



CARLISLE EST. 1751  
PENNSYLVANIA



**CARLISLE**  
**PENNSYLVANIA** EST. 1751

**Strategic Plan**  
2023

# Contents

---

## **PAGE 01**

Letter from the Mayor

## **PAGE 02**

The Carlisle Community

## **PAGE 04**

Strategic Planning Process

## **PAGE 05**

Community Outreach

## **PAGE 06**

Strategic Direction

## **PAGE 08**

Strategic Outcome Areas

## **PAGE 16**

Implementation  
& Communications





## One year ago, we took the first steps to bring Carlisle Borough its first strategic plan.

We have had long-term comprehensive plans, and we have had short-term biennial goal setting. Comprehensive plans are useful policy tools, but do not tend to look inward at internal Borough operations. The goals we set every two years often lack the focus to drive the long-term vision and mission of our community forward.

When I began my term as mayor, I believed we needed to bridge the gap between short-term goals and a long-term vision to sharpen the focus of our policies and the mission of our internal operations. Upon the approval of Borough Council, we all embarked on this journey together. This Plan will focus our policies and operations through the lenses of Borough elected officials, Borough employees, and most importantly, our residents.

The initial draft of the vision, mission and values contained in this Plan came from elected officials and senior Borough staff, along with input from our full staff of Borough employees. We then sought public input once the basic draft framework was in place.

Borough Council and I wanted our residents and community stakeholders to engage meaningfully in the process. We put surveys and meeting notices in the hands of our residents and businesses. We held multiple public meetings. We provided the opportunity to participate online. At the suggestion of a resident, we extended the time to encourage additional comment, and we did further outreach to neighborhoods and community organizations to cultivate more participation.

The significance of public participation in this process was most vivid during the final meeting we held to hone the final draft of key elements of the Strategic Plan. The meeting was at Borough Hall and began with Council and me sitting elevated on the dais and an audience of residents in the seats below. As it came time for the elected officials to break into groups to work on final drafts, elected officials stepped away from their seats, and seizing the opportunity, we crafted some of the final details of this plan side-by-side with our fellow residents. We rarely, if ever, get that kind of consequential public participation at other levels of government. It was a remarkable image of the ideals of local government at work, and it will be one of the highlights of my time serving this beautiful Borough of Carlisle.

This Strategic Plan came together through the work and thoughtful input of our Borough Manager, Borough employees, and our residents—all of whom took time that would have otherwise been devoted to personal pursuits and instead invested that time to move the community of Carlisle forward. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to be elected to serve this community are extraordinarily grateful for all your efforts.

The Plan is a product of our community, for our community. Members of the public made a difference in its development. As we strive to give each individual in this community the opportunity to thrive, it will take many more individuals collectively making a difference to make that vision a reality. I know we will succeed. Making a difference in our community is what the people of Carlisle do.



