

HARNETT COUNTY

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**2032**

# Strategic Plan

Adopted February 7, 2022





*Prepared by Harnett County in collaboration with the UNC School of Government,  
Center for Public Leadership and Governance*



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# County Commissioners

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**Lewis Weatherspoon**  
*Chairman*  
District 4



**Matthew Nicol**  
*Vice-Chairman*  
District 5



**Barbara McKoy**  
District 1



**Mark Johnson**  
District 2



**Brooks Matthews**  
District 3



## Message from the Board Chairman

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I am pleased to present Harnett County's inaugural Strategic Plan. This plan comes at a time of tremendous opportunity for Harnett County, and our goal is for the Strategic Plan to play a key role in helping the Board of Commissioners, County management, and staff seize that opportunity.

Harnett County has grown considerably over the past several decades, and is continuing to change rapidly. The County's population has nearly doubled since 1990, and Harnett is among the fastest growing counties in North Carolina over the past 10 years. If anything, this growth is only expected to accelerate going forward. There are currently more than 11,700 new homes in development across Harnett County. All of this growth means more citizens with more needs, priorities, and expectations for County government. Our job, and the job of all County employees, is to engage, listen to, and serve all of those citizens.

This Strategic Plan establishes explicit priorities that will serve as a roadmap for the County moving forward. It will allow us to move forward together in one direction for the betterment of Harnett County and all of its citizens.

The Plan articulates a dynamic and exciting vision for the future of Harnett County, along with a mission for County Government and five strategic goals that are intended to make that vision a reality. The plan also includes a set of shared core values for Harnett County Government, and objectives under each goal with key strategic actions aimed at accomplishing those objectives.

The process of developing this Strategic Plan was an inclusive one that offered opportunities for both County employees and the County's citizens to provide feedback, which informed the plan. We wanted to develop Strategic Goals that every County department and employee can see their role in accomplishing, and that every citizen feels will improve their lives.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my fellow commissioners for their leadership and direction in making this plan a reality; our County employees and citizens for their participation and input into this process; and our consultants, Rebecca Jackson and Lydian Altman, with the UNC School of Government's Center for Public Leadership and Governance for their support in the County's strategic planning efforts.

As the County transitions from plan development and adoption to execution and implementation, we intend to share our progress and successes by creating an annual performance report that will be available to the public to highlight our accomplishments and track progress towards accomplishing the goals set out in this plan.

Thank you again for your participation in this process and for your commitment to the success of Harnett County. We look forward to what lies ahead.



Lewis W. Weatherspoon, Chairman  
Harnett County Board of Commissioners

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# Foundation for High Performing Framework

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?

