

**2023-2024 City Council
Priorities
Completed Work**

On February 28, 2023, the City Council identified five strategic priorities for the City for the next two calendar years (2023-2024). City staff present updates on work completed or in process on a quarterly basis to the City Council. The following is a summary of work completed on the Council's priorities and has been included in prior updates. This document is updated quarterly.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Keep building on the progress made to further establish Walnut Creek as an inclusive community that welcomes diversity. Implement top DEI priorities through policies and practices, representation on City committees and commissions, training, events, outreach to under-represented communities, and partnerships with not-for-profit organizations. Monitor internal and external progress against clear, measurable goals.

There are several key initiatives related to DEI that incorporate many of the City's community-based DEI Task Force's recommendations, City Council feedback, and internal organizational initiatives:

1. Additional resources for DEI
2. Training for City Council, Commissions and City staff
3. City Commission and Committee representation
4. Integrating DEI into City communications
5. Cultural events
6. Rising TIDE
7. Library Partnerships

1. Additional Resources For DEI

- An additional, ongoing position in Human Resources was assigned to provide more concentrated focus on DEI work and be responsible for technical and analytical assistance in researching, developing and implementing DEI initiatives for the Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025 (FY24 and FY25) budget.
- In October 2023, an RFP was issued for consultants to recommend and assist with the creation and evaluation of a comprehensive diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging program that includes ongoing training and cultural integration. Thirty-two proposals were received, interviews were conducted, and a consultant was selected. An agreement for services was approved by Council in February 2024.

2. Training for City Council, Commissions and City Staff

- The City's Human Resources Department contracted with an external training consultant to provide mandated citywide DEI training courses for the City Council, Commission members and all City staff. The courses will be offered multiple times per year to ensure that all new staff members attend.

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3. City Commission and Committee Representation

- At the October 2023 Mayor and Commission Chair quarterly meeting, attendees provided ideas on recruiting qualified and committed commissioners who represent the diversity of the community. Staff utilized this feedback and broadened the outreach using different sources and methods to reach potential candidates. Additionally, staff utilized a new simplified platform for the submittal of commission applications.

4. Integrating DEI into City Communications

- The City launched a redesigned website as well as three new subsites for Arts + Recreation, Economic Development, and the Police Department that reflect a more inclusive approach to online communications. In addition to simplifying the text, a new translation tool makes the site available to an expanded audience. The City is also using analytics to measure accessibility for all viewers.

5. Cultural Events

- The Arts and Recreation Department expanded event offerings to highlight a variety of cultures and holiday celebrations including story-time offerings and special park events for Holi, Lunar New Year, Nowruz, Christmas, Chanukah, Easter and Eid.
- The Leshner Center held a weeklong celebration of Latin American art and culture called “Fiesta Cultural” in June 2023 that will return in future summers.

6. Rising TIDE

- Rising TIDE, an employee group focused on inclusion and belonging in the workplace, continually works on initiatives that advance inclusion across City departments.
- In light of derogatory remarks against the Jewish community occurring during public comment at City Council meetings, Rising TIDE used its *Did You Know...* employee newsletter as an opportunity to educate employees on the Jewish community in the Bay Area, protected and unprotected speech, the City’s zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment as well as a reminder to provide safe spaces for open discussion about harmful attacks.
- In summer 2023, Rising TIDE kicked off their book club for City employees. Staff met bi-monthly to discuss readings from Notes from a Young Black Chef: A Memoir by Kwame Onwuachi with Joshua David Stein, engaging in conversation around race, culture, food, and acceptance as it related to both the author and personal experience.

7. Library Partnership

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- The City partners with both Walnut Creek libraries to help amplify their outreach on special events including the multicultural “Live! From the Library” offerings, which the City broadcasts on Walnut Creek TV and YouTube, and highlighted special displays for events such as Black History Month.

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Economic Development and Job Creation

Through an integrated Economic Development Action Plan, promote economic diversification, adapt to changes in office uses, capitalize on economic strengths, improve jobs-housing balance, enhance downtown attractions and infrastructure, and streamline permitting processes. Establish metrics and reporting practices to clearly monitor progress.

The scope of work for this priority consists of four major areas:

1. Economic Development Action Plan
2. Improved Jobs-Housing Balance
3. Permit Streamlining
4. Enhanced Downtown Attractions and Infrastructure

1. Economic Development Action Plan

- The two-year Economic Development Action Plan draft plan was presented to Council on May 16, 2023 and feedback was incorporated into the plan.
- Staff completed additional discussions with Walnut Creek Downtown, the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce, the Convention Visitors Bureau (CVB), and Diablo Regional Arts Association (DRAA) that identified actions they will pursue to support the overall economic vitality of Walnut Creek in collaboration with the Action Plan. This feedback was incorporated into the plan in August 2023.
- Staff completed a workplan that identifies the steps needed and the responsible parties to accomplish the action plan strategies and progress made is presented quarterly to the Council.
- Stakeholders and City partners were engaged to provide feedback on the draft Design Review Guidelines and Standards for both residential and non-residential mixed-use projects.
- A consultant was selected to develop the Economic Development marketing materials and brokerage packets, and additional market research.
- Staff began initial outreach to the automotive industry.
- Community Development, Public Works, and Economic Development staff supported the on-schedule opening of the John Muir Health / UCSF Cancer Center in February 2024.

