ADVANCING OUR LIVABILITY
STRATEGIC PLAN

GUILFORD COUNTY, NC
DECEMBER 2025

Our Visionary Leadership

Melvin "Skip" Alston
Chair - District 8

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Vice-Chair - District 1

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District 2

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District 3

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District 4

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District 5

Brandon Gray-Hill
District 6

Frankie T. Jones Jr.
District 7

Empowering Successful People to Thrive in a Strong Community Supported by Quality Government.

Through community input, the Board helped define through vision statements what makes our People Successful, our Community Strong, and our Government of Excellent Quality

Core Values
Transparency and Communication
Equity and Inclusion
Our People Matter
Accountability
Service and Outcome Excellence
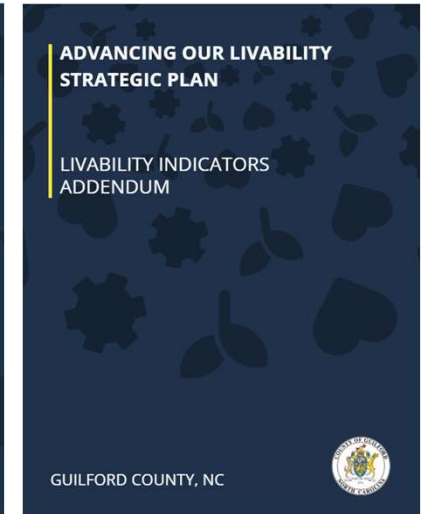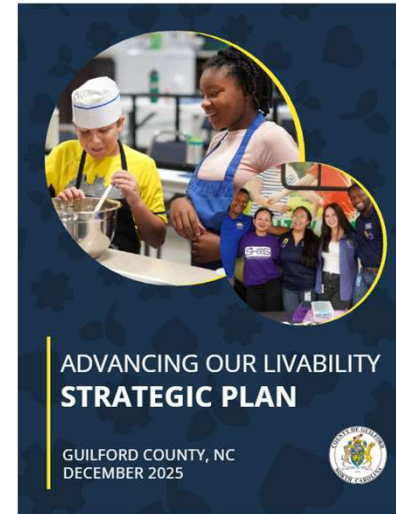
NACo Strategic Plan Framework

Utilizing the NACo EDGE Excellence in Strategic Planning Framework to guide this process.

* Define Mission, Vision, Values
* Inclusive of Public Input
* Documented Action Plan
* Connected Indicators of Success
* Systematic Governance Process
* Connection to Budget Process
* Communication of Plan Progress

Strategic Planning Framework Benchmarking

NACo Recommended Strategic Framework	Advancing our Livability Plan
Define Mission, Vision, Values	✓
Inclusive of Public Input	✓
Documented Action Plan	✓
Connected Indicators of Success	✓
Systematic Governance Process	✓
Connection to Budget Process	✓
Communication of Plan Progress	✓

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LIVABILITY INDICATORS ADDENDUM

GUILFORD COUNTY, NC

Adoption of this plan will demonstrate completion of NACo EDGE requirements and demonstrate Board's Commitment to strategic governance.

Building On a Foundation

2021

The Guilford County Board of Commissioners held listening sessions and conducted an online survey in late 2021 to help residents reflect on the effects of the pandemic and to gather initial input on ARPA funding priorities. Similarly, the ETC Institute administered a community survey to assess the pandemic's impact and identify the support most needed as the county allocated ARPA recovery funds.

2022

Key Board priorities under Successful People, Strong Community, and Quality Government service areas, including school bonds, reducing community disparities, improving communication, intentional collaboration, improving staff resources, and advancing the school nursing program, were established.

