



Lexington
ision
Focusing on the Future

Town of Lexington Council Retreat
July 18-19, 2017

Hilton Head Marriott Resort & Spa
Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

BOUDREAUX

Acknowledgments

On July 18-19, members of Town Council and Town staff met to review the Vision Plan accomplishments since 2014 (the last update) and to chart a new course for continuing to bring the Vision Plan to life. To kick-off the retreat, council and staff were asked what they hoped to accomplish during the retreat. All agreed that if the following were accomplished, they will have a clear path for leading the Town of Lexington.

- Create another workable, sustainable Vision Plan with short and long-term strategies that align with our vision and goals to create a desirable future.
- Each project to achieve the Vision should be financially attainable and sustainable with long-term revenue sources.
- Develop a 5-20 year traffic plan that prioritizes and focuses on funding sources and spending on transportation.
- Continue to improve green space and safety of the Town parks, trails and pedestrian and bike infrastructure.
- Continue to improve communications and collaborations with Lexington County, public and private organizations, and jurisdictions throughout the Midlands.
- Focus on completing the Mill Pond beautification and trail.

The priorities presented in this Vision Plan update and provide a clear path that can allow the Town to prosper as it continues to experience tremendous growth and development. There was a wealth of ideas and concerns shared and debated during the retreat. However, in the end, Council and staff were united in and committed to the priorities for the next three to five years.

The commitment to the Vision Plan is apparent through its completed projects and through the spirit of hope in transforming more ideas into reality. The Vision Plan provides a laser-beam focus on how to invest in capital projects along with additional projects and programs that ignite passion in the Town. The can-do attitude of council members and staff is contagious and has fueled an unprecedented track record of creating a vision, implementing the vision and turning the vision into a reality. What sets the Town of Lexington apart is that they use the successes of the Vision Plan, not as a place to rest on laurels, but as a foundation for continuing to do more for all residents. The Town of Lexington is a living testimony that a Vision Plan never ends: it is a perpetual call to work intentionally and collaboratively for the common good.

Message from Mayor MacDougall

We first embarked on our Vision Plan journey six years ago. Since Council adopted the original document in 2012, we have updated the plan in 2014 and again this year. It is amazing to see all we have accomplished, especially when traditional strategic plans are only expected to be updated every five to ten years. Ultimately, we know we cannot look at the past to plan for the future, but look at the future to create solutions.

Council and I take honor in planning for Lexington's future and have already made significant strides in providing the highest quality of life to our citizens through beautification, recreation and entertainment. This is credited to looking beyond the traditional path and finding creative alternatives which will accomplish our goals.

Currently, we are focusing our attention on the ever growing traffic woes being experienced through town. Council, staff and I have not taken a blind eye when it comes to funding, knowing the state and federal funding we seek is ultimately not available, and thus we have taken to alternative methods to improve traffic congestion.

Taking on the implementation of the Hospitality Tax was not a lighthearted decision, but we know that designating its funding to transportation projects is the only way to accomplish the end goal of improving the functionality of our current road system.

We look forward to the next phase of the Vision Plan and making the Town of Lexington the place where people want to live, work, learn and play for generations to come.

Participants

Town Council

Mayor Steve MacDougall
Mayor Pro-Tem Hazel Livingston
Council Member Kathy Maness
Council Member Ted Stambolitis
Council Member Todd Carnes
Council Member Ron Williams

Town Staff

Britt Poole, Town Administrator
Stuart Ford, Assistant Town Administrator
Brad Cunningham, Town Attorney
Becky Hildebrand, Municipal Clerk
Johnny Jeffcoat, Community & Economic Catalyst
Kathy Roberts, Finance Director
John Hanson, Director of Planning, Building & Technology
Randy Edwards, Director of Streets & Transportation
Jennifer Dowden, Events & Media Coordinator

Facilitator

Irene Dumas Tyson, BOUDREAUX

Vision Plan Progress Summary: 2012 – 2017

2012 Vision Plan Projects Completed or Implemented

Phase I Projects 2012-2014

- Lexington Square Park
- Unified Traffic Plan - Phase I
- Farmers Market
- Snowball Festival
- Lexington Paw Park
- Interstate 20 / Sunset Boulevard Interchange Beautification and Front Porch
- Downtown Commercial Facade Program
- Fourteen Mile Creek Trail
- Adaptive Computerized Signalization Project (*Phase I complete; Phase II in progress*)



