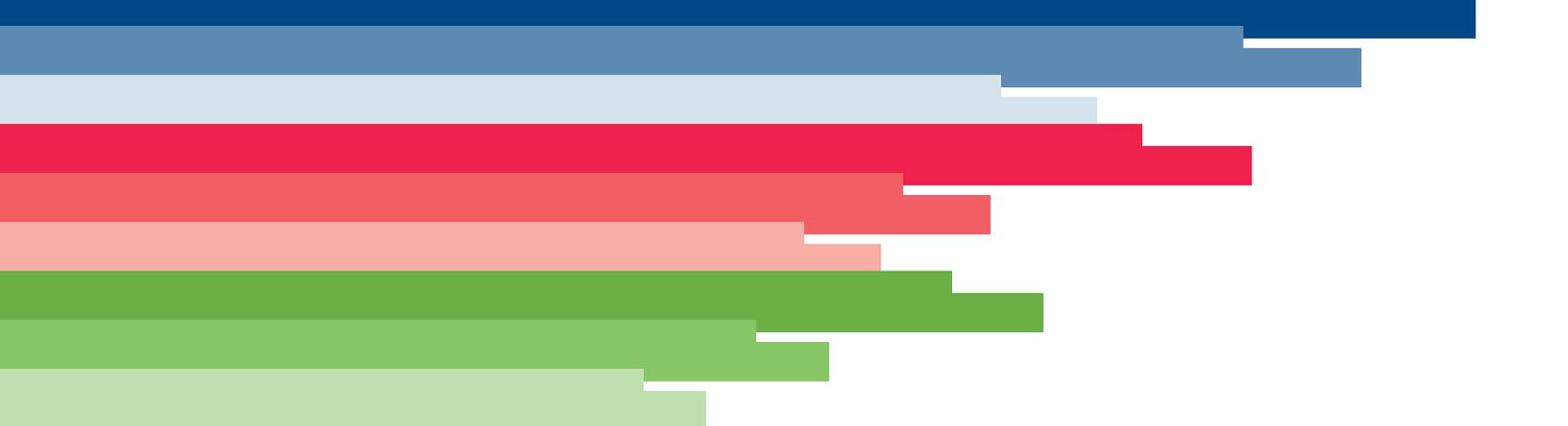


2018

MASC Municipal Association
of South CarolinaSM

Achievement Awards

Main Street SC Inspiration Awards



2018 Achievement Awards

Started in 1986, the Achievement Awards program gives cities and towns deserved recognition for superior and innovative efforts in local government. The program also provides a forum for sharing the best public service ideas in South Carolina.

This year, 30 municipalities entered the Achievement Awards program. A video highlighting this year's winners is available on the Association's website at www.masc.sc (keyword: achievement).

Population 1 - 1,000 Category | Town of Edisto Beach Edisto Beach Nourishment Project

If tourism is the Town of Edisto's industry, then the town's 4.4-mile beachfront is its industrial park. That means the wellbeing of the town as well as the preservation of this unique natural asset depend on protecting the coastline from the waves, tides, storm surges and other forces that cause sand to build up or to erode.

But protecting the beachfront calls for perseverance and cooperation. Luckily, Edisto Beach officials had both and were ready to step up and make the case for the project in order to win the support of various stakeholders.

In 2017, the town restored approximately 835,000 cubic yards of sand to the eroded beach and lengthened 26 groins. The technically complex, multi-million dollar project received funds from local tourism taxes and fees, including Colleton County's capital project sales tax, and grants from the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The town established a Beachfront Management Committee to provide input to the coastal engineer throughout the design and permitting process.

Mother Nature made things more difficult. Permitting was already a complex piece of the process, in part, because it called for efforts to protect nesting turtles and other monitoring activities. When hurricanes Joaquin and Matthew hit, the permitting had to be modified.

This project would have been a lot smaller without the contributions of partners. By teaming up with the Edisto Beach State Park, the cost of mobilization and demobilization — the largest cost component of the nourishment projects — was shared. Of the \$18 million project cost, the town contributed 16 percent. Four other entities shared the project costs. But before they joined in, the partners needed assurances that their contributions would be leveraged for the greatest result. Town leaders were successful in selling the benefits of the project to the other partners in order to acquire the necessary funding.

Contact Iris Hill at ihill@townofedistobeach.com or 843.869.2505.

Population 1,001 - 5,000 Category | Town of Hampton

Slum and Blight to Solar

The call from town residents who lived near a mobile home park was clear: “Something had to be done.” Dilapidated structures within the park and regular criminal activity nearby were drawing outcry from residents. So in 2016, the Town of Hampton decided to purchase the property with general fund dollars, which began the town’s process of abatement of 13 mobile homes and two other buildings that were on the site.

During this process, town officials discussed several options using the land. After months of deliberation and consideration of several projects, Hampton officials formed a public-private partnership with a solar energy project developer, SCE&G and Lowcountry Regional Water Systems. The town leases the property to a solar farm which sells the power to the nearby wastewater treatment plant that serves the residents of the Town of Hampton.

Town council rezoned the property and navigated the transition from a nuisance property to a field of gleaming solar panels by taking a comprehensive approach to code enforcement and community development.

