



Graceful Great Blue,
by Kelly Mieszkalski.



ORANGE COUNTY

NORTH CAROLINA

STRATEGIC PLAN FY2025-2029

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Canopy 2, by Diane Cashion

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Board of Commissioner's Message

After months of engagement, community building and collaboration, we are pleased to present Orange County's five-year Strategic Plan. This plan is an aspirational endeavor for the future of the County – who we are, who we want to be, and how to get there. Its success depends on all of us working together to implement the plan, report and evaluate our progress and make the adjustments necessary to continue moving the County forward.

This strategic plan is an essential tool in laying out ways we can make the County stronger. While we continue with our clear focus on delivering excellent service each day, this document is a public declaration of our commitment to work to achieve the County's

vision. Together, we created a vision for the future of the County: We are a diverse, inclusive, and healthy county working together to strengthen our community and enhance the quality of life for all residents.

Key to the formation of this Strategic Plan is the input and feedback we received from each one of you. It is through your discussions, insights, and input, that this Strategic Plan was developed. It was built and informed by your needs, your priorities, and your dreams. These are your visions and priorities, and we look forward to putting them into action.



Phyllis Portie-Ascott
District 2

Amy Fowler
At Large

Marilyn Carter
District 1

Sally Greene
At Large

Earl McKee
District 2

Jamezetta Bedford
Chair District 1

Jean Hamilton
Vice Chair District 1

Plan at a Glance

Mission Statement

Orange County is a visionary leader in providing governmental services valued by our community, beyond those required by law, in an equitable, sustainable, innovative, and efficient way.

Vision Statement

We are a diverse, inclusive, and healthy county working together to strengthen our community and enhance the quality of life for all residents.

Guiding Principles

Communication and Awareness

We provide information and opportunities for engagement in a transparent manner so that all in our community have knowledge, understanding, and a voice.

Inclusivity and Engagement

We foster an environment in which all are welcomed, represented, and empowered to participate in and feel connected to their community.

Dedication and Respect

We commit to our roles in public service and organizational excellence by fostering the skills, talents, and innovation of our residents, employees, volunteers, and boards needed to carry out this work.

Stewardship and Advocacy

We make proactive data supported decisions and advocate to local, state and Federal governments in response to our community's needs in a way that best utilizes our resources.

Partnership and Collaboration

We build meaningful relationships and connections that allow us to create holistic and integrated systems of support for all.

Social Justice

We reject oppression and inequity by ensuring fair and equitable treatment of all people.

Climate Action and Sustainability

We recognize that our environment is critical to our existence and are deliberate in protecting, preserving, and sustaining our natural resources for the continued good of all.

GOAL STATEMENT

Promote sustainability and resiliency across the County and collaborate with our partners to activate our community, protect and preserve our natural resources, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Objectives

1. Identify the priorities and resources necessary to implement the Climate Action Plan.
2. Invest in our infrastructure to reduce the environmental impact of the County fleet/facilities and improve safety.
3. Improve educational opportunities for County staff and community members on climate action and available resources to advance climate action projects.
4. Incentivize and promote sustainable agriculture and local food systems development through supportive policy, funding, farmland protection and educational outreach.
5. Review land use policies to promote and connect Town, County, and private trails and open spaces.
6. Protect water supply/watersheds.
7. Conserve and protect high priority open space, including Natural Heritage sites, nature preserves, watershed riparian buffers, and prime/threatened farmland.
8. Include environmental stewardship objectives in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Performance Measures

1. Implement 50% (35) of Climate Action Plan Strategies by June 30, 2029, and document strategy status in Climate Action Tracker.
2. Reduce the energy intensity (energy used in KBTU, or one-thousand British thermal units, per building square foot) of county facilities by 10% to 78.5 KBTUs per square foot by June 30, 2029.
3. Increase the annual solar energy generated at County facilities by 167% by June 30, 2029.
4. Replace 75% of County non-first responder vehicles (7-8 vehicles) each year with electric or other alternative fuel vehicles (biodiesel, ethanol, hydrogen, etc.).
5. Increase rating in the bi-annual community survey on the following two questions by one percentage point every 2 years:
How would you rate the County:
 - A. As a community committed to green & sustainable practices
 - B. As a place that prioritizes environmental protection
6. Establish baseline and increase the number of sustainable farming practices* farmers implement after participating in sustainable farming programs, outreach, or education each year.
7. Permanently protect 300 additional acres of farmland, priority natural areas, riparian buffer lands, floodplains, and wildlife habitat over the next 5 years.

