

GREENVILLE COUNTY

Open Space Plan

JUNE 2025



Greenville
County

Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

Overview

The Greenville County Open Space Plan establishes an ongoing vision for open space throughout the county, advancing the goals and priorities established in the 2019 Plan Greenville County Comprehensive Plan and the 2010 Greenville County Comprehensive Greenways Plan.

This Plan was developed by Alta Planning + Design, Inc. (consultant) in collaboration with Greenville County staff with input from the public, stakeholders, and a Project Steering Committee.

This plan presents detailed goals and objectives for open space, developed through extensive public and stakeholder engagement efforts, and an action plan with recommendations for implementable actions for the County to achieve those goals, including the overarching goal to preserve at least **30% of County** land for open space.

Open space includes the lands and waters where people play with their children, hike through the woods, hunt and fish, observe wildlife in their natural habitat, and farm and grow food. The goal is to preserve these assets, thereby maintaining the high quality of life as the county continues to grow and prosper.

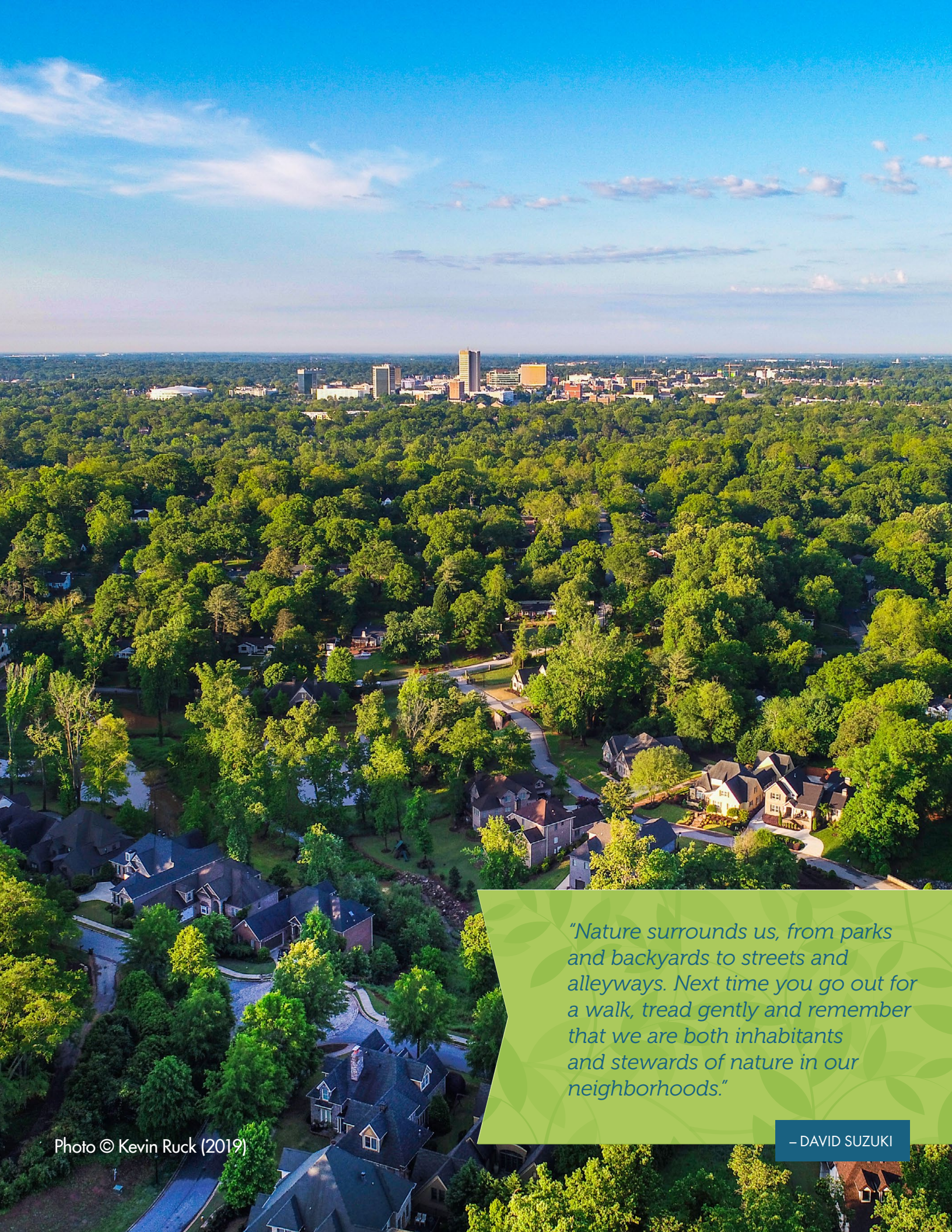
Why We Need this Plan

Greenville County has an abundance of open space today, but the rapid growth of the region has already begun to deplete and threaten much of the county's natural lands and farmlands with increased impacts of development. **With an estimated population increase of 25% since 2010 (over three times the national average)**, it is critical to proactively protect open space in order to preserve a high quality of life, protect and improve agricultural productivity, enhance environmental health and sustainability, and improve regional public health.

Plan Recommendations

This plan combines extensive public input and stakeholder involvement (Chapter 3) with in-depth analysis of the region's natural, cultural, historic, agricultural, and recreational resources data (Chapter 4). The result is a set of maps and data that show priority areas for conservation throughout the county.

Recommended action steps for implementation were created through this research and analysis, combined with further feedback and review by the public and the Project Steering Committee (see Pg. 39). These recommendations are presented in Chapter 4, along with detailed funding mechanisms and land acquisition tools to help the County in the implementation of the action steps.



"Nature surrounds us, from parks and backyards to streets and alleyways. Next time you go out for a walk, tread gently and remember that we are both inhabitants and stewards of nature in our neighborhoods."

Photo © Kevin Ruck (2019)

– DAVID SUZUKI

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01

Introduction

Purpose and Intent of the Open Space Plan

The Greenville County Open Space Plan has been developed to establish a coordinated, voluntary program to protect and promote the region's most valued natural landscapes and open spaces, in alignment with the goals established in the Greenville County Comprehensive Plan (2019) and the Greenville County Comprehensive Greenways Plan (2010). The ultimate goal is to preserve these assets, thereby maintaining a high quality of life as the county continues to grow and prosper. This plan also hopes to guide the development of new open spaces, such as community parks, in areas that are currently lacking publicly accessible open space.

COUNTY GOAL:

"Protect the most valuable and vulnerable natural resources"

- Greenville County Comprehensive Plan (2019)



Why This Plan is Important

Greenville County is experiencing rapid growth. Protecting and enhancing open space throughout the county while strategically allowing for smart development will help us maintain the character and quality of life that the area is known for, in addition to providing the following benefits:



Resiliency and Open Space as Infrastructure

This plan will strengthen our “green infrastructure” - the network of natural systems that manages stormwater and creates healthier urban environments. It can include wetlands, floodplains, open space, and other elements. Green infrastructure also reduces the “heat island effect”, where the general temperature of an area is increased from urban and developed areas absorbing and re-emitting the sun’s heat more than natural landscapes.



Food Security

The county is facing a rapid decline in farmlands and historic farms. Maintaining a local farm and food system is critically important to ensure that in times of market instability, the county is not too dependent on food raised far from home. Farms can also play a role in the county’s vibrant economy. Hunting and fishing can also help provide local food security.



Quality of Life in the Face of Rapid Growth

Open space contributes to the character and quality of life in Greenville County. The county’s health of citizens, love of place, and top-notch recreation is dependent on open space. This plan can help Greenville County balance growth while achieving its goals and vision for open space.



Public Health

The health of Greenville County residents and visitors is dependent on access to open space, opportunities for physical activity, and healthy food sources. This Open Space Plan can help ensure the County’s natural spaces remain healthy and accessible, and our agricultural lands are plentiful and productive.



A Vibrant Economy

Open space attracts visitors that spend dollars that benefit many, whether through agritourism or outdoor recreation. Open space also reduces the impacts and costs of natural disasters.



Wild & Historic Landscapes

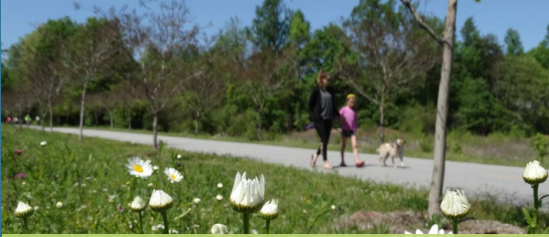
The plan will help maintain land for wild spaces and wildlife habitat - contributing to a healthy and diverse ecosystem, preserving historic landscapes, and creating opportunities for outdoor recreation that the area is known for.

What is Open Space

Open space includes all undeveloped areas, whether publicly or privately owned, protected or unprotected. Open space lands include forests, farms, streams, rivers, parks and more.

Open space serves as important infrastructure that protects our water quality and wildlife, protects us from flooding, and ensures food security through working lands and hunting and fishing. Open space also often serves as recreational area for play and contributes to the health and quality of life of Greenville County residents. There are many different types of open space, including recreational lands, natural lands, farmland, water resources, and cultural lands.

Figure 1. Types of Open Space

TYPES OF OPEN SPACE include, but are not limited to:	Recreational Lands Both Active Parks/Trails and Passive Recreation/Natural Areas	 Swamp Rabbit Trail © Greenville County
	Natural Lands Undeveloped, Lands with High-Value Natural Resources and Habitat	 Paris Mountain State Park © Greenville County
	Farmland Prime Farmland and Historic Farms	 Private Farmland © Greenville County
	Water Resources Floodplains, Critical Watersheds, Wetlands	 Cedar Falls Park © Greenville County
	Cultural Lands Historically or Culturally Significant Landscapes and Sites	 Jones Mill © Greenville County

Vision and Goals

The following vision statement and goals were established to act as “guiding arrows” through the development and implementation of this plan. They were developed as a result of feedback gathered through public engagement processes. Details of these processes can be viewed in Chapter 3, Public Engagement.

The following goals are established and presented in order of ranked importance, as determined by public feedback.

THE VISION:

To create and maintain an interconnected network of natural areas, working landscapes, and parks, balancing responsible growth with the preservation of natural beauty and a vibrant quality of life for future generations.

THE GOALS:

- 1** Preservation of Open Space
- 2** Water Resource Protection
- 3** Interconnected Wildlife and Water Corridors
- 4** Preservation of Historical, Cultural, and Aesthetic Resources
- 5** Enhanced Equitable Public Access to Parks
- 6** Resilient Development and Land Management

02

Existing Conditions

As we plan for the future of Greenville County's open spaces, it is important to have an understanding of the current conditions of the county's resources, and the recent trends and changes that shed light on the future needs and focus points for the Open Space Plan.

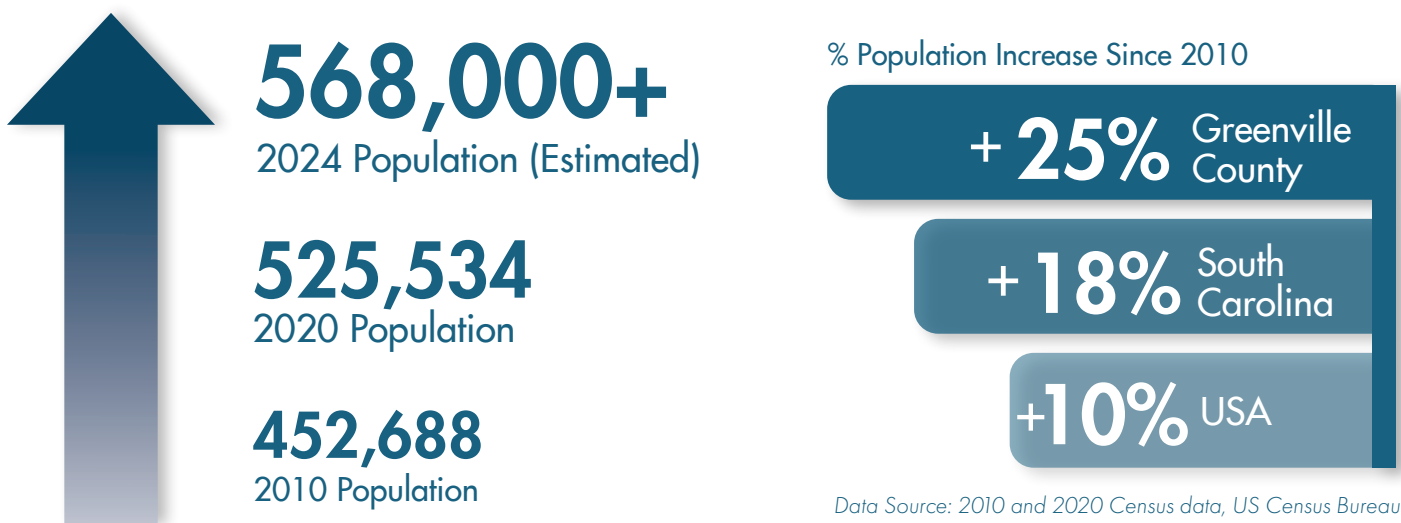
This includes an in-depth review and analysis of the county's existing plans, ordinances, and regulations related to open space to ensure that this new Open Space Plan is developed to expand and achieve the established open space goals and vision for Greenville County.

Population Growth

Greenville County's population is the largest in the state, and the fastest growing in the Upstate, with a population of over 525,000 in 2020 and an estimated population of over 568,000 in 2024 — a 25% increase since 2010's count of over 451,000 (U.S. Census Bureau).

The majority of the population has historically and continues to live in the central part of Greenville County, in and around the Cities of Greenville, Mauldin, Simpsonville, and its surrounding communities. But recent development trends and census data show that the population is expanding outwards at a rapid rate into more rural parts of the County (See Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Rapid Population Growth in Greenville County



Natural Resources

With its stunning landscapes, scenic waterways, and award-winning parks, the county is abundant with natural resources, including 3 state parks, that provide recreational, economic, environmental, and public health benefits for the region.

The Mountains

The county's mountainous northern region is packed with natural beauty, unique biodiversity, and recreational opportunities. The Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway guides visitors through 112 miles of picturesque landscapes through 5 counties, while the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area includes over 17,000 acres across the Jones Gap and Caesars Head State Parks. This area provides access to miles of hiking and cycling trails, panoramic views, and spectacular waterfalls. The mountains are also the drinking water source for the county and tens of thousands of people in Pickens County.

Urban Nature

Greenville County's central region includes the City of Greenville and surrounding communities, with award-winning parks and outdoor recreation opportunities, including: the 23-mile Swamp Rabbit Trail, a multi-use greenway that runs alongside the Reedy River (See Fig. 22, Recreational Resources Map); Falls Park, downtown Greenville's urban oasis; and Paris Mountain State Park.

Agricultural Land

Most of the county's prime and active farmland is located in the southern portion of the county. The farmlands are located adjacent to rivers, streams, and tributaries due to access to a reliable water supply and fertile soil. Historically referred to as Greenville's "breadbasket", the 50,000+ acres of agricultural land is a core resource that is vital to regional environmental and economic health, and the well-being of residents of Greenville County and beyond.

The preservation of existing farmlands is a vital priority for Greenville County. As development pressure extends to these agricultural areas, the amount of farmland has been rapidly decreasing.

(See Fig. 20, Prime Farmland Map)



Figure 3. Natural Resource Statistics

GREENVILLE COUNTY IS PROUDLY HOME TO

3

State Parks

13,000 +

Acres of
park land

50,000 +

Acres of
agricultural land



World Class Biodiversity

According to the South Carolina Native Plant Society, the Upstate is the most biologically diverse area in South Carolina. Greenville County is home to an extraordinary variety of plant and animal life, including many rare plant species. The County is made up of numerous landforms, including the piedmont, foothills, and escarpments, contributing to biodiverse area. The climate is humid subtropical, with an average of over 50 inches of rain per year.

The County is also full of critical habitat area. According to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), there are over 20 species of plants and animals in Greenville County that are listed as endangered, threatened, or at-risk. Habitat loss is typically considered the cause of these designations. The protection of natural areas throughout the county is a key priority to ensure a healthy ecosystem for current and future generations.

Recreational Resources

Greenville County residents love taking advantage of all the outdoor recreational opportunities the region has to offer, putting “active living” at the heart of Upstate culture. With more people born here choosing to stay here, as well as those moving to the Upstate, new residents and visitors are drawn to the area for its beautiful balance of urban and natural opportunities, allowing them to easily access and enjoy the great outdoors while living and working in a bustling metropolitan area. For example, Paris Mountain State Park attendance quintupled from 2020 to 2024. This exemplifies the need for more parks.

Greenville County is home to over 13,000 acres of park land and over 55 parks and recreational facilities. From Greenville County, visitors and residents can easily access the Upstate’s 47+ lakes and waterfalls, 556+ miles of bike trails, and 150+ public parks (See Fig. 22, Recreational Resources Map).

Cultural Resources

The county is rich with unique cultural and historical resources that strengthen the connections between the residents and visitors of Greenville County to the past, to the land, and to each other.

Historic sites are found throughout the county, including homes, churches, industrial and commercial buildings, and historic districts. The historic mills tie the county to its history as a center for the global textile industry. The historic Oakland Plantation is soon to be transformed into a regional park and its historic structures restored and opened to the public, including one of the County’s three remaining dwellings that housed enslaved people. Many other historical sites and structures can be found throughout the County’s parks and along the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway.

(See Fig. 21, Cultural Resources Map)

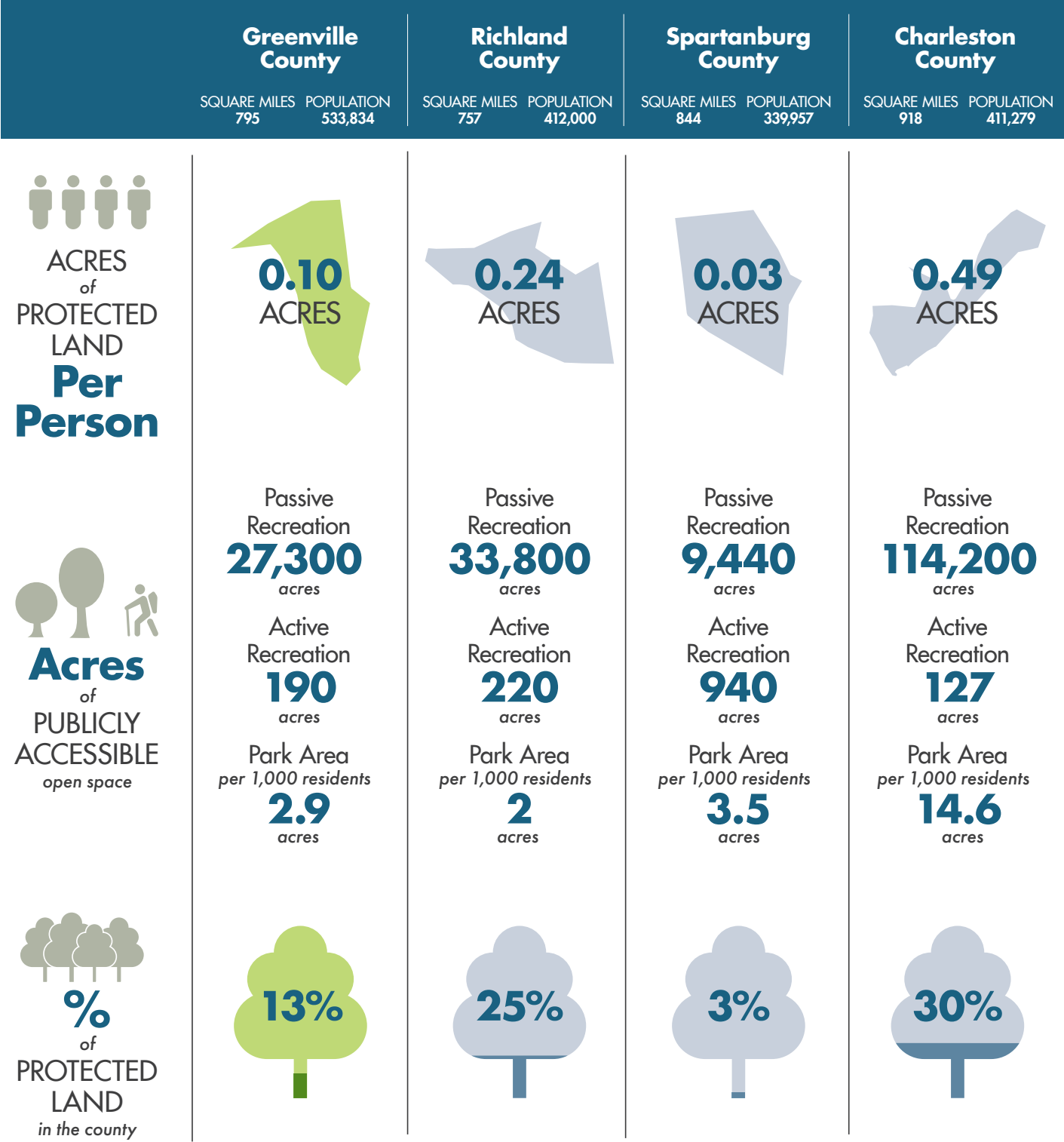


Campbells Covered Bridge © Greenville County

How Does Greenville County Compare?

Greenville County currently has about 13% of its total land area dedicated to protected open space. This is higher than some nearby counties, such as Spartanburg County which only has about 3% of its land dedicated to protected open space, but is significantly lower than others. For example, Richland County has about 25% open space and Charleston County has about 30% open space. There is a national effort to conserve 30% of land and water by 2030.

Figure 4. Comparison of Protected Open Space in South Carolina Counties



Inventory and Assessment Mapping

The maps included in this section were developed as part of an in-depth examination and analysis of the current state of open space and related community and environmental factors in Greenville County. These maps were used to help visualize, prioritize and guide the development of recommendations and proposed projects presented in this Open Space Plan.

The following maps are included in this section:

- ▶ Fig. 5. Study Area Map
- ▶ Fig. 6. Future Land Use Map
- ▶ Fig. 7. Future Land Use: Greenville Metro Area Map
- ▶ Fig. 8. Population Density Map
- ▶ Fig. 9. Social Vulnerability Map
- ▶ Fig. 10. High Conservation Need and High Social Vulnerability Map
- ▶ Fig. 11. Larger Tracts with Predominant Open Space Map
- ▶ Fig. 12. Sewer and Zoning Area Map
- ▶ Fig. 13. Protected Open Space (Public and Private) Map
- ▶ Fig. 14. State Conservation Priority Map
- ▶ Fig. 15. Habitat Cores Map
- ▶ Fig. 16. Imperiled Species Map
- ▶ Fig. 17. Watershed Impairment Status Map
- ▶ Fig. 18. Upstate Forever Critical Lands Map
- ▶ Fig. 19. Tree Canopy Map
- ▶ Fig. 20. Prime Farmland Map
- ▶ Fig. 21. Cultural Resources Map
- ▶ Fig. 22. Recreational Resources Map
- ▶ Fig. 23. Swamp Rabbit Trail System Map



