

In Fulfillment Of

RESOLUTION No. 1949

AN ANNUAL REPORT
ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF MAJOR SUBDIVISIONS
SERVED BY SEPTIC SYSTEMS IN THE UNZONED AREAS
OF GREENVILLE COUNTY



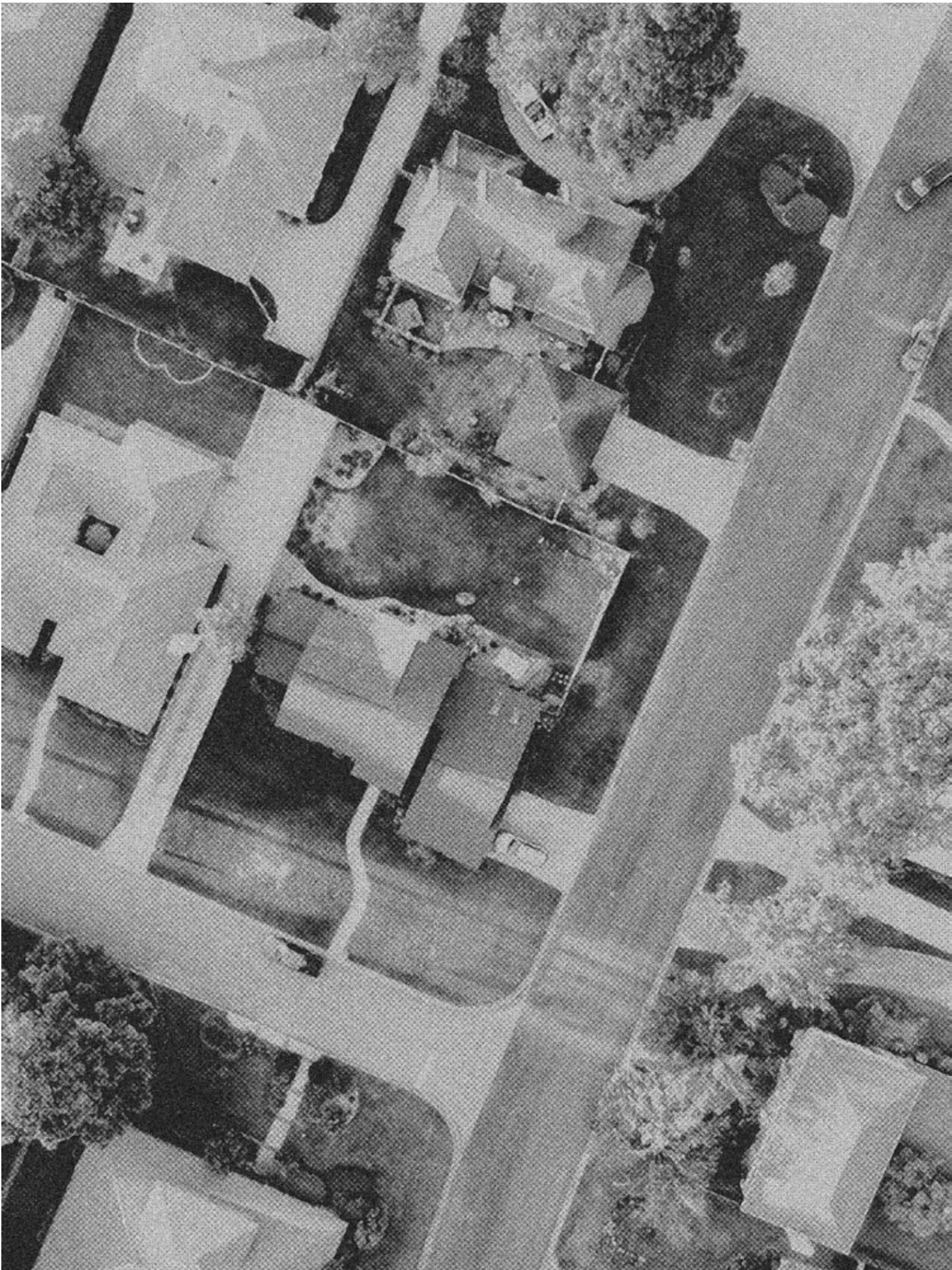
VER. 2, UPDATED 5/20/2026



GREENVILLE COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION
2026

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This report is submitted by the Greenville County Planning Commission to the Planning & Development Committee of County Council pursuant to Resolution No. 1949, adopted in 2023. The resolution requires an annual assessment of major subdivisions served by septic systems in comparison to those served by public sewer systems in both the zoned and unzoned areas of Greenville County.

