

Priority Investment Areas • Snapshot

Intent

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: (1) to enhance coordination of local government and public service planning in Dorchester County; (2) to better coordinate public and private investment in land and infrastructure; and (3) to conserve special places and natural resources through increased coordination. This chapter puts recent state legislation amending the South Carolina Local Government Planning Enabling Act into practice.

This legislation, the “Priority Investment Act,” 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. These entities are encouraged to prioritize projects for expenditure of those funds during the next ten years for needed public infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, roads, and schools. Local government agencies must coordinate with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions such as counties, municipalities, public and private utility providers, school districts, transportation agencies and other public entities affected by or that have planning authority over the public project.

Coordination

Coordination by a local government with public service entities and other political jurisdictions is needed not only during the preparation of a comprehensive plan, but also on an ongoing basis. The Dorchester County Planning Department leads a monthly Technical Review Committee (TRC) for subdivision applicants. Representatives from various public service providers are regularly in attendance to provide feedback to applicants regarding their agency or authority.

Throughout the course of Dorchester County’s 2007-2008 comprehensive planning process, the project team held monthly Task Force meetings with various stakeholders in the future of Dorchester County. These Task Force members include representatives from the Dorchester County Planning Commission and County Council. Representatives from the Lowcountry Housing Trust, Charleston Trident Homebuilders Association, MeadWestvaco, and Coastal

Conservation League all attended Task Force meetings. The project team coordinated the content of this Plan with representatives from Dorchester School District 2 and District 4. Meetings addressed available capacity for schools, in addition to plans for the four new schools currently under construction in District 2. Members of the project team also coordinated with representatives from neighboring jurisdictions of local government within the tri-county area at a staff level.

Capital Improvements Program and Scheduled Transportation Projects

Dorchester County is a member of the Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS) and took part in the composition of the CHATS Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Region. The LRTP identifies road construction and upgrade projects to be undertaken using a variety of funding sources, which include Guide-Share Funds, Sales Tax Funds, and Non-Guide-Share funds that may employ innovative financing methods from both public and private sources. A road improvement project set on a path to construction must appear in the region’s Transportation Improvements Program (TIP). The TIP names committed funding sources and sets timelines for completion as accurately as possible.

Multiple projects in Dorchester County appear in the CHATS LRTP, including the Bacon’s Bridge Road widening, the widening of Dorchester Road, the completion of Phase III of the Berlin G. Myers Parkway, the widening of US Highway 78, and the completion of the Glenn McConnell Parkway. The Dorchester County Penny Sales Tax Transportation Authority (DCTA) also identifies these infrastructure improvements.

The Dorchester County Capital Improvements Program (CIP) currently identifies public facilities such as libraries, emergency medical services (EMS) stations, fire and sheriff stations, jails, and water and sewer projects scheduled to be undertaken within the next five to ten years. Also included in the CIP are the expense timelines and funding sources for these improvements. The County’s CIP does not, however, include transportation projects.

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Conservation Areas: “Where Not to Grow”

Throughout the course of this comprehensive planning process, citizens of Dorchester County have expressed anxiety over the loss of open space in certain culturally and environmentally sensitive areas throughout the county due to growth. Residents desire to conserve certain areas of Dorchester County such as the historic Ashley River Road corridor and other historically sensitive lands surrounding Middleton Place. Other critical

resources of concern were the Four Holes Swamp and Great Cypress Swamp and the southwestern portion of the county along the Edisto River floodplain. Some of these areas are expected to experience significant growth pressure over the next ten to fifteen years. Residents identified expansion of the existing conservation easements in Dorchester County as an important conservation tool.

Priority Investment Areas • Shape

Goal 1

Dorchester County will initiate and facilitate a productive ongoing dialogue to coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions, agencies, and public service authorities in an effort to promote and sustain the quality of life enjoyed and shared by the residents of Dorchester County.

Policy 1.1: Dorchester County will provide written notification to all agencies, jurisdictions, public service districts, school districts, transportation agencies or other relevant entities of all major and minor subdivision or development proposal affecting their service or jurisdictional area and will seek the same courtesy from the other neighboring local governments.

