



Culver City City Council Planning Retreat

Retreat Summary
February 2026

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Strategic Planning Retreat Executive Summary

The February 2026 Strategic Planning Retreat brought together the Culver City City Council and executive leadership for a full-day session designed to establish shared priorities, strengthen alignment, and create a clear framework for decision-making in the year ahead. The retreat was convened to support a period of strategic reflection and to guide the development of a balanced FY 2026-2027 budget grounded in community needs and long-term fiscal responsibility. It provided a structured environment for clarifying expectations, reviewing financial realities, and identifying the strategic direction necessary to sustain high-quality services and advance community well-being.

A central component of the retreat was a Financial Summit, which offered a candid assessment of the City's fiscal condition. The analysis highlighted that while revenues have grown, expenditures continue to outpace them, resulting in a structurally unbalanced budget and declining reserves. Participants examined the drivers of long-term deficits including rising personnel costs, expanded service demands, deferred infrastructure needs, and revenue volatility, and discussed the importance of disciplined priority setting, long-term financial planning, and data-driven decision-making. The Summit also introduced tools such as Priority-Based Budgeting and "Turn the Curve" performance planning to support more transparent, outcome-focused resource allocation.

Building on this financial context, the Council reviewed the City's existing strategic priorities to assess their continued relevance. The discussion reaffirmed the importance of long-term financial sustainability, investment in public infrastructure and community spaces, and strengthening housing and homelessness services. Council Members emphasized that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and deepened community engagement must be embedded across all priorities to ensure fairness, transparency, and meaningful participation. Additional emerging areas such as economic opportunity, environmental sustainability, and public transit and mobility were also identified as important considerations for future planning cycles.

The retreat concluded with the establishment of three one-year strategic priorities for 2026:

- **strengthening long-term financial sustainability,**
- **investing in public infrastructure and community spaces,** and
- **enhancing overall affordability, addressing housing and homelessness.**

For each priority, the Council identified key performance indicators to support transparent tracking of progress and reinforce accountability. These indicators focus on fiscal stability, infrastructure condition and accessibility, and measurable improvements in housing and homelessness outcomes. Together, the priorities and KPIs provide a clear framework for aligning resources with community needs and guiding the City's work in the coming year.

Overall, the retreat strengthened governance cohesion, clarified strategic direction, and established a foundation for priority-based budgeting and performance management. The outcomes of the session will inform the next phase of planning, including refinement of priorities, development of detailed KPIs, integration of community input, and creation of a reporting and accountability framework.



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Introduction

Odis Jones was appointed by the Culver City City Council in December 2025 to serve as the next City Manager. Among his first priorities was guiding the City and the Council through a period of strategic reflection and alignment. To support this effort, Mr. Jones convened a strategic planning retreat for the Council on February 14, 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The purpose of the retreat was to establish shared priorities for the coming year, identify parameters for the FY 2026-2027 budget, and begin defining high-level key performance and community indicators to support transparent governance and measurable progress.

Dr. Yolanda Gorman and Dr. Jennifer Wells of Gorman Partners facilitated the retreat, with participation from Mayor Freddy Puza, Vice Mayor Bryan “Bubba” Fish, Council Members Yasmine-Imani McMorrin, Dan O’Brien, and Albert Vera. Other participants included Mr. Jones, City Manager, Lisa Soghor, Assistant City Manager and Chief Financial Officer, Jeremy Bocchino, City Clerk, department heads, financial consultants from Ernst & Young, and legal consultants from Orrick Law Firm.

The retreat provided a thoughtful experience that supported the Council in clarifying shared financial and community priorities, strengthening governance cohesion, and establishing a transparent framework for tracking progress.

Welcome and Opening Context

Mr. Puza, Culver City’s Mayor, opened the meeting and discussed his intentions for the retreat and then welcomed public comments. He turned the meeting over to Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones welcomed the Council Members and expressed gratitude to the Council for hiring him, and to his staff for their support during his transition. Mr. Jones stated to the Council his intention to address the fiscal crisis and shared his vision for Culver City. His intention for the planning retreat was to discuss priorities and refine criteria to measure success. As Mr. Jones discussed his priority to present a balanced budget, he emphasized that a balanced budget does not require a decrease in services or laying off staff. His intention is to position the Council to have support for necessary initiatives while establishing priorities that drive fiscal discipline. His remarks helped frame the day’s discussions and provided a grounding context for the Council’s priority-setting work

Key themes from Mr. Jones’s remarks included:

- Fiscal accountability and responsibility
- Economic vitality
- Community trust
- Infrastructure innovation

Retreat Overview

The Assistant City Manager and Chief Financial Officer, Lisa Soghor provided an overview of the retreat’s purpose, structure, and expected outcomes. Ms. Soghor discussed the importance of the Council providing direction to the staff by highlighting the importance of establishing priorities. She reinforced that not every priority will be able to be addressed during 2026, and reminded Council



Members that important issues that emerge during the discussion might be addressed in subsequent years.

