



Florence, South Carolina

Comprehensive Plan

AND

Existing City Report



Adopted **June 12, 2023**
by Florence City Council

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Thanks also to ...

Individual residents, business representatives, property owners, partner agencies, local organizations and others who contributed their insights and ideas to Florence's long-range planning process.

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For a quick read of the highlights of this Comprehensive Plan document:

1. Skim the **Plan Introduction section** for background on the plan purpose and organization, and how the plan will be used by the City of Florence and others.
2. View the plan **Guiding Principles** at page 8 of the Plan Introduction.
3. View the **Action Agenda** at page 5 of the **Plan Implementation section**, involving **21 key items** from throughout the plan.
4. View the **Goals and Strategic Action Priorities** in each plan focus area:
 - **Growth Capacity** at page 3 of that section.
 - **Land Use and Development** at page 4 of that section.
 - **Housing and Neighborhoods** at page 4 of that section.
 - **Transportation** at page 3 of that section.
 - **Economic Development** at page 3 at that section.
 - **Recreation and Amenities** at page 4 of that section.
5. View the **Future Land Use and Character map**, referenced at page 14 of the Land Use and Development section, and inserted at the end of the section. Also see **descriptions of the 12 map categories** starting at page 17 of the section.
6. Review the **population outlook for Florence** at page 13 of the Growth Capacity section.
7. Review **other facts and figures about Florence** in the **Existing City Report**, located at the back of the Comprehensive Plan document, which was finalized in mid-2021 prior to the Future City phase of the plan update process.

Skimming these selected items will give a reasonable idea of what is contained in the overall plan document. Those wishing more details should consult the **Table of Contents** to locate specific areas of interest.

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FUTURE CITY Plan Introduction

Introduction

The **Florence Comprehensive Plan** is intended to guide future development, redevelopment, and community enhancement efforts over the next 10-20 years through 2041. It serves as a framework for thoughtful community discussion on the real and perceived challenges currently facing Florence and the opportunities that will shape its future. Through long-range planning efforts, the community can accommodate its projected growth and revitalization in a manner that preserves its history, culture, and overall quality of life for current and future residents.

Process

The Comprehensive Plan resulted from an original 10-month planning and community engagement process that ultimately stretched to more than two years due to the disruption of the COVID-19 global pandemic that began one month after the project kickoff. The plan's findings and recommendations focus on the physical and economic aspects of the community's projected growth and development in the coming years. It provides guiding principles, goals, and action priorities that will help City officials, board/commission appointees, and staff in determining the location, financing and sequencing of public improvements; administering development regulations; and guiding reinvestment efforts. The plan also provides a basis for coordinating the actions of many different functions and interests within and outside of municipal government.

Plan Purpose

A comprehensive plan is usually the most important policy document a municipal government prepares and maintains. This is because the plan:

- Lays out a long-range vision regarding the community's future growth and enhancement.
- Considers at once the entire geographic area of the community, including areas where new development and redevelopment may occur, along with its regional context.
- Assesses near- and longer-term needs and desires across a variety of inter-related topics that represent the key "building blocks" of a community (e.g., land use, transportation, urban design, economic development, redevelopment, housing, neighborhoods, parks and recreation, utility infrastructure, public facilities and services, cultural facilities, etc.).
- Serves as a guideline for measuring success and is amended from time to time to remain a "living document" that is able to address changing circumstances.



Through a comprehensive plan, a community determines how best to accommodate and manage its projected growth and to revitalize older neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. The Florence Comprehensive Plan aims to ensure that ongoing development and redevelopment will proceed in an orderly, well-planned manner so that public facilities and services can keep pace and so that residents' quality of life will be enhanced.

The plan also clarifies and states the City's intentions regarding the area's physical development and associated infrastructure investment. This information creates a greater level of predictability for residents, land owners, developers, potential investors, and partner agencies and organizations.



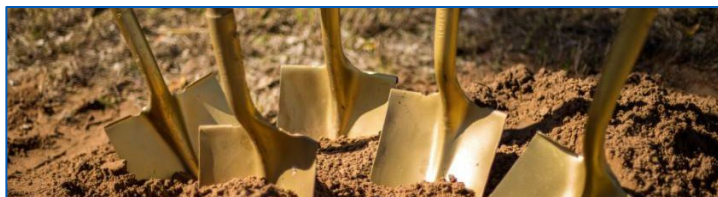
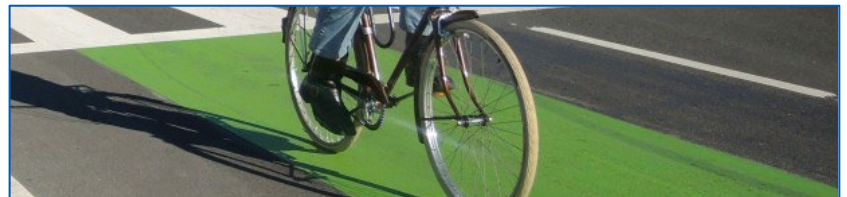
Growth Capacity

Land Use and Development



Housing and Neighborhoods

Transportation



Economic Development

Recreation and Amenities



Focus Areas

Focus areas within the Comprehensive Plan provide direction when setting program and funding priorities to enhance the quality of life in Florence. The **six focus areas** of this plan are highlighted on this page.

These focus areas were considered in developing this Existing City Report and help orient this Future City portion of the Comprehensive Plan.

Why Plan?

Local planning allows Florence to better control its future rather than simply dealing with change as it happens. Planning enables the City to manage future growth and development actively as opposed to reacting to development and redevelopment on a case-by-case basis without adequate and necessary consideration of community-wide issues. The process for developing the Comprehensive Plan involved major community discussions about Florence's priorities and its capability to provide the necessary public services and facilities to support these priorities. Such considerations led to pivotal discussions about what is "best" for the community and how everything from taxes to quality of life will be affected.

Long-range comprehensive planning provides an opportunity for the City's elected and appointed officials to step back from pressing, day-to-day issues and clarify their ideas on the kind of community they are trying to create and maintain. Through the plan development process, Florence's leaders could look broadly at programs for growth management, economic development, parks and recreation, and provision of public infrastructure and facilities and how these efforts may relate to one another. The plan ultimately represents a "big picture" of the community and its near-term and longer-range future. In sum, essential reasons for long-range planning are to:

- Provide a balance of land uses and services throughout the community to meet the needs and desires of the population.
- Ensure adequate public facilities to meet the demands of future development and redevelopment.
- Achieve and maintain a development pattern that reflects the values of the community and ensures a balanced tax base between residential and non-residential development.
- Ensure the long-term protection and enhancement of the perception and image of the community.
- Involve local citizens in the decision-making process, provide a transparent planning process and reach consensus on the future vision for Florence.

Use of This Plan

A comprehensive plan, when embraced by leadership and residents, has the potential to boost a community's livability and its opportunities for tangible accomplishments. This plan is ultimately a guidance document for City officials and staff, who must make decisions on a daily basis that will determine the future direction, financial health, and "look and feel" of the community. These decisions are carried out through:

- Targeted programs and expenditures prioritized through the City's annual budget process including routine but essential functions such as code compliance.
- Major public improvements and land acquisitions financed through the City's budgeting efforts.
- New and amended City ordinances and regulations closely linked to Comprehensive Plan objectives (and associated review and approval procedures in the case of subdivision and land development activities).
- Departmental work plans and resources in key areas.

Planning is ...

the process of identifying issues and needs, establishing goals and objectives, and determining the most effective means by which these ends may be achieved.

- Support for ongoing planning and studies that will further clarify needs, costs, benefits, and strategies.
- Pursuit of external grant funding to supplement local budgets and/or expedite certain projects.
- Initiatives pursued in conjunction with other public and private partners to leverage resources and achieve successes neither could accomplish on their own.

Despite these many avenues for action, the Comprehensive Plan should not be considered a “cure all” for every tough problem the community faces. This plan focuses primarily on the responsibilities of City government in the physical planning arena, where municipalities normally have a more direct and extensive role than in other areas that residents value such as education and social services. Long-range plans, as vision and policy documents, also must remain relatively general.

The resulting plan may not address every challenge before the city, but it is meant to set a tone and motivate concerted efforts to move the community forward in coming years.

Planning Authority and Requirements

This Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with the provisions of the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Act of 1994 and the South Carolina Priority Investment Act of 2007 as codified in Section 6-29-510 of the South Carolina Code of Laws. Chapter 6-29 gives cities the ability to create a municipal planning commission and specifies that:



It is the function and duty of the local planning commission ... to undertake a continuing planning program for the physical, social, and economic growth, development, and redevelopment of the area within its jurisdiction. The plans and programs must be designed to promote public health, safety, morals, convenience, prosperity, or the general welfare as well as the efficiency and economy of its area of jurisdiction.

This plan addresses the specifications of Section 6-29-510 by:

- Considering regional factors and context and interaction with adjacent jurisdictions.
- Inventorying existing conditions (in the Existing City Report supplement to this plan).
- Stating needs and goals (in each topical section of the plan).
- Providing plan implementation strategies with time frames (in the Plan Implementation element).
- Including a series of plan elements that correspond to and incorporate those itemized in Section 6-29-510(D):

Required Element	In Florence Comprehensive Plan
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Existing City Report (and with existing conditions for all other plan topics) › Growth Capacity
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Economic Development
Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Growth Capacity › Land Use and Development › Recreation and Amenities
Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Land Use and Development › Recreation and Amenities
Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Growth Capacity
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Land Use and Development › Housing and Neighborhoods
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Land Use and Development
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Transportation
Priority Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Growth Capacity and capital investment considerations in all other elements › Plan Implementation
Resiliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Growth Capacity primarily and “integrated into the goals and strategies of each of the other plan elements” per 6-29-510(D)

- Reinforcing in the Plan Implementation element that, along with annual reviews and reporting on implementation progress, the plan should be reviewed and updated on an interim basis at least every five years and fully updated at least every 10 years.

What Florence Residents Had to Say

Community and leadership engagement activities during the Comprehensive Plan process included:

- A series of informal interviews with smaller groups of elected officials and Planning Commission members early in the process (February 2020) and later with the new Mayor and City Council members (March 2021).
- A Town Hall Meeting on Florence’s Future held at First Presbyterian Church (February 2020).



- An online survey (receiving 553 responses) and related social media outreach (summer 2020).
- Four online virtual community meetings geared toward particular neighborhoods and one session with minority-owned small businesses in and around downtown (September 2020 and February, March, and April 2021).
- A series of in-person small group meetings involving neighborhood residents and representatives of business, lodging, and real estate/development (March 2021).
- A workshop session with the Mayor and City Council (July 2021), along with informal discussions with Council committees on Community Development and Business Development (July 2021).
- Four meetings with a City-appointed 29-member Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) consisting of representatives from local partner public agencies and organizations, neighborhood and bicycle/pedestrian advocates, major employers and the business community, key academic and medical institutions, the real estate and development community, members of City boards/commissions, and the area faith community (July-October 2021).
- Informal discussion of the draft plan goals and action recommendations with the Mayor and City Council (split over three sessions in March 2022, followed by further content refinement with City staff through Fall 2022).
- Presentation and discussion of highlights of the overall final draft plan with the Mayor, City Council and Planning Commission members (split over three sessions in March 2023).
- Public hearings before the Planning Commission (April 2023) and City Council (May 2023) prior to final plan adoption by City Council in May-June 2023.

The consultant team and City management and department directors also had ongoing discussions and completed area driving tours during the process.

FULL LIFE. FULL FORWARD.
FLORENCE
SOUTH CAROLINA

Survey on Florence's Future

The City of Florence is updating its Comprehensive Plan. This long-range plan helps the City – and others – to make sound and coordinated decisions regarding the future growth and enhancement of the community.

The plan update process was just starting in March when the coronavirus public health situation accelerated. During this time of social distancing, we would like to hear from you through this online survey until we can all come together again to share hopes, concerns and ideas about the future of Florence!

Do you live in Florence?
 Yes
 No

If no, where: _____

How long have you lived in Florence? (please check one if applicable):
 Less than 1 year
 1-5 years
 6-10 years
 11-20 years
 >20 years

Your responses to this survey will be kept strictly confidential. We are requesting the following information only to tie the input we receive to locations within or around the city, to confirm where additional outreach is needed due to limited response, and so you can receive periodic updates about the Comprehensive Plan process, related public meetings, and other input opportunities.

Name: _____
Street Address: _____
City, State and Zip Code: _____

Nearest Street Intersection (if you prefer not to provide your specific address): _____

If you are currently employed, where do you work?
 In Florence
 Elsewhere (city or location): _____

Community Input Sampler

"In the outskirts there isn't as much available to individuals with no way of commuting."

"[Planning] is a strength of the city. It seems like there is a valid, patient plan in place."

"Streets are rather poor but the utility systems seem to be working well."

"Storm drainage capacity is a concern due to increasing frequency of severe weather."

"Our low cost of living and two major hospital systems make Florence attractive."

"We love living in the downtown area."

"This area is lacking in a pool of trained people in technical skills."

"The cost to rent a home [here] is very high compared to other cities with similar amenities and size."

"To me the Rail Trail has a lot of potential but falls short of the mark."

"Recreation in Florence has improved tremendously in the area of sports."

"The City has done a good job in seeing that transit is available for all."

"I am so pleased with all of the changes [to Florence's appearance]."

"Florence needs a better outward facing brand for visitors."

City of Florence
June 26 · 🌐

2020 Comprehensive Plan

The City would like to hear from you to help share hopes, concerns, and ideas about the future of Florence!

The City of Florence's 2010 Comprehensive Plan guided City officials and City staff in their decision making for growth management, downtown preservation, economic development activities, neighborhood redevelopment and improvements to parks, gateways, trail systems and City services.

Now we need YOU to help guide our new 2020 Comprehensive Plan through this survey linked below. The planning process will lay the framework of this community for the next decade!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NRXJTVM>

City of Florence
Government Organization

[Learn More](#)

Participants visible in the grid:

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- Howard Simons
- Charles Smoot
- Alfred Cassidy
- Malcolm Cook
- Chris Goss
- VERMELL Hendr...
- Ralph Rahenkamp
- Clemon Grant
- Vanessa Murray



Future City

While the **Existing City Report** provides background and insights about Florence as it is today, this Future City portion of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on Florence as it intends to be in the years ahead. These aspirations are presented in topic areas that are central to Florence’s physical growth and development as listed earlier in this Introduction. Each topical section highlights key issues and considerations followed by a Framework for Action portion. A final section on plan implementation considerations, priorities, and procedures rounds out the Future City portion of the plan.

Guiding Principles

Through the process of preparing this plan, the seven guiding principles below were identified. **A Guiding Principle expresses a basic value or operating policy that will apply regardless of the course of action ultimately chosen.** In essence, guiding principles frame how an organization goes about pursuing its mission. These principles should be consulted when making crucial decisions and when evaluating the results of previous decisions and actions.

Guiding Principle 1

Florence will be **AMBITIOUS** in planning for its next 10 years and seeking out future successes involving economic development, capital investments, and next steps toward revitalizing a broader area around downtown.

Guiding Principle 2

Florence will be **COLLABORATIVE** as it works with partners at all levels of government and in the private and non-profit sectors to leverage City resources, pursue shared objectives, and team up on mutually beneficial “win-win” initiatives.

Guiding Principle 3

Florence will be better **CONNECTED** both in the physical realm of roads, sidewalks, and trails plus in terms of its sense of community and promoting activities that bring together residents from across the city.

Guiding Principle 4

Florence will be **EQUITABLE** in overcoming past wrongs and working every day to build a community of respect that allocates resources and promotes opportunity and access in all areas of the city.

Guiding Principle 5

Florence will be **INVITING** to newcomers and prospective investors and comfortable for residents, galvanizing around branding and beautification efforts to boost community confidence and pride.

Guiding Principle 6

Florence will be **RESOURCEFUL** by using the funding, energy and partnerships it has available to achieve best possible outcomes for the betterment of the community.

Guiding Principle 7

Florence will be **TRANSPARENT** through open communication, sharing of information, and being good stewards of its resources.

Goals and Action Priorities

The **Framework for Action** in each plan section also provides Goals and identifies strategic action priorities:

A **Goal** is a statement of a desired outcome (“end”) toward which efforts are directed as expressed by more specific objectives and action steps (“means”).

A **Strategic Action Priority** is aimed at seizing a special opportunity or addressing a particular challenge one faces, given limited resources – financial and otherwise – and recognizing that a broader agenda of new or ongoing activities will also be pursued in the meantime.

Pathways to Action

The action priorities in this Comprehensive Plan are presented in five categories that represent the major ways that plan goals and initiatives are typically advanced and accomplished:

Capital Investments

Like many municipalities, Florence uses a multi-year capital improvements planning process to identify and budget for large projects, especially those that must be phased and/or coordinated with other initiatives. This may include street infrastructure; water, sanitary sewer, and drainage improvements; parks, trails, and recreation facility construction and upgrades; construction of public buildings; and purchase of land, vehicles, or major equipment. With a typical five-year outlook, a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) provides predictability regarding a city’s capital investment plans and priorities for the benefit and awareness of citizens and private interests. Anticipating and adequately budgeting for major capital projects will be essential to implementing this Comprehensive Plan. Likewise, decisions regarding the prioritization of proposed capital improvements should reflect the direction and priorities of this plan.



Programs and Initiatives

Programs involve the routine activities of City departments and staff, as well as special projects and initiatives they may also undertake. As part of Comprehensive Plan implementation, this method may include initiating new or adjusting existing City programs and activities; expanding community outreach efforts; or providing specialized training to accomplish a priority objective more promptly and/or effectively.



Regulations and Standards

Given that private investment decisions account for a vast majority of a city’s physical form, land development regulations and engineering standards are fundamental for plan implementation. Consequently, zoning and subdivision regulations and associated development criteria and technical engineering standards are the basic keys to ensuring that the form, character, and quality of development reflect the City’s planning objectives. These codes, consolidated into a Unified Development Ordinance in Florence, should advance the community’s desire for quality development outcomes while recognizing economic factors. They should not delay or interfere unnecessarily with appropriate new development or redevelopment that is consistent with plan principles and directives.





Partnerships and Communication

Some community initiatives identified in this plan cannot be accomplished by City government on its own. They may require direct coordination, intergovernmental agreements, or funding support from other public entities or levels of government. Additionally, the unique role of potential private and non-profit partners to advance the community's action agenda should not be underestimated. This may occur through cooperative efforts, volunteer activities, and in-kind services (which can count toward the local match requirements for various grant opportunities), and from public/private financing of community improvements.



More Targeted Planning / Study

Various areas of City governance require more detailed study and planning, especially as required to qualify for external funding opportunities. These studies involve targeted planning work at a finer grain level of detail than is appropriate for comprehensive planning purposes (e.g., utility master plans, roadway alignment studies, etc.). As such, some parts of this plan will be implemented only after some additional planning or special study to clarify next steps and associated costs and considerations, including clarification of roles and potential cost-sharing when partnering is involved.

FUTURE CITY

Growth

Capacity

Plan Sections

- Growth Capacity
- Land Use and Development
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Recreation and Amenities
- Plan Implementation

Introduction

Florence must prepare for, and have the capacity to meet, the service demands of current residents plus future new development and redevelopment. Growth can bring many economic and community benefits but must be balanced with reinvestment in Florence's established neighborhoods and non-residential areas, which tax base expansion through revitalization will help to support.

Infrastructure and services are essential to secure investor interest and assurance to undertake private projects in Florence. Likewise, the City depends on an adequate tax base from business activity and private property improvements to fund essential capital projects and ongoing maintenance.

Why this Comprehensive Plan Section is Important for Florence

- Together with the Land Use and Development section, focuses on the potential extent of growth in and around Florence in the decades ahead, where this growth might occur, and the implications it could have for the City.
- Highlights that, as in other mature communities, Florence has aging infrastructure and public facility needs to address, including to maintain the capacity and efficiency of water and wastewater systems in compliance with applicable federal and state regulations.
- Points out that capital investments in public infrastructure such as utilities and streets can signal desired locations for growth, help maintain a high quality of life for residents, and create a framework for land development and revitalization.
- Emphasizes that absorbing some of the community's projected population growth within existing developed areas will inject new dollars and energy inside the city, capitalize on public infrastructure and facilities that are already in place, and potentially lead to new housing options and commercial and mixed-use developments.
- Reinforces the City's role in growth management and related tools and methods, including:
 - › Local development regulations that govern subdivision and re-platting activity, provide for the appropriate use of land through zoning, and set minimum standards for the nature and quality of development.
 - › Financing and special district mechanisms that advance the community's growth and economic development objectives while supporting beneficial private development and reinvestment.
 - › Ongoing partnerships with other key public agencies, including Florence County and Florence 1 Schools, among others.

Legacy of Past Planning

This new Comprehensive Plan builds on previous plans and studies completed by the City of Florence and other partners. Those most relevant to the Growth Capacity topic include:

- City of Florence Comprehensive Plan 2010 (February 2011).
- City of Florence Next Steps 2017-2022 (five-year interim Comprehensive Plan update).
- Pee Dee River Regional Water Treatment Plant Condition Assessment and Expansion Engineering Report (March 2021).
- Florence County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (updated periodically).

Accomplishments

Progress and achievements resulting from past planning and implementation efforts were identified through leadership and community input to this plan. Significant items cited that are most relevant to the Growth Capacity topic include:

- Capacity to supply more than 20 million gallons per day of high-quality drinking water to system customers, with advance planning to add more water production capacity.
- Expanded treatment capacity at the Florence Regional Wastewater Management Facility, while continuing to assess future growth-driven capacity needs.
- Capital construction plan developed for improvements to stormwater collection system, supported by \$8 million in bond funding over 14 years.
- Implementation of an asset management program for the City's water and wastewater systems.

Key Planning Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of the comprehensive planning effort, numerous real and perceived community issues and needs were identified through leadership and public engagement activities, as well as through the work of the plan consultants and their interactions with City management and staff. Key issues and considerations that led to the goals and action items in this Growth Capacity section include:

- Planning for potential expansion of Florence's incorporated area, both around the city's edges and through potential annexation of "donut hole" areas within the city.
- Prioritizing stormwater management, especially at a system-wide level through fresh study of regional drainage conditions and factors, leading to identification of targeted projects and potential policy changes.
- Balancing growth management efforts with revitalization needs in existing developed areas.
- An increasing focus on community resiliency, involving the City's infrastructure systems and public safety services, along with economic resilience and a sustainable tax base as addressed in other sections of this plan.

Framework for Action

This Framework for Action section builds off of the plan priorities confirmed with Florence City Council during the transition from the Existing City to the Future City phase of Comprehensive Plan development. The Plan goals and action strategies are aimed at “connecting the dots” between a set of community improvement fundamentals for Florence that involve:

- Stabilizing and enhancing Florence’s neighborhoods.
- Continuing the momentum of Florence’s downtown revitalization.
- Being both a fiscally and physically resilient city.
- Expecting quality in both private development and public projects.
- Being an amenity rich place.
- Being a connected, equitable community.
- Providing an environment for diverse economic growth opportunities.

What connects all of these points is the desire to retain and attract more population to Florence, including those who grew up here. The actions in this Growth Capacity section involve tangible steps that will lead to achievement of the goals in line with the plan's Guiding Principles (in the Introduction section). The actions are categorized into the five types of plan implementation actions highlighted throughout this Plan.

Goals for Growth Capacity

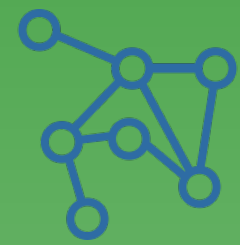
1. Rational **consolidation and expansion of the City’s incorporated area** through a targeted annexation program, backed by ongoing upgrades to the water and wastewater systems.
2. A refreshed understanding of the watersheds in and around Florence as part of a **comprehensive stormwater management** initiative.
3. **Targeted engagement of edge growth areas** amid a prioritized emphasis on **stabilization and renewal of Florence’s core neighborhoods**.
4. Leadership among South Carolina local governments in applying **technology**, promoting and implementing **green practices**, and planning for community resiliency.
5. A continued focus on **public safety staffing, municipal service delivery, and budget support** to maintain levels of service and responsiveness as Florence grows.



Actions by Goal

GOAL 1: Rational consolidation and expansion of the City’s incorporated area through a targeted annexation program, backed by ongoing upgrades to the water and wastewater systems.

Rationale: During the comprehensive planning process, some City of Florence officials emphasized the importance of being seen as a growing community if Florence is to achieve the economic success of other leading cities in South Carolina, including Charleston, Columbia, and Greenville-Spartanburg. They also recognize the challenges Florence faces under the South Carolina framework for municipal annexation, and the lack of consensus with Florence County that has constrained annexation activity in recent years. Nonetheless, this first Growth



A Goal is ...

a statement of a desired outcome (“end”) toward which efforts are directed as expressed by more specific objectives and action steps (“means”).

A Strategic Action Priority is ...

aimed at seizing a special opportunity or addressing a particular challenge one faces, given limited resources – financial and otherwise – and recognizing that a broader agenda of new or ongoing activities will also be pursued in the meantime.

Capacity goal and its associated action steps reflect this desire to emphasize growth, which could potentially put Florence on a higher population trajectory than the 2040 projection of 45,767 included in this plan section. This will require public investments in expanded utility capacity, along with water distribution and wastewater collection systems, in various potential growth areas and particularly at Florence’s western boundaries to provide greater opportunity for growth and development along and near the I-95 corridor.

Capital Investments

1. Continue phased expansion of water treatment capacity at the Pee Dee Surface Water Treatment Plant to address capacity shortcomings. The plant currently supplies just 30 percent of the city’s water. Opportunities for expansion at this plant are greater than those available from groundwater sources. Through its Pee Dee River Regional Water Treatment Plant Condition Assessment and Expansion Engineering Report (March 2021), CDM Smith has provided initial guidance for upgrading the plant capacity from 10 to 15 million gallons per day (MGD).

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Engineering Division**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Utilities Department

2. Following more targeted planning/study, implement either new wastewater treatment in West Florence or conveyance from the west side to the existing Florence Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant (FRWWTP). The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) has indicated that typical treatment methods would be insufficient for discharge to waterbodies west of the city. The additional treatment to meet state requirements would most likely make this option cost prohibitive. The best option appears to be conveyance, utilizing a pump station sized up to 10 MGD (and which can be further upgraded), from west of Highway 76 to FRWWTP. The plant’s current treatment capacity is 22 MGD. It is assumed (through capacity of the influent pump station) that, at buildout, FRWWTP’s hydraulic capacity could reach 60 MGD.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Engineering Division**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Utilities Department

Programs and Initiatives

1. Establish a long-term annexation strategy for feasible areas, including the identification of primary (five-year) and secondary (10-year) growth areas. Then prepare a municipal service plan for potential annexation activity within the primary growth areas. Unincorporated “donut hole” areas encircled by the current city limits should be a first focus for potential near-term annexation, where appropriate after further evaluation, to rationalize the City’s (and County’s) jurisdiction and provide greater continuity of public services.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › All public-serving departments (e.g., public safety, infrastructure, parks/recreation, etc.)
 › City of Florence Finance Department
 › Residents and other stakeholders in candidate annexation areas
 › Florence County Planning Department

2. Maintain fiscal impact analysis tools, customized to Florence, for evaluating the potential net benefits to City government of specific annexation scenarios and as an essential input to related decision-making.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Finance Department

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Growth Capacity goal, including:
 - The options for zoning of newly annexed land in Section 1-2.2.4.C.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

Partnerships and Communication

1. Maintain an overarching annexation strategy and a more specific annexation plan to guide City staff. Then leverage this strategy through partnerships with Florence County and other public agencies when evaluating specific areas for potential annexation by the City or to remain under County jurisdiction. Unincorporated “donut hole” locations within the existing city limits should be a potential first priority for evaluation, followed by key locations just outside the city limits that are already experiencing growth pressures or are otherwise significant.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** > Other pertinent City departments involving infrastructure, public safety, finance, etc.)
> Florence County

2. Engage stakeholders (e.g., Florence County, adjacent municipalities, and property/business owners and institutional representatives in unincorporated areas) to identify gaps in utility availability and coordinate phased extension/expansion of utilities to allow for incorporation or provide adequate service in areas intended to remain unincorporated.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** > **Florence County Planning Department**
> City of Florence Utilities Department
> City of Florence Engineering Division
> Property and business owners and institutional representatives

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Review the capacity of the City’s existing water distribution and wastewater collection systems to serve candidate annexation areas while ensuring maintenance of service to current customers.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Utilities Department and Key Partners** > City of Florence Engineering Division
> City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
> Florence County Planning Department

GOAL 2: A refreshed understanding of the watersheds in and around Florence as part of a comprehensive stormwater management initiative.

Rationale: Noting that even the City seal depicts Florence as a community built amid swamps, some City officials called for a thorough re-evaluation of area-wide drainage conditions, existing infrastructure, and current management strategies as the best path forward for responding to resident desires for more – and more effective – action by the City to address flooding risks and nuisance conditions. A new Stormwater Master Plan was initiated concurrent to the comprehensive plan process and will enable City staff and consultants to recommend data-driven strategic investments and actions based on fresh data and modeling.

Capital Investments

1. Implement phased maintenance and replacement of aged and undersized stormwater management facilities. Utilizing recommendations of the Stormwater Master Plan, analyze work based on facility condition and cost of failure, to prioritize projects.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Engineering Division**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Utilities Department

Programs and Initiatives

1. Establish an "Adopt a Drain" program to encourage citizen participation, refresh understanding of watersheds, and ensure that stormwater inlets and other facilities are clear prior to major storm events. Such grass-roots buy-in can benefit the community by reducing nuisance flooding in core neighborhoods and aiding the overall system performance by preventing solids accumulation that could disrupt stormwater flow.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Utilities Department**
and Key Partners > City Manager's Office / Communications Department
 > City of Florence Community Services Department
 > Area environmental organizations
 > Homeowner associations and other civic/neighborhood groups

2. Ensure coordination of Stormwater Master Plan activities with the City's ongoing implementation of mandated stormwater management requirements and best practices for water quality and pollution prevention under the federal Clean Water Act and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) programs.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Utilities Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Engineering Division
 > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

Regulations and Standards

1. Update the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to modify or add provisions and standards based on recommendations in the Stormwater Master Plan.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Utilities Department
 > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

2. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Growth Capacity goal, including:
 - The provisions of Article 12, Storm Water Management, Drainage, and Flood Prevention.
 - The ability of the Planning Commission to approve alternate standards for developments that will incorporate low impact development (LID) techniques, including more effective methods for reducing stormwater pollution, in Section 4-15.2.1.C.
 - The purposes and provisions of the Jeffries Creek Protection zoning overlay district in Division 1-2.6, which in part are "to preserve the Jeffries Creek floodway" along with water quality, habitat protection, and aesthetic purposes.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Utilities Department
 > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Prepare and adopt a Stormwater Master Plan, based on comprehensive analysis of area watersheds beyond the existing city limits and an assessment of all existing stormwater infrastructure. Along with identifying flooding issues and risk across the area, the plan should provide goals and strategies for mitigating adverse outcomes in identified areas of concern. Maintaining an up-to-date master plan will be highly beneficial for the City as the plan's findings and recommendations are an essential input to multi-year capital improvements planning and programming and any related grant pursuits to leverage local dollars with external funding sources. The master plan process should also highlight inter-related community planning objectives involving recreational enhancements through multi-objective site/facility design, annexation strategy and prioritization of candidate areas, and opportunities for greater intergovernmental cooperation. [Note: The City had already initiated the Master Plan process prior to adoption of this Comprehensive Plan update.]

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Utilities Department**
 - › City of Florence Engineering Division
 - › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Florence County Planning Department
 - › South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
 - › South Carolina Department of Transportation
 - › U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

GOAL 3: Targeted engagement of edge growth areas amid a prioritized emphasis on stabilization and renewal of Florence's core neighborhoods.

Rationale: As in other growing but mature cities across the nation, Florence must always balance the needs and interests of its established neighborhoods and developed areas with the prospects for new growth and investment in fringe locations either within or just beyond the City's existing incorporated area. Both of these essential geographic areas within a city require careful monitoring, planning, and management activities that only local government is capable of providing. Devoting staff resources and ongoing inter-departmental attention to these locations pay dividends in fundamental areas of municipal governance, including tax base growth and enhancement, effective public service delivery and allocation of public infrastructure capacity, and continued community revitalization concurrent with orderly growth.

Capital Investments

1. Explore the potential use of blighted properties for stormwater management purposes. Some core neighborhoods in Florence are simultaneously facing problems of nuisance flooding along with deteriorating structures, property maintenance issues, and vacant and underutilized parcels in some location. Utilizing otherwise unused space for this utility function can address both challenges while potentially providing a new physical feature and focal point for these neighborhood locations.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 - › City of Florence Utilities Department
 - › City of Florence Engineering Division
 - › City of Florence Community Services Department
 - › Neighborhood organizations

Programs and Initiatives

1. Institute pervious pavement and pilot demonstrations of infiltration ditches and bioswales to reduce nuisance flooding in targeted neighborhood areas and edge growth locations. With minimal investment, a proof-of-concept installation can be constructed to provide residents and other stakeholders an opportunity to familiarize themselves with these methods and their potential benefits.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Engineering Division
 › City of Florence Community Services Department
 › City of Florence Utilities Department
 › Neighborhood organizations

Regulations and Standards

1. Consider encouraging and incentivizing Low Impact Development (LID) standards from the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), as well as designing such methods into public improvement projects in Florence’s older established neighborhoods, to avoid missed opportunities for more cost-effective and environmentally beneficial outcomes while ensuring a product that will be familiar to City staff.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Utilities Department
 › City of Florence Engineering Division

2. As part of UDO updates based on this new Comprehensive Plan, explore the applicability to Florence of recent community planning trends elsewhere in South Carolina and across the nation, including less extensive zoning for areas devoted solely to single-family detached dwellings, reduced or eliminated minimum parking requirements in favor of more market-driven outcomes (and maximum caps on off-street surface parking where appropriate), greater allowance for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and more focused and holistic regulation of short-term rental (STR) properties, among others.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City Attorney

Partnerships and Communication

1. Continue effective interaction with development applicants to secure mutually beneficial cost-sharing arrangements that expedite desired housing and other development and ensure orderly and timely construction of needed infrastructure and public facilities.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Utilities Department
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

2. Explore potential application of land banking and land trust approaches to support beneficial redevelopment in core areas and growth management in edge locations, especially where a longer-term “patience” strategy is needed to avoid suboptimal near-term land use decisions and development outcomes.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › Pee Dee Land Trust
 › Florence County Planning
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Regularly review and update, as appropriate, the City's development and infrastructure related fees to ensure adequate revenue generation in line with costs and based on regional trends across jurisdictions.

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 › City of Florence Utilities Department
 › City of Florence Finance Department
 › City Attorney
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

GOAL 4: Leadership among South Carolina local governments in applying technology, promoting and implementing green practices, and planning for community resiliency.

Rationale: Florence leaders wish for their community to have an inclusive reputation that celebrates its unique assets, history of excellence in governance, and recent downtown revitalization successes. Florence has a more diverse story to share, and a growing list of statewide awards and other recognitions that can also extend into other areas of community success and effective governance. Through discussions for this new Comprehensive Plan, public and private leaders identified technology, sustainability, and community resiliency as key areas where Florence should aim to lead and stand out among its peers over the next several decades.

Capital Investments

1. Consider targeted implementation of on-site stormwater storage to de-load conveyance during major storm events. Identify major stormwater contributors without current on-site detention facilities that would benefit from retroactive installation. Detention basins should be constructed utilizing otherwise unused parcels/areas to plan for and promote community resiliency. The ultimate aim should be to attenuate natural processes and decentralize stormwater management to move from a conveyance to on-site treatment emphasis.

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 › City of Florence Utilities Department
 › City of Florence Engineering Division
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

Programs and Initiatives

1. Identify lead persons and points of coordination across City departments, along with targeted staff training, to advance the City's ambitions in the areas of technology application, green practices, and enhanced resiliency.

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City Manager's Office / Communications Department**
 › All City departments
 › Public agency, private sector, and non-profit partners in these areas of focus

2. Evaluate opportunities to manage stormwater through green infrastructure methods on City-owned properties, in coordination with partners, and to demonstrate effective methods for use on private properties.

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 › City of Florence Utilities Department
 › City of Florence Community Services Department

-
3. Utilize best management practices for City-maintained open spaces and facilities, such as efficient mowing, xeriscape (i.e., low-water, low-maintenance, and native plantings), reduced pesticide use, and energy and water conservation.
-

- Action Leaders** > **City of Florence Engineering Division**
and Key Partners > City Manager’s Office / Communications Department
 > City of Florence Utilities Department
 > City of Florence Recreation Department
 > City of Florence Community Services Department
-

4. Keep abreast of water conservation best management practices and promote wise water use throughout the community, including through related grant opportunities.
-

- Action Leaders** > **City of Florence Utilities Department**
and Key Partners > City Manager’s Office / Communications Department
 > City of Florence Recreation Department
 > City of Florence Community Services Department
 > South Carolina Department of Natural Resources – Land, Water and Conservation Division
 > Florence County Conservation District
-

5. Continually evaluate new technologies and options for improving dissemination of all City information, including for special events and “things to do” – always remaining cognizant of residents who are not online or technology savvy and need more traditional ways to remain informed and engaged.
-

- Action Leaders** > **City Manager’s Office / Communications Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Recreation Department
 > Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau
 > All public-serving departments
-

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Growth Capacity goal, including:
 - Density bonuses for “green” building design as part of residential developments in Section 2-7.1.2, and as part of non-residential developments in Section 2-7.1.3.
 - Standards for renewable energy systems with residential uses in Section 3-8.1.6.
 - Standards for small wind energy conversion systems (wind turbines) in UDO Appendix A.
-

- Action Leaders** > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Utilities Department
 > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
-

2. Expand upon Low Impact Development (LID) standards in the UDO, the typical benefits of which include:
 - Promotion of best practices for sustainable development by promoting stormwater infiltration or evapotranspiration.
 - On-site stormwater treatment and infiltration helps attenuate peak flows.
 - Removal of total suspended solids and other pollutants through infiltration to underdrain or groundwater, along with pre-treatment of stormwater via soils and plantings.
 - Visual impact of greening, leading to boosted health and happiness in adjacent neighborhoods.
 - Reduction of urban “heat island” effect.
 - Native habitat creation or restoration.
 - Integrating into community spaces stormwater detention and treatment facilities that are designed to serve a park and recreation function as well.
-

- Improved air quality and carbon sequestration, which can lead to higher property values in the vicinity.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Utilities Department
 › City of Florence Engineering Division
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › South Carolina Wildlife Federation

Partnerships and Communication

1. Continue the City's input to and support of the Florence County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, especially as it relates to the City's eligibility for related grant opportunities through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Fire Department – Emergency Preparedness/Risk Management**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 › Florence County Emergency Management Department
 › Florence County Planning Department

2. Follow the numerous state and national agencies and organizations with publications, technical assistance, grant and funding opportunities, and other guidance and resources for local governments involving technology application, green practices, and community resiliency (especially the South Carolina Municipal Association, American Planning Association, International City/County Management Association, U.S. Green Building Council, Esri, and Governing magazine, among others).

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › All public-serving departments

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Prepare and adopt a Green Infrastructure Master Plan. Potential components should include establishing goals for stormwater flow and nutrient loading, applying different technologies as appropriate to particular locations, providing standard details for project implementation, incorporating modeling guidance, describing sample projects, and itemizing and providing guidance for green infrastructure practices.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Utilities Department
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

GOAL 5: A continued focus on public safety staffing, municipal service delivery, and budget support to maintain levels of service and responsiveness as Florence grows.

Rationale: Florence residents and other stakeholders engaged for this Comprehensive Plan update routinely raised, without prompting, the City's public safety services as among the municipal services they value most and want to see maintained at a high level. Public health, safety, and welfare are among the core responsibilities of local government, contributing to community livability and a positive reputation to entice prospective investors, businesses, and new residents.

Programs and Initiatives

1. Provide adequate funding to achieve and maintain high-quality police services in line with continued population growth and development, especially in terms of the competitive

salaries, benefits, continuing education, and career and personal development the Police Department is able to offer.

- Action Leaders > **City of Florence City Council**
 - and Key Partners > **City Manager's Office**
 - > City of Florence Finance Department
 - > City of Florence Police Department
-

2. Continue funding support and other steps and ongoing practices to enable the Florence Fire Department to maintain its exemplary rating through the Insurance Services Office (ISO) evaluation system.

- Action Leaders > **City of Florence City Council**
 - and Key Partners > **City Manager's Office**
 - > City of Florence Finance Department
 - > City of Florence Fire Department
-

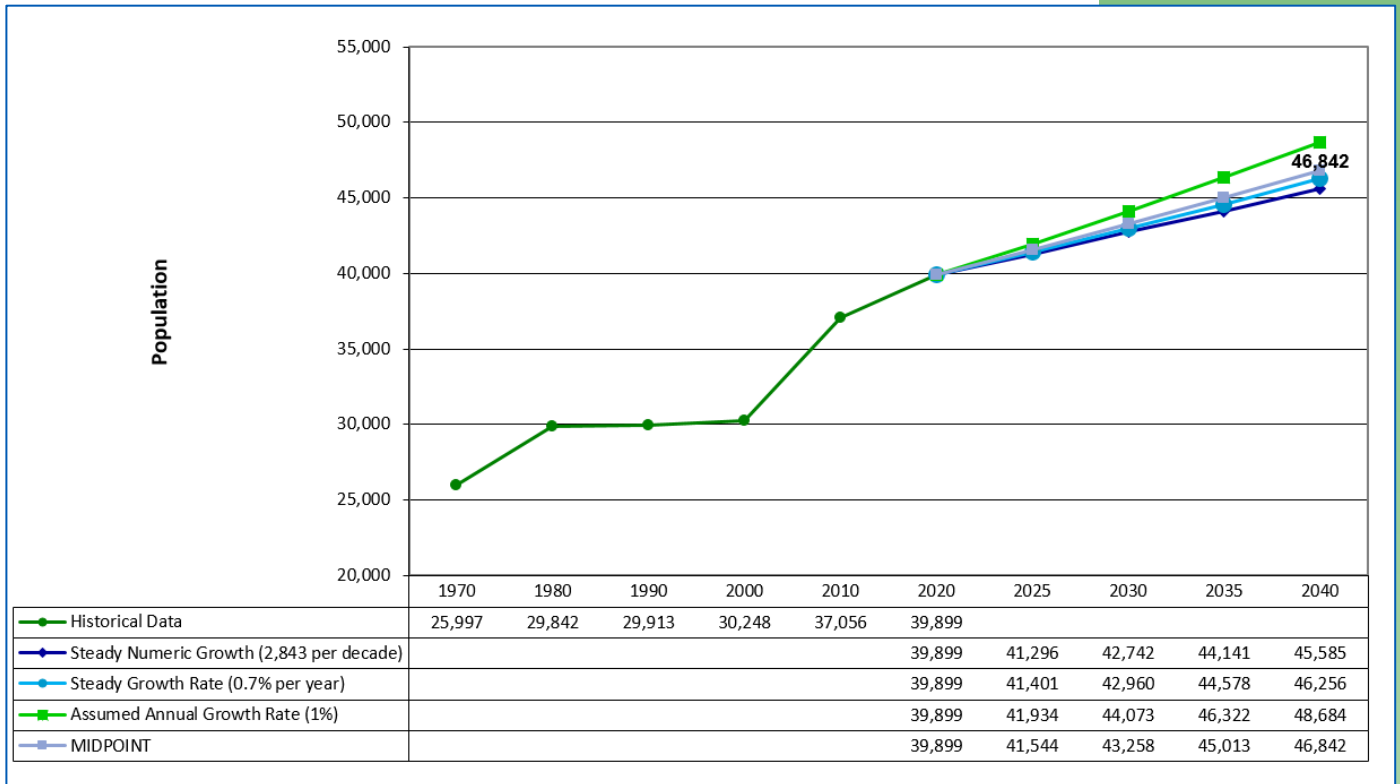
Population Outlook for Florence

Population projections are an important component of a long-range planning process. They help determine and quantify the demands that will be placed on public facilities and services based on the potential pace and scale of the community’s physical growth. Projections reflect local, regional, national, and even international trends and offer a basis to prepare for the future. However, forecasting population changes can be challenging, particularly for the long term, because it is often difficult to account for all circumstances that may arise. Therefore, it will be important for the City to monitor population and economic growth continually to account for both short- and longer-term shifts that can influence development activity and trends in the community and larger region.

