



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Monday, Oct. 6, 2014

Contact: Scott Dadson, Beaufort City Manager, 843-525-7000

Beaufort City planners honored for quality and innovation of Civic Master Plan

The innovation, quality and transferability of Beaufort's Civic Master Plan earned it the Outstanding Planning Project Award in small jurisdictions from the South Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Beaufort Planning Director Libby Anderson learned of the honor earlier this month from Susan Britt, past president of the Rock Hill-based SC chapter. It will be presented Oct. 17.

"There were other wonderful applications but this project stood out due to its innovation, quality, transferability and comprehensiveness," Britt wrote in informing Anderson of the honor.

The Beaufort Civic Master Plan, several years in the making with more than 1,000 hours of public review and input, is one of the most complete, detailed city-wide plans ever completed for a South Carolina municipality that includes a full inventory of needed public improvements along with potential private investments.

The project attracted an additional \$14 million in state and federal funds for capital projects identified in the plan, including the Boundary Street Redevelopment District for which road construction is expected to start within six months.

"Congratulations to everyone who helped create the Civic Master Plan, including our Planning Department, the Redevelopment Commission, the Mayor and City Council, our expert consultants and especially to the hundreds of local residents who shared their time and strong input to guide the plan," Beaufort City Manager Scott Dadson said.

“Here in Beaufort, we know we have an exceptional document in the Civic Master Plan, and it will help make Beaufort a better place for many years to come,” he said. “It’s always nice when experts outside of our area agree that we’ve done something special.”

In 2009, the City of Beaufort completed a Comprehensive Plan with a bold vision to replace outdated development patterns with a vision of growth and resiliency through infill and redevelopment. This plan went beyond the basic comprehensive plans of most small communities of similar size, and was even recognized in 2010 by the South Carolina Planning Association.

Yet, the City recognized that even with the best of comprehensive plans, given their ambitious vision, they needed to plan future public investment in a manner that would maximize private development. So, the City reinvigorated its Redevelopment Commission with private representation, and tasked the group with creating a city-wide Civic Master Plan.

The Civic Master Plan builds upon the City’s Comprehensive Plan by:

- thoroughly documenting areas in need of reinvestment
- identifying opportunities for partnerships or leveraged private development
- helping to prioritize public investments on an annual and multi-year basis.

The plan translates the vision of the Comprehensive Plan from a high city/regional level down to a block/lot level, and provides the City with the necessary guidance for partnering with the private sector toward a common vision.

“The greatest benefit of the Civic Master Plan is that it will guide the City of Beaufort’s future public expenditures in a manner that is most cost efficient and effective in spurring economic and community development,” Anderson wrote, “and in return, increase the tax base and improve the quality of life for the City’s residents. The long-term benefit will far exceed the initial cost of developing the plan.”

The Civic Master Plan helped the community secure millions of dollars in state and federal grants and technical assistance. The most significant of these was a \$12.6 million federal grant through the TIGER III program, to fund improvements to the Boundary Street Corridor. The initial plan for this corridor dated back to 2006.

The planning process for the Beaufort Comprehensive Plan and Civic Master Plan included an intensive public engagement process. It included hundreds of stakeholder interviews, public meetings and workshops, and multiple week-long design charrettes conducted within each of the five planning sectors.

The Civic Master Plan provided the planning tool needed for Beaufort leaders to prioritize policies in a strategic manner that supports economic and community development, while protecting natural and historical resources. In fact, the City began using the Civic Master Plan to guided annual budgeting discussion more than two years before the plan’s formal adoption.

Under the direction of the city’s Redevelopment Commission, a new public-private partnership was created to bring full-time planning consultant services into City Hall under a new Office of Civic Investment for a multi-year period.

By embedding the consultant team within the city administration, the program was able to coordinate existing city resources, build capacity within City Hall for local planning, and build trust with the public. The multidisciplinary team included planners, architects, market specialists, transportation engineers, illustrators and landscape architects.

The diversity of the team brought a range of expertise that translated to a more successful, complete planning process.

In addition to the Civic Master Plan project, this team also served as daily staff support by processing development applications and managing other projects of the city at the same time. The city, as a result, was able to keep a very lean full time staff during the period and was very efficient with their resources.

END