The data presented herein covers the reporting period of January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025. This report provides information on the number of approved major subdivisions, to-

tal lots, and total acres for developments served by septic systems and public sewer systems, disaggregated by zoned and unzoned areas as required by the resolution.

This reporting period represents the second full calendar year following the adoption of Land Development Regulation (LDR) amendments in January 2024, which established a minimum 1.5-acre lot size for major subdivisions (10 or more lots) served by septic systems in unzoned areas of the county, along with countywide riparian buffer requirements for new developments.

REGULATORY CONTEXT

Greenville County Council has taken a proactive approach to managing the impacts of growth on wastewater infrastructure and environmental quality. Several regulatory actions provide context for interpreting the data in this report.

Septic System and Riparian Buffer Ordinance (January 2024)

On January 2, 2024, County Council approved by a vote of 11 to 1 amendments to the Land Development Regulations establishing two key provisions:

- A minimum lot size of 1.5 acres for new major subdivisions (10 or more lots) served by individual septic systems in unzoned areas of the county.
- Countywide riparian buffer requirements of 50 feet along streams and jurisdictional waters, and 100 feet in areas with higher-volume drainage, for all new developments.

These regulations were designed to disincentivize dense septic-dependent development in areas lacking public sewer infrastructure and to direct growth toward areas where public utilities and services are already available. The ordinance includes a two-year sunset clause requiring County Council to reenact the provisions in early 2026 for them to remain in effect.

SCDES Oversight

The South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) is the permitting authority for individual septic systems in Greenville County. DES issues initial permits for septic tank installation; however, there is no ongoing inspection or maintenance requirement after installation. This lack of continued oversight has been cited by County Council members as a key concern regarding the long-term environmental and public health impacts of septic-dependent development.

Public Sewer Providers

Public sewer service in Greenville County is primarily provided by MetroConnects (legally the Metropolitan Sewer Subdistrict), with wastewater treatment provided by Renewable Water Resources (ReWa), the regional provider formerly known as the Western Carolina Regional Sewer Authority. Between 2021 and 2022, Greenville County completed a consol-

idation that brought six formerly independent sewer sub-districts—Berea, Gantt, Marietta, Wade Hampton, Parker, and Taylors—under MetroConnects, making it the sole sewer collection provider in the unincorporated areas of the county. Coordination with both MetroConnects and ReWa is a critical component of the subdivision review process for sewer-served developments.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

During the 2025 reporting period, a total of 29 major subdivisions were approved in Greenville County, encompassing 1,532 residential

lots across approximately 847.14 acres. The following sections present the detailed data as required by Resolution No. 1949.

Approved Major Subdivisions by Wastewater Service Type

Table 1. Count of Approved Major Subdivisions (Zoned vs. Unzoned)

Area	Septic	Public Sewer	Total
Zoned	7	18	25
Unzoned	1	3	4
Total	8	21	29

Of the 29 total approved major subdivisions, 21 (72.4%) were served by public sewer systems and 8 (27.6%) were served by individual septic systems. In unzoned areas specifically, only 4 major subdivisions were approved during the reporting period: 3 on public sewer and 1 on septic.

8 lots, falling below the 10-lot threshold that triggers the 1.5-acre minimum lot size requirement under the January 2024 ordinance. This is consistent with the County’s February 2025 planning report, which confirmed that no major septic-based subdivisions meeting the ordinance threshold have been proposed or approved in unzoned areas since the amendment took effect.

