

MINUTES

City Council Strategic Planning Meeting Blue Ridge Energy Corporate Office February 23, 2018 8:30 A.M.

Facilitator: Anthony Starr, Western Piedmont Council of Government.

Participants: Mayor Joseph Gibbons, Mayor Pro-Tem Ben Willis, T.J. Rohr, David Stevens, Todd Perdue, Crissy Thomas, Jonathan Beal, and Ike Perkins.

City Staff: City Manager, Scott Hildebran, City Clerk, Shirley Cannon, Finance Director, Donna Bean, Fire Chief, Ken Briscoe, Deputy Fire Chief (incoming Fire Chief) Ken Hair, Police Chief, Scott Brown, Economic Development Director, Kaylynn Horn, Public Information Officer, Joshua Harris, Planning Director, Jenny Wheelock, Public Utilities Director, Radford Thomas, Public Works Director, Charles Beck, incoming Public Works Director Jared Wright, Recreation Director, Kenny Story and Kyle Case, Main Street Coordinator. Customer Service Design Team Members in attendance were Daniel Clark, Zack Carter, Brent Phelps, Tim Sprouse and Chris Bumgarner.

Others in Attendance: Virginia Annable, *News-Topic*, and Jay Clapp, Ramey Kemp & Associates.

Call to Order

Mayor Gibbons welcomed everyone and stated this was a very important meeting for City Council since they would be establishing their upcoming priorities for 2018. Mayor Gibbons introduced Anthony Starr, Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Facilitator, of the Session. Mr. Starr reviewed the ground rules for the meeting and reviewed the agenda.

Customer Service Update

Zack Carter and Chris Bradshaw, co-leaders of the Customer Service Design Team, stated the City's Customer Service Program, which began in 2008, is an employee-driven program. They reviewed the City's eight customer service keys of personable, pro-active, effective communication, professionalism, timely & efficient, teamwork, equitable service and successful service delivery. Ongoing employee training sessions are held quarterly to reinforce the importance of the customer services keys to our operations.

The Team has implemented a program called "Everyday Heroes" as a way to recognize groups that may otherwise go unnoticed but are important to the operations of the City. The Team selects a group of employees who receive special recognition and a surprise visit with delivery of coffee, doughnuts, snacks, etc. They also highlighted several "thank you's" the City had received demonstrating excellent customer service. The Team has recently re-launched Team Talk, the employee newsletter, as a way information is shared with all employees. Mr. Carter mentioned the Golden Ticket award program whereby employees and/or Council may nominate an individual to receive a Golden Ticket for outstanding customer service.

Mr. Bradshaw stated Employee Appreciation Day (an event to thank city employees) was held at Bo's Entertainment last fall. The event was well attended and one of the most successful ever held.

It is the hope that the event can be held this year at Bo's as well. He also shared the Fire Department developed a callback survey program to measure their customer service. Staff made 464 call backs to customers receiving LFD service with 133 citizens participating in the survey. The department received ratings of 6.7 on a scale of 1 to 7. The Customer Service Team is exploring having another department participate in callback surveys in 2018.

Team member Joshua Harris reported the City is going to implement a Litter Sweep Campaign with the slogan "#LitterFreeLenoirNC". Tentative events dates are April 16 or April 23 and he encouraged employees to volunteer.

City Council asked about pocket guides that list all telephone numbers and contact information for Staff and inquired about additional customer service training for Council. Team members stated that would follow-up on both suggestions.

Mayor Gibbons commended the Design Team for the tremendous job they are doing and pointed out the program is continuing to grow with Council seeing the results of all their hard work.

On behalf of the Design Team, Mr. Carter and Mr. Bradshaw thanked City Council for all of their support.

Mission Statement & Vision Review

Mr. Starr requested City Council review the Mission and Vision Statement and suggest any revisions.

The mission of the City of Lenoir is:

- To serve our citizens and the community by providing a clean, safe, healthy, attractive living and business environment, through the efficient delivery of essential city services in a fiscally responsible manner.
- To identify, plan and act on opportunities for preserving and improving the quality of life of all of our citizens **and co-workers**.

The vision of the City of Lenoir is:

- We aspire to be the city of choice for ourselves and future generations- beautiful, clean and safe.

