



CITY OF  
**BEAUFORT**  
SOUTH CAROLINA

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-25



# LETTER FROM THE MAYOR



Stephen D. Murray III  
Mayor

It is important that, as Mayor and members of City Council, we take care of Beaufort with the knowledge that we are stewards of a three-century-old city. Our objective is to be sure that when our time here is done, we leave Beaufort in better shape than when we found it. To do that requires that we have the right people on staff, that we are attentive to the right activities, and that we responsibly apply our resources on things that are important to the betterment of our community.

Being successful in these activities requires thorough and thoughtful planning; planning that is strategic in nature and focused on results. This City of Beaufort Strategic Plan 2023-2025 lays out the City's key focus areas, guiding principles and initiatives for at least the next two years. It provides a roadmap for moving the City forward, a workplan for staff, and it prioritizes the expenditure of resources.

This plan is the result of hard work and thoughtful planning on the part of City Council, staff, and our strategic partners. It is the culmination of two days of very valuable time spent in the City's annual strategic planning retreat. The planning experience reminded me, once again, how humbled I am to be a part of Team Beaufort. In the current state of the world where people seem to be at odds with one another on a regular basis, I am filled with gratitude at the cooperation and professionalism of our staff, who consistently exceed expectations in taking care of our residents, business owners and visitors.

Thank you to members of City Council, our City Staff, our strategic partners, and our facilitators, Mike Letcher and Bill Stipp, for a successful planning retreat and a clear path forward for Beaufort.

*Stephen D. Murray III*  
Mayor

# LETTER FROM THE CITY MANAGER



Scott M. Marshall  
City Manager

The City of Beaufort 2023-2025 Strategic Plan is an important document for several reasons. First, it reflects the collective will of Beaufort's City Council in how they intend to direct policy and make decisions on behalf of the residents and business owners of the City. Secondly, it identifies a work plan for City staff over the course of the next two years. Lastly, and arguably most importantly, it provides an important connection between long-term City planning documents and utilization of resources.

Put a simpler way, the Strategic Plan helps us budget our time and money in a way that best accomplishes the traditional and emerging expectations of the City.

As a staff, we are grateful to our elected leaders on City Council for being receptive to the planning effort that resulted in the creation of this plan. Their openness to participating in the strategic planning retreat, which was a little different than what they have experienced in years past, was monumental to the success of the event. The key focus areas that were affirmed, the guiding principles that were developed, and the initiatives that were identified to comprise the work plan give staff the fidelity we need to conduct the business of the people.

I'm proud of this document and grateful to lead the team responsible for executing it.

*Scott M. Marshall*  
City Manager

# VISION

A City offering its citizens economic opportunities; housing they can afford; a transparent and responsive government; and confidence in the community's preparedness for weather and climate-related impacts. The City seeks this future by maintaining diversity, authenticity, history, and tourism while ensuring harmony between the manmade and natural environments.

# MISSION

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

Find the Strategic Plan online at:  
[cityofbeaufort.org/704/  
Strategic-Plan-2023-2025](https://cityofbeaufort.org/704/Strategic-Plan-2023-2025)



# KEY FOCUS AREAS

**1. A Safe & Vibrant City:** The City of Beaufort will maintain its authenticity while building a safe and equitable City. Beaufort will pursue affordable housing opportunities for all segments of the population, will provide responsive public safety, and will improve public spaces. *Pages 6-7*

**2. Manage Growth & Protect Natural Resources:** The City of Beaufort will maintain its 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 and the maintenance of City-owned infrastructure. *Pages 8-9*

**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. *Pages 10-11*

**4. Fiscal Sustainability:** The 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. *Pages 12-13*

**5. Organizational Excellence:** The City of Beaufort is a responsive, transparent, and efficient organization that engages its citizens, visitors, and business stakeholders. We shall integrate technologies that enhance the execution of City functions, staff the organization with highly qualified diverse personnel, and provide municipal education opportunities for boards, commissions, and citizens. *Pages 14-15*



Department heads and City Council members discuss the Strategic Plan at the annual retreat in March 2023. The retreat was held at the City's refurbished offices at 500 Carteret Street, known as The Landing Pad.

# A focused retreat shapes Strategic Plan

City Council and members of the City's senior staff met in a workshop/planning retreat over the course of two days on March 7-8, 2023. The retreat, advertised and open to the public, was held at the City of Beaufort's Landing Pad at 500 Carteret Street and was broadcast live via Facebook.

