

City of Ferndale, MI

City Council Retreat

March 9, 2024

The City of Ferndale (City), Michigan, held a City Council Retreat on March 9, 2024. The retreat was planned and facilitated by Raftelis.

Setting the Stage

City Manager Joseph Gacioch opened the session by welcoming everyone and noting the importance of the strategic planning sessions, especially as new members of Council are elected and begin working together to achieve policy goals. The facilitator, Julia Novak, reviewed the agenda and then asked each participant to introduce themselves and share their expectations for the day. Expectations are captured below.

Councilmembers

- Mayor Raylon Leaks-May – Excited to be here and for new Councilmembers who will bring new perspective to the process. Part of the reflection process is recognizing the world has changed and in turn the City has gone through a lot, especially transportation and housing focus areas.
- Greg Pawlica – Recognizes that 40% of City leadership has changed, with that brings new objectives, thoughts, and priorities. I'm interested in understanding these perspectives more and seeing how they can merge with existing objectives.
- Donnie Johnson – Newly elected Councilmember, expectation is to ensure the City is updating its vision by incorporating what has been learned from the past and also appreciating the world has changed, especially social, community, and financial pressures and needs.
- Rolanda Kelley – Newly elected Councilmember, excited to be here and hear what everyone has to say.
- Laura Mikulski – View the work today as task list, expectation setting for the community. Hoping to gain clarity on some goals and initiative status while adding value in terms of resident representation.

Staff Members

- Joesph Gacioch – City Manager who enjoys a good strategic planning retreat. Since 2019 we've experienced nothing but change, not exceptional but reality, looking forward to seeing how a new Council comes together to dialogue around that change to ultimately achieve alignment.
- Roger Caruso – Community and Economic Development Director; consensus from Council on what their goals are to articulate with staff and developers.
- Jennie Beeker – Director, Downtown Development Authority (DDA); expecting to hear the continuation of strategy especially as it relates to downtown, then determining how to move forward alongside other City departments to accomplish Council's strategic goals.
- Dan Jacey – HR Director; guidance and direction on goals and priorities of Council.

- Kara Sokol – Communications Director; in my role I get asked a lot of questions (why?), I'm hoping today will provide a north star to be able to plan and have a story to share with the community.
- Michael Lary – Director of Special Events; expectation is to understand the direction of our Council.
- Dennis Emmi – Chief of Police; appreciate this opportunity to get to see into the minds and motivations of brand new officials, this is an important first step.
- Teresa Robinson – Fire Chief 3 years; it is helpful to see a community Strategic Plan to inform the department's Strategic Plan and direction so that we are a united voice going out into the community.
- James Krizan – Assistant City Manager; learn more about Council priorities so it's easier to explain the why in staff actions.
- Emanuel Johnson – Parks and Recreation Director; understanding Council's strategic vision and how the department can be useful to advance that vision.
- Dean Lent - City Cler; excited to see new Council's view and moving forward as community.

Hometown Headline

Each participant was asked to write a front-page headline they would like to see about Ferndale in the local paper, two years from today. Participant headlines were as follows:

- Residents happy and trusting and using bike lanes on Woodward
- Headlee victory override, beneficial to the community
- Downtown Ferndale incorporates community green space amid thriving businesses*
**With public facilities*
- Ferndale posts fourth consecutive surplus: continuous investment in infrastructure
- Ferndale celebrates two years of zero employee churn, no rat issues, and effective local animal control
- Zero questions in Facebook forums! Even with recent progress on facilities updates, residents have all the info they need
- City of Ferndale sets stage for statewide shift in recreation efforts
- City of Ferndale awarded Best in State for staff equity, culture, and inclusion; attracts top talent with every city in Michigan
- Ferndale safest community in Michigan!
- Ferndale is safest and most affordable City to live in United States
- Ferndale community reaches affordable housing goals ensuring housing for everyone
- Ferndale breaks ground on state of the art Public Safety Facility and City Hall
- Ground-breaking set for new Public Safety Facility
- City of Ferndale breaks ground on new Public Safety Headquarters

- City celebrates 20th year of [fill in the blank] Facility!
- Ribbon cutting scheduled for new Police and Fire Departments and Community Center

Celebrating Success

Councilmembers and members of staff were grouped together in teams of three to four people and asked to discuss and share something that the City accomplished in the past year that made them proud. Areas that made the City shine in 2023 are summarized below.

