

COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES

Overview

The City of North Augusta operates and maintains a variety of facilities across its multiple departments. As growth continues, ensuring that the City's services are implemented in a cost-effective way will be important to make sure North Augusta remains an economically sustainable place.

Planning efforts that focus on the growth and expansion of the City must take into consideration how this will affect the City's services. The City of North Augusta offers high-quality services to its community and current levels of service should be maintained and not be hindered by expansion.

This chapter outlines the City's current services and facilities spanning across each department. The City of North Augusta strives to maintain a community where its residents feel safe and have a high quality of life. The City also wants to ensure the success of its businesses and industries that serve the community. Because of this, it is critical to have high quality community services and facilities and to ensure that the current level of service is always maintained. The goals and strategies outlined in this element focus on growth strategies and financial sustainability with regards to the City's services.



CURRENT CITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

General Government

The City of North Augusta operates a Mayor-Council form of government. City Council consists of seven elected officials serving four-year terms, with staggered elections held every two years. City Council is the legally constituted lawmaking and policy-making body for the City of North Augusta and serve by adopting an annual budget, establishing the annual property tax rate, developing policies and ordinances concerning the City's operation and appointing the City's Municipal Judges, City Attorney, City Clerk, and members of various boards.

Currently, the City employs 249 full-time and 16 part-time staff, who work in 9 general departments. These departments consist of:

- Administration
- Engineering and Public Works
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
- Planning and Development
- Public Safety
- Public Services

Administration

North Augusta's Administration Department consists of the City Administrator, Assistant City Administrator, City Clerk, and City Attorney. The City Administrator is appointed by City Council to serve an indefinite term. The City Administrator and Assistant Administrator are responsible for:

- Supervising and coordinating the activities of the City departments
- Attending Council meetings and making recommendations on appropriate matters of business
- Ascertaining that all orders and policies of the City Council are implemented
- Recommending the annual budget
- Keeping the City Council advised on the financial condition of the City
- Representing the city in business with other agencies

The City clerk is tasked with keeping all records of City Council, preparing, authenticating and recording ordinances and resolutions, keeping election records, notifying Council of impending expiration of the term of office of board and commission members, and keeping the official seal

of the City. The City Attorney provides legal counsel to the Mayor, City Council, City Administrator, operating departments, and boards and commissions.

Engineering and Public Works

The Engineering and Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining and improving the condition of the City's streets, enforcing building standards, delivering capital projects, managing the City's storm drain system, and operating traffic signals, among other things. The Department is comprised of four divisions, which includes Building Standards, Engineering, Stormwater Management, and Streets and Drains.

Building Standards

The Building Standards Department is the building code enforcement agency of the city. It is responsible for completing code compliance reviews on plans for all new building construction and for additions and renovations to existing structures. Inspections and testing are performed at various stages throughout construction to ensure compliance with the building, plumbing, mechanical and electrical codes adopted by City Council. The department is staffed by a Certified Building Official (CBO) as required by section 6-9-30 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina. The CBO oversees the issuance of building permits and the building inspection program. There are three building inspectors and two secretaries under the supervision of the CBO.

Engineering

The department provides technical support to citizens and other City departments in areas involving land development, public works and public utilities. Daily functions include reviewing site and subdivision development applications in conjunction with the Department of Planning Development, construction inspection, preparation of plans and technical specifications for city construction projects, and preparation and maintenance of infrastructure maps including utilities, streets and storm drainage. The Engineering Division performs annual pavement evaluations on all roads within the city and recommends street resurfacing projects and other roadway improvements to the SCDOT. The department is also responsible for coordinating and overseeing several of the Aiken County Capital Projects Sales Tax projects including road reconstruction, resurfacing and sidewalk installation.

Stormwater Management

This Division is responsible for providing and maintaining stormwater infrastructure that is protective of the City's natural resources. This is accomplished by ensuring that the City's residential, municipal, industrial, and commercial activities do not pollute the storm water system, the Savannah River, or other natural resources in the community. The Division has created a Stormwater Management Program, which focuses on 6 key elements, which includes, public education and outreach, public participation, illicit discharge detection and elimination, pollution prevention, construction site runoff control, and post-construction runoff control.

