



City of Hardeeville, SC - A 2022 Year In Review

The City of Hardeeville is considered to be one of the fastest growing municipalities in South Carolina being comprised of fifty-seven plus square miles and is ranked as the 4th largest city per area in the state and continues to see its population drastically increase each year. As the City of Hardeeville continues to advance, it is necessary for the city to continue evolving its standards of operations, introduce new strategic measures, and expand its programs and services. As a result, the city is reporting many of its noteworthy accomplishments and highlights for 2022.

The city now employs 133 staff across sixteen department with 123 full-time staff. This year the city expanded its departments and hired a Human Resource Director and CIP Project Manager, along with replacing its long tenured Public Works Director. Additionally, with this year's elections, the city now has two new members on city council.

City-wide Highlights

Transportation

The city continues to work on improving transportation and accessibility through the city, this past year the city finished construction of new traffic signals on US 278 at Latitude Margaritaville and Hilton Head Lakes, additionally the city has completed design and permitting is underway for a new traffic signal at the intersection of Argent, Short Cut and Jasper Station Roads. Partnering with Jasper and Beaufort Counties, the city signed an IGA to participate in more than \$2 million dollars of improvements to SC170. Additionally, the city secured funding to complete a regional traffic study in partnership with LCOG/LATS. The city also is working closely with SCDOT as they work on the I95 widening project that includes Exit 8 and Exit 5 improvements. Additionally, the city is continuing to work closely with Jasper County, Stratford Land, and SCDOT on moving the new Exit 3 project forward.

Infrastructure

The city continues working closely with BJWSA to improve water and sewer projects in the region, including projects serving the Exit 8 and US 278 growth and development that includes a \$6 million dollars sewer project, along with new water and sewer projects along US 17 totaling approximately \$20 million dollars that provide service and capacity for the many of ongoing industrial and commerce projects underway.

Additionally, the city is working with Dominion Energy in efforts to provide natural gas services to businesses along Whyte Hardee Boulevard and to serve various industrial areas throughout the city. In addition to gas services, the city has worked with Dominion to establish a new path



moving through the city for high power transmission lines that will provide enhanced services for the industrial projects along US 17.

Housing

Even though the city has several ongoing projects underway to address attainable housing needs, one of the more impactful projects this year has been the city's regional partnership with seven local jurisdictions to establish a Regional Housing Trust Fund that will put forth \$10 million dollars across ten years to help address various housing concerns in the region.

Nonprofit

In 2020, the city founded the Hardeeville Community Transformation Foundation, a 501c3 to continue meeting needs of the community, this year the nonprofit, on behalf of the city's ARPA allocations, administered \$125,000 for Small Business Recovery Grants and awarded \$61,000 during first round of grant applications with a second round of grants being available early in 2023, administered \$150,000 of Nonprofit Grants and awarded \$126,336 during one round of grant applications and continue to administer \$145,000 toward the city's Workforce Development Training program. To date, the Workforce Development Training program that started in 2020 by the city in partnership with Palmetto Training has now graduated 80+ certified welders and 70+ CDL drivers, all of which have been tuition free.

The city continues to partner with Bluffton Self Help and Lowcountry Legal along with other nonprofits and organizations to expand services to address the various needs of a growing city. Additionally, city continues to partner with Don Ryan Center to assist with businesses growth and development.

Finance Highlights

Fiscal Year 2023 Consolidated Budget

Hardeeville City Council approved the FY23 consolidated budget totaling \$46,496,004. The consolidated budget includes a General Fund budget of \$24,321,043 which funds administrative and operational services provided by the city. Capital projects funding for FY23 totals \$14,325,471 and includes funding for nearly three dozen infrastructure projects and capital purchases.

Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA)

The city and its finance department received the GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the tenth consecutive year. The city submitted the FY22 budget document to GFOA for review for the first time and received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award. The city also prepared its first Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) and submitted it for review by GFOA. The purpose of a PAFR is for the city to extract information



from the annual comprehensive financial report and to prepare a document that is readily accessible and easily understandable by the general public and other interested parties without a background in public finance. The PAFR was awarded the Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting. Receipt of these three awards results in the city being designated a GFOA Triple Crown Winner. Over 300 governments are awarded the Triple Crown annually. The city is one of eight South Carolina local governments recognized and the smallest by population size in South Carolina.

