

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2010

Adopted February 14, 2011



City of
FLORENCE
SOUTH CAROLINA

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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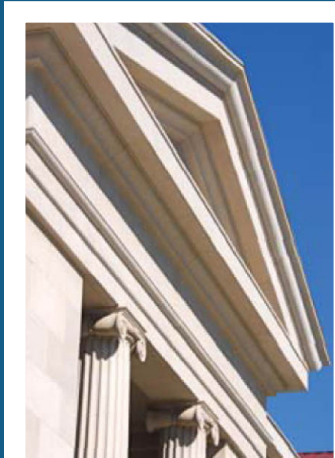
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PLAN INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

Beginning in mid-2009, the citizens and leaders of the City of Florence began to address the question of how best to plan for the long-term future of the community. While there have been many recent and intentional community investments, Florence is now presented with an opportunity to coordinate these efforts in a unified fashion to maximize the overall benefits of these individual actions. The community decided to pursue a course of action that offers the greatest likelihood of continued success.



To accomplish this, a shared vision of the desired future is required to guide citizens and their leaders over the next 20 years and beyond. This plan acknowledges the value of cooperation and consensus-building among residents, elected officials, City and County agencies, public benefactors, and other stakeholders.

ABOUT FLORENCE

Florence is one of South Carolina's regional centers, strategically positioned at the junction of Interstates 95 and 20. The City

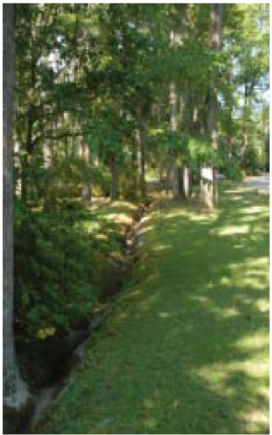
was established and gained stature with the 19th Century development of the railroads and the later growth of the textile industry. As the significance of these factors diminished, Florence was able to diversify its regional economy to remain strong.

Nevertheless, much of the regional growth over the past 50 years has bypassed much of the area within the City's municipal boundary, resulting in the shrinkage and deterioration of its downtown and some neighborhoods. While substantial investments are now being made to reverse past trends, much work remains to restore Florence's vitality and unique identity.

Florence is a community that firmly embraces its past, yet looks to its future with a sense of optimism, keen determination, sound recognition of the facing challenges, and the ability to channel its resources to meet them. Citizens are intent on retaining and enhancing their prized "small town" character in a way that will foster greater community identity, renewal, and the continued expansion of opportunities for all.

Comprehensive Plan

What is a Comprehensive Plan? A Comprehensive Plan is designed as a framework for guiding future development, redevelopment, and community enhancement in the City and its planning area over the next 20 years and beyond. The purpose of this plan is to establish a vision, along with realistic goals and achievable strategies, that residents, business and land owners, major institutions, civic groups, members of advisory committees, and public officials prefer – and will support with action – in the years ahead.



Florence has many tree-lined streets that provide an ideal living environment.

Florence is located in a gently rolling upland area, 70 miles west of the Atlantic coastline and midway between the Pee Dee and Lynches Rivers. Much of the land is wooded, and favorable climate and soil conditions promote lush vegetation and opportunities for abundant landscaping and planting of shade trees.

The City was established in the mid-19th Century at a strategic rail junction serving much of the Southeast and was laid out in the typical fashion of railroad cities of that time. The original business district and surrounding area were laid out in a gridiron pattern that was mainly oriented to the railroad tracks. Later development that proceeded south and west of the original platted area occurred in a more curvilinear fashion in response to topography, drainage patterns, and market preference for a more “suburban” form of residential development.

Florence’s original economic significance was as a transportation hub for agricultural products. Early rail-oriented industries included the production of paper, manufacture of textiles, and locomotive repair. During the mid-20th Century, City and County leaders succeeded in transforming the local economy to become the major biomedical and financial center of the region. Many financial institutions, medical centers, and medical service providers are located in Florence, including over a dozen national or regional banks,

two major hospitals, and two significant pharmaceutical companies. Other important industrial categories include ATV manufacturing, metal fabrication, and I-95/20 oriented logistics/distribution facilities.

While located approximately 10 miles east of the City’s center, Francis Marion University (FMU) is a significant cultural and economic asset to Florence. With an enrollment of 5,000 students and employing over 500 faculty and staff members, FMU is an integral part of the City’s fabric.

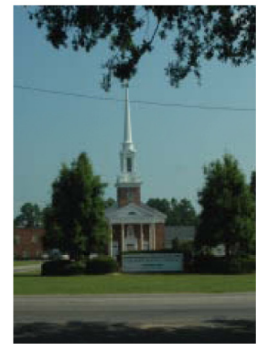
OBJECTIVES

The decision to conduct a comprehensive planning process was made primarily to establish better control over the destiny of the community rather than reacting to change. Adopting this plan is a deliberate action taken to proactively manage future growth and development as opposed to passively acquiescing to development or redevelopment proposals on a case-by-case basis without consideration of community-wide issues, established goals and policies, and extensive citizen input. It serves as a framework for promoting and accepting future public and private initiatives within the City.

Purpose and Need

At the beginning of the planning process, a series of key “stakeholder” listening sessions were conducted to solicit the input of residents. This was an important step toward understanding the underlying issues and needs of the City and, specifically, the values and priorities of those who know best — the citizens. The planning process also involved the regular input of a Citizens’ Delegation composed of knowledgeable and respected City of Florence residents. Early on, these participants identified several reasons to undertake this plan:

- ◆ To maintain or enhance Florence’s “small town” atmosphere, quality schools and parks, cultural activities, and attractive living areas.
- ◆ To improve the appearance of the City, particularly its entryways, and enhance its status as a regional center.



One of Florence’s distinctive churches

- ◆ To reinvest in declining neighborhoods in order to restore their integrity and provide safe, desirable living areas with adequate public amenities for all Florentines.
- ◆ To define the appropriate role and breadth of the downtown area in order to channel continuing redevelopment efforts in the most effective way possible.
- ◆ To ensure the continued provision of adequate and efficient community facilities, services, and infrastructure that are necessary to support new development and redevelopment.
- ◆ To make wise and fiscally-responsible decisions relating to the management of future development and utility extensions.
- ◆ To establish the framework for updating and adopting a new City zoning code.

Impetus

In recent years, citizens and local officials have recognized the urgency for reinvestment in the central areas of Florence. Substantial improvements have been made, and more are in various stages of planning or implementation. The City, which represents less than 20 percent of the Florence Transportation Metropolitan Area's total population, has recognized the need to determine its future destiny rather than relying on the planning guidance of the nonresident Florence County majority. For this reason, the City has re-established its own planning responsibilities.

As the City pursues its own courses of action, it becomes important — now more than ever — to maintain area-wide coordination of these efforts in order to leverage these developments and provide a unified design response in order to gain the maximum benefits. A successful outcome will benefit the City and County alike.

Guidance of Other Plans

This planning effort draws significantly on the contributions of other plans and studies. The following is a partial list of previous or ongoing planning efforts.

- ◆ The Florence County Plan is an ongoing program, undertaken by the County's planning staff with a consultant providing technical input on the

Previous Planning Efforts

- *Florence County Plan – Ongoing*
- *Florence Downtown Revitalization Plan (Hunter Interests) – Ongoing*
- *Florence 2010 Downtown Master Plan (HDR) – 1999*
- *Florence Tourism and Assessment Plan – 2007*
- *Florence Museum of Art, Science and History Feasibility Study – 2008*
- *Multi-Modal Transportation Center Development (Hunter Interests) – 2009*
- *Floodplain Map Updates and Digitization*
- *Federal Building Reuse Feasibility Study – 2009*
- *Sewer System Lift Station Upgrading and Instrumentation Enhancements*
- *Florence Area Transportation Study, Long Range Transportation Plan*
- *Development (Master Plan) scenarios produced as part of the brown field clean up*

Transportation Element. As it approaches completion, this comprehensive planning effort provides substantial resource information on County planning issues, including economic and demographic projections, natural resource and cultural inventories, housing, and growth management issues.

- ◆ The Florence Downtown Master Plan formed the initial case and physical guidance for downtown revitalization. It was updated and supplemented by the more recent and targeted Downtown Revitalization Plan, which pinpoints specific implementation projects. These two studies, along with the ongoing activities of their sponsors, have been pivotal in attracting new investment into the City's downtown area including:
- ◆ The new FMU Performing Arts Center, which is currently under construction with anticipated completion in 2010.

- ◆ A proposed multi-modal transportation center (site to be determined).
- ◆ The proposed replacement for the Museum of Art, Science, and History in the downtown core area.
- ◆ The recently completed Florence Little Theater building.
- ◆ The Florence Area Transportation Study, when completed, will provide guidance on the elimination or reduction of bottlenecks and future improvements of the major arterial streets that serve the City and provide connection to the interstate highways and outlying areas.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process, as summarized in the diagram (see page 1.5), is a series of steps taken to evaluate existing conditions, identify community needs and goals, and prepare a unified vision statement of Florence's future — and how to bring it about. At critical points along the way, various planning concepts and challenges have been introduced to the Citizens' Delegation and the public for discussion and guidance. The process culminates with a formal adoption procedure that involves additional public input, an official public hearing, and adoption by the City Council.

Outreach and Public Participation

Public involvement is an essential ingredient to a successful planning process. Accomplishing effective community outreach and participation has involved interactions through the following means:

- ◆ **Focus Group Interviews:** Group interviews were conducted at the beginning of the process to solicit specific input on various topics affecting the long-range planning process. There were seven focus group meetings involving between four and 10 people in each session. For example, one group consisted of local business leaders and bankers; another one was made up of persons interested in cultural activities and historic preservation.
- ◆ **Citizens' Delegation:** A 15-member Citizens' Delegation was assembled to provide ongoing input and guidance. Specific activities of the Delegation are listed in the planning process diagram (see page 1.5).
- ◆ **Community Workshops:** Three open community workshops are being conducted for citizens to come together and discuss pertinent issues

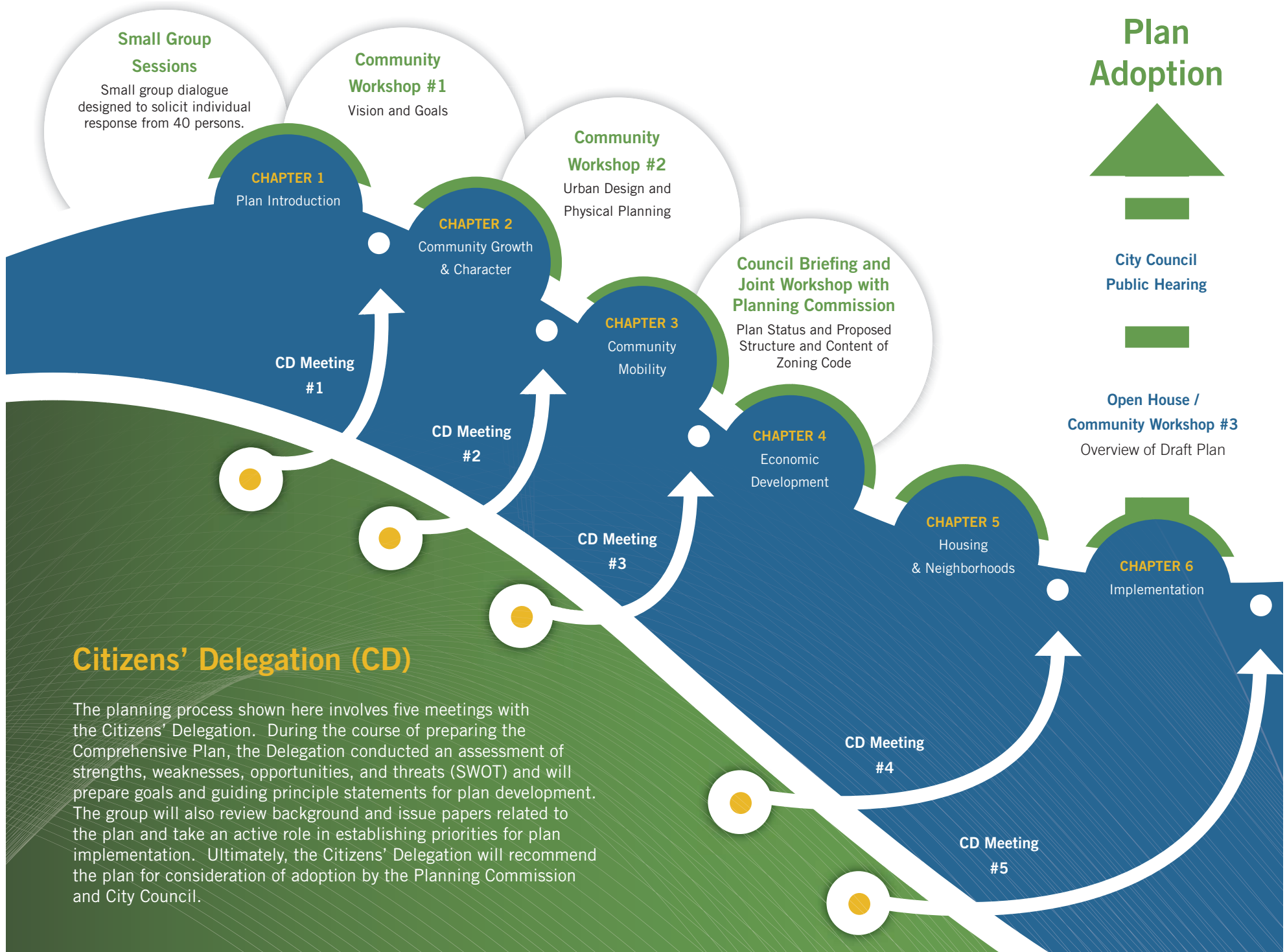
of the plan. Each meeting is to begin with the presentation of issues or recommendations, followed by smaller discussion sessions where participants can choose any of the individual topics being presented. The community dialog is then used to prepare the goals, objectives, and strategic directions of the plan.

- ◆ **Other Agencies:** The process has involved considerable interaction with other agencies whose missions relate to long-range planning issues. Examples of these agencies include the Florence County planning staff, the Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS), the Florence School District, and the Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority. A complete listing is provided in the section of this Chapter titled, "Representation of Groups and Agencies."
- ◆ **Elected and Appointed City Officials:** The Florence Planning Commission and City Council, under South Carolina Statute, have ultimate authority over the adoption and maintenance of the Comprehensive Plan. These two bodies have been integral to the planning process, particularly during the adoption stages.

Representation of Groups and Agencies

The following is a list of the other agencies and groups that have participated in focus group meetings and other input sessions. Their contributions are extensively reflected in this document.

- ◆ Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS)
- ◆ Florence Little Theater
- ◆ Florence County Economic Development Partnership
- ◆ Florence County Planning and Building Inspections
- ◆ Florence Downtown Development Corporation
- ◆ Florence School District One
- ◆ Francis Marion University
- ◆ Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority



Plan Adoption



City Council
Public Hearing



Open House /
Community Workshop #3
Overview of Draft Plan

Citizens' Delegation (CD)

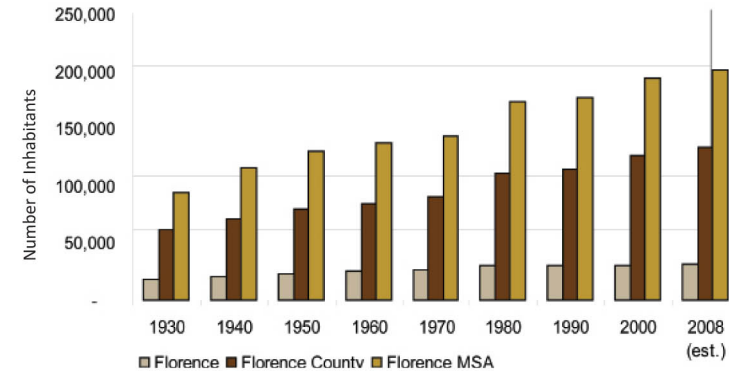
The planning process shown here involves five meetings with the Citizens' Delegation. During the course of preparing the Comprehensive Plan, the Delegation conducted an assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) and will prepare goals and guiding principle statements for plan development. The group will also review background and issue papers related to the plan and take an active role in establishing priorities for plan implementation. Ultimately, the Citizens' Delegation will recommend the plan for consideration of adoption by the Planning Commission and City Council.

AREAS OF FOCUS

At the outset of planning activities, four specific areas of focus were identified and addressed in greater depth:

- ◆ **Urban Growth:** As shown in *Figure 1.1, Population*, and *Table 1.1, Population*, regional growth has continued, while the City's population and level of development have remained stable. This topic addresses opportunities for the City to promote infill and redevelopment and to expand its boundaries in order to strengthen its stature as the center of the Pee Dee Region. This topic also takes into consideration the necessary sewer, water, drainage, and transportation infrastructure components needed to support growth in a responsible fashion.
- ◆ **Community Character and Appearance:** Initial focus group meetings indicated a common concern for maintaining and enhancing the appearance and image of Florence, particularly the highway entrances leading into the downtown area. This topic will address the long- and short-term strategies needed to upgrade troubled areas and enhance the character of development and overall beauty of Florence.
- ◆ **Neighborhood Renewal and Rehabilitation:** It is important that all neighborhoods in Florence, irrespective of demographic characteristics or housing costs, be regarded as good places to live. This topic addresses the complex issues of neighborhood deterioration, housing conditions, affordability, condition of public improvements, and accessibility to public facilities, shopping, and social services
- ◆ **Community Livability:** This broad category includes the provision and enhancement of parks and trails, cultural facilities and programs, historic preservation, and other amenities that distinguish Florence as a unique and special City.

Figure 1.1: Population



The City of Florence's population has remained stable for many decades - while the County and Metropolitan Area's populations have grown. The City has been constrained by its borders, allowing the bypass of growth and development to the unincorporated areas.

Table 1.1: Population

Currently, the population of the Florence MSA (Florence and Darlington Counties) is expected to increase by another 10% by the year 2030. The City's share of this future growth will be determined by the plans and policies that are now under consideration.

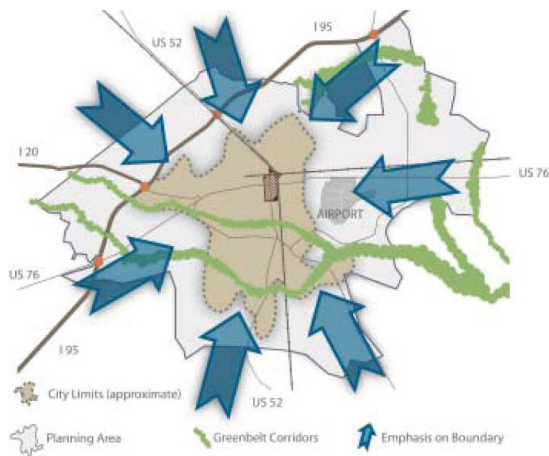
Year	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008 * (est.)
Florence	17,581	20,396	22,435	24,722	25,997	30,062	29,913	30,248	31,500
Florence County	61,027	70,582	79,710	84,438	89,636	110,163	114,344	125,761	133,000
Florence MSA	94,063	115,780	129,726	137,366	143,078	172,880	176,195	193,155	200,350

* 2008 estimate

INSIGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS

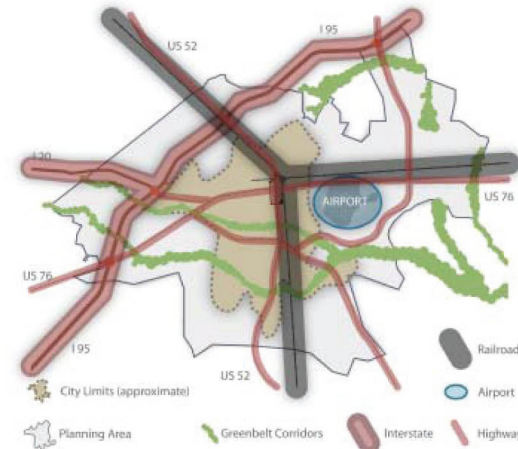
The following map diagrams summarize the major challenges observed in the planning process. The maps themselves depict the overall planning area with major highways and railroads, the approximate City limits, and the wooded “greenbelt” corridors associated with the streams and waterways that traverse the area.

Figure 1.2: City Limits



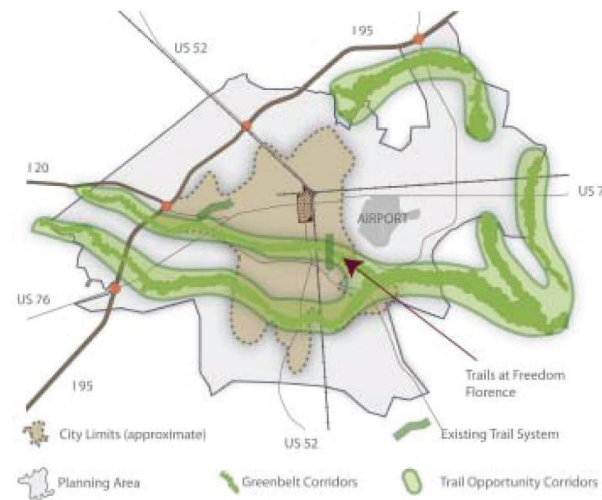
Florence is hemmed-in by rigid municipal boundaries, mainly due to statutory restrictions. The City has no control of development outside of its jurisdiction, yet faces the responsibility of providing many infrastructure services to these outlying, unincorporated areas.

Figure 1.3: Regional Transportation Linkages



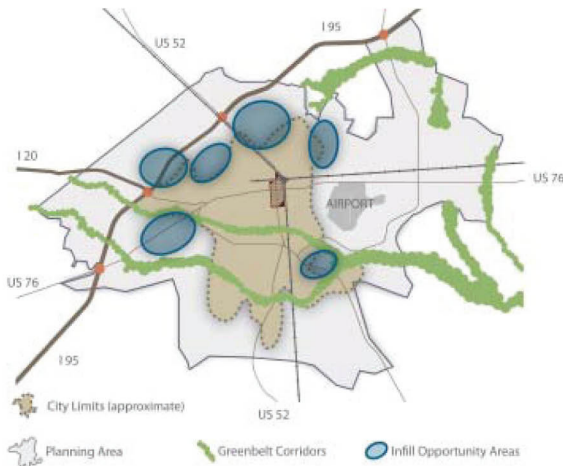
Florence has superb regional transportation linkages, which have helped sustain a robust area-wide economy.

Figure 1.4: Trail System



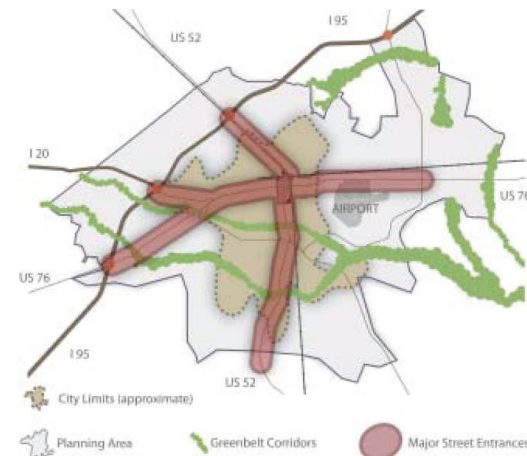
The wooded stream and vacated rail corridors present a tremendous opportunity to enhance the existing non-street trail system, offering improved linkages and access to existing parks.

Figure 1.5: Infill Opportunities



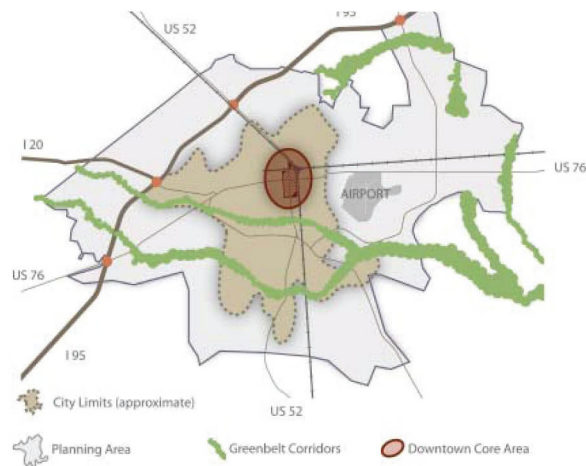
Florence has many infill opportunities for accommodating future development within or immediately contiguous to already developed areas, which may be readily and efficiently served with facilities and services.

Figure 1.6: Major Street Entrances



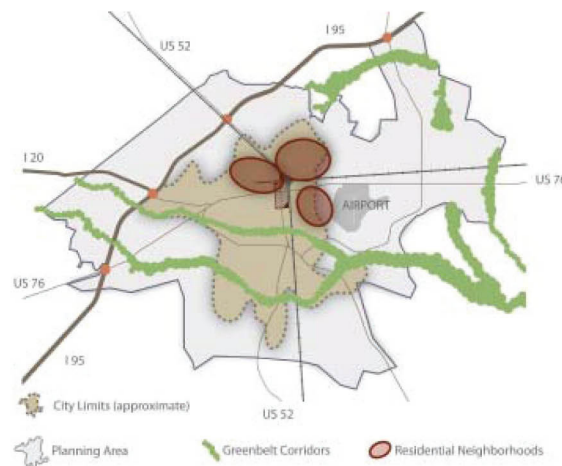
The image of Florence is detracted by its major street entrances. They are in need of major reinvestment and enhancement.

Figure 1.7: Downtown Core



In spite of many recent reinvestment activities, Florence still faces many challenges in defining and planning the future of its downtown core.

Figure 1.8: Central Residential Neighborhoods



Several residential neighborhoods in the central area of Florence are in advanced stages of deterioration and in need of redevelopment and facility improvements.

Table 1.2: Comprehensive Plan Elements

This Comprehensive Plan has been organized to include all plan elements required by statutes. The table below indicates the location of subject material for these required elements within the context of the Florence Comprehensive Plan document.

Florence Comprehensive Plan	Required by South Carolina Statutes
1. Introduction	
2. Community Growth and Character	— Population — Natural Resources — Land Use
3. Community Mobility	— Transportation
4. Housing and Neighborhoods	— Housing — Community Facilities — Cultural Resources
5. Economic Development	— Economic Development
6. Implementation	— Priority Investment

COMPLIANCE WITH SOUTH CAROLINA PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

This Comprehensive Plan has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the South Carolina Priority Investment Act of 2007 and the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Act of 1994. (See **Table 1.2, Comprehensive Plan Elements**.) These legislative acts establish the required elements to be included in a Comprehensive Plan document and further mandate that the plan be reviewed by the City Planning Commission “as often as necessary, but not less than every five years” and that the plan, including all elements, “must be updated at least every 10 years.”

Plan Content

- *Chapter 1 – Plan Introduction (this chapter).*
- *Chapter 2 – Community Character & Growth. Provides a commentary on existing land use and community character with strategic recommendations concerning the policy and regulatory changes needed to realize the desired paths of future community development and urban growth patterns.*
- *Chapter 3 – Community Mobility. Focuses on all modes of transportation and provides recommendations relating to improvement needs and standards.*
- *Chapter 4 – Economic Development. Presents data and information on the local economy and employment conditions, providing recommended strategies for sustainably growing the local economy.*
- *Chapter 5 – Housing & Neighborhoods. Provides descriptions of the adequacy of existing housing conditions and neighborhoods and recommends strategies for improving them.*
- *Chapter 6 – Implementation. Includes a comprehensive listing of project and program initiatives needed to bring this plan to reality with recommendations on funding, priority, and organizational responsibility.*

STATEMENTS OF VISION

The following vision statements have been identified as being critical to the guidance of this plan over the next 10 to 20 years. They will be subject to revision and expansion as the process continues.

- ◆ High quality neighborhoods — in which any citizen of Florence would be proud to live—with great accessibility to commercial facilities, employment opportunities, trails and parks, schools and public facilities, and having a variety of housing options for individuals and families of all income levels.
- ◆ A re-established City Center that is distinct to Florence—one that is true to the community’s history and commercial roots; realistically sized; offers increased opportunities for local businesses and choices in living;

and embraces both local and regional sustainability objectives through improved mobility and responsible development practices.

- ◆ Attractive entrances to the City that reflect its status as a regional center, its history of cultural pride, and its commitment to excellence in the future.
- ◆ Protection of the City's abundant natural areas, woodlands, and stream corridors.
- ◆ Ease and efficiency in travel within and outside the City using a variety of modes, including walking, bicycling, transit, and automobiles.
- ◆ Continued economic vigor and employment opportunity.
- ◆ Adjustment of the City's borders to resemble the full urbanized area and the extent of the utility services it provides.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND GROWTH

Chapter 2

This overview of existing physical characteristics provides insight into the community's urban form, current uses of land, and supporting infrastructure and public facilities. This chapter and Chapter 3, Community Mobility, illustrate current and future land use patterns and identify issues for analysis.

Planning for future land use and community character is based, in part, on how Florence has grown and evolved in the past and where it stands today as a small City that still retains its stature as a regional center. Community leaders and residents should appreciate the importance of guiding future development in the most efficient way possible. This may be accomplished through a series of recommended programs, ordinance changes, and capital projects, as well as through implementation of the Future Land Use Plan. This chapter provides a link between ideals and action so that the vision of future changes in the development pattern expressed by residents can become a reality.

INTRODUCTION

In many ways, residents seek to retain the small city atmosphere that has characterized Florence throughout its history. There has always been a sense of "place" associated with Florence as a City and a regional center in Northeastern South Carolina. A significant number of Florence residents still identify with the City's historic downtown and its different neighborhoods.

There are many urban design and land use elements that combine to create this perception of Florence. Streets with extensive tree cover and local parks help to complete the picture. Likewise, Francis Marion University and the two regional medical centers assist with "place-making" by creating destinations that draw residents and visitors alike. Lastly, the major businesses and industries that employ local residents are also landmarks and contribute to the overall impression of the City. The issues that relate to land use, development and redevelopment, community design and appearance, downtown, and historic preservation are addressed in this chapter.

Nearly all of the City's existing land area is developed, so the protection and improvement of existing neighborhoods is a significant issue for many residents. This is such a critical issue that it occupied a majority of time for voicing resident opinions at Community Workshop #1 held in September 2009. Many of the housing and neighborhood issues fall into this category of addressing the already built-out areas of the City that are in need of improvement and, in some cases, restoration or even redevelopment.

A second major opportunity is addressing new development, the so-called “greenfield” development on the City’s edges (and just outside its edges). Zoning for new development needs to encourage quality outcomes and protect neighbors from the encroachment of conflicting land uses. Lastly, future redevelopment plans of the downtown area need to focus on the re-creation of appropriate urban forms and walkable spaces that effectively interface with the recently constructed cultural buildings. The opportunity for downtown redevelopment has become more ripe than ever. This opportunity needs to be leveraged with the injection of proper financial and zoning incentives.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the necessary policy guidance to enable the City to plan effectively for its future growth, redevelopment, and character enhancement while respecting the existing land use pattern. Sound planning will ensure that community growth occurs in harmony with the natural environment, transportation pattern, public services, employment opportunities, and existing infrastructure. Sound planning is also needed to enhance the character and appearance of the City. Consider these issues and opportunities:

- ◆ Land use and its context with the natural environment are integral components of this Comprehensive Plan. Florence is located in a beautiful, wooded setting that, when correctly protected, provides the opportunity for the highest quality, sustainable development.
- ◆ Florence has a highly-developed transportation system. The City needs to pursue future growth and redevelopment in a fashion that optimizes the use and operating efficiency of current roadways and minimizes the need for costly new arterial and collector streets.
- ◆ Florence’s water distribution and sewer systems serve a wide area of dispersed development within both the incorporated City limits and the unincorporated periphery. Future growth should occur within the boundary that has already been defined by existing “urban-level” water and sanitary sewer service areas, which largely coincides with the designated planning area. Containing growth will allow the City to operate these systems more efficiently and invest in strengthening and enhancing their reliability rather than extending them further outward.

- ◆ Outward growth of businesses, shopping centers, and other forms of nonresidential development over the past 50 years has resulted in a dramatic and highly visible decline in value of once-enviable commercial areas. The City’s downtown and its traditional commercial highway corridors have been virtually “left behind” to a fate of “tired,” lower-value uses and abandonments.

This element of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to address these and other issues. The goals of this element are as follows:

- *Effectively manage future growth toward a more compact and fiscally responsible pattern of development.*
- *Strengthen the integrity and livability of existing neighborhoods through appropriate infill development and reinvestment.*
- *Preserve the community’s rich and valued open spaces and environmental resources while adopting more sustainable development practices that use these resources to advantage.*
- *Develop and redevelop downtown to regain its stature as a local and regional destination of living, culture, entertainment, and community gathering.*
- *Preserve community heritage through historic preservation/restoration and neighborhood integrity improvements.*
- *Enhance the character and aesthetic attractiveness of the community and its neighborhoods, districts, and approach corridors.*

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Natural Environment

This plan puts forward a vision related to overall livability and a high quality of life. Florence has flourished for many years, in large part, due to its rich and plentiful environmental resources. The spirit of sustainability intends to preserve or improve these environmental resources for future generations. Decisive action at this time fulfills the shared responsibility of all residents to permit future generations the ability to enjoy continued environmental opportunities.

Sensitive areas, stream corridors, and forest cover remain core values, but this summary also introduces contemporary concepts such as energy conservation, building design, and alternative transportation policies. A sustainable City requires that each of these issues receives attention, but also more importantly, that these policies, lead to action. In the context of a complex city such as Florence, this plan must focus on topics such as jobs, housing, streets, education, municipal finances, and culture. At the same time that growth and impacts occur in these areas, an effort must be made to limit the negative environmental effects.

Summary of Existing Natural Environment Conditions

The following paragraphs summarize the conditions and issues facing Florence with respect to the natural environment.

- ◆ Florence enjoys a gentle topography that adds to its environmental character without the constraints of steep slopes to pose development problems or severe land erosion.
- ◆ The natural amenities offered by the gently rolling terrain, mature forests, streams, and abundant groundwater resources are highly desirable as a living environment. These natural areas are depicted in **Map 2.1, Natural Areas**. There is an attraction to this open, rural landscape that, without deliberate planning, may be further eroded by scattered and short-sighted development patterns.
- ◆ Much of the undeveloped land surrounding the City is split almost evenly in forest, low-lying scrubland, or cropland that was cleared many years ago. Typically, the cost of developing woodland is higher, as even minimal clearing raises the price of land development and is also undesirable. Development on agricultural cropland, though basically less expensive, should require the introduction of sufficient trees and other landscaping materials to maintain a community appearance that is consistent with the remainder of the City.
- ◆ As a riparian community with several significant stream corridors, such as Jeffries and Middle Swamp Creeks, certain areas of Florence can be particularly susceptible to drainage issues and localized flooding. (Note the floodplains shown on **Map 2.1, Natural Areas**.) The City has developed storm sewers and has implemented a legal mechanism that reduces or eliminates stormwater management fees for developments that

provide their own on-site stormwater reduction measures. Newer forms of development and surface runoff management practices are now available that are less costly and reduce the need for extensive storm sewers.

- ◆ The City has acquired substantial areas of land along the Jeffries Creek corridor (see **Map 2.2, Park Service Areas**). These acquisitions result in benefits including habitat preservation, recreational and nature-education opportunities, permanent protection from inappropriate development, and aesthetic advantages to nearby neighborhoods.
- ◆ The following federally threatened or endangered species are found in Florence County and may be present within the study area. (See **Table 2.1: Florence County Species**.)
- ◆ The City enjoys a substantial tree canopy, which provides desirable summer

Table 2.1: Florence County Species

Genus/Species	Common Name
Haliaeetus LeucoCephalus	Bald Eagle
Oxypolis Canbyi	Canby's Dropwort
Picoides Borealis	Red-Cockaded Woodpecker
Schwalbea Americana	Chaffseed

Source: SC Department of Natural Resources

shade and significantly contributes to its community character. Many of the streets are tree-lined, with stands of native vegetation within the City and throughout the planning area. It is important that plans for landscaping and maintenance of the street canopy be provided for all neighborhoods in Florence.

- ◆ The intensively developed, auto-oriented commercial areas are largely impervious and, therefore,



One of Florence's many pleasant, tree-lined residential streets. Note the two separate directional lanes and boulevard-style median.

warrant improvements to avoid flooding and damage to local waterways. The City should seek ways to incorporate sustainable practices into all new development projects such as the preservation of open space, stormwater retention, and the use of natural drainageways.

Land Use and Community Character

This chapter examines the basic use of land, together with the standards and elements of design that affect the appearance of neighborhoods, commercial areas, and corridors – and the compatibility among and between them. This includes such factors as density (units per acre), intensity (building coverage and floor area), building setbacks, height and lot coverage, amount of open space, and vegetation. Since the zoning and subdivision regulations direct the design of individual sites, they warrant special attention.

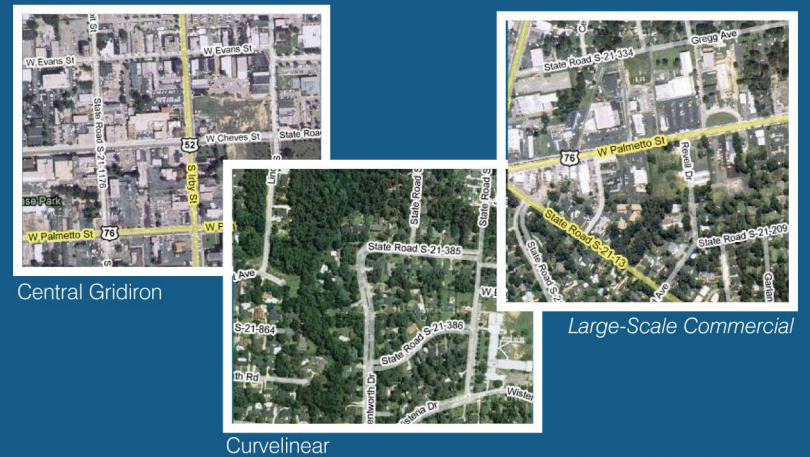
However, there are other implementation measures that can be employed to bring about appropriate development and encourage attractive redevelopment where needed. These tools include street access management, placement of park and recreational facilities, provision of other neighborhood amenities, housing rehabilitation, and other investment strategies. They must be fully exploited so that future development reflects the aspirations of Florence residents, as presented in *Chapter 1, Plan Introduction*.

The term “land use” literally relates to the use of land. However, it is the design of individual uses, districts, and neighborhoods that influence the “look and feel” of development more than the use itself. Therefore, the “character” of an area is more distinctly defined by the intensity (height and scale) of development, the arrangement of buildings and parking areas, the preservation and use of open space, and other aesthetic design features.

For instance, downtown and the originally settled portions of Florence have a grid street pattern, buildings mostly positioned close to the street, and sidewalks. This traditional form of development differentiates the older areas of Florence from the more auto-oriented nature that occurred after 1950 in the outer parts of the City. These later-established areas are largely characterized by greater setbacks and expansive parking areas, larger-scale buildings and out-parcels, and towering signs in the commercial areas. While also commercial in use, the outlying shopping malls and large-scale buildings produce a much different character of development than downtown or the

smaller commercial strip centers, such as along South Irby St. (See *Figure 2.1: Example Development Forms*.)

Figure 2.1: Example Development Forms

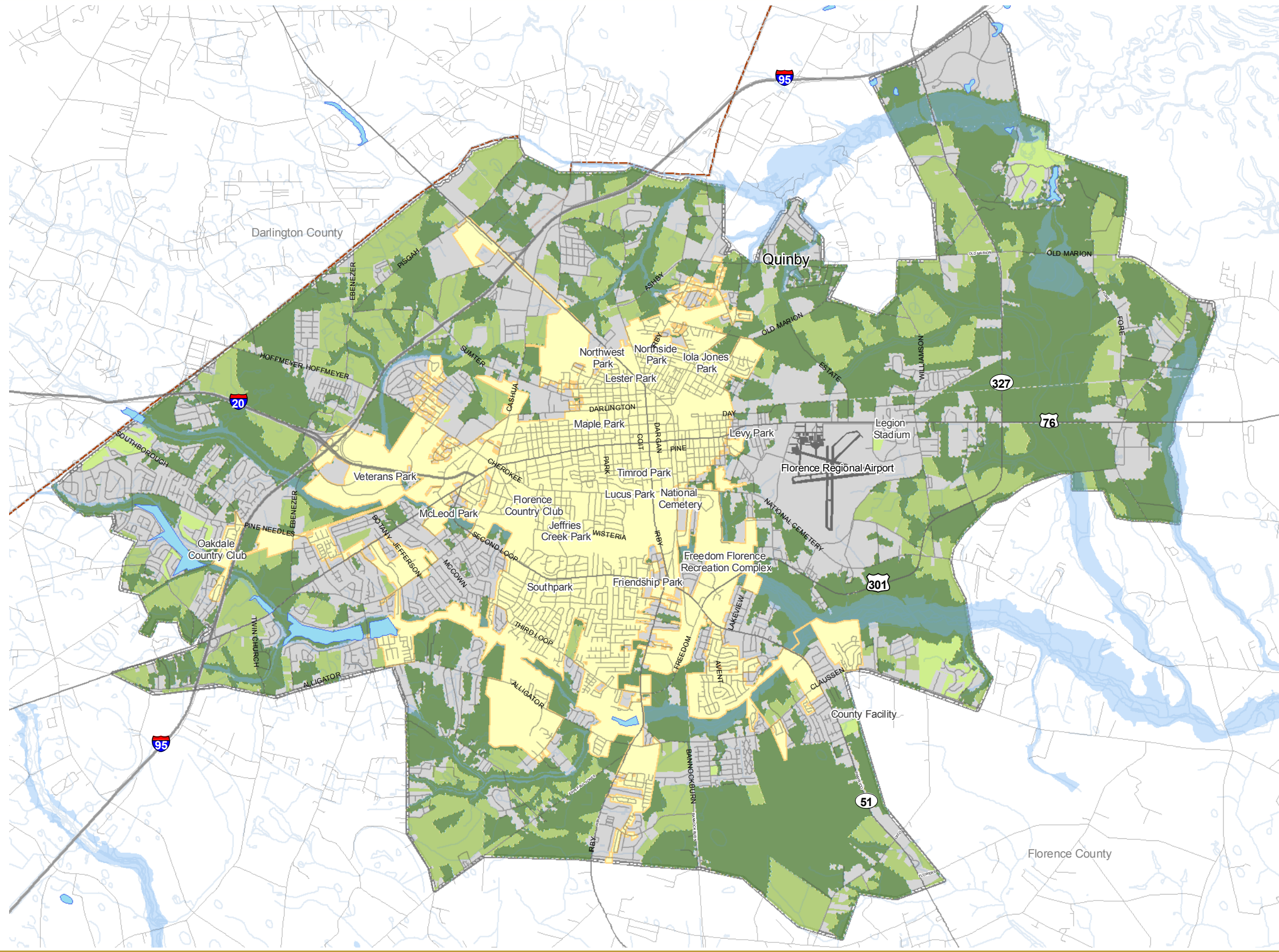


Source: Google Maps

It is this combination of land use and design that determines the compatibility and quality of development. Aesthetic enhancements such as attention to building scale, abundant landscaping and screening, sign control, and site amenities also contribute to the appeal of a neighborhood or commercial area. It is each of the above considerations that, collectively, are responsible for the community’s character and appearance and the impressions left on visitors and passers-by.

