

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Following the City Council’s vision for Beaufort, the 2021 Comprehensive Plan provides a holistic outlook and the future course for the city. The plan outlines overarching goals to accomplish council’s vision, provides assessments of existing conditions, identifies objectives, and provides an implementation strategy consisting of specific initiatives. The Comprehensive Plan will be the touchstone for future decisions.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

In the spring of 2019, the Metropolitan Planning Commission endorsed a format for the Comprehensive Plan that followed the state’s planning enabling legislation. The plan consists of this *Introduction* and separate sections or elements covering:

- *Vision* (overarching goals and objectives for the city)
- *Population* (demographics)
- *Economic Development*
- *Natural Resources*
- *Cultural Resources*
- *Community Facilities*
- *Housing*
- *Land Use*
- *Transportation*
- *Priority Investment*
- *Resiliency*

METHODOLOGY

The Comprehensive Plan focuses on creating a community where all citizens can thrive. This means understanding the needs of all citizens and integrating what the city has learned from previous planning efforts. The city has incorporated 1) lessons learned from public meetings, 2) relevant goals and objectives from the previous comprehensive plan, the *Civic Master Plan*, and the *Strategic Plan*, and 3) information gathered through public outreach and engagement.

The city employed experts and used the latest data from the US Census - American Community Survey, US Economic Census, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, SC Department of Department of Workforce and Employment, SC Department of Transportation, SC Department of Veteran Affairs, and local studies such as the *Beaufort County, SC Housing Needs Assessment*, *SC Sea Grant Consortium’s Flood Vulnerability Assessment*, *South Coast Cyber Center’s South Coast Regional Cybersecurity Education and Development Program*, *Chamber of Commerce’s Lowcountry Prosperity report*, the *Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation’s Update to the City of Beaufort*, *Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort’s Joint Land Use Study and Air Installation Compatible Use Zone Study*, the city’s *Historic Preservation Plan Update*, the *Lady’s Island Plan*, the *Lady’s Island Corridor Study*, and *Lady’s Island Traffic Study*.

The Comprehensive Plan has been constructed in a manner to make the data easily accessible and easily updated. It will serve as a resource document for the City’s Council, the city’s various boards, and for the Metropolitan Planning Commission.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

BEAUFORT 2030 VISION EXERCISE

To better understand what type of community our citizens want and what concerns they have, the city employed NEXT Generation Consulting, Inc. to conduct a two-day work session (Beaufort 2030) that studied societal trends and, through a collaborative process, determined stakeholders’ priorities for the future of Beaufort.

The Beaufort 2030 exercise determined that the top eight trends affecting the City of Beaufort’s future are:

1. Increasing K-12 teacher shortage
2. Rising sea level
3. Increasing nursing shortage
4. Lack of affordable housing
5. Increased impacts and frequency of storms
6. Continued need to address flooding
7. Improving K-12 academic performance and career preparation
8. Increased rates of child poverty

The Beaufort 2030 exercise determined the top four priorities for action:

1. Increase the number of affordable housing units for the workforce
2. Increase the number of diverse career opportunities for early and mid-level professionals
3. Increase the retention of locally trained students/graduates for local jobs
4. Reduce childhood poverty

WORKING DOCUMENT

Next, the city published the goals and objectives that were still relevant from the city’s existing plans (2009 Comprehensive Plan, The Civic Master Plan, and the 2021-2023 Strategic Plan) along with existing conditions organized by element in a working document to be used by staff, City Council, board members, and citizens to help focus discussion and consideration of what needs to be updated in the Comprehensive Plan. The city enlisted the help of the Lowcountry Council of Governments to provide current assessments for the *Community Facilities*, *Housing*, and *Transportation* elements and the DesignWorkShop consultancy to create the *Natural Resources*, *Cultural Resources*, and *Resiliency* elements.

PUBLIC SESSIONS AND FACILITATION

Next, the city conducted three public work sessions to discuss existing conditions, current goals and objectives, and to receive comments and suggestions. To reach citizens who did not attend the public work sessions, the city posted the working document on its website for review and comment. To make it easier for the public to participate, the city created a web-based platform that improved access to the working document and facilitated public review and comment. To inform visitors to City Hall about the update of the Comprehensive Plan, the city placed information boards and maps in the lobby.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Next, the city reached out to community stakeholders for interviews and asked the following questions:

- What do you like most about Beaufort?
- What do you like least about Beaufort?
- What do you think would make Beaufort a better place?
- What do you think should be the City's top three priorities?
- What is your biggest concern regarding the City's future?
- What does your organization want conveyed in the Comprehensive Plan?

Stakeholders included:

University of South Carolina – Beaufort,	Local Developers
Beaufort Jasper Water Sewer Authority,	Military Enhancement Committee
Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce,	Historic Beaufort Foundation,
Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce,	Beaufort County Historical Society,
Downtown Merchants Association,	Coastal Conservation League,
Greater Beaufort-Port Royal Convention and Visitors Bureau,	Sea Island Corridor Coalition,
Beaufort Memorial Hospital	Lady's Island Business Professionals Association
Beaufort Jasper County Realtors,	Neighborhood associations
Marine Corps Air Station Executive Team	Residents from apartment complexes
Open Land Trust	Northwest Quadrant civic leaders

COUNCIL, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS INPUT

- The Metropolitan Planning Commission and City Council endorsed the organizational approach to the update.
- The Metropolitan Planning Commission was involved in reviewing the existing goals and objectives from the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, Civic Master Plan, and Strategic Plan.
- City Council provided comments on the Comprehensive Plan during annual retreat discussions of the strategic plan.
- Members of the Design Review Board, Historic Review Board, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, and the City Council along with staff provided guidance on future land uses in the city and potential annexation areas.
- City Council conducted a public hearing on the comprehensive plan.

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- Metropolitan Planning Commission formally reviewed the plan and provided recommendations to the city council.
- City Council considered the Comprehensive Plan in two separate readings and adopted the plan by ordinance.