The Greer Community Master Plan: An entire community pieces together its future
GREER AT A GLANCE

Founded: 1876
Population: 27,167 (2013 U.S. Census estimate)
Government: Council
City Administrator: Edward Driggers
Area: Total 22.82 square miles
       Land 20.86 square miles
       Water 1.96 square miles
Elevation  1,024 ft.
Departments: Administration
             Building and Development Standards
             Fire
             Municipal Court
             Parks and Recreation
             Police
             Public Services
Website: www.cityofgreer.org
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Our Community Master Plan is a product of many minds

When some communities prepare to create a master plan, those around the table represent a small group of administrators, business people and planners. More often than not, the end result is a plan produced for the community.

The cover story in this annual report shares the results from the City of Greer’s master planning process and the process that helped create that document. Facilitated by the planning and consulting group Kimley-Horn and Associates, that planning process did include civic and business leaders, but there was a sizable and important group that was crucial to the process.

We recognized early on that the residents of this community were key stakeholders in the plan that will help shape the Greater Greer Area over the next 15 years and encouraged every member to have his or her say in the results.

The end result of this process is a plan produced by the community.

Planning can be a drawn-out process — not the type of activity that tends to draw crowds for an evening out. When the call for public input went out, however, the response in this community was overwhelming.

Invitations to workshops drew a tremendous response and participants transcended age, gender, race and household income. The call for online feedback was met with thousands of responses by those truly wanting to make a difference.

Instead of focusing on things that may divide a community, it was the desire to improve this community that brought everyone together.

As both an elected official and a resident of the City of Greer, that fills my heart with pride.

The result? Plan Greer is the product of many minds and bears the fingerprints of this entire community. It is your plan.

It’s important to remember that the plan simply marks a starting point, albeit an integral one for our future. Those who remember our original community master plan created at the turn of the century are not surprised today by Greer Station — our booming central business district — the Police and Municipal Court Complex on Main Street and the remarkable facilities at Greer City Park and Greer City Hall.

These all were components of that original plan and came to fruition through a series of steps outlined in the plan. Just as no responsible contractor would build a home without blueprints, city leaders cannot (or at least should not) undertake major changes in facilities and infrastructure without a master plan.

With a new plan in place, we begin to take the steps that will improve transportation, recreation, cultural arts, growth opportunities and overall quality of life during the next 15 years. The work is just beginning and there will be many more opportunities for you to stay involved in Plan Greer.
Team Greer’s daily goal: always exceed expectations

We have a name for the group of city employees that serves you on a daily basis: Team Greer.

Depending on your preferred dictionary, you’re likely to find definitions that perfectly sum up the reason for that name.

As a noun, team means a group of individuals who work together.

As a verb, team is defined as coming together to achieve a common goal.

Within the city structure, we have teams representing individual departments. Those teams work together to make possible youth sports leagues, Moonlight Movies, the K-9 unit and Amnesty Day, among many other programs.

It’s also important that each department member recognizes his or her role as part of a larger team — one that recognizes no departmental boundaries. You’ll find many examples of that teamwork in this annual report: Domestic Violence Court, the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics and something seemingly as simple as decorating the city for Christmas.

There is another component to Team Greer that complements the work done by city employees. Our residents are an important part of the wider definition of team as we know it in the city.

Have you ever considered yourself to be a part of Team Greer?

If you shopped in the city, in 2015 you helped gross retail sales surpass the $1 billion mark.

If you attended Freedom Blast, the Greer Goes Global International Festival or another special event at the Events Center at Greer City Hall or Greer City Hall, you helped build on a tradition of quality events.

If you attended Coffee with a Cop or wore your seatbelt and received a Chick-fil-a gift card at a traffic stop, you helped make the city a safer place.

If you picked up a City of Greer coloring book for your child, you helped teach a lesson about the services your city government provides.

If you were among the hundreds of residents who lined the streets to greet and salute the Military Vehicle Preservation Association as it passed through Greer to recreate the Bankhead Highway route, you showed the city’s very best to those brief visitors.

If you were among the thousands who contributed ideas and preferences to the Greer Community Master Plan via the Internet or in person at workshops, you have helped shape this community for the next generation and beyond.

As you read this annual report, consider the many ways that we all make up Team Greer and, in turn, make the city a better place.

We ask our city employees to keep two words in mind as they plan and execute their daily work: exceed expectations. It’s a philosophy that costs no more, but the rewards are many.

I’m reminded of a comment by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos that sums up our goal: “We see our customers as invited guests to a party, and we are the hosts. It’s our job every day to make every important aspect of the customer experience a little bit better.”
Nearly 1 in 5 Greer residents are millennials attracted by the city’s strong business climate, job availability, low rent near their workplace, location and the presence of other millennials.

The City of Greer also earned a spot on the SafeWise report of “Safest Cities in South Carolina” for 2015. The report considers all cities with a minimum population of 2,000 and uses the most recent FBI crime data to analyze and rank cities. SafeWise praised the City of Greer for making safety a priority as its population continues to grow rapidly.

The report says about Greer:
With new jobs comes an increased population, but that doesn’t keep Greer from keeping crime at bay. In fact, there were only 19 robberies reported in 2013.

“Whether we are working to retain our existing business base or recruiting a new business or industry to Greer, our focus is always first and foremost making sure that it is easy to do business in Greer,” said Wryley Bettis, Chairman of the Greer Development Corporation. “Good partnerships, a great community, and listening to the needs of our business community will ensure that Greer continues to grow to be the very best that it can be.”

NerdWallet described Greer with the following paragraph: This city is the site of the only BMW automotive manufacturing facility in North America. Greer has grown 54% from 2000 to 2013, and now it’s home to a young and diverse population. Small businesses benefit from its growing population and through the efforts of organizations, such as Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce and Greer Development Corp., which helps owners of specialty shops and restaurants. Businesses in Greer have high average revenues of $2,184,227, which is 139% more than the average business in South Carolina.

“Businesses in the City of Greer recognize and value such outstanding services and amenities as police and fire protection, infrastructure assistance and street lighting, lower utility costs, and the city’s ideal location in the center of the I-85 corridor. With four consecutive years of record gross retail sales in the city, it’s evident that the City of Greer is a great place to do business,” said City of Greer Administrator Ed Driggers.
Gross retail sales top $1 billion

The City of Greer’s gross retail sales figure for Fiscal Year 2015 was notable not only because it marked a record for the fifth consecutive year, but also because it was the city’s first year surpassing the billion dollar mark.

Reno Deaton, executive director of the Greer Development Corporation, made the announcement at the Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce’s October First Friday Luncheon that city businesses earned $1,034,016,761 in gross retail sales – an increase of 23% over Fiscal Year 2014.

The total is nearly a 93% increase over the pre-recession high in 2008.

“Congratulations to the businesses of the City of Greer. They have made Greer a retail destination, and they have developed a winning strategy to support Greer’s growing population. With great customer service, an attractive product mix, continued high traffic counts, and the support of a robust and growing community, Greer will continue to see consistent retail growth,” Deaton said.

Mark Owens, president and CEO of the Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce, said the six-year gross retail sales figures show that the City of Greer has lead the Upstate out of the recession.

“Not many communities have both residential and commercial growth at the same time, but we’re very fortunate to have that in Greer. As residents find the City of Greer a great place to live, more businesses are wanting to locate near those neighborhoods,” Owens said. “Retail sales are a great figure for the pulse of our economy. It reflects both the growth and vibrancy we have in the community. I think it’s a huge justification of the time and commitment that goes into economic development – not only recruiting new businesses but also helping those that are already here grow.”

City Administrator Ed Driggers said he is very encouraged by the trending figures.

“We monitor our retail sales closely to determine if there are any possible issues which we may need to be aware of. What we are seeing is a positive upward trend. It is a combination of new businesses opening and existing businesses seeing an increase in overall sales,” Driggers said. “An overall positive economy, a growing community with higher disposable incomes, more shopping opportunities, flexible shopping hours – all of these provide the right climate for economic success.”

“Not many communities have both residential and commercial growth at the same time, but we’re very fortunate to have that in Greer.”
Safe drivers earn sweet rewards

The sight of a traffic stop ahead can make even the most careful driver wince.

Is my license up to date? How about the registration? Where is my insurance card?

The key to stops operated by the Greer Police Department in September was seat belt use.

Drivers who were properly buckled up – and each of their passengers as well – were rewarded with a gift card for a free Frosted Lemonade treat or parfait dessert at Chick-fil-A of Greer.

“Children, especially, will remember this for a long time.”

Seat belt use – one of the best habits a driver can adopt – is a cause that Chick-fil-A owner Bill Tyler could easily support. Tyler gifted the cards to the city and the police department distributed them during traffic stops in all areas of the city.

Fox Carolina joined in as reporter Joe Gagnon was live at Chick-fil-A for four hours. Chick-fil-A employees, Sgt. Ballenger and communications manager Steve Owens were interviewed about the program and partnerships with city businesses.

“Children, especially, will remember this for a long time.”

“Coffee with a Cop” brings together residents and Greer police officers

There was a time when neighborhoods and business owners knew their local police officers by name and would chat as they walked the local beat. Growth over the past century has changed that dynamic, although Greer patrol officers still make an effort to introduce themselves to new residents and business owners.

In an effort to recapture some of that one-on-one relationship, the Greer Police Department established its Coffee with a Cop program in 2015. The sergeants in charge of each of the city’s four policing areas hosted a morning session at which residents and businesses were invited to meet and chat about local policing efforts.

Daily demands don’t always allow personal meetings, so Coffee with a Cop helped set aside a time to meet and communicate,” Sgt. Chad Richardson said. “We’ve enjoyed getting to know people of all ages in the city better and want them to know who to call if they ever have a question or a need for service.”
ICMA honors performance management

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has recognized the City of Greer with a Certificate of Achievement from the ICMA Center for Performance Analytics™ for the city’s performance management efforts.

“The certificate program recognizes the principles of performance management,” said Randall H. Reid, ICMA Director of Performance Initiatives. “Jurisdictions meeting the qualifications have demonstrated leadership in continuous improvement and community engagement, and they serve as examples for other governments to follow.”

ICMA assesses a local government’s performance management program and encourages analysis of results by comparing to peers and gauging performance over time. Performance management aids in cost reduction, program prioritization, and quality improvement. It also encourages accountability and transparency.

“One of our goals as a city is to engage residents and to make available information that they can easily access,” said Mike Sell, the City of Greer’s Assistant City Administrator. “We have practiced financial transparency for many years and it is an honor to now be recognized for our work in performance management.”

Certificates are awarded at the levels of Achievement, Distinction, and Excellence. Greer is among five jurisdictions receiving the Certificate of Achievement, and one of 48 recognized overall.

Criteria for the Certificate of Achievement include:

- Reporting of performance data to the public through budgets, newsletters, and/or information provided to elected officials
- Data verification efforts to ensure reliability
- Staff training.

