



Dorchester County
Comprehensive Plan 2008

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Document prepared with the assistance of:



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COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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Introduction

Developing the Vision

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan sets forth a vision for Dorchester County through the year 2030. The purpose of the Plan is to serve as a long-range policy document with implementation strategies to realize that vision. Extensive public input from the citizens of Dorchester County helped develop the vision. This input was received through public meetings hosted by Dorchester County, discussions with various citizens' groups active in the county, conversations with important stakeholders, and e-mail correspondence with citizens and stakeholders alike.

The Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan Task Force prepared the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. Three County Councilmen and the entire Dorchester County Planning Commission comprised the Comprehensive Plan Task Force. Professional planners from the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments facilitated the seven public meetings and helped the Task Force prepare the Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan Task Force hosted a total of seven public meetings between April and November 2007. The Task Force co-hosted three of these meetings with the Town of Summerville Planning Commission. A fourth, held in the town of Harleyville, included leaders from the towns of St. George, Reevesville, and Harleyville as part of the program. The County Seat of St. George was the site of two meetings, and a final meeting occurred at the County Services Building in Summerville.

County residents and landowners expressed concerns and aired frustrations while providing a broad range of feedback regarding the future identity and character of Dorchester County. "Where and how do we grow," rose as the prevailing issue of the planning process. Working together, the Comprehensive Plan Task Force established the following long-range planning principles for Dorchester County:

- Preserve and protect the rural communities and natural resources of

Dorchester County for current residents and future generations;

- Plan for growth in appropriate areas; and
- Ensure infrastructure concurrency in planned growth areas.

Seven Foundations¹

Community participation shaped not only the vision, but also the policy formulation of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. Citizens urged planners to address seven recurrent themes threatening prosperity and quality of life in Dorchester County. The Task Force, in turn, adopted the following themes as foundations of the planning process and developed solutions around each. These are the seven foundations of this solution-driven plan:

1. Future Land Use

The next 22 years of growth will fundamentally transform the landscape of Dorchester County. What will get built where is mapped in this chapter. Future land use provides a framework into which land development will fit in order to build towns and neighborhoods that include the jobs, services, and amenities in Dorchester County.

2. Infrastructure Concurrency

Every community, growing or not, must face the challenge of providing its citizens high-quality public services in a timely manner. This chapter not only details a comprehensive set of strategies, but also identifies the funding sources and partners that Dorchester County government must enlist to ensure that the expansion of public services keeps pace with population growth.

3. Transportation

Dorchester County has an impressive list of recent major arterial road improvement projects. This chapter pairs more major transportation initiatives with innovative management strategies that will improve travel in the County

¹*PlanCheyenne*, a nationally award winning comprehensive plan recognized by the American Planning Association in 2007 inspired the use of the terms "foundation," "snapshot," "shape," and "build."

at a fraction of the cost.

4. Economic Development

This chapter covers tried and true economic development strategies and reinforces Dorchester County's commitment to them. It also addresses the challenges of the 21st-century economy, setting policy to place Dorchester County ahead of its competition to attract and retain entrepreneurial talent.

5. Workforce Housing

More jobs and better transportation make Dorchester County a more attractive place to live. As housing demand increases, so do prices. Workforce housing means homes for current and future young entrepreneurs, schoolteachers, emergency responders, and other civil servants. This chapter sets policies to ensure Dorchester County can gain the housing it needs for these important community members.

6. Priority Investment Areas

This chapter sets as policy where public and private investment in land and infrastructure will occur in the County. It introduces new ideas in Dorchester County – transfer of development rights and commuter rail transportation – that set new priorities for conservation and transportation. The chapter stresses coordination with neighboring jurisdictions and other service providers to ensure common direction.

7. Community Design

This chapter shapes the contents of this Plan into a common vision of growth in Dorchester County. Community design specifies how new components of Dorchester County will feel and function. This chapter illustrates how roads, schools, neighborhoods, and commercial areas will be woven together to expand the fabric of Dorchester County communities.

Snapshot, Shape, and Build

Each chapter in the 2008 Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan is arranged in three sections: *Snapshot*, *Shape*, and *Build*.¹

Snapshot introduces salient conditions, trends,

and data sets that influence the policy set forth in this Plan Update. Dorchester County's two most recent Comprehensive Plan documents, prepared in 1998 and 2004, included exhaustive research into a broad inventory of existing conditions around which to plan. The 2007-2008 planning process seeks not to reproduce that effort, but to highlight recent changes or new information leading to fresh policies.

The solutions within the seven foundations of this Plan Update take shape as goals and policies. The objective of each *Shape* is to summarize the direction sought by citizens of Dorchester County, as well as the Comprehensive Plan Task Force, and then to assign policies necessary to achieve each stated goal.

The partnerships, tools, and funding sources necessary to build the vision set forth in this plan are presented in the third section of each chapter. *Build* states a priority level for each policy in relation to others in the list and identifies a timeframe for implementation of each policy.

Plan Applicability

Relationship with Past Plans

The Planning Commission prepared the 1998 Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan according to the parameters of then-new state enabling legislation. That Plan generated information and formulated policy around seven "elements:" population, economic development, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, housing, and land use. The 2004 planning process updated the data sets included in the 1998 document and primarily reiterated the policies of its predecessor.

