



Carroll Tomorrow Strategic Plan

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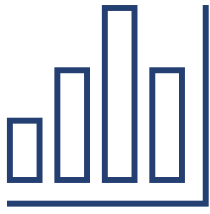


Carroll Tomorrow Planning Process

In 2021, Carroll Tomorrow will celebrate twenty years of positively influencing the economic competitiveness, growth, and prosperity of Carroll County. Since the genesis of the partnership, it has consistently engaged in five-year strategic planning efforts that helped guide and define its program of work. As the community and country navigate a challenging period of economic unrest and uncertainty, Carroll Tomorrow has recognized the need to accelerate the county's economic recovery and seize new opportunities, while enabling an increasingly flexible and responsive organization. This Strategic Plan and its corresponding Implementation Guidelines appropriately respond to that need, outlining a framework to guide Carroll Tomorrow's investments supporting economic development for years to come.

Working together, community and business leaders convened from August – December 2020 to examine resident input, assess the community's competitiveness, and help guide the development of this new Strategic Plan.

- **Planning Committee:** The strategic planning process was guided by a Planning Committee comprised of representatives from the Carroll Tomorrow Board of Directors, the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee, and other partners from across the community. The Committee met four times from September – December 2020.
- **Interviews:** A set of interviews with representatives from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors shared perspectives on the community's assets, challenges, and opportunities.
- **Community Survey:** An online survey solicited input from the community's residents and businesses from August – September 2020. Nearly 1,000 individuals (986) responded, evaluating the community's quality of life and business climate, and sharing their vision for its future.
- **Community Assessment:** The Community Assessment combines the qualitative input received from the county's residents and businesses with quantitative benchmarking that assesses performance relative to three communities with which Carroll County competes for jobs and workers – Coweta County (Newnan), Floyd County (Rome), and Hall County (Gainesville) – as well as the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta metropolitan area and the United States.
- **Strategic Plan:** The Strategic Plan reflects a new framework to guide Carroll Tomorrow's initiatives and investments supporting economic competitiveness from 2021 – 2025. It recommends potential responses to address identified challenges and potential pathways to realize identified opportunities. It is complemented by a set of Implementation Guidelines to help Carroll Tomorrow remain flexible and responsive as it operationalizes the Strategic Plan, resources its implementation, and communicates return on investment.



Community Assessment: Summary

The Community Assessment combined the qualitative input received from the county's residents and businesses with quantitative benchmarking, assessing our performance relative to communities with which we compete for jobs and workers: Coweta County (Newnan), Floyd County (Rome), and Hall County (Gainesville), as well as the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta metropolitan area and the United States. This assessment identified the issues and challenges to overcome as a community working collaboratively to advance economic development, and the strengths and assets we can leverage in doing so.¹

CONCERNS & ISSUES TO ADDRESS

- **Workforce quality:** adult educational attainment, relative lack of improvement
- **Business/financial services workforce:** lack of jobs, Great Recession impact
- **Labor shed for sites distant from I-20:** relatively uncompetitive labor access
- **Infrastructure:** broadband, water/sewer, public transportation, corridors (and their beautification)
- **Sites and buildings:** lack of ready-to-go sites and buildings, risk aversion, topography
- **Incomes and poverty:** comparatively low PCI, high poverty, inequitable growth
- **Housing:** options, quality/age, demand outpacing supply
- **Quality of place:** family activities, appeal to young adults, retail and restaurant choices
- **Future leadership:** engaging the next generation at community & organizational levels
- **Aligning community vision:** divergent perspectives by generation/geography

STRENGTHS & ASSETS TO LEVERAGE

- **Workforce sustainability:** favorable in-migration and age composition
- **Production workforce:** manufacturing strength and continued growth
- **Labor shed for sites along I-20:** tremendous access to labor
- **Education system:** K-12 student outcomes, higher education/training access
- **Recreation and trails:** Carrollton GreenBelt; outdoor recreation
- **Commute times:** 3rd lowest among 29 Metro Atlanta counties
- **Current leadership:** relationships, partnerships, regional status
- **Community capacity:** philanthropy, nonprofit capacity, health care system

¹ The full Community Assessment inclusive of competitive benchmarking and survey results is available upon request from Carroll Tomorrow.

