



Comprehensive Plan 2015

City of Laurens, South Carolina

This plan represents all elements and recommendations regarding wise and efficient use of public funds, future growth, development and redevelopment.

City of Laurens Planning Commission
10/20/2015

City of Laurens Comprehensive Plan 2015 - 2025

INTRODUCTION

This plan was compiled and produced by the Planning Commission of the City of Laurens. The Commission Members are appointed and approved by the City Council. Members of the Planning Commission during the planning process were as follows:

Brian Harlan	Natalie Fleck	John Young
Jonathan Coleman	Madge Byrd	James Latimore
Robby Templeton	Suzanne Lowry	

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The Planning Commission encouraged community participation in the preparation of this plan. A series of Community Input Meetings were held throughout the City of Laurens in August 2015. These meetings were used as a vehicle to gain insight to the concerns, suggestions and wishes of the citizens of Laurens and have incorporated those into this plan. Other methods of reaching the public included a dedicated Facebook page, articles in the Laurens County Advertiser newspaper, and radio spots on local radio station WLBG.

Findings

After three community meetings on different dates and locations, the residents reiterated several main themes regarding the needs for the City:

1. The City of Laurens needs to change the public perception of its identity.
2. The City of Laurens needs to create more new, affordable housing for ownership and for rent.
3. The City of Laurens needs to retain its population and attract new residents.
4. The City of Laurens needs more upscale restaurants and entertainment venues.

PLANNING PROCESS

An inventory and assessment was compiled for the current conditions under each of the nine (9) elements making up the Comprehensive Plan. This assessment acted as a benchmark from which goals and strategies with implementation time frames could be accomplished.

The Comprehensive Plan should be referred to as a guideline for development and redevelopment throughout the City of Laurens over the next ten (10) years. As required by State law, the City of Laurens Planning Commission will be responsible for reevaluating the various elements of the plan every five years and will prepare a revision of the plan in another ten (10) years.

CITY OF LAURENS HISTORY

The City of Laurens has a rich history that is still evident in many of its current structures. Located in the Upstate region of South Carolina, the city of Laurens is named after Henry Laurens of Revolutionary War fame. It is part of the Greenville–Mauldin–Easley Metropolitan Statistical Area.

The small town of Laurens, South Carolina was established by an act of the General Assembly on March 15, 1785 as a location for commercial activities. It was one of the six counties created for the original Ninety-Six Districts of South Carolina. Laurens was originally named Laurensville. On December 15, 1845, a charter was issued with the name of Laurensville. The first appearance of the town named Laurens was in an 1873 charter. The town of Laurens was chartered in 1900 and in 1916. The town was named in the honor of Henry Laurens, the South Carolina statesman.

The first inhabitants of Laurens were the Cherokee Indians. They used the land as their hunting and fighting ground. There has been evidence of broken potsherds, weapons, and a mound found linked to Cherokee culture on land now called Laurens. There were many treaties made with the Cherokee Indians over the land known as Laurens County dating back to 1721.

References:

Manning, Sam (1982), *The Scrapbook, Laurens*, Laurens County Historical Society and Laurens Country Arts Council. Pp. 597-599
Laurens County Chamber of Commerce

The textile, manufacturing and glass industries were at one point a major source of employment in the City of Laurens. Although many of the textile plants and the glass production facilities have closed over the last 30 years, a variety of industries still exist within the county including CeramTec, International Paper, Milliken & Company, and others. Walmart operates a distribution center outside of the City limits near Interstate 385 and serves as a major employer. Laurens has seen several recent economic retail developments in the East Main area and is seeing new capital investment in heavy industry, including a major new transmission production facility for German ZF Group.

CHAPTER 1 - POPULATION

According to the 2010 US Census the total population for the City of Laurens was 9,139 people. The female population of 4,944 outnumbered the male population of 4,195. When comparing the 2010 numbers to those of 2000, the total population of the City of Laurens decreased by 8.10%.

The age distribution of the population has also remained the same over the last ten years. However all age groups except children ages 0 to 4 years old showed a decrease in population. According to the 2010 Census the median age was 39.9 year old. The largest population group ranged from 40 to 59 years old. This shows that most residents are middle age and are most likely still able to be a part of the work force.

Age Group – 2010 Census	Number	Percentage
Under 5 years	735	8.0
5 to 9 years	600	6.6
10 to 14 years	543	5.9
15 to 19 years	532	5.8
20 to 24 years	540	5.9
25 to 29 years	623	6.8
30 to 34 years	510	5.6
35 to 39 years	495	5.4
40 to 44 years	528	5.8
45 to 49 years	554	6.1
50 to 54 years	590	6.5
55 to 59 years	596	6.5
60 to 64 years	514	5.6
65 to 69 years	451	4.9
70 to 74 years	317	3.5
75 to 79 years	309	3.4
80 to 84 years	300	3.3
85 years and older	402	4.4

The racial composition of the City of Laurens has remained fairly constant over the last ten years with the white population making up just over half of the residents. Both black and white populations have declined over the last ten years.

The Hispanic population is not counted as a separate race by the US Census. Hispanic people are included as Black, White or Other as the chart below outlines.

POPULATION STRENGTHS:

- ❖ The majority of the Laurens population is middle age adult and of working age.
- ❖ Population is evenly distributed among the African American and Caucasian races.

POPULATION WEAKNESSES:

- ❖ Over the course of the last ten years, the Laurens population has decreased by about 8%.

PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Retain and attract citizens through affordable, new housing.
- ❖ Retain and attract citizens through more cultural programming.
- ❖ Retain and attract citizens by encouraging more retail growth.

Population Comparison

Laurens, SC	2010 Census Count	Percentages	2000 Census Count	Percentages	2000-2010 Change	Change Percentages
Total Population	9139	100%	9944	100%	-805	-8.10%
RACE						
American Indian and Alaska Native	24	0.26%	27	0.27%	-3	-11.11%
Asian	27	0.30%	16	0.16%	11	68.75%
Black or African American	3916	42.85%	4,301	43.25%	-385	38.95%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Native	2	0.02%	11	0.11%	-9	-81.82%
Other race	261	2.86%	133	1.34%	128	96.24%
Two or more races	108	1.18%	87	0.87%	21	24.14%
White	4801	52.53%	5369	53.99%	-568	-10.58%
Population by Hispanic or Latino Origin (any race)						
Persons Not of Hispanic Origin	8,615	94.27%	9,705	97.60%	-1,090	-11.23%
Persons of Hispanic Origin	524	5.73%	239	2.40%	285	119.25%
GENDER						
Female	4,944	54.10%	5,478	55.09%	-534	-9.75%
Male	4,195	45.90%	4,466	44.91%	-271	-6.07%
AGE						
0 to 4 years	735	8.04%	701	7.05%	34	4.85%
5 to 17 years	1,461	15.99%	1,781	17.91%	-320	-17.97%
18 to 64 years	5,164	56.51%	5,508	55.39%	-344	-6.25%
65 years and over	1,779	19.47%	1,954	19.65%	-175	-8.96%

CHAPTER 2 - HOUSING

This chapter will address the physical condition of current housing within the City of Laurens and the projected needs for future housing. Location of housing determines access to community facilities, transportation, shopping, jobs and schools. Housing related expenses constitute a major portion of personal budgets of households. Furthermore, a home is the largest investment and principal savings vehicle for most households; as well as the most important income tax provision allowing the homeowner the deduction of mortgage interest and property taxes.