The City convenes a retreat annually to examine its progress on the current Strategic Plan, which typically lays out objectives for two to three years. This March retreat was particularly important because the intent was to establish a new plan, built on the previous one, for 2023-2025.

*Attending the retreat were:*

- Stephen D. Murray III, Mayor
- Mike McFee, Mayor Pro-Tempore
- Neil Lipsitz, Councilman
- Mitch Mitchell, Councilman
- Josh Scallate, Councilman
- Scott Marshall, City Manager
- Reece Bertholf, Deputy City Manager
- Traci Guldner, City Clerk
- Dale McDorman, Chief of Police
- Tim Ogden, Fire Chief
- Curt Freese, Community Development Director

- Alan Eisenman, Finance Director
- Ivette Burgess, Human Resources Director
- Linda Roper, Downtown Operations Director
- Sarah Farrow, Municipal Court Administrator
- Kathleen Williams, Communications Manager
- Bryan Durrance, Public Works (Acting Director)
- Carrie Gorsuch, Projects Coordinator

## The Facilitators

The retreat was facilitated by Mike Letcher and Bill Stipp, from BridgeGroup, LLC. Mr. Letcher has over 35 years of public sector experience as a city manager, budget director, human resources director, and other various public administration jobs in cities ranging in size from a population of 6,000 to 500,000. He is also an assistant professor of Public Administration at the University of Arizona. Mr. Stipp has more than 30 years of government experience, both at the municipal level and federal level, and is a retired member of the U.S. Army Reserve. His work has involved communities ranging in size from a population of 15,000 to that of more than 120,000 and he is currently serving his third term as an elected member of Council for the City of Goodyear, Arizona.

These gentlemen, thanks to their extensive experience in municipal government and as facilitators, kept the discussions focused and relevant.

## Day One

On the first day of the retreat, staff reviewed accomplishments and the status of actionable items identified in the Fiscal Year 2021-2023 Strategic Plan. Finance Director Alan Eisenman also presented Council with an update on the City's financial position.

Public comment, the first of several, was invited just prior to reviewing results of a pre-event survey that was distributed to Council members and senior staff. The survey sought input to the current strategic plan as well as any suggestions for changes to current key focus areas and associated objectives. Following the review of survey results and the current vision and mission statements, the group examined, discussed, and updated the City's guiding principles.

In the afternoon, staff department directors provided updates for their department's action items from the current strategic plan. Strategic partners, to include the Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation, the Beaufort Digital Corridor, and the South Coast Cyber Center, then made presentations. The session concluded with another opportunity for public comment.

## Day Two

On day two of the retreat, following opening comments, the facilitators reviewed the synthesized outcomes from the previous day before the session was open for public comment. Staff provided a Capital Projects update and reviewed prioritization of projects with Council. The group later discussed Council-appointed boards, commissions and committees, and the challenges and opportunities associated with them.

The afternoon discussion focused on identifying current and future initiatives to support the agreed-upon Key Focus Areas:

1. Safe & Vibrant City
2. Manage Growth & Protect Natural Resources
3. Economic Development & Innovation
4. Fiscal Sustainability
5. Organizational Excellence

After a final opportunity for public comment, the retreat was concluded with closing remarks from Mayor Murray, members of Council, the City Manager, and the facilitators.

On April 11, 2023, Council reviewed the Key Focus Areas, Guiding Principles and Initiatives resulting from the strategic planning retreat. These elements are the nucleus of the City of Beaufort Strategic Plan for 2023-2025.

## Elements of the Strategic Plan

The result of the strategic planning effort is the development of a strategic plan. This strategic plan is comprised of vision and mission statements, which are supported by focus areas, guiding principles and initiatives, all of which work together to provide clearly established guidance on use of resources and establishment of work plans.

**Vision Statement:** A vision statement looks forward and creates a mental image of the ideal state that the organization wishes to achieve. It is inspirational and aspirational and should challenge the organization.

**Mission Statement:** The mission statement describes what the organization needs to do now to achieve the vision.

**Key Focus Areas:** Key Focus Areas identify the portfolios of business or activities which the organization, through meaningful reflection and careful deliberation, has determined are mission priorities. These focus areas are designed to keep the organization from getting distracted by what may appear to be competing opportunities. These Key Focus Areas are meant to drive policy decisions and priorities for the City. These areas are essentially the "we will always" statements.

**Guiding Principles:** Guiding Principles are the strategies guiding the consistent execution of projects, policies and programs that continuously work toward achieving the goals expressed in the Key Focus Areas. These statements comprise the "and this is how we will do it" conclusion to, "we will always."

