

CITY of DOTHAN



STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE REPORT

February 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update is designed to build upon the vision, goals, and objectives contained in *Dothan’s Strategic Plan 2034*. A culminating workshop offers a series of *Our Time Conversations* to provide the Commission with information identified as essential to upcoming decisions. It also affords an opportunity for dialogue as the Commission strives to continue Dothan’s current high level of service while investing in new, transformational initiatives. Held on February 7 & 8 2025, Day-1 of the workshop consisted primarily of **presentations** in areas of interest identified by the Commission. Day-2 fostered **discussions** for elected leaders to share opinions, learn more about major projects and their impact, consider funding options, and provide direction to senior staff.

<i>Our Time Conversations</i>—Presentations Day-1	
Topics Requested by Commission	Areas of Interest
Major Projects for 2025--2030	An overview of major (costly) projects that “must” or “should” be considered for funding.
Senior Leadership Development	The impending loss of senior leadership through retirement; plans for continuity of experience.
HudsonAlpha Wiregrass Partnership	The economic impact of the HAW partnership; the partnership beyond contract year 5.
Creating Dothan’s Ag-Tech Economy	Building upon the Dothan-HAW partnership to create an Ag-Tech economy in the Wiregrass.
City Financial Status and Debt	Primary emphasis on overall health of the budget and on future debt capacity.
City Hall Status Update, Q&A	Building design/layout, estimated costs, timelines, and next steps.
Arena/Arts Status Updates, Q&A	Building design/layout, estimated costs, timelines, and next steps.

<i>Our Time Conversations</i>--2025 Discussions Day-2		Details Page #
Commission Dialogue	Summary of Outcomes	
Prioritization of Federal Requests	US 84/605 Intersection Capacity Improvements and the Girard Basin Stormwater/Drainage projects will receive top priority.	7
Funding the Future: General Fund	The Commission agreed that solutions must be identified to balance revenue-expenses in the solid waste fund without future transfers from the General Fund (\$5.8 million in 2024).	7
Funding the Future: Restart of ERP	Generally in favor of an ERP system for Dothan City, the Commission requested additional steps to ensure the conversion will be implemented effectively and on-budget.	8
Funding the Future: Public Safety Software	By 12/31, key software systems for DPD and DFD will no longer support essential functions. Formal proposals will be presented by May to ensure timely replacement decisions.	8
Timelines for Decision-Making: City Hall	Assuming future documents are completed on time and Guaranteed Maximum Prices are within expected ranges, the Commission will be ready to authorize contracts this summer.	8
Timelines for Decision-Making: Arena/Arts	With an estimated facility cost of \$200 million, the Commission is not ready to move forward with an April vote to authorize initial design work. Additional meetings with RDG and JLL/AMS were requested; the Commission would like to visit a city with a facility similar to the one being proposed in Dothan.	9
Staffing for City Fundraising	The Commission will continue to consider staffing/contracting to focus on revenue/partnerships not currently being pursued.	9

The STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE WORKSHOP PROCESS



The Strategic Planning Update Workshop is designed around three objectives:

- * To give the Mayor and Commissioners an opportunity to reflect on progress to-date, with accountability, in order to move forward;
- * To enable important conversations that are not possible given the tight schedules for regular Commission meetings; and
- * To provide general direction to the City Manager and senior staff as they develop their Business Plans, Capital Improvement Plans, and Biennial Budgets.

To develop the agenda for the 2025 Strategic Planning Update Workshop, individual interviews were conducted by consultant Barbara Alford (Wayfinder Solutions, LLC) with the elected City Leaders. Officials were asked to identify major projects or initiatives about which more detailed information was needed. They were asked to focus on their individual districts and on the City as a whole, to identify concerns, and to describe conversations that they believed were essential to support upcoming decisions. *Our Time Conversations* included in the Strategic Planning Workshop agenda were derived directly from these interviews. (See Appendix A for individual Commissioner and Mayor interviews.)

Summary of Interviews with the Dothan City Commissioners and the Mayor: The 2025 Strategic Planning Update Workshop was designed to address the topics these leaders identified as most critical to Dothan's future. A summary of their input follows:

* *Future City Debt Capacity and Revenue Projections*—All of the City's elected leaders were interested in Dothan's ability to balance annual costs to maintain the current level of high-quality service with the expectations for new major fiscal commitments. They asked for an overview of the City's revenue and expenditure budgets and fund balances, the impact of required new commitments (i.e., sewer project upgrades), and future debt projections. They also requested detailed information on the impact of additional debt on the City's fiscal stability and credit rating. Representatives from PFM Consulting, financial advisors contracted to provide these analyses for Dothan, were included in the Workshop agenda.

* *Leadership Development*—Commissioners are aware of the potential loss of senior level experience as department heads consider retirement. They requested an overview of strategies underway to identify and train future leaders from within the Dothan employee ranks, to transfer skills, to recruit and retain new talent, and to continue to work towards a leadership team that mirrors the Dothan community.

* *City Hall*—The Commission already has invested significantly in design, land purchase, and surrounding infrastructure for the new City Hall and Annex facilities. More information was requested regarding the full cost of the build-out and the timing of future contracting decisions. They also asked for an opportunity to discuss the critical talking points that clearly link this investment to the overall strategic vision for downtown.

* *City Center Block*—Although Commissioners suggested a variety of topics under this heading, the primary issues related to the major next-step in downtown development: the Arena/Arts complex. Original calendar drafts called for decisions to begin as early as April

2025 with the City’s investment in professional design work. The Commission requested Workshop time to discuss the impact of the Arena/Arts investment on quality of life, high wage-jobs, contingent communities (Districts 1 and 2), and support for facilities once constructed. They also requested time to discuss the development of clear and consistent communication with the public. Arena/Arts discussions were also to be linked to the City’s capacity for future debt while maintaining a high level of service overall, and to the need to actively promote partnerships, donors, and external funding opportunities to generate additional revenue.

**HudsonAlpha Wiregrass*—The Commission was well aware of the work underway by HudsonAlpha Wiregrass (HAW) in peanut research and education, but they requested an overview of the impact of this work on economic development. They had questions about the realistic expectations of both partners (HAW and the City), how to equate activity to return-on-investment, and what the partnership could be after year-5.

**Opportunities to Create an Ag-Tech Economy*—While this exact description was primarily Mayor Saliba’s, all Commissioners were interested in how to take the HudsonAlpha Wiregrass partnership to the next level.

**Fundraising for the City of Dothan*—Commissioner interest in this topic derived directly from dual desires to invest in major new initiatives (downtown) while maintaining a high level of service for all City departments and functions. Identifying and securing resources for the former is not something that the City is currently staffed to do strategically and on a daily basis. Pursuing grants, donors, partnerships, real estate sales, et al, are some of the possibilities that Commissioners mentioned.

* * * * *

While the agenda for the Workshop comes directly from Commission interviews, the information requested by the Commission comes primarily from the Department Heads. Each Department Leader was interviewed by Dr. Alford and asked to identify his/her department’s most mission-critical projects for 2025. Leaders were asked to consider the next five years and to identify three major (aka... “costly”) projects that **must** be funded in order to retain expected services, and one major project that **should** be considered if the City wishes to continue to move forward. This information provided the Commission with a general idea of future capital investments that they will be asked to fund to keep the primary City services in excellent condition. Department Heads also were asked to reflect on the impact that the downtown initiatives are having on their departments, both now and in the near future. Department Leader information was provided to the Commission prior to the Workshop.

While input from Department Leaders was specific to their area of responsibility, there were three recurring common themes: 1) Leaders continue to be supportive of the downtown initiative and simultaneously emphatic about the need to invest in City services (equipment, facilities, personnel, contracts, et al) in order to fulfill their responsibilities to the public. 2) Leaders asked to begin now to plan collaboratively for the impact of the new City Center on their personnel, budgets, schedules, etc. 3) Leaders cited the need to continue to invest in the recruitment and retention of talented personnel as the number one priority for their department.

(See Appendix B for Department Leader Interviews)

(See Appendix C for Department Must and Should Projects)

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The Strategic Planning Update Workshop schedule does not allow for a comprehensive review of progress on goals and objectives. However, to provide some background assessment related to the current strategic plan, Commission members were involved in a brief qualitative evaluation exercise. Elected officials were asked to provide a letter “grade” for each of the City’s 2034 goals and their respective objectives. Their cumulative assessment was reviewed during the Workshop introduction, with some opportunity for discussion, albeit limited by time. Dothan’s 2034 Goals include:

1. Maintain a Financially Sound City and a High-Performance Team
2. Expand the Local Economy
3. Plan for Dothan’s Future
4. Make Dothan a More Livable and Inclusive City
5. Improve Mobility.

(See Appendix D for Assessment of Progress on 2034 Goals)

Also as part of a qualitative assessment, and at the request of the Commission, the Department Leaders were asked to report on the status of the “big ideas” that they proposed during the 2024 planning session. These were reported to the Commission prior to the Workshop and reviewed during the opening **Conversations**. Department Leaders were in attendance to answer Commission questions about these, or any other major projects and initiatives.

(See Appendix E for Department Update on “Big Ideas” Proposed in 2024)

Our Time Conversations—2025
Outcomes

Conversation--Prioritization of Projects for Federal Requests

The following projects were identified and will be discussed with legislative representatives:

US 84/605 Intersection Capacity Improvements--\$4,270,000 (an 80/20 partnership)

Girard Basin Stormwater/Drainage projects-

Area 1--\$ 8.8 million

Area 2--\$37 million

The Commission believes that \$45-46 million in requested earmarks for the Girard Basin will not generate a strong proposal. They directed that a more general request be developed for \$15 million in federal support to allow this much-needed, long-term renovation project to proceed. If federal allocations are authorized, projects will be selected in accordance with data obtained from the recent study. The City would consider increasing the 20% match to allow these first stages to reach logical stopping points.

Two additional projects were presented.

Realtime Crime Center--\$800,085. This cost does not include drones to be stationed throughout the City for rapid deployment. The Commission is strongly in favor of this project. However, the time-lapse between a federal request and actual receipt of funds can be as much as three years. The Commission instructed the Interim City Manager to discuss this project with legislators but also requested that alternative funding sources be identified to allow this project to be completed (with drones) within a year.

Fire Department Mobile Command Center and Vests--\$1.2 million. Although the need for both items was affirmed, neither is likely to present a strong request at the federal level. The Interim City Manager will work with the Fire Chief to identify alternative funding.

Conversation--Funding the Future: General Fund

This conversation began with a reference to data provided on Day-1 by Director Marcus regarding the City's current and projected-future debt position. The Commission also reviewed information provided by representatives from PFM Consulting (a City financial advisor.) The consultants advised that there was fiscal affordability to borrow funds for the City Hall project and for the upcoming Cypress Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade (SRF), but not much capacity beyond that without increasing revenue. Director Marcus had previously informed the Commission that these two initiatives would move the City's debt load to \$169 million in 2027 (which is still below the constitutional debt limit of \$236 million) and would be discharged by 2046. However, the Commission was less focused on the constitutional maximum than on the annual debt service, given the City's extreme dependence on sales tax (a revenue source the City cannot fully control.) The Commission also briefly discussed the unfunded portion of Dothan's commitment to the Retirement System of Alabama, which is not included in debt forecasts. They requested further information on the Dothan-RSA status.

With regard to an annual deficit in the City's solid waste fund, there was general agreement that interventions are needed to enable the fund to be self-supporting, and to relieve the pressure on the general fund to back-fill this account each year. This discussion focused solely on the general fund and the importance of having all City utility services generate revenue to support cost. However, it was acknowledged that any rate increases proposed now could be misconstrued by the public as being related to the Downtown Initiative. Solutions must be found, but the public messaging must clearly delineate that this is related to

the Commission's fiduciary responsibility to ensure the stability of the general fund vs. the quest for new revenue for projects. Several options were discussed, but the Commission took no position on these at this time. The Commission directed the Interim City Manager and Finance Director to provide information on all utility funds to determine current and near-future self-sustainability. It was generally agreed that neither sales nor property tax increases will be considered for general fund relief or for the Downtown initiative at this time.

Conversation—Funding the Future: Restart of ERP

Despite a prior failed experience with the introduction of some portions of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system into Dothan, the Commission heard a presentation on the importance of completing this initiative to maximize records management, communication, and public services. Approximately \$4.6 million remains in the budget to support the project. Current lead staff have identified Tyler Software (in use in other Alabama cities) as the preferred software system. The potential benefits of an ERP system were not disputed. However, previous errors in selecting software vendors and integrators remain a concern. To gain more assurance that this second process will be successful, the Commission requested that Finance Director Marcus have further discussions with peers around the state regarding Tyler software and other products that may be in use. Meetings will be scheduled so that Commissioner members can be directly involved.

Conversation—Funding the Future: Public Safety Software

The City was very recently informed by Zoll Software (used by Dothan Fire Department) that it will cease support for the mandated reporting requirements for DFD by 12/31/25. Similarly, the data management/reporting system in use by Dothan Police Department (Southern Software) will no longer meet the functional requirements needed to support modern public safety operations. The Commission understands that substitute software must be purchased in 2025 for DPD and DFD to continue to comply with federal and other reporting requirements, and to provide essential tech-enabled services for Dothan's residents. Working together to identify a common public safety system for DPD and DFD, those chiefs have been collaborating with IT staff to research and identify the best options. ProPhenix, Motorola, and other systems are being carefully reviewed. The team also is reviewing the relative benefits of on-premise vs. cloud-based options (the latter being technically beneficial but more expensive.) A recommendation will be forthcoming to the Commission. A vote will be needed within the next several months for timely and effective purchase, installation, testing, training, and implementation to be completed.

