



**Harrisonburg City Council  
2024-2027 Priorities  
Work Session**

Tuesday, January 23, 2024



## BACKGROUND

# HARRISONBURG 2039

## CAPITAL OF THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY



*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.*





# Harrisonburg 2043

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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 and a beautiful natural environment that enrich life.

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

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.



# **Vision Areas**

**A City For All**

**A Thriving Educational  
Epicenter**

**Community Resiliency and  
the Natural Environment**

**Economic Development:  
Goals, Gains, and Growth**

**Available Housing for All**

**Distinctive, Reliable Delivery  
of High Quality City Services**

**Fiscal Responsibility and  
Planning**



# **PRIORITIES**

- Developed by consensus of City Council– all Council Members must agree on the priority in order for it to be included
- A policy guide outlining what City Council wants City staff to focus on implementing over the next three years (2024-2027) to advance progress toward the 2043 Vision



## **Action Plans**

- Action Plans were developed by City staff to outline, as much as possible, the action steps and timelines necessary to advance implementation of the priorities over the next three years



## **A city For All**

We are a harmonious, caring, welcoming city where differences are embraced, celebrated, and accommodated. Recognizing Harrisonburg's diversity, our support systems assure that any community member has access to city services. We are a city that allows all people to feel safe, valued, and have abundant opportunity. We continuously overcome barriers to progress and boldly address inequities.



# A city For All

## Priorities

- #1 Develop a central resource/hub for newcomers that makes them welcome in City Hall, provides information, and ensures access to City services
- #2 Create an assessment tool/process that periodically reviews City services to ensure that all residents, visitors, and businesses have effective access to those services and use it to review progress on Council's Vision
- #3 Coordinate and promote awareness of Public Safety services/programs that enhance community safety.
- #4 Implement a discussion of measures/actions the Council can take to remedy past harms
- #5 Identify and employ tools to give citizens greater access to City decision-making, including addressing barriers to participation in governmental processes





# Community Resiliency and the Natural Environment

Harrisonburg is a community with extraordinary beauty and an abundance of natural assets. We prioritize protection of these natural assets - air, streams, mountains, trees, and open space - critical to maintaining our quality of life and vibrant economy. We are a resilient community prepared to face numerous current and future challenges such as flooding, extreme fluctuation in weather, aging infrastructure, new energy technologies, and water supply as demands increase. With our partners, we are effectively reducing and responding to climate change impacts, especially as they impact historically disadvantaged communities. Investments in sustainable assets and infrastructure have established a strong foundation for the future.



# Community Resiliency and the Natural Environment

## Priorities

- #1 Promote community goals for the widespread adoption of renewable energy and efficiency measures
- #2 Continue implementation of greenspace management plans to include: #2a: Urban Forestry Management Plan; #2b: Urban Wood Program; #2c: Landscape Plan
- #3 Explore and enable sustainable practices that support financial stability for lower income families, including education regarding environmental impacts
- #4 Update the Stormwater Improvement Plan



## **Economic Development: Goals, Gains, and Growth**

Harrisonburg is the economic capital of the Shenandoah Valley. We are the regional destination for education, shopping, dining and entertainment. Our economic development partnerships have resulted in thriving technology zones, higher wage jobs, and a vibrant North End Gateway. Local economic activity is robust throughout the city and is easily accessible. Our economic development strategies continue to grow existing businesses, encourage entrepreneurship, and attract new opportunities.



# Economic Development: Goals, Gains, and Growth

## Priorities

- #1 Collaborate with private regional workforce transportation partners to establish a well-connected public transportation system, focused on enhancing workforce transportation within the area.
- #2 Provide the Black and Brown-Owned Business Growth Program (B-Cubed) effort with greater city support and buy-in, which might include:
  - Increasing the City's support of B-Cubed as a means of addressing historical inequities
  - Enhancing support and funding to the B-Cubed as a city initiative
  - Considering funds for BIPOC entrepreneurs to provide start-up capital and technical assistance to build generational wealth and correct past harms
  - Sharing B-Cubed successes
- #3 Develop an economic development strategic plan, including the identification of new business sectors for the City and appropriate recruitment strategies



## **A Thriving Educational Epicenter**

Harrisonburg has an exceptional public education system. 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 is a partner in ensuring that early childhood education is universally available for all children. City school graduates are 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.



# A Thriving Educational Epicenter

## Priorities

- #1 Consider new and creative ways to enter into and expand early childhood education in the City. This might include:
  - Assess and determine how to provide additional support to expand early childhood education and after-school programs run by the City
  - Consider building an early childhood education center in the northeast and the southwest as an extension to the after-school program run by Parks and Recreation
- #2 Work with the School Board to identify a successful strategy to meet our school growth
- #3 Enhance the City/University relationship for the benefit of residents and students and to achieve greater understanding of impact on the community, land use, and development



## **Fiscal Responsibility 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 the highest 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 to lead us toward a more progressive future.



# Fiscal Responsibility and Planning

## Priorities

- #1 Update Financial Management Policies





## **Available Housing for All**

Harrisonburg is at the forefront in developing a comprehensive approach to meeting a spectrum of housing needs through innovative planning and effective partnerships. The city has logistically integrated high quality affordable housing throughout its neighborhoods. As a result, Harrisonburg's neighborhoods reflect its diverse and unique character. Creative land use planning has permitted flexible redevelopment of our residential areas. Support and services are available for people experiencing housing insecurity so they can remain safely and securely housed. Moreover, the city has achieved these goals while maintaining a strong and sustainable tax base.



# Available Housing for All

## Priorities

- #1 Complete the zoning ordinance re-write
- #2 Develop and implement a strategic housing plan
- #3 Continue relationship with City/County Homeless Coalition to ensure collaboration and communication among service providers



## **Distinctive, Reliable Delivery of High Quality City Services**

Harrisonburg prides itself on high quality service provision. The city is clean, safe, and has abundant and diverse recreational opportunities. Traveling through the city is pleasant and easy, whether by car, bike, foot, or transit bus. Our highly engaged community members 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. The city government attracts and retains talented public servants due to its reputation for being well-managed and as a great employer.



# Distinctive, Reliable Delivery of High Quality City Services

## Priorities

- #1 Complete the study for the Transit Strategic Plan
- #2 Follow through on the study for on-demand microtransit
- #3 Continue strengthening city staff's ability to meet and serve our city into the future
- #4 Develop methods to effectively acquire customer service feedback
- #5 Complete the Update to the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- #6 Identify costs to create a justice system that aligns with the values of the City
- #7 Design and construct Station 5 in the Northwest Section of the City and begin implementation of the planned replacement of Station 4 in the Northeast Neighborhood
- #8 Update the Bike-Pedestrian Plan



## **Next Steps**

- City Council adoption of the Action Plans
- Once adopted, City staff will begin implementation.
- City staff will update City Council on progress toward implementation.