2. Improved Jobs-Housing Balance

- Staff identified data inputs that would be necessary to develop an ideal jobs-housing balance for Walnut Creek, including:
 - The current jobs-to-housing ratio.
 - Land acreage dedicated to the various types of properties: residential, retail, office, etc.

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- Maximum potential square footage for the commercial property types under current voter-approved height limits and evaluate the future jobs-to-housing ratio based on projected population growth.
- Information on evolving office trends to better understand how many future jobs could be accommodated by the existing commercial inventory.
- Jobs-housing ratios in other communities.

3. Permit Streamlining

- Staff completed a preliminary evaluation and review of current processes. Specific initial opportunities to streamline the processes included:
 - Streamlining the design review process through development of objective design standards
 - Refining to the design review decision-making process
 - Providing more customer-focused electronic and web-based tools like solar permits and electronic plan review to facilitate application submittals and reviews
 - Refining content on the development services pages of the City's website to increase transparency and clarity
 - Changes to residential project approval processes
 - Process review of Sign Permits, Site Development Permits, Conditional Use Permits (CUP) and Administrative Use Permits (AUP).
- Online permitting for solar installations (required by law by September 2023) launched in August 2023.
- Improvements have been made to the Development Services webpages to respond to customer feedback, clarify information and enhance the customer self-service options.
- The Council adopted permanent Housing Opportunity and More Efficiency Act (SB 9) regulations in October 2023.

4. Enhanced Downtown Attractions and Infrastructure

- Staff identified the need for increased internal and external coordination and planning for major work happening in Downtown.
- With the approval of the Outdoor Dining Policy, staff formed a cross departmental team to ensure internal coordination and communication is occurring regularly.

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Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action Plan

Remain a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving other sustainability goals by completing the update of the City's Sustainability Action Plan that includes a funding program, adoption of a climate emergency resolution, and strategies to advance objectives in areas such as alternative transportation, water usage, recycling, open space protection, and disaster resiliency.

- On July 18, 2023, the Council adopted a Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) with 21 strategies that aim to achieve a sustainable vision for the future, adapt to changing climate conditions, and rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions to support a pathway to net zero emissions by 2045.
- The Council adopted a climate emergency resolution along with the SAP.
- Hired a full-time Sustainability Manager in September 2023.
- Staff surveyed the community to understand how they would like to receive sustainability information and what they would like to know. Three hundred and eighty-six responses were received, and the community is most interested in hearing about resources and incentives that will help them become more sustainable. The City's monthly ECO newsletter, the Nutshell and news articles and short videos were the top ways residents would like to receive sustainability information. The responses also emphasized the importance of sharing information applicable to people who live in rentals, condominiums, or townhouses; as well as sharing actions the City is taking to make our operations more sustainable.

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Parks, Facilities and Other Infrastructure

Guided by the community, address major park, facility and infrastructure needs, with the early priority being the new combined aquatics and community center facility at Heather Farm Park and lighting and turf improvements at Tice and Heather Farm parks, respectively; address other park and infrastructure needs as resources permit.

Measure O Heather Farm Park Aquatics and Community Center

- The City Council approved the Conceptual Site Plan in February 2023.
- A list of Project Assumptions and Principles for the project were approved by Council in September 2023.
- Community outreach for the preliminary design phase was completed using a variety of engagement formats and venues including open houses, booths at community events, stakeholder meetings, an online survey, and Commission and Council meetings. Input on design aspects of the project, such as recreational amenities and architectural building styles, was gathered and included in the schematic design package presented to the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Commission, Design Review Commission, and the Youth Leadership Commission and the City Council.
- The City has selected consultants for project management, CEQA analysis and an architecture firm for the overall design of the project.

Lights at Tice Field

- Funding for the project was included in the FY24 and FY25 budget
- CEQA and design consultants hired.

Ballfields at Heather Farm Park

- The City and Walnut Creek Soccer Club signed an agreement outlining the fundraising and input on design the Walnut Creek Soccer Club will contribute to the project.
- Funding for the project was included in the FY 24 and FY 25 budget.
- CEQA and design consultants hired.

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Public Safety and Social Wellness

Ensure Walnut Creek is a safe community through (1) more innovative and effective responses to homelessness and mental health challenges (i.e., A3 and crisis intervention partnerships, mental health crisis response training, homeless outreach); (2) pro-active police responses to crime trends, including residential and retail property crimes; (3) strong crime prevention by building on partnerships with neighborhoods, businesses, schools; (4) Continuing to foster a modern and healthy police culture; (5) Improved traffic, transit, pedestrian and bike safety.