ICMA’s Center for Performance Analytics is dedicated to helping local governments use performance information to better the lives of the people they serve. The Center encourages the use and public reporting of performance information in a positive, continuous-learning environment in order to foster organizational cultures that deliver results that matter.

The city’s performance management site is located under the Government tab at www.cityofgreer.org.

City takes the lead in ADA compliance

Some may take for granted the enjoyment of watching a summer blockbuster at Greer City Park as part of the Moonlight Movies series.

City officials have spent considerable time making certain that parks and other city facilities comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and are accessible to all individuals.

Calling the City of Greer a leader in the Upstate among municipalities working to improve access for all individuals, the Center for Independent Living ABLE South Carolina honored the city with its 2015 Respectable Award.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was the only other government organization recognized at ABLE South Carolina’s annual meeting in Columbia.

“All cities and counties are required by law to meet ADA standards, but you would have a difficult time finding one that is fully compliant,” said Ruthie Helms, the City of Greer’s ADA Coordinator. “Some cities aren’t even fully aware of the requirements set forth by the ADA.”

The City of Greer has worked diligently with Greenville CAN, a network of self advocates, service providers, families, and community stakeholders working collaboratively to ensure access for those in need.

In July, the City of Greer hosted an ADA training session for city and county government representatives from across the Upstate. ABLE SC leaders taught the sessions and Helms also addressed the crowd.

The training, which was held in collaboration with greenvilleCAN and Ten at the Top, was the first organized and comprehensive training session of its kind in the Upstate.

“We’re proud that the City of Greer is recognized as a city that takes accessibility seriously and works to accommodate all citizens,” Helms said.
Maintaining effective communication between elected officials and appointed officials of the city’s various boards and commissions is especially important when their various decisions are expected to fit like cogs in a well-oiled machine to benefit all in the city.

The City of Greer’s Planning and Zoning Office determined the way to keep that machine running smoothly was to bring members of those various leadership committees together in the same room to achieve a general understanding of the shared responsibilities and interconnected impacts of each body.

That happened in September when members of Greer City Council, the Greer Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Construction Board and Board of Architectural Review gathered at City Hall to consider such topics transportation, land use planning and legal opinions and how they relate to their specific function.

Glenn Pace, planning and zoning coordinator, said it’s rare for a city’s multiple councils and boards to gather for such a meeting.

“Our goals were to provide education to conference attendees by discussing how decisions impact and affect others, to develop and improve relationships, and foster a dialog to gather information for decision-making processes that impact other roles and responsibilities,” Pace said.

“We reached out to various parties to create a well-rounded conference schedule and looked at various surrounding municipalities and governmental organizations to determine areas of focus that are relevant to Greer’s current and future development.

“The awareness of elected and appointed officials was increased by facilitating an open forum during the presentation of local, regional, and national issues as they relate to Greer and the surrounding community.”

Those gathered not only learned more about each other, but emerged with a new respect about the role each plays. Pace and his staff created and distributed the link to a website with all presentations and relevant articles as an interactive recap of the Structuring Alliance.

Pace said the city plans to make the Structuring Alliance a biennial event.

“This showed the importance of interconnected roles in decision making.”

— Glenn Pace
The beat of a Haitian drum blended almost perfectly with Latin guitars on a beautiful April day at Greer City Park as dancers swirled and people of all nationalities clapped along in the amphitheater.

The scene perfectly summed up the goal of the second annual Greer Goes Global International Festival that brought together exhibits and performances representing more than 40 countries and cultures.

“It honestly couldn’t have gone better. We had great participation from a variety of countries and a huge crowd eager to learn more about them,” said Ann Cunningham, director of the Parks and Recreation Department. “One of the unique things about Greer Goes Global is that it is an interactive experience so guests get to participate and try their hand at different activities.”

Exhibit tents included vast information on such countries as Great Britain, Japan, Bolivia, Panama, France, India, Colombia and South Korea. Natives and experts with ties to the countries answered questions about food, sports, politics and other aspects of life there. The Japan tent was the site of a popular sushi-making and tasting event.

Guests were invited to enjoy a hot dog and popcorn representing the United States or expand their tastes with a German pretzel, a churro, pita and hummus, gyros, souvlaki, eggrolls, and tacos and fajitas. A bottle of Jarritos soft drink from Mexico was perfect to wash it all down.

The festival was started in 2014 assisted by a grant from Ten at the Top. Although rain forced that inaugural festival indoors, there no such problems in 2015 as bright sunshine and unseasonably warm temperatures greeted visitors.

It also allowed festival coordinators to expand the childrens’ craft area and indoor performances in the Events Center at Greer City Hall. Hundreds of families enjoyed free activities like face painting, coloring, storytelling, a magic show, and costumed characters such as Dora the Explorer.

The amphitheater was the site of the Festival of Nations, during which representatives marched in with the flags of all participating nations, as well as Celtic music and Irish dancing, and interactive global drumming presentation, Chinese dancers, jazz music, and a belly dancing demonstration.

The City Park lawn was crowded throughout the day with a variety of activities including lawn chess, cricket, tai chi and karate. The 2016 Greer Goes Global International Festival will be held on April 9 at Greer City Park.
According to the Washington-based Violence Policy Center’s four most recent annual polls, South Carolina ranked either first or second in the United States among women murdered by men in single victim/single offender incidents.

Those homicides and other criminal domestic violence numbers are unacceptable to officials in the cities of Greer and Simpsonville, which partnered with the S.C. Attorney General’s office to establish domestic violence courts.

The once-monthly court sessions began in October and are held the second Thursday of each month.

“I’m excited about this opportunity. South Carolina is leading the nation in domestic violence deaths so we’re clearly not doing something right,” said Henry J. Mims, municipal judge for the City of Greer. “Our first charge is to make sure defendants have fair treatment. That’s always foremost. But we have to understand that victims have rights too. And it’s more than just a criminal issue. The impacts range from economic loss, the kids, the rest of the families and the community in general. If we can draft good solutions and get away from cookie cutter solutions, we can make a difference.”

The specialty court is the first of its kind for any Upstate municipality. Three South Carolina counties, including Greenville, and nine cities in the Midlands and Lowcountry currently have courts dealing exclusively with domestic violence cases.

Megan Gresham, an assistant attorney general in the S.C. Attorney General’s office since 2012, visits both cities monthly to prosecute cases. She frequently holds training for court officials, judges, lawyers, police officers and others on DV issues and prosecutes cases involving violence against women, including domestic violence, criminal sexual conduct, harassment, and stalking.

Gresham’s services are part of the S.T.O.P. Violence Against Women program established by the S.C. Attorney General’s office in 1996 with grant monies provided by the federal Violence Against Women Act – the first national legislation to specifically target criminal domestic violence and other abusive behaviors toward women.

Richard Moore, chief judge for the City of Simpsonville, said Gresham’s participation is integral to the new court’s success.

“The proposal extended by the Attorney General’s office results in that office essentially taking over the prosecution of domestic violence cases, whether it be from a plea, bench trial or jury trial standpoint,” he said. “It is our belief that having the resources of the Attorney General’s office better enables the city to serve its citizens and their needs as they pertain to this issue, by allowing a single prosecutor to deal only with those particular issues in our court rather than grouping them with the other myriad of issues handled by our court system and our city prosecutor on a daily basis.”

Kirsten Pressley, court administrator for the City of Greer, had considered implementing a domestic violence court for several years, but realized the city was not yet ready for the specialized court.

“I’ve continuously analyzed the numbers, the percentages, the increases, and a few months ago decided that this is really the time for us to be involved in something like this,” she said, adding that the victim advocacy division of the Greer Police Department was generating a similar proposal. “We knew it was the right time.”

Pressley said court and police officials from the two cities recognized the collective benefits of the new court and had all details worked out in an hour.

“This will benefit the entire community,” Pressley said. “In one session we can bring together the police officer, a specialized prosecutor, the victim advocate, the victim, witnesses, the defendant, the defense attorney, representatives from batterer treatment programs, and representatives from domestic violence shelters who provide counseling for the victims of domestic violence.”

Earlier in 2015, South Carolina lawmakers took a tougher stance on the crime by passing the Domestic Violence Reform Act. The bill, signed on June 4 by Gov. Nikki Haley, allows for harsher penalties based on the number of times an individual has been charged with domestic violence and the severity of the crime.
The City of Greer has a simple message for children who want to learn more about services and programs offered by their local municipality: Get out your crayons or markers and have fun.

The city’s Communications Office has produced “At Home in the City of Greer,” a 32-page coloring and activity book designed to help children learn more about city government and services.

“Students begin learning about all levels of government early in their elementary school careers so a coloring book with familiar events and landmarks seemed like the ideal way to introduce them to city government,” said Steve Owens, communications manager for the City of Greer. “The city offers services and programs that touch their families’ lives every day and this is a fun way to introduce those. Who knows? Maybe it will spark a desire for the young people to become more involved in local government as they grow older.”

The book includes such local landmarks as Greer City Hall, Greer City Park, Kids Planet Playground, Greer Station and the Police and Court Complex. Children may color pictures of city firefighters, police officers and building inspectors, as well as such events as Freedom Blast, the International Festival and Moonlight Movies. Services represent everything from the recycling program to youth sports.

Owens said branding the coloring book to Greer was important so children would recognize buildings and scenes from events they attend. He connected with Greer native Roy Miller, Jr., a talented artist who spent his own childhood in Greer and now resides in Philadelphia, to create the art.

A graduate of the Philadelphia College of Art, Miller’s work has graced the covers of the Strawbridge & Clothier Christmas catalog and has appeared in the Toronto Star, Ebony, the Saturday Evening Post children’s magazines, Inside Magazine, the Jewish Exponent, and The Greer Citizen. His work has been highlighted at the Greer Heritage Museum and an example of his building artwork hangs in the Greer State Bank boardroom.

“I’m proud that the city picked me to be of assistance in the book’s creation. I love my hometown. I have many good memories from my childhood days there until we moved when I was eight years old,” Miller said.

Free copies of the coloring and activity book are being offered at Greer City Hall and the City of Greer Operations Center. Digital copies of the books may also be downloaded at www.cityofgreer.org.
Lakota is a hit at Freedom Blast

The City of Greer’s Freedom Blast Festival added a popular new wrinkle in 2015 thanks to the generosity of the South Carolina Air and Army National Guard.

A Lakota helicopter from the Donaldson Center made the short flight to Greer City Park and landed near E. Poinsett Street to the excitement of those who arrived early to the festival.

The crew arrived at the park earlier in the day, but were forced to make an early departure due to heavy storms an hour before the festival began. However, as skies cleared, the chop of helicopter blades was heard and the Lakota buzzed over the crowd before making a perfect landing on the lawn.

Shortly after securing the aircraft, the crew allowed children to inspect the helicopter and posed for photos with young and old alike.

“Work began very early on getting approval for the helicopter because that can be a lengthy process. Given the mission of Freedom Blast, I think it’s something the Army really wanted to make happen” said Randle Ballenger, a sergeant with both the Greer Police Department and the S.C. Army National Guard.

The National Guard has long been an active participant in the festival that honors the commitment made by active U.S. servicemen and servicewomen and veterans in the Upstate.

