

**Downtown Master Plan  
& City-Wide Structure Plan**

Florence is experiencing a *Renaissance*. The downtown area is poised to play a major role and this master plan, which grew out of a strong community involvement in the process, is based upon a Vision of:

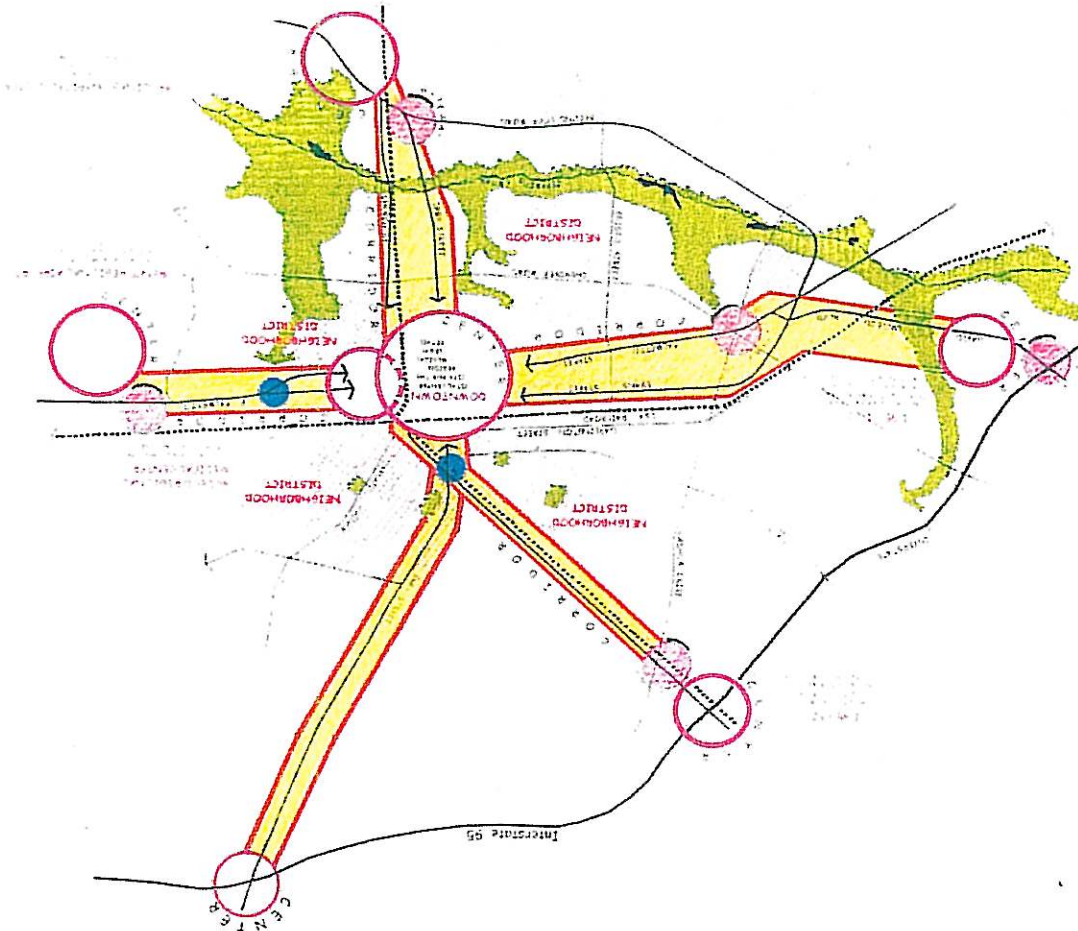
*Florence – The Cultural Heart of the Pee Dee Region*

This theme is intended to provide an image of the greatness that Florence has every right to expect, and should now seek. This Planning program has two approaches: a City-wide Structure Plan, and a Downtown Master Plan.