Strategic Plan: Ten Priorities (2021 – 2025)

The research and input collected in the strategic planning process and reviewed in the Community Assessment have resulted in a set of **ten strategic priorities**. Each strategic priority is guided and supported by a primary **objective** to guide the ongoing refinement of tactics; a **statement of opportunity** that helps articulate “why” this is a strategic priority; a set of **potential initiatives and investments** that may help us achieve our objective, and; a set of **outcomes** by which we’ll measure our progress. Objectives will guide the annual refinement of potential investment and initiatives (see Implementation Guidelines). In this regard, the Strategic Plan is not a static set of prescriptive recommendations; rather, it is a framework that enables flexibility and responsiveness in our efforts to support economic growth.

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|--------------------------|---|--|
| Economic
Development |  | 1. Preparing Industrial Sites & Buildings |
| |  | 2. Recruiting New Corporate Investment |
| |  | 3. Supporting Existing Business Resilience |
| |  | 4. Modernizing Small Business Assistance |
| Workforce
Improvement |  | 5. Encouraging Educational Excellence |
| |  | 6. Developing a Leadership Pipeline |
| |  | 7. Attracting Talent & Promoting Place |
| Asset
Enhancement |  | 8. Enhancing Recreational Appeal |
| |  | 9. Facilitating Broadband Deployment |
| |  | 10. Enabling Housing Choices |

1. Preparing Industrial Sites & Buildings

Our Objective

Aid our community's commitment to compete for economic development projects by helping public and private partners bring new sites and buildings to market.

Our Opportunity

In recent years, access to skilled labor has risen to the top of the factors influencing corporate location decisions. When combined with a favorable business climate, competitive infrastructure, and a wealth of related assets, it is no surprise that Metro Atlanta and the State of Georgia are among the most competitive regions and states for new economic development projects. Within that region, the competition is fierce. Our peers have been aggressive in their efforts to bring new economic development product – ready-to-go sites and buildings – to market. Some have invested considerable public dollars in land holdings, infrastructure provision, and business park development; others have used development authority powers, public-private partnerships, and purely private approaches to site preparation and/or speculative building development. A failure to invest in economic development product leaves Carroll County and its communities in a position where it can rarely compete for impactful projects. But the opportunity facing the community is immense: sites located in close proximity to Interstate 20 afford prospective employers with some of the strongest labor market access among suburban and exurban communities in Metro Atlanta, with a workforce and population that is nearly 2.5 times larger than that which can be accessed from a site located just a few miles off the interstate. Absent ready-to-go sites and buildings, Carroll County will continue to miss out on opportunities to provide quality jobs for its residents.

Potential Initiatives & Investments

- ✓ Regularly convene public partners to identify high-priority sites and associated infrastructure needs
- ✓ Regularly convene private partners (i.e. developers) to evaluate development opportunities
- ✓ Aid alignment of local government Comprehensive Plans with site-specific opportunities and needs
- ✓ Secure commitments to procure new resources (e.g. SPLOST, TADs) supporting site preparation
- ✓ Help assemble a new Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) certified industrial site
- ✓ Strengthen the inventory of marketable new or existing buildings of 50,000–100,000 square feet
- ✓ Integrate a compelling GIS system into the Carroll Tomorrow website to market available properties
- ✓ Evaluate opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation through the Greater West Georgia JDA
- ✓ Provide microgrants to help public and private partners initiate site evaluations or relevant studies
- ✓ Help partners pursue external funds (e.g. ARC, DCA grants) for site prep/infrastructure provision

Measuring Progress

- ✓ Number and acreage of marketable new industrial sites
- ✓ Number and square footage of available, marketable buildings

2. Recruiting New Corporate Investment

Our Objective

Attract new jobs and corporate investments that align with residents' skills, accelerate incomes, and support our community's economic diversity and prosperity.