Facilitator Introductions and Retreat Objectives

Drs. Gorman and Wells introduced themselves and outlined the objectives for the day, which included:

- Establishing a financial framework and priority-setting context
- Building a shared understanding of Council priorities
- Identifying one-year goals
- Creating a measurable framework for tracking progress
- Strengthening alignment between Council, staff, and community expectations
- Supporting effective governance and decision-making

Council Expectations

Council Members were invited to share their expectations for the retreat. This activity surfaced individual perspectives and helped align the group on shared goals. The Council's expectations for the retreat centered on establishing a focused set of 3–4 strategic priorities supported by clear direction, specific and measurable goals, and well-defined guidelines for the City's core responsibilities, including safety, streets, and parks.

Council Members emphasized the importance of grounding decisions in a strong financial framework, particularly through the Financial Summit, to ensure the budget is balanced and aligned with the City's priorities. They also highlighted the need for intentional listening, staff support, and care- or trauma-informed approaches to strengthen the culture of the organization.

In addition, the Council expressed a desire for more data to inform decision-making, tell the City's story effectively, and support innovation and new ways of approaching the work. Together, these expectations reflect a commitment to clarity, accountability, financial stewardship, and continuous improvement.

Financial Summit

Key Themes and Takeaways

Andrew Kleine, Managing Director – Government and Public Sector at Ernst & Young (EY) and Assistant City Manager /CFO Ms. Soghor opened the financial summit by stating that despite revenue growth for the city, expenses have outpaced that growth. Mr. Kleine led the summit by distinguishing between fiscal solvency and service solvency.

The Financial Summit provided a clear and candid assessment of Culver City's fiscal condition. While the City has taken meaningful steps in recent years to strengthen revenues, the analysis presented by the EY consultant underscored that Culver City is facing a **structurally unbalanced budget**, driven by expenditure growth that continues to outpace revenue growth. The discussion highlighted the need for



disciplined priority-setting, long-term financial planning, and a shift toward data-driven decision-making to ensure the City can sustain essential services and invest in community priorities.

The following section summarizes the key themes and takeaways from this discussion, highlighting the fiscal realities and strategic considerations that will shape the City's path forward.

Structural Imbalance

Culver City's General Fund is structurally unbalanced, with recurring expenditures exceeding recurring revenues. Drivers include rising personnel costs, expansion of programs (especially homelessness and housing services), deferred maintenance and capital needs, and increased risk management and insurance costs. These factors have contributed to a widening gap that cannot be addressed through one-time measures.

Declining Reserves

General Fund reserves have been drawn down to sustain operations, and the Contingency Reserve is projected to fall below the City's 30% policy target. Unassigned fund balance may be exhausted as early as FY26, requiring a formal replenishment plan and limiting the City's flexibility to respond to emergencies or economic shifts.

Revenue Volatility and Constraints

Although revenues have grown since FY23, they remain highly sensitive to economic conditions and are not keeping pace with rising costs. The City has already implemented multiple voter-approved tax increases, and statutory limits restrict the ability to raise additional revenue. Fee increases have helped but have also faced community and business concerns.

Rising Expenditures

Expenditures have grown at a rate of 9.5% annually since FY20, compared to 6.5% revenue growth. Personnel costs—including salaries, pensions, and healthcare—remain the largest drivers. Housing and homelessness services, deferred infrastructure needs, and increased risk management costs have also added significant pressure.

Growing Workforce

The General Government headcount has increased to 12% since FY20, while the population has remained flat. This growth reflects investments in service delivery and organizational capacity but also increases long-term pension and benefit obligations.

Underfunded Capital Needs

The City faces a substantial backlog of deferred maintenance and lacks a structured Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) prioritization framework. Capital investments have often been reactive rather than strategic, increasing reliance on the General Fund and creating long-term risks for infrastructure and facilities.

