

## 2018 State of the Town Address

I'm Mayor Steve MacDougall. Welcome to the State of the Town Address, a synopsis of our Town's accomplishments in 2017 and an outline of 2018's goals. I want to take time to recap the progress we made last year along with projects and concerns Council and I will undertake this year and beyond.

First, it is a continued privilege and honor to be your Mayor and I look forward to continuing to serve you and leading the Town of Lexington.

At this time I would like to acknowledge my fellow Council members – Mayor Pro-Tem Hazel Livingston, Council Member Kathy Maness, Council Member Ted Stambolitis, Council Member Todd Carnes, Council Member Ron Williams and Council Member Steve Baker; along with all of our staff for their dedication to the Town. These men and women are the foundation of this banner community. I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together in 2018.

As we prepare to spring forward, let's take a moment to highlight a few of the vital accomplishments from this past year:

2017 was another momentous year of fulfillment for the Town of Lexington.

First and foremost, we saw continued success of our **Icehouse Amphitheater**. In its first year, we hosted 50 events and greeted over 30,000 guests and were named the 2017 Municipal Association of South Carolina Achievement Award Winner. In addition to our signature concert series Lexington Live, the venue has been home to Movies in the Park, Lexington School District One Art Showcases, Lexington Community Band, the historic Total Solar Eclipse along with welcoming South Carolina natives Patrick Davis and Edwin McCain for our first larger scale concert. We look forward to a bigger and better second year, showcasing our wonderful downtown to residents and visitors alike! Learn more at [www.icehouseamphitheater.com](http://www.icehouseamphitheater.com).

It is crystal clear the Town of Lexington is the place where citizens want to live, work, play and learn. As we see downtown redevelop, Lexington will continue to reap the rewards through **Record Annexations**. In 2017, we had 32 annexations encompassing 775 acres of property. This is our largest annexation in 40 years and equates to an 11 percent increase in the total area of town limits.

Additionally, the Town saw an increase in the past year, watching the number of businesses licenses boom from 3,592 in 2016 to 3,675 in 2017. Furthermore, we had an increase in gross sales during the same time frame, catapulting from \$1.9 billion to \$2 billion.

We all know a safe community is a top priority for residents and businesses. Lexington's economic growth can be partly attributed to our top notch Police Department. In addition to being internationally accredited from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies since 2009, this past year saw a significant **reduction in crime**. Burglary reports are down 46%, while shoplifting went down to 19%. This is a direct result from the department's 2017 strategic plan priority list.

Additionally, the Lexington Police Department works diligently to expand their community presence. Citizens have been able to directly meet, greet and participate in a variety of events including child seat safety checks, bike rodeos, coffee with a cop and the annual **National Night Out**, which was named an award winner within the category of 15,000 - 50,000 populations' towns/cities.

The Town of Lexington continues to thrive with the success of our **Adaptive Computerized Signalization System**. In 2017 we finished the first phase of the project, which focuses on alleviating traffic congestion.

This high tech traffic management system monitors and synchronizes traffic signals to balance traffic flow in "real time" conditions and "link" all lights within the Town limits. Currently, 19 intersections are online focused on downtown, Sunset Blvd at I-20 and North Lake Dr towards the Lake Murray Dam. We are working on Phase II, which will include 16 intersections. In addition to having all 35 signals in town on the system, we are partnering with Lexington Medical Center to add the 12 intersections in campus proximity.

For this project, the Town received funding from the Central Midlands Council of Governments with Columbia Area Transportation Study (COATS) Share Funding, the County of Lexington and Lexington Medical Center for a total of \$6.6 million dollars.

This system will help place Lexington at the forefront of traffic management in South Carolina through the latest, innovative computer technology. This is just another example of the Town of Lexington being proactive in addressing current needs and preparing for future growth.

Along with executing transportation programs, the town has continued to concentrate efforts on our utility infrastructure through our Capital Improvement Projects.