## The Carlisle Community

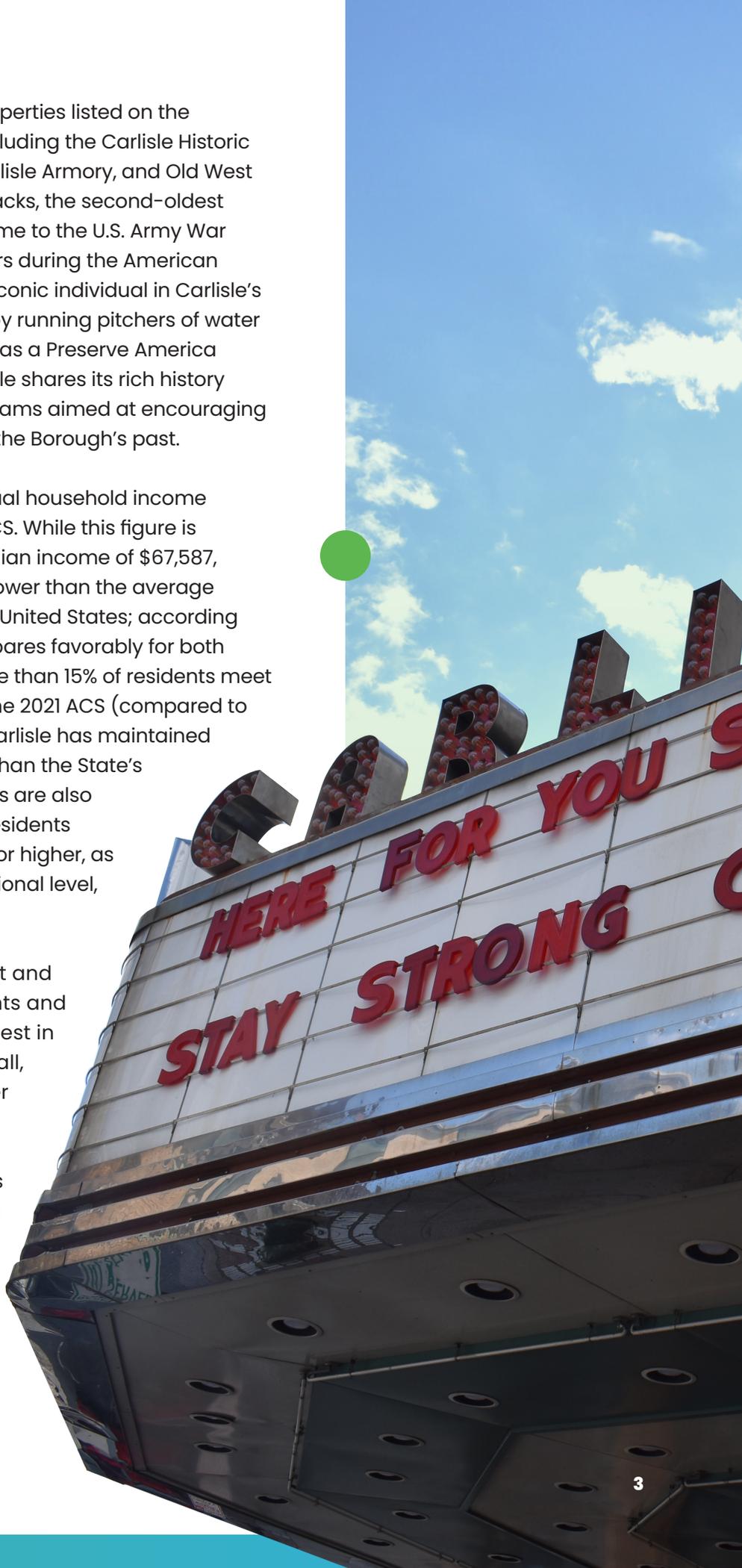
**Founded in 1751, Carlisle Borough is one of Pennsylvania’s most treasured historic communities.**

Located in picturesque south-central Pennsylvania, Carlisle Borough (Borough) is home to unique architecture, thriving local businesses, and a charming downtown. With a population of 20,118 residents in the 2020 Census, the Borough’s population growth has increased 12% since 2000 and is outpacing state trends. The median age of Carlisle residents is just under 35 years old and the population is 79.6% White, 9.9% Black or African American, 5.7% two or more races, and 7.6% of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, per the American Community Survey (ACS).

The Borough is home to numerous properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Carlisle Historic District, Hessian Powder Magazine, Carlisle Armory, and Old West at Dickinson College. The Carlisle Barracks, the second-oldest Army post in the United States and home to the U.S. Army War College, served as supply headquarters during the American Revolutionary War. Molly Pitcher is an iconic individual in Carlisle's history, having earned her nickname by running pitchers of water to soldiers during the war. Designated as a Preserve America Community by the White House, Carlisle shares its rich history through education and heritage programs aimed at encouraging people to experience and appreciate the Borough's past.

Carlisle residents have a median annual household income of \$52,098, as indicated by the 2021 ACS. While this figure is below the State of Pennsylvania's median income of \$67,587, the community's cost of living is also lower than the average cost of living for Pennsylvania and the United States; according to Sperling's Best Places, Carlisle compares favorably for both housing and transportation costs. More than 15% of residents meet federal poverty criteria according to the 2021 ACS (compared to just under 12% across the State), but Carlisle has maintained a lower average unemployment rate than the State's for the past decade. Carlisle's residents are also highly educated, with almost 40% of residents having achieved a bachelor's degree or higher, as compared to 33% at the state and national level, according to the 2021 ACS.

Carlisle boasts various entertainment and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, including the annual Ice Art Fest in the winter, Harvest of the Arts in the fall, and Second Saturdays in the summer and fall, all of which showcase the uniqueness that Carlisle has to offer. One of Carlisle's most popular events includes annual car shows that bring more than 500,000 visitors and car enthusiasts to the area each year. For nearly 50 years these annual shows have graced the Carlisle Fairgrounds, positively impacting the Borough's local businesses and economic growth.



