

City of Encinitas, CA

City Council Retreat

February 6, 2024

The City of Encinitas (City), California, held a City Council Retreat on February 6, 2024. The retreat was planned and facilitated by Raftelis.

Setting the Stage

The Mayor opened the session by expressing his gratitude for everyone taking their time to be present for the retreat. Following public comment, Julia Novak (Raftelis) then reviewed the agenda and asked that each participant introduce themselves and share their expectation for the day. Expectations are captured in the image below.

- Moving things forward; many of the items have been on the list for a long time; it is a challenge to move forward and work together.
- We need a refresh and looking forward to that.
- Coming in with no expectations. Excited to be here.
- Look forward to hearing Council's goals so staff can work to achieve those.
- Sit and listen to Council and hear what their priorities are.
- Have an open mind and am excited about the direction the City is going and has been.
- Excited about the communication and engagement of the strategic plan and how IT integrates into that.
- Understand where the Council wants to go and how public safety fits into that.
- 20 years of public service and excited to be here.



- We often have projects that are directly tied to the goals of the City Council and excited to see what those are.
- Align the vision of the City Council so we can understand how that impacts our customers.
- How we can focus staff in order to achieve the goals.
- Here to hear from Council how our administrative practice day to day is informed by your priorities.
- No expectations other than to hear what the City Council has to say.
- How we can help the Council achieve goals and come up with a vision. Excited to see things happen that have been talked about for quite some time. Come up with creative ways to support.
- Excited to hear from the Council members what they want to focus on for the next year.
- To see what the visions are for the strategic plan for the citizens of our community.
- A better understanding of the big picture.
- Excited to see how the Council sets their priorities and how we can help achieve their goals.
- It is always good to hear the strategic goal setting and translate it for staff.
- Listen to Council and their direction.
- Utilize this as a learning experience.
- Listen and learn and find out how we can support the Council in their goals for the future of the community.
- By the end of the day, have goals to give direction to the staff for the budget workshops. Appreciate the thought process that goes into it.
- Listen and contribute to the conversation.
- We have made some great progress due to jointly agreed upon goals from last year. Be clear about our priorities and how to contribute to the success of the City and articulate it in a way everyone can buy into.
- Our chance to air grievances and sit together to talk about our biggest visions and get to know staff together all in one room. Carry around the image that speaks to our priorities.
- Carry around the strategic goals. It is very useful and suggest everyone to look at it for guidance and ask, "Is this supporting our strategic goals?" Update it, especially regarding recent flooding and infrastructure.

Julia then shared feedback on accomplishments and challenges summarized from Council member survey responses.

Key **accomplishments** include:

- Surfer's Point acquisition
- Addressing bike safety
- Hiring a mobility manager
- Cycle track along west side of Coast Highway 101

The following **challenges** were also identified:

- Inadequate investment in infrastructure (pavement, stormwater, drainage)
- Addressing homelessness
- Ensuring affordable housing
- Preserving and maintaining open space
- Auto-centric intersections difficult for pedestrians and bicycles to navigate