Accommodations Tax Funding

The city awarded \$78,156 to two (2) non-profit organizations. The Jasper County Chamber of Commerce was awarded \$73,360 for event advertising and facility operations. The Sun City Pickleball Club was awarded \$4,796 for their annual Pickleball event. This event attracts over 200 players from across the nation in addition to over 100 local participants. The Accommodations Tax funds are generated from a tax on the gross proceeds derived from the rental of rooms for lodging accommodations. These funds are then dispersed to non-profit organizations for their events which promote tourism, arts, cultural events, and other tourism-generating activities.

Grant Funding

The city continues to seek out alternative funding sources through grants and various resources in efforts to maximize the city's ability to meet the demands associated with its continuous growth. This year, the city was successful in being awarded \$40,000 SC PARD funding for Millstone Landing, \$1.2 million for a FEMA SAFER grant for new fire department personnel, \$240,000 for SC Department of Public Safety the School Resource Officer program. The city has secured more than \$38 million dollars in grant funding for multiple projects within the past seven years, including \$28 million dollars for the new Exit 3 project.

Planning and Development Highlights

Growth

As the city works to meet the various demands of the ongoing growth and development each year, in 2022 the city was highlighted by a record year for building and planning permits as total permits surpassed 1,800 with approximately 1,063 new single-family permits and 700 single family certificates of occupancy were issued. Additionally, the city benefitted from new economic development projects as the RiverPort Commerce Park submitted permit applications for the seventh new building in the development stage. Currently, the RiverPort Commerce Park has four large buildings totaling 1.3 million square ft. that have received certificates of occupancy. As the result of the related growth and activity, the department is working toward the implementation of a new development pipeline to improve the overall internal and external development processes.



Resources

The planning & development department continues to expand its services with the collected responsibility of adding more staffing and resources to manage the ongoing planning and development activities throughout the city. Staffing for the department included the hiring a certified plans examiner, planning technician, and three building inspectors. Additionally, the department has implemented new GIS technology with the addition of Geothinq Mapping services to illustrate various details and information about the city along with providing an understanding of the many different projects that the city has ongoing.

Planning

Another key role of the department includes the ongoing activity associated with setting the direction and outlining the legal processes that steer the city's growth and development, this past year the department began the process of updating its Municipal Zoning and Development Ordinance (MZDO), a process that should be completed and adopted by late summer, 2023. Additionally, the department is beginning the implementation of the Whyte Hardee Boulevard Master Plan in efforts of transforming the downtown area.

Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Highlights

Awards

The City of Hardeeville and PR&T department received a Municipal Association of South Carolina Achievement Award for its new recreation center as the town won in the 5,001 – 10,000 population categories. The 38,000-square-foot facility offers a collegiate-sized basketball court with seating for 1,000 spectators, two racquetball courts, an indoor walking track, a fitness center, a rentable community room and classrooms. The center hosts a variety of programs, high school and youth athletics, team sports, community events and special events. Future plans include building a walking trail to connect the center to the city's recreation complex park. Additionally, the center has surpassed 1,000 monthly individual memberships. The Center also continues to market its programs and services for corporate members, welcoming the Jasper County Board of Education and their 415 employees along with Maruti Food Mart.

Additionally, the PR&T department was awarded the Zenie Ingram Community Service of the Year from the Jasper County Chamber of Commerce. This award was presented to the department based on their commitment toward enhancing the community through events, programs, and facilities that help in cultivating, promoting, and improving the quality of life for residents and visitors of the city.



Events

The PR&T department manages and operates several successful community events throughout the year that ranges in assorted sizes, with the largest of these events being the Festival on Main. This year the Festival on Main had a 25% increase in participation bringing more than 7,000 people to the two-day event in October. Additionally, the city was able to raise more than \$70,000 in community sponsorships to make the event a success.