Our **East Main St. water line project** replaced 3,241 feet of pipe, which has been in service for over 90 years. Additionally, 10,000 square feet of sidewalk was removed and replaced extending from S. Lake Dr. to the Old Mill.

The Town's key to success is fiscal responsibility which has led to continued national recognition. The Finance Department recently was awarded the **Governmental Finance Officers Association Comprehensive Annual Finance Report Award** for the 19<sup>th</sup> straight year and for the eighth straight year, the **Distinguished Budget Presentation Award**. Through our dedicated Finance Department staff, the Town remains rock-solid and financially sound and was recently given an **updated credit rating from Standard and Poor's**. Our water and sewer system went from AA- to AA, labeled high investment grade.

It should be noted that this stellar rating provides us access to the lowest interest rates for long-term capital projects, thereby reducing the cost of services and minimizing taxes for our citizens.

The Town of Lexington is staying very watchful of how we invest your tax dollars. In doing so, we collaborated with the County of Lexington and Lexington School District One to implement the **Corley Mill TIF**. The Corridor Redevelopment Tax Increment Financing District consists of 264 acres and will generate \$18 million, which will be added to the \$7.5 million raised through the 2% Hospitality tax for the **Corley Mill @Sunset Blvd. Gateway Improvements**.

Finally, the Town was able to restore **Fourteen Mile Creek Trail** after it suffered significant damage from the October 2015 floods. As part of the rebuilding process, the town removed debris from the creek; reinstalled two thirds of the matting to meet ADA compliance; repaired and leveled the first two bridges, connecting them with an additional walk way for added support; repaired and leveled the classroom stage, which was knocked off its foundation and removed the last two bridges that were unable to be repaired.

In total, staff put in 830 man hours along with numerous equipment hours to complete the project, which cost \$76,000. We expect approximately 75% reimbursement from FEMA, to offset the expenses.

These projects strengthen how our proactive, progressive vision and planning is continuing to create an outstanding, vibrant and livable community, not only for today but for future generations... our children and our grandchildren.

As you can see, we've had some incredible improvements this past year but there's always more work that can and will be done. Here are a **few of the challenging issues we will focus on into 2018 and beyond**:

As previously mentioned, Council, staff and I are dedicated to alleviating traffic congestion. Our long awaited **Downtown Improvements**, which includes the transition to **one-way pairs** along Lake Dr. and Church Street, began construction this past October and is projected to be complete this summer.

This is the first traffic and tourism project funded by the 2% Hospitality Tax. The purpose of the project is to make the intersection of Main Street at N. Lake Drive flow more efficiently. By splitting the northbound and southbound movements, the signals at Lake Drive and Church Street can service twice as many vehicles as it does today. This increase in efficiency will allow for more "green" signal time to be allotted to east and west Main Street at Lake Drive and Church Street.

In addition to this project, the Town is constructing a 150 space parking lot along South Church St. to serve the Lexington Municipal Complex, Palmetto Collegiate Institute, Virginia Hylton Park and the Icehouse Amphitheater.

Also as part of the **2% Hospitality Tax**, the Town will tackle traffic woes, focusing on **Crossroad Improvements at Lake Dr. & Sunset Blvd.** as well as **Corley Mill at Sunset Blvd Gateway Improvements**.

Phase I of our Crossroad Improvements will include **Harmon Street Extension**. The focus of the project is to improve safety and operation with the relocation of Dreher Street at North Lake Drive to connect at the existing Azalea Drive. This new road will be Harmon Street. Additionally, the project includes widening of North Lake Drive from South Church Street to Dreher Street. The project is currently in the final design stages and is slated to start construction this fall.

The **Corley Mill at Sunset Blvd Gateway Improvements** is currently under design. The focus of the project is to improve current traffic flow through the Corley Mill Road and U.S. 378 intersection which serves as the primary Gateway to the Town. Currently, the average daily traffic on Sunset Boulevard is approximately 45,000 vehicles per day and on Corley Mill Road 9,100 vehicles per day.