Conversation—Timelines for Decision-making: City Hall

Schematic and design work is nearly completed on the City Hall and Annex buildings. Working estimates for the two currently total \$68 million. As the City will not cash-flow this project, this investment will add approximately \$5.2 million per year to the City's annual debt service. It was agreed that the Commission has already received sufficient information about these two facilities to allow them to make the necessary incremental decisions. The current calendar calls for construction documents to be completed by 2/28/25 and Guaranteed Maximum Prices (GMP) to be received by 4/25/25. Assuming that these deadlines are met and that the GMP's are within range of the current estimates, the Commissioners and Mayor agree that they will be ready to proceed to authorize construction contracts in June for City Hall and in July for the Annex.

Conversation—Timelines for Decision-making: Arena/Arts

The original Day-2 Workshop agenda was developed to enable the Commission to discuss a possible range of City investment (debt) for this facility. However, after the Day-1 presentation on the general fund and the corresponding information provided by the PFM advisors, the Commission determined that they do not have sufficient information at this time to identify an approximate increase in the City's yearly debt service to fund a financial commitment to the Arena/Arts project. The current working price tag for the Arena/Arts complex is approximately \$200 million--\$115 million for the Arena and \$85 million for the Arts center. The current timeline calls for the Commission to enter into a contract with RDG for initial design work in April 2025. Although fees for the design contract are reimbursed by the Wiregrass Foundation*, the Commission is not prepared to commit to the April deadline at present. Members have requested meetings with RDG and JLL/AMS representatives (possibly in March) to get additional clarity on conceptual design options and the respective benefits of each. Commission members also agreed they would like to visit a city with a facility similar to the one being proposed in Dothan. Their questions for a site visit would include the measurable impact on that city's economy, qualitative and fiscal return-on-investment, strategies for sustainability, and effective communication with the public regarding that city's investment. Interim City Manager Morris will work with RDG to identify an appropriate facility and will schedule the meetings requested.

*NOTE: Wiregrass Foundation will pay architectural fees only when the City has approved and appropriated (or secured) adequate funding for each element of the Project.

Conversation—Staffing for Fundraising: The Commission discussed a possible addition to the staff for resource development, with special emphasis on the downtown projects. Several different types of revenue generation were reviewed. The City currently has some grantwriting expertise on-staff. However, competitive (discretionary) grants tend to be very specific as to funders (federal, state, private, etc) and topics, and a single person will not have expertise in all areas. The City would still need to contract occasionally with consultants for specific grant applications. A more consistent skill set can be applied to the development of contributor relationships. The Mayor and City officials schedule as many public appearances and private meetings as their calendars permit. However, this tends to be more reactive than proactive and is not conducive to developing the kind of relationships needed for major partnerships/donors. The Commission will consider identifying a position to focus exclusively on partnership and donor relationships to accelerate progress on the downtown initiative. An unfilled staff position salary exists to fund an employee if identified. No specific action item was assigned.

STRATEGIC PLANNING FUNDAMENTALS for the City of Dothan, AL

The City of Dothan has in place a comprehensive *Strategic Plan* through the year 2034. The Mission, Vision, and Goals (listed below) are reflective of Dothan's present values and general directions. Each year during the Strategic Planning Update Workshop these fundamentals are referenced to ensure that all discussions are integrally connected to what the City is today (Mission), where the City wishes to be in 2034 (Vision), and its fundamental aspirations (Goals).

Dothan's Mission

The Mission of the Dothan City Government is to provide
the ***BEST MUNICIPAL SERVICES,***
in a
CUSTOMER FRIENDLY MANNER,
and to be
FINANCIALLY SOUND
while
INVESTING IN THE CITY'S FUTURE,
and
ENGAGING OUR RESIDENTS.

Dothan Vision 2034

In 2034 Dothan is:

the ***MOST BEAUTIFUL, LIVABLE CITY*** in Alabama.

Dothan is:

the ***HUB OF THE WIREGRASS REGION***
with ***CONVENIENT ACCESS AND MOBILITY.***

Dothan has:

a ***VIBRANT 24 HOURS DOWNTOWN***
the heart of the community
and a ***STRONG DIVERSE ECONOMY.***

Dothan is:

a ***FAMILY FRIENDLY COMMUNITY***
with ***EXCEPTIONAL LEISURE AMENITIES FOR ALL,***
and ***An INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY FOR ALL.***

Dothan's Goals for 2024

- ***Maintain a Financially Sound City and a High Performance Team***
 - ***Expand the Local Economy***
 - ***Plan for Dothan's Future***
 - ***Make Dothan a More Livable and Inclusive City***
 - ***Improve Mobility***
-

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS 2025**Elected Leaders**

Mark Saliba, Mayor
Kevin Dorsey, District 1 Commissioner
Dr. Aristotle Kirkland, District 2 Commissioner
Bradley Bedwell, District 3 Commissioner
John Ferguson, District 4 Commissioner
Gantt Pierce, District 5 Commissioner
David Crutchfield, District 6 Commissioner

Senior Administration

Randy Morris, Interim City Manager

Department Heads

Angie Akos, Utilities Director
Chief Will Benny, Dothan Police
Clay Dempsey, Performing Arts Director
Rose Evans-Gordon, Municipal Court Judge
Kevan Kelly, Esq., Legal Services
Nikki Kerns, IT Director
Andy Love, General Services Director
Todd McDonald, Planning Director
Delvick McKay, Personnel Director
Romona Marcus, Finance Director
Billy Powell, Leisure Services Director
Vincent Vincent, Community Relations Officer
Chief Larry Williams, Dothan Fire
Tommy Wright, Public Works Director

Administrative Support

Lisa Matheny, Executive Assistant to the City Manager
Shirley Cosby, Special Assistant to the Commission

Presenters

Dean Mitchell, Director, HudsonAlpha Wiregrass
Joshua McCoy, Managing Director and Marcie Lewis, Senior Managing Consultant,
PFM Consulting

Consultant

Barbara Alford, Wayfinder Solutions, LLC

Planning sessions were announced and open to the public.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Elected Leader Interviews



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Mayor Mark Saliba

1. Thinking citywide: what are the major City projects/initiatives (underway, scheduled, or in planning) for 2025 about which you would like more information?

The Commission needs more information about the remaining major pieces of the original City Center plan—the arena, the arts spaces, the hotel, and the parking deck. Unlike some prior building decisions that have been primarily funded by state/private sources, the remaining structures will require major City investments. These decisions cannot be made without more information, even if this requires taking more time or adding modestly to the final costs because of the delay. The Commission needs to hear more about the pro's and con's of various layouts, the City's long-term debt situation, funding sources and strategies, and potential partnerships.

2. Thinking of constituents city-wide: what are the major changes/improvements that the people of Dothan would like to see accomplished (or at least started) by the city in 2025?

The City of Dothan is in a service business. It is the City's primary function to ensure the effective and efficient operation of day-to-day services expected/needed by the people: public safety (fire, police, EMS); water; sewer; business services; roadways; public parks; etc. These issues are top-of-mind for most people. The City Manager, Department Heads and their teams are primarily responsible for these services, while the Commission provides general oversight. However, the elected leaders have primary responsibility for designing long-term directions and goals, and for identifying strategies to position Dothan for big opportunities that are 5, 10, 15 years in the future.

Citizens also are concerned about broader issues, but these go well beyond a singular focus on Downtown. Dothan's residents are concerned about issues such as the effectiveness of Dothan's schools, and the engagement or lack of engagement of low-income and minority communities in Dothan decision-making. The Commission needs to be proactive vs. reactive in addressing some of these major concerns.

3. Thinking as a visionary: looking down the road to 2034, how will you know that the investment of time and resources in the Downtown initiative has made a positive difference for the people in your district?

Key metrics will include: an increase in the number and success of retailers and restaurants downtown; more people living downtown; a positive picture of the private investment that has been attracted and continues to be interested in downtown; more people living, working, and playing downtown and feeling safe while doing so.

4. Thinking as a responsible official: what, if anything, is your biggest concern about the future of Dothan Alabama?

The City relies on sales tax for approximately 75% of its revenue. There is a growing political trend (nationwide) to reduce taxes in general and to cannibalize sales taxes for various

incentives. The potential erosion of the sales tax base should be a major concern for city revenue projections in Dothan and elsewhere.

5. Thinking as a professional colleague: describe any conversations that you feel must take place amongst the Commissioners to better understand the opinions of your fellow commissioners on major city issues/topics/projects?

Improving communication has been an ongoing topic for strategic planning for the last several years. It is imperative that the City's elected officials regularly talk about issues and concerns in order to avoid last-minute emergency phone calls or the inability to cast a vote due to inadequate information. Can a conversation be structured within the Retreat agenda to identify what can be done by all parties to make real progress in this area?

The Mayor also would like to see the Commission discuss a broader issue: How can the Mayor and Commission work together to seize upon a time-bound opportunity to take advantage of Dothan's Ag Economy? Given Dothan's history and economic base, the new HudsonAlpha Wiregrass agreement, and emerging interest by other partners, there is genuine potential to make Dothan **THE** regional destination for industry advancement in agriculture. This accomplishment would bring with it the science, technology, education, career opportunities, and business location that would be associated with that designation.

6. Thinking as a Retreat participant: will you define one specific outcome for the February Strategic Planning Update Retreat that will make you feel that it was a good investment of your time?

The Mayor wants to walk away from this Retreat with a direction on the last pieces of the City Center block. Decisions are not anticipated or necessary. However, the Commission should have received enough information and have had sufficient dialogue to determine an overall direction to move forward with general plans and estimated timelines. These should be identified within the Commission's agreed-upon debt capacity for Dothan. This direction must also include the types of fundraising the City must engage in going forward and the personnel (employed or contracted) to make this possible.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Commissioner Kevin Dorsey, District 1

1. Thinking citywide: what are the major City projects/initiatives (underway, scheduled, or in planning) for 2025 about which you would like more information?

The most critical item that needs to be decided by the Commission is the selection and employment of a new City Manager. (Note: this request will be conveyed to the consultant group managing that process.) In addition, the Commission needs more information about the potential loss of senior level experience as Department Heads consider retirements. What are the training and development plans to attempt to grow talent from within the ranks? Are strategies in place to ensure that expertise and information is shared to have smooth transitions in top leadership positions?

*For several years, the Commissioner has been seeking a renter's ordinance. Recently, the Commission approved changes to Article 1, Chapter 14 of the City Code of Ordinances that is intended to assist with some of these issues. However, this is a very modest first step in addressing the housing conditions being faced by renters. Precisely how will these ordinance changes be implemented so they can begin to address renter's issues, and what is the timeline for implementation? What is the gap between the use of this ordinance to help renters vs. a full-scale renter's ordinance, and what are the next steps to close that gap?

2. Thinking of your district: what are the major changes/improvements that the people in your district would like to see accomplished (or at least started) by the City in 2025?

The renter's ordinance continues to be the most important issue for District 1. The changes recently made to Dothan's Code, Article 1, Chapter 14, are not understood to provide relief for the renters in a timely manner. How and when will people in District 1 be made aware of the ordinance change so they can get action on complaints?

3. Thinking as a visionary: looking down the road to 2034, how will you know that the investment of time and resources in the Downtown initiative has made a positive difference for the people in your district?

Downtown investment will be a success if it includes accessibility and inclusivity of all people including downtown business owners (current and prospective), investors, major organizations operating downtown, and the people living in neighborhoods surrounding the targeted area. City leadership should not assume to know what the people living in neighborhoods around downtown want to see. While there is every reason to assume that the facilities being planned and businesses being recruited will benefit all citizens, the citizens in districts 1 and 2 (closest to City Center) should be involved in conversations, even as it pertains to businesses being recruited downtown. For example, the Commissioner believes his constituents would like to see an urgent care facility added to the targeted list of businesses being encouraged to locate downtown. He noted that this is only his opinion based on constituent comments. There should be an active effort to ask District 1 and 2 residents to provide direct input.

4. Thinking as a responsible official: what, if anything, is your biggest concern about the future of Dothan Alabama?

The Commissioner is concerned about Dothan's youth--the increasing juvenile offenses; the lack of available jobs. His constituents cite the regularity of juveniles involved in crimes—guns being fired, minor thefts, etc. He sees two important partial solutions. 1) full employment of a highly trained, community-oriented police department, that regularly engages with the people in the district. 2) getting young people involved in jobs and job training. He asks if there are partnerships that can be formed with Wallace and Troy to provide internships or other education opportunities that occupy teenagers' time and give them a path into a good career? Keeping teens focused on a positive future and working towards that future would help keep many out of trouble.

The Commissioner also cited the broader concern about the City's lack of a structure for asking communities to be part of their own solutions. The Commissioner referenced work by the Woodson Center in Washington DC. This organization promotes a model of working from within communities to identify solutions to problems. They believe that the idea of changing policies or providing how-to manuals (which are developed by people outside the community) and even charitable giving only goes so far. These solutions seldom work, and they take power and responsibility away from the people who are living through the problems. You have to find out from each distinct community how they define their problems, and what solutions they believe will work.

5. Thinking as a professional colleague: describe any conversations that you feel must take place amongst the Commissioners in order to better understand the opinions of your fellow commissioners on major city issues/topics/projects?

Feelings do not change the truth. Opinions are not the same as facts. The Commission needs to ensure that the information they receive and statements that they make are evidence-based, or that they are clarified as opinions. Commissioners should be prepared to ask for data from Department Heads regarding requests and reports, and to ask for similar evidence from one another when positions are expressed.

The Commissioner also suggests that the Retreat agenda includes opportunities for discussion about some/all of these important topics: 1. Housing; 2. Financial literacy programs offered after school hours; 3. Economic development; 4. A health care facility downtown; 5. The City's role in mental health interventions; 6. Youth violence.

6. Thinking as a Retreat participant: will you define one specific outcome for the February Strategic Planning Update Retreat that will make you feel that it was a good investment of your time?

