On July 16-17, 2019, members of Town Council and Town Staff met to review the Vision Plan accomplishments since 2017 (the last update) and to chart a new course for continuing to implement the Town Vision Plan. The focus for this year’s retreat was upcoming large projects that have their origins in the Vision Plan. The retreat provided an opportunity for staff to update Council on the status of each project’s progress, challenges, and opportunities. The planning sessions allowed Council and Staff to prioritize the projects and develop funding strategies and next steps in order to be more successful in continued implementation of the Vision Plan.

Additionally, the retreat was a time to review progress and success, review and reaffirm the Vision Plan Goals and Guiding Principles, and to chart future ideas and projects. This year’s retreat also dedicated considerable time for Staff presentations during which each Department Director or Senior Staff presented to Council. The presentations provided an overview of the responsibilities; team members; day to day activity; and recent, current and future projects and initiatives. The presentations were appreciated by Council and demonstrated the pride the staff take in their roles and contributions and the way the spirit of the Vision Plan permeates so many aspects of Town operations, governance, and planning.

As stated in the 2017 update, the Town of Lexington is a living testimony that a Vision Plan never ends: it is a perpetual call-to-work intentionally and collaboratively for the common good. This year’s retreat was again evidence of this philosophy. The retreat provides a healthy forum for reflection, discussion, debate, and consensus building as to what aspects of the Vision Plan deserve focus and funding in the coming year. The priorities that emerged and are described herein are listed below in alphabetical order:

- Corley Mill Road at Sunset Boulevard (378)
- Hope Ferry Road Improvements @ Sunset Boulevard (378)
- Icehouse Pavilion
- Lexington Transportation Improvement Program (LTIP) Mineral Springs Road Improvements at Sunset Boulevard (378)
- Martel Drive
- North Lake Corridor
- Virginia Hylton Park

Given the continued growth and activity in the Town, number of projects under way, and potential for realistic funding strategies to enable implementation, Council determined that the Vision Plan Update Retreat should become an annual endeavor.
PARTICIPANTS

TOWN COUNCIL
- Mayor Steve MacDougall
- Mayor Pro-Tem Hazel Livingston
- Council Member Kathy Maness
- Council Member Todd Carnes
- Council Member Ron Williams
- Council Member Steve Baker
- Council Member Todd Lyle

TOWN STAFF
- Britt Poole Town Administrator
- Stuart Ford Assistant Town Administrator
- Brad Cunningham Town Attorney
- Becky Hildebrand Municipal Clerk
- Kathy Pharr Finance Director
- John Hanson Director of Planning, Building & Technology
- Randy Edwards Director of Transportation
- Jennifer Dowden Events & Media Coordinator
- Terrence Green Chief of Police
- Allen Lutz Utilities Director
- Walker Brewer Downtown Venue Promoter
- Wesley Crosby Special Projects Manager
- Dan Walker Director of Parks and Sanitation
- Johnny Dillard Assistant Director of Parks and Sanitation

FACILITATOR
- Heather Mitchell BOUDREAUX
Council affirmed the Guiding Principles as written in the original report and as amended in 2017 with no changes.

- **Sustain Main Street and Downtown as the heart of Lexington** from the Old Mill to Sunset Boulevard, historic Triangle area, the original boundaries of the town, and the government center.

- **Sustain Lexington’s sense of community**, its most important and endearing quality, which is exemplified through family values, award-winning schools, neighbors helping neighbors, safe, welcoming, natural beauty, unique history and preservation of historic resources, natural resources, and economic prosperity.

- **Enhance Lexington's small town feel** in concert with continued development while respecting and maintaining the rural nature.

- **Strive for intentional, sustainable and authentic development** that enhances Lexington’s natural beauty, sense of community, history and opportunities for prosperity.

- **Increase connectivity** by creating places and connections within town that engage people with people and people to places (transportation, communication, civic activities), which is paramount to retaining an authentic small town appeal.

- **Strive for innovation and sustainability** in all developments and programs in order to increase Lexington’s prosperity.

- **Require the highest quality design and development** in all projects and developments in order to reflect the spirit of Lexington and the intent and values of the Vision Plan.

- **Build multi-jurisdictional and regional partnerships in order to continually improve and to sustain the region’s quality of life** through preservation of the natural environment, improved infrastructure, accessibility and connectivity, cultural and recreational opportunities, economic development, housing, education, public safety, and wellness.
Council affirmed the goals of the Vision Plan as originally written and as amended in 2017 with one exception. Given the recent tragic loss of life of two runners on Lexington roads and the subsequent outpouring of community support and activism, the goal related to pedestrian and bike access and connectivity has been revised to address safety concerns.