Cedar Falls Park
© Greenville County

Figure 5. Study Area Map

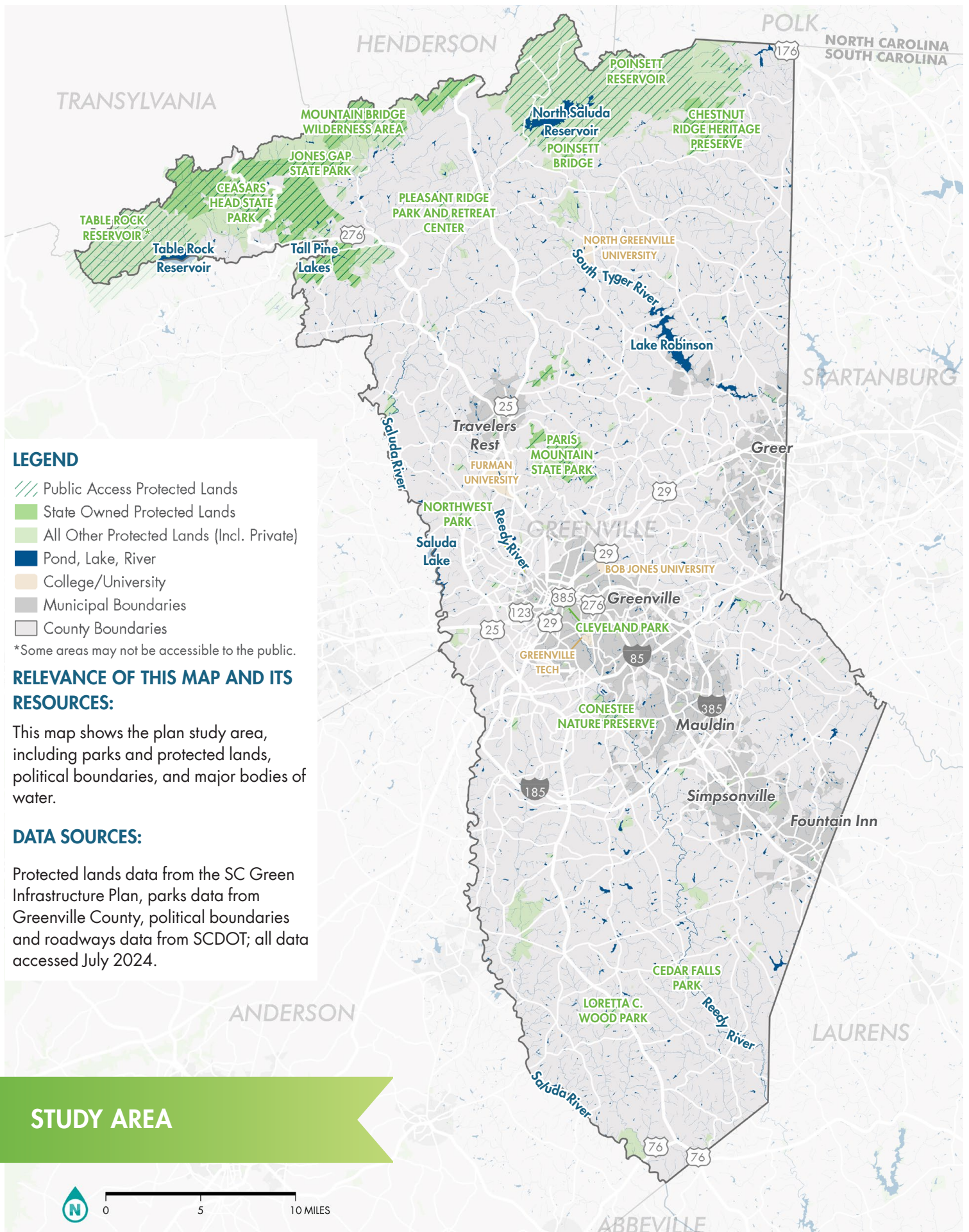


Figure 6. Future Land Use Map

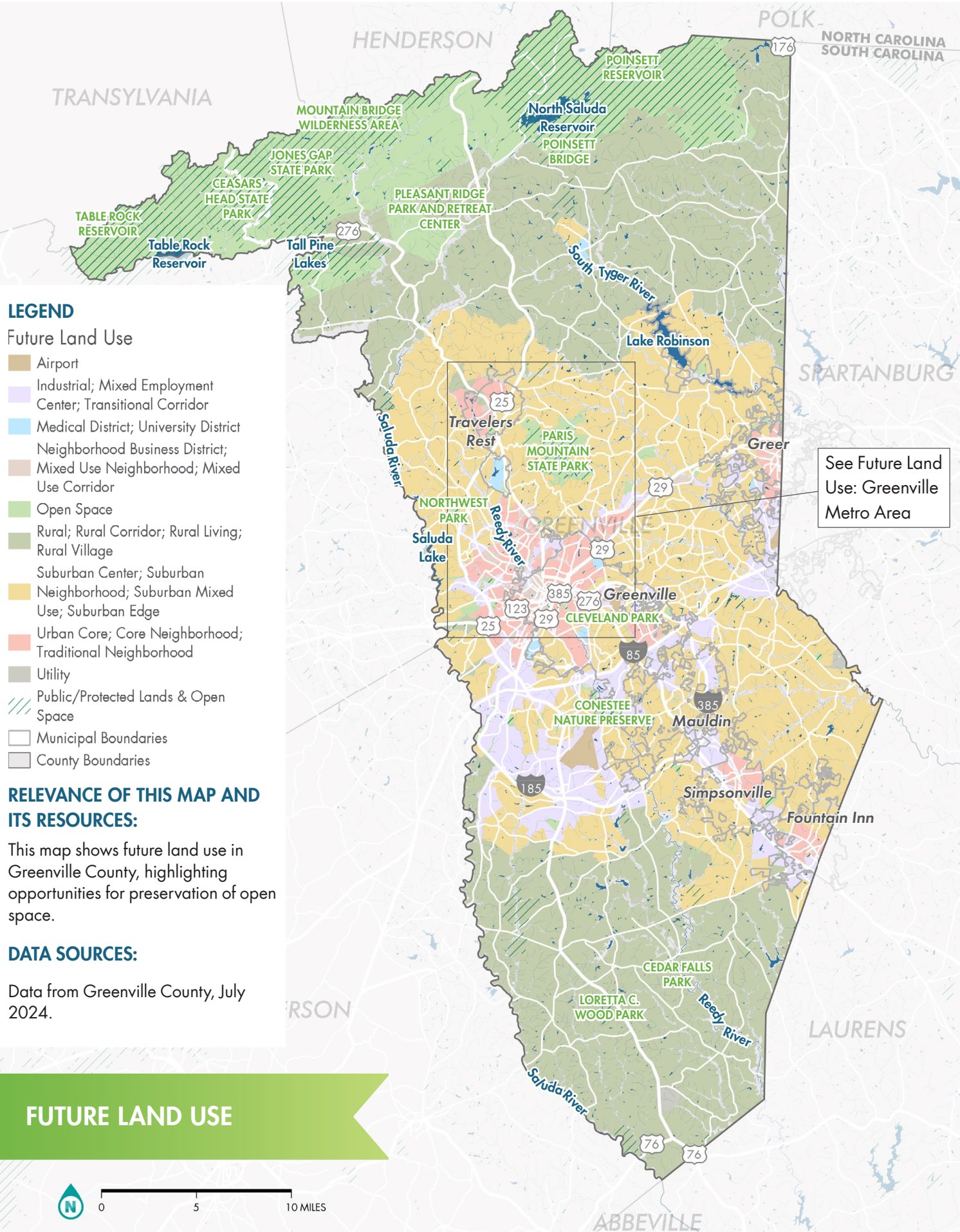


Figure 7. Future Land Use: Greenville Metro Area Map

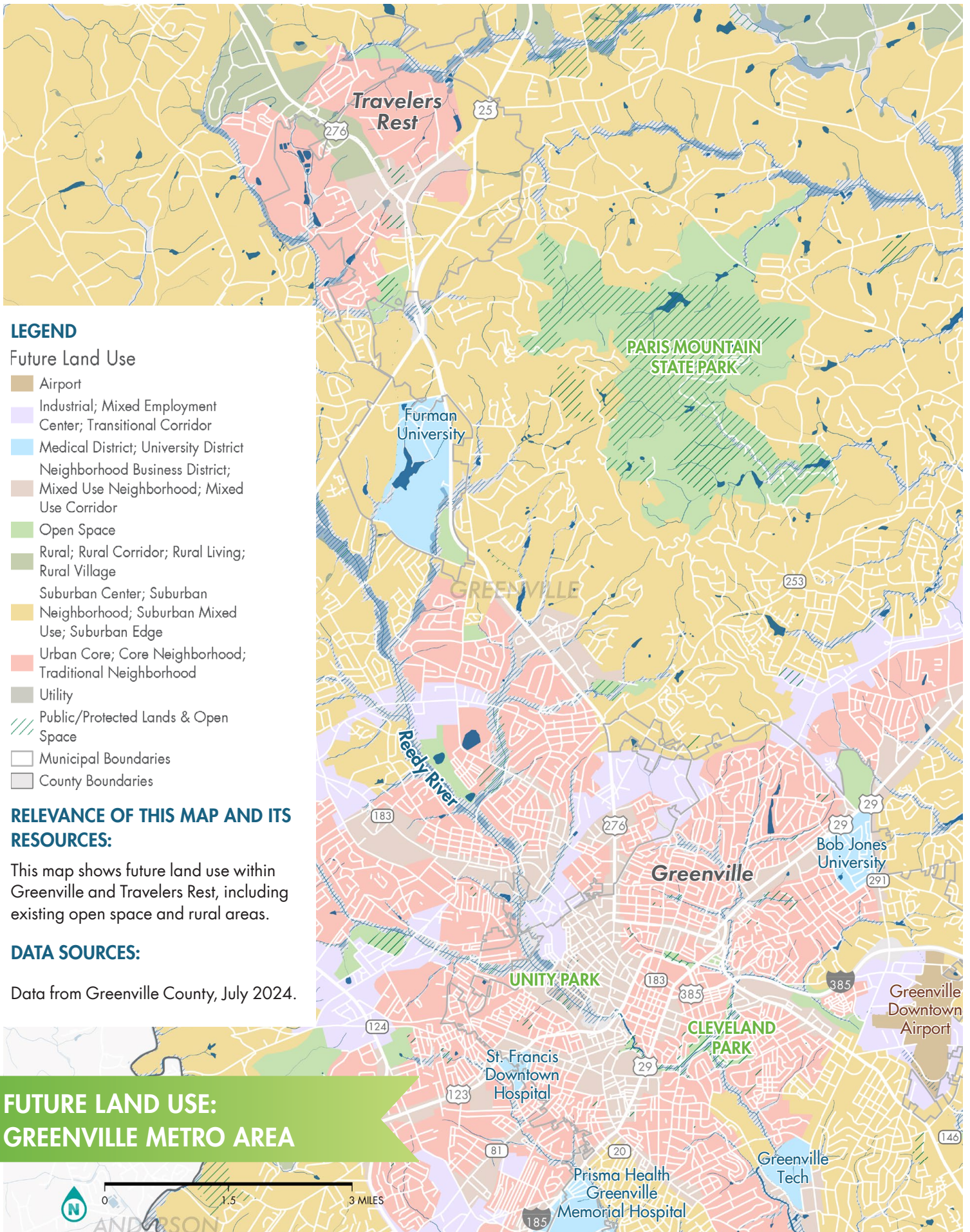


Figure 8. Population Density Map

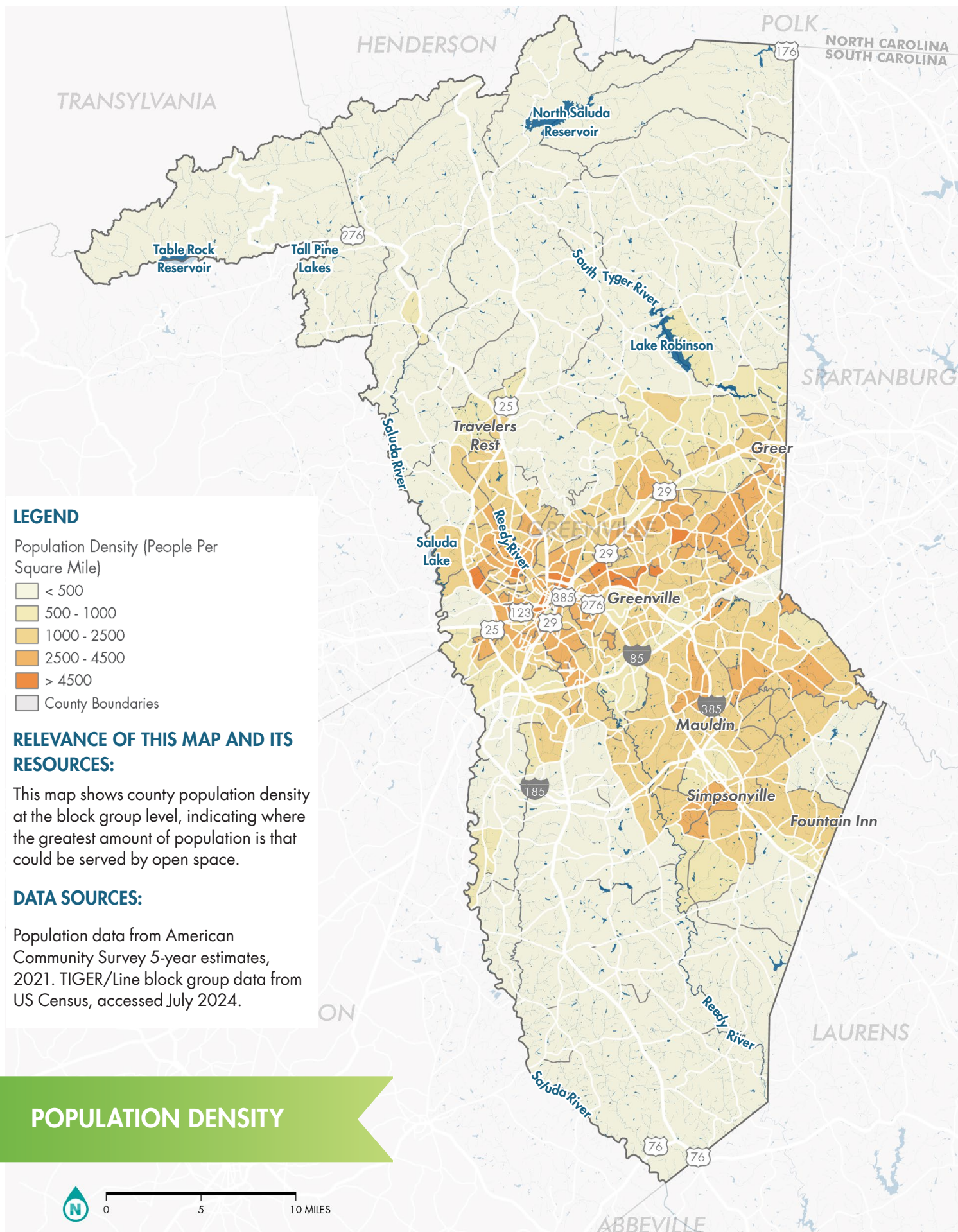


Figure 9. Social Vulnerability Map

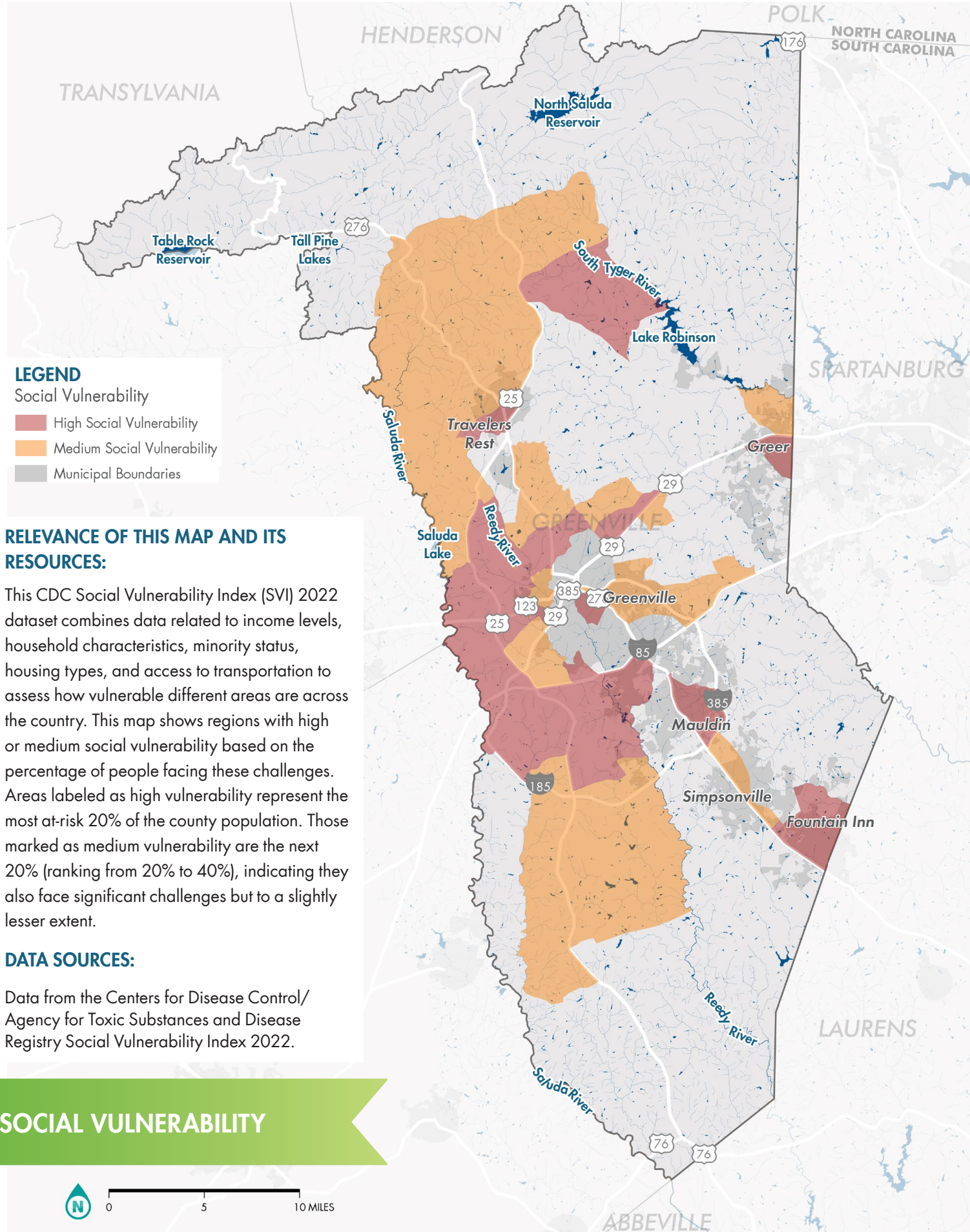


Figure 10. High Conservation Need and High Social Vulnerability Map

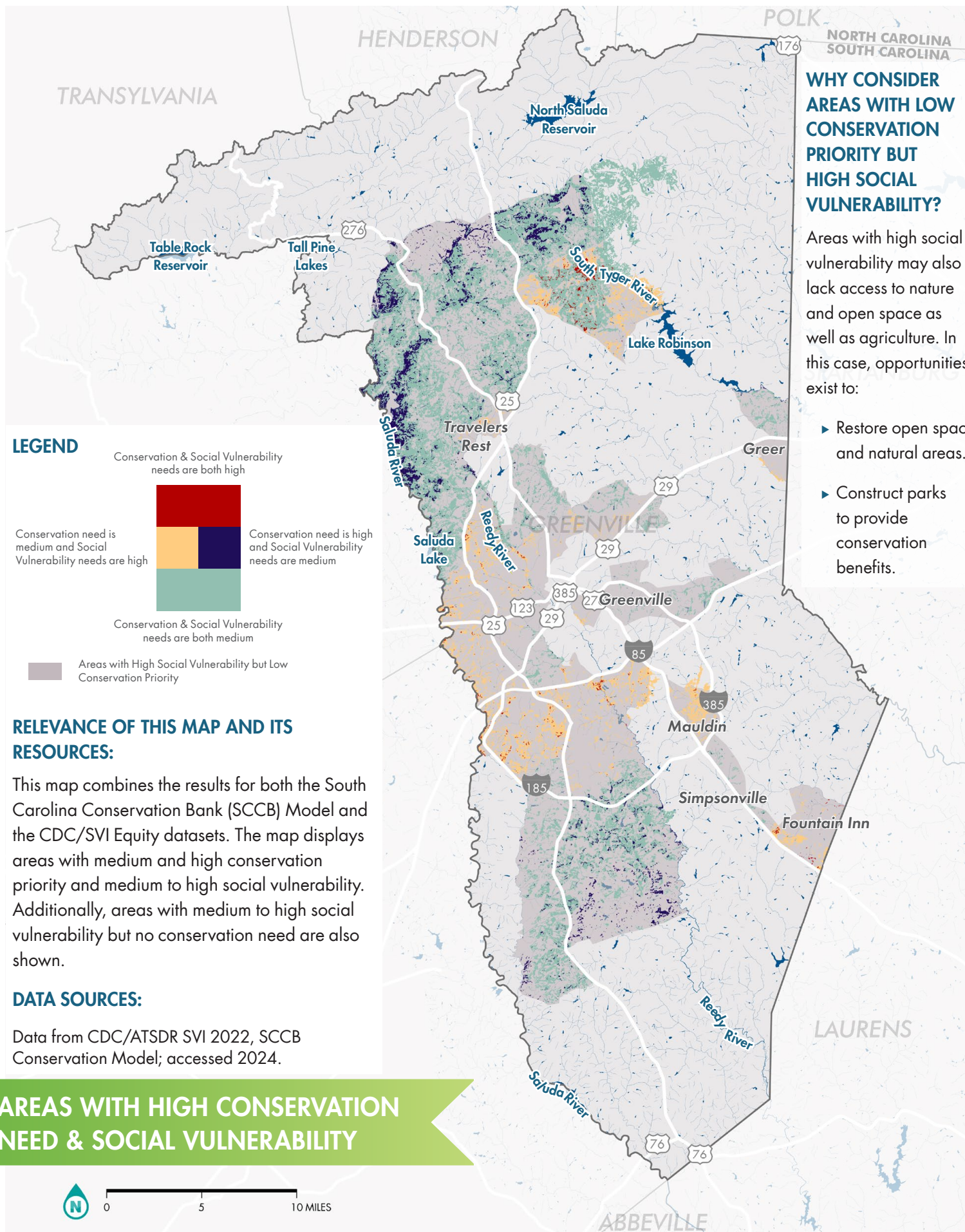


Figure 11. Larger Tracts with Predominant Open Space Map

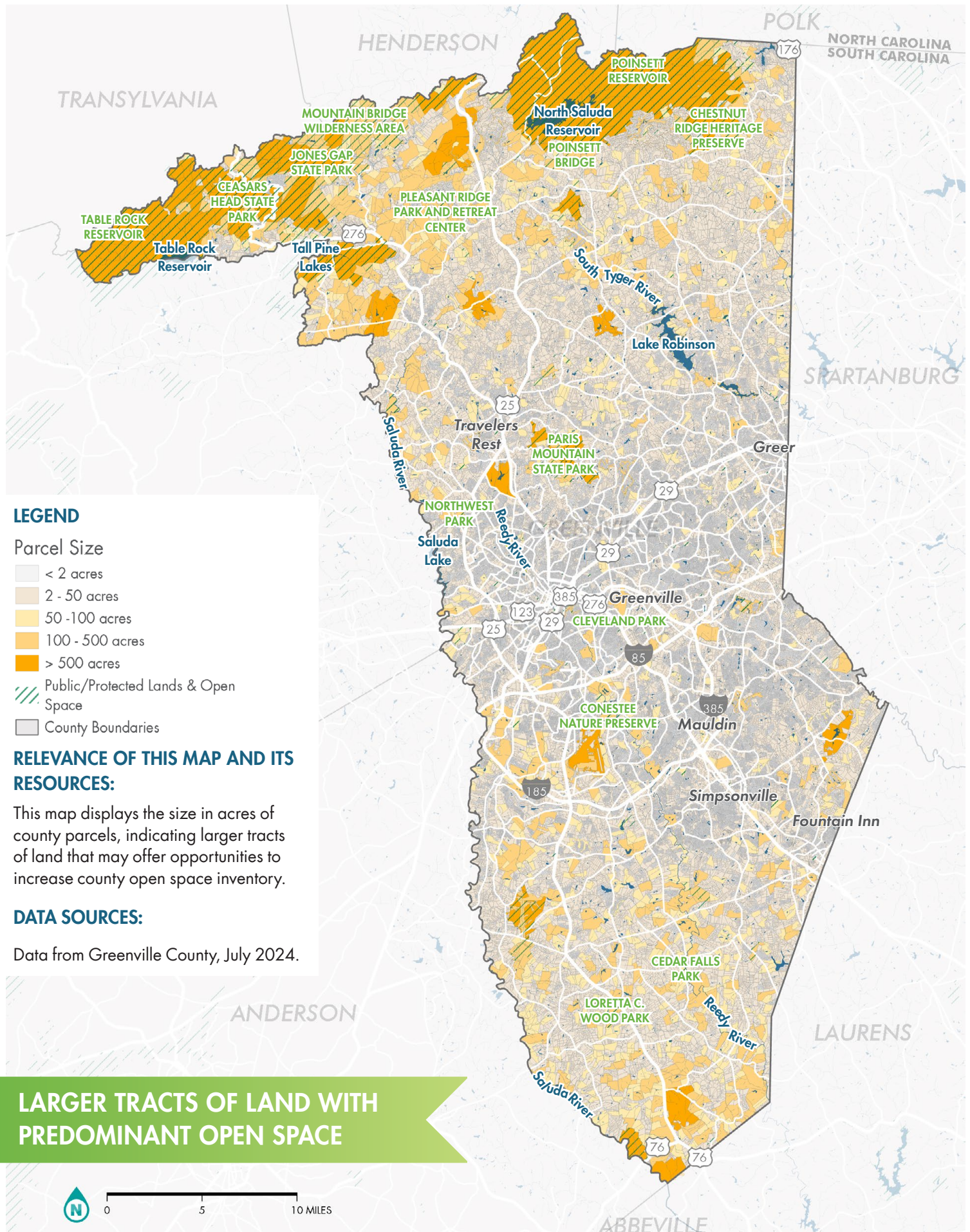


Figure 12. Sewer and Zoning Area Map

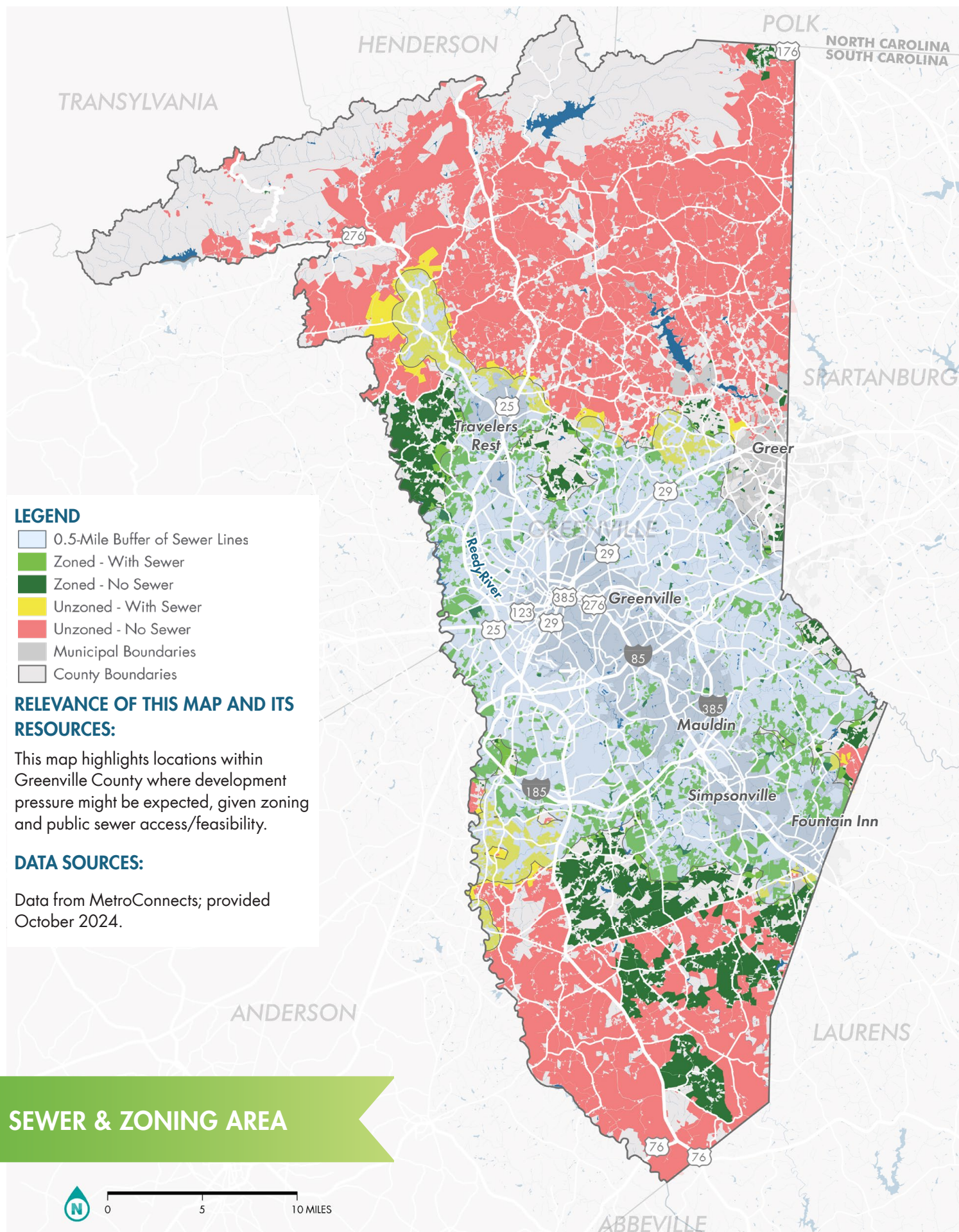


Figure 13. Protected Open Space (Public and Private) Map

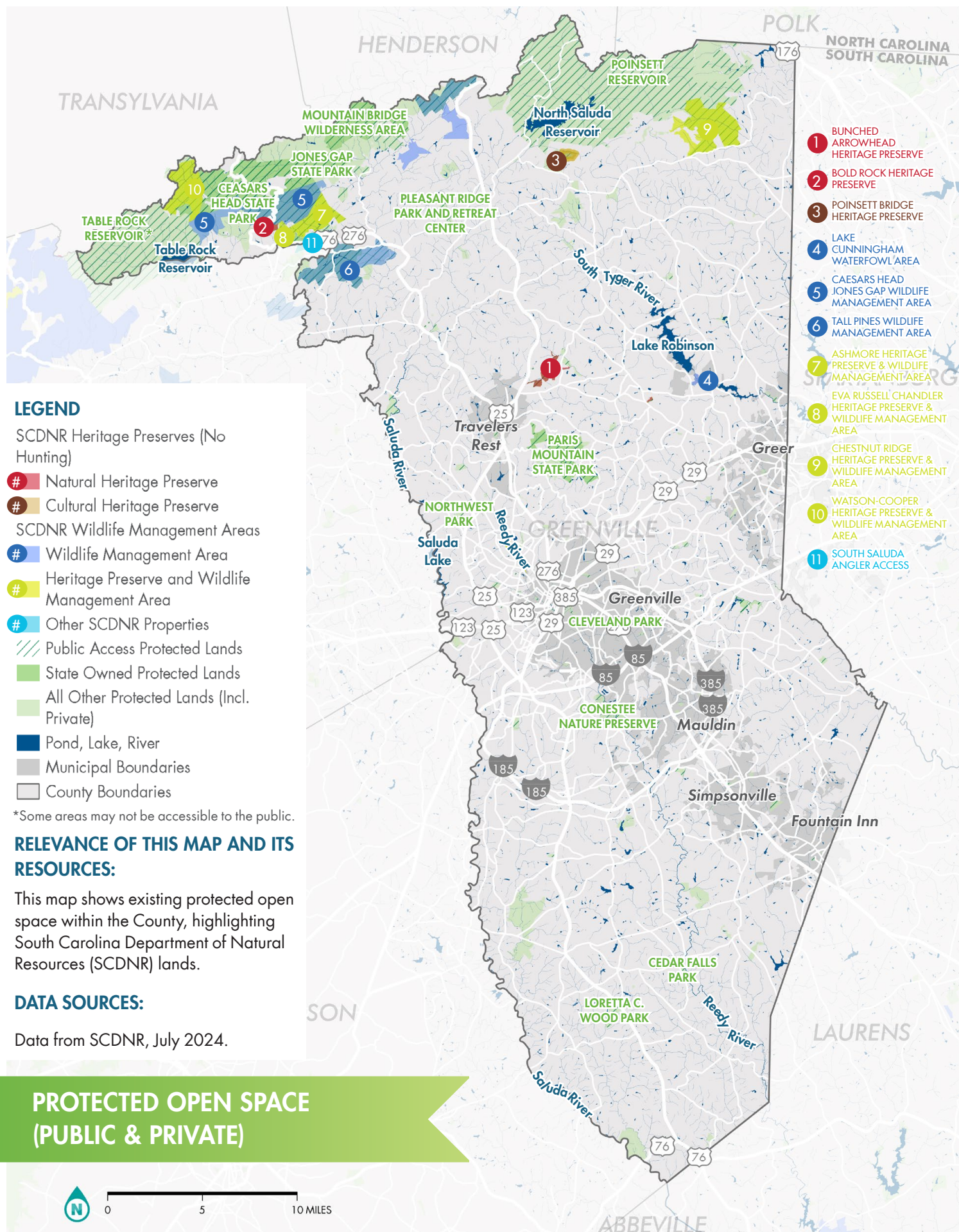


Figure 14. State Conservation Priority Map

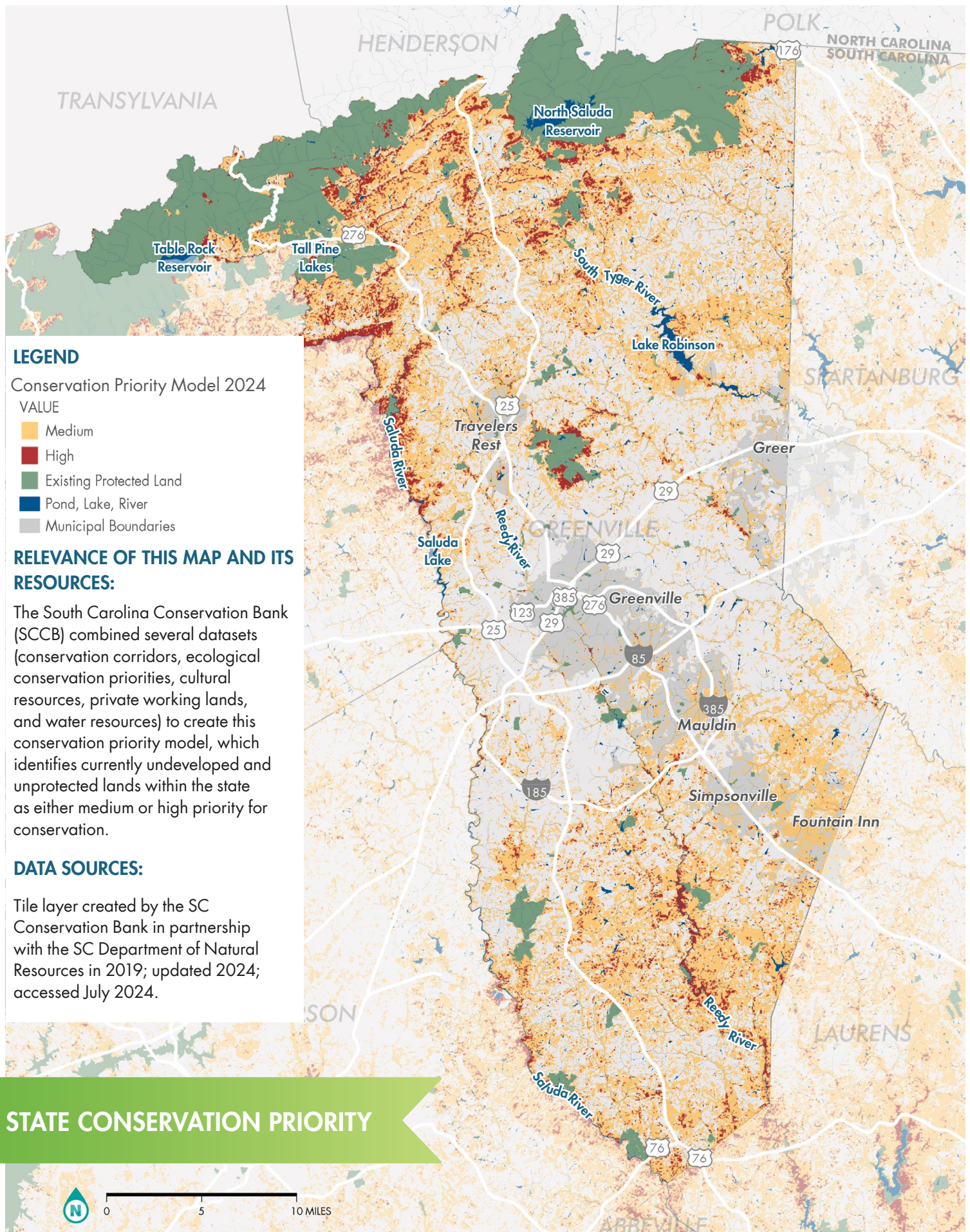


Figure 15. Habitat Cores Map

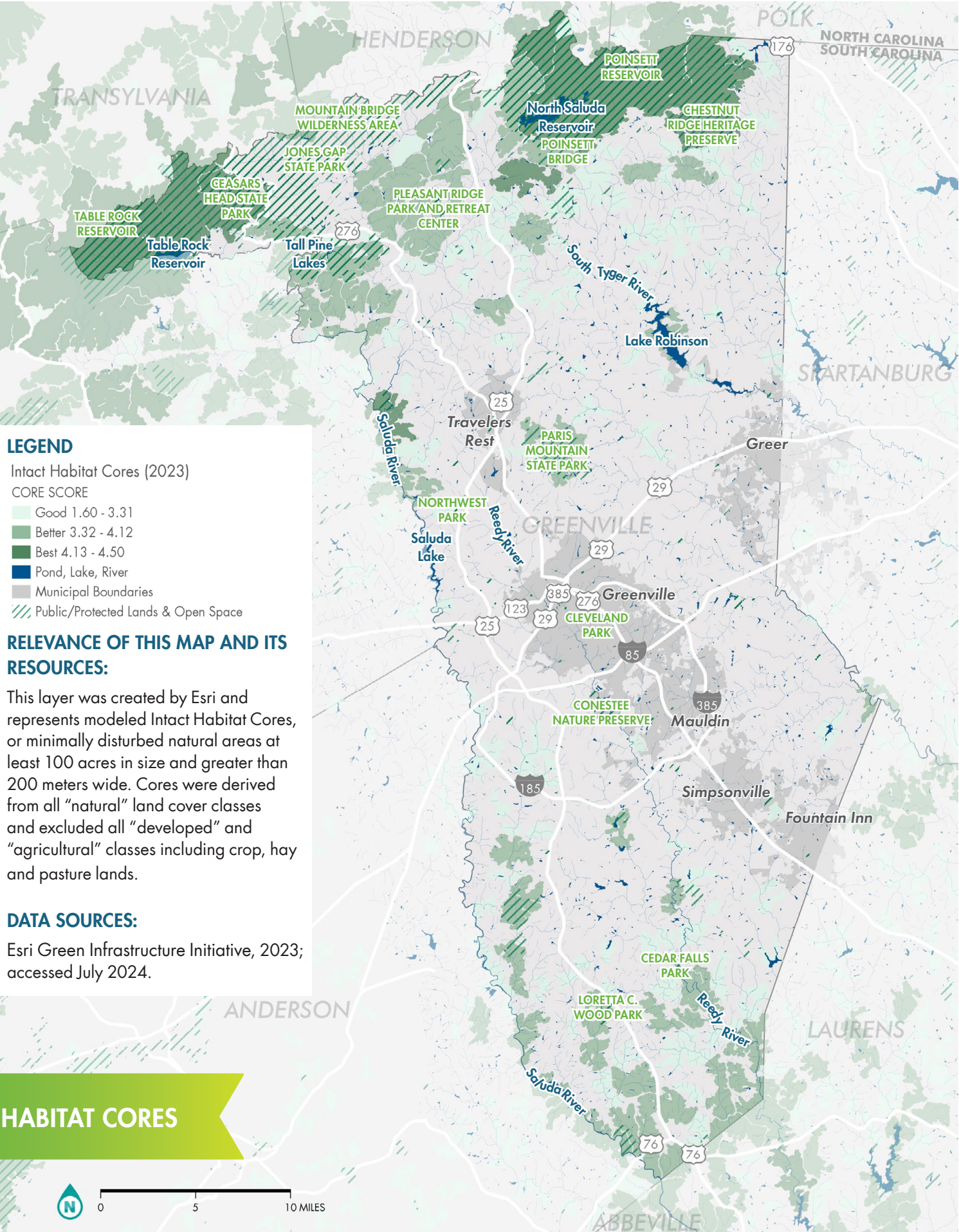


Figure 16. Imperiled Species Map

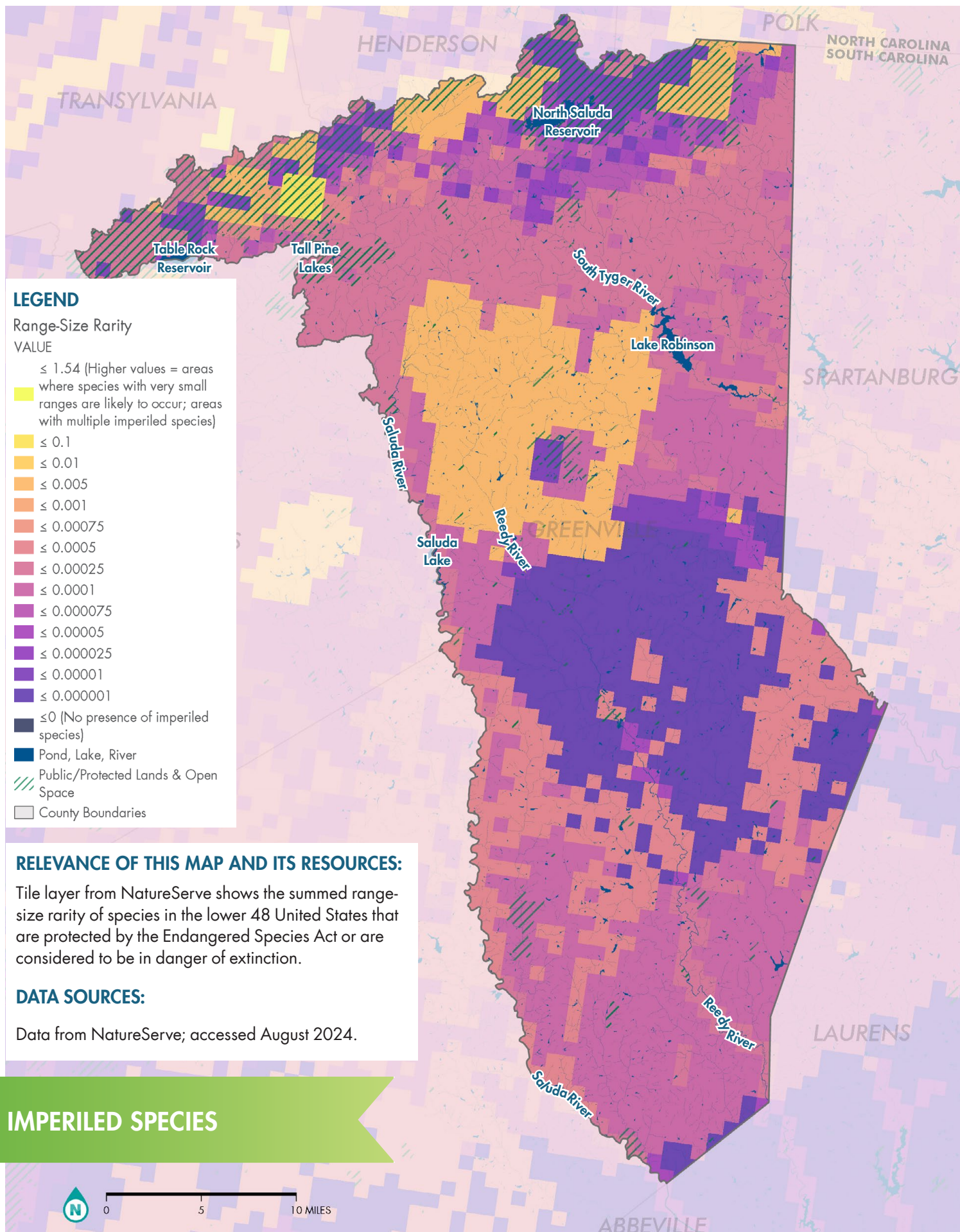


Figure 17. Watershed Impairment Status Map

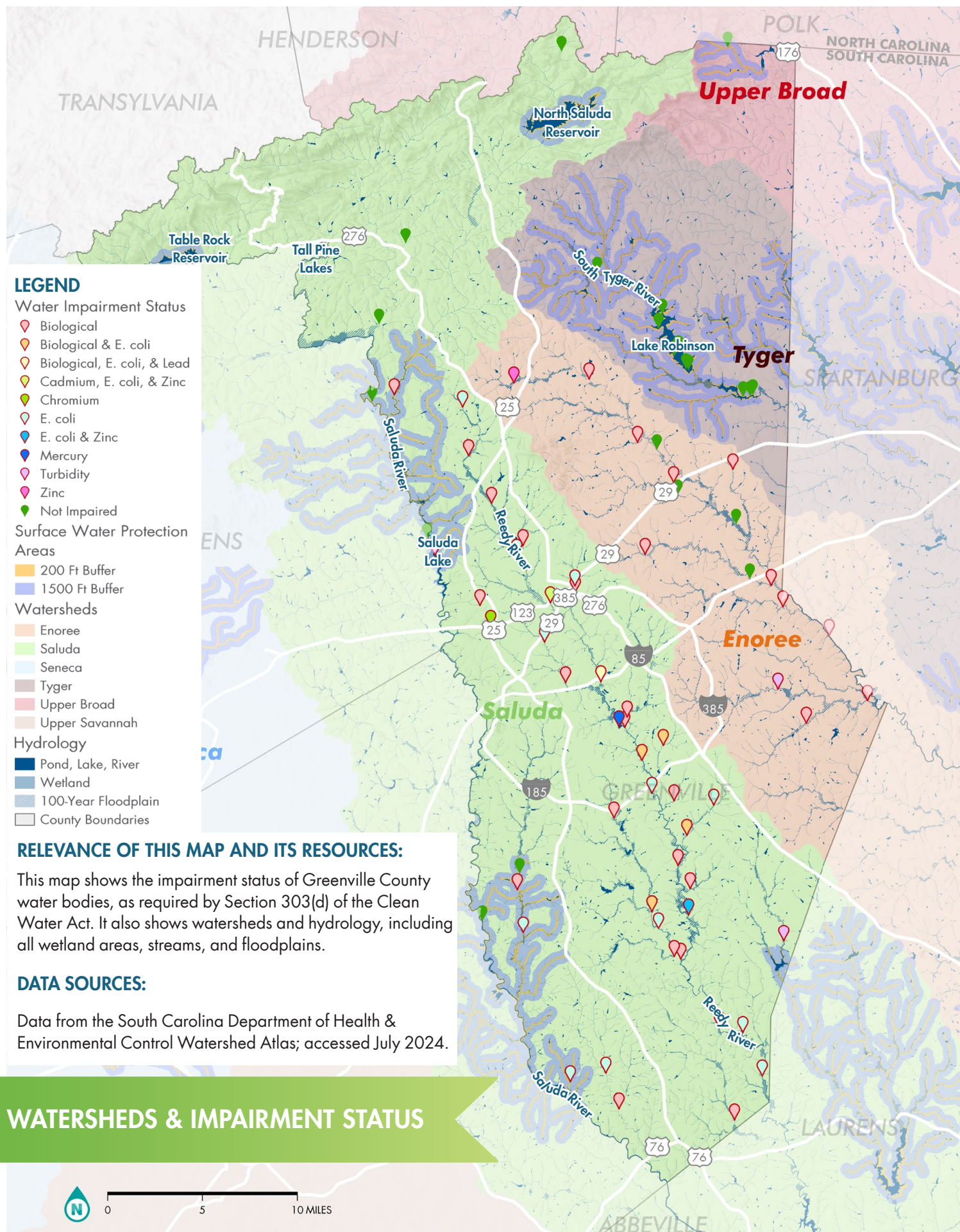


Figure 18. Upstate Forever Critical Lands Map

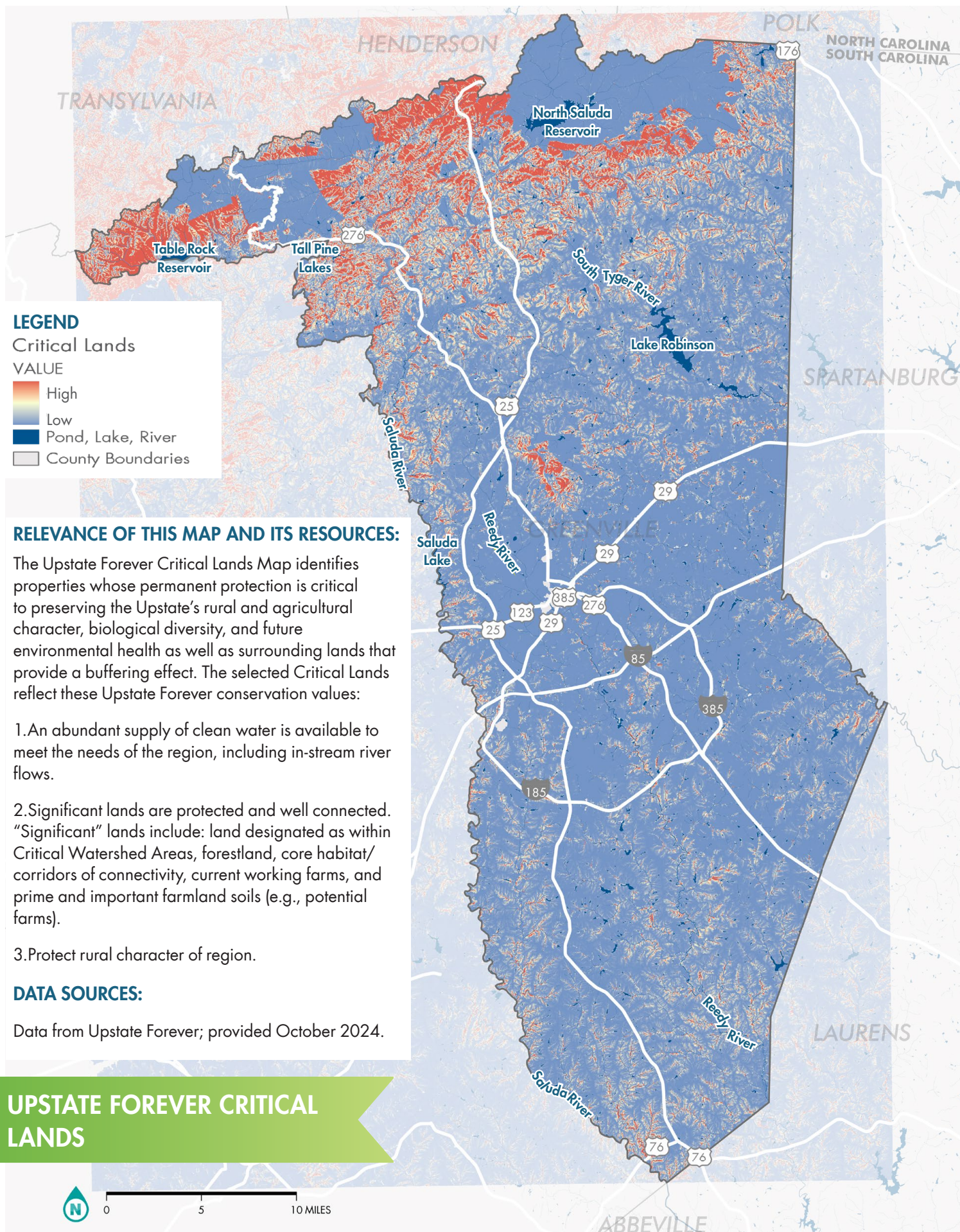


Figure 19. Street Tree Canopy Map

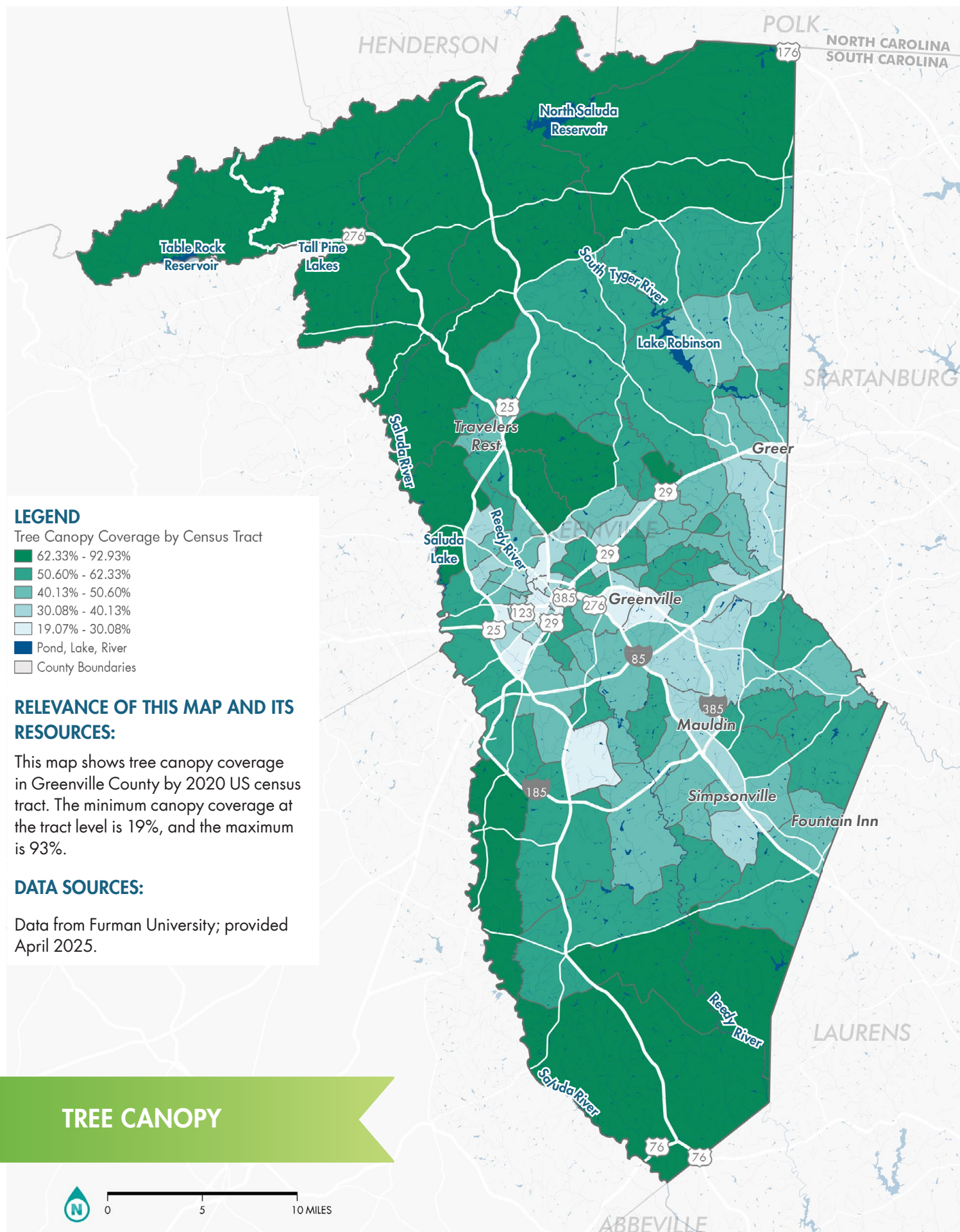


Figure 20. Prime Farmland Map

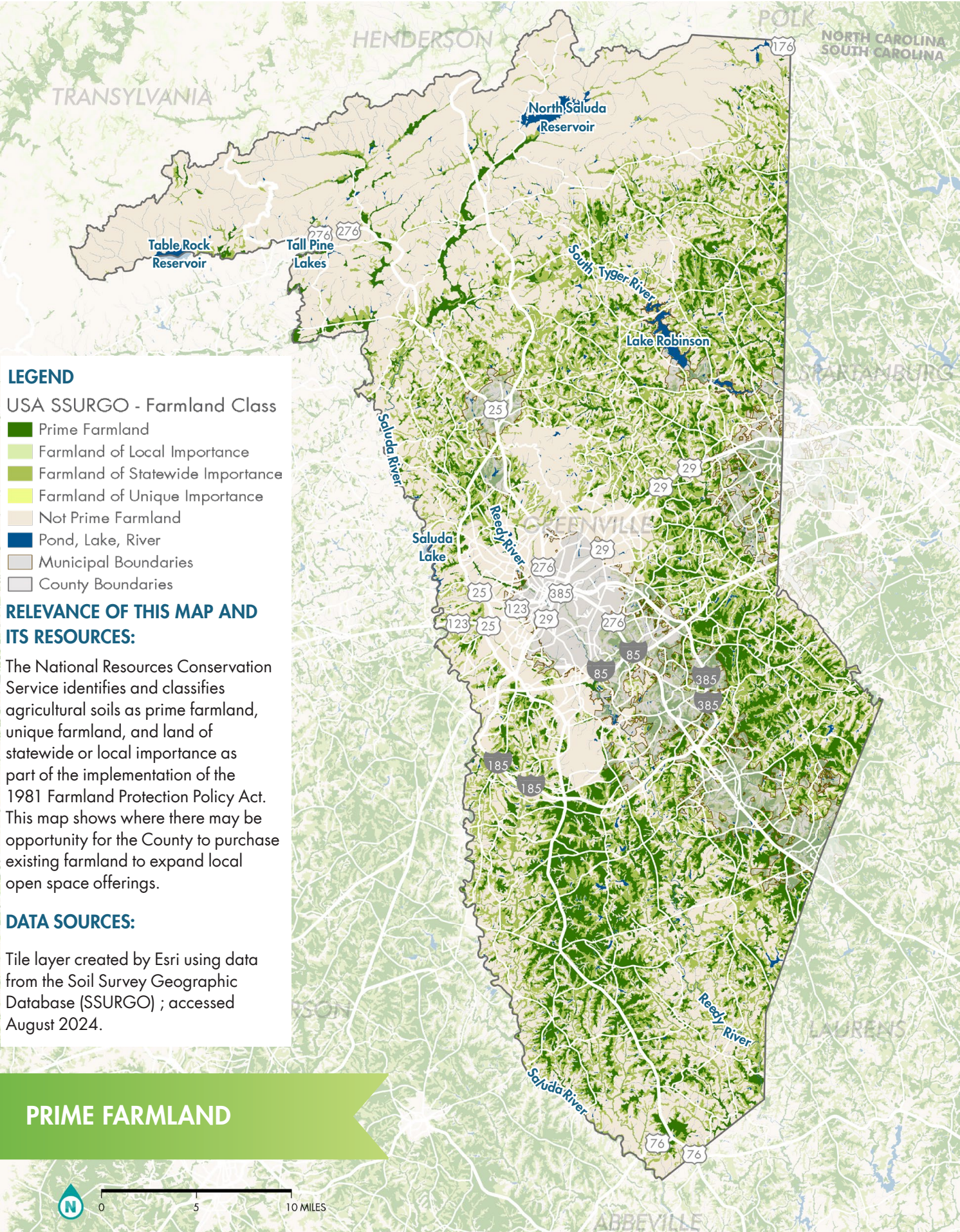


Figure 21. Cultural Resources Map

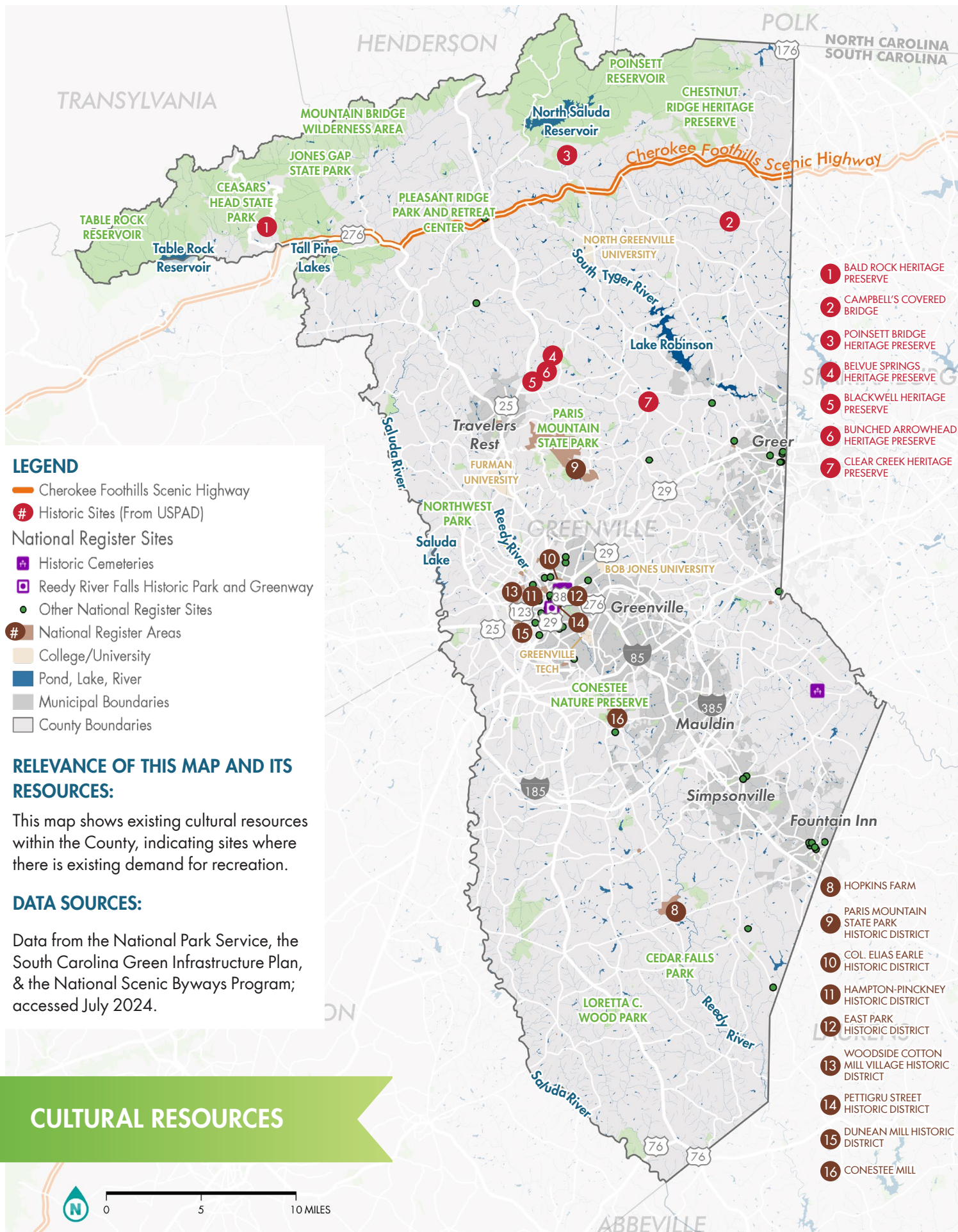


Figure 22. Recreational Resources Map

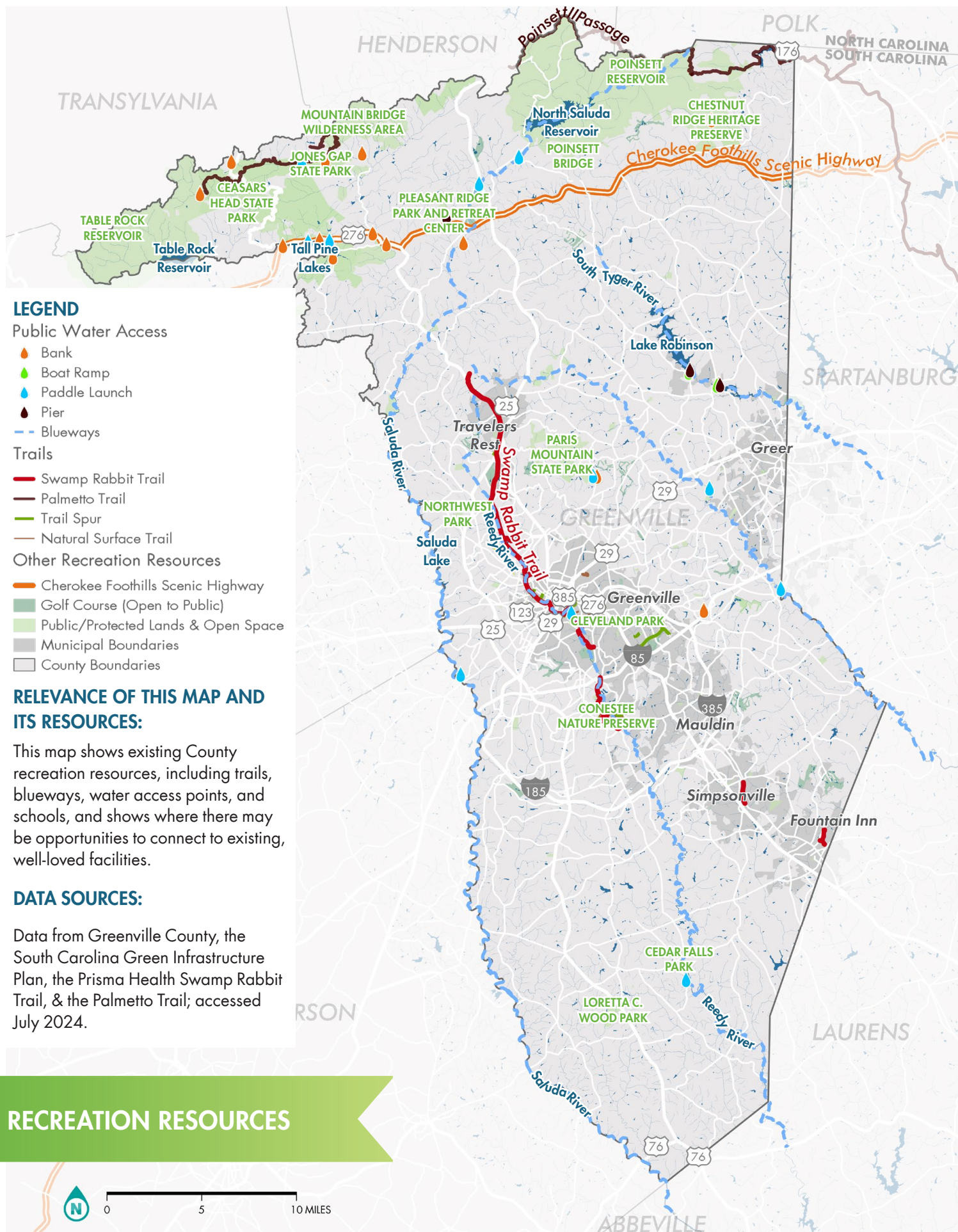
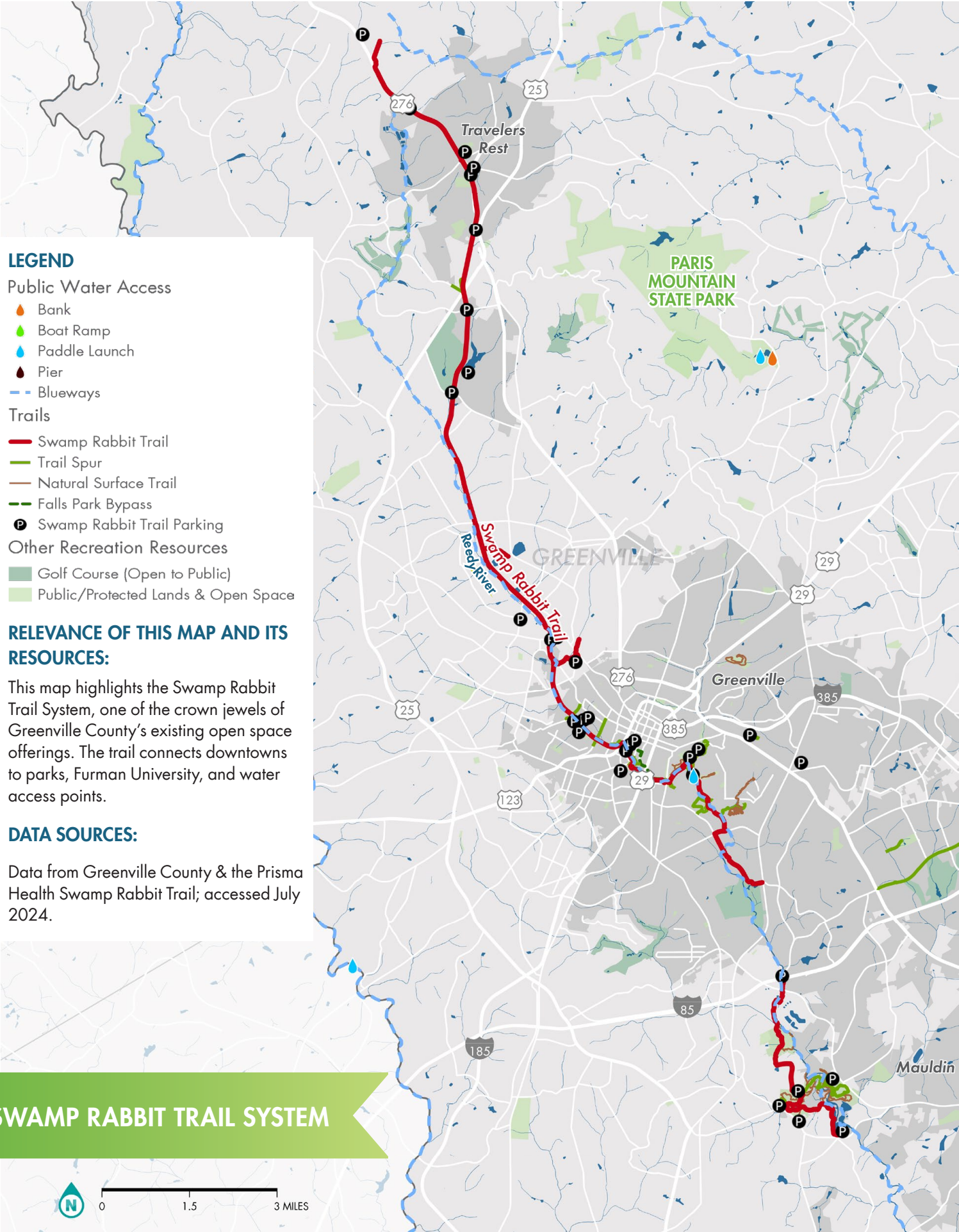


Figure 23. Swamp Rabbit Trail System Map



Existing Plans and Ordinances Review

An in-depth review of existing adopted plans and ordinances was conducted to create a clear vision of the County's established goals, visions, and regulations related to Open Space planning to enable this Plan to work cohesively with them all and identify potential opportunities for improvement.

Tables summarizing each of the plans and ordinances, and how they relate to open space regulations and this Open Space Plan is provided in this section. A non-summarized, fully-detailed version of this table can be found in Appendix A.

Open Space: A Common Goal

The preservation and creation of open space is a common goal or focal point that is seen throughout many of the existing plans for Greenville County at the city, county, and even state-wide level — as shown by the following examples, and others:

- ▶ The City of Greenville's **"GVL2040 Comprehensive Plan"** (adopted in 2020) listed "open space and the environment" as one of the top three priorities for the City.
- ▶ The **"Plan Greenville County Comprehensive Plan"** (2019) listed the protection of agricultural and natural spaces as key goals.
- ▶ The State of South Carolina's **"A Green Infrastructure Plan to Restore, Connect, and Protect South Carolina's Habitat"** (2023) calls for the protection of natural areas, including agricultural lands, to help preserve and establish healthy natural habitats and ecosystems.
- ▶ The SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism's **"Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan"** calls for dedicated open space for recreation.

Priority areas for open space have been identified by many organizations and plans, including, but not limited to, the Upstate Forever Critical Lands Map, the SC Conservation Bank Conservation Priority Map, and the Greenville County Future Land Use Map.

Current Open Space Standards

Greenville County has already adopted many ordinances and regulations that support the preservation and creation of open space throughout the county (summarized in Table 2), including, but not limited to:

- ▶ Flexible development standards that prioritize the preservation of open space on individual lots for some zoning districts (like the Environmentally Sensitive District - Paris Mountain) and Open Space Residential Subdivisions.
- ▶ An Agricultural Preservation District to help preserve land for critical agricultural uses.
- ▶ Minimum open space requirements for certain types of development.
- ▶ Minimum tree requirements and tree preservation standards for certain types of development.



≈ A selection of plans included in this review

Table 1. Existing Plans and Resources Summary Table

Plan/Resource Title	Source	Summary of Relevancy to this Plan
STATEWIDE PLANS AND RESOURCES		
A Green Infrastructure Plan to Restore, Connect, and Protect South Carolina's Habitat (2023)	State of SC, Green Infrastructure Center	Identifies statewide priority areas to conserve through conservation, planning, and policies.
Strategic Statewide Resilience and Risk Reduction Plan (2022)	South Carolina Office of Resilience (SCOR)	Identifies action items to enhance resilience against extreme weather and climate change.
South Carolina Conservation Bank Conservation Priority Mapping (2023)	South Carolina Conservation Bank (SCCB)	Identifies high and medium priority conservation areas based on key social and environmental factors.
State Wildlife Action Plan (2015)	SC Department of Natural Resources	Provides comprehensive data on species of greatest conservation need and outlines statewide conservation strategies, such as habitat protection and invasive species management.
South Carolina Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species Inventory (2023)	SC Heritage Trust Program	Identifies ecologically sensitive areas and provides data that can guide the selection of conservation areas, inform policy recommendations, and support strategic collaborations and community partnerships.
South Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2019)	SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism	Establishes statewide outdoor recreation goals and priorities. Provides a resource inventory, recreational demand data, implementation strategies, and potential funding information.
Public Lands Map	SC Department of Natural Resources	Provides detailed information on property boundaries and public access for lands managed by the SCDNR or its partners.
REGIONAL PLANS AND RESOURCES		
