

# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS & DELIVERABLES



**JULY 2025 - MAY 2026**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DOCUMENT OVERVIEW.....</b>	<b>PAGE 3</b>
<b>THE STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK....</b>	<b>PAGE 3</b>
<b>THE PLANNING PROCESS.....</b>	<b>PAGE 4</b>
<b>DELIVERABLES BY PHASE.....</b>	<b>PAGE 5</b>
<b>KEY DELIVERABLES.....</b>	<b>PAGE 8</b>
<b>FALL 2025 STRATEGIC PLANNING INPUT SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>PAGE 8</b>
<b>NOVEMBER 2025 STRATEGIC PLANNING LEADERSHIP RETREAT...</b>	<b>PAGE 39</b>
<b>JANUARY 2026 LEADERSHIP RETREAT.....</b>	<b>PAGE 81</b>
<b>FEBRUARY 2026 COUNCIL RETREAT.....</b>	<b>PAGE 111</b>

**SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS TO:**  
**THE STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM**  
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**COUNCIL MEMBER FOR THEIR**  
**CONTRIBUTIONS TO SHAPING**  
**THIS STRATEGIC PLAN.**

# City of Hendersonville

## Strategic Planning Process & Deliverables (2025 – 2026)

**Document Overview:** The City of Hendersonville undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process from July 2025 through April 2026, culminating in a refreshed strategic framework to guide City decisions and investments over the next three to four years. The process was intentionally designed to be grounded in real voices — drawing on community input, organizational leadership, and Council perspective — and to result in a plan that is practical, adaptable, and actively used.

This document compiles the key deliverables produced throughout that process and provides an overview of how each contributed to the final strategic framework adopted by the City Council.

### The Strategic Plan Framework

*The process produced a three-tier framework that organizes the City’s work:*

Element	Description	City of Hendersonville Services / Focuses
<b>CORE FOCUS AREAS</b> <i>(Our Programs)</i>	The key services and program areas that define HVL’s work: what we deliver to the community.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public Safety</li> <li>2. Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities</li> <li>3. Strong Infrastructure</li> <li>4. Business and Economic Development</li> <li>5. Housing, Growth Management, and Community Character</li> </ol>
<b>ENABLERS</b> <i>(How We Deliver Well)</i>	The organizational capabilities and systems that allow us to deliver high-quality service and adapt over time.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High-Performing City Workforce</li> <li>2. Financial Sustainability</li> <li>3. Community Partnerships</li> <li>4. High-Functioning City Council</li> <li>5. Engaged and Educated Community</li> </ol>
<b>STRATEGIC LENSES</b> <i>(How We Think and Decide)</i>	The cross-cutting filters/ pillars (what we believe in) that shape how we approach everything we do, guiding choices and trade-offs across all programs.	<u>City Council Values</u>

# The Planning Process

The process unfolded in three phases from July 2025 – April 2026, each producing key deliverables that built toward the final framework.

## ● PROCESS

### Kickoff & Early Planning (July–Sept.)

- 2–3 Planning Team calls
- Strategic planning framework assessment and draft ideas

### Council, Community, & Staff Conversations (Sept.–Nov.)

- 1-on-1 Council interviews and City Manager Interview (60 min each)
- 5 Council Community sessions (60 min each)
- Community functional area focus groups (staff-led)
- Leadership Team retreat (1 day)
- 2 virtual review sessions with Strategic Planning Team

### Retreats, Final Alignment, & Implementation (Dec.–Feb.)

- Winter Leadership Site / Visit Retreat
- Winter Council Retreat
- Up to 8 hours of virtual implementation support

## ● ROLES

The steering committee's role is to share insights from the City staff perspective, ensure we are reflecting community and organizational insights, and help support creating a clear, practical plan that everyone can own.



Warren and Laura here to guide the process and support documenting your work — making sure the strategic plan reflects your insights, priorities, and direction.

## ● WHAT TO HOLD AS WE MOVE THROUGH THE PROCESS



## ● OUTCOMES

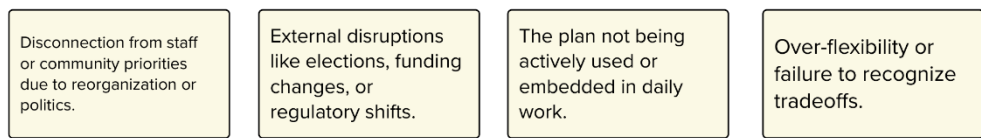
- A clear, flexible strategic framework and roadmap (i.e., a strategic plan) to guide the City and our decisions for the next 3–4 years.
- Insights grounded in community and staff voices, capturing what matters most.
- Shared alignment across leadership, with clarity on priorities and how we can be successful in our strategy.

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### What success looks like as we move through this process:



### What we need to be watching out for / aware of as we navigate toward success:



## Deliverables by Phase

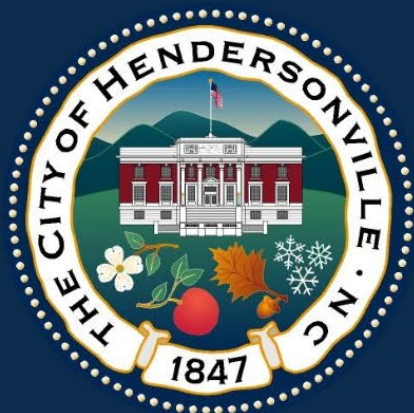
The table below outlines the three phases of the strategic planning process, describing what took place in each phase and the key deliverables produced. Each deliverable represents a distinct body of work — from community listening sessions and Council interviews to leadership retreats — and is included in full in the pages that follow. Taken together, they document the full arc of the process: how the City listened / discovered needs, what was heard, and how that input shaped Hendersonville's strategic direction.

Phase	Overview / Process	Key Deliverables
<b>Phase 1 Kickoff &amp; Early Planning</b> <i>July – September 2025</i>	<p>Fountainworks and the City's Strategic Planning Team established the process structure, assessed existing plans, and drafted an initial framework for discussion. Planning Team calls aligned leadership on goals and set the foundation for community engagement (1:1 Council interviews, Council Conversations, focus groups, etc.).</p>	<p><b>Key Deliverables</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial strategic planning draft framework concepts, process design and timeline / logistics (no “official” deliverable other than notes from strategic planning meetings)</li> </ol>
<b>Phase 2 Community, Council &amp; Staff Conversations</b> <i>September – November 2025</i>	<p>This was the core listening phase, designed to ground the plan in real voices. Three complementary input streams ran in parallel: public listening sessions, organizational focus groups, and individual Council interviews — each capturing a different perspective on Hendersonville’s priorities and direction. Following this input, an extended staff leadership convened to review the outputs and began to envision what “winning” would look like in</p>	<p><b>Key Deliverables</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Strategic Planning Input Report:</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Council Conversations Report</a> — 5 public sessions hosted by Council members (Sept.–Oct.); residents prioritized 7 focus areas via dot activity; top themes: Housing &amp; Growth, Parks, Taxes, Infrastructure</li> <li><a href="#">Focus Groups Report</a> — 4 sessions with community/ organizational</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

Phase	Overview / Process	Key Deliverables
	<p>each strategic plan focus area or enabler.</p>	<p>leaders (housing, healthcare, nonprofits, business); co-developed Projects, Programs &amp; Policies (3Ps); housing was the dominant theme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">1:1 Council Interviews Report</a> — 60-min. individual interviews with all Council members (Oct.); surfaced 20-year vision, near-term priorities, and strategic legacy themes</li> </ul> <p>3. <a href="#">November 18 Leadership Retreat</a> — Full-day session synthesizing all community and Council feedback into a shared draft strategic framework, including vision language, core focus areas, and enablers</p>
<p><b>Phase 3 Retreats, Alignment &amp; Finalization</b> <i>January – April 2026</i></p>	<p>With a draft framework in hand, the final phase focused on refining the plan through two structured retreats — one with the Staff Leadership Team and one with City Council. Additionally, the Strategic Planning Team convened to provide some insights on final plan updates and implementation into the platform Achievelt.</p>	<p><b>Key Deliverables</b></p> <p>4. <a href="#">January Leadership Retreat</a> — Site visit to High Point, NC (Jan. 8) followed by a half-day session (Jan. 9) to reflect on site learnings, re-align on the draft framework, and review employee engagement survey results (which was not part of the strategic planning process)</p> <p>5. <a href="#">February Council Retreat</a> — Full-day Council session (Feb. 27) to review and provide feedback on the draft strategic plan, and identify top near-term priorities (“big rocks”) for the coming year</p>

Phase	Overview / Process	Key Deliverables
		<p>6. Implementation Support — The Strategic Planning Team convened for two meetings to review the draft strategic plan and update it for the AchieveIt software. Refer to the AchieveIt platform for updated deliverable.</p>

# CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE STRATEGIC PLANNING INPUT SUMMARY



**NOVEMBER  
2025**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>COUNCIL CONVERSATIONS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Overview .....	4
Key Findings .....	5
Housing, Growth, Management, and Community Character .....	5
Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities .....	7
Keeping Taxes and Rates Affordable .....	8
Strong Infrastructure .....	10
Public Safety .....	11
Professional and Well-Trained City Workforce .....	12
Supporting Business and Economic Development .....	13
Other Commentary .....	14
<b>FOCUS GROUPS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Overview .....	15
Session #1 Overview .....	16
Session #2 Overview .....	17
Session #3 Overview .....	19
Session #4 Overview .....	20
<b>1:1 COUNCIL INTERVIEWS .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Overview .....	23
Main Points .....	25
Hendersonville Today .....	26
Disruptors/Change .....	27
20-Year Vision Themes / Headlines .....	28
Bold Ideas Tested in the Future .....	28
Next 3-4 Year Strategic Priorities .....	29
The Current Strategic Plan .....	30
North Stars and Council Legacy / Future Councilors .....	30

# PROCESS OVERVIEW

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## **Purpose**

This document compiles community, partner, and Council input to help inform the City of Hendersonville’s Strategic Plan update. It brings together three complementary feedback sources to provide a picture of priorities, tradeoffs, and opportunities for the City over the coming years.

## **What’s in this Document**

This report is organized into three sections, each summarizing a distinct input stream:

### **Council Conversations (Public Listening Sessions)**

Five open, informal dialogues hosted by the Mayor or a Council member between September 22 and October 20, 2025. Residents and community members shared priorities, asked questions, and completed a simple prioritization activity.

### **Focus Groups (Community & Organizational Leaders)**

Four in-person sessions held September 12–October 21, 2025, with a follow-up virtual conversation to ensure complete representation. Led by City of Hendersonville staff, participants reacted to demographic/disruption briefings and co-developed Projects, Programs/Plans, and Policies (“3Ps”).

### **1:1 Council Interviews (Leadership Perspectives)**

Individual, 60-minute virtual interviews with each Councilor conducted by Fountainworks from October 1-13, 2025, using a guided flow and virtual board to capture insights on today’s conditions, future vision, near-term priorities, and the usefulness of the current Strategic Plan.

## **How to Navigate this Document**

- Each section begins with an “overview” (purpose, timeline/participation, and process).
- The content emphasizes a summary of what participants said and how input was gathered.
- Together, these three inputs provide a triangulated view—public perspectives, organizational/partner insights, and Council’s individual viewpoints—that can be used to guide the City’s strategic plan update.

## **Timeframe & Participation at a Glance**

- Council Conversations: 5 sessions (Sept 22–Oct 20, 2025)
- Focus Groups: 4 sessions (Sept 12–Oct 21, 2025)
- 1:1 Council Interviews: All Council members, 60 minutes each (Oct 1–13, 2025)

# COUNCIL CONVERSATIONS

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## **Overview**

### **Purpose**

From September through October 2025, each member of the Hendersonville City Council hosted an individual Council Conversation: a community dialogue designed to strengthen connection between residents and City leadership as part of the City’s strategic planning process.

These sessions created an informal space for residents to share priorities, ask questions, and provide direct feedback on City services, projects, and future investments. Each conversation was open to the public and focused on listening, learning, and surfacing the issues most important to the community as Hendersonville continues to plan for the next three to four years.

As part of each session, participants also took part in a prioritization activity focused on seven City service / investment areas. Residents placed dot stickers to identify which focus areas they felt should receive the most attention in the years ahead. The results of this activity (combined with written comments and discussion notes) are reflected throughout this report as a summary of community priorities across all five conversations.

### **Timeline and Participation**

A total of five Council Conversations were held between September 22 and October 20, 2025, each hosted by a different Council member or the Mayor. City staff, department heads, and community partners were present at each session to answer questions and provide information related to specific topics, including infrastructure projects, public safety, housing initiatives, and economic development.

### **Outcome**

All notes, comments, and prioritization dots from the five sessions were compiled and analyzed to identify shared themes and areas of alignment across the community.

This Council Conversations Summary reflects the collective input of participants from all five meetings. The feedback gathered here directly informs the City’s ongoing Strategic Planning process and helps Council:

- Confirm what residents value most about Hendersonville today.
- Identify where community needs are changing.
- Highlight areas where the City can improve service delivery, community engagement, and long-term investment.

## **Key Findings**

### ***Top Community Priorities Across All Five Sessions:***

#### **Top priorities (by total dots):**

- Housing & Growth (28)
- Parks & Natural Amenities (20)
- Keeping Taxes Affordable (17)
- Strong Infrastructure (15)

**Mid-level focus:** Public Safety (14), Economic Development (8), City Workforce (8)

### **Housing, Growth, Management, and Community Character**

## Housing, Growth Management, & Community Character


*Dot Voting:* Place a dot below if this is one of your top priority areas for the City to focus on in the next 3-4 years.

# 28 Votes

*Add Detail:* Place a sticky note below to share why this is a priority area for you and note any specific projects, issues, or programs you'd like the City to continue or start investing in.

### Big Idea

The community values affordable, work-friendly housing that allows residents to live where they work while preserving Hendersonville's small-town character. People want balanced, well-managed growth supported by clear policies, strong code enforcement, and predictable costs for housing and city services.



### ***What were the big ideas shared related to “housing, growth management, and community character”?***

- The community values affordable, work-friendly housing that allows residents to live where they work while preserving Hendersonville’s small-town character. People want balanced, well-managed growth supported by clear policies, strong code enforcement, and predictable costs for housing and city services.

### ***What else did community members and residents share?***

- **Workforce housing:** Strong demand for housing for teachers, police, fire, and health workers.
- **Affordability:** Rent and ownership costs need to match local incomes; call for more workforce housing downtown. Residents emphasized that affordability should also include predictable utility and service costs that allow working families and retirees to remain in the city.
- **Small-town feel:** Maintain community character while allowing density in the right areas. Residents value thoughtful growth that protects neighborhood character and historic identity while supporting well-designed, higher-density housing where services already exist.
- **Transparency in development:** Questions about large projects (like Fairmont/Cedars) and how the city tracks developer follow-through.
- **Policy alignment:** Residents would like the City to continue implementing the Affordable Housing Plan and developing partnerships to support workforce and attainable housing, including collaborations with nonprofit and regional funding partners to improve access to local property ownership.
- **Zoning and growth management:** Calls to simplify zoning and make approvals clearer. Residents encouraged more transparent communication about development processes and an emphasis on placing new density near existing infrastructure, transit, and services.
- **Property maintenance:** A dedicated code enforcement officer will focus on clutter, unkempt vegetation, and nuisance properties. Residents stressed the importance of proactive enforcement and maintaining the visual quality of key corridors and neighborhoods.

## **Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities**

# Parks, Greenways, & Natural Amenities


*Dot Voting:* Place a dot below if this is one of your top priority areas for the City to focus on in the next 3-4 years.

## 20 Votes

*Add Detail:* Place a sticky note below to share why this is a priority area for you and note any specific projects, issues, or programs you'd like the City to continue or start investing in.

### Big Idea

The community deeply values parks, trails, and green spaces as essential to Hendersonville's quality of life. People want continued investment in recreation and connectivity, balanced with responsible budgeting.



### ***What were the big ideas shared related to “parks, greenways, and natural amenities”?***

- The community deeply values parks, trails, and green spaces as essential to Hendersonville's quality of life. People want continued investment in recreation and connectivity, balanced with responsible budgeting.

### ***What else did community members and residents share?***

- **Patton Pool replacement:** Strong support for a full-sized 50-meter pool; concerns over floodplain and funding; FEMA reimbursement pending.
- **Greenways and connectivity:** The Ecusta Trail and Oklawaha Greenway are widely seen as major community assets. Residents want continued investment in safety improvements,

better crossings, and connections between downtown, neighborhoods, and parks through shared lanes and trail links.

- **Tree and greenspace preservation:** Residents expressed concern about the loss of trees and natural buffers and emphasized the importance of replanting, conservation, and proactive protection of green corridors as development occurs.
- **Youth amenities:** Interest in a teen center, more youth programs, and activities for all ages. Residents want facilities that serve all ages and strengthen community connection.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Suggestion for a sustainability board to review city policies; balance greenway funding with housing investments.
- **Accessibility:** Requests for improved sidewalks, ramps, and ADA access across parks, trails, and public spaces to ensure inclusivity for all residents.

## Keeping Taxes and Rates Affordable

# Keeping Taxes & Rates Affordable


*Dot Voting:* Place a dot below if this is one of your top priority areas for the City to focus on in the next 3-4 years.

## 17 Votes

*Add Detail:* Place a sticky note below to share why this is a priority area for you and note any specific projects, issues, or programs you'd like the City to continue or start investing in.

### Big Idea

The community doesn't see affordability only through housing costs; they want predictable, reasonable city expenses across taxes and utilities, clear explanations of financial decisions, and confidence that their money is spent on the most essential community needs.



### ***What were the big ideas shared related to “keeping taxes and rates affordable”?***

- The community doesn’t see affordability only through housing costs; they want predictable, reasonable city expenses across taxes and utilities, clear explanations of financial decisions, and confidence that their money is spent on the most essential community needs.

### ***What else did community members and residents share?***

- **Fixed-income residents:** Need for policies that account for retirees and limited-income households. Residents want to see thoughtful approaches that help long-time residents remain in their homes despite rising costs.
- **Tax equity:** Comments that city residents shouldn’t be double-taxed (city + county). Some suggested closer coordination between governments to ensure fair funding and reduce overlap in services.
- **Project costs and priorities:** Concern about balancing spending on greenways or amenities versus essential services. Residents asked that the City focus on core needs such as infrastructure, public safety, and housing before expanding recreation or new projects.
- **Utility and stormwater bills:** Questions about high water/sewer rates and communication about billing. Residents want to understand how utility revenues support maintenance and improvements.
- **Transparency:** Desire to understand where tax dollars go and how bond funds, reimbursements, and revenues are managed. Residents showed strong interest in the proposed \$10 million General Obligation Bond for resurfacing, sidewalks, and ADA improvements and want to ensure bond spending and debt service are clearly reported.

## Strong Infrastructure

# Strong Infrastructure

Transportation, Water, Sewer, Stormwater, Facilities, etc.


*Dot Voting:* Place a dot below if this is one of your top priority areas for the City to focus on in the next 3-4 years.

**15 Votes**

*Add Detail:* Place a sticky note below to share why this is a priority area for you and note any specific projects, issues, or programs you'd like the City to continue or start investing in.

### Big Idea

Residents want to see visible, well-managed infrastructure improvements that address roads, drainage, and accessibility while preparing the city for future growth. People value investments that show clear progress, coordination with state agencies, and responsible long-term planning.



### What were the big ideas shared related to “strong infrastructure”?

- Residents want to see visible, well-managed infrastructure improvements that address roads, drainage, and accessibility while preparing the city for future growth. People value investments that show clear progress, coordination with state agencies, and responsible long-term planning.

### What else did community members and residents share?

- **\$10 million GO Bond:** Planned for the March ballot, the proposed bond would fund resurfacing, ADA ramps, sidewalks, and safety upgrades throughout the city, including key corridors such as King Street and Grove Street. Residents expressed strong support for

visible improvements to local streets and accessibility, along with a desire for transparency in how the funds are spent.

- **Transportation and connectivity:** Continued requests for expanded public transit and regional rail connections linking Hendersonville with Asheville, Charlotte, and surrounding areas. Residents want to see a more connected transportation system that reduces congestion and supports future growth.
- **Traffic and safety:** Ongoing concerns about speeding, red-light running, and unsafe pedestrian crossings. Residents emphasized the need for better enforcement and improved infrastructure design to enhance safety for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- **Storm drainage:** Infrastructure needs remain closely tied to flood mitigation, particularly the Mud Creek improvement project. Residents noted the importance of maintaining stormwater systems and ensuring that new development does not worsen flooding impacts.
- **ADA and accessibility:** Persistent calls for improved sidewalks, ramps, and crosswalks citywide to ensure safe and equitable access for all residents.
- **Community facilities:** Continued interest in more meeting and event spaces, along with better maintenance of existing infrastructure, water systems, and public utilities.

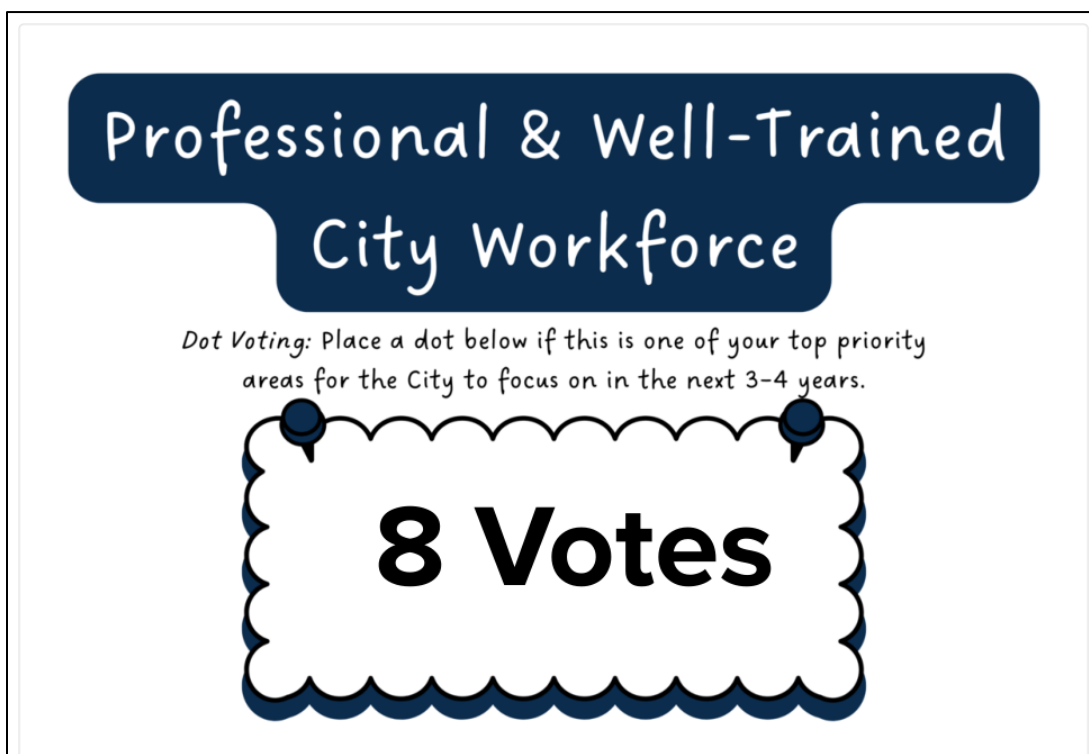
## **Public Safety**

A graphic for a dot voting session on Public Safety. It features a large orange rounded rectangle with the text "Public Safety" in a black, handwritten-style font. Below this, the text "Police, Fire, Code Enforcement, etc." is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. Underneath is a line of text: "Dot Voting: Place a dot below if this is one of your top priority areas for the City to focus on in the next 3-4 years." Below this text is a white, cloud-shaped box with a scalloped border and two orange pushpin graphics at the top corners. Inside this box, the text "14 Votes" is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font.

**What were the big ideas shared related to “public safety”?**

- **Community presence and enforcement:** Increase patrols, address speeding and red-light violations, improve neighborhood safety, and strengthen visibility along trails and parks.
- **Preparedness and emergency response:** Improve coordination for evacuations, disaster response, and ensure multilingual communication during emergencies.
- **Prevention and education:** Continue and expand programs like “Safe City” and water-safety education for children; focus on prevention, not just enforcement.

**Professional and Well-Trained City Workforce**



**What were the big ideas shared related to “professional and well-trained city workforce”?**

- **Recruit and retain talent:** Offer competitive pay, benefits, and a clear career path to keep high-quality staff, especially in public safety and infrastructure.
- **Invest in development:** Support ongoing training, professional certifications, and leadership growth opportunities.
- **Sustain culture and capacity:** Maintain a strong, service-oriented workforce with the resources needed to meet growth and community expectations.

- **Workforce recognition:** Residents expressed appreciation for staff professionalism and service quality, noting the importance of retaining talent through fair compensation and recognition.

## **Supporting Business and Economic Development**



### ***What were the big ideas shared related to “supporting business and economic development”?***

- **Diversify and grow local business:** Residents want to see new, high-value industries that bring stable, well-paying jobs while maintaining Hendersonville’s small-town livability. They emphasized the importance of supporting small businesses, entrepreneurship, and local ownership to strengthen the local economy.
- **Link economy to housing and workforce:** People want job creation to go hand-in-hand with affordable housing options so that employees—especially those in public service, healthcare, and education—can live where they work.
- **Collaborate and communicate:** Residents encouraged continued transparency around major development projects and requested clearer communication about how business incentives, loans, and partnerships support community goals.

- **Downtown vitality:** Participants noted the importance of maintaining an active, walkable downtown and ensuring that commercial spaces remain accessible to local entrepreneurs and independent retailers.
- **Economic balance:** Residents expressed interest in thoughtful growth that balances tourism with everyday livability, keeping Hendersonville welcoming to visitors without losing its identity as a resident-centered community.

## **Other Commentary**

### ***What else came up at the Council Conversations that didn't quite fit within a focus area but are still of importance to community members?***

- **Language access:** Develop a citywide language accommodations plan for emergencies and public communication.
- **Youth engagement:** Interest in a teen center and more activities for young people.
- **Community connection:** Continued emphasis on civic engagement, trust, and transparency in government.
- **Recreation and entertainment:** A few suggestions (e.g., Topgolf) reflect a desire for more social and family-friendly amenities.
- **Accessibility and inclusion:** Calls for broader accessibility in communication, facilities, and services to ensure all residents can participate fully in community life.

# FOCUS GROUPS

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## **Overview**

### **Purpose**

From September through October 2025, the City of Hendersonville convened a series of four Focus Group Sessions with community and organizational leaders as part of the City’s Strategic Plan Update for FY27–FY29.

The purpose of these sessions was to engage a diverse group of stakeholders—representing housing, business, health care, nonprofits, and civic sectors—in meaningful dialogue about Hendersonville’s future. Participants were asked to consider the City’s long-term direction, discuss external factors influencing growth and community well-being, and identify Projects, Programs, and Policies (“3Ps”) that could help elevate Hendersonville in the coming years.

Each session included an overview of the City’s strategic planning efforts, presentations on demographic trends and external disruptors, and guided discussion using shared resources such as presentations, whiteboards, and public input tools.

### **Timeline and Participation**

Four in-person focus group sessions were held between September 12 and October 21, 2025, each lasting between one and one-and-a-half hours. Participants represented a range of community partners and organizations, including:

- True Ridge (bilingual assistance & outreach nonprofit)
- Park National Bank / Boys & Girls Club
- Builders Association of the Blue Ridge Mountains
- Local Developer
- Former City Board Chairperson / City Resident
- UNC Health / Pardee Hospital / Partnership for Economic Development

Following the final session, an additional virtual conversation was held with the Park National Bank / Boys & Girls Club representative to ensure their perspectives were included.

### **Format**

1. Session #1 – Overview of City’s Strategic Plan, Why Strategic Planning is Important, and “Kneejerk” 3Ps
2. Session #2 – Gap Analysis Considering Drivers of Change Framework
3. Session #3 – Staff Engagement

#### 4. Session #4 – Structural Recommendations, Final Ideation, and Prioritization

### Resources

- PowerPoint - [Focus Group Presentations.pptx](#)
- Demographic Information - [JOHNSON - Demographer Presentation - Abbreviated.pdf](#)
- Managing Disruption Article - [Managing Disruption Article.pdf](#)
- Whiteboard Notes - [Whiteboard](#)
- Public Input Link for Feedback – [publicinput.com/focusgroup25](https://publicinput.com/focusgroup25)

### Outcome

All discussion notes, whiteboard inputs, and 3P rankings from the four sessions were compiled and analyzed to identify shared priorities, opportunities, and areas of alignment.

This Focus Group Summary reflects the collective insights of participants across all sessions. The feedback gathered here directly informs the City’s Strategic Planning process by helping to:

- Identify high-impact projects, programs, and policies that align with community needs.
- Highlight opportunities for collaboration with local partners and organizations.
- Capture community perspectives on housing, workforce, and infrastructure.
- Ensure the updated plan reflects diverse voices and real-world experience from community leaders.

The participants were grateful for the opportunity to participate and felt the City was on the right track. Housing was by far the most outspoken and common theme to address with this group. They also leaned heavily on the need for amplified community engagement and education.

