

2024



Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission

Strategic Plan





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A Message from the Board Chair and Executive Director

Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission (LCWSC) has over 50 years of history serving Laurens County and communities in southern Greenville County. What began as a grass-roots effort throughout the rural parts of the County in the 1950s and 60s led to the formation of both the Rabon Creek Rural Water District and the Laurens County Water Resource Commission in 1972. In 1993, the two utilities merged to form our current organization. Our focus has always been to ensure safe, reliable water and sewer service to the communities that came together to create us. We still value our grass-roots heritage. Regardless of where you live in Laurens County, you are why LCWSC was established and who we are proud to serve.

+ Our dedication, planning, and hard work led to the development and construction of Lake Greenwood Water Treatment Facility, a state-of-the-art facility with the most advanced water treatment processes available in our industry today. The facility can produce 4.0 million gallons per day (MGD) of quality drinking water and is expandable to 18.0 MGD or more if needed.

As part of this commitment to serve, our employees and Board of Commissioners are always striving to ensure that LCWSC is positioned to serve your children, grandchildren, and future generations.

While Lake Greenwood Water Treatment Facility is a significant achievement for Laurens County, LCWSC cannot become complacent; we must always look toward the future, continuously evaluating our priorities and aligning our goals with the communities we serve. A genuine commitment to service is a lifelong commitment that evolves with the needs of a community. Today's needs range from supporting residential and industrial development, replacing aging infrastructure, preparing for emerging regulatory requirements, expanding sewer service, investing in technology, growing our workforce, and maintaining fair and equitable cost service. Each of these needs will require our focus but will vary in priority based on available resources; therefore, we must be strategic in addressing the various community needs.

To this end, LCWSC began developing its first-ever Strategic Plan in January 2024. This Plan is not only about infrastructure, it is an initiative-taking plan. Every facet of our organization has been reviewed, and recommendations from internal and external stakeholders have been incorporated. To ensure we captured those recommendations, LCWSC conducted multiple employee focus sessions, hosted external stakeholder forums, and distributed community surveys. The information from these efforts was invaluable in providing insight to the Board of Commissioners as they worked to develop and approve the current Plan.

As in the 60s and 70s, this process was a genuine grass-roots effort that allowed LCWSC to identify priorities that touch many of the goals we all share for Laurens County. We are truly grateful for the time, effort, and commitment of all those who participated...but your participation does not end here. Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission will continue to need the community's support as we work toward the goals outlined in this document. Working together, we can make a positive difference in our County and achieve the quality of life we all want in our communities.



Thomas E. Davenport

Thomas Davenport Chairman



Jeff Field

Jeff Field Executive Director

The Strategic Planning Process

In January 2024, LCWSC initiated a process to develop the organization's first Strategic Plan. This plan outlines the organization's top priorities for the next few years, acting as a roadmap to drive LCWSC toward its desired future state by aligning resources with long-term goals.

LCWSC'S strategic planning process was designed to ensure:

- + Awareness of the needs of the organization and the community, both now and in the future.
- + A shared understanding of the perceptions and values of both internal and external stakeholders, as well as their views on LCWSC's role within the community.
- + Strong employee engagement and commitment to the Strategic Plan.
- + The development of a plan that captures LCWSC's efforts and intentional use of resources and can be implemented for years to come.

To achieve this, LCWSC's strategic planning process included:

- + Engagements with both internal and external stakeholders to gather insights used to shape the Strategic Plan, including one-on-one interviews with the Board of Commissioners and the Management Team, focus groups with employees and elected officials, and a final survey on the proposed strategic framework completed by the Board of Commissioners and staff.
- + A kick-off meeting with the Management Team to identify goals for the strategic planning process and discuss key trends in the industry impacting the organization.
- + A strategic planning workshop where the Board of Commissioners and Management Team reviewed stakeholder input to guide the establishment of the Strategic Plan.
- + A strategic plan implementation workshop in which the Management Team identified workplans and key performance indicators to ensure progress can be tracked and measured.





About LCWSC

LCWSC was established in 1993, following the consolidation of the Laurens County Water Resource Commission and the Rabon Creek Rural Water District.

Today, LCWSC operates as a Special Purpose District dedicated to providing essential water and sewer services to the unincorporated areas of Laurens County and parts of southern Greenville County in the state of South Carolina. The water sources include the LCWSC Lake Greenwood Water Treatment Facility and the Greenville Water System.

LCWSC is committed to providing high-quality and cost effective services. With a team of about 50 dedicated employees, LCWSC serves approximately 17,000 customer accounts, ensuring that water and sewer needs are met. The organization balances its financial resources to ensure sufficient system expansion to serve a growing population and effective maintenance of the existing system to provide continuous service to its current customers. The utility serves a large county with a varying population density that is experiencing a population growth rate of 3-5%. By ensuring the availability of safe drinking water and sewer treatment, LCWSC plays a pivotal role in safeguarding public health, supporting the well-being of county residents, and fostering economic progress within its designated service area.

