



2026

STRATEGIC PLAN

Adopted April 6th, 2026
Intended for 2026-2031 Use





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Washington County Board of Commissioners



John C. Spruill
Chair



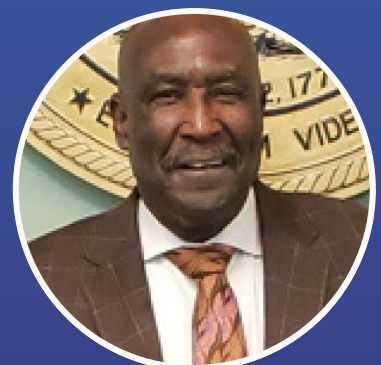
Tracey A. Johnson
Vice-Chair



Ann C. Keyes



Carol V. Phelps



Julius Walker, Jr.



County Manager's Message

I am pleased to present the updated Washington County Strategic Plan, building upon the foundation established in April 2024 and guiding our continued progress over the next three to four years.



Curtis S. Potter

**County Manager
ICMA-CM**

Over the past two years, we have made meaningful strides in implementing our original plan. Many of the goals and action items identified in 2024 have been successfully accomplished, resulting in measurable improvements across our organization. At the same time, some initiatives remain in progress, and others have evolved or been refined to better reflect changing conditions, emerging opportunities, and the evolving needs of our community.

Strategic planning remains essential to effective, accountable governance. This updated plan reaffirms our commitment to aligning organizational priorities with the expectations of the citizens we serve, while ensuring our efforts remain focused, practical, and results-driven.

This plan continues to serve as a guiding framework for decision-making and resource allocation. It provides clarity around our current priorities and establishes a structured approach for tracking progress, measuring outcomes, and maintaining transparency. Just as importantly, it reinforces accountability—both internally within our organization and externally to our community.

As with the original plan, this document is intended to be dynamic rather than static. The ability to adapt is critical in today's environment, and this updated Strategic Plan reflects our commitment to continuous improvement. County leadership will continue to review, evaluate, and update action items on a regular basis to ensure responsiveness to changing circumstances and long-term sustainability.

By building on our accomplishments and learning from our ongoing efforts, Washington County is well-positioned to strengthen organizational performance and enhance the services we provide. This updated plan represents both a continuation of our work and a renewed commitment to progress.

In closing, it is critical to always keep in mind the strategic planning is not intended to be a one-time initiative, but rather an ongoing interactive process that both guides and regularly adapts in accordance with our organizational and community growth and development.

Through the adoption of this updated and revised plan, we reaffirm our dedication to responsible stewardship, operational excellence, and service to our citizens. Together, we will continue working toward a stronger, more effective, and more resilient Washington County.

OUR ORGANIZATIONS CORE VALUES

OUR CORE VALUES IMPACT HOW WE WILL MAKE DECISIONS AND FULFILL OUR MISSION TO BETTER SERVE THE PUBLIC. THEY DEFINE OUR EXPECTATIONS AND ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR. WASHINGTON COUNTY EMPLOYEES ARE PUBLIC SERVANTS WHOSE CORE PURPOSE IS TO C.R.E.A.T.E A MORE I.D.E.A.L WASHINGTON COUNTY.



Customer Service

TO PROVIDE CITIZENS AND COWORKERS WITH THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF SERVICE POSSIBLE TAKING THE TIME TO LISTEN AND RESPOND TO THEIR NEEDS AND ENGAGING IN PROBLEM SOLVING.



Respect

VALUING OTHER PEOPLES BELIEFS AND TREATING THEM WITH KINDNESS, COURTESY, AND RESPECT.



Ethical & Fair Treatment

DOING WHAT IS RIGHT EVEN WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING, HAVING CONCERN FOR OTHERS, AND SERVING WITH INTEGRITY, HONESTY, AND CONSISTENCY.



Accountability

RECOGNIZING YOUR ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS REFLECT ON THE ORGANIZATION, TAKING RESPONSIBILITY WHEN THINGS DO NOT GO AS PLANNED, DOING WHAT YOU SAY YOU WILL DO, AND BEING GOOD STEWARDS OF THE PUBLIC TRUST.



Teamwork

WORKING TOGETHER TO GET THE JOB DONE, COMMUNICATING CLEARLY AND PROACTIVELY, ENGAGING COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS, AND RECOGNIZING THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSE VIEWS AND OPINIONS IN DECISION MAKING.



Excellence

COMMITTING TO MAKING PROCESSES MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE, ASKING HOW CAN WE MAKE THINGS BETTER, AND SEEKING CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

Integrity

We will strive to be honest and transparent in all we do. We will provide accurate information and guidance to build up positive relationships between our county government, its employees, and our community members.

Diversity

We will strive to signal care and attention to persons of all backgrounds and origins. We support all people's sense of belonging and their right to be included in our community and to express their ideas and opinions.

Excellence

We are committed to making all processes more efficient and effective. We will continue to pursue innovative ideas, best practices and professional development in all relevant areas of our organization for the betterment of our community which it serves.

