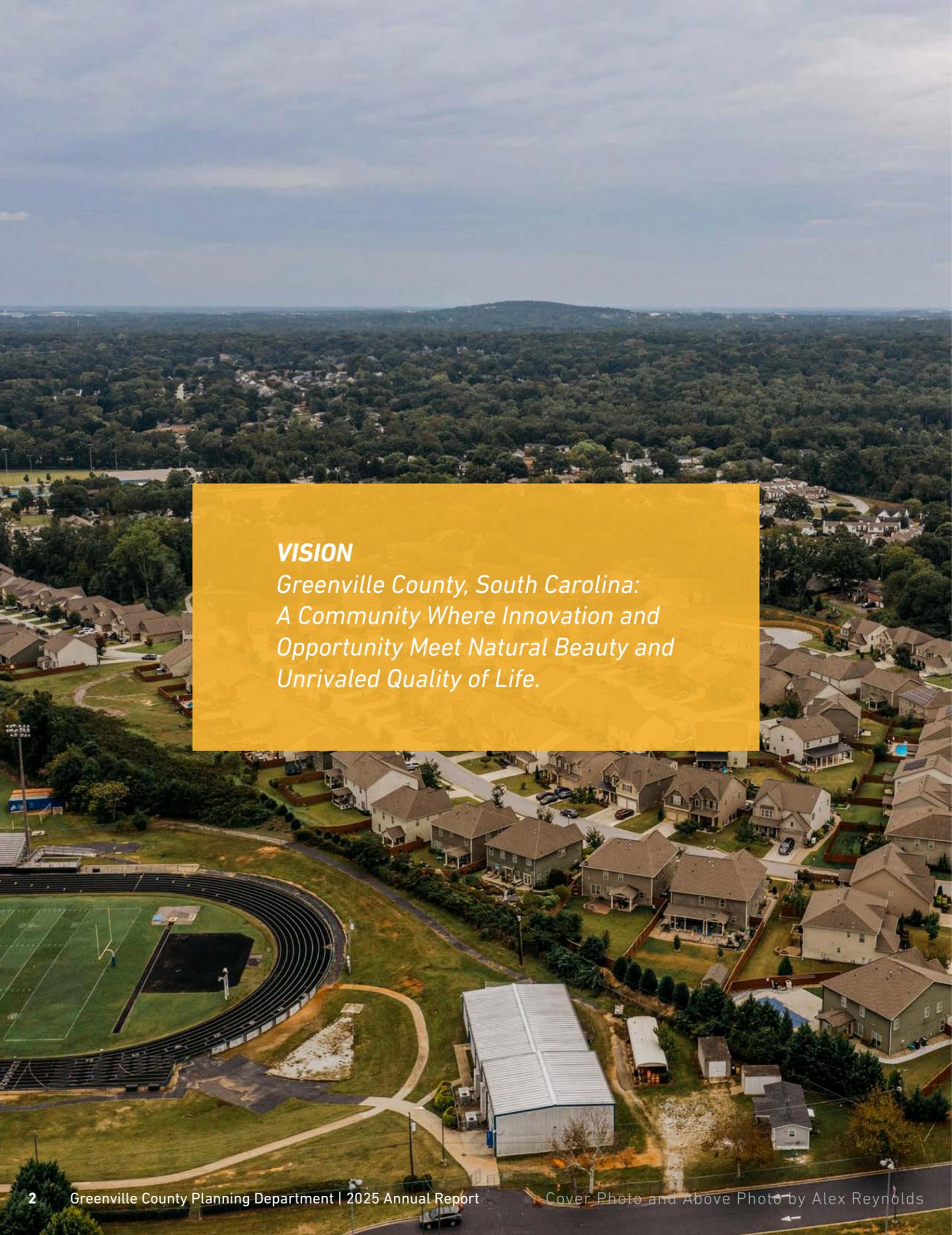




plan greenville county

Annual Report | 2025



VISION

*Greenville County, South Carolina:
A Community Where Innovation and
Opportunity Meet Natural Beauty and
Unrivalled Quality of Life.*

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Chapter One

Report: summarizing the activities, projects, and decisions across Greenville County's planning divisions, including long-range planning, transportation, subdivisions, zoning, and historic preservation.

Introduction

Greenville County's Planning Department navigated a consequential year in 2025, one defined by sustained growth pressures, contentious policy debates, and the kind of foundational work that positions the county for thoughtful development in the years ahead. The numbers tell part of the story: over 130 rezoning applications processed, dozens of subdivision proposals reviewed, and continued expansion of the regional transportation network. But the more significant narrative lies in how the county responded to challenges that revealed gaps in existing regulations and forced difficult conversations about growth management, infrastructure capacity, and community character preservation.

The year's most dramatic policy intervention – a unanimous 12-month moratorium on cluster developments – reflected widespread recognition that current regulations had failed to deliver promised benefits while allowing density increases that strained infrastructure beyond design limits. That moratorium, along with the state-mandated five-year Comprehensive Plan review, an audit of nineteen adopted community plans, and the proposal of the county's first Open Space Plan,

signaled a department and a county grappling seriously with the consequences of rapid growth.

This annual report documents that work across five divisions: Zoning Administration, which processed complex rezoning requests while identifying ordinance gaps requiring attention; Subdivision Administration, which managed high application volumes amid the cluster development crisis; Transportation Planning, which secured federal certification and positioned the region for its next long-range transportation plan; Long Range Planning, which advanced strategic initiatives while strengthening partnerships with economic development, recreation, and conservation partners; and the Historic Preservation Commission, which continued protecting the county's architectural and cultural heritage. Together, these divisions demonstrate a department committed to both responding to immediate needs and building the institutional capacity necessary for sustainable growth. The pages that follow detail those efforts – the successes, the challenges, and the work that remains.

Letter from the Director

Greenville County continued to grow and evolve in meaningful ways throughout 2025, and with that growth came a high level of public engagement. Residents took an active interest in how their communities are changing, while developers continued to bring forward new proposals. Together, this required elected and appointed officials to work through the often-difficult questions that accompany growth. That shared involvement remains essential and continues to shape Greenville County in thoughtful and lasting ways.

Much of the Planning Department's work this year focused on guiding growth responsibly while balancing a wide range of perspectives. Zoning staff spent considerable time updating plans, refining regulations, and reviewing zoning and subdivision proposals in response to ongoing development pressures across the County. Many rezoning proposals moved forward with support, while others prompted deeper discussion about infrastructure capacity, land-use compatibility, and long-term impacts. These conversations are rarely simple, but they are necessary to ensure that growth aligns with community expectations and adopted policy. Our staff approaches this work with a focus on consistency, fairness, and long-term outcomes.

Subdivision activity remained strong, with many proposals taking the form of cluster developments that generated significant public interest. In response to that interest, County Council chose to temporarily pause new cluster development applications to allow time for refinement of the standards governing this type of development. That pause has allowed staff to focus on improving the ordinance in ways that better preserve natural areas while still accommodating growth. Much of this foundational work is now complete, and we look forward to sharing proposed updates with the public early in the new year.

Growth has also increased pressure on infrastructure, particularly transportation. Traffic congestion remains a daily concern for many residents – captured memorably by a local plumber's billboard claiming they "can unclog anything, except I-85." While lighthearted, the message reflects a very real challenge shared across the County. GPATS, the County's regional transportation planning organization, is moving forward with the 10-year update to the Long-Range Transportation Plan. This effort will identify both near-term improvements and a longer-term vision for maintaining

a transportation system that supports continued growth, and we encourage residents to consider participating as this work moves forward.

Several of the County's major growth-management efforts this year were led by the Long-Range Planning Division, including the state-mandated five-year Comprehensive Plan review, an audit of adopted community plans, and the proposal of the County's first Open Space Plan. Historic preservation considerations were also woven throughout zoning, subdivision, and long-range planning decisions, helping protect community character while allowing growth to proceed under established standards. Alongside this work, the division focused on strengthening internal coordination by supporting partner agencies with in-house research and analysis, formalizing adoption procedures, and reviving the Lunch & Learn series to encourage professional development and collaboration across departments.

Having now served as Greenville County's Planning Director for six months, I am proud of the professionalism, consistency, and care our staff brings to its work with the public, the Planning Commission, and other County boards. Our role is to carry out the vision for Greenville County as adopted by County Council, and in 2025 that vision was reflected in the acceptance of staff recommendations approximately 85 percent of the time. Given the volume and complexity of the matters before us, this reflects the quality of the work being done every day. I am deeply proud of what this department accomplished in 2025, and I look forward to what 2026 will bring.

Draper Carlile

Draper Carlile

Greenville County Planning Director
December 29, 2025



Above Photo by Alex Reynolds

Chapter Two

Administrative: oversight of zoning processes, including application reviews, permit issuance, ordinance interpretations, and enforcement to ensure compliance with county land use regulations.

Zoning Administration

Introduction

Greenville County processed over 75 rezoning applications throughout 2025, reflecting sustained development pressure across residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial categories. The Planning Commission and County Council navigated complex decisions balancing property rights, infrastructure capacity, environmental protection, and community character preservation.

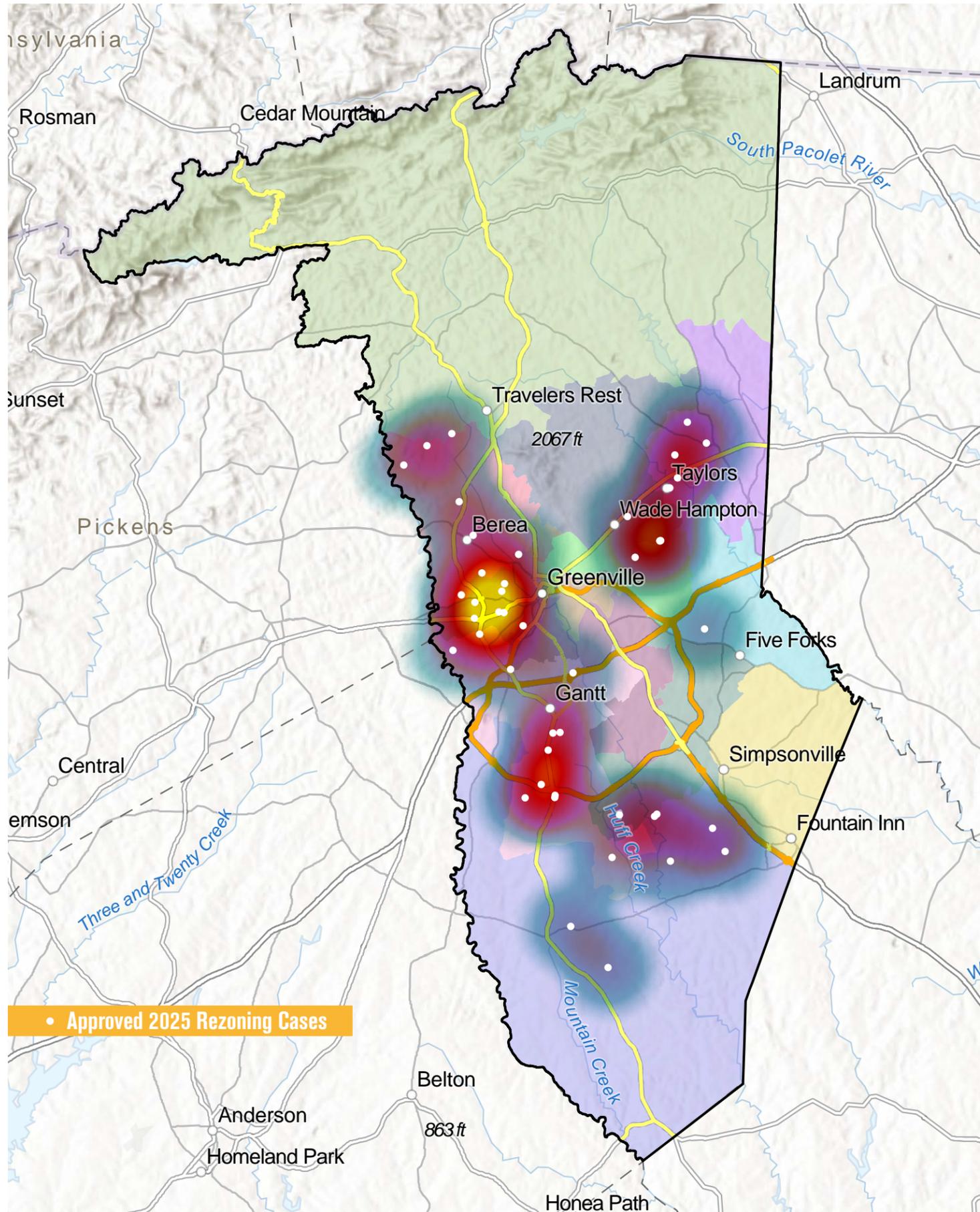
Geographic and planning context heavily influenced outcomes. Applications in Traditional Neighborhoods achieved higher approval rates than those in Rural or Suburban Edge designations. Significant tensions emerged between Comprehensive Plan designations and Area Plan recommendations, with no clear hierarchy established for conflicts. The Paris Mountain Environmental District underwent multiple regulatory refinements to strengthen protections.

Controversial decisions exposed ordinance gaps requiring attention: ambiguous agritourism definitions, unclear density calculations for subdivisions and rezoning applications, subjective land

use standards, and uncertainty about which zoning districts appropriately serve Mixed Employment Centers. Staff recommendations prevailed in approximately 85 percent of cases, though infrastructure and future-use concerns sometimes prompted decisions that diverged from planning staff guidance.

Multifamily rezoning requests faced particular skepticism, with only a 33 percent approval rate among decided cases, while agricultural and planned development rezonings were generally approved. Applicants who engaged early with planning staff and demonstrated community consultation experienced significantly higher success rates than those pursuing purely administrative approaches.

The rezoning activity of 2025 reveals an administration grappling with growth management challenges and recognizing that technical zoning compliance alone may not adequately address broader community concerns about sustainability and service capacity.



Rezoning Activity in 2025

Overview

Greenville County experienced substantial development pressure in 2025, processing 78 rezoning applications through the Planning Commission and County Council. This activity revealed persistent tensions between agricultural preservation, commercial expansion, residential intensification, and the county's Comprehensive Planning goals. The year brought into sharp focus fundamental questions about how the county should manage growth while maintaining the character and quality of life that makes it attractive to residents and businesses alike.

The Landscape of Rezoning Requests

The rezoning applications spanned the full spectrum of land use categories, from agricultural preservation districts to high-density multifamily developments. Approval rates varied dramatically by category, with planned developments and agricultural requests succeeding at rates above 70%, while multifamily rezoning requests faced significant resistance with only two of six decided applications approved – a 33% approval rate that reflected deep-seated concerns about density and infrastructure capacity. Of the 58 cases reaching final decision (excluding withdrawals and pending cases), approximately 70% were approved, reflecting neither rubber-stamp approval nor reflexive denial but rather genuine case-by-case evaluation. This disparity reflects concerns about density, infrastructure capacity, and community character that shaped decision-making throughout the year.

Agricultural preservation district requests emerged as unexpectedly controversial. While the county approved six of eight AG rezoning applications, the debates surrounding them revealed fundamental uncertainties about what constitutes legitimate agricultural use in a rapidly suburbanizing county. The Planning Commission wrestled extensively with agritourism definitions, attempting to distinguish genuine farm-based operations from commercial entertainment venues disguised as agriculture. Denver Downs and local wineries were repeatedly cited as appropriate models – working farms offering activities tied to agricultural operations – while haunted houses and

generic event venues were deemed outside the intended scope unless directly connected to farming activities.

The controversy intensified when AG rezoning requests appeared connected to code enforcement issues. In one notable case along Earle Drive, the Commission denied an AG rezoning request that seemed designed to circumvent compliance with junkyard and salvage yard regulations. Staff expressed concerns about retail operations masquerading as agriculture, and commissioners increasingly scrutinized whether applicants demonstrated genuine agricultural intent or merely sought to exploit zoning loopholes. This scrutiny reflected a broader realization that AG zoning, relatively new to Greenville County's regulatory framework, required more refined defini-

2025 Rezoning at a Glance

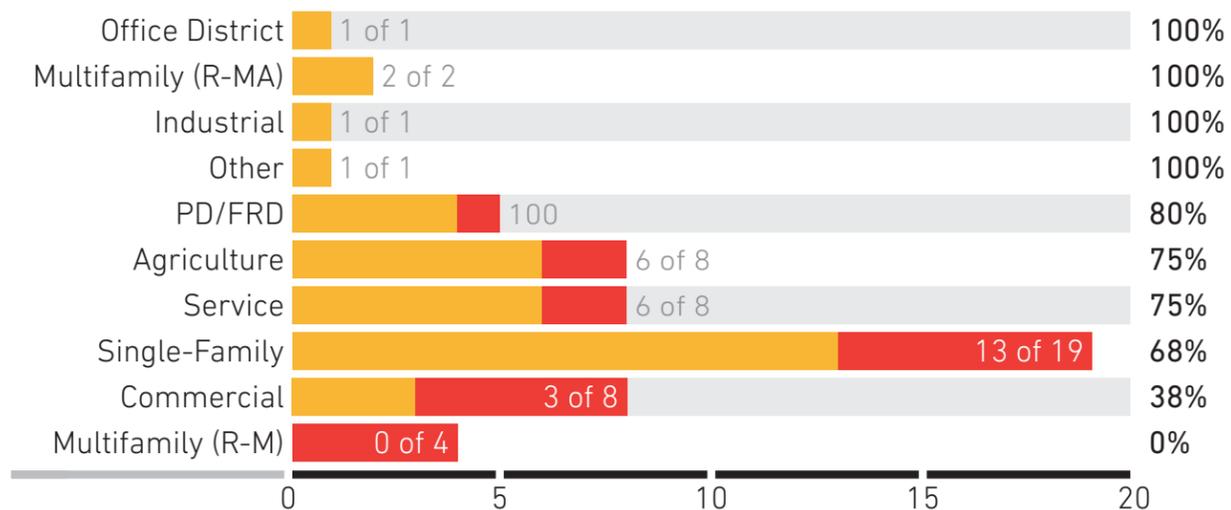
- 72** Total Applications Filed
- 54** Cases Reached Final Decision
- 38** Approved (70% approval rate)
- 16** Denied
- 18** Withdrawn (Administrative or Applicant)

itions and operational standards than the ordinance currently provided.

Commercial rezoning requests presented a different set of challenges, with approval rates hovering around 40%. The Commission demonstrated a clear preference for commercial uses in established corridors or mixed-use centers, readily approving C-1 applications along White Horse Road and in suburban center designations. However, requests to introduce commercial uses into predominantly residential areas met strong resistance. A pet grooming business proposal along Old White Horse Road failed on a 5-3 vote, with commissioners determining that commercial zoning would fundamentally alter the residential character of the corridor despite the relatively low-impact nature of the proposed use.

The C-2 commercial district, which uniquely allows liquor stores, bars, taverns, and nightclubs, proved particularly controversial even when commercial use seemed appropriate for a location. The Commission's concern centered not on current applicants' stated intentions but on future

Approval Rate by Zoning Category



possibilities if properties changed hands. This “future use” consideration shaped multiple denials, including a request along Conestee Road that staff recommended for approval to eliminate problematic split-zoning. Despite the planning logic favoring the rezoning and consistency with the Mill Village Commercial designation, commissioners voted 5-3 to deny, unable to overcome concerns about potential liquor sales establishments. Similarly, a Shriner’s Temple seeking C-2 zoning for an event facility faced unanimous denial, with Chairman Bichel articulating the Commission’s dilemma: “If rezoned to C-2 and the current occupant sells, it could become a bar.” Ultimately, this request was later approved under a different zoning classification (S-1) that would not permit bars.

Residential upzoning requests achieved approximately 75% approval when proposing single-family development at moderate densities, particularly within Traditional Neighborhood or Suburban Neighborhood designations. The Commission proved receptive to incremental density increases like R-10 to R-6 or R-7.5 to R-6, viewing these as appropriate infill development that complemented existing neighborhood character. However, larger jumps in density or requests in areas lacking adequate infrastructure faced significant skepticism. Septic system capacity emerged as an increasingly important consideration, with commissioners questioning whether proposed lot sizes could realistically accommodate septic systems

while meeting stream buffer requirements and other environmental constraints.

Multifamily rezoning requests encountered significant resistance, with only two of six decided applications approved, yielding a 33% approval rate (three additional applications were withdrawn before reaching a decision). These proposals included requests for R-M8, R-M10, R-M16, R-M20, and R-MA (Multifamily Attached) zoning districts, with R-MA requests achieving notably higher success rates than the higher-density R-M designations. The pattern revealed that commissioners distinguished between attached single-family/duplex developments (R-MA) and true high-density multifamily apartments, proving more receptive to the former.