“Given the mission of Freedom Blast, I think it’s something the Army really wanted to make happen.”
Teens learn policing skills at academy

The Greer Police Department’s bi-annual Citizens Academy program has proven to be one of its more popular offerings, even spawning an alumni association with active graduates who assist the department at various city events.

The academy was limited to adults until last summer, when the department’s school resource officers coordinated a two-week companion summer program geared to middle school boys and girls.

Rolled out as the Youth Citizens Police Academy, the two two-week sessions (separated by gender with an identical curriculum) included daily physical training, classroom work, team building exercises and attending graduation at the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy in Columbia.

Key areas covered in the department were community policing, crime prevention, patrol procedures, vice and narcotics investigation and the detention facility.

“The purpose of the Youth Citizens Police Academy is to encourage responsible citizenship and increase understanding between the youth and the police through education,” Lt. Jim Holcombe said. “The intent is to acquaint youth with law enforcement’s role in the criminal justice system and to provide increased understanding of issues faced by police officers every day.”

The idea for the youth academy came from department school resource officers Ashley Wright and Joel Galli.

“Our SRO program is probably one of the most valuable programs that we have in the community,” Police Chief Dan Reynolds said. “Young people get to learn about the police, talk to them and make friends with them at the school level. A lot of times these kids will come to the SRO for guidance when they’re having family problems or other problems at their home.”

Wright said those connections provided the foundation for the Youth Citizens Police Academy.

“We started out last December with an idea of how we could reach out and engage the youth of our community in a positive manner,” Wright said. “Two key components that we instilled in our cadets are leadership and pride.

The boys’ group, known as Class Echo, included 14 cadets from five area schools. Wright said the first week’s activities were crucial to building a team.

“Some of them knew each other (coming in) but most of them didn’t. During activities the first week, the boys really opened up and began working as a team,” she said. “Each cadet pushed himself and his teammates to new limits. I couldn’t be more proud of them.”

Thirteen girls comprised Class Gamma (girls) at their July graduation ceremony.

“Only negative incidents involving our youth seem to get public attention. This program focuses on the positive activities of our youth and very seldom do we get an opportunity to show the good things that our young people accomplish,” Reynolds said.

“These are tough times for police and communities,” he added. “Police are under more scrutiny and are being asked to be more transparent and engaged in our communities. This department has always done that and we will continue to find ways to do that so we can maintain a close working relationship with our community.”

Eighth-grader Jacob Barnett, who was recognized as Outstanding Cadet for Class Echo, said he chose to apply for the academy because he is considering criminal justice as a career.

“This seemed like a good way to meet new people and become more familiar with police work,” he said. “Everything was really fun and I’d like to do it again, but it’s only for sixth through eighth grades so I’m hoping to be a high school volunteer next year.”

His most memorable takeaway?

“I can’t slouch any more,” he said. “Really. It hurts if I do. My grandma is proud of that.”
Parks and Rec tackles renovations

Century Park, Victor Park Gym and City Stadium all receive a facelift

Frequent visitors to the City of Greer’s Parks and Recreation facilities may notice some major changes thanks to renovation work in 2015 and one major project that will continue into 2016.

“We constantly strive to keep our facilities safe and attractive for the public,” said Ann Cunningham, director of the Parks and Recreation department. “We also seek grants and other available funds to do the work as cost-effectively as possible.”

In 2014, the city was awarded a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for Century Park and the original press box/concession/restroom facility was razed in the fall of 2015.

The matching fund grant was also to fund construction of a replacement facility. The proposed plans for the project include a separate building for concessions with an upstairs press box and a nearby building located along the promenade that offers restrooms, a picnic shelter and a small storage area for program and maintenance supplies.

The project’s original scope was expanded to address recommended upgrades in storm water drainage and field lighting. Work is expected to begin in late spring of 2016.

Victor Gym renovations, including painting the gym and replacing the scorer table with one specifically designed for the City of Greer, were made possible by combining two cycles of Parks and Recreation Development funds.

A major project at the gym was replacing the upstairs room with a larger enclosed area that now encompasses most of the balcony.

New walls were constructed to the edge of the balcony and the ceiling was left open with drop lights and exposed ductwork for the new HVAC unit. Two new closets were also added.

Greer City Stadium received several upgrades including a subterranean drainage system to remedy continuous soggy field condition in the south end zone. All concrete walls and seating areas were painted, repairs were made to an interior catch basin and retaining wall and a new display board was installed.

The City of Greer Parks and Recreation Department stayed busy in 2015 with several facility upgrades, including demolition of the original press box and concessions building at Century Park to make way for a new building (top) in 2016. Victor Gym was repainted and now has a custom scorer table and a new classroom upstairs.

Greer City Stadium received a new drainage system and other upgrades.
RESIDENTS GREET BANKHEAD CONVOY

Greer was treated to a patriotic parade on Sept. 23 as the Military Vehicle Preservation Association (MVPA) passed through the city on Poinsett St.

The parade of more than 50 military and support vehicles celebrated the 95th anniversary of the U.S. Army’s cross country trip on the Bankhead Highway. The vehicles followed the same route as the original 1920 Transcontinental Motor Convoy route.


Residents of all ages lined the convoy’s route – past the S.C. Inland Port and Greer City Hall, through Greer Station to U.S. 29. The Greer Police Department conducted temporary stops along East and West Poinsett Streets to allow the processional to remain together.

“I think everyone at MVPA was impressed with the reception they received in Greer,” Sgt. Randle Ballenger said. “I spoke to one of the guys later and they said if they had known what it would be like, they would have stayed overnight in Greer.”
Dogged Determination

Greer PD reestablishes K-9 Unit as Boss and Stryker serve as ambassadors for the city

Several dogs have earned celebrity status throughout the years thanks to their work in movies and television. Names like Rin Tin Tin, Lassie and Benji will bring a smile to many faces.

The City of Greer’s two new K-9 officers may not have the benefit of the silver screen, but they are already earning legions of fans in the Upstate — and their work extends far beyond the spotlight.

Since they hit the streets in May with their handlers, Boss and Stryker have been more than earning their keep through drug detection and community goodwill.

The German Shepherds from the Czech Republic were certified for tracking and Narcotic Detection through the North American Police Work Dog Association (NAPWDA) after completing 160 hours of training.

Boss, who is partnered with Jordan Williams, and Stryker, paired with James Compton, made an immediate impact in the community. Through their first 96 deployments, the dogs accounted for 81 arrests and the seizure of 3.7 pounds of drugs and 58 items of drug paraphernalia. They seized more than $42,000 during their first seven months on the job.

They displayed their skills at a Greer City Council meeting last summer, quickly detecting illegal drugs hidden in the room earlier that evening.

“I think it’s safe to say the dogs have exceeded the expectations of everyone in the department,” Chief Dan Reynolds said. “To see how quickly they detect the scent of illegal drugs and work seamlessly with their handlers is a true validation of our K-9 program.”

The dogs and their partners are also popular in the community.

“These K9’s are incredibly important ambassadors for not only the police department, but the city,” Williams said. “Officer Compton and I along with our K-9 partners are frequently visiting schools, community meetings, and many other public events to speak with members of the community. These K-9s get us invited to many places where we may not normally have an opportunity to share the vision and goals of Greer Police Department.”

“The public has been amazing,” Compton added. “It used to be everyone wanted to speak to you because you were an officer. Now the response I get is ‘where is Stryker’ and ‘where is your better half?’

“Seeing the smile of a child is more rewarding than any case I have ever made or person I may have helped. It amazes me how many people will approach us to inquire about the dogs who would have never approached the police. That gives us an opportunity to bridge that gap.
and hopefully start to change the relationship or negative opinion someone might have had before.”

The bonding experience between the officers and their dogs is important in building communication and trust. Nearly inseparable, they train together monthly to hone their skills.

The teams are required by law to complete 16 hours of monthly maintenance training. They also participate in weekly training sessions with the Greenville County Sheriff’s Office. On average, the officers complete 32 hours of training each month.

“K-9 Stryker has bad days the same as anyone else. It’s up to me to recognize this behavior and to make sure I get it corrected before being deployed in the field. This is why training is so important,” Compton said, adding that Stryker has been 95.25 percent accurate since joining the force. “K-9 Stryker is a big kid at heart. All he wants to do is play and get his reward. He doesn’t even realize he is providing a much needed service.”

Williams said Boss exhibits the same traits.

“He has a great personality. Like with a human partner, I can tell when he’s excited or tired or bored. He’ll often let out a long sigh when I’m working on paperwork in the car,” Williams said, “If I’m having a rough day, he is there just wanting to play and it gives me a second wind to take care of what needs to be done.”

Mayor Rick Danner swears the dogs into office, an act that confirms their status as actual police officers. This ensures that anyone who injures either dog would receive a penalty comparable to assaulting a human police officer.

Compton and Williams will keep their eyes on Stryker and Boss to keep them safe. They can be certain that their partners are doing the same for them.

“Working with great people is one of the many reasons I do what I do,” Compton said. “Having a K-9 partner just adds to the excitement and fulfillment. It’s like having a best friend who never gets mad at you.”

Officers Jordan Williams and Boss (top) make new friends during a visit to the Shriner’s Hospital in Greenville, while Officers James Compton and Stryker stop by a local pre-school to teach children about policing.
Team Greer carries the torch

Special Olympics flame passes through city on its way to International Games in Los Angeles

When the City of Los Angeles submitted the winning bid to bring the Special Olympics World Summer Games back to the United States for the first time since 1999, city officials were determined to share the excitement with the rest of the country and assist with fundraising.

Their plans brought the Special Olympics torch and Flame of Hope to Greer in June as part of the Law Enforcement Torch Run, the largest international grassroots fundraising movement for the Special Olympics.

The Flame of Hope was lit by the sun’s rays on May 14 in Athens, Greece and followed three cross-country routes to Los Angeles as part of the Special Olympics Unified Relay Across America. Fundraisers on those routes were given the honor of forming a team and carrying the lighted torch through their cities.

“It’s energizing and exciting. We love every new team we come across. Our job is to give them the greatest experience possible and they make it easy for us,” said Michael Teem, executive director of the Law Enforcement Torch Run. “Every team that we’ve come across has had a wonderful experience. They’ve walked, they’ve run, they’ve biked and rollerbladed. For me, seeing a Special Olympics athlete carry that torch just warms my heart.”

Outside Greer City Hall, that honor fell to 24-year-old Natalie Dopp, a local Special Olympian born with Downs Syndrome. A broad smile crossed her face as a runner held his torch to hers and transferred the flame.

“Just to know where the flame is headed and to know that smiles it will bring one it reaches Los Angeles... it’s a great thing to be a part of,” said Sgt. Chris Forrester, who organized the local team among the Greer Police Department. “It felt really good to be out there running, especially with Natalie and see the excitement and determination on her face.”

In addition to Dopp, Forrester was joined by GPD colleagues Chris Krajenka, Jeff Smith and Mary Wood, and Caleb Creel of the Parks and Recreation Department’s Events Division.