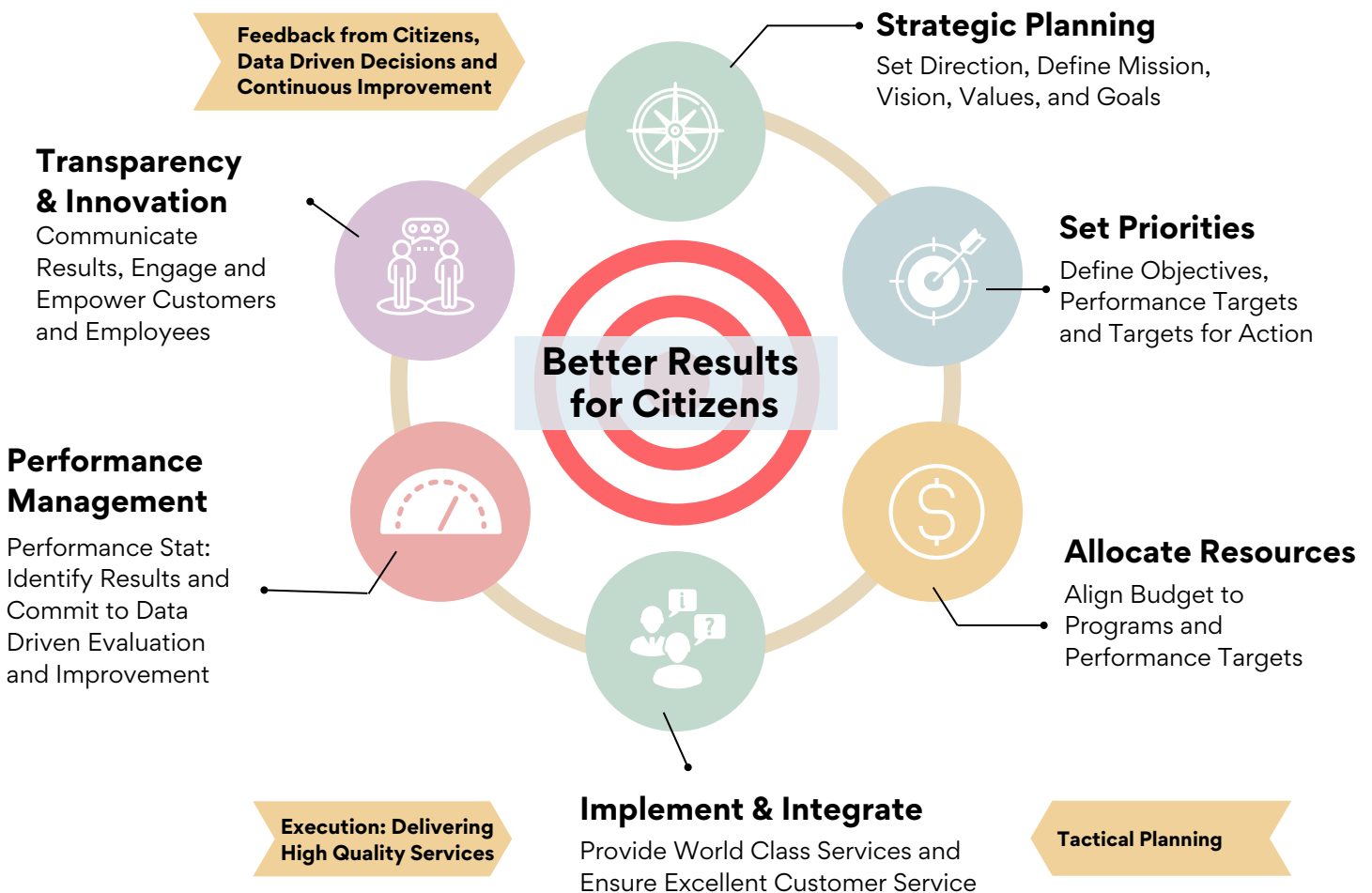
**Strategy:** What are our goals, objectives and priorities?

**Performance:** What are our one-year plans and how will we track our progress?

# Foundation for High Performing Framework

Strategic plans improve transparency and accountability. They align community values with strategies and priorities, transforming ideas into action.

This Plan will provide clarity to our organization and the community. It will guide our efforts and help make sure resources are allocated in the right areas. Strategic plans lay a foundation for engaging employees and citizens with clear communication, and they provide a basis for performance management.



# Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process kicked off in June 2021 with a retreat for County Department Heads where they were introduced to strategic planning and high performance structures, and where they identified strategic priorities for the County. A retreat was held for the Board of Commissioners in August 2021, during which the Board identified vision, mission, and core value themes along with strategic goals and priority themes.

County leaders recognized that input from citizens, partner organizations, and the business community was critical to the success of the strategic plan and launched a public engagement campaign in October 2021. Citizens and County employees were given an opportunity to weigh in on the themes the Board identified and provide their feedback during multiple virtual and in-person engagement sessions, and by participating in a strategic planning survey. The results of the survey and engagement sessions were then used to inform the draft Strategic Plan, which was presented to the Board of Commissioners for adoption in February 2022.



## MANAGER'S & DIRECTOR'S RETREAT JUNE 2021

- Introduction to strategic planning and high performance structures
- Celebrating success
- Changing times and improvement opportunities
- Environmental Scan
- Harnett County strategic priorities



## COMMISSIONERS INTERVIEWS & RETREAT JULY-AUGUST 2021

- Introduction to strategic planning and high performance structures
- Environmental scan review
- History of Harnett County
- Vision, Mission and Core Value Themes
- Strategic Goals and priority themes



## PUBLIC & WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT OCTOBER 2021

- Employee survey and workshops
- Citizen survey and workshops



## PLAN DEVELOPMENT & ADOPTION NOV 2021-FEB 2022

- Board of Commissioner review of input
- Refinement of strategic framework
- Adoption
- Implementation planning



# Citizen & Employee Engagement

Following strategic planning workshops held with Harnett County Department Heads and the Board of Commissioners, the County sought input from the public, as well as County employees.

Harnett County invited residents to participate in one of three community workshops in October 2021 to learn more about the strategic planning process and provide feedback. The County held two virtual workshops and one in-person workshop in the Harnett County Resource Center and Library in Lillington. County employees were also invited to attend one of two 30-minute employee engagement workshops to share priorities and to learn more about the process.