Examples of how design influences character within different land use types include:

- ◆ A single-family home situated on a large lot with mature trees and separated from neighboring homes versus a detached single-family home on a small lot with minimal yard space and vegetation;
- ◆ A master-planned business park in a campus-like setting versus an office building on an individual site surrounded by a parking lot;



LEGEND

Natural Areas

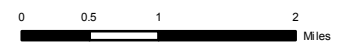
- Natural Areas
- Parks & Open Space
- Agriculture

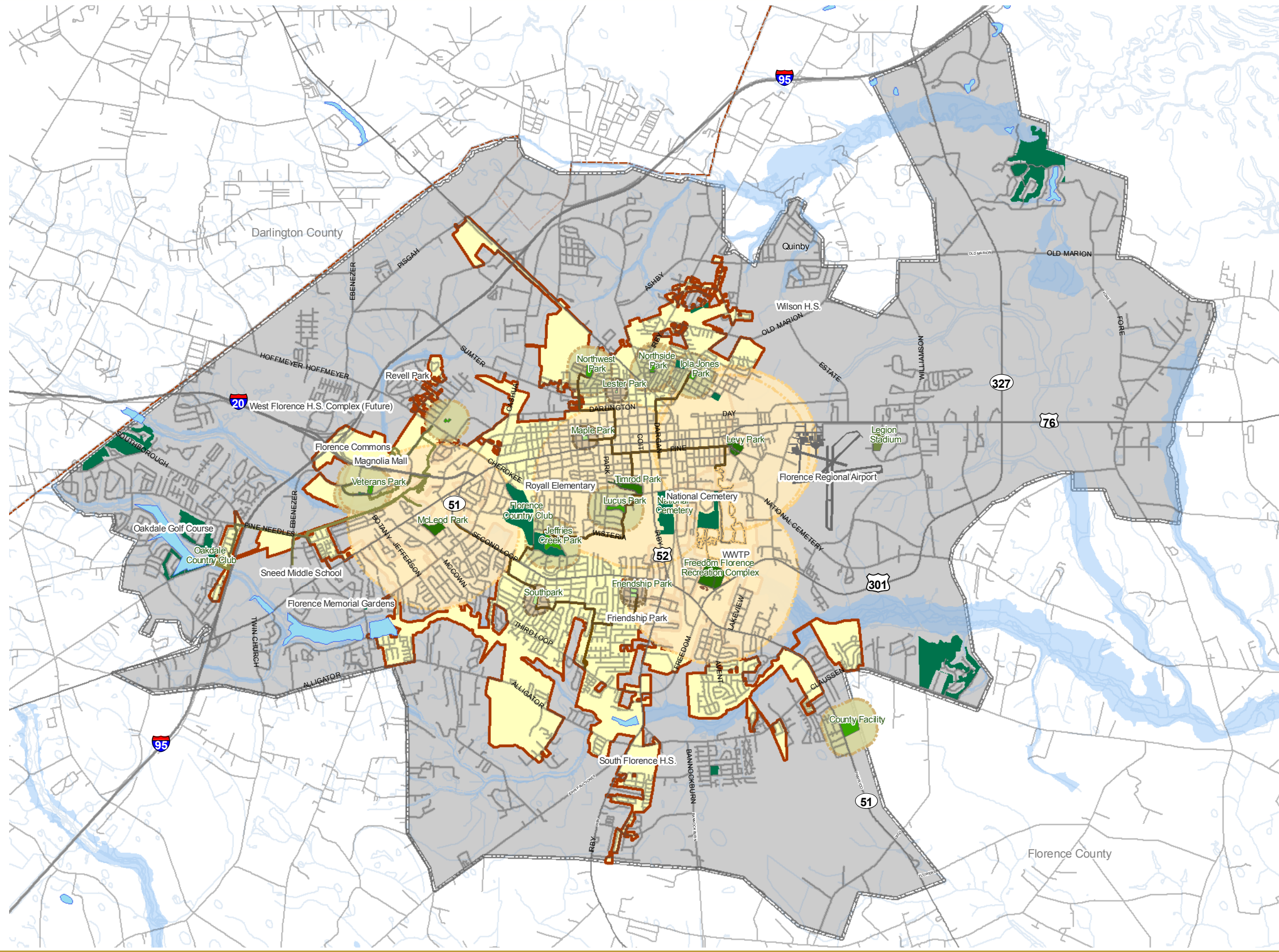
Boundaries & Infrastructure

- City Limits
- County Boundary
- Planning Area
- Quinby
- Railroad

Floodplain and Waterbodies

- 100-year floodplain
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams





LEGEND

Parks, Trails, and Service Areas

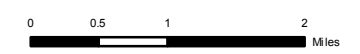
- Community Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Pocket Park
- Special Use Park
- Open Space
- Community Park Service Area (1 mile)
- Neighborhood Park Service Area (1/4 mile)
- Pocket Park Service Area (1/8 mile)
- Street Trails
- Rail to Trail
- Freedom Florence Trails
- Fitness Trails

Boundaries & Infrastructure

- City Limits
- County Boundary
- Planning Area
- Quinby
- Railroad

Floodplain and Waterbodies

- 100-year floodplain
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams



- ◆ Storefront shops and small cafes in a walkable, neighborhood setting versus “big box” stores and pad-site restaurants and retailers in a large-scale shopping center with expansive surface parking and minimal landscaping; and
- ◆ A manufacturing facility that is nestled on a large site and among broad open space and mature trees and landscaping versus a more intensive industrial operation with outdoor activity and unscreened equipment storage.

Above are examples of the same land use (and often zoning) categories that may assume much different characters depending on their layout, design, and environmental context. Each of these character/use types can be considered as desirable to a community when situated in an appropriate location and developed to standards that minimize their potentially negative impacts.

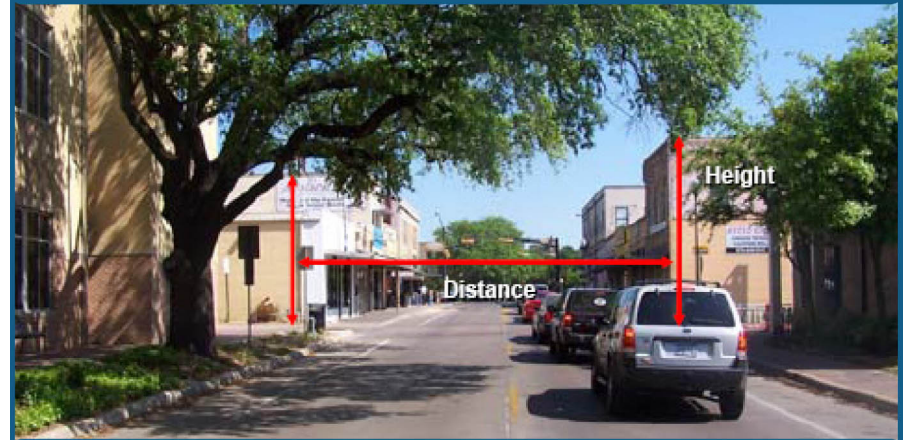
Mixing character types is usually disruptive. For instance, constructing a standalone store or office building with on-site parking in the front yard in the midst of a downtown block can damage the visual integrity of that block. This practice breaks the storefront façade “enclosure,” thereby creating an undesirable gap for pedestrians. Conversely, siting a small home close to the street within an estate residential area can break the continuity of front lawns and disturb the park-like setting of a suburban neighborhood. Plans, policies, and regulations must be mindful of neighboring development.

The zoning ordinance plays a significant role in establishing and protecting the physical character of the community. After all, this ordinance determines the types of use and delineation of districts, together with the height and area requirements and standards for landscaping, open space, and signage. As a result, the zoning ordinance largely directs the development outcomes. This is important since it provides a regulatory context in which local land use decisions may be made to foster a sustainable environment, a prosperous economy, and a high quality of life. The City’s development ordinances (zoning, subdivision, stormwater management, and building codes) represent the primary tools for implementing this policy document. A number of key recommendations are presented later in this chapter that are intended to reconcile the zoning districts and their intended character.

Existing Land Use Inventory

Existing Land Use Character is presented in [Map 2.3, Existing Land Use](#). The inventory reflects both the use of land (delineated as vacant, natural, agriculture, residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and parks), as well as its character. (See [Figure 2.2: Urban Character](#).)

Figure 2.2: Urban Character



Urban character is defined by the relationship of the buildings to the street, even if the buildings are only one or two stories tall. The sense of enclosure is defined by the buildings.

Florence can be divided generally into eight character classes as follows:

- ◆ **Urban** is unique to the downtown Florence area by virtue of the intensity and form of development.
- ◆ **Auto-Urban** reflects the more densely developed single- and multiple family neighborhoods; as well as the commercial uses along each of the main corridors, shopping centers, and the two large medical centers.
- ◆ **Industrial Uses** are composed mainly of individual manufacturing/storage buildings, industrial parks, railroad operations and switching yards, and campus-like industrial parks. Many of the standalone industrial sites within Florence resemble auto-urban development because of their large employee parking areas.

- ◆ **Suburban** includes the larger lot neighborhoods primarily on the fringes and outside the City, as well as nonresidential sites with liberal open space and vegetation.
- ◆ **Rural** makes up the natural and agricultural areas around the periphery of the City, including a few farmsteads and large-acreage estates.
- ◆ The **Special Use** category is comprised of miscellaneous uses or character types that cannot be readily characterized. The most significant use of this type in Florence is Florence Regional Airport.
- ◆ **Institutional Development** includes City- and other publicly-owned parcels/buildings, including schools.
- ◆ The **Parks and Open Space** class is composed of public parks and undeveloped areas that will remain permanently vacant or reserved as future parks.

Currently, U.S. 52 (Lucas/Irby Streets), U.S. 73 (Palmetto St.), W. Darlington St., N. Cashua Dr., Hoffmeyer Rd., David McLeod Blvd., W. Evans St., and portions of 2nd Loop Road (SC 51/Pamplico Hwy.) make up the major thoroughfares that traverse the City, attracting a large majority of “Auto-Urban Commercial” development leading into downtown.

Development in the northwestern sectors of the City and planning area is heavily influenced by Interstates 95 and 20, which serve as both barriers to development and as attractors to commercial development at their interchanges.

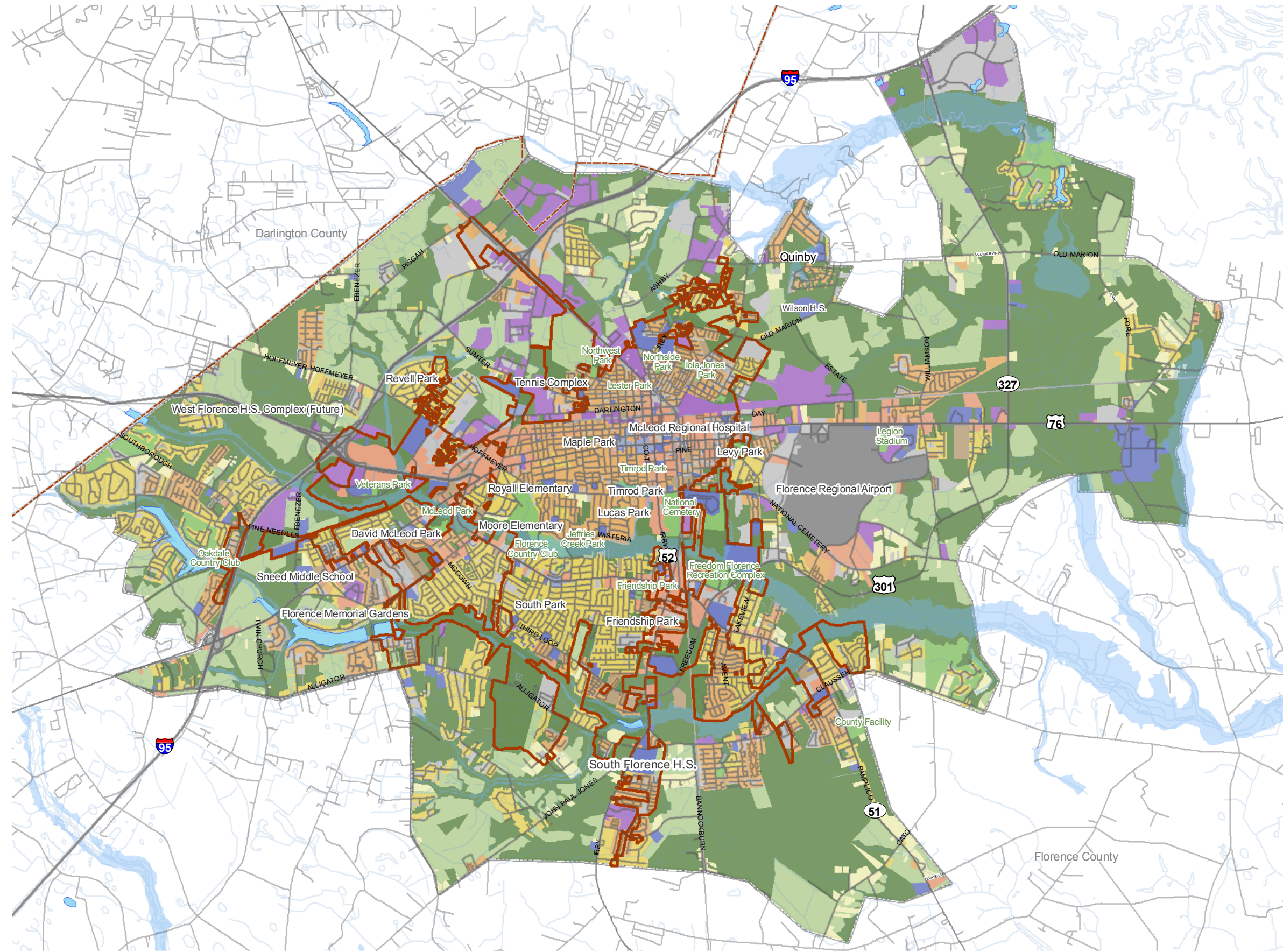
Industrial sites are scattered throughout Florence, though larger concentrations of manufacturing and storage operations are located in the northwestern sector of the City, at the far northwest edge of the planning area north of I-95, and at the I-95 and Williston Rd. interchange.

Surrounding downtown are a variety of higher-density residential uses, including largely “Auto-Urban Single-Family,” with some “Auto-Urban Multi-Family.” “Suburban Residential” uses are located in the outer portions of the City and in the unincorporated portions of the planning area. In many instances, “Auto-Urban Multi-Family” uses are co-mingled in the Suburban areas, mainly near arterial street intersections.

Much of the area surrounding the City limits is comprised of “Agriculture” and “Natural” (mainly woodland) land uses, with scattered lower-density residential development dispersed throughout. The quantities of the individual land use designations are exhibited in [Table 2.2, Existing Land Use and Character](#).

Findings and Issues

- ◆ Land development within the planning area totals approximately 60,000 acres (93.6 square miles), as shown in [Map 2.3, Existing Land Use](#). This acreage excludes water bodies and rights-of-way. The area outside of the City limits is predominantly comprised of “Natural” (21,474 acres) and “Agriculture” (9,740 acres) land uses with pockets of Estate Residential (1,760 acres) and Suburban Residential (4,484 acres).
- ◆ According to [Table 2.2, Existing Land Use and Character](#), approximately 57 percent of the land within the City and unincorporated planning area is “Natural” (40 percent) or “Agriculture” (17 percent).
- ◆ “Suburban Residential,” “Auto-Urban Single-Family Residential,” and “Auto-Urban Commercial” comprise the next three largest categories, altogether totaling nearly 47 percent of the calculated land area within the City. “Vacant” (1,030 acres) and “Parks” (4845 acres) together, account for roughly 14 percent of the total acreage within the City limits.
- ◆ The scattering of single industrial buildings throughout Florence is unusual and, while accommodating relatively “light” manufacturing operations, nevertheless represents an incompatible intrusion to nearby residential neighborhoods. Often, these operations can also create unusual amounts of traffic congestion during employee shift changes. The undesirable effects of this pattern can be mitigated by enhanced landscape buffering and the establishment of highway turning lanes where needed, as well as provisions to effectively transition these uses over time.
- ◆ The two large medical centers represent a vital asset to the community. They occupy large, monumental campuses, but have developed these sites through vastly different means. Carolinas Medical Center chose to develop on a large tract of vacant land at the southeastern edge of the City into a suburban form of development; McLeod Medical Center established its campus immediately east of downtown through the gradual acquisition and redevelopment of a once-residential area into an auto-urban site



LEGEND

Existing Land Use

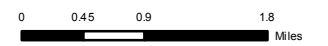
- Vacant
- Estate Residential
- Suburban Residential
- Auto-Urban Single-Family
- Auto-Urban Multi-Family
- Mobile Homes
- Auto-Urban Commercial
- Urban
- Industrial
- Office
- Public & Institutional
- Special Use
- Agriculture
- Parks & Open Space
- Natural

Boundaries & Infrastructure

- City Limits
- County Boundary
- Planning Area
- Places
- Railroad

Floodplain and Waterbodies

- 100-year floodplain
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams



using the original grid street pattern. Both institutions have campus plans that will play significant roles in future City zoning decisions. (See **Figure 2.3: Industrial Site Locations.**)

- ◆ Francis Marion University’s main campus location at the far eastern edge of the planning area, nearly eight miles from downtown Florence, creates the natural tendency of reducing its importance as a part of the City’s urban fabric. FMU’s pastoral campus site, a former plantation, is now

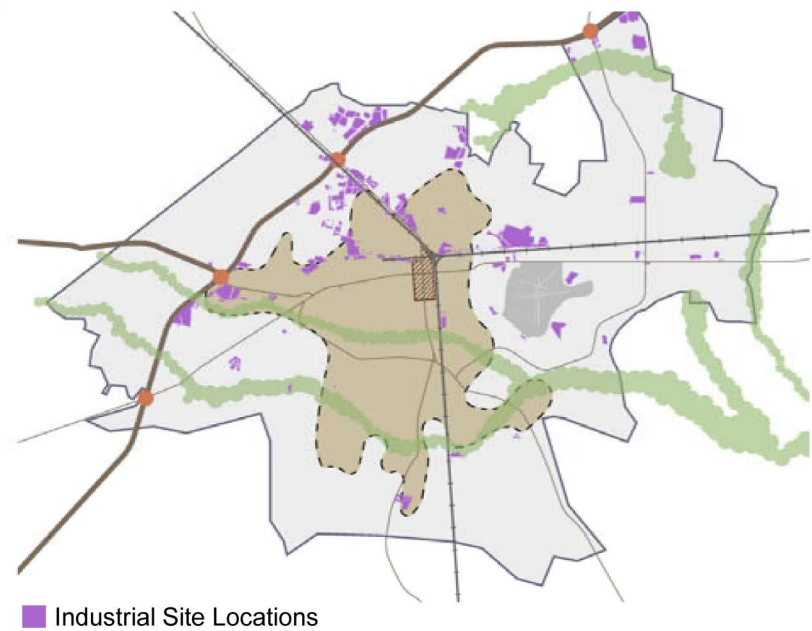
Table 2.2: Existing Land Use and Character

Existing Land Use/ Character	City of Florence		Unincorporated		Total Planning Area	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Vacant	1,032.4	9.3%	2,448.2	5.0%	3,480.6	5.8%
Auto-Urban Single-Family Residential	2,105.6	18.9%	2,457.3	5.0%	4,562.9	7.6%
Suburban Residential	1,760.5	15.8%	4,483.9	9.2%	6,244.3	10.4%
Estate Residential	95.1	0.9%	1,755.9	3.6%	1,851.0	3.1%
Auto-Urban Multi-Family Residential	470.3	4.2%	455.6	0.9%	925.9	1.5%
Auto-Urban Commercial	1,216.1	10.9%	814.2	1.7%	2,030.3	3.4%
Urban	20.0	0.2%	0.0	0.0%	20.0	0.0%
Industrial	136.7	1.2%	2,227.3	4.6%	2,364.0	3.9%
Public / Institutional	905.9	8.1%	944.1	1.9%	1,850.0	3.1%
Office	81.0	0.7%	25.2	0.1%	106.1	0.2%
Special Use	0.0	0.0%	1,170.4	2.4%	1,170.4	2.0%
Mobile Homes	2.0	0.0%	12.9	0.0%	14.9	0.0%
Natural	2,464.8	22.1%	21,474.1	44.1%	23,938.9	40.0%
Parks & Open Space	483.5	4.3%	733.9	1.5%	1,217.4	2.0%
Agriculture	363.3	3.3%	9,743.0	20.0%	10,106.4	16.9%
Total	11,137.3	100%	48,745.9	100%	59,883.1	100%

built out. Its isolation has been offset to a great extent by the University’s forward-thinking decisions to locate its new Performing Arts Center in the midst of the downtown core, site offices and other activities within the City, and promote an increased array of “in-town” student activities.

- ◆ Florence Regional Airport and its runway approaches occupy a significant area east of the downtown and McLeod Medical Center campus. While conveniently situated for travelers and supporting businesses, its large extent of open land has been perceived as a barrier to eastward development. This perception as a deterrent to growth, while partly correct, was overshadowed by the construction of I-95/20 northwest of the City over 40 years ago. The interstate highways radically altered the pattern of development, pulling most growth westward.
- ◆ The outward development of shopping malls, clustered hotel/restaurant complexes, convention facilities, and large and large-scale big-box

Figure 2.3: Industrial Site Locations



Industrial site locations are scattered throughout the Florence planning area, particularly in the unincorporated parts.

facilities has contributed to the gradual deterioration of older commercial areas. There are many instances of vacant buildings, abandonments, and marginal commercial enterprises in the highly visible approach corridors to the City. The City needs to adopt policies and regulations that will effectively prevent any further over-extension of commercial development. It also needs to ensure that vacated and abandoned structures are appropriately reused or removed in a timely fashion.

- ◆ The City's corporate boundary is excessively complicated, due mainly to the combination of unfavorable State legislation that hampers orderly annexation and the pattern of sewer/water service areas that span the City limits. There are many instances of large clusters of unincorporated areas – in some cases individual – lots that are surrounded by the City. These two factors, plus the practice of individual-lot annexations, block much of the City's ability to require or incentivize annexation. The resulting boundary pattern creates confusion regarding the City's tax base, the provision of public services, and the consistency of development regulations and the quality of development.

Water and Wastewater Utilities

Water supply and distribution, along with wastewater collection and treatment, are essential services that will enable Florence to continue growing and developing over time. Along with maintaining the physical components of these utility systems, the City must also attend to the public policy objectives for fiscal responsibility in providing water and wastewater connections to new developments. In both respects, Florence is pursuing positive end goals:

Investing in system maintenance and improvements while attempting to live up to its legacy policies of servicing both incorporated and unincorporated areas. Nearly all development within the planning area, both in and out of the City, is provided water supply and wastewater collection services by the City Utilities Department. The unincorporated area, which was once less intensively developed, was originally served by rural-standard water systems operated by Florence County and private, on-lot septic tanks or small-scale sewage collection and treatment systems. The City acquired the County's water and sewer systems through a Joint Services Agreement in 2002; this agreement extended the City's franchise area to include a substantial amount of rural area that is far outside the City's zoning and subdivision regulatory jurisdiction.

Given this dissonance between authority and responsibility, the City must diligently investigate and deliberately pursue a future course of action that will lead to a more fiscally sustainable outcome. Additional detail on the current status of Florence's water and wastewater systems are described below:

Summary of Existing Conditions:

Water Supply and Treatment

The City of Florence relies on groundwater as its primary supply source, from deep wells drilled into the Middendorf and Black Creek aquifers. The City provides drinking water for approximately 75,000 people and more than 2,990 businesses. Approximately 70 percent of Florence's water is provided by the groundwater well system. The City of Florence also operates the Pee Dee River Regional Surface Water Plant. This plant, which utilizes the Pee Dee River as its source, provides the remaining 30 percent of Florence's water supply.

Water Distribution and Storage

The service area for the City's drinking water supply system includes all areas within the City limits and much of northern Florence County, with the exception of Timmonsville. There are approximately 30,100 system connections (2010). The Comprehensive Planning study area includes areas contiguous to the existing City limits that are anticipated as potential areas for future development and annexation. Components evaluated for this analysis included water distribution and water storage.

A computerized modeling assessment of the City's water distribution system revealed a few isolated locations within the study area that currently have low pressures. The Water and Sewer Master Plan developed in 2005 (CDM, BP Barber, Davis and Brown) recommended several system upgrades to address these low pressure areas. These include the following:

- ◆ 30-inch transmission main along 301 Bypass to Pamplico Highway;
- ◆ Extend 12-inch line along Francis Marion road south of Old Wallace Gregg Road;
- ◆ Extend 12-inch line on John C. Calhoun Road and Williamson Road;

- ◆ Install 24-inch line on John Paul Jones road from the intersection of Third Loop Road and Highway 52/301, and
- ◆ Install 18-inch line in the Sumter Road / Pisgah Road area

When these modifications are incorporated into the model, the system is expected to meet the South Carolina water pressure standards for both average day demand and peak day demand conditions within the study area. Areas further outside of the study area will require additional modifications to alleviate future pressure problems.

According to South Carolina Department of Environment and Health Control (SC DHEC) guidelines, the system-wide storage capacity for emergency conditions should be 11.6 million gallons (MG). Acceptable storage for emergency conditions includes elevated storage and ground storage with auxiliary power for pumping (per SC DHEC). Actual elevated storage in the system is 5.1 MG, but this storage is augmented by the City's treatment facilities that have auxiliary power. Because auxiliary power has been provided, the City has an emergency supply capacity of 27.9 million gallons per day (MGD).

Wastewater Collection and Treatment

The service area for the wastewater (sewer) system is the same as that for the water supply system, but the infrastructure (collection system) is not as expansive as the water system (approximately 19,500 connections, 2010). The 2005 Utilities Master Plan included an evaluation of five major subsystems that comprise the City's collection system. As is the case with many municipal sewer collection systems, the report concluded that each of the City's subsystems experienced a significant volume of infiltration and inflow (I/I) related to rainfall. This was attributed primarily to the age of the systems. Most of the older parts of the system are located within the study area. To address the issue, recommendations were provided for inspection and rehabilitation of the older portions of the collection system.

In addition to the utilities plan, a separate study was undertaken to address specific sewer system capacity, management, operations, and maintenance issues. Recent projects implemented by the City to address the issue of I/I have included:

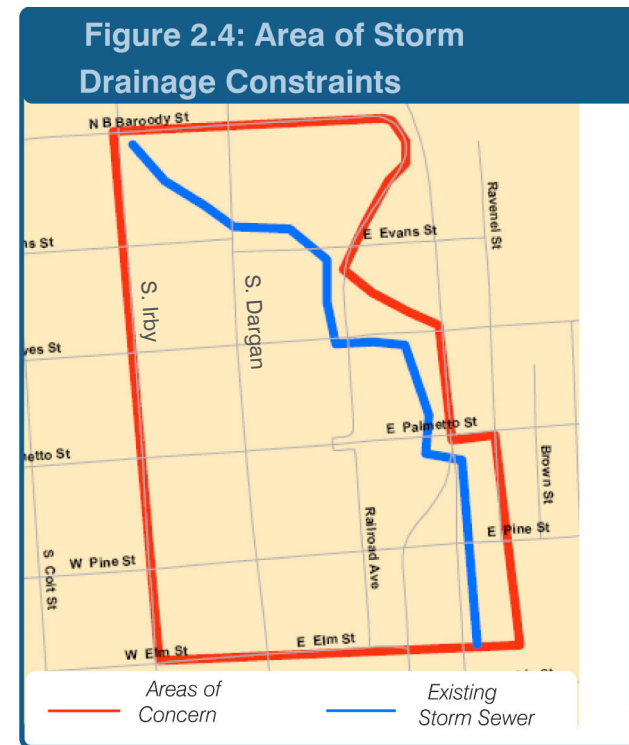
- ◆ Raising the manholes on the Middle Swamp gravity line (upstream of the pump station located on Pamplico Highway) and
- ◆ Adding a force main downstream of this pump station to increase discharge capacity.

The utilities plan also considered the need to accommodate future growth through the year 2025 and extrapolated to 2030. System improvements were recommended in the utilities plan to handle new flows related to anticipated growth. Florence is also embarking on the construction of a new \$120 million wastewater treatment facility on the site of the existing plant.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater management service for Florence is restricted to the City limits. The collection and drainage system has issues related to the age of the system. The City has recently completed several large drainage projects to help alleviate specific drainage issues in areas of Florence, but in the downtown area there are still some flooding and capacity issues that need to be resolved. (See **Figure 2.4: Area of Storm Drainage Constraints.**)

A large portion of the downtown area consists of impervious surfaces that contribute to stormwater runoff. This runoff is typically discharged to the SC DOT's right-of-way, and, in general, there is no more capacity for additional runoff in this area. During heavy rainfall events, flooding can occur in low lying areas, such as bridge underpasses.



In addition to stormwater quantity, the City is rated as an “MS4 Community” (municipal separate storm sewer system) that is regulated by Phase II of the U.S. EPA’s NPDES (national pollutant discharge elimination system) stormwater requirements. The City has developed a stormwater management plan that identifies best management practices (BMPs) that will be implemented to improve and enhance the quality of stormwater runoff within the City. The implementation of the BMPs from the Stormwater Management Plan will need to be incorporated into the evaluation of drainage issues to ensure that the City maintains compliance with the NPDES Phase II regulations.

Findings and Issues

Following is a summary of the findings and growth management issues pertaining to the City’s utility system infrastructure:

- ◆ Water System
 - » Based on a review of the water distribution and storage system, there are no significant constraints within the study area to accommodate future land development and redevelopment.
- ◆ Wastewater Collection
 - » Potential constraints for the wastewater management system include infiltration / inflow into older portions of the system.
 - » A priority for expanding the City’s wastewater management system is to extend the system into the pockets of undeveloped areas that are within the current system’s overall boundaries.
- ◆ Stormwater Management
 - » As downtown redevelopment continues, the inadequacy of existing stormwater facilities will present a potential constraint requiring future projects to provide on-site stormwater detention.
 - » The inadequacy of stormwater handling capacity in low-lying areas and bridge underpasses needs to be further evaluated in detail to determine the most effective measures to alleviate these problems.

Successful resolution of these stormwater capacity issues will require continuing input, cooperation, and coordination between the City, Florence County, and SC DOT.

Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation facilities are an essential part of a healthy, quality, and vibrant community environment. They provide the necessary components for events outside of the home and after work and school activities. Whether for passive or active use, parks and recreation facilities are an important part of everyday, active living – providing health benefits for children, adults, and seniors alike. The park system enhances the community’s “quality of life,” boosting economic development efforts to recruit and retain a skilled workforce; build a strong tax base to finance system expansion, facility enhancements, and maintenance; and attract new families and retirees alike.

The mission of the Florence Parks and Leisure Services Department is to enhance the quality of life in Florence by providing quality parks, facilities, programs, and services in the City. It is responsible for addressing the availability, quality, type, size, and location of recreation opportunities to meet the needs of Florence’s residents and visitors to the community. In recent years, the park system has grown to about 600 acres of land (both developed and undeveloped) in 16 locations throughout the community, an extensive trail system, 17 ball fields, 24 tennis courts, and 10 playgrounds. The City has also recently completed development of its Tennis Complex in the northern part of the City, which includes 30 tennis courts (4 clay courts) and other recreational amenities. Locations of these parks are illustrated in [Map 2.2, Park Service Areas](#) and in [Table 2.3: Park Classification System](#).

Pocket, Neighborhood, and Community Parks

The Department’s function has to be able to respond to new and emerging community desires and taking advantage of opportunities for new land acquisitions. While the identification of park projects, sites, and priorities are under the guidance of the Department, there are opportunities for the City to remain engaged. For example, through this process, residents identified a new tennis complex as a priority (along with many other park improvements).

Linear Parks and Trails

A system of parks and recreation areas is not complete without linear linkages between park facilities, neighborhoods, schools, and other public facilities. Such linkages may boost accessibility to parks and other public spaces,

Table 2.3: Park Classification System

Park Type	Description	Size	Service Radius	Standard
Community Park	Large-scale facility providing a variety of activities for the full community	Min. 5+ Acres	1 Mile	5.0 Acres per 1000 People
Neighborhood Park	Serves neighborhood residents within walking distance. Provides playground, picnicking, play courts, and other basic activities	Min. 2+ Acres	1/4 Mile	1.0 Acres per 1000 People
Pocket Park	Serves residents in the immediate area. Provides extremely limited facilities, such as a tot lot	0.25 to 1.0 Acre	1/8 Mile	2.5 Acres per 1000 People
Linear Park	Serves the broader community with activities such as bicycling, walking, and jogging. Used to interconnect other parks and school sites	Typically, 1 Mile	Available to All Persons	No Minimum Standard
Special Facility	Serves the broader community or region with specialized activities, such as a senior center or a stadium	No Minimum	Available to All Persons	No Minimum Standard
Open Space	Undeveloped land acquired for environmental protection, nature study, or limited activities. Often used as a reserve for future parks	No Minimum	Not Applicable	No Minimum Standard

- ◆ On-street designated bicycle routes;
- ◆ A two-mile “rail-trail” path developed on an abandoned railroad right-of-way;
- ◆ A system of hiking paths within the Freedom Florence Recreational Complex, then linking it with the National Cemetery and Levy Park; and
- ◆ A hiking trail along Jeffries Creek near the newly established Veterans Park and Civic Center at the western edge of Florence.

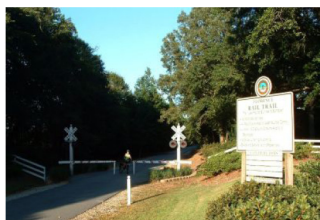
There will be many future opportunities to expand and enhance the trail system with additional land acquisitions along Jeffries Creek and Middle Swamp Creek, possible extension of the existing rail-trail, a new rail-trail along the existing rail line that parallels Lucas Street, widening and further improvement to the Veterans Park trail, and the designation of specific bicycle lanes for the on-street trails.

Park Service Areas

Evaluating service areas is an effective means of determining if the parks are well-located relative to their users. While some communities have sufficient, or even an abundance of, parkland, the location of these opportunities plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of the entire park system. This analysis

allows identification of those areas of the community that have sufficient park areas available and, more importantly, those that are in need of parks and recreation areas and facilities in closer proximity. (See **Table 2.4: List of Parks in Florence.**)

Depicted in **Map 2.2, Park Service Areas**, are service area buffers around all existing parks. The service areas are shown separately to emphasize the difference in service area coverage based on the classification of park. In some cases, such as the Freedom Florence Athletic Complex and Timrod Park, parks are multi-use destinations, serving as both a community park and a neighborhood park for nearby residents.



Florence's Rail-Trail Pathway is an example of a linear park.

thereby expanding the effective service area coverage of these existing parks. This, in turn, reduces the amount of public investment necessary to locate and construct parks densely throughout the community. In this planning process, residents expressed a desire for parks and other amenities to be within walking distance of home. Florence has established a trail system that is comprised of:

Table 2.4: List of Parks in Florence

Park Type	Size (in acres)	Ball Fields	Basketball Courts	Tennis Courts	Play-ground	Picnic Areas	Trails	Additional Features	Classification
Freedom Florence Recreational Complex	100	13	0	0	1	1	yes	Lake, gymnastic center, tournament softball, football and soccer fields	Community
Levy Park	13.6	2	6	2	1	1	no	Community center	Community
McLeod Park	51.5	5	6	0	0	multiple	yes	Two volleyball courts and skateboarding facility	Community
Timrod Park	18	0	0	11	0	multiple	yes	Gardens and two fitness courses	Community
Veterans Park	6	0	0	0	0	0	yes	Pathways with monuments and memorials; includes a wall of honor, an obelisk, as well as an amphitheatre	Neighborhood
Iola Jones Park	7.5	1	4	0	1	0	no	None	Neighborhood
Jeffries Creek Park	55	0	0	0	multiple	1	no	None	Neighborhood
Lucas Park	12	0	0	2	1	1	yes	Gardens	Neighborhood
Northside Park	7	2	0	0	0	0	yes	Swimming pool and community center	Neighborhood
Northwest Park	8.42	1	7	2	1	1	yes	Community center	Neighborhood
Friendship Park	3.5	2	0	0	0	1	no	Clubhouse and concession stand	Pocket
Legion Stadium	4	1	0	0	0	0	no	Baseball, press box; seats 1,500 people	Special Facility
Lester Park	1	0	0	0	1	1	no	Skating path	Pocket
Maple Park	4	2	0	0	1	0	no	Community center, two shuffleboard courts, four paddle tennis courts	Pocket
South Park	3.5	1	2	2	1	1	no	Skating path	Pocket

Source: City of Florence

From a purely locational standpoint, the analysis indicates that, within the City limits, the developed areas of the eastern side of the community are fairly well served by the existing neighborhood parks system. On the west side, there is an availability of community level parks that serve the local neighborhoods. However, some of the older neighborhoods near the City core and the fringes of the community, especially in the northwest, are deficient in park resources.

Findings of the service area analysis for each park type include:

- *Community parks have a primary service area of one mile, meaning that a majority of persons utilizing these area-wide parks generally reside within this radius. As illustrated by Map 2.3, Park Service Areas, Florence currently has four community parks. While their associated service areas cover most of the City limits, the far north and south areas of the City have limited coverage.*
- *Illustrated in Map 2.3, Park Service Areas, are the one-half mile service areas of the six neighborhood parks, as well as the one-quarter mile service areas of the pocket parks. The intent is to have well-distributed and evenly spaced neighborhood parks proximate to residentially developed areas. As displayed, the current array of neighborhood and pocket parks leaves many parts of the City uncovered, particularly in the original core and in the newer subdivisions at the edges.*
- *Natural areas, golf courses, and other specialized facilities do not have designated service areas. While these parks tend to benefit a relatively limited population, they provide an additional form of recreation for nearby residents. These passive park areas complement the Department's more active recreation holdings.*

Findings and Issues

- ◆ Many residential areas of the community and downtown Florence appear to be underserved by nearby neighborhood parks. The City should continue to pursue opportunities to acquire and develop these types of facilities, or further extend trails and bikeways to provide access to other nearby facilities.
- ◆ In Community Workshop #1, held in September, 2009, residents expressed the concern of imbalance in the quality of parks. Timrod Park is considered to be a highly valued asset that draws disproportionate usership because

other parks are perceived as less pleasant. Efforts should be made to upgrade landscaping, equipment, and other amenities to the point that all parks are thought of as having equal value.

- ◆ Neighborhoods in the unincorporated portions of the planning area are virtually unserved by any public parks, as there is only one Florence County park within the area. While some limited needs can be satisfied by the semi-public parks provided by subdivision or housing complex developers, there will be a continued need additional neighborhood and community parks in the currently unincorporated areas.
- ◆ Further, as new residential development occurs throughout the unincorporated planning area, there will be a need for additional neighborhood parks, but most especially in the already developed areas.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

During Colonial and early U.S. history, most development in the original 13 States took place in coastal areas, along canals and navigable river corridors, or along a handful of inland roads that followed original Native American trails. Inland areas such as Florence were unpopulated or lightly settled, mainly with subsistence agriculture, until the coming of the railroads in the mid-19th Century. Florence was established at the junction of three intersecting railroads serving the Southeast, with the first railroad station established in 1853. As railroad-related commerce increased, the original City was later laid out and platted by the railroad company as a speculative venture to sell real estate by attracting new residents. Florence was chartered in 1870 and incorporated in 1890.

The Civil War was the main historical event that shaped Florence. Because of its importance as a railroad center, the early township that eventually became Florence was the site of a military logistics and railroad maintenance center, stockade, medical center for wounded Confederate soldiers, and garrison for



The Florence National Cemetery is a historical landmark.

captured Union troops. The burial grounds adjacent to the stockade eventually became the Florence National Cemetery and continues to be a national burial ground for veterans of all wars, as well as a site for military commemorations.

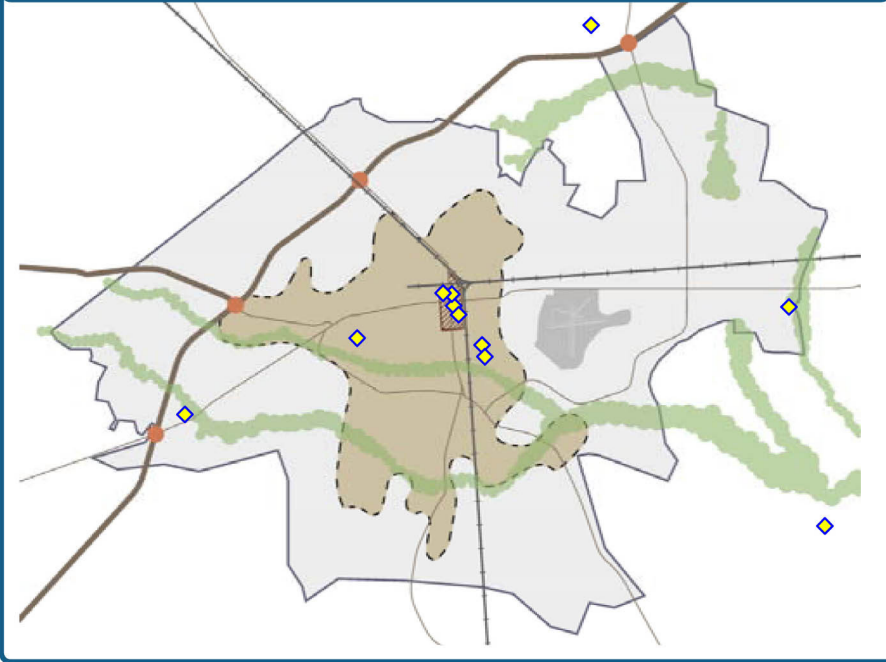
The City's ascendancy as a regional center started in the early 20th Century with the establishment of regional highways, manufacturing, and the establishment of supporting schools and cultural institutions. This progression has continued with the construction of Interstate highways, establishment of Francis Marion University, development of an airport supporting commercial airline traffic, continuing expansions of two major medical centers, and formation of a modern industrial base. Although Florence is highly optimistic about its future, it remains important to respect the past and work diligently to preserve its significant vestiges.

Florence has several organizations that have ardently worked to document and preserve the City's historical and cultural resources. (See **Figure 2.5: Sites Listed in the National Register of Historic Places**.) These include the Florence City/County Historical Commission, Florence Heritage Society, Florence Museum of Art and History, and the Mars Bluff Society. Additionally, Florence has 11 sites or structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places, including the following:

- ◆ Blooming Grove (Mandeville-Rogers House)*
- ◆ Bonnie Shade (currently the Mr. & Mrs. Mark Buyck Jr., residence)
- ◆ Christ Episcopal Church
- ◆ Claussen House*
- ◆ The former Florence Public Library (1925)
- ◆ Florence Downtown Historic District
- ◆ Florence National Cemetery
- ◆ Florence Stockade
- ◆ Poyner Junior High School
- ◆ Slave Houses of Gregg Plantation (Hewn Timber Cabins relocated to the Francis Marion University Campus)
- ◆ The former U.S. Post Office
- ◆ Young Farm

* Sites are located immediately outside planning area.

Figure 2.5: Sites Listed in the National Register of Historic Places



Further details on these buildings or properties, along with other Florence County listed sites can be found in the Florence County/Municipal Comprehensive Plan, prepared in 2007 by the Florence County Planning Department. In addition, there are many early 20th Century residences, churches, and institutional buildings, neighborhoods, and a portion of the remaining downtown area that are worthy of preservation and should be afforded further recognition.

