



CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Operations Center - Assembly Room | 305 Williams St. | Hendersonville NC 28792
Tuesday, November 14, 2023 – 5:30 PM

MINUTES

Present: Chair Josh Williams, Vice-Chair Nancy Diaz, Laura Bannister, Melinda Lowrance, Florence Allbaugh and Richard Reagan

Absent: Eric Gash and Jill Murray, City Clerk

Liaisons: Mayor Barbara G. Volk and Mayor Pro Tem Lindsey Simpson

Staff Present: City Manager John Connet, Communications Manager Allison Justus, Planner Alex Hunt and Sustainability Manager Caitlyn Gendusa

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Josh Williams called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

City Manager John Connet asked that Public Comment be added to the agenda. Committee Chair Eric Gash moved, seconded by Nancy Diaz to approve the agenda as amended. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

City Manager John Connet welcomed the Henderson County Youth Council. Annabella Geiser from Hendersonville Highschool spoke about the Latina Holiday Food Drive where they are delivering boxes to Hendersonville Highschool, East Hendersonville Highschool, Blue Ridge Innovative Highschool and North Hendersonville Highschool so that people can drop off ingredients to their boxes so that they can make their traditional foods and we have a list of foods that they commonly make. The food drive will go on through Christmas break.

Jeff Groh spoke about DEI and has proposed to offer at no charge, through the Convention of States Foundation, a Constitution class for the city to teach about the U.S. Constitution which binds all of us together. The City rejected this because the patriot academy has a particular interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. I ask the City to rethink this.

Teresa Drevlo agreed with Mr., Groh.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 14, 2023 - *Chair Josh Williams moved, seconded by Nancy Diaz to approve the minutes of March 14, 2023 as presented. Florence Allbaugh abstained since she was not at the meeting, but the minutes were approved. Motion carried.*

May 9, 2023 – *Melinda Lowrance moved, seconded by Nancy Diaz to approve the minutes of May 9, 2023 as presented. Florence Allbaugh abstained since she was not at the meeting, but the minutes were approved. Motion carried.*

September 12, 2023 - *Melinda Lowrance moved, seconded by Nancy Diaz to approve the minutes of May 9, 2023. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.*

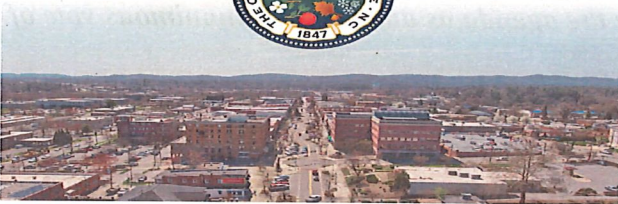
5. NEW BUSINESS

A. Sustainability Update – *Caitlyn Gendusa, Public Works Superintendent for Sustainability and Mike Huffman, Stormwater Division Manager*

City Manager John Connet introduced Caitlyn Gendusa who went over the following PowerPoint presentation.

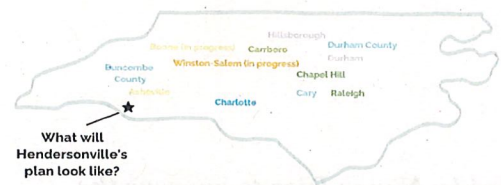
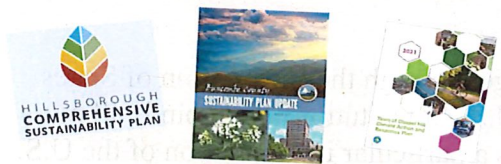


**CITY OF
HENDERSONVILLE**
Sustainability Strategic Plan
2024



**Diversity, equity,
& inclusion review**

What other municipalities in North Carolina have a Sustainability Plan?



Many cities and municipalities around the country and globe have created sustainability plans to integrate environmental, social, and economical values into solutions to some of the world's biggest challenges.

What is sustainability?

The meaning can vary across different fields and disciplines with three constant principals: economic viability, environmental protection, and social equity aimed at meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations.

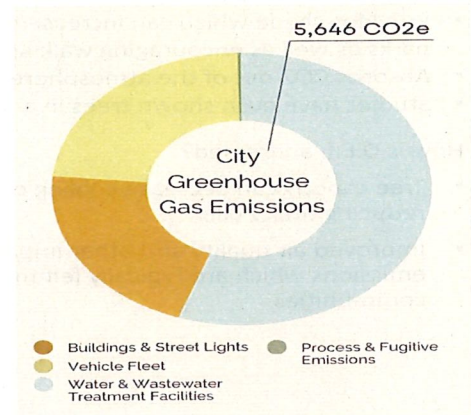
What is a sustainability plan?