The R-MA applications demonstrated this differential treatment. Old Spartanburg Road (CZ-2025-017) successfully converted from POD (Planned Office District) to R-MA with both staff and Commission support, proceeding to Council approval. Similarly, Old Chick Springs Road (CZ-2025-022) achieved R-MA rezoning despite both staff and Commission recommending denial, with County Council overriding those recommendations and approving the request as amended. The Old Bramlett Road FRD amendment (CZ-2025-042) incorporating R-MA also succeeded, indicating that attached housing at moderate densities proved more palatable than high-rise or garden-style multifamily.

Planning Commission Vote Margin Distribution

Vote Category	Count	% of Approved Cases	% Upheld by Council	Count	% of Approved Cases	% Upheld by Council
Unanimous (9-0, 8-0, 7-0)	34	85.0%	94%	9	50.0%	67%
Strong Majority (8-1, 7-1)	5	12.5%	100%	3	16.7%	100%
Moderate Majority (6-3)	1	2.5%	0%	3	16.7%	100%
Narrow Decision	0	0.0%	N/A	3	16.7%	100%
TOTAL	40	100%	93%	18	100%	83%

In contrast, higher-density R-M applications faced steeper challenges. The Gibson Drive request for R-M8 zoning in a Suburban Edge area designated for 0-1 dwelling per acre initially received “No Recommendation” from the Planning Commission to allow a community meeting. Even after that meeting suggested community preference for a less intensive R-M5 option with duplexes, the applicant ultimately withdrew the request rather than proceed with the notified R-M8 zoning, as the Commission could not approve the alternative density discussed at the meeting without a new application (CZ-2025-005).

The pattern of denial for higher-density R-M requests repeated along Easley Bridge Road (CZ-2025-006) and New Easley Highway (CZ-2025-026), where two separate R-M10 and R-M8 applications faced denial as commissioners concluded that the Rural Corridor and area plan designations simply could not support multifamily development regardless of specific density numbers. The Agnew Road case illustrated both the resistance to high-density multifamily and the potential for persistence through density reduction: after the Commission approved an R-M8 request (CZ-2025-014), County Council denied it on second reading despite Planning Commission support. However, a subsequent application for the same location seeking less intensive R-6 zoning (CZ-2025-050) succeeded, demonstrating that significantly reduced density proposals could overcome initial resistance. The Sans Souci area request for R-M10 zoning along West Blue Ridge Drive (CZ-2025-060) also failed, with the Commission denying it 7-1 when the area plan’s commercial designation conflicted with the Comprehensive Plan’s Traditional Neighborhood designation that would have supported medium-density residential.

The multifamily data revealed a clear hierarchy of acceptability: R-MA attached housing succeeded at a 100% rate among decided applications (all three – CZ-2025-017, CZ-2025-022, and the R-MA component of CZ-2025-042 – were approved), while R-M8, R-M10, and R-M16 applications for apartment-style development failed consistently, with only the reduced-density R-6 retry succeeding. This distinction suggested commissioners viewed townhomes and duplexes as compatible with existing neighborhoods while perceiving apartment complexes as fundamentally different land uses requiring extraordinary justification. The infrastructure capacity concerns discussed elsewhere in this report weighed particularly heavily on multifamily proposals, with commissioners questioning whether roads, schools, and septic systems could accommodate the concentrated population increases these rezonings would enable.

The Cluster Development Crisis

No issue generated more controversy in 2025 than cluster housing developments. The debate culminated in a 180-day moratorium approved by County Council in September, temporarily suspending acceptance of new cluster development applications while Council members and Commissioners reviewed and proposed amendments to Article 11 of the Land Development Regulations.

The controversy stemmed from the view expressed by members of Planning Commission that cluster development provisions were being used to increase density by offering less than adequate open space. The ordinance’s subjective language about “meaningful proportions” of open space proved difficult to enforce consistently, potentially leading to retention ponds and un-

buildable steep slopes being counted toward open space requirements. Commissioners and community members expressed frustration that they believed the promised benefits of cluster development – usable parks, connected trails, preserved natural features – rarely materialized in practice.

Technical questions about cluster development crossed into rezoning territory when the Commission grappled with whether R-R3 zoning could even be used for cluster development. The ordinance’s density table showed “N/A” for R-R3 in the cluster development column, which some commissioners interpreted as prohibition. Staff argued that “N/A” meant “not applicable” because density couldn’t be meaningfully expressed in units per acre for a district requiring one dwelling per three acres, not that cluster was disallowed. The debate exposed ambiguities in the ordinance that contributed to inconsistent application and developer uncertainty.

The moratorium represented acknowledgment that the current cluster development framework had failed to achieve its goals and required fundamental reconsideration. The 180-day pause allowed time for workshops, stakeholder input, and careful crafting of amended regulations that would either genuinely deliver promised open space benefits or be eliminated as a development option.

Infrastructure Capacity: The Unresolved Question

Perhaps no issue cut across more rezoning decisions than concerns about infrastructure capacity, particularly for septic systems, roads, and sewer availability. Yet these concerns existed in an uncomfortable procedural gray area, with commissioners uncertain about their authority to deny applications based on infrastructure inadequacy when technical zoning requirements were met.

The septic capacity question emerged most clearly in rural and suburban edge applications proposing density increases. A request along Highway 418 to upzone from R-R3 to R-R1 would have increased potential units from 15 to 45, all presumably on septic systems in an area lacking water and sewer infrastructure. Despite staff recommendation for approval based on consistency with the South Greenville Rural Preservation designation, the Commission denied the request 7-1, with Commissioner Manning emphasizing the lack of infrastructure. Similarly, a proposal along Carr

Road to rezone from R-S to R-15 generated concerns about septic capacity, with commissioners noting that R-15 zoning could theoretically permit up to 40 units despite the applicant’s stated plan for approximately 20. Questions arose about whether 15,000 square foot lots could realistically accommodate septic systems near stream buffers. The application ended in a 4-4 tie vote at the Planning Commission, constituting denial under Commission bylaws, and the applicant subsequently withdrew the request.

Why Multifamily Requests Were Denied

Reasons cited in staff/PC/Council discussion

05 Comprehensive/Area Plan Conflict

Cited in 5 of 6 cases - the most common barrier. Staff consistently found MR requests inconsistent with comp plan density designations.

03 Infrastructure/Road Capacity

Concerns about septic capacity, SCDOT access, and road adequacy featured in 3 cases.

04 Incompatible with Area Character

Surrounding neighborhood character arguments appeared in 4 of 6 cases, often paired with plan conflicts.

04 Density Exceeds Plan Intent

Even where some density increase might be acceptable, the magnitude of MF density was seen as excessive.

These decisions suggested the Commission was incorporating infrastructure capacity as a material consideration even when not explicitly required by the zoning ordinance. However, the legal foundation for this remained murky. Commissioner Hammond repeatedly argued that infrastructure capacity was “outside Commission purview” and belonged to the permitting phase, where DHEC would evaluate septic feasibility and issue or deny permits accordingly. Chairman Bichel and Commissioner Manning took the opposite view, believing the Commission had responsibility to consider whether infrastructure could support proposed development intensity.

The situation grew more complicated with sewer availability. ReWa (Renewable Water Resources authority) changed positions mid-process on the Toll Brothers development at Armstrong Creek, initially approving septic systems on June 26 but retroactively denying them after including the parcel in ReWa’s five-year Capital Improvement Plan. This unpredictability created uncertainty for

both developers and commissioners about when septic would be required versus when sewer connection would be mandated.

Traffic concerns manifested differently, constrained by state law and SCDOT jurisdiction. Multiple applications generated public opposition focused on traffic impacts, yet Chairman Bichel repeatedly explained that the Commission legally could not deny rezoning based on state road traffic since SCDOT held authority over state roads and would require traffic impact studies during the permitting phase. This legal constraint created frustration, with commissioners feeling public pressure about an issue they lacked authority to address directly through rezoning decisions.

The Hierarchy Problem: When Plans Conflict

Greenville County operates under multiple planning documents: a 2020 Comprehensive Plan covering the entire county and 18 area plans adopted between 2008 and 2024 with detailed community input. Throughout 2025, rezoning decisions exposed a fundamental ambiguity: which document should prevail when the two conflict?

The Sans Souci community case illustrated the stakes. An applicant sought R-M10 multifamily zoning along West Blue Ridge Drive on a property the Comprehensive Plan designated as Traditional Neighborhood, where medium-density residential would be appropriate. However, the Sans Souci Community Plan designated the corridor for commercial use, reflecting community survey results showing residents wanted local retail and restaurants rather than additional housing. The Commission sided with the area plan, recommending denial for the request 7-1 despite Comprehensive Plan support. A community member’s testimony revealed that some residents had initially supported the residential project until learning the units would be rentals rather than owner-occupied, adding affordability politics to the planning conflict. Council supported denial along with Planning Commission’s recommendation.

This decision established – or at least suggested – that area plans could override Comprehensive Plan designations when specific community input supported it. Yet the precedent remained uncertain because other decisions defaulted to Comprehensive Plan guidance when area plans were unclear or silent. The Berea area saw similar dynamics, with the Commission protecting the Berea

Area Plan’s Medium Density Residential designation against a commercial rezoning request, while industrial-to-residential conversions sometimes succeeded despite both planning documents supporting industrial use when market reality and area plan transitional designations suggested residential made more sense.

Staff conducting the Comprehensive Plan’s five-year review identified this hierarchy problem as requiring resolution. The county needed either a clear precedence rule (the more specific document prevails, or the Comprehensive Plan always prevails) or a consistent conflict-resolution process. The current case-by-case approach created unpredictability for applicants and left commissioners without clear guidance on how to weigh competing planning documents.

Industrial Land: Preservation Wins Over Market Reality

A rezoning request along Old Pelzer Road crystallized a fundamental tension about industrial land preservation – and ultimately affirmed the county’s commitment to protecting industrial zones. The property carried I-1 industrial zoning, and staff recommended denial of a request to convert it to R-S residential (CZ-2025-018), citing the Greenville Area Development Corporation’s work to attract industrial users and County Council’s historical commitment to maintaining industrial zones for economic development. Staff argued that industrial land represents a finite economic development asset that shouldn’t be converted to residential use, particularly given GADC’s active efforts to market industrial sites to prospective employers.

The Planning Commission disagreed with staff, approving the residential rezoning. Commissioner Hammond articulated the Commission’s counter-logic: “If the site were a desirable I-1 site, it would already be in use.” The long-term vacancy suggested market signals indicating the property wasn’t viable for industrial use, and the South Greenville Area Plan’s Transitional-Residential designation reflected this reality. Commissioners prioritized demonstrated market demand over speculative industrial preservation, concluding that economic development goals must align with economic viability rather than wishful thinking.

However, County Council sided with staff and GADC, denying the residential conversion on second reading. This decision established that the

county would protect industrially-zoned land even when market conditions suggested limited industrial viability, and that GADC input on economic development strategy can carry determinative weight at the Council level even when the Planning Commission concluded otherwise. The denial revealed the County's policy: industrial land preservation for long-term economic development takes precedence over short-term residential market demand, and vacant industrial properties should be held for future industrial use rather than converted when development pressure intensifies.

Yet the debate revealed unresolved policy questions that persist despite Council's clear stance: How long should the county "hold" industrial land before allowing conversion? What evidence demonstrates genuine industrial viability versus speculative zoning? Do potential jobs and tax base from industrial development outweigh immediate community housing needs? While Council answered these questions for the Old Pelzer Road property, the underlying tension between economic development theory and market reality will resurface as development pressure continues.

Commercial corridor protection generated different dynamics. The Commission proved more willing to preserve commercial designations against residential conversion, viewing major roadways as suited for commercial traffic and access and worrying that residential conversion would reduce commercial land supply permanently. The Sans Souci decision reflected this logic, with commissioners noting that once converted to residential, corridors rarely revert to commercial use even if later market demand emerges. Interestingly, the county approved several downzonings from C-2 commercial to S-1 service/industrial (CZ-2025-041, CZ-2025-058), suggesting more flexibility in converting commercial to industrial uses than in converting either to residential.

Paris Mountain: Environmental Protection Evolution

The Paris Mountain Environmental Sensitive District received unprecedented attention in 2025, with three text amendment attempts reflecting both the community's commitment to environmental protection and the complexity of crafting effective regulations. The district, established to protect the mountain's ecological, scenic, and recreational values, required regulatory updates

to address ambiguities and conflicts with state law.

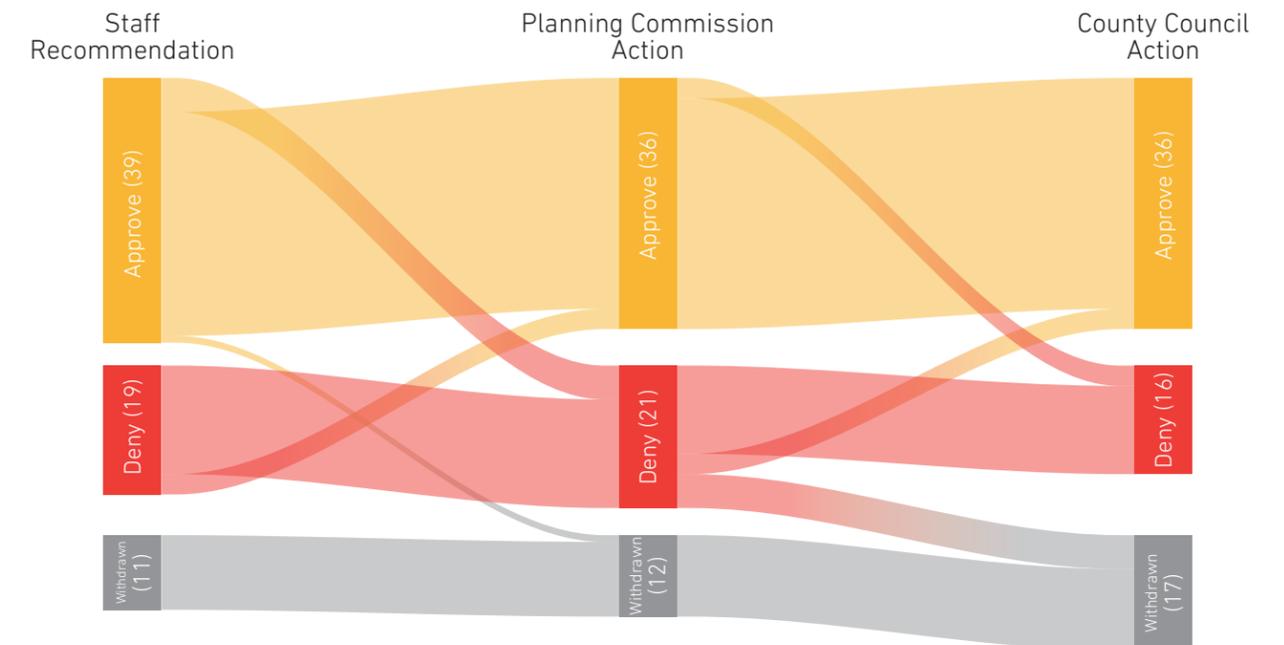
The first approved amendment eliminated "reversion" language that had suggested properties could automatically return to pre-ESD zoning if alternative access (not via Altamont Road) was provided. This provision conflicted with South Carolina Code requiring public hearings for any zoning change, creating an unenforceable mechanism. The amendment clarified that any zoning change must follow proper rezoning procedures while maintaining setback and buffer requirements from Altamont Road.

Subsequent amendments attempted to strengthen protections further, with Councilor Shaw proposing restrictions on Altamont Road access that the Council ultimately denied. A comprehensive amendment package addressed definitions, permitted uses, tree preservation requirements, and short-term rental provisions, though the rental provisions were removed due to lack of county-wide short-term rental policy. The amendments also addressed forestry activities exemptions mandated by state code, navigating the delicate balance between environmental protection and state-law-protected forestry operations.

The Commission's denial of one Paris Mountain amendment package (CZ-2025-053) while approving others illustrated the community's protective instincts toward the mountain combined with caution about regulatory overreach. Staff noted that additional amendments remained forthcoming, suggesting Paris Mountain regulations would continue evolving as implementation revealed gaps and ambiguities.

In marked contrast to the contentious Greenlink bus maintenance facility proposal in the historically Black New Washington Heights neighborhood, the Paris Mountain process demonstrated a collaborative and iterative approach to environmental regulation. While the Greenlink project advanced rapidly with limited early public input and ultimately proceeded despite sustained community opposition and concerns over environmental justice, traffic, and neighborhood character, the Paris Mountain amendments were repeatedly refined through extensive public hearings, stakeholder workshops, and deliberate Council debate. Proposals deemed overly restrictive or legally problematic were either scaled back or denied outright, reflecting a willingness to prioritize both community consensus and regulatory workability over expediency. This measured, transparent

Case Flow Sankey



evolution of the Environmental Sensitive District stands as a counterpoint to the Greenlink experience, where residents felt their voices were marginalized and the outcome predetermined, highlighting differing County approaches to balancing development needs with community and environmental protection in 2025.

The Flexible Review District: From Permissive to Restrictive Tool

The Flexible Review District (FRD), traditionally used for creative developments requiring flexibility beyond standard zoning districts, emerged in 2025 as something different: a tool to allow specific uses while prohibiting others that would be permitted in standard commercial districts.

The vehicle storage facility case along Chalmers Road illustrated this evolution. The applicant sought C-2 zoning, which would permit the desired vehicle storage use but also allow bars, liquor stores, and other uses concerning to nearby residents. Instead, the applicant proposed an FRD with a Statement of Intent that would permit all C-2 uses but add restrictions impossible under standard zoning: hours of operation limit-

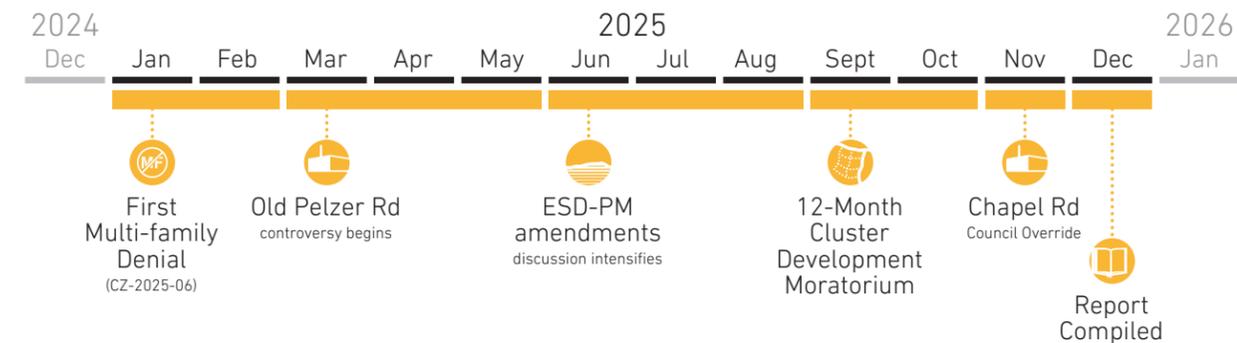
ed to 6am-10pm Monday through Saturday and 8am-8pm Sunday, enhanced landscaping beyond ordinance requirements, roadway frontage landscaping, and "light auto repair" carefully defined to exclude general automotive service facilities.

Staff initially recommended denial due to inadequate landscaping and buffering provisions, but after real-time negotiations during the hearing added conditions addressing these concerns, the Commission approved the FRD 7-1. The key insight was that once approved, the property remained bound to the FRD Statement of Intent permanently. Future property owners could not convert to general C-2 uses without initiating a new rezoning process, effectively "locking in" the restrictions negotiated with the original applicant.

This restrictive FRD approach addressed the "future use" concerns that plagued standard commercial zoning requests, particularly C-2. Instead of denying needed flexibility out of worry about hypothetical future bars or liquor stores, the Commission could approve specific uses while permanently prohibiting concerning ones. However, this approach increased complexity, requiring attorney involvement, detailed Statements of Intent, and subjecting future modifications to major

Timeline of Major Events

Key Moments in 2025 Rezoning



or minor change procedures with associated review costs and timelines.

The trend raised policy questions about whether FRDs were becoming a form of “contract zoning” – where conditions are negotiated specifically for individual applicants rather than applied uniformly through district regulations. Some commissioners questioned whether every controversial use would now require FRD processing rather than fitting within standard districts, potentially overwhelming the system with complex case-by-case negotiations.

The Staff Relationship

Staff recommendations carried substantial weight, with the Planning Commission following staff guidance in approximately 85% of cases. When staff and Commission aligned – both recommending approval or both recommending denial – the outcome was highly predictable at the Commission level. The interesting cases emerged when the Commission overrode staff recommendations, revealing priorities and concerns beyond technical planning analysis.

The Commission approved applications despite staff denial recommendations in two notable cases. The Old Pelzer Road industrial-to-residential conversion (CZ-2025-018) received Commission approval because commissioners prioritized market reality over economic development theory, though County Council ultimately denied it on second reading, siding with staff’s industrial preservation rationale. The Fork Shoals Road commercial rezoning (CZ-2025-031) received Commission

approval despite staff concerns because Commissioner Wood persuaded colleagues that the area needed commercial development rather than additional residential projects; Council concurred and approved the rezoning.

