SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT
Center for Public Leadership and Governance

THE CITY OF BREVARD
DEFINING STRATEGIC DIRECTION
CONSULTANT'S REPORT

Overview

The UNC School of Government's Center for Public Leadership and Governance (CPLG) is supporting the City of Brevard's 2024 strategic planning process. The City's Council's retreat was designed to ensure the strategic planning process responds to the city's service needs. The process also generated buy-in and ownership of the Council and leadership staff.
To plan for an effective retreat, planning meetings were conducted by the consultant with representatives from the City Council and city staff leadership to gain insight into Council priorities, as well as to better understand group dynamics. An agenda was finalized and distributed to the Council. The retreat was held at on February 29,2024, 8:30 am- 4:30 pm.
The retreat objectives were as follows:

- ❑ To review priorities and celebrate the City of Brevard's accomplishments.
- ❑ To strive for consensus on Vision themes
- ❑ To develop 3-year Goals (strategic focus areas)
- ❑ To identify Key Strategic Actions (Critical projects or tasks) for the next 12-18 months that align to the City's Goals
- ❑ To develop and utilize criteria to prioritize Key Strategic Actions.

Facilitator and Consultant: Rebecca Jackson, Adjunct Faculty Member, UNC Chapel Hill School of Government, Center for Public Leadership and Governance

Attendees: City of Brevard Mayor, City Council Members, City Manager, City Clerk and various Department Heads

The City of Brevard's Progress Successes

The City Council Mayor shared a report of the City's progress over the last 12-18 months.

The consultant led a Council discussion, seeking individual Council input on what they were most proud of accomplishing and what they saw as keys to success Overall, the strongest recurring themes were:

- Escusta Funding
- Affordable Housing partnerships and policy changes
- Road improvements
- Pedestrian, bike and safety improvements
- Wastewater treatment plan
- Infrastructure, including bridge
- Gateway t the national forest
- Community relationships and engagements
- Intergovernmental engagement
- NCDOT collaboration
- Public input process
- State compensation and funding support
- Downtown investment
- Masterplan
- Streetscape

The overall feeling was one of pride in the ability to accomplish so much in the last 12-18 months, and also feeling like there is still so much to do. Council discussed the importance of executing the plans that have been developed recently, being focused on execution, and follow through of those plans. An overall theme came through of that the City has "planted many seeds" and now it was time to water and grow. Council also discussed the importance of adapting to change.



Differences Between Comprehensive Plans and Strategic Plans

The Council considered the differences between the recent comprehensive plan and an organizational strategic plan.
Comprehensive plan includes:

- Scope: Long-range vision document; outlines community's goals, aspirations, and policies for future development and growth over a span of typically 10 to 20 years.
- Focus: Covers broad range of topics: Land use, transportation, housing, economic development, environmental conservation, infrastructure, and community services.
- Public Involvement: Involves community engagement.
- Legal Requirement: Comprehensive plans mandated by law as a tool for guiding land use decisions and managing growth.
- Flexibility: Flexible for policy decisions.

An organizational strategic plan includes:

- Scope: Focused action-oriented; Typically covers a period from 2- 10 years.
- Focus: Identifies specific objectives, priorities, initiatives, and performance measures to achieve organizational goals and address pressing issues or challenges and is consistent with a Comp. Plan.
- Departments and Employees: Developed holistically so that various levels of the organization can be aligned.
- Resource Allocation: Are used to allocate resources strategically, including budgetary allocations, staffing, CIP, IT and other resources, to implement targeted initiatives and achieve desired outcomes.
- Performance Monitoring: Includes mechanisms for monitoring progress, evaluating outcomes, and adjusting as needed to ensure the effective implementation of strategies.

Vision Themes:

A local government vision statement is a concise and aspirational expression that outlines the future state or desired outcomes for a community as envisioned by its governing body. This statement typically reflects the long-term goals, values, and aspirations that the local government aims to achieve in collaboration with its residents, businesses, and other stakeholders.

A vision statement serves as a guiding beacon, providing a sense of direction and purpose for the community's growth and development.

The City Council took a step back in time to consider the history of Brevard. Important events and dates of cultural, political, and economical significance were discussed to understand Brevard more fully and to develop a vision for the future.

Defining moments in history which shaped the character of the City we see today?



