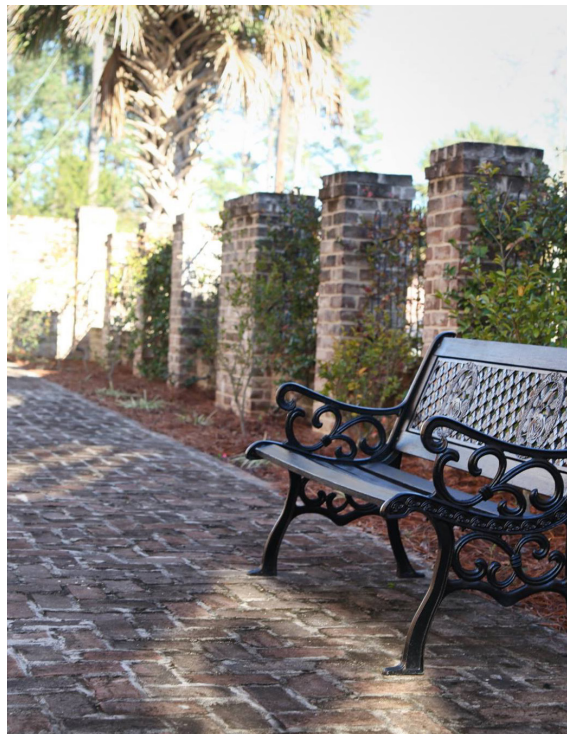




Dorchester COUNTY

2018 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

REVIEWED AND UPDATED FOR 2023



ADOPTED JANUARY 7TH, 2019
2023 REVIEW ADOPTED DECEMBER 4TH, 2023



Dorchester
COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Publication Date:
January 2019

Prepared for:
Dorchester County

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This comprehensive plan was made possible through the joint efforts, involvement and dedication of many individuals. We wish to thank the citizens who participated in the planning process, attended public workshops, and lent their voices in creating a future vision for Dorchester County.

DORCHESTER COUNTY COUNCIL

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WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A proper Comprehensive Plan is a formal planning document, adopted by law that provides aspirational and strategic continuity across time and gives successive public bodies a shared vision. At its heart, a comprehensive plan establishes policies to direct future investments to help shape the function, spirit and appearance of a community and provides justification for the decisions needed to implement these based on informed observations. Because a comprehensive plan is developed through a citizen-driven process, it creates political and societal accountability for its success.

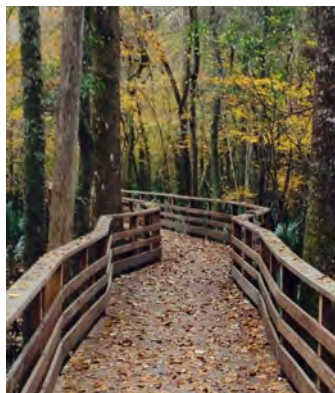
WHAT DOES IT INCLUDE?

The Plan includes specific strategies, framework plans, implementation steps, and results-oriented measurements that reflect the community-driven process. It purposefully does not, however, resolve all of these goals, plans, and measures – that is the work of future efforts. Rather, the Plan identifies and describes further work that must be done by the community to realize the agreed upon vision.

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

At the time of writing this Comprehensive Plan, Dorchester County is beginning to feel the effects of its success in attracting people to live here.

- » The County is still working to provide the infrastructure and services needed to support its current population in addition to the projected growth. Roads are congested during peak times and commutes can range up to 60 minutes for those that work in Charleston.
- » Riparian systems struggle with increased volumes of stormwater generated by expanding imperviousness, while rural character is threatened by opportunistic sprawl.
- » Access to nature and outdoors is being cut off from public use. Existing forests that contribute to the landscape and quality of the region are being cut down for new developments or sand mines.
- » The County has adopted plans regarding land use, transportation, parks and recreation, economic development, trails and greenways, and downtown redevelopment. However, a lack of coordination regarding the content and timing of these limit their potential impact. Information can be out-of-date, findings may conflict from one plan to another, and synergies between recommendations can be overlooked when not addressed comprehensively.



HOW TO USE IT

As the County’s playbook for success, this document consists of written recommendations supported by maps, definitions and action items. This guides County Leaders as they make the decisions that impact the residents of Dorchester County over the next 30 years. This document is available for viewing online at Dorchester County’s Comprehensive Plan website.

- An **introduction** provides overview of our Dorchester County planning area, process and timeline.
- Each chapter captures the **goals** of stakeholders and **actions** to achieve their vision, including guidance for implementation and reviewing procedures.
- A **Future Land Use Map** acts as a guide for growth and represents the goals of the plan. Individuals can learn about specific requirements that apply to all properties by viewing Dorchester County Zoning & Land Development Standards [hyperlink].
- An **appendix** includes a **glossary**, in-depth **summaries of public engagement milestones**, and detailed documents from the process.

OVERALL GOALS OF THE PLAN

- To highlight key aspirations, challenges, and opportunities that will define Dorchester County in the coming decades
- To set principles and priorities about where the County should be devoting its time, attention, and investment
- To help guide decision-making with respect to the key ongoing challenges and opportunities of fostering a livable and affordable built environment, ensuring harmony with the natural environment, growing a resilient economy, promoting interwoven equity, ensuring a healthy community, and bolstering responsible thinking at the regional scale
- To create a unifying vision that integrates the many existing and ongoing planning and development efforts across the County
- To create a resource to inform policy decisions over the lifespan of the plan
- To develop a high-level methodology for implementing and measuring progress, including periodic updates to create a living document
- To help balance and align core service delivery and long-range planning with County Council and citizen strategic priorities
- To prepare an illustrative and user-friendly comprehensive planning document
- To outline specific goals and strategies for addressing each of these challenges and opportunities

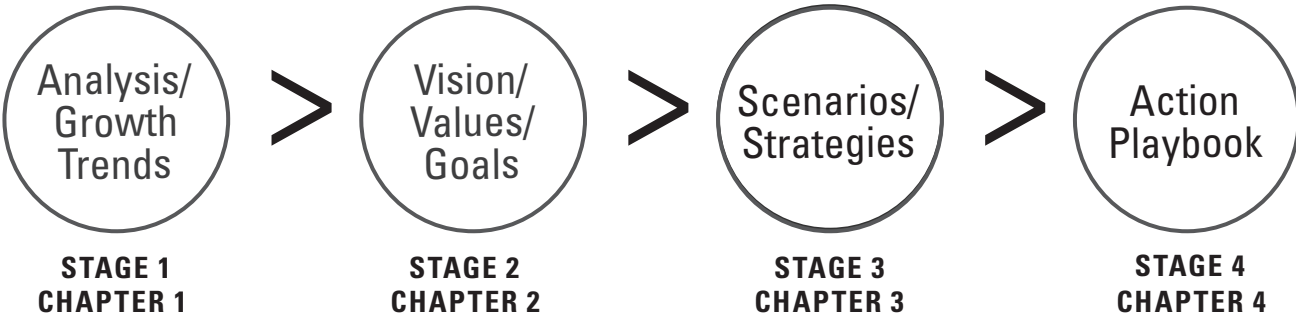
THE GOAL OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IS TO EVALUATE EXISTING PLANS AND, WITH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, VET AN UPDATED UNIFIED VISION RELEVANT TO THE NEEDS OF DORCHESTER COUNTY BOTH TODAY AND INTO THE FUTURE.



County planners are available should you have any questions. Contact the Planning and Zoning department if you have a general inquiry about this plan, are unsure what policies apply to your land, or would like to know how this plan may be changed. The American Planning Association website (www.planning.org) is another helpful resource for information.

FOUR STAGE PLAN CREATION PROCESS

The Comprehensive Plan was created using the four stage process below to ensure each stage responds to and informs all others. This same process also inspired the organization of this document. Therefore, the strategies and actions described in Chapters 3 and 4 were carefully written to ensure the goals captured both on this page and in Chapter 2 can be reasonably achieved and/or implemented. The beginning of each chapter will highlight its specific stage and other key steps.



REQUIRED ELEMENTS FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

The initial phase analyzed Dorchester County today, its role within the region, existing social and economic conditions, and projected growth to meet State of South Carolina requirements for comprehensive planning.



POPULATION

Consider historic trends, projections, household numbers and sizes, educational levels, and income.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Consider labor force characteristics, employment and residence, and analysis of the economic base.



NATURAL RESOURCES

Consider coastal resources, slope, agricultural and forest land, plant and animal habitats, parks and recreation areas, scenic views, wetlands and soils.



CULTURAL RESOURCES

Consider historic buildings, structures, districts, natural/ scenic sites and archaeological resources.



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Consider water/ sewage system and wastewater treatment; solid waste collection and disposal, fire protection, emergency medical services, government facilities; education and cultural facilities.



HOUSING

Consider location, types, age, condition of housing, owner and renter occupancy, and affordability.



LAND USE

Consider existing and future categories, including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, forestry, mining, public and quasi-public, recreation, parks, open space, and vacant or undeveloped.



TRANSPORTATION

Consider facilities including major road improvements, new roads, transit projects, pedestrian and bicycle projects, and other elements of a network in coordination with land use.



PRIORITY INVESTMENT

Analyze the likely federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years, and recommend projects for needed public infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, roads, and schools.



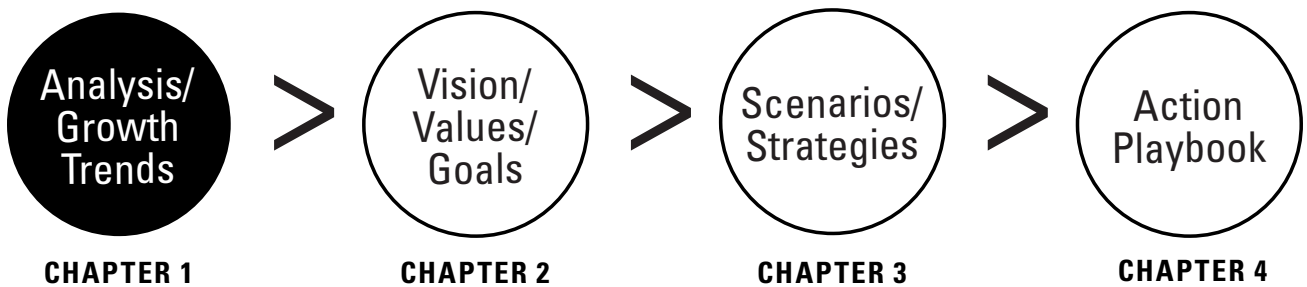
RESILIENCY

Consider the impacts of flooding or other natural hazards on citizens and the community.



CHAPTER 1: DORCHESTER TODAY

CHAPTER 1 Analyzes Dorchester County's existing environment, its role within the region, social and economic conditions, and projected growth. The Planning team worked closely with Citizen Advisory Committee members, County staff and leaders to review efforts already underway and to evaluate population growth, demographic changes, culture and character, livability, climate change, economic resiliency, sustainability, and equity.



A SPECIAL PLACE TO CALL HOME

BY CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER

JENNIFER PARVIN OF DORCHESTER COUNTY

A secret little spot nestled just to the Northwest of one of the world's top cities to visit is Dorchester County. Dorchester County is a little slice of heaven where I often joke that "we get all the benefits of living near one of the greatest attractions of the world but without the "two T's" – tourists and taxes!"

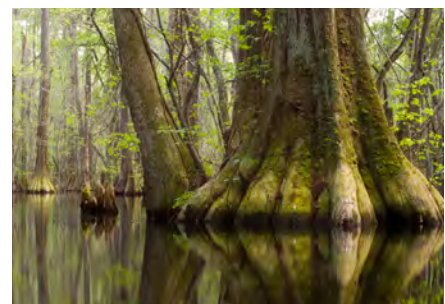
Dorchester County boasts many unique opportunities for residents that can take you back to the revolutionary war or just allow you to explore the sights and sounds across the County. If you are a history buff, you can visit the Colonial Dorchester Historic Site. It is where visitors can visit one of the best-preserved Oyster Shell Tabby Forts in the country and on a given Saturday will be lined with revolutionary re enactors for visitors to see what early life in Dorchester County was like. The site is a current archaeological dig, where there are constantly new findings of the settlements original history.

The Colonial Site is lined by another unique attraction in the County, the Ashley River. This is twelve miles of river that connects on the south side of the County all the way to Charleston Harbor. This allows residents to take advantage of low country living by getting out on the water to enjoy the marsh and wetlands that is home to many animals. The Ashley River connects into the Charleston Harbor, so again this creates water access to one of the world's great tourist destinations.

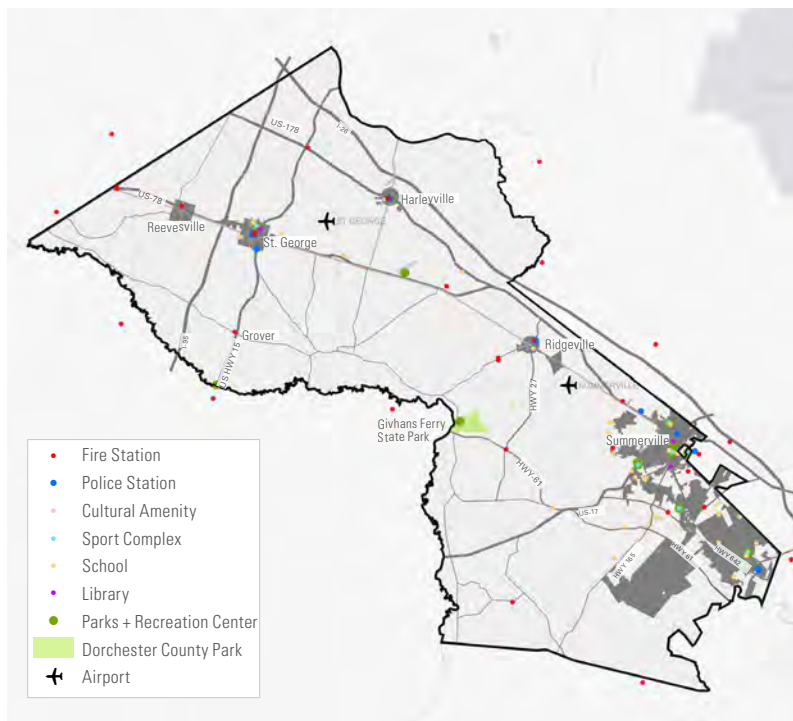
To enhance the experience of the Ashley River the County is working to complete a park master plan with features that will include an extensive trail system, playground, and river access. This will create 85 acres of protected park for residents to stroll and enjoy the waterfront views and become a waterfront destination and outdoor life.

As you ride up the pine tree-lined roads to the upper part of the County we are reminded of rich history when the County was first settled. Where the area was a touted as a summer resort break from the hot humid rice plantations found in the other parts of the low country. It was believed the fresh air whispering thru the many pines offered cool clean air that helped fight unwarranted illness. With many of these great pines protected you will still see an early glimpse of one of the main reasons people started to call this part of the low country home.

As you exit the pine-lined roads of the lower part of the County you will quickly enter the Four Hole Swamp. This is over 10,000 acres of natural protected land in the Francis Beidler Forest. This area is home to some of the largest remaining bald cypress, tupelo gum trees in the world and many endangered animals. The swamp is owned by 2 private hunt clubs but also used for history, education, and has miles and miles of hiking and bike trails.



THE ACTION PLAN



Dorchester County is a special place to call home and raise a family because without having to go too far there is an opportunity to see and do just about anything.

There is always a festival or event in the County to keep residents exploring. From the Grits Festival in St. George, created after it was discovered that the city of St. George consumed more grits than anywhere in the world.

To the Sweet Tea Festival, where you can celebrate and visit the birthplace of Sweet Tea, there is truly something for everyone. The festival season kicks off in the Spring with one of the top 20 festivals in the Southeast with the Flowertown Festival. The smell of popcorn and root beer fills the air with the sound of laughter from the kids as they take their turn of the festival rides.

The County is full of opportunities for food, fellowship, or just plain fun. You are certain to have your fill of southern food and hospitality across the County with many shared events.

If you want to spend your weekend outdoors, studying early American history, or out on the water with nature Dorchester County has a little something for everyone. It is a unique place to call home and raise a family because without having to go too far there is an opportunity to see and do just about anything.

8.5
Acres of parks per population

6
Sites of historic or cultural significance (including campgrounds)

BEAUTY WITHIN OUR BORDERS



BY CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

JOE DEBNEY OF DORCHESTER COUNTY

Just outside of the sprawl of the suburbs of Charleston lies the beauty of Dorchester County. Picturesque farms, slow flowing rivers, bottomland swamps, serene forests – these are some of the beautiful spaces that our County provides to its people. This beauty and quietness just northwest of Charleston leads some to settle here as they started doing in the late 1700’s. Unfortunately, the beauty that brought us here is dwindling and the only way to enjoy the Lowcountry is to visit other counties that have decided to preserve and protect it.

Future use planning, zoning, and conservation of our lands are important to our residents. Plans are in place to preserve these spaces for future generations, but more can be done.

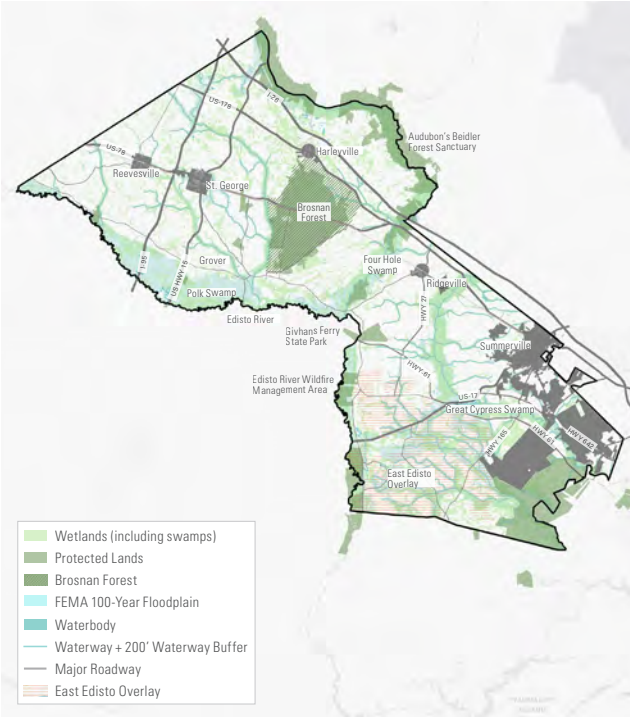
Providing structured access to our two major rivers – the Ashley and the Edisto – will give residents more time enjoying the outdoors and appreciating our natural resources. Preserving land and creating parks will give our families healthier lifestyles and bring our citizens closer together. By allowing access to these scenic spaces, our residents and visitors will come to have a deeper love of Dorchester County.

6.2

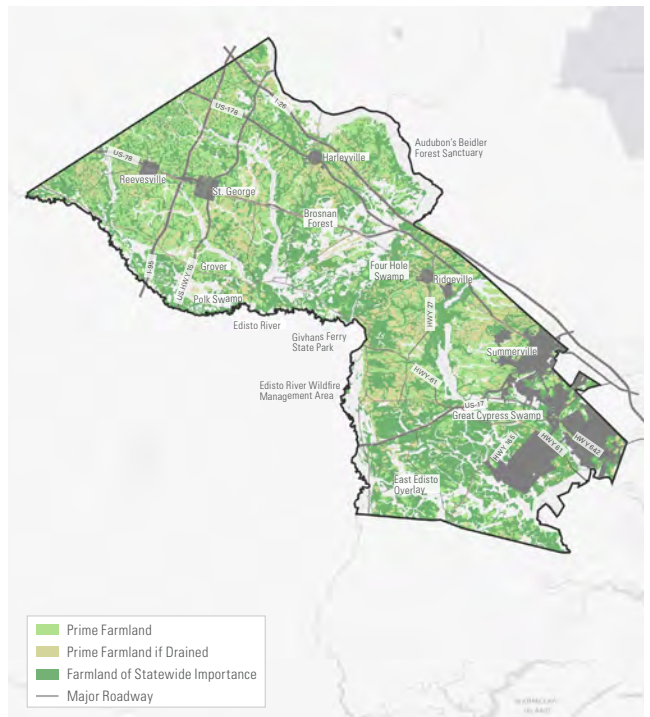
Miles of historic or cultural significance (Ashley River Corridor)

1,660

Acres of protected lands



The pine-lined roads of the lower part of the County lead to the Four Hole Swamp and 10,000+ acres of natural protected land in the Beidler and Broxnan Forests—home to some of the largest remaining bald cypress, tupelo gum trees in the world and many endangered animals.



Future use planning and conservation of lands are important to residents. Plans are in place to preserve these spaces for future generations.

POPULATION GROWTH

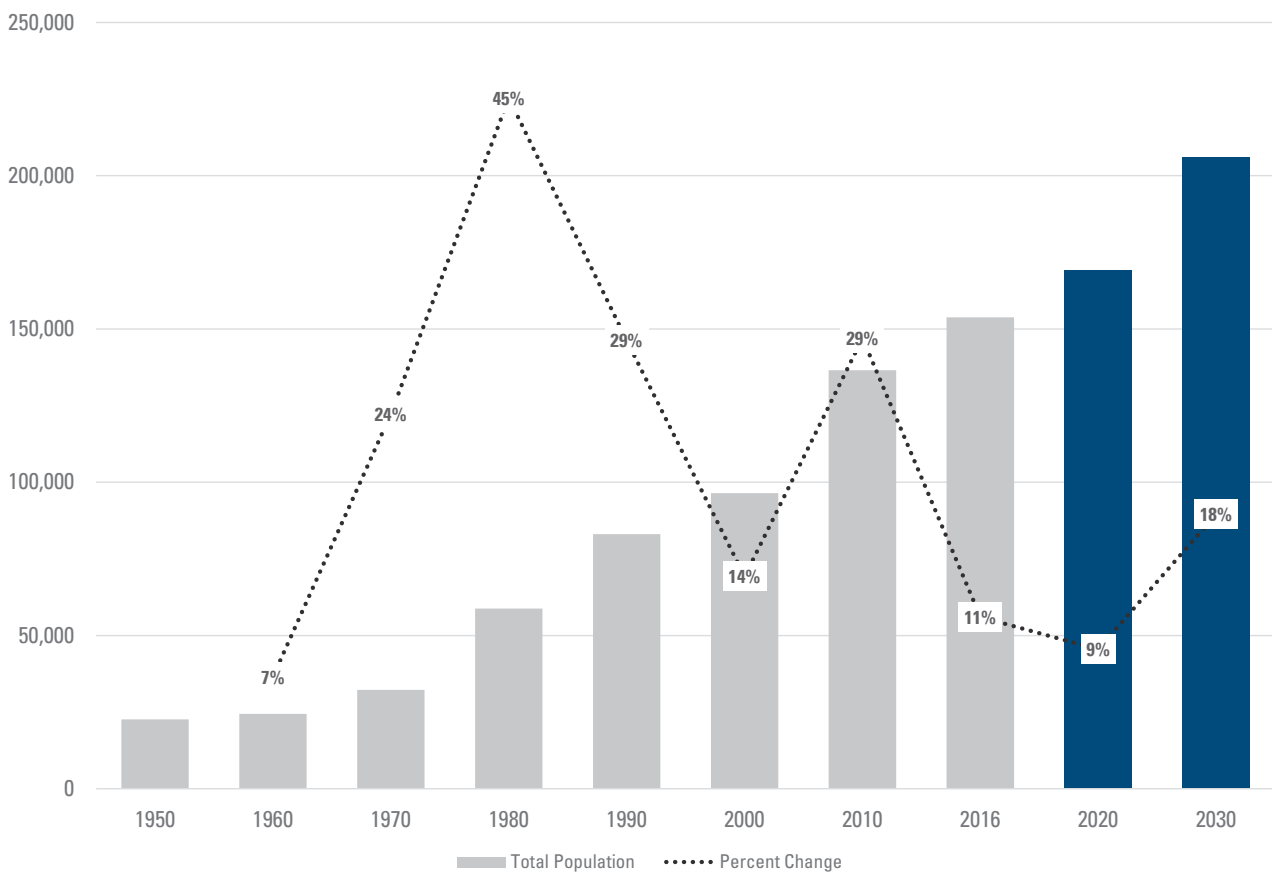
HISTORIC AND FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH

The total population of Dorchester County has been steadily increasing since 1960. Growth trends over time show that the County experienced its most rapid population growth during the 1980s (45% growth rate), with another rapid rise in growth occurring in 2010 (29% growth rate). Since 2010 the County has seen more moderate growth rate of 11%. In the most recent estimates calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2017, Dorchester County is home to a count of 156,456 residents, which is the latest year that estimates are available for. Although the rate of population growth has declined since 1990, Dorchester County is experiencing a new era of positive growth with a projected 2030 population of 206,100—or 49,644 new residents.

