Update on City Council Priorities

March 17, 2022

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE



Key Takeaways

- Council priorities have been developed over the past several years
- Many priorities are closely aligned with each other
- Despite staffing challenges, staff is making progress implementing and operationalizing policy objectives established through Council priorities
- Staff uses priorities for budget development and will establish work plans aligned with priorities for the upcoming fiscal year

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Asheville Vision Statement -Established 2016

Asheville is a great place to live because **we care about people**, we **invest in our city**, and we celebrate our natural and cultural heritage. Our city is for everyone. Our urban environment and **locally-based economy support workers, entrepreneurs and business owners, families and tourists**, and people of all ages. Cultural diversity and social and economic **equity** are evident in all that we do. Our neighborhoods are strong, **participation** in civic life is widespread, and collaborative **partnerships** are the foundation of our success.

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8 Key Focus Areas -Established 2016



Top 13 Strategies - Developed for FY 2020-2021

Focus Area	TOP 13 Strategy
An Equitable & Diverse Community	Expand partnership opportunities with Asheville City Schools through the Equity Collaborative to eliminate disparities in access to quality schools and other educational resources.
	Develop and implement a strategy based on the NLC report to foster economic mobility.
A Well-Planned & Livable Community	Develop specific implementation plan and schedule to amend the UDO and ordinances to reflect recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan.
	Complete corridor studies and other plans for identified transit-corridors to encourage supportive development that will be sensitive and complement adjacent neighborhoods.
A Clean & Healthy Environment	Reduce municipal carbon footprint by 4% per year (80% total reduction by 2050).
Quality Affordable Housing	Develop a strategy for sale or lease of city-owned land to incentivize affordable housing development.
	Review and update Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy with a goal of assessing the effectiveness of the tools and encouraging development of mixed income communities.
Transportation & Accessibility	Implement phase one recommendations of the Transit Master Plan.
Thriving Local Economy	Develop a business inclusion program to increase minority contractor participation in response to the Disparity Study.
A Financially Resilient City	Participate in the BCTDA management and planning initiative to develop a capital investment plan for high priority projects.
	Identify opportunities to fund transit service via a dedicated revenue stream.
	Identify opportunities to develop new tax revenue
	Invest needed financial and staff resources to address maintenance, new construction and operational needs.
A Connected and Engaged Community	

FY 2021-2022 Council Priorities -Developed in 2021

- **Reparations**
- **Employee Compensation Study**
- **Reimagining Public Safety**
- **Utilization of ARPA Funding**

Update on 2021 Council Priorities

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Reparations for Black Asheville

- **Funding:** City Council allocated $2.1 million to fund reparations and process
- **Staffing:** Office of Equity and Inclusion is fully staffed with the following positions:
  - Brenda Mills -Director
  - Darian Blue -Outreach Coordinator
  - Marcus Kirkman -Equity and Inclusion Training Consultant
  - Alayna Schmidt -Research & Data Analyst
- **In progress:** Formation of 25 member Reparations Commission
  - City Council appointments were approved on March 8
- **Commission Focus Areas:**
  - Housing
  - Economic Development
  - Public Health
  - Education
  - Public Safety and Justice

REPARATIONS PROJECT

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Reparations Process Outline

PHASE 1: Information Sharing and Truth Telling
(Completed)

PHASE 2: Formation of the Commission
(Underway)

PHASE 3: Finalize and present the report
(Est. Spring/Summer 2023)

For more information and updates: https://publicinput.com/reparations

Employee Compensation

- Compensation study completed. $7.9 million in FY2022 funding provided to implement the revised public safety pay plan and provide a pay increase to all other employees.
  - 16% average increase for Fire personnel
    - Starting pay for Firefighters increased 30%
  - 13% average increase for Police personnel
    - Starting pay for Police Officers increased 19%
  - Minimum of 2.5% increase for civilian positions across the City



- Ongoing analysis and review of compression issues and other compensation matters in collaboration with Finance and the City Manager's Office.

- FY2022 Budget included 8 weeks of paid parental leave and six weeks to care for a qualified family member with a serious health condition.

