Grow with us

Responsibly Planning Lexington County

The Lexington County 2022 Comprehensive Plan

Adopted June 7, 2022

COUNTY OF LEXINGTON, SOUTH CAROLINA
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June 28, 2022

To: Citizens of Lexington County

Subject: **Transmittal Letter – Lexington County 2022 *Grow With Us* Comprehensive Plan**

As the Director of Planning and GIS, I am very excited and proud to announce the final approval and adoption on June 7, 2022 of the new and modern, Responsibly Planning Lexington County *Grow With Us* 2022 Lexington County Comprehensive Plan. This Plan was the result of nearly two years of close coordination and challenging work performed by County Council, the Planning Commission, a select group of steering committee members made up of local leadership, stakeholders, staff, the community and a host of regional experts in the Clarion Team. This Plan is the latest of many that have been part of a continuous planning process in the County beginning with the adoption of the first Comprehensive Plan in 1974.

As such, as the current Director of Planning and GIS, I hereby present, formally transmit and dedicate this Plan with the intent for it to be fully utilized to plan for, provide vision to and manage growth for the citizens of Lexington County, without which, we could not have been successful.

Respectfully, I am

Holland Jay Leger, AICP
Director
Department of Planning and GIS
County of Lexington

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AN ORDINANCE SERVING TO ADOPT THE LEXINGTON COUNTY 2022 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, ENTITLED *"GROW WITH US"* "RESPONSIBLY PLANNING LEXINGTON COUNTY" THROUGH THE ADOPTION OF A NEW AND MODERN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, PURSUANT TO THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING ENABLING ACT OF 1994.

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WHEREAS, The 1994 State of South Carolina Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act (S.C. Code Section 6-29-310, et. seq., of the Code of Laws of South Carolina 1976, as amended) requires the development and adoption of a local Comprehensive Plan designed to promote public health, safety, morals, convenience, prosperity, or the general welfare as well as the efficiency and economy of the County; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994, this Ordinance is adopted in order to implement and replace Ordinance Number 99-01, the previously adopted Lexington County Comprehensive Plan and as such, this Ordinance is the latest of many that have been part of a continuous planning process in the County beginning with the adoption of the first Comprehensive Plan in 1974; and

WHEREAS, Lexington County Planning and GIS Department hired a highly qualified team of consultants to assist with the Plan preparation process, transpiring over a two-year scheduled scope of work during one of the most challenging times in recent history, due to the COVID 19 Coronavirus Pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the *Grow With Us* Plan is anticipated to ratify the extensive work of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, including all members of the Lexington County Planning Commission, on behalf of the Lexington County Council intended to establish and maintain a planning process, which will result in the systematic preparation and continual evaluation and updating of the Elements of the Comprehensive Plan (S.C Code Section 6-29-510[A]); and

WHEREAS, public engagement included five (5) separate outreach efforts beginning with a public "Kick-Off" meeting in July, 2020, before County Council and the Planning Commission; shortly followed by a process of extensive stakeholder interviews with citizens, leadership and organizations such as, the Building Industry Association, local builders and developers, private citizens, school districts, infrastructure providers, municipal leadership, environmental stewards, faith-based leaders, agricultural interests, recreation commissions and districts, SCDOT, CMCOG, CMRTA, etc., as well as focus group meetings with County Department Heads and Administration; and

WHEREAS, a Steering Committee made up of private citizens and local leadership was established serving to guide the Plan, provide key input and review initial framing of the Plan, early identification of goals and performance metrics for the Elements, and the content of the Elements themselves, through the facilitation of seven (7) separate meetings occurring between July, 2020 and March 2022; and

WHEREAS, the "Idea Week" of in-person (conducted at local libraries) and virtual public meetings and surveys utilizing Mentimeter keypad preference poling was conducted in October, 2020, with additional online activities open October - November used to gain input and understand the aspirations and priorities of residents strategically targeted at seven (7) regional areas in the County corresponding to the seven (7) previously identified Planning Areas; and

WHEREAS, three Growth Scenarios (detailed models of future land uses in the County) were developed reflecting actual demand for growth, transportation patterns, fiscal resources and impact fee analyses that preceded the Plan and the different priorities from Idea Week and then presented to the public in September, 2021, utilizing on-line graphics and a month-long, survey preference tool process, all intended to allow the public an opportunity to choose a preferred Growth Scenario option to help develop the County's Future Land Use and Character Map; and

WHEREAS, the "Virtual Plan Unveil" (public presentation of the Draft Plan) occurred in early January, 2022, including a virtual public presentation, live on-line question and answers session, while also utilizing a month-long on-line survey response format serving to solicit public feedback on the Draft Plan and the County's Future Land Use and Character Map; and

WHEREAS, the planning process for the *Grow With Us* Plan Elements have included and were not limited to the following items: identifying the role of the County and its partners; an inventory of existing conditions, fact and trends; a statement of needs, goals and performance metrics; and implementation strategies, policies, actions and costs with time frames (S.C. Code section 6-29-510[C]); and

WHEREAS, these requisite items are included in the ten (10) compulsory Comprehensive Plan Elements themselves derived through broad-based citizen participation listed as follows: Population, Economic Development, Natural Resources, Cultural Resources, Community Facilities, Housing, Land Use, Transportation, Priority Investment and Resiliency; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the required ten (10) Elements, the County elected to add an eleventh (11) Element, Public Safety, due to the significant importance of these services to the citizens of this County and as such, these eleven (11) Elements together comprise the *Grow With Us* 2022 Comprehensive Plan (S.C. Code Section 6-29-510 [D]); and

WHEREAS, all Planning Elements represent the Planning Commission's recommendations to the County Council regarding wise and efficient use of public funds, future growth, development, redevelopment, the inclusion of new public needs and issues which have arisen and the fiscal impact of the planning elements on property owners; and

WHEREAS, the Steering Committee agreed to include eight (8) Guiding Planning Principles to be included within the Introduction of the Plan, intended to articulate the planning policy "mission" for Lexington County identified as follows:

1. **The County will….**serve as a proactive convener of community partners that are involved in shaping the future of the County, including but not limited to regularly engaging the County's fifteen (15) municipalities, the County's five (5) school districts, two (2) recreation commissions, and numerous utility providers to coordinate growth, infrastructure and public investment decisions; and
2. **The County will….**provide effective and fiscally efficient public services to its residents and business community by directing new development to targeted growth areas near existing towns, existing or planned utilities, and existing or planned transportation facilities; and
3. **The County will….**protect economic development assets by identifying land available for future business expansion through the Future Land Use and Character Map and land for future public infrastructure investments through the Priority Investment Areas Map. This includes the County's business/technology/industrial parks, the Columbia Metropolitan Airport, and the Lexington County Airport; and
4. **The County will….**support the continued viability of agriculture, forestry, and agri-tourism industries through land planning and economic development support programs; and
5. **The County will….**protect and preserve land and water resources to provide economic, recreation, and environmental benefits to current and future generations through new development regulations and by directing growth away from these environmental

assets. These resources include Lake Murray and the Congaree, Saluda, and Edisto Rivers; and

6. **The County will….**create more opportunities for Lexington County residents to walk, bike, and use other non-automobile forms of transportation for the purpose of improving health of residents and improving the overall quality of life in the County; and

7. **The County will….**incentivize new models of development that support redevelopment and revitalization of existing, older developed areas; and

8. **The County will….**improve the overall quality of development by enhancing standards for residential development and creating new complete communities that result in walkable neighborhoods with amenities desired by households in the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, this Plan document and associated data is intended to help anyone in the public or private sector to make more informed decisions, to include those of an investment nature, and to expedite and improve the access to this data, all information of which is to be maintained in a digital, geographic information system format, as well as a paper format, with access over the internet utilized where possible, and

WHEREAS, it is apparent to County Council that the Comprehensive Plan is comprised of all required elements, was prepared utilizing significant public engagement to include thousands of participants and 20,000+ pieces of public input, is proper in all other material aspects, and that the adoption of the Plan is in the best interest of the County; and furthermore,

WHEREAS, pursuant to S.C. Code Section 6-29-510[E], the Comprehensive Plan, including all elements of it, must be updated at least every ten years;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the Lexington County Council, as recommended by Resolution of the Lexington County Planning Commission pursuant to the authority granted by the Constitution and General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, be it enacted by the County Council for Lexington County as follows:

SECTION I. Pursuant to S.C. Code Section 6-29-530 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina 1976, as amended, Lexington County Council does hereby adopt, approve and ratify Ordinance Number 22-07, adopting by reference the Lexington County 2022 Comprehensive Plan, entitled *"GROW WITH US"* *"RESPONSIBLY PLANNING LEXINGTON COUNTY"*, which is hereby digitally attached, on file in the Planning and GIS Department and also available on the Department web site.

SECTION II. Severability. If any section, subsection or clause of this Ordinance shall be deemed to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid, the validity of the remaining sections, subsections, and clauses shall not be affected thereby.

SECTION III. Conflicting Ordinances Repealed. All Ordinances or parts of Ordinances in conflict with the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby repealed.

SECTION IV. Effective Date. This Ordinance and referenced *Grow With Us* 2022 *Comprehensive Plan Responsibly Planning Lexington County* shall be effective upon its enactment.

Enacted this _____7th_____ day of ___June___, 2022.

LEXINGTON COUNTY

_____
Scott Whetstone, Chairman

(SEAL)

ATTEST:

_____
Brittany Shumpert, Clerk

First Reading: March 22, 2022 (By Title Only)

Public Hearing: May 11, 2022

Planning Commission Recommendation: May 19, 2022

Second Reading: May 24, 2022

Third and Final Reading: June 7, 2022

Filed W/Clerk of Court: _____

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
PLANNING COMMISSION FOR THE COUNTY OF LEXINGTON
RESOLUTION FOR THE ADOPTION
OF THE 2022 LEXINGTON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
AS REFERENCED WITHIN ORDINANCE NUMBER 22-07

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY OF LEXINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDING TO THE COUNTY OF LEXINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL ADOPTION OF A NEW AND MODERN LEXINGTON COUNTY 2022 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, ENTITLED *"GROW WITH US"* "RESPONSIBLY PLANNING LEXINGTON COUNTY" SERVING TO REPLACE ORDINANCE 99-01, THE PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED LEXINGTON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, PURSUANT TO THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING ENABLING ACT OF 1994.

Grow with us
Responsibly Planning Lexington County

WHEREAS, The 1994 State of South Carolina Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act (S.C. Code Section 6-29-310, et. seq., of the Code of Laws of South Carolina 1976, as amended) requires the development and adoption of a local Comprehensive Plan designed to promote public health, safety, morals, convenience, prosperity, or the general welfare as well as the efficiency and economy of the County; and

WHEREAS, the Lexington County Council approved Ordinance Number 99-01 on April 27, 1999, adopting the County of Lexington Comprehensive Plan in accordance with the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 (Title 6, Chapter 29 of the South Carolina Code), and

WHEREAS, this Ordinance Number 99-01 adopted by County Council was the latest of many that have been part of a continuous planning process in the County beginning with the adoption of the first Comprehensive Plan in 1974; and

WHEREAS, the County of Lexington Planning Commission on behalf of the Lexington County Council is responsible for establishing and maintaining a planning process, which will result in the systematic preparation and continual evaluation and updating of the Elements of the Comprehensive Plan (S.C Code Section 6-29-510[A]); and

WHEREAS, this recommendation is intended to support approval of Ordinance 22-07, by the County Council serving to adopt by reference the 2022 Lexington County Comprehensive Plan, addressing past, present and future growth in the County and the challenges that occur thereof, while providing a long–range vision for the Council and the Commission to help facilitate decision-making and staff direction regarding critical planning and budgetary issues in accordance with the established Mission and Vision; and

WHEREAS, the County of Lexington Council, Commission, staff and a team of Experts facilitated an extensive and robust, broad-based citizen public participation process to prepare this Plan and Future Land Use Character Map including residents, local business leadership, development groups, school districts, infrastructure providers, municipal leadership, environmental experts, transportation professionals and faith-based leaders, and

WHEREAS, the County of Lexington Planning Commission has received input from stakeholders, focus groups, Department Heads, Administration and a Steering Committee and provided recommendation in response to the public input and findings;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the County of Lexington Planning Commission this third Thursday of May, 2022, does hereby recommend to the County of Lexington County Council adoption of the 2022 Lexington County Comprehensive Plan entitled *"GROW WITH US" "RESPONSIBLY PLANNING LEXINGTON COUNTY"* along with all the maps and policies, Fact Book, Appendices, Elements and Implementation Actions contained therein, a copy of which is digitally attached thereto, including the Future Land Use and Character Map, as a replacement for the existing Ordinance Number 99-01, The County of Lexington Comprehensive Plan.

_____   __5/19/22__
Robert W. Price, III, Planning Commission Chairman   Date

_____   __5/19/2022__
Holland Jay Leger, AICP   Date
Director of Planning and GIS
Secretary to the Planning Commission

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1

INTRODUCTION

About Lexington County

On the shores of Lake Murray in the South Carolina Midlands, Lexington County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. Between 2000 and 2018, the County grew by 79,000 residents. It has been projected that an additional 150,000 residents will call Lexington County home by 2040, the "planning horizon" for this comprehensive plan.

Lexington County is closely tied to the region, with many connections to Columbia, the capital city across the Congaree River. It is also its own unique and distinct place with its 15 cities and towns (See Figure 1-1: Lexington County Municipalities), neighborhoods of all shapes and sizes, rich agricultural production, employers representing many industries, and its natural beauty. This is a comprehensive plan that helps the County's residents pursue their vision for the future over the long term.

Figure 1-1: Lexington County Municipalities
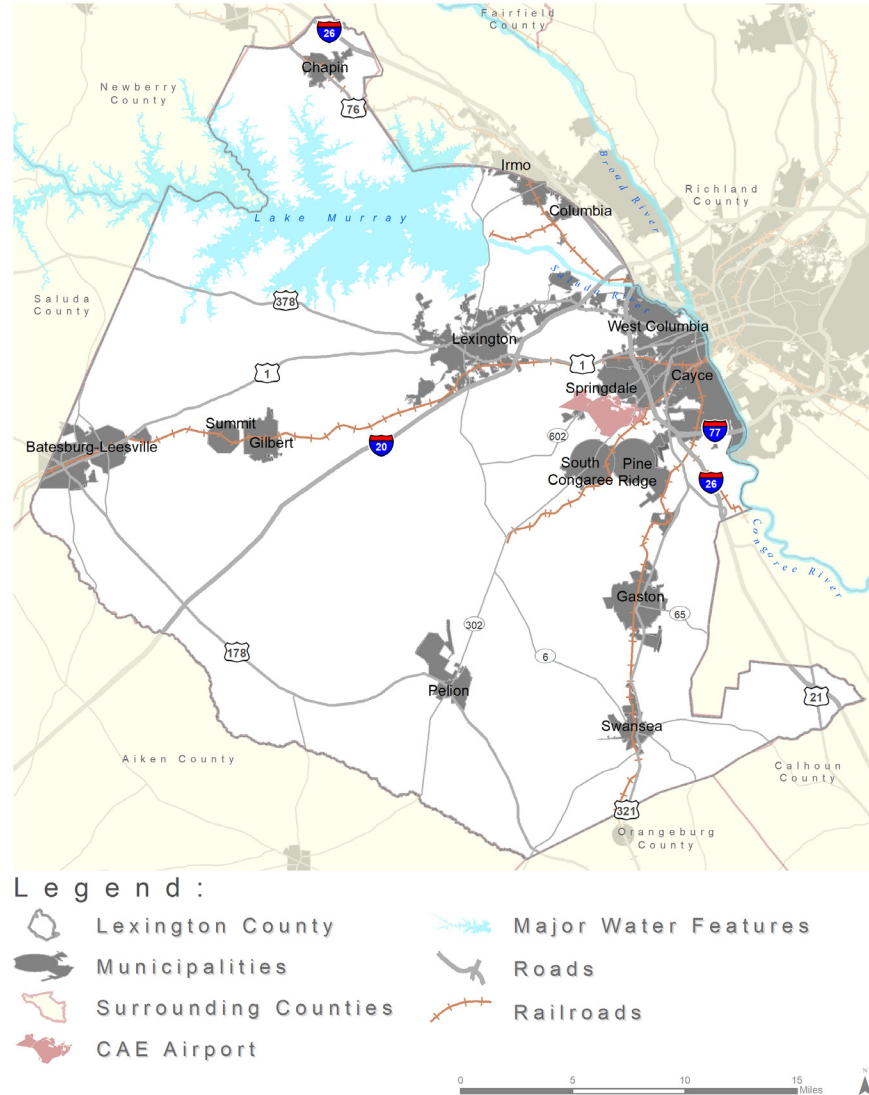
There are 15 municipalities in the County: Batesburg-Leesville, Cayce, Chapin, Columbia, Gaston, Gilbert, Irmo, Lexington, Pelion, Pine Ridge, Springdale, South Congaree, Summit, Swansea, and West Columbia.

About the Plan

A comprehensive plan is a document meant to guide future actions and decisions on development and public investments rather than directly creating regulations itself. Still, the document is a legal requirement of all jurisdictions with land development regulations, per the South Carolina 1994 Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act. The Act and later amendments set out 10 required elements. Each element is a chapter in this plan. This plan goes one step further and splits the "Public Safety" portion into its own element from the required "Community Facilities" element, reflecting the importance the County places on public safety. This is also the first comprehensive plan the County has developed since the state's newest required element, "Resiliency" was added to the Act in 2020.

The name of some elements may be similar to departments within County government, but there is not meant to be a singular connection between a chapter and department. It is a task for County administration to help determine the best means of implementing the plan.

The plan also includes an introduction, "Fact Book," references, appendices, and an Implementation Action Plan. Along with the 11 elements, the plan's 13 chapters are:

1. Introduction
2. Land Use
3. Economic Development
4. Transportation
5. Public Safety
6. Community Facilities
7. Housing and Neighborhoods
8. Natural Resources
9. Resiliency
10. Cultural Resources
11. Population
12. Priority Investment
13. Implementation Actions

Each element chapter includes the following sections:

- **The Element in Lexington County** describing:
  - **The Role of the County and its Partners** (how the County interacts with other entities to achieve goals).
  - **Facts and Trends** (relevant data about the County or about changing trends that help determine appropriate policies and actions).
- **Guiding and Measuring Success** describing:
  - **Goal** that describes intended end state for Lexington County in 2040.
  - **Performance Metrics** that can be measured to track progress of plan implementation over time.
- **Achieving Results** describing
  - **Policies** for guiding future decisions.
  - **Actions** to advance the County toward its goals.

A comprehensive plan is just one part of a broader planning and implementation cycle. High-level policy priorities for the County lead to more targeted priorities at the departmental level. Those priorities are then funded and implemented, then progress is assessed and measured. In the future, the County will review the plan and consider updating the policy direction based on new conditions and opportunities. The last Lexington County Comprehensive plan was adopted in 1999; however, a more regular cycle of a review/evaluation at 5 years and a comprehensive update at 10 years would be appropriate and in line with the timeline used in most other local government jurisdictions, and in accordance with the most recent Planning Enabling Statutes.

Figure 1-2: Comprehensive Planning Cycle

1. Set Policy Priorities: Comprehensive Plans/Other Plans
2. Set Work Priorities: Departmental Plans
3. Set Funding Priorities: Budget/CIP
4. Implement Priorities: Initiatives/Projects
5. Assess Progress: Measure & Evaluate

The Process

The Grow With Us Lexington County process, which was initiated by County Council to develop this comprehensive plan, began in early 2020 with the approval of a contract to work with the consultant team. However, behind the scenes, staff and administration have been discussing the importance, expense, and magnitude of such an endeavor for the last five years. At that time there was little information available about the extent and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the major project kickoff was delayed while appropriate plans for meeting were developed. (See Figure 1-3: The Grow With Us Process).

Figure 1-3: The Grow With Us Process

July - September 2020

October - February 2021

March - July 2021

August - December 2021

Early 2022

PHASE 1
Project Initiation

PHASE 2
Community Assessment & Envisioning

PHASE 3
Growth Alternatives Evaluation

PHASE 4
Plan Development

PHASE 5
Plan Adoption

Public Education and Participation

ROUND 1
OCTOBER 2020

Gathering ideas about the future of Lexington County

ROUND 2
SEPTEMBER 2021

Testing land use concepts and potential growth scenarios with the public

ROUND 3
JANUARY 2022

Collecting public comments on key plan recommendations

Health and safety precautions were honored throughout the process, including distanced kickoff meetings in late 2020

The project kicked-off in earnest in the summer of 2020 with a series of meetings with stakeholders including parties related to:

- Agricultural interests
- Airports
- Building Industry Association (BIA)
- Conservation and the environment
- Diverse community representatives and faith-based leaders
- Healthcare
- Higher education including technical and trade education
- Lexington County government Departments and County Administrator
- Local business community leaders
- Major employers
- Municipal planning directors, administrators, managers, and mayors
- Museums, libraries, culture, and the arts,
- Neighborhood and homeowners associations
- Public safety and EMS
- Real estate agents and developers
- Schools
- Utilities and infrastructure

The kickoff was also the first meeting of the Steering Committee, comprised of residents including all members of the Planning Commission, appointed to assist in the review of the plan throughout the drafting process.

The first product developed was a Fact Book that takes inventory of the existing conditions in the County. The Fact Book is available as an appendix to this plan

Public Engagement: Idea Week!

In October 2020, the Idea Week! of virtual meetings and feedback from the public was conducted to understand the aspirations and priorities of residents. The Idea Week events were strategically targeted at seven regional areas in the County corresponding to the seven previously identified Planning Areas. (See Figure 1-4: Planning Areas) These areas correspond generally to County Council Districts and census tract geography, but also more so to the chronological succession of areas in which zoning and land development codes were implemented throughout the County, as follows:

Figure 1-4: Planning Areas

PLANNING AREAS
LEXINGTON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- US Highway
- State Highway
- Lexington County
- Communities
- Water
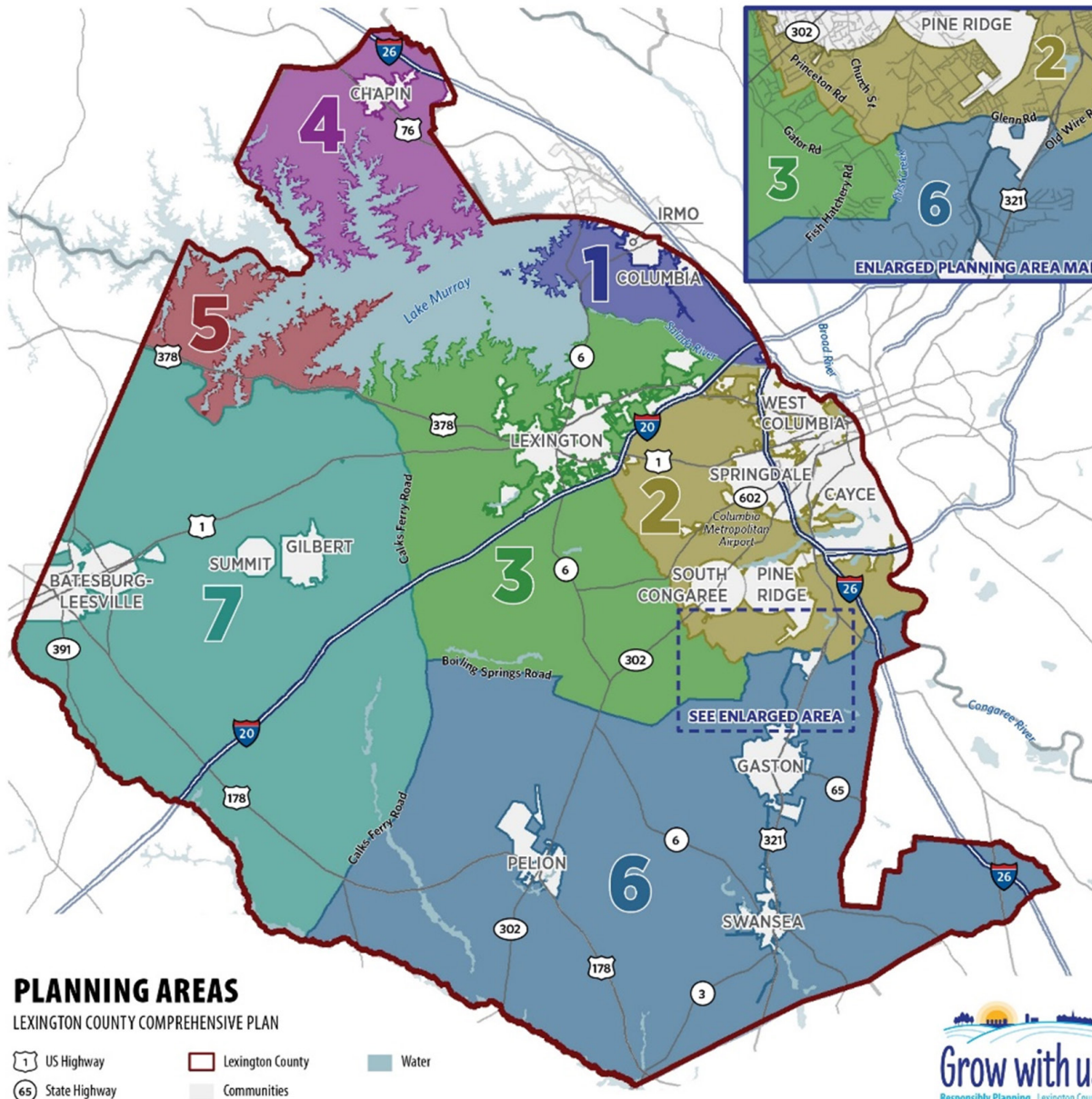
- Number One - Seven Oaks/Dutch Fork Area implemented on March 15, 1971;
- Number Two – Eastern Area implemented on February 14, 1980;
- Number Three – Central Area implemented on December 9, 1986;
- Number Four – Northern Area implemented on August 1, 1987;
- Number Five – Western Lake Murray Area implemented on March 20, 1989;
- Number Six – Southern Area implemented on January 13, 1998; and lastly
- Number Seven – Western Area implemented on November 14, 2001.

Although targeted at regional geography, such that focused input could be acquired, comments of a general nature were encouraged from all citizens serving to solicit as much input as possible. In addition, the staff made available in-person public engagement opportunities at seven local library facilities, regionally distributed and scattered across the County. This, in addition to hard-copy publications of all of the presentation and public comment materials utilized with the virtual engagement events. Doing so made available and enabled the engagement of disenfranchised populations and/or those

Plan development coincided with other overarching conversations around growth in the county, including a zoning, landscape, and subdivision moratorium. All inspired vibrant public discussion.

populations choosing to interact in person. During the early waves of the pandemic, few people chose to engage in person, making the virtual engagement events all the more important.

Public Engagement: Growth Scenarios

Three growth scenarios (detailed models of future land uses in the County) were developed reflecting actual demand for growth, transportation patterns, fiscal resources and impact fee analyses that preceded the plan, and the different priorities from Idea Week! These growth scenarios were scored on land use, fiscal, and transportation analysis metrics, culminating in the presentation of the scenarios to the public in September 2021. The results of the growth scenario preferences helped develop the County's Future Land Use and Character Map, and provided additional community input for developing the plan's policies and actions. While the scenarios asked residents to consider what new growth in any area would look like, the Future Land Use and Character Map also accounts for where existing buildings and uses would likely stay the same.

Public Engagement: Plan Unveil

A draft of the entire plan was made available to the public online. The structure and content was described at a virtual meeting January 5, 2022, and was open to comment through an online portal through January 28, 2022. The community was asked their opinion on planning principles, the Future Land Use and Character Map, and implementation priorities, as well as any specific comments about any content of the draft plan. Comments were summarized and presented to the Steering Committee to consider changes.

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee of dedicated County stakeholders has helped guide the plan, providing key input and reviewing initial framing of the plan, early identification of goals and performance metrics for the elements, and the content of the elements themselves. The Steering Committee endorsed the plan prior to the adoption process.

Adoption

A thorough adoption process provided additional opportunities for public review and vetting. The plan had its first reading before County Council March 22, 2022 and then subsequently was available for a public hearing, a meeting of the Planning Commission, and two additional readings before County Council, culminating in adoption on June 7, 2022

Lexington County Voices

This plan is indebted to the residents of Lexington County who lent their voices enthusiastically to the process at every opportunity provided. Their passion and their understanding of their home is inspiring. During Idea Week!, the public was asked "What do you wish the County would focus on in the next 5 to 10 years?" The written answers were instructive and a sampling of them follows, as well as a word cloud of the terms that came up most frequently across all responses:

Figure 1-5: What do you wish the County would focus on in the next 5 to 10 years?

"A **County park** would benefit all the citizens and provide tourists a beautiful area to visit if done correctly"

"**Unchecked growth and overdevelopment** will ruin the scenic, small town feel and beauty of Lexington County."

"**Keep improving the downtown area** so that it is a place that people desire to visit."

"Let's build a **healthy community** that gets people outside!"

"**Limit** development of **apartment complexes.** Designated **more green space** in urban areas."

"While I know that County growth is important, it is also important to **maintain the small town feel and character.** I would love to see old business buildings restored and used by new businesses so that small towns can flourish like they used to."

"The main reason Lexington County is popular and growing is because of the **lake and great schools.** We must **plan ahead for capacity** in the sewer, water, storm water, and roadway infrastructure."

"I am trying to think about where I want to buy a house with my family right now and **I'm weighing things like walkability, ease of travel, things to do**, festivals, good libraries, cultural attractions, good restaurants, nice buildings, beautification, and good schools."

Ideas Week! also collected feedback on community priorities based on different areas of the County, splitting up the County into its existing seven planning areas for analysis. In Figure 6: County Area Community Priorities From Public Engagement, the numbered planning areas have been replaced with descriptive areas. Patterns in priorities emerged. Maintaining rural character was most important north of the Saluda River and in areas to the west and south. Protecting water resources was most important in the eastern County, the southwest lake shore, and the southern County. Protecting farms from growth was most important in the southern and western County where the areas are still predominantly agricultural. Traffic and low tax concerns were priorities, except in the less populated southern County and the southwest lake shore, which is the only County area containing no municipalities. These priorities derived from that first public engagement have been provided to the public in follow-up events to help residents understand the preferences of their friends and neighbors.

Figure 1-6: County Area Community Priorities From Public Engagement

County Area	Maintain Rural Character	Protect Water Resources	Protect Farms From Growth	Address Traffic Congestion	Balance Low Taxes and Serving Growth
North of the Saluda River Incl. Irmo, Columbia, and the east lake shore				☑	☑
Eastern County Incl. Caycee, Pine Ridge, S. Congaree, Springdale, W. Columbia, and CMA (airport)		☑		☑	☑
County Center Incl. Lexington(Town) and the southeast lake shore				☑	☑
Northern County Incl. Chapin and all areas north of Lake Murray	☑			☑	☑
Southwest Lake Shore	☑	☑			
Southern County Incl. Gaston, Pelion, Swansea, and "the neck"	☑	☑	☑		
Western County Incl. Batesburg-Leesville, Gilbert, and Summit	☑		☑	☑	☑

GUIDING PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Planning Principles are a deeper guide to future action than policies and actions and are meant to continue even if there are future changes to preferred strategies or management. These guiding planning principles articulate the planning policy "mission" for Lexington County and are listed here in no particular order.

The County will...

1

Serve as a proactive convener of community partners that are involved in shaping the future of the County. This includes regularly engaging the County's 15 municipalities, the County's five school districts, two recreation commissions, and utility providers to coordinate growth, infrastructure, and public investment decisions.

2

Provide effective and fiscally efficient public services to its residents and business community by directing new development to targeted growth areas near existing towns, existing or planned utilities, and existing or planned transportation facilities.

3

Protect economic development assets by identifying land available for future business expansion through the Future Land Use and Character Map and land for future public infrastructure investments through the Priority Investment Areas Map. This includes the County's business parks, the Columbia Metropolitan Airport, and the Lexington County Airport.

4

Support the continued viability of agriculture, forestry, and agritourism industries through land planning and economic development support programs.

GUIDING PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The County will...

5

Protect and preserve land and water resources to provide economic, recreation, and environmental benefits to current and future generations through new development regulations and by directing growth away from these environmental assets. These resources include Lake Murray and the Congaree, Saluda, and Edisto Rivers.

6

Create more opportunities for Lexington County residents to walk, bike, and use other non-automobile forms of transportation for the purpose of improving health of residents and improving the overall quality of life in the County.

7

Incentivize new models of development that support redevelopment and revitalization of existing, older developed areas.

8

Improve the overall quality of development by enhancing standards for residential development and creating new complete communities that result in walkable neighborhoods with amenities desired by households in the 21st century.

2

LAND

USE

Land Use

Introduction

Future growth and development of Lexington County will be shaped by County land use policies. This element applies the current best practice of considering the character of an area along with traditional land use categories to better describe the community's vision for the future. These "character areas" are used to describe the policy direction for different places in the County depicted on the Future Land Use and Character Map in this chapter. Planning for land use is more than establishing a map to guide land development. The land uses, character, and pattern of future development included within this chapter incorporate the related policy direction for economic development, transportation, environmental quality, housing, and the other elements of this plan.

The Role of the County and its Partners

County and Municipalities

Within Lexington County, there are 16 different planning and zoning jurisdictions: one for the County and one each for the 15 municipalities in the County. Each jurisdictional authority sets policies through comprehensive plans and regulations through ordinances that apply to lands in their jurisdiction. The County and its municipalities are partners in developing land use patterns. Land that is in the County's jurisdiction may be annexed into a municipality either before or after it has been developed. This means in areas where municipalities are expanding the area may be a mixture of patterns that reflect County and municipal regulations. Sometimes these patterns can cause incompatibility as development standards are not consistent between jurisdictions. Joint planning is one strategy that can be leveraged by local governments to create more consistency in development patterns, particularly in areas of common interest on the edges of jurisdictional boundaries.

School Districts and Recreation Districts

Some public communal uses have a significant role in shaping the demand and location for different development patterns. Two such uses, schools and parks, are overseen by separate governing bodies that divide the County into distinct jurisdictions. There are five school districts and two recreation authorities in Lexington County. Quality school districts attract new residences for families seeking a good education for their children. Parks including structured sport facilities, open spaces, and trails provide a respite and recreational health opportunities to the community. Easy access to these places is in high demand. Schools and parks are both described in greater detail in Chapter 6: Community Facilities and Services.

Utilities

Capacity for new growth is dependent on being able to serve that growth with key utilities. In general, electricity has not been a limiting or driving factor on the type or location of development in the County. The provision of drinking (potable) water and especially sanitary sewer utility services are much more likely to create market demand for development in the areas they serve. When capacity is extended along a new line or to a new basin, the potential to serve new growth increases. There is much less capacity for growth in an area when wastewater treatment must be accomplished on-site, such as in a septic tank. Conversely, development served by an existing sewer line typically can be served with minimal effort.

Sewer management authority in the County is divided into nine public management areas and four private service areas. In general, the private service areas are much smaller in acreage than the municipal utilities. These authorities are organized by a 208 Water Quality Plan, so-called for Section 208 of the Clean Water Act, coordinated by the Central Midlands Council of Governments. Understanding the plans for the multiple sewer management areas and partnering with them to coordinate future extensions of sewer service is necessary to create a cohesive plan for growth in the County. (For more information on water and wastewater utility services, see Chapter 6: Community Facilities and Services.)

Facts and Trends

Land Use and Zoning in Lexington County

Lexington County has seven planning areas used for purposes of reference and analysis. The planning areas roughly correspond to the expansion of zoning control over time from the east adjacent to Columbia eventually spreading westward and southward. Prior to this comprehensive plan, Lexington County did not have a future land use map guiding growth and development intent. The County's zoning system, which is a tool that implements land use policies, was last overhauled in 1979 to switch from Euclidean to largely performance zoning, with modest amendments since that time. The County's zoning approach has continued to include some Euclidean zoning components after the conceptual switch.

Euclidean zoning is a tool for describing different appropriate uses and regulations based on areas of the map, often divided by a classification of land use or intensity of development type. Performance based zoning is a tool for describing the required conditions that should be met for different types of development, wherever they occur.

The County is actually the product of three conceptual regulatory frameworks:

- Euclidean Zoning
- Performance Zoning
- Street Classifications

The County uses street classifications to describe certain density and development standards. Street classifications are not directly tied to SCDOT standards. During an application for new development, the developer is ultimately requesting a change to a zoning district and a new street classification. Both must fit the development.

Performance-based zoning is appropriate for communities that are more rural and have slower growth rates as it is largely permissive with regard to where land uses can be located. As the County's pace of growth has increased, this approach has resulted in a rapid change in the rural character of the County and is a limited tool for guiding growth to appropriate areas and away from areas that are priorities for protection. During the course of developing this plan, the County Council took the step of placing a moratorium on some zoning, landscaping, and subdivisions to take time and get regulations right before allowing rapid growth to resume. The effort to create this comprehensive plan was not begun by

Figure 2-1: Existing Land Use

Existing Land Use

■ MISCELLANEOUS	■ PUBLIC (NON-UTILITY)	▢ Lexington County
■ INDUSTRIAL AND UTILITIES	■ SINGLE FAMILY MULTI UNIT	▢ Surrounding Counties
■ MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL	■ MOBILE HOME RESIDENTIAL	▢ Municipalities
■ COMMERCIAL	■ SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL	+—+ Railroads
■ INTENTIONAL OPEN LAND	■ UNIMPROVED RESIDENTIAL LAND	
■ INSTITUTIONAL	■ RURAL USES	
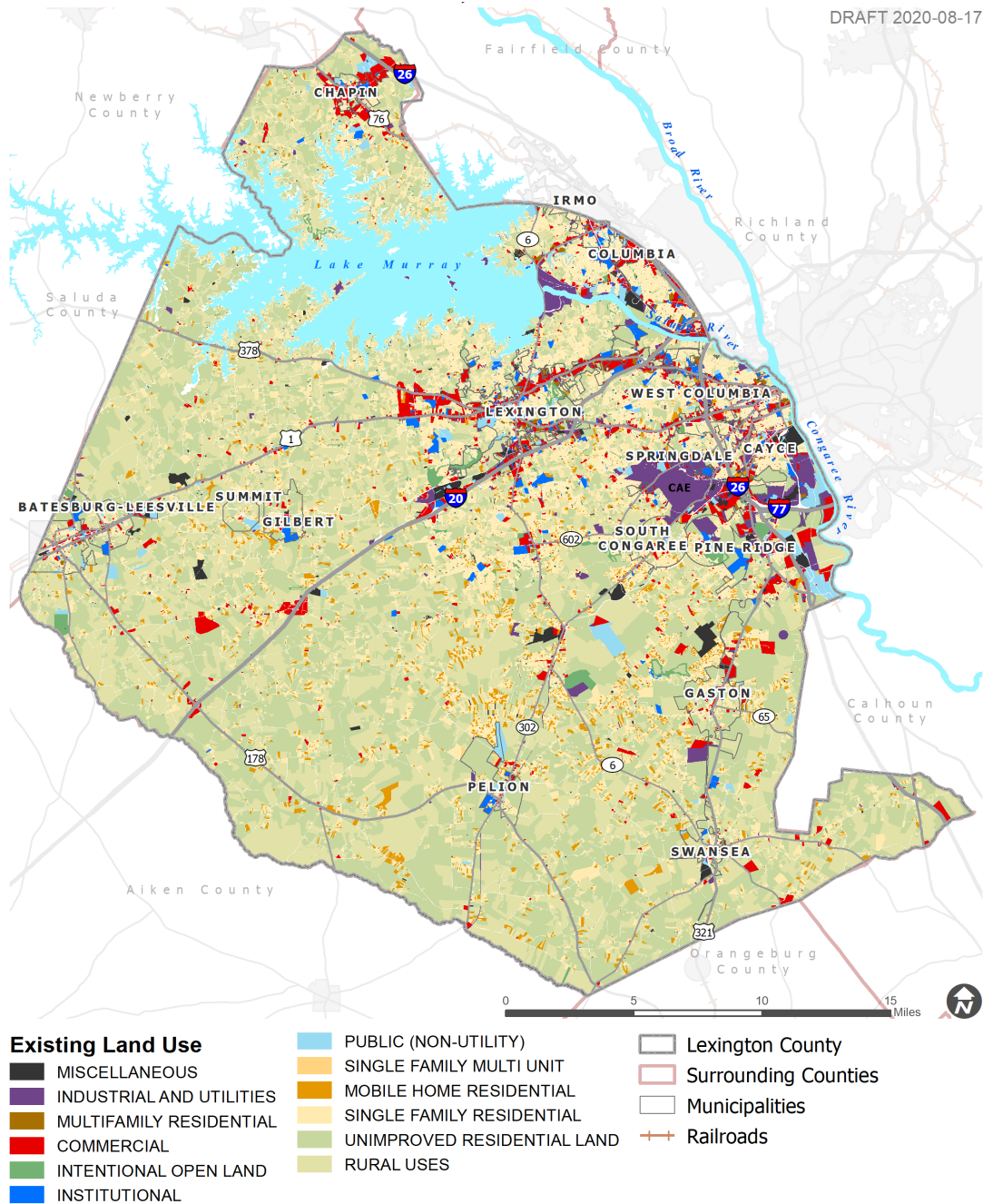
the moratorium, but the impetus to plan for the future and a desire to pause to get things right are connected by the idea that the County has felt pressure to reevaluate whether its development processes are aligned with the vision for its future. This chapter provides the County's first Future Land Use and Character Map that can guide future changes to the County's zoning regulations to achieve the preferred pattern of development for Lexington County.

Existing Land Use

Land use planning starts with an understanding of the current patterns for development and natural areas, and the types of development that exist in the County today. The existing land use map is created from County Assessor data. (See Figure 2-1: Existing Land Use). Every parcel in the County is assigned a category of land use for the purpose of levying an appropriate tax rate based on existing conditions. As the map is using data created by a taxing authority and not land use specialists, there may be anomalies on the categories assigned to individual parcels, however the general pattern of more varied land uses in the east, near towns, near the airport, and along major corridors is accurate, as is the large amount of land currently devoted to unimproved residential land and rural uses

Figure 2-2: Municipal Growth and Expansion Through Annexation

Figure 2-2: Municipal Growth and Expansion Through Annexation
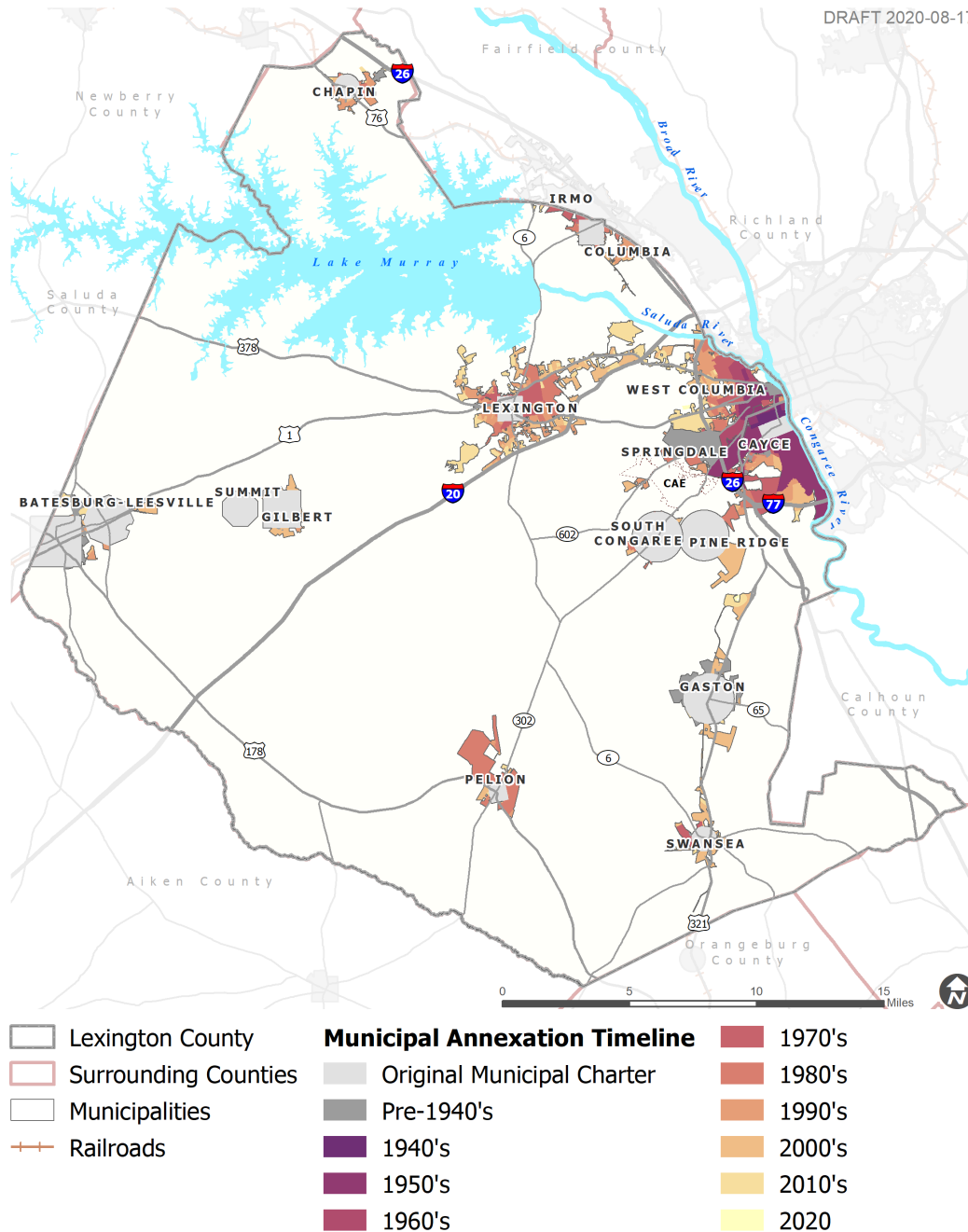
in the southern and western portions of the County. Over 70 percent of the land in the County is considered either a rural use or unimproved residential land by the County Assessor's office. Here unimproved means without building or structures on the land that would increase the property value.