POPULATION COUNTS AND CHANGE BY DECADE

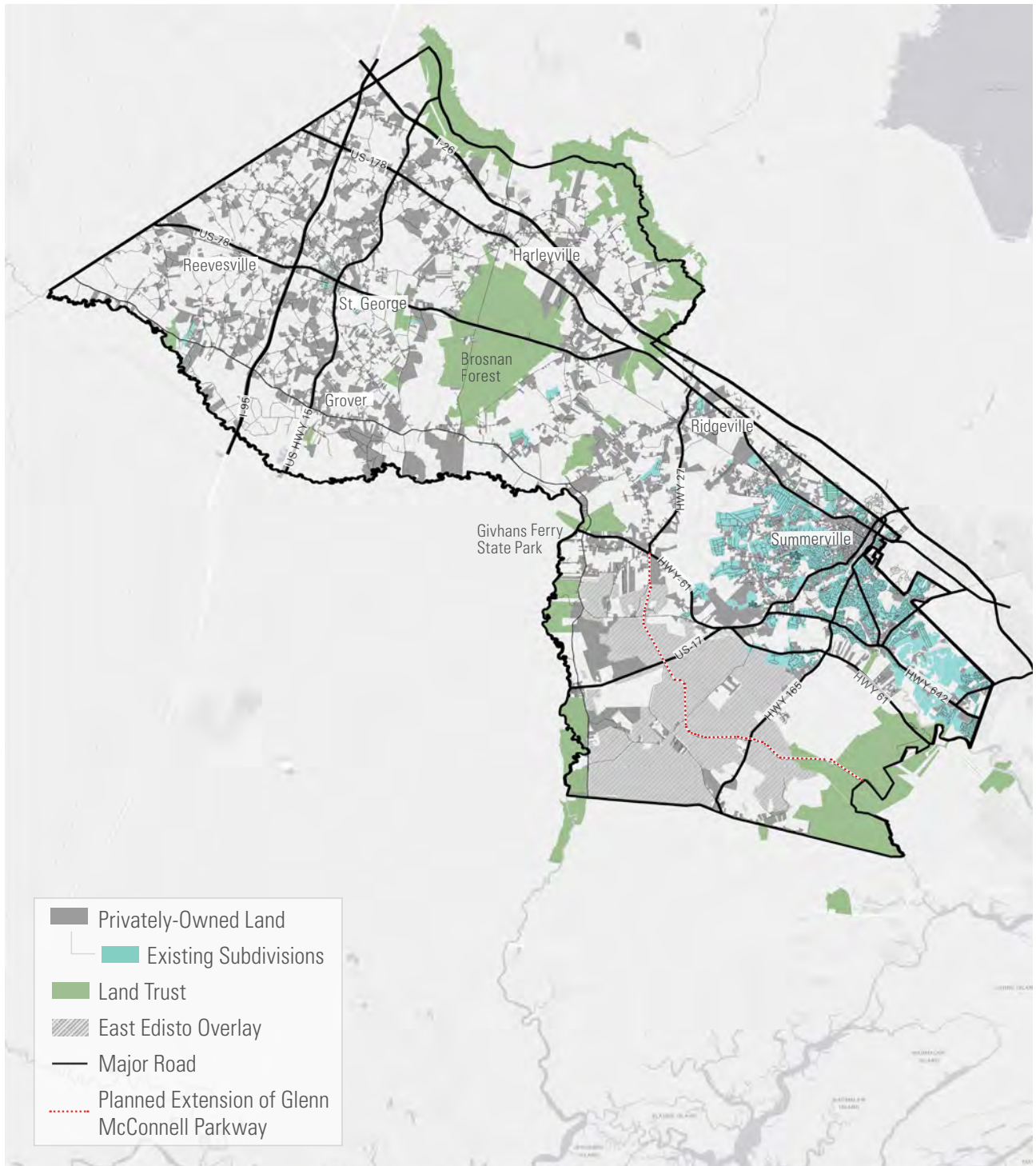
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Population Counts and Percent Change by Decade



HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTIC	2000	2010	2016	2000-2016 CHANGE
Total Households	34,709	50,259	53,005	18,296
Average Household Size	2.72	2.68	2.8	0.08
Total Families	26,293	36,850	37,104	10,811
Average Family Size	3.13	3.11	2.77	-0.36
Households with Children under 18	15,258	20,255	23,746	8,488
Householder 65 years and over	6,316	10,259	10,707	4,391

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



The beauty and quietness of Dorchester County, just northwest of Charleston, has attracted residents to the area starting in the late 1700's. The largest municipality in the County was Summerville (population of 6,000). Today, in 2018, that population exceeds 46,000. Dorchester County also has seen growth from around 32,000 people to about 156,000 over the same period of time.

ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL IMPACTS

BY CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

DR. TIMOTHY HUBER OF DORCHESTER COUNTY

Fifty years ago, Dorchester County was a sleepy, rural, and agricultural community 20 miles outside of the big city, Charleston, SC. The largest municipality in the County was Summerville with a population of around 6,000 while today, in 2018, that population exceeds 46,000. Dorchester County also has seen the population grow from around 32,000 to about 156,000 over the same period of time.

As economic and industrial expansion came into the Charleston-Berkeley-Dorchester area, Dorchester County may have missed out on some of the direct and indirect business investments that propelled and enabled adjacent counties and their municipalities to appreciate a diversified tax base. With a few notable exceptions, major industry went to Charleston and Berkeley counties. Dorchester County became home to a Robert Bosch manufacturing facility the initially supported the Caterpillar Diesel plant then in North Charleston. Much to some resident's chagrin, Dorchester County became the bedroom suburb for all the families moving into the area to support the surrounding industrial employment base.

Dorchester County also was home for a southern woodlands owner and developer, West Virginia Pulp and Paper. This company established a local property development business in the Summerville area that was known as Westvaco Development Corporation (WDC) in Dorchester County. WDC was active in selling and donating thousands of acres in woodland timber property and developing the properties for home and community development throughout the local tri-County area. Beginning in the early to mid- 1970's, WDC was instrumental in establishing major infrastructure projects in conjunction with local government support for several planned communities in the area as well as major roadways, drainage, and sewer projects in support of the residential and small business focus of their and local leaders' vision.

In 2018, Dorchester County is ready to appreciate unique opportunities for our residents and the businesses that provide their livelihoods. The greatest employers in Dorchester County are the two public school districts that educate over 27,000 children and adults. This monumental task is accomplished by over 4,200 educational personnel working in 33 facilities in the County.

The educational investment in our schools by the local taxpayer is remarkable. Opportunities to sustain the high levels of performance by our schools and their graduates essentially distill down to expanding the financial tax base, while supporting the teachers' efforts and providing safe and pleasant educational campuses. This formidable task is certainly not to be taken lightly or without significant citizen taxpayer input. Dorchester County must approach these opportunities with a willingness to try new approaches. Planning to protect and enhance the required local economic and educational growth may be challenging. We must welcome businesses and developers that share Dorchester County's vision and discourage those that are here to make the quick buck and not participate in our community.



MEDIUM INCOME	2000	2016	% CHANGE
Dorchester County	43,316	56,345	23%
South Carolina	37,082	46,898	21%

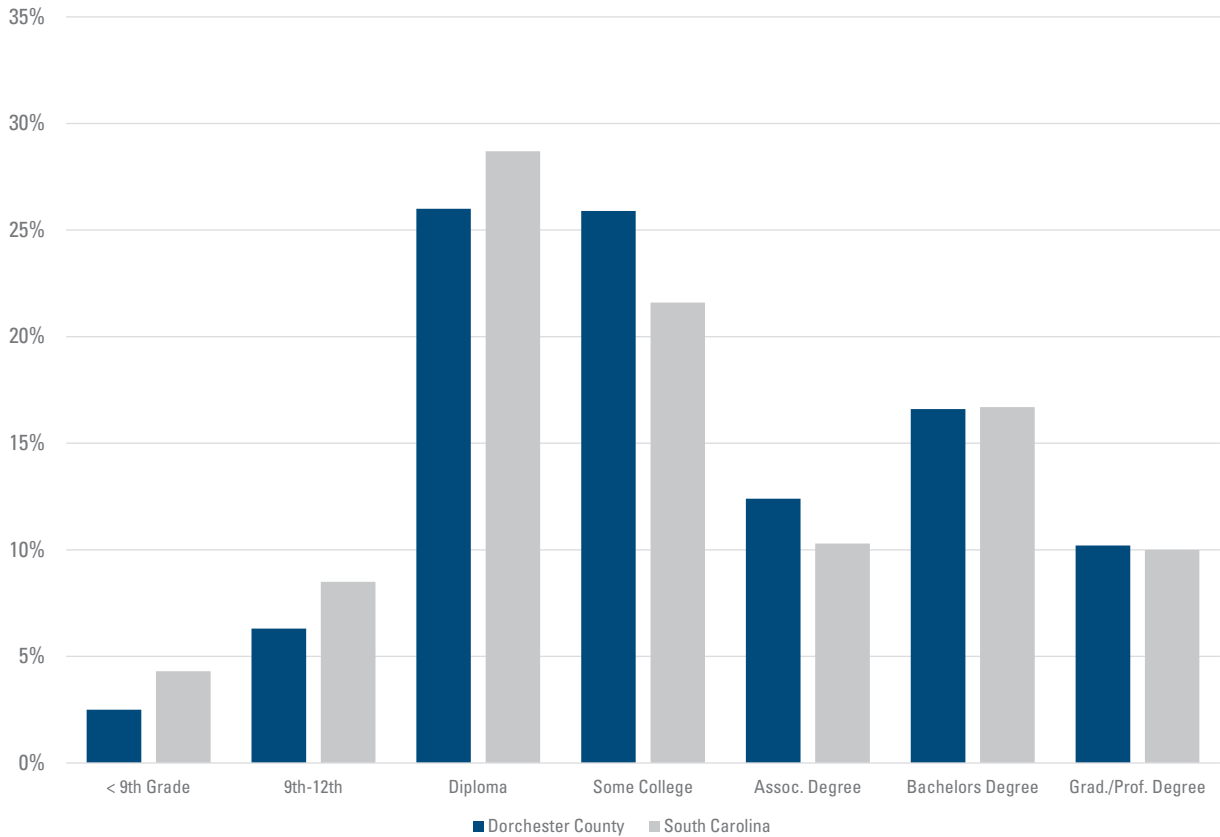
UNEMPLOYMENT	2000	2016	% CHANGE
Dorchester County	3.1%	4.3%	28%
South Carolina	3.6%	5.0%	28%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



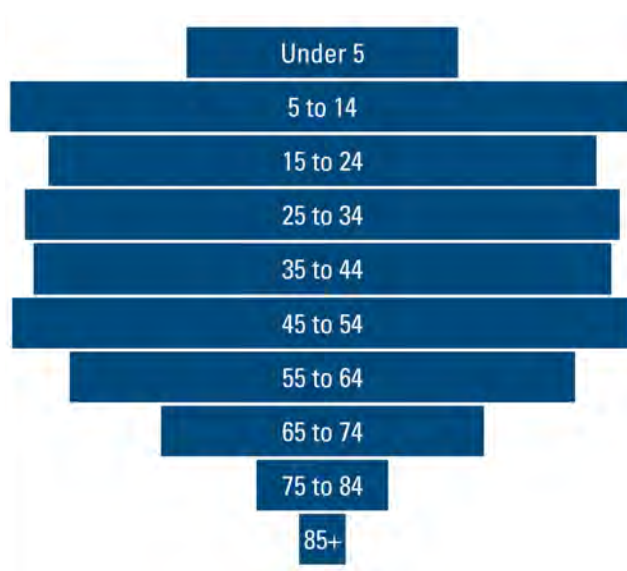
COMPARISON BETWEEN 2010 AND 2016 FOR HIGHEST DEGREE OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, POPULATION 25 AND OLDER

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



AGE DISTRIBUTION

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



95.2%

Youth within 5 miles of a public school

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

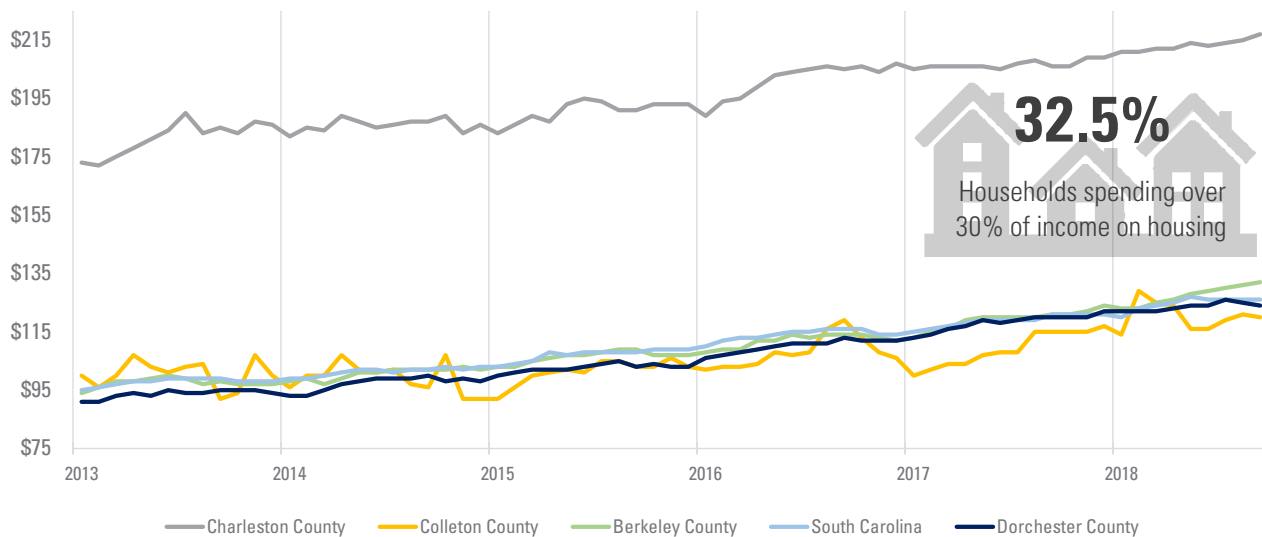
As compared to South Carolina, Dorchester contains a greater percentage of residents with diplomas and college degrees. More than a quarter of Dorchester County residents have earned their diploma, while many are in school or have some college (26%), having obtained a bachelor's degree (17%), followed closely by residents with graduate/professional degrees (10%). This high level of educational attainment is a resource for the community that can inform other aspects of planning, such as economic development.

MEDIAN HOME VALUE AND RESIDENTIAL RENT

Home affordability depends many factors such as the age, condition, and quality of housing in an area. Estimates generated by the Census Bureau rely solely on proprietary values, while the Zillow Home Value Index® (ZHVI) is calculated from public and user-submitted proprietary data and takes into account additional features such as location and market conditions. The metric also analyzes recent sales, adjusts for housing that is not currently on the market and accounts for other fluctuations in the market to provide a more comprehensive picture of home values in a region. The ZHVI for the Dorchester County real estate market shows median value per square foot fluctuating between \$91 and \$126 from 2010-2018. The current median value per square foot in Dorchester County (\$124 per square foot) is higher than the neighboring county of Colleton (\$120 per square foot), yet lower than that of Berkeley (\$132 per square foot) and Charleston (\$217 per square foot) counties.

MEDIAN HOME VALUE PER SQUARE FOOT

Source: Zillow Home Value Index®

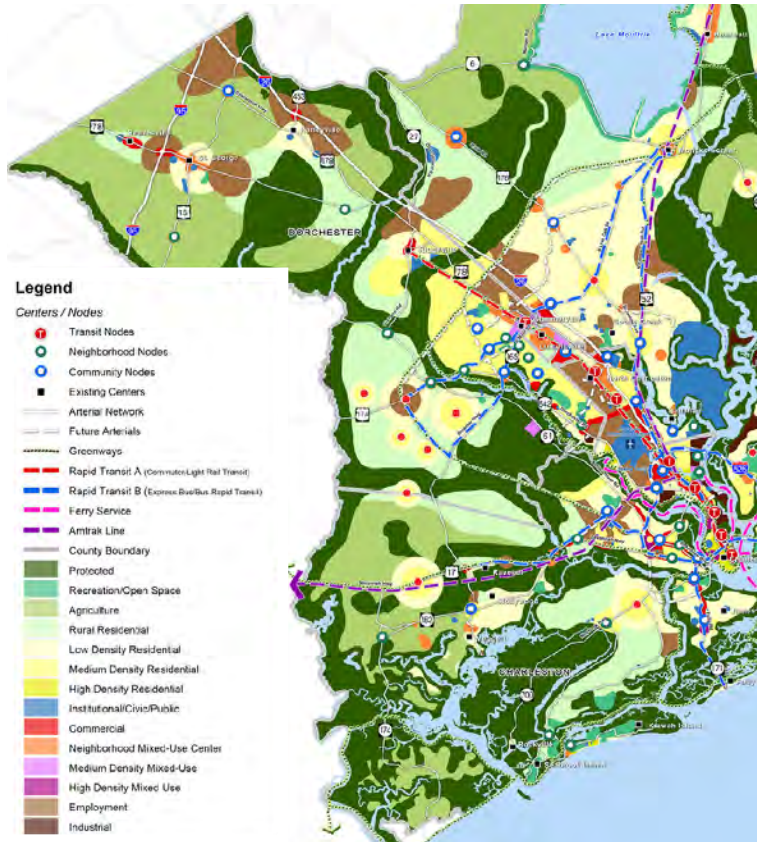


AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY	2000	2016
Median House Value	\$171,400	\$169,700
Median Gross Rent	\$868	\$967
Occupied Units	47,622	53,005
Owner- Occupied Units	35,264	36,921
Renter-Occupied Units	12,358	16,084

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION



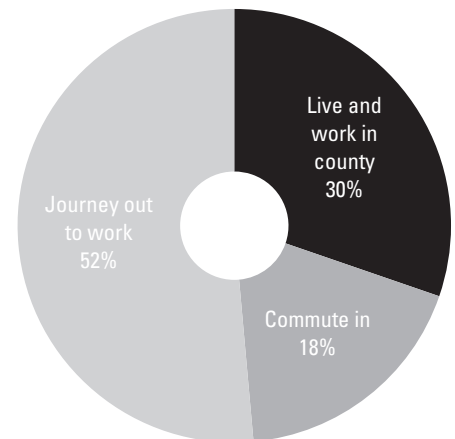
6.8%

Of workers commute 1 hour or more to work



6.78

Walkability Index Score (out of total score 20)

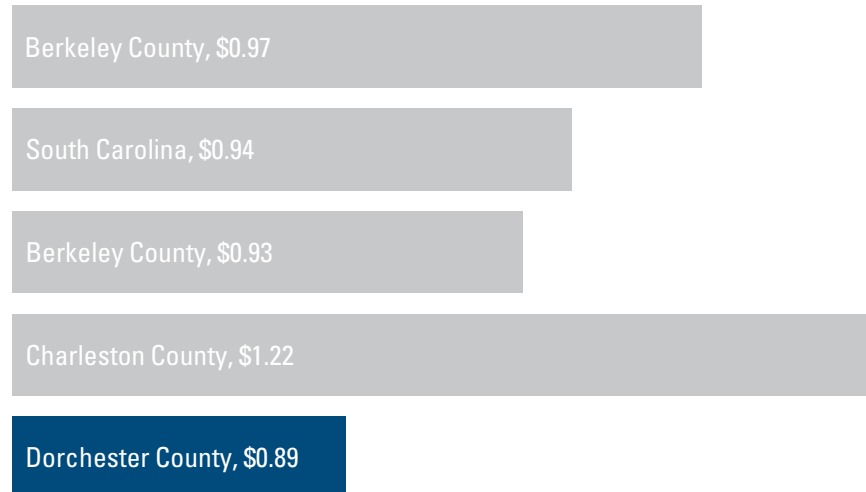


Census data includes where people work, how they get there, and how long it takes. This helps everyone make decisions related to regional transportation and infrastructure. Commute time also impacts the decisions of households and industries interested in relocation. Average journey to work time in Dorchester County is 28.1 minutes but this is on the rise as the region continues to grow in population.



MEDIAN RESIDENTIAL RENT PER SQUARE FOOT

Source: Zillow Rent Value Index®





CHAPTER 2: FUTURE VISION FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 2 captures the vision for Dorchester County as described by citizens, stakeholders and County leaders. In summary, it articulates a path forward that recognizes that growth will occur but not at the expense of what makes Dorchester County special. Included in this chapter are descriptions of the vision and aspirations derived from the community process along with the Future Land Use Plan that articulates how the County can define and direct growth in a positive way to maintain a sustainable future.



VISIONARY PROCESS

The process informed, involved and empowered Dorchester County stakeholders through a variety of community engagement methods and tools.



ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Planning Team met regularly with a Citizen Advisory Committee to gather feedback throughout the process, develop the Draft Plan, review documents, and help shape the Plan.



STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Engaged focus groups, comprised of local business and institutional representatives, explored ways to address Transportation, Housing, Equity, Education, Sustainability, Environment, Small Business, Economic Development, Parks, and Institutional concerns.



PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

A series of workshops, each with a different format and focus, created opportunities for all to share ideas and priorities through dialogue organized around Plan themes. Workshops were held at as diverse a range of times and locations as feasible to accommodate a variety of voices.



