

Town of Hertford



FY 2022-2023 Strategic Plan

Adopted May 9, 2022

Introduction

This strategic plan creates a single, forward-focused vision that clearly communicates the goals and priorities of the Town of Hertford to our residents, staff, and external partners. It is used to prioritize efforts, effectively allocate resources, and align management and staff to the Town's overall goals. According to the UNC School of Government, strategic planning is one of the most effective tools to improve organizational performance and sustainability in local government. In establishing this plan, the Hertford Town Council provides a framework for the Town Manager to organize budgets and projects on an annual basis to ensure consistent progress is made against major goals and initiatives over a much longer period of time. A clearly articulated strategic plan creates an increased sense of responsibility at all organizational levels while providing a clear and objective standard to which residents can hold their elected officials and government staff accountable.

The Town of Hertford Strategic Plan was initially created by the Town Council and Town Manager based on formal and informal inputs from our residents and other stakeholders. The Plan is a living document and will be updated periodically as the Town's needs and desires evolve moving forward.

Mission

Grow Hertford into a first-class community to live, work, play, and visit through increased economic opportunity for residents and businesses, improved housing, and more accessible youth programs, while maintaining an affordable cost of living.

Values

- We are one community of many voices, all with the same right to be heard and respected
- We are one community of many needs, all of which must be met for our shared success
- We must provide residents with opportunities to escape the cycle of poverty
- We must invest in and protect our youth to guarantee the future of our Town
- We must ensure every dollar we spend is put toward the item of greatest positive impact
- We must maintain the public trust by speaking truth, being transparent, and listening always

SWOT Analysis

Based on Town of Hertford Economic Development Strategic Plan (2018) with Updates (2022)

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautiful waterfront & River • Historic properties • Preserved Historic S-Bridge span • Retirees ready to engage • Beautiful architecture • Modern library • Ground transportation assets (ICPTA) • Affordability • Colleges and universities are nearby • New Art Gallery/Artistic community • Natural resources • New Youth Center • New Assisted Living Facility 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distressed Housing • Absentee owners • Gateways need attention • Broadband access is poor • No community college campus in Perquimans • Out migration • Low employment opportunities • Low skilled workforce • Lack of medical professionals • Aging / failing infrastructure
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once-in-a-generation federal infrastructure funding opportunities • Connectivity with Hampton Roads Region • Partnerships with colleges and universities • Collaboration with County and other nearby partners • State Theater Property • New I-87 improvements • HarborTown Project & Albemarle Loop • Marketing plan update • Waterfront development potential • Opportunity Zone designations • Marine Industrial Park 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town has a limited footprint for growth • New I-87 may bypass Hertford, route unknown • Flat tax base (may change after next round of reassessments) • Economic downturn may discourage external investment and limit borrowing opportunities • Retail growth outside of Town threatens to reduce business customers and visitors

STRATEGIC GOALS

1. **A community appearance of which our residents can be proud**
Preserve, maintain, and enhance the existing positive elements, and identify and rectify the negative elements of our community's appearance. Work to assist those who may be in need.
2. **An attractive historic waterfront community for tourist and citizens**
Preserve our commercial spaces, improve, and maintain existing public spaces and provide a new community gathering space to attract tourism and citizens to our downtown.
3. **A finance plan to identify funding for current projects and guide Town finances into the future.**
Identify grant opportunities, create financial policies, identify current assets, prepare, and follow rate studies, refinance debt, and explore partners to create a financial plan to fund community improvements and establish a culture of growing within means.
4. **Best practice administration operations**
Utilize technology, personnel evaluation system, and merit pay to enable staff to excel and improve operating efficiencies.
5. **A well-maintained Infrastructure and best practice utility operations**
Provide quality utilities and utility services in an efficient manner. Establish a level of service to be achieved through staffing, a Capital Improvement Plan for infrastructure repair, maintenance, and use of technology.
6. **A well-informed citizenry and visitors**
Improve communications to guide visitors and keep citizens informed.

ACTION PLAN

1. A community appearance of which our residents can be proud

Preserve, maintain, and enhance the existing positive elements, and identify and rectify the negative elements of our community's appearance. Work to assist those who may be in need.

Objective: Improve housing and appearance of Town

Strategies:

- 1. Secure code enforcement services through Town staff, shared staff or independent contractor*
- 2. Budget to enforce codes as needed*
- 3. Enforce nuisance and junk car ordinances*
- 4. Coordinate with County building inspector to enforce minimum housing standards*
- 5. Coordinate with County on foreclosures and to collect or secure the ownership of these properties.*
- 6. Sell properties for new housing or renovation*
- 7. Connect owners and tenants in need with resources and partners who can help*

2. An attractive historic waterfront community for tourist and citizens

Preserve our commercial spaces, improve, and maintain existing public spaces and provide a new community gathering space to attract tourism and citizens to our downtown.

a. Objective: Repair and improve street surfaces in the river front, downtown and surrounding areas (following underground and infrastructure repairs)

Strategies:

- 1. Conduct a pavement condition study to prioritize repairs and quantify the costs*
- 2. Develop an annual or bi-annual budget repair and resurfacing program*

b. Objective: Repair and install sidewalks in the river front, downtown and surrounding areas (following underground and infrastructure repairs)

Strategies:

- 1. Identify and prioritize sidewalk repairs and new sidewalk/crosswalk needs*
- 2. Budget for annual sidewalk repair, new sidewalks, and ADA compliant crosswalks*

c. Objective: Create a community gathering space

Strategies:

- 1. Identify and locate property*
- 2. Develop a plan for the space*
- 3. Identify funding to implement the plan*

d. Objective: Prevent further deterioration of and improve commercial buildings

Strategies:

- 1. Investigate a Demolition by Neglect (DBN) Ordinance*
- 2. Adopt and enforce the ordinance*
- 3. Seek County assistance in enforcing the DBN Ordinance*
- 4. Budget funds to enforce the Ordinance*

e. Objective: Develop amenities for citizens and tourists in the Downtown and River front

Strategies:

- 1. Identify locations for electric car charging stations and secure funding for their installation*
- 2. Review and amend zoning ordinances as needed to allow murals and create guidelines for their location, content, approval process, selection of artists, etc.*
- 3. Work with new cable provider to provide free Wi-Fi downtown*
- 4. Secure/manage parking downtown*
- 5. Provide public restrooms downtown*

f. Objective: Secure and improve vehicle and pedestrian access through Barrow Alley

Strategies:

- 1. Secure right of way as needed and identify funding for the paving improvements for cars and safe pedestrian access to the parking lot*

g. Objective: Improve the performance of Public Works Staff

Strategies:

- 1. With input from Public Works staff create a realistic picture of the skills and number of employees needed to accomplish the tasks.*

h. Objective: Continue to implement the Community and Waterfront Plan

Strategies: See Community and Waterfront Plan for action steps

i. **Objective: Continue Harbor Town Project**

Strategies: See Harbor Town Project Plan for action steps

j. **Objective: Bury overhead wires to improve appearance**

Strategies:

- 1. Explore developing a co-bury agreement with new cable provider*
- 2. Seek assistance of Electricities for planning, engineering, and prioritizing*

3. **A finance plan to identify funding for current projects and guide town finances into the future.**

Identify grant opportunities, create financial policies, identify current assets, prepare, and follow rate studies, refinance debt, and explore partners to create a financial plan to fund community improvements and establish a culture of growing within means.

a. **Objective: Refinance Debt**

Strategies:

- 1. Identify and select firms that work with local government on refinancing
And determine if it is the best course for the Town*

b. **Objective: Create a system to secure and manage grants**

Strategies:

- 1. Hold a funding summit of all governmental funding agencies*
- 2. Utilize Albemarle Commission grant services*
- 3. Contact NCLM about services to manage ARP funds*
- 4. Utilize DOC/CERRI services*
- 5. Utilize engineering companies in identifying and preparing grants*
- 6. Develop and implement a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to better
Inform the financial plan*

c. **Objective: Effectively utilize existing resources**

Strategies:

- 1. Inventory all real property owned by the Town and determine what can be
excessed and its value*
- 2. Elicit the assistance of the Development Finance Initiative at UNC School
of Government regarding sale and development of large parcel owned by
the Town on the water*

d. **Objective: Develop Financial Plan**

Strategies:

1. *Utilize a finance firm to develop a financial plan incorporating potential grant funding, financing and selling assets*

e. **Objective: Establish a culture of having and following best financial practices**

Strategies:

1. *Review and update or create policies and procedures to guide debt limits, fund balances, utility rates and purchasing*

4. **Best practice administration operations**

Utilize technology, personnel evaluation system, and merit pay to enable staff to excel and improve operating efficiencies

a. **Objective: Utilize smart meters in utility systems**

Strategies:

1. *Continue to implement the plan to install and utilize electric smart meters*
2. *Explore installing and utilizing water smart meters*
3. *Determine the system that best fits current billing software*
4. *Inform citizens of any changes that will impact them*

b. **Objective: Using GIS to create a better system for cemetery recordkeeping**

Strategies:

1. *Proceed with conversion from paper maps to GIS*

c. **Objective: Better utilize Granicus**

Strategies:

1. *Explore other options*

d. **Objective: Develop program to evaluate staff performance and recognize strong staff performance by identifying individual goals and training needs for growth**

Strategies:

1. *Review MAPS pay plan to get employees up to market*
2. *Create a simple performance evaluation process that is conducted annually and is used to determine merit increases*
3. *Budget for a merit increase pool of funds in the budget*

e. **Objective: Submit audit on time**

Strategies:

- 1. As budget records can be closed, prepare them for the auditor as soon as possible*
- 2. Schedule the auditor on-site visit for immediately after records are expected to be complete*
- 3. Document schedules and dates to prove to LGC if any delays are a result of the auditor rather than the Town*
- 4. Press auditor to complete audit and meet LGC deadline*

5. **A well-maintained Infrastructure and best practice utility operations**

Provide quality utilities and utility services in an efficient manner. Establish a level of service to be achieved through staffing, a Capital Improvement Plan for infrastructure repair, maintenance, and use of technology.

a. **Objective: Establish a level of service**

Strategies:

- 1. Use focus groups, incl. staff to develop an accepted level of service including fixed dates for meter reading, billing, collection, cutoffs and leak settlement*
- 2. Educate and train staff on the level of service and incorporate it in their job performance goals on which they will be evaluated*

b. **Objective: Using water and wastewater assessments to improve Infrastructure**

Strategies:

- 1. Complete water and wastewater assessments*
- 2. Use the assessment in budgeting and prioritizing projects*
- 3. Assess the efficacy of the merger, including costs to implement and revenues and expenses to operate*
- 4. Decide whether to proceed with the merger and take the steps necessary to implement*

6. **A well-informed citizenry and visitors**

Improve communications to guide visitors and keep residents informed.

a. **Objective: A brand/tagline for Hertford**

Strategies:

- 1. Explore firms to create a brand that Hertford can adopt and utilize*

b. Objective: Wayfinding signage to direct residents and visitors to key places in Town

Strategies:

- 1. Take the necessary steps to have wayfinding signs designed, selected, funded and installed*

c. Objective: Strong social media presence to inform residents & visitors

Strategies:

- 1. Evaluate current website product and presence*
- 2. Pursue best product for appeal, flexibility, ease in updating*
- 3. Post policies and freshen content frequently on website and Facebook*