2023

The Guilford County Board of Commissioners began hosting Budget Town Halls under a "*One Guilford*" approach to gather resident input on the Board's priorities and vision. Through this process, the Board developed vision statements to define what it means for County residents to be Successful People; what contributes to a Strong Community; and how the County delivers Quality Government operations, leadership, and services. The Board adopted an operational purpose to *Empower Successful People to thrive in a Strong Community supported by Quality Government.*

2024

The Guilford County Board of Commissioners invited municipalities and subject matter experts to discuss key issues facing the county—such as water and sewer infrastructure, housing, and other emerging challenges, to help inform future planning efforts. The Board also continued to host Budget Town Halls.

2025

The Guilford County Board of Commissioners reviewed key community metrics, data indicators, and supporting data informed policy decisions and reviewed a strategic plan framework aligned with the National Association of Counties (NACo) EDGE Excellence in Strategic Planning Award program. The Board continued community discussions with municipal partners on large system opportunities including housing and water/sewer.

The Lens of Livability

What makes a place livable depends on who you ask based on individual lived experiences.

Core livability ingredients such as safe housing, reliable transportation, access to services, and social connection form a shared foundation, although every person's experience builds on that foundation in their own way.

The AARP Public Policy Institute defines a livable community as one that is safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and has supportive community features and services. Once in place, those resources enhance personal independence; allow residents to age in place; and foster residents' engagement in the community's civic, economic, and social life.

Source: AARP.org/livable-communities

According to the **National Association of Counties (NACo)**, through various technical assistance programs, a livable community is one where residents of all ages have access to affordable, appropriate housing and multiple transportation options, live in safe, healthy environments, and are supported by services and infrastructure that foster economic growth and well-being.

Source: naco.org

The American Association of Planners generally defines livability as the quality of life in a community, measured by factors that enable residents to thrive, including meeting the needs of people of all ages by providing diverse housing options, transportation choices, safe and inclusive neighborhoods, access to services, and opportunities for participation and economic mobility.

