



*Gaithersburg*  
*A Character Counts! City*

City of Gaithersburg  
**PROCESS  
AND  
OVERVIEW**

**A Master Plan Element**

**Adopted January 19, 2010**

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**2009**  
MASTER PLAN



# **CITY OF GAITHERSBURG 2009 MASTER PLAN**

## **PROCESS AND OVERVIEW ELEMENT**

Planning Commission Approval: January 6, 2010, Resolution PCR-1-10  
Mayor and City Council Adoption: January 19, 2010, Resolution R-5-10

### **MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

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# CITY OF GAITHERSBURG 2009 Master Plan

## CHAPTER 1 PROCESS AND OVERVIEW

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## 1. Introduction

Article 66b of the Maryland Annotated Code requires that municipalities adopt a comprehensive, or master, plan composed of various elements, such as Land Use, Transportation, and Sensitive Areas, to serve the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing the coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the local jurisdiction and its environs.

The Master Plan is designed to establish a vision and long-range plan for the City's future. It sets policies, identifies and evaluates community planning goals and areas of community concern, and in the final analysis, presents a recommended plan. The process of developing and adopting a Master Plan involves many tasks such as social and demographic research, land-use review, identification of policy issues, community involvement and participation, and coordinating separate land use, transportation, community facilities, recreation and natural resource plans.

By evaluating current conditions and future trends, The City of Gaithersburg will develop a Master Plan to support its vision of leadership in the years to come. A unified vision for the future development of the City, representing ideas from the citizens, the local business community, industry, elected officials, regulatory agencies, and other interested parties, is a major achievement of the Master Plan.

Each of the Master Plan Elements will be prepared, reviewed, and revised separately. The first element of the City of Gaithersburg 2009 Master Plan update is "Process and Overview". This element will provide the basic strategy and visions that will guide each successive element, thus allowing the City to accommodate residential, commercial, institutional and industrial growth over the next six years.

## 2. Guiding Principles

In developing the Process and Overview Element, the City will continue to be guided by the Six Pillars of CHARACTER COUNTS (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship) as demonstrated by the following:

### *CUSTOMER FOCUS*

We actively pursue the identification of citizen needs through citizen involvement to provide effective service to our community with efficiency, accountability, and a caring attitude.

### *OPEN COMMUNICATION*

We promote honest, open communication and easy access to information.

### *CREATIVITY*

We strive to improve the quality and efficiency of City services through creative approaches and new innovative, cost effective technologies.

### *FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY*

We provide quality services, of the best value, to effectively meet the needs of our community while maintaining a pay-as-you-go philosophy.

### *COOPERATION*

We promote a spirit of fairness, trustworthiness, respect and teamwork among our elected officials, City employees, residential and business communities, neighboring jurisdictions, and other governmental agencies.

### *COMMITMENT OF EXCELLENCE*

We strive to achieve excellence in all we do.

### *CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT*

We advocate good citizenship and support the freedom to actively pursue suggestions, ideas, and creative approaches, leading to continuous improvement in everything we do.

### 3. Master Plan Framework

Under Maryland's "Smart, Green & Growing legislative package," adopted in 2009<sup>1</sup>, the City of Gaithersburg is required to incorporate twelve specific visions that will direct the goals of the Master Plan and help develop and implement a sound growth and development policy. These visions will enhance the City's Master Plan by reflecting a greater connection between where we live, where we work, and the quality of life we enjoy. The State's visions are actualized through the City of Gaithersburg's commitment to fulfill each vision. The City commitment will be achieved in the Master Plan through the incorporation of specific guiding strategies based upon the City's adopted Strategic Directions.

#### **State Vision 1:**

**Quality of life and sustainability: a high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water, and air resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment;**

*City Commitment: The City of Gaithersburg strives to provide a higher quality of life for the community by preserving and enhancing open space and critical environmental areas; highlighting environmental design in its land use plans to support ecological systems, create parks, trails, and recreational facilities; and encouraging sustainable development through smart growth practices and green building techniques.*

#### **Guiding Strategies:**

- Utilize the City's 'Smart Growth' principles to encourage high quality infill redevelopment.
- Increase public green/open space through infrastructure re-designs in existing neighborhoods.
- Protect and restore environmentally sensitive areas during development and redevelopment by promoting land uses that are in balance with, and minimize adverse effects on, the natural environment.
- Protect and improve water resources (streams, wetlands, 100-year floodplains, and riparian buffers) that have significant functions and values related to flood protection, sediment and erosion control, water quality, groundwater recharge and discharge, education, vegetation, and fish and wildlife habitat.
- Improve public and private stormwater management (SWM) facilities; including performance, longevity, safety, ease of maintenance, community acceptance, and environmental benefit, by implementing new State SWM regulations such as Environmental Site Design (ESD) techniques.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mdp.state.md.us/green.htm>

- Continue to improve single family, multifamily, commercial, and municipal recycling programs.
- All new City facilities should be constructed in an environmentally sustainable manner and achieve a minimum LEED Silver certification.
- Participate in regional efforts to reduce solid waste, air, noise, visual, and lighting pollution to ensure a high quality of life that is sustainable for future generations.
- Seek to eliminate gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle network, creating more walkable communities and encourage the use of transit facilities to reduce traffic congestion, conserve energy and maintain air quality goals.