Policy 1.2: All Dorchester County public service authorities, agencies, and jurisdictions will provide a notification of all permit applications from the respective jurisdiction or authority regarding all major subdivision or development proposals within the confines of their jurisdiction to ensure concurrency and to provide a simultaneous system of cross-checking development proposals throughout the approval process. (E.g., Dorchester County Public Works Department provides a letter to the Planning Department regarding available capacity for the recently submitted 225-unit development located off Bacon’s Bridge Road.)

Policy 1.3: Dorchester County will maintain a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) to address existing water and sewer capacity and further identify plans for future expansion of service and infrastructure throughout their service area to include a comparison of capital project needs and projected revenues over the next five to ten years.

Policy 1.4: Dorchester County Planning and Growth Management departments, Dorchester County schools, Dorchester County Public Works, South Carolina Department of Transportation, and other infrastructure providers shall designate and coordinate all infrastructure improvements for the Priority Growth Areas to ensure infrastructure concurrency. (See Chapter 2 for more information about infrastructure concurrency.)

Policy 1.5: Dorchester County will conduct an annual review of the County’s CIP to ensure infrastructure and public service concurrency and to address potential issues such as deficiencies and surpluses.

Policy 1.6: The Dorchester County Technical Review Committee will include a representative of each school district to consider land development proposals within each school district. The County will coordinate with both school districts to secure school capacity concurrent with growth.

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.”

Goal 2

Priority Investment Areas in Dorchester County will foster public and private investment in Employment Growth Areas and Gateway Districts, where economic development will be encouraged and accommodated.

Policy 2.1: The Employment Growth Areas and Gateway Districts identified on the *Priority Investment Areas Map* will utilize market-based incentives to encourage private developers to meet the goals of the Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan. These incentives may include land-use intensity bonuses, market-driven housing densities, relaxed zoning regulations, fees in lieu of taxes or parking, consideration of unusual development elements or innovations, fast-track permitting, and design flexibility. By reducing hurdles and timelines for receipt of permits, the County will encourage investment in Employment Growth Areas.

Policy 2.2 A streamlined development review process will apply to development proposals in the Gateway Districts identified on the *Priority Investment Areas Map*. In Gateway Districts, the County will expedite and incentivize environmentally sustainable compact, mixed-use development proposals with density bonuses provided the proposals meet ordinance-specified design objectives and low-impact development standards.

Policy 2.3: The Priority Investment Areas will provide for public and private investment in alternative modes of transportation to alleviate negative traffic conditions resulting from single-occupancy automobile transportation. Gateway Districts will benefit from the placement of commuter rail stations, as illustrated in the *Future Land Use Map*.



Gateway Districts - new town centers - are identified as Priority Investment Areas within Dorchester County considering their location and proximity to existing services and planned infrastructure. A Gateway District might evolve like the pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development depicted above. (Image created for Town of Summerville by BCDCOG, 2008)

Ten Principles of Smart Growth

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

The Smart Growth Network, in which USEPA is a partner and funder, developed the ten principles of "smart growth." (Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency, www.epa.gov, 2007)

Goal 3

Dorchester County will conserve natural and historic areas and redirect growth to more suitable and desirable areas targeted for investment and poised for development via a voluntary, market-driven program.

Policy 3.1: Dorchester County will identify Sending and Receiving Areas for a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program in its Zoning and Land Development Ordinance. The TDR program will be an incentive to landowners of large tracts of naturally or culturally valuable land to conserve, rather than develop, the land.

Policy 3.2: Dorchester County will capitalize on opportunities for conservation of green space and natural areas by utilizing a TDR program and redirecting development to areas that will support a higher level of development and residential density and away from naturally and culturally valuable lands and districts.

Policy 3.3: Environmentally and culturally sensitive areas shall be designated as TDR Sending Areas: places from which development and growth should be directed away, such as the Ashley River Road Historic Overlay District, the Edisto River floodplain, the Great Cypress Swamp, and the Four Holes Swamp. These are designated Restricted Growth Areas – Conservation on the *Priority Investment Areas Map*.

Policy 3.4: Dorchester County will guide economic development and employment growth opportunities for increased commerce throughout Dorchester County in areas designated for Employment Growth and Gateway Districts on the *Future Land Use Map* (FLUM). The FLUM also identifies commercial corridors for public and private investment to encourage growth and prosperity, including corridors of Ladson Road, Old Trolley Road, North Main Street, Dorchester Road, Central Avenue, Orangeburg Road, and Memorial Boulevard. Directing industrial and commercial use to these areas will reduce development pressure on more sensitive lands and waters of Dorchester County.

