

Community Appearance

Goal

Beautiful communities – historic, revitalized, and new – with public spaces, roadways, natural areas, and businesses that are clean and attractive combine to protect and enhance residential and rural quality of life.

Strategies

1. Implement a plan for improvement and beautification of public spaces and parks countywide.
2. Ensure staff has necessary tools for enforcement of current building codes.
3. Create regulatory tools to preserve and protect residential and rural quality of life while minimizing urban sprawl.
4. Provide adequate resources for the protection of historical and natural areas and roadways.
5. Develop incentives to utilize vacant structures, to demolish or revitalize unfit buildings, and to fill empty, large retail establishments.
6. Provide resources to enforce ordinances addressing unfit or abandoned properties and encourage maintenance.

Community Services

Goal

Individuals and families of all ages, abilities, and incomes in all parts of the County have access to well-managed community services that contribute to health and well-being with an emphasis on quality, affordable healthcare, EMS, housing, animal protection, and supportive programs for those with special needs.

Strategies

1. Expand community services delivery across the county to assure adequacy and effectiveness and to avoid duplication.
2. Assess concerns and needs of senior citizens to create a coordinated plan of action to address them.
3. Encourage educational seminars as a means of improving community health, parenting skills, and other needed areas.
4. Coordinate animal care and control programs among local governments and other involved organizations to reduce the number of unwanted and diseased pets.
5. Encourage organizations and partnerships (private, business, local community) to provide innovative solutions to meet community needs.
6. Coordinate with Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), local hospitals and other health care providers to anticipate and meet the health needs of residents.
7. Encourage the creation of affordable, quality housing options for people of limited means.

Culture and Entertainment

Goal

A thriving array of countywide cultural, entertainment, and civic activities and facilities – including excellent libraries, places for recreation and gatherings, restaurants and shops – encourages interaction among residents of all ages and backgrounds while emphasizing our history and attracting visitors to the County.

Strategies

1. Establish and disseminate a central calendar of cultural entertainment activities sponsored throughout the county.
2. Utilize existing Parks, Recreation and Tourism (PRT) and Accommodations Tax revenues for increased promotion of existing cultural and entertainment activities, as well as the initiation of new opportunities.
3. Encourage and support an annual meeting of groups within the county who sponsor cultural and entertainment activities for the purpose of enhancing and expanding the number and variety of such events.
4. Encourage Aiken County public schools to develop instructional enrichment opportunities in concert with local groups to promote the study and preservation of the history and heritage of all county residents.
5. Properly maintain existing recreational facilities and create new recreational facilities around the county.
6. Initiate actions to improve availability and quality of our libraries.

Governance and Leadership

Goal

County and local governments, the private sector, not-for-profit organizations, and the public communicate effectively and work proactively to promote cooperative decision-making, ensure wise use of resources, and implement projects and programs that effectively and efficiently serve the needs of residents.

Strategies

1. Initiate a study to implement/formulate strategies to consolidate city/county services, water services, fire services, etc.
2. Provide a phone system throughout the county so no citizen has to make a long distance phone call in order to complete county business.
3. Develop a public information program to include websites, newsletters, etc. to inform and educate the public about services, programs, activities, and project schedules of governments, private sector, and not-for-profit organizations.
4. Create liaisons with community organizations and areas to ensure that all concerns are voiced and considered in the government decision-making process.
5. Establish satellite county offices to provide services to citizens in outlying areas.
6. Ensure that local tax and revenue generation is fair and adequate and that resources are used efficiently, effectively, and equitably to ensure accountability and promote the fiscal health of the county.

Land Resources

Goal

Land resources are used effectively and strategically to further growth and development in a manner that enhances community character, parks, and the natural environment; strengthens existing and new communities; and provides a range of quality housing choices.

Strategies

1. Support countywide water and sewer system.
2. Develop and enforce a countywide approach to land planning, zoning, and development for residential communities, commerce, industry, agriculture, and open space that will incorporate public and small town input and will harmonize the diverse points of view within the community.
3. Capitalize on and preserve the county's land intensive assets, including the horse industry, agriculture, and the potential use of SRS buffer land.
4. Encourage shops and businesses in locations that reduce congestion, reuse existing buildings, and serve different parts of the county.
5. Maintain and improve downtowns throughout the county.
6. Coordinate maintenance and expansion of utilities and infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, cellular phone towers, etc.) with current needs and future development potential.
7. Establish guidelines to manage growth while maintaining a small town atmosphere.
8. Encourage quality housing for people of all income levels through tax incentives and program coordination efforts.

Learning

Goal

Every student has access to a dynamic and challenging education that encourages high expectations through demanding curriculum to prepare them for success in the work place and community.

Strategies

Together Aiken County recognizes that education is the responsibility of the educational institutions within the county (Aiken County Public Schools, Aiken Technical College, and the University of South Carolina Aiken). However, it is felt that strategies reflecting citizens' comments should be included in the Together Aiken County plan.

1. Increase funding for public schools by supporting alternative funding sources and strategic major grant writing in partnership with the School District and local education foundations to improve facilities and workforce preparation.
2. Encourage programs that will improve graduation rates.
3. Ensure equal access to curriculum/programs to close the achievement gap.
4. Improve our public educational system to ensure a quality workforce, which will attract employers to the County.
5. Update school curriculum to teach skills needed for today's jobs.
6. Support the continued development of public higher education in the County.
7. Encourage quality after school programs throughout the County.