### **State Vision 2:**

**Public participation: citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals;**

*City Commitment The City of Gaithersburg will ensure effective and consistent communication activities and implement programs that promote citizen involvement. The City will continue to develop innovative ways to involve citizens to carry out the City's vision, embracing the Inclusive Communities principles and recognizing citizens for their contributions.*

### **Guiding Strategies:**

- Target members of various demographics groups using multi-channel communication methods.
- Foster excellent working relationships with local media to ensure accurate, timely and comprehensive coverage of City news, events and activities is presented to the community.
- Work with homeowners associations and other community organizations to identify specific areas of concern.
- Ensure that public participation is all-inclusive by involving all the major interest groups of the City.
- Incorporate whenever possible public charettes, informational workshops, Council worksessions, and input from ad-hoc and standing advisory City committees in developing master plan element recommendations.
- Encourage active participation by stakeholders, local businesses, and other organizations early in the City's Master Plan development.

**State Vision 3:**

**Growth areas: growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers;**

*City Commitment* The city shall ensure an efficient use of land, provide for livable communities, and manage growth, encouraging economic development with important jobs, businesses and residences located only where infrastructure or capacity exists or can be improved.

**Guiding Strategies:**

- Explore opportunities for those areas located within the City's Maximum Expansion Limits.
- Diversify local economy so that approved development includes a variety of industries.
- Focus redevelopment opportunities on underutilized sites.
- Limit new development to where public utilities, facilities, and services can be established without unduly burdening the existing service provision or users.
- Focus growth within the City towards City activity centers.
- Include a mix of uses to create seven days a week activity with a balanced mix of commercial and residential uses.

**State Vision 4:**

**Community design: compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character, located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archeological resources.**

*City Commitment* The City shall continue to practice innovative and smart community design by encouraging traditional neighborhood designs, mixed use developments, and transit-oriented developments, incorporating sustainable "green" techniques. New developments and redevelopments of existing areas should achieve the City's desire for walkable neighborhoods, inviting streetscapes, usable public open spaces, sensitivity to historic resources, and a unique sense of place.

**Guiding Strategies:**

- Encourage the use of green building principles in both public and private development in order to support environmentally sensitive design, construction, operation, and maintenance of buildings and landscapes.

- Encourage compatible development when non-residential uses are adjacent to residential communities.
- Develop and implement design standards to assure compatibility and connectivity between adjacent land uses.
- Establish a street pattern for development that connects with the street pattern of the surrounding community.
- Continue to foster transit-friendly communities by providing infrastructure, transit shelters, pull-off lanes, and hiker-biker links to existing and planned residential and commercial developments, public facilities such as parks and schools, and transportation facilities such as park-and-ride lots and rail centers.
- Apply new land uses, development and design standards and encourage rezoning of certain properties to allow for development that integrates multiple uses (employment and/or housing) on the site.
- Include a mix of uses to create seven days a week activity with a balanced mix of commercial and residential uses.

#### **State Vision 5:**

**Infrastructure: growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner.**

***City Commitment** The City will continue to provide orderly and timely development by regulating growth through its Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (AFPO) requirements. This ensures new development or redevelopment will take place in an area that has the adequate school capacity, water and sewer capacity, and available emergency services; and produces no negative traffic impacts.*

#### **Guiding Strategies:**

- Work in close partnership with the State of Maryland, Montgomery County, the Board of Education, and the Maryland Department of Transportation to address transportation, open space, and school capacity issues.
- Consider the impact on transportation, schools, other public facilities, and the environment when approving new development and redevelopment.
- Continue working with the Board of Education, Montgomery County Government and the State of Maryland to secure upgrades to schools to meet the needs of City residents.

- Continue working with WSSC and developers to maintain and enhance the existing water and sewer infrastructure and any additions thereto.
- Implement a comprehensive approach to traffic management that includes planning, engineering, education, and enforcement that will integrate new transportation policies with design and construction of modern transportation facilities.

