

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TOWN OF GASTON, SOUTH CAROLINA



**TOWN OF GASTON PLANNING
COMMISSION MARCH 14, 2017**

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INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the Town of Gaston Town Council made a decision to undertake planning efforts for the Town that had been under discussion for several years. The Town wished to implement zoning and land development regulations to orderly control growth and development within the Town. The South Carolina local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 (the Planning Act) requires that any South Carolina jurisdiction that wishes to develop and enforce zoning and land development laws must first have a Comprehensive Plan. This Comprehensive Plan is the first step in the Town's planning efforts.

In basic terms, a Comprehensive Plan contains: an inventory of existing conditions, an analysis of these conditions to predict future trends, policies and strategies to address future growth and development, and key recommendations and implementation time lines. The Planning Act requires the Comprehensive Plan to exercise this planning process in the following areas or 'elements': population, economic development, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, housing, land use, transportation, and priority investment.

Although this is the Town of Gaston's first Comprehensive Plan, it is not the Town's first planning effort. In 2006, the Town commissioned a Comprehensive Needs Assessment Plan that focused on the following seven areas of interest: housing, water and sewer, drainage, roads, economic development, zoning and code enforcement, and community facilities. Although this document was not prepared to the specifications of the Planning Act, it was a valuable reference source in preparing this Comprehensive Plan. In December 2011, Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) staff partially drafted housing, community facilities, priority investment, and land use Comprehensive Plan elements as well as a strategy and time frames chapter. Although the CMCOG draft plan was neither completed nor adopted by the Town, it provides valuable data that was used in this Comprehensive Plan.

The Planning Act requires a five-year review of Comprehensive Plans to determine if any of the elements need to be updated and a ten-year update in which the entire plan is required to be updated. These periodic updates are valuable in that they provide historic data on how things have changed over time, which allows for a more thorough trend analysis. As this is the Town of Gaston's first Comprehensive Plan, this plan cannot benefit from data and information provided in earlier plans. Rather, this plan should be considered as a baseline Comprehensive Plan upon which future plans can be developed.

Study Areas

Whereas the area within the Town Limits is the focus of this plan, the broader Gaston community does not stop at the Town boundary. Residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial development outside of the Town Limits impact the town. The Town also utilizes the roads, bridges, sewer, electricity, and other infrastructure of the greater Gaston area, as well as schools, fire service, recreation, solid waste, and other County facilities. Therefore, based on road networks called Transportation Analysis Zones, an area surrounding the Town has been selected to show land use of the surrounding community and to map the location of the infrastructure and facilities mentioned above.

Some of the data and statistics found in this Plan were given for the Gaston 29053 zip code, while other data and statistics (including Census data) usually pertain to the area within the incorporated Town Limits. School data is given for the Lexington School District 4.

Geographical and hydrologic features rarely follow political boundaries; nor do plants and wildlife recognize political boundaries. Therefore, mapping and discussions of the Natural Resources Element of Gaston's Comprehensive Plan are given in the context of the hydro-geographic areas in which the Town is situated.

Vision Statement

In the June 6, 2006, council meeting, the Gaston Town Council adopted the following vision statement:

Gaston will continue to be a physically attractive community consisting of honorable citizens who desire that growth and development occur in an environmentally responsible way, and that the values of a small community are preserved.

This vision statement is the guiding principal of this Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Gaston. Environmental responsibility means protecting the natural environment from development pressures while ensuring that the built environment is developed in such a way as to promote the health and well-being of the citizens of the Town of Gaston.

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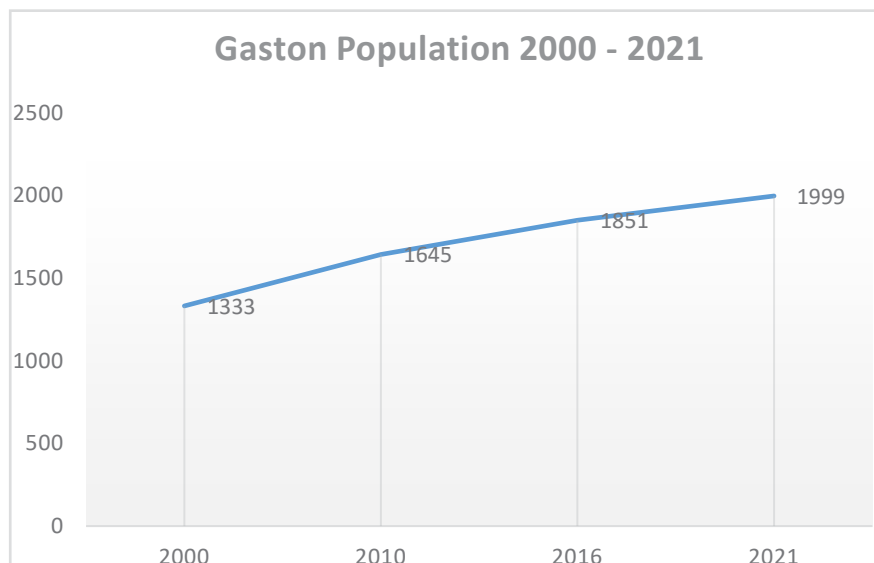
CHAPTER ONE: POPULATION ELEMENT

Knowledge of the characteristics of the population of the Town of Gaston is essential in planning to meet the current and future needs of the Town. Unless otherwise noted, data in this element is derived from US Census Bureau statistics. The latest attainable figures are used, which range from the 2010 decennial census numbers to 2021 projections.

Population Size and Growth

The 2010 Census population of Gaston was 1,645 persons. This was a 23.4% increase over the 2000 census population of 1,333 persons. The Census 2016 population estimate is 1,851, a 2.08 % per year increase since the 2010 census. The Census Bureau projects that the population will continue to increase at a rate of 1.55% until 2021 when the anticipated population of Gaston will be 1,999 persons. A continuation of this projection puts the Gaston population at 1259 in ten years (2026).

Exhibit 1.1 Gaston Population and Projections



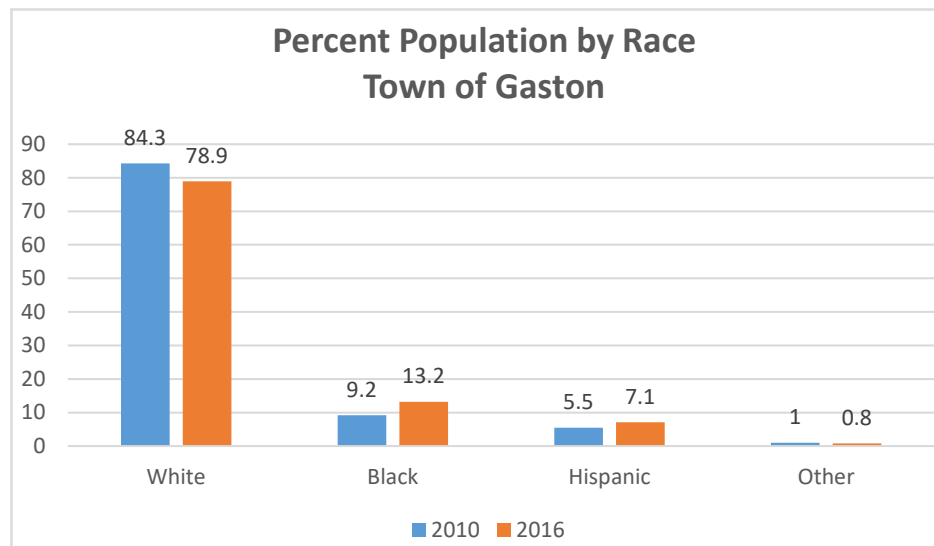
In an era in which many small South Carolina towns are experiencing steady population declines, Gaston is fortunate not to suffer such declines. However, steady growth in the population of the Town and surrounding areas of Lexington County means increased demands on the Town's roads, water, sewer, schools, and other utilities and facilities. These demands must be planned for if Gaston hopes to maintain and develop a good quality of life in the coming years.

Demographic Composition

Racial Composition

The population of Gaston, as with Lexington County, is largely white. But the population is slowly becoming more diverse, with a 4 percentage point increase in the black population and a 1.6 percentage point increase in the Hispanic population over the past six years.

Exhibit 1.2 Percent Population by Race

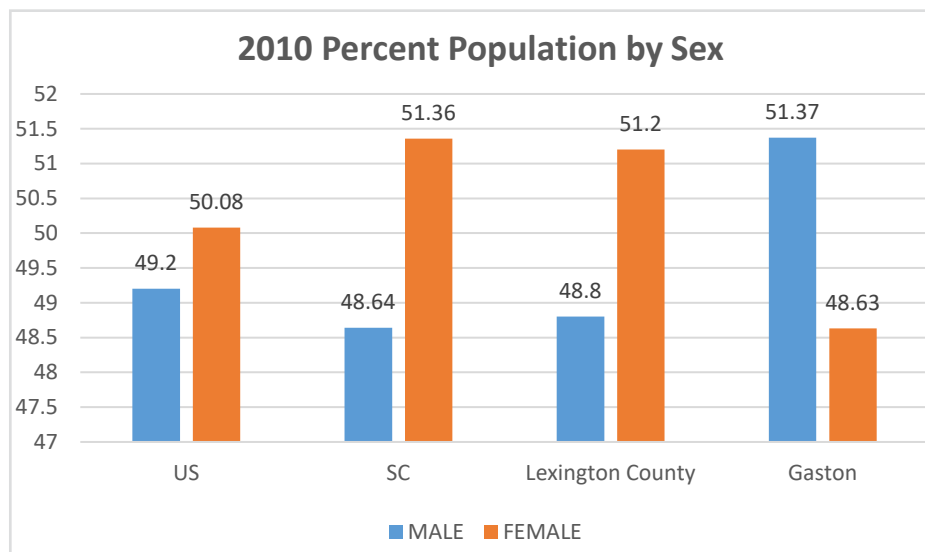


It is interesting to note that the majority of Spanish speakers are in the 18-64 age bracket, and all Spanish speakers in Gaston reported that they can speak English well or very well. This is an advantage over many South Carolina communities that have increasing needs to offer bilingual services for their citizens.

Gender Composition

Males slightly outnumber females worldwide. However, in the US, in South Carolina, and in Lexington County, females outnumber males. Gaston is more in line the worldwide sex ratio. This trend is expected to continue through the census projections for 2021 when the Town is anticipated to have approximately 1,007 males and 992 females.

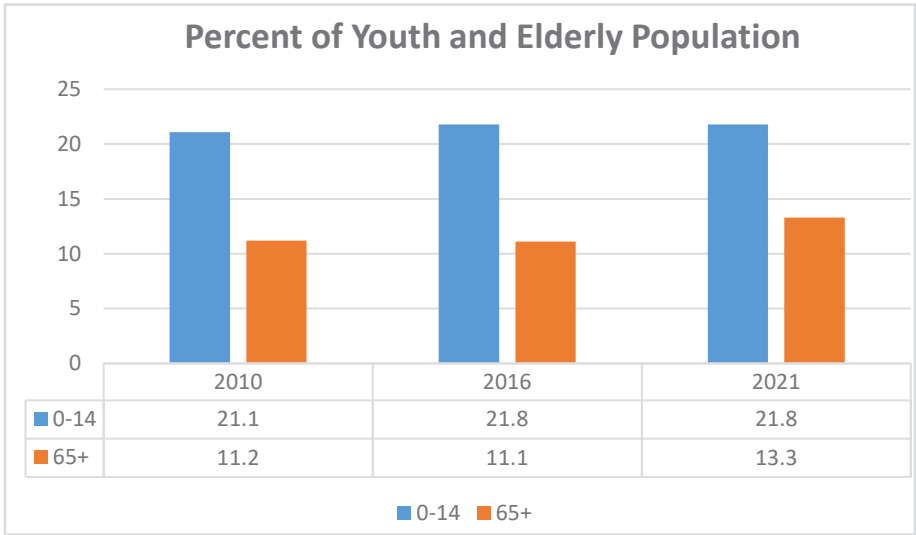
Exhibit 1.3 Percent Population by Sex



Age Composition

Gaston enjoys a healthy population age range. In 2016, 25 - 34 is the largest age group in Gaston at 14.4% of the total population. The 25-34 age bracket is projected to have the highest representation in 2021 as well. The youth population (0-14) is anticipated to hold steady through 2021. In a time when most populations throughout the US are aging, the 65 and older population in Gaston has held steady over the past six years and is anticipated to grow only slightly by 2021.

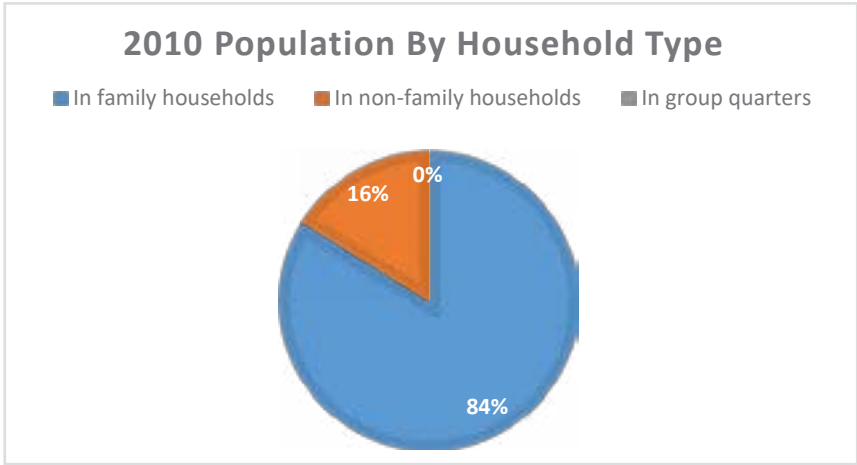
Exhibit 1.4 Percent of Youth and Elderly Population



Household Characteristics

In Gaston, as in all over America, the percentage of family households is shrinking, and the traditional family household of two parents with children is in sharp decline. The 2010 Census showed 83.8% of Gaston households were family households. The 2014 estimate was 72.5%. Households with just the single householder are on the rise: 26% in 2010 and 38.2% in 2014. In 2010, married couples with children represented only 20.4% of Gaston households. Because of these trends, nationally the average household size is declining. In Gaston, the average household size from 2010 to 2021 is expected to remain steady at around 2.6 persons per household. Additional household demographics are found in the Housing Element.

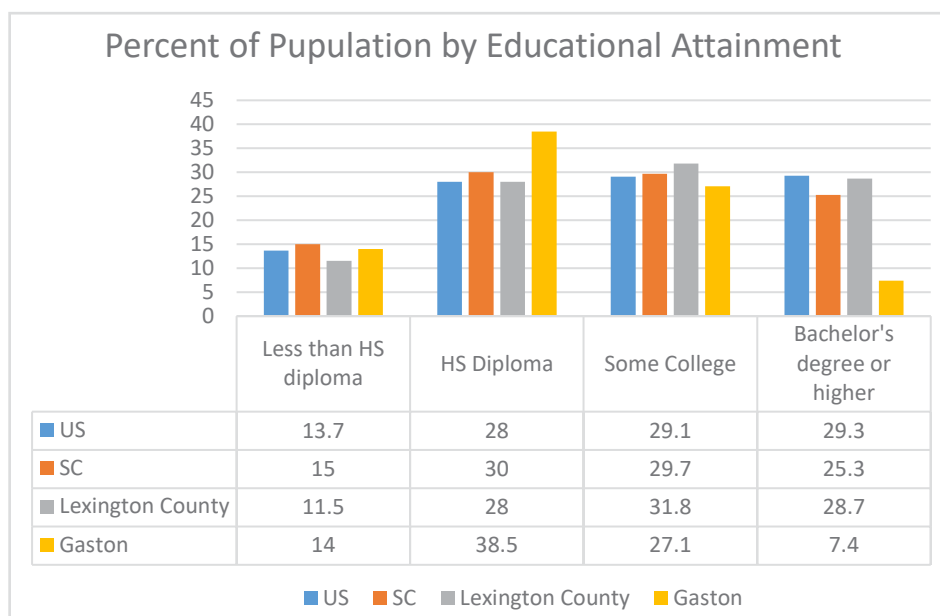
Exhibit 1.5 Population by Household Type



Educational Attainment

Exhibit 1.5 shows the current educational attainment by percentage population in the US, South Carolina, Lexington County, and Gaston. Gaston has a much higher rate of high school graduates than the national, state, and county percentages. Conversely, Gaston has a dramatically lower percentage of those who have attained a bachelor’s degree or higher. This indicates that Gaston residents place a high value on public school education and graduation from high school. Gaston residents have relied on the abundance of regionally available jobs that traditionally have required high school diplomas, associate’s degrees, or some college and did not require workers to have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Therefore, only 8.1% of the workforce are employed in the professional jobs which require higher education degree attainment and pay considerably higher wages.