Source: planning.org

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R), a program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, identifies conditions that shape livability, including safe housing, jobs that pay a living wage and well-resourced schools. These factors, often called the social determinants of health, and how these conditions are created, distributed and maintained determines the opportunity for everyone to thrive.
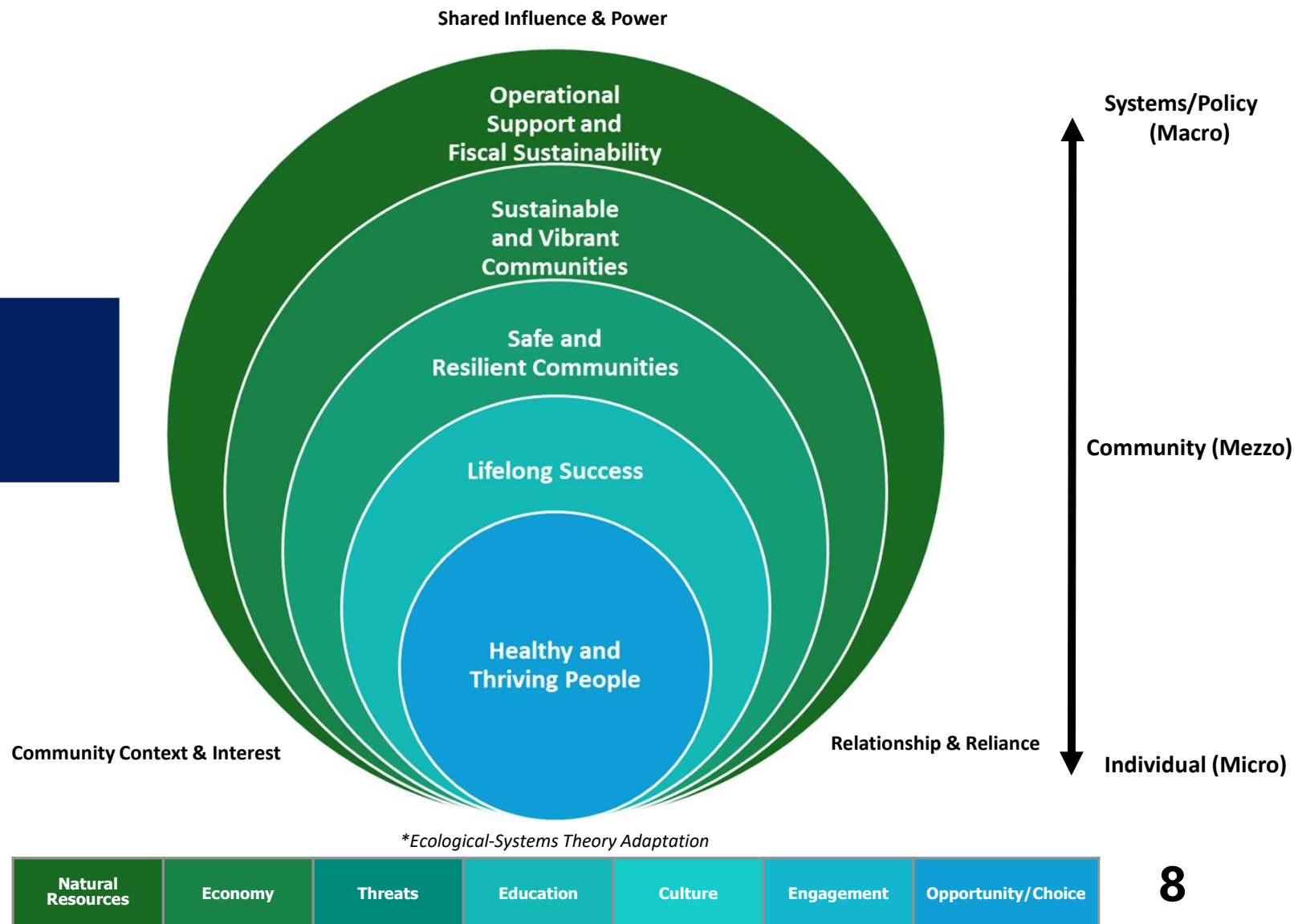
Source: countyhealthrankings.org
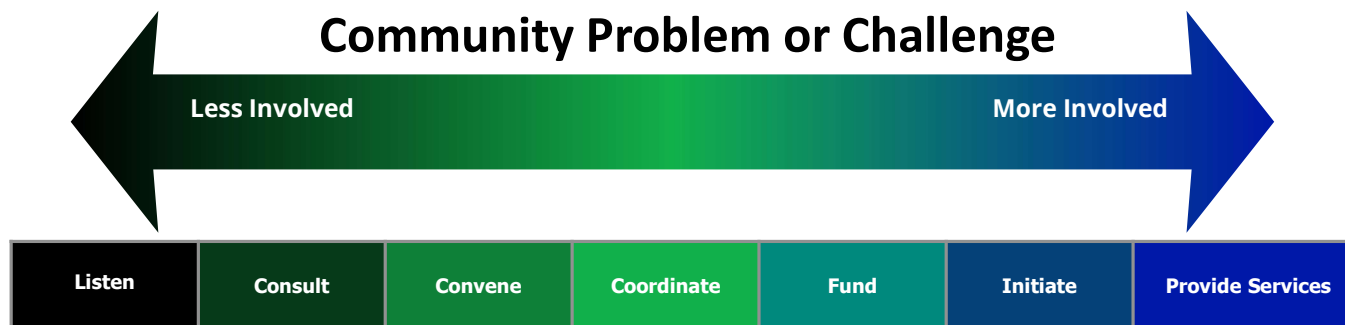
Our Lens of Livability

Guilford County defines livability as the degree to which people of all ages, abilities, and incomes can experience the opportunity to live, learn, work, and play in a desirable and supportive environment that honors the uniqueness of individuals, a vibrant culture, and access to amenities and resources.

