

County making progress on strategic focus area goals

By Hector Flores

Staff presented reports to the County Commission on progress implementing its strategic plan at a board workshop Tuesday. The strategic plan gets reviewed every other year as part of the two-year budget process.

The plan has four focus areas: public services, economic and community development, infrastructure and efficient and effective government. In public services, the goal is to maintain a safe and healthy community by delivering essential services from skilled, professional and dedicated public servants. In economic and community development, we aim to create a business climate that promotes a diversified, growing economy consistent with sustainable growth management plans, environmental stewardship and enhanced quality of life. For infrastructure, we strive to build and maintain countywide infrastructure that meets our evolving needs and enhances our community appearance, improves public safety and protects our natural resources. The goal of the efficient and effective government focus area is to manage fiscally sound county operations with a culture of transparency, accountability, citizen engagement and innovation.

All of the focus areas are driven by the county's mission, vision and values. The mission is to deliver exceptional service. The vision is to preserve and protect our community's quality of life for those who live, work and play in our paradise. Our values are embodied in the phrase Charlotte CARES, which stands for committed, accountable, resourceful, energetic and supportive.

Success in the focus areas is measured by progress made to meet numerous bold goals set by the commission. In economic and community development, a bold goal is developing more affordable housing. The board adopted the Charlotte HOME policy that awards incentives such as expedited permitting, impact fee waivers, utility and other fee subsidies, and removes barriers to building affordable housing. It also created and invested in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which currently has a \$2.3 million balance to support affordable housing initiatives.

The One Charlotte, One Water plan's goal is conduct ongoing water quality testing and identify area where measures can be taken to improve water quality. It provides live reports on water quality on the county website at www.charlottecountyfl.gov/one-charlotte-one-water/. The draft version of the long-range One Charlotte, One Water plan will be released this summer for public review and comment and be adopted before the end of the year.

The workforce development goal is to create internships and forge relationships with local high schools and colleges to educate students about opportunities in public service careers. In 2024, our Human Resources Department has exceeded its internship goal by 50%. The department also held an internship event at Charlotte Technical College, participated in numerous student

job fairs and developed a pilot HVAC internship program between CTC and the Facilities Department.

Space prevents me from covering the remaining three focus areas this week, but I will report on them in my column next week. To view the progress made in those areas, visit www.charlottecountyfl.gov/agendas/ and click the May 21 Strategic Focus Area Updates link to see the PowerPoint presentation.

Readers may reach County Administrator Hector Flores at Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.