One of the more exciting events held each year is the Battle of the Badges, an event that positions the city's fire department versus the police department in a "friendly" game of softball in efforts to raise money for local charities. This year this event raised \$13,000 to support the 200 Club of the Coastal Empire. The 200 Club of the Coastal Empire is a non-profit organization that provides financial and emotional support, college funding, and ongoing assistance for the families of firefighters and law enforcement officers who lose their lives the line of duty while protecting our communities.

In addition to other annual events, this year the PR&T department hosted the city's first annual Christmas Parade that generated much excitement and festive spirits through the downtown areas of the city with great crowds and participation. Additionally, a new larger-scaled event, Hardeeville Holly Days, immediately followed the parade creating a winter wonderland attraction for all to enjoy.

Ongoing efforts are underway marketing the Recreation Center as a first-class venue for sports tourism and events. This year, the Center hosted two larger Jui-Jitsu tournaments that brought participants and attendees of all ages and from several states in the southeast to the city in September and December with more than 1,500 people in attendance for the tournaments.

Staff Development

Additionally, the PR&T department operates effectively and efficiently with a small team, making staff development and leadership advancements a priority. This year, the Recreation Center Manager became a Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) and graduated with a master's degree in management.

Police Services Highlights

Personnel

The police department continues to grow in efforts to meet the demands of a fastly growing city, the department divided its command structure into two divisions, administration, and operations, hired seven new officers and obtained fifteen new vehicles along with an all-terrain vehicle. Among new employees added it included an officer to handle code enforcement and



animal control along with the City receiving additional grant funding in the amount of \$160,000 through SC Department of Public Safety for a new School Resource Officer added at the Jasper County Hardeeville School Complex. Currently, the department has three School Resource Officers at that location and one School Resource Office at Royal Live Oaks Academy.

Advancement

The police department continues to concentrate on advancing the professionalism of its officers through ongoing partnerships, training, education, and certifications. During the year, the department promoted seven officers, finalized a drug task force in partnership with the Jasper County Sheriff's office and designated a task force officer along with establishing a joint entry team. The department further advanced its K9 officer program with both K9 teams receiving certification from the American Society of Canine Trainers. Additionally, one of the K9 teams received certification in narcotics and tracking, and the other K9 team received certification in apprehension, tracking and narcotics. The department also conducted active shooter training in conjunction with the Jasper County Sheriff's Office, Jasper County Board of Education along with area first responders.

Community Safety

In efforts to safety through the community, the department finished phase 2 of the city-wide camera systems for areas that included Main Street, Frontage Rd, and segments of Whyte Hardee Boulevard. Additionally, the department added four ALPR, automated license plate readers that are high-speed, computer-controlled camera systems that capture all license plate numbers that come into view, along with the location, date, and time. The data, which includes photographs of the vehicle and sometimes its driver and passengers, is then uploaded to a central server. Also, three officers successfully completed certification training to become commercial drone pilots.

Court Services Highlights

Municipal Court

The city's municipal court continues advancing its efficiency and effectiveness as the number of fines, fees and forfeitures increased by 9% in 2022 and disposed cases decreased by 1%. Additionally, the municipal court received a clean audit from Office of State with only minimal findings.

Fire and Emergency Services Highlights

Fire Services

The fire department continues providing improved services in efforts of protecting and serving the city and community more efficiently, the department opened Station 84, the city's fourth



station, in the RiverPort Commerce Park that will serve the southern portion of the city. The station includes a 104' aerial apparatus to provide increased capabilities to the department. Additionally, the department ordered four addition new apparatus to replace the current aging fleet, including three fire engines and one ladder truck. The department was awarded a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant in the amount of \$1.22 million dollars and will be utilized to hire six new officers. The growth of services is needed as the city had a 21.48% increase in calls in 2022, responding to 1,978 total calls, a number that is expected to increase as the city continues to grow.

As a result of the improved services and professionalism of the department, the Insurance services Organization changed the rating of the fire department from a three (3) rating to a two (2) rating, effective on March 1, 2023. This is a major accomplishment for the city as only 4.4% of the fire departments in the nation are rated at a two (2) rating.

