



CHAPTER FOUR: THE PLANNING PROCESS

4 THE PLANNING PROCESS



Beaufort has an extensive planning history that dates back nearly two hundred years. Just within the past ten years, the City has undertaken or participated in over a dozen planning efforts. A list of the most recent projects includes:

- Historic Preservation Plan Update (2008)
- Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan (2007)
- Boundary Street Master Plan (2006)
- Comprehensive Plan Update (2004,1998)
- Workforce Housing Needs Assessment (2004)
- Lowcountry Joint Land Use Study Plan (2004)
- City of Beaufort Open Space Master Plan (2003)
- Robert Smalls Parkway Access Management Standards (2003)
- Bladen Street Revitalization Plan (2002)
- Entrance Corridors Charrette Report (2002)
- Tree Inventory Report (2002)
- Robert Smalls Parkway Joint Corridor Plan (2001)
- Broadening Our Boundaries Charrette Report (2000)
- Northwest Quadrant Design Principles (1999)
- City of Beaufort Unified Development Ordinance (2003)
- Beaufort Redevelopment Incentive Program (1989)

Chapter Highlights

- 4.1 Plan Development Process
- 4.2 Public Participation
- 4.3 Plan Reconnaissance/Charrette Preparation
- 4.4 The Charrette

The key to any planning effort is implementation, and the citizens of Beaufort made it clear during this process that they are ready to see plans translated into action. This plan sets forth specific action items and an implementation schedule for the City to follow. Action strategies can be found in upcoming chapters, but first, the planning team had to understand the vision of citizens and stakeholders as well as the issues, and opportunities that face the City as it positions itself to succeed over the next decades. This chapter highlights the public nature of this planning process and begins to reveal some of the overriding concepts that would guide the planning team.

“The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.”

— *Ralph Nichols*



Good plans shape good decisions. That's why good planning helps to make elusive dreams come true.

*—Lester Robert Bittel
(b. 1918), writer*

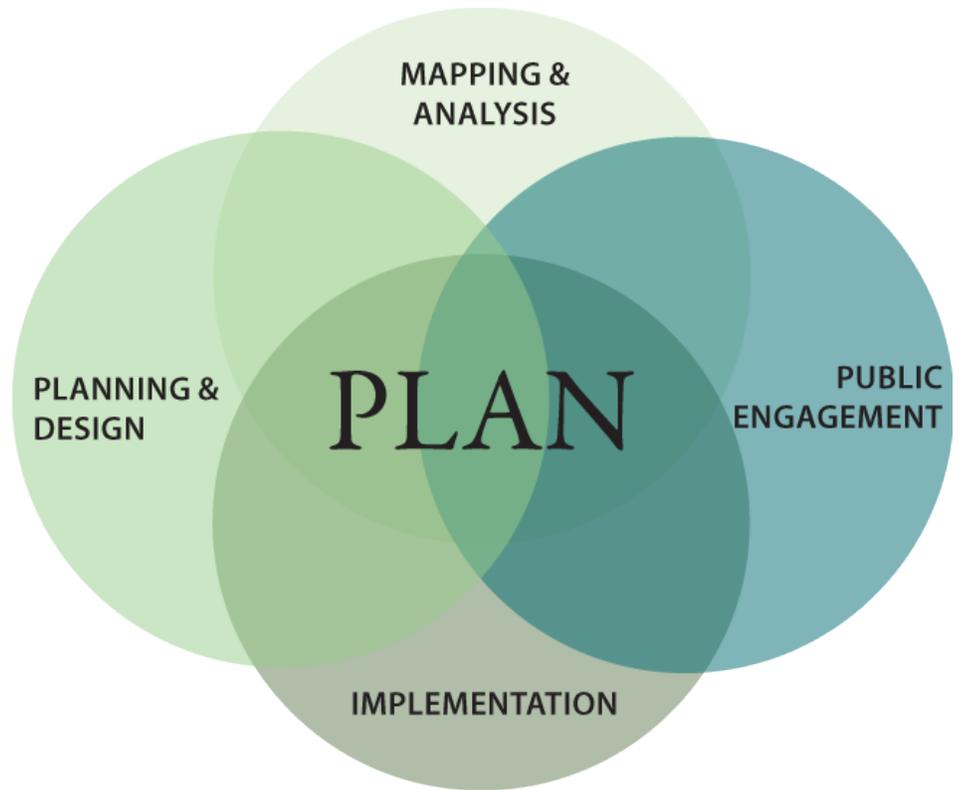
4.1 PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

At the direction of City Council, City staff hired a multi-disciplinary consultant team to assist in developing the plan. City Council also appointed a Steering Committee of 17 citizens and stakeholders to advise the consultants and council and create broader opportunity for public input into the plan. (See the Acknowledgements page for a listing of the Steering Committee members.) Beaufort City Council is responsible for adoption of the plan.

