



2026

Advocacy
AGENDA

Gastonia City Council



*Left to Right (front): Angela Dreher, Mayor Richard Franks, Jennifer Stepp
Left to Right (rear): Glenn Silverman, Donyel Barber, Demetrios Koutsoupas, Mayor Pro-Tem Jim Gallagher*

Vision

The City of Gastonia serves as a model for civic leadership as we engage our community of dedicated neighbors **(Great People)**. We share a collective passion for personal safety, economic vitality, inclusiveness, cultural richness and overall sustainability **(Great Place)**. Our distinct character is built upon a rich and unique heritage and fueled by enthusiasm for the promise of a bright tomorrow **(Great Promise)**.

Mission

To enhance the quality of life for all by providing innovative, responsive, and cost-effective services at the highest level.

Core Values

We, the Mayor, City Council, and City of Gastonia Employees, practice Accountability, Inclusiveness, Safety, Professionalism, Honesty, and Integrity to safeguard and enhance the public trust in City Government.

Federal Priority Issues

The City of Gastonia seeks funding for major transportation projects, community development, affordable housing, and infrastructure initiatives.

- The City seeks funding from the US Department of Transportation through various established grant programs such as the BUILD Program, Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Grant Program, INFRA Program, Safe Streets and Roads for All Program, rail connectivity, SMART Program, and all programs that provide funding to improve local transportation conditions and rail connectivity.
- The Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina Departments of Transportation are preparing a plan to build a high-speed rail line from Atlanta to Charlotte. The City supports route options that include stops in Downtown Gastonia.
- The City supports working with the Federal Rail Administration to further study intercity passenger rail from Kings Mountain to Charlotte as part of the Corridor ID Program.
- The City supports maintaining the tax-exempt status for local government bonds. Proposals to make government bonds taxable would make local governmental infrastructure projects costlier to local taxpayers and rate payers and may make them less attractive to investors.
- The City supports full funding for Federal Transit Administration programs and efforts to modernize funding strategies to better accommodate on-demand transit, otherwise known as microtransit.
- The City seeks to ensure that projects at the Gastonia Municipal Airport that are included in the Federal Aviation Administration's Work Plan receive high priority and adequate funding.
- The City supports continued funding for infrastructure initiatives in the areas of Transportation, Brownfields grants, Public Water and Sewer system rehabilitations and expansions, targeted Economic Development, Public Safety, and Community Development Block Grants, and HOME Programs that addresses affordable housing and reduces homelessness.

U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C.



State Priority Issues

The City of Gastonia will focus efforts on projects and initiatives that support the City's financial wellbeing, economic development, local governance, utilities, transportation, parks and recreation, community development and housing, museum services, and public safety.

FINANCIAL

- The City supports the position that the State should not cut or eliminate State-shared revenues to local governments unless other suitable revenues replace them.
- The City opposes unfunded mandates that are established through legislation or regulation that require additional local expenditures without corresponding revenues.
- Tax Reform or redistribution of revenues should not adversely affect the City's revenues necessary for local services.
- The City supports legislation to provide municipalities with authority for additional locally-controlled revenue options and flexibility in the use of those options, including – but not limited to – city-only sales tax, city occupancy taxes, a prepared food and beverage tax, and impact fees for transportation, parks and recreation, and public safety.
- The City supports legislation that will supersede the Blue Ridge Housing of Bakersville, LLC v. Mitchell County NC Court of Appeals case that allows a for-profit entity owned by a non-profit to qualify for exemption if the non-profit maintains sufficient control and ownership.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- The City supports legislation that will provide funding for State-level incentive programs necessary to keep North Carolina competitive in its efforts to bring additional jobs and economic development to local communities when competing with projects in other states. This includes the Governor's OneNC Fund, Golden Leaf Foundation, Job Development Investment Grants (JDIG), and other programs that support major industrial site development and downtown development.
- The City supports legislation that provides additional tools for redevelopment of downtown properties, including but not limited to additional resources to rehabilitate or purchase blighted properties. For example, the City believes Chapter 160D could be amended to provide for more flexibility in the negotiation of economic redevelopment agreements and the sale of city properties when addressing urban blight and downtown revitalization.
- The City supports State Historic Preservation Tax Credits and advocates that they not be curtailed. These credits are important economic development tools for Gastonia and the State of North Carolina.