**Improve Traffic Flow**
Implement transportation strategies that are innovative, progressive, provide options, and enhance the quality of life; diminish traffic from being Lexington’s story; work in concert with the County.

**Create a Vibrant Destination Main Street**
Host regular and diverse events for all ages; recruit local and national businesses and retail shops to invest in Main Street (improve local economy), support free WiFi hot spots throughout town (business establishments and public places); encourage alternate truck routes.

**Support and Encourage an Iconic Presence on Lake Murray**
Support a multi-use development for residents and visitors that improves connectivity and access between the Town and Lake Murray.

**Preserve and Celebrate the Origins of Lexington**
Many feel as if the history of Lexington is slipping away. Work to preserve and celebrate the treasured history of Lexington through signage, tourism opportunities, design standards, community events, and local businesses.

**Create a Welcoming Atmosphere with Beautiful, Landscaped “Front Porches”**
Design and construct unique and beautiful “front porches” that welcome all to this historic Town with landscaping that provides beauty and shade; install signage (I-20 interchanges, in town and throughout the County) that directs people to places in Lexington; work in concert with the County.

**Improve Pedestrian and Bike Access, Connectivity and Safety**
Create a comprehensive trail system that connects people to venues in town and throughout the region (Lake Murray, Saluda Shoals Park, Three Rivers Greenway, Palmetto Trail, etc.) in concert with County. The Town will evaluate town sidewalk networks relative to existing conditions, safety, and new development requirements.

**Remain a Charming Small Town in the Face of Exponential Growth**
Adopt planning districts throughout town with appropriate design and development standards that reflect the unique character and use/activity of each district; enforce/encourage authentic efforts that celebrate the spirit of Lexington; connect and enhance what is here.

**Provide for the Social and Recreational Needs of Residents**
Meet the needs of all residents, but particularly youth and young professionals, beyond organized sports by encouraging more in-town opportunities for movies, entertainment, food, cultural activities, access to Lake Murray, social, and passive recreation, etc.
Respect the Unique Rural Character of Lexington
Institute rural development standards that are sustainable while encouraging continued economic activity; work in concert with the County.

Be a Welcoming Home to a Growing International Community
The Town of Lexington is becoming home to a growing international community. The Town welcomes and celebrates this convergence of cultures while maintaining Lexington’s unique character through events, inclusive engagement of residents, and creating an atmosphere of unity.

Improve the Business Environment
Welcome and support new businesses and industries in the Town of Lexington by providing a business-friendly process. Institute regular training for staff in working with potential businesses, explore incentives for small, local businesses, improve access to information, and work in concert with the Chamber to promote Lexington as a friendly and prosperous place for doing business.

Promote and Build the Economy through the Celebration of Lexington’s History
In concert with the goal of preserving and celebrating the origins of Lexington, establish collaborative relationships to build a unique economy through tourism, special events, and programming. Preserve and then promote in order to draw residents and visitors to downtown to celebrate what is unique and authentic about Lexington. Historical tourism is an untapped resource, yet can be a sustainable economic development driver.
When asked to describe greatest recent accomplishments arising out of the Vision Plan, Council and Staff cited the downtown excitement, life, and vitality on Main Street; increased popularity of the Icehouse Amphitheater and the Farmer’s Market; and lauded the opening of four new restaurants. Additional accomplishments have been added to the ongoing list that follows:

**Phase I Projects 2012-2014**
- Lexington Square Park
- Unified Traffic Plan – Phase I
- Farmer’s Market
- Snowball Festival
- Lexington Paw Park
- Interstate 20 / Sunset Boulevard Interchange Beautification and Front Porch
- Downtown Commercial Facade Program
- Fourteen Mile Creek Trail
- Adaptive Computerized Signalization Project Phase 1

**Phase II Projects 2014-2017**

**Corridor Improvements**
- Ginny Lane Corner
- Columbia Avenue/West Main Island
- Corner of Reed Avenue and Butler Street
- Corner of West Main Street and Gibson Road Island
- I-20/US1(Augusta Road) Front Porch
- Old Cherokee & North Lake Drive Front Porch

**Downtown Projects**
- Icehouse Amphitheater
- Main Street Beautification & Planters
- Vision Plan Project Icehouse TIF District established
- Vision Plan Project Mill Pond Trail established
  
  (2015 historic floods – project stalled and now underway again)

**Infrastructure & Quality of Life**
- Caractor Park Restroom Facility
- Corley Mill TIF District established
- Downtown Parking Lot – South Church Street

**Sidewalks**
- Park Road Construction
- South Church Street Phase 1 & 2
- Augusta Road (US 1) – completed to Library Hill Lane
- Whispering Winds – Morgan Drive
- Duffie Drive
- Utility Project Lake Drive to Old Mill
Phase III Projects 2017 - 2019