The Commissioner reiterated the previous statement that feelings do not equal truths. He asks if the Commission can consider ways to become more committed to measuring the success of projects/initiatives/departments/personnel. The Retreat should result in a common understanding that the Commission is going to request more fact-based assessments for current projects and future requests, vs. making any decisions based on opinions or assumptions.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Commissioner Aristotle Kirkland, District 2

1. Thinking citywide: what are the major City projects/initiatives (underway, scheduled, or in planning) for 2025 about which you would like more information?

The Commissioner would like the Retreat program to include more information about Hudson-Alpha-Wiregrass, with emphasis on the nature of the partnership itself. Commissioners should have a better understanding of expectations with regard to anticipated benefits of this partnership to both parties, and the type and timing of Return-on-Investment the City should reasonably expect from this relationship.

2. Thinking of your district: what are the major changes/improvements that the people in your district would like to see accomplished (or at least started) by the City in 2025?

The Commissioner is planning to survey his constituents and will have more to say about this question at the Strategic Planning Workshop. Many of the same issues that he brought forward during strategic planning in 2024 remain as key concerns for 2025 (i.e., safety, policing, jobs.) These and other issues that are important citywide can have a greater intensity in neighborhoods like many in District 2. The arrival of Amazon in Dothan, located in District 2, is a big event for the City. However, with Amazon as with other businesses that are considering location in the District, not much is known about the jobs (particularly higher income jobs) that have employed people from District 2. Without data, it is difficult to answer questions about the impact of City achievements on the District.

3. Thinking as a visionary: looking down the road to 2034, how will you know that the investment of time and resources in the Downtown initiative has made a positive difference for the people in your district?

The debt assumed by the City for the Downtown projects remains well within the City's budget capacity, without cutting services and projects to other areas of the City. The new or renovated venues should be self-sustaining. The companies that located to or expanded in Dothan because of the Downtown revitalization bring with them good-paying jobs that are available to people in District 3.

4. Thinking as a responsible official: what, if anything, is your biggest concern about the future of Dothan Alabama?

Although the City Center initiative includes great projects and these are located in District 2, the Commissioner is concerned that so much time and money is being concentrated on the downtown corridor and leaders may be forgetting that there are other communities, major needs, other innovative projects requiring attention and funding. When projects outside of City Center are considered, these still tend to focus on the westside of town.

The Commissioner also continues to be dissatisfied with the City's lack of progress in the area of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity. This is particularly noticeable in the upper-level staff positions.

5. Thinking as a professional colleague: describe any conversations that you feel must take place amongst the Commissioners in order to better understand the opinions of your fellow commissioners on major city issues/topics/projects?

The Retreat agenda is likely to be heavily focused on Downtown initiatives. However, other Commissioners need time for dialogue about other important initiatives and advancements they would like to see in their districts and for the Dothan as a whole.

6. Thinking as a Retreat participant: will you define one specific outcome for the February Strategic Planning Update Retreat that will make you feel that it was a good investment of your time?

The Commissioner would like to see the leadership commit to assessing, measuring, and reporting progress on goals and objectives that have already been included in City plans. Strategic planning conversations seem to concentrate most heavily on new programs and projects.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Commissioner Bradley Bedwell, District 3

1. Thinking citywide: what are the major City projects/initiatives (underway, scheduled, or in planning) for 2025 about which you would like more information?

The Commissioner wants to hear more definite information on the costs of the City Hall build-out. Although information is regularly shared with the public, no final designs or dollar commitments have yet been announced. He questions how those final figures and designs will be viewed by the public. He also would like to have a conversation to address the question of whether or not the strategic vision for Downtown will match the investment.

2. Thinking of your district: what are the major changes/improvements that the people in your district would like to see accomplished (or at least started) by the City in 2025?

There has been a good deal of progress in District 3 and in the City overall. However, his District is concerned about the possible closing of part of the walking trail in Eastgate Park. Once again thinking of how his constituents will view this decision (if it happens), it would be difficult to reconcile how an investment of several hundred million in Downtown is valid, while \$200,000 in funding for trail repairs is considered unjustified.

3. Thinking as a visionary: looking down the road to 2034, how will you know that the investment of time and resources in the Downtown initiative has made positive difference for the people in your district?

A key metric will be the increase of businesses opening and thriving in Downtown Dothan, and the uptick in new or expanded business ventures throughout the City. Although he is supportive of the renovated arts facilities as part of the Downtown plan, it is difficult to see how those specific investments will encourage people to move to Dothan to live and to work. The return on investment will be realized primarily through business development. The Commissioner also would like to see some metrics identified (population, per capita income, tax revenues by districts, etc.) that could be tracked over time and would tell the success story in quantitative terms.

4. Thinking as a responsible official: what, if anything, is your biggest concern about the future of Dothan Alabama?

The Commissioner is highly focused on the City employing the best possible City Manager. The hiring process already is slightly behind schedule, and further delays could risk a loss of momentum for major projects that are underway. The Commission must commit to doing all that is necessary to complete this process effectively and expeditiously. Dothan does not need to lose any good prospects due to procedural matters or calendar issues, and Dothan may need to be prepared to reconsider compensation if it becomes clear that the City is not competitive with similar markets. In the end, the Commission must have confidence in their selection, and the public must have confidence in the Commission's decision-making.

5. Thinking as a professional colleague: describe any conversations that you feel must take place amongst the Commissioners in order to better understand the opinions of your fellow commissioners on major city issues/topics/projects?

Although there are no final decisions made during the Retreat, dialogues should foster a common understanding among the elected leaders about the expected outcomes for Downtown investments. Conversations should lead directly to future decisions based on clarity, consistency, and common sense as these are the qualities that Dothan citizens expect in their Commission.

6. Thinking as a Retreat participant: will you define one specific outcome for the February Strategic Planning Update Retreat that will make you feel that it was a good investment of your time?

Having gained experience in city government and having been through Dothan planning processes for several years, the Commissioner plans to take an active role in the 2025 Retreat. He expects to have the opportunity for open dialogue that will enable him to share his thoughts and to learn more about the opinions of his fellow elected officials. The Retreat should foster a spirit of collaboration and compromise that is necessary for effective teams. Ultimately the Retreat should result in all Commissioners being “on the same page” regarding the very impactful decisions to be made in the weeks ahead.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Commissioner John Ferguson, District 4

1. Thinking citywide: what are the major City projects/initiatives (underway, scheduled, or in planning) for 2025 about which you would like more information?

The Commissioner would like to discuss an updated business plan/timeline regarding the city's partnership with Hudson Alpha Wiregrass. Activities that are known and are happening to date are becoming generally familiar to wiregrass citizens, and they are exciting: scientific (peanut) research taking place here in Dothan, genomic science conversations in the community, DNA science education experiences in the classrooms. What happens next is less known.

As the Peanut Project expands to other counties and school systems, is there buy in from these communities to help support? How does the new HAW staffing tie into our partnership? Should we discuss the terms of our agreement to better coincide with completion of the Innovation Center? Are there other initiatives HAW plans to introduce? Can we incorporate learning to elementary grade students (Computer lab at Andrew Belle) The Commissioner would like to be able to answer his constituency with specifics and recognized Dean as an asset and always available for discussion.

2. Thinking of your district: what are the major changes/improvements that the people in your district would like to see accomplished (or at least started) by the city in 2025?

Although Main Street is a federal highway, resurfacing and adequate striping has been a growing concern from his constituents for several years. The same can be said for the entirety of Oates/Montgomery Hwy from circle to circle. Constituents were relieved to learn ALDOT was scheduled to begin work on Main in first quarter 2024. However, the work was delayed at city request due to work necessary prior to repaving. Commissioners are the ones to have the public-facing conversations to explain these turnabouts and sometimes aren't aware until they happen in real-time. When variables to timelines occur, the commission would like to know to better communicate to constituents.

3. Thinking as a visionary: looking down the road to 2034, how will you know that the investment of time and resources in the Downtown initiative has made a positive difference for the people in your district?

Evidence of success would include a downtown district with all committed phases completed, that the new improvements are a draw; are largely self-sufficient and do not impact negatively our ability to perform our core functions. He and his constituents would expect to see people using the facilities as intended, be well maintained, clean and safe. To be successful downtown, private investment must also be successful and profitable. It also will be

important for the economy to grow, but a balance needs to be maintained between available jobs/careers and the cost of living. He points to Huntsville's development as a model where explosive growth has been consistent, but they've been able to keep the cost of living relatively affordable. Dothan will be most successful by affording more career type opportunities and pursuing high wage, high demand jobs in varied industries. He also understands these investments won't appeal to, or be a priority for some constituents.

4. Thinking as a responsible official: what, if anything, is your biggest concern about the future of Dothan Alabama?

To use a descriptive quotation, the Commissioner does not want to see Dothan "get too far out over its skis". The concepts for City Center are exciting and the designs are impressive on paper and execution is critical. Dothan must be able to afford both the debt service and the continuing maintenance and sustainability of what is being built Downtown. Faith in our economy and financial strengths must be contrasted to many unknowns. The Commission needs to be confident about the debt it is contemplating for the city, and there needs to be a contingency plan that provides the city the ability to adjust to meet its obligations and high levels of service and performance in the event of declining revenues or other unexpected challenges.

The shift from big box retailers/shopping malls will continue to be a challenge in terms of real estate potentially becoming vacant and/or blighted. An emphasis on development of the entirety of RCC and major gateways such as 431/RCC should be in some degree of planning.

5. Thinking as a professional colleague: describe any conversations that you feel must take place amongst the Commissioners to better understand the opinions of your fellow commissioners on major city issues/topics/projects?

It is difficult to identify specific conversations because there are many unknowns about several major upcoming decisions. Regarding the arena and arts spaces, a conversation about city debt tolerance combined with other funding strategies to yield a total price point should have clear resolution. That work is ongoing now. The Commissioner also is concerned by the demolition of buildings that may not be technically historic, but they are important landmarks for the history of Dothan. This topic is particularly relevant to any planning option that includes the demolition of the current city administrative offices.

The Commissioner also would like to continue the practice from prior years of clearly prioritizing projects for federal funding requests. Time permitting, the Commissioner also would like to talk about the possibility of converting more of the Doug Tew campus to therapeutic options as well as any underutilized city-owned resources. The Westgate Armory should receive serious discussion of optimization. This has never been adequately discussed during his tenure on commission.

6. Thinking as a Retreat participant: will you define one specific outcome for the February Strategic Planning Update Retreat that will make you feel that it was a good investment of your time?

The Commission needs to prioritize the projects both in planning stages as well as conceptual. A clear game plan for the next year would make strategic planning a success.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Commissioner Gantt Pierce, District 5

1. Thinking citywide: what are the major City projects/initiatives (underway, scheduled, or in planning) for 2025 about which you would like more information?

In addition to additional information about the progress of Downtown projects, there is more that the Commissioner would like to understand about the Hudson-Alpha Wiregrass partnership in terms of return-on-investment for Dothan. The City is currently in year-3 of a five-year contract commitment with H-A-W. Much of the focus has been on education, which is a valuable addition to the community. However, there is more that needs to be shared with the Commission regarding plans for occupancy, costs, and revenue agreements for the Innovation Center. The Commissioner would like an update on what is currently being discussed between the organization and the City. He would like to know that there is a plan in progress and what the implementation timeline is for that plan, particularly when the Commission will be expected to make key decisions.

2. Thinking of your district: what are the major changes/improvements that the people in your district would like to see accomplished (or at least started) by the City in 2025?

The issue most often cited by District 5 constituents is infrastructure, with special emphasis on roads. There is a feeling that some of the work being done on City-owned roads is more of a temporary “band aid” vs. a long-term solution. In addition, people are concerned about growth that is occurring on the west side of the district. There does not appear to be consideration given to additional traffic issues prior to approvals being granted for new, large sub-divisions. They have expressed, and the Commissioner agrees, that the City should be thinking and planning ahead with regard to the impact of prospective new developments on existing homes and businesses.

3. Thinking as a visionary: looking down the road to 2034, how will you know that the investment of time and resources in the Downtown initiative has made a positive difference for the people in your district?

The best evidence of Downtown success will be people living in Downtown. Increased activity and visitors during weekend events will do little to validate the public investment. A vibrant Downtown community (to include guests “living” in the new City Center hotels during their stays) will motivate entrepreneurs and more importantly support businesses that already have invested in the area.

4. Thinking as a responsible official: what, if anything, is your biggest concern about the future of Dothan Alabama?

While it represents a major opportunity for Dothan’s future, the Downtown project also creates questions and concerns. Of all the initiatives attempted by Dothan in the past

decades, the City Center project could be a generational mistake if not done right. For many of the projects, there will be only one chance to make the right decisions, and these decisions are inter-connected. This is not a “build it and they will come” situation. The Commission needs to know that plans are underway to create new, broadly-attractive events and programs, and the public needs to know that the City is being intentional in making the Downtown transformation impactful for everyone.

A second area of concern is the Wiregrass Commons Mall property. The City does not own this property. However, it is one of the largest “footprints” of privately owned property in the City limits. It also is in a highly visible location, and it is continuing to deteriorate.

5. Thinking as a professional colleague: describe any conversations that you feel must take place amongst the Commissioners in order to better understand the opinions of your fellow commissioners on major city issues/topics/projects?

For the big issues/opportunities that are presented to the City (including, but not limited to Downtown), how can the Commission be proactive about being transparent? During this critical time of major investment possibilities Downtown, people need to be confident that the seven elected officials are working in the best interests of the public. Is the Commission doing enough to keep the public informed of the reasons why decisions are being made for public investment?

6. Thinking as a Retreat participant: will you define one specific outcome for the February Strategic Planning Update Retreat that will make you feel that it was a good investment of your time?

The Commissioner would like to leave the Retreat with concrete answers to the future fiscal relationship with Hudson-Alpha Wiregrass, and a common understanding of how the City is going to pay for a new arena/arts complex. Retreat information should include more than a review of the debt service options. Commissioners also need time to discuss whether or not these plans are viable in terms of return-on-investment. There also should be a better sense of how the City will be developing a plan for new programming (and revenue) Downtown.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Commissioner David Crutchfield, District 6

1. Thinking citywide: what are the major City projects/initiatives (underway, scheduled, or in planning) for 2025 about which you would like more information?