Southeast Conservation Blueprint Summary for South Carolina (2024)	Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS)	Identifies priority areas for a connected network of lands and waters in the Southeast based on a suite of natural and cultural resource indicators.
Watershed Plan for Sediment in the North Saluda River and Saluda Lake (2019)	Save Our Saluda	Lays the groundwork for implementation of practices and measures to reduce sediment runoff and help prevent future sediment runoff to the rivers and lakes.

(Table cont'd on next page)

Table 1 Cont'd

Plan/Resource Title	Source	Summary of Relevancy to this Plan
Upstate Forever: Shaping Our Future Growth Alternatives Analysis (2017)	Upstate Forever, Ten at the Top	Understanding, exploring, and measuring the trade-offs of different growth options to help make informed decisions about the future.
Travelers Rest Master Plan (2018)	Master Plan Advisory Committee of Travelers Rest	Includes an evaluation of trends and existing conditions, defines community strengths, and challenges, and provides recommendations.
GVL2040 Comprehensive Plan (2021)	City of Greenville	Sets clear priorities for open space preservation, reflects community values, and provides a framework for strategic action to maintain and enhance the city's green spaces in the face of urban development.
Upstate Forever Return on Investment Study (2017)	Upstate Forever	Provides a detailed analysis of the economic impacts of different growth scenarios and insights into the cost and benefits of various development patterns.
Save Our Saluda: Upper Saluda River Watershed Map (ongoing)	Save Our Saluda	Offers detailed geographical data and environmental information, such as water quality, land usage, and conservation areas.
Ten at the Top: Upstate Comprehensive Plan Analysis (2021)	Ten at the Top	Emphasizes the importance of preserving open spaces and can guide policy recommendations, land use planning, and the prioritization of capital projects.
COUNTY PLANS AND RESOURCES		
Greenville County, South Carolina Historic Resources Survey (2013)	Brockington and Assoc., Inc.; SC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Provides information to make informed decisions regarding the impact of development and other public activities on Greenville County's cultural resources and to set priorities for the protection and use of these resources.
A Preliminary Archaeological Context for Greenville County (1995)	Michael Trinkley, Ph.D., Debi Hacker, and Natalie Adams	Understanding the historical development, significant landmarks, and cultural heritage of the area to help planners identify key areas for preservation and highlight the importance of maintaining the county's unique character.

(Table cont'd on next page)

Table 1 Cont'd

Plan/Resource Title	Source	Summary of Relevancy to this Plan
<u>Greenville County Comprehensive Greenways Plan (2010)</u>	Greenways Inc.; Arbor Engineering	Helps identify potential areas for conservation, determine the best practices for land use, and develop a comprehensive approach to managing open spaces for the benefit of the community and the environment.
<u>Greenville County Stormwater Management Design Manual (Updated 2024)</u>	Greenville County	Offers guidance for the evaluation and implementation of best management practices for stormwater management. Many of the stormwater management strategies overlap with open space strategies and priorities.
<u>Greenville County Comprehensive Plan (2019)</u>	Greenville County	Supported by intensive community engagement efforts, this plan establishes goals and priorities for the future of Greenville County, including the preservation of agricultural and natural lands.
<u>Greenville County Food System Assessment (2020)</u>	Lindsey D. Jacobs, Esq. and Susan Shuller Frantz	Identifies key areas of focus for food production, distribution, and access and provides recommendations for improving healthy food access and establishing a local food policy council. Can guide the integration of food systems into open space planning, ensuring that spaces are designed to support community food needs.

Table 2. Existing Land Development Regulations and Ordinances Summary Table

Source	Ordinance Summary
GREENVILLE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS	
Art. 11, Cluster Developments	Allows flexibility of lot sizes to allow for “clustered development” to protect sensitive areas, including natural habitats and open space.
Art. 13, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)	Minimum 20% open space requirement for TND’s.
Art. 22, Rural Conservation Subdivision	Required open space (10-25%) based on average lot size, for lots less than 2 acres in major subdivisions in unzoned areas.
Art. 23, Tiny Houses	Common Open Space area is required at 400 sf per tiny home unit.
GREENVILLE COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE	
Sec. 7.2, Open Space Residential Development	A residential subdivision in which dwellings are situated on the most developable portion of the site in exchange for the preservation of substantial amounts of open space.
Sec. 8:9, Scuffletown Rural Conservation District	District established to protect open space, natural resources, and rural character in Scuffletown area. Minimum open space requirement (50%), with design guidelines for qualifying open space, including min. area, min. lot size, and max. density.
Sec. 8.9.4, Scuffletown Rural Conservation District, Rural Estate Lot Development Option	Conditionally approved alternative that allows for the setting aside of little or no open space for permanent protection in exchange for the preservation of environmental resources, natural and scenic features, and historic resources to a degree equal to or greater than development utilizing open space design principles.

(Table cont’d on next page)

Table 2 Cont'd

Source	Ordinance Summary
GREENVILLE COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES	
Ch. 8, Art. 2, Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance	Limits development in flood hazard areas, and implements design standards for any development that is permitted.
Ch. 8, Art. 3, Stormwater Management Ordinance	Establishes detailed requirements and procedures to control the potential adverse effects of increased stormwater runoff associated with both future development and existing developed land.

