



Florence County 2032: Connecting Our Past, Defining Our Future

Comprehensive Plan





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Executive Summary

Florence County 2032:

Connecting Our Past, Defining Our Future

Executive Summary

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

Process

This effort stems from a planning and community engagement process. The plan's findings and recommendations focus on the physical and economic aspects of the County's projected growth and development in the coming years. It provides guiding principles, goals, policies and action priorities that will help County elected and appointed officials and staff in determining the location, financing and sequencing of public improvements; administering development regulations; and guiding growth efforts. The Plan also provides a basis for coordinating the actions of many different functions and interests within and outside of County government.

Purpose

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

- Lays out a long-range vision regarding the future growth and enhancement of the County.
- Considers at once the entire geographic area of the County, including areas where new development and redevelopment may occur, along with its regional context.
- Assesses near and longer-term needs and desires across a variety of inter-related topics that represent the key "building blocks" of a community.
- Serves as a guideline for measuring success, and is amended from time to time to remain a "living document" that is able to address changing circumstances.

Plan Notes

- Despite these many avenues for action, the plan should not be considered a "cure all" for every tough problem a community faces. This plan focuses primarily on the responsibilities of County government in the physical



planning arena, where Counties normally have a more direct and extensive role than in other areas that residents value, such as education and social services. Of necessity, comprehensive plans, as vision and policy documents, also must remain relatively general.

- The resulting plan may not touch on every challenge before the County, but it is meant to set a tone and motivate concerted efforts to move the community forward in coming years.
- There are certainly recommendations contained in the plan for future study of specific areas. If the County wishes to expand and explore study on specific needs, funding should be set aside to program and prepare for those specific deep dives.

Next Steps

A comprehensive plan, if embraced by leadership and residents, has the potential to take a community to a whole new level in terms of livability and tangible accomplishments.

The plan is ultimately a guidance document for County officials and staff, who must make decisions on a daily basis that will determine the future direction, financial health, and “look and feel” of the community. These decisions are carried out through:

- Targeted programs and expenditures prioritized through the County’s annual budget process, including routine but essential functions such as code compliance.
- Major public improvements and land acquisitions financed through the County’s budgeting efforts.
- New regulations that stem from this plan.
- Departmental work plans and resources in key areas.
- Support for ongoing planning and studies that will further clarify needs, costs, benefits and strategies.
- Pursuit of external grant funding to supplement local budgets and/or expedite certain projects.
- Initiatives pursued in conjunction with other public and private partners to leverage resources and achieve successes neither could accomplish on their own.



INTRODUCTION



Purpose

This report provides background information about Florence County as it is today. This information is presented in topic areas relevant to a refreshed new Comprehensive Plan for Florence County's physical growth and development. This report also highlights key planning considerations for the years ahead, which will set the stage for the Future County portion of the Comprehensive Plan in terms of community needs and desires for the next decade. The content of this Existing Florence County report is based on initial background studies to date by the Florence County's community planning consultant, Kendig Keast Collaborative, as well as leadership and community input received to this point.

Benefits

A comprehensive plan is a long-range, community-driven policy document that lays the groundwork for how the County can take charge of, invest in, and realize its future over the next 10 years and beyond. Florence County's previous update to the Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2017. In the ensuing years, Florence County has continued to plan, including working diligently on the FLATS 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, placing the County in an excellent position to create a new Comprehensive Plan. Keeping a Comprehensive Plan current is not only state law, but also a planning best practice. It ensures the Plan reflects the newest emerging issues and opportunities.

Building on Past Plans

Previous planning guidance for the County prior to this Comprehensive Plan:

- 2017 Comprehensive Plan
- 2040 FLATS Long Range Plan
- Other Planning documents and guidance

Comprehensive Plans:

- Provide public officials with a greater understanding of existing conditions in their community, and the larger trends and forces that are impacting growth and development;
- Provide a long-term outlook at the potential implications of land use, infrastructure, and other decisions;
- Establish priorities for implementation strategies and actions to achieve preferred outcomes;
- Place communities in more favorable positions when pursuing and securing grants and capital partnerships;
- Offer an opportunity for constructive and meaningful public input, education, and engagement through a variety of forums, including one-on-one meetings, focus groups, town hall meetings, and community workshops;
- Provide policy guidance and a legally defensible basis for effective and implementable land development regulations;



- Provide a framework to enable local officials to make better-informed decisions based upon a coordinated plan to guide the orderly growth and development of their community; and
- Provide the umbrella for weaving together any small area plans, through which greater synergies can be created.

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

Approach - Existing County: Future County

The planning process focuses first on providing a snapshot of existing conditions, through the lens of multiple plan elements, culminating in this Existing County report. The report includes discussion of the Florence County's history, location and physical characteristics and highlights its demographic composition and trends. A summary of key indicators, from the latest available U.S. Census data (including the 2020 U.S. Census) and other sources, illustrates historical and current conditions and context relevant to the Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive plans are future-oriented and contain policies and actions that are intended to advance a set of preferred conditions. As such, the Future County component and its implementation emphasis will be the primary focus of the Florence County's Comprehensive Plan. The Future County portion will include recommended initiatives and strategies for guiding the Florence County's development and redevelopment while preserving community character, enhancing quality of life, and improving economic well-being. During community research, the following priorities were set that also guide the focus areas:

1. Upkeep of existing commercial and industrial properties while recruiting more
2. Continued support and improvement of public safety and other County Services
3. Retention of college students with good jobs and things to do for younger people
4. Quality and promotion of recreation and natural resources
5. More and affordable housing options while supporting existing neighborhoods

Focus Areas

The focus areas within the Florence County's Comprehensive Plan provide direction when setting program and funding priorities to enhance the quality of life in the county.

The **Focus Areas** are:

1. Land Use and Development
2. Housing and Neighborhoods
3. Economic Development
4. Recreation and Amenities
5. Special Area Planning

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



Benchmarking Data Points

While the focus of the Existing County report is the existing conditions in Florence County, it can be helpful to benchmark Florence County's data points to provide additional context. Within this report, certain Florence County data points were compared with the data points of:

- › Region (Counties surrounding Florence County)
- › Larger Counties in South Carolina (comparable areas with regional cities)
- › State

Naming the Plan: *Florence County 2032: Connecting Our Past, Defining Our Future*

Florence County 2032: Connecting Our Past, Defining Our Future is the name that has been selected for this Comprehensive Plan. This title reflects the rich history Florence County boasts and points to a shared goal: to shape the future and create opportunity in Florence County.

County Setting and Context

Florence County is the 10th largest County in area in South Carolina at 804 square miles. With a population of 137,059 per the 2020 Census, Florence County is the 13th largest. With 46 counties in South Carolina, these facts put Florence County in the top third in both categories. Florence County is also the largest in population among its neighboring counties and only second in area to Williamsburg County.

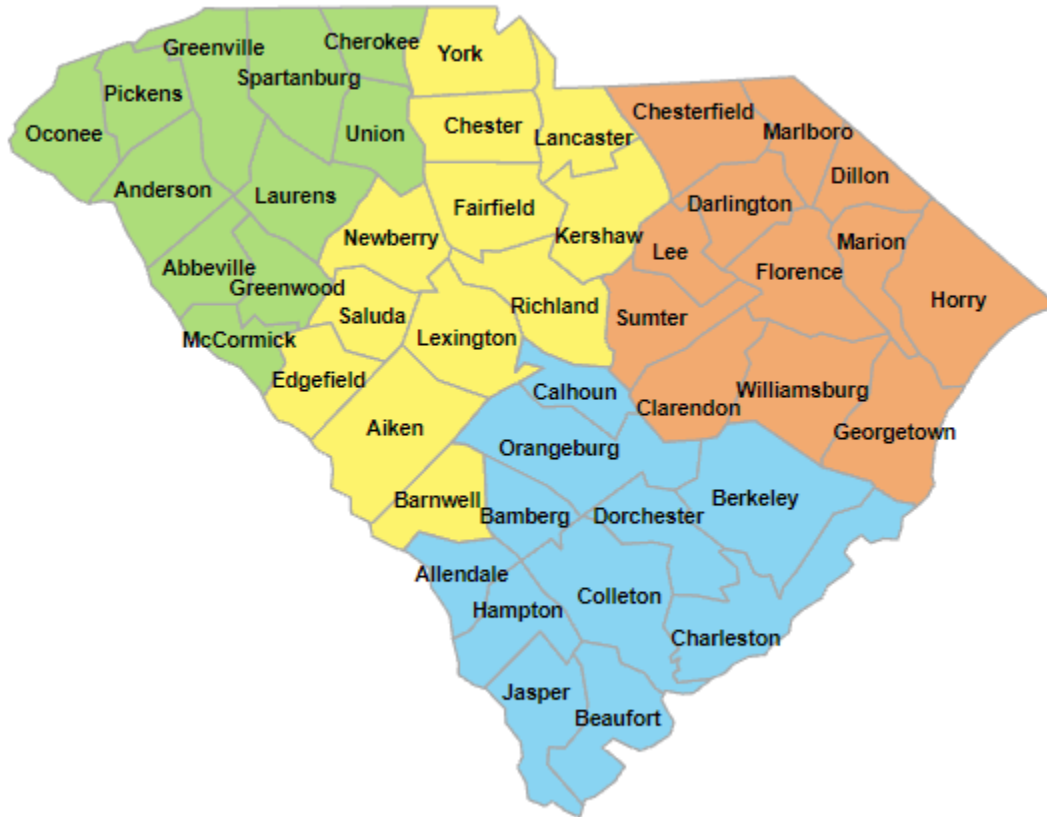
In the bigger picture, Florence County is located in the Pee Dee Region of South Carolina. As shown in the regional context map, the County is in the center of the Pee Dee Region, shown in orange (map from SC.gov). Several major transportation routes, including I-95, I-20, SC Highways 51, 52, 301, 76, 327, and 378, providing access to the greater region. In fact, I-20 terminates in Florence County at its intersection with I-95, making Florence County one of the few places in the United States with a major interstate ending within its jurisdiction.

Florence County is also a hub for rail transporting people and freight across the region. Similarly, the Florence Regional Airport also moves people and freight across the state and country.

Florence County lies an average of 138 feet above sea level and like much of the greater Pee Dee area has a variety of landscapes and natural resources.



Regional Context



Existing Florence County Report Content and Organization

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

- Historical Timeline
- Population
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Community Facilities



- Transportation
- Natural Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Resiliency
- Land Use
- Priority Investment (This will be exclusively in the Future County Plan as it is a product of the elements above)

The Future County Phase of the Plan will be a comprehensive guide to the future in one report considering all of these areas.



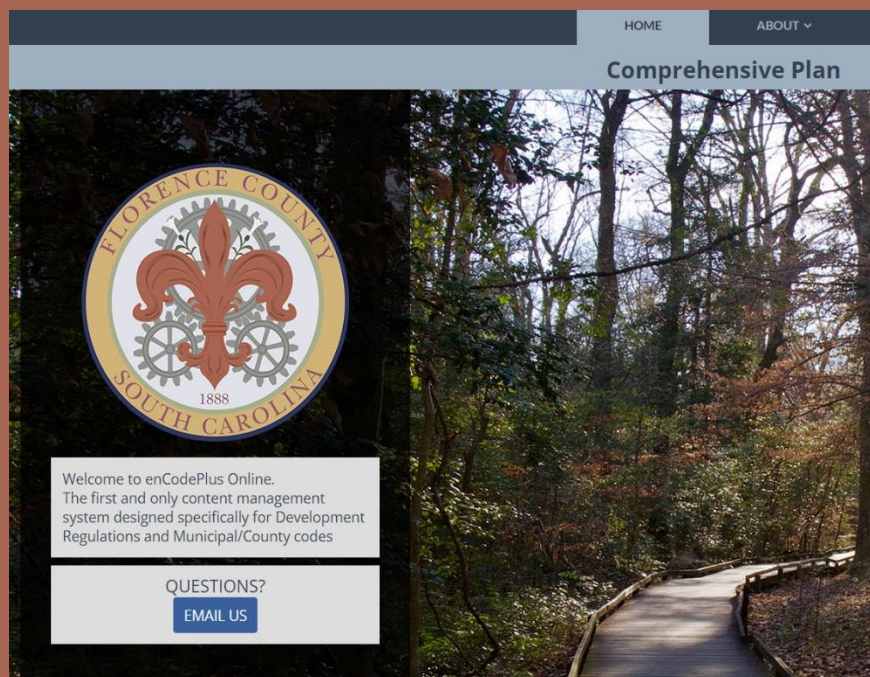
Engagement

Public and leadership engagement activities were hosted by the consultant team and Florence County officials to help inform this report and establish where to focus data gathering efforts. Input and feedback received during these meetings is referenced in this Existing County report. These engagement activities included:

- › **Listening sessions** with community leaders, public officials, department heads, and staff;
- › Use of the interactive **County enCodePlus website** for project communication with the community;
- › Two joint workshops with the **County Council and Planning Commission**;
- › **Public Workshop**; and
- › Several meetings with Planning **Staff**.

Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, ongoing at the time of the planning process, some engagement activities were hosted virtually or in a modified, socially distant manner.

The county-wide enCodePlus site was utilized for the Comprehensive Plan outreach, providing information and work, including the ability to contact the project team.





HISTORICAL TIMELINE



Early Days of Florence County	Native Americans created settlements along the banks of the Pee Dee River.
1730	Robert Johnson, the first Royal Governor of S.C., created eleven townships. Each contained 20,000 acres, and each man, woman and child who would improve 50 acres would receive the land free. Immigrants from Pennsylvania settled in the Pee Dee area. Settlement was slow so the government offered bounties to people who would settle in the area.
1780	Francis Marion, "The Swamp Fox", led a militia to fight the British during the American Revolutionary War.
1856	Henry Timrod founded a school for children. It is currently located in Timrod Park.
1860	Development of the railroad industry led to the settlement of a town, what is now the City of Florence. The first maps were created.
1864	The Stockade is constructed to house Civil War prisoners. It is eventually closed in 1865.
1888	The South Carolina General Assembly creates Florence County and includes Timmonsville, Coward, Lake City, and Florence.
1900s	Florence County continues to grow through agriculture and settlement.
Mid 1900s	I-20 and I-95 are built bringing more people to Florence County than ever before.
1963	Florence Darlington Technical College is founded.
1970	Francis Marion University is founded.
Throughout 1900s-2000s	Florence County continues to diversify its economy with textiles, manufacturing, medical, finance, and other industries.
2021	Comprehensive Plan process launched to update last plan adopted in 2017.



Historical Photos of Florence County



Early railroad days in Florence.



Hewn Timber Cabins at Francis Marion University.
Photos from Florenceco.org



Florence County Through the Years

Florence County has steadily expanded its footprint of development over the years. The aerial photos below, taken from County records and GIS data, visually demonstrate this growth in one area of the County. There are many other examples and can be seen through the progression aerial photography on the Florence County GIS website. The areas of the most intense new development are near the I-95 corridor, where multiple new residential subdivisions and commercial developments have been built in recent years, with several under development currently. New development has also occurred throughout Florence County.



1966 vs 2021: I-95/I-20 Area and Mall





1998 vs 2021: W. Palmetto St Area





POPULATION



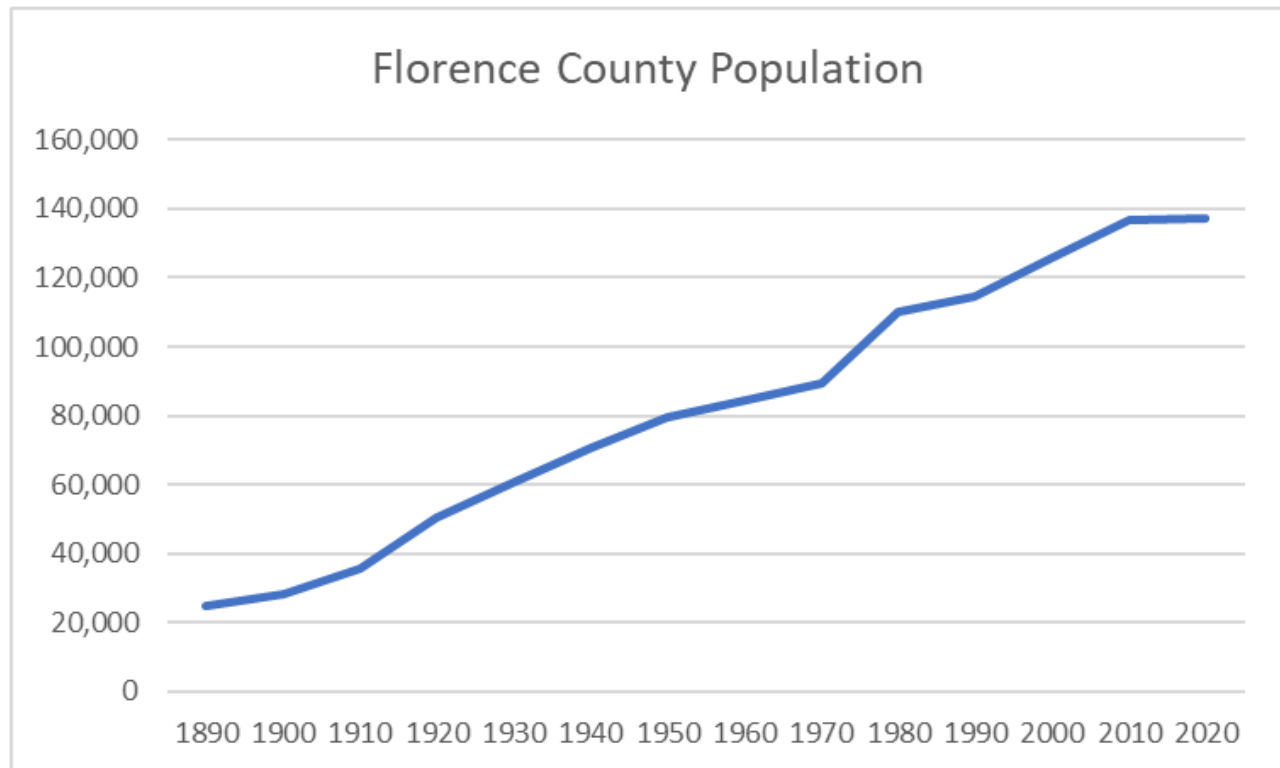
A review of key population indicators revealed a population boom in the 1970s and steady population growth in Florence County since. Continued growth, and both the opportunities and challenges it brings to Florence County, was a consistent theme heard during early engagement efforts for this Comprehensive Plan update. A common sentiment expressed was the need to address growth challenges such as traffic impacts while ensuring that growth is a positive for the residents both old and new. It was also expressed that not all areas of the County are appropriate for continued growth, and indicated a strong desire to preserve the natural resource and quality of life enjoyed in Florence County enjoyed by its citizens.

137,059 **2020 Census Population**

The 2020 US Census population of Florence County was 137,059, representing a slower growth rate than that of the State of South Carolina since 2010. However, with 1,419 new housing starts between 2012 and 2020, Florence County is certainly growing. In fact, Florence County has grown 9% since 2000 when Florence County's population was 125,761 persons. Growth has slightly slowed in recent years in terms of new residents, but during leadership meetings, it was noted that the “daytime population” of Florence County is even higher due to the presence of many employees who work in Florence County but live elsewhere in the Pee Dee region. Being the economic engine of the region not only impacts growth in Florence County, but also across the other Pee Dee counties. The major employers in Florence County draw from the region at large with many employees traveling from nearby counties to work.



Population Chart



Census Data Note

This Comprehensive Plan was prepared at the start of a new decade. This is when one-of-a-kind data from the decennial U.S. Census (2020) is newly available. The COVID-19 public health emergency impacted the ability of the Census Bureau to conduct normal Census activities in 2020, causing the typical Census reporting timeframe to be extended. As of the drafting of this report, limited releases of 2020 Census data were available.

In the meantime, interim results from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) are still, in many cases, the best source of detailed data about socioeconomic conditions at the local community level, especially for making “apples to apples” comparisons to other communities, the state, and the nation.

However, it is important to note that the US Census is the official authority on US Population statistics and many financial allotments to States are based upon these figures. It is too early to say if the COVID-19 public health emergency impacted the accuracy, causing the typical Census figures to be affected.

The Census Bureau will also not release its standard 2020 ACS 1-year estimates because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on data collection. We will use available 2020 figures where appropriate and 2019 figures where we need to make more detailed comparisons.



40

Median Age

As of 2019, the median age of Florence County's residents was 40 which is slightly higher than the median age in South Carolina (39.4). The median age has been steady over time, but has increased slightly in the past few years. This increase mirrors state and national increases in median age as the graying of the Baby Boom generation continues.

\$53,141

Median Household Income

According to the Florence County Economic Development Partnership, the Median household income in Florence County was \$53,141 in 2022. This updated figure was extrapolated from Applied Geographic Solutions and GIS Planning 2022, the TaxFoundation.Org 2021, and GIS Planning research. However, for statistical comparison for neighboring counties, the most recent data from the census is shown below. These 2019 figures placed Florence County, with a reported median income of \$50,082, just slightly lower than the median household income in the State of South Carolina, which was \$53,199. The higher median household income in South Carolina is being pulled up by higher income regions in South Carolina. Florence County does have one of the highest median household income among its adjacent counties by a large margin, shared with Sumter County. A higher median household income in a region can be attractive for some prospective businesses and retailers potentially looking to locate within a County as it can indicate a higher "purchasing power." Household income, as defined by the Census Bureau, includes earnings (wages and salaries), Social Security payments, pensions, child support, public assistance, annuities, money derived from rental properties, interest and dividends, and other sources.



Median Household Income Chart for Adjacent Counties According to the US Census



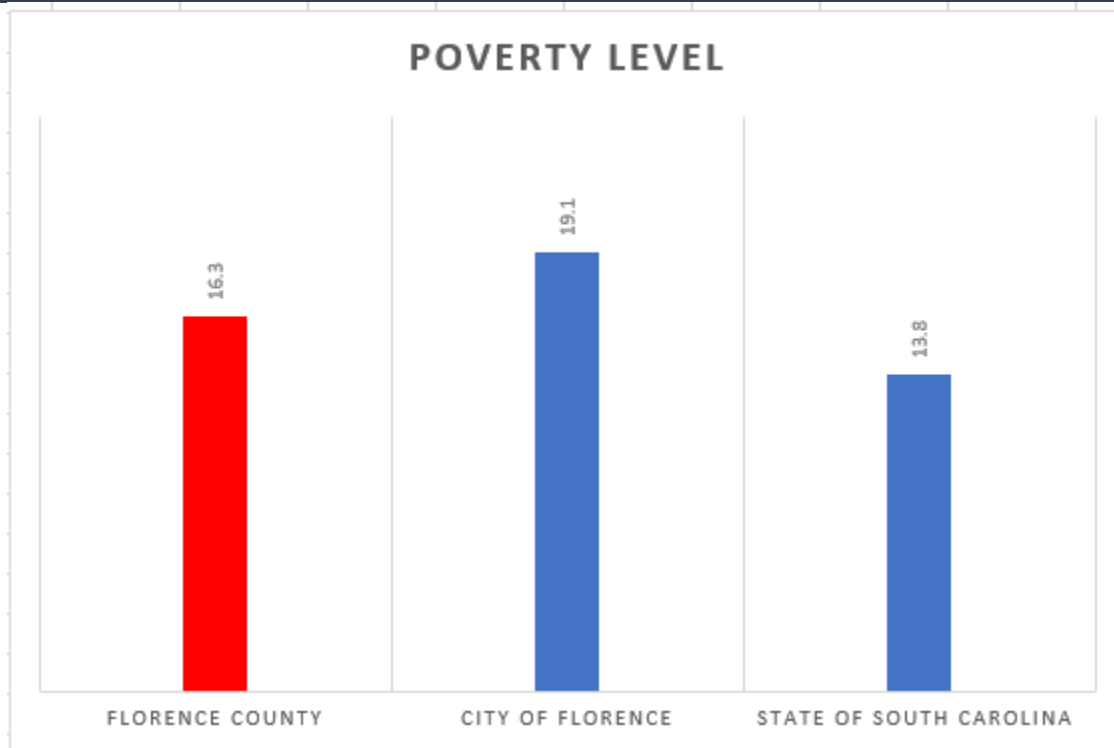
16.3

Percent of Population Below Poverty Level

Just over 16 percent of residents in Florence County fell below the poverty level as of 2019. This is slightly higher than the percentage of the population in the State of South Carolina below the poverty level (13.8 percent). The percentage of the population below the poverty level is higher in the City of Florence at 19.1 percent, which is affecting the County levels. As of 2019, the City of Florence accounted for 28 percent of the total population of Florence County. Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps).



Poverty Level Chart



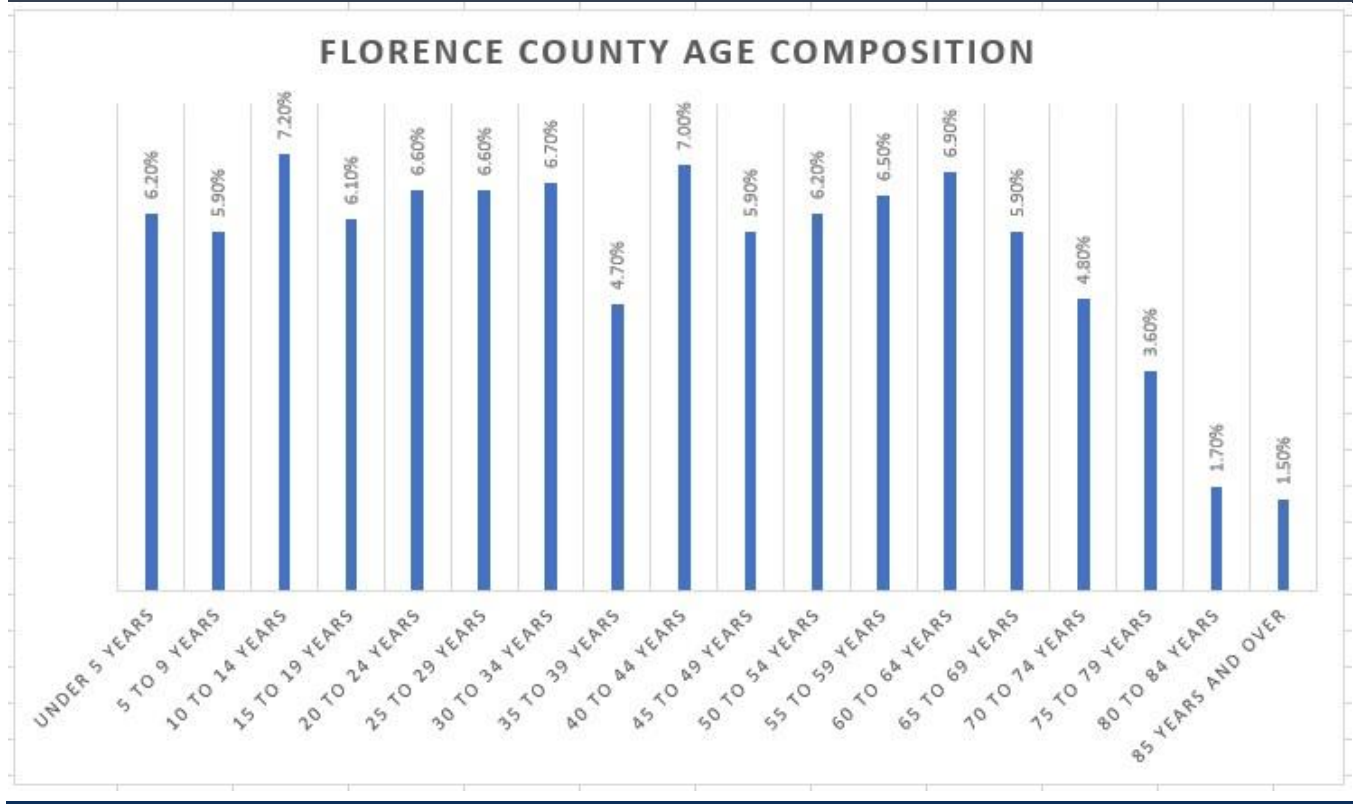
23.3

Percent of Residents Under Age 18

As of 2019, 31.5 percent of all households in Florence County had one or more persons under the age of 18, and 23.3 percent of all residents were under age 18. This compares to the average for the State of South Carolina of 21.6 percent of residents under age 18. Most households in the County are families, at 67.4 percent with the majority as married couples with and without children in the home at 43.6 percent. Only 3.7 percent of family households are males with no spouse, whereas 20.2 percent of these are females with no spouse. Accordingly, as the share of families and children in County shifts over time, the County will need to continue addressing the differing needs of these demographic groups.

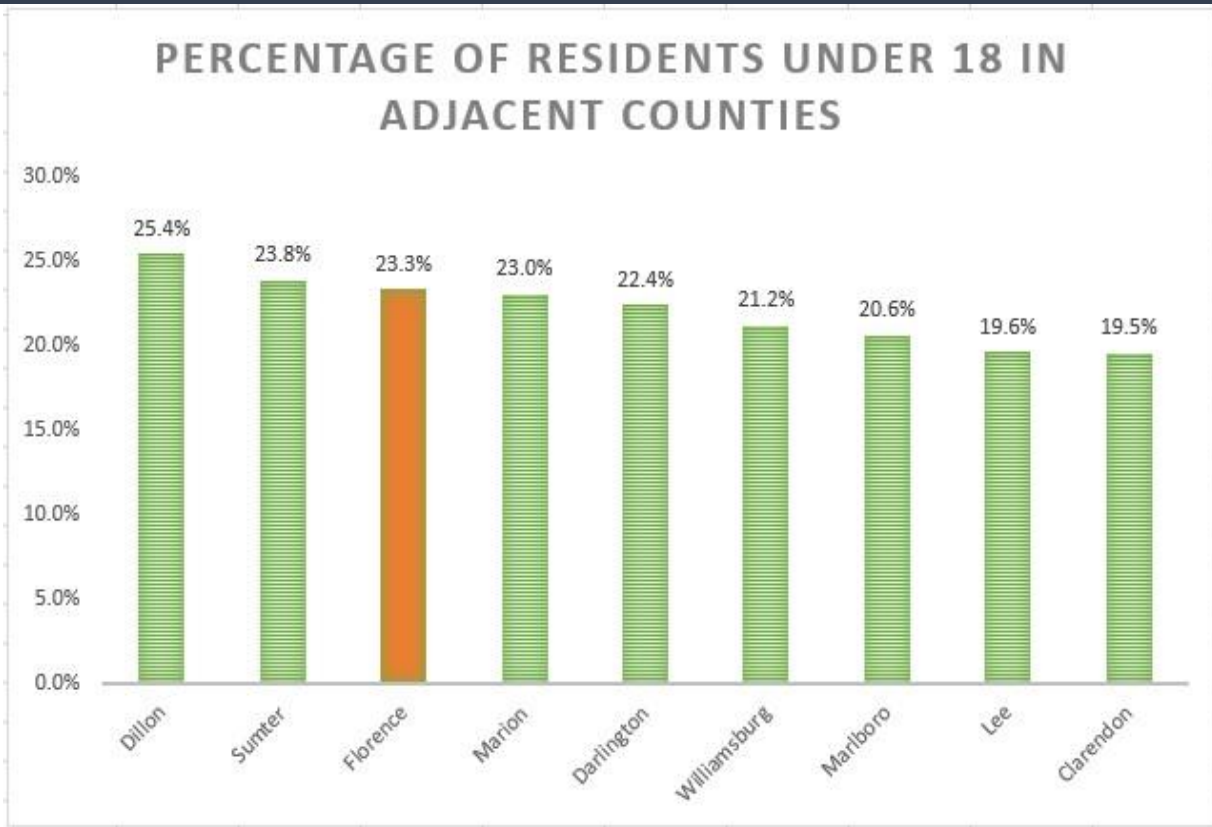


County Age Composition Chart





Percent of Population Under Age 18 in Adjacent Counties



34.99

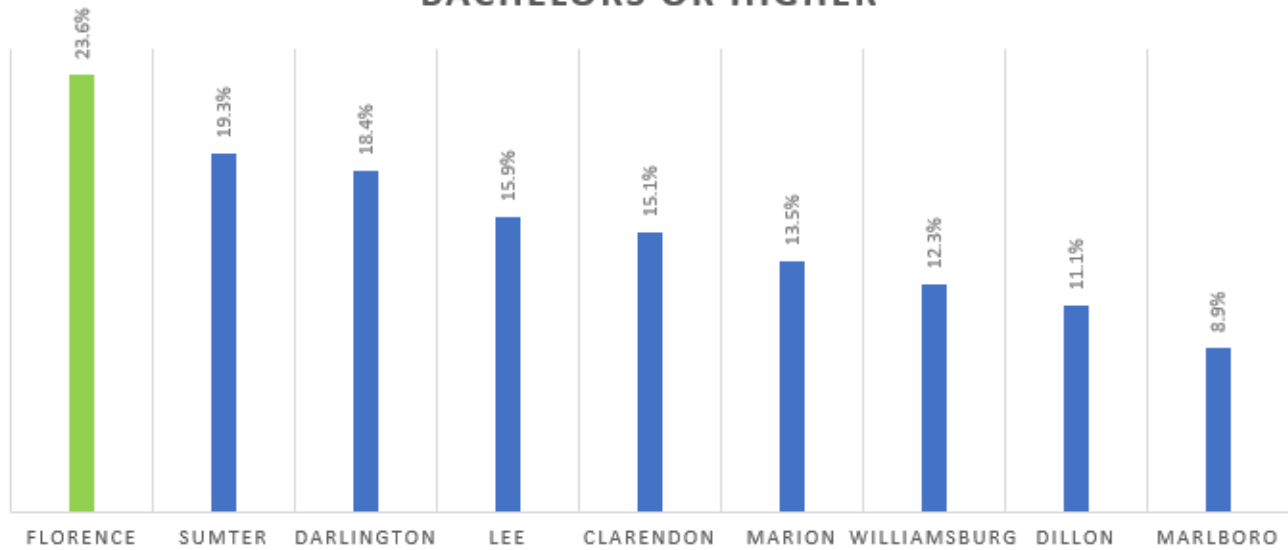
Percent of Residents with an Educational Attainment of Associate's Degree or Higher

In addition to the statistic above, as of 2019 in Florence County, 85 percent of people 25 years and over had at least graduated from high school and 23.6 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher. This is the highest in the region by over 4 percent to the next highest County and nearly 15 percent higher than that of the lowest. This may be due to the higher proportion of jobs in Florence County in industries that require an advanced degree.



Educational Attainment in Region

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION OVER AGE 25 WITH BACHELORS OR HIGHER





HOUSING



Providing and maintaining quality housing in Florence County remains a top priority as growth continues, the population ages, and as affordability concerns increase. Ensuring high quality development standards are met and coordinated with other County services was raised during early engagement efforts, along with maintaining the integrity, affordability, and quality of existing housing and neighborhoods.

Note: At the time of this report, economists and real estate specialists were highlighting COVID era concerns related to reduced housing construction, escalating costs, reduced inventories of new and resale homes, and resulting dramatic increases in median homes prices, leading to even greater affordability challenges given the relative pace of income growth. These trends were occurring nationwide and in South Carolina. This current reality should be taken into account when reviewing this section, which includes best available Census estimates from 2019. Data on economic conditions and trends elsewhere in this report were likewise impacted later by pandemic effects, so Florence County will need to monitor the newest available post-COVID data on population, housing and economic indicators following the release of Census 2020 results for their 5-year plan review.