**CITY-WIDE STRUCTURE PLAN**

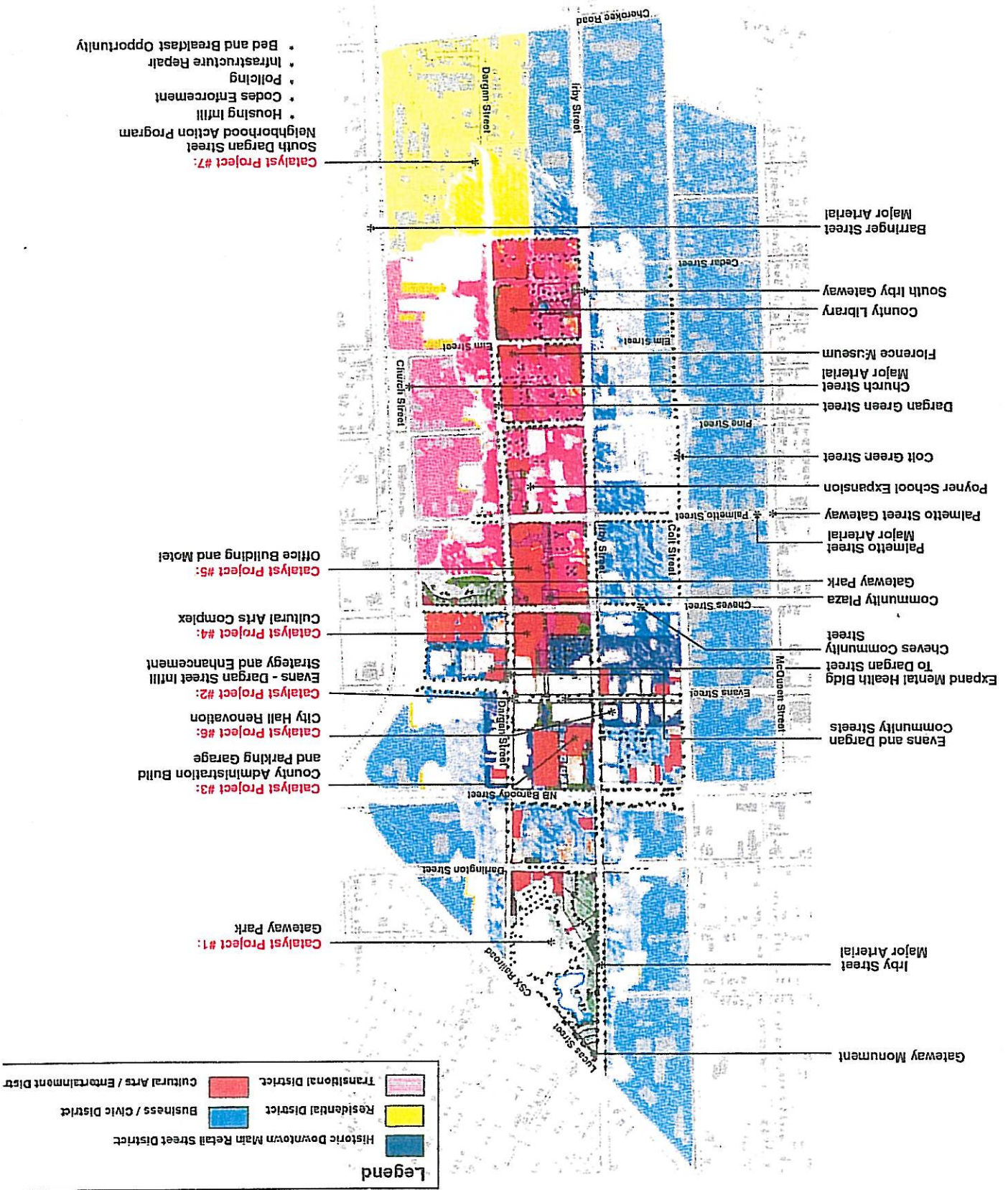
The Structure Plan recommends improvements for the enhancement of major Nodes, Corridors, and Open Space elements of the community, as well as defines the central role of Downtown as a key focal node that is truly the heart of the City. It is recommended that the City-wide Structure Plan be implemented through:

- A Neighborhood Planning and Improvement Program encompassing the residential districts lying to the north and east of downtown.
- The Keep Florence Beautiful Program and Local Area Improvement Associations.



# Florence

Cultural Heart of the Pee Dee Region



## DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

The Downtown area master plan is based upon a Conceptual Strategic Framework consisting of three strategies of relatively equal importance, as follows:

### The Economic Strategy

The Economic Strategy is focused upon pursuing a bundle of Catalyst Projects, if properly concentrated, will catalyze or stimulate other actions. Catalyst projects also involve changing image and sending a message to the broader public – local and otherwise – that the community is serious about building a new downtown. The recommended catalyst projects are:

1. Gateway Renaissance Park: This project will convert the Triangle, as defined by Irbby Street on the west, Darlington Street on the south, and the CSX railroad right-of-way on the northeast, into a high quality public park.