We will achieve our vision through:

- A healthy economy
- Strong businesses
- Vital neighborhoods
- A vibrant downtown
- Extensive recreational and cultural opportunities

We will preserve Lenoir's friendly, small town atmosphere and celebrate the diversity of our people.

We require a city government that is:

- Accessible **and engaged with the public**

- Accountable
- Efficient and **effective responsive**
- **Employer of choice**
- ~~Future oriented~~ **Forward thinking**
- Inclusive, Innovative, Collaborative
- Transparent
- Fiscally responsible
- With funding that is fair, affordable, and stable

All amendments approved are shown in **bold font** above. City Council also recommended publishing and posting the Mission/Vision Statement in Spanish.

State of the City Presentation – Mayor Gibbons/City Manager Hildebran

Mayor Gibbons and City Manager Hildebran reviewed a power point presentation “More in Lenoir” regarding the current state of the City.

City Manager Hildebran began by reviewing a list of new & expanded businesses that have recently opened in Lenoir and pointed out that Blue Ridge Energy has added a \$12.5 million new district office, Exela Pharma Sciences is in the process of completing a \$25 million expansion into the Old Expo Building and now has over 250 employees. Along with Exela, Woodgrain Millworks and Fairfield Chair have also completed expansions. Other expansions underway include Caldwell UNC Healthcare (\$23+ million) and an 85-room Hampton Inn & Suites. Mayor Gibbons highlighted Chick-fil-a and Golden Ticket Cinemas were two of the most requested new amenities to arrive.

Mr. Hildebran shared that 14 downtown properties have been sold and new residential construction includes the recently completed 50-unit Arbor Glen Senior Housing Complex. Approved residential construction includes Crescent Pointe at Greenhaven, which is a 60-unit senior housing complex.

Mayor Gibbons shared downtown accomplishments that include Moving Lenoir to 2nd Floor, the successful Branding Campaign “Together We Create”, Pop-out Dining, Wi-Fi and the new Duke Energy Charging Station. City Manager Hildebran related that Mayor Gibbons led efforts in raising \$125,000 for lighting at Walker Stadium and noted the City was also involved with the relocation and renovation of the Historic Rankin House which is home to Communities in Schools.

Other projects include the Lenoir Greenway, Rails to Trails Project (OVNHT) which calls for 330 miles of rail through four states. Part of the trail through Lenoir will follow an abandoned railroad along which the City’s Fairfield South Project known as “Funky Town”.

Infrastructure projects include the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) Conservation Easement on the Zacks Fork Property, two (2) new County EMS stations located in Valmead & Wilkesboro Boulevard and the Water Treatment Plant Improvements Projects, an \$11 million project which includes two (2) new filters, Active Flow System, and guaranteed 12 million gallons per day (MGD) service. Also, a new \$5 million project that includes a chemical storage facility with piping and control systems is almost completed.

Other infrastructure projects completed or underway include the Biosolids Project at Lower Creek WWTP, Renovation Project at Gunpowder Creek WWTP, Fire Station #3 in Lower Creek,

Mulberry Optimist Park Renovation, J.E. Broyhill Park Improvements Project, Hospital Avenue Sidewalk Project, and North Main Street Small Area Plan.

Mr. Hildebran commented that furniture is still strong in Lenoir and reviewed a list of the City's largest taxpayers. Caldwell County also moved to a Tier 2 economic status in state rankings and unemployment in the County is currently at 4.5%. The median income grew by 2.5% which will assist with growth. Future challenges are as follows:

- Vacant/Dilapidated Housing
- Market Rate Housing-New Stock of Single and Multi-Family
- Infrastructure- Repair/Replacement
- Retaining/Recruiting Youth and Millennials
- Changing Perception

City Council comments were very positive on all the activities that are underway and suggested sharing this update with the community.

Facilitated Discussion; Session 1 2017 Council Budget Priorities & Completed Activities

Mr. Hildebran reviewed the 2017 City Council Priorities as well 2017 Completed Activities.