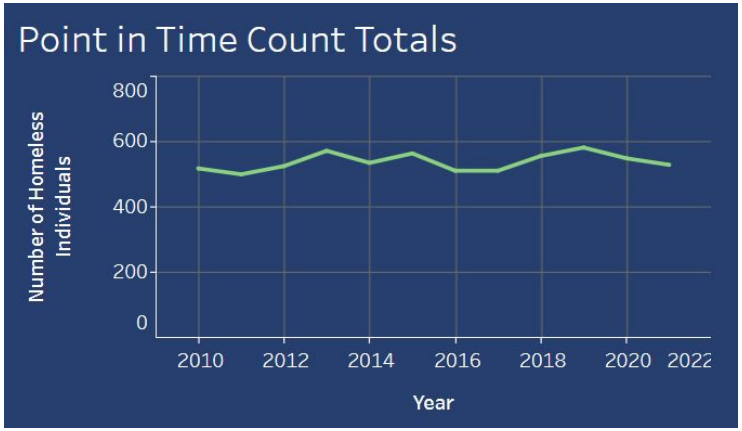
- Hiring key vacancies across the organization is a top priority to ensure necessary leadership support is available and provide continuity of operations.

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Reimagining Public Safety

Reallocated funding:

- Positions and funding moved from APD to Development Services Department:
  - All Animal Services employees, vehicles and budget
  - Noise Ordinance Enforcement - Council adopted updated Noise Ordinance
- Park Warden Position Moved from APD to Parks and Recreation Department
- Funded staffing for the ITS Department's Office of Data and Performance
  - Homelessness Point in Time Count Dashboard
  - ARPA RFP Evaluations
  - Partnership with Buncombe County and Code for Asheville launched the Buncombe County Court Reminders System
- Funded CAPE position, Neighborhood Services Specialist
  - Implementation of the first round of Neighborhood Grants
- Funded Homeward Bound Homelessness Outreach position to work in downtown and other areas



NEIGHBORHOOD
MATCHING GRANTS
PROGRAM

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Reimagining Public Safety

911 Consolidation

- Complete, effective January 1, 2022

"Lights On" Initiative

- Officers on traffic stops can give drivers a voucher for a free light repair, up to $250, rather than citing the driver

Police Recruiting Efforts

- Finalized contract with firm to develop effective recruitment strategy
- Currently working to establish viable incentive solutions to help retain existing staff

Homelessness Action Plan:

- In partnership with Buncombe County, the City will hire a consultant to develop an actionable plan to address unsheltered homelessness in Asheville and Buncombe County
- Consultant's work will be funded by Dogwood Health Trust

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American Rescue Plan Act Funding

Allowable Uses:

- Public health uses
- Negative economic impacts
- Additional pay for essential workers
- Revenue losses
- Investments in infrastructure
- Crime response and prevention

Recommended Categories:

- Affordable housing
- Homelessness services
- Small business recovery
- Workforce development
- Food systems
- City Infrastructure
- Domestic violence prevention and assistance
- Community communication

Progress To-Date

- Sept. 27 - Nov. 1, 2021: RFP for Funding Advertised
- December 2021: Initial Staff Scoring Completed
- February 1-2, 2022: Council Work Sessions to hear from applicants

Next Steps:

- April 2022: Notice of Initial Award Provided

American Rescue Plan Act Funding

Approved:	
Purpose	**Amount**
Emergency Non-Congregate Homeless Shelter	$3,446,212
Public Portable Toilet/Handwashing Services	$90,000
Homeward Bound Acquisition of the Days Inn	$2,000,000
Parking Revenue Loss	$1,600,000
ARPA Administrative Costs	$750,000
Step Up on Second Street for Ramada Inn	$500,000
Total ARPA Budgeted To-Date	**$8,386,212**
Total ARPA Award	**$26,293,853**
Total ARPA Remaining	**$17,907,641**

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Update on Focus Areas and Top 13 Strategies

1. Transportation and Accessibility

Strategy: Implement phase one recommendations of the Transit Master Plan

- Funding is budgeted to complete phase one one of the Transit Master Plan
  - This has not been implemented due to ART staffing shortages
- Continue to upgrade bus stop infrastructure, received $1 million from Federal Transit Administration to upgrade bus stops
- Completed the feasibility study for constructing a new Transit Maintenance Garage



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2. Quality Affordable Housing

Strategy: Develop a strategy for sale or lease of city-owned land to incentivize affordable housing development

Strategy: Review and update Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy with a goal of assessing the effectiveness of the tools and encouraging development of mixed income communities

- July 2021: City Council approved $2M in ARPA funding to support Homeward Bound's permanent supportive housing project for 85 units at Days Inn.
- November 2021: City received $4.7M in HOME ARP funds, designated to serve homeless individuals and families.
- December - February 2022: City approved the funding $1.5M in supportive services for 115 units of permanent supportive housing at the Ramada, with a real estate closing date scheduled for the end of March 2022.
- February 2022: the City Letter of Intent signed with Laurel Street Residential for the development of 319 Biltmore Avenue.
- February 2022: City Council approved a total of $2.5M in funding for the Haywood Street Community Development project for 45 units of permanent affordable housing on W. Haywood Street.