In 2007, Florence County Progress commissioned the professional preparation of the "Florence Tourism Assessment and Plan" for the area. This report presents an assessment of existing historical resources and a series of recommendations that are both detailed and comprehensive. It focuses on the area's significance in both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, early settlement, and its significance in the early 20th Century. Recommendations presented in the report focus on stimulating tourism by taking advantage of these historical

and cultural opportunities such as the exploits of Revolutionary War hero, Gen. Francis (“Swamp Fox”) Marion, the nearby Darlington Raceway, and the more recently developed downtown cultural facilities.

These and other historical resources are important assets to the community, both in terms of defining its heritage and character and as opportunities for economic development. Strategies are presented later in this Chapter that will assist in their preservation.

PLAN FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the planning process, a number of issues and concerns were expressed related to land use compatibility, coordination of infrastructure with community growth, entry corridor design and appearance, and downtown and neighborhood redevelopment. These discussions formed the basis of the following focus areas, along with analysis of existing conditions; review of the current plans, ordinances, and practices; and examination of the planning and development process – all within the context of recent development patterns. Following the identification of the focus topics is a series of strategies and their rationales, along with the advisable implementation actions and initiatives.

Focus Area 2.1 Managing Future Growth

Until the 1960s, most development in Florence was compact and followed the original grid street systems or a modified grid system having a few curvilinear streets and a more suburban character. These developments utilized existing or minimally extended sewer, water, and storm sewer infrastructure, and the City limits were expanded in an orderly fashion as growth proceeded. With construction of the I-95/I-20 corridors, most of Florence’s new development was pulled westward. Development also proceeded southward with the construction of new arterial streets and establishment of the Carolinas Medical Center campus. These newly developing areas were served by privately owned or City- or County-operated utility systems, avoiding any vital need for

annexation. Also, lower land costs and the County’s more lenient zoning and subdivision standards served as an additional attractor to rural subdivisions and suburban development. Ultimately, development became overextended in many areas, leaving undeveloped gaps and a highly inefficient pattern of growth and infrastructure.

Strategy 2.1.1: Accommodation of Development and Redevelopment

Rationale

The amount of undeveloped land needed to accommodate future growth in Florence is expected to be between 1,500 and 2,000 acres. This takes into consideration the current supply of platted, but undeveloped, lots. Selection of future growth areas should be based on the optimization of existing streets and utilities, taking advantage of the many remaining enclaves of undeveloped land that have been bypassed by earlier developments.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Employ the City’s zoning policy to prohibit any further leap-frog development by refraining from premature rezoning decisions. Instead, utilize the adequate infill areas that exist within the City’s current water and sanitary sewer service areas for accommodating a variety of new forms of development.
- ◆ In those exceptional cases where development of “raw” land is determined to be appropriate, the City should continue its current policies that require developers to provide adequate water distribution line and sewer extensions as a part of any new subdivisions or land development project.
- ◆ Establish an intergovernmental relationship with Florence County that assures that zoning policies and land development standards within the planning area are uniform, regardless of whether the area is inside or outside the City limits. This may also be achieved by way of development and pre-annexation agreements for those unincorporated properties requesting City utilities.
- ◆ Clarify and, if necessary, redefine the City sewer/water franchise area boundaries that were expanded in the 2002 City-County Joint Services Agreement. Revise the “economic feasibility assessment” provisions to place greater emphasis on the need for effective growth management and compatibility with this Comprehensive Plan.

- ◆ Establish a firm policy as to when the City will and will not participate in utility line oversizing. Participation should conform with the policies of this Comprehensive Plan.
- ◆ Define primary (one to 10 years) and secondary growth areas with policies and criteria as to development timing.

Strategy 2.1.2: Provide additional attention and resources to promote infill development and redevelopment and to reinvest in the established neighborhoods.

Rationale

A tenet of growing smart is maximizing the efficiency of the development pattern. This means promoting contiguous development and land use patterns that capitalize on the availability of existing infrastructure, wherever possible. There are many sizeable undeveloped and underdeveloped areas around Florence that provide opportunity for infill development where existing streets and utilities may be readily extended at minimal cost. There are also many individual lots that may be developed or redeveloped, particularly in the central and north-central neighborhoods of Florence. It is important to recognize, however, that only a part of Florence's future growth can be accommodated by infill; the market will continue to demand the continuation of urban expansion. A second tenet is improving the integrity and desirability of existing neighborhoods. Specific strategies and implementation measures are outlined in [Chapter 5, Housing and Neighborhoods](#). As related to land use, there are also initiatives pertaining to the compatibility of adjacent and nearby uses, preservation of neighborhood character, and convenient access to goods and services.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Determine the appropriate zoning classification of infill development tracts and initiate rezoning as appropriate. In doing this, ensure that the neighborhood character is preserved and compatibility with existing uses is strongly observed.
- ◆ Study the infrastructure needs of the infill opportunity sites and prepare a proactive schedule of capital improvements, including the timing and methods of funding the improvements.
- ◆ Incorporate bonuses or incentives into the zoning provisions whereby increased height and/or floor area may be achieved (in appropriate

settings) for meeting certain prescribed development standards. This may help to make infill development more feasible.

- ◆ Consider an infill incentive program whereby building permit fees may be reduced, infrastructure improvement costs may be shared with the City, and approval processes expedited as methods to encourage infill and redevelopment. Also, establish criteria and procedures to simplify and streamline development approval.
- ◆ In accordance with [Chapter 5, Housing and Neighborhoods](#), define the boundaries of redevelopment areas, possibly including them in the existing downtown redevelopment district. Subsequently, work with the residents of these neighborhoods to prepare a redevelopment plan to determine the type and general form of development, which may serve as a basis for design and implementation.
- ◆ Review and amend the City's zoning ordinance to identify and resolve any regulatory impediments to infill development and redevelopment that might exist. Incorporate standards that are unique and applicable to these sites versus undeveloped areas.
- ◆ Solicit interest among the landowners and charitable interests to partner in establishing individual redevelopment authorities to establish a transition plan and the means of financing and implementation.

Strategy 2.1.3: Direct future growth to occur in areas that are most suitable for development.

Rationale

The greater Florence planning area is projected to grow by approximately 20,000 persons by 2030. Assuming similar development patterns and densities, there will be a demand for an additional 1,500 to 2,000 acres to accommodate the projected population. This amounts to roughly between two and three square miles. The areas that are most suitable for future growth include several infill and development tracts that were identified by participants in the second Community Workshop held in October, 2009.

- ◆ Create and adopt a long-term annexation plan that reduces the complexity of the City's boundary, eliminates the "donut holes" of unincorporated

lands, and eventually brings the entire study area into the Florence City limits.

- ◆ Develop and use a robust fiscal impact model that considers facilities and services beyond just sewer and water utilities, e.g., fire-emergency response, police protection, parks, and schools. ◆ Employ development and pre-annexation agreements to initiate annexation of the properties within the study area when they are improved.
- ◆ Undertake a coordinated strategy with other South Carolina municipalities to modernize State legislation that regulates annexation.
- ◆ Amend the Zoning Map to rezone the preferred future growth areas to be consistent with the future land use plan. This would be done in advance of any development applications as a means of incentivizing development in the desired areas. Such “by-right” zoning should allow flexibility as to the development type, provided the development character is compatible with the surrounding area. This practice will attract development to desired areas, as developers will not be required to undertake rezoning actions.
- ◆ Develop a municipal infrastructure service plan to establish the timing and means of infrastructure provision to the future growth areas.
- ◆ Coordinate the capital improvement program (CIP) to provide streets, public facilities, and municipal services to the future growth areas.
- ◆ Adopt utility extension and public services policies subject to the following criteria:
 - » The subject parcel or development site is within a preferred growth area and will not create obstacles to successful implementation of a suitable roadway network consistent with the City’s Community Mobility Plan.
 - » The land is proposed for annexation and abuts the City’s existing utility service areas and can be immediately and efficiently served – or readily served with manageable and affordable capital improvements.
 - » The land can be adequately served by and funded for municipal police, fire, and emergency medical services, and the City can readily assume the fiscal responsibility for the maintenance of existing roads, street lights, parks, and any publicly-owned facility, for which the fee structure will optimize – or at least minimize – the fiscal costs to the City.

- » All public improvements necessary to serve the area proposed for service extension will be constructed and financed in accordance with City standards and policies.
- » There is sufficient capacity of the infrastructure systems, i.e. roads and utilities, to accommodate the added development.
- » There is a written finding on behalf of Florence School District One that there are or are planned to be requisite capacities of school facilities to accommodate the added enrollment.
- » As determined by the City, the actual fiscal impact of expanding the incorporated area and then providing basic services, maintaining public facilities, and making other necessary public improvements is favorable and sufficiently offsets the associated costs to the City, both near- and long-term.

Strategy 2.1.4: Continue to renovate and replace aging or inadequate infrastructure components.

Rationale

The City has invested wisely for many years to provide high quality and reliable water distribution and sanitary sewer services. As with all capital investments, these facilities wear out and eventually require refurbishment or replacement.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Complete the planning and construction of proposed water system components to strengthen the distribution system’s capacity and pressure:
 - » Transmission main along 301 Bypass to Pamplico Highway;
 - » Water main extension along Francis Marion Road south of Old Wallace Gregg Road;
 - » Water line extension on John C. Calhoun Road and Williamson Road;
 - » New 24-inch line on John Paul Jones Road from the intersection of Third Loop Road and Highway 52/301; and
 - » New 18-inch line in the Sumter Road / Pisgah Road area

- ◆ Continue the practice of requiring land developers to provide adequate water distribution facilities, sanitary sewers, and stormwater management facilities in their development projects.
- ◆ Promote infill development in those pockets of unsewered land that are within the boundaries of the City's broader sanitary sewer service area.
- ◆ Incorporate on-site stormwater detention and improved drainage collection facilities into future downtown redevelopment planning efforts and individual project site plans.
- ◆ Continue addressing and correcting site-specific stormwater management needs for low-lying areas and bridge underpasses.

Strategy 2.1.5: Upgrade service levels in areas currently served by rural water supply facilities.

Rationale

The rural-type water systems that were acquired from Florence County were never intended to accommodate the requirements of urban and suburban residents. Generally, the components of a rural water system are designed to provide minimum-cost water supplies over a wide geographical area. These include small-diameter, non-looped distribution lines that cannot accommodate fire protection demands. The absence of a water system that was built for fire protection within the City places added burden on the City Fire Department, requiring specialized equipment and firefighter training. It also can potentially reduce the City's fire rating, thereby increasing the cost of property owner's insurance for all residents.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Require all new development within the study area to provide urban-level water services, including fire hydrants.
- ◆ Replace inadequate water lines in the existing rural subdivisions that are located within the study area.

Strategy 2.1.6: Continue to work with City and County parks' officials on improving the quality of existing parks and expanding the park system through cooperative land acquisition agreements.

Rationale

The needs and desires of the citizens of Florence justify continued development of parks and recreation facilities and preservation of open space to meet the specific needs and requirements of the community. A variety of types and sizes of parks and recreation facilities and associated activities are recommended to satisfy the diverse interests of the population, to ensure adequate and equal opportunity for all persons, and, ultimately, to encourage use by all population groups.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Update the City's park, recreation, and open space master plan in coordination with this Comprehensive Plan. Include the entire planning area – adding the unincorporated areas – to the master planning study, and, if annexation does not occur, coordinate with Florence County for the provision of neighborhood and community parks needed to serve these citizens. Plans need to ensure that all portions of the City and planning area are provided adequate facilities.
- ◆ Ensure that the City's and County's development regulations include provisions for formal parkland dedication, structured to encourage employment of a "fee in lieu of dedication" option.
- ◆ As an alternative, use the City's powers as a mechanism for levying park improvement impact fees on new development.
- ◆ Coordinate with Florence Public School District One and FMU to address potential joint acquisition of land, improvement and maintenance of park land and facilities, and management of areas and buildings that would contribute to the supply of public recreational areas. As future schools are replaced or relocated, consider opportunities for converting their sites to parkland. One immediate opportunity for this is the new high school to be sited in West Florence, resulting in the sale of the West Florence High School buildings and site. A portion could be reserved for the City to provide parkland. Possibly, it could be part of the conveyance to the new

owner as a specified amount of land, thereby allowing them to master plan their property.

- ◆ Improve accessibility to parks for disabled and handicapped users by adding sidewalk curb cuts and ramps and wheelchair-accessible sidewalks and trails and providing accessible facilities such as play equipment, drinking fountains, and restrooms. Consider approaching national or regional philanthropic organizations, which concentrate on disabled persons' needs, for funding assistance.
- ◆ Improve the identification of on-street bicycle trails and their linkages with parks, schools, cultural facilities, and the off-street portions of the trail system. Develop a plan for educating the public about these options and locations.
- ◆ Continue the policy for the potential conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors and other rights-of-way and easements as trails and walking connections. Consider the acquisition of the rail line that parallels Lucas Street as a prime candidate.
- ◆ Regularly submit grant applications to State and Federal programs and other available resources to leverage funds for trails and bikeway planning and development.
- ◆ Expand planning for the City's trail network into the unincorporated portions of the planning area. Establish requirements for the dedication of easements or rights-of-way from new developments that adjoin or overlap the planned trail network. Rights-of-way must be dedicated for main trail segments and easements dedicated within the development to provide direct access points to the system. Design standards must also be established for segments of the trail and other connections to ensure long-lasting construction and minimized maintenance.

Strategy 2.1.7: Provide a “sense of freestanding entry” to Florence by preserving the remaining rural character of the City's periphery.

Rationale

The pattern of land use along the major approaches to the City has gradually become cluttered by spots of commercial development and nearby scattered subdivisions. Continuing this pattern will eventually deny the opportunity to

establish a strong identity for Florence as a distinctive, high-quality community. It will also will burden the rural environment, resulting in an inadequate road network, urban-rural land use conflicts, degradation of natural resources, and increased costs of public services.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Coordinate with Florence County to adopt rural zoning standards that limit the types, intensity, and location of non-urban growth and development. Alternatively, explore the possibilities of adopting an intergovernmental agreement that would extend the City's zoning and subdivision approval authority into the unincorporated parts of the planning area. Implementing this would include the addition of representatives from the extraterritorial area on the City's Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals.
- ◆ Establish decision criteria regarding the appropriateness for rezoning and annexation requests for land that is outside of the preferred future growth areas.
- ◆ Modify the provisions of Attachment F of the 2002 City-County Utilities Consolidation Agreement to expand the feasibility assessment procedures to include all municipal services (police, fire, schools, parks, etc.), not just sewer and water. Also, amend the feasibility point system to increase the weighting of compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan.
- ◆ Adopt a fiscal impact model to evaluate the feasibility of and warrant for annexation and future development. Adopt a policy to determine the fiscal threshold warranting development approval.
- ◆ Prohibit future development that would interfere with the airport expansion and flight paths. While the noise contours have not been designated for the Florence Regional Airport, there remain important considerations regarding building heights and uses in the surrounding area. Consider the implementation of airport approach zoning to protect these areas.
- ◆ Acquire natural areas and other open space at the outer entrances to Florence in order to create a natural visual gateway. Where lands are not available, create structural gateways and other means to enhance Florence's appearance as a special place.

Focus Area 2.2 Quality, Sustainable Development

The Northeastern South Carolina region is well-known for its rich environmental assets and the quality of its natural environs. With a mix of agriculture and woodland, Florence enjoys both the views of wide open spaces across the landscape and beautiful natural scenery by way of its woodland stands and its many creeks, wetlands, and low-lying areas. These qualities significantly contribute to the aesthetic and character of the community. Residents greatly value the environment and expressed their desire to see it preserved and protected.

The potential areas for future growth are reasonably well defined by way of the natural drainageways (Jeffries Creek, Middle Swamp Creek, Black Creek, and their associated wetlands and floodplains), and major land holdings and uses (such as the medical centers, railroads, airport, National Cemetery, and South Carolina State institutional properties), as well as the limits of municipal utility services. There are significant natural areas and corridors throughout the City and planning area, particularly in the southern portions, that should be protected. Therefore, as growth and development occurs in or near these areas, the harmony of development and the environment will be essential to preserve community character, promote environmental sustainability, and enhance the overall community image of Florence.

The City's current zoning standards provide few or no incentives for the preservation of open space, resource protection, or the use of alternative development forms such as clustering. Other than through the application of the traditional lot size, setback, and density standards, there are no minimum open space requirements. To preserve environmental resources and to achieve sustainable outcomes, additional regulatory options should be considered in future revisions to the zoning ordinance. A system of zoning incentives should be adopted that rewards good design and responsible development practices with density bonuses, streamlined approval, and increased certainty of project approval for complying proposals.

While the pattern and form of development may greatly influence environmental conditions, so, too, may the design of buildings and sites. Green building practices may reduce energy consumption, reuse and save precious resources (e.g. water recycling), and mitigate off-site impacts such as stormwater runoff and flooding.

Strategy 2.2.1: Protect and preserve environmental resources.

Rationale

The natural environment is a significant contributor to the character and beauty of Florence. This City has made strides in the area of resource protection, yet there is more that can be done. Between environmental protection and development, the City may be best achieved through the use of incentives and increased development flexibility, with a goal of encouraging better protection and more efficient development.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Modify the structure of the current zoning districts to allow increased flexibility through more development options that are each permitted by right. This approach would allow development in harmony with the environmental features of a site.
- ◆ Review and amend, where necessary, the nonresidential districts to require a minimum landscape surface, which would be for the purpose of preserving site resources, meeting landscape and buffering requirements, and providing improved site drainage.
- ◆ Incorporate site development capacity provisions into the zoning regulations to control the amount of development that may be accommodated on sites that have identified environmental resources worthy of protection. With the above outlined approach of allowing development options within each district, there would be flexibility to allow feasible development of heavily constrained sites, e.g. those partially within the floodplain, heavily wooded sites, etc.
- ◆ To maintain the economic value of properties having sensitive resources, consider the adoption of "transfer of development rights" provisions to other suitable properties within the City's defined future growth areas or allow a transfer of density to the developable portions of the same site.

- ◆ Amend the zoning ordinance to strengthen provisions that preserve and enhance the existing tree canopy, including tree protection and replacement standards, moderation of clear-cutting development practices, and the preservation of large trees.
- ◆ Maintain current stream buffer provisions and consider increasing the distance of structures from designated streams from the current requirement of 50 feet in sensitive areas.
- ◆ Maintain Florence's status as a "Tree City," continuing steps to protect, trim, preserve, and restore the urban forest, particularly in those neighborhoods that have been experiencing deterioration. This may include a preservation ordinance for heritage trees and/or tree protection requirements.

Strategy 2.2.2: Adopt a community agenda for energy conservation.

Rationale

Cities throughout the U.S. are becoming more committed to conserving energy and are seeking ways to lessen their potential impact on carbon emissions. Many initiatives are available that will have a collective, positive impact.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Adopt a long-term municipal strategy to include an energy plan that enumerates reduction goals based on current energy usage.
- ◆ Seek alternative transportation solutions at the local and regional levels to preserve air quality. Nonpoint source transportation impacts represent up to 40 percent of the pollution levels. Measures that may help reduce vehicle emissions include, but are not limited to the following:
- ◆ Continue to increase opportunities for bicycling and walking by way of trail expansions, implementation of "complete streets," and construction of sidewalks and other pedestrian improvements throughout the planning area. Require new developments to be integrated with existing or planned trail system expansions.
- ◆ Gradually replace the City's vehicle fleet, as appropriate, with alternative-powered and hybrid vehicles that are more energy efficient and produce lower emissions.

- ◆ Reduce congestion at local intersections by making Transportation Systems Management (TSM) improvements, such as dedicated left and right-turn lanes, traffic signal synchronization, and transit vehicle pull-out bays, among others.
- ◆ Conduct an audit to evaluate the effectiveness of the current building code with regard to building energy efficiency. The City may consider encouraging higher levels of energy and water efficiency by encouraging voluntary best management practices and incentivizing such practices in site and building design.
- ◆ Conduct a pilot energy efficiency project or seek LEED certification for future schools and public buildings. ("LEED," or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is a rating system established by the U.S. Green Building Council.) Given the long lifespan of municipal facilities, the operational cost savings over the long term would outweigh any additional upfront green building costs. This effort should be coordinated with the County, school district, and other governmental efforts.
- ◆ Consider a City-wide policy to retrofit existing public buildings in order to meet an established energy efficiency standard or achieve LEED certification.
- ◆ Create an Energy Task Force to identify energy saving measures, such as building lighting, street lights, building heating/cooling, building/window shading, and water usage/recapture. As work progresses, techniques and successes achieved by this group should be disseminated to other agencies and businesses throughout the community and region.

Strategy 2.2.3: Pursue more sustainable development outcomes through bonuses and incentives.

Rationale

In recent years, there is a renewed awareness and emphasis on sustainable development practices, which is now supported by a national environmental agenda. There are many approaches to seek improved sustainability, one of which is in the design of building sites and developments. Infusing best management practices and providing incentives for good design will move the City toward more responsible development outcomes. This also has the benefit of enhancing community character.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Amend the development ordinances to integrate sustainability standards in the design and planning of sites, which may include, among others:
 - » Mixed-use development by-right in select districts.
 - » Permitted on-site energy generation, e.g. solar and small wind turbines as accessory uses.
 - » Allowance for accessory and live/work units in appropriate locations.
 - » Reduced parking requirements coupled with alternative transportation provisions.
 - » Incentives and compatibility standards for infill development.
 - » Density/height bonuses for LEED certified buildings.
 - » Tree preservation and reforestation standards.
 - » Dark sky lighting standards.
 - » A program for recycling of demolition waste.
 - » On-site stormwater management options such as naturalized detention.
 - » Improved pedestrian and bicycle access.
 - » Improved transit site access and amenities.
 - » Better street connectivity in outlying development areas.
 - » Carbon budgets for new development.
- ◆ Incorporate sustainability concepts in the site development standards such as:
 - » The use of bio-swales and on-site water features, collection systems for stormwater management, and water quality purposes.
 - » Use of green roofs as a method of stormwater mitigation, as well as reduction of the urban “heat island” effect.
 - » Reduced stormwater runoff through on-site retention, micro-storage such as water gardens and rain barrels, and pervious pavement.
- ◆ Incorporate low-impact development provisions into the development ordinances. This approach uses site design techniques to store, infiltrate, evaporate, and detain runoff, which address runoff volume, frequency, and water quality. Site design elements can include on-lot micro-water storage, functional landscaping, open drainage swales, use of new less pervious paving materials, minimal grades, and depression storage.

- ◆ Continue the sponsoring and support of programs to educate citizens and community groups on the ways to reduce water consumption and waste, including do-it-yourself, low-cost measures such as residential water catchment (gutter collection) and water-efficient fixtures. Note: This is also a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II requirement.
- ◆ Add trash disposal and recycling options in each park and other public facilities throughout the City.

Focus Area 2.3
Downtown Renaissance

The ***Florence Downtown Master Plan (2010 – 2015)***, included as **Appendix A**, will be adopted in conjunction with, and as a component of, this Comprehensive Plan, ensuring community-wide support and complementary visions. The Master Plan encapsulates a body of planning work spanning approximately 10 years beginning with Vision 2010 adopted in 2001. Since that time, downtown Florence has undergone a number of notable changes that can be credited, in large part, to the generous investments in major cultural institutions by the Doctors Bruce and Lee Foundation. Several landmark projects have radically transformed portions of downtown and solidified its role as the civic and cultural hub of the region. Elements of the Master Plan have been included in **Figure 2.7, Florence Downtown Master Plan Executive Summary**, at the end of the chapter.

Historically, downtown Florence was once the region’s center of commerce and community activity. Across the country, the role of small-city downtown areas has shifted away from retailing to more offices, services, cultural and entertainment venues, restaurants, and government activities. This has occurred over many years and is the result of the following key factors among others:

- ◆ The establishment of I-95/I-20 outside the City, which reduced downtown through-traffic and lowered Florence’s significance as a destination City.

- ◆ An increased reliance on the automobile, establishing a market for auto-oriented strip shopping centers and shopping malls. This drew retail business adjacent to the primary access corridors – and to the fringe of the community – and along the corridors approaching downtown.
- ◆ New residential development in outlying areas, with many businesses leaving downtown behind as chain retailers displaced locally-owned stores. The once-popular mainline retailers were gradually displaced by marginal or lower-intensity, neighborhood-oriented businesses as property values and rental costs declined.
- ◆ The emergence of “big box” stores and power centers (a collection of big box stores) attracting fast food restaurants and small retailers to nearby sites – and away from downtown.

After many years of deterioration and continuing attempts at cosmetic rejuvenation, downtown Florence is beginning to make the transitions that other, similar downtown areas of the southeast have made. With the establishment of the new library, Florence Little Theatre building, the FMU Performing Arts Center, and other substantial investments, there is now a great opportunity to redefine the role of downtown. It will never be what it once was, but it may be re-established as a destination for culture, entertainment, and community gathering, with a healthy compliment of local shops and eateries. Doing so will require a continued commitment to restore the market attraction, redesign the environment, and reintroduce an urban fabric at an appropriate size and scale.

Therefore, it is apparent that the community seeks to expand the renaissance of downtown. The vision of downtown and the general policies and directions are expressed by this plan.

Strategy 2.3.1: Strengthen downtown as an economically viable place to conduct business.

Rationale

Presently, the downtown core has contracted in size and lost much of its previous identity as a cohesive district. With its many gaps of abandoned, vacant, or torn-down buildings, much of the area has evolved into a collection of individual businesses without the strong synergy that was once present. This is now changing. As the renaissance of downtown continues, the impediments

for locating and operating long-standing and stable, economically viable businesses will gradually be overcome as the area regains its appeal. As current investments continue, there will emerge a reason for deliberately choosing downtown Florence as a place to invest.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Implement the design and policy recommendations contained in the Florence Downtown Master Plan (2010-2015).
- ◆ Continue the Mayor’s recent initiatives for the creation of a Demolition Fund Requirement, where a percentage of any fire damage settlement is held in escrow until damage repairs are actually completed. Provide immediate board-up and prompt removal of damaged or abandoned structures.
- ◆ Leverage amenities and programs within the established Redevelopment District to create incentive packages or outright donations of land to attract the identified target businesses to locate – or relocate – in downtown. This may be to lease vacant space, infill development on vacant or underutilized sites, or to redevelop buildings or properties. Incentives within the District could potentially include tax and fee abatements on new improvements, reduction of sales tax on building materials, a waiver of building permit fees, and also an assortment of State tax incentives.
- ◆ Create a revolving loan fund specifically for downtown businesses and downtown developers. The fund would be used to provide “gap” financing for viable businesses where the owner/investor can demonstrate commitment, competency, and capacity and can bring a significant amount of their own equity to a project, as well as some conventional bank financing. The fund could potentially be capitalized with CDBG and foundation grants, SBA funds, pooled bank loans, and TIF funds.
- ◆ Assist with land assembly through direct purchase, assignable options, tax foreclosure, syndication, donation, and, in extreme cases, involving severe blight. These efforts will need to be matched with creative use of the City’s TIF powers; specifically in packaging low-interest financing that can be passed on to developers.
- ◆ Facilitate the use of Private Activity Bonds (PABs) to raise debt capital for private development. PABs allow cities to issue tax-exempt bonds on

behalf of private investors that are paid back directly by the investors. The two types of PABs that may be available to the City are Qualified Redevelopment Bonds and Enterprise Zone bonds. Both types of bonds are designed to fight blight and can be used for commercial development and housing.

- ◆ Look for creative ways to use TIF including “reversible,” or developer financed, TIFs whereby a developer basically fronts the cost of development and a percentage of a project’s annual tax increment is reimbursed back to him (or used to offset property taxes) and developer-backed TIF where TIF bonds are used to provide project financing directly to the developer and are personally guaranteed by the developer. The City’s legal counsel will need to check State statutes to determine any applicable restrictions on how TIF-financing is used.
- ◆ Work with foundations and charitable organizations to acquire and redevelop strategic properties and establish a revolving fund for low-interest (or interest forgiveness) programs for building rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.
- ◆ Continue City policies and programs to invest in streetscape and other public-realm improvement projects.
- ◆ Collaborate with McLeod Medical Center to establish improved access between its facilities and downtown to enable businesses to take better advantage of the market opportunities afforded by nearby hospital patrons and medical staff. Coordinate with PDRTA for special lunchtime transit runs to downtown restaurants, perhaps leaving every 15 minutes.
- ◆ As the array of businesses, cultural opportunities, and restaurants increases, motivate shoppers to patronize downtown through increased promotional programs such as the successful “Florence After Five!” events.
- ◆ Incorporate nighttime shopping events and historic programming that can bring life to downtown after 5:00 p.m., thereby encouraging a vibrant, multicultural “24/7” nightlife. This type of activity will be particularly attractive to students, young adults, and families who seek such amenities and cultural attractions in their community, leveraged by the new FMU Performing Arts Center venue.

Strategy 2.3.2: Position downtown as a unique local and regional destination.

Rationale

The circumstances of downtown have changed dramatically over the years. The nature of business has shifted away from its traditional primary retail role to one of government, institutions, and offices, combined with a lesser amount of retail services. Since the retail focus has relocated, it must position itself so as not to compete for the typical retail outlets, instead targeting a niche market with an orientation toward culture, entertainment, and community gathering. This will naturally attract complimentary retail uses such as restaurants, coffee shops, and unique local retailers.

Since downtown has retained its role as a governmental center and is situated near McLeod Medical Center and proposed FMU performing arts education facilities, it is well-situated to cater to local business people, as well as regional visitors and future students. The nature of businesses and the types of activities and attractions must appeal to all sectors.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Update earlier studies that define the market potential of downtown as to its regional economic capture, saleable/leasable square footage, and likely rate of absorption. Identify the range and preferred mixture of use types, along with a retention and attraction strategy and target marketing approach.
- ◆ Through the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, establish a design theme for the downtown district. This may include parameters of architecture, signage, lighting, enhanced streetscape, professional public art, and other amenities. The theme should allow individual expression while ensuring a semblance of design cohesiveness. This is addressed with greater detail in the Florence Downtown Master Plan (2010-2015).
- ◆ Encourage residential and mixed-use development in and around the downtown and cultural districts.
- ◆ Based upon the design theme and branding studies, create new street signage that is unique for the downtown district.

- ◆ Design and install distinct monuments and gateway treatments at the primary entries to the downtown district (particularly Palmetto and Irby Streets, along with unifying design elements like vegetated walls, decorative lighting, street and sidewalk patterns, and other unique design treatments.

Strategy 2.3.3: Re-establish the traditional urban character of the downtown core.

Rationale

Over time, the pattern of buildings and parking lots has dramatically shifted the character of downtown from an urban to auto-urban character, particularly at its edges. Abetted by the exceedingly large scale of the originally platted blocks (800 feet square), this was caused by the placement of newer buildings back from the street and the increasing percent of highly valued downtown area street frontage that is devoted to surface parking. With the exception of a few blocks, the pedestrian orientation of downtown has declined in favor of the automobile.

If the City is to re-establish downtown as a destination and seize its economic opportunities, among other strategies, it must reconsider the form and design of development and specifically how parking is handled and treated.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Implement the design and policy recommendations contained in the Florence Downtown Master Plan (2010-2015).
- ◆ Adjust provisions of the City's zoning ordinance as they relate to downtown development, redevelopment, reuse of buildings, allowance of residential and mixed-uses, parking, and signs.
- ◆ Develop design standards to guide the construction of new and improvement of existing buildings to ensure compatibility of the architecture and cohesiveness with the historic integrity of downtown. For example, floor area ratios and build-to line requirements should be adjusted to prohibit the intrusion of suburban or auto-urban character types into the downtown core.

Strategy 2.3.4: Strengthen the organizational leadership and financial capacity of the Florence Downtown Development Corporation (FDDC).

Rationale

The Florence Downtown Development Corporation (FDDC lacks the human and monetary resources to mobilize downtown revitalization. As the City seeks a competitive advantage, it should:

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Hire an FDDC executive director who will be responsible for both initiating and managing projects; business retention, expansion, and outreach; advocacy and recruitment activities; and coordinating with City and County planning and economic development staff. The person will need to be highly entrepreneurial and capable of handling business development services, as well as unconventional real estate development projects involving tax credits and other subsidies.
- ◆ Seek funding and program support through various economic development programs offered through the State, County and Federal governments, as well as programs and resources available through local educational institutions.
- ◆ Form a merchant's association independently managed, but supported by the FDDC.
- ◆ Consider re-structuring the FDDC board into a smaller, working board made up of contributing members with applicable expertise in real estate, banking, fund raising, and business management. Alternatively, the board could be organized into special subcommittees around specific functions or action items such as organizing and managing a revolving loan fund.
- ◆ Sharpen the FDDC's organizational focus and move it toward some degree of financial self-sufficiency with potential revenue streams from rents, loan administration fees, special events, and earned developer fees.

Focus Area 2.4 Preserve Community Heritage

Local history is an important part of a community's fabric and attractiveness, both as a source of local pride and as an opportunity for economic development. In fact, heritage tourism is the fastest growing product type in the United States with 92.5 million adult Americans visiting a museum or historic site or district while traveling that's 46 percent of the 199.8 million trips taken over 50 miles from home. The Travel Industry of America reports that this \$61.5 billion market grows at an average of 10 percent, while the tourism industry as a whole is growing at a rate between four and six percent.

Strategy 2.4.1: Preserve the historic character and integrity of the community.

Rationale

In recent decades, Florence has lost (or is facing the possible loss of) several significant historical structures due to owner neglect or the lack of financial resources needed for their care and rehabilitation. In recognition of this, the community has become well-organized to facilitate the preservation and restoration of historic landmarks and buildings. Historic preservation needs to be further integrated into the policies and procedures of development approval.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Solicit the help of local architects, historians, and preservation organizations for input toward the drafting of applicable historic preservation guidelines and/or standards.
- ◆ Establish, through official designation and amendment of the zoning ordinance and map, the foundational elements for historic preservation requirements that would apply to all zoning districts. Subsequently, draft the alteration, construction, and demolition standards that may be applicable to each individual district.
- ◆ Amend the zoning ordinance to accomplish the following:
 - » Clarify the procedures that are individually appropriate for the designation of landmarks, historic districts, and neighborhood

preservation districts, as each warrants unique consideration. Also, simplify the process for nominations of landmarks, historic districts, and neighborhood preservation districts and streamline the steps of review and acceptance. Also, revisit the provisions related to the support needed to establish a landmark or district.

- » Establish general City-wide standards pertaining to the procedures for alteration or demolition of potentially architecturally significant structures whether or not they are officially designated as a landmark or included in a historic district or neighborhood preservation district.
- » Upon designation of any district, strengthen the organization of historic and neighborhood preservation districts through a centralized and official historic preservation organization for which technical preservation assistance may be offered and resources may be available. In this way, a professional staff person may serve as an advocate for preservation efforts who may provide assistance to owners in complying with the procedures and preservation standards.
- » Conduct an examination of the zoning regulations and building code to correct any unintended impediments to rehabilitation, redevelopment, and/or preservation.
- » Publish educational resources to make information readily available as to appropriate preservation and modification techniques and the use of appropriate materials to allow neighborhoods to be historically reclaimed.
- » Supplement the materials already provided on the City's and County's websites to include other historic preservation library materials.

Focus Area 2.5 Enhance Florence's Community Character and Image

Florence was settled on an open landscape and nestled amongst a beautiful natural environment. Its location and environmental juxtaposition contribute to its overall character – that is, its identity and recognition within the broader regional context. As we zoom into the City and surrounding unincorporated planning area, different neighborhoods and areas exhibit their own individual characteristics. The differentiation of neighborhood character is due to:

- ◆ The integration with and treatment of the natural environment;
- ◆ The patterns and form of development;
- ◆ The aesthetics, scale, “sense of place,” amenities, and quality of urban design; and
- ◆ The condition in which these areas have been maintained.

The proximity of these areas and districts to one another and to the City’s primary entrance corridors is what forms the community’s overall character.

The term “community character” relates to how the community is viewed by visitors and passers-by at the overall scale, as well as (at the neighborhood scale) its contextual and functional relationships between districts and areas. In short, it relates to the compatibility between adjacent uses.

The City’s zoning ordinance is based on the use of land, meaning that the delineation of zoning districts is driven by lists of permitted, conditional, and special uses, as well as building height and lot area standards. In the case of the residential districts, the densities are determined by a minimum lot size. Other than building heights and setbacks in the standard districts (excluding planned developments and master planned areas such as the medical centers), there are no other standards that affect decisions as to minimum or larger lots, amount of open space, distances between houses, placement of garages and lot access, on-site parking, etc. As a result, the character of neighborhoods in the same zoning district, which are each allowed by-right, may be wary different. The outcome is commonly either uniformity (or monotony by reason of equal lot sizes, identical setbacks, and similar-appearing buildings) or, in many other cases, too much undesirable variation in structures.

Through the course of the initial phases of public involvement, participants in Community Workshop #1 made known their views of the City and its character, as well as the designs of sites, buildings, and neighborhoods. Their first and foremost concern was the clutter and deterioration of the major traffic corridors approaching downtown Florence. The presence of dilapidated or abandoned buildings, overgrown vegetation, marginal businesses, and unneeded or abandoned signs along the highly visible entrance ways stigmatizes the community’s image. The concern for solving this issue was compounded by jurisdictional issues, as most of these areas are outside the City’s present jurisdiction.

Citizens also spoke of the need to beautify railroad rights-of-way, the lack of green space in development, the value of preserving natural character, and the importance of rehabilitating the downtown area. While these concerns must be balanced with those of economic development and private property interests, this Comprehensive Plan and its implementation strategies offer the opportunity to reevaluate policies and practices, making sure that reasonable adjustments are made to current approaches and standards.

Strategy 2.5.1: Refocus the zoning ordinance to emphasize the character and form of development.

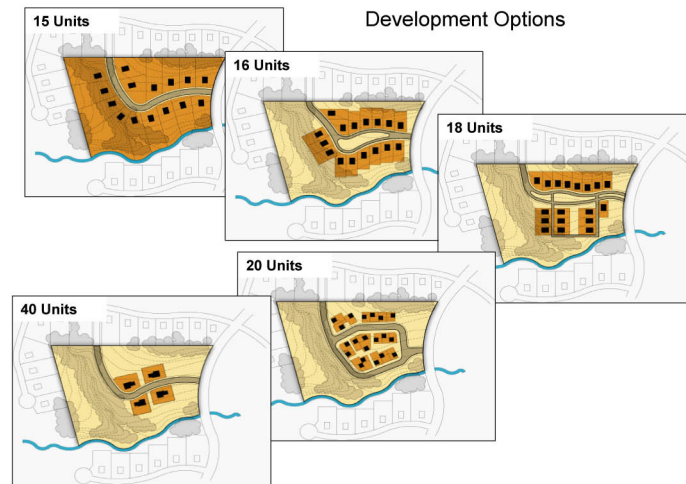
Rationale

The City’s zoning ordinance includes many of the elements necessary to achieve good development outcomes. However, there are many opportunities to adjust the districts to achieve the intended character of development without placing as much emphasis on land use. While use should remain an important consideration, the form and design of development and intensity of activities are more important if the City is to achieve enhanced character. At the same time, the zoning ordinance may allow procedural streamlining for good projects, increase market flexibility (subject to better or more deliberate standards), and improved certainty (for neighbors, the City, and the developer).

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Revise the district purpose statements to define the intended character of the various zoning districts. Rather than basing zoning requirements on general use types (e.g. low-density residential), define the density or intensity of development as urban, auto-urban, suburban, or rural. (See **Figure 2.6: Development Options.**)
- ◆ Recalibrate and consolidate, where possible, each of the existing districts. Revise the dimensional standards to produce the intended character. For instance, many of the districts have the same setbacks although the use types and densities (and potential impacts) are quite different. The dimensions should be changed accordingly.
- ◆ Review and revise the lists of permitted and special uses in each district. Include development and performance standards that relate to the district character, such as increased open space in the suburban district or increased building height and lot coverage in the urban district.

Figure 2.6: Development Options



Basing development decisions on community character rather than use or density requirements offers greater opportunity for design flexibility

- ◆ Provide for by-right allowance of commercial development where there are explicit standards as to location, scale, and design. Similarly, provide a by-right mixed-use district that includes all the applicable standards to assure good and compatible design.
- ◆ Adjust the zoning districts to be more flexible with respect to housing types. Include provisions that would allow mixed housing types in planned and mixed-use developments subject to district density restrictions and appropriate buffering.
- ◆ Amend the current landscaping requirements to tie them to the character of development, with variations as to their width, opacity, and means of buffering based on the density (residential) or intensity (nonresidential) of development. In this way, the buffers are commensurate with the impacts between abutting developments.

Strategy 2.5.2: Enhance the appearance of development and the compatibility between districts.

Rationale

The appearance of the City is, perhaps, the single most evident glimpse of the City's development standards and its pro-activeness. As the saying goes, you don't get the second chance to make a good first impression. The perceptions of the community are largely driven by the physical environment. As a result, decisions are made to live, work, or shop here; to invest in the community; or whether to return for another visit. For this reason, the quality of development is essential to the community's ongoing and future success. While many good standards are already in place, there are warranted changes and improved provisions to enhance the appearance of the City's districts and corridors and the compatibility between them.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Consider the establishment of approach gateways, with more significant monuments, enhanced landscaping, and lighting at the locations of greatest visibility, such as between the airport and downtown along East Palmetto Street.
- ◆ Integrate gateway and other street enhancements such as lighting, signage, landscaping, street furniture, and paths into capital improvement projects. Enhancements may include pavement colors and patterns at intersections, crosswalk textures (particularly approaching downtown), ornamental street fixtures (signal poles and mast arms), unique signage, green space, land contouring, street trees, and pedestrian paths and amenities. Coordination with SCDOT will be required along designated U.S. and State highways.
- ◆ Require plantings along all public and private parking and vehicular use areas having frontage adjacent to public street rights-of-way, as well as major entrance drives. This screening may include shrubbery, earthen berms, walls, or a combination thereof. Existing sites should comply with these standards upon any improvements warranting review or a permit.
- ◆ Amend the zoning ordinance to require that subdivision walls and solid fences be complemented by landscaping to soften the buffer between adjacent uses to avoid the creation of "fence canyons." In some instances,

fences may be replaced by berms and a landscape buffer, which may enhance their effectiveness and appearance.

- ◆ Require site design standards for temporary uses. Specify the percentage of site area that may be used for these uses and the display of outdoor merchandise, as well as their location on the site, means of defining the space, and the height of stacked materials, among other applicable requirements.
- ◆ Establish basic commercial design standards for all zoning districts. Necessary standards include scale limitations, an increased landscaping surface area, improved buffering, pitched roofs to match the adjacent residences, comparable building heights, care as to the location of site access and parking, site lighting, and the placement of service areas.
- ◆ Adopt building standards for “big-box” commercial and/or large-scale industrial buildings exceeding 50,000 square feet. Standards should address the building size, roof, and skyline; materials and design elements; loading and storage placement and screening; open space and streetscape areas; landscaping; signage; and the adaptive reuse or removal of the building if it becomes vacant or dormant for an extended period of time.
- ◆ Prepare and adopt design standards for multiple-family developments, which should include building and parking lot siting and proximity to adjacent properties, variable building heights and façade setbacks, sustainable building and roofing materials, site lighting, landscaping and screening, and other applicable standards.
- ◆ Establish industrial development standards that differentiate between those that are on the site’s periphery and in public view and those within the interior of an industrial park. Standards relating to building façade enhancements, blank walls, building materials, and screening of outdoor storage areas should apply to those within public view, with lesser standards for those generally out of the public view.
- ◆ Rewrite the sign regulations to restrict the number of signs, require a master sign plan for multi-tenant developments, establish clearer electronic message board standards related to animations, create a permit process or prohibit temporary and portable signs, and enumerate more definitive standards for the removal of nonconforming signs.