Alternative Growth Scenarios

Demographers caution that population projections become trickier as the geographic area gets smaller, making city-level population the most difficult to forecast. This is because local population change is strongly influenced by less predictable factors such as housing prices and options, availability of vacant land to develop, results from economic development efforts, and potential future annexation of additional territory, which may already have existing residents and results in an instant increase in the citywide total.

Given this context, the population projections chart below provides a comparison of multiple potential scenarios for future population change within the current Florence city limits, showing limited differences among the alternatives. The projections build on the **Census 2020 figure of 39,899 persons for Florence** and identify potential population levels in five-year increments out to 2040.



Projections Based on Varying Quantities and Rates of Growth

A common population projection method is to extend historical trends to future years. Linear growth forecasts are “straight line” projections that result in the same absolute number of new persons being added to the population in each period. This produces a declining rate of growth over time as the same amount is being added to an ever-expanding base (in the case of Florence, adding 2,843 residents per decade).

Exponential growth projections produce higher numbers than linear because the numerical change gets larger in each period while the *rate* of growth stays constant. This is similar to the power of compound growth in a savings account; the interest (i.e., growth) rate may not change, but it is being applied to an ever-expanding balance, resulting in larger and larger interest earnings over time. In the case of Florence, the Exponential Growth scenario results in 671 more residents by 2040 than the Linear Growth scenario.

The Exponential Growth line, labeled as “Steady Growth Rate” on the Florence population projections chart, is based on the 0.7% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) the city had from 2010 to 2020. The Exponential Growth line leads to a 2040 population of 46,256 while the Linear Growth line, labeled as “Steady Numeric Growth” on the chart, leads to a 2040 population of 45,585.

Another scenario for comparison, labeled as “Assumed Annual Growth Rate (1%)” on the chart, is based on a steady CAGR of 1% per year from 2020 through 2040. This scenario would result in 48,684 residents by 2040 – 2,428 more than the Steady Growth Rate scenario, and 3,099 higher than the Steady Numeric Growth Scenario. This scenario illustrates where Florence could be by 2040 if it steadily keeps gaining population at a moderately higher rate than in recent years, through ongoing development – and redevelopment – that adds more housing units within the city, and/or as Florence expands its incorporated area to bring in more population.

Projection Based on Local Share of County-Level Growth

The County Step-Down method was not used for Florence. This is another common projection method which considers the trend in a city’s share of the countywide population in past decades and prospects for its future share. This method was not used as the South Carolina Census State Data Center, the state’s official U.S. Census Bureau affiliate and a primary source of population estimates and projections produced for all counties statewide, projects that Florence County will lose population in the years ahead, falling from a peak of 137,059 in Census 2020 to below 130,000 (129,827) by 2035. If this projection becomes reality while the City of Florence continues to gain population, as in the city-level projection scenarios above, then the city naturally will increase its future share of the countywide population.

The City of Florence share of Florence County’s population was 29.1% in Census 2020 (39,899 city residents relative to 137,059 total county residents, including those in the city). This meant the city had gotten back to the 29% share it last held in 1970, when the city had 25,997 residents relative to 89,636 in the entire county. Over the next several decades, as population growth increased elsewhere in the county, Florence’s city share decreased to a low of 24.1% in 2000, then began recovering, to 27.1% in 2010.

Bottom Line

It is wise for cities to think in terms of a range of potential growth rather than an absolute number given the uncertainty of any small-area forecast that extends beyond a few years. **It is assumed**

for this Comprehensive Plan that Florence's 2040 population will fall within a forecast range of 45,585 to 48,684 persons, which yields a midpoint of 46,842 (and these numbers are based on the current 2022 city limits, meaning the projections would need to be revisited if the City annexes additional land that has existing population and/or the potential for more development and population growth).

As illustrated by the Midpoint projection line on the scenarios chart, the midpoint of the potential growth range to assume for this Comprehensive Plan – between the lower Steady Numeric Growth projection and the higher Assumed Annual Growth Rate (1%) projection – would put Florence's population at **41,544 in 2025; 43,258 in 2030; 45,013 in 2035; and 46,842 in 2040**. This would mean an **additional 6,943 residents from 2020** and implies that Florence could add the equivalent of 17% of its 2020 population by 2040. For perspective, the newest U.S. Census Bureau estimate, for 2020, showed an average household size in the City of Florence of 2.39 persons, meaning that **2,905 additional housing units would be needed to accommodate 6,943 added residents**.

As explained above, all of these scenarios are projections of what *could* occur in Florence over the next several decades based on recent trends and/or specified assumptions. Some communities choose to adopt more conservative assumptions due to concerns about their growth capacity and/or the implications of growth in terms of density of development, increasing traffic, school impacts, loss of open space, or other factors. On the other hand, some officials wish for their community to set its sights higher and aim to grow beyond the projected level in the coming decades.

The midpoint projection could be exceeded if the City of Florence promotes growth more aggressively through programs that incentivize new development or redevelopment/infill, or if it brings more population and/or growth areas into the city through annexation. Other key factors include:

- The extent of available, developable land in Florence that actually transitions to residential use, the pace and timing of such land development activity, and the housing types and densities involved;
- The projected capacity of the City's infrastructure and public services (and of the Florence 1 Schools system) to accommodate this growth in future years; and
- Community values and preferences regarding growth, which ultimately translates into capital projects and public services planning.

As emphasized at the start of this discussion, the next step after any such projections is immediate and ongoing tracking of actual growth year to year. That way, assumptions and projections can be adjusted through annual reviews and periodic updates of this Comprehensive Plan. Finally, available data and/or local studies on trends in daytime population – the influx of workers and visitors who come into a hub community like Florence on most weekdays and/or weekends – is another critical factor for gauging and anticipating cumulative demands on local infrastructure and public services.

Physical Implications of Projected Growth

The accompanying aerial view (from mid-2021) of The Reserve at Ebenezer subdivision, in west Florence just north of West Palmetto Street/U.S. 76, shows an existing neighborhood of 82 single-family detached homes plus 13 attached dwellings (95 total units). To accommodate the midpoint growth projection of 6,943 additional residents who would need 2,905 housing units by 2040, Florence would need 30 more subdivisions equivalent in size to The Reserve at Ebenezer by 2040 than it had in 2020. This quantified need for additional housing is based on:

- An average household size in Florence of 2.39 persons (per the newest U.S. Census Bureau estimate for 2020).
- 95 housing units in The Reserve at Ebenezer presumably housing 227 residents (at 2.39 persons per household).
- The 2,095 total units needed, divided by 95 units, equals 30.58.



As with the necessary year-to-year tracking of actual population growth relative to earlier projections, trends in Florence’s housing mix should also be monitored as average household size differs among housing types. In many communities, the number of persons per household in multi-family housing is often somewhat lower than in single-family detached homes – and this is also affected by the age distribution of the local population (i.e., potential for lower average household sizes depending on the extent of young singles, “empty nesters,” seniors living alone, etc.). As of 2020, the Census Bureau estimated that 43.4% of Florence’s housing stock was renter-occupied relative to owner-occupied housing. The land area needed for new housing will also be lower if more of the added population is absorbed into housing types other than single-family detached homes.

FUTURE CITY Land Use and Development

Plan Sections

- Growth Capacity
- **Land Use and Development**
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Recreation and Amenities
- Plan Implementation

Introduction

Land use involves how the properties in an area are allocated to an array of private and public activities, from housing and commercial uses to public needs such as streets, schools, parks, water treatment plants, and other government-maintained facilities. Also of interest is the relative intensity at which land is developed in terms of the nature of the use (e.g., residential, industrial, etc.), building size and height, separation from adjacent land uses, and coverage of sites with structures and paved surfaces.

Land use considerations are integrated with all other Comprehensive Plan components. For instance, the transportation network provides access to land, which, along with real estate market factors, influences the type and intensity of development that may occur. The capacity and condition of public utilities can dictate the location, amount, and timing of development, as can economic development efforts. Similarly, proximity to parks and public facilities promotes public health and safety and affects the development potential of an area. Development character and site design shape community aesthetics and the perceptions held by area residents, tourists, and those considering investment in Florence.

Why this Comprehensive Plan Section is Important for Florence

- Communicates the desired character for the community and its downtown, neighborhoods, roadway corridors, and other areas – today and in the years ahead – along with the anticipated land uses in these areas.
- Provides guidance to enable the City of Florence to plan effectively for future development and redevelopment, and for ongoing stewardship of areas intended to remain much as they are today.
- Offers predictability to property owners and investors regarding the community’s preferred development pattern and character, and helps the City prepare to serve future public infrastructure and service needs.
- Establishes the public policy basis for the City’s development regulations, especially to promote compatibility between adjacent land uses and varying development intensities.
- Reinforces the City’s role in promoting and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its residents by ensuring that development conforms to local building codes and standards and that sufficient land is dedicated to public needs such as recreation and education.
- Links to other plan sections that help set priorities for City programs and capital investments to support the desired development pattern and quality.



SOURCE: Google Earth
(May 2021 image)

Legacy of Past Planning

This new Comprehensive Plan builds on previous plans and studies completed by the City of Florence and other partners. Those most relevant to the Land Use and Development topic include:

- City of Florence Comprehensive Plan 2010 (February 2011).
- City of Florence Next Steps 2017-2022 (five-year interim Comprehensive Plan update).
- City of Florence Downtown Master Plan Update (February 2011).
- City of Florence Downtown Florence Five Year Comprehensive Plan Update (2017).
- City of Florence Neighborhood Action Plan (2013).
- City of Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (2014).
- Florence County U.S. 76 Gateway Corridor Study (September 2018).
- Florence County Comprehensive Plan Review (2017).

Accomplishments

Progress and achievements resulting from past planning and implementation efforts were identified through leadership and community input to this plan. Significant items cited that are most relevant to the Land Use and Development topic include:

- Adoption of a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), following through on a key action item from the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

- The dramatic Downtown revival of recent years.
- Neighborhood revitalization results.

Key Planning Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of the comprehensive planning effort, numerous real and perceived community issues and needs were identified through leadership and public engagement activities, as well as through the work of the plan consultants and their interactions with City management and staff. Key issues and considerations that led to the goals and action items in this Land Use and Development section include:

- Changing attitudes about growth and development, with more openness and adaption to change than in the past across many demographics.
- Need for equitable development outcomes and attention to the role that zoning can play in equity.
- Concerns about the quality and sustainability of some residential development.
- Even greater focus on community character going forward, ensuring that all development occurs with character principles and design practices in mind.
- Concerns about sprawl and needing higher-density development in appropriate locations to avoid an overly spread-out city.
- Ongoing urgency of redevelopment and infill development despite progress made.
- Continued consternation about the appearance of gateways into Florence and of main roadway corridors once in the city, including key corridors to and through neighborhoods.
- Need for more green space.

Framework for Action

This Framework for Action section builds off of the plan priorities confirmed with Florence City Council during the transition from the Existing City to the Future City phase of Comprehensive Plan development. The Plan goals and action strategies are aimed at “connecting the dots” between a set of community improvement fundamentals for Florence that involve:

- Stabilizing and enhancing Florence’s neighborhoods.
- Continuing the momentum of Florence’s downtown revitalization.
- Being both a fiscally and physically resilient city.
- Expecting quality in both private development and public projects.
- Being an amenity rich place.
- Being a connected, equitable community.
- Providing an environment for diverse economic growth opportunities.

What connects all of these points is the desire to retain and attract more population to Florence, including those who grew up here. The actions in this Land Use and Development section involve tangible steps that will lead to achievement of the goals in line with the plan's Guiding Principles (in the Introduction section). The actions are categorized into the five types of plan implementation actions highlighted throughout this Plan.



Goals for Land Use and Development

1. **Smooth transition between land uses to preserve neighborhood characters** when moving from one character type to another.
2. Enhanced appearance of Florence’s **primary gateways and high-profile roadway corridors**.
3. A continued focus on facilitating **reinvestment in and redevelopment of targeted areas** of Florence at risk of losing their vitality, value, and appeal.
4. An approach to and philosophy of development in Florence, through continued partnerships between the private and public sectors, that advances the community’s core desires for **equitable land use outcomes and investment that boosts Florence’s economic potential**.

Actions by Goal

GOAL 1: Smooth transition between land uses to preserve neighborhood characters when moving from one character type to another.

Rationale: Florence’s previous Comprehensive Plan in 2010 embraced the “community character” philosophy and concepts, which then led to a character-based Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) several years later. This updated Comprehensive Plan now reinforces the UDO purposes and provisions. Additionally, as in most such community planning discussions, “character” was cited on occasion during public input to this plan, whether in terms of the special character of a walkable downtown, protection of neighborhood character, or preservation of rural character. This is the reason for placing notions of “character” within a more formal and definitive framework in both the Comprehensive Plan and UDO.

Programs and Initiatives

1. Grow staffing of the City’s Planning, Research, and Development Department so adequate resources are devoted both to development review functions plus special initiatives and plan implementation efforts.

Action Leaders > **City Manager’s Office**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Land Use and Development goal, including:
 - The overarching UDO purpose to “protect and enhance community character” in Section 1-2.1.1.B.2.
 - Zoning districts with character-based purpose statements (in Section 1-2.2.1), standards and compatibility provisions addressing everything from rural and open space preservation and agricultural use protection to varied character of residential areas (Estate, Suburban, Auto-Urban, Urban), protection of neighborhood character, neighborhood-scale commercial uses, business and industrial parks with a Suburban campus character, and a set of Downtown zoning overlays to maintain historic character while promoting revitalization.
 - The overarching UDO purpose to “provide opportunities for development of employment centers in campus and industrial park settings” in Section 1-2.1.1.B.6, especially through the Campus (CA) zoning district with standards to achieve and maintain a Suburban rather than Auto-Urban development character.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

A Goal is ...

a statement of a desired outcome (“end”) toward which efforts are directed as expressed by more specific objectives and action steps (“means”).

A Strategic Action Priority is ...

aimed at seizing a special opportunity or addressing a particular challenge one faces, given limited resources – financial and otherwise – and recognizing that a broader agenda of new or ongoing activities will also be pursued in the meantime.



-
2. Continue implementing a character-based zoning approach, which factors into the stated purposes and design of zoning districts along with various specific regulating elements (e.g., residential densities and non-residential intensities; minimum lot and site areas; building setback, placement, and orientation on sites and associated front/side/rear yard depths; building heights, including in relation to adjacent buildings and uses; lot and site coverage by buildings and other physical improvements; off-street parking quantities, design and screening; etc.).

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

3. Review all aspects of the UDO, based on this new Comprehensive Plan, to identify potential regulatory and/or standards updates. This should include review and updates, as needed, to the use tables in Division 1-2.7 with evolving market and development trends involving both residential and non-residential uses.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** › Florence County
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Home Builders Association of the Greater Pee Dee
 › Pee Dee Realtor Association
 › Neighborhood organizations
 › Florence Downtown Development Corporation
 › Business community

4. Highlight as-built examples of where the UDO, even with its character preservation and enhancement emphasis, produced development outcomes that could be improved upon (e.g., involving buffering/screening, compatibility of development scale/intensity, etc.) to identify potential amendments through a next UDO update.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Neighborhood organizations
 › Business community

Partnerships and Communication

1. Continue coordination with Florence County to ensure complementary implementation of the new Comprehensive Plans adopted by both the City and County.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** › Florence County

2. Coordinate future interim and major updates of the Comprehensive Plan to coincide with periodic updates of the FLATS Long Range Transportation Plan to ensure effective integration of land use and transportation analysis and decision-making.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** › Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS)

GOAL 2: Enhanced appearance of Florence’s primary gateways and high-profile roadway corridors.

Rationale: Florence is a relatively spread-out city, experienced by residents, commuters, and visitors mostly while driving vehicles along its major roadways. The appearance of these roadway corridors has improved in some places over recent decades. But officials and the public still express exasperation, as during previous planning efforts, about their inability to control corridor quality just outside the city limits, along with the challenge of having so many older areas in need of revitalization along Florence’s main roads and highways. The ongoing concern is that these aesthetic issues are adversely affecting the community’s appeal as a place to invest, live, and visit, whether entering Florence from the regional airport, interstate highways, or other routes into and through the city.

Capital Investments

1. Install more gateway entrance features utilizing the City logo and branding as these high-profile locations offer opportunities to establish “first impressions,” promote Florence’s image, and communicate community values.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › Florence County
 - › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › South Carolina Department of Transportation
 - › Adjacent property/easement owners

2. Coordinate and consolidate public agency signage along local roadways and along the approaches to key intersections, especially in and around the downtown area.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › Florence Downtown Development Corporation
 - › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Florence County
 - › South Carolina Department of Transportation

Programs and Initiatives

1. Initiate a corridor planning focus, and a point person to coordinate with all relevant City departments and public agencies with jurisdiction and/or responsibility for certain aspects of managing and maintaining major area roadways.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Florence County
 - › Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS)
 - › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
 - › South Carolina Department of Transportation

2. Continue use of voter-approved penny sales tax revenue to fund streetscape enhancements.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City of Florence Finance Department
 - › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › Florence County
 - › South Carolina Department of Transportation

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Land Use and Development goal, including:
 - The overarching UDO purpose to promote the appearance of the city, along with its orderly development, in Section 1-1.2.1.B.



- A zoning district – Commercial Re-Use (CR) – intended in part to promote adaptive re-use of residential buildings for limited commercial uses along major corridors in Section 1-2.2.1.

Also encourage appropriate zoning to develop and maintain the character of particular corridor segments.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Community Services Department
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Neighborhood organizations
 › Homeowner associations
 › Business community

2. Consider needed adjustments to zoning districts and/or UDO standards or provisions that are particularly pertinent to the development, redevelopment, and appearance of corridor-fronting properties, especially as the County is revisiting its corridor zoning strategy for U.S. 76/E. Palmetto and other corridors.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › Florence County
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Neighborhood organizations
 › Homeowner associations
 › Business community

3. In conjunction with the related action item under the “more attractive community” goal in the Recreation and Amenities section of this plan, re-evaluate all aspects of the UDO that factor into corridor appearance (e.g., site and building design standards, signs, landscaping, fences, etc.), which are contained primarily in UDO Article 8, Supplemental Standards; Article 10, Landscaping and Buffering; Article 16, Special Site Development Standards; and Part 5, Sign Regulations.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › Florence County
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Neighborhood organizations
 › Business community

Partnerships and Communication

1. Support and contribute to Florence County’s multi-pronged implementation efforts resulting from its U.S. 76 Gateway Corridor Study and further follow-up planning and design, especially involving potential evolution in corridor zoning and development standards.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Recreation Department
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Business community
 › South Carolina Department of Transportation

2. Coordinate future interim and major updates of the Comprehensive Plan to coincide with periodic updates of the area’s key economic development strategy documents to ensure effective integration of land use with market analysis and other factors that drive business development efforts.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
- › Florence County Economic Development Partnership
- › Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
- › Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau
- › Florence Downtown Development Corporation
- › Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments
- › North Eastern Strategic Alliance

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Focus corridor planning efforts in targeted areas cited through input to this plan, along with other locations that may emerge as opportunity areas:
 - Interstate entries (W. Lucas Street/U.S. 52 and W. Palmetto/U.S. 76).
 - Irby Street (building on core area focus there through Downtown Master Plan update).
 - Pamplico Highway/U.S. 51.
 - Oakland Avenue northeast of downtown.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
- › Florence Downtown Development Corporation
- › Florence County
- › Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS)
- › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
- › South Carolina Department of Transportation
- › Neighborhood organizations
- › Business community
- › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
- › Keep Florence Beautiful

2. Pursue special urban design treatments for the Five Points intersection in coordination with potential traffic flow and safety improvements to this key intersection.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** › **Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS)**
- › South Carolina Department of Transportation
- › Florence County
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
- › Adjacent property/easement owners

GOAL 3: A continued focus on facilitating reinvestment in and redevelopment of targeted areas of Florence at risk of losing their vitality, value, and appeal.

Rationale: The need for ongoing renewal of Florence’s oldest established neighborhoods is a particular focus of the Housing and Neighborhoods section of this plan. However, neighborhood integrity and quality are also prime concerns of land use planning to ensure that past and continuing investments in public infrastructure, schools, parks, and other facilities are matched by effective use of land in such areas for housing, job-generating businesses, and other commercial activities. Along with promoting a livable community, municipal government has a fiduciary responsibility to its taxpayers and residents to foster an efficient land use pattern that will support a diverse tax base to fund public services over the long term.

Programs and Initiatives

1. Maintain an inventory of vacant residential parcels in the core area and developed portions of the city and assess the potential for specific housing types that further Comprehensive Plan goals and other City policies and plan/study recommendations.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
- › City of Florence Community Services Department
- › Community Development Corporation



- › Neighborhood organizations
- › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
- › Greater Florence Habitat for Humanity

2. Consider eventual application beyond downtown of the successful grant program methods used there (façade upgrades, design services, signage, historic buildings, etc.) to incentivize upgrades to aging retail centers and commercial properties elsewhere in the city while also monitoring ongoing upheaval in the nation’s retail sector that is leading to commercial vacancies.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 - › City of Florence Finance Department
 - › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 - › Business community

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Land Use and Development goal, including:

- The overarching UDO purpose to promote the prosperity of the city, along with its orderly development, in Section 1-1.2.1.B.
- The overarching UDO purpose to “facilitate redevelopment within the City’s established neighborhoods that are in transition” in Section 1-2.1.1.B.4.
- The Neighborhood Conservation zoning districts and subdistricts in Section 1-2.2.1.B, including measures to facilitate reinvestment such as waiving all existing nonconforming conditions involving lot dimensions and building heights and setbacks and allowing consideration of alternative development standards.
- The Neighborhood Revitalization Overlay District and associated standards established in Section 1-2.4.3.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 - › Business community

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Evaluate opportunities to make more vacant land within the city viable for development through implementation of capital projects and other strategies identified in the City’s new Stormwater Master Plan.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 - › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › City of Florence Utilities Department
 - › Community Development Corporation
 - › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

2. Assess where the City, Florence County, and other potential partners own vacant properties across the city and look for land consolidation opportunities to create larger development sites.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 - › City of Florence Community Services Department
 - › Florence Downtown Development Corporation
 - › Florence School District 1
 - › Florence County
 - › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)



GOAL 4: An approach to and philosophy of development in Florence, through continued partnerships between the private and public sectors, that advances the community’s core desires for equitable land use outcomes and investment that boosts Florence’s economic potential.

Rationale: As Florence looks ahead to its next 10-20 years of growth and change, legacy issues from its history of race relations and local governance continue to frame many public policy discussions and decisions. Similar conversations about equity are occurring across the nation, touching on many aspects of this plan (housing, transportation, community policing, employment and wealth-building opportunities, access to parks, etc.). Land use planning and resulting outcomes on the ground are key elements of a more equitable community, including the transparency and consistency of related local government processes that influence land use such as zoning regulations, capital projects planning and budgeting, and financial incentive programs for economic development.

Capital Investments

- 1. Include in the City’s criteria for capital projects prioritization consideration of geographic and/or socioeconomic fairness across the community, especially when assessing the cumulative outcome after evaluating and ranking numerous individual projects.

Action Leaders > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
and Key Partners > City of Florence Finance Department

Programs and Initiatives

- 1. Consider models for incorporating an independent evaluation mechanism into City development review/approval and capital planning processes, allowing for prompt intervention, problem-solving, and advocacy, when needed, on behalf of those who could be adversely affected by process outcomes. The focus should be on determining who is helped, who is harmed, and who is left out of current processes.

Action Leaders > City Manager’s Office
and Key Partners > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department

Regulations and Standards

- 1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Land Use and Development goal, including:
 - The overarching UDO purpose to promote the general welfare of the city, along with its orderly development, in Section 1-1.2.1.B.
 - The overarching UDO purpose to “respect and conserve the development patterns with the City’s established neighborhoods” in Section 1-2.1.1.B.3.
 - Multiple zoning districts intended to provide a direct path to mixed-use development in Section 1-2.2.1.
 - The Neighborhood Conservation zoning districts and subdistricts in Section 1-2.2.1.B.

Action Leaders > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
and Key Partners > City of Florence Community Services Department
> Community Development Corporation
> Neighborhood organizations
> Homeowner associations
> Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)



-
2. Assess the UDO for specific provisions that could raise equity concerns as highlighted in recent years by state and federal initiatives to remove obstacles to housing development and affordability (e.g., extent of land area zoned exclusively for single-family detached dwellings, minimum house size provisions, obstacles to redevelopment and infill, the extent and cost of submittal requirements and processes for development review/ approval, etc.).
-

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
- > Community Development Corporation
 - > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 - > Neighborhood organizations
-

3. Add new or amend current UDO provisions, as needed, that are directly linked to actions in other Comprehensive Plan sections related to housing attainability, neighborhood conservation and renewal, business retention and attraction, leisure and lifestyle related land uses, transit support, a more pedestrian- and cycling-friendly community, and park and open space protection.
-

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
- > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 - > Neighborhood organizations
 - > Florence County Economic Development Partnership
 - > Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
 - > Business community
 - > Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
-

Partnerships and Communication

1. Continue close coordination with the Florence School District 1 as one of the City's essential partners for community building and maintaining school campuses as neighborhood anchors.
-

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** > **City of Florence Community Services Department**
- > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - > Florence School District 1
 - > Neighborhood organizations
-

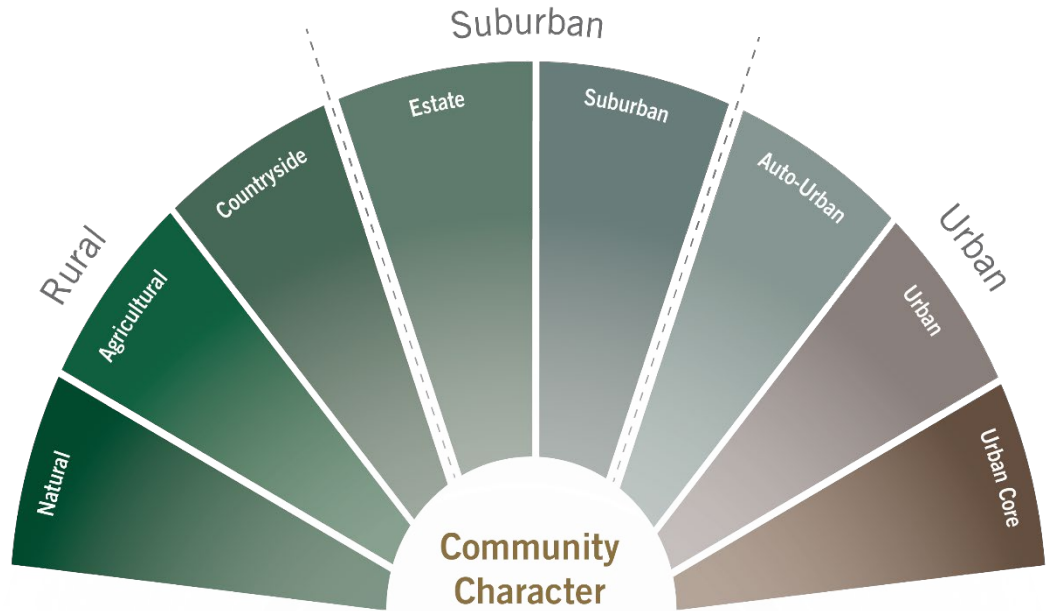
Community Character Framework for Land Use Planning

This Comprehensive Plan reinforces Florence’s approach to land use planning and growth guidance, which builds on the concept of **community character**. This approach looks beyond the basic use of land – residential, commercial, industrial, etc. – as only one factor that determines the ultimate compatibility and quality of land development within neighborhoods, non-residential areas, and along roadway corridors. It also promotes the ongoing integrity of rural and open space areas intended for minimal or no development.

Character Emphasis

Community character accounts for the physical traits one can see in a neighborhood, on a busy roadway corridor, or along a recreational trail or country lane which contribute to its “look and feel” relative to areas of the community with much different character.

Nearly any land use can occur in a range of settings within a community, from the most rural and suburban to the most urban, provided the use is designed to match the character of its surrounding area.



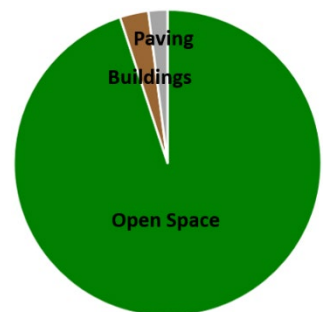
The community character approach to evaluating and planning for land use emphasizes the variation in physical conditions experienced along a spectrum from natural and rural landscapes at the edges of a community to its most urbanized environments, usually found in a core downtown area. A character-based approach focuses on the intensity and design of land uses, which encompasses:

- The density and layout of residential development;
- The scale and form of non-residential development; and
- The coverage of land surfaces by buildings and paving relative to the extent of open space and natural vegetation or landscaping.

How the automobile is accommodated is a key factor in distinguishing character types including how public streets are designed, how parking is provided and how buildings and paved areas are arranged on sites. Among the three major character classes:

- **Rural** character areas have wide open spaces where structures and paved surfaces occupy only a minimal portion of the landscape, or none at all in pristine or preserved natural areas.

Example Proportions of Rural Character Elements



- **Suburban** character areas have noticeably less intensive use of land than Urban character areas, with open and green spaces balancing – or, in Estate areas, exceeding – the extent of land covered by structures and paved surfaces.
- **Urban** character areas exhibit the greatest pedestrian orientation, through a more compact scale and “architectural enclosure” of streets by buildings situated close to front property lines and sidewalks.

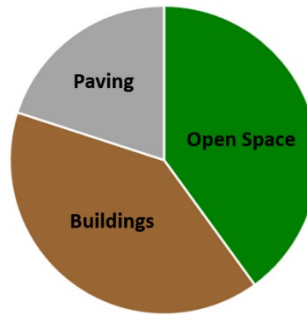
Within the Urban class, **Auto Urban** character areas are a particular planning challenge as they are designed mainly to accommodate automobile circulation and parking. Land cover by buildings and paved surfaces is similar to **Urban** areas but without the walkability emphasis.

The community character approach can be applied to the entire array of land use types and regardless of whether a site is in private ownership or owned and developed by a government agency for public purposes. Examples include:

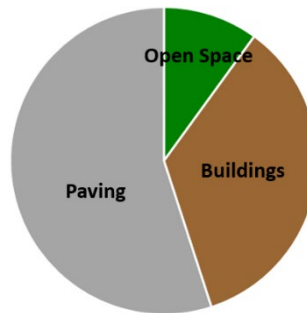
- A single-family home situated on a relatively large lot, with many mature trees and substantial separation from neighboring homes (Suburban or Estate character), versus a single-family bungalow on a small, narrow lot with rear-alley access and minimal yard space or vegetation (Urban neighborhood character).
- Storefront shops and small cafes in a walkable, neighborhood commercial setting (Urban character) versus “big box” stores and associated pad-site restaurants and retailers in a large-scale shopping center with extensive surface parking and minimal landscaping (Auto Urban character).
- A master-planned business park in a campus-like setting (Suburban character) versus an office building on a site dominated by surface parking (Auto Urban character) or a more vertical building in a downtown setting with ground-level retail uses and a nearby parking garage (Urban character).
- A public library, community center, or neighborhood park that is designed to be compatible with the surrounding residential area (whether Suburban or Urban in character) versus a municipal public works maintenance and storage site or a wastewater treatment plant that is as intensive as most private industrial sites in a community.

Maintaining and enhancing desired character is a central aim – and challenge – of implementing community plans amid constant change. A community character approach allows the formulation of standards within the City’s development regulations to achieve the desired character in newly developing areas, protect and enhance it in redevelopment and infill areas, and to ensure a rural atmosphere is maintained in areas where this character type is deemed most appropriate for the long term. Character-focused categories on a municipality’s future land use

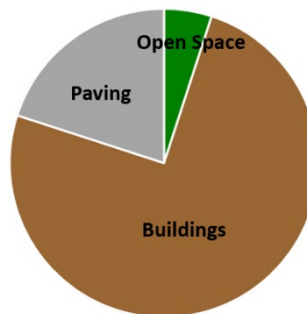
Example Proportions of Suburban Character Elements



Example Proportions of Auto Urban Character Elements



Example Proportions of Urban Character Elements



Design and Character

Aesthetic enhancements such as architectural design, landscaping and screening, signage standards, and site amenities also contribute to development appearance. But these factors can and should vary with the area character, which as defined here involves the interplay between buildings, paved surfaces, and unbuilt areas. For example, in a downtown core like Florence’s relative to Suburban character areas, landscaping shifts more to the public realm where buildings have minimal setbacks and sites have limited yard areas.

plan and character-oriented districts on its zoning map better portray the intended on-the-ground outcomes for land use and development. This offers assurance to neighboring property owners, a smoother path to approvals for development applicants, and more beneficial outcomes for the entire community.

Future Land Use and Character

Shown on the **Future Land Use and Character map** is the general pattern of uses anticipated and/or desired in the years ahead, and the character contexts in which uses occur. The map, along with the text descriptions in this section, indicate the use that is expected to predominate in areas where land is currently undeveloped or, in previously developed areas, based on what is already on the ground and will likely remain or possibly evolve. Such transitions in use can occur through redevelopment of previously built sites, “infill” construction on a vacant parcel amid existing built sites, or repurposing of an existing structure for another use without significant site changes.

Along with the predominant use types, other complementary uses will also remain or may emerge in particular areas of the community (e.g., small-scale, neighborhood-oriented retail and service uses within or near the edges of largely residential areas). Certain uses can be located amid other predominant use types, such as public facilities and places of worship within predominantly residential areas. Mixing uses on sites is common in downtowns (e.g., upper floor office or residential above ground-floor retail) and may occur elsewhere in a community as the market accommodates and zoning allows. Master-planned communities are often intentionally designed to integrate and mix uses in certain areas as described above while other areas have one predominant use (e.g., single-family detached housing).

Some uses are highly market-driven, with their timing and particular location dictated by the extent and pace of other types of development. This includes the typical pattern of retail uses locating near new residential “rooftops” and often at key roadway intersections. The location and extent of various forms of residential development can also be difficult to predict amid broader housing market cycles and regional needs, combined with developer areas of expertise and interest in bringing single-family or multi-family products to market.

Map Categories

The Future Land Use and Character map shows areas within Florence designated in 12 categories that address both use and character:

- Parks and Open Space
- Suburban Residential
- General Residential
- Urban Residential
- Neighborhood Conservation
- Suburban Commercial
- General Commercial
- Corridor Mixed Use
- Urban Downtown

- Suburban Campuses
- Industrial
- Utilities

For context, the map also shows locations of significant public properties and facilities (e.g., parks, schools, fire stations, etc.), along with significant institutional uses (e.g., McLeod Regional Medical Center).

The following descriptions indicate the anticipated principal uses in each category, plus the intended character of the areas in which the land uses occur, abut, or mix. Public and institutional uses, including public parks, commonly occur in all of these areas and should match the character. Specific standards for land development based on these designations are articulated through the City's implementing regulations (zoning, subdivision, etc.) as they currently exist within the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and may be further amended over time based on this planning guidance.

Land Use Planning versus Zoning

The side-by-side comparison below highlights the distinct purposes and uses of a future land use map relative to a zoning map. The City's development regulations are among the primary tools for implementing the plan. The zoning and subdivision regulations, in particular, can play a significant role in establishing and protecting the physical character of the community. Zoning regulations delineate land use districts and the uses permitted within them, together with standards for buildings and site improvements. As a result, the zoning and subdivision regulations largely direct development outcomes. Although the plan and future land use map provide only general planning guidance, they become the basis for updates of the zoning and subdivision regulations and the official zoning map.

Aspect	Future Land Use Map	Zoning Map
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlook for future use of land and character of particular areas of the community. • Macro level, showing generalized development patterns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basis for applying different land use regulations and development standards in different areas of the community ("zones"). • Micro level, with an area- and site-specific focus.

Aspect	Future Land Use Map	Zoning Map
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for City’s zoning map and related decisions (zone change requests, variance applications, etc.). • Baseline for monitoring consistency of actions and decisions with the Comprehensive Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulating development as it is proposed or as sites are positioned for the future with appropriate zoning (by the property owner or the City).
Inputs and Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing land use in the community. • The locational aspects of community planning priorities involving housing, economic development, infrastructure, parks and recreation, public facilities, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Plan and future land use map for general guidance. • Zoning decisions that differ substantially from the general development pattern depicted on the future land use map will indicate the need for some map adjustments during the next plan update.

Parks and Open Space

This designation includes the locations of government-owned and maintained public parks, designed for both active and passive recreational enjoyment, along with similar private sites. Some sites are developed with a variety of facilities and amenities while others have limited improvements and will be developed over time or remain in a more natural state.

Primary Land Use Types

- Public parks, greenways, trails, and open space.
- Joint City-school park areas.
- Public recreation areas and facilities, both outdoor and indoor.
- Private recreation areas and facilities, both outdoor and indoor.
- Large cemeteries (e.g., Florence National Cemetery and Mount Hope Cemetery).



Freedom Florence Recreation Complex and adjacent Jeffries Creek greenway corridor.

Characteristics

- As with any public facility, the design, intensity of development, and planned uses/activities within parks should match area character (e.g., public squares/plazas in Urban downtowns relative to recreational play and sports-focused parks in Suburban character areas, and nature-oriented parks for passive recreation in less developed areas).
- Public parkland theoretically will remain so in perpetuity compared to other public property and buildings that can transition to private ownership at some point.

Where on the Map

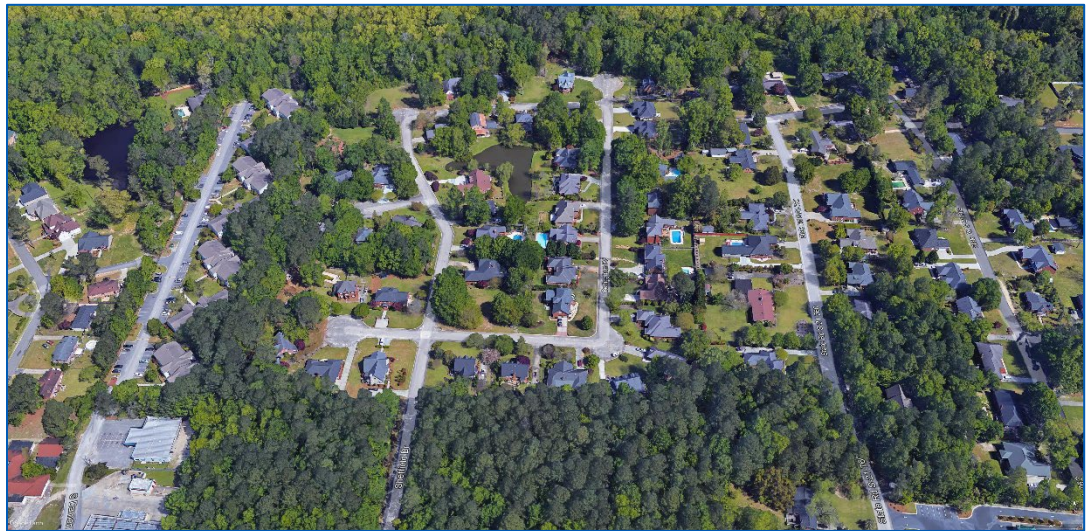
Various locations across the city, especially near residential areas and along water features.

Suburban Residential

This designation is for residential areas where Suburban character is established and preserved by achieving a balance between buildings and other site improvements relative to the degree of open space maintained within the neighborhood. The openness may be found in relatively large yard areas on individual lots and between homes and/or in common green spaces or water features. This distinguishes Suburban character areas from more auto-oriented areas where site coverage in the form of dwellings, driveways, and other paved surfaces predominates over green and open spaces.

Primary Land Use Types

- Detached residential dwellings.
- Planned developments that integrate other housing types (e.g., small-lot residential and attached residential such as patio homes or townhomes), with increased open space to preserve an overall Suburban character.



Sheffield Estates off of 2nd Loop Road in south central Florence.

Characteristics

- Less noticeable accommodation of the automobile compared to more intensive auto-oriented areas, especially where driveways are on the side of homes rather than occupying a portion of the front yard, and where garages are situated to the side or rear of the dwelling. Design of public and institutional sites should also reflect Suburban character.
- Character-based zoning and development standards can also discourage overly standardized subdivision designs and promote conservation design by allowing for smaller lot sizes than the baseline in exchange for greater open space set-aside. This approach enables some viable use of sites partially constrained by topography, floodplain, or other factors. It also provides flexibility for additional housing forms that blend with the area's Suburban residential character through additional on-site open space and perimeter buffering where differing housing types and densities are adjacent.
- More opportunity for natural and/or swale drainage (and stormwater retention/absorption) relative to concentrated stormwater conveyance in auto-oriented areas.

Where on the Map

Mostly around the edges of the city, plus some central locations in the Cherokee Road vicinity and near greenways.

General Residential

This designation covers areas of primarily single-family detached residential use where accommodation of the automobile is more visually dominant relative to more prominent green space in Suburban Residential character areas. This is typically due to relatively smaller and narrower lots, and often with limited open space set-asides or amenities for residents.

Primary Land Use Types

- Detached residential dwellings.
- Other attached residential forms (e.g., duplexes and multiplexes, patio homes, townhomes, multi-family, etc.) as permitted by zoning or where not otherwise restricted.
- Planned developments, potentially with a mix of housing types and varying densities, subject to compatibility and open space standards.



Inverness Estates
(at center of image)
along 3rd Loop Road
in south Florence.

Characteristics

- Residential neighborhoods with less openness and separation between dwellings compared to Suburban Residential areas.
- Auto Urban character, especially where driveways and front-loading garages dominate the front yards and front facades of homes. This can be offset by landscaping, “anti-monotony” architectural standards, and limitations on “cookie cutter” subdivision layouts characterized by straight streets and uniform lot sizes and arrangement.
- Enhanced design and landscaping of public and institutional sites can also influence the perceived character and appearance of largely auto-oriented areas.
- Neighborhood-oriented commercial uses may emerge over time and should be encouraged on corner sites or other locations at the edge of predominantly residential areas, at a scale and with a site design that is compatible with nearby residential uses.

Where on the Map

Toward the edges of the city, especially in west Florence in the I-95 and W. Palmetto Street vicinity.

