Manager's Report

April 13, 2021

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE



Asheville Vision Statement

In January 2016, Asheville City Council created a 20-year vision for the city. This Council vision reflects Asheville's unique character and the aspirations for the community. Council used the vision as a guide when developing policies and priorities.

Asheville's Vision Statement

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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The strategic vision included 8 core themes



Council Priority Strategies

1. Implement Transit Master Plan
2. Affordable housing development
3. Partner with ACS through the Equity Collaborative
4. Amend the UDO
5. Develop a business inclusion program
6. Review and update Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy
7. Foster economic mobility
8. Reduce municipal carbon footprint by 4% per year
9. Partner with BCTDA to develop a capital investment plan
10. Dedicated revenue for transit
11. Develop new tax revenue
12. Complete corridor studies
13. Maintenance, new construction and operational needs

Council Priority Strategies

- More detailed information about the City Council Vision 2036 and accomplishments can be found on the City Website here:

  https://www.ashevillenc.gov/government/vision-2036/

- The information is also linked to tonight's City Council Agenda.

Transportation and Accessibility

Goal: Enhance the frequency of transit service, while also expanding coverage and addressing on-time performance

Strategy 1: Implement phase one recommendations of the Transit Master Plan

Accomplishments:

- Service increase of 25% implemented in January 2020 (first portion of Yr. 1 Transit Master Plan).
- On-time performance improved from an average of 55-60% to over 70%.

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Quality Affordable Housing

Goal: Promote the development of new affordable housing units and maintenance of existing affordable housing stock within the City.

Strategy 2: Develop a strategy for sale or lease of city-owned land to incentivize affordable housing development

Accomplishments:

- Adopted “Policies for Implementing Affordable Housing on City-owned Land” in September of 2019.
- Construction is well underway at 360 Hilliard. Units are expected to be available for lease as soon as the summer of 2021, includes 34 affordable units for a period of 50 years.

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Quality Affordable Housing

Goal: Promote the development of new affordable housing units and maintenance of existing affordable housing stock within the City.

Strategy 6: Review and update Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy with a goal of assessing the effectiveness of the tools and encouraging development of mixed income communities

Accomplishments:

- Using the City tools of LUIG, HOME funding, Housing Trust Funds and Affordable Housing Bond funding, approximately $12.5M in City investments leveraged alongside non-profit and private investment resulting in the development of 373 units of affordable housing:
    - 72 < 30% AMI
    - 106 < 50% AMI
    - 132 < 60% AMI rental
    - 55 < 80% AMI rental
    - 8 < 80% AMI homeownership

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Quality Affordable Housing - Homelessness

- **Goals**
  - Provide shelter options for all individuals
  - Create permanent housing options
  - Treat all people with dignity and respect
  - Provide a safe community for unhoused and housed individuals

- **Current situation**
  - Increase in the houseless population
  - Lexington Avenue encampment removed
  - Significant safety concerns necessitate the removal of homeless encampments
    - French Broad River West area
    - Cherry Street
    - Aston Park
    - Martin Luther Park
    - Others, as necessary

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Quality Affordable Housing - Homelessness

- **Short-Term Solution**
  - Partner with churches, nonprofits and Buncombe County to open “Code Purple” shelters that operate every night regardless of the weather
  - Increase partnership with Homeward Bound to monitor and remove encampments where safety concerns exists

- **Long-Term Solution**
  - Partner with Buncombe County and other partners to provide a **path to stable housing**
  - Utilize American Recovery Plan funding to assist in the Community EMT, and crisis care center and low-barrier shelter for homeless community

An Equitable and Diverse Community

Goal: Eliminate racial disparities in our school system.

Strategy 3: Expand partnership opportunities with Asheville City Schools through the Equity Collaborative to eliminate disparities in access to quality schools and other educational resources

Accomplishments:

- Participation in the Equity Collaborative with Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County.
- Creation of PODS in 13 sites with 260 students
- Created partnership to provide all Housing Authority residents with high speed wireless broadband access with reallocated funds from APD
- Reviewed changes to City Strategic Partnership Funds grant program to focus on eliminating the Opportunity Gap

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Equitable and Diverse Community

Goal: Reduce racial disparities within City government

Strategy 7: Develop and implement a strategy based on the NLC report to foster economic mobility

Accomplishments:

- Council unanimously adopted Reparations Resolution
- Created and provided funding for Down Payment Assistance (DPA) Program to help create generational wealth through homeownership.
- Maintained and operated CAYLA 2020, utilizing a Virtual Platform, providing compensation and scholarships to CAYLA students during the Pandemic
- Collaborated with community partners to develop and implement the Mountain Community Capital Fund, providing access to Capital for BME and LMI companies through a loan guarantee fund for small business loans. Loans to eight Black business owners have been possible due to this fund.
- Assisted with technical assistance, funding assistance for start up costs, and seed capital for Asheville Buncombe Community Land Trust, creating opportunities to preserve permanent housing affordability.