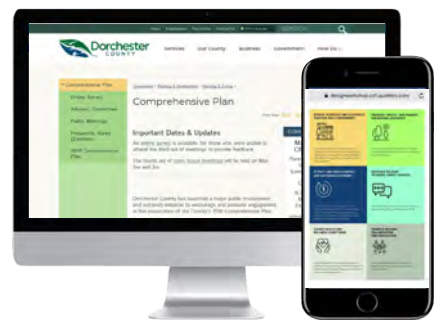
HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

A chip game planning exercise enabled citizens to create alternative scenarios for various land use concepts. Several public workshops, refined with input from County planning staff, offered everyone a chance to voice their opinions directly via post-it notes and stickers on illustrative boards. Some exercises offered open-ended comment, while some asked residents to think strategically and physically about opportunities across the County.



KEYPAD POLLING

Keypad polling gathered live audience opinions in response to a series of questions that delved into the Plan's themes, goals and strategies. The technology offered a chance in real time to visualize public opinion, and for residents to frame follow-up discussions around polling reactions. This also allows for all those attending to provide input equitably in the public process.



PUBLIC SURVEYS

The Plan was influenced by Public Surveys, conducted both online and in person. The surveys evaluated citizen satisfaction with existing County services and offered a glimpse into public preferences for prioritizing future investment.

VISIONARY STATEMENTS SYNTHESIZE INPUT RECEIVED FROM THE COMMUNITY

The community engagement process inspired nine visionary statements that later guided the goals, strategies, and action plan of the Comprehensive Plan.



Dorchester County citizens educate our young and old alike so that they can contribute to our great County and create a prosperous life for themselves and their family.



Our values are reflected in our preserved downtowns and historic neighborhoods. Tree lined streets and unique buildings offer a variety of living, shopping and work options.



We preserve our fragile natural environment and protect our rural qualities and character. New developments support our desires to protect our waterways, breathe clean air and conserve natural resources.



We have unparalleled access to nature. We enjoy fishing, boating, hunting and hiking in our network of swamps and rivers. Outdoor recreation enhances our economy and informs environmental stewardship.



We walk on accessible sidewalks and bike on tree lined streets. We develop compactly to encourage walking while also preserving the countryside. Our rural areas have unique zoning that allows our citizens to enjoy the benefit of land ownership while also promoting conservation, land preservation and context sensitive development.



Our neighborhoods are diverse, thriving and well-maintained and are seeing new life as people move in and remodel historic homes. New neighborhoods include accessible parks, sidewalks, housing of varying density, schools, places of worship, and the things that complete neighborhoods possess.



We support new industries. Plentiful educational options, workforce development, access to capital, economic incentives, and a culture that values homegrown businesses make our economy strong. Our public and private partners have demonstrated a unity of purpose. If you do your part, you will find success.



Dorchester County's special in its locally-focused and maker-oriented economy. Younger folks with higher education are giving the County much needed energy. Places like St. George and Ridgeville are home to funky, eclectic businesses, and a creative economy of artists, makers, and innovators is thriving.

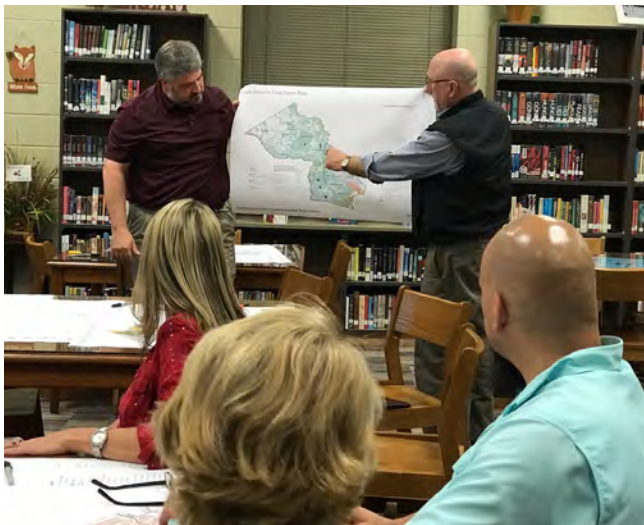
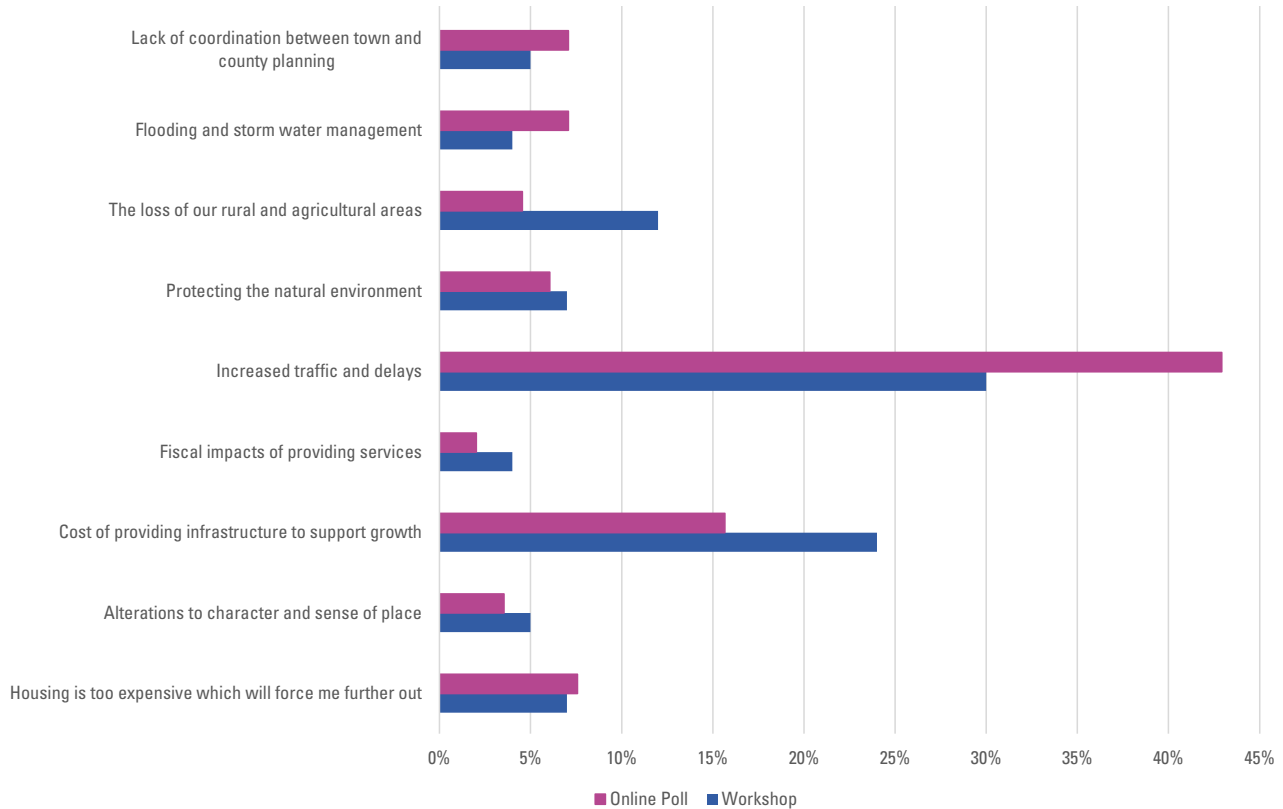


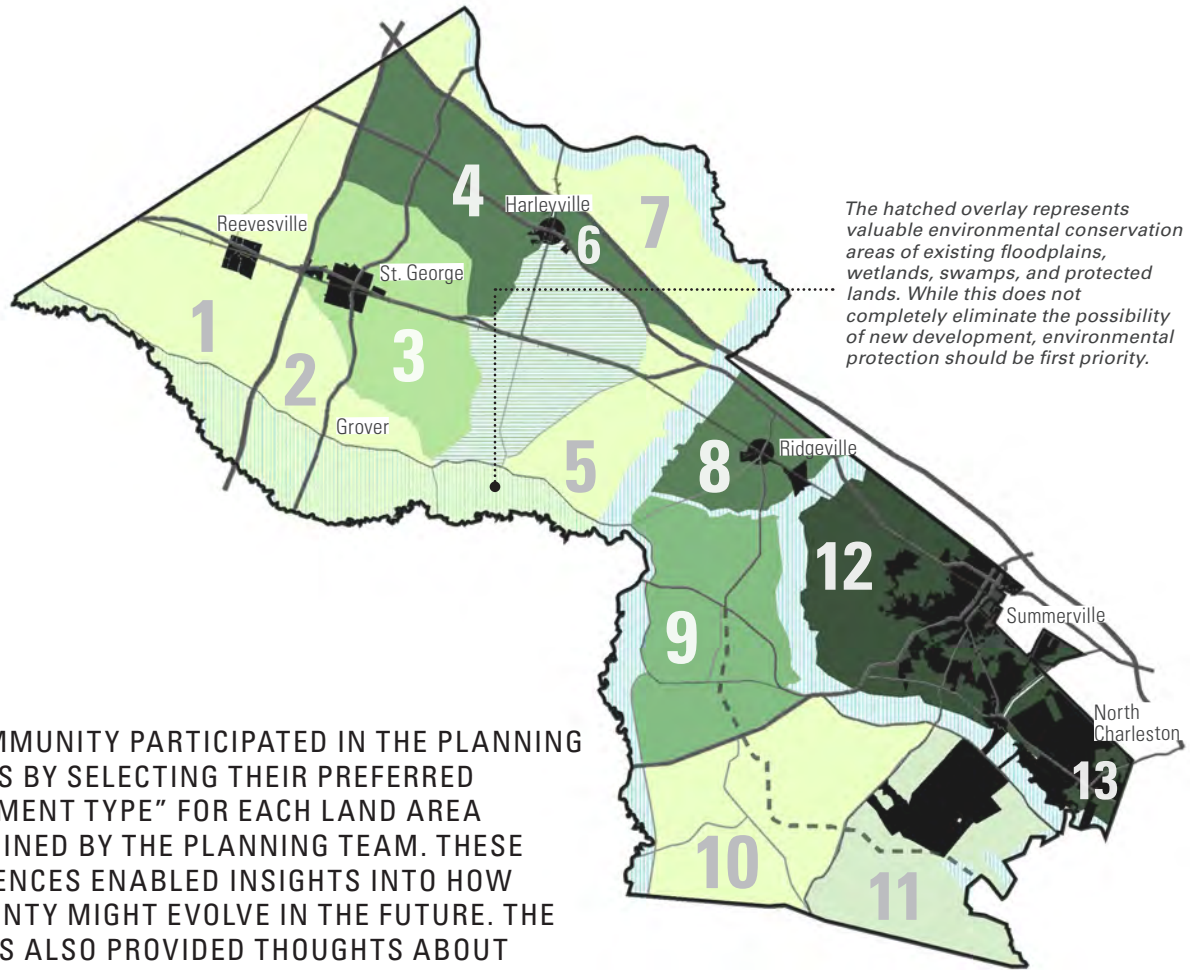
As an employer, the County values its workers by paying living wages and offering benefits that ensure both security and opportunity. Businesses of all types that share those values locate, start, and grow in Dorchester County, offering a wide range of career opportunities.

FUTURE GROWTH VISION

Public surveys, community workshops, focus groups, and planning exercises identified the most critical impacts of projected growth on the County to establish actionable goals. County staff, alongside citizens, created land use patterns for the County that make it more livable while keeping its sense of place. This plan considers that the citizens and County leadership want Dorchester County to evolve into an even more sustainable, healthy, equitable, responsible and highly livable place that elevates the lives of those that live here, while protecting the assets that makes it one of the best places on earth to be.

THE MOST CRITICAL IMPACT OF PROJECTED GROWTH ON OUR COUNTY IS...





THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATED IN THE PLANNING PROCESS BY SELECTING THEIR PREFERRED ‘SETTLEMENT TYPE’ FOR EACH LAND AREA DETERMINED BY THE PLANNING TEAM. THESE PREFERENCES ENABLED INSIGHTS INTO HOW THE COUNTY MIGHT EVOLVE IN THE FUTURE. THE CITIZENS ALSO PROVIDED THOUGHTS ABOUT EACH AREA AS OUTLINED BELOW:

AREA 1: Keep it rural. Preserve agriculture and natural systems. Limit suburban residential and commercial development to support Reevesville.

AREA 2: Keep it rural. Preserve agriculture and natural systems. Limit suburban residential development to support St. George.

AREA 3: Support the revitalization of downtown St. George with residential, commercial and employment uses.

AREA 4: Support Harleyville by taking advantage of the I-26 / I-95 interchange and supplying residential, commercial and employment uses.

AREA 5: Continue with the theme of environmental preservation / conservation between Brosnan Forest and Four Hole Swamp.

AREA 6: Keep it rural and preserve natural systems. Take advantage of I-26 frontage for residential and commercial uses.

AREA 7: Support rural conservation and preservation of natural environment, while taking advantage of I-26 frontage.

AREA 8: Plan for transit-ready suburban residential, commercial and employment growth around Ridgeville, while supporting existing rural character.

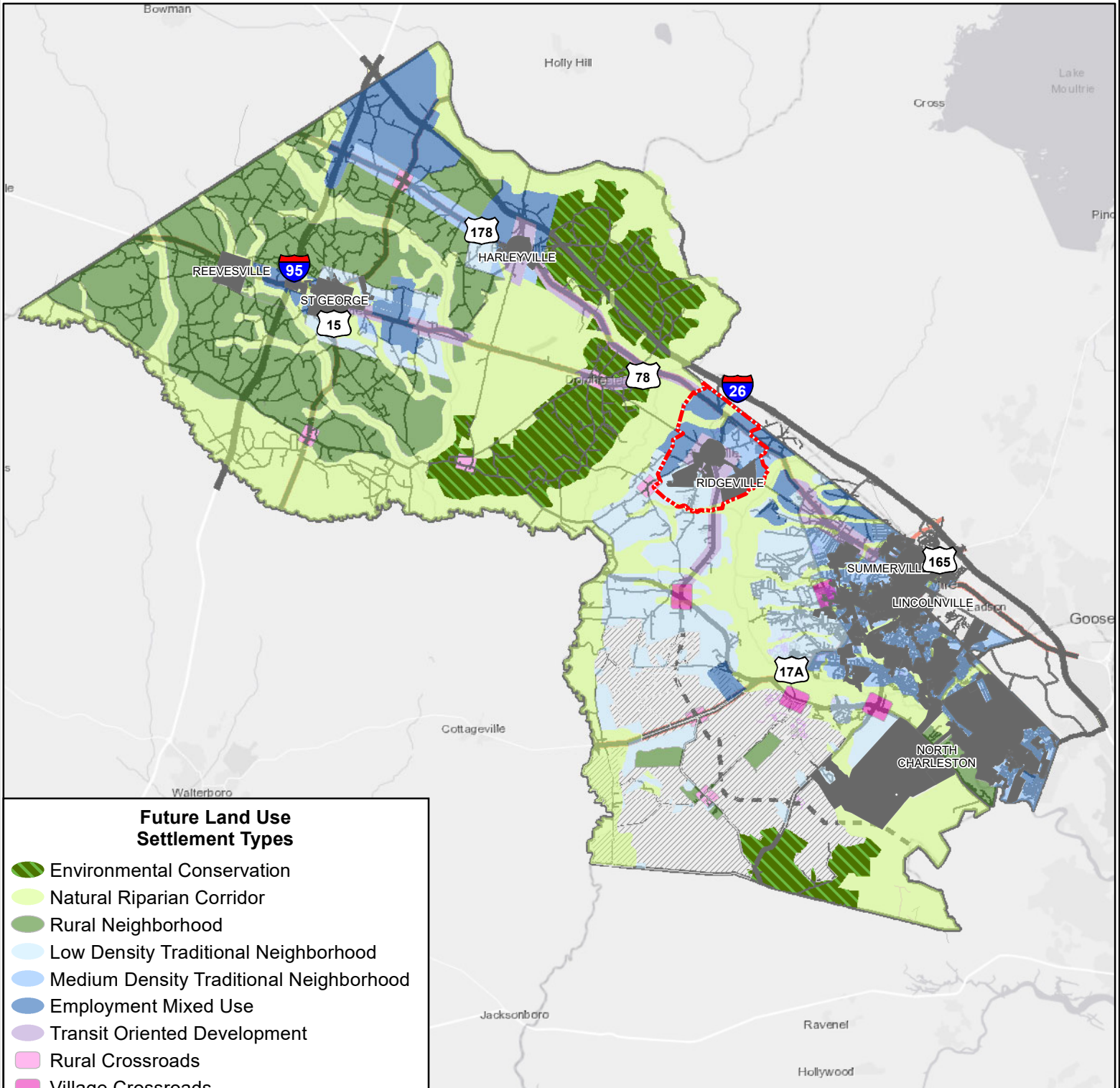
AREA 9: Support rural preservation. Plan for residential and commercial growth along the future Glenn McConnell Parkway to serve Volvo and other spin-offs.

AREA 10: Support rural and environmental preservation while allowing for suburban residential and commercial growth along the future Glenn McConnell Parkway.

AREA 11: Keep it rural. Support environmental preservation with low density residential development.

AREA 12: Support and plan for transit-ready suburban / urban residential and commercial growth around Summerville.

AREA 13: Support suburban / urban residential and transit ready commercial growth around North Charleston.



Future Land Use Settlement Types

-  Environmental Conservation
-  Natural Riparian Corridor
-  Rural Neighborhood
-  Low Density Traditional Neighborhood
-  Medium Density Traditional Neighborhood
-  Employment Mixed Use
-  Transit Oriented Development
-  Rural Crossroads
-  Village Crossroads
-  East Edisto Master Planned Overlay
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Ridgeville/Givhans Urban Growth Boundary

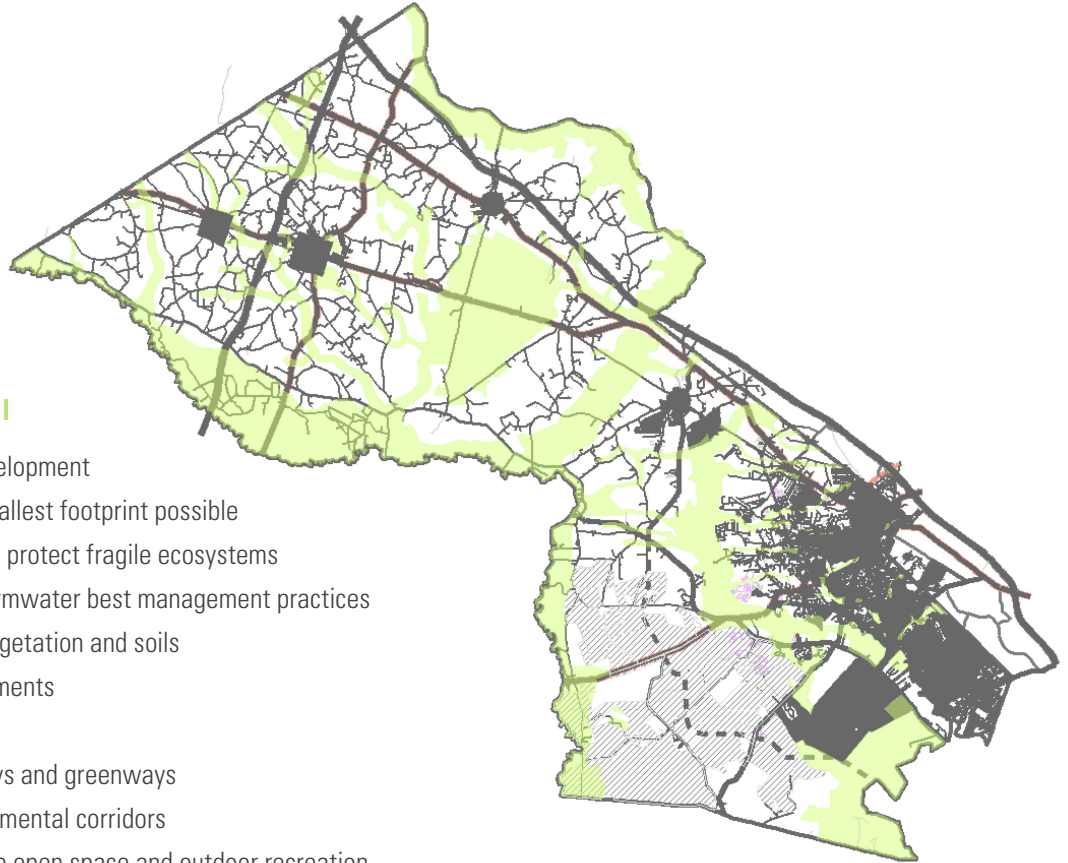


The Future Land Use Plan will help preserve the character and quality of Dorchester County for generations. It illustrates how the County can manage anticipated population growth over the next 30 years. It includes the creation of Settlement Types, promoting different types of living, anticipating a transit ready future, and support living and working in close proximity to reduce traffic congestion and commuting times. It directs development over time to land more suitable and protects critical environmental systems. Finally, it preserves the rural and low country character that is so important to citizens.

NATURAL RIPARIAN CORRIDOR

SETTLEMENT VISION

Swamps, rivers, streams, wetlands and swamps define the Lowcountry landscape of the County. This is a highly restricted area given it encompasses swamps, streams, flood plains and natural buffers needed to preserve these fragile and invaluable ecosystems. Settlements in these areas conservation-based, considered on a case-by-case basis only, and must utilize low impact techniques to preserve and protect sensitive riparian and natural environments.



SETTLEMENT CHAI

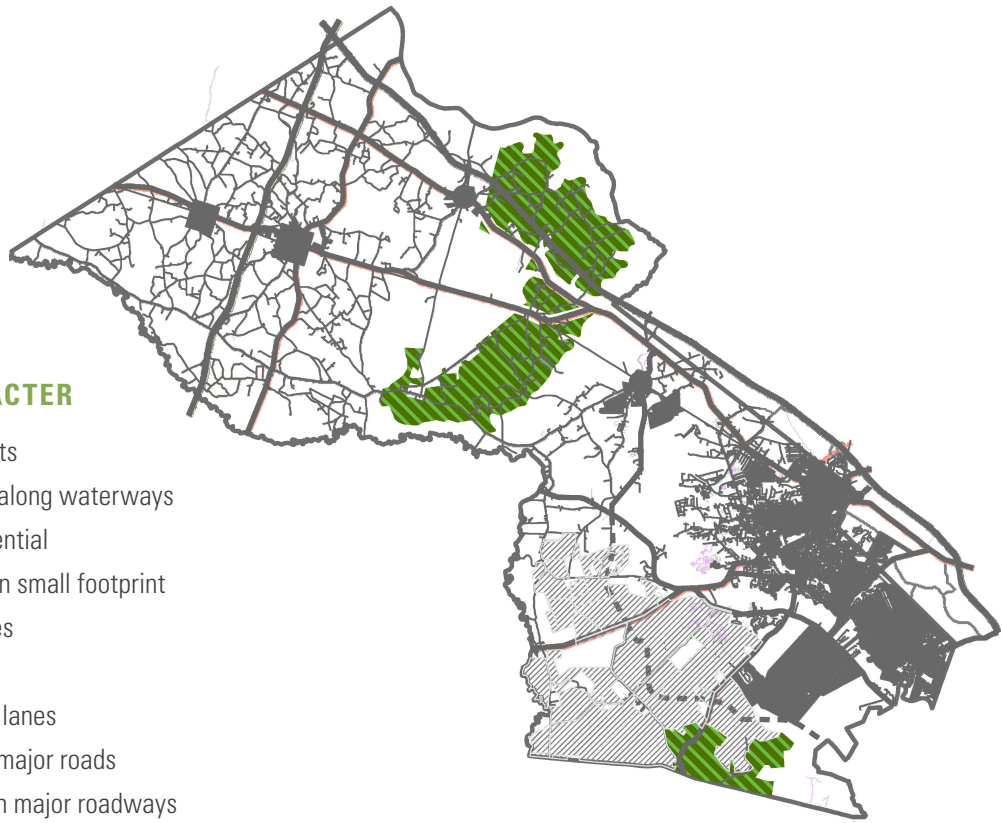
- Lowest impact development
- Lowest density, smallest footprint possible
- Clustered upland to protect fragile ecosystems
- Highest quality stormwater best management practices
- Preserved trees, vegetation and soils
- Conservation easements
- Riparian buffers
- Connected blueways and greenways
- Trails along environmental corridors
- Supports accessible open space and outdoor recreation
- Rural streets with bike lanes connect to other settlement types



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

SETTLEMENT VISION

Settlements in these areas should respond to the natural environment and utilize low impact development techniques, clustered developments, conservation easements and very low density development types. Development should work in harmony with the natural environment and efforts to preserve the natural environment continue to be strengthened.