### **State Vision 6:**

**Transportation: a well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers;**

*City Commitment The City will implement traffic and transportation planning and management strategies to improve the safety, structure, and function of streets, transit, bikeways, and sidewalks. The City will provide and encourage a safe, convenient, and economic transportation system. The City should plan for and serve the “transportation disadvantaged” and all transportation alternatives should be considered.*

### **Guiding Strategies:**

- Eliminate gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle network, and encourage the use of transit to reduce traffic congestion, conserve energy and maintain air quality goals.
- Integrate bicycle and pedestrian design elements into road design and traffic calming measures and implement traffic calming measures in existing communities where appropriate to encourage safe non-automotive transportation.
- Coordinate with Maryland Department of Transportation and Montgomery County on road projects, making sure that all new state and county roads in Gaithersburg contain appropriate design features.
- Optimize the location and utilization of parking through site plan review and by permitting parking on existing streets where appropriate to decrease impervious areas.
- Ensure compatibility of local transportation projects with regional transportation facilities.
- Require preservation or dedication of right of ways for future transportation projects.
- Promote alternatives to single-occupant vehicle trips, such as shared ride programs, transit, bicycling, and walking to reduce pollution and promote mobility for all residents.
- Consider the location of existing or providing public transportation options for new public improvement projects such as parks and other public land-uses.

- Identify and prioritize specific pedestrian and bicycle improvements including designated routes, road signage, new trails and sidewalks, and bike lanes.
- Fully integrate the consideration of bicyclists and pedestrians' needs into the community and the site design process to create facilities concurrently with development.
- Provide safe walking routes that connect communities to schools, transit, recreational facilities, commercial and retail areas, and other communities.

### **State Vision 7:**

**Housing: a range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.**

*City Commitment* The City will implement programs that improve current housing stock and pursue development and redevelopment opportunities that provide an appropriate mix of housing types in inclusive communities. The City shall provide for the housing needs of all its citizens.

### **Guiding Strategies:**

- Offer a wide range of housing types, preferably in a mixed-use setting.
- Adhere to the tenets of New Urbanism with aesthetic considerations in accordance with the urban design policies within the Master Plan – Smart Growth Policy Document for new housing development and re-development.
- Ensure that the current and future housing stock allows residents to remain in the City as their financial, employment, and familial situations change.
- Encourage renovations of suitable existing apartment communities and redevelopment of functionally obsolete and aging apartments.
- .Consider approval of higher density in or near the existing or proposed City activity centers.
- Consider approval of multi-family dwellings to encourage redevelopment of dilapidated properties or infill projects on underutilized sites.

**State Vision 8:**

**Economic development: economic development and natural resource–based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the state’s natural resources, public services, and public facilities are encouraged;**

*City Commitment* Gaithersburg will foster a growing and sustainable economic base to provide a diversity of jobs and services for City residents. Community-sensitive economic development will support the City’s vision ~~in almost all areas~~ and help to improve Gaithersburg’s quality of life.

**Guiding Strategies:**

- Focus on retaining businesses currently in Gaithersburg and helping them to grow and prosper
- Work with other City departments, state and county agencies and legislative bodies to implement transportation infrastructure improvements that will facilitate development or redevelopment.
- Improve local transportation links between existing residential communities and business areas to facilitate home-to-work trips.
- Develop a plan for City-owned properties in Olde Towne.
- Develop City incentives to facilitate implementation of the Frederick Avenue Corridor and Olde Towne Master Plans and to encourage redevelopment opportunities for sites such as Lakeforest Mall and the Montgomery County Agricultural Center.
- Ensure employment and commercial uses are sited in close proximity to residential areas.
- Identify existing business districts throughout the City which need better infrastructure or potential re-zoning to strengthen their business core.
- Diversify the local economy, with equitable and balanced opportunities throughout the City, so that approved development includes a variety of industries.

**State Vision 9:**

**Environmental protection: land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources;**

*City Commitment* The city will continue to implement programs and policies to protect, enhance, and monitor our natural and built environment to support a sustainable quality of life. The City believes in preserving and enhancing open space and environmental areas and will ensure a high quality of life that is sustainable for future generations.

**Guiding Strategies:**

- Encourage the use of green building principles in both public and private development in order to support environmentally sensitive design, construction, operation, and maintenance of buildings and landscapes.
- Develop environmental education programs and activities for citizens, staff, schools, and neighborhood groups to increase the community's involvement in environmental protection. Such issues could center on general environmental awareness, storm water management, integrated pest management, pollution prevention, recycling, climate protection, and green building.
- Preserve green space, flood plains, and stream valleys for passive recreation as well as seek opportunities to acquire open space with an emphasis on active use
- Continue to preserve and maintain environmentally sensitive areas through forest conservation, wetland and stream valley buffer protection, and floodplain management, while identifying those areas that are environmental hazards and encourage the proper mitigation and protection programs.
- Identify, designate, and protect key natural resources, sensitive environmental elements, and unique habitats.
- Protect and restore environmentally sensitive areas during development and redevelopment by promoting land uses that are in balance with, and minimize adverse effects, on the natural environment.

**State Vision 10:**

**Resource conservation: waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved;**

*City Commitment* The City shall preserve natural resources and conserve scenic and historic areas and open spaces. The City strives to provide a high quality environment in which to live and work that includes the conservation of the City's green infrastructure (the interconnected networks of open space, parks, natural areas, forests, waterways, and wildlife habitat).