The consultant team used a public design workshop (or “charrette”) as the central element of the comprehensive plan effort. The guiding principles of a charrette-based process are:

- Involve everyone from the start to foster a shared vision.
- Manage the process effectively to build trust between the team and the public.
- Work across disciplines to maximize group learning and productivity.
- Work in short feedback loops to test ideas and stimulate public participation.
- Work in detail to test the feasibility of alternative concepts.

Before and after the charrette were major elements of data collection, mapping, analysis, planning, and design that are described in the sections that follow and contributed to this final product. Additional elements of public input and engagement occurred before and after the charrette as the draft plan was developed.



4.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

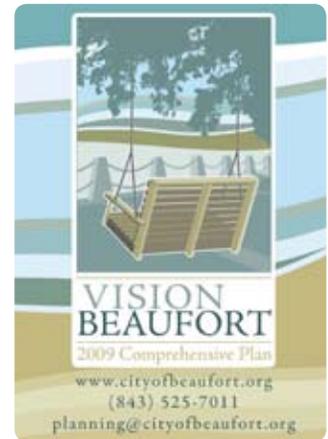
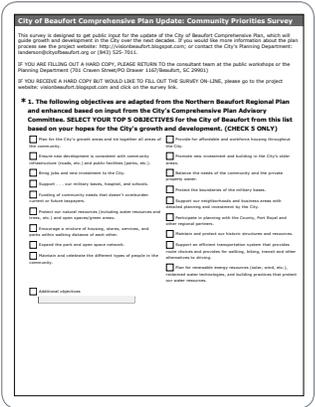
Beaufort's recent planning history has placed a heavy emphasis on public participation and input. City leaders in Beaufort intended that the development of this plan follow in that tradition. In fact, public participation and input were the cornerstones of this planning effort and are the basis for the plan's recommendations.

The City sought to insure that public input on the plan was garnered from as wide a spectrum of community members and stakeholders as possible. To that end, the public participation included several key elements:

1. An advisory committee including a wide range of community perspectives from business owners to neighborhood residents.
2. A community-wide survey that was distributed during the plan process.
3. A plan website that included up to date information on the plan process and supplementary information for education and public comment.
4. A 5-day public planning and design workshop (charrette), which was the central element of the public input process.

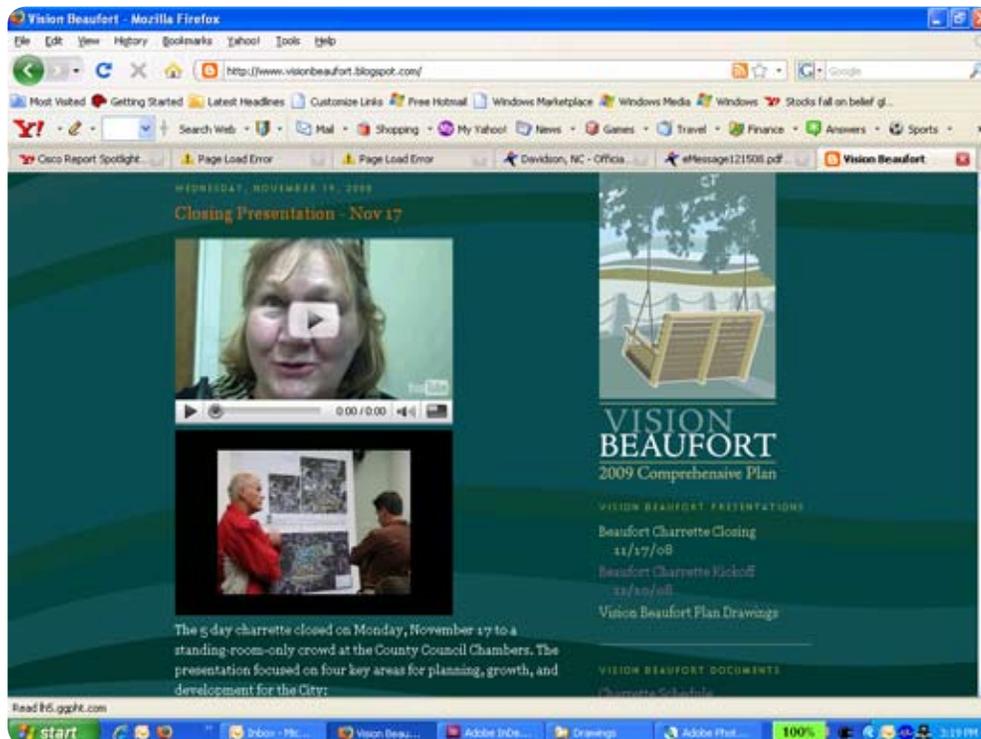
City of Beaufort staff, area non-profit organizations, local media groups, and the consultant team went to great lengths to publicize the charrette process and schedule. City staff and Advisory Committee members distributed posters and plan information throughout the community. These bulletins served notice to the public of the approaching charrette, inviting all interested persons to attend and participate in the workshop activities. This outreach was well-received and helped citizens become active participants in the exciting design work and visioning for Beaufort's future. Citizens were also alerted through internet applications, as well, by postings listed on the project website.