61,817

Housing Units in Florence County

Florence County had an estimated 61,817 housing units in 2019. This was an over 20 percent increase from the 51,836 units that were observed in the 2000 Census. Florence County maintains monthly building reports and residential is always a point of interest. While additions and renovations continue and have always been steady, there was also a boom of housing in the mid 2000's before the national housing crisis. Florence County was moderately affected by this similar to the rest of South Carolina. However, in recent years during national economic recovery, the boom has continued. Adding nearly 10,000 housing units in less than 20 years is significant considering the population has not grown by a similar percentage. It was noted in engagement efforts and in County reporting that a variety of types of housing units, including townhomes, have been developed in recent years due to market demand and continued affordability concerns.

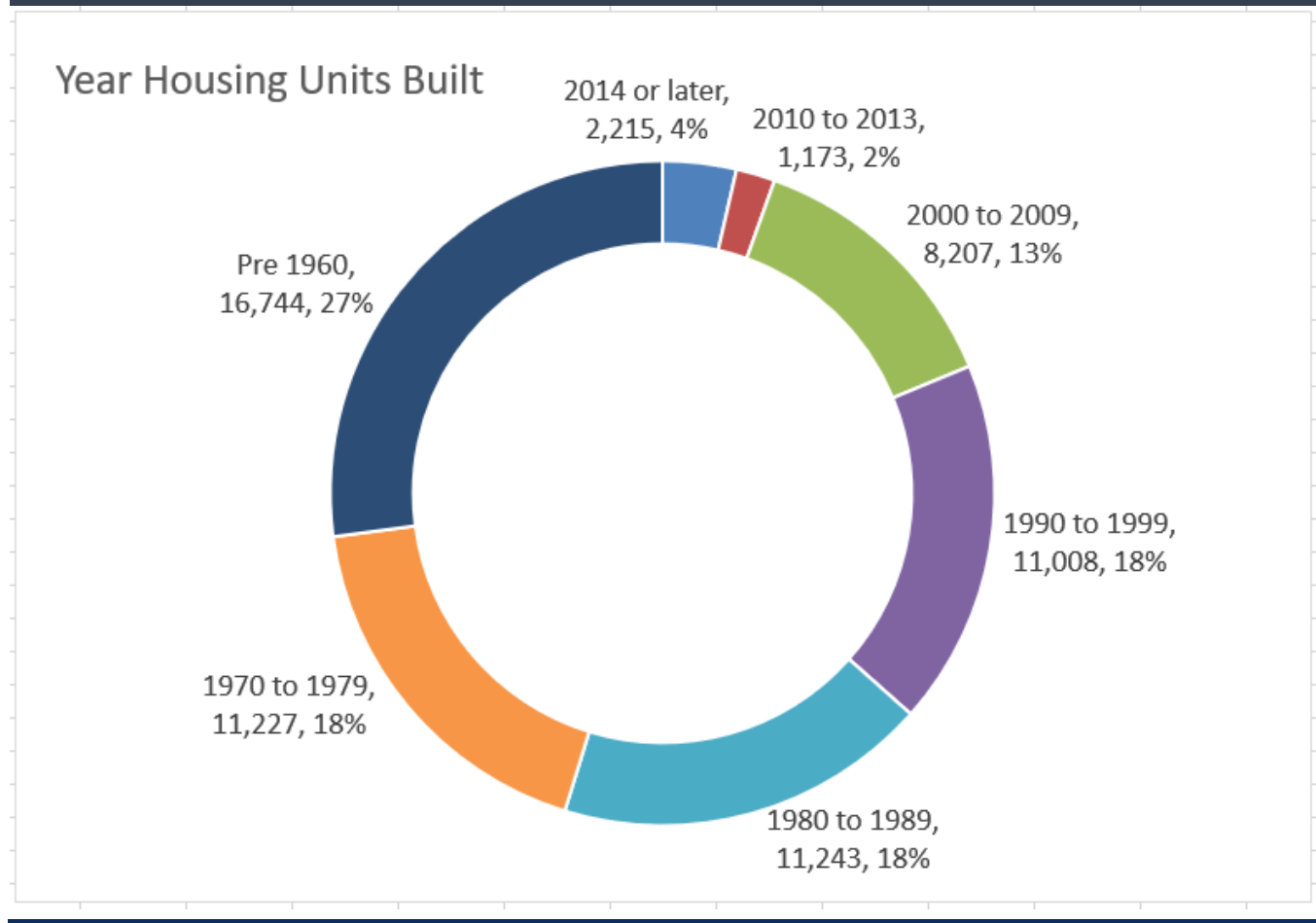


66.2

Percent of Housing Units Built Before 1990

In Florence County, 66.2 percent of all housing units were built prior to 1990. This 30-year threshold is significant as it represents a time when many homes and multi-family structures begin to need more substantial reinvestment or repairs. A substantial portion of the housing stock in the County is even older, with 27 percent of all housing units built prior to 1960. From 2012 to 2020, Florence County issued between 300 and 500 residential building permits per year for new construction, alterations, or repairs. This is significant activity for a County in this region. The majority of new residential construction permits were issued to builders constructing in new communities. As of September 2021, 256 residential construction permits had been issued thus far for the year with over half being new houses. As such, the trend in residential is continuing.

Year Housing Units Built





\$134,300 Median Home Value (Owner-Occupied Units)

In 2019, the median home value of owner-occupied housing units (non-rental) in Florence County was \$134,300. This is lower than that of the State of South Carolina at \$179,800, but higher than any other adjacent county by a significant margin.

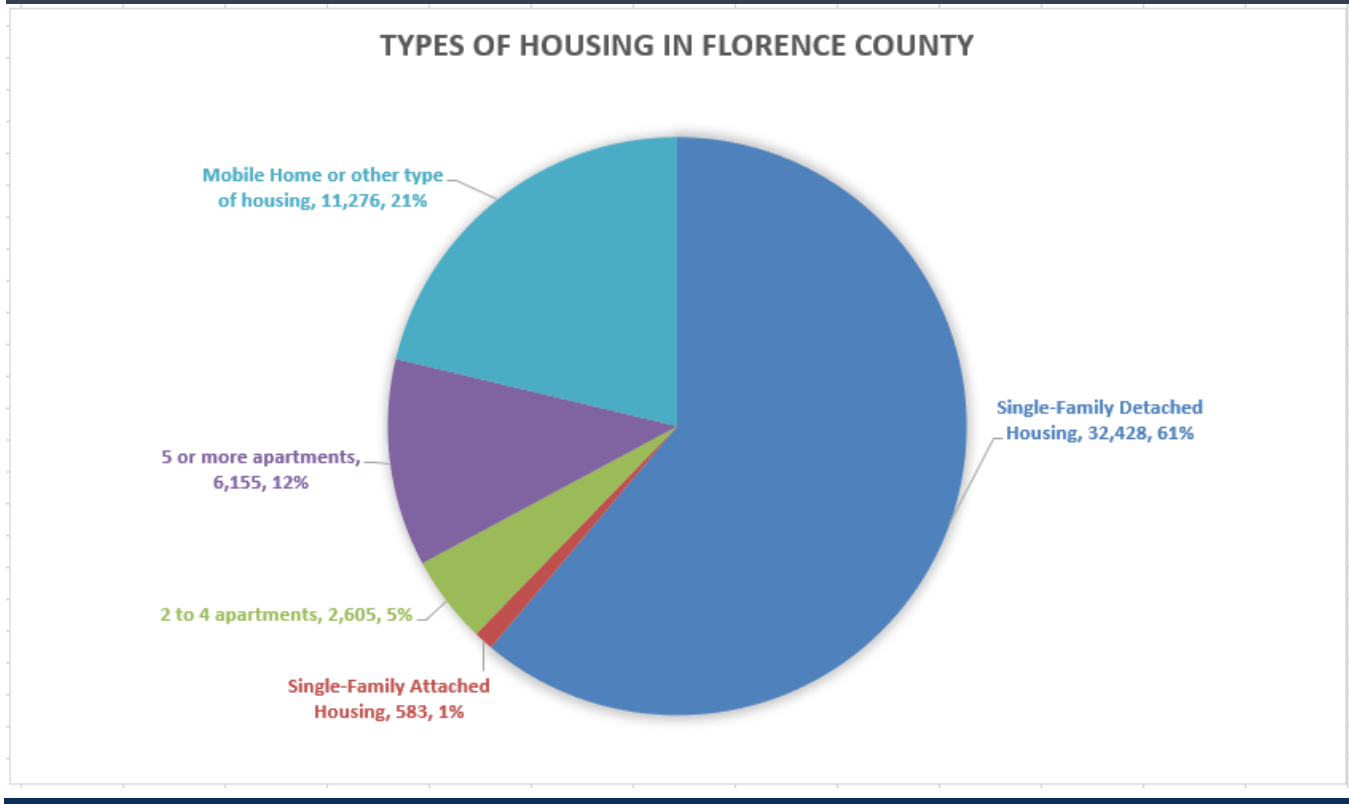
The median value of owner-occupied homes increased by \$22,400 from the 2010 median of \$111,900 in Florence County. Early engagement discussions for this plan indicated that both housing prices and land costs have been rising in recent years. This can present a challenge for maintaining existing housing and attracting new construction that is attainable for different segments of the population.

65 Percent of Housing Units are Owner-Occupied

The percentage of housing units in Florence County that were owner-occupied as of 2019 (65 percent) is slightly less than that of the State of South Carolina (70 percent). The percentage of housing units in Florence County that are renter-occupied is higher than the share of the housing stock that is composed of multi-family units. This indicates that renting is also occurring within single-family detached homes or another product, including manufactured housing. The chart below depicts the types of housing in 2019. Townhouses in Florence County are booming. Many have recently been completed and they are increasing in popularity. This trend will affect the figures below when Florence County undergoes a 5 year plan update. Not only will Florence County be affected, but also other locations within the region, state, and nation as developable land becomes scarce, maintenance costs of land increase, amenities become more and more important to residents, the population ages, and energy efficient homes are increase in demand.



Types of Housing Units Chart



61

Percent of Florence County Housing Units that are Single-Family Detached

The most prevalent housing types in Florence County, as of 2019, were single-family detached housing units, which comprised 61 percent of the housing stock, and mobile/manufactured housing, which comprised 21 percent of the housing stock. The remaining housing stock was comprised of single-family attached units (such as townhomes), at 1 percent, smaller multi-family sites (4 units or fewer), at 5 percent, and 5 or more apartment units at 12 percent. Engagement efforts revealed that Florence County also has a small percentage of residents living in recreational vehicles or structures that may not meet housing codes.

**46.7**

Percent of Renters Paying More than 30 Percent of Income in Housing Costs

The median gross rent in Florence County, as of 2019, was \$790. Just almost half of Florence County renters (46.7 percent) were paying more than 30 percent of their income in housing costs (a common indicator of housing unaffordability). By comparison, 23 percent of owners with a mortgage met this same threshold of paying more than 30 percent of their income toward housing costs. The table below indicates that for a Florence County resident making the median household income, affording a home at the median home value may be within reach, if supply is available. Early engagement discussions revealed that opportunities for home ownership, types of housing available, and housing affordability are all concerns in Florence County. Housing affordability, and rental housing affordability in particular, is an issue throughout the region and state. There is not much inventory in this price range, if any, and townhomes are often for rent. Homes in this price point, whether attached or detached, are not being developed anywhere in the region. Increasing constructions costs exacerbate this problem. Florence County is certainly aware of these issues and continues to work on this index.

	Median Household Income	Maximum Home Price Affordable to Median Household Income	Median Home Value	Minimum Household Income to Afford Median Priced Home
Florence County	\$50,082	\$150,242	\$134,300	\$44,766



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Florence County's economy is largely driven by broader economic trends across South Carolina and the nation as a whole. Industrial and medical facilities provide a large segment of the employment base in Florence County, and economic trends that impact the energy sector also influence the overall economic health of Florence County. While many economic factors are external and beyond the control of Florence County, the county can continue to work to strengthen its economy and be fiscally sustainable in its investments.

60,000+**Total Jobs within
the Florence County**

As of 2020, the Census Bureau estimates that Florence County had over 60,000 jobs within the County, across all employment sectors. The largest employers in Florence County include:

Employer	Type of Activity	Approximate Number of Employees
McLeod Regional Medical Center	Medical	5,800
Florence School District 1	Education	2,300
MUSC Hospital	Medical	1,174
McCall Farms	Manufacturing	1,150
Assurant	Insurance	1,080
Tricare	Insurance	1,010
Honda	Industrial	918
Nan Ya Plastics	Industrial	918
Ruiz Foods	Industrial	810
Florence County	Government	805
QVC	Distribution	752
Otis Elevator	Industrial	635
Performance Food Service	Industrial	497



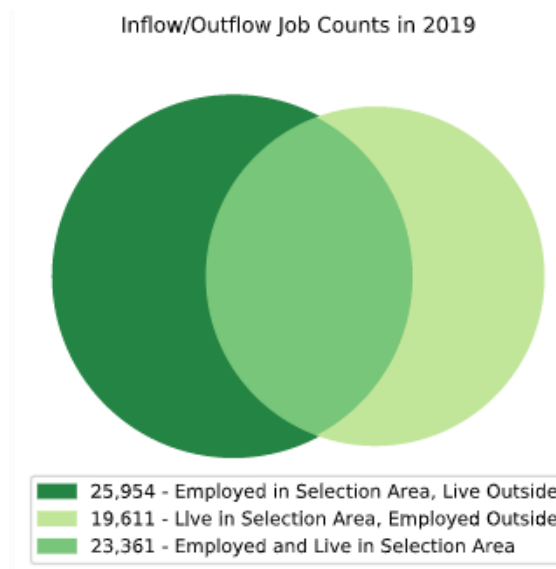
47.4

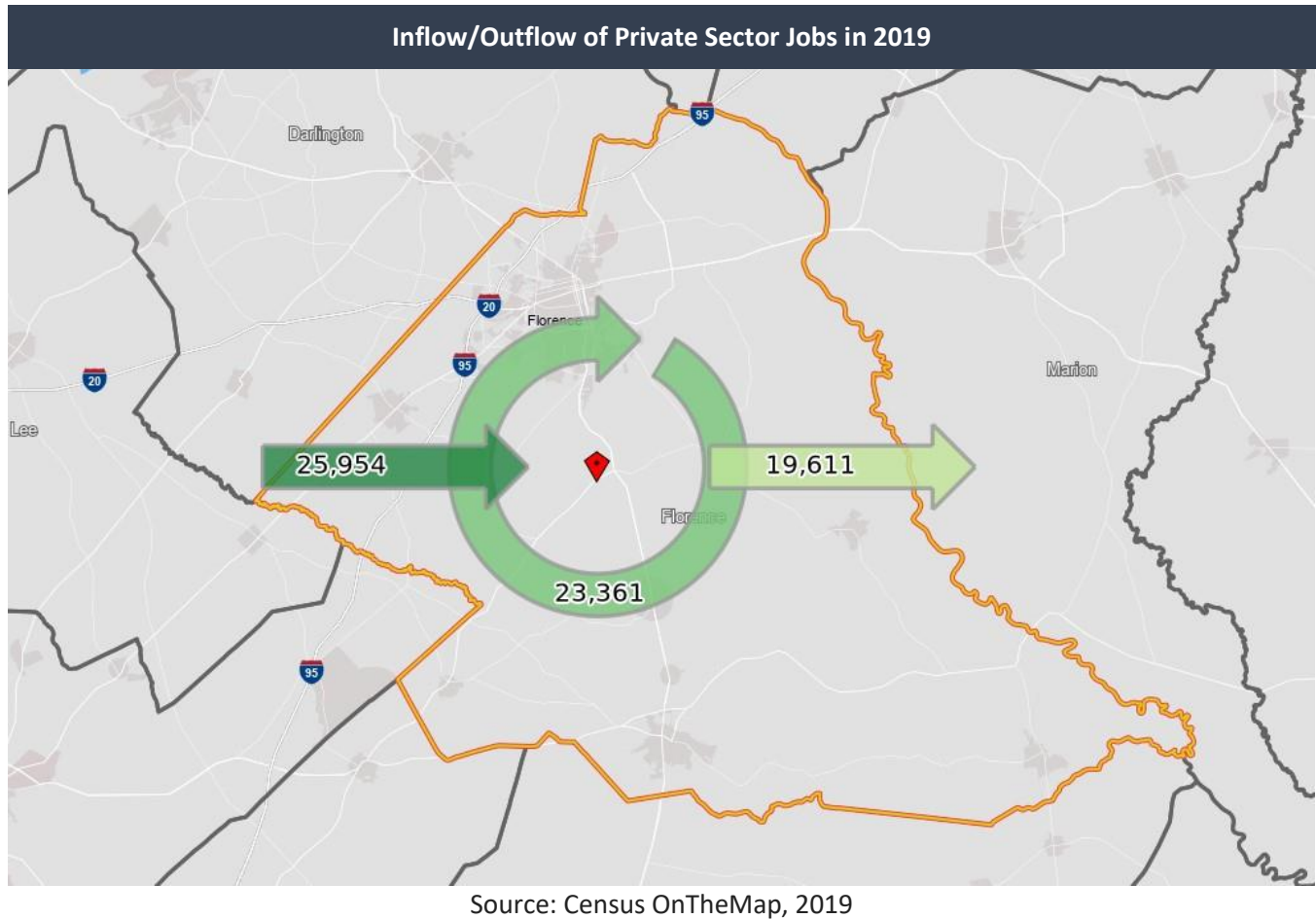
Percent of All Those Who Work in Florence County and Live Inside of County

As of 2019, 47.4 percent of those who worked in Florence County were estimated to also live in the County. This was 23,361 employees. Over 25,954 workers traveled into Florence County, but lived outside of the County. This shows that the economic opportunity in Florence County is very strong compared to neighboring counties. Less workers traveled outside of Florence County that lived within the County to work, at 19,611. However, this shows that there are employees to capture for new opportunities with Florence County as the County continues to grow.

52 percent of local workers who did not live in Florence County, the highest percentage were coming from elsewhere in the Pee Dee with a broad range from surrounding counties. The vast majority of workers in Florence County are working outside of their homes. Just over 3,000 people worked from home as of 2019. With the impact of COVID-19 not fully realized, the change in workplace from office to home may see these numbers increase in years to come. However, the vast majority of employees in Florence County will continue to commute to work with the largest percentages working in healthcare, education, and manufacturing.

Note: This analysis was performed utilizing the Census Bureau's OntheMap tool, which uses Longitudinal Employment Household Data (LEHD). While the most recent data available is from 2019 (and differs slightly from the employment estimates provided previously as this accounts for private sector employment), it is still helpful for understanding present day commuting patterns and provides a good snapshot of the pattern of living and working in Florence County in the private sector.





14

Percent Increase in the 1% Capital Project Sales Tax Revenue from 2020 to 2021

When COVID-19 disrupted global, national and local economies in 2020, many believed local sales tax revenues would plummet from reduced consumer activities such as shopping and eating out. However, Florence County did not experience the same level of reduction as some other areas. The Capital Project Sales Tax revenues from 2020 to 2021 actually show a robust growth. Early engagement with the business community indicated that Florence County residents came together to support local businesses during the pandemic, and many businesses were able to access various funding supports.



Fiscal Year and Months	Capital Project Sales Tax Revenue
FY 20 July-September	\$6,226,919
FY 20 October-December	\$5,985,161
FY 20 January-March	\$6,341,851
FY 20 April-June	\$5,448,929
TOTAL	\$24,002,860
FY 21 July-September	\$6,881,729
FY 21 October-December	\$6,352,746
FY 21 January-March	\$6,831,254
FY 21 April-June	\$7,223,881
TOTAL	\$27,289,610



5

New Industrial Sites Boasting \$26+ Million in Investment by Florence County



Florence County's Industrial Parks and sites for future growth of manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, and other targeted industrial uses are vast. There are currently five, new active parks according to the Florence County Economic Development Partnership. In a recent update from the Partnership, the following information was released:



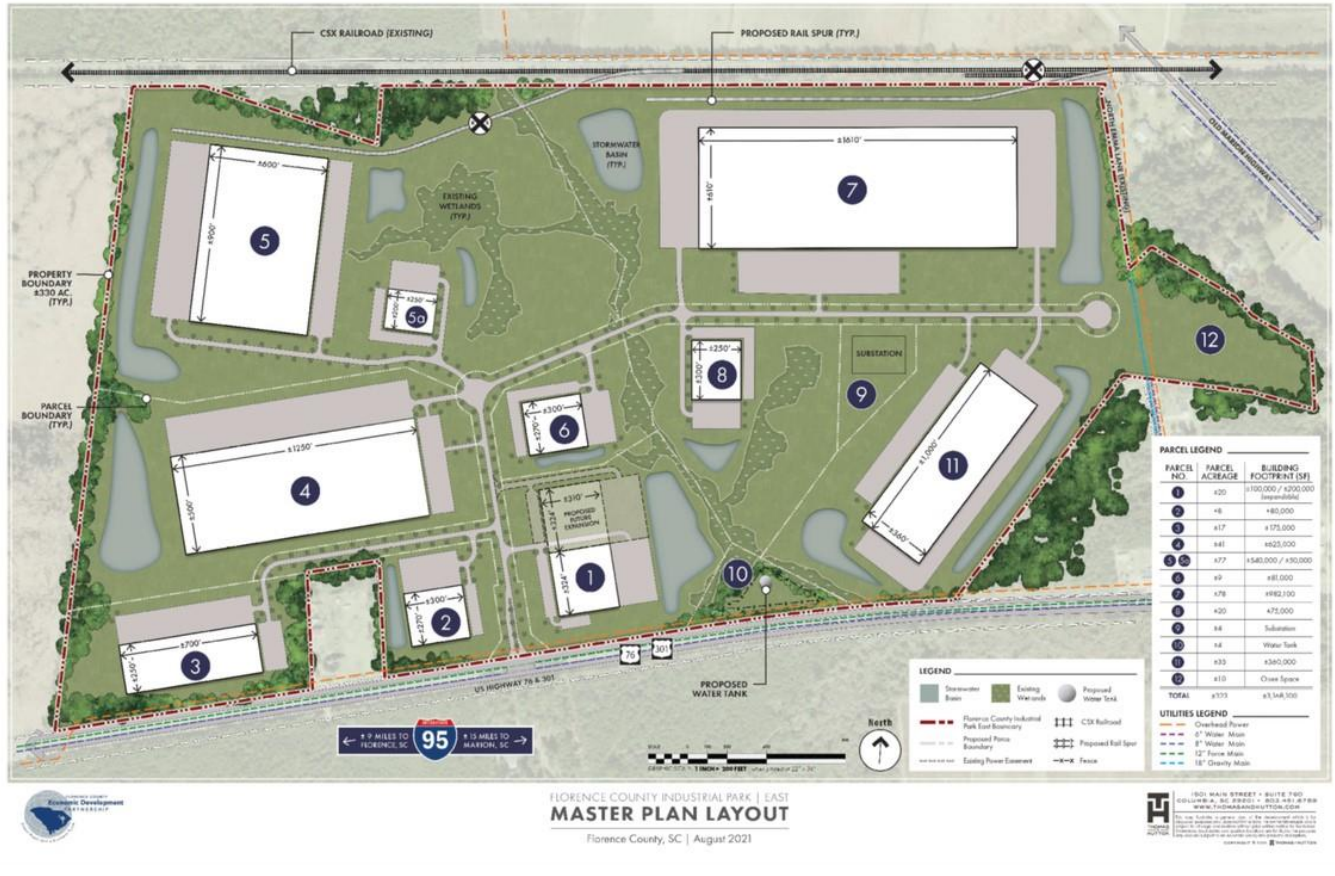
Florence County, SC invests \$26+ Million in Five Industrial Sites

In the last two years, Florence County purchased over 1,000 acres of property for industrial development. Two of the industrial sites are rail-served, one site fronts Interstate 95 and another site is located in an existing industrial park. This unique combination of product allows us to ensure continued industrial growth within Florence County in the years to come.



Florence County Industrial Park East

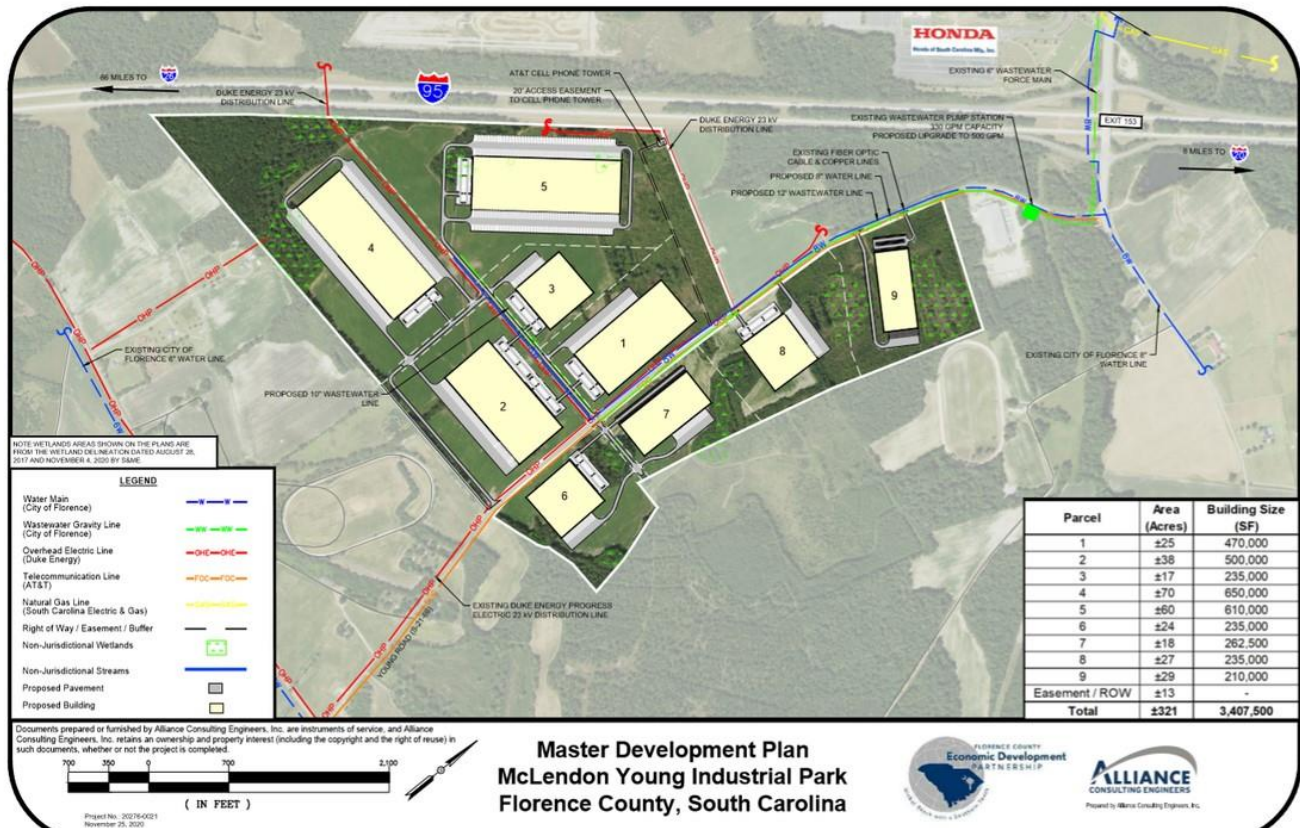
This 330-acre rail-served industrial park is located off U.S. Highway 76, less than ten miles from Interstate 95. Site work is currently underway including the addition of an industrial park entrance and deceleration lane on U.S. 76, extension of water and sewer infrastructure to a future speculative building site, mass grading of a 100,000 SF speculative building site, and addition of an industrial park sign on U.S. 76. It is anticipated that site work will be complete in May 2022.





Florence County Industrial Park West

Florence County Industrial Park West enjoys substantial frontage along I-95 and is located in an established industrial part of the county that has proven it can supply the labor needs of “household name” employers. The site is located directly across I-95 from Honda, which manufactures all-terrain and side-by-side vehicles at its Florence location. Given logistics positioning and strong demographics (high labor force participation, moderate median age, and moderately low median income levels) this is 315-acre property that could meet several higher-headcount and/or advanced requirements.





Highway 327 Industrial Site

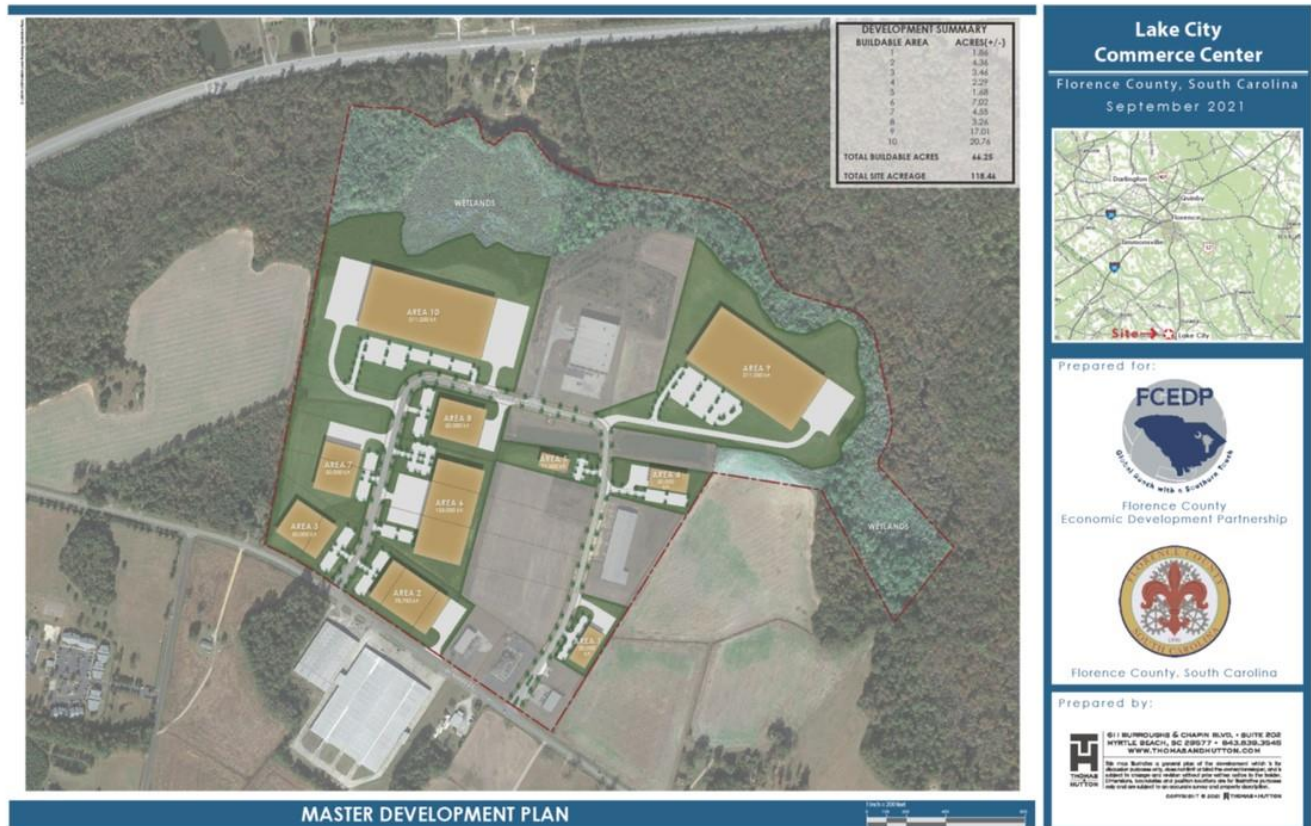
This 80-acre site is located on four-lane U.S. Highway 327, only four miles from Interstate 95. Located adjacent to Palmetto Paving Corporation, this site is prime for a single industrial user that desires quick access to I-95.





Lake City Commerce Center

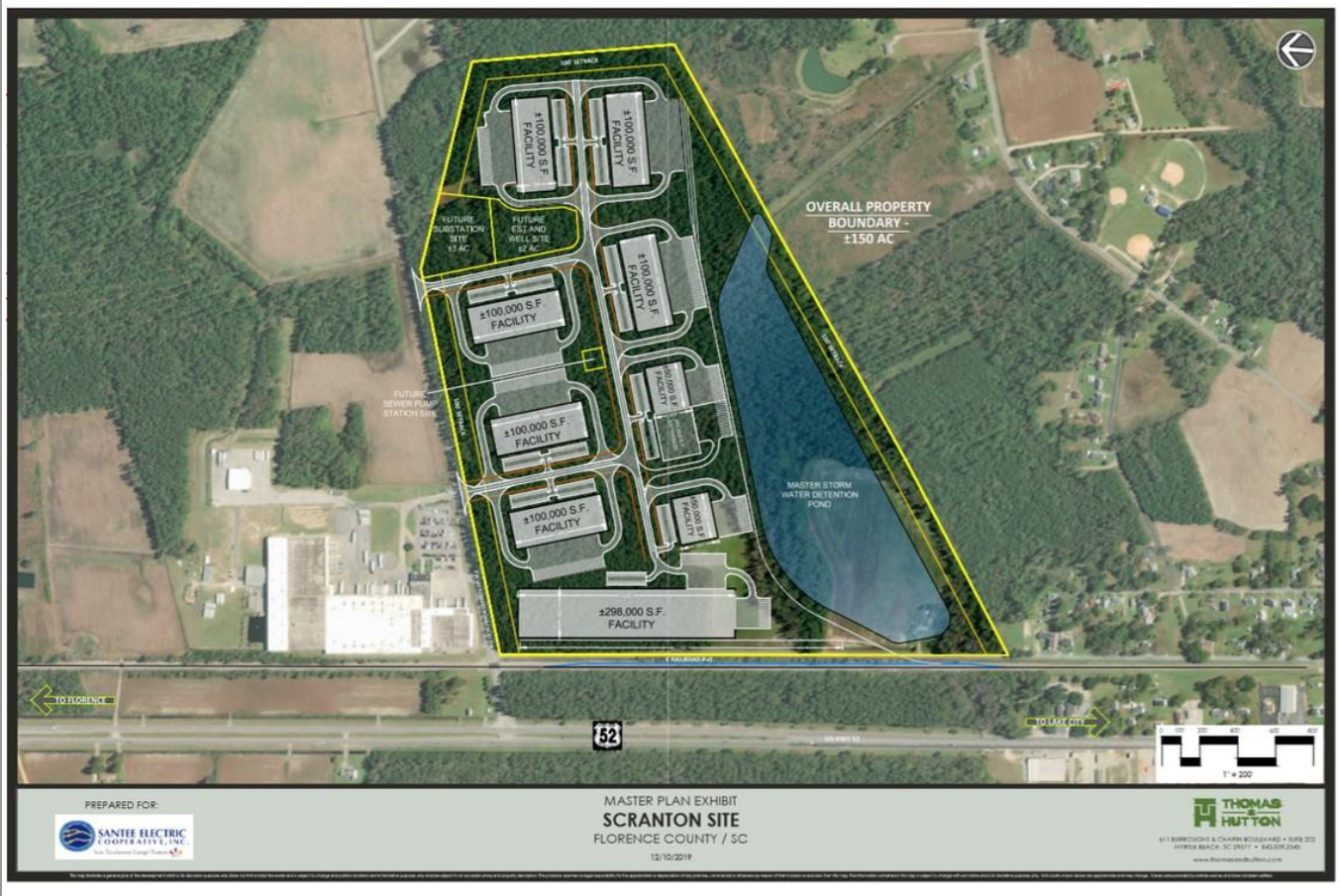
The Lake City Commerce Center is located less than one mile east of four-lane U.S. Highways 52 and less than one mile west of four-lane U.S. Highway 378 - which connects directly to Interstate 95. These major thoroughfares provide quick and easy access to the rest of Florence County and beyond. The 112-acre fully served park is located in an Opportunity Zone. Currently located in the park is Carbon Conversions, a carbon fiber recycling operation that has 40 employees. The front of the park lends well to commercial businesses and is home to Palmetto Printing and Lake City Family Dentistry.