**Sustainable Farming practices are defined as practices that improve soil health, water management, biodiversity and/or ability to farm long term.*

GOAL STATEMENT

Increase equitable access to care and social safety net programming to promote the physical, social, and mental well-being of our community.



Objectives

1. Improve harm reduction, prevention, and therapeutic interventions for adults and children experiencing behavioral health issues, substance use disorder, and intellectual or developmental disability.
2. Expand access to quality, affordable healthcare services. (e.g., Crisis Diversion facility, Medicaid expansion, crisis response, behavioral health).
3. Provide protective services for our most vulnerable community members with practices and resources that support reducing risk factors, ensuring safety, and achieving permanency.
4. Support the basic needs and financial security of low-income families through a robust safety net of economic supports that help build long-term financial security.
5. Provide deflection, diversion, therapeutic interventions, and re-entry support, including housing for justice-involved children and adults.
6. Invest in, support, train, and retain our community safety, health, and emergency services employees and direct care workforce.
7. Provide sustainable, equitable, and high-quality community safety and emergency services to meet the community's evolving needs.
8. Invest in services and programs that improve the health and quality of life of the community (e.g., recreation and public open spaces, arts, etc.)

Performance Measures

1. Implement Post Overdose Response Team (PORT):
 - A. PORT contacts 90% of patients referred within 24 hours.
 - B. PORT establishes and maintains an 80% induction to transfer of care and completion of medication assisted treatment for opioid use disorders.
2. Increase enrollment of Medicaid eligible residents by 1% (200 individuals) annually through Fiscal Year 2028-29.
3. Increase by 2% annually the number of individuals deflected or diverted from criminal legal system involvement, by referring individuals to the Criminal Justice Resource Department deflection and diversion programs.
4. Maintain an annual retention rate of 86% or more among:
 - Deputy Sheriffs,
 - EMTs and Paramedics,
 - 911 Call Takers and Telecommunicators, and
 - Protective Services Social Workers through Fiscal Year 2028-29.



5. Achieve by April 1, 2025, and maintain a 65% adherence rate to a 15 minute or less emergent total response time for events requiring critical intervention by Emergency Medical Services.
6. Train 80 individuals annually on mental health topics including Mental Health First Aid and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills.
7. Work with families to collect at least 70% of all current child support owed and collect arrears for at least 70% of the families served by the Child Support Services Program annually.
8. Serve 96% of the estimated eligible food insecure Orange County households with food and nutrition services annually.
9. Provide 128 families annually with case-management through the Family Success Alliance program to connect them to medical/mental health care, housing, or food with support, information, and referral services.
10. Increase the percentage of children achieving permanency through reunification when exiting foster care by 1 percentage point per year.
11. Increase by 10 quarterly the number of 911 responses made by the Mobile Crisis Team (CARE).
12. All first responder county employees complete annual training to ensure cultural competence.
13. Increase positive responses to the statement “County provides adequate amenities, access to leisure activities, & cultural activities” by 1 percentage point in the 2027 and 2029 community surveys.

GOAL STATEMENT

Promote equitable and accessible housing and address housing disparities through policies, partnerships, and collaboration to create a thriving community.