### Session #1 Overview

- Generated first list of 3Ps

Projects	Programs, Procedures, & Plans	Policies
Pool Facility	Improved Walkability	Review Complexity of Zoning Process
Better Road Infrastructure	Integrating Hispanic Voices into City Plans	Proactive Police Force
New YMCA	Education on Affordable Housing	Proud not Loud Policy for Main St.
Senior Center w/ Wraparound Services (w/ County)	Public Engagement on Ecusta Trail	Abolish CZD Zoning

Hotel on Main St.	Adopting a Language Justice System	Revise 64' Building Height
	Exit Interview for Board Members and Chairs	

- Plan Feedback & General Discussion
  - Like the plans ability to track and display progress
    - Would like to see other plans linking up to strategic plan
  - Need to define “responsible” growth
  - Helene and COVID have compounded issues
  - Housing is linked to everything
  - Workforce is also critical

## **Session #2 Overview**

# Day 2

### **Proud Of:**

Green Spaces, Events, Quality Services

### **We can do better with:**

Zoning Complexity  
 Family Friendly Spaces  
 Multi-Lingual Communication

### **Warning Lights:**

Housing Affordability, Density, and Growth in Unhoused Population

### **Shaping the Path Forward:**

Circular Economy, Food Security, Protecting Farmland, & Housing

### **Opportunities:**

Creative & Affordable Housing, Density, Community Clusters,  
 Transportation, and Workforce

### **In 20 Years Hendersonville Is/Has:**

A Leader in Housing Market Driven Solutions  
 City for All- From the Basics to the Arts  
 A Stable, Locally Driven Economy  
 Safe & Walkable  
 Diverse, A City for All Ages, and Small Town Feel

## Details:

- If you could name one thing the organization could do better to serve the community, what would it be?
  - Complexity of Zoning ("Extremely Difficult") - Navigation/Procedure
  - Voices and Representation (perception that gov. not listening and nothing will happen)
  - Mutual Aid (people coming together to help each other)
  - Family focused recreational facilities, activities, programs, and spaces for youth (growth considerations; diversity of age in growth trends)
  - Spanish Information during disaster (other languages)
- What signals do you see that we're moving in the right directions - or warning lights that we should pay attention to?
  - Housing/Density – Sprawl
  - Growth in homeless population (humane, compassionate, appropriateness)
  - Landlord/rent control
- Which of these (Drivers of Change) do you think will most shape Hendersonville's path forward?
  - Circular Economy keeping things local
  - Housing (700-800 sq. ft.) - "Compact Housing" single owner/renter - Aging In Place (lots of agreement)
  - Housing (make an impact)
  - Housing
  - Housing
  - Variety of types of housing
  - Food Security (Ginny has solution) - Protecting Farmland and Keeping Food Local - Circular Economy (composting to bolster farmlands)
- What opportunities could unlock if we lean into them?
  - Leaning into creative solutions like housing on stilts
  - Serves aging population
  - Density
  - Generational Housing
  - Risks of Isolation for seniors - "Cluster" communities - creative ways to encourage traditional/connected neighborhoods
  - Creativity - Modulars
  - State Reg. Barriers
  - Reduces carbon footprint
  - Housing helps workforce helps transportation
  - Affordability - maintenance ongoing costs
- What risks do we need to anticipate- and how could we prepare now?

- Public Outcry (NIMBY/BANANA)
- Zoning
- Imagine Hendersonville at its absolute best 20 years from now- what's happening in our community, our economy, our neighborhoods, our environment?
  - Leader in market driven solutions - housing that addresses the aging population - creative zoning changes have generated "responsible" growth and density - great vision and big plans
  - growing food everywhere - children and seniors are healthy in every way - "city for all from the basics to the arts"
  - Housing
  - Entrepreneurs (small businesses)
  - Stable Economy and circulation - grow up and move back for a job - safe and ability to walk between places - better traffic flow (better infrastructure, big decisions)
  - Diversity - People can live (diff. options of housing/incomes); small town feel; youth are happy with things to do in a healthy env.; born and raised (pride in our kids being born here and stay/come back)

### **Session #3 Overview**

- City Staff Presentations/Q&A
  - Staff: Angie Beeker, Chief Myhand, Brent Detwiler, Trae Laws, Caitlyn Gendusa, Jenny Floyd, and Alivea Turner (Love and Respect)
- General Comments/Notes
  - Housing
    - General sense from the focus group that this is our number one issue in the City
    - Would like more storytelling and data around statistics related to housing (ex. % owner occupied, % that get built, etc...)
    - Interested in the categories of affordability and what it means on an income level
    - General appreciation for the CDBG-NR program
    - All agree that density is critical to solving the problems
    - All agree that compatibility can be challenging
    - One question regarding the need for townhomes/condos, mentioned partnerships with banks and realtors to understand market demands
    - There was a question regarding oxford homes and micro-communities as an idea
    - General support for reverting old CZD's to original zoning
  - Public Safety

- Concurrence on the need for more capacity in our police department (more staffing)
- General discussions around how to improve recruitment (hiring bonuses mentioned)
- General discussion on early onboarding/over hiring as an option
- The City being #1 in traffic fatalities is concerning
- Concurrence that growth will further the demand for more services that the City will need to provide (another pro density argument)
- General appreciation for our existing staff and their professionalism
- Some questions arose around who to contact for general unhoused issues in the downtown areas
- Desire to see non-profit partners like Love & Respect and the Salvation Army stepping up
- Parks & Sustainability
  - YMCA needs attention
  - Should the pool be a top priority was introduced as a question – and a statement that it shouldn’t related to housing and public safety
    - Other comments that the pool should be regional and/or in partnership, not just a City responsibility

### **Session #4 Overview**

- Strategic Plan Structure
  - Add more budgetary information and tie it to plan areas
  - More communication and marketing, would like to see quarterly update in newsletter
  - Housing needs to be higher on the priority list
  - Consensus to keep housing with growth management and community character as the need to consider tradeoffs
  - Infrastructure is important
  - Plan needs to be adaptable to change
- Generated final list of 3Ps and Ranked

<b>Projects</b>	<b>Programs, Procedures, &amp; Plans</b>	<b>Policies</b>
<b>Session #1</b>		
Pool Facility	Improved Walkability	Review Complexity of Zoning Process
Better Road Infrastructure	Integrating Hispanic Voices into City Plans	Proactive Police Force
New YMCA	Education on Affordable Housing	Proud not Loud Policy for Main St.

Senior Center w/ Wraparound Services (w/ County)	Public Engagement on Ecusta Trail	Abolish CZD Zoning
Hotel on Main St.	Adopting a Language Justice System	Revise 64' Building Height
	Exit Interview for Board Members and Chairs	
Session #4		
Build the Pool Last	Develop a Workforce Development Plan (community-wide)	
	Increase Citizen Engagement and Education	
	Advance the Housing Plan	
	Whatever Keeps Staff Up at Night (address that)	
	Develop a Plan for the Aging Population	
	Develop a Resiliency Plan	
	Emergency Communications Plan (for 2nd language)	
	Improve Digital Access	
	Program/SOP for Assisting Vulnerable Populations	
	Develop Red/Yellow/Green Scoring for Downtown (criticality scale)	

- The Final Scoring Breakdown is as follows
  - Advance the Housing Plan – 5 Points
  - Develop a Workforce Development Plan – 5 Points
  - Increase Citizen Engagement & Education – 5 Points
  - Whatever Keeps Staff Up at Night – 2 Points
  - Review Complexity of Zoning Process – 2 Points
  - Proactive Police Force – 1 Point
  - Pool Facility – 1 Point
  - Build the Pool Last – 1 Point
  - Better Road Infrastructure – 1 Point
  - Improved Walkability – 1 Point
  - Develop a Plan for the Aging Population – 1 Point
  - Develop a Resiliency Plan – 1 Point
  - Emergency Communications Plan (for 2<sup>nd</sup> language) – 1 Point

- Improve Digital Access – 1 Point
- Program/SOP for Assisting Vulnerable Populations – 1 Point
- Proud Not Loud Policy for Main St. – HM
- Abolish CZD Zoning – HM
- Revise 64` Building Height – HM
- New YMCA – HM
- Senior Center w/ Wraparound Services – HM
- Hotel on Main St. – HM
- Integrating Hispanic Voices into City Plans – HM
- Education on Affordable Housing – HM
- Adopting a Language Justice System – HM
- Exit Interview for Board Members & Chairs – HM

HM = Honorable Mention

### Scoring Breakdown

Projects	Points	Programs, Procedures, Plans	Points	Policies	Points
<b>Session 1 - Initial Reactions</b>					
Pool Facility	1.00	Improved Walkability	1.00	Review Complexity of Zoning Process	2.00
Better Road Infrastructure	1.00	Integrating Hispanic Voices into City Plans	-	Proactive Police Force	1.00
New YMCA	-	Education on Affordable Housing	-	Proud not Loud Policy for Main St.	-
Senior Center w/ Wraparound Services (w/ County)	-	Public Engagement on Ecusta Trail	-	Abolish CZD Zoning	-
Hotel on Main St.	-	Adopting a Language Justice System	-	Revise 64' Building Height	-
	-	Exit Interview for Board Members and Chairs	-		-
<b>Session 4 - Final Ideation</b>					
Build the Pool Last	1.00	Develop a Workforce Development Plan (community-wide)	5.00		-
	-	Increase Citizen Engagement and Education	5.00		-
	-	Advance the Housing Plan	5.00		-
	-	Whatever Keeps Staff Up at Night	2.00		-
	-	Develop a Plan for the Aging Population	1.00		-
	-	Develop a Resiliency Plan	1.00		-
	-	Emergency Communications Plan (for 2nd language)	1.00		-
	-	Improve Digital Access	1.00		-
	-	Program/SOP for Assisting Vulnerable Populations	1.00		-
	-	Red/Yellow/Green Scoring for Downtown (criticality scale)	-		-

# 1:1 COUNCIL INTERVIEWS

## Overview

### Purpose

Between October 1-12, 2025, Fountainworks conducted one-on-one, 60-minute virtual interviews with each member of the Hendersonville City Council. These conversations were designed to gather individual Council perspectives as part of the City's Strategic Planning Framework update.

Each discussion provided a space for Council members to reflect on Hendersonville today, consider external influences and future opportunities, identify near-term priorities, and provide feedback on how the City's Strategic Plan can serve as a stronger "compass" for Council decision-making.

### Process

## ***60 Minute Virtual Council Interviews on Strategy***

### ● **PROCESS**

- Exploring Hendersonville Today

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- Discussing Disruptors and Change

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- Imagining Hendersonville's Future

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- Getting Specific About the Next 3-4 Years in the City

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- Reflecting on the Strategic Plan Itself

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- Closing Reflections

### ● **ROLES**

*Council* - share your perspectives, insights, and reflections to help shape the City's direction.



*Warren and Laura* - here to guide the process and support documenting your work!





### ● **OUTCOMES**

- Share your perspectives on Hendersonville today and your vision for the future.
- Identify near-term priorities and external influences that will shape that future.
- Gather feedback on how the strategic plan can serve as a stronger "compass" for Council.

### ● **QUESTIONS?**

***Anything about our process today before we get started?***



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Each interview followed a consistent structure, guided by Fountainworks facilitators using a virtual Mural board to support engagement and documentation. The conversation flowed through six main segments:

1. **Exploring Hendersonville Today** – Council members shared what they value and are proud of about the community, where they see progress or challenges, and how the organization can better serve residents.
2. **Discussing Disruptors and Change** – Participants explored external trends and “disruptors” that could influence the City’s path forward, including potential risks and opportunities.
3. **Imagining Hendersonville’s Future** – Council members envisioned what “Hendersonville at its best” looks like 20 years from now, considering bold ideas, legacies, and aspirations.
4. **Getting Specific About the Next 3–4 Years** – Discussion shifted toward near-term priorities most likely to shape the City’s long-term success, including tradeoffs and strategic focus areas.
5. **Reflecting on the Strategic Plan** – Participants assessed the usefulness of the current plan and discussed how it could better guide Council decisions and long-term planning.
6. **Closing Reflections** – Each conversation concluded with a “north star” question—what guiding principle the City should never lose sight of—and any final thoughts for the planning process.

## **Facilitation and Participation**

Each session was co-facilitated by Warren Miller and Laura Robinson from Fountainworks. They guided the discussion, documented input in real time, and ensured each Councilor’s insights were captured for synthesis and reporting.

## **Outcome**

The following summary reflects the collective insights shared across all one-on-one Council interviews. It highlights areas of strong alignment among Council members, as well as distinct perspectives that enrich the City’s understanding of its current strengths, challenges, and future direction.

Through these conversations, several clear themes emerged: confidence in Hendersonville’s strong foundation and organizational culture; shared recognition of the opportunities and pressures of growth; and a consistent desire to preserve the City’s “hometown feel” while advancing housing, infrastructure, and resilience.

This synthesis organizes Council input into a few key areas—how the City is performing today, what external influences are shaping the path ahead, a 20-year vision for Hendersonville’s future, top strategic priorities for the next three to four years, and reflections on leadership and legacy.

Together, these perspectives provide a foundation for the next phase of strategic planning and a shared roadmap for decision-making.

## **Main Points**

### ***What's the big picture / main ideas across all 5 Council "interviews"?***

#### **1. Hendersonville is strong and well-run.**

- There's real pride in how the City and community have handled big challenges — from COVID to Hurricane Helene.
- Staff are trusted, the organization runs smoothly, and Council and City leadership work well together.
- That sense of excellence and collaboration is a core strength to build from!

#### **2. Growth is here; managing it well is our biggest test.**

- People want to live here, and that's a good thing. But rapid growth is putting pressure on space, affordability, and infrastructure.
- Desire for strategy to support keeping the "hometown feel" front and center while planning for more people, more housing, and more activity — without losing what makes Hendersonville special.

#### **3. Housing touches everything.**

- Housing availability and affordability affect who can live and work here, how businesses find employees, and whether younger generations stay.
- Council is excited about and wants to see continued momentum on the Housing Plan; this will be one of the city's defining long-term priorities.

#### **4. Infrastructure, safety, and the environment need steady attention.**

- The City's success depends on the basics: strong public safety, reliable water and sewer systems, well-kept roads, and smart stormwater management.
- Helene was a wake-up call about resilience — the next strategy should tie together infrastructure investment, climate adaptation, and emergency readiness.

#### **5. Keep people at the center.**

- Residents value accessibility, transparency, and a sense of belonging.
- Staff culture matters too — "take care of employees and they'll take care of residents."
- Strategy should emphasize communication, inclusion (especially for seniors, families, and non-English speakers), and continued service excellence.

#### **6. Plan for the long game, and the next generation of leaders.**

- The current Council want to be remembered for stability, teamwork, and laying a solid foundation.
- Future Council will need to carry that forward: empathetic, curious, collaborative, City volunteer experience, and future-focused.
- The updated plan should be a living tool — easy to reference, tracked regularly, and focused on results.

## **Hendersonville Today**

### ***What are you currently seeing in our community today?***

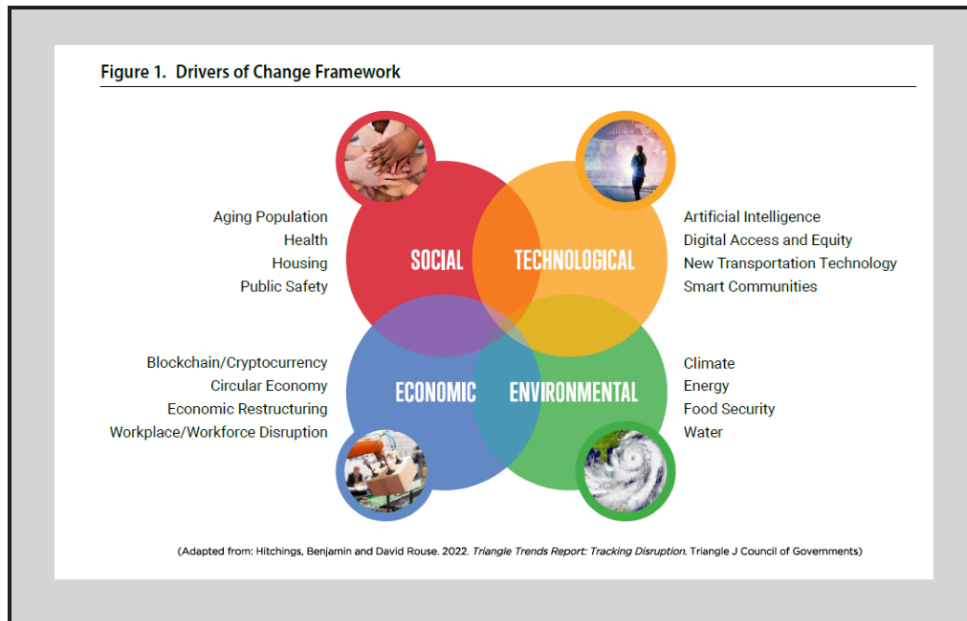
- **Community and governance**
  - High civic pride, strong staff "bench", and better public engagement.
  - “Hometown feel” and downtown charm remain key differentiators.
- **Economy**
  - Regionally competitive and attractive for investment; tourism and retirees are strong “legs of the stool.”
  - Small businesses face rent/landlord pressures; storefront turnover needs watching.
- **Growth pressures**
  - Desirability drives demand; space is finite; affordability and workforce housing are strained.
- **Public safety**
  - Recruitment/retention and visible presence are concerns; response times watched closely.
- **Mobility and infrastructure**
  - Ecusta Trail opening is a win!
  - Sidewalks and “complete streets” demand is growing.
  - Limited transit options today.
  - State road projects lag; local congestion/traffic management rising as a pain point.
- **Environment**
  - Post-storm resilience is better than expected, but flooding/stormwater and paved surfaces are front-of-mind.
- **Communication and accessibility**
  - Need multi-channel, multilingual, non-social-media outreach; seniors need tech-friendly approaches.

### ***What are some tensions we need to manage?***

- Keeping the “hometown feel” while accommodating growth.
- Serving residents well while also carrying the regional/tourism load.

- Adding services/amenities vs. maintaining a lean tax rate.

## **Disruptors/Change**



When considering some of the [key disruptors / change drivers influencing](#) North Carolina communities, Council identified the one most likely to affect the Hendersonville community.

### ***What’s most shaping our path (in order of greatest importance)?***

- **Social:**
  - Aging population alongside an influx of young families reshaping housing, schools, and workforce needs. Focus on belonging, inclusion, and managing polarization.
- **Environmental:**
  - Storm and flood risk, water quality protection, and wildfire preparedness. Continued learning post-events; commitment to green infrastructure and natural systems.
- **Economic:**
  - Cost of living and housing affordability pressures; sustaining downtown vitality while supporting small businesses and freelancers. Industry recruitment and skilled trades pipelines remain priorities. Maintaining balance between retirees, tourism, and a resilient local workforce; preserving rural areas by focusing growth near the city.
- Other things to pay attention to:

- **Technological:** Digital access and equity remain central; helping seniors and low-connectivity residents adopt new tools. Using technology strategically to maintain service levels with limited staff capacity.

### ***What are the risks we need to be anticipating?***

- Displacement and loss of hometown character.
- Sprawl into mountain landscapes.
- Under-resourced public safety; confidence erosion from slower response or lower visibility.
- Flooding worsened by paving/infilling without green infrastructure.
- Fiscal strain if services expand faster than revenue; staff burnout from "big-city" planning load.
- Communications gaps during shocks; warning system coverage.

## **20-Year Vision Themes / Headlines**

### ***What does Hendersonville (at its best) look like 20 years from now?***

- A quaint, walkable, mixed-use city that blends historic fabric with gentle density.
- Thriving, safe downtown with zero chronic vacancies and strong nighttime economy.
- Pocket parks and greenways stitch neighborhoods together; waterways are cleaner and flood-resilient.
- A right-sized transit network connects neighborhoods, jobs, schools, and the trail.
- Balanced demographics: retirees, families, and young workers can all afford to live here.
- An innovation/education hub feeds local clean industry; small businesses scale locally.
- "Hendersonville hospitality" is matched by service excellence and mutual respect in civic life (plus active residents).

### ***What have we absolutely avoided in the future?***

- Loss of the hometown feel and inclusive belonging.
- Widespread displacement or deteriorating housing conditions.
- Mountain sprawl and degraded waterways.
- Chronic downtown vacancies or public safety shortages.
- Policy drift driven by polarization or unqualified leadership.
- Residents don't feel supported or heard.

## **Bold Ideas Tested in the Future**

***If we were operating in a world without feasibility constraints – budget, staffing capacity, etc. – what are some big, bold ideas Hendersonville has tested out in the future?***

- County-wide bus network reaching rural “hollers,” connecting to essentials (e.g., Walmart) and a downtown circulator.
- Expand paid family leave for staff to 12 weeks
- “Blow out” park projects (Patton/Whitmire) with premium amenities—free access.
- Reopen/upgrade Patton Pool as a family hub.
- Housing for all who work locally, with edge development enhancing community goals; more amenities in new housing.
- Strategic housing plan and major infrastructure upkeep.
- Earmarked ad valorem revenues (if permissible) for parks/road development.

### **Next 3-4 Year Strategic Priorities**

***What are the “big rocks” you think the City should be focusing on / moving over the next 3-4 years (i.e., top strategic priorities)?***

- **Housing and Livability:**
  - Keep housing attainability front and center, with emphasis on workforce and mixed-income options near jobs and services; encourage quality infill and neighborhood balance.
- **Mobility and Access:**
  - Address traffic management and street safety; improve walkability and Ecusta Trail connections; explore transit and shuttle options responsive to local needs.
- **Environmental Resilience:**
  - Strengthen stormwater and flood management; preserve greenspace and natural systems; continue investment in sustainable, resilient infrastructure.
- **Parks and “Third Spaces”:**
  - Refresh and modernize parks and recreation; support pocket parks and community gathering spaces; clarify the long-term vision for aquatic and recreation facilities.
- **Economic Diversification:**
  - Broaden the economic base beyond tourism and retirement; support small businesses and pursue partnerships for workforce training and higher education.
- **Public Safety:**
  - Sustain visible, well-staffed police and fire services; maintain community confidence as the city grows.
- **Leadership and Fiscal Sustainability:**
  - Maintain strong organizational capacity and leadership; ensure growth is matched with sustainable service and infrastructure funding.
- **Communication and Engagement:**
  - Expand inclusive, multi-channel communication; improve access for seniors and non-digital residents; foster transparency and community connection.

### ***What are some tradeoffs you think the City might need to make?***

- **Affordability vs. Service Levels:** The city’s current low-tax, high-service model may not be sustainable long term; maintaining quality could require selective fee or rate increases.
- **Housing vs. Greenspace:** Ongoing tension between expanding housing supply and preserving open space and community character.
- **Revenue Strategy:** Potential need for new funding tools (e.g., paid parking, occupancy taxes) balanced against public tolerance for tax or fee changes.
- **Generational Balance:** Marketing and planning must serve both retirees and younger workers to sustain a balanced community.
- **Efficiency vs. Personal Service:** Using technology to improve efficiency while maintaining the “high-touch” approach residents value—especially mindful of senior users.
- **Mobility Design Choices:** Limited right-of-way and budgets mean not every corridor can include every multimodal feature; designs must be context-appropriate.
- **Partnerships for Amenities:** Larger facilities (like a city pool) may only be feasible through shared funding or partnerships; focus city resources on core services.

### **The Current Strategic Plan**

#### ***What is your overall confidence in the City’s current strategic plan?***

- **There is overall confidence that the current strategic plan prepares the City for future shifts:** high confidence for core services; lower for non-traditional roles (housing, homelessness, hyper-partisanship).

#### ***What are some opportunity areas you’re seeing to strengthen the City’s strategic plan?***

- Some ideas from Council to make it more of a decision tool, not a bookshelf item:
  - Add a one-page “At-a-Glance” with 8–10 priority outcomes and 12-month actions.
  - Create project reference IDs cross-walked to comp plan, mobility plan, parks plan, etc.
  - Run a quarterly dashboard/check-in (Council agenda item) with color-coded status.
  - “Decode” acronyms; keep visuals,

### **North Stars and Council Legacy / Future Councilors**

#### ***What are the guiding principles (i.e., “north stars”) that the City should never lose sight of?***

- Keep Hendersonville a welcoming hometown—safe, connected, and resilient—while growing opportunity for all generations. (Practiced daily through mutual respect, service excellence, and active listening.)

***What is the legacy of the current Council? What do you want to be known for or remembered by?***

- **Steady, collaborative leadership through disruption**
  - Guided Hendersonville through COVID, Helene, and rapid growth while maintaining calm, trust, and teamwork.
- **People-first governance**
  - Emphasized empathy, listening, transparency, and respect; built a culture where residents feel heard and staff feel supported.
- **Action on livability and housing**
  - Tackled affordability head-on with tangible steps (housing plan, workforce focus, etc.) and strengthened the city’s “hometown feel” through parks, greenways, and downtown vitality.
- **Future-focused planning**
  - Embedded long-term thinking, resilience, and data-informed decision-making into how the City operates.
  - Left behind a clear foundation and civic tone: grounded, respectful, service-oriented, and committed to continuous improvement.

***What should Council look like 10 – 20 years from now?***

- **Empathetic connectors:** genuinely care about people, listen well, and reflect the full diversity of the community.
- **Curious learners:** understand city systems, seek context, and approach issues with humility and curiosity.
- **Collaborative problem solvers:** able to disagree respectfully and find common ground to move the city forward.
- **Principled and professional:** thoughtful, balanced, and moderate in temperament; steady under pressure.
- **Visionary stewards:** keep Hendersonville’s hometown identity while leading it confidently into its next phase of growth and resilience.



# *Strategic Planning Leadership Retreat*

## **SUMMARY REPORT**

*NOVEMBER 18, 2025*



## Table of Contents

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<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Retreat Purpose.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Scanning the Environment and Change Disruptors .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Reviewing Community and Council Feedback.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Align on the Vision for Hendersonville.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Clarifying and Building Strategic Focus Areas.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Building Out Strategic Enablers .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Wrapping-Up / Conclusion .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>33</b>



## Executive Summary

### **RETREAT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: BIG INSIGHTS AND TAKEAWAYS**

The November 18 Strategic Planning Retreat brought together Hendersonville's leadership team for a full-day session focused on understanding the City's evolving environment, aligning around a long-term vision, and shaping a strategic framework to guide decision-making in the years ahead. Several clear themes emerged across the day's conversations.

#### **Shared Understanding of a Changing Environment**

Participants demonstrated strong alignment on the major forces reshaping Hendersonville—especially technological advancements, rising infrastructure costs, staffing pressures, and financial constraints. Across departments, there was broad agreement that:

- AI and emerging technologies will significantly reshape operations and service delivery.
- Rising capital costs and financial pressures represent cross-cutting risks.
- Public safety staffing, mandates, and community expectations require new approaches.
- Climate resilience and infrastructure durability will be major planning needs.

#### **Strong Alignment with Community and Council Priorities**

The leadership team's reflections closely mirrored what community partners, residents, and Council members articulated in interviews and listening sessions. Shared values—such as maintaining Hendersonville's small-town feel, supporting walkability and connectivity, ensuring transparency, investing in resilient infrastructure, and addressing affordability—reinforced that the City is already moving in a direction that resonates with the public.

#### **Core Focus Areas for the Next 3–5 Years**

Retreat discussions centered on what success should look like across Hendersonville's key program and service areas. Participants identified five Core Focus Areas and began defining what meaningful progress would look and feel like for the community:

1. **Public Safety:** Strengthening staffing, maintaining accreditation, expanding community relationships, adopting alternative policing strategies, and preparing for long-term facility and service needs.
2. **Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities:** Advancing major park projects, building interconnected greenways, supporting a growing bike culture, expanding floodplain mitigation and natural asset protection, and enhancing neighborhood-level recreation.



#### Core Focus Areas for the Next 3–5 Years (Continued)

- 3. Strong Infrastructure:** Investing in resilient, right-sized infrastructure; improving long-term planning; strengthening partnerships; managing mandates and rising costs; and supporting multi-modal connectivity.
- 4. Supporting Business and Economic Development:** Improving user experience for development, defining HVL's economic identity, supporting redevelopment opportunities, expanding arts and creative economy assets, and improving permitting and technology systems.
- 5. Housing, Growth Management, and Community Character:** Advancing housing strategy actions, supporting appropriate density, defining "community character," innovating in housing types, and aligning design standards with desired outcomes.

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#### Strategic Enablers: How We Deliver Well

Participants also explored the organizational capabilities required to deliver on Hendersonville's priorities. In rotating small-group stations, they discussed what "winning" looks like, the big priorities to move, and the pressures to plan for in each enabler.