Scranton Industrial Park

This 150-acre rail-served Class A industrial park is a one of its kind asset in northeastern South Carolina and is being marketed to industrial prospects who are interested in becoming part of a dynamic community. With no jurisdictional wetlands nor any other impediments to development, the park offers a variety of site configurations to meet the demands of its end-users. Located strategically on U.S. 52, a four lane highway leading directly to the port terminal in Charleston, the park offers logistical and workforce advantages more economically than parks located in metro areas. Currently, significant site work is underway at the Scranton Industrial Park. Site clearing and grubbing, water and wastewater extensions, roadway extension, the addition of a 180GPM on-site wastewater pump station and two 100,000SF spec building pads are all set to be complete by the end of this calendar year.





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Programs, Opportunities, and Agencies available to support Existing Industry in Florence County

The Florence County Economic Development Partnership also offers many opportunities to existing industries in Florence County. These include National, State, and Local programs listed below are featured in a guide from the Florence County Economic Development Partnership recently created as a guide to educate and inform about the following programs and incentives:

Opportunity	Type of Program
US Small Business Administration	Business Support
SC Manufacturing Extension Partnership	Business Support
SourceSC	Business Support
North Eastern Strategic Alliance	Business Support
SC Department of Commerce Recycling Program	Business Support
Florence Darlington Technical College	Workforce Assistance
Apprenticeship Carolina	Workforce Assistance
Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing & Technology	Workforce Assistance
The Continuum	Workforce Assistance
Francis Marion University	Workforce Assistance
readySC	Workforce Assistance
SC Works	Workforce Assistance
Tallo	Workforce Assistance
EZone	Workforce Assistance
SC Future Makers	Workforce Assistance
South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce	Workforce Assistance
South Carolina Department of Commerce	Expansion Resources



Opportunity	Type of Program
South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA) / SC Launch	Expansion Resources
U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration	Expansion Resources
JEDA	Expansion Resources
CSX	Logistics
SC Ports Authority	Logistics



McCall Farms. Photo from FCEDP.



COMMUNITY FACILITIES



Florence County has a multitude of facilities throughout the County that are comprised of infrastructure, public safety facilities, civic uses, recreation uses, educational facilities, and medical uses. These are spread throughout the County and offer citizens and visitors vast choices.

Infrastructure

Water and Sewer infrastructure throughout Florence County is comprised of water systems, wastewater systems, streets, and drainage. While the transportation network will be detailed in the Transportation section of this report, it is important to note that the vast majority of water and wastewater systems are supported by the municipalities within Florence County. They do provide opportunities for growth and development throughout the county as development needs continue to require these services. Where and how Florence County grows and develops will be determined not only by market forces, but also by development constraints such as environmental resources, floodplains, and availability of utilities. Florence County must work with the municipalities to ensure that utilities and public facilities have the capacity to serve both existing developed areas and new growth and development.

Public Safety

Florence County boasts a high performing and technically advanced group of public safety teams throughout Florence County. These include:

Florence County Emergency Management Department

This department is responsible for coordination and operation of a county-wide, multi-hazard disaster preparedness program; public safety and general government radio communications services; and E-911 network services. FCEMD receives thousands of calls each month.

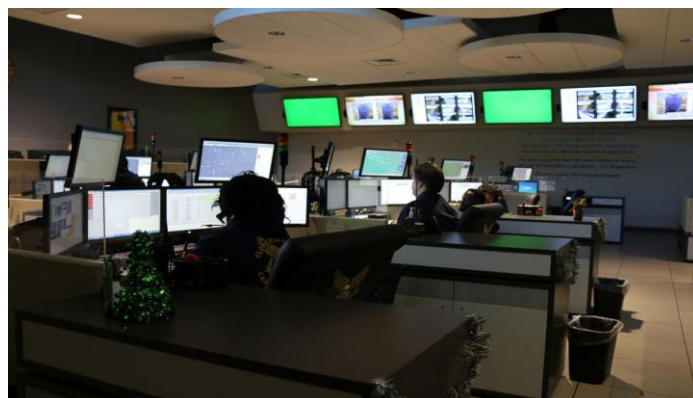


Photo from Florenceco.org.



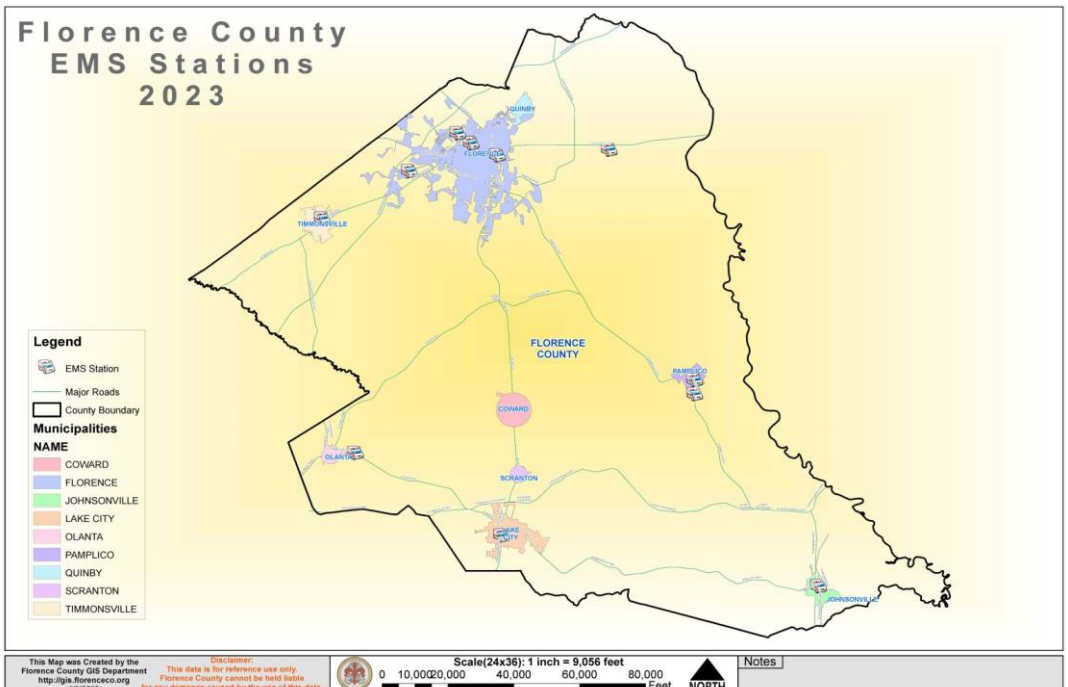
Emergency Medical Services

24,000 Responses to Incidents in 2020

With seven EMS Stations across Florence County, Florence County EMS responded to over 24,000 incidents in 2020.



Photo from Florenceco.org.





Sheriff's Office

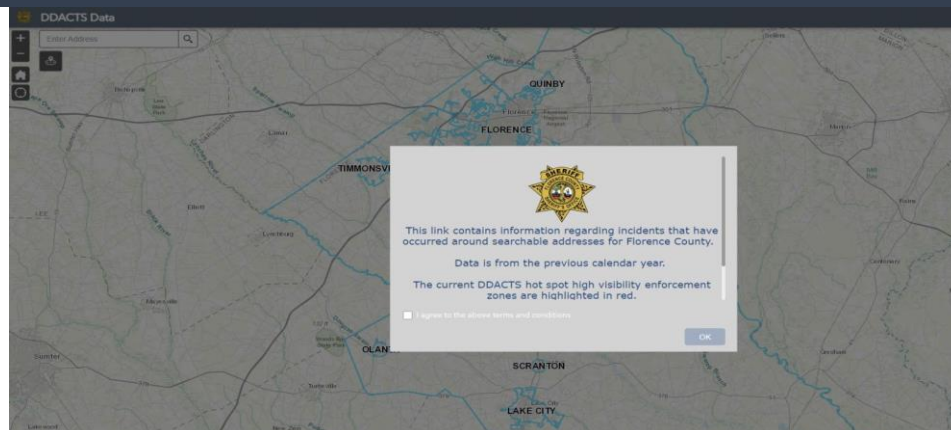
The Florence County Sheriff's Office, the largest department in County government, includes divisions focused on investigations, patrol, special operations, special services, and a detention center. They are focused on the safety of the County and feature an online mapping system to track activity from the previous year.



Photo from Florence County Sheriff's Office.

According to a recent article by WMBF, this system is an operational model that uses the integration to effectively place law enforcement across the county. DDACTS places an emphasis on being present, but not necessarily giving tickets. The plan is that if a law enforcement officer is present in hot spot locations that it will ultimately reduce bad driving behavior and criminal activity.

Florence County DDACTS System





Fire Protection

7

Fire Districts in Florence County



In addition to municipal fire departments within Florence County and other special purpose Fire Districts, the Unified Fire District Board consists of seven fire departments serving areas within Florence County. Council created the Florence County Fire Unified Protection District in 2014, which accomplishes three important goals. First, the new fire protection district ensures stringent physical responsibility and then equalizes taxation throughout the district by charging a uniform millage for fire protection. Most importantly, the new district adequately funds the departments providing this vital service to its citizens ensuring the firefighters are well trained, properly equipped, and meet state and national standards for fire protection. Florence County Fire covers 630.3 square miles with a population of 83,606 served by these 7 districts. This includes 32 fire stations and a total of 353 career and volunteer firefighters. These departments operate 43 engines, 31 tankers, 9 ladder trucks, and 10 rescue trucks. They also have 13 brush trucks and 34 support vehicles for a total of 130 pieces of apparatus in the fleet. The 2022-2023 budget for the fire protection district is over \$8 million. In 2022, the district answered 6,361 emergency calls.

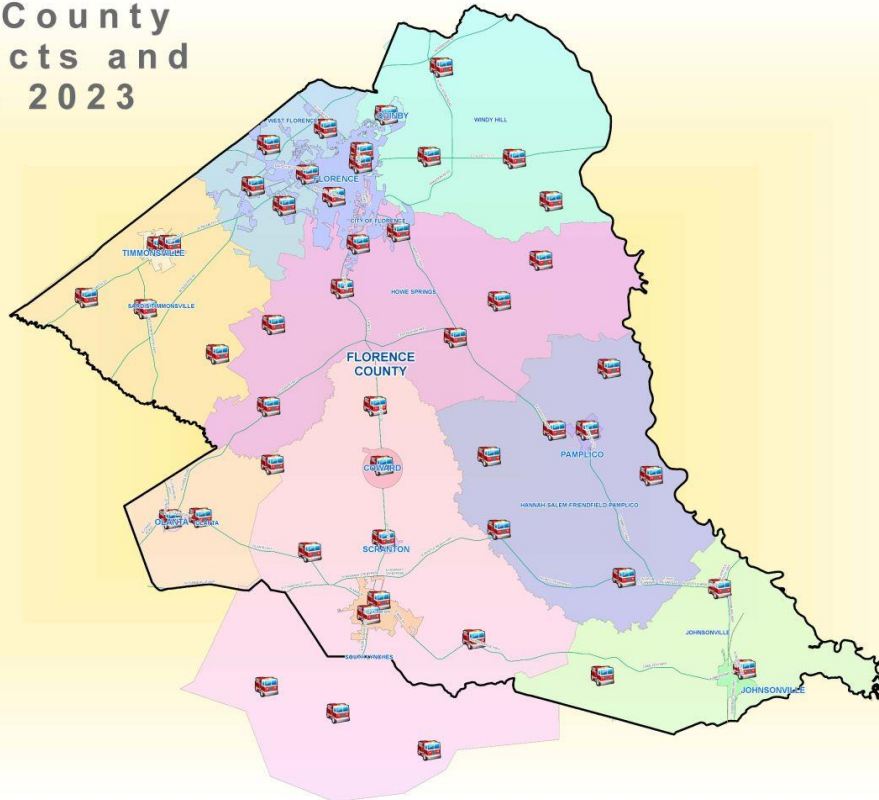
Fire Department	ISO Rating
Olanta Rural Fire Department	4
West Florence Rural Volunteer Fire Department	3
Windy Hill Volunteer Fire Company	3
Hannah Salem-Friendfield Fire Protection District, Inc	4
Sardis-Timmons ville Rural Fire Department	5
Howe Springs Volunteer Fire Company, Inc	4
Johnsonville Fire Department, Inc	3

Ratings are determined by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) ranging from 1 (best) to 10 (worst). ISO measures the quality of fire protection on which insurance premiums are based. The ISO protection classification ratings can result in lowered insurance rates for homeowners and business owners. Very few non-municipal fire departments can achieve a rating higher than 3 and it is important to note that this rating is not the full measure of the effectiveness of a fire department. Municipal fire departments within Florence County maintain higher ISO ratings due to a variety of factors.



Florence County Fire Districts and Stations 2023

- Legend**
- Fire Stations
 - Fire Districts**
 - Name**
 - CITY OF FLORENCE
 - CITY OF LAKE CITY
 - HANNAH SALEM FRIENDFIELD PAMPLICO
 - HOWE SPRINGS
 - JOHNSONVILLE
 - OLANTA
 - SARDIS-TIMMONSVILLE
 - SOUTH LYNCHES
 - WEST FLORENCE
 - WINDY HILL
 - Major Roads
 - County Boundary
 - Municipalities**
 - NAME**
 - COWARD
 - FLORENCE
 - JOHNSONVILLE
 - LAKE CITY
 - OLANTA
 - PAMPLICO
 - QUINBY
 - SCRANTON
 - TIMMONSVILLE



This Map was Created by the
Florence County GIS Department
<http://gis.florenceco.org>
1/3/2023

Disclaimer:
This data is for reference use only.
Florence County cannot be held liable
for any damages caused by the use of this data.



Scale(24x36): 1 inch = 9,890 feet
0 11,250 22,500 45,000 67,500 90,000 Feet NORTH

Notes

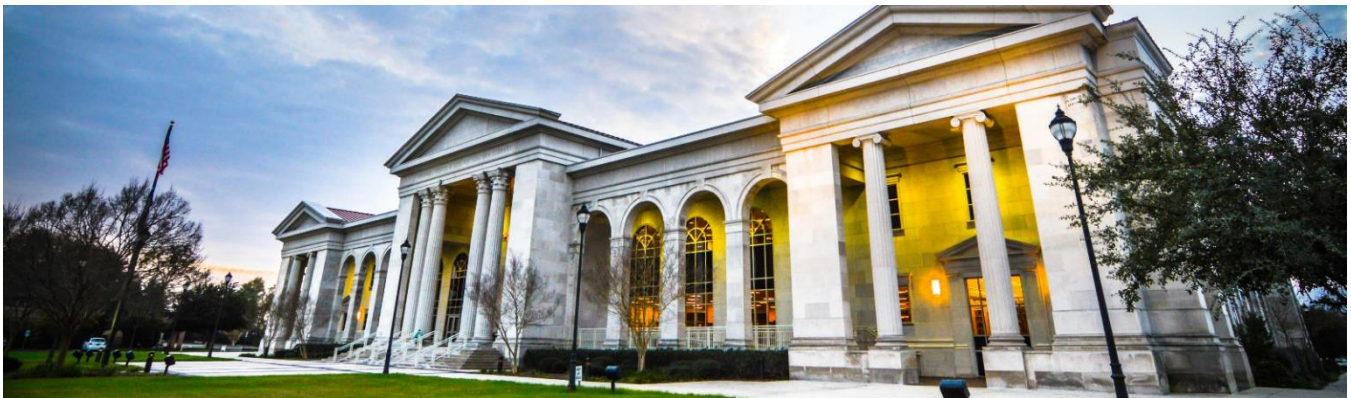


Civic

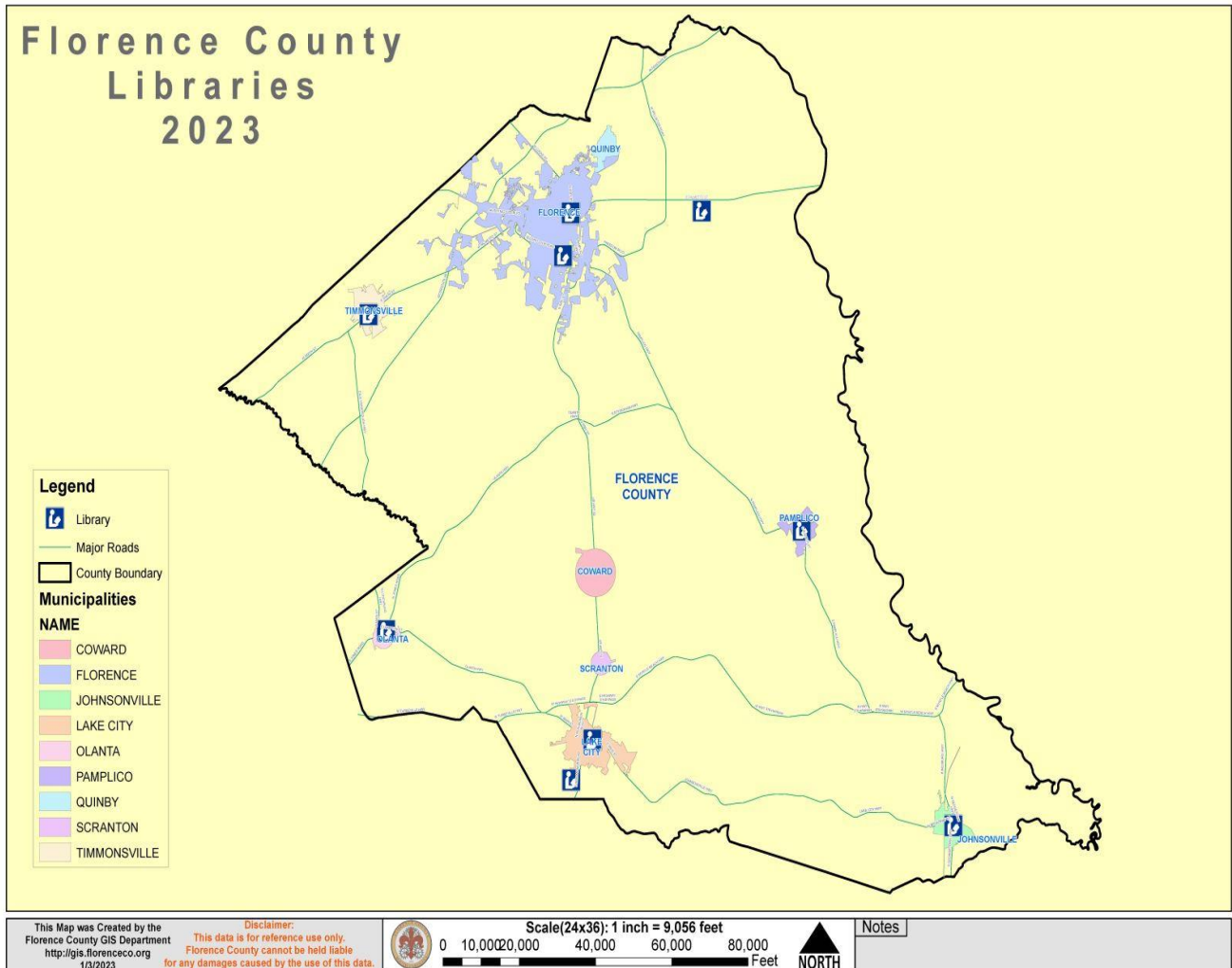
Florence County can attribute a great deal of civic pride to the numerous public facilities that operate within its jurisdiction. Many of these facilities are located within and operated by municipalities. Florence County also owns and maintains many facilities, some of which are discussed in other sections of this report. While the list could be endless, this report will focus on the library system.

Libraries

Florence County is home to a library system headquartered at the Doctors Bruce and Lee Foundation Library. With its exquisite architecture and unrivaled collection for the region, this building features 82,000 square feet with meeting rooms, public computer terminals, and a South Carolina history room. Opened in 2005, it became the capstone of the library system supporting 5 additional branch libraries throughout the County. All of these branches are also modern, easily accessible, and feature large collections in their own right. Florence County residents have access to libraries that meet all modern library standards that rival those of any county in South Carolina.



Doctors Bruce and Lee Foundation Library. Photo by Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce.





Recreation

Florence County Parks and Recreation operates numerous facilities and events throughout the year that contribute to the quality of life in Florence County. While many some of these facilities will be discussed in greater detail in the Natural Resources element, it is important to note the vast array of recreation options in Florence County, including:

- Athletics: Baseball, Softball, Miracle League, ESPORTS, Football, Soccer, Volleyball, Basketball, Tennis, Cheerleading, Tumbling, Karate Classes
- Senior Programming: Computer Classes, Arts & Crafts, Exercise Classes, Bingo, Movies, Line Dancing, Card Games, Crocheting, Senior Trips
- Lynches River County Park: Summer Camp, 1st Saturday Programming For Families, Wild Weekends, Archery Clinics, Moonlight Kayak/Canoe Trips, Paws On The Pad
- Department Events: Wildlife Winterfest, River Jamboree, Creepy Critters Sleepover, Tails & Trails, The Golden Wedding, Volunteer Banquet, Senior Games, Fishing Derby, and more



Photo from Florenceco.org.

By the Numbers

Florence County can boast over 5,000 children participate in sports annually, including the newest E-Sports, a new way for kids to participate in an alternative to traditional sports. The County also organized 54 trips in 2019 covering over 29,000 miles for senior citizens. This is a terrific way to get seniors involved in the community with active programming. Lynches River County Park, which will be highlighted in the Natural Resources Element, has over 77,000 visitors annually with over 4 miles of nature trails, 182 nightly cabin rentals, and nearly 300 overnight campground visits. This facility generates over \$80,000 in revenue annually. These are just some of the statistics that Florence County Parks and Recreation claims annually.



Photo from Florenceco.org.

Facilities

Florence County maintains over 900 acres of park space, 51 athletic fields, 1 splash pad, 1 gymnasium, 1 climbing wall, 10 tennis courts, 19 picnic shelters, 1 archery range, 16 playgrounds, 2 football fields, 2 boat landings, 1 disc golf course, and 2 canoe/kayak launch areas. This is a tremendous amount of property to maintain and market programming for in the County. The County has undertaken a comprehensive study of their programming and facilities to be ready for review soon.



900

Outdoor acreage in the County's Park System

Florence County's parkland inventory continues to grow to better serve residents. These parks offer many different types of amenities including trails, interactive nature, kayak and canoe launch sites, as well as campgrounds and cabins. These are integral parts of connecting Florence County residents with the beauty found in its natural resources. It is vital for Parks and Recreation to continue to be well funded to support this system and continue the programming it offers to County residents.



Photo from Florenceco.org.



Education

Florence County is home to a multitude of educational facilities from preschool to higher education. There are five public K-12 school districts, one university, one technical college, and many private schools. All of these provide services for Florence County residents and many bring residents from surrounding counties to Florence County on a daily basis.

School or District	Classification
Florence School District 1 - Florence	Public, K-12
Florence School District 2 - Pamplico	Public, K-12
Florence School District 3 - Coward, Lake City, Olanta, Scranton	Public, K-12
Florence School District 4 - Timmonsville	Public, K-12
Florence School District 5 - Johnsonville	Public, K-12
All Saints' Episcopal Day School	Private, K-6
Faith Christian Academy	Private, K-12
The Carolina Academy	Private, K-12
Florence Christian School	Private, K-12
Highland Park Kindergarten	Private, K
The King's Academy	Private, K-12
Montessori School of Florence	Private, K-6
St. Anthony Catholic School	Private, K-8

Note: K is representative of Kindergarten, which starts at earlier ages for some programs.

170

Degree Programs Offered in Florence County



With 75 degree programs, **Francis Marion University** is one of South Carolina's 13 state-supported universities making its home in Florence County. FMU's campus is just over 300 acres and offers students opportunities in many fields of study across a vast array of undergraduate and graduate programs. It rests on the east side of Florence County.

Florence-Darlington Technical College provides degree and certificate programs to students with the goal of creating graduates that can become highly marketable in the economic climate of Florence County. Florence-Darlington Technical College includes the Leatherman Advanced Manufacturing Center and the Gould Incubator at the Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing and Technology (SiMT).

The Continuum is a regional center for education and training in innovative and technical skills and workforce development, created through the collaboration between The Darla Moore Foundation, Florence-Darlington Technical College and Francis Marion University.

Constructed in 2010, the **Kenneth Shuler School of Cosmetology** is a professional cosmetology and esthetics program designed to train students in hairdressing and other disciplines. They are located on Highway 52 in Northern Florence County.



Francis Marion University
Photo by FMU.



Florence-Darlington Technical College

Photo by FDTC.



The Continuum in Lake City.

Photo by The Continuum.



Kenneth Shuler School of Cosmetology Graduation.

Photo by Kenneth Shuler.



Medical

Florence County is home to two major medical systems that support the region as well as the County. The first is **McLeod Health**. According to Florence County's website, McLeod Regional Medical serves the health care needs of Florence and Northeast South Carolina. The level of medical expertise and technology at this facility is on a par with the country's leading medical institutions. McLeod is a 331 bed referral and reaching medical complex on a 75-acre campus, designated as the regional neonatal and trauma center. Today, McLeod serves as the regional referral center for 12 counties in southeastern South Carolina. McLeod's neonatal intensive care unit is among the Southeast's finest.



McLeod Health

Photo by McLeod Health.

The second is the **Florence Medical Center of MUSC Health**. The County website states that the Florence Medical Center is a leading regional acute care facility consisting of 396 patient beds, 1,500 employees, and more than 425 physicians representing all primary specialties. Part of the Medical University of South Carolina Health family, a nationally recognized and respected academic medical institution located in Charleston, South Carolina.



Florence Medical Center

Photo by MUSC.



Rendering of new Facility prior to Construction by MUSC.

Although not directly in Florence County, MUSC Health has a new facility near Lake City in northern Williamsburg County. This is bringing a vast new network of health care resources and capabilities to the region to serve the residents in southern Florence County.

The 63,500-square-foot hospital replaces two medical facilities including the Lake City Community Hospital and the Williamsburg Regional Hospital.

Named **Black River Medical Center**, it is slated to open January 2023. This new state of the art medical facility was made possible by the collaborative effort of Florence and Williamsburg Counties. The two communities had separate hospitals, one in Lake City and one in Kingstree. Merging the two hospitals and partnering with MUSC will provide medical care with the most up to date equipment and facility to the residents in the Lake City region.



TRANSPORTATION

Florence County has an extensive and impressive transportation network composed of roads, an airport, rail, and a transit system that make it a hub for the entire Pee Dee Region. Its proximity to the inland port in Dillon County is also an asset.

Roads

Florence County has a long standing history of supporting and funding transportation projects throughout Florence County. From FLATS to the Capital Project Sales Tax, the County is involved in transportation planning at all levels and modes. While FLATS (Florence Area Transportation Study) is responsible for transportation planning in portions of Florence County and prepares independent planning documents including the LRTP (Long Range Transportation Plan) and TIP (Transportation Improvement Program), it is important to highlight transportation planning features as part of this plan for the FLATS area and other non-FLATS areas in Florence County.



58,000+

**Annual Average Daily Traffic
Along I-95 in 2019**

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) measures the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) along its system. The highest traffic counts in Florence County in 2019 were along I-95, with over 58,000 vehicles a day measured near I-20. AADT has increased over time, but numbers for 2020 may see a slight decrease due to the pandemic. Other roadways with the highest traffic counts were I-20, 52, 51, 76, 378, and 301.



About FLATS



As a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) is a process by which local officials and citizens have input in the expenditure of transportation funds within the urban area of Florence, South Carolina. Any major road project or transit project that takes place in this area using federal funds must be considered and approved by the FLATS Policy Committee.

The FLATS Policy Committee consists of representatives from the State Legislature, members of Florence County Council and Florence City Council, and the Mayor of the Town of Quinby. Any projects that come before the FLATS Policy Committee are first examined by the FLATS Study Team, which consists of technical representatives from various agencies and departments in the area. The recommendations provided by the FLATS Study Team are then passed on to the FLATS Policy Committee for consideration. Projects approved by the FLATS Policy Committee are then listed in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Efforts are made to give the public an opportunity to have input in the transportation planning process. A wide range of people, including agencies, community groups, individuals, and the media, are notified of the meetings. The Florence County Planning Department provides the staff work for FLATS and is available to assist the public with transportation questions.

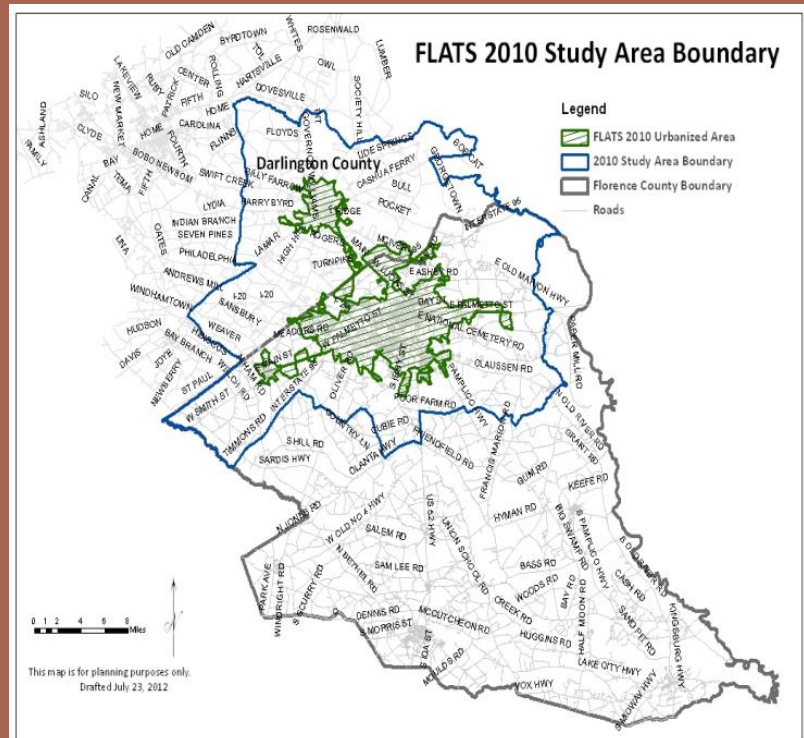


FLATS Study Area

The FLATS urbanized area consists of the City of Florence, Town of Quinby, City of Darlington, Town of Timmonsville and portions of Florence and Darlington counties. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations require all urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more to create an MPO. Each MPO must develop a cooperative, comprehensive and continuing transportation planning process in order to qualify for Federal funding for transportation projects within the FLATS Study Area Boundary. In addition to others, there are three primary responsibilities of an MPO: 1)

Develop and maintain a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which is, at a minimum, a 25-year transportation vision for the planning area; and 2) Develop and maintain a financially constrained Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is the agreed upon list of specific projects for which federal funds are anticipated; and 3) Develop and maintain a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which identifies the annual transportation planning activities that are to be undertaken in support of goals, objectives and actions established in the LRTP. The above referenced documents are periodically corrected or amended. Opportunities for public input are advertised and public comments are actively solicited for each. The federal funds utilized for Guideshare projects in the TIP Financial Plan are allocated through the most current Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) Bill/Law approved by the U.S. Congress.

To view the TIP, LRTP, and other FLATS documents, visit: <http://florenceco.org/offices/planning/flats/>



Other Areas



Florence County is home to many roads and corridors not in the FLATS study area. These are accounted for in the Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments (PDCOG) Rural Transportation Planning Efforts. These efforts outline Counties in the Pee Dee area, with the most recent plan programming \$9 million in funding in Florence County over the next five years in the following projects:

Florence	Intersection Improvement SC 327 (Francis Marion Rd) & S-57 (Old River Rd) at Claussen Rd P028486
	Intersection Improvement S-21-13 (E National Cemetary Rd) & Paper Mill Rd (S-21-24)
	Intersection Improvement SC 403 (N Bethel Rd), SC 341 (Olanta Hwy), & S-24-56 (Camp Branch Rd)

To view more about these projects, visit:

https://www.peedeecog.org/planning_community___economic_development_/planning/transportation.php

Sidewalks and Complete Streets

While FLATS handles multiple modes of transportation, including sidewalks, it is important to discuss this on a County level as all of Florence County has some existing sidewalks and continues to desire improvements. The County has made significant strides in sidewalk improvements to the sidewalk network that it has steadily been working to expand through the completion. Many of the existing sidewalks within the County are found within residential neighborhoods and along commercial corridors. Several major commercial corridors have continuous sidewalks to connect businesses or to connect transit stops. However, several older areas, especially older residential neighborhoods also do not have sidewalks. As Florence County continues to grow, it can explore alternative funding to retrofit sidewalks in areas where they do not exist and continue to support development efforts for placing sidewalks in new construction. Sidewalks are also part of Complete Streets. The guidance below from SCDOT explains how funding for walking, bicycling, and transit will be accommodated based on project type:



Program Category	Funding for Walking Accommodations	Funding for Bicycling Accommodations	Funding for Transit Accommodations
Safety ¹	Included with Project	Included with Project	Included with Project
Interstate Preventive Maintenance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Interstate Capacity	Included with Project for impacted crossing routes and consideration given for major river crossings	Included with Project for impacted crossing routes and consideration given for major river crossings	Included with Project for impacted crossing routes
Interstate Interchange	Included with Project	Included with Project	Included with Project
Bridge Replacement	Included with Project	Included with Project	Included with Project
Off System Bridge Replacement	Included with Project	Included with Project	Included with Project
Pavement Improvement ²	SCDOT-approved pavement markings and signage can be included with Project to enhance safety.	Included with Project	SCDOT-approved pavement markings and signage can be included with Project to enhance safety.
Statewide MPO and COG Widening	Included with Project	Included with Project	Included with Project
CMAQ	Included with Project	Included with Project	Included with Project
Locally Funded ³	Included with Project	Included with Project	Included with Project
CTC Projects	Included with Project	Included with Project	Included with Project

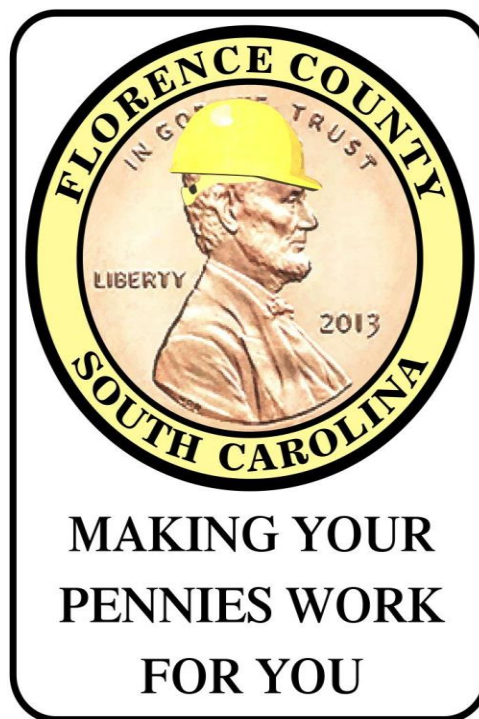
1. Safety projects may not always be appropriate for the inclusion of walking, bicycling, and transit accommodations due to the limited and targeted scope of these projects. Walking, bicycling, and transit accommodations will be included when the scope and context of the safety project is conducive to implementation of these accommodations.
2. Reference the SCDOT Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan for guidance on accessible walking accommodations and Engineering Directive 22 for guidance on bicycling accommodations as part of pavement improvement projects.
3. Local Option Sales Tax projects will be in accordance with the referendum for projects authorized by the voters if implemented prior to the effective date of this Departmental Directive. For projects authorized after the effective date of this Departmental Directive, accommodations for walking, bicycling, and transit that are within the project scope are expected to comply with the MPO/COG plans.



