

**MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC VISION/GOALS WORK SESSION OF THE  
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH RICHLAND HILLS, TEXAS,  
HELD AT CITY HALL, COMMUNITY ROOM  
4301 CITY POINT DRIVE  
JULY 11-12, 2024**

Present:	Jack McCarty	Mayor
	Tito Rodriguez	Place 1
	Ricky Rodriguez	Associate Mayor Pro Tem, Place 2
	Suzy Compton	Place 3
	Matt Blake	Place 4
	Blake Vaughn	Deputy Mayor Pro Tem, Place 5
	Russ Mitchell	Place 6
	Kelvin Deupree	Mayor Pro Tem, Place 7
Staff Members:	Paulette Hartman	City Manager
	Trudy Lewis	Assistant City Manager
	Caroline Waggoner	Assistant City Manager
	Alicia Richardson	City Secretary/Chief Governance Officer
	Mary Peters	Communications Director
	Billy Owens	Assistant to the City Manager

The City Council met on July 11, 2024 beginning at 8:30 a.m. and concluded on July 12, 2024 for the purpose of reviewing and setting goals, objectives and strategies. Mr. Randy Pennington, Pennington Performance Group, was the facilitator for the work session.

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor McCarty called the work session to order July 11, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. with the City Council and staff present as recorded. Mayor McCarty and City Manager Paulette Hartman gave opening remarks.

## **GROUND RULES AND LOGISTICS FOR SESSION**

Mr. Pennington informed City Council they would focus on policy issues, steps to move the city toward the City Council's vision for North Richland Hills, determine action on major issues facing the community, and guidance to staff regarding priorities, sense of urgency, accountability and follow-up timeframes. The final plan will reflect key action to move the City Council forward based on advancing that vision.

## **REVIEW AND DISCUSS CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION**

Mr. Pennington reviewed the results of the survey taken by City Council regarding the city's current goals. The responses to the survey questions were excellent, good, fair, poor and not sure.

<b>Targeted economic development: This goal focuses on attracting and retaining businesses and jobs to NRH. It includes attracting companies that provide higher-wage jobs, retaining current businesses, and strategic land use.</b>	<p>The results of the survey are mainly good with some indicating fair and poor and one excellent.</p> <p>The lower ratings are attributable to plans not being executed.</p>
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City Council discussed the appearance of the city being restrictive (ordinances) to businesses, the difference following the covid pandemic, attracting and keeping sustainable businesses, balance of revitalizing corridors and welcoming new businesses, and the shift in the city's demographics.

City Manager Paulette Hartman commented that the city must do a better job of telling our story and having one-on-one meetings with developers.

<b>Efficient and effective delivery of City services: This goal focuses on delivery of core services, maintaining city facilities and infrastructure, and promoting a culture of service that attracts/retains staff.</b>	<p>The results of the survey are mainly good with some indicating excellent and fair.</p>
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<b>Local and regional leadership: This goal focuses on NRH leaders being involved in and showing leadership on regional issues. It also includes being proactive with communication on legislative issues that affect the city.</b>	<p>The results of the survey are mainly excellent and good with some indicating fair. While there is a sense for the city to be involved in regional issues to serve as an influence for North Richland Hills, most cities do not have it listed in their goals.</p>
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<b>Should the current goals remain a focus moving forward.</b>	<p>The results of the survey indicate that safety and security, quality community development and revitalization, financial stability, sense of community and efficient and effective delivery of city services should be included in the future goals.</p> <p>While positive city image and targeted economic development were also identified as being in future goals, both received the response that it is “nice to have” rather than “have to have” as a goal.</p>
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	The results related to local regional leadership indicate that it should not be included as a goal.
<b>Safety and security: This goal focuses on keeping NRH safe. It included police, fire, and EMS readiness and response.</b>	The results of the survey are mainly good with some indicating excellent and fair.
<b>A sense of community: This goal focuses on activities that enhance the quality of life for NRH residents. It includes parks, recreation, trails, library, cultural arts, and promoting volunteerism across the community.</b>	The results of the survey are mainly excellent with some indicating good.
<b>Financial stability: This goal focuses on maintaining a stable, predictable revenue stream and tax rate. It also includes financial policies that maintain our bond rating.</b>	The results of the survey are excellent and good with some indicating fair.
<b>Quality community development and revitalization: This goal focuses on revitalizing residential neighborhoods and commercial centers as well as code enforcement.</b>	The results of the survey are mainly fair with some indicating good and excellent.
<b>Positive city image: This goal focuses on maintaining positive communication flow with citizens, promoting NRH across the region, sharing city successes, and providing a welcoming experience to new residents.</b>	The results of the survey are mainly good with some indicating excellent, fair, and poor.