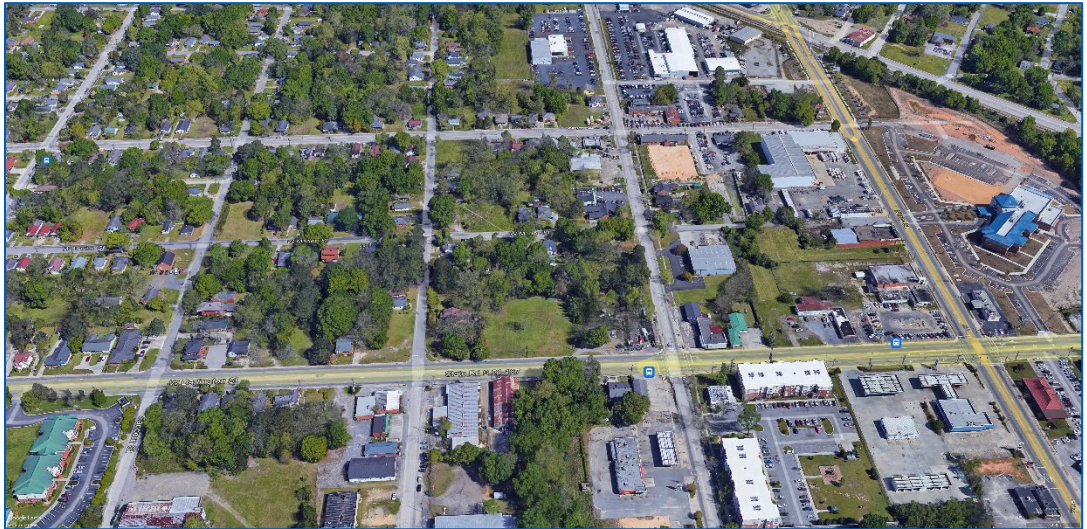
Urban Residential

This designation is for areas usually close to a downtown, where site coverage by structures is often the highest of any residential area in the community – or could be through infill and redevelopment activity. Where detached single-family dwellings are included, this is usually because of relatively small and often narrow and shallow lots, bringing the homes closer to the street and sidewalk and to each other. Urban character is especially reinforced where most blocks have rear alley access to properties, at least decreasing the possibility of an auto-oriented street scene where rear garages or parking are still widely used versus front driveways. Attached housing forms are also designed with limited on-site open space and surface parking, sometimes with greater reliance on on-street parking and/or an on-site parking structure.

Design of the public realm should also reinforce the Urban character, typically with a grid street pattern, sidewalks on both sides of all streets, and pocket parks or other common open space. Along with bike lane improvements in some locations, such areas should be the most conducive for pedestrian, bicycle, and wheelchair circulation within the neighborhood and to nearby shopping, parks, schools, and other destinations.

Primary Land Use Types

- Both detached and attached residential types (e.g., duplexes and multiplexes, townhomes, brownstones, multi-family, ownership condominiums, etc.).
- Mixed housing forms, on single sites or within close proximity.
- Neighborhood-oriented commercial retail and service uses where zoning allows.



Blocks northwest of Downtown, west of Coit Street and north of Front Street.

Characteristics

- Often a focus area for infill and redevelopment activity within the community, which may require customized development and design standards to ensure compatibility with the established or intended area character. This may include controlling the scale of development where larger sites have been created through assembly of smaller parcels.
- May require development and design standards to avoid encroachment of uses designed with an auto-oriented character more suited to other areas of the community.

Where on the Map

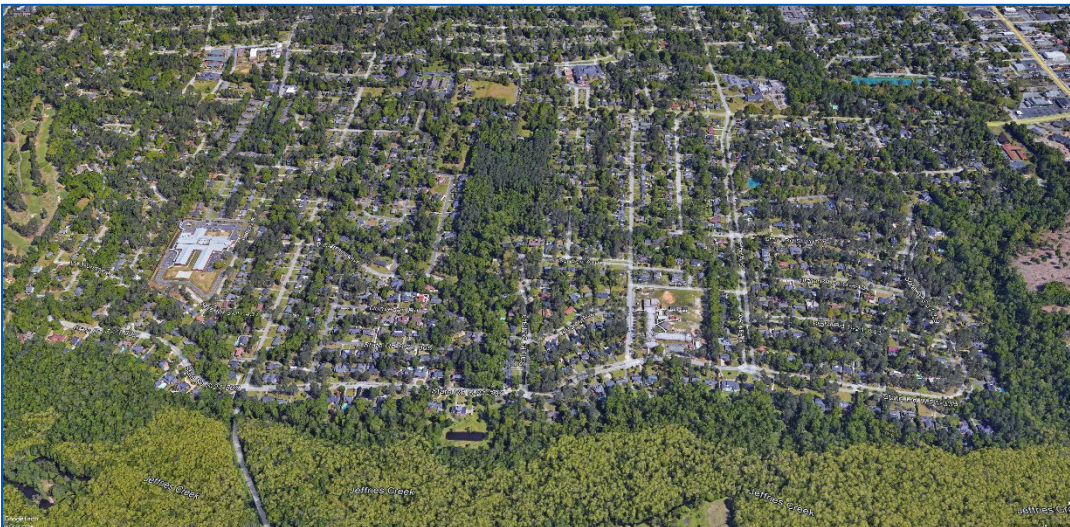
Focused at the northwest and south edges of Downtown.

Neighborhood Conservation

This designation is applied to established neighborhoods that are largely built-out and stable, and where no significant change in development type or pattern is expected or desired. Implementing a conservation strategy typically involves repurposing previous zoning districts, and recalibrating their uses and standards, to maintain the desired neighborhood character. This zoning approach is designed to “lock in” standards that reflect and reinforce how a neighborhood originally developed or has evolved over time, to preserve its existing, prevailing character. In other cases, a customized Neighborhood Conservation zone may serve to manage a neighborhood in transition, such as where older homes fronting on a perimeter street with increasing traffic volumes could be allowed to convert to small-scale office uses over time while still maintaining a residential character and appearance.

Primary Land Use Types

- Detached residential dwellings and, in particular neighborhoods, may include some attached housing types.
- Public/institutional uses (including certain public assembly uses such as places of worship).
- Parks and public spaces.



Sizable area of Neighborhood Conservation land use and zoning south of Cherokee Road.

Characteristics

- The integrity of older, intact neighborhoods may be protected through customized Neighborhood Conservation zoning with standards that ensure no significant change in the development type or pattern and reinforce existing physical conditions (e.g., prevailing lot sizes, building setbacks, architectural elements such as front porches, etc.).
- Designed to preserve existing housing stock and also to govern potential infill and/or redevelopment activity within a neighborhood to ensure compatibility while avoiding excessive variance requests and/or nonconformities.
- Depending on the particular neighborhood, the customized zoning may provide for small-scale office or retail uses on vacant sites at the edge of the neighborhood or other appropriate locations.

Where on the Map

Mostly in the original core neighborhoods of Florence, along with some edge residential areas.

Suburban Commercial

This designation involves commercial developments, whether at a neighborhood-focused or larger scale, that stand apart from most auto-oriented contemporary development. The Suburban character is achieved through lesser coverage of the site with buildings and especially paved areas. Preservation of trees or other natural features, along with generous landscaping, can also move a site into the Suburban range of the character spectrum relative to sites where “gray” paved surfaces predominate over “green” open spaces.

Primary Land Use Types

- Commercial retail and service uses, at varying scales and development intensities depending on the site.
- Office use, involving large and/or multi-story buildings or small-scale offices depending on the site, which may involve a medical or technology/research focus.
- Planned development to accommodate custom site designs and/or mixing of uses in a Suburban character setting.



McLeod Health and Fitness Center along David H. McLeod Boulevard in west Florence.

Characteristics

- Suburban character primarily from reduced site coverage relative to most auto-oriented commercial development. May exclude some auto-oriented uses that cannot achieve a Suburban character (e.g., car washes).
- Especially at key community entries and along high-profile roadway corridors, may also involve other criteria to yield less intensive and more attractive development outcomes relative to auto-oriented areas, including higher standards for landscaping (along street frontages and within parking areas), signs, and building design.
- Near residential properties and areas, the permitted scale and intensity of non-residential uses may be limited to ensure compatibility (including adequate buffering/screening, criteria for placement and orientation of buildings and parking areas, height limits, and residential-in-appearance architectural standards).

Where on the Map

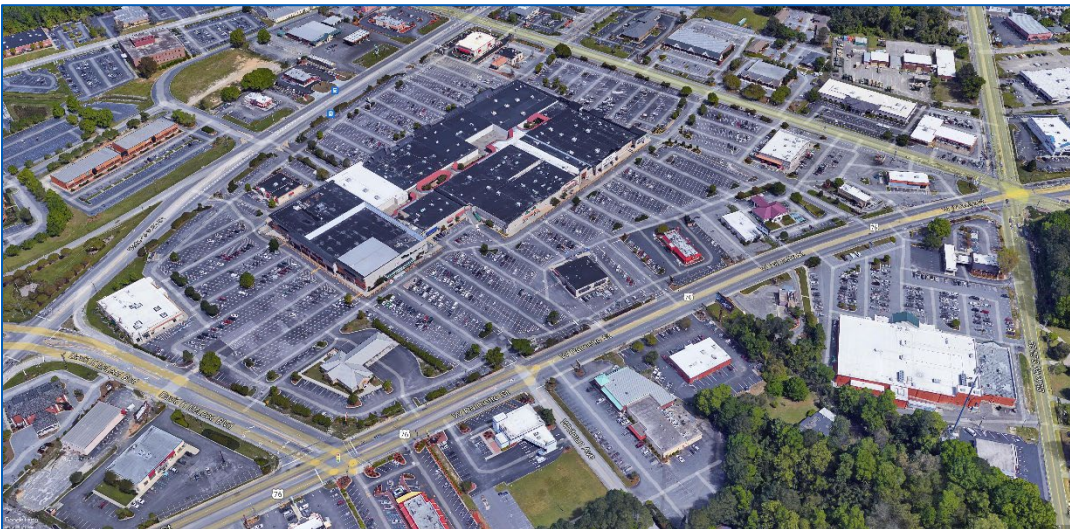
Various locations, often between more intensive commercial sites and residential areas and parks.

General Commercial

This designation is for properties in commercial retail, office, and service uses, primarily along portions of major roadway corridors within the community for high visibility and accessibility, but also in other locations to accommodate smaller-scale and neighborhood-focused businesses.

Primary Land Use Types

- Commercial centers along major roadways, with a range of uses including those on high-profile pad sites along the roadway frontage.
- "Big-box" commercial stores (e.g., grocery, appliances, clothing, etc.).
- Restaurant chains including various "fast food" and casual dining establishments.
- Automobile service related enterprises (e.g., gas stations, service/repair, car washes).
- Offices and services.
- Hotels and motels.
- Mixed-use developments where zoning allows.



Florence Mall and other nearby auto-oriented development in the Five Points vicinity.

Characteristics

- Commercial areas with significant portions of development sites devoted to vehicular access drives, circulation routes, surface parking, and loading/delivery areas, making pavement the most prominent visual feature. This can be offset by reduced site coverage and enhanced landscaping, building design, and well-designed signage.
- Buildings typically set back toward rear of site to accommodate expansive parking areas in front, closest to passing traffic, often resulting in less emphasis on architectural design.
- Development desire to maximize signage to capitalize on site visibility to passing traffic.
- Often not conducive for access or on-site circulation by pedestrians or cyclists.

Where on the Map

In high-profile areas east of I-95 in west Florence, in the vicinity of the Florence Soccer Complex, and south of Downtown along S. Irby Street and Freedom Boulevard in the vicinity of 2nd Loop Road/Pamplico Highway .

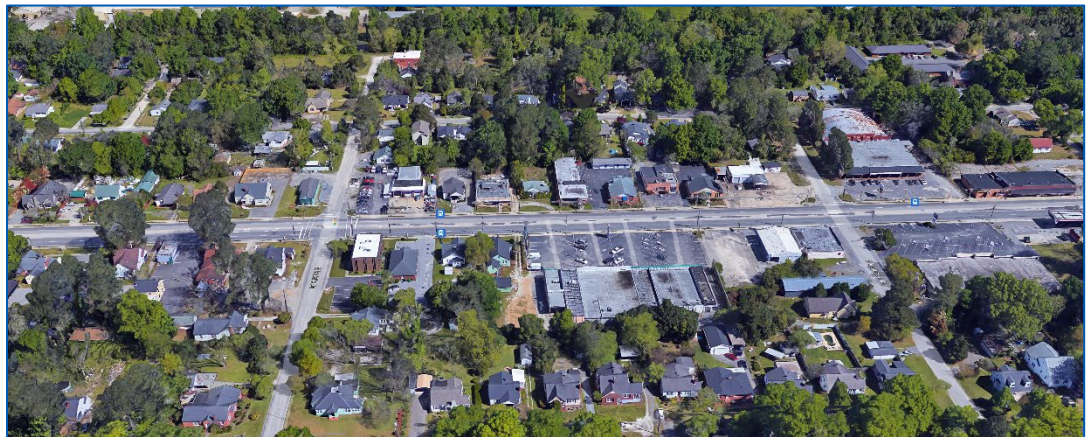
Corridor Mixed Use

This designation is for properties in commercial retail, office, and service uses along and near a high-profile roadway corridor where mixed-use development outcomes are desired and encouraged. The mix of uses may include residential, especially to provide additional housing options and forms within the community. Major public and/or institutional facilities may also serve as development anchors within the area.

Not all properties in this designation will be viable for or result in mixed-use outcomes given their size, location, and/or market position. Therefore, a range of typical stand-alone uses is anticipated as in the Commercial designations that are also shown along portions of Florence's major roadway network. Relative to these other designations, however, Corridor Mixed Use is particularly intended to recognize fundamental paradigm shifts occurring in the development models for residential, retail, office, and hospitality uses, leading to even greater focus on "destination" developments that creatively mix uses, integrate amenities, and emphasize quality design.

Primary Land Use Types

- Commercial retail and service uses, at varying scales and development intensities depending on the physical characteristics of the particular corridor, and of a specific site and its adjacent uses.
- Office use, sometimes involving large and/or multi-story buildings depending on the site.
- Multi-unit attached residential as a component of mixed-use development, whether for rent (apartments) or ownership (condominiums, townhomes, row houses, etc.).
- Planned development to accommodate custom site designs and/or mixing of uses.



Segment of the W. Evans Street corridor near the Edisto Drive intersection (on the left side of the image).

Where on the Map

Primarily around corridors radiating outward from Downtown to the north, west, and south, and also just east of I-95 and south of Pine Needles Road.

Characteristics

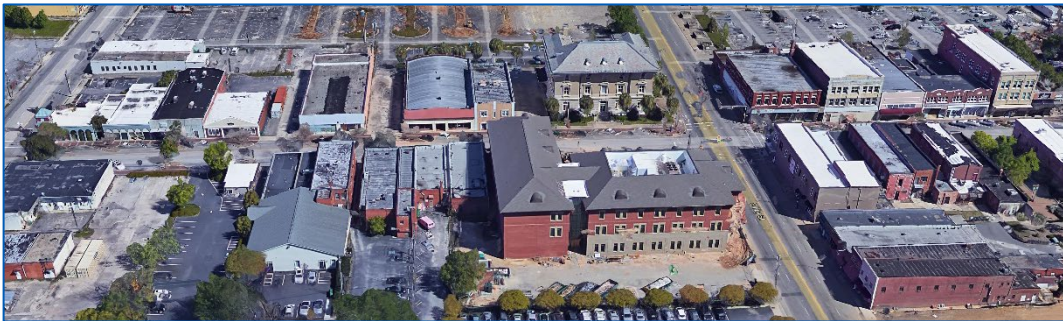
- The intent of a Corridor Mixed Use area may be to achieve a more walkable, bike- and transit-friendly Urban character outcome, although this may be difficult to achieve in a setting where most business patrons, employees, and visitors will still reach their destinations by private vehicle. Site design and development criteria may at least be set to soften the auto-oriented development character found along most busy roadway corridors, as well as to enhance safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Urban Downtown

This designation often involves the most intensively developed area of a community in terms of the greatest coverage of sites with buildings and the least amount of private development area devoted to off-street parking and landscaped yards or open space. Instead, most parking is accommodated on-street and/or within public parking areas. This enables most streets and other public spaces to be framed by buildings that abut the public sidewalk with zero or minimal front setbacks, creating “architectural enclosure” versus the progressively more open feel in other character areas (Auto Urban, Suburban, etc.). These elements, along with a predominance of mixed uses, makes this area of a city the most conducive for pedestrian activity and interaction. Public plazas and pocket parks can provide green space amid the urban environment and a place to gather and host community events, along with periodic street closures.

Primary Land Use Types

- Mixed uses, on single sites and within individual structures, including potential for residential space above commercial retail, service, or office uses, plus live/work units.
- Entertainment and cultural uses (e.g., restaurants, pubs, live music venues, theater, cinema, art galleries, museums), along with public and institutional uses (e.g., education).
- Attached residential types (e.g., townhomes, brownstones, and multi-family).
- Potential for parking structures and limited public or commercial surface parking areas.



Buildings framing
W. Evans Street in
Downtown Florence.

Characteristics

- Multi-story structures encouraged (and sometimes required) to bolster Urban character, encourage vertical mixed use, promote retail viability, and support transit ridership.
- Mostly on-street parking and minimal off-street surface parking, until the Urban character begins to give way to auto-oriented site design in transition areas around a downtown.
- Streetscape enhancements in public ways usually emphasized given limited area for private on-site landscaping relative to other character areas.
- May exclude some auto-oriented uses that cannot achieve an Urban character.
- Public/institutional uses should be designed to match the Urban character.
- Alleys and rear-access garages can reinforce Urban character on blocks with attached or detached residential dwellings.
- Often the only place in a community where multi-level parking structures may make sense and be financially viable.

Where on the Map

The traditional Downtown core of Florence, centered around the intersection of Irby Street/US 52 and Palmetto Street/US 76.

Suburban Campuses

This designation involves public school campuses, major institutional uses (e.g., McLeod Regional Medical Center), and large-scale places of worship. Many of these sites do feature a “campus” design with sizable green and open spaces that help establish a Suburban character. Some uses require substantial surface parking areas, which introduces an Auto Urban character element that is often offset by parking area and perimeter landscaping.

Primary Land Use Types

- Public/institutional uses (including certain public assembly uses such as places of worship).



West Florence High School, with most parking to the rear, and green athletic fields framing the campus, relative to the Auto Urban character of large retail stores across from the school.

Where on the Map

Various locations across the city, with many among the numbered Major Public and Institutional Uses on the map.

Characteristics

- Suburban character, typically in a campus-style setting featuring reduced site coverage and increased open space, and sometimes with enhanced building design.
- Typically a minimum open space ratio of 30 percent, which still allows for a sizable cumulative building footprint since most such developments involve large sites.

Industrial

This designation accommodates uses that are intensive in terms of how “light” industrial and especially “heavy” industrial activities can affect other nearby properties. This can include factors such as noise, vibration, light/glare, dust and particulate emissions, odors, truck traffic, and hours of operation, as well as the sheer scale and intensity of some heavy industrial uses. Depending on the standards applied through development regulations, an industrial area can allow for a wide range of uses, from office/warehouse to wholesale, product assembly, and manufacturing.

Primary Land Use Types

- Warehousing and distribution.
- Light manufacturing and/or processing/assembly.
- Heavy manufacturing where zoning allows.
- Office use accessory to a primary industrial use.
- Retail sales and services especially for area businesses and workers, and heavy commercial uses (e.g., building supply, recreational vehicle/manufactured home sales, etc.).
- Rail- and highway-oriented industrial facilities and business parks.



Industrial activity north of W. Lucas Street/US 52, northwest of Downtown.

Characteristics

- Typically Auto Urban character due to the extent of site coverage by buildings and paved areas.
- Potential for outdoor activity and storage, which should be screened where visible from public ways and residential areas, although heavy industrial uses may be difficult to screen aside from fencing, landscaping, and/or berms along site perimeters.
- May involve significant truck traffic or direct rail service, and may operate “24/7.”
- Risk of fire or explosion in some cases, depending on the materials handled or processed, that may affect the proximity and type of adjacent uses.
- Certain intensive publicly-owned uses are best located within industrial areas (e.g., public works facilities, fleet maintenance, treatment plants, fire training, etc.).

Where on the Map

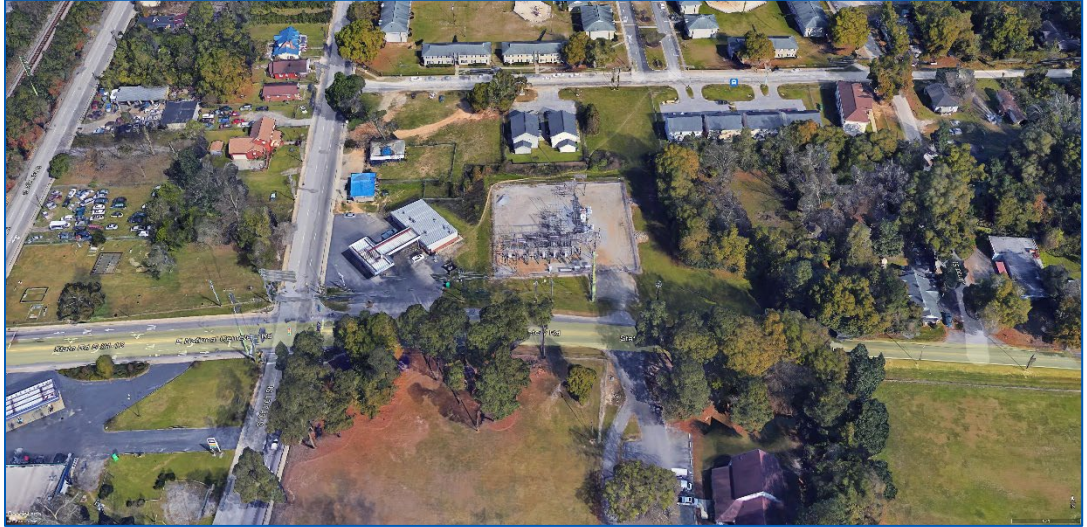
In core areas of the city around Downtown and nearby rail yards, plus the City’s Wastewater Treatment Plant southeast of Downtown.

Utilities

This designation is for a unique land use – utilities – and their vicinities that may warrant special consideration. Such consideration is necessary either to: (1) protect the utility use for security or other reasons; or (2) buffer and protect nearby properties from potential adverse effects depending on the nature and operational aspects of the utility activity.

Primary Land Use Types

- Electric substations.



Electric substation
(in center of image)
along E. National
Cemetery Road, just east
of Church Street.

Characteristics

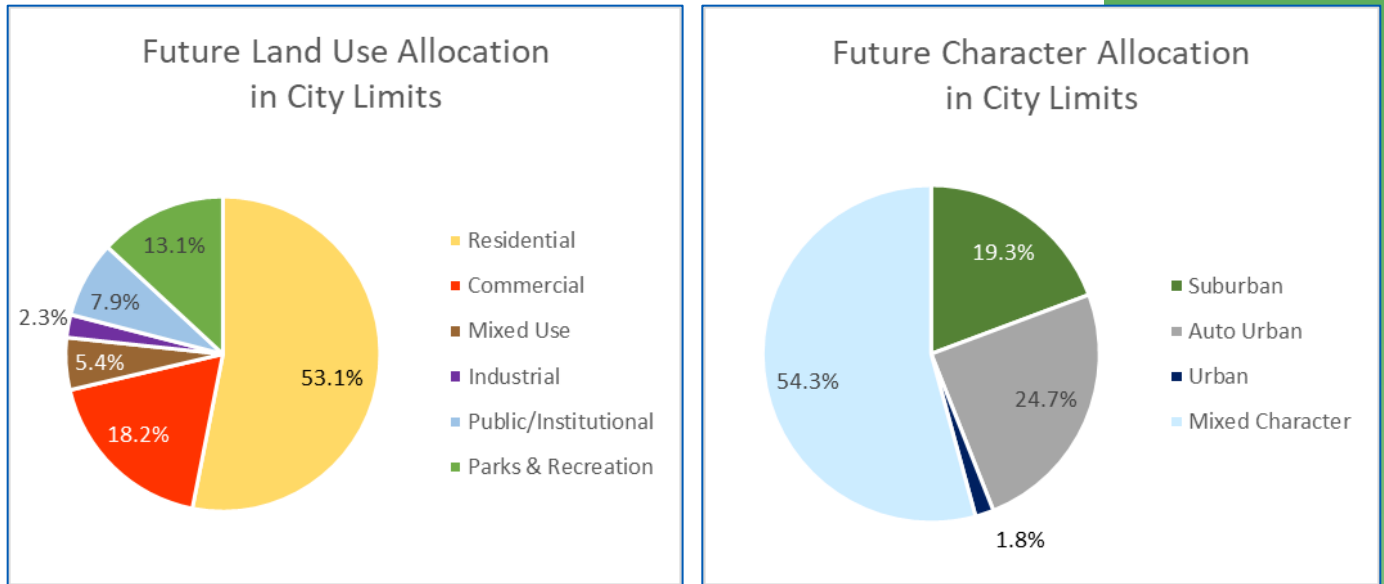
- Potential for environmental impacts that may affect adjacent uses, including noise, vibration, light/glare, dust and particulate emissions, odors, and electromagnetic interference.
- Potential for outdoor activity and storage, which should be screened where visible from public ways and residential areas.

Where on the Map

One location
as noted above.

Land Use Quantities on Map

Tallied in the table below are the estimated acres within each designation shown on the Future Land Use and Character Map. In more general terms, the map reflects these approximate use and character allocations within the current city limits:



It should be noted that the extent of area initially designated for new residential use will ultimately be reduced. Commercial retail and service uses may emerge amid neighborhood areas, and some land will be set aside for recreational use, preserved open space, and/or public purposes and facilities (e.g., street, drainage, etc.).

Map Category	City Limits (less street rights-of-way)	
	Acres	% of Total
Parks and Open Space	1,692.0	13.1%
Suburban Residential	1,092.3	8.5%
General Residential	916.7	7.1%
Urban Residential	33.0	0.3%
Neighborhood Conservation	4,816.3	37.3%
Suburban Commercial	412.2	3.2%
General Commercial	1,938.0	15.0%
Corridor Mixed Use	495.5	3.8%
Urban Downtown	196.4	1.5%
Suburban Campuses	987.3	7.6%
Industrial	302.2	2.3%
Utilities	28.2	0.2%

Current Zoning

The table below provides a comparison between the land use and character designations described above and the current zoning districts in Florence’s UDO.

Land Use and Character Designation	Most Closely Associated Zoning District(s)
Parks and Open Space	Open Space and Recreation (OSR)
Suburban Residential	Suburban Residential (RS) Estate Residential (RE)
General Residential	General Residential (RG)
Urban Residential	Urban Residential (RU)
Neighborhood Conservation	Neighborhood Conservation (NC)
Suburban Commercial	Campus (CA) Commercial Re-use (CR)
General Commercial	Commercial General (CG)
Corridor Mixed Use	Activity Center (AC) Destination / Select Use (DS) Commercial Re-use (CR)
Urban Downtown	Central Business District (CBD)
Suburban Campuses	Campus (CA)
Industrial	Light Industrial (IL) Heavy Industrial (IH)
Utilities	All districts as a permitted Special Exception use subject to standards

Criteria for Proposed Amendments to the Future Land Use and Character Map

Along with procedures for monitoring and periodically updating the Comprehensive Plan, another specific issue involves consideration of proposed amendments to the adopted Future Land Use and Character map. A first consideration is whether a map amendment is necessary immediately, such as in conjunction with a particular rezoning request? Or, can a potential adjustment to the Future Land Use and Character map wait so that it may be examined more holistically, along with any other map changes under consideration, through the next interim review and update of the entire Comprehensive Plan?

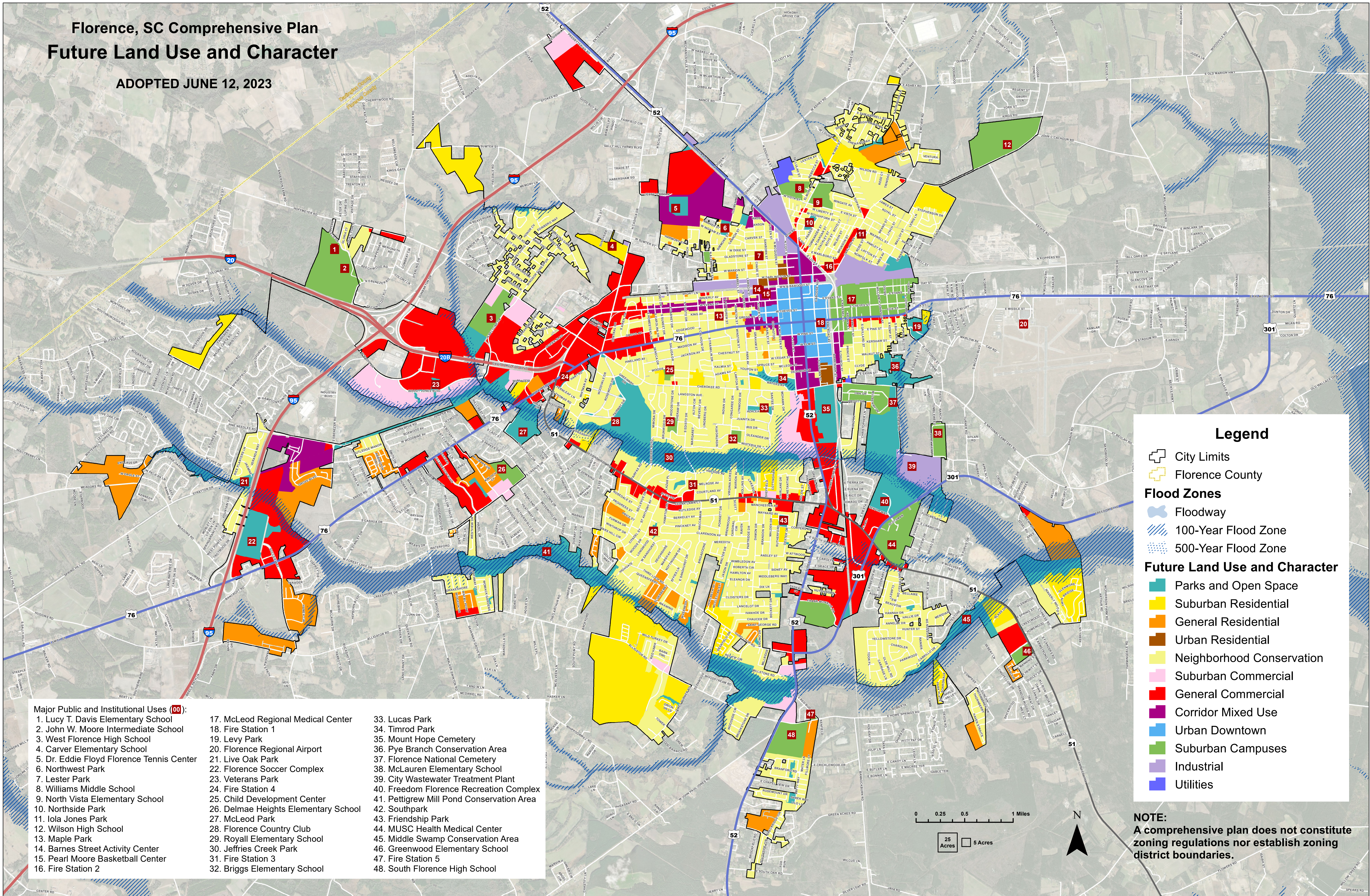
The items below should be reviewed and addressed, especially by the Planning Commission, when a Future Land Use and Character map adjustment is proposed:

- **Scope of Amendment:** Is the proposed map change limited to one or a few parcels or would it affect a much larger area?
- **Change in Circumstances:** What specific conditions have changed sufficiently to render the current map designation(s) inappropriate or out-of-date (e.g., city’s population size and/or characteristics, area character and building form, property/structure conditions, infrastructure or public services, market factors including need for more land in a particular designation, etc.)?

- **Consistency with Other Plans:** In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, is the proposed map change consistent with the intent and policy direction of any other applicable plans (utility infrastructure or drainage plans, public safety plans, parks and recreation master plan, etc.)?
- **Adequate Information:** Do City staff, the Planning Commission, and/or City Council have enough and appropriate information to move ahead with a decision (e.g., utility capacity, potential traffic impacts, other public service implications, resident/stakeholder concerns and input)?
- **Stakeholder Input:** What points, concerns, and insights have been raised by area residents, property owners, business owners, partner agencies/organizations, or others?

Florence, SC Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use and Character

ADOPTED JUNE 12, 2023



Legend

- City Limits
- Florence County
- Flood Zones**
 - Floodway
 - 100-Year Flood Zone
 - 500-Year Flood Zone
- Future Land Use and Character**
 - Parks and Open Space
 - Suburban Residential
 - General Residential
 - Urban Residential
 - Neighborhood Conservation
 - Suburban Commercial
 - General Commercial
 - Corridor Mixed Use
 - Urban Downtown
 - Suburban Campuses
 - Industrial
 - Utilities

- Major Public and Institutional Uses (00):**
- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Lucy T. Davis Elementary School | 17. McLeod Regional Medical Center | 33. Lucas Park |
| 2. John W. Moore Intermediate School | 18. Fire Station 1 | 34. Timrod Park |
| 3. West Florence High School | 19. Levy Park | 35. Mount Hope Cemetery |
| 4. Carver Elementary School | 20. Florence Regional Airport | 36. Pye Branch Conservation Area |
| 5. Dr. Eddie Floyd Florence Tennis Center | 21. Live Oak Park | 37. Florence National Cemetery |
| 6. Northwest Park | 22. Florence Soccer Complex | 38. McLauren Elementary School |
| 7. Lester Park | 23. Veterans Park | 39. City Wastewater Treatment Plant |
| 8. Williams Middle School | 24. Fire Station 4 | 40. Freedom Florence Recreation Complex |
| 9. North Vista Elementary School | 25. Child Development Center | 41. Pettigrew Mill Pond Conservation Area |
| 10. Northside Park | 26. Delmae Heights Elementary School | 42. Southpark |
| 11. Iola Jones Park | 27. McLeod Park | 43. Friendship Park |
| 12. Wilson High School | 28. Florence Country Club | 44. MUSC Health Medical Center |
| 13. Maple Park | 29. Royall Elementary School | 45. Middle Swamp Conservation Area |
| 14. Barnes Street Activity Center | 30. Jeffries Creek Park | 46. Greenwood Elementary School |
| 15. Pearl Moore Basketball Center | 31. Fire Station 3 | 47. Fire Station 5 |
| 16. Fire Station 2 | 32. Briggs Elementary School | 48. South Florence High School |



NOTE:
A comprehensive plan does not constitute zoning regulations nor establish zoning district boundaries.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Plan Sections

- Growth Capacity
- Land Use and Development
- **Housing and Neighborhoods**
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Recreation and Amenities
- Plan Implementation

Introduction

Along with food and water, shelter is among the most basic of human needs. The concept of “quality of life” also begins at home, meaning that both individuals and local governments have reasons to prioritize quality, affordable housing within safe and comfortable neighborhood settings. As in many similar communities, Florence’s economic development success also depends, in part, on the ready availability of attractive residential options for current and prospective business owners and their employees.

Housing needs, gaps, and challenges are central to any community-wide long-range plan. A key component of a city’s livability is whether its residents can find suitable and economical housing options at all stages of life to remain in the community they love. While the development of new residences and the rehabilitation of older housing occurs primarily through the private sector, municipal government and other public and non-profit partners have essential roles to play. The City and other partners help protect residential investments over time, and strong neighborhoods support the local economy and tax base. Having a diverse stock of housing – new and old, big and small, ownership and rental – is crucial for offering choice and providing for the individual needs of all households, regardless of economic conditions.

Why this Comprehensive Plan Section is Important for Florence

- Together with the Land Use and Development section, establishes the public policy basis for community planning and the City’s development regulations, especially to protect residential areas from incompatible land uses and development intensities, promote a wide range of housing options, and maintain desired neighborhood character.
- Builds on previous neighborhood planning and targeted revitalization efforts by the City of Florence and other partners that have yielded notable successes over the last decade.
- Provides guidance for if and when the City of Florence should take direct action to promote homeownership, spur neighborhood reinvestment, and monitor and enforce property maintenance standards, especially for rental housing.
- Reinforces the City’s role in promoting and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its residents by ensuring the quality and sustainability of new residential development and preventing older housing stock from falling into disrepair to the point of affecting the value and appeal of entire streets, blocks, and neighborhoods.
- Links to other plan sections that address components of a satisfying living environment, including well-maintained public infrastructure, safe streets and accommodation of pedestrians and cyclists along with motorized vehicles, nearby shopping and services, and access to neighborhood parks, trails, and community centers.
- Highlights the continuing need to promote equity in area housing markets and in public investment decisions that help sustain all of Florence’s neighborhoods, while also addressing the persistent challenge of homelessness.

Legacy of Past Planning

This new Comprehensive Plan builds on previous plans and studies completed by the City of Florence and other partners. Those most relevant to the Housing and Neighborhoods topic include:

- City of Florence Comprehensive Plan 2010 (February 2011).
- City of Florence Next Steps 2017-2022 (five-year interim Comprehensive Plan update).
- City of Florence Downtown Master Plan Update (February 2011).
- City of Florence Downtown Florence Five Year Comprehensive Plan Update (2017).
- City of Florence Neighborhood Action Plan (2013).
- City of Florence Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (2014).

Accomplishments

Progress and achievements resulting from past planning and implementation efforts were identified through leadership and community input to this plan. Significant items cited that are most relevant to the Housing and Neighborhoods topic include:

- Adoption of a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), including elements that promote housing variety and neighborhood protection.
- The City taking a direct and active role to address local housing needs, including through infill housing construction in older neighborhoods and development of the North Pointe Subdivision – which has drawn greater interest from private and external investors.
- First steps toward offering an urban living option in Florence as part of the City’s downtown revitalization efforts.
- Adoption and implementation of a Residential Rental Registration ordinance and program.
- Often cited progress in drawing the Florence community together by improving grass roots community involvement, elevating trust with community action organizations, and working to overcome “a century of frustration” – including by embedding City staff in specific neighborhoods and addressing issues through multi-department teams.
- Tangible neighborhood revitalization results, including visible improvements to neighborhood schools, parks, and community centers along with housing efforts.



Key Planning Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of the comprehensive planning effort, numerous real and perceived community issues and needs were identified through leadership and public engagement activities, as well as through the work of the plan consultants and their interactions with City management and staff. Key issues and considerations that led to the goals and action items in this Housing and Neighborhoods section include:

- Promoting more subdivision activity and residential development within the city limits to provide a steady supply of new housing to the area, especially for mid-level incomes, along with new market-rate rental housing.
- Guarding against subpar residential development that, as cited in public input to this plan, “negatively impacts our communities and detracts from quality of life.”
- A continued focus on spurring more residential construction in and around downtown.
- A continuing need for the City and other partners to take advantage of infill and replacement housing opportunities in existing neighborhoods, when done compatibly.
- Effective implementation of the City’s Residential Rental Registration program to overcome “fear of rentals” based on real experience with how such properties can decline over time.
- Maintaining the “collaborative spirit” that led to so much housing and neighborhood revitalization progress in Florence over the last decade.
- Desire for Florence to simply be “a good place to live” and maintain its sense of community.

Framework for Action

This Framework for Action section builds off of the plan priorities confirmed with Florence City Council during the transition from the Existing City to the Future City phase of Comprehensive Plan development. The Plan goals and action strategies are aimed at “connecting the dots” between a set of community improvement fundamentals for Florence that involve:

- Stabilizing and enhancing Florence’s neighborhoods.
- Continuing the momentum of Florence’s downtown revitalization.
- Being both a fiscally and physically resilient city.
- Expecting quality in both private development and public projects.
- Being an amenity rich place.
- Being a connected, equitable community.
- Providing an environment for diverse economic growth opportunities.

What connects all of these points is the desire to retain and attract more population to Florence, including those who grew up here. The actions in this Housing and Neighborhoods section involve tangible steps that will lead to achievement of the goals in line with the plan’s Guiding Principles (in the Introduction section). The actions are categorized into the five types of plan implementation actions highlighted throughout this Plan.



Goals for Housing and Neighborhoods



1. A **quantity and diversity of housing options** that makes living in Florence attainable and inviting for a wide range of age groups and income levels, including those critical to the community's economic development success.
2. **Elimination of barriers to equitable home ownership** in Florence while also balancing the **basic housing needs** of those who are shelter insecure or experiencing homelessness.
3. Continued momentum in **renewing housing and neighborhoods in greatest need**, using a "complete communities" approach that uplifts areas and residents through attention to the entire range of physical, social, educational, and recreational needs.
4. Sustained **integrity and value of Florence's oldest established neighborhoods** while promoting **quality housing development** and the long-term appeal of newer residential areas.

A Goal is ...

a statement of a desired outcome ("end") toward which efforts are directed as expressed by more specific objectives and action steps ("means").

A Strategic Action Priority is ...

aimed at seizing a special opportunity or addressing a particular challenge one faces, given limited resources – financial and otherwise – and recognizing that a broader agenda of new or ongoing activities will also be pursued in the meantime.

Actions by Goal

GOAL 1: A quantity and diversity of housing options that makes living in Florence attainable and inviting for a wide range of age groups and income levels, including those critical to the community's economic development success.

Rationale: A common theme during the update of this plan involved a desire for Florence to add more residents and grow as a city. In some cases this was linked to the community's economic development prospects and needing to have more to offer newcomers looking to invest in or move to Florence for their careers and businesses. At other times the discussion turned to retention of those who grew up in Florence but move away, for both job and housing reasons. An increased housing supply will expand choice and help offset upward pressure on area home prices. Annexation and flood mitigation efforts by the City, as covered in the Growth Capacity section of this plan, may make more land available within the city limits for housing construction. In the meantime, the City has shown in recent years how it can take direct action to add housing stock at price points and in neighborhood locations that likely would not have been accomplished solely through private sector development activity.

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Housing and Neighborhoods goal, including:
 - The range of residential and mixed-use zoning districts provided in Section 1-2.2.1.
 - Development yield standards for new neighborhoods in Section 2-4.1.1.
 - Standards for lot width averaging in Section 2-4.1.4.
 - Standards for condominium and alternative land ownership arrangements in Section 2-4.1.6.
 - Cross reference to standards for manufactured home subdivisions found in Chapter 11 of the City Code of Ordinances.

Action Leaders > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
and Key Partners > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

2. Along with the density bonuses already included in the UDO to incentivize certain development practices, consider adding a bonus to offset the inclusion of a certain number or percentage of "affordable" units within an overall market-rate residential development (where "affordable" typically means that the qualifying tenant will not spend

more than 30-35 percent of his or her income on monthly housing costs and/or the cost will be manageable for someone earning up to a certain percentage below the area’s median income). The units might also be designated for a target population (e.g., seniors, military veterans, public safety personnel, etc.).

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** › Housing Authority of Florence
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

3. Having already provided a pathway to accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in various zoning districts in UDO Section 1-2.10.1.B., subject to particular standards, continue to monitor trends and best practices for managing ADU activity with so much attention on this niche housing option across the nation and within the urban planning community (including if and when to allow detached and not just “integrated” ADUs in Florence). The same applies to short-term rental activity and parameters for preventing adverse neighborhood effects, which the UDO addresses in Section 1-2.8.2.I. and the definition in UDO Division 7-25.2(S).

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** › Neighborhood organizations
 › Homeowner associations
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

4. Along with routine feedback received through development review, approval, and permitting processes, seek input periodically from the real estate, development, and builder communities on ways the City’s development regulations, standards and/or processes help to promote or may work against Florence’s housing objectives, especially with evolving market trends and economic conditions over time.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** › Community Development Corporation
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Home Builders Association of the Greater Pee Dee
 › Pee Dee Realtor Association

Partnerships and Communication

1. Maintain relationships with local and regional real estate/development representatives and with economic development entities that recognize housing attainability as critical to community success, public school system viability, and the fiscal sustainability of local government.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Home Builders Association of the Greater Pee Dee
 › Pee Dee Realtor Association
 › Florence County Economic Development Partnership
 › Florence County Progress, Inc.

2. Through local young adult leadership organizations and networks, conduct periodic focus groups on housing desires and challenges faced by this key demographic in Florence related to dwelling types, costs, ownership versus rental, locations/lifestyle, and related considerations for both public agencies and the development community.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** › City Manager’s Office
 › Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
 › Pee Dee Realtor Association



More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Monitor the growing nationwide trend toward housing developed from the start with rental in mind, but with a higher level of site design, amenities, and ongoing property maintenance relative to many apartment developments, including to blend better in areas of predominantly single-family detached homes.

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Home Builders Association of the Greater Pee Dee

2. Pursue strategies in the City’s newest updated Downtown Master Plan for achieving a greater quantity and variety of residential options in and around the downtown area.

