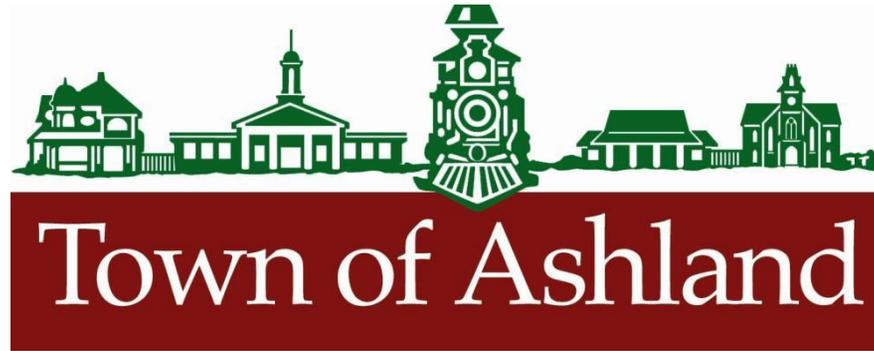


Town of Ashland



Strategic Plan 2019





Acknowledgements

Town Council

Steven Trivett, Mayor

John Hodges, Vice Mayor

Dr. George Spagna, Councilmember

Kathleen Abbott, Councilmember

Daniel McGraw, Councilmember

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Director

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Doug Goodman, Chief of Police

Wanda Cornwell, Assistant to the Town Manager / Human
Resources Director

Matt Reynal, Assistant Town Manager

Town of Ashland



Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan expresses the community's vision and the values, goals, and objectives that are desirable for the community and town staff to strive toward.

Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan describes the characteristics of the Town and identifies features and land use principles considered essential to the town's character. The Comprehensive Plan guides development and growth and is reflected in Town policies regarding transportation, land use, and capital improvements.

Five-Year Financial Plan

Each year during the budgeting process, the Town prepares a five-year financial projection in order to identify trends, effects of adopted policies and future needs. The five-year plan assists in the budgeting process and helps build resilient financial management.

Capital Improvement Plan

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) allows the Town to carefully manage capital and infrastructure assets by identifying long-term projects and needs far enough in advance to coordinate and plan financial and staffing needs.

Annual Budget

The annual budget serves as the Town's financial plan. The budget is a policy document that provides direction and priorities for the resources needed to deliver community services.



Strategic Planning Process

September 2014	An independent firm conducted a community survey from a randomly chosen representative sample of the population. More than 300 citizens participated in this survey.
January 2015	Town staff began presenting significant community data to the town council. Data included citizen survey results and trends from the 2011 citizen survey; an updated CIP plan; results from a recent employee survey; an analysis of community population, education, housing, and economy; and an analysis of land use and revenues.
February 2015	The town council and senior staff met for a facilitated strategic planning retreat.
July 2015	Town staff presented draft vision, mission, values, and focus area statements in a public work session for review by the council and the community.
September 2015	Updated vision, mission, values, and focus area statements were used to form and guide five strategic planning committees assigned with reviewing focus area objectives.
December 2015	A draft of the strategic plan was presented to town council for public review.
February 2016	Town council retreat to review and finalize the strategic plan.
February 2016	The town council adopted the strategic plan at a regular meeting.
Ongoing	Staff implements the strategic plan and updates it with the town council from time to time. The strategic plan is a living document that continues to reflect the vision and values of Ashland.



Definitions

Vision	A snapshot of the desired future state of the community; what we want to be.
Focus Areas	General organizational categories necessary to achieve the community vision.
Objectives	Goals within a focus area that will help achieve the community vision.
Initiatives	Action steps needed to meet the objective.
Key Indicators	Measures used to indicate progress toward achieving the objective.
Mission	The role of town government in achieving the community vision.
Values	Guiding principles that direct how decisions are made and the internal culture. Values strive to ensure the community not only reaches its vision but takes an appropriate path to get there.