Three factors determine future demand for housing:

- ❖ Change in the number and composition of households.
- ❖ Change in the number of vacant units.
- ❖ Change in the existing supply of housing.

During the Community Input Phase of this plan, citizens agreed wholeheartedly that new, affordable single family housing was of major importance to the future of the City.

The U.S. Census reported 4,367 housing units in 2010. Of those homes 55.5% were occupied by the owner. The American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Department shows an increase of housing in 2013 with a total of 4,539 housing units within the City limits.

While there seem to be plenty of homes available for purchase within the City of Laurens, it becomes a matter of choice for the homebuyer. Because most of the housing offered for sale is 15 years and older, a potential homebuyer can find more choices in neighboring communities that showcase newer homes, as well as older homes.

2010 Housing Statistics – U.S. Census

Total Housing Units	4,367
Occupied	3,770
Owner-occupied	2,010
Population in owner-occupied (number of individuals)	4,713
Renter-occupied	1,760
Population in renter-occupied (number of individuals)	4,107
Vacant housing	597
Vacant: for rent	266
Vacant: for sale	60

Median home values within the City are around \$80,700.00 as reported by the U.S. Census.

According to the Laurens County Tax Assessor records for the City of Laurens, owner-occupied residential property currently accounts for \$6,127,350.00 of assessed market value.

New Housing

According to Census statistics the majority of existing single family homes within the City were constructed in between the years 1960 – 1999. The City of Laurens Building Department reports that within the City limits, few building permits for single family construction have been issued over the last five years. However, it is interesting to note that in 2014 and 2015, the number of permits issued have increased dramatically.

Building Permits for New Construction – City of Laurens Building Department

Year	Number of Permits Issued for New Home Construction within City
2010	1
2011	1
2012	2
2013	4
2014	6
2015	7 (as of September 2015)

Declining household size has been a major factor in the housing market in recent years. The formation of households depends on both economic and social factors. The decline in birth rate and the increase in elderly, single, and divorced households has greatly reduced household size. This, in turn, has generated housing demand even though population has not increased.

Age of Occupied Housing – American Community Survey, U.S. Census 2009-2013

Year Structure Built	Occupied Housing Units	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied
2010 or later	0.1%	0.2%	.0%
2000 to 2009	8.6%	9.4%	7.1%
1980 to 1999	32.3%	31.2%	34.6%
1960 to 1979	35.6%	36.4%	33.9%
1940 to 1959	16.5%	17.3%	15.0%
1939 or earlier	6.8%	5.5%	9.4%

Historic Preservation and Rehabilitation

It is noteworthy to mention that rehabilitation of existing structures increases property values and therefore rents and taxes. Laurens has a large number of historic properties that deserve a fresh look and interior upgrades.

Mobile Homes

The City of Laurens has issued a moratorium on mobile homes through its Zoning Ordinance. The 2005 Comprehensive Plan stated there were approximately 200 mobile homes within the City limits at that time. The Laurens County Tax Assessor reports in 2014 within the City of Laurens there were 85 parcels with mobile home buildings.

2014 Mobile Homes – Laurens County Tax Assessor Files for the City of Laurens

Class	Parcels	Buildings	Building Value	Building Assessment
Residential	32	32	\$386,875	\$15,480
RX	3	3	\$7,000	\$280
Total at 4%	35	35	\$393,875	\$15,760
Commercial	1	1	\$5,000	\$300
Reg	8	8	\$34,000	\$2,040
RN	42	41	\$202,125	\$12,130
Total at 6%	51	50	\$241,125	\$14,470

Rental Property

The U.S. Census reports the median gross rent for the City of Laurens was \$591 as of 2013. Census data also shows that the majority of the population (81.2%) resides in the same house for more than one year. The report shows currently 30.4% of housing is renter occupied. This is comparable to national statistics of 32.4% of homes nationwide are renter occupied.

The Retail Strategies Report prepared for the Laurens County Development Corporation shows that within the City and outwards by three miles, the number renter occupied housing rose from the years 2000 to 2014.

Renter Occupied Housing Units

Year	Number of units within the City and radiating out 3 miles
2000	2026
2010	2266
2014	2377

Affordable, new or updated rental property is a need for the City of Laurens. Most apartment complexes (multi-unit structures) are sectioned for government rental assistance programs.

Affordable Housing

The City of Laurens recognizes that the availability of new, but affordable, housing is necessary to sustain and attract a stable population. The City has partnered with several agencies to build several new single family detached homes within the City limits.

Genesis Homes is a certified Community Development Corporation (CDC) and a registered non-profit 501 (c) 3. This group seeks to facilitate neighborhood revitalization efforts in low to moderate income areas in the Upstate of South Carolina through the development of affordable housing for homeownership or home rental. Genesis Homes addresses the need for affordable housing by constructing quality-crafted homes for both rental and ownership by low-income families and the elderly. Homes are currently under construction in the eastern sector of the City. The City expects to continue a partnership with Genesis Homes in the future.

Habitat for Humanity is a Christian non-profit housing ministry. With the help of donated land from the City and local volunteer labor, the Habitat for Humanity program builds at least one home per year within the City. The Laurens District 55 High School Building Construction program utilizes student labor to construct new homes at the high school which are then moved to donated sites and finished through the Habitat for Humanity program. Homes are sold to owners who have given much of their time in “sweat equity” and, in turn, pay an affordable monthly mortgage payment.

HOUSING STRENGTHS:

- ❖ Census data shows that most Laurens residents live in the same home for more than one year. Data also shows that the majority of homes are owned by residents and not rented. This shows a sense of pride and willingness to sustain upkeep of residences.

- ❖ Most neighborhoods are well maintained with few vacant homes.

HOUSING WEAKNESSES:

- ❖ The majority of single family homes within the City limits are fifteen years old and older. Very few new homes have been constructed within the last 20 years. This is detrimental to homes listed on the resale market as most homebuyers are looking for newer homes at a good price.
- ❖ Conventional rental opportunities are low within the City limits. There are no large multi-family apartment complexes that are not government assisted. However, there are many single family homes that are available for rent from private individuals.

HOUSING PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Encourage more affordable housing construction with outside partners such as Genesis Homes, Habitat for Humanity and the LDHS Building program.
- ❖ Work with local realtors to advertise and promote residences within the City of Laurens for individuals who are considering locating to Laurens.
- ❖ Create a Rental Properties Board for landlords.
- ❖ Create a Revitalization Board to address areas and neighborhoods that need improvement.
- ❖ Encourage the formation of neighborhood groups and homeowner associations to foster a sense of pride among residents and to encourage upkeep of properties.
- ❖ Review developmental regulations and zoning ordinances to determine if any areas within these documents need to be revised to encourage more housing development.
- ❖ Enforce current City codes as they relate to vacant and substandard housing.