A single framework which establishes a vision for our City's sustainable future

- Prioritized goals and actions that will contribute to the plan's success
- Goals and metrics to track sustainability performance

High level aspects of the plan

- Meant to be a living document – revised every 5 years as needed;
- Focused primarily on the municipal level with some community aspects;
- Broken up into five focus areas
- Included overall greenhouse gas reduction goal



Sustainability Strategic Plan

Implementation

Ranking criteria for implementation includes:

- Focus area
- Timeframe
- Cost
- Involved departments
- GHG reduction potential
- Co-benefits

Co-Benefits

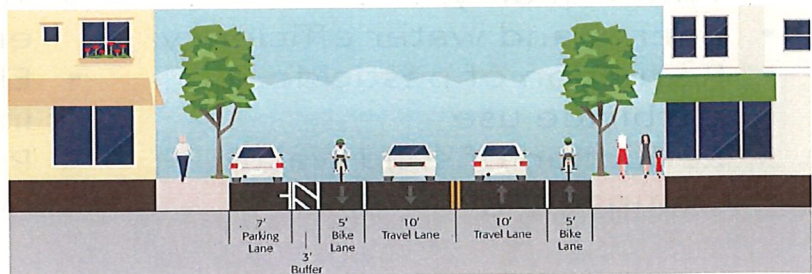
- Equity & Inclusion:** Actions address disproportionate burden of greenhouse gas emissions & leads to quality of life improvements for underserved and low income communities.
- Environmental Quality:** Action improves air and water quality while building a resilient ecosystem.
- Economic Vitality:** Action provides strong net cost (cost - savings) and/or may have a high initial cost but results in significant long-term cost savings.

Implement Alternative Transportation Plans

2017 bikeability plan

- Proposed projects: Adding bicycle lanes and traffic calming features, and shared lane markings.
- Proposed locations: Connecting 7th Avenue, Substation Street, Maple, & Locust Street to downtown.

Upcoming walkability plan



How is D.E.I. addressed?

- Provides a method of transportation for those that cannot afford vehicles

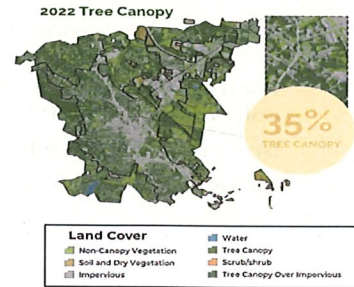
Increase citywide tree canopy to 45%

Trees provide significant quality of life benefits including:

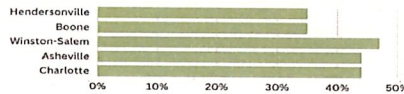
- Reduction in cooling electric costs
- Provides shade which can increase the amount of time community members spend in City greenspace & parks as well as encouraging walking and biking
- Absorbs CO2 out of the atmosphere
- Studies have even shown trees in a neighborhood lead to lower crime rates.

How is D.E.I. addressed?

- Tree canopy can decrease cooling cost by providing shade thus reducing utility bills
- Improved air quality and other impacts from greenhouse gas emissions which are typically felt more in underserved communities



Tree canopy percentages of other municipalities:



Enhance & restore City-owned natural areas and parks

Many quality of life benefits and amenities can be found by enhancing our existing greenspaces to include edible landscaping, land restoration & invasive species removal, and community gardening, among others.

Community gardens

- Grant funds recently received for improvements at Brooklyn Community Garden & will include ADA assessable garden beds, fruit trees, & more all open to the public

Edible landscaping

- Can build on existing efforts of Tree Board with Neighborwoods program and find opportunities for fruit trees on City owned property.

How is D.E.I. addressed?

- Increased access to local foods in areas most prone to food insecurity & lack of healthy foods

Spotlight on Current Success

Located adjacent to Sullivan Park in the historic 7th Avenue district, this community garden was started in 2011 with a partnership between the City of Hendersonville and a few dedicated community members to use City land for a community garden in the Green Meadows community. Upcoming improvements include an expansion, blueberry and bee houses, pollinator plantings, and picnic tables, among others.