Persistent Long-Term Deficits

Across pessimistic, baseline, and optimistic scenarios, the City's long-term forecast shows continued deficits without corrective action. Without changes, the City's ability to maintain critical services will be compromised. These challenges underscore the need for priority-based budgeting.

**Financial Summit:
Key Themes and
Takeaways**

- Declining reserves
- Volatile revenues and constraints
- Rising expenditures
- Growing workforce
- Unfunded capital needs
- Long-term deficits

Strategic Planning Retreat Summary



The City will need to make difficult funding decisions to deliver a balanced FY 2026-2027 budget. Long-term planning, disciplined prioritization, and enhanced performance management will be essential to restoring fiscal stability and supporting high-quality service delivery.

The Financial Summit provided a clear and sobering overview of Culver City's fiscal condition, emphasizing that the City is operating with a structurally unbalanced budget in which recurring expenditures continue to outpace recurring revenues. The Summit highlighted that while recent voter-approved tax measures and policy decisions have generated new revenue, rising personnel costs, expanded homelessness and housing services, deferred infrastructure needs, and increased risk management expenses have placed sustained pressure on the General Fund. The City has relied on reserve drawdowns to maintain operations, resulting in declining fund balances and a projected drop below the 30% Contingency Reserve policy target. Revenue growth remains volatile and constrained, with limited opportunities for additional tax increases. Long-term forecasts show persistent deficits across all scenarios without corrective action. The Summit underscored the need for disciplined priority-setting, long-term financial planning, and a shift toward data-driven budgeting and performance management to ensure the City can maintain essential services, invest in critical infrastructure, and restore long-term fiscal stability.

As part of the Financial Summit, the creation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Fund was introduced as a potential tool to support emerging special initiatives and address the limitations of existing grants and designated funding. This option was presented as an innovative financing mechanism that could help relieve pressure on the General Fund while expanding the City's capacity to advance priority projects.

Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Fund Creation

Jade Turner-Bond, a Partner at Orrick Los Angeles, whose practice focuses on social and transportation infrastructure projects and public finance transactions presented to the Council on Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to help relieve pressure of city projects on the General Fund. Her presentation on Joint Powers Authority (JPA) financing outlined how this structure could provide the City with greater flexibility in funding major initiatives, particularly those related to affordable housing and infrastructure. A JPA is a separate legal entity that may be formed between the City and the Housing Authority, enabling the issuance of bonds outside the City's direct debt limitations. This structure allows the City to pool resources, avoid certain statutory constraints, and access tax-exempt revenue bonds to finance eligible projects.

Under a typical arrangement, the JPA issues lease-revenue bonds to fund the construction or acquisition of a project. The local agency then leases the project back, with lease payments covering the debt service. This approach can create access to capital for projects that might otherwise be delayed due to General Fund constraints. The flexibility of JPA financing allows the City to respond to a variety of needs, including affordable housing, infrastructure improvements, and other community-serving facilities.

The presentation emphasized that a JPA does not replace the need for fiscal discipline; rather, it provides an additional tool for advancing strategic priorities without overburdening the General Fund. It also highlighted the importance of establishing clear governance structures, transparent reporting, and strong alignment between JPA-funded projects and the City's long-term financial and community goals. As the City considers this option, further analysis will be needed to determine the appropriate scope, structure, and safeguards to ensure responsible use of this financing mechanism.



Priority-Based Budgeting

Mr. Kleine and Ms. Soghor introduced priority-based budgeting as a framework for strategic decision-making and resource allocation. Mr. Kleine’s presentation introduced Priority-Based Budgeting (PBB) as a fundamental shift in how Culver City allocates resources and evaluates services. Rather than beginning with last year’s spending levels, PBB starts with the City’s strategic goals and directs funding toward the outcomes that matter most to the community. This approach requires the City to define clear priority outcomes, identify the services that contribute to those outcomes, and evaluate each service based on alignment, performance, and community impact.

PBB reframes the budget conversation from “What do we cut?” to “What do we keep and why?” In this approach departments are asked to submit proposals that demonstrate how their services advance the City’s goals, supported by measurable results. The process also introduces structured evaluation tools such as Requests for Results, Results Teams, and priority-performance matrices to ensure transparency and consistency in decision-making.