Municipal Charter Lands and Expansion

In addition to the County, fifteen municipalities are also engaged in land use planning. Land that is under the planning and zoning authority of the County may be annexed at a later date by one of the municipalities. Over time the municipalities have grown by annexation to be three times the size of their original charters. While the process has occurred gradually, there was a recent larger spike in annexation in the 2000's. (See Figure 3-1: Land Incorporated or Annexed by Decade (Acres), and Figure 3-2 Municipal Growth and Expansion Through Annexation.)

Guiding Growth

To achieve the County's vision for future land use, new strategies are needed to guide or steer growth. The four factors with the greatest potential to guide growth in Lexington County are:

• Provision of utilities and services,

especially wastewater, which can spark development at higher intensity where it is provided and limit the capacity for development where it is not;

- Municipal annexation, which can help determine the rules by which land is developed or redeveloped and the jurisdiction that regulates the change;

- Zoning regulations, which as described designate appropriate land uses, building dimensions, and development standards; and

- School districts and school locations, which can serve as powerful attractors for new or relocating County residents seeking high quality education for their children.

For any area of the County, a specific vision is more likely to be achieved if it is reinforced through one or more of these factors. There are other very important aspects to steering growth, such as the location of parks and amenities, and locations near work or near a workforce, but over the next 20 years the aforementioned four factors are still the best opportunity to guide growth long term.
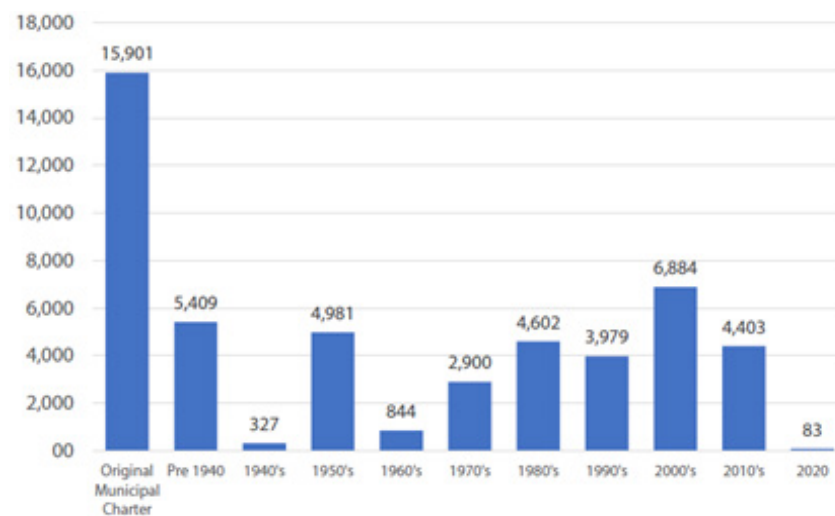
Redevelopment

While the next 20 years will see more growth in the County, the effect of the buildings and patterns that already exist will still be important in defining the future of developed and partially developed areas. Allowing for redevelopment can help accomplish some change in these developed areas. Redevelopment can be challenging to implement unless there is some flexibility for development standards. Land that has been developed already follows certain patterns. The land was subdivided at a size that fit the initial intended use. Trees and vegetation were planted that fit regulations and the room available alongside that use. Parking spaces were provided to accommodate the traffic of the use. When those subdivision, landscaping, and parking standards vary based on intended use it can be difficult to reconfigure the land to allow it to transition to something new. Many communities build in additional flexibility for these types of sites so that well-connected and served land near where people already want to live and work remains vibrant. An even more challenging case can be adaptive reuse of a building from one use to the next. This trend has been popular in traditional downtowns, lesser used old industrial buildings and warehouses, or office buildings. Allowing flexibility or assistance for adaptive reuse can help preserve history and character in the community. Many of the areas in Lexington County that may be attractive for adaptive reuse may be within municipalities, but there is still the potential within unincorporated areas, particularly near the airport and on the edges of municipalities.

Figure 2-3: Land Incorporated or Annexed by Decade (Acres)

GUIDING & MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

Responsible land use management will guide future growth and redevelopment in coordination with municipalities and utility providers, ensure environmental protection, support economic development, promote quality neighborhood growth in targeted areas, and protect rural lands.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

80% of new development should occur within growth areas identified on and consistent with the Future Land Use and Character Map.

Achieving Results

Policies

- **2-1** Support growth management efforts that guide development to areas that are currently served or planned to be served by wastewater utilities through the following approaches:

  o Provide flexibility for redevelopment and adaptive reuse to continue to invigorate areas that have already been developed.

  o Provide flexibility for infill, or development on lots that were passed over in an earlier wave of development.

  o Development should be encouraged in or near existing municipalities, particularly within areas with adequate water and wastewater capacity and available school capacity.

  o Support efforts to jointly plan with municipalities for areas of common interest to achieve cohesive growth patterns.

- **2-2** Development should be in accordance with the Future Land Use and Character Map

  o Redevelopment and new development should be approved in accordance with the future character and land use designation for its location.

  o Edge conditions between different Future Character and Land Use areas on the map should have built in flexibility, creating a procedure so that staff or a review board may allow designations along the edge of designations out to 1000 feet to instead match the conditions on the other side of the line if appropriate. This type of flexibility does not need to include lines established along interstates, on the edges of water bodies or groundwater basins, or on jurisdictional boundaries.

  o Infrastructure such as roads, transit, electric utilities, water and wastewater utilities that allows preferred growth areas to develop to their full potential should be pursued.

  o Retain the rural character of currently rural and agricultural areas.

Future Land Use And Character Map

Future land use and character areas are the mapped designations that describe the intended future for different areas of the County through the planning horizon of this plan (2040). Each future land use and character area is named and described through an area purpose statement, a desired development pattern, recommended land uses, transportation, and, if appropriate, policy guidance. The areas are divided into two main policy areas of the County: growth areas and a future planning area.

Growth areas are the locations where new or continued development are expected through the planning horizon year. There are ten future land use and character areas within the growth areas, divided into three types: residential, commercial, and specialized. The residential growth areas provide for varying density and character of predominantly residential neighborhoods within the County.

They describe broad areas, and all allow other types of uses as secondary within the area. The commercial growth areas provide for varying density and character of predominantly commercial uses. The specialized growth areas comprise specific land patterns with unique needs such as mining and landfills, or parks and open space.

There is more than sufficient land in the growth area to accommodate the projected demand for development in the County. To achieve the County's land use goal and policies, this future land use and character framework identifies the **future planning area** as the part of the County where new or continued development is not expected or preferred through the planning horizon. These are areas that are unlikely to receive growth pressures and are not intended to be served by new wastewater utilities within the next 20 years to focus growth of more intense land uses into the growth areas. The eventual future uses within the future planning area is not determined allowing for future planning efforts to designate the appropriate land use and character category based on future conditions.

Growth Areas

There are ten future character and land use areas within the growth area, separated into three categories:

- Residential Growth Areas
  - o Rural Village and Homestead
  - o Suburban Estate Neighborhood
  - o Complete Neighborhood 1
  - o Complete Neighborhood 2
- Commercial Growth Areas
  - o Community-Scale Commercial
  - o Destination Retail
  - o Town-Style Mixed Use
  - o Employment Focus
- Specialized Growth Areas
  - o Mining, Landfills, and Buffers
  - o Parks and Open Spaces

Future Land Use and Character Terminology

The future land use and character areas, listed above, use some terminology in common to describe the character. Secondary use patterns and small-scale attached units are two concepts deserving further clarification.

Secondary Use Patterns

Where primary use patterns may exist over the entirety of a future land use and character area, secondary uses may be more limited in their appropriate form and location to preserve the desired character. There are four secondary use patterns used within this plan to describe how secondary uses may interact with primary uses. They are (1) occasional or interspersed, (2) at crossroads, (3) along corridors, and (4) in enclaves or campuses.

Interspersed

When the most important characteristic of a secondary use is that it occurs less frequently than primary uses, but the use could be appropriate anywhere. The character areas describe this as interspersed: interspersed because they are not clustered and instead situated alongside the principal uses.

For example, commercial businesses and places of worship may be found interspersed in some existing low-density rural residential neighborhoods. The secondary uses are on parcels that could have been built with residential homes like the neighboring parcels, but they were not.

Interspersed

Corridors

Corridors

Enclaves or Campuses

Crossroads

When it is important for a secondary use to be situated where it is highly accessible, where there may be more traffic, or where it is easily connected by paths to primary uses, the future land use and character areas describe this as at crossroads.

For example, a commercial business or place of worship may be deemed appropriate where roads through neighborhoods intersect, even if they would not be appropriate along the roads that lead to the intersection.

Corridors

When the secondary use may be appropriately clustered with other secondary uses along streets or paths that pass through the primary use, the future land use and character areas describe this as along corridors.

For example, neighborhood serving commercial uses may line a street that passes through a residential area.

Enclaves or Campuses

When a secondary use occurs less frequently than primary uses, but requires significantly more space than the primary uses and may even break the pattern of lots or blocks, the future land use and character areas describe this as allowing the secondary use in an enclave or campus. Unlike an interspersed secondary use, if the enclave or campus were not there, then it would likely be too large an area to replace with a single instance of the appropriate primary uses.

For example, a college building or a large place of worship may be built at a scale much larger than its surrounding neighborhood.

Small Scale Attached Units

This residential use, which is appropriate in different future land use and character areas as either a primary or secondary use, describes housing unit types where multiple units are in the same building, but where the type does not rise to the density and form of townhomes or multifamily apartments. These are typically two to four units in a building, and include so-called duplexes, triplexes, quad- or fourplexes, and patio homes, sometimes a part of the term "missing middle housing" used to describe forms and densities that traditionally existed in neighborhoods but grew uncommon in new construction nationally in the last decades even as single family detached units and apartments continued to be built.

Rural Village and Homestead

RURAL VILLAGE AND HOMESTEAD AREA PURPOSE

Rural Village and Homestead Areas provide an opportunity for development in a way that maintains the County's rural character. The village centers are situated in the broader landscape of individual rural homesteads. Residents or visitors to the village centers can view the surrounding landscape or travel through homestead areas while residents of the homesteads may make services or amenities in the village centers a part of their daily lives. The additional density in the village center can generate more demand for services or amenities and make their provision to the area more efficiently feasible.

DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Each village should have either a residential or commercial and residential core. A residential core should be one third to one quarter acre lot residences, which may include townhomes. A commercial and residential core may include a combination of these uses and neighborhood-scale commercial along a main street or a series of short blocks. As distance from the core increases, lots size should increase with the furthest lots from the core up to five or more acres.* Buildings in the core should be close to the street with short yard setbacks. Residences or institutions located further away from the core in the rural homesteads should be set back farther from the streets.

RECOMMENDED LAND USES

Primary uses: Single-family detached units; small-scale attached units; townhomes; neighborhood scale commercial; agricultural production.

Secondary uses: Religious institutions or schools; outdoor recreation facilities; agritourism.

TRANSPORTATION

Connected streets in the village; roads leading to the village centers that are wide enough to accommodate on-road cyclists or pedestrians; connections to the wider transportation network. Some specialized versions of this pattern could consider equestrian paths.

POLICY GUIDANCE

The concept of this character area requires both villages and homesteads be created. Planned developments are one way to ensure there is a comprehensive design to the pattern of the area.

*NOTE: *Lot size is used to help describe development character. Regulations may achieve these sizes through other measures such as unit density.*

Suburban Estate Neighborhood

SUBURBAN ESTATE NEIGHBORHOOD AREA PURPOSE

Suburban Estate Neighborhoods provide the lowest level of residential density practical within the growth area given the overall demand for development in the County and the ability to provide utilities and services in these areas. It is meant to be applied in specific locations where environmental vulnerability, difficult traffic networks, or other growth concerns have been identified.

DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Residential lots sized one-half to two acres* or more organized in neighborhood developments, with flexibility to accommodate institutions such as places of worship or schools at key road intersections and along corridors. Buildings may have long setbacks from the street, and neighboring residences that do not share walls should be set back to allow usable yards between adjacent buildings. Nonresidential lots may be close to the street but should be set back and buffered from any adjacent residences, though they are encouraged to provide roadway, pedestrian and bicycle connections for local residents.

RECOMMENDED LAND USES

Primary uses: Single-family detached homes and small scale attached units.

Secondary uses: Nonresidential uses, such as neighborhood-oriented businesses, religious institutions, and schools at crossroads or on main road corridors; outdoor recreation.

TRANSPORTATION

Landscaping and berms should buffer developments from high-traffic streets. Neighborhood subdivisions may have few access points onto high-traffic streets, but should still be well connected in a series of blocks inside the subdivision, except where challenging geography imposes limits, such as on peninsulas adjacent to Lake Murray.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Application of Suburban Estate Neighborhoods should be limited to areas with environmental vulnerability, difficult traffic networks, potential for impairment of water quality, or other growth concerns.

*NOTE: *Lot size is used to help describe development character. Regulations may achieve these sizes through other measures such as unit density.*

Complete Neighborhood 1

COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD 1 AREA PURPOSE

Complete Neighborhood 1 areas provide a place to live in predominantly single-family homes with safe and convenient access to the goods, services, and recreation needed in daily life, which may be developed along with residential uses, or be easily accessible in nearby commercial nodes or municipalities. This character area is meant to be flexible and conducive to a range of residential densities or intensities and patterns.

DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Residential lots sized one third to one acres*, with flexibility to accommodate nonresidential institutions and neighborhood-oriented businesses at appropriate locations. While residential buildings may be set back from the street, porches, porticos, and other designs that encourage active front yards are encouraged. Commercial buildings may be sited toward the front of their lots to allow easier pedestrian access, with parking to the side or rear. Most commercial buildings are located at crossroads or along main road corridors, or they may be developed as a part of residential developments, and efforts are made that no residential land is more than a quarter mile from an opportunity for commercial, institutional, or recreational development.

RECOMMENDED LAND USES

Primary uses: single-family detached units; small scale attached units; townhomes.

Secondary uses: Nonresidential such as neighborhood-scale commercial, religious institutions, or schools at crossroads or along corridors; outdoor recreation.

TRANSPORTATION

Residential subdivisions should be well connected in a series of blocks with some locations where the internal network connects to nearby high-traffic streets. Pedestrian and bicycle networks may be encouraged if maintained by municipalities, neighborhood associations, or as a part of parks. Pedestrian and bicycle networks should include greenways and paths off of streets. Crossroads developed as nonresidential uses and connections of residential subdivisions to high-traffic streets should preserve space for bus stops or shelters.

POLICY GUIDANCE

This character area is meant to be flexible and conducive to a range of residential densities or intensities and patterns. An inability to meet the envisioned internal street connectivity should not prevent applying this character area to existing residential subdivisions.

*NOTE: *Lot size is used to help describe development character. Regulations may achieve these sizes through other measures such as unit density.*
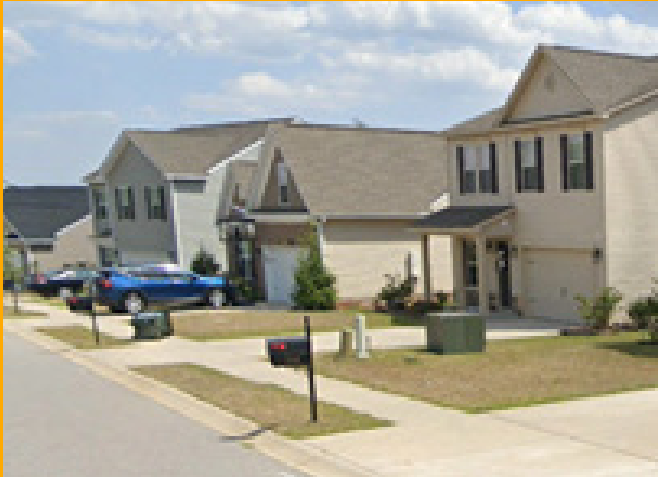
Complete Neighborhood 2

COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD 2 AREA PURPOSE

Complete Neighborhood 2 areas provide for a place to live with safe and convenient access to the goods, services, and recreation needed in daily life in areas of high demand for residences or near to commercial areas. This character area is meant to be flexible and conducive to a range of residential densities or intensities and patterns, and it has more flexibility for multifamily residences than Complete Neighborhood 1.

DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Residential lots of a quarter of an acre* (or less as allowed by zoning), with larger lots for apartments, townhomes, institutions and commercial. All buildings should be near to the street or fronted by porches, porticos, plazas, or other structures and designs that encourage active front yards. Residential buildings may be close to neighboring lots or buildings. Most commercial buildings are located along corridors and road intersections, and efforts are made that no residential land is more than a quarter mile from an opportunity for commercial, institutional, or recreational development.

RECOMMENDED LAND USES

Primary uses: small-lot single-family detached units; small scale attached units; townhomes; multifamily apartments.

Secondary uses: neighborhood-scale commercial at crossroads, along corridors, or interspersed within neighborhoods; religious institutions and schools on main road corridors; outdoor recreation.

TRANSPORTATION

Residential subdivisions or neighborhoods should be well connected in a block structure. The number of entrances into neighborhoods should not be limited, with everywhere the block pattern connects to high traffic streets serving as a usable intersection, if not limited by SCDOT policies. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are encouraged if maintained by municipalities, neighborhood associations, or as a part of parks. Space should be preserved for bus or other transit stops or shelters at regular intervals.

POLICY GUIDANCE

This character area is meant to be flexible and conducive to a range of densities or intensities and patterns and to create a development pattern that allows nonresidential supporting uses to be located proximate to residential neighborhoods. An inability to meet the envisioned internal street connectivity should not prevent applying this character area to existing residential subdivisions. This area should be applied where there is expected high demand for new residential development.

*NOTE: *Lot size is used to help describe development character. Regulations may achieve these sizes through other measures such as unit density.*

Community-Scale Commercial

COMMUNITY-SCALE COMMERCIAL AREA PURPOSE

Community-Scale Commercial areas provide an opportunity for multiple neighborhoods to find convenient goods and services, including more than daily necessities. The area also allows for some multifamily residences near or in the commercial areas, which can help generate greater demand for commercial uses. Locating residential uses nearby can also reduce traffic impacts by offering options for shorter trips within closer proximity to work and shopping destinations.

DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Commercial uses of less than 90,000 sf per use in a grid of blocks, or integrated with its surroundings in a master plan or planned development.

RECOMMENDED LAND USES

Primary uses: community-scale commercial including larger format retail centers, restaurants, specialty retail shops, convenience stores, professional offices; small medical offices or facilities.

Secondary uses: Multifamily residential or townhomes interspersed or in enclaves, religious institutions, government institutions, and recreation facilities.

TRANSPORTATION

Connections to the surrounding grid of streets and a pedestrian network within the commercial area should be provided. Space should be preserved for bus or other transit stops or shelters that provide access to COMET served routes.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Community-Scale Commercial is the most locally focused commercial designation given a specific location on the Future Land Use and Character Map (Neighborhood-scale commercial is a secondary use in residential character areas).

Destination Retail

DESTINATION RETAIL TYPE AREA PURPOSE

Destination Retail allows Countywide or regional-scale commercial areas that are destinations for eating, shopping, or entertainment. These sites can also include regional open space and recreation opportunities and connect to greenways and trails. It is expected that these types of areas are mostly in municipalities or in areas likely to be annexed into municipalities.

DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Activity centers that incorporate entertainment and shopping uses, possibly through master planning or planned development. These centers can help bundle trip destinations so that a single trip can serve multiple purposes, and so that a visitor to the area can park a single time and easily access the different shops, restaurants, and entertainment establishments. If large amounts of parking are required, the parking area should be broken into smaller pods or cells or provided through structured parking. The area should have a landscaped buffer from any residences not a part of the developments.

RECOMMENDED LAND USES

Principal Uses: Regional scale commercial, including restaurants, movie theaters, very large supermarkets, discount clubs, big box stores, and outlet malls.

Secondary Uses: Multifamily residential and hotels interspersed or in enclaves.

TRANSPORTATION

Well-connected interior circulation with accommodation for pedestrian and bicycle trips. Pedestrian paths through parking areas should help visitors navigate safely to the main commercial entrances. Space should be preserved for bus or other transit stops or shelters that provide access to COMET served routes.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Commercial development should allow some multifamily to be integrated to help generate a more consistent customer base for the area that does not need a car for every trip, to offer a variety of housing choices in the community, and to reduce demand pressure for development in outer rural areas. This category may be sparsely applied, with many areas that would fit either occurring within municipalities or in areas that are likely to be annexed into municipalities and then given municipal zoning.

Town-Style Mixed Use

TOWN-STYLE MIXED USE AREA PURPOSE

Town-Style Mixed Use provides for areas where residential and commercial uses are in close proximity, and can be in the same development or the same building. These areas can expand the capacity for development in and around towns.

DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Commercial ground floors along a main street or in a grid of blocks with a combination of offices and residences in the upper stories.

RECOMMENDED LAND USES

Primary uses: commercial retail and office, multifamily residential and live-work apartments.

Secondary uses: institutional uses (including medical) interspersed or at crossroads; parks, indoor, and outdoor entertainment interspersed.

TRANSPORTATION

Streets organized in a grid of blocks. Parking provided as on-street parking adjacent to the building or off-street parking beside or behind the buildings or in a shared structured garage.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Town-Style Mixed Use should be considered to designate or expand upon the pattern of commercial main streets in the various municipalities.

Development patterns in the various municipalites can differ. Appropriate character or lot size for this area should be in keeping with nearby neighborhood development patterns.

Employment Focus

EMPLOYMENT FOCUS AREA PURPOSE

The Employment Focus area provides for large scale employment-oriented development that is a regional work destination that draws employees from both inside and outside the County.

DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Available large parcels within organized business parks, or on roads well-served by major highways or interstates.

RECOMMENDED LAND USES

Principal Uses: Industrial warehouse and manufacturing; commercial office; corporate headquarters or campus-style office complexes.

Secondary Uses: Retail commercial at crossroads; multifamily.

TRANSPORTATION

Interior circulation can accommodate pedestrian and bicycle facilities for workers to exercise or get a break in nature during the day. Space should be preserved for bus or other transit stops or shelters at the entrance to the park or to each tenant, providing access to COMET served routes.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Employment Focus area should be applied to existing and planned business and industrial parks, as well as current clusters of current development activity.

Parks and Open Spaces

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES AREA PURPOSE

The Parks and Open Space area is reserved for purpose-built parks and protected open spaces. It is not meant as a holding category for undeveloped land to be developed later. Parks may include sports fields, natural areas, trails, golf courses and gardens. Larger parks and open space areas may allow room for maintenance facilities, museums, or interpretation centers. The Saluda River Greenway, Saluda Shoals Park, Peach Tree Rock, and 12,000 Year Park are emblematic of this character area. The existence of this category should not limit the development or preservation of additional parks and open spaces in other categories.

DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Natural or ordered park land and open space with access to the features of the park. The pattern of individual parks and open spaces may vary widely from one another.

RECOMMENDED LAND USES

Primary uses: Parks and preserved open space

Secondary uses: Bathrooms, visitor centers or interpretation centers; equipment rental and park supply facilities interspersed.

TRANSPORTATION

Clear connections to park entrances with space reserved for bus or transit stop or shelter by the entrance of destination parks. Internal circulation in line with safety and programming.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Inclusion of privately owned independent commercial establishments should be limited, with it preferable to include them, if appropriate, as vendors or operators within the park.

Deference should be given to the recreation and aging commissions or host municipalities on design and pattern of destination parks.

The existence of this future land use and character area should not preclude the creation of new parks within other areas or within private developments when the opportunity arises.

Mining, Landfills, and Buffers

MINING, LANDFILLS, AND BUFFERS
AREA PURPOSE

The Mining, Landfills and Buffers Character area includes active, planned, and past mining and quarrying sites, landfills, and the buffers of land around them devoted to processing material or protecting surrounding areas from nuisance exposures. When a mine or quarry has reached the end of its economically viable productive use and the land has been remediated, it may be appropriate to amend the map and recategorize the land as a different land use and character area.

DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Sites of extraction are surrounded by a buffer of land that limits impacts to surrounding areas. Depending on environmental and safety conditions, hiking paths and recreation space may be appropriate near the edges of wider buffers.

RECOMMENDED LAND USES

Primary uses: Resource extraction, remediation of past resource extraction site.

TRANSPORTATION

Street connections to freight routes and possible integration with rail freight lines.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Amend the Future Land Use and Character Map as appropriate to add mines or quarries that are coming online. Recategorize the land for remediated mines or quarries.

Future Planning Area

FUTURE PLANNING AREA PURPOSE

The Future Planning area provides flexibility for the future, however extension or expansion of sewer service and suburban-scale development is not proposed at this time. The County controls sewer extension in much of the future planning area, though Chapin, Town of Lexington, and Batesburg-Leesville control some of the potential sewer service areas along the northwest and southwest borders of the County. More intense development may be possible beyond the planning horizon year of 2040. Specific uses to be applied within future planning areas will be identified as part of the next plan update.

POLICY GUIDANCE

The Future Land Use and Character Map is policy guidance like the rest of the comprehensive plan. (See Figure 2-4: Future Land Use and Character Map) It is not a legal document like a zoning ordinance and allows for some level of discretion when County staff, the Planning Commission, and the County Council make future decisions on growth and development. Transformative projects that would benefit the County outside the pattern identified on the Future Land Use and Character Map can and should be considered. While the Future Planning area provides the same kind of policy guidance, greater care should be taken before overriding the intentions of the Future Planning area to ensure rural character and environmental protection policies are achieved.

Figure 2-4: Future Land Use and Character Map
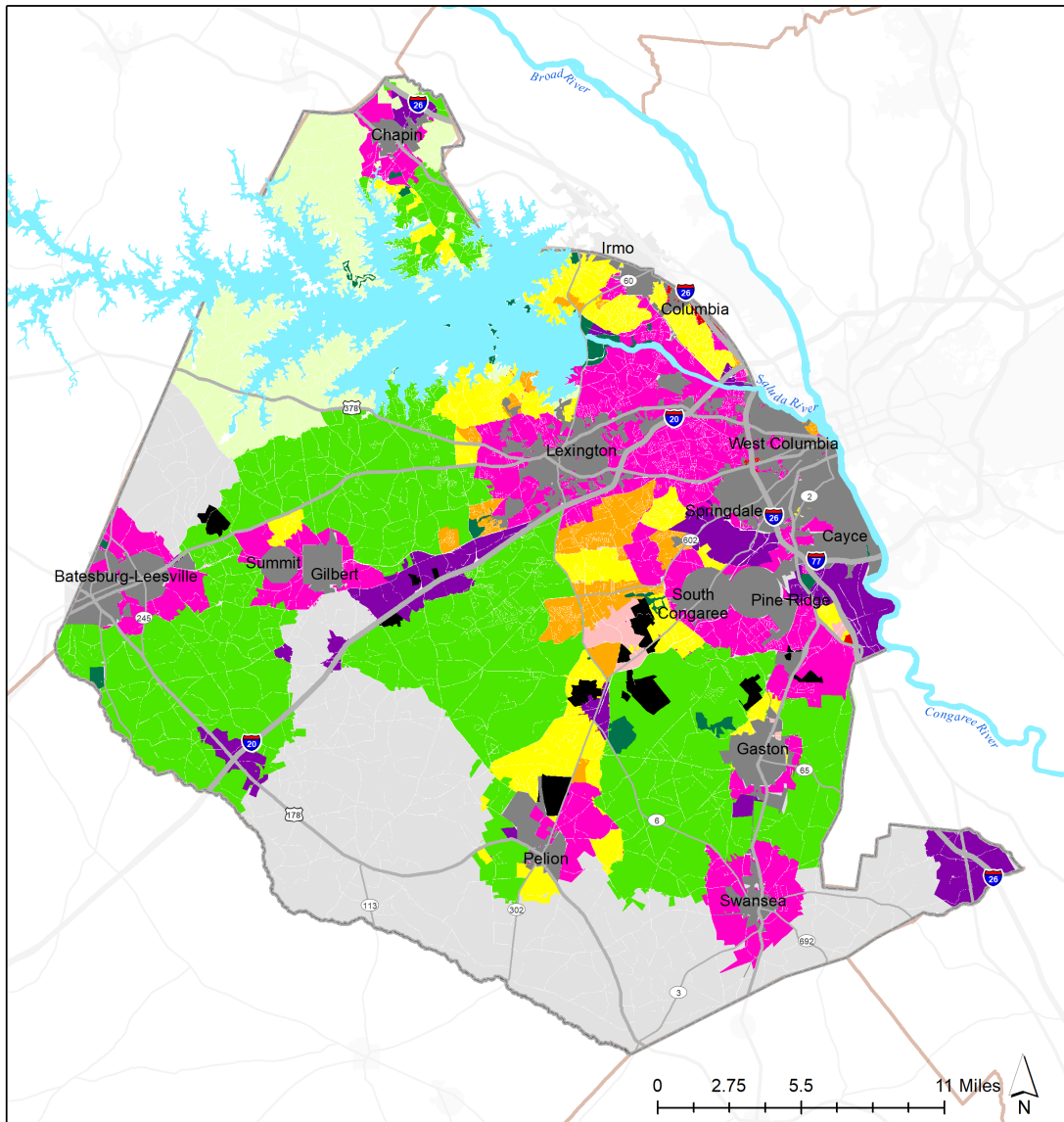
Legend

Residential Growth Areas
- ■ Rural Village and Homestead (green)
- ■ Suburban Estate Neighborhood (pale green)
- ■ Complete Neighborhood 1 (yellow)
- ■ Complete Neighborhood 2 (orange)

Commercial Growth Areas
- ■ Community-Scale Commercial (pink)
- ■ Destination Retail (red)
- ■ Town-Stye Mixed Use (magenta)
- ■ Employment Focus (purple)

Specialized Growth Areas
- ■ Mining, Landfill, and Buffers (black)
- ■ Parks and Open Space (teal)

Future Planning Area
- ■ Future Planning Area (gray)

Actions

- Where additional guidance will help clarify the future of a particular area, neighborhood, or region, **develop area plans to refine the guidance within this comprehensive plan**. Area plans should include input from any neighborhoods they encompass and neighboring jurisdictions that are adjacent.

- **Support the use of existing community land trusts** that could partner with private landowners and developers to preserve rural and agricultural land, special places, open space, common areas, places of special interest, parkland, or special views either as open space or as working farmland. The Land Trust Alliance directory identifies 15 land trusts that operate in the County.

- **Update and coordinate a re-write of all land use regulations**:
  - Update all land use and development-related regulations including the land development code and subdivision ordinance to help achieve the policy direction of this plan and the development patterns identified on the Future Land Use and Character Map. This may include adjustments to zoning districts, performance

o Consider re-writing the Subdivision Ordinance to alleviate substandard road and emergency services access conditions, including augmenting private road, dirt road, easement accessed-developed and other access policy considerations.

o Ensure any new standards also allow some flexibility for infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse.

• Should a holistic re-write of all land use regulations in a single action not be feasible in the near term, as a precursor to later changes:

o **Pursue an in-depth analysis and review of the zoning use and street classification** matrices and determine appropriate uses within each category

o **Pursue an in-depth analysis and review of all zoning districts and street classifications**, on the official zoning map, and evaluate the possibility of countywide changes to the overall zoning system

• **Analyze the effectiveness of recently adopted changes** to the Zoning Ordinance, Landscape and Open Space Ordinances, Subdivision Ordinance, and Land Development Manual as a result of the subdivision moratorium and connected measures.

zoning metrics or standards, street classification systems, or other such tools.

o Consider standards that allow conservation subdivision design as a means of supporting open space preservation.

• Work with municipalities to **ensure compatible regulations around the edges of planning and zoning jurisdictions** and to promote annexation that does not create holes of County jurisdiction inside municipalities.

• **Develop formalized agreements with municipalities** to coordinate land use planning, and develop joint plans for areas of common interest within growth areas.

• **Promote standards that encourage "walkability"** where residents and visitors can walk or bike for some trips. As long as the County does not want to maintain a sidewalk system, promote these aspects on sites large enough for the developer to provide these facilities as a private use, applied to internal circulation to the development, or where annexation by a municipality is likely, along major roadways near high density developments in keeping with Complete Streets Policy, or where significant destinations, such as Employment Focus, Destination Retail, schools or other pedestrian accessibility sites are located.

3

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development

Introduction

Economic development in Lexington County is the result of partnerships between the County, businesses, and critical institutions that support businesses or the local workforce. Some economic development is attributable to the large-scale growth of the region. Other economic development is attributable to countywide policies and programs, or the actions of major institutional actors such as Midlands Technical College, the Columbia Metropolitan Airport, and Lexington Medical Center. Still other development is attributable to discrete recruiting and services through public entities like the Lexington County Economic Development Department or business peer groups including multiple Chambers of Commerce. All of these broader factors are the foundation upon which individual businesses and employees power local economic growth. This chapter both describes the landscape of economic development in broad terms and identifies strategic entities or opportunities that can promote economic development in the future.

The Role of the County and its Partners

Economic Development Department

The County's economic development arm pursues economic development opportunities on behalf of the County. This includes tracking key workforce demographics and statistics, advertising available real estate, and coordinating business retention and expansion resources. The Economic Development Department coordinates with the South Carolina Coordinating Council for Economic Development on Job Development Credits that offset the cost of relocation or expansion of facilities and Job Retaining Credits that refund eligible job retraining up to $1,000 per employee.

Central Midlands Council of Governments

The Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) organizes planning on a regional scale including Lexington County. The Central Midlands also includes neighboring Fairfield, Newberry, and Richland Counties, as well as parts of Kershaw and Calhoun Counties. CMCOG pursues a portfolio of land use planning, mapping, environmental planning, aging services, economic and community development, transportation planning, and demographic research. The CMCOG maintains employment projections and population projections as a part of its regional demand model. CMCOG also helps jurisdictions pursue grant opportunities for business development through federal and state programs, including Community Development Block Grants and the South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority.

Airports

The Columbia Metropolitan Airport (CAE) in Lexington County is the main airport for the City of Columbia and the region with direct flights to 12 airports in seven states and Washington, D.C. The airport has grown with the region. Though COVID-19 related disruptions may have affected demand in the short term, over the next 20 years the expected trend is for the airport to continue to grow. Direct service to a headquarter city can be prerequisite for some businesses looking to expand to new locations. The airport also controls land surrounding the airport that is used to partner with Midlands Technical College on their Airport Campus and to serve as a business and industrial park for businesses that value easy access to the airport and highways. There may also be opportunities to partner with regional entities to improve development between the airport and the City of Columbia to serve as an attractive gateway to the state capital.

The Lexington County Airport in Pelion is a general aviation airport owned by the County. Improvement to facilities is planned to allow the airport to serve as a small corporate airport in addition to meeting the current local demand. Peak operations could double between 2015 and 2030. Though much smaller than CAE, there could still be significant economic development benefits to growth in the area around it, and more widely in the ability to serve these smaller planes away from the traffic of CAE.

Lexington County Airport is one of nine local, private, or general aviation facilities are also listed in the County.

Chambers of Commerce and Business Leadership Groups

The recruitment of new businesses and pursuit of economic development opportunities is not a task pursued by the County and the municipalities alone. Peer business groups such as the local Chambers of Commerce including the Lexington Chamber and Visitor's Center, the Greater Cayce West Columbia Chamber of Commerce, the Chapin Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center, the Batesburg-Leesville Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center, and the Greater Irmo Chamber of Commerce; and business leadership groups also promote business in the County. While business is a competitive enterprise, growing a local community of businesses can help sustain and support business sectors as a whole and attract a skilled workforce to the area. The County can improve the efforts of these private professional entities by maintaining up to date information about key County statistics, marketing the high quality of life provided in the County, and maintaining lists of development sites appropriate for a variety of company sizes.

Midlands Technical College

Midlands Technical College (MTC) is a critical partner in training and maintaining the local workforce with the skills needed by desirable employers. The existence of the college and its three Lexington County Campuses (Airport, Harbison, and Batesburg-Leesville) is an attraction to economic development in its own right. MTC also works with local employers when developing skills courses for their students. Lexington County business leaders serve as program or track advisors. MTC lists eight program categories, many of which are directly relevant to large employers and target industries in the County:

- Advanced manufacturing and skilled trades
- Education and public service
- Health care
- Social and behavioral sciences
- Business
- English and humanities
- Science, information technology, and math (STEM)
- Interdisciplinary studies

Facts and Trends

A Talented Workforce

It has always been important to businesses that they have access to a sufficient skilled workforce when the business is considering places to relocate or grow. The trend in recent years has been for employers to move toward talent and the desirable communities that are attracting talent across the nation. Growing the skilled workforce of the County is a key strategy toward growing economic development. This strategy can also take advantage of the local workforce that is being educated and trained in the County and region and provide opportunities for them to work near home.

Schools, Parks, and Quality of Life

School district quality has long been another indicator used by businesses looking to grow or relocate. Owners and employees care about access to quality education for their children. Lexington County is lucky to have some of the best performing school districts in the state. The recent trend has also been for businesses to look to other quality of life factors, such as parks and vibrant centers for recreation and destination retail and dining, because, like quality school districts, these are amenities that talented workers are seeking.

Waterfronts

The Saluda, Congaree, and Edisto rivers are the major rivers of the County. The first two are near growing areas of the County, where community access to the riverfront can be an iconic amenity for both the nearby neighborhoods and the community at large. The Saluda River is already a target area for planning the Saluda River Greenway by the River Alliance. It will join the existing Three Rivers Greenway in Columbia, West Columbia, and Cayce as a true jewel of the community. In addition to being a local attraction, entrances and paths to these greenways could be the site for new tourism and destination-based economic development, whether it is taking advantage of the views or of the new foot traffic. Preserving and enhancing access onto these rivers help spread the benefits of the waterfront to the region as a whole and not just adjacent landholders.

Lake Murray is a major regional attraction and amenity for the community. Preserving and enhancing access onto the lake and along the lakefront help spread the benefits of the Lake to the region as a whole and not just adjacent landholders.

Industrial and Business Parks

Development of industrial and business parks can be an effective way to preserve land with connection to utilities and transportation corridors for large employers. There are three County-owned business parks (Saxe Gotha Industrial Park, Chapin Business and Technology Park at Brighton, and Batesburg-Leesville Industrial Park). There are many other parks owned by other entities in the County, including the Columbia Metropolitan Airport West Park and the privately owned Lexington County Industrial Park.

Opportunity Zones

Opportunity zones are a federal program where some investments are eligible for preferential tax treatment provided the investment is within certain disadvantaged census tracts. There are 13,000 acres of land in the County in areas identified in opportunity zones, split into West Columbia, Batesburg-Leesville, and east of Pine Ridge.

Key Industries

Four industrial sectors each account for more than ten percent of jobs in Lexington County: health care and social assistance (15%), retail trade (14%), accommodation and food services (10%), and manufacturing

(10%). Of the four, two provide average wages in the County over $50,000 a year: manufacturing ($58,000) and health care and social assistance ($50,000). The economic development department may from time to time identify key industries to pursue in its marketing and development efforts. Those key industries may be based on adding to successes or on diversifying the local market.

Healthcare Workers

South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce generates a profile of employees for each County in South Carolina. This includes projection of future demand for jobs. The top five estimated growing job categories in the Midlands are all related to point-of-care healthcare: home health aides, personal health aides, physical care aides, physician's assistants, physical therapist assistants, and nurse practitioners. (See Figure 3-1: Top Midlands Job Projections for 2026, Highlighting Point-of Care Healthcare Jobs and the Fact Book for further details from the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce)

Agriculture and Agritourism

The County has a rich rural heritage and there are opportunities to shine a spotlight on agricultural producers and attract

Figure 3-1: Top Midlands Job Protections for 2026, Highlighting Point-of Care healthcare Jobs

Midlands Occupation	2016 Estimated Employmen	2026 Projected Employmen	Percent Change	Average Salary
Home Health Aides	1,645	2,449	49	$ 21,096
Personal Care Aides	2,548	3,575	40	$ 22,117
Physician Assistants	227	312	37	$ 103,340
Physical Therapist Assistants	260	354	36	$ 55,742
Nurse Practitioners	347	471	36	$ 97,573
Statisticians	108	146	35	$ 66,916
Massage Therapists	386	505	31	$ 40,182
Software Developers, Applications	969	1,262	30	$ 86,612
Medical Assistants	1,702	2,211	30	$ 31,107
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fas	10,875	14,126	30	$ 18,003
Physical Therapists	542	704	30	$ 89,274

visitors through Agritourism promotion and events. Agritourism is a means for those in the county who value the rural and agricultural areas to experience them and treasure them even if they do not live in rural parts of the County. The term covers a wide range of strategies including event venues that take advantage of the picturesque setting, U-pick farms that allow customers to pick their own fruit and vegetables, site tours and tasting facilities for specialized crops or products, and basic farm stands to sell products direct to customers. Preservation of agriculture, farmland and an agricultural way of life is critical to the County, as much of the culture here is based on farm-to-table row crops, fruits, vegetables and silviculture.

GUIDING & MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

Continue to build a strong local economy with a diversity of businesses that attracts high-quality jobs, supports the growth of the County's rural, agricultural, and agritourism sectors, provides training and education to improve skills of the workforce, extends economic opportunity throughout the County, and contributes positively to the overall quality of life.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- *Increase the number of living wage jobs and employers paying living wages of $15 per hour or higher to all employees.*
- *Increase local retention rates of college graduates from regional institutions of higher education.*

Achieving Results

Policies

- **3-1** Build and maintain a community where a skilled workforce wants to call home.
- **3-2** Foster opportunities for new companies that keep newly developed talent in the County.
- **3-3** Protect the growth potential of Columbia Metropolitan Airport and Lexington County Airport.
- **3-4** Provide information about the County to partners promoting the County as a prime location for potential new, growing, or relocating businesses.
- **3-5** Help maintain connections between businesses and local higher education.
- **3-6** Coordinate economic development with utility and service provision, transportation, and land use planning.
- **3-7** Recruit businesses in industrial sectors, and regularly reevaluate target sectors to both diversify the economy and build on successes.

