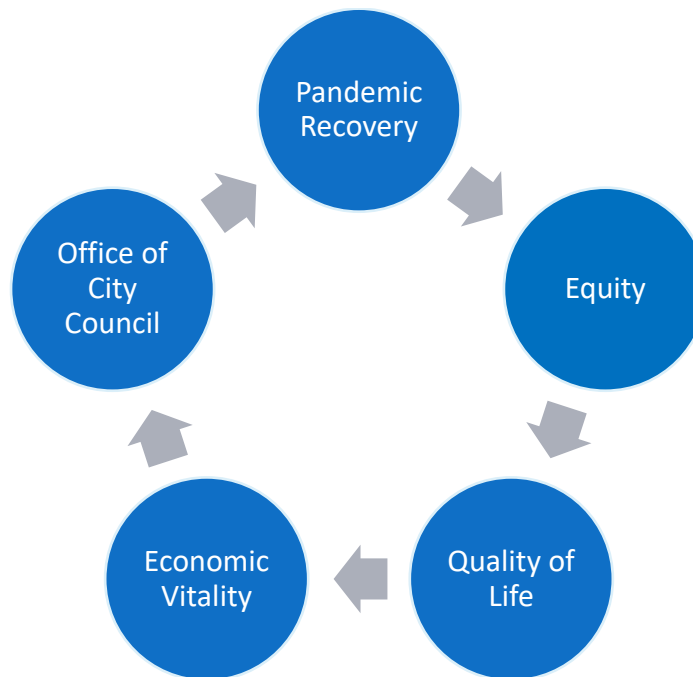# Richmond City Council Retreat
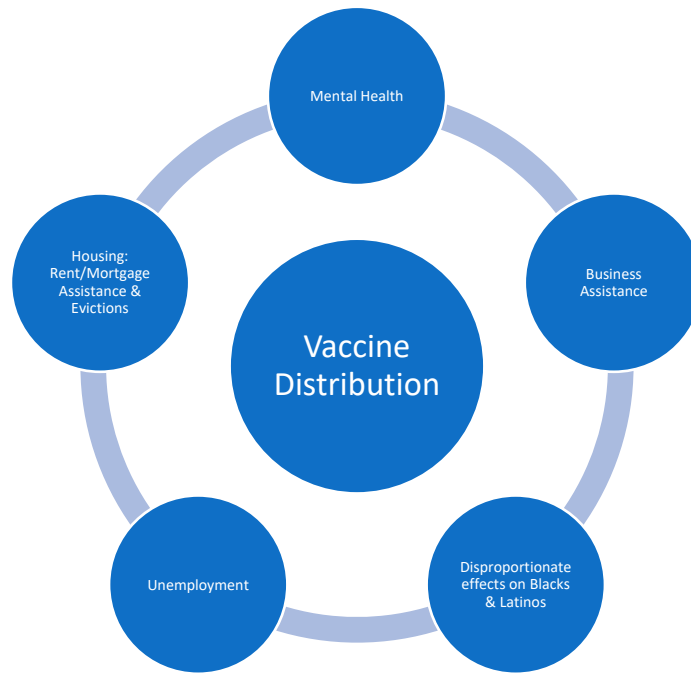
Identifying Council Priorities

The VIG facilitation team analyzed input received from city council members during a SWOT analysis informed by both preliminary individual member interviews and a group retreat meeting held on February 17. This includes issues at the district level and citywide.

This document was created to assist council in preparing for the second retreat session and next steps post-retreat. Several common areas that council would like to review and/or address were identified. The first diagram represents recurring overarching themes for council to weigh as priorities.
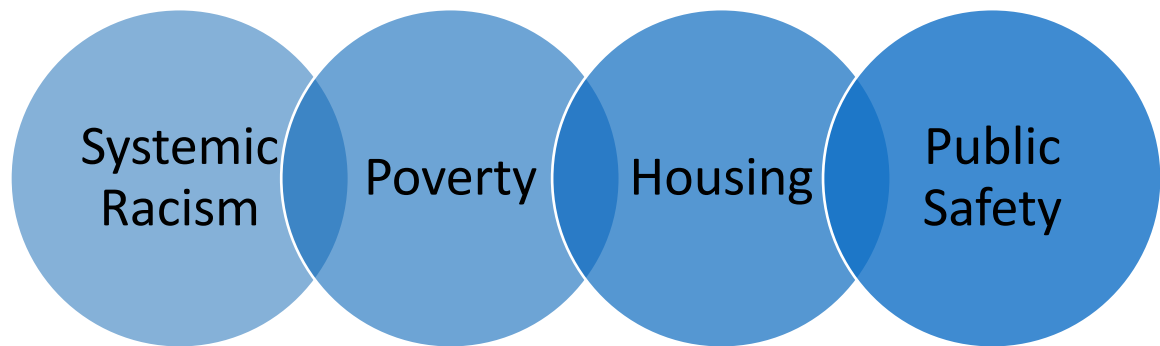
Pandemic Recovery

Equity

Quality of Life

Economic Vitality

Office of City Council

Pandemic Recovery

The graphic shows issues identified related to recovery from COVID19.

