

**City of Cochran
Strategic Plan**

2021-to-2023

**Adopted on Tuesday,
December 8, 2020**



Overview

The City of Cochran is utilizing a Strategic Planning process to promote strategic leadership and performance planning while prioritizing goals within the organization and the community that address the major issues we expect to face over the next several years. In doing so, the Mayor and Council for the City of Cochran are providing a framework in which to determine what the City intends to be in the future and how it will get there.

The Strategic Plan addresses the vision and mission, the core values, and the goals and objectives of the City. As the City continues to serve the citizens of the City of Cochran, it is vital that we operate with a clear understanding of our major role. That role is to provide services to the Citizens of Cochran in an effective and efficient manner. In doing so, staff needs to effectively communicate with the elected officials, as well as with County, State, and Federal agencies to ensure that all regulations and laws are abided by in a way that promotes an overall improved quality of life for the citizens of Cochran. It is also critical that elected officials and staff effectively communicate with the other governmental entities within Bleckley County to ensure that the goals and objectives of the Plan are realized.

Vision

We are a warm inviting safe community centrally located in Georgia, rich in history with schools of excellence and quality healthcare. We desire to leverage our various resources to lay the groundwork for improved recreation, a robust downtown, increased job opportunities, and affordable housing.

Mission

As stewards of the City of Cochran we understand the importance of building a strong community for our citizens. We believe the short-term focus of the City, beyond the standard delivery of services, should be to create a plan of action to revitalize and maintain the downtown area, to upgrade public utilities and infrastructure, and to improve housing and clear blight from the community.

Core Values

- We are Accountable to the Citizens of Cochran.
- We are committed to earn, maintain, and enhance the trust of each other and the community.
- We conduct our work with integrity in an atmosphere of honesty, respect, and courtesy.
- We strive to exceed expectations and nurture successful relationships with all our partners.
- We are flexible and adaptive to the ever-changing needs of our community, and we encourage and support new ideas and creative approaches.
- We will manage our resources wisely.
- We recognize the vital role played by all staff and will support them in realizing their full potentials.
- We believe in our employees and our citizens.
- Our actions are transparent to all our citizens and ourselves.

Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal #1: *Evaluate and Improve the delivery of services*

Objectives:

- Establish response standards for City staff- **Public safety personnel have response standards in place, such as preferred call response times. The Public Works Department will be developing response standards in the coming year- expected by 04/01/2021.**
- Provide customer service training to City staff -**Customer service training is provided annually to customer service clerks and City Hall staff. The City Clerk has put this in place annually for the past three years and will continue for 2021 and 2022.**
- Conduct public presentations upon request to public agencies, industry, and civic groups in the City- **This has been impacted by Covid-19 pandemic. Public presentations include addresses to the Rotary Club or other civic groups as needed or requested.**
- Network with stakeholder groups in the City to identify ways to improve service delivery (business associations, economic development initiatives)- **Department heads have attended, either in-person or virtually, annual training and share their insights on service delivery at department head meetings.**
- Continue vehicle and equipment improvements through implementation of capital plans to improve service delivery- **This is performed every year through development of a capital budget for each department, for example, scheduling patrol vehicle replacements and heavy equipment purchases.**

- Revise the Comprehensive Plan, Service Delivery Strategy, and renegotiate the L.O.S.T. Tax distribution by 12/31/2021- **The Regional Commission has a responsibility to oversee the revision of the City/ County Comp. Plan and Service Delivery Strategy by 12/31/2021. The City and County must negotiate and work together to agree on a new 10-year L.O.S.T distribution by 12/31/2021.**

Strategic Goal #2: *Enhance and further improve the City’s principal resource (its personnel)*

Objectives:

- Use professional organizations to implement best practices while participating with agencies to stay informed on regulatory changes. **These include Fire Services Standards and Training, Georgia Police Chiefs Assn., Georgia Code Enforcement Association, Ga. City/County Managers Assn. the Ga. Public Works Assn., and Ga. City/County Clerks Assn.**
- Finance and encourage job-related and safety training for municipal staff- **Training is budgeted and encouraged for all staff. Covid-19 has inhibited much, but not all training, and some training has been pursued through virtual learning opportunities.**
- Update pay classification plan for City personnel, including the update of job descriptions and pay ranges that reflect the value of positions to the City--**Targeted for 2021. The goals are to have an updated Personnel Handbook and Pay Classification Plan by 12/31/2021.**
- Begin a wellness program for employees that includes incentives for goal-achievement- This has not **been done yet. We have discussed using incentives, such as reduced health premiums for wellness participants.**
- Continue to implement standard operating procedures for all departments
- Improve the new annual merit-based system of compensation to employees- This can be achieved through review of criteria used for assigning merit increases to employees.
- Maintain up to date personnel handbook to guide employees in performance of their everyday duties- **this should be targeted for 2021 & 2022, along with updating the Personnel Handbook and Pay & Classification Plan.**
- Implement a safety program in each department that documents employee participation in safety meetings and safety training. **Partially accomplished. This can be a goal for 2021 and 2022. We are working with GMA’s Local Government Risk Services on implementing a safety program within all City departments.**

Strategic Goal #3: *Improve the City's technological resources.*

Objectives:

- Leverage our information technology infrastructure and maximize staff potential to foster innovation and excellence- **the City has an active website and Facebook page. The City's webpage was updated during 2020. During 2021, 2022 and beyond, the City can maintain a greater presence on social media. The goal of the City is to update the website at least once a year.**
- Ensure that Sophicity, the City's Information Technology consultant, provides a secure computing environment that ensures data privacy and to alleviate cyber security threats – **Sophicity offers regular back-up of City documentation and data. Through GIRMA, the City is insured against cyber-attacks and malware disruptions. For 2021 and 2022, the City will train staff on cybersecurity measures. City office staff will be trained on cybersecurity through the end of 2021 to become more familiar with reducing the risks of a cyber-attack.**
- Align funding and explore new funding sources essential for IT operations
- Ensure excellent service to enable the effective use of technology & resources by the City – **the City will make improved use of weblinks on the City's website. During 2021 & 2022, the City will research other municipal websites to determine what up-to-date applications need to be featured on the website to maximize the governments communications with citizens.**
- Continue to provide staff with the adequate training to improve the operation of services to the City- **Staff training is budgeted and used every year. The types of training are the required training to maintain staff certifications, department-specific safety training, appropriate harassment training, and supervisory training for division directors.**

Strategic Goal #4: *Continue Cost Saving Measures in all operations.*

Objectives:

- Ensure adequate staffing levels to reduce overtime- **the City has an on-going evaluation of personnel needs to ensure that service levels are fulfilled. For example, the City brought on additional part-time help to assist with Public Works while the women's prison crew is not working due to Covid-19. We seek to fill vacancies to reduce overtime costs.**
- Ensure modern and efficient vehicle fleet and equipment -this is done through assessments of repair schedules that will influence vehicle replacement, and through regular vehicle replacement/trade-ins, such as the goal to replace two police cars per year.
- Ensure routine and special maintenance plans are in place for vehicles, equipment, HVAC systems, and all infrastructure- **routine maintenance are in place for vehicles and equipment. During 2021, the City will put in place regular checks and maintenance of HVAC systems. This will be performed every March and September by the Public Works Department.**

- Continuously evaluate programs and operations to ensure efficient delivery of services.
- Evaluate contracts and all purchased services to identify lower cost opportunities- **our major on-going service contracts are with Advanced Disposal for Solid Waste and Falcon Design for civil engineering services and Holt Engineering for aviation engineering. During 2021, the City will evaluate costs of these services by researching service costs in cities of similar size the Cochran.**

Strategic Goal #5: Support a welcoming environment through planned development, historical and environmental preservation.

