

City of Emeryville

City Council Strategic Planning Session

Held March 21, 2025



The City of Emeryville held a City Council Strategic Planning Session on March 21, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Community Center. The session was facilitated by Raftelis.

Summary Results

The results of the session (detailed further in this report) were:

- Review of governance roles and practices
- Sharing of long-term visions
- Received information from City Manager and Assistant City Manager on status of existing Council priorities and other organizational initiatives
- Council consensus on four multi-year goals
 - Livable, Safe and Vibrant Community
 - Quality Infrastructure and Environment Stewardship
 - Dynamic and Growing Businesses
 - Resilient Organization and Employer of Choice
- Foundational principle affirmed: Financial Health and Sustainability
- Four priorities established by Council:
 - Bicycle and pedestrian focused projects: 40th Street redesign and Ashby interchange
 - New website
 - Revenue, budget, and audits; and researching revenue measures for 2026
 - Sutter Health development

Participants

The City Council and Executive Team participated in this session. Several other managers attended as observers.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• David Mourra, Mayor• Sukhdeep Kaur, Vice Mayor• Matthew Solomon, Council Member• Kalimah A. Priforce, Council Member• Courtney Welch, Council Member• LaTanya Bellow, City Manager• John Kennedy, City Attorney• Pedro Jimenez, Assistant City Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jeff Jennings, Police Chief• Lilybell Nakamura, Human Resources Director• Rebekka Sermeno, Community Services Director• Randall West, Alameda County Fire Department• Mohamed Alaoui, Public Works Director• Chadrick Smalley, Community development Director• Michael Parenti, Information Technology Director• April Richardson, City Clerk
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Facilitators: Jan Perkins and Julie Gieseke of Raftelis.

Session Objectives

- Affirm roles and create norms for governing
- Establish our Strategic Plan
- Strengthen the team

Session Agenda

- Icebreaker
- Discuss effective governance
- Review Strategic Plan Framework
- Share long-term visions
- Discuss and affirm broad multi-year goals
- Status of existing Council approved projects and other organizational priorities
- Establish Council's top priorities
- Wrap up

Governance

Achieving important results for the community requires effective governance as well as clear goals. In this part of the session, the City Council, along with the City Manager, City Attorney and Assistant City Manager, discussed governance.

The City Council discussed the attributes of an exceptional council, referencing an article by the *Institute for Local Government*. The overall perspective was that Emeryville reflects the attributes, which are:

1. Have a **sense of team** – a partnership with the city manager to govern and manage the city
2. Have **clear roles** and responsibilities that are understood and adhered to
3. Honor **the relationship** with staff and each other
4. Routinely conduct **effective meetings**
5. Hold themselves and the city **accountable**
6. Have members who practice **continuous improvement**



Comments included:

- A sense of team, as a partnership is important
- Adding a seventh attribute would be reflecting the will of the people
- Conducting effective meetings, which includes being prepared, asking questions in advance, and acting on an agenda efficiently
- Having clear roles and responsibilities

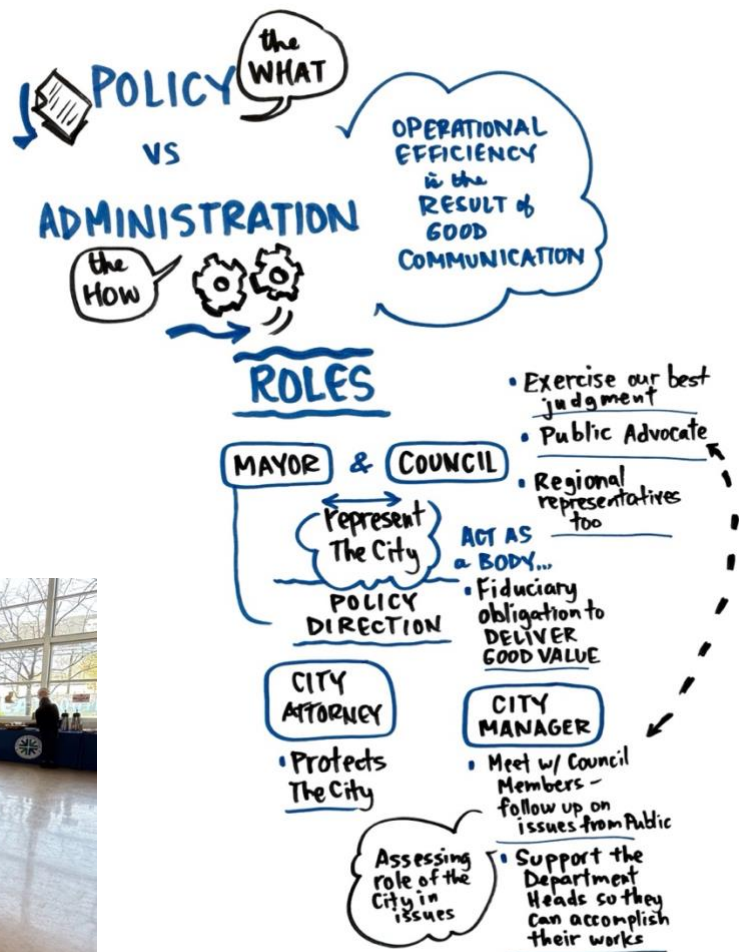
- Accountability encompasses all of the other attributes
- Practicing continuous improvement by learning from other elected leaders (example: League of CalCities sessions)
- Teamwork – things get done when we work together
- Well-implemented decisions through our professional staff