# Strategic Planning Process

## Carlisle's strategic planning process was designed to ensure:

- A shared vision of the Borough's ultimate goals. The process included a significant number of opportunities for input from members of the community, as organizations driven by collective goals and vision increase their capacity for success.
- A collective understanding of the Borough's operating context, available resources, and principles upon which strategies will be based. Ultimately, six strategic outcome areas were selected for inclusion in the 2023 plan, each with accompanying measures of success and specific strategies to guide implementation.
- Acceptance of the overall direction and urgency of the strategic plan, which will ultimately be integrated into the way the Borough operates on a daily basis. Progress reporting against the strategic outcome areas will be a key part of monitoring and ensuring long-term success.

## To achieve these conditions for success, Carlisle's strategic planning process involved input from a broad group of internal and external stakeholders. Major elements of the process included:

### Stakeholder Input

Input was obtained from the Borough's leadership team, employees, Borough Council, Boards and Committee Chairs, and community members through a combination of interviews, stakeholder focus groups, an online employee survey with more than 40 responses, community input sessions, and an online community survey with nearly 250 responses.

### Visioning Session

Borough department heads participated in a workshop to draft a Mission Statement and Values Statement for the Borough. Two workshops were held with Borough Council, leadership, and key staff members to consider the stakeholder input and to develop the strategic framework.

### Strategy Workshop

Borough leadership and key staff members met again to select strategies and metrics to finalize the framework.



## Community Outreach

The Borough deeply values input from its community members, recognizing the paramount importance of engaging its residents in the strategic planning process. Actively seeking input from the community ensures that a diverse range of perspectives, needs, and concerns are considered when developing a roadmap to achieve the Borough's future vision. As part of this process, the Borough utilized the following engagement opportunities:



Three in-person community input sessions



Survey opportunities at the downtown Earth Day event



Online community survey on the Engage Carlisle platform



Mass emails through CitizenLab to registered users



Surveys mailed to all Borough properties



More than 25 social media posts using four different platforms



Surveys available at Stuart Community Center, Town Hall reception, Hope Station, Bosler Library, Police Station, and ESNA



Local news coverage



Partnerships with Building Bridges, the Housing Authority, Downtown Carlisle Association, Community Action Network, Chapel Pointe residential community, and Warner and Sollman high school classes to promote outreach



## Strategic Direction

### This Strategic Plan serves as a blueprint for future decision making.

Furthermore, this plan provides a structure by which annual reviews can be accomplished to assure that goals and objectives retain their relevance over time. By laying out a course of action, this plan represents a disciplined process for making the fundamental decisions that will shape the Borough of Carlisle's long-term strategic success and ensure quality of life for current and future residents and visitors.

### Strategic Outcome Areas



**Caring & Professional:** Ensuring responsive, quality services by our knowledgeable and committed staff.

---



**Vibrant & Thriving:** Building an inclusive and engaged community by fostering creative opportunities, community connections, and a diverse economic base attractive to residents, businesses, and visitors.

---



**Dynamic & Responsible:** Responsibly managing the financial resources necessary to advance innovative initiatives, provide essential services, and build a stronger community.

---



**Healthy & Sustainable:** Growing a healthy community, supported by thoughtful neighborhood spaces, that is socially and environmentally sustainable, improves quality of life, protects ecosystems, and conserves natural resources.

---



**Welcoming & Livable:** Building and maintaining inviting and safe neighborhoods through affordable housing and engaging recreational opportunities where residents and businesses flourish.

---



**Accessible & Connected:** Investing in safe pedestrian-, bike-, and transit-friendly options that connect people to the places they need to go, with convenient, accessible infrastructure that reduces car dependency.



## VISION

In Carlisle, our history inspires innovative ideas that create a safe, inclusive, and welcoming community where every individual can thrive and make a difference.

## MISSION

In Carlisle, we **CARE**. Our team is dedicated to providing quality public services that support a safe, diverse, and dynamic community.

## VALUES

In Carlisle, we **CARE**. We are...

