



City of Keystone Heights 2025 Strategic Planning Report

February 20-21 Sessions Summary

Facilitated by the Florida Institute of Government at Florida State University



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Summary

On February 20-21, 2025, the City of Keystone Heights City Council and City Staff Members held a workshop to develop a strategic plan. The workshop was held at the Keystone Heights City Hall and was facilitated by staff of the Florida Institute of Government at Florida State University.

An overarching intent for the strategic planning workshop was to focus the City Council's conversations and discussions on the critical issues facing the municipality and its residents. The event was an opportunity for the City Council to convene, examine, and develop the municipality's vision and mission statements, its core organizational values, and establish strategic priorities, goals, and objectives. The conversations and discussions focused on prioritizing key issues in the short- and long-term to advance the wellbeing of the city's natural resources, businesses, and citizens.

The main priority of the strategic planning workshop was to determine vision and mission statements as well as strategic goals and specific, measurable objectives created by the Keystone Heights City Council and Staff. This document provides the results of the workshop and represents the City of Keystone Heights' Strategic Plan.



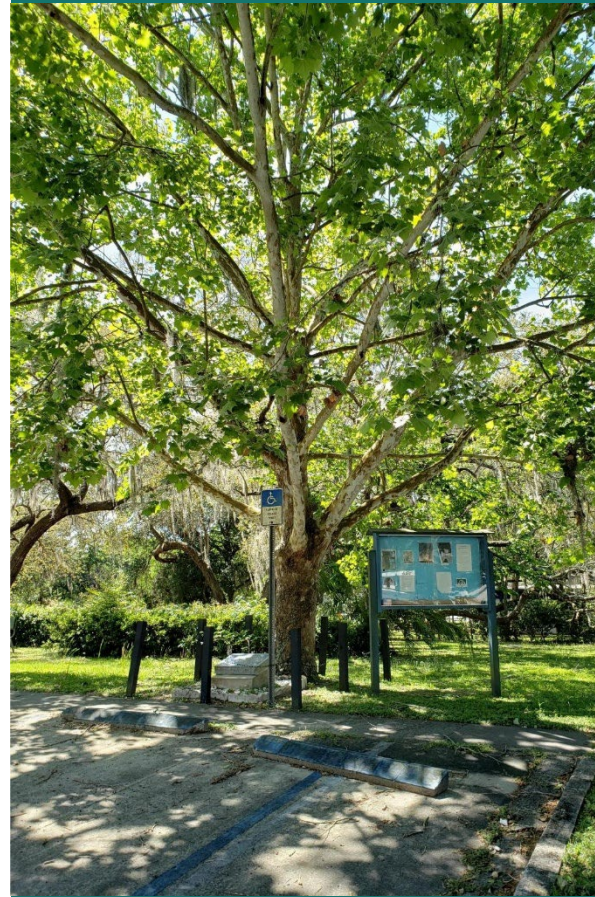
Strategic Planning Session Introduction

What is the most important thing you hope to get out of the next two days?

- ▶ 18,000-foot strategic priorities
- ▶ Convey to staff what is important to the council
- ▶ Come together as a unit to develop clear vision and mission statements
- ▶ Determine where the city is going in the next 3-5 years
- ▶ Develop tourism; develop responsibly
- ▶ “Put the bow on the package”
- ▶ Find ways to partner with the county and state on infrastructure improvements, particularly transportation

What is the biggest issue facing the City of Keystone Heights?