**Initiatives:** Initiatives are action items that have been identified through the strategic planning process. They are building blocks in the work plan which support a tangible commitment to Guiding Principles and Key Focus Areas. Initiatives answer the question of "what we will do," drive allocation of resources, and help direct City Council and staff activities.

Initiatives in the City of Beaufort 2023-2025 Strategic Plan are identified by Key Focus Area. They are further classified as "Legacy" or "New." Legacy initiatives are action items that have been identified in previous strategic plans, but either are in progress, or have not been started. New initiatives are action items that were identified for the first time during the most recent strategic planning retreat. Each initiative also provides the fiscal year in which the item is scheduled to begin, or in which it is continued if it is a legacy initiative.

# A SAFE & VIBRANT CITY

The City of Beaufort will maintain its authenticity while building a safe and equitable City. Beaufort will pursue affordable housing opportunities for all segments of the population, will provide responsive public safety, and will improve public spaces.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**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.

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

**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 outreach to our residents.

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

**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.

**1.6** Foster citywide “open space” initiatives, policies and city codes that support a clean, well-maintained, and sustainable community.

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



*Smiles are guaranteed at any festival held at Waterfront Park.*



*Community outreach is important to the Police Department. The Exchange Club of Beaufort donated sports balls to put in the trunks of patrol cars, allowing officers to throw a few balls with neighborhood kids.*



*City Council members join the 2023 Water Festival parade on a float.*

# A SAFE & VIBRANT CITY



Reconstruction Era Park Ranger Chris Barr takes a group of West Point cadets to the Stephen Elliott Park, more commonly known as Cannon Park.



Lt. Joseph Dobbins always has a big smile, especially at Chill with a Cop events.

## INITIATIVES

Complete an inventory of needs of existing neighborhood parks, and foster partnerships with Beaufort County and the Beaufort County School District.

**Legacy** FY2024

Support expansion of the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park as Beaufort seeks to become the center for the exploration of Reconstruction history.

**Legacy** FY2024

Cooperate with military on a shared services program.

**Legacy** FY2024-25

Expand Police Department efforts with Community Response Team.

**Legacy** FY2024

Evaluate parking and shuttle service.

**Legacy** FY2024

Enact land use policies and Beaufort Code changes with goal of reducing VMT (vehicle miles traveled per capita).

**Legacy** FY2024

Develop and publish a semi-annual newsletter to be mailed to all City residents.

**New** FY2024

Create an improved public notice process for development updates for enhanced notifications.

**New** FY2024

Evaluate/develop police Explorer/internship programs.

**New** FY2024-25

Develop City multi-modal plan.

**New** FY2025

Evaluate Waterfront Park – Marina expansion infrastructure improvements.

**New** FY2024

Evaluate Historic Preservation Incentive Program.

**New** FY2025

Expand downtown commerce availability to attract young families.

**New** FY2024

# MANAGE GROWTH & PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES

The City of Beaufort will maintain its 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 and the maintenance of City-owned infrastructure.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 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.
- 2.2** Identify programs, technologies, or resources to complement current operational practices that ensure the sustainability of existing infrastructure and facilities.
- 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.
- 2.4** Manage and encourage infill development to provide for the use of current built infrastructure and promote housing and economic development diversity.
- 2.5** Manage annexation through strategic 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.
- 2.6** Plan for climate change and sea level rise by designing, engineering, and implementing infrastructure improvements.
- 2.7** Maintain a development code that balances quality of life for residents, authenticity of the City, and that fosters smart growth.



*A worker restores windows at the historic Carnegie Library building, which now houses the Greater Beaufort-Port Royal Convention & Visitors Bureau.*



*A dredging project in Mossy Oaks keeps stormwater draining properly, helping to prevent flooding in low-lying neighborhoods.*

# MANAGE GROWTH & PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES

## INITIATIVES

Continue to participate in the Lady's Island Village Master Planning Process.

**Legacy** FY2024

Evaluate and promote infill incentives.

**Legacy** FY2024

Focus annexation efforts on parcels surrounded by City limits and contingent properties in Tax District 100.

**Legacy** FY2024

Evaluate options for reducing traffic congestion.

**Legacy** 2024

Review for implementation recommendations from the Affordable Housing Task Force.

**Legacy** 2024

Evaluate future delivery of services of annexed areas within growth boundaries of the City.

**New** FY2025

Explore City's MS4 Stormwater Designation/Certification.

**New** FY2024

Evaluate the Beaufort Development Code for updating and clarity.