Other topics included in plan

- Water quality
- Energy and water efficiency
- Reduction of pesticide & herbicide use
- Reduction of solid waste
- Composting
- Transition to zero and low-emission vehicles/fuel
- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Policies
- Renewable energy

What's next?

- October/November: Gain staff input/feedback
- November: Gain board feedback
- Public input survey released winter 2023/2024
- Brought to City Council in spring 2024
- Adopted and reference in upcoming Comprehensive Plan in Spring/Summer 2024
- Ongoing thereafter - implementation

B. Historic Preservation Update – Alex Hunt, Planner I

Alex Hunt, who is also staff liaison to the Historic Preservation Commission, said one of the things they have been working on is how local governments recognize historical buildings and structures and that is moving away from traditional standards and opening it up to recognizing local heritage sites, cultural sites, community gathering places. The city was contacted by volunteers of the Henderson County Museum about placing a bronze roadside marker with regards to Walter H. Bryson, a Buffalo soldier, who is buried at Oakdale Cemetery. They would also eventually like to have a “phase two” where they place interpretive signage that includes more background and some photos. So that is one example of the Historic Preservation Commission working with their community partners, as well as, county counterparts to create a project-based committee that is focused on creating more interpretive signage about certain places, whether or not they’re still standing, recognizing what was once there, recognizing historically under-represented community members and recognizing their contribution to Hendersonville’s history. We are also working with Mark Stierwalt, who works in our Public Works department and oversees the cemetery and there is possibly some grant money that can be used to place a kiosk in the cemetery where we can place some of this signage and maybe learn who is buried in the cemetery.

C. Comprehensive Plan Update – John Connet, City Manager

City Manager John Connet gave a comprehensive plan update and said that the City is moving along with our comprehensive plan and if you have not participated in our comprehensive plan survey yet, please do so as it closes at 11:59p.m. tonight. As we start moving through this survey data and getting critical information, I just wanted to share some of our outreach efforts. Allison has created a great list of places that we have been such as Rhythm & Brews, business after-hour events at the Chamber, parks events at the Health Science Center, and we’ve been to several breweries. We’ve also tried to reach out to the younger folks in our community. We had 3rd graders from Bruce Drysdale come by and they met with the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem Simpson on two different dates. We attended a Hendersonville High-School football game, National Night Out, a couple of classroom presentations at East Hendersonville High-School in their civics class. We’ve been to the Coalition of Aging and the Carolina Village Town Hall presentation. We tried to go across all age spectrums. We also reached out to our under-served populations, we’ve had Community Connections workshops, an event at City Hall with El Centro and True Ridge, and also

at the Whitmire Center with PFlag and Hendersonville Pride. The NAACP sponsored a group at Union Grove. We went to the Building Bridges luncheon co-hosted by El Centro and Hola Carolina, Back-to-School Fest in Sullivan Park, Ronnie Pepper's men's group meeting in Lincoln Circle, round-table discussions with Green Meadow representatives and we had a canvassing event in Green Meadows. We've also had El Centro survey assistance and library survey assistance, so we feel like we've done really well and we'd like to thank our vice-chair Nancy Diaz for helping us organize some workshops in Spanish. Also Tae Brown and Gabby Meadows helped us with the canvassing event. More than 4,000 people have interacted with the survey and our goal was 5,000. We're pretty pleased with the outcome though. Next steps are the City Council and Planning Board will have a joint meeting on Monday to go over the plan and we still have a few outreach opportunities with the Chamber and other groups and ultimately the consultants will start putting the plan together and I am sure there will be public presentations and activities and then in the spring or summer, we will be adopting the comprehensive plan. Thank you for your support. Allison Justus added that on Monday night, from 5-7 p.m. at the Henderson County Public Library main branch, we have a drop-in open-house event that is open to everyone in the community and it's an opportunity for the consultants to provide a glimpse of the survey results and it will be an opportunity for the consultants to get more input from the public so you can still go to that as well.

D. 2024 Workplan Discussion – John Connet, City Manager

City Manager Connet said this is the last meeting of the calendar year and I'd like you to think about things that you would like the committee to work on, otherwise we will continue to do what we've been doing, like updating you on activities of the city and reaching out to all residents of our community and making sure that we're in all neighborhoods and all communities as we go forward. But if you could think about things that you would like to see the committee do, that would be helpful.


6. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Melinda Lowrance moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.



Josh Williams, Chair

ATTEST:



Jill Murray, City Clerk