



Gaston County

Gaston County
Board of Commissioners
www.gastongov.com

County Manager

Board Action

File #: 25-433

Commissioner Brown - County Manager - To Approve the Updated FY26-28 Gaston County Strategic Plan

STAFF CONTACT

Scott Attaway - Financial & Management Services - 704-866-3152

BUDGET IMPACT

N/A

BACKGROUND

Over the past nine months, the County Manager's Office worked with Centralina Regional Council to update the County's FY26-28 Strategic Plan. This intensive process involved the Board of Commissioners, County leadership, staff at all levels, and the general public through workshops, focus groups, a County-wide employee survey, and the Get to Know Gaston event.

This effort resulted in updated vision and mission statements, five core values, and five overarching goals with strategies for achieving them. The updated plan was presented to the Board of Commissioners at the August 12th Work Session. After approval of this update, the next steps will be to finalize the metrics and reporting structure and create departmental plans that align with the County's plan.

POLICY IMPACT

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

Gaston County FY26-28 Strategic Plan

DO NOT TYPE BELOW THIS LINE

I, Donna S. Buff, Clerk to the County Commission, do hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of action taken by the Board of Commissioners as follows:

NO.	DATE	M1	M2	JBailey	CBrown	CCloninger	AFraley	BHovis	TKeigher	SSheehan	Vote
2025-270	08/26/2025	TK	JB	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	U

DISTRIBUTION:

Laserfiche Users

A=AYE, N=NAY, AB=ABSENT, ABS=ABSTAIN, U=UNANIMOUS



Gaston County

FY 26 - 28

Strategic Plan

Revision adopted August 26, 2025

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Letter from the County Manager

Board of Commissioners, residents, and staff:

Gaston County continues to grow and change, and with that growth comes the responsibility to remain intentional in how we serve our residents. The FY26-28 Strategic Plan reflects the next step in our journey of building a stronger, more resilient, and more collaborative organization.

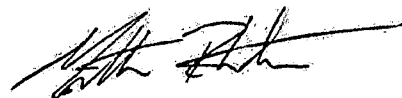
The update process was both thorough and all encompassing. Following the start of Phase 1 work with Centralina Regional Council in Fall 2024, the Board of Commissioners provided important direction through workshops and briefings beginning in January 2025. Beginning in March 2025, department directors and key staff participated in workshops and strategy sessions designed to refine our mission, vision, and values. All County employees were asked to contribute their insights through surveys and focus groups, ensuring that the perspectives of those who deliver services every day were incorporated. In addition, our community offered valuable input at the *Get to Know Gaston* event.

Through this process, we established five goal areas — Workplace Culture, Efficiency & Effectiveness, Civic Infrastructure, Sustainable Growth & Economic Diversification, and Talent. These priorities will guide future budgets, foster collaboration across departments, and connect daily work with long-term goals.

The FY26-28 Strategic Plan is not a static document. It is designed to adapt as challenges emerge, and opportunities arise. Most importantly, it keeps us focused on our shared vision of making Gaston County a model of intentional collaboration, innovation, and efficiency among local governments.

I am deeply grateful to our Board of Commissioners, County employees, and community members for their role in shaping this plan. Together, we are building a stronger foundation for the future of Gaston County.

Respectfully,



Matthew (Matt) Rhoten
County Manager



Gaston County Board of Commissioners



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Township



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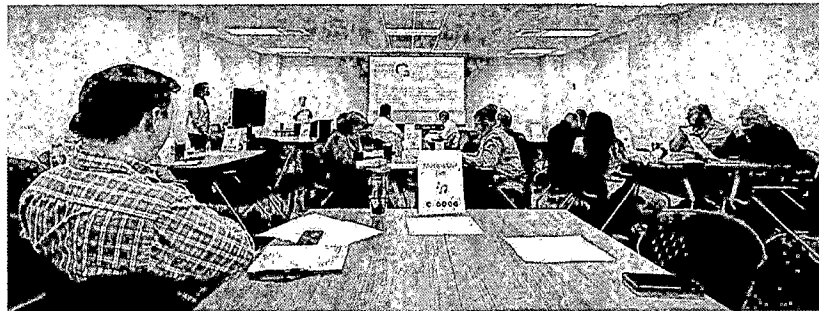


Scott Shehan
Gastonia
Township

Why Strategic Planning?

Gaston County has initiated work in organizational strategic planning with the approach that:

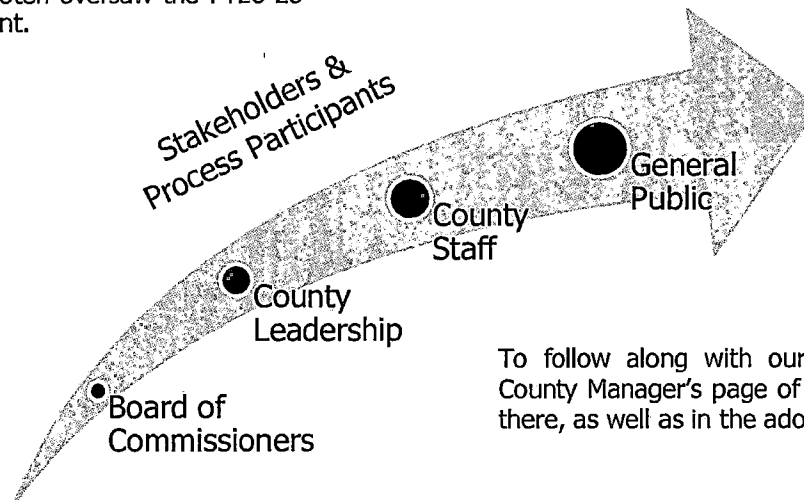
- A high-performing county government will achieve even better results for county residents when adopting a culture of strategic thinking.
- County employees can do their best work when they can put their considerable talent, expertise, experience, and creativity behind a well-defined strategy.