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Rainbow Falls, Jones Gap State Park
© Greenville County

03

Public Engagement

Overview

This chapter summarizes the engagement activities that occurred during the development of the Greenville County Open Space Plan, and the feedback gathered throughout the process. Public outreach efforts and events included:

- ▶ Steering Committee meetings
- ▶ Public open house events
- ▶ Stakeholder meetings and interviews
- ▶ Public surveys (2)
- ▶ Comment forms
- ▶ Digital feedback collection
- ▶ A project website and social media presence

The public engagement for this plan is supplementary to previous engagement done for the development of the Plan Greenville County Comprehensive Plan (2019). A summary of public feedback from that process that supports the development of this plan is shown on page 38.

Figure 24. Public Engagement Timeline



Open house participants. © Alta

Comprehensive Plan Engagement

The 2019 Greenville County Comprehensive Plan included goals and strategies for open space. During this planning process, county residents were asked what their priorities were for open space. Based on feedback, below are the resulting goals and strategies:

Protect farmland for local food production and ensure access to healthy foods for all citizens.

- ▶ Protect prime farmland through the county development code.
- ▶ Support the agricultural economy, labor and business.

Protect the most valuable and vulnerable resources in Greenville County.

- ▶ Protect rural character and critical resource areas.
- ▶ Protect and improve water resources and wildlife habitat.

Protect our cultural and historic resources for current and future generations.

- ▶ Increase public awareness of the types, location, and benefits of cultural and historic resources within the county.
- ▶ Improve accessibility to cultural resources.

The preservation heat map (Figure 25) highlights unique and sensitive areas that County residents wish to preserve from the 2019 Greenville County Comprehensive plan. Locations identified in the preservation heat map include:

- ▶ Jones Gap State Park
- ▶ Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area
- ▶ Lake Robinson
- ▶ Paris Mountain State Park
- ▶ Downtown Greenville and Falls Park
- ▶ Woodmont and South Piedmont
- ▶ Fork Shoals

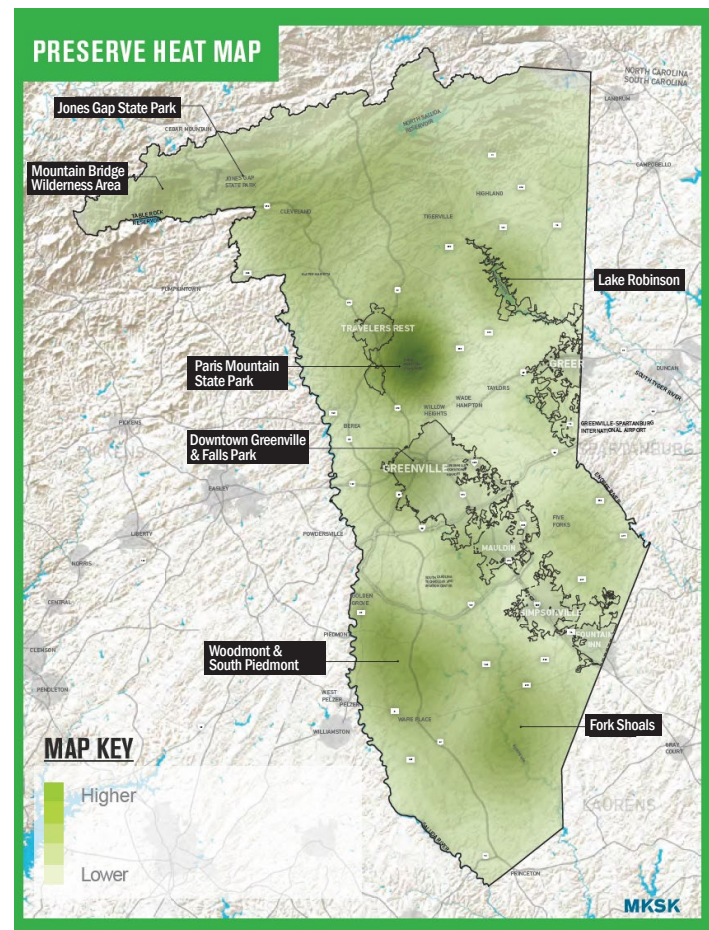


Figure 25. Preservation heat map (from the 2019 Greenville County Comprehensive Plan).

Project Steering Committee

A project steering committee was assembled to guide the Greenville County Open Space Planning process and inform the final document. The committee brings together a diverse group of stakeholders—including local and state government staff, community members, and staff from non-profit organizations—to ensure the plan reflects the community’s values, priorities, and the long-term vision for Greenville County.

The project steering committee had two meetings. The first was held virtually in February 2025, with 15 members in attendance. During this meeting, the committee was introduced to the project and reviewed, identified, and prioritized potential action items and strategies for creating and preserving open space in the county. The second committee meeting was held in-person on May 28th, 2025. This meeting focused on reviewing the draft Open Space Plan and providing feedback.

Additionally, committee members were encouraged to provide additional feedback, comments, and ideas throughout the entire project.

Organizations with representatives on the project steering committee include:

- ▶ Greenville County Community Planning and Development
- ▶ Greenville County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
- ▶ Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust
- ▶ South Carolina Office of Resilience
- ▶ South Carolina Conservation Bank
- ▶ South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
- ▶ Conestee Nature Preserve
- ▶ Upstate Forever
- ▶ American Farmland Trust
- ▶ Naturaland Trust
- ▶ MetroConnects



Project Stakeholder Groups

To help guide the Open Space Plan in specific interest areas, 4 stakeholder groups with 44 total participants representing recreation, local governments, conservation, and agriculture were formed. Each group was interviewed and asked to discuss the current status of open space efforts in Greenville County, where they think there is room for improvement, and what specific action items or strategies do they support or recommend. This section provides a summary of the feedback gathered at these 4 meetings.



Recreation

The recreation stakeholder group intends to focus on addressing active and passive recreational facilities within the County and ensuring the plans meet future recreation needs. This group included staff from Greenville County Rec (Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Department) and members of the Greenville County Rec Advisory Board. The meeting was held on April 8th, 2025, and had 16 attendees. Below are key takeaways from the meeting:

- ▶ **Flexible open field space** that can be used for a variety of activities is needed within the County, especially in areas that are considered recreation deserts.
- ▶ **Youth sports and facilities** are needed within the county as population increases, as there is a quality-of-life benefit.
- ▶ Aim to **connect communities and existing parks and recreation facilities with paved and unpaved trails** throughout the entire county, not just in one specific area.
- ▶ **Identify key funding strategies to improve parks and recreation**, including partnerships with the state or local groups. Funding is one of the greatest challenges due to limited dedicated parks funding as deferred maintenance increases.
- ▶ **Prioritize areas mentioned as “recreation deserts”**, or areas that lack park access in unincorporated Greenville County.
- ▶ **Focus on development of blueways** within the county for recreational use, with the **Saluda River as the #1 priority**, followed by the Enoree River.



Local Governments

The local governments stakeholder group is intended to focus on addressing coordination between the municipalities within Greenville County. The plan aims to increase the overall percentage of preserved land within the County and increase and enhance equitable public access to parks. To achieve this, the plan will address open space needs across the entire county, which includes 6 municipalities. This group included staff from the cities of Greenville, Greer, Travelers Rest, Simpsonville, Mauldin, and Fountain Inn, staff from Greenville County, and the surrounding counties of Spartanburg and Anderson. The meeting was held on April 8th, 2025, and had 14 attendees. The following are key takeaways from the meeting:

- ▶ **Continuing dedicated funding sources for land acquisition**, including from tree ordinances, which requires developers to pay for cutting down trees.
- ▶ **Focus on expanding existing greenway and trail networks.**
- ▶ **Develop policies or plans** that require tree canopy preservation, making floodplains available to recreation, collaborating with developers to provide open space in new development projects, and require design options geared towards conservation in new proposed developments within the County.
- ▶ **Invest in partnerships to address funding issues.** Examples include working with developers for developing trail corridors, or working with organizations like Upstate Forever or Naturaland Trust for land acquisition and permanent conservation easements



Conservation

The conservation stakeholder group is intended to focus on specific initiatives to acquire and dedicate land to conservation. This group included staff from Greenville County, South Carolina Conservation Bank, Trust for Public Land, and The Nature Conservancy. The meeting was held on April 24th, 2025, and had 7 attendees. Below are key takeaways from the meeting:

- ▶ Continue and expand partnerships that are working well within the County including the Historic and Natural Resources Trust (HNRT), South Carolina Conservation Bank, and Utility operators. These partnerships help fund and acquire land for conservation. Currently the HNRT has a significantly smaller budget compared to similar programs in other counties.
- ▶ Further explore implementing a sales tax similar to Charleston County, as polling in Greenville County has shown that citizens are in support of a similar program. Greenville County is currently one of the only counties in the state without an additional sales tax to fund improvements within. Specific projects should be identified to “sell” the funding mechanism and gain support.
- ▶ Increase dedicated staff and outreach efforts to engage landowners to implement conservation tools effectively.
- ▶ Focus on increasing publicly accessible land, both water and land resources.



Agriculture

The agriculture stakeholder group is intended to focus on addressing the needs of farmers within Greenville County and expanding access to farmland and percentage of farmland within the county. This group included staff from Greenville County, Greenville County Farm Bureau, American Farmland Trust, Greenville Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA Farm Service Agency, and local farmers in Greenville County. The meeting was held on April 24th, 2025, and had 7 attendees. The following are key takeaways from the meeting:

- ▶ Continue and expand existing programs that support open space and farmers that are working well including the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Seed Library Partnership, Soil Health Workshops, Farm Service Agency programs, Agricultural Preservation Zoning District, Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust, and Feed and Seed Co. Also, continue to promote these programs to farmers in Greenville County so they are aware of what is available.
- ▶ Address rapid development that is expanding into existing farmlands.
- ▶ Increase community awareness on food systems and the importance of local agriculture.

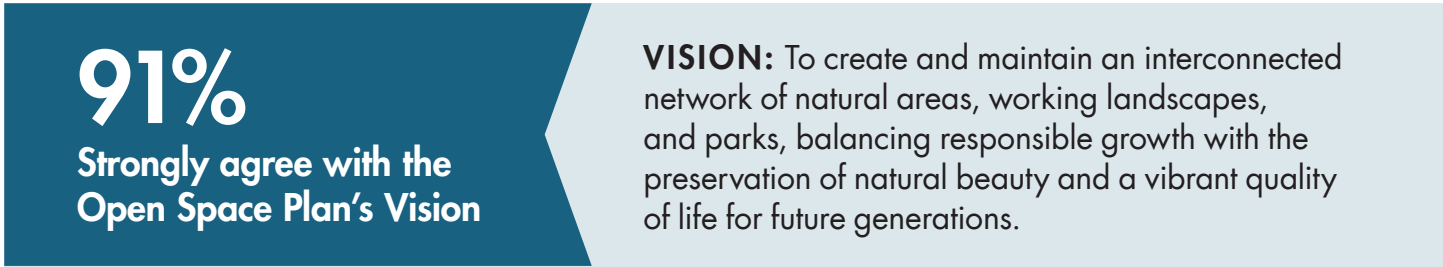
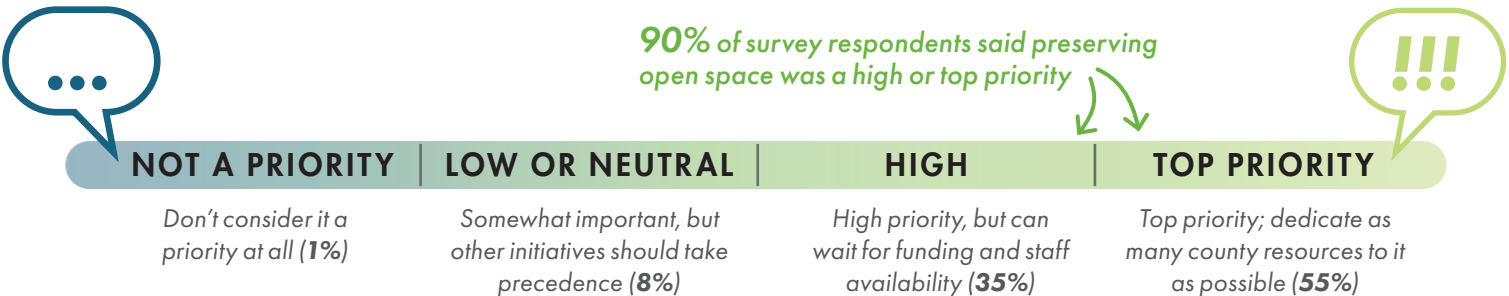
Public Engagement

Fall 2024 Engagement (Open House and Online Survey)

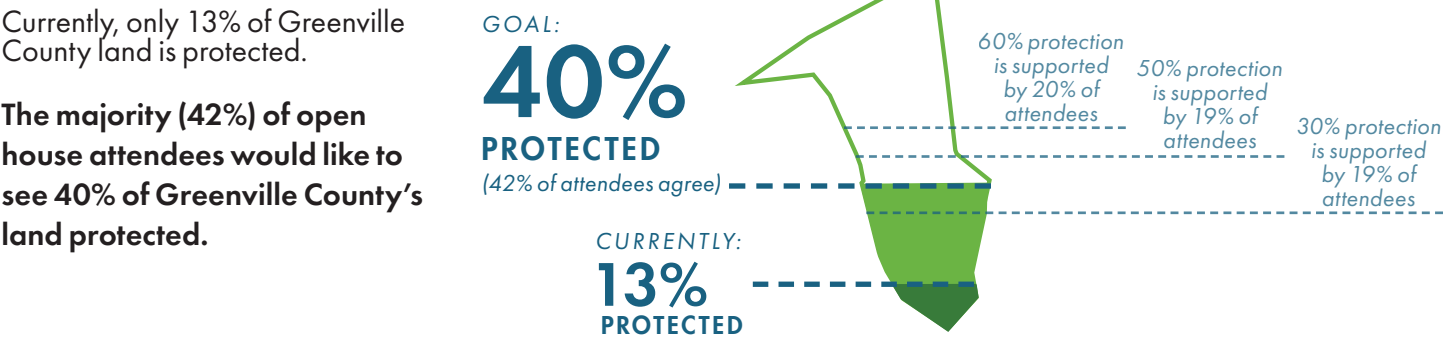
Fall 2024 engagement focused on gathering community input on the importance of open space and the goals of the plan. Community members were invited to take an online survey or attend an in-person public open house (held on November 14th at the County Council Chambers in Greenville). The County promoted both opportunities through social media, the project website, and printed posters and flyers. The following is a summary of input received via both the open house and online survey.



How High of a Priority is Open Space Preservation?



How Much Land Should Be Protected?



Community Priorities

Which Resources are Most Important to Protect through Open Space?



Watersheds and Water Supply

26% of survey respondents ranked this as the most important resource to protect.

Flood Resiliency Lands (Wetlands, Floodplains, etc.)

Expansion of Already Protected Lands

Natural Lands Valuable for Recreation

Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat

New Open Space Where it is Historically Lacking

Historic Landscapes with Strong Cultural Significance

Prime Agricultural Lands

This resource received the highest number of votes at the open house (24 votes).

Natural Resources Prioritized in Regional and State Models

Natural Lands for Hunting and Fishing

Which Goals are Most Important?



Preservation of Open Space

47% of survey respondents ranked this as their top goal.



Water Resource Protection



Interconnected Green Corridors

This goal received the highest number of votes at the open house (27 votes).



Preservation of Aesthetic, Historic, and Cultural Resources



Enhanced Equitable Public Access to Parks

OTHER GOALS:



6 Resilient Development and Land Management



7 Community Engagement and Stewardship



8 Data-Driven Decision Making



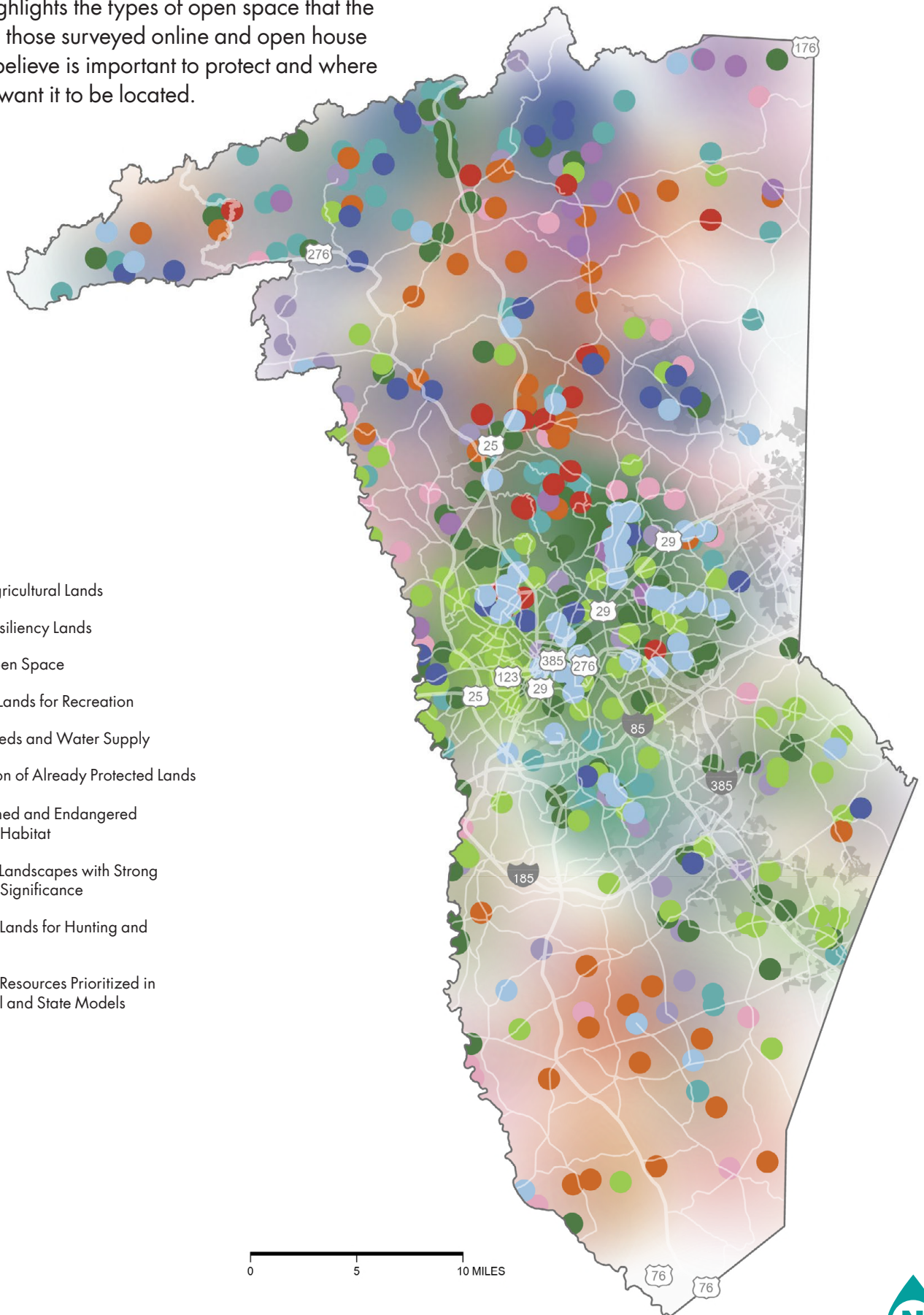
9 Public and Financial Leverage

What Kinds of Open Space Does the Public Want to See?

This map highlights the types of open space that the public (both those surveyed online and open house attendees) believe is important to protect and where they would want it to be located.

LEGEND

- Prime Agricultural Lands
- Flood Resiliency Lands
- New Open Space
- Natural Lands for Recreation
- Watersheds and Water Supply
- Expansion of Already Protected Lands
- Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat
- Historic Landscapes with Strong Cultural Significance
- Natural Lands for Hunting and Fishing
- Natural Resources Prioritized in Regional and State Models

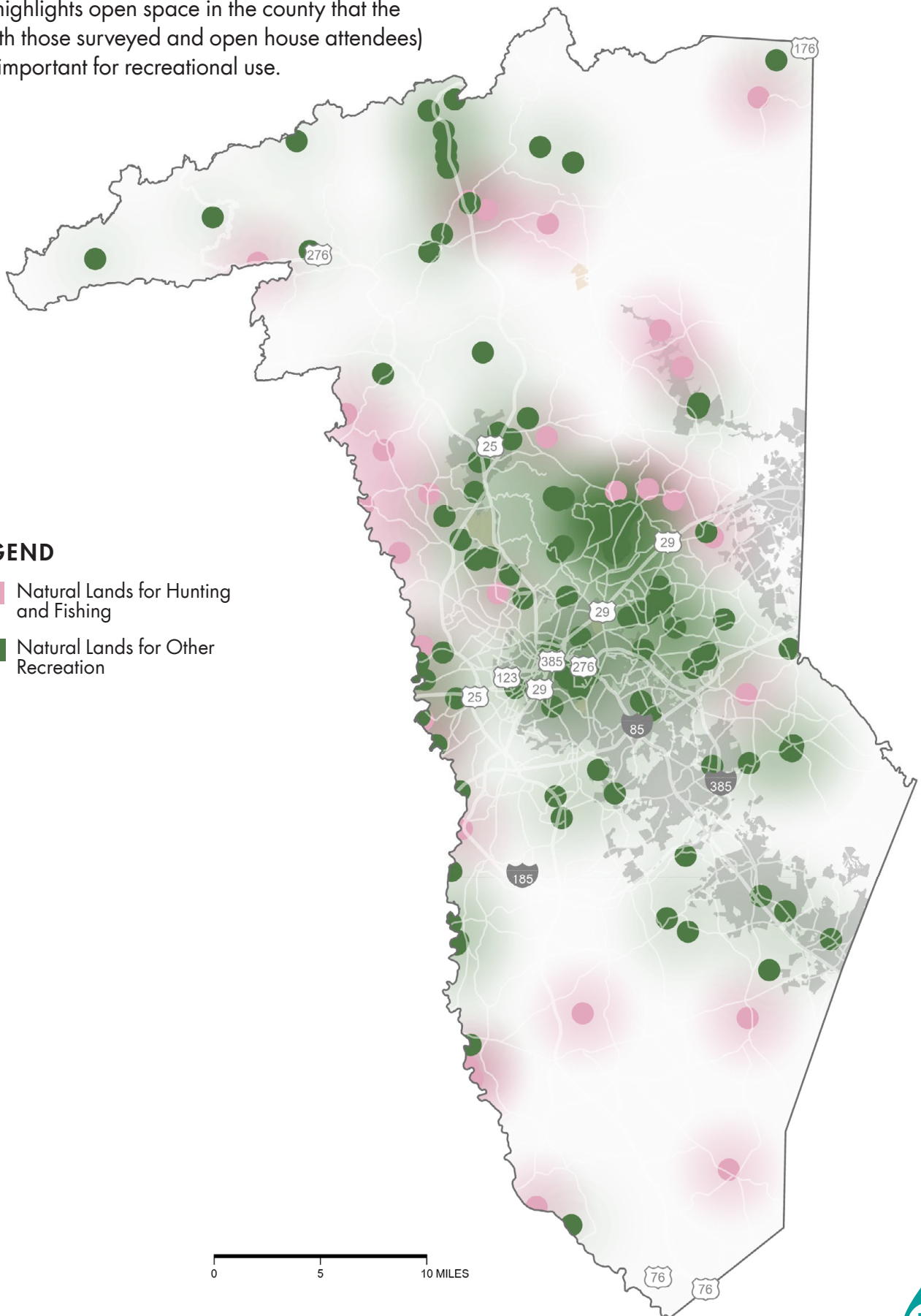


What Recreational Spaces Does the Public Want to Protect?

This map highlights open space in the county that the public (both those surveyed and open house attendees) believe is important for recreational use.

LEGEND

-  Natural Lands for Hunting and Fishing
-  Natural Lands for Other Recreation



Spring 2025 Engagement

Public engagement efforts in Spring 2025 focused on identifying what specific strategies and initiatives to provide open space in Greenville County would be most supported by the public and stakeholders. A virtual public open house was conducted on March 12th, 2025 with 12 members of the public in attendance. A new public survey was presented at this open house and then promoted for additional input until April 15th. 4 stakeholder meetings were conducted, with 44 total participants, representing local groups dedicated to recreation, local governments, conservation, and agriculture. Additional information on the project stakeholder groups can be found on pages 40-41.

BY THE NUMBERS:



44

Stakeholder
group
participants

+

71

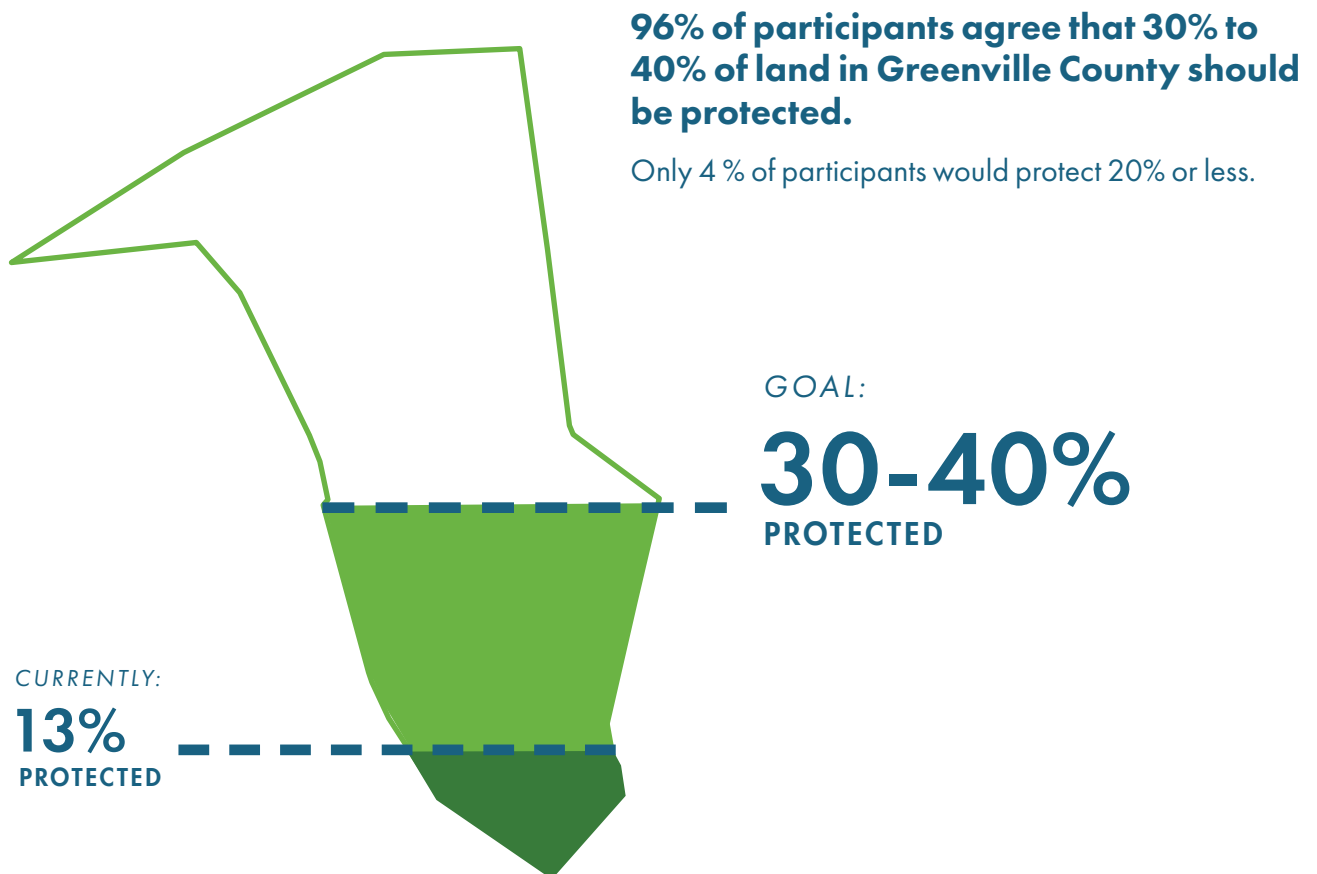
Online
survey
responses

+

12

Virtual
open house
attendees

How Much Land Should Be Protected?



The Public's Priorities Around Goals and Potential Strategies

67 survey respondents were given a project goal and asked to prioritize potential strategies for achieving open space in Greenville County.

1 Preserving and connecting corridors and enhancing access to parks.

Potential strategies ranked in order of importance:

1st: Partnering with local partners to expand public parks and natural areas.

2nd: Expand and protect open space corridors through trails & blueways.

3rd: Working with the state to expand public parks and natural areas.

4th: Work with developers to incorporate planned trails and open space along waterways into new developments.

2 Limit impacts to water resources (stream buffers, floodplains, and wetlands) to reduce flooding and maintain water quality.

Potential strategies ranked in order of importance:

1st: Continue to require buffer protection through land development ordinances and monitor to ensure compliance.

2nd: Work with voluntary landowners that are seeking buy-out for areas prone to flooding, or work with land trusts to help purchase easements.

3rd: Work with utility providers to manage utility easements as open space corridors.

3 Preservation of farmland and scenic and cultural resources

Potential strategies ranked in order of importance:

1st: Expand upon the farmland protection program.

2nd: Explore developing a zoning overlay for the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway to ensure development is complementary to its character.

3rd: Increase county funding or find funding elsewhere to work with voluntary landowners to place easements on their farms.

4 Build upon current zoning and land use planning open space protection tools.

Potential strategies ranked in order of importance:

1st: Consider additional zoning districts for conservation and historic resource protection (if supported by the local community).

2nd: Provide additional incentives for developers to protect open space, like transferable development rights, increased density allowances, and more.

5 Publicly funding open space.

Potential strategies ranked in order of importance:

1st: The County should increase County-dedicated funding to leverage state and federal dollars for dedicated open space and parks.

2nd: The County should match state funding to work with the State and local partners to protect lands for state parks and natural areas.

3rd: The County should seek more grant funding with partners.

Of the 5 goals above to protect open space, which do you think are most important?

- 1st: Preserving and connecting corridors and enhancing access to parks.
- 2nd: Limit impacts to water resources to reduce flooding and maintain water quality.
- 3rd: Preservation of farmland and scenic and cultural resources.
- 4th: Build upon current zoning and land planning open space protection rules.
- 5th: Publicly funding open space.

Do you have other ideas on how to better protect open space in Greenville County? Are there any personal or community benefits to protecting open space?

Below is a summary of the 37 responses received:

Protection and Preservation of Open Space

- ▶ Strong support for dedicated funding to protect natural and historical resources.
- ▶ Desire to set measurable goals, like defining how much protected open space exists and how much is needed in the future.
- ▶ Involve land trusts and conservation groups.
- ▶ Integrate trail systems, utility easements as green corridors, and protect trees.

Policy, Zoning, and Regulations

- ▶ Call for zoning across the entire county, especially in unzoned areas vulnerable to over development.
- ▶ Residents want a stronger voice in development decisions, particularly before plans are submitted to county staff.
- ▶ Update Land Development Regulations to increase open space percentage requirements, and tree canopy preservation in all projects, and ensure developments are sustainable and reduce sprawl.

Incentives and Accountability

- ▶ Property tax incentives or credits for landowners preserving open space.
- ▶ Holding developers accountable for respecting community plans and environmental impacts.

Environmental and Community Benefits

- ▶ Open space supports:
 - ▶ Watershed resilience
 - ▶ Clean air
 - ▶ Physical and mental health
 - ▶ Mobility and recreation (especially with trails, greenways, and walkable access)
 - ▶ Quality of life (especially for children and future generations)

04

Recommendations & Implementation

This chapter summarizes recommended action steps and strategies to achieve the open space goals established through the information gathering and public engagement processes for this Plan. It also summarizes the priority locations to focus open space projects and efforts in the County and the mapping process used to determine them.

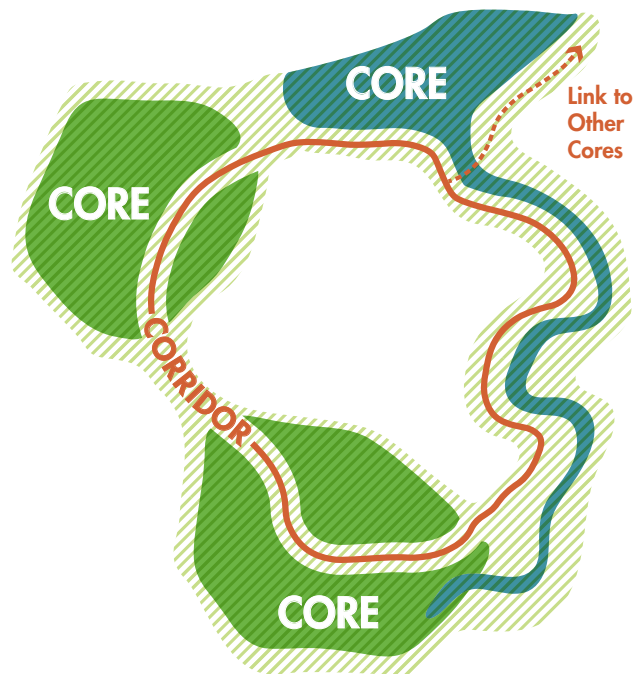
Open Space Prioritization

A key part of developing a successful open space plan is determining which places in the county are considered priority locations for open space protection or creation.

Key Concepts for Open Space Prioritization

This plan will identify the county's 'cores and corridors' and their potential to support biodiversity. A basic overview of this key concept is provided below. The descriptions draw from *Evaluating and Conserving Green Infrastructure Across the Landscape: A Practitioner's Guide; South Carolina Edition* (Firehock).

Biodiversity is the diversity among and within plant and animal species in an environment. Biodiverse systems provide a wide range of ecosystem services and have a greater ability to withstand natural and human-caused disturbance. To ensure biodiversity, it is critical to identify, map, and protect a series of intact core habitats and their connecting corridors. A **core** is an area of relatively intact habitat that is sufficiently large to support more than one individual



of species (Firehock, 2015). A **corridor** is a linear arrangement of habitat types or natural cover that provides a connection between cores. Generally speaking, the better the connectivity across cores provided by corridors, the greater the possibilities for higher biodiversity.