Krajenka became associated with Special Olympics as a runner and fundraiser for the Law Enforcement Torch Run in 1992 during his 21-year law enforcement career in New Hampshire. He later served as regional coordinator and then as a member of the state executive committee for the torch run.

“I found that with all the negatives you experience in this line of work, Special Olympics was a resounding positive. Awarding a medal to the athletes and seeing the huge smile was awesome. Even the athletes families appreciated the effort,” he said. “I was happy to find that Greer PD participates and when volunteers were being sought I was even happier to continue my participation with such a great organization as Special Olympics.

“The run itself allowed people to observe the good works of the PD and Special Olympics. Despite all the negative press aimed at law enforcement over the last couple years, this association with Special Olympics only helps show that there are plenty of good hardworking officers doing positive things for their community.”

Plans for the run wet set in motion when Sgt. Randle Ballenger was contacted by the national organization with a request for traffic control in Greer. When Forrester, who had previously participated in Law Enforcement Torch Runs for Upstate Special Olympics, learned of the flame’s journey to Greer, the avid runner knew the city had others who would support a team.

“The important thing is running for a cause. Whether you’re running a marathon for personal goals of the torch run for a purpose and other people. No matter how fast or how slow you’re going, you’re running for a special purpose and this is an historic thing to be a part of,” he said.

Law Enforcement Torch Runs annually raise more than $50 million for Special Olympics. The Greer team
raised more than $3,300 and was given one of the commemorative torches used during the run.

The group was escorted through Greer by vehicles and officers from the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Office, and other law enforcement personnel involved in the torch run.

“I’ve made many friends with officers all over the country during my volunteerism with the Special Olympics and during this run I was able to rekindle friendships with officers I had participated with in the running of the torch for the World Games held in Alaska in 2000,” Krajenka said.

“Running with Natalie was awesome. She showed that the participants of Special Olympics are truly athletes. During the run she continued to have a big smile and hung in there with the run.”

Initially planned for a stretch of the Greer route, the local team eventually logged nearly six miles.

“I counted it as an honor to be able to participate in such an event,” Smith said. “I was truly blown away at the tenacity displayed by Natalie. There were times during the run where you could tell she was getting fatigued but instead of riding in the cart, she would fight through it. This in return motivated us who were participating to run stronger. It was a great time for us and it was evident that Natalie had an awesome time as well.”

Teem, who retired in 2010 as a major with the Raleigh (N.C.) Police Department, has devoted his time to the Law Enforcement Torch Run for the past 25 years and is a member of the International Torch Run Hall of Fame.

Despite that work, the scope of the Special Olympics Unified Relay Across America left him unprepared for what a 46-day run would hold.

“This is the first time we’ve done a torch run across the country and we really didn’t know what to expect,” Teem said. “But it’s exceeded our expectations. People have come in all of these communities to raise money so they can carry that torch and be a part of this great movement. Special Olympics touches your heart. I know it’s touched mine.”

Forrester said that impact became evident during the run.

“While we were running, there were a lot of citizens standing outside and sitting in their cars as we passed,” Forrester said. “You could tell that some were a little frustrated at the delay, but when they saw the reason and saw Natalie out there they would pull out their phones and cheer us on. We had great support from the community.”

Chris Krajenka (third from left) leads Team Greer as the torchbearer during the Law Enforcement Torch Run. The team included (from left) Natalie Dopp, Chris Forrester, Krajenka, Caleb Creel, Mary Wood and Jeff Smith.
“Only one step away”

Firearms simulator puts officers in life or death situations

Officer Clay Anderson sternly called for a suspected drunk driver to stay in his vehicle, but the man waved off the command before stepping out with his hands in his pockets.

Anderson again barked orders at the seemingly intoxicated man, who continued to ignore the officer’s commands. Finally, a command for the man to show his hands was met with a quick draw of a handgun and rapid pop of shots.

Anderson returned fire and the man slumped against his car before sliding to the pavement — a tragic and unavoidable ending to a deadly scenario.

Then the lights came on.
Police officers live with the reality that any call on any given day has the potential to turn deadly. Handling those calls calmly and responsibly and acting on experience often is the key to resolving an incident peacefully or needing to use force.

That’s easier said than done when no officer wants to put himself or herself in dangerous situations for the sake of training.

A new training tool allows the city’s police officers to experience a variety of potentially deadly scenarios virtually — without ever leaving the department’s training room.

GPD is now using the Meggitt L7 compact firearms training simulator that projects realistic video from more than 500 scenarios on a wide screen. As a police officer interacts with the characters on the screen, a computer operator has the ability to adjust the scene to have characters respond to the commands or become more belligerent.

That non-linear storyline allows police officers to experience a range of outcomes and gain valuable experience that may save their lives.

“We can put them into a potentially deadly situation without really putting them in danger. It can end peacefully or with a firearms situation,” said Sgt. Chris Forrester, the Greer Police Department’s training officer. “It’s not exactly the real thing but it’s probably only one step away.”

The $75,000 system, which was purchased with seized funds, includes a Glock handgun and an M4 rifle nearly identical to the ones used by the department. The actual weapons have been retrofitted with a laser system that allows it to interact with each video scene. A magazine with compressed air provides recoil equivalent to a .22 caliber weapon and speakers sync each report when the trigger is squeezed.

“It’s not just firearms training. It’s about our overall communication,” Forrester said. “When you get into a situation like this your heart rate goes up and adrenaline pumps, which can affect your decision making. We want to make sure as many incidents as possibly end peacefully.”

As the screen bursts back to life, a woman with a knife screams at imaginary figures to stay away from her. Anderson repeatedly instructs the woman to calm down and promises her help. After 20 tense seconds she drops the knife and backs away, bringing the scene to a peaceful conclusion.

“If you treat it real and act like it’s real, you’ll get a lot out of this training,” he said.

The Bluetooth-enabled system allows trainees full range of motion as they work through scenarios. Forrester said it allows expansion to include use of a Taser and baton and hopes to include those options in future budget years.

The department also plans to offer the training to neighboring agencies to help gain valuable experience.

“Going to the range and shooting a target isn’t going to help you when you get into a certain situation,” GPD Chief Dan Reynolds said. “This does.”

The advanced software that runs the firearms training system allows different scenarios to occur on the screen. The operator may change a scenario to life-threatening with a mouse click.

“We can put them into a potentially deadly situation without really putting them in danger. It can end peacefully or with a firearms situation.”
Seamless.

That’s how Partnership for Tomorrow officials describe the expected transition from the first Greer Community Master Plan to the new version that was introduced in May to an overflow crowd at the Cannon Centre.

The celebration was the culmination of more than a year of planning and public meetings to determine how, over the next 15 years, to create a more livable community by enhancing cultural activities and establishing an environment for growth and development opportunities.
If *seamless* was one of the buzzwords surrounding the roll out of the Greer Community Master Plan, it certainly could have been accompanied by another word: ambitious. A 150-page report compiled by Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., a planning and consulting firm commissioned by Partnership for Tomorrow to aid in developing aspects of the plan, was distributed on branded flash drives to those attending the launch and made available at www.plangreer.com.

“We accomplished so many things in the first campaign that we were faced with how to step up the game,” said Brian Martin, a Greer attorney and chair of the Partnership for Tomorrow. “How would we make it more of a challenge for us to reach those goals? But when you put great minds together you come up with great ideas. We’re fortunate to be in a great community where people want to jump in and participate.”

The first community master plan launched in 1999 was designed to re-energize the downtown business district where empty storefronts surrounded nine-to-five shops.

“Before we started the Partnership for Tomorrow, you could stand at the top of Trade St. at six o’clock at night and fire a cannon and never hit a person or a car. Today you can hardly find a parking space,” said long-time Partnership for Tomorrow chair Larry Wilson, one of the founders of the public-private partnership. “This new plan is taking a much broader scope. It’s multi-faceted and covers a much broader area than the first plan that focused so much on our core area. I think we’re now just building off of that first plan, looking at infrastructure, where we want folks to live, where we want commercial development to be, and many other things that people in our community will reap the benefits for many years to come from this master plan.

“I would say unequivocally that the first plan was a success. And this one is going to be even bigger.”

The new plan focuses on four major corridors in the city: the downtown central business district, Wade Hampton Boulevard (U.S. Highway 29), S.C. Highway 101, and S.C. Highway 14. Those corridors were specifically targeted because of their susceptibility to change and their ability to accommodate future growth as the city and Greater Greer evolves.

Areas in need of attention or most likely able to accommodate future growth downtown include: Greer...
Station, particularly areas on the south end of Trade Street; between Trade Street and City Park; the Victor Mill area; and the North Main Street Corridor. Goals include connecting Trade Street to Greer City Park, enhancing the critical mass of downtown retailers and restaurants, adding downtown employers and residences to support downtown retail and restaurants, and connecting N. Main, Poinsett, and Trade/Pelham to adjacent neighborhoods to promote walkability.

Creating an Arts District south of Greer Station between the existing CSX and Norfolk Southern, railroad tracks will allow Greer to rehabilitate warehouses and industrial buildings into unique, interesting spaces.

Along Highway 29, the goal is to maintain and enhance the corridor with increased site development and design standards, establish architectural standards to create a gateway to Greer Station at Poinsett Street, and fostering opportunities to diversify land uses along Wade Hampton including mixed-use buildings and multi-use sites that include office and/or residential.

Goals for the Highway 14 corridor include improving the appearance and environment of the gateway from I-85 downtown, fostering a more significant employment area with supporting commercial projects, and providing an appropriate transition from I-85 and SC 14 to anticipated residential growth to the east and south.

On Highway 101, goals include creating a connection for the north side of I-85 and encouraging more employment along the west side of the corridor.

The report emphasizes five high priorities:

• Pursue and potentially incentivize new employment and residential development in and adjacent to Greer Station. The growth of downtown is dependent on the health of adjacent neighborhoods and employment centers. Greer has a significant opportunity to market neighborhoods and employment opportunities close to its vibrant and successful downtown.

• Implement gateway improvements. Greer has the opportunity to announce to visitors where the community begins and where it transitions into downtown through strategic gateway enhancements.

• Complete the pedestrian master plan, with specific guidance for enhancing the pedestrian experience in Greer by inventorying projects, identifying dedicated funding, and seeking partnerships for implementation.

• Establish a Public Art Commission and develop a public art master plan that inventory existing public art, identify potential funding partners, and leverage public/private partnerships to create more art in the City of Greer.

• Acquire Victor Mill and develop a plan for Victor Mill Park. This mill is a legacy for Greer and the current site detracts from the community. It offers a substantial opportunity to transition from an eyesore to a significant asset.

The master plan promotes connectivity in communities with recreation parks and trails. It recommends connecting any new community facility, Stevens Field, Veterans Park, Victor Park and downtown with bicycle and pedestrian trails. Work on that master plan, which is being facilitated by the city’s Parks and Recreation Department, was already underway when the Greer Community Master Plan was unveiled.