Objectives

1. Use regular federal and local funds to build and/or acquire new affordable housing.
2. Address need and any policy barriers to increase access to emergency shelter beds and other low-barrier housing, including eviction diversion.
3. Invest in permanent supportive housing and help residents achieve housing stability.
4. Prioritize and select County-owned land and/or facilities, including the Greene Tract, as part of an overall plan of facilities to create crisis, bridge, low barrier, affordable, and permanent housing.
5. Review County ordinances, policies, agreements, and the regulatory processes to streamline practices, and increase opportunities and reduce barriers to construct housing.
6. Increase opportunities for public employees to buy and rent homes where they work.
7. Expand resources and invest in housing designed for our aging and disabled residents.
8. Rehabilitate and repair existing housing to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing and avoid displacement.
9. Increase representation of people with lived experience on housing related matters.
10. Support unhoused residents in obtaining temporary and permanent housing.
11. Ensure timely and thorough investigations and dispositions to all civil rights and fair housing complaints.

Performance Measures

1. Increase the number of affordable (80% AMI or below) housing units funded by Orange County by an average of 10 annually over 5 years, prioritizing 60% AMI or below.
2. Increase the amount of immediately accessible cold weather emergency beds available in the community by 25% by 2026.
3. Establish baseline and increase by 5 per year the number of individuals moved from Bridge Housing programs to stable permanent housing.
4. Increase the number of households housed by permanent supportive housing by 10% annually.
5. 70% of residents served by eviction diversion programs avoid eviction in the next 12 months.



6. Establish baseline and decrease by 5% the median amount of time it takes from first development permit application to certificate of occupancy issuance for housing developments by June 30, 2029.
7. Establish baseline and increase by 5% the awareness of available housing and rental assistance programs among county employees by June 30, 2029.
8. Increase by an average of 10% annually over 5 years the number of housing units repaired or rehabilitated.
9. At least 25% of Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness, Housing Choice Voucher, and Affordable Housing Advisory Board Members are individuals who have experienced homelessness or housing insecurity themselves by June 2029.
10. Reduce the number of individuals who are unhoused by 10% per year, prioritizing protection from displacement.
11. Process 8 housing discrimination cases per year.
12. Continue providing rent cost support through federal housing choice vouchers for 650 households annually.

GOAL STATEMENT

Collaborate with our regional partners to expand, integrate/connect, and provide accessible public transportation options.

Objectives

1. Identify priorities and resources necessary to implement the Orange County Transit Plan.
2. Increase community awareness of all modes of transportation including transit, bike and pedestrian, vehicle, and all other modes.
3. Support road projects that address congestion and reduce commute time using the County's Complete Streets policy.
4. Coordinate transit investments with municipal and county land use planning to reduce vehicle miles travelled and to provide more equitable access to shopping, employment, medical centers, college campuses, etc.
5. Invest in implementing the County's Safe Routes to Schools plan.
6. Update transportation related plans to provide more multi-modal options including rural Orange County.

