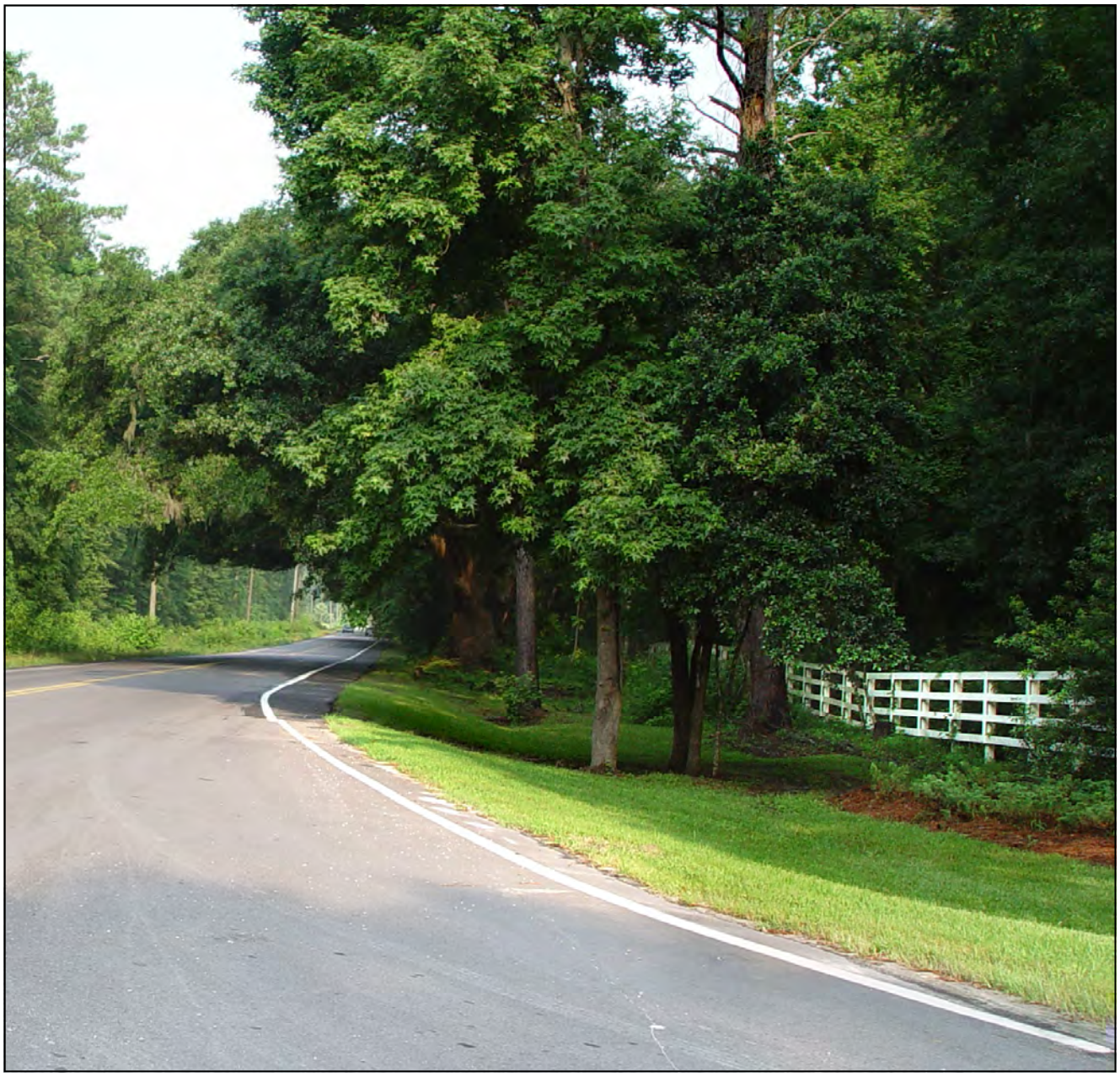

Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan

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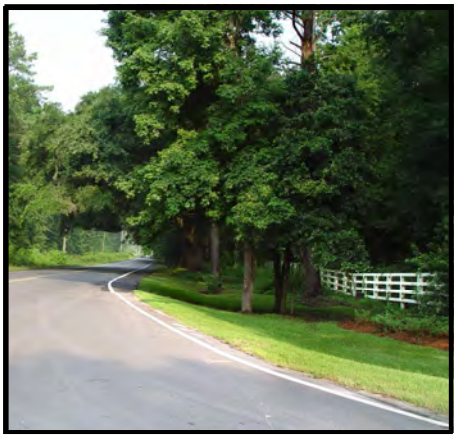


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beaufort County has experienced phenomenal growth over the last decade, primarily in the area of the county located south of the Broad River. This growth and its associated pressures on public services, infrastructure and quality of life is anticipated to continue into the foreseeable future. For this reason, the three local governments - the Town of Bluffton, the Town of Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County agreed to coordinate and prepare a regional plan to guide the growth of southern Beaufort County.

The Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan focuses on the amount of growth anticipated over the next two decades and the impacts of that growth on traffic, recreation, other public services and ultimately the region's quality of life. The plan explores how the three jurisdictions can work together as a region to keep up with the demands of growth, to protect the fragile coastal environment and to continue to make southern Beaufort County a desirable place to live and work.

The Planning Process

The Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan is a joint effort between Beaufort County, the Town of Bluffton and the Town of Hilton Head Island, referred to throughout this document as the Participating Local Governments. The plan evolved over an18-month period that started in September 2004 with the first Steering Committee Meeting.

The Steering Committee

The Steering Committee of the Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan was appointed by the Participating Local Governments to oversee the progress of the planning effort, act as policy makers, approve goals and objectives and make recommendations to the local elected officials. The voting members of the Steering Committee consist of representatives from the three local governments, the three local planning commissions and a land owner representing property owner interests in southern Beaufort County. In addition to the voting members, there were ex-officio representatives from the Beaufort County School District, Beaufort-Jasper Water Sewer Authority, the Greater Beaufort Chamber of Commerce, the Hilton Head Island/Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, the Lowcountry Council of Governments, the City of Hardeeville, Jasper County, and the South Carolina Department of Transportation.

Preparation and Review of Background Reports

After the September 2004 kickoff meeting of the Steering Committee, the planning process focused on the presentation of background information on key issues related to growth and development in southern Beaufort County. The staffs of the Participating Local Governments and the consultant, Clarion Associates, prepared the following background reports:

- Natural Assets and Natural Constraints to Growth;
- Land Use Patterns and Trends;
- Transportation and Other Public Facilities; and
- Fiscal Constraints and Opportunities Relating to Growth.

Common Goals and Objectives

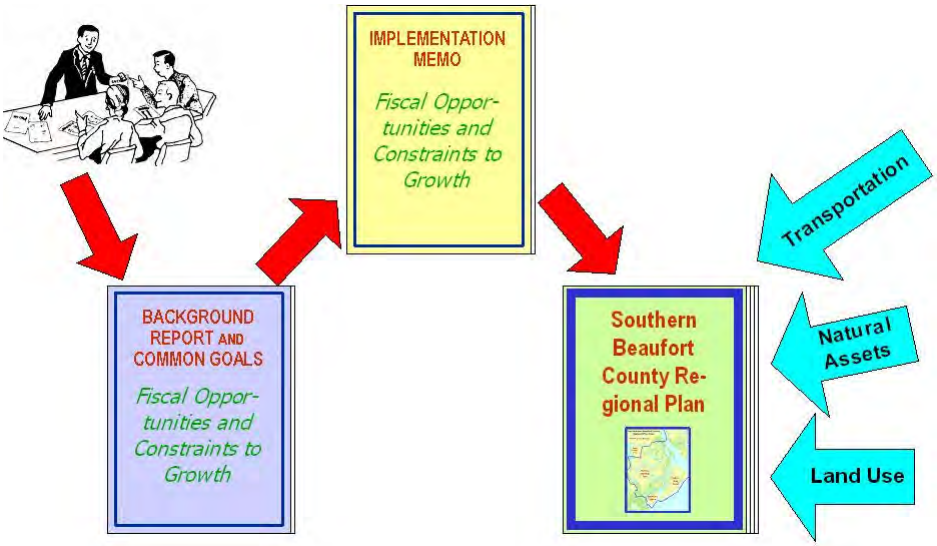
For each report, the Steering Committee met to review the information and to set common goals and objectives for each

subject area. These common goals and objectives became the foundation on which the plan was built.

Meetings with Elected Officials

After the common goals and objectives were agreed upon by the Steering Committee, meetings were held in June 2005 with the elected officials of each of the Participating Local Governments. The purpose of these meetings was to gauge whether the elected officials, who bear the ultimate responsibility to adopt and implement the plan, were in general agreement with the direction of the planning effort at that point in time.

Figure 1: Steps of the Process



Preparation and Review of Implementation Reports

Once the background reports and the common goals were approved by the Steering Committee and embraced by the local elected officials, the consulting team began the process of researching and evaluating a wide range of alternative implementation strategies and actions for achieving the common goals. The team presented its findings in three Implementation Reports:

- Public Facilities Coordination, Management, and Funding (which addressed the Transportation and Other Public facilities Background Report and the Fiscal Constraints and Opportunities Relating to Growth Background Report);

- Natural Assets and Natural Constraints to Development; and
- Land Use Patterns and Trends.

Plan Finalization

After the Implementation Reports were reviewed by the Steering Committee, the final plan was drafted. The plan will be reviewed by the Steering Committee, and then the elected officials from the Participating Local Governments prior to forwarding the plan to each of the Participating Local Governments for adoption.

Structure of this Plan

This plan is an encapsulation of the four background reports, the four sets of common goals and objectives, and the three implementation reports. The plan is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Natural Assets and Natural Constraints to Growth

Chapter 2: Land Use Patterns and Trends

Chapter 3: Cost of Growth

Chapter 4: Transportation

Chapter 5: Parks and Recreation

Chapter 6: Public Schools

Chapter 7: Plan Implementation

Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 conclude with a set of Common Goals, Objectives and corresponding Implementation Actions. The common goals and objectives establish a set of guiding principles for planning and growth management upon which the Participating Local Governments can agree. The implementation actions are specific recommended strategies and actions to achieve the common goals.

Natural Assets and Natural Constraints to Growth

The following natural assets were recognized as regionally significant and, therefore, worthy of multi-jurisdictional protection.

- Salt Marshes, Coastal Waters, Marine Resources, and Marsh Islands;
- Open Space;
- Trees, Forests, and Wildlife;
- Beaches and Dunes; and
- Freshwater Wetlands.

Great efforts have been made at the local level to protect the region's key natural assets. In order to build on these past successes and to guarantee the future protection of these natural assets the Participating Local Governments will:

- Pursue intergovernmental cooperation and planning to identify and protect these important natural assets;
- Address gaps and inconsistencies in local ordinances by setting "baseline" standards for protecting natural assets;
- Implement the remaining recommendations of the Beaufort Special Area Management Plan (SAMP); and
- Coordinate environmental protection with land use policies and the provision of roads and other public facilities.

Land Use Patterns and Trends

A majority of the land area in southern Beaufort County is committed for future development through previously approved planned unit developments (PUD's) and development agreements. Buildout of this previously approved development will likely double southern Beaufort County's population over the next 15 to 20 years from 67,179 to 134,842.

Following a pattern initially established by Sea Pines on Hilton Head Island, much of the developed landscape of southern Beaufort County consists of large, low-density, master planned

communities. The planning of these communities has been primarily a private sector endeavor with great care given to internal road networks, the delivery of services, and private covenants that set high development standards within the communities. Outside of the master planned communities, local governments have been faced with the challenge of providing roads, infrastructure, and land use regulations to connect the rest of the community together.

Local land use regulations have reflected this trend toward large master planned communities. Planned unit development (PUD's) zoning has been commonly used to provide the site design flexibility desired within these communities. Architectural, landscaping, site, lighting and signage standards have been employed on the major commercial corridors outside the master planned communities to complement the high development standards within the communities.

The land use recommendations center on identifying effective regional land use approaches that still respect the autonomy of each of the local governments. The Participating Local Governments will:

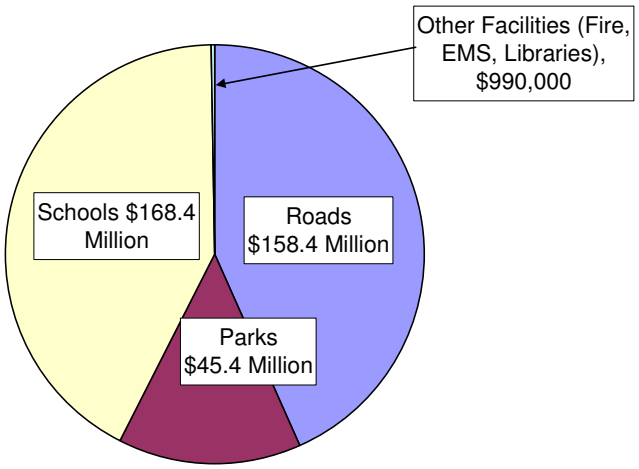
- Focus on the design and aesthetic quality of new development and redevelopment;
- Promote a positive relationship of land uses to each other, including connections, pedestrian-friendliness, and the encouragement of a mix of uses and higher-density development at identified nodes;
- Coordinate the timing and relationship of development with the provision of public services and facilities;
- Encourage the protection and preservation of open space where it exists in the region; and
- Implement a regional system to monitor and measure progress in achieving regional land use goals.

Cost of Growth

The doubling of southern Beaufort County's population over the next 15 to 20 years will have considerable impact on the region's public facilities. The cost of providing the capital improvements for roads, parks, schools, libraries, and public safety to keep up with this growth is estimated at over $529 million. However, dedicated funding sources (impact fees, State Highway Improvement Program, federal earmarks, etc.) only account for $150.6 million, leaving a "funding gap" of over $378.3 million. The magnitude of the price tag and funding gap to provide these facilities necessitates regional solutions to solve these challenges.

Roads, parks and schools represent the majority of the funding gap that the region will face over the next 15 to 20 years.

Figure 2: Summary of Funding Gap – 2005 to Buildout



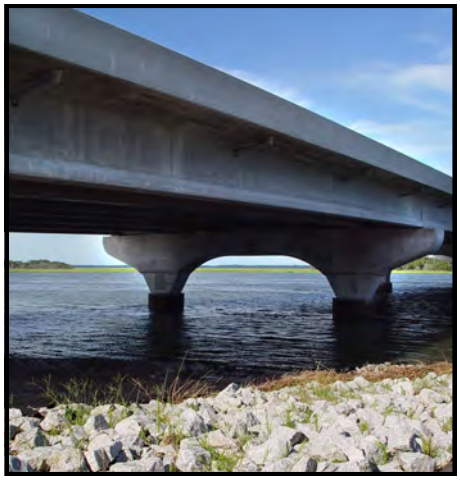
Given the importance of these public facilities to the region's quality of life and the magnitude of this revenue gap, the Participating Local Governments need to work collectively to plan for and coordinate the funding of these facilities. The Participating Local Governments will:

- Adopt regional levels of service (LOS) standards for roads and parks and use them to identify existing deficiencies and future capital improvements needs;
- Develop an appropriate mix of existing and new funding tools to address the funding gap;

- Work cooperatively with the school district to plan and provide for its capital needs;
- Cooperate with Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville to coordinate revenue funding strategies for the regional road network and other facilities that serve the greater region.

Transportation

Southern Beaufort County's fast rate of growth is placing a strong demand on the region's roads. The Participating Local Governments have decided as a matter of policy that conditions on the Regional Road Network should not fall below LOS "D". Based on this level of service, southern Beaufort County's Regional Road Network is already deficient in certain locations. Portions of U.S. 278 are failing with traffic volumes far exceeding capacity on the segments between S.C. 46 and the bridges to Hilton Head Island. It has been estimated $31 million worth of capital improvement projects are needed simply to address existing needs. The estimated doubling of southern Beaufort County's population over the next 15 to 20 years will cause most of the region's major roads to fail. Various plans and studies indicate that an additional $222.9 million in capital improvements will be needed to accommodate population at buildout. Yet even with the implementation of this extensive list of capital improvements, it is estimated that 20 miles of roads will still be failing.



If current fiscal conditions do not change, over the next 15 years only about $95.5 million is anticipated in revenues for road capital improvements from SCDOT and local road impact fees, leaving an estimated funding shortfall for the planned facilities of over $158.4 million.

Addressing this significant funding shortfall is a challenge the Participating Local Governments cannot solve individually. The issue must be addressed on a regional level, through a broad-based effort of:

- Cooperative efforts to plan and fund transportation capital improvements; and
- Cooperative land use initiatives to reduce vehicle miles traveled on the regional roads through the use of alternative modes of

transportation, the application of transportation management techniques, and the use of land use and growth management tools.

Parks and Recreation

Southern Beaufort County's active and passive parks and recreation facilities are an important component of the region's quality of life and economy, and an important means of making the natural assets accessible to both residents and tourists. Those parks that serve regional active and passive recreation needs make up the Regional Park Network. The Participating Local Governments have decided that to maintain the region's quality of life, its network of parks should not fall below the following level of service standards:

- Hilton Head Island
  12.2 acres of land per 1,000 residents
  $722 of park and recreation facilities per capita
- Bluffton and unincorporated Beaufort County
  13.0 acres of land per 1,000 residents
  $722 of park and recreation facilities per capita

Southern Beaufort County's rapid rate of growth is projected to cost the region over $66 million dollars in the next 15 to 20 years to maintain an acceptable level of service for park land and facilities. Existing revenue sources projected for this time period only account for approximately $21 million dollars leaving a $45 million dollar funding gap. Included in this funding gap is the cost for acquiring approximately 525 additional acres of parkland. As the region continues to grow, the availability of land for future parks becomes scarcer and more expensive to acquire giving immediacy to this issue.

Given the pressing needs facing the region's park network and its interrelated nature, the Participating Local Governments should work cooperatively to:

- Establish consistent techniques to measure needs and examine conditions within the region's park network.

- Plan for how to address these needs. This includes providing a strategy on where and how to acquire the 525 acres needed for park land.
- Address the funding gap to ensure future capital improvement needs are met within the Regional Park Network.

Public Schools

In order to keep up with projected population growth, the School District will need to construct 8 new schools along with additions to existing facilities with a price tag of 168.4 million. In addition to the overwhelming capital costs, 189.5 acres is needed to accommodate future school sites. As more of southern Beaufort County becomes developed or committed for future development, the task of finding suitable sites for future schools will become more challenging.

Because of the shared interests of the Participating Local Governments and the School District, the following cooperative efforts are recommended:

- Cooperatively develop strategies to find the needed revenue to meet the School District's capital needs;
- Collaborate in locating future school facilities that accommodate predicted growth and that are consistent with local land use plans; and
- Coordinate efforts and support policies to use public policy and public infrastructure commitments to build more livable neighborhoods and communities.

Plan Implementation

The Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan recommends a structure and process to facilitate the implementation of the plan recommendations. Once the plan is adopted, it is recommended that the Participating Local Governments appoint the Southern Regional Plan Implementation Committee. The committee would have representation from the Participating Local Governments, Jasper County, the City of Hardeeville, the School District, Beaufort Jasper Water Sewer Authority and the Lowcountry

Council of Governments. The Implementation Committee would be charged with the following:

- Prioritize implementation actions from the plan; and
- Oversee and advocate the implementation of the plan.

The plan implementation tasks would be assigned to three Working Groups appointed by the Participating Local Governments and made up largely of staff. Each task would be prepared by the Working Groups and presented to the Plan Implementation Committee, which would then evaluate and decide whether to forward to the governing bodies for adoption.

