

Priority Investment Areas Element

Overview

This chapter addresses recent amendments to the South Carolina Local Government Planning Enabling Act – South Carolina Priority Investment Act.

The purpose of this chapter is to enhance coordination of local governments and public service agencies in the Town of Summerville Planning Area; to synchronize public and private investment in land and infrastructure and to conserve cultural, environmental and fiscal resources.

The Priority Investment Act legislation requires a ninth comprehensive planning element. This element instructs local government entities to analyze the likely federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years and encourages the prioritization of funds for public infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, roads, and schools. Coordination is recommended between local governments and agencies, in addition to relevant jurisdictions such as public and private utilities, school districts, transportation agencies and other public entities affected by or that have planning authority over the public projects.

SC Priority Investment Act

“South Carolina Priority Investment Act by amending section 6-29-510, relating to comprehensive plans of local planning commissions, so as to amend the housing element and to provide for transportation and priority investment elements of comprehensive plans; to amend section 6-29-720, relating to regulation of zoning districts, so as to allow local governments to develop market-based incentives and elimination of nonessential housing regulatory requirements to encourage private development, traditional neighborhood design, and affordable housing in priority investment areas; to amend section 6-29-1110, relating to definitions, so as to defined “affordable housing”, “market based incentives”, “traditional neighborhood design”, and “nonessential housing regulatory requirements”; to amend section 6-29-1130, relating to regulations of a local governing body governing the development of land upon the recommendation of the local planning commission, so as to further provide for the content of these regulations relating to land development; and to provide that local governments amend their comprehensive plans to comply with these provisions.”

Capital Improvements Program and Transportation Projects

The Town of Summerville is a member of the Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS) and participated in the composition of the CHATS Long Range Transportation Plan for the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Region. The CHATS LRTP schedules road construction and enhancement projects with subsequent funding sources. Funding sources for these transportation projects include Guide-Share Funds, Sales Tax Funds, and Non-Guide-Share funds drawing upon public and private funding sources and other innovative financing methods. Scheduled transportation projects with corresponding funding sources are identified on the region’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Funding timelines are scheduled and arranged accordingly with set project completion dates.

The Town of Summerville’s Capital Improvements Program (CIP) provides a funding timeline for public facility improvements including Public Safety, Culture/Recreation, General Government and Public Service projects to be undertaken from 2008-2012. These projects include the construction and additions for fire and police stations, town parks and other supporting facilities. Summerville’s Capital Improvements Program also identifies programmed intersection improvements, but does not identify scheduled transportation road improvements.

The Town of Summerville and Dorchester County have projects scheduled in the CHATS LRTP. These projects include the completion of Phase III of the Berlin G. Myers Parkway, widening of Dorchester Road, widening of US Highway 78 (Fifth Street North) and completion of the Glenn McConell Parkway. These transportation infrastructure projects are also identified under the Dorchester County Penny Sales Tax Transportation Authority (DCTA).

Coordination of Goals and Objectives

Public input meetings have been held throughout the course of this comprehensive plan update. Joint workshops, public input and task force meetings for the Town of Summerville were held in conjunction with the update to Dorchester County's comprehensive land use plan. Continued coordination by local governments with public service entities is needed not only during the comprehensive planning process but on a continual basis. An ongoing level of dialogue between these entities will increase efficiency and contribute to the ultimate success and future of the Town of Summerville Planning Area.

Priority Investment Areas Element Goals and Objectives

Goal One – Coordination: The Town of Summerville should facilitate a productive and ongoing level of dialogue and coordination with neighboring jurisdictions, agencies, and public service authorities.

Objective: To increase intergovernmental coordination, promote and sustain the quality of life enjoyed and shared by the residents of the Planning Area.

Goal Two – Investment: The Town of Summerville should foster public and private investment in the Priority Investment Areas and Employment Growth Areas identified on the [Priority Investment Areas-Map #6](#).

Objective: To advance and accommodate economic development opportunities.

Goal Three – Conservation: The Town of Summerville should examine opportunities to encourage a voluntary, market-driven program to encourage conservation and preservation of natural and historic areas.

Objective: To guide development to desirable and suitable locations targeted for investment and poised for growth.

Goal Four – Workforce Housing: The Town of Summerville should provide opportunities for workforce housing in the Planning Area.

Objective: To encourage a variety of housing types for existing and future residents with varying income levels.

Priority Investment Areas Implementation Strategies

Strategy One: Coordination

Communication between local governments and public service providers should be initiated by the Town of Summerville. Town Planning Staff should provide written notification to relevant jurisdictions, public service and governing authorities regarding development and subdivision proposals as it relates to the municipality or public service districts.