Mayor McCarty recessed the meeting at 10:01 a.m.

Mayor McCarty reconvened the meeting at 10:16, with the same members present excluding Council members Rodriguez and Mitchell.

Mr. Pennington reviewed comments as the result of his one-on-one conversations with City Council.

The following are wins that make City Council proud of North Richland Hills.

Overall sense of community, it is a mid-sized city but still feels like a small town	North Richland Hills feels safe.	TexRail and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and developments around the Iron Horse Station and soon to be around the Smithfield Station.
Larger plots of land within the city with a country look.	Our growth has been good, and the city has a good reputation for working with bigger cities.	City staff in most cases cordial and represent our city well.
Library and NRH Centre.	Parks and trail system.	Economic development gains: City Point Development, Peppa Pig, new dining opportunities.
Focus parks and recreation department on making this a great place for raising families.	Quality of life events presented by the parks department and the library to residents of all ages.	High-quality city facilities.
City-wide communication.	It's a place where, when you grow up in North Richland Hills, you want to stay in North Richland Hills.	

City Council discussed how communication with the community has evolved over the years. The expectation of being considered responsive varies for different generations.

Council members Mitchell and Rodriguez present at 10:22 a.m.

The following areas are where the City Council believes the city has missed the mark.

Street maintenance	We need to consider a revitalization group made up of folks in part from those areas in need of revitalization.	Code enforcement: there are still areas of the city that need to be addressed.
Not the fault of the city, businesses that are past deadline for opening.	Police department hires and retention.	Driving efficiency needs to be a priority.
Auditing codes and permitting regulations.	Restaurants and entertainment.	Over build of apartments instead and family focused living.

Hotels - still waiting for construction.	More focus attention on deteriorating parks.	Revitalization, redevelopment in some of our older areas of North Richland Hills.
Not able to pull in more mid to upscale dining.	Speeding traffic and red-light runners.	South side redevelopment has been a focus but isn't proceeding as quickly as planned.
Attracting new business, especially restaurants.	Failed to remove burdens stifling economic development.	Lack of transparency into staff culture.
Inclusiveness	Communication	Building affordable single-family homes.
Misplaced priorities seem to be focused on career enhancement rather than citizen priorities.		

Mr. Pennington's observations from his interviews are that no one on the City Council believes the city is completely broken, and everyone wants to contribute to its success. Coming off the campaign, it may be a little challenging at first to work as a team. The City Council must decide if it is going to operate as a team or a group of individuals who respectfully work together while representing their constituents' views.

## **REVIEWED ROLES OF COUNCIL AND STAFF**

Mr. Pennington and City Council discussed team and individual approaches as they relate to City Council and staff. Mr. Pennington and Ms. Hartman discussed the concern from staff's perspective. Ms. Hartman commented that fear of change is natural, and that staff is managing and embracing the change.

Mr. Pennington shared that the team of North Richland Hills is comprised of City Council who sets the direction and policies. The leadership (city manager) steers the boat and staff drives the boat. He commented that City Council needs to be okay with staff driving. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Vaughn stated that he welcomes feedback and information from staff. The information provided to elected officials allows them to make decisions. It is not staff's position to get involved in politics.

Mr. Pennington discussed the five categories of trust (1) character, (2) competence, (3) consistency, (4) communication, and (5) courage. Mr. Pennington asked City Council to discuss their level of trust with members of City Council on a scale of 1-10. The majority rated their trust level in the 8-10 range.

Mayor McCarty recessed the meeting at 11:41 a.m.

