



City of Beaufort Strategic Plan

2021-2023

OUR VISION

We will ensure that the City of Beaufort offers its citizens broad economic opportunities; housing they can afford; a well-run government; and confidence in the community's preparedness for weather and climate-related impacts. The City seeks this future while maintaining the diversity, authenticity, history, tourism, and balance between the built and natural environment for which our city is renowned.

Beaufort: Where History, Charm and Business Thrive



KEY FOCUS AREAS



A Safe & Vibrant City



Economic Development & Innovation

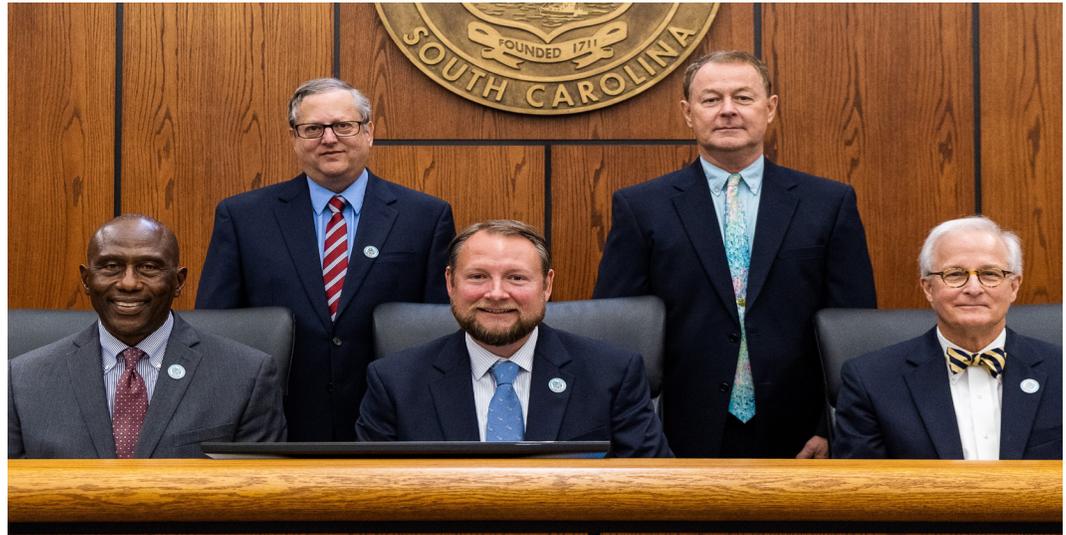


Growth & Natural Resources



Organizational Excellence

www.cityofbeaufort.org



Beaufort City Council in May 2021

*Front: Councilman Mitch Mitchell, Mayor Stephen Murray, Councilman Phil Cromer
Back: Councilman Neil Lipsitz, Mayor Pro Tem Mike McFee*

Dear Friends:

As the City enters its new Fiscal Year in July 2021, it's after more than a year of adapting to the Covid-19 pandemic. This led to remote operations for all staff for several months, virtual City Council and board meetings for more than a year, and adjustments to our revenue as businesses and residents coped with significant change.

Nevertheless, the City pressed on with its ambitious plans, many tied to our 2020-2022 Strategic Plan. Among the major accomplishments was the completion of the \$8 million Mossy Oaks Stormwater Drainage Project, which will lessen many of the flooding threats faced by that neighborhood.

In March 2021, the mayor, City Council, and department heads met for a two-day retreat to review and update the Strategic Plan. Several of the initiatives had already been accomplished. In looking ahead, we kept our four Key Focus Areas:

- A Safe & Vibrant City
- Economic Development & Innovation
- Growth & Natural Resources
- Organizational Excellence

Within each of these Key Focus Areas are new initiatives that City of Beaufort staff will focus on through 2023.

This Strategic Plan has been built over two mayoral administrations, with the input of veteran and new City Council members. On one thing they all agree: That "authenticity" defines Beaufort. Authenticity is everything that makes Beaufort a special hometown and a premier destination. As we make progress on our goals over the next two years, we will strive to always ensure that Beaufort stays true to that authentic identity.





A Safe & Vibrant City

To continue to build an authentic, safe, and equitable City, the City will pursue affordable housing opportunities for all segments of the population, will provide responsive public safety, and will improve public spaces.

Objective 1: Pursue opportunities for affordable and workforce housing

Initiatives:

- 1.1 Review for implementation recommendations from the Affordable Housing Task Force.
- 1.2 Work with landowners on developing economically viable multi-family housing through permitting a wide range of housing types with engaged stakeholders.
- 1.3 Conserve and reuse historic structures.