**New** FY2024



*A technician installs water gauges in The Point neighborhood. The data, collected over six months, helped to develop models to show how the neighborhood could be impacted by various levels of rainfall.*



*Whitehall Park, which overlooks the Beaufort River from Lady's Island, is a joint venture between the City of Beaufort and Beaufort County. This lovely passive park offers residents a place to enjoy the natural beauty of Beaufort.*

# 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 PRINCIPLES

**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.

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

**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.

**3.4** Nurture and support existing businesses, educational partners, and entrepreneurial efforts in the City of Beaufort.

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

**3.6** Promote balanced housing development that targets a wide variety of options (such as types, price ranges, sizes, ownership/rental, and styles) through strategic partnerships and enhanced ordinances/policies.



*The Chamber of Commerce and City officials welcome new or relocating businesses to Beaufort with ribbon-cuttings.*



*The Beaufort Digital Corridor offers events such as Techstars Startup Weekend and Digital Boot Camps to encourage current and future tech entrepreneurs.*



*University of South Carolina-Beaufort is one of the City's many partners working to develop cybersecurity expertise in the region.*



The City of Beaufort celebrates the opening of The Landing Pad, at 500 Carteret Street, giving national and international businesses a temporary home while evaluating business opportunities.



The Community Development Department reviews a prospective development with a project applicant in a Technical Review Committee meeting.

## INITIATIVES

Publish an annual State of the Business Community report of startups and closings.

**Legacy** FY2025

Begin program to evaluate vacant underutilized properties for development incentives.

**New** FY2025

Evaluate light industrial sites for future development.

**New** FY2024



The Japanese company SkyDrive announces new partnerships in South Carolina. They have based their U.S. operations in the Lowcountry with office space at The Landing Pad.

# FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

The 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.



*Members of the Finance Department examine quarterly financial reports in preparation for a presentation to City Council.*

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 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.
- 4.2** Implement financial initiatives that allow the City to proactively recruit, plan for, maximize, and retain top human resources.
- 4.3** Implement innovative technology initiatives to support City business processes, customer service, and encourage private development investment.
- 4.4** Create and pursue opportunities for collaboration and regional partnerships to maximize resources and address regional issues.
- 4.5** Implement, leverage, and seek diverse revenue sources that withstand and adapt to changing economic conditions.

# FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

## INITIATIVES

Advocate for formal evaluation of efficiencies gained through sharing in regional services such as fire, EMS, building inspections, code enforcement, etc.

**New** FY2024

Evaluate advocacy for a change in state legislation concerning Local Government Fund, changes in Act 388 to allow for local autonomy in taxing.

**New** FY2024

Update financial and procurement policies based on statutory and Government Finance Officers Association's Best Practices.

**New** FY2024

Evaluate financial reserve budget policy.

**New** FY2024

Evaluate recession strategic financial plan.

**New** FY2024

Develop debt service capital plan strategy.

**New** FY2026

Explore long-term technology strategic plan.

