

A scenic view of a bridge over water at sunset, with a cannon in the foreground. The bridge is a long, multi-span structure with a central arch, crossing a body of water. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, with clouds catching the low sun. In the foreground, a large, dark cannon is mounted on a wooden carriage on a grassy bank. The water reflects the colors of the sky and the bridge. The overall mood is peaceful and historical.

City of Beaufort Strategic Plan

Guiding Our Future

Fiscal Years 2026-2027

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Leadership Messages

Letter from the Mayor



Welcome to the City of Beaufort Strategic Plan. As your Mayor, I am committed to advancing our vision of a thriving and diverse city that honors its history while enhancing quality of life for all citizens. This strategic plan represents our roadmap to sustainable growth and community prosperity.

Together with the City Council and our dedicated staff, we have developed a comprehensive approach to address our key focus areas while maintaining fiscal responsibility and environmental stewardship. I invite you to review this plan and join us in building Beaufort's future.

- Mayor Phil Cromer

Letter from the City Manager



This Strategic Plan represents countless hours of thoughtful planning and community input. As City Manager, I am proud to present this document that will guide our operational decisions and resource allocations in the coming years.

Our team is focused on implementing the initiatives outlined in this plan with transparency and accountability. We are committed to providing exceptional service to our residents while ensuring the long-term sustainability of our beautiful city. We welcome your continued engagement as we work together to achieve these strategic goals.

- City Manager Scott Marshall

Vision and Mission

Vision

A city encouraging public confidence in an environment of economic opportunities and affordable livability, transparent and responsive government, and resiliency in the face of weather and climate related impacts. A thriving and diverse city that honors its history while enhancing the quality of life for its citizens, sustaining responsible growth, and maintaining harmony between the built and natural environment.

Mission

The mission of the City of Beaufort is to provide responsive governance and efficient and courteous service with professionalism and integrity.

Key Focus Areas

- **A Safe & Vibrant City** - Ensuring public safety, promoting cultural vitality, and creating engaging community spaces that enhance quality of life for residents and visitors.
- **Manage Infrastructure, Growth & Protect Natural Resources** - Developing and maintaining critical infrastructure while implementing sustainable growth policies that preserve our unique coastal environment and natural assets.
- **Economic Development & Innovation** - Fostering a diverse, resilient economy through business development, tourism enhancement, and innovation that respects our historic character while embracing future opportunities.
- **Fiscal Sustainability** - Maintaining responsible financial management, diverse revenue streams, and strategic investments that ensure long-term city viability while delivering value to taxpayers.
- **Organizational Excellence** - Building a high-performing, responsive city government through effective leadership, professional development, technological advancement, and exceptional customer service.



Executive Summary

The City of Beaufort's 2025 Strategic Planning Retreat held February 24–26 at the Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce, marked a pivotal step in refining the City's long-term goals and operational priorities. Guided by facilitator Bill Stipp of Bridge Group LLC, the retreat brought together City Council, senior staff, and regional partners to review progress on the current strategic plan, identify emerging priorities, and lay the foundation for updated initiatives for FY26 and FY27. The retreat also introduced a new capital planning framework that will guide infrastructure and financial investments over the next decade. This inclusive and transparent planning process is designed to ensure community needs and input are central to future policy and budget decisions.

Participants:

City Leadership

Phil Cromer, Mayor
Mike McFee, Mayor Pro-Tempore
Neil Lipsitz, Councilman
Mitch Mitchell, Councilman
Josh Scallate, Councilman
Traci Guldner, City Clerk
Scott Marshall, City Manager
JJ Sauve, Deputy City Manager
Ashley Brandon, PIO

Department Heads

Alan Eisenman, Finance Director
Ivette Burgess, HR Director
Nate Farrow, Public Works Director
Tim Ogden, Fire Chief
Stephenie Price, Police Chief
Curt Freese, Community Development Director
Linda Roper, Downtown Operations Director
Raul Dominguez, CIP Director

Day One:

The first day focused on establishing a foundation for the retreat and reviewing departmental progress and challenges. Following opening remarks from City leadership and a presentation on the strategic planning process, staff provided an update on strategic plan implementation. Department heads then delivered updates highlighting major accomplishments, ongoing challenges, and key unmet needs in areas such as public safety, public works, finance, courts, human resources, and capital improvements.

