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A photograph of a young boy running on a track in a stadium, overlaid with a green and blue gradient. The boy is wearing a dark t-shirt with "GAITHERSBURG" and a soccer ball logo, and light-colored shorts. The background shows stadium seating and a building.

# STRATEGIC PLAN

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## Message from the Mayor and City Manager

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**Gaithersburg, Maryland is home to 70,000 vibrant, diverse people who live in a community that respects its rural history while embracing a high tech future.**

We've been named **THE** most diverse small City in all of America every year since 2018, a title we're quite proud of. While Gaithersburg is home to world-renowned information and biotechnology companies, throughout the community you'll also find unique family-owned businesses that reflect and celebrate our diversity. With more than 500 acres of parkland, award-winning recreational facilities and programs, performing arts venues, and a staunch commitment to protecting the environment, Gaithersburg residents enjoy the best of both worlds – the familiarity and comfort of a small town community within the exciting metropolis that surrounds our nation's capital.

Our past, present and future are anything but static. Serving such a diverse, dynamic community requires us to constantly look inward to ensure that we are positioning this City and its residents for future success.



### City Council

Neil Harris, Lisa Henderson, Jim McNulty, Ryan Spiegel, and Robert Wu

The City's Strategic Plan has long been a guide for aligning our actions and budgets with our long-term goals for the community. But just as the community is not static, nor is the Plan. Beginning in the fall of 2021, we undertook an effort to reaffirm the City's mission, vision and values. Who are we at our core? Who do we serve? What values do our employees embrace as they work each day to serve our residents?

Elected officials and members of the Senior Leadership Team took a deep dive into all of this during several daylong retreats. After much soul searching and healthy dialog, advised by feedback from an extensive employee survey, we defined our vision, we arrived at a mission statement, and we identified what we value. Then we took that to you, our stakeholders. Through Community Summits, we shared our ideas and we asked for your feedback. You told us what resonated with you, expressed your challenges, and shared your own hopes and dreams for what this community could and should be. Your input was invaluable.

Teams of talented, dedicated employees then took that feedback and developed the Strategic Outcome Areas that you'll see in this document. These are at the heart of the Plan, the things that will help us achieve our vision and fulfill our mission over the next five years. Within the Outcome Areas are actionable items that we will measure and assess to ensure we stay on track. The Plan will drive our budget, making sure that resources are available to support what you helped identify as most important. The Plan will drive our programming, our services, our events, and our staffing. Most importantly, the Plan will drive outreach and engagement efforts, opening avenues of communication to ensure that all voices are heard and all voices are valued.

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**We cannot express our thanks deeply enough to all of those who had a hand in developing this Strategic Plan. Elected officials, City staff, civic leaders, nonprofit organizations, educators, business owners, and residents in every corner of the City touched this document in some way. Because of that, we know it truly reflects the best of all of us. We hope you see yourself somewhere in this document, and even more, we hope that you will join us in bringing it to life.**



**Jud Ashman**  
Mayor



**Tanisha Briley**  
City Manager

# THE GAITHERSBURG COMMUNITY



**The City of Gaithersburg is one of the largest municipalities in Maryland and is centrally located in the heart of Montgomery County.**

Gaithersburg's location provides residents and businesses easy access to three major airports, Washington Dulles and Baltimore Washington International Airports and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The City is located 15 miles from Washington, DC, and attracts businesses that bolster a strong economy.

Employment in Gaithersburg is dominated by Professional, Scientific, Management Administrative, and Waste Management Services industries, which employ almost a quarter of residents, per the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS). Gaithersburg's significant employers include AstraZeneca, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, and Leidos. Biotechnology is a primary employment driver. Four of the largest employers in the life sciences industry are headquartered in Gaithersburg. The greater Washington DC metro area houses more than 1,000 life sciences companies and 70 federal labs and research institutions. The second largest industry in Gaithersburg is Educational Services, Healthcare, and Social Sciences, which employs 19% of residents, followed by Public Administration, which employs 10% of residents.



As of February 2022, Montgomery County had an unemployment rate of 3.9%, compared to the state-wide rate of 4.4% and the national rate of 3.8%. The median annual household income in the City was \$91,845 according to the 2020 ACS, which is slightly higher than the median for the State of Maryland (\$87,0663). According to Salary.com, the cost of living in Gaithersburg is 40% higher than the national average, and nine percent of the Gaithersburg community falls below the federal poverty line.