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Downtown Development Office**
 › **Florence Downtown Development Corporation**
 › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

3. Monitor area cost-of-living indicators beyond monthly mortgage and rental payments including local government factors such as appraisals, tax rates, utility rates, and differences in such factors between in-City and unincorporated areas.

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Finance Department**
 › City of Florence Utilities Department
 › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 › Florence County
 › Florence County Economic Development Partnership

4. Build on periodic surveys and available data that compare local taxes and fees across South Carolina cities to correct perceptions of Florence as a “high tax city” that reduces residents’ disposable income for other purposes.

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City Manager’s Office**
 › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 › Municipal Association of South Carolina

5. As residential development continues and following any significant rezoning of properties from residential to non-residential designations, continue to use GIS mapping to monitor the area’s supply of residentially zoned acreage to provide market flexibility for developing diverse housing types in various locations across the city.

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**

GOAL 2: Elimination of barriers to equitable home ownership in Florence while also balancing the basic housing needs of those who are shelter insecure or experiencing homelessness.

Rationale: The Existing City Report that was prepared as a first step for this Comprehensive Plan update showed that Florence has a higher level of renters than in most communities. The consensus judgement among public and private leadership was that Florence should aim to boost home ownership opportunities, especially given the wealth-building benefit to individuals and families – and from generation to generation – of owning one’s own home. Home ownership also has a positive effect on neighborhoods from having more residents who are “bought in” and committed for the longer term. The City and other partners have taken action in recent years to help those least able to participate in the housing market, by supporting prospective buyers on the demand side of the market and by adding to the supply



of lower-priced homes. Community leaders in Florence also agreed on the need to focus more attention and resources on those most in need, who are already without a home or at risk of falling into homelessness. Homelessness burdens not only those involved, but can also detract from the security, aesthetics, and otherwise positive image of a community.

Programs and Initiatives

1. Continue pursuing or considering a range of measures focused on boosting the demand side of the housing market:
 - Homeownership “how to” education and first-time homebuyer support.
 - Down payment assistance.
 - Closing cost grants.
 - First-year property tax waivers.
 - Rental assistance.
 - Utilities assistance.
 - Payment of homeowner association fees.
 - Heir property workshops.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Community Services Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Finance Department
 > City of Florence Utility Finance Department
 > City of Florence Codes Enforcement Division
 > Housing Authority of Florence
 > Local banking community

2. Continue pursuing or considering a range of measures intended to support the supply side of the housing market, typically by reducing upfront development costs while also establishing expectations for dwelling quality, price point, and neighborhood amenities:
 - Land assembly and/or transfer of individual lots for private development.
 - City-initiated rezoning of land to suitable residential designations.
 - Fee waivers.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Community Services Department
 > City of Florence Finance Department

3. As the 27-lot North Pointe Subdivision builds out, pursue opportunities to replicate the success of this City-led and CDBG-supported affordable housing strategy in other catalyst areas of the city, as defined in the City’s Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, recognizing the increasing challenges of controlling the final home sale price.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Community Services Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 > City of Florence Finance Department
 > Community Development Corporation

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Housing and Neighborhoods goal, including:
 - Standards for condominium and alternative land ownership arrangements in Section 2-4.1.6.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)



Partnerships and Communication

1. Explore with the area’s major employers the potential to develop employer-assisted housing programs that entice employees of these organizations to choose Florence as their home in addition to their place of employment.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 - › Community Development Corporation
 - › Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
 - › Area business community
 - › Medical institutions

2. Using the Community Development Corporation, partner with local employers, banks, and others to better understand what price points and housing types are desired by area employees and forms of financial or other assistance that would be most effective.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 - › Community Development Corporation
 - › Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
 - › Area business community
 - › Medical institutions
 - › Local banking community
 - › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 - › Home Builders Association of the Greater Pee Dee
 - › Pee Dee Realtor Association

3. As in other communities nationwide, continue to pursue a partnership-based approach to reducing homelessness in Florence and its side effects, applying holistic strategies that encompass basic food and shelter needs, mental health and addiction recovery services, preparation for employability and self-sufficiency, and interagency response to concentrations and encampments of homeless individuals within the city and related security and aesthetic concerns.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 - › Mayor’s Coalition for Humanity
 - › City of Florence Police Department
 - › Housing Authority of Florence
 - › Florence County
 - › SC Works Florence Center
 - › Social service agencies and non-profits
 - › Faith community

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Monitor trends in local housing costs relative to personal and household income statistics, as well as the price ranges at which new ownership housing and rentals are being delivered to the local market, to inform and better frame discussions of housing “affordability” in Florence.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 - › Community Development Corporation
 - › Florence County Economic Development Partnership
 - › Housing Authority of Florence
 - › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 - › Home Builders Association of the Greater Pee Dee
 - › Pee Dee Realtor Association
 - › Local banking community



2. Explore the applicability of rent-to-own housing program models in Florence, especially in its lowest-income neighborhoods.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Housing Authority of Florence
 - › Community Development Corporation
 - › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

GOAL 3: Continued momentum in renewing housing and neighborhoods in greatest need, using a “complete communities” approach that uplifts areas and residents through attention to the entire range of physical, social, educational, and recreational needs.

Rationale: With this new Comprehensive Plan and other specialized City plans and studies, Florence has the opportunity to build on its award-winning revitalization initiatives and successes of recent years. This should continue to involve a team approach that draws on all aspects of City government that contribute to healthy and stable neighborhoods, along with effective partnering with other public agencies and key local organizations.

Capital Investments

1. Include criteria in the City’s capital improvements planning process that ensures consideration of neighborhood revitalization needs and enhancement opportunities when identifying and prioritizing candidate capital projects, especially to incorporate specific community-identified requests. Such efforts are often closely coordinated with the City’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programming as it prioritizes activities and use of funds through its Annual Action Plan.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** › **City of Florence Finance Department**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City of Florence Community Services Department
 - › Neighborhood organizations

Programs and Initiatives

1. Continue to deploy City staff and take advantage of local government capabilities where they can be most effective in support of ongoing neighborhood revitalization efforts, applying lessons learned from how City government spurred Florence’s downtown renewal, and supporting existing organizations best positioned to make a difference in the community.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Community Development Corporation
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Pee Dee Community Action Partnership (and other social service organizations)
 - › Greater Florence Habitat for Humanity
 - › Faith community

2. With the City’s recent establishment of a Community Development Corporation (CDC) as an added new mechanism for advancing neighborhood revitalization, attainable housing, and overall life improvement objectives in Florence, the CDC should focus on actions for which it is uniquely suited and that address the stated purposes in its bylaws, such as:
 - Acquiring and potentially banking property (especially foreclosed properties) for both housing and other community development objectives as appropriate to each location.



- Directly constructing or otherwise supporting the added supply of attainable housing units within the city (with some CDCs also involved in ongoing ownership and management of housing sites).
- Renovating existing housing and commercial buildings to improve physical conditions and eliminate vacancies, raise property values in targeted areas, and, in some cases, provide free or low-rent space for retail and office tenants.
- Supporting mixed-use development and redevelopment projects that can address neighborhood housing, retail, and service needs simultaneously.
- Undertaking specific neighborhood improvements, and leveraging City projects (e.g., park and community center upgrades, tree plantings, litter clean-ups, upgraded lighting, sidewalk repairs, etc.).
- Filling gaps in existing area programs that provide financing support for both low/moderate-income prospective home buyers and small businesses, and supplementing existing workforce training and job placement programs.
- Establishing or supporting programs aimed at reducing poverty and moving individuals toward self-sufficiency, including for families, seniors, disabled persons, and individuals at risk of becoming homeless (e.g., assistance with medical expenses, day care and school expenses, utility bills, tutoring, after-school programs, etc.).
- Providing assistance with transit expenses to connect individuals to expanded job options.
- Employing individuals directly to support CDC programming and provide needed jobs and income in targeted areas.

The websites below provide further guidance, examples, and success stories from CDCs across the nation. Like Florence’s new CDC, many such entities are established by – but operate somewhat independently of – municipal government so they can take an array of potential actions as a non-profit organization. Still, they are intended as a key partner to local elected officials and City staff, along with other area public agencies and non-profits. Over time, a CDC can build its resources to sustain “a comprehensive asset-based approach to community development” (as done by the Bethel New Life non-profit in Chicago).

- National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (NACEDA, at <https://www.naceda.org>, including a site page titled, what is a Community Development Corporation?).
- Practitioners Leveraging Assets for Community Enhancement (PLACE, at <https://ncrc.org/place/>, now under the umbrella of the National Community Reinvestment Coalition).
- Community-Wealth.org, including its in-depth coverage of CDCs (at <https://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/cdcs/index.html>) and compilation of CDC Models and Best Practices (<https://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/cdcs/models.html>).
- Why Start a Community Development Corporation guidance provided by Useful Community Development (at <https://www.useful-community-development.org/start-a-community-development-corporation.html>).

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- Action Leaders > **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 - and Key Partners > City Manager’s Office
 - > Local banking community
 - > Pee Dee Community Action Partnership
-

3. Ensure homeowners, tenants, and landlords are aware of resources available through various state and federal programs, such as weatherization programs to improve energy efficiency.

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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 - and Key Partners** › Community Development Corporation
 - › Homeowner associations
 - › Neighborhood organizations
-

4. Evaluate, in coordination with non-profits, faith-based groups, and Florence 1 Schools, the potential to create volunteer programs to assist elderly residents, or residents with limited means, with home repairs and property maintenance.

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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 - and Key Partners** › Community Development Corporation
 - › Florence 1 Schools
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Homeowner associations
 - › Pee Dee Community Action Partnership (and other social service organizations)
 - › Greater Florence Habitat for Humanity
 - › Faith community
-

5. Develop a program to highlight successful neighborhood beautification efforts, such as a beautification spot-of-the-month program, potentially in collaboration with local community groups.

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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 - and Key Partners** › City Manager’s Office
 - › Keep Florence Beautiful
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Homeowner associations
-

6. Consider use of cash or in-kind inducements (e.g., pre-loaded cards or gift cards) as an incentive to clear litter, remove illegally dumped items, and deliver heavy trash to designated drop-off locations.

-
- Action Leaders** › **Community Development Corporation**
 - and Key Partners** › Helping Florence Flourish
 - › Area business community
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Keep Florence Beautiful
-

7. Maintain the Florence Police Department’s participation in the South Carolina Litter Control Association, which since 1987 has promoted litter enforcement and encouraged law enforcement agencies to spread awareness of the fines associated with South Carolina’s litter laws.

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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Police Department**
 - and Key Partners** › City of Florence Community Services Department
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Keep Florence Beautiful
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8. Continue to build on established partnerships and financial and in-kind support for even more frequent neighborhood and roadway cleanup events in areas most affected by illegal dumping and pervasive litter and trash accumulation.

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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 - and Key Partners** › City Manager’s Office
 - › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › Florence County
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Keep Florence Beautiful
-

9. Explore the potential to devote more City resources to heavy trash collection, including through a possible matching challenge in which the City would allocate the same funding raised by community partners for more frequent or targeted bulk trash pickup and/or removal of illegally dumped items.



- Action Leaders and Key Partners** > **City of Florence Finance Department**
- > City of Florence Public Works Department
- > Florence County
- > Keep Florence Beautiful
- > Neighborhood organizations
- > Palmer Pre-Release Center, South Carolina Department of Corrections

10. Along with longstanding educational efforts and resources for changing attitudes and individual behavior about littering, also increase awareness of what litter costs the City and its taxpayers.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** > **City of Florence Finance Department**
- > City Manager’s Office
- > City of Florence Community Services Department
- > City of Florence Public Works Department

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Housing and Neighborhoods goal, including:
 - The intents of the Neighborhood Conservation (NC) zoning district/subdistricts in Section 1-2.2.1.
 - The intents of the Downtown and Neighborhood Revitalization overlay districts in Section 1-2.4.2 and 4.3.
 - Standards for residential and commercial use of homes in Section 1-2.8.2.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
- > Florence Downtown Development Corporation
- > Homeowner associations
- > Neighborhood organizations

Partnerships and Communication

1. Continue to partner with the faith community, Greater Florence Habitat for Humanity, and other community-based or non-profit efforts to address low-income housing needs in Florence, especially through “sweat equity” approaches and to assist owners of older homes with rehabilitation and repair.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** > **City of Florence Community Services Department**
- > Community Development Corporation
- > Housing Authority of Florence
- > Greater Florence Habitat for Humanity
- > Pee Dee Community Action Partnership
- > Faith community

2. Whenever the City takes action to construct one or more new homes in a neighborhood location, pursue partnerships aimed at broadening the positive effects by bringing up entire streets and blocks near the new home(s).

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** > **City of Florence Community Services Department**
- > Community Development Corporation
- > Neighborhood organizations
- > Pee Dee Community Action Partnership
- > Greater Florence Habitat for Humanity
- > Faith community

3. Continue to identify and develop neighborhood leaders who can help connect residents to available resources.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners** > **City of Florence Community Services Department**
- > Community Development Corporation
- > Neighborhood organizations
- > Pee Dee Community Action Partnership (and other social service organizations)



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4. Explore partnerships with local convenience stores to stock fresh fruits and vegetables, along with healthier “grab and go” options, as has been an industry trend in recent years with changing consumer demands and in response to increased attention to “food deserts.”
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Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 › City Manager’s Office
 › City of Florence Local Foods Initiative
 › Area business community, especially convenience store owners and franchisees

5. Explore partnership models for bringing fresh fruits and vegetables to underserved neighborhoods through a mobile approach, similar to the bookmobile model for making library resources more widely accessible.
-

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 › City Manager’s Office
 › City of Florence Local Foods Initiative
 › Area food banks/pantries
 › City Center Farmers Market and Kitchen
 › Pee Dee State Farmers Market
 › Area business community, including restaurant owners
 › Pee Dee Community Action Partnership (and other social service organizations)
 › Faith community

6. Continue to coordinate litter prevention and anti-dumping educational efforts with Florence County’s designated leads for litter control (under County Environmental Services), adopt-a-highway activities, and recycling.
-

Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 › City Manager’s Office
 › City of Florence Public Works Department
 › Florence County

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. As the 10-year point since their completion approaches, refresh and update the Neighborhood Action Plan of 2013 and the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy of 2014 to maintain momentum and continued tangible results in Florence’s core neighborhoods nearest to downtown.
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Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 › Community Development Corporation
 › Neighborhood organizations
 › Homeowner associations

2. As part of neighborhood planning and revitalization efforts, particularly focus on renewal of blocks in close proximity to public assets such as schools, parks, recreation facilities, and community centers.
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Action Leaders and Key Partners › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 › City of Florence Recreation Department
 › Community Development Corporation
 › Florence 1 Schools
 › Neighborhood organizations
 › Homeowner associations

3. In tandem with demolition and removal of dilapidated and burned-out structures, also plan for new construction that matches the area character and resembles the established housing stock and neighborhood.
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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 - and Key Partners** › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Greater Florence Habitat for Humanity
-

4. Use GIS mapping to monitor locations of grocery and convenience stores in relation to neighborhoods with limited access to fresh foods and other staple foods, especially after the recent opening of a new grocery establishment in the downtown area.
-

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 - and Key Partners** › City Manager’s Office
 - › City of Florence Local Foods Initiative
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GOAL 4: Sustained integrity and value of Florence’s oldest established neighborhoods while promoting quality housing development and the long-term appeal of newer residential areas.

Rationale: A home purchase is often the single largest financial investment by an individual or family. Significant cumulative value is embedded across all of Florence’s established neighborhoods, in terms of both the housing stock itself plus the public infrastructure and services in place to serve the neighborhoods. “Sustainability” can seem only a buzzword as widely as it is used today, but it becomes real when applied to actual neighborhoods as well a community’s newest subdivisions. Taken together, the collection of diverse neighborhoods and residents in a city like Florence encompass a wide range of individual interests and motivations. Municipal government has the perspective and capabilities to take a broader view and apply the unique programs and tools at its disposal for making neighborhoods, both old and new, more sustainable and better able to hold their value, which benefits both private and public interests.

Capital Investments

1. Apply a “physical plant” approach to identifying and tracking all levels of public assets the City must periodically maintain and/or rehabilitate in established neighborhoods and as public components are dedicated to the City in new residential developments (e.g., streets, sidewalks and crosswalks, street signs, street lighting, underground and above-ground utility infrastructure, fire hydrants, parks and trails, etc.).
-

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Public Works Department**
 - and Key Partners** › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City of Florence Utilities Department
 - › City of Florence Recreation Department
 - › City of Florence GIS mapping functions
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Programs and Initiatives

1. Evaluate the City’s residential rental registration and permit program, since its adoption by ordinance in October 2020, to highlight successes to date, aspects that may need further refinement, and any gaps to be addressed.
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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 - and Key Partners** › City of Florence Police Department
 - › Rental property owners and managers
 - › Neighborhood organizations
-

-
2. Expand staff duties to include a daily and ongoing neighborhood planning focus across the entire city, along with ongoing attention to Florence's near-downtown neighborhoods, and to act as a point person to coordinate across all neighborhood-serving City departments.
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Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Community Services Department
 › Neighborhood organizations
 › Homeowner associations

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Housing and Neighborhoods goal, including:
- The Neighborhood Conservation (NC) zoning district/subdistricts in Section 1-2.2.1.
 - The Downtown and Neighborhood Revitalization overlay districts in Section 1-2.4.2 and 4.3.
 - Standards for residential and commercial use of homes in Section 1-2.8.2.
 - Standards for residential accessory uses in Section 1-2.10.1.
 - Standards for new neighborhoods in Division 2-4.1, including preservation of open space.
 - Density bonuses for open space preservation and resource protection as part of residential developments in Section 2-7.1.1.
 - Standards for streets and sidewalks in Division 4-13.3, including provisions for residential street design, traffic calming, street system connectivity, pedestrian connections (including from the ends of cul-de-sac streets), multi-modal design in planned developments with multiple housing types, and potential for off-street trails in lieu of sidewalks in larger-lot Estate Residential areas.
 - Principles for subdivision and development design in Section 4-14.2.1.
 - Ability of the Planning Commission to approve alternate standards for developments "to provide a subdivider/developer with maximum flexibility in the design and character of creatively designed developments" in Section 4-15.2.1.A.
 - Special site development standards for duplexes, multiplexes, and multi-family sites in Division 4 16.1.
 - Best building and site design practices for residential developments that are preferred but not required by the City, as itemized in UDO Appendix A.
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Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Neighborhood organizations
 › Homeowner associations

2. Consider updates to UDO Section 3-8.3.1, Single Family Attached and Multiplex Building Standards, and related site design standards in Division 4-16.1, to address concerns about the character consistency of attached housing forms (e.g., duplexes, townhomes, etc.) built on vacant or infill sites in established neighborhoods – and their associated development costs – including building and parking placement on sites, building setbacks, and site access and on-site circulation.
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Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 › Neighborhood organizations

Partnerships and Communication

1. Use the City’s ongoing neighborhood-level planning and outreach to ensure regular interaction with residents.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City Manager’s Office
 - › City of Florence Community Services Department
 - › Community Development Corporation
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Homeowner associations

2. Maintain ongoing outreach to and communication with home owner associations (HOAs) and also to areas without HOAs or other organized means for neighborhood-level interaction with City officials and staff. Also consider hosting an annual Neighborhoods Summit as a high point for such outreach, to promote networking and information-sharing across neighborhoods, and to funnel input into the City’s annual budgeting and capital improvements planning.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Community Services Department
 - › City Manager’s Office
 - › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Homeowner associations

3. Partner with neighborhood organizations to improve key corridors into neighborhoods and other pride elements such as new or upgraded entry treatments (e.g., monument signage, landscaping, lighting, etc.).

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Community Services Department
 - › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › Community Development Corporation
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Homeowner associations

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Take advantage of resources readily available through the American Planning Association and other sources to monitor trends and best practices for managing both the positive and concerning attributes of activities within neighborhoods such as short-term rentals, increase in home occupation uses, and the buying of older homes for renovation and “flipping.”

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City of Florence Community Services Department
 - › Neighborhood organizations
 - › Homeowner associations

Other Partners related to Housing and Neighborhoods

- City of Florence Building Department
- City of Florence Fire Department
- Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments
- South Carolina Department of Commerce – CDBG Program
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

FUTURE CITY Transportation

Plan Sections

- Growth Capacity
- Land Use and Development
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- **Transportation**
- Economic Development
- Recreation and Amenities
- Plan Implementation

Introduction

This plan section focuses on current, near-term, and long-range transportation needs and priorities in and around Florence. Some of these priorities are outward focused, involving regional and state-level entities and necessary coordination, recognizing the City's role as one of multiple transportation partners in the Pee Dee region. Various other priorities are inward focused, involving essential thoroughfare system upgrades plus ongoing street rehabilitation, sidewalk repairs, and other mobility and safety enhancements in particular areas of the city.

As in many cities, top transportation-related issues facing Florence include improving traffic flow, safety, and connectivity while adding more ways to move around the community on foot and by bike. Continued enhancement of the area roadway network will be necessary to accommodate the increased travel demand resulting from population growth and development, along with additional pass-through beach and visitor traffic. As the mobility system continues to evolve, it should not only address traffic and safety needs but also reflect the surrounding land use and character. Finally, public transportation services are receiving increasing attention in Florence, especially for those without a personal vehicle or with special transportation needs, especially to reach jobs, education sites, and essential services.

Why this Comprehensive Plan Section is Important for Florence

- Reinforces the importance of minimizing traffic congestion while also ensuring safe roadway conditions as a key quality of life component for Florence residents.
- Highlights the role of street design in establishing and reinforcing the desired character of an area, whether in suburban residential neighborhoods or in Downtown Florence and vicinity, where walkability and safe biking are desired more than accommodation of the automobile.
- Emphasizes the fundamental priority placed on neighborhood integrity in Florence, which is influenced by traffic conditions on residential streets and the safety of kids and adults when walking and biking in the community.
- Provides the public policy basis for the City's regulations and standards related to streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, parking, and other mobility-related infrastructure and physical improvements.
- Recognizes that multiple state and regional agencies plan for and guide transportation upgrades and services in the Florence area, enabling the City to focus on local issues and needs along with regional coordination.
- Supports the City's linking of roadway and corridor design to economic development and aesthetic objectives, as has been demonstrated successfully over the last decade within Downtown Florence.

Legacy of Past Planning

This new Comprehensive Plan builds on previous plans and studies completed by the City of Florence and other partners. Those most relevant to the Transportation topic include:

- 2040 FLATS Long Range Transportation Plan (2018).
- Pedestrian Master Plan (2017).
- Regional Transit and Coordination Plan for Pee Dee Region (2014).
- 76 Gateway Corridor Study (2018).
- Next Steps 2017-2022 Comprehensive Plan Update (2017).
- Downtown Florence Five Year Comprehensive Plan Update (2017).
- Florence County Comprehensive Plan Review (2017).
- City of Florence Comprehensive Plan 2010 (February 2011).
- Florence County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020).

Accomplishments

Progress and achievements resulting from past planning and implementation efforts were identified through leadership and community input to this plan. Significant items cited that are most relevant to the Transportation topic include:

- A more walkable and bike-friendly Downtown, including through better management of parking supply and location.
- More pedestrian connections, along with trail system expansion.
- Transit service improvements, including the addition of free Downtown shuttles, an upgraded Florence Transit Center, and increasing coordination between the Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority and area employers to link workers to industry locations.
- Roadway capacity upgrades along specific corridors (e.g., Alligator Road).
- Roadway redesigns to improve traffic flow, safety, and aesthetics, including recent upgrades to the Evans Street corridor west of Downtown.

Key Planning Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of the comprehensive planning effort, numerous real and perceived community issues and needs were identified through leadership and public engagement activities, as well as through the work of the plan consultants and their interactions with City management and staff. Key issues and considerations that led to the goals and action items in this Transportation section include:

- The ongoing importance of transportation in connecting residents to more and better employment opportunities.
- An increasing focus on transportation safety, in Florence as well as nationwide, to reduce collisions and traffic fatalities while also prioritizing pedestrian and cyclist safety.

- Relieving peak-hour traffic congestion at key intersections (e.g., various Palmetto Street/US 76 intersections, including “Five Points” at Cashua Drive and Hoffmeyer/Cherokee Road, at David H. McLeod Boulevard, and at Irby Street/US 52; and Irby Street/US 52 at 2nd Loop Road/Highway 51).
- Desire to redesign, revitalize, and improve the aesthetics of key roadway corridors in Florence (e.g., Irby Street), but challenges faced when not under the City’s jurisdiction.
- Addressing increasing traffic volumes in growth areas in and around the city, balanced with the costs to the City of maintaining older street and sidewalk infrastructure in previously developed areas of Florence.
- Importance of the penny sales tax and other funding sources (e.g., Florence Area Transportation Study) in the absence of a dedicated local funding source for ongoing street maintenance and repair.
- Overcoming perceptions that the City “owns” all area roadways and is responsible for their maintenance.
- Long-range outlook for the Florence Regional Airport.
- Desire for better connectivity between Florence and other communities in Florence County and the Pee Dee region.

Framework for Action

This Framework for Action section builds off of the plan priorities confirmed with Florence City Council during the transition from the Existing City to the Future City phase of Comprehensive Plan development. The Plan goals and action strategies are aimed at “connecting the dots” between a set of community improvement fundamentals for Florence that involve:

- Stabilizing and enhancing Florence’s neighborhoods.
- Continuing the momentum of Florence’s downtown revitalization.
- Being both a fiscally and physically resilient city.
- Expecting quality in both private development and public projects.
- Being an amenity rich place.
- Being a connected, equitable community.
- Providing an environment for diverse economic growth opportunities.

What connects all of these points is the desire to retain and attract more population to Florence, including those who grew up here. The actions in this Transportation section involve tangible steps that will lead to achievement of the goals in line with the plan’s Guiding Principles (in the Introduction section). The actions are categorized into the five types of plan implementation actions highlighted throughout this Plan.

Goals for Transportation

1. A systematic approach to **street maintenance and upgraded design and appearance** through periodic rehabilitation.



A Goal is ...

a statement of a desired outcome ("end") toward which efforts are directed as expressed by more specific objectives and action steps ("means").

A Strategic Action Priority is ...

aimed at seizing a special opportunity or addressing a particular challenge one faces, given limited resources – financial and otherwise – and recognizing that a broader agenda of new or ongoing activities will also be pursued in the meantime.

- 2. Greater focus on **non-vehicular circulation** and the safety of those moving about Florence by bike or on foot.
- 3. A mobility system that provides **connectivity and options** for getting to destinations in and around the community, including to employment centers, schools, and locations for workforce training.
- 4. A continued emphasis on building **public transit ridership** through extended hours and more frequent service.

Actions by Goal

GOAL 1: A systematic approach to street maintenance and upgraded design and appearance through periodic rehabilitation.

Rationale: Like nearly every local government in South Carolina and across the nation, Florence’s elected leaders and staff must respond to citizen expectations for a well-maintained local street network. Applying technology and rational planning and management methods will help optimize the use of available resources, and target them effectively to areas in need of immediate attention, as well as street segments that will remain in sound condition through timely preventive maintenance. The City has also set a new standard for corridor design and appearance with the recent street reconfiguration and streetscape enhancements along W. Evans Street.

Capital Investments

- 1. Continue to build an asset management plan and strategy, including periodic updating of a condition index for prioritizing improvements; classifying potential improvements as short-, medium-, or long-term; and identifying funding sources.

Action Leaders › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
and Key Partners › City of Florence Public Works Department

- 2. Continue efforts to establish community gateways in priority locations, including use of public art as part of impactful gateway treatments.

Action Leaders › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
and Key Partners › City of Florence Public Works Department

Regulations and Standards

- 1. As part of Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) updates based on this new Comprehensive Plan, revisit requirements and standards for developer-installed street lighting. Also coordinate with Duke Energy to upgrade its lighting as it has done elsewhere in South Carolina. Also improve existing City-maintained lighting through annual allotments within the City’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Action Leaders › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
and Key Partners › City of Florence Public Works Department
› Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
› Duke Energy

GOAL 2: Greater focus on non-vehicular circulation and the safety of those moving about Florence by bike or on foot.

Rationale: Engagement activities for this Comprehensive Plan update included passionate statements on the need to prioritize and fund improvements beyond those intended to enhance the flow and speeds of primarily motor vehicle traffic. In particular, frustration was expressed over the distributed model through which multi-modal transportation improvements are accomplished not only in Florence, but across South Carolina and the nation, involving City, County, regional, state, and federal agencies with disparate yet often overlapping planning processes that touch on desired improvements to varying degrees yet do not always illuminate a clear path – and timeframe – for getting from statements in plans to implemented projects on the ground.

Capital Investments

1. Identify corridors that could be candidates for “road diets.” Then:
 - Utilize established resurfacing schedules to implement Complete Streets retrofits during these activities.
 - Assess opportunities for transitioning roadways into Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant public rights-of-way.
 - Evaluate the potential to incorporate bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
 - Apply for Surface Transportation Program (STP), Highway Safety Improvement Program (HISP), or other federal-aid funds to support road diet expenditures.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners**
 > City of Florence Public Works Department
 > FLATS
 > Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
 > SCDOT

Programs and Initiatives

1. Enact a Vision Zero policy to eliminate bicycle and pedestrian injuries and fatalities. This initiative would involve:
 - Prioritizing protected bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure.
 - Providing bicycling education and safety courses.
 - Focusing on large vehicle safety to avoid conflicts between large vehicle traffic and smaller, less protected road users.
 - Evaluating whether speeds are a contributor to bicycle/pedestrian accidents and determining if speeds can be lowered on roadways where bicycle/pedestrian accidents are higher.
 - Partnering with local schools to have a National Walk and Bike to School Day event to promote biking/walking to school year-round.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners**
 > City Manager’s Office
 > City of Florence Recreation Department
 > City of Florence Police Department
 > Florence 1 Schools
 > FLATS
 > Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
 > SCDOT
 > Neighborhood organizations

2. Better define the path from transportation plans and concepts to project prioritization, funding, design, and eventual implementation, especially for greater public and stakeholder understanding of public processes involving multiple agencies and levels of government. Especially work to ensure that residents and stakeholders gain greater awareness of when a priority project that originated in a City, County, FLATS, or SCDOT



planning process – and associated community engagement – is finally moving toward construction.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Florence County Planning
 - › FLATS
 - › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
 - › SCDOT

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Develop an ADA Transition Plan, to involve:
 - Engaging with the disabled public on accessibility challenges and issues in Florence.
 - Identifying existing facilities, services, and programs.
 - Identifying and cataloging non-ADA compliant public rights-of-way.
 - Identifying critical gaps in sidewalk coverage.
 - Inventorying existing sidewalks and establishing a condition rating index.
 - Developing a transition plan and priority schedule for accessibility improvements.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › FLATS
 - › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
 - › SCDOT
 - › Area advocates for disabled persons and ADA compliance

2. Identify non-motorized crash locations and assess the physical characteristics of these areas. As part of this effort, engage with bike/ped advocates and roadway users to confirm dangerous roadways and intersections. Also assess whether high-frequency crash locations can be improved with low-cost enhancements such as bulb-outs, marked crosswalks, or better lighting.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City of Florence Police Department
 - › FLATS
 - › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
 - › SCDOT
 - › Area bicycle and pedestrian advocates

3. Apply for Transportation Enhancement Grants, after:
 - Prioritizing projects based on identified metrics (starting with Pedestrian Master Plan projects).
 - Developing a Bicycle Compatibility Index to identify gaps and deficiencies in the bicycle network.
 - Creating a Bicycle Level of Service map using the Ride Illinois BLOS calculator.
 - Identifying routes appropriate for on-street bike lanes, shared-used paths, or marked sharrows.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › FLATS
 - › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
 - › SCDOT
 - › Area bicycle and pedestrian advocates

4. Implement projects identified in the Pedestrian Master Plan, working across City departments and with other agencies and partners to capitalize on implementing such improvements while maintenance or upgrades of other City facilities are also in planning and design. For example, if utilities are being upgraded could it be an opportunity to add sidewalks or improve a street crossing?

-
- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Public Works Department
 › FLATS
 › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
 › SCDOT
 › Area bicycle and pedestrian advocates
-

GOAL 3: A mobility system that provides connectivity and options for getting to destinations in and around the community, including to employment centers, schools, and locations for workforce training.

Rationale: Improved connectivity across the entire Florence community, accommodating a wider array of mobility options beyond private motorized vehicles, was a common theme during engagement activities for this new Comprehensive Plan. Enhanced safety for all ages was a parallel priority as captured by Goal 2 below. Furthermore, various discussions on these points also tied in the importance of connecting Florence residents with the entire range of employment opportunities available in the area, as well as the educational and training offerings that can make individuals more employable and better compensated.

Programs and Initiatives

1. Initiate a Bike Share Feasibility Study to:
 - Identify potential public or private partners to help start, maintain, and sponsor a bike share program.
 - Determine costs of operations, maintenance, and improving infrastructure for bike share stations.
 - Investigate and secure funding.

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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › City of Florence Public Works Department
 › City of Florence Recreation Department
 › City of Florence Finance Department
 › Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau
 › Potential public agency, employer, institutional, and non-profit partners

Regulations and Standards

1. Consider new or adjusted policies that would incentivize developers to include sharrows, bike lanes, and traffic calming devices in new development or redevelopment plans, along with other incentives for promoting less car-centric development patterns. As part of this initiative:
 - Develop a traffic calming manual.
 - Develop a safe street policy.
 - Adopt a complete streets resolution.

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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Identify the locations of key employment centers (e.g., McLeod Regional Medical Center, MUSC Medical Center, Pee Dee business park, Florence 1 Schools, Francis Marion University, City of Florence, Florence County, McLeod Health, major shopping centers, etc.) and workforce training opportunities. Then:
 - Ensure transit routes and stops align with these critical locations.
 - Apply for Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants to help build infrastructure to improve access to employment opportunities.
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- Identify gaps in sidewalk coverage to get to employment opportunities from transit stops.
 - Evaluate regional workforce transit opportunities such as vanpooling and carpooling.
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Action Leaders and Key Partners > **Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS)**
> City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
> Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
> Florence County Economic Development Partnership
> Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
> Major regional employers
> South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT)

2. Identify Florence 1 school campuses with significant trip generation. Then:
 - Determine the mode share of students, faculty, and staff (school bus, parent drop-off, walk, ride bike, personal vehicle, carpool, rideshare, public transit, etc.).
 - Identify gaps in sidewalk coverage within the walkshed of individual schools and prioritize these locations for sidewalk construction.
 - Apply for Safe Routes to School grant opportunities to help build infrastructure.
-

Action Leaders and Key Partners > **Florence 1 Schools**
> Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
> City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
> FLATS
> SCDOT

3. Identify low-income housing areas and areas where seniors or persons with disabilities live. Then:
 - Ensure transit routes and stops align with these locations.
 - Identify gaps in sidewalk coverage from housing to essential needs like grocery stores, pharmacies, and recreational facilities such as parks and trails.
-

Action Leaders and Key Partners > **Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority**
> City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
> Neighborhood organizations
> Pee Dee Community Action Partnership (and other social service organizations)
> SCDOT

4. Understand causes of congestion and strive to make operational improvements to signals or access management measures before widening roadways. Also:
 - Work with FLATS and SCDOT to complete a congestion management plan to understand existing traffic issues that contribute to congestion.
 - Continue active participation in the FLATS Policy Committee to engage in the transportation planning process for the area.
 - Implement access management and general improvement recommendations from the FLATS 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan.
-

Action Leaders and Key Partners > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
> FLATS
> SCDOT

GOAL 4: A continued emphasis on building public transit ridership through extended hours and more frequent service.

Rationale: Public transit systems across the country rely on federal funding and subsidized services to provide even a basic level of programming. Meeting the worthy objective of enhancing transit service within Florence and the larger Pee Dee Region will require partner support and additional resources.

Programs and Initiatives

1. Expand marketing to area residents and workers about transit services, taking even greater advantage of social media to disseminate information on how and where to ride local transit.

- Action Leaders** > **Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority**
and Key Partners > City Manager’s Office
 > Community Development Corporation
 > Pee Dee Community Action Partnership (and other social service organizations)
 > Faith community

2. Coordinate on-demand scheduling and dispatching, and the pursuit of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Access and Mobility Partnership Grants to gain more resources for PDRTA.

- Action Leaders** > **Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department

Partnerships and Communication

1. Continue efforts to create a multimodal hub that will facilitate Amtrak, intercity bus, and the regional bus system. Associated steps should include:
 - Identifying multimodal districts and hubs that represent Florence’s most walkable districts, as well as nodes for economic development.
 - Determining the potential for locating bus/transit stops within a 1/4-mile radius of such walkable districts.
 - Encouraging bike/pedestrian improvements connecting to the walkable districts.
 - Promoting streetscape design guidelines that encourage pedestrian activity and allow users to travel safely to walkable districts and the multimodal hubs within them.

- Action Leaders** > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
 > FLATS
 > SCDOT

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Support a regional ridership and planning study to determine where demand for transit ridership is concentrated and/or emerging, and the level of support for potential system expansions/improvements. As part of the survey effort for this study, explore why people do or do not use the public transit system and how it could be improved.

- Action Leaders** > **Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 > FLATS
 > SCDOT

2. Identify signalized intersections that are a source of delay for transit, and evaluate the potential for transit system priority treatments.

- Action Leaders** > **Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 > City of Florence Public Works Department
 > FLATS
 > SCDOT



FUTURE CITY Economic Development

Plan Sections

- Growth Capacity
- Land Use and Development
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Transportation
- **Economic Development**
- Recreation and Amenities
- Plan Implementation

Introduction

The City of Florence and the area's lead entities for economic development – from the Florence County Economic Development Partnership, the North Eastern Strategic Alliance, and the Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce to the Francis Marion University Kelley Center for Economic Development, the Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Florence Downtown Development Corporation – continue to work on key market factors they can directly influence. These include utility infrastructure availability and capacity, the size and skills of the local workforce, networking and support among existing and prospective new local businesses, and processes for obtaining development approvals and permits.

Local governments create synergy by providing basic public services, on the one hand, while also supporting economic development initiatives. Increased economic activity that creates a growing tax base better enables the City to provide the infrastructure and services desired by residents and businesses. In turn, the services, infrastructure, and amenities the City provides are enticements that encourage further economic growth. Well-constructed economic development policies will provide Florence and the Pee Dee region the greatest opportunity to influence the quality, quantity, and timing of development. Such policies will create the ability to shift some of the risk of funding public improvements to private sector partners and will afford the opportunity to ensure growth pays for itself.

Why this Comprehensive Plan Section is Important for Florence

- Reinforces that while the City is not the area's lead entity for economic development, it has a foundational role to play involving provision of utility infrastructure and other essential public services, and applying its Unified Development Ordinance to maintain a favorable investment framework and protect area assets like Florence Regional Airport.
- Emphasizes the importance of both commercial development quality and attractive design of public infrastructure and streetscapes along Florence's major corridors as this is where first and lasting impressions of the community are formed.
- Highlights the ongoing need for commercial redevelopment activity and where the City, with its various partners, should concentrate revitalization efforts to ensure outcomes desired by Florence residents.
- Advocates that successful economic development also requires a focus on quality of place, capitalizing on Florence's location, transportation infrastructure and other assets, and its special character to attract and retain businesses and high-skilled workers – and to draw visitors seeking shopping, services, entertainment, recreation, and arts and culture.

Legacy of Past Planning

This new Comprehensive Plan builds on previous plans and studies completed by the City of Florence and other partners. Those most relevant to the Economic Development topic include:

- Community Profile for Pee Dee Workforce Development Area (2019)
- 76 Gateway Corridor Study (2018)
- Next Steps 2017-2022 Comprehensive Plan Update (2017)
- Downtown Florence Five Year Comprehensive Plan Update (2017)

Accomplishments

Progress and achievements resulting from past planning and implementation efforts were identified through leadership and community input to this plan. Significant items cited that are most relevant to the Economic Development topic include:

- A revitalized and vibrant Downtown, supporting a diverse business mix along with public and institutional presence – leading to Florence being among three 2023 winners of the nationally prestigious Great American Main Street Award from Main Street America.
- Linking economic development with community development, recognizing that reinvestment in neighborhoods and people will support expanded wealth-building opportunities in Florence.
- Improved perceptions of Florence, which boosted interest from the investment and banking sectors.
- Expanded lodging options for Florence visitors, both Downtown and at the junction of Interstates 95 and 20.
- Community-supported upgrades to Florence Center.
- Improvements to Magnolia Mall as a key Florence retail draw.
- Leadership development and better connections across agencies and organizations.

Key Planning Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of the comprehensive planning effort, numerous real and perceived community issues and needs were identified through leadership and public engagement activities, as well as through the work of the plan consultants and their interactions with City management and staff. Key issues and considerations that led to the goals and action items in this Economic Development section include:

- Continuing to secure economic development wins that build on Florence’s core advantages (e.g., water capacity, the area’s “eds and meds” specialization in education and health care, etc.) and that generate jobs with more than just “livable” wages.
- Addressing the desire among City leaders to define “success” more clearly, so as to clarify and reinforce missions and roles for all those involved in the area’s economic development.
- Reinforcing Florence’s position as the hub city of the Pee Dee Region.

- Elevating the entire educational experience in Florence, from primary and secondary levels through higher education and workforce training, to bolster the area labor pool and also increase Florence’s appeal as a place to raise a family and stay to build a career.
- Retaining and drawing back Florence’s hometown sons and daughter to the community, with quality jobs the core factor, along with attainable housing, attractive neighborhoods, and amenities and overall livability.
- Continuing to promote the area’s transportation assets, from ready access to Interstates 95 and 20 to Florence Regional Airport, freight and passenger rail service, and a web of U.S. and state highway connections – plus the volume of pass-by traffic on the Interstate highways as another built-in market advantage.
- Connecting more Florence residents to area job opportunities through transit service upgrades.
- Maintaining the increasing pace, since 2010, of Downtown investment and activation of private and public spaces – and the ripple effects this has on the entire city.
- Needing to build on a new generation of branding and image-setting for the City of Florence – and separately but closely linked – for Downtown Florence.

Framework for Action

This Framework for Action section builds off of the plan priorities confirmed with Florence City Council during the transition from the Existing City to the Future City phase of Comprehensive Plan development. The Plan goals and action strategies are aimed at “connecting the dots” between a set of community improvement fundamentals for Florence that involve:

- Stabilizing and enhancing Florence’s neighborhoods.
- Continuing the momentum of Florence’s downtown revitalization.
- Being both a fiscally and physically resilient city.
- Expecting quality in both private development and public projects.
- Being an amenity rich place.
- Being a connected, equitable community.
- Providing an environment for diverse economic growth opportunities.

What connects all of these points is the desire to retain and attract more population to Florence, including those who grew up here. The actions in this Economic Development section involve tangible steps that will lead to achievement of the goals in line with the plan’s Guiding Principles (in the Introduction section). The actions are categorized into the five types of plan implementation actions highlighted throughout this Plan.

Goals for Economic Development

1. A clarified definition of what “economic development” means for Florence and the **City’s unique role in making Florence more attractive for investment**, including a holistic approach that encompasses overall community development and quality of place.



Defining Economic Development

Economic development is a shared effort between local governments and the business community with the mutual benefit of increased economic activity and revenue.

At the core of all economic development programs is to attract and retain businesses, create jobs, stabilize and grow the local tax base, and enhance local quality of life. To achieve these goals, economic development programs encompass a wide range of activities:

- Business retention and expansion assistance.
- Business recruitment.
- Marketing and branding.
- Small business development.
- “Economic gardening” (a data-centric approach to identifying and assisting local high-growth companies).
- Incentives.
- Workforce development.
- Tourism, including cultural draws (art, historic, music).
- Improved public services, processes, and infrastructure.

