



HARRISONBURG **VA**
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COUNCIL VISION & PRIORITIES

FEB. 2020 UPDATE



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HARRISONBURG 2039

CAPITAL OF THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY



At a City Council Retreat held in February 2019, Council members together created a vision statement capturing what they envision as the most ideal state of the City in 20 years. The vision is a guiding document for City Council and staff. By 2039, City Council desires for the City of Harrisonburg to be the ‘Capital of the Shenandoah Valley.’ That will be accomplished by focusing on these six key areas: A City for All; Economic Development: Goals, Gains, and Growth; A Thriving Educational Epicenter; Available Housing for All; Distinctive, Reliable Delivery of High Quality City Services; and Fiscal Sustainability and Planning.

The City’s executive leadership team developed a work plan with 29 actionable priorities and related projects for City departments to focus on for the next three years. The purpose of the plan is to advance the 2039 vision.

City Council adopted its vision and three-year plan on April 23, 2019. At the beginning of each year the City will review its accomplishments and report to City Council on progress. Significant progress has been made on the plan since its adoption. This annual report highlights some of the accomplishments made during the first year of work plan implementation and projects underway.



We are the capital of the Shenandoah Valley. We provide a quality urban living option for everyone who wants to reside here.

Our diverse population thrives in a welcoming city where all are valued as friends and neighbors.

Our inclusiveness is our strength and reflects the true spirit of our city.

The pillars of our multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-generational city consist of a robust economy and a vibrant education epicenter, along with a broad range of amenities that enrich life.

This is made possible by the fiscally sound planning of our staff and elected leaders.

A CITY FOR ALL

Harrisonburg is a city with a rich history as a community for all people, regardless of heritage, culture, language, age, economic status, or religion. We are a harmonious, caring, welcoming city where differences are embraced, celebrated, and accommodated. Recognizing Harrisonburg's diversity, our support systems assure that any resident has access to city services. We are a city that allows all people to feel safe, valued, and have abundant opportunity.



PRIORITIES

- DEVELOP A “HOW TO” FOR CITY SERVICES TO IMPROVE ACCESS.
- REVIEW OUR PROCESS FOR CITIZEN APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS & COMMISSIONS AND IMPLEMENT IMPROVEMENTS AS NEEDED.
- ENHANCE ACCESS TO LANGUAGE SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS AND CITY SERVICES.
- ENHANCE RESIDENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.
- DEVELOP AND BEGIN IMPLEMENTING APPROPRIATE RECOMMENDATIONS OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN.

..... PROJECTS UNDERWAY

The language access plan will review existing support services for limited English proficient residents accessing City of Harrisonburg services and propose policies and procedures to enhance these supports. The staff workgroup began meeting in November 2019.

✓ COMPLETED PROJECTS

• COMMUNITY WALKS

Monthly community walks in neighborhoods to meet residents, answer questions, and share tips continue to be a success. While the effort is led by the Police Department, staff from other departments frequently participate.



• ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN PHASE 1:

The Environmental Action Plan is a guide for city leaders, staff, and members of the community to implement sustainability visions and principles. The EAP Phase 1 lays the groundwork for future phases of EAP development and implementation and is organized into six focus areas where action can be



taken to improve the environment and sustainability (Buildings and Energy, Land Use and Green Space, Regional Food Systems, Sustainable Transportation, Waste Reduction and Recycling, and Water Resources). City Council adopted Phase 1 on January 14, 2020.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: GOALS, GAINS, AND GROWTH

Harrisonburg is the economic capital of the Shenandoah Valley. We are the business transaction center of western Virginia, where companies and professional service firms want to be. We are the regional destination for education, shopping, dining and entertainment. Our retail centers are robust throughout the city. Our regional economic development partnerships have resulted in thriving technology zones, higher wage jobs, and a vibrant North End Gateway. Our economic development strategies continue to grow businesses, encourage entrepreneurship, and attract opportunities.



PRIORITIES

- PURSUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS THAT ESTABLISH STRONGER RETAIL, JOB CREATION, AND A HEALTHIER ECONOMY.
- FURTHER ENHANCE OUR DOWNTOWN AREA.
- CONTINUE TO IMPROVE CITY PROCESSES AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ATTRACT NEW BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT TO THE CITY.

..... PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- **Downtown Parking:** The parking study examined existing parking supply and usage, forecasted demand for parking, and will recommend strategies for both current and projected demand. The final report is anticipated by the end of February 2020.
- **Downtown Master Plan:** The City and Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance are partnering together to develop a downtown master plan in 2020. A consultant will be hired in winter 2020 to assist with the process.

