

2015 ACTION PLAN

CLAREMONT, NORTH CAROLINA





MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL

The City Councilpeople of the City of Claremont pledge to create an environment in which the City will flourish around the concept of its mission statement and core values. The City Council acknowledges its role in Vision and Action Planning for the future of the City and pledges that this document will be a living, changing, and evolving document to help guide the City's path to the future.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the City of Claremont held an action planning meeting to develop a clear and concise action plan for the City for the next two years.

The City Council along with facilitation staff from the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) evaluated past major accomplishments, issues, trends and opportunities, effectiveness, and actions the Council feels it should increase/decrease in the future. These items were then used to set specific action points, goals, and programs to guide the City over the next several years.

This Plan will be used to establish the City's priorities as it undertakes new ideas or amends existing programs. It is a proactive statement of where the City wants to be in the future and is created to evolve as community needs change. The action plan identifies key initiatives with corresponding goals to direct the City's actions to help achieve its overarching mission while remaining in line with its values.

THE ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

WPCOG staff asked City Council members to respond to a short questionnaire in advance of the action planning session. (The questionnaire is included below as Appendix C.) The survey asked people to respond to four questions regarding:

- Key accomplishments
- Issues, concerns, trends and opportunities
- Significant initiatives or policies
- Organizational effectiveness

The responses in each of these four categories were reviewed by WPCOG staff before the October 28th meeting. (Detailed responses from the participants are presented below in Appendix D.)

During this discussion process, additional Council comments were gathered and then voted on. The input is in the following Categories:

- Key City accomplishments over the last two years
- Issues and concerns for the City
- Trends and opportunities for the City
- Finish this sentence: An effective city....
- The City should start or do more:
- The City should stop or do less:

MISSION STATEMENT

The City of Claremont Mission Statement describes how the community will reach its full potential and drives the action planning process. The Mission articulates and reflects the high ideals of the City as it looks to the future.

“A progressive city dedicated to preserving small town values while planning for the future.”

City Council Core Values:

- Effective local, regional and state partnerships
- Excellent and cost-effective services including police, fire, rescue, and public works
- Long-term financial stability
- Planned growth and economic development
- Fiscal accountability
- Leisure and cultural activities
- Environmentally-sensible practices

- Citizen Involvement

ACTION PLAN OUTLINE AND GOALS

The Action Plan identifies and defines key initiatives and includes corresponding goals and sub goals to direct future actions by the City to achieve the vision of the plan and the overarching City mission and values. The plan is broken down into five key areas:

- Culture, Parks and Recreation
- Roads and Public Utilities
- Technological Innovation
- Economic Development
- Responsive Government

These goals are the specific desires of the City Council over the next several years.

CULTURE, PARKS AND RECREATION

A vibrant community, engaging programs, and City culture play an important part in the overall health of our community. This key area defines the need to provide recreational and culture activities to meet the needs of all Claremont's citizens. It also indicates an approach to stewardship of the environment and history of the City to ensure the proper protection and development of these assets for the future.

GOALS

Maintain Claremont Park, and expand available programs.

Keep park aesthetically pleasing with well-maintained landscaping and functional equipment.

Continue to utilize staff in developing and implementing new programs and events.

Keep the downtown area and residential areas clean, beautiful and functional.

Seek ways to preserve the legacy of the City including buildings.

Continue to utilize staff in developing and implementing new programs and events.

Develop additional community events.

Involve citizens of all ages in our community, and try to reduce outmigration.

Strive to understand and accept diversity, including new and changing perspectives.

Maintain awareness of senior needs and implement programs, events or facilities as necessary.

Increase volunteer opportunities with the City.

Seek ways to connect retired citizens with opportunities provided in the community.

Expand positive relationships with schools and churches.

Continue to cultivate the Youth Council.

Remain open to culture, science and history.

Cultivate City culture and history as well as science through technology -- possibly through museums and using the library.