Phase II Projects 2014-2017

Corridor Improvements

- Ginny Lane Corner
- Columbia Avenue/West Main Island
- Corner of Reed Avenue and Butler Street
- Corner of West Main Street and Gibson Road Island
- I-20/US1 (Augusta Road) Front Porch
- Old Cherokee & North Lake Drive Front Porch



Downtown Projects

- SCE&G Franchise Fee Adjustment from 3% to 5%
- Icehouse Amphitheater complete and in operation
- Main Street Beautification & Planters
- Vision Plan Project Icehouse TIF District
- Vision Plan Project Mill Pond Trail (*2015 historic floods - project stalled*)

Infrastructure & Quality of Life

- Caractor Park Restroom Facility
- Corley Mill TIF District established
- Downtown Parking Lot - South Church Street (*under construction*)

Sidewalks

- Park Road Construction
- South Church Street Phase 1 (*completed*) and 2 (*under construction*)
- Augusta Road (US 1) - completed to Library Hill Lane
- Whispering Winds - Morgan Drive (*construction in 2017*)
- Duffie Drive (*construction in 2017*)
- Utility Project Lake Drive to Old Mill (*sidewalks will be replaced - part of contract*)



2014 -2017 Vision Plan Update Projects Completed or Implemented

- Host the Regional Mayors meeting and share Vision Plan updates (*Municipal Association of SC Mayors*)
- Conduct a count of existing parking spaces in downtown
- Convene a town and county meeting to develop strategies to garner regional financial support for projects in Lexington and Lexington County (*Parties met, but did not achieve desired goals/purposes.*)
- Present the Vision Plan Update during the Town Council meeting and invite the Steering Committee and stakeholders
- Establish strategies for regional inter-jurisdictional partnership in order to develop a multi-use destination on Lake Murray (*in progress*)
- Establish committee to study development of the Triangle and Depot historic districts, including representatives from the Lexington County Museum and SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (*The Town has expanded its relationship with the Lexington County Museum. Together, they have implemented mobile walking tours of the historic downtown and structures on the museum property as well as co-sponsor an annual gala and cross promote events and programs.*)
- Programming Summit: Discuss and develop strategies for staffing, security, maintenance and budgeting for events and new venues
- Post elections: update projects and funding per Penny for Progress results (*did not pass*)
- Convene a meeting to discuss how to leverage and effectively engage the Lexington County Development Corporation in economic development opportunities for downtown and on Lake Murray (*TIF District implementation*)
- Host a Vision Plan roundtable with stakeholders for updates and conversations
- Issue RFQ for Main Street Median Study in concert with the new Traffic Director and traffic committee (*Project is currently off the table.*)
- Clark House - study uses and develop cost estimates for repairs (*Structural repairs are complete.*)
- Expand 14 Mile Creek Trail to include a segment within the ROW to Old Cherokee Road; complete concept plan and estimate (*possible future expansion - historic flood caused significant damages needing repair to current trail*)
- Develop and promote an aggressive and strategic public outreach plan of the tree ordinance and design guidelines
- Produced updated Vision Plan video
- Complete pedestrian crossings on South Lake at Maiden Lane and at Church Street at Maiden Lane (*will be implemented as part of the one-way pair project - street signal and crossing*)
- Premiere updated Vision Plan video at the "State of the Town" address
- Develop plan for burying utility lines in target, WOW areas with cost estimates and benefits and present to Town Council (*Council discussed this but agreed not to move forward at this time.*)
- Old Brick Water Plant - study uses and develop cost estimates for repairs (*Study will take place after the Town maintenance facility is built and opens. Utilities staff is moving to the new location.*)
- Issue RFQ for a downtown plan: parking, connections, rear facades, alleyways, wayfinding, infill development (*Wayfinding has been designed with installation beginning with the construction of the one-way pairs, 200 parking spots have been added; following construction of the one-way pairs, the next phase of downtown planning will be considered.*)
- Convene a group to study how to best leverage and maximize the use, appearance and maintenance of all ROWs within Town limits (already maintaining the ROW and overseeing maintenance at interstate interchanges)
- Convene Town and County group to address old courthouse (members of County Council are looking for possible alternative uses - the project is in limbo)
- Create community stewardship plan with the Lexington Beautification Foundation for public landscaped areas
- Complete Wayfinding Master Plan: Wayfinding will be implemented as part of the transportation projects.
- Complete two Front Porches: 1) Old Cherokee at North Lake, 2) I-20/US1 (Augusta Road)
- Complete security and maintenance plan for Town civic places

2017 Vision Plan Update Priorities

Council and Staff keep the Guiding Principles and Goals set forth in 2012 remain true and viable to continue to guide the Vision Plan. However, with the continuing growth in population and opportunities for businesses and development, the group expanded the principles and goals to better reflect the needs and potential of the Town.