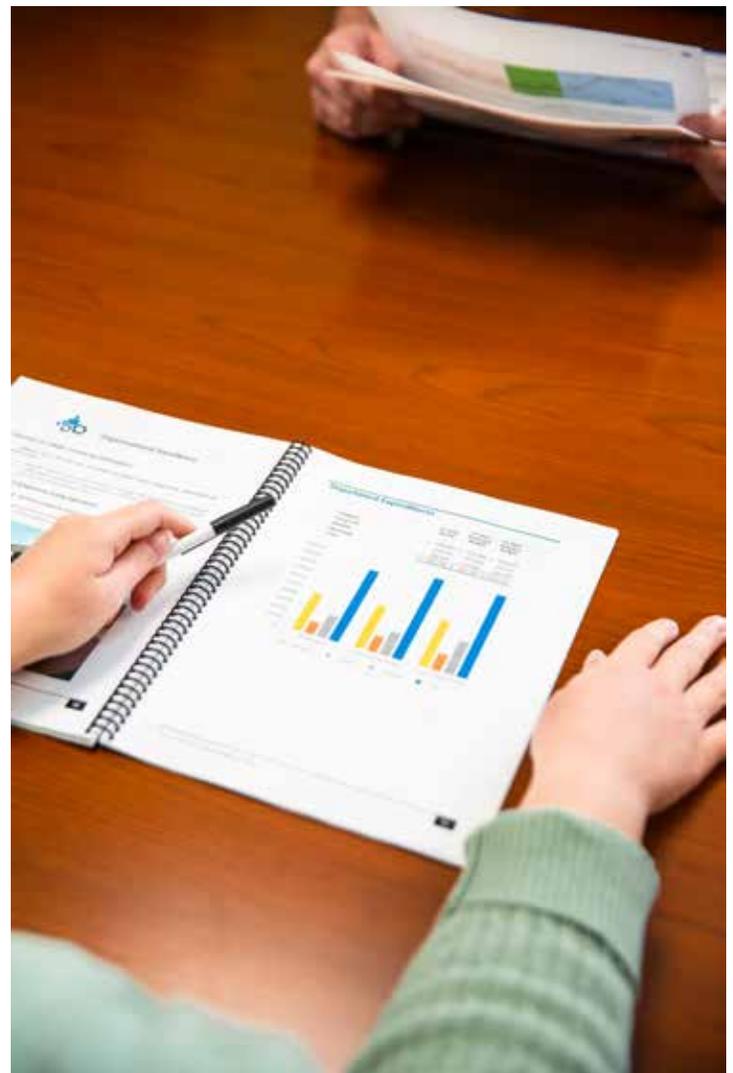
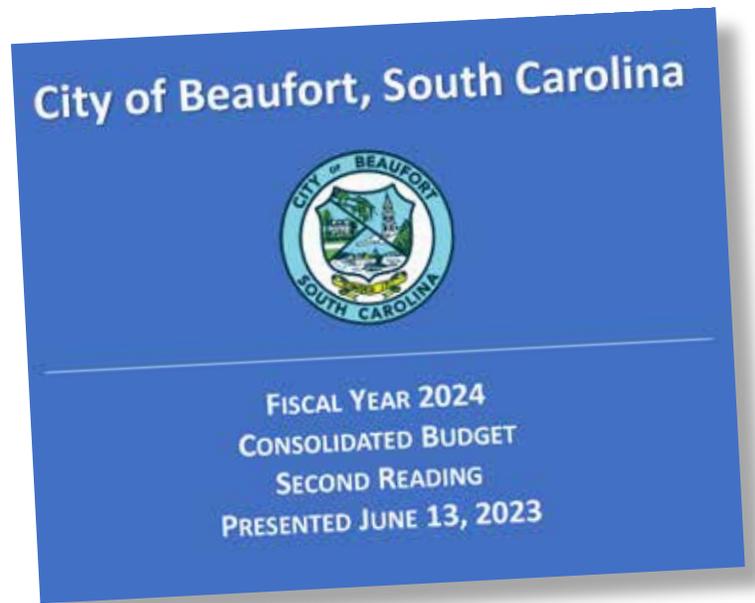
**New** FY2025

Formalize operating agreements with strategic partners, to include the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation, and the Beaufort Digital Corridor and others as needed.

**New** FY2024

Evaluate the consideration of local sales tax referendums in Beaufort County to fund public projects.

**New** FY2024



*The Finance Department must keep track of department expenditures throughout the year.*

# ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 5.1** Establish clear management expectations for all employees and volunteers of the City.
- 5.2** Develop initiatives to improve communication and transparency for City employees and the public they serve.
- 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 to provide excellent customer service efficiently and effectively.
- 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.
- 5.5** Implement and evaluate opportunities to foster employee engagement in meaningful ways that strengthen internal relationships while celebrating accomplishments.



Public Works Director Nate Farrow honors the outstanding work and customer service of Mel Heru, who is an integral part of the Parks Division.



2023 summer intern Grace Beasley and Human Resources Specialist Brian Ladson staff a Job Fair at the Technical College of the Lowcountry.

# ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

## INITIATIVES

Develop strategies for diversity in recruiting.

**Legacy** FY2025

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

**Legacy** FY2024

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

**Legacy** FY2024

Prepare Government Finance Officers Association's Popular Annual Financial Report.

**New** FY2024

Evaluate improving online access to City services.

**New** FY2024

Expand Transparency Portal for City.

**New** FY2024

Evaluate improved Human Resources Information Systems modules.

**New** FY2024-25

Evaluate website search functionality for the public.

**New** FY2025

Establish enhanced training programs for Council-appointed boards and commissions.

**New** FY2024

Develop online dashboard showing City infrastructure projects and their status.

**New** FY2024



*Giving back to the community is part of the ethos of the Police Department. Among the many events the PD holds during each year: Chill with a Cop, Movie Nights, Coffee with a Cop, and an annual Open House.*



*Human Resources staff Kristy Kittle, left, Director Ivette Burgess and Brian Ladson routinely evaluate HR policies to ensure that they comply with regulations and meet the needs of employees.*



# CITY OF BEAUFORT

## SOUTH CAROLINA

### FOUNDED 1711

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