- 1. Professional and Well-Trained City Workforce:** Expanding training resources, improving recruitment and retention, strengthening career pathways, building succession plans, and enhancing cross-department collaboration.
- 2. Financial / Budget Engine:** Aligning budgets with strategy, improving grant capacity, managing capital impacts, building fund balance, investing in emerging technology, and increasing clarity and transparency in financial decision-making.
- 3. Community Partnerships:** Strengthening relationships with nonprofits, businesses, higher education, and regional agencies; identifying service gaps; improving civic education; and increasing shared capacity to meet community needs.
- 4. High-Functioning City Council:** Clarifying expectations, strengthening communication and engagement, supporting data-driven decision-making, enhancing public transparency, and fostering collaborative relationships across the organization and community.



## Retreat Purpose

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The City of Hendersonville held a full-day Strategic Planning Retreat on November 18, 2025, bringing together members of the leadership team to begin shaping the City's strategic direction for the coming years. The session was facilitated by Fountainworks and designed to synthesize environmental insights, stakeholder feedback, and organizational needs into a shared strategic framework.

This summary reflects the day's structure, discussions, and intended outcomes. Notes were captured live and do not represent priorities unless specifically stated.



### **The immediate outcomes of the retreat included:**

*What are we immediately walking away from the retreat with?*

- A shared understanding of Hendersonville's current environment, major disruptors, and community priorities.
- A synthesis of outreach feedback informed by staff insight into feasibility, constraints, and resource implications.
- Alignment on a refreshed vision and the language needed to describe the city's future.
- Defined core focus areas (programs and services) with clear descriptions of what success looks like.
- Agreement on key enablers that support effective service delivery.



**The agenda for the retreat included:**

- Scanning the Environment and Change Disruptors
- Reviewing Community and Council Feedback
- Aligning on the Vision for HVL
- Clarifying and Building Strategic Focus Areas
- Building Out Strategic “Enablers”

**Outcomes**

- A shared understanding of Hendersonville’s current environment, key disruptors, and community priorities.
- A synthesis of outreach feedback, filtered through staff’s perspective on feasibility, constraints, and resource implications.
- Alignment on a refreshed vision and clear language to describe the city’s future.
- Defined core focus areas (programs and services) with clear descriptions of what success looks like in each.
- Agreement on key enablers that support effective delivery of core programs and services.

**Roles and Ways of Working**

- **Hendersonville Leadership:** Providers of operational insight and translators of community and leadership priorities into clear, feasible, and actionable recommended direction for Council.
- **Fountainworks:** Facilitators of the conversation and documenters of your collective insights and decisions.

**Agenda**

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025 (9:00 AM - 4:00 PM)

- WELCOME AND ORIENTATION
- SCANNING THE ENVIRONMENT AND CHANGE DISRUPTORS
- REVIEWING COMMUNITY AND COUNCIL FEEDBACK
- LUNCH
- ALIGNING ON THE VISION FOR HVL
- CLARIFYING AND BUILDING STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS
- BUILDING OUT STRATEGIC “ENABLERS”
- NEXT STEPS AND ADJOURNMENT

**Scanning the Environment and Change Disruptors**

After a welcome from Deputy City Manager Brian Pahle and an orientation from Fountainworks’ facilitator Warren Miller, participants transitioned into an environmental scan designed to deepen the leadership team’s understanding of the major forces shaping Hendersonville today and over the next decade. The activity began with a grounding in the stakeholder findings report and an introduction to five categories of “drivers of change” that influence both the community and the organization. These included social trends (such as demographics, housing, health, and safety), technological advancements, economic shifts, environmental pressures, and political or governmental factors.



Participants explored how each driver is emerging in the community, what these signals suggest about the future, and what implications they carry for both City government and residents. In small groups, participants identified key observations within each driver category, discussed what they are currently seeing in Hendersonville, and considered where each trend may be headed over the next 10 years. Each group then narrowed its list to the three or four trends they believe will matter most for Hendersonville to prepare for and manage effectively.

The full group reconvened for a collective debrief. Shared themes were captured on a context map, highlighting emerging opportunities, evolving challenges, and the organizational capacities the City will need in order to

navigate change successfully. The conversation emphasized what Hendersonville must be prepared to deliver in the years ahead and how the organization can position itself to remain responsive as conditions continue to shift.

After sharing out their findings, participants were asked to “vote” on the top two trends they felt the City should be paying closest attention to moving forward. This added an extra layer of prioritization and helped highlight where there was the strongest collective agreement about emerging pressures or opportunities.

## Drivers of Change Framework

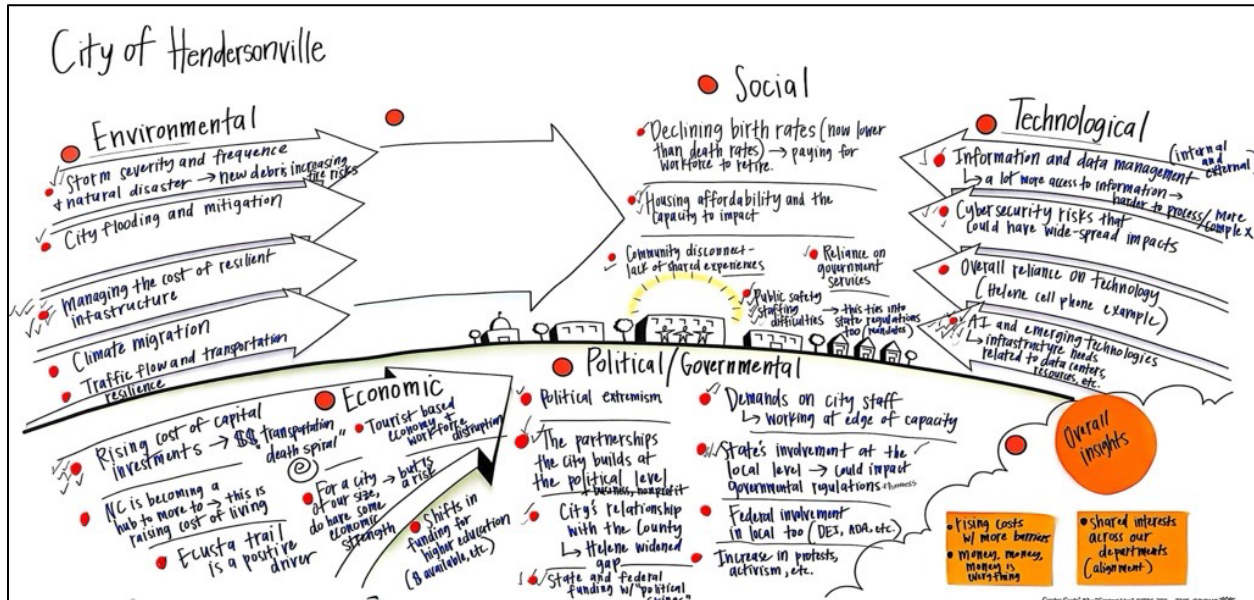
Figure 1. Drivers of Change Framework

Definitions

- **Social:** Demographic and societal forces that affect community well-being (e.g., aging, health, housing, safety).
- **Technological:** Emerging technologies that change how communities function (e.g., AI, digital access, transportation technology, smart systems).
- **Economic:** Large-scale economic forces that shape jobs, industries, markets, and financial stability (e.g., restructuring, workforce changes, cryptocurrency, circular economy).
- **Environmental:** Natural and resource-related forces that impact resilience and sustainability (e.g., climate, energy, food security, water).

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- Another change driver, not in the original framework, that is important for Hendersonville to consider:
  - **Political/Governmental:** Policy and governance factors—including laws, regulations, leadership, public institutions, etc.—that influence how communities operate and make decisions.



### City of Hendersonville Context Map

Driver	Trend / Factor
<b>Environmental</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing the cost of resilient infrastructure (8 votes)</li> <li>Storm severity and frequency, and natural disaster-&gt; new debris increasing fire risks (2 votes)</li> <li>City flooding and mitigation (1 vote)</li> <li>Climate mitigation</li> <li>Traffic flow and transportation resilience</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public safety staffing difficulties (7 votes)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This ties into the state regulations too (mandates)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Housing affordability and the capacity to impact (4 votes)</li> <li>Declining birth rates (now lower than death rates) -&gt; paying for workforce to retire (1 vote)</li> <li>Community disconnect-lack of shared experiences (1 vote)</li> <li>Reliance on government services</li> </ul>
<b>Technological</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AI and emerging technologies (11 votes)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infrastructure needs related to data centers, resources, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Cybersecurity risks that could have wide-spread impacts (3 votes)</li> <li>Information and data management (internal and external) (2 votes)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A lot more access to information -&gt; harder to process/ more complex)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Driver	Trend / Factor
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall reliance on technology (Helene cell phone example)</li> <li>• Rising cost of capital investments -&gt; \$\$ transportation “death spiral” (7 votes)</li> <li>• NC is becoming a hub to move to -&gt; this is raising cost of living</li> <li>• Ecusta trail is a positive driver (1 vote)</li> <li>• Tourist based economy and workforce disruption</li> <li>• For a city of our size, we do have some economic strength                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ But it is a risk</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Shifts in funding for higher education (funds available, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Political / Governmental</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and federal funding with “political swings” (3 votes)</li> <li>• State’s involvement at the local level → could impact governmental regulations (3 votes)</li> <li>• The partnerships the city builds at the political, business, and nonprofit level (2 votes)</li> <li>• City’s relationship with the county (2 votes)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Helene widened the gap</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Demands on city staff (2 votes)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Working at edge of capacity</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Political extremism (1 vote)</li> <li>• Federal involvement in local too (DEI, ADA, etc.)</li> <li>• Increase in protests, activism, etc.</li> </ul>

**Overall Insights:**

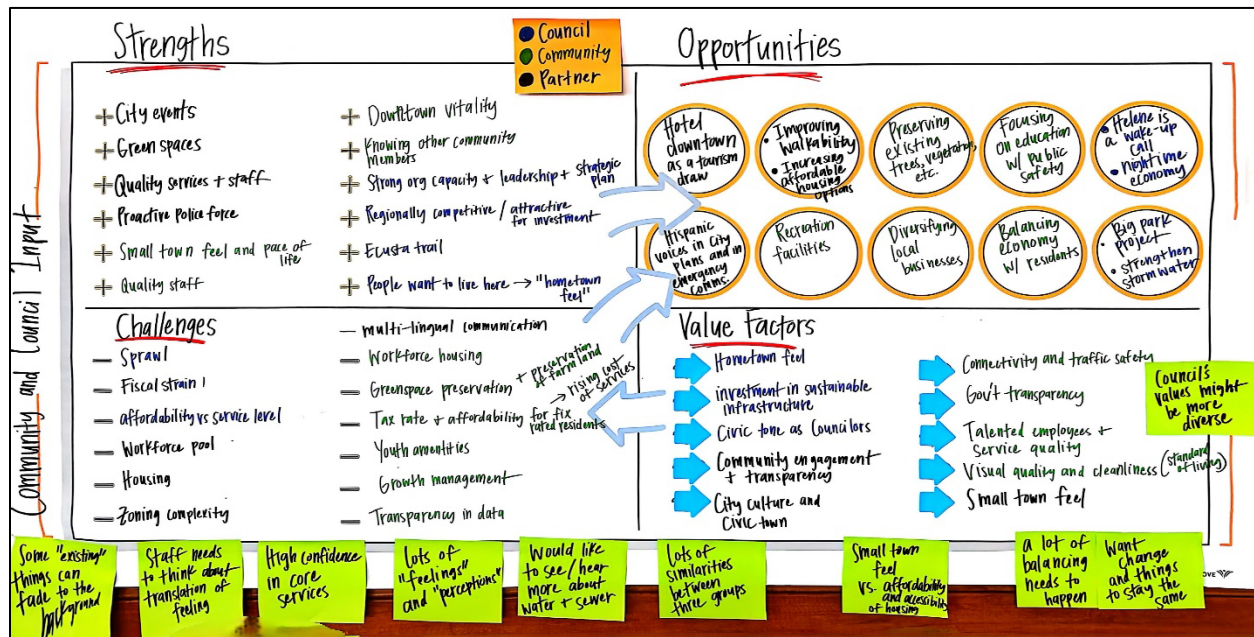
- The top factors participants think the City should be paying attention to the most in the coming years include:
  - AI and emerging technologies (11 votes)
  - Managing the cost of resilient infrastructure (8 votes)
  - Public safety staffing challenges and mandates (7 votes)
  - Rising cost of capital investments, especially transportation (7 votes)
- Rising costs are creating increasing barriers across multiple areas.
- Financial pressures (“money, money, money”) are a dominant challenge influencing nearly every trend.
- Many issues show strong alignment across departments, indicating shared interests and common challenges.



## Reviewing Community and Council Feedback

The conversation then shifted to a review of the stakeholder engagement conducted throughout the fall, which included Council conversations, focus groups with community partners, and one-on-one interviews with each Council member. Participants worked in small groups to reflect on what stakeholders identified as Hendersonville’s strengths, challenges, opportunities, and the qualities residents value most about their community. The Appendix includes these small group conversations.

After small group discussions, participants reconvened to share key takeaways and identify themes across stakeholder groups. The collective insights from this debrief are summarized below.



### Community and Council Conversation Group Insights

What are seen as our City’s Strengths?	What are our opportunity areas?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Partner</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City events</li> <li>Green spaces</li> <li>Quality services and staff</li> <li>Proactive police force</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small town feel and pace of life</li> <li>Quality staff</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Partner</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hotel downtown as a tourism draw</li> <li>Hispanic voices in city plans and in emergency comms.</li> <li>Improving walkability</li> <li>Increasing affordable housing options</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Community</b></li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Downtown vitality</li> <li>● <b>Council</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strong org capacity and leadership and strategic plan</li> <li>○ Regionally competitive/ attractive for investment</li> <li>○ Ecusta trail</li> <li>○ People want to live here (hometown feel)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recreation facilities</li> <li>○ Preserving existing trees, vegetables, etc.</li> <li>○ Diversifying local businesses</li> <li>○ Focusing on education w/ public safety</li> <li>○ Balancing economy w/ residents</li> <li>● <b>Council</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Helene is a wake-up call</li> <li>○ Nighttime economy</li> <li>○ Big park project</li> <li>○ Strengthen stormwater</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>What challenges are being recognized by community members and Council?</b></p>	<p><b>What does the community/Council value most about Hendersonville?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Partner</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Workforce pool</li> <li>○ Housing</li> <li>○ Zoning complexity</li> <li>○ Multi-lingual communication</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Workforce housing</li> <li>○ Greenspace preservation (and preservation of farmland)</li> <li>○ Tax rate and affordability for fix rated residents                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rising costs of services</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Youth amenities</li> <li>○ Growth management</li> <li>○ Transparency in data</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Council</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sprawl</li> <li>○ Fiscal strain</li> <li>○ Affordability vs. service level</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Partner</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Community engagement and transparency</li> <li>○ City culture and civic town</li> <li>○ Small town feel</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Community</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Connectivity and traffic safety</li> <li>○ Government transparency</li> <li>○ Talented employees and service quality</li> <li>○ Visual quality and cleanliness (standard of living)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Council</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hometown feel</li> <li>○ Investment in sustainable infrastructure</li> <li>○ Civic tone as Councilors</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Cross-Cutting Insights:**

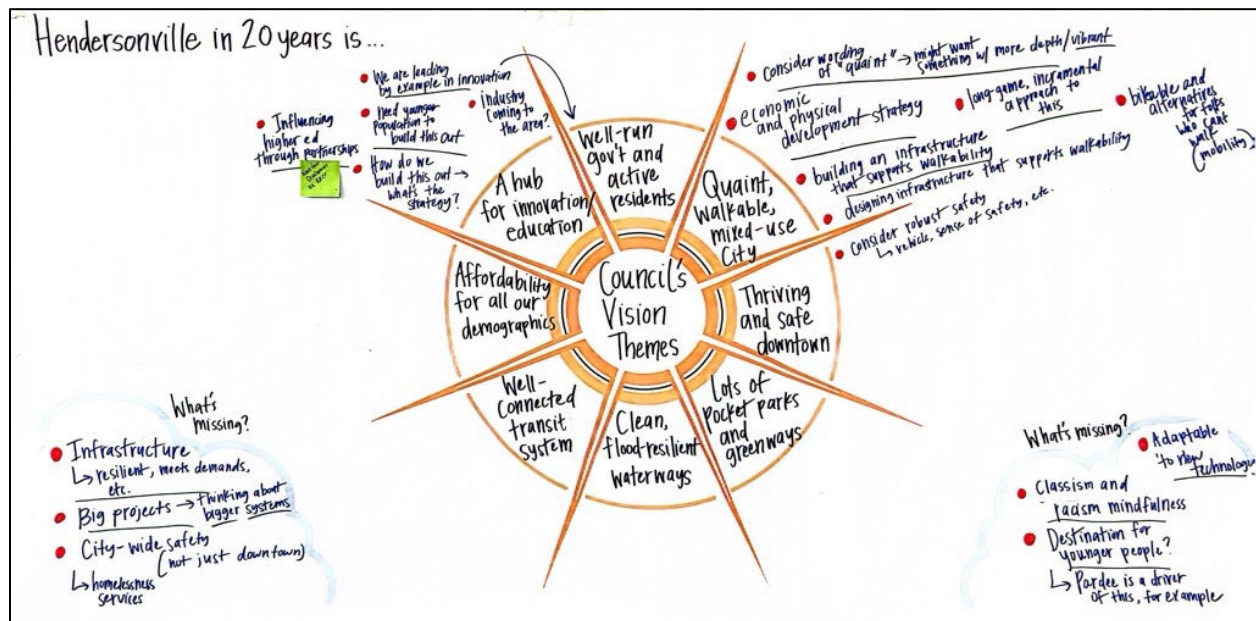
- Some “existing” things can fade to the background
- Staff need to think about translation of feeling
- High confidence in core services
- Lots of “feelings” and “perceptions”



- Would like to see/hear more about water and sewer
- Lots of similarities between three groups
- Small town feel vs. affordability and accessibility of housing
- A lot of balancing needs to happen
- Want change and things to stay the same
- Council's values might be more diverse

## Align on the Vision for Hendersonville

Following a lunch break, participants briefly reviewed several 20-year vision themes for Hendersonville that the Council developed during their 1:1 interviews as part of the strategic planning feedback process. Although the Council has not yet had the opportunity to align on or refine these themes, participants were invited to react to the initial working draft and help build out additional details. The summary below captures the conversation.



### Hendersonville in 20 years is...

- A hub for innovation/ education
  - How do we build this out?
  - What is the strategy?
  - Industry coming to the area?
  - Influencing higher ed through partnerships
- Well-run gov't and active residents



- We are leading by example in innovation
- Quaint, walkable, mixed-use city
  - Consideration of “quaint”
    - Might want something with more depth/ vibrant
  - Economic and physical development strategy
  - Long-game, incremental approach to this
  - Building an infrastructure that supports walkability
    - Designing infrastructure that supports walkability
  - Bikeable and alternatives for folks who can't walk (mobility)
- Thriving and safe downtown
- Lots of pocket parks and greenways
- Clean, flood-resilient waterways
- Well-connected transit system
- Affordability for all our demographics

### What's missing?

- Infrastructure
  - Resilient, meets demands, etc.
- Big projects
  - Thinking about bigger systems
- City-wide safety
  - Not just downtown
  - Homelessness services
- Classism and racism mindfulness
- Adaptable to new technology
- Destination for younger people
  - Pardee is a driver, for example.

## Clarifying and Building Strategic Focus Areas

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The group transitioned into a discussion of how the City will strategically organize and prioritize its work moving forward. To bridge the gap between Hendersonville’s current reality and its long-term vision, the Management Office introduced a draft strategic framework outlining three key components: Core Focus Areas, Enablers, and Strategic Lenses. This framework—captured in the visual included below—provides a structured way of thinking about what the City delivers, how it delivers effectively, and how decisions should be made across all areas of work.



To bring the draft strategic framework to life, participants moved into small groups to begin building out the details of each Core Focus Area.

- Public Safety
- Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities
- Strong Infrastructure
- Supporting Business and Economic Development
- Housing, Growth Management, and Community Character




Each group was asked to imagine what meaningful progress would look and feel like for the community over the next several years and to translate that vision into tangible priorities.

Guided by a set of prompting questions, groups explored:

- What does “winning” look like in this focus area 3–5 years from now?
- What are the major priorities or “big rocks” the City must move to make that future possible?
- What emerging pressures, changes, or new demands are likely to shape this area over the next few years?

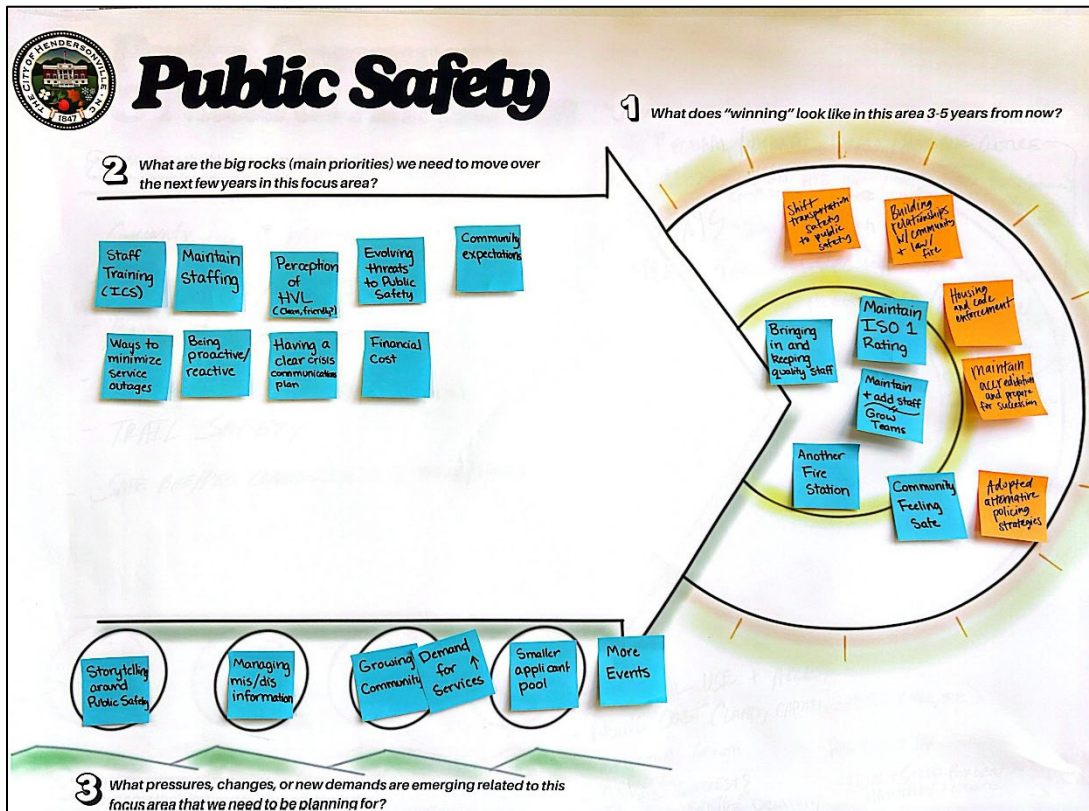
After working through the questions, groups provided a brief report-out to the full room. Participants, collectively, had an opportunity to discuss each focus area’s initial ideas and add additional commentary to expand and refine what had been captured. This collaborative layer helped surface additional insights and ensured that a broad range of perspectives informed the emerging picture.

## Floating a Strategic Framework

Element	Description	HVL Services / Focuses
 <b>Core Focus Areas (Our Programs)</b>	The key services and program areas that define HVL’s work: what we deliver to the community.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public Safety</li> <li>2. Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities</li> <li>3. Strong Infrastructure</li> <li>4. Supporting Business and Economic Development</li> <li>5. Housing, Growth Management, and Community Character</li> </ol>
 <b>Enablers (How We Deliver Well)</b>	The organizational capabilities and systems that allow us to deliver high-quality service and adapt over time.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Professional and Well-Trained City Workforce</li> <li>2. Financial / Budget Engine (internal services that keep everything funded)</li> <li>3. Community Partnerships</li> <li>4. High-Functioning City Council</li> </ol>
 <b>Strategic Lenses (How We Think and Decide)</b>	The cross-cutting priorities that shape how we approach everything we do, guiding choices and trade-offs across all programs.	<b>INITIAL WORKING IDEAS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping Taxes and Rates Affordable</li> <li>• Long-Term / Future Planning</li> <li>• Will need to pull some of the current Council Values such as environmental sustainability.</li> </ul>

• **Planning** is about executing known services well.  
 • **Strategy** is about making conscious, adaptive choices about outcomes and approaches in the face of uncertainty and change.

4



**Public Safety**

Question	Feedback / Ideas
<p>What does "winning" look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift transportation safety to public safety</li> <li>• Building relationships with community and law/ fire</li> <li>• Housing and code enforcement</li> <li>• Maintain accreditation and prepare for succession</li> <li>• Adopted alternative policing strategies</li> <li>• Bringing in and keeping quality staff</li> <li>• Maintain ISO 1 rating</li> <li>• Maintain and add staff (grow teams)</li> <li>• Another fire station</li> <li>• Community eeling safe</li> </ul>
<p>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff training (ICS)</li> <li>• Maintain staffing</li> <li>• Perception of HVL (clean, friendly?)</li> <li>• Evolving threats to public safety</li> <li>• Community expectations</li> </ul>



Question	Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to minimize service outages</li> <li>• Being proactive vs. reactive</li> <li>• Having a clear crisis communication plan</li> <li>• Financial cost</li> </ul>
<p>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storytelling around public safety</li> <li>• Managing mis/ dis – information</li> <li>• Growing community</li> <li>• Demand for services up</li> <li>• Smaller applicant pool</li> <li>• More events</li> </ul>

## Parks, Greenways, & Natural Amenities

**1** What does "winning" look like in this area 3-5 years from now?

**2** What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?

- Community Pool @ PATTON
- FUNDING/ BOND/ GRANTS
- LAND ACQUISITION
- PREPARING <sup>to be</sup> SAVIDA GRADE TRAILWAYS
- TRAIL SAFETY
- SAFE BIKE/ROAD CONNECTIONS to PARKS/TRAILS

**3** What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?

**Handwritten Notes:**

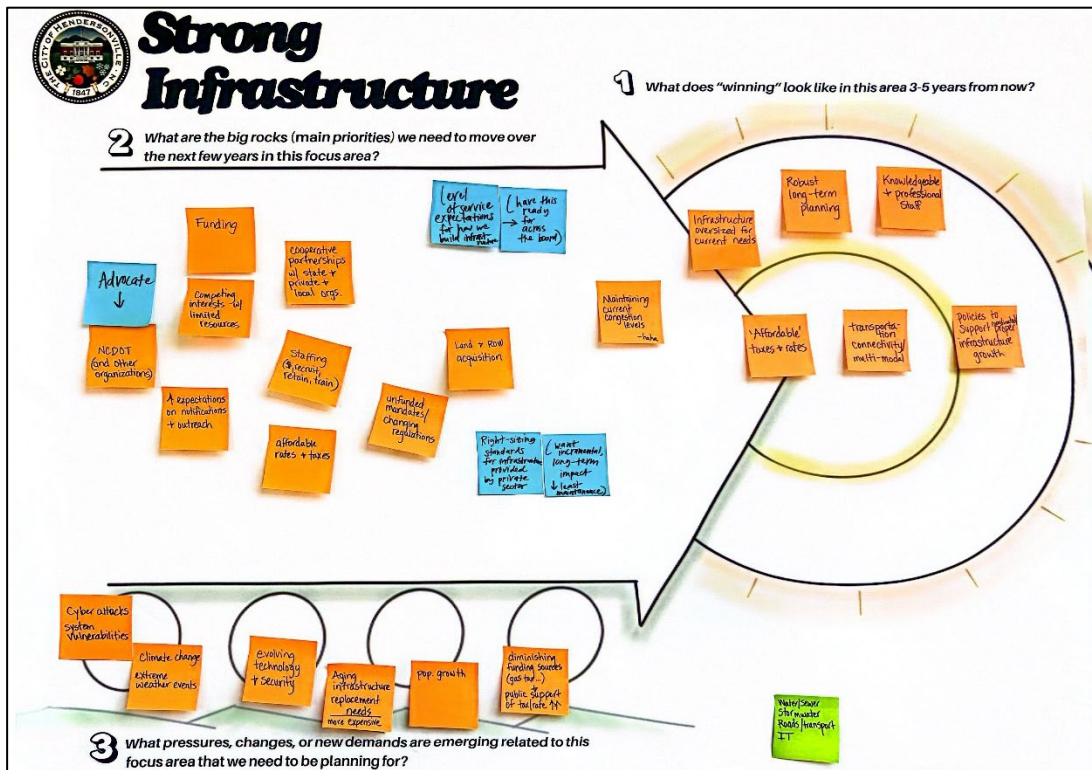
- REGIONAL/NATIONAL DRAW / ACTIVE BIKE CULTURE
- PARKS - CLARE ROAD, LOOK SHAW MTB PARK, COMPLETE PATTON PARK, WELL KNOWN AREAS (ACTIVE), BUILT HEJRO
- GREENWAYS - INTERCONNECTED TO EACH + PARKS, INTERCONNECTED REC + HABITAT, EXPANDED PROTECTED AREA / FLOODPLAIN MITIGATION PROJECTS
- QUALITY REQUIREMENTS OF LOCAL PERMITS + REGULATIONS
- ECOSTA TRAIL USE + ACCESS
- RAISING COST (LAND, CAPITAL, SALARIES, LABOR, ETC)
- POPULATION GROWTH - PUSH BACK IF TAX INCREASE
- SUBSIDISED SPECIAL INTERESTS - FISCAL + STAFF BURDEN TO MAINTAIN + OPERATE
- LEVEL OF SERVICE DELIVERY

**Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities**

Question	Feedback / Ideas
<p>What does "winning" look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional/ national draw/ active bike culture</li> </ul>



Question	Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (Re: Bike Culture) Quality partnerships with local non-profits and advocates</li> <li>● Parks                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Large park, Long John MTB park, complete Patton</li> <li>○ Small neighborhood parks (activate), build Hendo, Whitmore</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Greenways                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Interconnected to each and parks                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Above the mud (elevated or resilient surfaces?)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Natural Amenities                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Interconnected recreation and habitat</li> <li>○ Expanded protected area/ floodplain mitigation projects</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community pool at Patton</li> <li>● Funding/ bond. Grants</li> <li>● Land acquisition</li> <li>● Preparing to be Saluda grade terminus</li> <li>● Trail safety</li> <li>● Safe bike/ ped connections to parks/ trails</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ecusta Trail use and access</li> <li>● Rising cost (land, capital, supplies, labor, etc.)</li> <li>● Population growth</li> <li>● Increased special interests</li> <li>● Push back if tax increase</li> <li>● Fiscal and staff burden to maintain and operate</li> <li>● Level of service delivery (staff, burden to maintain and operate)</li> </ul>



**Strong Infrastructure**

Question	Feedback / Ideas
<p><b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure oversized for current needs</li> <li>• Robust long-term planning</li> <li>• Knowledgeable and professional staff</li> <li>• Affordable taxes and rates</li> <li>• Transportation connectivity, multi-modal</li> <li>• Policies to support proper infrastructure growth</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate with NCDOT (and other organizations)</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Competing interests with limited resources</li> <li>• More expectations on notifications and outreach</li> <li>• Cooperative partnerships with state, private, and local orgs.</li> <li>• Staffing (\$, recruit, retain, train)</li> <li>• Affordable rates and taxes</li> </ul>



Question	Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfunded mandates / changing regulations</li> <li>• Land and ROW acquisition</li> <li>• Level of service expectations for how we build infrastructure (have this ready for across the board)</li> <li>• Maintaining current congestion levels</li> <li>• Right-sizing standards for infrastructure provided by private sector; want incremental, long-term impact, less maintenance</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyber attacks, system vulnerabilities</li> <li>• Climate change, extreme weather events</li> <li>• Evolving technology and security</li> <li>• Aging infrastructure, replacement needs, more experience</li> <li>• Population growth</li> <li>• Diminishing funding sources (gas tax...) and public support of rising taxes and rates</li> <li>• Water/sewer stormwater, roads/ transportation, IT</li> </ul>



**Supporting Business & Economic Development**

1 What does "winning" look like in this area 3-5 years from now?

2 What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?

3 What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?

**Supporting Business and Economic Development**

Question	Feedback / Ideas
<p>What does "winning" look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User experience for business or development projects (permits, etc.)</li> <li>• Downtown hotel</li> <li>• City economic focus plan / identity</li> <li>• Redevelop old shopping centers and HVL crossing with comp plan vision</li> <li>• What is the focus/cluster?</li> <li>• Outdoor economy growth plan (trail-oriented development)</li> <li>• Creative economy/ tech or other industry</li> </ul>
<p>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define zoning, incentives, vision (design)</li> <li>• Arts community / studios</li> <li>• Building inspections in house</li> <li>• Bike/walk connectivity (tourism)</li> <li>• Class- A office (facilitating and encouraging)</li> </ul>



Question	Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small mill redevelopment, oriole, spinning wheel</li> <li>• Activate 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors downtown</li> <li>• Infill development 7<sup>th</sup> avenue and incentives</li> <li>• Unified technology to streamline permitting processes (buy in with departments and county and developers)</li> <li>• South main parking</li> <li>• Reenergizing a representative business voice</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property ownership</li> <li>• Cost of doing business</li> <li>• Gentrification</li> <li>• Workforce (housing, wages/childcare)</li> </ul>



**Housing, Growth Management, & Community Character**

**1** What does "winning" look like in this area 3-5 years from now?

**2** What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?

**3** What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?

**Housing, Growth Management, and Community Character**

Question	Feedback / Ideas
<p><b>What does "winning" look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve significant portion of goals in Housing Strategy Plan</li> <li>• Sense of "hometown feel"</li> <li>• Accepting needed density</li> <li>• Defining community character</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being strategic with land use</li> <li>• Acceptance by public of growth/ density</li> <li>• Funding for affordable housing</li> <li>• Innovative housing types</li> <li>• Define reality / what's doable</li> <li>• Defining affordable</li> <li>• Developing design standards for overlay districts</li> <li>• Public art</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic uncertainty (dinner table, politics, identifying opportunities and risk taking, consensus)</li> </ul>



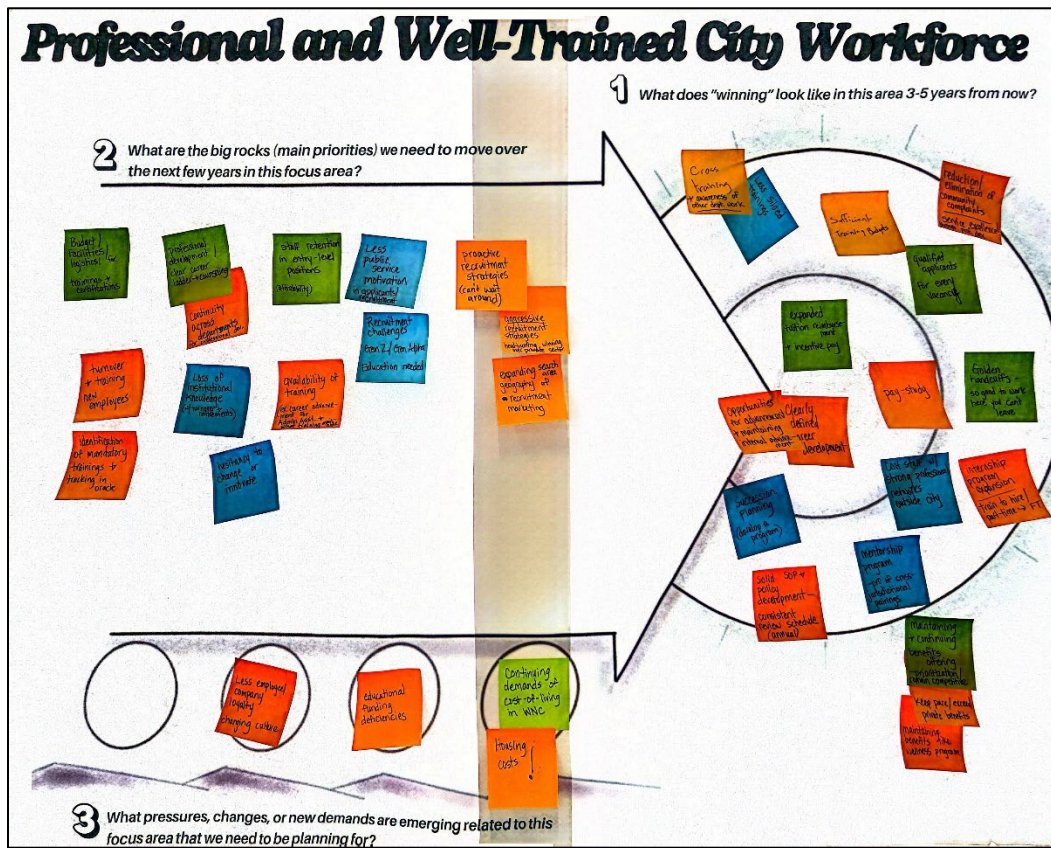
## Building Out Strategic Enablers

After wrapping up the Core Focus Area discussions, participants rotated through stations dedicated to each enabler. At each station, they explored what “winning” would look like in 3–5 years, the big priorities the City will need to move, and the key pressures or challenges to be aware of.

The enablers they worked through included:

1. Professional and Well-Trained City Workforce
2. Financial / Budget Engine
3. Community Partnerships
4. High-Functioning City Council

This rotation allowed participants to consider how the City can strengthen the internal capabilities that support all programs and to surface early ideas about where new capacity, alignment, or investment may be needed over the next several years.



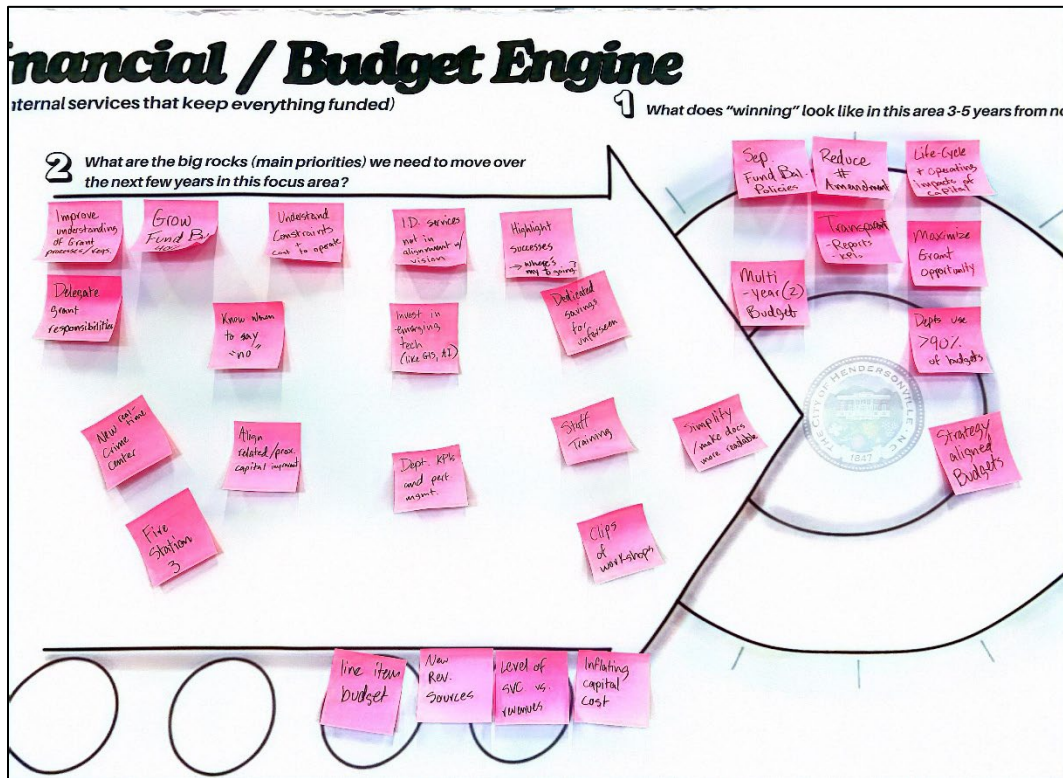


**Professional and Well-Trained Workforce**

Question	Feedback / Ideas
<p><b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross training so employees know other departments</li> <li>• Less siloed trainings</li> <li>• Sufficient training budgets</li> <li>• Reduction/ elimination of community complaints, service excellence through professional development</li> <li>• Qualified applicants for every vacancy</li> <li>• Expanded tuition reimbursement and incentive pay</li> <li>• Pay-study</li> <li>• Opportunities for advancement and maintaining internal and external development</li> <li>• Clearly defined career development</li> <li>• Golden handcuffs: so good to work here you can’t leave</li> <li>• Succession planning (develop a program)</li> <li>• staff with strong professional retreats outside city</li> <li>• Internship program expansion                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Train to hire/ part-time to full-time</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Solid SOP policy development                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consistent review schedule (annual)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mentorship program</li> <li>• Pro of cross-jurisdictional pairings</li> <li>• Maintaining and continuing benefits offering                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prioritization/remain competitive</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Keep people around (longevity)</li> <li>• Maintaining benefits like wellness program</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget/ facilities/ logistics for trainings and certifications</li> <li>• Turnover and training new employees</li> </ul>



Question	Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of mandatory trainings -&gt; tracking is broken</li> <li>• Professional development / clear career ladder -&gt; counseling</li> <li>• Continuity across departments for professional development</li> <li>• Loss of institutional knowledge (retirement/turnover)</li> <li>• Hesitancy to change or innovate</li> <li>• Staff retention in entry level-positions local and private sector competition</li> <li>• Availability of training (ex. career advancement for admin asst and what training is available)</li> <li>• Less public service motivation in applicants / recruitment</li> <li>• Recruitment challenges                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gen Z / Gen Alpha</li> <li>○ Education needed</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Proactive recruitment strategies (can't wait around)</li> <li>• Aggressive recruitment strategies                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Head-hunting, winning over private sector</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expanding search area / geography of recruitment marketing</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less employed company loyalty                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Changing culture</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Educational funding deficiencies</li> <li>• Continuing demands of cost of living in WNC</li> <li>• Housing costs</li> </ul>

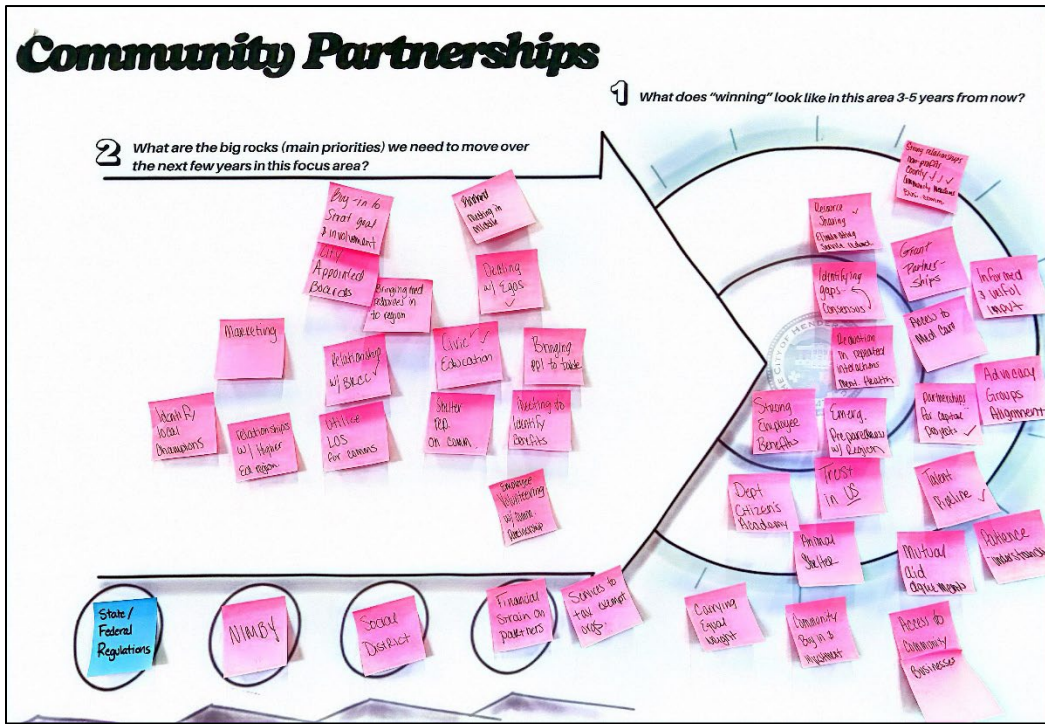


**Financial / Budget Engine**

Question	Feedback / Ideas
<p>What does "winning" look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sep. fund balance policies                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Reduce number of amendments</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lifecycle and operating impacts of capital</li> <li>• Multi-year (2) Budgets</li> <li>• Transportation                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Reports</li> <li>◦ KPI's</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maximize grant opportunity</li> <li>• Department use &gt;90% of budgets</li> <li>• Strategy aligned budgets</li> </ul>
<p>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve understanding of grant process/ years</li> <li>• Delegate grant responsibilities</li> <li>• New real-time crime center</li> <li>• Fire station 3</li> <li>• Grow fund balance</li> </ul>



Question	Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand constraints and cost to operate</li> <li>• Know when to say “no”</li> <li>• Align related/ prox. capital improvement</li> <li>• I.D. services not in alignment with vision</li> <li>• Invest in emerging tech (like GIS, AI)</li> <li>• Dept. KPI’s and performance management</li> <li>• Highlight successes                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Where's my money going?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Dedicated savings for unforeseen</li> <li>• Staff training</li> <li>• Clips of workshops</li> <li>• Simplify/make decisions more readable</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Line item budget</li> <li>• New revenue sources</li> <li>• Level of SVC vs. revenues</li> <li>• Inflating capital cost</li> </ul>

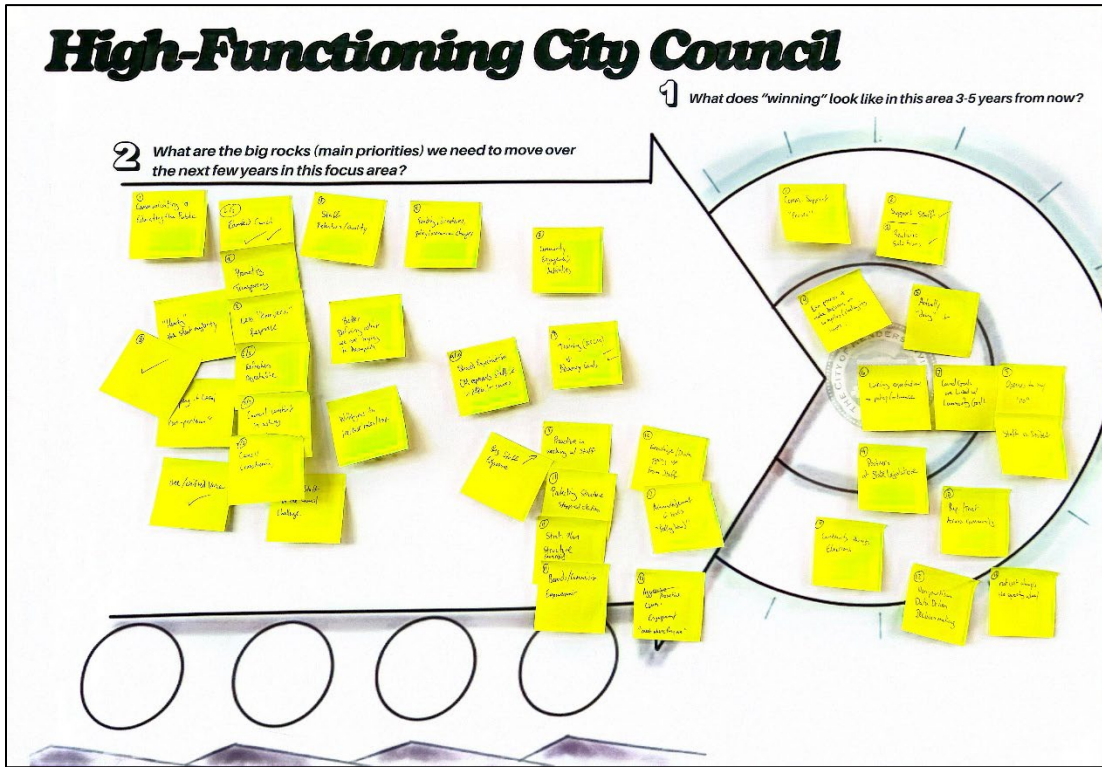


### Community Partnerships

Question	Feedback / Ideas
<p>What does "winning" look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource sharing (streamlining services)</li> <li>• Identifying gaps (consensus)</li> <li>• Reduction in repeated interactions mental health</li> <li>• Strong employee benefits</li> <li>• Department Citizens Academy</li> <li>• Emergency preparedness with region</li> <li>• Trust in US</li> <li>• Animal shelter</li> <li>• Strong relationships, non-profits, county, community members, business community</li> <li>• Grant partnerships</li> <li>• Access to medical care</li> <li>• Partnerships for capital projects</li> <li>• Talent pipeline</li> <li>• Mutual aid agreements</li> <li>• Access to community (business)</li> <li>• Informed and useful input</li> </ul>



Question	Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy groups alignment</li> <li>• Patience, understanding</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy-in to strategy goal and involvement</li> <li>• City appointed boards</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Identify local champions</li> <li>• Relationships w/ high ed region</li> <li>• Bringing med resources into region</li> <li>• Relationship with BRCC</li> <li>• Utilize LOS for comms</li> <li>• Meeting in the middle</li> <li>• Dealing with egos</li> <li>• Civic education</li> <li>• Staff representation on comm.</li> <li>• Bringing people to table</li> <li>• Meeting to identify benefits</li> <li>• Employee volunteering with community</li> <li>• Partnership</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State/federal regulations</li> <li>• NIMBY</li> <li>• Social district</li> <li>• Financial strain on partners</li> <li>• Services to tax exempt organizations</li> </ul>



**High-Functioning City Council**

Question	Feedback / Ideas
<p><b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council supports staff</li> <li>• Positive social media posts</li> <li>• Mobility (voting, etc.)</li> <li>• Clear expectations + policy guidance</li> <li>• (Council and staff) understand community goals</li> <li>• Openness to new ideas</li> <li>• Spotlight on families</li> <li>• Problems -&gt; staff / leadership resolve</li> <li>• Say “thank you” across community</li> <li>• Implementation of data-driven decision making</li> <li>• Not rigid; strong but approachable leadership</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating + educating the public</li> <li>• Council retreat</li> <li>• Promoting transparency</li> <li>• “Liaison” roles / response</li> </ul>



Question	Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies predictable</li> <li>• Training (NCLM) (Academy class)</li> <li>• Easier distribution + working with the community</li> <li>• Staff expectations (HR perspective) -&gt; performance levels</li> <li>• Council relations w/ community</li> <li>• Staff leadership + recruitment challenge</li> <li>• Welcoming to under-represented voices</li> <li>• Better definition of working relationship with managers</li> <li>• Legal contract knowledge</li> <li>• Understanding constraints for decision-making</li> <li>• Family-oriented, performance-based</li> <li>• Community engagement + civility</li> <li>• Practice + revisit working with staff</li> <li>• Positivity checks (communication)</li> <li>• Staff flow (strengthening internal comms)</li> <li>• Board / commission engagement</li> </ul>

## Wrapping-Up / Conclusion

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To wrap up the session, participants shared reflections on what stood out most from the day. Their comments highlighted themes of alignment, collaboration, and momentum for the work ahead, including:

- There is a lot of consensus on where the City needs to go
- This group - and City in general - are good at finding central priorities
- Looking forward to setting goals we can accomplish
- Cross-pollination between departments with same opinions supports attainable goals
- Folks get heard and have good attitudes about wide range of ideas
- Good multi-year buy-in of priorities (continuation)
- "Buckets" are crosscutting
- This type of work strengthens ability to do long-term work
- Good focus on City-wide impact for community; we all want to advance HVL
- Appreciate the feeling of team when we need to walk through the "wet cement"



Before closing, two key next steps were shared with the group:

- In the coming months, the City will continue to build out the strategic framework. City Council will have opportunities to weigh in, including developing the strategic lenses that will guide future decision-making. This work will continue into the Leadership January retreat, where the framework will be further refined and expanded.
- The Employee Experience Survey will be launching across the organization. While not designed to gather direct input on strategic priorities, the results will provide an important foundation for ongoing strategy work by helping illuminate:
  - Organizational strengths to build on in pursuit of operational excellence
  - Areas where staff may need additional support to deliver on the City’s mission
  - How employees are experiencing leadership, communication, and resources—factors that directly influence the City’s ability to achieve its strategic goals



## Appendix

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### Community and Council Feedback Small Group Conversations



## Council Conversations

**What do they see as HVL's strengths (as a community)? What about as an organization? What is it that they think we need to hold onto?**

- Small Town Feel
- Downtown Vitality
- Experienced + Educated Staff
- Transparency
  - Data
  - Projects
  - Development
- Workforce Recognition
- Resident community + welcoming visitors
- Resilience
- Creative & Innovative

**What do they see as our challenges?**

- Growth Management
- Transparency in Development
- Service for fixed or limited income folks
- Traffic safety + Transport. network/inf.
- Affordability
- Youth Amenities
- Inflation / rising cost of service
- Rates & Fees
- Recruit and retain talent
- Community Facilities

**What do they see as our opportunities?**

- Vail road
- SAFE CITY Program
- Diversify local businesses
- Parks & Greenways
- Emergency Preparedness & Response
- Trees, veg. + Conservation
- Funding Strat.
- Keeping taxes + Rates affordable
- Rec. Facilities

**What do they value about the community of HVL?**

- "Safe City"
- Talented Employees
- Visual Quality + Cleanliness
- Parks + Green spaces for quality of life
- Transparency (taxes, utilities, where money is spent)
- Community Connection
- Service Quality
- Parks & Greenways

**What do they see as HVL's strengths (as a community)? What about as an organization? What is it that they think we need to hold onto?**

- Small town feel
- Downtown vitality
- Experienced and education staff
- Resilience
- Transparency
  - Data
  - Project
  - Development
- Creative and innovative
- Workforce recognition
- Resident community and welcome visitor

**What do they see as our challenges?**

- Growth management



- Affordability
- Transparency in development
- Youth amenities
- Service for fixed or limited income folks
- Inflation / rising cost of service
- Traffic safety and transportation network/ infrastructure
- Access community facilities
- Rates and fees

**What do they see as our opportunities?**

- Railroad
- Emergency preparedness and response
- Safe city program
- Trees, vegetation and conservation
- Diversify local businesses
- Funding strategy
- Parks and greenways
- Keeping taxes and rates affordable
- Recreation facilities

**What do they value about the community of HVL?**

- “Safe city”
- Recruit and retain talent
- Community connection
- Talented employees
- Service quality
- Visual quality and cleanliness
- Parks and green spaces for quality of life
- Parks and greenways
- Transparency (taxes, utilities, where money is spent)



## Council Conversations

**What do they see as HVL's strengths (as a community)? What about as an organization? What is it that they think we need to hold onto?**

- The people said Great staff (culture or capacity)
- Downtown vitality

**What do they see as our challenges?**

- Managing Growth
- Youth amenities
- Tax-rates affordability for fixed-income residents
- Housing (workforce affordability)
- Greenspace preservation
- amenities vs. essential services

**What do they see as our opportunities?**

- diversity + grow local businesses
- focus on education (not just entertainment)
- Greenways + connectivity
- professional staff development
- Economic Balance between residents + visitors

**What do they value about the community of HVL?**

- Parks + Greenways
- ADA accessibility
- community + Traffic safety
- government transparency

↑ Accessibility language/technology ↓
↑ Maintenance of community facilities ↓

**What do they see as HVL's strengths (as a community)? What about as an organization? What is it that they think we need to hold onto?**

- The people said great staff (culture and capacity)
- Downtown vitality

**What do they see as our challenges?**

- Managing growth
- Youth amenities
- Tax-rates affordability for fixed-income residents
- Housing (workforce affordability)
- Greenspace preservation
- Amenities vs. essential services
- Maintenance of community facilities
- Accessibility language/ technology



**What do they see as our opportunities?**

- Diversify and grow local businesses
- Focus on education (not just enforcement)
- Greenways and connectivity
- Professional staff development
- Economic balance between residents and visitors
- Accessibility language/ technology

**What do they value about the community of HVL?**

- Parks and greenways
- ADA accessibility
- Connectivity and traffic safety
- Government transparency
- Maintenance of community facilities

**Council Interviews**

**What do they see as HVL's strengths (as a community)? What about as an organization? What is it that they think we need to hold onto?**

- Strong org. Capacity + Leadership
- Civic Pride
- Tourism + retreats "Strong Leg of the Economy"
- Attractive for investment + tourism
- Strategic Plan
- Strong Staff
- People want to live here
- Mountain Fall
- Post-Sem. Resilience Program
- Thrive Downtown + Eusta-trail

**What do they see as our challenges?**

- Aging Population + influx of young families
- Removal of Natural environment + Permitted activities (growth)
- Fiscal Strain \$
- Affordability VS Service level
- Complete Streets Demands
- Loss of downtown character
- Carrying capital / tourism load
- Small
- Housing VS Grumpage
- International Alliance

**What do they see as our opportunities?**

- "Blow out" Park projects
- Abolish Evinger Downtown
- Better Public Engagement
- Growth is here - managing it well
- Helene was a wake up call
- High-speed rail Network
- Strategic Planning
- Strengthen SW / Financial Management

**What do they value about the community of HVL?**

- Future focused Planning
- Hudson feel
- Communication Accessibility Multi-channel / Multi-lingual
- Thrive Downtown (low vacancy)
- Eusta Trail
- Hospitality + Service Excellence
- "One Voice" of Council
- Investment in sustainable, resilient infrastructure



**What do they see as HVL's strengths (as a community)? What about as an organization? What is it that they think we need to hold onto?**

- Strong organization capacity and leadership
- Strong staff
- Civic pride
- Tourism and retail "strong use of small economy"
- People want to live here
- Strategic plan
- Post-storm resilience, recovery
- Attractive for investment and tourism
- Hometown feel
- Thriving downtown & Ecusta trail

**What do they see as our challenges?**

- Aging population and influx of young families
- Carrying regional / tourism load
- Removal of natural environment & different labor force (growth)
- Affordability vs. services level
- Sprawl
- Loss of hometown Character
- Housing vs. Greenspace
- Fiscal strain
- Complete streets demands
- Intergenerational balance
- Competing capital/ location land

**What do they see as our opportunities?**


- "Blow out" park projects
- Nighttime Economy Downtown
- Better public engagement
- Light-speed transit network
- Strategic planning
- Helene was a wakeup call
- Growth is here- managing it well
- Strengthen staff / floodplain/project management

**What do they value about the community of HVL?**

- Future focused planning



- Hometown feel
- Hospitality and service excellence
- Communication accessibility
- Multichannel/ multilingual
- “Civic tone” of Council
- Thriving downtown (low vacancy)
- Investment in sustainable resilient infrastructure
- Ecusta trail

 <h2>Focus Groups with Partners</h2>	
<p><i>What do they see as HVL's strengths (as a community)? What about as an organization? What is it that they think we need to hold onto?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Green Spaces</li> <li>- Events</li> <li>- Quality Services</li> <li>- Proactive Police Force</li> <li>- CDBG funding (and others)</li> <li>- Core Services (Essential Services)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sanitation, clean water</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>What do they see as our challenges?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workforce pool</li> <li>- Housing</li> <li>- Zoning Complexity</li> <li>- Aging Community</li> </ul>
<p><i>What do they see as our opportunities?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Housing                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Density</li> <li>- Affordability</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Aging</li> <li>- Variety of homes</li> </ul>	<p><i>What do they value about the community of HVL?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affordability</li> <li>- professional &amp; Reliable Staff</li> <li>- Public Safety</li> <li>- Small town feel</li> <li>- Community Engagement &amp; Transparency</li> </ul>

**What do they see as HVL’s strengths (as a community)? What about as an organization? What is it that they think we need to hold onto?**

- Green spaces
- Events
- Quality services



- Proactive police force
- CDBG funding (and others)
- Care services (Essential services)
  - Sanitation, clean water

**What do they see as our challenges?**

- Workforce pool
- Zoning complexity
- Aging community
- housing

**What do they see as our opportunities?**

- Housing
  - Density
  - Affordability
  - Aging
  - Variety of homes

**What do they value about the community of HVL?**

- Affordability
- Professional and reliable staff
- Public safety
- Small town feel
- Community engagement and transparency



## Focus Groups with Partners

**What do they see as HVL's strengths (as a community)? What about as an organization? What is it that they think we need to hold onto?**

- Great city staff
- Communication
- Events
- Quality Services
- Green Spaces

**What do they see as our challenges?**

- Service Delivery
- Housing
- GROWTH
- Complexity of zoning
- POOL
- INFRASTRUCTURE
- Multi-Lingual Communication
- Aging Population (+technology)

**What do they see as our opportunities?**

- Incorporating Hispanic voices into city plans
- Improving walkability
- Senior center w/ wrap-around services w/ county
- TECHNOLOGY
- Hotel Downtown
- Emergency Communications Plan > and Language

**What do they value about the community of HVL?**

- Small town feel
- CITY CULTURE
- TRANSPARENCY + APPROACH ENGAGEMENT
- "What keeps staff up at night."