Although much has been accomplished and is in planning for the City Center initiative, the Commissioner feels that the City Hall project is the critical first step. Changes in strategies and plans, while necessary, have caused delays, and it is time for the Commission to have a firm concept of project design and a common commitment on a price, a funding plan, and a timeline to proceed. Some questions will be answered during consultant updates scheduled in January. The Retreat agenda should include answers to any remaining questions to avoid further delays. A detailed update on the City's fiscal position and debt capacity, and the projected financial impact of the City Hall commitment, also is needed.

2. Thinking of your district: what are the major changes/improvements that the people in your district would like to see accomplished (or at least started) by the City in 2025?

Storm water and drainage issues continue to be the primary concern of District 6. Action on problem areas has been delayed due to studies that have required additional work. The studies have yet to result in plans to begin addressing issues in District 6 and around the City.

A second concern has to do with the growth of higher density residential communities in the northern part of the District. Citizens want to see road and traffic issues addressed before projects are greenlighted. This generally does not occur. There also is concern about the need for future infrastructure and support (water, sewer, public safety) and the City's commitment to fund these improvements.

3. Thinking as a visionary: looking down the road to 2034, how will you know that the investment of time and resources in the Downtown initiative has made a positive difference for the people in your district?

By 2034, Dothan's Downtown is a center of things to do (entertainment, dining, shopping, etc.) that people frequent regularly and feel safe doing so. Dothan should start to see evidence of adult children and grandchildren returning to Dothan, and younger generations should indicate their full intentions of building their lives here (vs. current tendencies to see themselves moving away.) By 2034, changes prompted by the Downtown transformation should have led to new careers in technical and academic fields. Evidence should also start to show that people are choosing to stay in Dothan on weekends (participating in this community and spending money here to support local businesses) instead of leaving for beaches, lakes, and other cities.

4. Thinking as a responsible official: what, if anything, is your biggest concern about the future of Dothan Alabama?

The continuing and long-term financial health of the City is always a concern, especially as major projects are considered. One of the most important expenditures for the City, and one that will continue to increase in cost, is the ability to attract and retain high quality employees. Salaries and benefits will have to remain competitive within the region, and leaders must always look ahead to ascertain if such levels are sustainable. This is an issue for all governments.

5. Thinking as a professional colleague: describe any conversations that you feel must take place amongst the Commissioners in order to better understand the opinions of your fellow commissioners on major city issues/topics/projects?

There must be some structured conversation about the Commission's individual and collective comfort level with City debt. In addition, if there is a conversation that can be held in a public setting that will help clarify expectations for the next City Manager, that would be helpful in moving that process forward.

6. Thinking as a Retreat participant: will you define one specific outcome for the February Strategic Planning Update Retreat that will make you feel that it was a good investment of your time?

Although no votes are taken or decisions made on Feb. 7 or 8, the Retreat needs to clarify Commissioners' positions on the City's investment in the Arena and they should be able to identify realistic funding strategies for the balance. These strategies should not include tax increases. A good quality of life combined with relatively low taxes is a key benefit of life in Dothan. The Commissioner believes that increasing tax rates for anything other than an emergency would not be supported by a majority of residents.

Appendix B

Department Head Interviews



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025

Interview—Angie Akos, Utilities Director

Friday, January 10, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. The Director and staff will be involved in the continuing design and development of a new Emergency Electric Source Station. Once completed, the station will provide full-scale coverage and redundancy/back up for Dothan's electric system. Work will include coordination with Alabama Power Company, Energy Southeast, and McLean Design. Land has been acquired by the City, and the project is estimated at \$2.5 million, which qualifies for Energy Southeast reimbursement funding. Construction is expected to begin in 2026.

1b. An upgrade to Cypress Wastewater Treatment Plant is needed. This facility is over 20 years old and as such the ADEM Municipal Water Pollution Prevention grade for this facility is negatively impacted. The Director will be pursuing Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan funding for engineering and design (estimated at \$1.5 million) and construction (estimated at \$29.6 M) with the goal to begin design in September 2025.

1c. Continuing with federal rules regarding lead and copper, the Department will be heavily involved in: updates to the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) baseline inventory, field inspections and verifications, improvements to tap sampling, compliance actions, testing at schools and child care facilities, and public outreach. Dothan Utilities will be developing a program to include manpower and other budgetary impacts to reach the next mandatory milestones, one of which requires submittal to ADEM within three years.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. Utility improvements are seldom inexpensive. However, the costs for system failures and for failing to meet regulations are much higher. It is critical that the City continue to fund infrastructure improvements for Electric, Water and Wastewater programs and services. These include, but are not limited to: water supply and storage

improvements, EPA AOC sewer program inspection and infrastructure improvements, red water improvements, WWTP facility upgrades, vegetation management, transmission and transformer improvements, etc.

2b. As Dothan continues to grow in service area and water demands and to secure adequate groundwater supply to meet demands, a new water well along J.B. Chapman Rd. and a water transmission main will be required. Involvement will include obtaining 2025 (FY 2026) funding for design services (estimated at \$250K) and 2026 construction support (estimated at \$4.8 million.)

2c. The next WWTP upgrade needed will be at Little Choctawhatchee. This facility is over 13 years old. Continuing with a 20-year plan to maintain full compliance and functionality of these facilities, investment in Little Choctawhatchee WWTP upgrades should begin in 2029. The Director suggests that work begin with a 201 Facilities Planning Assessment to determine the design scope and anticipated construction costs. A Request for Proposals for engineering selection would begin in 2029 with an estimated cost of \$200,000 for that design work.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

The Director cites the need for initiatives to attract and retain skilled employees to secure Dothan Utilities' future as a top performing utility. The Department continues to lose personnel to other regional employers offering better salaries and benefits.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

A majority of the Department's work tasks associated with the Opera House Innovation Center and Event Space have been completed. Participation in each project involves meetings with architects and subs, design, material bidding, and construction. The Department has completed design for water and sewer services to City Hall and authorized the contractor to perform work. Electric work to service City Hall is ongoing. The workload required to participate in the Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck are not yet known, but will be similar to prior projects, most likely on a larger scale. The impact on staff and budgets for supporting water, wastewater, and electric at these proposed facilities is unknown.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Chief Will Benny, Police Department
Thursday, January 9, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. With support of the Commission, the Police Department has focused on building manpower and technology for the last several years. For 2025, in addition to administering the daily functions of the Department, the Chief's time and effort will be dedicated to continuing to identify ways to support the growing and increasingly complex law enforcement needs of Dothan through the use of technology. This is the future direction of policing. A police force equipped with modern technology will maximize efficiency and effectiveness while reducing the per-capita requirement for personnel.

1b. A total and upgraded change in the records management system for the Department is required in 2025. The current system (Southern Software) will no longer support law enforcement protocols after December 2025. A letter of intent has been signed to transition to ProPhoenix Public Safety Software for Dothan's police, fire, EMS, and dispatch support. In addition to negotiating prices for initial purchases and annual subscriptions, the Department will be heavily involved in installation, testing, training, and full implementation.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. The project with the most potential for positive impact on Dothan law enforcement is a Realtime Crime Center. Through technology, a Center would be able to coordinate the capabilities of the City's 2000+ cameras to monitor crimes in progress, from different angles/perspectives, from the initial call or alert (i.e. from Shotspotter) through the end of the incident. This enables more effective coordination of officer response, while increasing safety for victims, bystanders, and law enforcement personnel. The second effect of a Center is analytical. By reviewing and assessing recorded data, the Department will be able to determine patterns and trends for crimes across various Dothan neighborhoods/streets. From that information, proactive interventions can be developed. The City already owns a space appropriate to house the center. Initial investment in personnel, hardware, software, building renovations,

etc, would be \$1-2 million. However, it is expected that the annual maintenance subscription would be off-set by the Department's ability to cancel existing ancillary software that would no longer be needed.

2b. A driving track at the Public Safety Training Center is needed. The state may be interested in partnering with Dothan, as there currently is no facility for this skill training for State Troopers. (NOTE: the state currently rents the Talledega Speedway, which is not a realistic surface to mimic driving on city streets, county roads, or highways.) Teaching police officers to drive in pursuit at high speeds (i.e., 100 MPH) is a specific skill that needs to be taught and continually practiced. Incidences of chases through residential and commercial areas are increasing nationwide as criminals seem less concerned about their safety or the safety of others. Land is available at the WPSC for this addition.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

The City should consider implementing Drones-as-First-Responders. This program would station response drones across the city (i.e., on the roofs of the City's fire stations.) When 911 calls are received, the appropriate drone is immediately deployed and is on-scene monitoring, tracking and recording before response personnel arrive. These units are equipped with infrared capabilities, making nighttime operations to locate perpetrators and/or search for missing persons faster and more effective, without endangering human pilots during bad weather conditions. The estimated cost per drone is \$60--\$100,000, and the personnel at the Realtime Crime Center would be the remote pilots. (Note: The Chief stated that cities that have implemented this system are predominantly in the west and north. It may be worth pursuing a partnership with a primary vendor for Dothan to be that vendor's location for demonstration and training in the South.)

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

The need for additional manpower relative to City growth and development (including the City Center project) has been addressed proactively over the past three years. The Department is within six months of creating a 5th district (currently at 4 districts) that will be dedicated to the Downtown area. The district will have its own lieutenant, sergeants, and assigned officers so that downtown businesses, residents, and visitors will be familiar with the personnel providing law enforcement services. Needs for additional personnel will be assessed as the activity in City Center expands over the next 5-10 years. The Chief agreed with suggestions by several other department heads that it would be helpful for the Dept. Leaders who will be primarily involved in supporting the amplified Downtown events/activities to begin planning now for a coordinated approach. This might include learning from other cities similar to Dothan that are experienced in support of continually-active, vibrant city centers.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Clay Dempsey, Performing Arts Director
Friday, January 10, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. Performing Arts will work to strengthen and expand the Dothan Civic Center calendar of events. Director Dempsey will nurture relationships with existing partners and seek new opportunities to offer more programs and a wider array of programs that will appeal to the broad Dothan/Wiregrass community.

1b. The same proactive approach is now, and will continue to be, a major focus for the Dothan Opera House. It is expected to be back on-line in June 2025. Planning sessions are underway with local and guest performers who have used the Opera House in the past, and there will be efforts to develop new, Dothan-City-led experiences such as a songwriter festival, film festival, etc. Director Dempsey's primary goal is to achieve operational self-sufficiency for each of major performing arts venues.

1c. Major efforts also will concentrate on the new City Center park. Grants and sponsorships are being actively pursued to create innovative community engagement opportunities in this new performing arts space. The Director also envisions, and is working towards, new partnerships to enable outdoor performances to expand into outdoor experiences. For example: adding food trucks to an outdoor concert; partnering with the new nonprofit Art-in-Public-Places to add visual arts components to outdoor music, dance, and drama activities.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. For the revitalized Opera House and the new park space to be transformational, the Director recommends that a separate budget be allocated to each venue for the development of small & mid-size, City-Initiated events. With dedicated funding, these venues become not only a place in which to host acts/events that are promoted by others. They also begin to define and deliver Dothan's own niche commitments to the arts. Dothan becomes a leading *center* of the arts, not simply a place to perform. Separate budgets for proactive City arts events also will enable the department and the City to clearly monitor and demonstrate the cost-benefit relationship

of these new events. Director Dempsey envisions being able to design and deliver 1-3 new, major, Dothan-sponsored events for each venue every year. The Director emphasizes that the renovated Opera House & new City Center Park will play an important role in helping create revenue opportunities for downtown businesses. Doing so will also help make new business development opportunities more attractive to possible investors.

2b. A new Arena/Arts Space continues to be the centerpiece of the downtown renovation plan. However, it is important to remember that should the City decide not to build this new facility or is that decision is seriously delayed, the current Civic Center is in need of major repair and upgrades. Overall modernization of primary systems (lighting, sound, security, back of house, concessions, catering) has been delayed for several years while the final decision on a new facility was being considered. If the arena is not replaced, plans and funding will be needed to ensure that the existing facility is well utilized and is not a detractor from the other City Center investments.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

In addition to hosting community events and securing new entertainment, Dothan Performing Arts should also become known as a creative driver of the “music scene” in the Wiregrass. This could include Street Music Festivals, Bands on the Street, interactive events. The City can design and deliver an annual signature event designed to bring people together, but developed primarily by/for a younger demographic. Looking ahead long-term, the City needs to begin now to excite the next generations about downtown Dothan, and to actively involve them in its development. Along with a focus on younger event audiences, the Department also should develop a better partnership with local high schools. This would include internships, co-ops, and career work experience opportunities that combine high-tech skills with the arts.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

Performing Arts already is intricately involved in meetings about planning, design, and development of the downtown arts venues. Parallel discussions need to begin soon regarding the staffing that will be needed to support the envisioned high-level of downtown activity. There will be a need for additional personnel (hourly and professional salaried positions). If an outsourcing model is going to be preferred, this also has real costs. Director Dempsey also wants to begin the development of fair, consistent, and clear calendars and rules regarding the use of the current, new and renovated venues. He is committed to meeting the needs of local arts organizations and other groups that have traditionally used the City’s facilities. However, in order to add more (and more complex) performing arts experiences to these venues, expectations regarding reservations, use of space, support, and fees will require modifications. Involvement by and clear, continual communication with local groups is essential.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Judge Rose Evans-Gordon, Judicial Services
Monday, January 6, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. Emphasis and time will be dedicated to strengthening the connections between persons coming through judicial services and the essential community services that they need. Judge Gordon was very appreciative of the addition to her staff this year of Ms. Stephanie Harden, a full-time Social Services Coordinator. As the Judge has noted in prior interviews, many of the crimes being adjudicated are driven by underlying problems of homelessness, poverty, mental illness, and substance abuse. The Court has the right to order referrals and has considered it a responsibility to try to assist. However, the resources to do so have been extremely limited. With the addition of Ms. Harden to the staff, the Court has started to identify resources, assist with coordination of community providers, offer education and programming (like the Substance Abuse Fair), and engage in a case management style of follow-up. This is a critical component of Judicial Services that needs to continue to develop and grow.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. Renovation of the judicial services facilities has been in the planning stage for two years. The condition of the current building creates real physical barriers to service, presents a poor image of judicial functions, and negatively impacts staff morale. Plans have been drawn, and it is hoped that funding will be approved in 2025.