Chapter 1

NATURAL ASSETS AND NATURAL CONSTRAINT TO GROWTH

Southern Beaufort County's natural environment is an integral part of the region's cultural environment and economy. Natural amenities such as coastal waters, salt marshes, beaches, trees and local wildlife are what have made this region unique and immensely popular to outsiders and newcomers. They have essentially driven the economic engine of growth. In the face of rapid growth, a delicate balance must be struck between accommodating new development and preserving the very things that make this region unique.

This chapter identifies and provides an inventory of southern Beaufort County's natural assets. It looks at challenges and threats to the preservation of these assets and how they are being protected at the federal, state, and local level, and what gaps exist in their protection. Finally, it calls for regional approaches to planning management to further protect southern Beaufort County's natural assets in the face of rapid growth.

Identification and Inventory of Natural Assets

The following environmental features are the most regionally significant types of natural assets in southern Beaufort County and are worthy of multi-jurisdictional protection.

- Salt Marshes, Coastal Waters, Marine Resources, and Marsh Islands;
- Open Space;

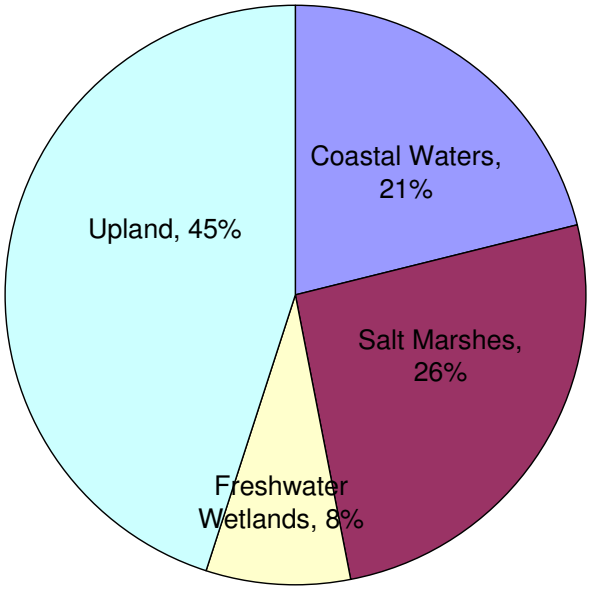
- Trees, Forests, and Wildlife;
- Beaches and Dunes; and
- Freshwater Wetlands.

This section provides a brief inventory and description of these natural assets.

Salt Marshes, Coastal Waters, Marine Resources and Marsh Islands

Southern Beaufort County's salt marshes and coastal waters are central to the region's sense of place, identity and economy. Salt marshes and coastal waters include all areas that are influenced by tides. These include bays, inlets, tidal creeks and salt marshes. Overall, almost one-half of southern Beaufort County (47%) is influenced by tides.

Figure 3: Inventory of Coastal Waters, Salt marshes, Freshwater Wetlands and Uplands in Southern Beaufort County



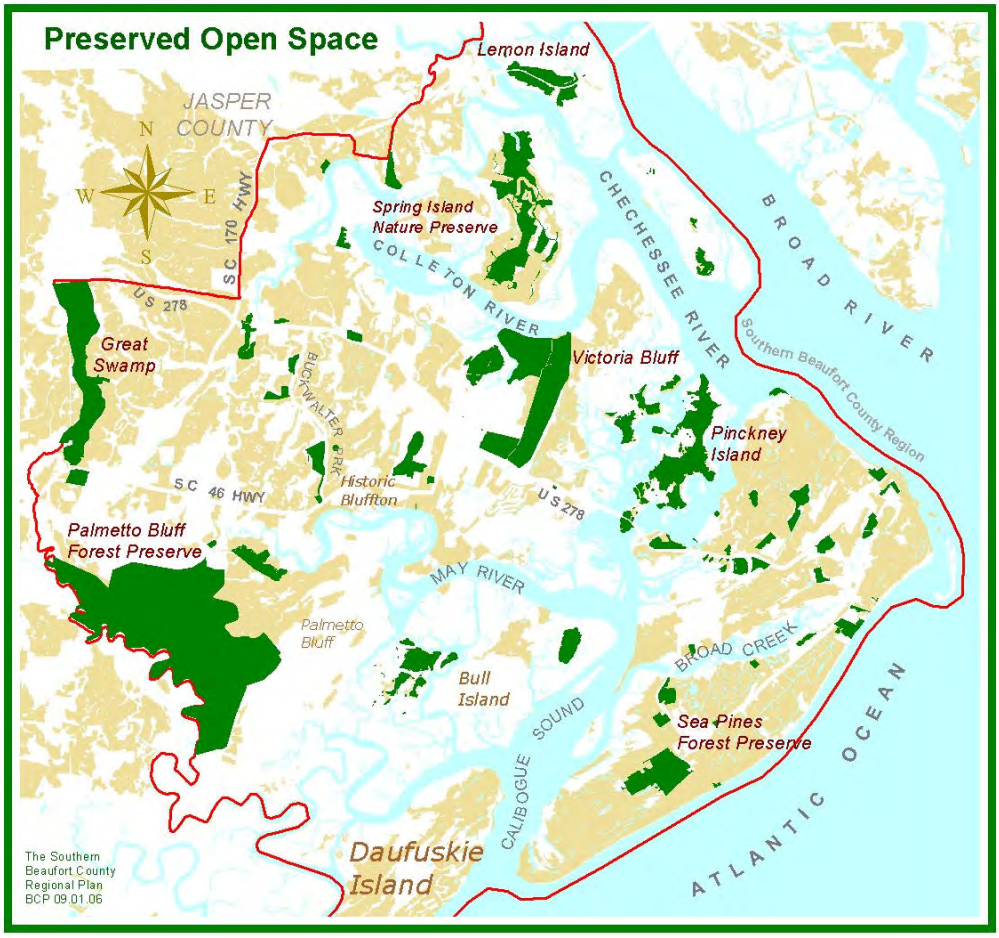
The greatest threat to the health of southern Beaufort County's salt marshes and coastal waters is pollution from upland runoff and specific discharge areas. An important indicator of when runoff poses a threat to water quality is the health of shellfish. Clams and oysters are highly sensitive to pollution because they are filter feeders. In 1995, 500 acres of shellfish beds were closed in southern Beaufort County due to high levels of fecal coliform bacteria. This event sparked a heightened awareness of the importance of water quality to the overall health of the natural resources in the region and

led to the creation of the Clean Water Task Force, which initiated the Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) for Beaufort County. The SAMP process led to many local programs, policies and ordinances that address water quality, which are discussed later in this chapter.

Open Space

Preserving open space is important to protect valuable habitat types, limit development in environmentally sensitive areas, provide public access to natural amenities and to relieve congestion in intensely developed areas. There are essentially two general methods used to preserve open space. One is the fee simple purchase of a property by a governmental, non-profit or private entity for the purpose of preservation. The other

Map 1: Preserved Open Space



mechanism is the purchase of development rights or voluntary conservation easements which allow the property owner to continue to own their property but limit future development through restrictive covenants. In southern Beaufort County, currently 14,727 upland acres of land are preserved through these means. This makes up approximately 15% of the total land area. As undeveloped land becomes scarcer, the cost of acquiring land for open space increases. This fact has made the acquisition of open space for the purpose of preservation a top priority in southern Beaufort County.

Beaches and Dunes

Southern Beaufort County's beaches and dunes are an important public resource. They provide the basis of much of the region's successful tourism industry and are a factor in the region's attractiveness as a place in which to relocate. A healthy beach and dune system also provides a natural storm barrier protecting life and property for those living along the coast. Southern Beaufort County has approximately 15½ linear miles of beaches. Barrier islands, such as Hilton Head and Daufuskie, are very dynamic environments continually being modified by waves, currents and winds. Balancing this dynamic natural environment with the fixed environment of man-made structures is the primary challenge in protecting this important public resource.

Trees, Forests and Wildlife

Southern Beaufort County's magnolias, palmettos and sprawling live oaks help define the region's scenic quality and character. In developed areas, trees soften the built landscape, shade buildings and streets and reduce the demand for air conditioning during the region's long hot summers. In undeveloped areas, forest communities provide valuable habitat for local wildlife. The threats to southern Beaufort County's trees and forest communities are related primarily to the rapid pace of development. Approximately 58% of southern Beaufort County's natural forests are anticipated to be impacted when all currently approved development is built out.

Freshwater Wetlands

Freshwater wetlands are the region's natural stormwater drainage systems. They absorb floodwaters, filter out pollutants and also provide a habitat for many plants and animals. According to the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), there are 13,955 acres of freshwater wetlands in southern Beaufort County. This is approximately 15% of the total land area. Like open space, the greatest threat to freshwater wetlands is the rapid rate of growth in southern Beaufort County. Another threat is the regulatory framework for freshwater wetland protection, which is somewhat in a state of flux. In 2001, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers no longer had jurisdiction over isolated freshwater wetlands. This left isolated freshwater wetlands unprotected in much of the United States.

Evaluation of Plans and Studies

In response to the importance of southern Beaufort County's natural assets, significant federal, state and local resources have been devoted to charting water quality in local watersheds, studying the impacts of point source and non-point source pollution and identifying gaps in the protection of natural habitats and wildlife. The recommendations of these plans and studies have led to a number of local programs, policies, and ordinances that address resource protection.

Comprehensive Plans

All three Participating Local Governments address environmental and natural resource protection issues in their respective comprehensive plans. Common themes include the protection of water quality by controlling stormwater runoff; the protection of significant trees, forests and other important natural amenities; and the preservation of open space. Many of these plan goals and objectives have been implemented through local ordinances and programs which are discussed later in this section.

Beaufort Special Area Management Plan (SAMP)

Responding to the closure of 500 acres of shellfish beds in 1995, the SAMP was conducted to address stormwater and other sources of water pollution and to identify effective actions to prevent further degradation of the County's waterways. The SAMP consisted of 10 work elements that addressed stormwater management, wastewater management,

water quality monitoring, boating management and education. Below are some of the highlights of the SAMP:

- **Countywide Stormwater Utility:** The SAMP called for the development of a countywide stormwater utility to address stormwater management at the watershed level. The Stormwater Utility was initiated in 2001 with the establishment of a flat fee to fund stormwater improvements throughout the County. Currently, a master plan is being finalized that will identify all primary drainage systems in the county and will determine what current facilities are undersized based on existing and future development.
- **Management Plans for Broad Creek and the Okatie River:** These plans emphasize the need for stormwater Best Management Practices, riparian setbacks and buffers, reduction of on-lot septic systems, boating management, and other methods to protect water quality.
- **River Quality Overlay District:** This district would address such concerns as setbacks, buffers and appropriate impervious surface cover limits to minimize impacts of development in sensitive headwater areas.
- **Develop a Comprehensive On-Site Disposal System (OSDS) Program:** The SAMP recognized that State requirements for on-site septic systems do not account for the region's high water table and do not control density. These two factors heighten the risk of degrading water quality. The SAMP calls for the adoption of more stringent septic system standards and for regular programs of inspection and maintenance.
- **Coordinate Water Quality Monitoring:** There is a considerable amount of monitoring of water quality in southern Beaufort County at the federal, state and local levels, but no central coordination of these efforts or dissemination of the information being gathered. Coordinating monitoring efforts would provide more efficient and effective use of the collected data, would help to identify specific pollution sources and track the overall health of the county's waterways.
- **Conduct Educational Campaigns:** Finally, the SAMP calls for education and public involvement in furthering water quality goals.

Other Studies and Reports

Other relevant studies include baseline assessments of Broad Creek, the Okatie River and the May River, the South Atlantic Bight Land Use-Coastal Ecosystem Study (LU-CES), the Broad and New River Watersheds Wetland Management Project, and the SC Gap Analysis Project. These studies cover such diverse topics as evaluating the current conditions of southern Beaufort County's waterways, mapping and identifying valuable wetlands and forest communities and further exploring the effects of development on sensitive estuarine ecosystems.

Analysis of the Regulatory Framework

All three local jurisdictions have made significant efforts to protect natural resources through local policies and ordinance requirements. There remain, however, some gaps and inconsistencies in the local regulatory framework that should be addressed. Below is a summary of regulations and programs used by the Participating Local Governments to protect the region's natural assets. A more detailed analysis is provided in the Natural Assets and Natural Constraints to Growth Background Report.

- **Salt Marshes, Coastal Waters, Marine Resources and Marsh Islands:** The Participating Local Governments have adopted various local regulations and programs that are designed to protect the region's water quality. These include setbacks and buffers from the critical line, stormwater best management practices (BMP's), and a countywide Stormwater Management Utility program that addresses stormwater runoff at a regional level.
- **Open Space:** For the purpose of preserving natural resources, open space has been aggressively pursued by the Participating Local Governments through the purchase of land and conservation easements; and through ordinance requirements for open space when land is developed.
- **Beaches and Dunes:** Both Beaufort County and the Town of Hilton Head Island require development to be setback from the baseline and also require the protection of dunes.
- **Trees, Forests, and Wildlife:** All three local jurisdictions require efforts to be made to protect specimen trees. More consistent protection, however, is needed to preserve forest communities and native vegetation.

- **Freshwater Wetlands:** Beaufort County and the Town of Hilton Head Island require the protection of isolated freshwater wetlands.

Common Goals, Objectives and Implementation Actions

Southern Beaufort County is blessed with a distinctive and diverse array of natural features that are important to the region for ecological, aesthetic, cultural, recreational, and economic reasons. As the region continues to grow at a rapid pace, a greater emphasis must be placed on continuing to protect the region's natural assets.

Great efforts have been made at the local level to protect the region's natural resources. In order to build on these past successes, it is important to focus on intergovernmental cooperation and planning; to address gaps and inconsistencies in local ordinances; and to implement the recommendations of the Beaufort SAMP. In addition, because environmental protection has the potential to impact the location and quality of future development, great care must be taken to coordinate environmental protection with land use policies and the provision of roads and other public facilities.

Common Goals for All Natural Assets

Six introductory common goals suggest general actions the Participating Local Governments should take to ensure protection for all the key natural assets in southern Beaufort County.

Common Goal 1: Cooperative Planning. The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively to maximize protections for the key natural assets that make southern Beaufort County unique, while still accommodating and encouraging preferred types of new development and redevelopment.

Implementation Action: Recognize the natural assets that are worthy of regional protection through local comprehensive plans, and build a foundation for the coordinated protection of those key assets by developing a regional environmental inventory.

Description:

- Acknowledge natural assets identified in this plan by amending the Natural Resources element of respective Comprehensive Plans.
- Appoint a Natural Assets Working Group composed of staff representatives of Participating Local Governments; Jasper County

and Hardeeville; and other agencies such as SCDNR, OCRM, and Lowcountry COG (see Chapter 7).

- Develop a regional environmental inventory which consists of a centralized system for tracking environmental data. It would assist in guiding development away from sensitive natural areas and help connect open space.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments; Natural Assets Working Group

Common Goal 2: Identification and Monitoring. The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively and with federal, state, and nongovernmental partners to improve and coordinate the identification and monitoring of the region's key natural assets.

Implementation Action: Support the establishment and ongoing operation of a water quality monitoring laboratory at the USC Beaufort New River Campus.

Description:

- Establish a water quality sampling and analytical laboratory at the New River Campus of the University of South Carolina Beaufort.
- Water quality data would be collected, analyzed, and inventoried to determine the adequacy of existing environmental requirements (buffers, BMP,s)
- The laboratory could be funded by Stormwater Utility Fee

Responsibility: Beaufort County and University of South Carolina Beaufort.

Common Goal 3: Balance of Regulatory and Non-regulatory Programs. The Participating Local Governments will develop both regulatory and non-regulatory programs to protect the region's key natural assets. For all types of natural resource protection, local governments will rely on acquisition, incentives, and partnerships with non-governmental organizations to supplement regulatory efforts.

Implementation Action: Place more emphasis on environmental education at the local and regional levels by dedicating more resources to educational programs.

Description:

- The Participating Local Governments should dedicate additional staff and funding to environmental education programs.
- Better coordinate existing programs conducted by governmental and non-profit agencies.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments and Natural Assets Working Group

Common Goal 4: Implementation. The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively to further implementation of the various and future federal, state, and nongovernmental plans and studies that have been and will be completed regarding the key natural assets.

Common Goals 4, 5 and 6 do not have specific implementation actions associated with them because they are general in nature and introduce themes that appear in the subsequent actions.

Common Goal 5: Jasper County. Jasper County is home to many rare and unique natural assets in addition to those found in Beaufort County. In order to coordinate natural asset protection between Jasper and Beaufort counties, and because development in Jasper County has the potential to affect the key natural assets in Beaufort County, the Participating Local Governments will strive to include Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville in planning for and protecting natural assets to the greatest extent possible.

Common Goal 6: Education. The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively and individually to develop education programs aimed at informing local residents about the value of the region's key natural assets to the local environment, economy, and quality of life.

Common Goal 7: Salt Marshes, Coastal Waters, and Marine Resources

Salt marshes, coastal waters, and marine resources are natural assets worthy of regional protection because of their importance to the quality of life and economic base of the region. The Participating Local Governments will cooperate and continue to emphasize the regional protection of salt marshes, coastal waters, and marine resources.

Objective 7.1: Development Limitations near Salt Marshes and Coastal Waters. The Participating Local Governments will:

A) Adopt overlay districts as recommended in the SAMP to prohibit certain land uses near salt marshes and coastal waters; and
B) Assess the adequacy of existing critical line setback and buffer requirements for development near salt marshes and coastal waters, aggressively enforce the requirements, and ensure that relief from critical line buffer standards is uniform.

Implementation Action - River Quality Overlay District: The Natural Assets Working Group should review the River Quality Overlay District recommendations from the SAMP.

Description: Review the adequacy of existing regulations already adopted, such as river buffers and stormwater best management practices (BMP's) to determine if the intent of the SAMP is already being met.

Responsibility: Natural Assets Working Group

Implementation Action – Critical Line Buffers and Setbacks: Improve education and enforcement regarding the critical line buffer and setback requirements.

Description:

- Dedicate additional resources (staff and funding) to enforcement and education to obtain better compliance with critical line buffer and setback requirements.

- Encourage implementation in Jasper County and Hardeeville (starting with New River watershed)

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Objective 7.2: Controlling Stormwater Quantity and Quality. The Participating Local Governments will:

A) Establish uniform minimum water quantity limitations for upland stormwater runoff, in order to prevent flooding of downstream properties;
B) Establish uniform minimum water quality standards for upland stormwater runoff, in order to protect against the specific pollutants that are most likely to affect water quality and the health of local shellfish beds;
C) Work cooperatively to establish new regional programs to maintain and enforce strict water quality standards to protect salt marshes and coastal waters (e.g., uniform standards for treatment of boat wastes at marinas, standards for marina siting, etc.).
D) Establish a structure to coordinate water quality monitoring activities in southern Beaufort County.

Implementation Action - Education and Enforcement: Improve education and enforcement regarding current stormwater standards.

Description:

- Dedicate additional resources to enforcement and education to obtain better compliance with stormwater requirements.
- Encourage adoption of similar requirements in Jasper County and Hardeeville (starting with New and Okatie River watersheds)

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Implementation Action - New Approaches for Stormwater Management: Utilize the Stormwater Utility Advisory Board to explore, develop, and promote new approaches for stormwater management.

Description:

- Consider new innovations in land development practices that integrate environmental protections with economic considerations (e.g. Low Impact Development model)
- Address pollution sources not covered under existing regulations.
- Coordinate stormwater management with open space preservation programs.

Responsibility: Stormwater Utility Advisory Board

Objective 7.3: Managing On-Lot Septic Systems. The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively and with the state to develop a unified set of septic system standards and a clear, effective way of monitoring enforcement of the standards. The Participating Local Governments will work actively to convert individual septic systems to public systems, focusing on the worst offenders and most sensitive natural areas.

Implementation Action: Develop a comprehensive regional approach to reducing the negative impacts of on-lot septic systems to marine and estuarine resources.