The City of Gaithersburg has a total population of 69,657 – a 16% increase from the 2010 Census – and is one of the most diverse cities in the U.S., ranked #1 amongst small cities (population of 100,000 or less) in April 2021 by WalletHub. With approximately half of the residents speaking a language other than English at home and almost 40% of residents foreign-born, Gaithersburg is a

City that provides multicultural experiences in a small-town atmosphere. The City is regionally recognized for the Gaithersburg Book Festival and Winter Lights events. In November 2021, the City achieved a score of 100 points in the 10th annual Municipal Equality Index, an initiative of the Human Rights Campaign that examines the inclusivity of laws, policies, and services concerning the LGBTQ+ community.

Gaithersburg's small-town charm is reflected in a variety of activities and entertainment attractions for all to enjoy, including vibrant shopping and dining experiences at rio, Downtown Crown, and Kentlands. Additionally, the Gaithersburg Community Museum, located in the 1884 B&O Railroad complex, captures the City's past and present, offering a hands-on learning center for children. Other local attractions include the Theater at the Arts Barn, Olde Towne Gaithersburg, and the Water Park and Mini Golf at Bohrer Park.

# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

## Updating Gaithersburg's strategic plan was designed to ensure:

- + A shared vision of the City's ultimate goals. Organizations driven by explicit purposes and shared values have a greater capacity to succeed than those that are not.
- + A collective understanding of the available resources, the environment, and the principles upon which strategies will be based.
- + Acceptance of the direction and urgency of the strategic plan, which will be integrated into the way the City operates on a daily basis.

## Gaithersburg's strategic planning process involved input from a broad group of internal and external stakeholders to achieve these conditions for success. To date, this has included:

- + Work sessions with Gaithersburg's Mayor and City Council
- + Work sessions with the City Manager and Senior Leadership Team
- + An employee survey with 315 responses
- + Two virtual meetings attended by 93 community stakeholders
- + Implementation meetings related to each outcome area with members of the City's Senior Leadership Team and subject matter experts

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**This input was used to update the strategic framework and outcome areas from Gaithersburg's existing strategic plan, which were then reviewed and refined by the City Manager's Office and ultimately adopted by the Gaithersburg Mayor and City Council.**

## VISION

Gaithersburg reflects the best of America - a City for today and tomorrow. It is a welcoming and vibrant place, supported by responsive, compassionate, and responsible leadership that brings people together, encouraging our community to flourish.



## MISSION

The City of Gaithersburg, through its valued employees, provides exceptional services to cultivate an inclusive, sustainable, and thriving community for all.

