

City of Manassas Strategic Plan

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Background

This plan embodies the result of a year long dialogue about the City's desired future with Council, citizens and City senior staff. It communicates a vision for the future and identifies the most important goals to realize those aspirations. While strategic planning begins with broad participation and consideration of all issues, the process progressively narrows and distills to focus on the "critical few" elements for success. As such, this plan communicates priority areas of focus for City Council, the City organization and the community.

The planning process began with a comprehensive review the community's situation and issues. In August 2004, Council heard staff reports on the major issues affecting the City's future. After hearing from staff, Council identified important future accomplishments and framed six strategic focus areas for further work: Safe and Secure Community; Positive Growth; Healthy, Safe Neighborhoods and Housing; Engaging and Service a Diverse Community; Natural, Cultural and Physical Infrastructure; and Fiscal Stewardship.

Recognizing the importance of community input, Council formed a 24 citizen member City Futures Task Force to add community vision for the future, suggest goals and recommend strategies for achieving them. The City Futures Task Force met as a group nine times between October and December 2004 and presented its final report to Council in January of 2005. During February, Council reviewed the more than one hundred strategies coming from the Task Force, added a few additional strategies and then completed a round of individual review to identify the most critical priority strategies.

With the selection of strategies by Council members, the City Manager and staff edited the original six focus areas into four more concentrated goals reflecting Council's strategic intent. These goals cover: Public Safety; Positive Growth and Economic Development; Neighborhood Preservation and Civic Engagement; and Government Stewardship and Effectiveness. The City Future's Task Force goal statements were used as the foundation for the final goals with Council's participation and concurrence. Council held two work sessions June 13, 2005 and July 18, 2005 to give ample consideration to goals and strategies.

This strategic plan reflects City Council's priority areas of attention to ensure a successful future. As such, it will guide the efforts of the City organization and its staff as they implement Council priorities and pursue progress toward achieving Council's goals. To maintain the plan's currency, it may be reviewed each year and updated as needed to address new situations, opportunities and accomplishments.

Public Safety – A Safe and Secure Community

The Vision for the Future:

Manassas will be a City in which:

- Public safety providers and the community work as partners to create a safe and secure community
- People feel safe day and night in all areas of the City
- The community supports and is supported by the finest first responders
- Crime is prevented and problems are resolved proactively
- The community and providers are proactive in preventing hazards and threats to public safety

Goal:

To maintain a safe and secure community with an effective system of public safety providers working in partnership with the community to prevent, respond to and mitigate emergencies, and improve the overall quality of life with a focus on problem solving.

Indicators of Success:

- Percent of residents who feel safe
- Average response time to high priority calls (police, fire, rescue)
- Low crime rates
- Reduction in gangs and gang related crime
- Low rate of fire deaths and injuries
- Low rate of traffic deaths and injuries
- Low attrition rate for public safety staff
- Number of community meetings held or attended by police
- Required police accreditation standards met

Public Safety Strategies:

Fire and Rescue Services

1. Explore the advantages and disadvantages of combining fire and rescue operations.

Public Safety Staffing

2. Enhance the recruitment and retention of volunteers to support fire, rescue and public safety operations.
3. Enhance the recruitment and retention of public safety staff.
4. Create ways to enable sworn police officers to spend more time on public safety by using civilian, support personnel and volunteers.

Police Effectiveness

5. Continue the gang task force and share facts with the community on a regular basis.

Positive Growth and Economic Development

The Vision for the Future:

Manassas will be:

- A City that protects City character in a balanced way as it encourages growth
- A City with a well preserved and protected historic, natural and cultural base
- Known for its beauty and attractiveness with welcoming gateways
- A place offering rich, sophisticated cultural resources and recreational opportunities
- An environment that is “pedestrian friendly”
- A City with a “hometown feeling”
- A place offering peace, quiet and tranquility
- A City whose community facilities and public infrastructure keep pace with community development and provide convenient access for citizens
- Resilient to economic fluctuations with a strong, balanced tax base
- A place that entices business and commercial development
- An affordable and prosperous place to live and do business

Goal:

To have a progressive and culturally rich City by encouraging balanced commercial and residential development that enhances the quality of life for all and preserves the community’s heritage and character.

Indicators of Success:

- Quality architecture consistent with the Design Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan
- Range of housing opportunities
- Pedestrian comfort and accessibility
- A mix of businesses to avoid over reliance on one industry
- A tax base that balances residential and non-residential revenue sources
- An increasing percentage of Manassas residents who work in the City
- Number of parking spaces in downtown (commuter, public and private)
- Visitor count (to City)
- Number of visitors annually to museums and cultural arts events
- Number of public area trees
- Absence of temporary public facilities and school trailers
- Gateway features and enhancements at major City entrances

Positive Growth and Economic Development Strategies:

Economic Base Expansion

1. Pursue economic development opportunities that attract and encourage diverse, revenue positive commercial development and enhance commercial sources of revenue.
2. Expand the commercial tax base through economic development.
3. Study the creation a re-development authority.