Objectives:

- Improve the process, as well as communication between department heads, when a new or existing business is entering the City or changing locations within the City- **the City can improve on this as the City pursues business opportunities in 2021 and 2022. Additional City administrative staff can serve as a clearinghouse and coordinate the zoning and permitting processes for new businesses. I will seek to create an administrative assistant position at City Hall who can serve as a community development coordinator who will have duties that include coordinating the zoning and permitting processes for new businesses.**
- Improve working relationships between City and County departments. Obtain an automatic aid agreement between City and County Fire Departments- **Automatic Aid will need to be negotiated by 12/31/2021 between the City and County. It will require the agreement of the new County Commissioner.**
- Host more public events such as Food Truck Friday, Movie Night, Concerts, etc.- **this can be pursued with the eventual easing of Covid-19 restrictions. This will be coordinated with the Chamber of Commerce.**
- Establish a relationship with Middle Georgia State University to cater to the needs and activities/events for college students- **this can be pursued in 2021 and 2022 with a concerted effort between the City, Chamber of Commerce, and the Cochran campus**
- Partner with Middle Georgia State University in developing a plan to recruit firefighters and police officers- **this program is being successfully implemented and maintained in the City Fire Department. The Police Chief will become involved in 2021 in outreach to students at the university to encourage their recruitment to law enforcement.**
- Create a public park with walking trails, playgrounds, picnic areas, etc. Research ways to convert the vacant Railroad Depot into a museum displaying Cochran's history- **The City is applying for funds to upgrade the Willie Basby Park. The Chamber and DDA has been researching opportunities related to the vacant Norfolk-Southern Railroad Depot in downtown Cochran. The City may look at the option of seeking the demolition of the former depot building, but this would have to be coordinated through the Chamber and Norfolk Southern.**
- Beautify the grounds of highly visible places in town such as, but not limited to: The Post Office, the Chamber, the Police Department and entrances to the City- **The City recently hired a contractor to perform landscaping maintenance at several City**

buildings. During 2021, the City will determine if the Public Works Department has the capacity to maintain City-owned grounds, or, if regular maintenance needs to be locally contracted.

- **Continue upgrading the City's water and sewer system- This will be performed through a combination of using the remaining Water & Sewer GEFA funds, which are due to be expended and closed by August 1, 2021, and budgeted capital funds in the Water & Sewer Funds. During 2021 & 2022, the City will develop a reliable asset management schedule for improvements at the wastewater treatment plant and improvements with the water distribution system and sewer collection system.**

Strategic Goal #6: *Improve Financial operations.*

Objectives:

- **Develop a strategy to collect fire and stormwater fees from vacant parcels, including parcels without structures- this is a goal of the Fire Department for 2021.**
- **Create a master list of fees that can be used as a handy reference by City personnel. This could include utility fees, special trash pick-up fees, cemetery plot fees, etc. Periodically update fees to cover true costs to City taxpayers. This is a goal that remains to be accomplished. The fees need to be compiled, evaluated, and proposed to the City Council for an update by the end of the 2020/21 fiscal year on June 30, 2021.**
- **Get the City audit completed by December 31 each year- we are on-track to accomplish this in 2020. The Audit must be completed by December 31 every year.**
- **Develop a cash reserve and debt policy to help ensure solvency.**
- **Amend the budget when needed to ensure that the budget reflects current operations- this is performed when needed. The City recently amended the budget on October 13, 2020 to include supplemental Covid pay for many full-time employees.**

Strategic Goal #7: *Construct and maintain existing infrastructure.*

Objectives:

- **Continue to assess and repair utility infrastructure, City roads and right-of-way, and sidewalks- this is currently performed and will continue for 2021 and 2022.**
- **Evaluate condition of City utilities and implement plan for repair or replacement-By 12/31/2022, the City will develop a comprehensive asset management plan that specifies the amount and value of each City utility and their scheduled maintenance, repair, and replacement.**
- **Prepare and adopt a comprehensive storm drain plan for the City- Falcon Design has been asked to develop a cost estimate for developing a storm drain plan, including the development of a maintenance schedule for the City's storm drain infrastructure.**