The City Council created a timeline of important events that shaped the character of the City we see today. Many important dates were mentioned including:

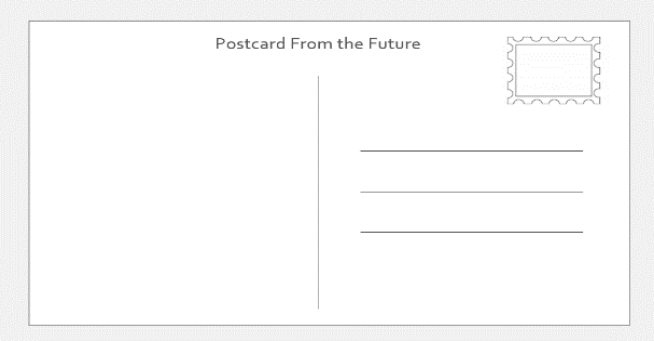
- Vanderbilt investments: Trades growth, local investments, building and booming in architecture, transportation and regional national connections
- Incorporation of government and first county meeting
- Brevard becomes County seat
- There is a focus on recreation
- Economic booms and establishments of the National Forest
- Industrial growth – Eucusta Plant
- Municipal expansion with professional character coherent with state standards and regulations
- Trades industry strong
- Switch to Council / Manager form of Government
- Schools were integrated
- Faith communities growing and crucial roles
- Disparities between communities growing
- Technology grows in 2000s
- Closure of manufacturing plants
- Becoming a Mainstreet Community

- Brevard /Pisgah forest featured in the Bike Magazine
- Re-envisioned the community center
- Residential shifts a trend
- Breweries trending
- Industry shifts to tourism- economic growth
- Rise of short term rentals and lack of new buildings
- Tourism and arts are strong and growing
- Covid made us aware of our nimbleness to adapt
- Covid brought funding to complete large projects
- Juneteenth made a holiday
- What the future brings: Recognizing all people in the community who have not been recognized previously. Bringing all community together.

Thinking of the Brevard Community we want to see in the future.

The Council collaborated on themes for a 5-year vision statement for Brevard. After group discussion on individual Council Member visions for the future as expressed during a "postcards exercise." The Council came to a consensus on which themes had the highest prioritization. The Council developed the following vision themes. The first three highlighted themes were the City Council's highest priority.

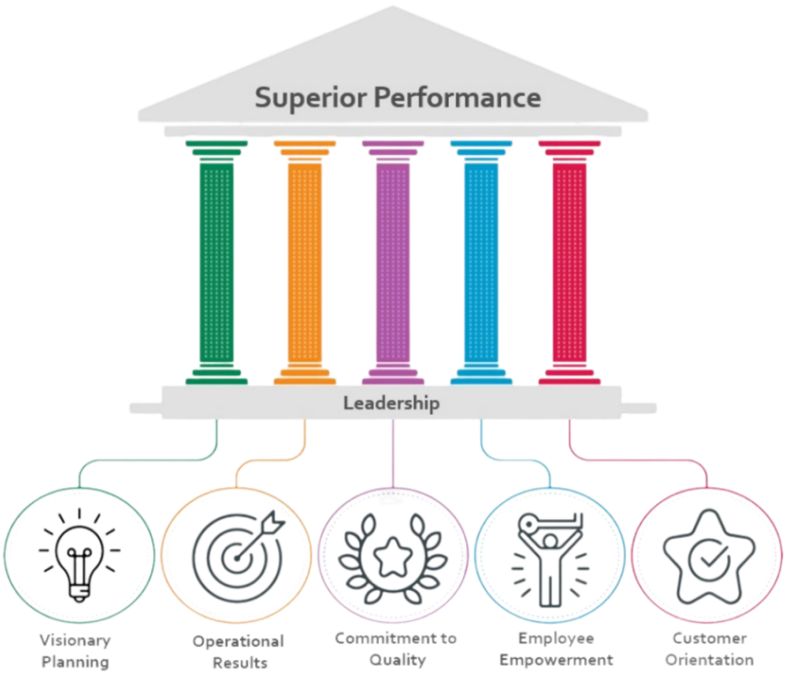
- Unique authentic character
- Vibrancy
- Unity, community, diversity
- Care for natural resources
- Responsible growth
- Outdoor Recreation
- Environmental preservation
- Family oriented
- Housing for all
- Safe and healthy
- Age-friendly
- Connectivity
- Economic vitality
- Living where you work
- Vibrant downtown



The City Council agreed to review the current vision statement to ensure consistency.