SETTLEMENT CHARACTER

- Conservation easements
- Environmental buffers along waterways
- Very low density residential
- Clustered home sites on small footprint
- Single family home sites
- Large lots (25 acres)
- Rural streets with bike lanes
- 45 mph speed limit on major roads
- Broad connectivity with major roadways
- Greenways and trails along environmental buffers
- Low impact development principles
- Tree preservation measures



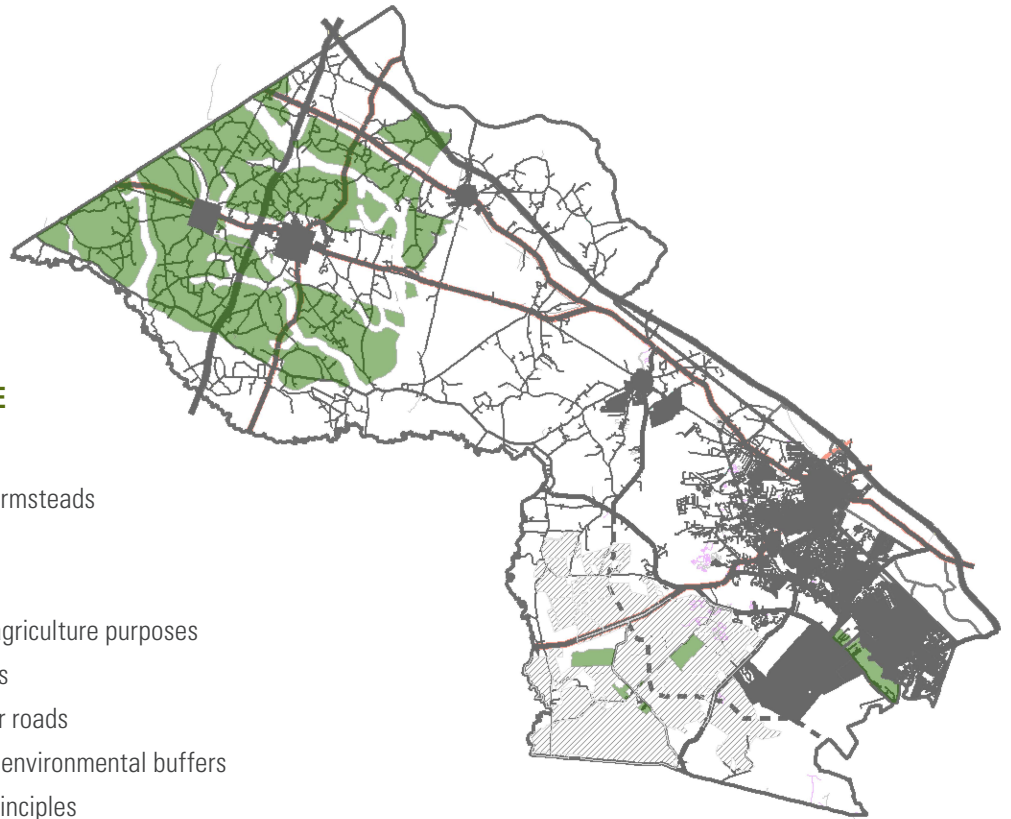
RURAL NEIGHBORHOOD

SETTLEMENT VISION

The rural and agricultural landscape also strongly defines the landscape character of the County and is a part of its cultural identity. Settlements in these areas should preserve useful agricultural lands and utilize clustered homes that preserve agriculture, low density developments, gentlemen farms and, ideally, promote architecture that is in keeping with low country rural character.

SETTLEMENT CHARACTER

- Very low to low density
- Clustered homes and / or farmsteads
- Single family home sites
- Large rural lots (5 acres)
- Use of majority of land for agriculture purposes
- Rural streets with bike lanes
- 45 mph speed limit on major roads
- Greenways and trails along environmental buffers
- Low impact development principles
- Environmental Conservation also allowed

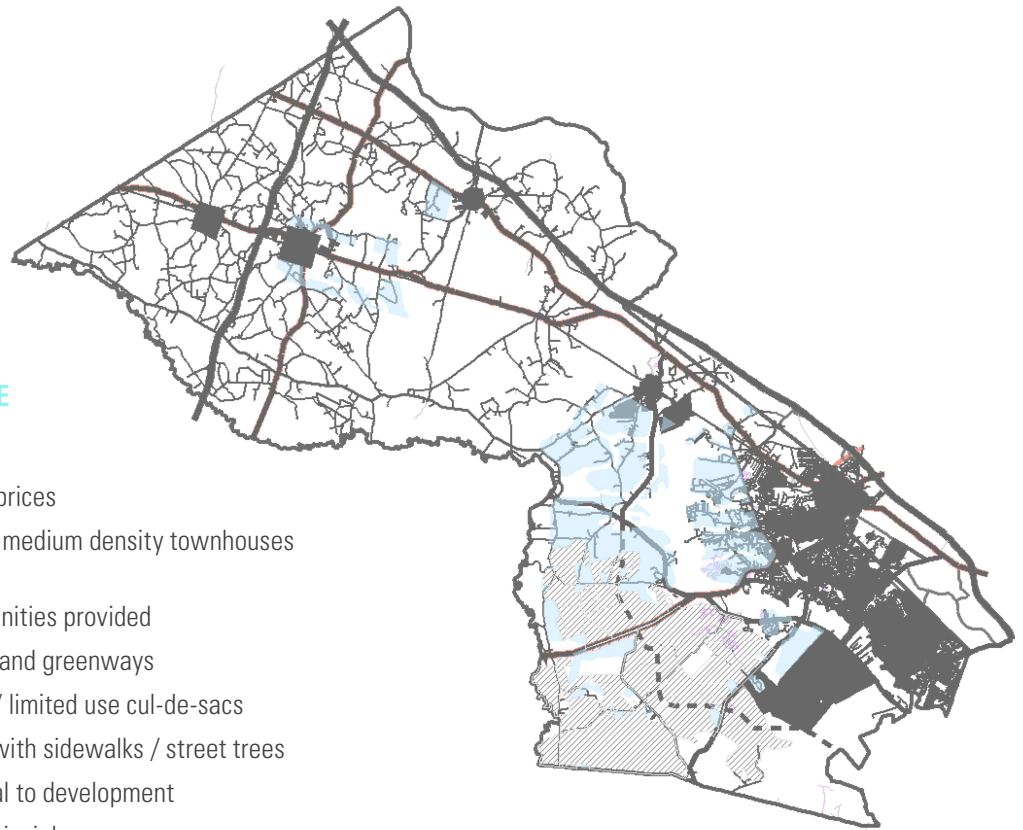


Gaff, Suzanne. "Rural South Carolina Scene." Fine Art America. Last modified July 3, 2008. <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/rural-south-carolina-scene-suzanne-gaff.html>.

LOW DENSITY RURAL AND TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

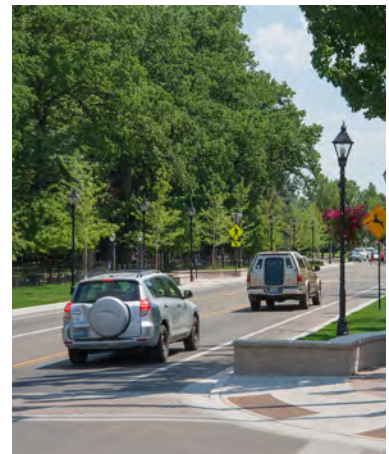
SETTLEMENT VISION

Settlement in this area should include low density neighborhoods along with quasi -rural subdivisions that offer a variety of housing types within primarily single family homes and limited multifamily and townhouse communities. Even though settlements in these areas are low density, they should provide parks, facilities and amenities that support the population . Streets and roadways should be connected and include provisions for walking and biking.



SETTLEMENT CHARACTE

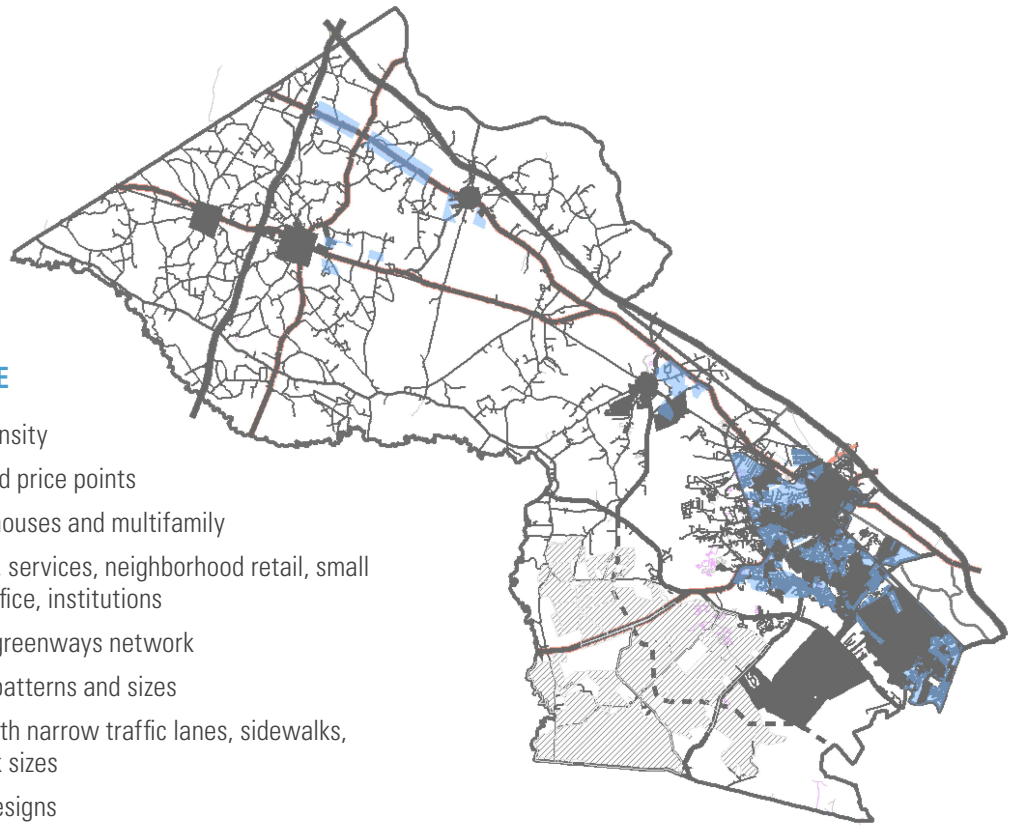
- Low to medium density
- Variety of home types and prices
- Primarily single family with medium density townhouses and multifamily
- Open space, parks and amenities provided
- Connected internal streets and greenways
- Suburban street networks / limited use cul-de-sacs
- Residential street designs with sidewalks / street trees
- 25 mph speed limits internal to development
- Low impact development principles
- Rural Neighborhoods and Environmental Conservation also allowed



MEDIUM DENSITY TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

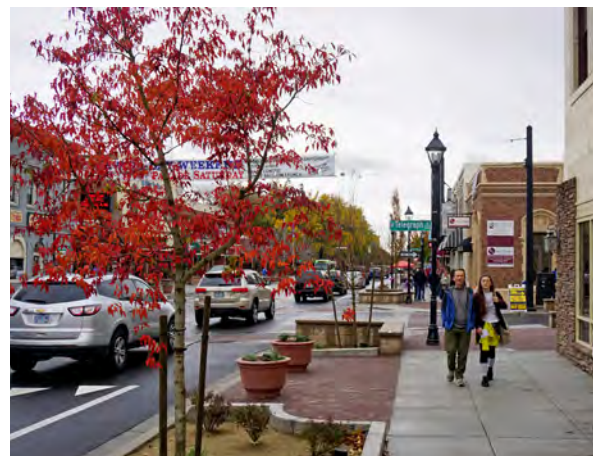
SETTLEMENT VISION

Settlements in these areas, which surround existing towns, support the integration of higher levels of density, a mix of uses, and a variety of housing types. Populations should support parks, neighborhood commercial developments, amenities and services. Streets should support walking and biking and offer high levels of connectivity. The character of these neighborhoods should respond to historic and traditional neighborhoods found in the County and region.



SETTLEMENT CHARACTER

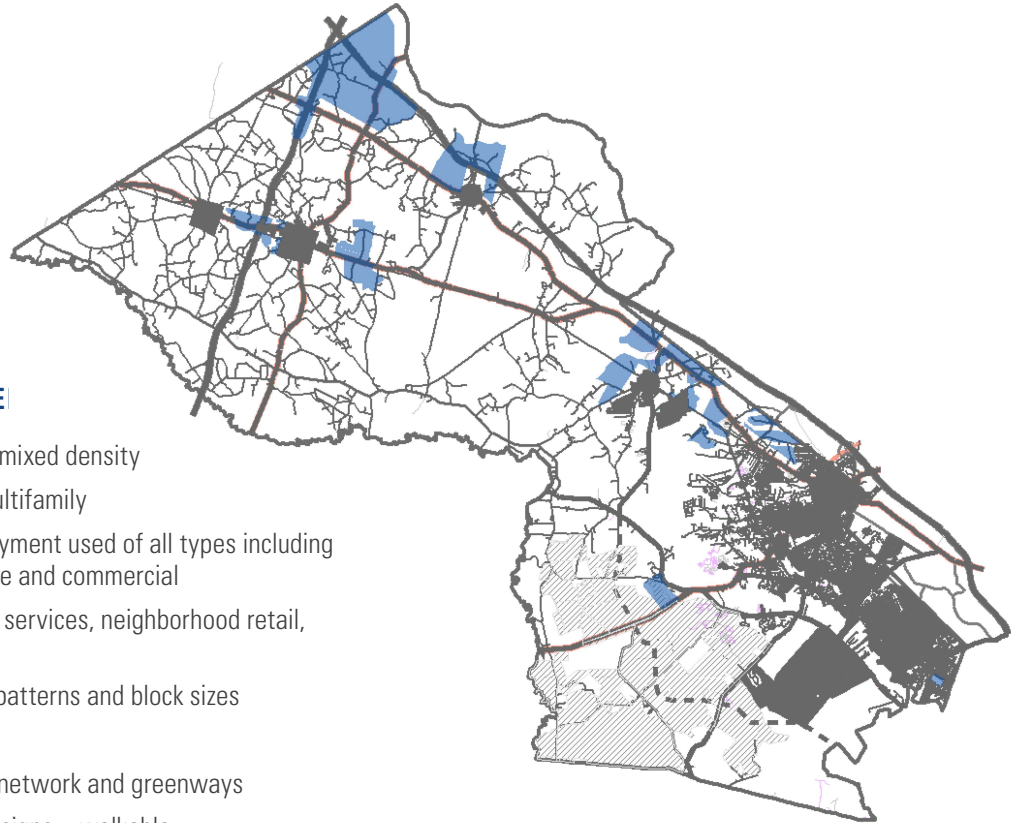
- Medium density / mixed density
- Variety of housing types and price points
- Single family homes, townhouses and multifamily
- Open space, parks, schools, services, neighborhood retail, small scale employment, small office, institutions
- Connected street grid and greenways network
- Suburban and urban block patterns and sizes
- Complete streets design with narrow traffic lanes, sidewalks, street trees, walkable block sizes
- Traditional neighborhood designs
- Low impact development principles
- Traditional Neighborhood (Low Density), rural neighborhoods and environmental conservation also allowed



EMPLOYMENT/ MIXED-USE

SETTLEMENT VISION

Providing jobs closer to where people live is a high priority. Settlements in these areas should promote jobs oriented uses along with a mix of residential uses that allow people to walk and bike to work. Densities in this Settlement Type are to be medium to high, with a broad mix of affordability. Developments should be highly walkable and include parks, amenities, connected streets, neighborhoods retail, employment and institutions.



SETTLEMENT CHARACTERISTICS

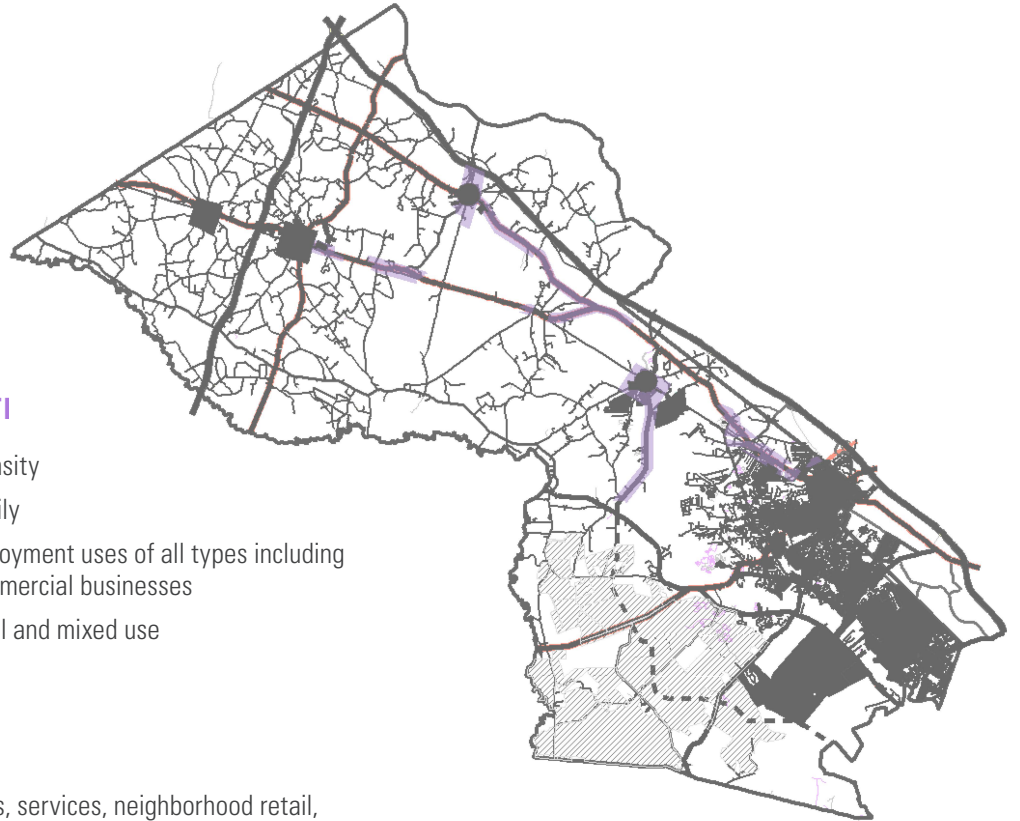
- Medium to higher density / mixed density
- Homes, townhouses and multifamily
- Allocation of land for employment used of all types including industry, light industry, office and commercial
- Open space, parks, schools, services, neighborhood retail, employment, institutions
- Suburban and urban street patterns and block sizes
- Complete streets designs
- Connected / gridded street network and greenways
- Traditional neighborhood designs – walkable



TRANSIT READY / TRANSIT ORIENTED

SETTLEMENT VISION

The highest level of density and walkability should occur in this Settlement Type to support future transit opportunities. They should be “transit ready” and include the attributes of Transit Oriented Development. These areas are located along the rail line and adjacent to existing towns. Developments in these areas should include urban block sizes, buildings fronting pedestrian oriented streets, a high mix of uses - both vertical and horizontal - and include urban amenities. These areas should support employment, commercial uses, institutions and high levels of urban design.



SETTLEMENT CHARACTERISTICS

- Higher density / mixed density
- Townhouses and multifamily
- Allocation of land for employment uses of all types including light industrial, office, commercial businesses
- Street oriented commercial and mixed use
- Parking in rear of buildings
- Complete streets
- Transit nodes
- Open space, parks, schools, services, neighborhood retail, employment, institutions
- Urban block patterns and sizes – highly pedestrian

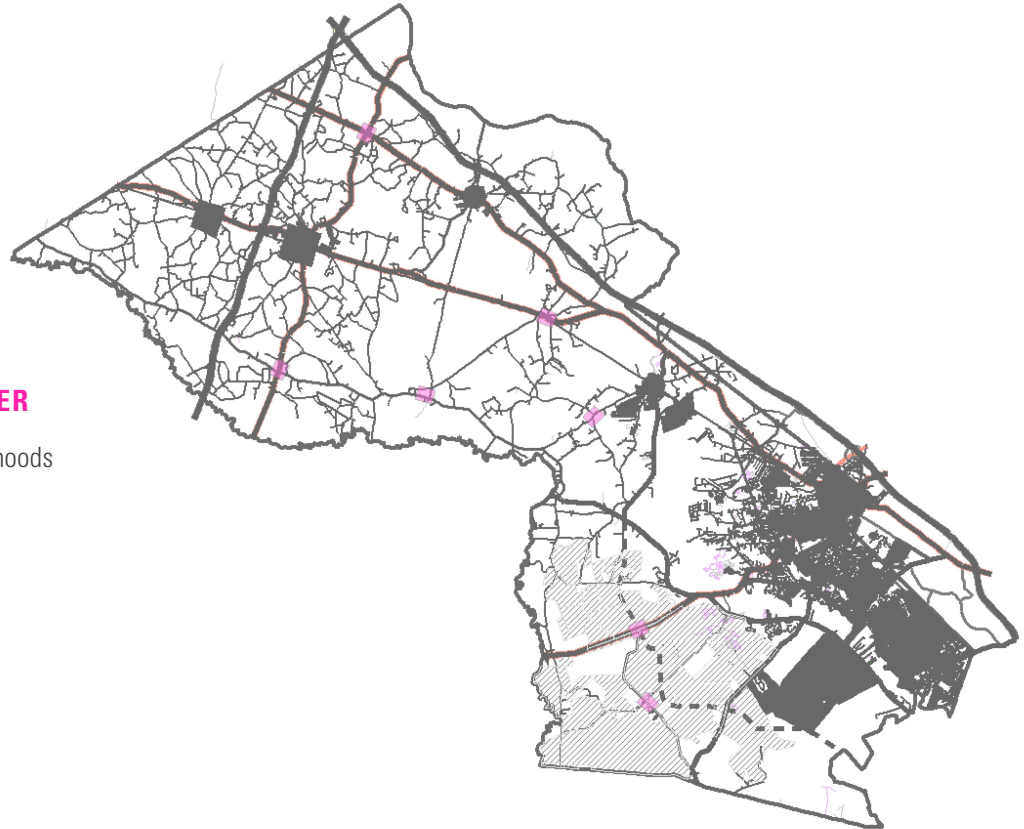


Nussbaumer, Newell. "Transit Oriented Development in Buffalo: How to Make it Work." Buffalo Rising. Last modified October 7, 2014. <https://www.buffalorising.com/2014/10/transit-oriented-development-in-buffalo-how-to-make-it-work/>.

