

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

Research and analysis are the most important first steps in the master planning process for they allowed the team to gain an intimate knowledge and understanding of the existing conditions and how these conditions will influence future plans. This process involved three steps: 1) listening; 2) site analysis; and 3) economic analysis. Each step provided invaluable insight into the city and into the potential and possibilities of improving downtown and the corridors leading into the city.

Listening is essential to creating a successful master plan. In order for the master plan to be relevant and for it to command a commitment to see it through, those who will benefit need to be heard. We were honored that so many shared their time with us to provide their opinions, their concerns and their vision for Hartsville’s future. When sharing visions, there are no wrong answers or bad ideas. Each person brings a unique perspective to the planning process. Each perspective is important to designing the future. There were many frank opinions shared, some very thoughtful ideas and some endearing visions. One common theme was a love for Hartsville and a firm belief in its future as a beloved hometown that provides jobs, educational, cultural, recreational and civic engagement opportunities. We thank each person for shaping this plan by helping us to know Hartsville and discover the vast potential that exists.

The following focus groups, interviews and meetings were held to gather input from residents and business and community leaders.

MEETINGS

March 11	Kick-off meeting with Master Plan Steering Committee and tour of City
April 11	Dr. Howard Tucker, Trees for Tomorrow Judi Elvington, Former HDDA Director Kiwanis Speaker, Guest of Nancy McGee City Parks Committee Meeting
April 22	Curtis Tyner, President, Heritage Community Bank Goz & Gray Segars, Segars Development

	Jamie Morphis, Carolina Bank, School Board Member, Local Developer Frank Willis, Darlington County Economic Development Partnership Meredith Lanier, HDDA Dr. Murray Brockman, Governor’s School for Science & Mathematics Public Meeting at Mt. Calvary AME Church (attendedby approximately 80 residents)
April 23	Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors Jack Sanders, CEO, Sonoco Roger Schrum, VP, Investor Relations and Corporate Affairs Dr. Robert Wyatt, President, Coker Allison Pederson, Black Creek Arts Council Oakdale Neighborhood Stakeholders Joint Planning Commission and City Council Meeting
April 30	Oakdale Neighborhood Meeting
June 24	Oakdale Neighborhood Meeting
August 1	Steering Committee Meeting Focus Group: Hartsville Young Professionals
September 12	Butler Heritage Foundation Meeting
September 17	Steering Committee Meeting
November 13	Steering Committee and Stakeholder Meeting Focus Group: Housing for Sonoco and Duke Energy Employees

Each focus group or individual was asked a series of similar questions such as the following. In addition, targeted questions were asked for each program or group in order to learn specific needs, concerns and ideas.

- What is sacred about Hartsville?
- Wish list - what do you want?
- How do you direct people into town?
- Where do you like to travel?
- What do you tell people about Hartsville?
- What are the challenges to progress?
- What businesses would make Hartsville better?
- What do you drive out of town to purchase or do that you cannot do in Hartsville?

SUMMARY OF INPUT

The following summarize the assets, challenges and ideas gathered during the listening sessions. These became the foundation for the master plan.

ASSETS

- The People
- Close-knit community
- Corporate community - generous and engaged
- Strong and vibrant downtown
- Churches... love thy neighbor
- Can do spirit
- Unique assets
- Parks
- Being a small town
- Spirit of hospitality
- Variety of institutions – the Y, Governor’s School, Coker College, Kalmia Gardens of Coker College, Byerly Park, library, arts community, historic resources, lakes, health care system, Black Creek Arts Council, Lawton Park, Hartsville Museum, Center Theater, Burry Park, Centennial Park, Pride Park
- Elizabeth Boatwright Coker Performing Arts Center
- Intellectual and cultural capital
- Simple life with some big city amenities
- Sonoco – majority of stock held within 100 miles of Hartsville, continuity of corporate vision
- Coker College
- Governors’ School for Science & Mathematics
- International Baccalaureate Program at Hartsville High School
- Florence Darlington Technical College
- Little Miss SC pageant
- Dixie Youth World Series
- Duke Energy Center for Innovation
- Prestwood Lake

The following were the highest recurring ideas that influenced the priority goals for the master plan.

Be a vibrant college town.