Seek ways to preserve historical documents, oral histories and traditions.

Work with Catawba County to expand library customers and remove unused library materials and replace them with more relevant materials.

If possible, clear space in the Claremont library branch for better flow of people, homework and discussions.

ROADS AND PUBLIC UTILITIES

High quality public utilities that reach the entire city not only ensure environmental protection but resources for future growth. Roads that run through the City are also a Council priority. This key area reinforces the City's desire to provide excellent, cost-effective services to all citizens of the community, both residential and commercial.

GOALS

Reduce thoroughfare traffic congestion.

Reduce congestion at the intersection of North Oxford and Main Street.

Complete turn lane additions to Western Centennial Boulevard.

Continue to work on City infrastructure upgrades (Examples include sidewalks, street lights and Wi-Fi).

Work to expand sewer service to all residents.

Work to increase sewer capacity and improve plant condition.

Enter into a local agreement with NC DOT for reimbursement of right-of-way mowing.

Analyze the cost of curb-side pick-up, and potentially modify the program -- charge more for services or reduce services.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

In order to ensure that the City provides the most cost-effective services, the most advanced technology should be used to help achieve the goals of this key area. The use of technology also furthers the City's e-profile for future growth and citizen transparency.

GOALS

Maintain and potentially increase technological outreach.

Continue to use social media to communicate with citizens about City services and to market Claremont.

Continue to ensure adequate and relevant City posts to Twitter, Facebook and the City's website.

Maintain and continue email listervs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This key area includes the retention of existing businesses, attracting new businesses, and encouraging the creation of quality jobs for the community. In doing so, the City must also strive to foster, support and retain a diverse economic base to continue long-term financial stability and planned growth.

GOALS

Continue downtown revitalization.

Consider improvements to the Cline-Jessup building. Determine the scope of work for and cost of improvements for creating a community center or for other uses.

Encourage businesses to extend hours of operation.

Create/promote contests for downtown businesses to keep them aesthetically appealing.

Promote walking downtown through events, social media and CMAQ/CTT grants.

Promote EDC and local business communication/relationships and expansion.

Continue to host annual Business Breakfasts.

Ensure education about existing opportunities and programs for all aspects of businesses and nonprofit operations.

Recognize local businesses with awards and/or events.

Create venues for business networking by hosting trade shows.

Work to recruit businesses and restaurants.

Continue to market industrial growth potential – close to Highway 16, high quality of life, and open space with amenities available.

RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

This key area describes the City’s responsibility to manage in a manner that seeks to be responsive to the community and accountable for actions taken. It seeks to maintain effective operational standards that will equate to effective delivery of services. This area also seeks to assure that the appropriate services are provided in a manner that reflects both the needs of the community and the ability of the City to provide them.

GOALS

Work to meet residential development need.

Work to remove vacant or blighted housing when possible.

Discuss selling or developing property with owners who are holding a lot of key property.

Focus on/advertise/market residential growth potential to developers.

Foster community and staff input for City governance and services.

Have semi-annual City Hall meetings so the Mayor and Council can hear from Citizens.

Listen and engage citizens via surveys, the City website, the City newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, and events.

Publish and promote efforts to implement the Action Plan and other adopted City plans.

Budget wisely, and maximize the City's financial resources.

Strive for financial stability; make changes efficiently and conservatively, and conduct long-term budgeting/forecasting.

Conduct a pay and position classification study.

Study the feasibility and benefits of merging the fire department and Claremont Rescue Squad. Consider establishing a steering committee for this study.

IMPLEMENTATION

Plan implementation will be dependent on both City Staff and City Council to take action on the recommendations contained in this report. Staff has the responsibility to take on these goals as a part of the operations of the City and the City Council must reinforce the desire and need for these actions to occur. The Staff and City Council must also be willing to update and review progress on these action points throughout the year along with a holistic annual review prior to the beginning of the budgeting process to ensure alignment of priorities and funding.

