

The background features three large, light green circles with a subtle gradient, arranged in a triangular pattern. Thin green lines intersect to form a large 'V' shape that frames the circles. A large, light gray 'DRAFT' watermark is oriented diagonally across the center of the page.

**COMMUNITY NEEDS
ASSESSMENT**

Dorchester County

March 2020

**Berkeley Charleston Dorchester
Council of Governments**

**Dorchester County
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March 2020**

I. Introduction

The purpose of the Community Needs Assessment (CNA) is to identify the community development and housing needs of the community, particularly the needs of low and moderate income (LMI) persons and the activities that may be undertaken with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, identified through the citizen participation plan process. The Community Needs Assessment provides a summary overview of community development and housing needs in the locality and examines the special needs of LMI persons.

II. Outreach

To formulate this needs assessment, a draft was created using the Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan, the Dorchester County Economic Development Strategic Plan, existing sources of data, previously held community needs assessment public hearings, residents and community organizations. As required by law, a Community Needs Assessment Public Hearing was advertised. The hearing was held to present the initial CNA findings as produced from input of county officials and the 2018 Comprehensive Plan to gain a more grassroots perspective of the needs of the community. At this hearing, information was presented concerning the CDBG program, including the amount of funds available, funding guidelines and the range of activities that may be undertaken with CDBG funds. Comments and suggestions obtained from previously held public hearings have been incorporated into this overall draft community needs assessment document.

Based on the input received, officials selected activities they felt would best serve the interest of LMI persons and have the greatest overall benefit to the community.

III. County Wide Demographics - Based on 2017 ACS Census Data

Total Persons	151,716	White	102,966
Persons Below Poverty Level	17,600	African American	38,986
Elderly > 62	23,799	Asian	2,915
Female Head of Household	7,899	American Indian/Alaska Native	698
Disabled Persons	9,277	Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	24
Total # Housing Units	59,038	Other	2038
# Owner Occupied	38,389	Identified by two or more	4,089
# Rental Occupied	14,643	Hispanic or Latino	7,651

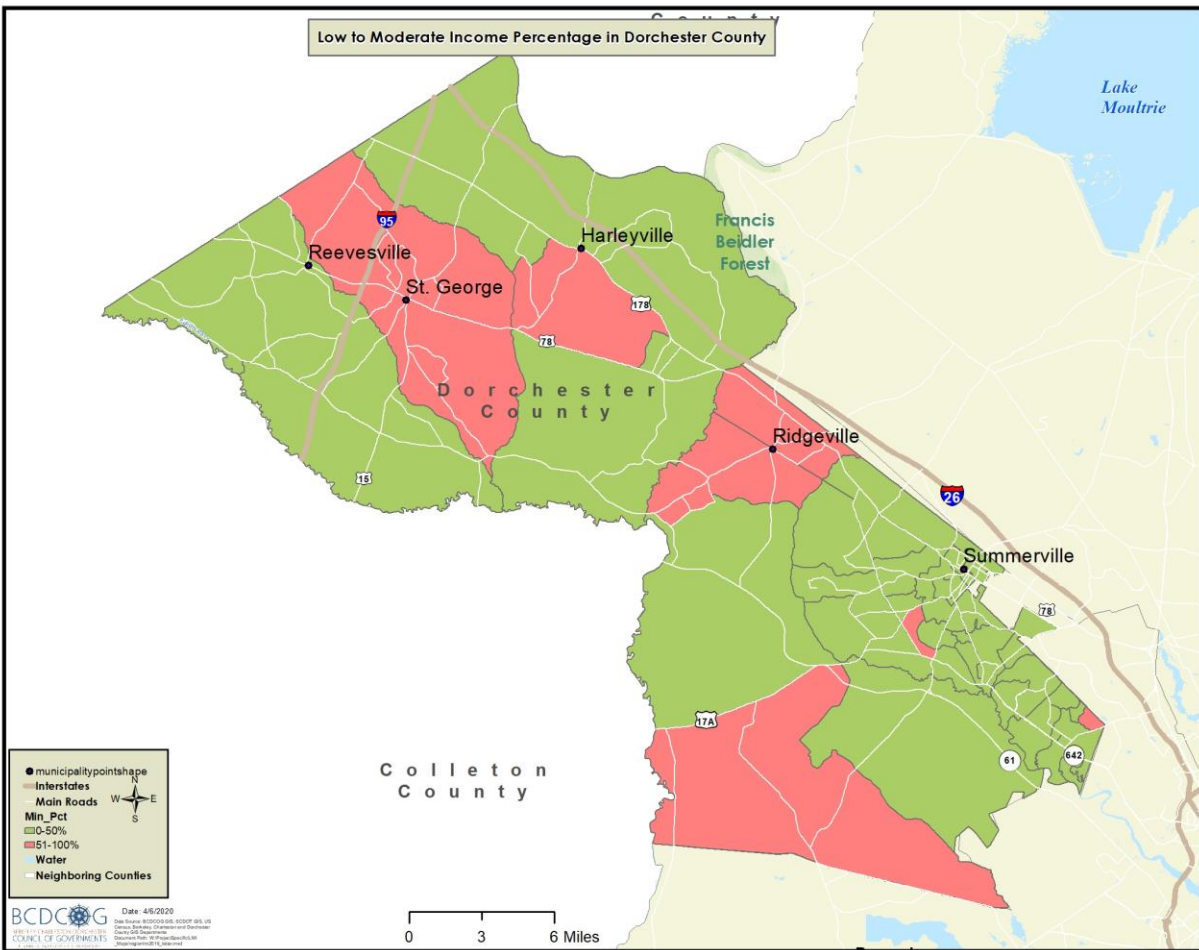
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Concentrations of Low and Moderate Income Persons – Based on 2019 United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Low-to Moderate Income data for Use in CDBG Grants