- ◆ Strengthen and clarify enforcement language in the zoning ordinance relating to issues such as pedestrian and bicycle compatibility with parking lot design. The bike parking standards can be improved to include best practices in bike parking design, location, and access. Likewise, the parking lot design standards should include pedestrian accessways and crosswalks that lead to the main entrance. Walkways should be continuous from the building entrance to different areas of the parking lot.

FUTURE LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN: PLAN AND POLICIES

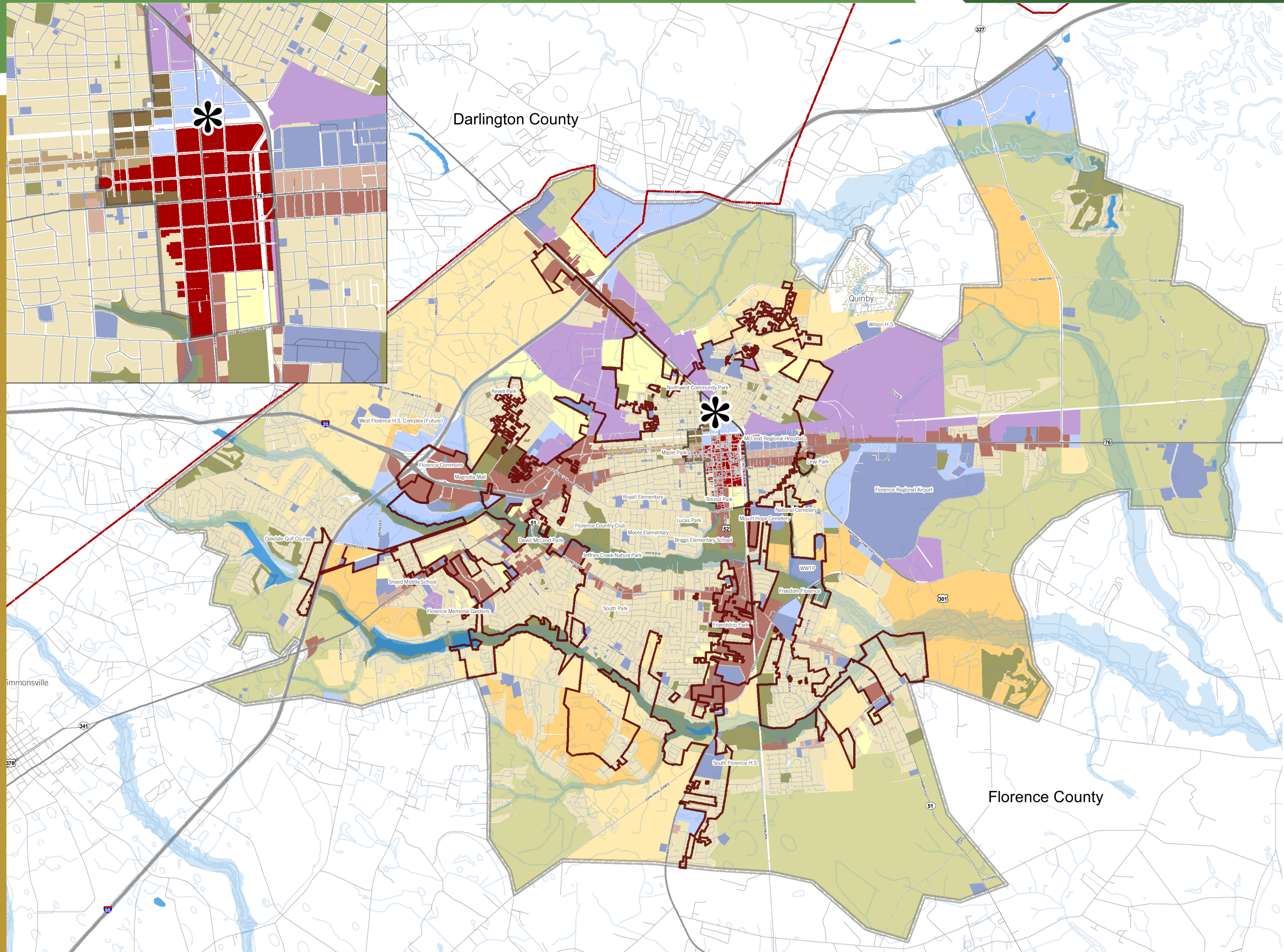
The essence of land use planning is a recognition that Florence does not have to passively wait and react to growth and development. Rather, it can determine where growth will occur and what character this new development will reflect. Through active community support, this plan will ensure that development meets certain standards and, thus, contributes to achieving the desired pattern of development and community character.

Florence Future Land Use Plan

As a guide for land development and public improvements, the plan depicted in [Map 2.4, Future Land Use Plan](#), captures and incorporates into the City’s policies the community’s values regarding how, when, and where the City will grow over the course of the next two decades. This is significant since the findings and recommendations contained in this plan provide the basis for the City’s development ordinances as the primary tools to implement this plan. The analysis included in the preceding sections of this chapter result in the policy direction embodied in the Land Use Plan. The land use categories are reflective of character and each relates directly to a zoning district that will be applied to properties in the future as the Zoning Ordinance and corresponding Zoning Map are approved. The categories and future zoning districts are shown in [Table 2.5, Florence Zoning Districts](#), with the intended character and description of each. The Downtown Central category is unique to the core area and is further detailed in the Downtown Master Plan, attached to this chapter as [Appendix A](#).

Future Land Use	Zoning District Name	Character	Description
Residential Uses			
Real Estate	Estate Residential (RE)	Estate	Single-family development with an estate character.
Residential Sub-Urban	Suburban Residential (RS)	Suburban	Single-family development with suburban character.
Residential Auto-Urban	General Residential (RG)	Auto-Urban or New-Urban	A variety of residential products with auto-urban or new-urban character.
Residential Urban	Urban Residential (RU)	Urban	A variety of residential products with urban character that is more intensely developed than the General Residential district.
Neighborhood Conservation	Neighborhood Conservation (NC(x))	Varies by Sub-category	Protects the character and function of established neighborhoods depending on the existing size. The resulting districts will be divided into six different sub-types.
Business and Commercial Uses			
Residential Transition/ Commercial Suburban	Commercial Re-use (CR)	Suburban	Low-impact commercial uses in appropriate residential settings and the adaptive re-use of residential buildings for low-impact commercial uses along major corridors.
Public and Institutional and Business Parks	Campus (CA)	Suburban	Campus settings for general, professional, and medical offices; educational and institutional facilities; hospitals; research; and high technology industries.
Auto-Urban Commercial	General Commercial (CG)	Auto-Urban or New-Urban	A broad range of region-serving retail, restaurant, entertainment, office, institutional, and service uses. Sites and buildings are relatively large-scale.

Future Land Use	Zoning District Name	Character	Description
Mixed Use			
Downtown Central	Central Business District (CBD)	Urban	Development, redevelopment, and reuse of residential, commercial, and mixed-use buildings downtown. Zoning regulations will include design standards for specific sub-areas referenced in the Downtown Master Plan as Cultural Campus, Irby Street Financial, and Cheves Street Hospitality.
Sub-Urban	Activity Center (AC)	Suburban	Areas for easy pedestrian and bicycle access to retail, restaurant, service, amusement, and recreational activities within close proximity to residential areas. In certain instances may include residential uses.
North Point	Destination / Select Use (DS)		Flexibility of uses (office, parks, entertainment venues) that will support nearby businesses by attracting people to the area.
Industrial Uses			
Industrial	Light Industrial (IL)	Auto-Urban	Non-polluting industrial and personal storage uses.
Industrial	Heavy Industrial (IH)	Auto-Urban	Heavy industrial uses.
Agricultural and Open Space Uses			
Parks and Open Space	Open Space and Recreation (OSR)	Natural or Rural	Public open space and recreation parcels and land that is subject to conservation easements that ensures its continued use as open space.
Rural	Agricultural / Rural (AR)	Rural	Agricultural and rural uses.



LEGEND

Future Land Use

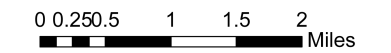
- Rural
- Neighborhood Conservation
- Residential Estate
- Residential Sub-Urban
- Residential Auto-Urban
- Residential Transition
- Residential Urban
- Commercial Suburban
- Commercial Auto-Urban
- Downtown
- Business Parks
- Industrial
- Public and Institutional
- Parks and Open Space
- Natural Areas

Boundaries & Infrastructure

- City Limits
- County Boundary
- Planning Area
- Downtown Boundary
- Quinby
- Railroad

Floodplain & Waterbodies

- 100-Year Floodplain
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams





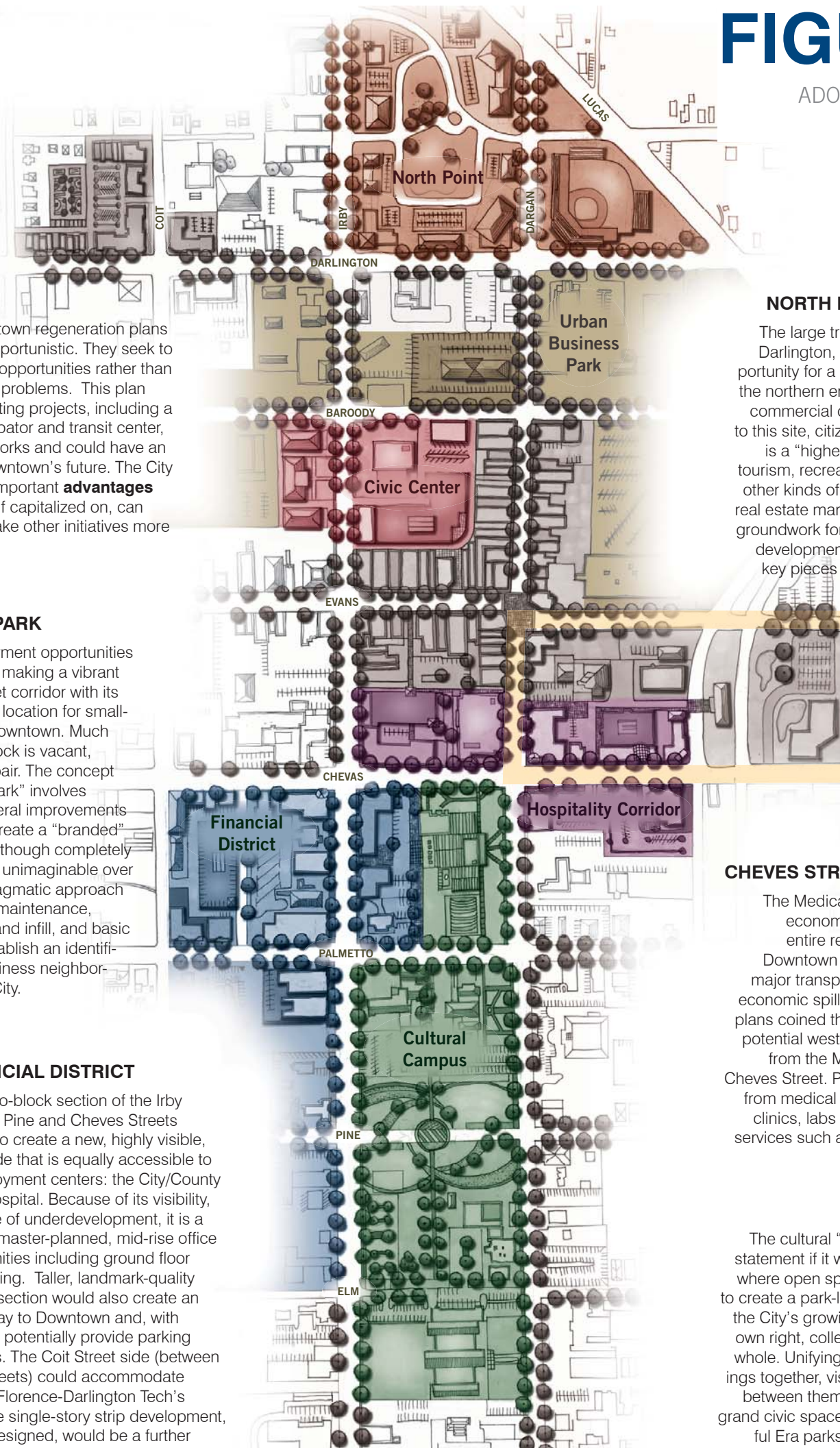
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Florence Downtown Master Plan (2010 - 2015) was developed in conjunction with, and as a component of, the City of Florence Comprehensive Plan. It encapsulates a body of planning work spanning approximately 10 years beginning with Vision 2010 (adopted in 2001). The impetus for this version of the plan is due to several factors - not the least of which has been the generous investments in major cultural institutions by the Doctors Bruce and Lee Foundation. These landmark projects have radically transformed portions of Downtown and solidified its role as the civic and cultural hub of the region. A number of new projects currently in the pre-feasibility or discussion phases warrant a plan update to ensure that they are being thought through collectively and in context with the entire Downtown. This plan was developed over several months in conjunction with an ad hoc Downtown Advisory Committee. The results from a community-wide planning forum held on March 22, 2010, as well as numerous interviews with city business leaders and real estate professionals, were used to inform plan recommendations and implementation strategies.

Downtown Master Plan

FIGURE 2.7

ADOPTED FEBRUARY 14, 2011



The most effective Downtown regeneration plans are assets-based and opportunistic. They seek to take advantage of ready opportunities rather than try to tackle the toughest problems. This plan looks at a handful of exciting projects, including a potential Downtown incubator and transit center, that are currently in the works and could have an important bearing on Downtown's future. The City of Florence has several important **advantages** and **opportunities** that, if capitalized on, can create conditions that make other initiatives more successful.

URBAN BUSINESS PARK

The expansion of employment opportunities in Downtown is critical to making a vibrant place. The Baroody Street corridor with its rail spur has long been a location for small-shop manufacturing in Downtown. Much of the current building stock is vacant, underutilized, or in disrepair. The concept for an "urban business park" involves several cosmetic, peripheral improvements and zoning changes to create a "branded" business environment. Although completely reinventing this area isn't unimaginable over the long term, a more pragmatic approach would focus on building maintenance, surgical redevelopment and infill, and basic aesthetics in order to establish an identifiable, attractive small business neighborhood in the heart of the City.

IRBY STREET FINANCIAL DISTRICT

Redevelopment of the two-block section of the Irby corridor roughly between Pine and Cheves Streets presents an opportunity to create a new, highly visible, professional services node that is equally accessible to Downtown's major employment centers: the City/County complex and McLeod Hospital. Because of its visibility, access, and current state of underdevelopment, it is a prime location for a new master-planned, mid-rise office center with Class A amenities including ground floor retail and structured parking. Taller, landmark-quality development at this intersection would also create an important western gateway to Downtown and, with structured parking, could potentially provide parking relief for nearby churches. The Coit Street side (between Palmetto and Cheves Streets) could accommodate a potential expansion of Florence-Darlington Tech's Downtown campus. More single-story strip development, no matter how well it is designed, would be a further underutilization of this important cross-roads.

NORTH POINT (AKA THE "TRIANGLE")

The large triangle-shaped area formed by Lucas, Darlington, and Irby Streets represents a rare opportunity for a large master planned development at the northern entry to downtown. While standard-box commercial development would likely be attracted to this site, citizens have repeatedly stated that there is a "higher and better" use that accommodates tourism, recreation, spectator sports, education and other kinds of "destination" development. While the real estate market recovers, the City can help lay the groundwork for quality master-planned, "mixed-unit" development by working to assemble and control key pieces of land and applying regulatory tools.

Medical Center

CHEVES STREET HOSPITALITY CORRIDOR

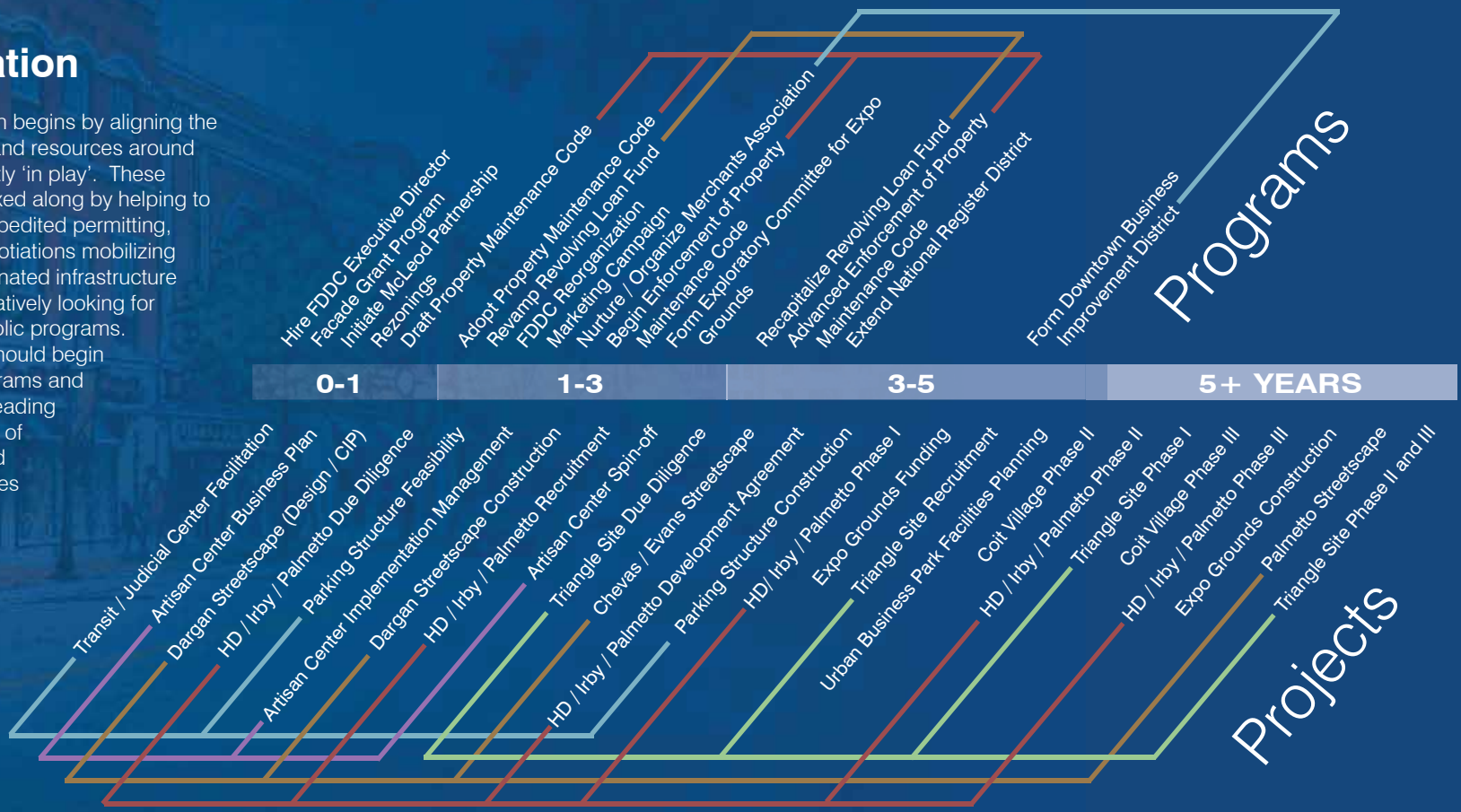
The Medical Center is perhaps the largest single economic catalyst and traffic generator in the entire region. It is separated from the heart of Downtown by only a few hundred feet (and by a major transportation corridor) yet there is very little economic spillover between the two areas. Previous plans coined the term "The Medical Mile" to define a potential westward path of development emanating from the McLeod campus into Downtown along Cheves Street. Possible uses along the corridor range from medical offices to medical supply companies, clinics, labs and the full complement of hospitality services such as hotels and restaurants to support a large and growing medical center.

CULTURAL CAMPUS

The cultural "district" would make a more powerful statement if it was reconceived as a cultural campus where open space is increased and knitted together to create a park-like setting. Although each building in the City's growing Cultural District is impressive in its own right, collectively, they don't constitute a greater whole. Unifying landscape features that tie the buildings together, visually or spatially, and the open lawns between them could transform Dargan Street into a grand civic space, reminiscent of the great City Beautiful Era parks when iconic cultural institutions were placed in lushly landscaped urban parks.

Implementation

Effective implementation begins by aligning the community's energies and resources around projects that are currently 'in play'. These projects should be coaxed along by helping to plug financing gaps, expedited permitting, facilitating property negotiations mobilizing political support, coordinated infrastructure improvements, and creatively looking for ways to tap existing public programs. Concurrently, the City should begin to put in place the programs and institutional structures leading to a sustainable climate of reinvestment. Policy and project-specific measures are presented below in three- to five-year intervals.



Alongside physical planning elements, the Florence Downtown Master Plan addresses policy-based issues that are integral to a comprehensive revitalization strategy and full revival of Downtown.

THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The City's admirable efforts to garner recognition for its Downtown historic district, including getting parts of it listed on the National Register, is a solid first step in building more local appreciation for it (and developer interest in it). A rigorous code enforcement program will protect the buildings from prolonged periods of deferred maintenance; many of them are at risk of demolition through neglect. It helps instill investor confidence by protecting the value of new projects against encroaching blight, and helps "mothball" historic buildings awaiting renovation. The implementation of such a code would empower the City to take preventative action.

Historic renovation projects in smaller cities like Florence are often very difficult to make work financially. Even with various tax credits, the costs of renovation often exceed the building's revenue generating potential. The City should be receptive to project ideas that require creative "deal structuring" to make work including those involving affordable housing tax credits, rehabilitation tax credits, New Markets Tax Credits, and potential TIF financing.

PARKING

Downtowns must accommodate parking without becoming overwhelmed with parking. As voiced in the public meetings for this plan, the city is in need of comprehensive, shared parking strategies in order to move away from the 'one building, one parking lot' development pattern that has left large holes in the City's urban fabric.

Florence will need to maximize off-street parking opportunities by strategically placing public lots and structured parking. Parking structures, however, are very expensive to build (\$15,000 - \$20,000 per space) and generally don't make financial sense where land costs are low and land vacancy is high. Greater development density or major public incentives will likely need to accompany the private development of structures. Three locations are under consideration: City/County Building lot; north side of Cheves Street roughly between Coit and Baroody Streets; and along Irby Street in the vicinity of the Little Theater and Library.

HOUSING

Downtowns need people living in them in order to thrive. Most successful Downtown rejuvenation efforts over the past 20 years have actually led with housing, which has provided a market for Downtown businesses and provided consistent activity at various times of the

day and week. Although most cities prefer "market rate" housing, the leading edge of the housing market usually consists of a significant percentage of affordable housing. Any effort, therefore, to encourage Downtown reinvestment should focus on housing as one of the first courses of action.

At present, there are far too few people living in the heart of Downtown to support local businesses and maintain consistent activity. Also, given current conditions Downtown, and the limited size of the local luxury urban housing market, the City shouldn't expect a flood of condo developers even once the market does recover. The City, therefore, would be wise to encourage more high-quality affordable housing developments Downtown, particularly in some of the historic buildings that probably won't get restored without some type

as streetscaping, wayfinding signs, and maximizing opportunities for bike lanes and on-street parking. New sidewalks should eventually be added to improve the walking experience. If and when any of the sites along the street get redeveloped, they should better define the street space by being oriented to the street and placed closer to it.

TRANSIT CENTER

Exciting efforts are currently underway to build a new intermodal transit center Downtown. Such a facility promises to stimulate other investments and will help reinforce Downtown as the place where all things come together.

Such a facility needs to be located near a concentration of potential ridership generators, and where buses can be staged without conflicting with adjacent uses. Most importantly, the project will have to tie in to Amtrak's Palmetto line service in order to be considered truly multi-modal. This will require relocating the current Amtrak station to a more central Downtown location.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

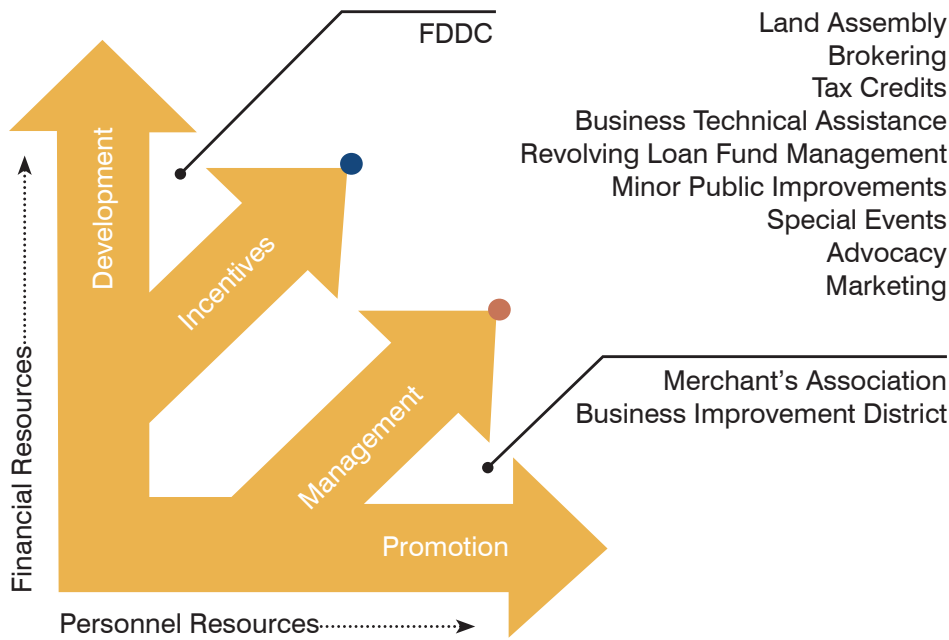
In today's economic environment, a singular focus on real estate development (supply) without a complementary effort to develop or recruit businesses to occupy it (demand) will have limited success. Incentives and supports need to be created for businesses as well as buildings, and the City will sometimes need to facilitate difficult projects into existence using all resources at its disposal.

The City's main role in getting private real estate projects off the ground will typically involve three things: assembling and reselling land

(possibly at a discount), providing low-cost subordinated 'gap' financing to businesses and developers, and ensuring fair and timely permitting. With regard to business creation, it also involves helping to line-up no/low cost business technical assistance such as through a university or technical college and providing an overall environment conducive to business formation.

Targeting economic development resources in Downtown is part of a larger economic development strategy for the city as a whole. It will involve building the capacity of the Florence Downtown Development Corporation with dedicated, professional leadership, including a fully empowered and experienced executive director and specialized FDDC board members. It will also require a combination of economic development incentives, offering direct and indirect financial assistance.

FOUR PLANKS OF DOWNTOWN REGENERATION



of major tax incentives (i.e. where the cost of rehab is likely to greatly exceed resale value or projected rental income). As a good local example, Coit Village is a newly constructed project that has, by most accounts, been positively received in the market.

MOBILITY

Downtown Florence is a fairly easy place to get around by automobile. It isn't as convenient to navigate by other means, and walking is inhibited by the distance between major building groups and heavy traffic on through streets. The edges of Downtown and its major attractions are also not well marked, giving it a pass-through quality. In all cases, the city needs to place greater emphasis on the overall user experience for visitors and pedestrians by accommodating alternative forms of transit such as bike and bus.

This plan doesn't put forth any new recommendations for major street improvements except for those that add to overall street functionality and appearance such

COMMUNITY MOBILITY

Chapter 3

Advance transportation planning and thoroughfare development will help prepare Florence for future traffic demands and create a safe and efficient system of travel to, from, and within the community. A well-balanced and comprehensive transportation system should offer a choice of travel modes (pedestrian, motor vehicle, or bicycle) and be appropriately designed for safety and visual appeal. This chapter of the Florence Comprehensive Plan establishes the framework for such a system to accommodate travel demand for the planning area through the Year 2030 and beyond.

This chapter identifies and addresses key transportation issues in the community and makes recommendations to help improve mobility and accommodate anticipated growth. Additionally, included in this chapter is a Thoroughfare Plan to be used by City staff, Planning Commission, and City Council to address necessary thoroughfare connections and extensions as future development occurs. It has been prepared in coordination with the Florence County Comprehensive Plan Update and, more significantly, with the ongoing Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) metropolitan area transportation planning process. Specific recommendations presented in the County's Transportation Element update and FLATS 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) are presented as insets throughout this chapter.

This Community Mobility chapter is divided into three sections:

- ◆ Discussion of trends affecting mobility in Florence.
- ◆ Recommended goals, objectives, and actions for maintaining and improving Florence's transportation network.
- ◆ Existing and future thoroughfare discussion.

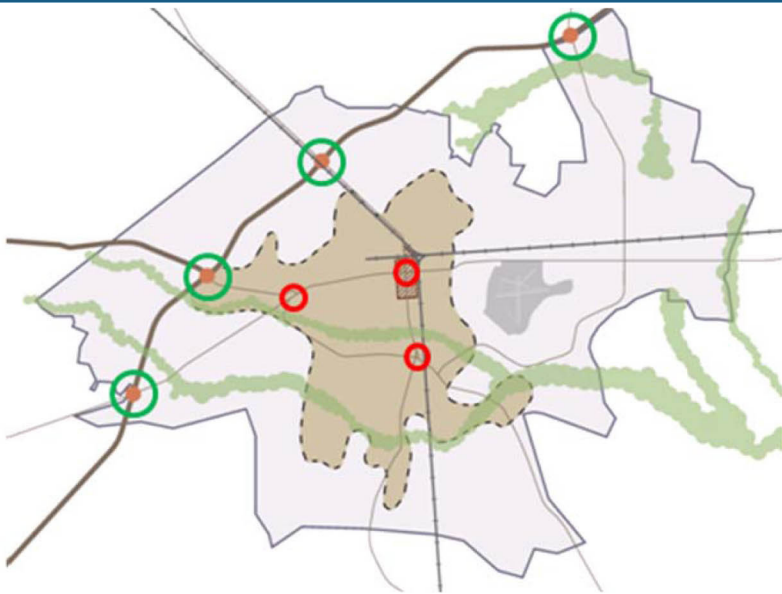
INTRODUCTION

Transportation concerns are one element common to nearly all residents' everyday lives. Traffic congestion, street maintenance, and safety, along roadways, are important elements when considering current and future community needs. When residents cannot move with relative ease throughout their community, this leads to frustration and detracts from local quality of life. Likewise, retaining and attracting businesses requires having adequate roadway, rail, air, and other transportation facilities to move people and goods to and from this area in an effective and efficient manner.

Nevertheless, during the series of Community Workshops, meetings of the Citizens' Delegation, and focus group discussions, transportation issues were rarely raised as major concerns of Florence residents. Issues such as business rush hour traffic, congested intersections, or mistimed traffic signals were, for the most part, considered to be annoyances rather than as strategic issues affecting the future of the community. Indeed, with a few exceptions, Florence has excellent transportation infrastructure for a community of its size.

Much of the emphasis of this chapter is placed on addressing roadway system issues in concert with recent and forthcoming peripheral land development patterns and, particularly, servicing new growth areas as efficiently as possible. Additional focus is given to making better use of the existing system — reducing inefficiencies and localized congestion — as well as improving the appearance of roadways in nonresidential areas.

Figure 3.1: Highway Access



Florence is benefitted by four I-95/I-20 interchanges and a complementing system of arterial streets. Areas subject to frequent traffic congestion are denoted by the red circles.

However, while traveling by car is the most common mode of travel, this plan recognizes that building and widening roadways will not adequately address future transportation needs in the community. With continued growth, high costs of developing infrastructure, escalating fuel costs, and impacts to air quality and the environment, planning for all future travel needs in the City will involve looking at transportation as an interconnected system of roadways, paths, trails, and sidewalks, with multiple options for getting around, including by transit and bicycle.

An integrated and connected system with multiple alternatives for traveling within the community will help keep traffic flowing and alleviate congestion on roadways. Options should apply not only in terms of offering different modes of transportation, but also in offering multiple travel routes and choices on the roadway system. Providing such options and enhancing mobility will also require promotion of development patterns that encourage alternative land uses and shorter trips (i.e., mixed use developments and compatible commercial uses within close proximity to neighborhoods). The transportation system has a strong influence on the type and quality of growth and should, therefore, be closely coordinated with the community's overall land use goals and policies. (See **Figure 3.1, Highway Access.**)

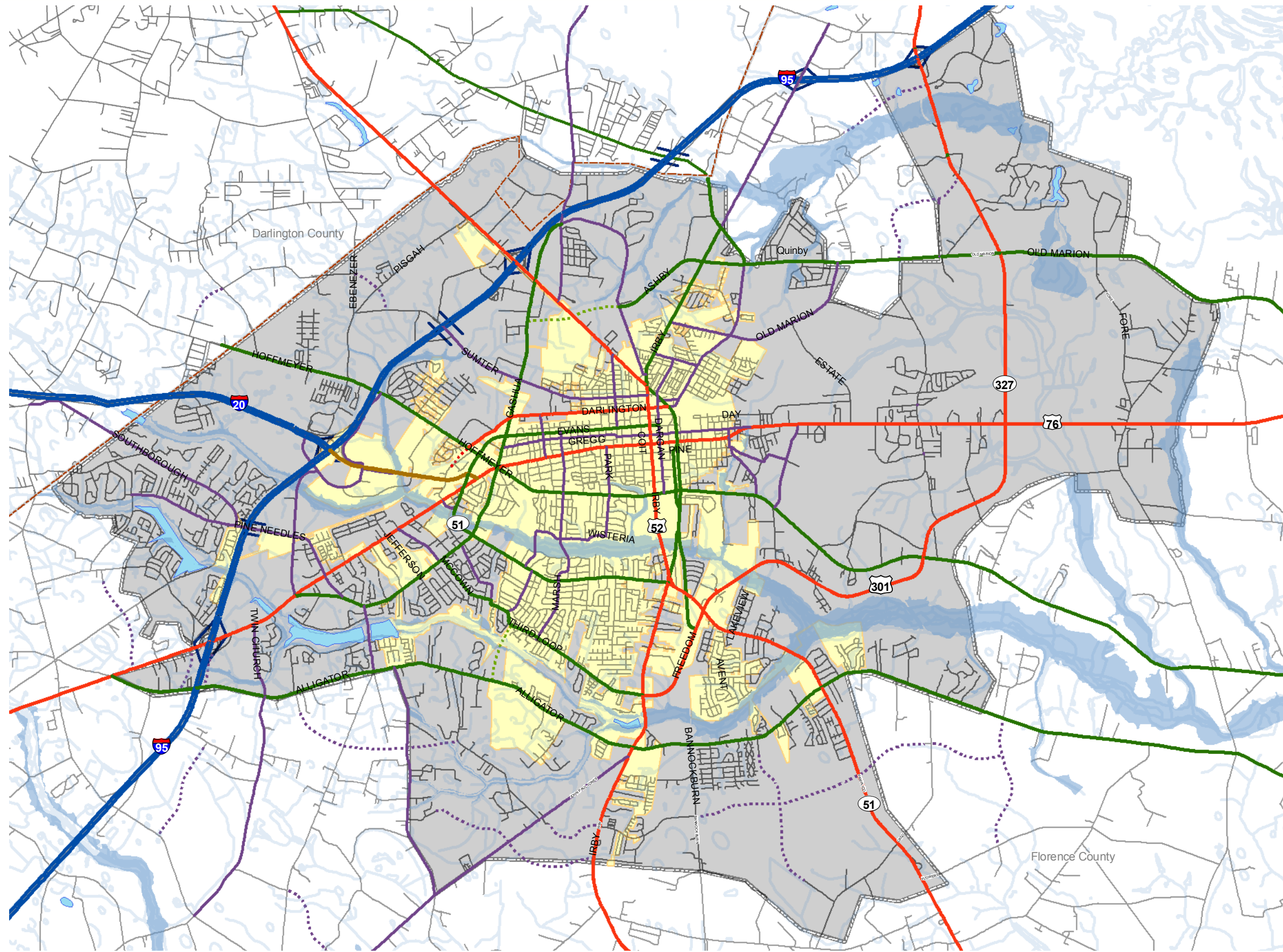
PLAN FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Focus Area 3.1

Ensure a well connected and safe mobility network.

A well-managed and maintained transportation system is important for ensuring a safe system that is enjoyable by all users. With the City's limited financial resources, roadway and other transportation improvements should be carefully balanced with basic maintenance of the existing systems of travel.

The functional classification of Florence's street system is illustrated in **Map 3.1, Functional Classification**. It shows the logical hierarchy of streets, ranging from interstate highways to freeways, principal and minor arterial and collector streets, and finally to local streets. The functional classification system



LEGEND

City Roads

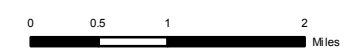
- Interstate Highway
- Freeway/Espressway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector

Boundaries & Infrastructure

- City Limits
- County Boundary
- Planning Area
- Quinby
- Railroad

Floodplain and Waterbodies

- 100-year floodplain
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams



Map 3.1: Functional Classifications (SCDOT)

is important not only for designating the traffic carrying significance of a street or highway, but also as a determination of the funding responsibilities and maintenance priorities of streets. In general, SCDOT has responsibility for the interstates, arterials, and collectors, leaving the City and County responsible for local streets in their respective jurisdictions.

Key planning considerations for ensuring a cohesive and safe mobility system include:

- *Improving existing roadway conditions through reconstructing failing streets and corridors.*
- *Pursuing safety improvements for all travel modes in existing and planned corridors.*
- *Ensuring continuity of arterial roads through more effective thoroughfare planning and targeted right-of-way acquisition and improvements.*

Strategy 3.1.1: Improve existing roadway conditions through local infrastructure maintenance and retrofitting.

Rationale

While building new roadways or widening existing ones is often important in addressing existing and future traffic needs, maintenance of what is already there is equally important and should require the continued attention of all units of government.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ In conjunction with other neighborhood enhancement and capital improvement projects, identify and improve deteriorating streets and roadways and establish a program for long-term rehabilitation.
- ◆ In conjunction with road rehabilitation or other public improvement projects, construct or reconstruct sidewalks where they do not exist or are in poor condition (particularly adjacent to schools, parks, and public buildings).

Florence County Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

In November 2006, Florence voters pledged an additional one-cent sales tax (Capital Road Funding) for Florence County roadway improvements. The tax expires after seven years. Commitment from the State Infrastructure Bank was secured to fund six road-building projects. If Florence County could come up with \$148 million in matching funds, the State would bankroll the remaining \$250 million. The six projects proposed are listed below in the order of priority.

- *Pine Needles Road widening from Southborough Road to South Ebenezer Road*
- *US 378 widening from US 52 near Lake City to SC 41 in Kingsburg*
- *US 76 widening from I-95 to Main Street in Timmonsville*
- *TV Road widening to four lanes from Wilson Road to I-95*
- *Pamplico Highway widening SC 51 from Claussen Road to US 378 in Kingsburg*
- *US 301 Bypass completion from US 76 near Timmonsville to the intersection of US 52/US 301 and Howe Springs Road*

The Capital Road funds collected from the November 2006 vote will complete the first four projects and a portion of the fifth. Funds will not be available for the sixth designated project.

Source: Transportation Element (2010 Draft), Florence County Comprehensive Plan

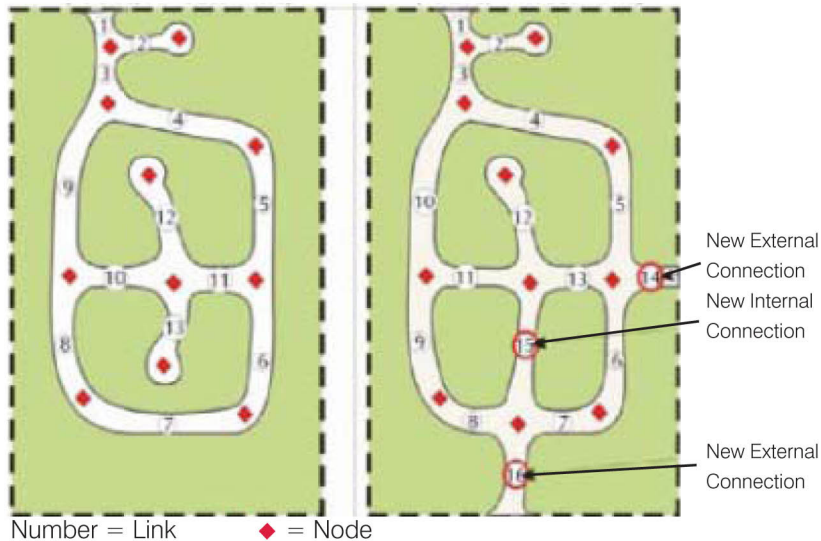
- ◆ Provide regular maintenance on pedestrian amenities including crosswalks and signals, replacing obsolete traffic signs, and synchronizing traffic signals.
- ◆ Seek future funding sources for local transportation improvements.

Strategy 3.1.2: Pursue multi-modal safety improvements in existing and planned corridors.

Rationale

Safely accommodating traffic is the primary consideration in the design of any transportation system, particularly when vehicle travel interfaces with pedestrians and bicycles.

Figure 3.2: Determining Street Connectivity



A connectivity index numerically evaluates the ratio of street links and nodes; needing a certain connectivity threshold to conform. The above example indicates a street loop (left) that does not meet the ratio ($13 \text{ links} / 11 \text{ nodes} = 1.18$) and a street layout (right) that is modified ($16 \text{ links} / 11 \text{ nodes} = 1.45$) to comply with the required threshold.