Open Space Priority Mapping Process

Community data was collected, mapped, and analyzed to help determine the “priority areas” for open space. The data sets were selected based on the open space data discussed in Chapter 2. Existing Conditions.

The datasets included in the prioritization analysis include the top 3 open space priorities ranked the most important by the Steering Committee and the public, which includes:

- ▶ Natural Resources and Ecology (Fig. 29)
- ▶ Recreation and Cultural Resource Access (Fig. 30)
- ▶ Working Lands (Fig. 31)

These 3 datasets were combined into the Overall Priority Map (Fig. 28), with each dataset weighted based on Steering Committee and public feedback.

The Steering Committee ranked the relative importance between the maps, with the Natural Resources and Ecology Map being deemed about twice as important as any other. This also reflects public input received which ranks the Natural Resources and Ecology Map of top importance.

In addition, the following 2 datasets were mapped as overlays to be considered in the prioritization of open space efforts.

- ▶ Overall protection risk, or risk of potential development (Fig. 32)
- ▶ Underserved populations who lack equitable access to parks and open space, based on the CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index (Fig. 33)

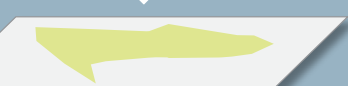
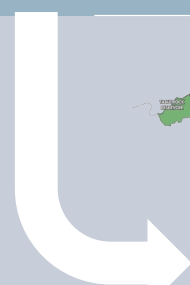
A summary of this prioritization process can be seen in Fig. 27. For a detailed explanation of the process, methodology, and preliminary results, see Appendix D: Prioritization Mapping Methodology and Preliminary Results Memo.

%

Percentage weighted based on ranking by Steering Committee

#

Order of priority as ranked by the public

OPEN SPACE PRIORITIES	 50%	#1	NATURAL RESOURCES AND ECOLOGY - Habitat cores (large blocks of intact habitat) - Projected floodplains and wetlands - SC Conservation Priority Model (SC Conservation Bank)
	+  25%	#2	RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCE ACCESS - Cultural resources/landscapes and the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Byway - Areas lacking walkable and drivable access to parks and open space - Proximity to public water access (including the Saluda River) trails, and schools
	+  25%	#3	WORKING LANDS Prime farmland
OPEN SPACE VIEWED THROUGH DIFFERENT LENSES			PROTECTION RISK - Parcel size (larger tracts) - Development pressure (based on sewer availability)
			UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS* *As defined by the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index - Disadvantaged populations and areas lacking access to parks, trails, and open space - Lack of tree cover in disadvantaged areas
			
			OVERALL PRIORITY OPEN SPACE MAP The overall priority open space map combines the five maps above (weighted by the percentages shown above) with the greatest emphasis placed on the "Natural Resources" features, as directed by the Steering Committee and supported by input from the public.

Open Space Priority Maps

Figure 27. Overall Open Space Priorities Map

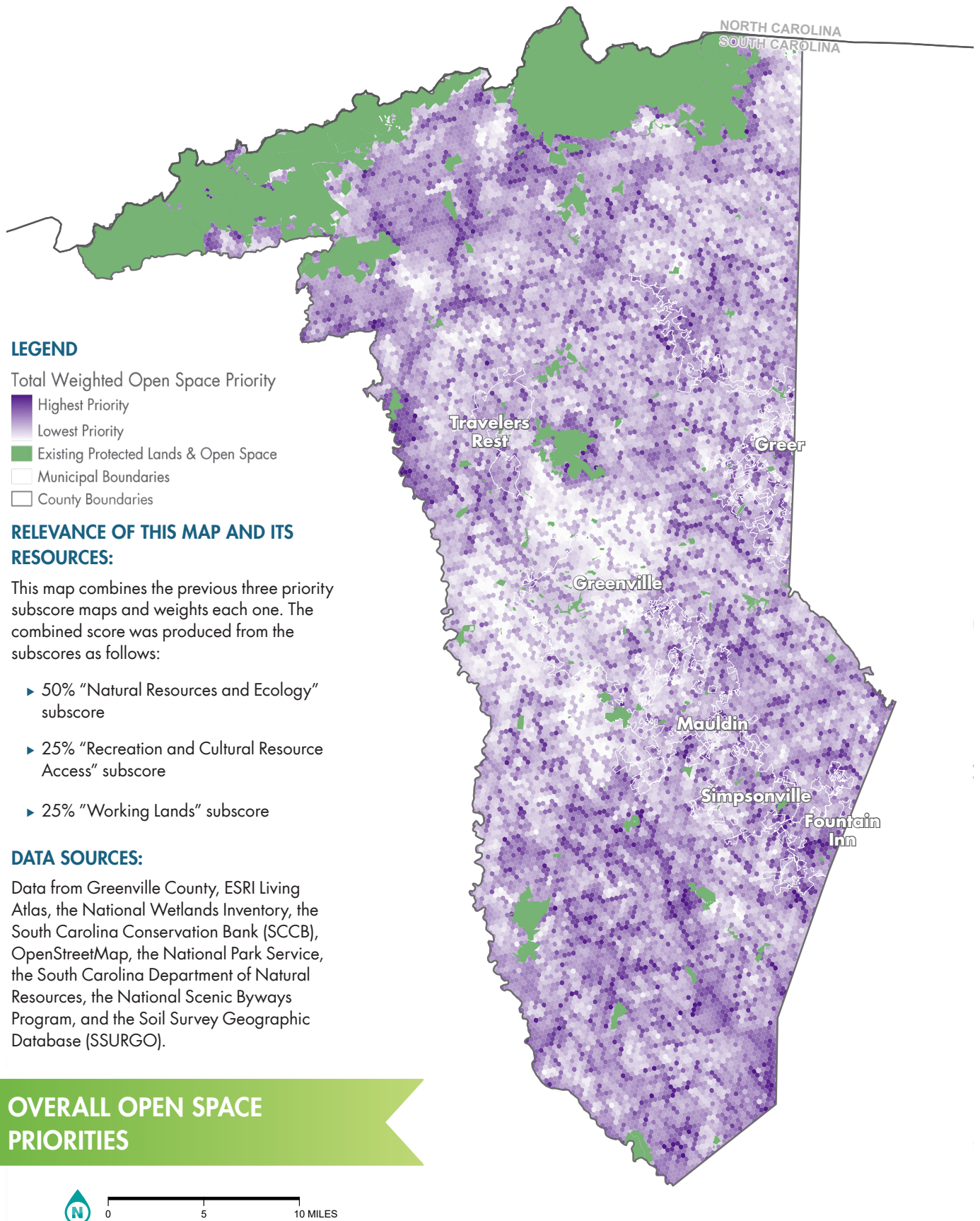


Figure 28. Natural Resources and Ecology Priorities Map

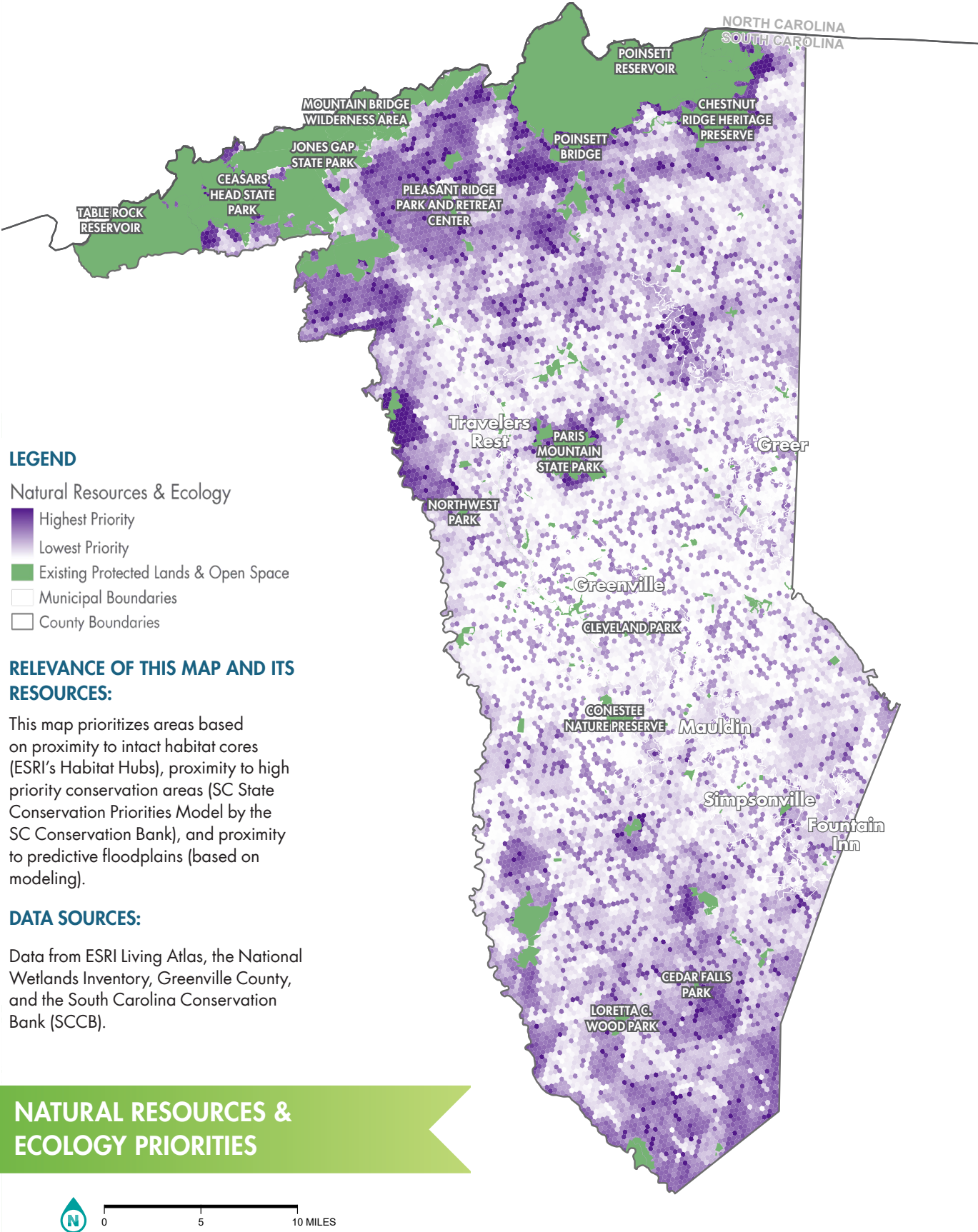


Figure 29. Recreation and Cultural Resource Access Priorities Map

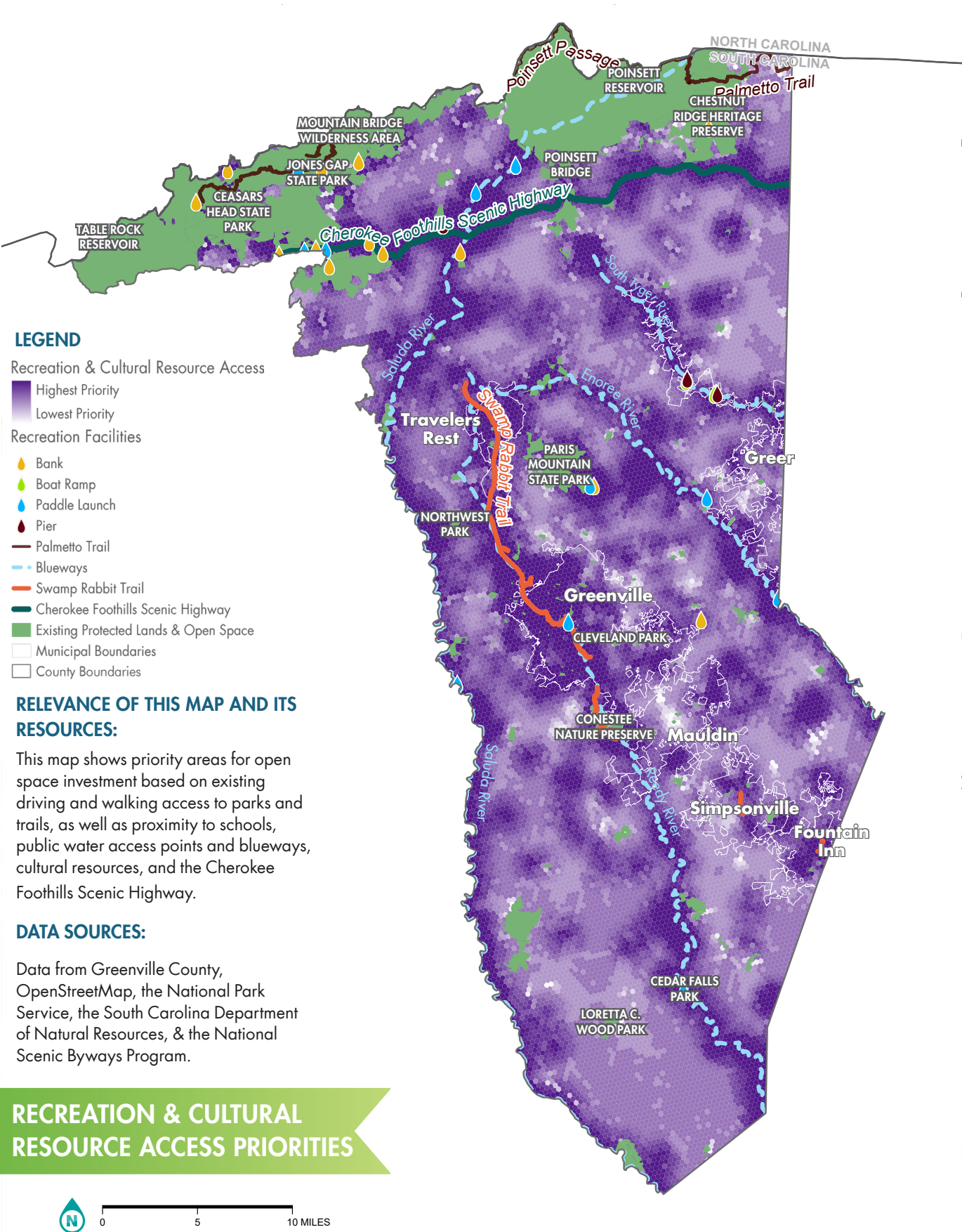


Figure 30. Working Lands Priorities Map

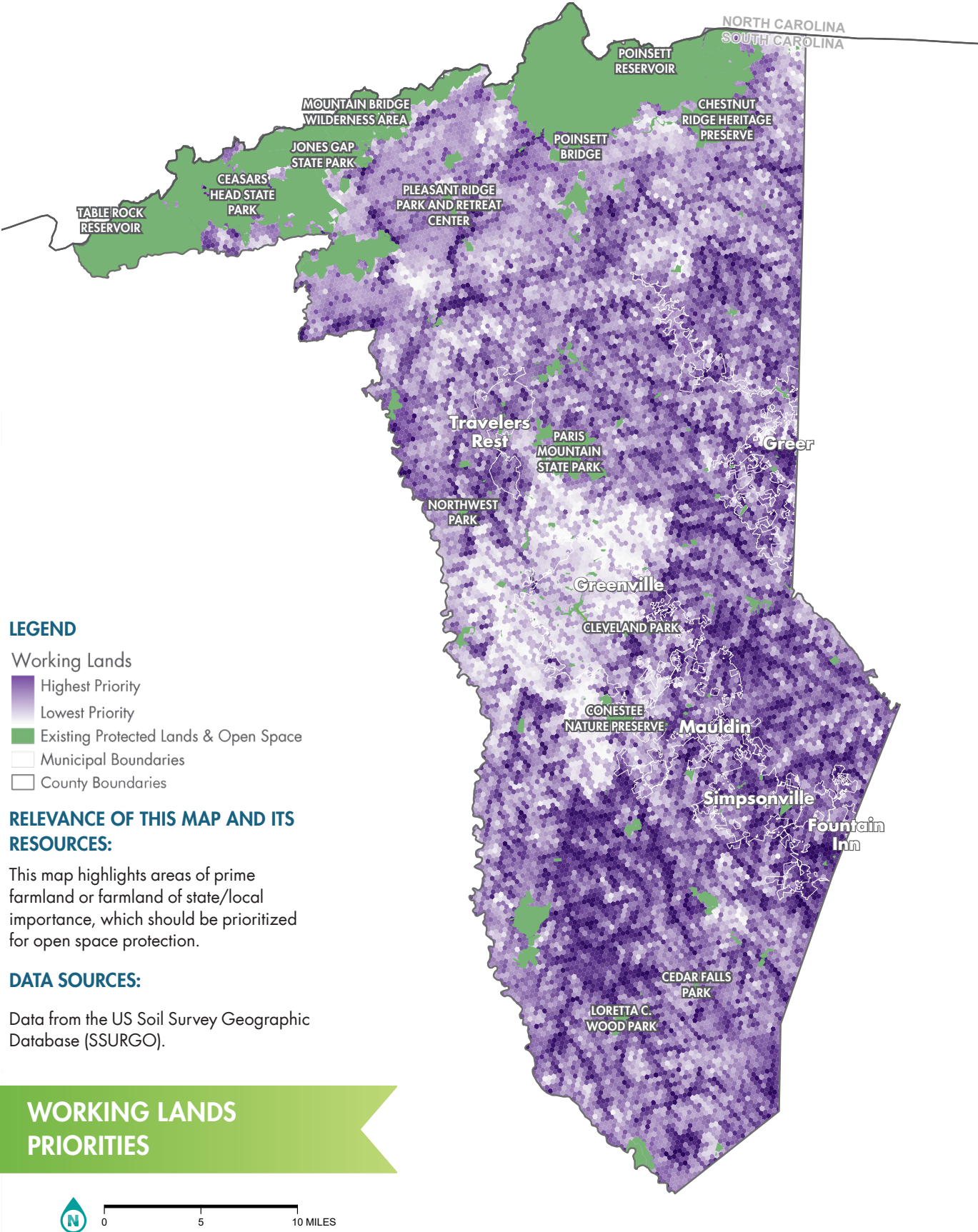


Figure 31. Protection Risk Priorities Map

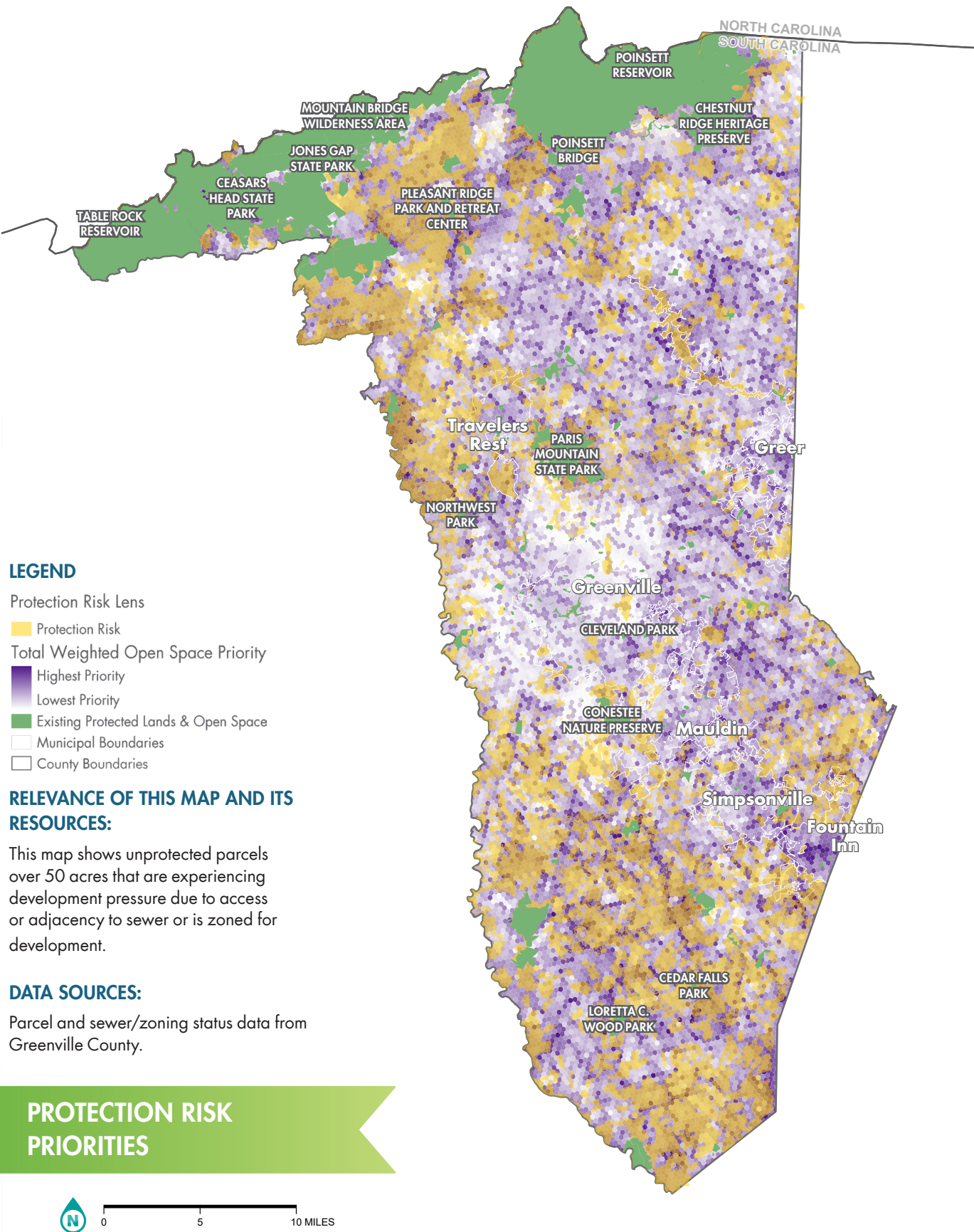


Figure 32. Underserved Populations Priorities Map

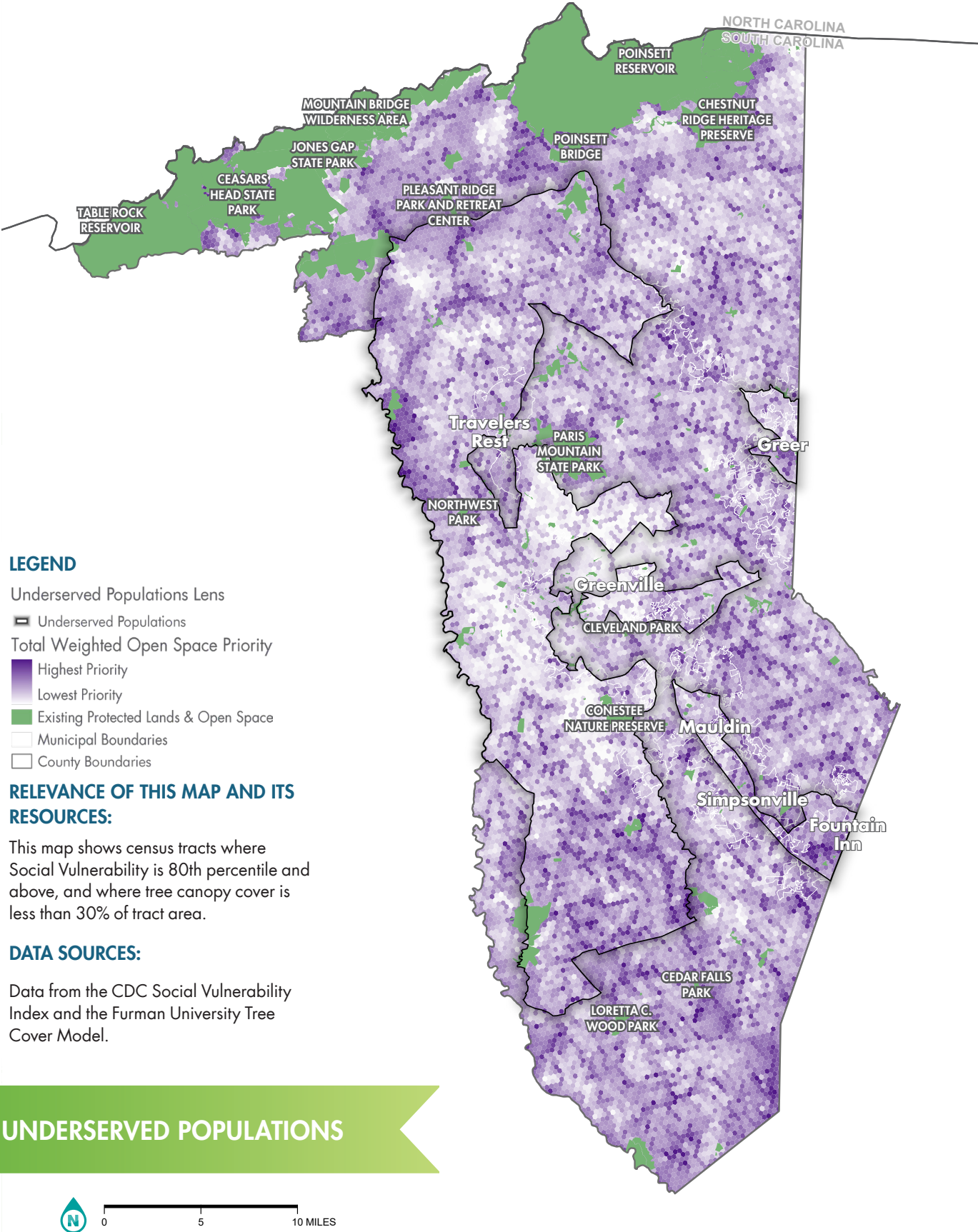
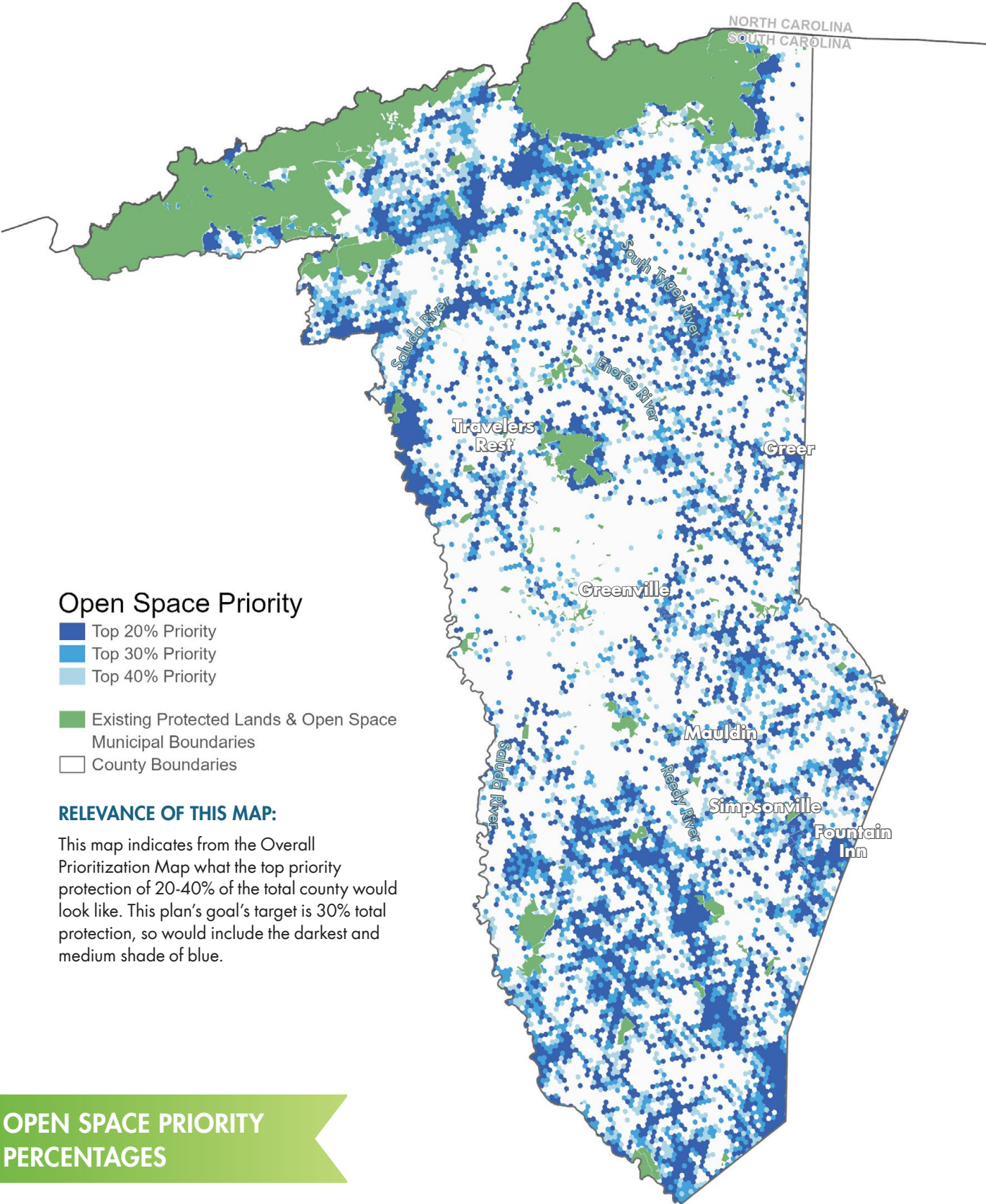


Figure 33. Open space priority percentages map.



How to Use the Priority Maps

The primary approach taken in most open space planning projects is to analyze the physical characteristics of a region's environment to find priority areas that would be the most beneficial to protect, according to what the community values most. This is the approach covered in this chapter, and there are important aspects of this to highlight when considering how to use these priority maps:

- 1. Priority areas will be considered as candidates for protection only when there is a willing landowner that desires to conserve their land.** Willing landowners can protect their land through conservation easements, by selling or donating their land, or other methods identified in this Plan.
- 2. The intention is not to protect all lands identified as high priority, nor is it to protect lands only within the high priority areas.** All landowners who wish to participate in the open space program should be considered, regardless of whether the land in question is identified as a priority in the mapping analysis.
- 3. Each site will have unique objectives.** A balanced approach should be taken in selecting a range of site types that reflect what people value most in terms of open space in Greenville County. Refer to the results of this Plan's public engagement (Chapter 3) for guidance.
- 4. The priority mapping in this chapter is data-driven and fact-based, but is still only a tool.** The methodology used in this Plan combines what is priority for many organizations and many existing priority maps. This does not mean it is a perfect tool. Care should be taken when considering candidate parcels for open space protection to be sure on-the-ground conditions reflect what is represented in the analysis.
- 5. The priority mapping will need to be updated regularly to remain relevant every 10 years.** It is recommended that a comprehensive list of data updates and needs be kept on a set basis, with the actual updates to the data and analysis occurring every 10 years or as needed based on new data or analysis techniques. This will reduce the amount of labor required for ongoing maintenance while also ensuring it stays current.
- 6. Not all aspects of this Plan can be addressed by protecting priority areas identified in the mapping analysis.** The best practices related to open space, along with this Plan's recommendations, represent the many other ways in which the goals of this Plan could be addressed.
- 7. These maps are intended to be used by multiple agencies and project partners.** For example, local and regional organizations that are primarily focused on water resources may benefit most from concentrating on areas identified by the Natural Resources and Ecology Map, and similarly for organizations focused on historic and cultural preservation, working lands, and so on. However, the Overall Priority Open Space Map (Fig. 28) may be more useful when multiple organizations with multiple interests are partnering for conservation purposes.





Action Plan

The following action plan charts a path for Greenville County to achieve its vision for open space. The strategies, objectives, and action items were developed through a collaborative effort involving Greenville County elected officials, Greenville County staff, local stakeholders and experts, project consultants, and feedback from Greenville County residents.

Near and Long-Term Actions

The actions recommended in this Action Plan are organized from near to long-term. Partners should work to achieve near-term actions within the next 1-2 years. This accelerated time frame reflects the urgency of development pressures and population growth. The cost and difficulty of protecting open space increase significantly over time as these trends continue. Long-term actions may require 10+ years to complete. Steps should be taken to work towards achieving long-term actions continuously throughout the years leading up to its completion.

Key Action Plan Terms

These key terms are the individual elements that make up the framework for the Action Plan.



VISION: A concise and inspirational statement that describes the future state of open space in Greenville County. The vision statement is a guide to help the County and partners make decisions that advance the plan goal and strategies.

“To create and maintain an interconnected network of natural areas, working landscapes, and parks, balancing responsible growth with the preservation of natural beauty and a vibrant quality of life for future generations.” - Vision Statement



STRATEGIES: A strategy is an approach to achieving an overarching goal or vision. Strategies should be all-encompassing of the work we want to do. The time frame can extend beyond the life of the plan, as these are core components to accomplish the overall plan vision.



OBJECTIVES: Objectives are more concrete and are often oriented toward smaller steps and a shorter time frame. They involve best practices, specific plans, resources, etc. Objectives should be “SMARTIE”—specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-based, inclusive, and equitable.



ACTIONS: Actions are short-term steps to complete the objectives. Each objective will have actions assigned. Some objectives have preliminary actions, which can be started immediately upon completion of this plan. Some actions are identified as “mission critical”, meaning they are necessary or imperative to achieving the overall plan goal and vision.

The Leadership and Collaboration Needed to Move This Plan Forward

GREENVILLE COUNTY OPEN SPACE ALLIANCE*

LEAD: GREENVILLE COUNTY

The County’s leadership is critical to increasing open space funding opportunities.

Different departments/organizations within the County will need to collaborate, including:



Greenville County

Planning Department



Greenville CountyRec

PARKS • RECREATION • TOURISM

Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Department



HISTORIC & NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST

Historic and Natural Resources Trust

SUPPORTING PARTNERS:

Potential supporting partners could include:

State Government	Non-Profits	Community Partners
 SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION & TOURISM  SCOR South Carolina Office of Resilience  SOUTH CAROLINA CONSERVATION BANK	 conestee NATURE PRESERVE Conservation Organizations Land Trusts	 MetroConnects Sustainable Wastewater Solutions Furman University Developers, Homebuilders Associations, etc.

*The naming for this alliance or coalition should be chosen by partners and is a placeholder for now.



PROTECT, EXPAND & CONNECT OPEN SPACE

Create and implement foundational resources, tools, and projects to preserve and provide open space that is accessible, equitable, and sustainable.

OBJECTIVE A:

Increase open space per person as the county's population grows.