LCWSC, as a special purpose district, operates under a separate governance structure. It is overseen by a Board of Commissioners, made up of eight members appointed by the Governor, who serve staggered terms. These Board members, who must be individual users or residents of the service district, are entrusted with setting policy and overseeing general operations.



LCWSC balances its financial resources to ensure sufficient system expansion to serve a growing population and effective maintenance of the existing system to provide continuous service to its current customers.

Industry Trends

To achieve continued success, LCWSC must address national, state, and local trends as it works to implement its Strategic Plan. The Management Team reviewed industry-wide trends and determined how each trend currently impacts the organization by either supporting or inhibiting the organization, and how those trends might impact LCWSC in the future. **The following key trends helped guide the development of the Strategic Plan.**

TREND

01

Population

Laurens County has experienced an overall growth rate of approximately 3% county-wide, with the majority of this growth occurring in the northern areas of the county. LCWSC anticipates the overall population growth rate to remain at 3-5% over the next few years. The organization plans to proactively manage its water and sewer system capacity to meet anticipated growth, invest in existing infrastructure to ensure reliability and efficiency, and leverage partnerships and available funding sources to ensure that infrastructure developments are sustainable and fiscally responsible.

TREND

02

Workforce

LCWSC has a strong internal culture, has recently raised base salaries, and has prioritized retaining and engaging younger employees. Succession planning is underway, but LCWSC recognizes a need for more focus on consistent cross-training across the organization. Considering anticipated population growth, LCWSC is aware that an increase in service demand may require an increase in staffing levels to ensure effective service delivery to its customers. To help plan for this anticipated growth and increased workload for staff, LCWSC is prioritizing the improvement of internal processes to become more efficient in its delivery of services.

TREND

03

Financial Considerations

LCWSC's rates are in line with those of other utilities in the region, but the organization remains mindful of the area's median household income and service affordability. Due to the predominantly rural nature of its service area, significant transmission and distribution infrastructure is necessary. Future growth in the county will help support both existing and new infrastructure investments. LCWSC prioritizes fiscal responsibility by actively seeking grant funding opportunities and maintaining a healthy cash balance.

TREND

04

Technology

The organization has effectively leveraged technology, boasting automated meter reading, an efficient remote data acquisition system, and a recently updated customer portal. LCWSC is currently automating its HR platform and proactively seeking opportunities to streamline processes for new customers and create greater efficiencies in its software usage.



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TREND

05

Increased Risk Profile

Laurens County is vulnerable to extreme weather events, particularly flooding and drought. Cybersecurity is a growing concern, especially regarding the need to protect customer information. To address these issues, LCWSC completed a vulnerability assessment as required by the America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA) and is in the process of implementing the recommendations provided by the assessment.

TREND

06

Environmental Issues and Regulations

LCWSC is actively working to meet regulatory requirements for nutrient removal, as well as addressing changes related to PFAS, commonly referred to as "forever chemicals." The organization is also ensuring compliance with Lead and Copper Rule requirements by completing an inventory of lead service lines. The organization will continue to monitor and respond appropriately to regulatory changes.

LCWSC Fast Facts

3.2

Million gallons of water
provided per day

1,135

Fire hydrants

1.1

Million gallons of
wastewater treated
per day

50

Employees



900

Miles of water
distribution lines
maintained

100

Miles of gravity and
pressure sewer mains

\$100M+

Capital investment in water
and sewer infrastructure in
Laurens County over the last
10 years

90%

Of Laurens County's
geographical area is
served by LCWSC

47,300+

People served

17,000+

Accounts served

+ LCWSC operates the multi-million-dollar Lake Greenwood Water Treatment Plant, which earned the prestigious State Finalist Award in Engineering Excellence from the American Council of Engineering Companies of South Carolina, as well as the 2022 Pinnacle Award for Best Utility Project from the Carolinas Associated General Contractors (CAGC)



Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder input is essential to ensuring that the mission and vision are aligned with the organization's day-to-day reality and understanding how stakeholders perceive the organization.

Engaging with Commissioners, the Management Team, employees, and regional elected officials, LCWSC obtained valuable insights into stakeholders' aspirations for the organization, identified its greatest strengths and opportunities, and gained an understanding of critical issues facing the organization.

This input was used to guide the development of the strategic framework on the following pages.



Aspirations:

- + To expand water and sewer service to reach more customers
- + To continue to deliver high-quality services to customers
- + To be well-resourced and able to support anticipated growth
- + To develop and maintain strong partnerships and relationships with local municipalities, political bodies, and utilities
- + To be an organization of choice for employees



Strengths:

- + Delivery of high-quality services
- + Excellent and responsive customer service
- + Organizational leadership
- + Community involvement and engagement
- + Relationships with stakeholders



Opportunities:

- + Expansion of services to under-served areas
- + Enhanced outreach initiatives to strengthen relationships with stakeholders
- + Preparation for growth in the region through capital planning and infrastructure investment
- + Optimization of internal processes to improve efficiency
- + Expanded coordination with stakeholders on long-term planning efforts



Critical Issues:

- + Maintaining compliance with regulatory requirements
- + Ensuring operational capacity to support a growing service area
- + Ensuring service affordability as costs and investment needs increase



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Vision

To be the leading water and sewer provider for the Laurens County community by delivering excellent, cost-effective services, valuing our employees and partners, and instilling a culture of integrity throughout our organization.