**Guiding Strategies:**

- Work closely with Federal, State and Montgomery county agencies and the public to protect and enhance the City's natural resources and urban environment.
- Implement policies and projects to preserve, enhance and maintain an interconnected network of open spaces, greenways, and urban forests to provide ecological, economic, recreation, and aesthetic benefits.

- Minimize operation costs by using cost-effective solutions and green building technologies to increase building efficiency.
- Pursue pollution prevention policies addressing noise, light, greenhouse gases, and solid waste.
- Development and redevelopment should be planned and directed so as to conserve the needed amount of open space.
- Manage land conservation and development activities in a manner that accurately reflects the community's desire for a quality environment and a healthy economy and is consistent with state environmental quality statutes, rules, and implementation plans.
- Protect and improve water resources (streams, wetlands, 100-year floodplains, and riparian buffers) that have significant functions and values related to flood protection, sediment and erosion control, water quality, groundwater recharge and discharge, education, vegetation, and fish and wildlife habitat.

#### **State Vision 11:**

**Stewardship: government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection;**

*City Commitment The City will continue to encourage orderly and managed development by implementing smart growth planning techniques that will ensure the City's neighborhoods and communities maintain a high quality of life and sustainability.*

#### **Guiding Strategies:**

- Address broad areas of concern such as: Future fiscal health of the City; future housing mix and affordability and demographic makeup of the City; future of the City's transportation network; and quality of life issues.
- Ensure that public participation is all inclusive by involving all of the major interest groups of the City.
- Adhere to the tenets of New Urbanism with aesthetic considerations in accordance with the recently adopted urban design policies within the Master Plan – Smart Growth Policy Document for new housing development and re-development.
- Support the preservation of both private and City-owned historic resources and designated sites.

- Incorporate the City's Smart Growth Principles to encourage high quality development and redevelopment. Thoughtful design techniques should be considered to protect natural resources, utilize existing infrastructure, and promote traditional neighborhood design.
- Limit new development where public utilities, facilities, and services cannot be established without unduly burdening the existing service provision or users. Continue to enforce the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) and update requirements periodically, if needed.
- Support compact building design and a mix of land uses that promotes sustainable development, creates more secure communities, provides a variety of land use options, and improves environmental outcomes.
- Balance the future type, location, and phasing of major public and transportation facilities with the City's urban expansion, including possible annexations and infill development.
- Implement programs and policies to protect, enhance, and monitor our natural and built environment to support a sustainable quality of life.

### **State Vision 12:**

**Implementation: strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state, and interstate levels to achieve these visions.**

*City Commitment The City will strive to Increase citizen awareness of, and participation in planning and other related community issues and processes and encourage active involvement in the City's Master Plan process.*

### **Guiding Strategies:**

- Ensure effective and consistent communication activities and implement programs that promote citizen involvement.
- Work in close partnership with the State of Maryland, Montgomery County, the Board of Education, and the Maryland Department of Transportation to address transportation, open space, and school capacity issues.
- Ensure that all planning and development considers and responds to the city's environmental, transportation, economic, social and civic needs.
- Educate Gaithersburg's residents, businesses, and developers about Smart Growth principles, new urbanism, planning trends, etc.
- Work harmoniously with surrounding municipalities, Montgomery County, and the State of Maryland to achieve the implementation of a cohesive smart planning vision.



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# City of Gaithersburg **TRANSPORTATION**

**A Master Plan Element**  
Published September 8, 2010

**2009**  
MASTER PLAN

# **CITY OF GAITHERSBURG 2009 MASTER PLAN**

## **TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT**

Planning Commission Approval: 6/16/2010, Resolution PCR-3-10  
Mayor and City Council Adoption: 9/07/2010, Resolution R-63-10

### **MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

Mayor Sidney A. Katz  
Council Vice President Cathy C. Drzyzgula  
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James D. Arnoult, Director  
Ollie Mumpower, Engineering Services Director

## 7. Policy Objectives and Recommendations

- ❖ **Objective 1: Promote connectivity within the transportation network for new, infill, and re-development projects.**
  - Encourage interconnected grid systems in new/redevelopment projects while discouraging dead end facilities.
  - Preserve adequate right-of-way for future roadway or transit corridors and improvements and avoid the preemption of a roadway or transit line by new construction or subdivision activity within the ROW corridor.
  - Identify future corridor needs, including transit, on the roadway system map and ensure adequate building setbacks through the master plan and site development process.
  - Require preservation of roadway corridors as a condition of approval for any future annexation approval.
  - Encourage and promote the sharing of access points between adjacent properties
  - Preserve the function of and connectivity to major thoroughfares, with abutting developments, by requiring the creation of parallel roads or cross access easements.
  - Preserve existing roadway connections, restore incomplete connections, and create new connections where appropriate.
  - Ensure that streets in new or redevelopment projects are designed with stubouts and/or ROW to connect to abutting undeveloped lands and/or land with redevelopment potential. Provisions for these future connections shall be provided whether the streets are public or private, except where abutting land is undevelopable. The City shall further ensure that all new developments will align their roadways to connect with the stubouts/ROW provided by adjacent developments.
  - Continue to support and encourage Montgomery County and Maryland State to provide both highway and transit projects that improve connectivity within Gaithersburg.
  - Continue to encourage the prioritization, funding and construction of the Watkins Mills Interchange.
  - Remain active participants in major projects that help connect the City of Gaithersburg to the surrounding region.