**What do they see as HVL's strengths (as a community)? What about as an organization? What is it that they think we need to hold onto?**

- Great city staff
- Communication
- Events
- Quality services
- Green spaces

**What do they see as our challenges?**

- Service delivery
- Housing
- Growth
- Complexity
- Pool
- Infrastructure
- Multilingual communication
- Aging population (and technology)



**What do they see as our opportunities?**

- Incorporating Hispanic voices into city plans
- Improving walkability
- Senior center with wraparound services with county
- Technology
- Hotel downtown
- Emergency communications plan -> second language

**What do they value about the community of HVL?**

- Small town feel
- City culture
- Transparency and engagement
- “What keeps staff up at night”



HIGH POINT, NC



# HVL LEADERSHIP RETREAT

JANUARY 8 - 9, 2026

SUMMARY REPORT





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>RETREAT PURPOSE .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PUBLIC SERVICE WHYS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>HIGH POINT SITE REFLECTIONS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE SURVEY .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>10</b>



## RETREAT PURPOSE

The City of Hendersonville convened its Leadership Team for a retreat that included a site visit to High Point, NC on January 8, 2026, followed by a facilitated leadership session on January 9, 2026. This retreat built on the full-day Strategic Planning Retreat held on November 18, 2025, which brought together members of the Leadership Team to begin shaping the City’s strategic direction for the coming years.

The January 9 session, held from 8:00 AM to noon, was facilitated by Fountainworks and focused on reflecting on site visit observations, reinforcing prior strategic work, and aligning leadership on next steps.

This summary reflects the structure, discussions, and intended outcomes of the retreat. Notes were captured live and do not represent priorities unless specifically stated.

The image contains two graphic cards. The left card is titled 'HVL LEADERSHIP RETREAT' and is dated 'JANUARY 9, 2026 | 8:00 AM - NOON HIGH POINT, NC'. It lists three key outcomes: discussing takeaways from the High Point site visit, re-aligning on the strategic plan framework, and connecting with high-level survey results. The right card is titled 'AGENDA' for the same time slot and lists six items: welcome and leadership purpose, reflecting on the High Point visit, a break, confirming the strategic plan framework, reviewing survey results, and closing out.

**The immediate outcomes of the retreat included:**

*What are we immediately walking away from the retreat with?*

- Discuss key takeaways from High Point site visit.
- Re-align on updated strategic plan framework.
- Connect with and align on the high level results of the employee engagement survey and what it means for the organization.



**The agenda for the retreat included:**

- Welcome and leadership purpose / “whys” in action
- Reflecting on the High Point site visit
- Confirming the strategic plan framework
- Reviewing and discussing employee experience survey results

**PUBLIC SERVICE WHYS**

To open the session, members of the Hendersonville Leadership Team participated in a reflection focused on leadership purpose and public service “whys.” Leaders were asked to reflect on their personal motivation for serving the City, examples of their “why” in action during 2025, and how the High Point site visit reinforced or brought new clarity to that purpose. This exercise was intended to reconnect leadership to shared values and ground strategic discussions in purpose and service.

The word cloud below reflects common themes from the leadership team’s public service reflections, highlighting shared values that informed and grounded the strategic discussions that followed.



**The individual reflections and group discussion highlight several common themes:**

- A strong commitment to making tangible, positive, and lasting impacts in the community, including planting roots, leaving footprints, and creating broader, service-oriented outcomes.



- A shared belief in the importance of doing the right things for the community, building relationships, and increasing trust in government and public institutions.
- Recognition of the value of “boots-on-the-ground” engagement, transparency, and direct connection to the community.
- An emphasis on organizational health, including setting departments up well, building the right frameworks, and fostering a culture and people-fit that supports long-term success.
- A view of leadership as coaching and facilitating, helping create creativity, happiness, and passion within the organization.
- Acknowledgment that revisiting these “whys” was energizing and reinforced the passion leaders felt for serving the Hendersonville community.

These reflections helped ground subsequent discussions in shared purpose and reinforced the connection between leadership values, strategic direction, and service delivery.

## HIGH POINT SITE REFLECTIONS

The Leadership Team participated in a small-group exercise to reflect on observations from the High Point site visit. In small groups, leaders discussed what stood out most from the visit, what they were learning about how High Point executes effectively, and what those observations might mean for Hendersonville. Each group captured its discussion on flipcharts, which are included in the [appendix](#).

<b>What We Noticed / What Stuck Out Most</b> <small>Key observations from:</small> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public safety and community context, downtown development and corridor investments, transportation and utilities, cross-department coordination</li> <li>• Other?</li> </ul>	<b>What We're Learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are we noticing about what's working well in High Point?</li> <li>• What are we learning about how successful execution happens?</li> </ul>	<b>What This Means for Hendersonville</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do we see parallels or contrasts with our organization?</li> <li>• What feels relevant to how we do the work in Hendersonville?</li> <li>• What practices, mindsets, or approaches might translate well?</li> </ul>
<p>lack of grocery stores - + hotels</p> <p>Real life crime center</p> <p>Crossways</p> <p>Drone for response</p> <p># of Department Heads that from what were replaced High Point over the year used to be</p> <p>3LO change</p> <p>Down town</p> <p>Creative - thinking outside the box</p> <p>Strong financial backing</p> <p>Growth in all areas</p> <p>Leadership</p> <p>PD - community education outreach</p> <p>Wellness Program - Food Prep</p>	<p>Take notes</p> <p>Tech</p> <p>Identify shortfalls - inventory</p> <p>Don't do a splashpad</p> <p>PD - community education outreach</p>	<p>Debt</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Passion - "why"</p> <p>Management Support &amp; Trust</p> <p>Want Building's Registry - what next?</p> <p>Pool Greenway Parks</p> <p>What opportunities do we have?</p>



Following small-group conversations, the full group reconvened to share key observations, learnings, and implications for Hendersonville. The discussion surfaced several common themes:

### **What Leaders Noticed**

- High Point's community and infrastructure were strongly oriented toward efficiently moving people, supported by significant investment capacity.
- Downtown development and corridor investments in High Point were active, intentional, and supported by a willingness to take risks to address identified weaknesses.
- High Point maintained a strong connection to its furniture industry while actively building a more diversified downtown economy.
- Public-private partnerships in High Point played a critical role in enabling development, innovation, and flexibility.
- The Chamber of Commerce in High Point was highly engaged and played a forward-thinking role in community and economic development.
- Strong City-County alignment in High Point contributed to a unified leadership approach.
- Public safety programs in High Point emphasized community engagement, wellness, and proactive programming.
- High Point demonstrated the ability to maintain momentum despite departmental leadership turnover, supported by strong senior management.
- A key community asset in High Point is its pool, which is anchored by an annual swim competition that helps drive usage and visibility.
- Leaders noted the multi-functional use of High Point's baseball team and appreciated that it is operated by a nonprofit, which supports a community-oriented approach.

### **What Leaders Were Learning**

- Successful execution in High Point was supported by organizational capacity, sustained leadership, and long-term thinking.
- Identifying weaknesses and taking calculated risks were seen as integral to progress in High Point.
- Community buy-in, neighborhood engagement, and partnerships were essential to launching and sustaining new initiatives.
- Designing projects with long-term operations and maintenance in mind supported sustainability.
- Many of the challenges faced by High Point were similar to those experienced by Hendersonville, reinforcing the relevance of the observations.



### What This Meant for Hendersonville

- Hendersonville has strong community heart and relationships, which are viewed as foundational strengths.
- Leaders identified opportunities to:
  - Expand partnerships and shared visions across sectors (such as with the Chamber).
  - Explore calculated risk-taking in priority projects (such as with the Cedars project)
  - Strengthen civic engagement and collaboration with the business community.
  - Consider investments that support year-round community connection.
- The discussion reinforced the importance of protecting staff capacity to support service excellence.

### High-Level Talking Points for Council

As the discussion concluded, the Leadership Team identified several high-level talking points informed by observations from the High Point site visit. These points were framed as considerations to help guide future conversations with City Council and were not intended as formal recommendations or decisions.

### Key themes included:

- The importance of protecting staff capacity to ensure continued service excellence, with High Point's staffing levels in areas such as public safety cited as a reference point.
- The need for a balanced approach that allows the organization to move the needle while managing resources responsibly.
- The value of continuing to innovate and take calculated risks, particularly when addressing known challenges or pursuing long-term community goals.
- The role of strong partnerships and shared visions across public, private, and nonprofit sectors in achieving meaningful outcomes.
- A shared belief that decisions should be grounded in what is best for the community as a whole, rather than individual needs or pursuits.
- An emphasis on long-term, multi-generational thinking to ensure sustainability and lasting community impact.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

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The Leadership Team revisited the strategic planning framework developed during the November 2025 retreat. The purpose of this segment was to ground leaders in where the work stood, sense-check the framework without rehashing prior discussions, and clarify what “winning looks like”



across the strategic plan so expectations would be clear when the framework is brought to City Council.

Leaders were reminded that the framework included **five core focus areas** (the City's programs and services) and **five strategic enablers** (how the City delivers well), including a newly added enabler focused on an engaged and educated community.

During this segment, leaders participated in small-group discussions that allowed space for each strategic focus area and enabler to be reviewed collectively. Input from each group was captured in a shared format to reflect additions, refinements, and observations across all elements of the framework. **Detailed outputs from the small-group discussions for both the [core focus areas](#) and [enablers](#) included in the appendix to preserve the full breadth of input while maintaining flow in the summary.**

Following the small-group discussions, the full group reconvened to discuss key highlights, identify common themes, and surface areas where additional clarity or refinement would strengthen the framework.

### Key Themes from the Discussion

- Leaders emphasized the importance of clearly defining and measuring success, noting that all aspects of “winning” should be measurable and well-articulated.
- The current title of the enabler “professional and well-trained workforce” might be better served with a different title, such as “high performing workforce.”
- Several comments focused on strengthening enablers, including clarifying the role of internal services such as IT, legal, and HR as part of the City's financial and operational engine.
- Workforce-related discussions highlighted opportunities to refine the framing of a professional and well-trained workforce, strengthen entry-level pipelines, and package employee wellness more holistically, including benefits education and financial counseling.
- Public safety conversations raised the need for stronger partnerships, clearer approaches to addressing unhoused populations, and a unified focus on public transportation safety.
- Leaders discussed the importance of defining less tangible outcomes—such as “hometown feel”—in clearer, more actionable terms.
- The group identified the need for strong, two-way staff–Council relationships and discussed what feedback would be most helpful from Council as the strategic framework advances.
- Ongoing investment in an educated and engaged community was reinforced as an important enabler of long-term success.



## EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE SURVEY

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To conclude the retreat, the Leadership Team reviewed and discussed the high-level results of a recent employee experience survey (which was conducted from late November to mid December 2025). A more detailed report is forthcoming and will consolidate the full set of results in one place.

During the discussion, leaders reflected on both the insights surfaced in the data and the implications for the organization moving forward. Key themes included:

- Recognition that organizational silos will continue to be a challenge, with an opportunity to focus on the role of middle management in improving information flow and cross-department communication.
- An emphasis on adaptability, including the need to continue pushing the organization toward more flexible and responsive ways of working.
- The importance of sharing survey results transparently with all staff to build understanding and trust.
- Acknowledgment that the survey data represents the lived experiences of employees, reinforcing the need to focus on actionable changes rather than viewing the results solely as numbers.
- Consideration of presenting high-level results to City Council to ensure a unified understanding and shared perspective.



## APPENDIX

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High Point Small Group Reflections

Core Focus Areas (Our Services) Small Group Discussions

Enablers (Our Organizational Capabilities) Small Group Discussions



**High Point Small Group Reflections**

Group	What We Noticed / What Stuck Out Most	What We're Learning	What This Means for Hendersonville
<b>Group One</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual downtowns</li> <li>• College town</li> <li>• Difference in downtown after 5:00 PM</li> <li>• Looming dam project</li> <li>• Geographically very segregated or independent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis communication and crime center (protest monitoring)</li> <li>• Public / private partnerships</li> <li>• Economic development close relationships</li> <li>• City lake park and pool (recuperating operational costs)</li> <li>• Wellness program</li> <li>• Baseball stadium (multi-use and non-profit organization)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events and tourism (influx of people)</li> <li>• Passive community</li> </ul>
<b>Group Two</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership with external organizations</li> <li>• City leadership pride and shared direction</li> <li>• Police: creative approach to community and public safety</li> <li>• Well-funded public transport</li> <li>• Private/Philanthropic investment in economic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared vision and direction about what they want High Point to be</li> <li>• Police: innovation and humility</li> <li>• Pool: only has one big competition/meet</li> <li>• Don't let one industry dominate your downtown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events, innovation, and challenges with public safety</li> <li>• Drive and motivation to develop downtown, economic development</li> <li>• Economic development potential</li> <li>• Philanthropic vs. Market driven</li> <li>• Take note of lessons learned on pool project</li> <li>• Partner with private developers</li> </ul>



Group	What We Noticed / What Stuck Out Most	What We're Learning	What This Means for Hendersonville
<b>Group Three</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on a small number of industries for growth and stability</li> <li>• Public transport: buses, trains</li> <li>• Congdon Family investments</li> <li>• Providing opportunities for community to develop and grow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and communication between the city and university</li> <li>• Good community relations help High Point “brand”</li> <li>• Keep moving forward; persevere</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our population and the community we serve are vastly different populations</li> <li>• Our visions for the pool and greenways are very similar</li> <li>• Open mindsets allow community wants and needs to change and evolve</li> <li>• We all have problems and weaknesses</li> <li>• Community expertise</li> </ul>
<b>Group Four</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of grocery stores and hotels</li> <li>• Real life crime center</li> <li>• Greenways</li> <li>• Number of department heads that were replaced over the years</li> <li>• 360-degree change from what High Point used to be</li> <li>• Downtown</li> <li>• Drones for first responders</li> <li>• Creativity – thinking outside the box</li> <li>• Strong financial backing</li> <li>• Growth in-fill ___ buildings</li> <li>• Baseball field – using ___</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take risks</li> <li>• Tech</li> <li>• Identify shortfalls – inventory</li> <li>• Don’t do a splashpad</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Police Department – community education and outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debt</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Passion – “why”</li> <li>• Management support and trust</li> <li>• Vacant buildings’ registry – what next?</li> <li>• Pool Greenway, Parks</li> <li>• What opportunities do we have?</li> </ul>



Group	What We Noticed / What Stuck Out Most	What We're Learning	What This Means for Hendersonville
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wellness program – food prep</li> </ul>		
<b>Group Five</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appreciate existing positives</li> <li><b>Similar</b> challenges scale differences</li> <li>Public/Private partnership</li> <li>Community Focus – small businesses / entrepreneurs, residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships / shared vision</li> <li>Problem solving approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-term sustained effort leads to pay-off</li> <li>Investing in partner relationships</li> <li>Truth to roots / identity (...contrasts to...)</li> <li>What does growth look like?</li> <li></li> </ul>
<b>Group Six</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are doing the same things as High Point Police Department</li> <li>Chamber strength</li> <li>Special events mindset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining relationships with four counties</li> <li>Unified front</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are approaching the future with the same focus</li> <li>Reinvention mindset</li> </ul>
<b>Group Seven</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Downtown missing people                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redevelopment was innovative</li> <li>A ton of nice buildings</li> <li>Missing community</li> </ul> </li> <li>Development driven by few partners such as High Point University</li> <li>Pool = great asset!</li> <li>HPU was disconnected but well-advertised?</li> <li>Seems like the entire town is built around moving folks in/out for market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Like HVL hometown feel</li> <li>High Point is working like a machine                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's getting the work done</li> <li>Doesn't feel like home</li> <li>Feels like living in a sales catalog</li> </ul> </li> <li>High Point is still relying on furniture                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good core industry / needs diversity</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our Apples = High Point's furniture</li> <li>City investing a lot (electric city utility)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HVL = W + S</li> </ul> </li> <li>Partnerships with chamber</li> <li>Innovating public services                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tech adaptation in crime center</li> </ul> </li> <li>Parking space downtown = priority</li> <li>Taking risks                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P.A.C</li> <li>Private investors</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Group	What We Noticed / What Stuck Out Most	What We're Learning	What This Means for Hendersonville
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPPD + other departments coordinate and work well together</li> <li>• 19/21 department heads have turned over under current C.M.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HPU good – but where do folks gather?</li> <li>• Progress is “a slow and fine grind”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ General Assembly</li> </ul>
<b>Group Eight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic different</li> <li>• Still doing similar things (streetscapes, etc.)</li> <li>• Historically manufacturing economy evolved</li> <li>• Strong community partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revitalization of Ballpark and Congdon Yards</li> <li>• Raise grants</li> <li>• Parks &amp; Recreation</li> <li>• Fee schedule helps cover costs</li> <li>• Time, talent, money, continual partnerships</li> <li>• Progressive programs                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HPPD</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of life focus</li> <li>• Creative approaches (forward thinking)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 50/50 cost share</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Team approach (high functioning)</li> <li>• To do: Build better partnerships, taking risks to build meeting spaces, but don't forget outdoor amenities – play to strengths</li> </ul>

**Core Focus Areas (Our Services) – Small Group Discussions**

**Public Safety**

Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift transportation safety to public safety</li> <li>• Building relationships with community and law/ fire</li> <li>• Housing and code enforcement</li> <li>• Maintain accreditation and prepare for succession</li> <li>• Adopted alternative policing strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more clear goals and strategy and to better define these areas (collecting data/metrics)</li> <li>• Crime-center (real-time) x 2</li> <li>• Improved transportation safety with NCDOT help</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bringing in and keeping quality staff</li> <li>• Maintain ISO 1 rating</li> <li>• Maintain and add staff (grow teams)</li> <li>• Another fire station</li> <li>• Community feeling safe</li> </ul>	<p>(example: Church St./Ecusta crossing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lighting and trail security (BUILD request)</li> <li>• Reduction to pedestrian/vehicular incidents (prioritize ped. and bike alternatives)</li> <li>• For housing and code enforcement – need to incorporate non-profits and the County in meetings and bringing in public safety</li> <li>• For maintaining and adding staff (grow teams) – need a master plan to evaluate to fit in with strategic plan</li> <li>• Need a safety plan for events</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff training (ICS)</li> <li>• Maintain staffing</li> <li>• Perception of HVL (clean, friendly?)</li> <li>• Evolving threats to public safety</li> <li>• Community expectations</li> <li>• Ways to minimize service outages</li> <li>• Being proactive vs. reactive</li> <li>• Having a clear crisis communication plan</li> <li>• Financial cost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt to technology</li> <li>• Creative use of sworn/non-sworn staff</li> <li>• D.F.R. (drone first responders) and other alternatives</li> <li>• PSAP decisions – State direction?</li> <li>• For events – need barricade SOP, cameras, and parade roles (who is running them?)</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storytelling around public safety</li> <li>• Managing mis/ dis – information</li> <li>• Growing community</li> <li>• Demand for services up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money is a limiting factor – property tax or other sources</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<b>this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller applicant pool</li> <li>• More events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private demand for public (Police) security</li> <li>• Managing event costs</li> </ul>

**Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities**

Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional/ national draw/ active bike culture                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (Re: Bike Culture) Quality partnerships with local non-profits and advocates</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Parks                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Large park, Long John MTB park, complete Patton</li> <li>○ Small neighborhood parks (activate), build Hendo, Whitmore</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Greenways                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Interconnected to each and parks                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Above the mud (elevated or resilient surfaces?)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Natural Amenities                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Interconnected recreation and habitat</li> <li>○ Expanded protected area/ floodplain mitigation projects</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a goal around partnerships with County</li> <li>• For parks, need to call out south main street park, downtown park, and public art</li> <li>• Need to define support structure and staff</li> <li>• We can’t forget stormwater and sustainability</li> <li>• Need a community center (multigenerational, Whitmire, pressure off of ops room for meetings)</li> <li>• Need a meeting space (Class A meeting / convention space as an amenity)</li> <li>• Lean into outdoors for the community and economy</li> <li>• Want Saluda grade trail to connect to main street</li> </ul>
<b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community pool at Patton</li> <li>• Funding/ bond. Grants</li> <li>• Land acquisition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing new put on the table</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<b>next few years in this focus area?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing to be Saluda grade terminus</li> <li>• Trail safety</li> <li>• Safe bike/ ped connections to parks/ trails</li> </ul>	
<b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecusta Trail use and access</li> <li>• Rising cost (land, capital, supplies, labor, etc.)</li> <li>• Population growth</li> <li>• Increased special interests</li> <li>• Push back if tax increase</li> <li>• Fiscal and staff burden to maintain and operate</li> <li>• Level of service delivery (staff, burden to maintain and operate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing new put on the table</li> </ul>

**Supporting Business and Economic Development**

Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User experience for business or development projects (permits, etc.)</li> <li>• Downtown hotel</li> <li>• City economic focus plan / identity</li> <li>• Redevelop old shopping centers and HVL crossing with comp plan vision</li> <li>• What is the focus/cluster?</li> <li>• Outdoor economy growth plan (trail-oriented development)</li> <li>• Creative economy/ tech or other industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a convention center</li> <li>• Increase partnerships with the chamber, HCPED, TDA, etc. (need a shared vision with partners)</li> <li>• Would like to see public art – might happen through public / private partners</li> </ul>
<b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define zoning, incentives, vision (design)</li> <li>• Arts community / studios</li> <li>• Building inspections in house</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies for incentives (might be a tool for incentives)</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<b>next few years in this focus area?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bike/walk connectivity (tourism)</li> <li>• Class- A office (facilitating and encouraging)</li> <li>• Small mill redevelopment, oriole, spinning wheel</li> <li>• Activate 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors downtown</li> <li>• Infill development 7<sup>th</sup> avenue and incentives</li> <li>• Unified technology to streamline permitting processes (buy in with departments and county and developers)</li> <li>• South main parking</li> <li>• Reenergizing a representative business voice</li> </ul>	
<b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property ownership</li> <li>• Cost of doing business</li> <li>• Gentrification</li> <li>• Workforce (housing, wages/childcare)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new ideas put on the table</li> </ul>

**Housing, Growth Management, and Community Character**

Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve significant portion of goals in Housing Strategy Plan</li> <li>• Sense of “hometown feel”</li> <li>• Accepting needed density</li> <li>• Defining community character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify areas for re-development</li> <li>• Winning looks like having people that can live and work here</li> <li>• Need to define what responsible growth really means for the public (clear definition and engaged public)</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to downtown design standards that are adopted and implemented</li> <li>• Entry corridors</li> <li>• Comp plan implementation</li> <li>• MLK Blvd by police station – sound / beautification</li> </ul>
<b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being strategic with land use</li> <li>• Acceptance by public of growth/ density</li> <li>• Funding for affordable housing</li> <li>• Innovative housing types</li> <li>• Define reality / what’s doable</li> <li>• Defining affordable</li> <li>• Developing design standards for overlay districts</li> <li>• Public art</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new ideas put on the table</li> </ul>
<b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic uncertainty (dinner table, politics, identifying opportunities and risk taking, consensus)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new ideas put on the table</li> </ul>

**Strong Infrastructure**

Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure oversized for current needs</li> <li>• Robust long-term planning</li> <li>• Knowledgeable and professional staff</li> <li>• Affordable taxes and rates</li> <li>• Transportation connectivity, multi-modal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GO Bond getting approved would be a win x 2</li> <li>• Making streets safer, more accessible, and reducing negative stats</li> <li>• Need to make sure the “infrastructure oversized” is changed to “right sized”</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies to support proper infrastructure growth</li> </ul>	<p>for current and future needs”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Example: Infrastructure is right sized for current and future needs</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a transportation (GO Bond building on these projects)</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate with NCDOT (and other organizations)</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Competing interests with limited resources</li> <li>• More expectations on notifications and outreach</li> <li>• Cooperative partnerships with state, private, and local orgs.</li> <li>• Staffing (\$, recruit, retain, train)</li> <li>• Affordable rates and taxes</li> <li>• Unfunded mandates / changing regulations</li> <li>• Land and ROW acquisition</li> <li>• Level of service expectations for how we build infrastructure (have this ready for across the board)</li> <li>• Maintaining current congestion levels</li> <li>• Right-sizing standards for infrastructure provided by private sector; want incremental, long-term impact, less maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new ideas put on the table</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyber attacks, system vulnerabilities</li> <li>• Climate change, extreme weather events</li> <li>• Evolving technology and security</li> <li>• Aging infrastructure, replacement needs, more experience</li> <li>• Population growth</li> <li>• Diminishing funding sources (gas tax...) and public support of rising taxes and rates</li> <li>• Water/sewer stormwater, roads/ transportation, IT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to prioritize and to communicate the important of water/sewer (hidden) in infrastructure</li> </ul>