Update Process

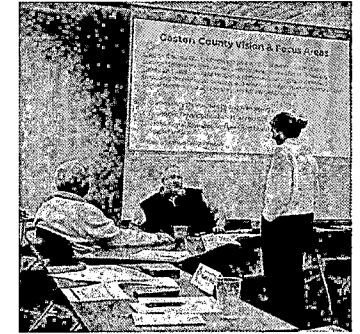
In his first year as County Manager, Matt Rhoten oversaw the FY26-28 Strategic plan update reflected in this document.

This intensive, collaborative process was guided by Centralina Regional Council in partnership with the County Manager's Office and Financial and Management Services department. It involved the Board of Commissioners, County leadership, staff at all levels, and the general public through workshops, focus groups, an organization-wide employee survey, and the Get to Know Gaston event which is pictured on the right of this page.



What Changed?

The development of a strategic plan is not the end but merely the beginning. As mentioned in the previously adopted version, the FY26-28 Strategic Plan is intended to be a dynamic document and may include additions and revisions over time necessary to meet the ever-evolving needs of Gaston County.



This most recent effort resulted in updated vision and mission statements, updated core values, and updated goal areas and strategies for achieving them. For a quick summary of what's included in this plan, please see pages 6-7.

Next Steps

Following the Board's adoption of this updated plan in August 2025, the County will continue its strategic planning work. This will involve finalizing the reporting structure and metrics that will measure our progress and creating departmental plans that detail the work going into each strategy in alignment with this plan.



To follow along with our strategic planning efforts, please visit the County Manager's page of our website. Annual metrics will be published there, as well as in the adopted budget books for each fiscal year.

Foundations



Activate & Keep in Front of Staff

Build connection to employees' day-to-day work

Vision

Describes a desired future – what you aspire to

Mission

Defines today's work that is aligned to a clear "why"

Values

Actions and behaviors that define culture and support the mission



How to live the mission, vision, and values



Educate & Tell the Story

Clear talking points and messaging that the local and global are connected and mutually supportive – county services create a great quality of life that attracts investment, investment creates tax revenue to support those services



Embed into Culture & Systems

Identify early actions to build trust and support culture change
Examples: build into appreciation systems, integrate into internal communications, monthly values focus, embed into performance evaluations

Framework

Goals

Strategic framework for action that is mission-aligned and strives toward the vision (long-term, multi-departmental)

Strategies

Specific pathways for achieving the goals (short-term)

Implementation Actions

Steps to implement each strategy on an annual or ongoing basis



Vision

Gaston County Government will be a model of intentional collaboration, innovation, and efficiency to expand local opportunity and attract global investment.

Core Values

We Value Collaboration

through engagement, compassion, and respect for all.

We Support County Employees

through a focus on communication, well-being, mutual respect, and development.

We Value Accountability & Transparency

through integrity, trust, and responsiveness.

We Value Quality & Innovation

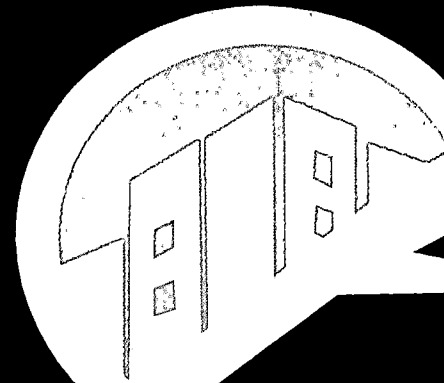
through creativity, flexibility, and continuous improvement.

We Value Our Resources

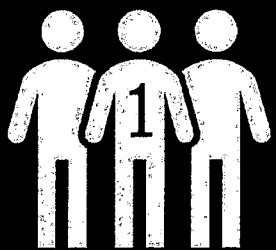
through stewardship and efficiency.

Mission

Service-Driven. Intentionally-Led.
Resident-Focused.



Goal Area					
					
					
					
Desired Future					
Goal					
Strategies					



Workplace Culture

Grow a culture where employees feel valued, have a strong sense of belonging, and have pride in their work.

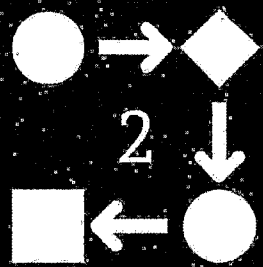


Gaston County FY26-28 Strategic Plan

Assess and refine the employee appreciation strategy to provide multiple mechanisms for demonstrating appreciation that are consistent and affordable.

Utilize the culture survey, employee action council and other feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement in priority areas.

Enhance organization-wide communication to transparently share information on County priorities, progress and policy direction from the Board.



Efficiency & Effectiveness

Improve community well-being and pursue opportunities through operational excellence and increased efficiency.



Improve intentional collaboration and information sharing across departments through consistent communication, technology use and convening/meetings.

Assess department facilities and services for opportunities to improve efficiency, optimize space utilization and complete internal process improvements.

Enhance grant development and external fundraising to increase revenue for strategic projects and initiatives.