Mayor McCarty reconvened the meeting at 12:10 p.m., with the same members present except Council member Rodriguez. Also in attendance for the afternoon were the following directors: Adrien Pekurney, Director of Parks and Recreation; Boe Blankenship, Director of Public Works; Cecilia Barham, Director of Library Services; Chase Fosse, Director of Budget and research; Clayton Comstock, Managing Director of Development Services; Craig Hulse, Director of Economic Development; Eric Von Schimmelmann, Director of Information Technology; Jay Patel, Director of Finance; Mike Young, Chief of Police; Patrick Hillis, Director of Human Resources; Rebecca Vinson, Municipal Court Administrator; Stan Tinney, Fire Chief; and Stefanie Martinez, Director of Neighborhood Services.

## **REVIEW AND DISCUSS CITY MISSION, VISION AND STRATEGIC GOALS**

Mr. Pennington reviewed the city's current mission statement.

*To ensure an exceptional quality of life and long-term viability of North Richland Hills through local leadership and regional cooperation.*

City Council discussed the current mission statement and its intended audience. They discussed the importance of the mission statement focusing accountability and the residents.

The consensus of City Council was to update the city's mission statement.

*To promote an exceptional quality of life for our community by being resident-focused, fiscally responsible, and business-friendly.*

Mr. Pennington reviewed the city's current vision statement.

*The City of Choice to live, work, and play.*

*A community for*

- *Quality neighborhoods (sustainable & revitalized)*
- *Exceptional family living and leisure activities*
- *Connection to great business and job opportunities*

Mr. Pennington and City Council discussed the current vision statement and values important to incorporate into the city's vision.

Mayor McCarty recessed the meeting at 1:38 p.m.

Mayor McCarty reconvened the meeting at 1:50 p.m.

The consensus of City Council was to update the city's vision statement.

*To be the standard for transparent, resident-focused, fiscally responsible, business-welcoming municipal government in Texas.*

Council member Rodriguez present at 2:45 p.m.

Mr. Pennington reviewed the city's current goals. He asked if the goals are still relevant or need to be modified.

- Goal #1: Quality Community Development and Revitalization
- Goal #2: Efficient and Effective Transportation Systems
- Goal #3: Safety & Security
- Goal #4: Financial Stability
- Goal #5: Positive City Image
- Goal #6: A Sense of Community
- Goal #7: Targeted Economic Development
- Goal #8: Local and Regional Leadership
- Goal #9: Efficient and Effective Delivery of City Services

The City Council discussed the current goals and the direction they want for the city and residents. They want the city to be known as business-friendly and resident-friendly. They discussed resident engagement, fiscal responsibility, and measurable metrics for goals. The consensus of City Council was to update the city's goals.

Mayor McCarty recessed the meeting at 3:44 p.m. and announced that the City Council would reconvene at 8:30 a.m. on Friday, July 12, 2024.

Mayor McCarty reconvened the work session at 8:30 a.m. on July 12, 2024, with the following members present.

Present:	Jack McCarty	Mayor
	Tito Rodriguez	Place 1
	Ricky Rodriguez	Associate Mayor Pro Tem, Place 2
	Suzy Compton	Place 3
	Matt Blake	Place 4
	Blake Vaughn	Deputy Mayor Pro Tem, Place 5
	Russ Mitchell	Place 6
	Kelvin Deupree	Mayor Pro Tem, Place 7
Staff Members:	Paulette Hartman	City Manager
	Trudy Lewis	Assistant City Manager
	Caroline Waggoner	Assistant City Manager
	Alicia Richardson	City Secretary/Chief Governance Officer
	Mary Peters	Communications Director
	Billy Owens	Assistant to the City Manager

Adrien Pekurney	Director of Parks and Recreation
Boe Blankenship	Director of Public Works
Cecilia Barham	Director of Library Services
Chase Fosse	Director of Budget and Research
Clayton Comstock	Managing Director of Development Services;
Craig Hulse	Director of Economic Development
Eric Von Schimmelmann	Director of Information Technology
Jay Patel	Director of Finance
Mike Young	Chief of Police
Patrick Hillis	Director of Human Resources
Rebecca Vinson	Municipal Court Administrator
Stan Tinney	Fire Chief
Stefanie Martinez	Director of Neighborhood Services.