## VALUES

Accountability  
Caring  
Excellence  
Integrity  
Teamwork



# Outcome Areas

## Strategic FRAMEWORK

### Vision

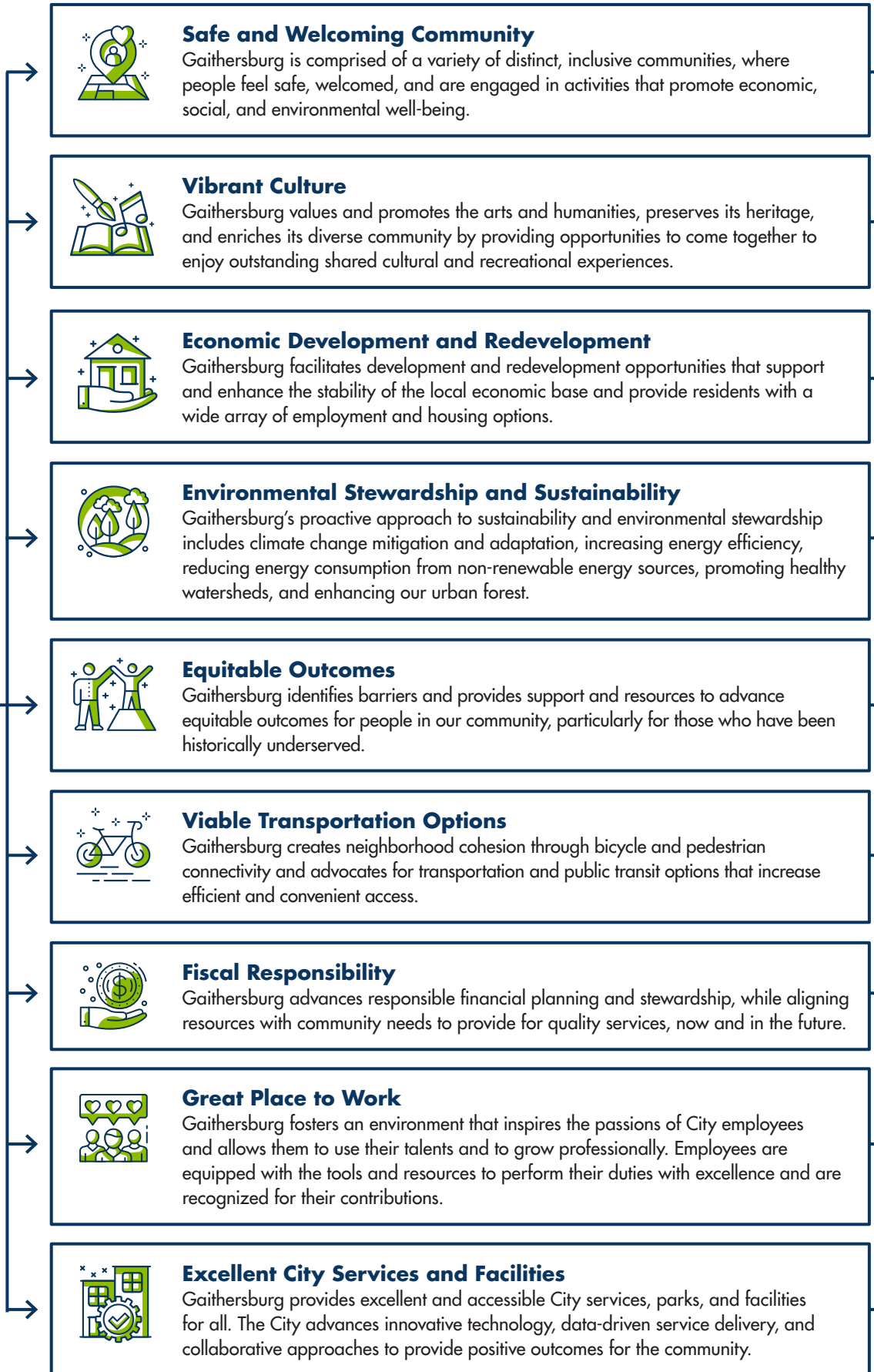
Gaithersburg reflects the best of America – a city for today and tomorrow. It is a welcoming and vibrant place, supported by responsive, compassionate, and responsible leadership that brings people together, encouraging our community to flourish.

### Mission


The City of Gaithersburg, through its valued employees, provides exceptional services to cultivate an inclusive, sustainable, and thriving community for all.


### Core Values


- Accountability
- Caring
- Excellence
- Integrity
- Teamwork



## Strategies


- 
1. Effectively use data and leverage community outreach to enhance public safety.
  2. Enhance trust in police services.
  3. Engage and empower diverse groups to enhance participation in City government, programming, and opportunities that enhance quality of life.
  4. Provide equitable access to and build awareness of social and financial programs and services.


- 
5. Establish Gaithersburg as a regional tourism destination.
  6. Develop activities that involve and reflect the City's diverse people, communities, cultures, and traditions.
  7. Provide recreational opportunities to enhance physical, mental, and social well-being for people of all ages and abilities.


- 
8. Improve access and integration among employment nodes, residential areas, and amenities.
  9. Develop Gaithersburg as a regional employment center that attracts and supports an array of entrepreneurial and established businesses from a variety of industries.
  10. Implement strategies that encourage reinvestment in aging commercial and multi-family properties.
  11. Pursue strategies to provide a mix of housing options for a variety of income levels.


- 
12. Pursue the highest level of Sustainable Maryland Certification.

- 
13. Implement and continually refine strategies associated with the City's Racial Equity Awareness and Action Plan.

- 
14. Improve connectivity of people to services, activities, employment, and points of interest.
  15. Develop and implement data-driven strategies that keep our community safely in motion.

- 
16. Pursue fiscally sustainable strategies to meet operational and community needs.
  17. Provide accessible and transparent financial information.

