



Destination Downtown

Long known as “The Electric City” for its history of being one of the first sites of practical hydroelectric power in the world, Anderson is now generating a new kind of electricity. And that’s downtown Anderson.

1992 Downtown Vision Process

In 1992, the citizens of Anderson began in earnest to plan a vision for a revitalized downtown. That visioning process established the goal of hiring a downtown manager to focus full-time on the redevelopment of downtown. Once the downtown manager was hired, the Anderson City Council sought additional professional assistance to help create a master plan for downtown. The design team and city staff held numerous public sessions and settled on the following major revitalization activities:

- Construction of streetscape improvements for a pedestrian friendly downtown
- Development of greenspace for beautification and leisure activities
- Provision of additional public parking, more attractive public parking
- Development of gateways into Downtown
- Establishment of east/west initiatives, i.e. an entertainment district

1996

City Council, with much public support adopted the Downtown Master Plan in 1996 and established the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District as the funding source to implement the plan.

1997-1999

Phase I

With the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan, Phase I improvements (\$3 million) were completed in 1999, and included major streetscape improvements on Main Street from Market Street on the south to Earle Street on the north (town center and one block north and south on Main Street). The redevelopment of the former Belks 100-space public parking lot and new lighting, landscaping and irrigation, brick and granite sidewalks, street furniture, and paving helped to complete the initial drive.

The City continued its philosophy of creating the public investment first as a commitment to spur the private sector efforts. A partnership among the City of Anderson, Anderson County, and the Anderson County Arts Center resulted in the establishment of the Farmers Market and the Electric City Depot. These improvements provided the impetus for the Arts center to initiate the Arts Center Warehouse project.

2001 – Master Plan Update

Again, the public’s involvement in support of the master plan identified the Phase II priorities: a continuation of the streetscape improvements along South and North Main Street, improved parking facilities on East Church Street as well as improvements to leased

parking areas (First Baptist and St. John's), including lighting, landscaping, irrigation, and paving. In 2001, the City re-visited the 1996 plan with a two-day public design charette. The focus of the charette was to build upon the successes and foundations created with the master plan and the Phase I and II improvements and to identify opportunities for future improvements. More than 40 local citizens and design professionals attended the charette. The format divided the Downtown into three areas wherein three groups of citizens developed recommendations for improving each area. Trolley tours of each area gave participants a front row look at the assigned areas.

Each of the three areas identified gateways as important features framing the downtown. Transportation issues are challenges and opportunities. The adopted Recreation Master Plan touches each of the three areas in different ways allowing for the coordination of resources and planning. The process and its results represented the collective interests and visioning of a diverse group of people who see intrinsic value in the reinvestment of Downtown Anderson. The update solidified the next course of action:

- Continue the improvements identified in Phases I and II (streetscape north and south on Main from Greenville to River Streets)
- Develop additional partnerships to leverage resources
- Establish new programs and guidelines that further encourage Downtown development (design guidelines, historic districts)
- Expand Downtown marketing and promotions

2001-2003

The City's commitment to public spaces and facilities was enhanced by the redevelopment of City Hall and the addition of new office space and the creation of a public plaza. This construction was completed in 2003 and provides a substantial focal point on South Main Street.

Small Steps

Investments in downtown have seen resurgence in both new construction and restoration activity. Even small incentives such as the Façade Grant program have reaped rewards. An initial public investment of \$200,000 over 8 years encouraged over \$1 million worth of private investment in the restoration of 90 downtown buildings. This continues to reap rewards with as many as 12 participants annually.

Additionally, a new emphasis is in place for marketing and promoting downtown businesses and downtown as a destination, evident by the debut of the 2005 downtown website. The 2004 "Big Fish" public art campaign provided a tourism side to downtown and assisted in the completion of the Arts Center Warehouse and establishment of new office space there for the Convention and Visitors Bureau. The City continues to partner with organizations on downtown activities such as public art projects, the performing and visual arts and other cultural activities. Our growing slate of special events includes Soiree in April, the antique car show in June, the October Chili Cook-off, and the December Holiday Walk and Tree Lighting festivities.

2005-2006

The focus for 2005-2006 public improvements is the construction of the streetscape north on Main Street from Earle Street to just beyond Federal and Sharpe Streets. The extension

of the streetscape to the south from City Hall to just beyond River Street is planned as part of the construction of the new Municipal Business Center at the corner of River and Main Streets. Other streetscape improvements along the east-west thoroughfares are in the planning and/or design stage for Earle, Whitner, Benson, Church, Federal, and Sharpe Streets. These improvements are planned to support and leverage private investment projects now in progress.

With the former Belks site cleared, Requests for Interest and Qualifications (RFIQ) on the development of the site are anticipated in early 2006, as well as RFIQs for the design of a new parking structure near the Chiquola Hotel site.

The atmosphere of partnerships grows stronger with efforts to capitalize on opportunities such as residential space; increased retailers and services; pedestrian-friendly green space; an arts center and entertainment corridor; a convention and visitor's bureau; and a full service hotel and conference center.

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