Mr. Pennington reviewed City Council's discussion and consensus for the city's new mission and vision statement. Mr. Pennington also reviewed City Council's discussion regarding new goals for the city. He shared that he added safety, security, and infrastructure.

The consensus of City Council was to update the city's goals. City Council and staff discussed the new goals for the city.

*Drive operational excellence into every area.*

*Become easier to do business with.*

*Steward the public's money well.*

*Be a great place to work.*

*Revitalize neighborhood and commercial corridors.*

*Engage residents to enhance connection with the city and their neighbors.*

*Improve safety, security, and infrastructure every day.*

Mayor McCarty recessed the meeting at 9:39 a.m.

Mayor McCarty reconvened the meeting at 9:57 a.m.

City Council and staff broke into sessions to identify objectives to implement the newly created goals. City Council discussed and placed objectives in high, medium and low priority.

### **Goal: Drive operational excellence into every area**

High priority:

- Create and reinforce a continuous improvement mindset that seeks to drive efficiency and effectiveness into every area of the operation and make the best use of resources.



- Define and articulate expectations for performance and results. Set targets for efficiency and effectiveness that can be objectively measured and tracked. Implement measurement processes and tools.
- Provide continuous improvement tools and training that equip team members to measure and improve effectiveness and efficiency.
- Implement continuous improvement tools and techniques.

**Goal: Become easier to do business with.**

High priority:

- Break down walls/silos between departments
- Eliminate burdensome or outdated regulations.
- Create a process change advocate in every department.

Medium priority:

- Implement an incentive/recognition program for ideas that make us easier to do business with based on criteria such as:
  - Cost savings
  - Resource utilization
  - Productivity improvements
- Integrate innovative technology in every department to gather customer feedback and improve ease of doing business such as:
  - Self-service options for customers
  - Feedback with every interaction
    - Phone
    - In-person
    - Online

Low priority:

- Establish a customer service advocate for all customer interactions.

**Goal: Steward the public's money well.**

High priority:

- Continually improve financial policies and procedures based on best practices.
- Collaboratively develop a long-term financing strategy for capital needs (debt vs. pay-as-you-go).
- Maximize the benefit of public funds through effective cash flow management.
- Conduct targeted, credible efficiency audits of city operations with the goal of maintaining or improving service levels with fewer resources.
- Increase collaboration with the community in the budget development process.
- Go beyond compliance as the minimum standard for determining the best use of public funds. Set a higher standard for transparency and stewardship.

Medium priority:

- Emphasize understanding of municipal budget through public education and input into budget development.
- Educate the public on how the city manages its finances:
  - Capital cost plan
  - Pay as you go and debt service plan
  - Budget preparation
  - Cost accounting

**Goal: Be a great place to work**

High priority:

- Utilize new technology and tools for recruiting candidates.
- Celebrate successes internally and externally.
- Adapt the culture to focus on operational excellence. Continuous improvement and serving North Richland Hills citizens.

Medium priority:

- Utilize cross-departmental kudos to celebrate small success.
- Create more frequent feedback opportunities for employees to tell us how we are doing and what we can do to make their job easier and more enjoyable (employee surveys).
- Continuously using the portal.
- Enhance the marketing of North Richland Hills as a great place to work.
- Continuously evaluate and upgrade job descriptions.

Mayor McCarty recessed the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

Mayor McCarty reconvened the meeting at 12:04 p.m.

**Goal: Revitalize neighborhoods and commercial corridors.**

High priority:

- Create a campaign “open for business”, letting citizens and businesses know what types of businesses are desired.
- Enhance the Business Improvement and Growth (BIG) program.
- Proactively create incentive packages for desired uses by developers in designated areas.
- Utilize and promote neighborhood and commercial revitalization programs or reinstate in another area or zone.
- Create and utilize Empowerment Zones.
- Enhance EZ Streets Program and expand in other areas (South of 820).
- Consistently enforce minimum, but fair development standards.