Key Topics Covered:

- Strategic planning overview and goals for the retreat
- Progress update on current strategic initiatives
- Department-level presentations on 2024 activities and priorities
- Discussion of personnel, technology, infrastructure, and service delivery challenges
- Public comment session

Day Two: Focused on strategic framework refinement, development code review, and capital project prioritization. Council and staff reviewed survey feedback, discussed the development code, and received updates on capital projects and the new 10-year CIP process.

Key Topics:

- Review of Council and staff survey results
- Development Code discussion
- Updates on capital projects and new CIP process
- Emerging projects and funding challenges
- Confirmation of FY26–28 strategic priorities
- Public comment

Day Three: Focused on partnerships. Strategic partners shared updates on collaboration opportunities related to infrastructure, housing, economic development, and public services. The day concluded with final public comment and closing reflections.

Key Topics:

- Strategic partner presentations
- Updates on joint initiatives and regional priorities
- Discussion of coordination opportunities
- Final public comment and closing remarks

Following the retreat, the strategic plan was presented to City Council for review and feedback in worksession and formal adoption via resolution.



Key Focus Area 1: A Safe & Vibrant City

The City of Beaufort will maintain our authenticity while building a safe and equitable City. Beaufort will pursue affordable livability for all segments of the population, through the provision of responsive public safety, and improved public spaces.

Guiding Principle 1.1

Preserve and enhance the historic and cultural identity/resources that reflect the values and traditions of our community. We support and promote cultural activities that reflect our historic legacy.

Guiding Principle 1.2

Support and create partnerships with public/private educational institutions and local school leadership. Encourage multi-generational development programs and recreational opportunities.

Guiding Principle 1.3

Enhance our connections with neighborhoods throughout the city through focused outreach and strategic utilization of various communication methods. We should celebrate our accomplishments through focused outreach to the residents.

Guiding Principle 1.4

Promote public safety process improvements and innovative programs that ensure a safe community.

Guiding Principle 1.5

Foster and support initiatives and evaluate community policies, programs, gathering places, and events that promote healthy and quality lifestyles for our demographically diverse community.

Guiding Principle 1.6

Foster citywide initiatives, policies and city codes that support a clean, well-maintained, and sustainable community.

Guiding Principle 1.7

Explore innovative transportation policies, projects, and plans to better accommodate patterns of movement for a growing population

Key Focus Area 1: A Safe & Vibrant City - Initiatives

Key Initiatives

Initiative	New/Legacy	Guiding Principle	Primary Department	FY Start
Develop an effective MOU with the NPS to ensure preservation and continued enjoyment for all of Reconstruction Era National Historic Park	Legacy	GP 1.1	Downtown Operations	FY26
Engage Beaufort County and BCSD administration to assess interest and feasibility of joint use, maintenance, and improvements agreements at identified municipal parks	Legacy	GP 1.5	Public Works	FY26
Evaluate and report recommendations on increasing family and consumer access to the downtown area	Legacy	GP 1.5	Downtown Operations	FY26
Assess and provide recommendations on feasibility and funding options for Municipal Historic Preservation Incentive and Grant Programs	Legacy	GP 1.1	Community Development	FY26

Key Focus Area 1: A Safe & Vibrant City - Initiatives Continued

Expand the existing summer police explorer and internship programs to include year-round programming	Legacy	GP 1.4	Police Department	FY26
Develop a report with recommendations on increasing downtown pedestrian traffic during identified critical time periods by local families	Legacy	GP 1.5	Downtown Operations	FY26
Develop a long-term plan for rehabilitating and maintaining the Waterfront Park and Marina infrastructure	Legacy	GP 1.1	Capital Improvements Program	FY26
Engage with LCOG and Palmetto Breeze to complete the Northern Beaufort Transit Master Plan	Legacy	GP 1.7	Community Development	FY26
Update Codes and Regulations for Parks and Playgrounds	New	GP 1.6	Public Works	FY26