- 
18. Create a comprehensive strategy to attract and retain a diverse and talented workforce.
  19. Provide a competitive and equitable total rewards package including compensation, benefits, wellness, recognition programs, and professional development opportunities.

- 
20. Improve service delivery through streamlined processes, data-driven decision making, and strategic partnerships.
  21. Responsibly maintain and invest in technology, facilities, and infrastructure to meet organizational and community needs.



## Safe and Welcoming Community

**Gaithersburg is comprised of a variety of distinct, inclusive communities, where people feel safe, welcomed, and are engaged in activities that promote economic, social, and environmental well-being.**



The City plans to invest in the Gaithersburg community by ensuring everyone has access to and information about the social and financial opportunities available to residents and visitors. Part of continuing to engage the community involves the City being intentional in leveraging strategic partnerships that engage and build trust and attract diverse groups to participate in community affairs.

Gaithersburg focuses on being welcoming and inclusive of everyone while strengthening unique and safe neighborhoods and has undertaken numerous initiatives to support this outcome. For example, the City was one of the first in the nation to have an Affordable Housing Ordinance, which was adopted in 2007. Additionally, the City offers two programs to support affordable housing, including the Homebuyer Assistance Loan Program, which helps first-time homebuyers, and the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program, which requires new developments of 20 or more rental or purchase units to set aside 15% of units as moderately priced.





The Gaithersburg Financial Empowerment Center (FEC), launched in the spring of 2022, is a new initiative that supports this outcome area. The FEC provides free, professional, one-on-one financial counseling to help residents at all income levels manage their finances, pay down debt, and establish and build credit to set them up with a solid path to financial security.

Gaithersburg will continue to host Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings, an existing program that fosters mutual understanding and respect. The PACT sets out to establish and maintain strong relationships of trust in the community to advance public safety and effective policing, and to identify solutions to community concerns.

**These existing programs, coupled with the strategies listed below, build on recent successes and help to ensure the community maintains a high quality of life.**

### Strategies

- + Effectively use data and leverage community outreach to enhance public safety.
- + Enhance trust in police services.
- + Engage and empower diverse groups to enhance participation in City government, programming, and opportunities that enhance quality of life.
- + Provide equitable access to and build awareness of social and financial programs and services.



## Vibrant Culture

**Gaithersburg values and promotes the arts and humanities, preserves its heritage, and enriches its diverse community by providing opportunities to come together to enjoy outstanding shared cultural and recreational experiences.**

Known as one of the most diverse cities in America, Gaithersburg elevates and celebrates the people who live in and visit the City. Success in this outcome area will involve enriching the programming and recreation activities to be inclusive of the local culture while uplifting the community's social well-being.

As the City focuses on creating a safe and welcoming community and achieving its other strategic outcomes, successfully promoting activities that enhance the vibrant culture that exists in the community will be paramount.



To support these efforts, Gaithersburg has launched a history project with a local historian, author, and documentary filmmaker to help bring the initiative to life. Recognizing that Gaithersburg has a rich multicultural history that has not been fully captured, this project will study the cultural history of various groups of people, starting with Black history, cultures, and organizations that have remained an integral part of the community.

Additionally, the Gaithersburg Book Festival returned as an in-person event in Spring 2022. This family-friendly festival often drew more than 20,000 attendees. Distinguished authors are invited to speak about their work, while writing workshops for adults and children and a literary-themed multicultural Children's Village introduce people of all ages to the beauty and power of the written word.



The new strategies listed here build on established programming and will help to ensure that the community is known regionally for its special events.

## Strategies

- + Establish Gaithersburg as a regional tourism destination.
- + Develop activities that involve and reflect the City's diverse people, communities, cultures, and traditions.
- + Provide recreational opportunities to enhance physical, mental, and social well-being for people of all ages and abilities.



## Economic Development and Redevelopment

**Gaithersburg facilitates development and redevelopment opportunities that support and enhance the stability of the local economic base and provide residents with a wide array of employment and housing options.**

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Gaithersburg is focused on creating a sense of place for neighborhoods to be unique and local businesses to be supported. Activities include identifying affordable and accessible housing opportunities and moving forward with reinvestment in commercial and multi-family properties.