- Group 1 – Proud of campaign and election, we reached high number of voters, many people were happy with City goals and direction. While a fraction of residents is not satisfied, most residents are happy.
- Group 2 – Forming the finance committee, it involved community activism and engagement throughout the process and provided a conclusion for how City should move forward. Also proud of opening the Shepards house and LGBTQ+ affordable seniors housing facility.
- Group 3 – Proud of high community engagement, especially with the finance committee bringing new faces and people to engage with the City. “Fern and Learn” was another example of this success. Both groups brought in people that were not as vocal in the community or were very vocal but changed their perspective (angry to engaged). City Hall staff is returning to “pre-Covid” world with more engagement and activities, leadership retention is better.
- Group 4 – Internal and external communications have improved. For example, the special events process has continued to improve, events are safe and becoming the standard in neighboring communities. The high volume of leadership transition, both through attrition and restructuring, is going more smoothly than expected.
- Group 5 – Increase in community engagement, we held the first open house at the Fire Department in 20 years. There were significant upgrades to parks, including opening a splash pad, re-opening a pool season in 2023, Wilson park development, and new walking paths.

After each of the groups reported their accomplishments, all participants engaged in further dialogue about recent successes. Topics of discussion included:

- Reiterating a successful election, including the City Clerk’s first election
- Woodward avenue safety improvements
- Downtown public art – large scale mural program, outdoor music

- DDA is engaged with community including a transformative approach for business owners – Council and staff hear from business owners how they appreciate the communication and support
- Financial task force transformation, participants view of the City became more positive as a result of the process
- Formed Community Police Advisory Review Committee (CPAR)
- Overall, when residents get involved and understand why actions are taking place, it creates positive outcomes

Living the Strategic Plan

After spending some time reflecting about past accomplishments and desired accomplishments for the future, participants began to review the current Strategic Plan, focusing on each of the eight Critical Success Factors (CSFs). The City Manager shared his thoughts and goals for the session, noting that planning a session like this is intentional after a majority local election that brings new members to the City Council. He would like them to establish team dynamics up front, which then allows staff to operationalize Council’s policy goals. The sessions are always very informative and an important touch point in the governing body cycle.

The facilitator reviewed Ferndale’s Strategic Framework: Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles, and Values. Participants then reviewed each of the CSFs to discuss whether any key concepts were missing and if so, whether adjustments to the success statement were appropriate. A summary of key concept discussions and adjustments to the success statements are reflected in the table below.

Critical Success Factor	Missing Concepts Discussion Points	Success Statement Adjustments
1. Economic Prosperity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage diverse business services and locations • Diverse business retention • Supportive and advocacy 	<p>Ferndale has an energetic downtown and an expanding and innovative industrial district. Entrepreneurs look to Ferndale to start and grow their businesses and contribute to a balanced and stable local economy. Local businesses feel engaged with, supported by, and advocated for.</p>
2. Supported Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively seek additional funding solutions (outside General Fund) • Unplanned contingencies 	<p>Ferndale cares for the infrastructure and assets that provide critical and valued services to the community. Ongoing maintenance is funded and planned for in both the operating budget and capital improvement plans.</p>

Critical Success Factor	Missing Concepts Discussion Points	Success Statement Adjustments
3. Safe, Protected, and Engaged Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community outreach Neighborhood stewardship Inclusive and equitable Responsiveness Unhoused population – proactive approach Preventive – a measure 	<p>Ferndale residents flourish in a safe and welcoming environment where proactive, responsive, inclusive, and equitable public safety is foundational to community health. City government is accountable, accessible, and responsive to all who choose to engage in routine civic life.</p>
4. Accessible Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<p><i>No Adjustments made:</i> Ferndale prioritizes safe and accessible transportation options within our community for all users, from walking and biking to driving and transit.</p>
5. Organizational and Financial Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People development Budget surplus – anticipating the unexpected, funding for that Resilient financial management 	<p>City government recognizes that leading a modern community requires a commitment to transparency, internal quality control, resilience, and financial prudence. City employees are committed to innovation, equity, and continuous improvement in the pursuit of excellence.</p>
6. Regionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-way communication 	<p>Ferndale recognizes its role as convener and connector of local and regional partners that contribute to the City's success. Local schools, Downtown Development Authority, library, neighboring municipalities, and regional governmental and non-governmental organizations mutually share information, and cooperatively engage with the City for support and partnership.</p>
7. Healthy, Connected, and Invested Neighborhoods	<p>Overlap with Safe, Protected, and Engaged Community. A small group wrote a fresh take with the following key concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parks Accessible transportation options Clean (adequate sanitation) Diverse Housing Stock Supportive Services 	<p>Ferndale has a variety of housing stock serving a diverse community across all ages and income levels. The City serves its neighborhoods by providing thriving parks and clean, healthy streets.</p>
8. Climate Resiliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for funding Tying it to residents or government infrastructure Educate and empower residents – Commission goals 	<p>Ferndale is committed to taking local action and educating and empowering our community to respond to the global climate crisis.</p>