Exhibit 1.6 Percent of Population by Educational Attainment

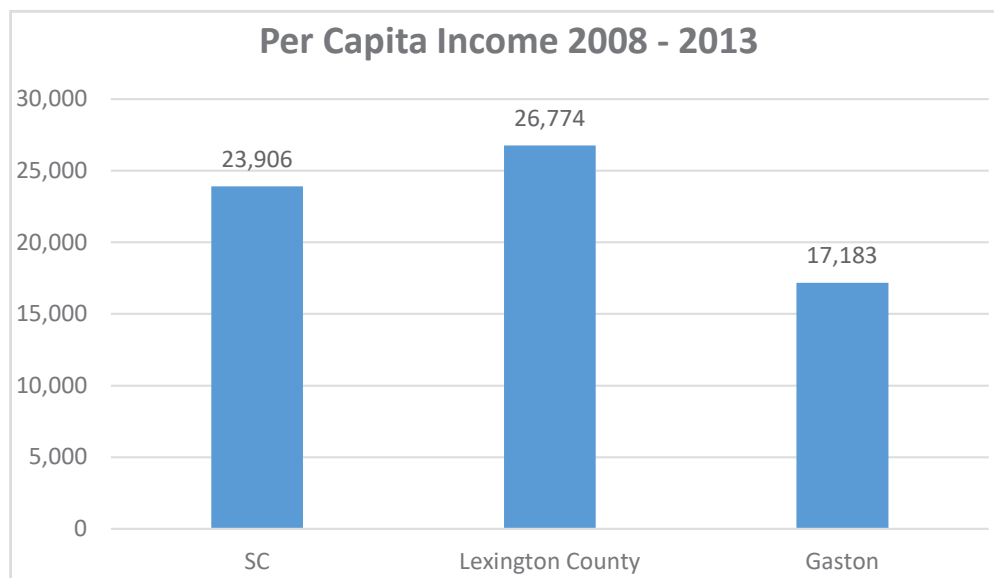


Income

Per Capita Income

Per capita income measures the average income earned per person in a given area (city, region, country, etc.) in a specified year. It is calculated by dividing the area's total income by its total population.

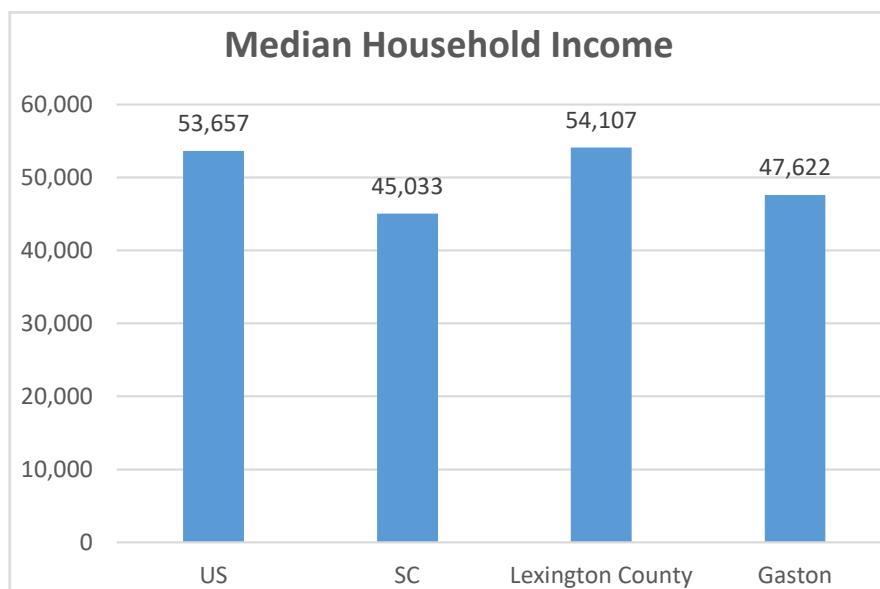
Exhibit 1.7 Per Capita Income 2008 - 2013



At \$17,183 per year, Gaston's per capita income is significantly lower than the County's and the State's. Although the majority of Gaston's workforce enjoys decent and steady employment, most of the higher-paid workforce lives elsewhere - many within Lexington County. Behind Beaufort and Charleston Counties, Lexington has the third highest per capita income of any county in the state.

Average Household Income

Although Gaston's per capita income is below par with the State and County, households are faring better. The average Gaston household earns \$47,622 per year, above the state average of \$45,033. Most Gaston households (65.6%) have multiple wage earners.



Population Health

The United States has the highest obesity rates in the developed world (behind four tiny Pacific island nations). In 2014, SC ranked 10th in the nation for obese adults; 31.7% have a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or greater (Trust for America's Health and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation). South Carolina ranks 7th in the nation for overall (all ages) obesity. Robert Woods Johnson 2015 data reports that 30% of Lexington County adults are obese - making Lexington County among the 5th lowest ranking of SC counties in adult obesity. Although little data is available on the municipal level, this data indicates that more than one in four adult Gaston citizens are obese. Obesity disproportionately affects certain racial and ethnic minorities, residents of rural areas, and those with low socioeconomic status. Risk factors for obesity include physical inactivity and improper nutrition.

Obesity and Chronic Disease

According to South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) statistics, compared to normal/recommended weight status, overweight* South Carolina individuals have:

- 50 percent higher odds of having a heart attack
- 30 percent higher odds of having arthritis
- 80 percent higher odds of having coronary heart disease
- Odds of having diabetes that are 2.4 times the odds of individuals of recommended weight status

Compared to normal/recommended weight status, obese* South Carolina individuals have:

- 40 percent higher odds of having a heart attack
- 60 percent higher odds of having arthritis
- 90 percent higher odds of having coronary heart disease
- Odds of having diabetes that are 5.6 times the odds of individuals of recommended weight status

* Definitions of Overweight and Obese

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines overweight as having a Body Mass Index (BMI) between 25 and 29.9 pounds per square inch. Obesity is defined as having a BMI greater than 30. Simply stated, BMI is the relationship of a person's height to their weight. In 2013, 66.5% of South Carolina adults were either overweight or obese.

Lexington County Obesity-Related Chronic Disease Statistics

- **Heart Disease:** In 2013, the number one cause of death in Lexington County was heart disease.
- **Stroke:** In 2011, South Carolina was the 8th highest state in prevalence of stroke. Stroke was the 4th leading cause of death in SC and in 2012, 111 Lexington County Residents died of stroke.

- **Cerebrovascular Disease:** In 2013 cerebrovascular disease (which includes stroke) was the 6th highest cause of death in Lexington County.
 - **Diabetes:** In 2010 South Carolina was the 8th highest state in the prevalence of diabetes - a 50% increase in 10 years.
 - In 2012, in DHEC Region 3 (which includes Lexington County), 10.3% of adults suffered annually from diabetes.
 - In 2013 diabetes was the 8th highest cause of death in Lexington County.
 - In 2012 in Lexington County, 9075 emergency room visits were related to diabetes, as were 410 hospitalizations.
- Source: SDHEC Epidemiology Data

Obesity Burden Disparities

The 2011 South Carolina Obesity Burden Report (SCDHEC/Eat Smart Move More South Carolina [ESMMSC]) records a disparity in the burden of obesity and the severity of related health conditions among different population groups. Whereas obesity is of national health concern in the general population, research has shown that persons within certain population sectors are more susceptible than others to obesity and related health problems:

- Ethnic and racial minorities
- Mentally and physically disabled persons
- Residents of rural areas

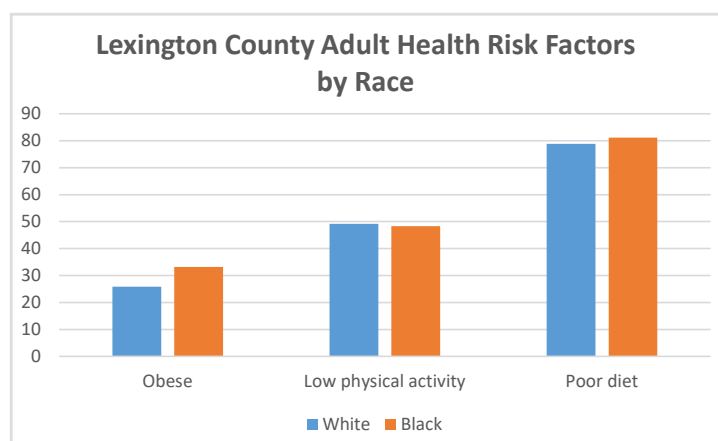
Exhibit 1.9 Percentage of SC Overweight and Obese Adults by Race

South Carolina Adult Overweight and Obese (combined) Rate by Race/Ethnicity							
Location	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	Other	All Adults
South Carolina	63.5%	75.4%	73.0%	No significant data	60.1%	52.8%	66.5%

Kaiser Family Foundation 2013

Exhibit 1.10 Lexington Adult Health Risk Factor by Race

Lexington County 2007- 2009 Adult Health Risk Factor by Race		
	White	Black
Obese	25.9	33.2
Not meeting recommended physical Activity¹	49.2	48.3
Not eating recommended fruits and Vegetables²	78.8	81.2



¹Physical Activity Recommendations

The US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) physical activity recommendation is that adults should engage in at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of moderate-intensity, 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or a combination of moderate and vigorous-intensity physical activity. DHHS also recommends that adults engage in muscle-strengthening activities that are moderate or high-intensity and involve all major muscle groups on two or more days per week.

²Dietary Recommendations

The DHHS recommended fruit and vegetable consumption was 2+ fruits and 3+ vegetables daily. Dietary indicators changed in 2015, but no racial statistics under these new indicators have been released.

Childhood Obesity

Children who are obese have immediate risk factors for cardiovascular disease and are more likely to have high blood glucose levels, indicating a high risk for developing diabetes. They are also more likely to have bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, and social and psychological problems. Long term health effects of childhood obesity include increased risk for many types of cancer, osteoarthritis, and stroke.

“Research shows that an obese teenager has up to an 80 percent chance of becoming an obese adult. Overweight and obese children are at higher risk than their healthy-weight peers for a host of serious illnesses, including heart disease, stroke, asthma and certain types of cancer. Obese children are being diagnosed with health problems previously considered adult illnesses, such as type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure” (Good for You Spartanburg 2013 report). Even at a very early age, childhood obesity may be a precursor to a lifetime of poor health.

Although there is currently little data at the local level on childhood obesity, 2013 DHEC data shows that 16.6% of Lexington County children (age 2-17) are obese, slightly below the state-wide rate of 16.7%. The table below gives DHEC 2012 state-wide childhood overweight and obesity levels by age group.

Exhibit 1.11 SC Childhood Overweight and Obesity Percentages by Age Groups

2012 SC Childhood Overweight and Obesity Percentages by Age Groups		
Age Groups	Overweight%	Obese%
2 - 4	8.2	21.0
5 - 10	17.4	23.1
11 - 13	18.4	20.7
14 - 17	15.4	15.1

Healthy Lifestyles and the Prevention of Chronic Disease and Obesity

- Healthy eating can play a major role in the prevention of many chronic diseases. These diseases include cancer, cardiovascular disease (e.g. congestive heart failure, hypertension, stroke), diabetes, gastrointestinal disorders (e.g. diverticular disease, irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, hemorrhoids), and osteoporosis. A healthy diet that is well-balanced and varied reduces the risk for all of these diseases (ESMMSC).
- Physical activity is a protective factor against being overweight and obese. According to the US Surgeon General, adults can obtain significant health benefits by including moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Engaging in regular physical activity is one of the most important steps to reduce the risk of chronic disease, build physical and mental health, and prevent becoming overweight and obese.

Researcher Dr. Tim Church at Louisiana State University found that even moderate walking (73 minutes per week at a moderate pace) exhibited the benefits found in more intense walking (e.g. jogging and powerwalking): lower cholesterol, better blood sugar metabolism, lower blood pressure, lower rates of heart disease, less stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression, loss of damaging visceral fat, and more energy.

Population Needs and Goals Statement

Population trends and analysis indicate a need to plan for steady population growth. Growth will occur both within the Town limits and in the surrounding unincorporated areas of Lexington County. Gaston must be prepared for the impact of this growth on the Town's infrastructure. The Town's businesses should also be prepared to benefit from this growth.

Based on the social characteristics, there is need to raise the income level of the Town's residents. Demographics indicate that an avenue to higher income is to increase higher educational attainment.

There is also a need to mitigate the impact of obesity and related chronic disease on Gaston's citizens through promoting healthy eating and physical activity.

Population Goal One – Achieve Higher Educational Attainment

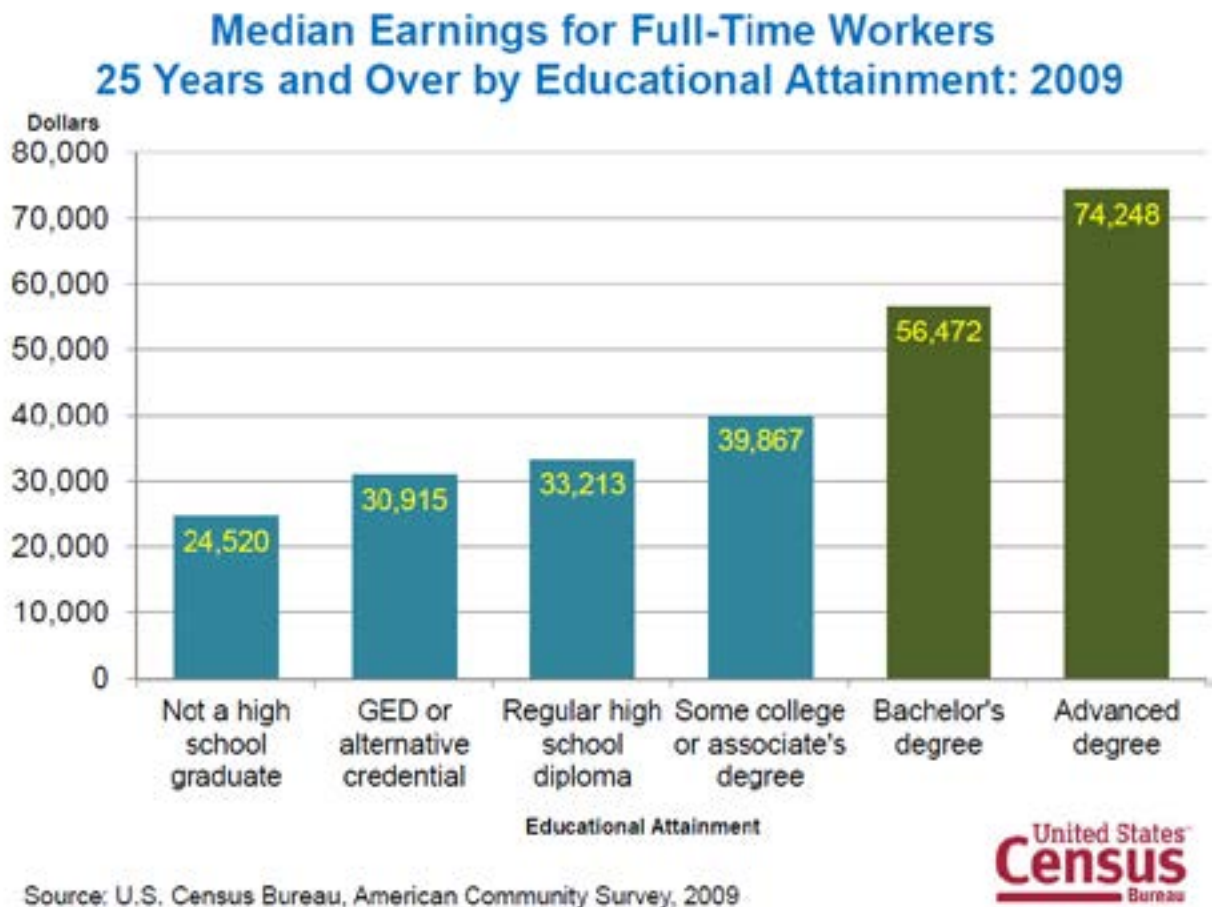
The high cost of higher education and the mounting burden of student loans have led to a growing sentiment that attaining a college degree is not worth the cost. Yet, data shows that higher educational attainment equates to higher income and lower unemployment. The following is from a 2009 report from the USC Darla Moore School of Business Division of Research: The Economic Return on Investments in South Carolina's Higher Education.