Economic redevelopment is a key focus area for the City. One of the most significant projects is the adopted Lakeforest Mall Master Plan Amendment, which will support a mixed-use community with various housing types and commercial spaces. The Mayor and City Council approved the initial Lakeforest Mall Master Plan in August 2021. Additionally, using a multi-modal transportation system, the project is intended to be surrounded by attractive green spaces, attract more biotech users, and provide co-working spaces for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Existing initiatives will be leveraged over the coming years to encourage local and state partnerships and internal efforts with the Planning and Economic Development Departments. The City is also working to build a database of City businesses and identify infill and redevelopment opportunities along Frederick Avenue.

**The strategies encapsulated in this plan build on recent activities and help to ensure that the community remains thriving and sustainable.**

## Strategies

- + Improve access and integration among employment nodes, residential areas, and amenities.
- + Develop Gaithersburg as a regional employment center that attracts and supports an array of entrepreneurial and established businesses from a variety of industries.
- + Implement strategies that encourage reinvestment in aging commercial and multi-family properties.
- + Pursue strategies to provide a mix of housing options for a variety of income levels.



## Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability

**Gaithersburg's proactive approach to sustainability and environmental stewardship includes climate change mitigation and adaptation, increasing energy efficiency, reducing energy consumption from non-renewable energy sources, promoting healthy watersheds, and enhancing our urban forest.**

Gaithersburg is a recognized leader in developing sustainable solutions to meet community needs and preserve resources for future generations. It was among the first cities in the country to adopt both residential and commercial green building standards, it was an early adopter of pesticide and polystyrene restrictions, and its stormwater programs are modeled throughout the region.

To further engage the community, Gaithersburg has led two recent public engagement efforts: the Storm Drain Art Contest and the Paint the Plow program. The Storm Drain Art Contest was designed to bring attention to



the importance of protecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed by having artists of all ages submit art that will be painted on storm drain covers throughout the City. The Paint the Plow program is a community outreach initiative where snowplow blades are painted with original artwork and messages to raise awareness of the overuse of salt on roads.

The primary focus of the City's efforts falls under the Sustainable Maryland Certification program. This program is designed to support municipalities in reducing expenses and taking critical steps to sustain their quality of life for generations to come. Gaithersburg has previously been awarded the bronze certification and has activities underway to obtain the silver certification. Success in this outcome area requires Gaithersburg to complete actions in six of the program's 10 categories and earn 400 points overall.

**The strategy listed below captures the work already underway and helps to ensure that the City will continue to advance sustainability efforts over the next several years.**

### Strategies

- + Pursue the highest level of Sustainable Maryland Certification.



## Equitable Outcomes

**Gaithersburg identifies barriers and provides support and resources to advance equitable outcomes for people in our community, particularly for those who have been historically underserved.**

Part of advancing equitable outcomes for Gaithersburg includes affirming the City's commitment to racial equity, diversity, and inclusion. In May 2021, the Mayor and City Council unanimously adopted a Resolution that launched the Racial Equity Action and Awareness Plan. The plan's primary goal is to identify and eliminate racial inequities and improve outcomes for all racial groups using a strategic approach.

The Racial Equity Action and Awareness Plan outlines several key actions in the following four focus areas:

- + Build awareness and capacity to advance racial equity within the organization
- + Align and enhance existing internal efforts to advance racial equity
- + Identify equity opportunities in each department
- + Explore and build community partnerships and alliances to leverage and scale racial equity efforts across the community

Gaithersburg understands that success in this outcome area requires direct support. Thus, the City has approved a Racial Equity Program Manager position in FY2023 to support these efforts. The City also remains active with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Equity Officers Committee and the Government Alliance on Race and Equity.

**The strategy listed below enhances Gaithersburg's commitment to racial equity and will improve the quality of life for community members.**

### Strategies

- + Implement and continually refine strategies associated with the City's Racial Equity Awareness and Action Plan.