- ✓ Committed
  - ✓ Accountable
  - ✓ Resilient
  - ✓ Ethical
- 

## Strategic Outcome Areas



### Caring & Professional



As an initial input to the strategic planning process, employees were surveyed and asked what motivates them to serve Carlisle. One employee responded by sharing:

**We feel a calling for the work, wanting to make a difference in people's lives and inspiring others to do the same. It is at the local level where we can make the most impact and where you can make your community better for the generations to come.**



#### Ensuring responsive, quality services by our knowledgeable and committed staff.

Empowering employees and developing a positive workplace culture is essential to delivering the high-quality core services that the Carlisle community has come to rely upon. The Borough is committed to providing employees opportunities to collaborate and solve problems to foster professional growth. The Borough has recently elevated strategies to advance a culture of diversity and inclusion and provide robust training and professional development opportunities. Positive service delivery and memorable customer experiences foster a sense of unity and belonging within the community by strengthening social cohesion and encouraging open lines of communication and engagement.

The Borough has identified the following strategies to help maintain its commitment to an engaged workforce and exceptional service to the community.

#### Strategies

- + Allow opportunities for employees to be part of solutions and feel empowered.
- + Increase non-digital outreach, activities, and access.
- + Increase employee training and development.
- + Facilitate opportunities for employees to collaborate, solve problems, and improve Borough operations.



## Vibrant & Thriving

**Building an inclusive and engaged community by fostering creative opportunities, community connections, and a diverse economic base attractive to residents, businesses, and visitors.**

The Vibrant and Thriving outcome area builds on previous Borough Council goals related to economic development, specifically creating a comprehensive economic development plan and advancing initiatives in Downtown Carlisle. Significant progress in this area is already underway; for example, one initiative is to provide support for minority-owned businesses in Carlisle. In 2022, Borough Council and Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) supported a Back-to-School Pop-Up shop with activities for children and that highlighted minority-owned businesses and food vendors. The Borough has also entered into a lease agreement with a minority-owned daycare facility at the Stuart Community Center. The daycare center is a start-up business and the lease has been structured using a graduated scale over the course of the next three years, with the Borough utilizing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for the daycare center's utility bills. Recognizing that economic development would be a major strategic focus, the Downtown Carlisle Association (DCA) assisted in building business engagement in the strategic planning process.

The following strategies are intended to support and expand this ongoing commitment to a vibrant and thriving community for all.

### Strategies

- + Encourage diverse and inclusive neighborhood and community partnerships to increase positive use of parks and public spaces.
- + Develop strategies and update land use code to attract development and retain local businesses.
- + Understand community preferences through surveys and regular engagement.
- + Explore programs and opportunities to improve capital and business investment equity among communities of color.
- + Evaluate TRC recommendations and implement where possible.



## Dynamic & Responsible



**Responsibly managing the financial resources necessary to advance innovative initiatives, provide essential services, and build a stronger community.**

Managing the Borough's fiscal resources requires strategic thinking to maintain appropriate funding and ultimately advance initiatives and projects. Carlisle is committed to ensuring long-term viability by maintaining a structurally solid financial foundation, attributed to a multi-pronged approach combining sound fiscal policies and conservative budgeting, balancing short- and long-term goals, leveraging grant funding, and elevating transparency to maintain public trust. Recently adopted policies requiring use of cash reserves before issuing debt allow the Borough to advance investments in capital needs and operations to continue providing reliable services to meet the needs of the community.



Borough staff have worked diligently to identify grants and other funding opportunities to pursue key projects. For example, in 2022, staff received more than \$250,000 in Recovery Grant funding from Cumberland County to support the Fairground Avenue Linear Park. The Borough also received more than \$1 million in Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency grants in 2023 to support various public safety projects, including the purchase of additional radios.

The Borough has identified the following strategies to help maintain its commitment to fiscal responsibility.

### Strategies

- + Identify multi-discipline funding partners to assist with implementation of various projects.
- + Develop a plan for implementing a Participatory Budget Program.
- + Increase collaboration with neighboring municipalities on service delivery.





## Healthy & Sustainable

---

**Growing a healthy community, supported by thoughtful neighborhood spaces, that is socially and environmentally sustainable, improves quality of life, protects ecosystems, and conserves natural resources.**

---

Providing a safe, healthy community is essential to maintaining and improving the quality of life experienced in Carlisle. The Borough is working to decrease reliance on fossil fuels and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as exhibited through conversions to energy efficient LED ceiling fixtures in Borough facilities, conversion of streetlights to LED fixtures, and continued hybridization of the police fleet. The Borough's Department of Public Works is also working to inventory water service lines, in compliance with Environmental Protection Agency Lead and Copper Rule requirements.