Notably, the single septic-served subdivision approved in the unzoned area contained only

Total Lots by Wastewater Service Type

Table 2. Total Lots in Approved Major Subdivisions (Zoned vs. Unzoned)

Area	Septic	Public Sewer	Total
Zoned	94	1,235	1,329
Unzoned	8	195	203
Total	102	1,430	1,532

Public sewer-served subdivisions accounted for 1,430 lots (93.3%) of the 1,532 total lots approved, while septic-served subdivisions accounted for 102 lots (6.7%). This disparity is even more pronounced than the subdivision count alone would suggest, indicating that sewer-served developments tend to be substantially larger in scale.

In unzoned areas, the 3 sewer-served subdivisions produced 195 lots compared to just 8 lots from the single septic-served subdivision, demonstrating the regulatory and market incentive to connect to public infrastructure when available.

Total Acres by Wastewater Service Type

Table 3. Total Acres in Approved Major Subdivisions (Zoned vs. Unzoned)

Area	Septic	Public Sewer	Total
Zoned	135.42	618.38	753.80
Unzoned	5.50	87.84	93.34
Total	140.92	706.22	847.14

Sewer-served subdivisions encompassed 706.22 acres (83.4%) compared to 140.92 acres (16.6%) for septic-served subdivisions. In unzoned areas, the land area for septic-served

development was minimal at only 5.50 acres, while sewer-served developments consumed 87.84 acres.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND TRENDS

Septic-to-Sewer Ratio

Table 4. Septic-to-Sewer Ratio Summary

Metric	Septic	Public Sewer
Subdivisions	8 (27.6%)	21 (72.4%)
Lots	102 (6.7%)	1,430 (93.3%)
Acres	140.92 (16.6%)	706.22 (83.4%)
Average Lot Size (Acres)	1.38	0.49

The septic-to-sewer ratio for the 2024 reporting period is approximately 1:2.6 by subdivision count, 1:14 by lot count, and 1:5 by acreage. These ratios indicate that public sewer-served

development far exceeds septic-served development across all measures, with the disparity most pronounced when measured by the number of residential lots produced.