More commonly, the Commission denied applications despite staff approval recommendations. Infrastructure concerns drove several such denials, including the Carr Road septic capacity case (CZ-2025-049), where staff recommended approval but the Commission’s concerns about septic feasibility on 15,000 square foot lots near stream buffers led to denial, after which the applicant withdrew rather than appeal to Council. Spot zoning worries also led commissioners to reject staff approvals, as on Jacobs Road (CZ-2025-024) where Commissioner Bailey’s spot zoning concern carried the day despite staff finding sufficient zoning diversity. The liquor sales concern proved powerful enough to override planning logic, with the Conestee Road split-zoning elimination (CZ-2025-052) failing despite staff’s sound reasoning about eliminating non-conformity.

However, the relationship between Commission recommendations and final outcomes became more complex at the County Council level. While the Commission generally deferred to staff, Council occasionally overrode both staff and Commission when political or practical considerations warranted. The Old Chick Springs Road case (CZ-2025-022) saw both staff and Commission recommend denial, yet Council’s Planning & Development Committee approved it as amended, and Council ultimately approved the rezoning. Similarly, the Chapel Road industrial-to-commercial

conversion (CZ-2025-063) faced denial recommendations from both staff and Commission, but after being held in committee, Council approved it as amended. These Council overrides suggested a three-tier decision-making hierarchy: staff provided technical analysis, Commission added community-level concerns and practical considerations, and Council made final determinations weighing political, economic, and constituency factors that sometimes superseded both technical planning and Commission judgment.

These override patterns – Commission overriding staff, and Council overriding both – generally reflected decision-makers’ reliance on their own lived experience, constituent feedback, and common-sense concerns about traffic, neighborhood character, infrastructure strain, spot zoning, and certain unpopular uses (such as liquor stores) rather than on deeper policy analysis or long-range planning principles. While staff recommendations were grounded primarily in ordinance compliance, the Comprehensive Plan, and technical review, commissioners and council members more often weighed immediate community sentiment and practical “what will this really mean for the neighbors” considerations. The Commission’s approximate 10-15% staff override rate and Council’s occasional override of both staff and Commission indicated strong overall deference to professional expertise, tempered by a willingness to set aside professional recommendations when political, intuitive, or neighborhood-level pressures felt more compelling.

Public Participation: Presence and Absence

Most rezoning applications drew minimal public participation, with 0-2 speakers on each side being typical. Multifamily rezoning proposals generated more opposition, as did commercial rezoning requests in predominantly residential areas, while agricultural zoning requests often proceeded unopposed. The relative quiet at public hearings raised questions about whether notification was adequate and whether absence of opposition should factor into approval decisions.

Chairman Bichel noted surprise at one hearing’s lack of opposition, remarking that the Commission had previously received calls, emails, and texts about similar proposals in the area. This observation suggested that public engagement might be inconsistent, with some applications generating substantial advance contact while others proceeded with minimal community awareness despite proper legal notification.

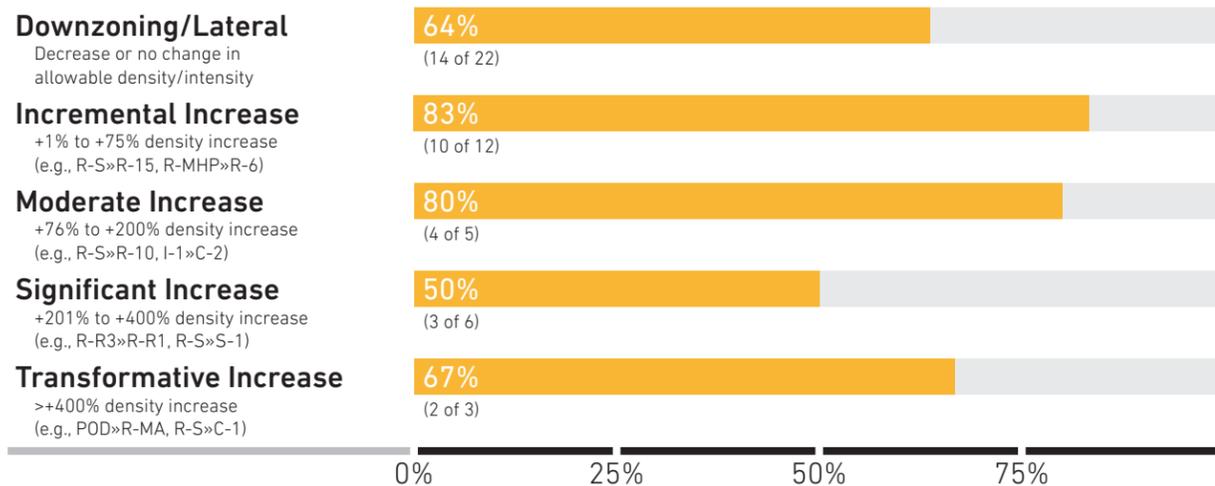
When citizens did participate, opposition focused on predictable themes: character change, traffic generation, property value concerns, precedent worries, and trust issues about future uses if properties sold. Support emphasized property rights, economic development benefits, correction of inappropriate previous zoning, limited impact from small parcels, and community needs for services or housing. These themes remained remarkably consistent across different types of applications and geographic areas.

The Gibson Drive case illustrated the complexity of public input. After the Commission issued “No Recommendation” to allow a community meeting at a councilman’s request, the meeting revealed neighborhood preference for R-M5 duplex devel-

Multifamily Rezoning Cases: Decision Pathway

	Staff Recommendation	Planning Commission	County Council	Notes:
CZ-2025-006 R-M10 - Easley Bridge Rd	Denial	Denial	Denial	Rural Corridor designation incompatible with MF
CZ-2025-014 R-M8 - Agnew Rd	Approval	Approval	Denial	Council reversed PC; retried as R-6 (050) » Approved
CZ-2025-017 R-MA - Old Spartanburg Rd	Approval	Approval	Approval	POD » R-MA conversion; full alignment
CZ-2025-022 R-MA - Old Chick Springs	Denial	Denial	Approval	Council overrode both staff and PC
CZ-2025-026 R-M8 - New Easley Hwy	Denial	Denial	Denial	Area plan conflict; rural corridor
CZ-2025-060 R-M10 - W Blue Ridge Dr	Denial	Denial	Denial	Sans Souci area; Comp Plan conflict

Lots per Approved Subdivision (Top Ten)



opment over the requested R-M8 zoning. However, the Commission remained bound by what had been publicly noticed (R-M8) and could not approve the alternative density discussed at the meeting without a new application. This procedural constraint demonstrated limitations on responsive decision-making even when public engagement occurred and generated useful input.

Commissioner Manning raised ethics concerns about developer communications with individual commissioners via email and telephone, arguing that all communication should occur in open public hearings to maintain quasi-judicial process integrity. Her position suggested need for clearer protocols about ex parte communications, disclosure requirements, and whether pre-hearing contact should be prohibited or merely disclosed. The current lack of formal rules created potential for appearance of impropriety without clear violations of any established standard.

Looking Forward: Unfinished Business

The 2025 rezoning record revealed multiple issues requiring attention as the county moves into 2026 and beyond. The cluster development moratorium temporarily addressed one crisis but required development of revised standards delivering genuine open space benefits or alternative regulatory approaches. The ordinance needed clarification on subjective terms like “meaningful proportions,”

with quantifiable standards or clearer qualitative criteria enabling consistent application.

Agritourism definitions required refinement with specific examples, operational standards, and retail limitations distinguishing legitimate farm-based activities from commercial entertainment disguised as agriculture. The Mixed Employment Center designation needed explicit lists of appropriate zoning districts rather than leaving staff and applicants to interpret planning language and debate whether S-1, C-1, C-2, or C-3 better serves the designation’s intent.

The infrastructure capacity question demanded policy resolution: Should rezoning approval be conditioned on infrastructure availability, or does infrastructure assessment properly belong to permitting phases? If infrastructure matters for rezoning, what evidence suffices to demonstrate adequacy or inadequacy? Should commissioners defer to technical agency determinations (DHEC for septic, SCDOT for traffic, ReWa for sewer) or exercise independent judgment about capacity?

Future amendments to the zoning ordinance may be needed to address fundamental tensions between planning document recommendations and existing zoning allowances. Properties zoned R-12 in Suburban Edge areas designated for 0-1 dwelling per acre created endemic inconsistency, requiring either plan amendments to match zoning or rezonings to match plans. The hierarchy between Comprehensive Plan and area plans require clear articulation, giving applicants, staff,

and commissioners guidance on how to resolve conflicts.

Process improvements beckoned, including ex parte communication protocols, enhanced pre-application conferences, better GIS integration of area plan boundaries and designations, and improved coordination with ReWa, DHEC, and SC-DOT so that rezoning decisions could account for infrastructure realities. Impact fee discussions suggested growing recognition that development must contribute to infrastructure costs, though concerns about housing affordability complicated that conversation.

spectives brought by elected officials with direct constituent accountability versus appointed commissioners focused on planning consistency.

Moving into 2026, Greenville County faces pressure to clarify subjective standards, establish clearer hierarchies between planning documents, address infrastructure capacity, and modernize ordinances for contemporary uses. The 2025 rezoning activity reflects the county’s ongoing struggle to manage rapid growth while maintaining quality of life—a challenge likely to intensify as development pressure continues and infrastructure constraints become more binding.

Processing Time Analysis

Average Days from Filing to Final Decision	Days
Fast Track (Staff & Commission agree on approval)	75 days
Standard (Some disagreement)	95 days
Complex (Multiple holds/overrides)	150+ days
Denied Cases (Faster exit)	85 days

Conclusion

The 2025 rezoning record demonstrates a Planning Commission and County Council balancing competing legitimate interests: property rights against community character, market forces against long-term planning, technical compliance against policy concerns, and countywide goals against area-specific interests. The approximately 70% approval rate for cases reaching decision reflected neither rubber-stamp approval nor reflexive denial but genuine case-by-case evaluation.

The year’s controversies—cluster development abuse, agritourism definition struggles, infrastructure uncertainties, planning document conflicts, and liquor sales concerns—revealed ordinance gaps requiring attention. Yet they also demonstrated commissioners and council members taking their responsibilities seriously and staff providing professional guidance while respecting decision-maker authority. The occasional divergence between Commission and Council decisions illustrated the multi-layered nature of land use decision-making and the different per-

Chapter Three

Regulatory: enforcement of subdivision regulations through review, approval, and administration of development plans to ensure compliance with county ordinances and standards.

Subdivision Administration

Introduction

Greenville County experienced significant subdivision development activity throughout 2025, marked by high application volumes, contentious regulatory debates, and growing recognition of infrastructure capacity constraints. The Planning Commission reviewed dozens of preliminary subdivision applications ranging from small conventional developments to large conservation projects, while County Council grappled with fundamental questions about growth management, development rights, and community character preservation.

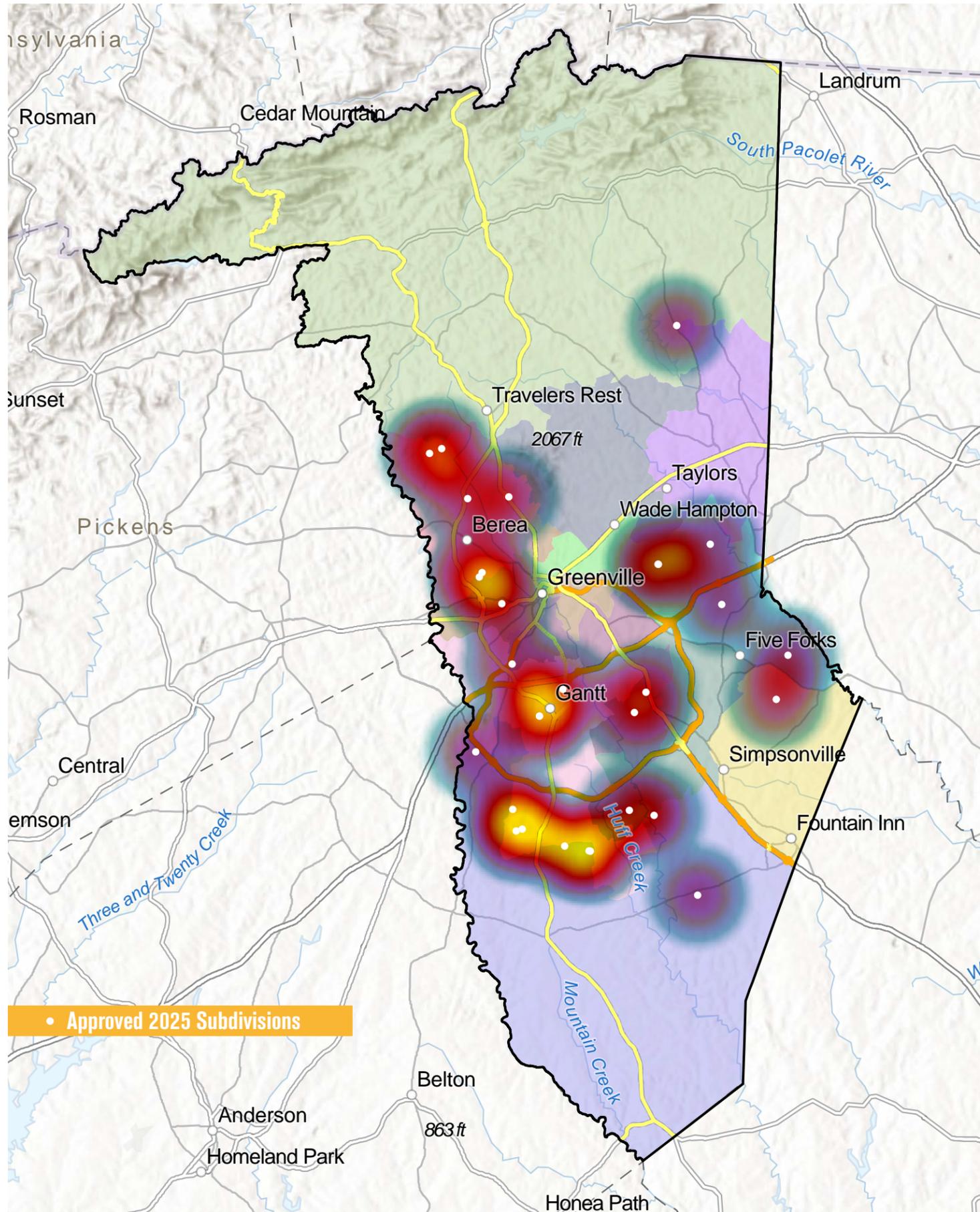
The year's defining issue was cluster development regulations, which generated the most sustained public opposition and ultimately prompted a county-wide policy response. In September, Council unanimously imposed a 12-month moratorium on new cluster developments, acknowledging that Article 11 of the Land Development Regulations contained overly subjective language requiring comprehensive reform.

Infrastructure emerged as the central challenge underlying virtually all subdivision debates. Roads, schools, stormwater systems, and utilities struggled to keep pace with development approv-

als. The County currently lacks a comprehensive mechanism to ensure that infrastructure investments align with subdivision growth, creating a persistent funding gap that Council addressed through debt financing and budget reallocations rather than through resolved policy solutions.

Notable conflicts between Planning Commission and Council occurred, particularly regarding the Bellewyn subdivision reconsideration attempt, which exposed serious legal constraints on Council authority once Planning Commission approval grants developers vested rights.

The year revealed fundamental tensions between housing affordability needs, property rights protections, infrastructure capacity, and rural character preservation. Ongoing initiatives – including cluster development revision workshops, an impact fees feasibility study, and fire service consolidation examination – suggest the County is pursuing incremental policy reforms to address these competing concerns.



Subdivision Activity in 2025

Overview

Greenville County’s subdivision activity in 2025 revealed a development landscape under extraordinary strain, with the Planning Commission reviewing dozens of preliminary plat applications while County Council grappled with fundamental questions about growth management, infrastructure capacity, and regulatory adequacy. The year culminated in a unanimous 12-month moratorium on cluster developments – the most dramatic policy intervention in recent memory – reflecting widespread recognition that existing regulations had failed to deliver promised benefits while allowing density increases that outpaced infrastructure capacity.

The Volume and Character of Development

The Planning Commission processed a steady stream of subdivision applications throughout 2025, with staff estimating 10-12 subdivision matters for the December meeting alone. Applications ranged from modest six-lot conventional subdivisions to ambitious 259-lot cluster developments, but the pattern clearly favored higher-density projects utilizing cluster development provisions to maximize lot yield. This preference reflected market realities: land costs in rapidly growing Greenville County made low-density development increasingly uneconomical, pushing developers toward regulatory tools that permitted more units per acre.

Cluster and conservation subdivisions dominated both the Commission agenda and public controversy. Logan Reserve initially sought 100 lots on 37 acres before reducing to 88 lots after community opposition and Commission concerns. Rock Springs packed 21 lots onto 11.42 acres in a Suburban Edge area designated for 0-1 dwelling per acre. Harbour Chase’s 85 lots on 112.03 acres represented a more modest 0.76 units per acre, while Bellewyn’s 71 lots on 19.34 acres achieved 3.67 units per acre, generating fierce debate about appropriate density in established neighborhoods.

Conventional subdivisions proceeded with less controversy when densities aligned with community expectations. Brown Haven Pointe initially proposed 23 lots on 5.25 acres but faced deni-

al, then returned with a revised 14-lot plan that gained approval. Creekhaven’s 34 lots on 26.94 acres and Toll Brothers at Armstrong Creek’s 91 lots on 124.20 acres both proceeded relatively smoothly, the latter despite complications when ReWa retroactively denied septic approval and required sewer connections. The pattern suggested that conventional subdivisions meeting community character expectations faced fewer obstacles than cluster developments pushing density limits.

Planned development subdivisions offered developers flexibility beyond standard zoning while providing the Commission tools to negotiate specific conditions. Hartness Phase 4-1 continued an established development with four additional lots. Hartness Village Center achieved remarkable density at 69 lots on 7.08 acres – 9.75 units per acre – within a planned development framework

2025 Subdivision Activity at a Glance

- 30** Total Subdivision Approvals
- 1,659** Total Lots Approved
- 910** acres
- 1,203** Cluster Developments
- 73%** of total
- 1.82** Average Density (units/acre)

that provided infrastructure and design standards justifying the intensity. Acadia Phase 4 added 65 lots on 27.81 acres at 2.34 units per acre. The success of these applications suggested that Comprehensive Planning with adequate infrastructure provisions could support higher densities when properly designed, contrasting with ad hoc cluster subdivisions that maximized density without corresponding infrastructure investment.

The Cluster Development Crisis

No issue dominated 2025 subdivision debates more thoroughly than cluster development, ultimately prompting County Council’s unanimous September moratorium. The crisis evolved from scattered public testimony in early 2025 to decisive regulatory action by year’s end, reflecting

both the severity of the problem and the deliberative process required to achieve consensus on controversial land use regulation.

The Fundamental Problem

The crisis reflected recognition that Land Development Regulations Article 11’s subjective language about “meaningful proportions” of open space had enabled inconsistent application, according to some members of the Planning Commission and Council. The cluster development concept theoretically allows developers to get closer to the maximum allowable density for meaningful open space preservation, creating neighborhoods with potentially concentrated density while compensating through accessible parks, preserved natural features, and connected trail systems. In some cases, developers attempted to calculate wetlands, steep unbuildable slopes, and narrow corridors as “open space” in order to comply with the letter of the ordinance rather than executing on the spirit of ordinance surrounding cluster development.

The Interpretation Divide

Chairman Bichel consistently argued for stricter interpretation requiring larger, genuinely accessible open spaces connected to residential lots. He questioned whether narrow corridors between lots constituted meaningful access and whether detention ponds surrounded by fencing could legitimately count toward open space requirements. Commissioner Hammond countered that the ordinance’s calculation methods, when literally applied, demonstrated technical compliance regardless of whether the resulting open space served its intended purpose. This fundamental divide – strict versus literal interpretation – played out across multiple applications, with the Commission’s composition on any given vote determining outcomes.

The debate revealed deeper confusion about the ordinance’s requirements. Section 11.1 required open space in “meaningful proportions,” while Section 11.3.2 required lots to have “direct access” to open space, and Section 11.4 elaborated on proportionality without providing quantifiable standards. What constituted “meaningful”? What qualified as “direct access” – physical connection, visual connection, pedestrian path within certain distance? Could a twenty-foot-wide corridor between lots satisfy the requirement? The ordinance provided no answers, leaving commissioners to make subjective judgments that varied by individual perspective and application.