Finance

The Department of Finance is responsible for financial accounting and reporting, tax collection, business licensing, and utility billing. The department is comprised of eight employees including:

Human Resources

The Human Resources Department develops, implements, and supports programs and processes that add value to the City of North Augusta and its employees. These programs lead to improved employee welfare, growth, and retention. Human Resources also provides salary administration and employee benefits administration to attract and retain qualified employees, posts and advertises departmental position openings and provides orientation to new employees. The City owns and maintains a number of municipal government buildings used to bring high quality services to its citizens.

Information Technology

The City's IT Department is responsible for providing support for desktop equipment through the help desk and on-site customer service assistance. The IT Department also provides network infrastructure to support City computer operations and information transfer. They ensure security and integrity of North Augusta's network and data, and provide for the procurement, development, upgrade, and support of business software for customer departments port Voice over IP systems and related telecommunication systems for City departments.

Parks, Recreation, and Tourism

The City's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism operates several program areas including Recreation Programs and Services, Parks, the Riverview Park Activities Center, the North Augusta Community Center, and Tourism. Currently, the Department is comprised of x full-time staff and x part-time staff.

Planning and Development

The City's Planning and Development Department is responsible for the City's comprehensive planning, mapping, zoning administration, and development regulation procedures. The Department also works with the Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS) Metropolitan Planning Organization to provide input about North Augusta's transportation planning efforts. The Planning and Development Department also provides staff support to the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals and houses Code Enforcement.

Public Safety

The City of North Augusta's Department of Public Safety provides police and fire services within its jurisdiction. The Department operates out of three stations, with the headquarters being

located on East Buena Avenue. Public Safety Station II is located on W. Five Notch Road and Public Safety Station III is located on Belvedere-Clearwater Road. The Department operates multiple divisions, which includes the Animal Control Division, Patrol Operations Division, Fire Suppression and Training, and Criminal Investigations Division.

Animal Control Division

The Animal Control Division is responsible for all humane investigations inside the City limits. This includes nuisance complaints, animal cruelty investigations, animal attacks, handling of rabid animals, dead animals, and injured animals. The Division is also responsible for taking care of animals at the North Augusta Shelter.

Patrol Operations Division

The Patrol Operations division is responsible for day-to-day patrol, response to crimes in progress, investigation of suspicious activities, initial investigation of crime, investigation of traffic accidents, security for municipal court and detention facility operations.

Fire Suppression and Training Division

All Public Safety Officers (PSOs) in the department are certified in both law enforcement and firefighting. They are also certified as emergency first responders. As a result, continuing training in all three areas is necessary. PSOs complete more than 300 hours of training each year. Volunteer firefighters complete a minimum of 240 hours of fire training each year. The Division is also responsible for the City's Emergency Management, which is responsible for emergency services, disaster planning, and community education and support.

Criminal Investigations Division

The Criminal Investigations division is responsible for criminal investigations of all major felonies including murder, armed robbery, rape, and others. The division is also responsible for the management of all cases adjudicated through the courts of General Session and Family Court. The division has a captain, a sergeant, one general investigator, two narcotics investigators, a lieutenant, and a corporal.

Emergency Medical Services

The Department of Public Safety and the Aiken County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) cooperatively respond to 911 medical emergencies in the city limits. Upon receipt of a 911 medical emergency call, a North Augusta PSO, trained as a first responder and equipped with emergency medical equipment and an automated external defibrillator, is dispatched to the scene by a North Augusta dispatcher. The dispatch officer links the caller to the Aiken County Sheriff's Office dispatch who issues the call for an ambulance. Aiken County EMS operates a fleet of ambulances and rescue stations located throughout the county. One of the stations is located near the City limits on US 25/Edgefield Road.

Public Services

The City's Department of Public Services is comprised of multiple divisions including sanitation, water production, water and wastewater operations, property maintenance, and recycling.

Sanitation

The Sanitation Division is responsible for collecting residential and commercial solid waste. Currently the Division serves approximately 11,379 customers throughout the City. Residential services are provided once per week and trash for multifamily units and commercial customers is collected curbside or by dumpster. Solid waste is sent to the Three Rivers Landfill and vegetative waste is disposed at the Bardon Landfill. Recyclables are sent to the City's Materials Recovery Facility and is processed and separated by material type.