Mental Health

Housing: Rent/Mortgage Assistance & Evictions

Business Assistance

Vaccine Distribution

Unemployment

Disproportionate effects on Blacks & Latinos

Vaccine distribution was a clear priority. The other issues will require both immediate assistance during the pandemic and long-term strategies to support both residents and the business community after COVID19 is no longer a major public health concern.
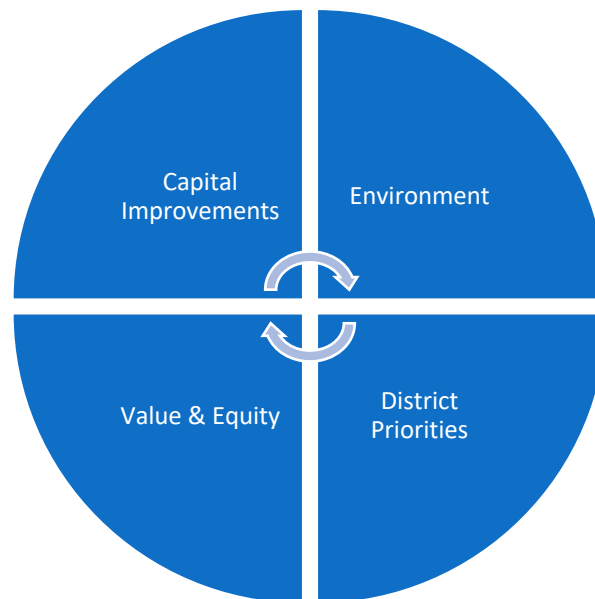
Equity

This section shows common themes identified through the equity lens.

Systemic Racism	Poverty	Housing	Public Safety

- Systemic Racism:
    - o Collaborate with the administration to analyze equity issues city-wide and develop an action plan that rectifies the wrongs of ordinances and practices that are systemically oppressive
    - o Acknowledge and own the community's history: tell the story of systemic racism (enslaved people, reconstruction, Jim Crow, massive resistance, civil rights, and today)
- Poverty:
    - o Support planning and initiatives that provide wrap around services to permanently pull people out of poverty
        - Examples include navigating challenges with housing, education/training, income, employment, mental health, food security, transportation, reentry, and access to health care
- Housing:
    - o Identify policy and budget opportunities that assist with creating affordable housing, transformation of public housing, and temporary and permanent housing solutions for the homeless population
- Public Safety:
    - o Review initiatives that will transform public safety and build community trust
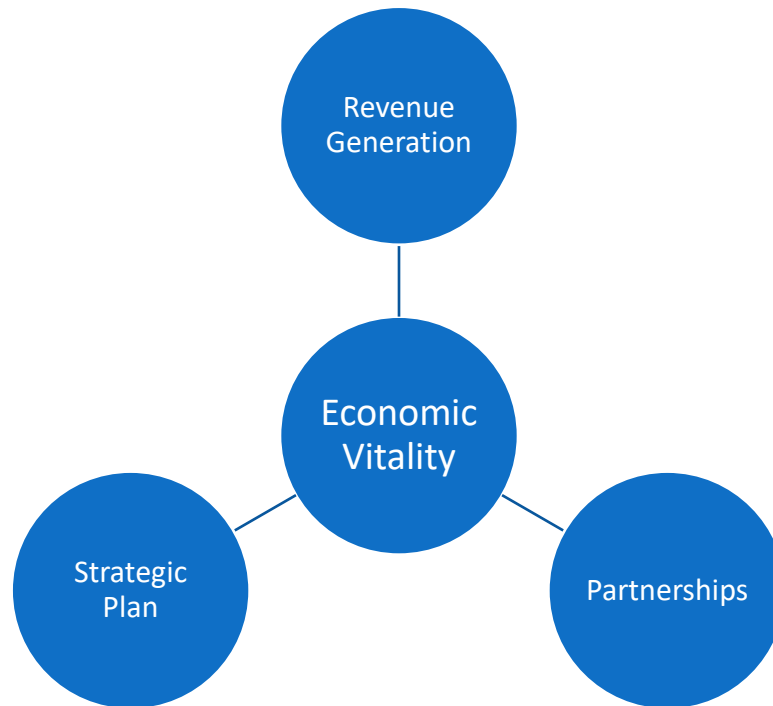
Quality of Life

The graphic below displays multiple issues related to quality of life in both districts and citywide.