2b. The City needs to participate in, if not lead, the development and implementation of a public-private initiative to reduce substance abuse (including fentanyl) in the community. Substance abuse is directly related to crime rates and must be addressed community-wide through education, awareness, prevention, intervention, and treatment.

2c. Outstanding, overdue fines remain on the City's books, but an appropriate and effective solution has not been addressed.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

As noted in question #1, above, Dothan (like all other communities within the state and nation) cannot continue to emphasize incarcerations without seriously addressing the underlying problems. Poverty, homelessness, mental illness and drug abuse are often major contributing factors to crimes. It is morally negligent and financially unwise to continue to believe that putting people in jail will change behavior or reduce crime rates.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

The specific projects underway and planned for Downtown Dothan will not directly impact the work of Judicial Services. No increase/decrease in the judicial docket is likely to be linked to downtown development. However, Judge Gordon expressed a concern that the communities surrounding the area are not as involved in development as planners had intended. People living around the main area of development do not feel included in the addition of structures and services that are literally being built next-door. People in low socio-economic neighborhoods may not feel totally welcome in art museums, opera houses, and science labs. Telling them they are welcome is not enough. It is important to involve those communities in the planning stages to find out what is important to them.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025

Interview—Kevan Kelly, City Attorney

(with attorneys Joe Herring and Virginia McInnes)

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. Assisting with property acquisitions, transferring deeds for downtown properties, and transferring ownership to the Public Building Authority has added significantly to the work requirements within the office. This is a critical first step in actualizing the Downtown revitalization vision and maximizing operational flexibility and funding options for the City Center initiatives.

1b. Based in part upon the recent, unsuccessful, and costly experience with the ERP conversion initiative, the new City IT Director has begun sending all contracts to Legal Services for review. Legal review of department-level contracts was not a preferred protocol of Legal Services until two years ago. This change has added a time-consuming and highly technical review process to the office. Other departments have begun to follow suit in sending contracts to Legal for review. It is expected that all contracts (above a specified dollar amount) eventually will require legal review and approval before being executed.

1c. A third major initiative continues to be the work on reopening the City landfill site. While it appears likely that the landfill will be given authorization to open, this will not necessarily stop future legal actions by the plaintiffs. In brief, work on this initiative is unlikely to be dismissed in 2025.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. The Legal Department has remained stagnant with only three attorneys for over 30 years while the City and its other departments have grown. The attorneys identified the need for at least two more attorneys to be added to the legal staff. The office currently assists all departments with litigation; revises and interprets all ordinances, codes, regulations; participates on and advises on City boards and commissions (including the City Commission); interprets legal language in laws and

regulations; and more. A part-time position currently is funded to represent the City in municipal court. This person does not handle pre-trial diversions, appeals, etc, all of which remains with the full-time staff. The workload and the subject-matter complexity of legal issues increase every year. The Department expects that the revenue from the school bus safety program as well as the salary of the current part-time employee could assist in funding a full-time addition.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

The attorneys reiterated the need to predict and plan for the additional workload in the City Attorney's Office and have sufficient personnel to staff that office appropriately.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

The population of Dothan is approximately 71,000. However, the City is actively pursuing several progressive initiatives, and the number of residents and visitors is predicted to increase. The addition of more people automatically triggers more legal issues, whether contracting, licensing, development of policies/procedures, or litigation. The addition of City-owned/City-managed buildings, venues and programs in the envisioned downtown transformation also will increase opportunities for legal services involvement (contract reviews, leases, etc) and legal actions (traffic accidents, arrests.) For example, the Department currently is working on standardized lease agreements for the Innovation Center, designing a protocol that will enable the Mayor/City Manager to sign-off on lease agreements to expedite the process. This would help address the often-expressed need of businesses/investors to simplify the process of doing business with the City. However, it is an unexpected addition to the workload of the Department.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Nikki Kerns, Information Technology Director
Friday, January 10, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. Omnichannel Customer Support Implementation--This project focuses on integrating various customer service channels for City employees (phone, email, live chat, social media, etc.) into a unified system for seamless communication and better customer experience. It involves tech. upgrades and process improvements to enhance customer satisfaction, provide consistent and efficient support experiences, and reduce response times.

1b. Legacy Platform Modernization Legacy Platform Modernization--Upgrading or replacing outdated technology platforms crucial to the City's operations. Modernizing legacy systems ensures better performance, scalability, and security, which will enhance service delivery. This will significantly improve the efficiency, reliability, and speed of the tech. infrastructure, allowing for more responsive services to employees and citizens.

1c. Employee Training & Development Program—The Director proposes a comprehensive training and development initiative that equips IT employees with the skills, knowledge, and tools to deliver exceptional service. This would include training on new technologies, soft skills, problem-solving techniques, and keeping staff updated on the latest product and service information. This program will reduce service resolution times and foster a culture of continuous learning and professionalism within the department.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. Establish a dedicated IT Learning and Development Instructor role to design and deliver training for the City's department-specific hardware and software skills. This will develop a more skilled, adaptable workforce and promote interdepartmental collaboration. Investing in employee development also increases morale and decreases attrition.

2b. Create a dedicated IT Project Management Division to handle strategic projects, distinct from the support teams responsible for daily operational tasks. A separate Project Management Division will improve the efficiency and success rate of major projects, ensuring they are completed on time and within budget. Separating responsibilities will improve focus and resource allocation, allowing support teams to concentrate on maintaining service levels while project teams drive key strategic initiatives.

2c. AI and Automation Integration--To keep up with industry trends and improve operational efficiency, the department (and the City) may need to invest in integrating artificial intelligence (AI). This could include automating routine tasks (such as customer service inquiries, data entry, or network management) and deploying AI-driven solutions for better decision-making and enhanced service delivery. Automating repetitive tasks and leveraging AI will improve efficiency and free up resources for more complex tasks.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

Data Center Design and Footprint Enhancement for Security--This project involves redesigning the data center architecture to enhance security and operational continuity by introducing multiple layers of redundancy at a geographically separated secondary location. The goal is to ensure that if one data center experiences a failure due to natural disasters, technical issues, or cyberattacks, the secondary site can immediately take over without service interruptions. This includes creating a mirrored data center, setting up real-time data replication, and implementing automatic failover mechanisms to ensure a seamless transition between primary and secondary locations.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

Relocation of IT to the Annex Building involves relocating servers, networks, and communication systems to ensure seamless connectivity and access to all city departments and facilities. The relocation of the IT department will require careful planning and execution to ensure minimal disruption and reliable connectivity. While this move will require coordination with City Hall and other downtown projects, it will also introduce challenges in terms of maintaining seamless integration with all other City facilities. Early planning, effective communication, and a focus on infrastructure will be key to ensuring that IT supports the success of all these projects at all stages of development.

Following the move, IT's location close to the new City Hall will allow better coordination on network infrastructure, security measures, and other IT services that will be required. IT's location also will enable them to handle ongoing projects in the downtown area. However, it is important to ensure that remote access and interconnectivity between the Annex and these buildings are solid. This requires Secure VPNS, redundant network infrastructure, and data backup and cloud services. Systems installed in each new facility will have to be fully integrated. Early and continual inclusion of IT staff in these conversations is critical.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025

Interview—Andy Love, General Services Director

Thursday, January 9, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. The construction/renovation work ongoing and scheduled for City Center will claim the majority of Director Love's focus for 2025:

- Completion of the Opera House—projected May 2025, with the Porter Park event space following closely behind--June 2025;
- The Innovation Center, currently in process with a projected completion date of February 2026;
- The new City Hall project is estimated to start May-June 2025. This project also includes demolition work and parking.

1b. Simultaneously, substantial planning is underway for the proposed new arena and arts spaces. The Department is involved in meetings focusing on possible layout/design, partnerships, funding mechanisms, legal questions, as well as coordinating the needs/wishes of multiple arts organizations.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. Sustainment, Renovation, Maintenance of City's existing facilities must be thoughtfully budgeted each year. As mentioned in previous years, it is important that the introduction of new buildings does not result in physical decline of existing facilities. The Director also stressed the need to continue to identify ways to move old, unused or underused facilities off the City's inventory (i.e. old Dothan City Schools Admin office, Armory at Westgate.)

2b. Vehicle fleet sustainment—The City is in a better place than it was several years ago. The City operates approximately 1000 vehicles and attempts to follow an average ten-year replacement cycle. It is important to budget annually to continue this schedule.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

The current Vehicle Maintenance Shop is over 40 years old. The City's maintenance needs can no longer be supported within this facility. The design cost for a replacement facility was included in the 2024 conditional funded budget but was not funded. Director Love will include a request for design support in the CIP for 2026, with the potential for approximately \$3 million in construction costs for 2027.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

General Services is already deeply involved in all construction projects both underway and planned for City Center. However, the Department's involvement does not end once construction is completed. As facilities come online and warranty periods expire, the maintenance of these buildings will be added to the General Services scope of work. The exact amounts of additional work that will be required is unknown at this time, but it is recognized that Dothan will be adding thousands of square feet to their owned inventory. Some of these facilities will be high-tech in nature, requiring support that is currently not part of General Services projects. The degree to which the costs to maintain new facilities may be off-set by revenue generated by each new facility also is unknown at this time.

The new facilities downtown also bring with them some new legal/managerial issues that will need to be addressed. For example:

- If the arena is constructed as a public-private partnership, what does the maintenance and sustainment of those buildings look like? The same is true for the owner-landlord-tenant relationship between Hudson-Alpha Wiregrass and the City for the new Innovation Center, details of which are still being discussed.
- The high-tech nature of some facilities (particularly the Innovation Center) must be considered not only in planning and construction, but also for long-term support. The Director categorized this Center as a "no-fail" facility, given the highly sensitive scientific work that is projected to be part of their mission.
- How will the City accommodate the needs and preferences of multiple "tenants" within a single space, such as the Wiregrass Museum, SEACT, SEADAC, and the Cultural Arts Center all sharing the new arts space?



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Todd McDonald, Planning and Development Director
 Thursday, January 9, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

The three projects noted in #2, below, will be the primary focus for Planning and Development in 2025 and will require primary attention by the Department Head.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. Now that Article IX, Chapter 14 of the Dothan Code of Ordinances has been amended to address dangerous/unsafe buildings, the Department will need to focus on implementation. A key extension of this amendment will be its application to address residential renters' issues, a concern frequently cited by the Commission. If successful in meeting the needs of renters, the use of this ordinance will increase as will the expectation of citizens for prompt, thorough response by the Department. Additional personnel may be needed.

2b. The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Dothan requires updating. The last long-range development plan was adopted in 2011. That process included design of a Future Land Use Map for the City and development policies. While many of the general precepts anchoring those plans may be similar today, much has changed in the last 14 years, and many unforeseen disruptors (i.e., Dothan's fast population growth, COVID, et al) have had an impact on details. Development of a new plan will require consultant assistance, research, comprehensive community engagement, and a good deal of time.

2c. Similarly, the Consolidated Plan required for Community Development Block Grant participation expired in 2024. A new five-year plan will need to be developed, from which an annual Action Plan can be derived so the City can continue to request and receive CDBG funding. The Consolidated Plan is comprehensive, with topics including: Housing Needs, Public Services, Infrastructure, Public and Neighborhood Facilities, Economic Development, Homelessness, and Program Administration. Consultant assistance will also be required which will be funded with CDBG administration funds. An Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing is also a required work product and will be produced in-house

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

The most critical project for Planning and Development for the next few years will be the revision/rewrite of the City's Comprehensive Plan. This process requires significant community input and repeated communication with community stakeholders to arrive at a document that reflects the diverse perspectives of City residents and businesses. Once completed and adopted, it is incumbent upon the City to be prepared to fund some of those projects that have been vetted and approved by the citizens.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

The Department's move to the new City Hall facility will involve not only the coordination of changing facilities while maintaining ongoing services to the public, but also provides an opportunity to consider the use of technology to reduce the large amount of paper storage. The Department is required to keep plans and other documents forever but does not have to maintain them in paper form.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025

Interview—Delvick McKay, Personnel Director

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. Key recruitment for retiring employees on various levels: City Manager, Department Directors, Department Managers, and long-tenured employees who are planning for retirement and who are reaching retirement in the next few years.

1b. Continued focus on recruitment and retention of talent to the city organization. There are currently 1,085 full-time employees, 29 part-time employees, and 112 seasonal/occasional sporadic employees totaling 1,226 employees. By maintaining competitive pay and benefits and continuing with alternative work scheduling options by department, these efforts have aided and continue to aid in work-life balance. 78 employees are eligible to retire in 2025. 89 are eligible to retire in 4 years. A total of 167 employees in 5 years.

1c. Continue to focus on internship to permanent hiring strategy. It takes planning and budgeting for additional staffing, when needed, to make this transition happen. Every department would not need additional staffing. However, in planning for future talent, timing when this concept as needed, is recommended. Particularly, during the spring and summer recruiting season for internships. These internships could then translate into full-time job opportunities. Relationships with Dothan Tech and Carver 9th Academy have resulted in resume writing and mock interviews with students and career placement hours and exposure for high school juniors/seniors. College and career fairs throughout the region continue, including HBCUs and community colleges

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. The City Commission has consistently budgeted for cost-of-living adjustments annually for City employees over the last several years as a part of the budgeting process. This process allows the pay plan to adjust and to ensure that salaries are competitive in the market. As long as there is a concerted effort to make this an annual adjustment, it avoids a tremendous expense in the future to catch up. Also, rewarding employee performance

through merit increases continue to be a priority to ensure quality talent is compensated and morale is maintained.