Over a typical career, the total income for an individual in South Carolina with a bachelor's degree is \$2.5 million, after subtracting higher education's costs.

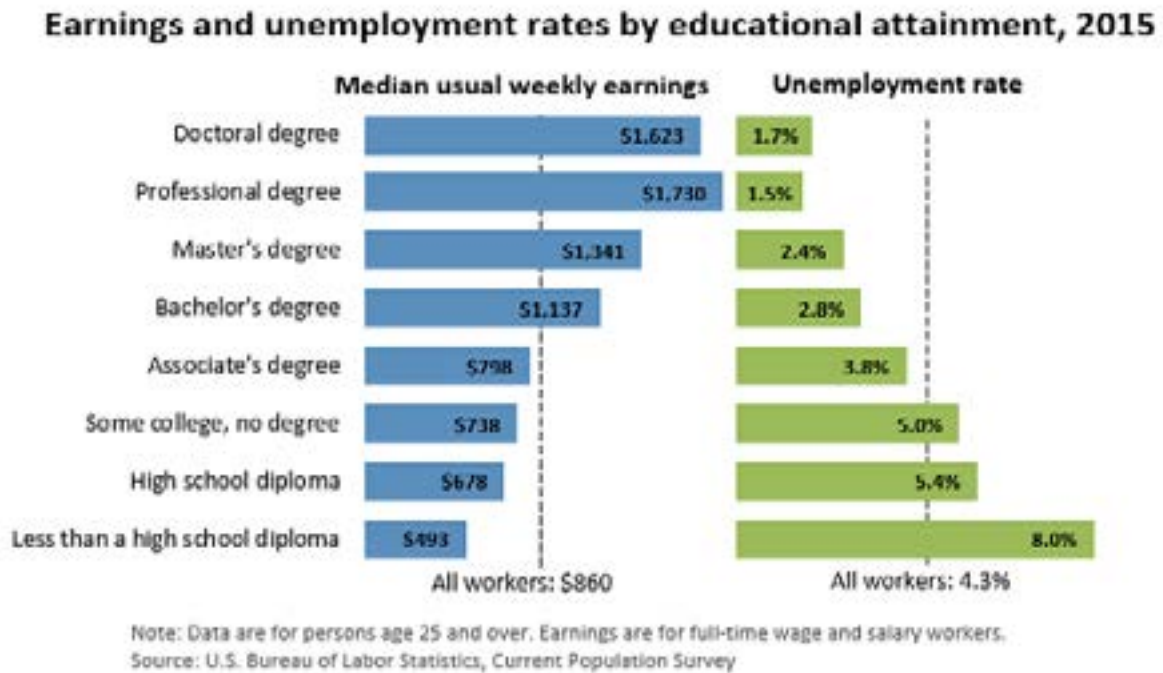
On average, individuals holding bachelor's degrees earn \$1.2 million more than individuals with just a high school diploma. Given an average investment in a four-year degree, an individual gains 8.2 times that amount in additional income.

This is supported by US Census Bureau data:

Exhibit 1.12 Earnings by Educational Attainment



In addition, the higher the educational attainment, the lower the unemployment rate.



Strategy

It is clear that the citizens of Gaston place a high value on their children attaining a high school education. The Town should work with the local schools, Lexington County School District 4, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) groups, and other concerned citizens to instill in the school children the importance of a higher education in today's economy. School guidance counselors should be well versed in college grants, loans, and scholarships available to academically gifted students who feel a college education is outside of their financial reach.

Population Goal Two – Promote Healthy Eating and Active Living Policies

Population statistics show that:

- The Town of Gaston's population has a high risk of chronic diseases due to unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity.
- Obesity is a major contributor to health risks in Gaston.
- Statistics indicate that there is a higher incidence of obesity among African Americans and Hispanics, and the low socioeconomic population.
- Statistics for pre-school and grade school children show a wide occurrence of childhood overweight/obesity, and that even at a very early age, childhood obesity may be a precursor to a lifetime of poor health.

Goal: promote healthy eating and active living policies

- Healthy Eating policies must address the production, processing, distribution, access, and consumption of foods that limit the risk of diet-related chronic disease.
- Active Living policies promote a way of life that integrates physical activity, such as walking and biking, into daily routines.

Strategies

Promote the Production, Sales, and Consumption of Local, Fresh, and Healthy Food

- Consider establishing local farmer's markets.
- Support local farmers by preserving agricultural land.
- Promote farm-to-school programs that include school educational programs.
- Promote stores and restaurants that serve and stock local foods.

Promote Active Lifestyles

- Provide development standards that include pedestrian and bicycle facilities and create walkable communities.
- Support local parks and recreational facilities.
- Support safe routes to school programs.
- Support physical education (PE) in local schools.

Support Eat Smart Move More Lexington County

The following information is from the Eat Smart Move More Lexington County website:

Eat Smart Move More Lexington County is a coalition of more than 20 facets of the community including hospitals, school districts, elected officials, ag business representatives, fitness centers and concerned citizens who have decided to make Lexington County a healthier place to live, work, pray and play.

The goals of the coalition are to:

1. Build synergy among Lexington County citizens and leadership to actively promote and support Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) policies, practices and programs.
2. Reduce disparities in Lexington County communities related to Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL).
3. Develop and sustain a viable organization that can support its mission.

We welcome all partners and interested residents of Lexington County to join us in this partnership!

Mission: To lead a unified movement in Lexington County to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Vision: A Lexington County in which healthy eating and active living are essential to the everyday culture where we live, work, learn, pray and play.

<http://eatsmartmovemore.org/lexingtoncounty/>

CHAPTER TWO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

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CHAPTER TWO:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The local economy impacts the well-being of every aspect of the community – from revenue the Town must have to implement needed projects and to provide for the public’s health and safety; to employment security of the residents; to the financial health of businesses, industries, and agriculture.

The health of the local economy is integrally dependent on the regional, state, national, and even global economic climate. Whereas little can be done on the local and regional level to influence larger economic trends, an examination of local economic characteristics will identify areas where improvement is needed and identify economic sectors of opportunity.

Economic Development Element data is derived from the US Census Bureau unless otherwise noted. Some of this data is based on forecasts from the 2010 Decennial Census and will not necessarily reflect actual numbers.

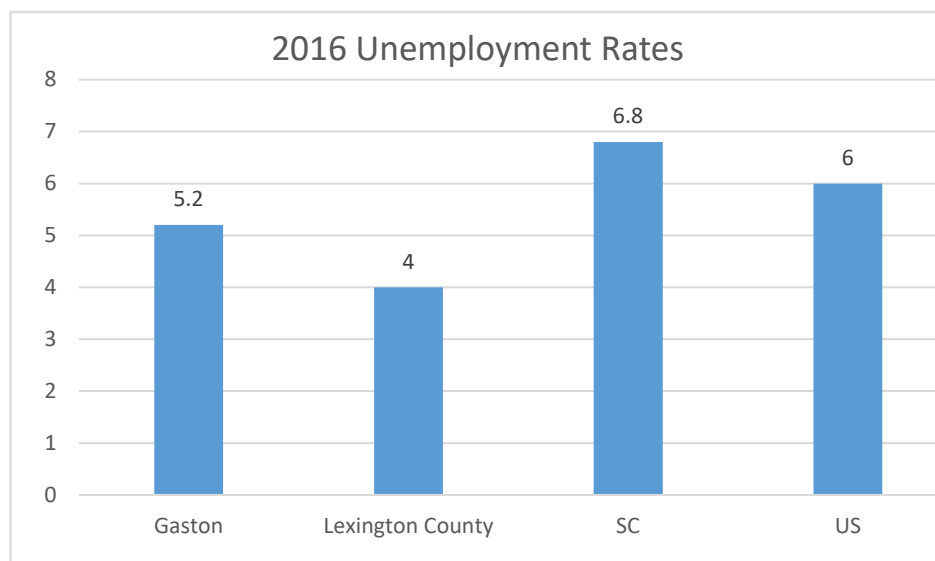
Workforce

The current total workforce (age 16+) is 769 workers. With an unemployment rate of 5.2%, approximately 729 Gaston residents (39.4% of the total population) are currently employed.

Workforce Unemployment

At a rate of 4.0%, Lexington County shares the lowest unemployment in the State with Charleston County. While unemployment in Gaston is higher than in Lexington County (5.2%), it is lower than the South Carolina and national unemployment rates.

Exhibit 2.1



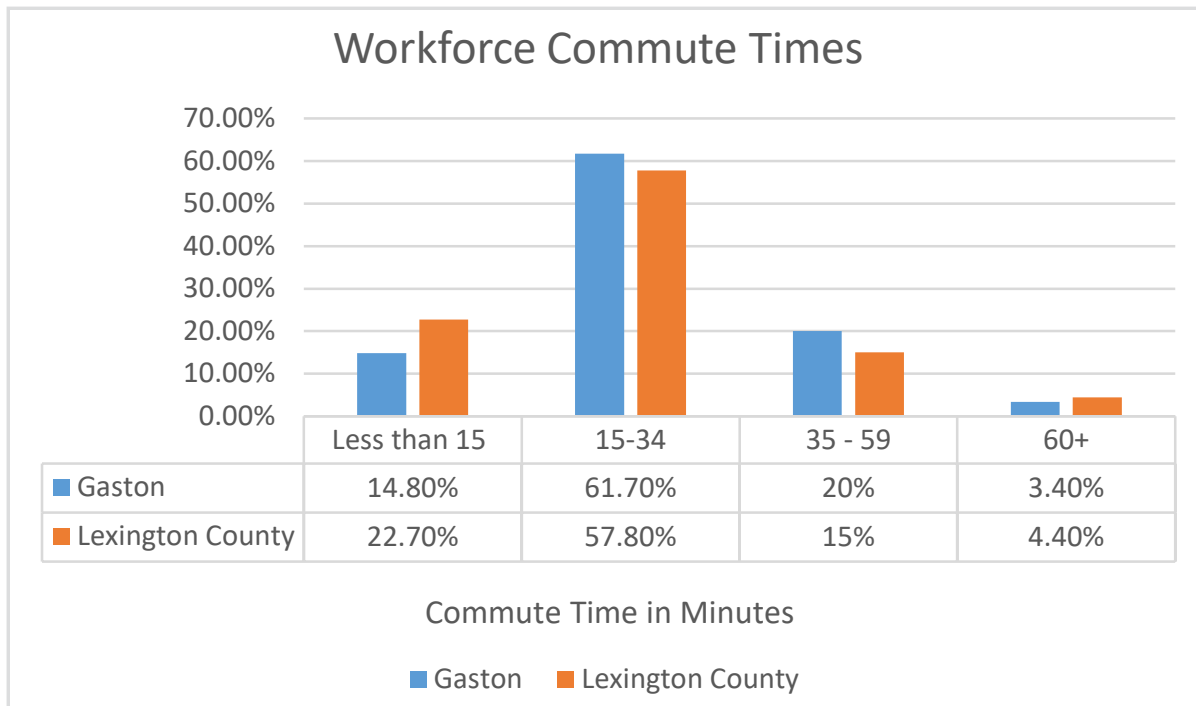
Unemployment and Poverty

Exhibit 2.2 shows the correlation of unemployment rates to poverty. Comparing the US, South Carolina, and Lexington County, there is a direct relationship between unemployment and poverty rates. However, in comparison, Gaston has a higher poverty rate than would be indicated by the unemployment rate. When the average worker is earning low wages to begin with, unemployment will quickly lead to poverty. In addition, citizens earning minimum wages at less than full time jobs are still considered employed, even if living in poverty. Gaston’s low per capita income is a persistent issue.



Work Location and Commuting (2010-2014 US Census American Community Survey Data)

- 5.1% of the Gaston workforce worked from home
- 9.4% of the Gaston workforce carpooled to work
- 85% of the Gaston workforce drove alone to work
- .4% of the Gaston workforce walked to work
- No one reported riding a bicycle to work
- The average commute time of the Gaston workforce was 31.5 minutes. 45.6% of the Gaston workforce's commute time was 30-34 minutes.
- 85.2% of the workforce reported a commute time of greater than 15 minutes, indicating that the great majority of the workforce works out of town.
 - 47.1% of the Gaston workforce worked within Lexington County
 - 52.1% worked in-state, but out of county



Other Workforce Characteristics (2010-2014 US Census American Community Survey Data)

- Gaston workers worked an average of 37.4 hours a week
- 34.4% of Gaston households have a single wage earner
- 557 Gaston women ages 20-64 were in the workforce. This was 57% of the total workforce ages 16+.
 - 9.7% of women in the workforce had children under age 18
 - Of the 73 Gaston women with children under the age of 6, all 73 were in the workforce

Employment Sectors

Exhibit 2.4 Gaston Commercial Establishments 2016

GASTON COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS 2016	
BUSINESS NAME	TYPE OF BUSINESS
Food Lion	Retail Grocery (supermarket)
Boost Mobile	Cell Phone Company
Little Caesars	Restaurant
Elegant Nails	Fingernail Salon
No. 1 China	Restaurant
Family Dollar	Retail Store (discount)
Wendy's	Restaurant
Palmetto Citizens	ATM
AutoZone	Auto Parts Sales
Advance Auto	Auto Parts Sales
Burger King / Pitt Stop	Restaurant /Gas with convenience store
Davita Dialysis	Dialysis Center
Tienda Jasmine	Billiard Hall / Bar/ tire repair
Patterson Realty / Holly Patterson Attorney	Real Estate and Law Offices
Ace Used Cars	Auto Repair and Parts
Sharpes	Towing and Body Shop
IGA	Retail Grocery (supermarket)
Fred's	Retail Store (discount)
Dominoes	Restaurant
ABC	Liquor Store
Dollar General	Retail Store (discount)
Double B Store	Hardware
Quick Pantry (Shuperts)	Gas with Convenience Store
BP	Gas with Convenience Store
Dollar Tree	Retail Store (discount)
China Taste	Restaurant
Tiger Smiles	Dentist Office
Gaston Family Pharmacy	Pharmacy
Bi Rite	Gas with Convenience Store
Better Car Wash	Car Wash
A Mother's Prayer	Day Care
Gaston Hot Hair	Beauty Salon
Southern Belle's & Beau's	Tanning Salon
Razor Image	Barber Shop
Meadowfield Storage	Storage Facility
M&M Auto Repair	Auto Repair Shop
Sightler's	Barber Shop
Gaston Pools	Swimming Pool Sales
Dowd's Marine Shop	Boat Repair
Carolina Fleet	Towing Service
Pecan Point	U-Haul rentals (moving trucks, trailers), storage, sales
Gaston Mobile Home Park	Mobile home Park
Shugarts	Auto Paint and Body shop

Anita's T-Shirts	Retail Sale
Today's Laundry	Laundromat
Air Masters	Air Conditioner Repair
Hobby Auto Sales	Used Auto Sales
This n That	Concrete Fixture Sales
A to Z Auto Sales	Used Auto Sales
Spradley Campground	Campground
Affordable Preowned cars	Used Auto Sales
Back Yard Auto Sales	Used Auto Sales
San Jose	Restaurant
Chile Caliente	Restaurant
Sinister Customs	Auto custom shop

List provided by Town of Gaston with updates from the Gaston Planning Commission

The majority of Gaston businesses are low-wage businesses. Forty-two percent (42%) of Gaston businesses are service sector jobs and 22% of the businesses are retail sales. These include:

- 6 ethnic restaurants (Chinese, Mexican, Italian [pizza])
- 4 gas station / convenience stores
- 4 used auto sales
- 3 discount retail stores
- 2 fast food restaurants
- 2 supermarkets

Exhibit 2.5

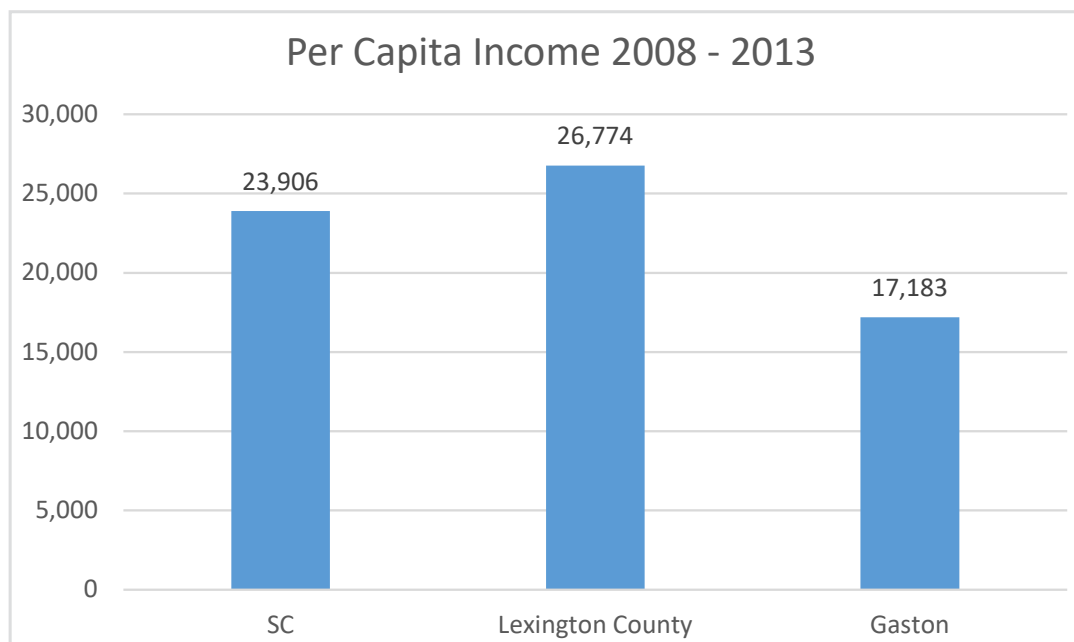
2016 Gaston Employed Population 16+ By Industry	
Agriculture/mining	1.4%
Construction	8.3%
Manufacturing	13.3%
Wholesale Trade	3.9%
Retail Trade	7.7%
Transportation/Utilities	9.8%
Information	1.3%
Finance/Insurance/Retail	3.9%
Services	42.7%
Public Administration	7.8%

Exhibit 2.6

2016 Gaston Employed Population 16+ By Occupation	
White Collar	40.5%
Management/Business/Financial	9.0%
Professional	8.1%
Sales	8.5%
Administrative Support	15.0%
Services	23.5%
Blue Collar	36.0%
Farming/Forestry/Fishing	1.4%
Construction/Extraction	6.6%
Installation/Maintenance/Repair	5.1%
Production	11.0%
Transportation/Material Moving	12.0%

Examining where the currently employed Gaston workforce works by industry and occupation, services is the largest employment sector. Service jobs tend to be the lower paying jobs, which correlates with the lower Gaston per capita income relative to Lexington County and the State.