RURAL CROSSROADS

SETTLEMENT VISION

Rural Crossroads are small scaled settlements that take advantage of their location at the intersection of major rural roadways. They promote a rural character and express low country aesthetics. They include retail and commercial uses as well as homes along tree-lined streets. In essence, these are little hamlets that provide a place for people to gather and purchase goods conveniently.



SETTLEMENT CHARACTER

- Small Traditional Neighborhoods
- Neighborhood scaled retail
- Rural retail / food stands
- Small office
- Gridded walkable streets
- Parking in rear of buildings
- Parks, services, institutions
- Greenways and trails



S.C. Promise Zone. "Smithsonian Exhibit." Last modified August 9, 2017. <http://scpromisezone.org/2017/08/apply-host-smithsonian-exhibit-crossroads-change-rural-america/smithsonian-exhibit/>.

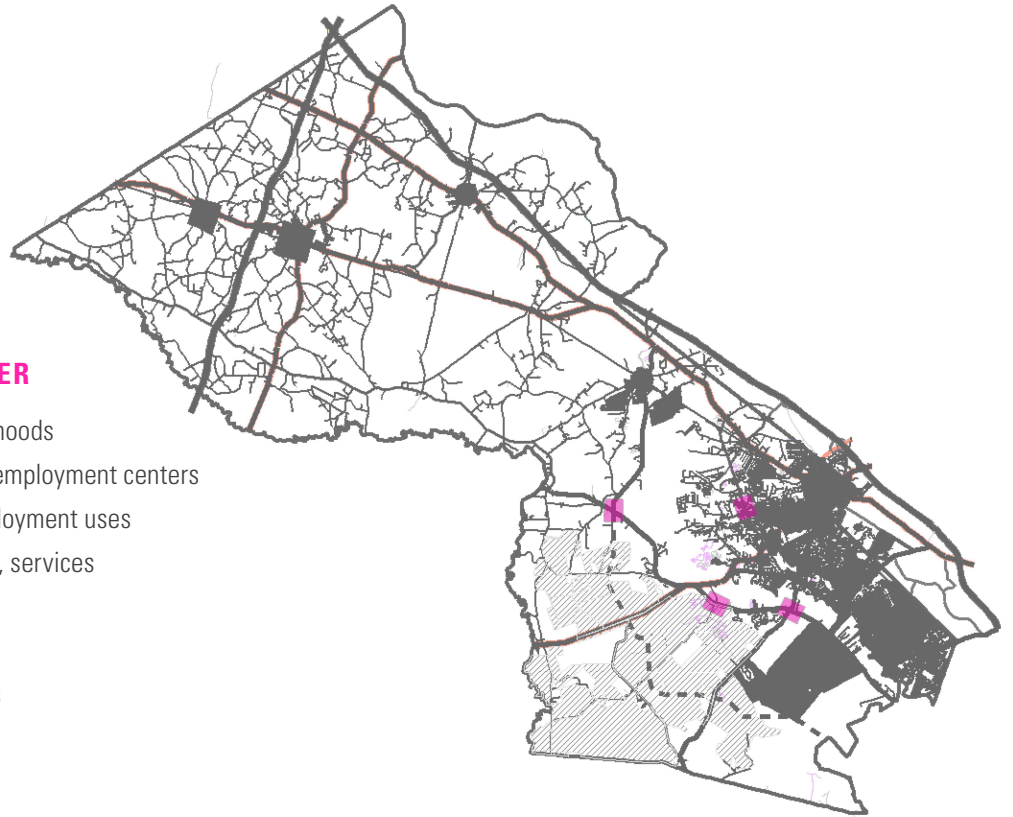


South Carolina Traveler. "The Klauber Building and Tri-County Chamber of Commerce." Accessed December 1, 2018. <http://www.scnhc.org/destination/the-klauber-building-and-tri-county-chamber-of-commerce>.

VILLAGE CROSSROADS

SETTLEMENT VISION

Village Crossroads are more expansive than Rural Crossroads and include more residences, more employment uses and more commercial uses. They take advantage of their location along major roadways and support the low density traditional neighborhoods that they are near with opportunities to buy household goods and to walk around on tree-lined streets.



SETTLEMENT CHARACTER

- Small Traditional Neighborhoods
- Regional scaled retail and employment centers
- Small office and other employment uses
- Open space, parks, schools, services
- Gridded walkable streets
- Parking in rear of buildings
- Parks, services, institutions
- Greenways and trails



DEVELOP A CONTEXT AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



Ensure that all elements of the built environment—including land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure—work together to provide sustainable, green places for living, working, and recreating, with a high quality of life.

PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND PROMOTE OUR NATURAL RESOURCES



Ensure that the benefit of nature to human well-being are explicitly recognized and valued and that maintaining their health is priority.

ATTRACT AND GROW A ROBUST AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY



Ensure that the community is prepared for both positive and negative changes in its economic health and to initiate sustainable urban development and redevelopment strategies that foster green business growth and build reliance on local assets.

EQUITABLE DELIVERY OF NEEDED COUNTY SERVICES



Ensure fairness and equity in providing for the housing, services, health, safety, and livelihood needs of all citizens and groups.

ELEVATE HEALTH AND WELLNESS COUNTYWIDE



Ensure that public health needs are recognized and addressed through provisions for healthy foods, physical activity, access to recreation, health care, environmental justice, and safe neighborhoods.

PROMOTE REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION



Ensure that local efforts support the plans of adjacent jurisdictions and the surrounding region for mutual benefit.



CHAPTER 3: GOALS + STRATEGIES

CHAPTER 3 outlines recommended strategies created in coordination with previous plans and studies, the County Council’s Strategic Plan, and in collaboration with the Community. Priorities were determined based on results of community polling and discussions with stakeholders and leaders. Synergistic Strategies recognize that each of the Themes is dynamic and that several Themes, Goals and Strategies need to work in harmony to achieve the vision and aspirations for the County. The Strategies in this chapter ultimately inform the Actions that need to be taken over the near and long term as described in CHAPTER 4: ACTION PLAYBOOK.





PROMOTE A BUILT ENVIRONMENT THAT FITS OUR UNIQUE LANDSCAPE AND CULTURE

Dorchester County residents enjoy living in the rural countryside and next to small towns such as Ridgeville and St. George and large growing towns and cities such as Summerville and North Charleston. To be able to live amongst nature, on a small family farm, or within attractive yet affordable new or historic neighborhoods, while also being able to have immediate access to the all that Charleston and the surrounding natural environment has to offer puts Dorchester County in an enviable position. As a result, it has bloomed into a sprawling bedroom community of the Charleston Metro Area and has seen a significant rise in plans for new housing developments, some of which may not reflect the character and scale that makes the County such a wonderful place to live. Dramatic increases in traffic delays, loss of agricultural land and impacts to the rivers, streams and swamps that manage storm water and provide recreation and habitat, and infrastructure service is lagging behind development in many instances. Fortunately, there is an opportunity to get on the right side of these impacts and plan for a well-managed future that supports the wonderful aspects that makes the County so highly livable.

Forward looking planning is now needed to retain the sense of place, environment, economy and culture that defines the County. Large areas of land that are currently categorized as “absence of control” require policies that will help retain the rural way of life while still offering land owners economic opportunities. Areas around towns and cities need to be better planned so that appropriate housing densities can support walkability and the potential for transit use. Environmental protections should be put in place to protect the fragile natural environment and roadways need to be built and retrofitted with the elements that will enable them to become multimodal over time to include pedestrians, bicycles, bus transit and rail transit. New policies should be created to help ensure that the context and character of developments and roadways fit with and contribute to the sense of place and design standards for rural areas, suburban areas and more urban areas need to be created to provide clear direction to developers and land owners on how best to respond to each of these character areas so that the patterns of growth and transportation provide a context sensitive fit. Transportation planning needs to consider how best to create higher levels of connectivity and finally, some areas of the County need to look well into the future to begin to establish the frameworks and patterns that will enable transit to eventually become a reality.

As stated by the County Council and supported by the residents, Dorchester County needs to move forward with a balance created between growth, the environment, and preservation of the unique cultural and natural characteristics of Dorchester County. By boldly establishing policies, plans, codes and ordinances that allow well managed growth that reflects the vision and aspirations of the community will allow it to remain a highly desirable place to live for future generations. Failure to act may see a further deterioration in the County’s sense of place that is so important to its residents.



INITIATE LAND USE PLANNING THAT ELEVATES OUR SENSE OF PLACE AND PROTECTS OUR RESOURCES:

During the community engagement process, the community voiced concerns about the potential negative impacts future growth and development will have on the County's sense of place, quality of life and the natural environment. Whereas land use controls may have been difficult to establish in the past, existing challenges and the threat of more future growth impact suggest the time is right to sensitively establish land use policies that seek to protect what makes Dorchester County a great place to live, while also protecting the opportunity associated with land ownership.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Acres of rural and agricultural land retained and protected from suburban development
- Increases in the number of people per acre over current numbers in areas designated for suburban and urban residential development
- More residences within 1/2 mile distance from a park

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- a. Focus future residential growth within designated areas in and around existing towns as well as existing and future major roadway corridors and in proximity to existing and future employment areas to reduce commute times, leverage infrastructure and preserve sensitive land areas.
- b. Address concerns with the "Absence of Control" zoning designation in the rural portions of the County with an acceptable rural designation and associated development standards that contribute to the retention of natural resources, prime agricultural land and rural character.
- c. Accommodate population growth within new development areas with appropriately sized and programmed parks and open spaces, that range from small pocket parks to large natural open spaces. Locate them close to where people live to provide recreational opportunities, access to nature, encourage walking and biking and reduce vehicular travel time to access them.
- d. Continue efforts to locate jobs closer where people live to address commuting time and encourage in-commutes to the County, which would contribute to tax base.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- e. When considering development codes and ordinances, leverage the good planning work that has been done in East Edisto and Nexton as models for suburban and urban growth, but modify them to meet affordability, jobs and accessibility aspirations.
- f. Create more descriptive and comprehensive land use and zoning categories based on Settlement Types that fit with the surrounding community, landscape, natural resources and transportation network.
- g. Consider development codes, design standards, development standards and/or form-based codes for these Settlement Types to better ensure implementation from developers.
- h. Address issues with multifamily zoning designation to include more mixed residential / mixed use in walkable, connected, mixed use neighborhoods.
- i. **Work with new industries to support and enhance the communities in which they locate.**



SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this Strategy:

- Protect agricultural lands by identifying and mapping prime agricultural lands and existing functioning farms to determine land areas that are important to protect and preserve.
- Employ the use of Conservation Easements (CE), Purchase Development Rights (PDRs), and Transfer Development Rights (TDRs) to preserve agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive lands and waterways.
- To preserve rural character and productive farming, consider design standards and guidelines for Agriculture based communities that allow for functioning farms as well as rural residential development.
- Continue to audit parks performance metrics to ensure there are adequate park types and programs located near where people live in addition to meeting the needs of the population.
- To accommodate population growth, ensure parks are provided in new master planned communities that are accessible and useable for residents as well as people of the County and/or develop a cash in lieu program to fund parks in other parts of the County.
- Prepare a Growth Management Plan that ties together zoning, codes and policies, infrastructure service, parks, County services and transportation.



INITIATE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING THAT PROMOTES THE DESIGN OF INTERCONNECTED AND MULTIMODAL “COMPLETE STREETS” THAT FIT WITH THE SETTLEMENT TYPES THAT IT PASSES THROUGH.

A challenge associated with recent and projected growth relates to the negative impact on traffic and travel delays. The recent strategy has been to build bigger roads and intersections to solve the traffic concerns. And while bigger roads may allow more cars to be accommodated and levels of service to be higher, bigger roads also threaten the sense of place, environment and quality of the communities that they pass through. The concerns about traffic are real, delays and commute times are reaching their limits, but solutions need to be created that also contribute to the quality of the built environment, create higher levels of interconnectivity that create alternative routes (grid) and promote other forms of transportation such as walking, biking and various forms of transit, including bus, bus rapid transit and rail transit.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Lower commuting times for residents

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- Move forward with efforts to seek and obtain funding for the design and construction for Glenn McConnell Parkway and other CIP projects as a “convertible parkway” (one that is designed to include transit services over time) to relieve traffic congestion associated with commuting to Charleston.
- Increase levels of connectivity to reduce traffic congestions by creating and enforcing plans and policies to increase connectivity in and between new developments and in areas of the County where there are higher levels of population and traffic congestion.
- Consider provisions for complete streets, multimodal, public transportation and transit in future transportation planning.
- Include multimodal facilities, urban design, elements, streetscapes, Right of Way dimensions and convertibility to accommodate transit in the future for key transportation corridors.
- Preserve future Right of Way for future key transportation corridors.
- Propose higher levels of transit services to the towns and cities that make up the County and link them with regional services such as CARTA.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- Consider, analyze and secure innovative funding sources for transportation that are applicable for Dorchester County.
- Transition over time to “Complete Streets” design standards and standards that allow for the evolution to dedicated transit lanes in the future.
- Match context sensitive street design standards and cross sections for each major street type with the character of the Settlement Types they travel through.
- Minimize environmental impacts of the transportation system – utilize planning tools to avoid or mitigate impacts to environmentally or culturally significant areas.
- Consider additional locations across the swamps and rivers to expand east to west connectivity.
- Consider the potential benefit of local airport expansions to create economic development opportunities when creating future land use plans.
- Improve freight mobility and access to industrial centers – enhance connectivity and improve safety of key corridors serving the freight community.
- Elevate public awareness of the benefits of transit use, including an outreach program to educate and encourage transit use by all levels of social classes and demographics.
- Continuously monitor design standards and code updates for industrial zoning along highway US-78 given its status as a transit ready corridor per the Regional Collaboration Framework.



SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Promote walking and biking as a form of exercise through with the provision of trails, bike lanes, sidewalks and complete streets
- Promote health and wellness activities and programs in parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities.
- Within Growth Management Planning, ensure that existing high traffic roadway corridors can expand their Rights of Way to include multimodal facilities, increased capacity, greenways and linear parks and landscaping.



PRESERVE THE COUNTY'S HISTORIC AND CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT PLACES, WATERWAYS AND LANDSCAPES.

Dorchester County has a rich history and is set in one of the most unique and beautiful landscapes in the world. New development pressures threaten to overrun this precious landscape and cover over sites of historic significance unless there is continued action to preserve and protect them as well as promote them for economic and recreational benefits. Preserving and protecting Dorchester County's historic and culturally significant places, waterways and landscapes can be part of an economic development strategy as well as the right thing to do to maintain the assets that make the County and the region unique.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Number of sites / acres / miles of Historic, Cultural or Environmentally significant sites
- Revenue from Historic, Cultural or Nature based tourism

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- Expand upon the preservation of historically and culturally significant roadway corridors and environmental corridors within the County.
- Build off the work being done to preserve and protect the Ashley River corridor and expand recreational assets to include the Edisto River corridor.
- Continue programs to put environmentally or historically significant properties into conservation easements.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- Make visible and direct residents and visitors to historic or culturally significant sites for recreational, cultural and economic development purposes.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Leverage tourism opportunities for economic development purposes the historic, small towns, natural environment. We have our own story. We need to be able to understand and tell our story.
- Promote Agricultural tourism, alongside Cultural and Historic Tourism, programs, events and promotional concepts to provide support for local farmers to increase the opportunity for existing farms to support themselves economically.
- Protect Scenic Corridors with Plan(s) that maps and creates policies and guidelines to protect the visual quality of important rural corridors that are visible from major roadways.
- Consolidate environmental systems and sensitive land areas and buffers into a County-wide "Green Framework" and trail system network that connects County parks, historic destinations and natural areas.
- Focus attention on attracting new industry development such as historical tourism, the nature and recreation economy, the maker economy and agritourism amongst others.



PRESERVE AND PROTECT OUR UNIQUE AND SPECIAL NATURAL RESOURCES

Dorchester County is blessed with natural beauty and a rural setting that includes historic rivers, swamps, wetlands and forests and is in a region that offers a unique landscape not represented anywhere else in the country. The Ashley and Edisto Rivers offer water activities that take paddlers through history back to the days of the founding of the country. The Edisto River is the longest free-flowing, blackwater river in North America. The Francis Beidler National Forest is one of the few remaining virgin tupelo swamps in the world. Givhans Ferry State Park, built as a Civilian Conservation Corps project, is 988 acres bordering the Edisto River, and is situated at the end of the 21-mile long stretch known as the Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Trail. Old Dorchester State Park is the site of the colonial town of Dorchester and contains the largely intact tabby Old Dorchester State Park; Fort Dorchester.

Access to the outdoors and recreation is highly valued by the citizens of Dorchester County and continues to be a highly desired amenity when people are choosing where to live. The County is proactive in its efforts to purchase land for conservation easements and for County parks and recreation areas. Dorchester County should capitalize on that and become the region's leader in promoting and offering world class natural amenities to its citizens and guests. Access to nature can become a very important part of Dorchester County's brand and continuing to nurture the relationships between Dorchester County's quality of life, easy access to outdoor recreation and the County's stewardship of the natural environment will add significantly to Dorchester County's image, quality and economic opportunities. Enacting a program of promoting and further supporting these assets would enhance Dorchester County's potential to attract people to Dorchester County as the place to live and work. It would enhance nature and recreation-based tourism revenues.

Going forward, Dorchester County can marry its appreciation of nature and the outdoors with a way of operating and guiding development that expresses a commitment to preserving and protecting valuable natural resources. It can preserve and promote its parks, natural outdoors and rural landscapes with protections from sprawl-oriented development and detrimental development practices that potentially harm the natural environment. It could create a program to mitigate land being used for sand mining and turn these into a framework of recreation areas. Establishing standards and guidelines that promoted green building and development practices would enhance these relationships further and be something that resonated with younger generations.



PROTECT AND PRESERVE RURAL LANDS, WHICH DEFINE AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR CHARACTER

The residents of Dorchester County passionately appreciate their rural quality of life and recognize that future growth will impact this important feature of living in the County. The affinity for keeping the County rural is at odds, however with an adversity to having land use controls put on private property. But throughout the community engagement process, the more vocal residents voiced a desire for the County to get control of growth so that it doesn't continue to erode the rural character of the County by creating tools and policies that allow for the opportunities of land ownership while also protecting this valuable scenic and quality of life asset.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Acres of agricultural or rural land permanently protected from development

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- a. Employ the use of Conservation Easements (CE), Purchase Development Rights (PDRs), and Transfer Development Rights (TDRs) to preserve agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive lands and waterways.
- b. To preserve rural character and productive farming, consider design standards and guidelines for Agriculture based communities that allow for functioning farms as well as rural residential development.
- c. Protect Scenic Corridors with plan(s) that maps and creates policies and guidelines to protect the visual quality of important rural corridors that are visible from major roadways.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- d. Elevate the importance of, through GIS mapping, the prime agricultural lands and existing functioning large farms so that they are made visible as part of reviewing land use plans to determine areas of where suburban or urban growth is acceptable or those areas that are important to protect and preserve as rural.
- e. Promote agricultural tourism programs, events and promotional concepts to provide support for local farmers to increase the opportunity for existing farms to support themselves economically.
- f. Make agriculture part of the brand and experience of visiting and living in the County and support the expansion of farmers markets and vegetable stands along key roadways to promote agriculture as part of the culture and landscape.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Address concerns with the "Absence of Control" zoning designation in the rural portions of the County with an acceptable rural designation and associated development standards that contribute to the retention of natural resources, prime agricultural land and rural character.



DEVELOP QUALITY PARKS, GREENWAYS AND OPEN SPACES

Quality parks and open spaces that are accessible to the residents of the County are an important part of economic development, healthy and happy citizens and quality of life. Fortunately, the County has established a parks department and has invested in creating and managing parks, open spaces and greenways to serve its citizens. Parks need to be offered that range from small neighborhood parks that families can walk to all the way to large community parks that offer organized sports. There is lots of work to be done to get the parks programs implemented so that the amount of park space and the programs offered are scaled and located so that they serve the needs of the population and enable access from all forms of transportation. With the amount of growth that has occurred in the County, it has been challenging to keep up with the demands. Adding to the challenge is much of the new development is large master planned communities that provide parks for their residents only, which may contribute to the amount of park space in the County but doesn't enable open access to all the residents. Considering the benefits that parks have on the lives of the citizens as well as their importance in attracting new residents, the County has an opportunity to continue to expand its programs and requirements for parks over time to best serve the people of the County.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Fulfillment of National Recreation and Park Association Standards for providing parks per population
- Miles of greenways and blueways implemented

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- a. Consolidate environmental systems and sensitive land areas and buffers into a County-wide "Green Framework" and trail system network that connects County parks, historic destinations and natural areas.
- b. Implement the recommendations of the Dorchester County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update of 4/4/2016 that outlines a strategic plan for the planning, development, and maintenance of Dorchester County Parks and Recreation facilities and programs.
- c. Identify and explore annual funding sources for the development of new parks to meet population requirements, short and long-term maintenance needs, and the growth of the Dorchester County Parks and Recreation Department.