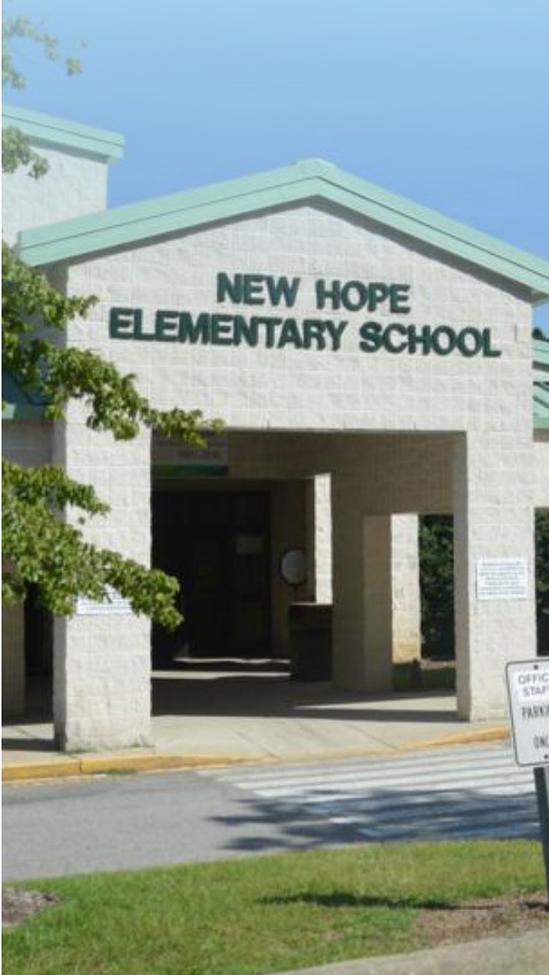
Performance Measures

1. Increase ridership by 5% each year on fixed route, demand response, and mobility on demand transportation services.
2. County transportation information is included in 90 outreach events each year.
3. Increase by 1 percentage point every two years the percentage of residents who are satisfied with biking, walking, and bus travel, as reported in the community survey.
4. Add at least one transportation network connection (sidewalks, trails, transit stops, etc.) each year through implementation of the Transportation Multi-Modal Plan.
5. Increase by 1 percentage point each year the percentage of on time pick ups and drop offs on fixed route, demand response, and mobility on demand transportation services.



GOAL STATEMENT

Enhance and maintain quality school operations and infrastructure and cultivate lifelong learning.



Objectives

1. Foster collaborative relationships with formal and informal educational organizations and agencies to provide opportunities for community members to meet, connect, and learn together.
2. Improve school readiness and educational outcomes by providing access, training, tools, technology, and other resources needed to thrive.
3. Provide support for Durham Tech continuing education, college and career readiness programming.
4. Improve learning environments by investing in facilities that address repair, renovation, and educational adequacy needs.
5. Invest in and implement a plan that supports schools operational and facility funding needs.
6. Implement the recommendations of the Schools Safety Task Force.

Performance Measures

1. Increase by 1% each year the number of children from low-income households enrolled annually in the childcare subsidy program.
2. Reach residents in all 15 zip codes of the county with digital literacy workshops offered annually.
3. Implement the Long-Range School Optimization Plan, funding planning for first construction in FY25-26, followed by construction on the first project in FY26-27. Utilize the remaining funds by the end of the 10-year plan period.
4. Track and report quarterly on school capital spending on high priority needs and other capital uses.
5. Annual meeting of the School Safety Task Force or other group convened by the Board of County Commissioners to review policies that address safety in the school districts and provide education on laws addressing school disruptions. Implement recommendation #3 in the School Safety Task Force Final Report by FY2025-26 and recommendation #8 by FY2026-27.
6. Establish baseline and increase visitors to the Southern Branch Library by 5% annually.
7. Increase by 1 percentage point annually the percentage of Durham Tech Promise scholarship recipients who complete a program or transfer to a four-year college or university.

GOAL STATEMENT

Foster an environment that attracts and retains sustainable and diverse businesses and visitors, employment opportunities, and diversifies our tax base.