Capital Project Sales Tax

The Capital Project Sales Tax is a renewal of the existing 1-cent local option sales tax and provides funding for the design, engineering, construction, and improvement of highways, roads, streets, drainage systems and/or bridges, improve traffic flow into and through Florence County, facilitate economic development, promote public safety, promote desirable living conditions, provide improved recreational facilities, promote public health and safety in the event of fire, emergency, panic and other dangers and meet present and future needs of Florence County and its citizens. To view current projects, visit <http://florenceco.org/road-projects>. In the newest approval, there are 289 projects.

All three CPST funding rounds total approximately \$400,000,000 and consist of sidewalk & road projects, fire and EMS stations, park expansions and recreational opportunities, radio upgrades, a new communication tower, voter system improvements, water and sewer upgrades for municipalities, hydrants, coroner's office and morgue improvements, Sheriff's Office Improvements, drainage improvements, and funding allocated to each municipality in Florence County.



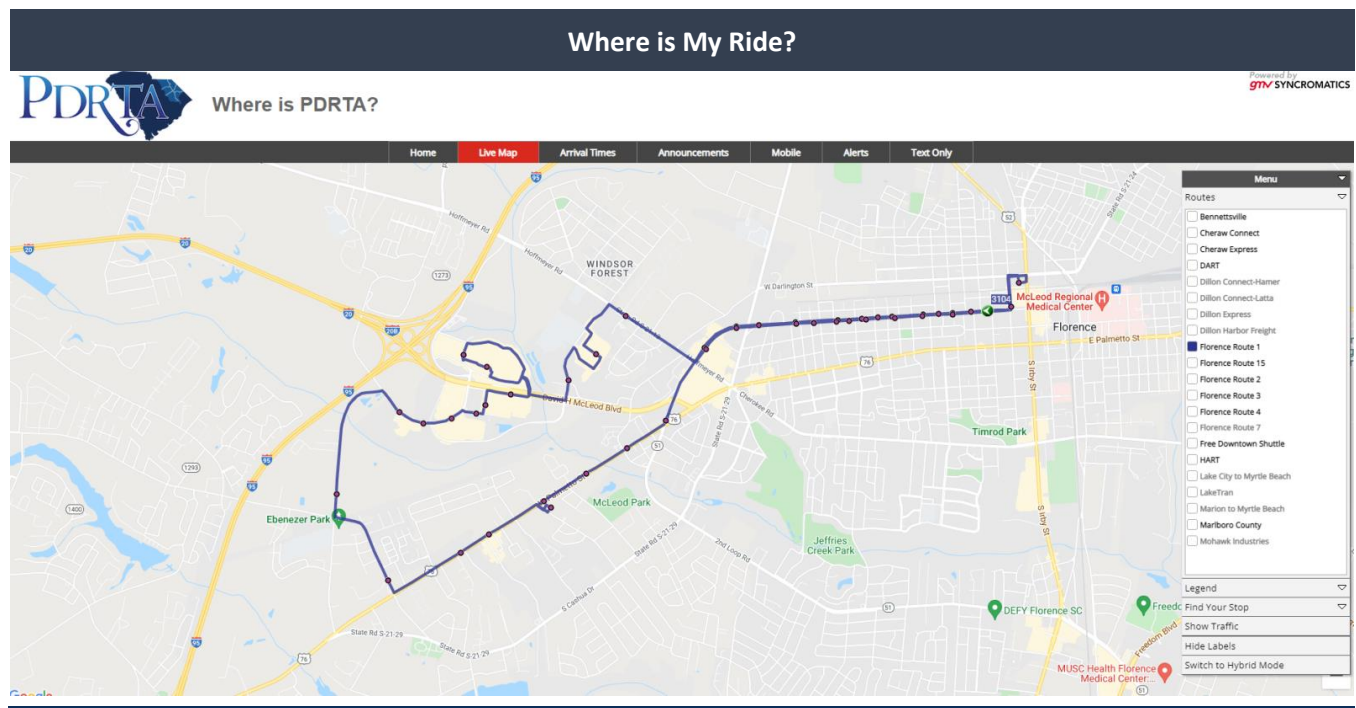


Transit

PDRTA (Pee Dee Regional Transit Authority) serves several Pee Dee Counties, including Florence. Formed in 1974, they were the first Regional Transportation Authority formed in the state of South Carolina. Within 2 years, they began serving the six counties that make up the Pee Dee region – Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion, and Marlboro. They focus on access to transportation in several areas including paratransit, fixed route service, and job access among others. They have also developed a *Where is PDRTA?* Interactive Map to help riders locate their ride. That website is featured on the PDRTA website, but also as a standalone feature here: <https://whereispdrta.com/map> as well as a mobile app, which is the most widely used version of this tool.



PDRTA Bus at the Library
Photo from PDRTA.





Airports

The South Carolina Aeronautics Commission lists eight airports in Florence County. These include private, single aircraft sites across the County. However, there are three airports that are larger and serve a greater population of aircraft.

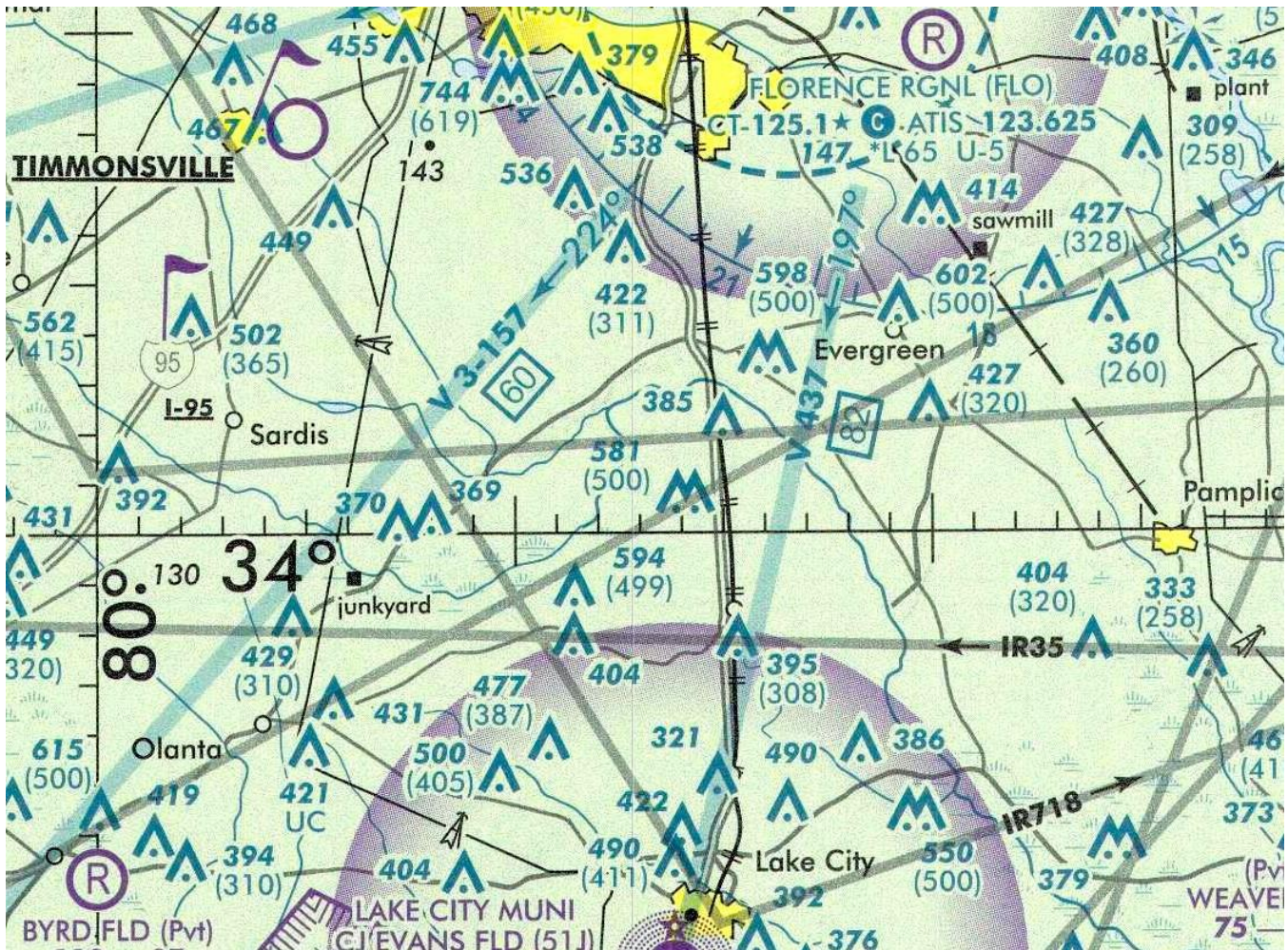
The corporate powers and duties of the Pee Dee Regional Airport District are exercised and performed through the Pee Dee Regional Airport Authority. The Authority has nine members; two members are nominated to represent the City of Florence, three members are nominated by Florence County, and two members are nominated each by Marion and Dillon Counties. Upon nomination, the Governor reviews the nomination and typically appoints the member to serve a four-year term on the Authority. Each Authority member may serve two four-year terms until replaced by another.



Photo by Florence Regional Airport.

The creation of the **Florence Regional Airport** began in 1928 when local leaders purchase 300 acres of land for the purpose of developing an Airport. With the onset of World War II, the War Department acquired an additional 1,400 acres and used the site as an Army Air Corps training base. During the war years, P-39 Aircobra, P-40 Warhawk, Pursuit/Fighter aircraft, and A-20 Havoc and A-26 Marauder light attack/bomber aircraft crews and support personnel trained here. Following the war, the property was deeded back to the City of Florence and later split with Florence County. The Florence City-County Airport Commission governed the Airport until the state legislature created the Pee Dee Regional Airport District in 1999. The Airport District is a political subdivision of the State of South Carolina and encompasses Dillon, Florence and Marion Counties.

The other two airports that serve a greater population and multiple aircraft include the **Lake City Municipal CJ Evans Field** and **Huggins Memorial** in Timmonsville.



Map of Airports provided by South Carolina Aeronautics Commission.



Rail

75

At Grade Railroad Crossings in Florence County

The railroad network in and around Florence County forms one of the key modes of transportation for the movement of goods. Florence County has CSX, Amtrak, and the South Carolina Central Railroad.

Due to its proximity to the Port of Charleston and Inland Port in Dillon, the region has emerged as a key logistics area for the transport of goods throughout the region and to points beyond. Large logistics facilities surge in this region as the efficient flow of goods and freight helps support the regional and national economy. Railroads are one of the most economical modes of transporting goods. The existing railroad network within the County includes 75 at grade rail crossings. This represents not only a vast rail network within Florence County, but also presents a safety problem with vehicle crossings. Continued awareness and safety discussions of how to navigate at grade crossings can be a goal for the County to continue, especially with younger drivers who may not be aware of how to safely navigate these situations. These crossings also inhibit emergency vehicles when stops are frequent and long. The County and CSX both continue to seek solutions.



The Great American Stations: Florence County Rail



The Amtrak station in Florence was constructed in 1996 by CSX as a replacement for the historic depot that sits right beside it. The old building, constructed in 1910 by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, was once served by six tracks with eight raised concrete platforms. Today, only one passenger track remains in place. Both depots, old and new, are owned by the McLeod Regional Medical Center, though the former is used as office space by the hospital. The current buff brick station is smaller and less grandiose than its historic counterpart, but it has delicate white brackets and well-kept landscaping.

Florence was part of the original townships laid out by the Lords Proprietors of Carolina in 1719, but the town remained thinly populated until Florence became a railroad terminal at the juncture of three lines. Florence's railroads were busy during the Civil War, transporting troops, artillery and supplies as they made their way through Florence and onto Richmond, Charleston and Savannah. The railroad carried wounded Confederate soldiers to Florence's Wayside Hospital, and brought captured Union soldiers to the Florence Stockade.

After the war, Florence prospered through its railroad, importing cotton, timber and tobacco toward the turn of the century. During the 1940s, Florence was the largest rail station in South Carolina, with 14 passenger trains serving the station every day. Florence became a major medical center during the 20th century, which helps explain the train station's ownership.

Other than its medical importance, Florence is famous for its trail system, the War Between the States Museum, Timrod Park, and the Florence Little Theater. The Florence County Museum features several distinctive rotating exhibits highlighting the area's rich artistic, cultural and historic heritage. Each fall, the town hosts the popular South Carolina Pecan Festival, which includes live music, food and craft vendors, amusement rides and other activities. Downtown has been undergoing significant revitalization to include the rehabilitation of historic structures and construction of new buildings that will house offices, commercial space and apartments.

Information provided from The Great American Stations Project.



Motor Vehicle Safety

Florence County manages the local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). While the MPO covers a multitude of topics and goals, one crucial to the system is Highway Safety Targets. Transit agencies are required to set fiscal year performance measures to improve the public transportation safety. Highway Safety Targets are set each year. These targets cover a five-year rolling average. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) reviews these targets yearly to determine if the states are meeting the targets or are making significant progress towards the set goals. The target categories that are being monitored are Fatalities, Fatality Rate, Number of Serious Injuries, Serious Injury Rate, and Number of Non-Motorized/ Serious Injuries. Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) works with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) in setting performance targets by planning for and programming safety aspects into each project. Calculating performance measures helps the transit agencies to quantify their safety risk and set targets that support local prioritization. The most recent safety targets were adopted on January 24, 2022 and are scheduled to be updated annually.

	Traffic Fatalities	Fatality Rate*	Severe Injuries	Severe Injury Rate*	Non-motorized
SC Baseline (2015-2019)	1005.8	1.821	2966.6	5.378	413.4
SC Targets (2017-2021)	1005.0	1.760	2950.0	5.350	440.0
FLATS Baseline (2015-2019)	32.0 20.0	1.934	70.4	4.240	16.2

**Per 100 million vehicle miles traveled*



NATURAL RESOURCES

Florence County has a vast system of natural resources that are made up of passive rivers, streams, and open space as well as organized parks and recreation facilities. Some details of those facilities are described in the Community Facilities element. Others are described below.



139,000

**Acres covered by water in
Florence County**

Florence County is also rich in water resources. Florence County has over 139,000 acres covered by water. These water sources include rivers, creeks, ponds, and streams. The most recently completed Comprehensive Plan prior to this effort includes an extremely detailed list of water features including the following:

Rivers

- Great Pee Dee River: This River forms the eastern border of Florence County and runs in a southeastern direction. This is the larger of the two rivers associated with the County and has a drainage area over most of the northeast portion of Florence County.
- Lynches River: Lynches River enters the County on the west near Cartersville and runs through the middle and southeast parts of the County. Its boundaries merge with the Great Pee Dee River in the southeastern corner of the County.

Lakes and Ponds

- Forest Lake: Located off of West Palmetto Street
- Lazar Lake: Situated between Second Loop Road and Jeffries Creek
- Lynches Lake: Located between Lake City and Johnsonville
- Lake Oakdale: Located northwest of Interstate 95 in the Oakdale community
- Freedom Florence Pond: Located off of SC 51 near Jefferies Creek
- McLeod Park Pond: Located off of US 76 at David McLeod Park
- Muldrows Mill Pond: Located south of the City of Florence near US 52
- Quinby Pond: Located on King Road
- Lake City Park Pond



Wetlands

Wetlands cover a large part of Florence County. These areas create a number of outdoor activities including fishing, hunting, boating, wildlife observation, natural studies, swimming, camping, and hiking. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “Inland wetlands are most common on floodplains along rivers and streams, in isolated depressions surrounded by dry land, along the margins of lakes and ponds, and in other low-lying areas where the groundwater intercepts the soil surface or where precipitation sufficiently saturates the soil”. Florence County wetlands may include marshes and wet meadows with herbaceous plants, swamps dominated by shrubs, and wooded swamps with trees as described by the EPA. These areas are abundant in undisturbed plant and animal life with some of the species found being rare and endangered.

Swamps

- Back Swamp: Traces a portion of the northern County line abutting Darlington County
- Big Swamp: Runs parallel with a portion of SC 51 near the Pamplico area
- Deep Hole Swamp: Located in Cartersville
- Douglas Swamp: Located in the Motts area, southwest of Olanta
- Lake Swamp: Situated between Timmonsville and Effingham
- Little Swamp: Located near the Pee Dee River in the southeastern part of the County
- Long Branch Swamp: Runs along the southern portion of the County line and borders Williamsburg County
- Middle Swamp: Located southwest of the City of Florence
- Polk Swamp: Located in the northeast part of Florence County
- Sparrow Swamp: Situated south of Timmonsville
- Snow’s Island: Located in the southeastern most tip of the County near Johnsonville

Branches

- Alligator Branch: Located between US 52 and Savannah Grove Road
- Barfields Old Mill Branch: Located northeast of Pamplico
- Bay Branch: Located in the Cartersville Township, west of Timmonsville
- Big Branch: Located near Danwood
- Bigham Branch: Located north of Pamplico
- Boggy Branch: Located in the northeast part of County
- Bullock Branch: Located southeast of Pamplico
- Bushy Branch: Runs through Olanta and into Douglas Swamp, just south of Olanta
- Camp Branch: Runs along Highway 403, towards Lake City
- Cane Branch: Located in the north central part of County
- Claussen Branch: Located in the northeast part of County
- Gum Branch: Located on Cane Branch Road
- Long Branch: Located in the northeast part of County



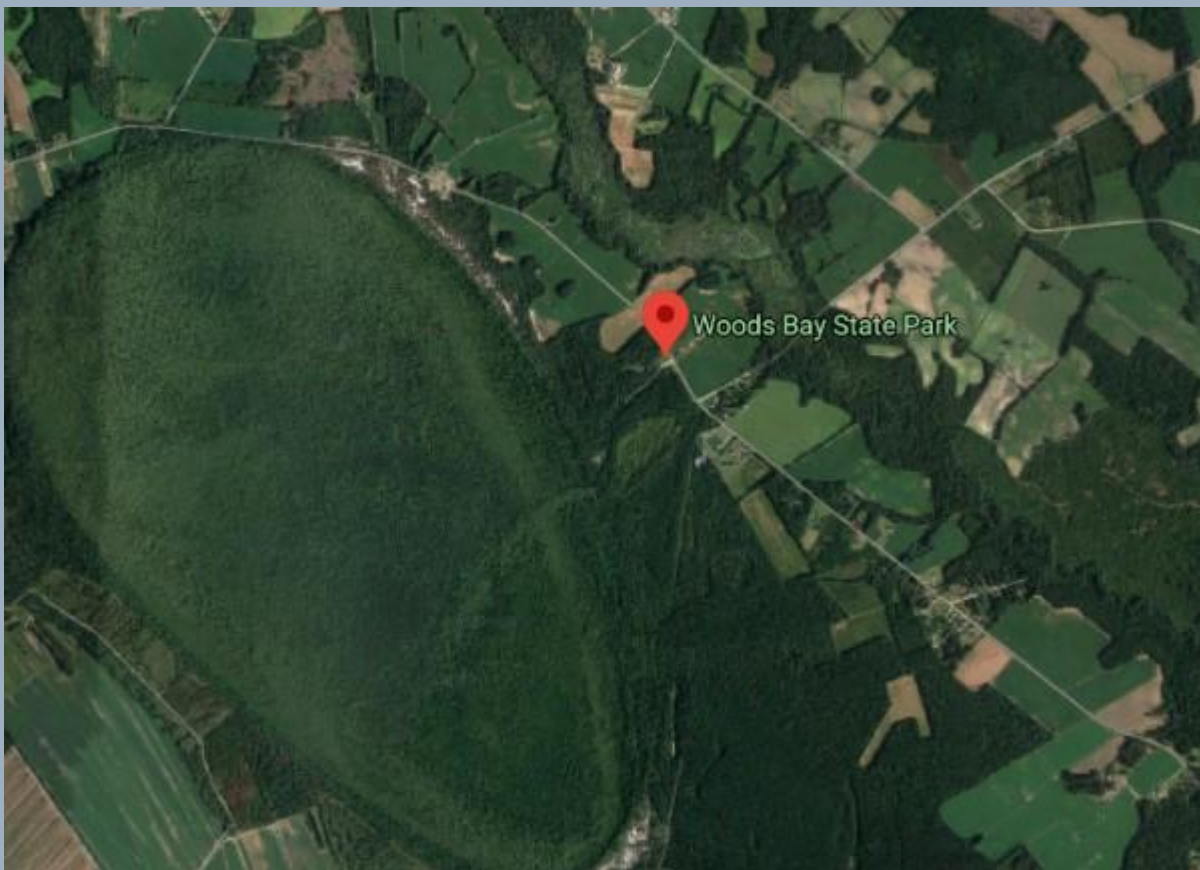
- McCall Branch: Located west of Evergreen
- Meadow Prong Branch: Located in Effingham, west of Savannah Grove Road
- Middle Branch: Situated in the northern part of County
- Mill Branch: Located on the eastern part of the County, north of Pamplico
- Mill Pond Branch: Located southwest of Pamplico
- Pole Cat Branch: Located near Lynch Cross Roads, west of Coward
- Two Mile Branch: Located west of Scranton (1997 Comprehensive Plan) Creeks
- Adams Creek: Located in the northern part of County
- Beaver Dam Creek: Located northwest of the City of Florence
- Black Creek: Located north of Quinby
- Clarks Creek: Marks a portion of the southeastern County line
- Cypress Creek: Located near Evergreen
- Deep Creek: Located north of Johnsonville
- High Hill Creek: Located between Coward and Scranton
- Jeffries Creek: Runs through the northern portion of the County from the Darlington County line in the west to the Pee Dee River in the east
- Muddy Creek: Runs along the southern portion of the County line near Johnsonville
- Willow Creek: Located near Evergreen (1997 Comprehensive Plan)



Carolina Bays

Interestingly, there is one landform type that is not found in many other places around the world. The following information is taken from a brochure from US Fisheries and Wildlife to assist in explaining this resource. Carolina Bays are small wetland depressions which are symmetrically oval in shape. When seen from the air, they are very distinct and the long axis of the oval is always oriented northwest to southeast. These wetlands occur only in the coastal plain regions of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia and vary in size from one acre to thousands of acres. The origin of Carolina Bays is a mystery. Some theories include: meteor showers, ocean currents, and sinkholes, but each theory has at least one flaw to disprove it. There are several different vegetative structures found in Carolina Bays based on the depression depth, size, hydrology, and subsurface. The map below shows Woods Bay located in Florence County, near Olanta. Woods Bay consists of 1,590 acres including marsh, sand hills, oak, hickory forest and a shrub bog. More than 75 species of mammals, reptiles and amphibians are found here, along with more than 150 species of birds. Woods Bay State Natural Area offers a close-up look at one of the last remaining large Carolina Bays on the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Kingsburg Bay is a very unique Carolina Bay in Kingsburg, Lower Florence County that is being extensively studied for its unique plant and animal communities.

Woods Bay in Florence County



**172**

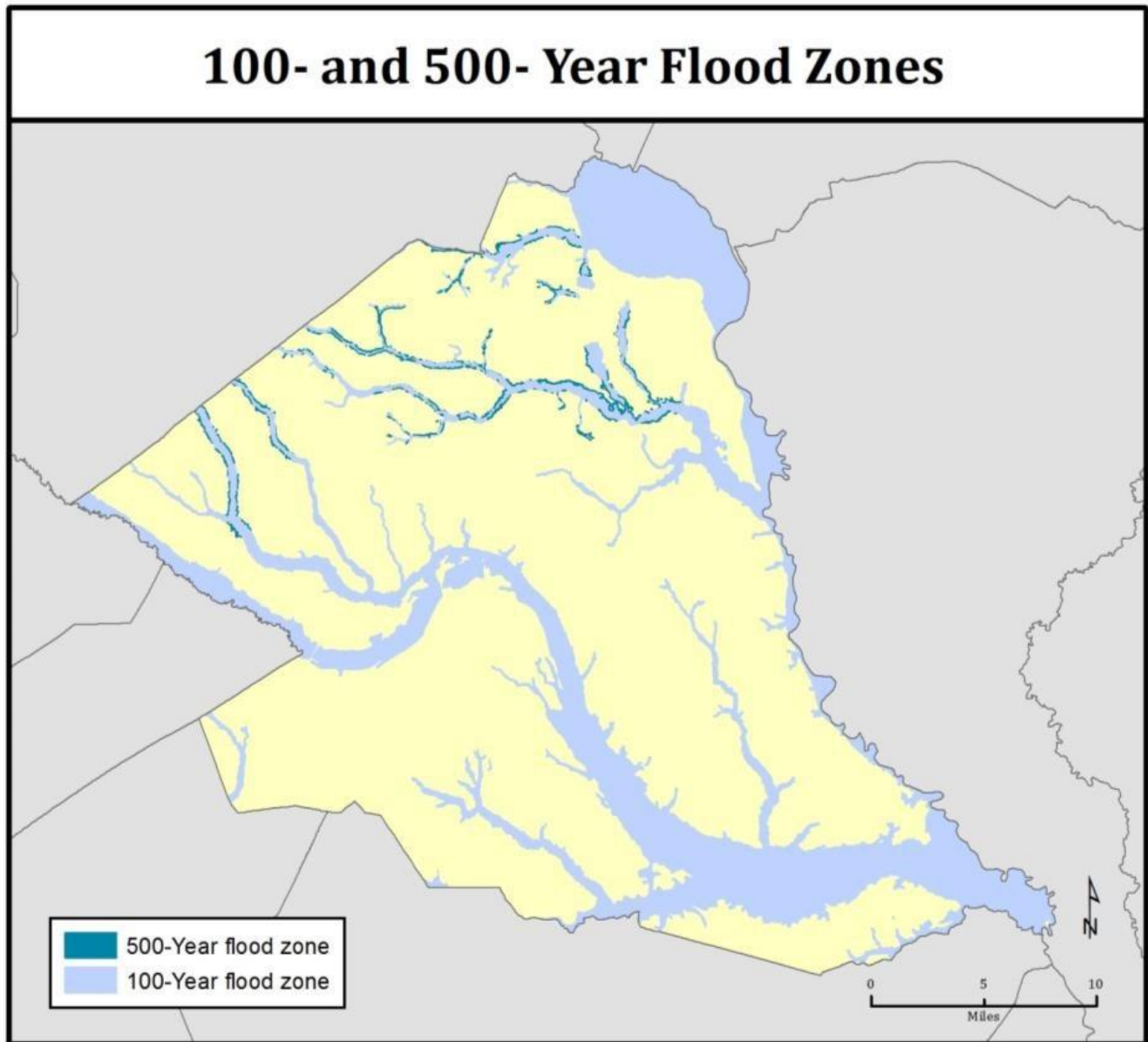
Approximate Acreage in the Flood Zone in Florence County

Florence County has approximately 172 square miles of land located in a special flood hazard area as mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The adopted flood maps are available for viewing at the Florence County Planning and Building Office and online through Florence County GIS. The county provides a Certified Flood Plain Manager to answer any questions about developing, constructing, or living in a flood zone. The floodplain manager may be reached by calling the Florence County Planning Department.

Flood insurance is available to all Florence County residents through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The annual cost of flood insurance for an individual property is determined by risk factor and should be discussed with your insurance agent. As an additional service to the residents of Florence County, participation in the Community Ratings System (CRS) allows for extra benefits for those who carry flood insurance. The CRS is an optional program that communities may participate in providing proactive and reactive services that result in further discounted rates for the residents. Florence County is annually evaluated as a CRS participant and works to increase the provided discount each year.

When a flooding event occurs, damage assessments will be conducted in the affected area to quickly assist the community in recovering and repairing any damages. These assessments are used to apply for grant opportunities and to fund improvements that will benefit everyone.

Jurisdiction/Community	Extent of Flood Prone Areas
Florence County (Unincorporated Area)	Moderate – Several major rivers.
Coward Town	NO DESIGNATED FLOOD-PRONE AREAS
Florence City	Moderate – Southern and Western portions of the City
Johnsonville City	NO DESIGNATED FLOOD-PRONE AREAS
Lake City City	Moderate – Northern edge of City
Olanda Town	Moderate – Western edge of Town
Pamplico Town	NO DESIGNATED FLOOD-PRONE AREAS
Quinby Town	Moderate – Northern edge of Town
Scranton Town	NO DESIGNATED FLOOD-PRONE AREAS
Timmons ville Town	Low – Limited to western and eastern edges





CULTURAL RESOURCES



Florence County is home to many cultural resources, including libraries and others discussed in the Community Facilities element. In addition to those, Florence County is home to museums, the Florence Civic Center, the National Cemetery, the Civil War Stockade, a Motor Speedway in Timmonsville being revived, and the SC BBQ Trail. Many of these are detailed below.

MUSEUMS

This section describes the museums in our area that have a variety of exhibits and attract a wide-range of interest.

The War Between the States Museum

According to the website of the War Between the States Museum, you can “take a walk into the past and visit and experience the many artifacts, pictures and stories of a nation divided”. This museum was founded in September 1988 by members of the Pee Dee Rifles and Sons of Confederate Veterans who possessed Civil War artifacts that they wanted to share with the public. In September 1989, the museum moved to its present location at 107 South Guerry Street in Florence.

Railroad Museum

The Railroad Museum consists of a restored caboose and boxcar filled with railroad memorabilia. This museum is located on Railroad Street adjacent to the Florence City-County Complex and is operated by the Florence Museum.

The Browntown Museum

The Browntown Museum, located on Highway 341 between Lake City and Johnsonville, displays many indications of pioneering ingenuity and farm-related industry, including a notable cotton gin with wooden gears, which continued operating through the late 19th century. The site also contains a corn crib, smokehouse, outhouse, and the Brown-Burrows Home, built about 1845. The origin of Browntown can be traced to two brothers, Robert Brown (1784-1866) and William Brown (1775-1850), and their families. Their holdings comprised over 8,000 acres. The museum, which was erected by Three Rivers Historical Society in 1982, was added to the National Register of Historical Places on June 28, 1982.



The Florence Museum of Art, Science, and History

Founded in 1924 and incorporated in 1936, The Florence Museum of Art, Science, and History “was established to promote the arts and sciences: to collect, to preserve, and to exhibit objects of historic, artistic, and scientific interest; as a cultural resource for the Pee Dee area”. In 2008, the Florence County Museum Board was established and consists of 13 members that meet quarterly. They were given the mission to build a new museum facility. The old museum was located at the Sanborn Chase Home on Spruce St. in Florence but was closed in 2013 to prepare for the Museum’s new building location at 111 West Cheves St. in Florence. The facility opened October 11, 2014 and is almost 30,000 square feet of which approximately 11,000 square feet is exhibit space. The museum was funded by the Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation, the State of South Carolina and Florence County. The Florence Museum Board of Trustees consists of 27 members who are appointed by the membership of the Florence Museum at their annual meeting. Acquisitions and resource allocations are provided by this Board.

CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS, SPECIAL EVENTS, & MARKERS

Florence County serves as a cultural center for the Pee Dee. There are a wide variety of arts organizations and cultural offerings, which celebrate our diverse heritage. Several of these are highlighted below:

Ronald E. McNair Memorial Park

Born in Lake City on October 21, 1950, Dr. Ronald E. McNair was a mission specialist aboard the ill-fated Challenger Space Shuttle in 1986. A graduate of Carver High School in Lake City, he later attended North Carolina A&T State University and received a B.S. degree in physics in 1971. He went on to study physics at MIT, where he specialized in quantum electronics and laser technology, completing his Ph.D. in 1977. After completing his Ph.D., he began working as a physicist in California conducting research on electrooptic laser modulation for satellite-to-satellite space communications. This research led McNair into close contact with the space program. When the opportunity presented itself, he applied for astronaut training. In January 1978, Dr. McNair was selected by NASA to enter the astronaut program. He was one of the first three African Americans selected. McNair became the second African American in space in February 1984 by flying on the Challenger Shuttle mission STS-41-B. In 1986, he was on his second Shuttle flight on the Challenger. A memorial to Ronald E. McNair can be viewed at 346 South Church Street in Lake City.

Atomic Bomb Crater

On March 11, 1958, an aircraft in route to an overseas base accidentally dropped an unarmed nuclear weapon on the property of Walter Gregg in Mars Bluff. While an atomic detonation did not occur with this accidental bomb dropping, the bomb’s highly explosive material exploded on impact, harming Mr. Gregg and five members of his family, and virtually destroyed his home. The bomb created a crater that was 50 to 70 feet in diameter and 25 to 30 feet deep. However, the crater can still be seen off of Highway 89 in the northeast part of Florence County, less than a mile from Francis Marion University. This site is located on private property.



Florence Stockade

A historical marker defines this site where, from September 1864 through February 1865 approximately 16,000 Union soldiers were held captive in Florence. A stockade was constructed here to accommodate prisoners, previously incarcerated at Andersonville and other prisons in south Georgia. These prisoners were moved as a result of Gen. William T. Sherman's Union Forces heading to Savannah in the now famous "March to the Sea." Approximately 2,802 Union soldiers died and many are buried as "unknowns" in the adjacent Florence National Cemetery. The Friends of the Florence Stockade held an official public opening on May 31, 2008. The site now includes parking area, and offers an interpretive gazebo and guided walking trail with interpretation about the history of the stockade.

Hewn Timber Cabins

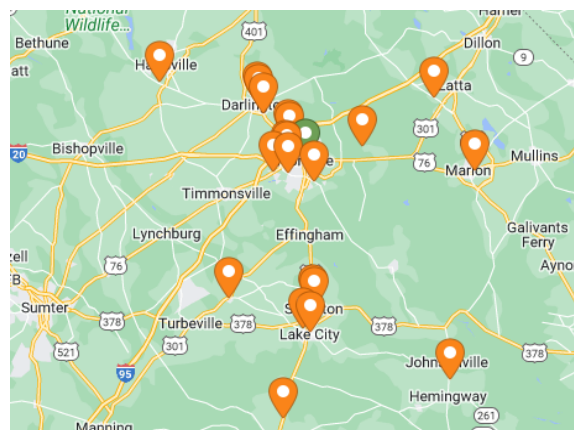
Francis Marion University maintains two historic, hewn timber cabins on its campus. The cabins, which date to the mid-19th century, were the living quarters for slaves, and later, for sharecroppers. They are a part of the legacy of the land, and part of the region's historical heritage as well. The cabins were relocated a short distance from their original locations on the Wallace Gregg farm to their current setting on Wallace Woods Drive after the founding of FMU. The cabins are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Guided tours of the cabins are available by appointment.

Jamestown

Determined to own his own land rather than to rent or sharecrop, former slave Ervin James (1815-1872) bought a 105-acre tract here in 1870. His five sons and a son-in-law later divided the tract into individual farms, and other area families purchased additional land, creating a rural community of some 250 residents that flourished for 70 years. Among its institutions were Jamestown Cemetery, Summerville Methodist Church (now Bowers Chapel United Methodist Church), established about 1880, and an elementary school founded in 1926. Only one of the settlement's original houses remains. A large family reunion, with educational programs open to the public, is held each July.

SC BBQ Trail

Florence County and the greater region boast many stops on the SC BBQ Trail. The map below shows those sites, but you can directly search for them on this site: <https://destination-bbq.com/sc-bbq-map-locator/>



Stops on the SC BBQ Trail in and around Florence County



12

Florence County Gateway Signs

Florence County added twelve gateway signs into the County reading "Welcome to Florence County. Global Reach with a Southern Appeal" to welcome visitors to the heart of the Pee Dee. These entrance signs are located at various entry points into Florence County. However, Florence County should consider more robust gateway signage along major gateways such as what is reflected in the 76 Gateway study.



Gateway Signs

Photo from Florenceco.org.

56

Historical Markers within the Florence County

Florence County is home to a large collection of South Carolina history, which contributes to its tourism appeal and related visitor spending. The South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office lists 56 historical markers in Florence County. The list includes churches, schools, multiple historic cemeteries, homesites of early settlers, and civic buildings. The historical markers speak to the long history of the area and its evolution from the Revolutionary War to today.



Sample Historical Marker for Red Doe



Photo from Google Earth.