The City of Brevard is a High Performing Organization with a Strategic Planning and Performance Management Framework

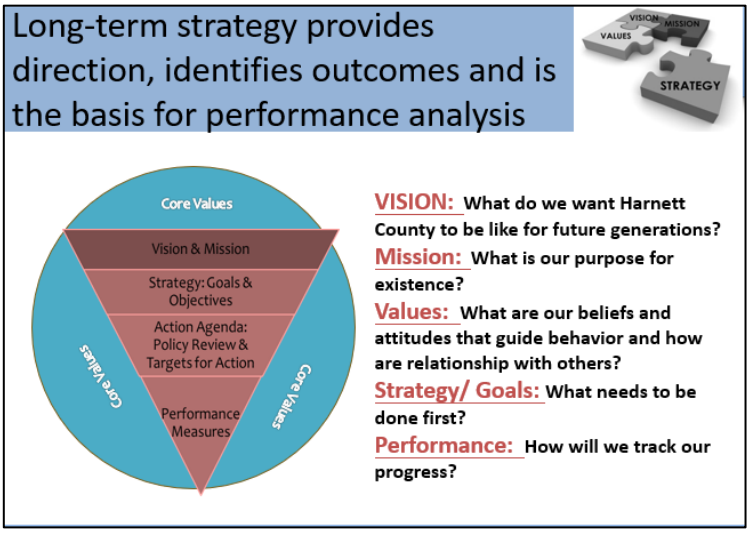
HIGH PERFORMING ORGANIZATION: The consultant presented an overview of high performing organizations and strategic planning.



STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK: The consultant presented best practices in strategic planning and performance measurement and discussed the importance of alignment of planning and implementation.

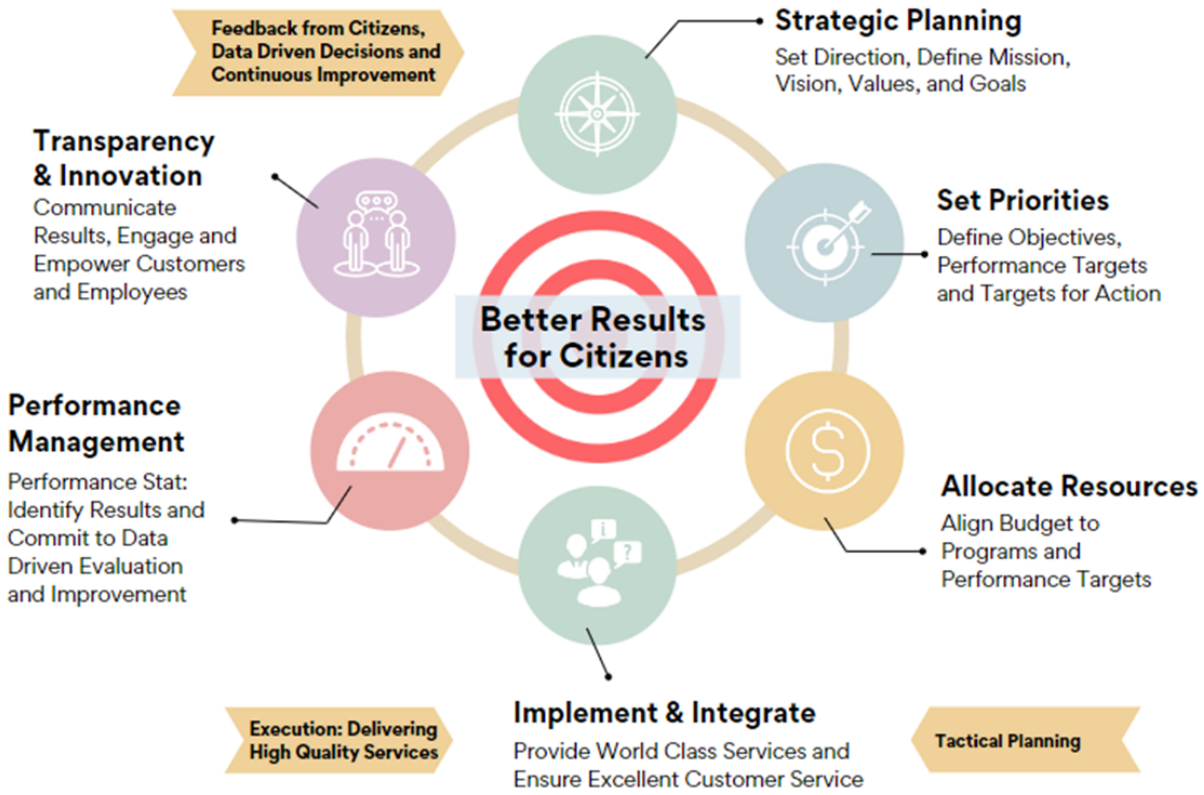
The benefit and uses of local government strategic plans were presented and include:

1. Provides direction & guidance from the elected officials
2. Transforms ideas into actions
3. Informs the Federal and State Legislative Agendas
4. Aligns core government functions and processes with desired strategies



5. Establishes Performance Management & Evaluation (Benchmarking and reporting)
6. Provides direction to Budgeting/Resource Allocation
7. Is foundational to internal and external communication strategies
8. Aligns citizen satisfaction, prioritization, engagement and education
9. Ensures employee engagement and informs orientation
10. Provides a basis for transparency and accountability.

Developing an organizational strategic plan aligns the organization for success.



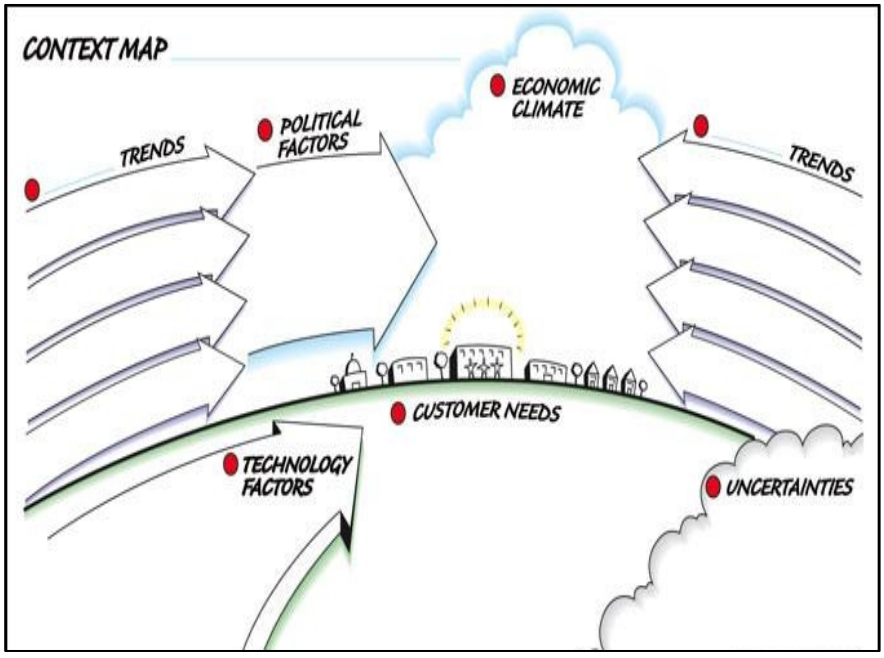
Directors Report and Environmental Scanning

The City Council heard from the City of Brevard's Department Directors. Directors expressed key issues and trends that Council should consider when developing long-term and short-term strategy.

The Council collaborated in an exercise of environmental scanning is an analysis of the current state of Brevard and the ongoing trends in the internal and external environment that impacts success, currently and in the future. This allows the Council to identify opportunities and key strategic issues in the community and organization. The results are extremely useful in shaping goals and strategies.