Progress Report

The City Manager provided a handout to participants summarizing the status of previous initiatives from the 2020 Strategic Plan. The summary included status updates of completed, in-progress, and paused. For in-progress initiatives he suggested staff should continue to operationalize. Council was then invited to comment on any of the previous initiatives within the context of new and emerging priorities to consider.

The following initiatives were brought up during discussion with the group. Often, the discussion considered a status of complete. The facilitator shared, and City Manager agreed, that complete in this context means operationalized. This does not mean the work is done, rather the resources required to accomplish the initiative have been put in place such that it is part of ongoing operations and programming for the City.

- **Initiative 2.2 Hire dedicated staff to implement downtown sanitation projects (complete)** – The City Manager shared that it was marked complete once a DPW Sanitation Officer for rodent control was hired. Discussion included acknowledging that while the staff resource was in place there remains opportunity to improve sanitation objectives, including extending sanitation to all neighborhoods. The group agreed that a new initiative in this policy area would be good.
- **Initiative 7.3 Find a better solution for animal control (paused)** – This initiative was identified as one to bring back and reassess. Discussion included distinguishing between vector control and animal control (largely pets) given the high volume of social media activity in the community around this issue. City Manager and staff shared the need to articulate resource requirements from the City as well as acknowledging the service tradeoff experienced when this was left to Oakland County to handle.
- **Initiative 6.4 Local small business preference RFP policy (paused)** – Should be changed from paused to in-progress. There was a delay in progress due to leadership transition.
- **Initiative 8.7 Establish a tree nursery (paused)** – Desire from two Councilmembers to bring back and re-prioritize.
- **Initiative 5.1 Develop an Eight-Mile Regional Plan for our segment (paused)** – Mayor is interested to know the future of this initiative. The City Manager shared the uncertainty around the regional partnerships as a result of staffing and elected official turnover. Ferndale does not have the organizational capacity to lead the effort independently. Discussion included reaching out to regional partners, to understand funding and capacity. At present, engagement is not shared among all parties, the state and county are not involved but likely should be. There was shared concern about losing accountability and visibility of Woodward and eight-mile intersection. One Councilmember also discussed the Livernois intersection and an opportunity to make it a much better active intersection, that is both welcoming and pedestrian friendly.

Prioritizing Initiatives

The City Manager shared information about various community and organizational plans that shaped the initiatives Council was asked to prioritize in the pre-retreat survey. The facilitator then reviewed the results of the pre-retreat survey, which ranked initiatives within each of the Critical Success Factors. Councilmembers also reviewed emerging priorities shared in the pre-retreat survey as well as new emerging initiatives shared during the retreat session. Paused initiatives that at least one Councilmember wanted to see revisited from the previous Strategic Plan were also included in the prioritization exercise.

Approximately 70 initiatives were included in the prioritization exercise. Councilmembers were given 24 dot stickers to indicate a high-priority vote. Initiatives with four or five stickers were assigned a “top” priority. Initiatives with three stickers were assigned a “high” priority. Initiatives with two or less stickers were assigned an “other” priority. The tables below summarize the initiatives by CSF and priority level.

1. Economic Prosperity

Initiative	Source	Priority Level
Create annual survey for local businesses to give feedback	Emerging Priority	High
Parking on the east side and improved streetscape along Nine Mile Road	Emerging Priority	High
Identify key redevelopment sites for adaptive reuse	Community Plan	Other
Downtown vision and redevelopment plan	Paused	Other
Adaptive Reuse Study for Affordable Housing	Paused	Other
Education outreach for new businesses or those interested in opening a business	Emerging Priority	Other
Create an east-side subarea development plan that includes redevelopment of City Hall/PD Annex and Lot 11	Community Plan	Other
Explore ways to establish a storefront and signage improvement program	Community Plan	Other
Establish seasonal Ferndale Market	Community Plan	Other
Create curb management plan, pursue monetization and scheduling models for deliveries and car sharing services	Community Plan	Other