CHAPTER 3 - NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

This chapter will address the unique structures as well as cultural and natural environmental characteristics that are found in the City of Laurens.

Climate

The City of Laurens has a total area of 10.6 square miles, all of it land. Laurens has a generally mild climate. The average wintertime high is 59 degrees and the average wintertime low is 36 degrees. The average summertime high is 89 degrees and the average summertime low is 65 degrees. The city averages around 4.6” of rainfall monthly.

Little River

The Little River was constructed in to alleviate flooding.

Now, parts along the Little River have been developed and include a paved trail which stretches 1.1 miles within the City limits. It is occasionally hilly and winds along the little River and Reedy Fork Creek. Development along the Little River was non-existent for a time until the City of Laurens was chosen as a site for the HGTV reality television show, Town Haul, which aired on the HGTV network in 2005.

In all six episodes of Town Haul, host Genevieve Gorder and her team refreshed some of the historic areas of Laurens and re-imagined new spaces with the help of residents. Town Haul noted “few towns have the luxury of a ‘river running through it’.” The crew of Town Haul built the Little River Park and included a state of the art playground complete with a miniature golf course and plenty of green space for socializing. In addition, the television show also created an outside open-air amphitheatre located on the Little River.

Artist’s Coop

The Artist’s Coop opened in October of 2002 and located on the Laurens Public Square in downtown Laurens. It became a non-profit organization in February of 2003. The Artist’s Coop is the only organization in Laurens County that offers and promotes visual arts for artists in the upstate of South Carolina. It is a public gallery and educational center offering art and pottery classes for all ages. It is a venue for many rural and unknown artists to display their work. Over sixty artists are members of the co-op. It is supported by members’ fees, commissions on sales, fund raisers, class tuitions, and donations from patrons and clients.

Laurens City Cemetery

The Laurens City Cemetery is located in the 400 block of North Harper Street in Laurens. The cemetery began as a family graveyard for the Thomas Porter family in the early 19th century. The first person buried there was the Porter’s two-year-old daughter who died in 1817 as the result of a bite from a rabid dog. The cemetery was expanded twice in the early 20th century to its current boundary on the Little River. Originally, the cemetery was called the New Cemetery and later Riverside Cemetery before becoming known colloquially as the Laurens City Cemetery.

Laurens County Museum

The Laurens County Museum Association was founded in July 2005 with the mission to preserve the history of Laurens County by providing and maintaining a place to display items significant

to the history of the county. In less than two years after the association's formation, the Laurens County Museum opened its first location at 205 West Laurens Street in downtown Laurens. In 2012 the Witherspoon Building on the historic Public Square was deeded to the association and a capital campaign begun to renovate the nearly 22,000 square foot building as the new location for the Museum. The goal of this new location is to bring new life to downtown through increased tourism traffic and a renewed appreciation of the history of Laurens.

Main Street Laurens

Main Street Laurens USA, Inc., was started in 1996 as the vehicle to drive downtown revitalization for the City of Laurens. As a member of Main Street South Carolina and an Accredited Main Street Program with the National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Main Street Laurens uses the 4-Point approach to revitalization. Those four points include Promotion, Design, Economic Enhancement, and Organization.

Main Street Laurens mission is to promote, improve and preserve the unique character and economic vitality of Downtown Laurens. The 20/20 Vision for Downtown Laurens is for historic Downtown Laurens to be the heart of the community, bringing people together to shop, socialize and have fun. Beautifully restored buildings with loft apartments and appealing storefronts continue to offer an inviting community atmosphere. Thriving local businesses will be a competitive force offering diversified products and services for residents and visitors alike.

The mission and vision of Main Street Laurens is accomplished only through community volunteers and partnerships. Those partnerships include the City of Laurens, Laurens CPW, PRTC, The Laurens Y, The Laurens Master Gardeners, Laurens Chamber of Commerce and the LCDC. Developing these strong partnerships, and constantly looking for new ones, is an ongoing job of the Main Street program.

The recent development of a stronger relationship between the City of Laurens and Main Street has resulted in many early successes. The new Laurens Living brand is the most recent accomplishment through a re-branding effort lead by Arnett Muldrow of Greenville. This re-branding exercise helped develop new logos for all aspects of both the City and Main Street Laurens. Another project, the result of this stronger partnerships, is the purchase and rehab of the former Chaney building in downtown.

Design: The Design Team for Main Street Laurens works to develop the overall design of downtown. The accomplishments of this group include facade grants, hanging of street banners, development of the new pocket park, clean up days and helping to ensure the City of Laurens is protecting the unique architecture present in downtown Laurens.

Promotion: The Promotion Team works to promote the downtown, its businesses and the Main Street program through special events, retail promotions and other promotional ideas. Some recent successful events include the weekly Downtown Farmers Market, Small Business Saturday activities, Christmas in the Park Light Tours, The Little River Bridge Run, The Laurens Christmas Parade and the annual Sip-N-Stroll Wine Tasting. In 2015, through the Hughes Investments Community Vibrancy Grant from Ten at the Top, Main Street began the Finally Friday music series in downtown on the final Friday of each month, March through August.

The largest event in the county is Squealin' on the Square presented by PRTC, the annual KCBS BBQ Cook-off and festival. This event started by Main Street Laurens in 2000 has grown yearly to now welcome over 20,000 visitors for the two day event. In recent years, Squealin' has attracted visitors from over 87 zip codes outside of the City of Laurens. This event is an economic boost for local businesses, restaurants, and hotels, including those in neighboring cities. The event attracts BBQ teams from across the southeast and certified BBQ judges from up and down the East Coast. The event has been recognized by many awards and was featured on the 3rd season of the Travel Channel's *BBQ Crawl*, hosted by Diva Que! This event would not be possible if it weren't for the hundreds of volunteers and local sponsors.

Organization: For Main Street Laurens, the Organization Team is responsible for the financial side of the organization. Main Street Laurens depends heavily on the financial support of the community. This support is what helps the organization accomplish its mission. The team has been responsible for recognizing excellence in our community. These winners are then submitted for Main Street South Carolina Inspiration Awards, which Downtown Laurens has been awarded 7 Maters Merchant Awards since 2000, among other awards.

Economic Enhancement: The Economic Enhancement Team is responsible for working with business and property owners to ensure they have the tools needed to succeed. The team's recent success includes the Jumpstart program, designed to be a rental assistance program to help attract new businesses to downtown. The program is a competition based on business plans and other factors. The first winner, Yo' Cup, opened in the fall of 2014 and applauds the Jumpstart program as the main reason they opened a second location. Other accomplishments of the team include a restaurant grant, in partnership with the City, which awarded nearly \$17,000 to ROMA, in downtown to uplift the restaurant with a bar area renovation. The results give the diners the feeling of being in a restaurant in any large town.

Future plans for the Main Street Laurens Program include hiring a part-time employee to assist the one paid employee. Other plans include a permanent home for the Farmers Market, developing a Master Plan for downtown, continuing to rehabilitate the former Chaney building (in partnership with the City of Laurens), developing a new website to include an available properties component, and actively recruiting new businesses to the downtown. This recruitment will be lead by a recent market analysis identifying several areas of potential economic development growth. Main Street Laurens will also continue to work with the Laurens County Museum Association as they develop their new home on Main Street in downtown. Securing the necessary financing to help develop the upper floors of the downtown buildings will also be a focus of the Main Street Laurens program into the future.

CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES STRENGTHS:

- ❖ Laurens has more cultural and natural resources than most municipalities its size. Many small cities cannot boast a river, a town square, historical buildings and homes, an amphitheatre, a movie theater, and multiple parks.

CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES WEAKNESSES:

- ❖ The resources located within the City limits are not a weakness in themselves. The only potential weakness would be the under utilization of the resources.

CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Continue development along the Little River with parks and restaurants.
- ❖ Better and more frequent programming for the Amphitheatre.
- ❖ Expand Farmers Market to year round planning.
- ❖ Offer another event or festival downtown besides Squealin' on the Square.
- ❖ Continue to support Main Street.

CHAPTER 4 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES

This chapter will address the plans are for the various activities that will be essential to the growth, development or redevelopment of the City of Laurens. Basic services and facilities such as schools and infrastructure are necessary for a community to enter the competitive arena for new investment. Fortunately, Laurens has these services and facilities in place.

Water Supply

The Laurens Commission of Public Works (LCPW) provides and maintains the water supply for the City of Laurens. The water is supplied from Lake Rabon which is owned and operated by the Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission (LCWSC). Lake Rabon contains 2,426 acre-feet of storage of water for residential and industrial use. LCPW's water treatment plant has the capacity to process 8.3 million gallons per day. The water system has 1.5 million gallons in elevated storage.

Sewage System

The wastewater treatment plant has a capacity of 4.5 million gallons per day. LCPW operates an "activated sludge process."

Electric Service

LCPW provides electrical service to the City of Laurens. Power is purchased from Piedmont Municipal Power Agency and Southeastern Power Administration for resale.

Natural Gas Service

LCPW provides natural gas to the area within the City of Laurens. The natural gas system is comprised of approximately 250 square miles and approximately 465 miles of pipeline.

Solid Waste Collection

The City of Laurens provides curbside garbage collection once a week to approximately 2900 customers. The City is responsible for collections of wastes which come under the following categories:

- Garbage.
- Market refuse.
- General rubbish.
- Yard rubbish.
- Ashes.
- General bulk waste.
- Residential bulk waste.

Recycling

The City of Laurens has a dedicated recycling center located at 124 Caroline Street. The Center is landscaped so that it has a friendly curb appeal and encourages citizens to get into the habit of recycling. The Laurens Recycle Center currently accepts the following materials: cardboard and paperboard, newspaper and paper, plastic bottles and containers, and aluminum cans. The City sells these items to manufacturers to offset the cost of running the Laurens Recycle Center. The aluminum cans are donated to the S.C. Burned Children's Fund in Augusta, Ga. Laurens ranked

#3 in the State in 2014 for the tonnage of cans recycled. This is a direct result of the great effort of the Laurens Fire Department and other recycling agencies to benefit those that must receive medical treatment for their burns. The City partners with the Disabilities and Special Needs Board to employ attendants at the Recycle Center.

Public Safety

Police Protection

The City of Laurens Police Department is a full service police department. Currently the City is budgeted for 32 sworn officers and 33 vehicles.

The Patrol Division: Responsible for the uniformed patrol functions of the department including 24-hour response to the initial investigation of crimes and incidents, traffic enforcement and control, accident investigation, community policing programs, and crime prevention functions.

Uniform Division: Uniform Division officers make up the largest and most visible group within the police department. These officers wear uniforms and drive the marked police cars. Most Uniform Division officers are assigned to patrol duties wherein they respond to either observed or citizens' calls for crimes in progress, traffic problems and accidents, disturbances, domestic violence, burglaries, robberies, auto thefts, assaults, etc., arresting suspects and writing investigative reports. In addition to handling crimes and calls for police service, patrol officers enforce traffic laws, do crime preventive patrol, assist motorists and, in general, serve and protect the citizens and visitors of Laurens.

Traffic Enforcement: The primary purpose of traffic enforcement is to reduce accidents, save lives, and facilitate the safe and efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic throughout the City. Traffic problems, including congestion, aggressive drivers, and speeding through neighborhoods, consistently ranks among the top 5 police-related concerns of Laurens residents in surveys conducted by the Laurens Police Department.

School Officer Resource Program: The School Officer Resource Program consists of two full-time police officers. One officer is assigned to Laurens Middle School and one is assigned to Sanders Middle School. Both officers are located within Laurens District 55. The goal of personnel working as School Resource Officers is to foster a positive image of Police Officers among young people, provide education and counseling to students on law enforcement topics, and provide security and maintain peace on school property.

The City of Laurens Police Department plans within the next ten (10) years to provide a pay scale for employees that will compete with surrounding agencies in order to attract and retain the best possible law enforcement and increasing the number of sworn officers to 40 officers.

Fire Protection Plan

The City of Laurens Fire Department was established in 1884 and is a combination paid and volunteer department. The City provides two fire stations to serve the citizens of Laurens: 1301 West Main Street and 411 Mill Street. This provides service on each end of the City. The department is staffed by 13 paid and 20 part-time firefighters. Personnel are trained in interior

structural fire fighting, confined spaces rescue, Haz-Mat, medical first responder, and fire prevention and trench rescue.

The City of Laurens Fire Department was awarded a class 2 ISO rating in 2011 and is one of only 25 departments in the state to receive this rating. The goal for the next ten years is to maintain the Class 2 rating and possibly scoring a Class 1 rating.

Future needs regarding fire safety include replacing one fire engine and one ladder truck over the next ten years.

Emergency Medical Service

Emergency Medical Services are provided by the Laurens County EMS.

Educational Facilities

Laurens County School District 55

Primary and secondary education in the City of Laurens is provided for the public by the Laurens County School District 55. With four K-5 elementary schools, two K-8 combined elementary/middle schools, two 6-8 middle schools and one 9-12 high school, Laurens School District 55 serves approximately 6,100 students. Instruction at all grade levels and in all nine schools focuses on *South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards* and the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*.

District 55 is also an “authentic” Montessori site with teachers trained in the Montessori Method. Since implementation in the district in 1995, the Montessori choice has continued to expand and is currently offered at three elementary schools and two middle schools. Serving approximately 1,000 students in preschool through middle school, District 55 is currently home to the large public school Montessori program in South Carolina.

Laurens District 55 High School is a comprehensive high school. Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, students will have the opportunity to participate in a Middle College Program and earn an associate degree while in high school.

Joe R. Adair Outdoor Education Center

Located at 110 Scout Creek Court, The Joe R. Adair Outdoor Education Center opened on March 22, 1996. Since that time, thousands of students and their teachers have experienced "hands on" education at the Center. Nestled in a wooded area off Parkview Drive behind Collyar Park in Laurens, the site for the Joe R. Adair Outdoor Education Center features 8.24 acres of mature hardwoods, colorful wild flora, and a winding creek. American beech, yellow poplar, and a hodgepodge of other hardwood trees and vegetation flourish in this habitat, as Scout Creek meanders through a ridge of varying elevations to create a moist and fertile bottomland. The property, given to the Soil Conservation District in 1992 as a gift by retired Soil Conservation Service employee Joe Adair, also includes an office and classroom building, an amphitheater, nature trails, picnic area, and a Native American area. In addition, an authentic Laurens County log cabin, which dates back to the 1800's, was donated and carefully relocated to the Center property. The log cabin site features a pioneer setting, including a garden.

