THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE
NORTH CAROLINA

City Council Priorities Update

April 13, 2021

- 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.

- The strategic vision included 8 core themes.
    - Equitable and Diverse Community
    - Transportation and Accessibility
    - Well Planned and Livable Community
    - Clean and Healthy Environment
    - Thriving Local Economy
    - Quality Affordable Housing
    - Connected and Engaged Community
    - Financially Resilient City

- In 2019, the City Council adopted 13 priorities to move the vision forward.

- This document provides an update on the accomplishments towards the 13 priorities.

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
Transportation & Accessibility	Enhance the frequency of transit service, while also expanding coverage and addressing on-time performance.	Implement phase one recommendations of the Transit Master Plan

Updates/Accomplishments over the past 2 years:

- 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%.
- Completed transit center renovation in late 2020.
- Completed bus stop improvements associated with the bond.

Covid Related Accomplishments:

- Successfully contracted with Young Transportation Inc. in June 2020 to provide support services to ART during the pandemic. Young picks up passengers on 4 primary routes when ART buses are full (capacity limited to 10 people) and to provide back up on routes when ART staff has been impacted by COVID. They carry between 400-500 passengers per week. This contract has allowed us to keep all routes running under normal schedule.

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Implement additional bus stop improvements utilizing $1 million Federal Transit grant over next 2-3 years.
- Implement next phase(s) of Transit Master Plan including later evening service and adding frequency to the S6 and S3 routes.

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
Quality Affordable Housing	Promote the development of new affordable housing units and maintenance of existing affordable housing stock within the City.	Develop a strategy for sale or lease of city-owned land to incentivize affordable housing development

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- City Council adopted “Policies for Implementing Affordable Housing on City-owned Land” in September of 2019 that set goals and procedures for using City land for affordable housing.
- On December 12, 2019, the City sold property at 360 Hilliard to Kassinger Development Group for the development of Hilliard Park Apartments, with 86 total residences, of which 34 are affordable for a period of 50 years. Construction is well underway and units are expected to be available for lease as soon as the summer of 2021.
- On January 30, 2020, the City purchased 5.48 acres of land located at 319 Biltmore Avenue and on February 5, 2020 issued a Request for Proposals for the development of a mixed-use, mixed income, affordable housing community. Nine proposals were received and Homes Urban was identified as the finalist for the development.
- In the fall of 2020, staff issued an RFP for the City’s Neighborhood Lots program to develop three small City-owned vacant sites for affordable housing at Kentucky Drive, Lufty Avenue, and West Chestnut Street. Community engagement and due diligence continues on these sites.

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Grand opening of Hilliard Park Apartments.
- City Council’s consideration of Homes Urban final proposal for 319 Biltmore, pending completion of due diligence.
- Completion of the purchase of approximately 21 acres of land 65 Ford Street as part of a larger 60 acre redevelopment opportunity in partnership w/ HACA & Purpose Built Communities (PBC).

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
An Equitable & Diverse Community	Eliminate racial disparities in our school system.	Expand partnership opportunities with Asheville City Schools through the Equity Collaborative to eliminate disparities in access to quality schools and other educational resources

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- Participation in the Equity Collaborative with Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County.

Covid Related Accomplishments:

- Creation of PODS
- Internet Access: partnership to provide all Housing Authority residents with high speed wireless broadband access

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Launch of the United for Youth Network - partnership with United Way, Buncombe County the Asheville Chamber and others focused on identifying and removing barriers to opportunity and co-create solutions that support student success.
- Review changes to City Strategic Partnership Fund (SPF) grant program to focus on eliminating the Opportunity Gap

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
A Well-Planned & Livable Community	Ensure future development is consistent with and achieves the vision recommended in the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan.	Develop specific implementation plan and schedule to amend the UDO and ordinances to reflect recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- 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 rezoning 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. The purpose of this project is to remove regulatory barriers to infill housing while balancing new housing development with other environmental goals.