**Enablers (Our Organizational Capabilities) – Small Group Discussions**

**Professional and Well-Trained Workforce**

Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<p><b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross training so employees know other departments</li> <li>• Less siloed trainings</li> <li>• Sufficient training budgets</li> <li>• Reduction/ elimination of community complaints, service excellence through professional development</li> <li>• Qualified applicants for every vacancy</li> <li>• Expanded tuition reimbursement and incentive pay</li> <li>• Pay-study</li> <li>• Opportunities for advancement and maintaining internal and external development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Want to rename this enabler title</li> <li>• Top employer in the County / Region</li> <li>• Expand tuition reimbursement plan</li> <li>• Opportunities for advancement is key, along with succession planning</li> <li>• Need service excellence committee (define); program needs to be revamped and “rebuilt”</li> <li>• What does “cross-jurisdictional pairings” mean?</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly defined career development</li> <li>• Golden handcuffs: so good to work here you can't leave</li> <li>• Succession planning (develop a program)</li> <li>• staff with strong professional retreats outside city</li> <li>• Internship program expansion                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Train to hire/ part-time to full-time</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Solid SOP policy development                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consistent review schedule (annual)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mentorship program</li> <li>• Pro of cross-jurisdictional pairings</li> <li>• Maintaining and continuing benefits offering                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prioritization/remain competitive</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Keep people around (longevity)</li> <li>• Maintaining benefits like wellness program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need meetings with communications and with City / County / cross-departments for planning, inspections, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget/ facilities/ logistics for trainings and certifications</li> <li>• Turnover and training new employees</li> <li>• Identification of mandatory trainings -&gt; tracking is broken</li> <li>• Professional development / clear career ladder -&gt; counseling</li> <li>• Continuity across departments for professional development</li> <li>• Loss of institutional knowledge (retirement/turnover)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childcare</li> <li>• Strong school district / education options</li> <li>• Want life skills for new "EEs"</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hesitancy to change or innovate</li> <li>• Staff retention in entry level-positions local and private sector competition</li> <li>• Availability of training (ex. career advancement for admin asst and what training is available)</li> <li>• Less public service motivation in applicants / recruitment</li> <li>• Recruitment challenges                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gen Z / Gen Alpha</li> <li>○ Education needed</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Proactive recruitment strategies (can't wait around)</li> <li>• Aggressive recruitment strategies                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Head-hunting, winning over private sector</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expanding search area / geography of recruitment marketing</li> </ul>	
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less employed company loyalty                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Changing culture</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Educational funding deficiencies</li> <li>• Continuing demands of cost of living in WNC</li> <li>• Housing costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new ideas put on the table</li> </ul>

**High-Functioning City Council**

Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<p><b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council supports staff</li> <li>• Positive social media posts</li> <li>• Mobility (voting, etc.)</li> <li>• Clear expectations + policy guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved collaboration with community partners towards shared goals</li> <li>• Identify shared goals – pool, industry, etc.</li> <li>• Shared strategic vision</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Council and staff) understand community goals</li> <li>• Openness to new ideas</li> <li>• Spotlight on families</li> <li>• Problems -&gt; staff / leadership resolve</li> <li>• Say “thank you” across community</li> <li>• Implementation of data-driven decision making</li> <li>• Not rigid; strong but approachable leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does Council want from staff? This needs to be covered at the Council retreat</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Willingness to work with the private sector</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating + educating the public</li> <li>• Council retreat</li> <li>• Promoting transparency</li> <li>• “Liaison” roles / response</li> <li>• Policies predictable</li> <li>• Training (NCLM) (Academy class)</li> <li>• Easier distribution + working with the community</li> <li>• Staff expectations (HR perspective) -&gt; performance levels</li> <li>• Council relations w/ community</li> <li>• Staff leadership + recruitment challenge</li> <li>• Welcoming to under-represented voices</li> <li>• Better definition of working relationship with managers</li> <li>• Legal contract knowledge</li> <li>• Understanding constraints for decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Mayor, new Council, different leadership styles</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family-oriented, performance-based</li> <li>• Community engagement + civility</li> <li>• Practice + revisit working with staff</li> <li>• Positivity checks (communication)</li> <li>• Staff flow (strengthening internal comms)</li> <li>• Board / commission engagement</li> </ul>	

**Financial / Budget Engine**

Question	Feedback / Ideas	
<p><b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sep. fund balance policies                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduce number of amendments</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lifecycle and operating impacts of capital</li> <li>• Multi-year (2) Budgets</li> <li>• Transportation                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reports</li> <li>○ KPI’s</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maximize grant opportunity</li> <li>• Department use &gt;90% of budgets</li> <li>• Strategy aligned budgets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve overall project planning (efficiency)</li> <li>• Need to make sure we get at the internal service aspect of this enabler (strong “internal service” overall idea and approach)</li> <li>• For lifecycle and operating impacts of capital, need to think about the pool (staffing with that too)</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve understanding of grant process/ years</li> <li>• Delegate grant responsibilities</li> <li>• New real-time crime center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does winning look like? IT, HR, etc.</li> </ul>



Question	Feedback / Ideas	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire station 3</li> <li>• Grow fund balance</li> <li>• Understand constraints and cost to operate</li> <li>• Know when to say “no”</li> <li>• Align related/ prox. capital improvement</li> <li>• I.D. services not in alignment with vision</li> <li>• Invest in emerging tech (like GIS, AI)</li> <li>• Dept. KPI’s and performance management</li> <li>• Highlight successes                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Where's my money going?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Dedicated savings for unforeseen</li> <li>• Staff training</li> <li>• Clips of workshops</li> <li>• Simplify/make decisions more readable</li> </ul>	
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Line item budget</li> <li>• New revenue sources</li> <li>• Level of SVC vs. revenues</li> <li>• Inflating capital cost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new ideas put on the table</li> </ul>

**Community Partnerships**

Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
<p><b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource sharing (streamlining services)</li> <li>• Identifying gaps (consensus)</li> <li>• Reduction in repeated interactions mental health</li> <li>• Strong employee benefits</li> <li>• Department Citizens Academy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find ways to get partners to engage more (County, non-profits, private opportunities, public school system, foundations) x 2</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency preparedness with region</li> <li>• Trust in us</li> <li>• Coordination with Animal Shelter</li> <li>• Strong relationships, non-profits, county, community members, business community</li> <li>• Grant partnerships</li> <li>• Access to medical care</li> <li>• Partnerships for capital projects</li> <li>• Talent pipeline</li> <li>• Mutual aid agreements</li> <li>• Access to community (business)</li> <li>• Informed and useful input</li> <li>• Advocacy groups alignment</li> <li>• Patience, understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winning would look like partnering with BRCC to get skilled employees vs city getting untrained staff (example: public works program)</li> <li>• “Fee in-lieu” through partnerships opportunities with Hospital partnership</li> <li>• Need to have tough regional discussions for consolidation (utilities, public safety, reduce duplication of services across jurisdictions)</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy-in to strategy goal and involvement</li> <li>• City appointed boards</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Identify local champions</li> <li>• Relationships with high ed region</li> <li>• Bringing med resources into region</li> <li>• Relationship with BRCC</li> <li>• Utilize Land of Sky (LOS) for communications</li> <li>• Meeting in the middle</li> <li>• Dealing with egos</li> <li>• Civic education</li> <li>• Shelter representation on committee</li> <li>• Bringing people to table</li> <li>• Meeting to identify benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new ideas put on the table</li> </ul>



Question	Nov 18 Feedback / Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback / Ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employee volunteering with community</li> <li>Partnership</li> </ul>	
<b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State/federal regulations</li> <li>NIMBY</li> <li>Social district</li> <li>Financial strain on partners</li> <li>Services to tax exempt organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No new ideas put on the table</li> </ul>

**Engaged and Education Community**

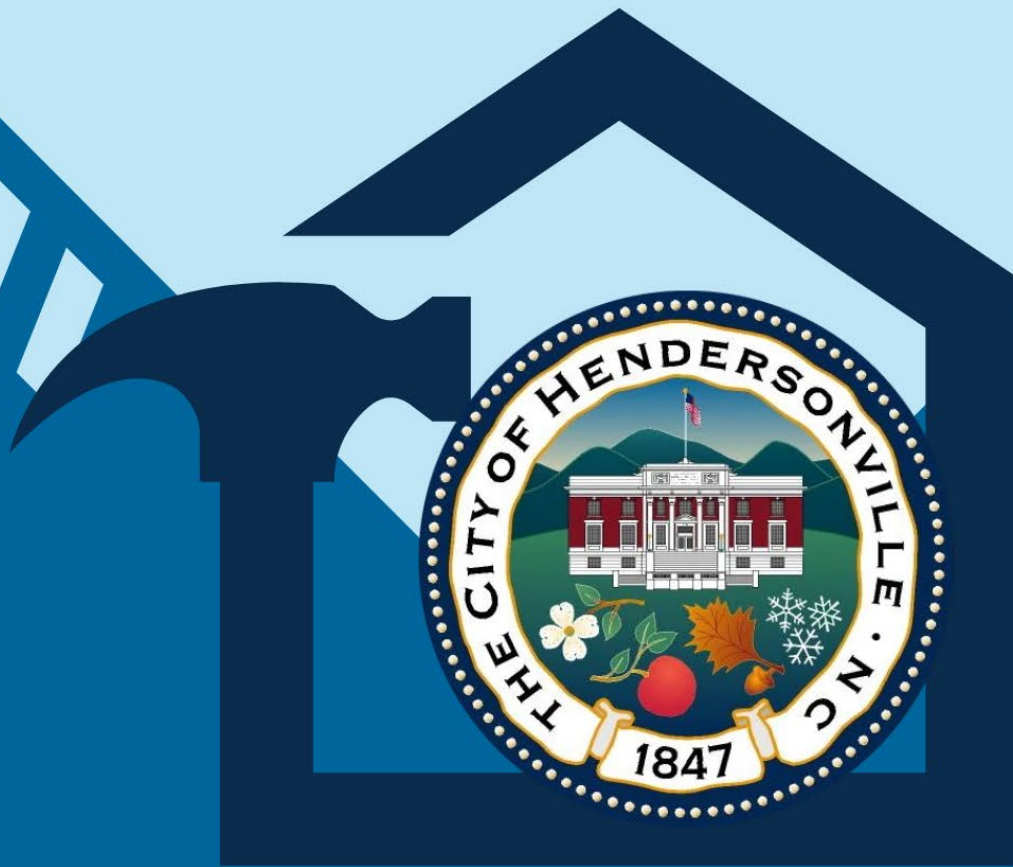
Question	Some Initial Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback
<b>What does “winning” look like in this area 3-5 years from now?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents trust City of Hendersonville government to be ethical and transparent</li> <li>All demographics and stakeholders of the City have an equal voice in the decision-making process</li> <li>City service information and engagement methods are accessible, and the government works with the community to remove barriers to access and participation</li> <li>Basic understanding on municipal government, responsibilities, and how they can access services and information</li> <li>Even if residents disagree with policies or decisions, they have an understanding of the ‘why’</li> <li>Community members rely on and share trusted sources of information (COH channels) vs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully build out transparency page on COH website</li> <li>Community believes / trust what COH publishes</li> <li>City is vulnerable and proactively provides information (City is forthcoming when not violating laws / rules)</li> <li>In the absence of information people speculate (this is a gap)</li> <li>Having a crisis communication plan would be a win!</li> <li>Storytelling to the public – water, ISO, PD/Fire, etc.</li> <li>Keeping the public in the loop ahead of time, consistency</li> <li>There is public trust</li> <li>There is “buy in”</li> </ul>



Question	Some Initial Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback
<p><b>What are the big rocks (main priorities) we need to move over the next few years in this focus area?</b></p>	<p>perpetuating rumors/misinformation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding access opportunities to groups with specific needs (English as a second language, ADA needs)</li> <li>• Making complex concepts and issues understandable through plain language, visuals/graphics, photo and video content to encourage consumption and capture shrinking attention spans of the public</li> <li>• Strengthen neighborhood-level engagement and identify/engage with community champions to help educate and engage community groups</li> <li>• Improve emergency preparedness level of community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More consistent public feedback – focus on the community’s “hot topics” (take feedback through frequent citizen surveying)</li> <li>• Continue leveraging tech. to gather feedback</li> <li>• Citizen’s Academy</li> </ul>
<p><b>What pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this focus area that we need to be planning for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing distrust of government at all levels, disengaged citizenry, incivility toward government workers and fellow community members</li> <li>• Hyper-politicized rhetoric and widening gap across political parties, extremism and unwillingness to compromise</li> <li>• Engagement fatigue, competing demands for residents’ time and attention</li> <li>• Expectations of service delivery and communications on par with private companies (amazon, etc.); with this comes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptions / uses of AI as a reliable data / solution source</li> <li>• Managing service level adaptations to balance costs and delivery</li> <li>• Set realistic expectations and start with “why”</li> <li>• Develop an AI policy</li> </ul>



Question	Some Initial Ideas	Jan 9 Feedback
	<p>the need for additional contracts, technology, staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rapid speed of the spread of misinformation, deepfakes</li><li>• AI and responsible use in customer service delivery and communications</li></ul>	



# Council Retreat Meeting Summary

*Building Hendersonville*



**FEBRUARY 27, 2026**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....3**

**RETREAT PURPOSE .....5**

**PUBLIC SAFETY FOCUS .....6**

**FOCUS AREA STATION CONVERSATIONS .....9**

**ENABLER STATION CONVERSATIONS .....21**

**DEBRIEF AND PRIORITY SETTING .....33**

**WRAP UP .....35**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## THE IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES OF THE RETREAT INCLUDED:

- Provided guidance on key public safety focus areas
- Reviewed and shared input on the City's updated draft strategic plan framework
- Identified top priorities ("big rocks") the City can emphasize over the next year

## COUNCIL DISCUSSED SEVERAL PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES:

### CODE ENFORCEMENT:

- Desire to be more proactive rather than complaint-driven
- Need for clearer ordinances
- Interest in partnerships for housing safety issues

### TRANSPORTATION SAFETY IDEAS DISCUSSED

#### INCLUDED:

- Lower speed limits (will explore more)
- Traffic calming measures
- Red-light or speed cameras
- Safer street design
- Unhoused Population

**POLICE STAFFING:** Support for maintaining strong staffing levels

## COUNCIL WEIGHED IN ON STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK:

- Council members participated in facilitated station-based discussions to review and provide input on the City's draft strategic plan framework.
- Rotating through stations hosted by staff subject-matter experts, Councilors discussed proposed outcomes, near-term priorities, and emerging issues affecting the community.
- A second round of stations focused on the organizational systems and capacities needed to support implementation of the City's strategic priorities.

## COUNCIL IDENTIFIED THEIR TOP PRIORITIES FOR NEXT 1-2 YEARS:

### TOP PRIORITIES:

- Real affordable housing / community land trust plan (defined and actionable)
- Intentional planning for green space acquisition
- Waste Water Treatment Plant Planning
- Development review overhaul (streamlining process)
- Public safety staffing (well paid, fully staffed workforce)
- Community Advisory Committee
- Sustainable staffing levels across departments
- More toward a living wage / comprehensive benefits (and compensation) that provide high quality of life for employees

### ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES:

- Traffic safety improvements
- Patton and Whitmire
- Helene Recovery – Critical Failure Priority
- More work on existing, aging infrastructure (such as stormwater)



# COUNCIL RETREAT 2026



## RETREAT PURPOSE

The City of Hendersonville convened its City Council for a retreat on February 27, 2026. This retreat was preceded by a strategic planning primer on February 25 and a financial update provided by City staff to Council on February 26, 2026.

The February 27 session, held from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM and facilitated by Fountainworks, focused on reviewing and providing feedback on the City’s updated draft strategic plan framework, as well as identifying key priorities the City may emphasize over the coming year.

This summary reflects the structure of the retreat, the discussions that took place, and the intended outcomes of the session. Notes were captured live and are intended to reflect the dialogue and feedback shared during the retreat; they do not represent formal priorities unless specifically identified as such.

**BUILDING HENDERSONVILLE:  
COUNCIL RETREAT**

**KEY OUTCOMES**

- Provide guidance on key public safety focus areas
- Create Hendersonville’s “Blueprint for the Future” (vision)
- Review and share input on the City’s updated draft strategic plan framework
- Identify top priorities (“big rocks”) the City can emphasize over the next year

**FEBRUARY 27, 2026**

**FEBRUARY 27 AGENDA**

- 8:00 AM - BREAKFAST
- 8:30 AM - WELCOME AND ORIENTATION
- PUBLIC SAFETY FOCUS DISCUSSION
- OUR BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE
- 12:00 PM - LUNCH
- STRATEGIC PLAN STATION CONVERSATIONS
- DEBRIEF AND PRIORITY SETTING
- 3:00 PM - CLOSING OUT

**The immediate outcomes of the retreat included:**

*What are we immediately walking away from the retreat with?*

- Provide guidance on key public safety focus areas
- Review and share input on the City's updated draft strategic plan framework
- Identify top priorities (“big rocks”) the City can emphasize over the next year



## The agenda for the retreat included:

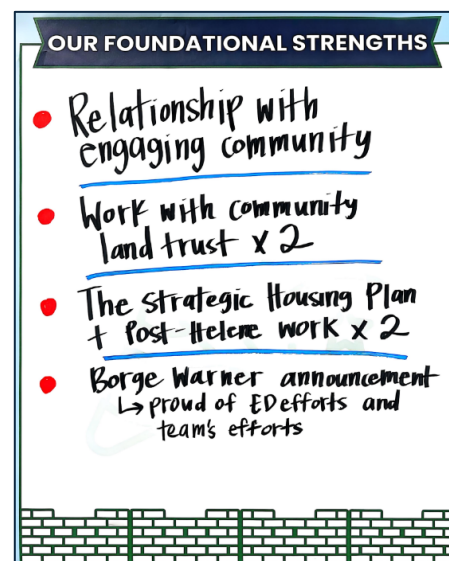
- Welcome and Orientation
- Public Safety Focus Discussion
- Strategic Plan Station Conversations
- Debrief and Priority Setting
- Next Steps and Wrap Up

To open the meeting, members of the Hendersonville City Council were asked to share a recent win, moment of pride, or core accomplishment for the City in the past few months. Their responses are the foundation strengths we are building on together at this retreat.

Their responses can be found below.

### Our Foundational Strengths

- Relationship with engaging community
- Work with community land trust [x2]
- The Strategic Housing Plan and Post-Helene work [x2]
- Borge Warner announcement
- Proud of Emergency Department efforts and team efforts



## PUBLIC SAFETY FOCUS

Staff Leadership led a discussion with Councilors around public safety aspects, including: code enforcement and development review, creative solutions for public safety and transportation safety, and police staffing needs. Councilors' reflections from their discussion can be found below.

### Code Enforcement / Development Review

#### Fire Code Enforcement

- Depending on the inspectors, they may “ding” you for certain things; have faced turnover but more consistency now
- How have inspections been done in the past? They now have their own division for this, which means no shift inspections anymore.
- With fire/police, is there a way to tap into others to respond to traffic accidents?



- Ultimately, we want to support staff
- We have to use certified fire inspectors
- Explore a Community Paramedic Program?
- Have the hood cleaning requirements changed?
  - Depends on use (church example)
- What are the relevant logistics for housing policy and single-family housing? Specifically residential housing/multi-family housing

### ***Commercial Code Enforcement***

- We would like to be more proactive—that is, less complaint-driven—as it can lead to building preservation
- Is the ordinance too vague?
  - Can get more specific
  - Clarity would be helpful
- What does code enforcement training look like?
  - There are a lot of training opportunities and tools to implement a professional level of expertise

### ***Minimum Housing Code Enforcement***

- Is there a partnership with Pisgah Legal for tenants in sub-standard houses that need repairs? We have an interest in a wrap-around approach.
  - Some preference for proactive approach
  - Can make this information public
- Tenant flood notification—worth looking into implementing such a feature

## **Creative Solutions for Public and Transportation Safety**

### ***Traffic Safety***

- Are there setbacks for things like the apartment complex on Justice Street?
  - Could address this in design standards
  - Justice Street is a major issue, we have the flexibility to reclassify
- Citywide speed limit (35 to 25 mph) and ordinance change has mixed feedback (no consensus)
  - Would need to educate initiatives
  - Would like to know all the streets that this would influence
- There is an interest in exploring red light/speed cameras, but we want to know more about the processes/fines/etc.
- Traffic calming to speed calming—will continue exploring its standards and policy



## Hendersonville Unhoused and HPD Social Work

- Still exploring transportation services outside of Hendersonville
- Compliance: around 40 clients connected to resources
  - Interested in long-term referral success metrics
- Is more staffing needed with the Police Department social work team?
  - Interns will provide support
  - Will look at hiring eventually
- Is there a (legal) framework for diversion?

## Police Staffing Needs

- Citizen's Academy for HPD?
  - Help with youth exposure and future recruitment
- No questions about the Chief's proposal for future staffing needs

### PUBLIC SAFETY DISCUSSION

POLICE STAFFING NEEDS	CODE ENFORCEMENT / VIEW	CREATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR PUBLIC AND TRANSPORTATION SAFETY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Citizen's Academy for HPD?</u> ↳ help with youth exposure and future recruitment</li> <li>• <u>No questions about Chief's proposal for future Staffing needs.</u></li> </ul>	<div style="background-color: #add8e6; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;">Fire Code enforcement</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Depending on inspectors might "ding" you for certain things → have faced turnover but more consistency now.</u></li> <li>• <u>How have inspections been done in the past? → Now have own division for this. (no shift inspections anymore)</u></li> <li>• <u>With fire/police, is there a way to tap into others for traffic accidents?</u> ↳ ultimately want to support staff ↳ have to use certified fire inspectors ↳ explore community paramedic program?</li> <li>• <u>Have the hood cleaning requirements changed? → depends on use (church example)</u></li> <li>• <u>For housing policy + single family → what are the logistics behind this?</u> ↳ residential housing/multi-family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Are there set backs for things like the Apt complex on Justice street?</u> ↳ could address this in design standards ↳ Justice is a major issue → we have flexibility to reclassify</li> <li>• <u>City wide speed limit + ordinance.</u> (currently change → mixed feedback, what like to know all streets this would influence, would need to do education, etc.)</li> <li>• <u>Ted light/speed cameras → interest in exploring but want to know about process/fines/etc.</u></li> <li>• <u>Traffic calming to speed calming</u> ↳ will continue exploring standards/policy</li> </ul>

#### → CODE ENFORCEMENT ←

Level of enforcement is a policy decision

- Commercial  
Would like to be more proactive (less complaint driven)  
↳ can lead to building preservation
- Is the ordinance to vague? can get more specific.  
↳ clarity is helpful
- What does code enforcement training look like?  
↳ there are a lot of training opportunities and lots of tools to implement a professional level of expertise
- minimum housing → is there a partnership with Friggin Legal for tenants in sub-standard houses that need repairs? → interest in wrap-around approach  
↳ some performance for proactive approach  
↳ can make this info public
- Tenant flood notification → definitely worth looking into

#### → HENDERSONVILLE UNHOUSED ←

- Still exploring transportation for services outside of HVL.
- Compliance → ~40 clients connected to resources (long-term referral success metrics) → interested in this data
- Is more staffing needed with the PD social work team?  
↳ Interns will support  
↳ will look at hiring eventually
- Is there a framework (legal) for diversion?

2026 Hendersonville Council Retreat Summary

Page | 8



## FOCUS AREA STATION CONVERSATIONS

Councilors individually participated in a station-based exercise designed to gather input and reactions to the initial strategic planning framework developed by staff for the City’s five proposed focus areas. The exercise was intended to help refine the draft framework and ensure it reflects Council’s perspectives on priorities, emerging challenges, and desired outcomes for the community.

At each station, Councilors reviewed the draft 3–5 year outcomes (“what winning looks like”) and the near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff. Councilors were asked to consider:

- How the proposed 3–5 year outcomes resonated with them and whether any edits, additions, or refinements were needed.
- Whether the proposed near- and mid-term priorities align with Council’s perspective, and what additional priorities or adjustments should be considered.
- What new pressures, trends, or emerging community needs should be considered within the focus area.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK		
Element	Description	City of Hendersonville Services / Focuses
<p><b>CORE FOCUS AREAS</b> (OUR PROGRAMS)</p>	The key services and program areas that define HVL’s work: what we deliver to the community.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public Safety</li> <li>2. Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities</li> <li>3. Strong Infrastructure</li> <li>4. Business and Economic Development</li> <li>5. Housing, Growth Management, and Community Character</li> </ol>
<p><b>ENABLERS</b> (HOW WE DELIVER WELL)</p>	The organizational capabilities and systems that allow us to deliver high-quality service and adapt over time.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High-Performing City Workforce</li> <li>2. Financial Sustainability</li> <li>3. Community Partnerships</li> <li>4. High-Functioning City Council</li> <li>5. Engaged and Educated Community</li> </ol>
<p><b>STRATEGIC LENSES</b> (HOW WE THINK AND DECIDE)</p>	The cross-cutting filters/ pillars (what we believe in) that shape how we approach everything we do, guiding choices and trade-offs across all programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>City Council Values</i></li> </ul>

• **Planning** is about executing known services well.  
 • **Strategy** is about making conscious, adaptive choices about outcomes and approaches in the face of uncertainty and change.

6

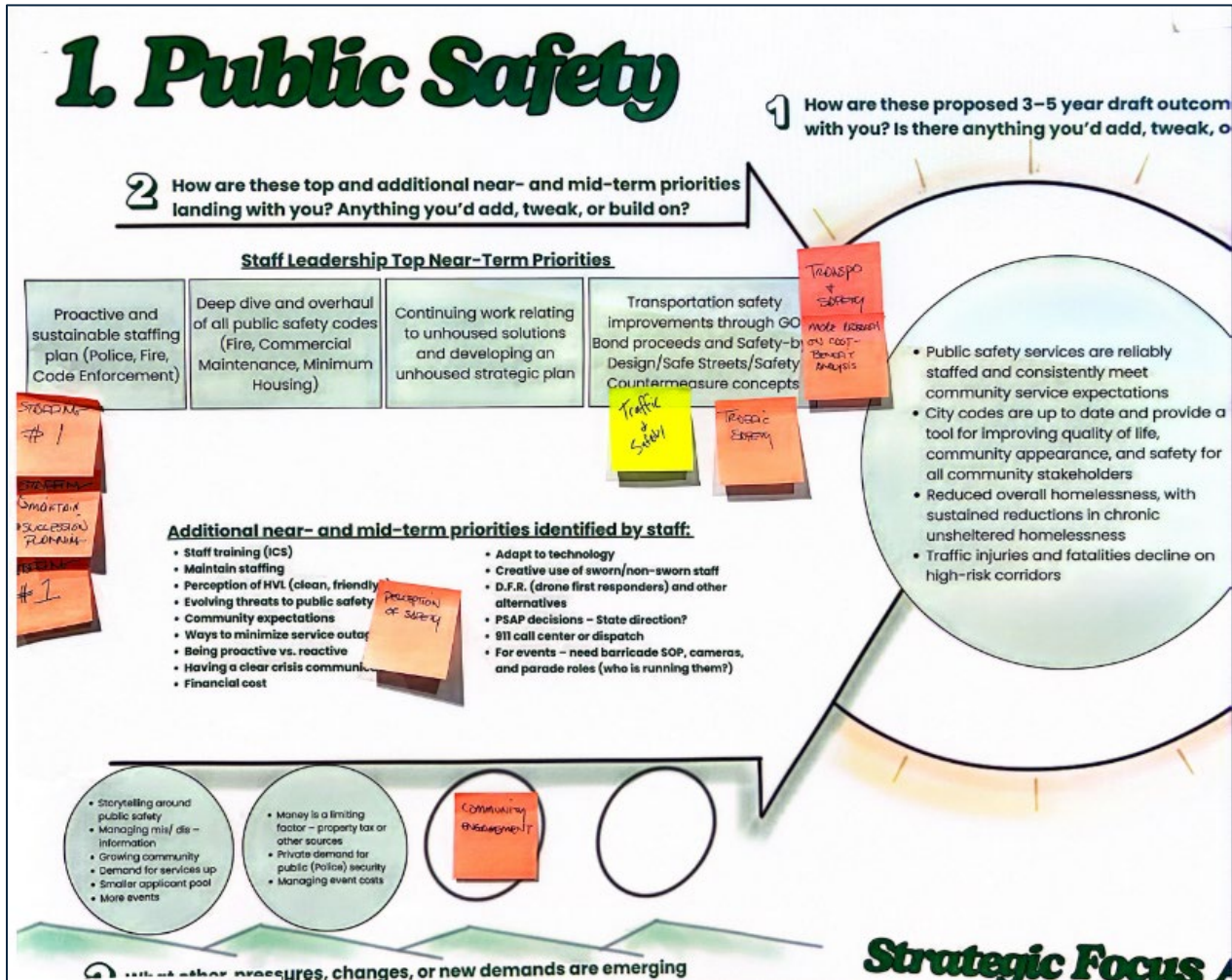
Stations corresponded to the City’s five proposed strategic plan focus areas:

- Public Safety (hosted by Chief Myhand)
- Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities (hosted by Richard Shook)
- Strong Infrastructure (hosted by Brent Detwiler and Brian Pahle)
- Business and Economic Development (hosted by Jamie Carpenter)
- Housing, Growth Management, and Community Character (hosted by Matt Manley)

The information below summarizes the feedback and discussion generated at each focus area station. Additions, reactions, or suggestions provided by Council are shown in *italics*. In some cases, station hosts noted which Councilors offered specific comments, and those Councilors are identified where applicable.