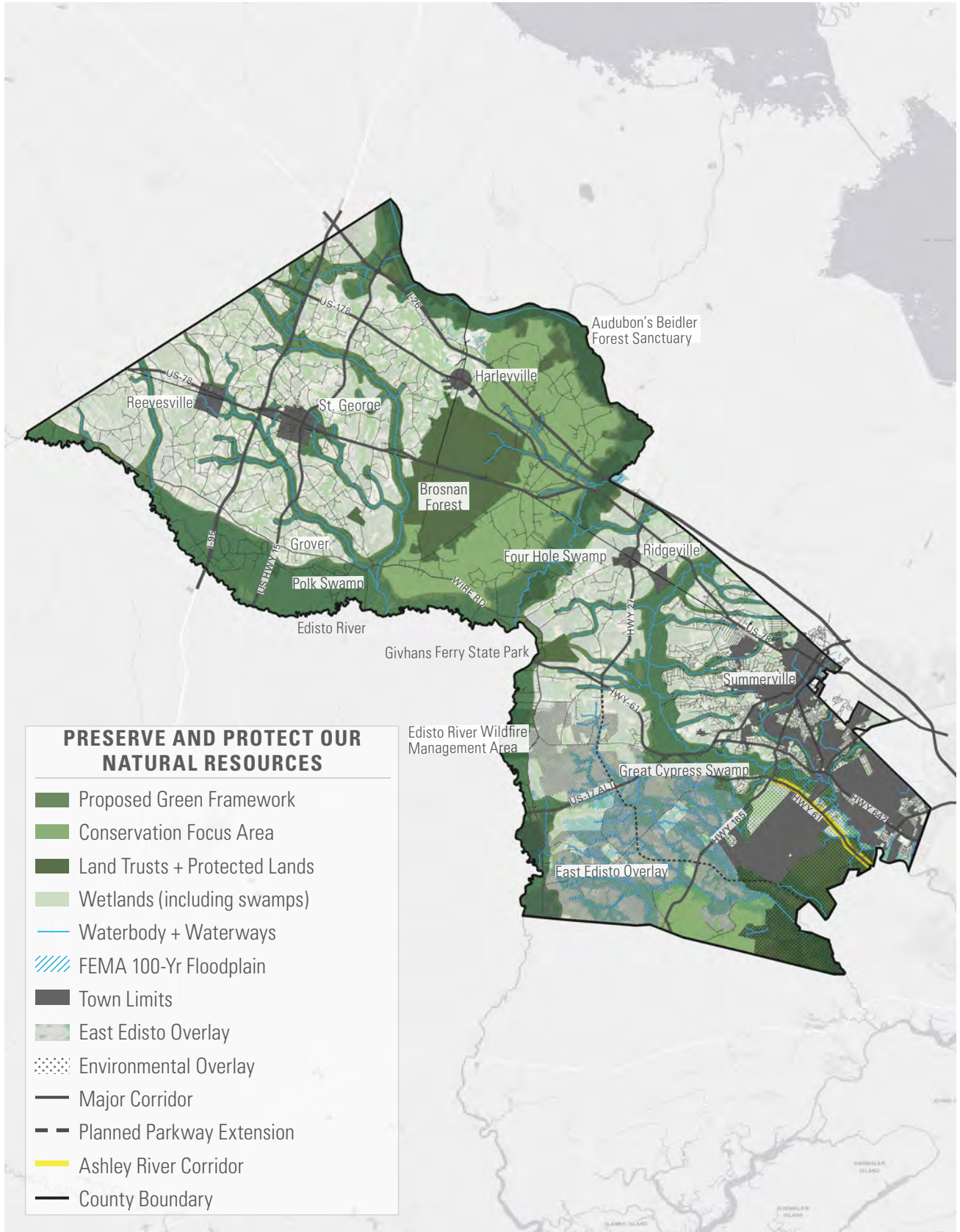
OTHER STRATEGIES:

- d. Continue to audit parks performance metrics to ensure that there are adequate park types and programs to serve the needs of the population and so that parks are better located near where people live.
- e. Maintain and expand various recreation partnerships to provide County residents with diverse recreational opportunities for all age groups and abilities.
- f. Ensure that parks are provided in new master planned communities that are accessible and useable for the residents of the County and/or develop and enforce a "cash in lieu of" program to fund parks in other parts of the County.
- g. Create a designated blueway trail network that links the County's rivers and swamps into a recreational asset.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Accommodate population growth within new development areas with appropriately sized and programmed parks and open spaces, that range from small pocket parks to large natural open spaces. Locate them close to where people live to provide recreational opportunities, access to nature, encourage walking and biking and reduce vehicular travel time to access them.





INITIATE ENVIRONMENTAL AND RESOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAMS

Residents of Dorchester County value their natural environment and want it to be protected. And at the time of this Comprehensive Plan Update, many also are opposed to regulations that limit individual and private property rights. Creating and enforcing environmental protection programs is therefore a delicate conversation that needs to be carefully constructed over time with effort made for all sides of the discussion to become more educated and understanding of the various points of view related to environmental planning, design and management. One item that many will agree on is that the County's waterways are fragile and need to be protected, that flooding is real and that changes need to be made in terms of where development is located and the impact that more paved surfaces have on the amount of water that needs to be managed. Beginning with those items that most can agree on will help to create trust and build momentum toward other programs that can help the County respond to the real environmental challenges and impacts associated with greenfield development and to protect and preserve the vital land, water, vegetation and habitat assets that make the County a unique place to live.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Acres of flood plain preserved from development
- Fewer homes within Flood Hazard Zone
- Increased area of tree canopy
- Acres of land put into conservation easements

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- Think comprehensively about environmental protection and protect valuable natural resources, such as wetlands, swamps, forests and rivers from development impacts and address impacts associated with extreme weather and the potential for rising sea levels.
- As part of that, create an educational program that describes the long term economic, cultural and environmental benefits of developing green infrastructure and low impact development.
- Ensure that the County's storm water management requirements represent current best practices for low impact development and naturalized storm water management, as well as tailoring these for more urban environments that require different standards.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- Increase the amount of tree coverage in the County by conducting efforts, such as plans, programs and policies.
- Explore options for implementing an industry accepted Green Building Programs and /or environmental rating system(s) or program(s) that require adherence to green building practices, such as but not limited to LEED ND and LEED NC, for new community development, new neighborhood development, new commercial construction, new home construction, redevelopment and refurbishing / remodeling existing buildings.
- Reduce day to day waste through County operations with strategies and management plans to conserve energy, water and other resources.
- Expand upon County programs that support green practices such as County supported composting and recycling, use of grey water systems, "water-wise" program for public landscape plantings and the use of native plants.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Consider the locations of Sand Mining when creating the plans and policies for rural development based on underlying geology. Anticipate that sand mining will occur and plan for it.



MITIGATE EFFECTS OF SAND MINING

The impacts of sand mining present opportunities for land owners, but also challenges for the people that live in the areas where mining occurs and along the routes taken by the haul trucks. During the community engagement process many residents voiced strong concerns over the impact that the haul trucks have on the County's roadways in terms of maintenance, repair and safety. There is also concerns about the impact of the mines on the ground water system since the removed sand leaves a bathtub like basin that retains water rather than allowing it to infiltrate into the aquifers below it. Pursuing strategies to mitigate the effects of the haul trucks as well as strategies to return the properties into something useful from an environmental or recreational perspective would create balance and fairness.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Money spent on road repair by mining operations
- Acres of new open space created by sand mine mitigation



BETTER LONG-TERM LOCATIONS OF LANDFILLS

The landfills that are located in the County create nuisance for the residents that live near them. While they are a fact of life – more people equals more garbage - they can be better planned and located in the future to avoid impacting the roadways that they are located on and the residences that are impacted but their odor.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Air-Quality Index

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- Determine the extent of potential long-term mining opportunities and impacts by mapping the areas of prime sand mining potential.
- Turn the mines into a public asset over time and repair the landscape.
- Establish post mining mitigation requirements and establish specific enforcement criteria to mitigate the maintenance and safety issues associated with haul trucks on public roadways.

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- Plan for landfills, as part of long range planning, to reduce future impacts to roads and residences located nearby

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Divert more waste away from landfills by promoting recycling and recycled content



ATTRACT AND GROW A ROBUST AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Dorchester County is committed to creating the diverse job opportunities to enable its citizens to enjoy a quality life, to bring young people back to it and to attract new people that will help spur the economy with new businesses, employment, ideas and spirit. It has invested in prime locations for industry relocations and has seriously committed itself to economic development planning. It has recognized and moved forward with plans to capitalize on the region's economic prosperity and more specifically the opportunities associated with Volvo being located just across I-26 from Ridgeville. Its current unemployment rate of 3.6% suggests that its citizens are employed. The question is whether those jobs are providing the income needed and at what cost, in terms of commuting time and lost County revenue. According to S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce "In-Commuters" measure at 30.3%, while Out-Commuters measure 50.9%. 18.9% work and live within the County. Most of the people are commuting to Charleston County and Berkeley County for their job and are spending money for lunch and other items while there during the day.

Dorchester County has a unique position in the region and can shape its future without compromising what makes it a special place to live. Nurturing and promoting what Dorchester County is and currently excels at will be to its economic benefit and make it even more attractive to potential employers and employees. It can also shape its future by committing to locate jobs near where people live so that commute times can be shortened and so tax revenues can remain in the County.

Continuing to work with and support the towns that make up the County by providing places for all income levels to live, work, entertain themselves and gather will expand opportunities further. Finally, working with regional partners and positioning Dorchester County's role within the region, where it isn't competing toe to toe with the other counties on every attribute, but instead is promoting and elevating its unique quality and set of assets will help distinguish it and offer a successful and prosperous path forward.

Fully realizing the potential of its citizens will require a commitment from the County to better prepare and educate its workforce to best fit with potential employers that may wish to locate here. Key Stakeholders expressed concerns that there is a need for better training, education, support and infrastructure to better prepare Dorchester County's able and willing citizens for the types of jobs that are attracted to the region.



ENHANCE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES COUNTYWIDE

Dorchester County is committed to diversifying its job base so that its citizens can enjoy a prosperous life, to enhance its ability to deliver city services through the creation of revenue, and to reduce travel times associated with commuting by providing jobs closer to where people live. For a long time, Dorchester County has been considered a bedroom community for Charleston and has offered affordable homes to people that work outside the County. Continued efforts to reverse this reality and to locate jobs closer to where people live is one of the highest priorities articulated by the citizens and leadership in the community engagement process. Capturing the momentum and opportunities associated with the location of the Volvo Plant within its developed industrial parks presents a huge opportunity for the County's economy.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Workers commuting 60 minutes or more to work
- Jobs to housing ratio

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- Plan for employment related and commercial uses in proximity of Interstate Highways (I-95 & I-26) and at existing Interstate Highway Interchanges.
- Plan for employment related uses to be located adjacent to existing towns such as St. George, Ridgeville and Harleyville as a mechanism to distribute jobs County-wide, take advantage of Volvo Plant location and to support the economic development of the towns that make up the County.
- Prioritize jobs creating uses over residences to increase jobs to housing balance, grow tax base and reduce commute times.
- Ensure policies and programs complement one another as to not inhibit economic development.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- Aggressively leverage the potential of Volvo Plant development by actively recruiting spin-off industries.
- Continue to market and maintain County employment and technology parks. Plan for new parks based on projected demand.
- Leverage / capitalize the potential created by renovated and expanded airports as it relates to shipping and receiving / transfer station related uses.
- Focus attention on attracting new industry development such as historical tourism, the nature and recreation economy, the maker economy and agritourism amongst others.
- Enhance the hospitality industry by providing new lodging for tourism activities.
- Consider planning for more conference/ events venues and a central meeting facility in the lower part of Dorchester County.
- Manage funding for improvements and services desired by the community to realize the vision for itself, while maintaining business supportive low taxes.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Focus future residential growth within designated areas in and around existing towns as well as existing and future major roadway corridors and in proximity to existing and future employment areas to reduce commute times, leverage infrastructure and preserve sensitive land areas.
- Continue efforts to locate jobs closer where people live to address commuting time and encourage in-commutes to the County, which would contribute to tax base.



CREATE AND SUPPORT A TALENTED AND EDUCATED WORKFORCE

The citizens of Dorchester County are hard working people that want to be better positioned for the types of jobs that are moving into the tri-County region. Especially in the western part of the County, preparing our talented people with the skills and education needed to best match with our current economy will enable us to fully realize the potential of all our citizens. There is a need for better training, education, support and infrastructure to better prepare Dorchester County's able and willing citizens for the types of jobs that are attracted to the region. Currently there is a 90% high school graduation rate in the County, who's schools are excellent, while there is 26% graduation rate with a Bachelors degree or higher. The Dorchester County QuickJobs Training Center located in St. George is one asset that enables citizens to advance their skills. Students can come onsite to train for jobs in their own community either through classes offered publicly or through contractual training with their employer. A college education is also within reach since academic credit courses can be offered at the center. The Dorchester County Career & Technology Center (DCCTC), located in Dorchester and Summerville, blends academic courses with career and technology education and has successfully prepared students for the workforce since 1970. In fact, state and federal data indicates that within 18 months of graduation, 98% of DCCTC students are either working, attending college or serving in the military. DCCTC Collaborates with private industry to bring real-world work experience to high school students before starting college or entering the workforce. Every teacher at DCCTC is hired directly from the industry in which they teach, ensuring that instructors are connected to current industry standards, guidelines and needs. Additionally, each of DCCTC's 17 programs boasts its own Advisory Council comprised of members of the Lowcountry business community. Finally, working with Trident Technical College, who's main campus is in North Charleston, to locate a Dorchester County campus will also contribute to elevating the education and skill set of the County's residents by making college education more accessible to more of the County's residents.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Increase in all degrees
- Reduction in unemployment

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- Continue leveraging post-secondary institutions to connect local employers with recent graduates
- Work with the legislature in getting a Trident Technical College campus in Dorchester County.
- Support and expand comprehensive workforce training and apprenticeship programs across all industry sectors to provide the type of education needed to support existing and potential employers.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- Support efforts that foster entrepreneurship, innovation and growth in emerging professions and industry.
- Support programs for adult education and job training at all skill levels.
- Support mentorship and internship programs that teach applied skills.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Continue efforts to locate jobs closer where people live to address commuting time and encourage in-commutes to the County, which would contribute to tax base.
- Propose higher levels of transit services to the towns and cities that make up the County and link them with regional services such as CARTA.



PROVIDE EQUITABLE DELIVERY OF NEEDED COUNTY SERVICES

Given its size and low population density, coupled with it being primarily a bedroom community serving the region, Dorchester County provides its citizens with a high level of service. As more residential growth occurs, it is becoming more and more challenging for the County to keep up with providing infrastructure service, such as water, sewer and storm water, services such as schools and libraries and convenient access to governmental functions. The County also has to serve diverse needs across the County and is under pressure to be more decentralized so that the eastern portion and the western portion both receive equitable industry to support revenues, services and facilities, even though the population is different from one side to the other.

Continuing to provide equitable delivery of services is a priority for the County and a direct result of having more residences, that cost the County money, versus revenue generating activities that increase the tax base. In many respects, accommodating equity requires the successful achievement of many of the themes, goals and strategies of this Comprehensive Plan.

Without economic development in both the eastern and western portion of the County, a higher proportion of jobs to housing units, higher wages, more compact and consolidated development around existing urbanized areas and considerations for managing residential growth, the County will have to continue to stretch itself to reach all the residents that are in need or want of the same level of service that folks in the more urban parts of the County enjoy.



IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC SERVICES COUNTY-WIDE

The County has been acting on its Strategic Plan to enhance the experience and efficiency of providing its services across the County. This includes contracting with a company called InfoVision to manage and upgrade several functions, including business licenses, building permits, inspections, and code enforcement, which will allow for these things to be managed and executed through the County's website. In 2016, voters approved a referendum authorizing the issuance of a \$30 Million general obligation bond to develop new library facilities. This included acquiring land and the design and construction of new library facilities in Summerville and North Charleston as well as in the western portion of the County. There have also been efforts by County Council to consider and expand health care services in the western portion of the County too. The current County Council agrees with its citizens that distributing public services to areas that are underserved and accommodating future growth are priorities to continue to work on. Doing so would create the framework to enable those areas of the County that are underserved to be in position to enjoy basic services and also be in a better position to capture economic development.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- New public facilities located in the Western portion of County to adequately support population
- Youth within 5 miles of a public school

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- a. Continue upgrading and expanding library facilities, community computer access, energy improvements, etc. to offer better services to the residents of upper Dorchester County that are predominately low and moderate income.
- b. Create partnerships between Dorchester County and its school districts to build cultural and recreational facilities available to pupils and area residents.
- c. Streamline County services, beginning with development review and building inspections, to make working with the County easier and to incentivize economic development.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- d. Continue to develop online delivery of public services to reduce need for using automobile.
- e. Consider consolidating County services into a single location to create efficiency.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this Strategy:

- Ensure bus routes serve primary and/or urgent care facilities.
- Propose higher levels of transit services to the towns and cities that make up the County and link them with regional services such as CARTA.



EXPAND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COUNTYWIDE

The County has been working diligently within its financial limitations to catch up with recent growth and the need for adequate water, storm water and sanitary sewer services. It has created master plans to consider extensions of transmission lines and capacity upgrades to provide service to St. George, and to the new Volvo plant. As the County continues to grow, the need for a comprehensive stormwater improvement plan will be required. This plan will utilize departmental knowledge and stormwater study results to review, assess, and evaluate current and future needs and funding. The benefits of a comprehensive plan include the evaluation of future funding, potential grant funding, short term improvements, and long-term improvements. The ongoing review of Dorchester County stormwater requirements will identify design requirement improvements with the goal of improving the overall stormwater quality for the County. Throughout the community engagement process, citizens vocalized concerns about the need for new development to support the implementation of infrastructure to serve them. They also described support for the need for infrastructure service to be concurrent with new development and/or that no new development permitting proceed in areas that don't have or have no plans for adequate water and sewer service. Infrastructure concurrency can help the County manage growth and push it into areas best suited to accommodate it. Before a new development is approved, Dorchester County should ensure that public infrastructure and public services are adequate to support the increased demands that will be generated by the proposed development and have those services in place concurrent with the development of the project. The County should also consider ways for private development to help fund new infrastructure to reduce the financial burden on the County.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- New areas of infrastructure service to adequately support population growth

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- Accommodate growth by creating and adopting a long-range infrastructure master plan that is consistent with the Growth Management Plan and establishes infrastructure service to areas planned to accommodate growth and new development.
- Require infrastructure service concurrency with the approval of all new developments.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- Seek funding through Rural Infrastructure Authority, Economic Development Administration and private/public partnerships to fund infrastructure to the underserved rural portions of the County.
- Help to empower towns that make up the County to elevate and expand their delivery of services to reduce the burden on the County.
- Coordinate plans for new developments across all County departments.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several Strategies described within other Themes relate to this Strategy:

- Develop a tool or database (like BATCHGeo) and offer biannual seminars to provide real time information regarding new growth so that public infrastructure enhancements can be phased over time.
- Focus future residential growth within designated areas in and around existing towns as well as existing and future major roadway corridors and in proximity to existing and future employment areas to reduce commute times, leverage infrastructure and preserve sensitive land areas.



ELEVATE AND BALANCE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dorchester County has some of the best schools in the state of South Carolina. They excel at preparing students for their future, whether that be on to college or into work. The demographic and growth characteristics of the County, along with state funding procedures has created an imbalance between the eastern and western portions of the County. The eastern portion (District 2) enjoys more success currently than does the western portion (District 4). This disparity influences decisions by families that are moving into the area, as the quality of schools is a major reason why people choose to locate in a place.

The schools in District 2 are underfunded for their population and are experiencing over-crowding and challenges with student / teacher ratios. Creating a catch 22, however is the fact that funding isn't based on student need, so gaining more students does not help District 2 create more facilities or hire more teachers. District 4 however has the opposite problem. Its lower population creates less critical mass and competition, which hurts the schools in this District's results. It also has challenges finding the same quality teachers since there aren't as many developed communities or towns like there are in the eastern portion of the County.

Discussions have occurred that ask whether consolidating the schools would help each of the districts and there are pros and cons on both sides. But one solution that would help both Districts is for there to be less growth in the Eastern portion of the County, since it cannot currently support more students, and more quality growth in the Western portion where there is less pressure on each of the schools. It is a challenging dilemma since the infrastructure and marketability of the Western portion isn't as strong as in the east. Addressing school issues is a challenge that requires a holistic response.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Higher test scores in the western County schools
- Higher enrollment in the western County schools

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- a. Seek to overcome challenges with state funding to continue to offer high quality schools to all residents of the County.
- b. Elevate the quality of schools in the western portions of the County and consider the potential of combining District 2 with District 4 to benefit the quality of both systems.
- c. Bolster elementary schools in and around Ridgeville and St. George to accommodate future population growth.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- d. Consider schools as the centers of community and plan for attainable housing for teacher to live near the schools they teach in, shopping to create convenience and jobs to support the residents.
- e. Establish higher levels of funding for buses, bus driver recruiting, and paving dirt roads.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Focus future residential growth within designated areas in and around existing towns as well as existing and future major roadway corridors and in proximity to existing and future employment areas to reduce commute times, leverage infrastructure and preserve sensitive land areas.



PROMOTE HOUSING CHOICES AND AFFORDABILITY OPTIONS

One of the reasons why Dorchester County has seen exponential growth is that it is a great place to live with housing that is not yet too expensive. Median home price \$202,000 compared to \$321,000 in Charleston County, with much of that driven by home prices in and around Summerville. Home prices in St. George, for instance are closer to \$160,000. But home prices are going up in favorable locations and have escalated almost 10% in the year 2018. Eventually, Dorchester County will need to determine how it can best accommodate the public servants, teachers, laborers, nurses that contribute to the community in housing that is attainable so that they can live where the work and serve to make the County a better place. According to the 2014 Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Housing Needs Assessment, the region, which includes Dorchester County is currently not as competitive similar cities such as Raleigh, Greenville, or Savannah as it relates to providing affordable housing. A plan of action can be initiated to establish housing production, preservation, and management in Dorchester County with a target of housing the local workforce near where they work in neat and attractive homes that fit within new and established neighborhoods. To effectively maintain and improve upon existing affordable housing in the County, Dorchester can incorporate more resilient regulations and standards, as well as creative financing to ensure that affordable housing is provided and that it is located and designed so that it best serves the community that needs it.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Quantity of affordable housing units as a percentage of annual building permits.
- Increase the proportions of both owner- and renter-occupied housing that are affordable to households earning below 120 percent of the median household income (\$61,598) and are located in close proximity to employment centers and existing public infrastructure.
- Households spending over 30% of income on housing.

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- Explore inclusionary zoning regulations, or other methods, to link the production of affordable housing to market rate housing which will encourage the development of affordable housing within well planned neighborhoods with the appropriate level of services.
- Create aesthetic design and development standards for affordable housing to enable it to better mix into the neighborhoods they are located in.
- Explore innovative financing, partnerships, and development programs that encourages private development to increase to provide more affordable housing.
- Work with Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments on its efforts described in the 2014 Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Housing Needs Assessment
- Ensure housing supply / choice meets housing need while maintaining sustainable growth patterns as they relate to preserving and protecting our natural resources, particularly in St. George.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- Promote housing developments that provide a safe and decent living environment for low and moderate-income families.
- Maximize the availability of affordable housing subsidies, including Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and HOME.
- Promote "affordability by design" principles through zoning flexibility, technical assistance, fast tracking permits, etc.
- Ensure consistent review and updates to the development code to encourage housing for all.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Explore development tax incentives to promote regional competitiveness.



ELEVATE HEALTH AND WELLNESS COUNTY-WIDE

Dorchester County is planning for and implementing much of the services and health care infrastructure needed to promote health and wellness. It has prepared comprehensive plans to construct greenways and parks that will provide recreational opportunities and programs throughout the County. Dorchester County is also well-served by two major healthcare systems, Trident Health System and Roper St. Francis Healthcare. Both systems include several hospitals that provide superior healthcare services; many of which are known for their award-winning programs. The County is also fortunate to have access to the Medical University of South Carolina, as well as the acclaimed MUSC Children’s Hospital. In addition to these healthcare facilities, Dorchester County has an award-winning EMS service which was designated in 2012 as the “South Carolina Large EMS System of the Year,”. The EMS service is the second and only County EMS agency in the state to be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS), which is the highest level available in the industry.