Our Opportunity

Carroll County has flourished as a destination for residents and workers on the periphery of an ever-expanding metropolitan area. And it has developed an enviable reputation for thriving, homegrown industry. But relative to some of its regional peers, the community has yet to fully seize the opportunities associated with corporate recruitment. As previously discussed, the county's peers around the region and state have invested heavily in the preparation of new industrial sites and buildings that afford prospective companies with the ability to start operations quickly. This relative advantage with respect to available "product" has resulted in greater success – and greater return on investment – associated with their community's targeted corporate recruitment efforts. With a renewed commitment to create more marketable economic development product, the community can and should invest more heavily in corporate attraction efforts that seek to bring new jobs to the county which align with the skills of our resident workforce. The community needs to move fast in terms of product development and corporate attraction efforts in order to seize new opportunities that have emerged in a post-COVID environment, including but not limited to: relocation of corporate headquarters and other operations from high-cost, high-regulation states such as California and New York; reshoring of pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and other "essential" supplies; reshoring of production operations to promote supply chain resilience, and; the proliferation of ecommerce and logistics centers supporting changing consumer preferences and buying habits, among other opportunities.

Potential Initiatives & Investments

- ✓ Develop a new website for Carroll Tomorrow that effectively promotes our community and economy
- ✓ Host virtual meetings consultants and brokers to maintain relationships during the pandemic
- ✓ Build a virtual familiarization and site tour program to showcase properties using new technology
- ✓ Use new media and technology (e.g. drone video) to capture and effectively market properties
- ✓ Solicit commitments from partners to provide sensible economic incentives to high-ROI projects
- ✓ Develop a signature inbound event to feature new "product" and community assets to partners
- ✓ Consistently attend industry events that strengthen relationships with decision-makers
- ✓ Work with existing employers to map supply chains and identify potential recruitment prospects
- ✓ Implement a narrow, targeted international recruitment effort derived from existing relationships
- ✓ Conduct a limited number of out-of-market visits to meet with leadership of identified prospects

Measuring Progress

- ✓ Number of prospects or leads generated or received
- ✓ Number of projects and associated jobs, investment, and wages

3. Supporting Existing Business Resilience

Our Objective

Solidify our reputation as a place defined by homegrown industry and our status as a pioneer of business and education partnerships.

Our Opportunity

A variety of studies have demonstrated that expansions of existing businesses represent between 60 percent to upwards of 90 percent of a region's job creation. But when existing employers face challenges, a layoff event or business closure can be devastating to a community and surrounding businesses. No community can control external factors or global trends affecting their business community. However, they can control the way that they proactively support the resilience of their employers. Communities that are proactive with respect to business retention and expansion are less likely to find themselves in unfortunate situations requiring reaction to an unforeseen event and are more likely to prevent issues before they emerge. Carroll County has built a reputation as a community where homegrown industry thrives and prospers, due in large part to effective partnerships between business and education. The opportunity that presents itself is to solidify this reputation, provide a sustainable structure to our efforts, and leverage this strength to support our community's economic development. Furthermore, we have an opportunity to leverage the information gleaned from existing business outreach to support our transition to a more strategic organization that adjusts initiatives and investments, and the tactics supporting them, on an annual basis (see implementation Guidelines).

Potential Initiatives & Investments

- ✓ Formalize a Rapid Response Team (RRT) of staff from key partners that can help address issues
- ✓ Draft a memorandum of understanding or statement of commitment from RRT partners
- ✓ Acquire customer relationship management (CRM) software to maintain and sustain relationships
- ✓ Leverage the Industry Leaders Council to expand outreach to smaller and medium-sized employers
- ✓ Dedicate staff resources to support breadth and depth in existing business outreach efforts
- ✓ Formalize a virtual outreach approach to augment in-person visits and maximize touch points
- ✓ Utilize digital and social platforms (inc. paid ads) to educate businesses and invite participation
- ✓ Produce and disseminate valuable information on the community's economic and labor conditions
- ✓ Challenge employers to "Keep it in Carroll" and identify one local alternative to a non-local supplier

Measuring Progress

- ✓ Number of existing business expansions and associated jobs, investment, and wages
- ✓ Case studies and individual business success stories

4. Modernizing Small Business Assistance

Our Objective

Sustain our legacy of entrepreneurial support by enabling the next generation of small business owners with a next generation entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Our Opportunity

Carroll County's legacy as a community that supports entrepreneurship has been buttressed by a tremendous gift to the community – the Burson Center – that has supported and incubated numerous small businesses since opening its doors in 2006. Now, nearly fifteen years later, it is incumbent upon Carroll Tomorrow to ensure that this is a gift that keeps on giving; that it continues to generate a positive return on investment and effectively influences the community's entrepreneurial potential and economic development. This is the opportunity that presents itself: to modernize the community's facilities and approaches supporting entrepreneurship in support of current and future generations. Through careful and considerate dialogue with our partners and investors, Carroll Tomorrow can evaluate a variety of ways in which an immense asset (physical and financial) such as the Burson Center can be leveraged, redeveloped, or otherwise repositioned to enable a modern set of programs and facilities and/or support other strategic priorities and programmatic opportunities.