2b. With the possibility of adding staff over the next 5 years, where needed, funding would need to be identified to meet this need. There are 481 employees with less than 4 years of tenure with the city. This is approximately 40% of the workforce. As more employees retire and new employees come on board, considering expansion of benefits for new families (e.g. daycare/daycare partnership assistance for public employees, etc.) and other unique benefits for new/younger employees can be considered. Our current outlay of benefits are exceptional and maintaining this expectation going forward is paramount.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

Continue to invest in our greatest asset, people! From professional development training, education incentives, equipment/fleet, to competitive salary and benefits. As the economy grows and as the budget grows with the growth of the City, ensuring that we are one of the top employers in the region. Salary, retirement, and benefit costs of \$100M continue to be a major expense to the overall annual budget.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

Staffing and customer service are critical to the success of these projects to both maintain the physical structures/areas and the services provided. Certainly, contracted services may be considered in combination with City staff. Further discussion and planning would need to take place regarding a venue management service agreement that could possibly include recruitment of temporary staff for events, maintenance contract for the buildings, and janitorial services for City facilities (City Hall, City Hall Annex, Opera House, and other City facilities downtown). These details would need to be determined in how the Personnel Department in conjunction with other outside contracted employment services would work together to meet this need.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025

Interview—Romona Marcus, Finance Director

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. The addition of PFM municipal financial advisory services to the City's Finance team has allowed the Finance Department to effectively pursue two important projects. The first, securing a new credit rating for the City. Preliminary work is underway. The next steps include approaching S&P Global Ratings and Moody's prior to going to the bond market for city hall financing. The City's current rating is Aa2-, and Finance is hoping for an upgrade. The Department also is working with PFM to design a forecasting model to project fund balances and debt capacity for a 30-year period. The current method of forecasting is accurate, but the extended forecast will allow management and elected officials to make strategic decisions for upcoming capital projects. The new method is expected to be available for use at the February Strategic Planning Update Retreat.

1b. In 2025, Finance will coordinate development of the 2026-2027 Biennial Budget. The process begins officially in April with salary and revenue projections, then proceeds to summer meetings with Department heads to develop the operating and capital budget. Work sessions will be scheduled with the Commission prior to presenting for approval in September.

1c. In March 2024, the Finance Department assumed responsibility for Business Licensing, and this will continue to be a major initiative for 2025. The primary emphasis is on coordination of licensing while providing clear, accurate, and consistent information to business owners and ensuring that all taxes are being paid.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. A restart of the adoption of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system is essential to achieve efficiency, timeliness, and automation in City services. Too many processes (in Finance and elsewhere) are inefficient and laborious. Many of our processes and current operational methods do not allow for coordination and integration between and amongst departments. A modern ERP system also is essential to provide

a front-facing portal for the public that will increase communication and public trust. There is valid frustration on the part of the Commission regarding the prior failed effort with Oracle. The delays/disappointments experienced with this project should not dissuade the City from moving ahead with an experienced Alabama-city provider.

2b. A consideration that affects every department, as well as the overall ability of the City to continue with planned progress, is the need to identify new sources of revenue. Costs of existing City services will continue to rise. In addition, major City investments will be needed to fund Downtown (and other) major projects directly, or to attract private dollars to these projects. Although unpopular to varying degrees for a variety of reasons, taxes and fees are the two primary sources of revenue that the City can control directly. These must be part of a funding conversation.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

The Finance Director reiterated that the ERP is the most important initiative for her department, and others, to improve services and remain regionally competitive.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

Development of each individual venue within the Downtown space brings with it specific impacts for Finance. Funding construction for each project is crucial, but funding operational costs for each facility once complete is also essential. Projects that will fall under the new Public Building Authority will need to maintain separate financial records that will be maintained by her office. Additional profit/loss statements will need to be developed for each of the (many) additional events expected for Downtown venues. Financial reporting is required to funding partners such as Wiregrass Foundation, State of Alabama, and other donors. For all facilities, Finance will have a role in discussions of fees, operational costs, and profit/loss reporting. Finance will also have a key role in helping to identify sources of revenue for new initiatives and to maintain a high level of service for current City operations. This task becomes increasingly difficult if new sources of revenue are not identified and made available.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Billy Powell, Leisure Services Director
(with Tyson Carter, Kelly Stakelum, Kenny Thompson)
Friday, January 10, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. Pickleball Complex at Rip Hewes—This 25-court complex was presented by the Department during last year's strategic planning. Pickleball is a fast-growing sport, appropriate for all ages. Costs currently are estimated at \$4.9 million dollars, with Visit Dothan partnering for \$1 million. Final designs for bidding documents are completed, with bids expected to be opened by April 1, and a presentation to the Commission for review and approval on the April 15th agenda.

1b. Skatepark at Westgate Park, as a logical extension of the popular BMX track—This also presented in 2024. Currently the Department is in the process of reviewing possible architects and contractors. This project also will be a partnership with Visit Dothan (contributing \$1 million toward an estimated \$2.4 million.) When further developed, the opportunity will be officially presented to the Commission.

1c. Forever Wild Dog Park (with restrooms and a pavilion)—This \$1 million dollar project was approved by the Commission and is included in the Capital Improvement Plan. Construction is slated to begin March 25. This facility will mirror the park currently in use at Eastgate and will respond to residents' requests for a facility on this side of town.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. Carrying forward a request proposed last year, the Director recommends a new administration facility for Leisure Services. As previously proposed, the former Fire Station #3 could be renovated for approximately \$2.5 million dollars, consolidating Department staff in close proximity to one of the City's largest leisure services facilities (Westgate Park.) This also eliminates the need to provide space for the department in the new City Hall complex.

2b. The equipment and surface of the Miracle Playground at Westgate Park is in need of replacement. Constructed in 2010, this is Dothan's only all-inclusive playground and is heavily utilized by families of children with disabilities and by all families throughout the City/County. The original park was constructed as a private-public partnership with the Dothan and Dothan/Houston County Rotary Clubs, and Director Powell already has begun discussions with the two organizations to participate financially once again. The cost is estimated at \$2.5 million, with a life expectancy of 10-15 years.

2c. A plan of action is needed to resolve serious issues at both the Wiregrass Pool and the Doug Tew Pool. The Westgate pool continually experiences serious leakage problems to the extent that it is closed and will not be able to reopen in Summer 2025. A proposal to replace the water feature with a splash-pad was discussed with the District 2 Commissioner, however his constituents were not in agreement. The pool at Doug Tew is also old and is not constructed to meet the needs of the therapeutic community for which that facility has recently been committed. Options exist for both pool replacements, but the Department requires direction (and then funding) from the Commission.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

Three innovative ideas are listed here. Each would advance Dothan's reputation as a leisure services destination and provide significant new revenue. These have been introduced to the Commission in the last two years, and they remain on the Department's top list for future growth and development: A) A Lazy River addition to Water World; B) A Soccer Complex; and C) the addition of ten courts to the Westgate Tennis Center complex. In addition to providing better services to Dothan's residents, each of these has the potential to draw more visitors to Dothan either as a major summertime recreation destination (Lazy River) or for tournaments (Soccer and Tennis). The Department is not seeking approval but rather requests direction regarding which of these is favored by the Commission.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

The Director and Assistant Directors reaffirmed that they are 100% supportive of the downtown revitalization initiatives. They do have some unanswered questions. To what extent will Leisure Services be responsible (solely or as a partner) for supporting the City Center events and activities? Will Leisure Services personnel/contractors be involved in maintenance of the fountain and any other water features that will be created? Will the initial and on-going investments in downtown translate into less funding for support of Leisure Services facilities and programs, or will it require delays in the projects already identified as important to maintaining or improving services to the public? Each of these questions has important implications for department planning, staffing, and budgeting.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Vincent Vincent, Community Relations Officer
Friday, January 10, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your division will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your division. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your division or in which your division is a key partner.)

1a. The implementation of the new PlacerAI geofencing software system will be a top priority. Once installed and operational, the Division will begin creating dashboards and using data to design targeted marketing strategies for City events, activities, and meetings. Not only will the system enable proactive marketing strategies, it also has the capacity to help other department leaders create responsive service improvements.

1b. As social media continues to evolve into the primary mode of communication between the City and its constituents, it will become necessary to create additional digital content. Dothan now has over 23,000 followers of its Facebook City Government page.

1c. For 2025, the Division will assist the Interim City Manager in compiling requests for funding for high-value public safety projects. The intensity of this work will depend upon the deadlines set by the target audiences (federal, state, private.)

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

Community Relations Officer Vincent noted that the major initiatives for his division through 2030 are important to maintaining quality service, but they are not necessarily “costly” when compared to other departments/division that are equipment/labor/contract intensive.

2a. As social media continues to grow as the primary interface between the City and its constituents, continued funding for digital backups of the City’s social media output is essential. For legal purposes and to preserve the interactive history of City information and conversation, continuing the digital recordkeeping contracted to Archive Social (for \$9,000/year) is critical.

2b. Fiscal commitments for PlacerAI are already in place (\$21,000/year for year one and \$23,100 for year two with a 5% escalator clause for every year thereafter). The

implementation, use, and assessment of the PlacerAI software will not require additional funding. Its effective use for targeted marketing may lead to the identification of additional outreach opportunities (i.e., billboards for specific activities, new social media platforms targeting identified markets, et al.)

2c. As more digital content is generated by the Department, the need for a high-powered PC for video editing and processing may become necessary.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your division to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar entities around the Southeast region?

Community Relations Officer Vincent recommends that the most critical fiscal element of divisional and citywide progress lies in personnel costs. Maintaining and improving services requires recruitment and retention of the best people, and advancement in marketing and communication necessitates training and national networking opportunities.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

This answer also has to do with people. While methods of operation may not change dramatically for many of the City departments/divisions (including Community Relations), the volume of work will increase. Community Relations will be expected to showcase Dothan's progress, highlight successes, and promote more events/activities as the City Center projects are completed and come online.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025
Interview—Chief Larry Williams, Fire Department
Tuesday, January 7, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. The Fire Department is currently revising key standard operating procedures and policies to address mandates and areas of concern regarding state and federal regulations. These include Emergency Medical Service Patient Treatment Protocols (State EMS Office), Personnel Standards Commission Rules and Regulations (Alabama Fire College), NFPA (1710 and other standards), Department of Labor (Payroll), and the US Fire Administration (NERIS Reporting). A training curriculum will be developed to ensure members receive the required annual continuing education.

1b. FD leadership is focused on reducing response times and improving their apparatus deployment model. The Department is currently conducting trials to assess different options. Once completed, a detailed staff study will be developed and discussed with the City Manager. They also are revisiting programs that proved effective in prior years but were not budgetarily sustained. (i.e. Dothan Community Response Unit used during COVID, and Silver Assist that provided non-emergency service call responses.

1c. In January 2025, the Fire Dept. and IT were informed that the current Fire Reporting System used in the FD is “sunsetting” by the end of 2025 and must be replaced. The Fire Dept is working with IT and the Police Department to recommend the replacement of their Computer Aided Dispatch system – all are in consensus that ProPhoenix is the correct system that will best integrate fire, police, EMS, dispatch, E911, and more. ProPhoenix will provide the FD with Fire Incident Reporting.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. The construction of fire station #11 is a critical long-range investment for Dothan. The City’s ISO Class 1 rating has just recently been reinstated, and proactive steps are needed to ensure it is retained. The Chief and other senior City staff will be engaged in seeking land for Fire Station 11. Plans call for property identification in 2025, land purchase in 2026, and station completed within five years to maintain emergency coverage as the City expands.

2b. It is essential that funding be allocated to maintain critical equipment and to meet the increasing costs of supplies and contracted services. General budget allocations have not kept pace with rising costs. Although the Commission is regularly willing to approve adjustments related to costs for fuel, utilities, and other “utility-based”

operational accounts, other areas such as medication costs, generic supplies, small tools/equipment are not at the level needed to ensure development of organizational replacement plans.

2c. As City service areas expand, businesses and homes are added, and new venues come online with more special events, current staffing is not sufficient to provide the required levels for public safety. The Fire Chief recommends:

- Development of a system for employing “sporadic/occasional” personnel to give the Department a cost-effective means of employing experienced personnel for specific activities without adding to full-time rosters or taking an advanced life support paramedic engine out of service.
- An additional secretary is needed. Currently only 3 personnel support 205 staff. Three Deputy Chiefs share one secretary. FD’s complex payroll system is managed by one clerk who is preparing to retire. A new position would address the workload and provide redundancy for payroll.
- The Department needs an imbedded IT support person with some fire safety expertise to run the 9 different software packages currently in use, and to assist with migration to new products as these come online.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

The current command vehicle is regularly in use and is 15 years old. Special events and support requests continue to increase within Dothan and will increase further as Downtown venues come on board. A mobile, technologically equipped vehicle from which to manage the multiple fire/EMS responsibilities for these events is in the interest of public safety. (Note: the need for a Logistics facility identified in last year’s planning was included in the conditional budget, but not allocated. It will be a high priority need for 2025.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

Pre-planning for public safety in the new Downtown area should already be underway. As the City’s vision for Downtown Dothan becomes reality, the City cannot assume it will be able to address the public safety needs for these events in a piecemeal manner. Just as Leisure Services, Performing Arts, various arts organizations, Hudson-Alpha Wiregrass, and others are beginning to design the programs they will sponsor Downtown, similar conversations should be underway by coordinated Fire, Police, and Utilities personnel. This same coordinated unit needs to be included now in the construction phases, with clear communication of work planned and expectations for public safety assistance.