Laurens Academy

Laurens Academy is a private, college preparatory school in a non-denominational Christian environment. The school began in August 1994 and is conveniently located on Highway 49 less than a mile off of I-385 and approximately 5 miles south of I-26 in Laurens County. The Academy serves families from all around the upstate as well as the world through an extensive International Student Program.

Each day begins with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance and students attend chapel once a week. The college prep education begins in K4 and builds upon the knowledge gained each year culminating with junior and senior high school students taking dual-enrollment college classes through The University of South Carolina and graduating with over 30 hours of college credit. Students learn cursive writing, spelling, grammar, traditional math, reading through phonics, science and history through hands-on exploration, as well as foreign language, art, music, physical education, computer and library. In athletics Laurens Academy competes in the South Carolina Independent School Athletic Association where it fields 14 teams on the middle school and varsity level.

Laurens Academy exceeds state educational standards and has 100% college acceptance. These students rank in the 70th percentile on the National Stanford Test and meet or exceed state averages on the SAT and ACT. Limited class sizes allow students to receive the attention they need and help to create a family atmosphere on campus. The school is accredited through the AdvancED Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the South Carolina Independent School Association (SCISA). Students applying must possess an overall “B” average and be free from any discipline issues. All incoming students are screened to ensure proper class placement for academic success.

First Steps

Laurens County First Steps program provides quality programs to help prepare children to reach first grade healthy and ready to succeed. The First Steps program partners with Laurens County School District 55, the Laurens Family YMCA, and the United Way to offer childcare scholarships, parent education, training for child care providers, and 4K classrooms in child care centers.

Colleges

University of South Carolina – Union at Laurens campus

Since 1983, The University of South Carolina Union has served an important part in offering University education to Laurens residents. In 2014, USC Union Laurens location moved to The Oaks Shopping Center at the Intersection of Highways 221 and 76 Bypass in the City of Laurens. The USC Union Laurens location offers a variety of programs and services to area citizens including the opportunity to complete an associate or baccalaureate degree programs without leaving the community in which they live and work. The campus offers state-of-the art classrooms where students can take traditional classroom setting and two-way video classes. They also offer classes for Concurrent (Dual Enrollment) courses to area high school students who want to get a jump start on their college career.

Piedmont Technical College – Laurens County Campus

This campus is located at 663 Medical Ridge Road in Clinton, SC. The 39,000 square foot facility serves PTC students who reside in Laurens County and provides a home to Laurens County Adult Education (Lifelong Learning – School Districts 55 and 56). Students have the opportunity to take credit or non-credit courses in a traditional classroom setting, via satellite, or a two-way video. Student services at the Laurens Campus include advising, financial aid, placement testing, career counseling, registration, and library services.

Straight Street

Straight Street is located in downtown Laurens at 220 West Main Street in what used to be the old Sears building next to the First United Methodist Church. Straight Street serves the youth of Laurens County, ages thirteen through nineteen, through a variety of activities such as basketball, air hockey, ping pong, pool, and video game stations.

Straight Street provides an avenue of outreach off the public street where youth can meet with their friends and are not subjected to the at risk behaviors found in their neighborhoods and streets. The Center cultivates an environment that is safe and fun for all, but also a place for spiritual and social growth. Straight Street is operated by a volunteer staff and is open on Friday and Saturday nights from 7:00 pm to 11:00 pm.

Library

The Laurens County Library is a county-wide system operating two branches, a bookmobile and book deposits for senior citizens. The Main Branch of the Library is located within the City of Laurens at 1017 West Main Street. The Library is governed by a seven member Board of Trustees appointed by the Laurens County Council. Most of the Library's funding is allocated by Laurens County Council, but support is also received from the State of South Carolina, from the cities of Laurens and Clinton, through federal grants for specific projects and from patron donations.

City of Laurens Recreation

The Laurens Parks and Recreation Department was established in 2005 and offers youth sports in baseball/softball, basketball, football and cheerleading, a full array of summer sports camps and day camps. The Recreation Department also oversees the programming for the Laurens Amphitheater located on the Little River.

Little River Park--located at 317 East Main Street Laurens, this park is the office of the Parks and Recreations Department. Along with lots of green space, the park houses a large playground, a mini golf course and a Pavilion. The mini golf course was designed and built by Town Haul reality television show in 2005. While here, the show also built the first stage of the playground. After the crews left the City added the offices and also the Pavilion. The Pavilion is a covered shelter where residents can rent for such things as birthday parties, family reunions or other events.

River Street Park--Located in the Historic Jersey Community, River Street Park is home to the city's only outdoor basketball court. Totally revamped in 2012 the court is always full. Along side the court is a family playground, paved parking, restrooms and a pavilion. The pavilion is available for rentals and is programmed by the City of Laurens Recreation Department.

Laurens City Park--located on Brownlee Ave, City Park is the hub for all of the Recreation Departments athletic activities. Home of Laurens Little League, there are two youth baseball fields and one multipurpose field, and all are in use year round. These fields house Laurens Little League regular season, District tourneys and travel baseball tourneys. City Park is also home to the football field where all home football games for Laurens PRD are played. The facility also provides six tennis courts. Home of LDHS Tennis home matches, CLNTA league matches as well as the Laurens Youth Tennis program, the City Park Tennis courts are a huge asset to this park.

Taylor Park--located on South Harper Street Extension, Taylor Park is a playground park where many children can walk daily and enjoy the outdoor fun.

Laurens Amphitheater--Located at 420 Gordon Street, the Laurens Amphitheater is a great setting for concerts, weddings, and church gatherings. Comfortably seating around 3,000 this complex is a gem that the City cherishes.

Ceramtec Park--located just off of Highway 14, Ceramtec Park is a 40 acre piece of land that has the potential to be the next big thing. The park is currently under intense planning and direction to be a park that draws visitors from around Laurens County and the entire Upstate of South Carolina.

YMCA

Located within the City limits on Anderson Drive, the Family YMCA of Laurens was established in 1969 and is a focal point within the Laurens community for health and wellness activities. The YMCA boasts meeting space, indoor gym with basketball courts, an exercise studio with programmed fitness programs, cardio equipment, weight room, and an outdoor swimming pool. The YMCA of Laurens addresses some of our community's most critical social needs by helping individuals across Laurens County reach their full potential in personal health. The YMCA focus includes youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. The YMCA also provides onsite therapy and rehabilitation for injury and surgical recovery.

The YMCA provides various programming provides education and instruction on issues that include ensuring children have access to healthy food and physical activity, giving individuals the training and tools to succeed in life-changing behaviors, helping diverse populations connect to their community, advocating with policymakers for change and empowering volunteers to give back. Specific programming includes but is not limited to after-school and childcare, youth sports, aquatics, wellness classes for youth to older adults, diabetes prevention, grief counseling, internships, and volunteer opportunities.