✓ COMPLETED PROJECTS

• OPPORTUNITY ZONES

The Economic Development Department created a comprehensive prospectus to market Opportunity Zone properties to potential investors. Staff hosted a seminar for developers, realtors, and financial advisors to educate them on Opportunity Zones regulations and local properties. Harrisonburg has more Opportunity Zone sites listed on the statewide database than any other Virginia locality.

• LAUNCH HARRISONBURG

In partnership with Co.Starters, the City now offers a 9-week bootcamp for local entrepreneurs. The new program will equip local residents to turn a good idea into a viable business. The first cohort began in February 2020.



• ONLINE PERMITTING AND INSPECTIONS SUBMISSION



A new online submission portal known as LAMA is now available for some permit and inspection applications. By summer 2020 the Department of Community Development hopes to expand the number of applications that can be submitted online.

A THRIVING EDUCATIONAL EPICENTER

Harrisonburg has an exceptional public education system, from pre-kindergarten through high school. Our schools are award winning and nationally recognized. Our investment in education attracts families and engaged leaders, and develops entrepreneurs and forward thinking businesses that contribute to our community. The city's schools graduate skilled and qualified individuals who are college, career, and life ready. Moreover, as the home of two institutions of higher learning, and in partnership with our regional community college, the city is a hub of innovation, technology, and workforce development.



PRIORITIES

- CONTINUE OUR COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC EDUCATION THROUGH ADEQUATE AND REALISTIC FUNDING.
- BUILD A NEW SECOND HIGH SCHOOL.
- CONTINUE THE EFFORTS OF THE JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY/CITY LIAISON COMMITTEE WITH A FOCUS ON ISSUES SUCH AS FUNDING; GROWTH, LAND USE, AND TRANSPORTATION; SAFETY; AND JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY STUDENT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.
- APPROACH THE EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT ABOUT ESTABLISHING AN EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY/CITY LIAISON COMMITTEE.
- EXPLORE ESTABLISHING A WORK GROUP COMPRISED OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIALS (FIRE DEPARTMENT, POLICE DEPARTMENT AND EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER) FROM JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY, EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY, AND THE CITY.

✓ COMPLETED PROJECTS

• CITY-EMU LIAISON COMMITTEE



Eastern
Mennonite
University

The first meeting of the City of Harrisonburg and Eastern Mennonite University was held on October 24, 2019. Mayor Deanna Reed and Vice-Mayor Sal Romero serve as Council liaisons.

• HHS2 REVISED PLAN

The City Council approved of the revised second high school plan on December 10, 2019.



..... PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- HHS2: The City is now accomplishing several tasks associated with the design, financing and infrastructure improvements for the second high school project.

AVAILABLE HOUSING FOR ALL

Harrisonburg has been at the forefront in developing a comprehensive approach to community housing needs. The city has successfully partnered with local organizations and has embraced policies such as a housing trust fund, supported by appropriate fees and incentives. As a result, Harrisonburg offers a wealth of affordable, diverse housing options to its residents.

Through innovative planning and partnerships, homelessness in Harrisonburg is now largely a thing of the past. Creative land use planning such as varied lot sizes has permitted flexible redevelopment of our residential areas. The city has logistically integrated high quality affordable housing throughout its neighborhoods. As a result, Harrisonburg's neighborhoods reflect its diverse and unique character. Moreover, the city has achieved these goals while maintaining a strong and sustainable tax base.



PRIORITIES

- DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING PLAN.
- INCREASE FLEXIBILITY IN DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS TO ENHANCE OUR HOUSING INVENTORY.
- CREATE ADVISORY COUNCIL TO ASSIST HARRISONBURG REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY.
- WORK WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS TO CREATE A COMMITTEE FOCUSED ON PRODUCING A PLAN FOR ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS.



COMPLETED PROJECTS

- **MEETINGS ON HOMELESSNESS**
Homelessness service providers, the City, and the County have met monthly since June 2019 to discuss homelessness in our community and work together to identify unmet service needs and develop short-term and long-term plans to fill these gaps.
- **SMALL LOT RESIDENTIAL ZONING**
City Council in June 2019 approved a new zoning classification that enables residential construction on smaller lots.

..... PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- **Re-Write of the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances:** These ordinances were last updated in the 1990s. Staff is drafting a request for proposal to hire technical assistance in 2020 to begin the re-write of the ordinances. This re-write, combined with the comprehensive housing study, will have a lasting impact on the City's ability to address housing needs.
- **Comprehensive Housing Study:** The comprehensive housing study will analyze the current housing market to quantify existing housing supply, assess demand for different housing types, identify barriers to meeting demands, and list potential policy tools to address any housing gaps. The staff workgroup began meeting in September 2019. A request for proposal to hire a consultant to complete the study will be released in February 2020.