Our Lens of Livability

Shared Influence & Power

Operational Support and Fiscal Sustainability

Sustainable and Vibrant Communities

Safe and Resilient Communities

Lifelong Success

Healthy and Thriving People

Systems/Policy (Macro)

Community (Mezzo)

Individual (Micro)

Community Context & Interest

Relationship & Reliance

Ecological-Systems Theory Adaptation

| Natural Resources | Economy | Threats | Education | Culture | Engagement | Opportunity/Choice |

8

Spectrum of Government Involvement

Community Problem or Challenge

Less Involved ← → More Involved

Listen	Consult	Convene	Coordinate	Fund	Initiate	Provide Services

- **Promote** – _Listen_ to gain greater understanding and increase awareness of a community priority.

- **Explore** – _Consult_ stakeholders and _Convene_ resources to research an issue and develop potential policy options.

- **Partner** – _Coordinate_ with community organizations and _Fund_ initiatives that achieve shared goals.

- **Enhance** – _Initiate_ policy options to _Provide Services_ that directly address these needs.
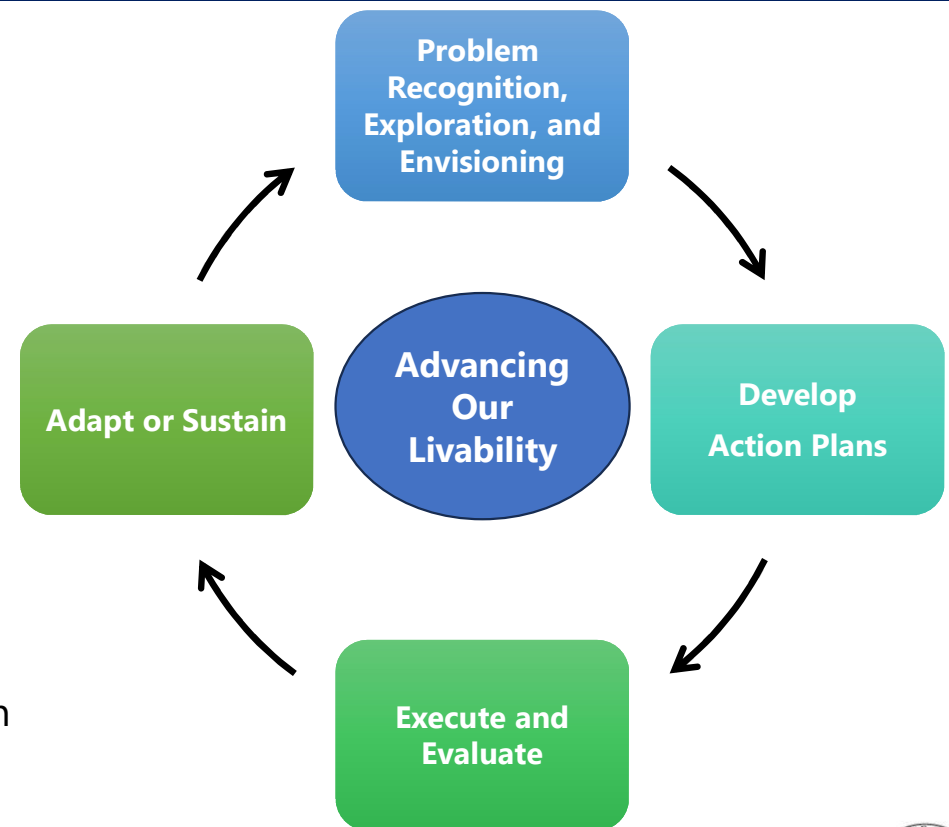
Proposed Governance

BoCC Livability Committee (4 Commissioners)

Strategic Leadership Team
- County Manager
- Assistant County Managers
- Strategic Planning Manager
- Budget Director
- Human Resource Director
- Chief Financial Officer
- Employee for Positive Change Representative

Goal Area Teams (5)
- Each workgroup will be co-led by a Department Director
- Staff and community membership/participation based on action plans and tactics

Problem Recognition, Exploration, and Envisioning

Develop Action Plans

Advancing Our Livability

Adapt or Sustain

Execute and Evaluate

Developing Our Livability Indicators

Livability indicators draw from data across key domains such as housing, health, safety, mobility, economic opportunity, and community belonging. Together, they offer a shared frame of reference for understanding community wellbeing.