But clearing a blighted area and replacing it with clean, sustainable energy technology wasn’t the only benefit to the Town of Hampton and its residents. Over the next 10 years, the town will receive \$270,000 through the lease of the property to the solar developers. That’s enough emission-free electricity to power 147 homes for an entire year. The solar farm will also participate in the Solar Energy Non-Residential Bill Credit program with South Carolina Electric & Gas, which provides energy or bill credits.

Hampton’s outlook continues to shine. Town officials plan to monitor funds that the project generates and decide whether to install additional solar panels on the property. Doing so would supply enough electricity to power to Hampton’s town hall, police department and fire department. The potential savings from shifting to solar power is estimated at \$18,000 per year.

Contact Robert Poston at rposton@hamptonsc.gov or 803.943.2951.

Population 5,001 - 10,000 Category | Town of Moncks Corner

Moncks Corner Community Outreach Program

Law enforcement officers in the Town of Moncks Corner were noticing a troubling theme: Residents felt disconnected from the officers who were sworn to serve them. There was tension between officers and the community due to the stressful nature of officers responding to calls for help.

So the department launched an outreach program that emphasized face-to-face engagement in a world that’s increasingly technology driven. Every month, volunteer officers from throughout the department set up a grill and cook hamburgers and hot dogs for the residents of a selected community. An important but subtle feature: Residents were treated as guests.

Instead of a special unit for community policing, the department instilled the philosophy that every officer is part of the ongoing community oriented policing effort. The department aims to make the community stronger and more open by bringing together people from all walks of life to have their voices heard.

The benefits are clear. Officers have become engaged in neighborhoods, and after events, residents have even asked them when they will come back. Meanwhile, since the outreach program began in early 2016, neighborhoods have experienced a decrease in calls for service.

There's more to come. The department is planning further outreach — Neighborhood bicycle rodeos, a town carnival and other activities to welcome residents. The effort will also include other departments, such the recreation department for its many programs and the fire department for safety information and smoke detector installation in the homes, to show residents what resources are available.

The department is also working with the Federal Bureau of Prisons to put computers in a community center, so that residents can take online courses and prepare to take the GED. By building relationships before there are problems, the Moncks Corner Police Department is preparing to deal with any crisis before it occurs.

Contact Chief Rick Ollic at rick.ollic@monckscornersc.gov or 843.719.7930.

Population 10,001 - 20,000 Category | Town of Bluffton Historic Rehabilitation Enhances Tourism and Economic Development Opportunities

The old house in the Town of Bluffton could have been demolished. But town officials recognized that it wasn't just any neglected site. The Garvin-Garvey House, built in approximately 1870, is a rare surviving example of a home built and inhabited by a freedman's family immediately after the Civil War — and the only one on the May River.

Like most historic structure rehabilitation projects, the Garvin-Garvey House project promised to be challenging. So the town hired an historic preservation consultant to assess the structure and plan the project.

In 2008, the town took steps to stabilize the collapsing structure, which was overgrown with vegetation. In 2014, the town re-stabilized the house after weather and termites led to the natural deterioration of the initial measure. During this time, a new foundation and flooring deck were installed. A reconstructed lean-to addition was built using the same framing techniques found throughout the original structure.

The project seamlessly wove together historic and new materials of the same dimension, exposure and thickness. The original interior wall boards, floor boards, roof rafters, shake shingles, trim and door were retained with all of the original finishes.

The town funded the project through grants, private donations and other public funds, and the town's accommodations tax revenue.

Open to the public since 2017, the fully rehabilitated site offers insights into American history while bringing to life the Garvin-Garvey family experiences and Gullah-Geechee culture. The Bluffton Historical Preservation Society provides guided tours. The town, which is developing an informational exhibit and interpretation design for the site, plans to have additional tours and host cultural events at the site to celebrate African American history and the Gullah-Geechee culture.

In preserving the Garvin-Garvey House, the town also created a model for future redevelopment projects on public land. The project show how to create a community unifier, an historic asset and a tourism destination from a single preservation project. At the same time, the project pulled together historical preservation organizations, state agencies, private citizens and cultural groups for support, funding and celebration.

Contact Debbie Szpanka at dszpanka@townofbluffton.com or 843.706.4534.

Communications Category | City of Rock Hill

2017 UCI BMX World Championships

The tens of thousands of visitors from around the globe traveling to Rock Hill for the 2017 UCI BMX World Championships presented city officials with two challenges: To ensure all Rock Hill residents knew about the event and to foster community pride as the first American city to host the event in 16 years.

After the marketing services company that was initially selected couldn't be used, city staff stepped up to produce marketing materials for what would be the largest international sporting event in South Carolina history. Staff produced a detailed marketing and communications plan to guide the process, working closely with city management and parks, recreation and tourism department staff to identify clear objectives and key messages aimed mainly at local communication.

The city also debuted a mobile app for ticket purchases, an event schedule, venue map, sponsors, push notifications and information about local restaurants and shops. City staff also produced a video that earned a 2017 Telly Award in the non-broadcast sports production category. When it came to the national and international news media who set up at the event, Rock Hill held a Rock Hill BMX Media Showdown. Reporters outfitted with a bike, helmet and instruction from a local rider participated in a series of races to experience the track first-hand.