During the summer of 2020, Borough Council passed a Climate Action Resolution that commits the Borough to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 26% by 2025 and 80% by 2050, compared to 2005. The resolution also requires the Borough to form a Climate Action Commission to create a Climate Action Plan, which was formally adopted in 2022. The Borough is working with local partners to reduce the environmental impact of community activities, facilities, and equipment.





Strategies in this area focus on the creation of additional plans and taking other steps to protect the Borough's environment.

### **Strategies**

- + Draft and implement a long-range municipal operations plan.
- + Evaluate site suitability and deploy strategies to increase tree canopies and green infrastructure in Carlisle.
- + Invest in infrastructure improvements to enhance water quality.
- + Develop and implement a comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.
- + Collaborate with the Clean Air Board, legislators, and other community stakeholders to improve air quality.



## Welcoming & Livable

**Building and maintaining inviting and safe neighborhoods through affordable housing and engaging recreational opportunities where residents and businesses flourish.**

Carlisle is committed to supporting a high quality of life and maintaining an inviting and safe community, regardless of age, economic circumstances, or ethnic and cultural background, among other factors. The Borough receives annual grant funding to improve the quality of life for the Carlisle community, having committed over \$358,000 last year to activities focusing heavily on economic development, housing rehabilitation for homeowners and tenants, public services and facilities, energy efficient assistance, and neighborhood recreation enhancements.

The Borough is also working to advance policies that maintain safe and livable neighborhoods. For example, in 2022, Carlisle launched a rental inspection program, which requires rental unit owners to register their properties with the Borough and have regular safety and code inspections. The program is designed to ensure safe and healthy housing, preserve housing stock, protect vulnerable tenants, and maintain neighborhood property values.

One of Borough Council's goals is to conduct a series of surveys on Engage Carlisle to evaluate the effectiveness of current recreational programs, parks and facilities, and future needs, which has been underway since early 2022. New in 2023, the Borough added the one-acre Fairground Avenue Linear Park, which includes a much-anticipated skate park and additional recreation areas.

The following strategies have been identified to support this ongoing commitment to creating a welcoming community for all.

### Strategies

- + Offer engaging recreational opportunities by collaborating with community organizations and other providers.
- + Develop creative solutions to increase the availability of affordable housing stock.
- + Streamline and build awareness of the Borough's role in supporting special events, celebrations, and public art.
- + Develop and implement a public safety, co-responder program that diverts non-violent emergencies to appropriate social workers and health professionals.
- + Develop resources to support renters.





## Accessible & Connected

---

**Investing in safe pedestrian-, bike-, and transit-friendly options that connect people to the places they need to go, with convenient, accessible infrastructure that reduces car dependency.**

---

During the stakeholder engagement portion of the strategic planning process, residents were particularly concerned with increasing public transportation options, implementing bike and pedestrian initiatives, and looking for opportunities to reduce traffic on Borough streets. Communities thrive when all community members have access to multi-modal transportation and mobility options to get them where they need to go. Carlisle is dedicated to creating pedestrian-friendly spaces and expanded opportunities for transportation to reduce mobility barriers.

One of the Borough Council's goals is to evaluate underutilized public spaces and parks for transition to vibrant, pedestrian-centered spaces through low-cost placemaking. The Climate Action Committee has also recommended bicycle and pedestrian safety education strategies, as well as specific actions to make the Borough safer, including incorporating bicycle facilities into road resurfacing projects, repurposing some on-street parking facilities, and creating pilot programs to test bicycle and pedestrian facilities prior to large-scale capital investments. The Borough is also installing traffic calming measures, including curb extensions, which reduce crossing distances and vehicle speeds by creating a narrower travel way.

Strategies in this area will further support ongoing efforts to improve the ease of navigating through the Borough's neighborhoods and getting people to their desired destination.

### Strategies

- + Prepare an active transportation plan that addresses dedicated facilities for cyclists, pedestrians, and micro-mobility.
- + Activate underutilized public spaces to build vibrant, pedestrian-centered spaces through low-cost creative placemaking.
- + Identify streets or alleys to designate as traffic-free zones that only allow foot traffic and encourages community engagement.
- + Examine opportunities to improve local public transportation options.