- ▶ Improve safety and accessibility to Lake Geneva waterfront areas and recreational facilities
- ▶ Restore water levels in lakes to support fishing and recreational activities
- ▶ Septic-to-sewer conversion
- ▶ Stormwater and flood water management
- ▶ Bring businesses to the city – economic development
- ▶ Manage capacity of all infrastructure with new development projects – possibility of additional 500 residents
- ▶ Citizens from outside the city limits using city resources and services putting a strain on infrastructure needs
- ▶ Keeping people in Clay County – advocating for an industry to locate here to provide employment for residents
- ▶ Development of trade school opportunities
- ▶ Need for commercial/industrial properties



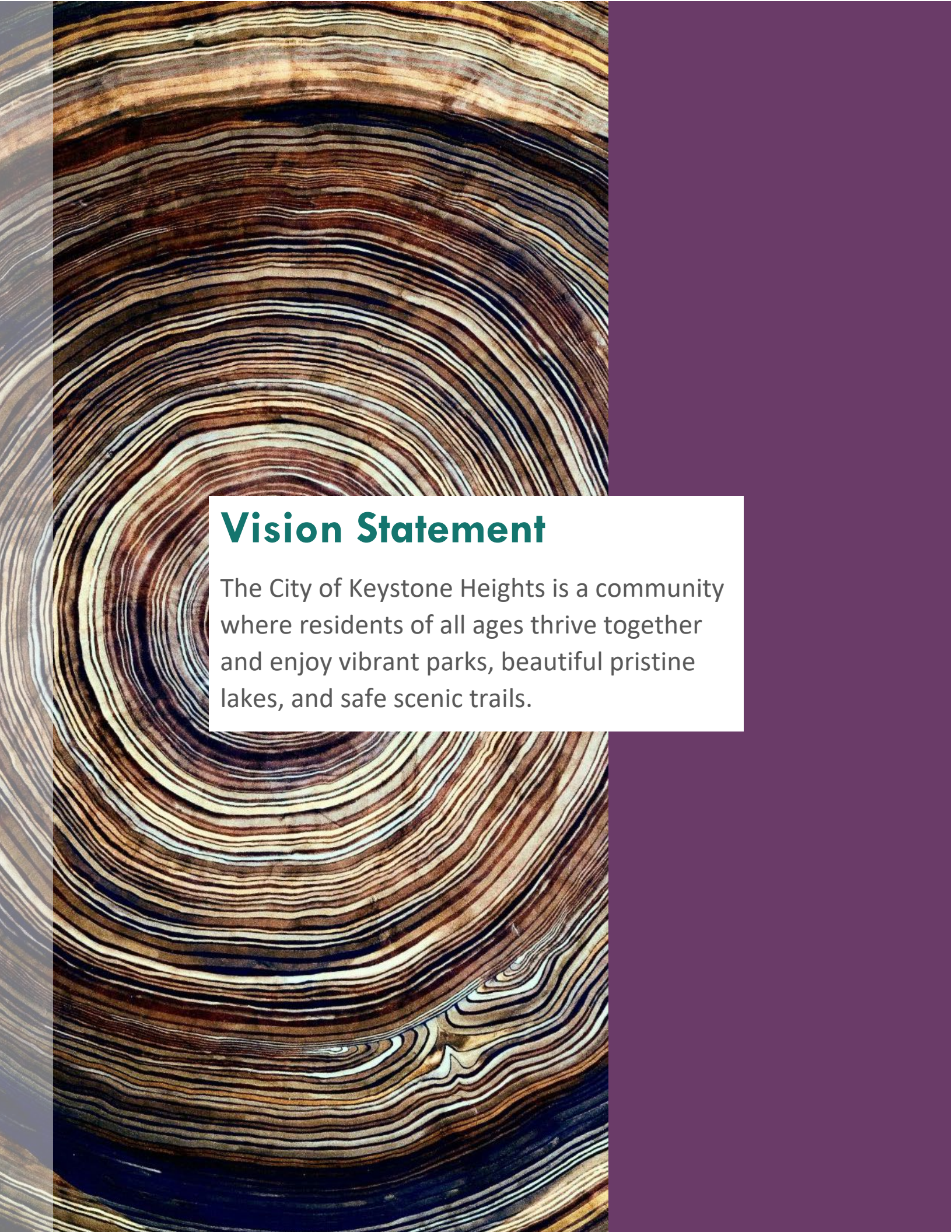
Session Introduction (continued)

- ▶ Insufficient downtown public parking areas
- ▶ Lack of significant retail presence in the downtown strip to give folks a reason to linger – need out-of-the-box ideas
- ▶ No clear incentive to offer for annexation – limited to public works and city staff, no other municipal services available

What brings people to the City of Keystone Heights?