Staff created the logo, all digital ads, video and social media posts and used the local telecommunications and media services company to manage the digital placement and tracking. During the event, city workers staffed media center operations, managed social media, and updated the website and mobile app. The money the city saved by doing the communications work in-house could instead be spent on additional ad placement.

City officials have since completed a marketing communications plan for Knowledge Park, an urban, mixed-use business park, basing the plan on the BMX event. Another takeaway? The use of community presentations, partnerships and overall grassroots efforts to inform and engage Rock Hill residents.

Contact Katie Quinn at katie.quinn@cityofrockhill.com or 803.326.3791.

Economic Development Category | City of Florence

Joseph P. Riley Jr Award

Strengthening Core Neighborhoods Improves Economic Development

The residents of the City of Florence had spoken: They wanted well-designed and maintained neighborhoods close to the city's downtown. It was important to recruit and retain employers, to expand on recent successes in downtown revitalization and to provide appealing housing choices for residents, regardless of their finances. Since there was limited interest by private sector developers to invest in struggling neighborhoods, city leaders stepped up to improve the quality of housing and establish a market for private investment.

City officials hired a consultant, tapped into S.C. State housing Finance and Development Authority and other sources, and partnered with banks to offer special mortgage financing to buyers and to host credit counseling and home buying classes. The intent was to create new housing infrastructure to bring old neighborhoods back to their vibrancy of 50 years ago.

Officials identified three historically significant neighborhoods located near the city's redeveloped downtown and then funded street infrastructure and housing development programs using capital project sales tax proceeds. A combination of general fund dollars and a federal Neighborhood Program Grant allowed the city to purchase vacant lots and abandoned structures.

The city sought to reinvest near other public improvements, creating linkages to broader areas. Improvements included street infrastructure and adjacent parks or public areas. The city then built houses above the current market conditions.

To help prospective buyers, the city has also offered gap financing in the form of down payment assistance of up to 20 percent of the value of the house.

As part of the plan, the city demolished 20 abandoned houses, purchased 53 others, completed seven street or infrastructure improvements in three designated neighborhoods, and built three homes with plans to redevelop another 22 units. Additionally, the city incentivized home building on vacant lots for infill development. The city has already seen private investment in two of the three targeted neighborhoods.

Contact Drew Griffin at dgriffin@cityofflorence.com or 843.665.3113.

Public Safety Category | City of Hartsville

Hartsville Police Department Community Outreach Division

A gap in understanding had opened between the City of Hartsville's police department and some of the residents it served. City leaders viewed that gap against the backdrop of the nationwide tensions and decided to take proactive steps to foster relationships with residents and reduce the crime rate.

In the fall of 2014, the American Planning Association's Community Planning Assistance Team assessed the conditions of one of the city's most crime-ridden, low-income neighborhoods and came up with a plan to address its challenges. The team concluded that the city should "build trust between the community and law enforcement."

The police department created the Community Outreach Division to focus on these challenges through special programs for crime reduction and safety. The division achieved success, in part, because of its partnerships with outside organizations and officials' conscious decision to avoid duplicating efforts already in existence. Division members worked to connect those with needs and organizations with the appropriate resources to meet those residents' needs. A U.S. Department of Justice grant allowed the city to create a community liaison officer position to assist with the division.

The division used community presentations, school visits, a satellite office and events such as Coffee with a Cop and National Night Out to build trust with residents. Another program the city partnered with, called Employing Ministry and Police to Overcome Walls and End Racism, resulted in repairs and improvements to four houses. The division was also involved in the Hartsville Safe Communities, a community partnership that works with repeat offenders to offer them a second chance. As a result of the partnership, the City of Hartsville hired one of the ex-offenders.

The division has created an environment of trust and open dialogue within the city that led to tangible results that address community concerns.

Contact Natalie Zeigler at Natalie.Zeigler@hartsvillesc.gov or 843.339.2867.

Public Service Category | City of Myrtle Beach

Savannah's Playground Enabling Park

Savannah's Playground, named for a 19-year-old with Williams Syndrome, was the inspiration of Savannah's Playground Enabling Park.

The playground opened in 2016 and offers an array of equipment that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The park features a zip line, specially designed swings, rubber surfaces to soften falls, an extended wheelchair ramp that stops at stations, a cooling mist feature during the

summer and a mile-long wheelchair path that goes around the lake. The playground also offers the largest harmony park — a collection of durable musical instruments such as bells and chimes — in the United States.

City, state and county funds, along with donations from more than a dozen community organizations and land donated by the city, made Savannah's Playground a reality. City employees, too, helped out by clearing the land, adding landscaping and pouring concrete walkways.

The playground has boosted tourism, promoted health and wellness to residents and visitors alike, and increased property values, all while strengthening the city's image and unique sense of place. The planning and fundraising for the next phase is underway focusing on additional playground equipment and permanent restroom facilities. Families have traveled from various states, with online reviews from as far away as Canada, specifically to visit the playground. In doing so, those families have also patronized restaurants, shops and recreational activities nearby.

