

Chapter 3.9: Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination

3.9.1: OVERVIEW

In 2007, the South Carolina Priority Investment Act (The Act) was passed by The General Assembly to address affordable housing and transportation issues and to create a formal process for inter-jurisdictional coordination. The Act requires two new elements be included in Comprehensive Plans, the Transportation Element and the Priority Investment Element. It also expands the Housing Element to require counties (1) to analyze regulatory barriers that may impede the provision of affordable housing; and (2) to utilize market-based incentives to encourage development of affordable housing. The primary intent of the Priority Investment Act is to better coordinate the funding of necessary public facilities with available resources and adjacent jurisdictions through implementation strategies. The significant challenge in meeting the requirements of The Act is the multi-jurisdictional nature of planning and public service provision in the County. As detailed throughout this Plan, many jurisdictions and agencies are involved in the provision of services and growth management in Charleston County. The multitude of service entities operating in the County requires extensive coordination.

Since its adoption in 1999, the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan has included an

Intergovernmental Coordination Element with the goal of promoting regional cooperation and coordination in areas of mutual concern for Charleston County, internal municipalities, and its neighbors. The Intergovernmental Coordination Element has been expanded and included in this Plan update as the Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element. The approach to priority investment in Charleston County includes:

1. (Strategies for ongoing coordination with adjacent jurisdictions, service providers, and other agencies;
2. Four major implementation initiatives; and
3. An implementation toolbox.

The four major initiatives for implementing this Plan prioritize the actions the County will take in an effort to coordinate land use, transportation, community facilities and economic development. The primary components of these initiatives include the development of a Capital Improvements Plan and the coordinated provision of public services and facilities. The Priority Investment, Implementation, and

Coordination Element will be an ongoing annual endeavor directed by County Council. As resources permit, the implementation should include a work program for land planning/growth management projects with a focus on coordinating with appropriate agencies and departments, strategies to consolidate services where appropriate and maintenance strategies for County provided services that protect the general health, safety and welfare of the public such as 9-1-1 dispatch, EMS, fire, sheriff, detention center, drainage, stormwater, roads, and mosquito abatement.

Purpose and Intent

The Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element prioritizes the implementation actions for the County over the next ten years through strategies, implementation initiatives and an implementation toolbox. This Element provides guidance for implementation of strategies contained in the other Plan Elements by analyzing the potential federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years and prioritizing projects recommended for that funding. The strategies and implementation measures contained in this Element identify service providers, organizations and municipalities with which the County should coordinate provision of services; reference elements of this Plan which identify locations for improvements to public facilities; support the prioritization of County funds; lay groundwork for intergovernmental coordination; and provide the implementation tools to accomplish the strategies of the Plan elements.

3.9.2: BACKGROUND

The elements of this Comprehensive Plan identify where and how growth in Charleston County should take place over the next ten years. The strategies contained in those elements are carried forward through the Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element. The County intends to continue to maintain the public facilities and service that are in place today. The strategies and implementation measures contained in this Element are intended to work in concert with and support current County initiatives, such as the Half-Cent Sales Tax Transportation Program, the Greenbelt Plan, and Consolidated Dispatch to ensure that these efforts continue in the future. Summaries of the main focuses of the other Plan elements are listed below.

1. Land Use Element

The Land Use Element contains specific recommendations on the location, type, form, and intensity of growth which should occur in the County and coordinates these recommendations with the use of an Urban Growth Boundary that delineates the Urban/Suburban Area and the Rural Area of the County. The Land Use Element contains specific guidelines for each of these areas which reference the provision of services appropriate to maintain and enhance their respective character. The character of the Rural Area has been identified in this Plan as a unique and valuable resource in the County. There are limited public facilities and services in the Rural Area. Moreover, there is an expectation that any new development will not negatively impact the rural character and will pay for itself regarding provision of facilities and services. The Plan includes guidelines for preservation of agricultural and rural landscapes, and makes it clear that roads and services should be of a high quality while maintaining and enhancing the rural character. Strategies and implementation measures for the Rural Area focus on improvement of quality without significant expansion of capacity which may encourage more suburban style growth.