Potential Initiatives & Investments

- ✓ Formalize a set of support services that provide a value proposition beyond free or low-cost space
- ✓ Acquire and share market research tools that are otherwise cost-prohibitive for small businesses
- ✓ Identify entrepreneurs with growth objectives in traded sectors, and target services appropriately
- ✓ Consider reinvesting in new physical space located in a more vibrant location of the county
- ✓ Maintain a peer mentorship network to leverage the community's existing entrepreneurial expertise
- ✓ Solicit commitments from employers and their executives to volunteer time as mentors and advisors
- ✓ Work with state partners in entrepreneurship to provide regular programming to Carroll County
- ✓ Support membership in regional and state entrepreneurial networks and organizations

Measuring Progress

- ✓ Number of assisted entrepreneurs and small businesses, associated revenue and job growth
- ✓ Development of modernized facilities

5. Encouraging Educational Excellence

Our Objective

Help align community resources to support enrollment, enlistment, and employment.

Our Opportunity

As a community that strives to provide a well-educated workforce for our employers, we have work to do; the data clearly illustrates that our community is at a disadvantage with respect to the share of its population with a college degree or industry-recognized credential. But as a community that strives to improve student outcomes and reduce disparities in these outcomes, we have an incredible story to tell; the data illustrate that we have made remarkable progress in elevating graduation rates and eliminating disparities. And it is evident from the business and resident input that our community's public education systems and institutions of higher education are assets which many peer communities are not afforded. With the understanding that educational attainment is the single greatest predictor of lifelong earning potential, we have an opportunity to double-down on the secret to our recent success: partnerships. Through collaboration and shared commitment, we have established goals in the past and we have achieved them. We can do it again. The opportunity that presents itself is the pursuit of excellence. Imagine the pride emanating from a community of students, parents, educators, employers, and institutions, all united in their collective commitment and shared responsibility to achieve something extraordinary: an objective to support every student and their attainment of one of the "three Es": enrolled in college, enlisted in service, or employed in a career.

Potential Initiatives & Investments

- ✓ Work with the Carroll County Education Collaborative to advance the "Three E" model
- ✓ Work with Partners Advancing Student Success (PASS) to identify relevant, scalable student services
- ✓ Challenge and/or incentivize employers to develop paid apprenticeships and internships
- ✓ Plan a series of exclusive job fairs for high school graduates seeking a direct path to employment
- ✓ Launch a new program pairing college students with high school students for college advising
- ✓ Help educational partners secure resources for dedicated college and career counseling capacity
- ✓ Organize a volunteer-led effort to help families with FAFSA applications (Financial Aid Saturdays)
- ✓ Organize a volunteer-led dropout prevention and intervention effort (Reach Out to Dropouts)

Measuring Progress

- ✓ Graduation rate, by district
- ✓ Enrollment, enlistment, and employment rates for graduation classes, by district

6. Developing a Leadership Pipeline

Our Objective

Provide new leadership and engagement opportunities for young people to ensure that our community's collaborative leadership capacity is sustained.

Our Opportunity

Throughout the input process, community members were quick to note that Carroll County and its economic development efforts have benefited from strong organizational and business leadership. Many were equally quick to highlight their concern that the community seems to lack a strong pipeline of emerging and engaged young leaders. They worry that that this asset – the community's leadership and in particular, its desire to collaborate for countywide benefit – could erode without intentional effort to cultivate that pipeline. They recognize that leadership impacts and influences everything from governing to entrepreneurship, from organizational effectiveness to corporate competitiveness. As a community, we have an opportunity to engender greater attachment among future generations to our community and its institutions. Absent this intentionality, we may wake up to a community characterized by apathy and guided by a lack of foresight.