The public's participation in each of the public input venues and events shaped the plan's final recommendations. The public comments, along with information gained from stakeholders, public officials and other representatives, guided the consultant team in their work and were key determinants of the plan's outcomes.



MEDIA APPLICATIONS & INPUT FORUMS

The images above and at left portray the various media used during the charrette. These included project posters, on-line and hard copy community surveys, a project website, powerpoint presentations, and video interviews. These various formats were used to raise awareness about the plan, keep the public posted on the latest ideas generated, and will serve as a multi-media record of the proceedings.





**VISION
BEAUFORT**
2009 Comprehensive Plan



Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work.

—Peter Drucker

4.3 PLAN RECONNAISSANCE/CHARRETTE PREPARATION

Preparation for the week-long charrette began several months ahead of the official kick-off. In the weeks leading up to the charrette, the design team traveled to Beaufort several times to conduct stakeholder interviews, coordinate workshop efforts and perform preliminary site analysis.

The stakeholder interviews consisted of consultant-led sessions in which local officials, agency representatives and interest groups described the pressing issues facing Beaufort. These meetings provided the consultant with insight into the local successes achieved and the challenges remaining as the City prepares to re-assess its development future.

In addition, the design team took to the streets and gathered first-hand evidence of the community’s existing conditions. Team members documented examples of both good and bad planning and design elements in Beaufort, noting how each contributed to the overall environment.

Smart Growth Audit. The plan reconnaissance effort included a review of Beaufort’s previous planning efforts, as documented in the 2008 *Smart Growth Audit*. This Report includes discussion on the existing regulatory practices and recommendations for specific changes to development ordinances. It includes an identification of regulatory barriers to Smart Growth as well opportunities to encourage best design and construction practices. A variety of techniques using best practices from across the United States are included and referenced. Additionally, techniques that might be applied to improve the development approval process and to encourage/incentivize best development practices are included. The report includes a preliminary implementation agenda for policy and regulatory actions.

Unique project logo. A graphic theme was created for this effort as part of the PR and marketing package. The logo was used throughout the process in locations such as design boards, postcards, and the project website.

PR materials including a project website and online survey. Reaching out to the public in a variety of ways is essential for any publically driven planning process.

Together, each of these exercises supplied critical background information, preparing the consultant team for the public design charrette.



◀ BEAUFORT SMART GROWTH AUDIT

As an initial step in this planning process, the consultant team conducted a thorough review of all relevant documents and prepared a draft Audit Report. Each document was assessed in terms of its impact on established Smart Growth goals for the City. The report references key issues identified by stakeholders and the Steering Committee.

4.4 THE CHARRETTE

To guide the planning process, the City of Beaufort and the consultant team hosted a five-day public design charrette. This endeavor began with the opening presentation and workshop on Monday, November 10, 2008.

The consultant team set up a temporary design studio in the Best Western's Conference Room downtown. The space served as the design team's "home base" for the charrette's duration, November 12-17. The studio, with design tables, maps, pin-up boards and graphic work stations, provided an open space where both formal and informal meetings occurred, as well as room for designers to craft the plan's details with the public's help.