Conversely, the Vision for this Plan encourages intensification and infill within the Urban/Suburban Area of the County. This area of the County includes the highest levels of public facilities and services giving it the greatest potential to support future growth. The prioritization of investment in the Urban/Suburban Area should be focused on ensuring that the of capacity of roads, water and sewer service, public safety services, open space and recreational areas, and other community facilities meet the needs of the existing population and that appropriate levels of service are planned for future residents.

2. Economic Development Element

Includes strategies to balance business and employment growth with population growth.

3. Natural Resources Element and Cultural Resources Element

Focus on strategies to preserve, protect and enhancement the County's significant natural and cultural resources that contribute to the quality of life of its residents.

4. Population Element

Identifies the demographics of the current and future population of the County to help guide policy decisions and to determine the future service needs of the population.

5. Housing Element

Includes strategies to ensure a sufficient supply of a variety and diversity of safe and affordable housing types.

6. Transportation Element

Identifies the locations and types of improvements planned for the County's transportation systems for the next 20 years. The Transportation Element also references the Comprehensive Transportation Plan completed by the Transportation Advisory Board in 2006 which coordinates the recommended transportation improvements with the underlying land use recommendations carried forward in this Plan and provides recommendations for allocation of state and federal funding as well as the local One-Half Cent Sales Tax Program.

7. Community Facilities Element

Focuses on strategies to balance land use planning with the availability of public facilities and services.

3.9.3: GOAL

Public infrastructure projects will be prioritized through coordination with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies.

3.9.4 STRATEGIES

The Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element prioritizes the implementation actions for the County over the next ten years through strategies, implementation initiatives and an implementation toolbox. The strategies listed below, together with the implementation initiatives that follow, are intended to lay the groundwork for the implementation actions necessary to meet the goals of this Plan. All of the strategies contain elements of the implementation initiatives. Those initiatives are explained in detail following the strategies listed below. Some of the strategies come from other elements of this Plan to be carried forward through implementation actions described in this Element. Other strategies are aimed at inter-jurisdictional coordination and cooperation which is another implementation action the County will take to meet the goals of this Comprehensive Plan. Additional tools the County can use to carry out the strategies of this Plan are included in the implementation toolbox, which is located in the appendix to the Comprehensive Plan.

- PI 1. Prepare a Fiscal Impact Analysis to evaluate the cost of providing services and infrastructure to new growth in the unincorporated county and across jurisdictions where the County is a major service provider.
- PI 2. Prepare and update a five to ten year Capital Improvement Plan that includes funding options and coordinates with the land use and transportation elements of the Comprehensive Plan.
- PI 3. Review and update the Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance to ensure these standards reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan Elements including but not limited to rural preservation, development quality, resource protection, housing affordability, and economic development.
- PI 4. Organize and carry out specific area plans in a coordinated effort to address specific planning issues involving Charleston County including:
 - Developments of County Significance
 - Consistent land use plans and architectural standards among adjacent jurisdictions
 - Consistent commercial corridor overlay districts among adjacent jurisdictions
 - Provision of transportation alternatives among jurisdictions

3.9.4 STRATEGIES CONTINUED

- PI 5. Seek agreements with water providers, Designated Wastewater Management Agencies, and agencies providing wastewater treatment that will:
- a. Establish service area limits in support of the regional land use pattern adopted in the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan
 - b. Establish designated wastewater management agencies for unincorporated areas of Charleston County
 - c. Require that any wastewater treatment systems other than individual on-site systems in the Rural Area be approved by County Council as a Comprehensive Plan amendment and be approved by the BCDCOG as an amendment to the Section 208 Water Quality Management Plan.
- PI 6. Work with municipalities to develop agreement on the Urban Growth Boundary in support of the regional land use pattern adopted in the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan.
- PI 7. Develop a Council directed prioritized annual work program for all County operations and agencies that includes allocation of appropriate resources. This annual work program should be completed as part of the budget process.