Potential Initiatives & Investments

- ✓ Launch a new emerging leadership development program in partnership with the Fanning Institute
- ✓ Seek commitments from Carroll Tomorrow investors to sponsor emerging leaders
- ✓ Seek commitments from employers to identify rising leaders and promote community engagement
- ✓ Challenge nonprofit partners to educate boards on the importance of emerging leader inclusion
- ✓ Develop a nonprofit board service training program to complement the emerging leadership program
- ✓ Engage emerging leaders in collaborative planning and implementation (see Imp. Guidelines)
- ✓ Provide microgrants to emerging leaders with ideas that could positively impact the community
- ✓ Develop new mechanisms to recognize and celebrate examples of young, emerging leadership

Measuring Progress

- ✓ Placement of emerging leadership program participants in community leadership positions

7. Attracting Talent & Promoting Place

Our Objective

Promote the exceptional attributes of our community to ensure that we effectively attract new residents and workers that can support the needs of employers.

Our Opportunity

The Community Assessment revealed that our residents are, by and large, proud to call Carroll County home; they are relatively strong “net promoters” of our community, they value the quality of our education systems and their sense of public safety, and they appreciate the balance of urban amenities and rural attributes that characterize our landscape. And the data shows that we are effectively attracting new residents; outside of recessions when mobility is depressed, we are a strong attractor of net new residents from other parts of the country. But we are located in a remarkably competitive region, one that is growing every day and presenting an ever-competitive set of choices to our existing and prospective future residents. The communities that contain these choices are investing heavily in brand identity and marketing that identity to prospective workers. As we continue to enhance our quality of life offerings – particularly the envisioning of a grander Greenbelt (see next priority) – and seek to effectively compete for top talent in Metro Atlanta, we will need to invest in our brand and tell our story more aggressively. While countless communities are currently saturating the national market with redundant messages pursuing prospective remote worker relocation, the opportunity that presents itself to Carroll County is one that requires patience. Rather than compete in this sea of sameness at a time when household mobility is depressed, we will sensibly preserve monies to deploy an aggressive talent attraction campaign once the market is less saturated, household mobility returns, and we have new stories to tell (e.g. GreenBelt activation). In the meantime, we will focus on cultivating greater pride in place among our best salespeople: existing residents.

Potential Initiatives & Investments

- ✓ Develop a community brand with partners that gains widespread adoption and strengthens pride
- ✓ Launch an internal marketing campaign to deploy the community brand and promote pride
- ✓ Engage emerging leaders in brand and campaign development to secure buy-in and relevance
- ✓ Retain media relations assistance to gain placements in major publications and media channels
- ✓ Build a targeted external campaign focused on raising awareness of the GreenBelt in Metro Atlanta
- ✓ Conduct a perceptions audit: survey Metro Atlanta residents to gauge perceptions and inform efforts
- ✓ Engage state and regional partners: align with resource expenditure supporting talent attraction
- ✓ Measure self-promotion: track changes in our net promoter score among residents over time

Measuring Progress

- ✓ Annual levels of net migration
- ✓ In-migrant attributes (age, educational attainment, incomes)
- ✓ Net promoter score

8. Enhancing Recreational Appeal

Our Objective

Help our partners develop and realize visions to activate recreational amenities and enhance their appeal to future generations.

Our Opportunity

From planned trail development in Villa Rica to the Carrollton GreenBelt to Chattahoochee River, Carroll County has an abundance of recreational opportunities upon which to build. Communities across the country are in constant pursuit of differentiating recreational amenities that put their community “on the map” and which strengthen their appeal to current and future generations. In nearby Uptown Columbus, the development of urban whitewater rapids and riverfront development helped activate the Chattahoochee and support the community’s business and talent retention efforts. Meanwhile, the Atlanta BeltLine has become an unrivaled regional amenity in metro Atlanta that defines the city’s appeal to future generations. The BeltLine’s success is defined not by its infrastructure (there are only six miles of paved trail along the 33-mile path, and the vision of light rail has yet to be realized) but rather, it is defined by its adjacent development, activation, and influence on placemaking. The Carrollton GreenBelt has this potential and more. With 18 miles of paved, shared-use trail connecting neighborhoods throughout the community, the GreenBelt is a sleeping giant that deserves awakening. It possesses the infrastructure that the BeltLine lacks but lacks the vision and induced development that have come to characterize the BeltLine. Imagine a GreenBelt that helps focus sensible, mixed-use developments in key nodes, providing amenities that will attract and retain the next generation of families and workers, with restaurants and shopping facing the GreenBelt. Imagine a trail system in Villa Rica lined with an additional layer of vital infrastructure: free wi-fi enabled by public-private partnership. The opportunities are clear and immense: establish visions to further activate our recreational assets and transform them into truly differentiating and defining amenities.