Exhibit 2.7



Economic Impact of Walking and Biking Amenities

The availability of infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, telecommunications, etc.) is a must-have in attracting new businesses and industries. Economic development professionals site that the next most important factor in corporation location decisions is the quality of life in the host community. Topping the list of desirable amenities are greenways, trails, and walkable, bikable communities. Eat Smart Move More South Carolina's recent publication: [Stronger Economies through Active Communities - The Economic Impact of Walkable, Bikable Communities in South Carolina](#) is a case study of walking and biking projects in ten South Carolina towns and cities. The findings were that investments in walking and biking infrastructure:

- Spurs activity-related spending
- Creates new jobs and businesses
- Raises property values
- Encourages private investment
- Promotes tourism
- Reduces injuries and health care costs

Downtown revitalization and trail improvements in the City of Florence has resulted in nearly a tripling of downtown property values. The opening of the Swamp Rabbit Trail between the Cities of Travelers Rest and Greenville has resulted in well publicized, dramatic economic benefits for Travelers Rest. The Trail and the resultant downtown revitalization efforts have created nearly fifty new businesses on Main Street and numerous residential developments are underway, all advertising accessibility to the Swamp Rabbit Trail.

Agricultural Sector

Special agriculture assessment of real property taxed are granted under SC Code of Laws Title 12, Chapter 43, for qualifying properties currently in agricultural and timber production. Lexington County currently has 2,106 acres of land within Gaston town limits under special agriculture assessment. This represents the majority of Gaston – 60.16% of the total land area of the Town. Yet, as is shown in Exhibit 2.6, only 1.4% of the employed Gaston workforce are occupied in farming, fishing, and forestry. Across South Carolina and the nation, there is a growing demand for fresh, locally grown produce, and the latest (2012) Agriculture Census reports that there was a 11.3% increase in new and beginning farmers whose prime income is farming. Refer to Exhibit 2.8 which compares Lexington County's 2012 Agriculture Census data with the 2007 Census data. There were significant increases in fruits/berries/nuts and in vegetable farms and a 7% increase in total farms. These new farmers are responding to market demands for locally-grown crops.

Exhibit 2.8 2012 Agriculture Census Data for Lexington County

Lexington County			
Commodity		Quantity In 2012	% Change from 2007
Acreage	Average	107	+13%
	Harvested	42,116	+23%
	Total	107,700	+19%
Farms (by type)	Fruits/Nuts/Berries	60	+18%
	Vegetable	69	+28%
	Animal	429	-7%
	Total	1,011	+7%
Farms (by value)	Fruits/Nuts/Berries	\$1,839,000	*
	Vegetable	\$24,151,000	*
	Animal	\$121,928,000	+3%
	Total	\$164,609,000	-1%
Direct to consumer sales	Participating farms	69	+47%
	Value	\$4,116,000	+704%
CSA	Participating farms	3	-40%
Agritourism	Participating farms	9	0%
	Value	\$174,000	+25%

Central Midlands Council of Governments

Economic Development Findings and Goals Statement

Gaston has an abundant amount of farmland that could be more productively utilized. As it is also the prevailing sentiment among the citizens of Gaston to preserve the rural environment, policies to protect and grow the agriculture sector and the local food systems should be encouraged.

The Town has a fairly diverse range of businesses, the majority of which are retail sales and services. Convenience stores, fast food and low-cost restaurants, and discount retail stores typify the Gaston business climate. Such businesses are not large employers, and wages tend to be low.

Women are the majority of the Gaston workforce. Of the female workforce, 9.7% have children under the age of 18. Furthermore, all the women with children under the age of six are in the workforce, meaning they are either working or actively seeking employment. Sixty-five percent (65%) of Gaston families have multiple wage earners and have children under the age of 18. With so many parents in the workforce, worker-parents need to be supported by the availability of affordable and quality day care and after school programs for school age children.

Economic Development Goal One

Create a town with the amenities to attract desirable employers to Gaston.

Strategy

This strategy is in tandem with the Population Element strategies of promoting active lifestyles and the Transportation Element bicycle and pedestrian policies.

Provide development standards that include an interconnected system of multi-use paths, sidewalks, trails, and greenways for new development and redevelopment projects.

Economic Development Goal Two - Revitalize the Agricultural Economy

As discussed, 61% of the Gaston land area is assessed as agricultural property, yet only 1.4% of the Gaston workforce is employed in the farming/forestry/fishing industry and there are no agricultural, forestry, fishing, and hunting businesses located in Gaston. One of the fastest emerging economies in the US and the State is the local foods movement. Many grocery stores feature SC Department of Agriculture Certified South Carolina Grown produce, meats, and prepared products, and more well-patronized restaurants feature menu items with produce and meats from local farms. Consequently, there has been a revival of small family farms.

Strategies

These strategies are in tandem with the Population Element strategies of promoting the production of local, fresh, and healthy food.

- Provide incentives for new and beginning farmers to turn low-production agricultural land into commercial-scale production
- Consider establishing a Gaston Farmers Market
- Support restaurants and stores that serve and stock local foods
- Have a contest for the best Gaston-grown collards at the annual Collards and BBQ Festival

Economic Development Goal Three - Create a Gaston Workforce Prepared for Higher Paying Jobs

We have seen that the largest employment sector for the Gaston workforce are the service industries. Generally, service sector jobs pay less than other industries, and this is reflected in the fact that Gaston's per capita income lags behind the County the State.

Strategy - Attract Higher Paying Business to Town

Implementing this comprehensive plan and developing zoning and land development regulations will result in a more attractive business and social environment that will help attract desirable and well-paying businesses to Gaston. Town leadership has demonstrated a commitment to planning. Efforts should include a marketing campaign to bring business into Gaston.

Strategy - Foster Workforce Training and Education

We have seen that Gaston has done a great job in achieving a superior high school graduation rate. Now Gaston needs to continue its commitment to education by encouraging high school graduates to achieve the training and higher education required for the better paying jobs of today's economy. This strategy compliments the Population Element Goal One "Achieve Higher Educational Attainment" strategies. High school guidance counselors should work closely with Midlands Technical College workforce development programs which are geared to provide specific training to meet local industries' skilled worker needs.

Economic Development Goal Four - Provide Quality Day Care and After School Programs

There are gaps in the childcare needs of Gaston working parents. There was only one private child care provider identified in a multiple listings search within the Town: A Mother's Prayer at 117 Main Street.

Lexington School District 4 has an Early Childhood Center in Swansea for age 3 to Kindergarten, and there are afterschool programs at the Early Childhood Center and Sandhills Primary School, also in Swansea. The only District 4 program in Gaston is the after school program for fifth and sixth graders at Francis Mack Intermediate School. Given the demographics of working parents and children, there is a clear need for local child care programs for children of all ages.

Strategies

- Support the expansion of Lexington School District 4 early childhood education and after school programs
- Encourage local industries to provide in-house child care programs and to provide flexible work schedules for working parents
- Provide incentives for local private childcare providers

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CHAPTER THREE: NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

The physical environment is a dominant factor in the daily lives of a community. The natural resources element examines the major geographic formation of the area in which the community is situated; land and soil characteristics and suitability; streams, ponds and other water bodies; floodplains and wetlands; plant and animal habitats; unique natural and recreation areas; mineral deposits; prime agricultural and forest land; air quality; and other matters related to the natural environment. Natural resources are usually not defined by political boundaries. Depending on the subject matter, Gaston's natural resources will be discussed within the context of various geographic areas in which the Town is located. These areas or regions will vary in scale. Data and information in this Chapter derives from several sources, including the Natural Resources Element of *Supporting Elements for the Comprehensive Plan: Lexington County South Carolina* (1999).

Geography

Lexington County lies within several of the geophysical regions commonly used to characterize the Eastern Seaboard states. Refer to Exhibit 3.1. The northern part of the County lies within the lower regions of the Piedmont Plateau. The fall line separates the Piedmont Plateau from the coastal plane. The transition zone between the Piedmont and the Coastal Plane is called the Sandhills. A portion of southeastern Lexington is in the Upper Piedmont Plain Province. The majority of Lexington County, including the Town of Gaston, is in the Sandhills.

Exhibit 3.1 The Fall Line



Sandhills

"[The Sandhills are] rounded gentle sloping hills [that] are the remains of sandy and clayey sediment deposits left between 55 and 100 million years ago when sea level was much higher than it is today and the newly opened Atlantic Ocean covered a large portion of eastern and southern South Carolina. The Sandhills topography corresponds to the ancient shoreline, which is recognizable today primarily by old sand dune remnants. During that ancient era, weathering and erosion of the Blue Ridge and Piedmont rocks and soils provided clays and sands that were carried by water and deposited at the mouth of rivers. Ocean waves and tides reshaped the sediments to form beaches and sand ridges, the remains of which are still visible today. Marine sediments were also deposited offshore, in the ancient flooded coastal plain, creating the nearly horizontal strata of sedimentary rocks that are characteristic of the present day Coastal Plain Region." – South Carolina Geographic Alliance. The topography of the Sandhills in general is rolling to moderately hilly. The elevation of the Sandhills is almost always higher than the adjacent Piedmont Plateau and Coastal Plains regions.

Peachtree Rock

Peachtree Rock Heritage Preserve is an unusual geographical formation for the Sandhills. It is located on Highway 6, nine miles west of Gaston, at 883 Peachtree Rock Road, Lexington 29073. "Layered sandstone formations, riddled with the fossils of ancient marine creatures, crop up on either side of the well-kept trails. Native longleaf pines tower overhead. Near the preserve's entrance, the only natural waterfall on the state's coastal plain splashes into a small pool. Rich in culture, history, unusual geology, plants and wildlife, Peachtree Rock Heritage Preserve is a wonderful and educational place to visit." – Peachtree Rock website

Sandhills Soils

The following discussion from the South Carolina Geographic Alliance provides further description of Sandhills soil characteristics:

"Coastal Plain soils increase in age with distance from the ocean because soils cannot start forming until sea level has fallen sufficiently to expose the former ocean floor to surface weathering conditions. The soils of the Carolina Sandhills, then, are among the oldest in the Coastal Plain of South Carolina. Such extensive weathering, over a period of perhaps a million years or more, has removed much of the original nutrient content of the soil. Unfortunately, the original sandy material was notoriously low in nutrients and organic material to start with, meaning that almost all soil fertility has been lost and the only material left is the original quartz mineral grains, which are highly resistant to weathering. Some clay does occur, however, usually in thin horizons of red or pink sandy clay. Clay rich soil can present its own problems for agriculture, though, especially during long dry spells when the clay can bake dry into a brick-like hardpan. Overall, there is far less clay in Sandhills soils than in the Piedmont because of the different nature of the parent material.

The rolling nature of the topography and the sandy parent material combine to permit good surface and internal drainage so that the majority of soils here are very well drained, sometimes too well drained to hold sufficient moisture for typical agricultural use. Because the soil texture allows for rapid leaching, soils are also strongly acidic. It is not uncommon to find lenses or horizons in Sandhills soils where sand grains have been cemented together with iron oxides, forming a barrier to root growth and water movement. Alluvial soils are rare in the Sandhills Region, but where they occur, they are rich and productive."

Lexington County and Gaston Sandhills Soils

"The Sandhills, the upper portion of the Atlantic Coastal Plain, consist of four geologic formations of unconsolidated marine sediments. The largest and oldest is the Tuscaloosa formation which expands from the Fall Line southward to cover over half of Lexington's coastal plain. This formation consists of light-colored sands with patches of kaolin clay. Overlying most of this is the Lakeland-Blaney soil association which comprises approximately 53 percent of the county. The Lakeland-Blaney soil association has very well-drained and level to strongly sloping soils. Some areas of the Sandhills are sandy throughout while other areas have a loamy subsoil and a fragipan (a subsurface horizon with little organic matter), are cemented, and relatively impermeable to water (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1976). In the southern portion of the county, the McBeam geologic formation is a gently sloping plain consisting of medium-grained sand, sandy clay loams, thin layers of clay, and fullers earth. Soil associations that overlie this formation are part of the Lakeland-Blaney, Lakeland Fuquay, and Dothan-Troup-Fuquay associations. The Dothan-Troup-Fuquay association is very similar to the previous two described above and makes up 11 percent of the soils in the county." *Supporting Elements for the Comprehensive Plan: Lexington County South Carolina* (1999).

Gaston lies in the McBeam geologic formation. The following discussion on Gaston soils is from *Geology of the Coastal Plain of South Carolina* (USGS 1936):

"The high sandy plateau upon which Gaston is built forms the divide between the headwaters of First Creek, which flows northward into Congaree Creek, and Sandy Run, which flows southeastward into the Congaree River. Other small

streams also radiate from Gaston. Sloan's Congaree shale crops out near the heads of several of these streams beneath a thick cover of sand. The type locality of the Congaree shale appears to be on Elmore Williams' place at the head, of First Creek, 0.8 mile west of Gaston. Sloan reports an 8-foot ledge of fuller's earth containing numerous large casts of *Venericardia "planicosta"* and shark teeth, overlain by fossiliferous quartzite, exposed on the south side of a large natural amphitheater. The fuller's earth is provisionally assigned to the McBean formation. The following section on the J. F. Mack property, 2 miles south of Gaston and 0.3 mile east of the Seaboard Air Line Railway, is adapted from Sloan.