2017 City Council Priorities

- 1) Housing
- 2) Economic Development
- 3) Employee Compensation
- 4) Staffing
- 5) Healthy Infrastructure
- 6) North Main Area Plan
- 7) Fairfield South Area Plan
- 8) US 321 Beautification Plan
- 9) Reduce unnecessary spending
- 10) Assess viability of Sister Cities

2017 Completed Activities

- Bost Lumber Sewer Replacement (Steele Street to College Avenue)
- LPD Security Fencing Project
- Public Engagement - community meetings & transparency
- Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
- Walker Stadium
- Downtown Main Street Revitalization
- Additional Staffing - Main Street Coordinator
- Downtown Branding Campaign
- Rankin House
- Downtown WI-FI Improvements (provided by Google)
- Gigabit Access - Downtown Business District
- Technology Utilization:
- Website Upgrade
- Streaming Council Meetings (Live and/or On-Demand)
- Electronic Payments

- Electronic Newsletter Re-launch
- Everbridge City Alerts (Mass Communications System)
- City IT Improvements
- Caldwell Heritage Museum – Landscaping/Signage
- UTV's Purchased (Police and Fire)

Mr. Starr asked Council to comment on the 2017 priorities and accomplishments.

Comments

- Salaries-more difficult, if any savings will apply towards compensation (Retain Staff in Fire and Police)
- Address issue of millennials
- Street Paving
- Infrastructure – discussion re: bond issue dedicated to infrastructure, educate public-let them decide, have detailed plan. Mr. Hildebran will review process and report back to Council.
- Issue of Security
- Fairfield South – sculptures
- Sister Cities – program was started years ago-now can use social media to develop relationships

Mr. Starr asked Council what issues/projects from 2017 stand out to you?

- Employee Compensation
- Housing/Code Violations
- Market Rate Housing
- Employee Retention (esp. Police & Fire)
- Infrastructure
- Marketing assets
- Street Paving
- Community Engagement
- Payment Processing –make online payment process more streamlined
- IT upgrades

Council further discussed addressing aging infrastructure and paving needs and mentioned building a documented list of these needs. Mr. Starr then asked City Council to identify what items should be continued in 2018-2019.

Items to be Continued as 2018-2019 Priorities by Rank

	Votes
Employee Compensation	7
Housing/Code Enforcement	3
Market rate housing	2
Housing	6
Employee Retention (esp. Police & Fire)	2
Infrastructure	7
Marketing Assets	1
Street paving	5

22	
Community Engagement	3
Payment Processing	1
IT upgrades	-

Facilitated Discussion; Session 2 Downtown Traffic Study; Preliminary Data

Mr. Jay Clapp, Ramey Kemp & Associates, reviewed a power point of the proposed conversion of traffic flow from one-way to two-way of Main Street and West Avenue. (A copy of the power point is attached to these minutes as information).

Council discussed the cost of the project along with the pros and cons. Mr. Clapp displayed a map of the thirteen intersections on Harper & West Avenue and the existing traffic volume. Deputy Fire Chief Ken Hair pointed out the project design could create issues for the Fire Department because the trucks take up all the lanes when responding to an emergency call.

Mr. Starr asked Council for their comments regarding the proposed two-way traffic conversion.

Downtown Traffic Study Issues

- Cost is a concern
- Impact on emergency services
- Possible reduction of parking
- Outside dining impacts/opportunities
- Traffic circles accommodating Fire Department
- Harper/Ridge/Norwood Intersection
- Feel strongly that we do this
- How it works with walkability and bike use
- Citizen education has to be spot on

It was noted the proposal needs to include alternatives for the Fire Department.

Facilitated Discussion; Session 3 Bike Plan Review

Planning Director Jenny Wheelock presented a summary report of the proposed Bike Plan. (A copy of the Bike Plan is available online at www.cityoflenoir.com).

Director Wheelock pointed out the City received a NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Division Planning Grant with a 15% City match in March 2016. The Steering Committee has held four public meetings and two public “open house” meetings plus conducted an online survey. Recommendations for a combination of three types of facilities include: 1) shared w/motor vehicle traffic; 2) dedicated facilities (bike lanes-conventional, separated, buffered) and; 3) shared w/pedestrians (greenway/multi-use paths/side paths).