The Town of Summerville's Planning Staff should facilitate a monthly Technical Review Committee for large scale development and subdivision proposals with representatives from Water and Sewer Authorities, Utility Providers, School Districts, SCDOT and in the future, CARTA and Tri-County Link as public transit service increases within the Planning Area.

The convergence of these authority and agency representatives will provide an opportunity for applicants of large development and subdivision proposals to obtain feedback and comment regarding their application. This meeting will also reduce administrative overlap and ultimately increase efficiency throughout all levels of the municipal approval process.

Strategy Two: Investment

Priority Investment Areas

The Town of Summerville's Priority Investment Areas Map identifies six locations. These Priority Investment Areas are located at strategic points along major corridors where major transportation improvements projects are scheduled.

The Priority Investment Areas are positioned as attractive points of entry into the Planning Area while being located near existing transportation routes with programmed capacity improvements. These scheduled improvements consist of improved roadways with enhanced transit routes in addition to planned commuter rail service and supporting facilities.

Priority Investment Areas for the Town of Summerville Planning Area are identified on the [Priority Investment Areas-Map #6](#).

Locations of the five Priority Investment Areas are these:

- 1) *North Main Priority Investment Area: at US-17A and US-78; Town of Summerville*
- 2) *Brownsville Priority Investment Area: at US-78 and SC-165; Town of Summerville*
- 3) *Downtown Priority Investment Area: at South Main Street and East Richardson Avenue; Town of Summerville*
- 4) *Oakbrook Priority Investment Area: at Ladson Road/Trolley Road/Dorchester Road Intersection; Town of Summerville*
- 5) *Jedburg Priority Investment Area: on Mallard Road near US-78; Dorchester County*
- 6) *Limehouse Crossroads Priority Investment Area: at SC-165 and SC-642; Dorchester County*

The North Main Priority Investment Area should draw upon activity generated by the County Services Building at 500 North Main Street. This Priority Investment Area should include regulatory changes and infrastructure improvements to increase private property values. Among these are height increases and an improved Fifth Street North (US-78) corridor. A potential commuter rail station is located on the edge of this Priority Investment Area as identified on the [Transit Service and Proposed Commuter Rail-Map #5](#).

The Fifth Street North corridor is proposed for widening from two to four lanes. This improvement should be coupled with on-street parking, wide sidewalks, and street trees to create an Avenue. Tax-increment financing (TIF's), municipal improvement districts (MID's) and residential improvement districts (RID's) may fund these improvements; reinvestment in adjacent private property will generate the new revenue for the Town of Summerville. This Avenue will be the spine of the North Main Priority Investment Area.

The Brownsville Priority Investment Area is planned around the possibility that MeadWestvaco will cease operations at its facility by 2030. Should that occur, the property would be an excellent opportunity for a commuter rail station and transit-oriented development. If the planned Exit 197 on Interstate Highway 26 is realized, the Brownsville Priority Investment Area will have convenient access to the highway. It is also near a current, growing economic development district, affording future residents of the Priority Investment Area short, in-town commutes.

The Downtown Priority Investment Area is located surrounding the intersection of South Main Street and Richardson Avenue, anchored by the new Town Hall annex and parking garage. Enhancement improvements and transportation facility upgrades have been undertaken for this intersection to include decorative mast arm intersection signals, lighting and street lamps. Stamped concrete has been installed along South Main Street from the railroad tracks to 2nd Street South. On-street parking spaces are provided along Central Avenue towards the intersection of Richardson Avenue. Pedestrian signage and pavement markings have been constructed and future upgrades are planned for this area. Bicycle and pedestrian scale amenities are planned for various points in this area to include additional pavement markings and bicycle racks. The Town should analyze opportunities to replace existing overhead power lines with underground utilities and continue replacing existing stop and street light fixtures with new decorative mast arms in this area.

Capital Improvements planned Downtown Priority Investment Area includes a potential commuter rail site within the area adjacent to the NSX rail line and a possible performing arts center. This possibility of a performing arts center has also been discussed for other locations such as Heritage Square Shopping Center and Oakbrook Shopping Center.