Emergency Response

The fire department also Increased its EMS capabilities by purchasing additional advanced life support (ALS) equipment that includes cardiac monitors making it possible for current staff paramedics to provide ALS services. In addition to the ALS equipment, the department has purchased one new ambulance and one additional ambulance as a backup unit, both will be placed into service in 2023, providing EMS transport capabilities to residents and supplement the County's EMS service.

Information Technology Highlights

Support

The continued growth and development of the city is mirrored with the increasing demand for technology and IT infrastructure. As a result of this demand, the city created its information technology department two years ago bringing many outsourced services in-house. Under the guidance of the Information Services Manager this year, the department successfully hired an IT Network Administrator that allowed all IT support services to be moved in-house, resulting in \$156,000 of savings in year one.

Services

The department was essential in the training and licensing of three certified drone pilots across three different departments allowing for improved services for events, tracking various projects along with aiding investigations for police and fire departments. Additionally, the department successfully migrated all file and application servers to the cloud, in turn, reducing our IT footprint on premises, saving in hardware and electrical costs. In addition, the department



implemented a in house RMM (remote monitoring and management) tool which allows for self-remediation of common PC issues and a in house IT help desk ticketing system.

Media Highlights

Communication

The media department works to capture, report, and provide data and information for various happenings in and around the city including, ground breakings, ribbon cuttings and social gatherings which can all be seen on different platforms of social media, website, and the television station.

This year the media department partnered with SC Works to incorporate a program that highlights employment opportunities in and around the city. Open positions are highlighted every other week on the city's website, social media, and government station through SC Works representatives.

Additionally, the department increased its production of other programs including "Speaking of Hardeeville" that included interviews with candidates running for elected positions in the city and county were featured on some of the episodes. A program that gave potential voters an opportunity to find out information about the candidates running for different elected seats. Other examples of new programming included coverage of the local youth football league games for the Barracudas and Patriots along with the continued efforts of collaborating closely with the Mayor and the Hardeeville Youth Council.

The department also worked closely with the Lowcountry Council of Governments featuring Hardeeville's own John Carroll who previously served as the organization's chairperson. The city hopes to continue partnering with the organization, highlighting the many programs and services that they provide to the region.

Technology Upgrades

In efforts to improve meeting communication, the media department completed the first phase of upgrades to the audio and visual equipment in council chambers and city hall. These upgrades enhanced the video and audio quality for streaming and broadcast. This first phase of the project was \$95,000 dollars.



Additional Capital Improvement Projects

Hardeeville Communications Tower

Construction of this new 300' communications tower will begin by February 2023 with a project cost of \$1.3 million dollars. The new tower is located off of US 17, Speedway Blvd near the RiverPort Commerce Park. This new tower will provide much needed coverage for emergency communications in the Southern part of the community with a radius of 10+/- miles. The new tower is also capable of holding up to four cellular carriers or other communication providers. The city continues to invest in technology and innovation to positively improve the quality of life for its residents, completion of the project is slated for March of 2023.

Brooks Willis Drive New Roadway and Stormwater/Drainage upgrades

Construction started in December 2022. This project will provide critical access to two of our newest hotel and businesses. A project funded primarily with Jasper County Transportation Committee (CTC) funds in the amount of \$350,000 dollars. Additionally, as part of the project, the city is investing in stormwater infrastructure in that area that will continue to improve the drainage for the for developments in the Exit 8 region. Completion is scheduled for April 2023.

Hardeeville Commerce Park

The Hardeeville Commerce Park (HCP) is located in the Northwest quadrant of Whyte Hardee Boulevard and I95 near Exit 5. Specifically, the new entrance and roadway to the HCP starts off of HWY 17. The HCP consists of 167 acres divided into various size lots that have been sold and being developed for commercial and/or light industrial use. The ongoing infrastructure project consisting of the construction of a new four-lane roadway, water and wastewater through the park totaling \$4.5 million dollars is near completion. Construction of the new road "Prosper Parkway", and related utilities is scheduled for June 2023. Funding for the project included a combination of various federal, state, and local grants, including a \$1.87 million-dollar federal grant through EDA and a \$500,000 grant through the South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority. The city has actively marketed and sold 160 acres in the park which will add more than one million square feet of commercial and light industrial building space in the community, along with bringing new employment opportunities to the city.