ACTION PLAN MATRIX

GOALS	KEY AREA	TIME FRAME (YRS)	LEAD DEPARTMENT	STATUS
Maintain Claremont Park, and expand available programs.	Culture, Parks & Recreation	1 -- 3	Parks & Rec	Ongoing
Keep the downtown area and residential areas clean, beautiful and functional.	Culture, Parks & Recreation	1 -- 3	Administration; Parks & Rec	Ongoing
Involve citizens of all ages in our community, and try to reduce outmigration.	Culture, Parks & Recreation	1 -- 2	Administration	Ongoing
Remain open to culture, science and history.	Culture, Parks & Recreation	1 -- 2	Administration	Started
Reduce thoroughfare traffic congestion.	Roads & Utilities	1 – 5+	Administration	Not Started
Continue to work on City infrastructure upgrades.	Roads & Utilities	1 -- 5	Public Works; Administration	Started
Maintain and potentially increase technological outreach.	Technological Innovation	0 -- 1	Administration	Ongoing
Continue downtown revitalization.	Economic Development	1 -- 5	Administration	Ongoing
Promote EDC and local business communication/relationships and expansion.	Economic Development	1 -- 2	Administration	Ongoing
Work to meet residential development need.	Responsive Government	1 -- 5	Administration	Ongoing
Foster community and staff input for City governance and services.	Responsive Government	0 -- 1	Administration	Ongoing
Budget wisely, and maximize the City's financial resources.	Responsive Government	1 -- 2	Administration	Started

APPENDIX A: COUNCIL INPUT (VERBAL)

Below are the comments that were collected during the action planning session followed by the votes gathered during each of 5 rounds of Councilmember voting.

#1 - KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◇ Community Unity
- ◇ Shell Building
- ◇ Downtown Revitalization (Example: Wi-Fi)
- ◇ Technological Outreach (1 first-round vote & 1 fourth-round vote)
- ◇ Staff Stability
- ◇ City Infrastructure Upgrades (1 first-round vote & 1 second-round vote)
- ◇ Facility Upgrades (Example: City Hall & Police Department)
- ◇ Equipment Replacement
- ◇ Citizen-Friendly Environment
- ◇ Local Government Relationships
- ◇ New/Improved Recreation Programs
- ◇ Good Departmental Relationships
- ◇ EDC and Local Business Communication/Relationships (2 fourth-round votes & 1 fifth-round vote)

#2 – ISSUES & CONCERNS

- ◇ Thoroughfare Traffic/Congestion (Example: North Oxford & Main) (3 first-round votes, 1 second-round vote & 1 third-round vote)
- ◇ Interim/Transitional Issues
- ◇ Staff Salary Study
- ◇ Sewer Capacity/Plant Condition
- ◇ Business/Restaurant Recruitment (1 second-round vote)
- ◇ Western Centennial Construction
- ◇ Downtown: Future of Cline-Jessup Building
- ◇ Vacant/Blighted Housing (1 first-round vote)

- ◇ Need for Residential Development

#3 – TRENDS & OPPORTUNITIES

- ◇ Positive Trend – Industrial Growth Potential
- ◇ Positive Trend/Opportunity – Residential Growth Potential (1 fourth-round vote & 1 fifth-round vote)
- ◇ Positive Trend – Social Media/Claremont Marketing (1 fifth-round vote)
- ◇ Positive Opportunity – Close to Airport, Highway 16 (STIP), High Quality of Life (Open Space with Amenities Still Available)
- ◇ Positive & Negative Trend/Opportunity - New/Diverse/Changing Perspectives (1 second-round vote)
- ◇ Negative Trend – Aging Population/Outmigration (1 fourth-round vote)
- ◇ Negative Trend – Foreclosures/Individuals Not Selling
- ◇ Positive Opportunity – Businesses Open More Hours/More Walkable Downtown

#4 – AN EFFECTIVE CITY...