The Oakbrook Priority Investment area bordered by the Ashley River and the only major transportation corridor with North Charleston along the river should encourage public and private partnerships as an employment/commercial center. These opportunities will help support the large residential, the low income populations and the senior residents in the area. A pedestrian friendly mixed use development area should be encouraged along the Midland Park and Dorchester Road area. The connection between the Saw Mill Branch Trail and North Charleston's bike pedestrian trail along Dorchester Road shall be pursued. There is a growing medical cluster that should be supported and encouraged to grow. Draft plans in place for express bus transportation to Charleston should be encouraged and coupled with possible bus connections to the Historic District and Azalea Square providing city wide access for all citizens. Planning cooperation with the County should be encouraged in the mixed governed area of Trolley Road. The Town should continue to research and plan for potential recreational opportunities within this area.

Further study should be undertaken by the Town of Summerville in conjunction with adjacent local governments and private developers to achieve a mutual vision for the ultimate design of these areas.

More information on land use and transportation planning surrounding these areas is included in the [Future Land Use Element](#) and the [Transportation Design Element](#).

Transportation Improvements – Roads

The Town of Summerville, through coordination with surrounding counties, should continually review and analyze existing and alternative funding sources for transportation infrastructure improvements. The

Transportation Improvements – Roads Table identifies tools the Town of Summerville should pursue through partnerships with Dorchester County to establish and generate funding sources for transportation projects. The municipal boundaries of the Town of Summerville and unincorporated Dorchester County are closely tied and interwoven thus further advancing the necessity of inter-governmental coordination across municipal boundaries.

Dorchester County voters approved a one-cent sales tax in 2006 thus enabling the Dorchester County Penny Sales Tax Authority (DCTA) to enact a program including 22 road improvement projects with a timeline of five to seven years. The project revenue of \$125-million dollars will be combined with funds available to Dorchester County from the South Carolina (SCDOT), Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), private contributors and other sources (DCTA, www.dorchesterroadstax.org, 2007).

The Town of Summerville and Dorchester County are members of the Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS). CHATS is the regional transportation-planning authority for the urbanized portion of the Charleston-North Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Federal funds for transportation infrastructure improvements are channeled through CHATS and the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG). Dorchester County applied to the State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) in December 2007 for financial assistance with five major road improvement projects. Although the funding timeline has not been finalized, the SIB committed \$213.2 million dollars to Dorchester County.

Alternative funding sources for transportation infrastructure improvements should be considered by the Town of Summerville by assessing “transportation impact fees.” The Dorchester County comprehensive land use plan recommended “transportation impact fees” to fund transportation infrastructure improvements. To assure a uniformed transportation strategy throughout geographic Dorchester County, it’s essential the Town of Summerville consider pursuing similar lines of funding sources for these transportation improvements.

Dorchester County has commissioned Kimley Horn & Associates, a transportation planning firm, to compile a comprehensive transportation plan for Dorchester County. The Town of Summerville’s Transportation Plan conducted by Carter & Burgess is discussed in the Transportation Design Element. The Town of Summerville should consider the potential of conflicting public policy regarding funding mechanisms for transportation improvements in the event that transportation impact fees are adopted by Dorchester County. These items should be addressed by the Town of Summerville during the composition of their Transportation Impact Fee Study being conducted by Kimly Horn and Associates.

Prior to implementing transportation impact fees, the Town of Summerville should amend their Capital Improvements Plan to identify plans for expansion of transportation infrastructure throughout the Planning Area over the next five to ten years. The Town of Summerville should confirm a “rational nexus” (*Nolan v. California Coastal Communities*, 483 U.S. 825, 1987) exists between the assessed transportation impact fees and the impact projected from the new development or user.

Impact fees can provide a counter balance of the proposed development or new user on existing infrastructure. The fees collected from a new user on the transportation network should benefit that user, as opposed to funding a transportation improvement project in another location of the municipality in which the user has no direct impact. Impact fees are determined based upon the cost of new facilities relative to the size, proportion and demand a new proposal has on the facility.

Transportation impact fees redirect the construction costs of new public facilities from taxpayers to the immediate beneficiaries of those facilities. The Town of Summerville may combine revenue from transportation impact fees with other local funding sources to accelerate major infrastructure and facility improvements. Special consideration should be made to address future land use planning issues in order to direct new growth and development towards the newly constructed public facilities.

Local governments in South Carolina are enabled to designate special tax assessment districts to generate revenue for construction of infrastructure projects and public facilities through tax-increment financing (TIF), municipal improvement districts (MID) and residential improvement districts (RID). TIF Districts allow a municipality to channel property tax revenue to an account programmed for financing infrastructure or public facility improvements within predetermined district locations. Municipal Improvement Districts (MID) function in the same manner as a TIF District, however MID's are special assessments primarily used to fund vertical public facilities as opposed to infrastructure improvements use primarily through TIF Districts. RID's function similar to MID's, however RID's may be used to construct schools.