- A-1** **Develop and update a trails overlay "district" into the Comprehensive Plan.** Update every 5 years. Use to collaborate with developers to accommodate trails in development. Develop a path overlay(s) for trails that are adjacent to destinations and build a "road network" without cars.
- A-2** **Add new State Parks to the County,** supporting the State in this endeavor.
- A-3** **Expand acreage for existing state, regional and County parks.**
- A-4** **Expand and connect trails and blueways** with a major focus on network expansion of the Swamp Rabbit Trail and Saluda River Blueway, and focus on front porch connections to retail.
- A-5** **Develop one major regional park** with additional conservation funding sought.
- A-6** **Create 2-3 new community active recreation parks.**
- A-7** **Acquisition of lands from delinquent tax sales.** Coordinate internally within the County to acquire land for parks, trails, and open space.
- A-8** **Preserve around .04 acres of open space per person (21,376 total acres) every 5 years.** Set goals for underserved areas. Take into consideration equitable distribution within voting districts.

OBJECTIVE B:

Preserve farmland and scenic resources.

- B-1** **Pursue grant opportunities** to promote the preservation of farmland and scenic resources.
- B-2** **Explore opportunities to maintain and expand Historic & Natural Resources Trust (HNRT) funding.**
- B-3** **Explore adopting a Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway Overlay** (see [Action Item D-4](#) for more details).
- B-4** **Promote and fund existing agricultural organizations and programs** that are dedicated to supporting local farmers and educating the public on the importance of local agriculture.
- B-5** **Work with national and regional non-profit partners** (such as American Farmland Trust or South Carolina Farm Bureau Land Trust) to understand and implement solutions that are successful in other communities for common problems for local farmers, such as:
 - » Increasing crop damage from displaced wildlife and
 - » Conflicts with neighboring uses and new developments.

 = **High Priority:**
Needs Immediate Action

Short-Term **Medium-Term** **Long-Term**
1-2 Years 3-10 Years 11-20 Years

OBJECTIVE C:

Protect water resources.

- C-1** **Explore additional stream buffer requirements** in key watersheds.
- C-2** **Incentivize developers** to implement low-impact development practices, such as:
 - » Provide wider stream buffers
 - » Provide more open space
 - » Limit impervious surface area
- C-3** **Work with land trusts** to secure easements.
- C-4** **Work with conservation organizations to acquire stream buffers** and other water resources in priority areas.
- C-5** **Partner with South Carolina Office of Resilience (SCOR) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to enhance existing floodplain buyback programs** through funding, technical support, and green space conversion, prioritizing low-maintenance outcomes.
 - » Work with landowners that are voluntarily seeking buy-out for areas prone to flooding.
 - » Explore land banking partnership and mitigation opportunities, and who can possibly lead this.



INSTITUTIONALIZE THE WORK

Embed systems and processes into the County's internal work structure so it becomes standard and sustainable.

OBJECTIVE D:

Resilient development and land management.

- D-1 Adopt a Zoning and Land Development Ordinance** which includes added protections for open space.
- D-2 Update and clarify "open space" definition** in development codes to require or encourage accessible and usable open space.
- D-3 Explore additional incentives for developers** to provide and protect open space, including:
 - » Allowing for transferable development rights in agricultural districts;
 - » Expanding voluntary agricultural districts;
 - » Density bonuses;
 - » Reduced parking requirements; and
 - » Design waivers for increased open space.
- D-4 Explore developing additional zoning overlays** for the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway (see Appendix C for example ordinance from Pickens County), Trails, and Critical Watershed Protection Zones.
- D-5 Incorporate Open Space Plan into future County comprehensive plan**, including actions in this section
- D-6 Consider additional zoning districts** for conservation and historic resource protection, if supported by the community.

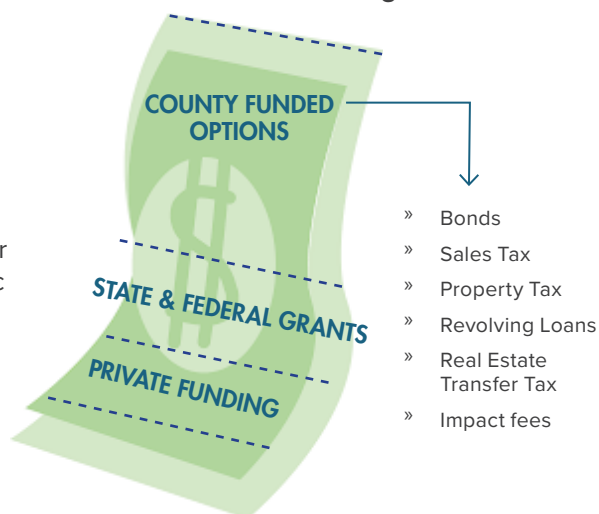
OBJECTIVE E:

Data-driven decision making.

- E-1 Use trail overlay and open space prioritization maps** (see pg. 52) to inform where best to locate parks and trails, invest in conservation, and coordinate with developers.
- E-2 Build and maintain a heritage resource layer** to inform planning.

How Funding For Open Space Typically Works

To achieve 30% protection of open space in the county, additional County investment is critical and will need to be a major portion of the funding



- D-7 Designate more parcels as Agricultural (AG) zoning.** Explore unzoned parcels for possible AG zoning.
- D-8 Additional impact fees** unless protection of open space is prioritized.

OBJECTIVE F:

Utilize public financial leverage.

- F-1 Increase and diversify conservation funding. Explore and vet the following funding options** with the public and elected officials:
 - » Voter approved bond referendum
 - » Quarter or eight-cent sales tax
 - » Property tax
 - » Real estate transfer tax
 - » Private match challenge
 - » State, Federal, and private grants
 - » Revolving County-funded loans
 - » Create special tax districts like a Watershed Conservation District
 - » Impact Fees
 - » Land Trust
- F-2 Consider a County-wide funding referendum**
- F-3 Work with national and regional non-profit partners** like Trust for Public Land (TPL), SC Conservation Bank, Upstate Forever, and more.
- F-4 Refer to past work by TPL to survey public preferences** for bond support and other past financial feasibility assessments. Use recent HNRT survey on citizen priorities to inform strategy.



STEWARD AND ENGAGE

Strategically expand and steward a community of engaged partners and supporters to ensure authentic and mutually beneficial relationships.

OBJECTIVE G:

Foster community support and understanding.

- G-1** **Launch a public and elected officials outreach campaign** for support of open space protection, creation, and funding through the County. Utilize recent polling through Greenville County Heritage and Natural Resource Trust to inform public and commissioners.
- G-2** **Engage with elected officials** in conversations around loss of open space and open space protection goals.
- G-3** **Embed the goals of the Open Space Plan** into other county and local initiatives and strategic plans, especially the County-wide Comprehensive Plan updates.
- G-4** **Find ways to connect with and engage underserved communities.**
- G-5** **Promote educational programs and organizations** that are dedicated to educating the public on the importance of open space, agriculture, natural, and cultural resources.

OBJECTIVE H:

Build and strengthen partnerships.

- H-1** **Meet regularly** with partners to ensure continuous communication. Consider building a county-wide conservation coalition and work group.
- H-2** **Share GIS data from this Open Space Plan** with partner organizations to leverage and incorporate Greenville County goals into their own efforts.
- H-3** **Integrate tourism and recreation partners** into future collaborations, see H-1.
- H-4** **Connect with developers, the Chamber of Commerce, and home builder associations** to partner and get feedback.
- H-5** **Build private funding partnerships** around conservation and recreation projects, and explore ways for these partners to support additional dedicated funding.
- H-6** **Collaborate with neighboring Counties**, especially Anderson and Pickens Counties along the Saluda River Blueway.

Building Private Funding and Conservation Partnerships

Building partnerships is critical to the long-term success of conservation efforts. Partnerships can help diversify funding sources, engage the community, unlock matching funds, and more. Below are two examples of partnerships with the goal of protecting land:

- ▶ **Preserve the Charm** is a grassroots campaign to fundraise, purchase, and permanently protect land in Dennis Village, Massachusetts. Learn more at [Preserve the Charm](#).
- ▶ The **South Mountain Partnership** is a public-private conservation network in south-central Pennsylvania. The coalition focuses on ecological protection, cultural preservation, and community health. The organization achieves this by building partnerships between governments, nonprofits, businesses, and residents. Learn more at [South Mountain Partnership](#).

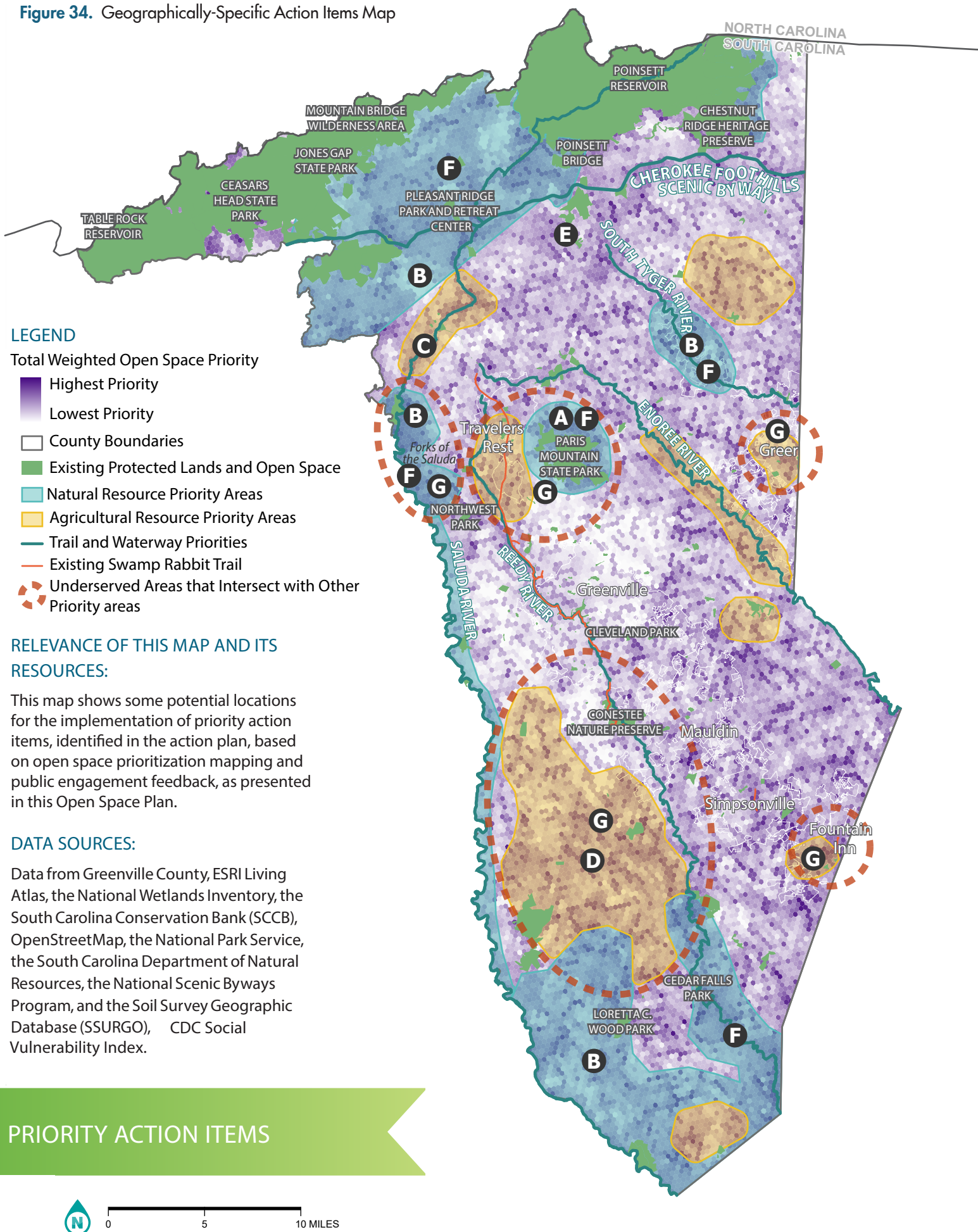
= High Priority:
Needs Immediate Action

Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
1-2 Years	3-10 Years	11-20 Years

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The Action Plan Mapped

Figure 34. Geographically-Specific Action Items Map



The following are identified as geographically-specific action items for consideration by Greenville County and are shown in Fig. 35, Geographically-Specific Action Items Map. These action items were selected based on research and analysis through the priority mapping process (see pg. 49) and feedback gathered from the public, stakeholders, and the Project Steering Committee.

A Expand existing parks and trails
(see [Action Item A-2](#))

Work with partners to expand the acreage of existing parks and trails in the county. Some priority projects to consider include:

- ▶ Expanding the Swamp Rabbit Trails system
- ▶ Expanding Jones Gap, Caesars Head, and Paris Mountain State Parks
- ▶ Expand existing County Parks

B Add State Parks in the county
(see [Action Item A-3](#))

Collaborate with State partners to designate a new State Park in one of the 4 areas identified on the map. Each area shown has high value natural resources, and some have an equity need. (Note: one new park coming on soon, Glassy Mountain off of Highway 11. This will be an additional 365 acres).

- ▶ Mountain Bridge
- ▶ Forks of the Saluda (Confluence)
- ▶ North Eastern Greenville County - South Tiger Lakes Region
- ▶ Southern Greenville County

C Prioritize land protection along rivers and explore opportunities for blueway and trail expansion, with a focus on the Saluda River (see [Action Item A-4](#))

D Concentrate agricultural protection in southern agricultural hub and other agricultural resource priority areas
(see [Objective B](#))

Work with partners to promote, support, and fund programs and organizations working to create and protect agricultural resources and farmers.

E Implement a Cherokee Foothills Scenic Byway Overlay District
(see [Action Item B-4](#))

Explore the creation of an overlay district to protect the scenic, cultural, and historical resources of the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Byway area. See the similar ordinance adopted by Pickens County in 2022 (Appendix C).

F Concentrate natural resource protection in the areas highlighted in blue and along rivers.

Prioritizing the preservation of natural resources in these areas will reinforce a “cores and corridors” conservation model that has the highest ecological benefits (see pg. 49 for more details).

G Prioritize areas of the county that are most underserved and lack protected open space.

The areas shown have high open space value and should be considered when identifying the conservation of natural lands, agriculture, and building new parks.

Funding

Nearly every successful open space program in the United States shares one common trait – a local source of funding that is used to match and leverage other funding in support of open space conservation.

While there is no specific amount of funding that is required to implement the Open Space Plan recommendations, it is advisable for Greenville County to examine other communities where a local funding source has been established. In Charleston County, SC, as one example, a 25-year sales tax program is generating approximately \$250 million over the life of the tax (see more example programs in Figure 37).

One of the first tasks for implementation for Greenville County will be to make a determination as to the most appropriate funding methods. Below are the funding mechanisms discussed in this section:

- **Sales Tax**
- **Property Tax**
- **Bond Referendum**
- **Real Estate Transfer Tax**
- **Project-By-Project Basis**
- **Federal, State, and Private Grants**
- **Private Match**
- **Revolving County-Funded Loans**

The following text explains further information into each of these mechanisms. For a detailed list of funding programs that support open space conservation see Appendix B.

Seeking A Voter-Approved Local Dedicated Source of Funding

Achieving the vision for the Greenville County Open Space Plan will require establishing a local, recurring source of dedicated funding. This type of stable source of funding is needed to match other local, regional, state and federal funding, as well as private sector funding. The local funding source will generally be determined by taxing capacity, voter preference, and political will.

It may be necessary to engage a public policy, financing strategist, and polling firm (such as the Trust for Public Land) to further explore the feasibility, public acceptability, and potential investment and return for a county funding strategy for open space consideration. Careful consideration should be given to the implementation of funding sources that require voter approval.

Specifically, this Plan recommends that Greenville County should continue to discuss the long-term benefits of open space conservation and implement the above program of action that gives consideration to future ballot initiatives.

There are three voter-approved financing options available to acquire land for parks, open space, and other natural areas: general obligation bonds, a property tax, or three sales tax options. The following sections of text describe these options.

Figure 36 highlights the three-step approach to implementing a voter-approved funding source.



Voter-Approved Property Tax

Property tax can be challenging, since it is already the main tax used to support many local services, such as local education, police/fire protection, local governments, some free medical services, and most other local infrastructure. For many such conservation programs, open space is seen as another form of essential public infrastructure, or “green infrastructure”. A small increase in property tax assessments can be used as a funding source within the county.

Voter-Approved Bond Referendum

Greenville County, or each municipality within, could put a referendum on the ballot that would authorize raising funds through the sale of bonds. A general obligation (G.O.) bond is long-term borrowing of funds in which the county or municipality pledges full faith and credit (its ability to raise revenues) to repay the debt over a specified term. G.O. bonds are typically used by local governments to fund a variety of needed projects as they put less stress on the local government budgets and offer an affordable method of raising significant capital in the short term. Local governments can fund G.O. bonds through a small increase in property tax. For example assessing an additional 2 cents on \$100 worth of property valuation. So, a property value at \$50,000 would generate an additional \$5.00 in annual taxes that are used to pay for the issuance of a G.O. bond. Local governments contemplating a bond issue should consult their bond attorneys as the first step.

Figure 35. Voter-Approved Funding Source 3-Step Approach

1 DETERMINE FINANCING & REVENUE

This research will help local leaders estimate how much revenue different options would raise and the potential impact on residents.

2 PUBLIC OPINION POLLING

Scientific polling should be conducted to assess voter preferences (their willingness to fund open space conservation in relation to other public needs) and how much voters might be willing to spend. Polling will gauge the public’s local conservation priorities and help determine the preferred type and size of financing measure.

Note: in 2025 the Greenville County Historic & Natural Resources Trust was involved in a statistical survey garnering attitudes on the County increasing open space funding and results were positive towards funding support. This should be used heavily in messaging to officials and the community.

3 DESIGNING A BALLOT MEASURE

If the research and polling indicate a favorable voter response, a ballot measure could be designed to reflect public priorities and a community’s conservation needs.

Voter-Approved Sales Tax

The South Carolina Code of Laws authorizes various types of local sales and use taxes which can be dedicated for parks, greenbelts, and land conservation. Citizens of a county may impose one or several local sales and use taxes. These include a county green space tax, capital projects tax, and a transportation tax. Figure 35 highlights different sales tax programs recently implemented in South Carolina. Currently, Greenville County is one of the only counties in the state without an additional sales tax.

City Sales Tax

With a city sales tax, a municipal government within Greenville County would implement a sales tax within their municipal boundary. The sales tax would be collected and used to leverage other local, state, federal, and private funding sources for projects. Local sales tax programs are subject to voter approval and individual ballot measures.

Capital Projects Tax

This 1 percent local sales and use tax is used to fund specific capital projects such as roads, bridges, public facilities, cultural/recreational/historic facilities, water and sewer/septic projects, flood control, storm water management, and beach access/re-nourishment.

Green Space Tax

This is the newest tax, which was passed by legislation in 2022. The tax, which can be levied up to 1 percent, can be used within a county for preservation procurements. This tax is imposed specifically for procuring, or for servicing bonds used to procure open land or green space for preservation by and through the acquisition of interests in real property.

Transportation Tax

This up to 1 percent local sales and use tax is used to fund transportation needs such as roads and bridges. This tax can potentially fund related projects such as trails and greenbelts.

Figure 36. Examples of Sales Tax Programs in South Carolina

Location (Year Passed)	Tax Rate	Funding Amount	Funded Projects
Charleston County (2004)	1/2 Penny (0.5%)	25 Years or until \$1.3 billion is collected	Funds the Greenbelt Program which increases protected lands within the county. Projects include parks, trails, natural and historical resources, farmlands, natural infrastructure, athletic fields, and tree canopy protection.
Beaufort County (2022—2024)	1 Penny (1%)	\$100 million	Funded projects to preserve open space, protect critical and natural resources, and provide land for recreation. Allows for the purchase of development rights, and fee- simple interest in lands threatened by development.
Berkeley County (2022)	1 Penny (1%)	Up to \$58.7 million	Funds greenbelt initiatives, including purchasing property and easements for conservation, creating passive and active greenspace, protecting natural resources, protecting agricultural or heritage landscapes, and protecting scenic corridors.

Figure 37. Penny Sales Tax Impact on Purchases

How Does a 1/4 Penny (0.25 Percent) Sales Tax Impact Purchases?

A sales tax is just one option to consider, and it could be structured to fit the needs of the community. For example, it could be proposed in a way that:

- ▶ Combines the use of the tax for not just open space, but also for other community wants and needs like transportation improvements, trails, and greenways. Research should be done ahead of time that gauges public interests and priorities.
- ▶ Contains a “sunset” provision, so that it expires after a certain number of years, subject to renewal by referendum.

Further research is needed for how it could apply in Greenville County, but some sales tax initiatives are created so they do not apply to several commonly purchased items, such as groceries, gasoline, prescription drugs, and motor vehicles.

One major benefit of a sales tax is that non-residents pay sales tax too, lessening the burden on Greenville County residents as the local tourism sector of the economy continues to grow, as has been the trend for many years.

The 1/4 percent addition to the sales tax rate is the equivalent of 1/4 of one penny per dollar spent. To put that in perspective, this would be an additional:

1¢ on a \$4 purchase

25¢ on a \$100 purchase

75¢ on a \$300 purchase

\$4 Coffee



=



\$100 Wireless Headphones



=



\$300 Hotel Stay



=



Project-By-Project Basis

Another method is to identify the needed open space projects and work with public and private partners to raise a specific amount of funding required to undertake the project. This is a “catch as catch can” approach and relies on the ability to successfully fund-raise for each and every project. An example of this type of approach includes the Cancer Survivors Park, which was mostly funded through private fundraising. While this method may have been successful in the past, it does not represent a comprehensive approach to open space program funding. In the absence of a local dedicated source of funding, this project-by project approach (including private partnerships, fundraising, crowd-sourcing, volunteerism, etc.) will be critical to establish the local matches required to leverage state, federal, and private grants for open space.

Federal, State, and Private Grants

Appendix B of this Plan features a table of more than 30 state, federal, and private funding opportunities that relate to the goals of this Plan. Most of the grants listed were found through funding research that took place in early 2025.

Private Match

Similar to the Project-By-Project funding mechanism utilizing private funding sources, a Private Match Challenge is a financing method used to incentivize private donors to give more to “unlock” extra funds. With this, the local government would set a target private funding goal, which would be matched with public funding from the local government.



Jones Gap State Park © South Carolina State Parks

Revolving County-Funded Loans

A Revolving Loan Fund is a finance tool that can be used by local governments often used to fill financing gaps, providing funds that might be needed to supplement loans from other sources or to secure projects that would otherwise be inviable. These loans are designed to be “revolving” in that the funds are replenished as the loans are repaid, allowing them to be used again and again to support multiple projects. This method could be used by the county to support numerous open space and recreational projects.

Real Estate Transfer Tax

Real estate transfer taxes are taxes imposed by states, counties, and municipalities on the transfer of the title of real property within the jurisdiction. Real estate transfer taxes can also be used for specific purposes, such as open space development. The State of South Carolina already has a real estate transfer tax so it would be a matter of authorizing local cities and counties to have a vote on this type of funding.

How Communities Pay for Conservation

by the Trust for Public Land

According to the Trust for Public Land, successful measures are the result of careful planning, hard work, and an understanding of public priorities. The process involves an assessment of public opinion about conservation and taxation and the design of a measure that does the following:

- ▶ The land preservation benefit must be viewed by voters as a compelling need. Whether it addresses water quality protection, farmland preservation, or urban parks and playgrounds, proponents must understand voters’ priorities and what they consider a fundamental, compelling need.
- ▶ The tax must be affordable. Voters have a specific taxing threshold, even to support benefits they find compelling. Find out how much



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LAND™**

voters are willing to spend (not what the ideal program would cost) and design your measure accordingly.

- ▶ Voters must have confidence that those in charge of spending the money will be accountable and responsible. Fiscal safeguards written into a measure can assure anxious voters that their tax dollars are being spent wisely. Safeguards include fiscal audits, administrative cost caps, citizen advisory committee reviews, and sunset clauses.

Once such a measure is designed, a good campaign must be conducted to build broad support from community leaders and organizations and to communicate the key benefits of the measure to undecided voters.

Land Acquisition

In order to achieve many of the strategies and action items recommended by this plan, once a funding source is secured the next step is to acquire the land for the preservation or creation of open space. This section summarizes many of the possible land acquisition methods and mechanisms.

Direct Purchase

Fee Simple Acquisition

Of course, land can be acquired through a traditional direct fee-simple purchase. This usually refers to the sale of land at its full market value, where ownership and responsibilities for the land are transferred completely to the buyer, providing them with full control over the future of the property.

Bargain Sale

Land (or an easement) can be purchased via a bargain sale at less than full market value, with the difference between the bargain sale price and the fair market value becoming a charitable donation. This reduces costs for the buyer and provide tax benefits for the seller.

Right of First Refusal

As part of a land sale, a right of first refusal agreement can be applied which gives the conservation agency the opportunity to match any offer and acquire the property if the landowner is

approached by another buyer. This is a good tool to consider utilizing when the conservation agency needs some extra time to acquire funds for purchase, but it can be risky since the land may be lost if the offer cannot be matched when the time comes.

Installment Sale

An installment sale is where a percentage of the purchase price is deferred and paid over successive years. This benefits the seller by possibly providing capital gains tax advantages.

Conservation Easement

A legal agreement can be made between a landowner and a conservation organization or agency to voluntarily restrict the use and development of a property, or a portion of a property, so that it must be used for open space. A landowner voluntarily grants a conservation easement for many reasons, such as preserving their legacy, protecting the natural resources of the land, or as a way to maintain family ownership. Conservation easements may be considered a charitable donation and can attract funding from conservation sources. The easement grantee (i.e. local government agency or organization) would hold a partial interest or some specified right in a parcel of land, while the landowner retains full ownership and management of the land.



Blackwell Farm
© Upstate Forever

Donation

Direct Donation

A direct donation may be made where the landowner grants full title and ownership to a conservation organization or agency. In exchange, the donor may qualify for tax deductions or benefit.

Donation via Bequest

A land donation may be made via bequest, through a will at the time of the owner's death. This can reduce estate taxes and may benefit any heirs with reduced inheritance taxes.

Donation with Reserved Life Estate

Where land is acquired with a donation with reserved life estate, the owner retains the rights to use all or part of the land for their remaining lifetime and the lifetimes of designated family members. This allows the owner to continue living on and using the property temporarily while ensuring the protection of the land for the future.

Land Banking

With land banking, land is purchased and reserved for later use or development, with the purchasing agency acting as a land trust. The land can be preserved, leased for immediate use (i.e. agriculture or athletic field), or held for eventual resale with restrictions. Through this proactive purchasing of land, this lowers potential future costs by acting proactively against future increasing land prices and development.

Partnerships

Intergovernmental Partnership

Intergovernmental partnership between federal, state, and local agencies can share the responsibilities and costs of acquisition and management, especially for larger or more expensive properties. These partnerships can fortify relationships and foster county-wide cooperation.

Joint Venture Partnership

Public agencies and private organizations can team up to accomplish projects that achieve mutual goals. For example, government-provided funds could be matched with private contributions to acquire land. The partners share the benefits, responsibilities, and costs, creating a coalition of support and bringing diverse sources of knowledge and expertise.

Land Exchange

Land may be exchanged for another parcel (or parcels) of equal value that is more desirable for open space or resource protection. Scattered smaller properties can be exchanged for a single, larger parcel. When equal value properties are exchanged, there is no tax on the transfer.

Non-Profit Acquisition and Conveyance

Non-profit organizations (such as a land trust) can buy a parcel of land and resell it to a local government or other public agency. Non-profits can often move more quickly to purchase and hold land until the public agency is able to buy it. This often reduces acquisition costs for the public agency in the long run.

Appendix A:

Existing Plans, Resources, and Ordinances

Table 1. Statewide Plans and Resources

STATEWIDE PLANS AND RESOURCES				
Plan/Resource Title	Source	Priority Areas Defined	Priority Resource(s)	Relevancy to this Plan
<u>A Green Infrastructure Plan to Restore, Connect, and Protect South Carolina's Habitat (2023)</u>	State of SC, Green Infrastructure Center	✓	-Large patches of natural lands -Wetlands -Streams - Soil and topographical diversity -Species richness -Rare, threatened, and/or endangered species	Identifies statewide priorities areas to conserve through conservation, planning, and policies
<u>Strategic Statewide Resilience and Risk Reduction Plan (2022)</u>	The South Carolina Office of Resilience (SCOR)		- Safe and healthy population - Sustainable economic development -Natural resources - Cultural resources	Identifies action items to enhance resilience against extreme weather and climate change by improving data collection, education, and community training, updating building codes and infrastructure design, conserving natural flood defenses, supporting housing recovery, and optimizing funding for these initiatives.
<u>South Carolina Conservation Bank Conservation Priority Mapping (2023)</u>	South Carolina Conservation Bank (SCCB)	✓	-Conservation corridors -Ecological conservation priorities -Sustainable forestry and agriculture -Water resources -Proximity to urban interface -Public benefit	Identifies high and medium priority areas throughout SC to conserve based on key social and environmental factors

Table 1 Cont'd

STATEWIDE PLANS AND RESOURCES				
Plan/Resource Title	Source	Priority Areas Defined	Priority Resource(s)	Relevancy to this Plan
State Wildlife Action Plan (2015)	South Carolina Department of Natural Resources	✓	- Terrestrial habitats, aquatic habitats - Certain birds, reptiles, mammals, fish - Protected areas, private lands - High water quality, wetlands - Invasive species management - Climate change adaptation	Provides comprehensive data on species of greatest conservation need, their habitats, and their threats, which can be helpful to identify areas to preserve. Additionally, the SWAP outlines statewide conservation strategies, such as habitat protection and invasive species management, which can be adapted to local needs.
South Carolina Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species Inventory (2023)	SC Heritage Trust Program	✓	- Habitats: Coastal types, river corridors, wetlands, and small coastal hummock islands. Isolated Wetlands, Bottomland Forests, Freshwater, Tidal and Brackish Marsh - Endangered, threatened, rare, and important species of plants and animals - Unique and unusual natural features, as well as areas that support significant natural diversity - Protection of water resources, particularly those associated with coastal and riverine environments	By identifying and preserving ecologically sensitive areas, the SCNHP helps ensure that growth and development are sustainable and protect the quality of life for residents. This data can guide the selection of areas for conservation, inform policy recommendations, and support strategic collaborations and community partnerships. Additionally, the program's resources can aid in creating high-level concept plans and GIS maps

Table 1 Cont'd

STATEWIDE PLANS AND RESOURCES				
Plan/Resource Title	Source	Priority Areas Defined	Priority Resource(s)	Relevancy to this Plan
South Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2019)	South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism	✓	- Natural Resources: Emphasizing the protection of forests, wetlands, and wildlife habitats - Water Resources: Focusing on the conservation of rivers, lakes, and coastal areas - Cultural Resources: Preserving historical sites and cultural landmarks - Recreational Facilities: Ensuring the maintenance and development of parks, trails, and other recreational areas	-Statewide recreation trends can help align Greenville County's open space initiatives with broader state priorities. -Resource inventory can help identify existing assets in Greenville County and highlight gaps that the Open Space Plan could address. -Recreational demand data can be used to forecast future needs in Greenville County. -Implementation strategies can serve as a blueprint for Greenville County, providing practical steps and best practices. -Potential funding opportunities information can be crucial for securing financial support for the Open Space Plan.
Public Lands Map	South Carolina Department of Natural Resources	✓	- Wildlife Management Area - Heritage Preserve and Wildlife Management Area - Other Heritage Preserves (No Hunting) - Natural Heritage Preserve - Cultural Heritage Preserve - South Carolina Game Zones	This map provides detailed information on property boundaries and public access for lands managed by the SCDNR or its partners. By using this map, planners can identify existing public lands, understand their geographical distribution, and assess how these areas can be integrated into the broader open space network. It can aid in strategic planning for land acquisitions, trail development, and conservation efforts.

Table 2. Regional Plans and Resources

REGIONAL PLANS AND RESOURCES				
Plan/Resource Title	Source	Priority Areas Defined	Priority Resource(s)	Relevancy to this Plan
Southeast Conservation Blueprint Summary for South Carolina (2024)	Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS)	✓	- Terrestrial indicators (i.e. East Coastal Plain open pine birds, Fire frequency, Greenways & trails, etc.) - Freshwater Indicators (i.e. Atlantic migratory fish habitat, Imperiled aquatic species, etc.) - Coastal & marine indicators (i.e. Atlantic coral & hardbottom, Atlantic estuarine fish habitat, Atlantic marine birds, etc.)	Identifies priority areas for a connected network of lands and waters in the Southeast. The Blueprint identifies priority areas based on a suite of natural and cultural resource indicators representing terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems. A connectivity analysis then identifies corridors that link coastal and inland areas and span climate gradients.
Watershed Plan for Sediment in the North Saluda River and Saluda Lake (2019)	Save Our Saluda	✓	- Land - Sediment deposits - Bodies of water	It lays the groundwork for implementation of practices and measures to reduce sediment runoff and help prevent future sediment runoff to the rivers and lakes.
SECAS Southeast Conservation Blueprint (2023)	Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS)	✓	- Terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems habitats - Indicator species - Areas that are crucial for maintaining biodiversity, ecosystem services, and connectivity between habitats - Freshwater systems, coastal areas, and marine environments that are vital for ecological balance and human use	This Blueprint identifies priority areas for conservation based on a variety of natural and cultural resource indicators, which can help planners in Greenville County pinpoint critical areas for preservation and connectivity. By leveraging the data and insights from the Blueprint, planners can make informed decisions about land acquisitions, trail development, and conservation strategies that will benefit the community and environment.

Table 2 Cont'd

REGIONAL PLANS AND RESOURCES				
Plan/Resource Title	Source	Priority Areas Defined	Priority Resource(s)	Relevancy to this Plan
Upstate Forever: Shaping Our Future Growth Alternatives Analysis (2017)	Upstate Forever, Ten at the Top, Furman's Riley Institute		- Forests, farmlands, waterways, and green spaces - Protect water quality and availability - Maintaining habitats for local wildlife. - Scenic Landscapes	Understanding, exploring, and measuring the trade-offs of different growth options to help residents and leaders make informed decisions about the future. Provides insights into specific areas and resources to prioritize to guide decision-making and policy development.
Pickens County Cherokee Foothills Scenic Byway Preservation Ordinance (2022)	Pickens County, SC	✓	- Cultural, historical, and scenic resource protection	County adjacent to Greenville County adopted an ordinance protecting the area surrounding the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Byway. This is a priority goal established by this Open Space Plan, and supported by public and stakeholder engagement.
Travelers Rest Master Plan (2018)	Master Plan Advisory Committee of Travelers Rest	✓	- Manage natural resources by focusing on infill and redevelopment as they grow - Use existing infrastructure to develop	This plan includes an evaluation of trends and existing conditions, defines community strengths, and challenges, and provides recommendations to address those challenges, which can help guide the Greenville open space plan to connect well with this adjacent city.
GVL2040 Comprehensive Plan (2021)	City of Greenville	✓	- Open space and the environment - Affordable housing opportunities - Transportation and mobility. - Utilizing vacant land - "Missing Middle" housing	Sets clear priorities for open space preservation, reflects community values, and provides a framework for strategic action to enhance the city's green spaces in the face of development. The Open Space Plan would build upon these priorities, translating them into specific strategies and actions to achieve the community's vision for open space conservation.