Key Takeaways

Before closing his presentation, Mr. Kleine highlighted several core principles that distinguish Priority-Based Budgeting from traditional budgeting practices. These principles underscore how PBB aligns financial decisions with the City’s strategic priorities, strengthens transparency, and supports more intentional resource allocation. The following key takeaways summarize the essential shifts and expectations that will guide the City’s transition to this new budgeting approach

A Shift From Spending History to Strategic Outcomes	Funding Follows Priorities	Evidence-Based Proposals	Transparent Tradeoffs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The "old way" of budgeting starts with last year's spending; the "new way" starts with next year's goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Instead of allocating funds by department PBB allocates resources by strategic priority areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Departments must demonstrate how their services contribute to priority outcomes and provide performance measures that answer: "How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Services are evaluated and ranked based on alignment and performance, enabling clearer decisions about where to invest, repurpose, or reduce spending

Overall, the introduction of Priority-Based Budgeting provided the Council with a clear understanding of how the City can better align its financial decisions with its strategic goals. The framework emphasizes intentionality, transparency, and measurable results, shifting the City away from



incremental budgeting and toward a model that prioritizes outcomes over historical spending patterns. By focusing on what matters most to the community and evaluating services based on alignment and performance, PBB offers a disciplined approach to resource allocation—one that supports long-term fiscal sustainability while strengthening accountability and improving service delivery.

Review of Existing Strategic Priorities

Facilitators guided the Council in reviewing the priorities previously identified for the City Manager. Council Members assessed whether the priorities remained relevant and clarified the intent and scope of each. Council Members were asked to revise, question or revise the following priorities. The Council's discussion included refining definitions and identifying strategic actions to help gain alignment on expected outcomes.

Strengthening Long-Term Financial Sustainability

The Council's priority to strengthen long-term financial sustainability requires combating a fiscal deficit by collaborating on sustainable revenue strategies and ensuring responsible stewardship of public resources.

To advance this priority, the City will focus on stabilizing and balancing the budget while growing revenue through grants, partnerships, and other diversified sources. Staff will continue developing and maintaining long-term financial plans, improving public transparency of financial data, and expanding opportunities for community participation in the budgeting process. Strengthening accountability and reporting systems, streamlining programs to improve efficiency, and implementing proactive liability management are also essential components of this work. In addition, the City will deepen its understanding and management of its assets to ensure resources are used effectively and responsibly.

Invest in Public Infrastructure and Community Spaces

The Council priority to invest in public infrastructure and community spaces requires advance planning and improvements that support safety, accessibility, and long-term community needs.

This priority centers on strengthening the City's physical and community-serving infrastructure to support safety, accessibility, and long-term resilience. The Council emphasized the importance of maintaining and improving roads, sidewalks, and transportation infrastructure, as well as investing in public parks, community spaces, and public buildings that serve residents every day. Mobility systems—including transit, pedestrian, and bicycle networks—are also essential components of this priority, ensuring that residents can move safely and efficiently throughout the city. In addition, the Council highlighted the need for proactive maintenance and long-term infrastructure planning to address deferred needs, reduce future liabilities, and ensure that community assets remain functional, safe, and welcoming.

To advance this priority, the City will undertake a series of coordinated actions designed to strengthen infrastructure and enhance community spaces. This includes conducting comprehensive condition assessments to better understand the state of existing assets and developing neighborhood-level infrastructure plans that reflect local needs and priorities. The City will continue to maintain and improve facilities, reduce hazards, and expand accessibility to ensure that public spaces are safe and usable for all residents. Transparent communication about infrastructure plans and investments will



also be a key component of this work, helping build public trust and ensuring that residents understand both the needs and the progress being made across the community.

Deliver High Quality Public Services

This priority involves driving efficiency and excellence in City operations while maintaining responsiveness to community needs.

To advance this priority, the City will focus on delivering services that are consistently high-quality, responsive, and aligned with the evolving needs of the community. This includes prioritizing service excellence and ensuring that residents experience timely, reliable, and effective support across all departments. Maintaining operational efficiency remains central to this work, requiring the City to continually refine processes, eliminate redundancies, and strengthen internal coordination. At the same time, the City will regularly assess and adjust its services to reflect changing community expectations, demographic shifts, and emerging challenges, ensuring that public services remain relevant, equitable, and impactful.

Enhance Housing and Homelessness Services

Council Members expect this priority will build on existing programs and partnerships to expand housing opportunities and deliver effective, coordinated services addressing affordability and homelessness.