- PI 8. Continue to coordinate with municipalities in the County to achieve consensus on regional issues and strategies to address regional issues in an effort to ensure long-term consistency and compatibility between County and municipal plans.
- PI 9. Continue coordination with Berkeley County, Dorchester County, and Colleton County to plan concurrently and compatibly, with particular attention to the regional implications of decisions regarding transportation system improvements, solid waste disposal, detention centers, and the extension of public sewer and water services.
- PI 10. Advocate coordinated public facilities and services necessary to support the regional land use pattern adopted in Charleston County.

3.9.4 STRATEGIES CONTINUED

PI 11. Continue coordinating with SCDOT and BCDCOG to enhance transportation planning in Charleston County, focused upon the following:

- Identification of roadway improvements in future updates of the CHATS Plan and the Five-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) that support the development pattern in the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan.
- Long-term planning for state highways that supports the goals of the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan.
- Design of state highways that supports the goals of the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan.
- Funding implementation of the adopted CHATS Plan Actions to enhance transit use and funding implementation of the CHATS Long-Range Public Transportation Plan.

PI 12. Continue Emergency Planning coordination with Berkeley County, Dorchester County and the South Carolina Emergency Preparedness Division to adequately plan for hurricanes and other possible disasters.

PI 13. Coordinate land use planning with the Charleston County School District.

PI 14. Continue efforts to develop a regional database sharing Geographic Information System (GIS) data among municipalities, counties, the BCDCOG, and state and federal resource management agencies.

3.9.5: IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVES

The following are the four Major Implementation Initiatives for the County to carry out some of the strategies recommended in this Plan. These specific work tasks should be reviewed annually and based on available resources the County Council should create an annual work plan for implementing the Comprehensive Plan through these initiatives. These recommendations include the general task to be completed and an overview of what would be required. A full description including case studies is included in the appendix document titled The Charleston County Comprehensive Plan Implementation Toolbox. The four initiatives are:

- A. Area Specific Strategic Planning
- B. Capital Facility Program, Fiscal Impact Analysis, and Funding Options
- C. Inter-jurisdictional Coordination
- D. Rural Preservation

A. Area Specific Strategic Planning

The following tasks are a strategic component of a work plan for implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The prioritization is detailed for each action. A Council directed work program for the Planning Department should be established annually based on available resources.

These tasks will help implement this Plan by coordinating land use with the provision of public facilities, and transportation initiatives. Many of them will require intergovernmental coordination to ensure aspects of development are consistent across jurisdictional lines. They can also be used to further the land use, population, and housing goals of the County. Future planning efforts should be approached to affirmatively answer as many of the following questions as possible to be consistent with the intent of this Comprehensive Plan.

- Does the proposed plan coordinate land use with the Urban Growth Boundary policies including Rural Preservation?
- Does the proposed plan include mixed-use centers?
- Does the proposed plan include provisions for affordable housing?
- Does the proposed plan promote sustainable development practices?
- Does the proposed plan following community form and quality standards?
- Does the proposed plan integrate transitional standards?

Major Planning Efforts

The intent of the County in identifying major planning efforts is to establish a process by which multi-jurisdictional agreements can be made between the County and adjacent jurisdictions and agencies to ensure coordinated land use planning and provision of services. To accomplish coordinated efforts, the County may enlist a third party to facilitate the process, which would involve extensive participation from the public and representatives of the impacted jurisdictions.

TABLE 3.9.1: PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAJOR PLANNING EFFORTS

Area	Recommended Time Frame*	Intergovernmental Coordination
Highway 17 North to the County Boundary (including all areas outside the National Forest)	1-2 Years	Towns of Mount Pleasant, Awendaw, McClellanville
West County/MeadWestvaco Area	1-2 Years	Towns of Hollywood, Meggett, Ravenel
Southern Portion of Johns Island	1-2 Years	Towns of Kiawah Island and Seabrook Island

*Time frame conditional based on availability of adequate resources, to be directed and reviewed annually by County Council.