Description:

- Identify and prioritize areas with the highest concentration of on-lot septic systems to be connected to public sewer. Base prioritization on quantity, condition, age, and proximity to sensitive natural areas of on-lot septic systems. Determine the economic impact the extension would place on affected residents.
- Pursue routine inspection and maintenance programs and higher standards for the remaining on-lot septic systems.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments, Beaufort Jasper Water Sewer Authority, DHEC

Objective 7.4: Regulate Stormwater Management on a Watershed Basis. The Participating Local Governments will regulate stormwater management on a watershed basis.

Implementation Action: Aggressively pursue implementation of regional stormwater master plan.

Description: Once Stormwater Master Plan is finalized, undertake projects recommended in the plan to improve water quality and reduce flooding.

Responsibility: Stormwater Utility Advisory Board; Participating Local Governments

Common Goal 8: Open Space

Open space areas that are permanently protected from development are important natural assets worthy of regional protection because they provide public access to water and natural amenities, protect wildlife habitat, relieve congestion, are important to local cultures, and contribute generally to the regional quality of life and economic base. The Participating Local Governments will cooperate and continue to emphasize protection of public and private open space.

Objective 8.1: Land Development Ordinance Requirements. Additions to the public and private open space systems (or fees in-lieu) will be viewed as a normal part of the land development process in all jurisdictions. Protection of open space will be integrated with all land-use decision-making in southern Beaufort County.

Implementation Action: Strengthen open space requirements by identifying desired regional characteristics of open space and allowing a fee in-lieu option.

Description:

- Identify and protect wetlands, flood hazard areas, areas in proximity to the critical line, drainageways, wildlife habitats, and other natural assets.
- Where no significant assets exist on a property, the developer should contribute fees in-lieu of open space to be applied to acquiring other environmentally sensitive properties.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Objective 8.2: Coordination of Public and Private Open Space. Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively to ensure that additions to the public and private open space systems are complementary and coordinated to the greatest extent possible.

Implementation Action: Build on the Greenprint process to advance regional open space goals by developing a regional inventory of lands to target for open space preservation.

Description: Inventory would help to:

- Ensure that additions to the open space system are consistent with the open space network already being established;
- Provide a basis for determining when to dedicate open space and when to provide fees in-lieu of open space;
- Plan for corridors that connect open space areas,
- Coordinate public and private open space protection efforts; and
- Facilitate the protection of areas that serve multiple purposes (stormwater management, recreation, etc.).

Responsibility: Natural Assets Working Group

Objective 8.3: Regional Open Space Funding. Participating Local Governments will establish one or more reliable and permanent sources of new funding for regional open space preservation to support existing local government and non-profit programs, such as the Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program. The Participating Local Governments will lobby the state legislature to extend the ability to levy a real estate transfer fee to the entire southern Beaufort County region (whereas now the fee may be levied only by Hilton Head Island).

Implementation Action: Establish a reliable, permanent source of funding for regional open space preservation.

Description:

- In the short term, the recommended option is to replenish funding for the existing Rural and Critical Lands Program by taking a new proposal for renewed funding for the program to the voters.
- Seek matching funding from state organizations, such as the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, or from similar federal programs and agencies to leverage local funds.
- In the long term, pursue the real estate transfer fee as a dedicated funding source (would require change in State enabling legislation).

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Objective 8.4: Regional Open Space Goals. Future regional open space protection will focus on establishing a network of open space areas that fulfill multiple objectives and that cross jurisdictional lines.

See implementation action under Objective 8.2

Common Goal 9: Trees, Forests, and Wildlife

Trees, forests, and native vegetation are natural assets worthy of regional protection because of their importance in providing shade and reducing air pollution, providing habitat for wildlife, serving as aesthetic amenities, and contributing to the economic base of the region. The Participating Local Governments will cooperate and continue to emphasize protection of trees, forests, and wildlife habitat during the land development process.

Objective 9.1: Baseline Protection Standards. The Participating Local Governments will establish baseline standards to protect trees, forests, native vegetation, and wildlife habitat. However, the particular standards established in each community will be tailored to achieve the unique vision, goals, and character desired by each community.

Implementation Action: Consider baseline environmental protection standards to protect trees, forests, native vegetation, and wildlife habitat.

Description:

- Protection of significant trees, woodland areas, of native vegetation, and wildlife habitat.
- Consider whether baseline standards would be worthwhile in southern Beaufort County given the fact that Hilton Head Island is mostly built out and Bluffton's growth area is substantially committed.
- The baseline standards would be minimums, meaning that they set a common floor, yet any of the Participating Local Governments would be free to adopt more stringent standards if desired.

Responsibility: Natural Assets Working Group; Participating Local Governments

Objective 9.2: Protect Range of Forest and Vegetation Types. The Participating Local Governments will cooperate to identify and protect a broad range of native forest types in southern Beaufort County.

Objective 9.3: Integration with Other Types of Natural Resource Protection. Protection of forests, trees, and native vegetation will be viewed as a normal part of the land development process in all jurisdictions, and will be integrated with protection of other types of natural and scenic resources.

See Natural Assets Objective 8.2

Common Goal 10: Beaches and Dunes

Beaches and dunes are natural assets worthy of regional protection because of their importance to local quality of life and the regional tourism industry, and their value as natural storm barriers. The Participating Local Governments will cooperate and continue to emphasize protection of beaches and dunes in the region.

Objective 10.1: Maximize Public Beach Access During Redevelopment. Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County should exercise their authority to purchase public access when reviewing development plans on beachfront properties, in order to gain as much public beach access as possible when property is being redeveloped.

Implementation Action: Maximize public beach access during redevelopment.

Description: Actively pursue public beach access when property is developed or redeveloped, as per local policies established in ordinances.

Responsibility: Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County

Objective 10.2: Uniform Minimum Dune Setback Requirements. The Participating Local Governments will establish uniform minimum setback requirements from dunes, beyond those required by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management.

Implementation Action: Evaluate whether or not to establish uniform baseline dune setbacks that exceed state requirements.

Description:

- Consider obstacle of the number of lots of record that may not be deep enough to accommodate development with a greater setback.
- Consider adequacy and consistency of local beach and dune protections.

Responsibility: Natural Assets Working Group

Common Goal 11: Freshwater Wetlands

Freshwater wetlands are natural assets worthy of regional protection because of their importance in the natural stormwater drainage system and as habitat for plants and animals. The Participating Local Governments will cooperate and continue to emphasize protection of freshwater wetlands.

Objective 11.1: Protection of Isolated Freshwater Wetlands. The Participating Local Governments will adopt uniform minimum standards regulating the identification and protection of isolated freshwater ("non-jurisdictional ") wetlands.

Implementation Action: Establish baseline regional standards regulating the identification and protection of isolated freshwater wetlands.

Description:

- Evaluate the adequacy of existing standards in the county and Hilton Head Island
- Develop uniform baseline standards that may be adopted by the Participating Local Governments and Jasper County and Hardeeville.
- **Responsibility:** Participating Local Governments, Jasper County and Hardeeville

Objective 11.2: Possible State Wetlands Legislation. Participating Local Governments should communicate to state legislators their strong concerns that local governments in South Carolina should retain the right to have local wetlands regulations that are more stringent than any state regulations.

Implementation Action: Lobby the state legislature regarding the need for South Carolina communities to be able to enact strong local wetlands protections that exceed state minimum requirements.

Description: Communicate to state legislators that local governments in South Carolina should retain the right to have local wetlands regulations that are more stringent than any state regulations.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Chapter

2

LAND USE PATTERNS AND TRENDS

In southern Beaufort County, the issue of land use and land use planning has been primarily addressed at the local government level. As the region has become more developed, there has been a trend to gain more local control over land use issues by incorporation, annexation and the creation of local planning commissions and departments. While this is one way to address land use issues, many local land use decisions also have regional implications and require a regional framework to adequately address the impacts of these decisions. One of the challenges in southern Beaufort County is to identify and address through this regional planning process the over-arching land use issues that will shape growth and development at the regional level.

This chapter first provides background on the current state of development and land use in southern Beaufort County and then future development and land uses, once the current approved developments are built out. This includes:

- A review and analysis of historic growth patterns and how they have been influenced and shaped by private developers and government actions.
- An inventory of existing land use;
- Estimates of existing and future population through the year 2020.
- A summary of the local comprehensive plans, land management ordinances, and other tools used to manage land use.

Finally, the chapter identifies the common goals and objectives adopted as part of this regional planning effort to address the regional land use issues, along with the implementation actions that will be taken to accomplish the common goals and objectives.

Historic Development Trends

Modern development in southern Beaufort County began with the construction of a bridge to Hilton Head Island in 1956 and the subsequent development of Sea Pines by Charles Fraser. With Sea Pines, Charles Fraser helped pioneer the concept of large, master-planned communities with amenities such as golf, tennis and common open spaces; and high standards of site and building design. In evaluating the development trends that have occurred in the region since the early Sea Pines development, the following common land use and development patterns have been identified.

- Large, amenity-based, low-density master planned communities dominate the developed landscape of southern Beaufort County. This phenomenon is generally the result of two factors:
    1. Southern Beaufort County had many large tracts of land that were a result of historic plantation landholdings.
    2. Other lands were consolidated by timber companies, and eventually sold for real estate
- The planning of these communities has been primarily a private sector endeavor with great care given to internal road networks, the delivery of services, and private covenants ensuring that development standards are high within the developments.
- The planned unit development (PUD) has been the preferred zoning tool to facilitate the development of these communities because it provides greater site design flexibility.
- Outside of the master planned communities, government has been faced with the challenge of providing roads, infrastructure, and land use regulations to connect the rest of the community together.
- Many of the region's current transportation inadequacies are a result of poor connectivity between the master planned communities and insufficient land being available for an adequate road network.
- Development is spreading west. Modern development began on Hilton Head Island, spread to the greater Bluffton Area (Bluffton and unincorporated county lands in the region), and is moving toward Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville.

Location, Amount, and Growth Rate of Existing and Future Land Uses

This section provides an analysis of past growth and development trends and offers projections based on these trends continuing into the future. The first part of this section examines the location and distribution of land uses. The analysis of existing and future land use then provides the framework on which the population projections are based.

Existing and Future Land Use Inventory

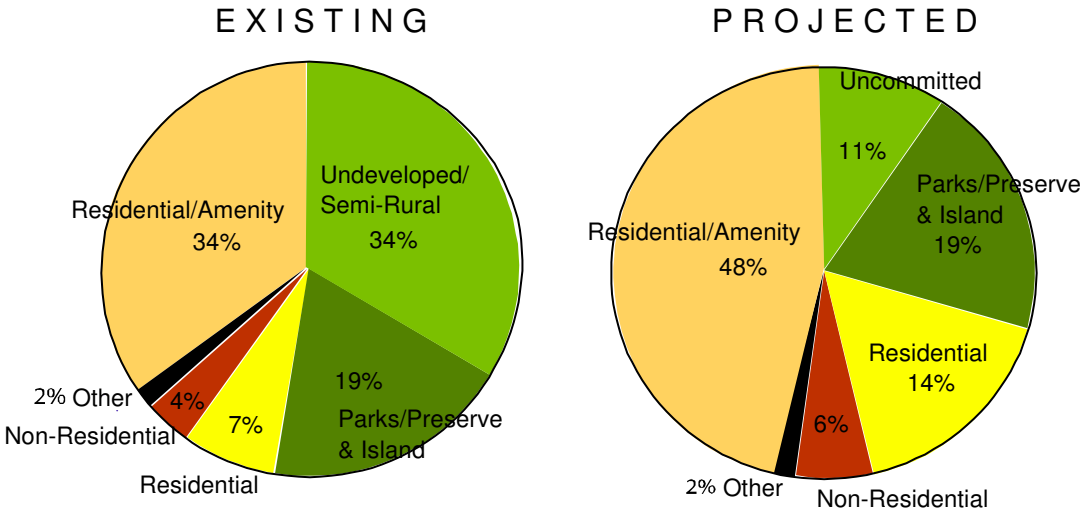
In identifying existing and future land uses, the land use categories used are general in nature in order to provide an overall picture of development patterns in southern Beaufort County (see Figure 4). The categories are used in both the existing and the future land use inventories with the exception of the last two categories. With the latter two categories, Undeveloped/Semi-rural, is only used on the existing land use map; it identifies all existing undeveloped Semi-rural lands. The Uncommitted category is used only on the future land use map; it identifies those lands for which development approvals have not been granted, to date.

Figure 4: Existing and Future Land Use Categories

Land Use Category	Definition
Residential	All standard single-family and multi-family developments
Residential/Amenity	Residential communities with significant recreational amenities such as golf courses, horse stables and/or marinas.
Non-residential	Retail, services, offices, other commercial uses, and light industry.
Resort	Resort communities, hotels, RV parks, and marinas not associated with residential communities.
Institutional	Municipal buildings, schools, universities and large churches.
Parks/Preserves/Islands	All large municipal and county parks, both publicly and privately preserved lands, and small islands with no road access.
Undeveloped/Semi-rural	This category only applies to the existing land use map. It applies to all currently undeveloped and semi-rural areas regardless if they are committed for future development.
Uncommitted	This category only applies to the future land use map. It applies to all undeveloped or semi rural areas that are currently not slated for future development (in other words do not have development approvals, like PUD or subdivision approval).

In evaluating existing and future land use conditions in southern Beaufort County, by far the most significant finding that emerges is that roughly 89% of the land area is either committed for future development or preserved as open space. In the existing land use inventory, approximately 34% of the total land area is classified as Undeveloped/Semi-rural. On the future land use inventory, which includes all lands approved for future development, only 10.9% of the region's lands remain uncommitted. **Figure 5** provides a comparison between existing and projected land uses.

Figure 5: Comparison of Existing and Projected Land Uses



The projected land uses are based on existing zoning. Future zoning amendments, annexations, conservation easements and land acquisitions for preservation purposes would change what is depicted in the charts above.

Density of Existing and Projected Development

Another relevant land use trend is that development has been occurring at fairly low residential densities. For example, once commercial lands and saltwater marshes are subtracted from the total acreage, the residential density of Sea Pines nets at 1.21 dwelling units per acre. Old Bluffton, the only traditional town center that predates the automobile era currently has a residential density of 1.28 dwelling units per acre. This trend of developing at a low density is likely to continue into the future.[1]

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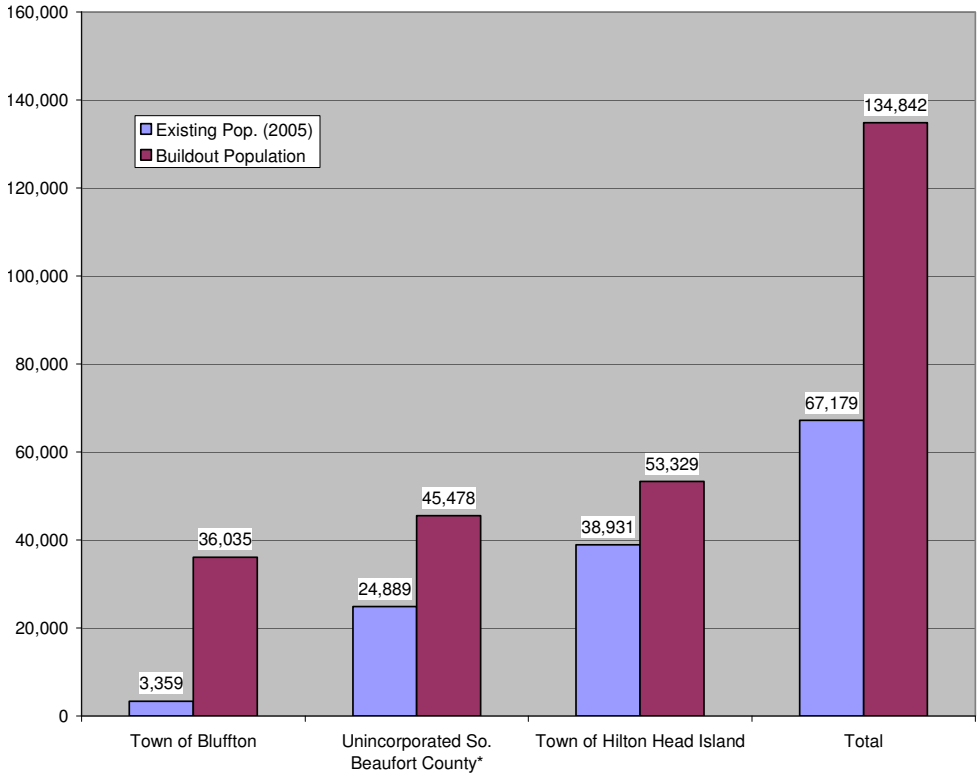
[1] For example, the Jones Tract, which is currently undeveloped, is approved for 5,209 dwelling units but has a residential density of only 1.26 dwelling units per acre.

Population of Region Based on Buildout of "Committed" Lands

- **Permanent Population:** On Hilton Head Island, population estimates are based on the amount of residential and nonresidential development its planning staff estimates could reasonably be developed on the island, based on existing development, existing zoning, and redevelopment opportunities. For the rest of the study area (Bluffton Area), future population growth is based on the number of dwelling units that have been approved for future development through subdivisions, PUD's and development agreements. Eventually the land's capacity will be used up with available land becoming more scattered, scarce and expensive to acquire. When the land's capacity to support more development is depleted, the term "buildout" is applied.

  Figure 6 summarizes existing and future permanent population projections in southern Beaufort County

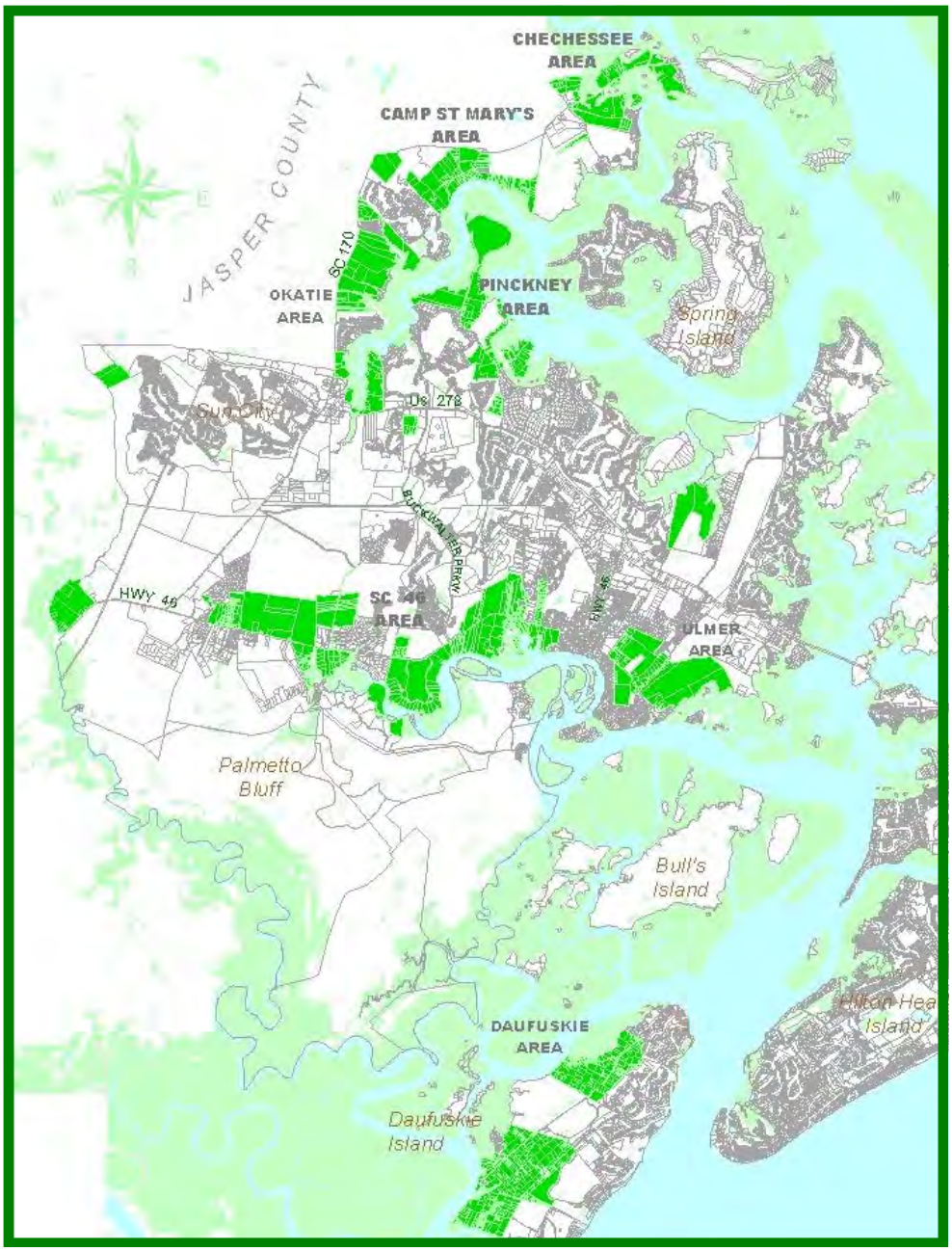
Figure 6: Estimates of Existing (2005) Permanent Population and Permanent Population at Buildout



*Includes Daufuskie Island and all unincorporated areas; excludes uncommitted lands described separately.