**I-20 Westbound Ramp Improvements** include proposed modifications to the traffic patterns in order to reduce or eliminate travelers exiting the ramp and crossing multiple lanes of traffic in attempt to make a left turn at Ginny Lane. The improvements call for allowing motorists to make a right turn at the Westbound ramp signal and proceed into the left turn lane for Ginny Lane. Construction is slated to begin this summer.

All of these traffic and tourism projects include the addition of **Wayfinding Signage**, which will direct residents and guests to specific landmarks throughout the Town of Lexington. Council will be reviewing proposed designs in February.

Finally, we are implementing the **Lexington Transportation Improvement Program**. The Town is working long-term on 30 smaller projects that will further address alleviating traffic woes within Lexington. These projects are being evaluated by a prioritization metric system including: Traffic Safety Improvement, Constructability, Permitability and Economic/Community Impacts. Projects will be addressed as funding becomes available.

The Town of Lexington is also tackling capital improvement projects, with the addition of a **Town maintenance facility**. This project is currently underway and will house the utilities department staff, along with providing equipment storage for our Parks and Sanitation, Police, Transportation and Utilities Department's. By having one centralized location, we will be able create additional parking at Town Hall and a secure, protected area for all of our equipment.

The **Cromer Road Pump Station** is being designed to increase the wastewater pumping capacity to 12.5million gallon as day, flowing to the Joint Wastewater Treatment Plant on the Congaree River. When finished future plans include a 30 inch parallel line to also tie into the joint facility.

Finally, we will continue our beautification efforts with improvements to **Virginia Hylton Park**. The Town is underway with constructing a design plan that will focus on providing a face lift to our oldest and most utilized park. Our goal is to preserve the qualities that make Virginia Hylton Park so special, while upgrading its aesthetic for the next generation.

The Town is also working with FEMA and SCDHEC in the rebuilding of **Gibson Pond Dam**. Design is currently underway and construction is slated to begin this year. The project is anticipated to cost \$2.5 million. It is our vision, to not only bring back the safety of the dam to our community, but to restore the pond to its natural state so all citizens can enjoy its beauty.

To feature our fantastic community, we provide ample **events and activities** throughout the year. The Town, along with the Lexington County Recreation and Aging Commission, hosts several events including the Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt and Carnival, Movies in the Park, Snowball Festival along with highlighting charitable senior programs such as Meals on Wheels and Project Warmth. Additionally, our community was honored to host the 2017 Big South Conference Baseball Championship at the Lexington County Stadium for the second consecutive year.

Other events include Special Needs Community Day, St. Patrick's Shamrock Parade and Carnival, Kid's Day of Lexington, Lexington's Live concert series, Wine Walk on Main, the Town of Lexington Farmers Market and the Lexington Police Department's Fall Fest. This year we are proud to welcome the Coastal Plain League's All Star Show hosted by the Lexington County Blowfish.

In addition to these signature events, the Town is proud to support homegrown efforts, like the Lexington Community Band and Lexington County Museum, providing entertainment for the entire family. We hope to see you around town for these wonderful events!

The Town strives to completely engage the public through various communication and marketing efforts. The Town launched our new website this past summer which includes user friendly and interactive pages. Make sure to stay informed with Town news and events through our website, Town Topics Newsletter, our social media pages of **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and our community access station on Spectrum Cable (formerly Time Warner)**, which is airing this State of the Town Address and Council Meeting live. Additionally, the Lexington Police Department has their own social media pages of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, while the Icehouse Amphitheater can be found on Facebook and Instagram.

We are truly spellbound by how many projects that have come to realization since we implemented the Vision Plan less than six years ago. This State of the Town Address reflects the outstanding work that is being done and how we can lead our community forward respectfully and responsibly. Each employee at the Town of Lexington has added valuable input to the achievements we have seen tonight and I want to thank them all in making our community a place you want to live, work, play and learn. Lexington is my hometown and I am still awestruck to see the positive growth and strides we've taken through the years.

I wish that all of you have a continued healthy, happy and prosperous 2018. God bless you, your family, our Town, the State of South Carolina and our great nation, the United States of America.

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