2. Evans and Dargan Street Infill Strategy and Enhancement Program: Early efforts should focus on the enhancement and expansion of businesses in the Evans and Dargan storefronts. The current business community should be considered a pioneering base that merits strong support for growth and expansion. The Marketing Analysis found that an additional 17,000+ square feet for specialized retail uses can be supported here.

3. County Administration Building / Parking Garage: It is recommended that the County build the proposed County Administration building in the parking lot immediately south of the existing City-County Complex. Secondly, it is recommended that the project include renovation of the lower level of the City-County Complex building as appropriate for its new function as a judicial center. Third, a large parking structure is recommended to be constructed over the balance of the parking lot east of these buildings.

4. Performing Arts Complex: It is recommended that the Performing Arts Complex be located behind the Evans Street storefronts in the southern half of the block bounded by Cheves, Irbby, Evans and Dargan Streets. The vacant land in the block would contain a 1,000 seat hall, the Florence Little Theater, and the meeting, conference, administrative, and rehearsal spaces. The complex would also include the Carolina Theater, refurbished as a movie hall.

5. Office Building and Motel: The market analysis identified a near-term need for a small office building and a 80+ unit motel. It is recommended that these two elements be developed on the south side of Cheves Street between Irbby and Dargan.

6. City Hall: Discussions have been underway for some time about the City relocating its administrative functions into the old Federal Building in the northwest corner of Irbby and Evans. The building has a physical image and presence that is fitting of a City Hall and enjoys a location that will keep the City employees and the using public in the very heart of downtown.

7. South Dargan Street Neighborhood Action Program: The predominantly residential area flanking South Dargan Street between Cedar Street and Cherokee Road is basically a sound residential area with a mixture of housing types, including a very significant retirement community. It is recommended that the City institute an Action Program to focus police, building inspections, nuisance ordinance enforcement, general maintenance and cleanup of public areas, and other public activities.

**The Physical Strategy**

The recommended catalyst projects strategy is paralleled by focusing the physical strategy such that the catalyst projects and other improvements are concentrated in the corridor between Irbly and Dargan Streets from the apex of the triangle to the Poyner School area. The catalyst projects are complemented by recommendations for improvements to the streetscapes of Irbly and Dargan Streets as well as the connecting east-west streets.

The urban design elements of the plan build from existing elements, and emphasis is placed on creating the pedestrian-dominated scale of development that is presented throughout the planning process. The streetscape elements that exist on Evans and Dargan Street provide the basic elements for all streets and sidewalks in the downtown area – street trees, the light fixtures, defined on-street parking, and brick pavers. Basic building guidelines include: requiring building to be on or near the sidewalk; using traditional brick and stone materials that are found in the City's more significant historical structures; and requiring visual linkages between the activity on the sidewalk and that in the building.

Irbly and Palmetto Streets will continue to provide the primary car routes into and through the Downtown. However, they will be made more pedestrian friendly through the addition of streetscape improvements, expanded pedestrian spaces to define corners, and on-street parallel parking.

**The Management Strategy**

The vision for Florence will be implemented by a variety of actions that are managed and driven by a Public-Private Partnership in the form of:

*Downtown Florence Renaissance, Inc.*

The management strategy focuses upon a recommendation that the 2010 Committee, Chamber, City, and County create and incorporate a quasi-public organization known as the Downtown Florence Renaissance, Inc. that should be structured as a not-for-profit corporation with broad-based community support growing out of the Florence 2010 Committee format.

The organization should have a Board of Directors with the following initial recommendation for the membership of the Board:

- Mayor of the City of Florence
- President of the Chamber of Commerce
- Representative of Keep Florence Beautiful
- Attorney
- Representative of the Doctors Bruce and Lee Foundation
- Chairman of the Florence County Council
- Representative of the Downtown Area Religious Institutions
- Representative of the Florence Arts Council
- Small Business Representative from the current merchants
- City Public Works Director

The Board would be supported by the hiring of key professional staff, including an Executive Director and Administrative Assistant. Additional staff support in the formative years of the program would be provided through the assignment of staff support from the City, County, and/or Chamber, and the utilization of volunteers.

The activities of the organization would be further supported through the use of a strong committee system with the following initial set of committees recommended:

- Administration/Staffing
- Participation/Communications/ Institutions
- Activities/Events
- Infrastructure/Parking/Circulation
- Fiscal/Finance/Fund Raising
- Economic Development/Business Support/Business Recruitment
- Image
- Safety/Security

Finally, it is recommended that Florence Downtown Renaissance avail itself of the support activities that the South Carolina Downtown Development Association provides through its Main Street Program.