



# 2021 OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL PRIORITIES



## Oconee County Mission Statement

It is the mission of Oconee County to provide our current and future citizens and visitors quality services while protecting our communities, heritage, environment and natural resources, in an ever-changing world.

## Oconee County Vision Statement

Oconee County – A diverse, growing, safe, vibrant community guided by rural traditions and shaped by natural beauty; where employment, education and recreation offer a rich quality of life for all generations, both today and tomorrow.

## County Council Priorities

For the past several years, County Council and Administration have held a Strategic Planning Retreat to review the previous year's accomplishments, establish goals for the upcoming year, and prioritize longer term goals in preparation for the future.

The Oconee County Strategic Planning Retreat was held on Friday, February 19, 2021. During the retreat, Finance Director, Ladale Price, presented the Annual Budget Update, followed by the 2020 Year in Review, presented by County Administrator, Amanda Brock.

County Council discussed strategic goals for each district and Oconee County as a whole. This discussion revealed a primary focus on improving quality of life, increasing public safety personnel, addressing the need to expand public leisure spaces as well as improving existing critical infrastructure. Strategic planning initiatives were ranked based on Council member comments and further discussion.

Oconee County's Council's priorities for 2021-2022 were **all** identified as objectives in the 2020 Oconee County Comprehensive Plan as each initiative indicates below.

## Tier One Priorities

Tier One initiatives were prioritized by three or more Council members during the Strategic Planning Retreat. These projects will receive primary staff commitment and funding consideration in the next fiscal year.

**Public Safety:** Four Council initiatives focused on increasing general public safety and addressed the need for additional personnel in both law enforcement and emergency services. These initiatives are addressed as follows in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan:

Strategy 7.1.3.2. Regularly update and utilize the County Capital Improvements Plan to systematically construct and upgrade facilities identified in the Community Facilities Plan.

Strategy 7.2.3.1. Review and upgrade existing emergency facilities plans on a regular basis, implementing established goals in a systematic manner.

Strategy 7.2.3.2. Provide local public safety agencies appropriate assistance in obtaining funding to expand and upgrade operations.

Strategy 7.2.3.3. Partner with private entities in the development of emergency satellite facilities and specialized response equipment.

Strategy 10.2.1.2. Broaden utilization of grants to assist with capital projects and leverage existing resources to provide matching funds for grant opportunities.

Strategy 10.2.1.5. Encourage and seek partnership opportunities to eliminate unnecessary redundancies, strengthen funding proposals, and establish public/private partnerships to meet public safety infrastructure and facility needs.

**Utica Revitalization:** Three Council initiatives addressed opportunities for public and private investment and community improvement measures in Utica. These initiatives are addressed as follows in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan:

Strategy 3.2.1.3. Encourage infill housing development on vacant properties in developed residential areas already served by infrastructure.

Strategy 3.2.1.4. Work with the State and other organizations to identify and secure funding for housing and neighborhood rehabilitation for declining and unsafe residential areas through the public, non-profit, and private sectors.

Strategy 3.2.1.5. Work to encourage affordable housing development in Opportunity Zones identified in Oconee County.

Strategy 3.2.1.7. Promote and encourage development within defined Opportunity Zones featuring either mixed use or affordable housing elements.

Strategy 4.3.1.5. Establish a county-wide loan pool, in partnership with area banks, focused on downtown revitalization.

**Expansion of County Parks / Lake Hartwell:** Three Council initiatives addressed the need for expansion of county park opportunities on Lake Hartwell. These initiatives are addressed as follows in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan:

Strategy 6.2.3.4. Expand and maintain public parks and recreation spaces to a uniform standard of excellence.

Strategy 7.3.1.2. Upgrade and maintain County parks and recreation facilities to encourage and promote ecotourism opportunities.

## Tier Two Priorities

Tier Two priorities were identified by at least two Council members during the Strategic Planning Retreat. Staff will research and present the cost and implementation of each of the priorities throughout the 2021-2022 budget year.

**Oconee Regional Airport Hangar Construction:** Two Council members' initiatives addressed the desire for construction of T-Hangars for increased revenues at Oconee Regional Airport. These initiatives are addressed as follows in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan:

Strategy 9.4.1.2. Develop an on-going capital improvements program aimed at upgrading the Airport facilities to attract use by additional employers and potential occupants of the business parks in the County.

Strategy 9.4.1.3 Seek and establish ways to utilize the Airport to foster partnerships with Clemson University in areas such as hanger lease agreements and facility use agreements.

Strategy 9.4.1.4 Identify Federal and State funds for investment in airport enhancements, including additional hangar space.

Strategy 9.4.1.5. Seek public/private partnerships to fund airport operations and expansions, including additional hangar space.

Strategy 10.1.2.10. Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport in a manner that not only serves existing clientele, but establishes the facility as a premier small airport.

**Highway Safety / Traffic Alleviation:** Two Council members’ prioritized list addressed the need for increased highway safety and traffic reduction measures. These initiatives are addressed as follows in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan:

Strategy 9.2.1.3. Maintain a priority road upgrade list that addresses existing traffic “bottlenecks” and other traffic issues and reasonably anticipates issues expected to emerge in the coming decade.

Strategy 9.2.1.4. Explore and adopt appropriate traffic management tools and techniques available through land use regulation that utilize concepts such as limiting the number of curb cuts in high traffic areas.

Strategy 9.2.1.6. Continue to require developers to provide traffic studies to determine if a road must be upgraded to safely handle increased traffic loads and to cover the cost of such road upgrades.

Strategy 9.3.3.1. Promote and assist in the establishment of commuter parking lots to encourage ride sharing and decrease traffic congestion.

