

CULTURAL RESOURCES

OVERVIEW

Cultural resources help define our quality of life. The Cultural Resources Element considers historic buildings and structures, unique natural or scenic resources, archeological, and other activities that improve the mind and body such as recreation, music, and the arts. Historic and cultural resources are an important element that can enhance the quality of life for area residents. Resources including history, heritage, architecture, spirituality, arts, recreation, and entertainment reflect the unique character of Laurens County.

As a County, Laurens is rich in cultural heritage and opportunities. With growth, however, come additional demands to maintain and preserve our heritage and history as well as increase cultural opportunities to benefit a diverse population. As a community, the County is committed to encouraging adopting policies, setting priorities, and engaging in collaborative initiatives that recognize, promote, and enhance the cultural resources that enrich the community's quality of life.

Definition of Cultural Resources

The term "cultural resources" is used throughout this document. The County views cultural resources in its broadest sense and defined it as the multitude of distinct features and attractions that are reflective of the diverse heritage, history, and current ways of life, and that have significant meaning or value to a community. Examples of cultural resources are historic sites, architecture, sporting events, museums, and artifacts from the County's past, parks, celebratory events, significant buildings, and other iconic points of interest.



From historic sites to education to entertainment, Laurens County has varied and rich cultural resources. For the purposes of this element of the plan, these resources will be listed and a brief description will be given of each.

Historic resources will be drawn from a listing done by the Upper Savannah Council of Governments and updated with the help of historic resource personnel from the Laurens County Library.

History

Laurens County was established by an act of the General Assembly on March 12, 1785. One of the six counties created from the original Ninety-Six District of South Carolina, it retains an old Indian Boundary line as its northwestern boundary. The County was named for Henry Laurens (1724 - 1792), a nationally recognized statesman from Charleston, South Carolina.

The site for the City of Laurens, the county seat, was selected by men deputized by the Fortieth and Forty-first Militia Regiments. Tradition states that the site chosen resulted from a compromise between the regiments, one having chosen a site near the present-day Cold Point community, the other a site near Watts Mill.

The first County Court of Laurens County convened June 13, 1785, with seven justices of the peace being present. This system continued to be used until subsequent courts were established in March 1800. The Courthouse Square, containing four acres, was purchased in 1792 for two guineas, or approximately \$21. The present Courthouse on this site is the third one, the first having been of wood construction; the second of brick.

Early schools included the Wadsworthville Poor School and the Pyleston School which were established in the early 1800's; an English School on Rabon Creek, which was in session in the 1820's; and the Laurensville Female College, which was started in 1829. The oldest church in the County is Duncan Creek Presbyterian, organized in 1764.

Battle Sites

Three Revolutionary War battles were fought in Laurens County: Musgrove's Mill, Hammond's Store, and Hayes Station. Brigadier General James Williams of Laurens County was a Revolutionary War hero at the Battle of Kings Mountain. The County's Revolutionary War heroines include Mary Musgrove, Mary Dillard, and Dicey Langston.

State and National Leaders - South Carolina Governors W. D. Simpson and Robert A Cooper were natives of Laurens County. Four other natives, John Hunter, Franklin H. Elmore, J. L. M Irby, and N. B. Dial served as U S Senators. Jeff Duncan presently serves in the US House. Ann Pamela Cunningham of Laurens County received national recognition as founder of the Mount Vernon Association for the preservation of George Washington's home. Andrew Johnson, seventeenth President of the United States, once operated a tailor's shop in the City of Laurens.

Historic Sites

Previous versions of the comprehensive plan had attempted to list individual historic sites in Laurens County.

Palmetto Conservation Foundation conducted an historic survey of Laurens County. There were 1,356 residential, 114 commercial, and many religious, industrial, and educational properties identified as potential historic sites. This survey could be used for the creation and promotion of economic incentives for rehabilitation, education, and heritage tourism, and the information could aid local governments in future planning activities and cultural tourism development.

Many local places are important to telling the story of Laurens County, the State of South Carolina, and the nation. The County must continue to identify and aid any properties that may have historic value. Many properties are in private hands, but resources are available through the State Department of Archives and History and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. As growth pressures continue in Laurens County, historic properties will continue to be threatened with destruction or degradation. Once these historic resources are lost, they can never be replaced. Creating a strong historic preservation program that includes sites representative of the history of all people could go a long way toward maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for its citizens.

Cultural Facilities and Activities

Laurens County has an abundance of resources to draw from, not the least of which is cultural activities. In creating the Laurens County Statistical Facts & Figures, the Chamber of Commerce created a comprehensive listing of all the activities and organizations that make Laurens County unique and interesting. One of these organizations is the Laurens County Arts Council. The Arts Council strives to make the arts an integral part of the lives of all residents through education, participation, and art awareness. In addition to concerts and performances, the Arts Council sponsors an annual countywide Arts Show, a summer "Arts Alive" program for youth throughout the County, workshops and classes in various art forms, and trips to area art exhibits and performances. The Arts Council is a proven resource to local artists and art organizations and provides administrative and financial support through grants and workshops.

Local arts organizations in the County include the Laurens County Community Theater, the Presbyterian College Fine Arts Series, the City of Clinton Concert Series, the Laurens County Community Concert Series, and the Laurens County Chorale. The Laurens County Arts Council also supports educational efforts in the local school districts. Each year, a live symphony orchestra performance is offered to County students and the Arts Council assists the schools in bringing quality, professional artists into the schools for hands-on workshops, lectures, and demonstrations. The Arts Council publishes an arts newsletter three times a year that features a county-wide calendar of local arts events.

Concerts, performances, and art exhibits regularly take place at Presbyterian College's arts facilities, including the 1,200 seat Belk Auditorium, the 350 seat Edmunds Hall, and the Harper Center for the Performing and Visual Arts which features an art gallery and a 200 seat theater. In the Spring, student art work is exhibited at the Youth Arts Center in uptown Laurens.

Laurens County has several annual festivals and events. These festivals offer family entertainment such as parades, fireworks, children's rides, dances, arts and crafts, flower shows, and games. Museums are located in Clinton and Owings.

Recently, the City of Laurens was chosen as the setting for "Town Haul", a television show which renovates several municipal structures in various locations around the country. The Laurens episodes featured an updated playground and park, an amphitheater, youth center, farmer's market, and barbershop.

Goals/Implementation Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame	Completion Date
Goal. To preserve and improve the cultural resources in Laurens County for a residents			
Work with the SC Department of Archives and History to research, catalog, and document sites of local and state importance. Work with Laurens County Historical Society and Musgrove Mill State Park personnel.	Administration	Short Term	
Coordinate planning for more county recreation sites and programs with municipal recreation planning officials.	County Council Planning Technical Review Committee	Ongoing	
County Council and the Arts Council should be involved in the study of funding a centralized art and civic center for Laurens County that could include a museum, theater, and meeting spaces.	County Council Arts Council	Short Term	