Vision Statement

Ashland is a beautiful, historic, and diverse community uniquely known as the Center of the Universe. Exceptional people, businesses and organizations are drawn to Ashland’s great neighborhoods, strong economy outstanding community amenities, and vibrant, multigenerational cultural activities.

<i>A beautiful community</i>	<i>A historic community</i>	<i>A diverse community</i>
Ashland is a beautiful central Virginia town with attractive gateways, authentic architecture spanning more than 150 years, and natural areas preserved for future generations.	Ashland embraces its history as a town of the railroad, home of the second oldest Methodist college in the country, and a place with many rich community traditions.	Everyone is welcome in Ashland. We welcome people of every generation, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and lifestyle. Varied perspectives elevate our planning and community decisions.

<i>Uniquely known as the Center of the Universe</i>	<i>Exceptional people, organizations and businesses</i>	<i>Great neighborhoods</i>
Ashland is a one-of-a-kind small town with a central location, a walk-able downtown, connections to urban and rural communities, and a broad range of cultural activities.	People, organizations and businesses choose to come to Ashland for all that it offers. Ashland is an exceptional destination because of the wonderful people, here and coming here, to share a high quality of life.	Ashland has safe and affordable housing for all residents. We have age-specific housing and recreational facilities that meet the needs of the community.

<i>The thriving economy that meets their needs</i>	<i>Excellent community amenities</i>	<i>Vibrant multigenerational activities</i>
Ashland is a technology hotspot and regional destination. We have robust hotels and a carefully developed interchange. We have the people and jobs for professional-level services. There are retail, medical, and other services to meet the needs of our community.	Ashland is centrally located with an interstate, highway, bike trails, and railroad. Our citizens are prepared to lead. The Town delivers outstanding, innovative public services ranging from trash pickup to broadband access to theater events. The Town works well with regional partners.	Ashland is a unique place; a regional destination where a diversity of residents and visitors enjoy a wide variety of cultural and educational activities.

Town of Ashland



Mission Statement

The mission of Ashland town government is to improve the quality of life in Ashland through the professional and efficient delivery of outstanding public services.

<i>Improve the quality of life in Ashland</i>	<i>Efficient delivery</i>	<i>Outstanding public services</i>
The initiatives implemented in Ashland will seek to make life better for our citizens.	Town staff will always seek to deliver exceptional services at the best possible value.	Services in Ashland are effective, equitable, Innovative, and citizen-centric.



Town of Ashland



Focus Areas

The future of the *Center of the Universe* is a place with a wonderful blend of eclectic shops, appealing restaurants, welcoming hotels, and arts and culture events that draw people here from miles around. It is a diverse place where people enjoy life as they grow old and where they watch their children grow up.

Ashland strives to be a place where everyone knows their neighbors and values integrity. It is a place that makes decisions with an eye toward future generations. Ashland is a safe place for everyone and at every time of day.

Focusing on these broad themes drives the efforts of the Town toward the *Center of the Universe* of the future.



Town of Ashland



1. Strong & Diverse Economy

1.1 Objective: Make it easy for businesses to locate and thrive in Ashland.

Key Indicators: Annual dollar increase in investment, number of STEM jobs, days to complete town review, customer service survey score, occupancy/vacancy rate, BPOL tax revenue, number of building permits issued, business turnover, rates/prices relative to surrounding areas, pad-ready lots as a percentage of vacant properties, number of jobs, unemployment rate, average wage, percentage of the population with technical or college education

Initiatives:

- 1.1.1 Make strategic infrastructure investments to develop pad-ready economic development opportunities.
- 1.1.2 Attract, develop, and retain qualified talent to meet the needs of the business community.
- 1.1.3 Continue to partner with the Dominion Energy Innovation Center to attract innovative industries.
- 1.1.4 Facilitate the retention and expansion of small- and medium-sized businesses, particularly businesses focused on innovation, technology, entertainment, and tourism.
- 1.1.5 Continue to partner with our existing businesses, Market Ashland Partnership, Ashland Main Street Association and other partner organizations on supporting and promoting existing businesses, and developing and attracting new businesses.