Next, Director Wheelock presented a list of Priority Projects including Map ID, Street, Start, End, Type, Implementation, Length, and cost estimate. The top six (6) Priority Projects are:

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) Harper Avenue | 2) Google Connector, Phase 1 | 3) Google Connector, Phase 2 |
| 4) Pennton Avenue | 5) College Avenue | 6) West Avenue |

Director Wheelock emphasized the modification to street design to accommodate two-way traffic should consider inclusion of bicycle facilities. She reported the Planning Board will review the

plan at their February 26 meeting and this item will be on the City Council agenda for consideration of approval at the March 20 meeting.

Bike Plan Comments

- Pennton Avenue is the top priority (cost/benefit is huge)
- Intersection at White Tire is safety issue (Pennton/Harper Intersection)
- Is Harper right-of-way wide enough for bike lanes if made a two-way street
- Impact/Integration with two-way traffic study
- Need creative funding solutions

Note: Pennton Avenue seemed to be the consensus for the top priority.

In addition, Public Works Director Beck stated Public Works Staff could do some of the work to make the project more cost effective should the project move forward.

Facilitated Discussion; Session 4

Mr. Starr asked City Manager Hildebran to review the potential list of priorities for City Council to consider in the 2018-2019 Budget process.

Mr. Starr asked Council what new items/issues should be included as priorities for 2018-2019. Following discussion, the list is as follows:

<u>New Items/Issues/Priorities by Rank</u>	<u>Votes</u>
Neighborhood Branding Signage	5
City facilities upkeep/maintenance	3
Diversity on boards/staff (race, age, income)	2
Giving people reasons to stop and spend money in our town	-
Public engagement (neighborhood meetings & walk/think)	3
City Hall rehab depending on expense	1
Address major visibility issues (Smith Crossroads, mall, etc.)	3
Downtown/Main Street revitalization	-
Work on commercial blight (city-wide & downtown)	5
Inner City improvements around the downtown	1
Sidewalk improvements & expansion	1

General Comments at conclusion of meeting

- Established ongoing and continued projects & identified new issues. Good session, next step is funding. Staff came up with ideas on how to grow. Lot of great projects for 2018-making a lot of progress.
- Impressive on what Staff has accomplished-followed through on Council's priorities list-proud of Staff.
- Appreciate Staff-makes a good impact-able to see where we are and where we are going. Take care of employees first. Communication to community is more effective-proud of Staff.
- Appreciate all the information & seeing how things are. Amazing what employees can get done.
- Most impressive on how we come together in sync-all in effort. A lot needs to be done, but we have the best people who save the City money. Keep utilizing what we have-we value what we have and it's good to be part of a plan.

- Public Works has an attitude that “we can do it”- the department has saved money. Also, I feel like we don’t have to go outside for personnel replacements.
- Our priority has shifted from being all about economic development, but the bike lanes, sidewalks, etc. will encouraged more economic development.

Councilman Rohr asked to see the City’s previous priority lists from the past five to ten years.

Mayor Gibbons commented the City is so much better now, but asked how does Council advance these new priorities?

City Manager Hildebran stated that all issues are important and he will compile a list of the top items to share with Council. (A 2018 Priorities List is attached to these minutes as information).

Wrap-up & Adjourn:

Mr. Starr thanked City Council for the opportunity to preside over the meeting and also commended them for their great working relationship and comradery.

Mayor Gibbons thanked Mr. Starr for the great partnership between the City and the WPCOG and commented it was great to have such an outstanding organization the City can call on.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Attachments

Power Point (Ramey Kemp & Associates)

2018 Priorities List

Conversion of Traffic Flow from One-Way to Two-Way

Presented By



**RAMEY KEMP
&
ASSOCIATES**

February 22, 2018

Pros and Cons

Pros:

- + Reduced traffic speeds
- + Increased visibility and access to businesses
- + Safer for pedestrians

Cons:

- Increased congestion
- Reduction of on-street parking
- Could be costly



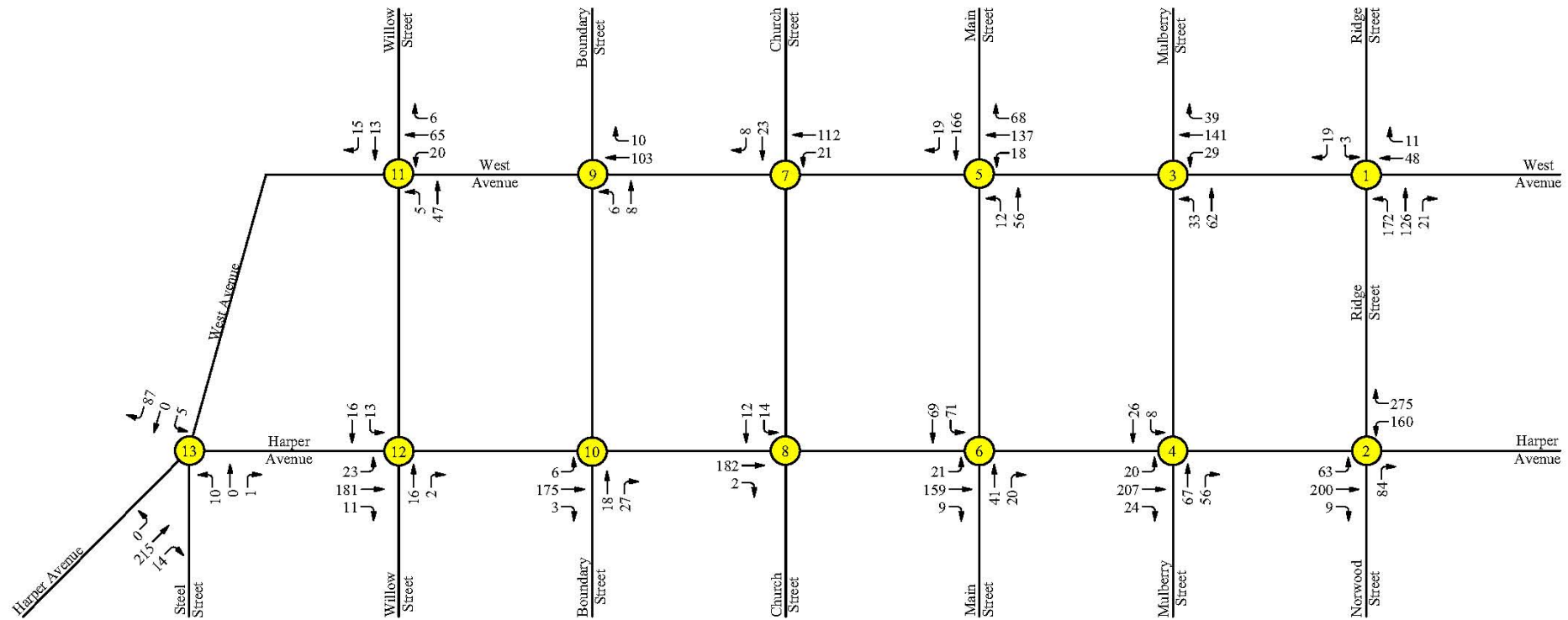
Harper Avenue / West Avenue
Two-Way Conversion Study
Lenoir, NC