DISTINCTIVE, RELIABLE DELIVERY OF HIGH-QUALITY CITY SERVICES

Harrisonburg prides itself on high-quality service provision. The city is clean, safe, and has abundant recreational opportunities. Traveling through the city is pleasant and easy, whether by car, bike, foot, or transit bus. Our highly engaged residents know the city is responsive to their concerns. Innovation in service delivery is encouraged and other communities turn to Harrisonburg as a center for best practices. Investments in sustainable assets and infrastructure have established a strong foundation for the future. The city government attracts and retains talented public servants due to its reputation for being well-managed and a great employer.



PRIORITIES

- ENHANCE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS IN THE CITY.
- DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY TO BETTER TELL THE CITY'S STORIES AND INFORM RESIDENTS OF THE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THEM, INCLUDING A UNIFORM STRATEGY FOR UPDATING RESIDENTS ABOUT EVENTS OR INCIDENTS.
- INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE BASED ON REGULARLY UPDATED PLANNING DOCUMENTS.
- WORK WITH DEPARTMENTS TO IDENTIFY, EXAMINE, AND IMPLEMENT EMERGING TECHNOLOGY.
- PURSUE AND MAINTAIN ACCREDITATIONS OF PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENTS
 - CONDUCT A FORMAL CITIZEN SURVEY BASED ON BEST PRACTICES TO EVALUATE SATISFACTION WITH CITY SERVICE PROVISION.
- MAINTAIN AND FURTHER PROVIDE SECURE ONLINE SERVICES FOR DOCUMENT FILINGS AND PAYMENT.



COMPLETED PROJECTS

• JMU COLOR ROUTES

NOW IN COLOR!



Based on a route study for all transit lines servicing JMU, the City introduced a new route system with color-coded bus lines and altered service hours.

• REGIONAL CAD/DMS SYSTEM

The City launched a new multi-jurisdictional and enhanced Call Dispatch and Records Management System that replaced the outdated system.

..... PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- **Purcell Park Master Plan:** The Parks and Recreation Department commenced a comprehensive planning process for Purcell Park. The first few phases, including community engagement, have been completed. Programming and conceptual design phases will occur in 2020.
- **Expansion of Bus Service Outside City Limits:** The City as a member of the Rockingham County Urban Development Area Advisory Committee has had productive discussions about possibly expanding transit service into the County.
- **Public Safety Accreditation:** The Fire Department and Police Department are both exploring accreditation.

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY AND PLANNING

We are a city with a long-term commitment to meeting demands for increased service while maintaining high standards. The city is financially secure with a AAA bond rating and a healthy fund balance. The city balances its growth through thorough evaluation of future needs and thoughtful planning. There is recognition of the need for careful financial management, while also prioritizing investment in essential operational and capital programs. Bold thinking, community input, and best practices lead the city to consider new paths and structures that have led to our recognition as a model locality.



PRIORITIES

- EXAMINE AND RESTRUCTURE THE PROCESS/ STRATEGY BY WHICH WE COMMIT CITY FUNDING TO THE CONTRIBUTIONS PORTION OF OUR BUDGET.
- DEVELOP, EXPAND, AND REGULARLY UPDATE ALL CITY PLANNING DOCUMENTS TO INCLUDE NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, COST ESTIMATES, AND IMPLEMENTATION.
- EVALUATE COST RECOVERY ACROSS ALL CITY SERVICES AND MODIFY FEES AS NECESSARY.
- EVALUATE AND SUPPORT LONG-TERM FINANCIAL MODELS FOR BOTH THE WATER AND SEWER FUNDS THAT RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR ADEQUATE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE EXPENSES, FUTURE AND EXISTING DEBT, AND CAPITAL FOR NEW GROWTH AND RETIREMENT OF EXISTING ASSETS.

✓ COMPLETED PROJECTS

• COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS RE-VAMP

The community contributions process was revised for the FY2020-21 budget cycle. Non-city organizations seeking funding must submit a funding application for review by a committee.

The City Manager will review and determine which committee recommendations to include in the budget as is feasible based on financial constraints.



..... PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- **Water Financial Model:** City staff is developing projections of the long-term costs of operating and maintaining our water infrastructure. These long-term projections may be used to guide decision-making on rate changes. The goal is to equip the City with the necessary information to be able to more gradually adjust rates in advance of anticipated large cost outlays. With this approach customers will have more time to prepare for higher rates.