Average Lot Size Comparison

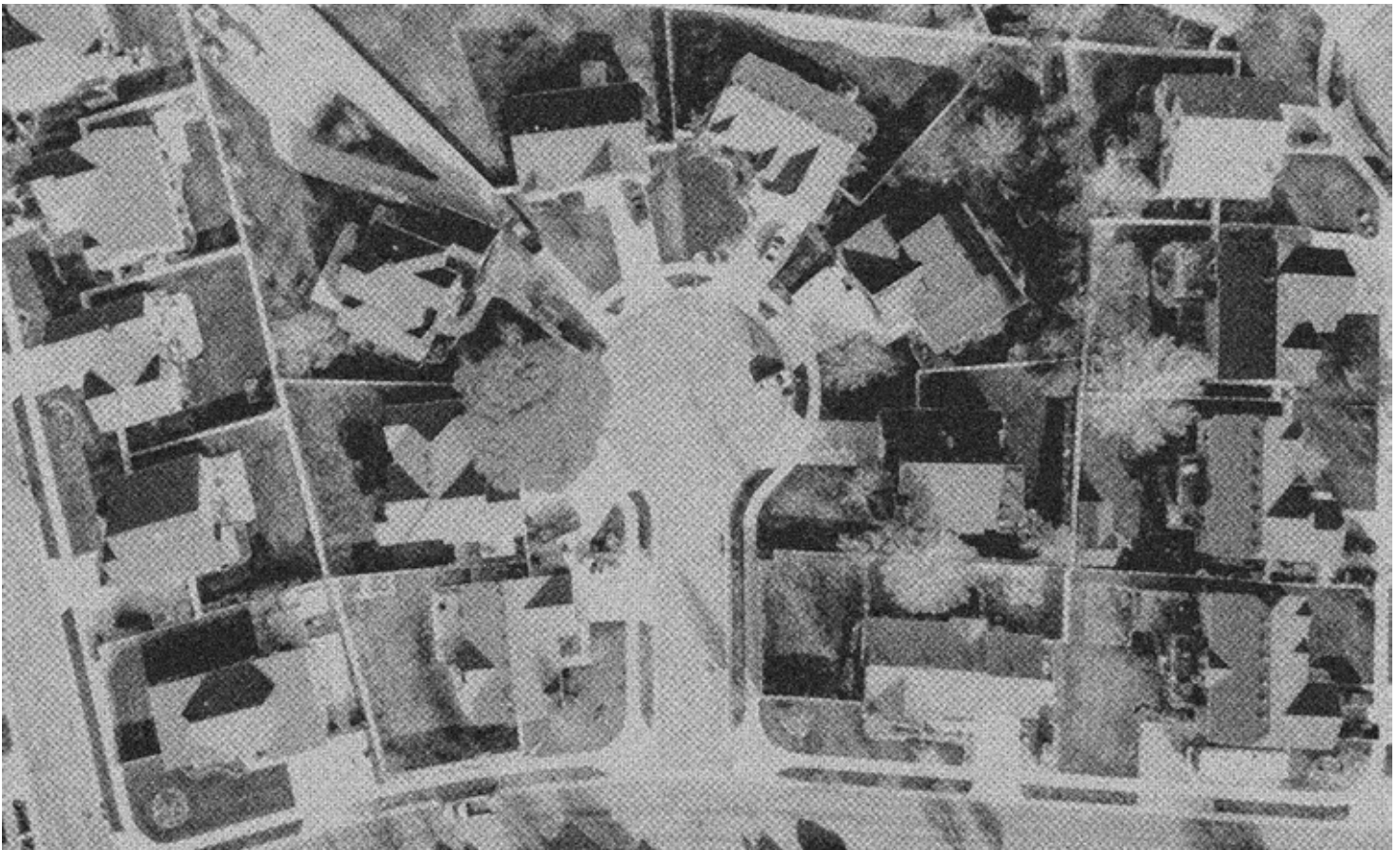
The average lot size for septic-served subdivisions was 1.38 acres, compared to 0.49 acres for sewer-served subdivisions. The significantly larger average lot size for septic developments reflects both the physical requirements of on-site septic systems and the influence of the 1.5-acre minimum in unzoned areas. Sewer-connected developments, by contrast, are able to achieve higher residential densities, which is more consistent with efficient land use and infrastructure investment patterns.

Impact of the January 2024 Ordinance No. 5577

The data suggests that the January 2024 LDR amendments have continued to have a measurable effect on development patterns in unzoned areas through a second full year of implemen-

tation. Only one septic-served major subdivision was approved in the unzoned area during the entire reporting period, and it contained just 8 lots on 5.50 acres—falling below the 10-lot regulatory threshold. This outcome is consistent with the stated policy objective of discouraging dense, septic-dependent development where public infrastructure is unavailable.

However, as noted in earlier analyses, the ordinance's impact on the overall rate of septic system use countywide has been limited. Seven of the eight septic-served subdivisions approved in 2025 were located in zoned areas, where the 1.5-acre minimum does not apply. This indicates that while the ordinance has effectively curtailed septic-based development in unzoned areas, it has not eliminated the use of septic systems in zoned portions of the county where public sewer service may or may not be readily accessible.



POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the data and analysis presented in this report, the Planning Commission offers the following observations for County Council’s consideration:

Sunset Clause and Ordinance Renewal

The January 2024 Ordinance No. 5577 included a two-year sunset clause requiring County Council action in early 2026 for the regulations to remain in effect. The ordinance was later amended (in 2025) to extend the sunset provision to January 2, 2028, unless readopted. The data presented in this report demonstrates that the ordinance has been effective across two full years of implementation in limiting large-scale, septic-dependent development in unzoned areas. County Council should consider this sustained track record as it evaluates the renewal of these provisions before calendar year 2028 and whether any modifications are warranted based on the cumulative implementation data.

Septic Use in Zoned Areas

The concentration of septic-served subdivision activity in zoned areas (7 of 8 septic subdivisions) warrants attention. While the January 2024 ordinance addressed development in unzoned areas, the continued use of septic systems in zoned areas—where zoning classifications may permit higher densities—raises questions about the availability and accessibility of public sewer service in those locations. MetroConnects and ReWa already review septic development requests within Greenville County as part of their established processes; continued coordination with both agencies on sewer extension priorities and capacity planning may help inform how septic-served development is evaluated in zoned areas going forward.