Economic Opportunities

Certain community features present opportunities for different economic development strategies. These features are listed below and shown on Figure 3-2: Economic Development Opportunities:

- **Existing Communities:** Municipalities have existing infrastructure and the population density to support additional development, and so may be more likely to have redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and infill opportunities. Opportunity zones are attractive targets for private investment based on federal investment incentives that apply.
- **Waterfronts:** The lakefront of Lake Murray and the riverfronts within the County can be the sites of public access points, parks, greenways and other opportunities for recreational development that help make the waterfronts a shared community resource. Though these are not sites of major new residences or commercial development, the strength of them as a regional recreational resource can be a selling point and boon to economic development in the whole County.
- **Agriculture:** There is potential for agritourism which can turn agricultural production into a destination for locals

Figure 3-2: Economic Development Opportunities
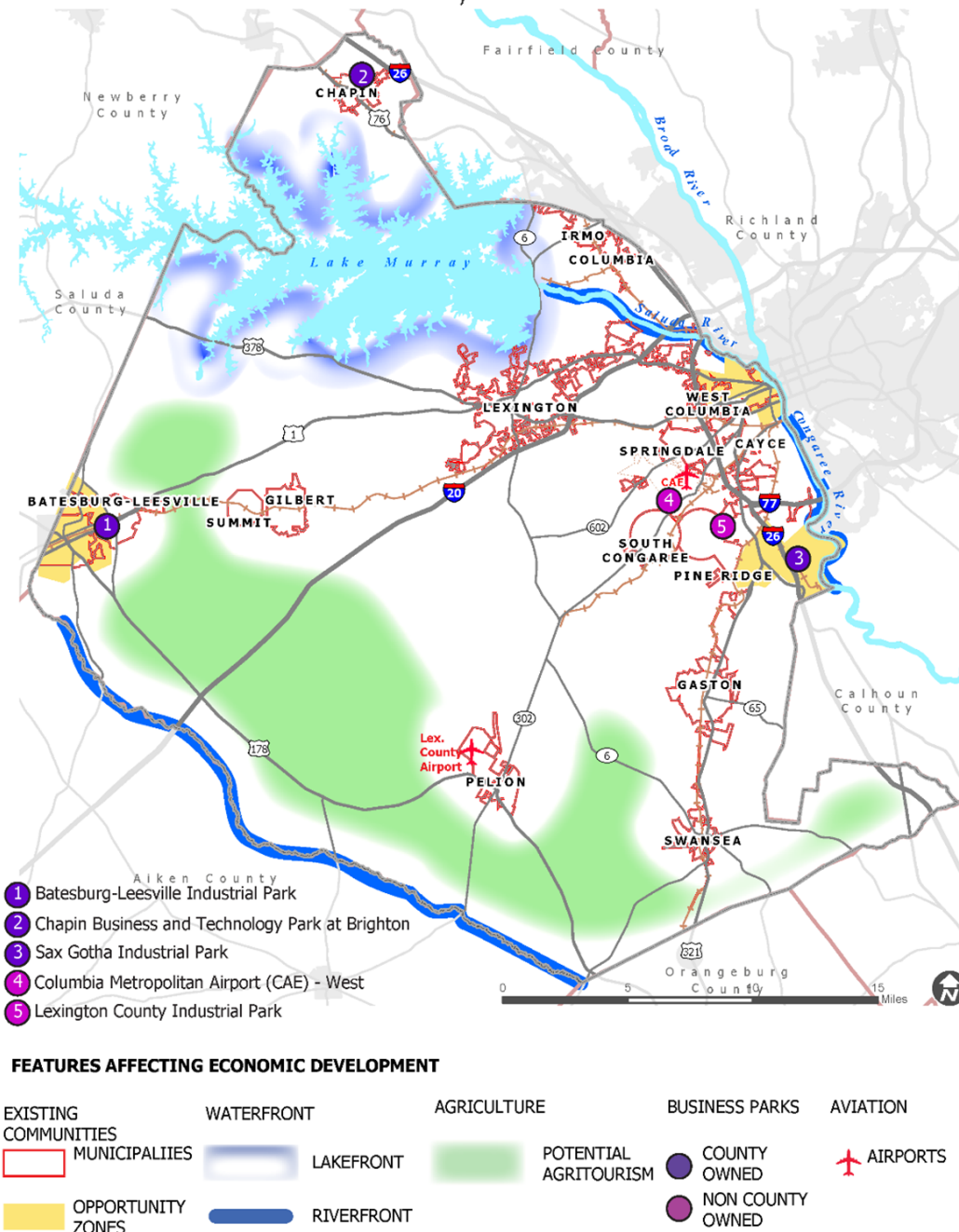
1. Batesburg-Leesville Industrial Park
2. Chapin Business and Technology Park at Brighton
3. Sax Gotha Industrial Park
4. Columbia Metropolitan Airport (CAE) - West
5. Lexington County Industrial Park

FEATURES AFFECTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

EXISTING COMMUNITIES	WATERFRONT	AGRICULTURE	BUSINESS PARKS	AVIATION
MUNICIPALIIES	LAKEFRONT	POTENTIAL AGRITOURISM	COUNTY OWNED	AIRPORTS
OPPORTUNITY ZONES	RIVERFRONT		NON COUNTY OWNED	

and visitors alike in parts of the County with many active farms.

- **Business Parks:** Business parks are the key sites available for future industrial and employment development.

- **Aviation:** Columbia Metropolitan Airport and Lexington County Airport each attract business and host attractive development opportunities on the lands surrounding the airports. These are already established areas but have the capacity to host more economic development activity.

Actions

- **Maintain a list of readily developable land** located in growth areas and identified for Employment Focus on the Future Land Use and Character Map.

- **Update the County's Zoning Ordinance** to reflect guidance of the Future Land Use and Character Map and associated map designations for employment areas.

- **Develop regulations and marketing to support agritourism** in the County.

- **Develop pilot projects showcasing redevelopment and adaptive reuse.** Pilot projects may take the form of public-private partnerships.

4

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation

Introduction

Lexington County's transportation system moves people within and through the County to get to their homes, jobs, school, shopping, and other destinations, making it a top public service priority for the community. Transportation includes all the ways people move around, including walking, biking, taking transit, driving, and carpooling. As the population grows, it will put pressure on the transportation system. Increasing levels of traffic congestion due to population growth and limited options for travel other than personal vehicles were cited by project participants as key concerns for transportation in Lexington County. Dedicating additional resources and planning for transportation infrastructure to support this growth will be essential to maintaining ease of access and a high quality of life in Lexington County. Preparing for this growth provides an opportunity to help facilitate the kind of healthy, outdoor lifestyle that project participants often desired by incorporating safe and inviting sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and trails as part of the transportation system to create convenient active transportation options for shorter trips.

The Role of the County and its Partners

The streets, transit, and trails that move people around Lexington County are owned and maintained by different governmental organizations, including the State, County, municipalities, and transit agencies. Each of these groups has its own responsibilities and resources, including:

South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT)

State departments of transportation typically maintain State and Federal highways and major roads that have regional roles and move people across greater distances. In Lexington County, these include roads like Interstate 20 (I-20), Interstate 26 (I-26), US 1, US 76, US 176, US 178, US 321, and US 378. In South Carolina, SCDOT also maintains many of the local streets in municipalities. In total, SCDOT maintains the largest share of roads within Lexington County (1,651 miles or 49 percent).

Lexington County

The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining and constructing the County's streets, bridges, and drainage systems. The Engineering Division supports this work through the planning, permitting, and design of these projects, including managing funding for transportation projects. The County maintains the next largest share of roads within Lexington County (1,274 miles or 38 percent). Most of these roads are located outside of municipalities and are shorter roads that do not provide regional connections. Lexington County also has intergovernmental agreements with many of its municipalities to maintain many of their roads in addition to its own. As a part of communicating its transportation priorities with SCDOT and governments in the region, including the "C" Fund Program allocations, Lexington County maintains a Transportation Plan, updated periodically and most recently in 2021.

Municipalities

There are 15 municipalities—towns or cities—within Lexington County, and each has its own policies and projects that shape how people move within and around their jurisdictions. Because many of the local streets within municipalities are actually maintained by the State, working with SCDOT is essential to most transportation projects within their jurisdictions.

Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority

Transit service for both Lexington County and Richland County is provided by Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority, the operator of the COMET. It operates through an intergovernmental agreement with the counties and participating municipalities. It is funded through multiple sources, including the State, the Federal Transit Authority (FTA), fares, and general fund contributions from participating local governments. Its largest source of revenue is the Richland County Penny Tax, which funded 63 percent of its annual budget in FY 2019/2020. Contributions from the Lexington County General Fund accounted for a small portion of the COMET's annual funding for the same year.

Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG)

This regional organization is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) responsible for carrying out the urban transportation planning process for the Columbia Area Transportation Study (COATS). Additionally, CMCOG is also

the Rural Planning Organization (RPO). Under these two designations, CMCOG is responsible for transportation planning in all or portions of Richland, Lexington, Fairfield, Newberry, Kershaw, and Calhoun Counties It assists local governments and develops regional plans and provides technical support to improve quality of life in the region. For transportation, one of its key roles is creating and updating the region's Long Range Transportation Plan (Columbia Area Transportation Study [COATS]) in coordination with the State and local governments, which includes forecasted growth, roads with anticipated congestion, and multimodal transportation needs over a 25-year period; CMCOG is currently updating that plan. CMCOG also serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for the Central Midlands region. In this role, it is responsible for allocating Federal funding to support the planning, design, and construction of transportation projects throughout the region, largely through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Facts and Trends

Impacts of Development Patterns on Transportation

The development pattern in Lexington County has a strong impact on its transportation system. The County's current zoning regulations use street classifications to assign density and development standards to properties. As a result, the development pattern tends to place many popular destinations, like shopping centers, along a few corridors in strip center-style developments rather than in a more traditional small-town development pattern. This puts pressure on a few roads, like US 378 and US 1, to handle much of the traffic in the County, including trips by people trying to access these destinations and those passing through as part of longer, cross-County trips. The frequent driveways along many of these roads further contribute to congestion and can cause safety hazards as drivers need to slow down to turn into the many destinations. In many areas, the lack of an effective street network means there are no parallel streets to provide options for local trips, and these local trips are therefore also added to these major roads, exacerbating congestion issues. Addressing traffic congestion was cited as the top concern

for project survey respondents in Planning Areas 1, 2, 3, and 4, the areas where this type of development is most common.

This development style also means that destinations tend to be spread farther apart, which makes it difficult to take many trips by walking, biking, or transit, options that could help relieve some of the traffic pressure. This is highlighted by the fact that almost all Lexington County residents drive to work alone or in a carpool (97 percent), higher than in Richland Count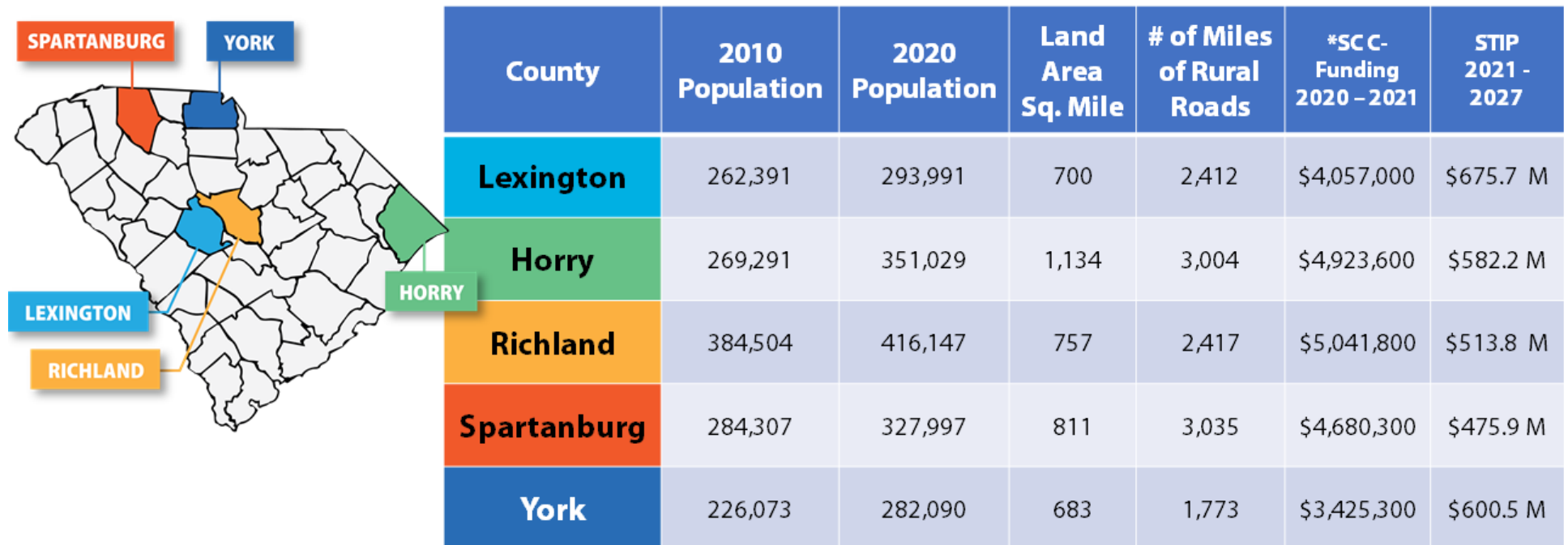y (85 percent) or the Columbia Metro Area overall (89 percent). They also tend to have longer commute times—which can be a factor of distance, congestion, and mode of travel—with 64 percent of Lexington County residents having commutes of 20 minutes or longer, compared to Richland County (52 percent) or the Columbia Metro Area (58 percent).

Transportation Funding

Opportunities to improve transportation infrastructure to address both current challenges and anticipated additional pressure from future growth are highly constrained by limited funding. Lexington County's primary source of funding for capital improvements is the "C" Fund Program, a statewide program for making local, relatively small-scale, roadway improvements. Program funding comes from the South Carolina fuel sales tax, which is distributed to each of the counties in the State. The County's total annual "C" Fund allocation in 2021 was $5.94 million for all project categories, with $1.37

Figure 4-1: Peer County Funding Comparisons

County	2010 Population	2020 Population	Land Area Sq. Mile	# of Miles of Rural Roads	*SC C-Funding 2020–2021	STIP 2021–2027
Lexington	262,391	293,991	700	2,412	$4,057,000	$675.7 M
Horry	269,291	351,029	1,134	3,004	$4,923,600	$582.2 M
Richland	384,504	416,147	757	2,417	$5,041,800	$513.8 M
Spartanburg	284,307	327,997	811	3,035	$4,680,300	$475.9 M
York	226,073	282,090	683	1,773	$3,425,300	$600.5 M

million of that total required to be set aside for projects on State roads. Most of the remaining funds ($4.57 million) are spent on asphalt maintenance (57.6 percent) and dirt road paving (21.9 percent), leaving very limited remaining funding for new or upgraded roads, sidewalks, or trails of any kind. This constrained funding limits the County's ability to invest in the kind of transportation infrastructure needed to address existing congestion and access issues, as well as the additional pressure anticipated by future growth.

The County has previously explored an additional one percent sales tax on retail goods to fund transportation infrastructure improvements, a Capital Project Sales Tax (CPST). The referendum was originally sent to the voters in 2014; however, failed by a margin of 2-1. The original tax was earmarked to pay for at least $268.1 million in improvements for roads, water sewer, drainage, and other projects. The tax increase would have lasted eight years, with groceries and prescription medicine exempt. The County Council chose to place a similar scaled-back version of the referendum on the ballot for 2020, which was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A transportation and drainage-related CPST referendum may be placed on the ballot for the 2022 election.

Rural Unpaved Roads

Many roads in Lexington County are unpaved, accounting for about 23 percent of the total roadway miles. Most of these are in more rural areas in the southeast and southwest parts of the County, mainly in Planning Areas 6 and 7. In these areas, the lack of paved roads was often cited as the top issue facing the community in project surveys. The majority of unpaved roads fall under the County's jurisdiction. About half (49 percent) of the roads Lexington County is responsible for are unpaved. County residents and businesses can petition to have their unpaved roads paved if all property owners agree and provide easements. More than 220 miles of unpaved County roads have already been petitioned for paving and the County maintains a prioritized list of these planned paving projects. However, the County's ability to complete these requests is constrained by funding. With the current limited annual budget, the County is only able to pave about two miles of unpaved roads annually. While this budget is constrained, it represents a significant portion (16.8 percent) of the County's annual "C" Fund distribution.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Using active modes of transportation, like walking and biking, not only helps people get around, but can support healthy lifestyles, reduce pollution, and take vehicular traffic pressure off roadways. For residents without access to a car, walking, biking, and taking transit are their only means of transportation and are essential to creating equitable access to housing and jobs. Participants in project community engagement activities consistently cited a desire for Lexington County to become a more walkable and bikeable place that encourages healthy living and gets people outside.

Data on the locations and condition of sidewalks throughout the County was not available at the time of this report and should be inventoried. An initial review of typical conditions shows, that in many cases, sidewalks are only available along major roads and maintained by the SCDOT. There are typically no buffers between these sidewalks and the curb, meaning people are walking right next to high traffic, high speed roads, creating a condition that is not ideal for pedestrian safety or comfort. In some cases, there are no sidewalks along the major roads in

areas with popular destinations, like parts of Sunset Boulevard / US378). Pedestrian crossings tend to be spaced far apart, which can encourage people to cross in unmarked locations and decreases safety for both pedestrians and drivers. In rural areas, sidewalks are not commonly found on major roads.

Existing trails and greenways have been focused on recreation and are mainly located within parks and along the riverfront. Most of these are found in municipalities, like the Columbia Riverfront Park, Cayce Riverwalk and Timmerman Trail, and Three Rivers Greenway. Several municipalities—Chapin, Swansea, Batesburg-Leesville, Cayce, West Columbia, and Springdale—have recently adopted their own pedestrian and bicycle master plans to continue expanding their systems. Existing on-street bicycle facilities in Lexington County are limited and are generally unbuffered bicycle lanes on 45-mile-per-hour roads like SC-6 and Platt Springs Road, which are unlikely to appeal to most potential cyclists.

Funding for additional sidewalk, bicycle facility, and trail improvements is extremely limited. These projects fall under the "Special Projects" category of the "C" Fund, which also includes projects like transit facilities, school road projects, and municipal projects. In 2021, about $350,000
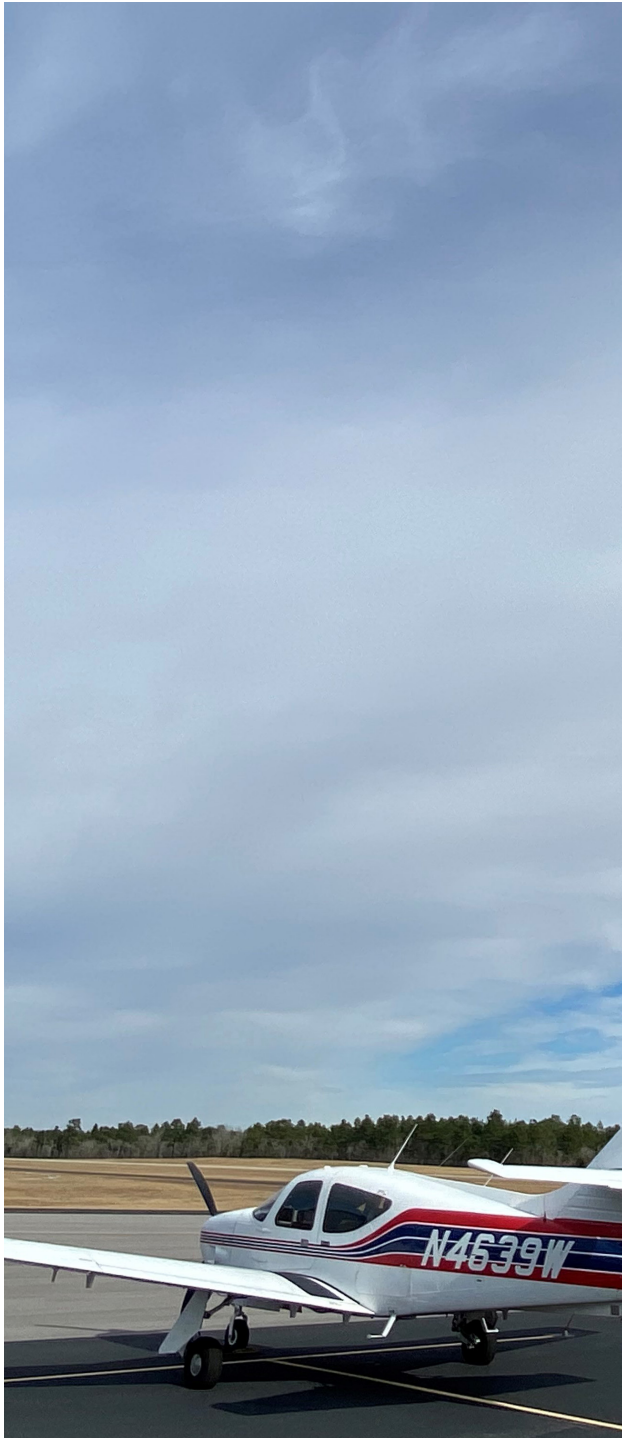
was set aside for these Special Projects, with $250,000 designated for municipal project requests, leaving about $100,000 for annual sidewalk, bicycle facility, and similar improvements on County roads in unincorporated areas. With typical costs to construct a basic 5 foot-wide sidewalk of about $174,240 per mile according to SCDOT, this amounts to about 0.57 miles of new sidewalks per year. This allocation is insufficient to meet the needs to expand safe walking and biking facilities in the County.

Transit Service

The COMET operates eight bus routes in Lexington County, with service concentrated in the eastern part of the County to connect municipalities and major employment centers to Downtown Columbia. These routes offer access to locations like Lexington Medical Center, Columbia Metropolitan Airport, Downtown West Columbia, Downtown Cayce, Springdale, and the Amazon fulfillment center. The recently added ReFlex Route 97 provides limited service to the western part of the County, with a fixed service-route between West Columbia and Batesburg-Leesville along with a flex service for the area around the fixed route. This flex service allows riders to schedule pick-ups in nearby locations. The utility of these routes is limited by low service frequencies, with bus arrivals every 30 to 60 minutes for local routes and twice daily service for park-and-ride express bus service. Additionally, some routes have no, or very limited, weekend service. The COMET 2020 Vision (2018) plan has few recommendations to expand fixed route service or frequency in Lexington County. Planned improvements include expanded dial-a-ride service for riders with disabilities, two new park-and-ride express routes during peak commute periods, a new bus and shuttle fleet, and bus stop enhancements.

Additional information about Lexington County's transportation system is available in the Appendices.

GUIDING & MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

Transportation planning will be coordinated with land use plans to improve mobility and accessibility and create a safe and efficient multimodal (car, regional transit, bike, walk) transportation network.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- *Decrease average commute time.*
- *Increase number of residences within 2 miles of schools and jobs.*
- *Increase carpool and transit mode share for commuting trips.*
- *Increase biking and walking mode share for short trips (i.e., less than 2 miles).*

Achieving Results

Policies

- **4-1** Increase funding and resources for transportation projects to allow more proactive investments in improved mobility:

  o Consider adopting a new CPST or another revenue source to provide dedicated, sustainable funding source for infrastructure projects, including transportation.

  o As additional funding is secured, hire additional staff to plan, design, administer, and maintain new roadway and trail projects.

  o Explore opportunities to increase financial contributions to Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority to expand transit service and increase frequency, such as by dedicating a portion of CPST revenue to transit. A comparable tax in Richland County has committed 29 percent of its revenue to fund transit.

  o Regularly pursue opportunities for Federal, State, and regional transportation infrastructure funding opportunities, including setting aside matching funds to leverage local investments. These may include Transportation Alternative Set-Aside funds through SCDOT and the Federal Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants.

  o Reevaluate the General Fund distribution to determine if additional existing funding can be reallocated to a dedicated capital fund for transportation projects beyond the State "C" Fund distribution.

- **4-2** Adopt a Complete Streets approach to street design to provide safe, multimodal transportation options for people of all ages and abilities walking, biking, driving, or riding transit in Lexington County:

  o Adopt an official Complete Streets policy and supporting design standards.

  o Work with SCDOT to implement their recently adopted Complete Streets policy for projects involving State roads.

o Support street designs that self-enforce slow speeds and reduced speed limits (25 miles per hour or less) for residential streets and streets with high levels of pedestrian activity to improve safety by minimizing the severity of crashes.

o Construct continuous pedestrian and bicycle facilities between major destinations like job centers, schools, shopping centers, parks, and neighborhoods.

o For pedestrian and bicycle facilities, construct "all ages and abilities facilities" that are designed to maximize user comfort and encourage separation from vehicles where possible.

o Work with municipalities to connect to their existing and planned pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

o Require pedestrian paths in large parking lots and campus settings.

o Develop trail systems that will connect to existing greenways and rivers, as well as nearby community destinations, to expand both active transportation and recreation opportunities that support a high quality of life for Lexington County residents.

o Encourage smaller block sizes and more frequent crossings in areas with high levels of pedestrian activities.

o Incorporate opportunities for aesthetic enhancements—like landscaping, street furnishing, and lighting—in street designs to create an inviting environment.

o Partner with Central Midlands Transit Authority to enhance popular bus stops with seating, shelter, lighting, and other amenities.

- **4-3** Manage traffic congestion by optimizing existing infrastructure, requiring street connectivity in new developments, providing multimodal transportation choices, and discouraging sprawling development patterns:

o Follow the Future Land Use and Character Map to encourage new development around municipalities and existing activity centers to keep trip lengths short where possible and reduce the need for new roads or additional road paving in rural parts of the County.

o Optimize traffic signal timing to improve traffic flow while minimizing road widenings.

o Require new neighborhoods and developments to have connected
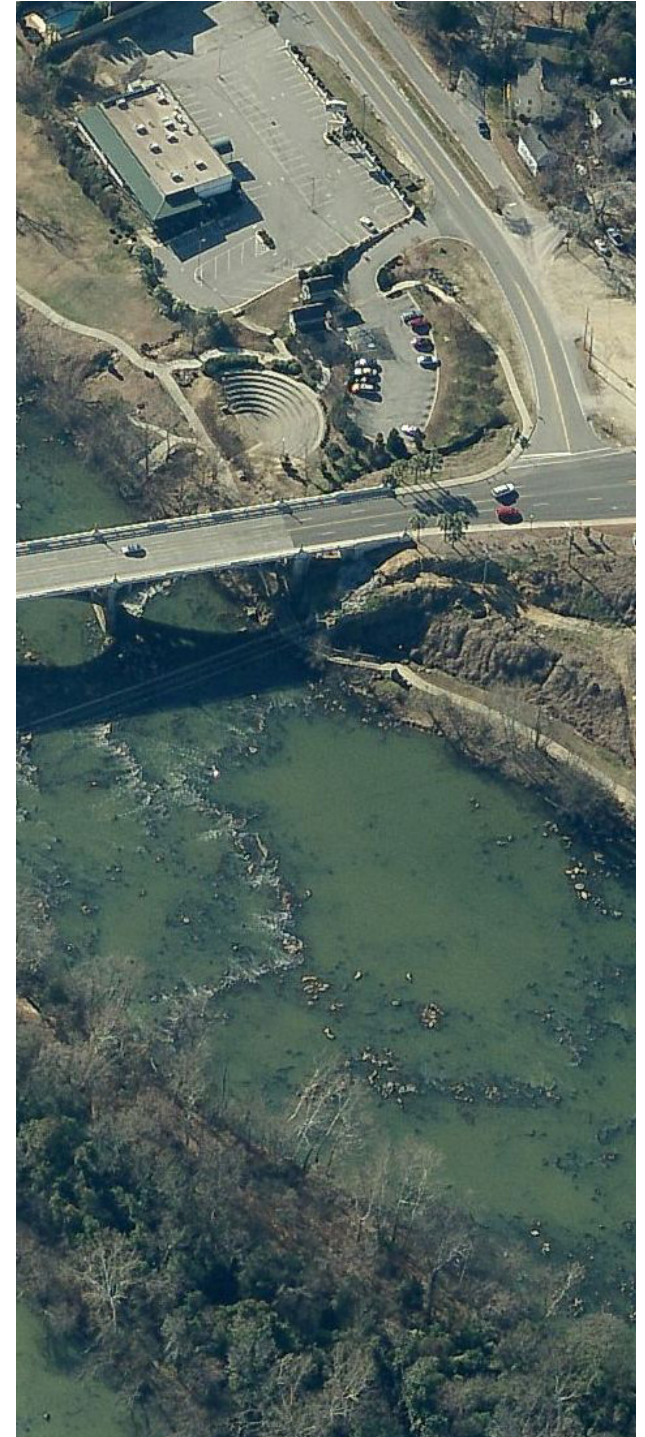
streets and prohibit dead end streets. Where there are no adjacent existing streets, require new developments to include unobstructed stub roads to facilitate future connectivity.

o Require new neighborhoods and developments to provide multiple access points (to at least two roads where possible) to improve network connectivity and relieve pressure on roads that serve as primary access points for multiple neighborhoods.

o Require new developments and substantial redevelopment projects to provide sidewalks, traffic calming, and appropriate bicycle facilities and transit access.

o Encourage access management strategies to limit frequent driveways, improve traffic flow, and minimize conflict points.

o Require inter-parcel connectivity on major roads to allow short trips between adjacent destinations to occur off major roads.

o Consider potential road widening projects judiciously and include appropriate sidewalks, traffic calming, pedestrian refuges, and bicycle facilities as part of their construction when they occur.

o Coordinate with SCDOT on traffic management plans for proposed developments and expectations for mitigation.

- **4-4** Make context-sensitive transportation investments:

o Focus investments in walking and biking infrastructure in more developed areas in the eastern part of the County and around village or town centers, job centers, parks, and schools/campuses, where trips of reasonable walking and biking distance can be made by the greatest number of people. Include but do not limit consideration of greenway or bike paths, and trails that are not always directly adjacent or along parallel routes to roads. These could be located along stream corridors, connecting schools, parks, and neighborhoods, or along natural preserves.

o Working with Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority, expand transit service and increase frequency in areas with sufficient intensity of activity to support ridership, and in areas where people have limited access to personal vehicles.

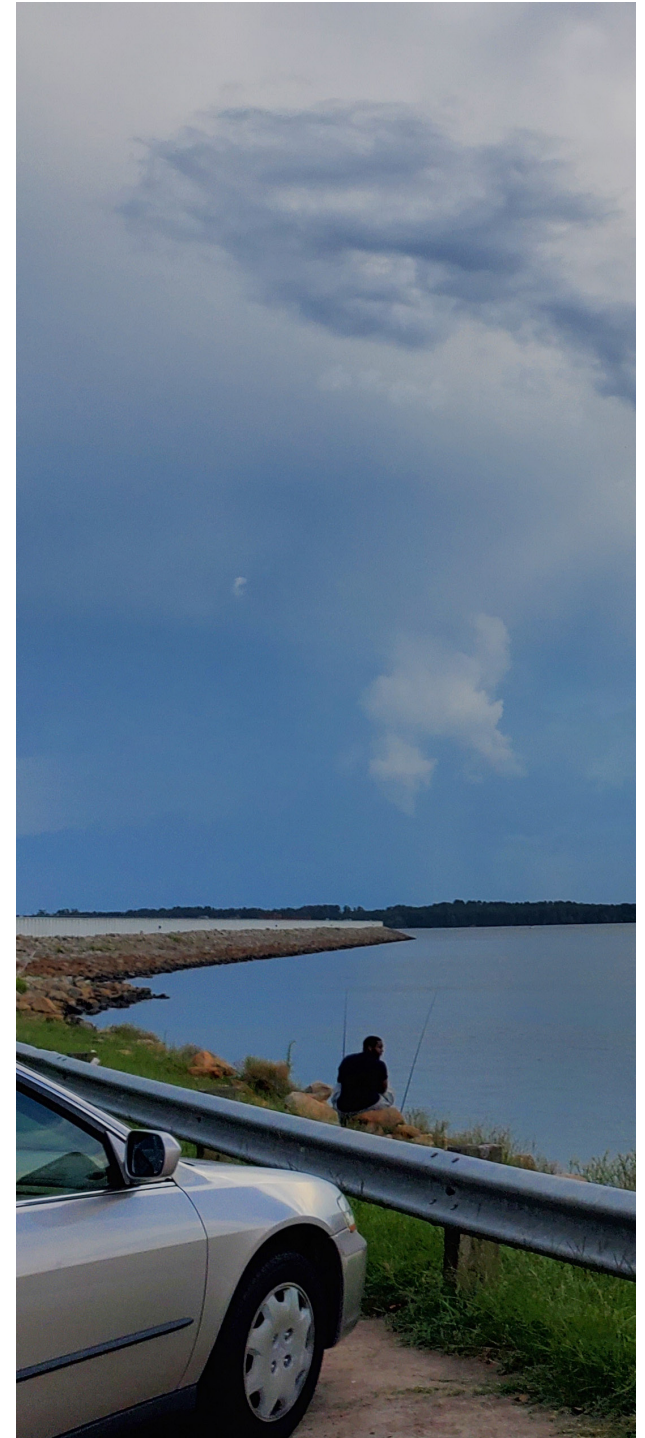o In rural areas, focus investments on paving requested, high-demand

unpaved streets and limiting growth to minimize additional pressure on roadways.

Actions

- Adopt a Capital Project Sales Tax (CPST) or another **sustainable revenue source to fund transportation investments**. A portion of the revenue from the CPST should be allocated to support walking and biking infrastructure, as well as COMET transit service, including capital investments and operations. Investment should consider both current deficiencies and getting ahead of future growth.

- **Coordinate with CMCOG** as they develop their ongoing **update to the region's Long Term Transportation Plan and Travel Demand Model**, using it as a tool to identify locations where transportation improvements will be necessary.

- **Update the Lexington County Transportation Plan** as additional transportation funding becomes available, expanding it to include additional capital projects like Complete Streets designs, intersection improvements, signal modifications, and safety projects. The revised plan should include a focus on identifying sidewalk, bicycle facility, and trail projects, or should be complemented by a dedicated Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan for the County.

- **Develop a County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**, similar to the SCDOT TIP, with an approved ranking criteria and prioritized project list for projects from the updated County Transportation Plan funded by the new CPST or similar revenue source.

- **Update street design guidance** as part of the Land Development Manual, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Ordinance to align with this plan, with modifications including:

  o Update street classifications to align with the Future Land Use and Character Map.

  o Consider amending the Subdivision Ordinance to restrict, severely minimize or upgrade the construction standards for, privately maintained dirt roads and/or private road access easements.

  o Require sidewalks for all roadway projects and increase the minimum sidewalk width from 4 feet to 5 feet on residential streets and wider for high-volume pedestrian areas like village and town centers, depending on context.

o Require, rather than encourage, inter-parcel connectivity on major roads to minimize curb cuts.

o Require shorter minimum block lengths in village and town centers.

o Include graphics for typical recommended street sections according to context, using a Complete Streets approach and aligning with the latest American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidance.

o Encourage parking to be located to the rear or side of buildings to create a more welcoming pedestrian environment along street frontages.

• Consider implementing d**evelopment impacts fees** to ensure new development is paying to mitigate the additional demand it places on the transportation system.

• Develop and maintain a **GIS inventory of existing sidewalk and bicycle facilities.**

• **Create a sidewalk request process, prioritization, and database**—similar to the existing road paving request process—and commit additional annual funding to sidewalk construction.

• Work with SCDOT to **conduct corridor studies for key State routes** with growth and congestion, like US 378 and US 1.

• **Develop small area plans for target growth areas** to identify transportation infrastructure projects and desired future street networks with connectivity that can support growing populations.

• **Create an airport area reinvestment plan around CAE** to address both economic development opportunities and infrastructure needed to support additional growth.

5

PUBLIC
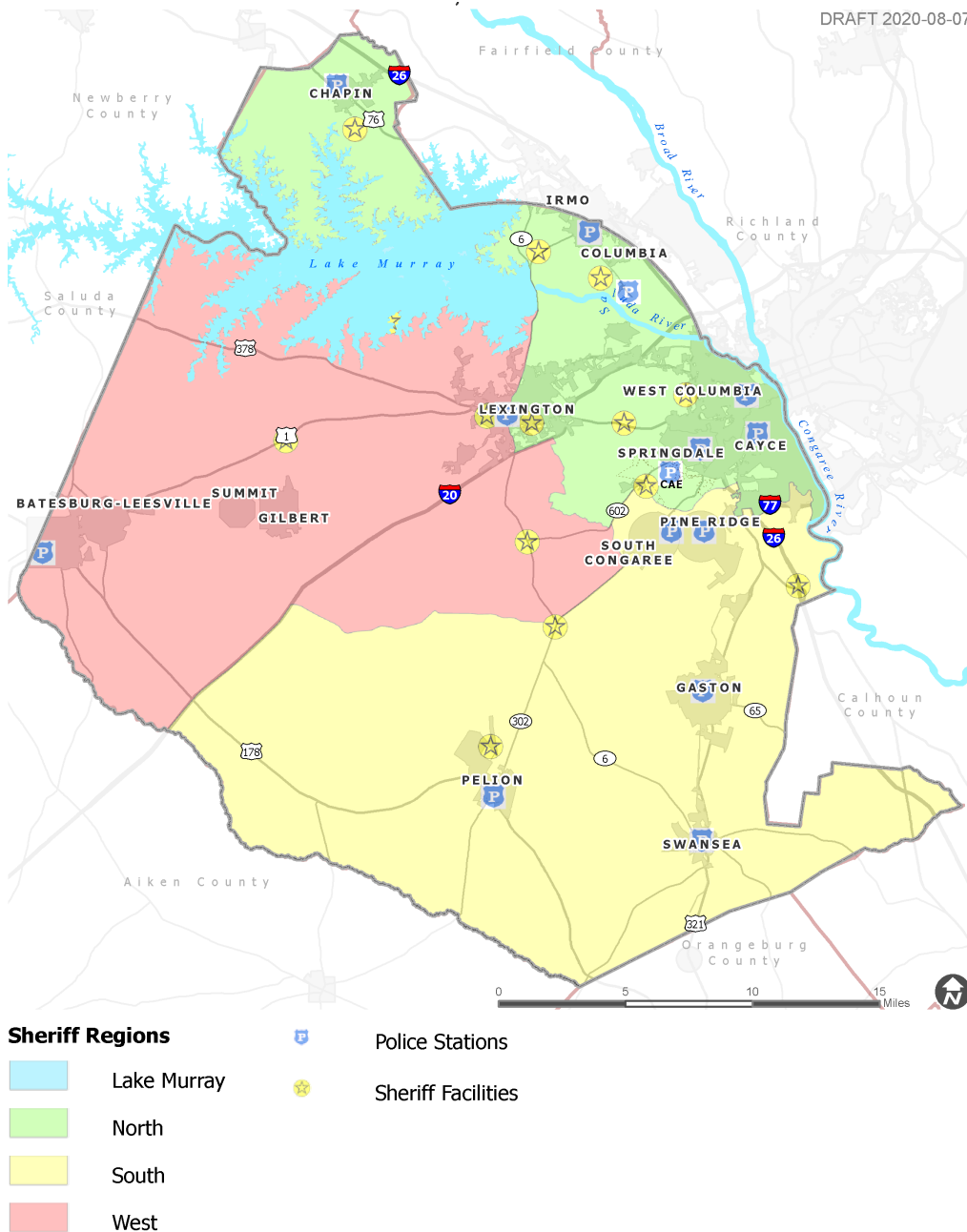## SAFETY

Public Safety

Introduction

Lexington County organizes its principal public safety functions in two departments: The Sheriff's Department and the Public Safety Department, which includes fire service, emergency medical service (EMS), emergency management, and communications (including 9-1-1 coverage). The departments are a point of pride in the County providing effective service efficiently. Each department develops plans for future facility needs. To ensure effective and efficient service over time as growth occurs, it is important to consider the impacts of long-range growth in the County of the provision of public safety services and to plan for these future needs.

The Role of the County and its Partners

The County is responsible for critical public safety services throughout its jurisdiction. Where municipalities have public safety functions, such as their own police or fire department, the municipality takes responsibility for funding and providing the service. The County and its municipalities develop agreements when necessary to respond to emergencies where complex jurisdictional boundaries complicate the provision of public safety services or where a partner service may be better able to respond to a particular community call. The County has these "Mutual Aid Agreements" with its municipalities to provide adequate coverage and effective responses regardless of which jurisdiction the call originates within.

Figure 5-1: Sheriff Regions

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Sheriff Regions

- Lake Murray
- North
- South
- West

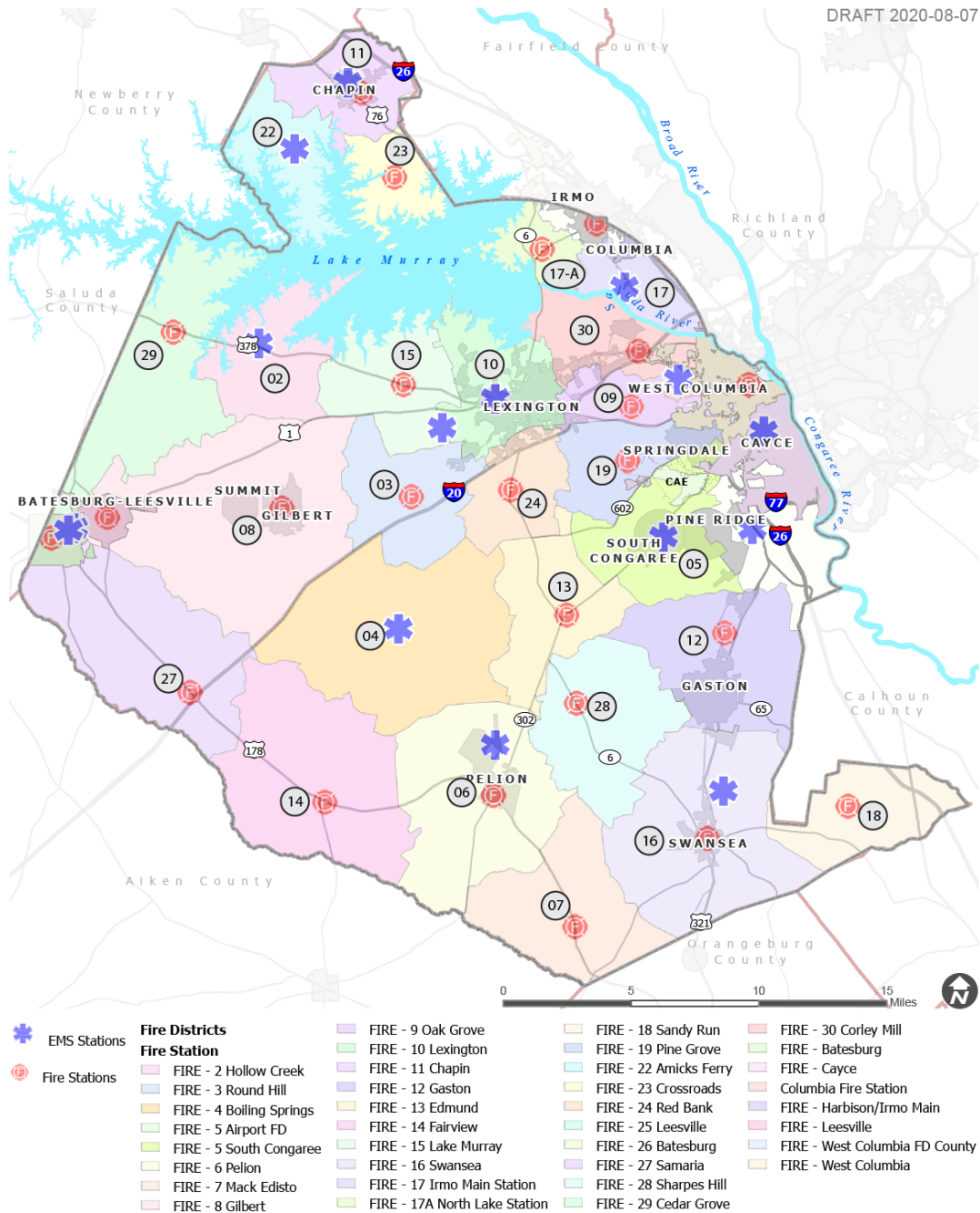Police Stations

Sheriff Facilities

Facts and Trends

Sheriff and Police Departments

The Sheriff's Department operates in three regions (North, South, and West) in addition to any operations on Lake Murray. (See Figure 5-1: Sheriff Regions) The majority of the thirteen Sheriff facilities are in the north region, covering all land north of Lake Murray and east of the lake from Irmo and eastern portions of the Town of Lexington to Cayce. The majority of the 14 municipal police stations in the County also fall within this region. The north region has been the site of much of the past population growth in the County, though as additional growth occurs in the west or south additional facilities may need to be considered. The Sheriff's department also operates the County jail. New satellite or regional command centers in the west and south and a new jail are projected to be needed by 2040 to serve the growing population.