Public Safety – Hosted by Chief Myhand



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3-5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
Proactive and sustainable staffing plan (Police, Fire, Code Enforcement) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong number 1 priority [x2]</li> <li>• For staffing, maintain and do succession planning</li> </ul>	Public safety services are reliably staffed and consistently meet community service expectations
Deep dive and overhaul of all public safety codes (Fire, Commercial Maintenance, Minimum Housing)	City codes are up to date and provide a tool for improving quality of life, community appearance, and safety for all community stakeholders



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
Continuing work relating to unhoused solutions and developing an unhoused strategic plan	Reduced overall homelessness, with sustained reductions in chronic unsheltered homelessness
Transportation safety improvements through GO Bond proceeds and Safety-by-Design/Safe Streets/Safety Countermeasure concepts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Traffic and safety [x3]</i></li> <li>• <i>More research on cost-benefit analysis</i></li> </ul>	Traffic injuries and fatalities decline on high-risk corridors

**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff:**

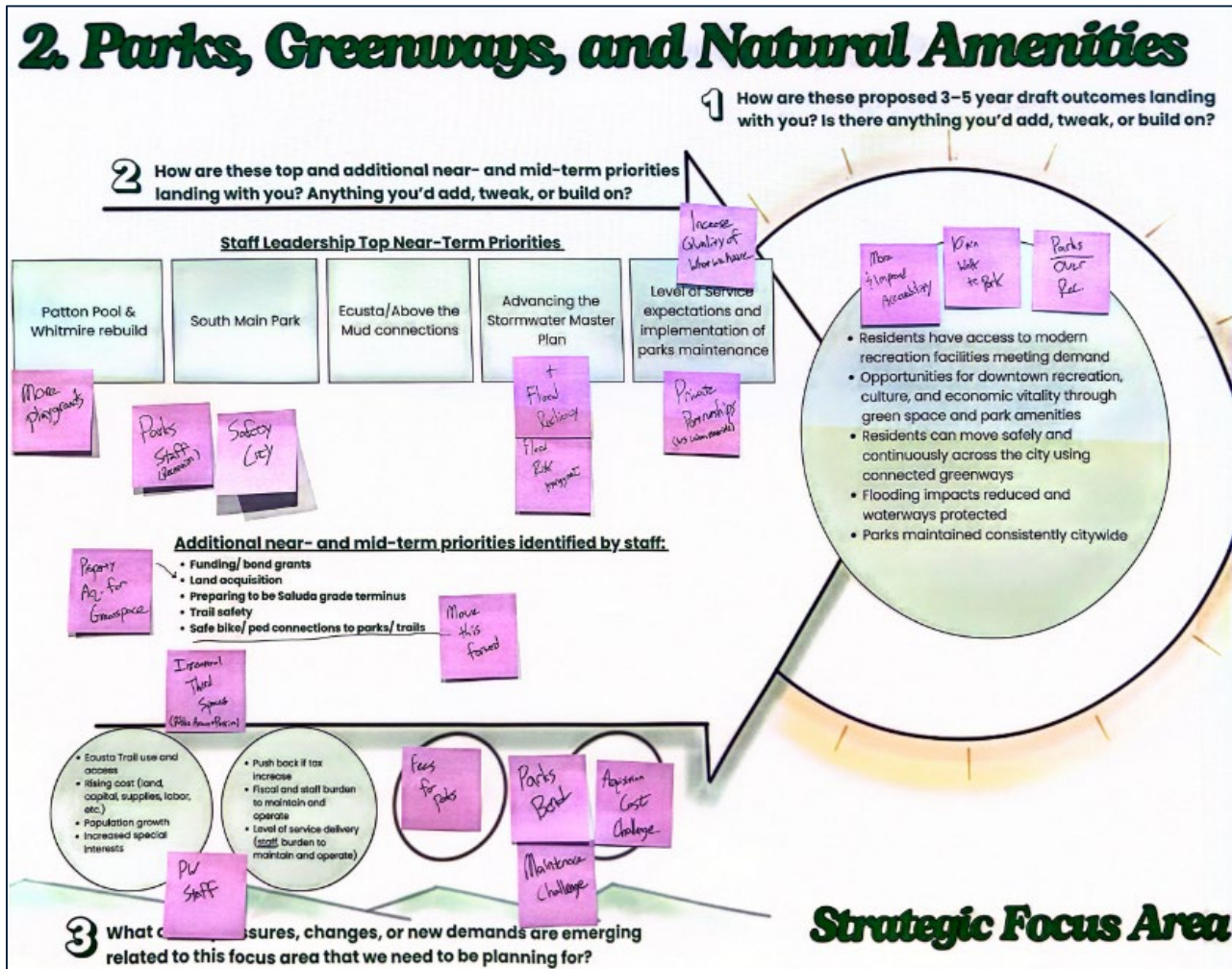
- Staff training (ICS)
- Maintain staffing
- Perception of HVL (clean, friendly?)
  - *Perception of safety*
- Evolving threats to public safety
- Community expectations
- Ways to minimize service outages
- Being proactive vs. reactive
- Having a clear crisis communication plan
- Financial cost
- Adapt to technology
- Creative use of sworn/non-sworn staff
- D.F.R. (drone first responders) and other alternatives
- PSAP decisions – State direction?
- 911 call center or dispatch
- For events – need barricade SOP, cameras, and parade roles (who is running them?)

**Pressures, changes, or new demands emerging:**

- *Community engagement*



Parks, Greenways, and Natural Amenities – Hosted by Richard Shook



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
Patton Pool & Whitmire rebuild <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>More playgrounds</i></li> </ul>	Residents have access to modern recreation facilities meeting demand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>More and improved accessibility</i></li> <li>• <i>10-minute walk to the park</i></li> <li>• <i>Parks over recreation</i></li> </ul>



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
South Main Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Parks staff (recreation)</i></li> <li>• <i>Safety city</i></li> </ul>	Opportunities for downtown recreation, culture, and economic vitality through green space and park amenities
Ecusta/Above the Mud connections	Residents can move safely and continuously across the city using connected greenways
Advancing the Stormwater Master Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Flood resiliency</i></li> <li>• <i>Flood risk management</i></li> </ul>	Flooding impacts reduced and waterways protected
Level of Service expectations and implementation of parks maintenance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Increase quality of what we have</i></li> <li>• <i>Private partnerships (WS Vulcan Materials)</i></li> </ul>	Parks maintained consistently citywide

**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff:**

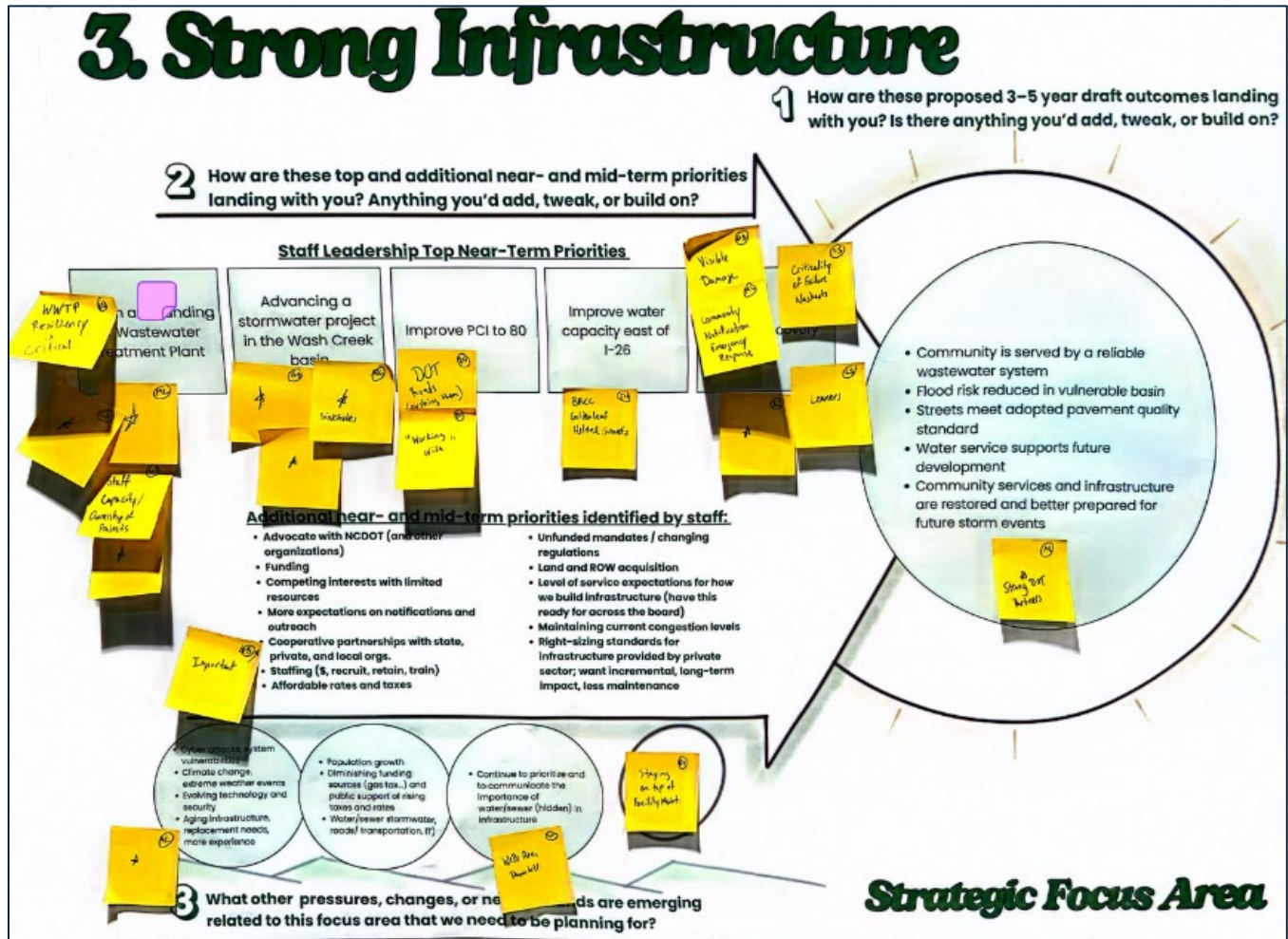
- Funding/ bond grants
- Land acquisition
  - *Property acquisition for greenspace*
- Preparing to be Saluda grade terminus
- Trail safety
- Safe bike/ ped connections to parks/ trails
  - *Move this forward*
  - *Intentional third spaces (public access and passion)*

**Pressures, changes, or new demands emerging:**

- *Public works staff*
- *Fees for parks*
- *Parks bond*
- *Acquisition cost challenge*
- *Maintenance challenge*



Strong Infrastructure – Hosted by Brent Detwiler and Brian Pahle



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
<p>Design and funding for wastewater treatment plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mayor Volk:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Wastewater Treatment Plant resiliency is critical</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Councilor Baxter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff capacity / ownership of projects</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Councilor Lowrance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Priority area</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Community is served by a reliable wastewater system</p>



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Councilor Simpson:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Priority area</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Mayor Pro Tem Hensley:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Priority area</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>Advancing a stormwater project in the Wash Creek basin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Councilor Baxter:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Priority area</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Councilor Simpson:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Priority area</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Councilor Lowrance</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Sinkholes</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Flood risk reduced in vulnerable basin</p>
<p>Improve PCI (Pavement Condition Index) to 80</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayor Volk:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Department of Transportation roads (pushing them)</i></li> <li>○ <i>“Working with”</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Streets meet adopted pavement quality standard</p>
<p>Improve water capacity east of I-26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayor Pro Tem Hensley:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Blue Ridge Community College – Golden LEAF Helene Grants</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Water service supports future development</p>
<p>Helene recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Councilor Baxter:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Visible damage</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Councilor Lowrance:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Community Notification Emergency Response</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Councilor Simpson:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Priority area</i></li> <li>○ <i>Leaners</i></li> <li>○ <i>Criticality of failure washouts</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Community services and infrastructure are restored and better prepared for future storm events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Priority area; strong partners at the Department of Transportation (Councilor Lowrance)</i></li> </ul>

**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff:**

- Advocate with NCDOT (and other organizations)
- Funding
- Competing interests with limited resources



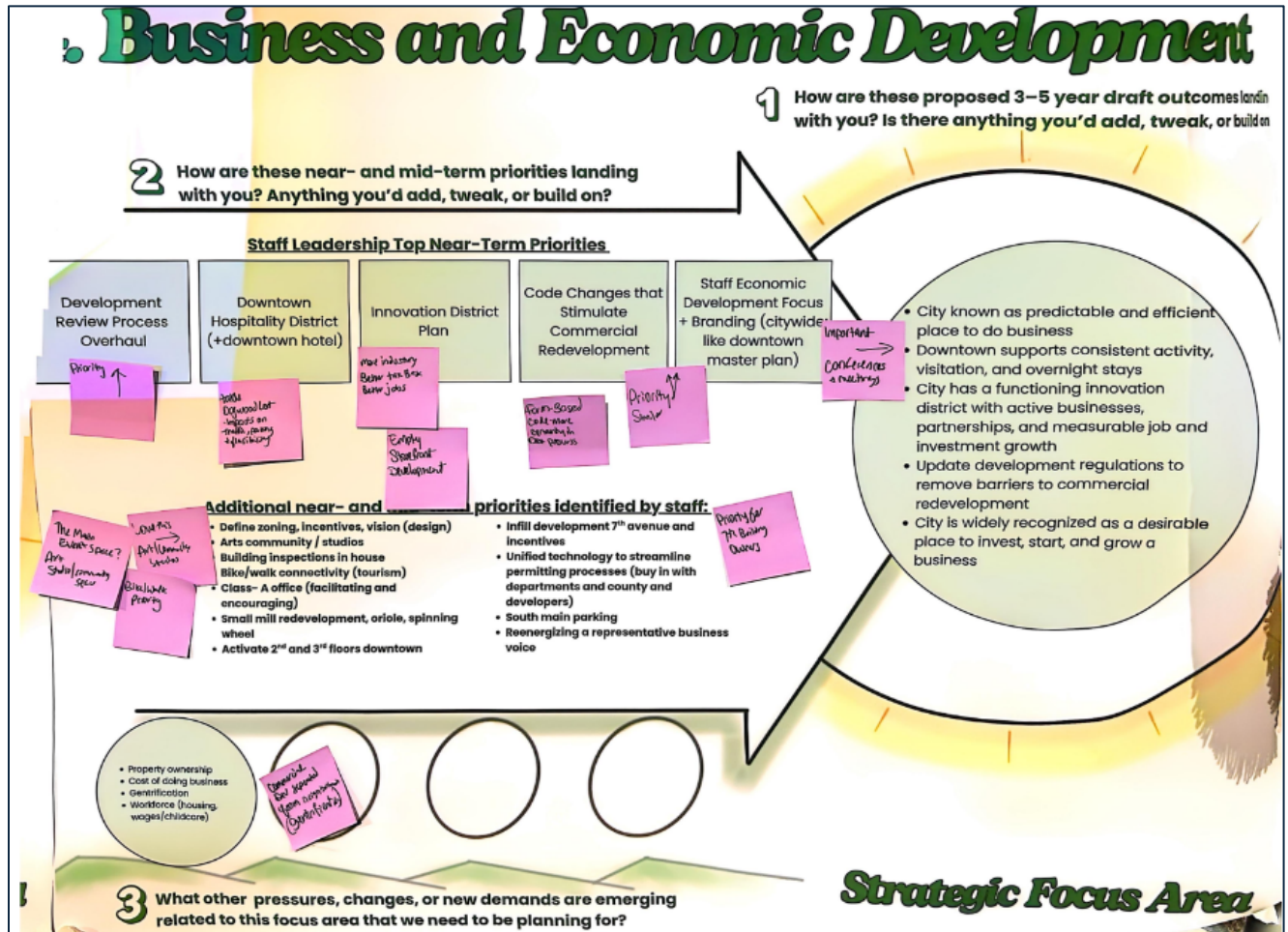
- More expectations on notifications and outreach
- Cooperative partnerships with state, private, and local organizations.
  - *Important (Councilor Baxter)*
- Staffing (\$, recruit, retain, train)
- Affordable rates and taxes
- Unfunded mandates / changing regulations
- Land and ROW acquisition
- Level of service expectations for how we build infrastructure (have this ready for across the board)
- Maintaining current congestion levels
- Right-sizing standards for infrastructure provided by private sector; want incremental, long-term impact, less maintenance

**Pressures, changes, or new demands emerging:**

- *Aging infrastructure, replacement needs, more experience*
  - *Priority area (Councilor Lowrance)*
- *Wells are downhill (Mayor Pro Tem Hensley)*
- *Staying on top of facility maintenance (Mayor Volk)*



Business and Economic Development – Hosted by Jamie Carpenter



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
Development Review Process Overhaul <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority</li> </ul>	City known as predictable and efficient place to do business
Downtown Hospitality District (+downtown hotel) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table Dogwood Lot: impacts on traffic, parking, and feasibility (Melinda Lowrance)</li> <li>• Most Councilors expressed positive excitement about this priority</li> </ul>	Downtown supports consistent activity, visitation, and overnight stays <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important, especially for conferences and meetings</li> </ul>



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
Innovation District Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>More industry activity</i></li> <li>• <i>Better tax base</i></li> <li>• <i>Better jobs</i></li> <li>• <i>Empty storefront development</i></li> </ul>	The City has a functioning innovation district with active businesses, partnerships, and measurable job and investment growth
Code Changes that Stimulate Commercial Redevelopment* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Farm-based code will bring more certainty in the development process</i></li> <li>• <i>Priority</i></li> </ul>	Update development regulations to remove barriers to commercial redevelopment
Staff Economic Development Focus + Branding (citywide; like downtown master plan)* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Priority</i></li> </ul>	The City is widely recognized as a desirable place to invest, start, and grow a business

*\*These two priorities Council considered to be complementary / paired*

**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff:**

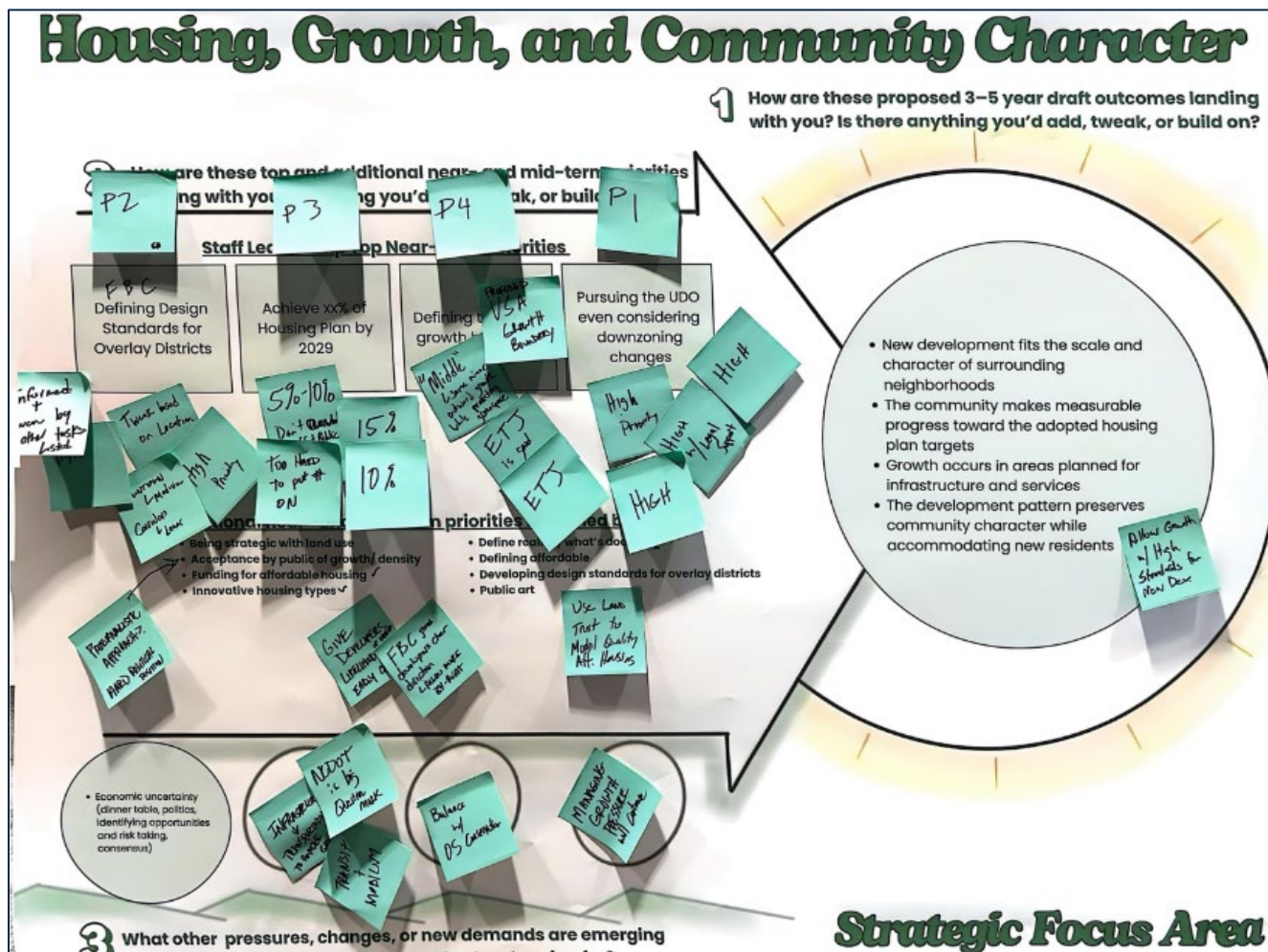
- Define zoning, incentives, vision (design)
- Arts community / studios
  - *Love this*
  - *Where would the main event space be?*
- Building inspections in house
- Bike/walk connectivity (tourism)
  - *Priority*
- Class- A office (facilitating and encouraging)
- Small mill redevelopment, oriole, spinning wheel
- Activate 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors downtown
- Infill development 7<sup>th</sup> avenue and incentives
  - *Priority for the building owners*
- Unified technology to streamline permitting processes (buy in with departments and county and developers)
- South main parking
- Reenergizing a representative business voice

**Pressures, changes, or new demands emerging:**

- *Gentrification: commercial developments are separated from neighborhoods*



Housing, Growth, and Community Character – Hosted by Matt Manley



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
Pursuing the UDO even considering downzoning changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High priority [x4]</li> <li>• With legal support</li> </ul>	New development fits the scale and character of surrounding neighborhoods
Defining Design Standards for Overlay Districts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second priority</li> </ul>	The community makes measurable progress toward the adopted housing plan targets



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Based on insights that it allows for more housing and greater mobility, but only if transportation keeps pace</i></li> <li>• <i>Defining whereby priorities level of high/medium/low are assigned</i></li> <li>• <i>Informed and driven by other tasks listed</i></li> <li>• <i>High priority: Tweak based on location</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Downtown as medium, corridors as lower</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>FBC = form-based code</i></li> </ul>	
<p>Achieve xx% of Housing Plan by 2029</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Third priority</i></li> <li>• <i>If other goals are achieved it will help achieve supply goals</i></li> <li>• <i>5-10% to not overwhelm the staff and public</i></li> <li>• <i>10%? 15%?</i></li> <li>• <i>Too hard to put a number on</i></li> </ul>	<p>Growth occurs in areas planned for infrastructure and services</p>
<p>Defining the City’s growth boundary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fourth priority</i></li> <li>• <i>Asked to give geographical limits of growth</i></li> <li>• <i>Proposed USA growth boundary</i></li> <li>• <i>“Middle”: some minor outward growth while protecting greenspace</i></li> <li>• <i>Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) is good</i></li> </ul>	<p>The development pattern preserves community character while accommodating new residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Allow growth with high standards for new development</i></li> </ul>

**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff:**

- Being strategic with land use
- Acceptance by public of growth/ density
  - *Paternalistic approach? Hard political position*
- Funding for affordable housing
- Innovative housing types
  - *Give developers likelihood of approach early on*
  - *FBC gives developers clear direction by allowing more by-right*
- Define reality / what’s doable
- Defining affordable



- *Use land trust to model quality affordable housing*
- Developing design standards for overlay districts
- Public art

**Pressures, changes, or new demands emerging:**

- *Infrastructure needs transportation to handle growth: focus on transit and mobility*
- *N.C. Department of Transportation is a big question mark*
- *Balance with OS Conservation*
- *Managing growth pressure will continue*

## ENABLER STATION CONVERSATIONS

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Councilors then participated in a second station exercise focused on the five proposed strategic plan “enablers,” which represent the organizational capacities and systems needed for the City to effectively deliver on its focus areas.

Councilors rotated through each station to review and react to the draft outcomes and priorities staff had identified for each enabler. As with the previous exercise, Councilors were asked to consider how the proposed outcomes resonated with them, what adjustments or additions might be needed, and what emerging pressures or opportunities the City should be planning for.

Stations included:

- High-Performing City Workforce (hosted by Adam Murr)
- High-Functioning City Council (hosted by Brian Pahle)
- Financial Sustainability (hosted by Krystal Powell)
- Community Partnerships (hosted by John Connet)
- Engaged and Educated Community (hosted by Jenny Floyd)

The information below summarizes the feedback and discussion generated at each strategic plan “enabler.” Additions, reactions, or suggestions provided by Council are shown in *italics*. In some cases, station hosts noted which Councilors offered specific comments, and those Councilors are identified where applicable.



High-Performing City Workforce – Hosted by Adam Murr

# 1. High-Performing City Workforce

**1** How are these proposed 3–5 year draft outcomes landing with you? Is there anything you'd add, tweak, or build on?

**2** How are these top and mid-term priorities landing with you? Any additional near- and mid-term priorities identified?