# Strategic Framework

**CARLISLE**  
PENNSYLVANIA EST. 1751

## Vision

In Carlisle, our history inspires innovative ideas that create a safe, inclusive, and welcoming community where every individual can thrive and make a difference.

## Mission

In Carlisle, we **CARE**. Our team is dedicated to providing quality public services that support a safe, diverse, and dynamic community.

## Values

In Carlisle, we **CARE**. We are...

Committed  
Accountable  
Resilient  
Ethical

## Outcome Areas



### Caring & Professional

Ensuring responsive, quality services by our knowledgeable and committed staff.



### Vibrant & Thriving

Building an inclusive and engaged community by fostering creative opportunities, community connections, and a diverse economic base attractive to residents, businesses, and visitors.



### Dynamic & Responsible

Responsibly managing the financial resources necessary to advance innovative initiatives, provide essential services, and build a stronger community.



### Healthy & Sustainable

Growing a healthy community, supported by thoughtful neighborhood spaces, that is socially and environmentally sustainable, improves quality of life, protects ecosystems, and conserves natural resources.



### Welcoming & Livable

Building and maintaining inviting and safe neighborhoods through affordable housing and engaging recreational opportunities where residents and businesses flourish.



### Accessible & Connected

Investing in safe pedestrian-, bike-, and transit-friendly options that connect people to the places they need to go, with convenient, accessible infrastructure that reduces car dependency.

**Communications:** Through this Strategic Plan, the Borough has committed to improving internal and external communications and outreach. Effective communication is critical not only for the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan, but also for the Borough's overall success. The need for additional information sharing and collaboration, which was a strong theme in the community input process, cuts across various strategic outcomes, and Carlisle is committed to increasing access, building awareness of opportunities, understanding community preferences, and collaborating with stakeholders to make the initiatives in the strategic plan come to life.

## Strategies

1. Allow opportunities for employees to be part of solutions and feel empowered.
2. Increase non-digital outreach, activities, and access.
3. Increase employees training and development.
4. Facilitate opportunities for employees to collaborate, solve problems, and improve Borough operations.

5. Encourage diverse and inclusive neighborhood and community partnerships to increase positive use of parks and public spaces.
6. Develop strategies and update land use code to attract development and retain local businesses.
7. Understand community preferences through surveys and regular engagement.
8. Explore programs and opportunities to improve capital and business investment equity among communities of color.
9. Evaluate TRC recommendations and implement where possible.

10. Identify multi-discipline funding partners to assist with implementation of various projects.
11. Develop a plan for implementing a Participatory Budget Program.
12. Increase collaboration with neighboring municipalities on service delivery.

13. Draft and implement a long-range municipal operations plan.
14. Evaluate site suitability and deploy strategies to increase tree canopies and green infrastructure in Carlisle.
15. Invest in infrastructure improvements to enhance water quality.
16. Develop and implement a comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.
17. Collaborate with the Clean Air Board, legislators, and other community stakeholders to improve air quality.

18. Offer engaging recreational opportunities by collaborating with community organizations and other providers.
19. Develop creative solutions to increase the availability of affordable housing stock.
20. Streamline and build awareness of the Borough's role in supporting special events, celebrations, and public art.
21. Develop and implement a public safety, co-responder program that diverts non-violent emergencies to appropriate social workers and health professionals.
22. Develop resources to support renters.

23. Prepare an active transportation plan that addresses dedicated facilities for cyclists, pedestrians, and micro-mobility.
24. Activate underutilized public spaces to build vibrant, pedestrian-centered spaces through low-cost creative placemaking.
25. Identify streets or alleys to designate as traffic-free zone that allows only foot traffic and encourages community engagement.
26. Examine opportunities to improve local public transportation options.

**Implementing the Plan:** The strategic plan implementation process for Carlisle includes leveraging internal subject matter expertise and continuing to use key staff members and small teams that are knowledgeable, energized, and committed to helping the Borough advance. Each strategy will ultimately have workplans, which will include the tasks and resources necessary for implementation, associated timelines, and individuals responsible for progress. The Borough is also working to develop tools to monitor and share implementation progress and to review and update strategic plan activities with the Borough Council on a regular basis.



*The Borough of Carlisle is grateful to all the individuals who took the time to provide input during this strategic planning process, and we look forward to sharing our progress and success as we work to achieve our shared goals.*