Actions and Initiatives

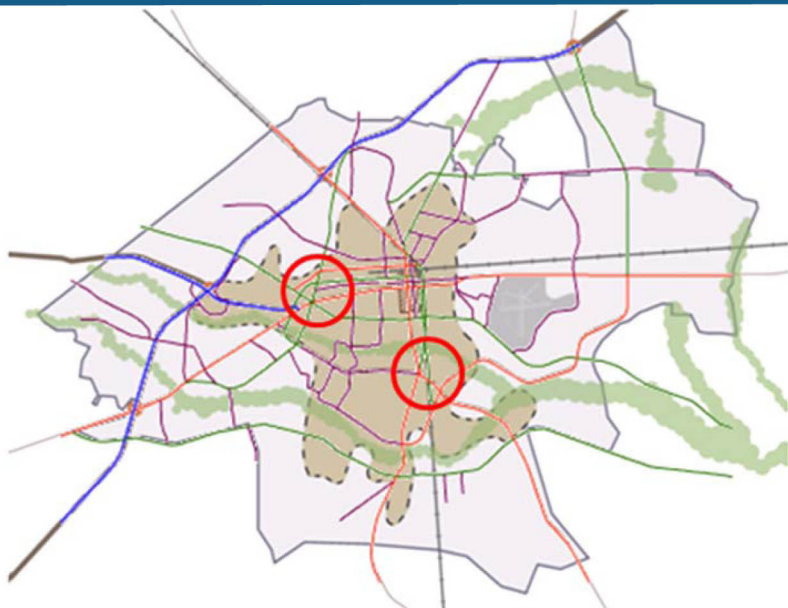
- ◆ During the subdivision review process, ensure connectivity of the road network for effective police and emergency response, possibly considering use of a connectivity index. (See **Figure 3.2, Determining Street Connectivity.**)
- ◆ Focus particularly on the safety of school children on bike and on foot through planned pedestrian improvements and connections to schools and parks.
- ◆ Take appropriate steps to enhance safety in school vicinities given traffic and vehicle queuing related to parent pick-up and drop-off and higher sensitivity to vehicle volumes and speeds. Rework downtown traffic circulation, in conjunction with the Downtown Plan Update, to enhance safety. This may include traffic calming installations, as well as appropriate signage, traffic control, and patrol.
- ◆ Continue to facilitate development of a citywide cyclist and pedestrian system through easement and right-of-way acquisition and land dedication concurrent with new development and redevelopment.
- ◆ Pursue access management policies and strengthened regulations to reduce conflict points and enhance traffic flow and safety on major roads by restricting the number, location, and spacing of driveways; street intersections; medians and median openings; marginal access roads; turn lanes; and acceleration/deceleration lanes at major intersections.
- ◆ In coordination with new access management restrictions, require both common and cross access for adjacent sites, thereby limiting street access to move between adjacent properties.
- ◆ Make physical improvements, where feasible and appropriate, to enhance safety (e.g., intersection redesign, new or upgraded signalization, new/improved street lighting).
- ◆ Monitor the visibility and effectiveness of traffic control and directional signage.
- ◆ Target traffic enforcement efforts to areas of particular concern for safety, notably including those near major traffic generators and destinations such as schools, the medical centers, and other large commercial developments and public buildings.
- ◆ Take appropriate steps, in coordination with railroad companies, to improve safety at busy railroad crossings. Consider applying to the SCDOT and Federal Railroad Administration for “Quiet Zone” status under the provisions of 49 C.F.R. § 222.7. These provisions will alleviate train whistle noise in Florence, particularly in neighborhoods along the main line railroad tracks.

Focus Area 3.2

Improve local traffic congestion.

While, overall, Florence's hierarchy of arterial and collector streets serves the community in a relatively effective manner, there are some localized areas where the over-concentration of major streets and nonresidential uses has produced congestion problems. In the western part of Florence, the successive, parallel east-west streets (for example, Darlington, Evans, King, and Palmetto) connect into North Cashua Drive, which then leads into the notorious "Five Points" intersection. The Florence community, working through FLATS, has addressed this and other areas of similar concern. These studies determined that alleviation of the problems through any major changes in street

Figure 3.3: Major Congested Areas



Areas shown in red indicate areas where several arterial or collector streets merge to create "choke points," where higher levels of congestion are often experienced.

configuration require the acquisition of expensive commercial property, are time consuming, and can intrude into nearby neighborhoods. Given these limitations, a long-term solution is more likely to involve localized reductions or relocations in curb cuts and improved access management as the adjacent commercial areas redevelop over the long term. (See **Figure 3.3: Major Congested Areas.**)

This can be implemented through the adoption and enforcement of stronger access management standards in the City's development ordinances and possibly affording density bonuses or other incentives for redevelopment projects where added investment is made to improve the flow of traffic.

Strategy 3.2.1: Work with FLATS and SCDOT to reduce traffic congestion issues at selected locations.

Rationale

FLATS and the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) are the funding and sponsoring agencies for improvements to the major portions of the street/highway network. It is important that the recommendations in this Comprehensive Plan be carried over to the ongoing FLATS planning process, as well as any statewide initiatives.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Continue to participate in the FLATS planning program.
- ◆ Include FLATS as a review agency for major City rezoning, subdivision, or other development projects.

Strategy 3.2.2: Ensure that future expansions to the transportation network avoid the creation of bottlenecks and areas of significant traffic congestion.

Rationale

Adequate planning measures, traffic studies, development standards, and the coordination of major transportation improvements with the Land Use Plan will help Florence avoid the mistakes that were made in the past.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Coordinate the Thoroughfare Plan with the Land Use Plan so that proposed major street extensions adequately serve their intended uses. Any

FLATS Roadway Capacity Improvement Recommendations

As part of the 2035 FLATS LRTP, a set of roadway capacity improvements was recommended within the MPO area. These recommendations consist of the following:

- Widen Cashua Drive between Second Loop Road (SC 51) and S Parker Drive to five lanes with a two-way left-turn lane
- Widen Claussen Road between SC 327 and just past SC 51/ Pamplico Highway to a three lane facility with a two-way left-turn lane
- Widen W. Darlington Street between N Cashua Drive and Irby Street (US 52) to five lanes
- Widen Ebenezer Road between Pine Needles Road and W Palmetto Street (US 76) to four lanes with a median
- Widen Ebenezer Road/Pisgah Road between Industry Boulevard and Pine Needles Road to five lanes with a two-way left-turn lane
- Widen Ebenezer Road/Radio Drive between David H McLeod Boulevard (I-20 Business) and near Industry Boulevard to 4 lanes with a median
- Widen Freedom Boulevard between Freedom Florence Recreational Facility and National Cemetery Road to 4 lanes with a median (including an access management overlay)
- Widen Hoffmeyer Road between Anderson Farm Road and Tivoli Drive to 4 lanes with a median
- Widen I-95 between David H McLeod Boulevard (I-20 Business) to W Palmetto Street (US 76) to six lanes
- Widen National Cemetery Road between S Church Street and Stockade Drive to four lanes with a median
- Widen Oakland Avenue between E Lucas Street and Wilson Road to three lanes with a two-way left-turn lane
- Widen Southborough Road between N Sally Hill Road and Pine Needles Road to 4 lanes with a median
- Widen Third Loop Road between S Marsh Avenue to S Irby Street to 3 lanes with a two-way left-turn lane
- Widen US 301 Bypass Extension/Alligator Road between Palmetto Street (US 76) and Irby Street to 4 lanes with a median

Source: Transportation Element (2010 Draft), Florence County Comprehensive Plan

amendments to the Land Use Plan warrant analysis as to the individual and cumulative effects on the Thoroughfare Plan, with recommendations as to necessary modifications.

- ◆ Enforce zoning regulations to ensure that any increased density or intensity of use does not create additional traffic congestion.
- ◆ Consider adding redevelopment density/intensity bonus provisions for projects that include improved access management or developer-funded roadway realignments.
- ◆ Work with SCDOT to improve its access management provisions for primary and secondary highways, particularly in the unincorporated outlying portions of the planning area. The condition and appearance of local streets is a fundamental factor in defining the livability and economic stability of a neighborhood. It is important that all neighborhoods be provided with safe, attractive, and well-maintained local streets.

Focus Area 3.3

Provide safe and adequate neighborhood streets.

The streets in most of Florence's neighborhoods are attractive and well maintained. However, there are some older neighborhoods in Florence where the streets were poorly constructed, have deteriorated over time, and are in need of repair and removal of overgrown weeds and vegetation. Some of this deterioration is inherent to aging and is simply indicative of the need for continued maintenance. In other situations, critical infrastructure components (sidewalks, intersection controls, crosswalks, etc.) were never installed along some City streets, and there is a need for installation for the first time.

Strategy 3.3.1: Maintain and improve the condition of neighborhood streets.

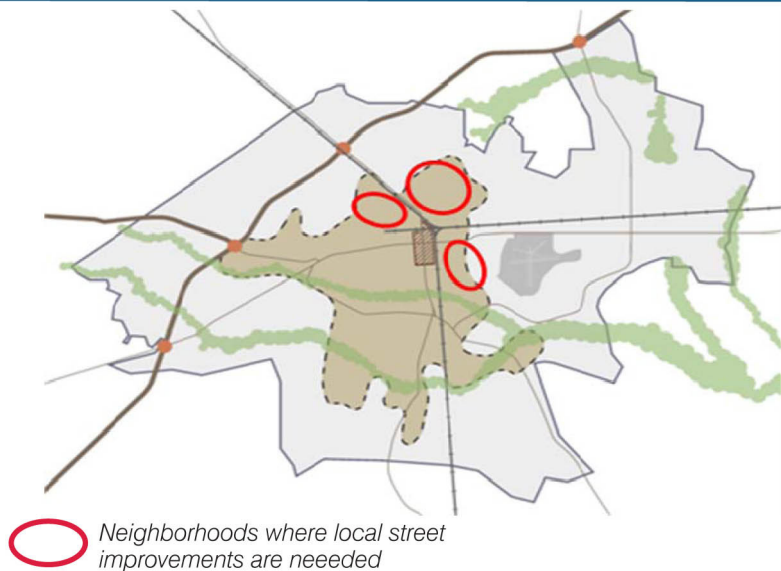
Rationale

Well-maintained, appropriately sized, and attractive streets are a primary asset of a neighborhood. (See **Figure 3.4: Areas Where Street Enhancements Are Needed**).

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Promote neighborhood integrity through appropriate street, sidewalk, and crosswalk design, including protection of mature trees in all road construction and rehabilitation projects.
- ◆ Ensure consideration of community aesthetics in all transportation infrastructure projects including the design of bridges, retaining walls, and medians, as well as the standards for street lighting and traffic control devices.
- ◆ Enhance the streetscapes and appearance of North/South Irby Street and East/West Palmetto Street as they approach downtown, including consideration of medians, landscaped parkways, enhanced lighting, wayfinding and unique street signage, and pedestrian amenities.

Figure 3.4: Areas Where Street Enhancements Are Needed



Some of the older neighborhoods in Florence have aging and inadequate residential streets that are in need of enhancement and repair.

- ◆ Review the street cross section requirements and design standards in the City's subdivision ordinance. The design standards should reflect the character of development by way of modified right-of-way widths, use of landscaped medians, the width of parkways and amount of green space within the right-of-way, the placement and spacing of streetside vegetation, and the handling of pedestrians and bicyclists.
- ◆ Complete a community-wide sidewalk inventory to highlight gaps in the existing sidewalk system, areas with no sidewalks, areas where sidewalks are in need of repair or replacement, and areas with the highest propensity of pedestrian activity where sidewalks and/or trails are most needed.
- ◆ Perform tree and vegetation trimming and replacement plans that improve the streetscape appearance, remove dead or unhealthy trees, and address site visibility at street intersections.



The design quality and good maintenance of local streets significantly contribute to their attractiveness and the character of the neighborhood.

Focus Area 3.4

Accommodate greater walking and biking opportunities.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities add to the quality of life of Florence and help create a cohesive environment that is interconnected not only through roadways, but also through a system of bike lanes (within or adjacent to streets), off-street trails, and sidewalks. In addition to their practical function of getting people around, pedestrian and bicycle opportunities help meet some of the recreational needs in the community. Currently, largely by reason of the available – or unavailable – infrastructure, automobiles are the primary form of transportation as less than three percent of residents walked or used a bicycle as their means to work¹. However, with an aging population and the presence of Francis Marion University, opportunities exist for providing alternative modes of transportation including bike and pedestrian facilities, along with improved public transit services.

¹ P30. Means of Transportation to Workers for Workers 16 Years and Over, Census Summary File 5 (SF3)

Key planning considerations for making Florence more bicycle and pedestrian “friendly” include:

- *Continuing to invest in necessary infrastructure and facilities to support alternative transportation modes.*
- *Making downtown Florence, the medical centers, and large auto-oriented commercial developments more accessible, safe, and hospitable for pedestrians and cyclists.*
- *Promoting development and redevelopment patterns that result in parks, schools, and convenience shopping and services within reasonable walking and bicycling distance of residential areas.*
- *Expanding and enhancing Florence’s extensive and interconnected trail network.*

Strategy 3.4.1: Provide facilities and improvements that promote and support alternative transportation modes.

Rationale

Increased use of alternate modes of transport will reduce demands on the street and highway network, reduce reliance on non-renewable energy sources, and promote personal health.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Determine appropriate requirements for pedestrian pathways within new developments and concurrent with street construction/rehabilitation projects, ensuring such improvements reflect the character of development.
- ◆ Install bicycle racks at key public locations and buildings throughout the community, also considering required bicycle parking for larger-scale development projects, e.g. shopping centers, big-box retail outlets, and major employers.
- ◆ Take steps to acquire easements or rights-of-way for future trail development, including the railroad right-of-way that parallels West Lucas Street.

- ◆ As part of an overall bicycle network, identify and stripe roadways appropriate for bicycle lanes. The City has identified an extensive on- and off-street bicycle trail system. While many trails are located along quiet neighborhood streets that do not require lane dedication, routes on busier collector streets should have dedicated, striped, and signed bicycle lanes.

Strategy 3.4.2: Increase multi-modal options by making commercial developments more accessible to bicyclists and pedestrians.

Rationale

The use of alternative modes of transport is often thought of as only a recreational pastime. Efforts should be taken to make bicycling and walking as true, viable alternatives to motor vehicles by providing adequate facilities in public venues, shopping areas, and places of employment.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Prioritize intersections in the community that are heavily used by pedestrians and implement safety improvements at these intersections. Intersections should be prioritized based on propensity of use and pedestrian risk.
- ◆ Improvements may include walkovers or tunnels; installing accessible ramps for persons with disabilities; marked, signed, and/or signaled pedestrian crossings; and pedestrian-actuated signal detectors.
- ◆ Target pedestrian and bicycle improvements at key locations within the community including around downtown areas as well as schools, parks, and other public places.
- ◆ Make the southern downtown “cultural district” more pedestrian-friendly by providing direct routes between buildings with enhanced landscaping and signage. Provide direct linkage to the new FMU Performing Arts Center and the downtown core.

Intersection Improvements Recommendations

Two major intersection and interchange improvements are also recommended as a part of the 2035 FLATS LRTP:

- *Construct half cloverleaf interchange at I-95 and McIver Road*
- *Construct 2-lane roundabout at the Five Points intersection*

- ◆ Coordinate with the McLeod Medical Center to provide direct pedestrian/bicycle linkage between their campus and downtown Florence.
- ◆ Add specific pedestrian and bicycle criteria to the site plan review process when large commercial and multi-use sites are proposed. These criteria may include designation of pedestrian connections to surrounding developments, internal pedestrian and bicycle circulation, bicycle parking and transit stop locations, and parking lot safety.
- ◆ Highlight the availability of offstreet parking in downtown Florence to overcome a perception that parking is scarce in the downtown, particularly at peak periods. Information about parking options should be made available through way-finding and good signage. Lighting and landscaping improvements should be made to parking areas to enhance their appearance and foster a greater sense of personal security.
- ◆ Efforts should be made to arrange for off-peak use of the new FMU Performing Arts Center and future Museum parking areas for use by downtown shoppers and lunchtime restaurant patrons.



Well designed parking lots should accommodate the safe and convenient movement of pedestrians throughout a development site.

Strategy 3.4.3: Promote land use patterns that result in a more walkable community.

Rationale

Transportation elements are closely interwoven with the land use pattern they serve. Neighborhood residents should be afforded choices in the mode of transport, as walking or cycling to an activity can often be more convenient and enjoyable.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Eliminate the PDD, Planned Development District in favor of allowing multiple development types, including the development of mixed use

neighborhoods and those with multiple housing types. Availability of nearby services and frequent destinations (school, church, restaurants, grocery store, convenience store, dry cleaners, parks, etc.). Allow residents to make shorter trips on foot or by bike rather than getting in their cars and driving for every trip purpose.

- ◆ Amend the zoning ordinance to include bufferyard provisions for both within and between districts to ensure compatibility among different use types and intensities. The bufferyard standards should be commensurate with the intensity of development
- ◆ Allow a mix of uses in specific zoning districts, subject to applicable districts to ensure compatibility among different use types and intensities standards should be commensurate with the intensity of develop community Example.)

Figure 3.5: Walkable Community Example



Mixed use development integrates different use and housing types in a manner that promotes pedestrian connectivity and improved walkability.

Focus Area 3.5

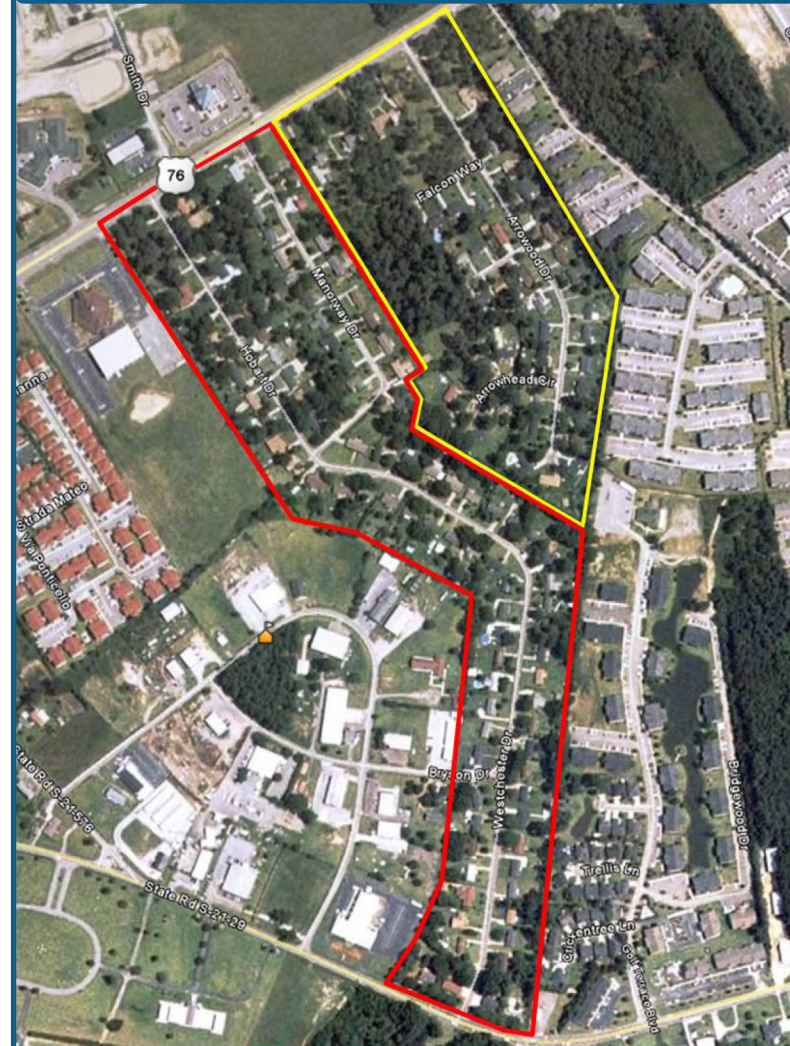
Expand the road network while maintaining the “small town” character.

In order to maintain a high quality of life for residents and remain competitive, local and regional transportation improvements will be necessary during the horizon of this plan. Mobility system expansion is inherent to population growth. This growth, however, does not need to come at the expense of the City budget and loss of neighborhood character. Efforts can be made to ensure that new roads are properly planned and executed in conjunction with future development. Future linkages can largely fail or succeed before the initial construction begins since so much of the corridor potential is derived from long-term right-of-way planning and acquisition.

A significant issue in street expansion is the physical design of the corridor and the infrastructure elements present in the right-of-way. Most of the City's older residential areas are on a grid system providing good connectivity within and through neighborhoods. However, many newer neighborhoods in near outlying and semi-rural areas have been designed with a curvilinear street pattern, cul-de-sacs, and, often, one point of entry/exit. (See **Figure 3.6: Subdivision Connectivity Example.**) While this pattern is desirable by residents for reasons of safety and aesthetics, concerns are typically raised regarding connectivity. As new subdivisions are developed, plans should be made for adequate connectivity within and between neighborhoods. Likewise, new subdivisions and commercial centers should be developed in a manner that allows multiple transportation options that are also interconnected. It is not sufficient to simply designate where new corridors will expand, but there is much gained or lost in the manner of their development. A well-designed, multi-modal corridor can be a boon to a neighborhood, while a poorly designed street may only signal a lost opportunity.

It is also important that the designation of new or extended corridors be executed with careful attention to land uses and the pattern of development along these corridors. For instance, the effectiveness of David McLeod Boulevard, which is a critical link between the City and I-95, is enhanced because direct access to the fronting commercial areas is restricted to the intersecting streets. This greatly improves the flow of traffic and the safety of

Figure 3.6: Subdivision Connectivity Example



Connectivity is an essential aspect of good transportation planning. The above image is a relevant example of two abutting, enclave subdivisions, in this case, one within and one outside the City limits that have no means of connection other than by an arterial road (West Palmetto Street).

this roadway. Conversely, the effectiveness of two other well-conceived corridors, Second Loop Road and Third Loop Road was – and continues to be – compromised by the development along these roads. These two strategically significant circumferential routes are fronted mainly by single-family residential development, with accompanying driveway curb cuts and speed limits that restrict traffic flows. The presence of this development also severely limits the ability to acquire additional right-of-way for future widening. Fortunately, such shortsightedness has not yet occurred in the design and construction of Freedom Boulevard, which extends Third Loop Road to the east and north to I-95.

Key planning considerations for ensuring that transportation infrastructure is in line with Florence's community character include:

- *Developing street design standards that are context sensitive and vary according to the development character (e.g. urban, suburban, rural, etc.).*
- *Anticipating potential traffic congestion and safety issues with ongoing growth and infill.*
- *Lining up the support and financing for significant regional roadway projects (e.g., Freedom Boulevard).*

Strategy 3.5.1: Implement transportation system improvements that are consistent with the development forms that they serve.

Rationale

Well-designed, appropriately sized streets and intersections can avoid congestion while saving costs.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Coordinate with SCDOT to adopt context sensitive solutions in the design of State roadways within the Florence planning area. Such approach would accommodate varying roadway design parameters to better integrate with the environment, including the character of adjacent development.

- ◆ Amend the City's subdivision ordinance and street standards to coincide the design of local streets with the character of development. This would result in rural, suburban, and urban street standards – consistent with the recommended district structure of the new zoning ordinance.²
- ◆ Provide for a continuous system of collector and minor arterial streets to distribute and convey traffic and relieve the traffic burden on the principal arterial streets.
- ◆ As part of the Downtown Master Plan Update, re-evaluate and amend the street design classifications and their widths and off-street parking requirements in the downtown to support the planned character of development and the area's accessibility and its role as the commercial and cultural center of the Pee Dee Region.

Focus Area 3.6

Improve the appearance of major entrances to Florence and portals to special areas and districts.

Issues, goal statements, and recommendations to improve the appearance of roadside development, particularly in commercial areas, are addressed in *Chapter 2, Community Character and Growth*. An issue and opportunity that is closely related to this is the improvement of the street cross – section itself. In many locations, the design of streets at the edge of the City limits and in the immediate fringe areas are four – or five – lane undivided sections. In these locations, use of a median would functionally aid in better managing property access while also creating an opportunity for aesthetic enhancement.

The addition of landscaping and other amenity enhancements to the unpaved highway median shown in *FLATS*



View of East Palmetto Street, looking eastward as it approaches the airport. The street cross section includes a landscaped median with turning lanes. Enhanced landscaping and minor repairs would greatly improve the appearance of this roadway.

(Source: Kendig Keast Collaborative.)

FLATS Intersection Improvements Recommendations

Two major intersection and interchange improvements are also recommended as a part of the 2035 FLATS LRTP:

- Construct half cloverleaf interchange at I-95 and McIver Road
- Construct 2-lane roundabout at the Five Points intersection

ensuing development. Creation of an esplanade within the continuous center turn lane on South Irby could transform the aesthetic integrity of this important portal to the downtown district.

Strategy 3.6.1: Upgrade the Appearance of the City's Major Approaches.

Rationale

Residents, visitors, and business prospects alike usually gain a lasting opinion of the City by their first impressions. It is important that Florence projects itself in the most positive fashion possible. Improvements in the public right-of-way are some of the most cost effective and easy-to-implement measures. The pleasant, green appearance along David McLeod Boulevard, for instance, presents a strong impression as to the City's values and livability.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Design, fund, and install community gateways in the following priority locations:
 - » I-95 and U.S. 76/West Palmetto;
 - » U.S. 76 at eastern City limits;
 - » I-95 and Alligator Road;³
 - » I-95 and U.S. 52/West Lucas Street;
 - » SR 26 and TV Road;

³ A gateway at this location assumes there is I-95 access at some point in the future.

Intersection Improvements Recommendations, would enhance the image of this important corridor approach to downtown Florence and the Florence Regional Airport. In a similar fashion, opportunities exist to transform the paved turning lanes of other highway approaches into landscaped medians, particularly in advance of

- » I-95 and SR 327; and
- » SR 51 at southeastern City limits.

- ◆ Prepare corridor master plans jointly with Florence County for the roadways on the fringe of the City limits with a goal of adopting regulatory provisions addressing signage, landscaping, general use types (and prohibited uses), outdoor storage and display, and other functional and aesthetic elements.
- ◆ Prepare corridor revitalization studies and plans including a detailed inventory and assessment of existing conditions such as land use and zoning, building footprints, numbers and locations of driveways and parking lots, numbers and locations of signs, trees and vegetation, natural features and open space, street cross section and right-of-way, sidewalks and bike/pedestrian improvements, pervious/impervious surfaces, and general visual elements. The revitalization plan should include specific regulatory recommendations and identified improvements and their

Historical Designation of Scenic or Historical Byways

Designation as a Scenic or Historical Byway includes the protection and enhancement of scenic or historic highway programs and sites, including SC Scenic Byways, and National Scenic Byways, as well as other State and Federal-designated and/or eligible historic highways, regardless of the functional classification of the road. Historic highways must also be listed on/eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Applicants must include documentation of National Register listing/eligibility with their application to be eligible under the historic highway provision.

- Installation of interpretive plaques, signs, aesthetic guardrail, and visually sensitive bridge rails.
- Restoration of historic highway-related features such as retaining walls or historic markers.
- Construction of new or restoration of existing tourist and welcome centers related to scenic or historical sites.
- Development of scenic overlooks on State-designated Scenic Byways or National Scenic Byways.

Source: South Carolina Department of Transportation

estimated costs. An implementation plan should identify priorities, funding options and sources, and a timeline.

- ◆ Partner with SCDOT in the establishment of scenic or historic byways particularly along U.S. 76 – and possibly other State routes through Florence – which would tap into Transportation Enhancement funds for activities that will protect and enhance the scenic and historic integrity and visitor appreciation of an existing highway or adjacent area.
- ◆ Coordinate with SCDOT to amend the design standards for the right-of-way width of new or extended arterial streets to acquire sufficient additional right-of-way to include environmental resources and add green space and buffer zones from adjacent land uses. This may include the acquisition of easements for the placement of entry gateway treatments, which may be funded by the City.
- ◆ Repurpose the landscaped median in the East Palmetto Street corridor near the Florence Regional Airport, including landscape enhancement, upgraded street lighting, and possibly public art installations.
- ◆ Select a “test case” area for replacing portions of the paved center turning lane with raised – or depressed – landscaped medians, which would be for the purpose of improving traffic control and better managing access while enhancing the visual environment. If the initial installation is successful, identify specific areas where additional median landscaping would be most effective and develop a long-term program for its implementation.
- ◆ Implement additional streetscape improvements in the southern “cultural district” part of downtown. Replace streetlights and provide additional amenities such as banners, benches, and street furniture, and other pedestrian-focused amenities. (See **Figure 3.7: Streetscape Transformation**).

Focus Area 3.7

Expand and enhance public transportation services.

The Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA), which serves six counties in the Pee Dee Region, operates six fixed bus routes in the Florence area via the Florence Transit System. The agency also offers regular

commuter service into Florence from Dillon, Marion, Hartsville, and Darlington. The systems serve over 100 destinations within the City and environs and operate seven days per week. Additionally, the PDRTA provides services in Chesterfield and Marlboro Counties, with service between Chesterfield, Cheraw, and Bennettsville. It also provides two daily commuter service trips between Florence and Myrtle Beach.

Para-transit, or on-demand service for persons with disabilities and the elderly, has been the most significant portion of PDRTA’s regular business. PDRTA is the transportation provider for many human services agencies in the Pee Dee Region, particularly providing access to the City’s medical centers.



*Pee Dee Regional
Transit Agency vehicle*

(Source: PDRTA website)

Key planning considerations for upgrading public transportation offerings include:

- *Continuing to invest in the expansion of the PDRTA vehicle fleet and service.*
- *Providing expanded service in connecting Francis Marion University’s outlying campus with the future student activities associated with the downtown Performing Arts Center and other university-related activities.*

Strategy 3.7.1: Enhance and expand public transportation options.

Rationale

A strong public transit system with fixed routes, intercity commuter service, and Para-transit services has been a part of Florence’s community fabric for over 30 years. The community should continue to support and expand the role of transit as the area continues to grow and change.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Cooperate with PDRTA to study ridership potential, as Florence grows, to determine ridership patterns and opportunities for modifying or adding routes.

Figure 3.7: Streetscape Transformation



This segment of South Irby Street (looking North toward downtown) could benefit from the installation of a landscaped median, which would begin to transform the aesthetic environs of the “heart of the City.”

(Source: Kendig Keast Collaborative)

- ◆ Coordinate the fixed transit routes that are committed for the long term with the capital streets improvement program. Invest in street-wide transit improvements such as bus pull-out bays. Other transit improvements include sidewalks of an increased width with curb cuts and handicap

accessible ramps; non-slip surfaces; marked, signed, and signaled pedestrian crossings; prevention of obstructions for wheelchair access; and installation of pedestrian actuated traffic signals. Low cost transit-oriented street improvements include:

- » Special left-turn lane signal phases at select intersections;
 - » Preferred signal timing to aid bus travel time;
 - » Initiation of parking regulations to clear the curb lane for bus operations;
 - » Improved identification of bus stop locations and installation of no parking signs; and
 - » Pavement markings in support of signing at transit stops.
- ◆ Amend the zoning ordinance to incorporate transit-supportive site development standards and design criteria. Considerations include pedestrian access within parking lots and to adjacent sites and transit stops; sheltered areas for transit patrons; access and site circulation for transit vehicles; site geometrics for vehicle maneuvering; and siting of transit stops and user amenities.

CITY OF FLORENCE 2030 THOROUGHFARE PLAN

The City's Thoroughfare Plan is designed to provide for future travel needs by ensuring orderly development of the street system, including the extension and improvement of existing streets, as well as planned future roadways. The purpose and importance of the Thoroughfare Plan is to ensure that adequate rights-of-way are preserved with a general alignment and sufficient width to allow for efficient expansion and improvement of the street system. In addition, it is designed to provide opportunities for other transportation modes so as not to place a fiscal burden on the community to fund extensive road improvements, which, in turn, require long-term maintenance.

Similar to the Future Land Use Plan, which is intended to guide growth through the Year 2030, the Thoroughfare Plan represents a long-term vision for the mobility of the community. Some of the proposed arterial and collector streets identified on the plan, particularly in the outlying portions of the study area, will likely not be needed or constructed during the 20-year horizon of this plan.

Nonetheless, the purpose of this plan is to preserve needed transportation corridors (even if they will not be needed for 50 years) so that, as development occurs in the future, the City will have the ability to develop appropriately sized transportation facilities.

Thoroughfare Plan Policies

Key features and policies of the Thoroughfare Plan are as follows:

- ◆ Review of general development plans and preliminary and final plats must be in compliance with the Thoroughfare Plan.
- ◆ The general location and alignment of thoroughfares must be in conformance with the Thoroughfare Plan. Any thoroughfare alignment that is inconsistent with the plan requires the approval of the Planning and Zoning Commission through a public hearing process. A change includes any proposal that adds or deletes a thoroughfare designation or changes the alignment that would affect adjacent lands.
- ◆ Variances from the Thoroughfare Plan should not be approved unless there is substantial evidence through a qualified traffic circulation and impacts study establishing a warrant for such amendment and showing how an alternative alignment or area street plan will provide improved circulation and an equal or improved level of service on all affected roadways.
- ◆ The necessary rights-of-way, in accordance with the roadway classification and corresponding cross sections, must be dedicated at the time of final platting. Properties proposed for subdivisions that include or are adjacent to an existing thoroughfare with insufficient right-of-way should be required to dedicate land to compensate for any deficiency.
- ◆ Existing streets adjacent to land proposed for subdivision should be continued so as to meet the continuity objectives of the Thoroughfare Plan. The arrangement of streets in a new subdivision – including private subdivisions – must make provision for continuation of the existing arterial and collector streets in the adjacent areas.
- ◆ Landowners are responsible for the dedication of rights-of-way and may be responsible for constructing sections of roadways located within or adjacent to their property. The total width of street rights-of-way must be dedicated at the time of development. The dedication of one-half of the

required right-of-way should not be accepted unless the other half already exists or there is a plat on file for the adjacent land.

- ◆ To maximize mobility, collector streets must provide access and circulation both within and between neighborhoods. Collectors should connect arterial streets rather than allowing development to have a street system with no points of ingress and egress other than the major entrance.
- ◆ Collectors must be situated to connect arterial streets with other collectors and local streets. Their continuity in the roadway system is essential to its function of distributing traffic within the hierarchical system.
- ◆ The fact that a thoroughfare is shown on the plan does not represent a commitment to a specific time frame for construction or that the City or other governing body will build the roadway improvement.
- ◆ Individual thoroughfare improvements may be constructed by a variety of implementing agencies including the City, Florence County, South Carolina Department of Transportation, private developers, and/or intergovernmental agencies.
- ◆ The future alignments of local streets are dependent upon land development plans and, thus, are not set forth by the Thoroughfare Plan.

Thoroughfare Plan Alignments and Extensions

Displayed in [Map 3.2, Thoroughfare Plan](#), is one the proposed general corridors for the extension of existing collector streets and minor and principal arterial roadways, together with planned new roadways. A majority of these corridors are wholly consistent with the functional classification of roadways development by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), with some additions and exceptions, as follows:

Principal Arterial Roads

- ◆ Alligator Road is proposed for re-designation from a Minor Arterial to a Principal Arterial Road because of its:
 - » likely future functional role in the southern portion of the urbanized area;
 - » length stretching westward beyond U.S. 76/West Palmetto Road, east of U.S. 52 (becoming E. Howe Springs Road), east of SR 51/Pamplico

Highway (becoming Claussen Road), and continuing eastward out of the Florence study area;

- » two- to four-mile spacing from U.S. 76; and
- » relationship to the developing southern portion of the Florence study area.

Minor Arterial Roads

- ◆ N. Ebenezer Road from St. Rd. S-21-13/Hoffmeyer Rd north to U.S. 52;
- ◆ Pisgah Road from Ebenezer Road northeast across U.S. 52 to SR 179/Mclver Road; and
- ◆ St. Rd. S-21-63/Mechanicsville Road from U.S. 52 north past SR 179/E. Mclver Road.

Collector Streets

- ◆ Blitsgel Drive from Southborough Road southwest;
- ◆ Wedgefield Road from Blitsgel Drive to Pine Needles Road;
- ◆ Stokes Road extending from Sumter Street parallel with I-95 to U.S. 52/West Lucas Street;
- ◆ Range Way between Pisgah Road and Mechanicsville Road;
- ◆ East Sam Harrell Road between SR 26/Irby Street and Mclver Road;
- ◆ John C. Calhoun Road between Old Marion Way and N. Williamson Road;
- ◆ Estate Road between Old Marion Road and U.S. 76/E. Palmetto Road;
- ◆ Stadium Road curving along the fringe of the Florence Regional Airport from U.S. 76/E. Palmetto Road to McCurdy Road;
- ◆ Extension of McCurdy Road south of National Cemetery Road following the alignment of Gilbert Drive to Freedom Boulevard;
- ◆ Steel Road between McCurdy Road and Freedom Boulevard;
- ◆ Beulah Road between McCurdy Road and Freedom Boulevard;
- ◆ Wallace Road from U.S. 76/E. Palmetto Road south across Freedom Boulevard to Old Wallace Gregg Road;
- ◆ Realignment of Turner Road to extend McCall Boulevard from National Cemetery Road south to Freedom Boulevard;

- ◆ Cato Road between Claussen Road across SR 51/Pamplico Highway southward through the Florence Study Area;
- ◆ Whippoorwill Road south of Alligator Road aligning with Myers Cemetery Road to John Paul Jones Road;
- ◆ McLaurin Lane connecting to Lakeshore Drive to S. Knollwood Road;
- ◆ Extension of Meadors Road (West of I-95) south of U.S. 76/W. Palmetto Road to Alligator Road, serving as a frontage road to gain access from/to I-95 to Alligator Road; and
- ◆ Extension of Bancroft Road (East of I-95) south of U.S. 76/W. Palmetto Road to Alligator Road, serving as a frontage road to gain access from/to I-95 from Alligator Road.

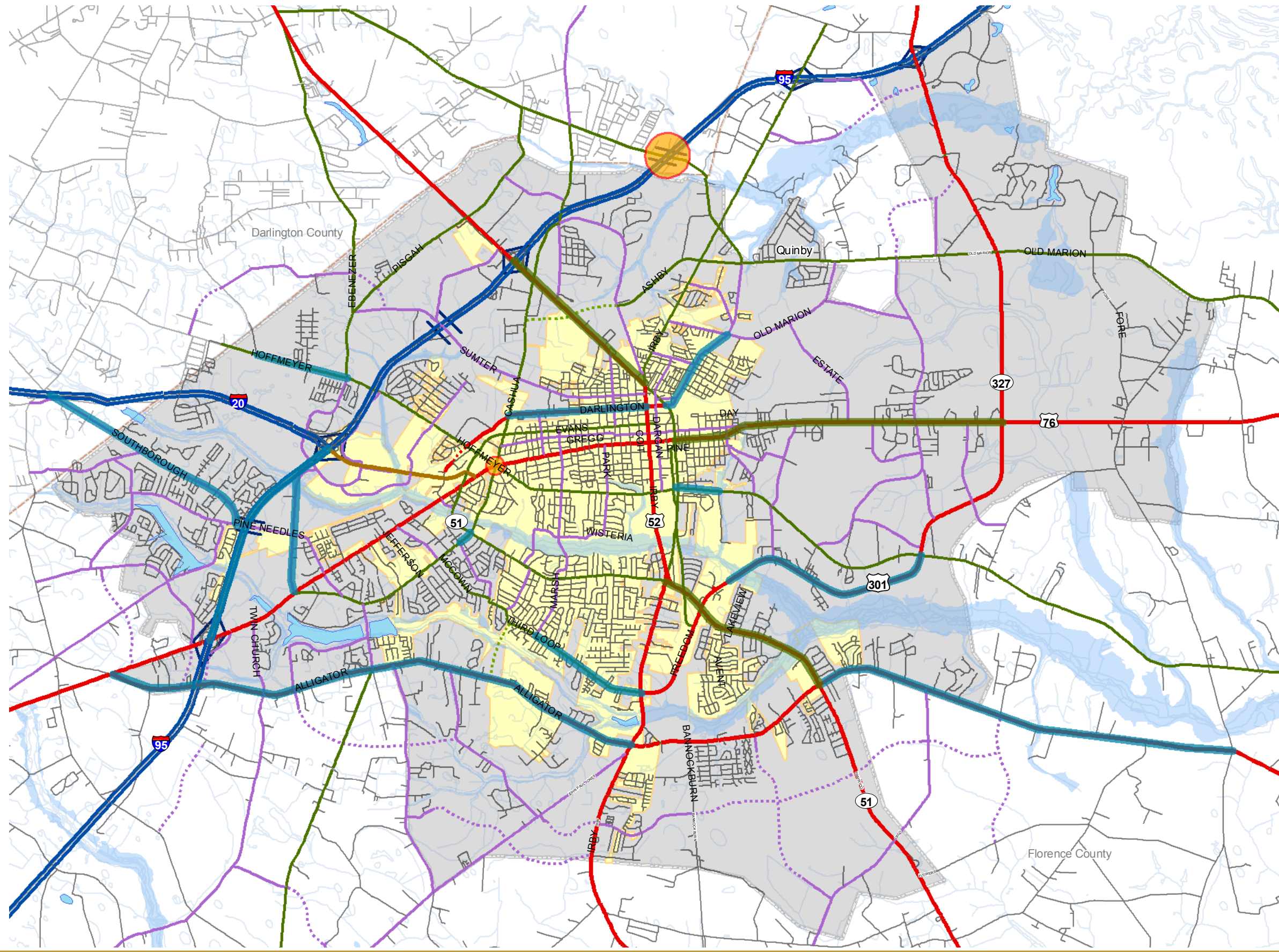
Concurrently with the City of Florence Comprehensive Plan is an update to the Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) as part of the metropolitan area transportation planning process. Preliminary outcomes of this study effort produced a series of recommended roadway improvements.⁴ The roadway alignments and extensions reflected in **Map 3.2, Thoroughfare Plan**, include those represented on the draft LRTP, plus several supplemental improvements, as follows:

Collector Streets

- ◆ Extension of McLaurin Road south of Alligator Road following the alignment of Parrott Drive South and East to Oliver Road (which is shown on the draft LRTP), and continuing eastward across Savannah Grove Road to Whippoorwill Road; and
- ◆ Extension of Green Acres Road east of the north-south extension of Secretariat Drive (between Claussen Road and Flowers Road) to Willow Creek Road.

Future thoroughfare development must achieve continuity and connectivity to be functionally efficient. To do so, the City's plan, development ordinances, and approval procedures must stipulate applicable standards so as to avoid discontinuous and irregular street patterns. This is particularly significant in the fringe and outlying areas, where the City is likely to annex to accommodate

⁴ Preliminary recommendations of the FLATS 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan, November 2009, provided by Kimley Horn Associates.



LEGEND

FLATS Recommended Improvements *

- Street/Highway Widening
- Access Management Improvements
- Intersections

City Roads

- Interstate Highway
- Freeway/Expressway
- Principal Arterials
- Minor Arterials
- Collectors

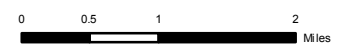
Boundaries & Infrastructure

- City Limits
- County Boundary
- Planning Area
- Quinby
- Railroad

Floodplain and Waterbodies

- 100-year floodplain
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams

* The denoted projects are the priority improvement recommendations of the 2035 FLATS Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).



its future growth. In these areas development has and continues to occur in a noncontiguous manner, resulting in discontinuous streets and lost opportunities for good thoroughfare planning. It is, therefore, vital for the City of Florence and Florence County to coordinate their transportation planning functions through FLATS. Aside from the planning process, though, there must be a commitment and diligence in the coordinated review and approval of subdivision development to ensure it occurs in an orderly manner in the context of the transportation infrastructure.

The following planning principles and design guidelines are to aid in the transportation planning decisions during the horizon on this plan:

Principal and Minor Arterials

Arterial streets form an interconnecting network for broad movement of traffic. Although they usually represent only five to 10 percent of the total roadway network, arterials typically accommodate between 30 and 40 percent of an area's travel volume. Since traffic movement, not land access, is the primary function of arterials, access management is essential to avoid traffic congestion and delays caused by turning movements for vehicles entering and exiting driveways. Likewise, intersections of arterials with other public streets and private access drives should be designed to limit speed differentials between turning vehicles and other traffic to no more than 10 to 15 miles per hour. Signalized intersection spacing should be long enough to allow a variety of signal cycle lengths and timing plans that can be adjusted to meet changes in traffic volumes and maintain traffic progression (preferably one-third to one-half mile spacing).

- ◆ Access to high-intensity land uses should be limited by way of cross and joint access agreements and use of marginal access roads.
- ◆ Access points should be a minimum distance of 120 feet from street intersections.
- ◆ A raised median should be included in the design cross-section of all new principal arterial streets where the abutting property is not yet developed. A raised median may be included in the design of minor arterial streets, where warranted. For largely developed areas, an access study should be prepared to determine the feasibility of raised medians.