Section of McBean formation 2 miles south of Gaston

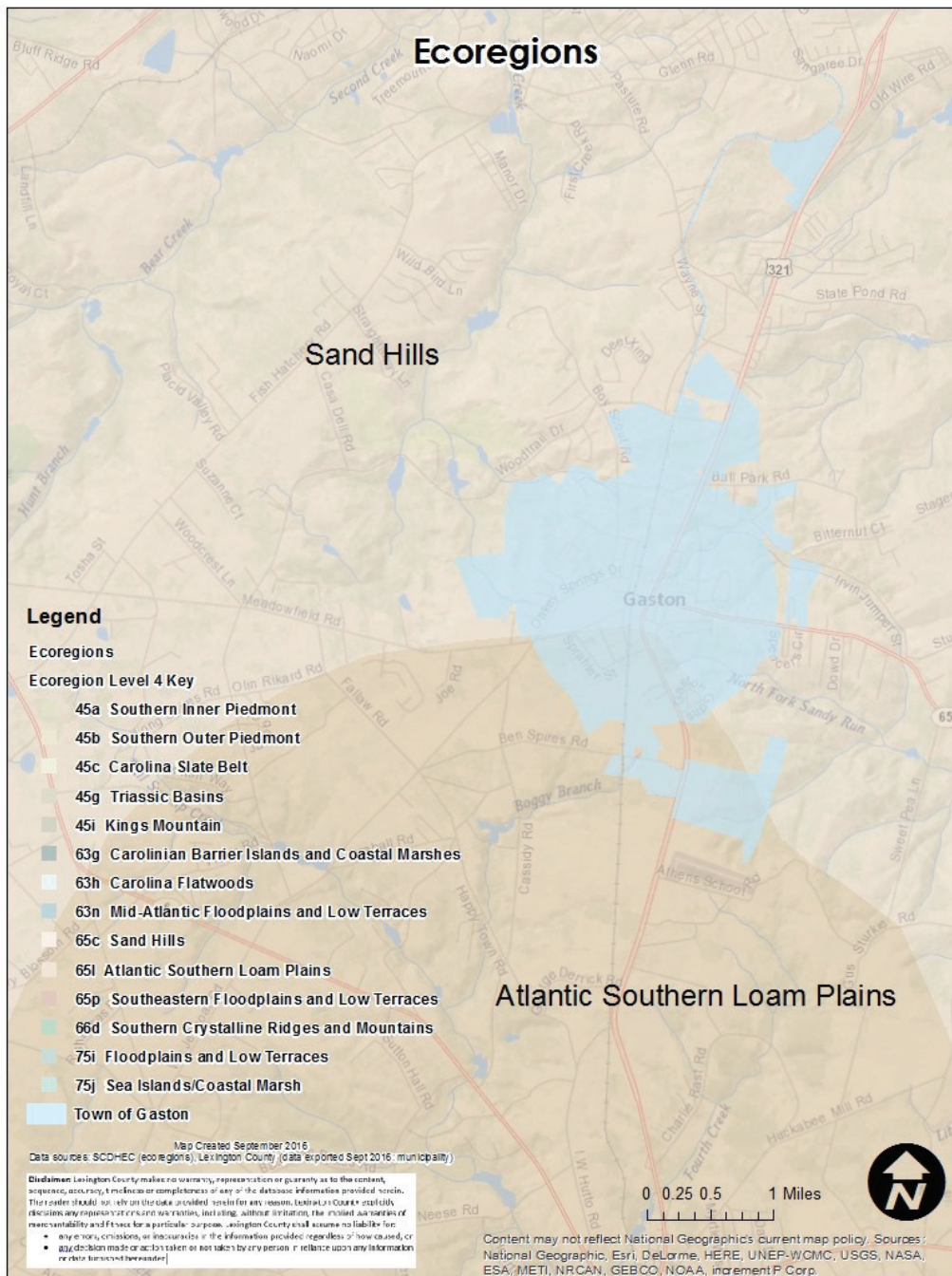
1. Sands inclosing an interrupted ledge of buhrstone that contains *Ostrea johnsoni*, and *Scutella* sp., 3/4inches in diameter. At 4.6 feet
2. Argillaceous yellow sands interstratified with horizontal lines of white and purple clays. At 8.2 feet
3. Plastic purple clay. At 3 feet
4. Drab fuller's earth enclosing molds and casts (principally *Venericardia "planicosta"*). (Congaree phase of Sloan.) Penetrated 4 feet by well.

Fossiliferous fuller's earth of the Congaree shale crops out, according to Sloan, on the Sturkie (Zid) place, 3 miles southeast of Gaston, on the west side of Sandy Run, where it is overlain by sand and clay, and on the Wolf property, 1.8 miles southwest of Congaree Bluff and 4 miles northeast of Gaston."

Ecoregions

Ecoregions are another method of classifying land according to a general similarity in ecosystems and in the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources. Ecosystems are all the living organisms in an area functioning together as a unit with all of the non-living physical factors of the environment. Ecoregion classification is designed to serve as a spatial framework for the research, assessment, management, and monitoring of ecosystems and ecosystem components. Ecoregion classification are used by many state and federal programs such as the development of water quality standards, management of nonpoint source pollution, and integrated ecosystem management.

Refer to Exhibit 3.2. Whereas all of Gaston is within the Sandhills geographic zone, the Town of Gaston is within two ecoregions: the Sandhills and the Atlantic Southern Plains. The boundary for the Atlantic Southern Plains ecosystem generally corresponds to the Edisto River Basin discussed in Hydrology (below), whereas the Sandhills ecoregion is generally located within the Saluda River Basin. Sandhills soils are discussed above. The Atlantic Southern Plains tends to be lower, flatter, and more gently rolling than the Sandhills ecoregion. These soils are more suited for agricultural use and more cropland is found within this ecoregion than in the Sandhills ecoregion as well as in the geographical zone of the same name. Refer to the farmland classification map in Exhibit 3.3. Except for one isolated pocket, prime farmland within and around Gaston lies within the Atlantic Southern Plains.



Farmland Soils

Prime Farmland

Prime farmland is one of several kinds of important farmland, defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as soils that are best suited to producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Prime farmland soils are of major importance in meeting the nation's short and long range needs for food and fiber.

Prime farmland soils have properties that are favorable for the economic production of sustained high yields of crops. The soils need only to be treated and managed using acceptable farming methods. The moisture supply, of course, must be adequate and the growing season has to be sufficiently long – both conditions are present in the Gaston area. Prime farmland soils produce the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources. The farming of

these soils results in the least damage to the environment. The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service's highest classification is "all areas are prime farmland." Refer the Exhibit 3.3. The majority of prime farmland within the Gaston Town Limits are in the south central area of town. This portion of the Town lies within Atlantic Southern Loam Plains Ecoregion (Exhibit 3.2) – known to be better agricultural lands than the rest of the Sandhills geographic region. There is a total of 215.7 acres of prime farmland in Gaston, which is only 6.2% of the total land area. These limited acreages of high production farmlands should be preserved and protected from development pressures.

Soils of Statewide Importance

A second tier classification of soils suitable for agriculture is "Soils of Statewide Importance." These are productive soils, but may have express characteristics of steep slope, high water table, presence of gravel, low water holding capacity, or susceptibility to erosion or other concerns. A total of 267 acres, or 7.6% of Gaston total land area, are classified as Soils of Statewide Importance. Some marginal lands may still be suited for timber and pasture land. Since these lands may also present development constraints, measures should be taken to preserve these lands for the more productive agricultural uses.

The acreage of highest quality farmland is limited; the USDA recognizes that government at local, state, and federal levels, as well as individuals, must encourage and facilitate the wise uses of our nation's prime farmland. Unfortunately, most soils best suited to farm operations are also best suited to urban development. This has accounted for massive conversions of farmland to urban use. Conversely, poor soils or soils with constraints to agricultural use generally present problems to urban development. As a result, there is a pressing need for planning to help resolve the conflict between development constraints posed by poorer soil conditions and the need to preserve prime agricultural land.

Historically, as development increased in Gaston and Lexington County, agricultural land has been reduced. Many areas throughout the nation employ rural zoning categories to reduce the density of residential development and the conflicts between housing and farming (*i.e.* sounds of heavy farm equipment, smell of manure or drifting chemical sprays, or clouds of dust). Regulations should provide for sustainable farming and ranching best management practices that protect the environment and safeguard human health.



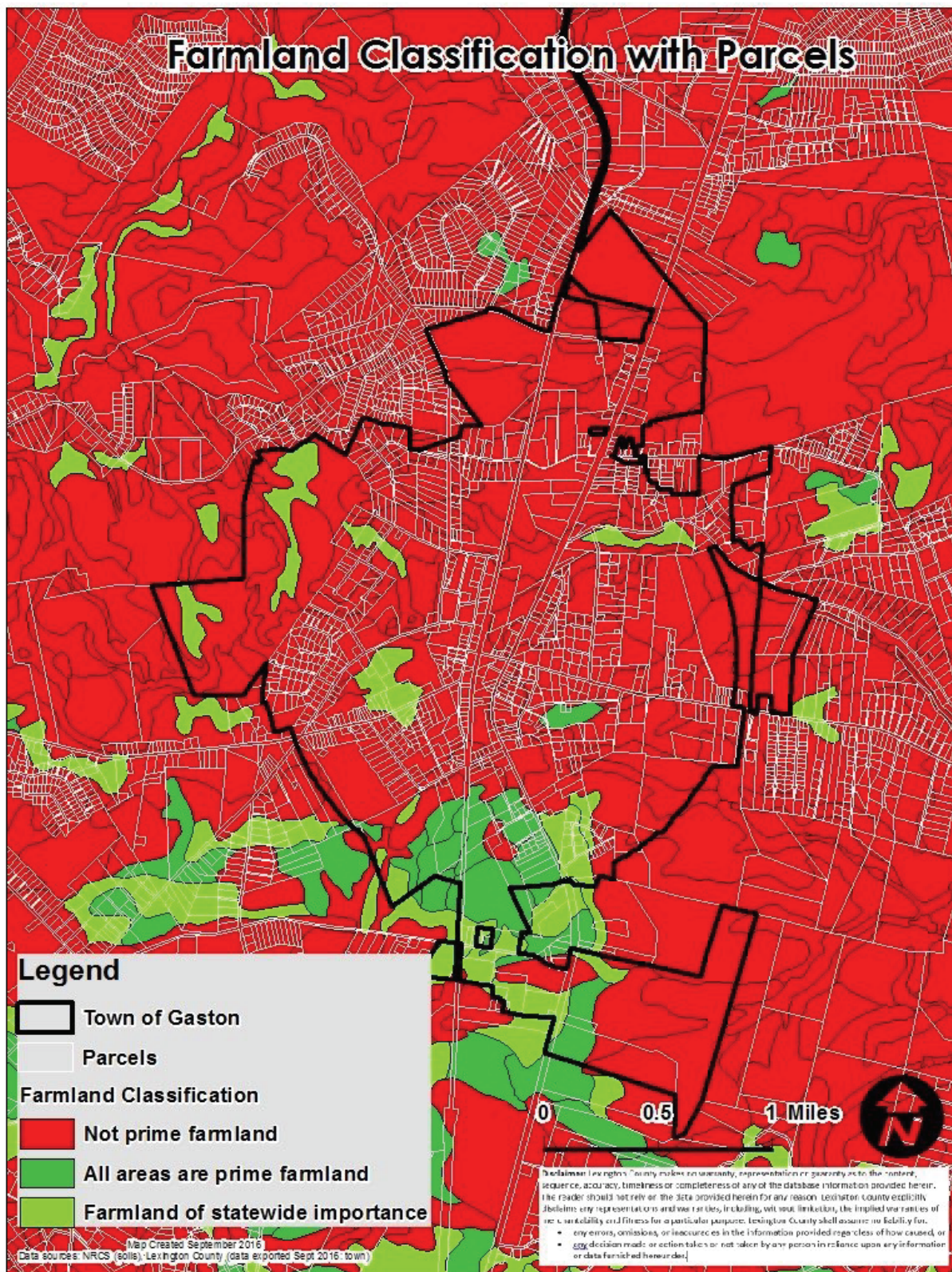
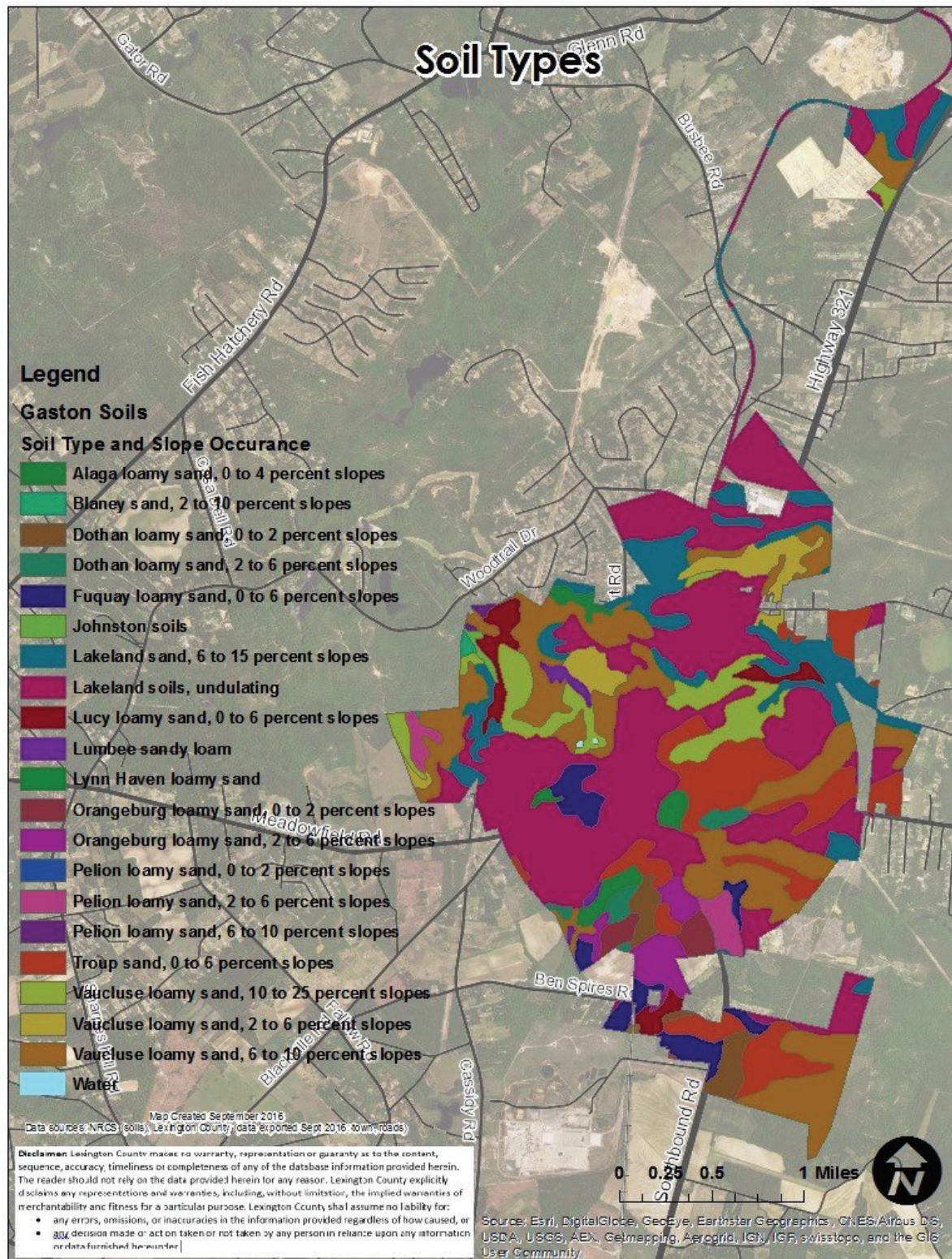