Roles within the Council/Manager form of government were discussed.

- **Mayor:** Chairs Council meetings, represents the City and serves as spokesperson, assists in creating consensus on Council, is one member of the City Council, communicates with the public
- **Council:** Sets policy as a body, appoints the City Manager and City Attorney, communicates with the public, sits on regional committees, does not direct staff
- **City Manager:** Serves as chief executive officer of the organization (appoints, directs, and supervises all City staff), manages operations, offers policy advice to the Council, communicates with the public, implements policy of the Council as a body
- **City Attorney:** Provides advice to the Council and staff on City matters, approves legal documents, handles litigation

The graphic highlights some of the discussion. Comments included:

- The Mayor is one member of the Council, one vote
- Council has a fiduciary obligation to deliver good value
- Council takes in public input and then exercises good judgement in making a decision
- Councilmembers serve as regional representatives
- Good communication is key to operational efficiency



Accomplishments

The session celebrated some key successes that have moved Emeryville forward, from building affordable housing to strengthening public trust. Examples shared by members of Council in their pre-planning interviews with the facilitator were:

- Hiring our new City Manager
- Positive relationships with staff
- Staff retention
- Crime reduction
- Solid credit rating
- Public trust
- Better engagement with community
- Sustainable transportation options
- Meeting Regional Housing Needs Allocation numbers
- Building affordable housing
- Economic development gains
- Development of toxic sites into community-oriented spaces
- Public art
- Capital improvement plan, good implementation
- Getting important goals accomplished
- Navigating through pandemic
- Community services programming, events
- Quiet Zone

Council members and executive staff then reflected on what made these successes possible and how they can build on this momentum:



Visioning: Looking to the Future

The Council and the executive team then engaged in a visioning exercise, responding to two questions:

1. What is **true today** about Emeryville that you hope will still be true in 10 years?
2. What is **not true now** about Emeryville that you hope will be true in 10 years?

Members of Council shared their responses, as shown in the graphic. Council and staff agreed that Emeryville is currently efficient, collaborative, listens to community needs, is safe, and is improving quality of life in many ways. Some hopes for Emeryville in 10 years are for the city to be viewed as a premier business, arts and recreation area; infrastructure that is fully addressed; is home to many families; is a zero climate leader; and inequities are corrected.



The Assistant City Manager summarized the responses from the executive team. The themes from the executive team were for what is **true today**: sense of a “community city,” focus on infrastructure, quality services, committed staff, attracting businesses. What staff hopes will be **true in 10 years** included new police and fire facilities, more staffing, and an even greater quality of life.



Strategic Plan

A new strategic planning framework was introduced as a way to broaden the context from a set of priorities to a larger perspective that takes into account long term goals. The framework encompasses the elements shown in the graphic.

Vision, Mission and Values

A draft vision, mission, and set of values was introduced, but placed on the “bike rack” for follow up by staff.

Broad Multi-Year Goals

The next element of the new Strategic Plan framework is a set of **four broad, multi-year goals with a foundational principle**. These will be what the City’s budget and services are directed toward in pursuit of the City’s mission and vision. The goals are what 90% of the City’s budget is focused on and where City staff can align their work.



Four goals were proposed for discussion.

- The proposed goals and principle were based on input from pre-session interviews with the Council, with the intent to incorporate Councilmembers’ interests for Emeryville.
- The goal is stated as a desired outcome, so that services and projects will be aligned toward that outcome. Underneath the goal statement are the services that would be incorporated into the goal through budgets and resources.