Planning Process

4. Identify and develop 'sub-areas' for economic development or redevelopment that would produce an immediate positive impact as the Sector Plans are completed.
5. Identify transitional land use areas and develop strategies to protect existing residential areas as the Sector Plans are completed.
6. Expedite the completion of the sector plans to form a 2025 vision of the entire city that identifies areas to encourage growth and areas to protect.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure

7. Ensure adequate infrastructure planning ahead of growth including schools, public safety facilities, parking, utilities and transportation.
8. Build a downtown parking garage.
9. Place utilities of all types underground.

Cultural and Recreational Resources

10. Continue the development of the City's museum system to preserve and display holdings within revenue available.

Neighborhood Preservation and Community Engagement

The Vision for the Future:

Manassas will be:

- A supportive community of good neighbors in which differences are bridged by open communication and understanding
- A place offering a high-quality, family-oriented lifestyle for all ages, cultures and interests
- A place where everyone feels safe and secure in their neighborhoods
- A place where all neighborhoods are thriving and there are no areas of blight
- A place where people of all incomes can find affordable housing that is safe, attractive, well maintained and not overcrowded
- A City that is “clean and green”, where public ways, parks and community spaces are clean and well kept
- A City whose residents demonstrate a strong sense of individual and civic responsibility.

Goal:

To maintain a unified community in which people of all backgrounds are active in their community and work well together to build strong and thriving neighborhoods and an unmatched quality of life.

Indicators of Success:

- Percent of residents who say their neighborhood is clean and attractive
- Percent of residents who feel safe in their neighborhood
- Percent of residents who rate quality of life as improving
- Number of active home owner associations
- Value of homes increasing in all neighborhoods
- Number of affordable housing units
- Number of rental unit inspections performed
- Number of overcrowding housing complaints
- Impact of overcrowding inspections (reduction in number of occupants after enforcement)
- Acreage of parks and green space

Neighborhood Preservation and Community Engagement Strategies:

Code and Law Enforcement

1. Enforce the City's blight codes.
2. Solicit the community's assistance to develop the most effective educational strategies to communicate the City's overcrowding policies and gain voluntary compliance.
3. Expand rental inspection program to rental properties in targeted areas of the City.

Neighborhood Appearance and Preservation

4. Work in partnership with homeowner's associations to maintain neighborhoods.

Community Diversity

5. Support and increase English language (ESL) classes to a variety of adult learners through civic and community groups and include teaching that facilitates cultural adjustment.

Outreach and Involvement

6. Build upon the success of the Georgetown South Task Force to form a broader network of home owners' associations to increase involvement in community issues and address neighborhood concerns.
7. Continue and expand community meetings to facilitate dialog between people and government.

Planning for Future

8. Develop a plan to serve a potentially rapidly increasing senior/elderly population.

Government Stewardship and Effectiveness

The Vision for the Future:

Manassas will be:

- A City whose citizens receive excellent value for their tax dollar
- A City whose government strikes the right balance with taxes and services
- A City with government that is thrifty and responsible in its spending
- A City with government that is innovative in developing revenue sources
- A model of accountability in government financial management
- A City whose government is a good steward of public funds
- A City with government that keeps the community well informed about fiscal issues and spending practices
- A City with a long term and proactive approach to investing in public buildings and infrastructure
- A City with a "get it done" attitude to its projects

Goal:

To manage the City's finances in an accountable, open and responsible manner in order to provide responsive services and quality facilities at a price that delivers excellent value for tax dollar

Indicators of Success:

- Percentage of citizens satisfied with the value they receive for their tax dollar and city services and facilities
- Average household tax burden
- Bond rating
- City comparable tax rate versus surrounding communities
- Percentage of real estate tax revenue from residential sources
- Real estate revenues as a percentage of total revenues
- Benchmark the effective tax rate
- Continue to obtain an unqualified audit report
- Dollar value of public facilities per capita

Government Stewardship and Effectiveness Strategies:

Financial Management Policy

1. Revisit the policy of setting aside a constant percentage of revenues for the schools.
2. Make Council priorities clear and visible and use as a guide for funding decisions.
3. Lobby the State and Federal governments against unfunded mandates and for greater flexibility in local revenue formulation.
4. Strengthen fiscal policies that improve revenue projections, reduce future year revenue surpluses and create opportunities to consider tax policies.
5. Allocate annual surplus revenues toward one-time operating and capital activities that meet the highest needs/priorities of the City.

Budgetary Process

6. Develop budgets based on needs, not based on projected revenues.
7. Encourage private contributions to fund school needs (such as an educational foundation).