Florence County Historical Markers

Marker Number	Marker Name	GPS Coordinates	Marker Text
21-01	Moses S. Haynsworth	34° 14.529' N, 79° 47.227' W	Born in Darlington District in 1845, this Confederate War veteran witnessed the firing attack on the Union steamer "Star of the West" as it attempted to reinforce Ft. Sumter Jan. 9, 1861. He participated in skirmishes at Tullifinny River near Yemassee Dec. 1864. Owner of this plantation, "Idylwild," he died in 1928, and is buried in Florence, S.C.
21-02	William Gee	34° 9.817' N, 79° 51.236' W	A veteran of the Revolution, William Gee served as a private with the Continental Line of N.C. and moved to this area before 1797. He was one of the original members of the Washington Society, organized in 1803 to establish an academy on Jeffries Creek at Ebenezer. His grave is located about 250 feet southwest of here.
21-03	Witherspoon's Ferry	33° 50.217' N, 79° 26.917' W	In use during the American Revolution, Witherspoon's Ferry was the site where Francis Marion accepted command of the Williamsburg Militia in 1780. Ownership of the ferry lands passed from Robert to John Witherspoon in 1787; in 1802 John bequeathed the land to Aimwell Presbyterian Church. The church had closed by 1820.
21-04	Marion at Port's Ferry	33° 51.583' N, 79° 26.817' W	Port's Ferry, 3 miles NE on the Pee Dee, was owned and operated by Frances Port (c. 1725-1812), widow of Thomas Port, who was a member of the Provincial Congress from Prince Frederick's Parish. This was a strategic crossing for Francis Marion, who fortified and used it frequently in his fall campaign of 1780 against British and Tories.



21-05	Ebenezer Church	34° 10.738' N, 79° 51.14' W	In January of 1778 Ebenezer Baptist Church was constituted by pioneer minister Evan Pugh and Richard Furman, for whom Furman University is named. Admitted to the Charleston Baptist Association in 1778, the church was incorporated in 1791 as "The Baptist Church, Ebenezer, Jeffries's Creek." Timothy Dargan was an early minister, who served the church until his death in 1783.
21-06	Young Farm	34° 9.558' N, 79° 51.738' W	In 1925 U.S. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, later U.S. president, inspected Fred Young's dairy farm following recognition of one of its Jerseys, Sensation's Mikado's Millie, as a world champion butter-fat producer. The house here, built c. 1877 according to family tradition, was remodeled 1968 by Edward L. Young, S.C. House member 1958-60, U.S. Congressman 1972-74.
21-07	Dewitt Bluff	33° 59.419' N, 79° 31.530' W	Located about ½ mile east, this bluff, part of a Royal land grant to Edward Crofts in 1740, was named for the DeWitt family, who settled nearby prior to 1767. This area of Prince Frederick Parish was known as Queensborough Township, one of 11 such townships planned by the British Crown in 1730 to foster settlement and protect the interior of the province.
21-08	William W. Harlee	34° 7.716' N, 79° 37.404' W	President of Wilmington & Manchester Railroad and a founder of the city of Florence, Harlee (1812-1897) was also a general in the SC Militia, signer of Ordinance of Secession, Lt. Governor (1860-62), member of the General Assembly, and president of the SC Bar Association. Both he and his daughter, from whom Florence takes its name, are buried here in Hopewell Cemetery.



21-09	Browntown	33° 49.935' N, 79° 37.247' W	This area is part of several royal land grants to Moses Brown in 1768-69 which developed into a family community known as Browntown. Family holdings here eventually comprised over 8,000 acres. Many indications of pioneering ingenuity and farm-related industry remain, including a notable cotton gin with wooden gears which continued operating through the late 19th century.
21-10	Christ Episcopal Church	34° 14.555' N, 79° 41.532' W	First organized as a chapel in 1843 by the Rev. N.P. Tillinghast of Trinity Church, Society Hill, this church was formally established as Christ Church, Mars Bluff, in 1856. The Rev. Augustus Moore, who took over the chapel in 1854, became the first rector of Christ Church and served until 1876. This sanctuary, on land donated by Dr. Edward Porcher, was consecrated in 1859.
21-11	Roseville Plantation	34° 16.625' N, 79° 42.177' W	Roseville Plantation was established by a royal grant before the American Revolution and a house was built here ca. 1771 for the Dewitt family. Richard Brockinton (d. ca. 1843), planter and state representative, purchased Roseville in 1821. Most of the house burned ca. 1832, and a second house was built on the original foundation for Brockinton and his wife Mary Hart about 1835.
21-12	William R. Johnson House	34° 13.637' N, 79° 38.896' W	This Greek Revival house was built ca. 1854 for William R. Johnson, (1813-1893), physician, planter, and legislator in what was then Marion District. Johnson, an 1838 graduate of the Medical College of S.C., later served in the S.C. House of Representatives 1852-55 and the S.C. Senate 1860-63; he died here in 1893 and is buried at nearby Hopewell Presbyterian Church.



21-13	Ney School	34° 16.439' N, 79° 43.087' W	About 1843 Robert Rogers (1808-1882), a planter at "Blooming Grove" in the Back Swamp community of what was then Darlington District, built a plantation schoolhouse and hired Peter Stuart Ney (d. 1846) to teach his children. The original building, moved here in 1870, was later the library for Back Swamp School (1921-1950). In 1970 it was moved to the home of Evander McIver Ervin.
21-14	Mt. Zion Rosenwald School	34° 10.773' N, 79° 38.618' W	This school, built in 1925, was the first public school for African American students in the Mars Bluff community. One of more than 5000 schools in the South funded in part by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, it features a standard two-classroom plan typical of the rural schools built by the foundation between 1917 and 1932.
21-15	Hewn-Timber Cabins	34° 11.754' N, 79° 38.993' W	The African Americans who built the two hewn-timber cabins that stand 200 yds. S on Wallace Woods Road were brought to Mars Bluff as slaves in 1836. They lived in these cabins on the cotton plantation of J. Eli Gregg, in what was then Marion District. These cabins are the last two of eight that originally stood in a cotton field at what is now the center of the university campus.
21-16	Greater St. James A.M.E. Church	33° 51.995' N, 79° 45.902' W	This church was founded in 1883 by a Rev. Hill and twenty-five charter members. Early services were held in a member's house on E. Main Street. The congregation purchased a lot at the corner of Lake and N. Church Streets in 1885 and built its first sanctuary, a frame building, that year. That church was renovated and enlarged in 1917. It was further renovated, adding a steeple, in 1948-50.



21-17	Mt. Zion Methodist Church	34° 10.758' N, 79° 38.616' W	This church, founded in 1868 with Rev. James Wesley Johnson as its first minister, held its early services in a brush arbor. In 1870 trustees purchased this 1 ¾ acre tract to build a “Negro Schoolhouse” sponsored by the church, the first in the Mars Bluff community. This sanctuary, originally a frame building, was built in 1875 on a tract purchased from the school.
21-18	Roseville Plantation Slave and Freedman's Cemetery	34° 16.902' N, 79° 42.156' W	This was originally the slave cemetery for Roseville Plantation. Roseville, established about 1771 by the Dewitt family, was later owned by the Brockinton, Bacot, and Clarke families from the 1820s through the Civil War. A 1200-acre plantation, it had more than 100 slaves living and planting cotton here by 1850.
21-19	Florence Depot (1852)	34° 11.591' N, 79° 48.649' W	The original depot named Florence was built here in 1852, where the Wilmington & Manchester RR crossed present-day Hoffmeyer Rd. It was named for Florence Harlee (1848-1927), daughter of the railroad's president, William W. Harlee (1812-1897). In 1855 a new depot was built 2 mi. E where the railroad crossed Coit St., the Cheraw & Darlington RR, and the North Eastern RR.
21-20	Hannah	33° 53.009' N, 79° 34.675' W	Hannah, named for the Hannah/Hanna family, was known as Cane Branch or Lynches River before a post office was opened here in 1887. William S. Hannah (1807-1876), a farmer and merchant, built his house nearby in 1847 and also ran a general store here; he later dropped the final "h" from the family name. This area was part of Marion County until Florence County was created in 1888.



21-21	William H. Johnson Birthplace	34° 11.673' N, 79° 45.183' W	William Henry Johnson (1901-1970), one of the most important African-American artists of the 20th century, was born nearby on Cox Street. His family later lived on the corner of Cheves and Kemp Streets. In 1918, at the age of 17, Johnson moved to New York City. Johnson studied at the National Academy of Design and the Cape Cod School of Art, won several prizes, and studied art in Europe 1926-29.
21-22	Jamestown	34° 12.831' N, 79° 36.725' W	This African American community, which flourished here for 70 years, has its origins in a 105-acre tract bought in 1870 by former slave Ervin James (1815-1872). James, determined to own his own farm instead of being dependent on sharecropping or tenant farming, bought the tract from Eli McKissick and Mary Poston. His five sons and a son-in-law later divided the tract into individual farms.
21-23	Pisgah Methodist Church	34° 12.686' N, 79° 50.369' W	This church, founded in 1806 in what was Darlington District until Florence County was founded in 1888, grew out of an early Methodist "Society." Rev. Thomas Humphries (d. 1820), who served this and other area circuits, conducted the first service. In 1813 Dempsey Russell donated an acre to the congregation, which soon built a frame building here as its first permanent church.
21-24	The Assassination of Rep. Alfred Rush	34° 5.073' N, 79° 50.923' W	Alfred Rush (d. 1876), a black state representative for two terms during Reconstruction, was assassinated near here, about 1/2 mi. from his home, on May 13, 1876. Rush, who represented what was then Darlington County in the S.C. House 1868-70 and 1874-76, was also a deacon at Savannah Grove Baptist Church.



21-25	Hopewell Presbyterian Church	34° 7.703' N, 79° 37.41' W	This church, organized ca. 1770, is the first Presbyterian church in what is now Florence County. Many of its founding families came to S.C. from Scotland and Ireland. The first church here, a frame building, stood across Old River Road with the church cemetery around it, but burned soon after it was completed.
21-26	Atomic Bomb Accident at Mars Bluff, March 11, 1958	34° 11.801' N, 79° 39.796' W	In 1958, in the midst of the Cold War, the U.S. Air Force accidentally dropped an atomic bomb near here. The unarmed 7,600-lb., 10'8"-long bomb was aboard a B-47E bomber on a training mission headed for England. Its high-explosive trigger detonated on impact, making a crater as large as 35 feet deep and 70 feet wide.
21-27	Red Doe	34° 10.513' N, 79° 38.903' W	This house was built in 1846 for Evander A. Gregg (1818-1874), a planter in what was Marion District. Its high masonry basement and porch form, indigenous to northeastern S.C., make it a fine example of a raised Carolina cottage. It was acquired by R.L. Singletary (1830-1910) in 1867 and by J.W. Wallace (1861-1928) in 1912. The plantation was named Red Doe in the 1930s.
21-28	Lake City	33° 52.299' N, 79° 45.183' W	This area, in what was then Williamsburg Township, was settled as early as 1754 by members of the Dick, Graham, McAllister, Scott, and other families. Several residents served under Francis Marion during the Revolution. By the 1820s this community was sometimes called "the crossroads" for the intersection of two major roads (one from Georgetown to Camden, the other from Charleston to Cheraw), now Main and Church Streets.



21-29	American Legion Post #1	34° 11.816' N, 79° 41.467' W	This post, organized in May 1919 and chartered by national headquarters in June 1919, was the first American Legion post in S.C. Florence County veterans J.D. Smyser, R.B. Fulton, and N.S. Lachicotte represented S.C. at the first national caucus. The American Legion of S.C. held its first state caucus in Florence in July 1919. A monument to Florence County WWI veterans was erected here in 1928.
21-30	Gregg-Wallace Farm Tenant House	34° 12.120' N, 79° 39.108' W	This house, built as a one-room tenant house ca. 1890 and later enlarged several times, features a narrow front porch and rear shed addition typical of many tenant houses on plantations and farms in the post-Civil War South. Like the families who lived here, most tenants were African American.
21-31	Wilson School	34° 11.613' N, 79° 45.957' W	Wilson School, later Wilson High School, was the first public school in Florence, and stood here from 1866 to 1906. At first a private school for black children, it was established by the New England Branch of the Freedmen's Union Commission and operated by the Freedmen's Bureau. Thomas C. Cox, its first principal, later served as Darlington County sheriff. The school became a public school after the S.C. Constitution of 1868 authorized a system of free public schools.
21-32	Lawton-Chase House	34° 11.208' N, 79° 46.557' W	This Art Moderne house, completed in 1939 for Joseph Maner Lawton, has housed the Florence Museum since 1953. It was designed by Sanborn Chase, then an engineering student influenced by Moderne architecture in France and later a prominent local businessman. The house features curved streamlined forms, a semicircular glass block entrance bay, and black glass bands just below the roofline. When completed it was described as "the talk of Florence."



21-33	W.T. Askins House	33° 52.213' N, 79° 45.335' W	This Folk Victorian house, with pierced brackets and fretwork on its two-tiered porch, was built ca. 1895 for William Thomas Askins (1859-1932). Askins, a merchant and farmer, built and operated five stores here beginning in the 1890s, including the general store W.T. Askins and Sons. He and three sons also owned several tobacco and truck farms on the outskirts of Lake City. This house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.
21-34	Mars Bluff	34° 12.270' N, 79° 39.348' W	This is the center of Mars Bluff, a rural community 8 mi. across in both directions, bounded by the Great Pee Dee River, Black Creek, & Jefferies Creek. A ferry across the Great Pee Dee began operation in 1767. Patriot and Loyalist militia later clashed in the area during the Revolution. Mars Bluff grew in both size and significance after the Wilmington & Manchester RR arrived in the 1850s.
21-35	Joshua Braveboy Plantation	33° 56.952' N, 79° 47.514' W	This site was part of the 150-acre plantation of Joshua Braveboy (1740-fl. 1820), a free black who served in the S.C. militia during the American Revolution. Braveboy, a native of N.C., came to S.C. in 1771 and received a grant on Two Mile Branch at Lynches Creek. He served under Gen. Francis Marion in 1780-81, and in another militia unit in 1782. He spent the rest of his life here, in what was then Williamsburg Co.
21-36	The Lynching of Frazier Baker	33° 51.784' N, 79° 45.535' W	In 1898 a building here was the scene of a lynching that sparked outrage across the nation. Frazier Baker, an African American who had recently been appointed postmaster of Effingham, was appointed postmaster of Lake City in 1897. Whites who resented Baker harassed him, even burning the post office in an attempt to make him resign and leave town. An old school on this site became a temporary post office and Baker's home.



21-37	Church Street	33° 52.288' N, 79° 45.177' W	Before the 1820s this intersection of two major roads, one from Georgetown to Camden and the other from Charleston to Cheraw, was popularly called “the crossroads.” After Aaron Graham built a house here ca. 1830, the area became known as “Graham’s Crossroads.” Church Street, the main north-south road through the town until 1924, was named soon after Bethlehem Baptist Church (now Lake City First Baptist Church) was built in 1828.
21-38	Lake City Tobacco Markets	33° 52.159' N, 79° 45.353' W	Farmers in this vicinity began growing tobacco in the early 1890s, and by 1895 Lake City opened its first tobacco market and warehouse. It built its second warehouse by 1903, a third by 1909, and two more by 1917. In the heart of the S.C. “tobacco belt,” this was the second-largest market in the state for most of the 20th century, and one of the largest in the five states producing flue-cured tobacco.
21-39	Lake City Produce Markets	33° 52.268' N, 79° 45.243' W	Lake City was a significant produce market as early as 1894, shipping fruits and vegetables to Northern markets until World War I. The market revived in the late 1920s and flourished during the Depression, when it shipped beans, squash, cucumbers, peas, and other vegetables. Lake City was one of the largest truck markets in the U.S. and claimed to be the largest string-bean or snap-bean market in the world.
21-40	H.H. Singletary Building	33° 52.377' N, 79° 45.281' W	This two-story commercial building was built in 1910 by Henry Horace Singletary (1848-1912) as the H.H. Singletary Company, with a grocery store on the first floor. Singletary, perhaps the most prominent businessman and civic leader in the town from Reconstruction into the 20th century, once owned almost 600 acres in what is now downtown Lake City. He also ran a sawmill and brickyard.



21-41	Whitehead Infirmary	33° 52.280' N, 79° 45.030' W	Dr. James Whitehead (1906-2004) was a graduate of Lake City H.S. and the Medical University of S.C. After completing his internship at Spartanburg General, he returned to Lake City where he practiced medicine for 55 years. In 1938 he oversaw the construction of this two-story building, which was built as a 14-bed obstetric hospital. With few other local options for professional medical care, however, Whitehead Infirmary quickly became the primary acute care facility in town.
21-42	Palmetto State Bank Robbery	33° 52.381' N, 79° 45.283' W	Constructed in 1907, this building originally housed Farmers and Merchants Bank. In 1934 the newly formed Palmetto State Bank opened here. On Sept. 5, 1934 the bank was robbed by three armed men. The bank had larger than normal deposits on hand because it was the height of tobacco marketing season and the group stole a reported \$114,082. Frank English and his wife Geneva were the only people tried for the crime.
21-43	Willow Creek Baptist Church	33° 6.286' N, 79° 35.422' W	The congregation of Willow Creek Baptist Church can trace its origins to the early 19th century when it was first associated with Lynch's Creek Church. The first meeting house was built in the neighborhood c. 1815. Samuel Timmons, pastor at Lynch's Creek, provided itinerant service in the early years. In 1829 Willow Creek was officially organized and joined the Charleston Baptist Association.
21-44	McLeod Medical Center	34° 11.728' N, 79° 45.951' W	The McLeod Infirmary was located here in 1906, inspired by the need to provide access to local medical and surgical care for people of the region. Frank Hilton McLeod was born in Richmond Co., N.C. in 1868 and graduated from the Univ. of Tennessee Medical School. In 1891, he moved to Florence and chartered the Florence Infirmary. By the 1920s it was the third largest hospital in the state.



21-45	Historic Downtown African American Business District	34° 12.058' N, 79° 45.976' W	The 200 and 300 blocks of N. Dargan St. were once the center of a thriving African American business district in Florence. A number of black-owned businesses operated here, including restaurants, barber shops, funeral parlors and pharmacies. These businesses provided services to African American customers who were often denied access to white-owned businesses.
21-46	Timmonsville	34° 8.087' N, 79° 56.501' W	Timmonsville was founded in 1852 and named for Rev. J. Morgan Timmons. Initial growth was spurred by the Wilmington and Manchester R.R., which carried cotton and forest productions to the port of Wilmington. J.M. Timmons established a turpentine distillery by 1854 and a steam-powered saw mill produced 5,000 feet of plank in that same year. The Timmonsville Tobacco Warehouse Co. organized in 1895, placing Timmonsville at the center of the growing Pee Dee tobacco belt.
21-47	Civil Rights Sit-Ins	34° 11.500' N, 79° 45.580' W	On March 3-4, 1960, members of the Florence Youth branch of the NAACP staged protest demonstrations here at the former S.H. Kress store. Wilson H.S. students marched from Trinity Baptist Church to sit at the store's lunch counter, but were refused service and asked to leave. The police were called and the students left peacefully. Store management closed the counter before reopening shortly after.
21-48	Frank Mandeville Rogers Jr.	34° 12.055' N, 79° 45.921' W	Frank Mandeville Rogers Jr. (1857-1945) of Florence Co. was influential in the development of Bright Leaf Tobacco in S.C. In 1884-85, he raised, cured, and sold a plot of tobacco on his Mars Bluff plantation, proving its potential to replace cotton as S.C.'s top cash crop. Rogers built a tobacco factory on Day St. and led efforts to open S.C.'s first tobacco auction warehouse, helping revitalize S.C.'s agricultural market economy.



21-49	Trinity Baptist Church	34° 12.026' N, 79° 46.052' W	Trinity Baptist organized in 1868, with Rev. Wesley J. Parnell (d.1873) serving as its first pastor. The church initially met at the home of members Jacob and Sarah Lindsey on Front St. before obtaining a property at the corner of Dargan and Marlboro Sts. The church acquired this site in 1884 and began meeting in a small frame sanctuary. Construction began on the current church around 1893 and finished by 1909.
21-50	Beth Israel Congregation	34° 11.485' N, 79° 46.675' W	Jews have lived in Florence since the city's founding in the 1850s and were among its early civic leaders. Local Jews first formally organized in 1887 as the Florence Hebrew Benevolent Association. The group's mission was to promote community and establish a Jewish cemetery, now 1 mi. SE of here. Members also opened a school for Jewish children before merging with Beth Israel Congregation in 1922.
21-51	F.H. McLeod House	34° 11.604' N, 79° 45.942' W	The brick house at the corner of Palmetto St. and Dargan St. was built c.1919 as the home of Dr. Frank Hilton McLeod (1868-1944). In 1906, McLeod founded the Florence Infirmary on W. Cheves St., adjacent to his personal residence. To allow for the Infirmary's expansion in 1916, McLeod had that wood frame home moved to this site. He and his wife Caroline Nelson McLeod (1878-1952) lived here in the old frame house until the brick house was built next to it.
21-52	Salem United Methodist Church	34° 7.428' N, 79° 36.762' W	This Methodist church organized in 1871, when trustees acquired ½ acre of land north of the Jeffries Creek Public Road for "a place of Divine worship." Many founding members had previously been enslaved in this area, then part of McMillan Township in Marion County. Congregants built a frame church at this site in 1884, when Rev. Jeremiah McLeod (1854-1920) was pastor.



21-53	Florence High School	34° 11.400' N, 79° 45.918' W	This three-story building was constructed in 1921 to house Florence High School. A fireproof facility, it was designed by architect William J. Wilkins and built of brick and reinforced concrete by contractors Haynsworth & Lawton. It replaced an older brick school on E. Cheves Street and originally included the main west wing and central auditorium, which hosted public performances and speakers. Behind the school was an athletic field used for home sporting events.
21-54	Graham Home Place	33° 52.506' N, 79° 42.876' W	The Graham family was among the first European settlers in Lake City, formerly named Graham's Crossroads. This site, owned by Hugh Graham in the late 1700s, was part of a larger tract on the N side of Lynches Lake (7/10 mi. S) that tradition holds was the family's colonial-era "home place." The site has been passed down over the generations and remains with the Graham family today.
21-55	Mars Bluff Rice Growers	34° 11.292' N, 79° 39.414' W	From the 18th century until c.1920, African American farmers grew rice in nearby fields. While not a major cash crop in this part of S.C., rice was a staple on local plantations, where enslaved people grew it using African methods. After the Civil War, most freed people here worked as tenants and sharecroppers, and some continued to grow rice for household consumption and sale to merchants.
21-56	Ebony Guest House	34° 12.426' N, 79° 45.648' W	In 1949, Ebony Guest House, a prominent local tourist home for African Americans, opened at this site. It was owned and operated by Mary C. Holmes (1900-1981), a native of Williamsburg Co. who moved to Florence in the 1920s. She lived next door with her family, who helped maintained the Guest House. Her husband, Norman A. Holmes (c.1890-1969), was a minister and carpenter who oversaw construction of the two concrete-block buildings where guests stayed.



50,000+

Average Attendance at Annual South Carolina Pecan Festival

Visitors come to Florence County for many reasons – to explore the natural settings of the rivers and parks, to visit and experience small town charm, to learn about the history of the area, and to experience the community’s cultural resources. The County is home to many festivals and events, including the South Carolina Pecan Festival, drawing over 50,000 people to enjoy great food and entertainment.

In 2003, the first SC Pecan Festival was created to bring our local community together in burgeoning Downtown Florence for fellowship, family fun, and to celebrate one of South Carolina’s favorite nuts, the pecan. The festival grew by leaps and bounds

over the next several years, and has since taken its place in Florence history as a time-honored and much anticipated annual fall event held on the first Saturday in November each year.

Tourism and Community Events

Florence County and its communities host several major annual festivals, events, and parades, including:

- Pecan Festival
- ArtFields
- SC Tobacco Festival
- The American Heritage Festival
- Johnsonville Heritage Festival
- Pamplico Cypress Festival
- Olanta Gator Fest
- HippieFest



In 2011, the SC Pecan Festival was designated as the Official South Carolina State Pecan Festival by Act No. 9 of 2011. Since then, the festival has been the recipient of numerous awards including several Best of the Pee Dee Awards for Excellence as the Best Community Festival in both 2014 and 2019. In 2017, Travel + Leisure named the Pecan Festival as the “Best Fall Festival in South Carolina.”

Admission to the festival has always been and will always be free. The SC Pecan Music and Food Festival is a one-day outdoor festival featuring big name entertainment across eight (8) stages, free kids and family activities, over 250 vendors spread across seven (7) blocks in Downtown Florence, amusement rides, pub for the grown-ups, culinary competitions, artist displays and activities, classic car show, Run Like a Nut 5K, 10K, and USATF-certified half marathon races, and Bike Like a Nut half century and century bike rides.

Historic Downtown Florence offers an ideal setting for this multi-block festival. Streets are lined with food and craft vendors, stages on each block

pulse with a diverse array of music and entertainment, and kids can enjoy a full day of activities in a space all their own on our FMU Performing Arts Center lawn.



As the festival has grown and evolved over time, the Pecan Festival Committee chose to use the time off due to COVID-19 to take a hard look at the festival, its name, and its mission, and have since rebranded the festival to better reflect the future of Florence's favorite event. We invite you to GO NUTS at the brand-new SC Pecan Music and Food Festival on the first Saturday in November. The committee promises plenty of food, fun, and outstanding entertainment packed into one beautiful fall day in Downtown Florence.





Ten years ago, art changed Lake City. In turn, Lake City made its own mark on the art world. ArtFields, simply by existing, challenged many notions of how contemporary art has traditionally been displayed and appreciated. Through its success, it rewrote the rules by breaking down barriers between the people of a small Southern town and artists from the South. Today, many know what we've always believed to be true: Art can, and should, be experienced by everyone. And Southern art, and Southern artists, are something special.

ArtFields started in 2013 with a simple goal: honor the artists of the Southeast with a week's worth of celebration and competition in the heart of a traditional Southern small town. The competition and exhibition offers over \$145,000 in cash prizes. The winners of two People's Choice Awards are determined by the votes of people visiting ArtFields; a panel of art professionals selects all the other awards, including the \$50,000 Grand Prize and \$25,000 Second Place award.

Up to 400 works of art will be on display in locally-owned venues, from renovated 1920s warehouses and professional art spaces such as Jones-Carter Gallery and TRAX Visual Art Center to the library, the history museum, the Ronald E. McNair Life History Center, restaurants, boutiques and other shops. During ArtFields, what was once one of South Carolina's most prosperous agricultural communities becomes a living art gallery as we recognize, celebrate and share the artistic talent of the Southeast.

-Artfields Website



RESILIENCY



Resiliency refers to the ability of a community to withstand, recover from, and adapt to disruptive events such as natural disasters. In 2020, the South Carolina General Assembly passed the *Disaster Relief and Resilience Act* to support disaster recovery efforts and to require local comprehensive plans to include a resilience element.

This resilience element considers the impacts of flooding, high water, and natural hazards on individuals, communities, institutions, business, economic development, public infrastructure and facilities, and public health safety and welfare. Also, this element includes an inventory of existing resiliency conditions, promotes resilient planning, design, and development, and is coordinated with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies.

Hazards Identification and Extent

As shown in Table 1, Florence County was exposed to a variety of natural hazards including tornadoes, hurricanes, windstorms, lightning, hail, drought, floods, winter storms, and extreme heat. Natural hazard events that have occurred since the last Comprehensive Plan (2017) are also shown.



Table 1. Summary of Historical and Recent Hazard Events, Florence County

Hazards	Events	Years in Data Record	Return Period (in years)	Annual % Chance	Recent Events 2017-2020
Tornado	33	59	1.79	55.93%	3
Hurricane	10	57	5.7	17.54%	0
Wind	225	61	.27	368.85%	32
Severe storm	249	58	.23	429.31%	32
Lightning	63	60	.95	105.00%	1
Hail	85	58	.68	146.55%	2
Drought	15	44	2.93	34.09%	0
Wildfire	3	55	18.3	5.45%	0
Flood	48	57	1.19	84.21%	0
Winter weather	54	60	1.11	90.00%	0
Fog	1	19	19	5.26%	0
Heat	10	45	4.5	22.22%	0

Source: Spatial Hazard Events and Losses Database for the US (SHELDUS), Arizona State University

Below are some examples of natural hazard events that have occurred since the 2017 Comprehensive Plan was adopted.

- Severe storms, thunderstorms, damaging winds, and tornadoes associated with Hurricane Sally in 2020.
- Severe storms, thunderstorms, and damaging winds associated with severe weather and tornadoes across the southeast US in 2018.
- Lightning and hail events in 2017.

A summary of the County's vulnerability to each hazard and recent loss information is provided in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Overall Vulnerability to Hazards and Loss Information 2017-2021**

Hazard	Vulnerability and Loss Information
Tornado	A moderate likelihood for experiencing tornadoes (55.93% chance/year). Between 2017 and 2020, there were three tornado events, totaling \$101,572 in adjusted property damages, and no injuries or fatalities.
Hurricane	A low likelihood of hurricane occurrence (17.54% chance/year). Between 2017 and 2020, there were no hurricane events.
Windstorm	A high likelihood of wind events (368.85% chance/year). Between 2017 and 2020, there were thirty-three wind events, which combined with other hazards accounted for \$325,054.79 in adjusted property damages, one injury, and no fatalities.
Lightning	A high likelihood of lightning events (105% chance/year). Between 2017 and 2021, there was one lightning event, which caused \$42,034.48 in adjusted property damages, and no injuries or deaths.
Hail	A high likelihood of experiencing hail events (146.55% chance/year). Between 2017 and 2020, there were two hail events, which accounted for \$1050.86 in adjusted property damages and no injuries or fatalities.
Drought	A low likelihood of drought (34.09% chance/year). Between 2017 and 2020, there were no drought events.
Wildfire	A low likelihood of wildfires (5.45% chance/year). Between 2017 and 2020, there were no wildfire events.
Flood	A high likelihood of flooding (84.21%). Between 2017 and 2020, there were no flood events.
Winter Storm	A high likelihood for experiencing winter storms (90% chance/year). Between 2017 and 2020, there were no winter storm events.
Extreme Heat	A low likelihood for experiencing extreme heat, with a 22.22% chance of occurrence. Between 2017 and 2020, there were no extreme heat events.

Source: Spatial Hazard Events and Losses Database for the US (SHELDUS), Arizona State University

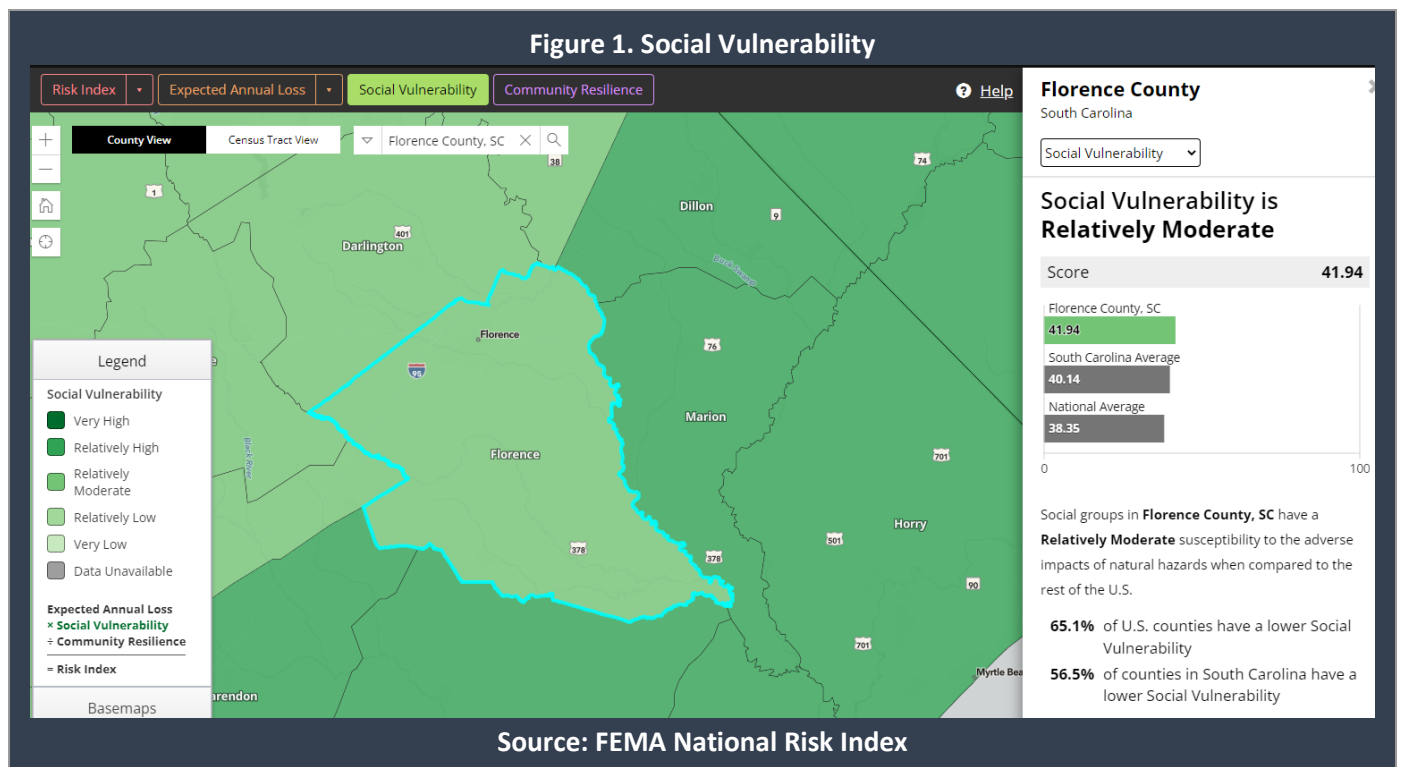
2015 Flood Impacts

Major flooding events occurred in the central portion of South Carolina during 2015. In Florence County, severe floods occurred on October 3-4, 2015. While there were no injuries or fatalities reported, the flooding did result in approximately \$11 million in property damage (Spatial Hazards Events and Losses Database for the US, Arizona State University).