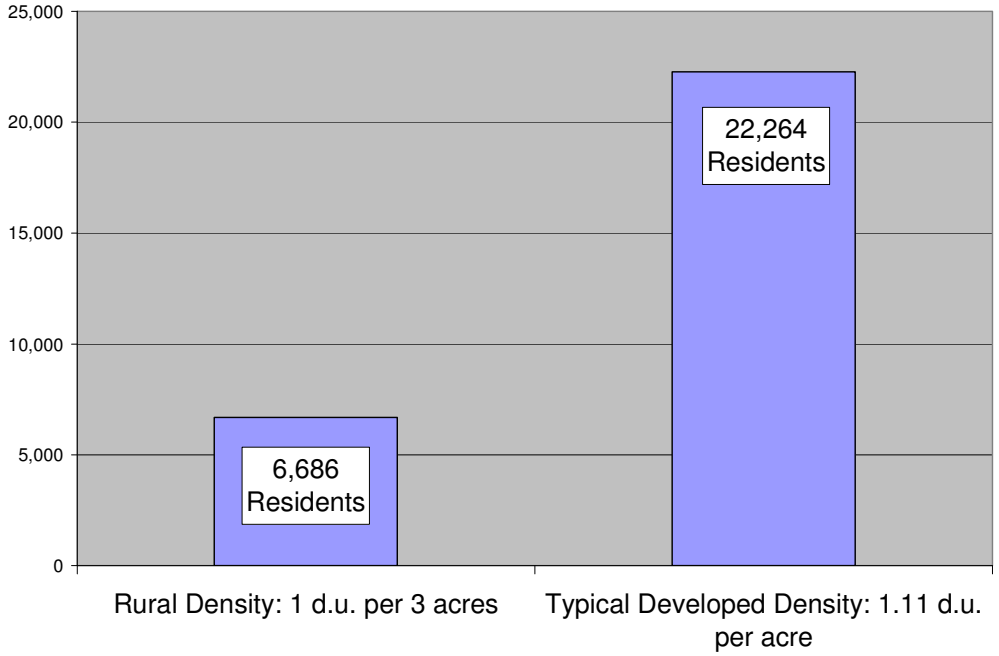
These estimates indicate that collectively, future permanent population growth in the region will increase from 67.179 in 2005, to 134,842 at buildout.

Map 2: "Uncommitted" Lands in Southern Beaufort County



- **Growth Potential of "Uncommitted" Lands:** As noted earlier in this chapter, all but 11% of the land area of southern Beaufort County is either committed to future development or preserved from development. Almost all of the remaining 11% of the uncommitted lands (10,784 acres) is located in unincorporated Beaufort County and zoned either Rural or Rural with Transitional Overlay, which permits a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per three acres. More than half of the uncommitted lands are located in the future growth area for the Town of Bluffton (see **Map 2**). In considering future population growth in the study area, it is also important to consider the potential for growth and development on these uncommitted lands. **Figure 7** illustrates two future scenarios of population growth on these uncommitted lands. The first scenario assumes that the uncommitted lands will develop at their current approved rural density of one dwelling unit (d.u.) per three acres. The second scenario assumes the land is either rezoned or annexed at a more typical developed density of 1.11 d.u. per acre. This figure represents an average of the densities from a sample of local developments.

Figure 7: Growth Potential of Uncommitted Lands



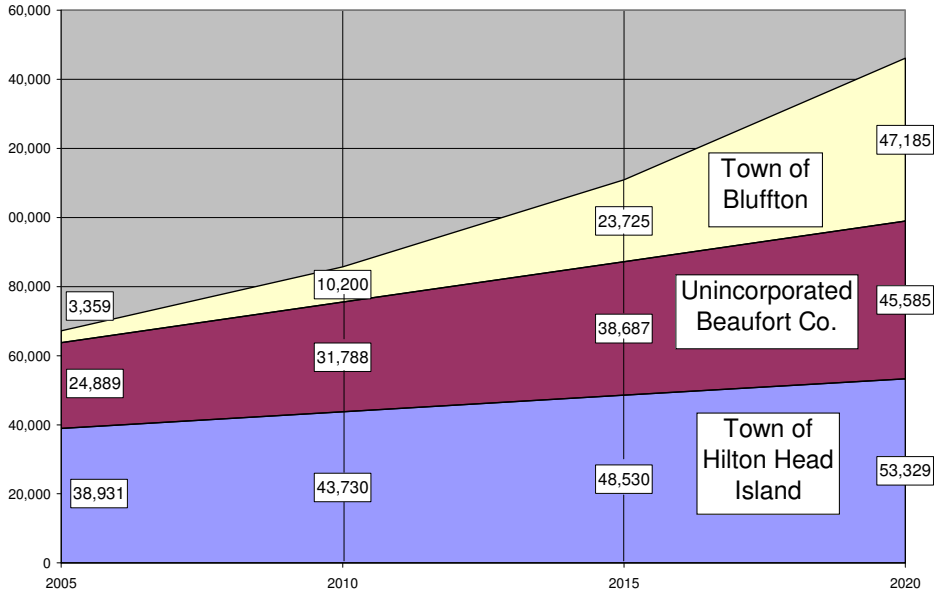
The population estimates in **Figure 7** do not make a distinction between permanent and seasonal residents or account for land that may be used for non-residential purposes. The estimates do,

however, illustrate that the remaining uncommitted lands have the potential to provide a considerable amount of additional growth to southern Beaufort County.

The future of the uncommitted lands in southern Beaufort County is a matter of great concern in the regional planning process because of the potential impacts the future development of these uncommitted lands will have on the general character, public facilities, and fiscal conditions of the region,

- **Rate of Growth: Population Trends and Projections:** Another issue considered as relevant to regional land use issues is the rate at which this future population growth will occur. To evaluate this, the Land Use Patterns and Trends Background Report used two different methods to estimate the rate of future growth and development, reflecting the different growth dynamics of Hilton Head Island and the remainder of southern Beaufort County. Hilton Head Island's planning staff estimates that buildout, will occur there by the year 2020, and as a result the estimated future population growth on Hilton Head Island is allocated proportionately between 2005 and 2020.

Figure 8: Projected Permanent Population Growth on Committed Lands in Southern Beaufort County



* Includes Daufuskie Island and all unincorporated areas

**This figure exceeds the buildout projections provided in Figure 6 because buildout is expected to occur in 2018.

For the remainder of southern Beaufort County, an annually compounded growth rate of 8.25% is used. This figure is based on

the growth rate for this area between 2000 and 2005. The annually compounded growth rate for the five-year period of 2000-2005 was chosen because it represents a time when the anticipated growth of the newly annexed areas of the Town of Bluffton began in earnest. Based on the annual growth rate of 8.25%, the remainder of the committed lands in southern Beaufort County will approach buildout during the year 2018. This time frame closely matches the year 2020 chosen for the Town of Hilton Head Island.

- **Resort and Seasonal Population:** Estimating existing and future permanent population does not tell the full story of the impact of future growth in southern Beaufort County. Vacationers and seasonal residents also have an impact on the region's roadways and other public facilities. Hilton Head Island is distinguished from the other areas in the region for its large number of resort accommodations – timeshares, short-term rentals, and hotels. The remainder of the region has seven additional hotels today and a significant number of seasonal residents. As is outlined in the Land Use Patterns and Trends Background Report, southern Beaufort County has the capacity to support as many as 50,653 seasonal residents and vacationers. This figure is estimated to increase to 72,038 at buildout.

- **Summary:** Based solely on the available supply of land in approved developments, southern Beaufort County stands to gain 67,663 additional permanent residents between today and buildout. Based on past population growth trends, the timeframe estimated to reach this number is sometime within the next 15 to 20 years. The implications of this growth on public facilities needs such as transportation, recreation, and schools are explored in those respective chapters.

  Although uncommitted lands make up only 11% of the total land area of southern Beaufort County, they also have the potential to add over 25,000 additional residents to the estimated buildout estimate of 134,842 persons. Additionally, and as is discussed above, the estimated seasonal/resort population at buildout will also place additional demands on the region. **Figure 9** below summarizes each of the population estimates provided in this chapter.

Figure 9: Summary of Permanent and Seasonal Population Estimates

	Permanent Committed Population	Permanent and Seasonal Uncommitted Population	Resort and Seasonal Population
Existing (2005)	67,179	–	50,653
Buildout	134,842	25,675	72,038

Current Planning and Management Efforts

Existing plans and development management efforts of the Participating Local Governments have also influenced existing and future land use practices.

Comprehensive Plans

In 1994, the State of South Carolina adopted the Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act, which required for the first time that all counties and municipalities regulating land use adopt a Comprehensive Plan. Each of the Participating Local Governments have adopted comprehensive plans that address land use, natural resources, cultural resources, population, housing, community facilities, and economic development.

- **Beaufort County:** The Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1997 and reviewed in 2002. Its Future Land Use Plan establishes a growth management strategy where future growth and infrastructure investment is targeted in Priority Investment Areas that consist of municipalities and the areas surrounding them. Conversely, Rural Investment Areas are intended to remain rural by encouraging low density development and limiting infrastructure investment.

- **Town of Bluffton:** Bluffton's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in May 1999 was prepared shortly after Palmetto Bluff and the Shults Tract had been annexed into the Town, but prior to the annexations of the Buckwalter and Jones Tracts. The plan emphasizes protecting and enhancing the character of

Old Bluffton by encouraging historic preservation and infill development. The plan also calls for integrating newly annexed areas into the Town's existing fabric. The plan establishes a future municipal growth boundary, bounded by U.S. 278 to the north, the May River to the east, and the county boundaries to the south and west. The Town is currently rewriting its comprehensive plan to better reflect the Town's current municipal boundaries and growth trends.

- **Town of Hilton Head Island:** The Town of Hilton Head Island adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1985, later revising it in 1991. It was rewritten in 1999 to conform to the 1994 South Carolina Planning Act and most recently updated in 2004. Hilton Head Island's future land use goals represent those of a more maturely developed community and therefore address issues of infill development, redevelopment and the buildout of the island's remaining vacant parcels. The plan emphasizes the sustainability of the balance of land uses; the balance of human activity and the natural environment; and the balance between land uses and public infrastructure and services.

Land Management Ordinances

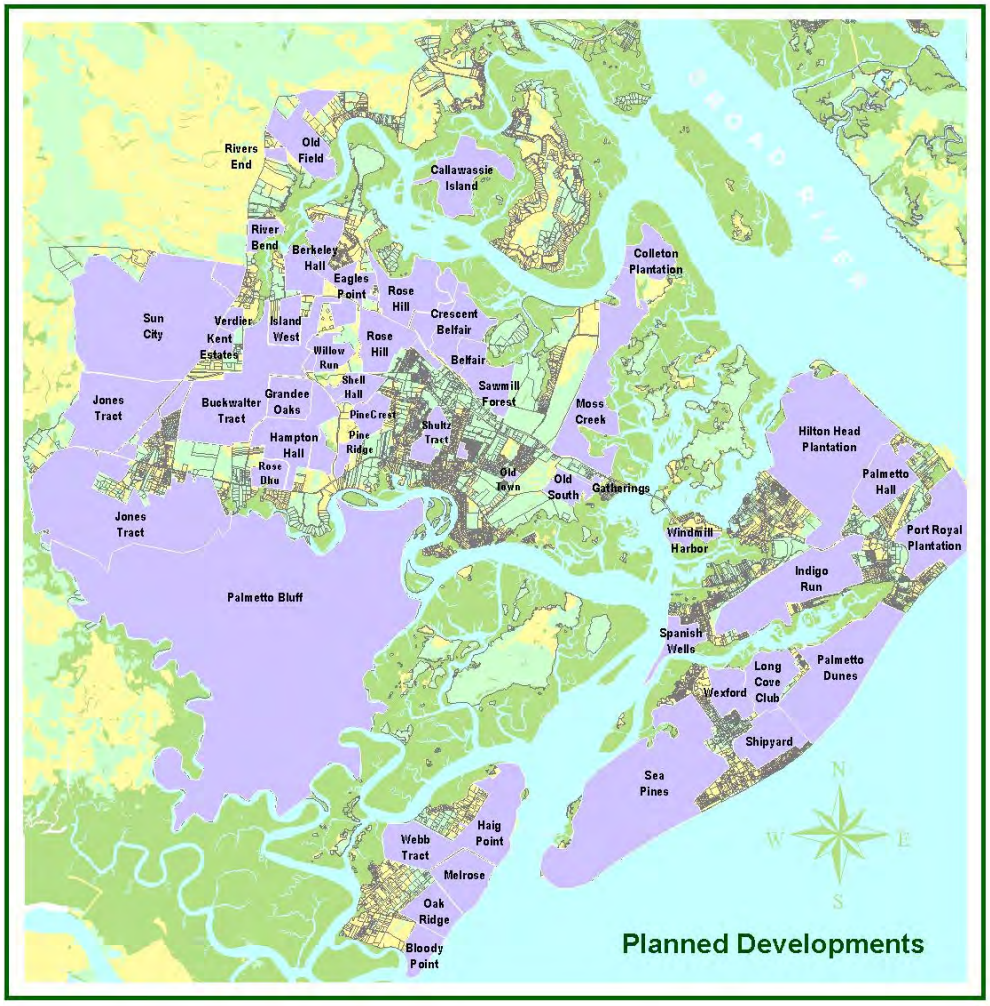
Current development patterns have been far more influenced by PUD's than by the land use, density and other requirements set forth in the standard zoning districts. The land management ordinances have been most effective in addressing specific areas, such as Old Bluffton, portions of Hilton Head Island and the County's community preservation areas, where control over lot patterns, site design and architecture are important in preserving local character. Another area where the local ordinances have had significant influence is in guiding the quality of growth, especially along the commercial corridors by architectural, landscaping, lighting and signage requirements.

Planned Unit Developments (PUD's) and Development Agreements

As is discussed above, one of the common themes in the recent history of development in southern Beaufort County has been the reliance on flexible, negotiated tools like the planned unit development (PUD) and the development agreement. PUD's grant developers greater leeway and flexibility to master plan and design an area than is possible under standard zoning rules, hopefully in exchange for providing a higher level of community benefits than is normally required. Each PUD contains a unique, negotiated set of standards covering a whole range

of issues, including use types, density, building form and appearance, open space, etc. As is discussed earlier, the PUD tool has been used extensively in the region by each of the Participating Local Governments to create high-quality, unique, master-planned developments.

Map 3: Planned Unit Developments (PUD's) in Southern Beaufort County



Development agreements provide for long-term predictability by allowing developers to lock in existing land use regulations for an extended time period, in exchange for community benefits such as open space and public infrastructure improvements. Under state law, development agreements must conform to local development standards, and so they often are combined with PUD's to establish a negotiated approval for development over an extended period of time. Bluffton, in particular, has relied on development agreements in the

annexation of major areas such as Palmetto Bluffs, the Shults Tract, and the Buckwalter Tract.

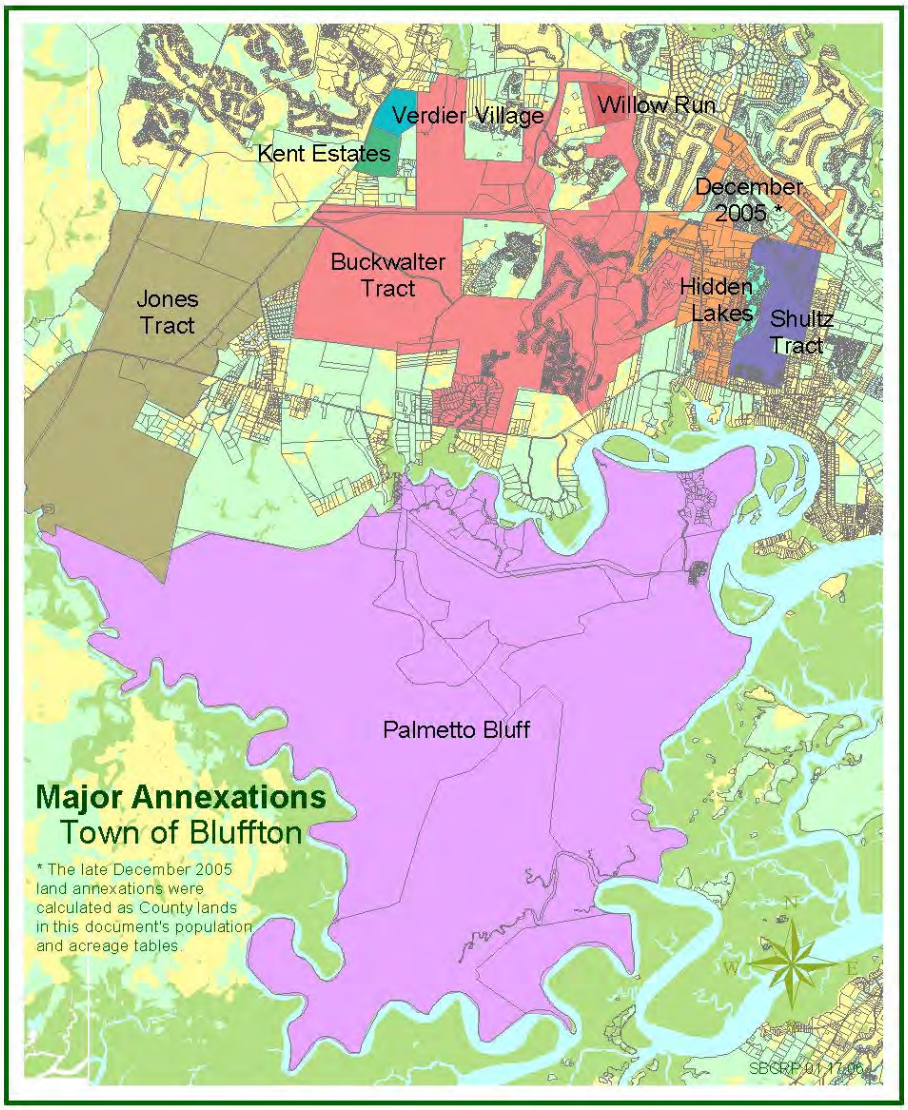
The private sector favors PUD's and development agreements because they allow a great amount of flexibility, as well as assure the rules of the game will not change as they relate to key development parameters. The Participating Local Governments have relied on these tools because negotiation typically has resulted in a higher level of community amenities (such as parks and open space, or road improvements) than otherwise would be obtained with typical development approved under the zoning and subdivision ordinances. Despite the benefits, however, both tools rely heavily on open-ended negotiation, and thus decrease the amount of certainty in the development review process. Further, the tools lock in decisions that may appear sound today but may not adequately address future needs, such as the provision of off-site infrastructure.