Smart planning and adherence to the first Greer Community Master Plan proved to be transformational for the Greater Greer community. Expanding the new plan was critical as planners estimate that, based on current trends and growth studies, the Greer area may be home to as many as 100,000 residents by 2030.

““The growth that’s going on in this community is tremendous and I feel it every day when I unlock my door and the phone is ringing and things need to be done. I suspect it’s like that for many others,” Martin said. “There’s a sense that we’re set to have an explosion of growth and we’re blessed to have a city council, city administrator and organizations that understand what’s coming. They’re excited about it but have the foresight to know how to control it and make it good for everybody. ““

“Growth and development is never good if you grow faster than you are able to accommodate it.”

Thanks to planning, the community has been able to accommodate its surge in population – largely young families flocking to the area thanks to employers like BMW Manufacturing Co. and Mitsubishi Polyester Inc. The Greer area experienced a 2.4 percent growth rate annually over the past 15 years compared to just a 1.1 percent annual growth rate in the Greenville-Spartanburg area.
“The number of people who were involved in this process was tremendous.”
Seeking input from those new residents about neighborhoods, shopping, food, entertainment and transportation was a key to creating a blueprint for the next 15 years. More than 1,000 members of the community attended workshops and participated in online surveys. The new plan also includes recommendations from officials in both Spartanburg and Greenville counties, as well as the S.C. Department of Transportation.

“One of the things we understand is that we have a very diverse and engaged community. The number of people who were involved in this process was tremendous,” Mayor Rick Danner said. “From a planning standpoint, that invaluable because the more input you get and the more perspectives you get, the more thorough your plan is going to be.”

Downtown homeowner Allison Ringer was one resident eager to take part in the planning process after witnessing results of the original community master plan.

“We moved here in 2006 and our original plan was to maybe stay five years and then move somewhere else. We saw all the improvements that Greer was making downtown and we decided to stay because Greer was becoming so awesome,” Ringer said. “I love that I can just walk to the Stomping Grounds coffee shop at any time. I can walk to about four playgrounds with my kids. It’s just a great lifestyle.

Watching the original community master plan become a reality was encouraging to Greer City Administrator Ed Driggers who chaired the committee tasked with producing the new community master plan.

“We moved here in 2006 and our original plan was to maybe stay five years and then move somewhere else. We saw all the improvements that Greer was making downtown and we decided to stay because Greer was becoming so awesome,” Ringer said. “I love that I can just walk to the Stomping Grounds coffee shop at any time. I can walk to about four playgrounds with my kids. It’s just a great lifestyle.

That understanding has generated strong support for the Partnership for Tomorrow’s fifth campaign. Wilson announced at the May celebration that pledges had reached $1.6 million, well exceeding the $1.2 million goal. The total included a $1 million pledge from the City of Greer.

As the applause and music faded and the last of the revelers left the Cannon Centre, Greer was left with
Biking and walking master plan emerges

More than 70 individuals filed into the Cannon Centre in September to learn more about preliminary plans to add walking and bicycle trails in downtown Greer and to offer input on where those proposed trails should be expanded.

Jean Crowther of Alta Planning & Design led a brief program on the proposed connected network of on- and off-street bike-ways, walkways, and trails that provide safe and family-friendly access between neighborhoods and community destinations for all ages and abilities.

The plan is an outgrowth from the Greer Community Master Plan.

Crowther said implementing the recommendations described in the plan will compliment, connect and enhance existing assets of the community, such as Greer City Park, Century Park, Main Street, and Greer Station among others. Recommendations may also better connect Greer with neighboring communities such as Taylors, Duncan, and Greenville.

“When realized, this plan will enhance the economic vitality, cultural assets, and overall health and well-being of Greer and its residents,” Crowther said.

Work on the Downtown Walking and Bicycling Master Plan, which is being facilitated by the city’s Parks and Recreation Department, began in March with the first steering committee meeting.

Alta Planning & Design conducted an existing conditions analysis and offered preliminary recommendations leading up to the public workshop.

The plan’s final draft, presented to Greer City Council in December, identifies four priority trails that would connect in downtown Greer Station: Main Street, Poinsett Street, Trade and Pelham streets, and a connection to Century Park.

“When you’re talking about this walking and bicycling master plan, you’re talking about how people move around Greer, how people experience Greer, how people get outdoors, are active and healthy, how families interact and how neighbors connect to each other,” Crowther said. “That’s really the overarching vision and feel of this plan, looking at how we can change the infrastructure and how people experience Greer.”

an energized group of residents, business owners and community leaders ready to roll up their sleeves and get to work on that seamless transition.

“The first plan was fantastic and it’s created some amazing things. Now we’re writing a new chapter to add to that. We have a great foundation to build on,” said Mark Owens, President and CEO of the Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce. “We’ve created a great plan, but now it’s time to get started and it’s exciting to have so many people of all ages, incomes and backgrounds ready to work on it.

“I think the planning process has really brought the community together. As we write the next chapter, we’re going at it as one community.”
Each December, Greer City Council receives a thorough report of the city’s financial report from independent auditors. Council members certainly enjoyed what they heard regarding the report for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2015.

Lee Grissom, an engagement manager with S. Preston Douglas & Associates, LLP, told council that the city’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report received an unqualified opinion, the highest level of assurance of fair and accurate reporting. In addition to reporting the financial results of the City, Grissom expressed his appreciation and congratulated the City’s Finance Department for maintaining low turnover, which builds consistency and knowledge, aiding in the review of the financial information by the auditors.

Key highlights for the fiscal year:

• The assets and deferred outflows of resources of the City of Greer exceeded its liabilities at the close of the most recent fiscal year by $17,428,236 (net position). The various categories in net position report the restrictions on the use of funds for specific purposes, as well as to meet the government’s ongoing obligation to citizens and creditors.

• As of the close of the current fiscal year, the City of Greer’s governmental funds reported combined ending fund balances of $14,002,640, a net change of $1,530,115.

• At the end of the fiscal year, unassigned fund balance for the general fund was $8,455,131 or 41.0% of the June 30, 2016, fiscal year’s budgeted general fund expenditures and transfers. The $1,261,917 increase is primarily a result of the improved economic activity in construction business licenses and related permits generating revenues in excess of budget of approximately $878,000. The increase can also be attributed to additions to the city’s tax base occurring through annexation and development, which resulted in an increase of approximately $411,000 of tax revenue over the prior year. Additionally, council’s and management’s commitment to improving the financial stability of the city is reflected in the city’s results in finishing the year under budget for expenditures.

• The city’s long-term obligations decreased by $1,729,081 from $21,445,075 to $19,715,994, a reduction of 8.1% as principal payments outpaced new borrowing.

The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the past fiscal year (and previous years) is available on the city’s website for public inspection.

The Finance Office also celebrated the receipt of its eighteenth consecutive Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting (CAFR). The honor, given by the non-profit Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada, is designed to encourage state and local governments to go beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles to prepare comprehensive annual financial reports that evidence the spirit of transparency and full disclosure.

The City of Greer website (www.cityofgreer.org) plays a major role in making sure that residents have easy access to financial information. Residents may monitor City of Greer finances monthly through a web dashboard that offers a comprehensive and interactive view of year-to-date revenues and expenditures.

Monthly financial reports posted to the website include a general fund check register, a general fund budget report, a detail general fund ledger, a monthly cash flow analysis, summary reports and graphs, and budget reports on the hospitality taxes and storm water funds.

Financial reports may be accessed by navigating to the finance section under City Administration or by clicking the Quick Links tab and scrolling to the financial reports link. Visitors may bookmark the page for easy future access.
Strong revenue and careful spending help replenish the city’s fund balance

The City of Greer continues to post strong financial statements as revenue outpaced expenditures for the fifth consecutive fiscal year, helping to raise the city’s fund balance above the $8.5 million mark. The fund balance — the city’s savings account for non-budgeted expenses — dipped below $3 million coming out of the recession and weakened the city’s overall financial situation. The graph below illustrates the revenue and expenditures of the General Fund since 2011. The graph at the bottom of the page shows fund balance growth since 2011.
The Building and Development Standards Department exists to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the general public through the equal enforcement of all applicable codes, ordinances, and sound engineering practices within the construction industry, mobile home industry, and engineering fields as needed.

Located on the first floor of Greer City Hall, the department serves a variety of functions for the City of Greer including planning and zoning, building inspections and code enforcement, geographic information system (GIS), engineering, and stormwater management.

The city enjoyed another record-breaking year for permits on the residential side as residential construction valuations increased from $44 million in 2014 to $64.6 million in 2015. There were 236 total single family dwelling housing starts and 56 single family attached units. The total valuation for commercial and residential permits increased by $6.5 million with construction valuations reaching $123,606,215.

Department head and city engineer Steve Grant, P.E. joined the department in March after the late Don Holloman retired. Grant got up to speed quickly and oversaw all activities of the engineering and stormwater divisions. The city engineer is tasked with coordinating city construction projects, reviewing residential and commercial site development plans, inspecting street construction in new subdivisions, addressing drainage problems and advising the stormwater program staff in the development and application of the Stormwater Management Program.

Grant continued the Roadway Assessment Program that annually grades city streets to determine those most in need of repair. This program has resulted in an improvement in the overall condition of streets within the city. Grant is considering a new computerized assessment method for 2016 and beyond that promises to improve efficiency, increase accuracy and eliminate subjectivity in the program.

In addition, efforts are continually underway to update property development, city maintained streets and other records into a digital format that can be used in conjunction with the GIS program. All storm drainage systems in new developments are now being submitted electronically and added on a GIS layer so that the city has a digital record of new storm drainage systems.

Grant serves on the state board of directors for the S.C. Society of Professional Engineers (SCSPE) and is also active in the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). During 2013 and 2014, the Planning and Zoning division reviewed and approved 1,242 single family lots for development. Since 2013, 595 actual lots have been constructed in 11 new communities.

The department has issued 236 building permits for new construction of single family dwellings in 2015. These new housing starts are beginning to use up the inventory of 1,242 lots – growth that has increased the city’s population to approximately 27,746. Adding 60 apartment/townhomes raises the population estimate to 27,869.

Developers continue to construct their communities in commercial and residential construction plans continued at a strong pace in the city in 2015. Among the commercial plans was Gibbs Cancer Center at the Pelham Medical Center campus, which received approval for a seven-story addition.
phases and have approximately 647 lots remaining on which to build new homes. In 2015, the Planning and Zoning division increased the undeveloped inventory by approving another 281 single family lot plats and an additional 31 townhomes.

Approval was granted for the continued construction of manufacturing, warehousing and distribution centers, along with a seven-story addition to the Gibbs Cancer Center located at Spartanburg Regional Health Care’s Pelham Medical Center.

The Board of Architectural Review reviewed improvements to several historic buildings in Greer Station as new businesses locate in the historic downtown area. Five apartments and studios constructed on the upper levels of historic buildings were reviewed and approved.

The City of Greer grew by 109 acres in 2014 due to property owners who requested annexation into the city.