Census Tract	Block Group	Low Income	LMI	LMI Percent
10818	2	1650	2380	53.13%
10604	2	205	655	53.91%
10700	1	435	630	54.55%
10818	4	475	1325	54.75%
10605	2	710	1355	55.53%
10100	1	335	635	55.70%
10300	4	300	365	56.59%
10400	2	575	980	56.98%
10503	2	620	840	57.53%
10808	1	100	340	57.63%
10814	1	1085	2395	57.64%
10300	5	325	675	61.64%
10700	2	975	1005	62.04%
10603	2	1220	2095	63.29%
10801	2	360	390	63.41%
10700	3	920	1610	64.14%
10300	2	575	945	64.95%
10808	5	525	740	66.07%
10300	3	525	1030	66.24%
10200	3	765	885	68.87%
10505	1	1275	1515	69.98%
10818	1	535	695	80.35%

Dorchester County contains urban, suburban as well as rural areas. Parts of Dorchester County are located contiguous to major urban centers such as the City of North Charleston and Town of Summerville. Conversely, there are areas of upper Dorchester County that are extremely rural and lack the most basic infrastructure and job opportunities. While Dorchester County is listed as a “developed county” by the SC Department of Commerce, there are many pockets of poverty within the County as is demonstrated by the Block Group Census Data. Most of the lower income Census Tract Block Groups are located in upper Dorchester County and are close to the Orangeburg County line. In addition, there are parts of Dorchester County located near the intersection of Dorchester Road and Ashley Phosphate that are more urban in nature and exhibit many of the qualities commonly associated with urban decay. These confluences of conditions result in a broad range of needs for Dorchester County.

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IV. Community Needs

The following are the Community Needs related to low and moderate-income families and individuals in Dorchester County

A. Housing

Comments made at past public hearings and newspaper articles have indicated there is a need for affordable housing in the County. Citizens voiced their concern for the need of decent affordable housing for low and moderate income families, especially in the rural areas. Housing prices in Dorchester County have escalated over the past several years and homeownership is beyond the financial means of not only low and moderate-income families, but also those who have what would normally be considered adequate income to achieve homeownership. The following strategies have been defined in order to promote the development of affordable housing for county residents:

1. Design progressive financing partnerships and development programs that include an affordable housing component
2. Promote housing developments that provide safe and decent living environments for low to moderate income residents
3. Take full advantage of affordable housing subsidies including Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and HOME
4. Promote affordability through zoning flexibility, technical assistance and expediting the permit process

B. Infrastructure

Rural locations within Dorchester County, located in the general vicinity of the I-95 corridor and I-26/I-95 interchange, could support growth and development, but these areas, other than the I95/US78 interchange, do not have access to either public water or sewer. At public meetings, concern was voiced regarding the lack of public water and sewer in the rural areas, and the health problems this presents to the citizens. Additionally, US HUD Data indicates that these areas are home to predominately low and moderate income residents.

For these areas to become economically competitive as well as to improve the quality of life of its residents, basic infrastructure is a critical necessity. This need has been recognized by the South Carolina Congressional Delegation which has sought to highlight the potential of the area. Dorchester County participates in the Lake Marion Regional Water System and has secured the funding to extend potable water to rural areas of the county surrounding the towns of St. George, Harleyville and Ridgeville.

There are many sewer lines in urbanized low-income areas of the County that have deteriorated and pose a health hazard to citizens they service. Broken or deteriorated lines are causing sewage back up in certain communities and infestation by vermin. Many of these sewer lines were originally installed by developers of subdivisions and then at a later date, as the County sewer system expanded, were deeded over to the County by the developers. Over time the County has determined some of these sewer systems were of substandard construction.

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C. Public Facilities

The Dorchester County Capital Improvements Program (CIP) currently identifies public facilities such as libraries, emergency medical services (EMS) stations, fire and sheriff stations, jails, and water and sewer projects scheduled to be undertaken within the next five to ten years. Also included in the CIP are the expense timelines and funding sources for these improvements.

Dorchester County has considered the establishment, expansion, or location of community facilities consistent with its land use implementation strategies and objectives and provides for the equitable distribution of community facilities throughout the county.

Dorchester County has considered a variety of recreational activities and facilities that attract new residents and economic development while maintaining compatibility with the county's existing character and environment. This insures that a variety of recreational activities and facilities are provided to meet the needs of the county's population mix while placing priority on maintaining and upgrading existing facilities and providing new facilities where needed.