Developments of County Significance

Developments of County Significance are defined as proposed developments 500 acres or greater located in the Rural Area of the County that propose variations from the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, including density recommendations. The Plan recognizes that there are Rural Areas throughout the County which may at some time meet this definition and that they should be addressed through appropriate procedural requirements. The Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance should be amended to establish protocol for submission requirements and review of Developments of County Significance. The information to the right outlines an application, process, and criteria which could be included in the Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance.

Application

All applications for Developments of County Significance shall include a Comprehensive Plan amendment request(s) and Development Agreement request(s). Additionally, a Planned Development application may be submitted as part of the application for Developments of County Significance.

Process

The process shall follow the procedure required by the Charleston County Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance and South Carolina State Law in terms of public hearings, notifications, time-limits, and final determinations for Comprehensive Plan amendment requests, Development Agreement requests, Planned Development requests, and for any change on the Zoning Map. Extensive public outreach should be required prior to the submission of an application for a Development of County Significance.

Criteria

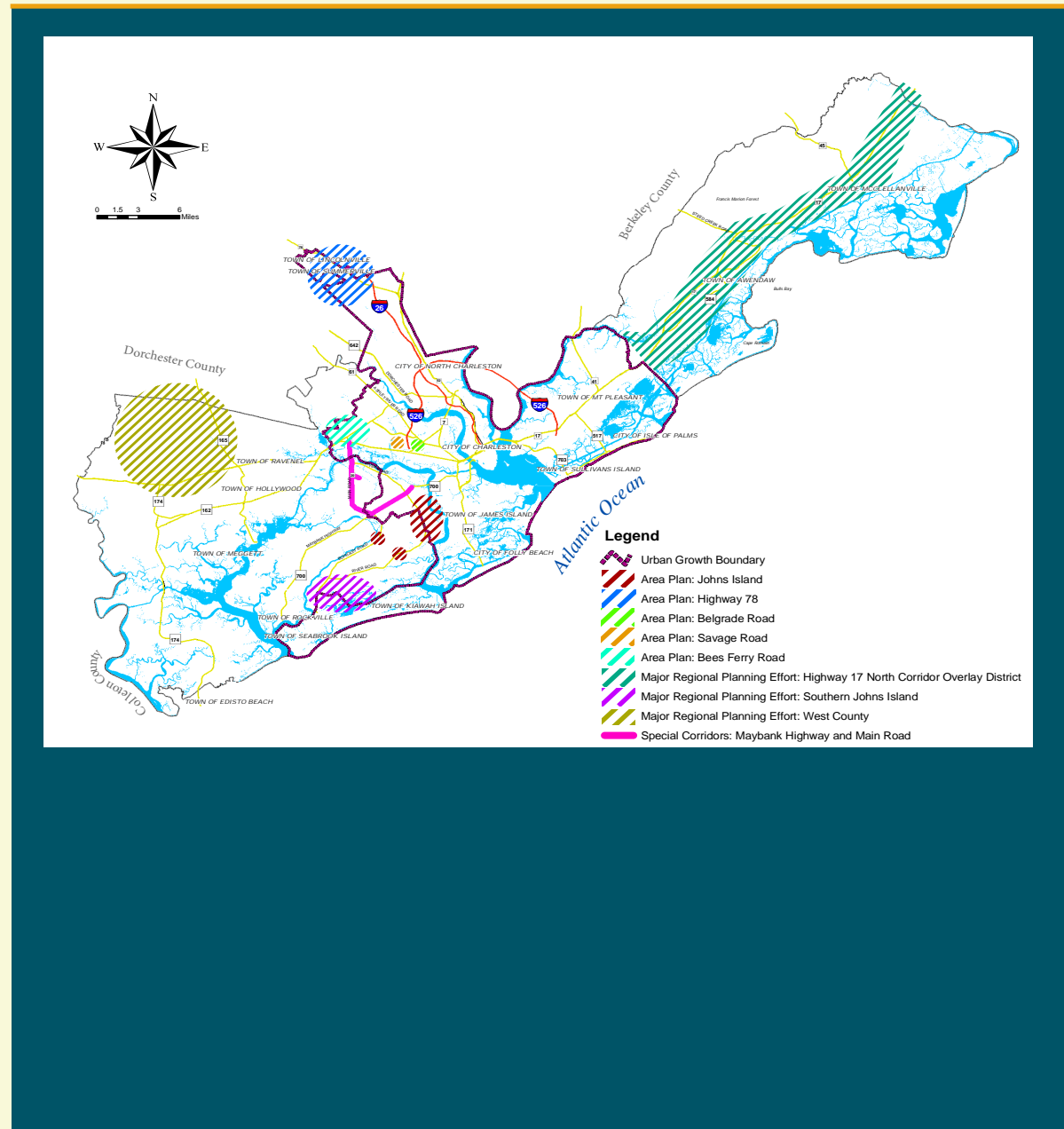
All applications shall include documentation addressing each element of the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan and shall at a minimum include the following:

- Preservation of a significant portion of the land for open spaces, natural features and recreational areas;
- A historic and archeological resource study;
- Preservation in perpetuity all significant cultural, historic and archaeological sites, resources and landscapes;
- Information regarding the location, density and intensity of proposed land uses;
- Proof that the proposed form and character of development is compatible with the intent of the Rural Area guidelines;
- Proof that residential land use patterns are coordinated with employment and service opportunities in the area of the proposed development;
- Inclusion of a variety of housing ownership types and affordability;
- Economic development information such as economic feasibility analysis, estimates of average annual ad valorem tax yields, economic development analysis of the impact on the economy and employment market;
- Fiscal impact analysis of the public infrastructure needs;
- List of required public improvements including but not limited to transportation improvements, educational facilities, public safety services, and government facilities;
- Traffic impact study;
- Interconnected and complete transportation network;
- Analysis of public transit alternatives;
- Provision of transportation alternatives; and
- Emergency evacuation plans.

Highway 17 North District

The Highway 17 North District is an area of concern because of current annexation and development trends and because all traffic in this area relies principally on US Highway 17 for access. Annexations that allow higher development densities than permitted in the County are placing pressure on County service provision. The recommended implementation strategy to address these concerns is a coordinated planning effort resulting in the creation of a special overlay district adopted by the County (as an amendment to the Future Land Use Plan and the Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance), the Town of Mount Pleasant, the Town of Awendaw, and the Town of McClellanville. The overlay should include regulations to support the rural character by addressing the following:

- Clustering commercial uses at nodes to provide services to local populations
- Commercial design standards including:
 - Scale and siting criteria
 - Architectural standards & building materials
- Signage
- Lighting
- Access and orientation
- Parking and loading design
- Buffers and landscaping
- Utility lines
- Pedestrian access
- Low density residential and agricultural uses in between nodes
- Scenic roadway protection and deep setback
- Tree preservation



Area Plans

The map entitled “Special Planning Areas” identifies areas in the Urban/Suburban Area of Charleston County that are experiencing immediate development pressures and require further study regarding land use issues. The recommended implementation strategy for these areas is to create consistent area plans coordinated with adjacent jurisdictions, affected agencies, and the public. This could result in amendments to the Future Land Use Plan and/or the Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance.

TABLE 3.9.2: PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AREA PLANS

Area	Recommended Time Frame	Intergovernmental Coordination
Bees Ferry Road	1-2 Years	Economic Development, City of Charleston
West Ashley (Belgrade Rd/ Savage Rd)	3-5 Years	City of Charleston
Highway 78	3-5 Years	Lincolntonville, Summerville, North Charleston,
Berkeley County Johns Island Area	3-5 Years	City of Charleston

Time frame conditional based on availability of adequate resources, to be directed and reviewed annually by County Council.