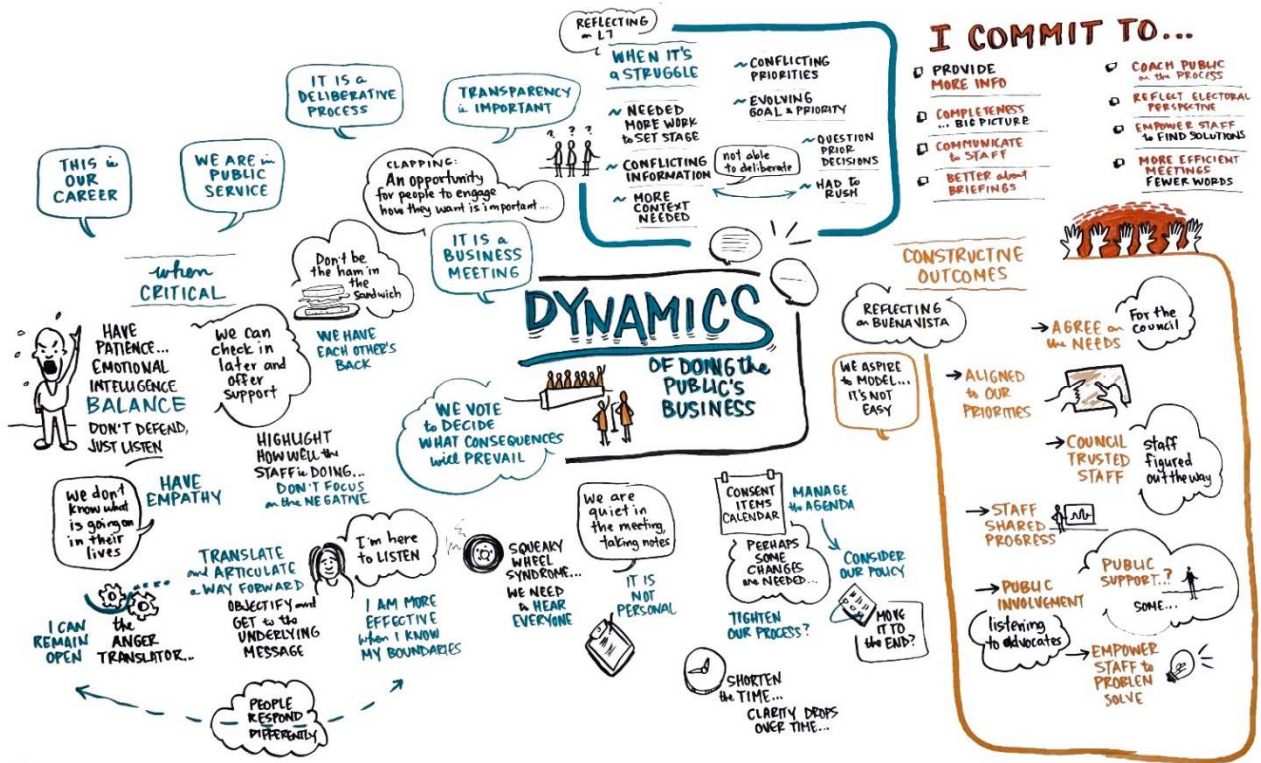
Celebrating Success

Council members and members of staff were asked to share something that the City accomplished in the past year that made them proud. Areas that made the City shine in 2023 are captured below.



The Dynamics of Doing the Public's Business

Participants worked in small groups to discuss how Council and staff experience City Council meetings and how they can work to create a collaborative and constructive environment for accomplishing the public's business.



Meeting Matters

Julia reviewed the meeting dynamics responses to the survey and led a discussion about how the Council has worked together and worked with the staff during the past year and identify what factors are in place that help the Council work effectively together. Council members were asked to reflect on a series of questions about creating a supportive and constructive atmosphere for the Council's deliberative process:

- What is an issue or topic that was challenging, but the Council worked well together to achieve a constructive outcome for the community?

Buena Vista Navigation Center

- Filled a gap for us. We had no low-barrier housing option, no guaranteed set of beds we could offer shelter, and the situation prohibited the sheriff from enforcing certain ordinances.

- We also had a shared agreement about the need to address. Homelessness was elevated as a prominent community issue and implemented the Homeless Action Plan. We identified it as a group as a strategic objective.
- Two different state grants from the state senator and other local agency.
- Staff felt the Council trusted us to achieve the outcome using our expertise. We successfully completed it within a tight timeline.
- The Council was brought along on the journey through a series of meetings.
- There was public support once the site was established.
- What factors contributed to the Council's success?
 - Having clarity and alignment on the need amongst the Council
 - Public involvement
 - Letting staff come up with bold, innovative solutions
- What is an issue or topic that was challenging, and the Council struggled to maintain a constructive and positive environment through their deliberative process?