City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update 2025

Interview—Tommy Wright, Public Works Director

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

1. Identify up to three major projects/initiatives that your department will be involved in during 2025. These should be three mission-critical items that will require time and attention by you as the leader and that are likely to have a significant impact on services provided by your department. (Note: these can be projects/initiatives that are wholly within your department or in which your department is a key partner.)

1a. The first major project for 2025 will result not in additional costs, but in cost savings. Work continues on the reopening of the City landfill. All ADEM requirements have been satisfied, and one local judicial action remains. The next steps include hearings, advertisements, and similar methods of informing the public. Reopening the landfill will yield a savings of approximately \$100,000/month. Associated with this activity is the parallel work of updating the solid waste ordinance. The intent is to more clearly define City responsibilities to clarify to the public exactly what does/does not qualify for City collection. An increase in collection fees will be proposed to the Commission to help the solid waste fund become funded closer to the actual costs associated with this service.

1b. Intersection/Road Improvements, including but not limited to:

- Public Works, the Commissioner of District 4 and the State of Alabama have identified the need for improvements at the US 84 and Brannon Stand (AL-605) location.
- A corridor study currently underway will recommend improvements to Brannon Stand (AL-605), tied to the City's master plan for Main Street. Funding requests are being developed.
- A consultant currently is under contract to write a construction grant for Honeysuckle Road improvements project which is almost fully designed. The approximate target for the grant is \$40 million.

2. Looking ahead 5 years—what are the major (aka...costly) initiatives/projects that must be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level and quality of service? (Please, no more than 3.)

2a. Current practice calls for an annual resurfacing budget of \$2 million/year. This is directed at residential/neighborhood projects. Major projects for some collector and arterial streets (such as the need to resurface Westgate Parkway from Hwy 231-Hwy 84, estimated at \$4 million) are not obtainable utilizing current budgets unless the City foregoes local paving for multiple years, which isn't recommended. There are several connector and arterial streets that will require resurfacing in the next several

years before they begin to have major failures. The Director recommends that a major project resurfacing budget be developed annually.

2b. Storm drainage infrastructure improvements have been temporarily halted until the City can complete and review the inventory and the hydrology study currently being conducted by Barge Design. Funds will be needed to address the needs identified, citywide, beginning in FY '27. A minimum budget of \$3 million/year is estimated to begin addressing those issues.

2c. The City must continue to work with the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program (ATRIP) II to take advantage of cost-sharing opportunities. For example, the Flowers Chapel/84 realignment project application was submitted in December 2024, with approximately \$2 million of the total \$3.1 million coming from the state funds. Another example, an additional eastbound lane on Hwy 84, tied directly to the US-84 West master plan, if awarded would provide \$2 million towards a total \$3.6 million for this project.

3. Looking ahead 5 years--what is one major (aka...costly) project/initiative that you believe should be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?

Budgets should continue to fund road improvements, including the use of consultants to provide expertise in specialized areas and to aid in the identification and acquisition of external funding sources. For example, a consultant currently under contract to Public Works will provide a full-blown assessment of Downtown traffic options (including results of the road diet test) prior to the scheduled repaving of Main Street by ALDOT. This assessment will offer guidance to Downtown traffic flow options/needs as new venues are authorized as part of the Dothan City Center project, and will save the City from costly mistakes if options are not fully assessed prior to repaving by the state.

4. How and when will the primary Downtown projects (Opera House, City Hall, Innovation Center, Event Space, Arena, Museum/Theatre, and Parking Deck) impact your department?

Public Works has been heavily and continually involved in the design and delivery of projects in Downtown, with department engineers assigned to all projects outside of the scope of the RDG contract. Going forward, the infrastructure, landscaping and other yard maintenance and continual improvement of the new venues being created will fall on Public Works, this will require consideration of staffing levels and work hours. For example, the City currently is testing a valet trash service for Downtown merchants. If successful, it will be expanded and made permanent, requiring additional personnel to handle this task. General maintenance of the venues will require staff working nights/weekends as expectations for venue usage are realized. It would be beneficial for City departments that will be directly affected by the revitalization of Downtown (Public Works, Utilities, Fire, Police, and others) to begin planning now for support, including researching communities similar to Dothan's to learn from their successes and mistakes.

Appendix C

Department Must & Should Projects

2025 DOTHAN DEPARTMENT LEADER SUMMARY
Looking Ahead to the Next Five Years
TIMEFRAME—2025-2030

<p>Looking ahead 5 years, what are the top 3 major (aka...<i>costly</i>) initiatives or projects that MUST be considered for funding in order for your department to maintain the current level of quality service?</p>		<p>Looking ahead 5 years, what is 1 major (aka...<i>costly</i>) project/initiative that you believe SHOULD be considered in order for your department to improve services and/or remain competitive with similar departments around the Southeast region?</p>	
<p align="center">MUST DO</p>	<p align="center">Cost Estimate</p> <p align="center">One Time Cost Recurring Cost</p>	<p align="center">SHOULD DO</p>	<p align="center">Cost Estimate</p> <p align="center">One Time Recurring Cost</p>
<p>Judge Rose Gordon</p> <p>A. Renovation of the judicial services facility.</p> <p>B. Lead development of public-private initiative to reduce substance abuse.</p> <p>C. Develop effective system (and ID personnel) to deal with overdue fines.</p>	<p>A. \$3.6 million</p> <p>B. Cannot be estimated; depends on project design *</p> <p>C. Cannot be estimated; * depends on system design</p>	<p>Find ways that City can appropriately be involved in addressing the underlying problems of incarcerations: poverty, homelessness, mental illness, and drug abuse.</p>	<p>City's costs would depend upon the strategies identified and projects initiated. *</p>
<p>Andy Love</p> <p>A. Sustainment, renovation, and maintenance of the City's existing facilities.</p> <p>B. Vehicle fleet sustainment on 10-year cycle.</p>	<p>A. \$1 million/yr * current level; needs revisiting</p> <p>B. \$5 million/yr *</p>	<p>New vehicle maintenance shop.</p>	<p>\$ 5 million</p>
<p>Angie Akos</p> <p>A. Continue to fund identified infrastructure improvements for electricity, water, wastewater.</p> <p>B. New well along J.B. Chapman Rd.</p>	<p>A. \$20 million/yr *</p> <p>B. \$250,000 design \$4.8 million construction</p>	<p>Increased salaries and benefits to stem the loss of trained personnel to other local communities.</p>	<p>Cannot be estimated at this time. Will require collaborative forecasting by DU and Personnel *</p>

<p>Angie Akos, cont'd.</p> <p>C. Upgrade at Little Choctawhatchee WWTP.</p>	<p>C. \$200,000 assessment \$1.5 million design</p>		
<p>Billy Powell</p> <p>A. New administration facility for Leisure Services (reno) & department rebranding.</p> <p>B. Replacing equipment and surface at Miracle Playground.</p> <p>C. Addressing issues at Wiregrass and Doug Tew pools.</p>	<p>A. \$2.5 million</p> <p>B. \$2.5 million</p> <p>C. \$3.5 million Wiregrass \$3.5 million Doug Tew</p>	<p>Projects from prior 2 years remain high priority: Lazy River; Soccer Complex; ten additional tennis courts at Westgate Tennis Center.</p>	<p>Lazy River w/kid zone \$ 12 million</p> <p>Soccer Complex \$ 24-25 million</p> <p>Westgate Tennis \$ 3.5 million</p>
<p>Chief Will Benny</p> <p>A. Real-time crime center.</p> <p>B. Driving track at the WPSC.</p> <p>C. Differentiated pay and education bonus converted to salary for employee retention.</p>	<p>A. \$1-2 million</p> <p>B. \$1 million</p> <p>C. \$ 638,534/yr for three proposed strategies</p>	<p>A Drones-As-First-Responder program.</p>	<p>\$100-300,000 Some platforms subscription based, some are buy outright</p>
<p>Chief Larry Williams</p> <p>A. Fire station #11.</p> <p>B. Allocations to maintain equipment; rising costs.</p> <p>C. Sporadic personnel, additional secretary and IT support.</p>	<p>A. \$1 million land purchase</p> <p>B. Will request increases to several budget lines *</p> <p>C. \$50,000/yr sporadic \$45,000/yr secretary IT from IT dept *</p>	<p>Replacement of 15-year-old mobile command center.</p>	<p>\$ 1.2—1.5 million</p>
<p>Delvick McKay</p> <p>A. Continuation of cost-of-living adjustments for employees.</p>	<p>A. \$4-5 million/yr salaries</p> <p>B. Cannot be estimated without identifying positions *</p>	<p>Continued investment in current personnel—training, education incentives, equipment, salary and benefits.</p>	<p>Estimating 5%/yr. increase average of \$1million/yr for benefits only.</p>

<p>Delvick McKay, cont'd. B. Funding for additional staff anticipated next 5 years.</p>			
<p>Clay Dempsey A. Separate budget for Opera House and Arena city-initiated events. B. Renovation/modernization of current arena if not replaced.</p>	<p>A. \$75,000/yr B. \$20-50 million *</p>	<p>Annual city-led, signature events in music.</p>	<p>\$ 100,000/yr</p>
<p>Nikki Kerns A. IT Learning and Development Instructor. B. Separate IT Project Management Team for major initiatives. C. AI and Automation Integration.</p>	<p>A. \$330-380,000/yr B. \$245-340,000/yr C. \$250,000/yr</p>	<p>Update Data Center equipment, layout and resources to enhance security, operations, and redundancy.</p>	<p>\$2,000,000</p>
<p>Todd McDonald A. Personnel to fully implement Article IX, Chapter 14 compliance & communication. B. Update of the City's Comprehensive Plan. C. Update of CDBG Consolidated Plan.</p>	<p>A. \$124,000/yr-1 \$79,000/yr 2-5 B. \$250,000 C. funded through CDBG *</p>	<p>Willingness to fund some of the projects identified by the new Comprehensive Plan.</p>	<p>Cannot be estimated at this time. Will depend upon the projects selected from the completed plan. *</p>
<p>Tommy Wright A. Development of a <u>major project</u> resurfacing budget. B. Funds for identified storm water/drainage project '27. C. Continuing ATRIP participation for cost-shared projects.</p>	<p>A. \$5 million Westgate \$4.9 million John D.Odom B. \$3 million/yr C. \$600,000 -- \$2,500,000/yr *</p>	<p>Continue annual funding for major road project resurfacing budget.</p>	<p>\$3.0 million/yr for years 2-5 to fund major resurfacing budget.</p>

<p>Kevan Kelly</p> <p>A. Two additional attorneys.</p>	<p>A. \$214,000/yr</p>	<p>Additional personnel are the most important.</p>	<p>Answered in MUST column</p>
<p>Romona Marcus</p> <p>A. Restart and completion of an ERP system initiative.</p> <p>B. Investing in ways to secure new sources of revenue.</p>	<p>A. & B. Costs cannot be estimated at this time. *</p>	<p>The ERP is the most important.</p>	<p>Cannot be estimated at this time. Will depend upon the system selected. *</p>
<p>Vincent Vincent</p> <p>A. Investment in digital back-ups of social media input and output.</p> <p>B. PlacerAI investment in location analytics for marketing and program development.</p> <p>C. High-powered computer for video editing and processing.</p>	<p>A. \$9,000/yr</p> <p>B. \$21,000 purchased 2025 \$26,000/yr * (purchase already approved)</p> <p>C. \$10,000</p>	<p>Continued support of personnel citywide.</p>	<p>Included in Personnel Dept.</p>
<p>POTENTIAL BUDGET ADDITIONS <u>MUST</u> PROJECTS/INITIATIVES 2025-2030.</p>	<p>Approximately \$46,635,534</p> <p>*Not included in this total. More info at Retreat 2025.</p>	<p>POTENTIAL BUDGET ADDITIONS <u>SHOULD</u> PROJECTS/INITIATIVES 2025-2030.</p>	<p>Approximately \$53,400,000</p> <p>*Not included this total. More info at Retreat 2025.</p>

Appendix D

Commission Assessment of 2034 Goals



GOAL 1: MAINTAIN A Financially Sound City and a High-Performance Team

- **Deliver City services in the most efficient, cost-effective manner.**
- **Diversity City revenue sources.**
- **Maintain adequate reserves consistent with City policies.**
- **Provide adequate funding for future facilities and infrastructure: to build, to maintain, to operate and to replace.**
- **Upgrade technology to reduce cost and improve service delivery.**
- **Have a City workforce reflective of the community demographic.**
- **Upgrade City facilities, infrastructure, equipment and vehicles through a comprehensive approach.**

SCORE: "B"

- * Explore more revenue sources (grants, philanthropy, state and federal),
- * Protect sales tax revenue and monitor the online tax.
- * Still some issues.



GOAL 2: EXPAND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- **Attract major business employers with quality jobs to Dothan.**
- **Retain existing businesses and support their expansion.**
- **Expand medical service education, and aviation businesses**
- **Grow small and minority owned business opportunities.**
- **Prepare a workforce for 21st century job opportunities.**
- **Maintain an active presence of Fort Rucker (Novosel) and the military.**

SCORE: "C"

- *Build on Hudson-Alpha partnership.
- *Consider an entrepreneur/innovation incubator.
- *Work on minority business opportunities.
- *Engage with Historically Black Colleges & Universities.
- *More "big" business bringing in good jobs.
- *Need higher wage opportunities to increase greatly.
- *Pursue Aerospace investments to support modernization of Army Aviation.
- *Need more diversity contractors. Split up some of the work.