Planning and zoning coordinator Glenn Pace and GIS planner Justin Kirtz brought together elected and appointed officials in June to help them better understand the roles each plays to advance the city.

Stormwater engineer Lillian Hanley and stormwater inspector Anthony Copeland worked with other city departments and government agencies to protect the city’s waterways from stormwater pollutants that may be generated by construction sites, illicit discharges or other means, as required by state and federal law. Copeland joined the staff in 2015 and brings more than 10 years of construction inspection experience in addition to many pertinent certifications.

Staff members also respond to citizen concerns about drainage issues. More than 50 drainage issue calls were received and investigated in 2015. Staff began utilizing a web-based reporting system to have a record of all issues and locations.

Because all runoff cannot be captured and treated like sewage at various treatment plants, the best way to ensure cleaner water is to prevent runoff from ever becoming polluted. The city relies on strong stormwater ordinances and a diligent staff to accomplish this goal. By educating the public, managing construction sites, and inspecting industrial facilities, the city’s stormwater team is working to protect the quality of the city’s water for generations to come.

Hanley reviewed 119 total stormwater plans, conducted 19 as-built reviews and held 36 pre-construction meetings during the year.

Copeland performed 245 monthly site inspections, 112 final site inspections and reviewed 151 residential lot drainage plans. He also performed 15 asphalt/proof roll inspections for new roads in developing subdivisions.

The city partners with Upstate organizations to provide information regarding water quality and how all can participate in keeping streams and rivers clean. The city’s stormwater division co-sponsored the 2015 meeting of the Southeast chapter of the International Erosion Control Association. In addition to utilizing the city website and PEG channel to offer public education, Hanley was active in the community in 2015 at such events as the Friends of Lake Robinson Day of Celebration.

Major accomplishments for the Stormwater division in 2015 were:

- Met with stakeholders to develop a phased plan for improvements at the City of Greer Recycling Center. The project goal is to improve infrastructure and reduce pollution in stormwater runoff by installing a stormwater management collection system, water quality treatment devices and new concrete paving. The project budget is $300,000.
- Began implementation of the Stormwater Quality Monitoring Plan in July as required by the city’s Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (SMS4) permit. The plan includes quarterly stream sampling during rain events and dry weather events at two locations. Samples are tested for E. coli and fecal coliform.
- Began a program to electronically scan project files. Benefits include inspector electronic access in the field and reduction of physical storage space.

Building official Ruthie Helms was re-elected president of the Upper State Code Enforcement Association and serves on various committees for the Building Officials Association of South Carolina. On behalf of the City of Greer, Helms was recognized by ABLE South Carolina for exceptional work to improve access for individuals with disabilities in Greer. She was also awarded the Member of the Year award and was the recipient of the M. F. “Red” Allen Educational Award by the Upper State Code Enforcement Association of South Carolina.

Codes enforcement officer Tor Ellstrom brought eight years of experience to the staff and has worked closely with neighborhood leaders and other city departments to address community concerns such as overgrown lots, trash, debris, and derelict vehicles.

Greer native Joe Aughtry, who is certified in various trades in construction, joined the staff as a building inspector.
FIRE DEPARTMENT

While many may think of a firefighter as the hero who charge into a burning building to rescue helpless citizens, the role of a firefighter has evolved dramatically in recent years. They are still very much heroes to anyone helped from a burning structure, but today’s firefighters are students, teachers, medical technicians, hazardous material inspectors and community leaders.

Fire calls represented 4 percent of the Greer Fire Department’s total calls in 2015. Despite a considerable decline from the previous year, rescue and emergency medical service calls continued to comprise the largest percentage of calls.

Overall, requests for service dropped by more than 800 calls in 2015.

When they aren’t on calls, members of the department are still making a difference in the community.

During the year, the department made 65 fire prevention presentations to 4,874 people.

It also started CPR Saturday, a once-monthly opportunity for members of the public to attend an American Heart Association Heart Saver CPR at no cost. Begun in August, the five classes in 2015 were attended by 55 people.

The department also offered Healthcare Provider CPR classes at area medical offices and nursing homes with approximately 100 professionals attending.

The city department continued to be a headquarters for child safety seat inspections, checking 242 seats. The number represented a slight decline from 2015 because Safe Kids Upstate, which coordinates the inspections, added inspection station locations across the Upstate.

Greenville County hosts an annual luncheon to recognize emergency personnel who save lives. Lt. Dwayne Brown, engineer Warren Douglas, and firefighter Thomas Kickler were among the firefighters and EMTs honored in 2015 for performing life saving first aid to cardiac arrest victims.

Training is a key part of the department’s preparedness. Paid staff completed 8,573 training hours in 2015, while volunteers completed 671 training hours.

ISO training area included officer classes, company level training, driver operator training, building familiarization and training on radioactivity / hazardous materials.

Chief Chris Harvey, Deputy Chief Josh Holzheimer and engineers Scott Tompkins, Kevin Holtzclaw, Vernon Jameson, and John Holland attended the week-long 2015 Fire Department Instructor Conference in Indianapolis. The conference brought together more
Chief Dorian Flowers assumed command of the City of Greer’s Fire Department on May 1, bringing more than 23 years of experience in the fire service including the past four years as the Hendersonville (N.C.) Fire Chief.

He previously worked as a captain with New Hanover County Fire Rescue in Wilmington, N.C. During his 13 years with New Hanover County Fire Rescue, he held various responsibilities including operations, training, and administration duties. Chief Flowers also assisted in the development and management of the technical rescue services for New Hanover County Fire Rescue.

Chief Flowers holds a master’s degree in public administration from Anna Maria College, a bachelor of science in business administration from Mount Olive College, and an associate of applied science in fire science technology from Pikes Peak Community College.

He completed his fourth and final year of the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) which provides senior fire officers with a broad perspective on various facets of fire and emergency services administration. The four graduate and upper-division-baccalaureate equivalent courses and accompanying research examine how to exercise leadership when dealing with difficult or unique problems within communities.

Chief Flowers has additional extensive fire education and training through the National Fire Academy, holds several fire service certifications and has taught fire and technical rescue programs at several community colleges across North Carolina.

He replaced Chris Harvey, who retired after 38 years of service.
MUNICIPAL COURT

As the judicial arm of the City of Greer, the Greer Municipal Court is responsible for the administration of justice. An efficient and courteous staff serves the public with integrity, professionalism, and respect.

The court staff consistently earns high marks in customer satisfaction in a facility that is one of the busiest in the city.

Greer Municipal Court is in session every Wednesday at the city’s Police and Court Complex to hear traffic and misdemeanor criminal cases carrying a maximum fine and sentence of $500 plus court costs or 30 days in jail, plus certain other cases as authorized by the legislature.

In addition to arraignments held twice daily (every day of the week), the facility is also the site of: General Sessions preliminary hearings for Greenville County charges; jury trials; and pretrial conferences. Greenville County Magistrate Judge Robert F. Simms uses the courtroom or hearing room an average of five days per month.

In addition to use by other regional agencies, the Department of Motor Vehicles uses the hearing room weekly to conduct regional administrative hearings for those who have lost their licenses to DUI charges.

Due to an increasing need for a ministerial recorder on site in the early morning hours, Municipal Court adjusted its weeknight staff and now has a ministerial recorder working from 11 p.m. until 7 a.m.

The City of Greer’s two full-time and three part-time ministerial recorders must complete 14 mandatory hours of annual training with three hours of ethics training.

Ministerial judges also completed annual criminal domestic violence training, online safety training, and quarterly in-house training that Pressley conducts on Saturdays.

Court clerks must also remain aware of critical changes in state law, case laws, and bond procedures.

Although training for clerks is not mandated by the state, Court

2015 Municipal Court Activity

Expungements: ...................... 410
Cases Files: ........................... 9,305
Cases processed: .................... 9,434
Bench Warrants issued: ........ 583
Bench Warrants served: ....... 574
Arrest Warrants issued: ...... 1,151
Arraignments Conducted: ..... 1,207 defendants with 2,110 charges
Revenue: .......................................................... $325,014.69
Total money receipted: ................................. $951,980.75
Municipal Court captures City Achievement Award

City of Greer departments strive to create new programs and projects to streamline city services and to improve the quality of life for residents.

As an incentive, the city established the City of Greer Achievement Award in 2015. Based on criteria for the Municipal Association of South Carolina’s Achievement Awards, the honor is designed to recognize innovative projects based on partnerships, efficient use of resources, quantifiable results, and adaptability to other cities.

Establishing the Domestic Violence Court (see Page 8) with the assistance of the Police Department and in partnership with the S.C. Attorney General’s office, domestic violence support agencies in the Upstate, and the City of Simpsonville earned the Municipal Court staff the city’s Achievement Award.

“Many people worked to ensure that this project would become a reality,” Greer Court Administrator Kirsten Pressley said. “Domestic violence was singled out by Gov. Nikki Haley in January as one of the largest problems facing our state today. The hope is that this court will serve as a model for other courts to replicate.”

After five months of court sessions, the program produced a 78% conviction rate, more than double the previous annual rate.

Winning the city award advanced the domestic violence court project to the state award competition.

Administrator Kirsten Pressley requires her employees to attend quarterly training sessions she conducts.

Because they are considered to be victim service providers by law, the clerks attend annual training in that area in addition to training opportunities from the Municipal Association of South Carolina. They daily monitor all files, programs and alternative sentences, and foster partnerships with service providers.

Greer Municipal Court staff are active in the Municipal Court Administration Association of South Carolina (MCAA), which focuses on fostering and developing interest in sound court administration, encouraging the most advanced technologies in the field of court administration, disseminating information and exchanging ideas among its members.

When South Carolina lawmakers got tougher on domestic violence crimes by passing the Domestic Violence Reform Act in June, both ministerial judges and clerks were required to quickly become familiar with the law.

Abusers now go to jail based on both the number of times they are charged with domestic violence and the severity of the crime and gun rights are stripped from abusers, but lower-level offenders can get them restored. Severe crimes carry a lifetime gun ban.

Judges may issue permanent orders of protection and set bond based on danger to “individual” as well as community.

In cooperation with the Greer Police Department, the court has established a successful alternative sentencing program through community service. The program enjoyed a 93% success rate, completing 1,357 hours and collecting 3,192 gallons of litter in 2015.
The City of Greer Parks and Recreation Department is committed to fulfilling its mission of providing quality recreational experiences while administering the values of community image, human development, preservation of environmental resources, health and wellness, economic development, and cultural unity.

The department relies on five divisions to accomplish this mission: athletics, recreation, events, cultural arts, and grounds maintenance. Working together, members of every division help provide events and activities for all ages in safe and comfortable settings.

Tournaments (through the athletics division) continue to have a positive impact and generated $69,800 of direct impact to the local economy in 2015 – an increase of nearly $10,000 from 2014.

The Parks and Recreation Department enjoyed a record participation in athletics programs in 2015, drawing more than 250 participants compared to 2014.

A highlight of the year was the Athletics Division offering camps free of charge for youth football, soccer, girls softball and basketball.