Site Location Map

Scale: Not to Scale

Figure



**LEGEND**

Signalized Intersection

X Peak Hour Traffic



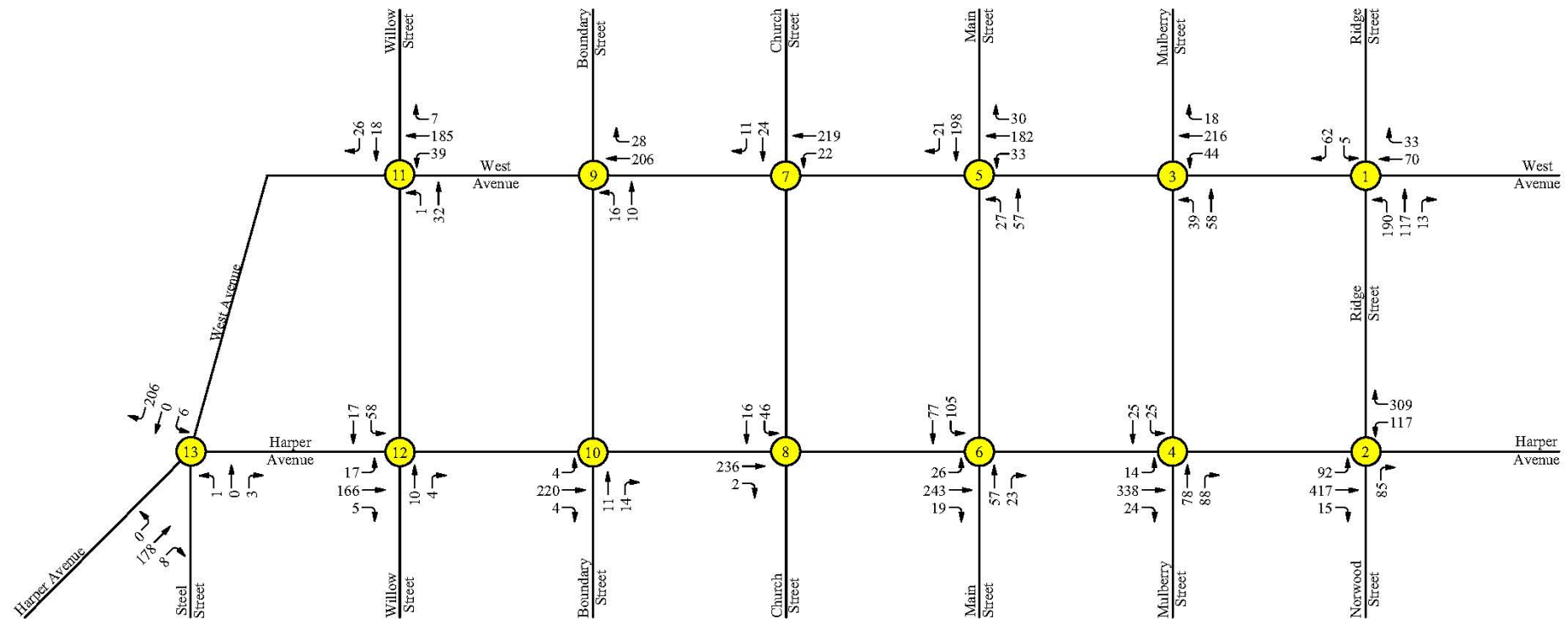
Harper Avenue / West Avenue
Two-Way Conversion Study
Lenoir, NC

Existing Traffic Volumes
[AM Peak Hour]

Scale: Not to Scale

Figure



**LEGEND**

Signalized Intersection

X Peak Hour Traffic



Harper Avenue / West Avenue
Two-Way Conversion Study
Lenoir, NC

Existing Traffic Volumes
[PM Peak Hour]

Scale: Not to Scale

Figure



Next Steps

- ◇ Complete traffic analysis for existing one-way traffic flow pattern
- ◇ Estimate traffic diversion and adjust traffic patterns
- ◇ Complete traffic analysis for proposed two-way traffic flow pattern
- ◇ Prepare conceptual design illustrating the conversion
- ◇ Develop an opinion of probable cost for conversion

2018 Council Budget Priorities

1. Employee Compensation:

- Continue efforts to offer competitive compensation and benefits for employee recruitment and retention

2. Healthy Infrastructure:

- Street Paving
- Downtown Traffic Study
- Bike Plan (Pennton Avenue)
- Maintain City Facilities
- Water/Sewer Improvements
- Stormwater
- City Hall
- Fire Station #3
- Sidewalks/Greenway/OVT (also downtown sidewalks)
- Optimist Park/Mulberry Improvements/JE Broyhill Park Improvements
- Information Technology

3. Housing:

- Minimum Housing Enforcement
- Pursue Market Rate Housing
- Market City-owned Properties to Sell
- Encourage Downtown Living (Moving Lenoir to the 2nd Floor)
- Communicate building “spec” homes in shovel-ready areas such as Hibriten Mountain, Stonecroft, Huntington Woods & Summerhill
- Work with WPCOG Vacant & Substandard Housing Task Force

4. US 321 Beautification

- Neighborhood Branding Signage
- Work on Commercial Blight (city-wide & downtown)
- Address Major Visibility Issues (Smith Crossroad, Old Mall, etc.)
- Implement North Main Area Plan & Fairfield South Plan

5. Public Engagement

- Neighborhood Meetings
- Walk-through's
- State of the City Presentations

6. Economic Development:

- Explore what other local governments are doing with public/private partnerships
- Maintain Healthy Infrastructure
- Continue Work with EDC
- Market Quality of Life Amenities (Greenway, OVT, Bike Plan, etc.)