Applications Denied

Multiple applications faced denial specifically for violating these provisions despite meeting technical density calculations. Rock Springs’ 21 lots faced rejection for inadequate greenspace and non-conformance with LDR 11.1, 11.3.2, and 11.4. Brown Haven Pointe’s initial 23-lot proposal met the same fate, though a revised 14-lot plan later gained approval. O’Neal Farms Phase II’s 147 lots encountered identical LDR violations. The pattern of denials based on subjective open space adequacy, despite technical compliance, demonstrated the ordinance’s fundamental inadequacy.

Public Opposition Intensifies

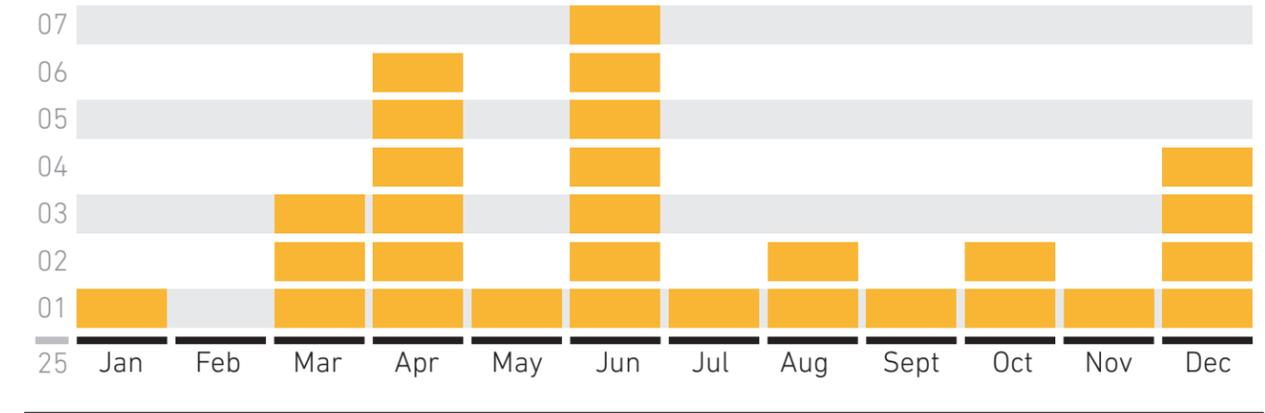
Public opposition to cluster developments intensified throughout the year, with citizens like Sherry Barrett, Emily Poole, Darlene Pace, Theodore Turieno, David Kraft, and Ma’ta Crawford appearing repeatedly before County Council. Sherry Barrett documented impacts in affected neighborhoods: roads inadequate for traffic volumes, retention ponds failing or poorly maintained, promised open space inaccessible or unusable, and density incompatible with surrounding development. Their concerns extended beyond aesthetics to practical impacts: roads designed for lower density couldn’t handle 33% more traffic, retention pond maintenance responsibilities fell to homeowners associations that might fail, and the promised open space benefits never materialized. Petition signatures opposing developments numbered in the hundreds, with Owens Glen alone generating 900+ signatures.

Council Response: From Consideration to Action

County Council’s path from initial concerns to unanimous moratorium stretched from February through September. Vice-Chairman Bradley formalized concerns in June by presenting an ordinance to completely delete Article 11 from Land Development Regulations, eliminating cluster housing as a development option. His proposal reflected constituents’ view that cluster development had proven fundamentally flawed and that elimination was preferable to attempted reform. Councilor McGahhey supported immediate action, arguing that neighborhoods were experiencing unwanted density and that four-month debates would allow pipeline developments to proceed under current rules, exacerbating problems before solutions took effect.

Opposition to complete elimination came from unexpected allies. Councilor Tripp argued that clus-

Monthly Approval Activity (by Count)



ter development represented a state-provided tool and that the county shouldn’t completely disarm itself of land use options even if current regulations needed improvement. Councilor Farmer noted that promised workshops with stakeholders had never occurred and that eliminating a regulatory tool without comprehensive stakeholder input represented poor process. Councilor Fant emphasized that cluster development contained some beneficial aspects and that discussions with developers, builders, home builders associations, and conservation groups should inform any changes. Councilor Seman wanted comprehensive review before elimination, concerned that hasty action might create unintended consequences worse than current problems.

The motion to hold the elimination ordinance until July 15 carried 7-5, buying time for alternative approaches. August 19th featured a public hearing where Darlene Pace, Theodore Turieno, David Kraft, and Ma’ta Crawford supported restrictions, building public record for action.

The Compromise Moratorium

By September 2nd, Council had crafted compromise language: a 12-month moratorium temporarily suspending new cluster developments and open space residential developments while preserving the possibility of reformed regulations rather than complete elimination. The moratorium passed unanimously at second reading on September 2nd, remarkable for a Council often divided on development issues. Final adoption occurred September 16th with an 11-0 vote (Tripp absent), making the moratorium immediately effective.

The unanimous support reflected several dynamics: even development-friendly Council members recognized that current regulations weren’t working, constituents across districts expressed similar concerns suggesting countywide rather than localized problems, the temporary nature made moratorium less threatening than permanent elimination, and the commitment to stakeholder workshops during the 12-month period offered hope for thoughtful reform rather than reactive prohibition.

Reform Priorities

The moratorium language focused Council’s reform mandate on road standards, retention pond maintenance requirements, open space specifications, density calculation methodologies, and compatibility standards with surrounding development. These priorities reflected the specific deficiencies that generated public opposition: roads built to minimal standards couldn’t handle actual traffic, homeowners associations struggled to maintain retention ponds without adequate funding mechanisms, open space designations included unusable or inaccessible land, density calculations exploited ambiguities to maximize lots, and cluster subdivisions imposed urban density in suburban or rural contexts without adequate transition. The moratorium allowed time for comprehensive review and amendment of Article 11 alongside related Zoning Ordinance provisions, with stakeholder input informing the path forward.

Infrastructure Capacity: The Binding Constraint

Every subdivision debate in 2025 ultimately returned to infrastructure adequacy, yet commissioners struggled with their authority to deny applications based on capacity concerns when technical zoning requirements were satisfied. This tension – between planning theory that separates zoning from infrastructure permitting and practical reality that inadequate infrastructure makes development unsustainable – created uncertainty and inconsistency in decision-making.

Traffic concerns dominated public opposition to virtually every significant subdivision. Owens Glen’s 286 proposed homes would generate an estimated 2,860 daily vehicle trips on narrow Owens Road, raising alarm among existing residents about congestion on roads designed for rural traffic volumes. Logan Reserve faced similar concerns about traffic impacts from its proposed development off Devenger Road. Multiple applications generated public testimony about dangerous intersections, speeding, pedestrian safety, and emergency vehicle access challenges.

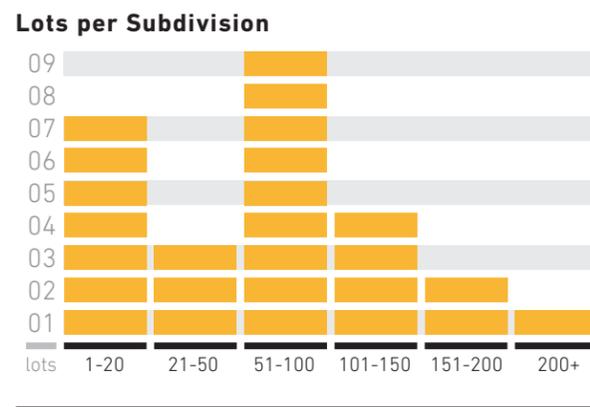
Yet Chairman Bichel repeatedly explained that the Commission legally could not deny subdivisions based on state road traffic impacts. SCDOT held jurisdiction over state roads and would require Traffic Impact Studies during permitting, not preliminary subdivision review. The Commission’s role involved ensuring internal subdivision streets met design standards, not evaluating broader transportation network capacity. This legal constraint created profound frustration, with commissioners feeling public pressure about issues beyond their authority to address through subdivision approval or denial.

The procedural reality proved more complex than the legal theory suggested. Some denials, including Owens Glen and Walton Estates, explicitly cited traffic and safety concerns in voting rationales. Commissioners invoked South Carolina Code Section 6-29-1120 regarding public health, safety, and transportation as legal basis for considering traffic beyond mere technical compliance with street design standards. Yet this approach risked legal challenge, as applicants could argue the Commission exceeded its authority by effectively conducting transportation adequacy review properly reserved for SCDOT and the permitting phase.

Stormwater management generated parallel concerns. Public testimony frequently warned

about downstream flooding impacts, with existing residents describing property damage from inadequate detention pond capacity or improper grading in nearby subdivisions. Yet the Commission generally deferred to staff expertise and regulatory compliance, accepting that if calculations met ordinance requirements and DHEC approved stormwater permits, the subdivision satisfied drainage requirements regardless of neighbors’ previous flooding experiences.

Project Size Distribution



The septic versus sewer question emerged as particularly vexing. Toll Brothers at Armstrong Creek illustrated the unpredictability: ReWa initially approved septic systems on June 26th, then retroactively denied after including the parcel in its five-year Capital Improvement Plan, requiring sewer connections instead. This mid-process reversal demonstrated that developers, commissioners, and the public couldn’t reliably predict infrastructure requirements. Properties outside current sewer service areas might suddenly require connection, invalidating density assumptions based on septic capacity. Conversely, areas presumed to need sewer might receive septic approval, potentially leading to groundwater contamination if density exceeded safe percolation rates.

DHEC’s septic regulations added another layer of confusion. Minimum lot sizes for septic systems varied by soil type, percolation rates, and proximity to water bodies and wells. Stream buffer requirements further constrained development, potentially making advertised lot sizes unbuildable once environmental constraints were mapped. Commissioners frequently expressed uncertainty about DHEC requirements, with some arguing

that septic feasibility belonged to the permitting phase while others believed the Commission bore responsibility to ensure proposed density could realistically be achieved within environmental constraints.

School capacity concerns appeared indirectly through budget debates rather than subdivision decisions. Councilor McGahhey’s data revealed that school district buses traveled 37,000 road miles daily transporting 27,000+ children, with Greenville County averaging 48 crashes per year – one every three days – and 16 fatalities on school buses in the previous eight years. Road conditions represented a major contributing factor, yet subdivision approvals continued adding students and traffic without corresponding infrastructure investment. The disconnect between growth approval and capacity planning suggested systemic failure to coordinate land use decisions with public facility needs.

The Bellewyn Case: Legal Constraints on Democratic Accountability

The Bellewyn subdivision controversy, designated PP-2025-015, exposed fundamental limitations on County Council’s authority to respond to constituent concerns about Planning Commission-approved subdivisions. The case became a cautionary tale about vested rights, ethics constraints, and the irreversibility of Planning Commission decisions once granted.

After Planning Commission approved Bellewyn in early 2025, multiple citizens appeared before County Council advocating for reconsideration. William Johnson, Michael Fox, William Bradshaw, and Jim Burns from the Greenville Area Development Corporation urged the Planning and Development Committee to request that the Planning Commission reconsider its approval. The Committee moved to make this request at the March 18th meeting, apparently responsive to constituent concerns about inappropriate density or inadequate infrastructure.

Councilor Tripp immediately raised legal alarm bells. He cited the *Niemitalo v. Greenville County* Planning Commission precedent establishing that once the Planning Commission approves a subdivision, developers gain vested rights. The County becomes liable for damages if reconsideration occurs without evidence of material misrepresentation in the original application. Tripp

warned bluntly: “The County is going to end up paying the developer” if Council pursued reconsideration based merely on constituent opposition rather than procedural defect or factual misrepresentation.

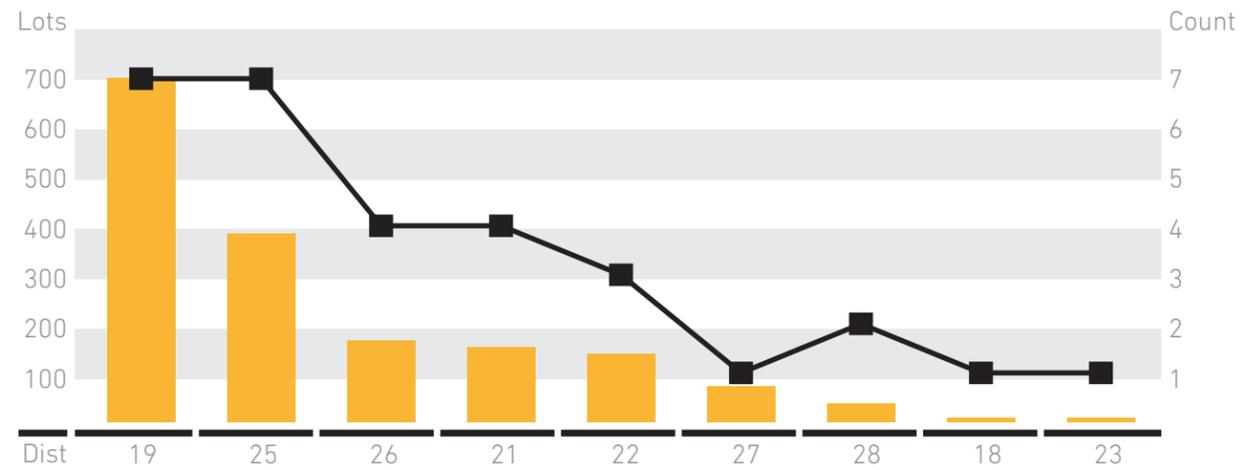
Ethics concerns compounded the legal problems. County Attorney Chris Antley’s March 13th email to Council referenced State Ethics Commission guidance, while former County Attorney Mark Tollison’s memo outlined specific violations. Council members, as the appointing body for Planning Commission, could not appear before the Commission to advocate positions without violating ethics rules. The quasi-judicial nature of Planning Commission decisions required independence from political pressure. Council directing Planning Commission reconsideration created the appearance – and potentially the reality – of improper influence over a body intended to make technical planning decisions insulated from constituent politics.

Deputy County Attorney Dean Campbell suggested that Executive Session was necessary to discuss the legal implications privately, signaling that the situation presented significant liability exposure. By May 20th, the item had moved to Committee of the Whole for legal guidance, and at the June 3rd meeting, Committee of the Whole reported that the reconsideration request had been defeated in Committee. No action was taken, the reconsideration request was abandoned, and the developer’s approval stood.

The Bellewyn case established practical realities that shaped subsequent subdivision debates. Once Planning Commission approves a subdivision, Council possesses virtually no authority to intervene absent extraordinary circumstances. Vested rights vest immediately upon approval, not after some waiting period or conditional phase. Constituent opposition, no matter how widespread or passionate, provides insufficient legal basis for reconsideration. Ethics rules prevent Council members from advocating before the body they appoint, limiting their ability to represent district concerns during the critical approval phase.

These constraints created a procedural trap: by the time citizens mobilized opposition and approached their Council representatives, Planning Commission approval had already granted vested rights that made reversal legally perilous and financially expensive. The public participation most meaningful to final outcomes occurred at Planning Commission hearings, where residents

Approved Lots and Subdivision Count by Council District



lacked the established relationships with elected representatives they enjoyed at Council level. Council members, the democratically accountable officials constituents naturally approached, possessed the least authority to affect outcomes once Planning Commission decided.

Density Debates and Comprehensive Plan Consistency

The relationship between zoning allowances, Comprehensive Plan recommendations, and actual subdivision approvals generated persistent tension throughout 2025. Applications meeting technical zoning requirements regularly faced challenges based on inconsistency with Comprehensive Plan density recommendations, yet no clear framework guided when plan recommendations should override zoning entitlements.

Suburban Edge character areas designated for 0-1 dwelling per acre proved particularly contentious. Rock Springs proposed 1.83 units per acre and faced denial despite technically complying with its split R-12 and R-M20 zoning. The Commission determined that Comprehensive Plan consistency mattered more than zoning compliance, even though property owners had purchased land based on existing zoning entitlements. Devonport Station achieved 3.58 units per acre in Suburban Edge and gained approval, while Broadleaf Bluffs' 2.31 units per acre in Suburban Mixed Use also

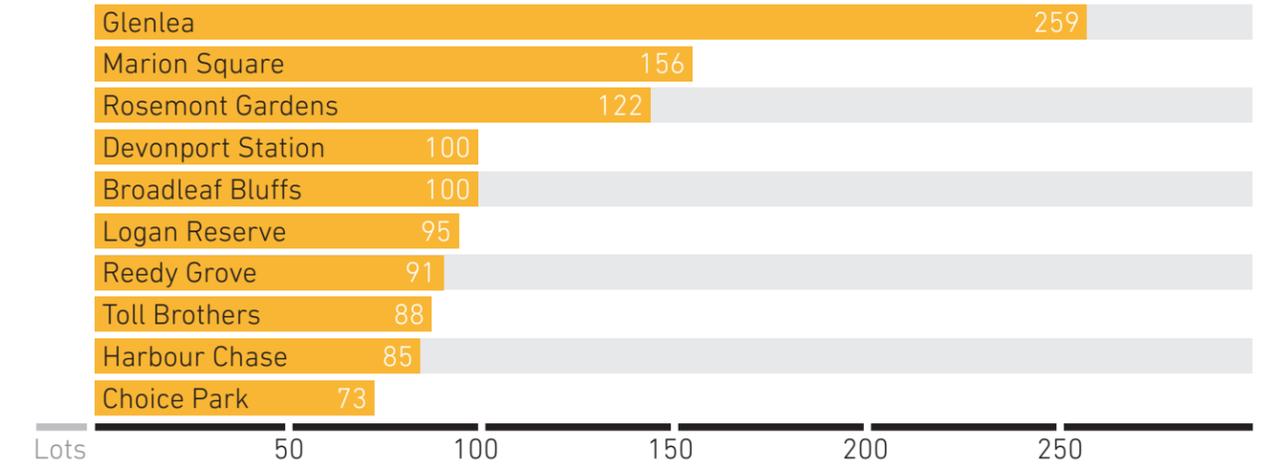
succeeded, suggesting that outcomes depended on individual circumstances, Commissioner composition on voting day, or factors not captured in official meeting minutes.

Rural designations recommending one dwelling per two or more acres created similar confusion. Walton Estates proposed 0.32 units per acre – well below the rural recommendation – yet faced denial on a tie vote after extensive debate about whether R-R3 zoning even permitted cluster development. The denial rationale cited inadequate open space and dangerous topography rather than excessive density, but the debate revealed commissioner uncertainty about how rural character recommendations should influence decisions when proposed density fell well below thresholds.

The fundamental problem involved reconciling three potentially conflicting documents: the 2020 Comprehensive Plan with countywide density recommendations, 19 community-specific area plans adopted between 2008 and 2024 with detailed local guidance, and actual zoning classifications established through previous rezoning decisions. Properties zoned R-12 in Suburban Edge areas created endemic conflict: R-12 permits 3.66 units per acre while Suburban Edge recommends 0-1 dwelling per acre. Should subdivision applications for R-12 properties be evaluated against zoning allowances or plan recommendations?

The county could either revise plan recommendations to match existing zoning, clarify that zoning trumps plan recommendations, or establish prin-

Lots per Approved Subdivision (Top Ten)



ciples for determining when plan recommendations override zoning. The current practice – case-by-case evaluation without consistent framework – generated unpredictability for applicants, confusion for commissioners, and frustration for the public unable to understand why apparently similar applications received different treatment.

The density calculation methodology added complexity. Split-zoned properties like Rock Springs demonstrated how developers could manipulate averages: 6.47 acres in R-12 yielded nine units at 1.39 units per acre within that portion, while 4.95 acres in R-M20 yielded twelve units at 2.42 units per acre, creating an overall average of 1.83 units per acre on the 11.42-acre site. Each portion met its own zoning density, but the overall exceeded Suburban Edge recommendations. Commissioner Matesevac questioned whether split zoning on single development parcels should be allowed or whether ordinance correction was needed, but no resolution emerged.

Cluster development density calculations compounded confusion further. The ordinance's Table 7.1 showed "N/A" for R-R3 in the cluster development column, which some commissioners interpreted as prohibition. Staff argued that "N/A" meant "not applicable" because density couldn't be meaningfully expressed in units per acre for a district requiring one dwelling per three acres, not that cluster was disallowed. The Walton Estates debate exposed this ambiguity without resolving it, leaving developers uncertain whether

R-R3 cluster development was permitted and, if so, how to calculate allowable density.

Geographic Patterns and Planning Area Dynamics

Subdivision pressure distributed unevenly across Greenville County, with certain areas experiencing concentrated development while others remained relatively undisturbed. The Piedmont and Berea areas saw multiple large subdivisions proposed, including the controversial O'Neal Farms generating opposition from existing residents concerned about traffic, school capacity, and character change. Rosemont Gardens' 122 lots gained approval, contributing to perceptions that the area was absorbing disproportionate growth.

The Scuffletown Rural Conservation District presented unique challenges. Choice Park's proposal raised historic preservation issues given the area's cultural significance, while 150-foot buffer requirements unique to the district reflected policy goals beyond standard subdivision regulation. The tension between preservation objectives and development rights created ambiguity about what could reasonably be approved, with commissioners torn between respecting property rights and honoring the special character that justified conservation district designation.