Because so much of the land in southern Beaufort County is already committed to future development, new baseline standards for PUD's and development agreements will have less impact than they would in a community with more development potential. However, because 10.9% of the regional planning area is uncommitted, and because some of the existing PUD's and development agreements might be re-opened over time, establishment of uniform standards between Bluffton and the county would still be a worthwhile action, as it could assist the Participating Local Governments achieve some of their regional land use goals. Further, establishing baseline standards in southern Beaufort County can be seen as a necessary first step toward achieving uniformity with Jasper County and Hardeeville for negotiated approvals in those jurisdictions.

Incorporation and Annexation

Incorporation and annexation have both been used by local municipalities to obtain more local control over development decisions. Hilton Head Island incorporated in 1983 for this very reason. The Town of Bluffton has annexed over 30,000 acres since 1998. Major annexations are shown on **Map 4**. Currently no joint land use plan or formal agreement exists between Beaufort County and the Town of Bluffton for land uses and residential densities for Bluffton's future growth area.

Map 4: Major Annexations – Town of Bluffton



Community Preservation Districts

One of the goals of Beaufort County's Comprehensive Plan is to preserve and protect existing small communities throughout the county that possess a distinctive character. These areas were designated Community Preservation Districts in the County Comprehensive Plan, which calls for a detailed community plan and design guidelines to be prepared for each of them. Interim standards have been adopted in the County Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance to apply to each of the CPs until permanent, individual standards can be developed through individual planning processes for each district.

Within southern Beaufort County, there are five CP districts: Pritchardville, Bluffton (unincorporated), Alljoy Road, Buckingham, and Daufuskie Island. The Alljoy Road CP Plan has been completed and Daufuskie Island is underway. Of the remaining CP's that need to be prepared in southern Beaufort County, the Bluffton and Pritchardville CP districts are adjacent to the Town of Bluffton, and thus provide a good opportunity for joint planning by Bluffton, the county, and the residents of the CP districts.

Joint Corridor Planning/Corridor Overlay Districts/Design Review Boards

Charles Fraser was enamored by the natural beauty of Hilton Head Island and chose to design Sea Pines around the natural features of the site with roads snaking among the live oaks and houses incorporating earth tones and blending into their environment. Deed covenants were used to ensure that the development of Sea Pines conformed to his vision. This occurred two decades before zoning regulations were enacted on Hilton Head Island. When the Town incorporated and adopted its own zoning code, aesthetic requirements matching those developed in the private communities were an important consideration.

The Participating Local Governments have also long recognized that maintaining a high level of development quality along the major roadways that traverse the region is essential to maintaining southern Beaufort County's unique sense of place. The Land Use Patterns and Trends Background Report recaps the substantial progress already made in requiring high-quality design along the roadways, beginning with the Sea Pines private design controls on Hilton Head Island, and continuing through the Corridor Overlay Districts being administered by each of the Participating Local Governments. However, there remains a public perception of clutter along some of the roadways, especially U.S. 278. This is in part an enforcement issue, and also due in part to early development that was approved prior to the adoption of current standards.

Hilton Head Island was the first local government to adopt a Corridor Overlay District (COD) to maintain aesthetic qualities along major corridors. Today, all three local jurisdictions have Corridor Overlay Districts that set standards for architecture, landscaping, lighting and signage. Hilton Head Islands Corridor Overlay District applies both to properties fronting all major roads and to waterfront and marsh-front properties. The Corridor Overlay Districts of the Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County apply to all major highways in southern Beaufort County. The only discrepancy is that Bluffton's Corridor Overlay District applies to Buckwalter Parkway and Bluffton Parkway which are not included in the County's Corridor Overlay District

During the regional planning process, concerns were voiced, that there was not a clear regional vision for the aesthetic qualities that should be maintained along these corridors, and a coordinated plan and development standards should be established. There were also suggestions that development review could also be better coordinated, especially between the County and Town of Bluffton.

Common Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Actions

The Land Use Goals and Objectives center on addressing land use issues of regional importance while respecting the autonomy of each of the Participating Local Governments to control its own individual land use decisions: The focus of the regional land uses goals involve:

- Coordinating future land use planning within the region, including:
    1. Planning for land uses and development on the remaining uncommitted lands.
    2. Planning for the Community Preservation districts.
    3. Coordinating regional planning efforts with Jasper County and Hardeeville.
    4. Ensuring coordinated reviews of major development projects and annexations between the Participating Local Governments.
    5. Establishing baseline standards for PUDs and Development Agreements.
- The design and aesthetic quality of new development and redevelopment, in particular highway corridors that traverse multiple jurisdictions and regional scenic corridors like the May River and Okatie highways.
- Promoting a positive relationship of land uses to each other, including connections, pedestrian-friendliness, the encouragement

of a mix of uses and higher-density development at identified nodes; and economic development at the appropriate locations.

- Coordinating the timing and relationship of development with the provision of public services and facilities;
- Encouraging the protection and preservation of open space where it exists in the region; and
- Implementing a regional demographic and land use information system.

Common Goal 1: Future Land Use Planning Coordination

Future land use planning will be coordinated between the county and the towns of Bluffton and Hilton Head Island (the "Participating Local Governments").

Objective 1.1 Bluffton Growth Area. The Participating Local Governments will prioritize and work cooperatively to prepare a joint land use plan for the Bluffton Growth Area that addresses the pattern of land use, density and intensity of development and redevelopment, environmental protection, the relationship of land use to public facilities, and fiscal impacts.

Implementation Action: Jointly prepare a land use plan (Joint Land Use Plan) for the uncommitted lands in southern Beaufort County, and potential redevelopment areas where densities could be increased, by the end of 2007.

Description:

- Establish a Land Use Working Group through intergovernmental agreement consisting of staff representatives of the Participating Local Governments and representatives from Jasper County and Hardeeville (Chapter 7 provides a more detailed description of the Land Use Working Group).
- Prepare a Joint Land Use Plan for the uncommitted lands that establishes a coordinated land use policy that is consistent with the local comprehensive plans and this regional plan. The Joint Land Use Plan should address:
    1. The residential density and land uses of the uncommitted lands;
    2. Lands with infill potential;
    3. Lands where mixed use development should be encouraged,
    4. Public facilities and services for the planning area;
    5. A plan for the Bluffton Community Preservation district;
    6. The future growth boundaries of Bluffton and Hardeeville; and
    7. Recommendations on how the coordinated land use policy will be implemented through a seamless set of zone districts and development standards between the County, Bluffton, and neighboring jurisdictions (as appropriate).
- Until the Joint Land Use Plan is completed, the county and Bluffton should adopt an interim policy that annexations and rezonings within the study area shall conform to the Future Land Use Plan of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Responsibility: Land Use Working Group, Southern Regional Plan Implementation Committee, Participating Local Governments.

Objective 1.2 Jasper County. The Participating Local Governments will engage in coordinated regional planning with Jasper County in the areas of future land use, public facilities (especially transportation and the planned new port), and environmental protection.

Implementation Action: Formalize regional planning cooperation and collaboration between the Participating Local Governments, Jasper County, and the City of Hardeeville to plan on a wider regional basis.

Description:

- The Participating Local Governments will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville to identify a common geographic area of interest, issues of common concern, and commitment to provide staff support to address common issues related to future land use, public facilities (especially transportation and the new port), and natural assets and environmental protection..
- Staff representatives from Jasper County and Hardeeville will be invited to participate as members of the Land Use Working Group, on a permanent basis.
  (A summary of recommendations to encourage joint planning between the Participating Local Governments and Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville is provided in Chapter 7.)

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments, Jasper County, and Hardeeville.

Objective 1.3 Coordinated Reviews. The Participating Local Governments will develop and implement joint review of major development proposals and annexations prior to their approvals.

Implementation Action: Codify requirements that allow for review and comment on annexations and rezonings.

Description: Require any annexation and rezoning proposal to be sent to the Planning Directors of the other two Participating Local Governments for review and comment prior to public hearing on the application, and that any comments be included in the review packets of the applications/proposal.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Objective 1.4 Planning for Community Preservation Districts. The county and Bluffton will engage in joint planning for the Bluffton and Pritchardville Community Preservation Districts as identified in the Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan.

Implementation Action: Jointly prepare a community plan for the Pritchardville Community Preservation district (The Bluffton Community Preservation Plan will be prepared as part of the Joint Land Use Plan for the uncommitted lands – Objective 1.1.).

Description:

- The Pritchardville Community Preservation Plan should identify the community's unique character by developing strategies that maintain its character in the face of rapid growth.
- Existing development patterns should be identified and maintained, while at the same time allowing for sensitive infill development to occur where consistent with the plan.
- The Pritchardville Community Preservation Plan should be consistent with the Joint Land Use Plan recommended for the uncommitted areas (Objective 1.1).
- The planning process should be driven by a Community Preservation Committee made up of Pritchardville residents, stakeholders, and County and Town of Bluffton officials.
- Both the County and the Town of Bluffton should facilitate the CP planning process. The Pritchardville Community Preservation Plan should be adopted by both the County and the Town of Bluffton.
- The County will seek input from the Town of Bluffton and the Town of Hilton Head Island when it addresses the Buckingham and Daufuskie Community Preservation Plans.

Responsibility: Beaufort County and the Town of Bluffton

Objective 1.5 Baseline Standards for Planned Unit Developments and Development Agreements. The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively to establish minimum standards for Planned Unit Developments and Development Agreements that will serve as a guide in the review and approval of development. These standards will establish minimum requirements for open space, the provision of public facilities, interconnectivity, mixed land uses, and environmental protection.

Implementation Action: Establish uniform baseline standards between the county and Bluffton for PUDs and Development Agreements. Adopt standards.

Description:

- For PUDs, establish uniform baseline standards addressing open space, environmental protection, traffic mitigation, connectivity, and access management.
- For Development Agreements:
    1. Require compliance with the uniform baseline standards established for PUDs, to the maximum extent allowed by law.
    2. Establish criteria allowing the agreement to be re-opened if defined conditions occur. These should include:
        - A phasing schedule that requires phases to be completed within a specified period of time;
        - A schedule that requires the transportation analysis and mitigation requirements to be re-evaluated after certain thresholds are reached, to ensure transportation impact and mitigation issues are addressed.
    3. Recognition that subsequently adopted laws are not in conflict with the development agreement, and can be applied, if at a public hearing the local government determines:
        - There are substantial changes that have occurred within the local government in pertinent conditions existing at the time the development agreement was adopted, which changes, if not addressed by the local government, would pose a serious threat to the health, safety, and welfare.

- The new laws address these problems and are essential to addressing them; and
- The laws expressly state they are to apply to the development agreement.

4. Recognition that subsequently adopted laws can apply to the development agreement if it is based on substantially and materially inaccurate information supplied by the developer.
5. In addition, baseline indicators should be established in the agreement itself, focusing on areas such as impacts on public facilities. Development exceeding the baseline indicators would be required to be re-opened.

Responsibility: Beaufort County and Town of Bluffton

Common Goal 2: Development Quality and Character

The region will maintain a strong community aesthetic that includes the protection of scenic view corridors and regional commercial travel corridors, in order to promote and protect the economic well-being of southern Beaufort County and supplement the high quality of master planned areas. Preserved scenic corridors and well-designed travel corridors will maintain a positive image of the region through a high quality of development that promotes a strong sense of regional and individual community character. Joint planning among jurisdictions is necessary to identify desired quality and character of new development along key corridors and in other key locations.

Objective 2.1 Joint Corridor Planning. The Participating Local Governments will engage in joint planning of highway corridors that are within multiple jurisdictions, such as Highway 46, U.S. 278, and SC 170.

Implementation Action: Jointly develop a corridor management plan and uniform standards for Bluffton-area regional travel corridors.

Description: Prepare corridor management plan that:

- Focuses on corridors that traverse both Bluffton and Beaufort County including U.S. 278, SC 170, SC 46, Burnt Church Road and Bluffton Parkway.
- Because of the complexity of the process, prepare corridor management plan for U.S. 278 first, and then prioritize completion of other corridors.
- Draw distinctions between urban, suburban, and rural roads and apply corresponding architecture, landscaping, lighting, signage, and streetscape standards for each road type.
- Include uniform standards consistent with the corridor management plan, which can be adopted by the County and Bluffton for the corridors.
- Includes additional standards to provide heightened protection for scenic resources along the May River Road (SC 46) and Okatie Highway (SC 170)

Responsibility: Land Use Working Group, Southern Regional Plan Implementation Committee, Participating Local Governments.

Objective 2.2 Regional Travel Corridors. The Participating Local Governments will establish coordinated review, administration, and enforcement of development to maintain a strong community aesthetic and function along the following regional travel corridors: U.S. 278, SC 170, Buckwalter Parkway, Bluffton Parkway, Burnt Church Road, and Bluffton Road.

Implementation Action: Consolidate administration and enforcement responsibilities for design review along Bluffton-area regional travel

corridors (U.S. 278, SC 170, SC 46, Buckwalter Parkway; and Burnt Church Road), .

Description:
- Establish a consolidated review body, by intergovernmental agreement, for a Joint Corridor Overlay District between the County and Bluffton for the Bluffton area regional travel corridors.
- There would be equal representation on the review body between the County and Bluffton,
- Review board members would consist of jointly appointed architects, landscape architects, design professionals as well as citizen representatives.

Responsibility: Beaufort County and the Town of Bluffton.

Objective 2.3 Regional Scenic Corridors. The Participating Local Governments will establish coordinated review, administration, and enforcement of development to maintain the views and images of the low country created along the following regional scenic corridors: the May River Highway and the Okatie Highway.

See implementation action under Land Use Objective 2.1

Objective 2.4 Individual Community Identities. The Participating Local Governments are encouraged to individually adopt additional design and aesthetic standards unique to their communities to strengthen community identity. The Participating Local Governments will work together to identify, document and protect historic, archaeological and cultural resources in southern Beaufort County.

Implementation Action: Collectively work to identify, document, and protect historic, archaeological, and cultural resources worthy of regional protection.

Description:
- Include historic resources in the County's Disaster Mitigation Plan.
- Review and evaluate preservation regulations to ensure they are providing sufficient protection to historic and cultural resources.
- Adopt local legislation to freeze property tax assessments at pre-rehabilitation levels.
- Emphasize adaptive reuse of historically significant buildings as a strategy to protect community character.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Objective 2.5 Urban and Suburban Distinctions. The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively to plan for transitions between newly developing suburban areas and the traditional areas of Bluffton, such as through gateway planning at key points of entry.

See implementation action under Land Use Objective 2.1

Common Goal 3: Land Use Relationships

The Participating Local Governments will have livable and sustainable neighborhoods and communities with compatible land uses, mixed-use development, pedestrian and transportation connections, and integrated open spaces.

Objective 3.1 Mixed Uses. To the maximum extent practicable, future land use will occur in locations and with a mix of land uses designed to promote efficient transportation networks and provision of public services. Desirable mixed land uses will promote strong focal points of diverse living, working, shopping, cultural, and recreational activities; will relieve traffic pressure by providing opportunities for multiple purpose vehicular trips; and will relieve development pressures on open space and key natural assets.

Implementation Action: Prepare incentive regulations in Bluffton to allow for mixed-use development options that result in substantial reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMTs).

Description:

- Offer higher densities/intensities as part of mixed-use development projects at selected locations (e.g., high growth nodes), if it can be demonstrated the change to mixed-use will result in a substantial reduction of VMTs (a minimum of 10 percent).
- Some of the other considerations to reduce VMT's include the degree of pedestrian connections; the availability of bicycle, sidewalk, and bus amenities; and limitations on the availability of parking.
- Expedited review procedures should also be considered as part of the incentive program

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Objective 3.2 Connectivity. The Participating Local Governments will establish coordinated minimum land use design principles to promote better connections between land uses and master planned communities, both vehicular connections that offer alternative travel routes and pedestrian connections that offer non-vehicular travel opportunities.

Implementation Action: Develop connectivity standards that will be adopted by all the Participating Local Governments in their development codes.

Description: Standards should require a clear hierarchy of well-connected streets that distribute traffic over multiple streets and avoid traffic congestion on principal routes. The standards should address: vehicular access to public streets; cross access to adjacent properties (as appropriate); on-site vehicular circulation; require some public through streets in large subdivisions; shared parking and access for non-residential properties; gridded street systems (where appropriate); and bike lanes and sidewalks.

Responsibility: Land Use Working Group, Participating Local Governments.

Objective 3.3 Economic Development. Locations will be planned for uses that further regional economic development goals that are developed through future economic development planning efforts.

Implementation Action: The Land Use Working Group should prepare and implement a regional economic development plan.

Description:
- The plan should support the creation of more high-quality commercial development, and emphasize the need to encourage more uses that create high-paying jobs..
- The Land Use Working Group should partner with local Chambers of Commerce.
- Jasper County and Hardeeville should be invited to participate in the plan.
- The plan should be undertaken concurrent with the Joint Land Use Plan.
- Upon completion, it should be adopted and implemented by the Participating Local Governments.

Responsibility: Land Use Working Group, Participating Local Governments.

Objective 3.4 Efficient Provision of Public Services and Facilities. Land uses will occur in a geographic pattern that allows for public services and facilities to be provided in an efficient manner.

Implementation Action: Be mindful of the public facility impacts from the development of the uncommitted lands.

Description: At the current density, uncommitted lands could yield a population of approximately 6,600. If they are rezoned to the average residential density of 1.11 dwelling units per acre, they could potentially yield over 22,000 additional residents.

Responsibility: Land Use Working Group; Southern Regional Plan Implementation Committee, Participating Local Governments.

Common Goal 4: Land Use and Public Service and Facilities Linkage

Development will be coordinated with the planning for and provision of public services and facilities for transportation, water and sewer facilities, schools, and others, as addressed through goals and objectives in the Transportation and Other Public Facilities element of this regional plan.

Implementation Action – Adequate Public Facilities: Consider adopting Adequate Public Facilities (APF) regulation for Regional Road Network.

Description:

- APF requires that adequate facilities be available to accommodate new development at or about the time that development occurs
- APF requires local governments to develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) consisting of capital improvements that provide adequate capacity for new growth and the commitment to fund these capital improvements.
- APF requires annual monitoring to measure capacity and demand conditions.
- Adequate Public Facilities regulations are not meant to be used as a "no growth" tool.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Implementation Action – Transportation Demand Management (TDM): Prepare and implement targeted TDM practices.

Description:

- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is a land use policy that encourages the reduction of single-occupant vehicle travel particularly during the peak hours.
- TDM policies include offering incentives to carpool, allowing flex-time so that employees can commute during off-peak hours, and improving alternatives to driving alone.

Responsibility: Southern Beaufort County Transportation Working Group; Major Local Employers; Participating Local Governments,

Common Goal 5: Regional Planning Information Systems

Southern Beaufort County will be served by a centralized regional information system that monitors and tracks planned land uses; provides ongoing population and employment forecasts; measures and predicts regional impacts of growth; and is integrated with other regional models such as environmental and transportation models.

Common Goal 6: Planned Population.

Southern Beaufort County needs to be prepared to accommodate, based on approved development agreements, an approximate doubling of permanent population over the next 20-25 years, with an anticipated "build-out" population of between 130,000 and 140,000 and a seasonal population of over 70,000.

Objective 5.1. Demographic Model. A regional demographic model of existing and forecasted population, including permanent and seasonal population, will be maintained through a multi-jurisdictional effort.