The Ridge

The Ridge at Laurens is a new community center (completion date 1st quarter 2016) located on Exchange Drive across from the Laurens City Park. The City Council of Laurens voted in 2014 to pursue the construction of this new space due to the large demand by citizens for meeting and recreation space. The center is owned by the City of Laurens and will be used for meetings, family reunions, social gatherings, and general youth, senior, and community events. It will have two full gymnasium spaces that will be used for basketball, volleyball, and other sporting activities. Basketball and volleyball tournaments will be held that will enhance economic development by attracting out-of-town teams. These spaces are designed to be multipurpose in order to host large events as well. *The Ridge* will also house the offices for the city recreation department who will be responsible for the operation of the facility.

Churches and Worship

More than 180 local churches provide worship and fellowship for the citizens of Laurens County. Some of the most beautiful and richly historic buildings in the county are churches. Churches provide socialization and entertainment for a large portion of the Laurens communities.

The Baptist denomination has 71 churches within the county, while Presbyterian and Methodist denominations each have 18 churches. Laurens County is also home to a number of other denominations including AME, Catholic, Episcopal, Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter Day Saints, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Wesleyan and more.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES STRENGTHS:

- ❖ The community facilities for Laurens are up to date and well maintained.
- ❖ The schools in Laurens are well equipped to produce graduates who are prepared for college and the workforce.
- ❖ Laurens has a strong church presence that offers socialization and moral education. Churches are often the heart of the community and contribute to many outside agencies and causes that meet the needs of residents where the City government cannot.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES WEAKNESSES:

- ❖ Despite trained teachers and new technology advances, the school facilities are aged.
- ❖ Laurens public schools continue to test below the national and state averages. This is a deterrent to attracting new families with school aged children to the area, as well as, new businesses who rely on an educated work force.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Partner with local schools to change the perception of public education in Laurens.
- ❖ Support police department with new equipment, body cameras and other big ticket items necessary to provide the best service to citizens and to protect police officers in the line of duty.
- ❖ Support the fire department with replacing one fire engine vehicle and one ladder truck by 2025.
- ❖ Continue park programming to improve health and quality of life for all residents.
- ❖ Work closely with churches to involve the community in City events and programs.
- ❖ Continue to support the YMCA monetarily and to partner with recreation and programming.

CHAPTER 5 - TRANSPORTATION

This chapter will discuss transportation facilities including major road improvements, new road construction, and pedestrian and bicycle projects. This part of the plan is essential to the land use portion of the Comprehensive Plan in order to ensure transportation efficiency for existing and planned development. An effective transportation system is crucial to the economic and social well-being of a community by allowing access to employment, labor, goods and services.

The City of Laurens is directly served by Highway 221 and Highway 76 which connect with Highway 14, Highway 49. Interstate 385 and Interstate 26 connect to major arteries. This system meets all travel and commuting needs for the citizens of Laurens.

Railroad

A rail map of South Carolina shows the state criss-crossed in nearly every direction by active railroad lines – some short, some long, some within the state, and some leaving the state. But only three lines carry people rather than freight.

All three of those passenger routes traverse South Carolina in a general north-south orientation, passing through the state's major cities: Greenville, Columbia, and Charleston. However, none of these lines connect with each other. The 2013 introduction of the inland port in Greer has sparked conversations among railroad advocates about the possibility of using the active Upstate to Charleston corridor to introduce passenger service from the mountains to the coast of South Carolina.

Rail transportation in Laurens County is provided by CSX Transportation and G&W Railroad, but neither line carries passengers. These lines provide transport service to both the cities of Laurens and Clinton, the company's main line passes directly through the neighboring City of Clinton. Switching is provided on an as needed basis.

CSX has introduced a new program called CSX Select Sites. Select Sites are properties identified and vetted as capable locations for future manufacturing facilities along the CSX network. These sites can be developed quickly because standard land use issues and comprehensive due diligence items have already been addressed. These are the first premium certified rail sites for industrial development and expansion. Select Site certification criteria include size, access to rail service, proximity to highways, workforce availability, natural gas, electricity, water, and wastewater, environmental and geo-technical standards. Neighboring Newberry County was recognized as a CSX Select Site in 2015.

Aviation

Laurens County Airport is a county-owned public-use airport in Laurens County, South Carolina, United States. It is located three nautical miles (6 km) east of the central business district of Laurens, South Carolina. It has one runway designated 8/26 with an asphalt surface measuring 3,898 by 75 feet (1,188 x 23m). For the 12 month period ending May 22, 2009, the air port had 5,500 craft operations – an average of 15 per day: 94% general aviation, 3% air taxi and 3% military. At that time there were 13 aircraft based at this air port. All aircrafts were single engine.

Street Signs

Over the last two years the City has implemented a new street sign replacement program on major thoroughfares. These signs add to the aesthetic value of the neighborhoods as well as direct traffic.

Public Transportation

There is currently no public transportation system that serves the City of Laurens. Various human service agencies provide client transportation to services within the City.

Biking/Hiking Trails

The Laurens County Trails Association is currently working on a trails plan to connect Laurens to the Swamp Rabbit Trail system. During May and June of 2015, the Laurens County Trails Association sponsored a survey to probe community interest in, and preferred use of, all forms of trails. The survey was developed in partnership with the National Park Service and administered by the Presbyterian College Office of Institutional Research.

The survey results demonstrate a high level of interest and community support for trails in Laurens County. Of the 239 responses received, 92% are in favor of extending the Swamp Rabbit Trail through Laurens County.

According to Furman University's 2012-2013 study of the GHS Swamp Rabbit Trail (SRT) in Greenville County, slightly over 500,000 people used the SRT during that year. 25% of them were from outside the Upstate so clearly the SRT is a tourism destination. Those 125,000 users, from outside the region, brought in \$6.7 million to the local economy. One purpose of extending the Swamp Rabbit Trail through Laurens County is to create a tourism destination and reproduce, to the extent possible, the financial results enjoyed by Greenville County.

Laurens County's natural beauty, parks, open spaces, and historic sites can also draw tourists. So, when completed, the Laurens County Greenway Master Plan is expected to include a variety of land- and water-based trails that capitalize on those resources. The SRT is envisioned as the backbone, or connector, that integrates those trails.

With appropriate planning, the City of Laurens can become an essential hub for this growth. The SRT itself and/or short spurs within the city can connect parks, recreation facilities, schools and businesses, providing access to these facilities by both citizens and tourists. As a hub, the City can provide food, lodging, shopping, and other resources to tourists that are here to enjoy attractions throughout the county.

Complete Streets Resolution

In 2014 the City of Laurens signed a resolution to support the Complete Streets program in the City of Laurens. This program was designed to provide safety and accessibility for all the users of our roads to include pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, commercial and emergency vehicles for people of all ages and abilities.

Golf Carts

A more recent mode of transportation with the City of Laurens has become a golf cart. These vehicles must follow all DMV regulations.

TRANSPORTATION STRENGTHS:

- ❖ The City of Laurens is centrally located with easy access to interstates 385 and 26.

