

2019 State of the Town Address

I'm Mayor Steve MacDougall. Welcome to the State of the Town Address, a capsule of our Town's accomplishments in 2018 and an outline of 2019's goals. I want to take time to recount the progress we made last year along with projects Council and I will execute this year and beyond.

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

At this time I would like to acknowledge my fellow Council Members – Mayor Pro-Tem Hazel Livingston, Councilwoman Kathy Maness, Councilman Todd Carnes, Councilman Ron Williams, Councilman Steve Baker and Councilman Todd Lyle; along with all of our staff for their dedication to the Town of Lexington. These men and women are the backbone of this top-notch community. I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together in 2019.

As we prepare for spring, let's take a moment to shine a light on a few of the major accomplishments from this past year:

2018 was a significant year of turning our vision into reality in the Town of Lexington.

Most notably, we completed our first traffic and tourism project funded by the Hospitality Tax – the **One-Way Pairs System** throughout downtown Lexington. This long-awaited project became operational this past summer and has made traffic flow at the intersection of Main Street at Lake Drive more efficient. By splitting the northbound and southbound movements, the signals at Lake Drive and Church Street can service twice as many vehicles. This allows for more “green” signal time to be allotted to east and west Main Street at Lake Drive and Church Street.

In addition to the one-way pairs, we have opened town parking lots on S. Church Street, housing 150 spaces to serve the Lexington Municipal Complex, Palmetto Collegiate Institute, Virginia Hylton Park and the Icehouse Amphitheater.

A primary reason for the high quality of life found in the Town of Lexington is from the service of our stellar Police Department. Led by Chief Terrence Green, the Department received the **Gold Standard Award** from the **Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement**, which first awarded accreditation to the Lexington Police Department in 2009. Additionally, the department was awarded the **DUI Agency of the Year from the South Carolina Department of Public Safety**; which was also previously won in 2013 and 2015.

Finally, the achievements from individual officers are also being recognized as Patrolman First Class Nick Thompson was named **DUI Officer of the Year from the South Carolina Department of Public Safety**; for excelling in the area of DUI arrests, DUI victim service and anti-underage drinking programs. It is an honor to call the men and women of the Lexington Police Department the cream of the crop. Thank you for your continued service in making our Town one of the safest communities in South Carolina.

Families have been able to enjoy nights out on the town at our safe-friendly atmosphere of the **Icehouse Amphitheater**. Completing our second year, the venue has now hosted 75 events and welcomed over 60,000 guests. In addition to our signature concert series Lexington Live, we have presented Lexington School District One Art Showcases, Movies in the Park and the 246th Army Band with fireworks to celebrate Independence Day. We have also welcomed to the stage Platinum Recording Artist Sister Hazel and Top 40 recording artist and SC native, Edwin McCain. We look forward continued success and bringing quality entertainment to the Town of Lexington. Learn more at www.icehouseamphitheater.com.

The Town of Lexington is also committed to bringing safety to our citizens through state-of-the-art utility infrastructure. Exactly one year ago, the town took over the **I-20 Wastewater Treatment Facility** formerly run by Carolina Water Service.

The transition of this facility to the Town of Lexington is the realization of many years of effort by the Town, Central Midlands Council of Governments, other regional municipal and county governments, state and federal environmental regulators, and concerned citizens to fully implement a regional sewer system to improve water quality and safeguard our natural waterways in accordance with the Clean Water Act of 1972.

Within the first month of ownership, the Town of Lexington diverted all flow from the I-20 Wastewater Treatment Facility to the Joint Wastewater Treatment Facility in Cayce officially eliminating discharge previously polluting the Saluda River.

Our commitment to the new 2,300 customers we serve includes substantial planned investments in sewer infrastructure rehabilitation and improvements over the next five years to ensure the sewer system meets high environmental, safety and service standards.

Additionally, the Town of Lexington is making technological advancements through upgrades of the **MI-NET meter reading system**, which is being installed to our 9,000 water customers. This system will allow staff remote access to read usages from their office. We have also expanded our **GIS system field applications**, allowing staff to remote access from mobile devices to look up utility infrastructure information such as water leaks and stormwater facilities.

The Finance Department was recently awarded the **Government Finance Officers Association's Comprehensive Annual Finance Report Award** for the 20th straight year and for the ninth straight year, the **Distinguished Budget Presentation Award**. Through these national awards, the Town reinforces transparency and full disclosure of our financial health.

It is important to note the continual growth in the number of business licenses issued in Town as well as the growth in retail sales. In 2018, the Town issued **4,190** business licenses. This is **3.8% increase in net new businesses**. Finally, there was **\$2.4 Billion Total Gross Sales** reported this past year. These facts, combined with continued economic growth through construction and annexation, support the notion that the Town continues to evolve from the bedroom community that it once was into a vibrant commercial and industrial center.

It has become very obvious the Town of Lexington is the place where citizens want to live, work, play and learn.

These particular 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.

Clearly, we've had some extraordinary advancement this past year but there's always more work that can and will be done. Here are a **few of the ambitious projects we will focus on into 2019 and beyond:**

Council, staff and I are continuously looking to alleviate traffic congestion. In addition to the projects we have already implemented, the Town also has two more hospitality tax transportation projects in the works.