Trends- Internal:	• Staffing needs • Cross training • Professionalizing • Lagging technology in our organization • Outgrowing out space • Equipment needs • Expanding scope of large projects impacting operations
Trends- External:	• Inflation/ Construction costs/ Cost of Living increasing • Grant funding available • Employee/workforce shortages • Infill and growth • Technology enhancements: changing, social media • Remote work increasing
Political Factors: Local, State and Federal policy	• Intergovernmental agencies: contracts and agreements • County conflicts • State limitations • Conflicting visions • Changes in policy makers (federal and State) • Federal / State funding for directed projects
Economic Climate: What's the financial picture?	• Pharm investments • Outdoor equipment manufacturing • Breweries • Architecture/arts • Retiree destination • Level off and visitor spending • Covid was a boom for the City financially • Baby boomers and new people transition impacting property availability • Short Term Rentals

Customer Needs: Changing Demographics? Changing requirements?	• Constituents expectations are rising • Increased expectations of citizens overall • Affordable housing • Safety • Roads • Stormwater infrastructure • Water/Sewer • Generational families vs. transplants mismatch • Population demographics change • Communication and feeling heard • Intentional engagement • Volunteer engagements • Connect with residents and leverage partnerships • Provide more information for citizens
Technology Factors	• Mismatched technology (City levels) • Teleworking opportunities trending up • IT security issues / security threats
Uncertainties	• Funding • City/County relationships • National economic events and trends • Up coming recessions • Reliance on tourism economy



Developing a Strategic Goals, Objectives and Key Strategic Actions (KSA) for the City of Brevard

Goals areas identify what the organization intends to achieve and defines a path the organization must follow to reach the vision. Goals are further defined by specific objectives that measure results with Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Key Strategic Actions (KSA). The City Council collaborated on themes for Brevard's Goal areas. There were 7 goal areas developed by the Council. They are listed in no particular order in this document.

The Key Strategic Actions listed under each goal area were identified by Council as priorities to focus on in the next 12-18 months. There were 20 KSAs identified by Council. The Council then used a "Levels of Support Spectrum," explained below, to agree on the KSA list. There was consensus regarding the list of KSAs.

Levels of Support			
Rate your individual level of support for this idea/topic/issue. **We're using a spectrum to gauge support, not a vote of YES or NO.**			
a	b	c	d
Full support or agreement with the proposal.	Agreement with most aspects of the proposal, and, despite continued concerns with some elements, *willingness to go along* with the proposal.	*Significant concerns* or outright disagreement with some or all elements of the proposal, *but will not oppose* the action or decision ("standing aside").	Continued *strong disagreement* with the proposal
• *If all members of the group are at levels a-c, then there is some degree of consensus.*			

If all members of the group express approval at levels A, B or C, then they have reached consensus. If some members continue to disagree strongly (level D), then consensus has not been reached. The challenge to the group is to see what interest must be addressed in the proposal to move people at D to C (or higher) and from C to B (or higher) and from B to A. In addition, it is important to find out the nature of disagreements with a proposal. It is often helpful to characterize concerns as follows:

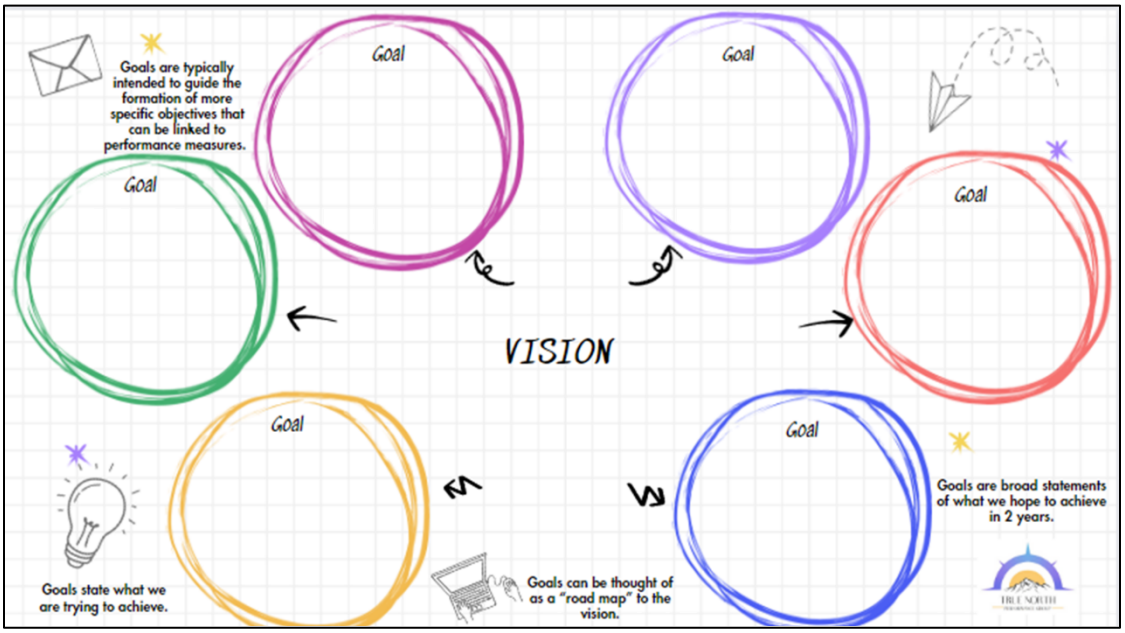
- Minor concerns with wording or editing.
- Agreement with the main thrust of the proposal, but concerns with specific elements which, if changed, would lead to agreement.
- Major concerns: principles disagreement with the overall direction of the proposal, which if not addressed, would lead the member to block the consensus (level D).