Objective 2: Provide accessible public facilities and spaces

Initiatives:

- 2.1 Complete an inventory of needs of existing neighborhood parks, and foster partnerships with Beaufort County and Beaufort County School District.
- 2.2 Determine an update and replacement schedule for park equipment and structures.
- 2.3 Review for implementation the Southside Park plan.
- 2.4 Complete City assumption of maintenance at Whitehall Park.
- 2.5 Support expansion of the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park as Beaufort seeks to become the center for the exploration of Reconstruction history.
- 2.6 Manage City facilities' maintenance and master plan.
- 2.7 Continue to manage flood infrastructure projects, including Johnny Morrall, Allison Road, Broad Street, Hay Street, Lafayette Street, Kings Ridge, Calhoun Street, and The Point.
- 2.8 Cooperate with military on a shared services program.



Objective 3: Provide strong public safety support

Initiatives:

- 3.1 Maintain service level provisions for the Police, Fire, and Public Works departments.
- 3.2 Continue to publish law enforcement and firefighting data on website and social media.
- 3.3 Expand Police Department efforts with Community Response Team.
- 3.4 Develop strategies for diversity in recruiting.



Flap gates installed as part of Mossy Oaks Stormwater Project

Objective 4: Facilitate unified and coordinated transportation planning

Initiatives:

- 4.1 Continue to participate in the Lady's Island planning process.
- 4.2 Update street infrastructure plan.
- 4.3 Evaluate parking and shuttle service.
- 4.4 Create a connectivity study of pedestrian/bicycle paths to enhance the pedestrian/bicycle access throughout the City, paying special attention to connecting schools, civic spaces, and places of employment.
- 4.5 Enact land use polices and Beaufort Code changes with the goal of reducing VMT (vehicle miles traveled per capita).

Measuring Progress

- 1.1 Update Beaufort Development Code.
- 1.2 Increase number of multi-family housing units.
- 1.3 Update list of Contributing Structures.
- 2.1 Work with Beaufort County to determine gaps in recreation opportunities.
- 2.3 Develop Master Plan for Southside Park.
- 2.7 Begin preliminary planning on next major flood project.
- 2.8 Develop and publicize shared services program.
- 3.2 Integrate data reports into performance dashboards.
- 4.2 Update Comprehensive Plan and Beaufort Development Code.





Economic Development & Innovation

The City 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.

Objective 5: Promote business prosperity and sustainable development

Initiatives:

- 5.1 Provide a collaborative environment by engaging partners, including the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation (BCECD), the Greater Beaufort-Port Royal Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce, the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Beaufort Digital Corridor, the Beaufort Area Hospitality Association, the South Coast Cyber Center, and the Downtown Beaufort Merchants Association as we work toward building a vibrant and sustainable economy. Continue to work with landowners on business recruitment and ensure the balanced administration of the Beaufort Code.
- 5.2 Publish a quarterly State of the Business Community report of business startups and closings.
- 5.3 Collaborate with the Convention & Visitors Bureau, Beaufort Area Hospitality Association, University of South Carolina-Beaufort (USCB), the Downtown Beaufort Merchants Association, and all stakeholders to enhance and diversify tourism.
- 5.4 Increase the awareness and use of Beaufort Pride of Place, an initiative to beautify and improve Beaufort through private donations. Create a campaign for holiday street decorations.
- 5.5 Leverage partnerships with USCB, the Technical College of the Lowcountry, and the Beaufort County School District, charter and private schools, the military, and the Beaufort Digital Corridor to build out career pathways that will help diversify the City's economic base. These include health care, digital commerce, and cybersecurity.
- 5.6 Provide funding for the Beaufort Digital Corridor and South Coast Cyber Center through leveraging private partnerships.
- 5.7 Create a citywide digital inventory of businesses and commercial property, and evaluate vacant or underutilized properties for development opportunities. This will include type of use, financing, incentives, and other resources.



Objective 6: Increase median incomes as we recruit new businesses and industry that are a good fit for Beaufort

Initiatives:

- 6.1 Partner with the BCEDC on prospect development, land transactions, and construction of a spec building in Beaufort Commerce Park.
- 6.2 Support through partnerships and financial contributions the South Coast Cyber Center as we strive to become a City and region known for cybersecurity expertise. Work with our educational partners, the military, Beaufort County, and the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce to develop career pathways, research, and jobs centered around cybersecurity.
- 6.3 In advance of the completion of the second phase of the upfit of the Landing Pad at 500 Carteret Street, prepare an operations plan.



Beaufort Digital Corridor

Objective 7: Preserve our authenticity

Initiatives:

- 7.1 Apply the Beaufort Code to ensure a balanced land-use mix for fiscal sustainability.
- 7.2 Leverage Beaufort 2030 (community-based futurism exercise) to continue to influence the discussion about education and support the 1795 Scholarship Committee (stipend for student housing in Beaufort) and others as requested.
- 7.3 Coordinate signage and information to make “wayfinding” easier throughout the entire downtown area and Historic District.
- 7.4 Collaborate with the National Park Service, Beaufort History Museum, historical and preservation groups to promote the Beaufort story and its rich historical and architectural heritage.