Exhibit 3.5 General Soil Types Map

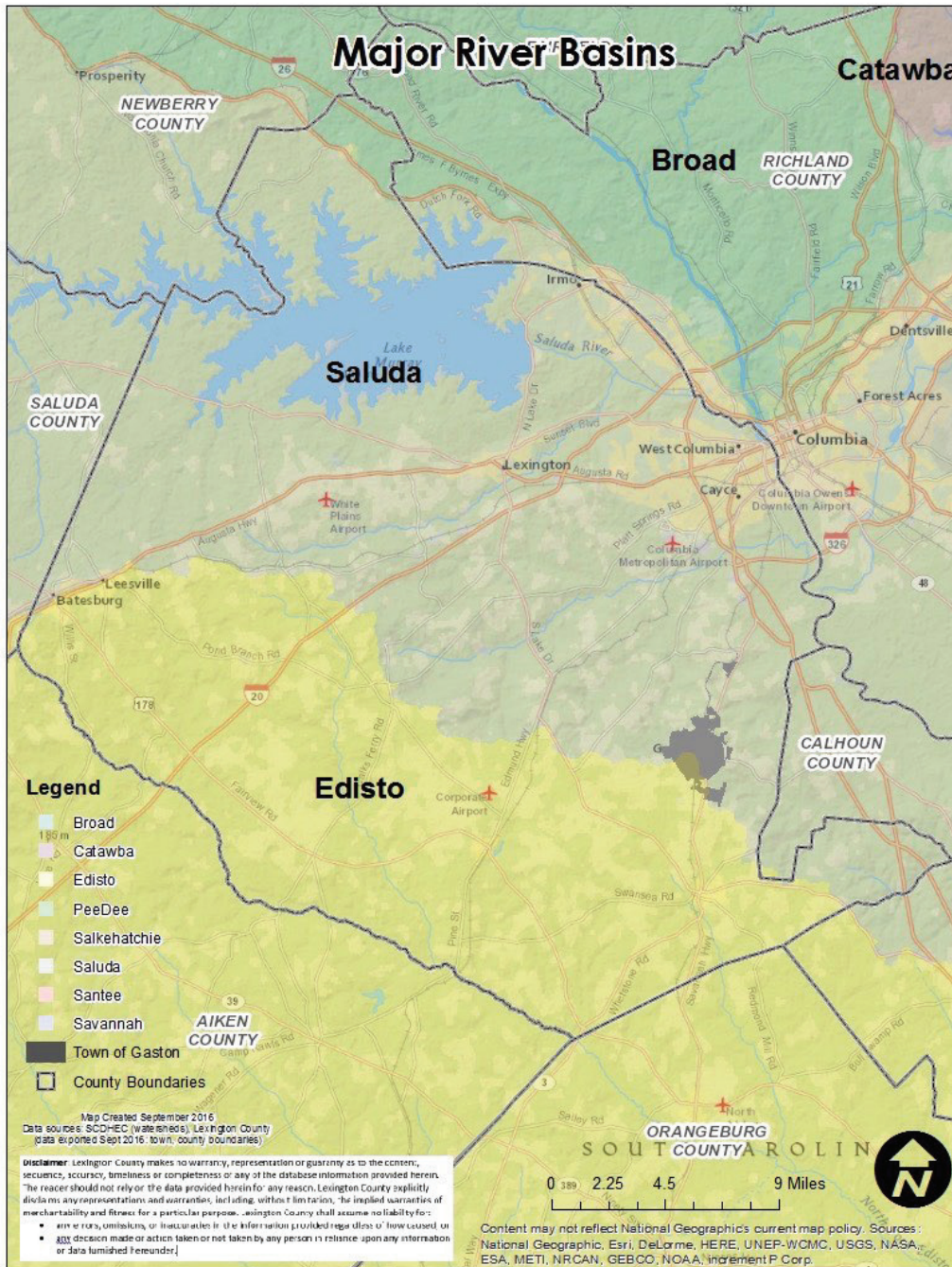


Hydrology

Watersheds

Watersheds are areas in which all water drains to the same receiving water body. Watersheds can be subdivided into many smaller units. The largest watershed in the lower 48 states is the Continental Divide. All water west of the divide eventually drains into the Pacific Ocean and all water east of the divide eventually drains into the Atlantic Ocean. The largest units of practical significance on the state level are Major River Basins. Refer to Exhibit 3.4. Interestingly, Gaston is on a “Continental Divide” of the surrounding area. The Southwest quadrant of Town drains to the Edisto River Basin, and the remainder of Town drains to the Saluda River Basin.

Exhibit 3.6 Major River Basins



Edisto River Basin

"In the western region of Lexington County, adjacent to Aiken and Saluda Counties, the Chiquapin and Lightwood Knot Creeks converge to form the North Fork Edisto River in the Edisto River Sub-basin. Black Creek and Bull Swamp Creek contribute to the North Fork Edisto further south, flowing in a southeasterly direction. Stream flow in these waters is well-sustained. Historical analysis has indicated declining concentrations of total phosphorus and biochemical oxygen demand as a result of pollution control programs. The total phosphorus concentration exceeded EPA criteria of 0.1 mg/l and violated state standards for fecal coliform bacteria as a result of livestock and feedlot activity. Also, the nitrogen/phosphorus (N/P) ratio was lowest in the Edisto basin because of the excess phosphorus entering streams from point and non-point sources. A high N/P ratio is an indicator of a balanced aquatic ecosystem and an undisturbed watershed.

In the Edisto River basin, near the North Fork [of the] Edisto River, there is a variable groundwater supply for Lexington County. Near the Fall Line, crystalline rock aquifers produce low yields, whereas further south, the Middendorf, Tertiary Sands, and Black Mingo Aquifer Systems are more utilized for public supply. The Middendorf and Tertiary Sand aquifers are the preferred systems of Lexington County primarily because of the large yields of available water. The Black Mingo is only partly in Lexington and is a secondary source. Sediments of the Middendorf Aquifer System lie near the surface of Lexington County and groundwater movement through the system is to the south and southeast. It produces soft, acidic water, very low in dissolved solids, which makes it corrosive to metal surfaces. The Tertiary Sand Aquifer System is composed of highly permeable quartzose sands with sandy clays and inter-fingered limestones. Direct precipitation recharges this aquifer in the outcrop areas adjacent to Orangeburg County. Water quality is acidic, high in iron and low in dissolved solids. Some wells in this area may contain hydrogen sulfide gas. Natural radioactivity, in excess of safe drinking water standards, occurs in isolated areas of the Edisto River basin. The Black Mingo Aquifer System is composed of fine sand, silty clays, fullers' earth fossiliferous limestones, and some mixed shales (S.C. Water Resources Commission, 1993)."

"Wetlands of the Edisto River basin are concentrated along the larger water bodies such as the North Fork Edisto River, Black Creek and Bull Swamp Creek. Generally, the total percentage of wetlands in a watershed of the Edisto basin increases toward the southeastern areas of Lexington. The North Fork Edisto watershed, from its origin to Black Creek has the highest percentage of wetlands, approximately 8 percent, and these are classified as forested wetland (Department of Health and Environmental Control, 1995). The entire Coastal Plain region has many soils which can be classified as wetlands. The large Lakeland Blaney soil association along with some Fuquay soils holds 46 percent of Lexington's total wetland area. Most of this acreage is bottomland hardwood along streams or rivers. Twenty-four (24) percent of all wetlands is held in Lakeland, Fuquay, Alga, Dothan, and Vacluse soils located in the southern areas of the county (*Supporting Elements for the Comprehensive Plan: Lexington County South Carolina* [1999])."

Saluda River Basin

The Saluda River found in the Piedmont of Lexington County has a stream flow modified by the water discharges from Lake Murray. From Newberry and Saluda Counties, the Saluda River flows through Lake Murray until it converges with the Broad River to form the Congaree River. Below Lake Murray, the Saluda has been found to average an annual stream flow of 2,929 cubic feet per second (CFS) near Columbia. Generally, flow is greater than 430 CFS. In the smaller streams and tributaries, the flow is more variable because they are affected by smaller watersheds. Decreased groundwater support and average precipitation in southern Piedmont regions also have a variable effect on stream flow.

Lake Murray

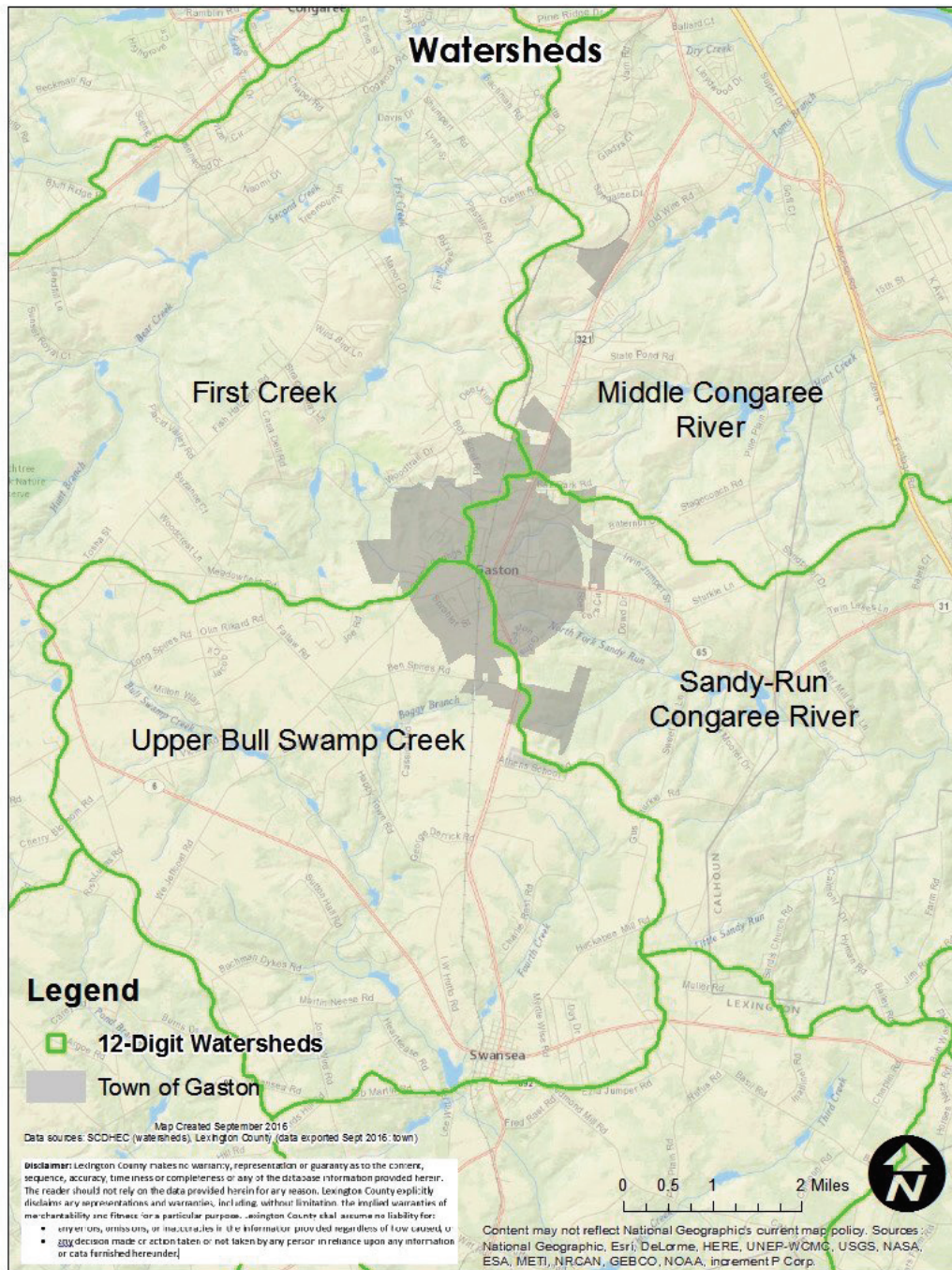
"Lake Murray, constructed in 1930, has the fifth largest surface area and the third largest volume of all the water bodies in the state. Located primarily in northern Lexington County, it is used for hydroelectric power, recreation, and water supply. Classified as mesotrophic, or having moderate to high nutrient levels, Lake Murray has generally a good and improving water quality. However, some problem areas occur in the upper reaches of the lake and in small coves where point and non-point source pollution enters from the upper Saluda and its tributaries.

Groundwater in the northern portion of the Saluda River basin provides Lexington County with a public water supply source. Two zones, the Shallow Sedimentary Rock Aquifer, and the Crystalline Rock Aquifer have been utilized for this purpose. Shallow wells, 60-100 feet deep tap groundwater at the saprolite layer of sediment. The permeability of this layer decreases lower in the Piedmont Province which in turn decreases rain water infiltration. As a result, these wells are apt to run dry. The Shallow Sedimentary Rock Aquifer is used by Lexington County only as a secondary source for public water supply due to limited availability compared to other sources found in the Coastal Plain Province. The Crystalline Rock Aquifer is composed of fractured igneous and metamorphic rocks. This deeper bedrock aquifer provides higher yields in faulted or jointed areas. All aquifers are recharged directly by precipitation or indirectly by groundwater storage in the saprolite layer. Around the Leesville area, the Tertiary Sand Aquifer System is a source of public water supply. Wells in this aquifer yield 50-150 gallons per minute. However, these ground waters have been found to con-

tain concentrations of Radium-226 which exceed safe drinking water standards. Radium-226, which is formed by the radioactive decay of thorium, is thought to have originated in the granitic outcrop areas near the Fall Line. Groundwater obtained from other sources of the Saluda River basin in Lexington is generally found to have good water quality." (S.C. Water Resources Commission, 1983).

"Wetlands in the Saluda River basin are minimal due to soil type and topography. Appling, Tatum, Georgeville, and Lakeland soils contribute to an average slope of 7 percent in various watersheds of the basin. Scattered wetlands are found around Lake Murray and Twelve Mile and Hollow Creeks (S.C. Water Resources Commission, 1995). The northern Piedmont Province holds about 18 percent of Lexington's wetlands. Mostly bottomland hardwoods, the wetlands of the Tatum-Georgeville-Helena soils mixed with some Nason and Herndon soils are primarily deciduous hardwood trees occurring in swamps or other partially or occasionally inundated environments "--(*Supporting Elements for the Comprehensive Plan: Lexington County South Carolina* [1999])."

The smallest watershed units are call 12-digit units after their 12-digit Hydraulic Unit Code. Refer to Exhibit 3.7. Three of the Town's four 12-digit units converge just west of the end of Daniel Lane, which is obviously at a high point in the Town. From this point, the Upper Bull Swamp Creek watershed drains into the Edisto River Basin to the south. The western First Creek Watershed and the eastern Sandy Run Congaree River watersheds both drain into the Saluda River Basin, as does the Middle Congaree River watershed at the northern tip of town.



Protection of Wetlands, Streams, and Flood Zones

Gaston has an agreement with Lexington County for the County to administer and enforce the Land Development Manual within the Town. “The Manual provides parameters and criteria for addressing some of the specific issues which must be resolved during the planning, designing, and construction phases of land development. The minimum standards for site and land development are intended to protect and promote the general welfare of all citizens by accomplishing these goals:

1. Clearly document the land disturbance permit application requirements and approval process;
2. Require the design and construction of safe and durable streets, right-of-ways, driveways and parking lots;
3. Require the design and construction of stormwater drainage systems that maintain to the maximum extent

practicable a site's pre-development drainage characteristics in terms of flow rates, runoff volume, and pollutant load/concentrations;

4. Require complete and accurate designs and construction documents to ensure grading and property issues are addressed;
5. Require land disturbance projects to contain the necessary measures to control erosion and sediment during construction;
6. Require land disturbance projects to contain the necessary measures to reduce stormwater pollution and protect water quality through good design features, maintenance requirements, and encouragement of the latest stormwater treatment technologies (engineered devices) and approaches (e.g. Low Impact Development, or LID);
7. Provide general information on avenues to improve water quality, prevent illicit discharges, and minimize stormwater runoff impacts due to increased flow volumes, peak discharge rates, and pollutant loads from disturbed areas;
8. Prevent the alteration, diversions, or disturbance of watercourses that lie within a special flood hazard area without the prior approval from the Federal Emergency Management Agency through submittals of LOMRs, No-rise certifications, or other appropriate documentation. Development in the floodplain shall be discouraged until all other possible locations have been exhausted and a reasonable and necessary use exists to develop in the floodplain. The PW/SWD shall be notified of any and all plans to develop areas within a floodplain;
9. Protect wetlands. All wetlands shall be delineated and verified by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and protected to the maximum extent possible or mitigated through other projects/mitigation banks. No disturbance of wetlands shall be allowed unless proper approval has been received from the USACE and Lexington County has been notified of such approval. Disturbance includes, but is not limited to, draining, grading, filling, discharging untreated stormwater runoff, and removal of vegetation. (Lexington County Land Development Manual section 1.1, Purpose)."

At this writing, the County is in the process of finalizing new amendments to the Land Development Manual and revising agreements with the County's Municipalities.