Implementation Action: Establish regional demographic and land use information systems.

Description:

- The system should consist of existing and forecasted seasonal and permanent population data; a consistent classification system for existing and future land use; and a regional land use model that monitors remaining growth capacity and assesses the impacts of land use decisions on the region.
- The County should be responsible for maintaining the system.

Responsibility: Beaufort County with the assistance of the Land Use Implementation Group

Objective 5.2. Land Use Model. A regional land use model will monitor remaining growth capacity relative to population forecasts along with the collective regional impacts of the land use plans of the Participating Local Governments.

See implementation action under Land Use Objective 5.1

Objective 5.3. Local Planning Coordination. Local comprehensive and land use planning efforts will be compatible and consistent with the regional forecasting and land use models.

See implementation action under Land Use Objective 5.1

Chapter

3

COST OF GROWTH

The previous chapter forecasts the doubling of southern Beaufort County's population over the next 15 to 20 years. This plan estimates that the cost of providing the capital improvements for roads, parks, schools, libraries, and public safety to keep up with this growth will be over $529 million (see Fiscal Opportunities and Constraints to Growth Background Report). However, dedicated funding sources (impact fees, State Highway Improvement Program funds, federal earmarks, etc.) only account for $150.6 million, leaving a "funding gap" of over $378.3 million. It is important to note that these costs do not include operations and maintenance. The magnitude of the price tag and funding gap to provide these facilities necessitates regional solutions to solve these challenges.

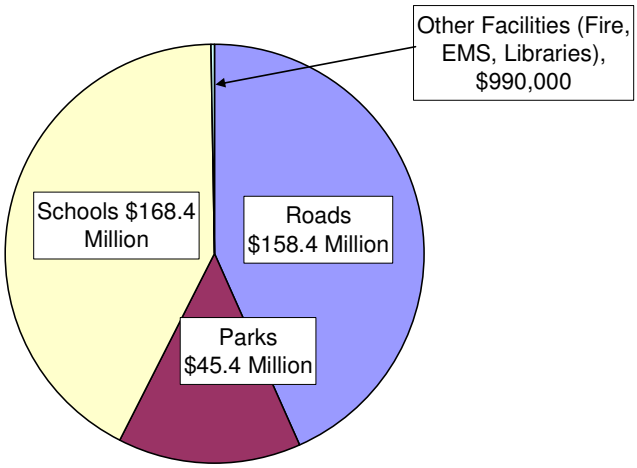
Roads, parks and schools, which are covered in more detail in the next three chapters, represent the majority of the estimated capital improvement costs and the funding gap that the region will face over the next 15 to 20 years. Specific funding strategies for each of these facilities are addressed in each of the subsequent chapters. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a common framework and point of reference for which the cost of growth issue is addressed in the goals and objectives for the next three chapters.

Concentrate Regional Funding Efforts on Roads, Parks and Schools

Figure 10 below illustrates that the facilities where capital funding needs are the most pressing at the regional level are transportation, parks and recreation, and public schools. Given the importance of these public facilities to the region's quality of life and the magnitude of this revenue

gap, the Participating Local Governments need to work collectively to plan for and coordinate the funding of these facilities.

Figure 10: Summary of Funding Gap for Capital Needs in Southern Beaufort County



Plan Strategically and Regionally

Toward this end, it is agreed as part of this regional planning process that the Participating Local Governments will focus strategically on regional approaches to funding roads and parks, and cooperate and support the School District in funding public school needs. These regional efforts will focus on a limited range of regional tools and efforts that are sufficient, effective, and practical to supplement local financing initiatives. They include:

- **Adopt Regional Level of Service (LOS) Standards:** In order to establish a foundation for coordinating transportation and parks planning across the region, each of the Participating Local Governments will adopt the same level of service standard for these facilities, that is consistent and coordinated with the LOS adopted by the other Participating Local Governments.

- **Identify Existing Deficiencies and Future Capital Improvements Needs:** Using the agreed upon LOS standards, the Participating Local Governments will then work cooperatively to identify needed capital projects, determine their costs and identify revenue sources to fund the projects.

- **Work Cooperatively with the School District:** While the School District has the responsibility to plan and provide funding for its capital

needs, a framework needs to be established where the Participating Local Governments can work cooperatively with the School District and support its efforts to plan for the future deficiencies and future capital improvement needs for public schools.

Develop an Appropriate Mix of Existing and New Funding Tools to Address the Funding Gap

As part of this regional planning effort, the Participating Local Governments have also agreed to work cooperatively to develop strategies to address the funding gap for each of the identified public facilities of regional importance (roads, parks, and schools). Toward the achievement of this overarching goal relating to funding, during the regional planning process, different potential funding sources were reviewed and ultimately identified as the most appropriate. They are identified and discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5. In making decisions about the most appropriate funding sources to use, the following considerations were made:

- **Develop an Overall Funding Strategy:** The following factors guided the selection of revenue sources to address the funding gap:
  1. Revenue Potential: Whether the tool can generate substantial sums of monies to fund capital infrastructure;
  2. Geographic Application: Whether the tool can be applied across the region;
  3. Legislative Authorization: Whether the tool requires legislative authorization;
  4. Technical/Administrative Ease: The ease of administering the tool; and
  5. Public Acceptability: How citizens will accept the tool.
- **Focus First on Available Funding Tools:** In order to take immediate action on addressing capital funding needs, it was determined that it was important to concentrate first on revenue sources that the State of South Carolina enables local governments to use to fund capital improvements. These include property taxes, impact fees and local sales taxes.
- **Consider Funding Tools that Require Changes in State Legislation:** It was also determined that if the available funding tools are not adequate to address the funding gap, it may be necessary to lobby the state to initiate legislation that would enable new funding sources.

- **Explore New Institutional Arrangements:** In addition, it was determined that where appropriate, new institutional arrangements to facilitate multi-jurisdictional cooperation on funding issues should be explored.
- **Cooperate with Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville**: It was also determined that where appropriate, revenue funding strategies for the Regional Road Network and other facilities as applicable will be coordinated with Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville.

Finally, given the size of the funding gap, particularly for transportation, it was determined that one funding tool or a one-dimensional funding strategy for either transportation or parks and recreation is not realistic. Instead, it was agreed that the Participating Local Governments must take a broad-based and multi-dimensional approach to funding these needs. It is also recognized that, given the size of the funding gap and the existing funding options in the region, the funding strategy will evolve over time.

As is mentioned above, the specific funding recommendations are included in chapters 4 (transportation) and 5 (parks and recreation) for each of those facilities.

Chapter

4

TRANSPORTATION

The most visible consequence of southern Beaufort County's fast rate of growth is the demand it places on the region's roads. The rapid rate of growth has already caused portions of U.S. 278, the region's primary east-west arterial, to fail with traffic volumes far exceeding capacity between S.C. 46 and the bridges to Hilton Head Island. It has been estimated that over $31 million worth of capital improvement projects are needed simply to address existing needs.

This situation will be far worse at buildout, when it is estimated the entire stretch of U.S. 278 from the Cross Island Parkway to the Jasper County line will be over capacity. Various plans and studies have recommended an additional $222.9 million in road improvements to accommodate population at buildout. Yet even with the implementation of this extensive list of improvements, it is estimated that 20 miles of roads will still be failing (due to local policies that discourage road widenings on certain roads).

While the needs are substantial (over $250 million), if current fiscal conditions do not change, it appears that over the next 15 years only $95.5 million is anticipated in revenues for road capital improvements from SCDOT and local road impact fees, leaving an estimated funding shortfall for the planned facilities of over $158.4 million.

Addressing this significant funding shortfall as well as planning for and developing management strategies to

reduce VMTs and travel demand on the region's roads is a challenge the Participating Local Governments cannot solve individually, but must be addressed at the regional level. This is so because the Regional Road Network is used by residents throughout the region, can be impacted by development throughout the region, and can only be realistically funded by a region-wide effort.

Regional Road Network

The Regional Road Network for southern Beaufort County is made up of 183 miles of principal arterials, minor arterials and major collectors. The majority of roads making up the Regional Road Network are owned and maintained by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), with the exception of Buckwalter Parkway and Bluffton Parkway (Beaufort County); Calhoun Street (Bluffton) and 3.4 miles of roads owned by the Town of Hilton Head Island.

Along with southern Beaufort County's fast pace of growth, three other factors place an additional strain on the Regional Road Network – geography – due to the waterways in the region; lack of parallel roads due to existing development; and relatively low density development.

Level of Service (LOS) Standard

Level of Service (LOS) is a term used in describing the operation and functionality of roadways and intersections. Level of Service defines the operational characteristics of roadways and intersections in terms of quality measures of speed, travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions and comfort and convenience.

Six LOS letters designate each level of quality of vehicular flow, from A to F, with LOS "A" representing the best operating conditions and LOS "F" the worst. The Participating Local Governments have decided as a matter of policy that in order to maintain a minimum quality of life in the region, conditions on the Regional Road Network should not fall below LOS "D".[2]

[2] The County and Bluffton presently measure LOS "D," based on an average daily basis. This is so because SCDOT annually measures traffic volume at major roadway segments over a 24-hour period. The resulting figure is called the Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) count. SCDOT does not provide annual traffic count information on intersections, but will conduct counts for problem intersections on an as needed basis. The Town of Hilton Head Island measures LOS on a peak hour basis. This is so because Hilton Head conducts their own manual traffic counts at all of their major intersections to determine peak hour data during the second week of June, which represents a high volume but not the peak volume time of the year. The differences between the data that the Town collects and SCDOT's AADT data are that the Town looks at

Map 5: Existing Conditions of the Regional Road Network

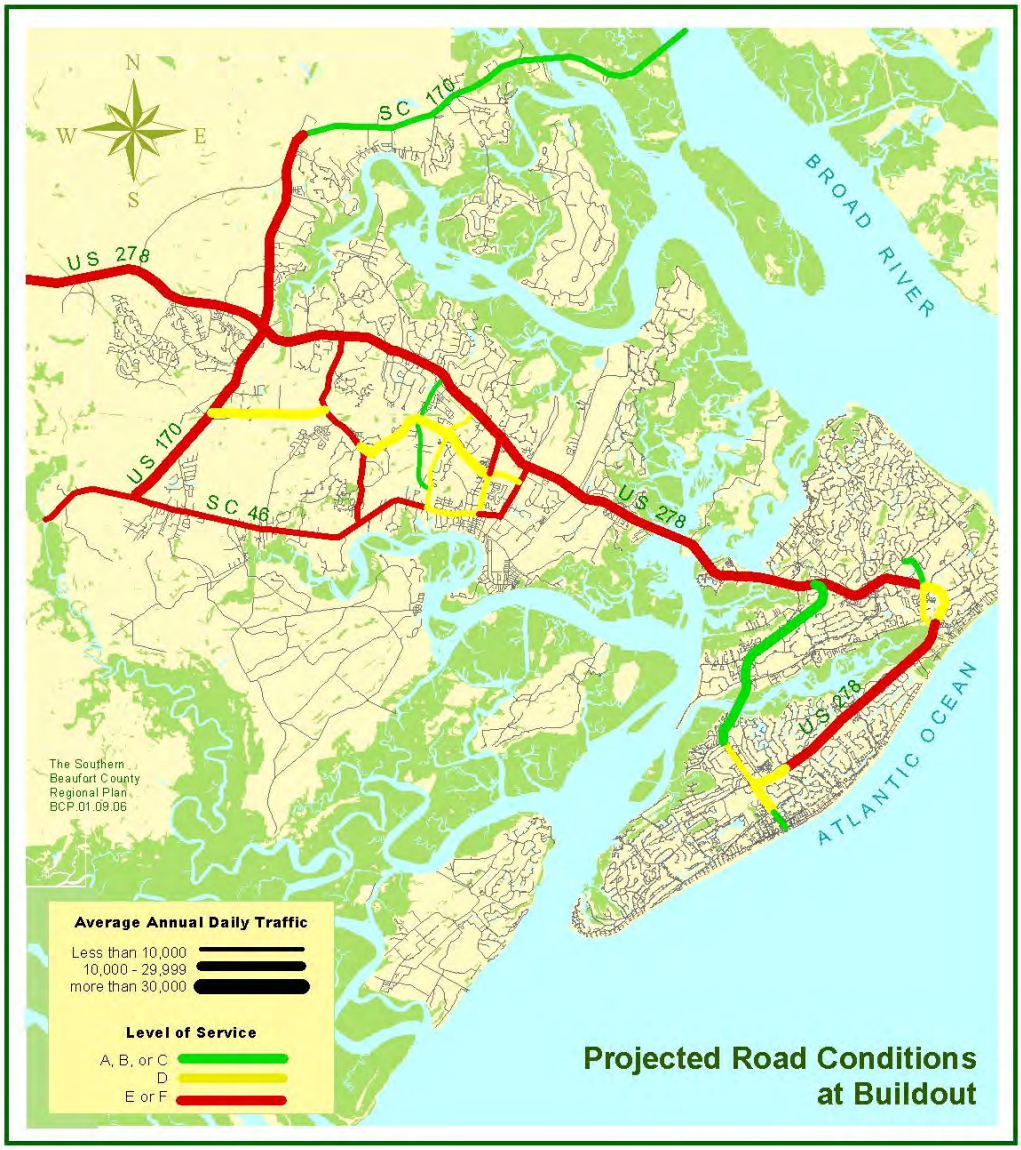
Existing Conditions and Future Road Demand

Today there are deficient conditions on the Regional Road Network. US 278 between SC 46 and the bridges to Hilton Head Island is currently failing (LOS E or F), with existing daily volumes exceeding available capacity, creating congestion, delays, and increased accident potential. Estimates indicate that it will cost approximately $31 million dollars to

peak hour demand rather than average daily traffic volumes. The Town's data is also specific to intersections. At each intersection, counts are made for each turning movement.

make the needed road capital improvements to correct these existing deficiencies (see Transportation and Other Public Facilities Background Report).

Map 6: Projected Conditions of the Regional Road Network at Buildout



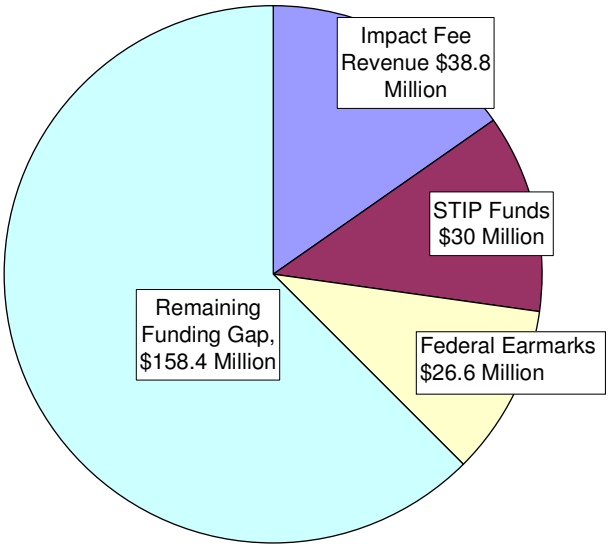
Map 6 indicates where future road deficiencies are anticipated on the Regional Road Network, at buildout assuming no additional road improvements are made (based on the population estimates outlined in Chapter 2). Estimates indicate it will cost approximately $222 million dollars to implement current plans for road capital improvements to address these needs to ensure the system operates at LOS "D."

However, even if these road capital improvements are completed, a number of roads will still operate below LOS "D". This is due to local policies that discourage road widenings on certain roads such as William Hilton Parkway (U.S. 278 Business) and May River Road (SC 46).

Funding Gap

Historically, the principal source of dedicated road funding for southern Beaufort County has been Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) dollars through the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). In addition to STIP monies, both the Town of Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County have implemented road impact fee programs. These two sources of revenue for road funding will not be adequate to fund the capital road improvement needs for the Regional Road Network to address either existing deficiencies or projected needs at buildout. In order to illustrate the magnitude of the transportation funding shortfall, **Figure 11** compares the region's needs in terms of the costs to make the needed capital improvements as compared to anticipated revenues from SCDOT and local road impact fees.

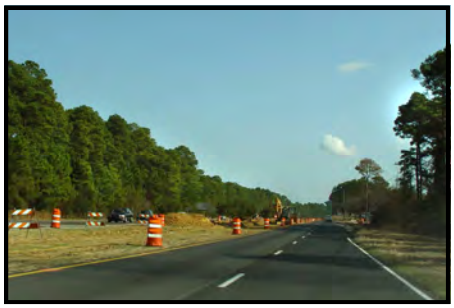
Figure 11: Transportation Funding Gap



If the Regional Road Network in southern Beaufort County is going to operate at LOS "D," it will be necessary for the Participating Local Governments to develop a strategy to find additional dedicated revenue sources to address the $158.4 million funding gap for the Regional Road Network.

Potential Revenue Sources to Address Funding Gap

As part of the regional planning process, it was determined that given the size of the funding gap for transportation, one funding tool or a one-dimensional funding strategy for transportation is not realistic. Instead, it was agreed that the Participating Local Governments must take a broad-based and multi-dimensional approach to funding transportation needs, continuing to use existing revenue sources where they make sense, and prioritizing and evaluating the most appropriate revenue sources, both from existing authorized sources, as well as revenue tools that require state enabling legislation. It is also recognized that, given the size of the funding gap and the existing funding options in the region, the funding strategy will evolve over time.



Based on these principles and the analysis undertaken in the background reports and implementation reports, the following revenue sources were identified as legitimate sources of revenue on which the Participating Local Governments should focus to address the funding gap for capital road improvements for the Regional Road Network.[3] The first two funding options are enabled by the state to be used by local governments. The last option would require changes to state enabling legislation.

- **Impact Fees:** Although Beaufort County already has transportation impact fees in place, these fees do not adequately cover the actual cost of providing transportation capital improvements to accommodate future development. An increase in the transportation impact fee is a potential source of additional revenue.
- **Capital Projects Sales Tax:** This funding tool is available to the county today and would go the furthest in generating needed revenues for capital road improvements. It is estimated that two consecutive 7-year applications of a 1 cent Capital Projects Sales Tax would generate roughly $175 million for capital projects in southern

[3] Property taxes are not included for consideration for several reasons. First, if used, they would likely triple the county's current debt service payments and require significant property tax increases. Secondly,, the Beaufort County School District also has significant capital needs due to the growth in the region, and will most likely use property taxes to fund these needs.

Beaufort County.[4] It is recommended that $136 million go toward transportation projects. It is important to note that any sales tax option would require approval in a countywide referendum. Two similar referendums failed in 2002 and 2004, making the use of this tool a challenge.

- **Local Option Gas Tax:** Both federal and state gas taxes are paid on each gallon of gas purchased locally. None of these funds go directly to local governments to address road capital needs. Some local communities across the nation, especially in high-growth areas, are authorized to impose local gas taxes. If South Carolina enabled such a tax, it is estimated that a 5 cent local option gas tax would generate $43.6 million countywide over the next 15 years.

Specific strategies for addressing this funding gap for transportation are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3: Cost of Growth.

Coordinated Policies to Preserve Capacity and Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT's)

The magnitude of southern Beaufort County's transportation problem and its funding shortfall points to the importance of looking at ways to preserve the existing capacity of the Regional Road Network and to reduce vehicle miles traveled. Policies and programs to further these efforts include encouraging the use of public transportation, ferry systems, multi-use pathways, and making roadways function more efficiently (access management and intelligent transportation systems).

Public Transportation

The Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority (LRTA) provides public transportation in southern Beaufort County. LRTA serves five counties (Beaufort, Jasper, Colleton, Hampton, and Allendale) and focuses primarily on bringing rural residents to jobs in Beaufort County.