Key Focus Area 1: A Safe & Vibrant City - Initiatives Continued

Implement full-time Emergency and Risk Management Program	New	GP 1.4	City Manager's Office	FY26
Explore Short Term Rental Ordinance update and CAP zoning	New	GP 1.1	Community Development	FY26
Partner with regional organizations to develop a plan addressing Housing Insecurity	New	GP 1.5	Community Development	FY27
Explore development incentives for increasing family and youth entertainment	New	GP 1.5	Community Development	FY26
Engage the County to invest in active parks within and adjoining the city	New	GP 1.6	Public Works	FY27

Key Focus Area 2: Manage Infrastructure, Growth & Protect Natural Resources

The City of Beaufort will preserve its unique character and charm while planning for future growth and addressing climate-related challenges. The City will assess environmental, municipal, regional, and private sector constraints that influence growth, identify key commercial and residential areas that need attention, and encourage balanced development through annexation, infill, and the upkeep of City-owned infrastructure.



Guiding Principle 2.1

Establish routine and industry best practice maintenance guidelines to monitor the efficiency and operability of current below and above grade infrastructure and facilities.



Guiding Principle 2.2

Identify programs, technologies, or resources to complement current operational practices that ensure the sustainability of existing infrastructure and facilities.



Guiding Principle 2.3

Establish long-term planning, prioritization and investment strategies for future infrastructure and facilities that improve the quality of life for residents while being financially sustainable.



Guiding Principle 2.4

Manage and encourage infill development to provide for use of current built infrastructure and promote housing and economic development diversity.



Guiding Principle 2.5

Manage annexation through strategic partnerships and acquisitions within growth boundaries, consistent with the comprehensive plan, that grow the city's tax base and/or enhance the quality of life and opportunities for residents.



Guiding Principle 2.6

Plan for climate change and sea level rise by designing, engineering, and implementing infrastructure improvements.



Guiding Principle 2.7

Maintain a development code that balances quality of life for residents, authenticity of the City, and that fosters smart growth

Key Focus Area 2: Manage Infrastructure, Growth & Protect Natural Resources- Initiatives

Key Initiatives

Initiative	New/Legacy	Guiding Principle	Primary Department	FY Start
Take a pro-active approach to coordination with Beaufort County in finalizing a Lady's Island Master Plan	Legacy	GP 2.3	Community Development	FY26
Develop a project plan and complete a full update of the Comprehensive Plan	Legacy	GP 2.3	Community Development	FY27
Develop a cost/benefit assessment procedure for annexation requests	Legacy	GP 2.5	Community Development	FY26
Complete ongoing development code edits to more accurately reflect best practices and current priorities during FY 26	Legacy	GP 2.7	Community Development	FY26
Evaluate and Implement Smart Growth Strategies	New	GP 2.3	Community Development	FY27



Key Focus Area 3: Economic Development & Innovation

The City of Beaufort will strengthen and diversify its economy, and build employment opportunities, through partnerships and innovation. We will support existing businesses and recruit new businesses as we promote balanced land use, support diverse tourism, and remain an authentic hometown.



Guiding Principle 3.1

Ensure development services are continually streamlined, efficient, customer focused and responsive to support new growth, local economic development, and the long-term success of existing local businesses.



Guiding Principle 3.2

Continually update and refine a long-range planning that incorporates resident and stakeholder input to provide a road map for community design, strategic economic development, infrastructure, and budget planning.



Guiding Principle 3.3

Focus on strategic and targeted economic development pursuits that strive to increase local jobs, generate additional revenues, and support the needs of a growing community.



Guiding Principle 3.4

In collaboration with civic partners, nurture and support existing businesses, educational partners, and entrepreneurial efforts in the city.



Guiding Principle 3.5

Employ economic development strategies that invest in public amenities and infrastructure to enhance our quality of life and thereby drive economic growth.



Guiding Principle 3.6

Encourage diverse housing concepts that target a wide variety of options (e.g. types, price ranges, sizes, ownership/rental, and styles) through strategic partnerships and enhanced ordinances/policies.