Participation by sport:
- Youth Baseball ............... 601
- Youth Soccer ................. 645
- Youth Football .............. 130
- Youth Cheerleading ........ 56
- Youth Wrestling ............. 33
- Adult Softball ............... 260
- Tournament .................. 708

Recreation baseball and softball all-star teams won three district tournaments, academy baseball teams were ranked in the national top 25 during the season and academy soccer teams won the CESA and Rock Hill Classic tournaments.

Tennis instructor Patrick Wood continued to grow that program, adding 20 memberships and producing revenue of nearly $5,000 through lessons, camps, clinics and league play.

The Recreation Division staffs and oversees general programming, including afterschool and summer camps, special events, facility rentals, senior citizen events, Greenville County Redevelopment Authority grant programs, and CPR, First Aid and AED training for the department.

In 2015, 42 programs in the Recreation Division drew more than 5,800 participants. New programs included Tumbling classes, Mothers in Common and Pickleball.

The division puts on such events as the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Luncheon at City Hall and the popular Egg-Tastic Easter Event at Century Park and Kids Planet.

The City of Greer again participated in the Greenville County Park Hop to foster an awareness and appreciation for the wealth of parks in the county, increase youth physical activity, and establish an annual tradition for all to enjoy.

The Events Division, which is based at Greer City Hall, is the office to visit to book event halls at Greer City Hall, the Cannon Centre, the gazebo, outdoor amphitheater and picnic shelter.

Facilities at Greer City Hall and Greer City Park are popular sites for weddings, birthday parties and com-
munity meetings. In 2015, the division reported a 9% increase in reservations at City Park property and an 8% increase in the number of reservations at the Cannon Centre.

With the support of additional Parks and Recreation divisions, other City of Greer departments, and local organizations, the Events Division hosted and assisted in the planning of approximately 20 public events including Freedom Blast, Christmas at Greer City Park, Moonlight Movies and the Greer Goes Global International Festival.

The Cultural Arts Division enjoyed a busy year as the Greer Children’s Theatre staged Disney’s Aladdin Jr., Disney’s Peter Pan Jr. and Mary Poppins.

The division sponsored a concert with renowned pianist Flavio Varani, as well as multiple concerts by the Foothills Philharmonic Orchestra.

Cultural Arts also books the Tunes in the Park concert series that also includes Greer Idol. The popular Friday night offering, was held on six summer evenings and saw Roni Teems (Greer Idol Teen) and Felicia Owens (Greer Idol) crowned at the finale, where a record number of votes was recorded.

Three art shows were featured this year: the Juried Art Show that included the themes “Greer: An Upstate Destination” and “Greer Goes Global;” the Freedom Blast Mural Competition; and the Giving Thanks Student Art Show. Exhibits by Upstate artists were installed every two months in the Wall Gallery at Greer City Hall.

Greer Cultural Arts received $25,500 in grants to support its 2015 programming.

The Grounds Maintenance Division cares for approximately 150 acres of facilities every day of the year — from preparing athletic fields and maintaining Greer City Park to changing banners and annual flowers.

A major project in May was replacing the crumb rubber fall safety material at the Greer City Park playground with a pour-in-place fall safety material. The new surface meets all ASTM International standards and is ADA compliant.

The division was awarded a grant through Partnership for Tomorrow in the amount of $1,500 for landscaping improvements to planters downtown.

Improvements at Greer City Stadium were another large project. All concrete walls and seating areas were painted, repairs were made to an interior catch basin and retaining wall, a new display board was installed and a subterranean drainage system was installed to remedy the continuous soggy field condition in the south end zone.

Among the division’s responsibilities:

- Maintaining public parks (including buildings, fencing, electrical, plumbing, irrigation, trees, etc.) and parking lots.
- Cleaning park restroom facilities.
- Providing safe playing surfaces for athletic league participants.
- Set up and breakdown for activities in City Park and the Events Halls.
- Pond and fountain maintenance at City Park.
- Handling event setup and multiple stage rentals for private functions.
- Installing and removing seasonal banners downtown and at City Park.
- Installing and removing light pole Christmas decorations.
- Set moves for Greer Cultural Arts.
- Equipment maintenance.

The Greer Children’s Theatre staged a full complement of shows during 2015, including Disney’s “Aladdin Jr.” (left). The theatre company performs plays to full houses at the J. Harley Bonds Career Center auditorium and at the Cannon Centre.

(David McLaurin photo)
Chicago teen Laquan McDonald was shot 16 times when he waved a knife at city police officers.

Riots in Baltimore, Md., erupted when Freddie Gray died after being subdued and taken into custody.

Cries for justice followed a video showed Officer Michael Slager shooting a fleeing Walter Scott in North Charleston, S.C.

A Texas police officer resigned after cell phone video showed him violently restraining a girl and drawing his weapon on unarmed teens at a pool party.

Media reports in 2015 have kept police and their behavior very much in the public eye, prompting everything from calls for internal investigations of police departments to body cameras for every police officer on the street.

Greer Police Chief Dan Reynolds knows that such acts across the nation cast a dark shadow on every police department – large and small – as residents demand to know that proper protocol will be followed in the quest for justice.

In fact, Reynolds’ department has been especially proactive about such matters and continued in 2015 to assure City of Greer residents that police are here to serve and protect them.

“It’s difficult to escape the criticism of poor decisions by police across the country and the negative publicity, but you can’t paint every department with the same brush,” Chief Dan Reynolds said. “We believe in a strong system of training and ethics for every officer and subscribe to community policing.”

The Greer department was testing body-worn cameras and comparing models a full year before Michael Brown was shot to death by a police officer in Ferguson, Mo. – an incident that prompted Brown’s family to call for the nationwide use of body cameras by police and the creation of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

All Greer patrol officers were equipped with body cameras by January of 2015.

GPD’s policy for the use of body cameras was approved by the South Carolina Justice Academy, making the department eligible to apply for reimbursement from the state in 2016.

In an effort to monitor the performance of its officers, the department implemented the Guardian Tracking System in August. The computerized system allows the department to maintain accurate documentation of employee productivity, track compliments and complaints, and summarize performances to assist with evaluations and identify training needs.

During its first five months of use, the system tracked 332 entries, producing three early intervention notices and one recognition notice.

“The system allows us to track officers’ behavior, both positive and negative. This system also gives us clues about possible weaknesses in our training program and gives us an opportunity to shore up those weaknesses with new, updated
“Both the body-worn camera program and the Guardian Tracking System will improve our transparency and accountability.”

Maintaining a positive presence and relationship with citizens is a key part of community policing and the department implemented several new programs in 2015 and improved existing programs to attain that goal.

A Summer Youth Leadership Program (see Page 11) allowed middle school students to spend two weeks with officers learning more about criminal justice. The Citizens Police Academy continued to grow, producing two graduating classes in 2015. The Greer Police Academy Alumni Association was very active as members volunteered 1,743 hours assisting the department with tasks at events.

Detective Jonathan McWhite began a mentoring program matching GPD police officers with area youths. The program currently includes 14 boys and girls paired with officers who have volunteered to participate.

Re-establishing the K-9 Division (see Page 14) has reduced drug cases in the city and conducting programs at more than 20 local daycare centers and schools helped educate young people through bonding with the two dogs.

Neighborhood Watch programs grew to include 20 active neighborhoods in the city. Members of the department hold meetings throughout the year to emphasize how neighbors can watch out for each other and deter crime. The department also participates in National Night Out events to introduce themselves to residents across the city.

Meeting residents is the goal of Coffee with a Cop (see Page 4), a program that began in 2015 at local restaurants and coffee shops, allowing business owners and families to hold informal one-on-one discussions with the police teams that patrol their areas. Plans are underway to continue the Coffee with a Cop in 2016.

The department encourages residents to use ReportIt (reportit.leadsonline.com), a free online property inventory that allows users to securely store serial numbers, item descriptions, pictures, and scans of receipts so that items may be more easily identified in the event of theft or loss.

Following the June shooting that killed nine people at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, Greer police met with officials from several churches to review their security plans.

Operation Medicine Cabinet continues to keep unwanted and unneeded prescription drugs off the street and out of the water system. Residents may drop off prescription drugs at Operation Medicine Cabinet events or at the drop box located in the Police Department lobby. A total of 810 pounds was collected and destroyed in 2015.

Alive at 25, the driver education program for young people, now has four instructors at GPD. The department held 14 sessions of the national program in 2015 as 422 students completed the class.

As 2015 drew to a close, GPD was planning a major community bonding and quality of life initiative in the Sunnyside Community to include individual surveys, community clean up days and other events to better connect the police and residents.

The department fully implemented the ReportBeam automated collision software system. Officers are now generating all collision reports on the system, cutting each report time by as much as 45 minutes. The automated reports are sent directly to a server in Columbia and, once approved online by the department’s records clerk, are distributed electronically to proper agencies.

Patrol officers are now able to generate e-tickets for traffic violations, reducing the need for manual data entry and allowing for simple scanning of drivers licenses and registrations.

Safety was also a priority for the Directed Patrol Unit / Traffic Unit. In addition to monitoring and mapping roadway collisions in the city, the unit purchased traffic solution signs with messages that are programmable from an officer’s smart phone or laptop computer. Statistical data recorded by the signs can be analyzed to determine any safety concerns.

The Criminal Investigation Division acquired and began using software that conducts forensic searches of cell phones used in criminal cases. The software will expedite investigations by reducing our reliance on Greenville County to provide the service.

GPD now has a marijuana testing lab for in-house testing rather than rely on another agency to provide results.

The department’s training efforts have become popular with both state and regional agencies. It held 94 training classes in 2015, drawing 1,783 students. The estimated economic impact to the Greer economy was $15,652.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PATROL DIVISION 2015 STATISTICS</th>
<th>2013</th>
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<td>291</td>
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</table>

2015 Greer Police Award Winners

SUPERVISOR
Mixon
Eldridge

OFFICER
Jonathan
McWhite

ROOKIE
Anna
Barnett

CIVILIAN
Shauna
Bagwell

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The department’s training efforts have become popular with both state and regional agencies. It held 94 training classes in 2015, drawing 1,783 students. The estimated economic impact to the Greer economy was $15,652.
From painting parking lots and cross walks to clearing city streets following festivals, the Public Services Department is tasked with performing services that many residents won’t notice unless they don’t happen. Department members, however, take pride in keeping the city looking — and operating — at its peak potential.

Ensuring the public’s safety is a departmental goal. It replaced more than 300 feet of sidewalks and added handicap ramps in 2015. Street signs are damaged more often than residents may realize and replacing those signs quickly is the key to making sure traffic moves as intended. Department members replaced 93 street name signs, 22 stop signs and 34 damaged sign posts.

Mowing and cleaning out road right-of-ways on a weekly basis reduces the risk of accidents and helps control water runoff. Heavy rainfall generates calls about water problems, mostly ditches, drains and outfalls blocked by debris. Crews are called on to repair storm drains, to jet drain lines and to check them with cameras for broken joints.

The department maintains the grounds at Mountain View and Edgewood Cemeteries, cutting grass and cutting back overhanging limbs.