This priority focuses on strengthening the City's capacity to address overall affordability, housing and homelessness through a comprehensive, coordinated, and community-centered approach. Council Members emphasized the need to expand access to affordable housing and strengthen homelessness prevention strategies, supported by robust social safety systems that help stabilize individuals and families before crises escalate. The priority also includes maintaining clean and safe public environments, increasing access to mental-health-supportive spaces, and ensuring that childcare and after-school programs are available to support working families. In addition, the Council expressed interest in exploring innovative tools such as universal basic income pilots and right-to-counsel programs, as well as advancing pro-housing policies and designations that position the City to leverage state and regional resources. Together, these focus areas reflect a commitment to addressing both the immediate and structural drivers of housing instability.

To advance this priority, the City will ground its decisions in data and comprehensive needs assessments to ensure that programs and investments are responsive to the realities faced by residents. Strengthening community engagement will be essential, enabling the City to build trust, incorporate lived experience, and ensure that services are culturally responsive and accessible. The City will also expand coordinated housing services, deepening partnerships across departments and with regional providers to create a more seamless and effective system of support. These strategic activities are designed to improve outcomes for residents, reduce homelessness, and ensure that the City's housing and social service systems operate with clarity, alignment, and measurable impact.

Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

During their discussion, the Council affirmed that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) must be woven throughout all the City's strategic priorities rather than treated as a standalone initiative. Council Members defined this priority as ensuring that the City's policies, programs, and decision-making processes reflect the community's values of fairness, belonging, accessibility, and opportunity for all residents. This definition underscores the City's commitment to creating an environment where every resident feels seen, supported, and able to participate fully in civic life.



The Council emphasized that equity and inclusion should serve as core values guiding all City operations, shaping how policies are developed, how services are delivered, and how decisions are made. This includes evaluating policies and procedures for their equitable impact and ensuring that City processes promote belonging, opportunity, and meaningful participation. To support this work, the Council identified key strategic questions that should inform planning, budgeting, and service delivery: How do City processes and procedures impact equity and inclusion, and how can equity be embedded more intentionally into the City's long-term strategies? These questions provide a foundation for integrating DEI into every aspect of the City's work and ensuring that equity considerations remain central to future decision-making.

Deepen Community Engagement and Participation

During their discussion, the Council emphasized that deepening community engagement must be central to every strategic priority the City advances. Council Members defined this priority as expanding outreach tools, improving transparency, and strengthening meaningful connections with residents and businesses. This reflects a commitment to ensuring that community voices are not only heard but actively shape City policies, programs, and decisions. By broadening access to information and creating more inclusive pathways for participation, the City aims to build trust, foster belonging, and ensure that residents feel informed, valued, and empowered to contribute to the future of their community.

To advance this priority, the City will focus on reforming and improving Council and decision-making processes to make them more accessible, transparent, and responsive. The Council underscored the importance of inviting community voices at every stage of planning—not just during final decision points—and engaging residents in the spaces where they already gather. This includes expanding outreach strategies, meeting people where they are, and providing clear, accessible education about City policies and programs. Together, these actions are designed to strengthen relationships with the community, broaden participation, and ensure that City decisions reflect the lived experiences and priorities of residents and businesses.

Other Priorities for Consideration

As the Council moved through its discussion of the core strategic priorities, Members also identified several additional areas that warrant attention in the coming planning cycle. These emerging priorities reflect broader themes raised throughout the retreat and include economic resilience, environmental stewardship, and the need for a more reliable and accessible mobility network. While not yet formalized as primary priorities, these areas represent important dimensions of the community's long-term well-being and will help shape future conversations about resource allocation, partnership opportunities, and policy development. The following summaries capture the Council's initial thinking about these emerging priorities and the outcomes they hope to advance.

Support Economic Opportunity and Workforce Sustainability

Council Members emphasized the importance of strengthening Culver City's economic vitality and supporting a sustainable workforce as an emerging priority. This includes expanding support for local businesses, maintaining competitive and fair wages, and exploring strategies that enable public employees to live within the community they serve. The Council also expressed interest in pursuing innovative partnerships and economic development strategies that can diversify the local economy, attract revenue, enhance job opportunities, and reinforce the City's long-term economic resilience. This priority reflects a commitment to fostering a thriving local economy that benefits both residents and the City's workforce.



Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability also emerged as a key area of focus, with Council members underscoring the need to protect environmental health and invest in long-term climate resilience. This priority includes improving air quality, expanding green infrastructure, and ensuring that public investments support sustainable practices. The Council highlighted the importance of integrating climate-resilient planning into City operations and infrastructure decisions, recognizing that environmental stewardship is essential to community well-being, public health, and the City's long-term sustainability goals.

Supporting Initiative: Improve Public Transit and Mobility

In addition to the core priorities, the Council identified improving public transit and mobility as a critical supporting initiative. The discussion acknowledged current challenges, including declining ridership driven by remote work trends, industry shifts, and operator shortages, as well as reliability concerns that affect residents' daily experience. At the same time, the Council recognized significant opportunities to strengthen the transit system through demand-management programs, employer and rider incentives, new routes, technology upgrades, and increased service frequency. The desired outcomes for this initiative include increased transit ridership, improved mobility, and greater accessibility across the community. This work will support the City's broader goals related to sustainability, equity, and economic opportunity.

Summary

During the retreat, the Council revisited the City's existing strategic priorities to assess their continued relevance and alignment with current community needs, fiscal realities, and organizational capacity. The discussion reaffirmed the importance of maintaining a clear focus on long-term financial sustainability, investing in public infrastructure and community spaces, and strengthening housing and homelessness services. Council Members emphasized that these priorities remain central to the City's ability to deliver high-quality services and support community well-being. At the same time, they underscored the need to embed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and deepened community engagement across all priority areas, ensuring that the City's work reflects shared values of fairness, transparency, and meaningful participation. This review provided a foundation for refining strategic direction, clarifying expectations, and identifying emerging areas of focus that need to be considered for the City's planning and resource allocation in the year ahead.

Identifying Key Performance Indicators

Following the review of strategic priorities, Mr. Kleine presented a set of Key Performance Indicators designed to illustrate how progress can be measured across each priority area. This portion of the presentation focused on providing the Council with a clear picture of the types of metrics that can track outcomes, support transparency, and strengthen alignment between the City's goals and its day-to-day operations. The KPIs presented served as examples of how the City can monitor performance over time communicate results to the community and reinforce a culture of data informed decision-making. The following section summarizes the indicators shared during the presentation.

As Council Members considered high-level KPIs to measure progress on the 2026 priorities. Mr. Kleine provided examples to support the discussion.

The presentation emphasized that long-term fiscal sustainability depends not only on budgeting practices but also on building a culture of performance across the organization. Performance management provides the tools and habits needed to monitor progress, improve service delivery, and

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communicate results to the community. The City must work toward making data visible, talking openly about performance, and fostering innovation to improve outcomes.

A key framework highlighted in the presentation was “Turn the Curve” planning, which helps departments understand current performance, identify the factors influencing outcomes, and develop targeted actions to improve results. This approach encourages collaboration across departments and with community partners, ensuring that performance improvement is shared work rather than siloed responsibility.

Mr. Kleine guided Council Members through an exercise demonstrating the “Turn the Curve” planning approach. Using bus ridership as the example, the Council reviewed data from 2019 to 2024, noting that ridership has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. They examined the story behind the curve, identifying both positive and negative factors influencing the trend. The Council then discussed potential partners who could help improve outcomes and identified strategies that could “turn the curve” and increase ridership, followed by outlining the steps needed to develop a plan. This exercise illustrated how the Council can promote accountability, use data to inform decisions, and champion progress on strategic priorities.

Mr. Kleine also provided examples of community indicators that Culver City could adopt to measure progress across priority areas. These examples prompted the Council’s discussion on indicators that help the City track whether residents are “better off” and provide a foundation for transparent reporting to the public.

Key Takeaways

Make Data Visible	Build a Learning Culture	"Turn the Curve" Planning	Community Indicators Matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Departments should develop dashboards, set performance targets and use data to guide decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance discussion should focus on problem -solving and continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This framework helps the City understand baseline performance, identify root causes, and design actions that improve outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indicators such as reserve adequacy, state of good repair, and access to housing help the City measure progress on Council priorities and communicate results to the public

The presentation on Key Performance Indicators provided the Council with a clear framework for measuring progress across the City’s strategic priorities and strengthening a culture of data-informed governance. Through examples and discussion, the Council explored how KPIs can track outcomes, support transparency, and align day-to-day operations with long-term goals. The session emphasized that effective performance management requires making data visible, engaging in open conversations about results, and fostering continuous improvement across departments. A central component of the presentation was the “Turn the Curve” planning model. The presentation also introduced potential community indicators that can help the City assess whether residents are “better off” and provide a



foundation for transparent public reporting. Together, these tools and examples underscored the importance of measurable, outcome-focused approaches to advancing the City's priorities.