Mission

LCWSC's dedicated team ensures high levels of service by managing a sustainable supply of quality drinking water, environmentally sound wastewater collection, and efficient treatment services, while supporting the infrastructure necessary for regional prosperity.

Values

Reliable – We strive to provide essential services to our community without delay or disruption.

Proactive – We look ahead and plan to meet the opportunities and challenges of tomorrow.

Safe – The safety of our water and our employees is of vital importance to LCWSC.

Sustainable – We use the environmental and financial resources entrusted to LCWSC in a responsible manner.

Partners – We value internal and external collaboration in pursuit of shared goals.

WE ARE LCWSC!

Strategic Priorities



Employee Development and Retention

LCWSC is known for its commitment to training and professional development, competitive compensation and benefits, and creating an environment where team members are engaged and valued.



Infrastructure Investment and Growth

LCWSC plans for and manages water and sewer capacity, existing infrastructure, and system expansion to meet regional needs and provide high-quality services for our community.



Financial and Organizational Resiliency

LCWSC works to continuously improve its policies and processes to support effective financial management, affordable service provision, and efficient operating procedures.



Community Engagement and Partnerships

LCWSC is focused on community outreach and education to build awareness, providing responsive customer service, and fostering positive stakeholder relationships to address shared goals.



High-Quality Services

LCWSC provides high-quality and essential water and sewer treatment by meeting or surpassing all regulatory requirements and partnering with industry groups to protect public and environmental health in our community.

Strategies

1. Conduct training to support supervisors and employees in career development.
2. Regularly evaluate salaries, benefits, and professional development incentives.
3. Investigate opportunities for alternative work schedules.
4. Continue employee enrichment activities that promote a positive workplace culture.
5. Fully implement the Greenshades HR system.

1. Evaluate and update LCWSC's asset management program, including optimization of CityWorks/ GIS.
2. Develop target service levels for asset repair and replacement.
3. Develop and implement a 20-Year Infrastructure Master Plan.
4. Identify partnerships and funding opportunities to expand sewer service.

1. Balance customer affordability with providing high-quality services and financial sufficiency.
2. Continue to identify and pursue alternative funding sources, including grants, low-interest loans, and potential public-private partnerships.
3. Conduct an organizational assessment and identify areas for succession planning.
4. Update and consolidate policies and procedures to ensure effective knowledge management and transfer.
5. Develop and implement an updated after-hours dispatch and customer response process.
6. Develop a comprehensive SOP for key processes.

1. Conduct outreach and promote LCWSC as a valuable resource, with a consistent brand and community presence.
2. Educate community members regarding the utility's role and purpose, as well as what customers can do to help ensure high-quality services.
3. Engage with the school systems to promote educational and career opportunities with LCWSC.
4. Solicit feedback from the municipalities within Laurens County for master planning and other regional efforts.
5. Host an annual meeting with municipal, county, and state elected officials to understand and support regional priorities.

1. Ensure compliance with current and future regulatory requirements.
2. Engage in the regulatory process by partnering with industry associations and other stakeholders to address areas of concern.
3. Continue to upgrade LCWSC's facilities to ensure consistent, high-quality water and sewer treatment.
4. Be recognized by SCAWWA, Rural Water, the Department of Environmental Services, and other peer groups, regulatory groups, and associations and other peer groups and associations in our industry for our water quality, compliance record, and quality of our workforce.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Annual training hours per employee (hours/employee)
2. Employee turnover rate (%)
3. Average employee tenure (years)
4. Percent of employees who have certifications beyond minimum requirements (%)

1. System renewal and replacement fund allocation (total expenditures or amount of funds reserved for R&R of an asset group / total present worth of R&R needs for that asset group)
2. Annual growth in accounts (%)
3. Planned maintenance (%)
4. System inspection (% of total horizontal network)
5. Percent of projects funded by non-rate revenues (%)

1. Days of cash on hand (#)
2. Residential Affordability
3. Debt-service coverage ratio
4. Non-revenue water (%)
5. Treatment cost per 1,000 gallons (\$)
6. Monthly calls handled by dispatch (#)
7. Average monthly overtime (hours)

1. Social media engagement
2. External engagement events (#)
3. Stakeholder engagement index
4. Customer satisfaction levels, as measured through a recurring survey

1. Regulatory compliance (pass/fail)
2. Number of service complaints (complaints / 1,000 accounts)
3. Length of service disruptions (hours)
4. Planned versus unplanned disruptions (#)



Elevating Laurens County

Powering Economic Development with Every Drop!

www.lcwsc.com



Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission

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