[Hold for description of impact fee studies for public safety facilities completed prior to the plan]

There are some natural challenges to the physical and political geography of the County that public safety services confront

Figure 5-2: EMS and Fire Service Districts and Stations

DRAFT 2020-08-07

Legend:

- ✴ EMS Stations
- Ⓕ Fire Stations

Fire Districts
Fire Station

- FIRE - 2 Hollow Creek
- FIRE - 3 Round Hill
- FIRE - 4 Boiling Springs
- FIRE - 5 Airport FD
- FIRE - 5 South Congaree
- FIRE - 6 Pelion
- FIRE - 7 Mack Edisto
- FIRE - 8 Gilbert
- FIRE - 9 Oak Grove
- FIRE - 10 Lexington
- FIRE - 11 Chapin
- FIRE - 12 Gaston
- FIRE - 13 Edmund
- FIRE - 14 Fairview
- FIRE - 15 Lake Murray
- FIRE - 16 Swansea
- FIRE - 17 Irmo Main Station
- FIRE - 17A North Lake Station
- FIRE - 18 Sandy Run
- FIRE - 19 Pine Grove
- FIRE - 22 Amicks Ferry
- FIRE - 23 Crossroads
- FIRE - 24 Red Bank
- FIRE - 25 Leesville
- FIRE - 26 Batesburg
- FIRE - 27 Samaria
- FIRE - 28 Sharpes Hill
- FIRE - 29 Cedar Grove
- FIRE - 30 Corley Mill
- FIRE - Batesburg
- FIRE - Cayce
- Columbia Fire Station
- FIRE - Harbison/Irmo Main
- FIRE - Leesville
- FIRE - West Columbia FD County
- FIRE - West Columbia

in carrying out their responsibilities. Physically, the County is noncontiguous. A significant area to the north near Chapin is separated from the rest of the County by Lake Murray and the jurisdiction of other counties. Politically, the municipalities in the County do not always annex full areas, and can leave holes of County jurisdiction within their own service areas. Neither of these issues are insurmountable. Public safety is still pursued through effective deployment of resources and joint service or response arrangements. These are still issues that impact planning for public safety in the County.

EMS and Fire Services

The County's 15 EMS and 25 Fire Stations provide coverage across the County. (See Figure 5-2: EMS and Fire Service Districts and Stations.) Vehicles are also strategically positioned away from the stations throughout the day to be able to swiftly respond to emergencies. As the County population grows, additional stations and major equipment will be needed to cover emergency calls generated by new residents and businesses.

Emergency Management and Communications Coverage

Emergency management prepares the County for disasters including natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes as well as other emergencies such as release of hazardous materials transported by rail or pipeline, or a critical failure at the VC Summer Nuclear Power Station Facility in Jenkinsville, SC. The department coordinates with designated emergency officers in municipalities and regularly conducts simulation and training exercises maintaining a state of readiness in the event of natural or man-made disasters. The County staff utilize a new and state of the art Emergency Operations Center (EOC), completed in 2013, to conduct and coordinate these events for the area. It is a relatively small office that plays a key role in preparing and coordinating other County functions when a large scale emergency occurs. Operation of a citizen shelter is a potential need to provide more comprehensive protection.

Maintaining 9-1-1 service is a countywide system employing more than 60 full time 9-1-1 dispatch and support members as a part of the communications team. As demand for 9-1-1 service increases, additional needs for the department are more likely to be technological than new facilities. Lexington County is actively working on moving from an E-911 system to a Next Generation 911 system (NG911). This process will help provide higher accuracy location information for 911 calls, and help improve services to Lexington County citizens and visitors.

[Hold for additional information on the Hazard Mitigation Plan, if available]
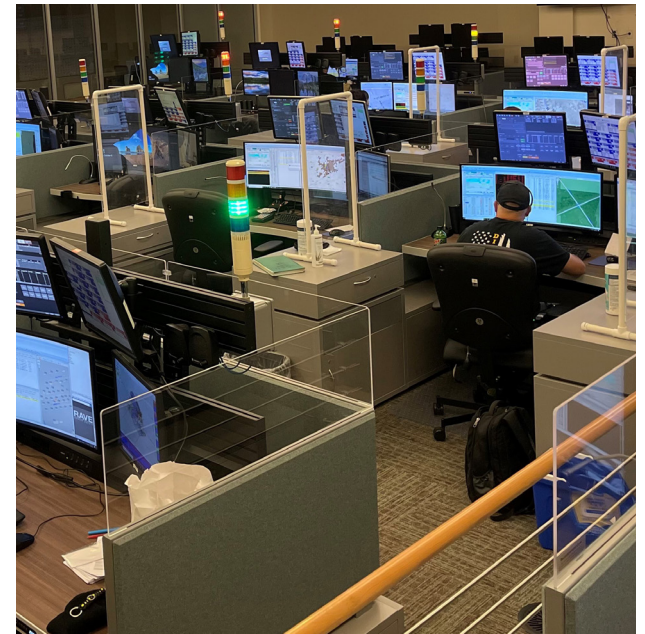
GUIDING & MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

Maintain a high level of service for emergency and public safety services that is provided in a fiscally efficient manner and coordinated with new and existing development in neighboring jurisdictions.

PERFORMANCE

Reduce public safety (Fire, EMS, Police) service average response times within growth areas identified on the Future Land Use and Character Map.

Achieving Results

Policies

- **5-1** Continue to maintain quality public safety services with coverage throughout the County.

- **5-2** Explore land use policies that would limit "holes" of County-served areas surrounded by municipally annexed land.

- **5-3** Consider establishing service areas where residents may wish to pay more for a higher level of service (LOS), particularly in growth areas identified on the Future Land Use and Character Map.

- **5-4** Locate public safety facilities efficiently, which may include co-locating new stations for different public services.

- **5-5** Ensure public safety departments and services have access to data on new growth and development so they may plan future service needs effectively.

Actions

- **Establish formal Levels of Service (LOS) for Sheriff, Fire, EMS, and 9-1-1 dispatch.**

- **Develop process to monitor level of service (LOS)** and develop plans to meet deficits.

- **Develop capital improvement plan (6-year or longer)** to plan for public safety capital investment improvements needed (facilities, apparatus, and equipment needs) to serve expected growth.

- Develop new **Sheriff's Department regional centers** in the west and south service regions as these areas develop.

- Build **additional public safety stations,** as needed to maintain efficient service.

- **Implement the Hazard Mitigation Plan.**
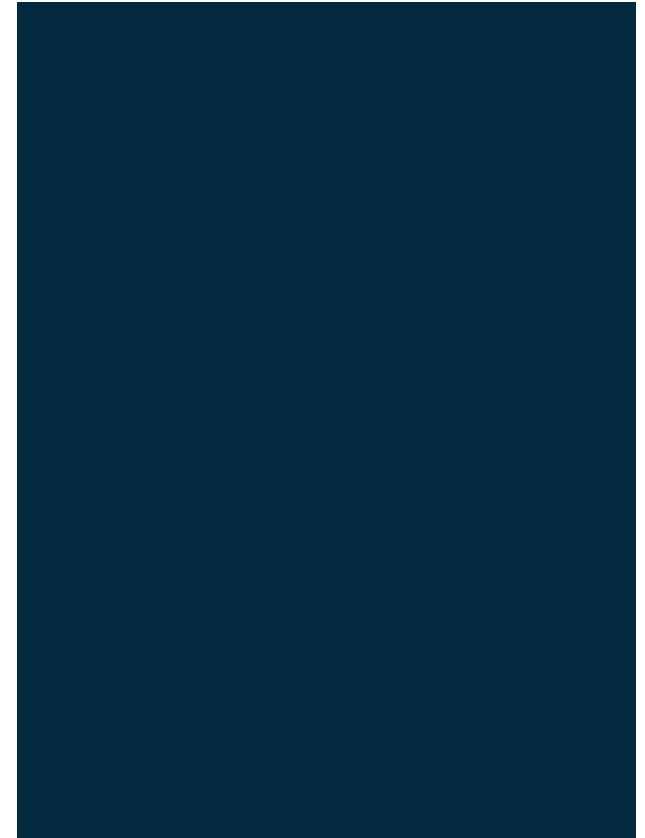
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6

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Community Facilities and Services

Introduction

Providing modern services and facilities to the residents and businesses of Lexington County is an imperative task that is largely coordinated by the County government. Most of these services are so ubiquitous that residents come to expect them, and often do not see the effort, expense, and long-term planning that goes into providing these services. As the population of the County continues to grow and change, so does the challenge of providing facilities and services to more people expecting better services. Services equivalent to the places they originate from, as opposed to services necessary of a rural growing County. Levels of service and expectations are oftentimes different for those moving in from other places, more urbanized areas, with more resources and less undeveloped areas. The differences can be significant and as such, the County remains focused on balancing the bottom line while offering adequate services in an efficient manner. In order to ascertain the needs, desires and priorities of the citizens of Lexington County, the Administration regularly conducts a "Community Engagement Study" as a means of acquiring this feedback.

Each of the following Community Facilities and Services are either provided directly by the Lexington County government or are supported through County property taxes. Each is also generally subject to both County and state regulations.

Public Works

This department of the Lexington County government is directly responsible for a variety of critical functions and is comprised of four divisions. The Engineering and Transportation divisions tend to the design, management, inspection, and maintenance of County roads. The Engineers division also performs the inspection of residential and commercial construction. The stormwater division ensures permit compliance with the NPDES and manages the County stormwater facility infrastructure. The Vector Control division works to limit insects that may serve as vectors for various pathogens.

General Government Services:

- Human Resources
- Planning and GIS
- Library
- Magistrate, Clerk of Court, and other Court services
- Community Development
- Register of Deeds
- Solid Waste
- Auditor, Coroner, Solicitor, Treasurer
- Other various government services.

General government services act as the managerial arm of an efficient local government, and in Lexington County, these departments each perform various tasks. The Human Resources department works to ensure that Lexington County remains an equal opportunity employer and to support the employees of the County. The Planning and GIS department works to coordinate countywide growth management through support to the land use ordinances, and to implement the County's strategic and comprehensive plans, while maintaining the geographic database. The Community Development group has a broad mandate and reviews the permit applications for all development, considers zoning permits and appeals,

interprets the subdivision standards, manages the Title VI program, administers floodplain management and stormwater ordinances and coordinates with housing grant programs (HOME and CDBG). The Register of Deeds serves as the County repository for all official documentation of real estate transactions, marriages, etc.

As a group, these departments and others are often largely unseen by the public, and not all residents have cause to directly interact with them. However, these services are the critical backbone of the local government – in essence "keeping the lights on" in the County. For a complete list of County divisions, and more information about each, please visit http://lex-co.sc.gov/departments.

Transportation: Roads, Transit, Sidewalks, Greenways, Railroads (Chapter 4)

The Lexington County government is only partially responsible for the roadway infrastructure in the County. Design, management, inspection, and maintenance of the roads in Lexington County is in fact shared between the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), and County and municipal governments. Currently the Transportation division of the Lexington County Public Works

department maintains over 1,200 miles of dirt and paved roads – all of which are in the County jurisdiction. The SCDOT serves this role for state and federal roadways throughout the County and across the state.

Public Safety: Sheriff, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services (Chapter 5)

Covered more closely in Chapter 5, Public Safety, this collection of services includes EMS, FIRE, Emergency Management and Communications Center, all of which function to keep residents and businesses safe. As an elected position, the Sheriff's office has operational autonomy, but is closely coordinated with these other divisions, as well as the Magistrate's office and general court functions.

The Role of the County and its Partners

The community facilities and services that residents of Lexington have come to expect, and desire, are not all provided directly by the County government. Ensuring this range of facilities and services requires deliberate cooperation between the County and the various other entities that provide them. Some services, like public safety are provided directly by the County, while others, like public water and sanitary sewer and parks and recreation are provided by independent commissions, boards, and other legal entities, public and private. Ultimately, the County government bears responsibility for coordinating these different stakeholders to ensure that these facilities and services are maintained to sufficiently meet the needs of all residents. The County can establish goals and policies that work towards this end.
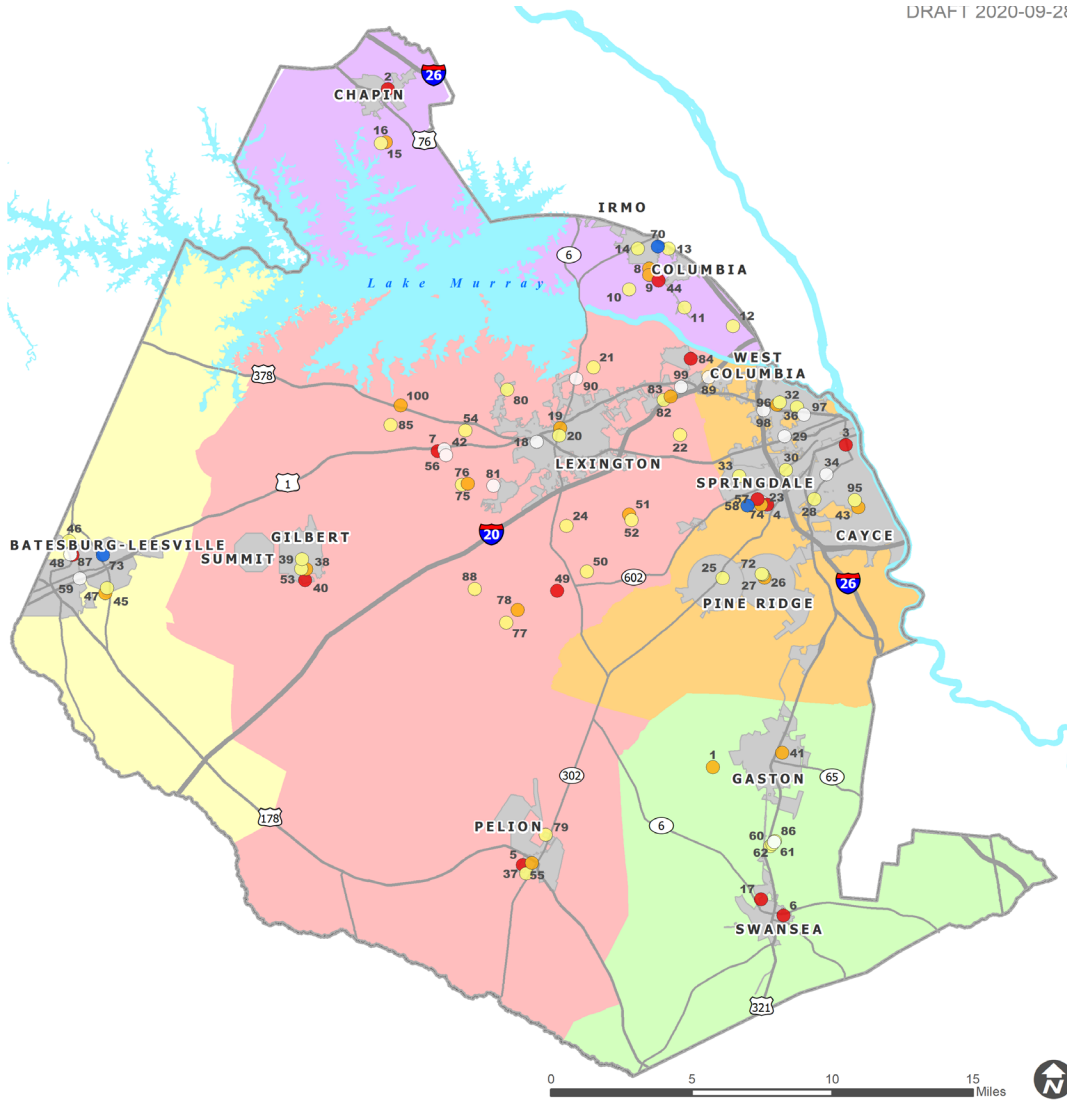
The residents and community stakeholders in Lexington County identified several key community services and facilities that bear discussion in this plan.

The following services are not provided directly by the Lexington County government, except for solid waste for which the County runs some services and is considering collection. More information about each can be found in the Lexington County Fact Book in the appendix.

- Lexington County School System (Districts 1-5)
- Parks and Recreation (Irmo-Chapin Recreation Commission & Lexington

Figure 6-1: School Districts

DRAFT 2020-09-28

School District

Color	District
(pink)	1
(orange)	2
(yellow)	3
(green)	4
(purple)	5

Lexington County Schools

Symbol	Type
(yellow)	Elementary School
(orange)	Middle School
(red)	High School
(white)	Other
(blue)	Midlands Technical College

County Recreation and Aging Commission)

- Water and Sewer Utilities
- Solid Waste
- Energy
- Telecommunication
- State and Regionally Maintained Transportation

Facts and Trends

School System

Public schools are the preeminent example of a community service, requiring significant planning and coordination with the County to ensure that they continue to improve and excel.

Lexington County is divided into 5 independent public-school districts, including one, LexRich 5, that also serves a portion of Richland County.

Each school district manages an independent budget, but all receive a significant portion of funding from taxes levied by their own authority against district residents, in addition to state and federal money.

As the population in the County continues to grow, an opportunity exists to coordinate

new housing developments with individual and district-wide school capacity to ensure that certain schools and districts are not overwhelmed by new students. Likewise, these increases in student enrollment add demand to the local road network, and growth that occurs near existing schools and municipalities will lessen this demand by shortening the average daily miles that residents drive.

Across the five school districts, the County has a total of 37 elementary schools, 17 middle schools, and 13 high schools. In addition to these grade-schools, the County is home to Midlands Technical College, as well as a handful of other private and vocational schools and learning centers.

(See Fact Book in appendix for a complete list of schools)

Parks and Recreation

A wide range of parks and recreational facilities are provided in Lexington County to meet the needs of a diverse population, including everything from water access afforded by Lake Murray, playgrounds, ball fields and recreation complexes, senior centers, and equestrian centers.

These facilities are managed and operated by two separate and independent Parks Commissions: The Lexington County Recreation and Aging Commission (LCRAC), which serves areas south of Lake Murray and the Saluda River, and The Irmo Chapin Recreational Commission (ICRC) which serves areas north of Lake Murray and the Saluda River. (See Figure 6- 2: Parks and Recreation Districts and Facilities)

County property taxes make up a portion of the revenue stream for both commissions, which also rely on cost-recovery funding from user fees and facility rentals. The commissions may seek additional funding through public bonds, which requires a Council-set limit, and mutual approval by the commission and County Council.

In addition to the parks offered by the ICRC and LCRAC, the residents of Lexington have other excellent opportunities locally, for example, Dreher Island State Park, Peachtree Rock Heritage Preserve, 12,000 Year History Park and even Harbison State Park and Congaree National Park, which are just outside the County limits.

Future opportunities are already in the planning process: the ICRC recently adopted a 10-year plan that includes more parks and park improvements, and Dominion Energy owns a large amount of land below and around the Lake Murray/Saluda River Dam and their plans include offering areas of public access and

Figure 6-2: Parks and Recreation Districts and Facilities

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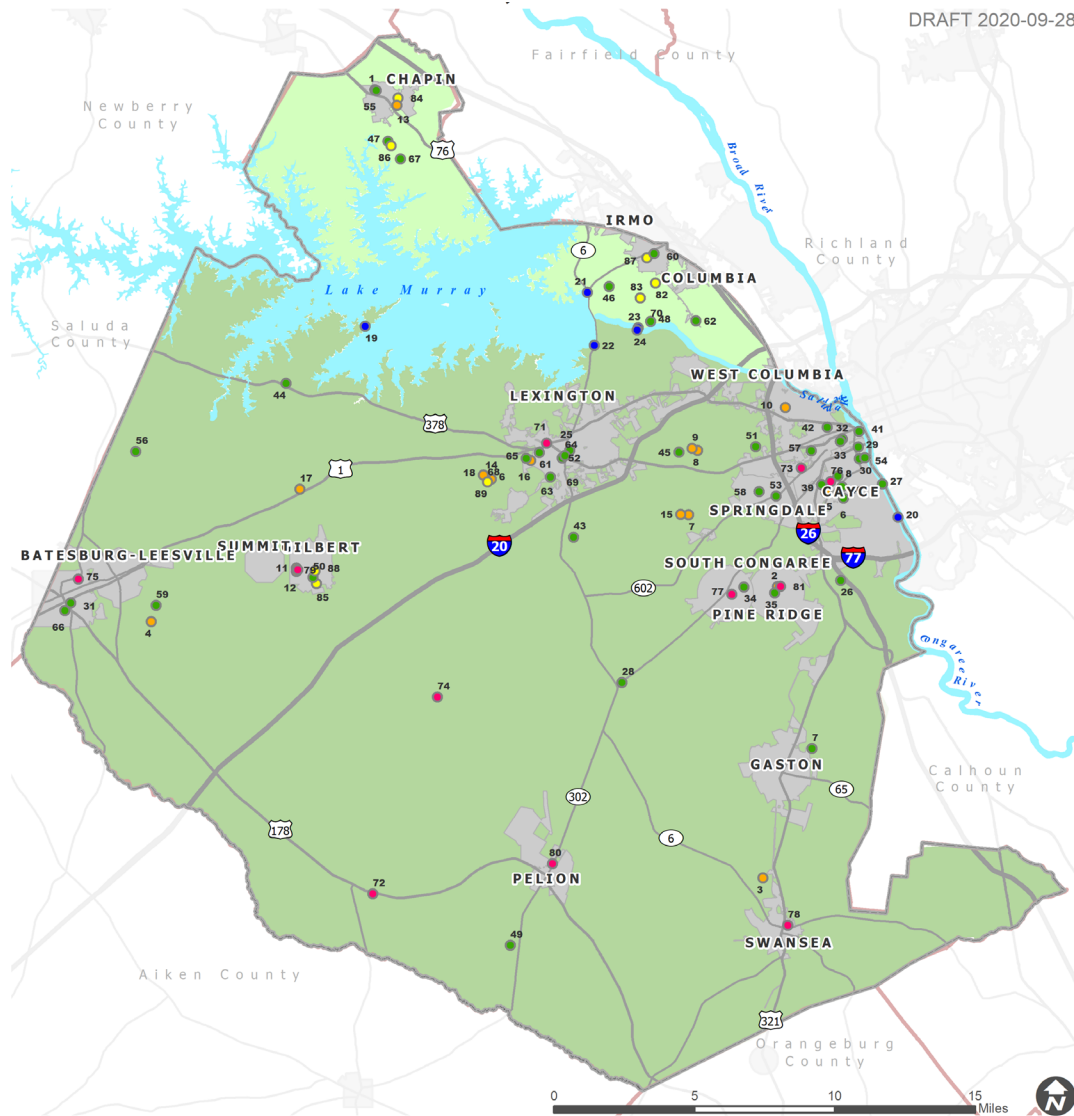
Parks and Recreation Facilities

- 🟠 Athletic Complex Public/Private
- 🔵 Boat Landing
- 🟢 Park
- 🔴 Recreation Center
- 🟡 School Athletic Complex

Recreation District

- 🟩 Irmo-Chapin Recreation Commission
- 🟩 Lexington County Recreation and Aging Commission

recreational use.

As the County continues to develop, so will demands on the County's parks facilities. As such increasingly fewer opportunities will exist for either commission to create new parks, in particular to provide residents with access to Lake Murray or the Saluda River. Beyond these key natural destinations, public comment as a part of this Plan has reinforced support for new varied recreation options including greenway trails some of which are independent of roadways, passive recreation parks, community gardens, community pools, basketball courts, and skateparks or other wheeled sport facilities.
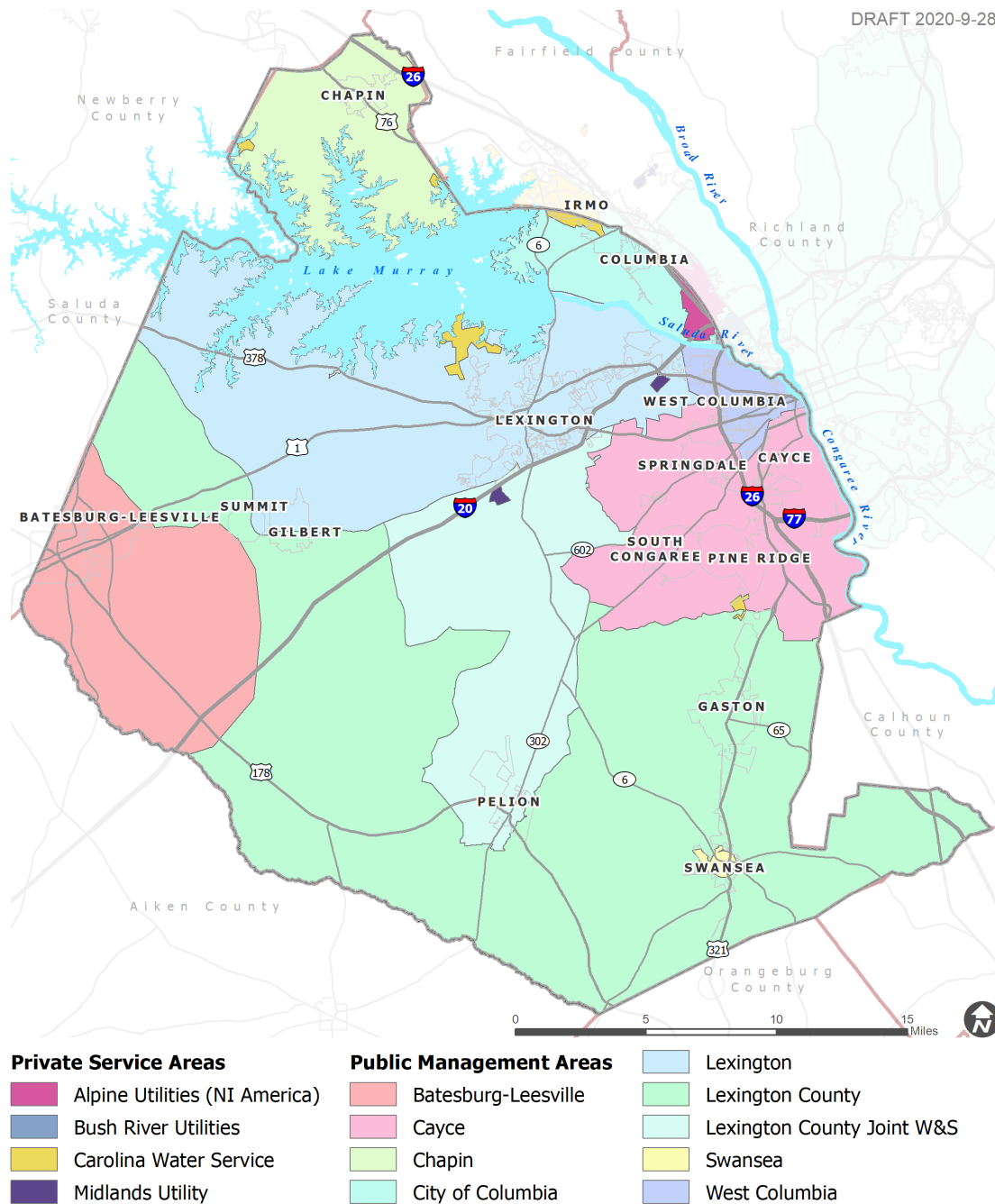
(See Fact Book for complete list of parks)

Water and Sewer Utilities

Many residents and businesses of Lexington County receive water and sanitary sewer (wastewater) services through a combination of publicly and privately owned utility companies. (See Figure 6-3: Sewer Management and Service Areas) The County does not directly provide or control ether.

In addition to the 9 public utility agencies, there are 4 private companies operating in the County, and the Council of Governments (COG) coordinates and defines the

Figure 6-3: Sewer Management and Service Areas

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Private Service Areas

- Alpine Utilities (NI America)
- Bush River Utilities
- Carolina Water Service
- Midlands Utility

Public Management Areas

- Batesburg-Leesville
- Cayce
- Chapin
- City of Columbia
- Lexington
- Lexington County
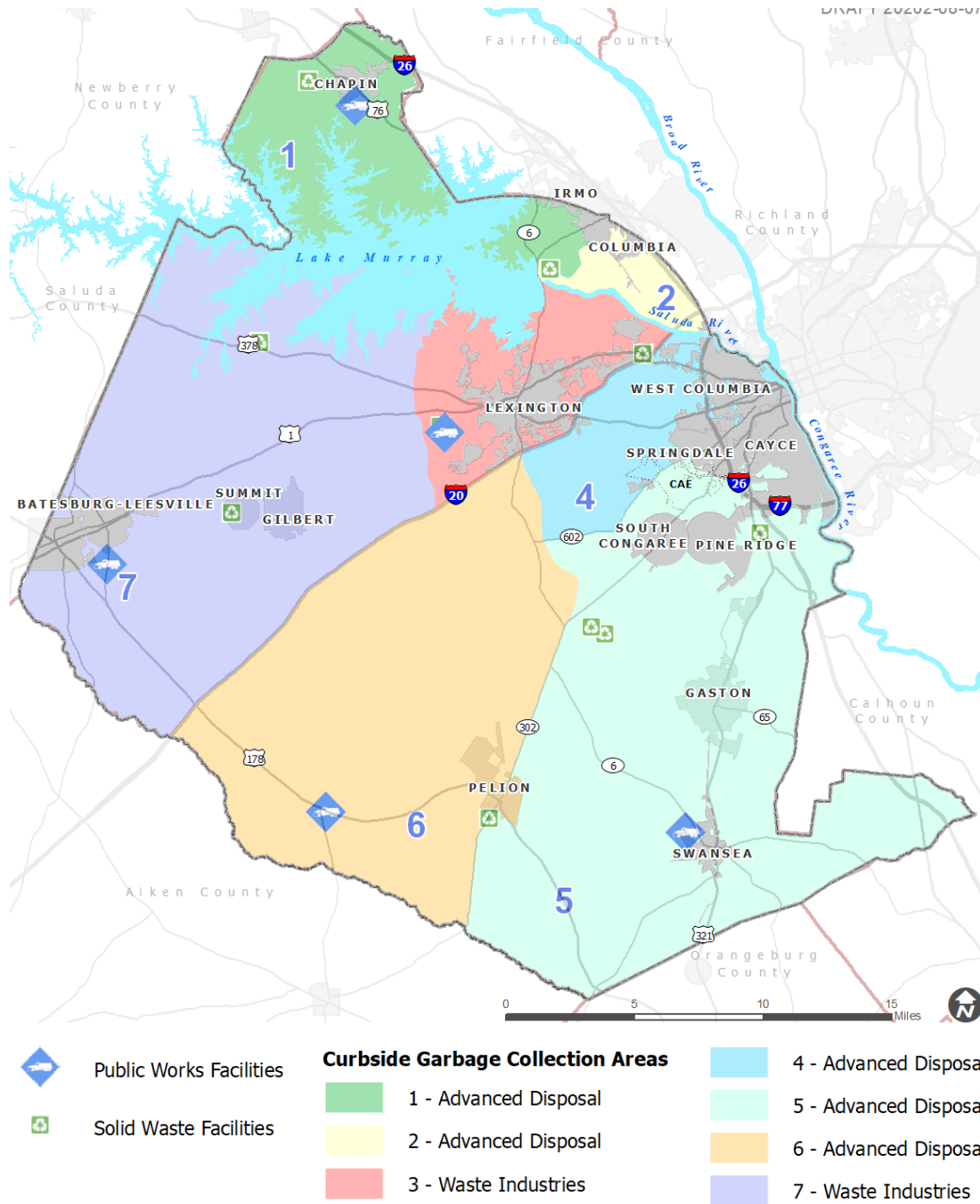- Lexington County Joint W&S
- Swansea
- West Columbia

jurisdictions in which each utility operates. These service territories do not align with the municipal jurisdictions of the County. The state-mandated Utilities Commission sets and regulates service rates. Each agency operates largely independently, yet they do share infrastructure in some instances (for example, the West Columbia sewer system ties into the Columbia sewer mains, and in the County Clean Water Act Section 208 Plan a treatment plant in Cayce serves multiple jurisdictions).

In general, residents of the municipalities or in the Lexington County Joint Water and Sewer area have access to public sewer connections, while residents and businesses located in the County jurisdiction may or may not have access to public or private utility connections. Where connections do not exist yet, individual residences and business will rely on in-ground septic systems and wells, both of which are permitted and regulated through County ordinances. Several "community" septic systems also exist within the County, effectively each a consolidated septic system that serves up to dozens of homes.

Newly planned sewer extensions will be most efficient when they are adjacent and contiguous to areas that are already connected to these utilities and served by them. The creation of so-called "doughnut

Figure 6-4: Solid Waste Collection Areas and Facilities

Public Works Facilities

Solid Waste Facilities

Curbside Garbage Collection Areas
- 1 - Advanced Disposal
- 2 - Advanced Disposal
- 3 - Waste Industries
- 4 - Advanced Disposal
- 5 - Advanced Disposal
- 6 - Advanced Disposal
- 7 - Waste Industries

holes" in service occurs when non-adjacent land is developed and connected, leaving a pocket of unconnected land between. This dynamic results in longer and more costly lines that ultimately serve fewer people, increasing the cost of service for all. Other public interests sometimes demand the extension of a line, with the most recent example the new line to Pelion to serve a school complex with a failing non-sewer system. Coordination of land uses along the extended line can help raise efficiency of the new infrastructure.

Solid Waste

Solid Waste in Lexington County is divided into seven collection areas. (See Figure 6-4: Solid Waste Collection Areas and Facilities) In practice two companies (Advanced Disposal and Waste Industries) are contracted to service all seven areas. Ultimately, all the household trash and municipal solid waste generated by residents and businesses is landfilled in adjoining Richland County for a pre-determined fee.

In addition, the Lexington County Department of Solid Waste Management has oversight of this waste disposal process utilizing a transfer station, through the operation of the Edmund Landfill. Only construction materials and other inert fill

Figure 6-5: Electric Cooperative Service Areas

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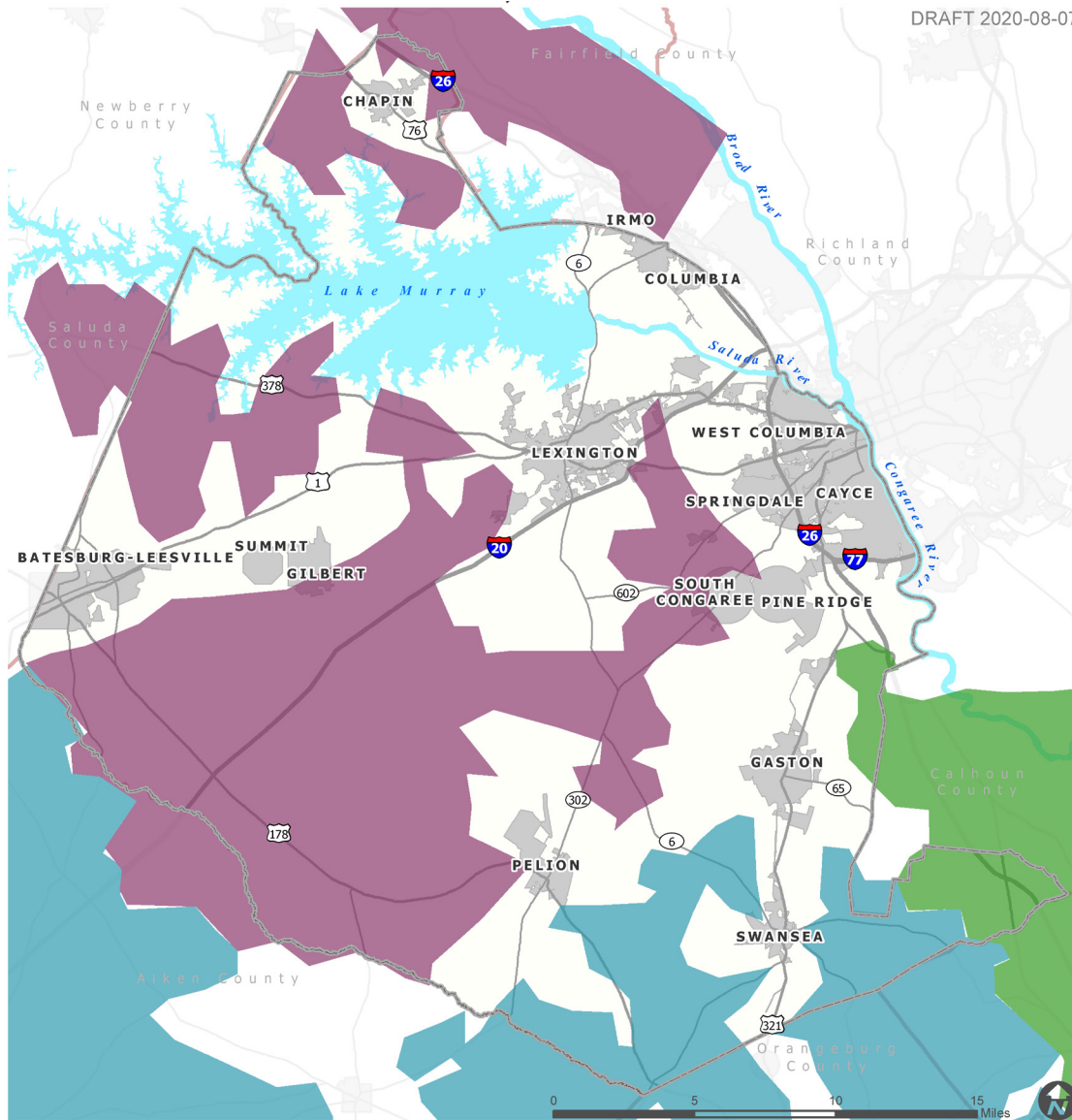
Electric Cooperative Service Areas
Provider
- Aiken
- Mid Carolina
- Tri-County

materials are disposed of in this facility. The facility also serves as a transfer station for HAZMAT waste, electronics, and other recycling streams.

Several public works and solid waste facilities are spread around the County to serve as convenient collection points. Items that should not be landfilled can be dropped off by residents at these locations.

The expected increases in County population will likely add more demand to the existing systems, requiring more trucks, more trips, and possibly more convenience centers spread around the County – a cost borne by the providers and passed on to residents. The County is in the process of planning for- and considering a countywide collection service funded through collection fees and operated by the Solid Waste Department.

If the County decided to pursue large scale waste management facilities or additional landfill within the County borders, it could be assisted in planning for the new development and growth through a capital improvement plan or a defined target level of service.

Energy

Electricity in Lexington County is provided through a combination of sources. Dominion Energy South Carolina serves a

large portion of the County with electricity, some of which is produced by the Saluda Hydroelectric Dam on Lake Murray. Most of the energy consumed in the County is produced by nuclear power plants (VC Summer Nuclear Power Generation Facility in Jenkinsville, SC) or fossil fuels.

Three electric cooperatives also operate in the County (Aiken Electric Cooperative, Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative, and Tri-County Electric Cooperative). (See Figure 6-5: Electric Cooperative Service Areas). Rates for the utilities are set by the South Carolina Utilities Commission, an independent regulatory body tasked with oversight.

In general, cooperatives serve customers outside of the municipalities and Dominion Energy serves those within them. Likewise, Dominion Energy serves many of the commercial-heavy portions of the County. In some instances, residents may have the option of which service to use. Dominion Energy also provides natural gas connections to most of the County.

Extending power connections is expensive, logistically complicated, and ever more so the fewer people are served with new extensions or connections to developing properties. Clustering infrastructure and avoiding "doughnut-holes" in service availability by only connecting to contiguous areas will result in service that is cheaper to provide and easier to maintain.

Dominion Energy is also a relatively new operator of these electric infrastructure facilities, and it is worth monitoring their corporate policies and practices to see if they have the same interest in holding property as the last operator. If not, the County or municipal or recreation authority partners might want to pursue securing land that has been or could be recreation areas, especially along the lakes and rivers.

Recently, spurred by federal program subsidies and fee-in-lieu incentives offered by the County, there has been a tremendous increase in interest for developing large-scale, solar power or solar panel power generation farms. Although minimal from the perspective of power generation share and somewhat in its infancy within this County, these solar power generation farms can use considerable amounts of vacant land, otherwise used for agriculture. Recent action by the Council has strengthened land use compatibility regulations, increasing buffers and landscaping requirements for solar generation to separate agricultural

farms and residential uses from encroachment. Due to the importance of sustainability issues and the recent trend in federal government support, the County will likely see more solar generation facilities in the future and continue to be proactively regulating their compatibility.
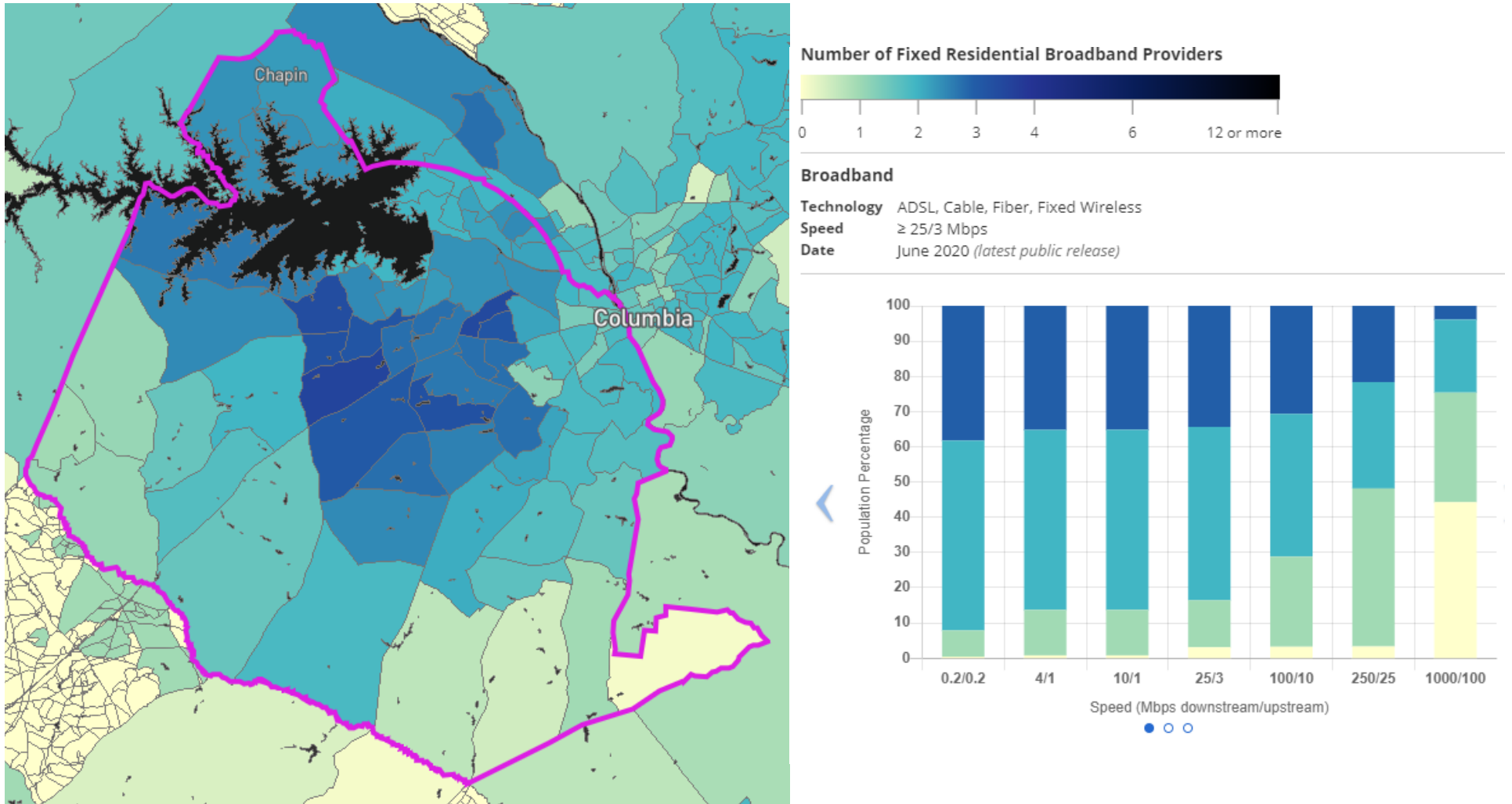
Telecommunication

Access to the internet and broadband technology has become an indispensable necessity for virtually every resident or business in any modern economy. In Lexington County, access to these services is not evenly distributed. Many of the more rural areas of the County have limited access, and connections may only be available at the significant expense of the private landowner, where long lines are required to reach properties and homes.