- ◆ Access points should be aligned with median breaks and access points across the street.
- ◆ Local streets should not access principal arterial roadways. Rather, they should access a collector roadway to minimize the impedence of traffic and maximize the traffic carrying capacity of the principal arterial street.
- ◆ Residential driveway access shall not be allowed onto a principal arterial street.
- ◆ Collector roadways should maintain a spacing of approximately one quarter to one-half mile, which may be signalized with a principal arterial street.
- ◆ Acceleration and deceleration lanes should be provided at all intersections to facilitate safe turning movements, as warranted by a traffic impact study.
- ◆ Parking should not be permitted on principal or minor arterial streets.
- ◆ A signal warrant study should be conducted to determine the location of signalized intersections.
- ◆ Pedestrian crossing improvements should be limited to signalized intersection locations. Such improvements should include crosswalk delineation via reflective paint or pavement texturing, American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements, pedestrian and bicycle actuated signals, pavement markings, and signage. An underwalk or overwalk may be warranted at mid-point crossings.
- ◆ An eight-foot wide trail section should be incorporated on one side of all principal and minor arterial streets.
- ◆ Traffic control devices should be installed in accordance with the Uniform Traffic Control Manual.

Major and Minor Collectors

Subdivision street layout plans and commercial and industrial districts must include collector streets in order to provide efficient traffic ingress/egress and circulation. Since collectors generally carry higher traffic volumes than local streets, they require a wider roadway cross section and added lanes at intersections with arterial streets to provide adequate capacity for both through traffic and turning movements. However, since speeds are slower and more turn movements are expected on collectors versus arterials, a higher speed differential and much closer intersection/access spacing can be used than

on arterials. Collectors typically make up about five to 10 percent of the total street system.

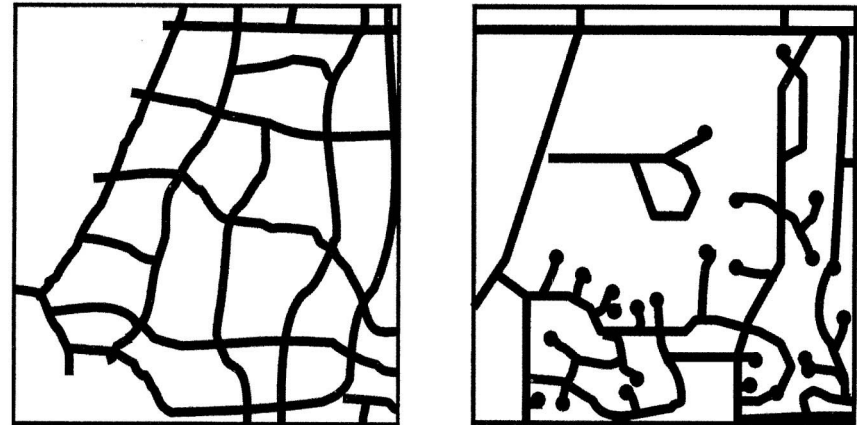
- ◆ Collector streets should be roughly spaced at one-half mile intervals.
- ◆ Minor collector streets, as applicable, should be determined by a development plan or a local circulation plan prepared by the City. Minor collector streets are for spacing between arterial and major collector streets where there are no more than 10,000 VPD.
- ◆ Collector roadways should not be designated as truck routes, unless special precautions are taken with respect to design (curb return radii, minimum tangent lengths between reverse curves, construction specifications, etc.) and the abutting land use.
- ◆ Driveways should be allowed for properties abutting no more than 20 percent of the lot frontage to collector streets.
- ◆ Collectors should extend continuously between arterial streets, crossing creeks, drainage channels, and other barriers to provide adequate street continuity. (See **Figure 3.8: Street Pattern Continuity**.)
- ◆ Traffic calming techniques should be used to slow traffic along continuous sections of collector roadways.
- ◆ Sidewalks should be located on both sides of all collector streets.
- ◆ Traffic control devices should be installed in accordance with the Uniform Traffic Control Manual.

Local Streets

Local streets allow direct property access within residential and commercial areas. Through-traffic and excessive speeds should be discouraged by using appropriate geometric designs, traffic control devices, and traffic calming techniques. Local streets typically comprise about 65 to 80 percent of the total street system.

- ◆ Performance standards should apply to local streets, where the type of access, number of dwelling units served, and the units' average frontages determine the right-of-way, pavement width, parking lanes, curb width, parkways, and sidewalks. In this way, the right-of-way and street design are directly tied to development density and traffic volumes.

Figure 3.8: Street Pattern Continuity



Continuity of the street pattern is essential for its efficient and systematic function in the overall thoroughfare system.

(Source: Kendig Keast Collaborative)

- ◆ Traffic calming techniques should be used to slow traffic, particularly adjacent to schools, parks, and public buildings.
- ◆ Traffic control devices should be installed in accordance with the Uniform Traffic Control Manual.

Access Management

Access management is an important component of the thoroughfare management process. Access management is the coordination between land access and traffic flow. The basic premise of access management is to preserve and enhance the performance and safety of the major street system. It manages congestion on existing transportation facilities and protects the capacity of future transportation systems by controlling access from adjacent development. Properly utilized, it can eliminate the need for street widening or right-of-way acquisition.

Techniques to accomplish access management include limiting and separating vehicle (and pedestrian) conflict points, reducing locations that require vehicle

deceleration, removing vehicle turning movements, creating intersection spacing that facilitates signal progression, and providing on-site ingress and egress capacity. In addition, regulation focuses on the spacing and design of driveways, street connections, medians and median openings, auxiliary lanes and transit facilities, on-street parking and parking facilities, on-site storage aisles, traffic signals, turn lanes, freeway interchanges, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, bus stops, and loading zones.

The following access management strategies may be used to coordinate the access needs of adjacent land uses with the function of the transportation system:

- ◆ **Intergovernmental coordination** - Access management is most effective as a regional strategy that would involve Florence County and SCDOT in the design and construction of area roadways. Through coordinated efforts, access management can even further add to the efficiency of local thoroughfares.
- ◆ **Separate conflict points** - Two common conflict points are driveways and adjacent intersections. Spacing driveways so they are not located within the area of influence of intersections or other driveways is a method to achieve access management objectives.
- ◆ **Restrict turning movements at non-signalized driveways and intersections** - Full movement intersections can serve multiple developments through the use of joint driveways or cross access

easements. Turning movements can be restricted by designing accesses to limit movements or by the construction of raised medians that can be used to provide turn lanes.

- ◆ **Establish design standards** - Design standards within the subdivision ordinance addressing the spacing of access points, driveway dimensions and radii, sight distance, and the length of turn lanes and tapers are effective mechanisms for managing the balance between the movement of traffic and site access.
- ◆ **Locate and design traffic signals to enhance traffic movement** - Interconnecting and spacing traffic signals to enhance the progressive movement of traffic is another strategy for managing mobility needs. Keeping the number of signal phases to a minimum can improve the capacity of a corridor by increasing green bandwidth by 20 seconds.
- ◆ **Remove turning vehicles from through travel lanes** - Left- and right-turn speed change lanes provide for the deceleration of vehicles turning into driveways or other major streets and for the acceleration of vehicles exiting driveways and entering major highways.
- ◆ **Encourage shared driveways, unified site plans and cross access easements** - Joint use of driveways reduces the proliferation of driveways and preserves the capacity of major transportation corridors. Such driveway arrangements also encourage sharing of parking and internal circulation among businesses that are in close proximity.

Florence County and Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) Program Recommendations

The FLATS Long-Range (2035) Transportation Plan is recommending access management and improvement strategies for three corridors within the City of Florence:

- *Palmetto Street (US 76/US 301)—Ballard Street to Williston Road/ McCurdy Road*
- *Pamplico Highway (SC 51) – Irby Street to How Springs Road/ Claussen Road*
- *Lucas Street (US 52) – I-95 to Irby Street*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 4

Economic growth is critical to the future vitality of the City of Florence. The City's economic health will dictate the type and quality of new development and the ability of the City to provide basic public services. It will affect the City's standing as the dominant economic engine for the Pee Dee Region, and impact the City's ability to keep taxes low through tax-base growth and the avoidance of major new demands for increased municipal services. This Chapter discusses policies and programs to grow and diversify the City's economy. It includes specific recommendations designed to expand the tax base, promote job creation, increase household wealth, and support the formation of new businesses. The recommendations are made with the understanding that Florence's economy is part of a much larger regional economic system whose overall performance will directly affect the City's own economy. They are also made with the assumption that Florence County will continue to handle the area's major economic development functions (such as industrial recruitment, expansion, and retention) and that it will continue to represent the City of Florence in future regional economic development initiatives. The City's economic development programs, therefore, are designed to augment and supplement, not supplant, existing County programs.

INTRODUCTION

Like other fluid systems, such as transportation and energy, Florence's economy is dynamic, interdependent, and constantly in flux. It doesn't adhere to municipal boundaries and is driven by internal, as well as external, forces. For this reason, the City's economic development policies and programs should be established and implemented within a regional context with the understanding that, "What is good for the region is good for Florence (and vice-versa)." This is particularly important for Florence due to its position as the County seat and economic hub for the entire Pee Dee Region. From its historical role as rail hub and center of textile production, the Florence region today has a diverse economy consisting of well-defined clusters of manufacturing, metal fabrication, medical services, distribution, government, and pharmaceuticals. From a national perspective, Florence is strategically positioned on the I-95 corridor midway between New York and Miami. Regionally, it is located at the eastern end of I-20 corridor, midway between the State Capital at Columbia and Myrtle Beach – one of the East

Coast's most popular coastal communities. Florence is also midway between Charlotte, NC, one of the South's largest financial centers, and Charleston, SC, one of the nation's oldest and largest seaports and a significant tourists destination. Both are a little more than a two-hour drive from Florence.

The City proper has many existing assets that can serve as a platform for future economic development efforts. These include, among others, Francis Marion University (FMU), two major medical institutions, and regional offices of major multi-national corporations such as GE Healthcare, Johnson Controls Inc., Honda, and Monster.com. It also has a fledgling tourism economy and a growing array of major cultural attractions. Florence has a robust transportation infrastructure and also features several attractive residential neighborhoods conveniently located to major centers of employment. It is also the center of an eight-County retail trade area comprised of a population of nearly 80,000. Overall, the City offers an affordable and attractive lifestyle along with low taxes and a warm-weather, pro-business climate.

In recent years, the City has established the Florence Downtown Development Corporation (FDDC) to spearhead downtown revitalization. The Corporation helped lead the creation of a new tax increment finance (TIF) district area. The creation of the FDDC and the TIF district are indicative of the City's

increasingly proactive stance in redevelopment planning and downtown regeneration. These steps are intended to help expand the City's economy in a deliberate, strategic, and balanced way. With the exception of the FDDC, most economic development functions for the City are currently handled at the County level by the Florence County Economic Development Partnership (FCEDP) and, nominally, the Florence County Chamber of Commerce. The FCEDP is primarily involved in strategic business outreach and community marketing activities and as a facilitator for local businesses to access statewide tax and job training incentives. Florence County offers additional incentives such as a five-year tax abatement for business real estate and equipment that the FCEDP helps promote and administer. **Table 4.1: Florence City/County Selected Economic Sectors: 2002 Economic Census**, gives business and employment information for Florence.



Years ago, a TIF district was established for the downtown.

Table 4.1: Florence City/County Selected Economic Sectors: 2002 Economic Census

NAICS Code	Sector	No. of Establishments		Sales (X \$1000)		Annual Payroll (X \$1000)		Paid Employees	
		City	County	City	County	City	County	City	County
31-33	Manufacturing	33	128	n/a	\$3,772,156	n/a	\$429,722	2,500-4,999	12,379
42	Wholesale Trade	59	189	\$285,656	\$1,134,711	\$22,970	\$88,577	602	2,446
44-45	Retail Trade	367	771	\$906,790	\$1,773,439	\$85,347	\$159,562	4,929	8,934
53	Real Estate	64	118	\$35,519	\$83,890	\$7,868	\$16,126	411	749
54	Professional & Technical Services	136	217	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,000-2,499	1,000-2,499
56	Administration & Support	63	129	\$42,584	\$78,714	\$24,193	\$41,892	1,603	2,921
62	Health Care	244	339	\$814,997	\$894,433	\$399,064	\$371,973	8,128	10,087
71	Arts, Recreation, Entertainment	19	39	\$13,553	\$20,500	\$5,173	\$7,173	354	517
72	Hospitality, Food Service	121	248	\$88,253	\$164,278	\$25,350	\$47,205	2,560	4,875

The FCEDP also operates a site location website and has facilitated various business expansions and relocations- leveraging such incentives as infrastructure extensions, land assembly, and land discounts. The entire County is a federally designated “Enterprise Community,” making new and expanding companies in it eligible for major tax incentives such as accelerated depreciation of capital assets and job training credits.

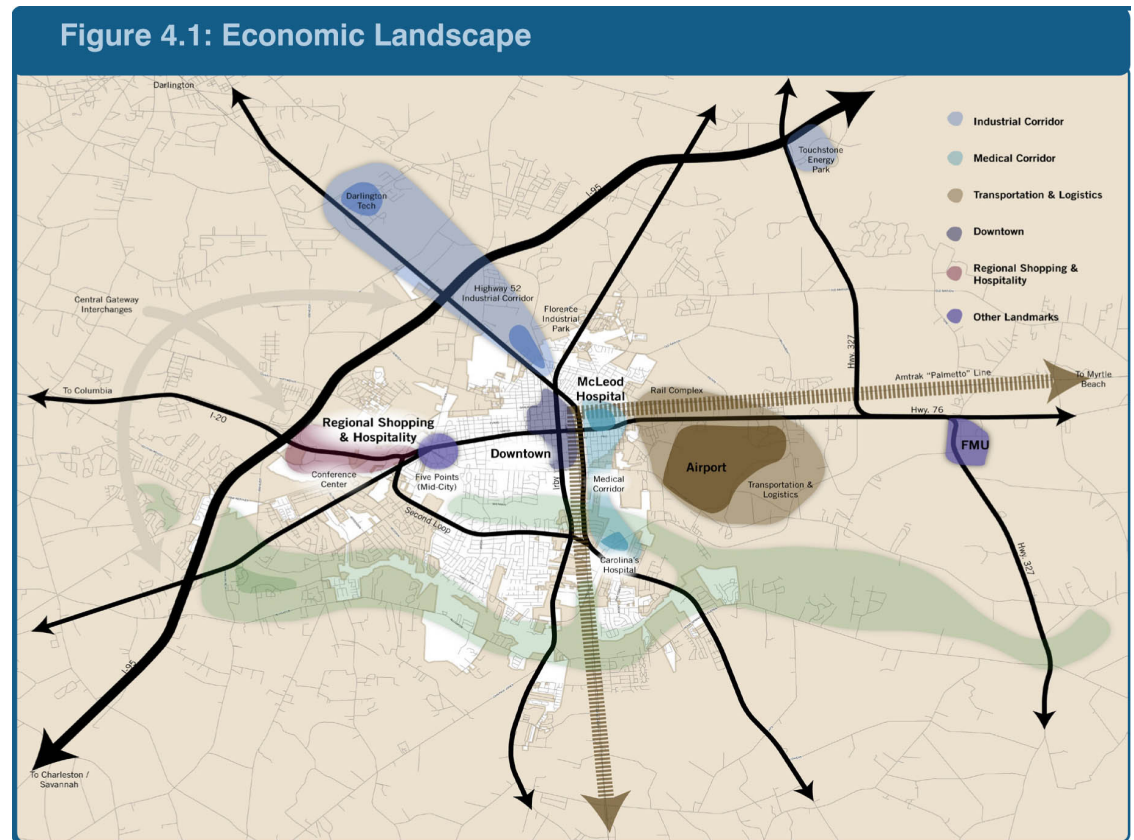
Discussions with City government and business leaders indicate that more tactical efforts need to be taken to steer investment into the City. There is growing sentiment that Florence should create some of its own economic development incentives to augment County and State programs, particularly in the areas of entrepreneurship, public-private partnerships, inter-institutional partnerships (such as between/among the City, University, hospitals, and Florence - Darlington Tech), and downtown redevelopment. There is also local support to promote or expand existing economic clusters such as medical care, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and tourism through customized incentive packages. Finally, there is a sense that the City should go to extra lengths to support local businesses and industries that do more than just expand the tax base, but that also provide quality jobs.

ECONOMIC POSITIONING OPPORTUNITIES

The region’s geographic location and existing asset base lend themselves to the potential creation of new or expanded economic opportunities for the Florence area. Realizing these opportunities, however, will require a concerted alignment of City and County economic development resources, including those of area educational institutions, and a continued build-up of the region’s existing industry specializations. (See **Figure 4.1: Economic Landscape**.)

Financial and Information Technology Services Backroom Operations

As the main financial center for the Pee Dee Region, the Florence area already has a large number of regional banks and supporting services. That the City is also very accessible to the southeast’s main financial centers of Charlotte and Atlanta and that it has affordable land and labor costs, reliable energy, and robust telecommunications capacity makes it a potentially attractive area to house backroom services for the financial and IT sectors. These services could include major IT services such as server farms and transaction processing centers. Currently, there are several daily flights to Charlotte and Atlanta from the Florence Regional Airport.



Florence “Railport” (Logistics Park)

The City’s geographic location and integrated transportation systems have made it an attractive location for distribution and logistics operations. Beyond this, however, the region’s specialization in manufacturing, together with low land and labor costs and a good technical education system, make it an attractive location for value-added manufacturing. This opportunity could be given impetus through the designation of a Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) and the creation of state-of-the-art intermodal facilities at the airport and/or rail yards on the east side of the City. A Florence FTZ could be either a stand-alone zone or a sub-zone of coastal FTZs in Charleston

Additive Manufacturing and Prototyping

The region currently has a high concentration of metal fabrication and other basic manufacturing industries. Its additional strengths in technical education, including the prototyping lab at the Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing and Technology (SIMT), as well as its reliable and affordable energy infrastructure, however, present an opportunity to establish an even stronger advanced manufacturing sector. Partnerships with other key regional players such as GE Healthcare and the University of South Carolina could be keys in building this sector. The presence of GE, the hospitals, and the local pharmaceuticals cluster may offer the potential for a medical instruments sub-

niche for Florence. Likewise, the regional presence of major corporations like Johnson Controls and new technology companies like Materials Technology, Inc. in nearby Lake City offer the potential for precision components manufacturing for leading-edge applications in emerging areas such as new materials, waste-to-product, and energy efficiency.



The Darlington Tech Campus offers manufacturing classes.

Biomedical Clinical Research, Biopharmaceuticals

With its two large hospitals, the City already serves as the regional medical center for the Pee Dee region. The City’s location midway between the State’s

main biomedical research facilities at the University of South Carolina in Columbia and large patient populations in the greater Pee Dee region and in Myrtle Beach; also position it to play a potentially greater role in clinical research trials (particularly involving geriatric medicine for instance). This opportunity may be given even greater impetus by the City’s current healthcare education infrastructure and the region’s pharmaceuticals industry. McLeod Hospital currently participates in limited clinical trials in conjunction with the University of South Carolina Medical School (USCMS) and, through a national consortium of regional hospitals, the Cleveland Clinic. This function could be significantly enlarged by forging stronger ties to the USCMS, potentially to also include clinical training of medical students much like the school’s relationship to hospitals in Greenville. Meanwhile, Roche represents one of the State’s flagship pharmaceuticals manufacturers. Opportunities may exist to develop or attract other companies that would benefit from having close proximity to Roche. Examples include major input suppliers and those having cross-over markets to other area companies, such as food manufacturing (i.e. preservatives and nutraceuticals).

Retirement Living & Tourism

Previous studies have dubbed Florence as the “Gateway to the Pee Dee Region and the Coast.” The City’s location at the mid-point between New York and Miami and as the main I-95 “exit” to Myrtle Beach afford the possibility to capitalize on the tourism market, provided that the City’s offerings – either alone or as part of a regional grouping of attractions – have enough drawing power to compel road-trippers to stop. The City is already well served by hotels that serve the tourism market. Continued growth of the City’s arts and culture economy also helps put Florence “on the map.” It has been suggested throughout this plan, however, that Florence will need to create at least one large, unique attraction to anchor a tourism market and improve the appearance of its entrance corridors to enhance its reputation as a destination. The City’s climate, major medical facilities, regional recreational attractions, and affordability also make it an attractive location for retirement living. Encouraging more senior housing in a variety of formats would help the City capitalize on the growing and potentially lucrative senior market.

Inland “Shop Floor”

Major coastal resort communities such as Myrtle Beach are usually home to sizable populations of successful, highly affluent, mid-career “serial entrepreneurs” who work or telecommute from their second home. Many of these entrepreneurs want to be close to their main place of businesses without giving up their coastal lifestyles. Further down the coast, Charleston is disadvantaged by its limited land and labor capacity to capitalize on all of the value-added manufacturing opportunities presented



Executives can provide business-as-usual even on vacation.

by its port and major manufacturers such as Boeing. Affordable land and labor availability, transportation access, and land entitlements are often restricted in dense coastal communities. Nearby Florence, with fewer of these limitations, may have an opportunity to position itself as a commuter “shop-floor” or supply-chain “link,” particularly for production-related companies originating from the coastal, as well as inland, areas. This opportunity is strengthened by Florence’s excellent transportation infrastructure and its uncommon innovation- infrastructure, as characterized by the prototyping lab at SIMT.

City financial incentives and target marketing to encourage new business start-ups may be needed to better position the City for this opportunity.

Table 4.2: May 2008 Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Area Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates: Florence MSA, provides occupation information.

Table 4.2: May 2008 Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Area Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates: Florence MSA

Occupation	No. of Employees	Average Annual Salary
Management	3,100	\$91,950
Business & Financial	2,930	\$49,030
Computer & Math Science	780	\$52,680
Architecture & Engineering	1,070	\$68,260
Life, Physical, & Social Science	460	\$52,930
Community & Social Service	1,290	\$32,120
Legal Occupations	490	\$43,080
Education	4,800	\$39,500
Arts, Entertainment, Media, Sports	480	\$40,170
Healthcare & Technical	6,540	\$60,330
Healthcare Support	3,790	\$21,590
Protective Services	1,490	\$28,590
Food Preparation & Servers	6,760	\$16,640
Building, Grounds Cleaning, & Maintenance	3,380	\$20,590
Personal Care & Service	1,350	\$21,530
Sales & Related	8,600	\$28,310
Office & Administrative Support	13,210	\$27,740
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	340	\$27,370
Construction & Extractions	3,570	\$29,260
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	4,230	\$36,970
Production	8,710	\$32,750
Transportation & Moving Materials	6,550	\$28,640

Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Focus Area 4.1

Build the City's capacity to undertake basic development.

Strategy 4.1.1: Create and fund a starter-menu of City-level economic development programs and incentives to supplement Florence County programs.

Rationale

Florence County, through the FCEDP, currently offers a general set of tax incentives and other business assistance available to businesses throughout the County; however, there are no added incentives for locating directly within the City of Florence. Therefore, there is little to provide the City a leg-up on its neighbors in attracting or retaining companies considering a Florence-area location. Because of a common perception that older cities have more than their share of "urban problems," including available sites, the City should consider additional "booster" incentives that could be added to countywide incentives to equalize its competitive footing, vis-à-vis neighboring communities

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Form a City economic development committee to oversee the development of City economic development programs and incentives, including the eventual creation of a permanent, dedicated economic development coordinator position and/or full time FDDC executive director.
- ◆ Consider the extension/expansion of County five-year tax abatements to seven years (i.e. offer a two-year "rider" of City property taxes). Identify and post all City census tracts that are eligible for New Markets Tax Credits (NMTCs).
- ◆ Identify and post all area Community Development Entities (CDEs) that have, or are eligible to receive, an allocation of NMTCs. Make this information known to area developers.
- ◆ Create a downtown façade grant program.

- ◆ Initiate discussions with area banks on participating in a City Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) as part of their Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) requirements (see above). (Revolving loan funds typically provide subordinated, low-interest "gap" financing for new businesses and development projects that can't obtain the necessary amount of conventional financing from commercial banks. They are not intended to be sole-source financing.) Besides contributing low interest loan funds, bank participation could also include in-kind assistance with loan underwriting and serving on a special RLF loan approval committee.
- ◆ Reconstitute the City's downtown micro-loan program with tighter underwriting guidelines requiring more owner-equity and sounder business planning.
- ◆ Launch a land-banking program that acquires and holds tax foreclosed, condemned, and other City-owned property in key locations for reassembly and redevelopment. Advantages to the City include greater control over the quality, scale, and timing of new development.

Strategy 4.1.2: Create a formal economic development staff position (or contracted consultant budget) to administer the above-described City programs (or re-align current staff responsibilities to do same).

Rationale

Economic development activities in Florence are currently under the aegis of the Florence County Economic Development Partnership. Although the City itself has demonstrated strong support for economic development through its support of the FCEDP, as well as the recent creation of the FDDC and downtown TIF district, it does not, by itself, have dedicated economic development staff to serve as liaison to business groups or to the County. While the County function is a necessary regional "layer" to lead major regional initiatives such as major corporate recruitment and the brokering of State resources, it doesn't have the resources to do much of the everyday, "ground level" work of economic



Evans Street Historical District is a potential location to start a grant program.

development such as helping put together smaller real estate projects, administering TIF districts, and working as staff support to neighborhood business groups and community development corporations (CDCs). This work typically falls to a dedicated staff person or consultant working for the City, a quasi-public development corporation such as the FDDC, or both.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Engage the City Council in discussions on the creation of a new City economic development director position (or realignment of current staff) under the Urban Planning and Development Department (this person's time and salary could possibly be split between the City and the FDDC). Alternatively, establish a dedicated executive directorship for the FDDC separate from other planning functions. Establish a sub-committee of the Council to study the matter, draft a preliminary job description, and make a recommendation to the full Council.
- ◆ Revise the FDDC's strategic plan to sharpen its programmatic focus and capitalization strategy. Consider adding new programs focused on business formation and expansion such as micro-loans and façade grants. (See **Figure 4.2: Florence Downtown Development Foci**.) Deepen the FDDC's Board expertise in the areas of real estate development/brokering, banking, business/financial management, marketing and fundraising. Consider paring down Board membership to a smaller number of "contributing" experts in the above fields.

Strategy 4.1.3: Improve the business friendliness of the City.

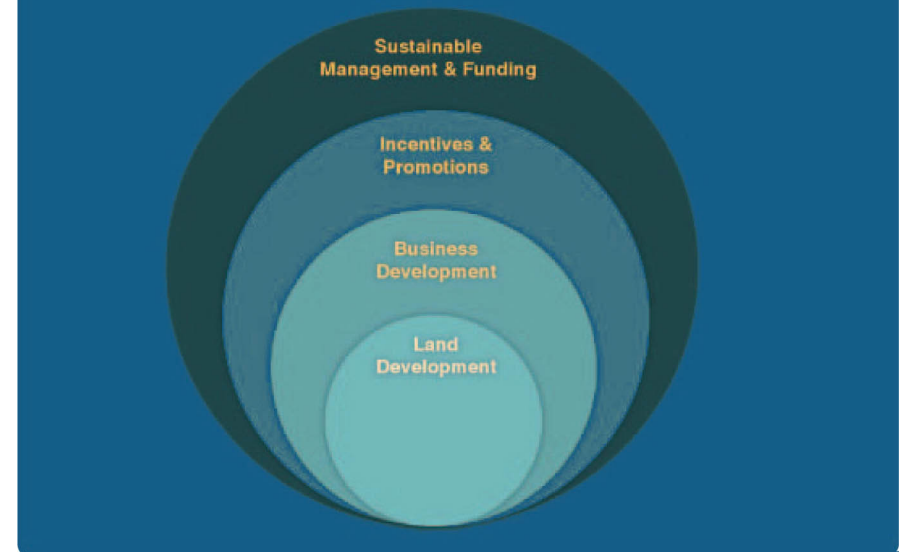
Rationale

Several people interviewed for this plan indicated that the City doesn't have a strong customer service orientation. Others suggested that the City wasn't aggressive enough in pursuing or following up on economic opportunities. These comments suggest that the City may need to be more proactive in creating and responding to new opportunities.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Conduct a thorough review of City intake procedures for development projects and business permits with a view toward adopting more expedited permitting processes.

Figure 4.2: Florence Downtown Development Foci



- ◆ Implement a single-point-of-contact protocol for all new development and business permit applications. This would be likened to a one-stop project manager or expeditor who would help shepherd development applications through the process, troubleshoot problems on the applicant's behalf, coordinate tax abatement requests with the County, and lead the applicant in the direction of other assistance. This system could be implemented with current staff.
- ◆ Mobilize top government officials and business leaders as welcoming committees for promising businesses, site selectors and selected developers.

Focus Area 4.2

Maximize the influence of Florence's medical institutions to drive economic growth in the City and region.

Strategy 4.2.1: Support the growth of local medical institutions and maximize the capture of their economic spillover. Work to retain more hospital visitor spending in the City, particularly in hospitality-related services. Facilitate

the formation of ancillary service support industries in the City such as medical equipment, medical labs and clinics, commissary services, pharmacy, and hospitality.

Rationale

The presence of McLeod and Carolinas hospitals in Florence firmly positions the City as the regional health hub of the Pee Dee region. Together, they draw thousands of annual visits into the City and, along with retail, represent the City's largest "export" industry. Anecdotal accounts, however, suggest that the City is not capturing much of the consumer spending potential presented by hospital visits. The City of Florence also needs to widen its offerings of amenities and housing options in order to maximize residency of health care workers and other professionals in the City.



The medical center is an economic driver, serving local and out-of-town residents.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Work to mesh the facilities plans of the hospitals into the larger fabric of the City. In particular, Florence should make improvements to the east end of Evans Streets and facilitate infill development, as well as cosmetic improvements along Cheves Street, to better connect the McLeod campus to downtown. Engage the hospitals in discussions on implementing walk-to-work incentives that provide forgivable loans to hospital workers to live in neighborhoods immediately surrounding the hospitals (in lieu of having to reserve or build valuable parking spaces for them). Added incentives for the hospitals can be restored urban neighborhoods surrounding the hospital campuses and workers living within minutes of the workplace.
- ◆ Work with the Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA) and downtown business owners to establish a new transit center and free midday shuttle service between the McLeod campus and downtown (the latter possibly funded in whole or in part by a future BID district).

- ◆ Encourage the hospitals and other large corporations to support local companies and, to the extent possible, source their supplies locally.
- ◆ Work with McLeod on potentially siting new support facilities such as extended-stay resident housing in downtown.
- ◆ Secure a site and work to recruit one or more hotels downtown, at least one of which should be an extended-stay format.

Strategy 4.2.2 Work with hospitals and the University of South Carolina on collaborative, interdisciplinary research, especially involving clinical trials and medical testing around specialty care medicine (i.e. establish and celebrate the City as a regional center of excellence for oncology, orthopedics, geriatrics, or other specialty practice areas.) Encourage cooperative cost-sharing agreements for specialty imaging equipment or other technologies.

Rationale

The City's location midway between the State's main medical research facilities in Columbia and large patient populations in the greater Pee Dee region and in Myrtle Beach position it to play a greater role in clinical research trials. (McLeod, through a consortium of other regional hospitals, currently participates in clinical trials with both the USCMS and the renowned Cleveland Clinic.) A stronger research profile would assist in cementing stronger inter-regional economies with Columbia and Myrtle Beach and may also assist the growth of the region's pharmaceuticals cluster. A greater research profile will also generate more visitor spending in the City and may help the hospitals attract and retain talent and secure additional operational funding.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Encourage more inter-institutional partnerships between McLeod and Carolinas Hospitals and encourage their engagement with other State medical research institutions.
- ◆ Engage in discussions with key local corporations such as GE Healthcare and Roche on how they could interface with, or benefit from, local clinical research (i.e. new medical equipment or drug testing).
- ◆ Use the medical research opportunity as a platform to engage other statewide economic development agencies around other inter-regional opportunities such as tourism, satellite educational facilities, transportation, etc.

Focus Area 4.3

Expand other industry clusters in pharmaceuticals, metal fabrication, advanced manufacturing/prototyping, and logistics.

Strategy 4.3.1: Encourage the FCEDP to focus its economic development programming around specific economic sectors and clusters.

Rationale

Florence County has small, but well-defined, industry clusters in the above sectors. Although the City and County should continue to try to diversify the local economy, they should align their marketing and future infrastructure investments to further develop existing clusters over trying to attract new companies in a random or ad-hoc manner. The ability of Florence to become a magnet for specialized talent workers and cluster support services is directly proportional to cluster size. The concentration of specialized skill sets and other cluster "infrastructure" in turn, helps enlarge the cluster in a virtuous self-reinforcing cycle. A targeted industry strategy also allows for a stronger leveraging of the region's current assets.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Work with local industries and Florence-Darlington Tech to develop specialized training modules for targeted industries in such areas as supply-chain management, prototyping and advanced manufacturing, and entrepreneurship.
- ◆ Encourage Francis Marion University's business school to work more closely with local corporations on developing specialized professional development programs (i.e. MBA in supply-chain management, import/export, or entrepreneurship).
- ◆ Consider equipping future business parks and other business centers with specialized amenities and infrastructure that are attractive to target industries, e.g. Wi-Fi, Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ), and distributed/redundant energy.
- ◆ Facilitate the formation of regional business networks and industry trade groups, especially around medical, pharmaceuticals, specialized manufacturing, tourism, and logistics.

- ◆ Work with FCEDP on developing a special targeted marketing campaign directed toward industry clusters. Consider offering special incentives packages for them.

Strategy 4.3.2: Enlarge the region's logistics, distribution, and specialized manufacturing sectors by dedicating a new state-of-the-art logistics park east of downtown near the Highway 76 corridor. (See **Figure 4.3: Special Logistics Park**.)

Rationale

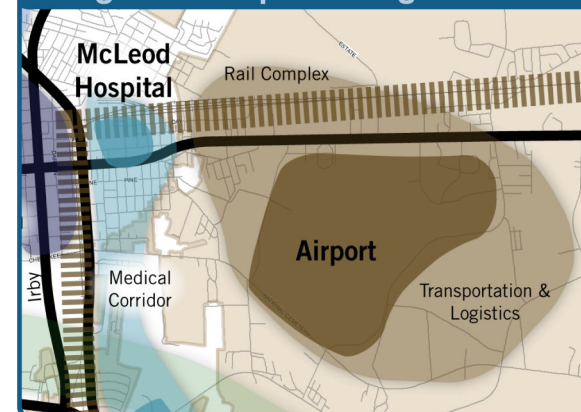
There are a number of distribution-related companies already in the region, and the region has ample space and infrastructure to accommodate more. The key in maximizing this opportunity, however, is for the City to go beyond just warehousing to create opportunities to add value to the goods passing through it.

Specialized facilities that allow for the easy off-loading of freight combined with special financial incentives for the modification of imports and exports (such as through an FTZ) could be key in making Florence a stronger regional hub for value-added manufacturing and distribution.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Talk with site selectors, State and County economic development officials, CSX Corporation, airport officials, utilities, and developers to test the idea of creating a special logistics park near the rail yards and airport. Conduct preliminary feasibility analysis.
- ◆ Talk with State and Federal officials on the process of creating a Foreign Trade Zone at the proposed logistics park or at the airport.

Figure 4.3: Special Logistics Park



- ◆ Create the appropriate land use and zoning/permitting designations that allow for high-quality, large-site industrial warehousing.
- ◆ Talk with CSX Corporation about the possibility of building special rail sidings into a proposed park.
- ◆ Talk with State and County transportation officials and State elected officials on building/designating a special truck route from the proposed park to I-95.

Focus Area 4.4

Work with the FCEDP and Francis Marion University to establish Florence as a State center for entrepreneurship.

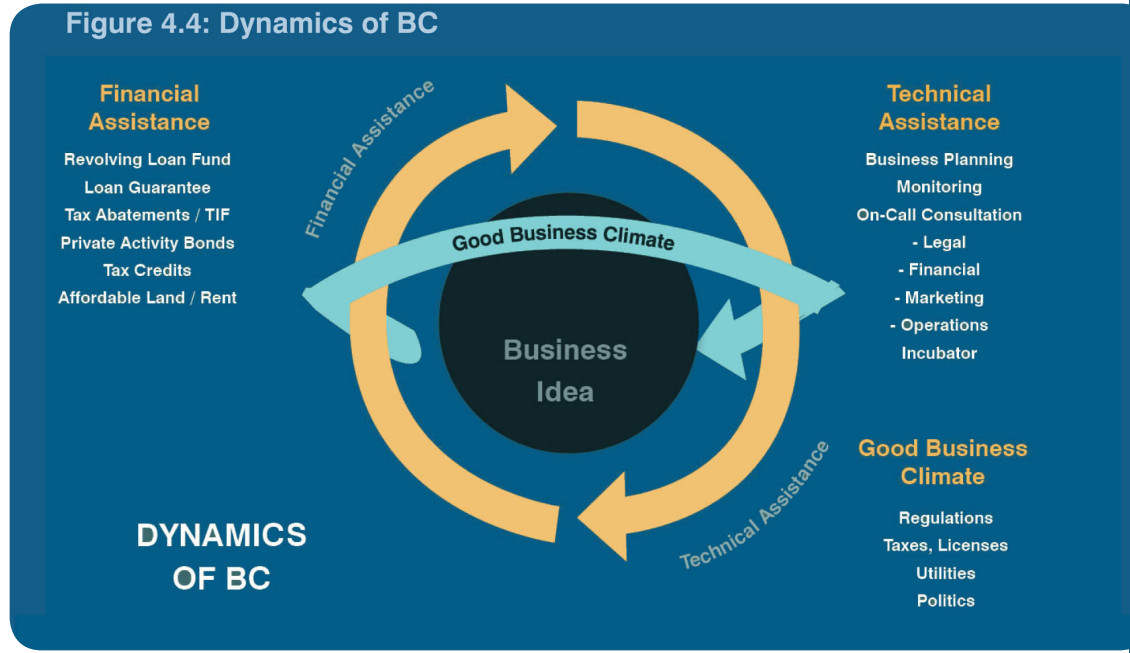
Strategy 4.4.1 Create conditions, incentives, and institutional support mechanisms that are conducive to business formation and expansion in and around the City of Florence. See **Figure 4.4: Dynamics of BC**. Attracting new businesses from the outside can be an expensive and time-consuming process with small odds for success. Statistics show that the vast majority of new jobs (80% in most places) are the result of new startups or the expansion of existing firms; yet, most economic development agencies continue to devote most of their resources to the recruitment of outside businesses. Local entrepreneurs generally support other local businesses by spending more of their money locally and have more loyalty to their host community. They are also much more likely to drive the regeneration of downtown and other older commercial districts.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Work with FMU to raise the profile of their Center for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Institute. Work with them to establish a downtown business incubator and encourage them to introduce additional entrepreneurship programming as part of their business school curriculum.
- ◆ Work with the University to aggressively promote this facility and the resources it can provide.

- ◆ Work with the FCEDP to help facilitate an aggressive business outreach program specifically for Florence-based businesses. Encourage them to develop a full service regional business development center including technical support services and liaison support for securing loans through the Small Business Administration and other sources.
- ◆ Work with the FCEDP to maintain ongoing outreach with major companies such as GE Healthcare, McLeod and Carolinas Hospitals, Heinz, Johnson Controls, and other major businesses to assure their continued satisfaction with the City of Florence and to secure any proposed expansions including those of key customers and suppliers.
- ◆ Work with local banks and the Small Business Administration to establish a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and underwriting guidelines specifically for Florence-based businesses. The fund may be capitalized initially through State/County CDGB funds, SBA funds, pooled bank funds, foundation grants, tax increment finance proceeds, or general funds- and be used for real estate development, as well as business equipment and working capital. Consider adding booster incentives specifically for new downtown businesses.

Figure 4.4: Dynamics of BC



- ◆ Work with individual business prospects and local developers to build appropriate business accelerator facilities in the City of Florence.
- ◆ Work with the FCEDP to grow the social, professional, and financial networks necessary to support innovation and entrepreneurship. (i.e. Young professionals groups, allied business networks, entrepreneurs clubs, and angel investor groups).

Focus Area 4.5

Regenerate, revitalize, and redevelop existing commercial and industrial districts within the City.

Strategy 4.5.1: Step up efforts to regenerate downtown with a mixture of new employment opportunities, housing, public spaces, infrastructure, and event programming. (See **Figure 4.5: Downtown Opportunities.**) Efforts should be led by a fully empowered FDDC with a strategic focus on business development, as well real estate development.