**❖ Objective 2: Maintain or improve the functioning of the City's road network**

- Review the 1450 CLV standard and its impact on future redevelopment opportunities. Consider raising the CLV standard or adopting creative mitigation policies and strategies in and around the City's activity centers to remain competitive with similar centers in adjoining jurisdictions.
- Strive for all City roads to have a LOS of "D" or better, but recognize that increased congestion is a result of increased density and growth. Physical site limitations and the costs associated with mitigation to maintain a LOS "D" may prohibit redevelopment projects.
- Ensure that existing and future land uses are appropriate for the function of adjacent roadways that serve them.
- Ensure the design of offsetting driveways in new projects to produce T-intersections and minimize the number of conflict points between traffic using the driveways and through traffic when driveways are far enough apart to prevent left turns from conflicting with each other.
- Support the installation of median barriers to control conflicts associated with left turn movements on multiple lane roads.
- Limit the number of approaches or curb cuts onto collectors and major and minor arterials, by requiring access to the development via minor collector or local streets as infill or redevelopment occurs.
- Encourage constructing parallel roads and rear parking to separate local traffic from through traffic.
- Study and implement transportation system management (TSM) strategies that increase the vehicle capacity on the roadway system in the most productive, safest, and cost-effective manner, which may include:
  - Converting two-way streets to one-way streets, thus reducing through traffic
  - Working with Montgomery County on the review of the coordinated traffic signal system and adjust or optimize signal timing as needed

- ❖ **Objective 3: Encourage and promote the City of Gaithersburg as a multi-modal community and reduce the dependence upon single occupancy vehicles (SOV)**
  - Continue to support the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) with the Kentlands and Crown Farm realignments and endorse light rail transit (LRT) as the preferred mode option for CCT.
  - Continue to work with Montgomery County and Maryland State in the creation and funding of a regional bus rapid transit (BRT) network.
  - Support and facilitate express toll lane (ETL) direct access ramps for I-270 at the Metropolitan Grove Road extended site.
  - Continue to work with MTA, SHA, and developers to ensure appropriate ROW is secured for the CCT alignment and the Watkins Mills Road Interchange.
  - Continue to coordinate with MTA, WMATA, and CSX on potential expansion, additional ROWs, and/or increased service for rail uses such as MARC and Metrorail.
  - Encourage the funding and implementation of the State’s “MARC Growth and Investment Plan.”
  - Continue to work with Montgomery County on the Ride-On program and service in Gaithersburg. Study the Ride-On demand needs for new developments and existing lines that serve the most highly frequented destinations, major residential areas, and traffic generators.
  - Support and encourage mass transit use by working with Montgomery County and developers in providing transit passengers amenities such as:
    - Information programs and route maps signs which acquaint passengers with transit routes and available services and destinations
    - Increased numbers of bus stops and shelters, providing weather protection at stops along the transit routes
    - Clear signage that identifies transit stops and routes
    - Lighting and emergency call boxes at selected stops
  - Encourage carpool/vanpool and park-and-ride use by such methods as:
    - Preferential parking for rideshare participants

- Convenient access points for passenger drop-offs and pick-ups at designated transit facilities and at commercial and office development sites
- Increase public awareness as to the locations and functionality of the City's park-and-ride lots
- Restrict availability and/or increase parking costs for single occupancy vehicles
- Review the use of incentive zoning to advance the City's multi-modal goals during development projects. These incentives could be used to encourage developers/businesses to adopt transportation demand management (TDM) strategies. TDM strategies help alleviate the demand for single occupancy travel by reducing volumes through private sector promotion of multi-modal alternatives, not construction of new or expanded roadways. Examples of TDM strategies include:
  - Employer/developer funded ride-share programs or shuttle service to and from the City's park-and-ride lots and major transit stations
  - Cash-out parking subsidies; these allow employees to convert employer paid parking subsidies to transit subsidies or cash, thus reducing automotive use.
  - Staggered work hours or flex time policies to more evenly distribute the number of commuters on the road throughout the day and parking spaces being used.
  - Telecommuting; this allows employees to work out of the home on at least a part-time basis.
  - Help organize transportation management associations, usually through employers or business associations, which will coordinate opportunities and incentives for shared travel.
- Incorporate dedicated bicycle parking in public parking garages at the ground floor level and on parking lots.
- Study the feasibility of a proportionate share development impact fee program to include street improvements and foster multi-modal infrastructure and use
- Encourage mixed-use transit oriented development projects that promote automobile alternatives and allow for shared and/or reduced parking