- ▶ Strong generational ties among residents
- ▶ Natural beauty and the scenic lakes
- ▶ Sense of safety and community
- ▶ Bedroom community – a retreat from urban areas
- ▶ Favorable tax structure and a municipal airport





Vision Statement

The City of Keystone Heights is a community where residents of all ages thrive together and enjoy vibrant parks, beautiful pristine lakes, and safe scenic trails.



Mission Statement Development

Two mission statements were developed by the convened working groups, then merged into one comprehensive statement.

Option 1:

The mission of the City of Keystone Heights is to provide outstanding municipal services, to be financially sound, to be champions of our lakes, and to carefully grow and improve our community.

Option 2:

The city provides responsive governance to its citizens through safe and well-maintained infrastructure, excellent community events, and economic growth opportunities.

Mission Statement

The City of Keystone Heights provides outstanding municipal services, preserves and champions our lakes, ensures sound financial stewardship, and fosters a thriving community through secure infrastructure, responsible economic growth, and engaging events.



Core Values Development

- ▶ Honesty & Integrity
- ▶ Servant Leadership
- ▶ Teamwork
- ▶ Accountability

Discussion Points

- Our city is not afraid to get out there and do the work.
- We provide a vision and the ability to overcome obstacles.
- We can disagree professionally and are willing to be flexible to make the city successful.
- We are responsible for the decisions that are made collectively, as well as setting expectations for successful levels of work, due diligence, and research.

Strategic Priorities

- Sustainability
- Events
- Local Economic Growth
- Infrastructure



Strategic Goals for Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority – Sustainability

Goal 1. Take care of our assets for a safe, enjoyable community experience.

Goal 2. Allocate appropriate resources for scheduled projects such as defined timelines, scope, and budget.

Strategic Priority – Events

Goal 1. Recreate, reintroduce, and hold annually, a Chautauqua.

Goal 2. Encourage more community involvement and support, including sponsors and marketing and volunteers.

Strategic Priority – Local Economic Growth

Goal 1. Strategically plan for measured growth.

Goal 2. Develop a business plan including cost and location for a City of Keystone Heights Museum and Welcome Center.

Strategic Priority – Infrastructure

Goal 1. Ensure critical infrastructure is in place and sustainable for future growth.

Goal 2. Finish what we started – complete Lawrence Scape, The Corner, and recreation upgrades.

Strategic Objectives for Strategic Goals

Strategic Priority – Sustainability

Goal 1. Take care of our assets for a safe, enjoyable community experience.

Objective 1: No later than September 2025, develop a major infrastructure plan – “sidewalks, roads, and stormwater” – to address annual assessment, maintenance, and budget.

Objective 2: Launch strategy to prioritize needs and identify budget dollars per project by Spring 2026.

Goal 2. Allocate appropriate resources for scheduled projects such as defined timelines, scope, and budget.

Objective 1: By April 2026, develop a 3-year funding plan anticipated for existing and projected infrastructure needs of the city.

Objective 2: Annually review infrastructure needs and match with available grant opportunities.

Strategic Priority – Events

Goal 1. Recreate, reintroduce, and hold annually, a Chautauqua.

Objective 1: By May 2025, utilize pop-up museum/Chautauqua lessons learned to develop a marketing plan: multi-media, signs, invitations that ties City of Keystone Heights to future events.

Objective 2: Conduct after-action review and adjust planning as needed. Identify funds to support moving forward to the 2026 event. Complete by July 31, 2025.

Goal 2. Encourage more community involvement and support, including sponsors and marketing and volunteers.