The Tri-County region ranks high compared to the rest of South Carolina in terms of the overall health and Dorchester County outranks its sister counties in the region. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute measured the health of nearly all the counties in the nation and ranked them within states. The results show that “Health Outcomes” (based on equal weighting of length and quality of life) ranks high in the Tri County region with Berkeley County ranked #6, Charleston County ranked #4 and Dorchester County ranked #2. For “Health Factors” (based on weighted scores for health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors and the physical environment) Berkeley County ranked # 10, Charleston County #3 and Dorchester County #6. While the Tri-County area performed better than many neighboring counties, South Carolina currently ranks 42 of 50 states nationally, so there is still much work to be done to ensure that Dorchester County provides the services and support needed to keep its citizens healthy.

As Dorchester County’s population ages with the ongoing influx of retirees who move to the County for quality of life, weather and favorable taxes, providing safe and accessible facilities that promote health and wellness activities will enhance the lives of its citizens. Dorchester County can also take on issues such as obesity and drug addiction head on, with deliberate action given to helping to break the cycle of addiction and ensure that healthy choices are available for all citizens. By taking an active role, Dorchester County can help its citizens to become more committed to their health and wellness, which will have positive economic and social benefits. Doing so would create a positive success story that Dorchester County could share with the nation – that it proactively helps its citizens become more healthy and better contributors to society and that Dorchester County cares.



EXPAND, ELEVATE AND DISTRIBUTE QUALITY HEALTH CARE COUNTY- WIDE

Although Dorchester County boasts quality “award winning” health care, much of the rural western part of the County cannot access it as easily as those living in the eastern part of the County. In truth, it is not unusual for the more urbanized portions of a County to have easier and more accessible health care than the more rural parts – that is one of the societal benefits of living in a more compact urbanized environment with a population density that can support expanded services. As the County continues to grow, however, and efforts to locate industry and services toward the western portions of the County to provide economic development gain momentum, providing more accessibility to health care services will become more important.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Population living close to emergency facilities.
- Population of healthcare professionals commuting out of the County for work.
- Average emergency response times
- Number of educational programs available to families and students each year regarding obesity, drug prevention, and mental health / behavioral therapy services.

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- a. Ensure zoning accommodates and allows for modern small-scale medical facilities, including walk-in clinics, within walking distance to the largest population centers and along major transportation corridors.
- b. Ensure correct phasing of additional services to meet the needs of new development and increases in population without destabilizing local providers.
- c. Explore financing partnerships to support local physicians in rural areas with subspecialty care, training, and resources.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- d. Expand access to and quality of services in western Dorchester County to meet the needs of new development and increases in population.
- e. Build upon the successes of the health care system as well as EMT service and expand it County-wide where and whenever feasible.
- f. Ensure EMS services stays within Dorchester County to support local providers and decrease response time.
- g. Partner with local and regional entities to secure medical funding for additional facilities and services, especially pediatric specialties.
- h. Partner with local and regional community resources (such as the YMCA) to create educational programs and activities for parents that address common illness prevention and first aid.
- i. Coordinate with medical and healthcare providers / partners regarding growth management plans.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Ensure bus routes serve primary and/or urgent care facilities.
- Develop a tool or database (like BATCHGeo) and offer biannual seminars to provide real time information regarding new growth so the medical / healthcare community and others can target phased enhancements over time (10, 20, 30 years).



PROMOTE GENERAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS AS PART OF THE LIFESTYLE OF DORCHESTER COUNTY

Dorchester County's climate and access to nature provide its residents with a healthy lifestyle and construction of County parks and a green framework support walking and biking in parts of the County. While it is challenging to provide trails throughout the rural portions of the County given the distances that have to be navigated, making plans to link parks, open spaces and the County's natural areas over time will create an amazing asset for the citizens of Dorchester County to recreate on. This system could also benefit economic development too much like the Swamp Rabbit Trail does in South Carolinas Upstate around Greenville. Health, wellness and recreation is a marketable investment and could be part of Dorchester County's brand image.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Miles of accessible walking and biking trails along County roadways and open spaces.

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- a. Promote walking and biking as a form of exercise through the green framework and complete streets planning and incentivize complete networks for walking and biking.
- b. Promote health and wellness activities and programs catering to all age groups and demographics in parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- c. Partner with local and regional community resources (such as the YMCA) to create educational programs, activities, or seminars for all ages that address healthy living and diets, obesity, drug prevention, mental health and behavioral therapy services.
- d. Make health and wellness a County priority. Create a "dashboard" that captures and tracks weight loss, dependency and activity successes, amongst other things, so that citizens become part of a movement together toward health and wellness.
- e. Ensure parks, trails, and green spaces provide a safe and easily accessible opportunity for physical activity.
- f. Create easily accessible gathering spaces to encourage aging in place.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this Strategy:

- Promote walking and biking as a form of exercise through with the provision of trails, bike lanes, sidewalks and complete streets
- Promote health and wellness activities and programs in parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities.
- Make agriculture part of the brand and experience of visiting and living in the County and support the expansion of farmers markets and vegetable stands along key roadways to promote agriculture as part of the culture and landscape.
- Consolidate environmental systems and sensitive land areas and buffers into a County-wide "Green Framework" and trail system network that connects County parks, historic destinations and natural areas.
- Implement the recommendations of the Dorchester County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update of 4/4/2016 that outlines a strategic plan for the planning, development, and maintenance of Dorchester County Parks and Recreation facilities and programs.



PROVIDE HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES

The rural areas of the County provide food and a sense of place. This important part of the landscape and culture of Dorchester County can be elevated and made more accessible to its residents as part of health and wellness focus and as part of an agricultural tourism experience that becomes part of the County's image and brand. Efforts to promote the growing and equitable distribution of healthy food choices will make the citizens of the County more healthy and productive, while also establishing a lifestyle choice that people are seeking. Community gardens and urban agriculture are trends that more and more communities are supporting for many positive reasons and Dorchester County is in a great position, given its commitment to its rural way of life and healthy lifestyle, to continue to do so.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Percentage of population that does not live within a 0.50 mile of a supermarket
- Local food outlets

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- Ensure that codes and regulations allow for the growing of all kinds of food and promote / require "edible landscaping" and community gardens to serve residents within new master planned communities and within the County's parks and open spaces.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- Create a County-sponsored and promoted "farmshare" program to increase accessibility to healthy food. Consider regional partnerships to make this a regional program that elevates the regions fresh foods.
- Incentivize the development of grocery stores in or near underserved neighborhoods where the distance or barriers to healthy food choices is a problem.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this Strategy:

- Make agriculture part of the brand and experience of visiting and living in the County and support the expansion of farmers markets and vegetable stands along key roadways to promote agriculture as part of the culture and landscape.





PROMOTE REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

Dorchester County shares its landscape, waterways, history, roadways and quality of life with the towns and cities that are inside of it, such as Summerville, St. George, Ridgeville, Harleyville, Reevesville and North Charleston. It is also tucked into a region of three counties (the Tri Counties) which includes Charleston and Berkeley County and is adjacent to the City of Charleston, which is driving the economic growth in the region. The region boasts an attractive mix of transportation connections, access to the natural environment, employment centers, unique neighborhoods, higher education, health care, destinations and entertainment. Each of the cities and towns that make up the region have unique attributes, image and qualities, which are built around geographic position, history, and transportation networks. As such, Dorchester County benefits from its position in the region and is poised to capitalize on the economic growth that is occurring.

Of major importance is the protection of the waterways and sensitive environments that make up the region, as waterways don't follow political boundaries. It is also important to recognize that the state highways that make up the regions roadway networks cross jurisdictional boundaries and provide access to work, shopping and recreation for all the region. Not only do Dorchester County folks use the major roadways to commute on, but people from neighboring counties also use these roads, which adds to their congestion. As growth continues to escalate in the region, it is important that higher levels of cooperation and leadership be initiated to best serve Dorchester County.

Collaborative relationships with the towns and cities that make up the County will help each evolve smartly and toward a consistent vision that allows the towns to remain an important part of what makes living in Dorchester County attractive, while providing support for the ones that need assistance from an economic development and infrastructure standpoint. Cooperation with neighboring counties will contribute to shared efforts, financing leverage and shared costs for major roadway and transportation improvements, such as roadway improvements and transit service, that are much needed to reduce growing commuting times. Working toward a shared vision for environmental stewardship will allow the regions precious water resources to be protected for generations, protect habitats and provide recreational opportunities.

As such, Dorchester County need not necessarily compete against the other counties and cities on all fronts and provide everything that each of the other cities has to offer. Rather, continuing to explore ways to create regional partnerships, coordinated economic development and regional connectivity will enhance Dorchester County's opportunities to remain authentic and to share in the prosperity and opportunity of a broader economic and demographic base. It will enable Dorchester County to "be Dorchester County" and to express and support those things that make it a unique gem within the region. And it will benefit the citizens because it will allow them to live, work, recreate, shop and entertain themselves where they choose and to move freely around the region in economical modes of transportation.



PROMOTE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS

Traffic congestion is a regional issue that requires a regional solution. Currently people who live in Dorchester County must commute within the region to get to work in the mornings and come home at night. In the future, efforts to locate jobs nearer to where people live in the County will help this issue, but for the foreseeable future, many of the regional employers and County and city governments benefit from the people of Dorchester who travel to work and spend their money in places other than where they live. Fortunately, COG is in place to create transportation plans and secure funds to help resolve issues and to anticipate growth and provide forward looking transportation solutions. Obtaining transit effective transit service such as Bus Rapid Transit or Rail Transit as envisioned to serve Dorchester County, as well as alternative ways to circulate within the region will require the political support and muscle of entities like COG and a recognition from neighboring counties that solving transportation comprehensively will be within everyone's best interests.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Reduced travel time associated with commuting and day to day trip travel
- Increase in use of transit within the tri County area

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- a. Support the development of a convenient regional transit network (BRT or rail) that enables citizens of all economic backgrounds in the County to circulate and take advantage of regional opportunities and advantages.
- b. Make plans to create or improve roadway connectivity that will provide more circulation options within the region to reduce congestion on major roadways.
- c. Increase the number of park-and-ride locations and networks along major transportation routes that link with regional and citywide transit services so that convenient connectivity is created.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- d. Create stronger synergies and coordination between land use, transportation, public services, parks and other topics between County and town/city governments that make up the County.
- e. In collaboration with SCDOT and COG, establish consistent standards and guidelines for streets that are "context sensitive" and include elements of "complete streets" for major street types that traverse the region.
- f. Make plans to widen major road corridors as population and development increases.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Protect Scenic Corridors with Plan(s) that maps and creates policies and guidelines to protect the visual quality of important rural corridors that are visible from major roadways.
- Consolidate environmental systems and sensitive land areas and buffers into a County-wide "Green Framework" and trail system network that connects County parks, historic destinations and natural areas.
- Match context sensitive street design standards and cross sections for each major street type with the character of the Settlement Types they travel through.
- Minimize environmental impacts of the transportation system – utilize planning tools to avoid or mitigate impacts to environmentally or culturally significant areas.
- Consider additional locations across the swamps and rivers to expand east to west connectivity.
- Propose higher levels of transit services to the towns and cities that make up the County and link them with regional services such as CARTA.



PROMOTE REGIONAL NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

The natural environment of the low country does not have political boundaries and is an asset that is shared by all that live in and visit the region. Ongoing urbanization has and will continue to have a detrimental effect on the natural environment unless cooperation and shared values orient new development toward lands that are suited for it and away from sensitive landscape and habitats, wetlands and floodplains. As we look into the future, it is highly likely that impacts from flooding, in particular, will only get worse due to extreme weather events and/ or the paving over of the open landscape unless forward looking solutions are brought forward to anticipate and mitigate the impacts of flood water.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Acres of land under conservation easement
- Miles of trails that connect the region

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- a. Link parks, open spaces, destinations, towns and cities with an integrated regional green framework and promote the green framework as part of a quality of life and recreation based economic development strategy.
- b. Develop, with regional partners, regional watershed, basin, and stormwater plans and regulations to preserve and protect the regions water systems.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- c. Promote the regions commitment to environmental and agricultural protection as part of a “quality of life” economic development strategy.
- d. Coordinate long range land use and transportation planning with each of the towns that make up the County.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Consolidate environmental systems and sensitive land areas and buffers into a County-wide “Green Framework” and trail system network that connects County parks, historic destinations and natural areas.
- Protect Scenic Corridors with plan(s) that maps and creates policies and guidelines to protect the visual quality of important rural corridors that are visible from major roadways.



PROMOTE REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The growth of the Tri County area is robust and is fueled by its location along major transportation assets and by the ports located in Charleston. While it is recognized that competition is a necessary part of our economy, working together might also “lift all boats” toward a better future and allow each part of the region to best express itself and provide its citizens with job opportunities that enable them to live and work within an acceptable proximity in housing that is affordable. Dorchester County cannot continue to be the bedroom community for the region and provide the affordable housing and lifestyle that it does indefinitely without a drastic impact on school systems, congestion, pollution and the counties ability to provide the type of services that the citizens want and need. In many respects, working on regional economic development is part of the solution to alleviating traffic congestion issues and protecting the natural character and environment of the region as it will enable a more “local” lifestyle. It will also provide the opportunity to best leverage the strength and momentum of the current economy to better the counties revenue potential. Taking a leadership position to promote regional economic development will be in Dorchester County’s favor.

MEASUREMENTS / METRICS:

- Increased tax revenue for Dorchester County

HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES:

- a. Create stronger synergies between the neighboring counties (Tri Counties) to promote economic development, tourism and land use policies.
- b. Lead or participate in regional economic development planning that creates clarity and reduces duplication and allows the regions strengths to be leveraged.

OTHER STRATEGIES:

- c. Coordinate economic development activities between the towns and cities that make up the region so that there is balance and equity shared between them and so that each city can express its unique attributes and assets.
- d. Lead or participate in regional marketing and promotion efforts to promote the regions quality of life, diversity, access to the outdoors, culture, history and arts.

SYNERGISTIC STRATEGIES:

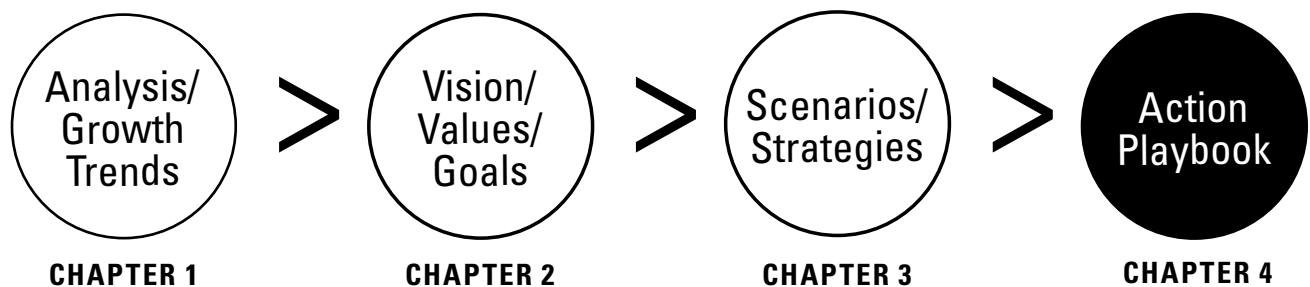
Several strategies described within other Themes relate to this strategy:

- Explore development tax incentives to promote regional competitiveness.



CHAPTER 4: ACTION PLAYBOOK

The Comprehensive Plan, once adopted, establishes the vision and shared direction for County economic, social, cultural, and environmental actions. It will serve as the foundation on which future plans and policies are grounded. It will act as the County's "playbook" and be referred to regularly as each department establishes its work plans for the year. It will guide the County's budget and be a tool to communicate goals to residents and investors who seek to further quality of life and strengthen the standard of living of Dorchester County. The Comprehensive Plan should be a living document, "dog eared" due to constant use and added to regularly by successive County Councils through ongoing community outreach.



OVERVIEW



THE DORCHESTER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE PROVIDES A VISION, GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS, CREATED THROUGH AN INTERACTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS, TO HELP ENSURE THAT DORCHESTER COUNTY MAINTAINS AND PROMOTES IT'S HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, UNIQUE LANDSCAPE AND ACCESS TO NATURE, IT'S LOW COUNTRY AESTHETIC AND EXPANDED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.

To realize this vision, the County's departments, leadership and citizens need to collaboratively act on the Plan and hold each other accountable to provide necessary support, funding, staffing, collaboration and shared commitment. Doing so will enable the County to realize its vision and manage its evolution toward an even more viable and sustainable future. In some ways, creating the Comprehensive Plan was the easy part. The real challenge will come from the hard work needed to implement it.

Each of the goals, strategies, actions and metrics included in this document have been determined, through the community engagement process, to be important to accomplish for the County to achieve its vision and better manage its future. For it to be effective, The Comprehensive Plan should be a reference tool and playbook that is referred to often and regularly and be managed so that it accomplishes what it sets out to do. It must be acted upon to be effective.

Key to ensuring success is establishing an effective management plan that fits with the culture, processes and staffing needs of the people accountable to get things done. The first steps include establishing a yearly review of short, medium and long term priorities, creating work plans, identifying responsibilities, identifying partnerships, determining the time frame for completion and establishing necessary funding. It is also helpful to consider activities that have already been initiated within other plans so that they proceed toward the same vision and to avoid duplication.

It's important to recognize that many plans have been initiated in the past in response to the challenges and opportunities posed by exponential growth. However, many of these plans have experienced difficulty reaching completion and adoption. The time is now for Dorchester County to act, as projections for future growth, combined with opportunities associated with new employment opportunities, create a sense of urgency and level of threat that cannot be ignored or kicked down the road for the next generation to wrestle with. Without deliberate action to manage the future growth of the County, the very things that the citizens of the County value will be lost to sprawl, continued traffic nightmares and destruction of the rural and natural landscape.

STEPS TO INITIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN:

- Once adopted, display the Plan it where it is easily accessible for day to day use.
- Conduct necessary educational discussions and create alignment between Staff, Departments, Planning Commission and County Council with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Advance the Action Plan by creating work plans, schedules, and responsibilities.
- Coordinate the Plan with Capital Improvement Plans (CIP) and the Strategic Plan.
- Coordinate the Action Plan with existing plans and studies or ones currently being created.
- Identify “low-hanging fruit” to enable items to be more readily implemented to establish momentum.
- Regularly set priorities for short, medium, and long-term actions based on yearly financial capabilities, the emergence of opportunities and ongoing community support.
- Manage the execution of the Action Plan by establishing a single point of contact who will oversee its implementation and identify key leaders from every department to champion it.
- Establish a method to monitor the progress of the Plan including a “dash board” and adherence to metrics.
- Conduct an annual report to County Council on the ongoing progress on the Plan.
- Evaluate and appraise the Plan every 5 years as required.
- Use the vision, goals and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan to influence future planning efforts.
- Coordinate the Plan with regional jurisdictions, towns, cities and counties.

COORDINATION WITH THE CIP

By implementing the Comprehensive Plan in coordination with it’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and the County Council Strategic Plan– the County will maintain alignment around prioritizing investment and expenditures, land use and growth management policies, economic development strategies, housing policies, delivery of services, infrastructure development, shared commitment and focus, as well as compatibility between the County’s growth policies and those of the tri-County region and Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments and other units of local government and agencies with whom coordination is important.

COORDINATION WITH COUNTY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan should also be the inspiration for the Strategic Plan created annually by County Council, so that all three items - the Comprehensive Plan, the CIP and the Strategic Plan are working together to guide the County’s actions, expenditures and priorities. In that respect, the Strategic Plan should be the tool that prioritizes the actions of the Comprehensive Plan each time one is created.

POTENTIAL AVAILABLE FUNDING SOURCES

The Priority Investment Act (Act No. 31 of 2007) requires the “analysis of federal and state funding for public infrastructure that may be available” to support the expenditures needed to implement the Plan. The funding needs required for implementation will be determined and prioritized through the CIP process. As described below, there are many ways that the Actions of the Plan can and will be funded. The following list describes possible revenue sources, both existing and potential, for how items described in the Action Plan might be funded:

- Real and Personal Property Taxes
- County Sales Taxes
- Capital Project Sales Taxes (CPST)
- Local Option Sales Taxes (LOST)
- Vehicle Taxes
- Utility User Charges (rates)
- Stormwater Utility Fees
- Business License Fees
- Utility Impact and Connection Fees
- Fees In Lieu of Development (parks)
- Permitting Fees (building and development)
- Development Agreements
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Revenue and General Obligation Bonds
- State and Federal Grant Funding
- Hospitality and Accommodations Tax

Funding types and sources will evolve over time based on state law, politics, practicality, culture or other reasons.

Each update to the CIP should evaluate the types of acceptable funding available to assist with ongoing funding needs.

IMPLEMENTING AND UPDATING THE DORCHESTER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan Update, as well as the Action Plan located within it, should be viewed as a high-level document that provides broad guidance. It is not intended to be a rigid prescription for how to accomplish the vision or each goal or strategy. It is also a long term plan that will span several election and economic cycles. To this end, it allows those in charge of its implementation to determine the most appropriate courses of action to achieve it’s implementation, based on current best practices, staffing, funding, the nature of the task and current conditions. As to be expected, given their complexity, many of the goals and strategies of the Plan will require additional actions, prioritization, planning, community involvement, and funding, as well as ongoing review and evaluation.

The Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed at least every five years and updated at least every ten years as required. When the County conducts a review or update to the Plan, it will evaluate the need to update any or all of the required elements of the Plan, based on conditions at the time. To the extent the review necessitates an amendment to the Priority Investment Element or the other relevant elements of the Plan, the County will coordinate with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies, as required by the [South Carolina Planning Enabling Act](#).

THE ACTION PLAN



The Action Plan describes essential items to be acted upon and provides the Planning Commission and County Council a guide for future funding, planning and investment. The Action Plan focuses on tasks, derived from the process, that can start the process of achieving the vision articulated within the Plan and chart a positive course for the County's future. It describes plans and policies to be created, near mid and long-term actions and the identification of departmental responsibilities. It establishes the initial "Playbook" to follow to achieve the vision of the Plan.

The work associated with implementing the Plan will be challenging and staffing needs and the sourcing and obtaining of the funds needed to complete the actions of the Plan will be an ongoing, but worthy challenge. With its adoption, however, Dorchester County can begin the process to achieve its vision of ongoing economic prosperity, the retention and promotion of what makes Dorchester County special, and the high quality of life of its citizens.