Environmental and Public Health Monitoring

The absence of ongoing inspection or maintenance requirements for individual septic systems after initial DES permitting remains a concern. As the number of septic systems in the county accumulates over time, the cumulative risk to water quality increases. The Planning Commission encourages continued dialogue between County Council, DES, and local environmental stakeholders regarding strategies for monitoring septic system performance and protecting water quality in the county’s watersheds.

Long-Range Infrastructure Planning

The data reinforces the importance of long-range infrastructure planning to support sustainable growth. Realizing the Comprehensive Plan’s vision depends on the coordinated alignment of three interrelated elements: zoning, the Future Land Use Map, and sewer infrastructure. When these tools work in concert—directing density where service capacity exists and extending service to areas designated for growth—development outcomes more consistently reflect adopted policy. Continued coordination with sewer providers on capital improvement programming, paired with land use and zoning decisions that anticipate and respond to infrastructure investment, will be critical as the county’s population continues to grow. Population projections indicate that Greenville County may add more than 200,000 residents by 2040, underscoring the urgency of proactive, integrated planning.

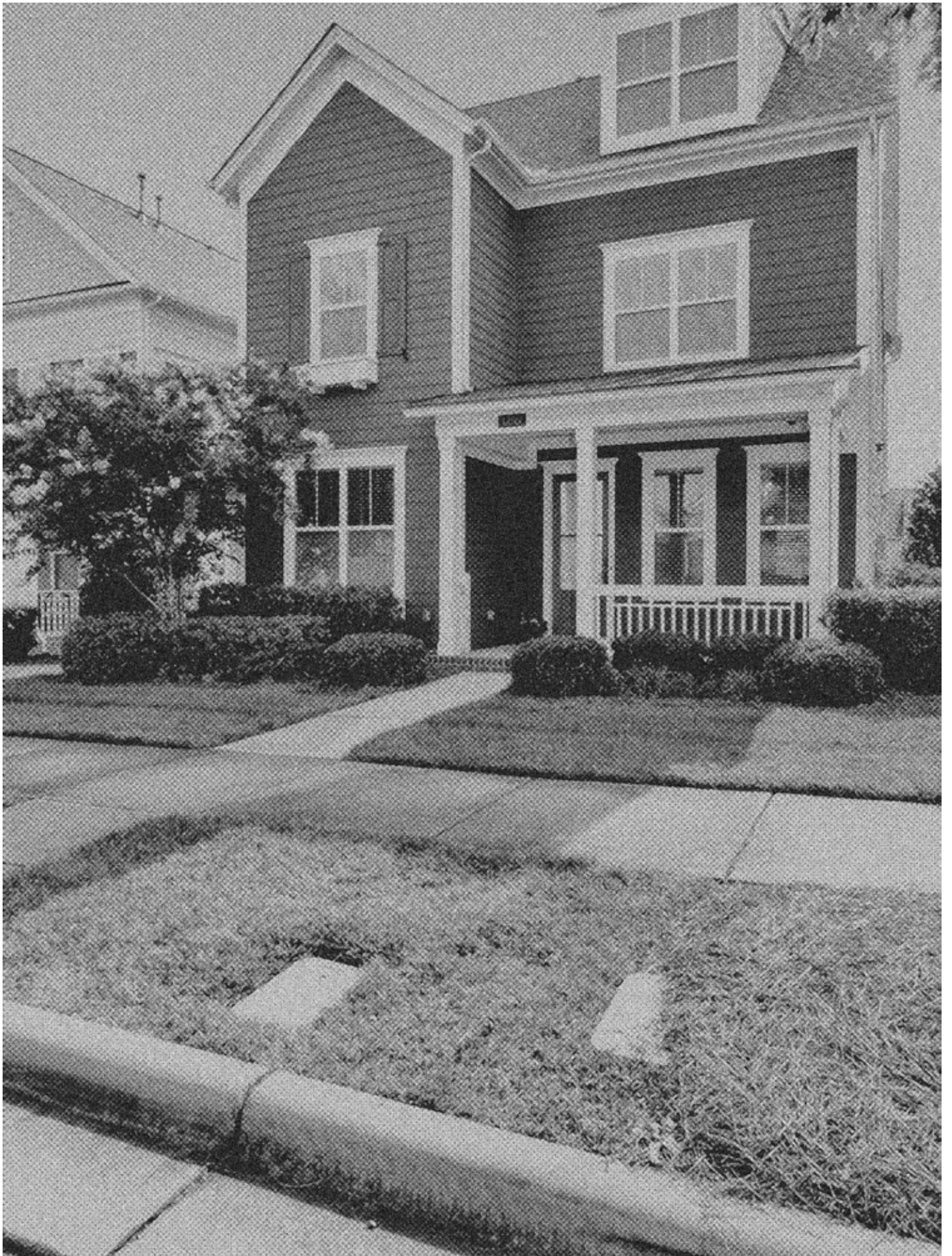
CONCLUSION

The 2025 data confirms that the overwhelming majority of major subdivision activity in Greenville County is served by public sewer systems. Public sewer-served developments accounted for 72.4% of approved subdivisions, 93.3% of approved lots, and 83.4% of total acreage. Septic-served development in unzoned areas was minimal, with only one small subdivision of 8 lots on 5.50 acres receiving approval.

The January 2024 LDR amendments have continued to achieve their intended effect of discouraging large-scale septic-dependent development in unzoned areas, though their impact

on septic use in zoned areas has been limited. As County Council evaluates the sunset clause and considers future policy direction, this data provides a baseline for assessing trends and informing decision-making regarding wastewater management, growth management, and environmental stewardship.

The Planning Commission remains committed to providing County Council with the data and analysis necessary to support informed policy decisions, and welcomes any questions or requests for additional information related to this report.



APPENDIX A: RESOLUTION No. 1948

The full text of County Council Resolution No. 1948 is reproduced below.

No. 1949

A RESOLUTION