2. Ongoing promotion of a **thriving downtown** to act as an economic driver, drawing more investment that spreads prosperity wider, and for attracting and retaining a skilled workforce.
3. Continued **capitalization on Florence’s position as the hub city of the Pee Dee** for jobs, education, shopping and services, transportation linkages, utility infrastructure, and arts and culture, among many other assets and regional draws.
4. A **fresh identity and branding, both for City government and then specifically for Downtown**, that stands apart from but also reinforces other local efforts to communicate Florence’s story to external audiences while also boosting community confidence and pride.
5. Sustained emphasis on the creation of partnerships to address the **continuum of education**, from early childhood through higher and continuing education, to enhance Florence’s workforce and draw industries with better jobs and pay.

Actions by Goal

GOAL 1: A clarified definition of what “economic development” means for Florence and the City’s unique role in making Florence more attractive for investment, including a holistic approach that encompasses overall community development and quality of place.

Rationale: Previous Comprehensive Plans for Florence emphasized the need for coordinated efforts and programming across the various entities involved in area economic development. Along with this continuing need, some City officials called for re-examination and affirmation of the unique and/or specific ways municipal government can contribute to shared economic development goals and aspirations. As with all forms of economic development, the key question is what desired outcomes would be unlikely to occur “but for” the City’s involvement and direct action? The City has important roles to play through its provision of utility infrastructure and associated capital improvements programming, its regulatory authorities, sources of funding it can tap into (e.g., penny sales tax funds), and the many ways it works to boost community livability and appeal. The City should support the partners and resource connections that are working to diversify the industry mix and range of job opportunities available to residents, while promoting private investment that will yield additional City tax revenue for funding public services. During discussions for this Comprehensive Plan update, it was also noted that, given the growth outlook for west Florence, the City should especially support efforts to capitalize more on the I-95 corridor and associated traveler traffic.

Programs and Initiatives

1. Work collaboratively with the Florence County Economic Development Partnership while expanding the services provided and connections made to existing area resources through the ongoing functions and programs of the City’s Planning, Research, and Development Department.

- Action Leaders** > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > Francis Marion University Kelley Center for Economic Development (small business support/incubation program)
 > Florence County Economic Development Partnership

2. Continue to monitor state legislation affecting economic development best practices and tools for South Carolina municipalities.

- Action Leaders** > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Finance Department
 > City of Florence Utilities Department

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Economic Development goal, including:
 - Zoning districts in Section 1-2.2.1 for both light and heavy industrial activity (IL and IH) to provide for a range of business investment and employment opportunities involving manufacturing and assembly, warehousing and distribution/logistics, research and development, salvage and recycling, and ancillary uses to trucking, rail and air transportation, among many others.
 - Zoning districts in Section 1-2.2.1 to provide for mixed-use development outside of downtown (AC) and to “allow for flexibility of uses that will support nearby businesses by attracting people to the area” (DS).

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** > Florence County Economic Development Partnership
 > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

2. Continue to fulfill the City’s unique asset protection role, such as through ongoing implementation of the Florence Airport Compatibility zoning overlay district in UDO Division 1-2.5 and related airport protection standards in Division 4-13.5.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** > Florence County Planning
 > Pee Dee Regional Airport Authority
 > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

Partnerships and Communication

1. Pursue efforts in partnership with the area’s major employers to entice more workers to consider living locally and make them more aware of local amenities and resources.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** > Florence County Economic Development Partnership
 > Florence Downtown Development Corporation
 > Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
 > Florence County Progress

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Pursue market-based corridor studies for specific commercial corridors, beginning with the S. Irby Street, W. Evans Street, and W. Palmetto Street corridors. The market-based corridor study examines the specific market context along the corridor, identifies potential redevelopment opportunities and catalyst sites, and completes development pro formas for the catalyst sites. Study recommendations should focus especially on unique and essential action steps City government can take.

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners**

GOAL 2: Ongoing promotion of a **thriving downtown** to act as an economic driver, drawing more investment that spreads prosperity wider, and for attracting and retaining a skilled workforce.

Rationale: A Downtown Master Plan update concurrent to this Comprehensive Plan update means that Florence is well positioned for a next decade of sustained progress in its remarkable downtown turnaround story. Three keys to an even more vibrant downtown include: (1) introducing even more residential units into the downtown use mix, (2) focusing on the



Appreciating the Importance of Small Businesses

Traditionally, economic development efforts have focused on the "big get" to entice large regional and national job producers. The nationwide fever over the Amazon HQ2 site selection process was a recent high-profile example. These types of opportunities, which are not frequent, spark fierce competition among cities and towns. Unfortunately, smaller communities have difficulty matching the scale of incentives offered by larger jurisdictions and expend valuable resources without big payoffs.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that 52 percent of job growth in the U.S. in recent pre-pandemic years came from small and mid-sized businesses (1-49 and 50-249 employees, respectively) – approximately 22 percent from small and 30 percent from mid-sized businesses. All communities should pay more attention to this key growth segment. Especially smaller communities that may realize a higher success rate as there is likely less competition from communities outside of the local region.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, The Economic Daily.

"people" side of downtown (gathering spaces, family-friendly activities, complementary annual events, etc.), and (3) extending revitalization efforts to key downtown area nodes and corridors beyond the historic core.

Capital Investments

1. Implement actions in the updated Downtown Master Plan involving capital investment needs and priorities.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › **Florence Downtown Development Corporation**
 › City of Florence Utilities Department
 › City of Florence Public Works Department
 › City of Florence Finance Department

Programs and Initiatives

1. Implement actions in the updated Downtown Master Plan involving new or expanded programs and initiatives.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › **Florence Downtown Development Corporation**
 › Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Economic Development goal, including:
 - The Downtown design districts established as zoning overlays in Division 1-2.4, with associated site development guidelines in Division 4-16.3.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

2. Implement actions in the updated Downtown Master Plan involving new or amended regulations and standards that would support ongoing revitalization objectives.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

Partnerships and Communication

1. Implement actions in the updated Downtown Master Plan involving new or renewed partnerships and interagency coordination.

Action Leaders › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners

NOTE: Included at the end of this Economic Development section is an insert taken from the newest update of the Florence Downtown Master Plan, highlighting accomplishments and successes after several decades of sustained public and private investments and other wide-ranging plan implementation efforts.

GOAL 3: Continued **capitalization on Florence’s position as the hub city of the Pee Dee** for jobs, education, shopping and services, transportation linkages, utility infrastructure, and arts and culture, among many other assets and regional draws.

Rationale: Florence must continue to cultivate its position as the clear leader and activity center of the Pee Dee region. This will require an ongoing partnerships emphasis across all the assets and elements that draw people to Florence. The City must also maintain its active participation in regional and state economic development entities to advance Florence’s interests; and likewise, continue to foster relationships with and support local economic development organizations.

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Economic Development goal, including:
 - The overarching UDO purpose to “provide opportunities for commercial development and mixed-use activity centers to serve city and regional residents and visitors” in Section 1-2.1.1.B.5.
 - Activity Center (AC) and Destination / Select Use (DS) zoning districts in Section 1-2.2.1 to provide for mixed-use development outside of downtown (AC) and to “allow for flexibility of uses that will support nearby businesses by attracting people to the area” (DS).

Action Leaders > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners** > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

Partnerships and Communication

1. Continue to strengthen and grow partnerships in key areas where the City does not have a lead role, including:
 - Regional economic development planning, programs, and initiatives administered by the Florence County Economic Development Partnership, Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce, and the North Eastern Strategic Alliance.
 - Education and workforce training with Florence 1 Schools, area private schools, Francis Marion University, area medical and nursing programs, Florence-Darlington Technical College, SC Works Pee Dee, and South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce.
 - Commercial property prospects with property owners, brokers, and developers to keep abreast of their plans and desires for their properties.
 - Insights about the area economy and local business needs or challenges through a major employers and small business owners roundtable that meets periodically.
 - Tourism promotion and marketing coordination through ongoing interaction with the Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau, Florence Downtown Development Corporation, and the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (DiSCover South Carolina), among others.

Action Leaders > **City Manager’s Office and Key Partners** > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department > Agency and institutional partners cited above > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. In partnership with the area’s lead economic development entities, contribute to a refreshed area-wide Economic Development Plan, which among other purposes can help guide the development of vacant land, infill development and redevelopment, and investment and revitalization along key roadway corridors. The plan should also include



links to planning for infrastructure, historic preservation, arts and culture, and tourism promotion.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Florence County Economic Development Partnership
 - › City of Florence Utilities Department
 - › Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - › Florence Downtown Development Corporation
 - › North Eastern Strategic Alliance

GOAL 4: A fresh identity and branding, both for City government and then specifically for Downtown, that stands apart from but also reinforces other local efforts to communicate Florence’s story to external audiences while also boosting community confidence and pride.

Rationale: Both in discussions about the image and identify of Florence as a whole, as well as Downtown Florence specifically, the desire was consistently expressed to create a new branding treatment for use in communications with external and internal audiences. Some mentioned the notion of a “new generation” of Florence branding, including to transition to a more customized and tangible message than the “Full Life, Full Forward” tagline of recent years.

Programs and Initiatives

1. Continue attracting broad participation in the Chamber’s Leadership Florence program, along with its Young Professionals of Florence group. In other communities this has led to an ongoing formalized structure for young and emerging leaders to collaborate and channel volunteer enthusiasm and effort into strategic initiatives (one example is the Claremore Collective in Claremore, Oklahoma, <http://www.claremorecollective.com/>).

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
 - › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City Manager’s Office
 - › Florence Downtown Development Corporation

2. Maintain the City’s Tree City USA recognition from the Arbor Day Foundation (now for 40+ years) and pursue more community recognitions and competitive rankings that are beneficial for economic development purposes and general marketing of Florence (e.g., All-America City honors through the National Civic League, last received by Florence in 1965).

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Public Works Department – Beautification and Facilities/Parks Division
 - › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Using input from existing local businesses, pursue a strategic marketing plan based on identified assets, advantages, and services that can help attract targeted new businesses and retail customers to Florence.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
 - › Florence County Economic Development Partnership
 - › Florence County Progress

GOAL 5: Sustained emphasis on the creation of partnerships to address the **continuum of education**, from early childhood through higher and continuing education, to enhance Florence’s workforce and draw industries with better jobs and pay.

Rationale: Given the limited role of municipal government in public and higher education functions, City officials, management, and departments should continue to strengthen their ties to and partnerships with the various entities across the area committed to educational programming and excellence, especially as it relates to workforce readiness and continuing education.

Partnerships and Communication

1. Along with regular one-on-one communications between City officials and institutional leaders, continue active participation in forums, events, and other gatherings that celebrate and demonstrate community support for area educational institutions and providers at all levels.

- Action Leaders** > **Florence City Council and City Manager’s Office**
- and Key Partners** > All relevant City departments
- > All area institutions and entities involved in primary and secondary education, higher education, technical/career training, and workforce development and continuing education
- > Florence County Economic Development Partnership

2022

FLORENCE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Adopted in 2011, the Florence Downtown Master Plan Update set the stage for what turned out to be a dramatic revitalization of downtown. After 10 years, interim strategy updates in 2014 and 2017, and immense success with the accomplishment of 96% of the implementation steps, the City of Florence in 2021 began the process of updating its Downtown Master Plan in concert with the citywide Comprehensive Plan. The Downtown Master Plan Update builds on the progress to-date, highlighting accomplishments from the previous Plans. It takes into consideration the vision of City leaders, downtown stakeholders and staff, as well as staffing and budgetary constraints. This double-sided fold-out celebrates "wins" achieved and key milestones, and sets the stage for a thorough Plan Update to guide ongoing efforts over the next 5-10 years.

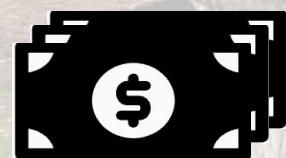
Fast Facts



Number of Vacant Downtown Buildings
 2011 | 42
 2017 | 11
 2021 | 6



Small Businesses in Downtown Florence
76 Small Businesses
 40% minority or women-owned
 70% of retail and restaurants minority or women-owned



Public and Private Investment Since
\$252.5 Million Total
 7:1 Private to Public Investment since 2011
 28:1 Private to Public Investment in 2020



Downtown Events
Over 20 Annual Events
 Including SC Pecan Music & Food Festival, Florence After 5, City Center Farmers Market

Major Building and Use Changes since 2010



Map Key

1. Hope Health
2. Save a Lot Grocery Store
3. PDRTA Transit Center
4. City Center Farmers Market and Kitchen
5. Pearl Moore Basketball Center
6. Florence County Judicial Center
7. Florence County Parking Structure
8. Florence County Government Complex Renovation
9. Carolina Bank
10. Condo redevelopments
11. Kress Building Redevelopment
12. Florence Police Department Substation
13. Florence City Center Relocation
14. Francis Marion University (FMU) Center for Health Sciences
15. Hotel Florence and Victor's Bistro
16. Chamber of Commerce Relocation
17. Hyatt Place Hotel
18. Waters Building Redevelopment
19. Emerson Apartment Complex and Wrapped Parking Structure
20. Florence County Museum
21. "Restaurant Row" Redevelopment
22. FMU Performing Arts Center

Florence Downtown Development Before & After Photos



Kress Corner



138-140 W Evans St



Hotel Florence



185 W Evans St



127 W Evans St

TWO DECADES OF MOMENTUM IN DOWNTOWN FLORENCE

2000 - 2009

- 2002** | Florence Downtown Development Corporation (FDDC) established as non-profit
- 2006** | 3-phase Downtown Master Plan approved to revitalize downtown
- 2008** | Florence Downtown Historic District listed in National Register (reflects development from 1890-1940)
- 2009** | First Florence After Five Concert



2012

James Allen Plaza and the Renaissance Dining Courtyard created

- Florence After Five moves to Dargan Street
- Creation of Downtown Farmers' Market

2016

- Redevelopment Grant Program adopted
- Wayfinding program begins
- 100 residential units downtown (Emerson)
- Kress Corner completed
- FMU Health Sciences building completed
- Downtown Christmas Light Show added

2017

- Dargan Street streetscape completed
- Hope Health Phase 2 complete
- FDDC branding project: "Full Life. Full Forward. Florence"
- City Council designates "Food, Artisan, and Warehouse Overlay District"



2019

City Center Farmers Market completed

- Griffin Plaza and splash pad created
- Irby Corridor Overlay District adopted
- Project Urban Square announced
- Digital wayfinding signs completed
- Downtown Loop Trail designed
- New public art installed

2020

- Hotel Florence renovation complete
- FMU Old Post Office redevelopment complete
- Rebrand of SC Pecan Festival to SC Pecan Music & Food Festival
- Six new businesses open



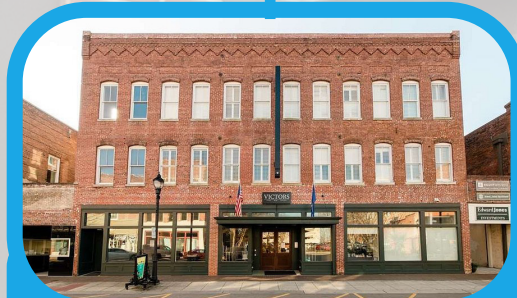
2021

Save a Lot Grocery opens Oct 2021

2010

2011

- City of Florence Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Master Plan adopted
- Maintenance and Appearance Codes, and Facade Grant Program passed by City Council
- Facade Demo Block program adopted by City Council
- Francis Marion University (FMU) Performing Arts Center opens



2013

Hotel Florence and Victor's open

- Public art program for Downtown created

2014

- Businesses continue to move to downtown
- City of Florence offices relocate downtown
- Facade and streetscape work continues



2015

Florence Museum completed

- Hope Health Phase 1 complete
- Med-Enroll (now Synergi Partners) opens
- 100 W. Evans building completed
- Florence Chamber moves Downtown

2018

- Hyatt Hotel completed
- Florence County Judicial Center completed
- Millennial Advisory, Merchant, and Hospitality Committees formed
- TIF district extended to 2046
- Downtown rejoins SC Main Street program



2018

Carolina Bank adaptive reuse project complete

Robust FDDC and City Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

- Award small business re-opening grants
- Staff create COVID resource center, assist 50+ small businesses with funding applications
- Curbside pickup areas activated
- Downtown holiday programming virtual gift guide



2021

Downtown Florence achieves National Main Street Accreditation



2015

Award-Winning Downtown and Florence Downtown Development Corporation
South Carolina Municipal Association Award for Public Service associated with Brownfield Cleanup and Hope Health

2017

Municipal Association of South Carolina Joseph P. Riley Jr. Award for Economic Development

2021

Main Street South Carolina Inspiration Awards for Outstanding 2020 Promotion of Downtown Holiday Gift Guide & Outstanding Business Development Program for COVID-19 Response



FUTURE CITY Recreation and Amenities

Plan Sections

- Growth Capacity
- Land Use and Development
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- **Recreation and Amenities**
- Plan Implementation

Introduction

Input to this Comprehensive Plan update confirmed that City leaders, area institutions, and residents were already thinking in general about all the elements that will make Florence a more complete community as it grows, from more shopping and restaurant options to enhanced cultural and entertainment offerings, along with robust recreation opportunities. In this respect, this plan section builds on various shared objectives in the Economic Development section.

While all aspects of this Comprehensive Plan ultimately shape the livability of Florence, this Recreation and Amenities section especially reinforces the quality of life its residents enjoy. All of the plan elements also relate to the environment, including topics such as: land management through municipal planning and development regulation; design of housing and neighborhoods; availability of travel options; provision of water, sanitary sewer, waste disposal, storm drainage, and other public services; and – through this plan section – planning for recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors. Consideration of prudent resource conservation practices requires a holistic view of the community and how it interacts with, benefits from, and manages the integrity of its natural “infrastructure.”

Why this Comprehensive Plan Section is Important for Florence

- Emphasizes that parks, open space, and recreation facilities are an essential part of a healthy and sustainable community, offering relaxation and exercise outside of the home and work and beyond school activities.
- Underscores that much like streets, utilities, and police and fire protection, parks are another component of a municipality’s core services – and often among the public services most valued by residents and also enjoyed by visitors.
- Highlights that with its unique heritage and appreciation for the arts, Florence also offers a revived and active Downtown, close proximity to the South Carolina coast and beaches, and access to the surrounding countryside of the Pee Dee region.
- Reinforces that the quality of land, water, and air resources is also essential to the character and livability of a community.

Legacy of Past Planning

This new Comprehensive Plan builds on previous plans and studies completed by the City of Florence and other partners. Those most relevant to the Recreation and Amenities topic include:

- 76 Gateway Corridor Study (2018)
- Pedestrian Master Plan (2017)
- Next Steps 2017-2022 Comprehensive Plan Update (2017)
- Downtown Florence Five Year Comprehensive Plan Update (2017)
- Forestry Stewardship Management Plan (2015)
- Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (2014)
- Neighborhood Action Plan (2013)

Accomplishments

Progress and achievements resulting from past planning and implementation efforts were identified through leadership and community input to this plan. Significant items cited that are most relevant to the Recreation and Amenities topic include:

- Reinvestment in Florence’s core neighborhood parks and community centers.
- An impressive collection of specialty sports complexes and facilities for tennis, soccer, and basketball.
- Trail system development.
- Increased recreational programming for Florence’s youth and seniors, and more entertainment options Downtown for young adults – plus valued annual and special events for the entire community.
- An enhanced Florence Center.
- A renewed, activated, and award-winning Downtown, along with free shuttle service for visitors and residents.
- Better recognition of Downtown and the City’s parks and trails as places to gather and build community in Florence.
- City-led success at drawing the community together and improving communication and trust across all aspects of Florence’s diverse demographics (race, income, etc.), to advance shared objectives for community betterment.
- The extent and variety of community accomplishments Florence has made since its 2010 Comprehensive Plan, despite limited resources and other challenges.

Key Planning Issues and Considerations

Through the Existing City and Plan Direction phases of the comprehensive planning effort, numerous real and perceived community issues and needs were identified through leadership and public engagement activities, as well as through the work of the plan consultants and their interactions with City management and staff. Key issues and considerations that led to the goals and action items in this Recreation and Amenities section include:

- After a decade-plus of wide-ranging accomplishments that enhanced Florence’s livability, avoiding complacency and working toward next major vision elements and planning-driven community milestones with the City’s many partners.
- In concert with the quality jobs focus of the Economic Development section and the home ownership emphasis of the Housing and Neighborhoods element of this plan, retaining and convincing Florence’s hometown sons and daughter to return someday, also for its smaller city character, a revived Downtown, and other recreation and cultural amenities.
- Continuing to promote the health and fitness of Florence residents through outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities, and by becoming a more bike- and pedestrian-friendly community in conjunction with the Transportation element of this plan.
- Capitalizing more on the Pee Dee region’s natural assets and beauty.
- The challenge of enhancing certain areas for public recreation – and improved stormwater management – where private land ownership prevails (e.g., along Jeffries Creek and other creek corridors).
- Continuing to improve Florence’s aesthetics and appearance, for the overall livability purposes of this plan section, and in conjunction with priority actions in the Economic Development and Land Use and Development sections.
- Continuing to demonstrate that Downtown is for everybody, with more attractions and activities for kids and families.

Framework for Action

This Framework for Action section builds off of the plan priorities confirmed with Florence City Council during the transition from the Existing City to the Future City phase of Comprehensive Plan development. The Plan goals and action strategies are aimed at “connecting the dots” between a set of community improvement fundamentals for Florence that involve:

- Stabilizing and enhancing Florence’s neighborhoods.
- Continuing the momentum of Florence’s downtown revitalization.
- Being both a fiscally and physically resilient city.
- Expecting quality in both private development and public projects.
- Being an amenity rich place.
- Being a connected, equitable community.
- Providing an environment for diverse economic growth opportunities.

What connects all of these points is the desire to retain and attract more population to Florence, including those who grew up here. The actions in this Recreation and Amenities section involve tangible steps that will lead to achievement of the goals in line with the plan’s Guiding Principles (in the Introduction section). The actions are categorized into the five types of plan implementation actions highlighted throughout this Plan.



Goals for Recreation and Amenities

1. A park and recreation system that contributes to a **more connected community and healthy residents** through expanded trail networks, greenways, and other off-street links between neighborhoods and popular destinations.
2. Continued **reinvestment in City parks and playgrounds**, along with **expanded youth programming**.
3. A more complete **“lifestyle” community** with amenities and activities that appeal across a range of ages and interests – and with increased awareness of all there is to do in Florence.
4. Greater emphasis on and resources toward preserving the area’s **natural, historic, and cultural assets**.
5. A **more attractive community** based on quality design and character of both private development and the public realm and greater appreciation for the area’s natural beauty.



Actions by Goal

GOAL 1: A park and recreation system that contributes to a more connected community and healthy residents through expanded trail networks, greenways, and other off-street links between neighborhoods and popular destinations.

Rationale: As reflected in the Transportation section of this Comprehensive Plan, along with this plan’s overall guiding principles, achieving a more connected community is an overarching goal for the Florence community over the next 10-20 years. Residents and bike/ped advocates continue to call for tangible progress toward an eventual citywide trail and pathways network, building especially on Florence’s existing Rail Trail and established greenways. Another related motivation is to put even more emphasis on healthy living opportunities for Florence residents in all parks and recreation programming, along with boosting safety for those walking and biking in their neighborhoods, downtown, to and from schools, parks and community centers, and elsewhere in the community.

Capital Investments

1. Implement specific capital projects identified in the Pedestrian Master Plan, including extensions to the existing Rail Trail, and with links to regional trails and pathways where such opportunities arise.
 - Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 - and Key Partners** › City of Florence Recreation Department
 - › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › City of Florence Finance Department
 - › Florence County Parks and Recreation Department
 - › Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS)
 - › South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT)
2. Make wayfinding and visibility/safety improvements for designated on-street bicycle routes and street crossings, prioritized based on known problem locations and areas with the highest bike/ped activity.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
- and Key Partners** › City of Florence Public Works Department
- › City of Florence Recreation Department
- › City of Florence Police Department
- › FLATS
- › SCDOT

3. Along with recreational trail projects, prioritize sidewalk extension and repair projects and crosswalk improvements in core areas of the community where sidewalks are the main way to provide continuity in an eventual citywide trail system. Especially pursue projects that will improve access to local jobs, educational facilities, healthcare and other services, and fresh food.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Public Works Department**
- and Key Partners** › City Manager’s Office
- › City of Florence Recreation Department
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
- › City of Florence Local Foods Initiative
- › FLATS
- › SCDOT

Partnerships and Communication

1. Continue mutually beneficial arrangements with property owners and developers to add to the local greenway inventory and work toward continuous trail segments and links to City parks.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
- and Key Partners** › City of Florence Recreation Department
- › Florence County Planning Department
- › Florence County Parks and Recreation Department
- › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Complete a thorough update to the Pedestrian Master Plan (completed in May 2017) by 2023, taking into account the newest community input and expressed priorities. In conjunction with a similar need stated in the Transportation section of this Comprehensive Plan, use the Master Plan update process and document to clarify how improvement needs, concepts, and priorities captured in state-level and regional transportation plans and studies are ultimately funded and translated into real projects on the ground, especially through local implementation efforts by City government.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
- and Key Partners** › City of Florence Public Works Department
- › City of Florence Recreation Department
- › FLATS
- › SCDOT
- › Bicycle/pedestrian advocacy groups

2. As part of any future stormwater master planning for Florence, pursue design approaches to demonstrate the multi-purpose recreational and open space preservation opportunities with certain stormwater facilities.

- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Utilities Department**
- and Key Partners** › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
- › City of Florence Recreation Department
- › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)



GOAL 2: Continued reinvestment in City parks and playgrounds, along with expanded youth programming.

Rationale: As highlighted in the Existing City Report for this Comprehensive Plan update, Florence has made substantial progress in upgrading and expanding its parks and recreation offerings, especially by designing and constructing dedicated sports complexes for tennis, soccer, basketball, and other sports at key locations across the city. The City now must ensure an ongoing commitment to top-notch maintenance and operational excellence, taking advantage of partner support and joint arrangements as much as possible, and aiming for equitable allocation of resources to benefit all users of the parks and recreation system.

Partnerships and Communication

1. Capitalize on opportunities with Florence 1 Schools, Florence County, private developers, and any other potential partners, where feasible. This should include more formalized inter-agency agreements as appropriate.

- Action Leaders > City of Florence Recreation Department
- and Key Partners > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
- > City Attorney
- > Florence 1 Schools
- > Florence County Parks and Recreation Department

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Prepare and adopt a new Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan for Florence, along with regular interim updates, highlighting implementation progress and successes – especially through partnership efforts – while continuing to communicate Florence’s park, recreation, trail, and open space priorities to funding partners and private development interests.

- Action Leaders > City of Florence Recreation Department
- and Key Partners > City Manager’s Office
- > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
- > Pee Dee Land Trust
- > South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism

GOAL 3: A more complete “lifestyle” community with amenities and activities that appeal across a range of ages and interests – and with increased awareness of all there is to do in Florence.

Rationale: Through this Comprehensive Plan update process, Florence leaders and other stakeholders expressed their belief that Florence must provide more lifestyle opportunities as a location of choice for residential living if it is to make progress on its growth and economic development goals. This means building on the evident success and public investments already made in Downtown, parks and community centers, and multiple sports complexes, among others. Particular interest was expressed for the concept of a new Entertainment District, as a supplement to all that Downtown Florence now has to offer, especially to retain and draw more young workers and professionals to the area, along with visitors and tourists.

Programs and Initiatives

1. Pursue opportunities to advance Florence as a lifelong community including Age-Friendly certification from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

- Action Leaders > City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
- and Key Partners > City Manager’s Office



Partnerships and Communication

1. Coordinate with community organizations, the local faith community, and others to welcome newcomers into the Florence community, raising their awareness of events, family activities, and “things to do,” along with opportunities to plug in for networking and volunteer service.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City Manager’s Office
 - › City of Florence Community Services Department
 - › City of Florence Recreation Department
 - › Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau
 - › Greater Florence Area Chamber of Commerce
 - › Community groups, neighborhood organizations and faith community

More Targeted Planning / Study

1. Support a feasibility study of community interest in an aquatics facility, both for resident enjoyment and as another draw for regional and statewide sports tournament activity in Florence.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › Florence 1 Schools
 - › Other institutional and foundation partners
 - › City Manager’s Office

2. Explore the concept of a new Entertainment District in Florence that could be located and designed to appeal to both residents and visitors (e.g., I-95 travelers, sports tournament attendees, Florence Center event patrons, etc.).

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City of Florence Recreation Department
 - › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

3. Amid the ongoing popularity of retiring to the Carolinas, continue to assess Florence’s retirement community potential and the factors that shape this advantage and perception as tracked by various organizations and media outlets (e.g., discoversouthcarolina.com, AARP-American Association of Retired Persons, agefriendly.com, etc.). Also explore principles and resources available from the 8-80 Cities non-profit organization, which advocates that “if everything we do in our cities is great for an 8 year old and an 80 year old, then it will be great for all people.”

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau
 - › South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism
 - › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

GOAL 4: Greater emphasis on and resources toward preserving the area’s natural, historic, and cultural assets.

Rationale: In tandem with the rationale for Goal 3 above, regarding Florence’s need to enhance its livability, various leaders, residents, and stakeholders providing input to this Comprehensive Plan update (and the concurrent Downtown Master Plan update) emphasized the need to prioritize even more highly the area’s assets involving natural resources, historic sites and structures, and Florence’s exceptional cultural amenities and offerings.



Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Recreation and Amenities goal, including:
 - A zoning district – Open Space and Recreation (OSR) – dedicated specifically to open space preservation, and for recreational use where appropriate, in Section 1-2.2.1.
 - The intents of the Downtown Redevelopment (D-1), Timrod Park Residential (D-4), and Downtown Historic (H-1) zoning overlay districts in Section 1-2.4.2.
 - Provisions for historic conservation in Division 1-2.3.
 - The intent of the Jeffries Creek Protection zoning overlay district in Division 1-2.6 “to protect and improve the water quality, scenic beauty, and wildlife habitat of the creek,” including through the riparian buffer provisions cited below.
 - Standards for new neighborhoods in Division 2-4.1, including preservation of open space.
 - Density bonuses for open space preservation and resource protection as part of residential developments in Section 2-7.1.1.
 - Provisions to preserve and provide riparian buffers along waterways in Division 4-12.5.
 - The authority of the Planning Commission to require the conservation of “outstanding natural features, historical landmarks/sites/buildings, scenic spots, water bodies, and significant stands of trees” in Section 4-13.2.2.
 - Allowance for varied setbacks of dwellings in larger-lot subdivisions, in part, “to avoid impacts on natural resources or to provide a better view of protected resources or designated open space” in Section 4-14.2.5.
 - The ability of the Planning Commission to approve alternate standards for developments that will incorporate low impact development (LID) techniques in Section 4-15.2.1.C.
 - Development standards for historically designated properties in Division 4-16.2.

- Action Leaders** > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Community Services Department
 > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

Partnerships and Communication

1. Maintain positive and productive interactions with the Florence City/County Historical Commission, Florence County Historical Society, and State Historic Preservation Office to advance shared heritage planning and preservation priorities including potential incentive methods and/or recognition for those reinvesting in and upgrading older homes, structures, and sites.

- Action Leaders** > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Community Services Department
 > City Attorney
 > Florence City/County Historical Commission
 > Florence County Historical Society
 > State Historic Preservation Office
 > Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

2. Pursue targeted land conservation efforts with Florence County and the Pee Dee Land Trust, especially given resident desire to preserve some sense of surrounding countryside and the area’s agricultural heritage amid projected growth and change.

- Action Leaders** > **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
and Key Partners > City of Florence Public Works Department
 > City Attorney
 > Florence County Planning Department
 > Florence County Parks and Recreation Department

- › Pee Dee Land Trust
- › South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism
- › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)

3. Continue to support the Regional Arts Alliance commensurate with the level and quality of cultural venues and programming found in the Florence area.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **Florence City Council and Florence County Council**
 - › Florence Downtown Development Corporation
 - › Florence County Progress
 - › Greater Florence Area Chamber of Commerce
 - › Other corporate, private, institutional, and foundation partners

GOAL 5: A more attractive community based on quality design and character of both private development and the public realm and greater appreciation for the area’s natural beauty.

Rationale: As a component of making Florence more attractive for economic investment and residential living, Florence leaders, residents, and stakeholders called for redoubled efforts to upgrade the community’s visual appeal, especially at gateways from Florence Regional Airport/U.S. 75, I-95, and other directions, as has been discussed for many years. Some Florence leaders recognized the challenge of changing mindsets about littering and basic property maintenance through community outreach and education. They also emphasized ongoing beautification efforts as essential to boosting community confidence and pride in Florence.

Capital Investments

1. Explore opportunities to link the design and construction of specific capital projects to community beautification objectives, such as along corridors and at high-profile gateways to the city. This can include supplementing public infrastructure with art and design elements that help to improve the aesthetics of and/or screen an otherwise utilitarian capital project. Possibilities include overpasses and viaducts (with the South Carolina Department of Transportation), ground and elevated water storage tanks, utility cabinets, and fire hydrants.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department**
 - › City of Florence Utilities Department
 - › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › City of Florence Recreation Department
 - › City of Florence Community Services Department
 - › Florence Downtown Development Corporation
 - › Florence County Public Works
 - › FLATS
 - › SCDOT
 - › Neighborhood organizations and community groups

Programs and Initiatives

1. Pursue opportunities to link neighborhood revitalization initiatives with community appearance and anti-littering efforts.

- Action Leaders and Key Partners**
- › **City of Florence Community Services Department**
 - › City Manager’s Office
 - › City of Florence Public Works Department
 - › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
 - › City of Florence Recreation Department
 - › Community Development Corporation
 - › Keep Florence Beautiful



-
- › Pee Dee Community Action Partnership
 - › Neighborhood organizations and community groups
 - › Homeowner associations
-

Regulations and Standards

1. Continue advancing the overall Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) purposes and applying specific provisions relevant to this Recreation and Amenities goal, including:
 - A zoning district – Agricultural / Rural (AR) – dedicated specifically to preservation of rural character and accommodation of agricultural activities in Section 1-2.2.1.
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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners**
- › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
 - › Pee Dee Land Trust
-

2. In conjunction with the related action item under the “enhanced appearance” of gateways and roadway corridors goal in the Land Use and Development section of this plan, re-evaluate all aspects of the UDO that factor into community appearance (e.g., site and building design standards, signs, landscaping, fences, etc.), which are contained primarily in UDO Article 8, Supplemental Standards; Article 10, Landscaping and Buffering; Article 16, Special Site Development Standards; and Part 5, Sign Regulations.
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- Action Leaders** › **City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department and Key Partners**
- › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/engineers, etc.)
-

FUTURE CITY Plan Implementation

Plan Sections

- Growth Capacity
- Land Use and Development
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Recreation and Amenities
- **Plan Implementation**

Introduction

With this updated Comprehensive Plan, the City of Florence and its numerous partner agencies and organizations will have an essential new document that should be frequently referred to for guidance in community decision-making. The plan should be a “living document” that is responsive to ongoing change. Its key planning considerations, goals, and action strategies must be revisited periodically to ensure that the plan is providing clear and reliable direction on a range of matters including land development issues and public investments in infrastructure and services.

Implementation goes well beyond just a list of action items. It is a challenging process that will require the commitment of the City’s elected and appointed officials, staff, residents, business owners, major institutions, other levels of government, and other organizations and individuals who will serve as champions of the plan and its particular direction and strategies. Among its purposes, this final plan section highlights specific roles, responsibilities, and methods of implementation to execute priority plan recommendations. Equally important are formalized procedures for the ongoing monitoring and reporting of successes achieved, difficulties encountered, and new opportunities and challenges that have emerged since plan adoption. This is in addition to any other change in circumstances, which may require rethinking of plan priorities. Scheduled plan evaluations and updates, as described later in this section, will help maintain its relevance and credibility as an overarching policy and action guide.

Why this Comprehensive Plan Section is Important for Florence

- Emphasizes the importance of not only creating a plan but translating it into real action and tangible, beneficial results.
- Adds a shorter-term strategic perspective to what is otherwise intended as a guide to Florence’s long-term enhancement over the next 20 years.
- Includes a list of priority actions for the City and other plan implementation partners to focus on during the next several years after plan adoption.
- Underscores the need to keep the plan fresh and relevant through annual review and reporting procedures and periodic updates.
- Advocates for ongoing community engagement as the plan is implemented.

Plan Administration

During the development of this plan, representatives of government, business, community groups, and others came together to inform the planning process. These community leaders – and new ones who will emerge over the horizon of this plan – must maintain their commitment to the ongoing implementation and updating of the plan’s goals and action strategies.

Leadership Alignment

Long-range plans such as Florence’s Comprehensive Plan are relatively general in nature, but they are still complex policy documents that account for interrelationships among various policy and action choices. Engaging decision-makers and administrators about plan implementation is an important first step after plan adoption. As the principal groups that will implement the plan, City management and department heads, the City Council, and the Planning Commission – along with all City boards/commissions – should all be “on the same page” with regard to priorities, responsibilities, and interpretations.

Consequently, City management should arrange to convene those listed above immediately after plan adoption, to include:

- A discussion of the respective roles and responsibilities of the City Council, the Planning Commission (and other City advisory bodies), and City departments and staff;
- A thorough overview of the entire Comprehensive Plan, with emphasis on the parts of the plan that relate to each group;
- Implementation tasking and priority setting, which should help solidify a near-term action agenda;
- Potential facilitation of a mock meeting in which the use of the plan and its policies and recommendations is illustrated; and
- An in-depth question-and-answer session, with support from the Director of Planning, Research, and Development, the City Attorney, and other key staff.

Definition of Roles

City Council

The City Council should take the lead in the following general areas:

- Adopting and amending the plan, when necessary and appropriate, after recommendation by the Planning Commission (and input from other boards/commissions depending on the topic).
- Acting as a champion of the plan.
- Establishing the overall implementation priorities and timeframes by which action strategies in the plan will be initiated and completed.
- Considering and approving necessary funding commitments.
- Adopting new or amended land development regulations to implement the plan.
- Approving intergovernmental and public/private agreements that implement the plan.

- Approving projects and activities and their associated funding during the City's annual budget process, consistent with this plan and its goals and action priorities.
- Providing policy direction to the Planning Commission, other appointed City boards and commissions, and City management and staff.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission should take the lead in the following general areas:

- Ensuring that recommendations forwarded to the City Council are reflective of plan goals and action priorities.
- After holding one or more public hearings to discuss new or evolving community issues and needs, making recommendations to the City Council regarding plan updates and plan amendments.

City Staff

City staff should take the lead in the following general areas:

- Managing day-to-day implementation of the plan, including ongoing coordination through an interdepartmental plan implementation committee with representatives of all key City functions.
- Supporting and carrying out capital improvement planning efforts.
- Managing the drafting of new or amended land development regulations.
- Conducting studies and developing additional special-purpose and/or special area plans.
- Reviewing land development applications for consistency with the plan.
- Negotiating the specifics of intergovernmental and other agreements.
- Administering collaborative programs and ensuring open channels of communication with various private, public, and non-profit partners.
- Maintaining an inventory of potential plan amendments, as suggested by City staff and others, for consideration during annual and periodic plan review and update processes.

Action Agenda

The goals in this Comprehensive Plan will ultimately be attained through a multitude of specific actions itemized in each plan section. The initiatives highlighted in this Plan Implementation section cut across – and are supported by – multiple elements within the plan. Compiled in the **Action Agenda table** below is a set of **21 key action items** derived from the plan sections. The table does not include every recommendation found throughout this plan, a number of which aim to reinforce or expand upon existing beneficial activities by the City and its partners. Instead, it details a shorter “to do” list of initial strategic priorities, their potential timing, and who is responsible for initiating, administering, and participating in the implementation process.

The table indicates a target timeframe for pursuing each action item, either immediately in **Year 1** after plan adoption (six items), in the near term during **Years 2-4** (nine items) or later in **Years 5+** (six items).

Ways of Moving Toward Action

Along with their potential timeframe, items in the Action Agenda table are categorized as to whether they will involve:



Capital Investments



Programs and Initiatives



Regulations and Standards



Partnerships and Communication



More Targeted Planning / Study

Most capital projects will also require, to varying degrees, additional feasibility analysis, construction documentation, specifications, and detailed cost estimates.

The Action Agenda table provides a starting point for determining immediate, near-term, and longer-term task priorities. This is an important first step toward plan implementation and should occur in conjunction with the City's annual budget process, during Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) preparation, and in support of departmental work planning. Then, once the necessary funding is committed and roles are defined, a lead City staff member should initiate a first-year work program in conjunction with City management, other departments, and other public and private implementation partners.

The near-term action priorities should be revisited annually by City officials and staff to recognize accomplishments, highlight areas where further attention and effort are needed, and determine whether some items have moved up or down on the priority list given changing circumstances and emerging needs. It should be kept in mind that early implementation of certain items, while perhaps not the uppermost priorities, may be expedited by the availability of related grant funds, by a state or federal mandate, or by the eagerness of one or more partners to pursue an initiative with the City. On the other hand, some high-priority items may prove difficult to tackle in the near-term due to budget constraints, the lack of a lead entity or individual to carry the initiative forward, or by the community's readiness to take on a complex or potentially controversial new program.

Progress on the immediate and near-term items should be the focus of the first annual review and report one year after adoption of this Comprehensive Plan as described later in this section. Then, similar to multi-year capital improvements programming, the entire Action Agenda – and all other action strategies within the plan sections – should be revisited annually to decide if any additional items are ready to move into a sooner action timeframe.

