

Introduction

For the past forty years, the Town of Mount Pleasant has been in a position that many communities would consider enviable. It is situated in a beautiful coastal environment with world-famous neighbors, expanding employment, and tourism opportunities. With top-notch support services and infrastructure, outdoor recreational activities, and – historically – vacant land suitable for new development, this growing community has had extremely good fortune.

Today, the Town is highly regarded within the Charleston metropolitan area as home to the best schools in the region, a thriving recreation program, low property taxes, numerous convenient retail areas, and many sought-after residential neighborhoods. Continuous changes have transformed what was once a small village into the 4th-largest municipality in the state of South Carolina.

In many ways, however, these blessings have produced side effects that represent the flip side of the coin. Increased traffic and congestion are evident on our streets and roads. New types and forms of development have emerged and deciding what type of development is appropriate in certain locations is often contentious. Natural areas have been lost or negatively affected and flooding has increased. Town government is being stretched thin as the provision of public services and support facilities is stressed to meet demands. Keeping up with new growth has become increasingly difficult and expensive.

2018 Comprehensive Plan Update

As a result, citizens and community leaders face challenges and difficult decisions every day as they work to manage past growth and development decisions while striving to protect the future character and quality of life of this community. One way to deal with such situations is to slow down, take stock of the situation, and plan ahead. By evaluating current conditions, studying historical trends and future needs, and asking residents and business representatives to share their opinions and aspirations, a new guidance system can be crafted and put in place. In other words, a long-range planning effort to prepare a new, more-relevant plan can pay major dividends.

Thus, in the summer of 2017, the Town of Mount Pleasant recognized this need and began a process of updating its Comprehensive Plan ahead of schedule. This long-range policy document is intended to

Notable Features of the New Plan

Certain aspects of this Comprehensive Plan are worth pointing out, as they represent an intentional shift or focus on specific themes.

- Land Use & Transportation plans written concurrently to ensure close coordination
- Focus on community-building opportunities (mixed-use hubs, Mount Pleasant Way, Cultural Core)
- Recognition of interconnectedness of various components of the Plan
- Provision of infrastructure (beyond roadways) to meet community goals
- Shift in approach for commercial corridors, focusing on specific redevelopment areas instead of widespread linear patterns
- Consideration of fiscal implications of land development patterns as it affects future service provision.
- Focus on protecting character of development and defining transitions to neighboring areas
- Preservation and maintenance of character of existing neighborhoods
- Creation of options and alternatives for a changing community (transportation, housing, employment)
- Intentional focus on improved transportation connections

serve as a “touchstone” to guide public and private decisions and investments for the next two decades. Starting with the appointment of a demographically diverse citizens committee by the Planning Commission, the 40-member Plan Forum was “front & center” as the group worked together with a team of staff and consultants to prepare this new Plan. Throughout this 18-month process, we hosted Open House meetings and provided online survey opportunities to gain insight from local citizens about their current concerns and future desires for their community. They identified many issues that they wanted addressed in the planning process - traffic, infrastructure, development, growth, tree protection, housing, the sense of community, recreation facilities, stormwater, and parks – to name but a few. They also indicated the types of places, features, and community amenities they longed for in the future, including active centers with a variety of land uses.

This loss of a sense of community was a strong undercurrent of many comments received throughout the Town of Mount Pleasant’s 2018 comprehensive planning process. The desire to re-capture a small-town community spirit, while meeting the daily needs of our citizens and business community is at the heart of many of the resulting Comprehensive Plan’s goals and recommendations.

The Vision

Against this backdrop, the Plan Forum developed a *Vision Statement* to guide development of the Comprehensive Plan. This Vision draws upon four key themes and reads as follows:

The Town of Mount Pleasant will be a sustainable and resilient community.
..

... where the built environment honors the town’s coastal village heritage, while recognizing that different parts of Town have their own unique character;

... where the natural features and historic coastal character of Mount Pleasant can be found in every aspect of daily life, and the friendly, small-Town feel is embraced and strengthened through interaction with each other and the environment;

... that adapts to evolving conditions while enhancing and maintaining the high standards and quality of life that residents expect; and

... that is supported by a reliable, sustainable and accessible 21st Century transportation system with multiple travel options which safely connect our communities, businesses, and cultural areas.