Dorchester County's Library system is one of the most active library systems within the state of South Carolina. The library in St. George completed a renovation in 2012 using CDBG funds. The library in Summerville needs upgrading to accommodate the number of users and latest technology.

High priority strategies for improving resident access to public facilities include:

1. Continuing to upgrade and expand library facilities
2. Create partnerships between the county and the school districts to provide students and area residents with access to more cultural and recreational facilities
3. Increase online availability of county public services to remove transportation as an obstacle to access
4. Ensure that essential public services are accessible via transit

D. Public Safety

It is the mission of the Dorchester County Sheriff's Office to improve the quality of life by providing a safe environment for all people within the county. This is done by collaborative efforts of the Sheriff's office and the community. The Sheriff's Office will maintain a high standard of professional accountability to its citizens, always being mindful to be fiscally responsible. The Sheriff's Office will serve all people of Dorchester County with dignity, respect, fairness and compassion.

The Dorchester County Sheriff's Department will continue to ensure the personal and property safety of the residents of Dorchester County; increase law enforcement visibility; increase citizen participation and neighborhood crime watch in the County.

There is a need to expand the water system especially in the rural areas to afford citizens enhanced fire protection (addressed in section B).

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E. Economic Development

There is a lack of jobs available to people in the western part of the county, largely because of the lack of and/or accessibility to industry and the training to prepare people for these jobs in this area. This is evidenced by the large percentage of persons in Dorchester County that commute out of the County for employment. Increasing the number of jobs would also have a positive effect on mitigating the effects of commuter traffic.

F. Workforce Development

In order to promote job training opportunities and job creation for LMI persons, Dorchester County needs to look at providing adequate education and training opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed; targeting recruitment and support development of existing industries requiring the occupational skills and education of the existing labor force base; and promoting opportunities to maintain low levels of unemployment and reduce underemployment of County labor force. The county can accomplish these goals by:

1. Encourage relationships between employers and post-secondary institutions to connect recent graduates to available jobs
2. Lobby for a Trident Technical College campus in Dorchester County
3. Promote workforce training, mentorships and apprenticeship programs
4. Support programs for adult education and job training at all skill levels

H. Downtown and Neighborhood Revitalization

In order to encourage and create economic opportunities through job creation and downtown revitalization, Dorchester County needs to promote new or improved availability of infrastructure and services to businesses, and accessibility to jobs for low and moderate income persons. In addition, Dorchester County needs to encourage the redevelopment of downtown and neighborhood areas. Strategies to accomplish this objective include:

1. Support complete streets and multimodal public transportation
2. Promote good planning (i.e. Nexton) but modify it to integrate affordability and accessibility
3. Create more comprehensive land use and zoning categories that fit the surrounding communities.
4. Address multi-family zoning issues to promote more mixed use development creating walkable, connected neighborhoods.

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V. Challenges

a. Obstacles to Economic Competitiveness

Policy: Promote community sustainability by providing new or improved opportunities for economic development and job creation for LMI persons.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Provide necessary infrastructure to support economic or redevelopment, building on community assets and resources.

b. Workforce Development

Policy: Promote opportunities for labor force training and job creation for LMI persons.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Provide adequate education and training opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed.
2. Target recruitment and support development of existing industries requiring the occupational skills and education of the existing labor force base.
3. Promote opportunities to maintain low levels of unemployment and reduce underemployment of County labor force.

c. Neighborhood and Downtown Revitalization

Policy: Encourage and create economic opportunities through support of small business creation and downtown revitalization.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Promote economic opportunity through new or improved pedestrian oriented infrastructure and services to businesses that are accessible to low and moderate income persons.
2. Encourage the redevelopment of downtown and neighborhood areas.

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VI. Priorities and Planned Actions

Ranking of Priorities

- 1) Focus on Economic Development that results in increased employment opportunities and job training opportunities for low and moderate income residents, particularly those concentrated in upper Dorchester County:
 - A. Recruit and locate industries to create employment opportunities;
 - B. Improve infrastructure to facilitate economic development;
 - C. Improve access to employment training; and
 - D. Continue upgrading and expanding library facilities, community computer access, energy improvements, etc. to offer better services to the residents that are predominately low and moderate income.

- 2) Enhance the availability of Water & Sewer Service in low and moderate income areas. The specific areas contemplated were as follows:
 - a) Establish water service to the Winding Woods Industrial Park using Lake Marion Water through a connection from Harleyville to the Industrial Park
 - b) Establish Water & Sewer service for all Interstate Interchanges in Dorchester County
 - c) Establish water & sewer service to Coburn Town Road and Campbell Thicket Road
 - d) Establish Water & Sewer service to the Givhans Community
 - e) Upgrade Lower Dorchester WWTP from 8 mgd to 16 mgd
 - f) Establish a Central WWTP with a capacity of 8mgd

- 3) Conduct Housing Related Activities that provide a Safe /Decent Living Environment for low and moderate income families. The following areas have been identified as having concentrations of substandard housing:
 - A. The Stratton Community;
 - B. Hudson Town Community;
 - C. Clemson Terrace;
 - D. Azalea Community; and
 - E. Pockets within Knightsville Community.