

Beautiful Swansboro

AN EVOLVING ACTION PLAN FOR COMMUNITY APPEARANCE & ENHANCEMENT



TOWN OF SWANSBORO APPEARANCE COMMISSION

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I. EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Beautiful Swansboro

Beautiful Swansboro is the Swansboro Appearance Commission's evolving strategic action plan for community appearance, enhancement, preservation, and engagement.

The plan provides an organized framework for transforming ideas and opportunities into well-developed initiatives that can be evaluated, prioritized, funded, recommended, and implemented in coordination with the Town.

The plan recognizes that Swansboro's appearance is shaped not by any single project, but by the collective impact of its gateways, streetscapes, waterfront, public spaces, landscaping, trees, signage, historic character, private properties, and community stewardship.

Accordingly, Beautiful Swansboro establishes six initial strategic priorities for our 2026-2028 focus:

1. Community Appearance & Engagement Programs
2. Encourage community participation, recognize outstanding properties, and coordinate volunteer-supported enhancement projects with minimal fiscal impact.
3. Streetscape Enhancement
4. Create a coordinated approach to furnishings, seasonal beautification, decorative lighting, signature features, and other streetscape improvements.
5. Funding & Resource Development
6. Apply for grants, create sponsorships, fundraise, solicit donations, develop partnerships, and pursue other resources as applicable to advance projects responsibly.
7. Signage Improvement & Enhancement

8. Improve gateways, historic district signage, interpretive signage, and other public-facing visual elements.
9. Rooted in Swansboro
10. Protect and expand Swansboro's tree canopy while promoting tree care, education, planting, preservation, and environmental stewardship.
11. White Oak River Bridge Enhancement
12. Explore long-range opportunities to enhance one of Swansboro's most prominent gateways and its connection to the White Oak River.

II. VISION & STRATEGIC PURPOSE

Vision

To enhance Swansboro's distinctive beauty, historic character, coastal identity, natural environment, and welcoming appearance through thoughtful planning, strategic improvements, community partnerships, and responsible stewardship.

Strategic Purpose

Beautiful Swansboro is intended to:

- Establish clear appearance and enhancement priorities.
- Provide continuity for multi-year initiatives.
- Coordinate projects rather than approach improvements individually.
- Establish responsibility and accountability for project development.
- Identify costs before projects are advanced.
- Maximize grants, sponsorships, donations, and partnerships.
- Consider maintenance and long-term sustainability from the beginning.
- Encourage meaningful community participation.
- Provide the Town and Board of Commissioners with organized, well-researched recommendations.

- Create measurable progress toward a more attractive and cohesive community.

III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Every Beautiful Swansboro initiative should advance one or more of the following principles.

PRESERVE

Protect the historic, natural, coastal, and small-town characteristics that make Swansboro distinctive.

ENHANCE

Improve existing public spaces, streetscapes, gateways, landscaping, signage, and community features.

CONNECT

Create visual consistency and stronger connections among Swansboro's public spaces and community destinations.

ENGAGE

Provide residents, businesses, organizations, and volunteers with meaningful opportunities to participate in community beautification.

PARTNER

Leverage relationships with businesses, civic organizations, governmental agencies, nonprofits, and community stakeholders.

INVEST RESPONSIBLY

Consider initial cost, outside funding opportunities, maintenance requirements, durability, and long-term value.

PLAN FOR LONGEVITY

Prioritize improvements capable of providing lasting value rather than temporary visual impact alone.

IV. 2026–2028 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1-Community Appearance & Engagement Programs

- Appearance Recognition Program
- Appearance Project Program

Primary Goal: Build community pride and participation by recognizing positive contributions and creating opportunities for residents, businesses, organizations, and volunteers to participate directly in improving Swansboro.

PRIORITY 2-Streetscape Enhancement Initiative

Project Leads: Nancy & Cynthia

Focus Areas

- Seasonal beautification
- Public furnishings
- Decorative lighting
- Planters
- Signature community features
- Enhancement location planning

Primary Goal: Create an attractive, coordinated streetscape identity that complements Swansboro's historic and coastal character.

PRIORITY 3-Funding & Resource Development

Project Leads: Cynthia & (Linda?)

Focus Areas

- Fundraising
- Sponsorships
- Grants
- Government and partner funding
- Donations
- In-kind contributions

Primary Goal: Develop sustainable resources that allow appearance initiatives to advance while minimizing fiscal impact to the Town.