Guiding Principles

- **Sustain Main Street and downtown as the heart of Lexington** from the Old Mill to Sunset Boulevard, historic Triangle area, the original boundaries of the town and the government center.
- **Sustain Lexington's sense of community**, its most important and endearing quality, which is exemplified through family values, award-winning schools, neighbors helping neighbors, safe, welcoming, natural beauty, unique history and preservation of historic resources, natural resources, and economic prosperity.
- **Enhance Lexington's small town** feel in concert with continued development while respecting and maintaining the rural nature.
- **Strive for intentional, sustainable and authentic development** that enhances Lexington's natural beauty, sense of community, history and opportunities for prosperity.
- **Increase connectivity** by creating places and connections within town that engage people with people and people to places (transportation, communication, civic activities), which is paramount to retaining an authentic small town appeal.
- **Strive for innovation and sustainability** in all developments and programs in order to increase Lexington's prosperity.
- **Require the highest quality design and development** in all projects and developments in order to reflect the spirit of Lexington and the intent and values of the Vision Plan.

New Guiding Principle

- **Build multi-jurisdictional and regional partnerships in order to continually improve and to sustain the region's quality of life** through preservation of the natural environment, improved infrastructure, accessibility and connectivity, cultural and recreational opportunities, economic development and housing, education and public safety and wellness.

2017 Vision Plan Update Priorities

Goals of the Vision Plan

Improve Traffic Flow

Implement transportation strategies that are innovative, progressive, provide options and enhance the quality of life; diminish traffic from being Lexington's story; work in concert with the county.

Create a Vibrant Destination Main Street

Host regular and diverse events for all ages; recruit local and national businesses and retail shops to invest in Main Street (improve local economy), support free WiFi hot spots throughout town (business establishments and public places); encourage alternate truck routes.

Support and Encourage an Iconic Presence on Lake Murray

Support a multi-use development for residents and visitors that improves connectivity and access between the town and Lake Murray.

Preserve and Celebrate the Origins of Lexington

Many feel as if the history of Lexington is slipping away. Work to preserve and celebrate the treasured history of Lexington through signage, tourism opportunities, design standards, community events and local businesses.

Create a Welcoming Atmosphere with Beautiful, Landscaped "Front Porches"

Design and construct unique and beautiful "front porches" that welcome all to this historic town with landscaping that provides beauty and shade; install signage (I-20 interchanges, in town and throughout the county) that directs people to places in Lexington; work in concert with the county.

Improve Pedestrian and Bike Access and Connectivity

Create a comprehensive trail system that connects people to venues in town and throughout the region (Lake Murray, Saluda Shoals Park, Three Rivers Greenway, Palmetto trail, etc.); work in concert with the county.

Remain a Charming Small Town in the Face of Exponential Growth

Adopt planning districts throughout town with appropriate design and development standards that reflect the unique character and use/activity of each district; enforce/encourage authentic efforts that celebrate the spirit of Lexington; connect and enhance what's here.

Provide for the Social and Recreational Needs of Residents

Meet the needs of all residents, but particularly youth and young professionals, beyond organized sports by encouraging more in-town opportunities for movies, entertainment, food, cultural activities, access to Lake Murray, social and passive recreation, etc.

Respect the Unique Rural Character of Lexington

Institute rural development standards that are sustainable while encouraging continued economic activity; work in concert with the county.

New Goals

Be a Welcoming Home to a Growing International Community

The Town of Lexington is becoming home to a growing international community. The Town welcomes and celebrates this convergence of cultures while maintaining Lexington's unique character through events, inclusive engagement of residents and creating an atmosphere of unity.

Improve the Business Environment

Welcome and support new businesses and industries in the Town of Lexington by providing a business-friendly process. Institute regular training for staff in working with potential businesses, explore incentives for small, local businesses, improve access to information and work in concert with the Chamber to promote Lexington as a friendly and prosperous place for doing business.

Promote and Build the Economy through the Celebration of Lexington's History

In concert with the goal of preserving and celebrating the origins of Lexington, establish collaborative relationships to build a unique economy through tourism, special events, and programming. Preserve and then promote in order to draw residents and visitors to downtown to celebrate what is unique and authentic about Lexington. Historical tourism is an untapped resource, yet can be a sustainable economic development driver.