L7 100% Affordable Housing

- What made this especially challenging?
 - The Brown Act hinders ability to move along, and fact check conflicting information.
 - There is a disconnect when Councilmembers talk across each other and do not see eye-to-eye.
 - There is a general agreement amongst Council that affordable housing is important to our community and needs to evolve through a process. However, there were some issues and misalignment on the process.
 - This was a key opportunity to harness our own local control over affordable housing, rather than have it dictated by the state.
 - Advocates have the stamina for moving the conversation forward through a multi-year effort.
 - The vote was a 3-2 split. The Mayor felt he had not been looped into the conversation.
 - There was more work needed to set the stage. The Council acknowledged they were not all working with the same information at the same point.
 - There were valid concerns raised while deciding on the location such as saturation of high-density housing and traffic impacts, and previous designation as parkland.
 - There is a big gap in providing the land and making it 100% affordable. The Mayor voiced that he does not want to overpromise to the community and underdeliver.
- In hindsight, what would you want to do differently to create a different outcome?
 - Acknowledge long-term impacts of past decisions and agreement to move forward. It was not until the third meeting that the Council went back to historical decisions and specific plans.
 - In retrospect, wish there had been more time to review all the information and to conduct a more deliberative process.

- The Council does not always like what staff tell us. Staff are doing the best they can to keep us proactive. A lot of credit is due to staff keeping the important conversation at the forefront.
- What the Council is trying to do is a bit novel, without an example to look to. We aspire to be a model and ask a lot of staff to create something new. Acknowledge that it is not easy.
- Stop and start is difficult for staff, and staff feels the pressure from both sides.
- It was requested that staff paint the picture better and provide more details in future staff reports.
- This City Council values unanimity.

The conversation continued about meeting length, goals of the deliberative process, the practice of pulling consent items from the agenda, and the allowance of time donation during public comment.

Commitments

The group considered how they can work together to create a positive and collaborative dynamic between the Council, Staff, and the public that achieves the aspiration articulated by the Council that “*communication and engagement are characterized as fair, civil, timely, and transparent.*” Based on the morning’s conversation, the facilitator asked each Council member, City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and Deputy City Manager to share a commitment they will make to continuing to improve effectiveness. The commitments are listed below.

- Provide Council the best information to make the best decisions for the community
- Communicate back to staff so we can be prepared
- Make better use of our briefings to get questions answered in advance
- Coach members of the public so they can better navigate our process and not throw off-budget requests at staff
- From the dais, always reflect what the electorate thinks
- Be clear on big and strategic priorities and empower staff to find creative solutions
- Try to make our meetings more efficient
- Invite feedback from colleagues

Focus Areas

The facilitator reviewed Council input on the Focus Areas. Discussion ensued about suggested modifications.

Focus Area	Main Discussion Points
Mobility & Alternate Modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two main goals include safety (Vision Zero) and to decarbonize (Climate Action Plan) • Create the opportunity for mode choice; make it an option, not mandatory • Not intended to replace vehicles • Create environment so they share the road safely • Safe and effective, or functional transportation network
Engagement & Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing education • Opportunity to be proactive and put the facts out there • Equity goal as part – translation and equity study, we have learning to do • Expectation about communicating ourselves and responding to misinformation
Housing & Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add existing affordable housing
Fiscal Stewardship & Effective City Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiscal stewardship in context of considering Infrastructure Task Force priorities; explore funding mechanisms such as sales tax ballot measure or bond • Limited resources for long list of infrastructure needs to address
Evolving & Preserving Community Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms dependent upon where our passions are • Change is constant, how do we not lose what has made this city great over time and balance the tension • Preserving implies managing the change and retaining key aspects of the community when we can • Community character is ambiguous • For preservation, explore designation of historical areas • Let members of the community weigh in on the definition • Missing cultural arts, habitat restoration/open space, recreational opportunities, and shared values of the City Council
Environmental Health & Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility choice is a better term