Florence Action Agenda

ACTION	Where in Plan	Action Type	Action Leaders and Key Partners
Year 1			
<p>A Identify lead persons and points of coordination across City departments, along with targeted staff training, to advance the City's ambitions in the areas of technology application, green practices, and enhanced resiliency.</p>	<p>Growth Capacity Goal 4 Action 1</p>	<p>Programs and Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City Manager's Office / Communications Department › All City Departments › Public agency, private sector, and non-profit partners in these areas of focus
<p>B Review all aspects of the UDO, based on this new Comprehensive Plan, to identify potential regulatory and/or standards updates. This should include review and updates, as needed, to the use tables in Division 1-2.7 with evolving market and development trends involving both residential and non-residential uses.</p> <p>Related Actions (for this and later timeframes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth Capacity, Goal 2, Regulations and Standards, Action 1 (stormwater). • Growth Capacity, Goal 3, Regulations and Standards, Action 2 (community planning trends). • Growth Capacity, Goal 4, Regulations and Standards, Action 2 (expand Low Impact Development standards). • Land Use and Development, Goal 1, Regulations and Standards, Action 4 (as-built examples). • Land Use and Development, Goal 4, Regulations and Standards, Action 2 (equity assessment). • Land Use and Development, Goal 4, Regulations and Standards, Action 3 (Comprehensive Plan priorities). • Housing and Neighborhoods, Goal 1, Regulations and Standards, Action 2 ("affordable units" bonus). • Housing and Neighborhoods, Goal 1, Regulations and Standards, Action 3 (accessory dwelling units). • Housing and Neighborhoods, Goal 4, Regulations and Standards, Action 2 (site design standards for attached housing). • Transportation, Goal 1, Regulations and Standards, Action 1 (street lighting). • Transportation Goal 3, Regulations and Standards, Action 1 (incentivize accommodation of biking and traffic calming). • Economic Development, Goal 2, Regulations and Standards, Action 2 (regulatory items from Downtown Master Plan). • Recreation and Amenities, Goal 5, Regulations and Standards, Action 2 (community appearance factors). 	<p>Land Use and Development Goal 1 Action 3</p>	<p>Regulations and Standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › Florence County › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/ engineers, etc.) › Home Builders Association of the Greater Pee Dee › Pee Dee Realtor Association › Neighborhood organizations › Florence Downtown Development Corporation › Business community

ACTION	Where in Plan	Action Type	Action Leaders and Key Partners
Year 1			
<p>C Initiate a corridor planning focus, and a point person to coordinate with all relevant City departments and public agencies with jurisdiction and/or responsibility for certain aspects of managing and maintaining major area roadways.</p> <p>Related Actions (for this and later timeframes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use and Development, Goal 2, Capital Investments, Action 1 (gateway entrance features). • Land Use and Development, Goal 2, Capital Investments, Action 2 (coordinate/consolidate public agency signage). • Land Use and Development, Goal 2, Regulations and Standards, Action 2 (corridor zoning). • Land Use and Development, Goal 2, Regulations and Standards, Action 3 (corridor appearance). • Land Use and Development, Goal 2, Partnerships and Communication, Action 1 (U.S. 76 Gateway implementation). • Land Use and Development, Goal 2, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 1 (targeted areas for corridor planning). • Land Use and Development, Goal 2, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 2 (Five Points intersection urban design treatments). • Land Use and Development, Goal 3, Programs and Initiatives, Action 2 (grants for commercial upgrades). • Transportation, Goal 1, Capital Investments, Action 2 (community gateways). • Transportation, Goal 2, Capital Investments, Action 1 (candidate corridors for “road diets”). • Economic Development, Goal 1, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 1 (market-based corridor studies). • Recreation and Amenities, Goal 5, Capital Investments, Action 1 (beautification element to capital projects). 	<p>Land Use and Development</p> <p>Goal 2</p> <p>Action 1</p>	<p>Programs and Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › Florence County › Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority › South Carolina Department of Transportation
<p>D With the City’s recent establishment of a Community Development Corporation (CDC) as an added new mechanism for advancing neighborhood revitalization, attainable housing, and overall life improvement objectives in Florence, the CDC should focus on actions for which it is uniquely suited and that address the stated purposes in its bylaws. [See list of potential next steps and online resources in the full Action item.]</p>	<p>Housing and Neighborhoods</p> <p>Goal 3</p> <p>Action 2</p>	<p>Programs and Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Community Services Department › City Manager’s Office › Local banking community › Pee Dee Community Action Partnership

ACTION	Where in Plan	Action Type	Action Leaders and Key Partners
Year 1			
<p>E Enact a Vision Zero policy to eliminate bicycle and pedestrian injuries and fatalities. This initiative would involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizing protected bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure. • Providing bicycling education and safety courses. • Focusing on large vehicle safety to avoid conflicts between large vehicle traffic and smaller, less protected road users. • Evaluating whether speeds are a contributor to bicycle/pedestrian accidents and determining if speeds can be lowered on roadways where bicycle/pedestrian accidents are higher. • Partnering with local schools to have a National Walk and Bike to School Day event to promote biking/walking to school year-round. <p>Related Actions (for this and later timeframes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation, Goal 2, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 2 (non-motorized and high-frequency crash locations). 	<p>Transportation Goal 2 Action 1</p>	<p>Programs and Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › City Manager’s Office › City of Florence Recreation Department › City of Florence Police Department › Florence 1 Schools › FLATS › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority › SCDOT › Neighborhood organizations.
<p>F Implement actions in the updated Downtown Master Plan involving new or expanded programs and initiatives.</p> <p>Related Actions (for this and later timeframes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development, Goal 2, Capital Investments, Action 1 (capital project items in Downtown Master Plan). • Economic Development, Goal 2, Partnerships and Communication, Action 1 (new/renewed partnerships and interagency coordination). 	<p>Economic Development Goal 2 Action 1</p>	<p>Programs and Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › Florence Downtown Development Corporation
Years 2-4			
<p>G Establish a long-term annexation strategy for feasible areas, including the identification of primary (five-year) and secondary (10-year) growth areas. Then prepare a municipal service plan for potential annexation activity within the primary growth areas. Unincorporated “donut hole” areas encircled by the current city limits should be a first focus for potential near-term annexation, where appropriate after further evaluation, to rationalize the City’s (and County’s) jurisdiction and provide greater continuity of public services.</p> <p>Related Actions (for this and later timeframes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth Capacity, Goal 1, Partnerships and Communication, Action 1 (annexation plan). 	<p>Growth Capacity Goal 1 Action 1</p>	<p>Programs and Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › All public-serving departments (e.g., public safety, infrastructure, parks/recreation, etc.) › City of Florence Finance Department › Residents and other stakeholders in candidate annexation areas › Florence County Planning Department

ACTION	Where in Plan	Action Type	Action Leaders and Key Partners
Years 2-4			
<p>H Implement phased maintenance and replacement of aged and undersized stormwater management facilities. Utilizing recommendations of the Stormwater Master Plan, analyze work based on facility condition and cost of failure, to prioritize projects.</p> <p>Related Actions (for this and later timeframes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth Capacity, Goal 3, Programs and Initiatives, Action 1 (pilot demonstrations). • Growth Capacity, Goal 3, Regulations and Standards, Action 1 (incentivize Low Impact Development practices). • Growth Capacity, Goal 4, Capital Investments, Action 1 (targeted on-site stormwater storage). • Growth Capacity, Goal 4, Programs and Initiatives, Action 2 (green infrastructure methods on City-owned properties). • Land Use and Development, Goal 3, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 1 (make vacant land viable for development). • Recreation and Amenities, Goal 1, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 2 (multi-purpose facility design). 	<p>Growth Capacity</p> <p>Goal 2</p> <p>Action 1</p>	<p>Capital Investments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Engineering Division › City of Florence Utilities Department
<p>I Consider models for incorporating an independent evaluation mechanism into City development review/approval and capital planning processes, allowing for prompt intervention, problem-solving, and advocacy, when needed, on behalf of those who could be adversely affected by process outcomes. The focus should be on determining who is helped, who is harmed, and who is left out of current processes.</p> <p>Related Actions (for this and later timeframes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use and Development, Goal 4, Capital Investments, Action 1 (fairness factors in capital projects prioritization). 	<p>Land Use and Development</p> <p>Goal 4</p> <p>Action 1</p>	<p>Programs and Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City Manager’s Office › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department
<p>J As the 10-year point since their completion approaches, refresh and update the Neighborhood Action Plan of 2013 and the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy of 2014 to maintain momentum and continued tangible results in Florence’s core neighborhoods nearest to downtown.</p>	<p>Housing and Neighborhoods</p> <p>Goal 3</p> <p>Action 1</p>	<p>More Targeted Planning / Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Community Services Department › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › Neighborhood organizations › Homeowner associations

ACTION	Where in Plan	Action Type	Action Leaders and Key Partners
Years 2-4			
<p>K Evaluate the City's residential rental registration and permit program, since its adoption by ordinance in October 2020, to highlight successes to date, aspects that may need further refinement, and any gaps to be addressed.</p>	<p>Housing and Neighborhoods Goal 4 Action 1</p>	<p>Programs and Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › City of Florence Police Department › Rental property owners and managers › Neighborhood organizations
<p>L Expand staff duties to include a daily and ongoing neighborhood planning focus across the entire city, along with ongoing attention to Florence's near-downtown neighborhoods, and to act as a point person to coordinate across all neighborhood-serving City departments.</p> <p>Related Actions (for this and later timeframes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Neighborhoods, various actions under Goal 2 (home ownership and housing needs). • Housing and Neighborhoods, various actions under Goal 3 ("complete communities" approach to housing/neighborhood renewal). • Housing and Neighborhoods, various actions under Goal 4 (sustained neighborhood integrity and value). • Recreation and Amenities, Goal 5, Programs and Initiatives, Action 1 (community appearance and anti-littering efforts). 	<p>Housing and Neighborhoods Goal 4 Action 2</p>	<p>Programs and Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › City of Florence Community Services Department › Neighborhood organizations › Homeowner associations
<p>M Implement projects identified in the Pedestrian Master Plan, working across City departments and with other agencies and partners to capitalize on implementing such improvements while maintenance or upgrades of other City facilities are also in planning and design. For example, if utilities are being upgraded could it be an opportunity to add sidewalks or improve a street crossing?</p> <p>Related Actions (for this and later timeframes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation, Goal 2, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 3 (apply for Transportation Enhancement Grants). • Transportation, Goal 3, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 1 (access to employment and workforce training). • Transportation, Goal 3, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 2 (safe access to school campuses). • Transportation, Goal 3, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 3 (walkability in low-income housing areas). • Recreation and Amenities, Goal 1, Capital Investments, Action 1 (implement capital projects in Master Plan). • Recreation and Amenities, Goal 1, Capital Investments, Action 2 (wayfinding and visibility/safety improvements). • Recreation and Amenities, Goal 1, Capital Investments, Action 3 (sidewalk extension and repair projects). • Recreation and Amenities, Goal 1, More Targeted Planning/Study, Action 1 (Master Plan update by 2023). 	<p>Transportation Goal 2 Action 4</p>	<p>More Targeted Planning / Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › City of Florence Public Works Department › FLATS › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority › SCDOT › Area bicycle and pedestrian advocates

ACTION	Where in Plan	Action Type	Action Leaders and Key Partners
Years 2-4			
<p>N In partnership with the area’s lead economic development entities, contribute to a refreshed area-wide Economic Development Plan, which among other purposes can help guide the development of vacant land, infill development and redevelopment, and investment and revitalization along key roadway corridors. The plan should also include links to planning for infrastructure, historic preservation, arts and culture, and tourism promotion.</p>	<p>Economic Development Goal 3 Action 1</p>	<p>More Targeted Planning / Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › Florence County Economic Development Partnership › City of Florence Utilities Department › Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau › Florence Downtown Development Corporation › North Eastern Strategic Alliance
<p>O Support a feasibility study of community interest in an aquatics facility, both for resident enjoyment and as another draw for regional and statewide sports tournament activity in Florence.</p>	<p>Recreation and Amenities Goal 3 Action 1</p>	<p>More Targeted Planning / Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Florence 1 Schools › Other institutional and foundation partners › City Manager’s Office
Years 5+			
<p>P Prepare and adopt a Green Infrastructure Master Plan. Potential components should include establishing goals for stormwater flow and nutrient loading, applying different technologies as appropriate to particular locations, providing standard details for project implementation, incorporating modeling guidance, describing sample projects, and itemizing and providing guidance for green infrastructure practices.</p>	<p>Growth Capacity Goal 4 Action 1</p>	<p>More Targeted Planning / Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › City of Florence Utilities Department › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/ engineers, etc.)

ACTION	Where in Plan	Action Type	Action Leaders and Key Partners
Years 5+			
<p>Q Develop an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan, to involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging with the disabled public on accessibility challenges and issues in Florence. Identifying existing facilities, services, and programs. Identifying and cataloging non-ADA compliant public rights-of-way. Identifying critical gaps in sidewalk coverage. Inventorizing existing sidewalks and establishing a condition rating index. Developing a transition plan and priority schedule for accessibility improvements. 	<p>Transportation Goal 2 Action 1</p>	<p>More Targeted Planning / Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › City of Florence Public Works Department › FLATS › Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority › SCDOT › Area advocates for disabled persons and ADA compliance
<p>R Initiate a Bike Share Feasibility Study to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential public or private partners to help start, maintain, and sponsor a bike share program. Determine costs of operations, maintenance, and improving infrastructure for bike share stations. Investigate and secure funding. 	<p>Transportation Goal 3 Action 1</p>	<p>Programs and Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › City of Florence Public Works Department › City of Florence Recreation Department › City of Florence Finance Department › Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau › Potential public agency, employer, institutional, and non-profit partners
<p>S Using input from existing local businesses, pursue a strategic marketing plan based on identified assets, advantages, and services that can help attract targeted new businesses and retail customers to Florence.</p>	<p>Economic Development Goal 4 Action 1</p>	<p>More Targeted Planning / Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce › Florence County Economic Development Partnership › Florence County Progress

ACTION		Where in Plan	Action Type	Action Leaders and Key Partners
Years 5+				
T	Prepare and adopt a new Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan for Florence, along with regular interim updates, highlighting implementation progress and successes – especially through partnership efforts – while continuing to communicate Florence’s park, recreation, trail, and open space priorities to funding partners and private development interests.	Recreation and Amenities Goal 2 Action 1	More Targeted Planning / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Recreation Department › City Manager’s Office › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › Pee Dee Land Trust › South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism
U	Explore the concept of a new Entertainment District in Florence that could be located and designed to appeal to both residents and visitors (e.g., I-95 travelers, sports tournament attendees, Florence Center event patrons, etc.).	Recreation and Amenities Goal 3 Action 2	More Targeted Planning / Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › City of Florence Planning, Research, and Development Department › City of Florence Recreation Department › Area real estate and development community (property owners, developers, builders, land planners/designers/ engineers, etc.)

Plan Amendment Process

The Florence Comprehensive Plan should be a flexible document that allows for adjustment to changing conditions over time. Shifts in political, economic, physical, technological, and social conditions, and other unforeseen circumstances, may influence and change the priorities and fiscal outlook of the community. As Florence evolves, new issues will emerge while others will no longer be as relevant. Some action statements will be found impractical or outdated while other plausible solutions will arise. To ensure that it continues to reflect the overall goals of the community and remains relevant over time, the plan must be revisited regularly to confirm that the plan elements are still on point and the associated goals and action strategies are still appropriate.

Revisions to the Comprehensive Plan are two-fold, with minor plan amendments occurring at least every other year and more significant updates and modifications occurring every five years. As an example, a **minor amendment** could include revisions to certain elements of the plan as a result of the adoption of another specialized plan. **Major updates** will involve:

- Reviewing the community’s base conditions and anticipated growth trends;
- Re-evaluating the plan findings and formulating new ones as necessary; and



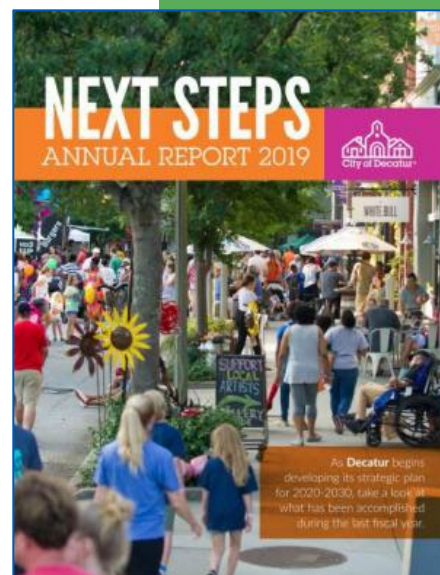
- Adding, revising, or removing action strategies in the plan based on implementation progress.

Annual Progress Report

City staff should prepare an annual progress report for presentation to the Planning Commission and City Council. This ensures that the plan is consistently reviewed and that any needed modifications or clarifications are identified for the bi-annual minor plan amendment process. Ongoing tracking of consistency between the plan and the City’s regulations should be an essential part of this effort.

The **Annual Progress Report** should include and highlight:

- Significant actions and accomplishments during the last year, including the status of each programmed task in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Obstacles or problems in implementing the plan.
- Proposed content amendments that have come forward during the year.
- Recommendations for needed actions, programs, and procedures to be developed and implemented in the coming year including recommendation of projects to be included in the City’s proposed Capital Improvement Plan, other programs/projects to be funded, and priority coordination needs with public and private implementation partners.



Bi-Annual Amendment Process

Plan amendments should occur at least bi-annually (every two years), allowing for proposed changes to be considered concurrently so the cumulative effects may be understood.

Factors that should be considered in deciding on a proposed plan amendment include:

- Consistency with the goals and action strategies in the plan.
- Potential effects on infrastructure provision including water, wastewater, drainage, and the transportation network.
- Potential effects on the City’s ability to provide, fund, and maintain services.
- Potential effects on environmentally sensitive and natural areas.
- Whether the proposed amendment contributes to the overall direction and character of the community as captured in the plan vision and goals and as reflected in ongoing public input.



Five-Year Update / Evaluation and Appraisal Report

An **Evaluation and Appraisal Report** to the City Council should be prepared every five years. This report should be prepared by City staff with input from all departments, the Planning Commission, and other boards and commissions. The report process involves evaluating the existing plan and assessing how successful it has been in achieving the community’s goals.



The report purpose is to identify the successes and shortcomings of the plan, look at what has changed over the last five years, and make recommendations on how the plan should be modified in light of those changes.

The report should review baseline conditions and assumptions about trends and growth indicators. It should also evaluate implementation potential and/or obstacles related to any unaddressed major action strategies. The evaluation report and process should result in a strategy for amending the Comprehensive Plan, including identification of new or revised information that may lead to updated goals and action strategies.

More specifically, **the report should identify and provide:**

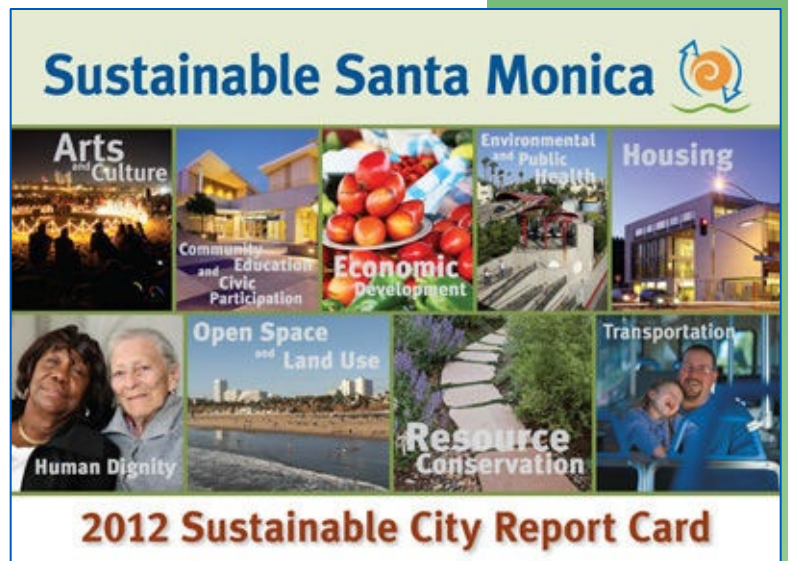
- A summary of major actions and interim plan amendments undertaken over the last five years.
- Major issues in the community and how these issues have changed over time.
- Changes in the assumptions, trends, and base studies data in the Existing City Report including:
 - › The rate at which growth and development is occurring relative to plan projections.
 - › Shifts in demographics and other growth trends.
 - › City-wide attitudes and whether apparent shifts, if significant, necessitate amendments to the stated goals or action strategies of the plan.
 - › Other changes in political, social, economic, technological, or environmental conditions that indicate a need for plan amendments.
- Ability of the plan to continue to support progress toward achieving the community's goals. The following should be evaluated and revised as needed:
 - › Individual sections and statements within the plan must be reviewed and revised, as necessary, to ensure that the plan provides sufficient information and direction to achieve the intended outcome.
 - › Conflicts between goals and action strategies that have been discovered in the implementation and administration of the plan must be pointed out and resolved.
 - › The list of priority actions must be reviewed and major accomplishments highlighted. Those not completed by the specified timeframe should be re-evaluated to confirm their continued relevance and/or revise them appropriately, along with discussion of any barriers encountered, missed opportunities, and lessons learned.
 - › As conditions change, the timeframes for implementing major actions in the plan should be re-evaluated where necessary. Some actions may emerge as a higher priority given new or changed circumstances while others may become less important to achieving the goals and development objectives of the community.
 - › Based upon organizational and procedural factors, plus the status of previously assigned tasks, the implementation task assignments must be reviewed and altered, as needed, to ensure timely accomplishment of the plan's action strategies.
 - › Changes in laws, procedures, and missions may affect the community's ability to achieve its goals. The plan review must assess these changes and their effects on implementation success, leading to any suggested revisions in strategies or priorities.

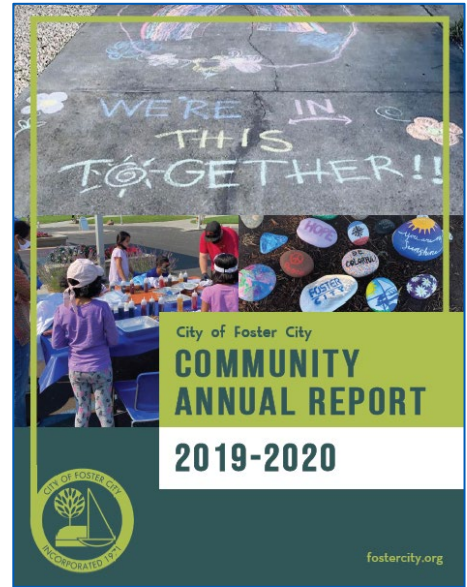
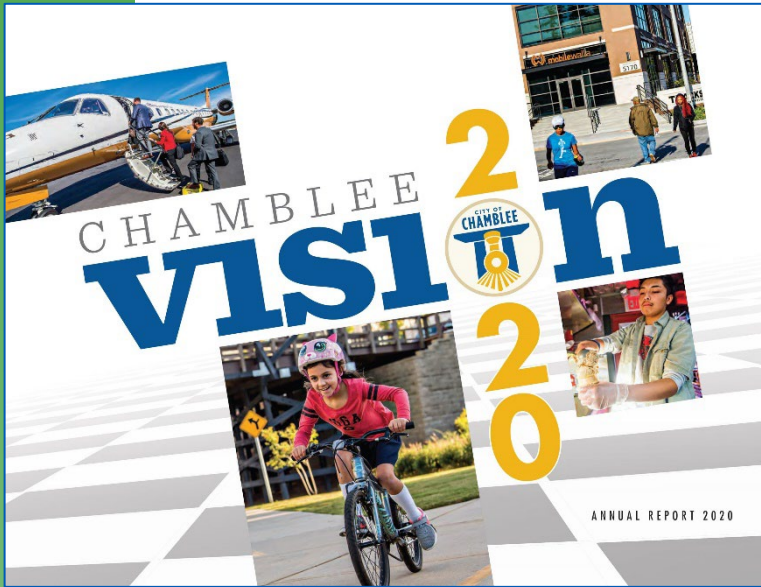
Ongoing Community Outreach and Engagement

All review processes and updates related to this Comprehensive Plan should emphasize and incorporate ongoing public input. The annual and continual plan evaluation and reporting processes should also incorporate specific performance measures and quantitative indicators that can be compiled and communicated both internally and to elected officials, residents, and other plan stakeholders and partners in a **"report card"** fashion. Examples might include:

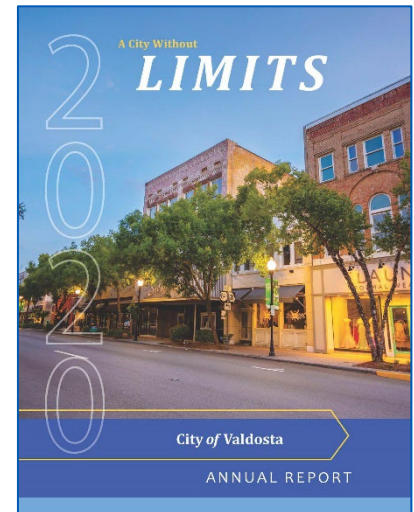


- Acres of new development (plus number of residential units by type, and square footage of commercial and industrial space) approved and constructed in conformance with this plan and Florence’s development regulations.
- Measures of service capacity (gallons per day, etc.) added to the City’s utility infrastructure systems – and the number of dollars allocated to fund the necessary capital projects.
- New and expanded businesses, added jobs, and associated tax revenue gains through economic development initiatives.
- Lane miles of new or rehabilitated road, plus bike, pedestrian, transit, and other transportation system improvements that increase mobility options.
- Acres of parkland and open space added to the City’s inventory, utilization of new or improved recreation spaces, and linear feet of trail developed or improved.
- Indicators of the benefits from redeveloped sites and structures (appraised value, increased tax revenue, new residential units, retail and office spaces in mixed-use settings, etc.).
- The numbers of residents and other stakeholders engaged through City-sponsored education and outreach events related to Comprehensive Plan implementation and periodic review and updating as outlined in this section.





Visual presentation of metrics status in annual report of City of Powell, Ohio.



Existing City

REPORT

Purpose

This report provides background information about Florence as it is today. This information is presented in topic areas relevant to a refreshed new Comprehensive Plan for Florence's physical growth and development. This report also highlights key planning considerations for the years ahead, which will set the stage for the Future City portion of the Comprehensive Plan in terms of community needs and desires for the next 10-20 years, through 2040. The content of this report is based on initial background studies and input received to date by the City's community planning consultant, Kendig Keast Collaborative and its subconsultants CDM Smith (transportation and utility infrastructure) and APD Urban Planning + Management (targeted data analysis and mapping for neighborhoods in east, north and northwest Florence).



SOURCE: Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Benefits

A comprehensive plan is a long-range, community-driven policy document that lays the groundwork for how Florence can take charge of, invest in and realize its future over the next 10-20 years and beyond. Amid a period of ongoing population growth since its 2010 Comprehensive Plan and later interim updates, the City of Florence has undertaken multiple other targeted planning efforts as cited on this page. Keeping the Comprehensive Plan current is a planning best practice and ensures the Plan reflects the newest emerging issues and opportunities along with the findings and recommendations of other recently completed planning studies.

Comprehensive Plans:

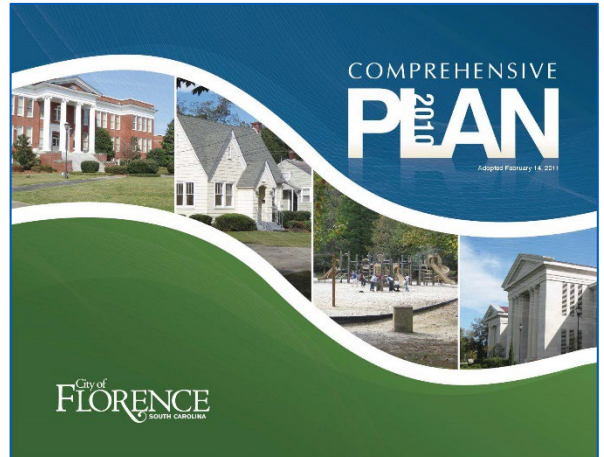
- Provide public officials with a greater understanding of existing conditions in their community and the larger trends and forces that are impacting growth and development;

Other Florence Plans

Key local resource documents consulted during the Existing City phase included:

- Florence County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020)
- Community Profile for Pee Dee Workforce Development Area (2019)
- 76 Gateway Corridor Study (2018)
- 2040 FLATS Long Range Transportation Plan (2018)
- Pedestrian Master Plan (2017)
- Next Steps 2017-2022 Comprehensive Plan Update (2017)
- Downtown Florence Five Year Comprehensive Plan Update (2017)
- Florence County Comprehensive Plan Review (2017)
- Forestry Stewardship Management Plan (2015)
- Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (2014)
- Regional Transit and Coordination Plan for Pee Dee Region (2014)
- Neighborhood Action Plan (2013)

- Provide a long-term outlook at the potential implications of land use, infrastructure and other decisions;
- Establish priorities for implementation strategies and actions to achieve preferred outcomes;
- Place communities in more favorable positions when pursuing and securing grants and capital partnerships;
- Offer an opportunity for constructive and meaningful public input, education and engagement through a variety of forums including one-on-one meetings, focus groups, town hall meetings, community workshops and surveys;



- Provide policy guidance and a legally defensible basis for effective and implementable land development regulations;
- Provide a framework to enable local officials to make better-informed decisions based upon a coordinated plan to guide the orderly growth and development of their community; and
- Provide the umbrella for weaving together a series of small area plans, through which greater synergies can be created.



Engaging in a local comprehensive planning process enables the City of Florence to have a greater measure of control over its future and the opportunities and challenges that change will bring. Planning will enable the City to manage future growth, development and redevelopment actively as opposed to reacting to development proposals on a case-by-case basis without adequate and necessary consideration of community-wide issues.

Approach

Existing City | Future City

The planning process focuses first on providing a snapshot of existing conditions, through the lens of multiple plan topics, culminating in this Existing City Report. The report includes discussion of Florence’s history, location and physical characteristics and highlights its demographic composition and trends. A summary of key indicators, from the latest available U.S. Census Bureau data and other sources, illustrates historical and current conditions and context relevant to the Comprehensive Plan.

Focus Areas

Focus areas within the Comprehensive Plan provide direction when setting program and funding priorities to enhance the quality of life in Florence.

The six **Focus Areas** are:

1. Growth Capacity
2. Land Use and Development
3. Housing and Neighborhoods
4. Economic Development
5. Transportation
6. Recreation and Amenities

These focus areas were considered in developing this Existing City Report and will orient the Future City portion of the Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive plans are future-oriented and contain policies and actions that are intended to advance a set of preferred conditions. As such, the Future City component and its implementation emphasis will be the primary focus of the City’s new Comprehensive Plan. The Future City portion includes recommended initiatives and strategies for guiding Florence’s development and redevelopment while preserving community character, enhancing quality of life and improving economic well-being.

Florence Setting and Context

Florence is located in the northeast corner of South Carolina in a region referred to as the Pee Dee. The name Pee Dee comes from the first Native American inhabitants of the area. Approximately 70 miles from the Atlantic Ocean at popular Myrtle Beach, Florence is strategically positioned as a regional center at the junction of Interstates 95 and 20. U.S. Highways 52 (Irby Street), 76 (Palmetto Street) and 301 (Freedom Boulevard) are other important roadways in and through the Florence area. The city is also accessible via railroad and Florence Regional Airport.



SOURCE: thestate.com.

The City of Florence is the county seat and largest city in Florence County (Lake City next largest). Florence is at the north end of the county, with Timmonsville nearby to the west, Quinby to the northeast and Darlington north in Darlington County. Florence 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 exhibit 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 is located midway between the Pee Dee and Lynches Rivers in a moderately rolling upland area, typical terrain for the Atlantic coastal plain. The average elevation in Florence is 138 feet above sea level, and the highest elevation point in all of Florence County’s 765 square miles is 285 feet. Much of the Florence area is wooded, and favorable climate and soil



conditions promote lush vegetation and opportunities for abundant landscaping and planting of shade trees. Florence has a temperate climate, and local

temperatures and weather are generally not affected by the area’s geography with the exception of hurricane season lasting from May through November. However, the inland threat from hurricanes in South Carolina is moderate, and regional requirements in construction codes generally account for this risk.



Statewide and Regional Trends

South Carolina has experienced tremendous growth since 2000, growing significantly faster than the nation as a whole. The economic context of both South Carolina and neighboring North Carolina, including a favorable business environment and a relatively low cost of living combined with a temperate climate, have made this U.S. region attractive to employers and to people alike. This growth surge has occurred across both states but has mostly been focused around the Upstate of South Carolina and the Research Triangle and Charlotte areas of North Carolina. Popular coastal areas of both states also continue to grow.

Florence has an east central location within the Carolinas and is relatively close to both the North Carolina border and the Atlantic coast. With no major cities nearby, Florence remains the economic center of the Pee Dee. The closest larger cities include Myrtle Beach, which has a fully coastal climate with tourism as its primary industry, and the state capital of Columbia. These cities are not in direct competition with Florence. Additionally, the counties and cities immediately adjacent to Florence have traditionally struggled for growth and industry after the textile and farming industries downsized.

Northeast of Florence is Dillon County, which in 2018 saw the opening of the South Carolina Ports Authority Dillon Inland Port, with direct rail connections. With an economic impact of more than \$7.1 billion annually in the Pee Dee, the SC Ports Authority has played a major role in this region according to USC's Darla Moore School of Business. With the Port of Charleston soon becoming the deepest port on the U.S. East Coast, South Carolina, including the Pee Dee region, is poised to continue reaching new levels of economic success.



Florence in fall 2018.

SOURCE: Google Earth.

Existing City Report Organization and Content

The information in this report is presented in the following topic areas relevant to the City's Comprehensive Plan for guiding Florence's future physical development:

- Historical Timeline
- People
- Housing
- Jobs and Income
- Utility Infrastructure
- Transportation
- Recreation and Amenities



Additionally, two appendices to this report contain the results of the targeted data analysis and mapping conducted by consultant team member APD Urban Planning + Management including:

- An updated Neighborhood Profile for the combined neighborhood areas of east, north and northwest Florence.
- Parcel-level mapping of existing land use and housing, building conditions and occupancy/vacancy of structures in the neighborhood areas, updating similar work conducted by APD in 2013.



Historical Timeline of Florence's Development

1853

First railroad station in area is established at the junction of three intersecting railroads serving the Southeast. The North Eastern Railroad Company later purchases 577 acres that provide the basis for a new town, first mapped in 1860 as a planned community with 7 streets and 96 lots.

1870

Florence is chartered following a period in which the original town had been laid out and platted by the railroad company as a speculative venture to sell real estate by attracting new residents. In the post-Civil War years the North Eastern Railroad remains the primary employer, and the town grows around transport of agricultural products from the surrounding Pee Dee River Basin.

1888

South Carolina General Assembly creates the County of Florence, encompassing the towns of Timmonsville, Coward and Lake City with the Town of Florence as its county seat.

1890

City of Florence is incorporated, growing into the 20th Century as an important rail and transportation center.

1923

Florence Little Theater is created, reflecting a growing interest in the arts. The Florence Museum is established in the 1930s and the Florence Symphony Orchestra in the 1940s.

1925

First public library is built at 319 S. Irby St.

1928

Airfield created by Mayor H.K. Gilbert in late 1920s becomes known as Gilbert Field.

1940s

World War II brings an Army Air Base to Gilbert Field, serving as a major training site and spurring the growth of local industry. During this period Florence is the largest rail station in South Carolina with 14 passenger trains and 48 freight trains passing through the city every day.

1960s-70s

Construction of Interstates 20 and 95 reinforces Florence's strategic location amid transportation networks and increases visitation to the city.

1965

National Civic League names Florence an "All-America City."

1970s-90s

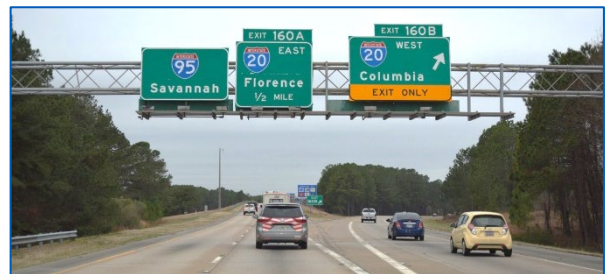
Economic growth proceeds with new industrial investments, service businesses and retail expansion. Florence solidifies its position as the hub of an eight-county region called the "Pee Dee," drawing activity and visitors related to business, health care, communications, education, retail, cultural opportunities and recreation.

1992

Francis Marion College, established in 1970, elevates to University status.

2008

Florence Downtown Historic District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



SOURCE: Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau.

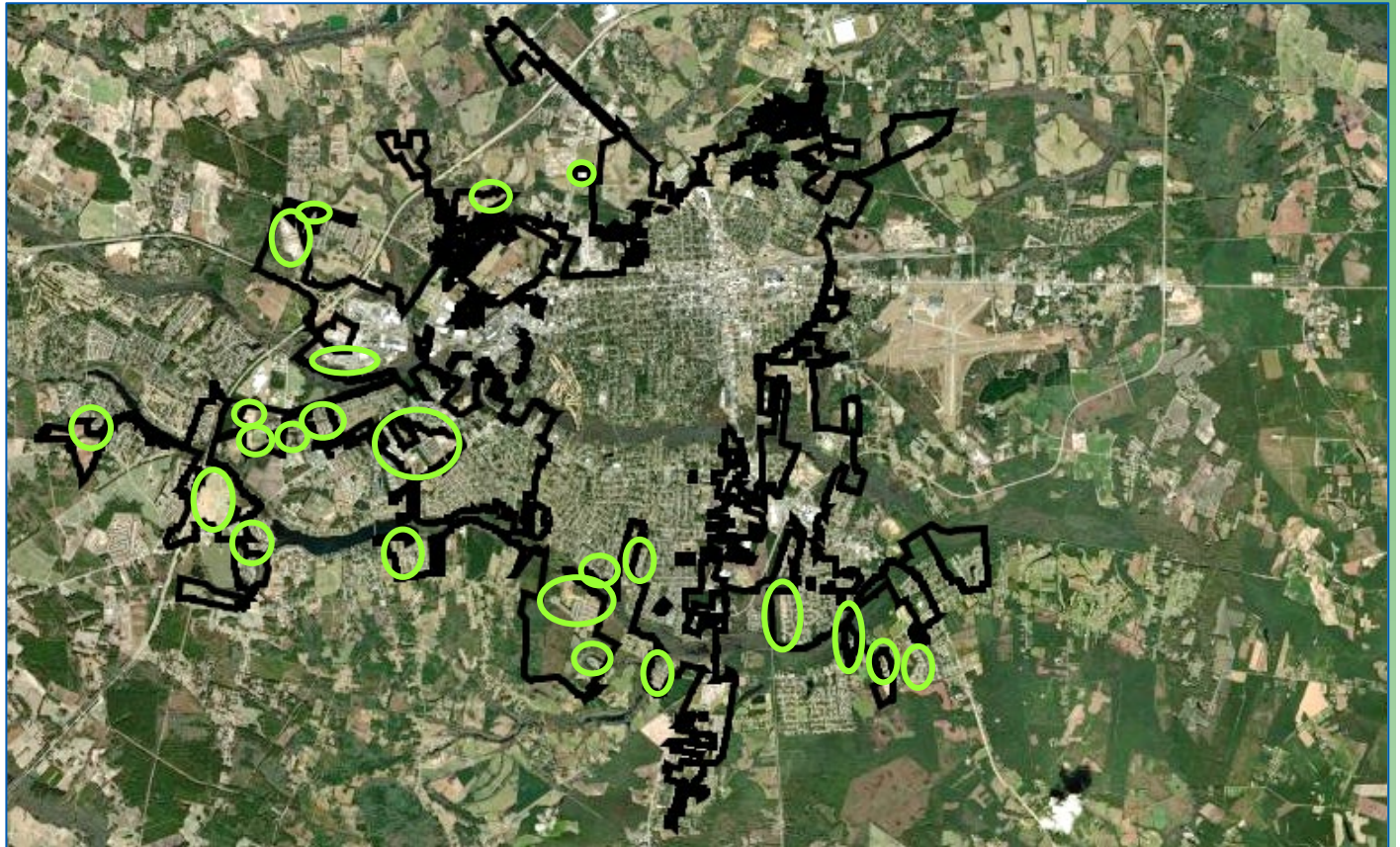
Change on the Ground in and around Florence

In recent years, the most significant development in the Florence area has occurred either outside the city limits in the unincorporated county or near the periphery of the incorporated city, along with ongoing infill and redevelopment activity within the city. Highlighted in green on the second and more recent aerial image below are locations, mostly toward Florence’s southern and western edges, that have developed over the last decade relative to the first aerial view from 10 years ago.



Florence Area in 2011

Florence Area in 2021
(city limits in black)



People

A review of key population indicators confirms the steady growth Florence has experienced in recent decades along with ongoing “graying” of the population as is occurring in many areas of the United States. All 2020 data in this and later sections are from esri Community Profiles, both for Florence and the entire State of South Carolina. The esri profiles are based on U.S. Census Bureau data and estimates through 2019 and then esri-prepared forecasts for 2020. In a few instances where indicated, only Census Bureau data through 2019 are used. Time will tell to what extent various indicators were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic peak during 2020 and its lingering after-effects.

Census Data Availability

This Comprehensive Plan was prepared at the start of a new decade. This is when one-of-a-kind data from the last decennial U.S. Census (2010) is growing increasingly out of date and release of fresh data from the next census (2020) is still pending. The COVID-19 public health emergency impacted the ability of the Census Bureau to conduct normal Census activities in 2020, causing the typical Census reporting timeframe to be extended at least through fall 2021. In the meantime, interim estimates for some indicators are available through the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) and used here.

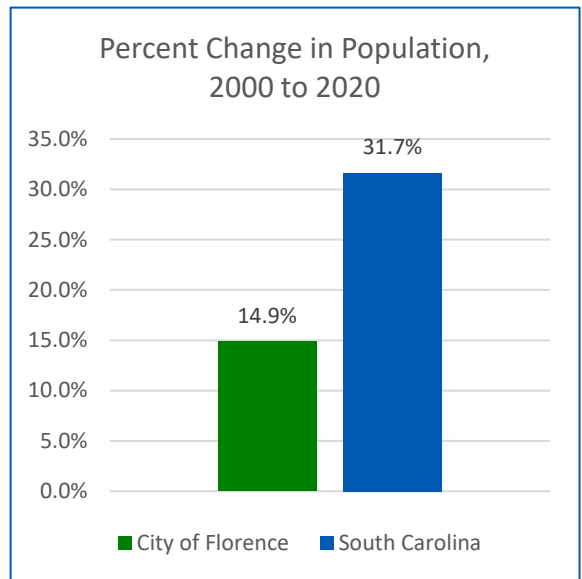
39,000+

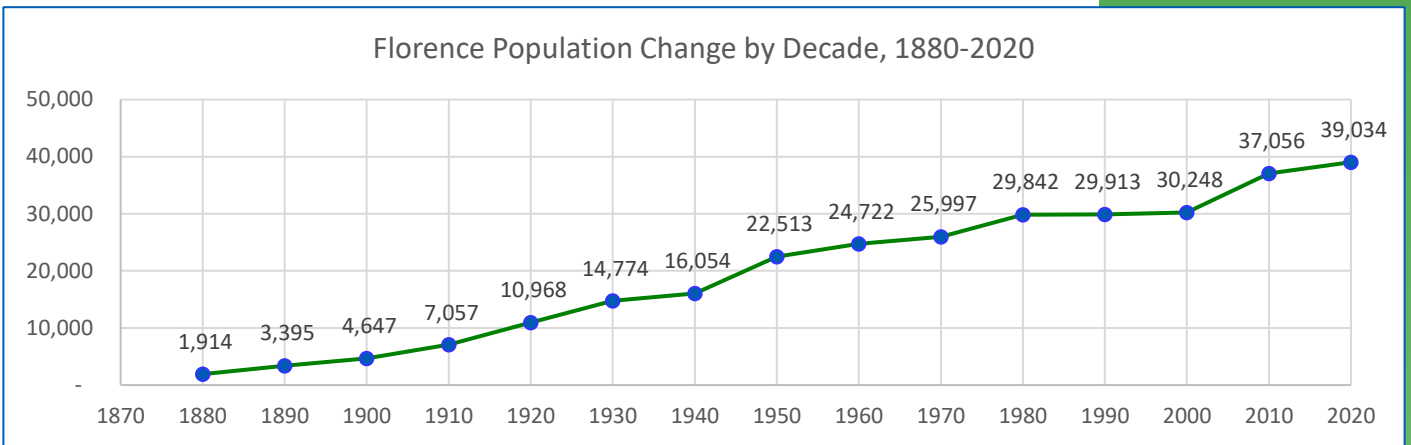
Population

Population within the Florence city limits has increased approximately 15 percent over the last two decades from 33,976 in Census 2000 to an estimated 39,034 in 2020, making Florence the 11th largest city in South Carolina. Meanwhile, the statewide population grew by just over 30 percent, surpassing 5.2 million in 2020.

The City of Florence is part of a larger regional planning area that is addressed by the Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS), administered by Florence County. Along with the city, the approximately 440 square mile planning area includes the City of Darlington, the Towns of Quinby and Timmonsville, and surrounding unincorporated portions of Florence and Darlington counties. The last FLATS Long Range Transportation Plan through 2040, completed in 2018, cited an urban population of approximately 130,000 residents within this planning area.

The chart below of Florence’s historical population trend shows ongoing steady growth for more than a century. The rate of population growth experienced between 2000 and 2010 was the most notable since the World War II era in the 1940s. Further population increase moderated over the last decade since 2010, mostly because of the extent of growth outside the city within unincorporated Florence County.