• Completion of Main Street One Way Pairs
• Installation under way Phase II Adaptive Signalization and Phase III in partnership with Lexington Medical Center - West Columbia
• Parking for Icehouse (North Church Street Parking)
• Completion of Bruner Road Operations Center
• Completion of Serenity Park in Virginia Hylton Park
• University of South Carolina presence established in Town
• Demolition of Liverman Hospital
• Sold hotel property (private owner sold to private developer)
• Booster Station at Cromer Road
• New pump station at I-20 lagoon projected completion late November
• Old Mill Pond Trail designed to dovetail with old mill dam restoration
• Gibson Pond Dam restoration design complete and will bid this fall; 75% FEMA funded
• LTIP Sunset Blvd (378) and Old Cherokee Improvements submitted to SCDOT for final approval and projected to bid Fall 2019
• Wayfinding signage graphics adopted and approved by SCDOT; locations are set and going through DOT approvals
• South Church Street parking and underground storm water detention
• Golden Hills Pond Dam Stabilization
• Ginny Lane Widening and I-20 exit ramp improvements
Background Summary
The Town has invested in studies and preliminary design efforts with the goal of improving traffic flow through one of the busiest intersections in the Town limits. South Carolina Department of Transportation has been engaged in reviewing options and preliminary designs. Solutions will come through multiple phases and funding sources. Mead & Hunt has been engaged as an engineering consultant and presented a project update at the Retreat. As a result of the installation of the adaptive signalization system, Mead & Hunt reported improvements in conditions as compared to when their preliminary modeling was completed. At peak a.m. and p.m. travel times when school is in session, it now takes a car traveling east bound on Sunset Boulevard half of the time it previously did to get through the light at Corley Mill Road and to the Interstate 20 on-ramp. Video evidence of driver habits on this same route also indicated that all of the lanes to access I-20 are not fully utilized due to poor signage. Improved signage will help traffic flow and the Town agreed to investigate simply adding signage to yield additional incremental improvements.

Longer term improvements consist of two parts: Sunset Split and a Bypass. The Sunset Split can be constructed in phases, but ultimately consists of constructing a new one-way
west portion of Sunset Boulevard to the north of the existing road and making the current road one-way in the eastern direction. The split would extend from the I-20 ramp on the east to just past Northside Boulevard on the west. The bypass would allow drivers to avoid the I-20/Sunset exchange and Corley Mill/Sunset intersection. Routing on the northeast side of these intersections, the bypass is planned to connect to Sunset Boulevard at White Oak Lane and to Corley Mill Road just north of 174 Corley Mill Road. Either part constructed individually will improve traffic conditions, but both working together provide the desired level of service based upon traffic models for a 2040 design year which also account for continued population growth.

**Agreed to next steps:**
- Increase previously discussed budget by $6 million funded by H-tax in order to construct the Sunset Split.
- Seek public private partnerships.
- Over the next 5 months, determine whether to proceed with design for the full split as described above or a provisional split (initial phase) in which case the western terminus of the one way pairs would be in alignment with the Honda Cars of Columbia western driveway.
- Continue conversations about the Bypass and required right-of-way with major stakeholders.
- Continue progress updates with the County and School District.

**Total Anticipated Sunset Split Project Cost:** $23 Million ($3 million already invested)

**Funding Source:** Tax Increment Financing (Corley Mill TIF) and Hospitality Tax (H-tax)
Background Summary
Formerly described and studied as the Mineral Springs/Hope Ferry project, Infrastructure Consulting and Engineering (ICE) has provided engineering services to study traffic improvements to better accommodate the existing traffic pattern and improve access management along Sunset Boulevard Corridor near the intersections with Mineral Springs and Hope Ferry Roads. ICE presented the results of the recently completed traffic study. Options B and C both involve improvements to the Hope Ferry intersection. Realignment of Mineral Springs has been ruled out given that the benefits do not justify the cost as compared to the Hope Ferry improvements and improvements to the intersection are being addressed in separate projects described below.

Agreed to next steps:
- Council to select between Options B and C as presented by ICE in the August Work Session for approval at the September 2019 Council meeting.
- Begin Process of seeking funding from an outside source.
- Determine if Town desires to continue funding the design in order to potentially help make outside funding more attractive and to expedite the project once funding is in place. ($1-1.3 million)

Total Anticipated Project Cost: $10-13 Million depending on option selected
Funding Source: Outside source to be determined
Icehouse Pavilion

Background Summary
In collaboration with the Town, Lexington architectural firm, Catalyst, has completed schematic design concepts for an open air pavilion to be constructed to the east of the amphitheater along South Church Street. The Pavilion will be constructed on a sloped site undesirable to the private market because of the cost of site work relative to the available development parcel. The Pavilion will become home to the Farmer’s Market and provide storage below thereby greatly reducing the time and cost associated with set up and take down. The design will also accommodate food truck parking and be a venue for multiple types of events. The Town has identified the completion of the Icehouse Pavilion as its number one priority.