The Lowcountry Public Transit Coordination Feasibility Study[5] identified several factors that make the efficient provision of public transportation difficult in the region. While southern

[4] It is estimated that $350 million would be generated countywide. It is assumed that half of the available Capital Projects Sales Tax revenue would go to projects in southern Beaufort County.

[5] Day Wilburn and Associates, 2003

Beaufort County is rapidly becoming urbanized, residential densities remain fairly low at 1 to 2 dwelling units per acre. Low residential density in conjunction with decentralized commercial and employment areas make it difficult to provide regular transit service that can attract people away from their automobiles.

Recognizing these limitations, the study explored mainline transit service along U.S. 278. This would consist of a regularly scheduled fixed route service with frequent service levels and long hours of operation. Providing for limited stop transit service is very important to consider when planning for the future configuration of the U.S. 278 corridor.

Ferry Service

Ferry service is a possible alternative mode of transportation given the region's many navigable waterways and the potential to reduce travel demands on US 278 and SC 170. Effective ferry terminals would require sizable waterfront property for parking and multi-modal facilities to transport people from the terminal to places of employment. Funding and commute times are also obstacles that need to be overcome in order to make ferry service a viable alternative to automobile transportation. Given the transportation constraints under which the region is operating, however, this is another option that might require further consideration.

Multi-Use Pathways

Another way to address current and future transportation demand is to promote walking, running, and cycling as viable alternatives to automobile transportation. The Town of Hilton Head Island has been the leader in the region in establishing an extensive network of multi-use pathways consisting of over 49 miles of public multi-use pathways with over 31 additional miles planned in their ten year Capital Improvements Program. One of the ways the Town promotes their pathways is by providing the public with information showing the relationship of multi-use pathways to shopping areas, employment centers and other areas of interest.

In the Bluffton area, the Southern Beaufort Greenway Plan calls for improving the pedestrian climate in historic Bluffton while connecting it with the newer annexed areas such as Palmetto Bluff, the Buckwalter Tract, and the Shults Tract. The next phase

of the plan calls for the construction of a multi-use pathway along 278 from Buckwalter Parkway east to Hilton Head Island, connecting with Hilton Head's pathway network.

Expansion of the multi-use pathway system could result in some reduction in VMT's, and create more sustainable development within the region.

Access Management Standards

Managing the points of access to the major roads in the Regional Road Network can improve the efficiency of those roads, effectively increasing the capacity of the roads to carry traffic. Major projects could include physically limiting points of access to a regional road while creating frontage streets to accommodate local traffic. Less costly techniques can include attention to signal spacing, signal timing, driveway spacing, driveway design, shared driveway access, construction of acceleration and deceleration lanes, and enhanced connectivity standards for new development. Effective access management standards benefit a community by reducing accidents, increasing roadway capacity, providing better access to businesses, and improving mobility.

There are different access management standards that apply today within the different Participating Local Governments.

There are definite benefits in establishing a uniform set of access management standards in southern Beaufort County. Access management standards worthy of consideration include signal spacing, timing and coordination; driveway spacing and design; deceleration lanes; shared driveway access; frontage roads and backside access; and general road connectivity.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

There are three components to Beaufort County's existing Intelligent Transportation System: video surveillance, response vehicles, and radio advisory broadcasts. The County operates 26 surveillance cameras along SC 170 and US 278, with images updated every five seconds. Based on the images, the County's Emergency Management Department can send vehicles to remove wrecked or stranded vehicles, place electronic message boards to alert drivers to detour options, and broadcast over designated AM radio stations. The system helps officials respond quickly to unforeseen events, and thereby minimize delays for motorists (and, accordingly, helps maintain the maximum traffic-carrying capacity of these roadways). In addition, when accidents and

congestion occur, the county may notify SCDOT to send incident management vehicles to remove wrecked or stranded vehicles, dispatch law enforcement officials, update electronic message boards to notify drivers of detours, or broadcast traffic information over designated AM radio stations. Images from the cameras are also placed on the county's web site allowing motorists the ability to assess traffic situations before leaving home.

The ability of safety officials to respond quickly to congestion issues is important to minimize delays on major roads such as US 278. For this reason, the County's ITS system should be expanded to targeted road on the Regional Road Network throughout the region.

Removing Land from Potential Development

Significant efforts have been made by local governments in southern Beaufort County to reduce potential vehicle miles traveled on the Regional Road Network by purchasing land to prevent potential future development. The Town of Hilton Head Island, using Real Estate Transfer Fee funds, has acquired over 1,100 acres in the last 15 years and has calculated that these acquisitions have prevented the construction of 4.5 million square feet of commercial space, 1,365 motel rooms, 3,266 multi-family and time-share units, and 26,216 peak hour trips.

Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program has also been used to remove land from potential development. These efforts should continue into the future.

Traffic Impact Analysis Ordinances

Traffic Impact Analysis Ordinances require a developer to determine the impact of their proposed development on the road network and provide mitigation, if necessary. The performance standard to determine whether mitigation is needed is LOS "D" along affected roadways and intersections. Typical improvements recommended by a traffic impact analysis to mitigate the impacts of development include the provision of turning and deceleration lanes, the installation of traffic signals, and sharing access with adjoining developments.

TRANPLAN Model

The primary purpose of the TRANPLAN model, used both by Beaufort County and Hilton Head Island, is to estimate future traffic volumes on the road network. This enables the Town and County to plan for road projects in a timely manner to provide sufficient growth capacity to

meet the projected demand. The TRANPLAN model can also help determine the transportation impacts and ultimately the decision of whether to approve large projects, such as a PUD or large-scale zoning amendments.

Environmental and Aesthetic Concerns

Even if the region were able to fund all the transportation improvements identified as necessary to accommodate new growth and development, the impact of these improvements on the region's natural assets and aesthetic qualities discussed earlier in this plan need to be addressed.

Chapter 2 (Objective 3.2) of this plan recommends road connectivity as a way to make the Regional Road Network more efficient by offering alternative travel routes. However, connecting wildlife habitat and reducing its fragmentation is also recognized as an important goal. Achieving both types of connectivity goals has the potential to serve cross-purposes. In planning for future roadways, considerations should be given for the network of open spaces that is called for in this plan. Innovative road construction techniques have also been used to aid in linking wildlife habitat.

Chapter 3 (Common Goal 2) addresses the importance of maintaining and promoting the aesthetic qualities along the region's travel corridors through coordinated planning and the adoption of uniform development standards. Joint corridor planning needs to address the potential adverse impacts that future road improvements will have on the aesthetic qualities of the travel corridors.

Common Goals, Objectives and Implementation Actions

Addressing the cost of funding future road capital improvements in southern Beaufort County is a challenge the Participating Local Governments cannot solve individually. The issue will be addressed on a regional level, through a broad-based effort to plan and fund transportation improvements and work to reduce vehicle miles traveled on the region's main corridors

Common Goal 1: Coordination of Transportation Planning

Transportation planning will be coordinated between Beaufort County and the towns of Bluffton and Hilton Head Island (the "Participating Local Governments"), and Jasper County and its municipalities.

Objective 1.1 Level of Service Standard. To ensure a minimum quality of life, the Participating Local Governments will adopt a level of service standard on the Regional Road Network of LOS "D." To improve road conditions on the Regional Road Network, all the Participating Local Governments will evaluate adopting a LOS based on peak hour conditions.

Implementation Action: Recognize Regional Road Network and establish a common level-of-service (LOS) standard.

Description:

- The Participating Local Governments will recognize that the Regional Road Network is subject to coordinated planning, regulation and funding.
- Ordinances and policies will be amended to recognize LOS "D" as the standard that should be maintained on the Regional Road Network;
- Beaufort County and Bluffton staff should explore changing their transportation LOS standard to a peak-hour/peak-season standard.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Objective 1.2 Formalize Regional Transportation Planning. The Participating Local Governments will formalize through an Intergovernmental Agreement a coordinated regional transportation process that coordinates transportation planning with land use planning and forecasts, and addresses: data collection, monitoring, modeling, planning, and funding issues related to the Regional Road Network.

Implementation Action: Establish a formal structure for coordinating transportation planning at the regional level through an Intergovernmental Agreement.

Description:

- Formalize Southern Beaufort County Highway Improvement Team through intergovernmental agreement and change name to Southern Beaufort County Transportation Planning Team (SBCTPT).

- Prepare a regional transportation plan that identifies existing conditions and deficiencies and cost to address deficiencies.
- SBCTPT will serve as key entity in the region for transportation data collection, modeling and monitoring.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments, Southern Beaufort County Transportation Planning Team

Objective 1.3 Jasper County. The Participating Local Governments will engage in coordinated regional transportation planning with Jasper County and its municipalities.

See Chapter 7, Figure 14

Objective 1.4 Coordinated Reviews. The Participating Local Governments will develop and implement joint review of major development proposals prior to their approvals to ensure the proposal does not have an adverse impact on the Regional Road Network.

Implementation Action: Codify requirements for review and/or mitigation of extra-local transportation impacts on the Regional Road Network by requiring all projects that trigger traffic impact analysis requirements to be circulated to all local traffic engineers.

Description: This action would provide an opportunity for discussion on key issues of concern, such as access management, driveway spacing, etc. The exact procedure for intergovernmental reviews should be determined by the Southern Beaufort County Transportation Planning Team.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Common Goal 2: Funding Transportation Needs on Regional Road Network

The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively with the state and federal governments to develop a strategy to fund existing and future transportation capital improvements needs on the Regional Road Network to maintain the adopted LOS standard in a way that is environmentally and context sensitive, so that the images and character of the Participating Local Governments is maintained, to the maximum extent practicable.

Objective 2.1 Joint Funding. Because of the relationship between new growth and development and its impact on the Regional Road Network, the Participating Local Governments, to the maximum extent practicable, will establish funding arrangements in which the Participating Local Governments jointly fund the needed capital transportation projects on the Regional Road Network.

Implementation Action: Establish formal work group or entity to address regional transportation funding.

Description:

- Develop a specific transportation funding strategy for the Regional Road Network.
- In the longer term, analyze the consequences of the region becoming a metropolitan planning organization (MPO).

Responsibility: Southern Beaufort County Transportation Planning Team

Objective 2.2 Funding Options. The sources of funding considered by the Participating Local Governments will include but not be limited to: road impact fees; Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds, the optional sales tax, toll roads, tax increment financing, assessment districts, and ROW dedication policy.

Implementation Action: Develop a coordinated funding strategy to fund the Regional Road Network.

Description:

- Encourage local elected officials and staff members to lobby the state and federal governments for additional funds for regional transportation projects.
- Increase road impact fees to require payment of full costs of Participating Local Governments to accommodate new development.
- Hold a referendum to establish a 1% capital projects sales tax for the maximum 7 year term. Two consecutive 7 year terms would generate roughly $136 million at buildout for transportation projects in southern Beaufort County.
- Lobby the State Legislature to enable a local option gas tax. A 5 cents tax could potentially generate $22 million over a 15 year period for southern Beaufort County.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments; Legislative Delegation

Objective 2.3 Priority on Funding Existing Deficiencies on US 278. In developing a coordinated road improvement plan and funding strategy for the Regional Road Network, priority will be given to first planning for and funding the existing deficiencies on US 278.

Objective 2.4 New Development Pays Pro Rata Share. As a general matter of policy, new growth and development will bear a proportionate share of the cost of the provision of new road capital improvements required by such development on the Regional Road Network.

See Transportation Objective 2.2

Common Goal 3: Coordinated Policies to Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT's)

The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively to develop strategies to reduce VMT's on the Regional Road Network.

Objective 3.1 Access Management Standards. The Participating Local Governments will coordinate access management standards to improve the efficiency of the Regional Road Network, especially along shared corridors. Those standards will address signal spacing, signal timing and control, driveway spacing, driveway design, deceleration lanes, shared driveway access, frontage roads, and

Implementation Action: Develop access management plan and standards for Regional Road Network.

Description: Compile all access management rules currently in place for each jurisdiction and identify which roads on the Regional Road Network are to be candidates for additional access management standards. Develop plan and standards for access management.

Responsibility: Southern Beaufort County Transportation Planning Team

Objective 3.2 Public Transportation. The Participating Local Governments will place an emphasis on the expansion of public transportation as an alternative means of transportation in the region (e.g., van pooling, ride sharing, buses, para-transit, ferry service and similar initiatives).

Implementation Action: Support LRTA in planning for and expanding public transportation options in the region.

Description:

- Encourage LRTA to continue pursuing mainline transit service along U.S. 278; and to continue to study the public transportation network with special emphasis given to alternatives such as ferry services.
- Adopt standards in local development codes that provide incentives for employees to use alternative transportation, encourage alternative transportation amenities such as bus stops and multi-use paths.

Responsibility: Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority (LRTA); Participating Local Governments

Objective 3.3 Multi-Use Pathway System. The Participating Local Governments will coordinate and place additional emphasis on expansion and implementation of a multi-use pathway system through the Hilton Head Comprehensive Plan, the Southern Beaufort Greenway Plan, and the Beaufort County Trails and Blueways Master Plan.

Implementation Action: Coordinate planning and funding for a system of non-motorized transportation alternatives.

Description:
- Evaluate existing plans in light of reducing VMT's on the Regional Road Network and identifying where pathways are needed to connect activity points.
- Take advantage of road widenings and new development proposals to construct segments of the planned multi-use pathway system.
- Strategize additional funding sources.

Responsibility: Southern Beaufort County Transportation Planning Team

Objective 3.4 Intelligent Transportation Systems. The Participating Local Governments will adopt a program to ensure the establishment of an Intelligent Transportation System for the entire Regional Road Network.

Implementation Action: Develop a plan for the ITS system to enable its extension throughout the Regional Road Network.

Description:
- Explore where the current ITS system should extend
- Pursue funding and operation of system extension through an intergovernmental agreement.

Responsibility: Southern Beaufort County Transportation Planning Team

Objective 3.5 Land Use Policies. The Participating Local Governments, where appropriate, will adopt land use policies, such as regulations to encourage mixed use development at higher intensity nodes that result in reduced VMT's on the Regional Road Network, more pronounced connectivity standards, and adequate public facility standards. In addition, the Participating Local Governments will further evaluate and consider, where appropriate, rate of growth regulations.

See Land Use Objective 3.1

Objective 3.6 Land Acquisition. The Participating Local Governments will coordinate their efforts to identify and purchase land in order to remove it from potential development. This is a growth management tool that can reduce future transportation demand and be coordinated with other goals and objectives to

See Land Use Objective 8.3

Common Goal 4: Context Sensitive Design on Major Road Corridors.

The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively to maintain and enhance regional commercial travel corridors and scenic corridors to promote a positive image of the region, and to protect regional character and quality of life, environmental quality, and aesthetics.

Objective 4.1 Regional Travel Corridors. As provided in the Land Use Goals, the Participating Local Governments will establish coordinated review, administration, and enforcement of development to maintain a strong community aesthetic and function along the following regional travel corridors: US 278, Buckwalter Parkway, Bluffton Parkway, Burnt Church Road, Bluffton Road, William Hilton Parkway, and the Cross Island Parkway.

See Land Use Objective 2.2

Objective 4.2 Regional Scenic Corridors. As provided in the Land Use Goals, the Participating Local Governments will establish coordinated review, administration, and enforcement of development to maintain the views and images of the Lowcountry created along the following regional scenic corridors: SC 46 (May River Highway) and SC 170 (Okatie Highway).

See Land Use Objective 2.3

Objective 4.3 Open Space Network. The Participating Local Governments will adopt standards to protect the network of open spaces, discussed in the Natural Assets and Natural Constraints to Growth Report, including innovative road construction techniques to link wildlife habitat and preserve wetlands.

See Natural Assets Objectives 8.2 and 8.4

Chapter

5

PARKS AND RECREATION

Southern Beaufort County's active and passive parks and recreation facilities are an important component of the region's quality of life and economy. The first chapter established that natural amenities such as coastal waters, salt marshes, beaches, trees and local wildlife are an integral component of the region's attractiveness to both tourists and newcomers. Parks and recreation facilities are an important means of making these natural amenities accessible to both residents and tourists.

Southern Beaufort County's rapid rate of growth is projected to cost the region over $66 million dollars in the next 15 to 20 years to maintain an acceptable level of service for park land and facilities. Existing dedicated revenue sources projected for this time period only account for approximately $21 million dollars leaving a $45 million dollar funding gap.

In addition to the cost of serving the region's parks and recreation needs, the availability of additional land to accommodate future park needs is of immediate concern. Although all three Participating Local Governments have been proactive in acquiring land for parks through fee simple purchases or from dedications negotiated from private developments, an additional 525 acres is needed primarily in the Bluffton area. As the region continues to grow, the availability of land for future parks becomes scarcer and more expensive to acquire giving immediacy to this issue.

Regional Park Network

Southern Beaufort County has 3,786.4 acres of federal, state, county and municipal parks. These parks range from small neighborhood pocket parks, to the 970-acre Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge. In an effort to organize parks and recreation facilities into logical groups for the purposes of planning and growth management, this plan makes a distinction between parks that serve specific natural and cultural preservation goals and parks that serve a broader diversity of regional active and passive recreation needs. The parks that serve regional active and passive recreational needs constitute the Regional Park Network (see **Map 7**).

Map 7: Regional Park Network

Level of Service (LOS) Standard

For the purposes of this plan, LOS standards for southern Beaufort County's Regional Park Network are established for park land (acres) and for park and recreation facilities (ball fields, tennis courts, picnic shelters, etc.). The park land LOS for the Greater Bluffton Area is based on the Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan. Hilton Head Island's LOS is based on number of park land acres per person that it currently provides. The LOS for parks and recreation is based on the replacement costs of the existing facilities in the Regional Park Network divided by the region's current permanent population. The LOS standards are outlined below:

- Hilton Head Island
  12.2 acres of land per 1,000 residents
  $722 of park and recreation facilities per capita

- Bluffton and unincorporated Beaufort County
  13.0 acres of land per 1,000 residents
  $722 of park and recreation facilities per capita

Existing and Projected Needs for Regional Park Network

Based on the established LOS standards, 940 acres of park land are needed to accommodate southern Beaufort County's buildout population of 134,842. The Participating Local Governments currently own approximately 431 undeveloped acres that can be used for future park land. This still leaves a shortfall of approximately 509 acres which are estimated to cost $17,822,000. This future park land need is entirely within the Greater Bluffton Area.

Based on the established LOS standard of $722 per capita in park facilities expenditures, $48,852,686 is needed to accommodate southern Beaufort County's buildout population ($10.3 million on Hilton Head Island and $38.4 million in the Greater Bluffton Area).