Consistent with state statute requirements, the Dorchester Comprehensive Plan Update includes consideration for the **ten** required elements that must be addressed in the development of a Comprehensive Plan. These include:

1. Population and demographics
2. Economic development, labor, and workforce
3. Natural resources
4. Cultural resources
5. Community facilities; water, sewer, fire, EMS, education, etc.
6. Housing inventory, condition, types, and affordability
7. Future land use
8. Transportation, improvements, efficiency, safety
9. Priority investments, immediate & long term public needs
10. Resiliency

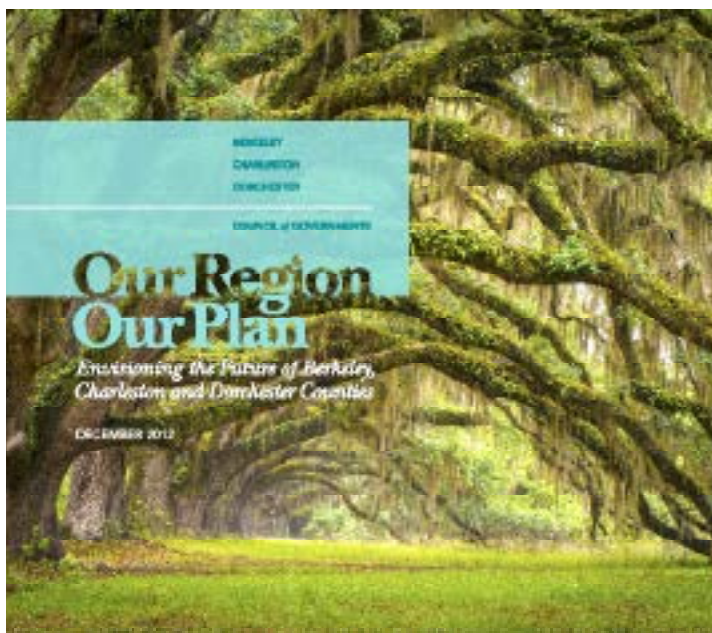
The Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan Update, however, is formatted differently than a traditional comprehensive plan to better recognize and articulate the natural interrelationship and synergies between the required elements described above. The format chosen for the Plan is based on holistic "themes", inspired by the [American Planning Association](#) (APA) in its *Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans*. By doing that, the state required elements listed above are woven into the goals, strategies and actions of the themes that were created for the Plan and within the chapters that were created for each theme and not divided into their own individual chapters like they usually are.

One required element of the Plan, The Priority Investment Element is outlined on the following page independently, since funding is such a critical element of successfully implementing the Plan. It is a reality that the Action Plan needs to be adequately funded and that long term maintenance and operations need to be considered for the County's vision to be realized. The Element addresses how funding needs to be assessed, planned for and coordinated.

PRIORITY INVESTMENT ELEMENT ACTIONS

The Priority Investment Element is a requirement element, as described in the Priority Investment Act, to “fulfill the purposes of ensuring prioritized planning for funding of public infrastructure and facilities over the next ten years, to recommend projects for their expenditure, and establishing basic levels of regional planning coordination”. The Goals, Strategies and Actions of the Comprehensive Plan support and clarify the Priority Investment Element. Additional actions, associated with the Priority Investment Element that will contribute to successfully implementing The Plan include:

- Coordinate the Capital Improvement Plan and the Council’s Strategic Plan with the Comprehensive Plan Action Plan to ensure that Dorchester County’s annual funding and revenue needs are identified and planned for.
- Utilize current sources of revenue and consider innovative revenue sources that are appropriate for Dorchester County to help fund transportation, infrastructure, facilities, operations, maintenance, public uses, schools, libraries or other elements.
- As further described in the Comprehensive Plan, regularly assess how the County delivers its services to all portions of the County, including the type and extent of the services it provides; water and sewer infrastructure reach and condition; facilities types, condition and locations; public transportation; emergency services; and general operational efficiency to inform the CIP and the County’s budget.
- Ensure that ongoing maintenance needs for County parks, facilities, infrastructure, stormwater or other, are adequately staffed and funded to achieve desired levels of maintenance practices consistent with the vision of the Comprehensive Plan Update.
- As described in the Comprehensive Plan, ensure the coordination of regionally beneficial projects, such as transportation and storm water management systems, with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies and actively participate in regional planning, economic development and financing initiatives beneficial to the County.
- Seek and leverage beneficial partnerships, such as with private business entities, community groups, educational institutions, regional governments, governmental agencies, the development and building industry to support accomplishing the vision, goals, strategies and actions of the Plan.
- Work collaboratively with property owners and developers within the areas targeted for future growth, as described on the Future Land Use Plan, to facilitate the implementation of developments, parks and infrastructure that support the vision of Dorchester County.



The County works hard to improve Dorchester County’s economy, environment and quality of life and has invested in plans and studies to help ensure progress is being made. Many of these plans and studies are still relevant at the time of writing this comprehensive plan and support the goals and strategies articulated by the Community in the process of creating the Comprehensive Plan. And although they are still relevant, there are many action items to be completed within each of the plans that are consistent with the strategies and action items of the plan, so refocusing efforts to complete the recommendations of these previous plans is important to move forward.

IMPLEMENT EXISTING PLANS

Out of these plans several high-level strategies or action items remain important to consider for the Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan and should be acted upon. In that regard, the Action Items shown in this Comprehensive Plan include outstanding items from these previous plans so that they remain in focus as yearly work plans and budgets are being created. The relevant strategies and action items from previous plans and studies include:

- » Continuing to pursue feasibility and funding for the Glenn McConnell Parkway.
- » Improving access management, right sizing lanes, improving intersections, correcting signal timing and other traffic management strategies on key roadways.
- » Creating policies and design details for the evolution to implement “Complete Streets” that include bike and pedestrian infrastructure, streetscape, crosswalks, right sized lanes and other multimodal friendly improvements.
- » Encourage context-sensitive design elements that integrate all travel modes into roadway designs and in keeping with the context and character of their surroundings.
- » Improve freight mobility and access to industrial centers along with methods to reduce the impacts of truck traffic, particularly from sand haul trucks, on the counties roadways.
- » The development of accessible bicycle infrastructure, both bike lanes and bike trails, County-wide along with expansion of the Greenway Trails networks.
- » The development of high quality parks, greenways and trails County-wide to satisfy the recreational and leisure needs of the community and right sized and programmed for the population according to [National Parks and Recreation Standards](#) (NRPA).
- » Implementing plans to preserve, protect and enhance the historic and vital neighborhoods that exist in the County that surround historic towns.
- » Providing / promoting housing diversity in terms of dwelling unit type, size and design that supports the local population, attracts new residents, and creates a high quality residential environment.
- » Sustaining existing commercial areas and providing / promoting areas and sites for adequate and compatible growth and expansion.
- » Providing land and infrastructure to sustain and promote industrial growth.
- » Encouraging the redevelopment of under utilized land and buildings to capitalize on existing infrastructure and services rather than continuing to sprawl into the countryside where infrastructure doesn’t exist.
- » Creating a master plan for the expansion of water and sewer service to underutilized areas of the County that are targeted for growth.
- » Continuing to pursue the feasibility and funding for higher levels of transit service including future concepts for expanded bus service, bus rapid transit (BRT) service and rail transit service to reduce commuting times.
- » Continuing to support land conservation efforts that protect Dorchester County’s natural resources.
- » Pursuing zoning and development controls for the areas of the County designated as “Absence of Control”.

PLANS/ STUDIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The 2016 Strategic Direction for Dorchester County prepared by the Dorchester County Council

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan for Dorchester County

The 2012 Our Region Our Plan – Envisioning the Future of Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester County prepared by Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Council of Governments

The 2009 Dorchester County Parks and Recreation Master Plan and its update in 2016

The 2010 Dorchester County Comprehensive Transportation Master Plan prepared by Kimley Horn

The 2014 Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan Review and Progress Report

Retail Market Study and Marketing Strategy for Dorchester County commissioned in 2010

Economic Development Strategic Plan adopted in 2012

The 2019 Dorchester County Conservation Master Plan

The 2021 Dorchester County Hazard Mitigation Plan

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

Dorchester County has reached the point where continued unmanaged growth has made citizens realize that land use controls, especially in the rural areas, may be necessary if the County is to continue to offer the quality of life, character and landscape that resident's value.

IT IS ESSENTIAL, AS ONE OF THE FIRST AND PRIMARY TASKS ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION THAT THE CREATION OF A COMPLETE AND NUANCED GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN IS TIMELY AND NECESSARY.

The County must engage the community and appropriate professionals in a process to create a Growth Management Plan that:

- Identifies and accommodates acceptable quantities of growth based on growth projections and the vision for the County articulated by the community;
- Identifies appropriate areas within the County for future growth based on environmental attributes, access, context, location near transportation, location near jobs, and other important attributes and limitations.
- Establishes the future character of the chosen and appropriate types of growth (Settlement Types) that fit with the vision of the County and identified in the Comprehensive Plan;
- Creates concurrency with infrastructure planning;
- Considers appropriate transportation modes and character along with Settlement Types to match their character, need and purpose;
- And establishes the form and character of different types of development ranging from more urban transit ready development to rural conservation type development.

The Growth Management Plan, to be comprehensive and link the elements that together need to be considered in balance, should include provisions for:

ENVIRONMENT: Putting development that accommodates future growth on lands suited for development such as upland land, tailoring development intensity and density to the attributes of the different land types, while preserving land and riparian areas that are important to preserve from an environmental perspective such as wetlands, flood plains, swamps, creeks and rivers.	ECONOMICS: Accommodating growth and development in areas that are in the best position to create economic development such as near major transportation networks, jobs and existing developed areas and areas that have infrastructure service or are planned for infrastructure service within the time frame of development.	COMMUNITY: Promoting development forms and patterns that fit with the culture and character of the low country, while also encouraging more compact forms of development where it is appropriate to create more walkable neighborhoods, to reduce development footprint and to promote use of public transportation.	AESTHETICS / SENSE OF PLACE: Promoting development, buildings and landscape that is in keeping and character with the aesthetics and sense of place of the Low Country as well as the context and character of what exists around it.
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It should also include and codify design standards and guidelines for:

- All types of development forms and densities ranging from conservation-based development to urban center development and all forms in between.
- Transportation modes and complete streets that are appropriately scaled to fit with the context that they are serving and traveling through.
- Transportation networks that increase connectivity and efficiency
- Preservation and the protection of the natural environment
- Infrastructure service
- Community services, parks, open spaces

ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN:

- Refined land use categories (Settlement Types) that are descriptive of the intended use and character with more typical land use types included to support the settlement type.
- Identification and delineation, using GIS mapping, of lands that are suitable for development in consideration of environmental, economic, cultural and accessibility conditions.
- Identification and delineation of lands, using GIS mapping, in the code that are to be protected from development and considered as conservation land such as riparian areas and their buffers, sensitive landscapes, forests and habitats. In many respects this acts as a growth boundary but is based on environmental attributes.
- Identification and delineation of lands, using GIS mapping, to be targeted / encouraged for specific development / settlement types such as rural community, suburban community or urban center. For instance, the corridors planned in the future for transit should be geared toward transit readiness and not allowed to be developed into something that would eventually limit the potential of transit. Rural areas should be kept that. Areas in between may be where suburban development, such as what is occurring at Summers Corner, are located.
- A “form-based” approach to coding based on the Settlement Type. This would include development form, building form, bulk and height, building orientation next to public realm, parking location, building next to various street types, build to lines, etc.
- Consideration and guidelines and standards for neighborhood form within each settlement type such as street organization, block sizes, locations of parks and gathering spaces, building arrangements, parking, etc.
- Considerations and guidelines and standards for architecture and landscape in the form of simple design standards for each settlement type to establish the minimum considerations. Or a separate exercise may be more detailed design standards and guidelines for specific Settlement Types that warrant it.
- Linking Settlement Type with transportation types and making the standards and guidelines for those consistent.
- Locating, based on sound land planning principles, where rural, suburban and urban centers should be focused, where parks should be located, where green connections should be located, future schools, other County services, etc. The plan for the [City of Asheville](#), done by John Nollen is a fantastic example of how the key bones are established, which then allows the spaces in between to be more flexible.

The Growth Management Plan should advance the vision and planning strategies articulated in the Comprehensive Plan and establish at a higher level of detail and legibility the future direction of where and how development types should be located and occur. Conducting this planning work, alongside or simultaneously with long range transportation / transit planning and infrastructure planning will ensure that these critical components of Dorchester County’s future are describing the same intent and vision.

NEAR TERM ACTIONS (1-3 YEARS)

THESE ACTIONS ARE THE VERY HIGHEST PRIORITY AND SHOULD BEGIN IMMEDIATELY, SHOULD FUNDING BECOME AVAILABLE. GETTING THESE ACTIONS STARTED RIGHT AWAY WILL HELP THE COUNTY ADDRESS CONCERNS ABOUT THE IMPACTS OF GROWTH.

- Create a **Growth Management Plan** that includes provisions for place-based settlement types and addresses development standards, guidelines and restrictions for conservation-based communities, rural communities, suburban new communities and transit ready communities.**

- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Public Works / Utilities / Parks Department



Goals achieved

- As part of creating the new Growth Management Plan, or simultaneously so they are in synch with each other, update or create and adopt a place based / settlement type oriented **long-range Transportation Master Plan** that includes provisions for complete streets, multimodal transportation and future transit options, higher levels of inter connectivity, enhanced Level of Service, Design Standards and new street cross sections that coordinate with the Settlement Types determined for the Growth Management Plan.**

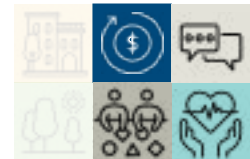
- » Responsibility: Public Works / Planning Department
- » Coordination: BCDCOG / SCDOT



Goals achieved

- As part of creating the new Growth Management Plan, or simultaneously so they are in synch with each other, create and adopt a long-range **Infrastructure Service Master Plan and Policies related to development and service concurrency.****

- » Responsibility: Utilities
- » Coordination: Public Works / Planning Department



Goals achieved

- Initiate discussions with SCDOT on “Complete Streets”** and their applicability in Dorchester County as a precursor to transportation planning. Include Complete Streets in Growth Management Planning, Transportation Planning, Subdivision Regulations and other applicable codes.**

- » Responsibility: Planning Department / Public Works
- » Coordination: BCDCOG



Goals achieved

- Develop a New Dorchester County Parks and Recreation Master Plan** that considers developments since 2009 so that it is using current best practices, suggesting funding sources, addressing maintenance and accommodating the program and spatial needs of the current population.**

- » Responsibility: Parks Department
- » Coordination: Planning Department



Goals achieved

**** HIGH PRIORITY ACTION**

NEAR TERM ACTIONS (1-3 YEARS)

- As part of Growth Management Plan process, **establish and document the Green Framework** that includes greenways to link the County’s parks, historic destinations, and natural areas. **Include a Blue Framework** that includes blueways that link the County’s waterways.**

- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Parks Department



Goals achieved

- Create policies to address parks within developments** to assure access, programming, size, and concurrency.

- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Parks Department



Goals achieved

- Map in GIS database all prime agricultural lands and existing large farms** to be used as a planning layer to determine development acceptability.

- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Assessors Office



Goals achieved

- Implement the Dorchester County Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update of 4/4/2016.**

- » Responsibility: Parks Department
- » Coordination: County Council



Goals achieved

- As part of Growth Management Planning, **create design standards and guidelines for low impact development to be used in appropriate Settlement Types.**

- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Public Works Department



Goals achieved

- Complete and adopt the recommendations of the Watershed Management Plan and the Watershed Master Plan.**

- » Responsibility: Public Works
- » Coordination: Planning Department



Goals achieved

- Determine applicable strategies to **codify appropriate green development and green management and maintenance practices.**

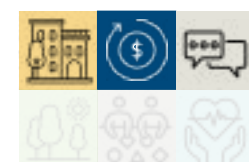
- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Building Department / Public Works Department



Goals achieved

- As part of creating the new Growth Management Plan, create and adopt a long-range **Affordable/Workforce Housing Study and Master Plan** to address future housing affordability issues and challenges.

- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Economic Development / Local and Regional Builders and Developers



Goals achieved

NEAR TERM ACTIONS (1-3 YEARS)

Create plans and policies for sand mining operations that includes land use, mitigation requirements, roadway mitigation.

- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Public Works Department



Goals achieved

Conduct ongoing and continued efforts to attract new industries to Dorchester County.

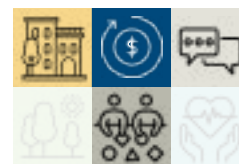
- » Responsibility: Economic Development
- » Coordination: CDRA / County Council



Goals achieved

Complete Countywide Market Study in partnership with Summerville and Dorchester County Chamber of Commerce to determine extent of office, retail and restaurant opportunities.

- » Responsibility: Chamber of Commerce
- » Coordination: Economic Development, Town of Summerville



Goals achieved

Ongoing and continued efforts to attract Trident Technical College to locate a campus in the County.

- » Responsibility: County Council
- » Coordination: Economic Development



Goals achieved

Ongoing support of technical skills development training such as L.E.A.N manufacturing programs, ongoing support for non-college level industrial training, workforce training, apprenticeship programs and skills matching with potential employers.

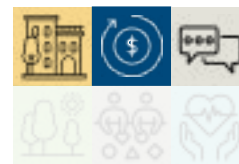
- » Responsibility: Economic Development
- » Coordination: Trident Technical College, Dorchester Districts 2 & 4, DCCTC



Goals achieved

Create a brand supportive signage and wayfinding program that directs people to historic or culturally significant sites while also promoting the entire County.

- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Chamber of Commerce / BCDCOG



Goals achieved

Create long range plans and policies for Landfills operations that includes land use, mitigation requirements, roadway mitigation.

- » Responsibility: Public Works
- » Coordination: Chamber of Commerce / Planning Department



Goals achieved

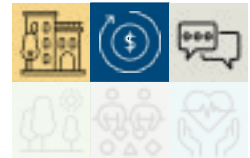
** HIGH PRIORITY ACTION

MID-TERM ACTIONS (3-5 YEARS)

THESE ACTIONS ARE ALSO HIGH PRIORITY AND SHOULD PROCEED IMMEDIATELY, SHOULD FUNDING BE AVAILABLE. GETTING THESE ACTIONS STARTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WILL HELP THE COUNTY ADDRESS CONCERNS ABOUT THE IMPACTS OF FUTURE GROWTH.

-
- Continue to increase the proportion of jobs to housing ratios** (more jobs, fewer houses) and focus the location of job creating uses closer to where people currently live or plan to live.**

- » Responsibility: Economic Development
- » Coordination: Chamber of Commerce / Planning Department



Goals achieved

-
- Ongoing and continued efforts to attract Trident Technical College or other secondary community colleges** or higher education to locate a campus in the County and continue with efforts to educate Dorchester Counties work force to be in position to fill the jobs that are projected to be coming to the region.**

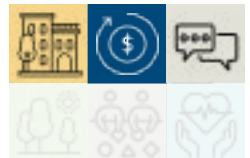
- » Responsibility: County Council
- » Coordination: Economic Development



Goals achieved

-
- Design and plan the Glenn McConnell Parkway** corridor as a convertible limited access and multimodal parkway and according to the standards created in the Long-Range Transportation Plan.**

- » Responsibility: Public Works / Planning Department
- » Coordination: BCDCOG / Economic Development



Goals achieved

-
- Act on plans and initiatives to expand County services** such as libraries once population and funding can support it.

- » Responsibility: County Council
- » Coordination: Planning Department



Goals achieved

ONGOING ACTIONS (5+ YEARS)

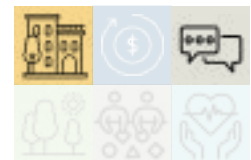
THESE ACTIONS ARE STILL VERY IMPORTANT, BUT EITHER HAVE A SLIGHTLY LONGER TIME FRAME ASSOCIATED WITH THEM. SHOULD FUNDING BE AVAILABLE, GETTING THESE ACTIONS STARTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WILL HELP THE COUNTY ADDRESS CONCERNS ABOUT THE IMPACTS OF GROWTH.

- Promote the western portion of the County as the new place to live, work, recreate.** Assist St. George in its evolution into a more active walkable downtown to serve this portion of the County. As part of this, plan for where development should go to support St. George and plan for the needed infrastructure (social services / water and sewer / parks / streets / schools / etc) needed to serve the current population needs.**
 - » Responsibility: Economic Development
 - » Coordination: Chamber of Commerce / BCDCOG / Planning Department



Goals achieved

- Resolve issues that keep Dorchester County schools under funded and overcrowded in the eastern portion of the County.** Support schools in the western portion of the County so that they elevate themselves to become part of the reason to live in that part of the County.**
 - » Responsibility: School District 2 / County Council
 - » Coordination: Economic Development / Chamber of Commerce



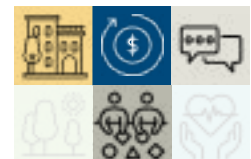
Goals achieved

- Create Study and Master Plan locations for providing health care facilities to support projected population growth and need.****
 - » Responsibility: Planning Department
 - » Coordination: BCDCOG



Goals achieved

- Update and implement a Regional (Tri-County) Multimodal Transportation Plan** created and adopted prepared in collaboration with BCDCOG.**
 - » Responsibility: Planning Department / Public Works
 - » Coordination: BCDCOG



Goals achieved

- Create a Historical, Natural and Cultural Resource Master Plan and Management Plan** that includes: mapping culturally, historically and environmentally significant sites within the County; and determining which roadway and environmental corridors need to be protected and or preserved and create action plans to secure their protection and/or master plans to enhance their value or experience. As part of planning, create long term management and maintenance plans; and explore branding and economic development opportunities through marketing and promotion.
 - » Responsibility: Parks Department
 - » Coordination: Chamber of Commerce / Planning Department



Goals achieved

** HIGH PRIORITY ACTION

ONGOING ACTIONS (5+ YEARS)

- Create Study and Master Plan to determine areas where food desserts exist** and make recommendations to address this issue.

- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Economic Development



Goals achieved

- As part of revising development codes, **ensure that urban agriculture and community gardens are acceptable and encouraged land uses** within new and existing communities.

- » Responsibility: Planning Department
- » Coordination: Parks Department



Goals achieved

- Conduct research into how to best organize and promote farm to table, farm share and agritourism** to best enable small farmers to get their goods to locations that can serve the population.

- » Responsibility: Clemson Extension
- » Coordination: Chamber of Commerce



Goals achieved

- Create a Bike and Pedestrian Plan** that draws from the BCDCOG plan.

- » Responsibility: Parks Department / Planning Department
- » Coordination: BCDCOG



Goals achieved

- Create Regional Stormwater management / watershed-based planning guidelines.**

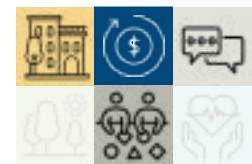
- » Responsibility: Public Works / Planning Department
- » Coordination: Planning Department



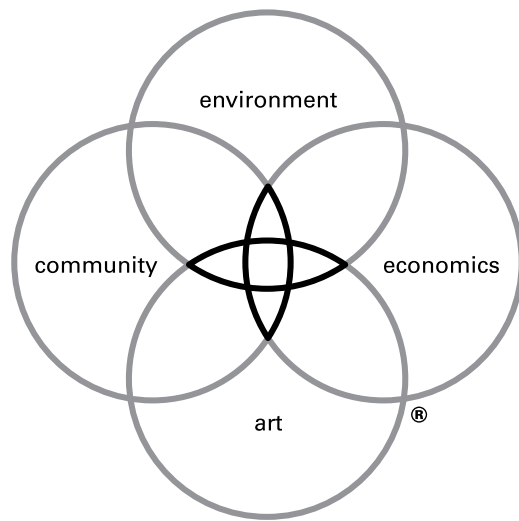
Goals achieved

- Conduct ongoing regional Economic Development Planning** in collaboration with regional partners.

- » Responsibility: Economic Development
- » Coordination: BCDCOG / Chamber of Commerce



Goals achieved



DW LEGACY DESIGN®

We believe that when environment, economics, art and community are combined in harmony with the dictates of the land and needs of society, magical places result — sustainable places of timeless beauty, significant value and enduring quality, places that lift the spirit.

Design Workshop is dedicated to creating Legacy projects: for our clients, for society and for the well-being of our planet.