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3. An Equitable and Diverse Community

Strategy: Expand partnership opportunities with Asheville City Schools through the Equity Collaborative to eliminate disparities in access to quality schools and other educational resources

Strategy: Foster economic mobility

- Scope of Strategic Partnership Fund Grants refined to address impacts of the opportunity gap by supporting school-aged children in and out of the classroom
  - Grant process updates presented to HCD on February 15
  - Draft policy and application to be shared with HCD in June 2022
  - City Council approval in July 2022
  - Application process to begin in August 2022
- Provided funding for Down Payment Assistance (DPA) Program to help create generational wealth through homeownership.
- Maintained and operated CAYLA 2021
- Partnership with United Way, United for Youth Initiative

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4. A Well-Planned and Livable Community

Strategy: Develop specific implementation plan and schedule to amend the UDO and ordinances to reflect recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan

Strategy: Complete corridor studies and other plans for identified transit-corridors to encourage supportive development that will be sensitive and complement adjacent neighborhoods

- Implementation of Hotel Regulations has resulted in a minimum of **$1,006,000** to either the affordable housing trust fund or reparations fund from the public benefits table.
- City Council approved Urban Centers initiative to foster higher-density, mixed-use development that improves walkability and neighborhood quality of life while bringing housing closer to jobs and transit corridors.
- Open Space Task Force completed proposed changes to the City's open space zoning regulations and to refine the amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

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5. Thriving Local Economy

Strategy: Develop a business inclusion program to increase minority contractor participation in response to the Disparity Study

- Business Inclusion Contracting Policy Approved on October 27, 2020
- Business Inclusion Office established as part of Community and Economic Development Department in September 2021
    - Angelica Driver recently named Business Inclusion Manager

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6. A Clean and Healthy Environment

Strategy: Reduce municipal carbon footprint by 4% per year (80% total reduction by 2050)

- Completed Climate Justice Data Map for the public and staff to visualize local climate threats and compounding social and economic stressors
- Completed the Climate Justice Guide and Screening tool for internal operations to assist in determining the extent to which proposed plans and policies prioritize climate equity.
- Municipal Climate Action Plan development currently underway to create a roadmap for meeting the City's goals and implementing prioritized actions.

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7. A Financially Resilient City

Strategy: Participate in the BCTDA management and planning initiative to develop a capital investment plan for high priority projects

- Continued communication and meetings with BCTDA
- Identification of existing capital needs that align with TPDF funding requirements

Strategy: Identify opportunities to fund transit service via a dedicated revenue stream

- Preliminary conversations have occurred with City and County leadership

Strategy: Identify opportunities to develop new tax revenue

- Legislative agenda included proposed revisions to TPDF funding, making more capital projects occupancy tax eligible
- Development of tools such as the Public Benefits Table to provide financial resources that support City Council priorities

Strategy: Invest needed financial and staff resources to address maintenance, new construction and operational needs

- Completion of compensation study, implementation of public safety pay plan revisions, and ongoing efforts to address compression issues across organization

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8. Connected and Engaged Community

- Development of a comprehensive engagement and stakeholder database that can be accessed by all departments (recommendation from the Equity Assessment)
- Recently completed audit of Ashevillenc.gov to ensure information is as up-to-date as possible. Establishing criteria for the review and update of website data, and developing reports to ensure all webpages are updated on a regular basis.
- Enhance reporting and use of Asheville App data to ensure timely responses are provided and that data is more useful for identifying key drivers of issues across the community.
- Development of short-term and long-term solutions to improve access to government through measures to improve consistency on how information is accessed online, providing links to supporting materials in PDF format, and posting meeting schedules in the same location and same format for all boards and commissions.

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Next Steps

- March 18
  - Morning Session: Discuss Best Practices for Review of Strategic Priorities
  - Afternoon Session: Establish Strategic Priorities for FY2022-2023
- March-June
  - Annual Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Plan Developed and Finalized Based on Strategic Priorities
  - Departmental Work Plans Established Based on Strategic Priorities
  - Strategic Priorities used to inform future Council Committee agendas

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Priority Alignment

Reparations | ARPA | Classification/ Compensation | Reimagining Public Safety

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