2. Supported Infrastructure

Initiative	Source	Priority Level
Construct Martin Road Recreation Facility	Community Plan	Top
Construct a new public safety headquarters	Community Plan	Top
Establish new DPW transfer station and construct new salt barn	Community Plan	High
Complete fats, oil, and grease (FOG) ordinance + franchised FOG hauler agreement	Community Plan	High
Evaluate downtown public space receptacles	Community Plan	High
Evaluate and recommend design changes to downtown compactor and recycling spaces	Community Plan	Other
Ensure new public facilities meet baseline sustainability standards	Community Plan	Other
Strive for City buildings and infrastructure projects to lead by example to meet sustainability and climate action goals	Community Plan	Other
Retrofit City buildings for electrification by 2030	Community Plan	Other
Expand public Wi-Fi and charging ports	Community Plan	Other
Public education for stormwater management	Emerging Priority	Other
Create baseline standards for incorporating green infrastructure into improvement projects	Emerging Priority	Other

3. Safe, Protected, and Engaged Community

Initiative	Source	Priority Level
Vector Control – animal control models	Emerging Priority	Top
Create "Welcome to Ferndale" Resources Book for landlords and tenants	Community Plan	High
Financial training and home buyer education program for community members	Community Plan	Other
Revitalize existing and past neighborhood associations	Community Plan	Other
Prepare for Ferndale 100th Anniversary in 2027	Emerging Priority	Other

Initiative	Source	Priority Level
Explore funding mechanisms for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund	Emerging Priority	Other

4. Accessible Transportation

Initiative	Source	Priority Level
Redevelop Withington Alley with a focus on making pedestrian, transportation, and sustainability improvements	Emerging Priority	Top
Create a barrier-free and inclusive design plan (See Ferndale Moves)	Community Plan	Other
Improve signals across Eight Mile Road at Hilton Road, Ralston Street, Woodward Avenue, and Pinecrest Drive	Community Plan	Other
Prioritize expansion and maintenance of nonmotorized network per Ferndale Moves	Community Plan	Other
Close the bike lane gap on Nine Mile Road between Woodward Avenue and Pinecrest Drive	Community Plan	Other

5. Organizational and Financial Excellence

Initiative	Source	Priority Level
Create a public monthly report showing high-level budget vs. actual	Emerging Priority	Top
Summarize annual tax and spending report for residents	Community Plan	Top
Establish documented financial standard operating procedures (SOPs)	Emerging Priority	Top
Third-party organizational performance assessment/staff feedback	Emerging Priority	Top
Perform local income tax feasibility and impact study	Community Plan	Other
Create an annual incentives report	Community Plan	Other
Create redevelopment plan for current DPW Southwest Storage Yard	Community Plan	Other
Develop Proposal A/Headlee FAQ Sheet for City communications and local realtors	Community Plan	Other

6. Strong Regional Partnerships

Initiative	Source	Priority Level
Expand mental health co-responder program for the Police Department	Community Plan	Top
Develop a Eight Mile Regional Plan for our segment	Paused	Top
Perform feasibility studies for regional alternative service models like a parks authority, fire authority, regional Dispatch, etc.	Community Plan	Other
Participate in Nine Mile Corridor Task Force, implement Nine Mile Corridor Plan	Community Plan	Other
Develop a pedestrian friendly and aesthetically pleasing intersection at Livernois and Eight Mile Road	Emerging Priority	Other

7. Healthy, Connected, and Invested Neighborhoods

Initiative	Source	Priority Level
Trash cans using grant funds and a small charge via the sanitation fund	Emerging Priority	Top
Dedicated Arborist	Emerging Priority	Top
Find a better solution for animal control	Paused	Top
Update community wayfinding signage including parks, downtown, parking, and entryways	Community Plan	High
Specific incentives for barrier-free housing	Emerging Priority	High
Establish public land for inclusive housing policy	Paused	High
Public Art incentive policy: Update incentive policy to require a contribution to an established public art fund	Community Plan	Other
Inventory informal and private green spaces to better understand how non-municipal property provides value as green spaces across the City	Community Plan	Other
Incorporate green education in parks and green spaces through signage and community partnerships	Community Plan	Other