Policy 3.5: The FLUM depicts Housing Nodes – centrally located new neighborhoods where a variety of housing types are encouraged to mix with light commercial services and civic uses. Housing Nodes will use land efficiently to slow the encroachment of housing development into areas set aside for conservation.

A Transfer of Development Rights program will be utilized to preserve existing natural greenbelts located throughout Dorchester County in addition to other environmentally and culturally sensitive areas.



Conservation areas designated on the *Future Land Use Map* will be considered TDR Sending Areas (i.e., the Ashley River Road corridor, the Four Holes Swamp, the Edisto River floodplain, and the Great Cypress Swamp).

Gateway Districts are located at strategic intersections and corridors abounding with development opportunity in lower portions of Dorchester County, such as the intersection of Mallard and Jedburg roads with US Highway 78, shown here.



Goal 4

Dorchester County will undertake a proactive and innovative approach to address housing affordability issues by encouraging a variety of housing opportunities for existing and future residents of Dorchester County with varying income levels.

Policy 4.1: To encourage creation of workforce housing, Dorchester County will provide market-based incentives and work to streamline its development review process. Tools will be available to developers of workforce housing such that development proposals including workforce housing can gain approval without rezoning.

Policy 4.2: Dorchester County will encourage the free market to provide an adequate supply of housing options at key locations including Housing Nodes, Gateway Districts and Community-Oriented Corridors within the county. A by-right zoning district will be tailored for central neighborhoods (Housing Nodes) to allow accessory dwelling units, townhouses, apartments, and live-work units as appropriate for the surrounding community. Development proposals that include multiple housing types that target the workforce will not undergo greater scrutiny than a more conventional residential subdivision with a uniform lot size in the rezoning and land development review processes.

Policy 4.3: The Gateway Districts shall encourage alternative and innovative development proposals such as transit-oriented design or traditional neighborhood development to ensure a variety of housing types are financially attainable to single heads of households, young professionals, public servants, and empty-nesters.



Workforce housing targets families who earn between 80 and 120 percent of the area's median income.

Priority Investment Areas • Build

Coordination

To secure efficient and sound investment in public infrastructure and services in Dorchester County, the departments of Planning and Growth Management will maintain open lines of communication between all public service and infrastructure providers. The Dorchester County Planning Staff will take the lead in this coordination initiative by notifying adjacent jurisdictions and public service authorities in writing monthly to coordinate development proposals coming on-line. This level of coordination will increase government efficiency and remove unnecessary overlap of duties.

Dorchester County will encourage neighboring public-service providers, with purview over water & sewer, roads, schools, and other services, to return the same level of communication. The County Planning Staff will encourage the aforementioned local public service providers to notify the County of applications for service and available capacity.

At its monthly meeting, the Dorchester County Technical Review Committee (TRC) will include representatives from all entities involved in or impacted by a land development proposal. These entities are Dorchester County Public Works, SCE&G, SCDOT, Dorchester County school districts, Knology, Time Warner Cable, BellSouth, and in the future, CARTA, as the area’s transit authority. A representative from an adjacent municipality, such as a Town of Summerville or City of North Charleston planner may also be invited to TRC meetings for developments adjacent to their jurisdiction. The gathering of these representatives will offer a *one-stop shopping* opportunity for a major land development applicant to receive feedback from each individual agency, authority, or jurisdiction.

This monthly (or as needed) meeting will allow representatives to coordinate allocation of public services in an efficient and timely manner. These monthly TRC meetings will continue to cut down on administrative overlap and provide an opportunity to expedite the approval process.

Transportation Improvements

Major Dorchester County Road Project Implementation

Project	Timeline for Completion	DCTA	CHATS	SIB	*Impact Fees	*TIF	*MID	*Tolls
Glenn McConnell Pkwy. (Bees Ferry Rd. to US-17A)	20-30 years				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	
Fifth North Street (US-78): Berlin G. Myers Pkwy. to Jedburg Rd.	10-20 years	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		

Dorchester County can rely upon no single source of revenue to fully fund any of its major road projects, listed above. The table identifies tools the County will establish and sources it will tap to begin revenue collection for each project. Given

the long timeline for completion of some projects, future revenue streams not yet identified will be necessary and must be addressed during future updates of the Dorchester County Comprehensive Plan. Future revenues from one or more of the

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listed sources must also be considered at a later date.