Potential Initiatives & Investments

- ✓ Convene partners and secure buy-in for processes to envision recreational activation
- ✓ Solicit proposals from qualified firms to help define visions and craft plans
- ✓ Work with partners to enable new funding mechanisms to advance recreational activation
- ✓ Evaluate public-private opportunities to enable free public wi-fi along trails and in public parks
- ✓ Evaluate the viability of enhancing infrastructure and placemaking through tax increment financing
- ✓ Evaluate the viability of incorporating an authority as TIF administrator to support activation(s)
- ✓ Identify and inventory attractive redevelopment opportunities adjacent to recreational amenities
- ✓ Conduct inter-city visits to other communities to study the development and activation of recreation

Measuring Progress

- ✓ Number of new housing units (single-family and multi-family) in recreation-adjacent property
- ✓ Number of new restaurants and retail establishments in recreation-adjacent property

9. Facilitating Broadband Deployment

Our Objective

Work with partners to identify gaps in service, provide infrastructure to underserved areas, and develop plans that support our long-term economic competitiveness.

Our Opportunity

As each day passes, the importance of broadband internet to everyday life and work expands. This reality was reinforced by survey participants who evaluated broadband infrastructure as the most important yet least competitive attribute of the community's business climate. Carroll County is not alone in confronting this challenge to efficiently yet swiftly provide the infrastructure that twenty-first century economies have demand for two decades. The challenges born from inadequate access have and will continue to accelerate as business and production processes are increasingly digitalized, employers are increasingly engaged in remote work, and students frequently require reliable internet connections to effectively participate in the public education system. And so, our opportunity is perhaps better characterized as imperative: a failure to enable adequate broadband access will cost our residents and employers tremendous individual and collective opportunities. There is perhaps no greater issue confronting Carroll County or its local economy. It begs the question: what is economic development if businesses and residents cannot effectively participate in and access that economy; what is educational attainment if students cannot reasonably participate in and access that education?

Potential Initiatives & Investments

- ✓ Support timely implementation of planned expansions that fill gaps (e.g. Carroll EMC/SyncGlobal)
- ✓ Bring public and private partners together to identify incentives or joint ventures that aid expansion
- ✓ Help partners pursue available funds to aid expansion plans that fill immediate gaps
- ✓ Work with partners to unite plans and establish a long-term vision for broadband competitiveness
- ✓ Identify new partnership and funding opportunities to aid expansion (e.g. Microsoft TechSpark)
- ✓ Evaluate opportunities to enable free wireless access along the Greenbelt (and other public places)
- ✓ Help partners evaluate and launch a library- or school-based mobile hotspot lending program
- ✓ Study best practices from other communities and help focus peer-learning (i.e. inter-city visits)

Measuring Progress

- ✓ Percentage of households with internet access
- ✓ Percentage of households with fiber connection

10. Enabling Urban & Rural Choices

Our Objective

Work with partners to secure sensible new housing and retail development that provides our residents with necessary choices in urban attributes and rural settings.

Our Opportunity

Throughout the input process it was evident that residents and businesses were dissatisfied with two primary attributes of the community's quality of life: the availability of housing choices and the availability of retail and restaurant options. The data validated their perceptions that the market can support additional development; permitting activity, the age of our housing stock, and the vacancy rate in our single-family and multi-family housing all indicate that we have failed to supply housing at a rate to keep pace with demand. Similarly, the data illustrate that our residents are leaving the community for specific retail and food choices, taking their expenditure and tax dollars to neighboring communities. The opportunity facing Carroll County is simple: enable environments and conditions that can entice attractive and sensible new housing and retail developments. More importantly, the opportunity is to do so in a manner that affords the access to urban amenities which many younger workers desire while preserving the rural character that defines "home" for so many existing residents. By focusing development within key nodes and along key corridors, we can preserve character in parts of our county while enabling choices that current and future generations want and need.