### Tier Three Priorities

Tier Three initiatives were prioritized by one member of County Council, and will be incrementally implemented over a period of years as funding and opportunity allows. These initiatives are addressed as follows in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan:

#### Entrepreneurial Developments / Blue Ridge Community Center / FARM Center

Strategy 4.3.2.1. Support small business start-up and expansion and assist in clearing key steps in the development and start-up process to include permitting and inspections, licensing, and eligibility for State and local incentives.

Strategy 4.3.2.2. Establish and maintain local business incubation capabilities.

Strategy 4.3.3.2. Capitalize on the local traditional arts, culture, and heritage of the County as an economic opportunity for small business development, downtown revitalization, and tourism.

Strategy 8.1.1.9. Activate vacant and underutilized County owned property to facilitate a program that invites entrepreneurs, non-profits, residents, and other groups to begin entry-level agricultural businesses, community gardens, and pilot programs for engaging residents in the agricultural processes.

#### Speculative Building / Economic Development Investment

Strategy 4.1.1.1. Maintain economic incentives for new and expanding industry.

Strategy 4.1.1.2. Maintain communication with existing business and industry to assess the local business climate, public services, workforce quality, and potential areas for improvement.

Strategy 4.1.1.3. Continue to develop the I-85 industrial corridor with associated infrastructure to support fully utilized industrial parks.

Strategy 4.1.1.4. Promote the inventory of industrial sites and buildings in Oconee County with an emphasis on vacant and certified industrial sites and parks.

Strategy 4.1.1.5. Recruit new industry to the County and assist in expansion of existing employers in the target sectors of advanced manufacturing, biosciences, automotive, and energy.

Strategy 4.1.1.6. Continue to support the Oconee Economic Alliance as the primary entity to represent the County and pursue industrial development with broad-based public and private representation.

## **Expansion of County Service Locations**

Strategy 7.1.3.2. Regularly update and utilize the County Capital Improvements Plan to systematically construct and upgrade facilities identified in the Community Facilities Plan.

Strategy 10.1.1.3. Utilize the County's Five-Year Capital Plan to systematically construct and upgrade facilities identified in the Master Plan.

Strategy 10.2.1.2. Broaden utilization of grants to assist with capital projects and leverage existing resources to provide matching funds for grant opportunities.

Strategy 10.2.1.3. Explore and pursue other revenue sources such as user-based fees, impact fees, and other sources to help fund infrastructure.

Strategy 10.2.1.5. Encourage and seek partnership opportunities to eliminate unnecessary redundancies, strengthen funding proposals, and establish public/private partnerships to meet public infrastructure and facility needs.

## **Greenway Development Plan**

Strategy 7.3.1.1. Partner with public and private entities to develop a countywide greenway system that will offer opportunities for nature-based recreation in areas where few currently exist and to connect existing parks to enable safe cycling routes.

Strategy 9.3.2.1. Provide and encourage pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between existing and planned residential, parks and recreation areas, trails, public facilities, and commercial and industrial uses that will enable alternative transportation opportunities.

Strategy 9.3.2.3. Seek funding opportunities to create nature trails, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and other facilities designed to make communities more walkable, reduce vehicular traffic, and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Strategy 10.1.2.9. Expand bicycle and pedestrian routes to allow for greater use of alternative forms of transportation and to promote ecotourism opportunities.

## **Bountyland Fire Substation Construction**

Strategy 7.1.3.2. Regularly update and utilize the County Capital Improvements Plan to systematically construct and upgrade facilities identified in the Community Facilities Plan.

Strategy 7.2.3.1. Review and upgrade existing emergency facilities plans on a regular basis, implementing established goals in a systematic manner.

Strategy 7.2.3.2. Provide local public safety agencies appropriate assistance in obtaining funding to expand and upgrade operations.

## **Wastewater Treatment Expansion**

Strategy 3.2.2.1. Encourage the expansion of water and sewer infrastructure and facilities to increase opportunities for new industrial, commercial and residential development and provide service for existing residential areas that are currently unserved.

Strategy 6.3.1.1. Support wastewater treatment providers in the extension of sewer service to currently unserved or underserved areas to minimize the need for septic tanks where conditions are not suitable or water sources may be compromised.

Strategy 6.3.1.2. Support wastewater treatment providers in the upgrade and expansion of existing treatment facilities to accommodate the expansion of sewer service.

### **Stormwater Management Personnel / Engineer**

Strategy 6.3.3.1. Establish strategies and adopt measures necessary to create a framework for the efficient implementation of erosion and sediment control regulations.

Strategy 6.3.3.2. Develop a County storm water management program to prepare for efficient and cost-effective implementation in the event of Federal designation.

### **Alternative Solid Waste Opportunities**

Strategy 7.2.2.1. Work to reduce the volume of solid waste through increased recycling and composting.

Strategy 7.2.2.2. Seek out innovative and alternative technologies that provide a long-term solution to current and projected solid waste needs and may also be used in the future to mitigate and reclaim closed facilities.

### **Roadway Infrastructure**

Strategy 9.2.1.1. Acquire and allocate C-funds and leverage in-kind resources to maintain and enhance the County road network and supporting infrastructure.

### **Broadband Expansion**

Strategy 7.2.3.6. Work with communications providers to ensure optimum communications access and speed for emergency services, local governments, businesses, residents, and visitors.

### **Development or Impact Fees**

Strategy 10.2.1.3. Explore and pursue other revenue sources such as user-based fees, impact fees, and other sources to help fund infrastructure.

## **Conclusion**

The goals and objectives set forth by this Council define a significant priority: a better way of life for all Oconeans and our visitors.