Covid Related Accomplishments:

- The AVL Shares Space program was initiated in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program was established to help safely support small businesses and included various strategies to reorganize how public space (sidewalks and streets) and private property (parking lots) are used. Examples included curbside pick-up zones, expansion of use of public sidewalks for outdoor seating and merchandise sales, and use of on-street parking spaces for outdoor seating and congregation in designated pedestrian priority zones (“shared streets”).

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Comprehensive Plan implementation plan - staff is currently working on a framework for plan implementation that will help guide a prioritization process for UDO amendments.
- Urban Centers/Urban Place Rezoning - staff expects to present the draft zoning text and map for phase one (Merrimon Ave, Tunnel Rd and Bleachery Blvd) to the Planning & Zoning Commission in June 2021. Staff is currently working with the Legacy Neighborhoods Coalition and Buncombe County on potential anti-displacement strategies for phase two Urban Centers locations (along Patton Avenue and the Asheville Mall area).
- Open space standards - staff is currently facilitating meetings with a working group that includes representatives from several boards and commissions in order to take a more holistic view of the proposal. This process is expected to take approximately six months to complete.
- AVL Shares Space - staff is currently working on a transition plan that may include phasing out elements of the program and/or making some portions more permanent.

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
Thriving Local Economy	Enhance support of small and minority businesses.	Develop a business inclusion program to increase minority contractor participation in response to the Disparity Study

Updates/Accomplishments over the last two years:

- New Business Inclusion Policy, a Race and gender-conscious Policy, adopted by City Council on October 27, 2020.
- Developed new procedures to comply with Policy, including new forms to collect data
- Developed COA MWBE certification to allow businesses to be recognized as MWBEs and utilized. This certification is also utilized to set project by project goals based on disparities.
- COA certification is a stepping stone to allow businesses to gain/ grow the capacity to become certified with NCDOT and the State HUB Office and eventually become Prime contractors and bid on bigger projects.
- Training staff to comply with new ABI Policy (Continuous)
- Started a newsletter to inform MWBEs of upcoming opportunities and provide business best practices recommendations
- Hosted two Ice House Entrepreneurship Programs. This program is designed to empower learners by exposing them to entrepreneurial thinking while immersing them in entrepreneurial experiences that will enable them to develop creativity and critical thinking, effective problem solving, communication, teamwork, and other entrepreneurial skills – skills that will enable them to succeed regardless of their chosen path.

Covid Related Accomplishments:

- Vendor Pop Up FAIR: One Love Holiday Market hosted at several locations. We had eight BIPOC vendors test out and sold their goods for eight weeks.
- Applied and received an NC IDEA Grant to purchase laptops to loan to MBEs who did not have connectivity. We purchased 12 Chromebooks, and we have a lending library for our MBEs to utilize.
- Hosted several webinars on PPP and other grant opportunities
- Partnered with several nonprofits to support MWBEs through classes, workshops, one on one training.

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- On April 13, 2021, ABI Manager will start teaching classes and workshops at AB-Tech. The first series will be the Willing, Able, & Ready Training Series. These workshops will be provided quarterly.
- Collaborating with several partners (Skanska, Wake Community College, AB-Tech, NC MWBE Coordinators Network, and NCLBGC) to develop a Contractors Academy to grow the capacity of our MWBEs
- MWBE utilization reporting system

- COA Certified MWBE database for internal and external use. This database will help increase and promote awareness of our MWBEs
- Start marketing campaign to ensure that we reach our MWBEs in the ten County relevant market region set by the Disparity Study. This Market Region is also where we have the authority to certify MWBEs
- UNC School of Government utilizing our new Policy as a resource for other municipalities
- Will be hosting three ICE HOUSE Entrepreneurship Programs (One in summer, two in autumn) for 9th and 10th graders at Asheville High School.