Source: Hustedde, Smutko, and Kapsa, *Turning Lemons into Lemonade* (n.d.)

The 20 KSAs were then prioritized with a strategic filter designed in collaboration by the Council. The filter included the following criteria:

- Essential Services (What keeps the lights on and is mandatory by law)
- What creates efficiencies
- Connected services
- Ongoing projects that are critical and priorities – what needs to happen for successful completion?
- What has been "hanging on the wall" and really needs to get done?
- "Big vs Small Impact" What has a big impact on the community and meets citizens needs?

The KSA receiving the most dots were considered the highest relative priority.



GOAL 1: To be a safe community

Goal Objectives

- Increase public trust in police
- Ensure adequate response time
- Provide road and traffic safety
- Maintain current conditions (low crime rates) and addressing negative public perception
- Address new threats (opioids & encampments)

Goal Key Partners

- County
- NCDOT

Goal Key Strategic Actions for FY 2025

This Goal has 2 Key Strategic Actions. The City Council vote for top priority is indicate in parathesis.

1. Develop a Public Safety staffing proposal that considers growth (3)
2. Review the agreement with the County for fire service

GOAL 2: To provide effective and sustainable infrastructure

Goal Objectives

- Provie effective Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP)
- Provide effective sidewalks and streets
- Provide effective Stormwater infrastructure
- Maintain and execute on an appropriate Capital Improvement Plan

Goal Key Strategic Actions for FY 2025

This Goal has 6 Key Strategic Actions. The City Council vote for top priority is indicate in parathesis.

1. Make progress on the WWTP (4)
2. Continue to seek funding on the Downtown master Plan (1)
3. Increase maintenance of existing infrastructure (5)
4. Provide budget proposal to accelerate street repaving schedule
5. Update stormwater plan and seek funding for approved options (4)
6. Consider revisions to fee-in-lieu policy for sidewalks

GOAL 3: To cultivate a vibrant economy in Brevard, characterized by vitality and sustainable development

Goal Objectives

- Ensure consistency to the comp plan
- Support local businesses
- Levering local resources
- Incentivize specialized manufacturing and industries
- Increase the number of jobs available in the community with competitive salaries that match the cost of living
- Focus on the arts and culture of the community

Goal Key Partners

- Henderson County
- Transylvania County
- Friends of the ET

Goal Key Strategic Actions for FY 2025

This Goal has 1 Key Strategic Actions. The City Council vote for top priority is indicate in parathesis.

1. Create an economic development incentive policy (2)

GOAL 4: To ensure affordable housing for all

Goal Objectives

- Ensure housing that is affordable and appropriate for the workforce in the community
- Ensure adequate choices for diverse housing needs
- Ensure adequate availability if housing for all in the community

Goal Key Partners

- Habitat for Humanity
- Faith based organizations

Goal Key Strategic Actions for FY 2025

This Goal has 4 Key Strategic Actions. The City Council vote for top priority is indicate in parathesis.