- Nightlife, open past 5:30 p.m.
- Affordable housing within walking distances
- 24/7, hi-tech, totally connected
- Grocery within walking distance
- Art and Culture
- Town and Gown relationships – joint projects, joint recruitment and retention
- Third Places: coffee shops, restaurants, pool hall/billiards lounge, bars, pizza joint
- Outdoor recreation
- Sense of community
- Intellectual capital
- Discounts and specials for students
- Entrepreneurial opportunities

Provide Diverse Housing Options

- Retirees, young professionals, faculty
- Variety (size, price, rental, ownership)
- Quality rental
- Examples: Baxter Village and Market Common at the beach
- Maintenance

Enhance 6th Street Corridor

- Infrastructure (sidewalks, streets, lighting)
- Condition of houses
- Butler Heritage Foundation properties
- Retail, incubator, art studios opportunities
- Aesthetics: landscaping, beauty, maintenance, address vacant houses and businesses

Improve Gateways and Corridors into the City

- Getting travelers off of Highway 151
- Positive and beautiful experience driving into the city
- Improve both ends of 5th Street - best chance to grab visitors
- Entrances should tell the unique, beautiful, progressive story of Hartsville.
- Highway 151 entrance: best chance to grab visitors
- Aesthetics: landscaping, beauty, first impressions, welcoming, signage
- Collaborative efforts with Darlington County

Improve Downtown

- Program to address renovation of buildings
- Recruit and support local businesses
- Re-imagine downtown... more than retail, not just for shopping anymore
- Diversity in retail – more specialty, diverse price points
- Hospitality coordinator
- Re-imagine storefronts and buildings... smaller spaces
- Balance of public vs. private use – private should be majority (tax base, skin in the game, investment)
- Management (parking, safety, events, promotions, maintenance, etc.)
- Tales of the Town scavenger hunt (like Mice on Main)
- Aesthetics: landscaping, beauty, maintenance, improve facades, signage

Recruit and retain young professionals

- Social networks
- Opportunities for spouses
- Entertainment
- Active recreation
- Shopping
- Diversity: “I want to see people like me.”
- Young Professionals organization
- Entrepreneurial opportunities (aging merchants, need for new businesses, start-ups)
- A new major employer

SUMMARY OF INPUT, *continued*

Maximize use of Center Theater

- Programs and music that appeals to young professionals
- Market regionally

Coordination among the Community Foundation for a Better Hartsville, Main Street Hartsville, the Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce and the City of Hartsville – centralized hospitality organization.

Redevelop Oakdale Neighborhood

- Rebuild sense of community
- Great opportunity for infill housing
- “We looked out for each other. We didn’t go in our houses, close the blinds and turn on the TV or computer.”

Keep Hartsville Local... and Promote

- Burry Bookstore... better than Barnes & Noble
- Midnight Rooster... better than Starbucks and Panera
- Movie Theater... better bang for your buck
- Yogi Bear’s Honey Fried Chicken... better than Kentucky Fried
- Kalmia Gardens... better than Calloway Gardens
- Higher Ed... more than college... Governor’s School, Coker College, FDTC, Hartsville High School IB program
- Coker Farms... impacting the world

Other ideas that were shared include the following. While these were not mentioned as frequently, they are valid comments and have been considered

Economy and Government

- Equitable distribution of Hospitality Tax revenue
- Hartsville needs a new major employer.

- Long-term plan to address transportation logistics of Sonoco and other corporations (coordination with city and county).
- Coordination of all government entities.
- Prioritization of capital improvement projects
- Diversify corporate community
- Annexation
- Decrease need for shopping in Florence, Columbia and Charlotte
- Maximize assets: connect, leverage, promote (to residents, to visitors, i.e. Pure Michigan), utilize
- Development of 150-acre tract on 151/Byerly – great potential

Livability

- Improvements in K-12 education culture... beyond adequate; be the best and promote.
- Hartsville has to be a livable city.
- “We’re here as long as we can get the type of people we need. The next generation is the most important generation. If we cannot attract them and keep them, the result will be cataclysmic for Hartsville.”
- “Here, you can be a part of a community and have a voice.”
- Want to stay vs. Able to stay
- Outdoor recreation: lakes, rivers, cycling (trails), golf, public access
- Connectivity: bike and pedestrian, between assets, residential to downtown to campuses, sidewalks on 4th Street, pedestrian safety, accessibility
- Telling and promoting the story of Hartsville and all that it offers

Town and Gown

- Safety around the Governor’s School and Coker College campuses
- Town and Gown relationships (Coker and Governor’s School) – joint projects, joint recruitment and retention