GOAL 3: Plan for Dothan’s Future

- **Up-to-date comprehensive, area and master plans guiding policies and decisions.**
- **City infrastructure facilities and parks to support future growth.**
- **Infill development adding value to the neighborhood and community.**
- **Private sector investing in Dothan’s future.**
- **Business friendly development processes while protecting the community’s interest.**
- **Citizen having an opportunity to participate in the development plans.**
- **Planned growth for east Dothan area; ACOM area, South Dothan, and Downtown.**

SCORE: **“B”**

*Conduct workshops to educate citizens about development and developers, plans for City’s growth, and the challenges of infrastructure.
 *East and South Dothan have not experienced growth as anticipated.



GOAL 4: Make Dothan a More Livable and Inclusive City

- **More attractive City entrances, streetscapes, public spaces, trees.**
- **Revitalize Downtown.**
- **Develop strong partnership and working relationships with diverse cultures and religious institutions.**
- **Continue as a safe City with low crime rate.**
- **Support for quality education.**
- **Upgrade parks and facilities to respond to changing community needs.**
- **Strengthen community unity and pride.**

SCORE: **“B”**

* More needs to be done with Objective #5--support for quality education and Objective #7 --strengthening community unity and pride.
 * Support for quality education needs work.
 * Gun violence seems to be high, but DPD doing a great job.
 *Support for education has increased even as Dothan City School enrollment has decreased.



GOAL 5: Improve Mobility

- **Improve traffic flow and reduce travel times.**
- **Better quality streets, highways and bridges.**
- **Improve intersections.**
- **Enhance alternative transportation modes including public transit.**
- **Connect neighborhoods and commercial areas through sidewalks and bike paths.**
- **Increase use of available parking in Downtown with appropriate signage.**

SCORE: "A"

- * Good movement in these areas.
- * Major throughfares need work. (North and South Oates)
- * Main Street (underway) desperately needs resurfacing.
- * Road diet downtown a bad idea.
- * Progress on public transit not doing well.

Appendix E

Department Update on “Big Ideas” Proposed in 2024



UPDATE ON *THE NEXT BIG IDEAS* **Identified by Dothan Department Heads in February 2024**

Police Department: A forensic capability that is proactively changing criminal investigation is mobile DNA processing. ANDE Rapid DNA Technology makes it possible to obtain samples and see results within two hours, vs several weeks/months when dependent upon a state lab. Such systems are extremely useful in mass-casualty situations (which we hope not to have in Dothan), However, ANDE mobile technology also will allow department investigators to immediately collect evidence and begin to identify victims and perpetrators.

Unfunded. Other Police Department budget requests have taken priority (i.e., ShotSpotter). Bringing Rapid DNA Technology to Dothan is still of interest. However, it is not a top priority for the next two years.

Performing Arts: Director Dempsey would like to create excitement and support for the overall Downtown work and for the new arena as it is being constructed. By offering festivals and similar outdoor events in the general vicinity while construction is underway, people will be able to enjoy those opportunities while observing the progress. This will build anticipation and generate excitement during the two years the arena is not available.

The new Amphitheater at Porter Park and The Dothan Opera House are both opening this year. The Director will propose a budget of \$50,000/yr to produce events at the Opera House and \$25,000/yr for events at the Amphitheater, to begin as soon as spaces open and to continue yearly. Sponsors and ticket sales should recoup most, if not all, City investment. Events would be strategic to fit the needs of downtown.

Leisure Services: Director Hall recommends a complete rebranding of the department. The title, "Leisure Services" is outdated; cities around the US use some derivation of Parks and Recreation. The title also is not descriptive of the full range of options offered by the department. With the move to the old Fire Station 3 location, this would be a good time to consider the mission, vision, and goals of the department as a key contributor to the future quality of life in Dothan, and to brand it appropriately. The involvement of staff, stakeholders, and the Commission would help provide direction for the next fifty years. (Note: this idea was submitted by a previous Director.)

New Director Billy Powell is 100% in agreement that the City needs to move forward with a complete rebranding of Leisure Services to Parks and Recreation. The timing is perfect as the Department is making plans to move into a new office facility. Estimated costs for renovation of the City facility and rebranding will be included in budget requests currently being developed. Funding will be requested in budgets for FY26/FY27.

General Services: General Services is a division whose primary role is to support the projects and initiatives of the other public-facing City departments, rather than initiate new projects on their own. Director Love states that he continues to seek solutions to the challenge of recruiting and retaining good talent. Vacancies and skill deficits are particularly apparent in the key trade areas—vacancies due to retirement and resignation of experienced personnel, and skill deficits due to the young age and limited experience of new hires. Outsourcing is increasingly important to completing general services assignments. The Director anticipates continuing to strive for the right balance between outsourcing (sometimes at higher costs) and insourcing (sometimes with slower completion times or lesser quality work) in order to accomplish projects in a timely manner.

Director Love anticipates that the Department will have to continue to outsource more and more as the fleet and facilities continue to grow in size and complexity with no or limited growth in support personnel.

Planning and Development: The City owns the former Young Junior High School building on Dusy Street. Some informal discussion has taken place regarding the renovation and use of that facility for consolidated services for the homeless, including some possible on-site shelter options. The City could play a role in leading a collaborative effort that would include the various nonprofit organizations serving the homeless, the Housing Authority, and others. Coordinated services could more effectively assist the homeless who are seeking both improved life status and short-term support. Planning and Development could actively assist in identifying and helping to secure funding for renovations, relocations, programs and services (i.e., through CDBG and other HUD resources.) Director McDonald also noted that initiatives such as this one require an assigned professional with a (nearly) singular focus to coordinate this endeavor. It is unlikely to occur with only the occasional, unstructured approach.

The estimated cost of the renovation exceeded \$15 million; no budget request was submitted. A Section 108 loan for partial funding was discussed and presented to the commission in October. Other potential funding sources include: HOME (requires creation of a Consortium of local governments), competitive grants for this purpose through Dothan Housing Authority and SEACH (as Continuum of Care.)

Personnel: An employee health clinic would be a proactive next step for competitive benefits. Alabama cities already have these in place—Auburn, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, et al. Not only is this a value-added benefit for employees and their families, it also enables the City to have more control over healthcare costs. For clinics that are on-site, the time lost for medical appointments also can be reduced, creating more savings for the City. A secondary option would be a near-site clinic in partnership with an existing local provider. This would enable the City to provide this competitive benefit to employees while being a part of the established medical community.

\$1,500,000.00 was included in the FY26 Six-Year Capital Improvement Plan for an onsite health clinic. A secondary option, currently being explored, would be to partner with an existing local provider and utilize a near-site clinic concept to provide urgent and primary medical services to employees/retirees, and dependents on the City's insurance plan at an approximate cost of \$500,000.00 per

year. Utilization of the near-site clinic concept will provide savings to the City's claims expense over time. A provider has been identified through the BCBS Preferred Network and is prepared to move forward when the City is ready.

Finance: As the ERP comes online, Finance will develop dashboards for the Commission, senior staff, and Department Heads to continually monitor revenue, expenditures, projects, and budget updates. These can be tailored to meet the needs and interests of individual participants.

A full restart of the ERP initiative is currently on hold. Director Marcus still supports development of a system that will place just-in-time information into the hands of elected officials, department heads, and staff, as well aid substantially in customer service and communication. She is working with IT and other departments involved in the previous initiative to identify a product that can be presented to the Commission with clarity and confidence.

Information Technology: With plans for the Municipal Court to move into a new facility, the IT Director is planning to partner with judicial department and work with them to define the technology systems required to meet the current and future needs of changing courtroom proceedings and processes. The current level of tech integration in court operations is minimal. Technology exists (and will continue to evolve) to enable all parties to communicate in real-time, pay fines, enter and retrieve documents, collaborate across departments, etc, with high levels of security. IT would like the opportunity to project and plan for the utilization of these options. (Note: this idea was submitted by a previous Director.)

The new facility for the Municipal Court was postponed. IT is currently working in conjunction with the Judicial and Finance Departments evaluating new court software. They are in the early phase of evaluation,

Utilities: To support the City's growth and to reliably meet the ever-increasing demands of Dothan residents and businesses, it is essential to construct an electric transmission line from Monument Substation to Ross Clark Circle (north) to provide redundant electric transmission lines. (Cost estimated at \$2.5 million.) DU also would like to proactively address the employee shortages by raising public awareness of the department through an annual "open house". The Department also wants to coordinate with schools to provide career days and/or develop more educational opportunities. (Note: this idea was submitted by a previous Director.)

The Monument Loop Transmission Line Project is included in the Dothan Utilities (DU) Capital Improvement Plan for FY 26 (design-\$300K) and FY 27 (construction-\$4M). Funding availability is unknown at this time.

An Open House was not initiated in FY 24, and it is currently not budgeted for future fiscal years. As far as developing more educational opportunities, DU continues to partner with local high schools and universities to coordinate job shadowing opportunities, job internships, groundwater day events, career fairs, facility tours with local schools and community groups, and job/project related speaking opportunities at community engagements.

Legal Services: This question is not as applicable to Legal Services (as it is to other City departments) as their primary role is to support City initiatives, provide legal guidance on projects and defend lawsuits. The department is structured to be responsive. However, Mr. Kelly would like to have his office be more proactive, for example: working with the Police Department to assist with roll-call training; being able to attend more meetings of City-sponsored Boards and Committees; etc. This expansion of duties would depend upon staffing.

With the Department's review of the ever-increasing number of contracts, and the growing number of City partnerships requiring legal review, the proactive outreach noted above will be possible only with additional full-time attorneys.

Fire Department: Identifying and securing a location (Logistics facility) to accommodate (safely house in ready condition) reserve vehicles and equipment to increase department readiness and decrease equipment damage. The right facility with open floor space must serve as a dual purpose to conduct regular Candidate Physical Ability Tests (CPAT). With the projected growth of Dothan's population, the City should begin looking for land for a future Fire Station 11.

Logistics/CPAT - A location has been determined behind Fire Administration and Station 1. There was discussion with the City Manager and General Services Director during 2024, but no movement on funding of this project as of this date. It is listed in the Capital Improvement Plan (non-budgeted and no conditional funding) for 2026 (\$1,000,000). This remains a high priority for 2025!

Station 11 Land Location – Currently evaluating a couple of properties and have the purchase listed for the 2027 CIP. Hopeful to move this up in the FY 2026 CIP. (\$1,000,000 – high estimate). Securing a location remains high priority for 2025.

Public Works: The scale of roadway improvement projects underway in the City is amazing for a community of Dothan's size. It is not by accident. Current staff and administration have worked tirelessly to continue to build the relationships with ALDOT over the years to keep interest in improving roadway infrastructure in our area. Director Wright feels that it is the Department's responsibility to nurture these relationships, to continue to develop and support both City and State sponsored projects, and to constantly seek any funding opportunities to ensure the projects stay in our area. On occasion, some of the major projects implementing new ALDOT policies may negatively impact existing businesses or even proposed developments. The City will need to continue to navigate these issues and facilitate the conversations between the developers, the City, and the State to find acceptable solutions to benefit all parties involved.

Current objectives concerning roadwork in partnership with ALDOT include:

- *US-84 & John D. Odom Intersection Improvements. Completion est. late 2025.**
- *Flowers Chapel Rd Realignment w/US-84. Construction may begin Spr. 2026.**

2025 ATRIP Application Options:

- *East Ross Clark Circle Access Management/Safety Improvements.
Earliest start date is Spring 2027. OR,**
- *US-84 Additional Eastbound Lane from John D. Odom to Flowers Chapel.
Earliest start date by Spring 2027.**

APPENDIX F

Strategic Planning Update Workshop Agenda



**City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update Workshop
February 7 and 8, 2025
Wiregrass Public Safety Center**

**Day 1
AGENDA**

- 7:45 – 8:30 **Arrival and Breakfast**
- 8:30 – 8:45 **Invocation and Welcome** Mayor Mark Saliba
- 8:45 – 9:00 **Workshop Introduction & Overview** Barbara Alford

***Our Time* Conversations 2025**

- 9:00 – 10:00 **Conversation 1—Major Projects 2025-2030** Randy Morris
Interim City Manager
- 10:00 – 10:45 **Conversation 2—Senior Leadership Development** Delvick McKay
Personnel Director
- 10:45 – 11:00 **STRETCH BREAK**
- 11:00 – 11:45 **Conversation 3—HudsonAlpha Wiregrass Partnership** Dean Mitchell
Director, HA Wiregrass
- 11:45 – 12:15 **Conversation 4—Creating Dothan’s Ag-Tech Economy** Mayor Saliba
- 12:15 – 12:45 **LUNCH**
- 12:45 – 1:30 **Conversation 5—City Financial Status & Debt** Romona Marcus
Finance Director
- 1:30 – 2:30 **Conversation 6—Financial Strategies for
Downtown Dothan** Joshua McCoy
Managing Director, PFM
- 2:30 – 2:45 **STRETCH BREAK**
- 2:45 – 3:45 **Conversation 7—CITY HALL Status Updates, Q&A** Andy Love
General Services Director
- 3:45 – 4:45 **Conversation 8—ARENA/ARTS Status Updates, Q&A** Randy Morris
- 4:45 – 5:00 **Overview of Day-2** Barbara Alford





**City of Dothan Strategic Planning Update Workshop
February 7 and 8, 2025
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**Day 2
AGENDA**

8:00 – 8:30	Arrival and Breakfast	
8:30 – 8:45	Welcome Comments from Mayor and Commissioners	Mayor Mark Saliba

***Our Time* Conversations 2025**, continued

8:45 – 9:45	Conversation 9 —Prioritization of Projects for Federal Requests	Randy Morris & Commission
9:45 – 10:00	STRETCH BREAK	
10:00 – 11:00	Conversation 10 —Funding the Future	Commission
11:00 – 11:30	Conversation 11 —Staffing for City Fundraising	Barbara Alford
11:30 – 12:00	LUNCH	
12:00 – 1:30	Conversation 12 —Timelines for Decision-making:	Barbara Alford & Commission
1:30 – 1:45	Summary Comments	Mayor Saliba, Commissioners, Interim City Manager

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