As the residents and businesses of Lexington County become ever more reliant on being connected to high-speed internet and modern telecommunications, the County can expect to see continued desire from private companies to expand and develop the infrastructure that makes this possible. None of the existing or potential future infrastructure is directly constructed by the County, however the County holds some regulatory authority over the installation specifications and locations in public rights of way. The County can, to a degree, guide the creation of future infrastructure in such a way to maintain safety and aesthetic concerns of the public while still meeting the increasing demand for this service.

Areas of the County that have previously not had access to broadband connectivity should be prioritized for new infrastructure, to ensure that all people, and especially students and disenfranchised communities, have access. Telecommunications infrastructure is expensive to install and maintain, and the average cost of providing access to each business or residence is lessened when new development is clustered together and located nearby to existing infrastructure. The County has an opportunity to ensure that developers are inclined to provide this for new construction through denser land-use regulations.

Figure 6-6: Broadband Access

Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers

0 1 2 3 4 6 12 or more

Broadband

Technology	ADSL, Cable, Fiber, Fixed Wireless
Speed	≥ 25/3 Mbps
Date	June 2020 *(latest public release)*

GUIDING &
MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

Provide quality public facilities and services that support a high quality of life for residents and economic growth in targeted new development and redevelopment areas in a manner that balances service demands and fiscal impacts.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- *Maintain resident satisfaction with public facilities and services through an annual survey, such as the Community Engagement Survey*
- *Achieve a balanced ratio of school capacity to student generation by school district enrollment zones*
- *Maintain or increase park space available per capita, while also making an effort to distribute available resources to the entire County*

- *Decrease average distance new utility lines must be extended, per new household*
- *Reduce materials disposed of in landfills (either total reduction, or a per capita reduction in annual average) / corollary increase in recycled materials stream*
- *Increase percentage of renewable energy (solar)*
- *Reduce average annual energy use per resident*
- *Establish Levels of Service for community facilities*

Achieving Results

Policies

- **6-1** Promote sustainable development of utilities to serve more people in a fiscally efficient manner that supports growth areas identified on the Future Land Use and Character Map.

- **6-2** Work with the municipalities to identify annexation approaches that reduce the potential for fragmented public service areas.

- **6-3** Continually evaluate the impacts of growth on County services and plan for future capital investment needs to maintain existing levels of service as growth occurs.

- **6-4** Prioritize the development of new broadband infrastructure in the rural parts of the County which have previously been under-served.

- **6-5** Support extensions of sewer facilities solely within growth areas identified on the Future Land Use and Character Map. Only allow extensions of service into future planning areas identified on the Future Land Use and Character Map and within the County's Sewer Management Area where they are needed to address health and safety issues, such as failing septic systems.

- **6-6** Encourage renewable energy to be an increasingly larger portion of the County's energy service by promoting solar energy collection, both large and small scale.
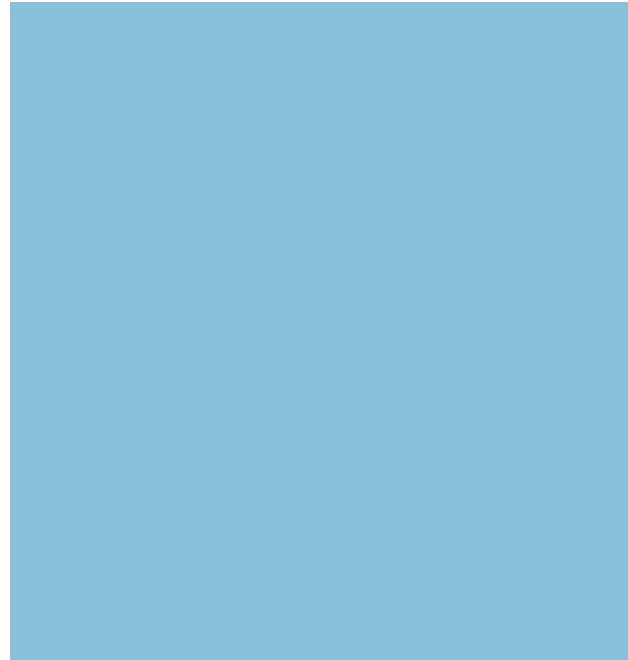
Actions

- Develop an **accounting of total potable water and wastewater capacity** provided by private and public utilities operating within Lexington County. Document and track these capacities and coordinate discussions with jurisdictional partners regarding any needs for future improvements needed to provide adequate capacity to serve projected long-range growth.

- **Establish formal Levels of Service for public facilities and services** to be tracked and monitored over time and to be used for projecting future capital facilities needs.

- Develop a **long-term facility maintenance needs plan** for all County infrastructure.

- Develop a **mitigation strategy for addressing existing stormwater challenges** in the County.

- Develop a **strategy for addressing future solid waste** service needs and secure funding for future landfill disposal services.

- **Develop a capital improvement plan (6-year or longer)** to plan for capital investment improvements needed to serve growth. Examples include expansion of library facilities, expansion of the County Administrative Building, improvements to the Columbia Metropolitan Airport (per the Airport Master Plan), and future solid waste needs. Use future projections to plan for capital investments before they are critically needed.

- Consider preparation of **special service district(s)** to be located in parts of the County that desire higher levels of service for solid waste or stormwater services.

- Support a revision to the State legislation regulating the methodologies that implement local government annexation, to provide **better tools for partnership and to reduce "donut holes" in annexation.**

- **Coordinate with the public school districts** by providing the districts with pertinent information (number of units and type of units) on new residential developments. Request the districts to identify the amount of school capacity available to serve the development. Make this information publicly available as part of the development review process.

- The County should look for opportunities to partner with other localities, recreation commissions, community partners, and developers to identify potential greenways, trails, and bike paths and to **diversify park and recreation offerings** throughout the County such as but not limited to: active and passive recreation space, greenways and trails some of which are independent of roadways, community gardens, community pools, basketball courts, and skateparks or other wheeled sport facilities. Community trends and preferences should be monitored over time to identify new types of desired spaces.

7

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

Housing and Neighborhoods

Introduction

A "home" is more than a house. Homes are places people build their lives around and a full understanding of peoples' homes include the condition and location of the actual housing unit where they live, as well as the neighborhood where that unit resides. Housing and neighborhoods in Lexington County take shape from the collective decisions of the County, municipalities, the real estate and development sector, and non-profit organizations responding to the demand for housing in the community. The overall demand for housing is tied closely to the growth of the region. However, planning for housing and neighborhoods is more than counting numbers. Many recent market trends focus on creating places that accommodate different and changing household needs and preferences. Residents of Lexington County are also interested in improving the quality of new residential neighborhoods and better managing where new neighborhoods are developed. Residents have expressed interest in maintaining the rural character found in the southern and western parts of the County, as well as protecting environmentally sensitive areas. This plan, through the Future Land Use and Character Map, identifies appropriate places for developing future neighborhoods and the recommended character of those neighborhoods. Maintaining a housing stock that is affordable to local workers is also an important factor for spurring economic development in the County.

The Role of the County and its Partners

The County and Municipalities

Housing and neighborhoods are developed in accordance with the rules set in place by Lexington County within its own jurisdiction, and within the municipalities within their jurisdictions. The County and municipalities each control aspects of the actual home site, such as lot size, yard size and, building placement, through zoning and subdivision ordinances, and through enforcement of building code standards adopted as mandated by the State.

Neighborhood character is also formed by standards that affect a larger area, such as minimum block length, sidewalk requirements, and connectivity regulations. The County and municipalities, by setting the rules for development and through their relationship with other partners, determine the patterns for residential development in the County.

School Districts and Parks and Recreation

Part of the quality-of-life experience of a neighborhood is determined by the interconnections with area parks and schools. Their locations and how they are designed determines which students can walk to and from school and after-school activities, where there are trails to walk or run, playgrounds or ball fields to spend time on, or passive places to simply take in nature's beauty beyond one's own yard. While parks may be provided by municipalities within their jurisdictions, and smaller parks and playgrounds may be managed by neighborhood or homeowner associations (HOAs), the school districts and recreation and aging commissions operating in Lexington County could be key partners in the placement of these neighborhood features.

Private Real Estate, Development, and Construction Industry

The private real estate, development, and construction industry are key partners in housing the residents of the County. New home and neighborhood construction that can accommodate expected population growth are predominantly built by the private sector. Private developers are responding to a combination of the demands within the housing market, their own experience producing home "products", applicable development rules and regulations, and maintaining a profitable business.

As a part of a neighborhood development, the private sector may construct amenities, such as parks and trails that will be maintained by a neighborhood association. As a part of creating complete neighborhoods, neighborhoods may be a part of multi-use areas where homes and non-residential areas are a part of a well-connected master site plan. These are more traditional forms of development that were commonplace in the early to mid-1900s. Now called neo-traditional neighborhoods, these neighborhood designs allow residents to take shorter trips to get to destinations from their home, provide recreational

opportunities within neighborhoods, and support the use of different modes of travel, including walking and biking.

Institutions and Nonprofit Organizations

A community as large as Lexington County has some housing needs that cannot be met by market forces alone, including providing emergency or transitional housing, providing specialized care including medical or social services, and developing homes that are affordable to residents of all economic situations. At least some of this need may be met by institutions and nonprofit organizations that use a variety of approaches, including using volunteer construction to reduce housing costs and providing medical care directly to patients in their homes. These institutions and nonprofit organizations may have a single mission of serving this need or may be the charitable arm of a larger group, such as when the housing or housing assistance is provided by the congregants of a place of worship. On the scale of the County, the number of people these organizations are assisting with housing may seem small, but they are vital to those who receive the assistance. Affordable workforce housing is especially important for developing a strong community where public safety

officers and teachers can afford to live in some of the neighborhoods they serve. It is also important to have workforce housing to attract new businesses. Ensuring that new workers have affordable housing is an important factor for businesses selecting a new location.

Facts and Trends

Understanding the current trends of housing and neighborhoods in Lexington County is an important baseline step in creating a plan for future residential areas. This section discusses the types of homes found in Lexington County, affordability of housing, and important housing trends that will influence development of future neighborhoods.

Housing Types

The vast majority of housing units in the County are single-family detached units, comprising 67.5 percent of housing units, with the next most common type, mobile homes, comprising 18.7 percent of the County. Both of these types of housing units are a larger share of the total in Lexington County than they are in South Carolina as a whole. This suggests that the County's housing stock may not be providing enough variety to meet residents'

needs. The other types of units tracked by the U.S. Census includes different scales of attached units comprising 13.8 percent (as well as a very small proportion living in vehicles or boats).

"Missing Middle" Housing

While some attached housing consists of apartment buildings and townhomes, other units are in a collection of different forms of housing that were once a part of traditional neighborhoods, but have become less common over time. These include duplexes, triplexes, quad- or fourplexes, patio homes, cottages or bungalows, and live-work homes above or behind storefronts. These types of homes provide alternatives to single-family detached houses and apartment buildings that once were more common, but have been missing from newer built neighborhoods. Often called "missing middle," these housing options have been experiencing a resurgence in high growth communities. Missing middle housing is not a category tracked by the U.S. Census, but combining attached housing, and 2-to-4-unit housing, the category makes up approximately 5.5% of housing units in the County. Many communities with a goal of providing a diverse array of housing options acknowledge the different preferences for housing types and different resources families have available to spend, and ensure their regulations and programs allow or incentivize the missing middle housing types.

Rental and Ownership

Whether a home is inhabited by someone who rents or owns the unit is tracked

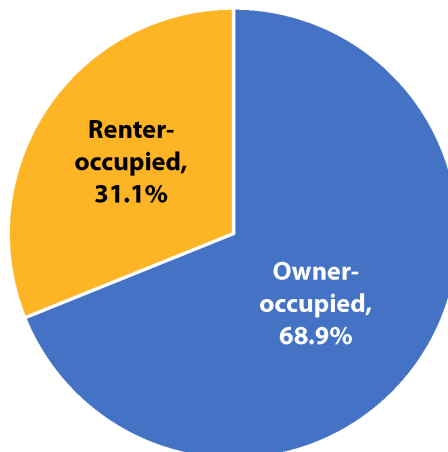### *Figure 7-1: Housing Unit Types in Lexington County*

Unit type	Lexington County Housing Units	Lexington County Percent of Housing Units	South Carolina Percent of Housing Units
Total housing units	122,711	-	-
1-unit, detached	82,799	67.5%	62.8%
1-unit, attached	2,463	2.0%	3.1%
2 units	1,704	1.4%	2.1%
3 or 4 units	2,611	2.1%	2.8%
5 to 9 units	3,791	3.1%	4.3%
10 to 19 units	2,895	2.4%	3.5%
20 or more units	3,380	2.8%	5.0%
Mobile home	22,917	18.7%	16.4%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	151	0.1%	0.1%

Figure 7-2: Housing Tenure in Lexington County

Lexington County Housing Tenure, 2018
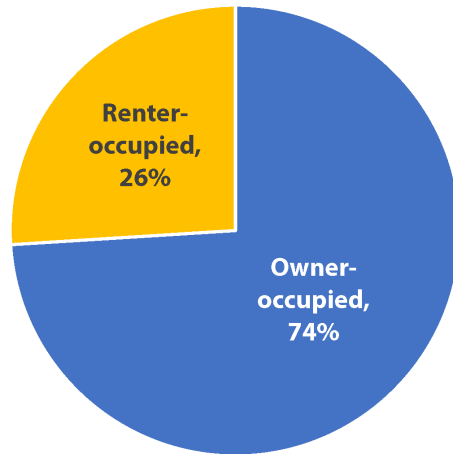
South Carolina Housing Tenure, 2018

as "housing tenure" in the U.S. Census. In 2018, 74 percent of housing units in Lexington County were owner-occupied, higher than the statewide share of 68.9 percent. (See Figure 7-2: Housing Tenure in Lexington County) This trend suggests that there may be an unmet rental housing need for young professionals, service sector and lower wage-worker households, and aging residents on fixed incomes. Communities that are interested in reducing transportation congestion and other traffic impacts will work to provide housing choices for local workers earning the full range of wages provided in the community. Having local housing for workers in appropriate locations can reduce commutes, traffic, and vehicular pollution.

Cost Burdens

Whether renting or owning a home, the general rule of thumb is that housing costs should not be over thirty percent of household income to ensure the cost of housing is not an undue burden. The same threshold is used whether it is paying a mortgage or monthly rent, and the U.S. Census formalizes this recommendation, counting cost-burdened households, measuring for rental or ownership separately. There are cost-burdened households throughout the County, with every census tract having at least 10 percent of homeowners cost-burdened, and greater concentration in the south and west. At least some of the west, along the shore of Lake Murray, may be due to residents choosing to pay a premium to live along the lake. In general, there is a greater percentage of cost-burdened, owner-occupied households than renter-occupied households across the County.

## Alternative Cost Burden Calculations

Some communities look beyond housing price alone and acknowledge that the degree to which housing costs are a burden are also related to how much the household is spending on another high-value need: transportation. This has led to the creation of alternatives to the 30 percent of income rule of thumb. One example is the Housing and Transportation Index from the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), which suggests that 45 percent of income dedicated to the combination of housing and transportation costs is a more accurate measure. The housing and transportation costs analysis conducted by CNT identifies that a larger portion of the County is cost-burdened when transportation costs are considered. While remaining informed
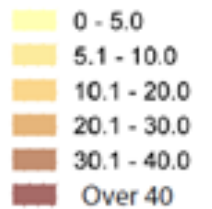
Figure 7-3: Cost Burdened Households

Ownership

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Rental

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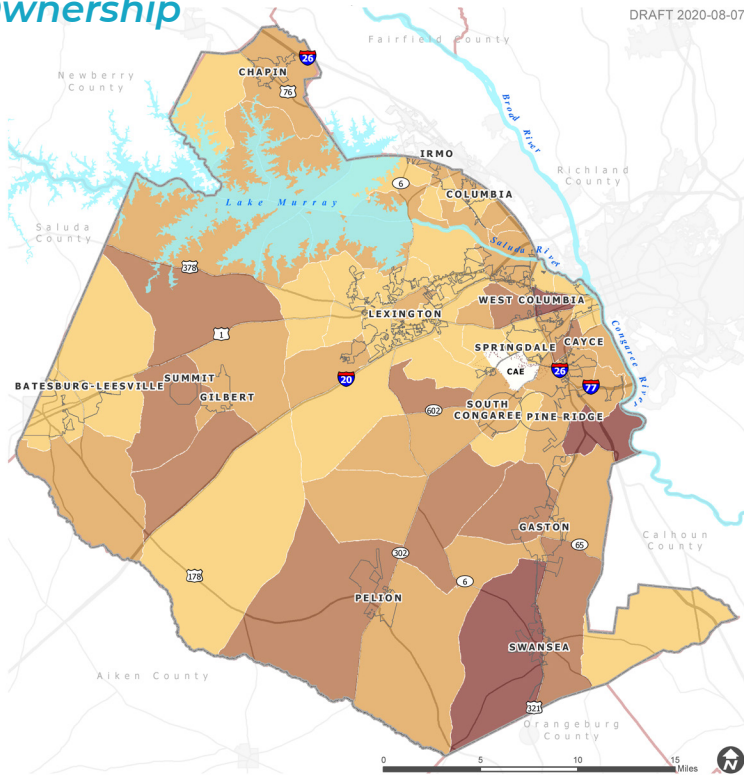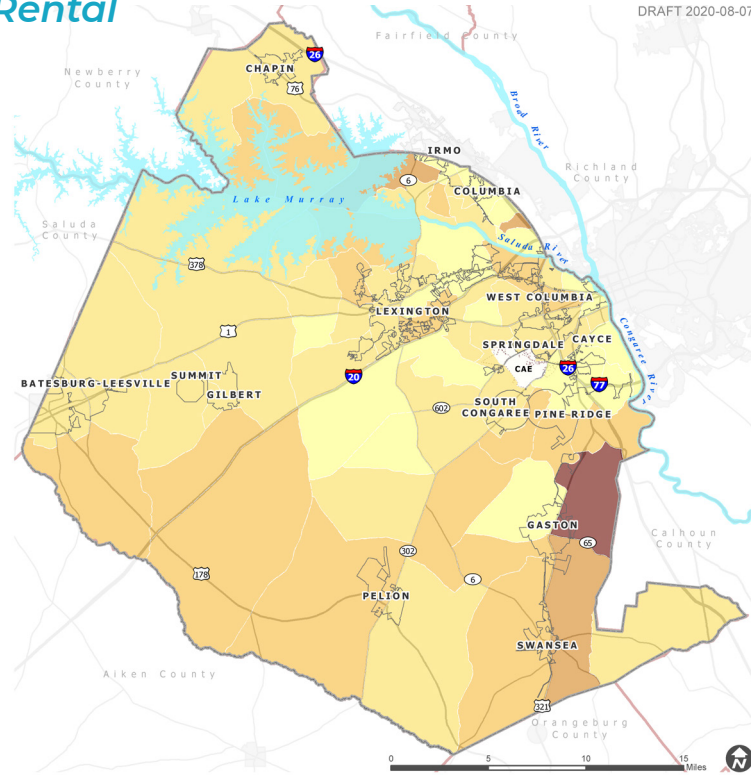
Percent of households where mortgage/ rent and select costs are > 30% household income

	0 - 5.0
	5.1 - 10.0
	10.1 - 20.0
	20.1 - 30.0
	30.1 - 40.0
	Over 40

on these alternatives and considering the central point of considering housing and transportation costs together is invaluable, the traditional 30 percent for housing has the benefit of being tracked for many years, which could make it easier to monitor trends and select benchmarks.

Future Housing Preferences

Much has been written about future housing preferences. The planning literature ranges from forecasts based on the preferences of different generations, changing preferences for housing types and styles, and the diversity of family types and sizes. One recognition is the rise of multi-generational households, which are households with more than one generation of adults living together. Whether adult children are moving back or staying with their parents, retired parents are moving in with their children and grandchildren, or another assortment of extended family are banding together, the rise in this trend is clear. In 2018, the Pew Research Center identified that 64 million Americans lived in multi-generational households. That is 20 percent of the population, trending up from a low point of 12 percent in 1980, and as high as it has been since 1950. Shifting preferences are one reason that accommodating a diversity of housing types and sizes within the same community and even within the same neighborhood is seen as desirable.

Planning for Neighborhoods

While the condition of an individual home or lot is important, the residents of Lexington County care about their surrounding neighborhoods, as well. Recent planning trends have recognized the importance of neighborhood character and experience. In particular, the related trends toward walkability and complete neighborhoods have been pursued nationally.

Walkability

Walkability is the feature of being able to do some tasks and take some trips throughout the day without the use of a car. As its name implies, walking is the principal concern, including the design of street networks and sidewalks to accommodate pedestrians. It also considers other forms of transportation access that support walking, such as public transit and bicycle infrastructure. The ability to take these trips on foot or by bicycle helps connect homes with the greater neighborhood and creates more opportunity for social interaction with neighbors.

There are two common measures of walkability used by local governments. These measures evaluate the safety and ease of walking within different areas of a community and include an evaluation of places to walk to, including parks, schools, workplaces, shops, and services. One is "Walk Score," maintained by a private real estate entity, and the other is the National
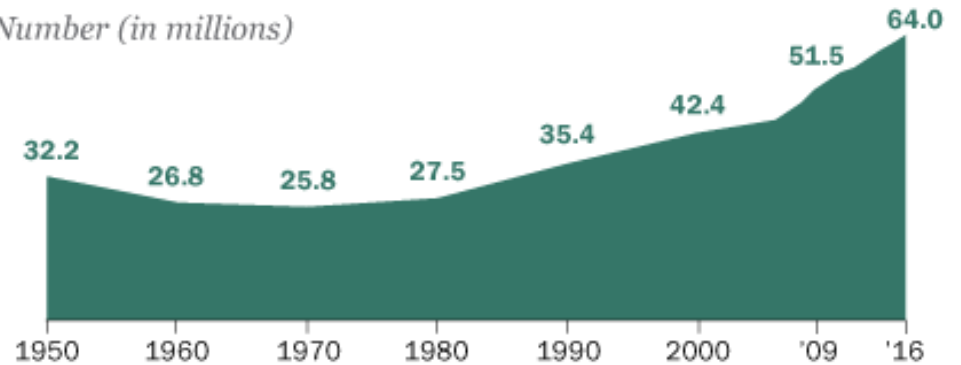
Figure 7-4: Pew Research Center on Multi-generational Households

One-in-five Americans live in a multigenerational household

% of population in multigenerational households
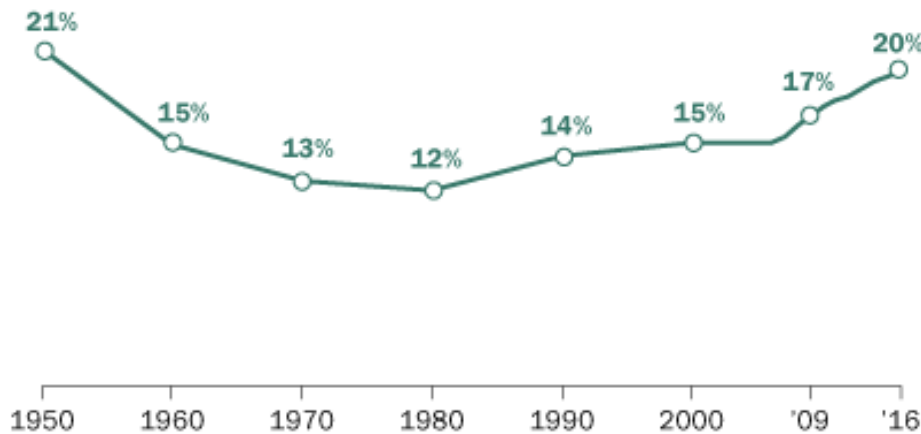
Number (in millions)

Note: Multigenerational households include at least two adult generations or grandparents and grandchildren younger than 25.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1950-2000 decennial censuses and 2006-2016 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Walkability Index maintained by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Both use generalized information from census blocks or other larger geographies and do a better job at describing the walkability of a larger area than the walkability of a single site. In Lexington County, The National Walkability Index of a few census blocks in Irmo, Columbia, West Columbia and Cayce are deemed "most walkable," with slightly more of the municipalities and the center of the towns of Lexington and Batesburg-Leesville designated "above average walkable." The remainder of the County is "below average walkable," or "least walkable."

Complete Neighborhoods

There is an overlap between what is considered favorable to walkability and what makes a complete neighborhood. Advocates of complete neighborhoods call for building neighborhood centers at the "human scale" where many daily activities can be accomplished close to home: shopping, dining, entertainment, healthcare services, recreation, education, and work. Residents of a complete neighborhood may still travel by car to some destinations, but they have the option to get to some destinations by walking, biking, or taking transit. Complete neighborhoods can be

achieved by ensuring connectivity and shorter distances between residential and commercial areas and utilize neighborhood designs that make the connections between the two safe and comfortable.

The preference for replacing some car trips with walking or biking trips inherent in both walkability and complete neighborhoods is more than a lifestyle benefit. It is also a design model for reducing traffic congestion. All new development will include some new trips taken by the new residents, but longer trips with more time on the road generate more traffic. By using walkability and complete neighborhood designs, the neighborhood itself encourages shorter trips and helps reduce traffic demand.

GUIDING & MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

Achieve quality construction, environmental preservation, open space amenities, and efficient development review processes for redeveloping and new residential development. Provide a wide range of quality housing choices for type of unit, price range, and accessibility. Support development of quality housing options for the County's workforce, aging residents, and diverse households with limited income.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- *Ensure 80 percent of new residential development is consistent with the Future Land Use and Character Map.*

- *Increase number of acres of open space protected or in parks as part of residential development.*
- *Increase the number of neighborhoods within a ten-minute walk of common goods and services.*
- *Reduce the overall percentage of cost-burdened households.*

Achieving Results

Policies

- **7-1** Allow for a diversity of housing types, sizes, and price points in the County to accommodate the varied needs and preferences of residents. Monitor housing prices in the County, and track trends related to residents cost-burdened by their housing.

- **7-2** Work to accommodate those whose housing needs cannot be met with market-rate housing. This may include working with local institutions and nonprofit organizations, such as the Central South Carolina Habitat for Humanity and other groups; as well as short-term assistance through County programs, including the Homebuyer Assistance Program and LexCo Cares

pandemic assistance through Federal Community Development Block Grants.

- **7-3** In conjunction with economic development goals, work to provide housing and neighborhoods attractive to the worker demographics needed by County targeted employment sectors.

- **7-4** Ensure new residential areas are designed as complete neighborhoods where daily needs of residents are met proximate to housing and can be accessed through walking or biking.

- **7-5** Support infill development in existing neighborhoods that are already well-served by utilities and amenities

- **7-6** Promote conditions that allow residents to live where they work, including broadband access that enables work-from home, a review of home business standards, and residential neighborhoods that connect to nearby businesses.

- **7-7** Protect nature in neighborhoods, ensuring green spaces, environmentally

sensitive lands, and existing trees are accounted for in subdivision and site design.

- **7-8** Encourage provision of new opportunities to interact with nature in neighborhoods, such as pocket parks, trails, and community gardens.

Actions

- **Incorporate housing standards for both single family and multi-family housing units into the zoning, subdivision, and landscape ordinances**, that better achieve the vision set out in the Future Land Use and Character Map and the policies of this plan. Standards may include:

  o Open space set-asides for conservation land or parks within larger developments. The amount of open space may be tied to the number of units or development area and could include both passive and active open space.

  o Requiring internal connectivity standards within neighborhoods and subdivisions to support more options for safe walking and biking close to home.

  o Requiring connectivity between residential neighborhoods and adjacent compatible uses, such as neighborhood shopping centers, parks, and schools.

  o Incentives such as additional height or density for creating complete neighborhoods that use best practices for developing housing as a part of well-integrated mixed-use projects.

  o Large-scale multifamily design standards that ensure appropriate massing, building orientation, building materials, relation to surrounding uses, and required amenities.

  o Development standards that are specific to different character areas identified on the Future Land Use and Character Map.

  o Appropriate flexibility in development standards to accommodate infill lots in existing neighborhoods.

- **Strengthen tree protection standards,** considering protections for both significant individual trees and for preserving a portion of the overall tree canopy.

- Encourage or require **features in new neighborhoods that create walkability,** including sidewalks, trails, and crosswalks.

8

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources
Introduction

Located in the Midlands of central South Carolina, Lexington County displays the habitats, geologies, flora, and fauna associated with southern piedmont, sandhills, and coastal plain ecosystems. The County is approximately equidistant from the Atlantic Ocean and Appalachian Mountains and resulting in a range of natural features. In the Upland areas in the northern and western portions of the County undeveloped land is predominantly temperate hardwood forests, while the southeastern portion of the County is predominantly sand hills, lowlands, and pine-dominated forests. A braided network of wetlands and rivers collect and convey surface waters from the Saluda and Edisto basins along their path to the ocean, with a significant portion first collected and stored in Lake Murray, the Jewel of the Midlands.

When they are healthy, these natural systems perform a valuable function for residents of the County, maintaining the environmental health of the region. Obvious and essential advantages include "ecosystem services," like enhancing water and air quality through forests, wetlands, and appropriately vegetated riparian areas that act as the natural filters. Subtler and more nuanced benefits accrue from having and protecting these different habitats and the species that depend on them. As climate change disrupts the current capacities of these systems, their enhanced protection mitigates against future impairment, and any significant compromise of the County's existing natural resources is likely to result in a weakened ability for these essential processes to occur.

In addition to environmental benefits, natural resources provide recreational opportunities as well, through access to the water and natural lands and generally activities that are enjoyed outdoors. Similarly, the County has financially valuable natural resources in the form of its forestry, agricultural croplands, sand mining, kaolin clay and granite quarrying operations that will continue to play a role for local businesses and development in the area. Managing these various interests presents a challenge to the community, to strike a balance between resource use and extraction, and preservation and conservation.

The Role of the County and its Partners

The natural resources are a part of interconnected systems that extend beyond the County boundary extending out to the region. The systems themselves are interconnected to each other. The County bears a significant responsibility and general regulatory oversight over these resources through development regulations, yet also depends on partnerships and collaboration with other entities. In some instances, the regulatory authority of the County is preempted by both State and Federal Regulations. For example, the Federal Clean Water Act of 1972 (CWA) regulates the discharge of pollution into the waters of the U.S. and establishes a permitting structure that applies nationwide. The Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) is another planning agency and is a partner for Lexington County – helping to administer and track the implementation of the CWA regulations and coordinate the Section 208 Plan for wastewater authority.

Facts and Trends

Land Features

The Department of Natural Resources maintains a list of rare ecological communities located by County. Included on the list are the broad and widely distributed categories of oak-hickory and bottomland hardwood forests that are typical of the Atlantic coast piedmont. Likewise, the pine-scrub sand hills predominate the coastal plain. There are also Atlantic white cedar swamps, bay forests, Pocosin bogs, and sandhill scrub – each providing a unique habitat. This assemblage of ecologies has the advantage of preserving diversity and biological resiliency to the impacts and realities of a changing climate. The Figure 1: Land Features Map on the following page also shows land that has been turned to fields, whether cultivated or barren, "developed open space" or land dedicated to parks, buffers, or landscaping that is a part of other developments.

The fields designation is indicative of the importance of agriculture to the County and a reflection of the possibilities of cultivation on some of the land feature categories. Agriculture contributes to the economy of the County, including
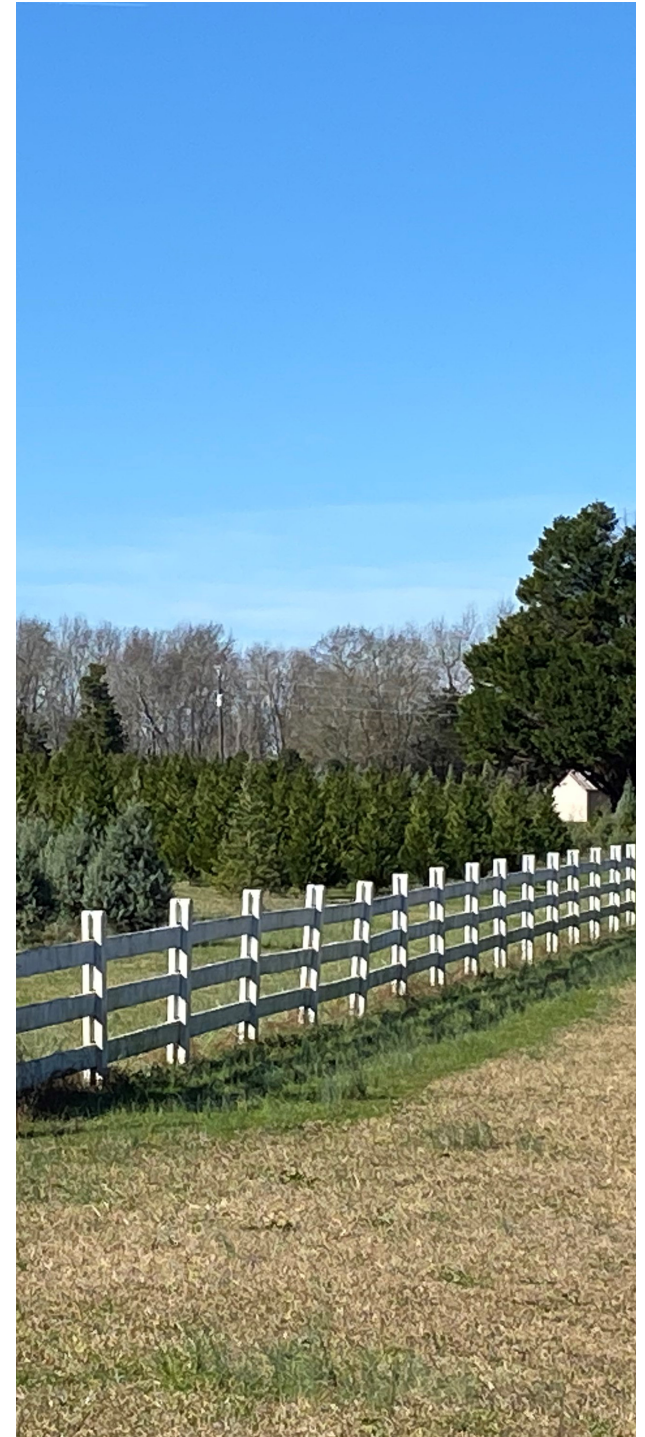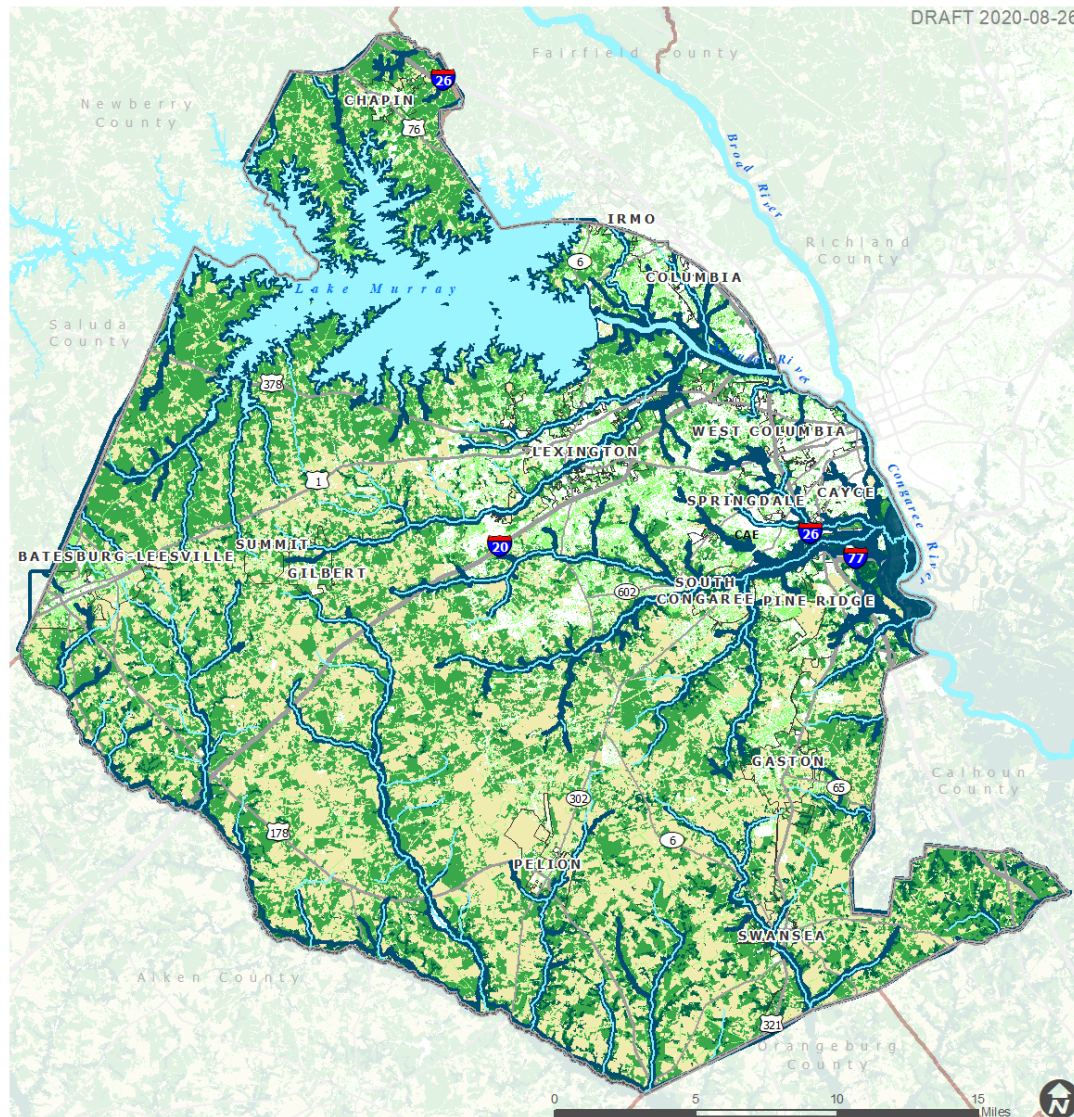
Figure 8-1: Land Features Map

Legend:
- Wetlands
- Urban / Developed / Other
- Fields / Pastures / Herbaceous / Barren
- Developed Open Space
- Upland Forest
- Flood Hazard Areas

providing crops for regional export, as well as to the character much beloved in the county, comprising much of the rural land that is productive, attractive, and supportive of an agricultural tradition that stretches back into the County's history.

Water Features

Lexington County has extensive surface waters within and adjacent to its borders, the largest being the Saluda River and Broad Rivers, the Congaree River, the North Fork Edisto River, and Lake Murray, in addition to the many smaller creeks and tributaries that cross the County. See Figure 8-2: Water Features Map on page 114.

Lake Murray is likely the most significant water feature in the County, due to its size and the functions it performs: the lake was impounded in the 1920's when the Saluda River was dammed to create the reservoir as a source of hydro-power and drinking water. This makes water quality in Lake Murray of critical importance to the residents of the County. Over time, as there is greater construction and development around the lake, along the streams and creeks that flow into it, and on the lands that stormwater washed over before settling into it, there is a greater strain put on the water quality of the lake. Sediments, construction materials, pollutants from roadways and

nutrients from planted areas all contribute bit by bit to potentially lessening the water quality. As the lake serves as a drinking water source not just for current residents, but for many of the additional residents expected to come as the County grows, maintaining high water quality in Lake Murray is important both for safety and for efficiency – any additional treatment required after water is withdrawn from the lake is an additional expense ultimately paid by residents. Many factors that preserve the quality of the water to drink can also help preserve the lake as a natural environment.

The Saluda now discharges from the lake where it joins with the Broad River along the Richland County line, becoming the Congaree River. This confluence occurs in the highly developed area between Columbia and West Columbia, which presents a threat to the long-term health of these rivers.

Lexington County is just upriver from the 24,000-acre Congaree National Park, which protects and celebrates the Congaree River, and its surrounding wetlands, swamps, and old growth forests. While the park is not within the bounds of the County, it remains directly connected and integral to the region's natural resources.

Development activities can cause sediments and sedimentation from construction site erosion, which can be a significant threat to the ecology of the streams, lakes, and rivers in the County. Excessive sedimentation can destroy in-stream habitat, and over time can even diminish the reservoir storage capacity, as sediments remain trapped behind the dam.

What About Stormwater?