- Environment:
    - Support clean and safe neighborhood initiatives (Examples include functional and well-maintained corridors, streets, sidewalks, drainage, and landscaping)
- District Priorities:
    - Food deserts, flood mitigation, affordable housing, poverty, unemployment, redlining, economic development, COVID19 vaccine distribution, CIP projects, facility improvements (schools, parks, etc.), and specific district features (Riverfront Plan, commercial corridor plans, public housing)
- Value and Equity:
    - Define what equity of services across districts looks like
    - Catch up on investments in neighborhoods that have been left behind
- Capital Improvements:
    - Utilize the budget process to set council driven strategic priorities in districts and city-wide for CIP funding for water, wastewater, stormwater, roads, schools, parks, and other facilities/projects
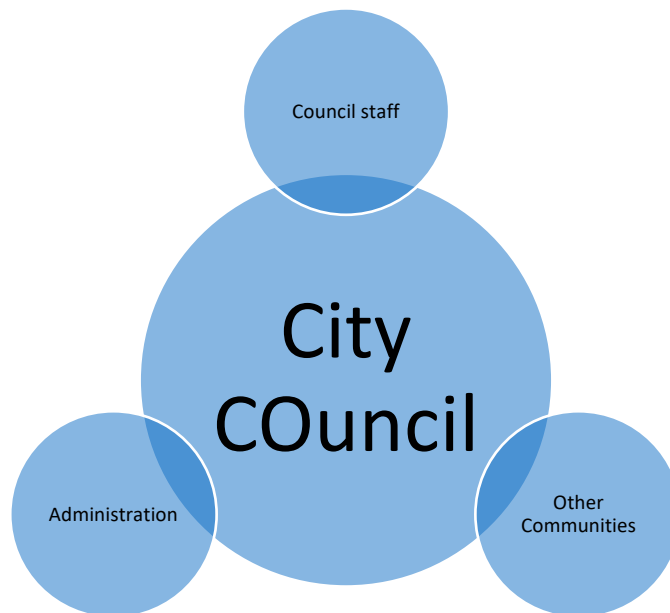
Economic Vitality

This section highlights common themes identified by council regarding the city's economic vitality.

- Revenue Generation:
  - o Review potential new revenue streams (casino and cannabis initiatives) and align how they are invested with council strategic priorities
- Strategic Plan:
  - o Create a council driven economic vitality strategic plan that proactively identifies community and economic development opportunities and partnerships at both the district and the citywide levels
  - o Review existing related studies in this comprehensive strategic initiative (Riverfront Plan, corridor plans, other projects)
  - o Align plan with council budget priorities
- Partnerships:
  - o Collaborate with anchor institutions, private sector, non-profits, other local governments, and other regional entities to prevent missed opportunities for the city

Office of the City Council

The final graphic highlights opportunities identified by Council for the elected body and staff to strengthen relationships both internally and externally.

- City Council:
    - o Increase communication and develop trust between individual council members
    - o Embrace public meeting discussion as it is challenging for nine members to communicate effectively otherwise
    - o Create council staff management structure to lead, set expectations, and hold staff accountable
    - o Balance support and accountability of the public-school system with annual funding budget review that considers student success, school accreditation, local composite index, and other critical factors
    - o Identify legislative agendas for both state and federal representatives and work with council staff to implement action plan
- Council Staff:
    - o Identify pathway for staff to better support council members in their work.
        - ▪ Review staff responsibilities, consider restructuring opportunities, conduct internal/external salary analysis, and streamline processes
        - ▪ Encompass all units reporting directly to council
    - o Design and implement an effective collective communication strategy
        - ▪ Sustain city council presence on social media, news media, and other outlets to inform the community of council activities and opportunities for input/feedback
        - ▪ Enhance overall public relations

- o Develop structured, consistent, and timely training, professional development, and support activities for council members
  - Annual retreats, new member orientation, and action plans after each new council takes office
- Other Communities
  - o Partner, learn from, and share best practices and experiences with other local governments (regionally, statewide, and beyond)
  - o Review consequences of independent city structure
    - Burden of services not shared with counties, annexation moratorium/landlocked, lack of flexibility (Dillon Rule, etc.)
- Administration/Mayor:
  - o Identify strategic priorities that allow council to proactively work with the administration rather than react to proposals (economic development, budget)