**3** What other pressures, changes, or new demands are emerging related to this area that we need to be planning for?

**Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities**

- Create Employee Development Plan (mentorship, cross-training, professional development, succession planning, career ladder education, etc.)
- Living wage, attainable housing, and being able to live in Hendersonville
- Renewal of the Service Excellence Program
- Staffing capacity to maintain and advance quality of life amenities

**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified**

- Budgeting logistics for trainings and certifications
- Turnover and training new employees
- Identification of mandatory trainings -> tracking is broken
- Professional development / clear career ladder -> counseling
- Continuity across departments for professional development
- Loss of institutional knowledge (retirement/turnover)
- Hesitancy to change or innovate
- Staff retention in entry-level positions local and private sector competition
- Availability of training (ex. cost and what training is available)
- Less public service motivation
- Recruitment challenges
  - Gen Z / Gen Alpha
  - Education needed
- Proactive recruitment strategies (can't wait around)
  - Head-hunting, winning over private sector
- Expanding search area / geography of recruitment marketing

**Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)**

- Employees have clear career pathways and the City retains skilled institutional knowledge
- Employees can afford to live in the community they serve, improving retention and local investment
- Recognition of service-oriented behaviors becomes embedded in daily operations, reinforcing a culture where excellence is expected and celebrated
- Adequate staffing levels in all departments to keep pace with level of service expectations and reduce employee burnout

**Strategic Enabler**

Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
Create Employee Development Plan (mentorship, cross-training, professional development, succession planning, career ladder education, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department leaders develop succession plans</li> <li>• Cross training</li> <li>• Work towards living wage</li> </ul>	Employees have clear career pathways and the City retains skilled institutional knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career paths must have clarity</li> </ul>



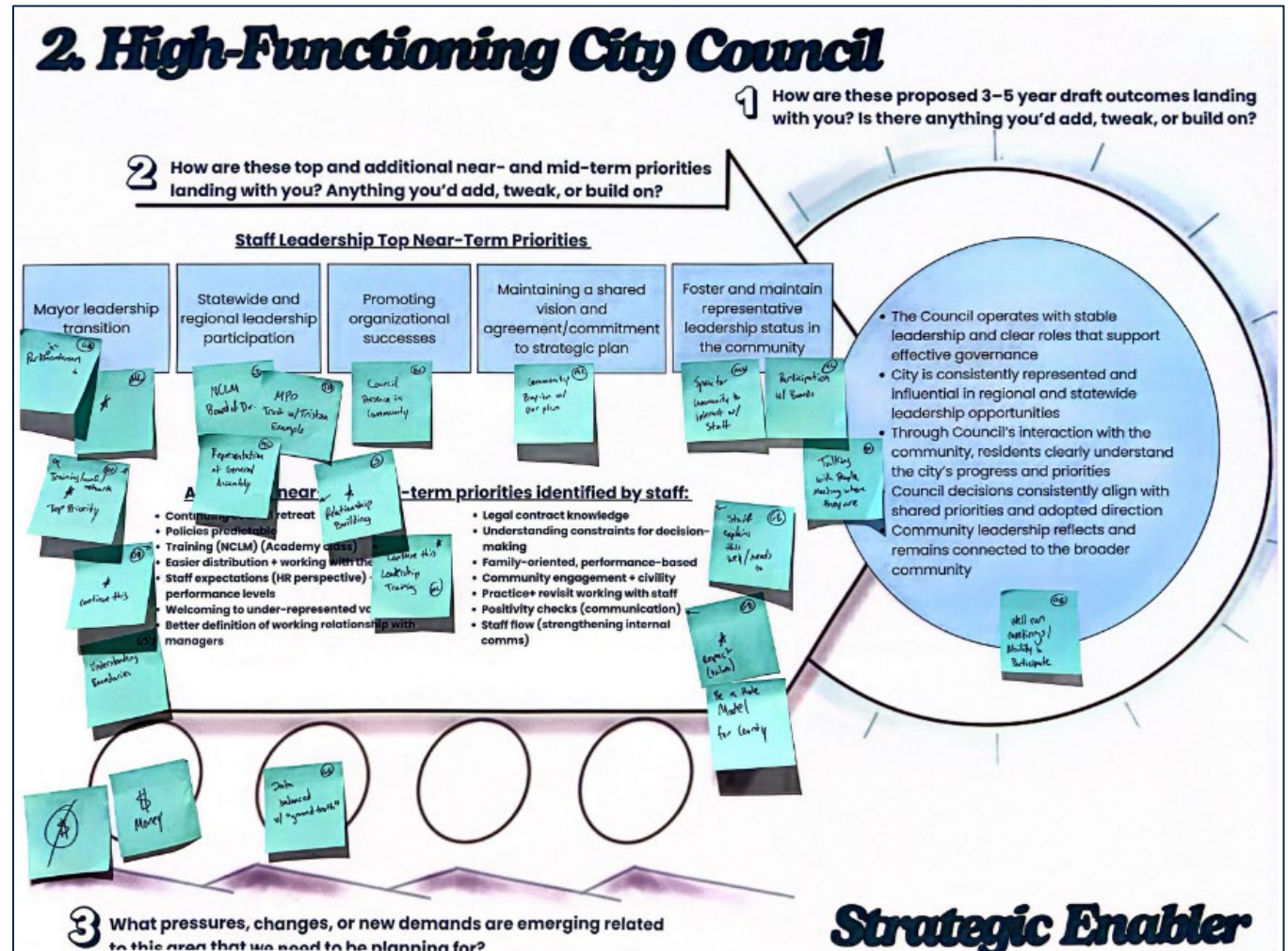
Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>More aggressive wage catch-up</i></li> <li>● <i>Look at benefits as a whole</i></li> </ul>	
<p>Living wage, attainable housing, and being able to live in Hendersonville</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Administrative medical leave for employee, not only family</i></li> <li>● <i>Childcare</i></li> <li>● <i>Pooled leave bank [x2]</i></li> </ul>	<p>Employees can afford to live in the community they serve, improving retention and local investment</p>
<p>Renewal of the Service Excellence Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Once benefit is provided, don't reduce</i></li> </ul>	<p>Recognition of service-oriented behaviors becomes embedded in daily operations, reinforcing a culture where excellence is expected and celebrated</p>
<p>Staffing capacity to maintain and advance quality of life amenities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Personal family leave, administrative medical leave, and birth leave</i></li> <li>● <i>Increase paid family leave</i></li> <li>● <i>Partner with other organizations for in-house childcare system [x2]</i></li> </ul>	<p>Adequate staffing levels in all departments to keep pace with level of service expectations and reduce employee burnout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Mental health benefits</i></li> </ul>

**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff:**

- Budget/ facilities/ logistics for trainings and certifications
- Turnover and training new employees
- Identification of mandatory trainings - > tracking is broken
- Professional development / clear career ladder -> counseling
- Continuity across departments for professional development
- Loss of institutional knowledge (retirement/turnover)
- Hesitancy to change or innovate
- Staff retention in entry-level positions local and private sector competition
- Availability of training (ex. career advancement for admin asst and what training is available)
- Less public service motivation in applicants / recruitment
- Recruitment challenges (Gen Z / Gen Alpha and education needed)
- Proactive and aggressive recruitment strategies (winning over private sector)
- Expanding search area / geography of recruitment marketing



## High-Functioning City Council – Hosted by Brian Pahle



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
<p>Mayor leadership transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mayor Volk:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Top priority</li> <li>○ Training/conference/network</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Councilor Baxter:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Priority area</li> <li>○ Parliamentarian</li> <li>○ Understanding boundaries</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The Council operates with stable leadership and clear roles that support effective governance</p>



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Continue this</i></li> <li>● <i>Councilor Lowrance:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Priority area</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>Statewide and regional leadership participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Councilor Lowrance:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Representation at General Assembly</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● <i>Councilor Simpson:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>NCLM Board of Directors</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● <i>Mayor Pro Tem Hensley:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>MPO trust with Tristan as an example</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The city is consistently represented and influential in regional and statewide leadership opportunities</p>
<p>Promoting organizational successes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Mayor Volk:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Council presence in community</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Through Council’s interaction with the community, residents clearly understand the city’s progress and priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Mayor Volk:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Talking with people, meeting where they are</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Maintaining a shared vision and agreement/commitment to strategic plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Councilor Lowrance:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Community buy-in with our plan</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Council decisions consistently align with shared priorities and adopted direction</p>
<p>Foster and maintain representative leadership status in the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Councilor Lowrance:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Space for community to interact with staff</i></li> <li>○ <i>Participation with boards</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Community leadership reflects and remains connected to the broader community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Councilor Baxter:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Well-run meetings and the ability to participate</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

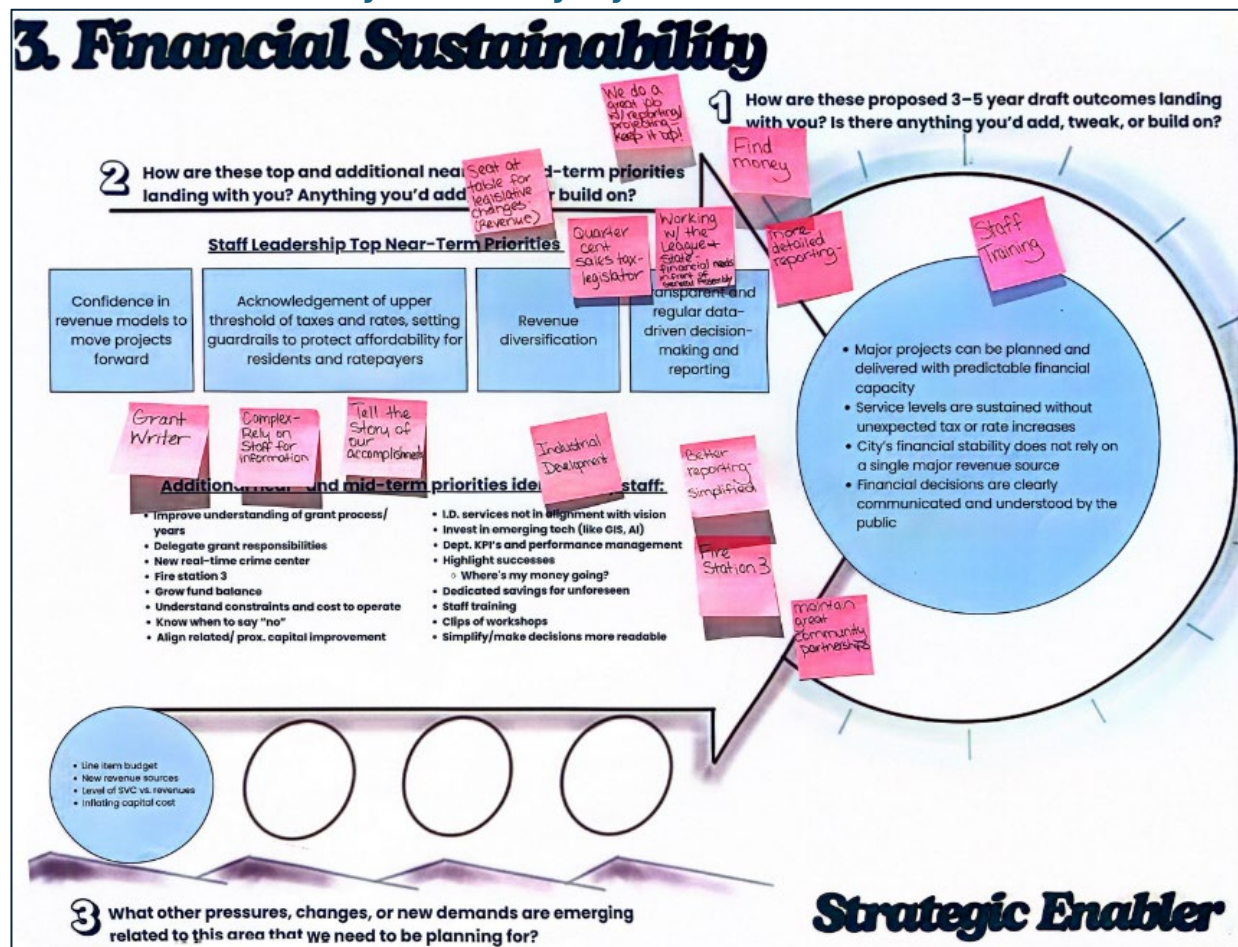
**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff:**

- Continuing council retreat
  - *Councilor Simpson: priority, relationship-building*
- Policies predictable
- Training (NCLM) (Academy class)
  - *Councilor Lowrance: Continue this leadership training*
  - *Councilor Baxter: priority, continue this*
- Easier distribution + working with the community



- Staff expectations (HR perspective) -> performance levels
- Welcoming to under-represented voices
- Better definition of working relationship with managers
  - *Councilor Baxter: Understanding boundaries*
- Legal contract knowledge
  - *Councilor Baxter: Staff explains this well / needs to*
- Understanding constraints for decision-making
- Family-oriented, performance-based
- Community engagement + civility
- Practice + revisit working with staff
- Positivity checks (communication)
  - *Councilor Baxter: priority, respect and values; be a role model for the county*
- Staff flow (strengthening internal communication)

## Financial Sustainability – Hosted by Krystal Powell





Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
Confidence in revenue models to move projects forward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Grant writer</i></li> </ul>	Major projects can be planned and delivered with predictable financial capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Staff training</i></li> </ul>
Acknowledgement of upper threshold of taxes and rates, setting guardrails to protect affordability for residents and ratepayers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Complex—rely on staff for information</i></li> <li>• <i>Tell the story of our accomplishment</i></li> </ul>	Service levels are sustained without unexpected tax or rate increases
Revenue diversification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Seat at the table for legislative changes regarding revenue</i></li> <li>• <i>Industrial development</i></li> </ul>	The city’s financial stability does not rely on a single major revenue source
Transparent and regular data-driven decision-making and reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Quarter cent sales tax legislator</i></li> <li>• <i>Working with the league and state—present financial needs in front of General Assembly</i></li> <li>• <i>More detailed reporting</i></li> <li>• <i>Find money</i></li> <li>• <i>We do a great job reporting and projecting—keep it up!</i></li> </ul>	Financial decisions are clearly communicated and understood by the public

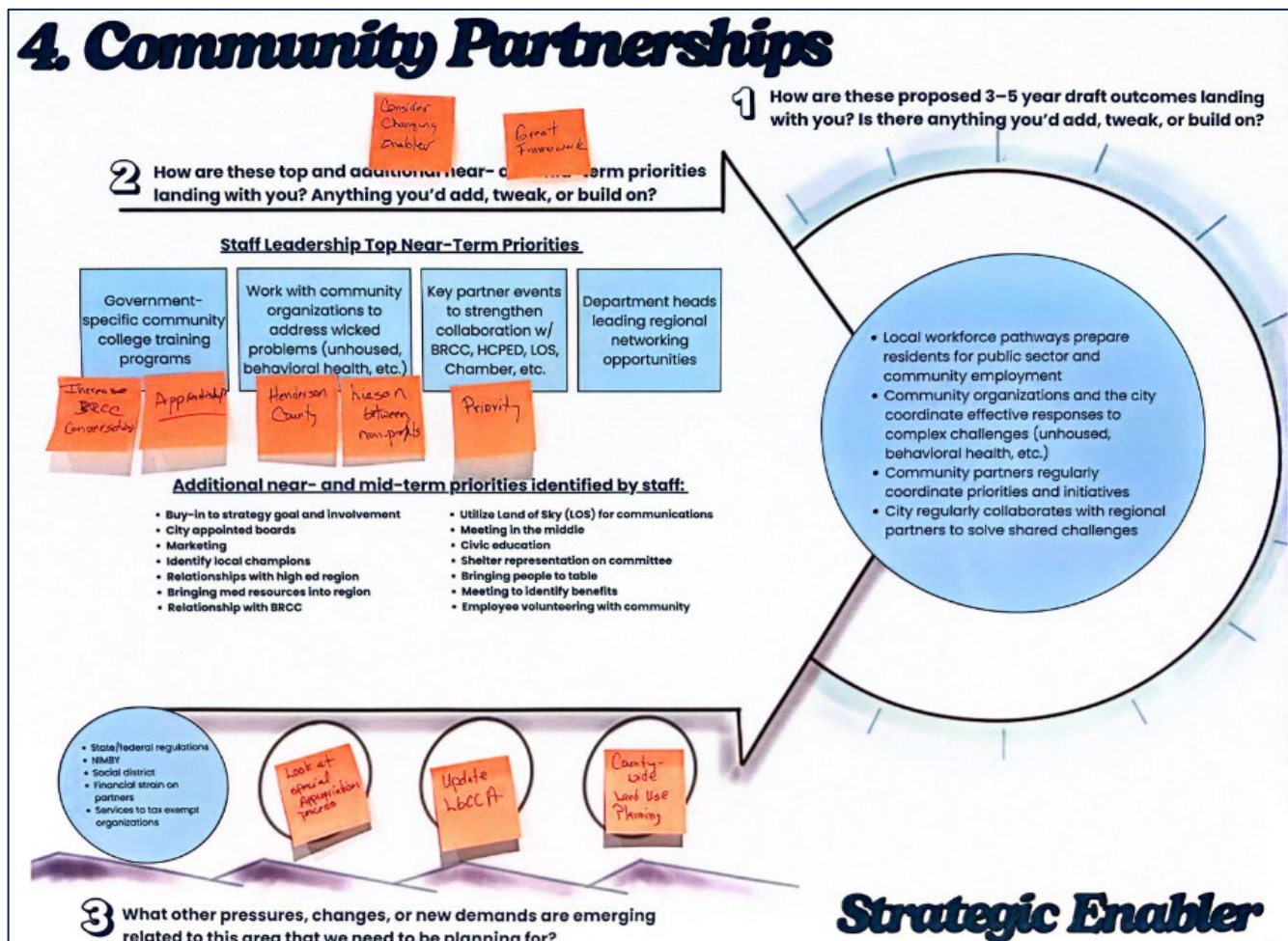
**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff:**

- Improve understanding of grant process/ years
- Delegate grant responsibilities
- New real-time crime center
- Fire station 3
- Grow fund balance
- Understand constraints and cost to operate
- Know when to say “no”
- Align related/ prox. capital improvement
- I.D. services not in alignment with vision
  - Industrial development
- Invest in emerging tech (like GIS, AI)



- Dept. KPI's and performance management
- Highlight successes
  - Where's my money going?
- Dedicated savings for unforeseen
- Staff training
- Clips of workshops
- Simplify/make decisions more readable
- *Better reporting is simplified reporting*
- *Fire Station 3*
- *Maintain great community partnerships*

## Community Partnerships – Hosted by John Connet





Original Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
Government-specific community college training programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Increase BRCC conversations</i></li> <li>• <i>Apprenticeship</i></li> </ul>	Local workforce pathways prepare residents for public sector and community employment
Work with community organizations to address wicked problems (unhoused, behavioral health, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Henderson County</i></li> <li>• <i>Liaison between nonprofits</i></li> </ul>	Community organizations and the city coordinate effective responses to complex challenges (unhoused, behavioral health, etc.)
Key partner events to strengthen collaboration w/ BRCC, HCPED, LOS, Chamber, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Priority</i></li> </ul>	Community partners regularly coordinate priorities and initiatives
Department heads leading regional networking opportunities	The city regularly collaborates with regional partners to solve shared challenges

**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff:**

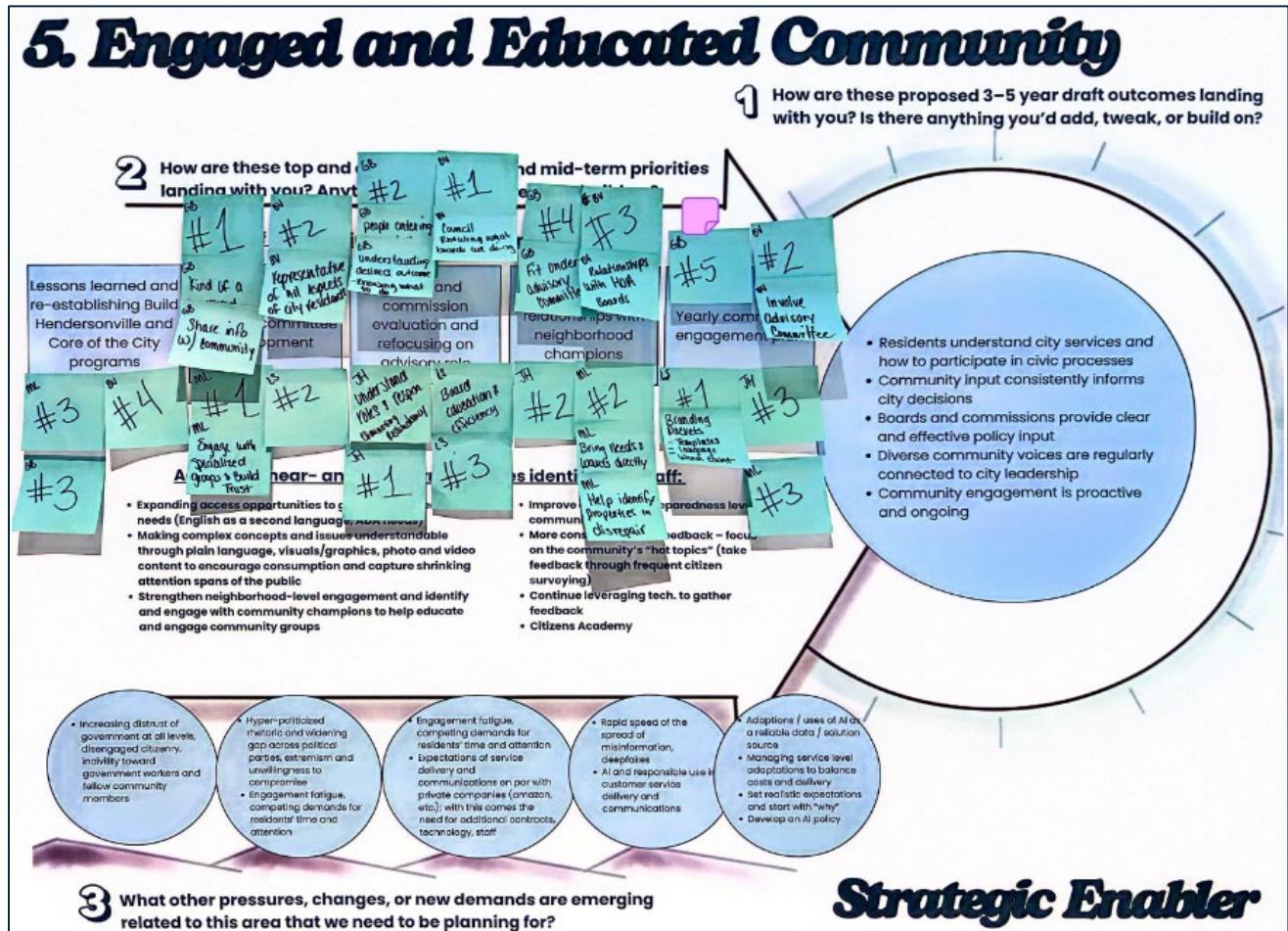
- Buy-in to strategy goal and involvement
- City appointed boards
- Marketing
- Identify local champions
- Relationships with high ed region
- Bringing med resources into region
- Relationship with BRCC
- Utilize Land of Sky (LOS) for communications
- Meeting in the middle
- Civic education
- Shelter representation on committee
- Bringing people to table
- Meeting to identify benefits
- Employee volunteering with community

**Pressures, changes, or new demands emerging:**

- *Look at special appropriations process*
- *Update Local Government Committee for Cooperative Action (LGCCA)*
- *County-wide land use planning*



Educated and Engaged Community – Hosted by Jenny Floyd



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
Lessons learned and re-establishing Build Hendersonville and Core of the City programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mayor Volk: 4<sup>th</sup> priority</li> <li>Councilor Baxter: 3<sup>rd</sup> priority</li> <li>Councilor Lowrance: 3<sup>rd</sup> priority</li> </ul>	Residents understand city services and how to participate in civic processes
Community advisory committee development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mayor Volk: 2<sup>nd</sup> priority                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representative of all aspects of city residents</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Community input consistently informs city decisions



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councilor Baxter: 1<sup>st</sup> priority                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Kind of year round core</i></li> <li>○ <i>Share information with community</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Councilor Lowrance: 1<sup>st</sup> priority                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Engage with specialized groups and build trust</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Councilor Simpson: 2<sup>nd</sup> priority</li> </ul>	
<p>Board and commission evaluation and refocusing on advisory role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayor Volk: 1<sup>st</sup> priority</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Council knowing what boards are doing</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Councilor Baxter: 2<sup>nd</sup> priority</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>People entering with a better understanding of the role</i></li> <li>○ <i>Understanding desired outcome will help us know what to do</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Councilor Simpson: 3<sup>rd</sup> priority</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Board education and efficiency</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Mayor Pro Tem Hensley: 1<sup>st</sup> priority</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Understand roles and responsibilities, eliminating redundancy</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Boards and commissions provide clear and effective policy input</p>
<p>Identify and foster relationships with neighborhood champions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayor Volk: 3<sup>rd</sup> priority</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Relationship with Homeowner Association boards</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Councilor Baxter: 4<sup>th</sup> priority</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Fit under advisory committee</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Councilor Lowrance: 2<sup>nd</sup> priority</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Brings needs and wants directly</i></li> <li>○ <i>Help identify properties in disrepair</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Mayor Pro Tem Hensley: 2<sup>nd</sup> priority</i></li> </ul>	<p>Diverse community voices are regularly connected to city leadership</p>
<p>Yearly community engagement plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayor Volk: 2<sup>nd</sup> priority</i></li> </ul>	<p>Community engagement is proactive and ongoing</p>



Staff Leadership Top Near-Term Priorities	Proposed 3–5 Year Outcomes (What Winning Looks Like)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Involve advisory committee</i></li> <li>● <i>Councilor Baxter: 5<sup>th</sup> priority</i></li> <li>● <i>Councilor Lowrance: 3<sup>rd</sup> priority</i></li> <li>● <i>Councilor Simpson: 1<sup>st</sup> priority</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Branding packets with templates, language, and word count</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● <i>Mayor Pro Tem Hensley: 3<sup>rd</sup> priority</i></li> </ul>	

**Additional near- and mid-term priorities identified by staff:**

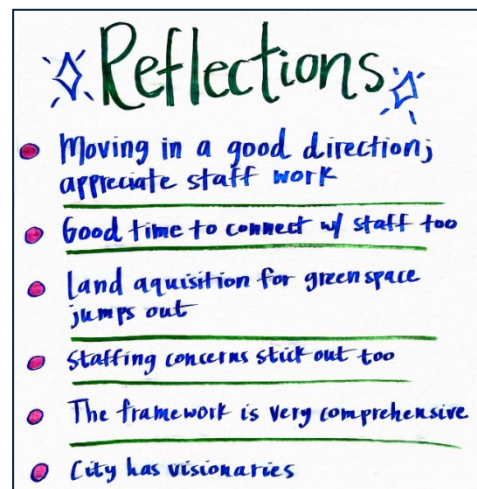
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expanding access opportunities to groups with specific needs (English as a second language, ADA needs)</li> <li>● Making complex concepts and issues understandable through plain language, visuals/graphics, photo and video content to encourage consumption and capture shrinking attention spans of the public</li> <li>● Strengthen neighborhood-level engagement and identify and engage with community champions to help</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>educate and engage community groups</li> <li>● Improve emergency preparedness level of community members</li> <li>● More consistent public feedback – focus on the community’s “hot topics” (take feedback through frequent citizen surveying)</li> <li>● Continue leveraging tech. to gather feedback</li> <li>● Citizens Academy</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

**Station Reflections**

After both the Focus Area and Enabler station exercises concluded, Councilors were invited to share any overarching reflections from the discussions. This provided an opportunity for Council to step back from the individual stations and highlight broader observations or themes that emerged during the exercises.

**Reflections:**

- Moving in a good direction; appreciate staff work
- Good time to connect with staff too
- Land acquisition for greenspace jumps out
- Staffing concerns stick out
- The framework is very comprehensive
- City has visionaries





## DEBRIEF AND PRIORITY SETTING

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After reflecting on the proposed strategic framework areas (five focus areas and five enablers), Councilors participated in a priority-setting exercise to identify the key “big rocks” they believe the City should focus the most energy on over the next 1–2 years. **Councilors were first asked to individually identify their top three priorities and write each on a separate sticky note.** These priorities were then shared with the group and placed under the corresponding focus area or enabler area, with similar ideas grouped together where overlap existed. **Councilors were then invited to further prioritize the ideas through a dot-voting exercise, placing two dot stickers on the priorities they believed should receive the greatest focus in the near term.**

Priority Identified	Strategic Area	Dot Votes
<b>Real affordable housing / community land trust plan (defined and actionable)</b> <i>(identified by Melinda Lowrance and Gina Baxter)</i>	Housing, Growth Management & Community Character	Gina Baxter, Melinda Lowrance, and Lyndsey Simpson
<b>Intentional planning for green space acquisition</b> <i>(identified by Gina Baxter)</i>	Parks, Greenways & Natural Amenities	Gina Baxter
<b>Waste Water Treatment Plant Planning</b> <i>(identified by Barbara Volk and Jennifer Hensley)</i>	Strong Infrastructure	Barbara Volk
<b>Development review overhaul (streamlining process)</b> <i>(identified by Jennifer Hensley)</i>	Business & Economic Development	Jennifer Hensley
<b>Public safety staffing (well paid, fully staffed workforce)</b> <i>(identified by Gina Baxter)</i>	Public Safety	Jennifer Hensley
<b>Community Advisory Committee</b> <i>(identified by Melinda Lowrance)</i>	Engaged & Educated Community	Melinda Lowrance
<b>Sustainable staffing levels across departments</b> <i>(identified by Lyndsey Simpson)</i>	High-Performing City Workforce	Lyndsey Simpson
<b>More toward a living wage / comprehensive benefits (and compensation) that provide high quality of life for employees</b>	High-Performing City Workforce	Barbara Volk



Priority Identified	Strategic Area	Dot Votes
<i>(identified by Barbara Volk and Lyndsey Simpson)</i>		
<b>Traffic safety improvements</b> <i>(identified by Barbara Volk)</i>	Public Safety	
<b>Patton and Whitmire</b> <i>(identified by Jennifer Hensley)</i>	Parks, Greenways & Natural Amenities	
<b>Helene Recovery – Critical Failure Priority</b> <i>(identified by Lyndsey Simpson)</i>	Strong Infrastructure	
<b>More work on existing, aging infrastructure (such as stormwater)</b> <i>(identified by Melinda Lowrance)</i>	Strong Infrastructure	

TOP PRIORITIES OVER THE NEXT 1-2 YEARS

<p><b>Public Safety</b></p> <p><i>BN</i> Traffic safety improvements</p> <p><i>GB</i> will not fully signed off until (public safety priority)</p>	<p><b>Parks, Greenways, &amp; Natural Amenities</b></p> <p><i>JH</i> Patton Whitmire</p> <p><i>GB</i> recommends planning queue space acquisition</p>	<p><b>Strong Infrastructure</b></p> <p><i>LS</i> Helene Recovery Critical Failure Priority</p> <p><i>ML</i> [Existing Infrastructure] More work on infrastructure aging stormwater</p> <p><i>JH</i> Strong Infrastructure Water Treatment</p> <p><i>SU</i> WWTTP planning</p>	<p><b>Business &amp; Economic Development</b></p> <p><i>JH</i> Development Review Overhaul (streamline process)</p>	<p><b>Housing, Growth Management &amp; Community Character</b></p> <p><i>ML</i> Real Affordable Housing Goals</p> <p><i>GB</i> Community and Trust Plan (land/schools)</p>
<p><b>High-Performing City Workforce</b></p> <p><i>LS</i> Sustainable staffing levels across all Departments</p> <p><i>BN</i> More Local Living Wages</p> <p><i>LS</i> Comprehensive Benefits (Comp what people high quality of life for employees)</p>	<p><b>High-Functioning City Council</b></p>	<p><b>Community Partnerships</b></p>	<p><b>Engaged &amp; Educated Community</b></p> <p><i>ML</i> Community Advisory Committee</p>	



## WRAP UP

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To close the retreat, Councilors were invited to select a picture card that represented a core value—or strategic lens—they hope future City Councils never lose sight of when making decisions for the community. Councilors briefly shared why they selected their card and the value or perspective it represented.

**HARDWORK IS WORTH IT**

**HIGH QUALITY LIFE FOR ALL**

**CORE VALUES WE HOPE OUR FUTURE COUNCILS NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF**

**HAVE A HOME WE LOVE**

**INTERTWINED AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**BUILDING TOGETHER TO PRODUCE RESULTS**

City Manager John Connet then offered closing remarks, thanking Council and staff for their thoughtful participation throughout the retreat. He noted the value of the discussion in helping clarify priorities and direction for the City’s strategic planning efforts and emphasized the importance of continued collaboration as the framework is further refined and implemented.