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
Quality Affordable Housing	Promote the development of new affordable housing units and maintenance of existing affordable housing stock within the City.	Review and update Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy with a goal of assessing the effectiveness of the tools and encouraging development of mixed income communities

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- During this pandemic, CD Staff has focused intensively on getting funding into the community through our partners to benefit Low & Moderate Income (LMI) Individuals and Families. This includes CDBG, HOME, SPF, CoC, ESG, HTF and COVID-related funds.
- In 2020, CD Staff processed roughly 300 draw requests for nearly $6 million.
- So far in 2021, staff have dispersed 36 draw requests totaling $758,824.
- 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.
    - 373 units of affordable housing
        - 72 < 30% AMI
        - 106 < 50% AMI
        - 132 < 60% AMI rental
        - 55 < 80% AMI rental
        - 8 < 80% AMI homeownership
    - $34,906 per unit (City investment)

Covid Related Accomplishments:

- Of the CARES Act passed in March and September 2020, the City received a total $1.5M of CDBG-CV funding which was primarily allocated to Pisgah Legal Services and Homeward Bound for emergency rental assistance. Households are eligible for up to 6 months of rent/utility arrears and/or rental/utility assistance. To date, 101 households have been assisted with these funds.
- A non-congregate shelter (NCS) for people who are homeless with COVID vulnerability that began at the Harrah's Cherokee Center - Asheville continues to operate in partnership at the Red Roof Inn with Homeward Bound, and Axis Security.
- As of March 5, there were 59 people in shelter. A total of 136 people have been served since the project's inception on May 11, 2020, with an average length of stay of 138 days. Since operations began, 33 people have exited to permanent housing.
- This project is funded by the City and Dogwood Health Trust, with partial reimbursement through FEMA.

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Allocate funding to support the purchase of the Days Inn Motel by Homeward Bound for 85 units of permanent supportive housing.

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
An Equitable & Diverse Community		Develop and implement a strategy based on the NLC report to foster economic mobility

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- 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. It is a collaboration between Carolina Small Business Development Fund, Mountain BizWorks, Self-Help Credit Union, the City of Asheville, and Buncombe County. The program launched on Tuesday, August 27, 2019. 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.
- Create and provide funding for Down Payment Assistance (DPA) Program to help create generational wealth through homeownership.
- Efforts to position COA as a Model Employer: adoption of Living Wage for City Employees; update Comp and Class Study; create and model diversity in hiring practices.

Covid Related Accomplishments:

- Regular communication with MBEs about CV19 resources and technical assistance
- Hosted a Virtual cohort of businesses for peer-led business training through the Mountain Business Equity Initiative, a City funded initiative to increase BIPOC entrepreneurs and business.
- Maintained and operated CAYLA 2020, utilizing a Virtual Platform, providing compensation and scholarships to CAYLA students during the Pandemic

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Consider expansion of CAYLA program to include additional internships, working with additional for-profit businesses in high demand jobs

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
A Clean & Healthy Environment	Promote environmental stewardship.	Reduce municipal carbon footprint by 4% per year (80% total reduction by 2050)

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- 100% Renewable Energy Roadmap
- Aggregated Solar RFP w/ Buncombe County: City Council approved an interlocal agreement with Buncombe County in Resolution 19-214 to conduct feasibility site assessments and issue a joint solicitation for onsite renewable energy systems. This project was a joint venture between the City, Buncombe County, AB Tech, Buncombe County Schools and Asheville City Schools and will result in the installation of 7 MW of solar energy at 46 sites.
- This project will see the installation of a combined total of 259 kW of solar photovoltaic energy on five (5) City owned facilities:
    - Burton Street Community Center
    - Linwood Crump Shiloh Community Center
    - Fire Station #10
    - Fire Station #11
    - Wall Street Parking Deck
- ART Station Solar Installation
- Duke Energy IRP Formal Intervention: Every two years Duke Energy submits an Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) to communicate strategies for delivering reliable electricity at the lowest cost (typically a 10 to 20 year horizon).
- The IRP models potential pathways to accelerate renewable energy deployment but reform of state policy is required. This is an opportunity to advocate for such reform. The City of Asheville's Moving to 100% - Renewable Energy Transition Pathways Analysis identifies the need to participate in State and Utility actions to achieve the City's renewable energy goals.