PRIORITY 4-Signage Improvement & Enhancement

Project Leads: Claire & Kim

Focus Areas

- Historic District street signs
- History Story Walk
- Gateway signage
- Additional sign additions, improvements & enhancements

Primary Goal: Improve the appearance, consistency, functionality, and character of Swansboro's public signage.

PRIORITY 5-ROOTED IN SWANSBORO: Tree-Friendly City by the Sea

Project Leads: Doug & Larry

Focus Areas

1. Town to apply for & adopt Tree City USA requirements
 - a. Request the Board of Commissioners establish the Appearance Commission as the dedicated body to coordinate, manage, & oversee the program

- b. Review tree ordinances & make recommendations that will strengthen them
- c. Coordinate Events
 - i. Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation
 - 1. Town to recognize the Live Oak as the “Town Tree”
 - ii. Planting Events
 - 1. Local Sponsorships
 - 2. Arbor Day Foundation
 - iii. Education
 - 1. Native/Approved plantings seminar-NC Sea Grant (NCSU)
 - 2. Tree planting workshop (NC Forestry Service)
 - 3. Tree care and pruning (NC Forestry Service/other?)
 - iv. Budget
 - 1. \$2 per resident per year-Approximately \$8,000 annually to be used as outlined by TCUSA requirements
- 2. Perform a Canopy Assessment: assess tree loss and prioritize tree planting projects; may be completed through the Arbor Day Foundation or NC Forestry Service
- 3. Heritage Tree Program: recognizes and promotes the preservation of significant trees with historical, cultural, environmental, or aesthetic value
- 4. Memorial Tree Program: honors individuals through commemorative tree plants that contribute to the community’s lasting beauty and landscape
- 5. Tree Sponsorship Program: provides individuals, businesses, and organizations the opportunity to sponsor tree plantings that enhance and contribute to the community’s beauty, tree canopy, and environmental health

Primary Goal: Preserve, protect, and expand Swansboro’s tree canopy while increasing community knowledge and participation in responsible tree stewardship.

PRIORITY 6-White Oak River Bridge Enhancement

Project Leads: Doug & Nancy

Focus Areas

- Decorative lighting
- Gateway enhancements
- Additional decorative features

Primary Goal: Explore opportunities to enhance the bridge as a recognizable gateway into Swansboro and celebrate the Town's relationship with the White Oak River.

V. PRIORITY ACTION PLANS

ACTION PLAN 1

COMMUNITY APPEARANCE & ENGAGEMENT

Objective

Encourage residents, businesses, organizations, and volunteers to become active partners in maintaining and enhancing Swansboro's appearance.

Initiative A — Appearance Recognition Program

Purpose:

Recognize residential and commercial properties that demonstrate exceptional care and positively contribute to Swansboro's appearance.

Desired Outcomes:

- Increased community pride
- Recognition of positive property stewardship
- Greater participation in beautification
- Stronger Town/community partnerships
- Visible examples that encourage additional property improvements

Current Status: Submitted for consideration

Next Milestone: Approval and implementation

Fiscal Impact: Low

Potential Resources: Sponsorships, donations, existing resources

Performance Measures:

- Properties recognized
- Nominations received
- Community participation
- Business participation
- Program visibility

Initiative B — Appearance Project Program

Purpose:

Identify properties or areas where coordinated cleanup, landscaping, or beautification can produce a visible community benefit.

Desired Outcomes:

- Visible improvements
- Increased volunteer participation
- Community partnerships
- Neighborhood-level impact
- Increased civic pride

Current Status: Submitted for consideration

Next Milestone: Approval and selection of pilot project

Potential Resources: Volunteers, donations, sponsors, in-kind contributions

ACTION PLAN 2

STREETSCAPE ENHANCEMENT

Project Leads: Nancy & Cynthia

Objective

Develop a coordinated streetscape enhancement strategy for prominent public spaces and corridors.

Seasonal Beautification Locations

- Two corridor gateway signs
- Puglise Pavilion
- Front Street/NC 24
- Town Hall — three locations
- Riverwalk signage
- Visitor Center

Streetscape Elements

- Decorative trash receptacles
- Benches
- Picnic tables
- Planters
- Bicycle racks
- Decorative lighting

Signature Features

Explore features capable of becoming identifiable Swansboro landmarks, including:

- Decorative or historic-style clock
- Flag display
- Swan-themed public feature or artwork
- Waterfront-inspired features
- Other distinctive community installations

2026–2028 Actions

Phase 1 — Inventory

Document existing furnishings, décor, lighting, and priority locations.