Throughout the week hundreds of citizens, property and business owners, public officials and agency representatives met to discuss the City's future. The program featured both formal meetings led by the consultant and open to the public, as well as informal sessions that emerged out of these meetings and other design-related activities. Topics discussed ranged from transportation to big box design, neighborhoods, utilities, environmental protection, affordable housing, and downtown. At the end of each day, the design team facilitated an informal review and public critique of the day's progress.

On Monday, November 17, 2008, the charrette closed with a final presentation highlighting the week's achievements and the plan's preliminary recommendations. Over 100 people were in attendance for the presentation. This plan represents the consensus opinion gained through collaboration between the City's residents, staff and the design team. It embodies the vision to be carried forth by Beaufort's citizens and officials in the years to come.



Charrette is "little cart" in French. In 19th century Paris, design professors circulated carts to collect final drawings from students. Students jumped on the carts as they were pulled through the streets in public view. The term charrette has evolved to mean an open public design process.



Vision Beaufort

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Beaufort, SC

PLANNING & DESIGN CHARRETTE SCHEDULE

Kickoff Presentation and Public Workshop

Join us for a hands-on design session where community residents, stakeholders, and City officials work together to create a vision for Beaufort.

November 10th at 6:00 pm

Location: Beaufort Middle School Cafeteria, 2501 Mossy Oaks Road

Public Planning and Design Charrette

Members of the community and all those interested in the future of Beaufort are invited to stop-by the design studio throughout the week and participate in any of the focus group meetings. The design team will work on-site creating the plan and invites the community to offer continual input and monitor the work-in-progress and will be available to meet with residents, answer questions, and further refine ideas. **Come by for one of the specific focus group meetings or drop in anytime from 9 am until 8 pm each day.**

November 12th – 17th

Location: Dolphin Room @ the Best Western Sea Island Inn, 1015 Bay Street

Wednesday, November 12th

9:00 am Housing
10:30 am Arts & Cultural Facilities
1:00 pm Transportation & Circulation
2:30 pm Pedestrian, Bicycle & Transit Planning
4:00 pm Open Space, Parks, Greenways & Blueways
5:30 pm Daily Project Update/Design Pin-Up
6:30 pm Meeting of the Neighborhoods (All neighborhood leaders and interested residents are invited)
6:30 pm until 8:00 pm Open Design Studio

Friday, November 14th

9:00 am Big Boxes and Corridor Design Standards
11:30 am Town of Port Royal Coordination Meeting
1:00 pm Advisory Committee Meeting
2:30 pm Real Estate and Development Stakeholders
4:00 pm Small Businesses
5:30 pm Daily Project Update/Design Pin-Up
6:30 pm until 8:00 pm Open Design Studio

Thursday, November 13th

8:30 am Downtown Development
10:30 am Downtown Parking
1:00 pm Environmental Protection & Sustainability
2:30 pm Historic Preservation
4:00 pm Utilities
5:30 pm Daily Project Update/Design Pin-Up
6:30 pm until 8:00 pm Open Design Studio

Saturday, November 15th

9:00 am until noon Open Design Studio – All interested citizens are invited to stop by to meet individually with the planners and designers and offer any suggestions & recommendations
3:00 pm Daily Project Update/Design Pin-Up

Monday, November 17th

9:00 am until noon Open Design Studio

Closing Presentation

The design team will present its set of preliminary recommendations for guiding growth, development and redevelopment over the next twenty years.

November 17th at 6:00 pm

Location: County Council Chambers, 100 Ribaut Road

For more information or project updates, please contact the City of Beaufort Planning Department at (843) 525-7011 or planning@cityofbeaufort.org. Also, please visit the Comprehensive Plan website at <http://visionbeaufort.blogspot.com>



CHARRETTE SCHEDULE

The schedule to the left describes the overall agenda and various stakeholder meeting held during the weeklong design charrette. The meetings targeted specific interest groups and topics. However, every meeting was open to the general public and the public was invited to drop-in on the charrette studio at any point during the process to get updates or provide feedback. Each day's session ended with a project update to encourage feedback from participants.



FROM THE CHARRETTE BLOG . . .