Covid Related Accomplishments:

- Work From Home [WFH] carbon reductions

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Fire Station #13 LEED Certification [LEED Policy]
- Grant Center -- renewable energy installation
- Round II Aggregated Solar: On April 13, 2021 staff is requesting that Council authorize the City Manager to enter into an interlocal agreement with Buncombe County to give authority to conduct feasibility site assessments and issuance of a joint solicitation for onsite solar energy systems.
- The solicitation will be issued by Buncombe County and will also include sites from Buncombe County, Town of Weaverville, Town of Black Mountain, UNC Asheville, and Asheville Regional

Airport. The City will be responsible for selection of the sites, funds for feasibility assessments and funds to prepare solicitation documents.

- Fleet Electrification
- Municipal Climate Action Plan

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
A Financially Resilient City	Foster opportunities for new revenue streams.	Participate in the Buncombe County Tourism and Development Authority (BCTDA) management and planning initiative to develop a capital investment plan for high priority projects

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- 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.
- With COVID and the change in leadership, the BCTDA is reevaluating the recommendations of the plan to ensure that it still meets the needs of the Community.

Covid Related Accomplishments:

- The BCTDA provided grants to tourism related businesses during COVID.

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Staff is continuing to meet with the leadership of the BCTDA to understand the next steps.

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
A Financially Resilient City	Foster opportunities for new revenue streams.	Identify opportunities to fund transit service via a dedicated revenue stream

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- Legislative agenda passed by council in 2021 includes the following
    - Restoration of State Maintenance Assistance Program (SMAP)
    - Authority to Conduct a Referendum on a ¼ cent Sales Tax for Transit

Covid Related Accomplishments:

- City has taken advantage of Covid related funding to implement safety protocols on buses.

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Continued discussions with the legislative delegation and Buncombe County

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
A Financially Resilient City	Foster opportunities for new revenue streams.	Identify opportunities to develop new tax revenue

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- 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.

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Continued discussion with legislative delegation and the Tourism Development Authority.

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
A Well-Planned & Livable Community	Ensure future development is consistent with and achieves the vision recommended in the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan.	Complete corridor studies and other plans for identified transit-corridors to encourage supportive development that will be sensitive and complement adjacent neighborhoods

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- 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.

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Hendersonville Rd corridor study - the consultant team are now preparing a final draft report. Once completed it will be presented to City Council for consideration of adoption.
- Tunnel Rd corridor study - the second and final community workshop is scheduled for April 2021, in which the community will discuss and explore design ideas and opportunities.

Focus Area	Goal	Strategy
A Financially Resilient City	Enhance City facilities and services to maintain high quality of life.	Invest needed financial and staff resources to address maintenance, new construction and operational needs

Updates/Accomplishments over the last 2 years:

- 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.
- Renewal and replacement work has focused on renewable energy goals.
- Projects have included the various solar installations as well roof replacements that will support future solar installations.
- Assessments are also being conducted to determine the additional cost associated with completing future projects that allow the City to meet these goals.

Covid Related Accomplishments:

- Custodial and maintenance staff have successfully performed upkeep on all City facilities ensuring that work environments were kept clean and safe for use.
- Many building projects have been completed in the last year.
- This has allowed for building maintenance to be maintained at expected levels and has also helped to ensure that contractors were able to stay busy.

Upcoming Milestones/Next Steps:

- Staff will turn the planning focus onto large value facility maintenance and replacement prioritization.
- The first stage of this work included minor maintenance but there is also a need to complete a more comprehensive evaluation of our facilities.
- This work will help to inform our future budgeting and early work in this area will also help in the achievement of the City’s goals for social and environmental justice.