Establishing One-Year Priorities (2026)

After reviewing the full set of strategic priorities and gaining a clearer understanding of how Key Performance Indicators can be used to measure progress, the Council shifted its focus to identifying the areas that require concentrated attention over the next year. The KPI presentation helped ground the discussion in what is measurable, actionable, and aligned with community outcomes, giving Council Members a shared framework for thinking about impact. With this context in place, the Council moved toward selecting three one-year priorities and the performance indicators that will guide implementation, track progress, and support transparent reporting throughout the year.

The process began with a facilitated review and discussion of the six priorities. Through this discussion, Council Members identified quality of service and diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values that would serve as foundational principles guiding the advancement of all strategic priorities.

Council Members then participated in a structured prioritization exercise using a color-coded dot voting method to identify which priorities represented (1) foundational work, (2) areas requiring immediate attention, and (3) opportunities to pilot efforts or build momentum. This exercise enabled the Council to collectively identify and visually align around key focus areas.

Following the prioritization activity, the discussion focused on establishing a shared understanding of the identified priorities. Mr. Kleine presented suggested indicators of success to support the operationalization of the Council's identified priorities and to provide a framework for measuring progress. This led to the Council's discussion regarding appropriate metrics and benchmarks that would demonstrate meaningful progress. The following section outlines the priorities the Council agreed to elevate for focused action in the coming year.

2026 Strategic Priorities and Performance Indicators

During the retreat, the Council affirmed three strategic priorities that will guide the City's work in the coming year. These priorities reflect a shared commitment to fiscal responsibility, community well-being, and long-term investment in the City's infrastructure and social systems. For each priority, the Council also identified key indicators that will support transparent tracking of progress and help ensure accountability to the community.

Strengthening Long-Term Financial Sustainability

Strengthening long-term financial sustainability emerged as a foundational priority, recognizing the need for responsible stewardship of public resources in the face of ongoing fiscal pressures. The Council emphasized stabilizing and balancing the budget, diversifying revenue streams, and improving the City's long-term financial planning practices. They also underscored the importance of increasing public transparency, strengthening accountability systems, and improving the City's understanding and management of its assets.

Key indicators for this priority include measures of budget stability, revenue growth and diversification, liability reduction, and improved public understanding of the City's financial position.



Investment in Public Infrastructure and Community Spaces

The Council also prioritized **investment in public infrastructure and community spaces**, acknowledging the critical role that safe, accessible, and well-maintained facilities play in supporting quality of life. This priority encompasses roads and sidewalks, parks and community spaces, public buildings, and mobility systems.

Strategic actions include conducting infrastructure condition assessments, developing neighborhood-level plans, improving facilities, reducing hazards, and communicating infrastructure plans more transparently.

Indicators for this priority focus on improved condition ratings, increased accessibility, reduced infrastructure liabilities, enhanced transit reliability, improved traffic flow and safety, and greater usability of public spaces.

Enhancing Overall Affordability, Addressing Housing and Homelessness

Finally, the Council affirmed **enhancing affordability, addressing housing and homelessness** as a core priority. Building on existing programs and partnerships, the City will continue to expand housing opportunities and strengthen coordinated services that address affordability, homelessness prevention, and supportive social systems. This priority includes access to mental health support, childcare and after-school programs, clean and safe public environments, and exploration of pro-housing policies. The Council emphasized the importance of grounding decisions in data, strengthening community engagement, and improving program evaluation.

Key indicators include reductions in food insecurity, decreases in the number of unhoused residents and those at risk of homelessness, increases in permanent housing placements, and improvements in program effectiveness and resident outcomes.

Together, these priorities and indicators provide a clear framework for aligning the City’s work with community needs, guiding resource allocation, and measuring progress over time. They also establish the foundation for the next phase of the City’s priority-based budgeting and performance management efforts.