South Greenville's transitional character generated mixed subdivision outcomes. The area combined rural land, agricultural operations seeking

agritourism zoning, and transitional residential designations reflecting the urbanizing trajectory. Subdivision proposals required case-by-case evaluation of whether development represented appropriate infill in areas already transitioning or inappropriate conversion of land better preserved for agriculture or very low-density rural residential use.

Paris Mountain area residents demonstrated exceptional engagement in protecting environmental resources, successfully strengthening ESD-PM regulations through multiple text amendments during 2025. The subdivision-related provisions included tree preservation requirements distinguishing commercial forestry operations (exempt) from subdivision land clearing (subject to tree save standards), riparian buffer protections, and building setbacks from Altamont Road. The regulatory evolution reflected community recognition that subdivision development, not forestry, represented the primary threat to the mountain's ecological and scenic values.

Northern Greenville County, particularly the Greer and Taylors areas in District 18, experienced significant growth pressure reflected in rezoning applications and public comments about recreational facility needs. Western areas including Mauldin and Simpsonville saw multiple subdivision-related rezoning requests, while southeastern areas near Fountain Inn balanced growth pressure against rural character preservation concerns. The Augusta Road corridor in District 25 became a focal point for both commercial and residential development with persistent infrastructure adequacy questions.

Stormwater, Septic, and Environmental Regulation

Environmental concerns shaped subdivision debates through multiple regulatory channels, with stormwater management, septic system standards, and riparian buffer requirements all generating controversy during 2025. Ordinance 5577 establishing riparian buffer and septic standards for unzoned areas originally contained a sunset provision expiring January 2nd, 2026, reflecting legislative caution about permanent property restrictions without periodic review.

The sunset provision generated sustained debate. Councilors Fant and Seman argued for extension, emphasizing that water quality protection rep-

resented essential environmental stewardship and fiduciary responsibility to future generations. Septic systems constituted major pollutant sources, and Greenville County's lower water table created particular vulnerability to contamination. The policy was working as intended, and sunset would eliminate protections without adequate replacement. Councilors Tripp and Collins countered that government should periodically review property restrictions to prevent "lackadaisical government" perpetuating outdated or excessive regulations. Property owners' rights deserved consideration, and the riparian buffer provisions particularly concerned some Council members who believed the nuances hadn't been fully studied.

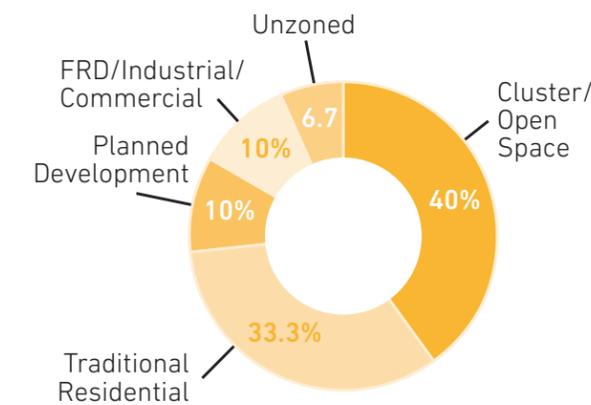
Councilor Collins proposed making the sunset provision indefinite, effectively eliminating periodic review, but his motion failed 5-7 in June. By September, Council compromised on a two-year extension to January 2nd, 2028, passing 10-2 at second reading with Farmer and Collins opposing, then 9-1-1 at final adoption with Collins opposed and Mitchell abstaining. Chairman Blount suggested potentially splitting the ordinance into separate provisions – septic tank standards enjoying broader support and riparian buffer requirements remaining controversial – to enable independent consideration of each component.

Stormwater management ordinance revisions in September addressed a specific abuse: event barns, wedding venues, wine barns, and similar establishments claiming agricultural exemptions to avoid stormwater permitting despite generating intensive commercial use. Councilor McGahhey's amendment prohibited retail sales not directly related to products produced on the property from claiming agricultural exemption, closing the loophole while preserving legitimate farm operations' exemption.

Councilor Collins described constituents experiencing flooding from nearby development, where county inspectors claimed developers "followed all the rules" yet inadequate stormwater management destroyed property values and damaged homes. He advised elderly homeowners to sue Greenville County, then moved to send the ordinance back to the River, Infrastructure, Public Works Committee for additional work. The incident illustrated persistent problems: even compliant developments could generate downstream impacts, technical compliance didn't guarantee functional adequacy, and affected residents lacked effective recourse short of litigation.

Paris Mountain's ESD-PM text amendments included tree preservation requirements distinguishing commercial forestry from subdivision land clearing. Councilor Shaw's September amendment exempted forestland taxed on present-use value, managed per forest management plans, certified under recognized systems, subject to conservation easements, or managed per State Commission of Forestry best practices. This ensured that working forests remained viable while preventing subdivision developers from clearcutting under forestry exemptions. The distinction recognized that subdivision development, not sustainable forestry, threatened the mountain's tree canopy and ecological integrity.

Development Type Distribution



Affordable Housing and Workforce Housing Challenges

Subdivision activity intersected with affordable housing policy through multiple channels during 2025, revealing deep Council divisions about government's appropriate role in housing markets. The Greenville County Redevelopment Authority received property transfers for affordable housing projects that functioned as small-scale affordable housing subdivisions: 10.9 acres at Woodside Mill Community approved 8-4 in September despite opposition from Councilors Shaw, McGahhey, Collins, and Long; and 6.07 acres on Worley Road approved 8-3 in October despite Councilor Collins' concern about using green space funds for housing in a potentially blighted area.

The Gridley Street, Morris Street, and Bailey Street GCRA property rezoned from FRD to FRD-MC and R-7.5 represented another affordable housing initiative. Las Cruces Investment's persistent efforts to rezone Agnew Road and Richards Avenue property from R-MHP to higher density – initially requesting R-M8, facing Committee denial, being held multiple times for negotiation, then revising to R-6 and eventually gaining approval – illustrated market pressure to convert mobile home parks to higher-density development that could include affordable units.

The June budget battle over workforce housing funding exposed philosophical divisions. Councilor Mitchell proposed \$2 million for down payment assistance for county employees including teachers, first responders, and other public servants priced out of the housing market. The amendment failed 5-6, but Councilor Seman's revised proposal for \$1 million using GADC surplus and General Fund dollars (avoiding road budget impacts) passed 7-5. The debate featured starkly different perspectives: supporters argued that essential workers – police, teachers, nurses, firefighters – literally could not afford housing in the communities they served, while opponents characterized affordable housing as a "scam" and argued that market-based solutions worked better than government intervention.

The tension between subdivision approval and affordable housing reflected competing pressures. Higher-density subdivisions reduced per-unit land costs, potentially improving affordability, yet strained infrastructure and changed neighborhood character. Cluster developments allowed more units per acre, theoretically supporting affordability, yet delivered inadequate infrastructure and became the focus of moratorium. Affordable housing subdivisions generated opposition in some districts but not others, raising geographic equity concerns about which areas absorbed workforce housing.

The fundamental disconnect involved both timing and mechanism. Subdivision approvals occurred on a project-by-project basis without a comprehensive affordable housing strategy. Individual subdivisions might include affordable units through GCRA or other mechanisms, but most market-rate subdivisions contributed to affordability challenges by consuming land and infrastructure capacity without delivering units accessible to teachers, first responders, or service workers. Without dedicated initiatives from the county, affordable housing was left dependent

on separate efforts rather than integrated into broader development patterns.

Process, Procedure, and Democratic Accountability

The Bellewyn case’s legal constraints highlighted broader process concerns that surfaced throughout 2025. Once Planning Commission approved subdivisions, County Council possessed little authority to intervene, yet Planning Commission operated with less public engagement and political accountability than Council. This created a democratic accountability gap: the body with greatest authority to approve or deny subdivisions (Planning Commission) received less public attention and constituent engagement, while the democratically elected body most accessible to citizens (County Council) possessed least authority over outcomes.

Ethics rules prevented Council members from appearing before Planning Commission to advocate positions, appropriate given Council’s appointing authority and the need for independent quasi-judicial decision-making. However, this meant that when constituents approached their elected representatives about subdivision concerns, those representatives could not directly advocate before the body making decisions. Council members could appoint Planning Commissioners sharing their land use philosophies but could not influ-

ence specific case outcomes without violating ethics standards.

The timeline compounded the problem. By the time subdivisions generated sufficient public concern to mobilize neighborhood opposition, Planning Commission approval had often already vested rights making reversal legally and financially perilous. The most meaningful public participation opportunity occurred at Planning Commission hearings, but residents typically learned about applications only when they saw survey stakes or construction equipment, often after approval. Legal notification requirements – posted signs and newspaper advertisements – rarely reached residents who didn’t regularly patrol neighborhood roads or read legal notices.

Councilor Shaw proposed eliminating staff recommendations from subdivision review, concerned that Planning Commission deferred to readily to staff expertise without exercising independent judgment. The proposal went to Planning and Development Committee but saw no final action in 2025, suggesting insufficient support for formal change. Yet the concern reflected broader questions about planning staff’s appropriate role: should staff provide technical expertise while Commission makes policy judgments, or should Commission generally defer to staff’s professional recommendations absent clear error?

Commissioner Manning’s objection to developer communications directly to individual commissioners raised parallel questions. Developers

contacted commissioners via email and telephone providing information and responding to perceived concerns, claiming transparency by copying all commissioners to avoid isolation. Manning argued that all communication should occur in open public hearings to maintain quasi-judicial process integrity and avoid appearance of impropriety. The county lacked formal rules prohibiting such contacts, creating potential for appearances of improper influence without clear violations.

The reconsideration process illustrated procedural asymmetries. Logan Reserve gained reconsideration and eventual approval after revising plans to increase open space from 25% to 38% and reducing lots from 100 to 88. Walton Estates requested but was denied reconsideration despite similar concerns. No clear standards governed when reconsideration was appropriate, leaving decisions to Commission discretion influenced by factors not always apparent from meeting minutes.

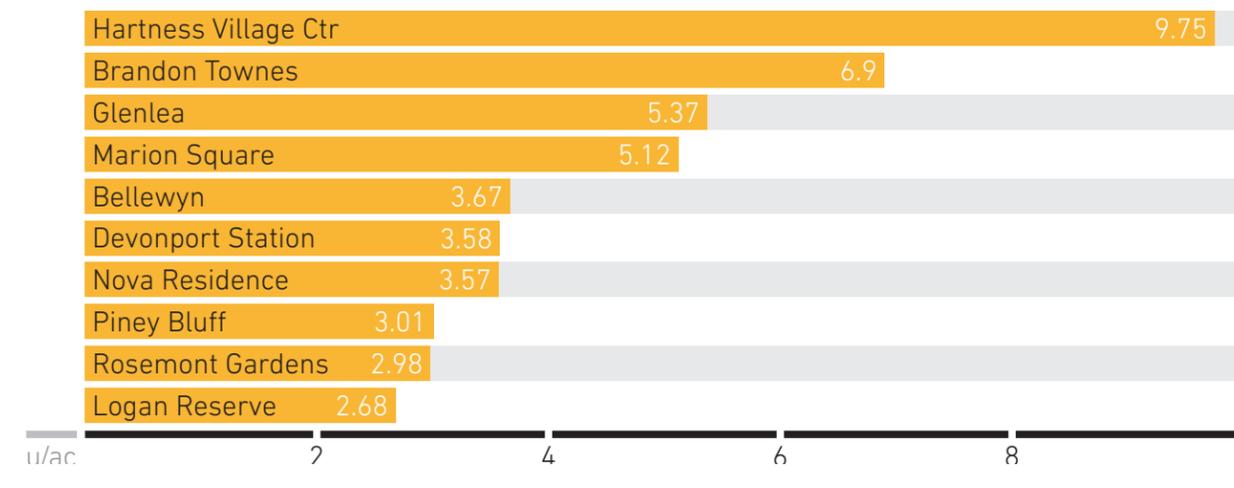
Councilor Collins’ withdrawn proposal to “realign Planning Commission” and revert to 2001 ordinance structure reflected frustration with the current organization. He wanted expert examination of Planning Commission’s organizational structure and relationship to County Administrator, noting that “County’s style had surpassed its infrastructure.” However, he withdrew the proposal due to pending litigation regarding sewer expansion, not wanting perceived affiliation with the court case. The withdrawal prevented full debate about whether structural reform could improve process accountability while maintaining technical expertise.

The impact fee study, introduced in June and completed in November by TischlerBise, represented a potential solution to infrastructure funding gaps but faced political sensitivity about housing affordability impacts. Councilors acknowledged that top South Carolina counties excluding Greenville had implemented impact fees successfully, yet worried that fees would be passed to homebuyers, reducing affordability. The feasibility study recommended pursuing impact fees for Sheriff (law enforcement facilities), select fire districts (station space and apparatus), parks and recreation (park improvements and land acquisition), and EMS (ambulance expansion), while advising against fees for stormwater, solid waste, and transportation due to existing utilities, external factors, and voter resistance to related funding measures. However, the study’s recommendations remain subject to Council approval, ordinance development, and potential interlocal agreements, with no clear timeline for implementation. Without adopted impact fees or alternative funding mechanisms, the disconnect between subdivision approval and infrastructure capacity would persist and worsen.

Short-term rental policy development through the October-appointed ad hoc committee would shape subdivision markets in ways not yet fully understood. If counties imposed restrictions on short-term rentals in residential areas, property values and neighborhood character would be affected. If regulations were too permissive, subdivisions might transform into quasi-hotel districts with transient populations, parking problems, and noise concerns. The Paris Mountain text amendment’s attempted short-term rental restrictions, deleted due to lack of county-wide definition, illustrated the challenge of addressing the issue subdivision-by-subdivision versus comprehensively.

Fire service consolidation study authorized in October would examine whether multiple independent fire districts could adequately serve rapidly developing areas or whether consolidated service would improve Insurance Services Office ratings, response times, and equipment quality. The implications for future subdivisions were significant: improved fire service could support higher densities in currently constrained areas, while consolidation might enable fire service impact fees contributing to infrastructure funding. The study timeline and implementation process remained undefined.

Density Ranking: Units/Acre (Top Ten)



Looking Forward: Unresolved Questions

The 2025 subdivision record identified numerous issues requiring attention but left fundamental questions unresolved. The cluster development moratorium’s 12-month period would require Council to determine whether revised regulations could deliver genuine benefits or whether cluster development should be eliminated entirely. The stakeholder workshop process would test whether developers, builders, conservation groups, and neighborhood advocates could find common ground on standards serving multiple interests or whether philosophical divisions were too deep for compromise.

School capacity planning remained disconnected from subdivision approval despite clear evidence that growth outpaced school construction. South Carolina law permitted school impact fees, but Greenville County has not implemented them. Property tax revenue from new subdivisions lagged behind enrollment growth, creating budget pressures manifesting in teacher compensation, facility overcrowding, and extended school bus routes contributing to crash statistics. No mechanism connected subdivision approval to school capacity assessment or improvement funding.

The Comprehensive Plan's Five Year Review identified fundamental inconsistencies between plan recommendations and zoning allowances, where properties zoned for densities exceeding Plan guidelines created endemic conflicts. Addressing these discrepancies will require measures such as Plan amendments, clarifications on whether zoning trumps the Plan, or decision rules for conflict resolution. While the review effectively documented achievements and setbacks, it stopped short of prescribing solutions, leaving subsequent action dependent on political will and stakeholder agreement on appropriate approaches.

Conclusion

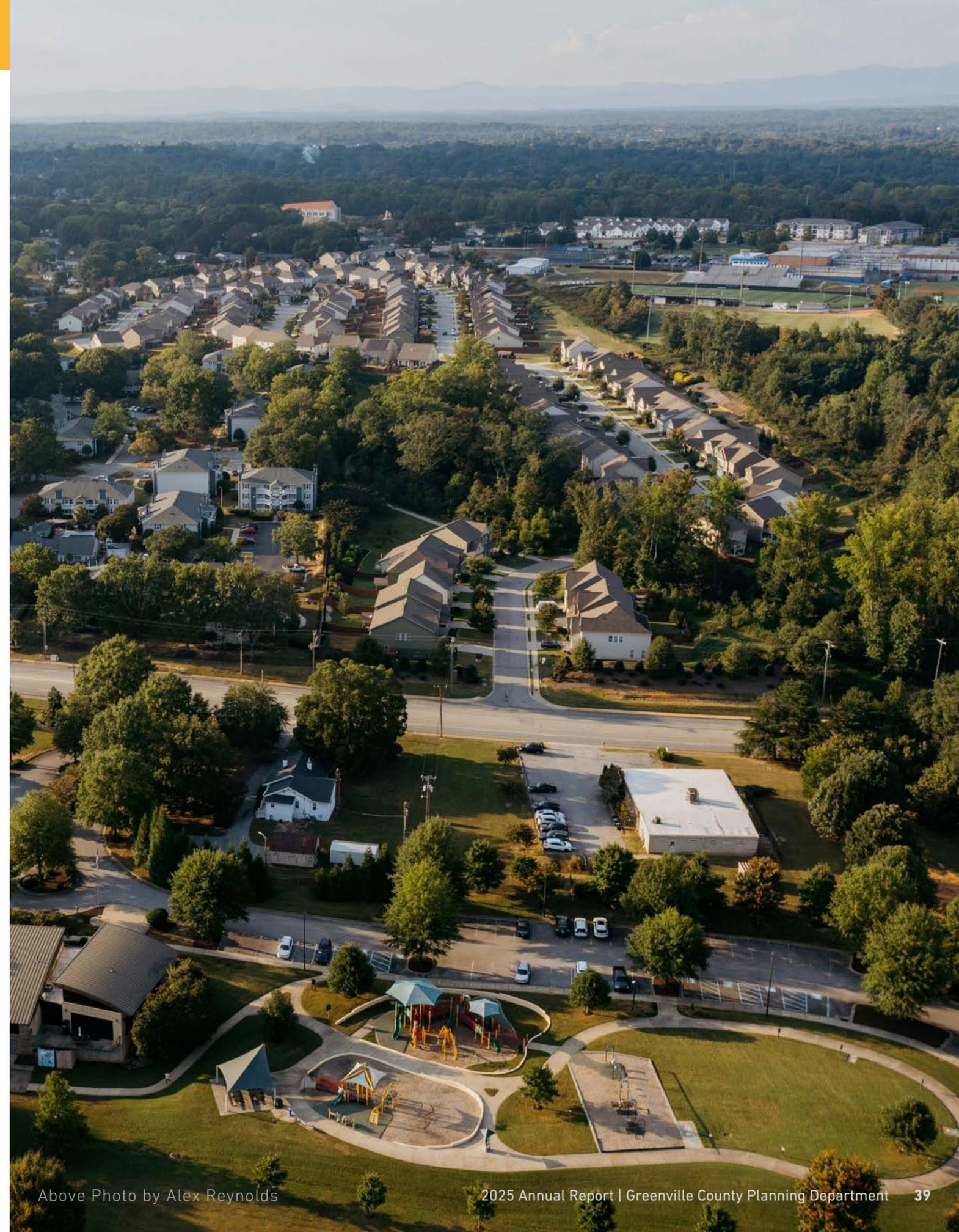
Greenville County's 2025 subdivision activity revealed a development management system under extraordinary strain. The unanimous cluster development moratorium represented acknowledgment that existing regulations had failed to balance density, infrastructure, and community character. The Bellewyn case exposed legal constraints limiting democratic accountability once Planning Commission granted approval. Comprehensive Plan-zoning conflicts generated unpredictable outcomes. Infrastructure funding mechanisms proved inadequate for growth-generated demands.

Yet the year also demonstrated institutional capacity for course correction. County Council's willingness to impose a moratorium despite development-friendly members' usual opposition suggested recognition that the current trajectory was unsustainable. The stakeholder workshop commitment reflected understanding that elimination without replacement would be worse than thoughtful reform. Environmental regulation strengthening in Paris Mountain, stormwater standards, and septic requirements showed envi-

ronmental values influencing policy despite property rights concerns. Affordable housing funding, however limited, acknowledged that essential workers needed housing support in high-cost markets.

The fundamental challenges persisted: reconciling property rights with community character, accommodating growth while maintaining infrastructure adequacy, enabling housing affordability while ensuring environmental protection, and providing democratic accountability while respecting technical expertise. The 2025 record suggested these tensions would define Greenville County development politics for years to come, with outcomes dependent on whether stakeholders could forge compromises balancing legitimate competing interests or whether philosophical divisions would generate continued conflict and regulatory stalemate.

The cluster development revision process, impact fee study results, short-term rental policy, fire service consolidation recommendations, and Comprehensive Plan implementation framework would substantially shape subdivision patterns through the remainder of the decade. How effectively Greenville County addresses the issues identified in 2025 will determine whether it manages growth while maintaining livability or whether development will outpace governance capacity, degrading the quality of life that made the county attractive in the first place.