When rain falls to the ground, one of two things happens: it is either absorbed by the ground, or it flows on the most direct path downhill to the nearest stream or river. Water that flows across the surface is known as "stormwater runoff." In general, natural surfaces allow some degree of absorption (even though some water may run off), whereas impervious surfaces such as rooftops or roads, do not allow any absorption. As the extent of impervious surfaces in an area increases, so does the proportion of water during a rain that will not be absorbed. When this happens, the stormwater runoff becomes a problem: there are higher total volumes of runoff, higher peak flows in local watersheds, and a shortened lag time between peak rainfall and peak flow. This can cause flooding or wash more pollutants into the rivers, streams, and lakes. Both water flow and quality are affected.
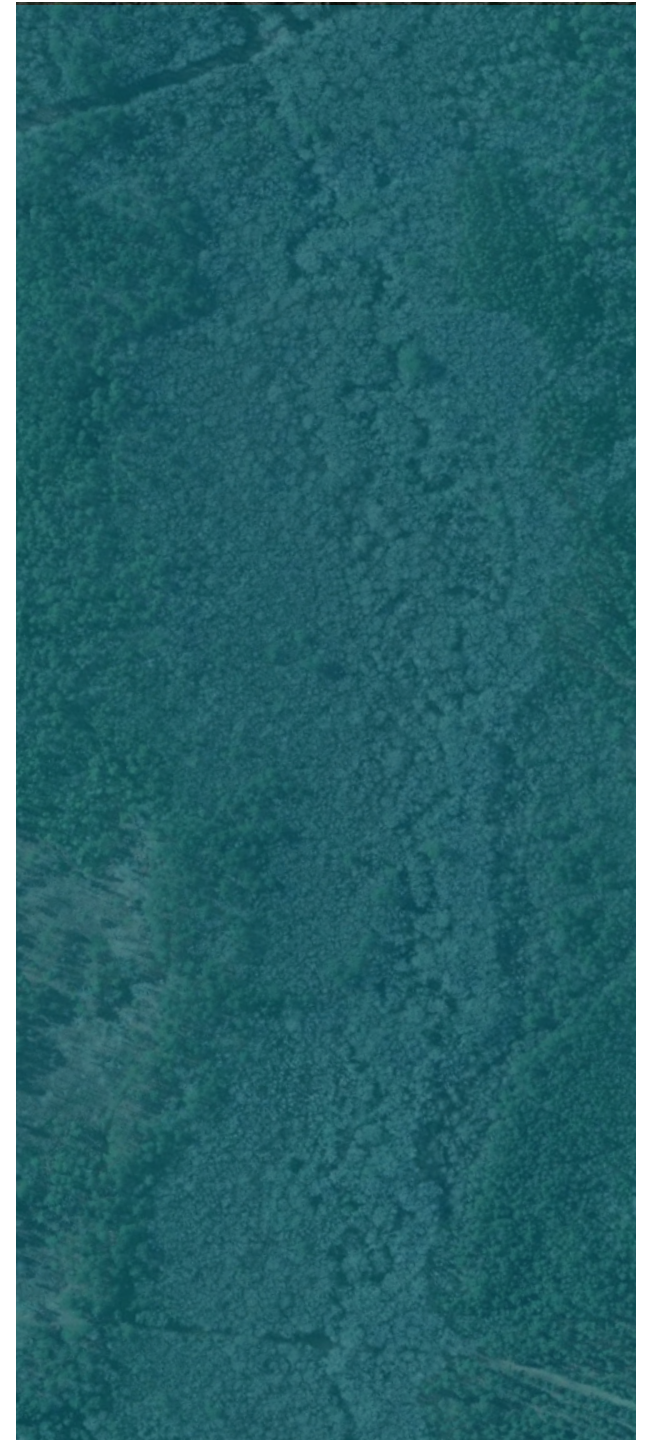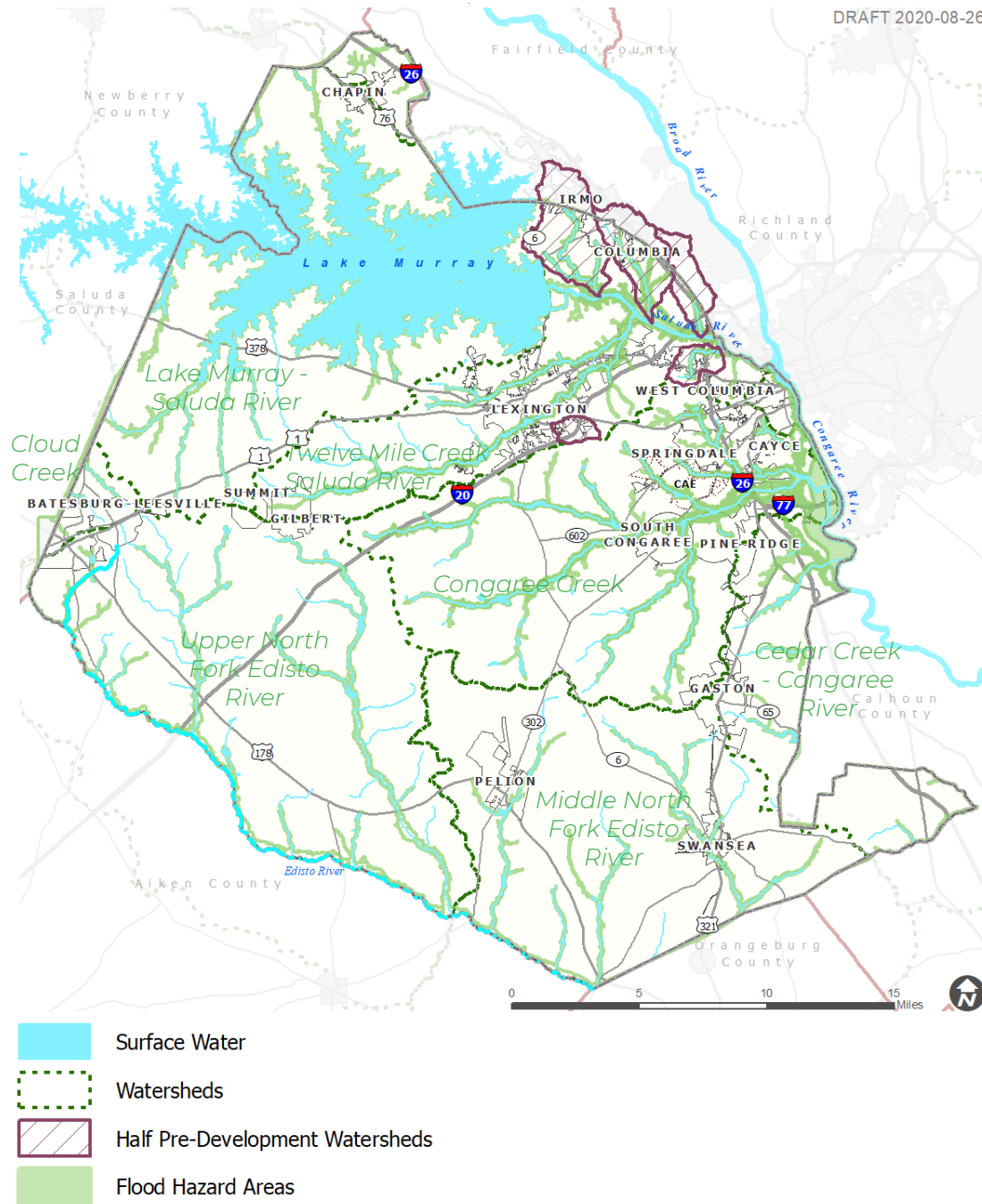
Figure 8-2: Water Features Map

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Legend:
- Surface Water
- Watersheds
- Half Pre-Development Watersheds
- Flood Hazard Areas

In general, when more than 10 percent of a watershed is covered by impervious surfaces, water quality and hydrology, or flow, begin to degrade. Higher total volumes of runoff mean that more water flows directly into the rivers, and less water filters down below ground to recharge aquifers or other groundwater storage. Greater peak flows result in higher water velocities that scour and erode streambeds. Shorter lag times between rainfall and peak flow in-stream can lead to localized and flash flooding, including in places not previously threatened by flooding. In certain at-risk areas where there are already many impervious surfaces, regulations require improved drainage and storage, such that after development only half as much water is permitted to run off of the development. The County records these as "Half Pre-Development Watersheds" See Figure 8-2: Water Features Map.

Stormwater also washes pollution that collects on roadways, as well as nutrients (fertilizers) or pesticides from agricultural fields into local waterways. An increased load of nutrients often causes harmful algae blooms, which can strip oxygen from the water, possibly creating dead-zones where fish, amphibians, plants, and insects cannot survive. These algae blooms also affect the taste and quality of the drinking water

Figure 8-3: Active Mines Map
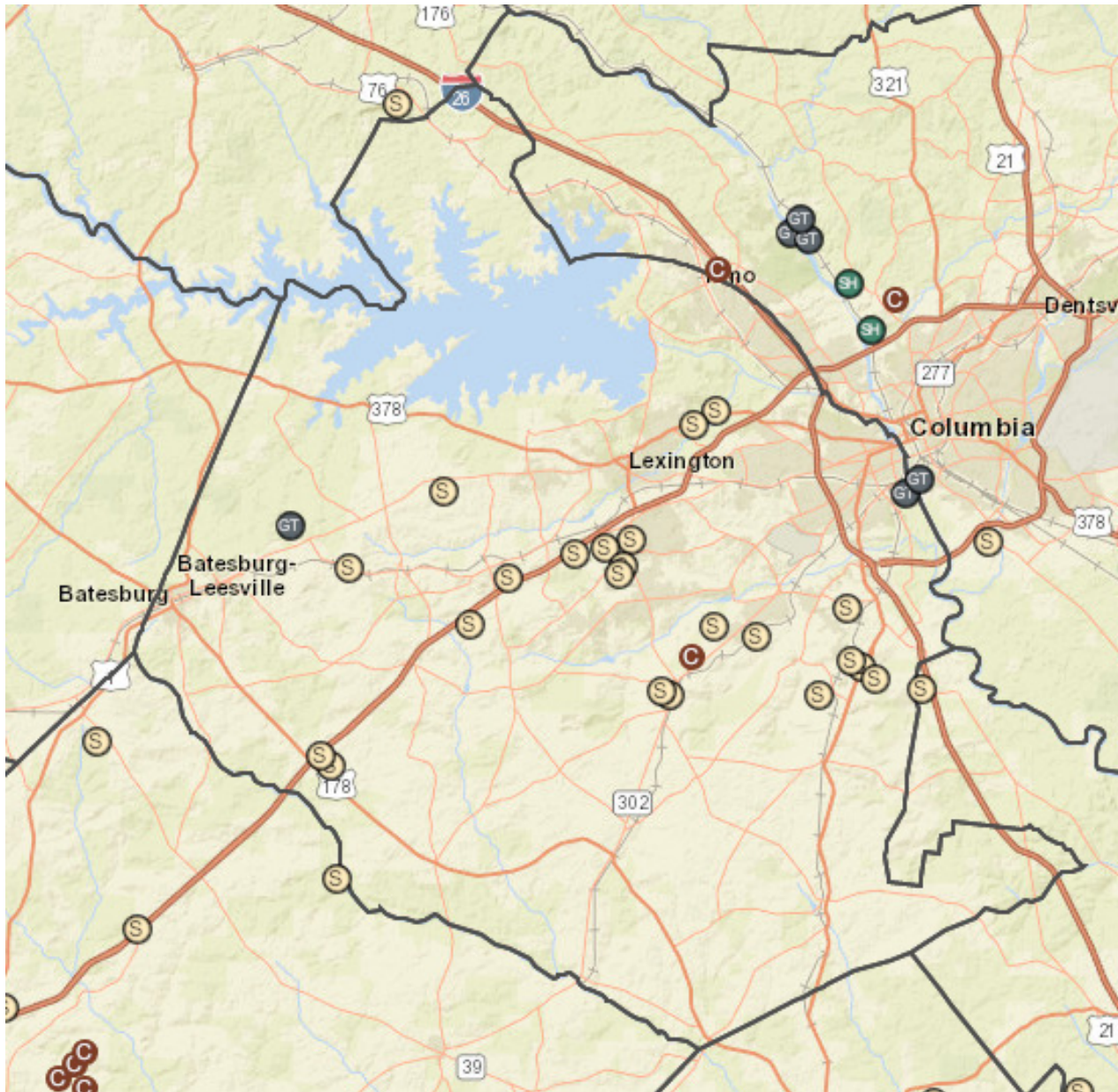
Active mines: Clay marked with "C," Granite marked with "GT," Sand marked with "S," and Shale (only outside the County) marked with "SH".

coming from the reservoir, requiring more expensive treatment, and more chemicals to appropriately treat the water before distribution.

Additional information about the risks from stormwater and flooding are in Chapter 9: Resiliency.

Mining Features

Mining is an industry with a significant impact on the land use, economy, and environment of the County. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control maintains a database of active mines in the State. Lexington's active mines are all south of Lake Murray and predominantly have easy access to major road corridors. There are 26 mining sites, of which 23 are devoted to sand, two to granite, and one to clay. There are also sand, granite, and clay mines just over the borders of the County, close enough where they may have an effect on environmental conditions, traffic, and jobs. See Figure 8-3: Active Mines Map

Figure 8-4: Soil Suitability for Septic Systems and Agriculture map
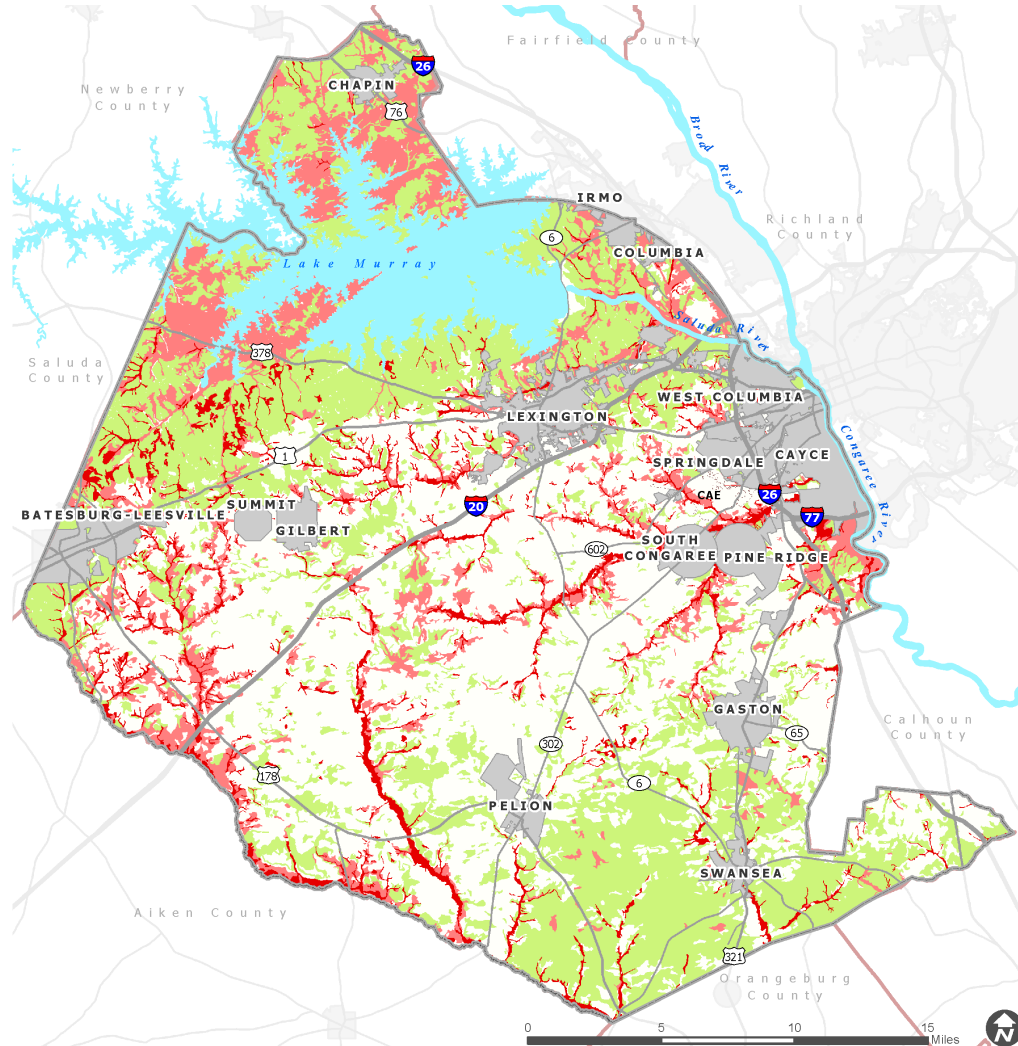
Soil Suitablility for Septic Systems and Agriculture

- ▮ (red) Generally Unsuitable for On-Site Septic Systems
- ▮ (pink) Provisionally Suitable for On-Site Septic Systems (Requires Certain Conditions)
- ▮ (green) Likely Suitable for Septic Systems Generally Suitable for Agriculture (Loamy Soil)
- ▯ (white) Likely Suitable for Septic Systems Not Generally Suitable for Agriculture (Non-Loamy Soils)

Soils

Lexington County has a variety of distinct soils because of a geologic history straddling the piedmont, characterized by gentle rolling hills, and the coastal plain, which is associated with flatter terrain. In general, sandy soils exist in the coastal plain, and soils that contain more loam or clay exist in the piedmont. Specific sites vary due to other natural features and land use practices over time.

These soil profiles are generally very supportive of agriculture and, given the temperate climate of the area, a significant portion of the County is used for agricultural purposes. This land use carries varying impacts on the long-term health of the soil, largely dependent on the methods, types, and intensities of agricultural activity.

In addition to agriculture, soil types are a critical component of rural residential development. Where properties are not served by municipal wastewater services, they must rely on private in-ground septic systems. Soil quality and characteristics directly affect the amount of land needed for a septic tank, or if a conventional one will be viable at all. A State or Federally approved engineered system may be required in places that do not otherwise have appropriate soil properties. For

example, Riparian areas and some other particular soil conditions are not generally suitable for septic systems. See Figure 8-4: Soil Suitability for Septic Systems Map

Air Quality

Of all the natural resources to consider, air quality is simultaneously paramount and difficult to control. Air is an essential element for healthy life, yet air quality is determined by global and seasonal meteorological events, as well as pollutant emissions from sources near and far. At the local level, air quality is affected by automotive and industrial emissions, which can include carbon dioxide, sulfur and nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons, and various heavy metals and smog forming particles. These pollutants can be directly harmful to human health or harmful to environmental systems. Likewise, agricultural activities may contribute negatively to air quality through the production of dust and from the animal emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, or nitrous oxide. The EPA sets allowable levels for air pollution through the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). In Lexington County all NAAQS pollutants are currently in attainment (they are present at concentrations less than the prohibited level). Attainment is monitored and as conditions change in or around the county, that status can change, either because new pollutants are released, or because the health standards have been increased. In 2007, CMCOG identified parts of Lexington and Richland Counties in non-attainment for ground level ozone and particulate matter, though in most recent reports from the EPA the designation has since been removed. When the nonattainment first occurred, Lexington County communicated initiatives for air improvement to its partners in the region. Initiatives included a no idling policy, a lawn mower exchange, an outdoor burn ordinance, tree planting projects, and school outreach.

Air quality is also impacted by circumstances from outside the County – for example, smoke from wildfires as far away as the west coast can spread here – as global scale wind patterns move and mix our air. The National Weather Service provides up-to-date air quality advisories, focusing on ozone and particulate matter as the two most significant threats.
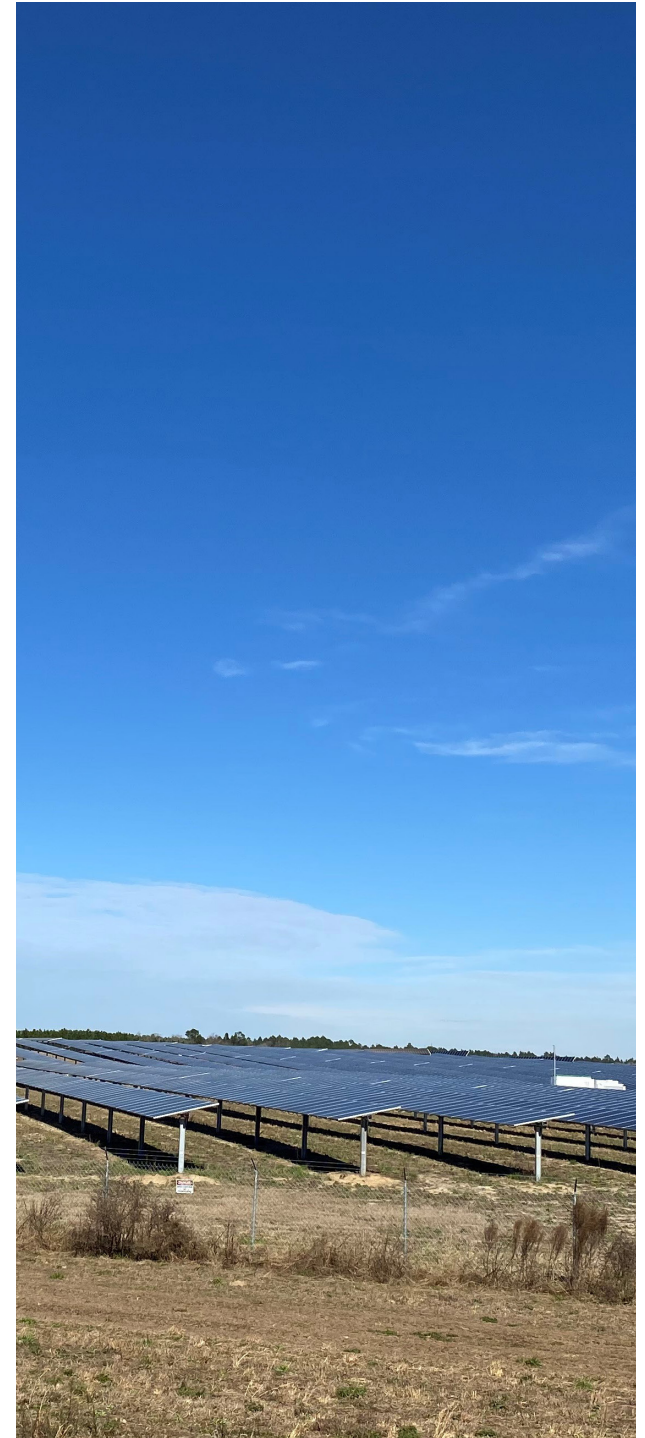
Ecology and Wildlife

The unique landscapes and habitats of Lexington County support a diverse array of plants and animals. Along the State's coastal plain, the land contains scrubby pine forests, sandhill barrens, and longleaf pine forests that host many species, from the eastern fox squirrel to the occasional black bear. This ecosystem is also home to the well-known red-cockaded woodpecker, which is classified as an endangered species by the State. The abundant and extensive network of surface waters and wetlands supports myriad species of reptile, amphibians, and birds. Another threatened species living in Lexington County is the bald eagle, which nests primarily around Lake Murray and the wetlands, swamps, and rivers around it, and has State protection. In addition to these higher profile species are the numerous others that thrive in the hardwood forests of the upland areas.

GUIDING & MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

Maintain the County's natural resources that provide scenic, recreational, agricultural, and ecosystem benefits through the protection of environmentally sensitive lands, open spaces, and waterways by facilitating private conservation, development regulation, and strategic conservation partnerships with partner agencies and neighboring jurisdictions.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- *Increase the number of acres of protected park or conservation land.*
- *Increase the extent of environmentally sensitive lands protected through private conservation efforts or development regulations.*

- *Increase the number of acres of preserved farmland.*
- *Increase the number of acres of preserved natural lands.*
- *Begin to utilize the newly acquired LiDAR to assist with natural resource feature identification and evaluation across the County.*
- *Maintain existing air quality standards and programs to help the region stay in attainment for NAAQS pollutants.*

Achieving Results

Policies

- **8-1** Protect water quality through regulation of development in riparian areas around rivers, and lakeside buffers and larger catchment areas around Lake Murray.

- **8-2** Protection of environmentally sensitive lands and native ecosystems as part of the development process through open space standards or incentives.

- **8-3** Enable support for permanent protection of land through land conservancies or direct action of the County.

- **8-4** Encourage and promote regenerative farming (no-till practices, perennial crops, water management, etc.) to protect agricultural economic viability over time.

- **8-5** Identifying areas within the unincorporated areas of the County that are essential to the production, marketing, sales, or distribution of agricultural crops and commodities, both locally and regionally.

- **8-6** Promote the recreational uses of the County's natural areas, including access and amenities for Lake Murray.

- **8-7** Work to limit the impact of mining activities from other land uses through strategies such as buffering.

- **8-8** Protect the shores of Lake Murray from residential and non-residential encroachment, while also maintaining
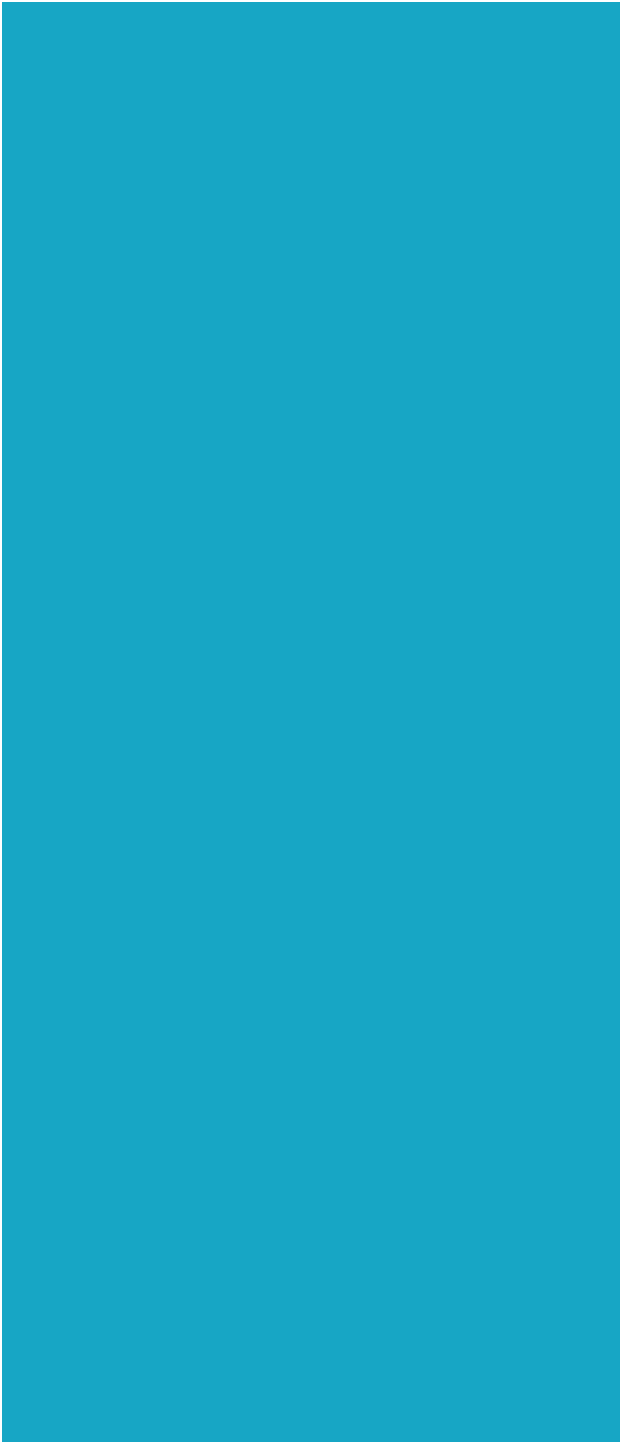
the rural characteristics, natural beauty and water quality of the lake and nearby area.

- **8-9** Maintain the aesthetics of Lake Murray and protect the natural resources and environmental qualities the surrounding lake.

- **8-10** Protect, preserve and promote agribusiness, agricultural operations, and natural resources management in Lexington County by identifying areas within the unincorporated areas of the County that are essential to the production, marketing, sales, and/or distribution of agricultural crops and commodities, both locally and regionally.

- **8-11** Maintain rural surroundings consistent with agriculturally based communities, and maintain a harmonious transition between agricultural operations, with their unique characteristics, and differing neighboring land uses.

Actions

- **Protect critical watershed areas**, with protective standards for activities that require clearing and grading the land.

- Develop graduated **standards for preserving open spaces** that require greater protection on larger uncleared tracts. In general, larger tracts can have more opportunity to rearrange development proposals to protect land and canopy while still securing a return on investment.

- Develop and maintain **standards that allow Green Infrastructure** in new developments, designed to detain and retain excess stormwater.

- Identify **priorities for open space preservation on development sites,** such as floodplains, or areas that connect to parks and preserves.

- Identify **priority areas across the County** to preserve as natural or open space through County funds or partnerships.

- Develop a **standard for native planting** incentives or guidelines in new development. Consider native planting requirements for vegetated buffers.

- Explore developing a **fund to purchase and maintain open space**.
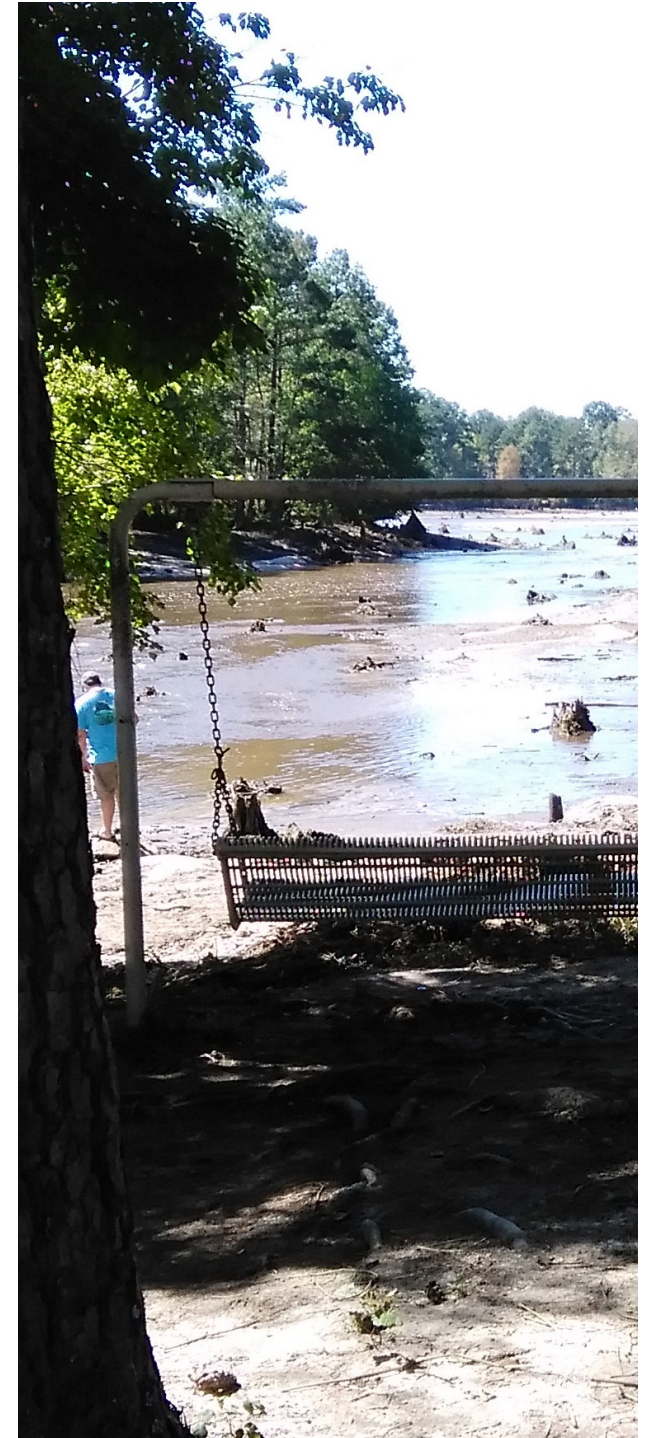
- Put **quality of life and valuable, sustainable development** as considerations when determining highest and best use.

- Consider increasing **mitigation requirements of impervious surface coverage** on new developments.

- **Ensure mines are buffered from surrounding conflicting uses**, while also ensuring mines are remediated and the land reclassified upon the end of their economic viability.

- Support efforts by DHEC, possibly through the use of the recently acquired QL1 LiDAR, to identify, **categorize and inventory all potential solid/household waste landfills, construction and demolition landfills; past, present and potential future contaminated/NEPA sites** across the County and begin to determine and analyze a means of remediation and/or buffering from potential conflicting land uses.

9

RESILIENCY

Resiliency

Introduction

The South Carolina Legislature added a requirement for a resiliency element in comprehensive plans as a part of the Disaster Relief and Resilience Act of 2020. This chapter is the County's first opportunity to update its comprehensive plan to meet the requirement.

Resiliency is about more than natural or man-made hazards that might cause a disaster or long-term challenges for a community. Resiliency is how communities, or the County as a whole, recover from a disaster or strain. Achieving resiliency requires action at multiple levels of a community working together with the broadest actions taken by governments and utilities. However, success is also dependent on the strength of the individuals, communities, institutions, and businesses within the County. Measures that strengthen the connections of these community partners help with resiliency in the face of almost any hazard.

This chapter focuses on the most likely hazard - flooding events and the most catastrophic potential disaster - a failure at the Saluda Dam. Maps included show potential areas that could be particularly affected under these hypothetical disasters. The purpose of this analysis is to consider disaster impacts before they happen and plan accordingly. This chapter, along with the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the Lexington County Floodplain Mitigation Plan are important policy guides for protecting life and property from future hazards.

The Role of the County and its Partners

Governments and Utilities

In the wake of hazards and stresses, the local economy, public infrastructure, and public health, safety and welfare can be significantly impacted. Decisions made by local governments and utilities are critical opportunities to improve resiliency and recover more quickly and successfully from future hazards in the County. These entities, along with additional partners, should limit how hazards or stresses can impact the community and provide guidance for the County to recover when disaster or strain strikes.

The County, the Emergency Management Division, and Municipalities

Lexington County and its municipalities generate the rules of development and administer programs that help improve the resiliency of the County. The governing body makes decisions effecting where public infrastructure is placed and is responsible for using this authority to promote the health, safety and welfare of residents. Decisions made or enforced by these entities can help limit the risk to of damage to newly built areas, ensuring more local effort over time can be put toward the economic development of the County than toward rebuilding high-risk sites. The County acts through its Emergency Management Division to plan and coordinate the response to a disaster, though all departments and divisions may have a role in ensuring the County is in the best position it can be when such a disaster strikes.

Coordination with surrounding counties and municipalities is also critical and that can occur specifically related to hazards and strains through the Emergency Management Division and analogous divisions, departments and managers at the other governments, as well as more generally from elected bodies to elected bodies and staff to staff.

State and Federal Programs

Much existing infrastructure, including major roads and interstates, are owned or maintained by State agencies, or through the application of State and Federal funds. The State and Federal governments also periodically make available additional funds supporting community resilience. This is a shifting landscape of programs, but it can be expected to continue to include funds for infrastructure, planning and implementing resiliency strategies, and actual buyouts of certain at-risk lands.

Dominion Energy and other Utilities

Utilities have a critical resiliency role by providing the power, water, and sewer service necessary for the basic expected quality of life in the County. Resilient utilities must meet daily use demands as well as address the risk of a particular hazard or strain. It is also important to consider the sources of water, power, and treatment systems as a whole to ensure they are not unduly contributing to environmental conditions that could aggravate hazards or stresses.

Dominion Energy has a special role to
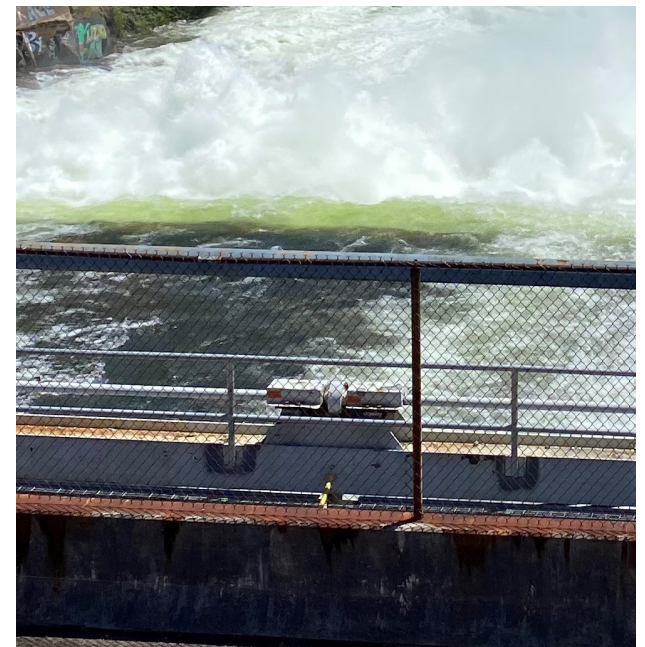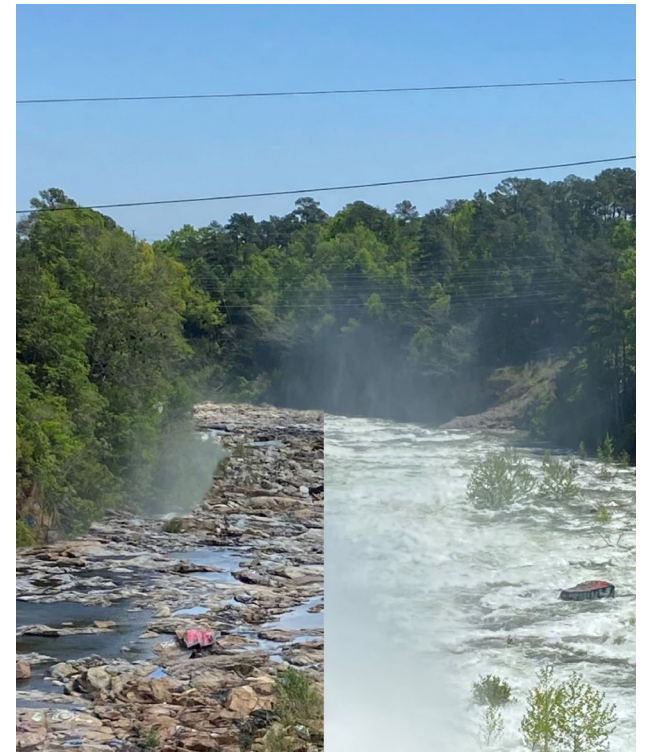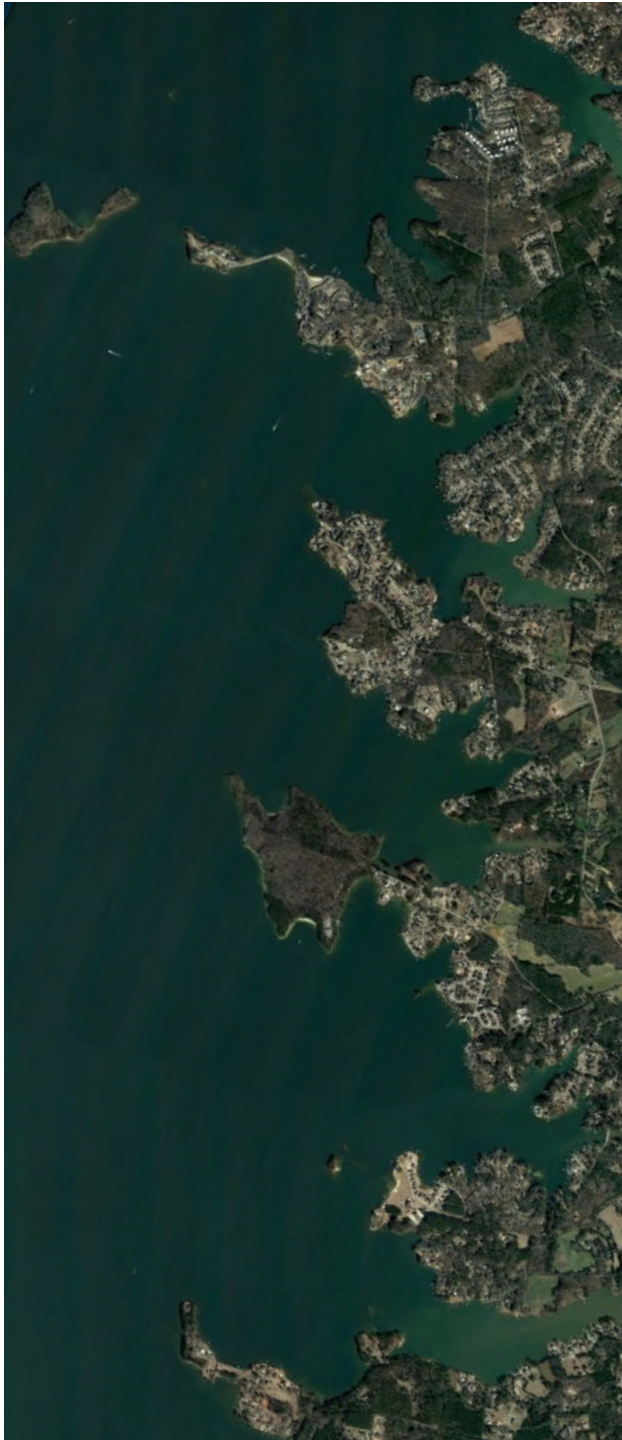
play as the manager of Lake Murray. Ensuring water levels in the lake are ready to accommodate storms helps stabilize any risk of flooding on the watersheds that feed into the lake, and maintenance of the Saluda Dam ensures the stability of the lake more generally.

Additional Partnership Roles in Cultivating Resiliency

The Role of Individuals in Resiliency

The role of the individual (either an individual person, a household, or a family) in resiliency is to prepare to meet challenges and to act on information about risks. To do this effectively requires access to appropriate information. Governments, utilities, and institutions can help ensure appropriate guides are available for individuals. Individuals need to be prepared to weather minor disruptions in critical infrastructure, and to make decisions about moving to shelter if appropriate when there is advance warning of a larger disaster.

Individuals also ultimately make decisions about where they will live and where they will locate a business. Part of the necessary education of individuals is to ensure that at the point of purchase or leasing they are aware of the kind of hazards that could affect the land, particularly if it is within a floodplain or evacuation zone.

Individuals also make up the other partnerships within the County, acting as a part of or voting for representatives within community organizations, local institutions, businesses, and governments.

The Role of Communities in Resiliency

Communities have an important role in promoting resiliency as the source of collective action. Where a community is empowered to act with financial resources or decision-making power through a local government, the community can identify and finance measures that mitigate the effect of disasters and disruptions. Strong communities also improve resilience through fostering personal connections. One common thread of emergency situations and disasters is that they may be accompanied by disruption of ordinary services.

The classic case study in the importance of communities in resilience comes from a heat wave in Chicago in 1995. There were hundreds of deaths across the city, but two adjacent neighborhoods with the same economic profile, similar demographics, and both with many elderly residents living alone had vastly different

outcomes. The neighborhood with the livelier social network, where there were more connections between people, and where there were more small stores and gathering spaces had a mortality rate ten times less than the other during the heatwave. Connections to neighbors place the community in a better position for its members to help each other informally when formal assistance is delayed or otherwise unavailable. Similar patterns have been observed in the fortunes of neighborhoods and communities in the largest and most devastating disasters that have occurred since. A well-connected community is a resilient community.

The Role of Institutions in Resiliency

There are three roles for institutions in resiliency. Before any disaster strikes, institutions are in a favorable position to work to mitigate the risks from the disaster. During or in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, institutions, including hospitals, need to continue the provision of critical services that people depend on. During the disaster or during recovery, institutions that serve the community in other ways may join efforts to aid the community they serve, such as a school or religious institution that may operate a shelter, a fraternal organization that may coordinate volunteer assistance, or large institutional land holders like energy companies and community or technical colleges that may allow land to serve as staging areas where widespread assistance is needed. Institutional actors can be in the best position to take the broad steps that allow for a return to normalcy after a disaster or event has stressed community resources.

The Role of Businesses in Resiliency

For the County to recover after a disaster, businesses that are disrupted by the event need to be able to open their doors again to employees and customers. It is the role of businesses in resiliency to prepare themselves through continuity of operations plans so they are prepared for how to quickly recover when basic services are returned after a disruption. Local businesses also can serve as local community gathering places and are a critical part of building the ties of community that are such an important part of fostering resilience as a whole.