- ❖ **Objective 4: Ensure that land use and transportation decisions, strategies, and investments are in step and consistent with the health, safety, and welfare goals of the City of Gaithersburg, its neighborhoods, and its citizens**
  - Welcome and encourage citizen involvement in identifying problem areas and solutions in regards to transportation issues and projects.
  - Work with developers in creating major entryways and gateways into the city that present a positive image of the community.
  - Provide and plan for full accommodation for the mobility impaired, including parking spaces, sidewalks, and ramps for handicapped access. The study and review of use of universal design principals will be incorporated into the site development process, in addition to ADA compliance.
  - Continue to actively participate in transportation planning coordination with the State, Montgomery County, and other jurisdictions on all transportation project teams affecting the City.
  - Continue to ensure all development projects will be viewed with public safety in mind by maintaining and improving access for emergency services.
  - Ensure that the transportation system contributes to the protection of natural features and the environment. This includes incorporating “Green Streets” technologies in the design of new and retrofit roads and the promotion of the use of public transit and bicycling as viable alternatives to the SOV.
  - Encourage developers to improve environmental quality and promote energy-efficient transportation by providing for a range of transportation alternatives to the automobile, including public transit amenities and projects conducive to bicycling and walking.
  - Continue to study the installation of new crosswalks and the addition of signalized crossings to enhance pedestrian safety.

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A photograph of a young boy running on a track in a stadium, overlaid with a green tint. 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

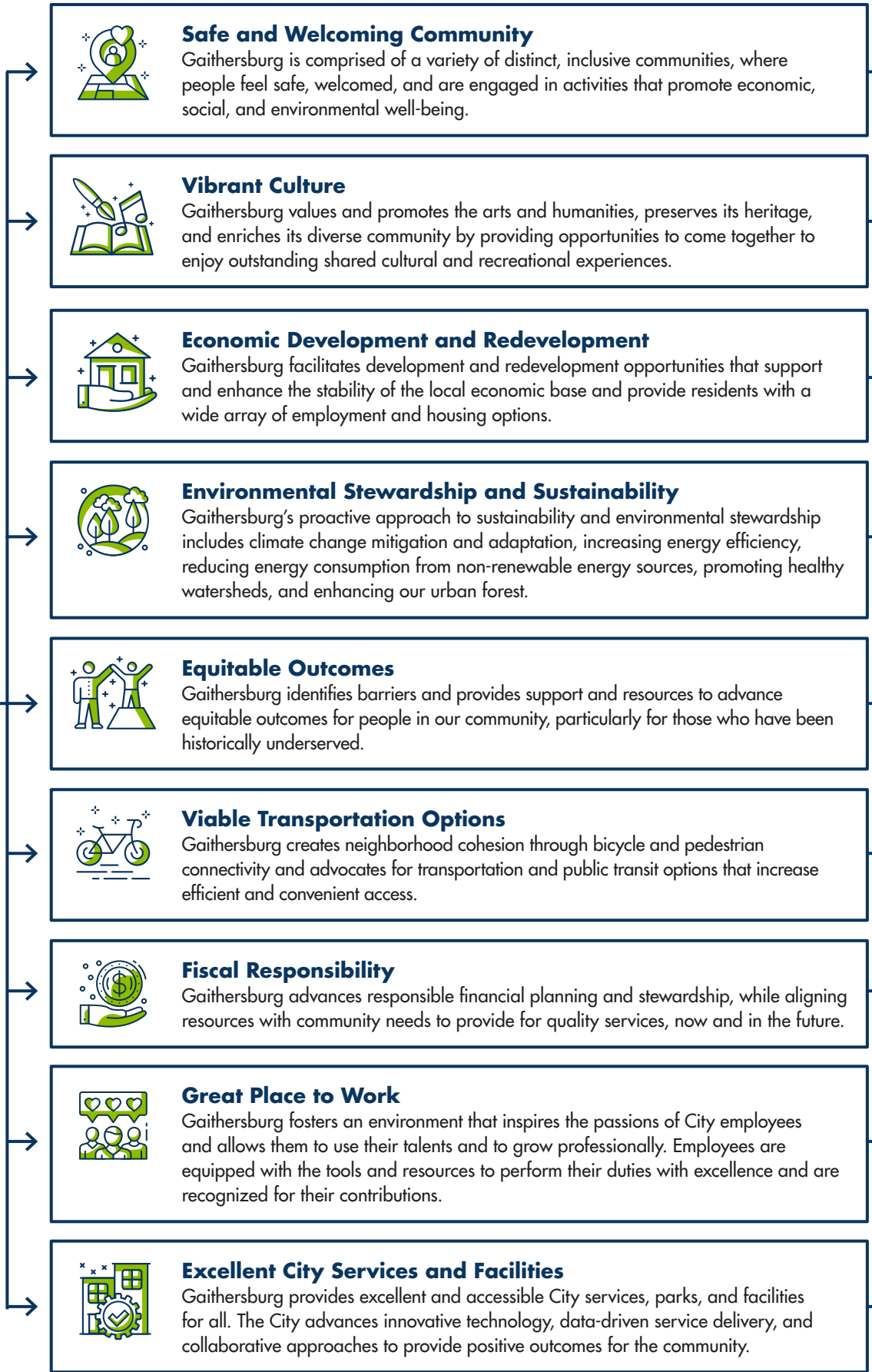
Gaithersburg reflects the best of America – a city for today and tomorrow. It is a welcoming and vibrant place, supported by responsive, compassionate, and responsible leadership that brings people together, encouraging our community to flourish.