In 2006, the voters of Dorchester County approved the one-cent sales tax, which enabled the Dorchester County Penny Sales Tax Transportation Authority (DCTA) to implement a program including 22 road improvement projects over the next five to seven years. This \$125-million program will supplement funds available to the county from South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), Federal Highways Administration ((FHWA), private contributors and other sources (DCTA, www.dorchesterroadstax.org, 2007).

Dorchester County is a member of the Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS), the regional transportation-planning authority for the urbanized portion of the Charleston-North Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), as well as the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG), which directs transportation planning in the rural areas in the same MSA. CHATS and BCDCOG are the conduits for federal funds for road improvements in Dorchester County.

In December 2007, Dorchester County applied to the South Carolina's State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) to supplement funding for five arterial road improvement projects. SIB awarded the County \$213.2 million; however, the timeline for receipt of the award is unset. Dorchester is just one of several counties to receive a SIB commitment, and SIB funding from year to year is inconsistent.

Dorchester County has the opportunity to secure another source of revenue for transportation improvements by assessing "transportation impact fees." Impact fees may be implemented to fund public transportation improvements for Dorchester County if they are programmed in the Capital Improvements Program.

In order for Dorchester County to collect development impact fees for transportation improvements, there must be a "rational nexus" (Nolan v. California Coastal Commission, 483 U.S. 825, 1987). Between the fees and the impact expected from the new development assessed the fee. Impact fees cannot be used to rectify an existing shortfall in a road's level of service. Moreover, fees collected from a new user of the transportation system must benefit that user, rather than fund projects many miles away, on which that user has no impact.

The amount of an impact fee is determined by the cost of a new facility compared to the size, proportion, and strain that a new development places on a facility proposed for improvements. These fees transfer a portion of cost for construction of new public facilities from the taxpayers to the direct beneficiaries of those facilities. These fees will be coupled with local funding sources to expedite major infrastructure and facility improvements in a jurisdiction.

For successful application of development impact fees, Dorchester County must implement land-use planning to guide growth toward the new public facilities scheduled to support the ensuing development. While a zoning district is not required to assess development impact fees, it is highly recommended so that Dorchester County can predict revenue and set impact fees accordingly.

Tax-increment financing (TIF) and municipal improvement districts (MID) are both tools that allow a local government to create special tax assessment districts to collect revenue for public infrastructure projects. Dorchester County could use TIF to redirect property tax revenue away from current recipients and into an account designated for a predetermined project without raising taxes for the district. A local government would assess an additional tax in a MID to generate revenue for a planned project. As of this document's printing, cities and towns could create MIDs, but not counties. Pending state legislation could change that during 2008.

Both TIF and MID typically fund projects smaller than arterial road widening projects. Their revenues could supplement other sources or be specifically targeted to streetscape improvements on existing roads. In 2007, however, the City of North Charleston established a MID to fund more significant infrastructure projects in and around the former Charleston Navy Base.

A toll placed on a road is a fee that each motorist pays for each use of the road, either upon entering or exiting the facility. This tool can only be implemented for a limited-access facility.

Commuter Rail Stations & Supporting Facilities

Four locations have been identified for possible commuter rail stations. Three of the four sites are located in municipalities in the lower portion of Dorchester County. Cooperation between the

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County and its municipalities will be necessary to fully fund and successfully implement a commuter rail program serving those commuting from Dorchester County and job centers in Charleston and North Charleston. A combination of local, state, and federal sources – possibly including a sales tax, SIB money, and Federal Transit Administration funds – may be needed to bring a commuter rail system to Dorchester County.

BCDCOG is leading the planning effort for commuter rail, with Dorchester County’s participation. The Federal Transit Administration has two programs that may be available to fund the BCD Region’s commuter rail system: New Starts and Small Starts. Both require significant matching dollars from dedicated state and local sources.

During 2007, Wilbur Smith and Associates, a consultant to BCDCOG, is conducting an analysis of existing infrastructure, including the status of Norfolk-Southern and CSX rail lines located throughout portions of the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Region. Mass transit objectives are further explained in Chapter 3: Transportation.

The first potential commuter rail station site is located near the intersection of Berlin G. Myers Parkway and US-78 in Summerville. The second Summerville site is further west along US-78,

where it joins with SC-165 in the Brownsville area. The third location is outside the Town of Summerville’s jurisdiction and located along US-78 at its intersection with Jedburg Road. The fourth potential commuter rail station site is within the Town of Ridgeville at the intersection of SC-27 and Ridge Road.