Initiative	Source	Priority Level
Consider percent-for-art ordinance, where 1-2% of all capital improvement projects are retained for commissioning public art works	Community Plan	Other
Broaden the Public Art Incentive item to be a contribution to Recreation and Community Assets Fund, which would be used for public art as well as parks improvements and other improvements to community-facing assets	Emerging Priority	Other
Resources for neighbors to organize	Emerging Priority	Other
Set up a local housing trust fund	Paused	Other
Residential trash cans	Emerging Priority	Other

8. Climate Resiliency

Initiative	Source	Priority Level
Create drop-off sites for less common recycling items at City Hall, library, and local businesses	Community Plan	Top
Study feasibility of creating a Ferndale street tree nursery	Community Plan	Top
Expand multifamily recycling collection/Institute mandatory recycling for multifamily units	Community Plan	Top
Integrate green stormwater infrastructure in downtown and park projects	Community Plan	High
Promote community action on solar through programs like Solarize to enable cheaper rates for residential solar	Community Plan	Other
Increase business recycling through code requirements or incentive programs	Community Plan	Other
Expand compost drop-off locations from five to seven, develop a plan for curbside collection, and identify regional system and infrastructure barriers	Community Plan	Other
Complete organics pilot/Begin development of organics diversion ordinance	Community Plan	Other
Evaluate a green building association for Ferndale or a chapter of the Green Building Alliance for 2030 reporting	Community Plan	Other
Develop an electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure plan that includes residential neighborhoods	Emerging Priority	Other

The table below reflects all initiatives sorted by top, high, and other.

Initiative	Priority Level
Construct Martin Road Recreation Facility.	Top
Create a public monthly report showing high-level budget vs. actual	Top
Create drop-off sites for less common recycling items at City Hall, library, and local businesses.	Top
Expand mental health co-responder program for the Police Department.	Top
Expand multifamily recycling collection / Institute mandatory recycling for multifamily units	Top
Redevelop Withington Alley with a focus on making pedestrian, transportation, and sustainability improvements	Top
Study feasibility of creating a Ferndale street tree nursery.	Top
Vector Control - animal control models	Top
Construct a new public safety headquarters.	Top
Dedicated Arborist	Top
Develop a 8 Mile Regional Plan for our segment	Top
Establish documented financial SOPs	Top
Find a better solution for animal control	Top
Summarize annual tax and spending report for residents.	Top
Third-party organizational performance assessment / staff feedback	Top
Trash cans using grant funds and a small charge via the sanitation fund	Top
Complete fats, oil, and grease (FOG) ordinance + franchised FOG hauler agreement.	High
Create "Welcome to Ferndale" Resources Book for landlords and tenants.	High
Create annual survey for local businesses to give feedback	High
Establish new DPW transfer station and construct new salt barn.	High
Establish public land for inclusive housing policy	High
Evaluate downtown public space receptacles.	High
Integrate green Stormwater infrastructure in downtown and park projects.	High

Initiative	Priority Level
Parking on the east side and improved streetscape along 9 mile	High
Specific incentives for barrier-free housing	High
Update community wayfinding signage including parks, downtown, parking, and entryways.	High
Create a barrier-free and inclusive design plan. (See Ferndale Moves).	Other
Evaluate and recommend design changes to downtown compactor and recycling spaces.	Other
Identify key redevelopment sites for adaptive reuse.	Other
Perform feasibility studies for regional alternative service models like a parks authority, fire authority, regional Dispatch, etc.	Other
Adaptive Reuse Study for Affordable Housing	Other
Create an annual incentives report.	Other
Develop a pedestrian friendly and aesthetically pleasing intersection at Livernois and 8-mile	Other
Downtown vision and redevelopment plan	Other
Education outreach for new businesses or those interested in opening a business	Other
Financial training and home buyer education program for community members.	Other
Increase business recycling through code requirements or incentive programs.	Other
Participate in 9 Mile Corridor Task Force, implement 9 Mile Corridor Plan.	Other
Perform local income tax feasibility and impact study.	Other
Promote community action on solar through programs like Solarize to enable cheaper rates for residential solar.	Other
Broaden the Public Art Incentive item to be a contribution to Recreation & Community Assets Fund which would be used for public art as well as parks improvements and other improvements to community-facing assets.	Other
Close the bike lane gap on Nine Mile Road between Woodward Avenue and Pinecrest Drive.	Other
Complete organics pilot / Begin development of organics diversion ordinance.	Other
Consider percent-for-art ordinance, where 1-2% of all capital improvement projects are retained for commissioning public art works.	Other
Create an east-side subarea development plan that includes redevelopment of City Hall/PD Annex and Lot 11.	Other