Medium priority:

- Review existing development zones to ensure realistic and available standards.

Low priority:

- Revise and focus code enforcement process on repeat violators more than one-off violations. Show understanding early.

**Goal: Engage residents to enhance connection with the city and their neighbors.**

High priority:

- Continue paper newsletters.
- Make sure there is always an “N/A” response option on surveys.
- Continue communication and promotions for community events on all channels.
- Implement the NRHTX app.
- Conduct more surveys to gather citizen input and feedback more frequently (including at city events). Utilize flash vote surveys.
- Encourage citizen involvement in citizen academy and neighborhood cleanup.
- Expand Fit It Blitz Program to twice a year.
- Include a “What have you done to help your neighbor or neighborhood” message in the newsletter.
- Expand in-person engagement conversations (coffee shop, town hall, etc.).
- Explore push notifications for communications with residents.

Medium priority:

- Provide recognition for good neighbor behaviors to residents. Promote “the neighborly thing to do.”
- Continue in-person engagement like Homeowners Association meetings and National Night Out.
- Be proactive with city officials and staff speaking at Homeowners Association meetings and other community organizations.
- Create a plan for the City Council to be proactive about visiting businesses and neighborhoods.
- Explore live streaming for all board and commission meetings.

Low priority:

- Explore a way for residents to opt out of print newsletters.
- Examine how to encourage enhanced connection between neighbors.

**Goal: Improve safety, security, and infrastructure every day.**

High priority:

- Explore new funding strategies for safety, security, and infrastructure including grant opportunities.
- Enhance preventive maintenance strategies.

- Enhance community safety outreach programs—open houses, academies, and social media.
- Make police department recruitment a priority.
- Improve response times by providing resources and updating processes for dispatch.
- Improve/continue long-range planning for infrastructure.
- Continuing involvement with Northeast Fire Department Association (NEFDA).
- Continuing staff training for first responders.
- Partner with agencies that share infrastructure (traffic signal enhancement and coordination).

Medium priority:

- Enhance programs and education messaging on community programs.
- Maintenance standard reviews for preventative maintenance efforts.
- Creative funding strategies for infrastructure.
- Continue to build on partnerships with organizations who can help enhance safety and security:
  - Continue training with local partners like BISD on active shooter drills.
  - Partner on traffic flow through signal coordination.
- Improve road safety programs.
- Continue to hold vendors to high standards.
- Promote innovation in the way we provide safety, security, and infrastructure including cyber security and safety.
- Enhance staff recruitment for hard to fill infrastructure positions.
- Update long-range plans for safety infrastructure.

Mayor McCarty recessed the meeting at 1:52 p.m.

Mayor McCarty reconvened the meeting at 2:02 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Vaughn left the meeting at 2:50 p.m.

Mr. Pennington stated that the consensus of the City Council is that the rules make sense. He suggested that City Council not make changes for a few months.

Mr. Pennington reviewed City Council's House Rules.

- Do your homework and be prepared for each meeting.
- Support final council decisions regardless of individual opinions.
- Consider issues based on what's best for the City of North Richland Hills rather than personal considerations.
- Be truthful.
- Focus on vision, goals, and targets in making our decisions.

- Be open with communications. Be transparent about your thoughts and actions. Share information that others would benefit from knowing. Tell others if you disagree with them.
- Agree to disagree.
- Debate pending issues in the council environment.
- Treat others as you would like to be treated (Treat others with respect).
- Allow each other to discuss items fully.
- Share questions and concerns in advance whenever possible. Don't blindside staff, council and others to sabotage.
- Respect confidentiality of executive sessions.
- When proactively communicating with citizens, ask everyone rather than a specific/limited group. Use technology and focus groups to ensure communication and representation with citizens.
- Be responsive. Follow practice and procedure regarding communication; be aware of open meetings laws. Be cautious about responding to electronic communication.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no requests to speak from the public.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor McCarty adjourned the work session on July 12, 2024 at 3:24 p.m.

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Jack McCarty, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Alicia Richardson  
City Secretary/Chief Governance Officer