Surrounding these commuter rail station locations, special considerations should be taken to provide additional parking facilities. In the event of insufficient surface parking to serve the commuter rail station, Dorchester County will encourage the two towns to consider a tax-increment financing (TIF) district or a municipal improvement district (MID) to raise revenue for the construction of a vertical parking facility for commuters.

The location of this parking facility would be well suited to the North Main Gateway District, at US-17A and US-78. This location is within the walking distance of the potential commuter rail station locations and may also serve as an ideal spot for a park-and-ride lot for express bus routes, given the proximity to Downtown Summerville and I-26. Partnership and financial arrangement between Dorchester County and the Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) is necessary for the implementation of an express bus route.

Capital Improvements Programming

Selected Public Works Projects - Capital Improvements Program				
Public Works	Funding Source	Start Date	End Date	Total (\$1,000s)
Water & Sewer-Kings Grant Location	2006 Revenue Bonds	2008	2010	1,250
Water & Sewer-WWTP Upgrade (8 MGD to 12 MGD)	2006 Revenue Bonds	2008	2010	6,026
Water & Sewer-Pump Station #3 Upgrade & Force Main	2006 Revenue Bonds	2008	2010	1,576
Water & Sewer-School to Pump Station #2	2006 Revenue Bonds	2008	2010	5,507
Water & Sewer-Shady Grove Elevation Tank	2006 Revenue Bonds	2008	2010	436
Water & Sewer-Poplar Grove to Ashley Ridge HS	2006 Revenue Bonds	2008	2010	1,446
Water & Sewer-Water to Ashley Ridge HS & Elevation Tank	2006 Revenue Bonds	2008	2010	4,352
Water & Sewer-Wescott Elevation Tank	2006 Revenue Bonds	2008	2010	1,570

The Dorchester County Capital Improvements Program (CIP) identifies funding sources and timelines for capital facilities to be constructed or upgraded within the next five to ten years. These projects include a broad range of facilities: construction of the new courthouse complex in St.

George, additions to EMS facilities, fire stations, county jails, libraries, and water & sewer facilities.

The table above, “Selected Public Works Projects,” identifies major water and sewer improvements scheduled in the CIP. Dorchester County must employ a similar template for road improvement

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projects in order to utilize transportation impact fees.

Dorchester County has commissioned BP Barber & Associates, a Charleston-based engineering consulting firm, to compile a study of future sewage treatment demand. The firm will conduct an analysis regarding expansion of wastewater treatment capacity for the Dorchester County Public Works Department. The completed study is expected in 2008. The plant expansion is listed second in the table.

The following table then lists projected need of education facilities based on 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. The school district will seek a referendum in November 2008 to raise revenue for the listed capital projects.

This Plan recommends that Dorchester County partner with its school districts to construct and upgrade capital facilities on school grounds. Prior to doing so, the County should urge school districts to prepare a CIP that identifies funding sources and timelines, at least for those facilities planned in partnership. The County can raise revenue to construct joint-use auxiliary facilities (i.e., no classrooms) through tax-increment financing or establish “residential improvement districts” in which to raise new revenue for school buildings, including classrooms.

Education Facilities Improvements

Education Facility Needs in Dorchester County - School District 2

New Schools	Address	City	Opening Date
Ashley Ridge High School	9800 Delemar Highway	Summerville	Aug-08
William M. Reeves, Jr. Elementary	1003 DuBose School Road	Summerville	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 River HS	TBD	TBD	2011
New High School	TBD	TBD	2014

Gateway Districts

Six Gateway Districts, illustrated on the *Priority Investment Areas Map*, are located at strategic points along major corridors where major transportation improvement projects are scheduled throughout the lower portion of Dorchester County. The purpose of each Gateway District is to serve as a “new town center” of surrounding neighborhoods and adjacent communities.

Locations of the six Gateway Districts are these:

- 1) *North Main Gateway District*: at US-17A and US-78;
- 2) *Brownsville Gateway District*: at US-78 and SC-165;
- 3) *Jedburg Gateway District*: on Mallard Road near US-78;
- 4) *Limehouse Crossroads Gateway District*: at SC-165 and SC-642;
- 5) *Ridgeville Gateway District*: on SC-27 near US-78; and
- 6) *Rosom Hill Gateway District*: near Sland’s Bridge (US-17A).