Utilize data sources previously shared by BoCC, best practice livability indices, utilizing reliable sources trusted by departments.

Livability Indicator

Graphic:
- A chart, metric, or other visual representation of the indicator.

Data Source:
- A citation of the dataset or system used to produce the measure.
- Indicators with an asterisk (*) after the data sources can be viewed on the County Health Rankings website. This tool allows a user to view information from multiple counties at once for the purposes of comparison.

About The Data:
- Explains what the indicator measures.
- Describes how the measure or calculation is performed.

Why This Is Important:
- Provides context on why the indicator matters to the community.
- Situates the measure within a broader understanding of community health, equity, and quality of life.

How is Guilford County Doing?
- Interprets the measure in context.
- Compares Guilford County's performance to state and national benchmarks when available.

Structure of Plan

60 _Livability Indicators_ are connected to the goal areas to support measuring the livability of the community.

- Goal Area
- Strategy
- Activity
- Tactic

Structure of Plan: Terminology & Shared Language

Goal Areas are high-level focus areas reflecting strategic livability themes, which help concentrate energy to support alignment around strategic direction.
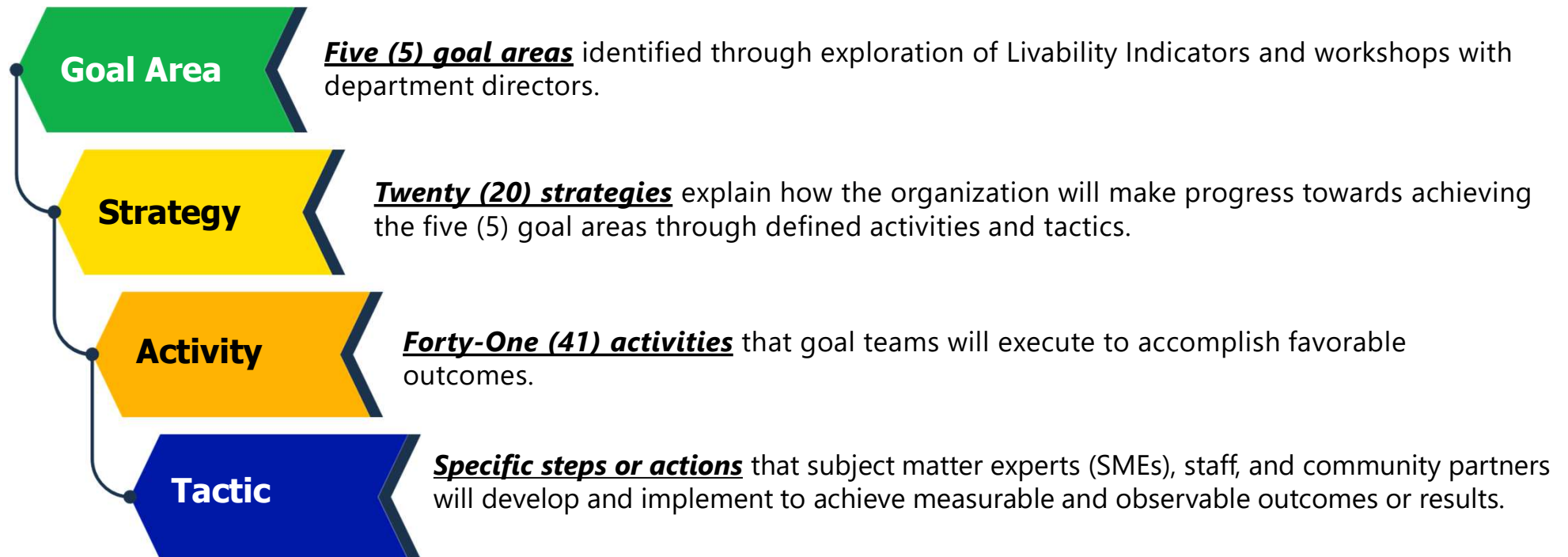
A **strategy** is a high-level, cross functional, coordinated approach to achieve a goal.