Initiative	Priority Level
Create baseline standards for incorporating green infrastructure into improvement projects	Other
Create curb management plan, pursue monetization and scheduling models for deliveries and car sharing services.	Other
Create redevelopment plan for current DPW Southwest Storage Yard.	Other
Develop an electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure plan that includes residential neighborhoods.	Other
Develop Proposal A/Headlee FAQ Sheet for city communications and local realtors.	Other
Ensure new public facilities meet baseline sustainability standards.	Other
Establish seasonal Ferndale Market.	Other
Evaluate a green building association for Ferndale or a chapter of the Green Building Alliance for 2030 reporting.	Other
Expand compost drop off locations from five to seven, develop a plan for curbside collection and identify regional system and infrastructure barriers.	Other
Expand public Wi-Fi and charging ports.	Other
Explore funding mechanisms for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund	Other
Explore ways to establish a storefront and signage improvement program.	Other
Improve signals across Eight Mile Road at Hilton Road, Ralston Street, Woodward Avenue, and Pinecrest Drive.	Other
Incorporate green education in parks and green spaces through signage and community partnerships.	Other
Inventory informal and private green spaces to better understand how non-municipal property provides value as green spaces across the city.	Other
Prepare for Ferndale 100th Anniversary in 2027	Other
Prioritize expansion and maintenance of nonmotorized network per Ferndale Moves.	Other
Public Art incentive policy: Update incentive policy to require a contribution to an established public art fund.	Other
Public education for stormwater management	Other
Residential trash cans	Other
Resources for neighbors to organize	Other

Initiative	Priority Level
Retrofit city buildings for electrification by 2030.	Other
Revitalize existing and past neighborhood associations.	Other
Set up a local housing trust fund	Other
Strive for city buildings and infrastructure projects to lead by example to meet sustainability and climate action goals.	Other

Next Steps

The facilitator reminded participants of the political aspiration identified as initiatives above and the need to balance them with administrative capacity. The Mayor then shared the resource constraints potentially facing the City of Ferndale with the Headlee millage renewal forthcoming. Failure to renew this general fund revenue source would mean little progress in the initiatives presented today and more likely reductions to the baseline service levels currently provided by the City to balance the revenue loss. Other participants shared that even with a millage renewal inflationary cost pressures continue to persist and exceed revenue growth patterns.

With the potential financial headwinds, members of Council emphasized the importance of building trust within the community and doing this through financial transparency. There was strong consensus among Council for initiatives tied to these objectives. Overall participants were happy to see alignment around top priorities, showing a strong and unified understanding of community needs.

The City Manager shared that he saw a thriving mindset with this new Council. The visioning is strong and that’s what he wanted to see in this session. The upcoming budget work session will showcase financial forecast and frame the policy resourcing discussions. As mentioned previously, the Ferndale dollar purchases less today than it has in the past.

Collectively the City Council identified 16 top-priority initiatives and 10 high-priority initiatives. The efforts from the Strategic Planning session elevated approximately two-thirds (37.1%) of the 70 initiatives originally identified. Staff acknowledged that other initiatives would still be included in the annual performance planning conversations but would include a check-in with Council to make sure there is consensus and resource allocation. Council noted that they expected staff to prioritize the other initiatives that are policy oriented and not cost prohibitive. There may also be opportunities to advance other initiatives when outside funding opportunities become available to support them.

The timeline ahead will include integrating prioritized initiatives into the budget development and adoption process with Council. Staff will then begin performance planning in the summer and carrying out policy directives in the fall.

Parting Thoughts

At the close of the retreat, participants were asked to reflect and share their parting thoughts. Each participant shared a six-word slam. Responses are captured below.

- Council collaboration and engagement is invigorating
- Hearted by Council's alignment and enthusiasm
- Refreshing, Krispy, insightful, collaborative, satisfying session!
- Productive, beneficial, worthwhile, engaging, illuminating, sleepy
- Pushing forward the Council's strategic priorities
- Working together for a better community
- Watching City Council brainstorm is informative
- Strategic planning Saturday light the way
- Assess, envision, formulate, implement, evaluate, adapt
- Collaboration and communication create governmental excellence
- The fastest strategic session ever attended
- Vectors, not just images, who knew
- Understanding Council's passions inform my priorities
- Council displays unity through strategic objectives
- This educational experience was super cool
- Aligning our visions for community progress
- So happy Julia limited the dots
- Council deets, Pawlica trees, vector fleas