Objective 1: Host workshop to assess our needs for volunteers, creative communications, and maintaining volunteers by June 2026.

Objective 2: By October 2025, hold a town hall to address citizen and local business needs and their interest in volunteering, sponsorship, and marketing.

Strategic Objectives for Strategic Goals

Strategic Priority – Local Economic Growth

Goal 1. Strategically plan for measured growth.

Objective 1: No later than June 2026, complete the EAR and Comprehensive Plan process.

Objective 2: Identify and prioritize strategic partners county and statewide by physical presence by June 2026.

Goal 2. Develop business plan including cost and location for a City of Keystone Height Museum/Welcome Center.

Objective 1: Develop business plan including cost and location of City of Keystone Heights Museum/Welcome Center.

Objective 2: By June 2026 City Council completes site visits at potential site for museum and welcome center.

Strategic Priority – Infrastructure

Goal 1. Ensure critical infrastructure is in place and sustainable for future growth.

Objective 1: By June 2026, city council will complete site visits at potential parking sites for additional parking.

Objective 2: Collaborate with strategic partners and annually review current stormwater infrastructure reports. Keep projects in queue with city engineers and provide quarterly updates to council.

Goal 2. Finish what we started – complete Lawrence Scape, The Corner, and recreation upgrades.

Objective 1: Keep turn lane on City of Keystone Heights legislative priorities to ensure city, county, FDOT and state alignment continuously.

Objective 2: City council ensures that all timelines are met for recreational areas by providing appropriate resources, guidance and timelines that are reviewed on a monthly basis.





Appendices

Appendix A: SWOT Assessment

(These comments were provided by participants in the workshop, but do not necessarily represent a final position of the City Council)

Internal & External

Strengths

- Five gems of Keystone Heights – 1. lakes, 2. airport (only public airport in Clay County), 3. churches/faith (most per capita in the state), 4. schools, and 5. camps (summer camps – church, YMCA, City of Gainesville, etc.)
- The community – welcoming to all, engaged with city events, unified
- City staff – steady presence
- Business community is supportive and fairly content
- Demographics – variety of generations, energy & creative thinking
- Heritage Commission – activities and events
- Civic groups – Women’s Group, Kiwanis, Rotary, faith-based organizations, Masons, Shriners
- Improved, positive interactions with Clay County Sheriff, Clay County Tourism
- Forgotten corner of Clay County – strength and weakness; inspires independence and innovation

Weaknesses

- Forgotten corner of Clay County – strength and weakness; often overlooked by the Chamber of Commerce and Clay County
- More wants and needs than financial resources
- Plans have been made that have not been seen through to fruition – prioritizing needs to be done and action needs to be taken
- Lack of follow-through, especially when officials and staff change
- Frustration with gaining community engagement; would like to see at least 1/3 of residents become more engaged with municipal government
- So many processes that need to take place to make the lakes safe areas and bring the lakes back; when the lake levels are down, property values go down causing a domino effect on other city statistics; as the lake levels rise, property values also rise and conditions throughout the city also improve
- Boat ramp is currently cut-off from some areas due to low water levels; removing tree overgrowth before the water levels rise; getting the final pieces of the project in place

Opportunities

- Working with the county and state to advance municipal needs
- Grant writing options that can be leveraged to obtain state funding
- Partnering with the state, FAA, TPO, school district
- Expansion of airport projects to benefit Keystone Heights
- Possibilities to recruit industry and economic development projects
- Moving forward with the septic-to-sewer project
- Heritage Commission – Chautauqua Meeting (2-day arts, lecture, education event) – first in many years; to be held with a pop-up museum at Keystone Beach area; could be an annual event, building on the city's heritage

Threats

- Growth – this could be an opportunity if well-managed, but some members of the community want zero growth
- Growth can't be controlled outside of the city limits – but that growth affects the city
- Unrestrained growth in the State of Florida
- Water management district projects that affect the water levels of Keystone Heights' lakes
- Ability to secure water rights
- Legislative mandates affecting water levels (need a lobbyist to represent the interests of Keystone Heights)

Appendix B: Discussion Notes

Vision Statement Development

The City of Keystone Heights is a community where residents of all ages thrive together and enjoy vibrant parks, beautiful pristine lakes, and safe scenic trails.