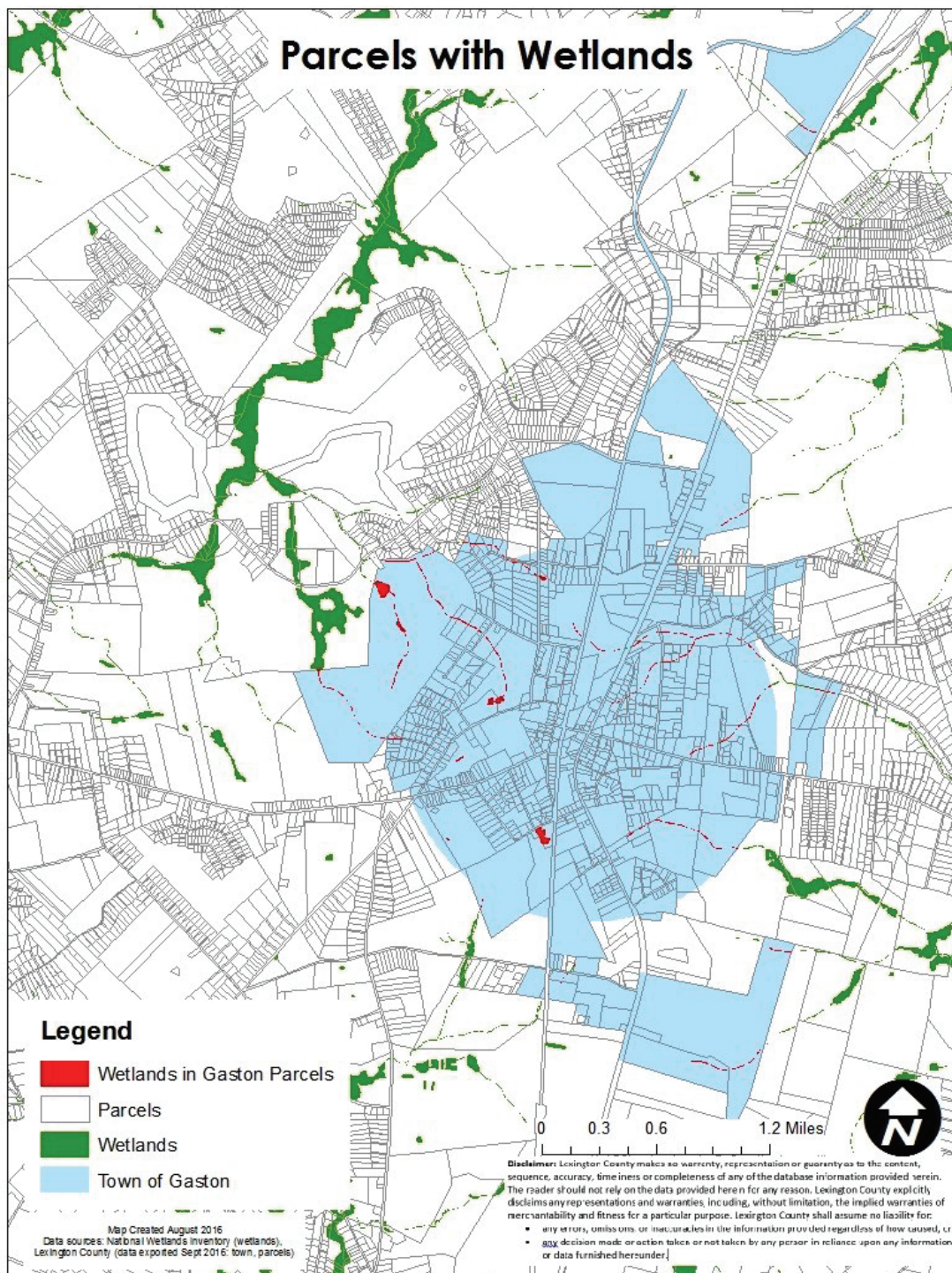
Wetlands

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil, all year or for varying periods of time during the year, including during the growing season. Water saturation largely determines how the soil develops and the types of plant and animal communities living in and on the soil. Wetlands may support both water (aquatic) and land (terrestrial) plant and animal species. The prolonged presence of water creates conditions that favor the growth of specially adapted plants (hydrophytes) and promote the development of characteristic wetland (hydric) soils.

In addition to their importance in providing plant and animal habitats, wetlands have many other beneficial functions. Wetlands serve as storage areas for stormwater discharges, thus are natural flood control systems. Wetlands acts as a natural filter to clean urban and agricultural pollutants from stormwater. Wetlands are natural recharge areas for groundwater, replenishing the aquifers from which drinking water is pumped. For all of these reasons, wetlands are protected by section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

National Wetlands Inventory

The US Fish and Wildlife Service began the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) program to map wetlands across America in order to: provide biologists and others with information on the distribution of various types of wetlands, and to aide in wetlands conservation efforts. This is done remotely by trained analysts who use on-screen imagery and geospatial software to determine and classify wetlands. Refer to Exhibit 3.8. There are a few wetland areas within the Town of Gaston identified through the National Wetlands Inventory. Refer to item 9 from the Purpose section of Land Development Manual above. The US Army Corps of Engineers has the responsibility for the on-ground determination and delineation of wetlands. They first make a determination that an area is classified as a wetland and then delineate the boundary of the wetlands. Not all wetlands are identified in the NWI program, and a wetlands professional should be consulted before disturbing and area identified in the NWI or any area exhibiting the characteristics of a wetland.



Water Quality Buffers

Section 3.4.4 of the Lexington Land Development Manual provides for water quality buffers to protect “all perennial and intermittent streams waterways, shorelines and wetlands as identified on a 7.5 USGS quadrangle map, USACE, or as determined by the County Public Works Department Stormwater Division.” Section 3.4.4 states:

“A water quality buffer is an area of original or re-established vegetation that borders streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, wetlands, and seeps. Buffers are most effective when stormwater runoff is flowing into and through the buffer zone as shallow sheet flow, rather than concentrated flow such as channels, gullies, or wet weather conveyances. Therefore, it is

critical that design of all development include management practices, to the maximum extent practical, that will result in stormwater runoff flowing into the buffer zone as shallow sheet flow.

Water quality buffers provide numerous environmental protection and resource management benefits including:

1. Restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the water resources,
2. Removing pollutants delivered in urban stormwater,
3. Reducing erosion and controlling sedimentation,
4. Stabilizing stream banks,
5. Providing infiltration of stormwater runoff,
6. Maintaining base flow of streams,
7. Contributing the organic matter that is a source of food and energy for the aquatic ecosystem,
8. Providing tree canopy to shade streams and promote desirable aquatic organisms,
9. Providing riparian wildlife habitat, and
10. Furnishing scenic value and recreational opportunity."

Streams with Water Quality Buffers are shown on Exhibit 3.9 and Exhibit 3.10.

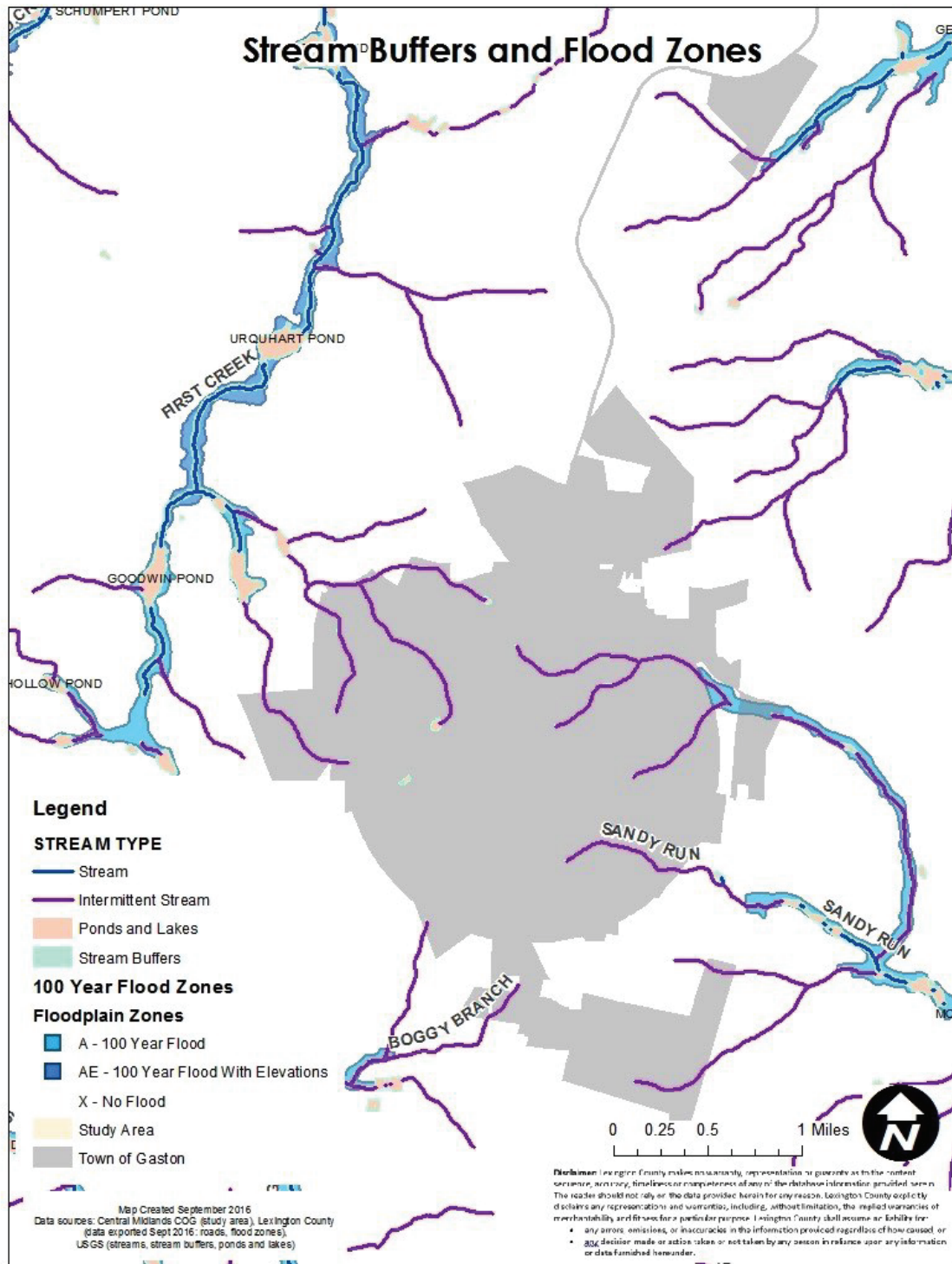
Flood Hazard Zones

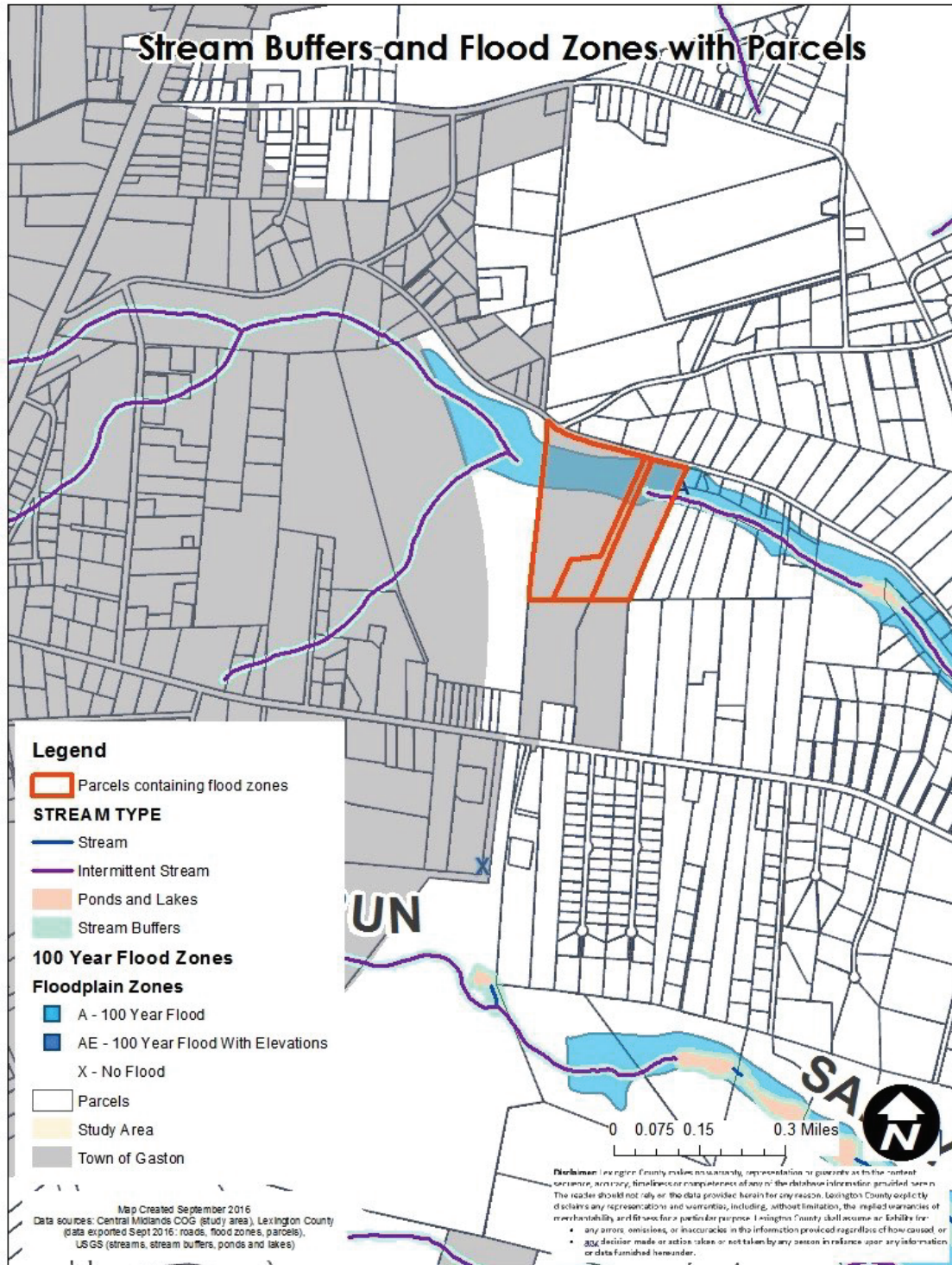
Chapter 6 of the Lexington County Land Development Manual (LDM) regulates floodplains as required by the SC Flood Mitigation Program and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Section 6.2, Finding of Fact, of the LDM states:

"The Special Flood Hazard Areas of Lexington County are subject to periodic inundation which results in loss of life, property, health and safety hazards, disruption of commerce and governmental services, extraordinary public expenditures of flood protection and relief, and impairment of the tax base, all of which adversely affect the public health, safety, and general welfare.

Furthermore, these flood losses are caused by the cumulative effect of obstructions in floodplains causing increases in flood heights and velocities, and by the occupancy in flood hazard areas by uses vulnerable to floods or hazardous to other lands which are inadequately elevated, flood proofed, or otherwise unprotected from flood damages."

Flood hazard zones in the Gaston area are shown in Exhibit 3.9, and the affected parcels within the Town are shown in Exhibit 3.10.





Mining and Minerals

There are no mines or mineral extraction within the Gaston Town Limits. The closest mine is the B&T Sand Company, 7.5 miles WNW of Gaston at 5960 Edmund Hwy, Lexington, SC 29073.

Plant and Animal Habitats

"Plant and animal habitats of Lexington County identified by the National Heritage Program (NHP) can be grouped according to regions. Most of the plant and animal species found in the survey live in a level to strongly sloping environment of the Coastal Plain. Lakeland-Blaney soils which traverse the entire east to west width of Lexington provide the basis for evergreen and mixed forest, pasture, and wetland habitats. Animals such as the Eastern fox squirrel, the Eastern coral snake, and the Black swamp snake make their home in the pine and oak forests and swamp lands of the area. Bald eagles, listed as an endangered species, are found in areas below Lake Murray and along the border with Richland County. Both of these areas offer access to the Saluda and Congaree rivers. The Carolina Darter has also been identified in a survey conducted along the northern border with Richland County. The habitat of this threatened fish includes areas of the Santee River drainage system, backwater pools near banks of small, slow streams with silt or detritus-covered bottoms. The Red-cockade woodpecker, on the federal endangered list, has also been identified in Lexington County and can be found in mature pine stands. Schewinitz's sunflower, listed as an endangered species, has been surveyed in lower Lexington in open or sparsely wooded areas on Iredell soils. The most complex mixtures of plants lie in the central areas of Lakeland-Blaney soils. The following vascular plants thrive in habitats of dry open sandy woods with sparse ground cover, and flood plains of blackwater streams: Sweet pitcher plant, Pickering's morning glory, Woody goldenrod, and Woolly-berry -(Supporting Elements for the Comprehensive Plan: Lexington County South Carolina [1999])."