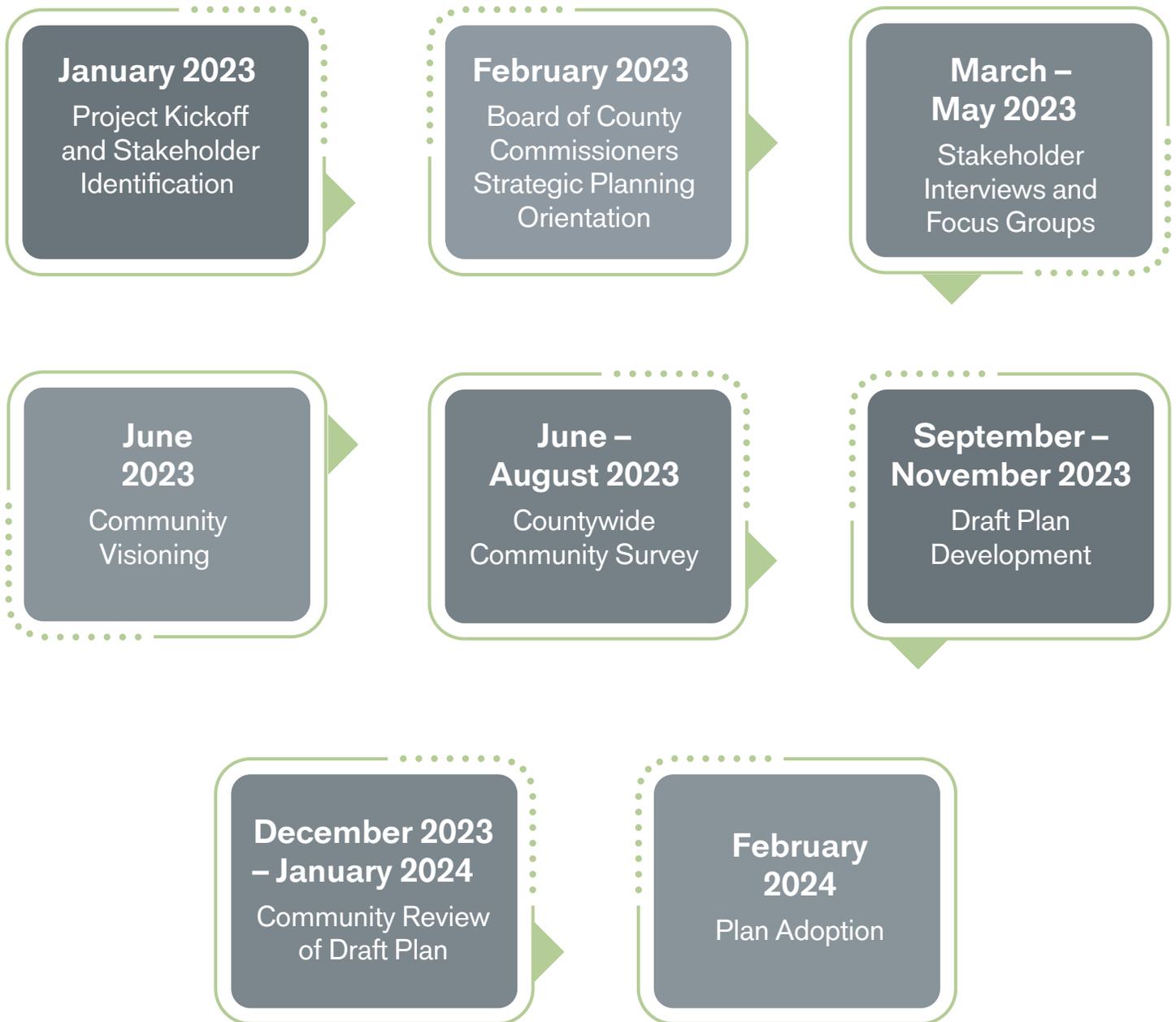
Objectives

1. Provide family-oriented and inclusive programming or other cultural events for residents and visitors.
2. Review and revise County policies and regulations to support business investment in Orange County.
3. Streamline and digitize business processes to facilitate efficient interactions between employers and County departments.
4. Provide resources to new and expanding, small, creative, and agri-businesses that add character and quality of life to our community to attract employers, employees, and visitors.
5. Increase access to and awareness of resources and assistance available to residents and businesses.
6. Provide workforce and business development resources to enhance the skills of residents of the County.
7. Expand the non-residential tax base.

Performance Measures

1. Establish a baseline of tourism resources invested in community partners producing cultural events by June 30, 2025, and evaluate the economic impact annually.
2. Establish baseline and increase by 1 percentage point each year the percentage of Small Business Investment Grant recipients that are still in business one year after receiving a grant.
3. Establish baseline and increase by 1 percentage point each year the percentage of Agricultural Economic Development Grant Program recipients' farms that are still in operation one year after receiving the grant.
4. Establish baseline and increase by 3 percentage points annually the percentage of residents enrolled in Employment Services who complete an employment or training related program and/or gain employment.
5. Establish baseline and increase by 1 percentage point annually the percentage of residents enrolled in Durham Tech apprenticeship and workforce development programs who complete an employment or training related program and/or gain employment.