1. Ensure progress on Phase I of DFI Study (4)
2. Pursue grants for infrastructure (Azalea/Rhodo neighborhood)
3. Underwrite programs that produce affordable units (3)
4. Continue reviewing the UDO to encourage "missing middle" housing/density where appropriate (2)

GOAL 5: To promote unity, foster a strong sense of community, and encourage collaboration among residents and stakeholders

Goal Objectives

- To support festival and special evets (MLK celebration and Juneteenth)
- To support DEI initiatives
- To provide effective communication and community engagement
- To leverage Boards and Committees
- To gain citizen input
- Provide advocacy for the community (legislative policy and agendas)

Goal Key Partners

- Heart of Brevard
- TDA
- Chamber

Goal Key Strategic Actions for FY 2025

This Goal has 1 Key Strategic Actions. The City Council vote for top priority is indicate in parathesis.

1. Refresh Brevard's approach to organizing and hosing festivals

GOAL 6: To ensure we are a high quality organization, optimizing resources and processes to enhance service delivery and responsiveness to the needs of our community.

Goal Objectives

- To ensure efficient operations
- To optimize budget with appropriate tax rate'
- To provide exceptional financial management and maintain fund balance policy
- To provide effective IT services to the departments
- To ensure adequate space and equipment for employees to deliver high quality services
- To maintain legal compliance
- To ensure organizational design that reflects the community needs
- To attract and retain high quality staff
- To ensure effective project management ensuring that special/critical projects are executed

Goal Key Strategic Actions for FY 2025

This Goal has 3 Key Strategic Actions. The City Council vote for top priority is indicate in parathesis.

1. Address aging technology and software systems (4)
2. Complete space needs analysis and changes for all departments
3. Focus on employee engagement (2)

GOAL 7: To ensure effective transportation network that enhances the connectivity of the community and access to natural resources

Goal Objectives

- To provide adequate outdoor recreation opportunities accessible via our transportation network
- To ensure adequate trails and multiuse pathways especially focused on supporting the Ecusta and Esatoe trail
- To provide effective greenways and blueways

Goal Key Strategic Actions for FY 2025

This Goal has 3 Key Strategic Actions. The City Council vote for top priority is indicate in parathesis.

1. Create a parking plan and wayfinding sign plan for the whole city (3)
2. Complete the Tannery North section of Estateo Trail (2)
3. Complete easements and design for remaining sections of Esatoe Trail (3)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the strategic planning retreat for the City of Brevard has been a collaborative and insightful journey, laying the groundwork for a dynamic and sustainable future. Through engaged discussions, careful analysis, and the integration of diverse perspectives, the Council has forged a roadmap that aligns with the community's aspirations and positions Brevard for long-term success. The identified goals and objectives encapsulate the collective vision for the City, emphasizing Key Strategic Actions for the next 12-18 months. It is essential to recognize that successful implementation will require ongoing commitment, adaptability, and continuous evaluation. As Brevard moves forward, the success of a strategic plan lies not only in a comprehensive design but also in the commitment of all stakeholders involved. The collaboration between community members, local government, and external partners will be pivotal in realizing the envisioned future for Brevard. While this retreat began the journey to design a comprehensive organizational strategic plan, additional collaborative work should be done to finalize the plan. Consultant recommendations include:

- Reviewing the organizational mission statement
- Developing Core Values for the organization
- Reviewing this document with Council to ensure it encapsulates the Council's interest
- Providing an opportunity for the community and employees to provide feedback and input
- Making final revisions to the plan
- Adopting the strategic plan with expectations of performance management
- Developing Key Performance Indicators to manage for results

Regular reviews, open communication, and a flexible approach to adjustments will be crucial elements in ensuring that the strategic plan remains a living document, evolving in response to changing circumstances and emerging opportunities. The commitment to transparency, community engagement, and shared responsibility will be integral to the plan's effectiveness.

Brevard is poised for a future defined by sustainable growth, enhanced quality of life, and a sense of community pride. As Brevard embarks on the journey ahead, carry forward the momentum generated through this strategic planning process, fostering a collective commitment to the well-being and prosperity of Brevard and its residents. I appreciate the dedication and enthusiasm demonstrated by all participants throughout this strategic planning endeavor. With a shared vision and a commitment to excellence, I look forward to witnessing the positive transformation and continued success of Brevard

Sincerely,

Rebecca Jackson, Adjunct Faculty Member, UNC SOG Center for Public Leadership and Governance; CEO, True North Performance Group, LLC