Table 2 Cont'd

REGIONAL PLANS AND RESOURCES				
Plan/Resource Title	Source	Priority Areas Defined	Priority Resource(s)	Relevancy to this Plan
Upstate Forever Return on Investment Study (2017)	Upstate Forever and Urban3		- Defines its priorities based on the anticipated impacts of growth in the Upstate region of South Carolina - The priorities include understanding the implications of growth on commute times, transportation choices, economic development opportunities, environmental sustainability, home choices, and the cost of government services	This report provides a detailed analysis of the economic impacts of different growth scenarios, which can help make informed decisions about land use and open space preservation, ensuring that the region's growth is managed in a way that balances economic development with environmental stewardship. The study's insights into the cost and benefits of various development patterns enable community leaders and planners to devise a plan that aligns with the community's vision.
Save Our Saluda: Upper Saluda River Watershed Map (ongoing)	Save Our Saluda	✓	- Priority/important areas are defined based on their connection to and impact on the Saluda River Watershed	By offering detailed geographical data and environmental information, such as water quality, land usage, and conservation areas, stakeholders can use this map to identify key areas for preservation and development. Additionally, it could assist in identifying ecologically sensitive areas that require protection to maintain biodiversity and natural habitats, specifically as it related to the Saluda
Ten at the Top: Upstate Comprehensive Plan Analysis (2021)	Ten at the Top, Upstate Planners, Clemson University		- Priorities identified based on the South Carolina legislature: - Population, Economy, Natural resources, Cultural resources, Community facilities, Housing, Transportation, Land use	It emphasizes the importance of preserving open spaces and can guide policy recommendations, land use planning, and the prioritization of capital projects for Greenville County's future open space initiatives.

Table 3. County Plans and Resources

COUNTY PLANS AND RESOURCES				
Plan/Resource Title	Source	Priority Areas Defined	Priority Resource(s)	Relevancy to this Plan
Greenville County, South Carolina Historic Resources Survey (2013)	Brockington and Associates Inc.; South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	✓	-1,100 historic architectural resources*1 of which 20 are recommended individually eligible for listing in the NRHP. An additional six areas are recommended for future intensive survey, as they have the potential to be NRHP-eligible districts. - These include: Conestee Mill Village, the Piedmont Mill Village, the communities of Slater and Fork Shoals, and the communities surrounding the Union and Renfrew Bleacheries. - Resources for consideration included buildings, structures, objects, districts, and landscapes that have architectural or historical significance	The project can provide information to make informed decisions regarding the impact of development and other public activities on Greenville County's cultural resources and to set priorities for the protection and use of these resources.
A Preliminary Archaeological Context for Greenville County (1995)	Michael Trinkley, Ph.D., Debi Hacker, and Natalie Adams		- Critical Open Spaces - Important Rural Vistas - Historic Structures -Natural Areas -Farms	Understanding the historical development, significant landmarks, and cultural heritage of the area can help planners identify key areas for preservation and highlight the importance of maintaining the county's unique character.

Table 3 Cont'd

COUNTY PLANS AND RESOURCES				
Plan/Resource Title	Source	Priority Areas Defined	Priority Resource(s)	Relevancy to this Plan
<u>Greenville County Comprehensive Greenways Plan (2010)</u>	Greenways Incorporated; Arbor Engineering	✓	- Land parcels that provide critical connections between existing greenway trails and parks. - Natural habitats and ecosystems that offer environmental and recreational benefits. - Water resources such as rivers, lakes, and streams - Cultural and historical sites - Scenic vistas and landscapes that enhance the visual appeal of greenway routes	Can help identify potential areas for conservation, determine the best practices for land use, and develop a comprehensive approach to managing its open spaces for the benefit of the community and the environment. The insights gained from the Greenways Plan can guide policy recommendations, strategic collaborations, and community partnerships, which are essential for the successful implementation of an Open Space Plan.
<u>Greenville County Stormwater Design Manual (Updated 2021)</u>	Greenville County Staff		- Natural drainage ways to manage stormwater effectively - Vegetated buffer areas along natural waterways - Floodplains to control and manage floodwaters - Areas of undisturbed vegetation - Low areas within the site terrain for natural stormwater infiltration. - Outstanding resource waters identified by sampling or monitoring as high-quality water bodies	It can inform the design and development process: - The manual offers guidance for the evaluation and implementation of best management practices for stormwater management. - It aims to reduce adverse impacts on water quality and quantity from stormwater runoff. - The manual encourages the protection of downstream areas from stormwater impacts resulting from development.

Table 3 Cont'd

COUNTY PLANS AND RESOURCES				
Plan/Resource Title	Source	Priority Areas Defined	Priority Resource(s)	Relevancy to this Plan
Greenville County Zoning and Land Development Regulations (Updated 2024)	Greenville County Staff		- Developments in rural, unzoned subdivisions are required to set aside at least 30% of the property as open space - For subdivisions with lots between 1 acre and 1.99 acres, at least 10% of the property must be designated for open space - There is no open space requirement for subdivisions with lots 2 acres or larger - The regulations also allow for certain amenities such as swimming pools, subdivision streets, and clubhouses to be counted as "open space" under specific conditions	The LDR outlines specific requirements and standards for land development, can provide definitions and classifications for different types of open spaces, establishes guidelines for environmental protection
Greenville County Comprehensive Plan (2020)	Greenville County Staff; LandDesign, Inc; TischlerBise	✓	- Encourage growth in areas that can best support new development with an emphasis on these priorities: - Preservation of open space - Facilitation of mass transit - Higher density development - Utilization of existing infrastructure prior to developing new infrastructure	- Can help cater to different age groups and cultures - Analyzing household and family sizes may influence the size and number of open spaces - Economic status can help in determining the affordability of open space amenities - Assessing transportation and mobility patterns can inform the location and accessibility of open spaces - Recognizing trends in population growth or decline can help in planning the scalability of open spaces - Establishes goals for preservation of agricultural and natural lands

Table 3 Cont'd

COUNTY PLANS AND RESOURCES				
Plan/Resource Title	Source	Priority Areas Defined	Priority Resource(s)	Relevancy to this Plan
Greenville County Food System Assessment (2020)	Lindsey D. Jacobs, Esq. and Susan Shuller Frantz		- Advocate for the implementation of the 2019 Greenville County Comprehensive Plan - Invest in local processing and distribution infrastructure - Connect farmers to new markets and continue to grow demand for local food - Employ a cross-sector approach to improving healthy food access - Establish a local food policy council to coordinate food system work	Identifies key areas of focus such as food production, distribution, and access. The assessment's recommendations for improving healthy food access and establishing a local food policy council can guide the integration of food systems into open space planning, ensuring that spaces are designed to support community food needs. Additionally, the assessment's emphasis on collaboration across food system partners can be leveraged to foster partnerships essential for the successful implementation of an open space plan.

Table 4. Open Space Regulations in County Land Development Regulations

GREENVILLE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS	
Source	Ordinance Summary
Art. 11, Cluster Developments	- Allows flexibility of lot sizes to allow for “clustered development” to protect sensitive areas, including natural habitats and open space - Requires min. amount of open space that must be accessible
Art. 13, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)	- Open Space areas will be 20% of the gross acreage of the TND - At least 25% of the open space must include neighborhood parks, central squares, playgrounds and other recreational uses. (Sec. 13.3.1)
Art. 22, Rural Conservation Subdivision	- For major subdivisions in unzoned areas - Required open space (10-25%) based on average lot size for lots less than 2 acres - Does not have to be contiguous with adjacent parcels
Art. 23, Tiny Houses	- Common Open Space area is required at 400 sf per unit. Community buildings can count as open space. - Design standards for qualifying common open space

Table 5. Existing Open Space Regulations in County Zoning Ordinance

GREENVILLE COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE	
Source	Ordinance Summary
Sec. 7.2, Open Space Residential Development	- 2 options for “Open Space Residential Development”, with required min. % of land area dedicated to open space. - Permits housing units to be grouped with reduced lot size/setbacks/frontage requirements to allow for the same allowed base density, while dedicating more land to open space. - Option 1: 2-acre min., 15 – 50% open space required - Option 2: 5-acre min., 30-65% COMMON open space required
Sec. 8:9, Scuffletown Rural Conservation District	- District established to protect open space, natural resources, and rural character in Scuffletown area. - Conservation Subdivision Design standards required for all new Major Subdivisions 8 acres or larger (excludes Planned Developments; can get conditional use exception). - Min. 50% of land must be open space. Must be connected, where possible, to larger open space network. - Intensive district perimeter landscape buffer requirements, including in front yards.
Sec. 8.9.4, Scuffletown Rural Conservation District (SRCD), Rural Estate Lot Development Option	- Applicable for lots in SRCD at least 4 acres in area. - Conditionally approved alternative that allows for the setting aside of little or no open space for permanent protection in exchange for the preservation of environmental resources, natural and scenic features, and historic resources to a degree equal to or greater than development utilizing open space design principles.

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Appendix B:

Funding Resources

Table 1. Funding Resources

FEDERAL FUNDING RESOURCES			
Name	Description	Agency	Amount
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, NRCS helps Indian Tribes, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve easements component, NRCS helps to restore, protect, and enhance enrolled wetlands.	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Approximately \$138 million was awarded in 2024
Agriculture and Food Research Initiative: Food Security Challenge Area	Funding used to develop agricultural production research, education, and extension to develop more sustainable, productive, and economically viable plant and animal production systems. This program will contribute to rural economic development and prosperity while enhancing food security and encouraging diversification of agricultural production.	National Institute of Food and Agriculture	Estimated total program funding is \$30 million (FY 2024)
Agriculture and Food Research Initiative: Water and Agriculture Challenge Area	Funding will be used to develop management practices, technologies, and tools for farmers, ranchers, forest owners and managers, public decision makers, public and private managers, and citizens to improve water resource quantity and quality.	National Institute of Food and Agriculture	Estimated total program funding is \$30 million
Competitive State Wildlife Grants Program	This nationally-competitive program provides a resource to implement or enhance the State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs), with a special focus on promoting and advancing cooperative partnerships that result in large-scale landscape conservation.	Fish and Wildlife Service	Typically provides \$7.4 million in funding annually
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance, the higher the performance, the high the payment.	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	CSP provides two types of payments through five-year contracts: annual payments for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing practices; and supplemental payments for adopting a resource conserving crop rotation. Producers may be able to renew a contract if they have successfully fulfilled the initial contract and agree to achieve additional conservation objectives.

Table 1 Cont'd

FEDERAL FUNDING RESOURCES			
Name	Description	Agency	Amount
Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)	The goals of FMPP grants are to increase domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products, and to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets by developing, improving, expanding, and providing outreach, training, and technical assistance to, or assisting in the development, improvement, and expansion of, domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities.	USDA Agricultural Marketing Service	Approximately \$10.5 million is awarded annually (FY 2024), minimum award is \$50k, maximum award is \$500k depending on project criteria.
Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	The Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) helps landowners restore, enhance and protect forestland resources on private lands through easements and financial assistance. Through HFRP, landowners promote the recovery of endangered or threatened species, improve plant and animal biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration.	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	The program offers 4 enrollment options: 1. A 10-year restoration cost-share agreement for which the landowner may receive 50% of the average cost of approved consideration practices. 2. 30-year easement for which the landowner may receive 75% of the easement value of the enrolled land plus 75% of the average cost of approved conservation practices 3. 30-year contract on acreage owned by Tribal Indians 4. Permanent easements for which landowners may receive 100% of the easement value of the enrolled land plus 100% the average cost of approved conservation practices.
Land and Water Conservation Fund	A federal program that provides matching grants for the acquisition or development of outdoor recreation areas and facilities.	United States Department of the Interior	50/50 Match Grant Program

Table 1 Cont'd

FEDERAL FUNDING RESOURCES			
Name	Description	Agency	Amount
Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)	LFPP offers grant funds with a 25% match to support the development of local and regional food business enterprises to increase domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products, and to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets.	USDA Agricultural Marketing Service	Approximately \$10.5 million is awarded annually (FY 2024), Planning grants range from \$25k to \$100k, implementation grants range from \$100k to \$500k
North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)	The NAWCA U.S. Standard grants are competitive, matching grants that support public/private partnerships carrying out projects in the U.S. that involve long term protection, restoration, and/or enhancement of wetlands and associated uplands habitats for the benefit of all wetlands-associated migratory birds.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Grants up to \$3 million can be awarded.
Organic Transitions	The overall goal is to support the development and implementation of research, extension and higher education programs to improve the competitiveness of organic livestock and crop producers, as well as those who are adopting organic practices.	National Institute of Food and Agriculture	Estimated total program funding is \$7.5 million (FY 2024)
Outdoor Recreation Legacy Program	This program provides new or significantly improved recreation opportunities in economically disadvantaged communities.	National Parks Service	1:1 Grant Match with non-federal dollars, Grant Minimum: \$300k, Grant Maximum: \$15 million.
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW)	The Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program is a voluntary, incentive-based program that provides direct technical assistance and financial assistance in the form of cooperative agreements to private landowners to restore and conserve fish and wildlife habitats.	Fish and Wildlife Service	Estimated total program funding is \$15 million.
Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program	The program's purpose is to assist eligible entities in implementing farm to school programs that improve access to local foods in eligible schools.	USDA Food and Nutrition Service	Grants range from \$50k to \$500k, estimated annual total funding is \$14.3 (FY2024)
Recreational Trails Program	A federally funded program to construct new recreational trails, improve/maintain existing trails, develop/enhance trailhead or trailside facilities, and acquire trail corridors.	Federal Highway Administration	The grant recipient must pay 100% of the cost and can submit for reimbursement for up to 80% of eligible costs.

Table 1 Cont'd

FEDERAL FUNDING RESOURCES			
Name	Description	Agency	Amount
<u>Regional Conservation Partnership Program</u>	Enhance regional cooperation to more effectively implement and maintain conservation activities, thereby promoting the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources or regional or watershed scales. A complete list of the projects and their descriptions is available on the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) website.	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Estimated total program funding is \$1.5 billion (FY 2024)
<u>Specialty Crop Block Grant Program</u>	The purpose of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as "fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture)."	USDA Agricultural Marketing Service	Approximately \$10.5 million is awarded annually (FY 2024), minimum award is \$50k, maximum award is \$500k depending on project criteria.
<u>The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)</u>	Extends and expands the benefits of the National Park Service throughout the nation to connect all Americans to their parks, trails, rivers, and other special places. Our staff helps community groups, National Parks, nonprofits, state and local governments, and tribes plan parks and trails, conserve and improve access to natural areas, and create recreation opportunities through locally led partnerships.	National Park Service	This program does not award monetary grants or loans. Instead, one of our staff with extensive experience in community-based outdoor recreation and conservation will work with you and your partners to get your project on the ground. If funding is necessary to achieve project goals, we can often assist partners in identifying and securing sources of financial assistance.
<u>The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)</u>	Competitive grants program that encourage owners and operators of privately held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by public for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife dependent recreation.	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Estimated total program funding is \$50 million
<u>Wildlife Restoration Program (Pittman Robertson Act)</u>	This program provides grant funds to the states and insular areas fish and wildlife agencies for projects to restore, conserve, manage, and enhance wild birds and mammals and their habitats.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Grant amounts vary

Table 2. State and Local Funding Resources

STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING RESOURCES			
Name	Description	Agency	Amount
Parks and Recreation Development Fund (PARD)	This is a state-funded, noncompetitive, reimbursable grant program for eligible local governments or special purpose district entities which provide recreational opportunities within each county. PARD assists with the development of new public recreation facilities or with the enhancement/renovation of existing facilities	South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism	80/20 Match Grant Program
Private Match Challenge	Similar to the Project-By-Project funding mechanism described in chapter 4 utilizing private funding sources, a Private Match Challenge is a financing method used to incentivize private donors to give more to “unlock” extra funds. With this, the local government would set a target private funding goal, which would be matched with public funding from the local government.	Greenville County, Other Municipalities	Funding determined by ideal split between public and private funding to meet the desired total amount.
Revolving County-Funded Loans	A Revolving Loan Fund is a finance tool that can be used by local governments often used to fill financing gaps, providing funds that might be needed to supplement loans from other sources or to secure projects that would otherwise be inviable. These loans are designed to be “revolving” in that the funds are replenished as the loans are repaid, allowing them to be used again and again to support multiple projects. This method could be used by the county to support numerous open space and recreational projects.	Greenville County	Loan amounts to be determined by identified project costs.
Undiscovered SC Grant	This grant program is designed to assist communities with the development of publicly owned tourism products and attractions that will encourage visitation to South Carolina.	South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism	Minimum grant award: \$100,00 Maximum grant award: \$200,000

Table 2 Cont'd

STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING RESOURCES			
Name	Description	Agency	Amount
South Carolina Conservation Bank	The South Carolina Conservation Bank works to improve the quality of life in South Carolina by conserving forest lands, farmlands, wetlands, historical properties, archaeological sites, and urban parks. Grants are available for acquisition and protection of open space.	South Carolina Conservation Bank	In total, over \$290 million in grants have been awarded.
South Carolina Community Development Block Grants	The Community Development Block Grant provides grants to eligible local governments that do not directly receive CDBG funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). CDBG grants can fund a variety of projects from revitalizing neighborhoods to improving community infrastructure, providing public facilities and creating or retaining jobs.	South Carolina Department of Commerce and US Department of Housing and Urban Development	Funding varies based on project type.
Special Tax District	A local government can create a special tax district in which an additional property tax is levied on properties within the defined district. Special Tax Districts can be created for a specific purpose, such as community recreation, to specifically fund identified parks, sports fields, community centers, or other parks and recreation projects. Special tax districts can also collect funding through user fees (for services like water or utilities), sales taxes, and bonds.	Greenville County	Funding varies depending on method chosen and rate set to be collected.

Table 3. Private Funding Resources

PRIVATE FUNDING RESOURCES			
Name	Description	Agency	Amount
AARP Community Challenge Grant	Provides quick action grants to help make communities more livable for people of all ages.	American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)	Since 2017, more than \$20.1 million has been funded through 1,700 grants.
MLB Youth Development Foundation Grants	Created to increase participation in and expand access to youth baseball and softball. The program prioritizes bold, innovative, and creative ideas that increase opportunities for youth, particularly those who are minorities, girls, and/or located in under-resourced communities. Funds may be used to support capital projects (e.g. field renovations), baseball/softball programs, and education initiatives.	Major League Baseball	315 grants have been awarded totaling over \$31.2 million.
National Environmental Education Foundation, Various Grants (NEEF)	The nation's leading organization in lifelong environmental learning, creating opportunities for people of all ages to experience and learn about the environment in ways that improve their lives and the health of the planet. The NEEF offers various grants with private funding partners in for projects relating to conservation, health, and environmental education.	National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF)	Specific funding varies per grant. Since 1995, over 1,000 grants have been awarded totaling almost \$14 million.
Walmart's Acres for American Program	Walmart and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation have teamed up to establish the Acres for America Program to conserve lands of national significance, protect critical fish and wildlife habitat and benefit people and local economies. Program Priorities include: 1. Conserve critical habitats for birds, fish, plants and wildlife. 2. Connect existing protected lands to unify wild places and protect migration routes. 3. Provide access for people to enjoy the outdoors. 4. Ensure the future of local economies that depend on forestry, ranching, and recreation.	Walmart and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	In 2024, it was announced that the program was renewed for 10 years with an anticipated \$34.5 million in funding.
Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative	Provides funding to facilitate high priority bird-focused conservation projects. Projects should actively manage, restore, and or steward land in a way that enhances habitat and promotes bird conservation	Cornell University Lab or Ornithology	\$25,000 grants available for management and restoration projects and \$10,000 grants for capacity and partnership projects

Appendix C:

Pickens County Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway Ordinance

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
)
COUNTY OF PICKENS)

ORDINANCE # 617

WHEREAS Pickens County, South Carolina (the "County") is a political subdivision of the State of South Carolina and is thereby authorized to enact regulations, resolutions, and ordinances, not inconsistent with the Constitution and general law of this State, including the exercise of these powers in relation to health and order in counties or respecting any subject as appears to them necessary and proper for the security, general welfare, and convenience of counties or for preserving health, peace, order, and good government in them; and

WHEREAS, as such the County is further authorized by state law to establish and enforce reasonable land use regulations and/or restrictions, official maps, regulations on structures or changes in land use, building sites or open spaces, and other development and/or use standard in order to promote and preserve the public safety, economy, good order, appearance, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare, and

WHEREAS, South Carolina Highway 11 ("HWY 11") follows part of the historic Cherokee Path through the Blue Ridge Escarpment of South Carolina, spanning 118 miles through five counties, including Pickens County and was designated the "Cherokee Foothills Scenic Byway" on June 9, 1998, establishing it as a National Scenic Byway under the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to recognize, protect, and promote America's most outstanding roads; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the requirement that a National Scenic Byway must possess characteristics of regional significance within at least one of the intrinsic quality categories of scenic, natural, historic, recreational, archaeological, or cultural, the byway must demonstrate strong community support and a corridor management plan must be developed that describes in detail the preservation, marketing, and improvement strategies for the byway; and

WHEREAS, the Corridor Management Plan was developed in 1997 as a collaborative effort between the Appalachian Council of Governments, the appointed Advisory Committee and various residents and businesses from the Highway 11 corridor area and across the region; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the state South Carolina enacted the Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act in 1994 that allows for local governments to engage in planning activities; and

WHEREAS, the Unified Development Standards Ordinance of Pickens County (hereinafter the "UDSO") sets forth in Article 1 that its purpose is to conserve and ensure access to the County's natural and scenic resources for future generations to enjoy; and

WHEREAS, Pickens County Council adopted the Pickens County Comprehensive Plan in March of 2022 that states an objective to preserve natural beauty; protect mountain vistas, lakes and river watersheds, and forest preserves; increase green space areas; protect pristine land all in a manner that respects the rights of property owners as well as an objective to continue to protect and market the SR 11 corridor and

the County's lakes and mountains to create economic and recreational opportunities related to recreation and tourism in a way that minimizes impact to these natural resources; and

WHEREAS, Pickens County Council established a vision for the County that emphasizes the importance of protecting and enhancing our unique nature; and

WHEREAS, in furtherance of this vision, County Council authorized a 2020 Branding and Marketing Study by the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor ("SCNHC") to conduct an analysis of our County-wide strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; and

WHEREAS, one of the key recommendations provided in the SCNHC study was to investigate and consider protections for HWY 11 through the adoption of a scenic overlay ordinance for The Cherokee Foothills Scenic Byway; and

WHEREAS, based on the recommendation of the SCHNC study, County Council requested a further study of HWY 11 Corridor by the Appalachian County of Governments ("ACOG"); and

WHEREAS, County Council voted for a Moratorium on development along the corridor until such time as the ACOG-led Corridor Study could be completed and considered; and

WHEREAS, during the study, ACOG and the County's Division of Community and Tourism Development scheduled numerous public meetings to receive public comment from citizens and stakeholders, both in person and online; and

WHEREAS, ACOG completed its study, and presented its findings and recommendations to County Council in April of 2022; and

WHEREAS, the results of the ACOG study and its extensive community engagement resulted in a series of recommendations, including 1) preserving the natural and remote characteristics of the corridor's unique driving experience, 2) buffering and/or sighting residential uses so as to limit impact on the visual characteristics of the corridor, 3) limiting commercial development to maintain the rural and natural features of the corridor, 4) excluding industrial impacts, 5) recognizing and protecting the historic, environmental, and cultural significance of the corridor and its features, and 6) preserving the corridor's unique driving experience; and

WHEREAS, the Pickens County Planning Commission also held a public hearing on the ACOG study and its recommendations, and subsequently voted unanimously to advance and endorse the study's recommendation to County Council; and

WHEREAS, as part of the study and public comments the HWY 11 view shed was identified as a desirable natural asset that should be preserved for future generations and that the preservation of the viewshed can be fostered by methods that require further consideration and/or regulation; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the above referenced recitals, public inputs, studies, and approvals, the County Council of Pickens County has found, and does hereby find, that the preservation of the unique nature of the Natural Heritage Area is in the best interest of the County, its citizens, and the region's natural environment,

and is necessary and proper for the security, general welfare, and convenience of County and/or for preserving health, peace, order, and good government in the County;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Pickens County Code of Ordinances be amended as follows:

ORDINANCE FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PICKENS COUNTY NATURAL HERITAGE AREA

Section 1. DEFINITIONS

A. Pickens County Natural Heritage Area

1. Natural Heritage Area (hereinafter "THE HERITAGE AREA") is the area bound by a line One Thousand (1000) feet in a southern direction from the center line of Highway 11 northward to a line One Thousand (1000) feet in a northern direction from the center line of Highway 11. The area is bound by Greenville County on the east and Oconee County on the west. The area also includes the areas north and south of Highway 11 which are in the Highway 11 viewshed. A map of the above described area is incorporated herein and shall be dispositive to any ambiguity in the description as Exhibit A.
2. Exclusions
 - a. Areas within Subdivisions which have filed covenants and restrictions created prior to the passage of this Ordinance are excluded from THE HERITAGE AREA.
 - b. Areas within Subdivisions which have filed covenants and restrictions approved by the Pickens County Planning Commission as conforming to the character of THE HERITAGE AREA subsequent to the passage of this Ordinance are excluded from THE HERITAGE AREA.
 - c. Areas within 1000 feet of the shoreline of Lake Keowee are excluded from THE HERITAGE AREA.

B. Highway 11 Buffer

1. Highway 11 Buffer The area one hundred fifty (150) feet north of and one hundred fifty (150) feet south of the center line of Highway 11 in Pickens County South Carolina. Highway 11 traverses Pickens County approximately 21 miles from Oconee County on the west to Greenville County on the east.

C. Major Roads

1. Major Roads. Public roads with the classification of 1, 2 or 3 as set forth by Pickens County and more particularly described in Exhibit B.

Section 2. BUFFER

A. Setback Disturbance Prohibition

1. No development other than the maintenance or approved renovation of existing construction is allowed within the Highway 11 Buffer.
2. No land disturbance, such as cutting of trees, grading, paving, or other disturbance to the character and heritage of the NATURAL HERITAGE AREA may occur within the Highway 11 Buffer.

B. Exclusions from Buffer Setback Disturbance Prohibition

1. Major Road Intersection Exclusion. The Setback Disturbance Prohibition shall not apply to areas 500 feet along the roadway from the centerline intersection of Major Roads. Should the intersection be of more than two Major Roads then the exclusion shall be 500 feet along each roadway from the centerline intersection of each road.
2. Access Exclusion. The Planning Commission may grant an access exclusion through the buffer upon submission of a site plan and remediation plan submitted by or on behalf of the property owner. The access exclusion shall be for access to property through the buffer. The access exclusion shall be in compliance with the remainder of the restrictions set forth herein. The access exclusion for Driveways and entrance roads shall comply with the Pickens County UDSO (Unified Development Standards Ordinance)

Section 3. INDUSTRIAL USE PROHIBITED

Heavy Industrial Uses are prohibited in THE HERITAGE AREA. For the purposes of this ordinance, Heavy Industrial Uses are defined in the Pickens County Unified Development Standards Ordinance, Section 1603.

Light Industrial Uses as defined in the Pickens County Unified Development Standards Ordinance, Section 1603, may be approved subject to all Commercial Use and Site Design Limitations in Section 4 hereunder. However, if the primary use of the subject property is residential Section 5 hereunder may regulate the use of the property with approval of the Planning Commission.

Section 4. COMMERCIAL USE AND SITE DESIGN LIMITATIONS

- A. Commercial uses including new construction, rehabilitation of construction, maintenance, and remodeling or renovation projects within the area defined as THE HERITAGE AREA and maintenance and renovation of existing commercial within the Highway 11 Buffer are subject to the limitations and requirements set forth in this Section 4. For the purposes of this ordinance, Commercial Use is defined in the Pickens County Unified Development Standards Ordinance.
- B. Compliance with the requirements set forth in this Ordinance shall be required prior to the issuance of any building, electrical, stormwater, development, and/or land use permit. A

temporary permit may be issued if it is demonstrated that work necessary to bring the parcel into compliance with this Ordinance will be undertaken simultaneously with a development, rehabilitation, remodeling, or redevelopment project.

- C. All Land Use Plans and Development Plans proposed for THE HERITAGE AREA or Highway 11 Buffer shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission.
- D. Clearcutting of land is not allowed unless it is part of an integrated pest management program as recommended by a certified forester or the South Carolina Forestry Commission.

Section 4.1. LIMITATIONS ON BUILDING MATERIALS

All facades of buildings visible from a road in THE HERITAGE AREA, including accessory buildings, must have fenestration and articulation on all sides with the consistent and appropriate materials, detailing, and features:

- A. All buildings shall be constructed of brick, stone, exposed timber, fiber cement siding, wood siding, shingle siding, or other material that is consistent with the natural features of THE HERITAGE AREA. No building shall be covered with sheet or corrugated metal or with vinyl siding. Exterior building materials shall be continued to finished grade of any elevation in accordance with manufacturer specifications.
- B. Architectural accent materials located above the roof line shall be constructed of brick, stone, wood, pre-cast concrete, architectural quality steel, fiber cement siding or other high quality, long-lasting material that is consistent with the natural features of THE HERITAGE AREA. Accent materials shall be approved by the Planning Commission.
- C. The color of all structures must be those occurring in the natural environment of THE HERITAGE AREA, such as various natural shades and earth tone hues. Neon, unnatural, or fluorescent colors are prohibited. Colors must be approved by the Planning Commission.

Section 4.2. LIMITATIONS ON BUILDING CONFIGURATION

- A. Building facades shall have no more than one hundred (100) feet of frontage on any road in THE HERITAGE AREA and shall not exceed thirty-five (35) feet in height from existing grade at the proposed building site location. Buildings located on steep areas shall conform to hillside topography by stepping or staggering the mass of the proposed structure up or down the slope.
- B. Building masses shall maintain a balance of scale and proportion using design components which are harmonious with natural landforms and landscaping.
- C. Proposed structures shall not be sited atop peaks or silhouetted against the sky when viewed from a road within THE HERITAGE AREA.

- D. Retaining walls visible from any public right of way shall not exceed ten (10) feet in height as measured from grade at face to top of wall. Multiple "stepped" retaining walls whose total height exceeds ten (10) feet must each be offset by at least eight (8) horizontal feet. Visible walls shall be colored and textured to complement the background land and vegetation. "Stepped" walls shall have three (3) understory trees and ten (10) 6'-8' shrubs per one hundred (100) feet of offset.
- E. Changes in existing elevation and/or slope beyond fifteen (15) degrees from existing and/or natural conditions are hereby prohibited.
- F. Sites with multiple buildings shall have a uniform design and material composition amongst the buildings.

Section 4.3. ARCHITECTURAL LIMITATIONS

Elements of articulation shall be employed on any building visible from any public right-of-way to reduce the apparent bulk and uniform appearance of large buildings, provide visual interest and variety, and reinforce local architecture. A minimum of three (3) articulations of at least twelve (12) inches, in addition to fenestration or change of material for each fifty (50) feet of façade is required.

Section 4.4. ROOF DESIGN LIMITATIONS

The roof of any building shall present a distinctive profile and add interest to larger buildings and complement the character of other buildings included on the same lot or parcel.

- A. All structures with a footprint of three thousand (3,000) square feet or less shall incorporate a pitched roof system; all others shall be constructed of either a pitched, parapet, or mansard roof system (enclosed on all sides).
- B. Standing seam metal roofs shall be constructed of a factory-treated, non-metallic, matte finish. Metal roofs with lapped seam construction, bituminous built-up roofs, and flat, membrane-type roofs which are visible from any public right-of-way shall be prohibited.
- C. All rooftop mechanical equipment and vents greater than eight (8) inches in diameter shall be screened from the line of sight of public rights-of-way, private roads, parking lots, public sidewalks, greenways, and internal pedestrian ways except for instances where site topography precludes reasonable compliance with the minimum screening requirement. Materials used to screen equipment must be compliant with those listed in Section 3.1. This screening, if necessary, shall not be counted towards the thirty-five (35) foot maximum building height.

Section 4.5 PROHIBITION OF FRANCHISE ARCHITECTURE

To maintain the unique character of THE HERITAGE AREA, buildings shall not be constructed or renovated using franchise and/or branded architecture. Any commercial use must follow the standards of this ordinance to remain strictly compatible with the existing topography, features, and character of THE HERITAGE AREA.

Section 4.6 LIMITATIONS ON PARKING LOTS

Vehicular use areas are defined as any area used for movement, circulation, parking and/or display of any type of vehicle, including but not limited to parking lots, loading and unloading areas and sales service areas. Vehicular use areas under the jurisdiction of this Ordinance must be located behind the front building line and screened with a ten (10) foot Class 2 buffer and shall comply with the following standards:

- A. When a parking lot contains twenty-five (25) or more spaces, an area equal to twenty (20) percent of the total interior square footage of the vehicular use area shall be dedicated to landscaping. The twenty (20) percent landscape requirement is in addition to any required buffers as outlined in this Ordinance and in Article 8 of the Pickens County Unified Development Standards Ordinance.
- B. Landscaped areas shall contain a mixture of native canopy trees, understory trees, evergreens/conifers, and shrubs. Article 8 of the Pickens County Unified Development Standards Ordinance details the minimum standards for plant sizes, substitutions, installation, and maintenance of landscaped areas.
- C. All paved area planting plans must demonstrate complete canopy coverage from hardwood trees after fifteen (15) years of growth.
- D. The minimum landscape area for each tree shall be no less than one hundred seventy (170) square feet with four (4) foot minimum distance between all trees and paving at time of planting, measured at the base of the tree.
- E. For any developments with twohundred fifty (250) feet or less of frontage on a road in THE HERITAGE AREA, only one (1) curb cut shall be allowed. Developments with more than two hundred fifty (250) feet of frontage shall be allowed two (2) curbs cuts.
- F. No drive-through windows allowed.