REQUIRING THE PLANNING COMMISSION TO SUBMIT AN ANNUAL REPORT ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF MAJOR SUBDIVISIONS SERVED BY SEPTIC SYSTEMS IN THE UNZONED AREAS OF GREENVILLE COUNTY

WHEREAS, the proper management of wastewater treatment and disposal systems is essential to protect public health, water quality, and the environment; and

WHEREAS, the County Planning Commission is responsible for evaluating and approving subdivision proposals; and

WHEREAS, it is crucial for the County Council to have accurate and current information on the number of new major subdivisions served by septic systems compared to those served by public sewer systems in the unzoned areas, as well as the associated acres and lots within these subdivisions; and

WHEREAS, understanding the ratio of septic systems to public sewer systems within the county will aid in evaluating the effectiveness of current wastewater management policies, identifying areas of concern, and developing strategies to promote sustainable growth and environmental protection;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Greenville County Council that the County Planning Commission shall submit an annual report to the County Council regarding the number of subdivisions served by septic systems, total acres, and total lots, in comparison to the number of subdivisions served by public sewer systems.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this annual report shall include, but not be limited to, the following information:

1. An annual count of approved major subdivisions served by septic systems within the unzoned and zoned areas.
2. An annual count of approved major subdivisions served by public sewer systems within the unzoned and zoned areas.
3. An annual count of the total lots and acres encompassed by approved subdivisions served by septic systems in the unzoned and zoned areas.
4. An annual count of the total lots and acres encompassed by approved subdivisions served by public sewer systems in the unzoned and zoned areas.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County Planning Commission shall submit the annual report to the Planning & Development Committee of County Council no later than August 1, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning & Development Committee of County Council shall review the annual report and use the information to assess the current state of

wastewater management within the county, identify trends, and consider necessary revisions to planning and zoning policies.

ADOPTED IN REGULAR MEETING THIS ___ DAY OF _____, 2023.

GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

ATTEST:

Dan Tripp, Chairman
County Council

Regina McCaskill
Clerk to Council

Joseph M. Kernell
County Administrator

GREENVILLE COUNTY
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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