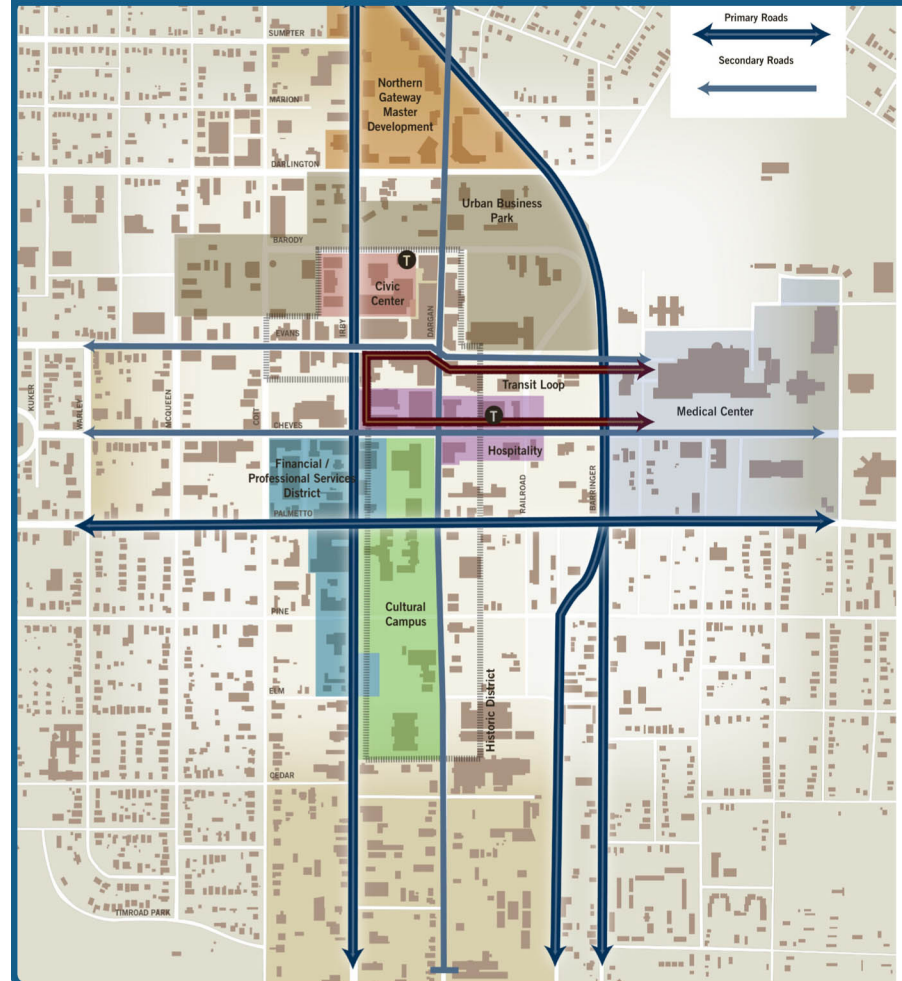
Rationale

Downtowns are a city's main barometer of community vitality. Most people will make inferences about the entire community based on their first impressions of downtown. Downtowns also play an important role in supporting economic innovation and talent attraction/retention by adding depth and variety to city life. Nurturing entrepreneurship is a critical piece of downtown redevelopment since pioneering local business people usually form the vanguard for downtown redevelopment and provide the desired local flavor.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Improve the "climate" for historic preservation in downtown by securing its enrollment in the National Park Service's Certified Local Government (CLG) program.
- ◆ Establish a downtown façade grant/loan program.
- ◆ Develop a business plan and budget for the FDDC and identify its permanent funding source. Empower it to actively manage the redevelopment of downtown through the strategic land purchases, developer solicitation,

Figure 4.5: Downtown Opportunities



- and selective business lending. Change the FDDC Executive Directorship to a full time, dedicated position.
- ◆ Work with downtown property owners to rehab and rent vacant storefronts and upper story units. Create financial incentives for urban housing.
- ◆ Change zoning as needed to encourage more multi-family and senior housing in different formats. Recenter the region's office market in

downtown by redeveloping the Irby and Cheves corridors into a professional services district. (See **Figure 4.6: Irby Redevelopment Concept.**)

- ◆ Relax zoning regulations to allow/encourage sidewalk vending, merchant displays, and dining.
- ◆ Support the efforts of the Downtown Merchants Association to self-manage and promote downtown. Encourage more downtown event programming and joint promotional activities.
- ◆ Work with the Downtown Merchants Association to encourage the eventual formation of a downtown Business Improvement District (BID) as a future funding mechanism for promotional events, landscape/streetscape improvements, or security services. Supported by City economic development staff, the association should be groomed to eventually assume responsibility for existing Main Street-type functions.
- ◆ Work to secure a permanent downtown site for a farmer's market and actively recruit a downtown grocery store.
- ◆ Revamp the City's micro-loan program for downtown businesses. Funds may be used to supplement a City/County-wide revolving loan program. Work with Florence-Darlington Tech on expanding its downtown presence (potentially with a new residential facility).
- ◆ Work with FMU to establish a downtown business incubator. Work with property owners and developers and the FDDC to expand downtown

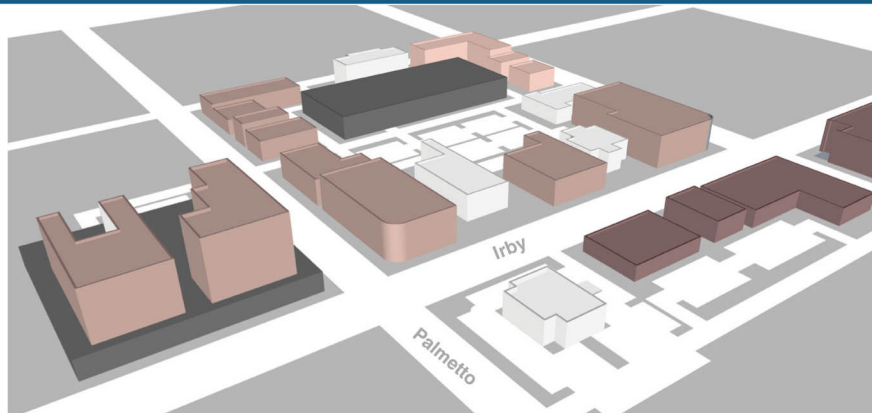
housing market opportunities, including merchant live/work units. Support the development of additional affordable (tax credit) housing units to drive the market.

- ◆ Work with the FDDC, Florence County, and other property owners to assure an optimal distribution of public/private parking facilities downtown.
- ◆ Consider building one or more public parking structures in key locations and/or securing long-term leases in privately developed structures. The development of private structures should be supported by City TIF policies.
- ◆ Develop general criteria for public financial participation in private development projects. Be prepared to invest in catalytic projects that spur the market and help implement City plans.



Coit Village would be a good place for additional parking, due to the development nature of the area.

Figure 4.6: Irby Redevelopment Concept



Strategy 4.5.2: Work to assure that downtown remains the center of City and County services and “civic life.”

Rationale

Florence is the seat of County government and administration, with most services grouped in the downtown area. The co-location of public services in a defined geographic area allows for operational efficiencies and provides a critical number of downtown jobs that support local businesses and drive visitation. The dispersal of these services can accelerate

downtown's decline and create challenges for downtown businesses, as well as people with limited mobility. It also dilutes downtown's role as the symbolic center of civic life. (See **Figure 4.7: Downtown.**)

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Support the continued “hubbing” of regional transit downtown. Assist the transit agency's efforts to build a new downtown intermodal station near main centers of activity including McLeod Hospital.
- ◆ Work to secure the proposed new judicial center downtown. Design it in such a way to create a recognizable “civic center” across from the City/County Building.
- ◆ Explore the feasibility of establishing universal, free Wi-Fi coverage downtown.

Strategy 4.5.3: Continue to grow the arts and culture “scene” downtown.

Rationale

The City of Florence already has an abundance of cultural facilities located downtown, and it is solidly positioned as the region's cultural capital. This

stature presents a host of spin-off opportunities for kindred goods and services including restaurants, entertainment, and art-based businesses that can capitalize on visitor flows.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Work with the Doctors Bruce and Lee Foundation, FMU, the Art Trail, the Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau, and others to promote cross-marketing and programming opportunities between the institutions and downtown businesses.
- ◆ Promote the creation of an arts guild or arts consortium/network among the above organizations. Work with FDDC and/or FMU to evolve Art Trail into a fully integrated arts co-op or arts incubator that combines teaching, learning, and the commercialization of local art.
- ◆ Create a formal business plan and funding strategy for the gallery and consider moving it if necessary. Consider creating a subsidiary, spin-off, nonprofit organization to manage it.
- ◆ Encourage FMU to build stronger links between its renowned business and arts programs to groom more artist-entrepreneurs.

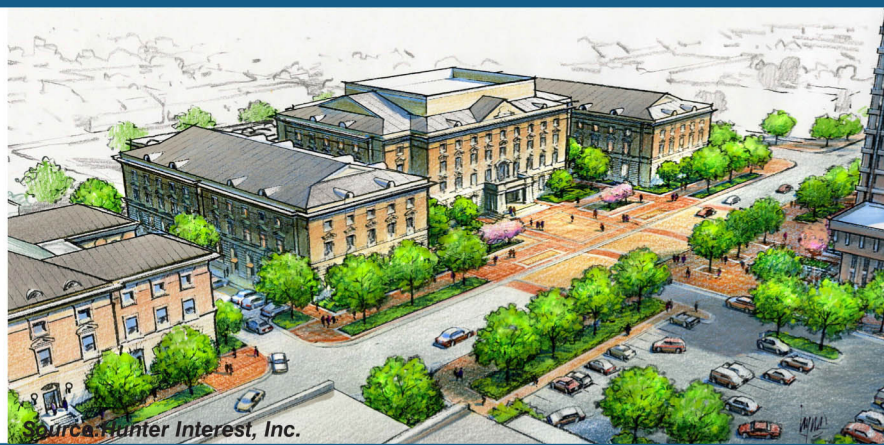
Strategy 4.5.4: Work to “level the playing field” between older urban commercial/industrial sites and new “greenfield” sites in outlying areas.

Rationale

As a mature city with relatively fixed boundaries, Florence has limited expansion potential to accommodate new growth. Moreover, the dictates of sound fiscal management compel cities to maximize the utilization of existing infrastructure before developing new. Redevelopment of older urban sites, however, is often hampered by a number of factors that newer sites aren't encumbered with. These include: fragmented land ownership, environmental contamination, inadequate parcel size/shape, land use conflicts, and obsolete buildings, among others.

In order to make urban sites attractive for reinvestment, cities often need to work to neutralize or mitigate some of the factors that drive development outward. Typically, this involves things like: upgrades to existing infrastructure; land assembly, clearance, and reconfiguration of lots; limiting the amount of new

Figure 4.7: Downtown



commercial and industrial zoned land; title clearing mechanisms; and, in cases where dilapidated housing and other conflicting land uses are present, “down-zoning.”

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Consider more aggressive use of tax increment finance to spur the redevelopment of older commercial districts and corridors.
- ◆ Work with State and Federal environmental agencies and property owners to perform comprehensive brownfield site assessment and remediation planning.
- ◆ Lead efforts to create a modern urban business park along the Baroody Street corridor through the strategies of adaptive use of older buildings, infill of vacant lots, surgical redevelopment, expansion of shared parking, and unified landscaping.
- ◆ Develop and implement industrial park design standards to aid the attraction of top companies and to extend the life of the parks.
- ◆ Work with the FCEDP, local utility companies, and developers to assemble industrial parcels in targeted redevelopment areas as part of a land-banking program.

Focus Area 4.6

Unify local economic development efforts under a common regional banner such as a FCEDP, NESA consortium. Deepen the region's economic links throughout the state and southeast.

Strategy 4.6.1: Encourage FCEDP to conduct more “trade missions” outside the region; help galvanize local industry groups; and, when necessary, lobby the State for assistance in seizing key opportunities.

Rationale

If, as the saying goes, “all politics is local,” then all economics are regional. Local economies don’t exist in a vacuum. They affect and are affected by economic conditions that exist at a macro-regional level. Business leaders in the Florence area realized this when they came together several years ago

under the name “Progress” to advocate for non-governmental approaches for improving the region’s business climate. Creating a stronger regional identity is a part of a bigger strategy to strengthen outside trade links and to quell parochial competition among local municipalities. This reasoning may justify an expansion of FCEDP’s mission and geographic reach.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Continue to hold Florence County Legislative Days at Columbia where local business leaders can have full audience with State - elected representatives.
- ◆ Encourage the FCEDP and Florence hospitals to seek more relationships with State medical research institutions.
- ◆ Work with the FCEDP and local corporations to explore the possibility of landing a satellite program/campus of USC in the City of Florence (potentially around bio-medical research or new materials engineering and development). Specialty programs and institutes could be partially sponsored by benefiting corporations.
- ◆ Advocate for a coordinated regional marketing branding effort for the Florence area emphasizing culture, history, quality health care, affordability, and geographic centrality. Align the City's messaging to complement the regional brand. Develop separate City print and web materials that interface with County/Regional content.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Chapter 5

Florence's long-term future as a community is inextricably tied to its housing conditions. Housing and neighborhood conditions are central to almost any discussion about City affairs, no matter whether the focus is on economic development opportunities, downtown redevelopment, or the ability to simply walk from one neighborhood to another. The reason for a focus on housing was evident in public meetings and Citizens' Delegation discussions: deteriorating neighborhoods need to be rehabilitated to avoid further decline. The timing of this critical housing issue is not by chance.

Florence's current housing challenge may be succinctly summarized: How might the City spark increased reinvestment in its aging and deteriorated neighborhoods? The answer is not as simple. Identifying the proper participants and funding sources for housing improvements offers a long list of potential options. Any long-term solution will require many levels of partnership, whether between the City, neighborhoods, owners, developers, or benefactors. This chapter brings together potential solutions and strategies that can serve as immediate, mid-term, and long-range initiatives to improve existing housing conditions.

While one challenge is to sustain the integrity of existing neighborhoods, another task is to address future housing needs. Having a diverse stock of housing – new and old, big and small – is instrumental in offering choice and

providing for the individual needs of all households, regardless of economic stature. Besides price and location, another consideration is the design of neighborhoods. The suburban development that occurred in the late-20th Century departed from the established town settlement pattern near the core of the City. New housing development needs to reflect growing demand for neighborhood-style patterns that are once again integrated to the existing fabric of the community. This new development should be located near other uses for ease of access, accessible to local services, offering transportation options, and preserving resources through innovative subdivision design.

INTRODUCTION

Florence residents wish to enjoy quality housing and the positive impact that well-designed and maintained neighborhoods can have on the image and attitude of the community. From the outset of this planning process, housing and neighborhood conditions have taken the lead as one of the key issues facing the community. The current state of neighborhood conditions is also a central issue because it impacts the overall image of the City.

Issues voiced by citizens, organizations, and officials indicate that addressing existing housing conditions and neighborhood vitality are primary components to a successful future. Stakeholder input resulted in the assembly of several key issues related to existing housing and neighborhood conditions. Concurrent with job and population growth, Florence’s stock of housing and neighborhoods will continue to grow. Based on citizen concerns and comments about existing developments, it is essential to recognize that creating future housing options and designs will require additional development standards as a part of any future development code modifications. Providing quality housing and neighborhoods is fundamental in creating a desirable place to live. In fact, residents supported this premise through their comments indicating their desire for attractive, landscaped, and well-connected neighborhoods.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to identify solutions to ensure that the community meets its existing and future housing needs, protects established neighborhoods from deterioration, and invests in the revitalization of significantly deteriorated neighborhoods. This can be accomplished by providing access to safe, quality, and affordable housing within livable, attractive neighborhood environments. Furthermore, the types of housing, their arrangement and design, and integration of open space and amenities contribute significantly to the quality appearance and character of the community. Neighborhood design provisions can also be incorporated that will reduce the potential for crime.

Florence’s economic health and safety rely, in part, on the City’s ability to preserve its well-established neighborhoods while planning for the development of new living environments that meet the physical, social, and economic needs of its residents.

This chapter is divided into two major sections:

- ◆ Discussion of trends affecting existing neighborhoods, housing conditions, and future housing availability.
- ◆ Recommendations of strategies and actions for maintaining and improving Florence’s neighborhoods: those existing and those planned for the future.

SUMMARY OF HOUSING NEEDS, CONDITIONS, AND PROGRAMS

Mixture of Housing Types

Florence has a reasonably wide range of housing types, with the current mix being mostly single-family detached homes. Since 70 percent of the housing units are single-family detached, choice is available to residents as to unit types. Within the broad single-family category, most development is suburban or auto-urban in character with some estate development structures in the form of one-acre or larger lots. As described in *Chapter 2, Community Character and Growth*, these housing types are primarily located on the outer edges of the City or within the unincorporated planning area. Rounding out the rest of the housing choices, though, are additional choices of single-family attached, duplex, townhouse, and larger apartment buildings. Some of these units are manufactured homes. (View housing details in **Table 5.1: Housing Types 2000**.)

Table 5.1: Housing Types 2000

Location	Total Housing Units	Single-Family Detached Units	Attached and Multi-Family Units				Manufactured/Mobile Home Dwellings
			Single-Family	2-4 Family Structures	5-10 Family Structures	10+ Family Structures	
South Carolina	1,753,670	1,078,678 (60%)	40,185 (2.3%)	101,588 (5.8%)	77,598 (4.4%)	97,566 (5.6%)	358,055 (20.4%)
Florence County	51,836	32,226 (62.2%)	815 (1.6%)	3,038 (5.9%)	2,175 (4.2%)	1,684 (3.2%)	11,858 (22.9%)
City of Florence	13,075	9,159 (70.0%)	327 (2.5%)	1,438 (11%)	942 (7.2%)	923 (7.1%)	286 (2.2%)

Looking ahead, aging residents are expected to desire more housing options, including (at some point during the 20-year horizon of this Plan) additional assisted living and continuing care facilities. Units marketable to households that are “downsizing” should both be permitted and encouraged in appropriate locations. Likely options include appropriately-scaled two-family homes, patio homes, townhomes, and multiple-unit structures. Additionally, the demand for suburban-style living in detached single-family homes on larger lots is likely to continue. This being so, they should be developed in new subdivisions and infill areas with a more connected street network (discussed in more detail in *Chapter 2, Community Character and Growth*). These networks should feature multiple access points (and, preferably, multiple modes of travel) to the major street system and, eventually, to the broader regional transportation system (discussed in more detail in *Chapter 3, Community Mobility*).

Jobs – Housing Balance

Maintaining a balance between jobs and housing is important so residents can live and work locally. Not only does this balance contribute to quality of life, it also can become a major factor in the siting of new businesses in the City of Florence. Attracting new business relies upon the host city having an adequate housing supply for potential workers. Even retaining businesses and providing for their expansion relies on a healthy housing market that offers adequate choice in housing and living environments and price. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are too few quality housing options and that business attraction is more difficult due to the lack of quality workforce housing.

While adequate jobs are an asset, it is indicative of a need to be wary of the implications of a jobs-to-housing imbalance. Longer commutes and lower quality of life are possible results of a local housing market that has a scarcity of housing units at different prices.

Housing Conditions

According to participants in the planning process and field reconnaissance, there are neighborhoods in the areas north, east, and southeast of downtown that are in exceptionally poor condition. These conditions are the result of a combination of complex factors including poverty, inadequate streets and public facilities, and the low quality of original dwelling unit construction. As

the community’s housing stock ages and with the continued reliance on rental housing to serve the residents of these areas, the visible signs of neighborhood deterioration will continue unless abated. Protecting neighborhood integrity is one of the key issues in this plan.

Housing Age

When compared with Florence County and the State of South Carolina, the 2000 Census data indicates that Florence’s housing stock is considerably older. This confirms the observation in *Chapter 2, Community Character and Growth*, that most of the more recent development has occurred outside the Florence city limits. The 1990s saw a significant expansion of the residential housing stock with 13,457 units constructed in Florence County, as shown in **Table 5.2, Housing Age 2000**; however, over 80 percent of these units were built outside the City. Typically, housing needs significant repairs after 20 years. At present, over 1,800 units in the City are older than 20 years, which is symptomatic of the need for concentrated programs for housing rehabilitation and neighborhood conservation.

Future Housing Requirements

The population of Florence and the surrounding unincorporated study area is anticipated to grow from approximately 52,000 people in 2008 to about 60,000 by the year 2030 (projected population), an increase of 8,000 people. The year

Table 5.2: Housing Age 2000

Location	Total of Built Housing Units	1990 to March, 2000 (%)	1940 to 1989 (%)	1939 to Earlier (%)
South Carolina	1,753,670	435,731 (25.9%)	1,192,800 (25.9%)	107,139 (6.1%)
Florence County	51,836	13,457 (26.0%)	35,998 (69.4%)	2,381 (4.6%)
City of Florence	13,075	1,877 (14.3%)	10,351 (79.1%)	847 (6.4%)

2000 average household size for Florence County was 2.6 persons. Assuming this number remains steady, Florence and the planning area will add 147 households each year through the year 2030 in order to reach a population level of 60,000. This projection is conservative, since it does not account for the number of homes that will be needed to replace housing units that are functionally obsolete or demolished. The future population and number of new dwelling units will also increase to greater levels than projected here, if Florence is successful in attracting greater numbers of retiree households.

Looking at the bigger picture over the next two decades allows for a more balanced view as to what type of growth is possible. The City will need approximately 3,100 housing units of various types to accommodate its projected population and maintain a healthy, balanced housing market. Rather than seek a comparable ratio of ownership to rental units over time, there should be a focus on increasing the owner-occupied units. Achieving increases in the ratio between owner- and renter-occupied dwellings would also be an acceptable goal.

PLAN FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Focus Area 5.1

Preserve and rehabilitate the existing housing stock.

The community must remain cognizant of its older housing stock as rehabilitation and reinvestment will become increasingly important to the integrity and vitality of neighborhoods surrounding the original City core. There are distinct neighborhood differences as most of the housing in the central neighborhoods is older and warranting reinvestment. Code enforcement and basic building maintenance are critical issues in these neighborhoods. Comments by residents at public meetings indicated concerns about rental unit over-occupancy and external appearance, particularly those areas that serve as gateways. Some suggested the need for stricter regulations or better enforcement of existing requirements. Others emphasized the need to improve basic cleanliness and property maintenance.

Strategy 5.1.1: Promote opportunities for neighborhood improvements and housing stock rehabilitation.

Rationale

Established neighborhoods often lack the size, design, and amenities of newer housing developments. However, older neighborhoods offer intangibles such as history, culture, proximity, and, often, a stronger sense of community. In Florence, some older neighborhoods have been well maintained, while many others require infill development, infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, street lights, drainage) improvements, and revitalization efforts. While the impacts of history, neglect due to poverty, and inappropriate surrounding land uses may make recovery difficult for some neighborhoods, most offer an opportunity for renewal and long-term viability.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Encourage redevelopment in targeted “at risk” areas through financial assistance programs, such as low-interest loans or outright property grants, that promote infill redevelopment in Florence neighborhoods. Such a program could target lots that have recently demolished structures so that those lots are put back onto the market and tax rolls.
- ◆ Form a target-area capital investment program focused on infrastructure improvements within defined at-risk neighborhoods. The purpose of this program is to provide a dedicated source of annual funding for use in making improvements and leveraging private reinvestment through rehabilitation, redevelopment, building additions, and/or infill development.
- ◆ Work with the Florence County Council and SCDOT to repave roads in targeted areas of neighborhoods. Prioritization should be in line with other reinvestment initiatives.
- ◆ Review the feasibility for private-sector investment in infill development and redevelopment based on the costs of land purchase and development. Infill development can help meet the need for additional housing units in the community. While the current zoning ordinance may not be raising unnecessary obstacles to housing infill, there may be opportunities to make it easier for creating additional housing types surrounding downtown Florence and the Cultural District.

- ◆ Focus on park and recreation improvements as a means for elevating neighborhood viability. In concert with *Chapter 2, Community Character and Growth*, highlight the importance of clean, safe, well-maintained, and vibrant neighborhood parks and activity centers as an anchor for strong, established neighborhoods where residents and children use public spaces and interact on evenings and weekends. Another neighborhood scale open space amenity is the creation of neighborhood gardens or urban agricultural plots, which can be located in existing parks or as a temporary use on vacant lots.

Affordable Homes in the North Pointe Subdivision

- *The North Pointe Subdivision is a new subdivision that was planned, funded, and developed by the City of Florence. It is located off Williams Boulevard in North Florence. The subdivision has an attractive landscaped entrance, curb and gutter, sidewalks, and decorative street lighting. The price of the 27 single-family homes planned for the subdivision will range from \$95,000 to \$105,000 for applicants eligible to receive assistance. They will also receive \$10,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance.*
- *The City of Florence donated the land for the subdivision and used approximately \$275,000 in CDBG funding for infrastructure construction. Florence County, also has committed to donate \$64,000 to the project. The infrastructure is complete and housing construction is expected to begin shortly.*

- ◆ Incentivize home building on empty lots as infill development, in identified areas of need, with a one-time grant of \$3,000 to \$5,000. Equally important to the demolition program is a redevelopment program that matches potential homebuilders with newly cleared lots. In this respect, the City can be ambitious in funding financial incentives for developers willing to build compatibly-designed and scaled residences on infill lots.
- ◆ Continue to support the City's Fix a Block program and the annual Great American Cleanup sponsored by Keep Florence Beautiful. These efforts involve family teams, neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations, the Housing Authority of Florence and S.C. Department of

Juvenile Justice teams. These types of programs are highly effective in involving volunteer citizen participation and promoting awareness of the continuing need to control litter, remove debris, and abandoned properties.

- ◆ Continue the Florence Sanitation Division's annual "amnesty day" arrangements for collection of old appliances and furniture and other large items.
- ◆ Pursue alternative code enforcement methods in an endeavor to be more proactive and ensure positive outcomes. Consider use of an advocacy program to aid in code compliance rather than citing noncompliant property owners. A key element may be the cross-training of enforcement advocacy officers in conflict management/resolution.
- ◆ Consider the adoption of a biennial Mandatory Rental Inspection Program, which enforces property maintenance standards. Code enforcement was recognized as an important issue during the Community Workshop. This program is important not only for the safety of occupants, but it also serves to maintain property values and helps to stabilize older neighborhoods. As such, the Community Services Department should schedule required inspections and follow ups to ensure that all noted code violations and deficiencies found are properly corrected in a timely manner. A registration fee for each rental dwelling unit would assist with the implementation of this program. The regulations would also provide for fees to be assessed by the City for repeat inspections of properties that fail to correct noted deficiencies within the prescribed time frame.
- ◆ Consider the adoption of a rental housing conversion program where the City would provide \$5,000 to \$10,000 grants to the purchasers of existing rental units to be used as their own place of residence. Such a program would incentivize the conversion of single-family rental units to owner-occupied units. A program like this would gradually increase the level of home ownership and revitalize established neighborhoods.
- ◆ Similarly, consider the adoption of an incentive program for the development of homes on infill areas or abandoned lots. Incentives could include financial or property grants, reduced utility hookup charges, and fast-track permit reviews and approval. For example, the Certificate of Appropriateness review and approval process could be combined with the Board of Zoning Appeals' special exception approval process in order to construct housing units above retail storefronts in the downtown area.

Strategy 5.1.2: Strengthen the ability of local organizations to work on housing issues in existing neighborhoods.

Rationale

The quality and maintenance of housing, along with property upkeep, impacts neighborhood appearance and creates an impression of the entire City. Housing and properties that appear run down can be an indication of a community in a state of disrepair and decline. Freshly painted and well-maintained homes and properties are indicative of a promising future. Appearance is also correlated to community pride in ownership, perception, property values, maintenance costs, and quality of life, where each can be influenced positively or negatively.



“Abandoned houses are trouble magnets...”

*-- Anson Shells, Florence Chief of Police
(as quoted by SCNow.com).*

While private owners can and should work to maintain their properties, there are other housing groups that can offer technical or financial assistance. Complex rehabilitation projects can oftentimes only be completed with the help of a third-party organization that addresses housing issues on a professional basis.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Initiate a City-sponsored, Overall Housing Action Plan that will monitor and evaluate housing development throughout the City (and planning area) in the future. This plan may be largely derived from action items in this Comprehensive Plan. However, it will be supplemented annually with housing data and measureable accomplishments (i.e. number of new housing units built at each price point, grant dollars invested in housing programs, homes rehabilitated, or homebuyer classes offered locally).
- ◆ Consider the establishment of a City of Florence housing organization to coordinate with the Housing Authority of Florence (HAF) in neighborhood improvement and grant applications that are specific to the City of Florence and planning area. The presence of a City-focused organization will assist HAF in obtaining grants and donations for existing and future programs, allowing more funds to flow into local redevelopment projects for the City’s neighborhoods.
- ◆ Fund HAF’s Home Improvement Rebate program so that it can be more effective in assisting homeowners with their home repairs, improvements, and installation of energy conservation measures. Not only are these types of projects important today, but also will be even more important in the future. Issues of accessibility and energy-efficiency will only increase with an aging population and higher energy costs. It will be critical that Florence can meet this growing need.
- ◆ Strengthen existing programs and coordinate activities with agencies having a common mission of improving housing and neighborhood conditions — such as the Pee Dee Community Action Agency. Florence is one of 200 affiliates in this national program, which has the stated mission of “bringing volunteers and communities together to improve the homes and lives of homeowners in need.” The organization addresses issues pertaining to home ownership, needs of the elderly and disabled, and providing sustainable solutions for low-income households. The local program has focused mainly on volunteer “clean-up/fix-up” efforts. It currently has limited funding and high turnover among board members. Stable leadership and a consistent commitment of resources will be necessary for sustained success.
- ◆ Establish a quarterly local homebuyer education course in Florence that will educate residents about the purchasing and mortgage process. These classes would not only serve as an educational tool for the prospective homebuyer looking to learn about the process, but it could also act as a prerequisite for homebuyers interested in grant funds. Such a program can be organized through a local nonprofit organization or realtors’ association.
- ◆ Seek the participation of churches, civic organizations, schools, and businesses in neighborhood improvement and revitalization efforts. The City should actively solicit and coordinate these efforts.

Focus Area 5.2

Defend neighborhood integrity of existing neighborhoods.

In Florence's context, some older neighborhoods have been well maintained, while others require infrastructure improvements and significant revitalization efforts. While the impacts of history, neglect due to poverty and crime, conversions to rental use, and inappropriate surrounding or encroaching land uses may make recovery difficult for some neighborhoods, most offer an opportunity for renewal and long-term viability.

Strategy 5.2.1: Stabilize and improve the integrity of neighborhoods in regards to housing and property conditions.

Rationale

Most of the long-established neighborhoods in Florence are well maintained and in good or excellent condition. In order to attract and retain households of all incomes, housing in these neighborhoods must compete with newer, larger, and more modern homes in the outskirts of the City and surrounding area. Today's society expects more amenities in their homes such as greater closet space, larger rooms, nine-foot ceilings, and gourmet kitchens. Other neighborhoods have already become deteriorated and face the need for substantial investment and rehabilitation. Some even face the possibility of eventual extinction as residents move, become elderly, or move out to better areas. Planning efforts, improvement programs, and investments should be channeled to meet the varying requirements of Florence's neighborhoods.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Create a neighborhood-oriented planning program to help the community form neighborhood associations and develop neighborhood action plans. A neighborhood plan may include elements that would normally be required for a housing grant submittal and could, thus, be very effective as a grant administration tool. Such a plan would highlight potential development/redevelopment sites, infrastructure improvements, and link current issues to solutions. Such a neighborhood planning process would be beneficial for those neighborhoods needing the greatest amount of attention.

- ◆ Formalize neighborhood groups through identifiable maps that distinguish neighborhood boundaries. The residents in the neighborhoods can then create neighborhood groups or homeowner organizations. As illustrated in **Map 5.1, Neighborhoods**, the different areas of Florence are identified in order to expand the City's neighborhood organization movement. (The names and boundaries of these neighborhoods in **Map 5.1** were drawn to reflect the activities of current neighborhood organizations, neighborhood watch groups, physical boundaries, and community character types.)
- ◆ Identify the conservation and improvement needs of each of the established neighborhoods in Florence, recognizing that each one has its own unique set of challenges and opportunities.
- ◆ Investigate opportunities for the establishment of neighborhood stores and other small-scale commercial uses within existing neighborhoods, particularly in North and East Florence.
- ◆ Conduct an annual "All-Neighborhoods Conference" and quarterly neighborhood improvement forums to facilitate the sharing of ideas, challenges, and success stories between neighborhoods.
- ◆ Prepare detailed needs identification and neighborhood conservation/improvement plans for each identified neighborhood. The priorities for future planning efforts should be based on the urgency of required improvements and the levels of interest and actual performance achieved by existing neighborhood organizations in their planning and implementation efforts.
- ◆ Work with neighborhood organizations on prioritizing local infrastructure improvements and identifying likely candidates for capital projects. Such improvements may include street repairs, tree trimming, parking restrictions, shielded street lighting, improved pedestrian lighting, added green space, improved public streetscape/landscape, and new signage. This neighborhood improvement list

Attractive Neighborhood in West Florence

Beautiful homes, lawns, and streets as depicted below set the standard for all Florence neighborhoods.



will also be a source of site specific information (improvements, history, etc.) for any future grant application that involves that area.

- ◆ Coordinate with the Police Department's Community Assistance Team (CAT) to provide technical planning support for established and newly created neighborhood organizations. Such support could address issues related to code enforcement, inactive or defunct neighborhood associations, parking requirements, street/sidewalk improvements, crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), or navigating the available housing programs.
- ◆ Strengthen neighborhood crime watch efforts throughout the community. These local crime prevention efforts may be initiated on a neighborhood scale that corresponds with the newly designated neighborhood boundaries and the possible creation of municipal improvement districts. Such efforts will serve to enhance communication between public safety staff and local residents while making strides towards a safer community.
- ◆ Establish neighborhood conservation standards, within the zoning ordinance, to allow single-family neighborhood residents to reinvest their homes, in a manner that will allow them to compete with outlying suburban areas.
- ◆ Address the persistent non-conformities in neighborhoods that occur from deteriorated mobile or manufactured homes that are situated in single-family neighborhoods. Any such homes should be amortized so that there is a clear "sunset" date of removal. While these units may have provided valuable housing options at one time, many of the units devalue neighborhood integrity.
- ◆ As future FMU students choose to live in the City or planning area, create a model lease agreement that can serve as a template for student lease agreements with landlords. Many university communities use their model lease agreements to establish guidelines for site conditions (no parking or furniture on lawn, garbage bins kept out of the street, etc.), as well as building conditions.
- ◆ Evaluate neighborhoods for down-zoning or other regulatory options that will protect existing predominantly owner-occupied neighborhoods from increased levels of multi-tenant housing. Neighborhoods that are zoned for single-family residences would be likely candidates for such a review. Key evaluation measures would include the current levels of ownership,

housing conditions, and local geography. If possible, zoning districts should be consistent so that the same zoning district is used on both sides of the street when the character remains the same. Zoning districts should not disrupt neighborhood continuity by way of allowing multi-tenant housing across the street from single-family owner-occupied units.

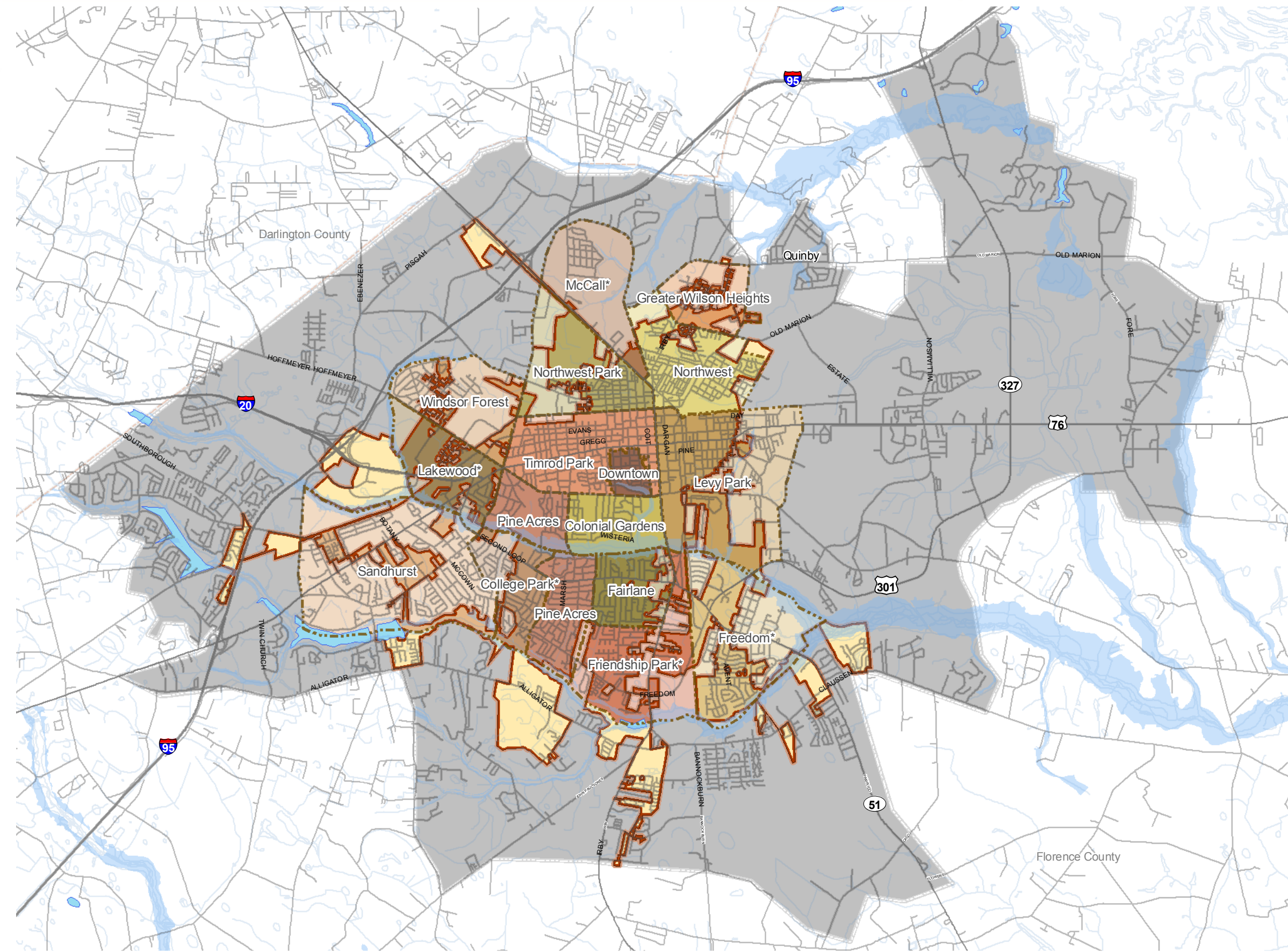
- ◆ Structure a Rental Inspection Program to include a trigger when housing units change occupancy or ownership, so that they are inspected and brought to code. A requirement to bring the code up to basic standards would be a long-term method for improving neighborhood conditions, especially among the most troubled properties.
- ◆ Where appropriate, link homeowners with historic preservation funds so that homeowners can update their homes in a context-sensitive manner. Consider the use of "historic tax credits" as financial incentives, which could be facilitated by a local nonprofit organization dedicated to housing redevelopment.

Focus Area 5.3

Ensure affordable and sufficient housing options in the future.

Affordability is a constant issue of debate. For many, the question is, "Affordable to whom?" The household earning \$34,000 will define "affordable" quite differently from the household that earns over \$100,000 a year. Nevertheless, each is looking for housing that is affordable. Families earning the median income have been able to afford housing in the past; but with the possibility of resuming increases in housing costs, these families may begin to encounter affordability issues. The price barrier created by the housing market creates difficulties for low-income households to consider purchasing a new home in Florence. Thus, the remaining option is to buy an existing home, though, as mentioned previously, the older housing stock presents its own rehabilitation issues.

Housing affordability as generally defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) states that a family or household can afford to spend 30 percent of its income on housing. This percentage leaves a sufficient amount of income for other essential household needs. Households



LEGEND

Neighborhoods

- College Park*
- Colonial Gardens
- Downtown
- Fairlane
- Freedom*
- Friendship Park*
- Greater Wilson Heights
- Lakewood*
- Levy Park
- McCall*
- Northwest
- Northwest Park
- Pine Acres
- Sandhurst
- Timrod Park
- Windsor Forest

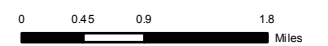
Boundaries & Infrastructure

- City Limits
- County Boundary
- Planning Area
- Quinby
- Neighborhoods
- Railroad

Floodplain & Waterbodies

- 100-year Floodplain
- Lakes
- Rivers & Streams

Suggested Neighborhood Name



Map 5.1: Suggested Neighborhood Boundaries

who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are described as “cost burdened.” In the Florence area, the median family income in 1999 was \$35,388. For housing to be considered affordable to a family earning the median income, housing costs could not exceed \$885 in a month regardless of the type or terms of the mortgage.

Strategy 5.3.1: Provide housing options and assistance aimed at a variety of income levels and household age groups, both now and in the future.

Rationale

In short, affordable housing options lead to a higher quality of life for the community. In general, as more affordable housing options are supplied, a greater number of residents are able to live in Florence and work nearby. In addition to the distress it causes families who cannot easily find a place to live, lack of affordable housing is considered to have negative effects on a community’s overall health. The City recognizes the need to ensure that all of its residents enjoy access to quality and affordable housing within livable and attractive environments.

Actions and Initiatives

Continue to apply for and receive state and federal grant programs, such as the Community Development Block Grant, that provide assistance to low-income residents. These funds are critical in the support for many of the housing programs that exist in the City. Even though Florence is categorized as a CDBG “entitlement” city, the volatile nature of grant funding creates unpredictable program support and cannot be counted on as a long-term source of program support.

- ◆ Seek to supplement grant funding for these low-income housing programs through local charitable contributions and philanthropic donations. Additional revenue will assist to balance irregularities in grant funding, but, more importantly, will allow the City to address more of the housing issues in the low-income target areas. Most funding is state-supplied, and the City’s financial involvement in housing rehabilitation should continue to be strengthened so that more success can be had in addressing the backlog of housing and neighborhood improvements.

Community Development Block Grant Funding

- *The City of Florence’s Community Development Division sponsors a broad-based grant program designed to rebuild and revitalize depressed areas of the City. The Department grants funds for a wide variety of activities that can take place in community areas that have been targeted as needing special assistance and attention. These areas include North, East, and West Florence.*
- *Applications for grants are accepted up until March of each year. City Council then makes decisions based on the strength of the proposal, the expected impact the project will have on the community, and the amount of money available for the program.*
- *In 2009, Florence received \$335,000 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to fund these assistance programs.*

- ◆ Continue support for the single-family, owner-occupied rehabilitation program. Simultaneously, explore ways to boost revenue for this program to expand its coverage, since demand outstrips supply each year.
- ◆ Continue to develop mixed-use and multi-family developments in the Downtown Redevelopment District as recommended in *Chapter 4: Economic Development*.
- ◆ Continue to acquire infill sites or assemble larger areas for redevelopment. This strategy will keep the City actively involved in the infill market so that troublesome sites or vacant parcels can be sold to developers or a nonprofit organization, possibly at a reduced cost. Funding options for this land acquisition and assembly include CDBG (HUD) or



Coit Village Apartments Project in Downtown Florence

This affordable housing development, located in the northern part of downtown, was completed in late 2008. It was built by a North Carolina firm that specializes in affordable and workforce housing. Over half of its 60 rental units were occupied within the first month of its opening.

Neighborhood Stabilization funds (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act).

- ◆ Continue redevelopment efforts in targeted areas, as this transformation can help meet some of the housing needs for low- and moderate income households. Not only can newly created workforce housing be constructed as infill projects, it will also serve to increase the vitality of the neighborhood.

Strategy 5.3.2: Utilize the City's zoning regulations to encourage the development of moderate-income housing in the community.

Rationale

A diversity of housing opportunities promotes a mixture of people with different skills, needs, and aspirations. Additionally, a variety of housing choices is attractive to a broader range of potential workers. As in any community, people need to live near their jobs in order to keep commutes short, while not exceeding their monthly budget. Looking at the bigger picture, affordable housing availability supports economic development efforts. Providing affordable housing options near employment centers will have a positive effect on the economic well-being of individual residents, families, and the entire community. For example, lack of affordable housing can make low-cost labor scarce and increase demands on transportation systems as workers travel longer distances between jobs and areas with affordable housing.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Establish an average, rather than a minimum, lot size whereby lot sizes are required to vary in width, with a certain percentage being narrower and the remaining being wider than the average. This allows a broader variety of unit types with different price points. The smaller, narrower lots can be used for market rate housing.
- ◆ Provide a density bonus to offset any subsidized housing production in order to avoid significantly affecting the feasibility of the residential development. Density bonuses are a type of housing production program where projects are granted additional residential density over and above the maximum limit allowed by existing zoning, with the condition that the additional housing is restricted to occupancy by a certain target group and

that the units remain affordable through deed restriction over a specified amount of time and multiple resales of the property.

- ◆ Provide fast-track application, permitting, and inspection provisions for the construction of infill housing or home renovations.
- ◆ Within the neighborhood conservation areas, establish provisions that allow comparable units on infill lots. Such standards must maintain the neighborhood character while, at the same time, allow feasible development of the lot.
- ◆ Renew past efforts to incorporate accessory dwelling units in the City's zoning regulations, along with appropriate provisions governing their use and compatibility. Implement a community education program that demonstrates the benefits and minimal impacts of this form of housing. The allowance of accessory dwelling units is a trend that has become popular in many communities to accommodate elderly parents or relatives ("granny flats"), young adult family members wanting to live independently but close by, or students in need of basic, low-cost housing. It also provides another affordable living option within neighborhoods and a rental income opportunity for homeowners. Such units must be strictly controlled to preserve neighborhood integrity.
- ◆ Allow greater variability in the parking requirements in the zoning regulations for multi-family units. In order to make units more affordable, it is necessary to allow flexibility in the number of parking spaces required for one- and two-bedroom multi-family units. A sliding scale for parking standards should be allowed for smaller multi-family units (i.e. 1.0 parking spaces for lofts or one-bedroom units, 1.5 parking spaces for two-bedroom units, 2.0 parking spaces for three-bedroom units or larger). Different retirement community scenarios should also have parking requirements tailored to the individual levels of car ownership.
- ◆ Coordinate with Francis Marion University (FMU) as it continues to develop facilities in and near downtown Florence. FMU's provision of classroom and cultural facilities will ultimately make the downtown area more attractive for student off-campus living.
- ◆ Work with officials of Florence's medical institutions for the consideration of in-city rental housing developments to accommodate transient or short-term medical staff residencies.
- ◆ Strengthen the "abandonment" provisions and enforcement of the zoning ordinance so that there are specific improvements necessary upon six

months of abandonment. These standards should be detailed enough to allow for proper enforcement of issues related to lighting, signs, curb cuts, vacant buildings, and other site conditions.