Timeline



Public Engagement Summary



4

Focus Group



40

Participants



5,590

Total Visits

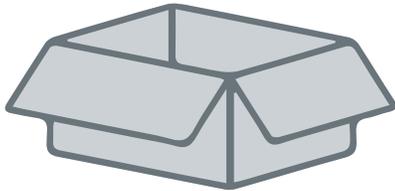
311

Survey Responses

49

Ideas

Meeting-in-a-box



7

Participants



1

Community Pop-up Event

Employee Survey



406

Responses

Community Survey
(statistically valid)



604

Responses

Community Survey
(non-random)



696

Responses

Demographics

Orange County Population



134,010
2010

148,911
2020

161,272
2030



\$79,205

Median Household Income*



\$339,900

Median Household Value



93.7%

High School Graduate
or Higher

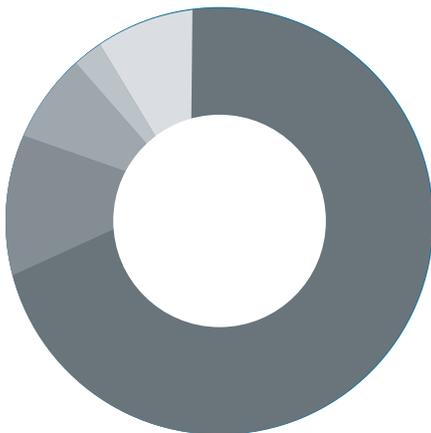


12.2%

Residents Below
Poverty Level

Source: 2022 Population Estimates, US Census Bureau *in 2021 dollars

Race and Ethnicity



68.8%

White or Caucasian
(Non-Hispanic)

12%

Black or African
American

8.8%

Hispanic

8.2%

Asian or
Asian Indian

2.8%

Two or More
Races

Source: North Carolina Office of State Budget & Management, State Demographer

What's Next?

Putting the Plan Into Action

Now that the strategic plan is adopted, the implementation phase commences.

This involves translating the outlined strategies into actionable steps, assigning responsibilities, and establishing timelines.

Regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be put in place to assess progress and make adjustments as needed.

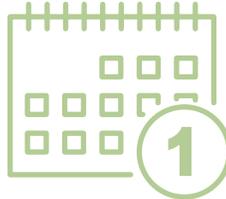
Feedback loops will also be established to help ensure continuous improvement and alignment with the County's overarching goals.

Successful execution of the strategic plan will require adaptability, clear communication, and a commitment to achieving the defined objectives.

Stay involved and curious about the process to learn more about our progress on the plan.

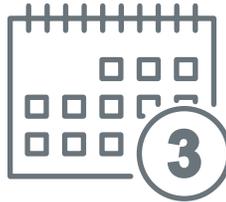
Keeping Track Of Progress

How are we doing? We'll let you know!



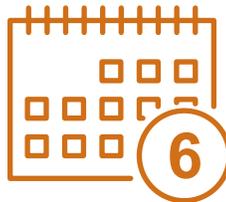
MONTHLY

County staff will evaluate and discuss progress on Strategic Plan goals.



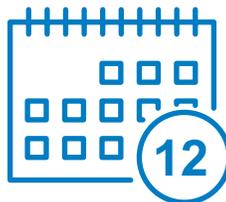
QUARTERLY

County leadership will provide the County Manager's Office with progress updates for each Strategic Plan goal.



TWICE A YEAR

County Manager's Office will prepare an update to the Board for each Strategic Plan goal, including significant wins and challenges.



ANNUALLY

The County Manager's Office will prepare a year end update detailing progress on each Strategic Plan goal. Report to be presented to Board and shared on orangecountync.gov for public access.

Acknowledgments

This strategic plan is the result of the combined efforts of our County's residents, elected officials, employees, and community stakeholders.

Orange County would like to thank everyone who provided their knowledge and insights throughout the process and who dedicated their time to making this Strategic Plan come to life.



ORANGE COUNTY

NORTH CAROLINA

STRATEGIC PLAN FY2025-2029