



**IMAGINE**

**GREENVILLE COUNTY**

TOMORROW'S VISION TODAY

## **Coordination Element**

## Purpose

As local governments in Greenville County were updating their comprehensive plans during the 2008-2010 time period, they realized the value of keeping each other informed of each plan's progress. Understanding the goals and implementation strategies of each comprehensive plan provided each local government the opportunity to identify areas of agreement and potential conflict. Unfortunately, each planning process was following a different completion schedule and it became difficult to try to coordinate future land use recommendations as well as identify similar growth and development strategies.

Therefore the planning functions of each local government agreed to meet after all the comprehensive plans were completed and adopted. The goal of these meetings was to determine if it was possible to jointly produce a "Coordination Element." This element would consist of a future land use map that reflected the intended development pattern of each local government and at the same time indicate compatible land uses in those areas where two or more local governments were in close proximity to one another.

In addition to a comprehensive, coordinated future land use map, the Coordination Element could identify development goals and strategies that were being advocated by each of the local government comprehensive plans. The Coordination Element also could identify other areas of cooperation and coordination as well.

The idea was for everyone to agree upon a future land use map and a set of development strategies and put together a "Coordination Element". Then the Coordination Element would be presented to each local government as an amendment to its comprehensive plan.

## Process

The planning staffs of each local government were aware of the value of coordinating land development patterns as well as establishing partnerships in other areas such as recreation and transportation planning. Working together in these areas can result in mutual benefits as well as the improvement of providing efficient services. During the years 2010 and 2011 staff planners of each local government in Greenville County attempted to meet once a month to discuss the purpose and composition of the Coordination Element. The planners decided that they would first focus on the future land use maps of each comprehensive plan, then review goals and objectives adopted in each plan to look for similarities, and finally identify other areas in which the local governments could work together.

During the meeting process, each meeting agenda also included a status report on the planning related activities that each local government was working on. This sharing of information was very important and useful. It led to the idea of possibly meeting on a frequent basis – quarterly, semi-annually, etc. to share information.

# Future Land Use Maps

The comparison of future land use maps began with having the ability to “join” the various future land use maps by use of the Geographic Information System (GIS) computer mapping program. In addition each jurisdiction was able to produce portions of their future land use map where it was adjacent to another local government on a larger scale. After the mapping was complete, the planners from the various jurisdictions who were adjacent to one another met to review the future land use maps.

The resulting comparison of maps indicated smooth transitions of proposed land uses among the adjacent local governments, and very few areas of conflicting land use recommendations. This comparison was not that surprising in that most of the local governments did have opportunities previously during their comprehensive plan planning processes to review and discuss future land use map recommendations. The few areas of conflict were very minor in nature and could be justified in that they reflected similar goals and objectives in the land use element of the neighboring jurisdictions. Therefore it appeared that none of the local governments would have to seek amendments to their adopted future land use maps for the purpose of seeking compatibility with other local governments.

# Greenville County Land Development Strategies

Each local government had its comprehensive plan online at its website and available to the public. Some of the staff planners accessed these documents and reviewed the goals, objectives and strategies of each of the Land Use Elements for each plan. While each Land Use Element certainly focused on issues and visions that were unique to that locality, there were ideas and strategies that were mentioned in all of the land use elements. These land use strategies were strategic in each plan and could represent the focus of a county-wide land use development strategy. These land use strategies included:

## **Infill Development -**

The idea of encouraging development on vacant properties or areas with redevelopment potential already within the built environment of each jurisdiction. These infill sites already have infrastructure in place usually with available capacity to serve new development. The challenge is to identify the most appropriate uses for the property and provide the best opportunities for their development or redevelopment.

## **Mixed Use Development -**

The concept of encouraging development with a mixture of uses is not new to any of the local governments in Greenville County. However, the notion of better integrating these uses through connectivity and pedestrian access to truly allow live, work, play, education opportunities in a village or community context is relatively new and is important and needed.

### Commercial Corridor Revitalization -

The appearance of vacant commercial big box stores and strip centers across the county was an issue identified in the comprehensive plans and one mentioned by many of citizen participants in the various planning processes. Once again the redevelopment of these sites involves identifying the most appropriate uses and the right circumstances for their successful reuse.

## Other areas of planning cooperation and coordination

- 1) Transportation Planning
- 2) Recreation Planning – Swamp Rabbit Trail and county-wide trail/greenway system
- 3) Stormwater management
- 4) Economic Development
- 5) Zoning Ordinance amendments to allow similar land uses in transition areas
- 6) The use of land use and design guidelines to promote the Centers and Corridors Concept

## Recommendations

- 1) That the professional planners for each local government in Greenville County jointly draft a “Coordination Element” that identifies a County –wide future land use map and accompanying development strategies that can be used and adopted by each of the local governments in Greenville County as an amendment to their comprehensive plan.
- 2) That the professional planners agree to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss planning issues in their jurisdiction and identify areas of cooperation and coordination such as recreation planning – trails/greenways, transportation planning, storm water management, continuing education of local planning officials, etc. The goal will be to select an issue each year and focus their activities and resources to successfully address this issue.