### 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



### 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.



### 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.



### 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.



### 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.



### 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.



### 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.



### 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.



### 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.





### Excellent 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.

## 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.**

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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.**

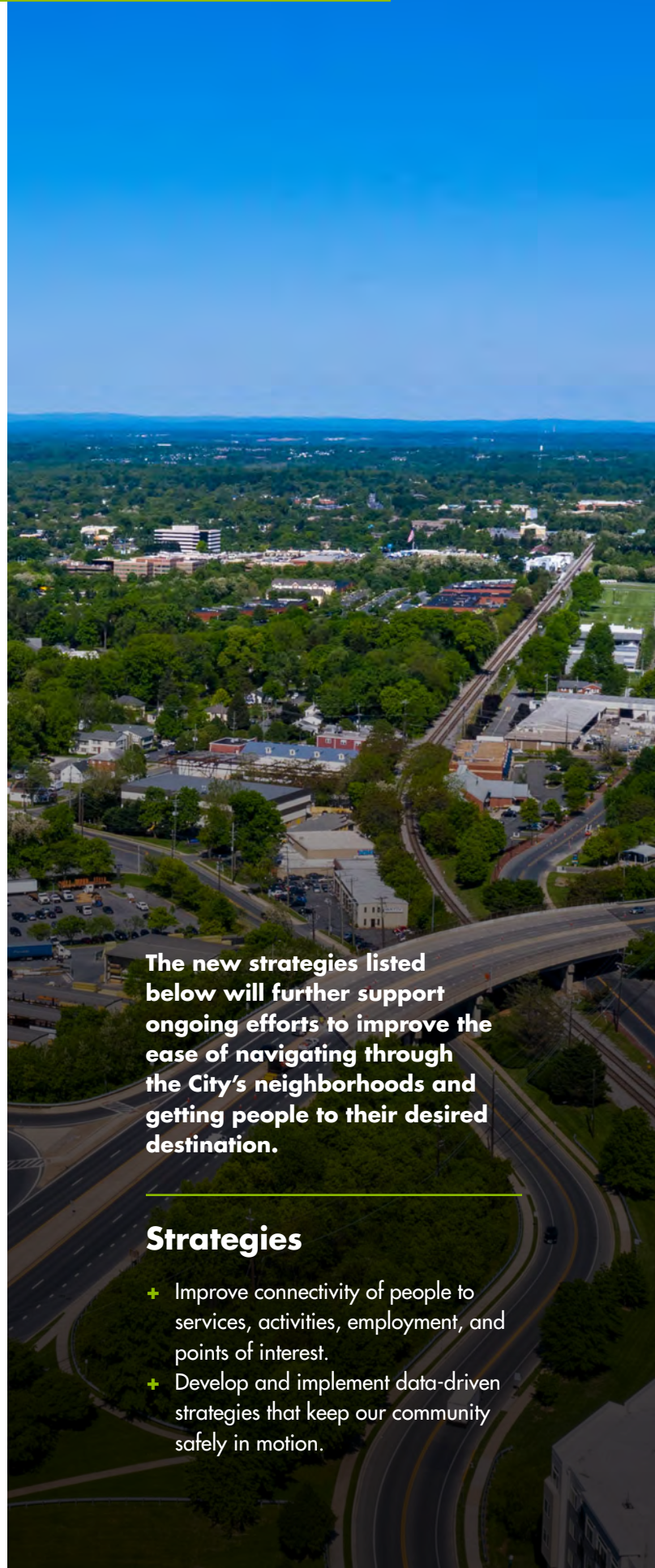
Gaithersburg's focus is to continue to be a proponent of equitable and accessible mixed modal transit for all. The City has numerous activities underway that support this outcome area, and recognizes the value of strategic partnerships for regional solutions. For example, the Washingtonian Boulevard 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.