Chapter Four

Regional: coordinated transportation planning across multiple jurisdictions, encompassing counties and municipalities, to evaluate priorities, allocate funds, and enhance mobility in the broader Greenville-Pickens area.

Transportation Planning

Introduction

Greenville County's Transportation Planning Division had a productive 2025 – one defined by federal certification success, significant grant awards, and the groundwork for a transformative long-range planning effort. Coming off the County's Capital Sales Tax effort in 2024 and preparing for the GPATS Long-Range Transportation Plan in 2026, staff navigated a demanding schedule while strengthening relationships with regional partners and advancing projects that will shape mobility in the Upstate for decades.

The year's crowning achievement was passing the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration's Review and Certification, ensuring Greenville County can continue serving as the Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study (GPATS) and receive federal funding for another four years. Four scheduled GPATS Study Team meetings and four GPATS Policy Committee meetings were successfully conducted through-

out the year, maintaining the steady rhythm of regional transportation coordination.

Staff also grew professionally. Transit Planner and Grants Manager Asangwua Ikein attained his PE license and will begin taking on official engineering projects through SCDOT's Local Public Agency process. Transportation Planner Anna Stewart passed her exam for the American Institute of Certified Planners, attaining her AICP certification. Conferences including SCAPA, NAACTO, and the Southeast Rail Forum expanded staff knowledge and professional networks. These individual accomplishments translate into enhanced departmental capacity – expertise that benefits the county and the region.

The projects and initiatives that follow represent Transportation Planning's breadth of work: federal certification, grant facilitation, infrastructure investments, program management, and preparation for the next decade of regional transportation planning.

Transportation Planning Activity in 2025

GPATS in 2025

The Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study began the year coordinating and assisting in numerous transportation projects, with grant facilitation emerging as a particular strength. GPATS assisted in securing a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant of \$20.3 million for the Sans Souci Connector Greenway. Staff also supported two South Carolina Recreational Trails Program grants for the River Falls Access Trails and the Paris Mountain Hughes Tract Trail Expansion. Additionally, GPATS facilitated another RAISE Grant award of \$2.021 million to Greenville Transit Authority/Greenlink for bus stop improvements across ten phases.

The year included calls for projects under both the FTA Section 5310 program and the Transportation Alternatives Program, expanding opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure investments. Leadership transitions occurred smoothly: following the departure of Greenville County Councilman Butch Kirven, the GPATS Policy Committee elected City of Fountain Inn Mayor G.P. McLeer as Vice-Chair at the February meeting.

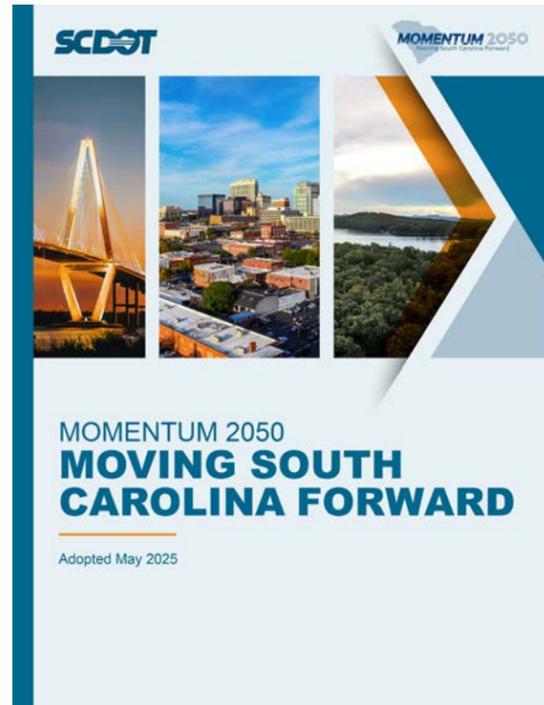
In May, GPATS compiled and adopted its biennial Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the crucial document that identifies planning priorities and activities within GPATS boundaries. The same month, the South Carolina Department of Transportation presented Momentum 2050 – the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan setting the vision for the next twenty-plus years – to the GPATS Policy Committee, with SCDOT staff available to address questions directly.

August brought the GPATS 101 Training Session for those interested in learning about GPATS' structure, functions, funding, projects, and history. These sessions and accompanying presentations remain available on the GPATS website for ongoing reference.

In October, the GPATS Policy Committee approved an application for FTA Section 5310 funds – designated for elderly and disabled transit – to be awarded to Able SC, a disability nonprofit organization. The application totaled approximately \$176,000, with the applicant providing roughly half as local match. The approval followed the established process: GPATS received the application, the Transit Coordinated Committee evalu-

ated it, and the GPATS Study Team reviewed and recommended the award before Policy Committee action.

GPATS TMA Certification Review



SCDOT MOMENTUM 2050 DOCUMENT

Every four years, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation must certify that each Metropolitan Planning Organization serving a Transportation Management Area with a population exceeding 200,000 is carrying out the metropolitan planning process in adherence with federal statutes and regulations. This certification ensures GPATS can continue receiving federal funding for activities and projects.

The Federal Transit Administration and Federal Highway Administration conducted their review of GPATS and jointly issued certification on behalf of the DOT Secretary. GPATS passed the review in September 2025 following weeks of preparation and a full day of presentations and discussions, securing certification for another four years. The review document is scheduled for presentation to the GPATS Policy Committee by FHWA in February 2026 and will be publicly available on the GPATS website thereafter.

GPATS extends its appreciation to Greenville Transit Authority for the use of their new facilities, which accommodated both the Study Team

meeting and the TMA Certification Review in September.

Greenlink Transit Maintenance and Operations Facility

In December 2024, Greenlink celebrated the ribbon-cutting for its new \$50 million Maintenance & Operations Facility. The facility occupies 26 acres on Arcadia Drive near the New Washington Heights Community, with capacity to park 80 buses – a significant expansion that positions Greenlink for service growth.

The expanded capacity enables Greenlink to advance plans for service expansion, including 17 additional bus routes and doubled service frequencies from 60 to 30 minutes. At the beginning of 2026, three existing routes will increase service frequencies to 30-minute headways. Beyond capacity, the new facility improves working conditions for maintenance staff and consolidates administrative and maintenance functions in one building, enhancing internal communications. As Greenville continues growing, this infrastructure investment ensures Greenlink can scale services to meet demand.

Transportation Alternatives



Photo ©2025 Greenville Journal, Megan Fitzgerald

GREENLINK MAINTENANCE FACILITY RIBBON-CUTTING

Program

The Transportation Alternatives Program provides federal funding that GPATS manages, receiving an annual allocation of approximately \$1.23 million for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects. In August, the GPATS Policy Committee approved a TAP application of \$920,350 for the Textile Crescent Shared Use Path, which will extend from Abney Street to Easley Bridge Road on a former rail line.

The project will create a 0.6-mile, 12-foot-wide shared-use path connecting four Mill Villages in West Greenville. The Bike and Pedestrian Coordinating Committee reviewed the application, and the GPATS Study Team recommended approval before funding authorization. Greenville County Recreation will manage the project and provide the 20% local match. In October, SCDOT issued the project award letter, and construction planning is underway.

TAP funds are allocated annually, with GPATS issuing a Call for Projects each January. Information is available on the GPATS website's Transportation Alternatives page, or by contacting Transportation Planner Anna Stewart.

APBP Webinars



Photo ©2025 UGATA

TEXTILE CRESCENT GREENWAY

In 2025, GPATS hosted six Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals webinars open to the public and planning professionals throughout the region. These sessions feature presentations by bicycle and pedestrian planners, engineers, and nonprofit agencies on topics including transportation infrastructure, pedestrian safety, and active transportation design.

The 2026 webinar series is scheduled to include sessions on daylighting intersections in Austin, curb management and accessibility, designing island platform bus stops for people with disabilities, planning complete streets for neurodivergence, the Fall Line Trail regional trail project in Richmond, and MnDOT's separated bike lane guidance. Interested participants can contact Anna Stewart for registration information.

Carbon Reduction Program

The Carbon Reduction Program, made available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, allocated approximately \$2 million to GPATS for 2025 for transportation projects that reduce carbon emissions. GPATS communicated with all signal providers in the region, SCDOT Districts 2 and 3, and the City of Greenville to identify and discuss eligible projects.

SCDOT has decided to primarily use funding for signal upgrades, while the City of Greenville plans to expand video detection for traffic signals. SCDOT District 3 selected a Ramp Metering Project at the SC 14 on-ramp to I-85, and SCDOT District 2 chose intersection signal upgrades in the Powdersville area. GPATS continues actively allocating CRP funding and will do so for the life of IIJA funding and beyond should the program be renewed.

Local Public Agency Capability

When a project receives federal funding, it becomes "federalized," triggering increased regulatory requirements for project documentation. Typically, SCDOT assumes these duties for transportation projects in South Carolina. If a local jurisdiction wishes to manage the project instead, an employee must register as the Local Public Agency point of contact. LPA designation is granted for individual projects and remains active for three years with possible extension to five years.

One hindrance to managing transportation projects in-house has been the lack of an engineer.

Though Greenville County has engineers, the department lacks capacity for this additional work, and jurisdictional responsibilities end at county boundaries – problematic for GPATS, which has extra-jurisdictional responsibilities extending beyond Greenville County.

GPATS now has an engineer on staff, enabling in-house management of LPA projects. This capability particularly benefits smaller jurisdictions lacking engineering staff. Previously, when smaller jurisdictions undertook engineering projects, SCDOT managed them – at a cost of approximately \$250,000 per project for administration. With an engineer on GPATS staff, those funds can now go toward project expenses rather than administrative overhead, as GPATS does not charge an administrative fee.

Transportation Alternative Program projects will likely see the most direct benefit from this new capability, though other projects may utilize it in the future.

Horizon2050

Every Metropolitan Planning Organization is required to maintain a Long-Range Transportation Plan that is reviewed and updated over time. The LRTP results from regional collaboration and con-



sensus on the transportation system, serving as the defining vision for that system and its services. In metropolitan areas, the plan outlines all transportation improvements scheduled for funding over the next 25 years.

GPATS reviews its LRTP every five years and creates a new one every ten years. The next update, Horizon2050, is due by the end of 2026. In preparation, Greenville County initiated a Request for Proposals in September 2025 to solicit proposals from potential vendors. In early 2026, the chosen consultant will be announced, and numerous surveys, meetings, and events will take place throughout the year.

Public participation is crucial to the LRTP process. GPATS will post notices on its website and social media channels as the effort unfolds. Res-

idents interested in staying informed can sign up for the mailing list by contacting staff or emailing gpats@greenvillecounty.org.

Completed and Ongoing Projects

Several GPATS-programmed projects reached completion in 2025, including the Roper Mountain Road and Roper Mountain Extension widenings and the Batesville Road widening. Staff continues working on upcoming projects in conjunction with SCDOT and relevant jurisdictions, including the East Butler Road widening and the Woodruff Road Congestion Relief Project.

Transportation Planning, primarily through GPATS activities, continues to serve the County and the Upstate effectively, maintaining strong relationships with surrounding jurisdictions, SCDOT, and federal agencies. These relationships – built through consistent engagement and reliable project delivery – position the region well for the planning challenges and opportunities ahead.

Chapter Five

Comprehensive: a holistic, systematic approach to planning that addresses interconnected physical, economic, social, and environmental factors for guiding community growth and development.

Long Range Planning

Introduction

Greenville County's Long Range Planning Department had a productive 2025 – one defined by both major strategic initiatives and the kind of practical, day-to-day work that strengthens institutional capacity and builds partnerships across sectors.

The year's headline accomplishments include completing the mandated five-year review of the Comprehensive Plan, auditing nineteen adopted community plans to assess their relevance and implementation progress, and proposing the county's first Open Space Plan – a strategic response to growth pressures threatening the natural and recreational assets that define quality of life in the Upstate. These are the projects that generate public attention and shape long-term county policy.

But 2025 was also a year of building connections and improving internal processes. Long Range Planning strengthened working relationships with the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority, the Greenville Area Development Corporation, Parks and Recreation, and the Soil & Water

Conservation District – providing research, analysis, and design support that leverages internal expertise rather than contracting externally. The department created its first comprehensive Standards Operating Procedures Manual for Adoption Processes, preserving institutional knowledge and ensuring consistency as staff transitions occur. And the Lunch & Learn series was revived, creating regular opportunities for professional development and cross-sector dialogue.

The projects that follow represent the breadth of Long Range Planning's work: strategic policy documents, regulatory ordinances, community-led initiatives, interdepartmental collaborations, and the foundational infrastructure that makes all of it possible. Together, they demonstrate a department focused on both responding to immediate needs and positioning Greenville County for thoughtful, sustainable growth in the years ahead.

Long Range Planning Project Summaries in 2025

Five Year Review

Greenville County's 2025 five-year review of its 2020 Comprehensive Plan reveals a community grappling with growth that has vastly outpaced expectations. While the county has achieved notable successes in economic development, infrastructure consolidation, and natural resource protection, it now faces critical challenges – particularly around housing affordability and the capacity of existing infrastructure to support continued expansion.



FIVE YEAR REVIEW DOCUMENT

The Growth Reality

The numbers tell a striking story. With 525,534 residents as of 2020, Greenville County grew 16% over the previous decade, eclipsing both state and national growth rates. Yet even this growth rate understates what's actually happening on the ground. The county must now accommodate 243,500 additional residents and nearly 100,000 new housing units by 2040 – a demand that significantly exceeds what planners anticipated when the current Comprehensive Plan was adopted.

A Housing Affordability Crisis

The most visible manifestation of this pressure is the housing market. Average home prices jumped more than 50% between 2019 and 2023, reaching \$343,000. Meanwhile, 53% of county households lack the income to qualify for homeownership, and nearly half of renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing—double the standard affordability threshold.

The county has taken steps to address this crisis through the 2022 Workforce & Affordable Housing Policy, which provides financial incentives for developers to create affordable units, and several zoning amendments: removing caps on townhomes in open space developments (CZ-2020-46), increasing the maximum number of townhome units per building from four to six (CZ-2023-14), and allowing mixed-use development in commercial districts (CZ-2023-21). While these regulatory changes expand housing options, the county still faces an estimated annual supply shortfall of 800 units—a gap that modest zoning adjustments alone cannot close.

What's Working

The review documents genuine accomplishments. The consolidation of seven sewer districts into MetroConnects streamlined wastewater management across unincorporated areas. The newly established Historic and Natural Resources Trust has protected over 2,200 acres since 2020. The Swamp Rabbit Trail has expanded by 5 miles with another 2 under construction. Economic development has remained robust, with more than 15,000 jobs created through targeted initiatives. Collectively, these achievements reflect deliberate, coordinated effort by county staff, municipalities, and regional partners.

Where Plans Fall Short

The proposed Unified Development Ordinance – designed to modernize zoning, facilitate mixed-use development, and incentivize affordable housing – was indefinitely tabled in August 2025, stalling momentum on comprehensive regulatory reform. A referendum on a 1% capital projects sales tax for transportation failed, leaving the county unable to fund 123 corridor improvements and 137 intersection improvements identified as necessary by 2040. These setbacks highlight the tension between ambitious planning goals and political or fiscal constraints on implementation.

Moving Forward

The review affirms the county's "focus growth scenario," which channels development toward urbanized areas with existing infrastructure rather than sprawling into rural zones. However, updating the Future Land Use map to reflect actual market pressures and demographic realities will be essential. Success also hinges on streamlining permitting processes, deepening public-private partnerships, and preparing for a full Comprehensive Plan update by 2030. Community input – gathered through meetings, surveys, and digital engagement – shows residents care deeply about preserving open space, managing density thoughtfully, and maintaining quality of life even as the county transforms. Meeting those expectations will require both strategic adaptability and sustained commitment to balanced growth.

Adopted Plans Audit

In 2025, Greenville County undertook a comprehensive audit of 19 community-specific plans



ADOPTED PLANS AUDIT DOCUMENT

adopted over the past 17 years, examining how well they're tracking against current realities and identifying where adjustments are needed. The audit fulfills a state requirement but serves a more practical purpose: ensuring that plans adopted in different years and for different areas

actually work together and remain relevant as the county approaches a population of 575,000 and continues growing at nearly 1.8% annually.

What the Audit Found

The picture is mixed. Many plans are aging well, with measurable progress on their original goals. The Augusta Road Corridor Strategic Plan is seeing real multimodal improvements through Greenlink expansions and streetscape funding. The Berea Community Plan has attracted new affordable housing developments. Economic activity across the county has generated substantial returns – \$885 million in regional investment creating more than 1,300 jobs. Trail expansions, particularly the Swamp Rabbit Trail extensions, are improving quality of life across multiple communities.

Yet persistent challenges cut across nearly every plan. Housing affordability dominates resident concerns – 78% of survey respondents cited it as a priority. Home values in community-specific areas have climbed to \$248,000–\$520,000, outpacing local wage growth and displacing longtime residents, particularly in historically Black neighborhoods like Sterling, which saw a 20% decline in its Black population. Infrastructure gaps – incomplete sidewalk networks, traffic congestion (in some areas reaching "Level of Service D-E," or degraded conditions), and stormwater management issues – create safety and equity problems. Rural areas struggle against development pressures that contradict preservation goals. Economic disparities persist between affluent northern suburbs and lower-income southern areas, where poverty rates exceed 25%.

Implementation Challenges

The audit candidly acknowledges that resource constraints – limited time, budget, and personnel – have hindered plan implementation. Some communities have compensated through strong civic associations and grassroots advocacy (Monaghan and Sans Souci offer models worth studying), but inconsistent implementation has eroded resident trust. Plans adopted in different years sometimes work at cross-purposes rather than reinforcing a coherent county strategy.

A Roadmap Forward

Rather than overhauling all 19 plans immediately, the audit proposes a tiered approach. Urgent issues – health, safety, and affordable housing – should be tackled within one to two years. Infrastructure improvements warrant a

two-to-four-year horizon. Long-term plan updates can stretch across four to six years. Specific recommendations include establishing a \$5 million Anti-Displacement Fund to help stabilize long-term residents in appreciating neighborhoods, investing \$40–50 million over five years in sidewalk connectivity, and enforcing Agricultural Zoning protections in threatened rural areas. Economic incentives should target underserved neighborhoods. Funding would blend federal sources (CDBG, HOME grants), state allocations (SCDOT, Rural Infrastructure Fund), local mechanisms (impact fees, bonds), and private investment.

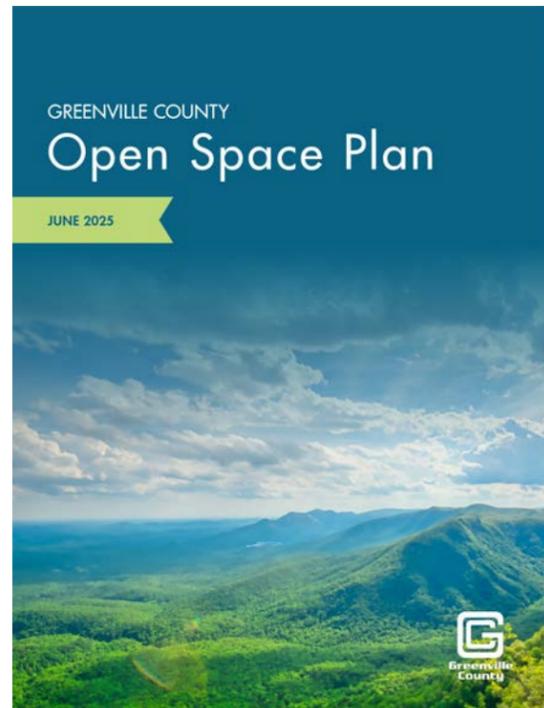
The audit also proposes operational changes: appointing a dedicated Implementation Coordinator, conducting transparent community workshops beginning in 2025, and establishing annual reviews with mid-cycle evaluations to track progress and adapt as needed. Some plans – particularly Sterling and Cherrydale, which are now within municipal boundaries – should be rescinded to those cities. Outdated plans like Scuffletown and New Washington Heights warrant major updates. Newer plans like Piedmont and the Augusta Road Corridor Strategic Plan should move into active implementation mode.

Why This Matters

The audit is fundamentally about ensuring that planning documents translate into real outcomes for residents. Success will depend on demonstrable action: affordable housing units built, traffic safety improvements realized, sidewalk networks completed, and crime reductions sustained. The audit positions the county to move forward with clarity, explicit accountability, and the kind of collaborative stewardship needed as growth continues reshaping the region.

Open Space Plan

In August 2025, Long Range Planning’s consultant, Alta Planning+Design, presented its first comprehensive Open Space Plan to the Planning Commission, a strategic response to a fundamental problem: rapid growth is consuming the natural, recreational, and cultural assets that define quality of life in the Upstate. With 150,000 new residents projected by 2040 and farmland disappearing at a rate of 5,000 acres annually, the county recognized it needed an explicit strategy



OPEN SPACE PLAN DOCUMENT

to protect what makes the region distinctive while accommodating necessary development.