Natural Environment

Goal

A beautiful, well-maintained natural environment reflects the County's rural character with protected natural resources, farmland, and open spaces with programs for proper waste management, recycling, and safe air and water resources for all residents.

Strategies

1. Develop a comprehensive land use plan and zoning which specifies how land throughout the county should be protected and developed in order to preserve the county's rural character.
2. Appoint an environmental committee made up of interested citizens, businesspersons, and scientists to advise on environmental matters and take leadership to bring issues and develop environmental strategies.
3. Appoint a Waste Management citizen advisory committee to monitor the county waste management and recycling program.
4. Develop a comprehensive litter control program including education and enforcement.

Parks and Recreation

Goal

A range of excellent, affordable and accessible programs, facilities, parks, and natural areas—both public and commercial—throughout the County are designed and coordinated to meet the needs of all abilities and ages.

Strategies

1. Develop a comprehensive plan for the delivery of active and passive recreational opportunities throughout the county.
2. Provide incentives as permitted by law to developers to include open space and/or recreational opportunities with their projects.
3. Encourage the creation of an umbrella organization for community-based programs that would also provide coordination and calendar for countywide recreation opportunities.
4. Identify and publicize unmet recreational needs in Aiken County in order to attract private business development opportunities to address those needs (such as theaters, horseback riding, water park, putt-putt golf, etc.).
5. Coordinate the use of county, cities, and school district recreation and sports facilities in order to optimize the utilization and accessibility of existing facilities.
6. Pursue the development and implementation of a comprehensive recreation facilities development plan in cooperation with the cities and school district that identifies and schedules the construction of new recreation centers, parks, trails, gathering places, and aquatic facilities.

People

Goal

A community of diverse people, places, and ideas with a welcoming, small-town atmosphere encourages opportunities for interaction, inclusion, and equal access to resources throughout the county.

Strategies

1. Create an environment to attract a diverse and demographically balanced population.
2. Support programs that allow and promote free flow of information throughout the County, promote diversity, and provide equal access to all services.
3. Create a countywide master development plan (to include infrastructure) incorporating “small town” centers and residential areas.
4. Encourage a welcoming climate of county unity, harmony, moral standards, and small town charm.

Prosperity

Goal

A strong economy supporting the success of new and existing businesses – including a diverse array of farms, large employers, industries, services, locally-owned businesses – provides high-quality jobs, job training, and placement assistance for the workforce, including the disabled and youth.

Strategies

1. Provide incentives to employers that are willing to locate in outlying areas of the county to ensure distribution of jobs and prosperity.
2. Encourage the creation of a consolidated grant research program to help entrepreneurs and small business owners start and expand businesses in Aiken County.
3. Work closely with smaller communities to develop and enhance small town assets that will increase tourism and related investments.
4. Work to improve the number and variety of career-oriented educational opportunities across the county.
5. Continue to market the Aiken County area nationwide and internationally to portray a diversified customer base and a capable workforce to attract a wide array of businesses and diverse job opportunities.
6. Encourage coordination and collaboration among all water and sewer providers with the specific aim of enhancing and managing economic development activities in areas currently lacking sufficient infrastructure.
7. Maintain and grow existing small, medium, and large businesses and attract new employers to ensure a healthy, diverse economy.

Public Safety

Goal

Cooperative and responsive systems – governmental, private, and volunteer – deliver effective and cost-efficient services in all parts of the County for police, fire, and emergency responses that create a safe community environment.

Strategies

1. Create a county fire marshal to coordinate volunteer fire departments in standardizing training, equipment, and response times, and fund fire departments equitably.
2. Develop agreements with neighboring cities, counties, and volunteer agencies to improve the provision of all emergency services (fire, police, and ambulance) to all citizens of the county.
3. Create concrete security measures to make school bus rides safer for the children.
4. Create standards for the provision of emergency services (fire, police, and ambulance) and provide adequate funding to meet these standards.
5. Create a traffic safety campaign and enforcement processes to reduce traffic accidents, enforce speed limits, and monitor major intersections to enforce traffic regulations.
6. Create a coalition of law enforcement officials, educators, and medical experts to address the issues of legal and illegal substance abuse.

Transportation

Goal

Transportation options meet the diverse needs of the County with safe, efficient, quality paved roadways, better access to major roads, an expanded public transportation system, sidewalks, bike paths, and walking trails.

Strategies

1. Coordinate transportation services provided by public and social service agencies so as to adequately provide public transportation services for all areas and residents of the county.
2. Utilize all possible sources of funding including local option sales tax, federal funds, local taxes, etc. to pave and resurface new and existing roads in the county and to also include bike paths/sidewalks when the roads are improved.
3. Create a diverse transportation committee to study transportation issues in the County (e.g. traffic congestion) and develop a plan to address those issues.
4. Establish standards for road maintenance and then provide funding to adequately maintain county roads (dirt and paved) to these standards.
5. Create new roadways to provide more direct traffic routes between rural destinations.
6. Improve visibility and flow of intersections (roads and/or train) with additional safety devices.