This Council priority integrates existing and new programs that are provided by multiple departments throughout the City. The proposed scope of work centers on five areas:

1. Innovative and effective responses to homelessness and mental health challenges
2. Pro-active police responses to crime trends
3. Strong crime prevention through partnerships
4. Fostering a modern and healthy police culture
5. Improved traffic, transit, pedestrian and bike safety

1. **Innovative and effective responses to homelessness and mental health challenges**

- The Miles Hall Community Crisis Center progressed from being open daily 8:00am-12:30pm in fall 2023 to operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week by December 2023.
- As of January 2023, there were two Mobile Crisis Response teams in place. By September 2023 were 15, and by February 2024 there were 26 teams.
- A new Youth Crisis Stabilization Unit is operational in support of the “A Place to Go” goal.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by all law enforcement agencies in Contra Costa County in order to create a shared process for directing calls placed to law enforcement dispatch centers to the Miles Hall Community Crisis Call Center as appropriate. The City of Walnut Creek led this effort.
- The Regional Crisis Intervention Team (WCPD, Martinez and Pleasant Hill police departments) added three officers (for a total of six) and allocated a sergeant in July 2023.
- The City contributes funding to Contra Costa County’s Coordinated Outreach Referral, Engagement (CORE) team and negotiated a new contract which that includes enhanced reporting requirements.
- The Homeless Outreach Program (HOP) team works to build relationships with the City’s homeless community to help connect them to services, help maintain a lawful and safe environment, and work with residents and businesses to address quality of life issues related to homelessness.

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2. Pro-active police responses to crime trends

- WCPD developed and implemented a Directed Patrol Response program. Directed patrol is a proactive form of policing which can prevent crime before it happens by analyzing trends and adjusting patrol presence. Crime data, complaints of crime and reports of suspicious activity are inputted into Dispatch's computer aided dispatch (CAD) system to map and analyze trends. This helps the City use data to deploy officers where they are needed most.
- Over the 2023 holiday season, additional officers were deployed downtown on foot, on bicycles, and in both marked and unmarked patrol cars. The officers who participated in this staffing plan conducted education and enforcement, provided high visibility presence, and engaged with community members.

3. Strong crime prevention through partnerships

- The Police Department hosted multiple Coffee with a Cop events, including Rossmoor which featured a traffic safety presentation Q&A from residents.
- In August 2023, the Police department staff participated in National Night Out, an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. The event was a success and enhanced the relationship between the community and the department.

4. Fostering a modern and healthy police culture

- The Police Department signed up for and continues to participate in the Swear Not to Swear Campaign to foster more professional conduct and reduce the use of profanity by officers in the public.
- In July 2023, a community engagement tool was deployed that allows the police department to collect anonymous feedback via post-contact text surveys to gain insights about officer interactions with the community. During the 90-day pilot, the department received over 500 survey responses and 84% of respondents reported having a positive view of the department and 91% felt they were treated with respect during their interactions with staff.
- In January 2023, the Police Department received State grant funds to start an employee resilience program to invest in employee wellness. This expands on existing employee wellness programs for officers including peer counseling, therapy services, etc.

5. Improved traffic, transit, pedestrian and bike safety

- The Council adopted a 10-Year CIP and Capital Budget on June 20, 2023 that incorporates traffic safety into maintenance and capital projects.

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- In June 2023, WCPD purchased two traffic safety radar trailers. These trailers have a messaging board capability which allows the Traffic Engineering and the Police Department to display a variety of traffic safety messages. These highly visible trailers serve as a tool to prevent traffic collisions by providing driver alerts and monitoring traffic speeds.
- In July 2023, the WCPD Traffic and Patrol Bureaus conducted a distracted driving campaign in downtown Walnut Creek. This operation focused on drivers failing to use hands-free devices while on the phone. During the six-hour operation, fifteen citations were issued along with seven warnings. The department is exploring Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) grant funding to support and enforce the traffic safety program with an emphasis placed on combatting impaired driving.
- In August 2023, the Council adopted the Local Roadway Safety Plan: A Path to Vision Zero along with a resolution that aims to eliminate fatal and severe injury collisions in Walnut Creek by December 2034 and commits to establishing a Traffic Safety Working group.
- Traffic Engineering and the Police Department conducted outreach to all public and private schools within the City of Walnut Creek or serving Walnut Creek residents in adjacent jurisdictions to provide educational materials for parents, drivers, student drivers, staff, and others impacted by school traffic. The intent of the outreach is to remind the community that school-related traffic is back and to drive safely, especially as there are children walking, biking, and getting into and out of vehicles.
- In anticipation of the beginning of the 2023 school year, Traffic Engineering staff prepared Walk and Roll to School online interactive maps. The maps assist parents and students to make informed decisions about safe ways to get to school by walking, biking, or rolling, with the goal to increase trips by active modes, and aligns with the City's sustainability goals.
- The City was awarded \$240,000 in Federal grant funds for this study to develop a Traffic Safety Action plan that will implement the Local Roadway Safety Plan.
- The Police Department added four officers to the Traffic Bureau to fill vacancies.