Section 4.7 LIMITATIONS ON EXTERIOR LIGHTING

- A. All outdoor light fixtures shall be fully shielded and Dark Sky Compliant (as defined by the International Dark-Sky Association). A fully shielded fixture must be a full cutoff luminaire or a decorative luminaire with full cutoff optics, and is defined as an outdoor lighting that is shielded or constructed so that all light emitted is projected below a horizontal plane running through the lowest part of the fixtures.
- B. No flickering or flashing lights shall be permitted.
- C. Fixtures shall be limited to twenty-five (25) feet in height.
- D. Planning staff may require submission of an exterior lighting plan if deemed necessary to ensure compliance with the intent of this Ordinance.

Section 4.8 LIMITATIONS ON SIGNAGE

Signs within THE HERITAGE AREA boundary shall conform to Article 7 of the Pickens County Unified Development Standards Ordinance and shall also be subject to the following standards and prohibitions:

- A. In addition to the signs prohibited in Section 704 of the Pickens County Unified Development Standards Ordinance, the following signs shall be prohibited in THE HERITAGE AREA:
 - 1. Free-standing pole signs;
 - 2. Water towers as advertising;
 - 3. Wall murals as advertising;
 - 4. Any and all off-premise signs, including billboards;
 - 5. Electronic signs;
 - 6. Streamers, pennants, ribbons, spinners and other similar devices;
 - 7. Signs containing reflective elements that sparkle or twinkle in the sunlight; and
 - 8. Signs containing moving parts.
- B. One (1) free-standing monument sign shall be permitted per parcel of land:
 - 1. Single tenant monument signs shall not exceed fifty (50) square feet in area and ten (10) feet in height above the finished grade elevation at the edge of the adjacent public roadway.
 - 2. Multi-tenant monument signs shall not exceed one hundred (100) square feet in area and fifteen (15) feet in height above the finished grade elevation at the edge of the adjacent public roadway.
 - 3. Signs shall be setback ten (10) feet from public rights-of-way and property line(s) and may be located within a buffer yard, however, there shall be no reduction in the planting requirements of any buffer yard.
 - 4. Monument signs shall be constructed of brick, stone or similar materials that are used on the principal building. Landscaping around the base of the sign shall be required.
- C. Permanent signs attached to buildings shall be limited to fifty (50) square feet in size and limited to one (1) per building.
- D. Signs may be externally illuminated. External illumination must be directed downward; text and logo only may be illuminated. Internally lit signs are prohibited.

Section 5. SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL USE

- A. Single Family Residential use in THE HERITAGE AREA is subject to all requirements now existing or created in the future. Any subdivisions shall be limited to ten or fewer homes. Single Family Residential use is not further limited by the design provisions of this Ordinance.
- B. Single Family Residential is defined as a single-family residential structure.
- C. Multi-Family use is deemed to be Commercial Use.

Section 6. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PICKENS COUNTY CONSERVATION BANK

Section 6.1. The Pickens County Conservation Bank (hereinafter THE BANK) is hereby established

- 1) to foster the protection of lands with significant natural resources,
- 2) to aid in the preservation of historic structures and areas chosen by Pickens County Council, and
- 3) to foster the advancement of cultural structures and areas all of which must be at least partially located in Pickens County, South Carolina

Section 6.2. PROCESS TO PROVIDE FUNDS

- A. Pickens County Community and Tourism Development staff will:
 - 1. Establish guidelines and procedures necessary to establish the BANK;
 - 2. Develop a ranking system for applications pursuant to the criteria in Sections 6.3;
 - 3. Receive applications from Eligible Bank Recipients pursuant to Sections 6.3;
 - a. Eligible Bank Recipient means any of the following:
 - 1. Pickens County;
 - 2. A municipality in Pickens County;
 - 3. An agency or commission of Pickens County whose mission directly relates to the conservation of lands with significant natural resources;
 - 4. A not-for-profit charitable corporation or trust authorized to do business in South Carolina and organized and operated for natural resource conservation or land conservation, and having tax-exempt status as a public charity under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, and having the power to acquire, hold, and maintain interests in land for these purposes;
 - 5. Federal, state, and local agencies organized and operated for natural resource protection, or land conservation purposes.

4. Evaluate applications from Eligible Bank Recipients for eligibility in the program pursuant to Section 6.3;
 5. Review and rank applications from Eligible Bank Recipients pursuant to the ranking system;
 6. Submit Eligible Bank Recipients to Pickens County Council for approval; and
 7. Submit an annual report of the BANK to Pickens County Council
- B. Pickens County Council may approve and award grants to Eligible Bank Recipients with such conditions as determined County Council.
- C. The County Administrator will provide the administrative resources and support needed to operate and manage the BANK.

Section 6.3. CRITERIA

Pickens County Community and Tourism Development staff shall use the following conservation criteria in developing a ranking system for applications to the BANK:

Section 6.3.1 Natural Resources Criteria

- A. Environmental Sensitivity
 1. Presence of wetlands;
 2. Frontage on USGS blue line streams;
 3. Water quality classification of stream by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control;
 4. Presence of threatened and/or endangered species;
 5. Habitat suitable for threatened and/or endangered species;
 6. Habitat suitable for native wildlife species;
 7. Extent of biological diversity
 8. Presence of unique geological and/or natural features; or
 9. Percentage of Property Sharing a Boundary with Protected Land
- B. Percentage of Property Containing Prime/ Statewide Important Soil Types
- C. Extent of Active Farming on Property
- D. Extent of Public Visibility of Property
 1. Visibility from public roads
 2. Visibility from public land
- E. Scenic view from property
- F. Extent of public access
- G. Location of property
- H. Threat of development
- I. Size of property

Section 6.3.2 Historic Criteria

The criteria for determining and ranking projects for funding under the historic criteria as determined by the Pickens County Community and Tourism Development shall be set forth in writing to the Pickens County Council for approval prior to March 15, 2023.

Section 6.3.3 Cultural Criteria

The criteria for determining and ranking projects for funding under the cultural criteria as determined by the Pickens County Community and Tourism Development shall be set forth in writing to the Pickens County Council for approval prior to March 15, 2023.

Section 6.4. EMINENT DOMAIN OR CONDEMNATION PROCEEDINGS

The BANK may not be used to acquire interests in lands or other interests in real property through the exercise of any power of eminent domain or condemnation proceedings.

Section 6.5. RECREATIONAL AND ECONOMIC USE

The provisions of this Ordinance shall not be construed to eliminate or unreasonably restrict hunting, fishing, farming, forestry, timber management, or wildlife habitat management, as regulated by the law of this State, upon lands for which interests in lands are obtained pursuant to this Ordinance. These and other traditional and compatible activities may be conducted, where appropriate, upon lands protected or acquired by the BANK.

Section 6.6. BANK ACCOUNT

The Pickens County Treasurer shall establish an account for the BANK that is separate and distinct from all other funds appropriated by County Council. The BANK shall receive revenues according to one or more funding measures approved by Pickens County Council. The Council acknowledges and agrees that funding measures shall be undertaken as soon as feasible in order to avoid escalating land costs and lost acquisition and protection opportunities. Any funds not fully expended during the fiscal year shall remain in the BANK and be available for grants in subsequent years unless the Council expressly provides otherwise.

Section 7. LEGAL STATUS PROVISIONS

Section 7.1. AUTHORITY

This ordinance is adopted pursuant to authority conferred by the South Carolina Code of Laws upon Pickens County in Title VI, Chapter 29, Section 710 of South Carolina Code of Laws. Likewise, 4-9-25 of the South

Carolina Code of Laws provides counties with the police power to regulate for health, safety and welfare of local citizens.

SECTION 7.2. SEVERABILITY

Should any section or provision of this Ordinance be declared invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such declaration shall not affect the validity of the Ordinance as a whole or any part thereof, other than the part or application so declared to be invalid or unconstitutional.

SECTION 7.3. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS

Nothing contained in this Ordinance is intended to relieve compliance with any other Ordinance or law adopted and in effect by Pickens County, South Carolina, or the United States. Where any provision or regulation contained in this Ordinance is in conflict with any other Ordinance of Pickens County, South Carolina the stricter regulation shall apply.

SECTION 7.4. CASE OF HARDSHIP

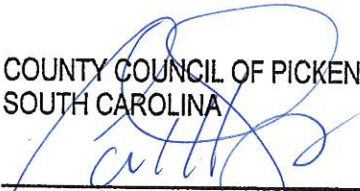
If any of the provisions or regulations contained in this ordinance impose an undue hardship on any property owner, that property owner has the right to seek relief through the Pickens County Board of Appeals. Variance procedures and criteria for determination of a hardship shall be as specified in the Pickens County Development Standards Ordinance.

SECTION 7.5. ENACTMENT

This Ordinance shall become fully enforced and binding upon its formal adoption by Pickens County, South Carolina.

Passed and approved, this 5th day of December, 2022.

COUNTY COUNCIL OF PICKENS COUNTY,
SOUTH CAROLINA


Chris Bowers, Chairman of County Council
Pickens County, South Carolina

(SEAL)

Attest:

Meagan Nations

Meagan Nations, Clerk of County Council
Pickens County, South Carolina

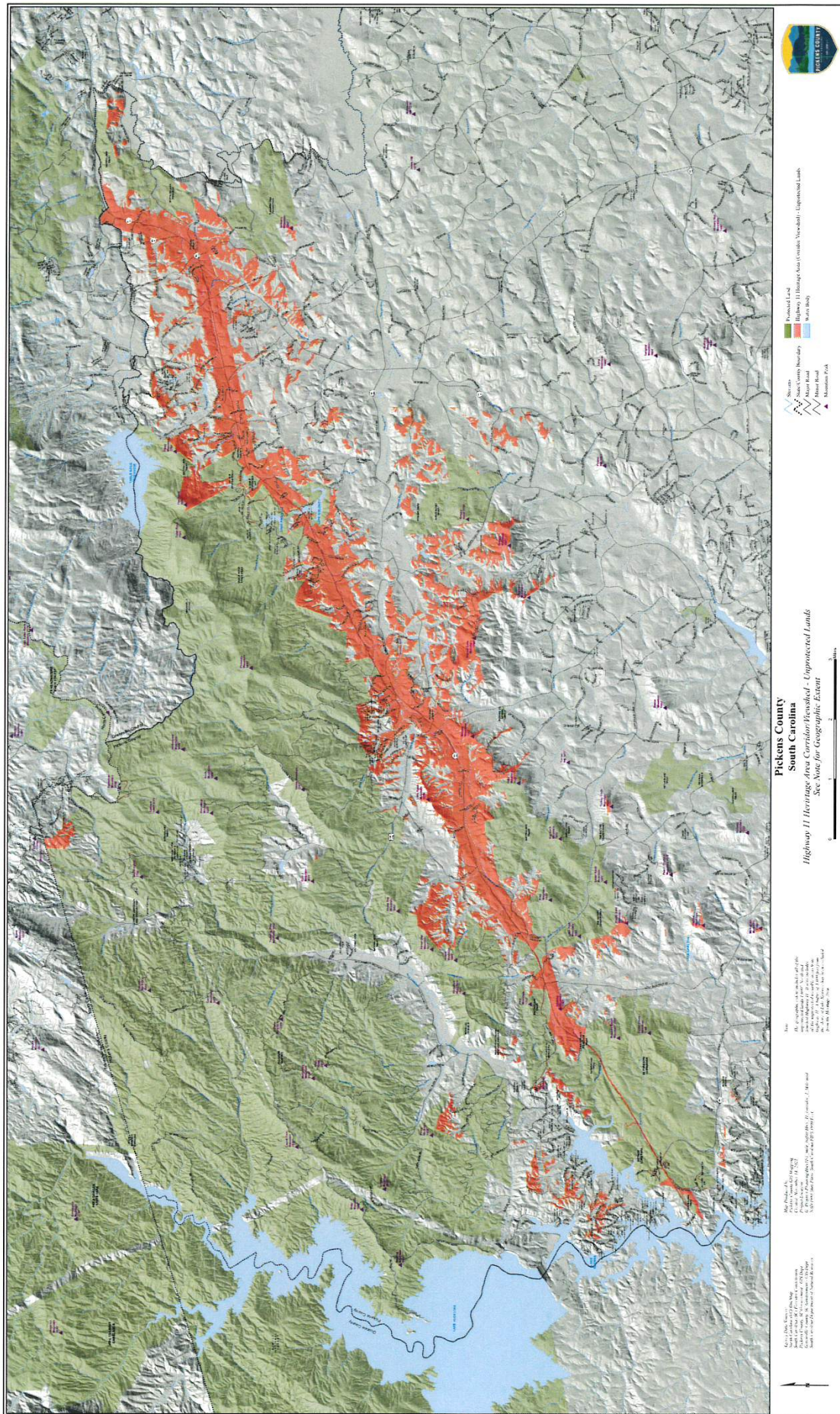


Exhibit A

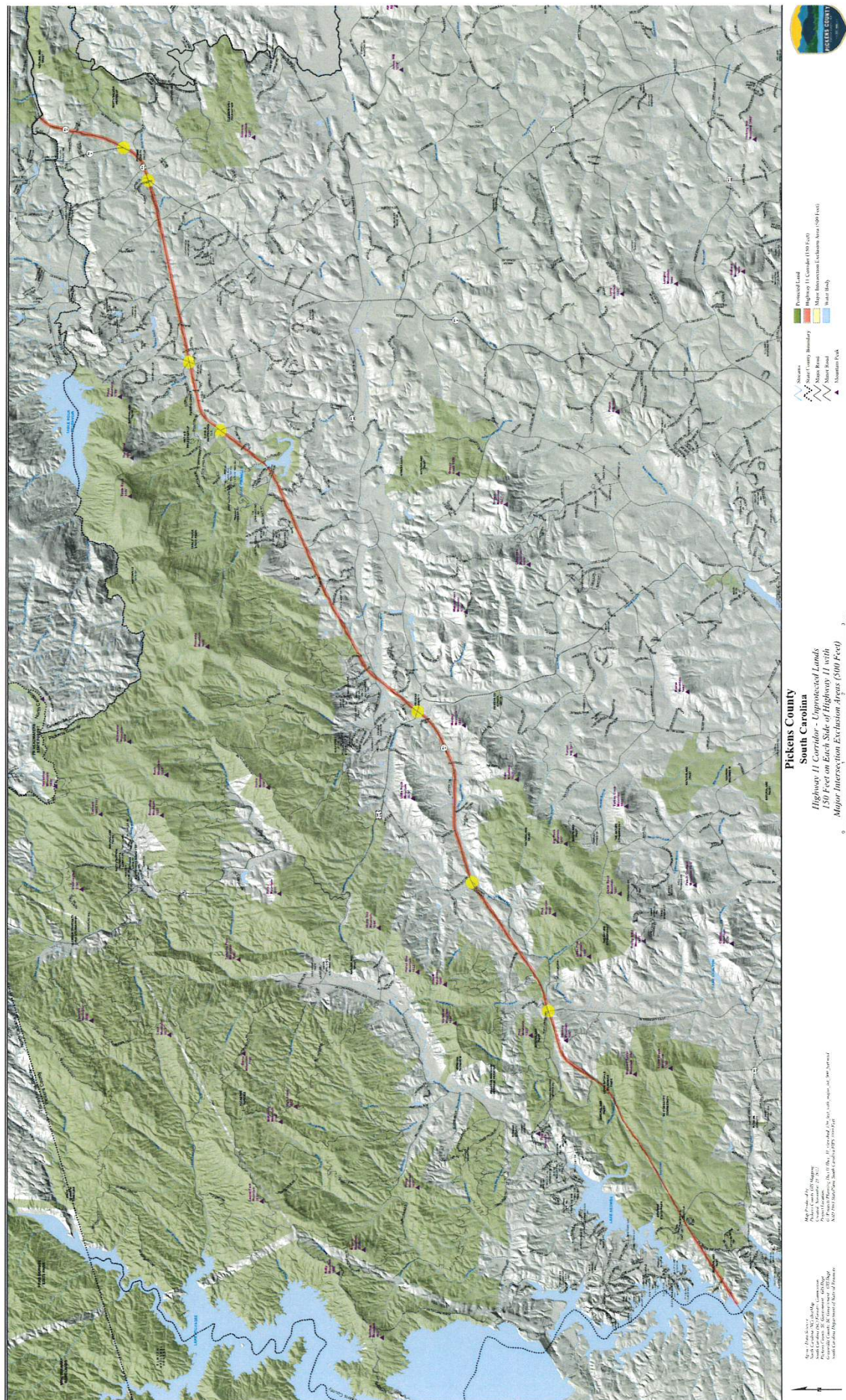


Exhibit B

Appendix D:

Prioritization Mapping Methodology and Preliminary Results Memo



To: Greenville County

From: David Wasserman, Cyrus Chimento, Lucy Laird, and Kimberly Williams

Date: 1/29/2025

Re: Greenville County Open Space Prioritization – Revised Methodology and Preliminary Results

Prioritization Analysis

Alta proposed a prioritization process that would identify the best opportunities for open space preservation by scoring lands within Greenville County based on their proximity to natural lands and other ecological resources, their status as working lands, and their access to cultural resources and open space recreation opportunities. To that end, Alta has developed a suite of prioritization metrics to identify these distinct locations based on three overarching goals. Below is a methodology for this prioritization.

Whole Area Prioritization

The unit of analysis for prioritization analysis is often not heavily scrutinized as part of open space planning efforts. However, questions that can have subtle and cascading impacts on what projects are prioritized and how data analysis should be interpreted can arise without defining a unit of analysis. Different projects have different needs from their units of analysis, but where possible, Alta prefers to provide resilient and robust analysis outputs where underlying analysis metrics are assessed across entire networks. To develop a resilient prioritization process for Greenville, Alta recommended a **whole area prioritization** process that used an “evaluation grid” consisting of a disaggregated hex grid¹. The goal of these grids is to score all general locations and enable average scores to show prioritization results by different geographies, such as by neighborhood or jurisdiction. The benefit of this unit of analysis is that each area under study is equal in size and has a uniform shape that is known to work well for spatial sampling. The approximate target size for hexagons is smaller than a typical traffic analysis zone (small neighborhood) but larger than one downtown block. These hexagons, once scored, can be used to score individual projects based on the average scores of hexagons within some proximity of them. This is a flexible approach that supports scoring on-street and new off-street facilities on a similar basis as equal area geographies are weighted equally to create average scores. An example of the relative size of the H3 grid compared to the street network is visible in **Figure 1**.

¹ This hex grid will be based on either a [generated tessellation](#) or on using [H3](#). The main difference is the degree of control over the resulting geometry with generated tessellations having more custom patterns to which they can adhere. H3 would be pulling from a global repository of hexagons at different scales. These hexagons have unique IDs and are popular for spatial analysis because in theory any aggregation to H3 grids for other analysis could be easily joined in that they reference consistent spatial grids.

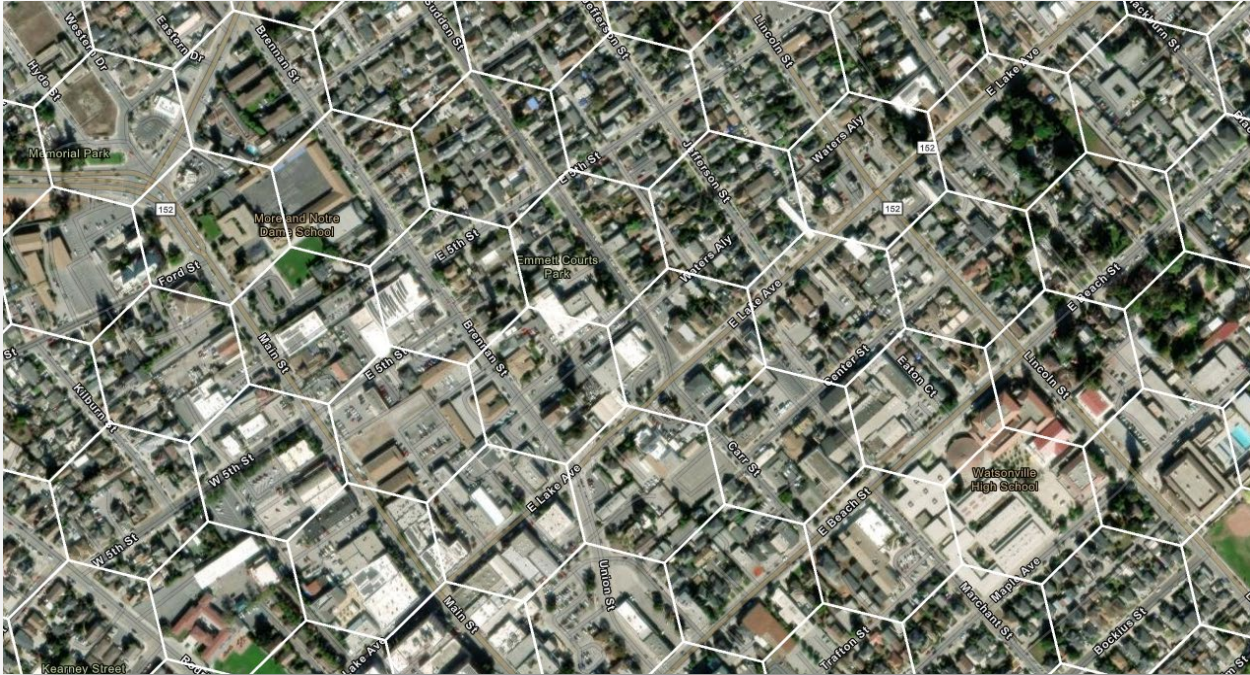


Figure 1. Example H3 hex grid at resolution ten

Scoring Processes

There are several types of scoring processes applied to the hexagon layers within this prioritization. The most common scoring methods were a ranking of a sampled metric or proximity functions. Other measures that did not fall into these categories and have their detailed prioritization criteria shared in **Table 2** used a scoring process appropriate to its criterion.

Sampled Metrics

Sampled metrics are values from larger geographies such as census tracts that we want to associate to the hexagons, which are a much smaller geography. One such value is the number of trips to open space destinations. This sampling process used area-weighted sampling for sampled values, which is based on a proportional allocation process as shown in **Figure 2**. The statistics pulled into the hexagons can be proportional sums (the number of estimated trips in a hexagon) or averages (the area-weighted average CDC SVI score).

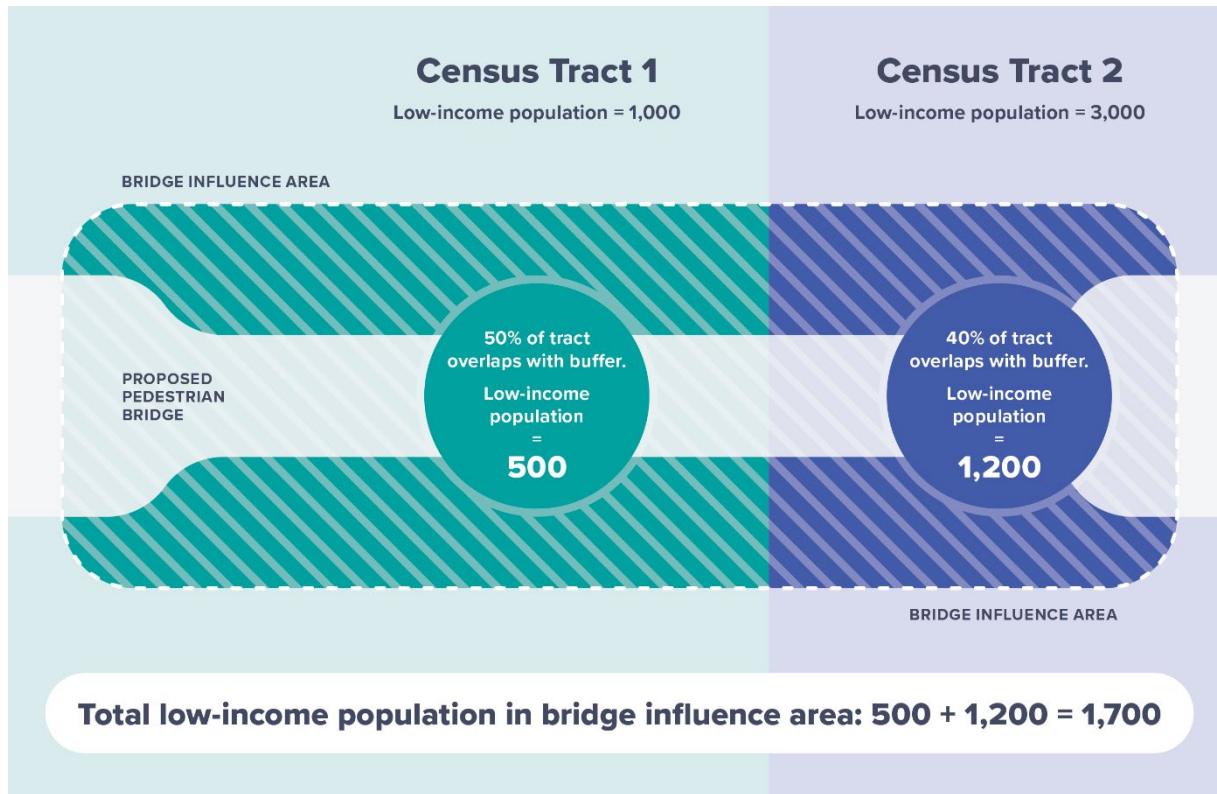


Figure 2. Proportional allocation process illustration for proportional sums.

Proximity Metrics

Proximity metrics refer to the distance from a hexagon to different entities, which will determine its point value. **Table 1** identifies the major proximity functions referenced for some of the criteria identified in our proposed prioritization approach in **Table 2**.

Table 1 Proximity Functions table identifies the suggested points for different proximities based on their type. Referenced in the prioritization summary.

Criteria			Points
Need Proximity Function	Hazard Proximity Function	Benefit Proximity Function	
2 Miles +	0 - 330 Feet	500 Feet	10 Points
2 Miles	330 - 660 Feet	¼ Mile	8 Points
1 Mile	660 – 990 Feet	½ Mile	6 Points
¾ Mile	990 – 1320 Feet	¾ Mile	4 Points
½ Mile	+1320 Feet	1 Mile	2 Points
¼ Mile	0 Feet	1+ Miles	1 Point

Prioritization Criteria

Prioritization allows us to apply the community’s values to data to understand which projects will provide the greatest return on investment and help communities identify where to start. **Table 2** summarizes the analysis criteria used to guide prioritization for the Greenville County Open Space Plan, which is designed to guide prioritization efforts for open space investments. **See Figure 3 of this memo to see the full analysis prioritization approach as a graphic.** The table outlines key criteria, measures, data sources, hexagon scoring methods, and various weighting scenarios focused on equity, recreation and access, natural resource protection, and the preservation of working lands. Note that data and methodology varied slightly from the originally proposed process once the model development was underway and data was explored more deeply. For example, all scores are assumed to have a minimum of one point so that all scores are between 1 and 10, and the hazard proximity reward index was changed to reward buffering of hazards by preserved open spaces.

The final prioritization score was a weighted sum of the final subscores of the three scoring factors: recreation and cultural resource access, natural resources and ecology, and working lands. The recreation and cultural resource access and working lands subscores accounted for 25% each of the final score, while the natural resources and ecology subscore accounted for 50% of the final score.

Table 2 Greenville County Open Space Prioritization Map Methodology Criteria

Criteria	Measures	Data Source	Hexagon Scoring	Weights
RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCE ACCESS				
Walking Access to Parks, Trails, and Publicly Accessible Open Space	Areas that are lacking access to a park or open spaces and areas that lack connection to existing trails as defined by a 15-minute walkshed. Longer travel times are awarded higher points, since these areas should be considered higher priority for access improvement.	Greenville County Parks and SC Conservation Bank conserved lands/public lands data Trailheads/trail system Trailhead layer was created based on the intersections of state and local roadways with OpenStreetMap trails data. The layer excluded paths located along golf courses.	Hexagons were given points based on the travel times by mode that their centers fell within. Point allocations were: 5 Minute Walk – 1 Point 10 Minute Walk – 4 Points 15 Minute Walk – 7 Points 15 Minute + Walk – 10 Points	RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCE ACCESS WEIGHT: 25%



MEMORANDUM

Criteria	Measures	Data Source	Hexagon Scoring	Weights
Driving Access to Parks, Trails, and Publicly Accessible Open Space	Areas that are lacking access to a park within a 15-minute drive are areas that are lacking access to parks. Longer travel times are awarded higher points, since these areas should be considered higher priority for access improvement.	Greenville County Parks and SC Conservation Bank conserved lands/public lands data	Hexagons were given points based on the travel times by mode that their centers fell within. Point allocations were: • 5 Minute Drive – 1 Point • 10 Minute Drive – 4 Points • 15 Minute Drive – 7 Points • 15 Minute + Drive – 10 Points	RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCE ACCESS WEIGHT: 25%
Proximity to Public Water Access	Proximity to public water access points of varying amenity classifications.	South Carolina Department of Natural Resources- South Carolina Public Water Access, selected blueways (entire length) like the Saluda River	Hexagons were scored based on their proximity to water access points and blueways using a benefit proximity function as seen in Table 1 .	
Proximity to Trails	Proximity to trails.	Greenville County, OpenStreetMap	Hexagons were scored based on their proximity to trails using a benefit proximity function as seen in Table 1 .	
Proximity to Schools	Proximity to public elementary, middle, and high schools.	Greenville County, Homeland Infrastructure Foundation-Level Data	Hexagons were scored based on their proximity to schools using a benefit proximity function as seen in Table 1 .	
Proximity to Cultural Resources and Landscapes	Proximity to different cultural amenities.	South Carolina Department of Natural Resources-Heritage Preserves (Cultural), National Register Areas (outside of municipalities), Historic Sites (USPAD)	Hexagons were scored based on their proximity to cultural resources and amenities using a benefit proximity function as seen in Table 1 .	

Criteria	Measures	Data Source	Hexagon Scoring	Weights
			1.	
Proximity to the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway	Proximity to the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Byway	National Trails National Scenic Byways, National Scenic Byways Program	Hexagons were scored based on their proximity to the Scenic Highway and amenities using a benefit proximity function as seen in Table 1.	
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ECOLOGY				
Habitat Cores	Supports the integrity of habitat cores and their connectivity.	Esri Living Atlas – Green Infrastructure Layers	Hexagons were given an area-weighted average of points assuming the intact habitat cores are reclassified into the following point categories: • Best (4.13-4.5) – 10 Points • Better (3.32-4.12) – 7 Points • Good (1.60-3.31) – 4 Points	NATURAL RESOURCES AND ECOLOGY WEIGHT: 50%
Predictive Floodplains and Wetlands	Use of predictive flood risk locations that are useful buffers to development and serve a resilient infrastructure to reduce flooding	Predictive Flood Layers and the National Wetlands Inventory	Hexagons were scored based on their proximity to predictive floodplains using a hazard proximity function as seen in Table 1.	
Conservation Priority Model	Use South Carolina’s Conservation Priority model to identify high priority conservation lands.	South Carolina Conservation Bank (SCCB)	Hexagons were given an area-weighted average of points assuming the conservation priority model is reclassified into the following point categories: • High – 10 Points	



Criteria	Measures	Data Source	Hexagon Scoring	Weights
WORKING LANDS				
Farmland Class	Areas that are prime farmland should be prioritized for open space protections.	Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO)	Medium – 5 Points	
			Hexagons were given an area-weighted average of points assuming farmland classes are reclassified into the following point categories: - Prime Farmland – 10 Points - Farmland of Statewide Importance – 6 Points - Farmland of Local Importance – 4 Points - All Other Lands – 1 Point	WORKING LANDS WEIGHT: 25%

Analyzing Equity and Protection Risk

The below map layers were used to examine the results the above Open Space Prioritization Map through different lenses of risk and equity, highlighting locations within the County that are currently underserved with regards to accessible open space. The following methodologies were used to create these maps.

Underserved Communities Overlay

The underserved communities overlay was produced based on the CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index and the Furman University Tree Canopy Model and includes areas where either Social Vulnerability is high (the most at-risk 20% of the county’s population) or medium (the next most at-risk 20%, ranking from 20-40%), or where tree canopy covers less than 30% of census tract area.

Table 3 Greenville County Open Space Underserved Populations and Protection Risk ‘Lenses’ – Underserved Communities

Criteria	Measures	Data Source	Overlay Thresholds
Disadvantaged Residents	CDC Social Vulnerability index leveraging a combination of demographic and socioeconomic data to identify socially vulnerable populations with high investment need.	CDC Social Vulnerability Index – RPL_Theme1	Most vulnerable 40% of the population based on the social vulnerability index
Lack of Tree Cover in Disadvantaged Areas	A University provided layer will identify areas without green tree canopy that can be used to identify populations with less access to ambient green spaces.	Furman University Tree Cover Model	Less than 30% of a census tract has tree canopy

Development Risk Overlay

The development risk overlay was developed as a combination of parcels larger than 50 acres that have either already been zoned or have sewer access. The lands which meet **both** qualifications are at risk of development, though they could be optimal locations for near-term open space preservation.

Table 3b Greenville County Open Space Underserved Populations and Protection Risk ‘Lenses’ – Development Risk

Criteria	Measures	Data Source	Overlay Thresholds
Parcel Size	Larger parcels can support purchases of open space with less negotiation, cost, and support more facilities if needed. They are also possible candidates for development for similar reasons.	Greenville County - Parcel Layer	Parcels > 50 Acres
Development Pressure	Areas that are undeveloped but have appropriate zoning and infrastructure to support development are at higher risk of future development.	Greenville County – Sewer Adjacency & Zoned Land Layer	If the Zoned and Sewered land layers indicated to be within the following zones: • Zoned – With Sewer • Zoned – Without Sewer Points • Unzoned – with Sewer

Figure 3. Prioritization of Open Space Graphic

PRIORITIZING OPEN SPACE IN GREENVILLE COUNTY

A key part of this plan is prioritizing what parts of the county are considered the most important to protect. Below are a few main categories of resources and key factors related to open space. These are based on the open space data discussed in the Existing Conditions chapter. Areas of land that have more of these features are assigned higher values within each category. All maps are then combined together with a weighting to culminate in an Overall Priority Open Space Map.

% Percentage weighted based on ranking by Steering Committee

Order of priority as ranked by the public