Potential Initiatives & Investments

- ✓ Help partners identify the highest-value infill, redevelopment, and greenfield opportunities
- ✓ Develop a program to expose residential developers to identified opportunities
- ✓ Compile market research and local plans (e.g. sewer) that help demonstrate housing opportunity
- ✓ Help partners identify and advance plans to establish tax allocation districts to spur development
- ✓ Help development authorities evaluate opportunities to guide and incentivize desired development
- ✓ Support efforts to beautify key centers, corridors, and gateways to the community
- ✓ Aid local governments with comprehensive planning for new housing choices and mixed-uses

Measuring Progress

- ✓ Housing permits issued, single-family and multi-family
- ✓ Housing vacancy rate, rental
- ✓ Number of retail establishments per capita and revenue per capita

Implementation Guidelines

The Strategic Plan outlined herein provides a framework for Carroll Tomorrow's strategic initiatives supporting economic development from 2021 – 2025. As a framework, the Strategic Plan is intended to guide Carroll Tomorrow's investments without prescribing tactics for a five-year period. In this regard, it intends to recognize that organizations must be increasingly flexible and responsive in their daily operations, reacting to sudden challenges and new opportunities as they present themselves. But organizations cannot leave strategic thinking and subsequent action up to chance; they must be deliberate in enabling an intentional process to think and act strategically as organization. These Implementation Guidelines help detail the ways in Carroll Tomorrow, its partners, and its investors can operationalize and update this Strategic Plan on an annual basis, providing structure and order to its efforts to remain nimble and flexible. In doing so, Carroll Tomorrow will nurture its evolution and cement its status as a strategic catalyst for change in Carroll County.

The Carroll Collaboratory



Throughout the input process, stakeholders repeatedly emphasized that one of Carroll Tomorrow's greatest strengths is its ability to effectively convene leadership and partners to engender collaboration and advance partnerships that can help confront the community's most pressing issues. This is a role and reputation that must be leveraged; many peer economic development organizations would envy the level of trust that Carroll Tomorrow has earned in the community. This Strategic Plan recognizes that unique role and attempts to leverage it through the establishment of a fundamental new program that provides structure to Carroll Tomorrow's efforts to collaboratively influence the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan: **the Carroll Collaboratory**.

The Collaboratory (or the CoLab) is envisioned as a program, and potentially a physical space, whereby Carroll Tomorrow proactively and regularly convenes partners to advance collaborative solutions to strategic priorities. Specifically, the Collaboratory fills a role as community incubator, nurturing new partnerships and enabling new capacity by "spinning off" new initiatives, public-private partnerships, or other endeavors. In practice, the Collaboratory would convene partners around specific strategic priorities once a year, devoting resources to support the study and development of plans related to the issue or priority in question. CoLabs could also be convened as needed and dissolve when their work is accomplished, with the goal of each CoLab being the production of a core deliverable (e.g. a study, a plan) and/or the incubation of new capacity. For example, partners could be convened in a CoLab that seeks to establish a new vision for the Greenbelt or a comprehensive long-range broadband plan. Historical efforts in the community also provide perspective; the Collaboratory is a place where the need for collaborative capacity such as the Carroll County Education Collaborative or Partners Advancing Student Success (PASS) could have been identified and subsequently incubated. It is not simply a community "think tank" but rather, it is an incubator of solutions.

The Collaboratory is the means by which Carroll Tomorrow can maintain and strengthen its trusted role as a convener and catalyst in the community. It delivers value to partners from all sectors by providing the community with a strategic resource to keep its collective priorities aligned. And it provides a forum and a structure for our community to more regularly and intentionally convene to affect positive change.

Operationalizing the Strategic Plan



To promote flexibility and responsiveness, Carroll Tomorrow should also undertake a process to operationalize the Strategic Plan each year. Specifically, it should implement a process whereby the Plan’s strategic priorities, and corresponding potential initiatives and investments, are translated into an annual work plan for the organization and its staff.