Accountability

We honor the authority entrusted to serve and protect our residents. Measuring and taking responsibility for the impact and effect of our actions and behavior, and following through on the pursuit of our goals and our commitments, reflects good stewardship within our county.

Leadership

Promoting transparent and accountable leadership, fostering trust through open communication, ethical decision-making, and responsible stewardship of resources, ensuring the county's sustained integrity and public confidence in governance.



OUR VISION

(OF WHO WE ASPIRE TO BE)

Describes where we are trying to go as an ideal organization to best serve our community and its citizens in 5 to 10 years.

VISION STATEMENT:

Washington County will become the preferred destination to live, learn, work, and play in Northeast NC.



Our **MISSION** describes our organization's purpose for existing, and helps define our role in pursuing the successful implementation of our **VISION**.

MISSION STATEMENT:

Washington County will improve, promote and protect the health and welfare of our citizens. Our mission is to provide exceptional public services in a fiscally responsible manner, to meet the diverse needs of our residents, visitors & business community.



Strategic Planning For Greater Performance

Understanding what the County wishes to achieve by having a clear focus is foundational for building a culture of high performance and essential for making a positive impact in the community. That is what a strategic plan provides.

Once a strategic plan is in place, it is not meant to be a static document that sits on a shelf. It is a living document that must be evaluated and updated as priorities and needs change. Long-term strategic planning provides direction, identifies desired outcomes, and is the basis for performance analysis.



- **Vision:** What do we want our community to be like for future generations?
- **Mission:** What is our purpose for existence?
- **Core Values:** What are our beliefs and attitudes that guide behavior and our relationships with others?
- **Strategy:** What are our goals, objectives and priorities?
- **Performance:** What are our 1/2/3 year plans and how will we track our progress and make adjustments if needed?

The Constant Strategic Planning Process

Strategic plans provide clarity to our organization and the community and can dramatically improve transparency and accountability by helping to align community values with goal priorities and resources to transform ideas into action. HOWEVER, they only work well if embraced as a CONSTANT EVOLVING PROCESS rather than as a single event or static plan.

Feedback from Citizens, Data Driven Decisions and Continuous Improvement

Set vision, mission, goals, objectives

Est. goal priorities & performance targets using broad collaborative input to maximize buy-in & quality

Communicate results, engage & empower citizens & staff to innovate & improve the continuing strategic planning process

Transparency & Innovation

Identify Strategic Goals & Objectives

Prioritize

Pursue & Allocate Available Resources

Measure & Review Performance

Implement & Integrate

Align CIP & budget to program & performance targets

Commit to data driven evaluation & improvement (aka Performance Management)

Provide First Class Service Delivery & Great Customer Service through tactical planning & personnel training & development



Primary Strategic Objectives



The Strategic Plan provides a clear vision for the future, with practical guidance for turning that vision into reality. It is organized around four primary strategic objectives, each supported by a brief explanation of its importance in advancing the County's overall mission.

Each objective is also supported by several specific goals, along with a range of clearly defined action items to be pursued over the coming years.

Plan progress should be reviewed regularly, with a comprehensive evaluation by the Board every 1-3 years to determine if a comprehensive revision is warranted.

Key performance measurement indicators (PMIs) should be developed for most action items to support consistent progress tracking and evaluation of overall progress, and to help align the County's organizational culture toward performance measurement review processes.



Sustainable Economic Growth & Development



Strong Educational Opportunities



Safe Healthy Communities



Organizational Excellence





Organizational Excellence

Objective Statement, Goals, & Action Item Summary

Washington County's greatest asset is its employees without whom no services could be provided to the public. The County desires to become an employer of choice, growing a culture that values high performance and embraces diversity.

A positive workplace environment increases productivity and reduces employee stress and turnover levels, empowering staff to perform at their peak and provide top-notch service to residents.

The County seeks to implement a culture of accountability where staff at every level look for ways to improve and innovate operations and service delivery.

- **Goal 1:** Attract, retain, and grow high-performing employees.
- **Goal 2:** Foster a community of transparent accountability through performance measures and adherence to established processes.
- **Goal 3:** Seek new and best practice technology to improve processes in all county operations.
- **Goal 4:** Improve resident and customer service experience through efficient, high quality service delivery and continuous innovation and improvement.
- **Goal 5:** Seek ways to work cooperatively with municipal and regional partners to leverage limited resources and mutually pursue solutions to help reduce bureaucracy and streamline delivery of quality public services.

Specific Action Items Include: Recurring pay plan maintenance; Employee Training & Communications Program Improvements; Updating Personnel/Travel/Tech Policies; Maintaining CIPs (including Water CIP) and Strategic Plan; Creating an Innovations Lab/Program; Improving electronic payment processes; Increasing Public Feedback & Engagement; Creating a Community Center Site Development Plan; and Increasing Intergovernmental Relations.