- The City supports the re-establishment of the North Carolina Mills Tax Credit or a similar incentive that will stimulate the marketplace to restore and reuse large vacant industrial, agricultural, and utilities buildings.
- The City supports the efforts to revitalize the P&N Rail Line for commuter rail and appropriate freight use.
- The City supports Charlotte's bid for federal recognition to become a Tech Hub and ways to collaborate with Charlotte and other regional, state, and federal partners to be a vital part of the emerging tech hub community in Charlotte.
- The City supports the revitalization of vacant and abandoned properties with funding.
 - Many towns and cities do not have funding to address abandoned properties.
 - These properties affect surrounding home and business property values, economic development opportunities, and crime rates.
 - With funding and additional legal tools, such as those allowing for properties to be more easily condemned, these properties could serve to address local housing needs.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

- The City supports the re-establishment of the non-partisan plurality election model used by the City under NCGS 163-192 that allows all Gastonia citizens to vote for each member of the Gastonia City Council. Therefore, the City seeks to protect the ability of municipal elected officials, acting on behalf of local voters, to determine election formats, districts, and other election matters currently under their purview.
- The City seeks to update the annexation petition thresholds to make voluntary annexations easier to initiate.
- The City supports amending state annexation laws to allow cities to close doughnut holes and restrict all water and sewer expenditures to areas only within public rights-of-way and easements.

- The City supports legislative repeal or amendment of recent changes to N.C.G.S 160D-601(d) (Downzoning). The recently adopted Session Law 2024-57, in part, amended the existing statutory provisions governing “downzoning.” These changes greatly expanded the definition of “downzoning,” and for the first time in the State’s history, prohibited nearly all local government authority to take such action. These changes will significantly impact the ability of local governments to use the zoning power to adjust to new types of land uses, to amend outdated development standards, to adjust to changes in jurisdictions, and to comply with State and Federal requirements to adopt updated maps (such as those dealing with changing flood plains).
- The City seeks legislative authority to publish legal notice of public hearings online versus printing these notices in the local newspaper. Other jurisdictions in North Carolina have received legislative authority to publish notice of public hearings online.
- The City supports a system of spirituous liquor sales that maintains a local referendum about the decision to sell, preserves local control over the location and density of outlets, and preserves the local revenue stream.
- The City seeks authority to criminally enforce City regulations for the towing and booting industry (such as mandatory signage, procedures to tow or boot, business hours’ operation, and mandatory acceptance of credit cards).
- The City supports state regulations that prevents abusive price gouging and extortion that occurs in this industry.
- The City seeks to reduce pressure on property taxpayers by expanding locally controlled options for revenue generation.
 - Property taxes remain the primary revenue stream over which municipal governments exercise control.
 - A lack of diverse, local tax options can affect economic growth, as well as cause large swings in revenue based on economic changes.
- The City supports legislation clarifying a City’s right to establish a tree ordinance and opposes legislation impairing the right of a City to protect its tree canopy.

UTILITIES

- The City supports the creation of incentives that encourage and adequately fund regionalized water and wastewater solutions, cooperation in the interconnection of water and wastewater utilities through partnerships and contractual negotiation, and encourages the General Assembly to enact legislation which provides fiscal and regulatory incentives in support of such initiatives. Conversely, the City strongly opposes State legislation which would compel the transfer or sale of utility systems or that curtails the ability of municipalities to secure no interest loans and grant funding opportunities for regional water and wastewater interconnections.
- The City supports the reduction of regulatory conflicts between state agencies that discourage voluntary consolidation, merger, and interconnection of municipal utility systems.
- The City supports full funding for the State Revolving Loan Fund (SRLF) of the NCDEQ.
- The City supports full funding of the NC Land and Water Fund (formerly the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund) for stormwater and water quality projects.
- The City supports local government authority to build broadband infrastructure in order to partner with private providers and provide additional funding to help close the digital divide.
- The City supports the establishment of long-term funding streams that adequately address water, wastewater, stormwater, and other infrastructure needs.
- The City supports science based PFAS drinking water and wastewater regulations and the funding of treatment upgrades for the removal of PFAS from drinking water and wastewater.
- The City opposes any interbasin transfer (IBT) that negatively impacts the City of Gastonia, Gaston County, and those served by the Catawba River Basin.
- The City supports the construction of properly built, operated, and maintained stormwater infrastructure that helps create a safe and livable community by preventing dangerous flooding and by keeping our water clean. The City supports the vigorous enforcement of existing stormwater and soil erosion regulations and given the number and severity of flooding problems experienced by our residents as well as those just outside our City limits, we believe additional regulations and resources for enforcement are warranted.