2017 Vision Plan Update Priorities

Vision Plan Implementation Priorities

Council and staff presented numerous ideas and projects to consider for the Vision Plan update. Each project was discussed relative to need, impact, funding options and staff resources. Randy Edwards presented a detailed matrix for evaluating Lexington Transportation Improvement Plan (LTIP) projects. This was an invaluable tool for council and staff in determining how to prioritize not only transportation projects, but all projects.

Short-term Priorities: One to three years

- **Improve Virginia Hylton Park**

Create a long-term, visionary master plan for the park that improves ADA accessibility and connectivity, brings all facilities and amenities up to codes, national standards and Lexington park design standards. Work with the Lexington Beautification Foundation to support improvements. Desired improvements and additions include:

- One universal playground that is accessible for all visitors
- Connect to new parking, the Icehouse amphitheater and planned Mill Pond Trail
- Interactive water feature
- Teaching gardens, community gardens, and a children's memorial garden
- Open, green space
- Quiet areas
- Activity space (yoga, wellness, classes)
- Free WiFi

- **Redevelop Liverman Hospital**

The Liverman Hospital is a major reinvestment area and critical to the TIF pro forma and value of investments in downtown. Council agreed that the desired future uses are for office, retail or creative spaces that establish new jobs, draws people to downtown, and can serve as a catalyst for continued revitalization of this area. The new road configuration of one-way pairs will impact market interest in this site; therefore, the Town will evaluate the market trends after construction and then intentionally market. In the meantime, staff will obtain an asbestos inspection (two months report to council) in order to understand the full extent of existing conditions.

- **Install Wayfinding Signage**

The wayfinding signage design is complete with two color scheme options. Staff will ask vendors to provide mock-ups of the schemes. Installation of the signs will begin after the completion of the one-way pairs with downtown installation complete by December 2018, pending SCDOT approvals. Other signs throughout Town will be installed as LTIP projects are implemented.

- **Explore Expansion of Palmetto Collegiate Institute Parking**

Additional parking is needed downtown to meet the growing popularity of events at the Palmetto Collegiate Institute, the Icehouse Amphitheater, Lexington Square and businesses on Main Street. Staff will evaluate possible locations, schematics, land values and costs for council review by September 30.

- **Implement the Lexington Transportation Improvement Plan (LTIP)**

Randy Edwards presented a detailed matrix for evaluating Lexington Transportation Improvement Plan (LTIP) projects. There was consensus that the matrix is a very comprehensive and objective tool for evaluating and prioritizing transportation projects. The matrix is the first time such a comprehensive list of much-needed improvements has been created. Council commended staff for this work.

The matrix evaluates LTIP projects based on several factors: While the matrix does prioritize projects based on objective data (80%), the market will drive the implementation. Safety, however, is the priority concern for Council, followed by improving traffic flow and securing sustainable revenue sources. The Old Cherokee/378 intersection at Publix is a primary concern for safety.

Staff will run several calculations by giving higher priority to safety and level of service in order to determine the priorities. Staff will present these to Council in a work session with the goal of establishing a prioritized list for kick-starting the LTIP and determining funding options by November 30.

Mayor MacDougall met with Christy Hall, Secretary of SCDOT, and now has her ear and commitment to assign staff to Lexington's projects. Mayor MacDougall will continue to build this relationship in order to advance the LTIP.

The Parker/Gibson/Swartz bypass (an original Vision Plan project) is important but can only be implemented through COATS/SCDOT due to the significant costs. This will require a study to determine need and scope; however, this project is not a priority for Council at this time.

2017 Vision Plan Update Priorities

Short-term Priorities: One to three years (continued)

- **Complete the Remaining Front Porches**
 - South Lake (within six months)
 - 378/Main Street: within three years to accommodate possible annexation and new town limits
 - Three years: update the front porch plan

- **Create a New Funding Policy/Plan for LTIP**

In order to implement LTIP projects, the Towns need to explore new funding options, which may include new fees and policies to support these fees and other funding sources. Staff will research options and present a draft policy with potential funding sources to Council by October 2017.

The goals of the new policy are to:

1. Create a steady high-value revenue source;
2. Reduce dependency on outside revenue; and
3. Create a multi-level revenue source.

- **Expand the Facade Grant Program**

Boundaries: Areas to consider include Columbia Avenue/West Main Street. John will present the idea to the Architecture Review Board for input and then present results to Council in September 2017.

Signage: Explore small grants for signage as part of the program

- **Continue to strengthen relationships and communications with Lexington County and the SCDOT.**

These relationships are critical to the success of implementation of the Vision Plan priorities and can lead to beneficial partnerships, efficiencies in administration, improved leveraging of resources, and access to financial and economic development opportunities.