The concept of creating inclusive recreation space for children of all abilities, a project that fosters confidence, independence and personal growth, has mushroomed, as other South Carolina cities have turned their attention to enabling playground features.

Contact Fox Simons at fsimons@cityofmyrtlebeach.com or 854.918.1016.

Public Works Category | City of Woodruff

City of Woodruff WWTP and Collection System Upgrades

The City of Woodruff and the Upstate region are on the cusp of growth. Ordinarily, that's a good thing. But officials knew the city's wastewater treatment plant wouldn't be able to keep up with expanding residential, commercial and industrial demands. The facility was nearing the end of its lifespan, and the sewer collection system and pump stations were failing. In fact, the collection system had chronic problems, suffering constant sanitary sewer overflows due to holes in pipes.

One nearly-70-year-old pump station had repeated sanitary sewer overflows and spilled its contents directly into the path of school children walking to school. None of the pump stations had backup power, and the pumps, control panel, guide rails and valves were past their life expectancy and failed regularly.

It was time for a dramatic infrastructure expansion and modernization — upgrades that would halt the system failures, keep the public safe from spills and provide enough plant capacity for decades of growth.

Among the upgrades was technology to help clean the wastewater: New dual automatic bar screens help remove solids and trash; a moving bed bio reactor helps eliminate ammonia; and diffused air flotation technology, which removes fine solid particles, leaves the water crystal clear. To improve employee and public safety, the city transitioned to ultraviolet disinfection to replace its gas chlorination, which posed risks in the event of a spill. And for added reliability during a power failure, the upgrades included a paralleling generator system to provide redundancy if one generator fails.

City staff worked with the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, the S.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and consultants to secure funding and permits necessary to improve their infrastructure.

After the city completed the improvements, word about the innovations spread among consultants and manufacturers, leading to officials in Alabama, Texas and Canada calling the City of Woodruff to learn more.

Contact Lee Bailey at lbailey@cityofwoodruff.com or 864.415.9573.

Other Entries

City of Aiken

The City of Aiken used to be reactive in its approach to utility infrastructure maintenance. But that's no longer the case, thanks to new software that allows city staff to be proactive. By using a GIS-based asset management and rehabilitation planning program for its water, sewer, and storm water utilities, the city is now able to pinpoint potential problems and make highly informed decisions when planning sewer rehabilitation projects.

Funded through the city's operational budget, the new software integrates GIS data, inspection data, work and service order data, while using spatial analysis to determine and score potential risk of failure for each asset in the utility system. City officials can then use these "consequence of failure" scores and "likelihood of failure" scores are then analyzed to create a rehabilitation plan and capital budget plan.

Data analysis for future projects will include rehabilitating an additional 58 miles of extreme and high risk sewer pipes, 67 miles of water pipes, and 25 miles of storm pipe.

Contact Sabina Craig at scraig@cityofaikensc.gov or 803.642.7606.

City of Columbia

The City of Columbia's Water Distribution Division and Wastewater Maintenance Division shared space with the Public Works Department in a former big box chain store site. They needed room to grow. Crews working in these divisions also needed to be able to service the city's extensive water and sewer systems and to be centrally located to reach all areas quickly.

So with funding from its water and sewer capital improvement program, the City of Columbia developed a new LEED Gold Water and Wastewater Administration building on a former brownfield site and auto dealership, complete with green roof and low-impact landscaping.

The project brought a host of other benefits: Higher morale for employees, the transformation of a blighted area, a demonstration of sustainable building practices, the reinvestment in a local neighborhood and a jumpstart to the surrounding local economy.

Next up? City staff will host tours and trainings at the facility, including workshops for local builders, designers and landscapers on green design and maintenance.

Contact Chris Segars at cmsegars@columbiasc.net or 803.545.4143.

City of Conway

The City of Conway had a historic gem of a building that sat unappreciated under decades of dust. When Horry County donated the building to the city, Conway officials knew just what to do with it. They restored the 6,800-square-foot National Register-listed property.

The restoration saved the building's historic windows, flooring, interior openings and finishes. The space became the city's visitor center that also includes community banquet and meeting space, and offices for Conway Downtown Alive, a National Main Street Affiliate working in downtown Conway.

In October of 2017, thousands of residents mingled with tourists at the building for the beginning of the annual Spirits of the Lowcountry ghost walk. Conway's general fund and a matching grant from the state of South Carolina supported the project, along with labor from city workers.

The city plans to use this building for another 100 years to give the community a place to be proud of, use for social and other events, and to greet visitors and newcomers. The building will be the beginning of countless community and tourism related events for generations.

Contact Adam Emrick at aemrick@cityofconway.com or 843.248.1760.

City of Denmark

The need to ensure fire safety and to remedy discolored water, low water pressure and waterline leaks drove the City of Denmark to make crucial waterline improvements.

The Denmark Public Works Department conducted a review of all water lines with particular attention to the age and the number of repairs a specific area had already undergone.

By using a Community Development Block Grant and matching city funds, city leaders were able to tackle a comprehensive upgrade project, one that will take more time and additional funding but represents an aggressive effort to bring the entire system up to date. Waterline upgrades and improved fire service assisted by new fire hydrants are an integral part of the city's strategic plan.