## Viable Transportation Options

**Gaithersburg creates neighborhood cohesion through bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and advocates for transportation and public transit options that increase efficient and convenient access.**

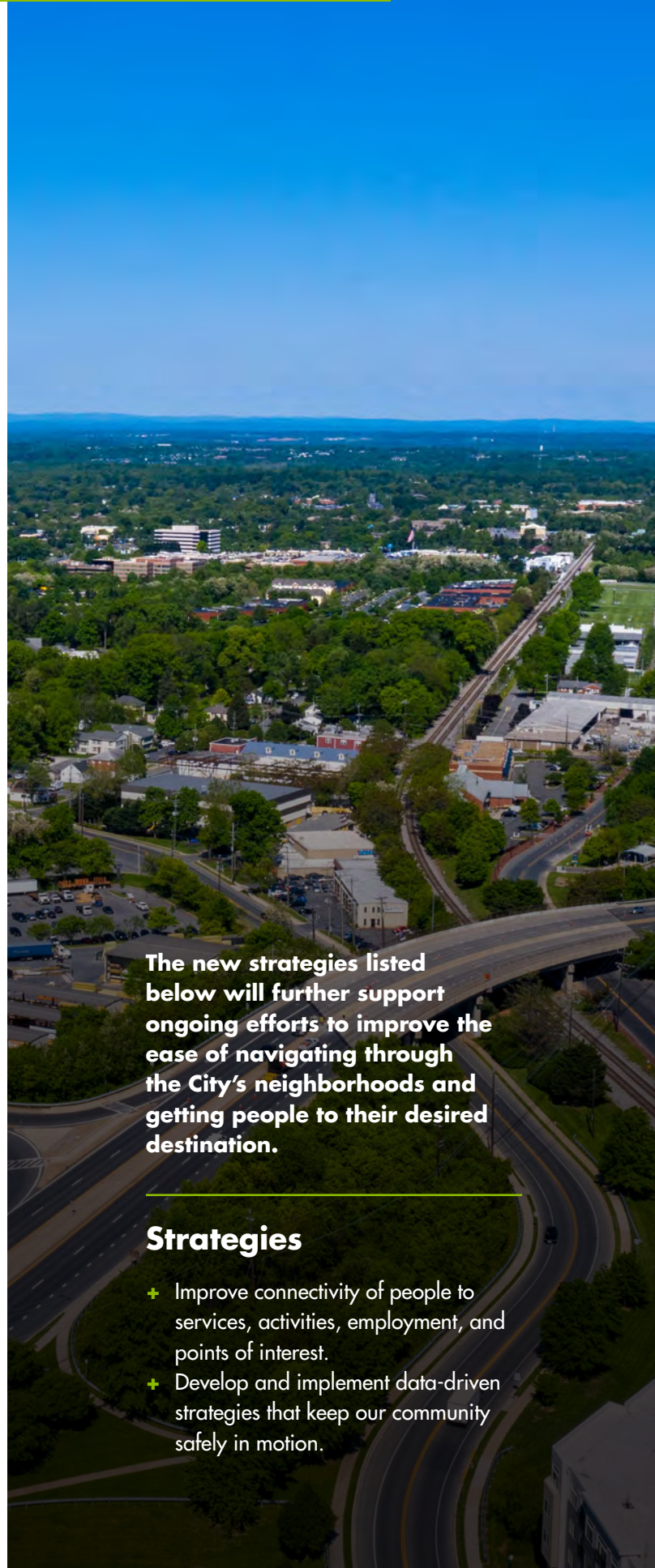
Gaithersburg's focus is to continue to be a proponent of equitable and accessible mixed modal transit for all. The City has numerous activities underway that support this outcome area, and recognizes the value of strategic partnerships for regional solutions. For example, the Washingtonian Boulevard Low-Stress Bicycle Path connection involves pavement striping, roundabout signage, and lighting improvements to the project area. Construction is anticipated in FY2023.

Success in this outcome area requires Gaithersburg to continue to utilize regional partnerships to build upon existing transportation options and mixed modal connectivity. This will be achieved by implementing recommendations from several plans, including the City's surface improvement plan, bicycle master plan, the new plans for a paved path maintenance program, and local road safety plan.

**The new strategies listed below will further support ongoing efforts to improve the ease of navigating through the City's neighborhoods and getting people to their desired destination.**

### Strategies

- + Improve connectivity of people to services, activities, employment, and points of interest.
- + Develop and implement data-driven strategies that keep our community safely in motion.