Water Production

The Water Production Division monitors and tests treated water to ensure water quality standards are met prior to the distribution of the treated water. The Division is also responsible for operation, repair, and maintenance of the City's water supply system. The City's Water Treatment Facility treats approximately 12 million gallons per day (MGD) and utilizes the Savannah River as its primary raw water source. Facilities include a 30 MGD reservoir that is used when the water quality from the Savannah is poor, and serves as a secondary source in emergency situations. The City also has two wells, a ground storage tank, and five elevated tanks with a total water capacity of approximately 50 MGD. Other facilities are used to maintain adequate water pressure and volume throughout the water distribution system. The water treatment process involves several steps. The first step involves pumping water from the Savannah River into the water treatment facility. The water then goes through a pre-sedimentation basin, then undergoes chemical coagulation, flocculation, sedimentation, disinfection, and filtration. Once the water undergoes the treatment process, it is sent to two storage tanks. Samples of the treated water are then tested to ensure water quality.

Wastewater Operations

The Wastewater Operations Division currently provides wastewater collection services for more than 12,783 residential, commercial, and industrial customers. The service system area is approximately 218 square miles in size and includes approximately 209 miles of pipelines. The system covers 16 drainage basins and includes 23 lift stations. Approximately 4.3 to 4.7 million gallons of wastewater is conveyed to Aiken County Public Service Authority's Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Education Facilities

Public Schools

The Consolidated School District of Aiken County is the administrative unit serving the City of North Augusta. The district is the sixth largest in the state and is made up of five administrative areas. The district is governed by the Aiken County Board of Education, which is comprised of seven members elected to four-year terms. The City is served by three elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. These schools and their enrollment are listed below.

- Hammond Hill Elementary – 716 Students
- Mossy Creek Elementary – 654 Students
- North Augusta Elementary – 656 Students
- North Augusta Middle School – 640 Students
- Paul Knox Middle School – 802 Students
- North Augusta High School – 1,541 Students

Libraries

The Nancy Carson Library is located on Edgefield Road and is part of the Aiken-Bamberg-Barnwell-Edgefield Regional Library System (ABBE). The library features 18 public-access computers and is open Monday – Saturday.

Healthcare Facilities

Residents of North Augusta have access to 7 hospitals located in the Aiken-Augusta area, with over 4,000 hospital beds and more than 25,000 employed in the healthcare industry, making it one of the largest medical centers in the Southeast. Primary care and mental health services are also available in the region. North Augusta also has several assisted living facilities and nursing homes.

GOALS & STRATEGIES

5.1

ESTABLISH ANNEXATION AND GROWTH STRATEGIES:

Determine where and how North Augusta should grow in order to ensure effective services for citizens.

5.1.1. Determine a future growth strategy and possible areas of annexation.

City staff should collaborate with the public, consultants, businesses, and local development organizations to develop a growth strategy to use as a foundation for the City's future expansion efforts.

2. Expand utilities to areas of targeted growth as needed.

When areas of annexation are identified, the City will need to expand its utilities to these new areas in order for development to occur.

5.2

ENSURE THE FINACNIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF NORTH AUGUSTA:

Develop strategies that ensure the efficient delivery of City services.

5.2.1. Prioritize infill development and compact growth to ensure North Augusta's tax bas can support City services.

Developing the City in areas already served by the City will increase its tax base while keeping the same service costs. This keeps the City from spending extra money to expand its services and also minimizes maintenance costs.

5.2.2. Establish a long-term financial plan for public sector investments.

In many cases public sector investment is necessary to attract and retain development. Catalyst projects can spin off great returns on investment, but it is important to prioritize them in a way that achieves North Augusta's goals most efficiently. Adopting a 5 to 7-year capital improvement plan (CIP) will help North Augusta prioritize its investments based upon expected future revenues.

5.2.3. Seek out partnerships wherever possible.

To achieve the goals outlined within this Comprehensive Plan, the City should collaborate with other businesses, developers, and organizations. Continuing the success of public-private partnerships will lead to greater change for North Augusta.

5.2.4. Continue to implement innovative financial mechanisms such as tax-increment financing (TIF), municipal improvement districts (MID), and impact fees for new development.

Implementing funding mechanisms as part of public and private sector development can help manage and grow revenue. The financing mechanism used in Project Jackson, tax-increment financing districts ensure taxes collected within an area are applied to that same area. Municipal improvement districts collect an extra tax on businesses or residents to then spend in the specific district where they reside. Mobility fees collected from developers can be spent on projects that help mitigate or support some of the effects of new development, like an increase in traffic or the need for additional trails. All of these mechanisms can help ensure resources are spent in the areas that will see the greatest return on investment.