Key Focus Area 3: Economic Development & Innovation- Initiatives

Key Initiatives

Initiative	New/Legacy	Guiding Principle	Primary Department	FY Start
Implement Open for Business Tiger Team Phased Recommendations	New	GP 3.3	Downtown Operations	FY26
Evaluate and make recommendations on feasible development code exceptions for the facilitation of affordable workforce housing	New	GP 3.6	Community Development	FY 26

Key Focus Area 4: Fiscal Sustainability

City of Beaufort will maintain a stable financial environment that is transparent and that ensures outstanding public services. The city will implement innovative and responsible policies to effectively manage its fiscal and human resources. Business practices will be efficient, business friendly and ensure exceptional customer service to all stakeholders and citizens.

Guiding Principle 4.1

Implement business processes and operational efficiencies to streamline the cost of government including the examination and identification of cost of services and cost recovery policies.

Guiding Principle 4.5

Implement, leverage and seek diverse revenue sources that withstand and adapt to changing economic conditions.



Guiding Principle 4.2

Implement financial initiatives that allow the city to proactively recruit, plan for, maximize, and retain top human resources.

Guiding Principle 4.3

Implement innovative technology initiatives to support city business processes, customer service and encourage private development investment.

Guiding Principle 4.4

Create and pursue opportunities for collaboration and regional partnerships to maximize resources and address regional issues.

Key Focus Area 4: Fiscal Sustainability- Initiatives

Key Initiatives

Initiative	New/Legacy	Guiding Principle	Primary Department	FY Start
Develop and implement a Comprehensive Fiscal Policies and Controls Manual	Legacy	GP 4.1	Finance	FY26
Complete and adopt a strategic plan for Information Technology and Geographic Information Services management	Legacy	GP 4.3	City Manager's Office	FY26
Formalize operating agreements with strategic partners, to include the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation and the Beaufort Digital Corridor and others as needed.	Legacy	GP 4.4	City Manager's Office	FY26
Develop Asset Management Plan	New	GP 4.1	Finance	FY26
Develop Recession Contingency Plan	New	GP 4.5	Finance	FY26
Evaluate Cost of Service Delivery	New	GP 4.1	Finance	FY27
Evaluate Divestiture of Real Properties	New	GP 4.1	City Manager's Office	FY26

Key Focus Area 5: Organizational Excellence

City of Beaufort is a responsive, transparent, and efficient organization that engages its citizens, visitors and business stakeholders. We shall integrate technologies which enhances the execution of City functions, staff the organization with highly qualified diverse personnel, and provide municipal education opportunities for boards, commissions and citizens.



Guiding Principle 5.1

Establish clear management expectations for all employees and volunteers of the city.



Guiding Principle 5.2

Develop initiatives to improve communication and transparency for city employees.



Guiding Principle 5.3

Create and maintain a culture of ownership by empowering employees to make decisions. Ensure employees have the necessary intellectual and physical resources to perform their jobs and provide excellent customer service efficiently and effectively.



Guiding Principle 5.4

Implement programs and develop projects that create a professional, safe, value-oriented, accountable, and responsive work environment with opportunities for education, advancement, and job fulfillment for all employees and volunteers.



Guiding Principle 5.5

Implement and evaluate opportunities to foster employee engagement in meaningful ways that strengthen internal relationships while celebrating accomplishments.



Guiding Principle 5.6

Engage in legislative advocacy with County, State and Federal entities to proactively advance and protect the interests and quality of life for our residents, businesses and visitors.

Key Focus Area 5: Organizational Excellence- Initiatives

Key Initiatives

Initiative	New/Legacy	Guiding Principle	Primary Department	FY Start
Update the Council SOP Manual to reflect specific duties and procedures of all applicable appointed Boards and Commissions	New	GP 5.4	City Manager's Office	FY26
Establish a professional development program for Council appointed Boards and Commissions based on the new Council SOP Manual and other available resources	Legacy	GP 5.1	City Manager's Office	FY26
Implement First Line Supervisor and Executive/Leadership Development Program	New	GP 5.3	Human Resources	FY26
Develop City-Wide Key Performance Metrics	New	GP 5.1	City Manager's Office	FY26
Develop and implement a process for determining annual political advocacy resolutions	Legacy	GP 5.6	City Manager's Office	FY26

City of Beaufort

City Council

Beaufort City Council members are available to address your questions and concerns. Please feel free to reach out via email.



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www.cityofbeaufort.org