TRANSPORTATION

- The City supports the Catawba Crossings transportation project. Improving connectivity from Gastonia to Charlotte-Douglas International Airport and its Intermodal Facility is a key transportation and economic development priority. Bridge crossings of the Catawba and South Fork Rivers are a high priority transportation goal in our region.
- The City strongly supports intercity passenger rail and rapid transit from Charlotte to Gastonia, including daily passenger rail service that will extend from Charlotte to Gastonia. This includes the full utilization of the P&N Rail Line.
- The City supports legislation that would allow (for all non-federally funded interstate highway projects) for the reimbursement of utility relocation projects to be phased in over a period of five years. NCDOT should allow municipal utilities with adequate, functioning, and existing underground lines within State road rights-of-ways to remain in place for NCDOT road-widening projects.
- The City supports NCDOT-funded transportation projects throughout the City and will continue to actively partner with NCDOT to ensure City input is incorporated during planning, design, and construction, including considerations related to community context, aesthetics, and local priorities.
- The City seeks legislation to ensure that the amount of Powell Bill funds or a future like model funding source appropriated by the State are sustained and distributions to municipalities are increased and grow over time.
- The City supports an expansion of transportation funding streams which include but are not limited to construction, the maintenance of municipal and state-owned secondary roads, as well as public transit and transportation development and operations.

**N.C. General Assembly
Raleigh, N.C.**



PARKS & RECREATION

- The City supports the continued funding of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant Program (PARTF Grants).
- The City supports the continuation of allocations for the Recreational Trails Grant Program (RTP Grant).
- The City supports Crowder's Mountain State Park and increased funding for future improvements.
- The City supports Mountain Island Educational State Forest and increased funding for future improvements.
- The City supports funding for the former landfill site located adjacent to Interstate 85 North and Sims Legion Park. This includes the total replacement and improvement of existing recreational areas that are impacted by the mitigation project.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING

- The City seeks legislation that provides additional tools and financial resources to address safe and affordable housing, including the creation of incentives to encourage a diversity of housing options.
- The City seeks financial resources for programs and partnerships that address homelessness.
- The City supports the adoption of the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act, which has the potential to put more vacant property back into use – and to do so by treating property owners fairer with fewer court-ordered forced sales and with a streamlined process to sort out ownership interests. These vacant property situations are particularly apt to arise in properties handed down from one generation to another without a formal will left by the original owner.

MUSEUM

- The City supports full funding and inclusion in the state budget for the NC Science Museum's Competitive Grant Program, an important program that allows the City's Schiele Museum to provide high-quality science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education programs to students in Gastonia, Gaston County and throughout the region.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- The City seeks public safety grant funding and the expansion of allowable uses.
 - Improving policing will require additional public safety grant funding and more flexibility in its uses.
 - More effective and equitable policing can be achieved by additional funding of community policing programs, as well as the allocation of more funds toward alternative programs that seek to address mental health calls and other issues through non-uniformed personnel.
- The City seeks additional funding for the continued improvement of the Charlotte Area Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) communications system in partnership with regional and federal partners.
- The City supports legislation providing additional post-employment benefits to public employees that includes a funding mechanism to fully support the cost and liability of the benefit, and supports the study of existing post-employment benefits, such as special separation allowance programs to ensure that the liability of providing the benefit is not solely borne by the last employer.
- The City seeks improved statewide funding and support for Law Enforcement Officers training focused on use of force, mental health, and de-escalation skills.
 - Highly publicized incidents of police use of force in recent years have underscored the need for enhanced and expanded law enforcement training.
 - Improved training is needed to build trust and legitimacy in the community while serving the public in a professional and equitable manner.
 - Numerous studies show that additional and effective training focused on conflict de-escalation can significantly reduce police use of force.

County Priority Issues

The City of Gastonia supports projects and initiatives that provide opportunities to partner with Gaston County to improve employment, economic development, transportation, and address homelessness.

- The City seeks to partner with Gaston County, the faith-based community, and area non-profits to reduce homelessness.
- The City seeks to partner with Gaston County on the acquisition and development of additional property for industrial use and job creation.
- The City seeks to partner with Gaston County on mutually beneficial studies that include economic development, transportation issues, and other items of interest.
- The City seeks to continue to partner with Gaston County to fund and construct strategic utility extensions.
- The City supports a countywide initiative to provide necessary funding for transportation improvements that includes funding for all modes of transportation.
- The City seeks Gaston County financial support for the Schiele Museum.
- The City seeks to partner with Gaston County related to Downtown Beautification efforts, specifically public artwork around publicly owned spaces.
- The City seeks to partner with Gaston County to increase travel and tourism through capital projects and strategic marketing.
- The City seeks an increased level of service for animal control enforcement in Gaston County.
- The City supports the vigorous enforcement of existing stormwater and soil erosion regulations, and given the number and severity of flooding problems experienced by our residents as well as those just outside our City limits, we believe additional regulations and resources for enforcement are warranted.
- The City supports the per capita distribution method of sales tax over the current ad valorem distribution method selected by Gaston County.

Gaston County Courthouse
Gastonia, N.C.





GASTONIA_{NC}

Great Place. Great People. Great Promise.



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