Figure 12: Summary of Costs of Park Lands and Facilities to Accommodate Existing and Projected Population

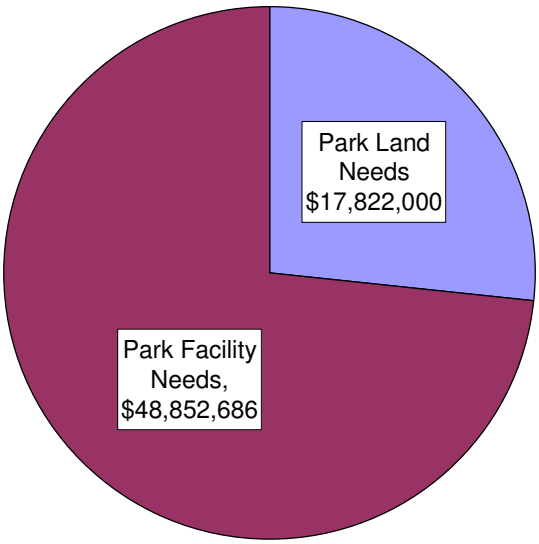
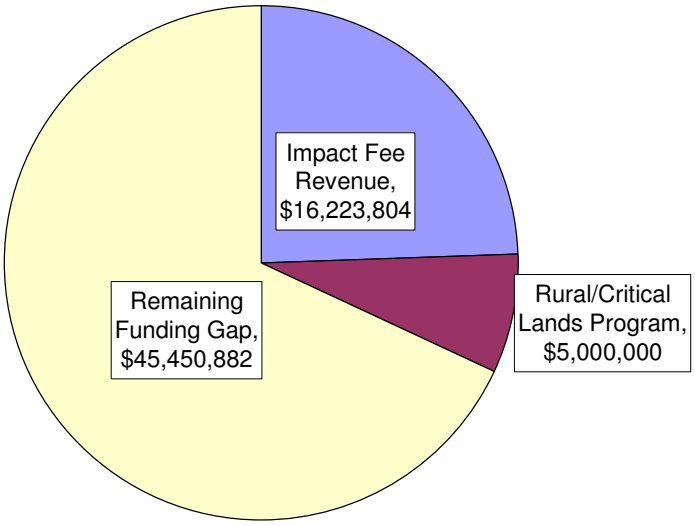


Figure 13: Parks and Recreation Funding Gap



Funding Gap

Regional park lands and facilities are currently funded through park impact fees, the Rural and Critical Lands Program, the Town of Hilton Head Island's real estate transfer fee and other miscellaneous local

revenue sources. Hilton Head Island also uses property taxes to fund park facilities. However, other than remaining funds in the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program, the only dedicated funding source for park and recreation needs is the impact fee program. If no changes to the existing revenue structure for the funding of the Regional Park Network are made, the participating Local Governments will not be able to fund the needs for regional park lands and facilities into the future.

Potential Revenue Sources to Address Funding Gap

The following funding sources will be explored to address the funding gap for park land and facility needs.

- **Impact Fees:** Although Beaufort County already has impact fees for parks and recreation, these fees do not adequately cover the actual cost to accommodate new growth. An increase in these fees would provide a source of additional revenue.
- **Capital Project Sales Tax:** As discussed in the previous chapter, this funding tool would go the furthest in addressing capital project needs in southern Beaufort County. Of the $175 million[6] that would be generated over a 14-year period from a countywide Capital Projects Sales Tax for projects in southern Beaufort County approximately $24 million should go toward parks.
- **Real Estate Transfer Fee:** This revenue option consists of a fee on the transfer, sale or conveyance of real property. It is estimated a countywide real estate transfer fee at a rate of one quarter of one percent (0.0025) (excluding Hilton Head Island) would generate approximately $130 million countywide over the next 15 years. Of that amount, approximately half ($65 million) could go toward land acquisition in southern Beaufort County. This revenue option would require changes to state enabling legislation.
- **Property Tax:** Property tax revenues will be used to fund park facilities only if impact fees and the Capital Project Sales Tax do not raise sufficient revenues.

[6] It is assumed that half of the available Capital Projects Sales Tax revenue would go to projects in southern Beaufort County.

Common Goals, Objectives and Implementation Actions

Given the pressing needs facing the region's park network and its interrelated nature, the Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively to:

- Establish consistent techniques to measure needs and examine conditions within the region's park network.
- Plan for how to address these needs. This includes providing a strategy for where and how to acquire the 525 acres needed for park land.
- Address the funding gap to ensure future capital improvement needs are met within the Regional Park Network.

Common Goal 1: Coordination of Parks and Recreation Planning.

Parks and recreation planning for the Regional Park Network will be coordinated between Beaufort County and the Towns of Bluffton and Hilton Head Island (the "Participating Local Governments").

Objective 1.1 Consistent Nomenclature. The Participating Local Governments will establish consistent classifications to define the types of park lands and recreation facilities that make up the Regional Park Network.

See description under Objective 1.2

Objective 1.2 Uniform Minimum Standards. To ensure a minimum quality of life, the Participating Local Governments will adopt the following level of service (LOS) standards for park lands and recreation facilities within the Regional Park Network:

Hilton Head Island: 12.2 acres of land per 1,000 residents; $722 of park and recreation facilities per capita

Bluffton and unincorporated Beaufort County (for the study area): 13.0 acres of land per capita; $722 of park and recreation facilities per capita.

Implementation Action: Recognize Regional Park Network and establish LOS standard.

Description: All Participating Local Governments in their local ordinances should recognize the adopted LOS standards and consistent classifications to define types of park lands and recreation facilities.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments

Objective 1.3 Jasper County. The Participating Local Governments will engage in coordinated regional park planning with Jasper County and its municipalities.

See Chapter 7, Figure 14.

Common Goal 2: Regional Park Network Funding.

The Participating Local Governments, where appropriate, will work cooperatively to fund park land and recreation facility needs within the Regional Park Network.

Objective 2.1 Coordinated Funding. The Participating Local Governments, where appropriate, will work together to identify funding arrangements in which the Participating Local Governments coordinate the funding of park land and park facility needs within the Regional Park Network.

Implementation Action: Develop a coordinated strategy to fund the Regional Park Network in Bluffton and the unincorporated county.

Description:

- Revisit park impact fees to determine whether they are adequately covering the cost of providing park land and facilities to accommodate future growth. Increase fees to higher levels if analysis justifies.
- Hold referendum to establish a 1% capital projects sales tax for the maximum 7 year term. Two consecutive 7 year terms would generate roughly $24 million at buildout for park projects in southern Beaufort County.
- If other revenue tools are not sufficient, consider use of property tax revenue.
- Consider use of real estate transfer fee as permanent funding source for park land acquisition. This would require lobbying the State Legislature to enable local governments to establish a real estate transfer fee. A .0025 real estate transfer in Beaufort County (with the exception of Hilton Head Island) would generate $65 million over a 15 year period for southern Beaufort County.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments; Legislative Delegation

Objective 2.2 Impact Fees. The Participating Local Governments will continue to utilize impact fees to fund recreation facilities.

See implementation action under Objective 2.1

Objective 2.3 Other Revenue Sources. The Participating Local Governments will use other revenue sources for the acquisition of park lands.

See implementation action under Objective 2.1 and Natural Assets Objective 8.3

Objective 2.4 Land Acquisition. The Participating Local Governments, where appropriate, will use land acquisition programs to identify and purchase land suitable for the Regional Park Network. In addition to providing additional parks lands, this program will be coordinated with other goals and objectives to limit development, thereby protecting open space and environmentally sensitive lands, and reducing future transportation pressures.

See implementation action under Objective 2.1 and Natural Assets Objective 8.2

Objective 2.5 Maintenance. The Participating Local Governments will work together to identify funding arrangements to fund adequate maintenance of the Regional Park Network.

Common Goal 3: Beach and Water Access Funding.

The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively to develop a strategy to identify the need for, plan for, and fund the acquisition of lands and facilities that provide public access to the water, including beach access, boat landings, fishing, and other water recreation.

Objective 3.1 Maximize Existing Opportunities for Public Water Access. The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively, to maximize opportunities to enhance existing public lands to increase public access to the water and marsh. Attention shall be given to specific water access needs, such as beach access (consistent with The Natural Assets and Natural Constraints Objective 10.1), boat landings, and fishing piers.

See Natural Assets Objective 10.1

Objective 3.2 Land Acquisition. The Participating Local Governments will work cooperatively to develop a funding strategy to acquire additional land and provide facilities to provide public access to the water.

See Natural Assets Objective 8.3

Objective 3.3 Public/Private Partnerships. The Planning staffs of the Participating Local Governments will work together to provide incentives and strategies to encourage private waterfront development to provide public access to the water.

See Natural Assets Objective 8.1

Chapter

6

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In June, 2004, the Beaufort County School District engaged DeJong, Inc., an educational planning firm to undertake a ten-year Facilities Master Plan. Based on the Facilities Master Plan May 28, 2005 Addendum adopted by the Board of Education, it was estimated that with the continued growth expected in southern Beaufort County over the next ten years, eight new school facilities will need to be built. The magnitude of this public facility need has several regional implications:

- The School District will need $161.8 million to fund the needed capital school facilities in the Southern Beaufort County. The Participating Local Governments and School District will need to work cooperatively in developing strategies to find the needed revenue, especially since demands for other capital funding is necessary for roads.
- In addition to these significant capital costs,189.5 acres is needed to accommodate future school sites and is estimated to cost an additional $6.6 million. As more of southern Beaufort County becomes developed or committed for future development, the task of finding suitable sites for future schools will become more challenging. Therefore, it will be important for the School District to collaborate with the Participating Local Governments and the community in locating future school facilities that accommodate predicted growth and that are consistent with the local land use plans
- Finally, because of the important relationship between schools, land use, and quality of life issues, it is also important for the School District and the Participating Local Governments to coordinate their efforts and support policies to use public policy and public infrastructure commitments to build more livable neighborhoods and communities.

Current and Projected Student Enrollment vs. School Capacity

Southern Beaufort County's growth trends will certainly have an impact on student enrollment, which is expected to increase by 4,423 students over the next 10 years. This represents a 75% increase over the current enrollment in southern Beaufort County of 8,109. The region currently has 2 high schools, 2 middle schools and 5 elementary schools. In the 2004-05 school year, five of the nine schools were over capacity. In ten years, it is projected there will be a need to provide facilities for an additional 2,944 elementary school students, 1,451 middle school students, and 1,399 high school students.

School Facility Needs

The DeJong Facility Master Plan developed facility options based on a series of community meetings and data developed for the district. The options included new construction to address overcrowding and projected growth, and renovations to existing buildings. The Plan recommended the following facilities to handle projected future enrollment:

- Five new elementary schools (500 students each)
- Two new middle schools (750 students each)
- One new high school (1200 students)
- Complete build-out of Bluffton High School – Third Floor (450 students)
- Renovations to Hilton Head Middle School, Hilton Head High School and M.C. Riley Elementary School.

The building costs associated with these new facilities are estimated to be 161.8 million dollars. The DeJong Study did not address potential sites for new school facilities, nor the additional costs associated with the purchase of property for new schools. Using the School District's minimum acreage requirements and assuming a per acre cost of $35,000, an additional $6,632,500 will be needed to purchase the189.5 acres needed to accommodate these new facilities.

The costs associated with design and construction of new facilities are typically paid for with proceeds received from the sale of General Obligation Bonds which in turn are paid for with revenues from local property taxes. This method requires voter approval via Bond Referendums. In addition, it will be important for the District to collaborate with local jurisdictions and the community to locate future school facilities that accommodate predicted growth.

Common Goals, Objectives and Implementation Actions

Because of the shared interests of the Participating Local Governments and the School District, the following cooperative efforts will be undertaken:

- Cooperatively develop strategies to find the needed revenue to meet the School District's capital needs;
- Collaborate in locating future school facilities that accommodate predicted growth and that are consistent with local land use plans; and
- Coordinate efforts and support policies to use public policy and public infrastructure commitments to build more livable neighborhoods and communities.

Common Goal 1: Coordination of Public School Planning.

The Participating Local Governments, to the maximum extent practicable, will work cooperatively with the School District to locate new public schools in close proximity or within residential areas so children can walk to school, and the school can be integrated into the fabric of a neighborhood.

Implementation Action – Formalized Cooperation: Formalize process for coordinating school planning through an intergovernmental agreement

Description:
- Develop more formal mechanisms for coordinating population projections, facilities planning, school siting, and school capacity issues.
- Explore shared use of school and governmental facilities (ball fields, parks, libraries, etc.)

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments; Beaufort County School District

Implementation Action – Impacts of Development on School Capacity: Formalize a process for coordinating the evaluation of school capacity and the impact of development proposals on school capacity through an intergovernmental agreement.

Description:
- Establish a process for coordinating the sharing of information on school capacity;

- Establish a process for sharing school capacity information so that local governments are aware of school capacity issues when they are reviewing development plans.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments; Beaufort County School District

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Common Goal 2: Coordinated Public School Funding.

As appropriate, the Participating Local Governments will cooperate with the School District in supporting School District's efforts to fund future facilities.

Implementation Action – Formalized Cooperation: Establish work group through an intergovernmental agreement to support school funding.

Description: Develop a support strategy to assist the School District in its efforts to address the school funding gap that includes the following actions:

- Lobby the State Legislature to enable local governments to enact school impact fees;
- Lobby the State Legislature to change the funding formula established in the 1977 Education Finance Act (EFA) used to allocate state funds to one that is more fair and equitable.
- Require land donations for future school sites or equivalent fees in lieu of from development determined to have an impact on future school enrollment.

Responsibility: Participating Local Governments; Beaufort County School District

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Common Goal 3: Building Livable Communities.

The Participating Local Governments will coordinate with the School District to organize public policy and public infrastructure commitments so that:

- *New public schools are located in close proximity or within residential areas so children can walk to school; and*
- *Development standards are established that require a strong pedestrian orientation in residential areas so when schools are located in close proximity, pedestrianways are available so that children can safely walk to school.*

See Land Use Objective 3.1

Chapter

7

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan includes a structure and process to facilitate the implementation of the plan recommendations.

Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan Implementation Committee

Once the plan is adopted, the Participating Local Governments will appoint a Southern Regional Plan Implementation Committee to oversee the implementation of the plan. All Committee members will be voting members. The structure of the committee will be similar to the Steering Committee with the following representation:

- One elected official from each Participating Local Government;
- One additional member selected by the three elected officials:
- One representative each from the Beaufort County Board of Education, the Beaufort-Jasper Water Sewer Authority, Jasper County, the City of Hardeeville, and the Lowcountry Council of Governments.

The primary tasks of the Southern Regional Plan Implementation Committee will be to prioritize implementation actions from the plan and to oversee and advocate the implementation of the plan. The Committee will oversee three staff level "Working Groups" that will be charged with completing the implementation tasks assigned to them by the Committee. The Committee will establish policies that require public

participation at the Working Group level when specific implementation items are addressed. Finally, the Committee will identify when implementation items are ready to be forwarded to the governing bodies for adoption and advocate their passage by the local governments.

Staff Level Working Groups

Three Working Groups with staff members of the Participating Local Governments, Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville will be appointed by the governing bodies: the Land Use Working Group; the natural Assets Working Group; and the Southern Beaufort County Transportation Planning Team. The Implementation Committee may appoint additional Working Groups for specific tasks related to other implementation items of the plan on an as needed basis.

Land Use Working Group

This group will consist of staff representatives from each participating Local Government. Jasper County, the City of Hardeeville, and the Beaufort County School District will be invited to have staff representation on this group too. The initial task for the Land Use Working Group should be development of a joint land use plan for the uncommitted lands in southern Beaufort County, and specifically a land use map that defines the area of mutual planning interest for all concerned local governments. The recommended planning area is the uncommitted lands identified in Chaper 2, but the exact boundaries should be determined as the initial step in the joint planning process. Other responsibilities of the Land Use Working Group under this regional plan include:

- Developing a corridor management plan and uniform standards for Bluffton-area regional travel corridors (Land Use Objective 2.1);
- Developing connectivity standards for all Participating Local Governments (Land Use Objective 3.2);
- Assisting in the preparation of a regional economic development plan (Land Use Objective 3.3); and
- Assisting Beaufort County in establishing regional demographic and land use information systems (Land Use Goal 5).

Natural Assets Working Group

This group would be made up of staff and should be composed of, at a minimum, representatives from each of the Participating Local Governments. Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville should also have staff representation. Other members could include representatives

from the state Department of Health and Environmental Control (including the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management), and local and regional private and non-profit conservation organizations. The Natural Asset Working Group will be tasked with addressing the implementation actions in Chapter 1. The group's initial responsibility will be to develop the regional environmental inventory, which should consist of a system of collecting, organizing, maintaining, and disseminating regional information regarding the key regional natural assets in southern Beaufort County. Other responsibilities of the Natural Assets Working Group under this regional plan include:

- Assisting the Participating Local Governments in strengthening environmental education programs (Natural Assets Common Goal 3);
- Developing a regional inventory of lands to target for open space preservation (Natural Assets Objective 8.2); and
- Assisting the Participating Local Governments in the consideration of baseline environmental protection standards to protect trees, native vegetation, and wildlife habitat (Natural Assets Objective 9.1).

Southern Beaufort County Transportation Planning Team

The existing informal cooperation that already exists as part of the "Southern Beaufort County Highway Improvement Team" will be formalized with the Southern Beaufort County Planning Team (SBCPT) as part of this regional planning effort. This staff-level working group was formed at the suggestion of the local mayors and council members, and it is beginning to make solid progress in addressing regional transportation issues. The SBCPT will consist of staff representatives from all the Participating Local Governments. Staff representatives from Jasper County, the City of Hardeeville, and the School District will also be invited to be a part of the SBCPT. The responsibilities of the SBCTPT under this regional plan include:

- Preparing a regional transportation plan for the Regional Road Network, based on the adopted LOS (Transportation Objective 1.2). The regional transportation plan will include key substantive elements that:
    1. Identify existing conditions, and deficiencies and their costs, if appropriate; and
    2. Estimate future capital improvement needs and their costs.

- Assisting in the development of a joint funding strategy to address the funding gap for transportation capital improvements on the Regional Road Network (Transportation Objective 2.1)
- Coordinating planning for the multi-use pathway systems between the Participating Local Governments to maximize reductions in VMTs (Transportation Objective 3.2);
- Developing an access management plan and standards for adoption by the Participating Local Governments (Transportation Objective 3.3)
- Developing a plan for the County's existing ITS system to enable its extension onto appropriate roads on the Regional Road Network (Transportation Objective 3.4)
- Serving as the key entity in the region responsible for: data collection related to transportation (including the collection of traffic counts); and
- Preparing transportation demand management principles and standards for adoption by the Participating Local Governments (Land Use Goal 4).

Future Cooperation with Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville

This Plan recognizes that growth and development in Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville will have a major regional impact on southern Beaufort County. Therefore, the Participating Local Governments should agree that all future regional planning and implementation efforts should actively solicit involvement by Jasper County and Hardeeville. **Figure 14** provides a summary of recommendations to encourage joint planning between the Participating Local Governments and jasper County and Hardeeville.

Figure 14: Plan Implementation Items to Coordinate with Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville

Natural Assets and Natural Constraints to Growth
▪ Encourage cooperation in the development of the regional environmental inventory (Natural Assets Common Goal 1) ▪ Encourage uniform critical line setback and buffer requirements starting with the New River watershed (Natural Assets Objective 7.1) ▪ Encourage establishment of more uniform stormwater management requirements across the region (Natural Assets Objective 7.2) ▪ Encourage participation in the development of a regional open space inventory and development of regional open space funding sources Natural Assets Objectives 8.2 and 8.3)

▪ Encourage adoption of uniform baseline forest vegetation protection standards (Natural Assets Objective 9.1)
Land Use Patterns and Trends
▪ Encourage participation in the joint planning effort for the uncommitted areas of southern Beaufort County (Land Use Objective 1.1). ▪ Encourage collaboration in the development of baseline PUD standards, connectivity and mixed-use requirements and other efforts to reduce vehicle miles traveled on the Regional Road Network (Land Use Objectives 1.5, 3.1, and 3.2).
Transportation and Other Public Facilities
▪ Encourage the inclusion of Jasper County's major transportation corridors into the Regional Road Network. ▪ Encourage the adoption of LOS "D" peak hour on these roads (Transportation Objective 1.1). ▪ Encourage coordinated facilities planning and access management along shared regional travel corridors such as US 278, SC 170 and the Bluffton Parkway (Transportation Objective 3.3) ▪ Encourage participation in state lobbying efforts to enable more local funding sources to pay for transportation facilities (Transportation Objective 2.2) ▪ Coordinate regional parks planning. For example, shared facilities could be jointly funded and conveniently located to both counties thus offering a regional amenity that might not otherwise be funded (Parks and Recreation Objective 1.3) ▪ Coordinate regional planning for facilities that could benefit from a multi-county approach such as the proposed new port, landfills, and GIS mapping systems. ▪ Participation in Economic Development Plan (Land Use Objective 3.3)