Through this process, Carroll Tomorrow would ensure that the organization and its Strategic Plan stays relevant and responsive, revisiting our strategic thinking more frequently than in five-year increments.

In practice, operationalizing the Strategic Plan – planning for the upcoming year – should take place in the fourth quarter of the preceding year. The process would commence with annual board and staff planning retreats: highly-focused two-hour or half-day sessions that solicit feedback related to our strategic priorities in order to refine our tactical approaches and program of work for the coming year. Following these retreats, staff would be tasked with developing a concise annual work plan, detailing the tactics and activities that will be pursued in the coming year to support each priority. This process will be aligned with annual budgeting, resulting in a work plan for the upcoming year that is supportive of the Strategic Plan, reflected in our budget, and considerate of board input. The resulting program of work, and a record of accomplishments from the previous year, can appropriately be communicated to partners and investors by way of publications (annual reports) and events (annual meetings) at the end of each year.

Organizational Resources



Carroll Tomorrow has a strong legacy of effectively resourcing its Strategic Plans through public-private investment in the community’s economic development. This Strategic Plan will, not surprisingly, necessitate heightened investment to support its implementation.

It calls for new services and initiatives that will require additional financial resources (e.g. talent attraction campaign), but more importantly, it will require additional staff resources to effectively implement. Relationships lie at the core of effective economic development service delivery; high-quality economic development programs are inherently labor-intensive, and best practice organizations recognize the need to invest in high-quality professional capacity. Carroll Tomorrow is no different; the enablement of adequate staff capacity is critical to success, particularly in a community where there is an expectation of partnership. Carroll County can look no further than Gainesville and Hall County; the community’s strategic land acquisition and site preparation has been complemented by investment in necessary economic development staff to support project activity. In a region with abundant opportunity yet immense competition, *status quo investment will maintain status quo outcomes*.

The table that follows illustrates the targeted expenditure levels associated with the current (2016 – 2020) Advantage Carroll Strategic Plan.

Goal	Annual Budget	Five-Year Total
Economic Development	\$400,000	\$2,000,000
Workforce Education & Development	\$160,000	\$800,000
Community Development	\$120,000	\$600,000
Leadership Development	\$80,000	\$400,000
Total	\$760,000	\$3,800,000

The Planning Committee provided feedback via meeting discussion, calls and emails, and survey response to help define priorities and determine appropriate distribution of organizational resources associated with potential Plan investments.

The table that follows illustrates the recommended expenditure levels associated with this Strategic Plan.

Goal	Annual Budget	Five-Year Total
Economic Development	\$550,000	\$2,750,000
Workforce Improvement	\$250,000	\$1,250,000
Asset Enhancement	\$100,000	\$500,000
Total	\$900,000	\$4,500,000

New resources are needed to support the addition of at least **one new full-time staff member at Carroll Tomorrow – a Project Manager** – to support program development and implementation, project activity, and service delivery. Additionally, new resources are needed to support potential expenditures recommended in the Plan (e.g. talent attraction campaign, mini planning grants to support Asset Enhancement). For the purposes of budgeting and fundraising, it has been assumed that existing operations are maintained; any savings gained from operational changes will be considered supplemental, and appropriately reinvested in the organization and fulfillment of its mission.

The recommended financial resources required to support the Strategic Plan will be evaluated through an additional set of interviews conducted by POWER 10 to evaluate the viability of the Plan and feasibility of securing recommended funds necessary to support its implementation.

Performance Measurement



A set of potential performance metrics are outlined throughout this Strategic Plan in relation to each strategic priority and the outcomes they seek to influence. Rather than establish specific measurable goals for each metric – goals that can be impacted by external factors and exogenous shocks that we do not control (e.g. recessions, pandemics, natural disasters) – Carroll Tomorrow can continue measure its performance and strategic outcomes relative to a set of peer communities, Metro Atlanta, and the United States as a whole. In doing so, Carroll Tomorrow and the community will have the appropriate context to measure performance and relative competitiveness.

A new digital dashboard can be integrated into the Carroll Tomorrow website to provide regular monitoring and progress towards key outcomes that relate to our strategic priorities and reflect our competitiveness.