Council Goals

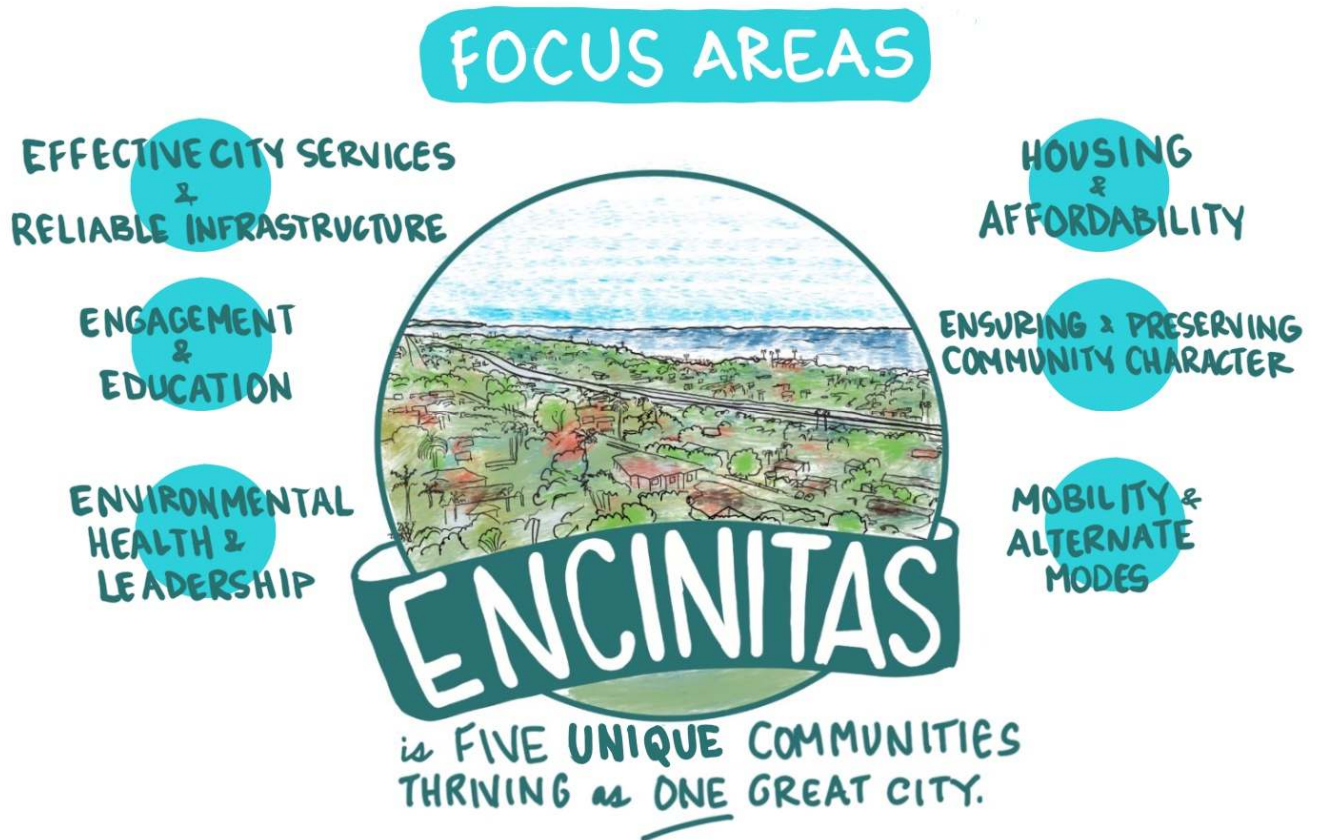
The facilitator reviewed the Council Goals and the group discussed whether the individual items are operationalized, underway, or not yet begun. The operationalized items were considered accomplishments and removed from the list for 2024. The underway items remain on the workplan.