Additional items

The following items are important to elevate the quality of life in Lexington as well as support residents and public safety. These are efforts that exist or can be incorporated into current programs within the Town or other community organizations.

- Update the landscaping and tree ordinances
- Expand events at the amphitheater and throughout Town that are representative of the Town of Lexington and are profitable for vendors, organizers and the Town
- Support the Police Department as they deal with expanding routes (annexation) and drug abuse problems within the community: staff, equipment, resources
- Create and promote caring and outreach programs for residents
- Create a Community Wellness Program for all residents, but with a focus on seniors
- Continue the promotion of and storytelling of the Vision Plan

Tasks to Accomplish by December 31, 2017

Council directed staff to complete the following tasks in order to lay the ground work for the prioritized projects.

Immediate:

- Staff will run several versions of the LTIP matrix by giving higher priority to safety and level of service in order to justify the transportation priorities.

September 30, 2017:

- Present to Council recommendations for Expanding the Facade Grant
- Present to Council recommendations for expansion of Palmetto Collegiate Institute Parking
- Report to Council on asbestos inspection progress for Liverman Hospital.

October 2017:

- Present to Council draft LTIP funding policy and funding sources

November 30, 2017:

- Present to Council in a work session LTIP prioritized projects and funding options

December 2017:

- Install picnic tables at Lexington Paw Park and engage users to fundraise

January 2018:

- Receive mock-ups of the two wayfinding signage color schemes for Council review
- Create a long-term, visionary master plan for Virginia Hylton Park
- Complete the South Lake/I-20 Front Porch

2017 Vision Plan Update Priorities

Long-term Priorities

The following projects have a longer-term implementation schedule, but planning should begin now. Efforts are underway for many of these projects and should continue.

- **Build an additional Paw Park (3-5 years)**
 - Consider creating a user group to advise and to facilitate fundraisers
 - Consider a reciprocal membership with other paw parks in the region

- **Pursue an Iconic Development on Lake Murray**
 - Continue to work with local and regional stakeholders and Lexington County
 - Work toward beginning implementation within 2-5 years

- **Create a Higher Education Center in Downtown**
 - Create a task force with representation from Midlands Tech, USC, Clemson, Lexington High Schools, Lexington County, the Chamber and other stakeholders to explore the need, opportunities and feasibility (July 2018)

- **Complete the Old Mill Trail**
 - Continue work with funding agencies and property owners to complete the trail (ongoing)
 - Complete connections to with Virginia Hylton Park, downtown sidewalks, the amphitheater, and the water plant (3-5 years)

- **Implement a Regional Multi-use Path Network**
 - Take the lead in working with the Central Midlands Council of Governments, the River Alliance, SCANA, and adjacent municipalities to plan, design and implement the network. (1-3 years)
 - Construct paths that begin connecting amenities within the Town of Lexington to the regional network (3-5 years)

- **Extend 14 Mile Creek Trail**
 - Develop a plan that connects the trailhead to a possible park on town owned property at Old Cherokee and SC-6, creates small parks along the path, and includes flood management facilities
 - Create education and public awareness resources of the unique history of the area: flora, fauna, agricultural
 - Improve accessibility to and along the trail: ADA, signage, parking, amenities

- **Develop a comprehensive history program with the Lexington County Museum, the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations (2-3 years)**
 - The program will promote tourism, economic development and entrepreneurial opportunities, local awareness, and celebrate Lexington's unique history.
 - Create a task force to study and make recommendations for implementation. (12-18 months)
 - Create a Town map (hard copy, app) that promotes historic resources, parks, trails, tourism, and local businesses (possible partnership opportunities)

- **Build and manage a skateboard park, possibly in partnership with Lexington County**

2017 Vision Plan Update Priorities

Additional Ideas Presented

The following ideas were presented by Council and staff during the retreat. While they are all worthy, Council determined that they are not priorities at this time. Council would like to keep the ideas on the table for future consideration as other Vision Plan priorities are complemented.

- Historic Lexington County Courthouse redevelopment
- Parking deck along Maiden Lane
- Landscaping incentives for businesses
- Smart growth strategies to address long-term challenges and opportunities
- Redevelopment or reuse of the Old Brick Water Plant
- Corridor improvements on Highway 6 in order to make attractive and appeal to visitors and potential investors: beautification, address blighted properties and buildings, redevelopment incentives
- Reuse/redevelopment of Dr. Harmon's house - historical significance