



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Friday, March 18, 2011

Contact: Scott Dadson, Beaufort City Manager, 843-525-7070

Beaufort's plan for the future builds in workshops next week, public invited

Building Beaufort's future continues next week with a weeklong planning workshop to take public input from recent sessions and create designs for neighborhoods in the downtown area. The workshop is led by the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission through the Office of Civic Investment.

"This is one of many steps toward creating not just a vision, but a reality for what our future can be and will be," Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling said. "Two years ago we created our 10 year comprehensive plan called 'Vision Beaufort' and now is the time to being implementing the plan on a block by block, neighborhood basis."

Joe DeVito, chairman of the Beaufort-Port Royal Metropolitan Planning Commission, agreed.

"While most comprehensive plans sit on shelf collecting dust until it is time to update them in five years, in honor of Beaufort celebrating its 300th birthday this year, we are busily working to launch Beaufort's fourth century," he said.

The first planning session focuses on Sector 1, which includes Beaufort's historic district (downtown, The Point, Northwest Quadrant, The Old Commons and The Bluff neighborhoods); Pigeon Point; Uptown Beaufort along the easternmost Boundary Street Corridor; Higginsonville and Whitehall (on Lady's Island).

Future sessions over the next 18 months will cover the rest of the city.

“Each neighborhood has its history, unique character and physical attributes upon which we will respect, build upon and not destroy,” said Jon Verity, Chairman of the City Redevelopment Commission, which is overseeing the contract with the Office of Civic Investment and The Lawrence Group to complete the new Civic Master Plan for Beaufort.

Preceded by interviews and meetings with neighborhood groups, designers, property owners, real estate developers and other professionals, the “slow charette” process take place between March 22 – 28.

During the intensive process, , designers will be sketching potential options for housing concepts, neighborhoods improvements , street corners, sidewalks, streetscapes, public open spaces and parks and appropriate commercial spaces uniquely appropriate for the City. With the Redevelopment Commission, they will be also developing policies and programs, and seeking out partnerships to implement needed infrastructure, infill and redevelopment projects.

There will be opportunities for the public to view and comment on the concepts throughout the process. The design studio will be open for public view from 4-7 p.m. Wednesday, March 23; Thursday March 24; and Friday, March 25, at 209 Charles Street near the corner of Charles and Bay streets in downtown Beaufort.

The goal? “Coming out of this intensive weeklong charette, our goal is to develop design plans at the neighborhood, block and site levels, and to start drawing up recommended policy and infrastructure recommendations to the City leaders,” said Josh Martin, who leads the process for the Office of Civic Investment.

Specific targets include:

1. Pre-packaged projects/deals for interested property owners and potential investors
2. Examples of implementation of form-based code
3. Policy recommendations to the City for more streamlined regulations that clearly lay out consistent and predictable expectations for development and redevelopment in targeted areas of the City
4. Infrastructure recommendations to the City including sidewalks, streetscapes, parks and other open space, streets and improving existing alley ways throughout part of the city

“The Civic Master Plan will establish principles and standards which will lead to a roadmap for t all public and private development in Beaufort. The Office of Civic Investment, working with the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission and City Council, will identify and promote investment and reinvestment opportunities, block by block, in each neighborhood throughout the City, not just one or two neighborhoods,” Beaufort City Manager Scott Dadson said.

Previous public sessions included workshops with neighborhood associations (Feb. 17), the development community (Feb. 24), a neighborhood walk-around tour (Feb. 26), a Redevelopment Commission presentation (March 3), and a retail and marketing session March 8. All told, more than 200 people attended those meetings.

Comments from the workshops included observations and goals such as:

- Widen the public perception of “downtown Beaufort” from simply Bay Street to include the areas bordered by Bay, Carteret, Boundary and Ribaut Road

- Help Beaufort grow while maintaining its historic character
- Create improved sidewalks to increase walkability
- Capitalize upon the variety of educational opportunities in the area, including public and private schools as well as the Beaufort College campus of USC-B and the Technical College of the Lowcountry
- Add more mixed use of residential above retail
- Attract new and varied retailers and office spaces
- Expand the area's economic base
- Provide incentives to encourage development downtown
- Affordable housing including small-scale multi-family units and accessory dwelling units
- Create more parking opportunities throughout the entire downtown area.

For frequent updates on the planning process for Beaufort's fourth century, visit www.cityofbeaufort.org and www.beaufortcivicinvestment.org.

END