- ◇ Listens/Engages Citizens (1 fifth-round vote)
- ◇ Growing/Expanding
- ◇ Aesthetically Pleasing
- ◇ Attracts and Retains Youth (1 third-round vote)
- ◇ Plans *and* Executes
- ◇ Financially Stable
- ◇ Aware of Senior Needs
- ◇ Open to Culture, Science & History
- ◇ Understands and Accepts Diversity (2 fifth-round votes)
- ◇ Partners Well with Business Community
- ◇ Partners Well with Other Local Governments

#5 – START OR DO MORE:

- ◇ More – Summer Community Events
- ◇ Start – Staff Salary/Organizational Study
- ◇ More – Recognize Businesses

- ◇ More - Business Networking (Example: Trade Show)
- ◇ Start/More – Expand Positive Relationships with Schools & Churches
- ◇ More – Sewer Service to All Residents
- ◇ Start – Consider Merging Fire & Rescue (1 third-round vote)
- ◇ More – Downtown Revitalization (Example: Sidewalks, Street Lights, Wi-Fi, Etc.) (2 second-round votes, 3 third-round votes & 1 fourth-round vote)

#6 – STOP OR DO LESS:

- ◇ Stop - No More Railroad Spurs
- ◇ Stop - “Finish Mowing” (Example: Right-of-way on Centennial, Railroad, Maybe map these areas)
- ◇ Stop/Do Less - Look at Cost of Curb-Side Pick-Up/Potentially Modify
- ◇ Stop – Maintaining Unused Library Materials. Work with County to Expand Library Customers (Maybe Open up Space for Better Flow of People – Homework, Discussion, Etc.)

APPENDIX B: STRATEGY VOTES

Several similar input categories were combined as votes were calculated. The strategies are listed here by highest to lowest number of votes each idea received:

- ◇ More – Downtown Revitalization (Example: Sidewalks, Street Lights, Wi-Fi, Etc.) (2 second-round votes, 3 third-round votes & 1 fourth-round vote) (6 total votes)
- ◇ Thoroughfare Traffic/Congestion (Example: North Oxford & Main) (3 first-round votes, 1 second-round vote & 1 third-round vote) (5 total votes)
- ◇ EDC and Local Business Communication/Relationships (2 fourth-round votes & 1 fifth-round vote) (3 total votes)
- ◇ Technological Outreach; Positive Trend – Social Media/Claremont Marketing (1 first-round vote, 1 fourth-round vote & 1 fifth-round vote) (3 total votes)
- ◇ Understands and Accepts Diversity – New/Changing Perspectives (1 second-round vote & 2 fifth-round votes) (3 total votes)
- ◇ City Infrastructure Upgrades (1 first-round vote & 1 second-round vote) (2 total votes)
- ◇ Positive Trend/Opportunity – Residential Growth Potential (1 fourth-round vote & 1 fifth-round vote) (2 total votes)
- ◇ Start – Consider Merging Fire & Rescue (1 third-round vote) (1 total vote)
- ◇ Business/Restaurant Recruitment (1 second-round vote) (1 total vote)
- ◇ Vacant/Blighted Housing (1 first-round vote) (1 total vote)
- ◇ Negative Trend – Aging Population/Outmigration (1 fourth-round vote) (1 total vote)

- ◇ Listens/Engages Citizens (1 fifth-round vote) (1 total vote)
- ◇ Attracts and Retains Youth (1 third-round vote) (1 total vote)

APPENDIX C: COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE

The Appendix includes the questionnaire used by the City Council to construct the framework of the discussions behind the formulation of this action plan and the resulting answers compiled for each question.

City of Claremont
Goal Setting Session – 2014
Questionnaire

Introduction

The City of Claremont's Goal Setting Session will be held on Tuesday, October 28th at the Claremont City Hall. The purpose of the session will be to identify and prioritize the City's overall goals and objectives for the next two to five years.