But Denmark has more plans. The city has received additional CDBG funding, which will allow the upgrades to continue and to bring an additional five fire hydrants to the city.

Results are already apparent. The number of water leaks has gone down dramatically, and the new fire hydrants have already assisted with a house fire in Denmark. The new hydrant directly reduced damage to the house.

Contact Heyward Robinson at hrobi13901@aol.com or 803.793.3734.

City of Easley

A planning grant revealed the City of Easley's deficiencies in public walking and biking infrastructure. At the same time, the city was facing rising downtown home prices, which was in turn causing gentrification in the historic African-American neighborhoods.

So city leaders decided to do something about it. The City of Easley and the City of Pickens partnered on the creation of a 7.5-mile Doodle Trail, which opened in 2015. The 1-mile extension that leads into downtown Easley and the progressive planning of affordable housing along the Doodle Trail have transformed the City of Easley from an auto-centric, suburb into an active recreation urban core.

There's more in store. The city plans to use a network of trails and sidewalks to connect all city parks together and to connect the Doodle

Trail on the north side of the city to the Brushy Creek Greenway on the south side, while working toward the long-term regional goal of connecting the Doodle Trail, Green Crescent and Swamp Rabbit Trail. In addition, a nature park focused on sustainability, conservation, and education will be situated on the western side of the city.

Contact Blake Sanders at bsanders@cityofeasley.com or 864.293.1853.

Town of Fort Mill

The Great Recession hit downtown Fort Mill hard. Properties were vacant, commerce had slowed and businesses were struggling. The town had to act to bring back its downtown vibrancy.

That's where Fort Mill Tomorrow came in. City officials developed the town's 2008 comprehensive plan, "Fort Mill Tomorrow," and subsequent 2013 update of the plan through significant public involvement, including citizens and stakeholders throughout the community. The plan envisioned both physical improvements and legislative fixes from Town Council to boost the downtown district, enhance its sense of place and spur future private investment.

The plan called for investing public money downtown while private investment interest was low as a way to prime the downtown area for private investment as soon as the economy rebounded from the Great Recession. The town's Capital Projects Fund paid for physical investments in downtown. The town used these funds to leverage additional grant money and non-profit donations to increase the total investment.

Town officials are finalizing a new comprehensive plan, which provides a vision for next 20 years and builds on the successes of the 2008 and 2013 updated plan.

Contact Caroline Hasty at chasty@fortmillsc.gov or 803.547.2116.

City of Greenwood

The City of Greenwood's declining Westside neighborhood was at a juncture.

In 2010, land adjoining the neighborhood and the medical district had been cleared and prepared for redevelopment. But without a comprehensive planning effort, the neighborhood's character was in danger of being lost. With the growth of the downtown and the medical district, city leaders saw an opportunity in the Westside neighborhood.

The Greenwood Partnership Alliance worked with planners to facilitate interviews, group roundtables and a public meeting that included Westside residents, property owners, city staff and elected officials at all levels, and other stakeholders. A steering committee directed the planning effort from start to finish. Partnerships and grants, including a Community Development Block Grant and private donations, helped the revitalization succeed.

The city removed some dilapidated structures. Now new homes are planned for construction, which will add to the city's tax base and provide access to affordable housing. City officials plan to continue building upon relationships forged between residents and the historic religious institutions of Westside.

Contact Charlie Barrineau at charlie.barrineau@gwdcity.com or 864.942.8410.

City of Greer

Trains are more active than ever in the City of Greer, where three rail companies — CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern Railway and Amtrak — share railroad tracks. With a growing population of young families and increased rail traffic due to the addition of Inland Port Greer in 2013, the mix of train traffic, vehicles and pedestrians led to eight accidents involving trains from 2015 – 2017, including two pedestrian fatalities.

The public needed a greater awareness of the dangers. So the city partnered with Operation Lifesaver, a national organization that promotes rail safety to create Railfest, a family fun and educational event funded in part by the city and a grant from the S.C. Ports Authority.

"It's getting bigger every year," said Greer Police Department Sgt. Randle Ballenger. "We hope to get the word out — Don't drive around crossings."

City officials expect the event to grow exponentially in quality, partnerships and attendance, given the growing interest from volunteers. The city's expanded marketing plan's aim is to increase the attendees to include residents of cities across the Upstate.

Contact Steve Owens at sowens@cityofgreer.org or 864.416.0121.

City of Hardeeville

Hardeeville's dramatic growth had created "neighborhood silos" that illustrated a clear divide between long-time residents and new residents, and a rising potential for gentrification that some feared would change the urban district's character and culture. So in 2015, the planning process for the Hardeeville Youth Council was born.

City leaders created the Youth Council to recognize the importance of multicultural programs aimed at connecting young residents to their local government. They had a clear challenge — to unify the changing city in the face of its rapid change and development.

The Youth Council was made up of representatives from the city's five public and private schools. Its mission was to discuss and vote on select issues taken from the Hardeeville City Council agenda and to provide input from the city's younger residents to the Hardeeville City Council before the council voted. In its first year, the Youth Council launched two initiatives, an anti-littering campaign and an anti-distracted driving campaign, which offered education and outreach to more than 2,000 students and staff.

With the Youth Council's positive impact already being felt, the city plans to expand its programs.