1.2 Objective: Promote Ashland as a tourism destination.

Key Indicators: Number of hotel stays in Ashland, number of hotel rooms available, hotel room vacancy rate, percentage increase of global impressions, lodging tax revenue, meals tax revenue

Initiatives:

- 1.2.1 Improve hotel stock through redevelopment of blighted or undesirable properties.
- 1.2.2 Utilize technology and regional partnerships to draw attention and drive traffic.



- 1.2.3 Locate a hotel/conference center in Ashland.
- 1.2.4 Work with state and federal agencies to keep passenger rail in Ashland
- 1.2.5 Develop parks, trails, museums, recreational opportunities, or other unique amenities that attract visitors from the region and country.
- 1.2.6 Develop a marketing strategy that effectively brands Ashland as a destination, and effectively use advertising to promote the Ashland brand to increase tourism.

1.3 Objective: Carefully develop the interchange area as an oasis of cleanliness and convenience.

Key Indicators: Property values, lodging tax revenue, meals tax revenue, revenue per acre, revenue per business, square feet of development/redevelopment, number of development/redevelopment projects, total development/redevelopment investment, completion of rest area development

Initiatives:

- 1.3.1 Create an interstate development plan to enhance the appeal, convenience and commercial development of the exit, and town gateway surrounding Interstate 95.
- 1.3.2 Redevelop blighted or undesirable properties.
- 1.3.3 Utilize the restored Mechumps Creek and develop as an amenity along the creek with a trail connected to the town trail system.

1.4 Objective: Become a regional hotspot for high-speed internet.

Key Indicators: Percentage of businesses with high-speed internet access, percentage of residences with high-speed internet access, creation of downtown Wi-Fi

Initiatives:

- 1.4.1 Extend dark fiber into downtown and other strategic development locations throughout the town.
- 1.4.2 Create a downtown Wi-Fi system that is accessible to the public.



- 1.4.3 Develop a partnership with the college to maximize cooperative investment.
- 1.4.4 Provide an opportunity for local businesses and residents to connect to high-speed internet.

1.5 Objective: Expand quality public transportation options for the residents and visitors of the Town of Ashland.

Key Indicators: Percentage of citizens who live within a ¼ mile of a circulator system stop; number of riders on the circulator system per month; number of visitors who use the circulator system per month; the outcome of the DC2RVA rail project; Number of citizens who utilize the bus line to commute to their place of employment daily to the Richmond metropolitan area

Initiatives:

- 1.5.1 Develop or partner with an organization to develop an intra-town bus or trolley system that can serve citizens or tourists to access Ashland’s expanding job market, cultural amenities, and recreational amenities.
- 1.5.2 Advocate for public transportation access to the Richmond metropolitan area for Ashland residents.
- 1.5.3 Use every available resource to influence the outcome of the DC2RVA rail project in the Ashland area.





2. Cultural Vitality

2.1 Objective: Create a unique sense of place, energy, and excitement in Ashland.

Key Indicators: Downtown occupancy/vacancy rate, downtown population, number of business contacts, number of pieces of public art installed, new business openings downtown, percent favorable “social events and activities”, percent favorable “vibrant downtown/commercial area”, downtown parking review completed, number of college-advertised events, creation of downtown campus master plan

Initiatives:

2.1.1 Continue investment and maintenance of pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, planning, and aesthetic elements throughout the downtown area.

2.1.2 Maximize the use of downtown parking space to allow visitors easy access to downtown points of interest.

Town of Ashland



- 2.1.3 Redevelop unused, underused, and blighted property through cooperation with property owners and economic development organizations and by regulatory means, where necessary.
- 2.1.4 Support Ashland's expanding reputation as a destination for arts and cultural activities by increasing public art in the arts and culture district.
- 2.1.5 Attract and promote multigenerational activities, entertainment, and recreation that support and preserve the small town feeling and character of the town.
- 2.1.6 Partner with the college to increase awareness of available activities, events, and amenities among student and resident populations.
- 2.1.7 Increase the number of people living in the downtown area.
- 2.1.8 Enhance existing businesses, organizations, and venues through education and grant opportunities.
- 2.1.9 Encourage arts, dining, and retail businesses from other areas of Virginia to consider Ashland as a location for future expansion.
- 2.1.10 Develop the town hall campus as a center for community gatherings, discussion, and events.