An **activity** is a project/initiative that operationalizes the strategy.

A **tactic** is a short-term, measurable, and assignable task.

Goal Area — *What you want to improve*

Strategy — *How you plan to improve it*

Activity — *The major work*

Tactic — *The specific actions*

Structure of Plan

Goal Area

Five (5) goal areas identified through exploration of Livability Indicators and workshops with department directors.

Strategy

Twenty (20) strategies explain how the organization will make progress towards achieving the five (5) goal areas through defined activities and tactics.

Activity

Forty-One (41) activities that goal teams will execute to accomplish favorable outcomes.

Tactic

Specific steps or actions that subject matter experts (SMEs), staff, and community partners will develop and implement to achieve measurable and observable outcomes or results.

Our Goal Areas:

Healthy and Thriving People

Guilford County supports individuals and families to thrive by ensuring access to high-quality health and human services and by promoting physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

Lifelong Success

Guilford County empowers individuals across their lifespan from early childhood education through lifelong learning, supports upward mobility and long-term prosperity, and promotes sustainable economic development.

Safe and Resilient Communities

Guilford County creates a safe, prepared, and resilient community by investing in public safety, emergency response, disaster readiness, and community resilience.

Sustainable & Vibrant Communities

Guilford County promotes intentionally designed, vibrant, and thriving communities by advancing infrastructure to meet growth demands, engaging in planning and development practices that balance environmental, social and economic factors for all residents, and establishing high quality recreational and green space amenities.

Operational Support and Fiscal Sustainability

Guilford County is committed to attracting and retaining a talented County workforce, thereby ensuring operational excellence and responsible fiscal stewardship for the delivery of sustainable, high-quality public services in partnership with the community.

Strategic Plan Operationalization

Problem Recognition, Exploration & Envisioning → Action Plan Development → Execution & Evaluation → Adapt or Sustain

Goal 1: Guilford County supports individuals and families to thrive by ensuring access to high-quality health and human services and by promoting physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

Strategies	Enhance collaborative solutions with community partners to address longstanding health disparities and disparate health outcomes, including infant mortality, firearm violence and injury, and food insecurity.	Enhance services to reduce the harms of substance use through a continuum of care with a focus on families, children, veterans, and other vulnerable populations.	Enhance individual and community wellbeing, through the lens of whole person care, to address complex challenges faced by vulnerable families and individuals.	Promote second chance and recovery pathways for justice-involved adults and youth through community collaboration.
Activities	Continue to partner with and enhance the efforts of the Guilford County Infant Mortality Taskforce and Every Baby Guilford's collective action strategy to reduce infant deaths.	Enhance access to residential recovery centers to provide low-barrier specialized, family-centered treatment, including pregnant and parenting recovery and long term supports for highly vulnerable adults.	Establish and sustain a cross-departmental multi-disciplinary team and service navigation framework to support vulnerable residents.	Complete an analysis of justice involved populations and explore policies, practices, and programs that address disparities in the criminal legal system, including evaluating and implementing the public safety assessment tool for pre-trial services.
	Sustain and enhance the public health gun violence coalition in an effort to implement collective action strategies to reduce firearm violence and injury.	Sustain a comprehensive Opioid Action Plan that includes inappropriate prescribing, prevention, harm reduction, residential supports, justice-involved services, equity, lived experience, and performance management.	Implement the HHS Practice and Operational Framework supporting consolidation into a Health and Human Services Agency, as defined per statute NCGS 153A-77, and design service delivery and workspaces to promote co-location of health and human services to promote "no wrong door," high quality service delivery.	Evaluate and enhance existing programming for justice involved residents in areas of reentry programming, youth detention, and recovery courts with an emphasis on mental illness, addiction, and workforce development.
	Sustain and enhance the ARPA-funded food security collective action plan.		Reduce barriers to access through mobile and community-based locations.	