Contact Neil Parsons at nparsons41230@cityofhardeeville.com or 843.784.2231.

Town of Kiawah Island

The Town of Kiawah Island's website wasn't offering enough information.

"It was like any typical municipal website, text heavy and focused on residents who were interested in town council and what services were offered," said Stephanie Braswell Edgerton, the town's communication specialist. But as a private residential island with a golf resort, Kiawah is different.

"There was no one promoting the island as a whole. Everyone was doing their own thing," she said. "We wanted to make sure that it was a community asset, supporting our tourism industry, supporting our businesses and our residents, as well as working to preserve and protect our island's unique setting and natural resources."

Over the summer and fall of 2016, town staff worked with a web design firm to develop a new website. The goal was to create an informative, easy to navigate, and exciting website for the residents and community. The town paid for the work from its general fund.

The town is now working to develop an app, in part, to help communicate with residents, visitors and businesses during hurricanes and other emergencies.

Contact Stephanie Braswell Edgerton at sbraswell@kiawahisland.org or 843.768.9166.

Town of Lexington

As the fourth-fastest growing municipality in the state, traffic in the Town of Lexington was becoming a serious concern. State traffic engineers kept traffic signals throughout town on an analog system, with programming occurring every five years. Due to Lexington's rapid growth, the timing sequence was ineffective and caused congestion.

To fix the problem, town officials switched to an adaptive computerized signalization system that constantly measures traffic volume, detects the approaching and standing vehicles using cameras, and uses an algorithm to develop the most efficient way to move traffic. With the new system, signals adjust throughout the day and evening to maximize and improve efficiency in traffic flow based on traffic spikes. Lexington

County, the local council of governments, the Columbia Area Transportation Study Share Funding and local medical center helped provide funding for the technology.

Phase II of the system to connect an additional 16 intersections is underway. Once complete, all 35 intersections in town and its borders will be part of this high-tech innovation.

Contact Jennifer Dowden at jdowden@lexsc.com or 803.356.8238.

City of Marion

City leaders took an unfortunate accident and turned it into a boon for residents and downtown businesses. In 2011, a fire destroyed several downtown buildings, damaged others and displaced businesses. But city leaders weren't going to give up on the area. They asked residents and organizations what the city should do with three empty lots on Main Street.

The property owners sold two lots to the Historic Marion Revitalization Association. Proceeds from the sale of one donated building helped create a new downtown venue. From the gaping space left by the fire emerged the Main Street Commons, an outdoor gathering place with electricity and elevated stage for music entertainment, health fairs, farmers markets and other events.

The city plans to acquire an adjacent vacant lot to expand the space with permanent restroom facilities, an arbor and a dining venue. Two businesses have already added rear access points to their businesses. City officials predict other businesses will follow suit as business owners take pride in the enhanced aesthetics of the Main Street Commons.

Contact Alan Ammons at aammons@marionsc.gov or 843.423. 5961.

City of Mauldin

Over the years, the City of Mauldin had grown into a suburban, commercial community driven by zoning provisions that paid little attention to walkability and favored large building setbacks and expansive parking lots.

“If you’ve ever heard the term suburban sprawl, it epitomized that — your sprawling commercial and sprawling residential, all disconnected,” said David Dyrhaug, the city’s economic development planner.

City leaders knew they had the power to reverse course and raise the development standard.

So beginning in 2017, the City of Mauldin adopted several revisions and amendments to its zoning regulations in an effort to foster and promote mixed-use spaces, pedestrian considerations and place-making principles. Among the changes were amendments that altered how height is measured and provided for a bonus of greater height in select districts in exchange for attention to urban design. The city also created a new zoning district known as the Urban Village District.

Mauldin officials aren’t resting. They will continue to identify regulations that can be adjusted to align with the city’s vision and strategies.

Contact David Dyrhaug at DDyrhaug@MauldinCitySC.com or 864.289.8979.

Town of Mount Pleasant

Mount Pleasant is surrounded by water — the Cooper and Wando rivers, the Intracoastal Waterway, salt marshes and wetlands. City staff noticed that crews were responding to an increasing number of spills related to traffic accidents, where materials entered storm drains, potentially polluting creeks and waterways. If the town did not have enough trained personnel to clean it up, they would have to hire special contractors and incur a larger cost.

The challenges called for a more formal response plan and a coordinated effort. So the town formed the Spill Response Team, a cost-effective, voluntary program meeting the need to adhere to the Clean Water Act guidelines and protect the natural environment.

“The program has grown to meet several needs, to deliver cost effective and cost efficient services, to train and promote safety, to foster team building across our divisions, and to help the town protect residents and environmental resources,” said Hillary Repik, the town’s stormwater manager.

As safety and regulatory requirements change and demands for town services grow, the program will evolve to meet those needs.

Contact Martine Wolfe-Miller at mwolfe@tompsc.com or 843.884.8517.

City of Newberry

“Nothing will crush your soul more than to go out and see an able-bodied child playing, while their brother or sister sat on the sidelines and watched,” said Newberry City Manager Matt DeWitt.

So Newberry leaders made sure that doesn’t happen in their city. Children with disabilities will now be able to play alongside other children.