Special Corridors

The Special Corridors identified in this Plan include the Maybank Highway Corridor Overlay District and Main Road from its intersection with River Road to Maybank Highway, including Kitford Road. The recommended implementation strategy to ensure coordinated planning between the County and the City of Charleston in the Maybank Highway corridor is to work with the City of Charleston and the public to implement consistent land use and design standards. This could result in amendments to the Future Land Use Plan and/or the Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance.

The recommended strategy to ensure a cohesive land use pattern for Main Road is to create an overlay district for Main Road from its intersection with River Road to Maybank Highway, including Kitford Road. The process should include participation from the public and any impacted jurisdictions. This could result in amendments to the Future Land Use Plan and/or the Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance.

Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance Updates

As a general implementation strategy, the County should review the Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance to ensure conformance with the Comprehensive Plan goals and strategies. Updates may be needed to address modifications to the Future Land Use Plan and include design standards to support the character of the Rural Area and Urban/Suburban Area of the County. The time frame for completion of this initiative should be ongoing to stay up to date with current planning in the County.

TABLE 3.9.3: PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIAL CORRIDORS

Area	Recommended Time Frame	Intergovernmental Coordination
Maybank Hwy Corridor Overlay District (consistency with the Johns Island Plan)	1-2 Years	City of Charleston
Main Road (River Rd to Maybank Hwy including Kitford Rd)	1-2 Years	City of Charleston

Time frame conditional based on availability of adequate resources, to be directed and reviewed annually by County Council.

B. Capital Improvement Plan, Fiscal Impact Assessment, and Funding Options

A Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is a five to six year schedule of capital projects for public facilities including funding options which will be used to finance improvements. The types of public facilities in a CIP for Charleston County might include transportation, parks, public safety, and public buildings. A properly funded CIP is a fiscal business plan to meet the needs of the County. It takes stock of current levels of service for the included facilities, identifies deficiencies and makes recommendations for needed improvements. To be successful, the CIP should take cues from the land use and development goals and strategies contained in this Plan that direct where and how growth should occur in the County. A strong CIP directs where development and redevelopment will be supported through infrastructure investments.

In addition to the creation of a CIP, the County should conduct a Fiscal Impact Analysis to determine the cost of providing services and infrastructure to new development. A Fiscal Impact Analysis evaluates the revenue and costs associated with new development either on a per unit basis or as a marginal increase to the County's overall operations. The results of a Fiscal Impact Analysis can help the County in the preparation of a CIP by determining the costs of additional demand for facilities based on housing and business growth, thus allowing the County to adjust protocol for funding improvements to ensure high levels of service are maintained and keep pace with growth. Understanding the fiscal impact of growth is the first step in ensuring that growth pays for itself.

Funding options that may be used to fund capital improvements include:

- Impact Fees- a one time fee based on the cost associated with providing capital improvements to new homes or businesses. This fee is a per unit exaction paid at the time property is developed or purchased.
- Property Tax- a tax collected by the County based on the appraised value of a real asset.
- Capital Project Sales Tax- a sales tax collected for the express purpose of funding capital projects. The County is currently using a one-half cent sales tax to fund road, transit, drainage, and open space projects.

C. Inter-jurisdictional Coordination

The unique circumstances of the jurisdictional boundaries and service provision in the Charleston Region make inter-jurisdictional coordination necessary in order to have successful implementation of this Plan. Inter-jurisdictional coordination can be informal such as regular meetings between staff of various agencies and jurisdictions and open sharing of information; or formal when an official contract, such as a Memorandum of Agreement, is enacted between jurisdictions for a particular purpose. There are many topics in the Comprehensive Plan that would benefit from increased coordination including:

1. Formalize the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)

- Coordinate the location of the UGB with municipalities in the County; and
- Work with municipalities to develop a mutually agreed to process and criteria for amending the UGB including inter-jurisdictional communication and justification regarding proposed changes.