It would be difficult to hold an outdoor festival in the city without the department, as staff members hang and remove banners, barricade streets, install and remove drop cords, and set up and empty trash cans. They are the first on site to set up for an event and the last to leave, making sure the streets are spotless.

One of the department’s more popular services is its 12-week curbside leaf collection that operates on a schedule allowing trucks to visit each residence three times during the collection season. A brochure with a map and collection dates is mailed to all city residents in October.

Public Services also facilitates solid waste removal through ACE Environmental, the city’s contractor for curbside trash and recyclables collection, and delivers green carts, recycling bins, and yard waste carts to residences.

Workers saw a 274-ton decrease in solid waste collection and a 26-ton increase in curbside recycling in 2015. That was a positive trend as residents sent more materials to the recycler than to landfills.

That trend was also reflected in collection numbers at the City Recycling Center on Buncombe St. The center experienced more than twice the tonnage of plastics compared to 2014 and nearly twice the tonnage of paper. It also collected more cardboard and tires than the previous year.
Economic development plays a critical role in the City of Greer.

To attract new capital investments, create jobs, and revitalize the community, the City of Greer partners with the Greer Commission of Public Works, the Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce, the Partnership for Tomorrow, and private sector businesses to support the Greer Development Corporation (GDC).

The mission of this public/private partnership is to promote and to enhance economic growth and development in Greer by increasing the wealth creating opportunities in the community while preserving the high quality of life of one of South Carolina’s fastest growing communities.

GDC’s strategic efforts focus on recruitment and retention of commercial and industrial businesses, targeted marketing of the community, and development of properties for future economic opportunities.

GDC provides prospective businesses and industries with data on available real estate; information on taxes, incentives, financing and business assistance programs; statistical data on Greer’s marketplace and workforce; introductions to community resources; and site selection and community tours.

Major projects and historic firsts marked 2015 in the City of Greer.

• Vacancy in Greer’s historic downtown, Greer Station, decreased to 15% with announcements by The Galleries of Brian Brigham, The Chocolate Toad, Abbott’s Frozen Custard, and Blue Ridge Brewing Company, among others.

• Velocity Park expanded its footprint and offerings by beginning construction on a new 240,000 square foot speculative industrial building and annexing more than 60 acres into the City of Greer for industrial park expansion.

• Greer welcomed Israel-based ARAN packaging to the city with the acquisition of a new building on Poplar Drive Extension.

• Mitsubishi Polyester Film announced a $100 million expansion of their Greer facility.

• Greer eclipsed $1 billion in total gross retail sales.

In all, GDC facilitated 25 successful projects in 2015 representing total capital investments of more than $158 million and the creation of more than 300 new jobs.
Greenville County Redevelopment Authority

The Greenville County Redevelopment Authority (GCRA) provides the opportunity for residents of Greenville County to achieve the American Dream through affordable housing opportunities and community revitalization.

Established in 1974, GCRA works to improve the living conditions of the county’s low and moderate income residents by building new homes, rehabilitating existing homes and improving the infrastructures within communities, as well as providing credit and homeownership education.

By developing community partnerships and administering funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), GCRA works to build a better quality of life for everyone.

First-time homeowners have the opportunity to purchase one of GCRA’s new homes, while current homeowners can repair or improve their homes through GCRA’s Rehabilitation Program.

Strong partnerships make it possible for GCRA to conduct beautification and public works projects such as improving streets, sidewalks, lighting, drainage, sewers, parks, and installing handicap ramps to maintain a safe and beautiful environment for all residents to enjoy.

GCRA experienced change in 2015 as longtime executive director Martin Livingston resigned and Stan Wilson filled that post on Nov. 1. However, the organization’s work in the City of Greer continued without interruption.

GCRA completed demolition of three properties in the city in 2015 and another three were in progress. It also completed four emergency rehabs of owner-occupied properties.

Work continued in the Needmore Community, where one housing unit was under construction on McKissick Ave. and infrastructure improvement on Spring St. entered the engineering design phase.

GCRA has worked with The Upstate Homeless Coalition to implement a $4 million, 36-unit Housing and Urban Development senior housing complex as part of the Fiscal Year 2015 Sub-Recipient Funding.

Creekside Community project. GCRA has completed two new single-family homes in the community and another is underway.

GCRA offers a facade improvement grant program to encourage improvement and investment to retain and attract businesses, strengthen the central business district, increase utilization of downtown buildings, restore economic vitality and enhance property values. One facade project on Trade St. was underway in 2015 while two additional applications were being considered.

The Economic Development and Revolving Loan Fund is a program designed to encourage economic development activities and promote opportunities for employment in the communities that GCRA serves. The program provides five-year, low-interest loans between $5,000 and $25,000 to small existing and emerging businesses located in Greer’s central business district.

A portion of the city’s annual CDBG allocation is made available through a competitive application process to sub-recipients for public service activities. Sub-recipient funding was $40,000 for six local organizations in 2015.

Fiscal Year 2015 Sub-Recipient Funding
Greer Community Ministries ................. $14,000
Creative Advancement Centers ............. $ 8,000
Needmore Summer Camp ................... $ 7,000
Greer Relief and Resources Agency ....... $ 6,000
Cannon Senior Center Program .......... $ 3,000
Brushy Creek First Assembly of God .... $ 2,000

This single-family home under construction on McKissick St. across from the Needmore Recreation Center is among the homes being offered for sale by GCRA.
CITY SERVICES DIRECTORY

Abandoned Vehicles ..................................... (864) 801-2040
Accounts Payable ....................................... (864) 484-5388
Accounts Receivable .................................. (864) 484-5399
Adult Sports Programs ................................ (864) 416-0105
Advertising ................................................... (864) 416-0118
Alarm Permit ................................................ (864) 848-2150
Animal Control ............................................. (864) 848-5363
Annexation .................................................... (864) 848-5396
Arraignments ............................................... (864) 848-5374
Athletics Programs ....................................... (864) 416-0105
Auctions (city items) .................................... (864) 801-2027
Audit ................................................................ (864) 416-0090
Budget ............................................................ (864) 416-0090
Building Inspections ..................................... (864) 848-2175
Building Permits ........................................... (864) 848-2150
Business Licenses ......................................... (864) 848-2186
Cable TV Channel ........................................... (864) 416-0121
Car Seat Inspections ....................................... (864) 416-6601
Cemetery (city-owned) .................................. (864) 416-0090
Children’s Theater ........................................... (864) 848-5383
City Administrator ....................................... (864) 848-5387
City Council ................................................... (864) 801-2027
City Hall Rental Space .................................. (864) 968-7005
City Park Rental Space .................................. (864) 968-7005
Code Enforcement ......................................... (864) 848-5397
Comprehensive Plan ..................................... (864) 416-0118
CPW ............................................................... (864) 848-5500
Criminal Investigation .................................... (864) 848-2188
Cultural Arts ................................................... (864) 848-5383
Design Standards .......................................... (864) 848-5396
Detention Center .......................................... (864) 848-5358
Dog License .................................................... (864) 848-2150
Drainage Problems ....................................... (864) 801-2026
Drug Activity .................................................. (864) 416-6615
Easements ....................................................... (864) 848-5397
Elections (City) ............................................... (864) 801-2027
Emergencies ................................................... Dial 911
Employment .................................................. (864) 848-2174
Engineering Services .................................... (864) 848-2181
Event Permits ................................................ (864) 848-5387
Events Center ............................................... (864) 968-7005
Facilities (Parks) ............................................ (864) 416-6607
Finance ........................................................... (864) 848-2185
Fire Department Tours .................................. (864) 416-6601
Fire Safety Education .................................... (864) 416-6602
Fire Inspections ............................................. (864) 848-2169
Gang Information .......................................... (864) 848-2188
Garbage Collection ....................................... (864) 848-2182
GIS ............................................................... (864) 879-4307
Graffiti ........................................................... (864) 848-2182
Greater Greer
Chamber of Commerce .................................. (864) 877-3131
Greer Development Corp ................................ (864) 416-0125
Greer Heritage Museum ................................ (864) 877-3377
Hazardous Materials ..................................... (864) 877-3377
Human Resources ......................................... (864) 848-2174
Illegal Dumping ............................................. (864) 801-2040
Immigration .................................................... (864) 801-0510
Information Technology ................................ (864) 416-0123
Jail (Detention Center) .................................. (864) 848-5358
Jean Smith Library ....................................... (864) 877-8722
Job Openings ............................................... (864) 848-2184
Kids Planet .................................................... (864) 416-6606
Library ........................................................... (864) 877-8722
Litter ............................................................... (864) 801-2040
Maps ................................................................ (864) 879-4307
Mayor ............................................................. (864) 484-5387
Municipal Court ............................................. (864) 848-5374
Mapping ......................................................... (864) 879-4307
Missing Person ............................................... (864) 848-2188
Neighborhood Safety .................................... (864) 968-7002
News & Media ............................................... (864) 416-0121
Noise / Nuisance .......................................... (864) 801-2040
Ordinances (City) .......................................... (864) 801-2027
Overgrown Lots ............................................ (864) 801-2040
Parks .............................................................. (864) 416-6607
Planning ......................................................... (864) 484-5396
Police ............................................................ (864) 416-6615
Police Reports ............................................... (864) 848-2194
Public Services .............................................. (864) 848-2182
Recreation Programs .................................... (864) 416-6606
Recycling (curbside) ..................................... (864) 484-2182
Recycling Center .......................................... (864) 934-0268
Road Maintenance ........................................ (864) 416-6611
SAFE Kids ...................................................... (864) 416-6601
Seniors Activities .......................................... (864) 416-6606
Sidewalks ....................................................... (864) 416-6611
Sign Standards .............................................. (864) 848-5396
Special Events Permits .................................. (864) 848-5387
Sports Programs ........................................... (864) 416-0105
Streetlights ..................................................... (864) 848-5500
Street Repair .................................................. (864) 416-6611
Storm Water Issues ....................................... (864) 801-2026
Taxi Code Enforcement .................................. (864) 877-7906
Television Channel ........................................ (864) 416-0121
Traffic Lights ................................................ (864) 848-2188
Trash (collection) .......................................... (864) 484-2182
Trash (litter) .................................................. (864) 801-2040
Tree Maintenance ........................................... (864) 484-2182
Vacant House Disrepair .................................. (864) 801-2040
Victim Advocacy .......................................... (864) 416-0095
Voter Registration........................................... (864) 416-0095
Greenville County ........................................ (864) 476-7250
Spartanburg County ....................................... (864) 959-2549
Wanted Persons ............................................ (864) 848-2188
Website ........................................................ (864) 416-0121
Yard Waste .................................................... (864) 848-2182
Youth Activities ............................................. (864) 416-6606
Youth Sports .................................................. (864) 416-0105
Zoning .......................................................... (864) 484-5396
Delivering effective and efficient services to provide a quality of life that makes the City of Greer a great place to live, work and play.

Greer City Hall
103 East Poinsett Street • Greer, South Carolina 29651