Safe Healthy Communities Objective Statement, Goals, & Action Item Summary

Washington County is committed to ensuring that all residents have opportunities to live healthy and productive lives, and that they feel safe.

This commitment is shown through the provision of services and programs that enhance residents' lives and promote healthy behaviors and lifestyles.

The County is also committed to providing strong public safety and emergency response service.

- Goal 1: Provide high-quality emergency response and public safety.
- Goal 2: Improve access to affordable healthcare and nutrition opportunities.
- Goal 3: Enhance residential quality of life by supporting recreational opportunities including physical exercise, sports activities, and arts and cultural experience opportunities.
- Goal 4: Decrease substance abuse and dependence.

Specific Action Items Include: Completing Emergency Management Training & Ops Center (EMTOC); Updating EM Ordinance/Policies; Recurring Active Shooter Training; Improving Washington/Tyrrell EMS System; Assisting VFDs with Capital Improvement Planning; Animal Control Program Improvements; Regular Healthcare Coalition Meetings; Creating a Long Term Recreation Master Plan; Improving Community Enrichment Programs (including Recreation); Work with WRMC to support growth of local hospital; Work with law enforcement and partner organizations to identify ways to reduce community violence/crime.



Strong Educational Opportunities

Objective Statement, Goals, & Action Item Summary

Education is an essential component of human development and progress. It plays a crucial role in shaping and improving individual lives which inevitably shape and improve our local communities, economies, and larger society.

A strong public school system is absolutely essential for supporting the successful development of our children into productive adults capable and willing of contributing to the overall strength and success of our community.

The County will partner with the Washington County School System and other educational partners to ensure all students are provided an opportunity to receive a high quality education.

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- **Goal 1: Establish and maintain collaborative partnerships with Washington County Schools ("WCS") to proactively and more efficiently coordinate annual budgeting and long term capital projects planning.**
 - **Goal 2: Collaborate with all educational partners to strengthen career readiness, innovation, and student morale.**
 - **Goal 3: Support recruitment and retention of qualified and experienced WCS teachers and staff to improve academic achievement and quality.**
 - **Goal 4: Advocate for appropriate allocation of school funding from federal and state sources.**
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Specific Action Items Include: Recurring Joint Meetings; Seeking PK-12 Phase II Athletics Funding; Shared Facility Use Agreements; Supporting Communities in Schools (CIS) Program; Support of CTE Program; Expanding Work Based Learning Opportunities; Reviewing local teacher supplement allocations.



Sustainable Economic Growth & Development Objective Statement, Goals, & Action Item Summary

Washington County is committed to creating economic development opportunities for our residents and we are working to strengthen our economic development programs.

Economic development refers to the process through which Washington County improves its overall economic well-being and quality of life for its residents.

This process involves a variety of strategies and policies aimed at creating job opportunities, increasing income levels, attracting investments, reducing unnecessary development barriers, and fostering an ideal environment for natural sustainable growth in a wide variety of different sectors.

- **Goal 1:** Collaborate with municipal, educational, & industrial partners to develop & deliver a more formally organized, proactive, & effective economic dev. program.
- **Goal 2:** Provide well-planned & strategically placed infrastructure to attract & support continued economic dev. & growth, particularly for private business & industry.
- **Goal 3:** Leverage partners & stakeholders to enhance economic dev. capacity & opportunities.
- **Goal 4:** Attract, retrain, and increase a diverse and sustainable tax base.
- **Goal 5:** Streamline & coordinate county & municipal planning, zoning, & building inspection processes to create a more efficient, consistent, & predictable development environment that supports responsible growth & strengthens countywide economic development opportunities.

Specific Action Items Include: Recurring Economic Development Council meetings; Municipal Collaboration; Creation of ED Parcels Database; Occupational Internship Development; Chamber of Commerce Support; Legislative Lobbying; Completion of major Water System Projects; Revision of County Subdivision & Zoning Ordinances; Early Revaluation Completion & Ongoing Review; Fire District Tax Model Changes.

APPENDICES

The following appendices are incorporated as integral components of the County's Strategic Plan:

- **(A) Specific Action Item Spreadsheets**
- **(B) Municipal Partner Strategic Plan Priorities & Projects.**
- **(C) Community Conversations Summary**
- **(D) Internal Implementation/Revision Notes* (Not yet created, but listed here to preserve its potential future use to help document plan *implementation notes and/or revision ideas or progress which are not otherwise included within the Action Item Spreadsheets*)**

These materials are intended to serve as dynamic, working documents that support implementation of the Plan.

The Community Conversations Summary is included primarily to preserve historical input and stakeholder feedback, which may inform future updates and the next comprehensive plan revision.

These appendices may be updated periodically by staff to reflect progress, emerging priorities, and new information; however, any substantive changes to any specific action item numbers or descriptions shall require approval from the County Manager and shall be reported to the Board of Commissioners. All other updates are considered administrative in nature and may be made without formal Board action, provided they remain aligned with the Plan's overall strategic objectives and goals.