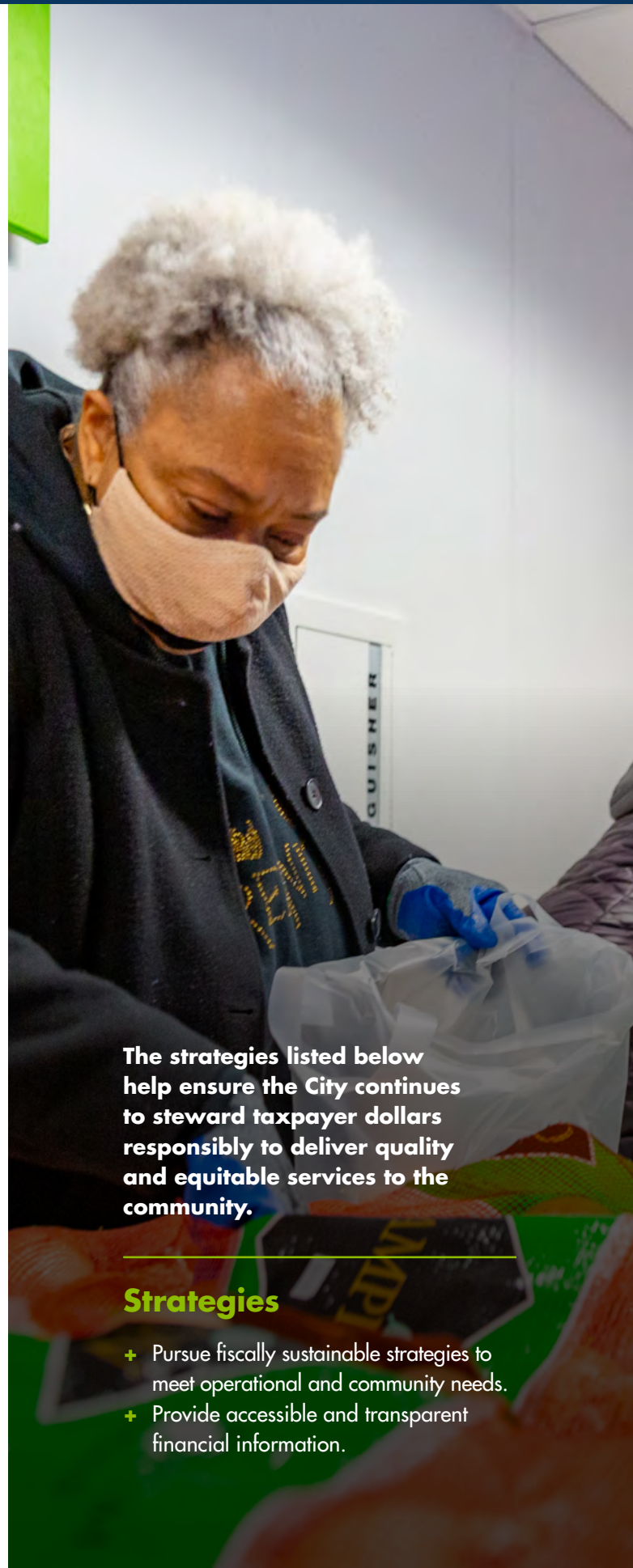
## Fiscal Responsibility

**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.



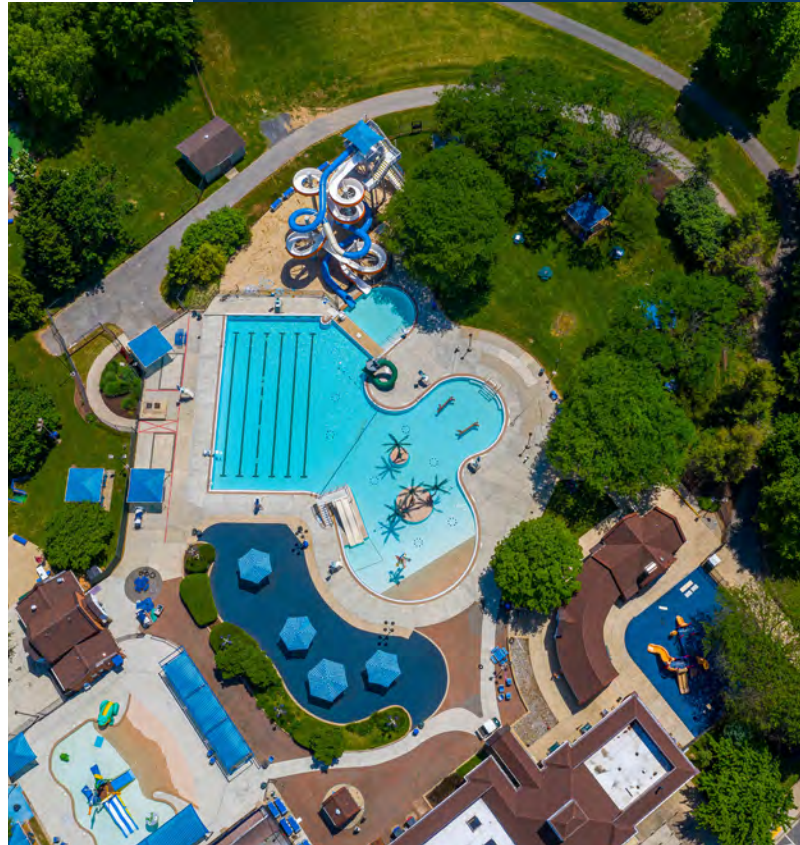
## Exceptional City Services and Facilities

**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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