The Town of Summerville should consider utilizing TIF, MID and RID Districts to finance public infrastructure improvements. These funding tools could be combined with other local funding sources to supplement public investment within Priority Investment Areas. [Priority Investment Areas-Map #6](#)

TIF Districts may be coupled with additional funding sources to construct the recommended transportation enhancement improvements for the (US-78) Fifth Street North corridor as identified under the Transportation Element of this plan. A MID District may be designated to fund the construction of vertical facilities or perhaps supporting transportation facilities for a Commuter Rail Station. RID Districts are similar to MID Districts, except a RID District may be used to fund the construction of schools.

The two Priority Investment Areas as identified in this comprehensive plan element are positioned in location where existing public investment is currently planned.

The final funding source for transportation improvement projects is Toll Roads. Toll roads charge a fee for motorists to use a road, upon entry or exit of the facility. Toll roads are only allowed for limited access facilities but should be considered to fund certain long range transportation improvements for the Town of Summerville and Dorchester County.

**Figure PIA1:
Transportation Improvements – Roads
Major Dorchester County and Town of Summerville Road Projects**

Project	Timeline for Completion	DCTA	CHATS	SIB	*Impact Fees	*TIF	*MID	*RID	*Tolls
Glenn McConnell Pkwy. (Bees Ferry Rd. to US-17A)	20-30 years				X			X	X
Berlin Myers Pkwy, Phase III (SC-165 to US-17A)	5-10 years	X	X	X	X				
Bacon's Bridge Rd. (SC-165): Trolley Rd. to Ashley Ridge HS)	5-10 years	X	X	X	X				
Dorchester Rd. (SC-642): US-17A to Trolley Rd.	5-10 years	X	X	X	X				
US-78: College Park Rd. to Berlin G. Myers Pkwy.)	20-30 years					X	X	X	
Fifth North Street (US-78): Berlin G. Myers Pkwy. to Jedburg Rd.	10-20 years	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
US-78: Jedburg Rd. to CHATS Boundary	15-30 years	X		X	X				
US-17A: BGM Pkwy. to Clubhouse Rd.	20-30 years				X	X			

*New or potential funding sources

Source: Dorchester County Sales Tax Authority (DCTA) & Charleston Area Regional Transportation Study

Transportation Facility Improvements - Commuter Rail Stations

The Dorchester County and Town of Summerville comprehensive land use plans have identified four potential locations for a commuter rail station. Three of these four commuter rail locations have been identified in the town of Summerville Planning Area. Cooperation between the Town of Summerville and surrounding municipalities will be essential in order to effectively implement a commuter rail program set to provide service to commuters traveling from Dorchester County to employment centers within North Charleston and the City of Charleston.

Financing for a commuter rail program should draw upon a combination of funding sources including local, state and federal sources in addition to possible sales tax, SIB money, and Federal Transit Administration funds which may be arranged to facilitate a commuter rail program for the Town of Summerville, Dorchester County and the BCD Region.

A commuter rail program would provide an opportunity to reduce vehicle trips and provide alternative transportation options for commuters. The BCDCOG has hired a transportation planning firm, Wilbur Smith and Associates to conduct an analysis of existing infrastructure for the Norfolk-Southern and CSX rail lines located with the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Region. Current and proposed mass transit service projects and other supporting facilities are explained in the Transportation Element of this comprehensive plan update.

The first potential commuter rail station site is located near the intersection of Berlin G. Myers Parkway and US-78 (Fifth Street North) in the Town of Summerville. The second site is located in the Town of Summerville along US-78 (Fifth Street North) at the intersection of SC-165 in the Brownsville community. The third site is located along the US-78 at the intersection of Jedburg.

Special consideration should be taken into account to provide supplementary parking facilities to support these commuter station locations. The Town of Summerville should consider TIF, MID, & RID Districts for the two commuter rail site locations within the town boundaries to generate revenue for the construction of vertical parking facilities for commuters. The ideal location for these parking facilities would be the North Main Priority Investment Area at the intersection of 17-A and US-78 (Fifth Street North) considering the location is within walking distance of potential commuter rail stations and may also serve as an ideal location for supporting park

and ride facilities for express bus routes. Partnerships between the Town of Summerville, Dorchester County, Charleston Area Transportation Authority (CARTA) and Tri-County Links should be considered to implement an express bus route to provide support for commuter rail service.