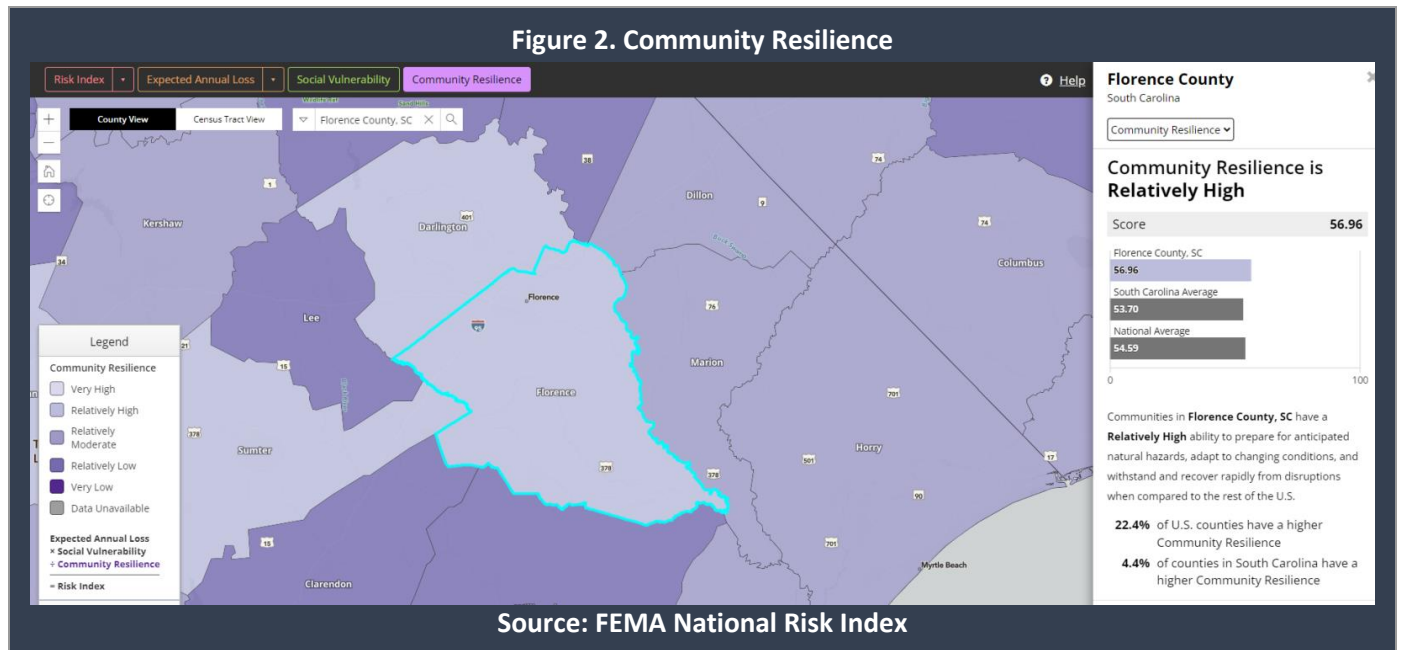


Social Vulnerability and Community Resilience

Social Vulnerability considers the social, economic, demographic, and housing characteristics of a community that influence its ability to prepare for, respond to, cope with, recover from, and adapt to natural hazards. Based on the FEMA National Risk Index for measuring social vulnerability, Florence County has a “Relatively Moderate” susceptibility to adverse impacts of natural hazards, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. The index suggests that Florence County is somewhat more vulnerable to natural hazard impacts than other counties in South Carolina and the nation.



Community Resilience considers several categories of county-level community disaster resilience: social, economic, community capital, institutional, infrastructural, and environmental. Based on the FEMA National Risk Index measuring community resilience, Florence County has a “Relatively High” capacity to prepare for, adapt to, and recover from natural hazard impacts, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.



Hazard Mitigation Actions

Florence County has several measures in place concerning community resilience, including the county Hazard Mitigation Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and relevant ordinances and regulations. In general, implementing mitigation actions and measures enhances the ability of the community to adapt to hazards, strengthening its overall resilience. Table 3 provides further details of the relationship between these measures and community resilience.

**Table 3. Hazard Mitigation and Community Resiliency Measures**

Existing Measure	Relation to Community Resilience
Florence County Hazard Mitigation Plan	Identifies and addresses vulnerabilities to natural hazards through risk assessment and mitigation action planning. FEMA approved. Mitigation actions include, e.g., relocating critical facilities out of hazard-prone areas, post-flood event cleanup and recovery, buyout of properties located in flood hazard areas, maintaining compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).
Florence County Comprehensive Plan	Guides future growth and development in support of public health, safety, and welfare. Future development and investment decisions account for minimizing disaster losses and protecting property, facilities, and infrastructure. Includes resiliency element
Florence County Zoning Ordinance	Regulates use of land in the interest of public health, safety, and welfare. Limits or directs development away from flood-prone and other hazardous areas. Includes Flood Hazard zoning district and riparian buffer requirements.
Florence County Stormwater Ordinance	Accommodates rainfall to minimize adverse effects of runoff. Prevents excessive flood damage and protects property.
Florence County Flood Information and Floodplain Management	Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) and other flood insurance made available by the Florence County Planning Department. Certified Floodplain Manager on staff.
National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)	Property owners can purchase flood insurance. Insurance required for buildings in Special Flood Hazard Areas. Land use controls and related measures required for the community to participate in the NFIP.

Coordination with Relevant Agencies and Jurisdictions

This Resilience Element will be shared with the agencies and jurisdictions listed below. Any comments may be submitted to the Florence County Planning Commission or the Florence County Planning Department.

- Counties: Clarendon, Darlington, Lee, Marion, Sumter, Williamsburg
- Municipalities: Coward, Florence, Johnsonville, Lake City, Olanta, Pamplico, Quinby, Timmons ville



- Utilities: SCE&G, Duke Energy, Pee Dee Electric Cooperative
- School Districts: Florence 1, 2, 3, 4
- Transportation Providers: Pee Dee Regional Transportation
- Public Services: Public Service Commission District 7

Summary

Overall, Florence County is moderately vulnerable to the range of natural hazards that typically occur in South Carolina. In a given year, some natural hazards are highly likely to occur, including flooding, while others are not very likely to occur. In the face of these hazards, the County's capacity to prepare for, adapt to, and recover from adverse impacts is relatively high, according to the FEMA National Risk Index.

The County has a current Hazard Mitigation Plan and Comprehensive Plan, both of which provide general policy guidance for natural hazards and community resilience-related issues. County development regulations and stormwater and flood management regulations provide more specific requirements to protect public safety and prevent property damage.

The County also has departments with resources and procedures in place to respond to and mitigate natural hazard events, including fire, police, and public works. In case of major natural disasters, the County can work closely with the City of Florence, the South Carolina Emergency Management Division, the South Carolina Office of Resilience, and other agencies for preparedness and mitigation.

The County should continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as well as in future updates of the Pee Dee Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.



LAND USE

The future land use of Florence County is of utmost concern as the growth of the County continues. Having an accurate and prepared guide for this growth will ensure that leaders are making sound decisions and steering the community in a positive direction. As such, there are several critical factors when reviewing land use. Zoning is one important part factor.

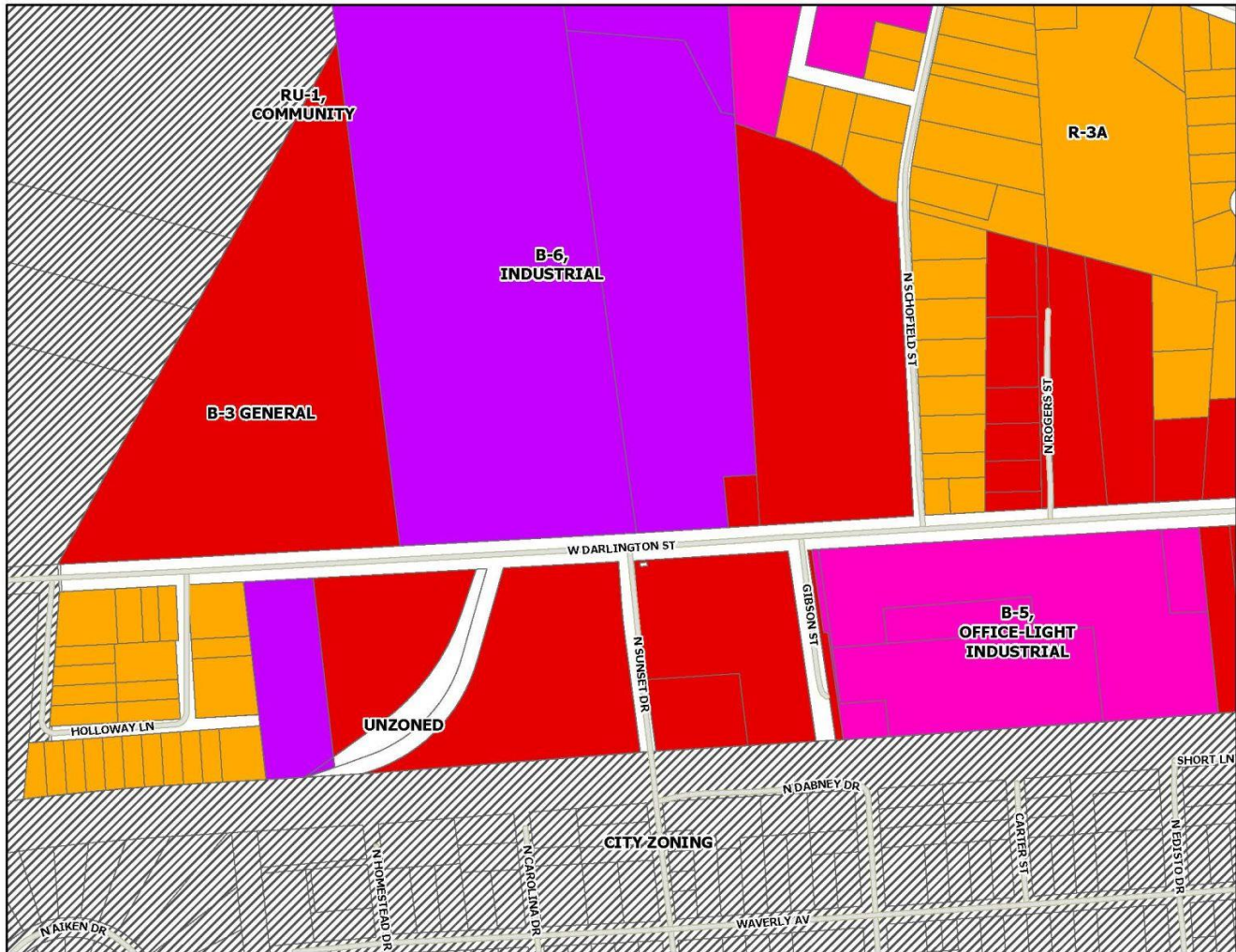
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Zoning Districts within the Florence County, including the Unzoned Area

The County has 22 officially adopted base zoning districts and a large unzoned area to aid in planning for and managing growth and development. Of the 22 zoned districts, 14 are primarily commercial or mixed use, while 8 are primarily residential. Newly developed areas can either develop in the unzoned areas or within a zoned district. Each district has its own zoning regulations that dictate the types and development intensity of land uses that are allowable within the district. In addition to the 22 adopted zoning districts and the unzoned area, Florence County has three zoning overlay districts, the Flood Hazard District, the Airport Compatibility District, and the Corridor Overlay District. These zoning overlay districts are designed to supplement the primary underlying zoning district classification for their specifically named purposes.



Existing Zoning ***SAMPLE***



Land use in Florence County is as complex as in most southern communities. It is organic in that it has grown and changed over time. As part of the Existing County phase, the current land use and development pattern in Florence County was assessed, focusing especially on the character of the County's built and open space areas as elaborated on below.



Community Character Framework for Land Use Planning

Philosophy on this Approach

Community character accounts for the physical traits one can see in a neighborhood, on a roadway corridor, or along a greenway trail which contribute to its “look and feel” relative to areas with much different character. Various land uses, including parks, can occur in a range of settings within a community, from the most rural and suburban to the most urban, provided they are designed to match the character of the area. The comprehensive planning process will be centered on the concept of “community character” as a way to enhance the approach Florence County takes to land use planning, farm land and rural conservation, and open space preservation. A character-based approach emphasizes the variation in physical conditions that is experienced along a spectrum from natural and rural landscapes at the edges of a community to its most urbanized environments, usually found in suburban areas. Looking beyond land use alone, a character focus considers how intensively land is used – or used only minimally in the case of some public parks or not at all in preserved natural areas.

Land use intensity involves three key elements:

- A. The density and layout of residential development;
- B. The scale and form of non-residential development; and,
- C. The amount of building and pavement coverage relative to the extent of open space and natural vegetation or landscaping.

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

- **Variable** character areas have wide open spaces and a mixture of commercial and residential uses. This area makes up the majority of the undeveloped areas of the county as well as areas that are transitioning into more developed areas. *Zoning Districts appropriate in the Variable Development District Future Land Use Category include **B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, R1, R3, R3A, RU-1, RU-1A, RU-2, TH, MR, MMF, FO/LI, CMU, and PD.*** **However, to clarify that certain areas of the County are prescribed for a more intense land use than others, there are two Variable Development Districts, which include:**
 - **Variable Development District 1: B1, B2, B3, RU-1, RU-1A, R1, R3, R3A, TH, MR, MMF, FO/LI, CMU, and PD.** This generally focuses on the first 500 feet from urban corridors and the majority of the Rural land in Florence County. For parcels that are greater than 500 feet deep, the entirety of the parcel could be developed in the preferred zoning district if approved by Council when rezoning. Overall, this area will include most areas within ½ mile from Suburban or Urban categories.
 - **Variable Development District 2: B5, B6, RU-1, RU-1A, RU-2, FO/LI and PD.** This area is specified in Florence County as specifically for industrial parks and growth as well as large lot residential development. This is also a district option for Rural land.
- **Suburban** character areas have noticeably less intensive use of land than Urban areas, with open and green spaces balancing – or, in estate sized areas, exceeding – the extent of land covered by structures and paved surfaces. *Zoning Districts appropriate in the Suburban District Future Land Use Category include **R1, R2, R3, R3A, B1, MR, and PD.***



- **Urban** character areas exhibit the greatest pedestrian orientation, through a more compact scale and “architectural enclosure” of streets by buildings situated close to front property lines and sidewalks. Within the Urban class, auto urban character areas are a particular planning challenge as they are designed mainly to accommodate automobile circulation and parking. This is the main type of Urban development in Florence County. The extent of land cover by buildings and paved surfaces is similar to Urban areas, but often without a pedestrian orientation as in traditional downtowns. This is especially true where development is spread across the landscape more horizontally relative to more compact “development nodes” and “activity centers” that enable multi-purpose trips and walking or biking between destinations. *Zoning Districts within Florence County appropriate in the Urban District Future Land Use Category include **B1, B2, B3, R3A, R4, R5, R5A, TH, MR, MMF, MU, CMU, and PD.***
- Much like Urban character areas, **Downtown** character areas are categorized by development very close to or within the proximity of a municipal downtown. *As Florence County does Land Use planning for several municipalities therein, including the Downtown Development District Future Land Use Category is necessary with the allowed zonings of **B4, MU, CMU, and PD.***

Purpose of Character Planning

It is this combination of land use and the characteristics and context of the use that determines the real compatibility and quality of development, as well as the ongoing integrity of open space areas intended for minimal or no development. Aesthetic enhancements such as architectural design, landscaping and screening, signage standards, and site amenities also contribute to development appearance, but these factors can and should vary with the area character (e.g., landscaping shifting more to the public realm versus on private sites in a downtown area given minimal building setbacks and yard areas).

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

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

Maintaining and enhancing desired character is a central aim – and challenge – of implementing community plans amid constant change. A character approach allows the formulation of standards within the County's development regulations to:

- Achieve the desired character in newly developing areas;



- Protect and enhance it in redevelopment and infill areas; and
- Ensure a rural or large-lot residential atmosphere is maintained in areas where these character types are deemed most appropriate for the long term.

Character-focused categories on the County's future land use map, together with the districts on a subsequent zoning map, better portray the intended outcomes of land use and development. This offers assurance to neighboring property owners, a smoother path to approvals for development applicants, and more beneficial outcomes for the entire community.

Variable Character

Variable character is seen in many areas within Florence County. With two Variable Development Districts as seen on the Future Land Use Map, this plan captures the rural parts of Florence County as well as smaller developments in emerging areas. Traveling to the South, there are farms and estates with homes and vacant property that captures the rich agricultural heritage of the County. This character is visible in many areas, which involves individual homes and farms scattered along and fronting on two-lane roads that are otherwise framed by vegetation and open space (versus any clusters of residential lots arranged within subdivisions).

As the County grows and even if there a leapfrog, scattered development pattern in many areas, we must protect open spaces and keep this character intact as a plan goal or policy objective.



Sample of Variable Development along Friendfield Road



This designation consists of lands that are often sparsely developed, with many agricultural activity and/or very low-density residential as the primary uses along with more natural areas. Variable character areas have:

- Wide open landscapes, with minimal sense of enclosure and views to the horizon unbroken by buildings in most places.
- Scattered residential development on relatively large acreages, resulting in very high open space ratios and very low site coverage.
- Typically no centralized water or sanitary sewer service available. Also much greater reliance on natural drainage systems, except where altered significantly by agricultural operations or regional storm water management projects and/or infrastructure.
- The opportunity for appropriately scaled development that fits within the framework of surrounding zoning and land use in Florence County.

This category provides its residents with choices away from a more developed setting. Some of the County's jurisdictions have limited rural character areas within their city limits, except in areas that have been annexed for eventual development or that are not suitable for future development. Other municipalities within the County may choose to intentionally preserve rural character through the protections afforded by agricultural zoning. However the vast majority of agricultural and rural property lies within the County. Floodplain areas may also retain their rural character over the long term given their unsuitability for any intensive land development.

This designation is also for areas that have limited development activity other than large-lot residential. Such areas provide a transition between the County's rural areas and more urbanized in-town development patterns and intensities.

Variable character is very prevalent in Florence County, with the one example being an area of homes off N. Ebenezer Road (seen below). The extent of separation and vegetation between many of these dwellings is a hallmark of Estate character. Pockets of Variable character are also seen throughout southern Florence County, where housing densities are lower in general.



Sample of Variable Character along N. Ebenezer Road

In these areas, most of the land surface is still in unbuilt open space, putting it closer to the rural range of the character spectrum, but with more land now occupied by buildings and paved surfaces.

Properties are typically one acre or larger, especially where required by public health regulations to allow for both individual water wells and on-site septic systems on properties where centralized water and/or wastewater service may not be available or feasible.

Business Parks and Industrial Development

This designation is often a subset of a variety of land uses in communities that aim to promote high-quality office and/or light industrial development as an economic development magnet or as part of overall efforts to create a highly attractive business investment environment. Depending on the area's economic base, this may include a campus setting for research and technology businesses. The area may also include limited retail and service uses to serve local workers and visitors.

- Variable character results from reduced site coverage and increased open space.



- Development outcomes are often controlled by private covenants and restrictions that exceed County ordinances and development standards. Whether public or private, such standards may include enhanced architectural design of buildings, extensive landscaping of the business park perimeter, and special streetscaping and design treatments at entries, key intersections and other internal focal points.



Sample of Variable Character Business Park off I-95 and 327



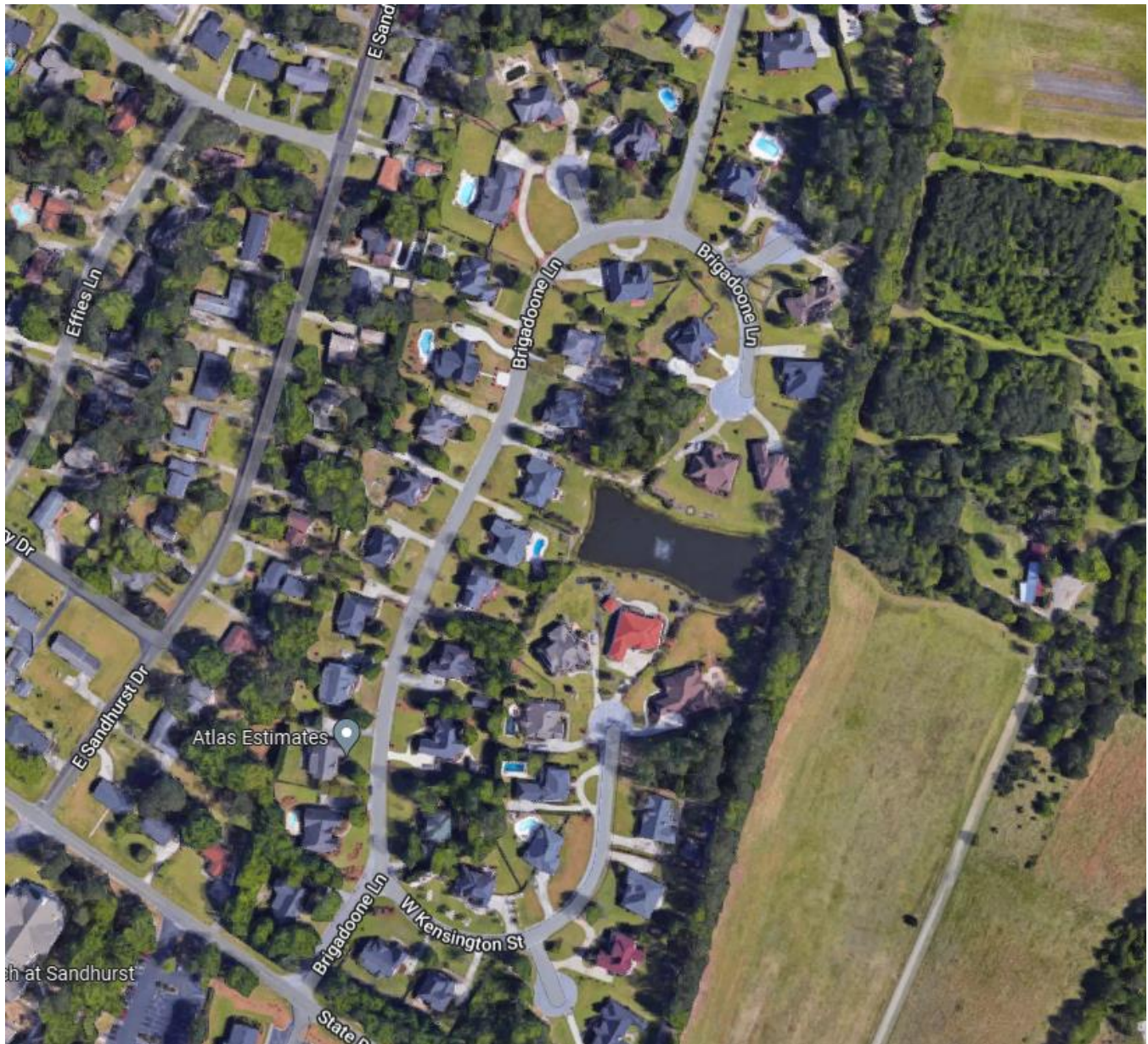
Suburban Character

This designation is for areas where Suburban character is established and preserved by achieving a balance between buildings and other site improvements relative to the degree of open space maintained within the neighborhood and amongst commercial development. The openness may be found in relatively large yard areas on individual lots and between homes and/or in common green spaces or water features, including on multi-family residential sites. This distinguishes Suburban character areas from more urban areas where site coverage in the form of dwellings, driveways and other paved surfaces predominates relative to undeveloped space. Therefore, Suburban character can apply to varied dwelling types, from single-family detached homes to the entire range of attached forms (duplexes, multiplexes, townhomes, attached patio homes, rental apartments and ownership condos, etc.). Some such developments may strive for this character outcome by design or due to the terrain and pre-existing vegetation on-site and in the area.

Suburban Character

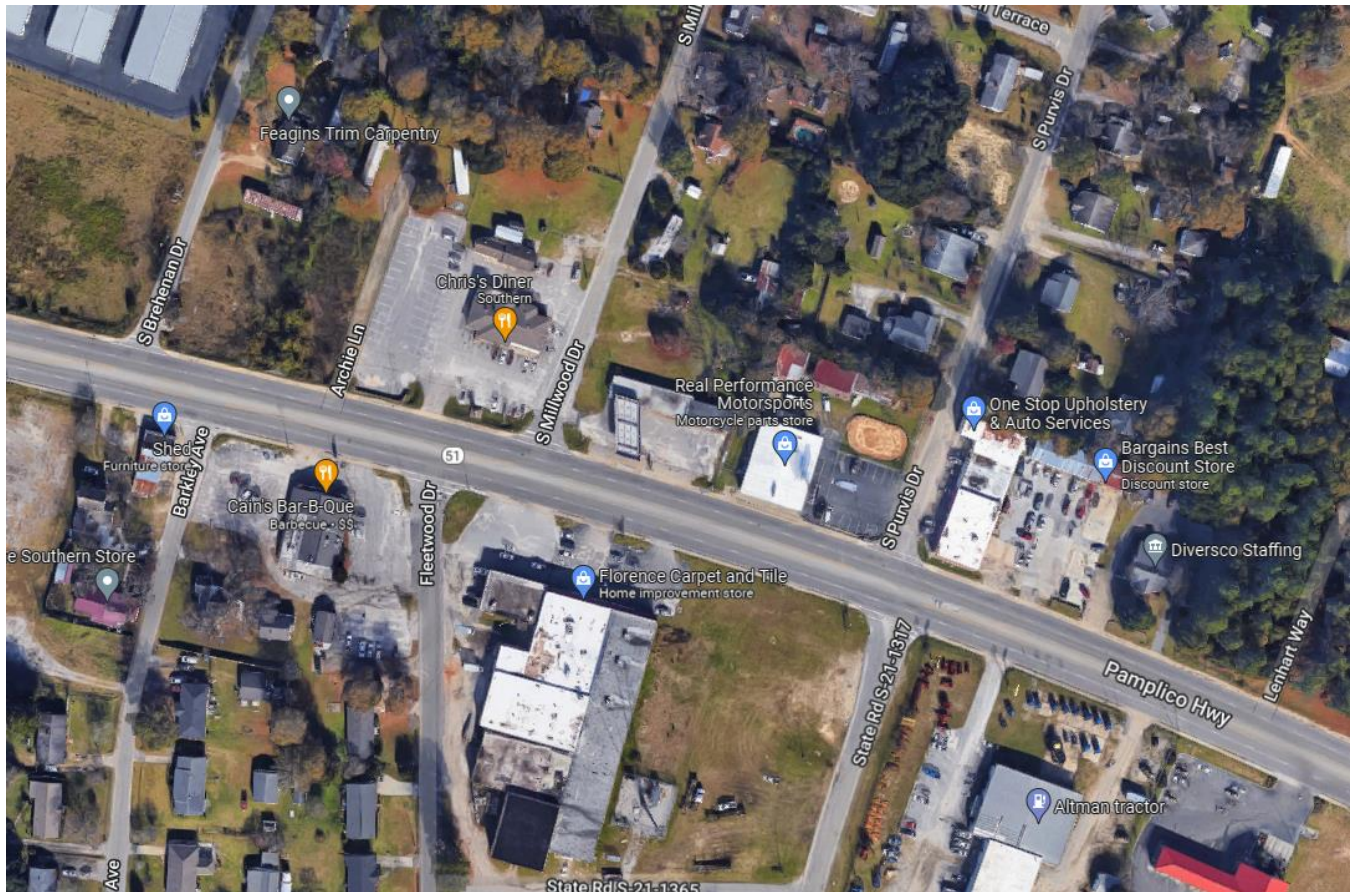
Suburban character is seen in various residential areas across the County. But true Suburban Commercial character is difficult to find as in most communities that developed during a largely auto-oriented era in U.S. history. Florence County also has several examples of multi-family residential designed with a more Suburban character orientation.

- In Suburban areas accommodation of the automobile is less noticeable compared to more intensive auto-oriented areas, especially where residential driveways are on the side of homes rather than occupying a portion of the front yard space and where garages are situated to the side or rear of the dwelling.
- More opportunity for natural and/or swale drainage (and storm water retention/absorption) relative to concentrated storm water conveyance in Auto Urban character areas.



Sample of Suburban Residential along Third Loop Road

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



Sample of Suburban Commercial along Pamplico Highway

Urban Character

Urban Character is prevalent in many commercial areas of Florence County no different from most similar U.S. communities. Urban Character is seen in three ways within one category: Commercial, Residential, and Mixed Use. This designation covers residential areas where accommodation of the automobile is more visually dominant relative to more prominent green space in Suburban character areas. This is typically due to relatively smaller and narrower lots, and often with limited open space set-asides or amenities for residents. Auto-oriented character on multi-family residential sites is usually due to the extent of off-street parking needed (or required) to accommodate the density of units. Most of the Urban character development in Florence County has been annexed into the City of Florence.

- Urban residential neighborhoods have less openness and separation between dwellings compared to Suburban Residential areas.
- Urban character is unavoidable where driveways and front-loading garages dominate the front yards and front facades of homes.



Urban Character located off Alligator Road (City of Florence)

Urban (Commercial areas)

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

- Urban commercial areas have significant portions of development sites devoted to vehicular access drives, circulation routes, surface parking, and loading/delivery areas, making pavement the most prominent visual feature.
- Buildings are typically set back toward the rear of sites to accommodate expansive parking areas in front, closest to passing traffic, resulting in less emphasis on architectural design in many cases.
- Development in such areas aims to maximize signage (number, size) to capitalize on site visibility to passing traffic.
- Such sites are often not conducive for access or on-site circulation by pedestrians or cyclists.
- All of these characteristics are often captured by the term “strip development” along major roadways. Such development can include a range of uses on high-profile “pad” sites along the roadway frontage. Also common are “big box” stores, other chain retail and franchise restaurants, and automobile services (e.g., gas stations, service/repair, car washes, etc.).



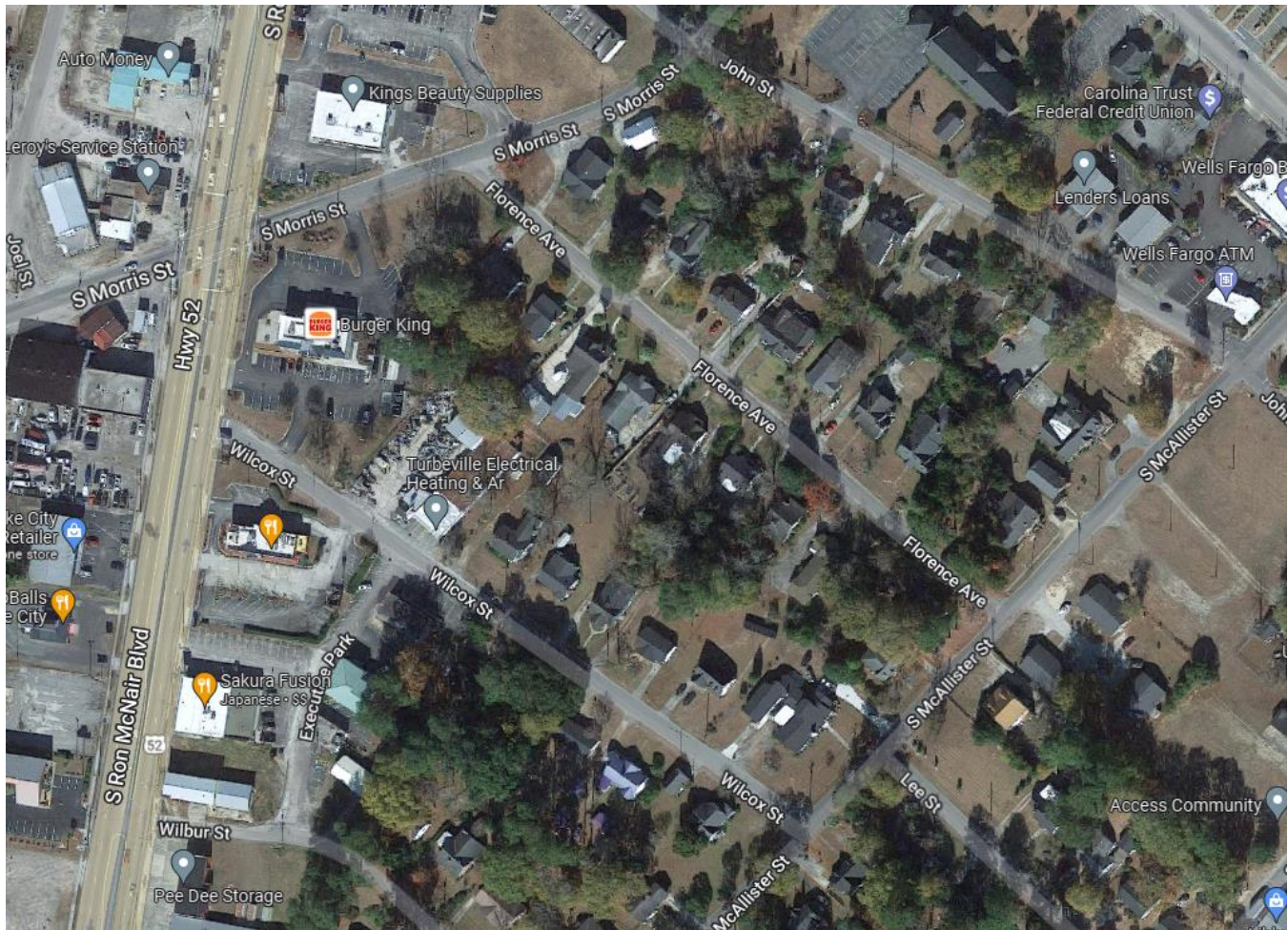
Additionally, light and heavy industrial land uses in many communities often exhibit an Auto Urban character, unless subject to more strict development standards in higher-profile locations, or where located within a higher-quality Suburban Business Park setting as described above.



Sample of Urban character along US 52 and I-95

Urban (Residential areas)

Urban residential character prevails in municipalities within Florence County where lots with relatively shallow front yards bring single-family detached homes, plus other housing types (e.g., townhomes, apartments, live/work units, etc.), closer to the street. This is especially evident where no front driveways or garages are visible due to property access from rear alleys, which often occurs where lots are relatively narrow as well. These factors also allow an Urban Neighborhood still to have some amount of front yard trees and greenery. A grid street pattern and proximity to a core downtown area and other walkable destinations can also reinforce the overall neighborhood character relative to residential living in auto-oriented and Suburban character environments. However, a transition toward commercial can occur on blocks where front driveways are introduced over time, especially on lots where new homes are built after removal of older dwellings.



Sample of Urban Residential in downtown Lake City

Urban (Mixed Use areas)

Urban character is evident in downtown areas of the municipalities within Florence County. However, none of the cities in Florence County are ringed by classic Urban neighborhoods as in some larger areas, in the strictest sense of the character descriptions. Small areas in the City of Florence, Lake City, and Johnsonville come closest. Lake City Park provides an exemplary gathering space between downtown and the residential parts of the community.

- Public plazas and pocket parks help to provide green space amid the Urban environment and a place to gather and host community events, along with periodic street closures in some cases.
- A walkable street scene may be “activated” by varied retail storefronts, restaurants and pubs (especially with open-air sidewalk seating areas), cultural and entertainment venues, civic uses, historic architecture and properties, and streetscape and design treatments in the public realm.
- Mostly on-street parking and minimal off-street surface parking, until transition areas around the downtown core give way to auto-oriented site design.



- Often the only place in a smaller city where multi-level parking structures may make sense and be financially viable at some point.
- Often a focus area for infill and redevelopment activity within the community, along with nearby neighborhoods and historic districts.



Lake City Park

Mixed Use often involves the most intensively developed area of a community in terms of the greatest coverage of sites with building footprints and the least amount of private development area devoted to off-street surface parking and landscaped open space. Instead, most parking is accommodated on-street and/or within public parking areas or structures. This enables most streets and other public spaces to be framed by one- or multi-story buildings with zero or minimal front setbacks along public sidewalks, creating “architectural enclosure” versus the progressively more open feel in other character areas (Auto Urban, Suburban, etc.). These elements, along with a predominance of mixed uses (some on upper floors above street-level uses), makes the Urban character area the most conducive for pedestrian activity and interaction. Aside from master-planned “lifestyle centers” designed in this manner, Urban character is typically found only in a traditional downtown. Florence County has an opportunity, if desired, to make these types of communities if infrastructure needs can be met.



Downtown Character

Much like the Urban Character areas, the Downtown Character Area is captured in the municipalities within Florence County. While several of the municipalities within Florence County, including the City of Florence, the City of Lake City, and the Town of Coward are not subject to land use restrictions governed by Florence County as they have their own land use and zoning departments, several Downtown Character areas exist within other municipalities, including within the City of Johnsonville and the Town of Pamplico. The Downtown Development District is featured currently in those locations on the Future Land Use Map.

All photos in this section from Florence County GIS or Florenceco.org.