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A Well-Planned and Livable Community

Goal: Ensure future development is consistent with and achieves the vision recommended in the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy 4: Develop specific implementation plan and schedule to amend the UDO and ordinances to reflect recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan

Accomplishments:

- New hotel development regulations, including an incentivize-based public benefits table, were adopted in February 2021.
- A draft of the Urban Centers/Urban Place rezoning was released in January 2021. The first phase includes areas along Merrimon Ave, Tunnel Rd and Bleachery Blvd to encourage higher-density mixed-use development along high frequency transit corridors.
- New standards related to open space were released in 2020 with a goal to remove regulatory barriers to infill housing while balancing new housing development with other environmental goals.
- The AVL Shares Space program was initiated in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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A Well-Planned and Livable Community

Goal: Ensure future development is consistent with and achieves the vision recommended in the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy 12: Complete corridor studies and other plans for identified transit-corridors to encourage supportive development that will be sensitive and complement adjacent neighborhoods

Accomplishments:

- Hendersonville Rd corridor study - the draft corridor study was made available in January 2021 and was informed by community input over the past year. The draft study includes the background, existing conditions, market analysis and recommendations for the corridor. A final community workshop was held in February 2021.
- Tunnel Rd corridor study - a draft report was made available in December 2020 and several focus group meetings and community workshops have been held.

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Thriving Local Economy

Goal: Enhance support of small and minority businesses.

Strategy 5: Develop a business inclusion program to increase minority contractor participation in response to the Disparity Study

Accomplishments:

- New Business Inclusion Policy, a Race and gender-conscious Policy, adopted by City Council on October 27, 2020.
- Developed COA MWBE certification to allow businesses to be recognized as MWBEs and utilized.
- Started newsletter to inform MWBEs of upcoming opportunities and provide business best practices recommendations
- NC IDEA Grant used to purchase laptops to loan to MBEs who did not have connectivity.
- Hosted webinars on PPP and other grant opportunities
- Partnered with nonprofits to support MWBEs through classes, workshops, one on one training.

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Clean and Healthy Environment

Goal: Promote environmental stewardship.

Strategy 8: Reduce municipal carbon footprint by 4% per year (80% total reduction by 2050)

Accomplishments:

- Solar panels installed on the roof of the renovated ART Transit Station
- 100% Renewable Energy Roadmap
- Aggregated Solar RFP w/ Buncombe County
- ART Station Solar Installation
- Resolution endorsing the Declaration of a Climate Emergency
- Duke Energy IRP Formal Intervention

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A Financially Resilient City

Goal: Foster opportunities for new revenue streams.

Strategy 9: Participate in the Buncombe County Tourist Development Authoriy management and planning initiative to develop a capital investment plan for high priority projects

Accomplishments:

- Staff participated in the TDA's Tourism Management Improvement Plan (TMIP) during 2019-2020.
- The City provided a list and cost estimates of various capital projects for consideration.
- Staff is continuing to meet with the leadership of the BCTDA to understand the next steps.

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A Financially Resilient City

Goal: Foster opportunities for new revenue streams.

Strategy 10: Identify opportunities to fund transit service via a dedicated revenue stream

Accomplishments:

- Legislative agenda passed by council includes the following
  - Restoration of State Maintenance Assistance Program (SMAP)
  - Authority to Conduct a Referendum on a ¼ cent Sales Tax for Transit
- City has taken advantage of Covid-related funding to implement safety protocols on buses.
- Continued discussions with the legislative delegation and Buncombe County

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A Financially Resilient City

Goal: Foster opportunities for new revenue streams.

Strategy 11: Identify opportunities to develop new tax revenue

Accomplishments:

- City hosted meetings with stakeholder groups to educate and gather feedback on the possibility of the City obtaining more diverse funding revenue from (1) Food/Beverage Tax; (2) the Occupancy Tax; and a (3) ¼ cent sales tax dedicated to transit.
- Legislative agenda passed by Council supports reforming the local occupancy tax utilization.
- Continued discussion with legislative delegation and the Tourism Development Authority.

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A Financially Resilient City

Goal: Enhance City facilities and services to maintain high quality of life.

Strategy 13: Invest needed financial and staff resources to address maintenance, new construction and operational needs

Accomplishments:

- Staff has worked to prioritize maintenance needs across all facilities.
- This work helps ensure that facilities are receiving maintenance and renewal activities before there are issues with facility deterioration.
- There is a significant backlog of maintenance needs but the planning efforts help to ensure that funds are available and that adequate funds are being requested.

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RIVER ARTS DISTRICT
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

2010 3 restaurants or coffee shops: a none serving dinner

2020 15 restaurants, coffee or tea shops: 9 serving dinner

2010 140 artists located in 16 Buildings

2020 250+ artists located in 19 buildings

2010 1 river recreation business

2020 5 river recreation businesses

2010 <1 mile of sidewalk and zero miles of greenways and/or bike facilities

2020 4 miles of sidewalk, 2 miles of greenway, and the first 1/2mile of a 2-way cycle track in Asheville's history

2010 1 brewery, 1 bar

2020 3 breweries, 2 wine bars, 3 bars



Grand Opening Celebration April 22- May 22
Details at www.ashevillenc.gov/river

WE ARE OPEN

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Connected and Engaged Community

- Launch of the Virtual Engagement Hub allowed the City to continue public meetings by streaming them online and include live public comment. Over 20,000 unique participants have used the Virtual Engagement Hub.
- Partnership with Buncombe County to provide Covid updates and information to the community
- Re-imagining Public Safety Engagement:
  - Over 5,000 digital and paper survey responses
  - 5 Virtual listening sessions
  - 1 in person listening session
- Launch of APD's Community Engagement Division, Tip2APD allowing the public to share anonymous tips with police officers, and the public transparency dashboard
- Vance Monument Task Force Engagement led to decision by Council to remove the Vance Monument
- City of Asheville rolls out text message option for public engagement
- Equity Focused Budget Engagement and Planning Process currently underway

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2021 - 2022 Council Priorities

- Reparations
- Employee Compensation Study
- Reimagining Public Safety
- Covid Relief Spending and Investment/Prioritizing Recovery Funding

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Council Priority Strategies

Stay in the know!

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