In 2016, the city’s director of parks, recreation and tourism received a text message from a neighbor who knew someone who would like to see the city offer a wheelchair-accessible swing. The city formed a Recreation Accessibility Team, a community-based group dedicated to bringing accessible and inclusive play opportunities to people of all ability levels. City funding, community donations and a Parks and Recreation Development Fund grant helped bring four inclusive swing chairs and two wheelchair accessible swings to two city parks.

But Newberry’s not finished. The city is working to add more playground equipment for all ability levels, along with a recreation complex, funded with from capital project sales tax revenues, that would house an inclusive playground and other inclusive equipment.

Contact Elyssa Haven at ehaven@cityofnewberry.com or 803.321.3607.

City of Orangeburg

The City of Orangeburg’s Department of Public Utilities upgraded its existing plant, originally constructed in the 1970s, after a five-day biochemical oxygen demand test revealed an increase in pollution. The management team decided it was best to prepare the plant for the next 20 years.

The system upgrade was funded by the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which also includes provisions for a Green Project Reserve. The project was also eligible for the Green Project Reserve because the energy savings exceeded the 20 percent reduction in energy consumption required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

“The upgrade certainly ensures our ability to return the treated wastewater back to the environment significantly cleaner than when it was first extracted for use,” said Randy Eppers, key accounts manager for the Orangeburg DPU.

As Orangeburg continues to grow, the wastewater treatment plant is positioned well to accommodate the added demands on its system.

Contact Randy Eppers at retters@orbgdpu.com or 803.268.4103.

City of Seneca

The City of Seneca’s downtown needed a boost. Its identity had faded due to a bypass that proved to be a faster, wider, more highly trafficked route through town. The appearance, convenience and infrastructure downtown were improving, but the city needed an event that would attract people. So the mayor and City Council designed Jazz on the Alley, an outdoor music festival held every Thursday night from April – October, to bring hundreds of people each week to downtown restaurants and businesses.

But Jazz on the Alley, funded by the city’s hospitality accommodation tax and created with the Downtown Seneca Merchants’ Association, does more than foster economic development and downtown vitality.

“We invited public service organizations and charities. ‘Hey, come down. Bring your information. Put your table out there and tell us what you’re doing,’” said Riley Johnson, the city’s events coordinator.

City officials hope to grow Jazz on the Alley and to expand it to several streets.

Contact Riley Johnson at rhjohnson@seneca.sc.us or 864.723.3910.

Town of Summerville

Recognizing that growth brings expanding pavement and other environmental concerns, planners at the Town of Summerville decided to get ahead of the impacts. They set about conducting an Urban Tree Canopy assessment that included a green infrastructure map to identify the town’s most precious natural, cultural and historical assets. This resulted in a green infrastructure plan, which the town adopted in February of 2017.

The green infrastructure plan offers specific goals, strategies, and tasks to build upon the town’s long-term plans and inform land development regulations, guide updates to long-term planning documents, and improve day-to-day planning decisions.

Summerville’s efforts to balance the economic, social and environmental concerns of an ever growing community have earned kudos. Largely because of its green infrastructure plan, the town was the first to be designated an Audubon South Carolina Climate-Resilient and Bird-Friendly Municipality.

As for what’s next? Town planners are overhauling the zoning and land development regulations into one unified development ordinance using the goals identified in the green infrastructure plan. Additionally, the Summerville Planning Department intends to hire an arborist/natural resource planner to help implement other goals contained in the plan.

Contact Jessi Shuler at jshuler@summervillesc.gov or 843.851.4217.

City of Sumter

For many children in Sumter, a field trip to the Sumter Opera House is their first exposure to a live performing arts event. But with dwindling school funding for activities, most teachers must ask students to bring money from home to attend a performance with their class. This means some students are unable to participate.

City leaders believed no child should miss the opportunity to learn through the arts. The city worked with the Sumter School District to create the Y.E.S. (Youth Education Scholarship) Program in the fall of 2016 so that underserved students could attend live performances at the Sumter Opera House. To start the program, the

City of Sumter paid the costs of the artist fees for all performances the first year. Since then, grants, private donors and general ticket sales have sustained the Y.E.S. Program, which also sends nationally recognized artists into local classrooms to lead workshops before or after students attend matinee performances at the opera house.

City officials hope to continue securing funding from public and private sources and ticket sales in order to continue offering the full array of matinee shows.

Contact Shelley Kile at skile@sumtersc.gov or 803.795.2463.

City of Teга Cay

Something was missing from the City of Teга Cay Police Department's crime-reduction efforts. Officers would address traffic and crime needs in specific areas due to data or residents' complaints, but the officers would fail to communicate to the community why they were targeting the area and their methods for doing so.

The department decided to film public service announcements to get the word out about their activities. By partnering with Fort Mill High School's "The Buzz TV" media program, the PSAs cost nothing and also allowed law enforcement to build rapport with local high school students. By analyzing data, staff pinpointed when crimes peaked and then highlighted information in a PSA to reduce that specific crime. For example, in August when schools return to session, the PSA will be on traffic and crosswalk safety and when motorists must stop for a school bus.