Phase 2 — Design

Develop a preferred streetscape design family to encourage visual consistency.

Phase 3 — Cost

Obtain commercial-grade product pricing and installation estimates.

Phase 4 — Prioritize

Establish Phase I, Phase II, and long-range installation priorities.

Phase 5 — Fund

Match projects with Town resources, sponsorships, donations, fundraising, or grants.

Phase 6 — Recommend & Implement

Prepare project proposals for appropriate review, consideration and approval.

ACTION PLAN 3

FUNDING & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Project Leads: Cynthia & (Linda?)

Objective

Create a diversified funding strategy capable of supporting Beautiful Swansboro initiatives without relying solely upon Town funding.

Funding Portfolio

Town Resources

Identify projects appropriate for municipal funding consideration.

Grants

Maintain an active inventory of applicable beautification, preservation, tourism, environmental, and community-development grants.

Sponsorships

Develop standardized sponsorship opportunities for approved amenities and programs.

Community Fundraising

Create targeted fundraising campaigns connected to specific projects.

Donations

Provide appropriate opportunities for monetary and material donations.

In-Kind Support

Develop partnerships for donated labor, professional expertise, equipment, landscaping, materials, and services.

Funding Principle

Whenever practical, major project proposals should identify potential funding before being submitted for final consideration.

ACTION PLAN 4

SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENT & ENHANCEMENT

Project Leads: Claire & Kim

Objective

Create attractive and cohesive signage that improves navigation, interpretation, gateway appearance, and community identity.

Project Areas

Historic District Street Signs

Research decorative alternatives compatible with the Historic District.

History Story Walk

Assess condition, design, materials, readability, and opportunities for improvement or expansion.

Gateway Signage

Evaluate signage together with surrounding landscaping, lighting, seasonal décor, and complementary features.

Next Actions

1. Inventory existing signage.
2. Photograph and document conditions.
3. Identify priority improvements.
4. Research comparable communities and design concepts.
5. Obtain preliminary costs.
6. Develop phased recommendations.

ACTION PLAN 5

ROOTED IN SWANSBORO-Tree-Friendly City by the Sea

Project Leads: Doug & Larry

Objective

Establish a recognizable umbrella initiative for tree preservation, planting, education, and stewardship.

1. Tree City USA

- Apply for and maintain Tree City USA designation.
- Request the Board of Commissioners designate the Appearance Commission as the coordinating body.
- Establish the required annual tree-care budget.

2. Tree Preservation & Planning

- Review existing tree ordinances and recommend enhancements.
- Conduct a Tree Canopy Assessment to identify tree loss and prioritize planting and preservation.
- Designate the Live Oak as Swansboro's official Town Tree.

3. Community Tree Programs

- Heritage Tree Program — Recognize and encourage preservation of significant trees.
- Memorial Tree Program — Provide opportunities for commemorative tree plantings.
- Tree Sponsorship Program — Engage residents, businesses, and organizations in sponsoring community tree plantings.

4. Events & Partnerships

- Establish an annual Arbor Day observance and proclamation.
- Coordinate community tree-planting events.
- Develop sponsorships and partnerships with local organizations, the Arbor Day Foundation, N.C. Forest Service, NC Sea Grant/NCSU, and other partners.

5. Education

- Native and approved plantings seminar.
- Proper tree planting workshop.
- Tree care and pruning workshop.

PROPOSED BUDGET: Approximately \$8,000 annually, based on \$2 per resident, to support qualifying tree planting, maintenance, preservation, education, and related initiatives.

Long-Term Outcome: A healthier, better-maintained and more resilient tree canopy that remains an integral part of Swansboro's identity for future generations.

ACTION PLAN 6

WHITE OAK RIVER BRIDGE ENHANCEMENT

Project Leads: Nancy & Doug

Objective

Explore the potential for the White Oak River Bridge to function not simply as transportation infrastructure, but as a visually distinctive gateway into Swansboro.