After understanding what is included in the work plan for the upcoming year, the group discussed emerging issues the Council wants to consider as organizational capacity is available. As a result, Council added two new goals for 2024, listed below under “Not Yet Begun.”

Status	Council Goals
Operationalized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize Housing Solutions Manager to explore solutions for homeless and unhoused • Quail Gardens Drive – Saxony/Westlake safe routes complete streets
Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% affordable housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Choose a site ○ Define a project ○ Find funding partners • Prioritize remaining streetscape elements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete C ○ Stormwater ○ B ○ A South • Safe, legal railroad crossings and establish city-wide quiet zones • Expand habitat stewardship and open space preservation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify resources to fund and better manage our natural resources
Not Yet Begun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider Infrastructure Task Force prioritization and funding recommendations • Build on the bike safety emergency declaration goals and implement Vision Zero

The Strategic Planning Framework

The Council reviewed the strategic planning framework established last year and agreed to update the framework to include the following elements:



Vision

Encinitas is five unique communities thriving as ONE great City.

Mission

Leading the preservation and evolution of our City and providing innovative services that enhance the quality of life for residents, visitors, businesses, and our communities.

Focus Areas

Effective City Services & Reliable Infrastructure

Effective City Services and Reliable Infrastructure means services are provided consistently, timely, and predictably and infrastructure investments are planned and executed in a fiscally responsible manner.

Housing & Affordability

Housing and Affordability means providing diverse and affordable housing, including workforce housing, having a roof over everyone's head, engaging underrepresented populations, preserving existing affordable housing, and ensuring the provision of support services.

Engagement & Education

Engagement and Education means taking initiative to listen and learn from the community using diverse and inclusive communication tools. The City continually adapts and builds relationships with our community through education, proactive communication, accurate information, and a focus on equity.

Ensuring & Preserving Community Character

Evolving and Preserving Community Character reflects the importance of balancing growth and preservation in a welcoming beach community while striving to maintain its unique character, embracing diversity, fostering innovation, and enhancing quality of life.

Environmental Health & Leadership

Environmental Health and Leadership means continuing our environmental leadership by showing our commitment to good stewardship of our natural resources; meeting our goals on Climate Action remains a priority, including decarbonization, mobility mode choice, clean air and water, responsible solid waste disposal, storm and wastewater reuse, shoreline, and open space preservation.

Mobility & Alternate Modes

Mobility and Alternate Modes mean we strive to be a nation-wide leader in mode choice by providing data-driven solutions to create a safe and functional transportation network along with programs that educate and empower people to reach destinations by active transportation and micro-mobility.

Council Goals

- **100% affordable housing (choose site, define project, explore funding options)**
- **Prioritize remaining streetscape elements (Complete C, Stormwater, B, A South)**
- **Safe, legal railroad crossings and establish citywide quiet zones**
- **Expand habitat stewardship and explore open space preservation (Identify resources to fund and better manage our natural resources)**
- **Consider Infrastructure Task Force prioritization and funding recommendations**
- **Build on the bike safety emergency declaration goals and implement Vision Zero**

Parting Thoughts

At the close of the retreat, participants were asked to reflect and share their parting thoughts.

- I appreciate all the participation here. It is always good food for thought. The continuation of what we established last year will help moving forward.
- Great wordsmithing and clarity helped me. I look forward to my updated page.
- Wordsmithing revealed how much we accomplished this year. We had the right amount of tension and collaboration. I am also amazed we will get out on time.
- I do not think we are shy about taking on big things. Good for all of us. I appreciate the dialogue every year.
- Echo clarity and collaboration.
- Appreciate refining of goals and objectives to have the direction. Amazing to look at celebrating success. It is a reflection of Council and staff collaboration.
- The best thing was to make Nick the Mobility Manager. Everyone has great ideas. The Council was good at taking what we had last year and making it even better.
- Could not believe infrastructure was missing from last year. The tracking sheet and donut chart from Lois is great, especially with State of the City coming up.