First, the **Crossroad Improvements Project** will focus on the North Lake Corridor, starting at the end of the one-way pair to the North Lake Drive at Sunset Boulevard Intersection. The improvements will provide safety and operational upgrades to the corridor, which serves 40,000 cars per day.

Phase I will see the **widening of North Lake Drive** from the one-way pair split at Church Street to the existing Dreher Street. Plans have been submitted and are awaiting SCDOT approval; which places our anticipated construction starting this summer. Additional phases include the **Harmon Street Extension** and relocation of Dreher Street to North Lake Drive at Azalea Drive along with tying together the corridor through improvements from the existing Dreher Street to North Lake Drive at Sunset Boulevard.

Our third hospitality tax project focuses on improvements at the **Corley Mill at Sunset Blvd Gateway**. The goal of this project is to improve current traffic flow through this 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.

Phase I of this project is the **I-20 Westbound Ramp Improvements, which includes** 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. Additionally, two right turn lanes from Ginny Lane onto Sunset Boulevard are anticipated to be complete and operational by April.

The Town of Lexington is also beginning Phase II of our **Adaptive Computerized Signalization System**, which will include 16 signals. The project went to bid in January and we anticipate our notice to proceed in March, with an approximate timeline of an 18 month completion. In addition to having all 35 signals in town on the system, we are collaborating with Lexington Medical Center to include the 10 intersections in campus proximity. This project is currently out to bid and we anticipate proceeding by this spring.

We are also continuing our efforts with beautification of our parks. First, we are working with the Army Corps of Engineers, FEMA and SCDHEC in the rebuilding of **Gibson Pond Dam**. Plans have been submitted for design review; once approved, we expect permitting to be issued allowing us to begin the long-awaited construction, with an anticipated re-opening in fall 2019. 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 citizens can enjoy its beauty.

The town has also created a design plan to provide a 21st century facelift to our oldest and most utilized green space, **Virginia Hylton Park**. Currently, the park is 6.5 acres, sitting on Twelve Mile Creek with amenities including gazebos, staging area, playground, several gardens and a special needs playground for wheelchair bound persons. The proposed expansion will include an additional 8.25 acres. To help fund the renovations, a Virginia Hylton Park Committee was formed and hosted their first event, the Hops and Harvest Craft Beer Festival, raising \$4,000. Additionally, the Lexington Beautification Foundation has committed \$200,000 for upgrades. The environment will provide a playful, social and recreational space for all ages. Council's goal is to preserve the qualities that make Virginia Hylton Park so special, while serving as a safe haven and healthy green space promoting a friendly, caring community inclusive to all our citizens for generations to come.

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

Additionally, the **Cromer Road Pump Station** will open this summer to increase the wastewater pumping capacity to 12.5 million gallons a day, flowing to the Joint Wastewater Treatment Plant on the Congaree River. Future plans include a 30 inch parallel line to also tie into the joint facility.

Finally, I am excited to announce the Town of Lexington has gained a higher education presence with the opening of The University of South Carolina Palmetto College Transfer Center at Lexington Middle School, which operates 4pm-7pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Building 400 Area 11 (Abbie Lane Side). This site will greatly enhance educational opportunities for adult and non-traditional students within the area to complete a four-year degree. Lexington County is one of the fastest growing communities in the state, and this new location will enable USC Palmetto College to serve more adult and working students who are seeking to complete their bachelor's degree within our community. USC Palmetto College providing a location in the Town of Lexington will lead to better educational outcomes in the area for the students they serve and provide citizens the opportunity to learn more about bachelor's degree completion or tackle new subjects to advance their career path. Additionally, our children are served by one of the premier school districts in the state. Through USC Palmetto College and USC Sumter's collaboration with Lexington School District One, our future workforce now has the opportunity to start their collegiate education prior to leaving high school through dual credit programs. This gives

students greater flexibility and choices by providing a higher opportunity for success in completing their education and advancing their future careers.

To emphasize our dynamic community, we provide a wide-ranging calendar of **events and activities** throughout the year. The Town of Lexington, along with the Lexington County Recreation and Aging Commission, hosts several events including the Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt, Movies in the Park and Snowball Festival along with highlighting charitable senior programs such as Meals on Wheels and Project Warmth. Additionally, the Lexington County Stadium run by the commission was placed on a national stage as it was home to the Coastal Plain League's 2018 All Star Show hosted by the Lexington County Blowfish.

The calendar also is comprised of Lexington County Chili Cookoff, St. Patrick's Shamrock Parade, Kid's Day of Lexington, Lexington Wine Walk, Lexington Farmers Market, the Lexington Police Department's Fall Fest and Lexington's Hops and Harvest Festival.

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 aspires to engage the public through an all-inclusive communication and marketing campaign. 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 1301 on Spectrum Cable**, 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 genuinely astounded by how many projects that have come to realization since we implemented the Vision Plan less than seven years ago. This State of the Town Address echoes the impressive 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 guidance 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 astounded to see the positive leaps we have taken through the years.

I wish that all of you have a continued healthy, happy and prosperous 2019. 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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