- ◆ Maintain sufficient land zoned as residential in the future as zoning regulations are updated. Likewise, the Future Land Use Plan should always provide sufficient options for the market to build residential housing in different areas of the City. The Future Land Use Plan associated with the Comprehensive Plan includes more than sufficient acreage to accommodate project growth, while providing reasonable market flexibility.

Focus Area 5.4

Design neighborhoods and communities as special places.

Providing quality housing and neighborhoods is fundamental in creating a desirable place to live, especially as it relates to attracting new families to Florence. In fact, residents supported this premise through their comments indicating their desire for attractive, landscaped, and well-connected neighborhoods. One key element of new housing is the connection between desired outcomes and existing regulations. Despite the desire for quality new development in the City, the City's current ordinances do not have adequate provisions to ensure the outcome of quality neighborhoods.

Strategy 5.4.1: Improve the subdivision design standards to include additional criteria addressing site design and to create livable neighborhoods for young families.

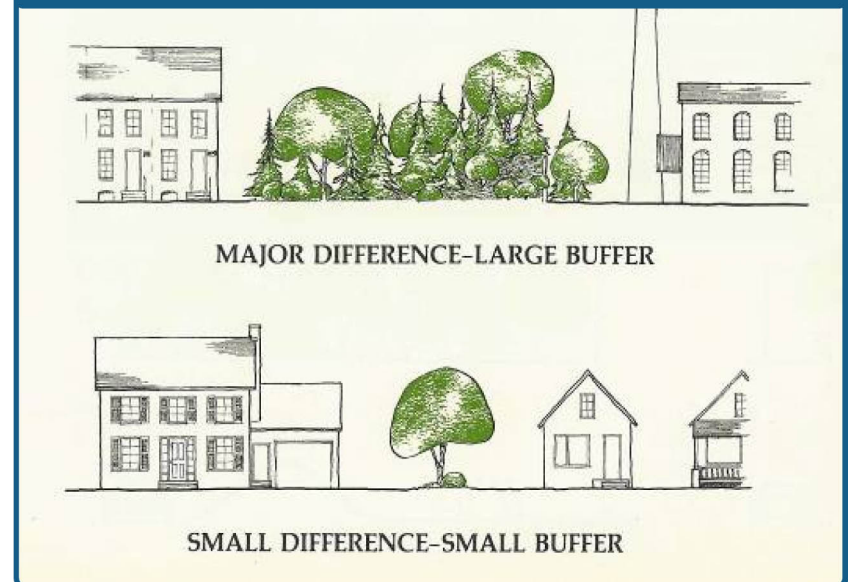
Rationale

Most new residential areas are developed as independent subdivisions rather than as dynamic neighborhoods that are connected to other uses and destinations. Based on citizen concerns and comments about existing development, it is essential to recognize that creating future housing options and designs will require additional development standards. Creating attractive environments for young families is critical for Florence's future. Such efforts, partnered with investments in infrastructure, parks, and public education, will make the City more attractive for the next wave of new residential development.

Actions and Initiatives

- ◆ Adopt design standards for high-density residential development, which may include provisions for building form and scale, articulated building walls, building orientation, architectural detailing, roof types and materials, façade enhancements, and acceptable building materials (See "**Quality Neighborhood Design**.")
- ◆ Amend the City's zoning regulations to incentivize the provision of a perimeter bufferyard along edges of residential developments where dwellings would benefit from extra buffering near more intensive residential uses, nonresidential development, or the noise and visual impacts of an abutting arterial street. Flexible standards, ensure that the scale of the bufferyard is commensurate with the intensity and/or proximity of adjacent uses. (See **Figure 5.1, Bufferyards**.)
- ◆ Continue to monitor investor interest in downtown residential projects, including attached single-family, multi-family, and residential-over-retail opportunities. Work with private interests and public agencies to pinpoint and remove or reduce obstacles or delays in approvals for new

Figure 5.1: Bufferyards



Quality Neighborhood Design

Contemporary subdivision design too often overlooks the time-honored elements of what makes a neighborhood appealing and viable for the long term. Typical features of a quality neighborhood design include:

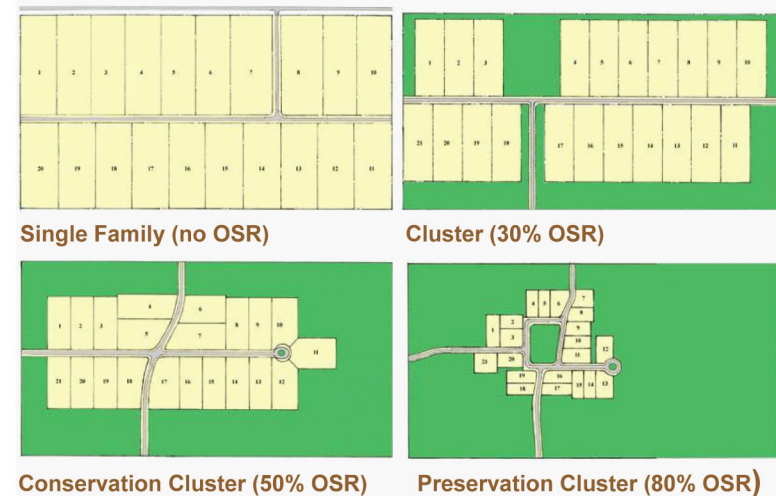
- Some focal point, whether a park or central green, school, community center, place of worship, or small-scale commercial activity, that enlivens the neighborhood and provides a gathering place.
- Equal importance of pedestrian and vehicular circulation. Street design accommodates, but also calms, necessary automobile traffic. Sidewalks along or away from streets, and/or a network of off-street trails, provide for pedestrian and bicycle circulation (especially for school children) and promote interconnectivity of adjacent neighborhoods.
- A variety of dwelling types to address a range of needs among potential residents (based on age, income level, household size, etc.).
- Access to schools, recreation, and daily conveniences within relatively close proximity to the neighborhood, if not within or at its edges (such as along bordering major streets).
- An effective street layout that provides multiple paths to external destinations (and critical access for emergency vehicles) while also discouraging non-local or cut-through traffic.
- Appealing streetscapes, whether achieved through street trees or other design elements, which “soften” an otherwise urban atmosphere and draw residents to enjoy common areas of their neighborhood. Landscape design requirements that are consistent with local climate and vegetation can be incorporated into development regulations.
- Compatibility of fringe or adjacent uses, or measures to buffer the neighborhood from incompatible development.
- Evident definition of the neighborhood “unit” through recognizable identity and edges, without going so far (through walls and other physical barriers) as to establish “fortress” neighborhoods.

- Set-aside of conservation areas, greenbelts, or other open space as an amenity, to encourage leisure and healthful living, and to contribute to neighborhood buffering and definition.
- Use of local streets for parking to reduce the lot area that must be devoted to driveways and garages and for the traffic calming benefits of on-street parking.
- Respect for historic sites and structures and incorporation of such assets into neighborhood design.

development and redevelopment in and around downtown. Additional ownership housing options (including commercial/residential mixed-use development) are needed, but such housing alternatives need to be planned and permitted by-right.

- ◆ Support open space and park land areas in subdivisions for enhanced value and amenities to residents. (See **Figure 5.2, Open Space Preservation Options.**) This may include well-designed residential development near creek corridors and other environmental assets (through conservation design, open space preservation, taking advantage of natural views,

Figure 5.2: Open Space Preservation Options



etc.). This can be implemented through the revision of the City's zoning regulations so that the number of residences permitted on a project site is determined by specified density and open space protection requirements rather than the minimum allowable lot size within a district.

- ◆ Encourage life-cycle housing options in new major subdivisions that will offer alternatives to residents. A subdivision should not only be allowed, but should also promote inclusion of more than one housing type. A combination of housing options and lot size will result in a diversity of housing choices — choices that will be useful in attracting younger families and keeping older residents. Variation in subdivision lot sizes will also help in the prevention of the monotonous appearance that results when identical housing units are sited on a series of adjacent lots.
- ◆ Require adequate connectivity and multi-modal design in new subdivisions and neighborhoods, as consistent with the recommendations of [Chapter 3, Community Mobility](#).
- ◆ Coordinate with Florence County to adopt subdivision design and development requirements that are identical to those of the City. This will eliminate the existing loophole that allows lower standard development immediately outside the City limits, thereby thwarting the possibility of future cost-effective annexation.
- ◆ Discourage design that promotes cut-through traffic and speeding.
- ◆ Require sidewalks on both sides of the street in all neighborhoods. As an alternative, off-street trails may be used in lieu of sidewalks as long as there is adequate linkage within and through the neighborhood.
- ◆ At the time of platting, require public access easements to provide for direct linkages between developments and to trails, parks, schools, and neighborhood convenience areas.
- ◆ Provide regular maintenance on pedestrian amenities including crosswalks and signals, replacing obsolete traffic signs and synchronizing traffic signals.

IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter 6

This plan establishes a shared vision as to how Florence should develop over the next 20 years and beyond. With the vision in place, the community must now direct its resources to implement the plan. Each of the goals, policies, and recommended action statements identified throughout the preceding chapters of this plan must now be transformed into specific programs, initiatives, and/or new standards. The purpose of this chapter is to integrate the elements of the plan together to provide a clear path for sound decision making. This chapter outlines the organizational structure necessary to implement the plan, strategic directions, priorities for implementation, and a process for regular evaluation and appraisal of the plan to ensure it is kept relevant and viable. Implementation is an essential step in the plan development process. It requires the commitment of the City's leadership, including the Mayor and City Council, Planning Commission, other City boards and commissions, and City staff. It is also necessary for there to be close coordination with and joint commitment from other organizations that significantly influence Florence and its growth, including the following:

- ◆ Florence County
- ◆ South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT)
- ◆ Florence Public School District One
- ◆ Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) Policy Committee

- ◆ Neighboring cities (Quinby and Darlington)
- ◆ Florence-Darlington Technical College
- ◆ Francis Marion University
- ◆ Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ Florence Downtown Development Corporation
- ◆ Florence County Economic Development Partnership
- ◆ Florence County Progress, Inc.
- ◆ Other organizations, agencies, and groups.

Each chapter of this plan outlines specific issues to be addressed to achieve what is envisioned by community residents. Emanating from the recommended action plan initiatives is a large number of potential actions that relate to regulatory changes, program initiatives, and capital projects. While these recommendations are far-reaching and intended to be accomplished over the 20-year horizon of this plan, near-term strategies must be put in place to take the first steps toward implementation.

These strategies must then be prioritized, with decisions as to the sequencing of activities, the capacity to fulfill each initiative, and the ability to obligate the necessary funding. Those determined as being top priorities and viewed as feasible in the short term are placed in a five-year action plan. In addition to implementing these targeted strategies, the broader policies set forth by the plan text and maps may be used in making decisions related to the physical and economic development of the community.

METHODS AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

To be successful, the City must regularly use this plan; and the plan's recommended strategies, actions, and initiatives must be integrated into ongoing governmental practices and programs. The recommendations must be referenced often and widely used to make decisions pertaining to the timing and availability of infrastructure improvements; City-initiated and owner-requested annexations; proposed development/redevelopment applications; zoning map amendment requests; expansion of public facilities, services, and programs; and annual capital budgeting, among other considerations.

Each City Council member, staff person, and member of boards, commissions, and/or committees has an obligation to use this plan in guiding their decisions. The plan is designed to guide the growth and economic development of the community. It is intended to guide staff – of all departments – in managing their individual activities, annual work programs, and capital projects. The primary means of implementation include:

- ◆ **Regulatory Changes.** Current regulations need to be reviewed and updated to ensure a quality and character of development that reflects the community's vision. Florence's zoning and subdivision ordinances, in particular, must be updated to reflect local conditions, improve land use compatibility, protect natural resources and open space, preserve the character and integrity of neighborhoods and valued areas, improve the quality of site design, improve the efficiency of facility and service provisions, and contribute to, fiscally responsible pattern of urban growth.
- ◆ **Formation of New Policies.** As new development or redevelopment plans are proposed, staff and the City's advisory boards, together with the City Council, must abide by the policies and recommendations of this

plan. The text of this plan, coupled with the future land use, thoroughfare, and community investment plans, should weigh heavily in future decisions by the City officials, residents, and other stakeholders in achieving the shared community vision.

- ◆ **Priority Investment Programming.** The City should regularly update its State-mandated list of priority investment initiatives: a ten-year plan that identifies capital projects for street infrastructure; water, wastewater, and drainage improvements; park, trail, and recreation facility provisions; and other public buildings and municipal services. These capital improvements must be coordinated with the objectives of this plan and implemented in a consistent manner with the future land use and growth plans, the thoroughfare plan, parks and recreation system recommendations, and other relevant plans.
- ◆ **Special Projects.** The City should identify special projects, programs, and initiatives to achieve organizational, programmatic, and/or developmental objectives presented in this plan. In some instances, these may include further studies, detailed special area plans (individual neighborhoods, downtown, or designated corridors), or initiating or expanding on key existing City programs. These tend to be more administrative in nature, which may support or influence physical improvements or enhancements, but themselves focus on community betterment.

PLAN ADMINISTRATION

A host of community leaders must take "ownership" of this plan and maintain a commitment for its ongoing, successful implementation. The City's management and staff, together with its boards, committees and organizations, will have essential roles in implementing the plan and, thus, ensuring its success. As future regulatory, policy, or administrative decisions are made, the responsible parties must continually refer to the plan for guidance on such actions.

Education and Training

A necessary first step is to conduct individual training workshops with the Planning Commission, City Council, and City department managers, as well as each of the other boards and committees that have a role in plan implementation. These are the groups which, individually and collectively, will be responsible for implementation. The importance of their collaboration,

coordination, and communication cannot be overstated. The training initiative should include:

- ◆ Discussion of the roles and responsibilities of each individual commission, board, or committee and their function in the organization.
- ◆ A thorough overview of the entire plan, with particular emphasis on the segments that most directly relate to their charge.
- ◆ Implementation tasking and priority setting, allowing each group to establish its own one-, two-, and five-year agendas in coordination with the strategic agenda of the Mayor and City Council.
- ◆ A concluding question-and-answer session.

Role Definition

The City Council will assume the lead role in implementing this plan. Its chief responsibility is to decide and establish the priorities and time frames by which each action will be initiated and completed. In conjunction with the City Manager and subordinate departments, they must manage the coordination among the various groups responsible for carrying out the plan's recommendations. Lastly, it is also responsible for the required funding commitments, whether it involves capital outlay, budget for expanded services, additional staffing, further studies, or procedural changes. The hierarchy and roles of implementation are as follows:

City Council

- ◆ Establishes overall action priorities and time frames by which each action of the plan will be initiated and completed.
- ◆ Considers and sets the requisite funding commitments.
- ◆ Offers final approval of projects/activities and associated costs during the budget process.
- ◆ Provides direction to the Planning Commission, City Manager, and departmental staff.

Planning Commission

- ◆ Recommends to City Council an annual program of actions to be implemented, including guidance as to the time frames and priorities.

- ◆ Prepares an Annual Progress Report for submittal and presentation to the Mayor and City Council (see the Plan Amendment Process later in this Chapter for more detail).
- ◆ Ensures decisions and recommendations presented to the City Council are consistent with the plan's policies, objectives, and recommendations. This relates particularly to decisions for subdivision approval, site plan review, major street and utility extensions, zoning map amendments, ordinance text amendments, and annexation.
- ◆ Ensures that the plan influences the decisions and actions of other boards and committees.

City Departments and the Director of Urban Planning & Development

All departments are responsible for administering this plan, specifically as it relates to their function within the organization. Several City departments were involved in the formation of this plan and are, therefore, familiar with its content and intended outcomes. They are vested as implementers and should ensure that their budgets and annual work programs are in line with the plan.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Jurisdictions have long acknowledged that many growth management issues are regional, rather than local, in nature. Watershed and environmental protection, economic development, land use, transportation patterns, housing, and the effects of growth and change are issues that usually cross the borders of communities and impact not only Florence, but also Florence County, Quinby, Darlington County, and other nearby communities.

As a result, the financial health of Florence is partly affected by the County and neighboring communities, meaning that the well-being and success of one can be largely affected by the other. In addition, cooperation is now more important than ever due to the severe limitations of public sector resources brought on by the recent economic recession. Coordinating among entities allows for more efficient service provision. Therefore, the idea of managing the growth of the City, for instance, will not be effective without the effective coordination of Florence County and its adherence to its own recently updated comprehensive plan.

In the past, peripheral, unplanned growth has had grave impacts on the City and its ability to provide adequate public services and meet the expectations of its future constituency. The type and quality of this development not only impacts the character of Florence, but also impacts its resources as residents living in these unincorporated areas often drive into the City for their shopping and service needs.

In many respects, the locational identity of a significant number of “Greater Florence” residents has been blurred because important institutions such as the school system and public library have been established to serve City and non-City residents, alike. The City boundary itself is highly complex and non-distinct. With the City’s responsibility to provide infrastructure, police and fire protection, and other services, the need for intergovernmental coordination is more crucial than ever.

In a related matter, the responsibility for nearly all of the programming and funding responsibilities for street system improvements in the City have been vested in the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). The SCDOT receives significant planning input from the Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS), which is administered by the Florence County Planning Department. This overlap in responsibility underscores the need for both agencies to continue to coordinate their long-range and current planning efforts – and for the City to retain its fair share of transportation funding through this process.

The elected officials of Florence and Florence County must recognize their interdependence and the need to cooperate in the administration of sound growth management policies. Strong intergovernmental cooperation will be instrumental in effective implementation of this plan and the continuing financial health of both jurisdictions. Each of the governmental agencies shares common interests and goals, including enhancing economic development, and providing for quality housing, services, and infrastructure needs. These goals can be more effectively achieved through mutual cooperation and coordination.

Recommended Strategies for Intergovernmental Cooperation

- ◆ Create a City/County planning advisory council, which should include both elected officials and representatives from each agency’s planning

commissions. The council should meet regularly to consider and act on projects and initiatives that are of mutual interest and benefit.

- ◆ Develop a memorandum of understanding between City and County elected officials, with a goal of enhancing the City’s ability to manage its future pattern of development and municipal boundaries, protect the resources of both parties, and ensure sound fiscal management practices for delivery of urban- and rural-level public services.
- ◆ Modify the terms of the 2002 water and sewer “Consolidation Agreement” between the City and County to provide the City greater flexibility, discretion, and adherence to planning principles in determining the location, size, and timing of future sewer and water system extensions into unincorporated areas. The current agreement expires in 2022, but can be extended indefinitely in five-year increments. However, in order for the agreement to conform with current State law, the terms of the Agreement need to be reconciled with the 2007 Amendments to Section 2-29-510(D)(9) of the 1976 South Carolina Code (Priority Investment Act), which requires the coordination of all relevant jurisdictions’ staff and planning commissions in the process of programming future infrastructure projects and funding.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Shown in **Table 6.1, Community Investment Action Items**, (at the conclusion of this Chapter) are the key action items and capital projects recommended for implementation, with more detail found within the individual plan chapters. These strategies and investments highlight the steps to be taken by the City, often in coordination with other jurisdictions, organizations, or agencies. This table is intended as a quick reference. It is designed to be kept up to date and used on an annual basis as part of the regular review process, in accordance with the South Carolina Priority Investment Act. Each year, the projects that are substantially complete should be removed, with the corresponding years advanced one year, and a fifth year of programmed actions added. In this way, this table may be used on an ongoing basis and provided to the City Council to keep them apprised of the progress of implementation.

Code Amendments

Currently, the City has separate zoning and subdivision codes. As an extension of this comprehensive plan update, the City has embarked in a comprehensive update of its current Zoning Ordinance. The review and possible update of the City's Subdivision Regulations are expected to follow.

Zoning Ordinance

Because the City's zoning administration function was consolidated with Florence County for an 11-year period between 1997 and 2008, there was only one code for both City and County. When this joint relationship was ended in 2008, the City brought forward the regulations it had used with the County as an interim measure until a revised ordinance is prepared. Amendment of the zoning ordinance is imperative, and work has begun to rewrite it based on this adopted comprehensive plan.

Key changes that are under consideration include:

- ◆ Develop new zoning districts that are based on desired community character outcomes rather than specific land uses. This includes the possible consolidation of zoning districts.
- ◆ Control setbacks and building mass to maintain the design integrity of existing neighborhoods.
- ◆ Adopt compatibility and residential design (not architectural style) standards for elements such as building massing, materials, quality of detailing, building orientation and elevation, roof design, and minimum yard landscaping requirements.
- ◆ Recalibrate the business zoning districts to address downtown planning objectives while remaining sensitive to the market conditions for commercial land. Simplify existing commercial development design standards.
- ◆ Establish "Green Building" standards that promote efficient energy use, minimize stormwater runoff, and optimize use of the site.
- ◆ Establish streamlined review and approval processes that expedite compliant applications. With clearly outlined performance standards, the process may be eased with greater reliance on sound administration of a well-written development code.

- ◆ Identify opportunities for administrative approval of routine applications to shorten the time of application acceptance.
- ◆ Reformat the code to enhance understanding and usability.

Subdivision Code

The current subdivision ordinance and approval processes should be addressed as adoption of the revised Zoning Ordinance proceeds. Changes are likely to be required in response to modifications of zoning standards, district configuration, approval processes, and possible changes in intergovernmental agreements.

Growth Management

Map 2.4, Future Land Use Plan, identifies future growth and infill areas within the planning area boundaries. Implementation of this plan is essential if the City is to forge fiscally responsible future development, preserve its character, protect views and open space, secure the protection of sensitive resources, and effectively control its destiny. While current South Carolina annexation laws and the 2002 City/County utility Consolidation Agreement complicate the means by which the City may accomplish its growth management objectives, following is the advisable approach:

- ◆ First and foremost, prepare infill development standards to allow new development to occur on infill tracts and ensure it is of comparable scale and character to the surrounding development. The City should establish expedited review standards to serve as an incentive. Existing economic incentives for infill development should be continued and expanded.
- ◆ Prepare a three- to five-year annexation plan for lands designated for development in the Future Land Use Plan. In most instances, the basic framework for streets, utilities, and other public services has been established in these areas – providing appropriate justification for municipal annexation.
- ◆ Prepare a fiscal impact model to determine the relative impact of the proposed annexation and the proposed future development, including an assessment of the expense of providing the required City facilities and services. The fiscal evaluation must occur concurrently with the annexation

plans to allow sound decisions as to the inclusion or exclusion of certain areas.

Priority Investments Plan

Closely related to the ability of the City to manage its growth is the adequacy of its existing infrastructure and its ability to maintain it. The requirement to keep pace with development in terms of increasing capacities and service needs is significant. This strengthens the cause for managing growth to ensure that new development occurs within the areas where infrastructure and services already exist.

Capital improvement strategies include:

- ◆ Tie the capital improvements program to the growth plan, allowing the City to assess its long-term infrastructure needs and to stage improvements concurrent with growth.
- ◆ Prepare financially constrained infrastructure improvement plans. Resources should be directed to serving infill projects followed by those that are contiguous to the service area. All projects should be within the defined growth area.
- ◆ In coordination with the Future Land Use Plan, approve new development project applications and zoning map amendments only in areas where there is existing adequate street and utility infrastructure or where they may be readily extended without financial burden on the City.
- ◆ Amend current utility extension policies that strictly adhere to the growth policies of both the City's and County's respective comprehensive plans.
- ◆ Consider the establishment of density bonuses that provide incentives for development clustering and reduce the need for infrastructure construction since there are fewer roads and utility lines needed. This optimizes the efficiency of roads and utility services.

Downtown Redevelopment

The current *Florence Downtown Master Plan* (2010-2015), included in **Appendix A**, includes a series of three- to five-year implementation measures. They focus on the physical, economic, and organizational changes that are needed to revitalize downtown and reestablish its role as the dominant focal point of Florence. Specific implementation measures include:

- ◆ Modification of the zoning provisions of downtown in accordance with the requirements of the redevelopment plan.
- ◆ Refinement of the "Cultural Campus" district for the Pine Street area.
- ◆ Development of residential and nonresidential design guidelines for building scale and massing; relationships to the street front; pedestrian facilities and amenities; parking location and design; site lighting; service, loading, outdoor storage, and mechanical areas; building design (facades, articulation, exteriors, fenestration, blank walls, etc.); and signs and awnings.
- ◆ Increased urban living options within and immediately adjacent to downtown.
- ◆ Improved access and interactivity between downtown and the McLeod Medical Campus.
- ◆ Continued expansion of the amenities associated with the FMU Performing Arts Center, Cultural Museum, and other elements recommended in the Florence Downtown Master Plan (2010-2015).
- ◆ Preparation of a working business plan for a new Artisan Center/Art Trail Gallery that would define its business model, identify sources of funding, recruit board membership, recruit tenants, and manage the facility.
- ◆ Establishment, funding, and organization of a business improvement district (BID).

Highway Corridor Beautification

The unattractive highway entrance corridors have been identified as significant detriments to the City. Specific areas identified in the FLATS Transportation Planning Study include:

- ◆ Palmetto Street (US 76/US 301) – East of Florence, from Ballard Street to Williston Road/McCurdy Road.
- ◆ Pamplico Highway (SC 51) – From South Irby Street to Howe Springs Road/Claussen Road.
- ◆ Lucas Street (US 52) – The entire length of the highway, from I-95 to Irby Street.

The community needs to make concerted efforts to remove abandoned buildings and signs, enhance landscaping, and make physical roadway improvements to these corridors.

- ◆ The City should pursue a long-term annexation policy to bring all properties that front these corridors into Florence. This will subject the corridors to the City's zoning and sign control standards.
- ◆ As the annexation process recommended above is likely to occur over a long period of time, the City needs to work now with Florence County to upgrade the County's development and sign control standards to improve the appearance of unincorporated properties.
- ◆ The City and County should secure SCDOT funding, in accordance with the Florence Land Use and Transportation Study (FLATS), to provide street improvements, landscaping, and improved access management control for these designated corridors.
- ◆ The City and County should pursue all available legal and code enforcement remedies to remove the abandoned buildings from these corridors as they are unsightly, dangerous, and conducive to crime.

Park, Open Space, and Trail System Master Planning

While Florence has an excellent system of parks and trails, many references in Chapters Two and Five, along with the five-year Florence Downtown Master Plan (2010-2015), are made to recommendations for further improvements. The City should consider preparing a detailed parks, open space, and trails system master plan that is coordinated with this comprehensive plan.

Such a master plan should include:

- ◆ An updated inventory of all existing public parks, open space lands, and trail segments, including preparation of a map and GIS database.
- ◆ An updated inventory of all existing public trails and sidewalks, as well as existing and committed (platted and planned) private trails.
- ◆ Refinement of per capita recreational acreage and facility calculations to compare Florence with national park and recreational standards.
- ◆ Preparation of a gap analysis to identify locations where improvements may be made to connect existing sidewalks and trails.

- ◆ Preliminary assessment of available rights-of-way, easements, and publicly- owned properties suitable for possible park and trail development.
- ◆ Development of a long-range parks plan indicating areas where future parks will be required in response to land development, as well as a network of connecting trails that complement Florence's existing trail and pathway system.
- ◆ Preparation of a comprehensive parks, recreation, open space, and trails master plan indicating the general locations of future parks, improvements to existing parks, and potential alignments of off-street trails.

Improvement of Neighborhoods and Housing Conditions

The affordability of housing to all Florence citizens remains an important issue for the community. In the interest of accommodating persons of all economic strata, mechanisms must be put in place to allow for attainable housing, in addition to and support of that being provided by Florence Affordable Homes. In addition, the City must act to protect, stabilize, and strengthen neighborhood environments, while revitalizing "tired" neighborhoods and rehabilitating the older housing stock

Key strategies to improve neighborhood quality and housing affordability include:

- ◆ Continue the administration and funding of housing and neighborhood improvement programs described in Chapter Five, Housing and Neighborhoods. These include:
 - » Acquisition and demolition of abandoned houses, with the resale of cleared properties.
 - » The Housing Authority of Florence (HAF) Home Improvement Rebate Program. Neighborhood "clean-up, fix-up" programs such as the Great » American Cleanup.
 - » The City's "Fix a Block" program.
 - » Creation of affordable housing ownership developments, such as the North Pointe Subdivision.
- ◆ Establish additional investment programs that promote the improvement of neighborhoods and home ownership:

- » Financial incentives and expedited approvals for the construction of new housing units on vacant lots in existing neighborhoods.
- » Adoption of a mandatory, biennial rental housing inspection » program.
- ◆ Secure SCDOT and other funding to redevelop neighborhood streets and sidewalks in redevelopment areas to standards that are comparable to all residential areas in Florence.
- ◆ Include the following provisions in the Zoning Ordinance, which is currently being rewritten:
 - » Provisions for inclusionary housing under certain specified » circumstances, which may be accomplished by way of a housing bonus program whereby a subdivider may achieve greater overall density (using alternative housing types or via lot size adjustments) in exchange for providing affordable units.
 - » Use of a lot size formula that provides for an average rather than a » minimum size lot in new subdivisions. This allows a mixture of lot sizes, thereby accommodating different floor plans, sizes, and prices of units while fending off monotony at the same time.
 - » Provisions for market rate housing, whereby the increment created by » density bonuses is used to write-down the lot and infrastructure costs for a specified percentage of units, making them more affordable.
 - » Providing a range of development options within each district, with » density bonuses for planned development. To achieve higher densities within a planned environment, a minimum of two or three housing types are required, which helps to achieve community affordability objectives.

The City should reinstitute its neighborhood planning programs. In coordination with individual neighborhoods, at least one small area plan should be developed each year. These plans would focus on specific area improvements and relevant code enforcement issues, which would identify and prioritize future capital projects, zoning district amendments, enhancement projects, or other special initiatives or programs.

Economic Development

The City should continue to work closely with Florence County Economic Development Partnership (FCEDP) in attracting new industries and promoting economic development at a strategic level. As outlined in Chapter Four, Economic Development, a more tactical local support effort is needed to augment the existing County and State programs. This City-level initiative would strengthen the promotion of entrepreneurship, public-private and inter-institutional partnerships, and downtown redevelopment.

Specific implementation measures include:

- ◆ Formation of a City economic development committee and the eventual creation of a permanent economic development coordinator position for Florence.
- ◆ Re-establish the City's micro-loan program for downtown redevelopment.
- ◆ Work with local bankers to create a City revolving loan fund as part of the Community Investment Act. This program would provide low-interest loans and loan underwriting for commercial development and redevelopment projects within the City. Establish a single-point-of-contact protocol to expedite the approval of new development and business permit applications.
- ◆ Establish a City welcoming committee to attract promising businesses, professional site selectors, and high-quality developers.
- ◆ Work with Florence's two major medical centers, the University of South Carolina, and medical-related private-sector firms to attract a greater share of interdisciplinary medical research to Florence.

Plan Amendment

This plan must remain flexible and allow for adjustment to change over time. Shifts in political, economic, physical, and social conditions, and other unforeseen circumstances will influence the priorities of the community. As future development and redevelopment continue, new issues will emerge, while others may no longer be relevant. Some action statements may become less practical, while other plausible solutions will arise. To ensure that it continues to reflect the vision and remains relevant and viable over time,

this comprehensive plan must be revisited on a routine basis, with regular amendments and warranted updates.

Revisions to the plan are two-fold; minor plan amendments should occur bi-annually, and more significant updates handled every five years. Minor amendments may include revisions to the land use and growth plan or thoroughfare plan as the development pattern unfolds. Major updates will involve reviewing the base conditions and growth trends; re-evaluating the goals, policies, and recommendations; and formulating new ones in response to changing needs and priorities.

Annual Progress Report

A progress report should be prepared annually by the Planning Commission, with the assistance of the Urban Planning & Development Department staff and presented to the Mayor and City Council. This ensures that the plan is regularly reviewed and modifications are identified for the minor plan amendment process. Ongoing monitoring of plan consistency with the City's ordinances must be an essential part of this effort.

The Annual Progress Report should include:

- ◆ Significant actions and accomplishments during the past year including the status of implementation for each programmed task.
- ◆ Implementation constraints including those encountered in administering the plan and its policies.
- ◆ Proposed amendments that have come forward during the course of the year, which may include revisions to the plan maps, or other recommendations, policies, or text changes.
- ◆ Recommendations for needed actions, programs, and procedures to be developed and implemented in the forthcoming year including a recommendation of projects to be included in the CIP, programs and initiatives to be funded, and priority coordination needs with public and private implementation partners.

Amendment Process

Plan amendments should occur every two years, allowing proposed changes to be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect may be understood.

Amendments may need to be made in a lesser time, in the event of a major opportunity for development.

Any proposed amendments must be consistent with the goals and policies originally set forth in the plan. Careful consideration should also be given to guard against site-specific plan changes that could negatively impact adjacent areas and uses or detract from the overall vision and character of the area.

Factors that should be considered include:

- ◆ Consistency with the goals and policies of the plan;
- ◆ Adherence with the future land use, thoroughfare, and downtown redevelopment plans;
- ◆ Compatibility with the County plan and related plans of surrounding areas;
- ◆ Impacts on the provision of infrastructure and public services;
- ◆ Impact on environmentally sensitive and natural areas; and
- ◆ Contribution to the vision of the plan and character of the community.

Five-Year Update/Evaluation and Appraisal Report

A more formal evaluation and appraisal report should be prepared every five years. This report should be prepared by the Urban Planning & Development Department staff and approved by the Director, with input from various City departments, Planning Commission, and other boards and committees. The report involves evaluating the existing plan and assessing how successful it has been in implementing the vision and goals. The purpose is to identify the successes and shortcomings of the plan, evaluate circumstances that may have changed, and make recommendations on how the plan should be modified. The report should review baseline conditions and assumptions about trends and growth indicators, and it should evaluate implementation potential and/or obstacles related to any unmet goals, policies, and recommendations. The result of the evaluation report will be a revised comprehensive plan.

More specifically, the report should identify and evaluate the following:

- ◆ Summary of plan amendments and major actions undertaken over the last five years.
- ◆ Major issues in the community and how these issues have changed over time.

- ◆ Changes in the assumptions, trends, and base studies including the following:
 - » The rate at which growth is occurring relative to the projections put forward in the plan;
 - » Shifts in demographics and other growth trends;
 - » The area of urban land that is designated and zoned and its capacity to meet projected demands;
 - » City-wide attitudes and whether changes necessitate amendments to the vision and goals; and,
 - » Other changes in the political, social, economic, or environmental conditions that dictate a need for plan amendment.
 - » Ability of the plan to continue to successfully implement the vision. Individual statements or sections of the plan must be reviewed and
 - » rewritten to ensure that the plan provides sufficient information and direction to achieve the intended outcome.
 - » Conflicts between goals and policies that have been discovered in the implementation and administration of the plan must be resolved.
 - » The action agenda should be reviewed, and major actions accomplished should be highlighted. Those not accomplished should be re-evaluated to ensure their relevancy and/or to revise them appropriately.
 - » The time frames for implementing the individual actions should be re-evaluated. Some actions may emerge as a higher priority given new or changed circumstances, while others may become less important.
 - » Based upon organizational, programmatic, and procedural factors, as well as the status of previously assigned tasks, the implementation task assignments must be reviewed and altered to ensure timely accomplishment.
 - » Changes in laws, procedures, and missions may impact the ability to achieve the goals. The plan review must assess these changes and their impacts on the success of implementation, leading to any suggested revisions in strategies or priorities.

Table 6.1: Community Investment Action Items

Action Recommendation	Type	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years	Lead Agency	Source of Funds
L = Legislative P = Programs CI = Capital Improvements						
Land Use and Management of Future Development						
Update/Amend Zoning Ordinance	L	X			CITY	CITY
Update Sign Ordinance	L	X				
Regulatory provisions for State-mandated NPDES Phase 2 Stormwater Management requirements	L	X				
Review and amend, as needed, the Subdivision Ordinance	L	X				
Establish a long-term City annexation strategy with identified areas	P	X				
Utility Systems						
Downtown area stormwater management improvements	CI	X			CITY PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT	CITY
Wastewater treatment plant expansion	CI	X				CITY/US EPA
Water distribution system line extensions and improvements	CI	X	X			UTILITY SYSTEM REVENUE
30-inch water transmission main along 301 Bypass to Pamlico Highway	CI		X			
Continuing sanitary sewer system I/I corrections	CI	X	X	X		
Modify the rural utility extension terms of the City/County "Consolidation Agreement"	P			P		N/A
Parks, Trails, and Beautification						
Update the park, recreation, open space and trails master plan	P	X			CITY PARKS AND BEAUTIFICATION DEPARTMENT	CITY
Signage improvements for designated on-street bicycle routes	P	X				
Rail-trail extensions	CI	X	X	X		
Establish new rail-trail along Lucas St.	AS OPPORTUNITY BECOMES AVAILABLE					

Action Recommendation	Type	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years	Lead Agency	Source of Funds
L = Legislative P = Programs CI = Capital Improvements						
Parks, Trails, and Beautification						
Establish a new neighborhood park on part of the existing West H.S. site when the school is relocated	CI		X		CITY PARKS AND BEAUTIFICATION DEPARTMENT	CITY
Approach corridor beautification	CI	X				
Downtown Redevelopment						
Recruitment of a Director for the FDDC	P	X				CITY/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS
Establishment of a downtown façade grant/loan program	P	X				
Downtown Property Maintenance Code	L	X				
Zoning map changes for special downtown subdistricts	L	X				
Downtown marketing campaign	P	X				
Update downtown development guidelines	L	X				
Amendment of TIF project plans to include property acquisition and developer financing	P	X				
Advance planning of cultural campus design	P	X				CITY/DONATIONS
Land assembly/redevelopment in Irby/Palmetto area and "triangle" site	P/CI	X				CITY/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS
Capitalize the downtown development revolving fund	P/CI		X			
Farmers market/expo grounds development planning	P		X			
Expansion of Coit Village	CI		X			
Transportation						
Development of a new downtown transportation center	CI	X			CITY/COUNTY/SCDOT	CITY/SCDOT
Pine Needles Road widening from Southborough Road to South Ebenezer Road						

Action Recommendation	Type	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years	Lead Agency	Source of Funds
	L = Legislative P = Programs CI = Capital Improvements					
Transportation (cont.)						
US 378 widening from US 52 near Lake City to SC 41 in Kingsburg	CI	X			CITY/COUNTY/SCDOT	SCDOT (FLATS)
TV Road widening to four lanes from Wilson Road to I-95	CI		X			
Pamplico Highway widening SC 51 from Claussen Road to US 378 in Kingsburg	CI		X			
US 301 Bypass completion from US 76 near Timmonsville to the intersection of US 52/US 301 and Howe Springs Road	CI		X			
Widen Cashua Drive between Second Loop Road (SC 51) and S Parker Drive to 5 lanes with a two-way left-turn lane	CI		X			
Widen Claussen Road between SC 327 and just past SC 51/Pamplico Highway to a 3 lane facility with a two-way left-turn lane	CI			X		
Widen W. Darlington Street between N Cashua Drive and Irby Street (US 52) to 5 lanes	CI			X		
Widen Ebenezer Road between Pine Needles Road and W Palmetto Street (US 76) to 4 lanes with a median	CI			X		
Widen Ebenezer Road/Pisgah Road between Industry Boulevard and Pine Needles Road to 5 lanes with a two-way left-turn lane	CI			X		
Widen Ebenezer Road/Radio Drive between David H McLeod Boulevard (I-20 Business) and near Industry Boulevard to 4 lanes with a median	CI			X		

Action Recommendation	Type	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years	Lead Agency	Source of Funds
L = Legislative P = Programs CI = Capital Improvements						
Transportation (cont.)						
Widen Freedom Boulevard between Freedom Florence Recreational Facility and National Cemetery Road to 4 lanes with a median	CI			X	CITY/COUNTY/SCDOT	SCDOT (FLATS)
Widen Hoffmeyer Road between Anderson Farm Road and Tivoli Drive to 4 lanes with a median	CI			X		
Widen I-95 between David H McLeod Boulevard (I-20 Business) to W Palmetto Street (US 76) to 6 lanes	CI			X		
Widen National Cemetery Road between S Church Street and Stockade Drive to 4 lanes with a median	CI			X		
Widen Oakland Avenue between E Lucas Street and Wilson Road to 3 lanes with a two-way left-turn lane	CI			X		
Widen Southborough Road between N Sally Hill Road and Pine Needles Road to 4 lanes with a median	CI			X		
Widen Third Loop Road between S Marsh Avenue to S Irby Street to 3 lanes with a two-way left-turn lane	CI			X		
Widen US 301 Bypass Extension/Alligator Road between Palmetto Street (US 76) and Irby Street to 4 lanes with a median	CI			X		
Construct half cloverleaf interchange at I-95 and McIver Road	CI			X		
Construct 2-lane roundabout at the Five Points intersection	CI			X		
Access management improvements to Palmetto Street (US 76/US 301) corridor—Ballard Street to Williston Road/McCurdy Road	CI	X				

Action Recommendation	Type	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years	Lead Agency	Source of Funds
L = Legislative P = Programs CI = Capital Improvements						
Transportation (cont.)						
Access management improvements to Pamplico Highway (SC 51) Corridor – Irby Street to Howe Springs Road/Claussen Road	CI				CITY/COUNTY/SCDOT	SCDOT (FLATS)
Access management improvements to Lucas Street (US 52) corridor I-95 to Irby Street	CI		X			
Economic Development						
Establishment and staffing of a City economic development department	P	X			CITY	CITY
Initiation of Foreign Trade Zone establishment process at the airport or proposed industrial/logistics park	P	X				CITY
Additional or extended CSX industrial rail sidings	CI	X	X	X		CSX/DEVELOPER
I-95 to industrial park truck route designations	P	X				CITY/SCDOT
Establishment of business development revolving fund	P	X				CITY/LOCAL BANKS
Establishment of downtown business incubator	P	X				CITY
Establishment of a City "welcoming committee" to attract new business development	P	X				CITY
Establishment of a new downtown hotel	CI		X	X		CITY/DEVELOPER
Establishment of an arts incubator facility	P		X			CITY
Establishment of an urban business park along the Baroody Street corridor	CI		X		CITY	

Action Recommendation	Type	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years	Lead Agency	Source of Funds
L = Legislative P = Programs CI = Capital Improvements						
Housing and Neighborhoods						
Preparation of detailed neighborhood redevelopment plans	P	X	X	X	CITY	CITY
Adoption of updated duplex and multi-family residence design standards	L					
Improvement of neighborhood street and sidewalks in identified target areas	P	X	X	X		
Removal of abandoned structures	P	X	X	X		U.S. HUD
Continuation of existing CDBG-funded housing programs	P	X	X	X		
Establishment of a rental housing inspection program	P	X	X			CITY
Establishment of an incentives program to convert rental housing units to owner-occupancy	P	X				
Establishment of incentives for lot-infill housing construction	P	X	X			
Formation of a home buyer education program	P	X				