TRANSPORTATION WEAKNESSES:

- ❖ Few biking and hiking trails.
- ❖ Sidewalks need extending through parts of the City.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Encourage creation of biking paths and connect with the Swamp Rabbit Trail.
- ❖ Update all street signage on major thoroughfares.
- ❖ Promote pedestrian activity by extending sidewalks in areas where there are none.
- ❖ Promote pedestrian activity by marking areas as pedestrian friendly in high traffic areas.

CHAPTER 6 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is the process of creating wealth by mobilizing human, physical, natural and capital resources to produce marketable goods and services. The role of the City as the economic developer is to foster the growth and retention of business activity and by way of a healthy economy provide employment opportunities and a strong tax base. This chapter will focus on the following:

- ❖ Retaining existing business and industry.
- ❖ Attracting new businesses.
- ❖ Nurturing small and start-up businesses.
- ❖ Developing and financing facilities that help capture business.

The textile, manufacturing and glass industries were at one point a major source of employment in the City of Laurens. Although many of the textile plants and the glass production facilities have closed over the last 30 years, a variety of industries still exist within the county including CeramTec, International Paper, Milliken & Company, and others. WalMart operates a distribution center outside of the City limits near Interstate 385 and serves as a major employer for many residents within the City. Laurens has seen several recent economic retail developments in the East Main area and is experiencing new capital investment in heavy industry, including a major new transmission production facility for German ZF Group.

According to the U.S. Census the civilian labor force in the City of Laurens from 2009-2013 was 54.3% (ages 16+ years). Statistics also show the mean travel time to work for this same population was 23.2 minutes. This tells us that most people work close to home, and that acceptable employment is available within a short commute.

The Laurens County Development Corporation reports as of June 2014 the total labor force for Laurens County was at 30,129 people. Of those eligible to work, 28,440 were employed at the time of the report leaving only 5.6% unemployed. While a 5.6% unemployment rate is better than most areas, the City of Laurens recognizes that in order for the City to grow, there must be stable employment at competitive wages to retain population, sustain and encourage housing growth and promote retail activity within the City.

The LCDC contracted with Retail Strategies in 2014 to perform an assessment of current retail establishments and projected retail opportunities. This report is included within this Comprehensive Plan. While the LCDC report is not specifically for the City limits of Laurens, it does give good insight as to what types of retail is needed and wanted by the citizens of Laurens and is included as part of this comprehensive plan.

In addition, Main Street Laurens, in conjunction with the City of Laurens Commission of Public Works, contracted with Arnett Muldrow to conduct a community market analysis for downtown Laurens. This market research shows the majority of patrons of downtown businesses reside within the City limits and also come from Clinton and Mountville. Fewer than 1% of shoppers are from outside of Laurens County. The research identified the best potential retail opportunities for downtown Laurens, and these are listed below:

- ❖ Full Service Restaurants – mid and upscale fine dining establishments.
- ❖ Special Food Services – catering and special event locations.
- ❖ Clothing Stores – women’s clothing in particular.
- ❖ Shoe Stores and Sporting Goods Stores – athletic gear for all sports programs located in Laurens.
- ❖ Special Food Stores – specialty grocers.

Main Street Laurens has also created a Strategy Board based on the findings from the market analysis. This information is included below:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRENGTHS:

- ❖ Storefronts on the Public Square are available for business locations.
- ❖ Friendly zoning ordinance that allows and encourages retail development.
- ❖ Downtown has sufficient parking and easy walking access to storefronts.
- ❖ Attractive downtown landscape.
- ❖ Safe Public Square location with immediate police presence.
- ❖ Existing industrial park with available acreage, infrastructure, and access to rail and interstate.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEAKNESSES:

- ❖ Lack of dedicated economic development recruitment to downtown Laurens.
- ❖ Lack of retail and restaurants within City limits which in turn encourages residents to shop elsewhere.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ Create an economic development board to discuss market opportunities and encourage investment in the City of Laurens.
- ❖ Recruit upscale restaurants and boutique shopping on the Public Square.
- ❖ Encourage business owners in the downtown district to expand business hours on the weekend.
- ❖ Work closely with Main Street Laurens to foster economic development within the Square.

CHAPTER 7 - LAND USE

The City of Laurens contains the full range of urban uses including residential, industrial, commercial, public spaces and vacant land.

Residential Land Use: The current zoning map shows the City of Laurens as a primarily residential area. The largest zoning preference is R-2 which is mainly single family homes. Existing residential land use in the City is predominantly low to medium density single family development. Higher density multi-family residential complexes are scattered throughout the City with no major concentration of large developments.

Commerical Land Use and Business Corridors

Hillcrest- Fleming Street – This corridor stretches from Church Street to Harper street and from Harper Street to East Main Street. Hillcrest Drive houses the Laurens County Courthouse facility as well the Hillcrest Shopping Center. Banks, fast food restaurants and various small businesses round out the buildings along this route. Most buildings are landscaped, and the four lane road is in good condition and offers a sidewalk for pedestrian traffic. This area follows the Little River.

Fleming Street continues from Harper Street and then becomes Exchange Drive before ending at East Main Street. This portion is a mixed use of single family homes and small businesses. Once the street becomes Exchange Drive, the use is City Parks and Recreation along with a multifamily housing development, restaurants and small businesses.

Short Term Goals:

- Extend the period lighting along this corridor.
- Extend sidewalks down Fleming to Exchange Drive.
- Update street signs.

Long Term Goals:

- Recruit grocery store for this area.

East Main Street – This corridor has become the main retail area for the City of Laurens. This corridor boasts several grocery stores, larger department store retail, Wal-Mart, chain stores, fast food dining and a few small businesses. This area is consistently busy with traffic at all hours. The four lane road is in good condition. This area has a partial sidewalk, but it is rarely used by pedestrians due to the traffic along this stretch.

Short Term Goals

- Continue business recruitment.
- Extend period lighting into this corridor.

Long Term Goals:

- Extend sidewalk from main shopping area in the western direction.
- Monitor the amount of curb cuts into new shopping centers and commercial spaces to allow a good traffic flow and reduce the amount of vehicles entering or exiting the main stream of traffic.

North Harper – This road is one of the main gateways into the City of Laurens. Any driver entering the City from Highway 49 or Hwy 221 North will travel along North Harper. While there is a formal stone marker indicating the city limits, it is not easy to tell where the dividing line is between Laurens County and the City. This corridor is a mix of commercial property along side single family homes. Businesses along this road way include fuel stations, banks, and small businesses. No major retailers are located in this area.

Short Term Goals:

Extend period lighting into corridor.

Long Term Goals:

Create a clear gateway into the City that portrays the image of the City and defines it from the County limits.

Church Street – The Church Street corridor stretches from West Main Street and continues to become Hwy 14 which leads out of the county. This road is home to several professional businesses, a bank, police department, and the Commission of Public Works. A large housing population of single family homes and multi-family apartments also reside along this corridor.

Short Term Goals:

Install period lighting.

Long Term Goals:

Create a clear gateway into the City that portrays the image of the City and defines it from the County limits.

Recruit a grocery store for this area.