PRIORITY INVESTMENT

As an update to the South Carolina Planning Enabling Act, the 2007 South Carolina Priority Investment Act specifically set priorities for housing, transportation, capital improvement planning, intergovernmental coordination, and encouragement towards traditional neighborhood design. These themes are referenced throughout other elements of this plan and fully accomplished within the Land Use and Growth section of the Future County Report. It encourages local governments to reevaluate comprehensive plans to limit the growth of sprawl and prioritize projects and funding while creating new opportunities for affordable housing. The combination of these uses and study of their potential location constitute land use and transportation planning policy. Land use planning is an important component to achieve the ideal economic, social, environmental, and public health outcomes for a community. Effective future land development can occur in a productive, efficient, and sustainable manner with proper land use planning. Assessing the pros and cons about future decisions made in regards to land use is imperative. The Priority Investment Act recommends that the local jurisdictions focus on the impact of regional land use patterns, for example, the regional transportation system should be able to meet future demands of the future land use. The Act supports incorporating scenario planning in the regional travel demand model to measure the impact of land use decisions on the transportation system.

In July 2022, FLATS (Florence County Transportation Study) adopted a new 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan. This plan accomplishes many goals of the Priority Investment Act. New priorities were studied and goals set for the future development of Florence County.

The Future Land Use Map contained within this Plan also accomplishes many of the goals within the Act. However, also important to discuss are the following components:

Funding

Bonding Capacity and Local Option Sales Tax

Bonds, grants and donations make up the majority of capital projects funding. Florence County has consistently utilized general obligation bonds (GOBs) for large projects. The County has the capability to utilize its full bonding potential and insure bonds only when needed for long term investment and capital improvement projects. Additionally, the County works with other entities that share its public protection mission for them to issue tax exempt bonds.

The County has also approved a One-Cent Capital Project Sales Tax three times in the past to facilitate improvements in Florence County. The County maintains a Penny Tour website contained within with Florence County pages to see the improvements made across the County. This public funding choices made within the One-Cent Capital program allows Florence County to collaborate with other governmental entities including utilities, other counties, municipalities, public service districts, school districts, public and private utilities, transportation agencies, and other public entities to create a plan for growth and continued improvement of the Pee Dee. While the most recent Capital Sales tax was approved by County Council on March 18, 2021, a list of all improvements throughout the programs history as well as links to current projects can be found here: <http://florenceco.org/road-projects>



Transportation Funding

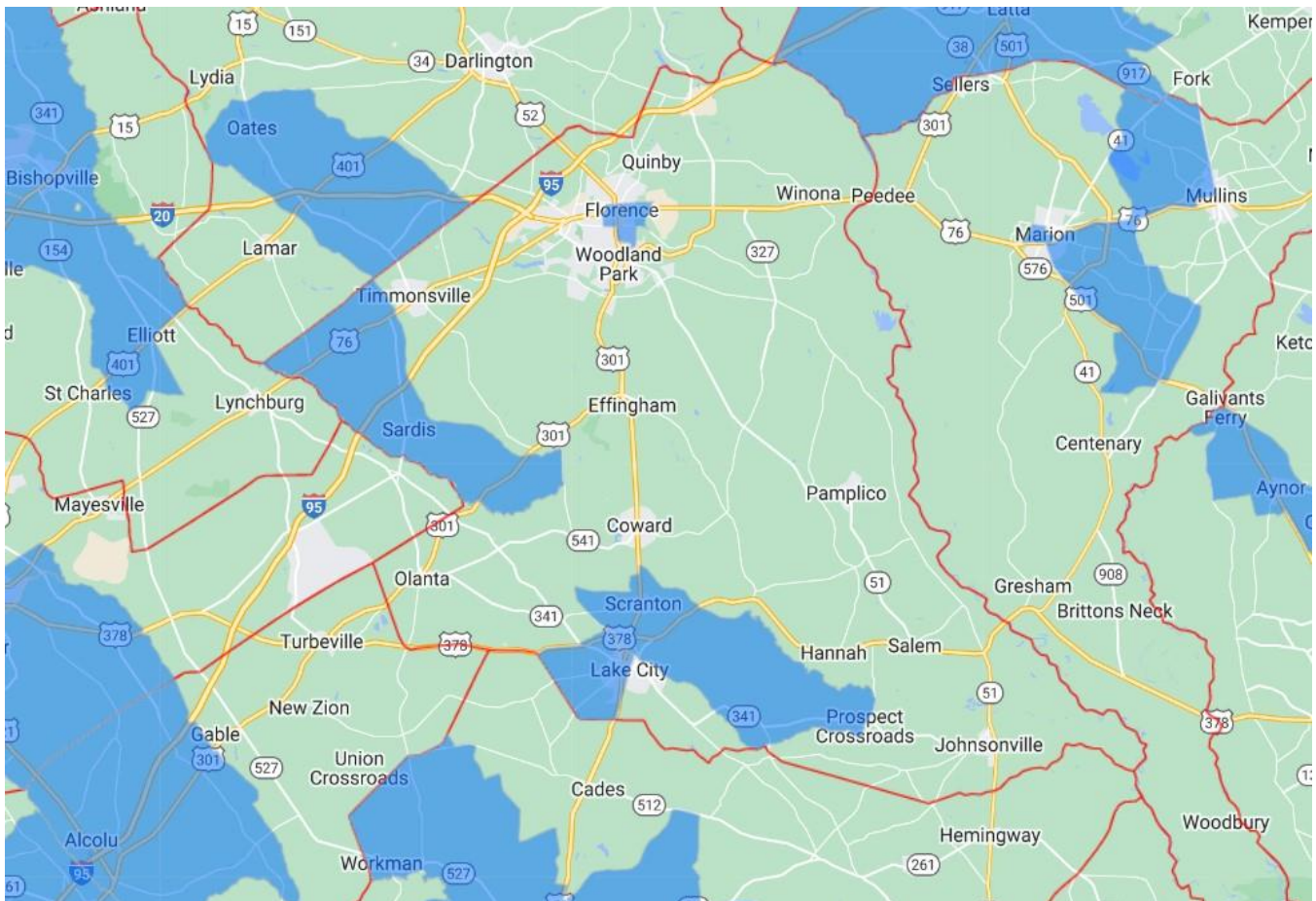
For all transportation funding information and priorities, please refer to the FLATS website on the Florence County Planning page. The details within that plan are intricate and too numerous to be contained within this plan.

Pee Dee Council of Governments

Similar to FLATS, the Pee Dee Council of Governments (PDCOG) receives Guidesshare funds from the federal transportation authorization, through SCDOT; but, its funds are directed to rural areas outside of the FLATS. The annual Guidesshare covers roadway improvements in Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion and Marlboro counties. Like the FLATS, the PDCOG prioritizes roadway improvements through a fiscally constrained long range transportation plan (LRTP).

South Carolina Opportunity Zones

Opportunity Zones are a new community development program established by Congress as a part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. They are designed to encourage long-term private investments in low-income communities. This program provides a federal tax incentive for taxpayers who reinvest unrealized capital gains into "Opportunity Funds," which are specialized vehicles dedicated to investing in low-income areas called "Opportunity Zones." There are four in Florence County:





The first is in the City of Florence. This opportunity zone corresponds with Census Tract 45041000700. The second is near Timmonsville (Census Tract 45041002500). The remaining two are in the southern portion of Florence County near Scranton and Lake City. They are adjacent to one another (Census Tracts 45041002201 and 45041002000). Investing in these areas provides preferential tax treatment. To date, there is only one project being developed in an opportunity zone in Florence County and it is the Republic 124 Project in the City of Florence.

Other Priority Investment Areas

As identified in the Economic Development Element, Florence County has invested heavily in shovel ready industrial sites across the area. These sites and future goals in the economic development arena are discussed in the Future County Report.



FUTURE COUNTY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

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

Process

This effort stems from a thorough planning process. The plan's findings and recommendations focus on the physical and economic aspects of the County's projected growth and development in the coming years. It provides guiding principles, goals, policies and action priorities that will help Florence County officials, appointees, and Staff in determining the location, financing, and sequencing of public improvements; administering development regulations; and guiding reinvestment efforts. The Plan also provides a basis for coordinating the actions of many different functions and interests within and outside of County government. Growth depends on many people to make these goals a reality. The County cannot do it alone. The private sector also plays an integral role in the future of Florence County.

Purpose

A comprehensive plan is one of the most important policy documents a County government prepares and maintains. This is because the plan:

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

Through a comprehensive plan, a County can determine how best to accommodate and manage its projected growth, and the revitalization of older neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. *Connecting Our Past, Defining Our Future* is not just a title. It is a mission statement. It means this effort is attempting to ensure that ongoing development and redevelopment will proceed in an orderly, well-planned manner so that public facilities and services can keep pace, and so that residents' quality of life will be enhanced.



Significantly, by clarifying and stating the County's intentions regarding zoning, physical development, and infrastructure investment, the plan also creates a greater level of predictability for residents, land owners, developers, potential investors, and partner agencies and organizations.

Tuning In: Creating Focus Areas from State Mandates

State mandated elements were described in detail in the Existing County phase of the plan to provide direction when setting program and funding priorities to enhance the quality of life in Florence County.

In order to fine tune recommendations and goals that have echoes from many required elements, the Future County portion of the plan will cover them in four unique ways. Each of these topics below incorporates aspects of the others to form a cohesive way to think about the future. The future will be discussed in areas where a direct impact can be made on other areas.

These include:

1. Land Use and Growth
2. Economic Development
3. Housing
4. Amenities and the Next Big Thing

These have been formulated from the plan focus areas discovered early on in the process:

Plan Focus Areas



Upkeep of existing commercial and industrial properties and recruiting more

Continued support and improvement of public safety and other County Services



Retention of college students with good jobs and things to do for younger people

Quality and promotion of recreation and natural resources

More and affordable housing options while supporting existing neighborhoods





Why Plan?

Local planning allows Florence County to better control its future rather than simply react to change. Planning enables the County to manage future growth and development actively as opposed to reacting to development and redevelopment on a case-by-case basis without adequate and necessary consideration of community-wide issues. The process for developing the plan involved leadership discussions about Florence County's priorities and its capability to provide the necessary public services and facilities to support these priorities. This led to pivotal discussions about what is “best” for the community and how everything from taxes to quality of life will be affected.

Long-range comprehensive planning provides an opportunity for the County elected and appointed officials to step back from pressing, day-to-day issues and clarify their ideas on the kind of place they are trying to create and maintain. Through the plan development process, they can look broadly at programs for neighborhoods, housing, economic development, and provision of public infrastructure and facilities and how these efforts may relate to one another. The plan ultimately represents a “big picture” of the community and its near-term and longer-range future. Bottom line, the essential reasons for long-range planning include to:

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

Use of this Plan and Important Considerations

A comprehensive plan, if embraced by leadership and residents, has the potential to take a community to a whole new level in terms of livability and tangible accomplishments.

The plan is ultimately a guidance document for County officials and staff, who must make decisions on a daily basis that will determine the future direction, financial health, and “look and feel” of the community. These decisions are carried out through the following considerations:

- In accordance with South Carolina State Law, Zoning and Subdivision regulations must be made in accordance with the comprehensive plan. They must be made with a view to promoting the purposes set forth throughout this plan.



- Land use changes, including amendments to this plan's Future Land Use Map or to the Zoning Map, are nuanced and must consider many factors when making decisions. There are numerous factors to consider before making a change, especially to zoning, including:
 - Compliance with the Future Land Use Map
 - Changes that have occurred over time in the immediate and surrounding area
 - Benefit to all areas of the community where the rezoning is occurring
 - Public infrastructure implications and requirements, including transportation and utilities
 - Educational impacts to local schools
 - Impact on natural resources
 - Ability for the community to absorb the impacts of the project without a major impact to the quality of life the current residents and businesses enjoy and expect
- A strong understanding that although a request is made, many factors go into the decision to approve or deny other than the requestors plea and desire to change.
- Targeted programs and expenditures prioritized through the County's annual budget process, including routine but essential functions such as code compliance. For example, will the rezoning or change impact the ability for current department operations to continue successfully.
- Major public improvements and land acquisitions financed through the County's budgeting efforts.
- New and amended County ordinances and regulations closely linked to this plan's objectives that may be taking place concurrently.
- Departmental work plans and resources in key areas.
- Support for ongoing planning and studies that will further clarify needs, costs, benefits and strategies.
- Pursuit of external grant funding to supplement local budgets and/or expedite certain projects.
- Initiatives pursued in conjunction with other public and private partners to leverage resources and achieve successes neither could accomplish on their own.

Despite these many avenues for action, the plan should not be considered a “cure all” for every tough problem that Florence County may face. This plan focuses primarily on the responsibilities of County government in the physical planning arena, where Counties normally have a more direct and extensive role than in other areas that residents value, such as education and social services. Of necessity, comprehensive plans, as vision and policy documents, also must remain relatively general.

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



Our Future County

While the Existing County Report provides background and insights about Florence County as it is today in ten elements as required by State Law, this Future County portion of the plan focuses on Florence County as it intends to be in the years ahead. These aspirations are presented in topic areas that are central to physical growth and development. Through the process of preparing this plan, the set of five overarching guiding principles below was developed. A guiding principle expresses a basic value or operating policy that will apply regardless of the course of action ultimately chosen.

Guiding Principles

1. Florence County will emphasize **QUALITY**, ensuring growth is managed in a way that adds value to the County, while also strengthening existing residential development and commercial/industrial businesses.
2. Florence County will be **ADAPTABLE**, focusing on developing and sustaining a diverse economy that attracts and retains individuals and families to put down roots in the community, while providing a robust range of housing to accommodate people in all stages of life.
3. Florence County will be **AUTHENTIC**, continuing to focus on those elements that differentiate it such as its natural assets including rivers and parks, and its friendly and welcoming nature as a benefit for both current and future residents to enjoy.
4. Florence County will be **ACTIVE**, enabling healthy living through offering quality and safe County parks and recreational opportunities, by prioritizing the ability to walk and bicycle safely, and by committing to maintain high levels of public safety services.
5. Florence County will be **COLLABORATIVE**, pursuing and maintaining partnerships in all arenas, including housing, transportation, infrastructure, economic development, emergency response, and arts and culture.



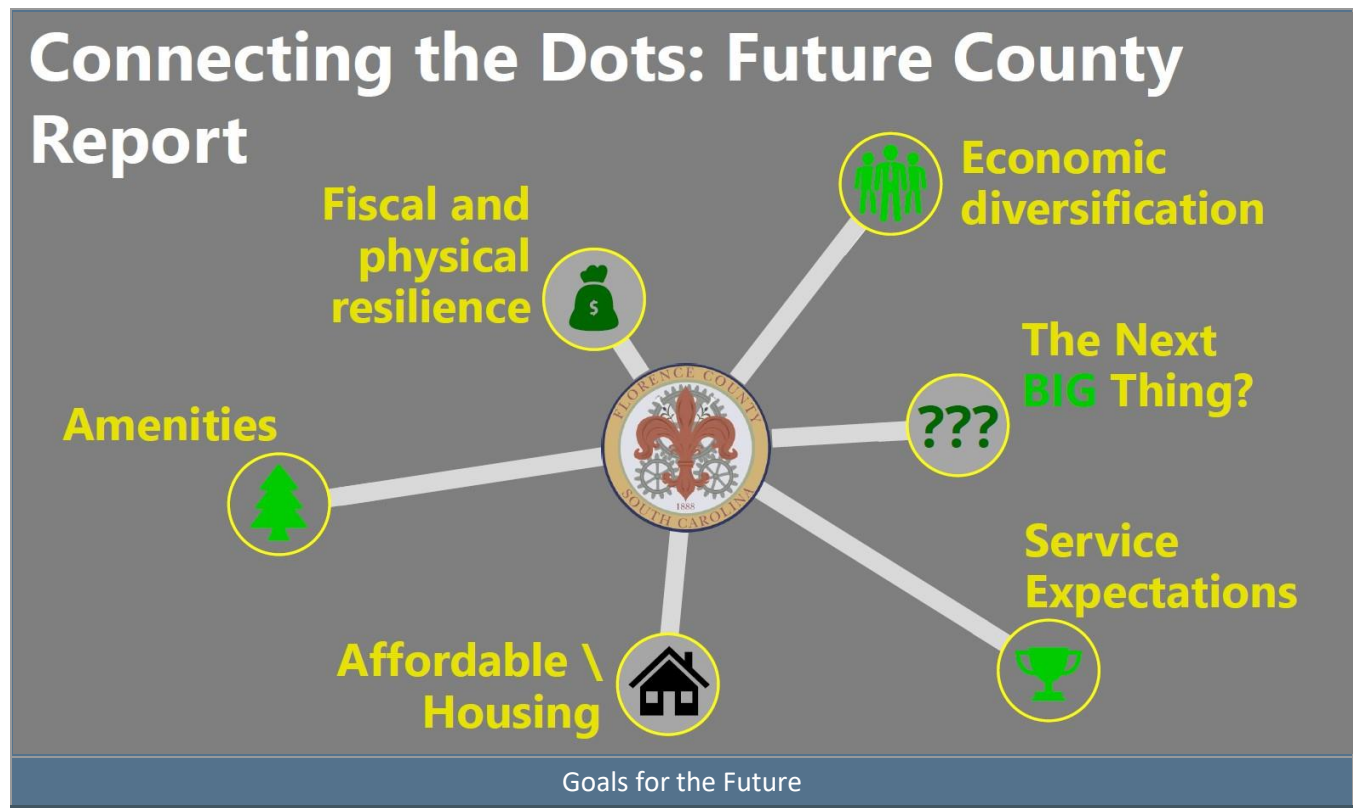


LAND USE AND GROWTH

Introduction

The purpose of studying Land Use is to guide policy to enable Florence County to plan effectively for future development and redevelopment. However, another important goal is to protect and preserve uses that are necessary for the vitality of the community. Sound land use planning is essential to ensure that the County is prepared to serve anticipated public infrastructure and service needs, and also to create and maintain a desired community character.

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





Key Planning Issues and Considerations

Throughout this process, a wheel of priorities was identified based on input from County Council, the Planning Commission, key community stakeholders, the results of public engagement activities, County staff, and the consultant team. These include:

- A. Economic Diversification
- B. Fiscal and Physical Resilience
- C. High Service Expectations
- D. Excellent and Expanded Amenities
- E. Affordable and Diverse Housing
- F. The Next Big Thing for Florence County

Several of these are land use specific and are discussed below.

Framework for Action

The Framework for Action involves tangible steps that will, in the long run, lead to achievement of the goals in this Land Use and Development section in line with the plan's Guiding Principles. Those Principles, which are located in the Introduction of the Future County section, include growing with quality, being adaptable, being authentic, creating active living, and being collaborative across all services.

Goals for Land Use and Development

- A. A land use allocation and pattern that advances Florence County's objectives of achieving greater housing variety, supporting its economic development and tax base needs, and creating a complete community with convenient resident access to schools, recreation, shopping, and services. This will capture an increased amount of growth from surrounding counties and the entire Pee Dee Region.
- B. Consistent character of land use within areas intended for particular character types shown on the Future Land Use Map.
- C. Ongoing and effective collaboration between land use and other planning sectors to ensure a well-connected, thriving County.

Policies for Land Use and Development

In making decisions that involve public resource allocation, regulatory matters, and physical improvements, among others, Florence County will:

- A. Appreciate residents' desire to maintain Florence County's identity and character as the region continues to grow. The region is growing at a rapid pace and many neighboring communities may have experiences to share.
- B. Accommodate a range of character settings within its planning area to address preferences, from large-lot living to denser and walkable mixed-use living environments. There are many choices of zoning districts



within each Future Land Use category that give decision makers the ability to make nuanced decisions for each and every property within Florence County.

- C. Continue to support a character based approach to zoning.
- D. Promote land use outcomes that further community objectives.
- E. Ensure development design respects the area's environmental assets and resource base, including rivers and streams.
- F. Manage land use patterns near Florence County's parks, trails, and open spaces to: protect their ecological functions; prevent physical and other impactful encroachments; maintain public access; and preserve their overall quality and value – especially where public green spaces contribute to County character and enhance commercial settings.
- G. Plan for destination development in the vicinity of the County's partner municipalities as well as near the growing commercial corridors in Florence County that build toward a cohesive business economy over time rather than a fragmented pattern of stand-alone developments.

Along with the broader-brush statements of policy above, the specific policies below are intended as a supplement to the Future Land Use map, which provides only a visual depiction of desired land use patterns and sound development practices. County officials and staff should use these statements as a guide and reference, particularly when making decisions regarding proposed development activity and/or changes in zoning classifications. Details about land use decision making were also previously stated in the Introduction of this Future County Report.

Numbering Explanation

Each of the categories below have a list of policy statements that Planning Staff and Elected Officials can rely on when making decisions. They are enumerated with the category letter and then a number to correspond with the statement. The letters are used to distinguish between categories.

General

- G1: Land uses should not detract from the enjoyment or value of neighboring properties.
- G2: Potential negative land use effects (noise, odor, dust, excessive light, traffic, etc.) should be considered in development review/approval and mitigated.
- G3: Adequate transportation access and circulation should be provided for uses that generate large numbers of trips. Pedestrian and bicycle access should be addressed where appropriate.
- G4: Well-planned mixed-use projects are encouraged where compatible with nearby development.
- G5: Floodplain areas should not be encroached upon by development unless there is compliance with stringent floodplain management practices. These areas should be used for parks, recreation or related purposes, or for agricultural uses.
- G6: Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected, including wildlife habitat areas.
- G7: Community attractions that draw many external visitors should be in locations with good regional transportation access and visibility.

Residential



R1: Residential areas should not be located next to heavy industrial areas.

R2: Residential and commercial areas may be adjacent if separated by a buffer in alignment with Zoning.

R3: Schools, parks, and community facilities should be located close to or within residential neighborhoods.

R4: New residential developments should include adequate area for parks and recreation facilities, schools and places of worship.

Commercial

C1: Neighborhood retail and service uses should be located at intersections of thoroughfares or collector streets or at the edge of logical neighborhood areas unless appropriately placed within a planned development.

C2: Retail development should be clustered throughout the community and convenient to residential areas.

C3: Buffers should separate retail and office uses from residential areas.

C4: Office and professional uses should be compatible with nearby residential areas and other uses through appropriate building height limitations and adequate buffering and landscaping.

C5: Low-intensity office and professional uses should provide a transition between more intense uses and residential areas.

Heavy Commercial

H1: Commercial uses with more intensive operational or traffic characteristics should be located away from most residential areas.

H2: Heavy commercial development should be concentrated in nodes at intersections and along major thoroughfares that are designed and constructed to accommodate higher traffic volumes.

H3: Buffers should separate heavy commercial uses from any adjacent residential areas, especially where the commercial use involves visible display or outdoor storage of merchandise or materials.

Industrial

I1: Heavy industrial development should not be directly adjacent to residential areas without ample consideration.

I2: Industrial uses should be located in dedicated industrial development areas as mapped.

I3: Industrial development should be separated from other uses by buffers.

I4: Industrial development should have good access to thoroughfares and interstates where possible.

I5: Industrial development involving trucking operations should have good access to truck routes, designated hazardous material routes, and railroads as applicable.

Parks and Open Space



P1: Parks should be evenly distributed throughout the County and include larger community parks and smaller neighborhood parks.

P2: Pedestrian connections should be provided between parks, schools, residential areas and employment centers.

P3: Parks are a desirable use for floodplain areas.

P4: Parks and open space should be used to buffer incompatible land uses.

P5: Natural features should be used as buffers or preserved open space between or around developed areas.



Future Land Use Categories

Shown on the Future Land Use and Character map is the general pattern of uses anticipated and/or desired in the years ahead, and the character contexts in which uses occur. The map, along with the text descriptions in this section, indicate the use that is expected to predominate in areas where land is currently undeveloped or, in previously developed areas, based on what is already on the ground and will likely remain or possibly evolve. Such transitions in use can occur through redevelopment of previously built sites, “infill” construction on a vacant parcel amid existing built sites, or repurposing of an existing structure for another use without significant site changes. Along with the predominant use types, other complementary uses will also remain or may emerge in particular areas of the community (e.g., small-scale, neighborhood-oriented retail and service uses within or near the edges of largely residential areas). Certain uses can be located amid other predominant use types, such as public facilities and places of worship within predominantly residential areas. Mixing uses on sites is common in downtowns (e.g., upper floor office or residential above ground-floor retail) and may occur elsewhere in a community as the market accommodates and zoning allows. Some uses are highly market-driven, with their timing and particular location dictated by the extent and pace of other types of development. This includes the typical pattern of retail uses locating near new residential “rooftops” and often at key roadway intersections. The location and extent of various forms of residential development can also be difficult to predict amid broader housing market cycles and regional needs, combined with developer areas of expertise and interest in bringing single-family or multi-family products to market.



What is Character?

Character is the feeling an area has that comes from aesthetic enhancements such as architectural design, landscaping and screening, signage standards, and site amenities. These all contribute to development appearance. However, many of these factors can and should vary with the area character, which as defined here involves the interplay between buildings, paved surfaces and unbuilt areas. For example, in a downtown core like Johnsonville's relative to suburban areas, landscaping shifts more to the public realm given minimal building setbacks and yard areas.

Character based land use planning provides flexibility and helps to achieve the policies and objectives in this document.

Map Categories

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

Variable Development District 1

Variable Development District 2

Suburban

Urban

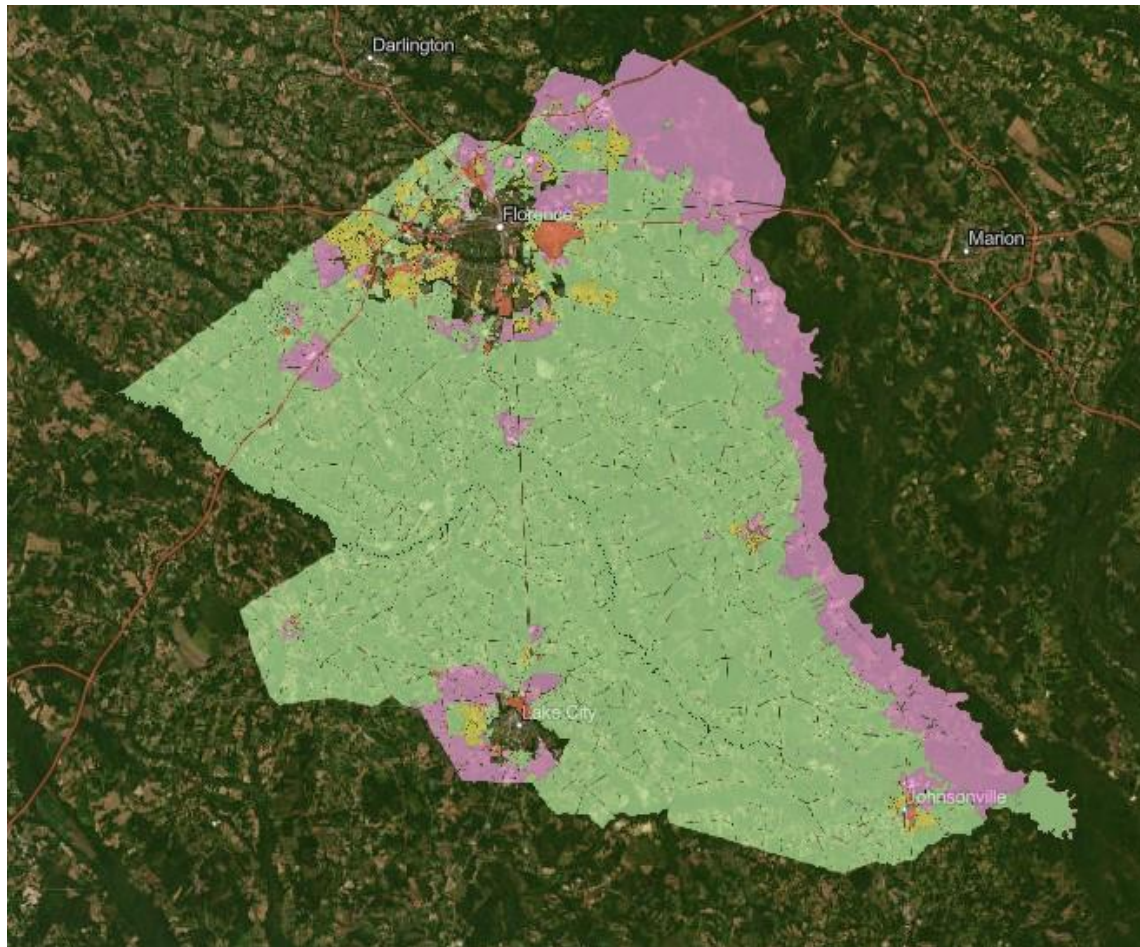
Downtown

The following descriptions indicate the anticipated principal zones in each category, plus the intended character of the areas in which the land uses occur, abut or mix. Public and institutional uses, including public parks, commonly occur in all of these areas and should match the character. These match the Zoning Districts in the Zoning Ordinance.



Future Land Use Map

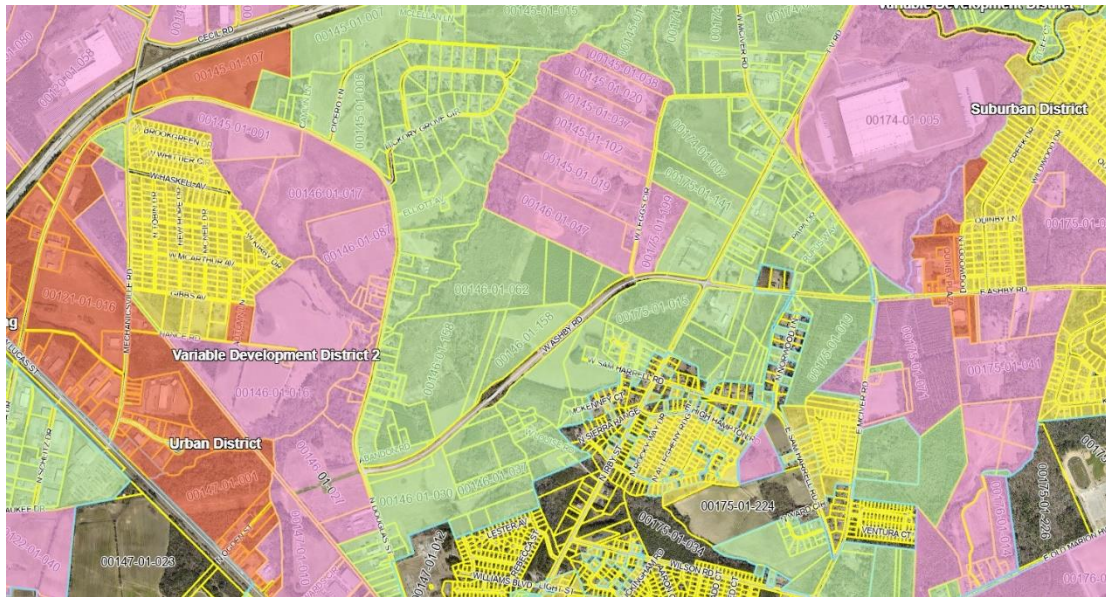
The Future Land Use Map is a graphical representation of the policies and goals in this plan. These designations and their placement is very specifically designed to promote the ideals of character found in each district.