These Gateway Districts will each offer a mixture of local and destination retail and restaurants. Dorchester County should also encourage the location of a large white-collar employer to catalyze economic activity in these highly accessible areas of the county. Gateway Districts will also house the employees of these restaurants, offices, and retail uses. Chapter 5 is devoted to promoting workforce housing in Dorchester County.

Gateway Districts are situated in areas of Dorchester County where there are entrance points to the Town of Summerville or Ridgeville. An opportunity exists for Dorchester County to reach a mutual vision with its municipalities and set objectives for these specific locations given the proximity to jurisdictional boundaries.

Four of the Gateway Districts – North Main Gateway District, Brownsville Gateway District, Jedburg Gateway District, and Ridgeville Gateway District – are planned near the Norfolk-Southern Railroad. All four have potential to become transit-oriented developments around future commuter rail stations. Dorchester County and the towns of Summerville and Ridgeville should collaborate on land-use and transportation-planning initiatives to maximize the potential to serve the existing and future citizens of Dorchester County with alternative modes of transportation such as bus transit and commuter rail. Through the implementation of sound planning and community design principles, Dorchester County and the towns of Summerville and Ridgeville must provide land development opportunities within these specific Gateway Districts that would support a commuter rail station. In order to validate and sustain the site locations for commuter rail stations, it is essential that Dorchester County and the two towns Summerville mutually address and, more importantly, embrace these concepts of future land-use planning and transit-oriented development to support transportation alternatives. More information about Gateway Districts appears in the first and seventh chapters of this Plan.

Transfer of Development Rights

A Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program will redirect development away from environmentally sensitive areas to places in which existing and planned infrastructure capacity and transportation improvements are scheduled. By implementing a TDR program, Dorchester County

would take a proactive approach to conserving some of the most culturally, historically, and environmentally sensitive areas in Dorchester County. The TDR program will conserve sensitive areas, as designated on the *Priority Investment Areas Map*, by redirecting and concentrating this growth into areas better suited to accommodate land development and its impacts.

A TDR program is a voluntary, market-driven program that would grant 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. The maximum number of “rights” available is the number of housing units allowed by Dorchester County zoning on the tract(s) of land. This area where the development rights can be purchased is the TDR “Sending Area.” The purchaser of these development rights is commonly another landowner, who in turn would be allowed by Dorchester County to increase residential density in another predetermined location, commonly referred to as a TDR “Receiving Area.” The resulting residential density of the Receiving Area is the number of homes allowed under then-current zoning plus the number of rights transferred to the Receiving Area.

Dorchester County will designate certain environmentally sensitive areas such as the Ashley River Historic Overlay District, the Edisto River floodplain, the Great Cypress Swamp, and the Four Holes Swamp as TDR Sending Areas in amendments to its Zoning and Land Development Ordinance. Potential TDR Sending Areas have been identified on the *Priority Investment Areas Map* as Restricted Growth Areas – Conservation. These areas, identified in light green, are well positioned as natural corridors surrounding the municipalities of Dorchester County.

The Great Cypress Swamp, the Four Holes Swamp, the Ashley River floodplain, and the Edisto River floodplain are natural corridors that already consist of isolated conservation easements that will be supplemented by a Transfer of Development Rights program. Dorchester County communities, outdoor enthusiasts, conservationists and others will have the opportunity to benefit from these natural greenbelts should this vision come to fruition.

The TDR program need not be implemented all at once. More appropriately, the County should begin

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with a smaller geographic scope. Establishment of the first Sending Area hinges on willing landowner participation and must be established by zoning. The County will press for larger tract acreage minimums than would be feasible under simple zoning. The TDR program effectively rewards the landowner for accepting strict zoning limitations geared toward conservation.

Dorchester County should partner with the Town of Summerville and the Town of Ridgeville, where

three of the six Gateway Districts are planned, to identify appropriate Receiving Areas. Portions of these two towns enjoy the best access to public infrastructure of any area within the boundaries of Dorchester County. To participate, the towns will need to adopt zoning standards that resemble the County's for the Transfer of Development Rights program. While the towns will keep their own zoning records, the County will continue to maintain all deed restrictions and easements on file at the County Courthouse, just as it currently does.