2.2 Objective: Develop and promote destination venues, sites, and events in Ashland.

Key Indicators: Theater ticket sales, theater attendance per production, annual visits to the visitors center, event attendance, meals tax revenue, transient occupancy tax revenue, number of regional destinations in town limits

Initiatives:

- 2.2.1 Continue to support the Ashland Theater as a regional multi-use venue for entertainment and community events.
- 2.2.2 Complete the Trolley Line Trail in Ashland and work with neighboring jurisdictions to continue the trail into Richmond.
- 2.2.3 Construct a physical marker for the Center of the Universe that relays the character and history of the community and promotes Ashland tourism.
- 2.2.4 Promote existing features, facilities, and events that attract outside visitors and continue to support their maintenance and improvement.
- 2.2.5 Encourage the development of regional destinations including, but not limited to, hotel conference centers, sports and recreation facilities, enhanced cycling routes, entertainment venues, technology destinations, museums, train watching sites, and historical sites.
- 2.2.6 Encourage the development of self-sustaining festivals and regional events.
- 2.2.7 Promote awareness of town activities.



Town of Ashland



2.3 Objective: Support quality schools, educational programs, and enrichment activities.

Key Indicators: Percent favorable “education and enrichment opportunities”, percent favorable “religious or spiritual events and activities”, percent favorable “adult education”, percent favorable “child care / preschool”, CLA participation

Initiatives:

- 2.3.1 Coordinate with Hanover County Public Schools to support improvements for local school facilities.
- 2.3.2 Leverage the Ashland Branch Library and Ashland Theatre as downtown destinations for community events and activities.
- 2.3.3 Maintain a positive and collaborative relationship with Randolph-Macon College.
- 2.3.4 Continue to build positive and collaborative relationships with local religious and spiritual organizations.
- 2.3.5 Explore options to increase workforce training and community awareness of existing adult education programs in the region.
- 2.3.6 Collaborate with organizations to enhance and improve existing education programs, preschools, and activities for children.
- 2.3.7 Continue to support and encourage participation in the Ashland Citizen Leadership Academy.



3. Community & Neighborhood Livability

3.1 Objective: Establish Ashland as a welcoming and attractive community.

Key Indicators: percent favorable “View of Ashland as a diverse place”, minority CLA participants

Initiatives:

- 3.1.1 Invite participation in the democratic process and town events from all segments of the community.
- 3.1.2 Actively identify and empower all segments of the community.
- 3.1.3 Develop and support activities and events with a broader and more diverse appeal.
- 3.1.4 Support efforts to document, highlight, and encourage diversity in Ashland.
- 3.1.5 Partner with CSX and Amtrak to make the Visitor Center ADA compliant.

3.2 Objective: Provide high-quality recreational programming and amenities to attract and retain residents.

Key Indicators: percent favorable “Access to quality parks and recreation”, number of miles of on-street bicycle routes added annually, pool survey scores, number of recreational, and cultural offerings

Initiatives:

- 3.2.1 Upgrade Carter Park Pool as an attractive asset and a gathering place for Ashland’s diverse community.
- 3.2.2 Increase the quantity and variety of recreation program options in Ashland.
- 3.2.3 Implement the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- 3.2.4 Create a unified trail system that is an asset to the community.
- 3.2.5 Improve cycling on-road and off-road infrastructure, particularly related to national bike routes.
- 3.2.6 Require that new development include appropriate recreation amenities or dedications, including trails, paths, playgrounds, parks, and open space.