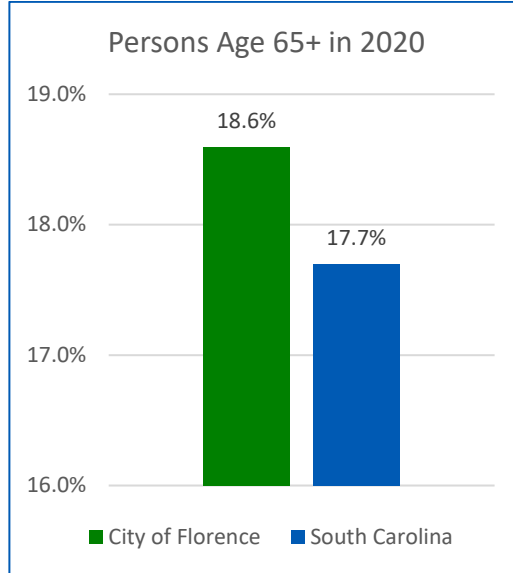
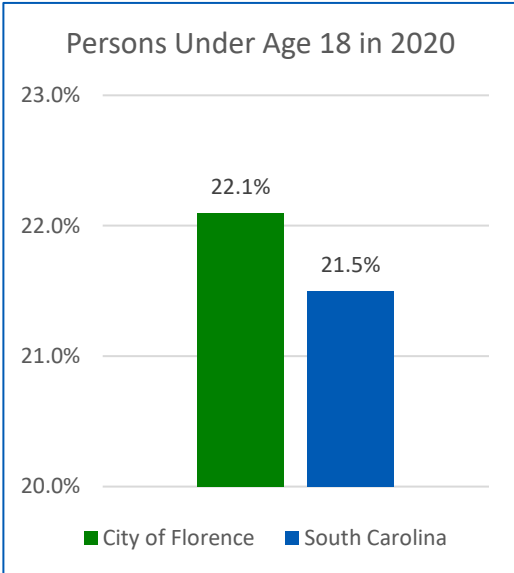




Age Distribution

The City of Florence is not significantly different from statewide numbers when it comes to age distribution within the respective populations. This is reflected in nearly identical median age figures, with Florence just a bit higher at a 39.9 median age in 2020 relative to 39.5 for all of South Carolina. Florence had a slightly higher percentage of its population under age 18 in 2020, estimated at 22.1 percent relative to 21.5 percent statewide. The city also had a higher share of its population age 65 and older in 2020 (18.6 percent relative to 17.7 percent for the state), indicating that a somewhat lower proportion of Florence’s population was in the prime adult working years from age 18 to 65 compared to the state. Additionally, Florence’s median age increased from 37.3 years in 2010 to 39.9 in 2020, which is the trend in many areas of the nation as the sizable Baby Boom generation continues to transition into their retirement years.

39.9



Housing

According to the newest available U.S. Census Bureau data, the City of Florence had an estimated 18,133 housing units in 2019. This housing count was up 8.8 percent from the 16,665 units reported in Census 2010. Of the 2019 total, 70.2 percent were single-family detached dwellings, and 58.5 percent of all housing units were owner-occupied versus rentals.

18,133





66.7%

\$158,600

23.4%

50.3%

37,829

63.1%



Average household size in Florence is estimated by esri to have remained steady over the last decade, effectively unchanged from 2.43 persons per household in 2010 to 2.45 in 2020. The statewide average household size was barely higher and also steady over the decade, at 2.50 in 2020 relative to 2.49 in 2010.

Housing Units Built Before 1990

Of the estimated 18,000+ housing units in Florence in 2019, two-thirds (66.7 percent) were built prior to 1990. It is important to consider housing that is 30 years or older as this is a common point when maintenance of older homes becomes an increasing burden on their owners and can start to impact the integrity of entire neighborhoods.

Median Home Value

Across the entire existing stock of ownership housing within the city in 2019, the Census Bureau reported an estimated median home value of \$158,600. Additionally, just under two-thirds (65.3 percent) of homes were valued in a range between \$100,000 and \$299,999.

Households Burdened with Cost of Housing

The Census Bureau estimated that among Florence households with a mortgage in 2019, nearly one-quarter (23.4 percent) were paying 30 percent or more of their monthly income on housing costs – and 16.9 percent were above the 35 percent cost threshold. The percentage of income that residents spend on their housing needs is an important affordability metric. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), “families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.”

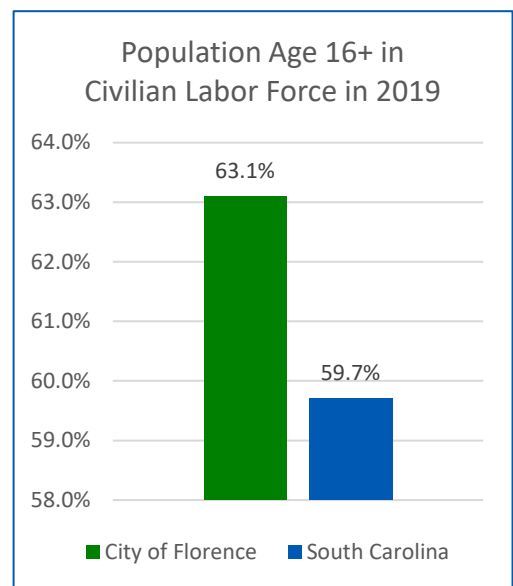
Among renters in Florence, the percentage above the 30 percent cost threshold was estimated at 50.3 percent in 2019 – with 41.1 percent spending more than 35 percent of monthly income on housing. The median rent in Florence in 2019 was estimated at \$780 per month, and nearly two-thirds of renters (65.6 percent) were paying in the \$500-\$999 range. The Census Bureau figures also indicate that only a small percentage of renters, less than four percent, were paying more than \$1,500 per month in rent.

Jobs and Income

While esri estimated a 2020 population in Florence of 39,034, they also concluded that total employment within the city was 37,829. This indicates nearly a 1:1 ratio between jobs and residents, which is a favorable number considering that earlier data showed only about 60 percent of the city population is in the prime adult working years from age 18 to 65. This is a further reflection of Florence’s role as a regional hub community, drawing in workers who commute to jobs within the city.

Labor Force Participation

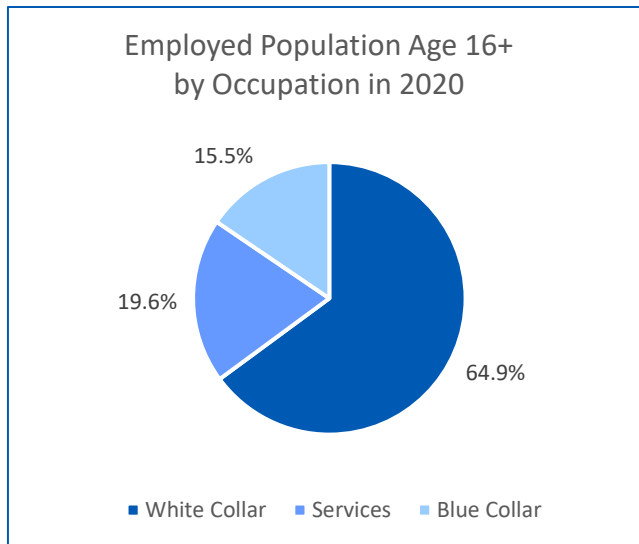
The Census Bureau estimated that 63.1 percent of Florence’s population age 16 or older was in



the civilian labor force in 2019, either employed or actively seeking work and counted as unemployed. This compared to 59.7 percent in the labor force statewide, which likely reflects South Carolina’s increasing popularity as a retirement destination.

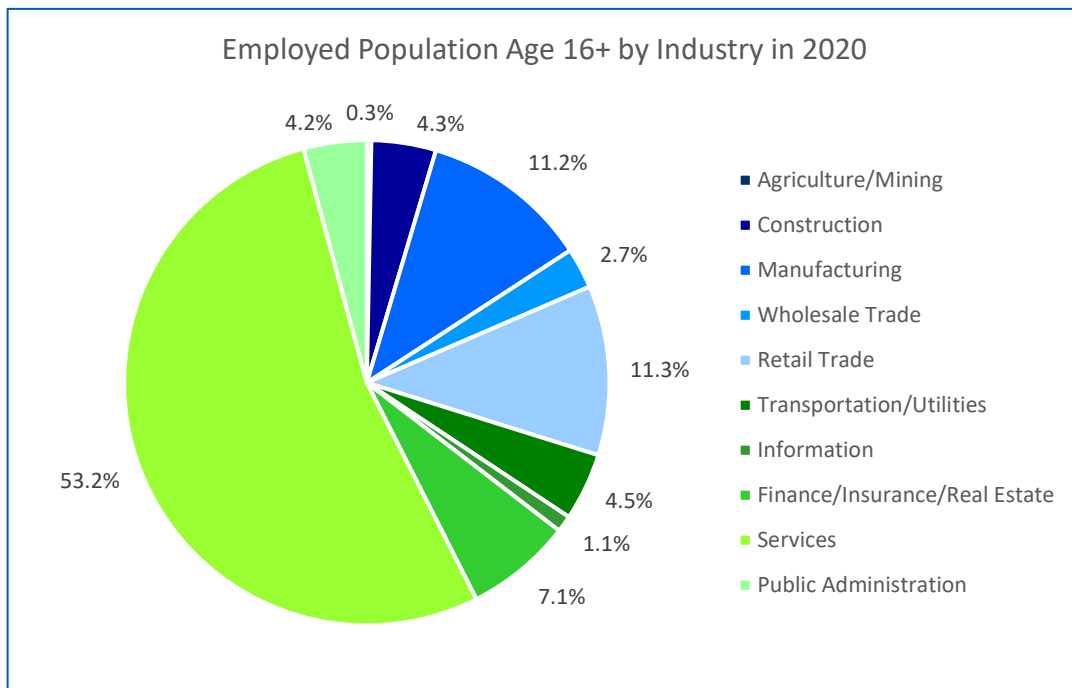
Types of Work

Among Florence’s employed population in 2020, esri estimated that nearly two-thirds (64.9 percent) were in “white collar” jobs involving management/business/financial positions or other professional, sales or administrative support roles. Another nearly 20 percent were in the services sector, and approximately 15 percent were in “blue collar” jobs (farming/forestry/fishing, construction/extraction, installation/maintenance/repair, production or transportation/material moving). Relative to statewide figures, Florence has more of its jobs in white collar and services roles, with all of South Carolina having nearly a quarter of its jobs (24.2 percent) in blue collar activities compared to 15.5 percent in Florence.



Employment by Industry

The esri estimates then allocate the employed workforce into 10 main industry sectors. The chart below illustrating this allocation shows that more than half (53.2 percent) of all Florence employment was in services-related jobs. The next largest shares of local jobs were in retail (11.3 percent) and manufacturing (11.2 percent), followed by 7.1 percent in finance, insurance and real estate activities typical of a regional center.



64.9%

53.2%



40.8%

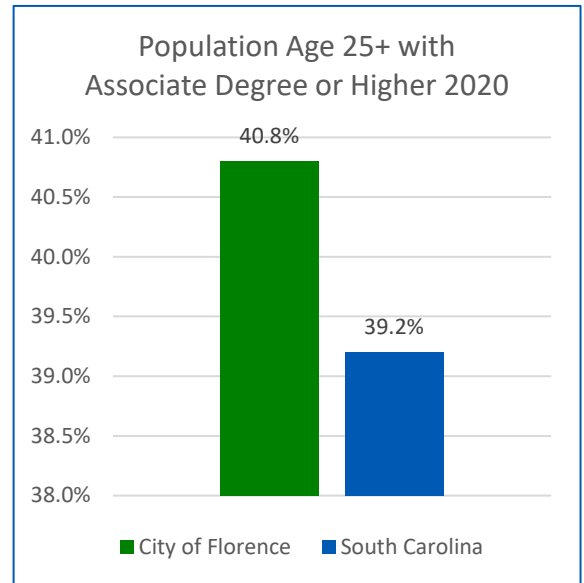
\$49,533

18.5%

Statewide employment is also dominated by services occupations but at a slightly lower share, 47.1 percent compared to 53.2 percent in Florence. More prominent employment sources across all of South Carolina are manufacturing (14.1 percent versus 11.2) and construction (7.4 percent versus 4.3). Most others sectors have roughly the same job shares both locally and in the state.

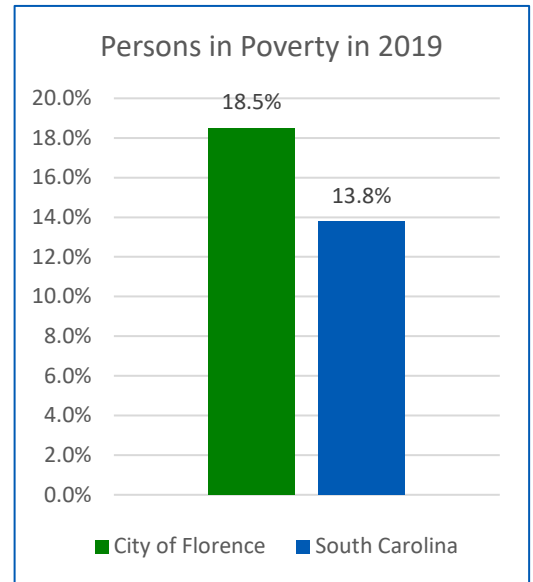
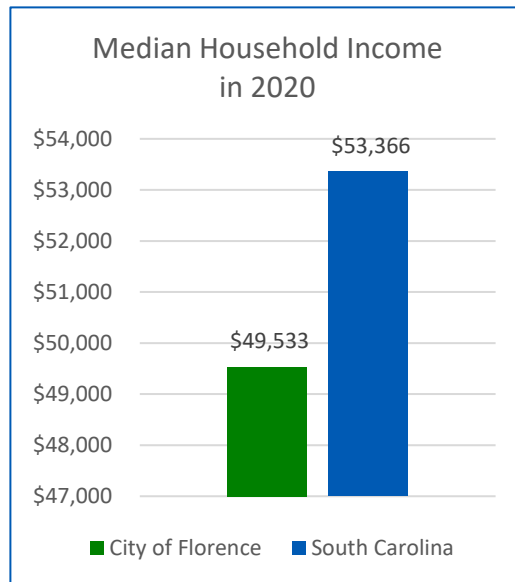
Educational Attainment

Ultimate education levels in Florence are roughly equivalent to those statewide according to the esri estimates for 2020. These estimates show 40.8 percent of Florence residents age 25+ having earned an Associate degree or higher by 2020 while the statewide figure was 39.2 percent. In Florence this included 19.1 percent with a bachelor’s degree and 12 percent with a graduate or professional degree.



Median Household Income

Median household income is an area where the city is below the statewide level, by approximately \$3,800 during 2020 as estimated by esri.



Persons in Poverty

Not surprisingly, then, Florence had a somewhat higher incidence of poverty in 2019 than found statewide, with 18.5 percent of all persons in the city falling below the federally-defined poverty threshold relative to 13.8 percent for all of South Carolina.

The Census Bureau also estimates the share of households with a broadband internet subscription, determining that 78.2 percent of households statewide had such coverage in 2019 while the local Florence estimate was 73.6 percent.



Utility Infrastructure

The City of Florence Utilities Department maintains water, sewer and stormwater systems for residents of Florence and some surrounding areas. Planning for expansion of these utilities will help focus and support the growth of the city while also maintaining the desired level of service to existing residents.

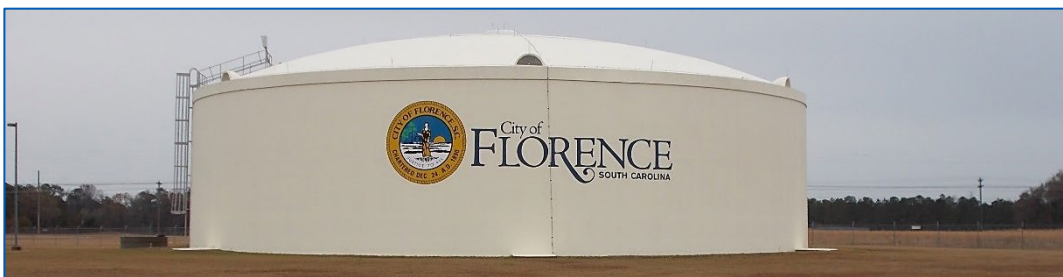
Stormwater Collection System

The stormwater collection system consists of inlets or catch basins, open channels and ditches, underground pipes, and detention ponds which are located within the city limits. These structures divert water after a storm from roadways, parking lots and rooftops to local water bodies such as creeks, streams and rivers.

Florence is federally designated as a small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). Under this designation, the City must require implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) and other water quality considerations related to illicit discharges, land disturbing activities, public outreach, and pollution prevention to satisfy the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) general permit for stormwater discharge.

A large portion of the downtown area consists of impervious surfaces that contribute to stormwater runoff. During heavy rainfall periods, the stormwater collection system may become overwhelmed, causing water to pond on roads. However, the ponded water will drain as soon as the storm intensity diminishes and the system catches up. This type of short-term nuisance flooding, which may inundate streets but does not cause major property damage or seriously threaten public safety, is the most common flooding in Florence.

Some older areas of the system constructed in the 1950s or 1960s are in poor condition. New development and redevelopment pose an additional challenge as more runoff from new impervious areas is introduced to the existing stormwater facilities that are already limited in capacity. To address issues with capacity and condition of the stormwater collection system, a capital construction plan was developed with \$8 million in bond funding over 14 years. Proposed future stormwater projects, totaling over \$6 million, are focused on specific areas of concern throughout the city.



Water Treatment and Distribution

The City of Florence provides water to customers within Florence, Quinby, Timmonsville and unincorporated portions of Florence County. Drinking water is produced from 14 groundwater treatment facilities supplied by 33 groundwater wells along with and one surface water treatment facility that is supplied with water from the Pee Dee River. Combined, these facilities have a capacity of approximately 20.5 million gallons per day (MGD) and produce high quality drinking water that exceeds all state and health safety standards.

\$6 million

20.5 MGD



Utility Asset Management

The City of Florence has undertaken an asset management program for its water and wastewater systems. This program will roll out over the next decade and will inventory critical water and wastewater assets, evaluate their condition and performance, and develop plans to pre-emptively secure, maintain, repair and replace assets.

22



Water is distributed through approximately 850 miles of water lines, ranging in size from one inch to 36 inches. The water system includes 14 elevated water storage tanks, and two booster pump stations maintain system pressure in critical areas.

The Pee Dee Regional Water Treatment Plant (WTP) was originally constructed in 2002. While the plant has undergone minor upgrades to improve treatment performance and replace failing equipment, the plant is nearing 20 years old, and some equipment is at or near the end of its useful life. Therefore, some components are in need of rehabilitation and replacement. The City must also balance the needs to rehabilitate the existing infrastructure with the needs to expand the Pee Dee WTP to meet future growth. The City is currently undertaking a project to increase the permitted water production capacity at the Pee Dee Regional WTP from 10 MGD to 15 MGD. This plant upgrade will provide additional water supply in the near term as several new industrial developments are planned for the area in the coming years. Additional expansions of the Pee Dee Regional WTP beyond 15 MGD are being considered to meet long-term water supply needs as the city and surrounding areas grow.

The City maintains a water distribution system model to aid in planning and evaluating system capacity. Identified future system needs include a second transmission main on the western side of the distribution system for redundancy to the higher elevation areas that tend to see the lowest water pressures. A planned capital improvement project will extend a 30-inch diameter water main along Freedom Boulevard to Alligator Road on the eastern side of the system to improve water conveyance into the system from the Pee Dee Regional WTP.



Wastewater Collection and Treatment

The wastewater collection system provides service to Florence, Quinby, Timmons ville and some unincorporated portions of Florence County, although the wastewater collection system does not extend as far into the county as the water distribution system. The system includes approximately 400 miles of gravity sewer pipes, 125 miles of force mains, over 120 pump stations and more than 7,500 manholes.

The majority of the collection system flows to the Florence Regional Wastewater Management Facility (WWMF), which was expanded from a treatment capacity of 15 MGD to 22 MGD in 2013. Wastewater in the Timmons ville area is treated at the Timmons ville Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), with a capacity of 2 MGD. The Timmons ville WWTP was acquired by Florence in 2013 and is planned for phase-out and replacement after exhausting its current service life.

The City recently conducted a study focusing on the Jeffries Creek sewer interceptors. The study goal was to develop conceptual improvement alternatives and recommended improvements to increase the capacity of these interceptors which convey a large portion of the wastewater flow from the central and western portion of the city. Since the completion of this study, the City has seen increased developer interest for residential growth in the western portion of the service area and potential for increased industrial growth in the eastern portion of the service area. To balance the current limitations and future needs, the City has begun planning for a

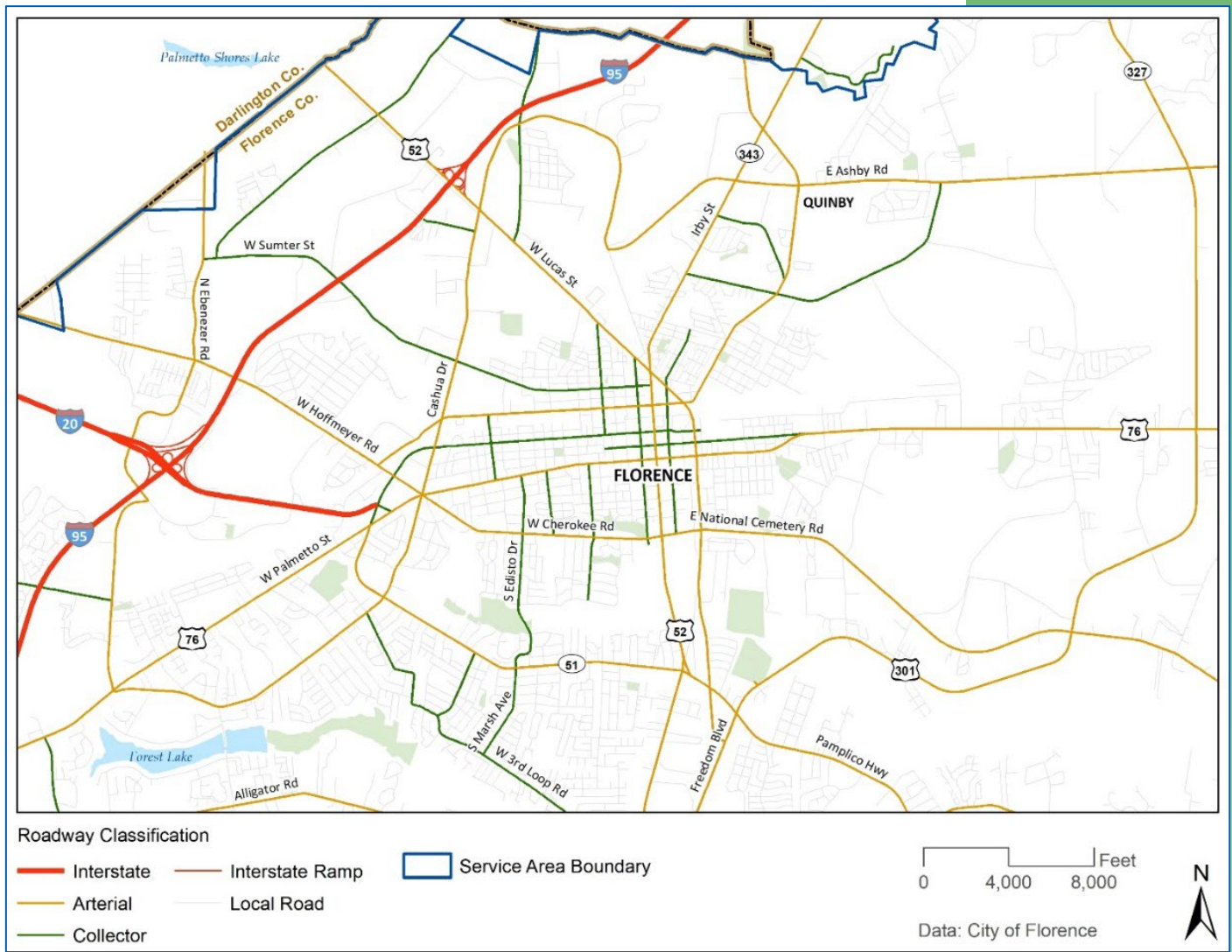
new Wastewater Management Facility located in between the Timmonsville WWTP and the Florence Regional WWMF.

Transportation

As in many U.S. communities, the most common form of travel in Florence is by personal vehicle. However, as population growth continues and infrastructure improvement costs rise, the City will need to look at all transportation modes to provide an interconnected system. Therefore, this section summarizes Florence’s current transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities along with existing vehicular circulation.

Roadway Network

Interstate 20 terminates at Florence’s western edge at the Interstate 95 interchange. Within the city limits, US 76/Palmetto Street, US 52/Irby Street, and US 301/Freedom Boulevard serve as major arterials that provide connections for Florence and the surrounding areas. Other critical roadways that accommodate local traffic include David McLeod Boulevard, Alligator Road, Highway 327, Highway 51/2nd Loop Road/Pamplico Highway, Evans Street, Cashua Drive



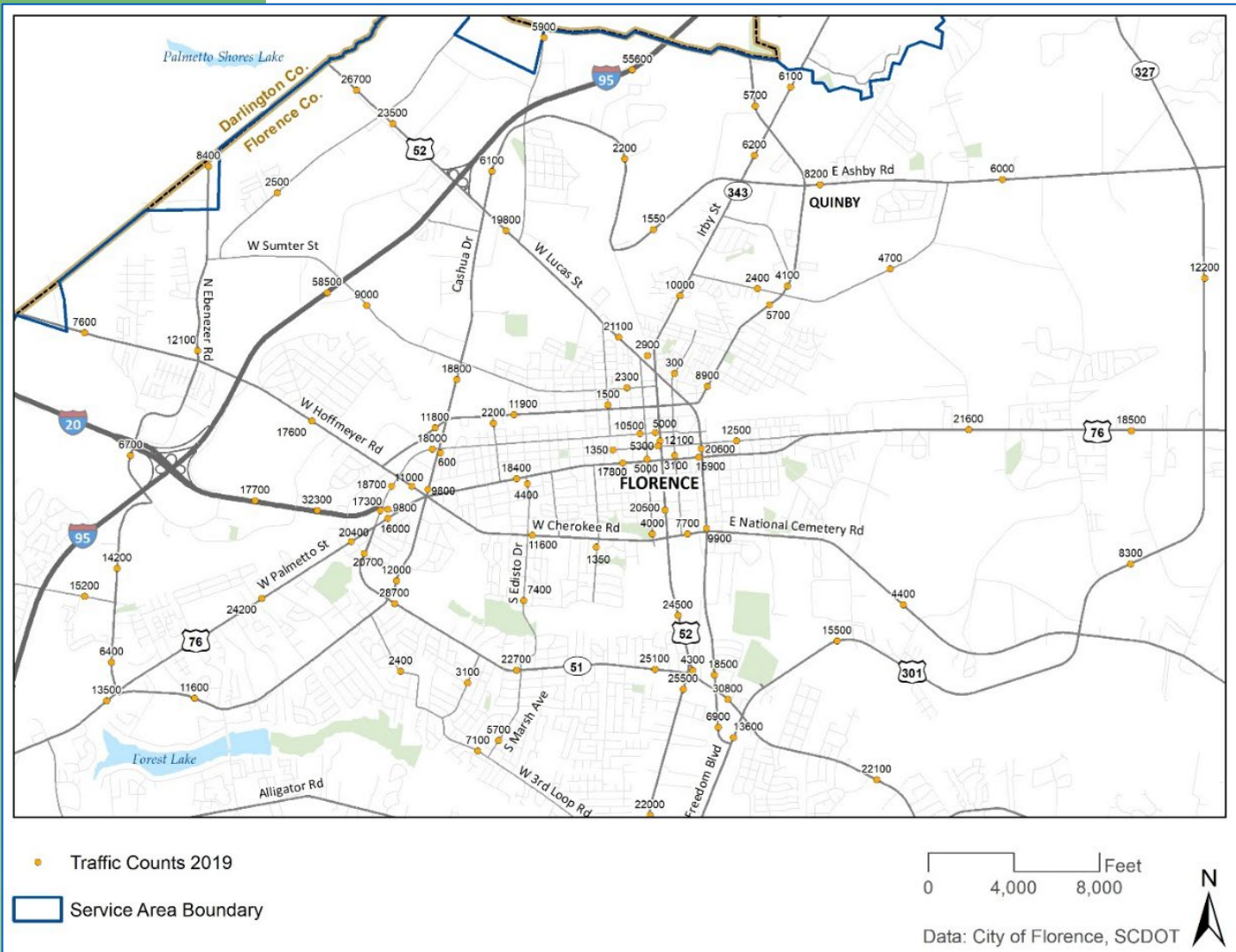
~30,000

and Hoffmeyer Road, which turns into E. National Cemetery Road east of US 52/Irby Street. These roads are shown on the map below and are categorized by their functional classifications.

According to South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) traffic count data, US 76/Palmetto Street, US 52/Irby Street, and Highway 51/2nd Loop Road carry more than 20,000 vehicles per day. In some locations this is closer to 30,000 vehicles per day. The next map shows the 2019 annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes at various locations across the area.

Several intersections throughout the city experience congestion, especially in the PM peak hour:

- US 76/Palmetto Street at Cashua Drive at Hoffmeyer Road (Five Points).
- US 76/Palmetto Street at David H. McLeod Boulevard.
- US 76/Palmetto Street at US 52/Irby Street.
- US 52/Irby Street at Highway 51/2nd Loop Road.

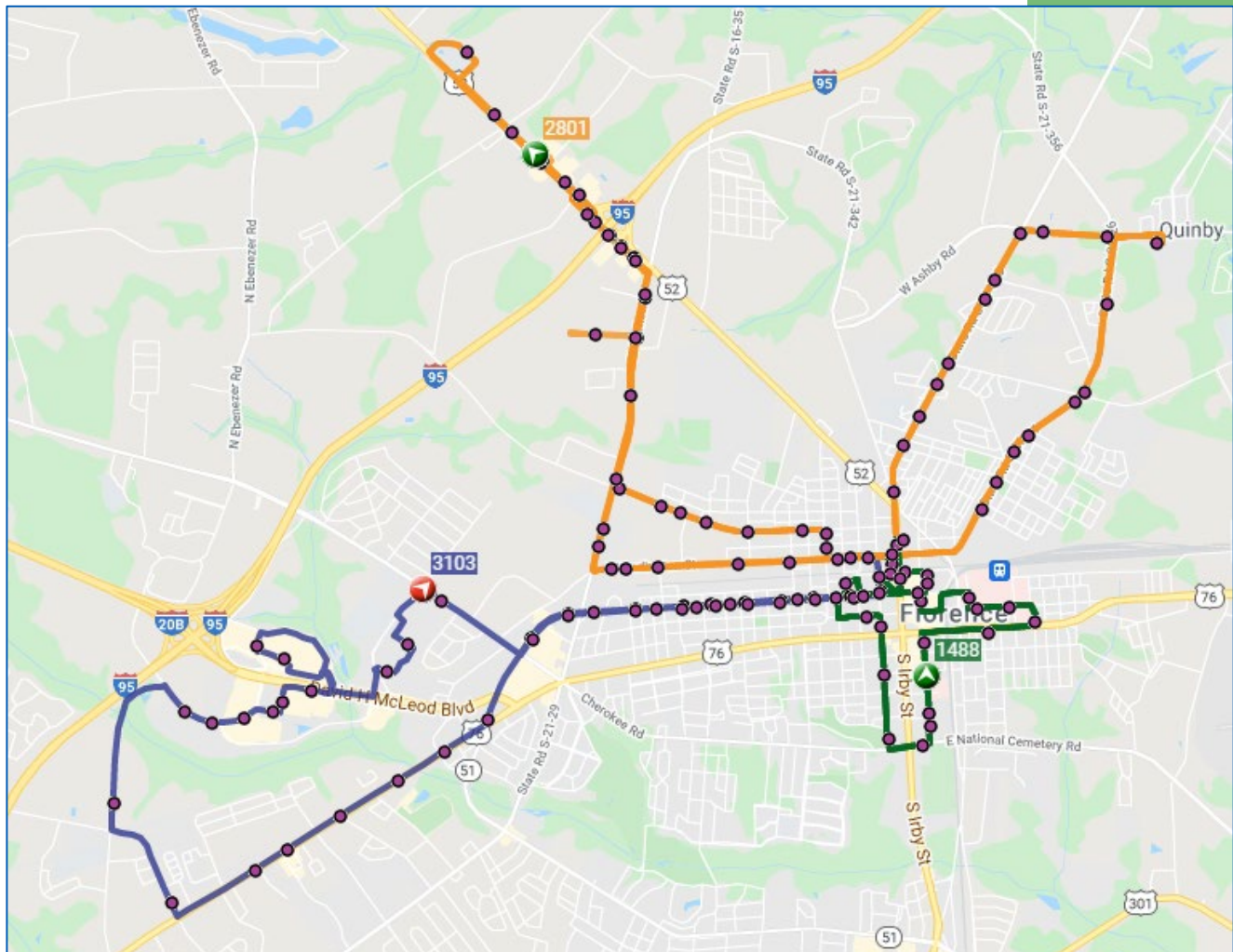


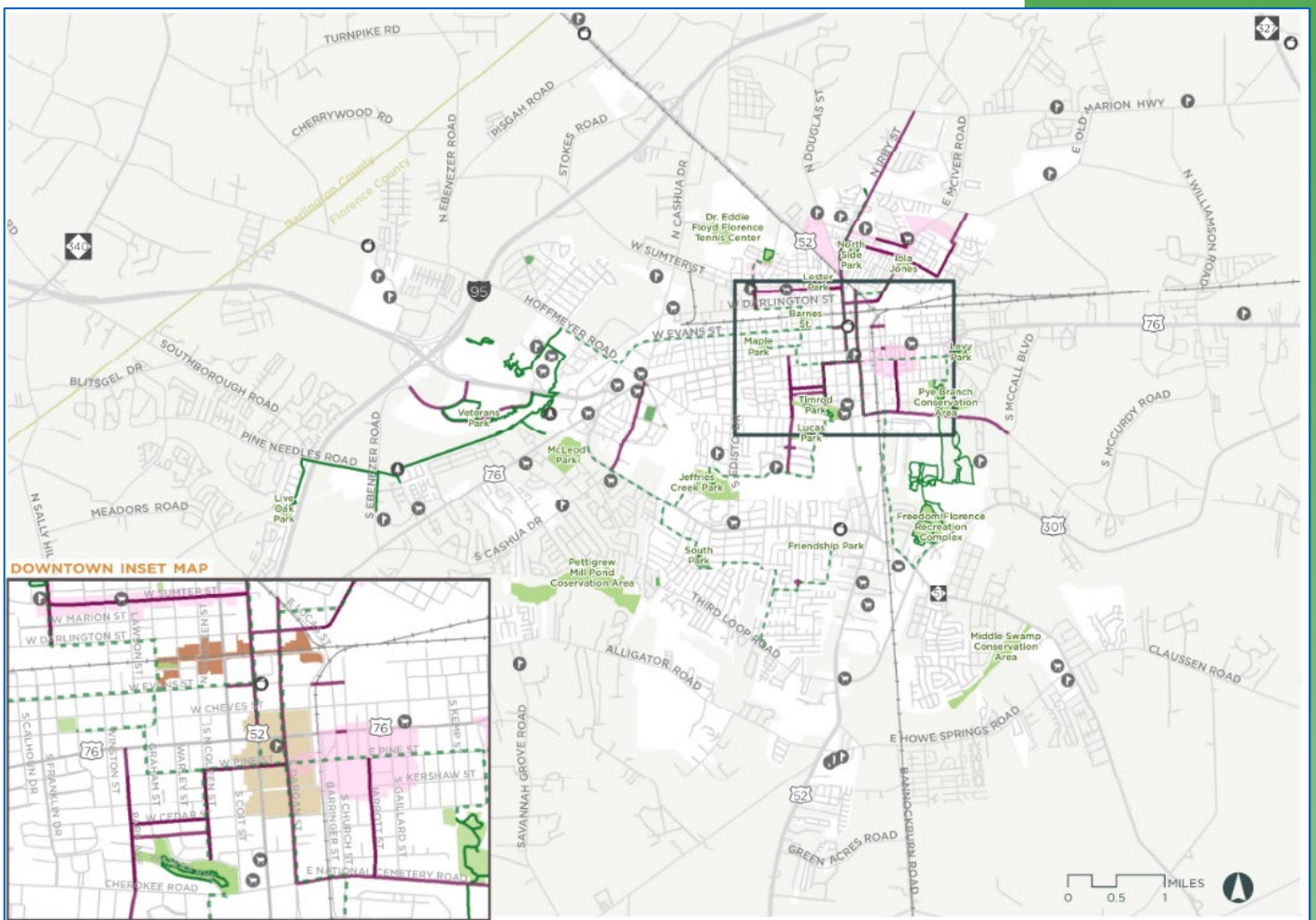
Transit Network

The Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA) provides public transportation services for the three-county Pee Dee region of South Carolina. In 2019, the Authority provided approximately 252,000 unlinked trips. Along with a free trolley shuttle around downtown and its Florence Transit Center at the corner of W. Darlington and N. Irby streets, PDRTA currently operates five fixed bus routes throughout Florence:

- Route 1: West Evans Street – Magnolia Mall.
- Route 2: North Florence.
- Route 3: East and South Florence.
- Route 4: 2nd Loop – Department of Social Services (DSS) – Super Walmart.
- Route 7: Francis Marion University.

Commuter service is provided into Florence from Marion and Darlington counties. These commuter routes connect to the fixed routes within the City of Florence.



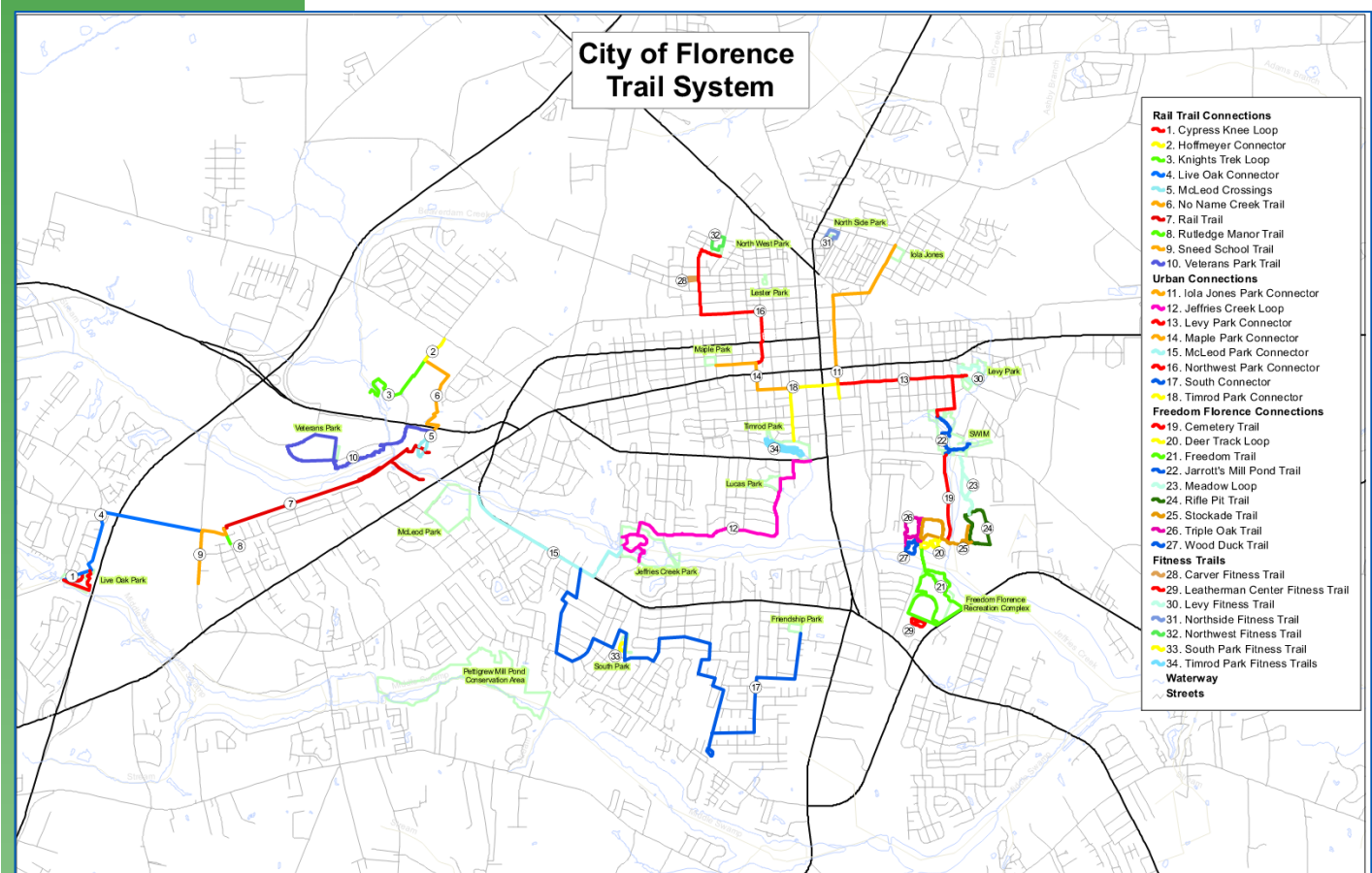


The next map shows the Florence Trail System. The system includes three distinct groupings of trails: Rail Trail Connections, Urban Connections and Freedom Florence Connections. The Rail Trail connections consist of approximately 10 miles of trails and are intended for recreational use with their hard surfaces and pleasant outdoor settings. The Urban connections focus on connecting to parks located in residential areas via groupings of urban streets. The Freedom Florence connections comprise approximately eight miles of trail running generally north-south between the Freedom Florence Recreational Complex and the Levy Park Community Center.

LEGEND

- Farmers Market
- School
- Trailhead
- Existing Trail
- Proposed Urban Connections
- Road Improvement Project
- Road
- Railroad
- Catalyst Project
- Food Overlay District
- Arts & Culture Overlay District
- Park
- City of Florence
- County Boundary

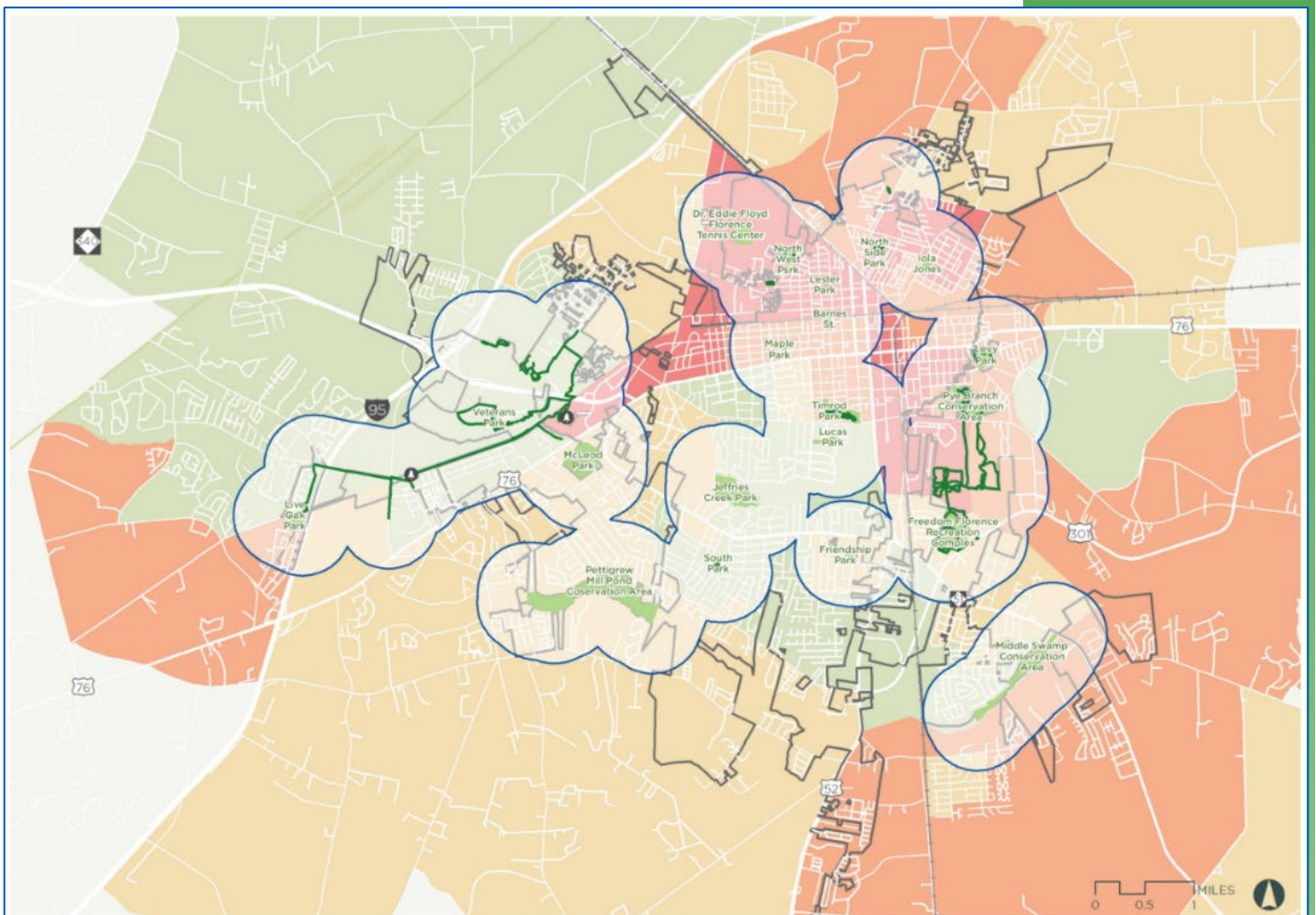




Jeffries Creek Trail.