Goal 2: Guilford County empowers individuals across their lifespan from early childhood education through lifelong learning, supports upward mobility and long-term prosperity, and promotes sustainable economic development.

Strategies	Explore and address barriers to accessing affordable, quality childcare and the associated workforce development needs to sustain success.	Partner with Guilford County Schools to fund and sustain safe, modern, and future-ready schools while fulfilling statutory obligations per NCGS 115C-426(f).	Explore opportunities to support market competitiveness for the delivery of quality education by investing in a highly skilled workforce while fulfilling statutory requirements of NCGS 115C.	Promote sustainable local prosperity and economic development by creating a seamless educational and credentialing pipeline to prepare the workforce for high-demand careers in advanced manufacturing, aerospace, healthcare, life science, clean energy, and other skilled trades.	Partner to strengthen the local business network to support small businesses and startups with a focus on historically underserved entrepreneurs.
Activities	Through partnership, develop an actionable, cross-sector, and data-informed roadmap to strengthen the early childcare system in Guilford County.	In partnership with Guilford County Schools, complete $2 billion bond program and evaluate the funding and debt service strategy to support the next series of school construction projects based on the GCS Facilities Master Plan informed by updated comparative data.	Explore funding strategies based on a multi-year phased approach to maintain salary supplements in the top 10 school districts statewide for teachers, assistant principals, and principals and evaluate market-based pay adjustments for classified employees who support daily school operations.	In partnership with Guilford County Economic Development Alliance (GCEDA), Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, and High Point Economic Development., NC Works and other stakeholders, implement a regional skills analysis in effort to align economic growth with local talent and skills.	Expand partnerships to improve access to local and regional procurement opportunities with a focus on increasing the number of HUB certified small businesses in the county.
			Evaluate a funding plan in response to the Quarter of a Cent Sales Tax Advisory Referendum on the November 2026 ballot.	In addition to funding the operational needs of Guilford Technical Community College, per NCGS 115D-32, evaluate and support capital improvement planning to ensure alignment with future economic growth and specialized job demands.	Increase small business capacity by utilizing financial readiness resources and capital access through Carolina Small Business Development.
			Support Guilford County Schools' implementation of School Health Clinics in alignment with the School-Based Health Alliance National Standards.	Promote a clean energy economy in partnership with the Guilford County Economic Development Alliance (GCEDA), Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, and High Point Economic Development.	

Action Plan Development (Strategies & Activities)

Action Plan Development (Strategies & Activities)

Goal 3: Guilford County creates a safe, prepared, and resilient community by investing in public safety, emergency response, disaster readiness, and community resilience.

Strategies	Enhance the public safety system by aligning staffing and resources with service demand to ensure timely response to emergencies and calls for service.	Explore community partnerships and processes to increase the live release rate by reducing intake and preventing crises before animals reach the shelter.	Be a well-planned community by promoting housing stability through enhancing emergency supports, pathways to attainable housing, and housing choice in partnership with the NC-504 CoC and municipalities.
Activities	Evaluate public safety service rate prediction models (emergency services, law enforcement, animal services, and juvenile detention) to identify resource needs to respond to population growth and service demands.	Implement targeted service delivery response and identify innovative strategies to keep people with their pets.	Promote the development and retention of a variety of housing types that accommodate all residents while emphasizing safe and high-quality, sustainable designs throughout Guilford County, specifically in activity centers designated by the adopted 2025 Guiding Guilford Comprehensive Plan.
	Through partnership, explore implementing a standard of coverage for rural fire protection along with a fiscally responsible reserve policy that sustains reliable fire response.		Partner with local organizations, housing authorities, and municipalities to address service delivery needs across the continuum of care, including emergency shelters, housing that is affordable, and supports for the unhoused population.
			Promote housing stability through the Eviction Mediation and Landlord Engagement Program to collaboratively reduce the community eviction rate.
			In partnership with municipalities, explore the repurposing of County parcels/properties to support opportunities for attainable housing.