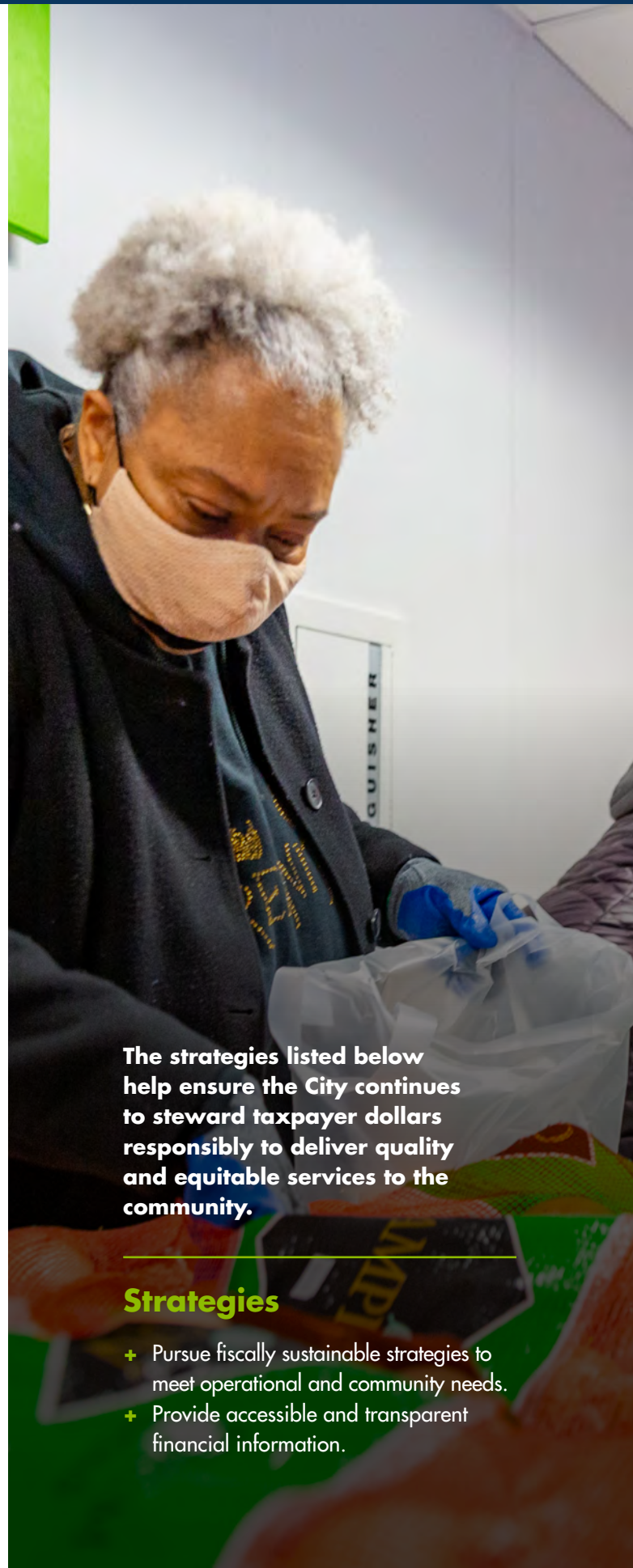
## Fiscal Responsibility

**Gaithersburg advances responsible financial planning and stewardship, while aligning resources with community needs to provide for quality services, now and in the future.**

The City of Gaithersburg has a solid financial position. It remains debt free, and its residents enjoy one of the lowest property tax rates in the state. The real property tax has only been raised once since 1964.

Recent projects underway in this outcome area include an enterprise resource program (ERP) software study. The ERP study will allow the City to evaluate the alignment of new technology software with its current processes and look for opportunities to streamline process improvement.

Another example of the City's responsible financial stewardship involves the process changes for operating and capital budget and general financial management practices. Additionally, a full-time position was added to the FY2023 budget for a Finance Systems Manager to build additional capacity in the Department of Finance and Administration to meet service demands.



**The strategies listed below help ensure the City continues to steward taxpayer dollars responsibly to deliver quality and equitable services to the community.**

### Strategies

- + Pursue fiscally sustainable strategies to meet operational and community needs.
- + Provide accessible and transparent financial information.