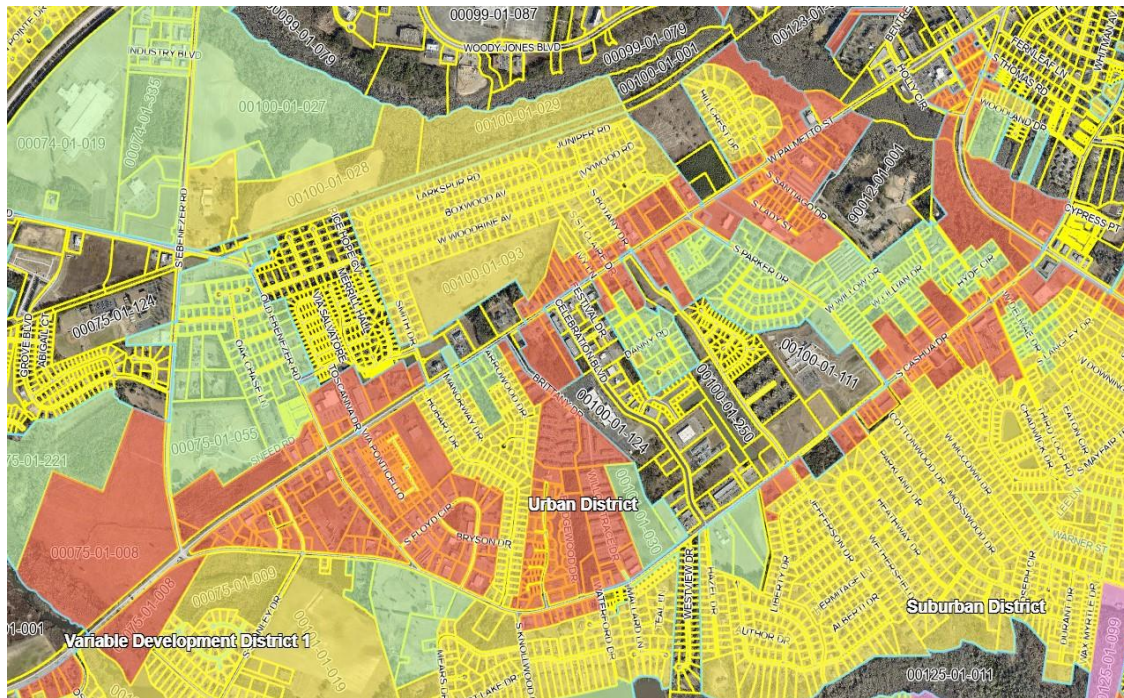
Florence County Future Land Use Map



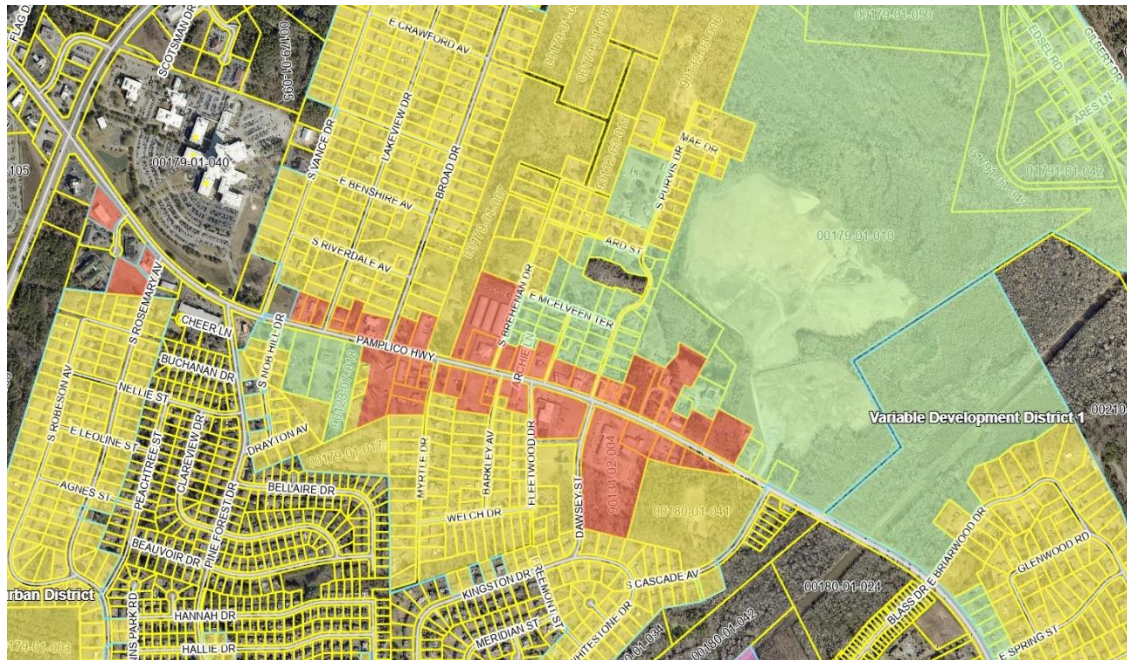
Maps by Area:



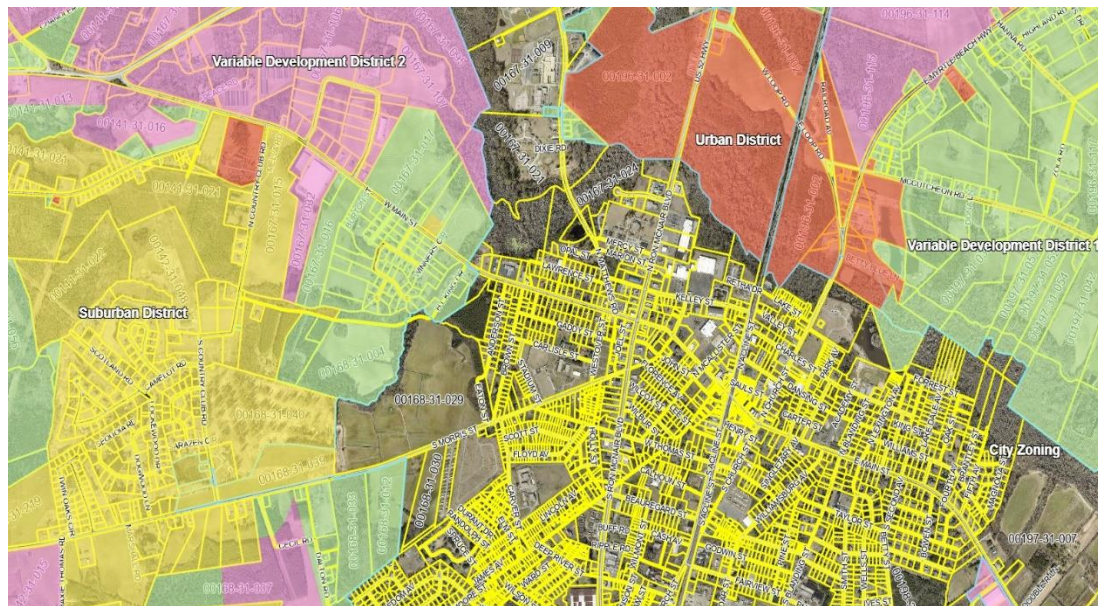
North Florence



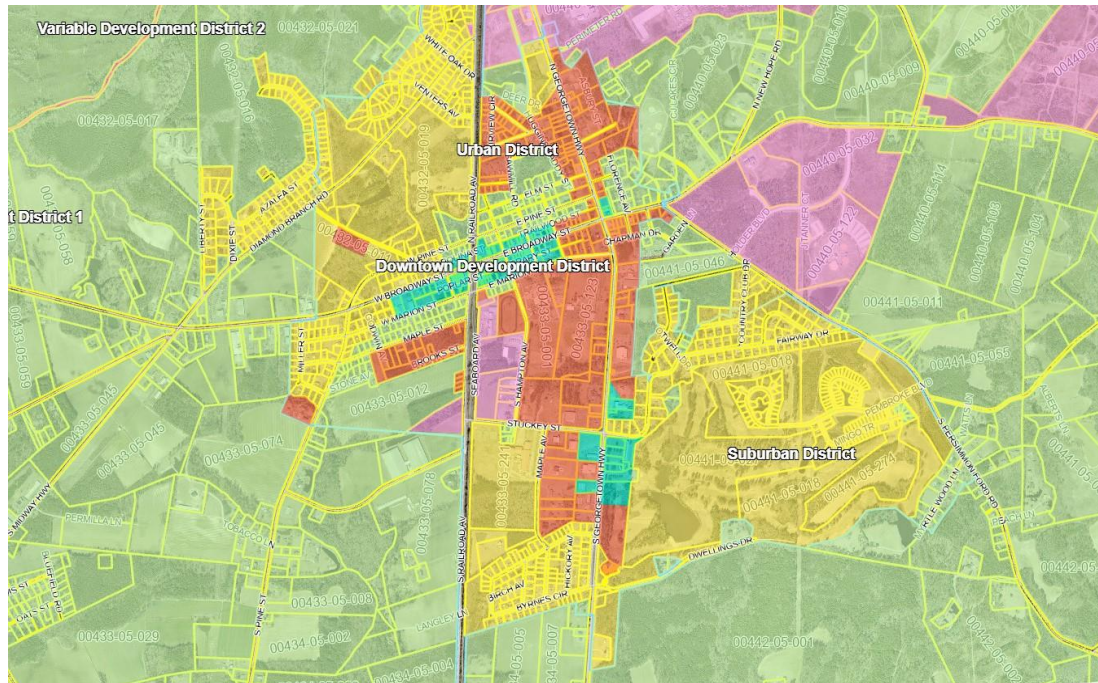
W. Palmetto Street



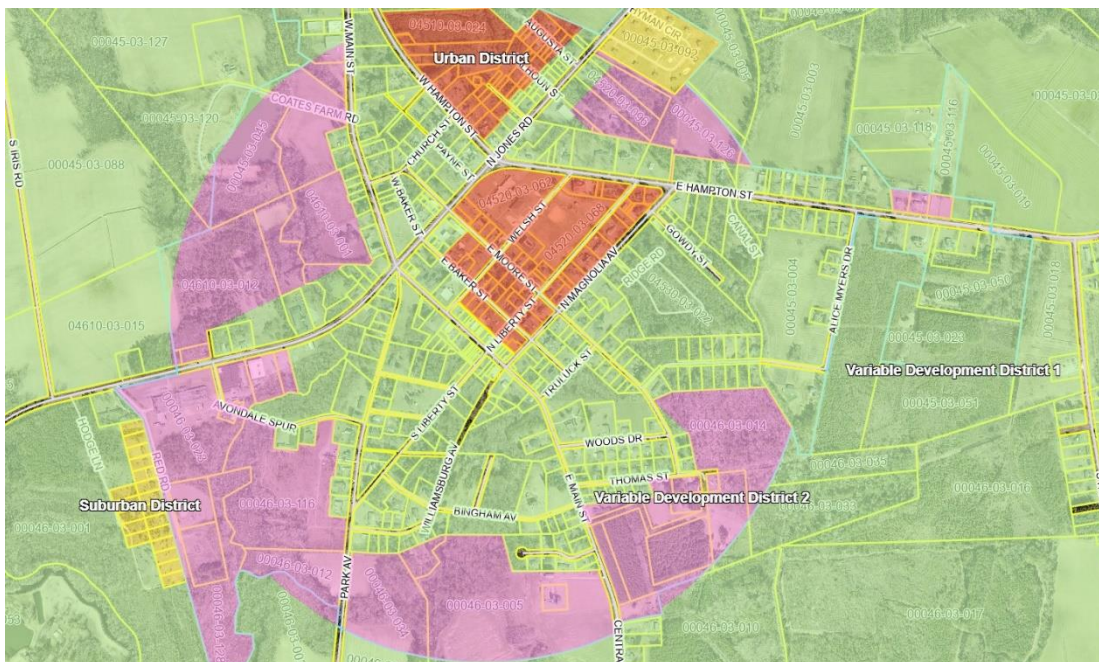
Pamplico Highway



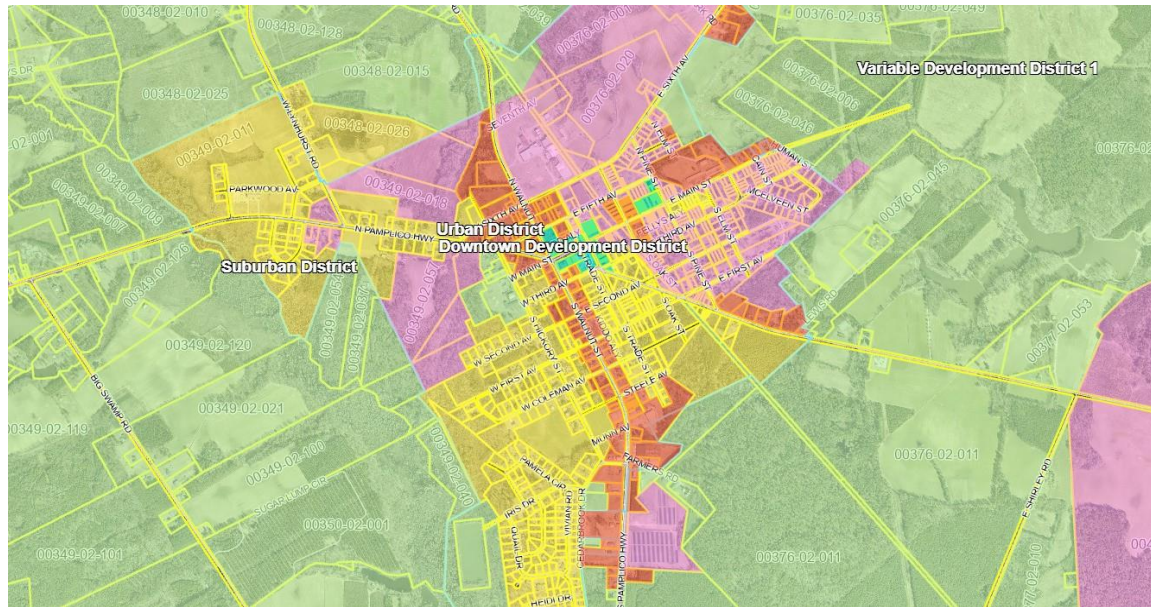
Lake City



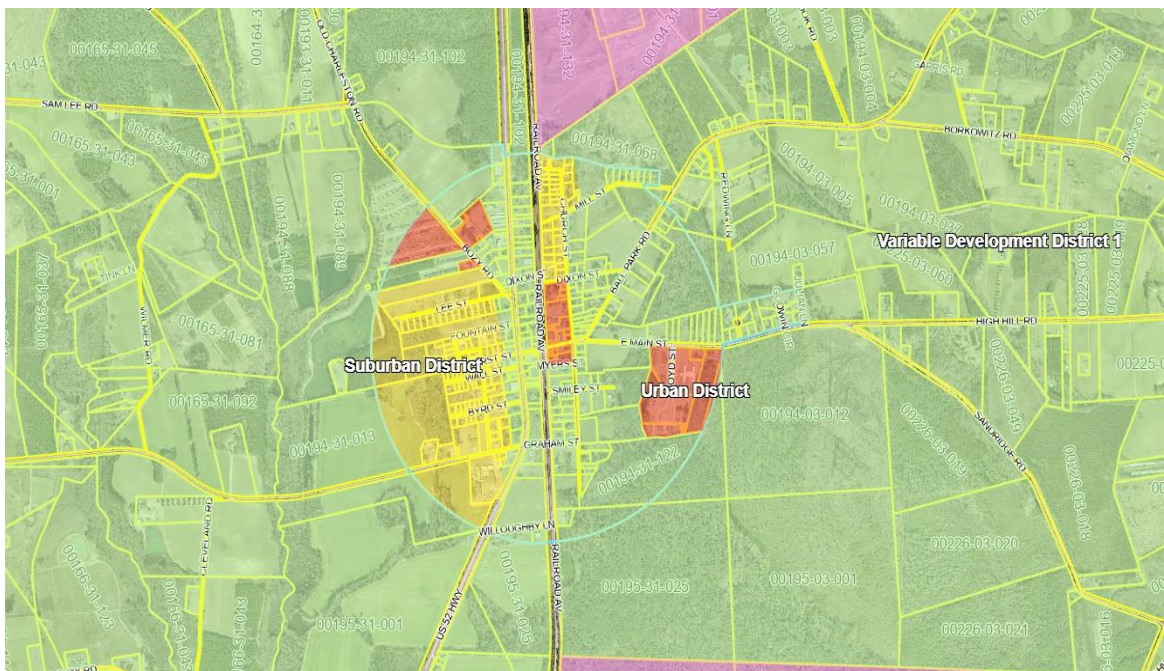
Johnsonville



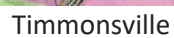
Olanta



Pamplico



Scranton





- **Variable** character areas have wide open spaces and a mixture of commercial and residential uses. This area makes up the majority of the undeveloped areas of the county as well as areas that are transitioning into more developed areas. *Zoning Districts appropriate in the Variable Development District Future Land Use Category include **B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, R1, R3, R3A, RU-1, RU-1A, RU-2, TH, MR, MMF, FO/LI, CMU, and PD.*** **However, to clarify that certain areas of the County are prescribed for a more intense land use than others, there are two Variable Development Districts, which include:**
 - **Variable Development District 1: B1, B2, B3, RU-1, RU-1A, R1, R3, R3A, TH, MR, MMF, FO/LI, CMU, and PD.** This generally focuses on the first 500 feet from urban corridors and the majority of the Rural land in Florence County. For parcels that are greater than 500 feet deep, the entirety of the parcel could be developed in the preferred zoning district if approved by Council when rezoning. Overall, this area will include most areas within ½ mile from Suburban or Urban categories.
 - **Variable Development District 2: B5, B6, RU-1, RU-1A, RU-2, FO/LI, and PD.** This area is specified in Florence County as specifically for industrial parks and growth as well as large lot residential development. This is also a district option for Rural land.
- **Suburban** character areas have noticeably less intensive use of land than Urban areas, with open and green spaces balancing – or, in estate sized areas, exceeding – the extent of land covered by structures and paved surfaces. *Zoning Districts appropriate in the Suburban District Future Land Use Category include **R1, R2, R3, R3A, B1, MR, and PD.***
- **Urban** character areas exhibit the greatest pedestrian orientation, through a more compact scale and “architectural enclosure” of streets by buildings situated close to front property lines and sidewalks. Within the Urban class, auto urban character areas are a particular planning challenge as they are designed mainly to accommodate automobile circulation and parking. This is the main type of Urban development in Florence County. The extent of land cover by buildings and paved surfaces is similar to Urban areas, but often without a pedestrian orientation as in traditional downtowns. This is especially true where development is spread across the landscape more horizontally relative to more compact “development nodes” and “activity centers” that enable multi-purpose trips and walking or biking between destinations. *Zoning Districts within Florence County appropriate in the Urban District Future Land Use Category include **B1, B2, B3, R3A, R4, R5, R5A, TH, MR, MMF, MU, CMU, and PD.***
- Much like Urban character areas, **Downtown** character areas are categorized by development very close to or within the proximity of a municipal downtown. *As Florence County does Land Use planning for several municipalities therein, including the Downtown Development District Future Land Use Category is necessary with the allowed zonings of **B4, MU, CMU, and PD.***



A Note on Land Use Planning and Zoning

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

Key Takeaways to Achieve Land Use Objectives

There are a couple of key takeaways necessary to achieve the desired land use objectives above:

Development Ordinances

In order to move into the future to accomplish these goals, land use ordinances, including zoning and subdivision regulations, are critical. Florence County will be reviewing all ordinances that could parallel the Future Land Use Categories found in this document. The County must continually review all aspects of the zoning ordinance, based on this new plan, to identify potential regulatory and/or standards updates. Doing so, it must add new or amend current provisions, as needed, that are directly linked to changing land use priorities. These will include sections related to housing attainability, neighborhood conservation, business retention and attraction, leisure and lifestyle related land uses, pedestrian support, and park and open space protection.

County Initiatives

In order to achieve desired objectives, Florence County must continue to coordinate with local County partners to ensure cohesiveness and compatibility with their planning efforts. This land use plan cannot fully capture all future changes. As such, Florence County must be ever present and mindful of the needs of the community residents as the region grows and changes.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This plan section highlights how Florence County is part of a broader economy contributing to the success of the South Carolina business and economic climate. The County has a strong employment base and growing living options for area residents. The County and the Florence County Economic Development Partnership and other regional partners continue to work on key economic development factors they can directly influence, whether involving utility infrastructure availability and capacity, the size and skills of the local workforce, networking and support among existing and prospective new local businesses, and processes for

The Role of the FCEDP

The Florence County Economic Development Partnership (FCEDP) plays a massive role in economic development and it is an extremely important responsibility. In turn, the services, infrastructure and amenities the County provides are enticements that encourage further economic growth. Well-constructed economic development policies and incentives will provide County government the greatest opportunity to influence the quality, quantity and timing of development. Such policies will create the ability to shift some of the risk of funding public improvements to private sector partners and will afford the opportunity to ensure growth pays for itself.

obtaining development approvals and permits. Local governments create synergy by providing basic public services, on the one hand, while also pursuing economic development initiatives. Increased economic activity that creates a growing tax base better enables the County to provide the infrastructure and services desired by residents and businesses. Successful economic development also requires a focus on quality of place, capitalizing on the County's special character and often-cited “charm” to attract and retain businesses and high-skilled workers and to draw visitors seeking shopping, services, entertainment, recreation, arts and culture, and heritage tourism. During early discussions for this plan it was often noted that Florence County has entered a new era of residential growth after an earlier time of being known more for a slower

pace. As this transition continues, Florence County also has the opportunity to build a more comprehensive and sophisticated approach to economic development as it is doing in other areas of governance and collaboration appropriate to a growing community.

In addition to the goals listed here, it is important for County leaders to continually reference and consult with the staff of the FCEDP.

Growth and Revitalization Strategies

Economic development plays a huge role in land use decision making and in the County's growth and revitalization strategies, particularly to support additional primary jobs within the County. Identifying areas of growth and development create economic diversity. Several strategies to employ include:

- A. Focusing economic growth in the commercial and industrial sectors to the identified corridors on the Future Land Use Map.
- B. Focusing on diversification of companies to create a stable, solid, and longstanding industrial tax base.



- C. Working with education partners at all levels (high school, community college, and university) across the region and state to attract professionals to live and work in Florence County. This will create a workforce ready to meet the needs of current and prospective employers.
- D. Create a strategy within the County to continue to have a wide range of employment opportunities as well as housing and lifestyle amenities.
- E. Keep an ongoing focus on drawing more and higher-level retail investment to address resident desires and bolster the County's tax base.
- F. Prioritize a higher utilization of industrial land, especially areas that are already “shovel-ready”.
- G. Support the growth of the strong medical and hospital presence, including specialists. Leveraging new major employers to assist in the effort to support medical services may be a synergy to continue.
- H. Continue to strengthen Florence County's tourism industry and support preservation of the County's rich history.
- I. Reinforce Florence County's charming identity while also highlighting its proximity and links to other nearby areas and major South Carolina metropolitan regions.



Photo from FCEDP.



Priority Investments

Public Projects

As required by the Priority Investment Act, Florence County must do the following when considering public projects: Consult and coordinate with all governmental entities and utilities - other counties, municipalities, public service districts, school districts, public and private utilities, transportation agencies and other public entities - that are affected by or have any planning authority over any public project identified. This coordination can be detailed, but is required to be at a basic level providing written notice to these agencies with an opportunity to comment before a project is approved. Through the process of writing and developing this Plan, these agencies were notified and given opportunity to engage as they will continue to be when any new public projects are proposed.

New Zoning Tools

The Priority Investment Act also provides for two new zoning tools to promote affordable housing and traditional neighborhood design. Florence County shall:

- A. Undertake a study of their zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to determine if the regulatory requirements affecting the affordability of housing are not necessary to protect the public health, safety or welfare.
- B. Analyze market-based incentives that may be made available to encourage the development of affordable housing. Under the Priority Investment Act, Florence County can identify priority investment zones to adopt market based incentives or relax or eliminate nonessential housing regulatory requirements in order to encourage affordable housing. The creation of a new zoning map achieves this goal as many areas are now zoned to allow multiple types of housing. Additional zoning tools should also be considered.
- C. The Act also requires Florence County to identify priority investment zones to encourage traditional neighborhood design – communities with mixed residential and commercial uses that look and function like traditional towns and neighborhoods. They have done that through the creation of a new zoning map allowing Planned Development throughout the County. They may wish to add additional tools to their ordinance in this regard as well. These tools include density bonuses, relaxed zoning regulations such as lot area requirements or setbacks, reduced or waived fees, fast track permitting, and design flexibility. All of these should be studied when a zoning ordinance rewrite is completed.



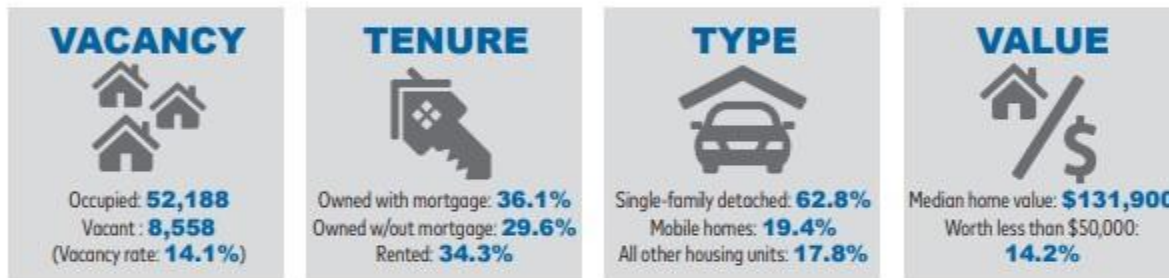
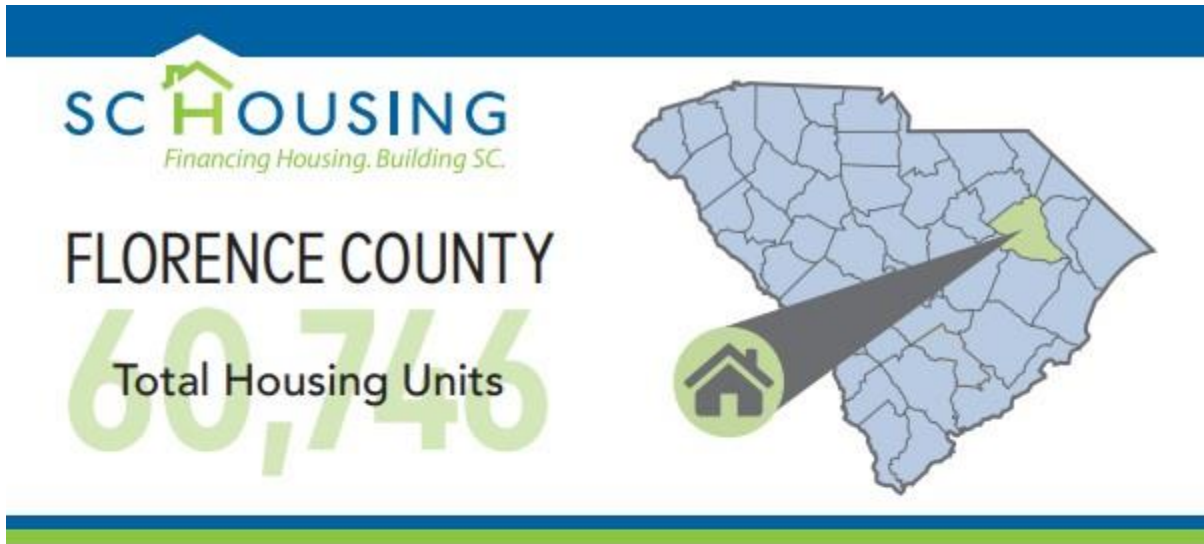
HOUSING

Introduction

The County's access to both Interstate 95 and the end of I-26 allow for easy travel access to and from the entire Pee Dee area. Many years ago, developers began proposing plans for a variety of housing, single family detached and attached, multifamily, as well as options for ownership or rental.

As new residential sites and remodels continue to grow, the duty of the County is to protect land, and investments. All of these factors need to be considered when projecting future development and expansion of residential communities in Florence County. Zoning can only go so far. The County can only do so much. Creating good land use policies that developers can look to can support connectivity, recreation, and infrastructure when considering projects.

The following infographic from SC Housing shows some recent details about Florence County.



Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (2015-2019)

- 4,076** severely cost burdened renter households
- \$2.90** "housing wage" gap for the average renter
- 461** evictions per 1,000 renter households
- 21** subsidized rental housing units per 100 low-income renters (8,639 low-income renters living in unsubsidized housing)

Source: 2021 South Carolina Housing Needs Assessment



SOUTH CAROLINA STATE HOUSING FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
300-C Outlet Pointe Boulevard Columbia, South Carolina 29210 PH: 803.896.9001 SCHousing.com



Key Issues to Consider

During stakeholder and leadership engagement and as a result of the growing affordability problem discovered during the Existing County Phase, it is important for Florence County to encourage housing opportunities that offer a variety of market rate options. While there is a housing need, maintaining the volume of growth the County has to ensure logical, proportional growth at a rate which the County can serve is crucial. The sections below provide tangible steps to promote stable growth in the community without disrupting service or neighborhood consistency for existing areas. The items from the County's main strategic plan that are most relevant to this section are:

- Promote Housing Development
- Increase Community Walkability
- Invest in Appearance and Downtown Revitalization for Municipalities with Florence County

Action Plan Guide

Housing Goals

There are several housing goals that are important to consider:

- A. Create a diverse blend of housing options, including single family detached, single family attached, multi-family, and active living facilities.
- B. Bring market rate apartments and rental properties into the community.
- C. Preserve and/or enhance value for existing residential properties by promoting subdivision designs that offer new community development with long-term sustainability
- D. Promote connectivity through design and open space encouragement to allow for walking trails, sidewalk development, and overall pedestrian access through neighborhoods.



Policies for Housing

It is important for Florence County to consider the following policies for making decisions during the approval process of new housing:

- A. Continue to follow all standards and development regulations set forth by the Zoning Ordinance and/or Land Development and Subdivision Ordinance, or other subsequent versions of these. The County shall also strive to maintain standards for development that remain consistent with surrounding areas.
- B. Continue to encourage new guidelines that encourage a blend of housing options.
- C. Uphold regulations for infill and redevelopment to help improve existing areas and promote improvement to community values.
- D. Encourage development of housing to meet needs of varying price points for potential buyers and renters of all income levels.
- E. Promote development that offers blended housing, offering single and multifamily in one community, instead of separation of multifamily only or single family only. This type of diversity in housing works especially well in Mixed Use communities and Planned Developments.
- F. Continue to improve permitting processes to avoid denial of potential projects that would benefit and promote the overall goals of the County and this plan.
- G. Encourage developers to create Mixed Use communities in order to blend residential and commercial uses to promote walkability and sustainable developments.
- H. Promote accessible designs for residential communities to allow pedestrian way connectivity and convenient access to trails and greenways.
- I. Monitor overall effectiveness of home owner associations (HOAs) in the community to ensure future developments can support long-term, sustainable HOA involvement in communities.
- J. Continue to grow support of multifamily interest and overcome perceptions from past and current situations.

Actions

Housing often happens naturally, where property owners chose to build homes or develop within the confines of the ordinance. It is often without governmental input where developers purchase property. The market dictates where housing is desirable and what type of pricing is in place. However, making specific action steps can help the County plan for the future. These steps are specific actions and thought processes:

Capital Investment

Ensure consideration for neighborhood needs and identify enhancement opportunities within the capital improvements planning to aide in prioritizing candidate capital projects.



Programs and Initiatives

- A. Consider stronger support and development of programs to promote increased residential downtown to help promote mixed use for properties in the downtowns of local communities within Florence County.
- B. Continue to identify and monitor structures subject to minimum housing regulations to encourage renovation in established neighborhoods to prevent property value decline.
- C. Support enforcement and code compliance to continue to develop the County to comply with standards adopted by the governing board to promote diversity in the community and uphold development standards and public safety.

Regulations and Standards

- A. Review develop standards and ordinances to update and enhance housing as follows:
 - 1. Consider performance type zoning for residential properties to encourage more creative subdivision development and help increase preserved sustainable open space.
 - 2. Encourage flexibility by allowing Mixed Use, especially in urban settings.
 - 3. Review all development procedures to ensure housing development, the platting process, and the approval processes are clear and concise.
 - 4. Design principles for subdivisions to produce growth that protects the environment, encourages connectivity, and complimentary to the surrounding established development.
- B. Add new regulations addressing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as well as short-term rental options within the County.
- C. Continue to maintain long term relationships with real estate and contractor communities for ongoing feedback and improvement regarding standards and guidelines for development guidelines.

Partnerships and Coordination

- A. Partner with growing industrial partners and FCEDP to grow a local job base to encourage residents to be able to work locally.
- B. Continue regular interaction with all municipalities within Florence County to promote overall holistic growth in residential, industrial, and recreational accessibility for residents.
- C. Partner with the Habitat for Humanity or other County agencies to address low-income housing needs throughout the community.
- D. Maintain ongoing outreach with home owner associations (HOAs), as well as communities without HOAs, to establish community wide networking for neighborhood-level interaction with County staff and private organizations.

More Targeted Planning/Study

- A. Consider completing concise neighborhood plans in a prioritized series over several years within the framework of this comprehensive plan (and establish a basis for conservation zoning standards if needed).
- B. Track housing market and socioeconomic trends relevant to the priorities of this document to anticipate emerging issues as well as measure success in satisfying existing needs.



- C. Monitor cost-of-living indicators exceeding mortgage and rental payments such as utility rates, tax rates, and appraisals. In addition, monitor these factors and changes between in-town, incorporated areas and unincorporated areas.
- D. Continue to monitor Florence County's retirement community and the national trends as tracked through the AARP and media sources to maintain adequate accessibility of active living facilities.



Quality Neighborhood Design

Florence County has the task of promoting affordable housing development and quality neighborhood settings. This also lends developers flexibility in design to help encourage more creative development. Different blends of housing type and levels of mixed use offer a variety of combinations for developers to incorporate in housing developments. This flexibility helps to create appealing neighborhood designs and community connectivity through:

1. Local focal point, either a park or similar open common space, school, community center, etcetera that provides a central gathering place and unites the surrounding community.
2. Emphasis on vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Street design accommodates safer walkability while also minimizing heavy automobile traffic. Greenway development to help separate pedestrian and cyclists from automobile traffic while allowing access to the same area.
3. A variety of different housing to meet the needs of multiple demographics (age, income, etc.)
4. Efficient street design to allow multiple routes to any location. Encourage connectivity between developments in a creative way that discourage nonlocal cut-through traffic.
5. Close proximity to schools, activity centers, and daily conveniences to accommodate pedestrian travel and decrease overall traffic impacts.
6. Incorporation of fringe uses to create a buffer between neighborhoods and other incompatible development.
7. Designation of conservation areas to promote healthy living and increase availability of outdoor amenities.
8. Respect for historic sites and structures of local importance that can be incorporated into neighborhood design.
9. Promote centralized parking or street parking for denser urban areas to decrease impermeable surface areas from private driveways and garages.

Housing Policy Options

Florence County's housing is not a unique situation. The need for more housing of every kind is a problem for areas nationwide. The American Planning Association (APA) publishes guidelines for a range of planning issues. These policy guides offer best practices for planners to stay updated on national trends and best practices. Florence County can choose to implement the APA guidelines to help manage housing needs in the community. The 2019 APA Housing Policy Guide contains 5 key policies:

- A. Modernize state and local laws to ensure housing opportunities are available, accessible, and affordable to all.
- B. Preserve existing housing to maintain the quality and overall supply of affordable housing.
- C. Encourage environmental sustainability and resiliency as critical elements of housing availability and affordability.
- D. Ensure that public and private finance keeps pace and innovates to support increased housing availability and affordability.
- E. Support funding and program flexibility to provide services, shelters, and permanent supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness, veterans, immigrants, and the formerly incarcerated.



AMENITIES AND THE NEXT BIG THING

This plan section emphasizes the essential contribution that parks, open space, and recreation facilities make to a healthy and sustainable community. Parks and open space are integral parts of any County and often are among the public services most valued by residents and also enjoyed by visitors. Florence County offers well utilized parks and recreation facilities, that in addition to its historic assets and cultural facilities, contribute to the livability of the County. All aspects of this Comprehensive Plan shape the livability of Florence County, but this plan section especially reinforces the quality of life its residents enjoy.

Goals for Amenities

What are the goals for natural, cultural, and other amenities in Florence County?

- A. First and foremost, the County must protect and enhance the community's appearance.
- B. Taking advantage of the trail connections in and around the County.
- C. Creating protected and scenic entrances into the County, its parks, and natural resources is important. While economic diversification tends to rule the day, protecting the quality of life afforded by natural scenery is just as critical. The County should employ a study to create protected corridors for these amenities.

Health and Parks

Well-designed parks and trails can encourage and allow a safe place for exercise and community interaction and can provide mental health benefits such as stress reduction. Tools such as Health Impact Assessments (HIA) are used to quantify and qualify the public health impacts of proposed policies, plans, or development projects. Health Impact Assessments help communities assess the potential effects of a proposed policy, plan, program, or project on community health, including the distribution of benefits and costs within the community. HIAs recommend strategies for monitoring and managing health and bring public health issues to decision makers outside of the public health field, such as in transportation and land use. HIAs can be voluntary or regulatory processes that focus on health outcomes. Health Impact Assessments specific to parks and trails can be completed to evaluate how to maximize the positive impact of new park and trail investments on public health. Source: ULI - Intersections: Health and the Built Environment



Parks and Open Space Site Selection Criteria

It is critical for Florence County to continue their strategic outlook on placement of new parks and open space. Various factors influence the siting of parks and recreation areas. Among the criteria that influence site selection are the surrounding land use characteristics (e.g. type and scale of development, lot size), the size and anticipated use of the proposed area, and the potential physical development constraints and barriers (e.g. arterial (primary) roadways and other streets, waterways, and drainage ditches). The general site selection criteria and principal considerations for parks and recreation facilities include the following factors:

Topography:

1. The park should have a land surface configuration (relief) to accommodate its intended uses such as ball fields and open play areas.
2. Some variation in topography, even if created through cut and fill, is desirable to create visual interest and to offer additional opportunities for park uses such as mountain biking and hiking.
3. There should be a sufficient slope to allow for adequate storm water runoff from ball fields and other developed areas.
4. Desirable views into and away from the site should be preserved and protected.

Soils/Landscaping:

1. The topsoil should be suitable for turf grasses and trees.
2. The area should be protected from soil erosion during construction and designed to avoid erosion upon completion (e.g., through mulches, retaining walls).
3. Natural or landscaped vegetation should include grass areas and trees with hardy, low maintenance species preferred for planted vegetation.
4. Irrigation systems should be provided for intensively used areas such as playing fields and landscaped areas.
5. Significant individual specimens or unique wildlife habitats are desirable.
6. Interpretive signage should be provided to identify species and varieties of natural vegetation and to educate the public.

Access and Location:

1. All parks should be readily accessible to their users and convenient for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.
2. Parks should be accessible from collector (secondary) streets rather than arterial (primary) roadways.
3. Parks should be located adjacent to trails and greenways to provide linkage to neighborhoods and other areas of the community.
4. Joint use of sites for public parks and school use is highly desirable to maximize the public benefit and to be efficient in the expenditure of public resources.



The Next Big Thing for Florence County

A lot of discussion was generated about what is the "Next Big Thing" for Florence County. Many cities and other counties across the region struggle with identifying what that should be and how to get there. More times than not, discussion focused on things for young people to do or engage in to keep them in Florence County. One of the most popular concepts for this is additional facilities with sports fields, aquatic resources, and wellness activities for all ages.



This type of facility can make a regional impact. Discussed as a huge need for the area, keeping young people and new families engaged is critical to growth. A multi-use facility would support several critical functions: tourism, wellness, and economic diversification. While this planning effort was not designed to master plan such a facility, it was a goal to identify what that effort should be focused towards.



Florence County will continue to tap into public/private partnerships to create this next milestone. Other concepts discussed during engagement and detailed study included improvement of corridors with new and interesting commercial businesses, continued support and improved marketing of existing County facilities, and simply improving services the County already provides. There is certainly something to be said for doing basic functions well. The County has a long standing history of excellent service in many areas. It is a clear approach for the County to continue this pattern and look towards the future in these areas. However, being forward thinking also involves considering what is next on the horizon. Florence County has many options for growth and development. With a longstanding tradition of considering the needs and desires of local residents, there is no doubt that whatever comes next for Florence County will be a long term success.