Measuring Progress

- 5.1 Project starts.
Permit applications.
Growth in tax base.
Growth in business licenses and revenue.
- 5.2 Share report.
- 5.4 Launch holiday decorations campaign.
- 6.1 Additional tenants or property owners.
- 6.3 Complete upfit and operations plan.
- 7.1 Approval by City Council of revised Comprehensive Plan and Beaufort Development Code.
- 7.3 New informative signs throughout downtown.





Manage Growth & Protect Natural Resources

To maintain the City's authenticity and attractiveness, while accommodating future growth and preparing for climate related challenges, the City will evaluate environmental, municipal, and private constraints on growth; will identify commercial and residential areas requiring immediate attention; and will promote balanced growth through infill.

Objective 8: Manage growth boundaries

Initiatives:

8.1 Manage Northern Regional Plan growth boundaries.

Objective 9: Manage and encourage infill development

Initiatives:

9.1 Promote infill incentives.

9.2 Update the Beaufort Preservation Manual from 1979, known as the Milner Report.

9.3 Update the survey of above-ground structures in the Historic District that are in the National Register.



Home in Historic District





Objective 10: Manage annexation

Initiatives:

- 10.1 Focus annexation efforts on parcels surrounded by city limits and contingent properties in Tax District 100.
- 10.2 Expand delivery of services within the growth boundaries of the City.

Objective 11: Plan for sea-level rise

Initiatives:

- 11.1 Discourage development in hazard zones and seek funding for resiliency planning with the Army Corps of Engineers and other partners.
- 11.2 Engage community and other stakeholders in discussion, plans and actions related to sea-level rise.
- 11.3 Develop mitigation and implementation strategies.

Measuring Progress

9.1 Marketable inventory of potential infill assets.

9.2 Report approved by Historic District Review Board and City Council and put on website in searchable form.

9.3 Survey approved by HRB and City Council.

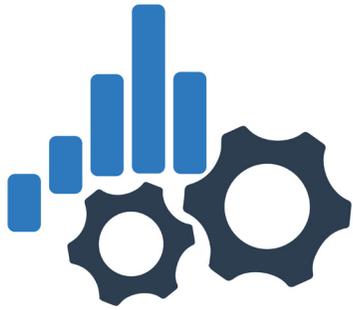
10.1 Number of successful annexation petitions.

10.2 Measuring service in growth areas.

11.1 Begin funding process with Army Corps of Engineers.

11.2 Develop communications strategy for engagement.





Organizational Excellence

To provide a transparent, efficient organization, the City will engage its citizens and community and business stakeholders, will integrate technologies which enhance the execution of City functions, will staff the organization with highly qualified personnel, and will provide municipal education opportunities for boards, commissions and citizens.

Objective 12: Engage community stakeholders

Initiatives:

12.1 Establish separate training and education programs for board and commission members and citizens. Create recruiting programs to build diversity in membership.

12.2 Continue to build social media presence, increase distribution of monthly newsletter, and increase subscriptions to Notify Me.

12.3 Increase use of surveys to gather more input from community on important issues.



Objective 13: Transparency in City operations

Initiatives:

13.1 Continue live-streaming of all boards, commissions, and public meetings; encourage public comment through Zoom, Facebook, email, and traditional means.

13.2 Develop a digital dashboard to show progress on City initiatives.

13.3 Promote availability of financial transparency tool.

13.4 Create a community and economic development dashboard for proposed and current projects.



Objective 14: Provide responsive, efficient and innovative services

Initiatives:

- 14.1 Recruit and retain a diverse, educated, and high-performing workforce.
- 14.2 Establish customer service training for new hires.
- 14.3 Continue to find ways to make operations more efficient by sharing in regional services, such as fire, building inspections, code enforcement, etc.

Objective 15: Sustainability in finance, infrastructure, and planning

Initiatives:

- 15.1 Advocate for a change in state legislation concerning the local government fund, changes in Act 388 to allow for local autonomy in taxing, and support the addition of Local Option Sales Tax in Beaufort County.
- 15.2 Include Strategic Plan in annual budget document.
- 15.3 Tie all capital purchases to identified initiatives in Strategic Plan.
- 15.4 Increase efficiency in online payment receipt and processing.
- 15.5 Capture data connected to projects in one place.



Washington Street Park ribbon-cutting for new playground

Measuring Progress

12.1 Number of board members who have completed training. Establish Citizens Academy.

12.2 Increase number of newsletter subscriptions and Facebook engagements year over year.

13.2 Develop a digital dashboard linked to strategic plan to show progress on initiatives.

14.1 Develop diversity strategy and measure results in employment.

14.3 New partnerships.

15.1 Passage of Local Options Sales Tax.

15.5 Explore use of OpenGov storyboarding to illustrate projects.



HOW TO REACH US

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Photos by Shawn Hill