In addition to the workshops, citizens and employees were asked to complete a short survey to provide input on the Strategic Plan, which was incorporated into the draft Plan. The surveys contained demographic questions to help ensure the County received diverse perspectives. The County received 776 survey responses from citizens and 263 survey responses from employees within several departments with various years of experience.

Capturing the voice of employees and the community within the Strategic Plan helps to ensure alignment with organizational priorities and community expectations. In addition to being incorporated in the draft plan, the feedback from the workshops and surveys was compiled into an Engagement Report and provided to County Commissioners to show community and employee priorities for the County's vision, mission, and goals.



## WHO WE ASPIRE TO BE

Our vision tells us where we are going. It describes the ideal state of Harnett County in 10 years and is focused on the community's future.

# OUR VISION



Harnett County is a **unified, safe, healthy, and engaged community** that is **culturally vibrant, well-planned with a thriving economy and a high-quality educational system**, in **harmony with its environment and beautiful natural resources**, and with **strong leadership** ensuring **equitable services** so that all citizens will prosper.

## WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO

Our mission imparts our organization's purpose. It describes why we exist and defines our organization's role in pursuing the community vision.

# OUR MISSION



Harnett County will **effectively and efficiently deliver high quality County services** and **public infrastructure** with **smart growth strategies** and through a **responsive** Board and workforce who are **committed to excellence** and **ensuring the public trust with dedication, leadership and governance**.

# CORE VALUES

Our Core Values inform how we will make decisions and fulfill our mission to serve the public. They define our standards of behavior. Harnett County employees are public servants whose purpose is to **CREATE** a better Harnett County.



## CUSTOMER SERVICE

*Seeking 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 people's beliefs and treating them with kindness and courtesy.*



## ETHICAL & FAIR TREATMENT

*Doing what's right even when nobody's 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 don't 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.*

# Strategic Goals

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Harnett County's Strategic Plan is designed to provide a clear vision for the future along with direction for turning that vision into a reality. The Plan includes five Strategic Goals that reflect the County's priorities for the next three years. Goal statements define what the organization intends to accomplish and lays out a path to follow in order to realize the vision.

Each Goal includes a set of Objectives that further define the Goal, along with Key Strategic Actions that should be undertaken in the coming year to make progress toward the County's Objectives. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will also be developed following Strategic Plan adoption that will assist the County in tracking progress toward accomplishing each Goal.



**SUPERIOR  
EDUCATION**



**ORGANIZATIONAL  
EXCELLENCE**



**HEALTHY & SAFE  
COMMUNITY**



**ECONOMIC  
STRENGTH**



**INFORMED  
& ENGAGED  
CITIZENS**



## SUPERIOR EDUCATION

A strong public school system is essential for the development of children into productive adults who contribute to the overall success of Harnett County. It is critical that Harnett County Government partner with the Harnett County School System to ensure all students in Harnett County are provided with a high quality education.

### GOAL OBJECTIVES

Objective 1.1	Maintain effective collaboration with Harnett County Schools to coordinate budget process, capital projects, and other initiatives
Objective 1.2	Maintain a long-term funding plan for capital needs
Objective 1.3	Attract, support, and retain highly qualified and experienced public school teachers and staff
Objective 1.4	Advocate for appropriate allocation of school funding from federal and state sources

### FY 2023 KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- ▶ **Action 1.1:** Engage school administration proactively to discuss and coordinate budget priorities and funding for FY2023
- ▶ **Action 1.2:** Restore County involvement in capital planning and architectural committee for ongoing and upcoming projects
- ▶ **Action 1.3:** Create and adopt a long-term plan for funding new schools based on Board of Education priorities
- ▶ **Action 1.4:** Address teacher supplements to increase competitiveness in the region
- ▶ **Action 1.5:** Adopt Legislative Priorities for FY2022 that includes advocacy for increased funding for schools



## ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Harnett County's greatest asset is its employees. 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 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 OBJECTIVES

Objective 2.1	Attract, retain and grow high performing employees
Objective 2.2	Lead the organization with best finance and budget practices
Objective 2.3	Foster culture of accountability through performance management and adherence to internal processes
Objective 2.4	Seek new and best practice technology to improve processes in all operational areas
Objective 2.5	Improve resident and customer experiences through efficient, high quality service delivery and continuous improvement

### FY 2023 KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- ▶ **Action 2.1:** Complete Compensation Study to assess competitiveness of employee pay and salary compression for existing County employees
- ▶ **Action 2.2:** Review and revise employee performance evaluation process to encourage culture of accountability
- ▶ **Action 2.3:** Engage County employees in improving internal processes and provide regular education on adherence
- ▶ **Action 2.4:** Develop and implement an organizational training and development program
- ▶ **Action 2.5:** Research, develop, and implement a holistic performance management program
- ▶ **Action 2.6:** Implement process for obtaining citizen feedback on County service provision
- ▶ **Action 2.7:** Provide County employees with enrichment opportunities



## SAFE & HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Harnett 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 services.