## Great Place to Work

**Gaithersburg fosters an environment that inspires the passions of City employees and allows them to use their talents and to grow professionally. Employees are equipped with the tools and resources to perform their duties with excellence and are recognized for their contributions.**

Part of continuing to grow and maintain a well-trained workforce relies on cultivating and promoting an attractive workplace environment. Gaithersburg is invested in attracting, developing, and retaining a highly motivated, engaged, skilled, and service-focused workforce.

Success in this area will require the City to stay engaged with its workforce using employee engagement surveys and expand the existing employee recognition program at the departmental level. Additionally, evaluating and revising employee policies, such as the hybrid work policy, and implementing updates to the employee onboarding program will allow the City to appeal to a diverse candidate pool.

**The strategies listed below enhance the existing strategic plan's work and help ensure the City continues to be an employer of choice in the region.**

### Strategies

- + Create a comprehensive strategy to attract and retain a diverse and talented workforce.
- + Provide a competitive and equitable total rewards package including compensation, benefits, wellness, recognition programs, and professional development opportunities.



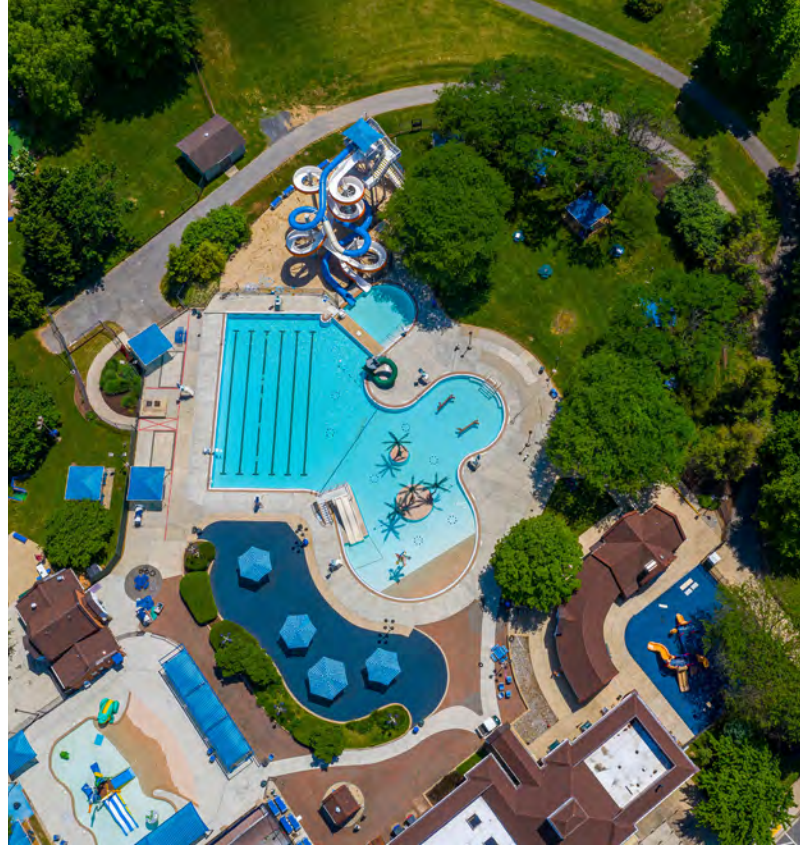
## Exceptional City Services and Facilities

**Gaithersburg provides excellent and accessible City services, parks, and facilities for all. The City advances innovative technology, data-driven service delivery, and collaborative approaches to provide positive outcomes for the community.**

Providing accessible City services, parks, and facilities for all relies directly on the success in this outcome area. The City is focused on improving service delivery by utilizing technology, data, and process improvements to guide decisions and meet community needs.

The City is in the process of building Pleasant View Park, a nearly 10-acre recreational amenity with a community garden, bicycle skills course, open space, pavilions, a playground, and fitness pods. The park is expected to be completed early in 2023.

Additionally, Gaithersburg began a redevelopment project several years ago to provide a new facility for the Police Department. The municipal center will also include a new Council Chambers and other spaces for the community to gather and meet. It is expected to open in FY2023.



The strategies listed below will help ensure that Gaithersburg's City services and facilities are well maintained and supportive of the quality of life the community desires.

### Strategies

- + Improve service delivery through streamlined processes, data-driven decision-making, and strategic partnerships.
- + Responsibly maintain and invest in technology, facilities, and infrastructure to meet organizational and community needs.





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