Table: Strategic Priorities and Key Indicators

Priority	Key Indicators
<p>1. Strengthen Long-Term Financial Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget stability and fiscal balance • Revenue growth and diversification • Reduction in financial liabilities • Increased public understanding of budgeting • Improved accountability and transparency
<p>2. Invest in Public Infrastructure and Community Spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved sidewalk and road condition ratings • Increased accessibility metrics • Reduced infrastructure liabilities and risks • Increased public transit reliability • Improved traffic flow and safety



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased usability of parks and community spaces • Increased tree canopy and green infrastructure
<p>3. Enhance Overall Affordability, Address Housing and Homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in food insecurity • Reduction in number of unhoused residents • Reduction in residents at risk of homelessness • Increased prevention of housing insecurity • Increase in permanent housing placements • Increased effectiveness of housing programs • Improved feedback and program evaluation systems

Cross-Cutting Implementation Principles

Across all strategic priorities, the City’s work should be guided by a set of cross-cutting implementation principles that ensure consistency, accountability, and alignment with community values. Each priority will be advanced through **equity-centered planning** that recognizes the diverse needs of residents and seeks to eliminate barriers to access and opportunity. **Decision-making will be grounded in data**, supported by **transparent communication** that helps the public understand how and why choices are made. **Community engagement** will remain central throughout the process, ensuring that residents have meaningful opportunities to shape policies, programs, and investments. **Long-term sustainability** will guide planning and resource allocation, helping the City balance immediate needs with future obligations. Finally, all efforts will be anchored in **accountability and measurable outcomes**, enabling the City to track progress, evaluate impact, and demonstrate results to the community.

Planning Summary

The Council’s strategic priorities emerged directly from the financial realities outlined during the Financial Summit. The City’s structurally unbalanced budget, rising cost pressures, and declining reserves underscored the need for a disciplined, priority-driven approach to decision-making. By grounding the retreat in a clear understanding of the City’s fiscal condition, Council Members were able to focus on the areas where strategic clarity, investment, and measurable progress are most essential.

Priority-based budgeting and performance management provided the framework for this work. These tools help ensure that limited resources are aligned with the outcomes that matter most to the community, and that progress can be tracked transparently through meaningful indicators. The strategic priorities and associated KPIs identified by the Council reflect a commitment to fiscal stewardship, transparent decision-making, and measurable progress across all priority areas.

Strategic Planning Retreat Summary



After reviewing the City’s long-term strategic priorities and gaining clarity on the financial and operational context, the Council identified three one-year priorities to guide focused action in 2026. These priorities—strengthening long-term financial sustainability, investing in public infrastructure and community spaces, and enhancing housing affordability and addressing homelessness, reflect the areas of greatest urgency and community impact. Each priority is supported by a set of performance indicators designed to track progress, reinforce accountability, and ensure that the City’s work remains aligned with measurable outcomes. Together, these priorities provide a clear framework for resource allocation, operational planning, and transparent reporting in the year ahead.

Next Steps

The retreat concluded with a shared commitment to strengthening the City’s fiscal foundation, improving service delivery, and aligning resources with the community’s most pressing needs. Council and staff affirmed the importance of disciplined financial stewardship and a continued shift toward data-driven governance, recognizing that transparent metrics and clear priorities are essential to sustaining public trust and ensuring long-term stability. The discussions also reinforced the central role of community engagement, emphasizing that meaningful participation must remain embedded in every stage of planning, budgeting, and implementation.

Building on the priorities established during the retreat, the next phase of work will focus on refining Key Performance Indicators, integrating community input, and aligning departmental efforts with the one-year priorities. This work will also inform the development of the FY 2026-2027 budget, enabling the City to allocate resources in a way that reflects both fiscal realities and community values. Staff will also develop approaches that translate strategic direction into operational steps, ensuring that each priority is supported by clear actions, responsible leads, and measurable outcomes.

To maintain momentum and ensure accountability, the City Council will meet to approve a final plan, develop mechanisms to review progress, assess performance data, and make adjustments as needed. These check-ins will support a culture of continuous improvement and help ensure that the City remains responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities. Together, these next steps position the staff to move forward with clarity, cohesion, and a shared commitment to delivering results for the community.

This retreat marked a major step in strengthening alignment between the Council and staff and establishing a disciplined, data-driven approach to governing in the year ahead. The priorities, performance indicators, and next steps identified during this process provide a clear roadmap for focusing resources, improving transparency, and deepening engagement with the community. As the City moves forward, continued collaboration, thoughtful planning, and a shared commitment to fiscal responsibility will be essential to delivering meaningful progress. With a unified direction and a framework for measuring results, Culver City is well-positioned to advance the community’s long-term well-being and build a resilient, accountable, and forward-looking municipal government.