Agreed to next steps:
- Proceed with producing construction documents and issuing project for construction bidding by general contractors.

Total Anticipated Project Cost: $1 Million
Funding Source: General Obligation Bonds to ultimately be converted to Revenue Bonds
**Lexington Transportation Improvement Program (LTIP)
Mineral Springs Road Improvements at Sunset Boulevard (378)**

**Background Summary**
In 2018, the Town completed work on the Lexington Transportation Improvement Program (LTIP), a priority list of transportation projects to help improve safety, reduce congestion, and improve flows of traffic throughout the Town. The resulting planning matrix utilizes a ranking system to prioritize the projects. Improvements at the Mineral Springs Road and Sunset Boulevard are ranked number 4 on the list. Planned private development in the area have created the opportunity for the cost of improvements to be shared by the Town and private developer. Improvements include restricting Powell to right in/right out, adding east bound right turn lane to Mineral Springs Road, and adding a second north bound left turn lane from Mineral Springs. The Town also purchased Claystone Drive for access to Palmetto Park Boulevard.

**Agreed to next steps:**
- Continue conversations with private developer to confirm timeline.

**Town’s anticipated investment: $500,000**

**Funding Source: Streets and Infrastructure Fund**
Martel Drive

Background Summary
As part of the multi-phase Crossroad Improvements Project that improves traffic flow on North Lake Drive and has been designed in concert with planned improvements to Lexington Elementary School, the northern end of Harmon Street will be relocated and connected to North Lake Drive. After this is complete, it is anticipated that improvements may be needed at the south end of Harmon St. where it intersects with East Main Street (I) at Martel Drive. It was determined that improvements to Martel will go on hold until the completion of the Harmon Street Extension in order to assess its impact.

Agreed to next steps:
• Hold at current design completion (30%)
• Resume design in 2022 upon completion of Harmon Street Extension

Total Anticipated Project Cost: $1 Million
Funding Source: Hospitality Tax
North Lake Corridor

Background Summary
Also a part of the multi-phase Crossroad Improvements Project that improves traffic flow on North Lake Drive (6), Phase 3 includes improvements and widening starting in front of Lexington Middle School and extending north to include improvements to the Abbie Lane/Northwood Road intersection and the Sunset Boulevard (378) Intersection. These improvements can happen within the existing right-of-way. In order to avoid too much of North Lake being under construction at once, this work will proceed upon the completion of the widening at Lexington Elementary School (Phase I) and the Harmon Street extension (Phase 2). Design is 30% complete and it was determined that design should continue.

Agreed to next steps:
- Complete design with anticipated bid date of 2021

Total Anticipated Project Cost: $3 Million
Funding Source: Hospitality Tax
Virginia Hylton Park

Background Summary
A master plan for Virginia Hylton Park has been completed by Boudreaux and LandPlan Group South based upon goals set at the last retreat. The current goal is to develop the design and construction documents based upon the master plan. A phased construction strategy will be developed so that the project can be cost effectively bid as one large project and then constructed in stages by the selected contractor as to keep the park open throughout construction. Other considerations discussed that should be included in the next phase of design are the inclusion of memorials, future use of Clark House, future use of the building that currently supports maintenance, and improvements to sections of parking to the southeast of town hall. Development of the design will include cost estimating to confirm total project costs.

Agreed to next steps:
- Begin topographical and tree survey
- Revise design proposal
- Complete design development and develop construction timeline

Total Anticipated Project Cost: $3 Million

Funding Source: New Revenue Bonds
Throughout the retreat, other ideas and desired next steps were discussed as documented in the following list:

• At the October Council Work Session, Staff is to present to Council a full funding plan based upon the strategies outlined at the retreat for the Priority Focus Areas along with a plan on how to educate constituents.
• In next 4 months, prepare request for qualifications for a consulting team to provide a comprehensive overhaul to the zoning and land development ordinance.
• In the next 6-8 months, begin review of the landscape and tree ordinance.
• In next 6 months, Staff to present to Council during a work session a plan for disposition of town-owned property.
For longer range planning and staff focus during the year, topics for next year’s retreat shall include:

- Suggested new park sites
- Plan for redevelopment of former utility facility site near Old Mill Pond
- Long-term downtown parking plan
- Sidewalk improvement study
- Out of town developer incentives
- Develop traffic improvement
- Public relations communication strategy
- Lake Murray presence