### GOAL OBJECTIVES

**Objective 3.1** Preserve and enhance County residents' quality of life through open space, parks, recreation resources and greenways

**Objective 3.2** Protect open space and natural resources

**Objective 3.3** Improve access to healthy food

**Objective 3.4** Decrease alcohol and drug abuse

**Objective 3.5** Provide high quality emergency response and public safety

**Objective 3.6** Support, promote and celebrate arts and culture

### FY 2023 KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- ▶ **Action 3.1:** Prioritize parks and greenway projects for development through Capital Improvements Program
- ▶ **Action 3.2:** Provide support for local farmer's markets and community gardens at County locations to support healthy food options for residents
- ▶ **Action 3.3:** Assess most pressing issues surrounding substance abuse and engage stakeholders to develop plan to curb problems
- ▶ **Action 3.4:** Increase provision of County programs and initiatives aimed at encouraging healthy lifestyles and outdoor activity
- ▶ **Action 3.5:** Meet regularly with the local arts organizations to generate and implement ideas for celebrating arts and culture.





## ECONOMIC STRENGTH

Harnett County is committed to creating economic opportunity for our residents. The County is working to strengthen its economic development program to position the County for success. This includes providing well-planned infrastructure to recruit business and industry, working with our educational partners to ensure a highly-skilled workforce, and leveraging our resources to ensure residents share in the prosperity generated through these efforts.

## GOAL OBJECTIVES

Objective 4.1	Provide an effective economic development program
Objective 4.2	Provide well-planned communities with smart and sustainable growth strategies
Objective 4.3	Attract and retain a diverse and viable tax base with increased commercial and retail
Objective 4.4	Provide strategically-placed infrastructure for business and industry growth and attraction
Objective 4.5	Enhance Harnett Regional Jetport's function as an economic engine for the county
Objective 4.6	Foster upward mobility and reduce poverty
Objective 4.7	Leverage partners and stakeholders to enhance economic development capacity

## FY 2023 KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- ▶ **Action 4.1:** Revise development and incentive policies to support thriving business and job creation
- ▶ **Action 4.2:** Increase availability of high speed Broadband throughout County
- ▶ **Action 4.3:** Seek to extend natural gas availability along strategic corridors identified for commercial growth
- ▶ **Action 4.4:** Pursue enhanced transportation infrastructure to reduce congestion and increase access throughout the county
- ▶ **Action 4.5:** Plan water and wastewater infrastructure to direct and attract residential, commercial and industrial growth toward targeted areas
- ▶ **Action 4.6:** Educate County departments about economic development priorities and their role in advancing those priorities





## INFORMED & ENGAGED CITIZENS

Harnett County Government exists to serve the citizens of Harnett County. It is vitally important that the public have access to information about County services and programs, and are given an opportunity to provide feedback to the County. Citizens also need to have the capacity and knowledge to effectively engage with County government.

### GOAL OBJECTIVES

Objective  
5.1

Provide effective communication to citizens and businesses

Objective  
5.2

Provide opportunities for citizens to engage meaningfully with County government

Objective  
5.3

Provide effective internal communications and engagement with employees

Objective  
5.4

Strengthen Citizen Advisory Boards and Committees program

### FY 2023 KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- ▶ **Action 5.1:** Launch program to provide presentations to community groups and organizations from County staff on requested topics
- ▶ **Action 5.2:** Create and distribute bimonthly County newsletter in Harnett Regional Water bills
- ▶ **Action 5.3:** Implement use of video and storyboards to promote County events and educate citizens on County services and initiatives
- ▶ **Action 5.4:** Launch new engagement initiative to inform citizens and County employees through quarterly update meetings
- ▶ **Action 5.5:** Redesign County website with citizen dashboard to create more user-friendly experience



For more information, contact:  
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[www.harnett.org/publicinfo/strategic-plan.asp](http://www.harnett.org/publicinfo/strategic-plan.asp)