

Preserving history and building resilience (without raising taxes) in Lavonia, GA



Founded in 1880 around a newly constructed railroad line, Lavonia, Georgia, was built on connectivity, commerce, and community. Located in northeastern Franklin County, the town grew from a rail stop into a close-knit city with historic buildings that still anchor its downtown and civic identity today.

More than a century and a half later, those same buildings—rich in character and history—required significant repairs and modernization. Aging roofs, inefficient lighting, and deferred maintenance posed financial and operational challenges for a small city committed to preserving its heritage without overburdening taxpayers.

ABM delivered a comprehensive infrastructure solution that addressed critical upgrades with no upfront cost. From roof replacements to LED lighting retrofits, Lavonia modernized its facilities, improved energy efficiency, and strengthened long-term resilience—without raising taxes or compromising its historic character.

Quick Stats

Established in
1880

9
 Buildings

Train depot with
100-year-old
 Roof

Committed to
Historic preservation

Over \$300k
 Energy savings and cost
 avoidance per year

702
 Solar panels installed
 generating 302,065
 kWh annually

CHALLENGES

Lavonia takes deep pride in its historic landmarks, including the Lavonia Depot—constructed in 1912—and the Carnegie Library, funded in part by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. These buildings are not relics; they remain active centers of civic life.

But age brings complexity. The Depot’s original roof had endured for more than a century and was failing, restricting the building’s use and threatening a cornerstone of the community’s identity. Across multiple facilities, deferred maintenance, aging HVAC systems, and inefficient lighting were increasing operational strain.

City leaders faced a dual imperative: preserve the architectural character that defines Lavonia while modernizing infrastructure to improve resilience, comfort, and efficiency.

For a community of roughly 2,000 residents, financial flexibility is limited. With a constrained tax base, Lavonia needed a partner capable of addressing critical infrastructure needs without requiring upfront capital or increasing the burden on taxpayers.

SOLUTION

ABM deployed its guaranteed energy savings program to fund comprehensive upgrades through future energy and operational savings—eliminating the need for upfront investment.

ABM’s Infrastructure Solutions team implemented a portfolio of energy conservation and capital improvement measures, including:

- Replacement of multiple roofs on city-owned facilities, including the 100-year-old Depot roof
- HVAC system upgrades to enhance comfort, reliability, and energy performance
- Improvements to the building envelope to strengthen thermal efficiency
- Installation of 180 LED light fixtures with advanced controls to significantly reduce energy consumption

Energy savings extended beyond infrastructure stabilization. The program also funded:

- Construction of a covered outdoor basketball court
- Renovations to the community center
- Installation of a solar array
- Two years of preventive HVAC maintenance

The result was not a single repair project, but a comprehensive reinvestment in Lavonia’s public assets.

BENEFIT

Today, Lavonia’s historic buildings operate at full capacity (serving the community as intended) without increasing the city’s financial burden.

The Depot, once limited by roof deterioration and poor insulation, is again a fully functional civic space protected by infrastructure designed for year-round use and long-term performance.

The new covered basketball court provides year-round access for residents, fulfilling a city council commitment and expanding recreational opportunity regardless of weather conditions.

A newly installed solar array located adjacent to the city’s drinking water plant—Lavonia’s largest energy consumer—greatly offset utility costs. By shaving peak demand and reducing overall electricity consumption, the system lowers long-term operating expenses while strengthening infrastructure resilience.

Importantly, modernization did not come at the expense of character. Upgrades were executed with careful attention to preserving the historic look and feel that defines Lavonia’s identity, even as advanced controls and high-efficiency systems were integrated behind the scenes.

This project demonstrates how innovative financing and performance-driven infrastructure strategies can enable small municipalities to protect their heritage, strengthen community assets, and improve operational efficiency—all without raising taxes.

[Learn how ABM can implement similar solutions for your community.](#)

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