3.3 Objective: Encourage and support revitalization efforts in Ashland neighborhoods.

Key Indicators: percent favorable “Access to quality senior housing or resources to age-in-place”, residential property values, percent favorable “Access to quality housing”, grant dollars for rehabilitation, percentage of high-income housing relative to total stock

Initiatives:

- 3.3.1 Promote the rehabilitation of existing housing stock to provide decent, safe, and affordable housing for all segments of the population.
- 3.3.2 Attract more high-income housing to balance the local market.
- 3.3.3 Grow the town’s regional reputation and awareness of Ashland as a desirable place to live.
- 3.3.4 Provide incentives for rehabilitating existing housing with universal design.
- 3.3.5 Provide a diverse range of housing opportunities that meet the needs of Ashland residents and attract a qualified workforce.
- 3.3.6 Collaborate with Hanover County on the future use of Henry Clay Elementary School.
- 3.3.7 Acknowledge and encourage community organizations focused on housing initiatives.
- 3.3.8 Develop a comprehensive approach to neighborhood revitalization.

3.4 Objective: Develop an infrastructure of services for aging and veteran populations.

Key Indicators: Percent favorable “Access to necessary medical and mental health resources in Ashland”, number of medical providers, number of entertainment venues, number of organizations providing recreation, attraction of medical facility

Initiatives:

- 3.4.1 Partner with local transportation and medical providers to bring shuttle and transit services to Ashland, including shuttles to nearby medical facilities.
- 3.4.2 Attract a hospital, medical complex and/or continuing care facility to Ashland.
- 3.4.3 Maintain walk-able neighborhoods and commercial districts.



4. Safe Community

- 4.1 **Objective:** Maintain and improve public trust of law enforcement through community outreach and a commitment to transparency.

Key Indicators: percent favorable “overall feeling of safety”, “safe in neighborhood”, and “safe downtown/commercial area”, trust

Initiatives:

- 4.1.1 Support the Ashland Police Department’s ongoing efforts to build mutual respect and trust in the community, and enhance the community’s satisfaction with policing activities.
- 4.1.2 Maintain CALEA accreditation to ensure continued professional excellence and transparency.
- 4.1.3 Continue outreach efforts to build goodwill and engage the public on the safety needs of the community.
- 4.1.4 Grow the number and activity of neighborhood watch and business crime prevention efforts.
- 4.1.5 Maintain policies and procedures that effectively balance technological capability and personal privacy.

- 4.2 **Objective:** Ensure timely and appropriate response.

Key Indicators: emergency response time, non-emergency response time, complaints, percent favorable “emergency preparedness”, percent favorable “quality of police services”

Initiatives:

- 4.2.1 Maintain staffing levels for required response times and service levels, and provide proactive high-visibility patrols.
- 4.2.2 Provide necessary tools to strengthen Ashland’s public safety operations and prepare for future growth.
- 4.2.3 Ensure all public safety officers meet or exceed the appropriate amount of training.
- 4.2.4 Continue to partner with regional emergency response agencies and CSX to prepare for large scale disasters or the possibility of a rail emergency.



4.3 **Objective:** Reduce the occurrence and severity of crime through active prevention and deterrence.

Key Indicators: percent favorable “crime prevention”, Part I crime offenses, number of nuisance offenses, maintain accreditation

Initiatives:

4.3.1 Promote strategic enforcement operations based on available data.

4.3.2 Promote citizen crime prevention through public education and information campaigns, and Prevent juvenile crime by continuing to grow programs to educate youth.

4.3.3 Continue the review of development plans by the appropriate public safety agencies.

4.3.4 Develop appropriate codes and regulations to effectively deal with property maintenance issues, especially repeat offenders and blight.

4.4 **Objective:** Maintain a safe and effective flow of traffic.

Key Indicators: percent favorable “traffic flow”, percent favorable “traffic enforcement”, accident rate, DUI arrest rates

Initiatives:

4.4.1 Prioritize funding for infrastructure that adds or expands sidewalks, crosswalks, bike paths, turn lanes, or otherwise enhances the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

4.4.2 Develop traffic connector routes as directed by the Comprehensive Plan.

4.4.3 Work to mitigate impacts of repetitive but unpredictable traffic events, including passing trains and closures or restrictions on Interstate 95.