2. Explore the possibility of the County becoming a Designated Management Agency under the Section 208 Water Quality Management Plan administered by the BCDCOG. The benefits of becoming a Designated Management Agency include:

- Provides the County with a seat at the decision-making table;
- Gives the County a critical role in determining how wastewater disposal needs are addressed in the unincorporated areas of the County;
- Provides greater assurance of compliance with the County's Comprehensive Plan and overall goals and objectives;
- Encourages development review process to look at wastewater treatment first;
- Provides a means for coordination with the County's NPDES Phase II stormwater management planning & implementation;
- Allows the County to determine their level of participation in water quality planning.

3. Coordinate County policy governing County services regarding developments that do not comply with the Comprehensive Plan, whether they are located in the unincorporated area of the County or within a municipality that relies on County services.

4. Continue to coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions to achieve consensus on local and regional issues and strategies in an effort to ensure long-term consistency and compatibility between County and municipal plans.

D. Rural Preservation

Preservation of the natural and cultivated rural character of the Lowcountry landscape was among one of the highest priorities of this Plan particularly in its contribution to the character and quality of life for residents of the County and region. The unique Lowcountry rural landscape and the historic properties and landmarks benefit the local economy through their contributions to production, tourism, and recreation. In order to effectively protect the Rural Area, the County should undertake efforts to promote traditional rural uses, preserve natural resources, and maintain the Lowcountry landscapes. The County should institute programs to support the preservation of rural character. The County has already taken many steps in this direction by having a future land use plan and zoning regulations that protect the Rural Area. This Plan carries forward the Rural Area designation and strengthens the strategies to protect and preserve the unique features of the Lowcountry rural landscape. Further efforts the County may explore to build on past successes include:

1. *Formalizing the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB):*

- Coordinate the location of the UGB with municipalities in the County; and
- Work with municipalities to develop a mutually agreed to process and criteria for amending the UGB including inter-jurisdictional communication and justification regarding proposed changes.

2. *Exploring ways, through zoning, to encourage and allow rural and agricultural businesses to prosper through farm and agricultural related activities. Such methods could include:*

- Expanding agriculture and agricultural uses in districts;
- Allowing niche farming, agri-tourism and agri-tainment uses such as hay rides and corn mazes; and
- Creating a rural industrial district to provide services and employment opportunities for rural residents.

3. *Providing for conservation subdivisions as a development option to preserve open space; and*

4. *Exploring programs that promote local food production and consumption.*

3.9.6. IMPLEMENTATION TOOLBOX

The following list includes additional tools the County can use to carry out the goals and strategies of this Plan. Some of these tools are already utilized by Charleston County, such as the *Charleston County Greenbelt Plan* and the *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance*. Some of these tools have been mentioned previously in this document, while others are listed to ensure their inclusion should the County decide to use them. Each of these tools is explained in more detail including case studies and technical information in the appendix document *Charleston County Implementation Toolbox*.

- **The Charleston County Greenbelt Plan**
- **The Charleston County Comprehensive Transportation Plan**
- **The Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance**
- **Design Standards**
- **Conservation Subdivisions**
- **Property Maintenance Standards**
- **Solid Waste Management Plan**
- **Stormwater Program**
- **Public Private Partnerships**
- **Capital Improvement Plans**
- **Fiscal Impact Analysis**
- **Development Agreements**
- **Intergovernmental/Inter-jurisdictional Agreements**
- **Impact Assessment Studies**
- **Adequate Public Facilities Program**
- **Transfer of Development Rights/Purchase of Development Rights**
- **Funding Options**
- **Impact Fees**
- **Property Tax**
- **Capital Project Sales Tax**
- **Transportation Authority Sales Tax**
- **Real Estate Transfer Fee**
- **Local Option Gas Tax**
- **Tax Increment Finance District**