West Main Street – This corridor extends from the Public Square westward toward the County line. Most commercial activity is located around Western Square shopping center which houses a major grocery store but has much empty space. This area has declined in commercial activity over the last twenty years due to the expansion of retail on East Main Street. However, this area boasts the most concentrated population of single family homes within a higher price range.

Short Term Goals:

Encourage more retail and professional businesses toward the Western Square.

Extend period lighting from Public Square to Western Square.

Long Term Goals:

Extend sidewalks.

Create bicycle lanes.

Public Square -

The Public Square of Historic Laurens dates back to the 1700s. Five roads converged to where the Square exists today. In 1980 the Square was included on the National Register of Historic Places for its unusually intact collection of architecture from the 19th and 20th centuries. Today the Public Square offers tremendous possibilities for small businesses. Comprised of over 140,000 square feet of retail space, the Square stands as a significant shopping center for the community.

Industrial and Manufacturing Land Use: This category of land use includes warehouse, manufacturing facilities, and industrial parks. Our region is the hub of established manufacturing and research in the state. Clemson University and BMW have teamed to create a new International Center for Automotive Research just ten miles from the Laurens County border. Laurens County has four industrial parks, numerous rail served sites and a 50,000 sq.-ft. spec building available for industrial use.

Public Land Use: Existing public and semi-public land uses within the City include City, County and State offices, cultural and recreation areas, churches, schools, and nursing homes. These land uses generally fit into the urban areas with a minimum of disruption. The only exception noted is the U.S. Post Office located on Harper Street which is a detriment to traffic flow due to lack of parking and easy ingress and egress.

Community Gardens

The City of Laurens has established community gardens in the community and in the public schools. The City should continue to support private and semi-private gardens for food production and provide opportunities for community gardens including vacant lots and school yards.

Annexation

The existing annexation policy requires annexation of residential and commercial properties served by the Laurens Commission of Public Works for utilities. The City of Laurens should continue to encourage the annexation of adjacent developed or developing areas which are contiguous to the City.

CHAPTER 8 – Health and Wellness Community Investment

Personal health and wellness is a concern for all of Americans. In order for the City of Laurens to thrive, its citizens must be healthy.

Laurens County is blessed with an excellent health care system, a continually expanding and improving hospital staffed with outstanding physicians, support by a dedicated emergency medical service staff. Young and old alike will find a commitment to quality and a level of caring unmatched in the Southeast.

Greenville Hospital System

Never losing sight of its mission to deliver progressive healthcare to its citizens, the Greenville Healthcare System is always a step ahead in offering Laurens County a full spectrum of care that is with us for life. GHS offers specialized programs including:

- Comprehensive Acute Care
- Family-Centered Maternity Care
- Modern Outpatient Surgery and Diagnostic Center
- Critical Care Unit with Trained CCU Medical Team
- Emergency Medical Services Staffed 24 Hours
- Cardiac Care And Trauma Center
- Upstate Wound Healing
- Physical Therapy
- Health Works (for business & industry)
- Breast Care Clinic
- Pediatric Care
- Cardiac Rehab Program

Self Regional Healthcare System

Self Regional Medical Center expanded its presence into Laurens in January 2015. The 28,000 square foot medical center is located at 22580 Hwy 76 E in Laurens County and is across the street from the Greenville Hospital complex.

Self prides itself on designing a facility that represents an evolution from the traditional healthcare visit. Their philosophy includes quick wait times and full service procedures such as lab work when visiting a physician in private examination rooms.

To treat all physical deficits and pain, the Optimum Life Center of Self Regional Healthcare now offers outpatient physical therapy services at the Laurens Family YMCA. Trained and certified therapists will treat all physical deficits and pain whether physical impairments are acute, chronic, pre- or post-operative. The YMCA offers new, up-to-date and well-equipped treatment area with one-on-one therapist to patient care.

Good Shepherd Free Medical Clinic provides free medical care to citizens who are without private insurance, government assistance, or the financial resources to afford such care. The clinic is staffed by volunteers and funded by several other sources including private donations.

Piedmont Agency on Aging is a private, non-profit agency focusing on serving the needs of senior adults in order to delay the need for nursing home care. Formerly known as Senior

Options, the Piedmont Agency on Aging relies on support from the county, donations from the community, and volunteer support.

Laurens County Health Department and **Laurens County Department of Social Services** provide numerous programs from health related to training and temporary aid for limited income families. Laurens County Disabilities & Special Needs, Whitten Center, Community Health Services, and Hospice of Laurens County are also important health-related services available to residents.

Assisted Living Facilities available within the county include:

- Bailey Manor
- Beasley Home of the Aged
- Frampton Hall
- Agape at Laurens
- LaForest Community Care System
- Langston House
- Laurens County Memorial Home for the Aged
- Martha Franks Baptist Retirement Center
- NHC HealthCare, Laurens
- NHC HealthCare, Clinton
- Presbyterian Home

CHAPTER 9 -Priority Investment – Projected Projects

The following is a list of prioritized needs with possible funding sources for the City of Laurens. This list should be updated every five years.

City Funded Projects:

- ❖ Purchase of Body Cameras for Police Officers
- ❖ Implementation of Drug Canine Program (Canine for each shift).

General Budget

- ❖ Construction of a Maintenance Building for the Streets and Sanitation Department.
- ❖ Purchase of Engine Truck and Ladder Truck for Fire Department.
- ❖ Installation of period lighting throughout identified corridors.

Hospitality Budget

- ❖ Funding for the Ridge at Laurens Complex.
- ❖ Installation of landscaping at City entrances.

State Budget

- ❖ County Transportation Committee Funds to help pave City maintained streets (\$50,000 per year).
- ❖ County Transportation Committee Funds to install and continue sidewalks on major thoroughfares.

Federal Grants

- ❖ HUD funding to demolish dilapidated structures.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This Comprehensive Plan has included the nine basic elements of a comprehensive plan required by the South Carolina Local Government Planning Enabling Acts of 1994, as amended. Each of these elements includes a discussion of inventory of existing conditions, needs and goals.

This study finds the City of Laurens with good basic infrastructure, the provision of basic municipal services, and many cultural and natural resources. The focus for the future is transforming the negative perception of the City into a positive perception. The City of Laurens has much to be proud of and has many physical buildings and institutions already in place. However, for the City to retain and attract more residents, cultivate new industry, build affordable and new housing, and enjoy more retail establishments, the City must make its locations attractive to development.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Improve the appearance of major retail and commercial corridors leading into the City through landscaping, lighting and sidewalks.**
- ❖ Work with the public school district to improve the reputation of the public school system.**
- ❖ Focus on economic development within the City limits to recruit restaurants and retail shopping.**
- ❖ Encourage the construction of new, affordable housing for ownership and for lease.**
- ❖ Encourage the revitalization of residential areas with historic benefit.**
- ❖ Partner with various groups to bring bicycle and walking trails into the City limits.**

CONCLUSION

This Comprehensive Plan must be continually monitored by the Planning Commission and revisions recommended to the Mayor and Council when changes become necessary.

As required by South Carolina law, the Planning Commission must review the Plan at least every five years.