In order to prepare for this session, you are requested to identify key issues and potential objectives that will be reviewed and discussed at the session. Please complete all sections of this questionnaire. Thank you.

Major Accomplishments

1. Please list major city accomplishments over the past two years. These accomplishments could be as large as a street project or as simple as a newly adopted city policy. The items do not need to be in any particular order.

Issues, Concerns, Trends, and Opportunities

2. Please list specific issues, concerns, trends, and opportunities that affect future city services, policies, finances, or operations. You do not need to identify potential solutions to your concerns.

Significant Initiatives or Programs

3. Please list any initiatives, programs or policies that you think the city should consider in the next two years.

Organizational Effectiveness

4. Please list several things that the Mayor/City Council and/or staff could do in the future to improve organizational effectiveness, decision-making processes, teamwork and the ability to accomplish the City's stated goals and objectives.

Return of Questionnaire

Thank you! We look forward to setting exciting goals on October 28th.

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Key Accomplishments

- “Sidewalk repairs, improvement of our recycling efforts, upgrading of equipment and vehicles for police, public works and fire, debit card payment and online payment of utilities, the shell building, improvements at the city park, history wall at city hall are just a few”

10/5/2014 9:32 PM

- “The Shell Building, replacement of emergency vehicles, new businesses, replacement of vehicles and equipment in public works, online and credit card/debit bill pay”

10/2/2014 10:22 PM

- “New industries”

9/30/2014 9:57 PM

- “Shell Building, Total involvement with EDC. Website, Facebook, Instagram activity. City wide radio read water meters. Working with local business. Fire and police Dept purchases. Improvements at City Hall”

9/30/2014 6:25 PM

- “1. Additions to business park. 2. Upgrading city park. 3. Downtown Wi-Fi. 4. Sidewalk upgrades. 5. Credit card and online bill pay. 6. Long term planning; plans updated. 7. Better citizen input and communications.”

9/30/2014 2:21 PM

Issues, Trends, Concerns, and Opportunities

- “Department heads need to be more accountable for their specific jobs and functions. Others in the departments need to be cross trained in case someone was out, departments do not need to do any unnecessary spending, keeping up our equipment so that we do no[t] have any unexpected large repairs”

10/5/2014 9:32 PM

- “Sewer Development for growth. Population getting older, need to attract younger people. Promote vacate housing and unoccupied housing. Water issues.”

9/30/2014 6:28 PM

- “1. State funding going forward. 2. Loss of potential revenue sharing statewide. 3. Businesses leaving the immediate area. 4. Opportunities within our business park - Phase 1&2. 5. Good momentum on growth and visibility with the city. 6. Sewer system infrastructure long term.”

9/30/2014 2:26 PM

Significant Initiatives or Policies

- “We need to get the 25-35 year old age group interested in operations and city government, continue trying to solve our traffic problems on targeted streets, continue city park improvements, have more events and encourage citizens to come out and participate, plan programs and activities for our young population”

10/5/2014 9:32 PM

- “Promoting history wall and other activities. seek other opportunities to bring in tourism. Work to build on local artist group.”

9/30/2014 6:30 PM

- “1. Initiative to complete city sewer system to all citizen home locations. 2. Strive to convince one of the local regional hospitals to put an urgent care center in Claremont. 3. Plan for long term completion of Centennial Blvd.”

9/30/2014 2:29 PM

Organizational Effectiveness

- “Information needs to be filtered down to all employees and volunteer committee members...the key thing is communications, change is good if all involved are on the same page with the changes things should not be hide from anyone and we should be up front”

10/5/2014 9:32 PM

- “Be more inviting to promote the city though personal contact. Be open to seek local and regional cooperation on projects.”

10/1/2014 9:28 AM

- “I think the staff set-up and manager/mayor/council communications and working effectiveness is very good at present and I don't see the need for short term change.”

9/30/2014 2:37 PM