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update supplements, and does not replace, previous Dorchester County plans. The 2007-2008 planning process builds on previous planning efforts, constructively utilizing past research, public input, and conclusions. If, however, any policy stated herein conflicts with past statements, the direction of this Plan shall prevail.

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Introduction to the 2008 Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan

The 2008 Plan covers all seven planning elements required by State Code, as well as two new elements mandated by 2007 legislation: Transportation and Priority Investment. Each of the seven foundations presented in this document incorporates one or more of the elements. Significant overlap between the seven foundations reveals not only the interrelationship of each foundation, but also the prevalence of the nine elements throughout.

Relationship with Municipalities and School Districts

The 2007-2008 planning process engaged citizens and elected officials of all local governing bodies in Dorchester County. The 2008 Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan addresses all areas of the entire county for the first time. Past plans grayed out municipal areas in maps and graphics, thus inadequately communicating the impacts of municipal plans on unincorporated areas.

The BCD Council of Governments, consultants to the 2008 Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan, is assisting all five municipalities seated in Dorchester County with their own comprehensive plan updates. These town plans will therefore be logically coordinated with the County Plan.

This does not mean that each town is committed precisely to the decision of County Council on this Plan. Rather, each town will develop a more refined plan best suited to its needs. BCDCOG planners will assume responsibility for any conflicts and work with both local governments to find a resolution. BCDCOG planners are uniquely positioned to do so, since all the towns and the County are members of the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments.

This Plan provides direction regarding school location and site planning, which directly impact

land use and community design. No additional planning is done for the school districts regarding other issues, and the direction provided herein constitutes voluntary guidelines, which can be achieved solely through cooperation between the County and its school districts.

The school districts, like the municipalities, have singular purview over their planning activities. This planning process seeks to coordinate, not usurp, local planning activities.

Plan Inclusiveness

Comprehensive planning might be the most inclusive, democratic function of local government. It seeks direct citizen participation in community goal-setting and policy formulation. Dozens of Dorchester County citizens, including residents from all six municipalities within the county, represented themselves in county government by attending seven public workshops. The largest of these filled County Council Chambers in St. George, which has a capacity of 120 people.

Many more citizens attended workshops held by MeadWestvaco in its planning effort for “East Edisto.” The company is planning new towns and villages on some 72,000 acres bisected by the Dorchester-Charleston County boundary. The input gathered at these meetings, which occurred during the County’s comprehensive planning process, was valuable for the preparation of this document as well.

The names of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force and the BCDCOG project team appear below; however, this document is the result of input from everyone who participated in a public workshop, attended a Task Force meeting, or otherwise engaged the list of volunteers and professionals below in the best interests of Dorchester County.

2007-2008 Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan Task Force

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The Citizens of Dorchester County

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Acronyms Used in This Plan

AADT	Average Annual Daily Traffic	MGD	Million Gallons per Day
ACE Basin	Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto Rivers Basin	MID	Municipal Improvement District
BCDCOG	Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments	MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
BMP	Best Management Practices	MS	Middle School
CARTA	Charleston Area Regional Transit Authority	N/A	Not Available
CATT	Center for Advanced Technology in Telecommunications	NAICS	North American Industrial Classification System
CHATS	Charleston Area Transportation Study	OCRM	South Carolina Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management
CIP	Capital Improvements Program	ORS	South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics
CRDA	Charleston Regional Development Alliance	PCO	Primary Care Office
DCEDB	Dorchester County Economic Development Board	PIA	Priority Investment Area
DCPC	Dorchester County Planning Commission	REEV	Town of Reevesville
DCPWD	Dorchester County Public Works Department	RID	Residential Improvement District
DCTA	Dorchester County Transportation Authority	RIDG	Town of Ridgeville
DCWA	Dorchester County Water Authority	RTMA	Rural Transit Management Authority
DHEC	South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control	SCDOC	South Carolina Department of Commerce
DSD2	Dorchester School District 2	SCDHEC	South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
DSD4	Dorchester School District 4	SCDNR	South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
EMS	Emergency Medical Services	SCDOT	South Carolina Department of Transportation
ES	Elementary School	SCDPRT	South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	SCE&G	South Carolina Electric and Gas
FLUM	Future Land Use Map	SCPHCA	South Carolina Primary Health Care Association
FTA	Federal Transit Administration	SCPW	Summerville Commissioners of Public Works
FTZ	Foreign Trade Zone	SIB	State Infrastructure Bank
FY	Fiscal Year	STG	Town of Saint George
HARL	Town of Harleyville	TBD	To Be Determined
HS	High School	TDR	Transfer of Development Rights
ISO	Insurance Services Office	TIF	Tax-Increment Financing
ITE	Institute of Transportation Engineers	TIP	Transportation Improvements Program
JEDA	South Carolina Jobs-Economic Development Authority	TRC	Technical Review Committee
LOS	Level of Service	USBLS	United States Bureau of Labor Statistics
LHT	Lowcountry Housing Trust	USDHUD	United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
L RTP	Long-Range Transportation Plan	ZLDO	Dorchester County Zoning and Land Development Ordinance