Kick-Off: Approximately 60 people attended the Public Kick-off meeting for the Comprehensive Plan Public Design Workshop at the Beaufort Middle School. The group included numerous elected and appointed officials, including Mayor-elect Keyserling, City Council members, Planning Board Commission members, and members of the Comprehensive Plan Stakeholder committee. After a brief presentation on the Comprehensive Plan process, the group broke into small groups to discuss questions regarding community growth.

Day 1: Wednesday's meetings included meetings on Housing; Arts & Cultural Facilities; Transportation, including a meeting on bicycle, pedestrian, and transit issues; Open Space, Parks, Greenways & Blueways, and a meeting with representatives of the City's neighborhoods. Attendance on the first day of the charrette was outstanding, with more than 200 people attending the various meetings and observing and commenting on the work in the design studio. Meanwhile, designers and engineers worked on draft conceptual plans for the community's growth and redevelopment areas; future transportation network; downtown site surveys; and design concepts for new downtown buildings and homes. These ideas were displayed and described for public comment at the daily 5:30 pm "pin-up" session.

Day 2: The second day of the charrette continued with strong attendance at meetings on Downtown development and parking and Historic Preservation. Over 100 citizens and stakeholders attended meetings on these topics. Based on the comparatively lightly attended Environmental Protection & Sustainability meeting, Historic Preservation appears to be the clear priority for Beaufort. Citizens and consultants also met with representatives of the County's Stormwater Services, Beaufort Jasper Water & Sewer Authority, and SCE&G to discuss utility issues regarding growth and development in the area. Members of Beaufort's elected and appointed boards as well as the Comprehensive Plan's Stakeholder Committee participated in all of the meetings. At the daily pin-up session, designers and engineers showed refinements of their conceptual roadway network; future land use recommendations based on a series of walkable community nodes in buildable areas in the City's western growth area; and strategic infill concepts for the Northwest Quadrant and downtown. Public comments at the pin up session included the desire to increase planning and funding for public transit and the need to advocate for higher quality schools.

Day 3: Friday began with regional issues related to big box, regional retail, and common issues between Port Royal and Beaufort and ended with focus groups about development and small business development. Participation remained strong as the design team continued to pin up development ideas using the principles and practices espoused in the Vision and Goals document as well as from previous planning efforts. In addition, the team continued to refine and consolidate a number of previous planning visions into a larger coherent framework. Specifically the design team introduced a "low build" alternative to the Northwest Bypass and a realignment of US 21 to improve conditions along Ribault Road. Conceptual plans were developed for various infill and new development sites including the Northwest neighborhood, the historic core, the Lafayette Street area, the intersection of Sea Island Parkway and Lady's Island Parkway, and the Burton community.

Day 4: The design studio was open throughout the day and many Beaufort citizens took the opportunity to stop by and express their visions and thoughts with the design team. Public interest remained high and a number of key planning elements came into focus including: the rerouting of US 21 to open up opportunities to humanize the Ribault Road corridor; infill opportunities throughout the community; reasonable annexation/expansion areas; a diversity of housing initiatives throughout the community; sustainable site design techniques; redevelopment strategies for various parcels throughout the community including in the Burton community; and preservation strategies that keep certain areas as "living areas" rather than as museums for tourists.

Closing: The 5 day charrette closed on Monday, November 17 to a standing-room-only crowd at the County Council Chambers. The presentation focused on four key areas for planning, growth, and development for the City:

- We must protect and preserve that which brought us here including the natural beauty, the historic (and prehistoric) resources, and the strong military presence.
- We must maintain Beaufort as a living community with vibrant, diverse neighborhoods, workforce housing, and a living downtown with a strong emphasis on its history.
- We must improve mobility throughout the community with more efficient routes for the auto and prioritized transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements to maintain our quality of life.
- We must stabilize and improve our economic conditions with a more diversified tax base, expansion of existing major employers and institutions (e.g. military, USC-B, Beaufort Memorial Hospital, Technical College of the Lowcountry), new jobs, new sources of municipal revenue, and the efficient delivery of municipal services.

CHARRETTE DRAWINGS

By week's end, the charrette's comprehensive scope had enabled the design team to provide detailed recommendations for the City. The on-site design studio allowed the team to produce detailed, two & three-dimensional illustrations depicting the area's potential build-out and redevelopment of buildings, streets and open spaces.