Goal 4: Guilford County promotes intentionally designed, vibrant, and thriving communities by advancing infrastructure to meet growth demands, engaging in planning and development practices that balance environmental, social and economic factors for all residents, and establishing high quality recreational and green space amenities.

Strategies	Explore opportunities to promote clean and green spaces, to ensure a safe natural and built environment, and to adopt green practices.	Partner with municipalities and the Piedmont Triad Regional Water Authority to explore opportunities to increase coordinated regional water and sewer infrastructure to expand capacity and meet sustainable future growth needs.	Promote addressing the digital divide to close connectivity gaps and link underserved neighborhoods to essential services.	Explore opportunities to increase transportation access and system integration to connect residents to jobs, education, and other services.
Activities	Explore options, identify opportunities, and build a shared understanding around long-term clean energy planning for County operations.	Explore opportunities to support targeted water/sewer infrastructure extensions and connectivity to promote economic development and address demand for additional housing units, specifically in unincorporated Guilford County.	Partner with key influencers, community members, and the local business community to develop a multi-year plan to eliminate digital inequities and access based on the 2022 Broadband study.	Develop and implement a countywide mobility plan.
	Develop environmentally sustainable design standards as identified in the Comprehensive Plan.			
	Support partnerships with the Piedmont Triad Regional Council to establish an interlocal agreement and sustainability plan for the Bicentennial Greenway.			

Goal 5: Guilford County is committed to attracting and retaining a talented County workforce, thereby ensuring operational excellence and responsible fiscal stewardship for the delivery of sustainable, high-quality public services in partnership with the community.

Strategies	Enhance public communication tools and broaden community engagement to deliver clear, accessible, and transparent information for all residents.	Enhance the use of data and analytics to address community challenges, better understand community needs, and prevent recurring crises.	Enhance capital planning through lifecycle cost analysis to ensure reliable, high-quality services that prioritize life/safety and accessibility.	Enhance the County workforce by offering competitive pay and benefits and growth opportunities and by promoting a positive workplace culture.
Activities	Expand and diversify community engagement methods to create more opportunities for two-way communication, education, awareness, and advocacy.	Strengthen the County's data culture by expanding tools, training, and shared practices that help staff, partners, and residents use data effectively.	Develop and implement a capital and space use plan that promotes co-located services, centralization of administrative functions, and highest and best use of existing assets.	Maintain competitive compensation and benefits philosophy to attract and retain qualified employees.
		Develop a data integration framework and system to connect information, improve coordination, and deliver more effective support to residents to mitigate cyclical crises.	Develop a capital improvement plan to address deferred capital repairs and expansion opportunities based on the 2025 Guilford County Parks, Open Space & Trails Master Plan.	Develop and implement a county-wide workplace climate action plan.
				Institute a recurring employee appreciation and recognition program.

Q&A & Initial Feedback

- What resonates with you?

- What is missing?

- What gives you worry or concern?

- Will this make a difference in the lives of residents?

12 Month Calendar

Month	Step
January 2026	• BoCC feedback on alignment using the lens of livability to shape direction • BoCC feedback on identified goals/strategies
February 2026	• Host Livability Forums to collect resident feedback on Activities to inform development of Tactics
March 2026	• BoCC Retreat: Adopt the Plan; Align strategies & activities with Fiscal Year 2027 budget process
May 2026	• Form Livability Committee, Goal Area Teams, & develop Action Plans
July 2026	• Begin Implementation and monthly Goal Area Team meetings
October 2026	• First Quarterly Livability Committee Meeting (each quarter will focus on 2 goal areas)
January 2027	• Mid-year Progress Report to BoCC