Areas for Exploration

Architectural/Decorative Lighting

Evaluate:

- Visual impact
- Lighting design
- Infrastructure requirements
- Jurisdiction and permitting
- Environmental considerations
- Installation expense
- Energy expense
- Maintenance
- Long-term replacement costs

Gateway Features

Explore additional enhancements that reinforce arrival into Swansboro and its connection to the White Oak River.

Project Classification

Long-Range Signature Initiative

The project should advance first through feasibility, jurisdictional coordination, and conceptual planning before significant design expenditures are incurred.

VI. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & APPROVAL FRAMEWORK

Every substantial Beautiful Swansboro project should move through a consistent process.

1 — IDENTIFY

What opportunity, problem, or location is being addressed?

2 — DEFINE

What is the desired result?

3 — RESEARCH

What products, designs, comparable projects, requirements, and alternatives exist?

4 — DESIGN

What concept best complements Swansboro?

5 — LOCATE

Where should the improvement be placed?

6 — COST

What are the acquisition, installation, operating, maintenance, and replacement costs?

7 — FUND

What Town, grant, sponsorship, fundraising, donation, or partnership resources are available?

8 — COORDINATE

What Town departments, property owners, agencies, boards, utilities, or community partners need to participate?

9 — RECOMMEND & APPROVE

Prepare a complete recommendation for all required approvals.

10 — IMPLEMENT

Establish procurement, installation, volunteer, and completion responsibilities.

11 — MAINTAIN

Establish maintenance responsibility before implementation.

12 — EVALUATE

Review results and determine whether the initiative should continue, expand, change, or conclude.

VII. PROJECT PROPOSAL STANDARD

Before a significant project advances for approval, the Commission should strive to provide:

PROJECT:

PURPOSE:

LOCATION:

PROJECT LEAD(S):

PROPOSED DESIGN:

COMMUNITY BENEFIT:

ESTIMATED PROJECT COST:

ESTIMATED INSTALLATION COST:

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COST:

EXPECTED USEFUL LIFE:

PROPOSED FUNDING SOURCE(S):

SPONSORSHIP/GRANT OPPORTUNITIES:

PERMITTING/APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS:

MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY:

PROPOSED TIMELINE:

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

This creates a consistent BOC-ready project format for major recommendations.

IV. PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

When determining which projects should advance, consideration should be given to:

Visual Impact — How significantly will the project enhance Swansboro?

Visibility — How many residents and visitors are likely to experience the improvement?

Community Benefit — Does the project provide broad benefit?

Character — Does it complement Swansboro's coastal, historic, and small-town identity?

Feasibility — Can the project realistically be completed?

Cost Effectiveness — Is the expected benefit reasonable in relation to cost?

Outside Funding — Can external resources offset public expenses?

Maintenance — Is long-term maintenance practical?

Longevity — Will the improvement provide enduring value?

Community Engagement — Does it encourage participation or partnership?

Strategic Alignment — Does it advance the overall Beautiful Swansboro vision?

X. PROGRESS REPORTING

Quarterly Review

The Commission may review quarterly progress during the regularly scheduled meetings and/or by email updates.

COMPLETED — Project or milestone completed

IN PROGRESS — Active development or implementation

READY FOR ACTION — Research completed; next decision required

PLANNING — Concept/design/research underway

FUNDING — Awaiting or pursuing resources

FUTURE — Retained as a longer-range priority

ON HOLD — Temporarily deferred

This simple updating system offers both shared progress and advancements and accountability.

XI. ANNUAL BEAUTIFUL SWANSBORO REVIEW

At least annually, the Commission should review the plan to:

- Document accomplishments.
- Update project status.
- Add newly identified opportunities.

- Remove completed projects from the Action Plan.
- Reevaluate priorities.
- Review costs and funding.
- Identify upcoming grant opportunities.
- Establish the next year's primary objectives.
- Consider new community partnerships.
- Present significant recommendations as appropriate.

The Evolving Action Plan should remain a living document rather than a static plan and be available to new members, providing continuity of plans and work throughout the future of the Commission.

BEAUTIFUL SWANSBORO

Preserve the Character.

Enhance the Beauty.

Strengthen the Community.

Beautiful Swansboro represents a commitment to thoughtful, coordinated, and sustainable enhancement of the community.

Through strategic planning, community engagement, preservation, responsible investment, and partnerships, the Swansboro Appearance Commission can help ensure that the qualities that make Swansboro special today are protected—and thoughtfully enhanced—for generations to come.