The progress made through the intensive charrette process culminated in a final presentation featuring a digital portrayal of the vision. In this session, the design team set forth the specific recommendations generated by the week's publicly-driven efforts. The proposals highlighted the necessary changes required to improve Beaufort's landscape. Upon departure from the charrette, the design team presented the City of Beaufort with a published package of materials, including a high-quality PowerPoint presentation and Drawings Booklet containing the design team's completed renderings.

4.5 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT: COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The list below summarizes the major public/stakeholder priorities articulated during the plan process in the various venues for feedback: the kick-off meeting, the community survey, and the charrette meetings. A more detailed list of strategies recommended by the public under each major heading is included in Appendix A.

These publicly-developed priority areas provide the basis for the plan recommendations in the chapters that follow.

1. Promote Environmental Protection & Sustainability
2. Provide for Parks & Open Space
3. Practice Growth Management and Regional Cooperation
4. Support Economic Development & Real Estate Investment
5. Develop an Efficient and Multi-modal Transportation Network
6. Support Efficient, Safe, and High-Tech Utility Services
7. Enhance and Support Existing Neighborhoods
8. Emphasize Historic Preservation
9. Promote Downtown Development
10. Support Arts & Cultural Facilities
11. Create Predictable Criteria for Big Box and Regional Retail

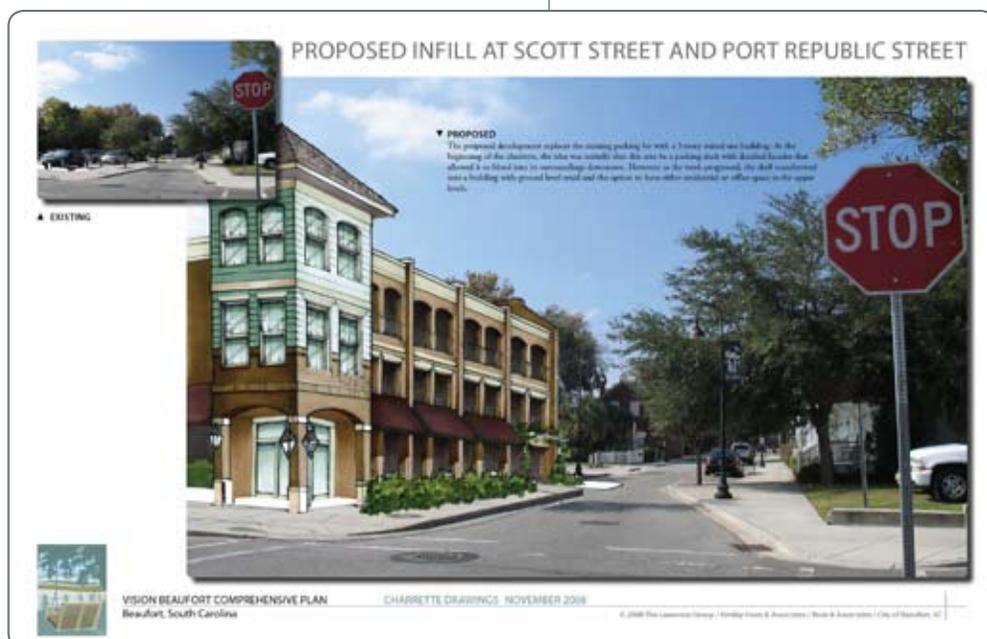


QUESTIONS POSED TO PUBLIC DURING PLANNING PROCESS

What do you value about the City of Beaufort?

How and where should the City grow?

What other changes would you most like to see?



▲ PAGE FROM THE CHARRETTE DRAWINGS BOOKLET

By involving everyone who can enable or block decisions and by committing to produce actionable plans within a set timeframe, charrettes can save months – even years – of tedious back-and-forth negotiations and redesign. They also provide an experience that’s increasingly rare for most people: they get to be involved in something organized especially to listen to their ideas and to act on them immediately.



Public participation throughout comprehensive planning process

2004
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN

Comprehensive planning has been an integral part of the city planning process for hundreds of years. The original master plans in early American cities provided designs for streets, open space, available building lots and institutional facilities.

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan (the Plan) is intended to provide a long term vision and plan for the community; it is the “essential first step in the planning process”[3] of a city and as such is composed of several elements intended to address the various facets of growth and development within in the City. Comprehensive plans are required by law to include seven planning elements, along with any other element determined to be needed in the local community. These seven elements comprise the comprehensive plan and include: population, economic, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, housing, and land use.

CITY OF BEAUFORT



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE 2004