The Goals, following Council input are as follow. The “*how we work*” element below was added to incorporate Councilmembers’ comments about innovation and continuous improvement.

Livable, Safe and Vibrant Community

- Public safety services, housing, long range and current planning, recreation, parks, events, engaged community members and partners, arts and creativity, concern for the vulnerable

Quality Infrastructure and Environmental Stewardship

- Maintenance and improvement of infrastructure, facilities, fleet, climate policies

Dynamic and Growing Businesses

- Support for existing businesses and attracting new ones, diversity of business types, proactive engagement with business community

Resilient Organization and Employer of Choice

- Employee training and development, recruitment and retention, information technology, process improvements, customer service

Foundational Principle: Financial Health and Sustainability

How We Work: Through Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Summary of Councilmember comments about the proposed goals are shown in the graphic.

- The consensus was that the goals generally captured what was important to them.
- Suggested modifications included creativity, arts and innovation; protecting the vulnerable; equitable.
- The importance of innovation was mentioned several times and has been captured as a line under the foundational principle as “how we work.”



Review of Key Projects and Initiatives

The Assistant City Manager and City Manager reviewed a document that had been prepared in advance containing the status of existing Council priority projects and several important organizational initiatives. The document indicated that a few projects had been completed, and that others would be proceeding, but not all at the same pace or schedule.



The document had three tables, each listing projects.

Report Tables	Number of Projects Listed
A. Current City Council Priorities (from the 2024 City Council Goal Setting Session)	10
B. Other Council-approved projects	17
C. Other major organizational projects	7
Total Projects	34

Top Priorities

The intent of this exercise was to seek Council direction on what the top four priorities are for the Council as a governing body. There was a discussion of the value of this, since all of the projects were marked on the document as continuing to move forward. The City Manager and department heads clarified that while all the projects shown as “continue” will make progress, they will move at different paces, and it will depend on available staffing and resources.

Having a clear understanding of which among the many projects were the City Council’s most important items will help the City Manager and executive team prioritize staff work when choices must be made. Given vacancies, required timelines for certain tasks, and other factors, having this clarity is of great help to staff. The City Manager also noted that projects cannot continue to be added to the list, given the real resources the City has.

Through a narrowing exercise, the following four items were identified with a majority of members of Council identifying these as their top priorities.

The numbers shown correspond with the project numbers on the document referenced above and are listed in that order.

- **Bicycle and pedestrian focused projects: 40th Street redesign and Ashby interchange (A1)**
- **New website (A3)**
- **Revenue, budget and audits; and researching revenue measures for 2026 (B15 &17)**
- **Sutter Health development (C1)**



Definitions for Reference

For reference, definitions of the strategic planning components are shown below.

Vision, Mission and Values	Vision states what the city is aspiring to be
	Mission states the purpose of the organization
	Values are the expected behaviors of those within the organization
Multi-Year Goals	Continuing over many years
	High-level, desired outcomes
	Includes ongoing operations, reflected in budgets – 90% of what the City does
Annual Council Priorities	Limited to about 4 items
	What Council desires the City to focus the greatest attention in the coming year – nothing will get in the way
	Not ongoing, regular operations; non routine
City Manager’s and Departmental Work Plans	How the Council’s priorities and a multitude of projects will be implemented
	Allocation of staff time and budget resources
	Assignments to staff, interdepartmental work for City services

Bike Rack

Staff will follow up with City Council to review and finalize a vision statement, mission statement and set of values. The following drafts were prepared by City staff but were not discussed.

Draft Vision: A thriving city, where partnerships with residents and stakeholders create lasting safety, vibrancy, and memorable experiences for generations.

Draft Mission: The City of Emeryville delivers innovative, community-driven services to foster a vibrant, safe, and livable city for all residents and businesses.

Draft Values:

- **Fair and Respectful Treatment:** Treat all individuals with respect and dignity, ensuring impartial decision-making.
- **Integrity and Transparency:** Operate ethically, communicate openly, and maintain accountability in governance.
- **Community Partnership:** Collaborate with residents to co-create solutions and sustain shared goals.
- **Innovations and Improvements:** Embrace creative and sustainable solutions, learning, adapt to challenges.

Wrap Up and Closing Comments

As the session ended, the City Manager indicated staff would be reporting progress on the priorities, as well as other important work plan items. The Council agreed that it was important to stay focused on the agreed-upon priorities so that the City could make progress and achieve results.

All members of Council, City Manager, City Attorney and Assistant City Manager offered some closing comments about the day's session, as captured in the graphic.