SOURCE: Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce.

The next map shows a ½-mile, or 10-minute, walkshed around all of the active spaces across Florence. Active spaces are the existing greenspaces, parks, Freedom Florence connections, rail trail connections and fitness trails. The map illustrates that much of the city is within a 10-minute walk of an active space; however, as mentioned previously, many of the lower classification roadways do not have sidewalks or other adequate pedestrian facilities for people to access the active spaces.



Regional Airport

The Florence Regional Airport is a general aviation airport that serves the Pee Dee region of South Carolina from its location on the east side of the city. American Airlines is the only commercial airline that currently serves the Florence Regional Airport.

In 2019, the airport had 43,356 boardings, which was a 2.2 percent reduction from 2018. According to the May 2021 Enplanement Data, air travel is picking up again after the COVID-19 disruption. The airport had 1,997 enplanements that month, which is the highest monthly figure since February 2020.

LEGEND

Concentration of Vulnerable Populations

- Highest
-
-
- Lowest

1/2 mile walkshed around active spaces

43,356



Public Safety Services

Along with utility and transportation infrastructure, public safety services are another essential part of a community’s “growth capacity,” meaning its ability to serve further population and territorial growth while meeting the needs of current residents, businesses and institutions plus redeveloping and infill areas within the existing city.

Florence Fire Department

The City of Florence Fire Department (FFD) serves approximately 21 square miles from five stations, each housing an engine company. Along with the engine company, Station 1 also houses a truck company, Battalion Chief and rescue truck. Station locations include:

- Station 1 at 144 E. Palmetto Street in Downtown.
- Station 2 at 250 E. Marion Street in northeast Florence.
- Station 3 at 1321 S. Edisto Drive in south central Florence.
- Station 4 at 2160 W. Palmetto Street in west Florence.
- Station 5 at 296 E. Red Bud Lane in south Florence.

FFD responds to an average of 4,000 incidents each year involving fires, medical first responder calls along with EMS, hazardous materials releases, electrical issues, vehicle accidents and rescue situations, among others. The Department’s response occurs through three shifts that operate on a 24/48 hour schedule so all stations are staffed around the clock each day, with a minimum staffing of three personnel per apparatus. FFD’s Suppression Division is its largest, with 25 emergency response personnel on duty each day. The Life Safety Division, led by the City’s Fire Marshal, contributes to the City’s code compliance efforts by conducting fire safety inspections at new and existing business locations.



~4,000

Florence Police Department

The Florence Police Department (FPD) is administered from the City Center building Downtown and also has its Patrol Division Headquarters at 303 Athens Street just north of Downtown and a Downtown Substation at 112 North Dargan Street. FPD is a State Accredited Law Enforcement agency that has continued to adjust its staffing and programs with ongoing growth in the city’s population and incorporated area. An ongoing commitment remains FPD’s department-wide focus on community oriented policing which emphasizes crime prevention and more effective response through routine interaction with citizens and by meeting regularly with 40 neighborhood and business crime watch associations. Among the many ways this philosophy is implemented are a Citizens Police Academy, the Police Chief’s Citizen Advisory Board, periodic community surveys and police/youth programs including Police Explorers.

The Department’s efforts are most visible through its Patrol Division and the Uniformed Patrol Unit, which operates under a four-squad concept and a 12-hour shift schedule. Through FPD’s Community Relations Division, citizen- and officer-identified violations of City zoning and codes

40

are investigated and resolved either through the City’s livability court process or through other acceptable methods. With the City’s recent addition of a rental registry ordinance, FPD’s Codes and Zoning Enforcement Unit also ensures that rental property owners comply with all of the City’s property maintenance and zoning requirements including having obtained a rental permit and, in some cases, a business license prior to renting a property.

The Enforcement Unit also supports the City’s ongoing neighborhood redevelopment efforts, especially in areas where property maintenance issues are concentrated. Officers help identify derelict property conditions and use enforcement methods to achieve remediation. The Community Relations Division coordinates with other City departments and divisions such as Community Services, Public Works and Planning, Research and Development to eliminate neighborhood problems that hinder redevelopment efforts.



Recreation and Amenities

Florence is a city rich with recreational, cultural and other amenities for a community its size. Extensive detail and resources beyond the purposes of this summary report are available at:

- City of Florence Parks & Recreation Department
<https://www.cityofflorence.com/parks-recreation>
- Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau
<https://visitflo.com/>
- Visit Downtown portion of Florence Downtown Development Corporation website
<https://www.florencedowntown.com/visit-downtown>

Public Parks

Along with the recreational trails highlighted in the earlier Transportation section, the City park system includes nearly 500 acres devoted to active recreational and sports uses plus quiet places for access to nature, passive recreational pursuits, and area history and memorials. Multiple parks include community centers for use by seniors, adults and/or youth along with the Barnes Street Activity Center. Several of the largest parks include Jeffries Creek Park (55 acres between Edisto Drive and DeBerry Boulevard in south central Florence), McLeod Park (48.5 acres at 620 Santiago Drive in west Florence) and Timrod Park (18 acres at 400 Timrod Park Drive in central Florence). Some of the gems within the City’s parks and recreation system include:

- **Freedom Florence Recreation Complex** (off Pamplico Highway/Highway 51 at 1515 Freedom Boulevard in east central Florence)
 - › Opened in 1990.
 - › 100-acre multipurpose recreation park designed, in part, to provide



Tree City USA

The City of Florence has been recognized as a “Tree City USA” for more than 30 years by the national Arbor Day Foundation.



~500



championship caliber softball fields and facilities for local leagues as well as to host various state, regional and national level tournaments that have a direct economic impact for the Florence community.

- › 9 lighted state-of-the-art tournament softball fields.
- › 3 football fields.
- › An 11,600 square foot Gymnastics Center.
- **City of Florence Soccer Complex** (along the east side of I-95, accessed from W. Palmetto Street/US 76, in west Florence)
 - › Opened in 2018.
 - › 10 championship soccer fields, two lighted for night play.
 - › 6,000 square foot pavilion.

- **Dr. Eddie Floyd Florence Tennis Center** (1300 Jennie O’Bryan Avenue, off of 1060 N. Cashua Drive, in north Florence)
 - › Opened in 2011.
 - › 24 asphalt courts.
 - › 6 Har-Tru clay courts.
 - › 5,000 square foot activity center.



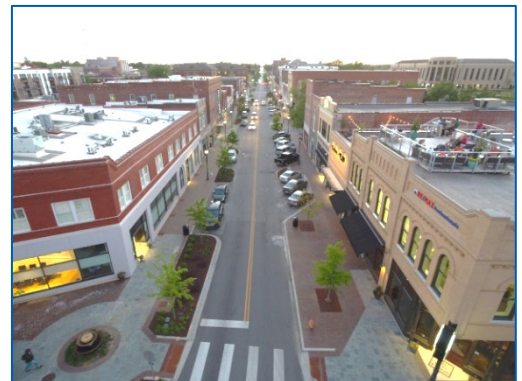
SOURCE: scnow.com.

- **Pearl Moore Basketball Center** (500 Barnes Street in the Downtown area, adjacent to the Barnes Street Activity Center and City Center Farmers Market at 200 Sanborn Street)
 - › Opened in 2018.
 - › Approximately 31,525 square feet.
 - › Dick’s Sporting Goods Championship Court.
 - › Auxiliary gym with two full-sized basketball floors.



Downtown Florence

The revitalized core of Downtown Florence encompasses just over one square mile, with the Downtown Historic District including a collection of 51 commercial buildings, of which 38 contribute to the historical character of the area. The rapid and widely-recognized success that the Florence community has demonstrated in turning around its Downtown over the last decade led to the Joseph P. Riley, Jr. Award for Economic Development from the Municipal Association of South Carolina.





Downtown Florence achieved a significant new distinction in 2021 by being recognized as a Main Street America™ Accredited program through the national Main Street Program and its state coordinating program, Main Street South Carolina. Such accredited programs are committed to creating high-quality places and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. All Main Street

America™ Accredited programs meet a set of National Accreditation Standards of Performance as outlined by Main Street America. The Main Street Approach™ involves four key focus areas: Economic Vitality, Organization, Design and Promotion.

The following facts and figures reflect the successful redevelopment of Downtown Florence:

- Along with an assortment of business, professional office, civic, institutional, cultural and entertainment uses, Downtown Florence is once again a prime destination for residents and visitors with two hotels, over a dozen independently owned restaurants, more than a dozen unique shops and over 20 annual events and festivals each year including the award-winning Florence After 5 concert series and the SC Pecan Festival.



- Downtown has seen \$250+ million in public and private investment since 2010, with more than half of this occurring since 2015.
- More than 40 buildings have been restored for productive use versus vacancy and blighted condition in some cases.
- Downtown now has more than 100 residential units including both market-rate apartments and owner-occupied condos. The Cost of Living Index for Downtown residents is 82.9 on a scale where 100 is the national average.
- More than 2,500 parking spaces are available near Downtown destinations including a free City of Florence parking garage, the new 385-space Florence County parking garage and various surface lots. The City plans to add another garage with 320 spaces.
- Downtown’s renewed economic prominence is reflected by:
 - › Approximately 15,000 daytime workers.
 - › \$2.6 billion in spending power within a 10-mile radius.
 - › 74,000+ annual event attendees (pre-COVID).
- Downtown is the cultural hub of Florence and the Pee Dee region with:
 - › Francis Marion University (FMU) Performing Arts Center (pictured on next page).
 - › Florence County Museum and Waters Gallery.
 - › Florence Little Theatre.
 - › FMU University Place Gallery.



Historic Downtown African American Business District

In 2017 the City of Florence sponsored a historical marker to highlight the historic business district. As stated on the marker:

“The 200 and 300 blocks of N. Dargan St. were once the center of a thriving African American business district in Florence. A number of black-owned businesses operated here, including restaurants, barber shops, funeral parlors and pharmacies. These businesses provided services to African American customers who were often denied access to white-owned businesses. By the first decades of the 20th century North Florence had become the principal African American residential district as patterns of racial segregation became more fixed. The shops located on N. Dargan St., just north of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, served the predominantly African American residents who lived and worked here.”



- › Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation Library.
- › Florence Regional Arts Alliance.

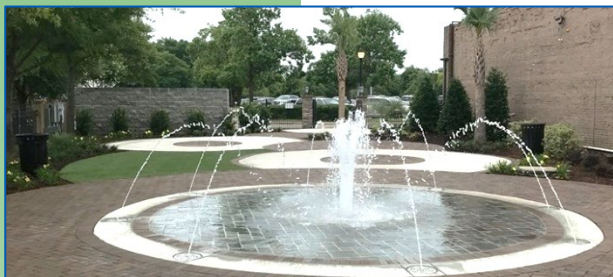


As a result, Downtown Florence is one of eight Cultural Districts of South Carolina designated by the South Carolina Arts Commission under legislation passed by the South Carolina General Assembly. A cultural district is a geographic area that has a concentration of walkable and connected cultural assets, amenities and activities. Cultural districts are recertified every five years.



- The Downtown public art collection includes eleven pieces of 2D and 3D artworks from local and international artists, documented in a downloadable public art trail guide.

At the time of this report the City of Florence and the Florence Downtown Development Corporation (FDDC) had just won two 2021 Inspiration Awards from Main Street South Carolina, which recognize members' achievements and success in downtown revitalization work. The first award for Outstanding 2020 Promotion recognized FDDC's work on the Downtown Holiday Gift Guide, a digital shopping catalog that connected thousands of shoppers with holiday gift ideas from locally owned downtown business owners. The second award to the City and FDDC was for Outstanding Business Development Program for their prompt and effective response to the COVID-19 scenario. This pivot during 2020 included assembling resources, identifying relief funding for small businesses and providing extensive technical services and ecommerce training. The Downtown district held its own and even added six new businesses. The City and FDDC also partnered to provide qualifying micro-businesses in the district with re-opening grants to assist them with marketing and promotions once the statewide restrictions were lifted.



SOURCE: Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce (also Downtown view on page 24).



Florence Center

Florence Center is the largest convention, entertainment and exhibition facility in northeast South Carolina with more than 75,000 square feet of multipurpose space. Located at 3300 W. Radio Drive near the interchange between I-95 and I-20, Florence Center is situated amid a hospitality district of hotels, restaurants, shopping and recreational amenities in west Florence. The Center regularly hosts entertainment, community and civic events. Features of the recently expanded facility include:

- A 10,000-seat arena.
- A 14,500 square foot ballroom along with a junior ballroom.
- 9 meeting rooms.
- An oversized pre-function area.

Florence Center is managed by SMG and is a 10-time recipient of the Prime Site Award from Facilities Magazine.



SOURCE: wikipedia.org.

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APPENDIX A

Neighborhood Profile Update

Stakeholders and residents will be more familiar with the overall demographic makeup of their city. However, they may be unaware of the unique situation in the East, North and Northwest neighborhoods in Florence. This section highlights the demographic picture of the three neighborhoods (the study area), using all of Florence as a counterpoint. The neighborhood profile section is used to create a snapshot of the study area and the City of Florence to summarize and compare demographics.

The table below (master table with all demographics) features both the study area and the City of Florence. The statistics for the two areas are split into five categories: location, population, income, housing, and education and employment combined.

Demographic Category	Study Area	City of Florence
Location Characteristics		
Square miles	8.57	22.3
Acres	5,484	14,272
Population Characteristics		
Total Population (2000)	15,367	33,775
Total Population (2010)	14,184	37,183
Total Population (2019)	14,223	38,792
Total Households	5,066	15,580
Housing Density	1.2 per acre	1.2 per acre
Median Age	37.7	40
Below 18 Years of Age	25.2%	22.1%
Above 65 Years of Age	16.3%	18.5%
Average Household Size	3.27	2.45
Income		
Median Household Income	\$22,967	\$42,648
Average Household Income	\$33,772	\$62,433
Median Net Worth	\$12,964	\$51,050
Poverty Rate	40.3%	18.8%
Housing		
Median Homeowner Property Value	\$76,682	\$172,549
Average Household Rent	\$662	\$759
Renters Paying more than 30% of Income in Rent	50.8%	43.8%
Renters Paying more than 50% of Income in Rent	29.6%	24%
Ownership Rate	34%	54%
Vacancy Rate	15.6%	10%
Access to Internet	53.4%	74%
Education and Employment		
At least High School Diploma	36.4%	89.3%
At least Bachelor's Degree	11.8%	30.4%
At least Graduate/Professional Degree	4.2%	12%
Unemployment Rate	10.2%	6.0%

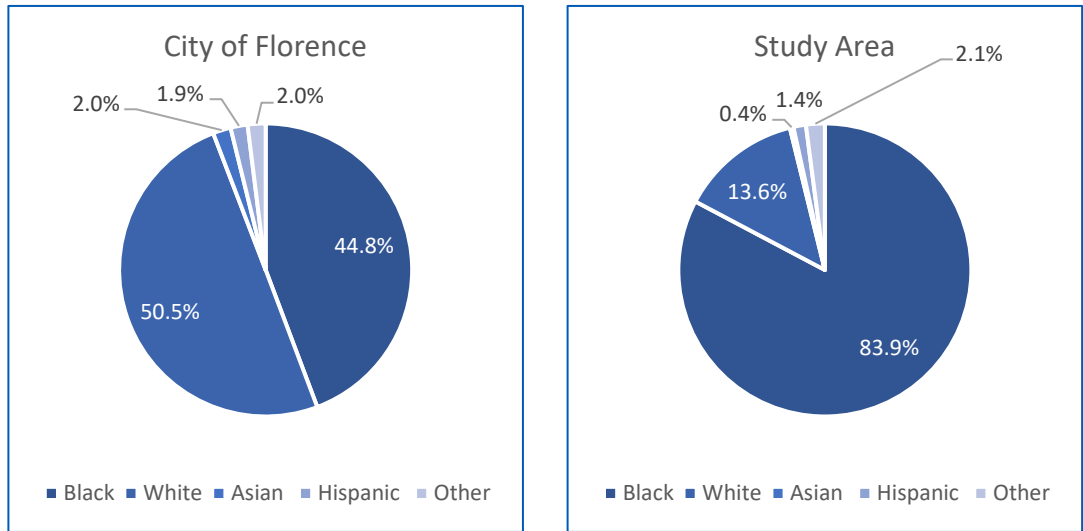
SOURCE:

City of Florence data provided by the City (2019 American Community Survey data from U.S. Census Bureau). Study area data from esri Community Analyst (based on 2019 American Community Survey data).

NOTE: Differences in data points between this appendix and the main body of the Existing City Report are due to differing sources and/or timeframe of data for the entire city.

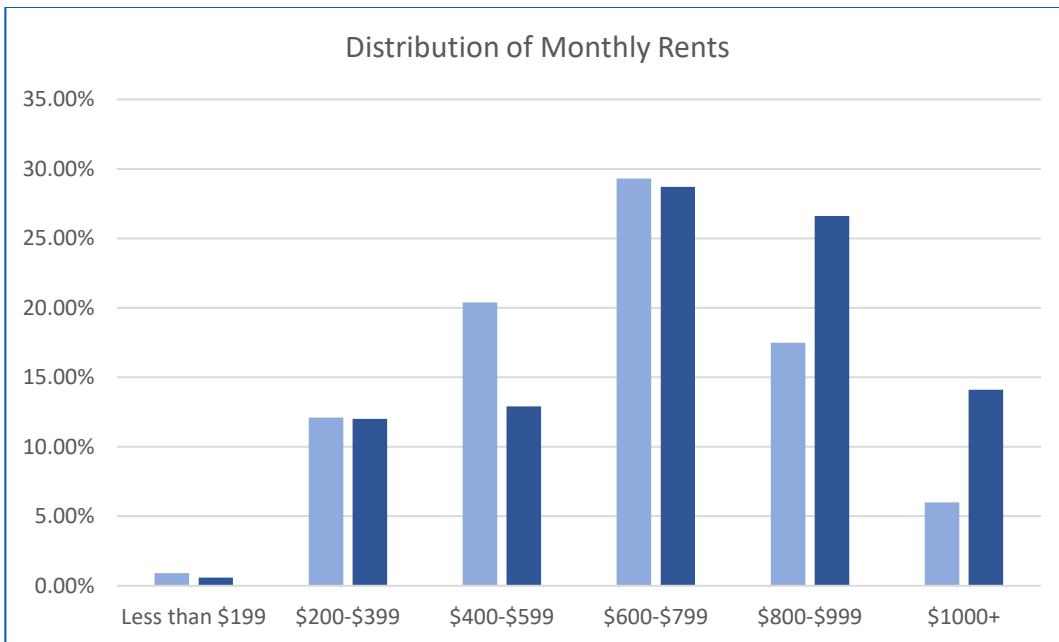
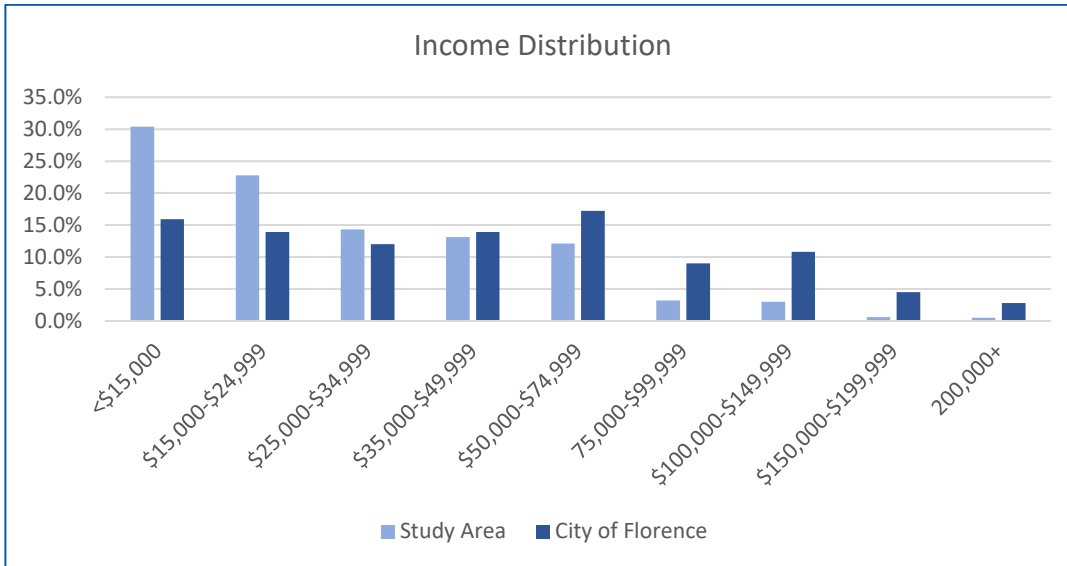
Population and Income

The study area population in 2019 accounted for roughly 32 percent of the population of the City of Florence, which was estimated as 38,972 at the time. A large portion of the study area population is African American as shown on the second chart below. The average age in the study area is only slightly younger than the average age of the City of Florence.



The median household income of the study area in 2019 was \$22,967, which was 46 percent lower than the median household income of the City of Florence. Low incomes directly contribute to the high poverty rate in the study area, which was 40.3 percent in 2019 compared to 18.8 percent for the City of Florence. The difference translates into approximately eight in 20 residents living in poverty in the study area relative to one in 20 living in poverty in Florence.

The next figure below shows the difference in incomes between residents in the study area and the City of Florence. Roughly 30 percent of residents in the study area made less than \$15,000 a year in 2019 compared to 15 percent of residents in the City of Florence. As shown in the next figure, exactly half (50 percent) of the residents in the study area spent more than 30 percent of their income on rent in 2019 compared to 43 percent in the City of Florence. The small difference in percentage is likely due to the lower rents found in the study area than in Florence.



Education and Employment

Approximately seven in 20 residents in the study area had attained a high school diploma as of 2019 compared to 18 in 20 residents for the City of Florence. The percentage of residents who had achieved a bachelor's degree was less significant – with 12 percent of residents in the study area having a bachelor's degree compared to 30 percent for the City.

The study area's 2019 unemployment rate of 10 percent was higher than the City of Florence's unemployment rate of 6 percent.

Population Key Facts

- Median household income in the study area was 46 percent less in 2019 than the median household income for the City of Florence.



- 12 of 100 residents had at least a bachelor’s degree in the study area compared to roughly 30 of 100 for the City of Florence.
- The poverty rate in the study area was approximately twice the rate for the City of Florence.

APPENDIX B

Neighborhood Inventory Update

This section is based on parcel-level mapping and analysis of existing land use and housing, building conditions, and occupancy/vacancy or absence of structures on properties in the East, North and Northwest neighborhoods of Florence (the study area).

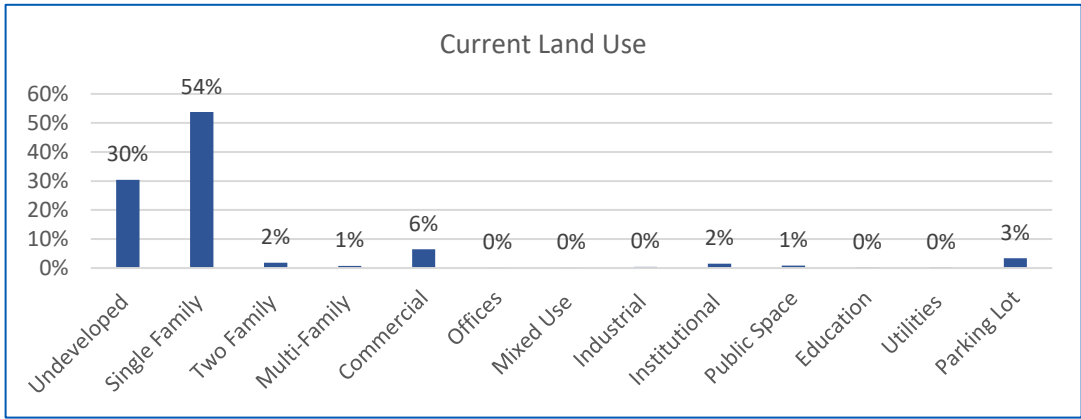
Existing Land Use

The information below represents current land use information for the Florence study area. The information displayed utilizes categorical charts and geographical representation of land use by parcel. The accompanying map indicates the land use category for each parcel.

A windshield survey conducted in spring 2021 examined 6,421 parcels in the East, North, and Northwest neighborhoods in Florence to provide land use information and analysis. The following analysis organizes the collected land use information into 12 different land use categories and descriptors:

- **Single-Family Detached:** Single-Family dwelling with no shared walls.
- **Single-Family Attached:** Single Family with shared walls with 2+ units and individual lot lines between units.
- **Multiplex:** Multi-family dwelling with shared walls and shared floors between 2-4 units with common land ownership.
- **Multi-Family:** Multi-family dwelling (5 or more units).
- **Commercial:** Used for retail.
- **Office:** Used for office.
- **Mixed-Use:** Used for living and working.
- **Industrial:** Used for manufacturing, storage or other industrial uses.
- **Institutional:** Used for church, government or education.
- **Public Space:** Used for public recreation or could signify a neighborhood greenspace amenity.
- **Parking Lot:** Used for parking vehicles.
- **Utility:** Used for utility purposes.
- **Undeveloped:** No use or no structure.

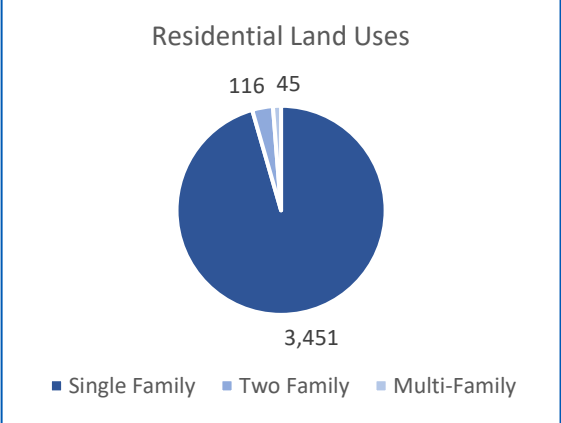
The existing land use in the East, North and Northwest is dominated by single-family homes, accounting for 3,451 parcels or 54 percent of all existing land use in the three neighborhoods as shown on the chart below. Undeveloped land is the next largest category of land use, accounting for 1,950 parcels or 30 percent of all existing land use in the study area. Commercial is the third-largest category in the study area, accounting for six percent of the existing land use in the three neighborhoods.



In total, the study area has 3,612 residential parcels, of which 116 are duplexes and 45 are multi-family properties.

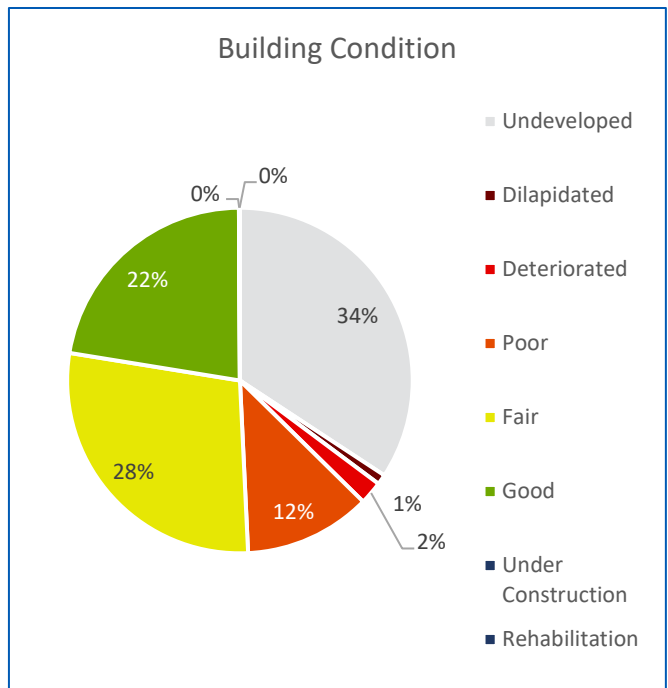
Key Findings

The study area is predominately single-family but has several large parcels on the exterior that are undeveloped and could serve as potential catalytic development sites.



Building Conditions

The information presented in this section describes the building conditions of structures on each parcel within East, North and Northwest Florence. Conditions were collected through an external survey of every property within the study area during spring 2021. Due to limitations



in the survey methodology, analysis of internal building conditions was not considered. The accompanying map displays the location of the structures and their corresponding condition. Building conditions percentages were calculated using the total number of parcels for each given condition.

Of the 6,421 parcels surveyed, 34 percent were undeveloped, 22 percent were in good condition, 28 percent were in fair, 12 percent were in poor, and less than three percent were deteriorated, under construction or currently being rehabilitated as shown on the next chart.

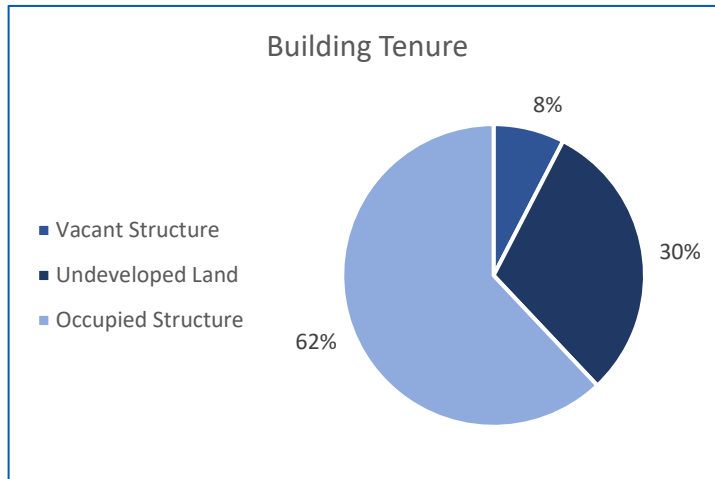
Key Findings

The largest percentage of parcels in the study area is undeveloped, providing significant development opportunities within the study area. Most structures in the study area are in good or fair condition, meaning most structures do not currently require exterior renovation work.

Building Tenure

Building tenure designates parcels that have occupied structures, vacant structures or no structure (undeveloped land). Building tenure for the study area is shown on the accompanying map. To determine building occupancy, parcels were examined in spring 2021 for signs of activity (car, mail, trashcan) or no activity (no cars or trashcans, significant overgrowth, open entry).

As shown on the next chart, of the 6,421 total parcels in the study area, the data show that 1,950 parcels are vacant lots and 488 parcels have vacant buildings.



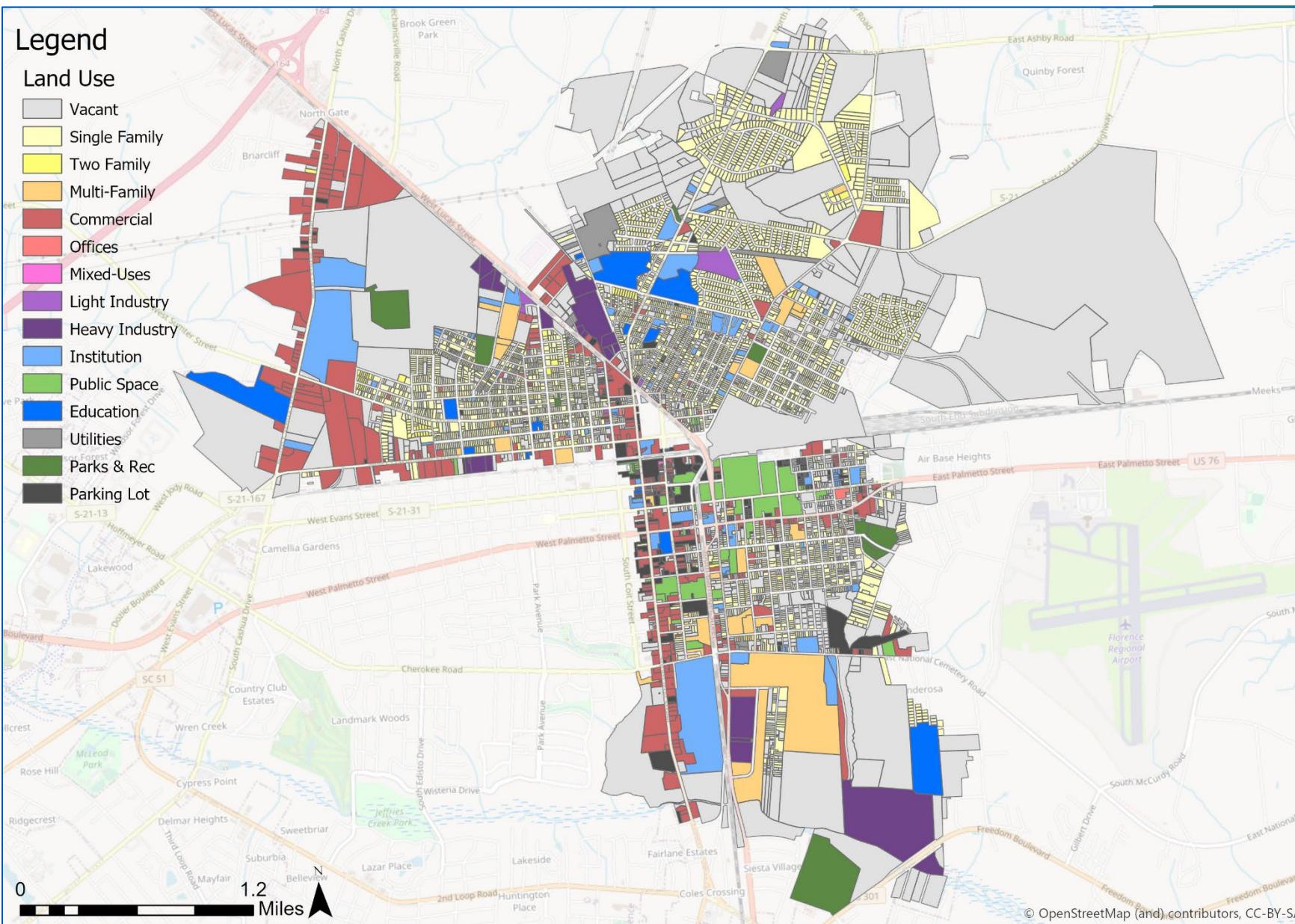
Key Findings

The three neighborhoods have significant opportunity for development. There is an opportunity for minor infill development within the interior of the neighborhoods and more significant catalytic developments on the edges of each neighborhood.

Neighborhood Comparison

- East Florence has the highest percentage of undeveloped parcels (42 percent).
- North Florence has the highest percentage of single-family homes.
- Northwest Florence has the highest percentage of structures in poor condition.

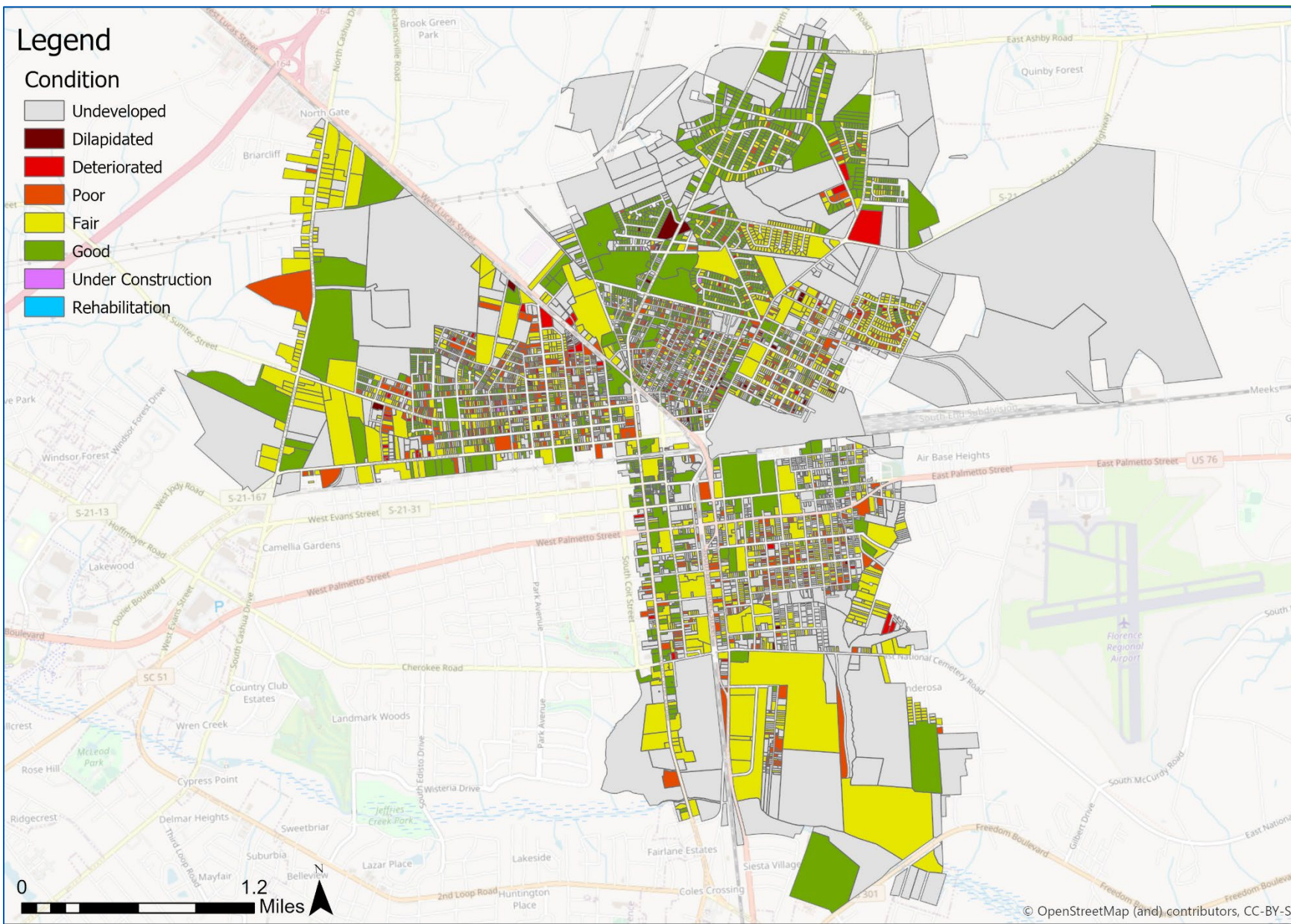
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Sources: City of Florence GIS, Florence County, South Carolina GIS (2015-2019),
 APD Urban Planning & Management
 Date: 7/7/2021



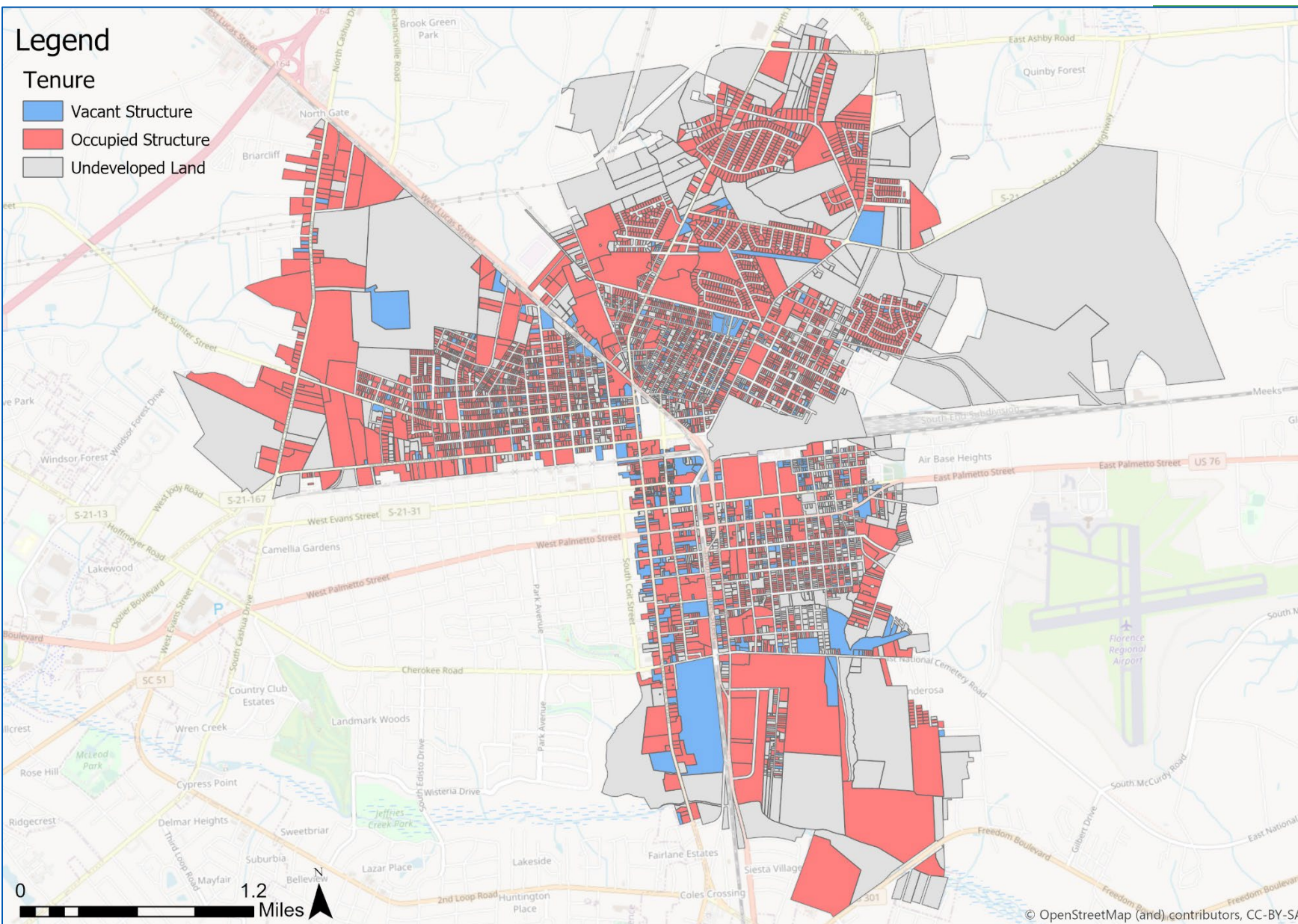
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Sources: City of Florence GIS, Florence County, South Carolina GIS (2015-2019), APD Urban Planning & Management
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Florence, South Carolina

Comprehensive Plan