Why Open Space Matters

The plan reframes open space – forests, farmlands, waterways, parks, trails, and historic sites – as essential infrastructure, not luxury amenities. The benefits are concrete: stormwater management that reduces flooding, habitat preservation that maintains biodiversity, recreational facilities that improve public health, and cultural heritage that attracts tourism worth an estimated \$1.5 billion annually across the region. As development pressures intensify, protecting these assets becomes both more urgent and more difficult.

The Starting Point

Greenville County currently lags behind peer communities in open space protection. Only 8% of the county’s land is formally protected, compared to 15–20% in similarly situated counties like Charleston and Mecklenburg. Per capita park spending stands at \$50 annually, half the \$100+ average in comparable communities. The inventory reveals both assets and gaps: 28% forest cover, 1,200 miles of streams, 12,000 acres of parks, and 150 miles of trails (anchored by the Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail). Yet critical habitats like bog turtle wetlands face fragmentation, and 150+ historic sites lack systematic protection. The plan’s

GIS mapping identified high-priority conservation zones in the northern mountains and southern rural corridors, as well as “recreation deserts” in low-income areas where park access is limited.

What Residents Want

The plan drew heavily on community input. Public engagement included two open houses, online surveys (500+ responses), interactive mapping sessions (1,200 comments), focus groups representing agriculture, recreation, conservation, and equity interests, and guidance from a 20-member steering committee. The message was remarkably consistent: 90% of respondents prioritized protecting farmlands and waterways. Residents valued voluntary landowner partnerships over mandates, wanted measurable goals (such as protecting 20% of county land by 2040), and flagged equity as a central concern – noting that lower-income southern neighborhoods have far fewer recreational opportunities than affluent northern areas.

The Plan’s Framework

The Open Space Plan is built around four core goals: protect vulnerable natural resources, expand recreational opportunities, preserve agricultural and cultural heritage, and ensure equitable access for underserved communities. To achieve these, it proposes 25 specific actions, including developing a regional park system, adopting zoning protections like a Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway overlay to preserve viewsheds, and strengthening conservation easements. Open space prioritization mapping combines environmental value, recreational need, and equity considerations to guide investments toward areas like Paris Mountain and Saluda River corridors.

The Funding Challenge

The plan is realistic about costs. Protecting and expanding open space would require \$20–50 million annually – money the county currently doesn’t have from local sources. The plan proposes a diversified funding strategy: voter-approved bonds or a quarter-cent sales tax (generating the bulk of ongoing funding), federal grants like the Land and Water Conservation Fund (up to \$10 million with local match), state programs such as the SC Conservation Bank (\$15 million available), and private sources including philanthropy, corporate sponsorships, and development impact fees. Land acquisition strategies emphasize voluntary transactions – fee-simple purchases, tax-deductible conservation easements, and partnerships with land trusts – to protect 10,000 acres over five

years, with particular focus on floodplain buyouts that serve both conservation and resilience goals.

Current Status

The Planning Commission received the plan on August 21, 2025, but chose not to take action, instead holding it pending resolution of ongoing cluster development negotiations. The plan remains under consideration as the county works through related land use policy discussions. The comprehensive research, community input, and strategic framework developed through this process provide a foundation for future open space planning efforts, regardless of when formal adoption occurs.

Mountain Creek Community Overlay District

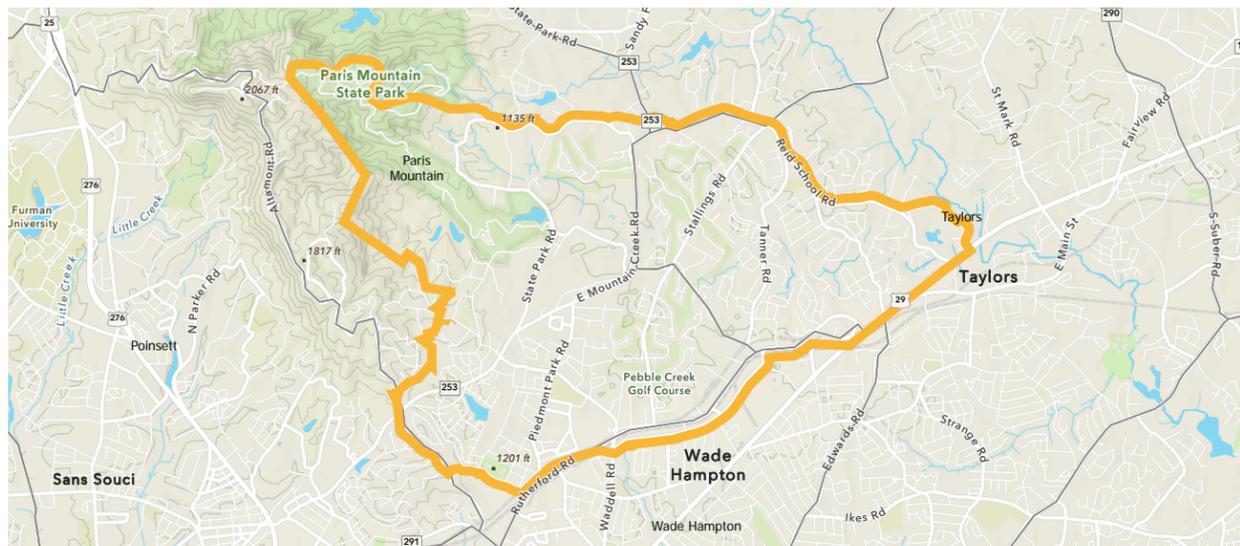
The proposed Mountain Creek Community (MCC) District Ordinance responds to a straightforward problem: a neighborhood built largely before modern flood control and stormwater regulations existed now faces worsening flooding as remaining open space gets developed. The ordinance creates stricter development standards for new major subdivisions to prevent flooding from getting worse and to preserve what natural infrastructure – tree cover, wetlands, permeable surfaces – still remains.

Why Mountain Creek Is Vulnerable

The community’s flood risk is a direct result of its development timeline. An estimated 831 parcels were developed before 1979, when Greenville County first enacted flood plain management regulations. Another 320 parcels went in before 1983, when stormwater management systems became required. A further 913 parcels were built before 1993, when federal NPDES water quality permitting became mandatory. In other words, the majority of Mountain Creek was constructed without the environmental protections now considered standard practice.

The consequence is a neighborhood with limited capacity to absorb additional stormwater. As infill development continues and density increases, each new project adds impervious surfaces – roofs, driveways, streets – that shed water rather than absorbing it. Without intervention, ongoing development will degrade remaining tree cover and wetlands, accelerating runoff and worsening flooding for existing residents who had no say in how their neighborhood was originally built.

Mountain Creek Community Overlay District Study Area



What the Ordinance Does

The MCC District is structured as a special purpose zoning overlay that would apply to all new major subdivisions within the community. It doesn't change what's already built, but it establishes significantly stricter standards for what comes next.

- Enhanced Stormwater Management:** New developments must manage runoff from a 100-year frequency storm – a 1% annual chance event – which is considerably more stringent than typical county requirements. Low Impact Development (LID) features that promote on-site infiltration and water quality improvement will be required where Greenville County Land Development determines them feasible. Impervious surfaces must be minimized.
- Mandatory Buffers:** A minimum 50-foot undisturbed buffer is required around the perimeter of any new development to preserve existing vegetation and trees, which help diffuse rainfall and slow runoff. A minimum 100-foot riparian buffer is required along both sides of all streams and jurisdictional waters, with no clearing, grading, or disturbance permitted except in specified limited circumstances.

- Open Space and Historic Preservation:** At least 50% of the total land area in a new subdivision must be set aside as protected open space for natural habitat preservation, passive recreation, and conservation. Required buffers can be credited toward this requirement, though no more than half the designated open space can consist of wetlands or floodplains. Historic sites – whether nationally registered or locally designated – must be noted on plats.

The Underlying Logic

The ordinance recognizes a reality: you can't undo how a community was originally built, but you can prevent new development from making existing problems worse. By requiring new projects to absorb their own stormwater, preserve natural features that mitigate flooding, and set aside substantial open space, the ordinance ensures that future development doesn't further burden a neighborhood already struggling with inadequate infrastructure. It's a defensive measure, designed to protect what remains rather than allow incremental degradation to continue unchecked.

GCRA Support

Long Range Planning has a sustained working relationship with the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority (GCRA), providing research,

analysis, and design support for affordable housing projects across the county. Rather than GCRA contracting externally for feasibility studies and conceptual design work, Long Range Planning can provide a degree of this support internally – leveraging county staff expertise to help GCRA explore possibilities, assess viability, and develop proposals that can move toward implementation.

A Signature Project

One major collaboration involved a project that aims to create affordable housing while integrating community amenities: Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail connectivity, potential commercial space, and community open space features that serve the surrounding area as well. Long Range staff conducted several months of analysis to determine the highest and best use for the site. This included assessing legal permissibility (what zoning and regulations allow), evaluating physical possibilities (site constraints, topography, access), examining general financial feasibility (what development scenarios pencil out), and identifying maximum productivity through both internal analysis and consultation with industry experts.

The design proposal phase resulted in six core layout concepts for the site – options that gave GCRA choices reflecting different tradeoffs between density, open space, circulation, and amenity placement. The project is currently in implementation discussions with GCRA, though Long Range staff remains available to provide community engagement support or ongoing design assistance as the project advances.

Additional Conceptual Planning

Long Range also provided conceptual master plans for other GCRA project sites to assist with early-stage feasibility assessment. One site focused on context-sensitive design, long-term affordability mechanisms, and community integration – ensuring new housing fits the surrounding neighborhood character while remaining accessible to lower-income residents over time. Another site allowed staff to deliver two conceptual master plan options exploring different organizational patterns and housing typologies, giving GCRA flexibility to consider various development approaches.

Why This Partnership Works

The collaboration makes practical sense. GCRA needs planning and design expertise to evaluate sites and develop concepts that can attract financing and community support. Long Range Planning has that expertise in-house. By working together, both entities accomplish more than they could separately – GCRA gets professional-quality feasibility studies and conceptual designs without contracting costs, and Long Range Planning directly supports one of the county's most urgent priorities: expanding affordable housing supply. It's another example of how internal collaboration stretches county resources and delivers tangible value to residents.

GADC Support

Long Range Planning staff reconnected this year with the Greenville Area Development Corpora-



DESIGN PROPOSAL PRESENTATION TO GCRA STAFF.

tion (GADC) in a deliberate effort to strengthen communication and coordination between county planning and economic development. The goal was straightforward: understand GADC's priorities and explore where planning resources could meaningfully support their work attracting and retaining investment in Greenville County.

From Conversation to Action

The conversation moved quickly from discussion to concrete application. In November 2025, Long Range Planning conducted a spatial analysis for GADC to identify development-ready sites across the county – the kind of data-driven work that economic development professionals need to pitch sites to prospective businesses efficiently.

Using ArcGIS Pro, the analysis evaluated parcels against key criteria: a minimum of 10 acres, sewer availability, nonresidential zoning, and unimproved land status. Unzoned properties within sewer-served areas were also included, recognizing that development-ready doesn't always mean already zoned. Residential parcels were excluded to maintain focus on sites genuinely suitable for commercial or industrial use.

What the Analysis Produced

The result is an interactive map that visualizes development opportunity across the county. Selected parcels were highlighted and labeled with their tax map numbers for easy reference. A heat map layer shows where qualifying sites cluster, revealing geographic patterns of development readiness. The inventory gives GADC a streamlined, evidence-based foundation for targeting recruitment efforts – knowing precisely where infrastructure exists, where zoning permits commercial or industrial use, and where sites are developable rather than encumbered by existing structures or uses.

Opening New Possibilities

While many identified sites were likely already part of GADC's working knowledge, the spatial analysis may uncover overlooked opportunities – parcels that qualify but hadn't surfaced in previous prospecting efforts. More importantly, the exercise demonstrates what's possible when planning and economic development collaborate systematically rather than working in parallel.

This partnership represents a broader recognition: effective economic development depends on current, accurate information about land availability and suitability. Planning has that informa-

tion. By translating it into tools GADC can use directly, both departments strengthen their ability to respond quickly when prospects inquire about available sites or when emerging industries create unexpected opportunities. It's a practical example of how rebuilding inter-departmental relationships pays dividends.

Rec Support

Greenville County's Long Range and Rec departments have found practical ways to work together more effectively, pooling resources and expertise to accomplish more without asking taxpayers for additional funding. It's straightforward departmental collaboration, but the results demonstrate how internal coordination can stretch limited budgets and improve project outcomes.

Maximizing Existing Resources

Long Range Planning staff has worked closely with Parks, Recreation, & Tourism throughout 2025 to provide design and planning support for ongoing and future projects. Rather than outsourcing work to external consultants, the County is leveraging skills already on staff – letting different departments support each other and avoiding redundant contractor costs.

Concrete Examples

One concrete project involved concept plan renderings for proposed improvements to Slater Hall, a historic county site. Long Range Planning produced these renderings, which gave Rec staff the visual materials they needed to pursue grant funding and communicate the vision to potential funders. Without this internal support, Rec would likely have needed to contract with outside design firms – an expense that would have come out of already constrained departmental budgets.

Similarly, Long Range Planning has been developing key planning assets for future Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail expansions. These materials assist Rec in their ongoing negotiations with property owners and their communications with partner organizations and stakeholders. By providing this internal support, the planning team helps Rec move projects forward more efficiently.

A Model for Future Collaboration

Long Range Planning is optimistic about deepening this partnership. There's significant potential to provide more comprehensive support to Parks, Recreation, & Tourism on upcoming projects – concept planning, visualization materials,

site analysis, and strategic planning work. By intentionally leveraging existing internal resources rather than outsourcing, the County delivers value to residents without increasing costs. It's a practical reminder that sometimes the most effective improvements come not from new spending, but from departments working together more strategically.

Soil & Water Conservation District Support

Long Range Planning staff collaborated with the Greenville County Soil & Water Conservation District on a project that addresses a practical infrastructure challenge: how to manage five aging dams across the Huff Creek Watershed that were originally constructed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for flood control.

The Challenge

These dams serve important purposes, but maintaining them becomes increasingly difficult and costly over time. The Soil & Water Conservation District currently bears responsibility for their upkeep – work that consumes resources and staff attention that could be directed toward broader watershed management and conservation priorities. The District recognized an opportunity: could a dedicated Huff Creek Watershed Board be established to assume maintenance responsibility for these five structures, freeing Soil & Water to focus on other critical conservation work?

Supporting the Analysis

To explore this question, the District needed solid information about the watershed itself – its geography, drainage patterns, land use, and relevant features. Long Range Planning produced instrumental maps that provided this analytical foundation. These maps became critical components of a feasibility report examining whether a watershed board was viable and what its structure and responsibilities might be.

Why It Matters

This kind of collaboration allows specialized departments to support each other's work without adding cost or creating redundant capabilities. Soil & Water has expertise in watershed management and conservation practice. Long Range Planning has GIS and mapping expertise. By combining those strengths, both departments accomplish more than either could alone. The maps Long Range produced gave Soil & Water the visual and

spatial analysis they needed to make an informed recommendation regarding the watershed's governance – work that might otherwise have required external consultants or contractors.

Piedmont Area Plan Executive Summary

In December 2024, County Council formally adopted the Piedmont Area Plan, the product of an 18-month collaborative planning process between Greenville County and Anderson County. The first bi-county community plan in the region, it provides a unified, forward-looking vision for the rapidly growing Piedmont community that straddles the county line along US-25 and SC-86.

The 342-page document serves as a detailed roadmap for land use, urban design, transportation improvements, economic development, and community character in this historically rural but increasingly suburbanizing area. Key recommendations focus on creating walkable mixed-use nodes, preserving remaining rural landscapes, strengthening the Piedmont town center, improving multimodal connectivity, and identifying priority public investments that both counties can pursue jointly or in parallel.

To make the plan accessible and actionable, Long Range Planning staff prepared a concise Piedmont Area Plan Guide – an executive summary that distills the plan's core ideas, priority actions, and implementation strategy into an easy-to-navigate format. The guide also features a series of interactive web maps that illustrate recommended future land-use patterns, potential redevelopment sites, and conceptual streetscape enhancements. A traditional non-interactive PDF version is available for download as well.

The Piedmont Area Plan and its companion guide are now active policy tools guiding rezoning decisions, capital programming, and partnership opportunities in one of the county's fastest-growing southern corridors.

Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway Corridor Plan

The Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway – South Carolina Highway 11 – winds 130 miles through the Upstate's mountain foothills, passing through five counties including Greenville. Designated a National Scenic Byway in 1996, the route was rec-

ognized for its regional significance, scenic quality, and cultural integrity. Yet nearly three decades later, it still lacks a comprehensive management plan. Beyond federal restrictions on billboards and junkyards, there’s no coordinated strategy to protect what makes Highway 11 distinctive as development pressure intensifies along the corridor.

Long Range Planning is now developing the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway Corridor Plan to address this gap – focusing specifically on the approximately 24 miles that pass through Greenville County.

Why This Matters

Highway 11 tells a layered story. It follows routes originally traveled by the Cherokee as hunting and trade paths through the Blue Ridge foothills – terrain they called the “Great Blue Hills of God.” European settlers later adopted and widened these paths into colonial roads. Today, the corridor passes through small communities like Cleveland, Slater-Marietta, Travelers Rest, Tigerville, and Gowensville, connecting pristine lakes, wilderness areas, and outdoor recreation destinations. It’s a working landscape – people live along it, farms operate on it, businesses depend on it – but it’s also a scenic and cultural asset that attracts visitors and defines regional character.

Growth along Highway 11 is inevitable. But without intentional planning, incremental development will erode the very qualities that make the

route worth preserving: mountain viewsheds, forested ridgelines, historic sites, and the sense of traveling through relatively undisturbed Appalachian landscape.

What the Plan Will Do

The corridor plan aims to preserve and enhance Highway 11’s “intrinsic qualities” – the federal term for features that give a place unique character and value. These include archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. Practically, the plan will protect scenic viewsheds through viewshed analysis (identifying what’s visible from the road and from key vantage points), document historic resources within the corridor, and develop a legally enforceable ordinance to regulate development and land use in ways that maintain the corridor’s character.

The plan also seeks to accommodate commercial traffic while ensuring safety for recreational users – cyclists, joggers, pedestrians, and sightseers in smaller vehicles. It will identify conservation tools like easements and incentives, promote sustainable tourism and economic development, and minimize gaps or intrusions on the visitor experience.

Learning from Others

Long Range Planning examined successful corridor management strategies elsewhere. The Blue Ridge Parkway Overlay District in Buncombe

County, North Carolina, restricts building heights on ridgelines visible from the Parkway, requires vegetative buffers and tree preservation, and prohibits billboards – demonstrating how local governments can guide growth without halting it. Hilton Head Island’s Corridor Overlay District uses design review boards to evaluate building form, materials, signage, and lighting, ensuring development complements scenic character. Albemarle County, Virginia, applies similar design standards along entrance corridors leading to Charlottesville and Monticello.

Closer to home, Pickens County adopted an ordinance in 2022 protecting a 1,000-foot corridor on either side of Highway 11, imposing design guidelines and establishing a conservation bank for natural and cultural preservation. Greenville County’s approach will build on these precedents while adapting to local conditions and community priorities.

The Process

The planning effort runs from mid-2025 through mid-2026 and follows a structured methodology: preliminary research and case study analysis, existing conditions inventory and viewshed analysis, community engagement including a steering committee and public meetings, plan development with specific goals and recommendations, and adoption through Planning Commission and County Council.

Community engagement will be central. The plan must reflect what residents and stakeholders value about the corridor – not just planners’ technical assessments. Potential partners include the Appalachian Council of Governments, Upstate Forever, the South Carolina Conservation Bank, SCDOT, Clemson and Furman universities, the Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust, tribal organizations like the Eastern Cherokee, and tourism entities like VisitGreenvilleSC and Discover Upcountry Carolina Association.

What Success Looks Like

If executed as designed, the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway Corridor Plan will provide a clear, enforceable framework that allows necessary growth while protecting the qualities that make Highway 11 regionally and nationally significant. Development will be guided by design standards that maintain scenic viewsheds, preserve historic and natural resources, and ensure new construction complements rather than degrades corridor character. The plan won’t freeze the landscape in

place – that’s neither realistic nor desirable – but it will ensure that change happens thoughtfully, with the corridor’s long-term integrity in mind.