FEMA Community Meeting
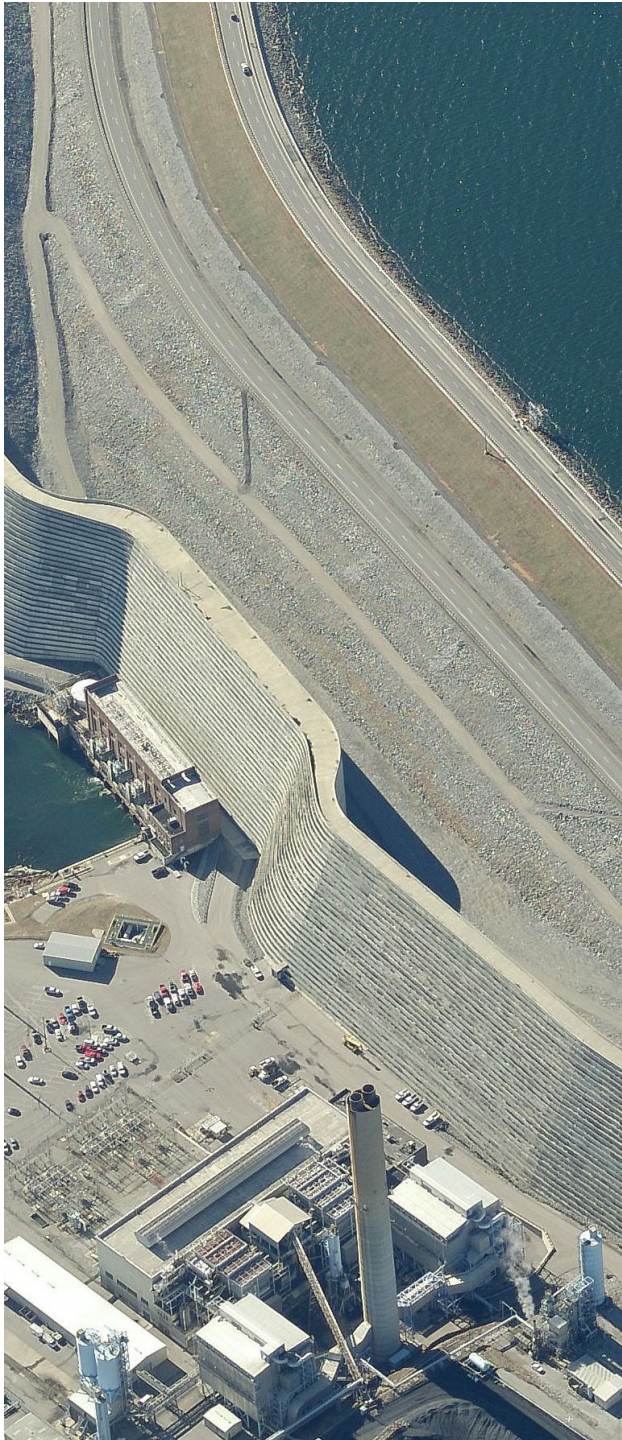
Facts and Trends

Flooding and High Water

Water-related issues are the most common resiliency issues in South Carolina. The state differentiates threats from flooding and from high water. With much of the County in watersheds influenced by Lake Murray's role as a controlled reservoir, the likelihood of a high-water event that is not also a flooding event is effectively zero.

The topography of the County and its rivers and streams indicate the most likely vulnerable areas – the floodplain. Tracked by the County as a Flood Hazard Area or Special Flood Hazard Area, the most vulnerable category of floodplains is the one that includes low-lying lands susceptible to being inundated by floodwater with at least a 1 percent chance of occurring in any given year. Flood hazard areas in Lexington County are identified on Figure 1: Flood Hazard Area Map on the following page.

One of the most effective tools communities use to reduce the physical and economically destructive impacts from flooding and to ensure critical systems are resilient to flood events is limitation on development in the floodplain. This limitation can take many forms, such as outright prohibition on development in the floodplain, requiring application of significantly higher development standards for properties located in floodplains, prohibition on constructing critical infrastructure in the floodplain, or prohibition or enhanced requirements for any facilities that involve special care of occupants (such as hospitals and nursing homes). In certain at-risk areas where there are already many impervious surfaces, regulations require improved drainage and storage, such that after development only half as much water is permitted to run off of the development. The County records these as "Half Pre-Development Watersheds"

Figure 9-1: Flood Hazard Area

Figure 9-1: Flood Hazard Area

Legend:
- Surface Water
- Watersheds
- Half Pre-Development Watersheds
- Flood Hazard Areas
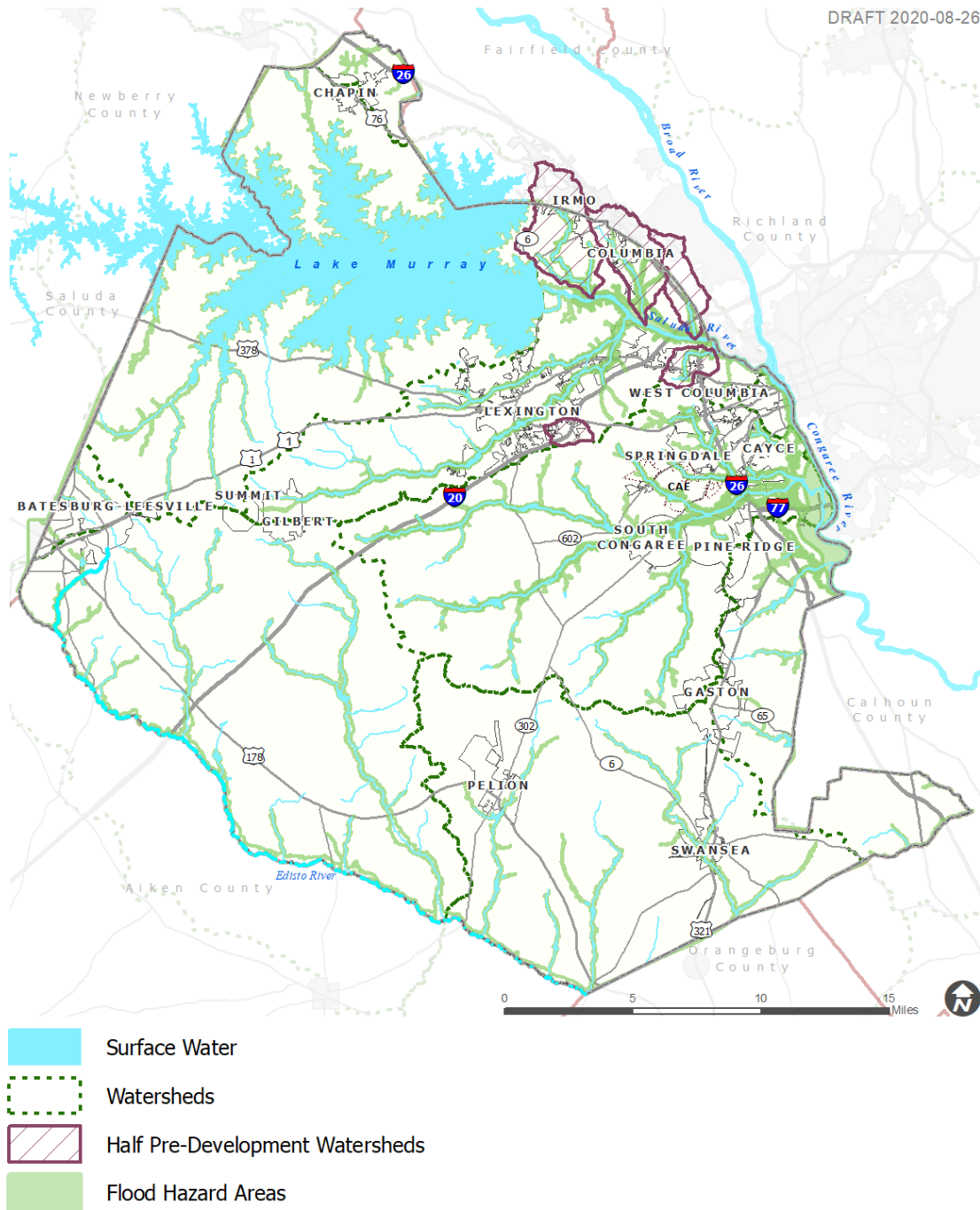
Major Events

The most recent and notable severe flooding event occurred in 2015, when two days of persistent rain, due to Hurricane Joaquin and resulting weather patterns across the region, caused widespread flooding with even more dangerous conditions in local areas. In Lexington County, one measurement in Chapin from the National Weather Service topped out at over 17 inches between October 3rd and October 5th. The County generally saw an average of 10 inches over that time, and across the Midlands there were measurements taken between 5 and 22 inches. When severe rains are regional, there is always a potential risk of longer-term flooding as the excess water works its way through the watershed. In less severe instances, there is time for the use of Lake Murray as a managed reservoir to reduce the flooding impacts on the County. The 2015 event caused the breach of three dams along the Twelve Mile Creek, south of Lake Murray in Lexington

The formation of Lake Murray by the Saluda Dam raises the possibility of a catastrophic, but extremely unlikely event: the failure of the dam. It is difficult to overstate just how strong the precautions against this event are. In 2005 a "backup dam" was constructed to address evidence that the

strongest historic earthquake in the region, occurring in 1886, was actually stronger than previously thought. With the addition of the backup dam, the Lake Murray and the Saluda Dam system are prepared to withstand the strongest known seismic event in the area. Still, in the event of the unthinkable, Dominion Energy maintains a map of evacuation zones and evacuation routes downstream of the lake. Five of the evacuation zones are in Lexington County, though risks on the Richland County side of the Congaree River would extend far further south.

The dams that failed in the 2015 flooding event were much smaller than the Saluda Dam. These dams were created to help manage the flow of the numerous streams and tributaries within the County. These dams and other important control points are shown on the Flood Risk Map that follows, a FEMA-generated non-regulatory map that helps communicate community risks.

Figure 9-2: 2015 Rain Event

Figure 9-3: Lake Murray Dam Evacuation Zones
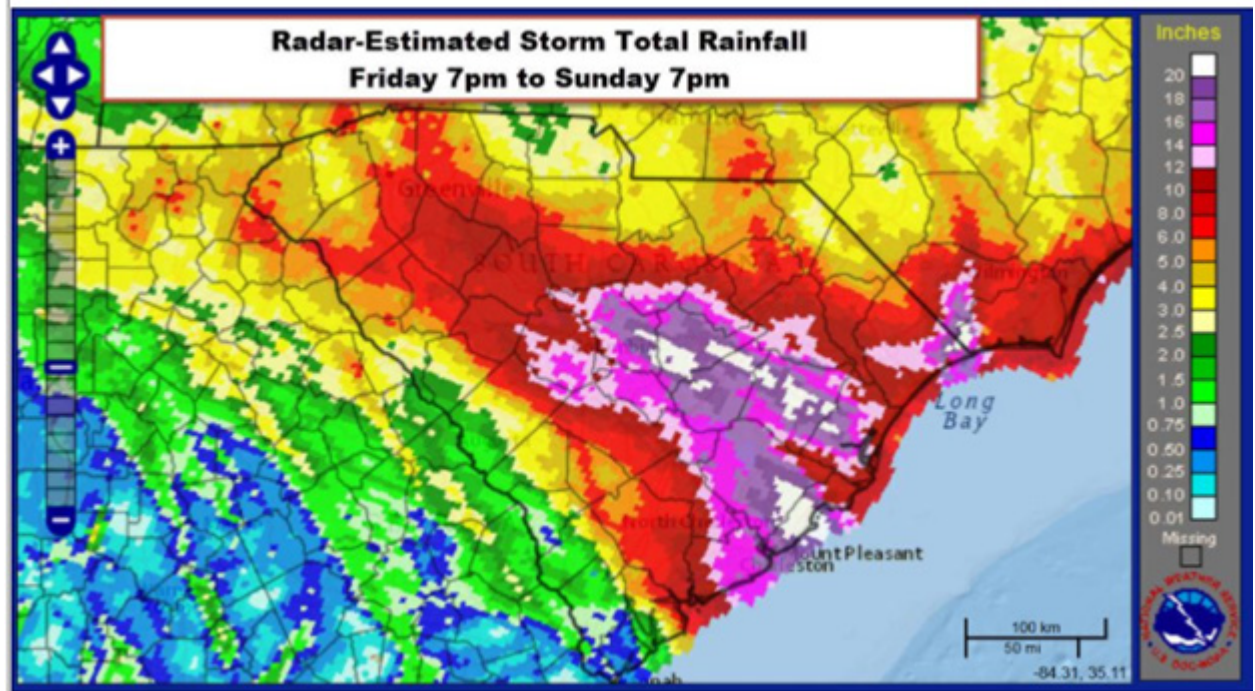
National Flood Insurance Program and Community Rating System

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which sets minimum standards related to development in or near the floodplain. FEMA also administers the Community Rating System (CRS), a voluntary program where community-wide efforts lead to discounted flood insurance rates for property owners in the community. The CRS has nine classes with 9 being the easiest class to achieve and 1 the most comprehensive. Classes are point-based, and actions taken to achieve a class may include stricter regulation of construction within the floodplain, or other community-wide, anti-flood measures.

Lexington County participates in the CRS and has achieved a Class 7 rating. By comparison, neighboring Richland, Orangeburg, and Aiken Counties are Class 8, 9, and 9 respectively, and municipalities Columbia and Cayce are also Class 9. In fact, while Charleston County leads the state as Class 3, only two jurisdictions not in coastal counties (where sea level rise and hurricanes are an additional reason to participate) have achieved a more stringent

Figure 9-4: Flood Risk Map

Figure 9-4: Flood Risk Map

classification than Lexington County – the cities of Greenville and Florence.

Class 7 entitles Lexington County residents and landowners to a 5 percent discount on flood insurance (15 percent in the Special Flood Hazard Area, a FEMA-mapped portion of the floodplain at greater risk of flooding). Were Lexington County to pursue Class 6, that discount would rise to 10 percent (20 percent in the Special Flood Hazard Area).

Repetitive Loss

FEMA policies and programs are related to "repetitive loss" properties, where due to flood there has been two claims to the National Flood Insurance Program on the same property within 10 years, and "severe repetitive loss" properties where there have been four larger claims within the same 10 years. Repetitive loss buyout programs can boost resilience by relocating structures that are repeatedly being harmed to parts of the community with less risk, and such programs are underway already in the county

The Planning and GIS Department maintains a list of these properties as identified in FEMA data, though as these are calculated on individual properties and not generalized areas, a map has not been included in this plan in accordance with FEMA-guided privacy policies.

Lowlands as Community Assets

A prohibition on structures in a floodplain limits property damage and community costs to address the damage when the area does flood. Depending on the area context, floodplains can be strategically used as accessible open space for the community. Trails and parks can accommodate stormwater or floodwater and are easy to repair if they do temporarily go underwater. Most floodplains are located along the banks of connected tributaries and streams and could be a ready-made network of greenways or nature paths in areas ready for that investment. Essentially, use of floodplains as community parkland can help turn a community liability into a community asset.

Preserving Natural Places

In addition to the general case of preserving lowlands, there are opportunities to preserve natural lands to better protect and provide access to high profile waterways, including Lake Murray, the Saluda River, and the Edisto River. Lake Murray is universally recognized as a County asset worth protecting. The Saluda River is the site of near-term plans for the Saluda River Greenway as a part of the Three Rivers Trails system. The plans are for continuous trails along the length of the river south of the Saluda Dam. It is expected to be a popular destination.

The Edisto River is a different kind of opportunity. Development pressure is still not nearly as heavy on the Edisto as near Lake Murray, the Saluda River, or the Congaree River. This means there could be significant long term benefits for acting to protect stretches of the river now, before competing demands on the land make it more difficult. Actions could include seeking designations for the river, such as declaring it a State Scenic River or connecting it to national programs, such as the American Rivers organization. It could also include preserving the land in the floodplain or in a buffer from the river by prohibiting permanent structures other than docks or boathouses. It could also take the form of seeking partnership with organizations looking to preserve open lands and prioritizing land along the river, such as the Nature Conservancy or the local Columbia Land Trust.

Figure 9-5: NNBF Strategies

River and Floodplain Management
- Slows flood flows
- Encourages flood storage
- Creates bypasses to move water away from communities
- Provides ecological and aquatic habitat benefits

Vegetation Management
- Slows water
- Encourages infiltration in soil
- Enables evapotranspiration
- Increases roughness and slows flow

Rural Runoff Management
- Captures water flow
- Slows and stores water
- Encourages infiltration
- Traps sediments

Urban Runoff Management
- Retains and stores water in green space
- Slows delivery of water to sewer system

Erosion Management
- Protects riverbanks
- Reduces erosion of banks
- Replaces hard engineering with vegetated banks

Natural and Nature-Based Features (NNBF) for Flood Risk Management

In 2021, the US Army Corps of Engineers released the International Guidelines on Natural and Nature-Based Features for Flood Risk Management, detailing the planning, design, implementation and value of using "green infrastructure." Green infrastructure is a common name for these natural and nature-based features. The report provides conceptual level guidance for deploying these NNBF in various environments and offers guidance.

Implementing effective NNBF techniques begins with appropriate scoping and planning, funding, acquisition, and diverse stakeholder involvement, and a long-term commitment. In general, the approach is to plan at the watershed scale to augment and restore existing natural systems, and otherwise mimic natural systems. Full benefits are achieved over the long timescale, in part by reducing losses from disasters. The systems also have aesthetic, environmental, financial, public health benefits beyond dealing with the same hazards through hard infrastructure. NNBFs seek to manage the flow of water on rivers and floodplains, the vegetation along the edges, runoff into the system from

agriculture, or urban areas, and managing erosion.

General goals from the NNBF report include:

- Retain runoff from rainfall, thus reducing the downstream flow.

- Increase the proportion of rainfall that infiltrates into the ground, thus reducing the amount of runoff from rainfall and, therefore, the downstream flow.

- Delay the flow of water by slowing its progress across a property.

- Decrease lowland floodwater levels by increasing the capacity to move water.

For additional details see Figure 9-5: NNBF Strategies.

Additional Hazardous Events

As discussed in Chapter 5, Public Safety, the Lexington County Emergency Management Division coordinates hazard response and mitigation. In addition to flooding, some hazardous events with planned response policies and actions include release of hazardous materials in transit, and a major failure at the nearby Virgil C. Summer Nuclear Generating Station in Jenkinsville, SC. Additional possible events include winter storms with enough ice or snow to temporarily shut down infrastructure and heat waves where any residents without

regular access to air-conditioned space may be at a health risk. Having effective plans for disasters can help limit damage and speed recovery. Thorough planning can also limit the frequency of damage or harmful effects when potential disasters occur. To that end, Lexington County's Emergency Management Division-led Hazard Mitigation Plan, updated every five years as required by FEMA, will be a key tool in maintaining resiliency.

Effecting Regional, National, or Global Systems

Changing climate patterns and environmental cycles can expand the path of disasters and strains in the County. To the degree industry or infrastructure within the County contributes to larger regional, national, or global hazards and stresses, the County may wish to mitigate those effects. The degree of this could include power and water conservation efforts, allowance for renewable energy development, or acting strategically to help meet a particular target at the regional, national or global level. There is not currently a South Carolina Renewable Portfolio Standard for electricity, but there are targets in 15 states, and the County can look to contribute toward such goals or policies if they are made in the future.

GUIDING & MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

Prepare the County for both natural and human-caused hazardous events to reduce or eliminate disaster impacts on property and human life through emergency preparedness, development regulations, and infrastructure development.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- *Reduce the number of properties failing to use best management practices to prevent damage from flooding.*

- *Maintain and Improve the County's NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program) Community Rating System (CRS) Classification, maintaining Class 7 and pursuing Class 6.*

- *Continue to Reduce the number of repetitive loss properties as identified in the Floodplain Management Plan.*

- *Limit or prevent the creation of critical public facilities at risk from flood damage.*
- *Increase the acres of protected park, conservation land, or designated open space in floodplain areas.*
- *Increase the number of formal coordination actions or plans with municipalities and surrounding jurisdictions.*

Achieving Results

Policies

- **9-1** Coordinate resilience planning, including hazard mitigation plans, with surrounding jurisdictions.

- **9-2** Work with municipalities, the recreation and aging commissions, or other entities to identify new parkland or passive recreation opportunities in floodplains where structures or other development would be a considerable liability during a flood or storm.

- **9-3** Continually work to identify properties at risk of damage from hazards.

- **9-4** Continually monitor for state and federal programs and initiatives that help improve or educate property owners and the community about the value of resilience efforts.

- **9-5** Continually educate the public on risks and how to prepare for them. Education should include information for both individuals and businesses.

- **9-6** Consider evacuation zones and routes when modifying zoning or street classifications that govern land use and changes to the transportation network.

- **9-6** In partnership with CMCOG, plan for water flow on the scale of watersheds.

- **9-7** Support opportunities for renewable energy production.

- **9-8** Support opportunities for water and electricity conservation.

- **9-9** Support plans for protection of specific waterways, such as the Edisto River, through greenway or blueway trails or other land protections.

- **9-10** Act to implement regulations to reduce the potential for flood damage in flood prone areas before intense market demand is established in these areas.

- **9-11** Consider NBBF opportunities when infrastructure design solutions are being decided.
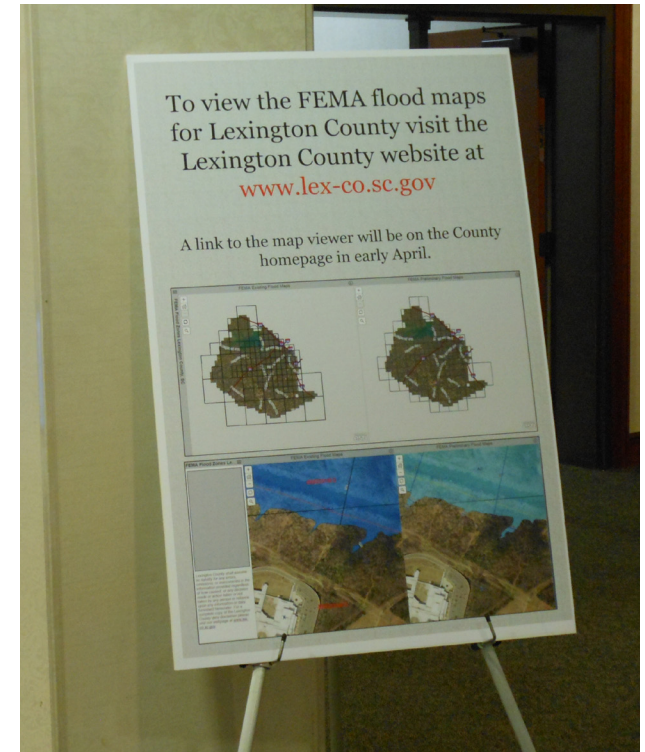
Actions

- Comply with the most recent **Hazard Mitigation Plan**, and actively pursue Hazard Mitigation Plan actions.

- **Improve floodplain and stormwater management development standards** within the County land development ordinances, including potential incentives for low impact development techniques.

- Meet new thresholds for the **FEMA Community Rating System (CRS)** Class 7 updated in 2021, including maintaining the current 2 foot of freeboard requirement on any development in the floodplain.

- **Pursue CRS Class 6** and achieve greater flood insurance discounts for residents and property owners. Monitor the class achieved by surrounding communities and stay ahead if possible, to use as an economic development recruitment tool.

- **Develop flooding and drainage studies** that are prerequisites for access to Federal or State funding programs. These should align with considerations of flooding and drainage in the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

- Consider measures that **mitigate the potential cost of property damage in floods along the Saluda River** downstream from the dam

- **Coordinate any resilience planning or actions** with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions.

- Implement any federal or State-enabled **buyout programs for repetitive loss** properties, or other properties at a heightened risk of loss during disasters.

- Develop a **stormwater utility fee** to improve drainage in areas with a high amount of development.

- Adopt **heightened standards that ensure continuance of operations** for public institution sites and service provision. This could include either stronger development standards or prohibition on placement of such facilities within floodplains to the greatest extent possible.

- Support recognition or designation **recognizing the value of the Edisto River.**

- **Partner with land trust organizations to protect land along the waterfronts,** including land where development would create a flood risk. Investigate how much of a role the Recreation and Aging Commissions may take in creating trail networks and identify other entities or agencies that could also be partners.

- **Investigate requirements for seed grant money or matching funds** available through State and Federal agencies, including DHEC.

10
CULTURAL
RESOURCES

Cultural Resources

Introduction

The historic properties, structures, and cultural institutions that exist in Lexington County are valuable assets that provide a tangible connection to the County's past. Taken together, these cultural resources directly enrich the lives and livelihoods of residents by providing context and offering a glimpse into the origins of the County and a narrative to its current circumstances. Likewise, these spaces and places become points of attraction for visitors to the County, as they embody the stories of the people that shaped and lived them. Preserving, maintaining, and augmenting these cultural resources over time ensures that this lens of perspective is maintained, and that a consideration of the past may shed light on the County's future.

The Role of the County and its Partners

To protect its cultural assets, Lexington County and its partners rely on established programs. For example the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office works towards preserving historic and prehistoric properties by helping to identify them and working with local municipalities to protect them and provide interpretive signage for the public. One of the primary goals of these groups is to get properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which is maintained by the National Park Service, and affords listed properties a high-profile endorsement of preservation. A listed property may also be eligible to receive Federal financial assistance in the form of tax incentives or grant money intended to help the owner maintain the property. Other groups also facilitate and encourage the protection and preservation of these places, often not in direct coordination with the County.

Alongside these various historically significant places, Lexington County is host to other opportunities, destinations, and features that build and support its suite of cultural assets. In many cases, these places are located within the municipalities, yet all are available to the general public and offer entertainment, exposure, and educational opportunities to residents of the County.

Unfortunately, the County's historical and cultural attributes have been sorely overlooked over time when evaluating the

highest and best use of lands across the County. Recently, there has been a renewed effort and a re-invigorated interest in preserving, protecting, enhancing and re-vitalizing the County's historic, cultural and natural resources in the form of restrictive development regulations serving to begin to accomplish this task. It is recommended that the County Council, citizens, Boards and Commissions, and administration continue to take an active and renewed role in this rejuvenation.

Facts and Trends

Lexington County currently has 56 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and likely more that would qualify. (See Figure 10-1: Historic Places

Figure 10-1: Historic Places Map and List
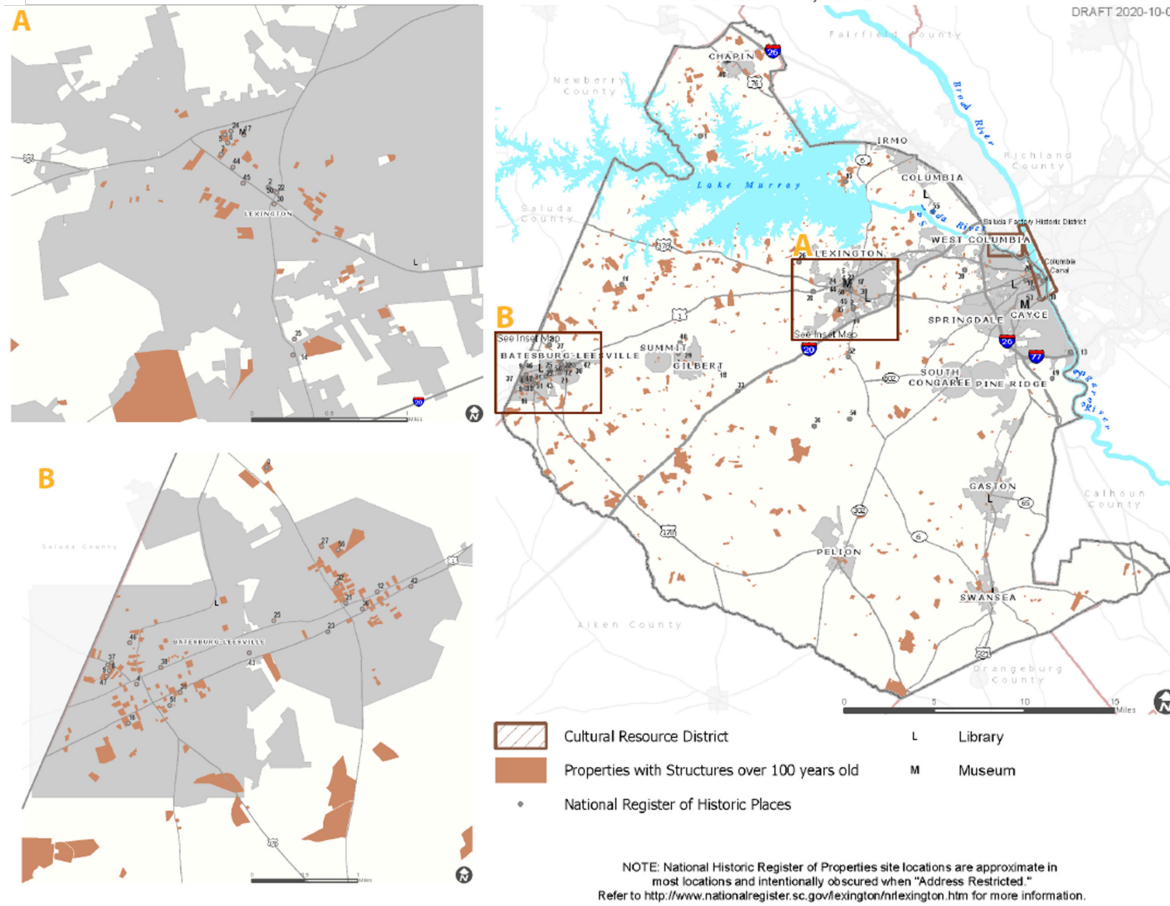
1	Ballentine-Shealy House
2	Bank of Western Carolina
3	D.D.D. Barr House
4	Batesburg Commercial Historic District
5	W. Q. M. Berly House
6	William Berly House
7	Lemuel Boozer House
8	Simon Bouknight House
9	Cartledge House
10	William J. Cayce House
11	Cedar Grove Lutheran Church
12	Church Street Historic District
13	Congarees Site (Address Restricted)
14	C. E. Corley House
15	Jacob Wingard Dreher House
16	Broadus Edwards House
17	Fox House
18	David Jefferson Griffith House (Address Restr.)
19	Guignard Brick Works
20	Gunter-Summers House
21	Hampton Hendrix Office
22	James Harman Building
23	Hartley House
24	Ernest L. Hazelius House
25	Henry Franklin Hendrix House
26	John Solomon Hendrix House
27	Thomas Galbraith Herbert House
28	John Jacob Hite Farm (Address Restricted)
29	J. B. Homan House
30	Home National Bank
31	A. C. Jones House
32	Leesville College Historic District
33	Henry Lybrand Farm (Address Restricted)
34	Manning Archaeological Site (Address Restr.)
35	Major Henry A. Meetze House
36	Crowell Mitchell House
37	McKendree Mitchell House
38	Mitchell-Shealy House
39	Mount Hebron Temperance Hall
40	Music Hall Evangelical Lutheran Church (Restr.)
41	New Brookland Historic District
42	Old Batesburg Grade School
43	Old Batesburg-Leesville High School
44	Charlton Rauch House
45	David Rawl House
46	John Jacob Rawl House
47	Rawl-Couch House
48	Robinson-Hiller House
49	South Appalachian Mississippian (Address Restr.)
50	Simmons-Harth House
51	Southern Railway Depot
52	James Stewart House
53	Still Hopes
54	Taylor Site (Address Restricted)
55	Vastine Wessinger House
56	Reverend Frank Yarborough House

Map) In most cases, the properties are the remaining structures and houses from old family farms and homesteads in the rural County. In other cases, storefronts and homes in the historic downtown areas are on the list. Likewise, the County has at least 1,000 properties with structures that are over 100 years old, and in some cases much older than that. Many of these historically significant properties and buildings are in the rural and unincorporated areas of the County, and which may see development pressures in the years ahead and could be lost through development. Through a broad agency announcement, multi-jurisdictional agreement with the USGS, USDA and a significant number of Counties statewide, the County recently acquired QL1 LiDAR mapping and data, serving to enable identification of hidden and previously unidentified historical ground resources.

The Lexington County Museum is in downtown Lexington and celebrates the colonial and antebellum era architecture preserved there, including the antiques and relics of life at that time. The museum features over thirty historic buildings that have been moved there from around the County serving to further protect them for future generations. Visitors explore the seven-acre grounds and can see the original house that was built on the property during educational and interpretive tours.

Lexington County also boasts a large library system. The main branch is in the Town of Lexington itself, with nine other branches spread around the County, including a mobile library serving the needs of remote and underserved populations. The library system offers a range of digital and analog content, as well as age-based programming events, including for children and teenagers. Libraries are more than places to borrow books, they are multi-faceted community resource centers.

Other notable cultural resources and venues include:

- Sports destinations (see Recreation Commission Facilities List);
- Performance venues;
- The South Carolina State Farmers Market;
- Continued tradition of agricultural production in area farms;
- Icehouse Amphitheater;
- Village Square Theater;
- West Columbia Riverwalk Park and Amphitheater;
- Saluda Shoals Park and Greenway;
- The Lake Murray Symphony Orchestra;
- Riverbanks Zoo and Botanical Gardens; and
- The Columbia Convention Center, which is just outside the County and a key partner.

Recreation Commissions Facilities List

1	Chapin Recreation Complex	31	Batesburg-Leesville Town Park	61	Willie B. Caractor Park
2	Midlands Sports Complex	32	Douglas Reeves Community Park	62	Seven Oaks Park
3	Swansea Sports Complex	33	B Avenue Park	63	Gibson Pond Park
4	Brodie Road Sports Complex	34	South Congaree Town Park	64	Lexington Square
5	Reco Ball Field	35	Pine Ridge Park	65	Lexington Paw Park
6	Ball Park Road Recreation Complex	36	Sunnyside Park	66	Twin City High Community Park
7	Pine Grove Sports Complex	37	Gaston Ball Park	67	Melvin Park
8	Oak Grove Sports Complex	38	Granby Gardens Park	68	LCRAC Maintenance Bldg
9	Lexington County Tennis Complex	39	Glenwood Park	69	LCRAC Administration Bldg
10	Howard Sports Complex	40	Andrew J. Burnette Park	70	ICRC Administration Center
11	Gilbert Sports Complex	41	C.M. Jack Carraway Community Park	71	Lexington Leisure Center
12	Gilbert Soccer & Softball Complex	42	Rosamounda Percell-Butler Community Park	72	Fairview Community Center
13	Boundary Field	43	Red Bank Park	73	Tri-City Leisure Center
14	Ball Park Road Gymnasium	44	Hollow Creek Park	74	Boiling Springs Community Center
15	West Columbia Soccer Complex	45	Halleywood Park	75	Batesburg-Leesville Leisure Center
16	Lexington County Sports Complex	46	Beverly Brandes Community Park	76	Spires Recreation Center
17	Gilbert Church Softball Complex	47	Crooked Creek Park	77	South Congaree Equestrian Center
18	Lexington Girls Softball Fields	48	Saluda Shoals Regional Park	78	Swansea Senior Center
19	Shull Island Landing	49	Cooper Park	79	Gilbert Senior Center
20	Thomas A. Newman Boat Landing	50	Gilbert Town Park	80	Pelion Senior Center
21	Lake Murray Public Access	51	Pine View Ball Park	81	Pine Ridge Senior Center
22	Lake Murray Public Access	52	Virginia Hylton Park	82	Irmo Middle School Athletic Complex
23	Saluda River Public Access	53	Felton C. Benton Park	83	Nursery Road Elementary Athletic Complex
24	Saluda River Public Access	54	Cayce Riverwalk Park	84	Chapin High School Athletic Complex
25	Corley Street Park	55	Derrick Park	85	Gilbert Middle School Athletic Complex
26	Bray Park	56	Ridge Road Park	86	Chapin Elementary Athletic Complex
27	Riverland Park	57	Eric L. Fowler Community Park	87	Irmo Elementary School Athletic Complex
28	Edmund Park	58	Springdale Park	88	Gilbert Elementary Athletic Complex
29	Guignard Park	59	Banks Park	89	Wildcat Hollow Athletic Field
30	State Street Park	60	Irmo Town Park		

GUIDING & MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

Support cultural, historic, and art amenities in the County through support for private landowner preservation efforts, identification of funding sources, coordination with municipalities, and marketing and promotional support.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- *Increase investment in and support for arts, recreation, and tourism.*
- *Increase the number of sites on the National Historic Register.*

Achieving Results

Policies

- **10-1** Protecting historic buildings through strategies, such as development incentives and recognition programs.

- **10-2** Build capacity to assist with the technical requirements in identifying potential historic and arts program funding sources for local efforts in partnership with county organizations.

- **10-3** Promote historic and arts programs in the county.

- **10-4** Support and publicize private efforts to preserve cultural resources.

- **10-5** Support and activate community arts initiatives. Municipalities may be a key partner in this effort.

- **10-6** Support and publicize opportunities for participating in or watching sporting events in the County.

- **10-7** Support historical and other narrative roadside marker programs that highlight culture in the County.

- **10-8** Consider arts and cultural opportunities when the County builds or refurbishes its own facilities.

- **10-9** Host or provide support for annual music, arts, heritage, or cultural festivals held in the County or in the municipalities.

- **10-11** Begin to utilize the newly acquired LiDAR to assist with historic and cultural resource feature identification and evaluation across the County.

Actions

- Establish **criteria for identifying and preserving historic sites and districts.** This may include establishment of an architectural or historic review board to help preserve identified districts through clear standards that would be adopted by ordinance.

- Consider creating and empower a **Lexington County Art Commission** or supporting a nonprofit organization partner to coordinate funding and support for historic, cultural, and arts programs.

- Consider **development incentives for providing public art** in new developments, or for payments-in-lieu to be directed towards a public arts program.

- Investigate requirements for **hosting statewide or regional amateur or school sports competitions** and end-of-year championships.

- Establish a procedure for evaluating opportunities to s**upport annual music, arts, heritage, or cultural festivals**.

- Consider use of the newly acquired QL1 LiDAR to **identify features on potential cultural and historic properties** in support of long-term protection of these resources for preservation purposes.

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11

POPULATION

Population

Introduction

The population of Lexington County is growing, with 150,000 new residents potentially expected by 2040. That overall growth is a driving force that influences the policies and actions throughout the entire comprehensive plan. This chapter briefly describes that growth, as well as factors that can improve the health, well-being, and quality of life of the population during that growth.

The Role of the County and its Partners

The County and Municipalities

Toward the collection of population data, the County and municipalities are mostly consumers of the information. They do not collect the information directly, but they are responsible for using it to plan effectively. When it comes to projections, rather than just the critical counts of existing conditions, the County and municipalities do share future plans so they can be used in the regional calculations by CMCOG.

Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG)

The Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) in its regional transportation planning capacity collects key benchmark data points, coordinates with the regional jurisdictions, and uses sophisticated statistical modeling to produce the projections. Population data and characteristics are just a first stepping-stone for CMCOG as it uses the data as inputs in a sophisticated transportation model. Though the transportation model is its ultimate target, having population projections is a critical tool for this planning effort.

Healthcare Systems

Various entities in the regional healthcare system are critical partners in ensuring the health, well-being, and quality of life for the population in the County, including Lexington Medical Center.

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC)

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is the statewide agency tasked with monitoring health and environmental factors and administering relevant programs. It is

valuable to the planning effort both as a source of trusted statistics and as a potential partner in ensuring funds or other assistance makes it to the right residents of the County. In 2022 legislation was advanced to split DHEC into multiple agencies but had not been ratified by the time this plan was drafted. Successor agencies should be substituted as partners as appropriate.

Hospitals, Doctors, and other Care Providers.

By reporting case statistics through appropriate channels, the hospitals, doctors, and care providers of the County help ensure DHEC is working from accurate numbers. They are also instrumental in communicating with their patients, including many Lexington County residents, and in helping to formulate responses to risks in community health and well-being.

Facts and Trends

Population Projection

The Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) projects an additional 150,000 people will reside in Lexington County by 2040, with a total population rising from nearly 320,000 to nearly 470,000. (The 2020 Census population total for the county is nearly 294,000, a number that would be taken into account in future projections developed by CMCOG.) As of 2018, (See Figure 11-1: Population History and Projection) nearly three quarters of the County's population lived in the unincorporated portions of the County. While that proportion may change as more land is developed, with the expectation of municipal services, the number has been consistently above 70% since at least the year 2000. (See Figure 11-2: Population by Incorporation). The rising population is being generated by a combination of the growth of the region as a whole and the growth of the County in particular, with its reputation for high performing schools and a pleasant place to live

Lexington County has experienced significant growth over the last two decades, adding more than 100,000 new residents. The County's assets and quality of life are attracting new residents from near and far, but a greater portion of
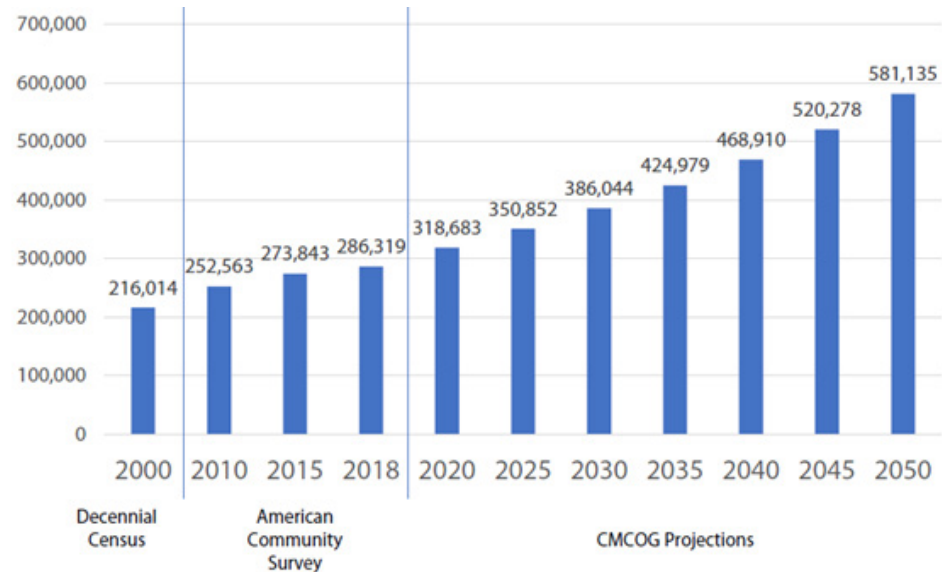
Figure 1: Population History and Projection

Figure 2: Population by Incorporation
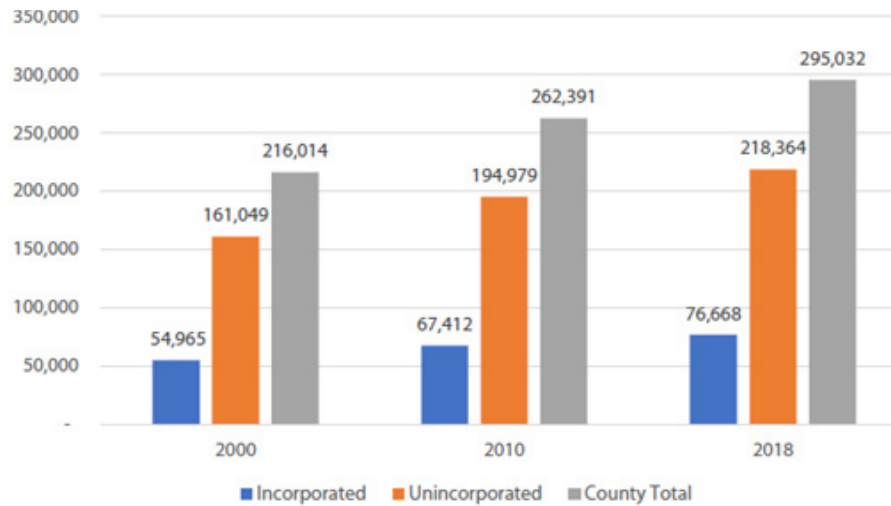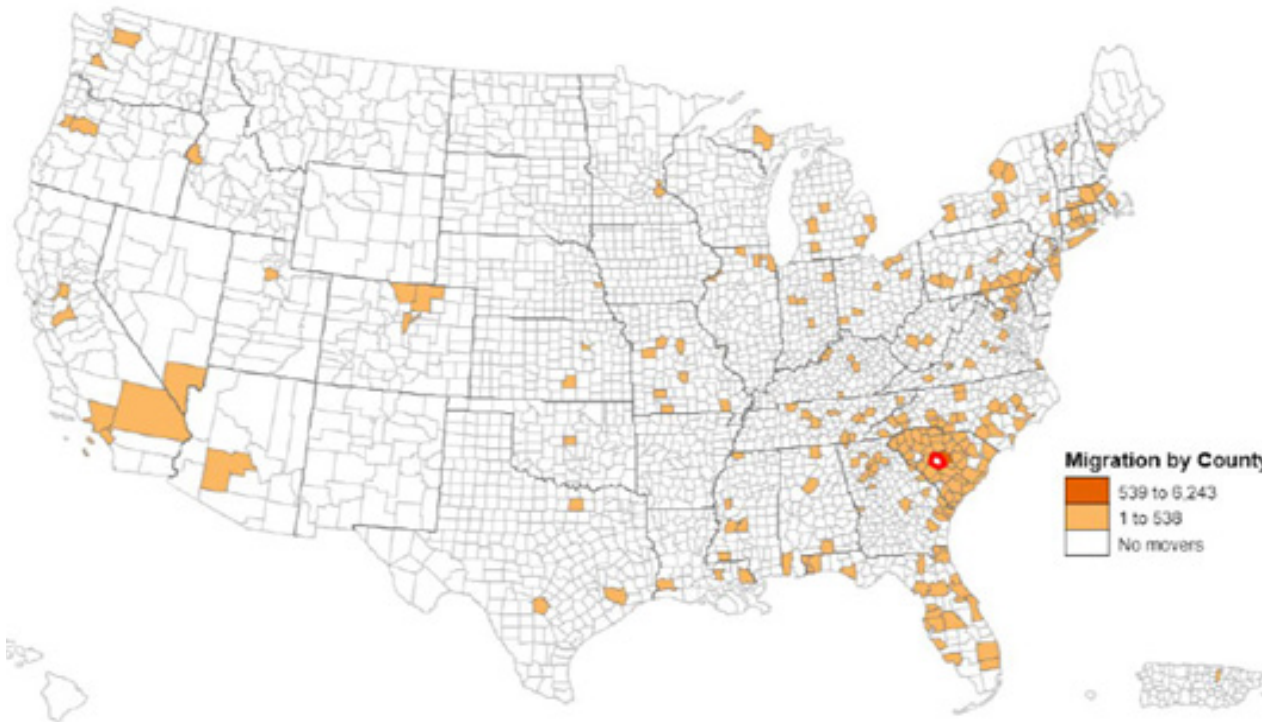

Figure 3: County to County Migration

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 5-year American Community Survey

them are from relatively nearby. As of 2018, approximately 64% of new residents moving to Lexington County moved from somewhere else in South Carolina. When considering the flow of in-migration of people moving from across the country, 34% of those moving to Lexington County are from Richland County, just across the county line. The most common origination states of new residents are North Carolina and Georgia. (See Figure 11-3: County to County Migration for all original counties that registered a move to Lexington County in the latest data set.)