Education Facility Improvements – Public Schools

The following table lists the projected education facilities needed for Dorchester County District 2 Schools for the next eight to ten years of projected growth. Dorchester School District 2 enlisted the expertise of Kenneth Stevenson to advise the School Board of facility needs and assign a cost to them, totaling \$162 million.

Dorchester County’s comprehensive plan recommends the County partner with school districts to construct and upgrade capital facilities on school grounds. Dorchester County’s comprehensive land use plan recommends the identification of funding sources and timeline for inclusion in the County’s CIP. This would allow the County an opportunity to raise revenue to construct joint-use auxiliary facilities (i.e., not to include classrooms) through tax-increment financing, or new state legislation, residential improvement districts in which to raise new revenue for school buildings, including classrooms.

The Town of Summerville should coordinate and maintain an ongoing level of dialogue with Dorchester County School District 2 to determine growth and facility needs. The Town of Summerville supports the location, placement and construction of public or private school facilities within the town boundaries. The Town of Summerville should pursue these goals through partnerships with Dorchester County District 2 Schools and the private development community. The Town of Summerville should consider certain tools to further facilitate these undertakings such as development agreements, planned developments and residential improvement districts (RID Districts) depending on current South Carolina Legislation. These tools should be considered in order to solidify these arrangements during the municipal approval process to assist in the financing of public and private school facilities.

Figure PIA2: Education Facility Needs in Dorchester County School District 2			
New Schools	Address	Municipality	Opening Date
Ashley Ridge High School	9800 Delemar Highway	Dorchester County	Aug-08
William M. Reeves, Jr. Elementary	1003 DuBose School Road	Dorchester County	Aug-07
River Oaks Middle School	8642 River Oaks Drive	North Charleston	Aug-07
Eagle Nest Elementary School	8640 River Oaks Drive	North Charleston	Aug-07
New elementary school A	To be determined (TBD)	TBD	2009
New elementary school B	TBD	TBD	2010
New elementary school C	TBD	TBD	2014
New elementary school D	TBD	TBD	2016
New middle school A	TBD	TBD	2010
New middle school B	TBD	TBD	2013
New middle school C	TBD	TBD	2016
Additions to Ashley Ridge HS	TBD	TBD	2011
New High School	TBD	TBD	2014

Source: Dorchester County – School District Two

Strategy Three: Conservation

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR Program)

A Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program may be used to redirect growth and development away from environmentally sensitive areas to locations in which existing and planned infrastructure capacity and transportation improvements are scheduled. The Town of Summerville in concert with Dorchester County and the Town of Ridgeville should consider implementing a TDR program to conserve culturally, historically, and environmentally sensitive areas in Dorchester County.

A TDR program is a voluntary, market-driven program which grants a landowner the ability to sell the development potential of a site to another landowner, while continuing to maintain ownership of his or her respective property. These acquired “rights” may be transferred from one site to another as it relates to “by right zoning”.

An area where development rights may be purchased is the TDR “sending area.” The purchaser of these development rights may be allowed by the local governing body to increase residential density in another predetermined location, referred to as a TDR “receiving area.”

In Dorchester County’s comprehensive land use plan, environmentally sensitive areas such as the Ashley River Road Historic Overlay District, the Edisto River floodplain, the Great Cypress Swamp, the Four Holes Swamp have been designated as TDR “sending areas”. The Great Cypress Swamp, Four Holes Swamp, Ashley River floodplain, and Edisto River floodplain are natural greenbelt corridors consisting of isolated conservation easements. A TDR Program may be used to enhance these conservation areas. Successful implementation of a TDR program could take years, the Town of Summerville in partnership with Dorchester County and the Town of Ridgeville should identify TDR “receiving areas”. The Town of Summerville and the Town of Ridgeville will need to continually maintain zoning records as it relates to the TDR Program, Dorchester County should consider maintaining all deed restrictions and easements on file at the County Courthouse.

Strategy Four: Workforce Housing

Workforce Housing is housing that is made affordable to people who earn 80 to 120 percent of the area’s median income. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (USDHUD) classifies homes as affordable when the amount spend on rent or mortgage payments does not exceed 30 percent of a household’s combined gross income.

Market-based incentives may be enacted by the Town of Summerville to encourage workforce housing. A fast-track permitting and/or development review process may be considered to expedite municipal approval for development proposals that contain wholly or portions of workforce housing. Workforce housing should be encouraged in Central Neighborhoods, Gateway Mixed Use and Neighborhood Mixed Use Districts and along Community-oriented Corridors.

By-right zoning districts should be tailored for these future land use districts to allow a variety of housing types including accessory dwelling units, rowhouses, townhouses, apartments, condominiums and live-work units.