Next up, the department will analyze data for the upcoming year and plan its 12-month PSA lineup to educate, inform, and reduce crime in the specific areas.

Contact Steven Parker at sparker@tegacaysc.gov or 803.448.2513.

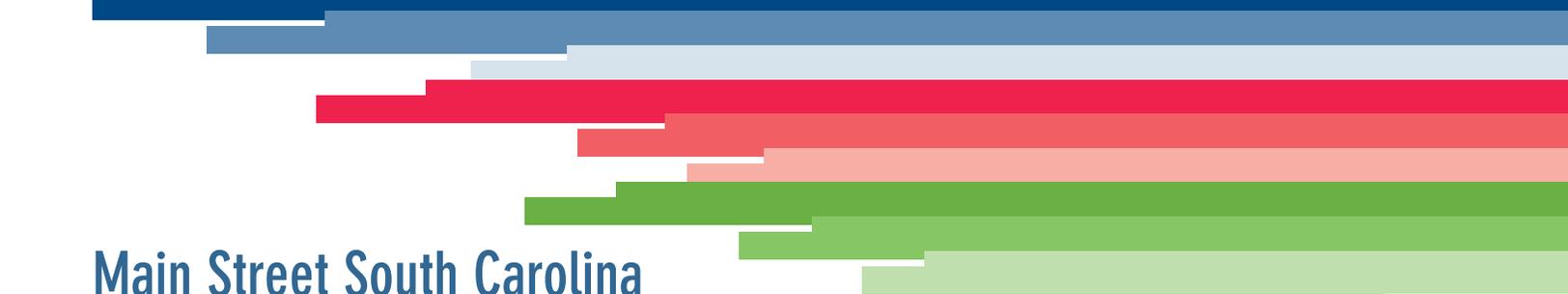
City of Walterboro

The city's website needed a revamp. It was heavy on text, hard to navigate and failed to communicate the city's "front porch of the Lowcountry" identity. Fortunately, Walterboro officials knew what was at stake — that a well-functioning website is integral to success in serving residents, attracting potential residents, recruiting industry, drawing tourists and keeping day-to-day municipal business running smoothly.

With these things in mind, the city launched a new website in 2017 with the help of the city's web team, led by the city's tourism department and assisted by representatives of different city departments. The new website reduced the number of pages from 99 to 48 pages by focusing on quality over quantity and created four categories to assist users: Government, Visitors, Business and City Services. The new site also communicates the marketing message of "the front porch of the Lowcountry," using imagery, color choices, background and typography.

Looking ahead, the city plans to keep the website fluid and responsive to local dynamics. Staff plans to consistently generate new content, while keeping in mind that the process is due to begin again in two to three years.

Contact Michelle Strickland at mstrickland@walterborosc.org or 843.538.4353.



Main Street South Carolina Inspiration Awards

Main Street South Carolina empowers residents, business owners and local officials with the knowledge, skills, tools and organizational structure necessary to revitalize downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts into vibrant centers of commerce and community.

Main Street South Carolina is a service of the Municipal Association of SC and is accredited by the National Main Street Center. The program follows National Main Street's Four Point Approach — economic vitality, design, promotion and organization. Each year, Main Street South Carolina recognizes members' achievements and successes in downtown revitalization.

Excellence on Main Street Award

Outstanding New Construction Project Downtown Sumter's Downtown Municipal Parking Garage

City officials understood that one of the secrets to making a city's downtown a desirable destination is making it easy to get to and enjoy. And one of the biggest complaints about most historic downtowns is that there is nowhere to park. If there's nowhere to park, residents and visitors avoid the area.

So city officials decided to build a municipal parking garage — one that was free and open to the public. The new parking garage was built in an existing open air parking lot and offers 201 spaces, which is more than double the number of spaces that available in the flat lot there before.

The idea for the garage was born alongside plans for the Hyatt Place Hotel. When the Hyatt Place Hotel decided in 2016 to locate in Downtown Sumter, part of the agreement was that the city would build a parking garage. It was funded using tax increment financing dollars and built by the same construction company that was building the hotel so as not to get in each other's way. The garage opened in December 2017, and the hotel opened in the spring of 2018.

City leaders wanted more than functional infrastructure, though. The garage was built to blend in with adjacent buildings by using similar brick and muted colors. While mainly built for function and convenience, it is also an attractive building and adheres to the city's Historic Preservation Design Review Guidelines.

Inspiration Award

Gaines Jontz Rehabilitation Award – City of Clinton's 101 Main Street

City of Clinton officials knew the value of restoring historic buildings to their former beauty. The Homes of Hope 101 Main Street project is a shining example of how to accomplish it. Project leaders leveraged federal and state historic tax credits and abandoned buildings credits to convert a mostly abandoned historic downtown building into a mixed-use space with three market-rate apartments upstairs and three commercial spaces on the ground floor. The commercial areas vary in size from 450 square feet to the 1,200-square foot-space that the First National Bank of Clinton once occupied.

The historic rehabilitation project, assisted by private investors and a low-interest acquisition loan from the Clinton Economic Development Corporation, has energized Clinton's residents, property owners and even caught the attention of future investors. Current property owners are looking to spruce up their buildings, while developers are showing more and more interest in investing in Clinton.