Health and Well-being

There are innumerable ways to consider tracking the health of the population, but one important baseline that helps compare across different geographies is DHEC's Community Health Profile. The Profile measures eleven separate chronic diseases, risk factors, and health behaviors. Lexington County is better than the state average on seven of eight negative health indicators. The percent of the population with coronary heart disease, stroke, heart attack, hypertension, diabetes, and asthma and obesity is less than the state as a whole. The eighth negative indicator, percent of the population that smokes, is nearly identical to the state average. Medical professionals

in the County also report a relatively high prevalence of diabetes and opioid abuse.

Lexington is also above the state average in three positive indicators: (1)Percent reporting leisure time physical activity, (2)population age 65 and over that has received a flu shot and (3)pneumococcal vaccine. Though the County is ahead of the State, maintaining these targeted measures or even improving them further can generate greater health outcomes for the population.

Access to a Healthy Diet

Many of the DHEC indicators can be caused or aggravated by a poor diet. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) maintains the Food Access Research Atlas, which categorizes different food access deficiencies by census tract. The greatest risk designation from the USDA is in low-income census tracts where a significant number of residents live more than a mile from a grocery store in urban areas and more than 20 miles in rural areas. There are four such tracts in Lexington County: In Batesburg-Leesville, West Columbia, east of South Congaree, and west of the Columbia Metropolitan Airport. Strategies to ensure the population has access to healthy foods include subsidizing mobile groceries that bring farmers-market quality produce to areas with poor access. Others include encouraging development of a grocery store, if there is demand enough to support it.

Access to Nature

The health benefits of access to nature are clear, if frustratingly difficult to quantify. Still, Harvard's Health and Places Initiative (HAPI) undertook a survey of all available published studies to determine what benefits from nature there are in the built environment. Improvements to mental health in the study areas where there was access to nature, including unchanged wilderness, cultivated gardens, lawns, and tree-lined streets all proved adequate for a short-term mental break in times of stress.

Access to Networks

Health outcomes can be tied to stable access to opportunities that allow for upward mobility and economic enhancement of individuals and households. Access to physical workspaces and broadband internet to facilitate work from home and remote learning opportunities are important examples. The dire circumstances regarding COVID-19 that were prevalent as this plan was drafted will fade, but the need for improved access to opportunities through networks may very well stay in some form.

GUIDING & MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

All residents will have access to healthy neighborhoods and quality employment opportunities through safe, affordable, and convenient public and private services and amenities.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- *Increasing number of residences within 5 miles of grocery store.*
- *Increasing number of residences within 10 miles of employment centers.*
- *Increasing number of residences within a ten-minute walk of public parks.*
- *Reduce chronic disease and DHEC risk factor metrics over time.*

Achieving Results

Policies

- **11-1** Work with parks and recreation commissions to develop requirements for new residential developments of a specific size to incorporate passive/active parklands and facilities.
- **11-2** Track population growth and housing unit growth against projections to get a better sense of the projections accuracy over time. Track based on planning areas or other useful subdivisions of the County to aid future capital investment planning.
- **11-3** Coordinate with municipalities on expectations for annexation and growth in the future.
- **11-4** Continue to monitor progress in community health risk factors.
- **11-5** Work with hospitals, doctors, and care providers to highlight health improvement programs.
- **11-6** Work with hospitals, doctors, and care providers to improve health service coverage in rural and underserved areas.
- **11-7** Improve access to broadband internet.

Actions

- **Recruit grocery stores** with fresh produce and healthy offerings to serve the County, particularly in areas suffering from food access deficiencies.
- Work with grocery stores or nonprofit groups to **bring fresh and healthy food options to residents in poorly served areas.**
- **Require natural elements in all residential and commercial development** to allow residents, workers, and customers to benefit from a view or proximity to nature. Consider recommendations or incentives for the same in industrial developments.
- **Require a combination of active and passive park areas** within large residential developments.
- **Develop complete neighborhoods** with easy access to grocery stores, public parks, and employment centers.

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12

PRIORITY INVESTMENT

Priority Investment

Introduction

As recognized by residents and as described in this plan, Lexington County is a place of many opportunities. It is a growing County, which can be both a testament to the quality of life made available within its borders and a source of challenges. This chapter helps identify priority areas – both physical locations, and types of needs – where strategic investment by the County can either make a direct impact or help steer action toward a significant benefit for the County as a whole.

The Role of the County and its Partners

County

When it comes to priority investments, the County is the key actor. While the County must consider its entire make-up, as a steward of public funds and potential catalyst for economic impacts, the County also needs to pursue strategic investments with outsized results, either in the size of the benefit to County residents or in serving parts of the County that otherwise might not receive a fair share of the benefits of future growth. The County acts both on its own through departments, including the Economic Development Department, as well as through partnering with other entities or programs.

Municipalities

Municipal and County success is intrinsically linked, and strategic partnerships toward the creation of a common goal benefits both municipal and county residents, such as development of a destination entertainment venue like an outdoor stage at a park that doubles as a regional farmers market, increasing broadband access, or partnering on a bid for funds from a state or federal program. County-municipal partnerships can

increase the size and scope of what either can do alone.

This plan also intends for some of the growth of the County to occur in and around existing municipalities. The transitional area on the edge of municipalities and the County, where some but not all landowners will consider annexation along with development, is a prime target for partnerships reflecting how important the area is to both the municipality and the County.

Where the cooperation requires greater formality or assurances, an interlocal agreement may be appropriate, including sharing responsibility for some utilities or governmental services. South Carolina allows municipalities, counties, and other political jurisdictions to share responsibilities and costs of providing services in this way.

State and Federal Programs

One of the most common ways to strategically do more for the County is through accessing State and Federal programs that may offer either specialized expertise, grants or matching funds that allow the County to have a greater impact than local funds alone could do. For example, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a Homebuyer Assistance program, HOME Investment Partnerships, that allows some assistance to first time homebuyers in the County, provided the County maintains a second lien position on the property. It also administers Community Development Block Grants that can be used to fund public services, facilities, and infrastructure. The State manages a State Revolving Fund for small rural water system grants and loans that could assist residents out beyond the easy reach of existing water systems.

Additional Granting Associations and Organizations

Still additional opportunities are available through other associations and organizations. The South Carolina Association of Counties maintains multiple grant programs and serves as a source of information for even more opportunities for everything from public humanities programs and preservation funds to litter crews and resilient infrastructure grants.

Economic Development Department

While it will remain true as time goes on that certain actions have an outsized positive impact on the County, the feasibility of some of those actions is dependent on

the shifting landscape of available funds and programs. Especially where funds are used to generate infrastructure to help attract new businesses to the County, the Economic Development Department will be the key arm of County Government acting on behalf of the County's interest.

Facts and Trends

Opportunity Zones and Business Parks

Opportunity Zones are economically distressed communities identified by census tract where some investments receive preferential tax treatment. These are opportunity areas for private and possibly public investment. Business parks that are County-owned or operated and market large sites to key industries are other potential opportunities for future public investment. Both were discussed more in depth in Chapter 3: Economic Development.

Public Private Partnerships

Public Private Partnerships, sometimes called PPP or P3 ventures, are arrangements between governments and private developers or operators to develop a district or provide a key piece of infrastructure. (The model is flexible; Spartanburg even boasts a public private partnership operated elementary school.) The model generally benefits governments by providing access to creative expertise of the private sector, while allowing the public sector to retain some control over the development structure. The private side of the partnership gains greater flexibility of regulations, a local government partner that is usually providing some financial benefit, and the ability to develop at a scale that increases profit. The public gets access to an innovative development or infrastructure solution along with the expected long-term stability of government participation. The most successful PPPs improve all three points: the private sector makes a profit, the government gets heightened tax revenues needed to fund services, and the public gets access to something special that neither the private nor public sector would feel prepared to commit to on their own. In Lexington County, the most likely targets for a PPP venture are well-designed mixed-use developments, critical infrastructure including road paving projects, and Broadband access. (In the past few years, the South Carolina Department of Commerce has contributed funds to such internet infrastructure ventures to make them more attractive, but so far, the program has been limited to areas with declining population.)

Zoning and Infrastructure Investments

In many communities where there is an investment in infrastructure, there is a rezoning that follows to encourage more development where the investment has been made in order to help recoup some of the costs of the initial investment. This can be true of new highways or interchanges, new sewer lines, or new transit corridors. The unit cost to provide the infrastructure is reduced and the increased development potential increases the taxable value of the land. Though traditionally this is done through zoning, the same effect could be achieved through street reclassifications, or even through strategic PPPs in a service area.

Revitalization and Similar Efforts

Investment is sometimes needed to spark change in challenging development contexts. This can include areas where there may be a desire to revitalize old buildings (adaptive reuse) old blocks and streets (revitalization), undeveloped parcels that were passed over in the past (infill) and areas that have fallen into disrepair that may need refreshing or additional changes (redevelopment). The investment can take the form of a pilot project that shows the viability of revitalizing an area, or a cleanup or infrastructure investment that reduces or clarifies unknown costs associated with building on sites that already have a history of development.
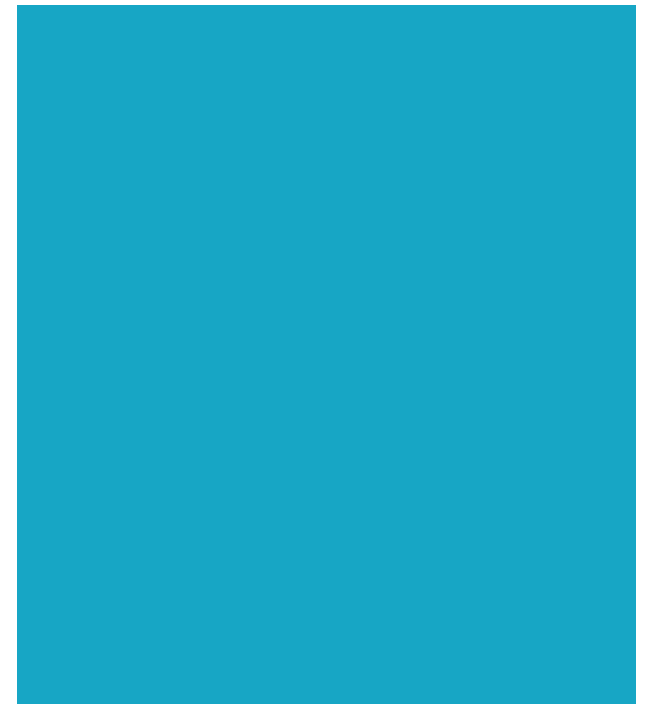
GUIDING & MEASURING SUCCESS

GOAL

Coordinate with state, federal, and local agencies to create opportunities for development and revitalization in priority investment areas identified on the Priority Investment Map.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- *Increase the number of jobs and businesses in identified priority investment areas.*

Achieving Results

Policies

- **12-1** Act strategically and invest in the County in ways that bring additional resources and benefits to County residents and businesses.

- **12-2** Coordinate with municipalities on investment in areas of mutual interest on the edges of municipal boundaries.

- **12-3** Prioritize investments in areas shown on the Priority Investment Map (see Figure 12-1: Priority Investment Map on the following page).

- **12-4** Continually survey potential State and Federal programs for useful new tools to support reinvestment in established areas and economic development in newer developing areas, including Federal CDBG grants, state rural utility and infrastructure grants, and those collected or administered by the South Carolina Association of Counties.

- **12-5** Take advantage of other priorities that can be addressed with Community Development Block Grants including public services, public facilities, and infrastructure.

- **12-6** Continually survey additional granting associations for useful new tools in prioritizing development.

- **12-7** Investigate additional funding sources, including revisiting the Capital Project Sales Tax (CPST) for transportation.

- **12-8** Support efforts to use adaptive reuse, revitalization, infill development or redevelopment to invest in areas that are already built.

Figure 12-1: Priority Investment Map
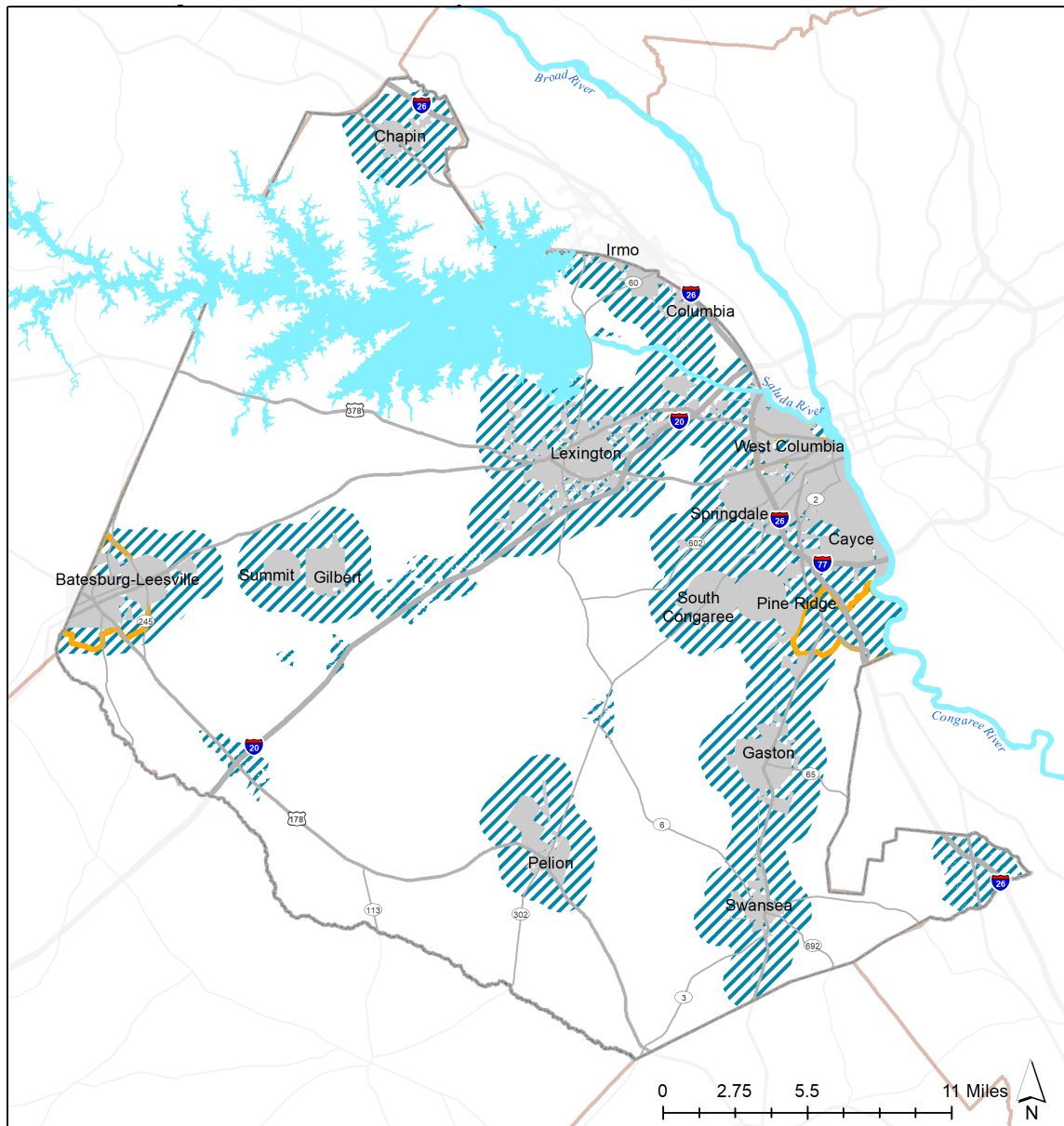
Legend

▨ Priority Investment Area   ▨ Opportunity Zones   ▨ Municipalities

Priority Investment Map

The Priority Investment Map identifies preferred locations for priority investment actions. These Priority Investment Areas (PIA) focus on expected locations for future growth primarily focused on economic development opportunities and areas in need of reinvestment and redevelopment. PIAs include business parks owned or operated by the County and the Columbia Metropolitan Airport.

The following map should be used as a guide when making decisions about future infrastructure investments and decisions related to investments, such as the County requesting a sewer extension within the County's sewer authority area from a neighboring municipality or private sewer provider. While generally speaking, rural areas are not identified as priorities for investment action, strategies to expand the economic development potential of rural businesses, such as expansion of broadband, should also be prioritized by the County. However, the extension of water or wastewater utilities within Future Planning Areas that are primarily rural in character is not supported by the policies of this plan.

Actions

- **Develop joint plans with neighboring municipalities** about appropriate development on land along the municipal border, and interlocal agreements to help ensure the transitional area is affectively served.

- Pursue **public private partnership efforts to support economic development** in Priority Investment Areas. Include and publicize quick projects early on to increase awareness and familiarity with the tool in the County.

- Empower the Economic Development Department to **make additional inquiries into public private partnership opportunities.**

- Create a path for **coordinated development review of complex projects** that can help the potential complications of a PPP or similar project to be better addressed, including identifying all needed permitting authorities.

- **Increase broadband coverage in areas with poor access.**

- **Increase mobility options,** including both high demand destinations and areas where there may be a higher proportion of residents without their own vehicle.

- Through the Economic Development Department, **assist prospective businesses and investors with identifying existing opportunity zone locations.**

- **Convene or facilitate ongoing discussions between key industries and workforce training programs**, including ones run through Midlands Technical College and local high schools.

- Through the Economic Development Department and Community Development Department, **promote reinvestment** in incorporated areas, redevelopment, revitalization, and infill development opportunities.

- **Revise the zoning and street classification regulations** on properties located along new infrastructure investments. This action will achieve a higher rate of return on these public investments by allowing more intensive development that will increase tax revenues.

- Complete a **pilot project demonstrating the viability of redevelopment or adaptive reuse.**

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13

IMPLEMENTATION

ACTION PLAN

Using the Plan

A plan for the future of the County will be most effective if it is regularly used as guidance by staff and decisionmakers. This includes looking to policies that help guide decisions in line with general planning principles and community goals, tracking the metrics that can help with understanding progress over time, and ultimately pushing to achieve the actions that will help bring about the community vision.

Community Priorities

As a part of the planning process, when the draft plan was unveiled the public was asked what elements they considered high priorities for action. Each respondent could select five. The top five responses were:

(1) Land Use, 68%

(2) Natural Resources (67%)

(3) Public Safety (63%)

(4) Transportation (53%)

(5) Population (48%)

Applying the Policies

The comprehensive plan's policies guide decisions related to both public action by the County government and private land development proposals that need some formal approval. County staff, advisory boards, and elected officials can look to the policies when deciding if a course of action or approval furthers community goals. Applicable policies may be referenced in staff reports to the various boards to highlight this connection. It is guidance and not a mandate. Complex land use decisions will raise concerns that need to be balanced. Even in these instances, the policies provide a common framework to work through nuanced issues for a particular development proposal. Policies may also help staff pursue new programs or prioritize existing ones when in the daily course of their work, or when proposing budgets.

Tracking Performance Metrics

The performance metrics in each chapter are a new feature for the County. They identify quantifiable values that can be tracked over time. The County should pursue information to update the metric values on a regular schedule. Where observing the metrics has proven they are associated with desired outcomes, numeric goals can be set and revised to continue to strive and to achieve the County's vision.

Changing the Plan

Communities continue to face new issues and opportunities brought on by growth and change. Plans need to evolve with the community. It is important for communities to support amendments and updates to plans over time so that the policy guidance included in the plan is relevant.
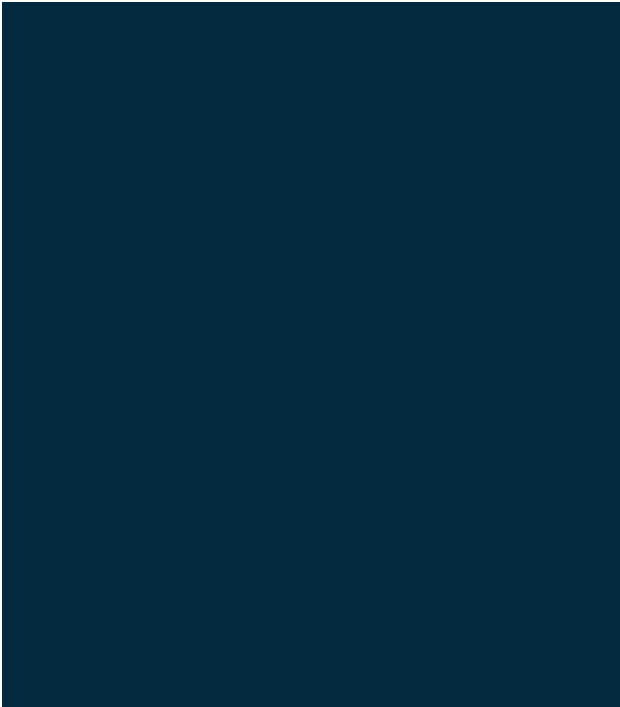
Amending the Plan

Every plan has an element of projecting the future, and as such may need to be changed to best support the County if something does not match changing conditions. Reasons to amend the plan include:

- Changing projections or assumptions upon which the plan was based (for example, a significant change in regional population of traffic projections based on new development patterns or new transportation technology).

- New issues or opportunities arising that were not addressed in the plan (for example as a transformative economic opportunity on the scale of a new county-leading employer or a new college campus).

- A major change in the preferred direction of the County's future such that the guiding planning principals, goals, policies, or actions no longer reflect the will of the community.

- Errors or omissions.

Updating the Plan

Comprehensive planning is a cycle that continues over time. The best practice is to continually evaluate the plan at regular intervals and project out further into the future to meet new challenges. The South Carolina Code of Laws Sec. 6-29-510(E) requires a review of comprehensive plan elements "as often as necessary but not less than once every five years." The same section requires the comprehensive plan, including all elements, be updated at least every ten years.

Acting to Achieve Plan Goals

Categorizing Actions

All actions included in the plan are identified and organized here for future implementation. Included within this section is guidance for implementation, including the duration, appropriate actor, cost, and whether an action is a one-time completion or an ongoing program. This information can be used by the County to identify appropriate actions to implement in future years as resources and partnership opportunities are available.

Action Duration

The actions are described as short duration, medium duration, or long duration, as shown below. All descriptions are estimates

S **Short Duration**: Action can be completed, or ongoing program established and running, within a year of beginning work.

M **Medium Duration**: Action can be completed, or ongoing program established and running, between one and three years of beginning work.

L **Long Duration**: Action can be completed, or ongoing program established and running, in more than three years of beginning to work.

Completing Actions

Some actions are for a plan or policy that can be completed, while others are building capacity or systems that require ongoing attention.

OC **One Time Completion**: The action has a definitive end.

OP **Ongoing Program**: When the action is considered completed, what remains is a program that will take some effort to continue to sustain.

Appropriate Actor

The responsible entity for achieving the action may be the County, or it may require a partnership with a different entity. Appropriate listed actors are estimates.

CO **County**: The County alone is responsible.

NP **Nonprofit Partner**: The County should partner with a nonprofit, nongovernmental, or community organization to complete the action or establish the ongoing program.

BP **Business Partner**: The County should partner with a private business to complete the action or establish the ongoing program.

MP **Municipal Partner**: The County should partner with municipalities within the County to complete the action or establish the ongoing program.

RP **Regional Partner**: The County should partner with a regional entity, school district, or recreation and aging commission to complete the action or establish the ongoing program.

Where an action or ongoing program requires the assistance of the State of South Carolina or the Federal government, requires a specialized private consultant, or requires a basic bid process, the designation reflects which partners are needed to enter into those contracts and projects.

Approximate Cost of Action to the County

Cost estimates are costs to the County for the action or ongoing program. Actions that generate revenue may be low cost even if they are costing others in taxes or fees.

$ **Low Cost**: New costs above and beyond staff time are estimated to be less than $10,000

$$ **Medium Cost**: New costs are estimated to be tens of thousands of dollars, but less than $100,000

$$$ **High Cost**: New costs are estimated to be hundreds of thousands of dollars, but less than $500,000

$$$$ **Very High Cost**: New costs are estimated to be over half a million dollars, reserved almost exclusively for infrastructure projects.

CHAPTER 2 LAND USE ACTIONS

Where additional guidance will help clarify the future of a particular area, neighborhood, or region, **develop area plans to refine the guidance within this comprehensive plan.** Area plans should include input from any neighborhoods they encompass and neighboring jurisdictions that are adjacent.

S **CO** **$** **OP**

Support the use of existing community land trusts that could partner with private landowners and developers to preserve rural and agricultural land, special places, open space, common areas, places of special interest, parkland, or special views either as open space or as working farmland. The Land Trust Alliance directory identifies 15 land trusts that operate in the County.

M **NP** **$** **OP**

Update and coordinate a re-write of land use regulations:

o Update all land use and development-related regulations including the zoning ordinance, landscape and open space ordinance, and subdivision ordinance to help achieve the policy direction of this plan and the development patterns identified on the Future Land Use and Character Map. This may include adjustments to zoning districts, performance zoning metrics or standards, street classification systems, open space requirements or other such tools.

o Consider standards that allow conservation subdivision design as a means of supporting open space preservation.

o Consider re-writing the Subdivision Ordinance to alleviate substandard road and emergency services access conditions, including augmenting private road, dirt road, easement accessed-developed and other access policy considerations.

o Ensure any new standards also allow some flexibility for infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse.

M **L** **CO** **MP** **$$** **$$$** **$$$$** **OC**

Should a holistic re-write of land use regulations in a single action not be feasible in the near term, as a precursor to later changes:

o Pursue an **in-depth analysis and review of the zoning use and street classification** matrices and determine appropriate uses within each category

o Pursue and in-depth analysis and review of zoning districts and street classifications, on the official zoning map, and evaluate the possibility of countywide changes to the overall zoning system

S **M** **CO** **$** **$$** **OC**

Analyze the effectiveness of recently adopted changes to the Zoning Ordinance, Landscape and Open Space Ordinances, Subdivision Ordinance, and Land Development Manual as a result of the subdivision moratorium and connected measures.

S **M** **CO** **$** **$$** **OC**

Work with municipalities to **ensure compatible regulations around the edges of planning and zoning jurisdictions** and to promote annexation that does not create holes of county jurisdiction inside municipalities.

S **M** **MP** **$** **$$** **OP**

Develop formalized agreements with municipalities to coordinate land use planning, and develop joint plans for areas of common interest within growth areas.

S **M** **MP** **$** **$$** **OC**

Promote standards that encourage "walkability" where residents and visitors can walk or bike for some trips. As long as the County does not want to maintain a sidewalk system, promote these aspects on sites large enough for the developer to provide these facilities as a private use, applied to internal circulation to the development, or where annexation by a municipality is likely.

S **M** MP BP RP **$** **$$** $$$ OP

CHAPTER 3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

Maintain a list of readily developable land located in growth areas and identified for employment development on the Future Land Use and Character Map.

S CO **$** OP

Update the County's Zoning Ordinance to reflect guidance of the Future Land Use and Character Map and associated map designations for employment areas.

S **M** **L** CO **$** **$$** OC

Develop regulations and marketing to support agritourism in the County.

S **M** NP BP **$** **$$** OP

Develop **pilot projects showcasing redevelopment and adaptive reuse**. Pilot projects may take the form of public-private partnerships.

S **M** CO BP **$$** $$$ OP

CHAPTER 4 TRANSPORTATION ACTIONS

Adopt a Capital Projects Sales Tax(CPST) or another **sustainable revenue source to fund transportation investments**. A portion of the revenue from the CPST should

be allocated to support walking and biking infrastructure, as well as COMET transit service, including capital investments and operations. Investment should consider both current deficiencies and getting ahead of future growth.

S **M** **L** **CO** **$$** **$$$** **OP**

Coordinate with CMCOG as they develop their ongoing **update to the region's Long Term Transportation Plan and Travel Demand Model**, using it as a tool to identify locations where transportation improvements will be necessary.

S **M** **L** **CO** **RP** **$** **OC**

Update the Lexington County Transportation Plan as additional transportation funding becomes available, expanding it to include additional capital projects like Complete Streets designs, intersection improvements, signal modifications, and safety projects. The revised plan should include a focus on identifying sidewalk, bicycle facility, and trail projects, or should be complemented by a dedicated Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan for the County.

S **M** **CO** **$$** **OP**

Develop a County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), similar to the SCDOT TIP, with an approved ranking criteria and prioritized project list for projects from the updated County Transportation Plan funded by the new Capital Penny Sales Tax or similar revenue source.

S **M** **CO** **$$** **OP**

Update street design guidance as part of the Land Development Manual, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Ordinance to align with this plan, with modifications including:

o Update street classifications to align with the Future Land Use and Character Map.

o Consider amending the Subdivision Ordinance to restrict, severely minimize or upgrade the construction standards for, privately maintained dirt roads and/or

private road access easements.

o Require sidewalks for all roadway projects and increase the minimum sidewalk width from 4 feet to 5 feet on residential streets and wider for high-volume pedestrian areas like village and town centers, depending on context.

o Require, rather than encourage, inter-parcel connectivity on major roads to minimize curb cuts.

o Require shorter minimum block lengths in village and town centers.

o Include graphics for typical recommended street sections according to context, using a Complete Streets approach and aligning with the latest American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidance.

o Encourage parking to be located to the rear or side of buildings to create a more welcoming pedestrian environment along street frontages.

S **M** **CO** **$$** **$$$** **OC**

Consider implementing **development impacts fees** to ensure new development is paying to mitigate the additional demand it places on the transportation system.

S **M** **CO** **$$** **$$$** **OP**

Develop and maintain a **GIS inventory of existing sidewalk and bicycle facilities**.

S **CO** **$** **OP**

Create a sidewalk request process, prioritization, and database—similar to the existing road paving request process—and commit additional annual funding to sidewalk construction.

M **L** **CO** **$** **$$** **$$$** **OP**

Work with SCDOT to **conduct corridor studies for key State routes** with growth and congestion, like US 378 and US 1.

M **CO** **$$** **$$$** **OC**

Develop small area plans for target growth areas to identify transportation infrastructure projects and desired future street networks with connectivity that can support growing populations.

S **M** **CO** **$$** **$$$** **OC**

Create an airport area reinvestment plan around CAE to address both economic development opportunities and infrastructure needed to support additional growth.

M **CO** **RP** **$$** **OC**

CHAPTER 5 PUBLIC SAFETY ACTIONS

Establish formal Levels of Service (LOS) for Sheriff, Fire, EMS, and 9-1-1 dispatch.

M **L** **CO** **MP** **OC**

Develop process to monitor level of service (LOS) and develop plans to meet deficits.

M **CO** **$$** **$$$** **OP**

Develop capital improvement plan (6-year or longer) to plan for public safety capital investment improvements needed (facilities, apparatus, and equipment needs) to serve expected growth.

S **M** **L** **CO** **$** **OP**

Develop new **Sheriff's Department regional centers** in the west and south service regions as these areas develop.

`L` `CO` `$$` `$$$` `$$$$` `OC`

Build **additional public safety stations**, as needed to maintain efficient service.

`M` `L` `CO` `$$` `$$$` `OP`

Implement the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

`M` `L` `CO` `$$` `$$$` `OP`

CHAPTER 6 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES ACTIONS

Develop an accounting of **total potable water and wastewater capacity** provided by private and public utilities operating within Lexington County. Document and track these capacities and coordinate discussions with jurisdictional partners regarding any needs for future improvements needed to provide adequate capacity to serve projected long-range growth.

`M` `L` `RP` `$` `$$` `OP`

Establish formal Levels of Service for public facilities and services to be tracked and monitored over time and to be used for projecting future capital facilities needs.

`M` `L` `RP` `$$` `OC`

Develop a **long-term facility maintenance needs plan** for all County infrastructure.

`M` `L` `CO` `$` `$$` `OC`

Develop a **mitigation strategy for addressing existing stormwater challenges** in the County.

`S` `M` `RP` `$` `$$` `OC`

Develop a **strategy for addressing future solid waste service** needs and secure funding for future landfill disposal services.

L **RP** **$** **$$** **OP**

Develop a capital improvement plan (6-year or longer) to plan for capital investment improvements needed to serve growth. Examples include expansion of library facilities, expansion of the County Administrative Building, improvements to the Columbia Metropolitan Airport (per the Airport Master Plan) and the Lexington County Airport, and future solid waste needs. Use future projections to plan for capital investments before they are critically needed.

S **M** **L** **RP** **$** **OP**

Consider preparation of **special service district(s)** to be located in parts of the County that desire higher levels of service for solid waste or stormwater services.

L **RP** **CO** **$$** **OC**

Support a revision to the State legislation regulating the methodologies that implement local government annexation, to provide **better tools for partnership and to reduce "donut holes" in annexation.**

L **MP** **$** **OP**

Coordinate with the public school districts by providing the districts with pertinent information (number of units and type of units) on new residential developments. Request the districts to identify the amount of school capacity available to serve the development. Make this information publicly available as part of the development review process.

S **M** **RP** **$** **OP**

The County should look for opportunities to partner with other localities, recreation commissions, community partners, and developers to identify potential greenways, trails, and bike paths and to **diversify park and recreation offerings** throughout the County such as but not limited to: active and passive recreation space, greenways and trails some of which are independent of roadways, community gardens, community pools, basketball courts, and skateparks or other wheeled sport facilities. Community trends and preferences should be monitored over time to identify new types of desired spaces.

M **L** **OP** **NP** **BP** **MP** **RP** **$** **$$** **$$$** **$$$$**

CHAPTER 7 HOUSING ACTIONS

Incorporate housing standards for both single family and multifamily housing units into the zoning, subdivision, and landscape ordinances, that vary based on location to better achieve the community vision, whether the location be based on, for example, zoning districts or street classifications. Standards may include:

o Open space set-asides for conservation land or parks within larger developments. The amount of open space may be tied to the number of units or development area and may require specific distribution of space or amenities.

o Requiring internal connectivity standards.

o Requiring connectivity between residential neighborhoods and adjacent compatible uses

o Incentives such as additional height or density for creating complete neighborhoods that use best practices, for developing housing as a part of well-integrated mixed-use projects.

o Large-scale multifamily design standards that ensure appropriate massing, building orientation, building materials, relation to surrounding uses, and required amenities.

o Standards that vary based on location to better achieve the community vision, whether the location be based on zoning districts or street classifications.

S **M** **CO** **$$** **$$$** **OC**

Strengthen tree protection standards, considering protections for both significant individual trees and for preserving a portion of the overall tree canopy.

S **M** **CO** **$** **$$** **OC**

Encourage or require **features in new neighborhoods that create walkability**, including sidewalks, trails, and crosswalks.

M **L** **CO** **BP** **MP** **RP** **$** **$$** **OC**

CHAPTER 8 NATURAL RESOURCES ACTIONS

Protect critical watershed areas, with protective standards for activities that require clearing and grading the land.

S **M** **co** **$** **$$** **oc**

Develop graduated **standards for preserving open space**, that require greater protection on larger uncleared tracts. In general, larger tracts can have more opportunity to rearrange development proposals to protect land and canopy while still securing a return on investment.

S **co** **$$** **$$$** **oc**

Develop and maintain **standards that allow Green Infrastructure** in new developments, designed to detain and retain excess stormwater.

S **M** **co** **$** **$$** **oc**

Identify **priorities for open space preservation on development sites,** such as floodplains, or areas that connect to parks and preserves.

S **co** **$** **oc**

Identify **priority areas across the County** to preserve as natural or open space through County funds or partnerships.

S **co** **$** **oc**

Develop a s**tandard for native planting** incentives or guidelines in new development. Consider native planting requirements for vegetated buffers.

S **co** **$$** **$$$** **oc**

Explore developing **a fund to purchase and maintain open space**.

S **co** **$$** **$$$** **OP**

Put **quality of life and valuable, sustainable development** as considerations when determining highest and best use.

S **co** **$** **oc**

Consider increasing **mitigation requirements of impervious surface coverage** on new developments.

S **CO** **$** **$$** **OP**

Ensure mines are buffered from surrounding conflicting uses, while also ensuring mines are remediated and the land reclassified upon the end of their economic viability.

S **CO** **$$** **OC**

Support efforts by DHEC, possibly through the use of the recently acquired QL1 LiDAR, to identify, **categorize and inventory all potential solid and household waste landfills, construction and demolition landfills; past, present and potential future contaminated or NEPA sites** across the County and begin to determine and analyze a means of remediation and/or buffering from potential conflicting land uses.

S **M** **CO** **$** **$$** **OP**

CHAPTER 9 RESILIENCY ACTIONS

Comply with the most recent **Hazard Mitigation Plan**, and actively pursue Hazard Mitigation Plan actions.

S **M** **CO** **$$** **$$$** **OP**

Improve floodplain and stormwater management development standards within the County land development ordinances, including potential incentives for low impact development techniques.

S **M** **CO** **$$** **$$$** **OC**

Meet new thresholds for the **FEMA Community Rating System (CRS)** updated in 2021, including maintaining the current 2 foot of freeboard requirement on any development in the floodplain.

S **M** **CO** **$** **OC**

Pursue CRS Class 6 and achieve greater flood insurance discounts for residents and property owners. Monitor the class achieved by surrounding communities and stay ahead if possible, to use as an economic development recruitment tool.

M **L** **CO** **$** **$$** **OC**

Develop flooding and drainage studies that are prerequisites for access to some Federal or State funding programs. These should align with considerations of flooding and drainage in the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

S **M** **CO** **$$** **$$$** **OC**

Consider measures that **mitigate the potential cost of property damage in floods along the Saluda River** downstream from the dam.

M **L** **CO** **$** **$$** **OP**

Coordinate any resilience planning or actions with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions.

S **RP** **MP** **$** **OP**

Implement any Federal or State-enabled **buyout programs for repetitive loss properties**, or other properties at a heightened risk of loss during disasters.

S **M** **CO** **$** **$$** **OC**

Develop a **stormwater utility fee** to improve drainage in areas with a high amount of development.

M **CO** **$$** **OC**

Adopt **heightened standards that ensure continuance of operations** for public institution sites and service provision. This could include either stronger development standards or prohibition on placement of such facilities within floodplains to the greatest extent possible.

`S` `CO` `$` `$$` `OC`

Support recognition or designation **recognizing the value of the Edisto River**.

`S` `M` `RP` `$` `OC`

Partner with land trust organizations to protect land along the waterfronts, including land where development would create a flood risk.

`L` `CO` `$` `OP`

Investigate requirements for seed grant money or matching funds available through State and Federal agencies, including DHEC.

`S` `RP` `$` `OC`

CHAPTER 10 CULTURAL RESOURCES ACTIONS

Establish **criteria for identifying and preserving historic sites and districts**. This may include establishment of an architectural or historic review board to help preserve identified districts through clear standards that would be adopted by ordinance.

`M` `CO` `$` `OC`

Consider creating and empowering a **Lexington County Art commission** or supporting a nonprofit organization partner to coordinate funding and support for historic, cultural, and arts programs.

`M` `CO` `$` `OP`

Consider **development incentives for providing public art** in new developments, or for payments-in-lieu to be directed towards a public arts program

`S` `RP` `$` `OC`

Investigate requirements for **hosting statewide or regional amateur or school sports competitions** and end-of-year championships.

M CO $ OC

Establish a procedure for evaluating opportunities to **support annual music, arts, heritage, or cultural festivals**.

S CO $ OP

Consider use of the newly acquired QL1 LiDAR to **identify features on potential cultural and historic properties** in support of long-term protection of these resources for preservation purposes.

S M CO $ OP

CHAPTER 11 POPULATION ACTIONS

Recruit grocery stores with fresh produce and healthy offerings to serve the County.

M CO $ OP

Work with grocery stores or nonprofit groups to **bring fresh and healthy food options to residents in poorly served areas.**

M CO $ $$ OP

Require natural elements in all residential and commercial development to allow residents, workers, and customers to benefit from a view or proximity to nature. Consider recommendation or incentive for the same in industrial developments.

S CO $ OC

Require a combination of active and passive park areas within large residential developments

`S` `CO` `$` `OC`

Develop complete neighborhoods with easy access to grocery stores, public parks, and employment centers

`M` `L` `CO` `$` `$$` `OP`

CHAPTER 12 PRIORITY INVESTMENT ACTIONS

Develop joint area plans with municipalities about appropriate development on land near to the municipal border, and interlocal agreements to help ensure the transitional area is affectively served.

`M` `MP` `$` `$$` `OC`

Pursue **public private partnership efforts to support economic development** in priority investment areas. Include and publicize quick projects early on to increase awareness and familiarity with the tool in the County.

`S` `BP` `$$` `OC` `OP`

Empower the Economic Development Department to **make inquiries into public private partnership opportunities**.

`S` `BP` `$` `OP`

Create a path for **coordinated development review of complex projects** that can help the potential complications of a PPP or similar project can be better addressed, including identifying all needed permitting authorities.

`S` `CO` `$` `OP`

Increase broadband coverage in areas with poor access.

M L CO $$ $$$ OC

Increase mobility options, including both high demand destinations and areas where there may be a higher proportion of residents without their own vehicle.

M CO RP $ $$ OC

Through the Economic Development Department, **assist prospective businesses and investors with identifying existing opportunity zone locations.**

S BP $ OP

Convene or facilitate ongoing discussions between key industries and workforce training programs, including ones run through Midlands Technical College and local high schools

S BP $ OP

Through the Economic Development Department and Community Development Department, **promote reinvestment** in incorporated areas, redevelopment, revitalization, and infill development opportunities.

S MP BP $ OP

Revise the zoning and street classification regulations on properties located along new infrastructure investments. This action will achieve a higher rate of return on these public investments by allowing more intensive development that will increase tax revenues.

S M CO $ $$ OC

Complete a **pilot project demonstrating the viability of redevelopment or adaptive reuse.**

S BP $$ $$$ OC