4.4.4 Require new development to make necessary improvements to maintain traffic flow and safety.

4.4.5 Conduct targeted enforcement in corridors subject to citizen traffic safety complaints based on historical trends, available data and studies.



5. Responsive & Responsible Governance

5.1 Objective: Provide responsive, citizen-oriented service to internal and external customers.

Key Indicators: Percent favorable “overall confidence in Ashland government”, average number of days to respond to online requests, satisfaction surveys, percent favorable “public information”

Initiatives:

- 5.1.1 Measure and improve resident satisfaction with town services.
- 5.1.2 Promote interdepartmental collaboration to improve the customer experience.
- 5.1.3 Continuously improve the town website to improve organization and search-ability.
- 5.1.4 Record and broadcast all public meetings of town governing bodies.
- 5.1.5 Provide online access to town records, budgets, and finance data.

5.2 Objective: Attract, develop, and retain an exceptional, diverse, and engaged workforce.

Key Indicators: Employee turnover, hours of training, wellness program participation, percent positive “Overall quality of town services”, Number of OSHA recordable accidents, percentage reduction in average cost of workers’ compensation claims, number of verified citizen complaints, percentage of employees belonging to a professional organization

Initiatives:

- 5.2.1 Establish pay and benefits that are regionally competitive for every position.
- 5.2.2 Provide appropriate training, continuing education, and career development opportunities for all staff.
- 5.2.3 Grow the pool of diverse, talented, and qualified candidates applying for town positions and hire employees that demonstrate town values and an ability to fit into the organizational culture.
- 5.2.4 Develop a strategic workforce, training, and succession plan to capture organizational expertise.
- 5.2.5 Improve and grow wellness-based productivity initiatives.



- 5.2.6 Continue to implement best practices to mitigate security risks for people, assets, and information.
- 5.2.7 Develop a reward and recognition program.
- 5.2.8 Develop internal innovation team(s) to help drive innovation at all levels of the organization.

5.3 Objective: Support strategic initiatives and policies that promote the long-term sustainability of community financial, environmental, and social resources.

Key Indicators: Percentage of GFOA Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting criteria scoring “Proficient” or higher, Receipt of GFOA Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), percentage of utility cost reductions, Number of CIP projects completed within a five-year period, percentage of projects funded, average project completion time, annual review of strategic plan, percentage of employees reporting awareness of strategic plan

Initiatives:

- 5.3.1 Engage the community on strategic topics and encourage their input.
- 5.3.2 Regularly review the Strategic Plan’s vision as a council and strive to make it reality.
- 5.3.3 Adopt a five-year financial plan that incorporates fiscally responsible revenue and expenditure forecasts and prioritizes the evaluation of existing facilities and infrastructure and considers repair and/or replacement for use of available funds.
- 5.3.4 Require new initiatives to identify strategic value for a minimum of five years into the future.
- 5.3.5 Support strategic initiatives with infrastructure, policies, and funding.
- 5.3.6 Identify and evaluate alternative approaches to finance capital investments.
- 5.3.7 Identify and meet requirements for storm water management.
- 5.3.8 Continue to pursue opportunities to reduce the Town’s consumption of finite resources and make use of new technologies for energy efficiency.
- 5.3.9 Educate employees on the strategic plan and their role in its creation and implementation.
- 5.3.10 Actively participate in regional organizations to maximize positive outcomes and leverage resources.



Guiding Values

Sustainability

We meet the needs of the present without compromising future generations through long-term planning, innovative operations, responsible management of community resources, and developing the capacity to withstand and grow from difficulties.

Community

We are a unique place where people care about each other and contribute their enthusiasm, skills and resources to solve common problems or create shared events and celebrations.

Integrity

We consistently take the high road to do what is moral, ethical, legal, honest, fair, and humane. We are particularly mindful when doing so is difficult or when behind closed doors.

Equity

We always provide the highest level of service to all residents and stakeholders and strive to include them in the political process.

Excellence

We deliver highly competent, innovative, citizen-focused services. We are always working to quality, efficiency, and skill with which those services are delivered.