Sans Souci Neighborhood Alliance Support

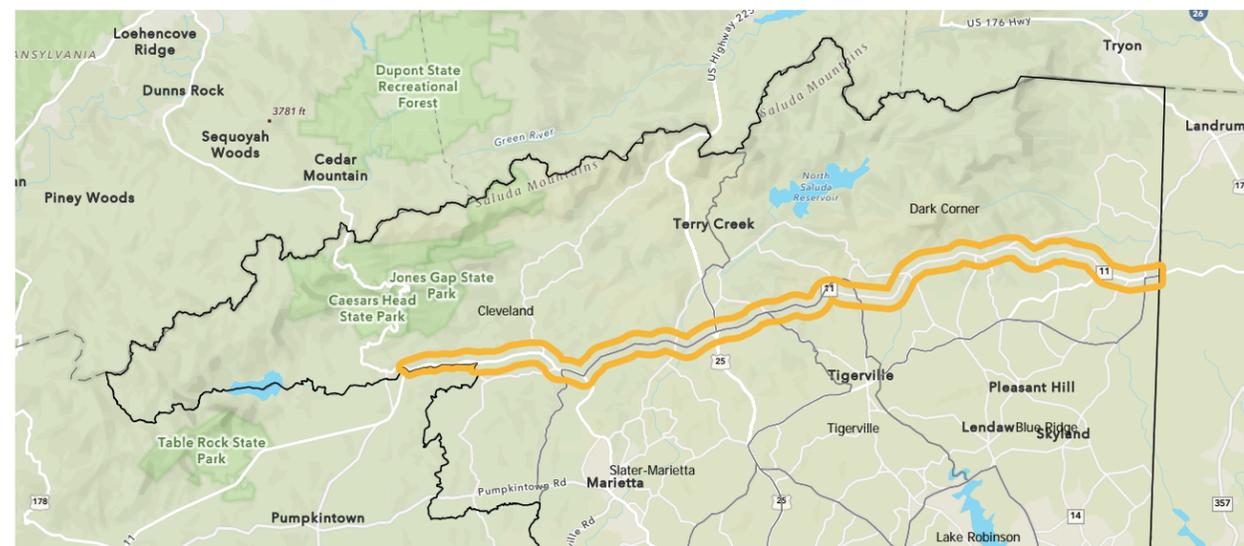
Community plans look good on paper. Turning them into reality is harder. It requires sustained commitment, resources, and the kind of follow-through that many neighborhood organizations struggle to maintain. Which is precisely why Sans Souci’s recent initiative deserves attention – it’s a textbook example of how community-led planning actually works.

The Opportunity

Several years ago, Greenville County’s Floodplain Buy-Back program acquired properties in Sans Souci to reduce flood risk. The program removes structures and returns the land to its natural state, which is environmentally sound but leaves the community with vacant parcels. Sans Souci’s community plan recognized this as an opportunity: what if these acquired properties could be developed thoughtfully – within floodplain management constraints – as community assets? The idea was elegant: activate latent land, create new neighborhood amenities, and establish community stewardship through organized maintenance.

But identifying an opportunity in a plan and actually executing it are different things. This is where Sans Souci diverged from many communities. Rather than letting the action item languish, community leaders contacted Long Range Planning

Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway Corridor Plan Study Area



this year and said, essentially: “We want to move forward. Help us think through how.”

Collaboration in Action

Long Range staff met with Sans Souci leaders on site and later provided background information and context at a community meeting. The early conversations established the parameters: what floodplain regulations permit, what the community envisioned, and what practical steps came next.

Then something unexpected happened – and it’s crucial to understanding why this matters. Kai Koopman, a Sans Souci resident and current Master of Landscape Architecture student at Clemson University, saw the initiative and decided to champion it personally. He made it the subject of his thesis project, lending academic rigor and design expertise to what began as a community conversation. Koopman met with relevant county staff, hosted a community event on the site itself, and solicited direct feedback from neighbors.

Why This Model Works

What unfolded is the ideal pattern for how community plans should function. It wasn’t top-down directives or county staff imposing solutions. It was a neighborhood identifying a real need, committing to address it, and then leveraging available expertise – both external (county staff knowledge) and internal (a resident designer’s professional training and fresh perspective). The community maintained agency throughout. County planning provided information and coordination, but Sans Souci’s residents drove the vision.

This approach produces several benefits simultaneously. The neighborhood gets a tangible new asset. Residents develop ownership through direct participation and decision-making. Implementation capacity – through volunteer stewardship and maintenance – is built into the project from the start rather than added as an afterthought. And a young professional gains thesis material and real-world experience solving an actual community problem.

For a county managing 19 adopted community plans across diverse neighborhoods, Sans Souci’s model offers a replicable template: engage community leaders early, provide planning staff support and information, create space for residents and local professionals to take ownership, and step back enough to let authentic community leadership emerge. It’s how plans become reality, and how neighborhoods build resilience and civic capacity at the same time.

Judson Community Plan Review

Long Range Planning has begun reviewing the Judson Community Plan, originally adopted in 2012, to assess how well it’s held up against more than a decade of substantial change. The community has evolved dramatically since that time – and with one of the oldest community plans on the books – the Judson Community Plan made a logical candidate for updated planning.

What’s Changed

The transformation is visible. Judson Mills itself has undergone comprehensive redevelopment. Upscale, modern infill development is now nested within what was historically a working-class mill town. The physical landscape looks different, but so do the demographics and community dynamics. Understanding precisely what’s changed – on the ground, in population characteristics, and in how the neighborhood functions – is the starting point for determining whether the 2012 plan still serves its purpose.

When adopted, the Judson Community Plan was meant to guide future development while also prescribing enhancements: streetscape beautification, designated public gathering spaces, infrastructure improvements. Some of those goals have been achieved. Others haven’t. Part of the review involves systematically comparing original objectives against actual outcomes – what worked, what didn’t, and why.

Key Questions

The investigation is focused on several specific areas: What’s the current status of community leadership? Are there still active residents and organizations who can speak for the neighborhood’s interests? How might potential annexation affect Judson’s trajectory? What impact will planned rail trail connections between Judson and other nearby mill communities have on connectivity and character? And perhaps most critically, how has growth affected the neighborhood and housing market?

What Comes Next

Through outreach to remaining community leaders and residents, the Long Range Planning team hopes to gauge whether there’s appetite for a full community plan update. If there is, a new planning process would produce a contemporary plan that reflects current realities and resident aspirations rather than conditions from 2012. If there isn’t – if the community has fragmented to the

point where collective planning no longer makes sense – that’s important information too. Either way, the review will clarify whether Judson needs an updated roadmap or whether circumstances have moved beyond what a community plan may have to offer.

Adoption Process SOP Manual

Every planning department accumulates knowledge through experience – how to handle a rezoning application, what notices to send, which board approves what. But when that knowledge exists primarily in individual staff members’ heads, organizations become vulnerable. People leave. Processes get inconsistent. Legal requirements get missed. Greenville County’s Long Range Planning staff recognized this risk and took a deliberate step to address it: they created the county’s first comprehensive Standards Operating Procedures (SOP) Manual for the adoption and approval of planning and zoning deliverables.

Why This Matters

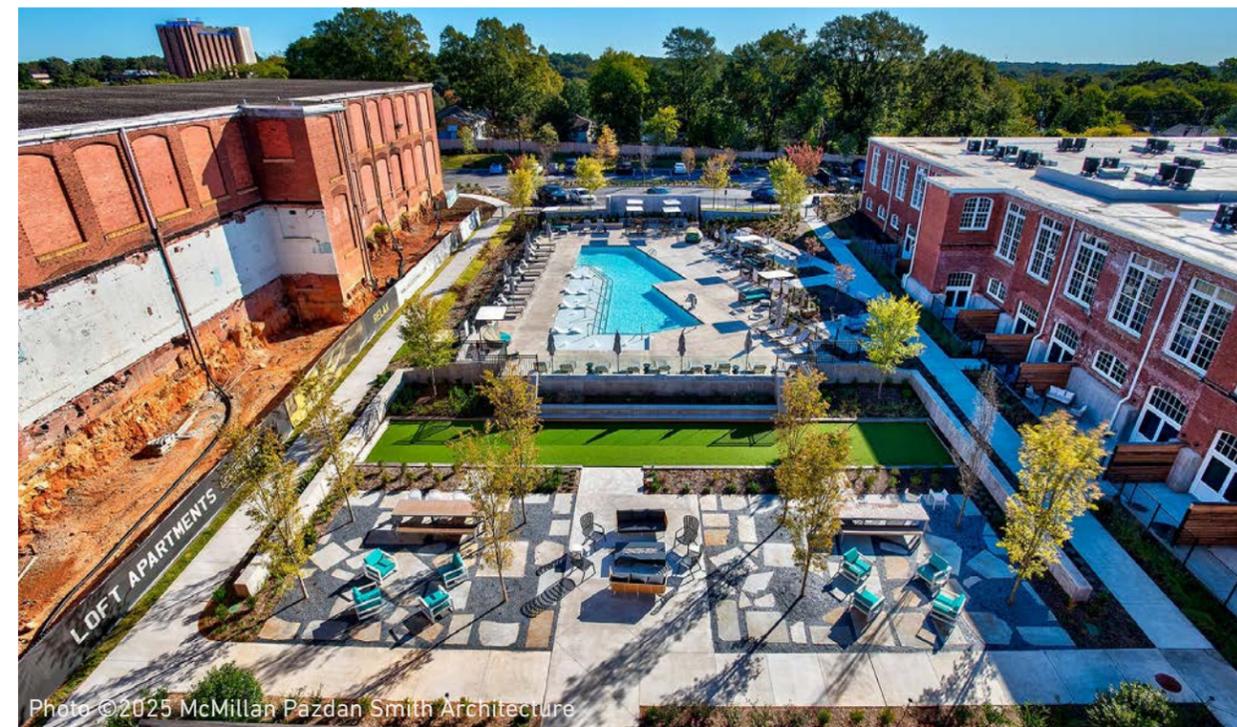
The manual is fundamentally about two things: preserving institutional memory and ensuring consistency across the department. As Greenville County manages rapid growth, evolving regulations, and an increasingly complex development landscape, the department needs reliable, docu-

mented procedures that reduce the risk of procedural errors and support efficient, legally compliant decision-making. A clear SOP manual does exactly that – it codifies what works and provides a reference that all staff can rely on.

What’s Inside

The manual is organized for easy staff reference. It opens with a legal framework section that clarifies the county’s authorities under South Carolina law, explains the roles of County Council, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Zoning Appeals, and distinguishes between ordinances (enforceable laws requiring three public readings and hearings) and resolutions (policy statements with streamlined adoption). It then walks through the Planning Commission’s dual responsibility: recommending on major items like Comprehensive Plan amendments and rezonings, while exercising direct decision authority on preliminary subdivisions and certain site plans.

The core content covers 11 key deliverables and their processes. Comprehensive Plan amendments require a 30-day notice period and three readings. Zoning map amendments need 15-day property posting and a 30-day Planning Commission review. Community plans can take either ordinance form (if regulatory force is intended) or resolution form (if policy guidance suffices). The manual includes step-by-step guidance for each,



JUDSON MILL REDEVELOPMENT IN CONSTRUCTION.

complete with timelines and flowcharts so staff follows consistent procedures.

A critical component consolidates public notice and hearing requirements by action type, specifying mailed notices, newspaper publications, property postings, and timelines. This ensures the department meets all legal obligations and reduces the risk of procedural oversights.

The manual also addresses practical mechanics: application processing workflows with critical deadlines (10 days for completeness review, 60–90 days for final action), standardized forms, and fee schedules (\$70–\$600 for rezoning applications depending on scope, \$500+ per lot for subdivisions). A glossary provides reference definitions for terms used throughout the document.

A Living Document

The SOP manual is designed to evolve. It's slated for annual review and updates, recognizing that regulations change, case law develops, and departmental best practices improve. This positions the department to stay current and adapt procedures as needed.

Building Department Capacity

The manual represents an investment in departmental infrastructure – the kind of foundational work that strengthens staff capacity and institutional resilience. By documenting procedures and standardizing processes, the department ensures that knowledge doesn't walk out the door when staff members move on, that new employees can get up to speed more quickly, and that all staff are operating from the same playbook. For a department managing growth pressures and legal complexity, this kind of institutional documentation is essential. As Greenville County heads into 2026 and beyond, having this manual in place is a significant asset.

Lunch & Learn Series

Long Range Planning revived a previous office tradition this year: the Lunch & Learn series. These casual sessions bring staff and partners together to share expertise, discuss industry trends, and build relationships across organizational boundaries. It's a straightforward professional development approach, but one that creates space for the kind of knowledge exchange and networking that rarely happens in day-to-day operations.

Why It Works

The format is deliberately low-key. Staff gather over lunch to hear from practitioners, experts, and partners working on issues directly relevant to planning work in Greenville County. Sessions blend internal knowledge-sharing (learning what colleagues in other divisions are doing) with external perspectives (understanding how nonprofits, private firms, and industry associations see the same challenges). The result is staff who are better informed, more connected, and exposed to approaches they might not encounter otherwise.

This Year's Sessions

The 2025 lineup covered diverse ground. Asangwua Ikein, one of the county's own transportation planners, walked through effective public engagement practices and the tools he uses to solicit meaningful community input. John Lattimore, Chief Programs Officer of Habitat for Humanity of Greenville, provided a comprehensive history of Habitat's evolution and surveyed their recent local projects – giving staff insight into how one of the county's major affordable housing partners operates. Leadership from the Greater Greenville Association of REALTORS®, including CEO Chris Bailey and Government Affairs Director Elizabeth Edwards Martin, delivered a detailed presentation on their role in the real estate industry, current market trends, and what planners should anticipate as market conditions shift. Planning Director Draper Carlile offered staff a crash course on planning law – foundational knowledge that's essential for understanding how legal constraints shape what's possible in planning practice.

Looking Ahead

The series continues into 2026, with a January session already scheduled featuring team members from LS3P, the architecture and planning firm responsible for several signature projects in Greenville and nationwide. The momentum suggests the Lunch & Learn format has found its footing again – offering staff ongoing professional development while strengthening the county's relationships with nonprofit and private sector partners who are essential to implementing plans on the ground.

Chapter Six

Protective: safeguarding historic properties and districts through reviews of designations, construction plans, and applications to ensure preservation of cultural and historical resources.

Historic Preservation Commission

Introduction

In 2025, the Greenville County Historic Preservation Commission advanced its mission to identify, protect, and celebrate the county's historic resources while navigating a dynamic landscape of redevelopment pressures, ownership changes, and community-led preservation efforts. The year was marked by rigorous review of rehabilitation projects under the Bailey Bill tax incentive program, approval of thoughtful restoration and adaptive reuse proposals, and active outreach to safeguard at-risk properties and cemeteries.

Headline accomplishments included final certification (with conditions) of the American Spinning Mill's Main Mill, approval of major stabilization work at Oakland Plantation, and support for interpretive projects such as the relocation of a historic cabin at Spring Park Inn and Phase 1 of the Sterling School Memorial. At the same time,

the Commission took decisive action to decertify properties where rehabilitation commitments were not met or where significant alterations compromised historic integrity.

Beyond project reviews, the Commission deepened community partnerships, provided technical guidance to nonprofits and local governments, supported documentary and memorial initiatives, and invested in public education through brochures, social media, and training. These efforts reflect a Commission committed to preserving the county's rich architectural, cultural, and social history while ensuring that historic resources remain viable contributors to Greenville's evolving communities.

Historic Preservation Activity in 2025

Bailey Bill Projects

The Bailey Bill tax incentive program remained a cornerstone of the Commission's work, offering property tax relief in exchange for rehabilitation of historic structures. Several high-profile cases illustrated both the opportunities and the challenges of this program.

The American Spinning Mill project required extensive oversight throughout the year. In January, the Commission determined the project was stalled, with prior requirements unmet and the certification period lapsed. After deferring action in February to seek legal guidance, the Commission approved Final Certification for the Main Mill in March, subject to strict conditions: completion of required work within six months, full compliance with approved rehabilitation standards (particularly brickwork), quarterly site visits, and written progress reports. Separate future approvals were required for the Cotton and Storage Warehouses. The Commission cited COVID-related hardships as justification for limited flexibility. In September, the Commission was informed that the owners had requested annexation into the City of Greenville; in October, the property was decertified as it fell outside county jurisdiction.

The Bloomhill Estate residential property was decertified after owners removed required historic elements that had been present at the time of Final Certification. Staff notified the County Assessor's Office, and the special tax assessment was repealed.

Restoration and Adaptive Reuse Approvals

The Commission approved several projects that balanced preservation with modern use:

- McCullough House (Cedarhurst): Revisions were approved to restore original early-19th-century interior features discovered beneath later alterations.
- Spring Park Inn: Relocation of a historically significant 19th-century cabin to the property was approved for interpretive use. Discussions continued regarding the proposed Dicey Langston Park.
- Oakland Plantation: Comprehensive exterior repairs and stabilization of the main house and slave cabin were approved, supported by grant funding.
- Sterling School Memorial: Phase 1 plans were approved to demarcate the boundary of the original school foundation, including a landscape plan.

- Slater Hall: Changes to roofing (from asphalt shingle to standing seam mill roof) and gutter/downspout upgrades were approved.
- Jones Mill: A Certificate of Appropriateness was issued for a picnic shelter as part of the proposed park plan.

Historic Designation and Community Outreach

Outreach remained a priority. The Commission continued engagement with owners of potential County Designated Historic Sites, including the Rainey House, John Arrington House, Furman University properties, and others. Discussions addressed endangered resources such as Gilreath Mill and the Clarendon Avenue historic district.

The Commission supported a variety of community initiatives:

- Provided guidance to The 250 Committee for inclusion of local American Revolution veterans at the County Square Veterans Memorial.
- Assisted representatives of Camp Sevier Remembered with efforts to memorialize the historic Camp Sevier site in unincorporated Taylors.
- Offered information to Fountain Inn stakeholders on establishing a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to preserve the Principal's House, Teacherage, and Mount Zion Baptist Church.
- Collaborated with the owner of historic housing on Clarendon Avenue to advance goals for a historic district.
- Provided redevelopment guidance to the Greenville Area Development Corporation for the ballpark within the Woodside Cotton Mill Village Historic District.
- Supported commissioners' efforts to document and clean up the Townes-Paris Cemetery.
- Backed Oliver Lollis and Jesse Collier's proposal for a multi-episode documentary on the history and importance of Greenville's cotton mill villages.

Cemeteries and Preservation Advocacy

Cemeteries received focused attention. The Commission identified new and at-risk sites, including Brandon Mill Cemetery following a tax sale. Legal and preservation strategies were discussed to ensure access, protection, and potential donation of cemetery properties. Damage to the Springwood Cemetery entrance arch was assessed and deemed repairable, preventing removal. Staff sought Commission advice on repairs to Brutontown Cemetery.

Other Notable Achievements

County Council allocated \$3,200 in discretionary funds, enabling the purchase of 12 bronze plaques for sites receiving local historic designation. Commissioners participated in two training events hosted by the State Historic Preservation Office: the Annual Historic Preservation Conference in April and the Historic Cemetery Workshop in September, each providing seven hours of continuing education.

Moving Forward

2025 demonstrated the Commission's ability to balance rigorous stewardship of historic resources with collaborative, community-driven preservation. Looking ahead, continued emphasis on outreach to at-risk properties, support for non-profit fundraising, and education will be essential to ensure that Greenville County's historic fabric endures amid ongoing growth and change. The Commission remains committed to working with owners, municipalities, and residents to protect these irreplaceable assets for future generations.



The American Spinning Mill. ©Landing 2026

Conclusion

As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it.

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Looking Ahead

The 2025 record reveals a county at an inflection point. Greenville County's attractiveness – its natural beauty, economic vitality, and quality of life – continues drawing new residents and investment at rates that challenge existing infrastructure and regulatory frameworks. The controversies documented in this report – cluster development abuse, infrastructure capacity constraints, planning document conflicts, and affordable housing shortfalls – are not failures of planning but rather symptoms of success creating its own complications.

What distinguished 2025 was the county's willingness to acknowledge when existing approaches weren't working and to pursue course corrections. The unanimous cluster development moratorium, the Comprehensive Plan five-year review, the adopted plans audit, and the Open Space Plan proposal all represent a government taking seriously its responsibility to manage growth rather than simply accommodate it. The stakeholder workshops, public hearings, and community engagement efforts reflect recognition that sustainable growth requires building consensus, not just approving applications.

Significant work remains. The cluster development moratorium will require either reformed regulations delivering genuine open space benefits or alternative regulatory approaches. Infrastructure funding mechanisms must evolve to ensure development pays its proportionate share. Planning documents need clearer hierarchies and conflict-resolution frameworks. Affordable housing supply must expand to serve essential workers priced out of the communities they serve. And coordination with regional partners – ReWa, SCDOT, school districts, and neighboring jurisdictions – must strengthen to address challenges that cross organizational boundaries.

The Planning Department enters 2026 with both challenges and opportunities. The foundation laid this year – strategic plans, procedural improvements, strengthened partnerships, and professional development – positions staff to address the policy questions that 2025 identified. How effectively Greenville County builds on that foundation will substantially shape its character and livability for decades to come.



Greenville County Planning Department

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