Building Tomorrow Together: Provide a shared vision for our community, focused on collaborative actions, creating a vision that benefits all.

A welcoming community where small-town charm meets modern opportunity, fostering a vibrant community for all. (focus on growth, lakes, heritage)

A hometown lake living community with family friendly recreation.

A lakefront community cherished by its citizens and visitors.

Enjoy the laid-back life.

A place to find comfort under the trees, relaxation at the lake, and community with neighbors.

The city of lakes, peace and progress.

Mission Statement Development – additional submissions

To foster a welcoming community where residents thrive, traditions flourish and natural beauty is cherished.

Make small town living fun again.

The city will provide world-class customer service and be an anchor of stability for the region.

The city provides sound government focused on public safety, cleanliness and public service.

Responsive leadership that is focused on business development, sustainability, infrastructure, and community.

The city provides the citizens with honest, transparent communication regarding all city services.

Core Values Development – key word discussion

Integrity	Pride	Collaboration
Service before self	Honesty	Teamwork
Inclusion	Communication	Respect
Excellence	Transparency	Accountability
Initiative	Innovation	Public Service
Servant Leadership	Leadership	Safety

Strategic Goals Development – additional submissions

Strategic Priority: Sustainability

Improve and freshen signage.

Maintain adequate reserves.

Strategic Priority: Events

Consistent community events to bring our citizens together.

Communicate more with local businesses and develop a positive rapport using town halls and physical presence.

Strategic Priority: Local Economic Growth

Incentivize new business with tax breaks, marketing assistance, annexation of additional properties and streamlining licensing.

Identify needs and location to re-open the farmers' market in the downtown area.

Strategic Priority: Infrastructure

Prioritize pre-existing infrastructure projects.

Identify options to add public restrooms in the trailhead area.

Strategic Objectives Development – additional submissions

Strategic Priority: Sustainability – Goal #1

Repair and refurbish Geneva Jungle by July 2025.

Prioritize projects and costs of our safety assessment to be conducted by August 31, 2025.

Strategic Priority: Sustainability – Goal #2

By August 31, 2025 conduct an assessment and analysis of all critical infrastructure the city is responsible for providing and maintaining.

Develop an annual plan that drives city sustainability efforts.

Strategic Priority: Events – Goal #1

Begin coordination with the Heritage Commission to facilitate Chautauqua volunteer support from schools, volunteer organizations, and community members.

Identify pros and cons of March 2025 event for future plans by April 30, 2025.

Strategic Priority: Events – Goal #2

Launch volunteer strategy “test and tune” for July 4, 2025.

By October 2025, coordinate a meeting between the City of Keystone Heights and local interest group leaders to understand future plans and synchronize efforts.

Strategic Priority: Local Economic Growth – Goal #1

No later than 2028 complete the Lawrence Streetscape plan.

Delegation of the city management team to attend meetings with strategic partners as an ongoing process.

Strategic Priority: Local Economic Growth – Goal #2

By April 2026, design, cost-estimate, and award any contracts to facilitate the establishment of the museum and welcome center.

Public notice for bid for portable by September 30, 2025.

Strategic Priority: Infrastructure – Goal #1

By April 2026, design, cost-estimate, and award any contract to facilitate the establishment of additional downtown parking.

Explore technology capabilities to better access and manage by September 30, 2025.

Strategic Priority: Local Economic Growth – Goal #2

Explore outside-the-box parking and mural concept by June 30, 2025.

Execute completion of recreation upgrade by December 31, 2025 and vote on RFP for the tennis court by June 2025 council meeting.