

# **The Comprehensive Planning Process**

Rob Caison, Planner II  
Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester  
Council of Governments

# Planning Legislation in SC

- Authority for local governments to undertake planning and to adopt zoning and land development regulations is granted by the General Assembly
- Originally authorized in 1924 for municipalities and county planning in 1942.
- Local Government Planning Enabling Act of 1994
  - Requires all local comprehensive plans, zoning and land development ordinances comply with the 1994 State Enabling Legislation
  - Must establish a Planning Commission of 5 to 12 members

# Functions and Duties

- Engage in the continuing planning program for the physical, social, and economic growth, development and re-development of the community
- Elements (7) and any others within the comprehensive plans must be designed to promote public health, safety, morals, convenience, prosperity or the general welfare as well as the efficiency and economy of the community
- Elements are based on comprehensive surveys and studies of existing conditions and probable future development and recommended means of implementing the plans

# Comprehensive Plan Elements

- Population
- Economic Development
- Natural Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Community Facilities
- Housing
- Land Use

# Population

- Includes information relating to historic trends in population and projections
- Number, size, and characteristics of households; educational level and trends
- Race, sex, age, and income levels
- Any additional information relevant to a clear understanding of how population affects the community and future growth

# Economic Development

- Historic trends and projections on the numbers and characteristics of the labor force
- Where people who live in the community work, where people who work in the community reside, employment characteristics and trends
- Tourism, manufacturing, re-development, and revitalization are other factors that should be considered

# Natural Resources

- Coastal resources, slope characteristics, agricultural and forest land, wildlife habitats, park and recreation areas,
- Scenic views, sites and corridors, wetlands
- Flood plain and flood way areas
- Any other information relative to the natural environment of the area

# Cultural Resources

- Historic buildings, unique commercial or residential areas,
- Unique natural or scenic resources or corridors
- Educational, religious, or entertainment areas

# Community Facilities

- Includes activities essential to the growth, development and re-development of the community
- Special consideration should be given to plans such as:
  - Transportation facility plan
  - Water supply, treatment and distribution plan
  - Sewage system and wastewater treatment plan
  - Solid waste collection and disposal plan
  - Fire protection plan
  - EMS plan
  - Expansion plan for municipal/government facilities
  - Educational facilities expansion plan

# Housing Element

- Analysis of existing housing by location
- Type, age, conditions, ratio of owner to renter occupancy, affordability
- Projections of housing needs to accommodate existing and future populations as identified in the population and economics element of the comprehensive plan

# Land Use Element

- Development characteristics of land
- Considers existing and future characteristics of land by category
  - Residential
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Agricultural
  - Forestry
  - Recreation, Park, Open Space
  - Vacant or Undeveloped Land
- This element is influenced by all previously described plan elements
- Findings, projections and conclusions from each of the previous six elements will influence the amount of land needed for various uses

# Procedure for Adoption

- When the plan, elements, amendments, additions or extension are complete. The following steps must be taken in accord with SC 6-29-520 and 6-29-530.
- Resolution – Planning Commission must adopt a resolution recommending the plan to the governing body for adoption
- Minutes – Resolution must be recorded in the official minutes
- Recommendation – Copies of the plan must be submitted to the local governing body
- Hearing – Prior to adoption, the governing body must hold a public hearing after publishing at least 30 days notice of the time and place of the hearing in a general circulation newspaper in the community
- Ordinance – The governing body must adopt the comprehensive plan or element by ordinance. The governing body cannot approve the plan on final reading of the ordinance until the planning commission has recommended the plan