Exhibit 3.11 Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species and Communities

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species and Communities Known to Occur in Lexington County, South Carolina June 11, 2014			
Scientific Name	Common Name	USESA Designation	State Protection
<u>Vertebrate Animals</u>			
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle		ST: Threatened
<i>Micrurus fulvius</i>	Eastern Coral Snake		
<i>Picoides borealis</i>	Red-cockaded Woodpecker	LE: Endangered	SE: Endangered
<i>Sciurus niger</i>	Eastern Fox Squirrel		
<i>Seminatrix pygaea</i>	Black Swamp Snake		
<u>Vascular Plants</u>			
<i>Andropogon gyrans</i> var. <i>stenophyllus</i>	Elliott's Bluestem		

Climate

Gaston gets an average of 47 inches per year of rain. On average, Gaston has 221 sunny days per year. July is the warmest month with an average high of 92 degrees. January is the coldest month with a low of around 34 degrees.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species and Communities Known to Occur in Lexington County, South Carolina June 11, 2014			
Scientific Name	Common Name	USES Designation	State Protection
<i>Aristida condensata</i>	Piedmont Three- awned Grass		
<i>Asplenium pinnatifidum</i>	Lobed Spleenwort		
<i>Burmannia biflora</i>	Northern Burmannia		
<i>Carex collinsii</i>	Collins' Sedge		
<i>Ceratiola ericoides</i>	Sandhills Rosemary		
<i>Chrysoma pauciflorescens</i>	Woody Goldenrod		
<i>Coreopsis gladiata</i>	Southeastern Tickseed		
<i>Euonymus atropurpureus</i>	Eastern Wahoo		
<i>Gaylussacia mosieri</i>	Woolly Huckleberry		
<i>Hymenocallis coronaria</i>	Shoals Spider-lily		
<i>Hypericum nitidum</i>	Carolina St. John's-wort		
<i>Liatris microcephala</i>	Small-head Gayfeather		
<i>Lobelia</i> sp. 1	Lobelia		
<i>Lycopus cokeri</i>	Carolina Bugleweed		
<i>Menispermum canadense</i>	Canada Moonseed		
<i>Myriophyllum laxum</i>	Piedmont Water- milfoil		
<i>Nolina georgiana</i>	Georgia Beargrass		
<i>Oxypolis ternata</i>	Piedmont Cowbane		
<i>Pityopsis pinifolia</i>	Pine-leaved Golden Aster		
<i>Polygala nana</i>	Dwarf Milkwort		
<i>Rhynchospora alba</i>	White Beakrush		
<i>Rhynchospora inundata</i>	Drowned Hornedrush		

Probability of Natural Disasters

Homefacts has analyzed historic weather data for Gaston to assess the probability of the occurrence of natural disasters

Earthquakes

Gaston has a low earthquake risk, with a total of 2 earthquakes since 1931. The USGS database shows that there is a 3.48% chance of a major earthquake within 50km of Gaston within the next 50 years. The largest earthquake within 30 miles of Gaston was a 2.9 magnitude in 2016.

Hurricanes

Gaston is in a very low risk hurricane zone. 50 hurricanes have been recorded in the Gaston since 1930. The largest hurricane was Unnamed in 1933. The most recent hurricane to reach Gaston was Andrea in 2013.

Hail

Gaston has a high risk of hail storms. From 2004 – 2012 there was an average of 4 reports per year of hail in the vicinity of Gaston.

Tornados

The 29053 zip code is a High Risk area for tornados. According to records, the largest tornado in the Gaston area was an F3 in 1994; there were no injuries or deaths from that tornado. Tornado risk is calculated from the destruction path that has occurred within 30 miles of the location.

Risk Level: High

Yearly Avg. of Tornados in 29053 - 2

Yearly Avg. of Fatalities in 29053 - 0

Tornados since 1950 in 29053 - 111

Air Quality Index

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is based on annual reports from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The number of ozone alert days is used as an indicator of air quality, as are the amounts of seven pollutants including particulates, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, and volatile organic chemicals.

Air Quality Indices are numbers used by government agencies to characterize the quality of the air at a given location. As the AQI increases, an increasingly large percentage of the population is likely to experience increasingly severe adverse health effects. Air quality index values are divided into ranges, and each range is assigned a descriptor and a color code. Standardized public health advisories are associated with each AQI range. The EPA uses the following AQI:

0-50 good (Green)

51-100 moderate (Yellow)

101-150 Unhealthy for sensitive groups (Orange)

151-200 unhealthy (Red)

201-300 very unhealthy (Purple)

301-500 Hazardous (no color code)

Gaston's current AQI is 45.8 which places Gaston's air quality as good.

Water Quality Index

The water quality index (WQI) is a measurement of an area's water supply as rated by the EPA. The WQI is a number ranging from 1 to 100; a higher number is indicative of better water quality. Scores are determined by the EPA by a complex method of measuring water quality using 15 indicators which include: temperature, pH, fecal coliform bacteria and other pollutants, dissolved oxygen, total suspended sediment, turbidity, total phosphorus, and total nitrogen. Gaston's water quality index is 55.

Natural Resource Goals and Needs Statement

Much of the parcels with prime farmland and soils of statewide importance are currently under special agricultural assessment. As property owners get a reduced tax as long as the land is used for agricultural purposes, there is an incentive to preserve these highly productive but scarce farmlands. However, some of these fertile farmlands have already been utilized for non-agricultural uses; while others are vulnerable to development pressures.

Gaston currently has good air quality, but it is only a few points away from being downgraded from good to moderate air quality. Gaston water quality is about in the middle range from good to poor. While air and water quality are not bad, they are both on the cusp of the 'good' range. History shows that Gaston is likely to experience fairly frequent hail storms and tornado strike in the future, and should be prepared.

Goal

Preserve agricultural land.

Strategy

Create an agriculture zoning district that protects agricultural uses through minimum lot sizes, and allows only agricultural and related uses.

Goal

Maintain a high degree of environmental quality for the Town of Gaston.

Strategy

Raise the Water Quality Index through participation in the County's Stormwater Management Permit with SCDHEC.

As discussed above, Gaston already has an agreement with Lexington County for the County to administer and enforce the Land Development Manual within the Town.

DHEC has determined that the Town of Gaston is now an urbanized area and must be permitted as a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS3). In simple terms, the urban build-up of the Town has reached a point at which the Town's run-off after a rain (storm) event into the surrounding waterways is significant enough to require a permit. This is a federally-required permit administered by Lexington County through DHEC. The Stormwater Management Plan required by the permit has many best practices that will help improve Gaston's water quality. The timeframe for the permit requirement is unknown at this time, but the Town should work with Lexington County to begin implementing the permit conditions now.

Strategy

Maintain the good air quality of Gaston by joining and actively participating in the regional Midlands Air Quality Forum. Everyone contributes to air pollution in some way or another, but everyone can also be a part of the solution.

Lexington County government wants to be part of the solution by supporting programs and initiatives aimed at improving air quality. For example:

- The County has implemented an [Air Quality Policy](#) to reduce its own contribution to air pollution.
- The County is a founding member of the [\[Midlands Air Quality Forum\]](#); a collaboration between Richland and Lexington Counties, the Central Midlands Council of Governments, the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce and other municipal, business, industry and organizational stakeholders in the area.
- The County has supported special events to improve air quality such as the [\[Central Midlands Lawn Mower Exchange\]](#) (winner of the 2008 National Association of Counties Achievement Award), Car Care Vehicle Maintenance Checks and the 2007 Climate Protection Action Committee Green is Good for Business Conference. – [Lexington County Air Quality Webpage](#)

Goal

Be prepared for natural disasters.

Strategy

Work with the Lexington County Emergency Management Division to educate the Town leaders first responders and citizens on how to prepare for emergencies.

"When disaster strikes, will you and your family know what to do? How well you manage the aftermath of a disaster depends a great deal on your level of preparedness when disaster strikes. The following links offer information on preparing emergency kits for the family, making and practicing emergency plans, and other important preparedness activities." [Emergency Management Division website](#)

CHAPTER FOUR: CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

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CHAPTER FOUR: CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

A community’s cultural resources add to the quality of life and enjoyment of the residents and visitors alike. Cultural resources give a community a sense of place and a connection with its past.

Historic Resources

There are no recorded historic buildings or structures within the Town Limits of Gaston. However, the William Baker House (about 8 miles east of Gaston on US 21/176 in Sandy Run) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The William Baker House

“The William Baker House is significant as a vernacular version of Classical Revival architecture. The present house, which dates to the late 1820s or early 1830s, was built by William Baker II, or his son William Baker III. The house is situated at a relatively high elevation in the Sandhills and provides a view of Columbia, seen across the Congaree River and Congaree Swamp. The two-storied frame structure sits on a high basement, which enables a view of the hand-hewn logs and pegging. This house features a v-crimp metal roof and full-length hipped-roof veranda, surmounted by a center balcony with pediment. A simple balustrade connects the square columns on both levels. Two interior chimneys protrude from the medium-pitched gable roof. The front entrance contains a paneled door enclosed by sidelights and a transom; the rear entrance is identical, but without the transom. The interior walls are plastered and feature wainscoting and doors that are marbleized, using the technique of feather painting. Fireplaces are plain with dentil molding around the mantels. Wide, heart-pine flooring is found in each room. A wooden outbuilding and family cemetery are included in the nominated property. Listed in the National Register March 8, 1978.” – SC Department of Archives and History

Civic and Fraternal Organizations

Gaston Masonic Lodge

Gaston Lodge #382 is a Regular and Recognized Masonic Lodge located in Gaston, SC, having a charter through the Grand Lodge of SC, AFM, which is recognized by the United Grand Lodge of England. The Lodge is located at 118 North Main.

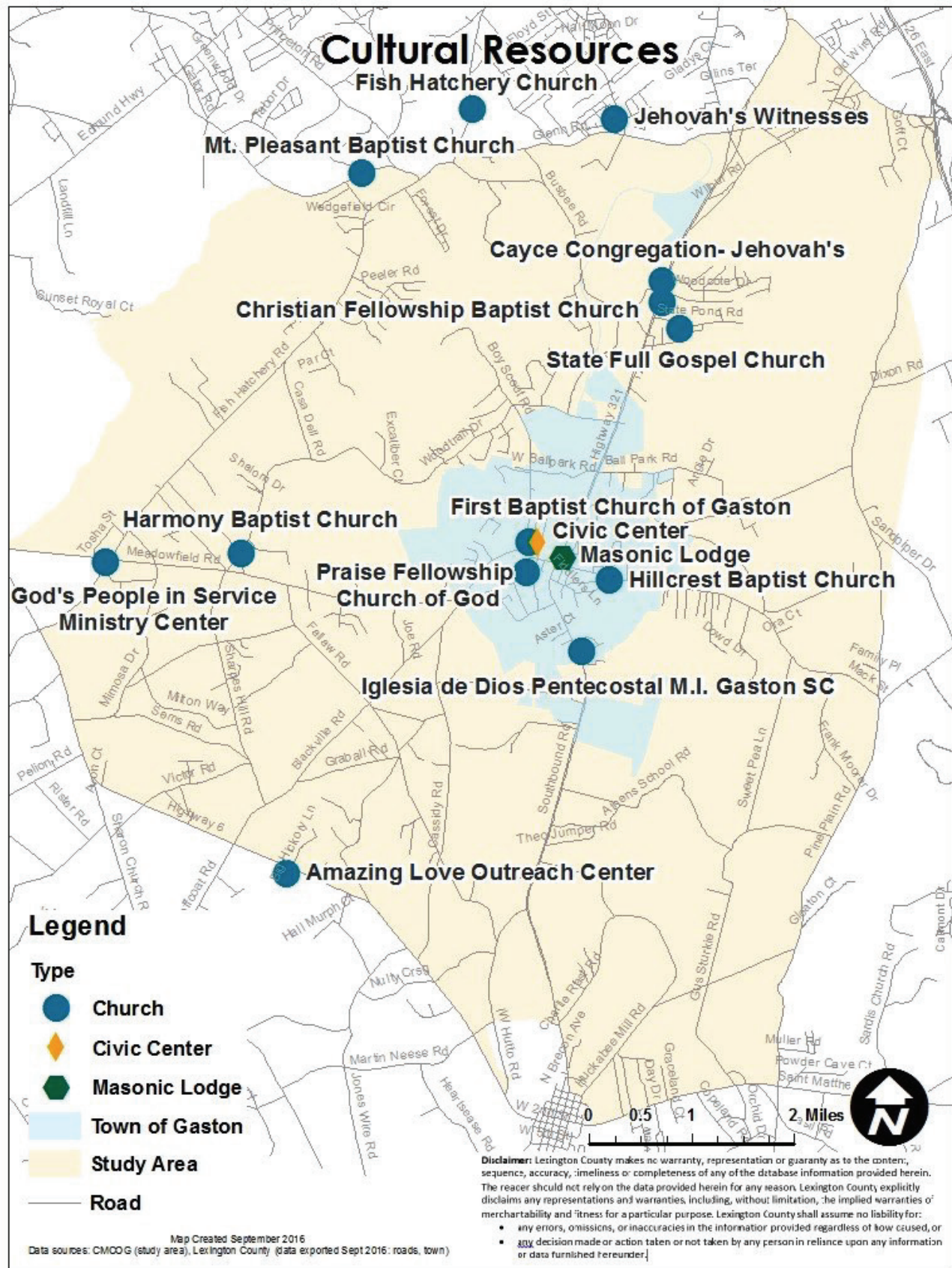
Churches and Religious Organizations

For a small town, Gaston boasts 15 churches and religious organizations in the Gaston study area. These are all Christian Protestant or non-denominational. No other Christian (Catholic, Orthodox, etc.) or other religions have organizations or places of worship in the Town.

Exhibit 4.1 Gaston Area Churches and Religious Organizations

Gaston Church and Religious Organizations	
Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal M.I. Gaston SC 426 S Main Street Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 542-6046 Pentecostal	Mt Pleasant Baptist Church 310 Gator Rd. Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 755-3367 Baptist
Praise Fellowship Church of God 155 Meadowfield Rd. Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 791-1599 Church of God	Beulah United Methodist Church 1577 Old State Rd. Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 794-0783 United Methodist

Gaston Church and Religious Organizations	
State Full Gospel Church 200 State Pond Rd. Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 794-4822 Religious Organization	First Baptist Church of Gaston 121 Oakey Springs Dr. Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 794-0377 General Baptist
Harmony Baptist Church 1959 Woodtrail Dr. Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 939-9366 Baptist	Hillcrest Baptist Church 1344 Mack St. Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 791-0823 Baptist
Amazing Love Outreach Center 1621 Highway 6 Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 568-2404 Religious Organization	First Baptist Church of Sandy Run SBC 442 Livingston Rd. Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 791-0704 Southern Baptist
Cayce Congregation-Jehovah's 4560 Highway 321 Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 926-8087 Jehovah's Witnesses	God's People in Service Ministry Center 4512 Fish Hatchery Rd. Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 955-9251 Social Service Organization
Jehovah's Witnesses 4560 Highway 321 Gaston, SC 29053 (803) 926-8087 Jehovah's Witnesses	



Gaston Cultural Events

Miss Gaston Beauty Pageant

The Miss Gaston Beauty Pageant is held in September at the Gaston Civic Center. Contestants compete in age divisions. Division 1 is age 0 months to 4 years, and division 2 is age 5 through 24 years. There are several age groups within each division and opportunities to win or place within each age group. Award categories are Beauty, Most Beautiful, and Photogenic. There is one overall winner for each division.

The Gaston Collard and BBQ Festival

The Gaston Collard and BBQ Festival began in 1982 as an annual event to celebrate fall harvest. The festival is held behind the town's Civic Center on the first Saturday in October. Annual events at the festival include:

Parade

Winners of the Beauty Pageant are featured in the parade.

Barbeque cook-off

Up to 20 contestants may enter. Contestants set up and start cooking the Friday before the festival.

Other Annual Events Include:

- Live entertainment
- Crafters and exhibitors with wares to sell
- Free games and rides

Additional activities may be included on a year by year basis. Past festivals included antique car and tractor displays, dessert contests, chili cook-offs, and live auctions.

Gaston Christmas Parade

Held each year on the second Saturday of December, the Gaston Christmas Parade starts at Frances Mack Intermediate School on Gaston Street, turns right onto Mack Street, crosses Hwy 321 and the railroad, turns right onto North Carlisle and ends at the Town Hall / Civic Center. The Mayor and Town Council are always in the parade. Other participating groups and individuals may include elected officials, churches, commercial businesses, and horseback riders.

Needs and Goals Statement

Gaston has few cultural resources beyond its churches and annual cultural events. However, these events are well attended and enjoyed by the residents and visitors alike. With historic settlements by the Cherokee and the founding of the town in 1894, undocumented historic resources are likely to exist.

Goal

Gaston will enhance its historical resources.

Strategy

Survey, record, and list the town's archeological and historic assets. It will be a policy of the town to include the protection and preservation of these assets in considering any development plans or zoning applications that could impact the assets and/or surrounding properties.

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CHAPTER FIVE: COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT

Community facilities in the Town of Gaston are under the jurisdiction of multiple agencies: Town of Gaston Government, Lexington County Government, Lexington School District 4, Gaston Rural Water District, the Lexington County Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission, the Lexington County Recreation and Aging Commission, and the US Postal Service. Therefore, it is essential that the Town coordinates the efforts of these public service and facility providers towards an orderly, efficient, and quality development process as the Town continues to grow.

Government Facilities

Gaston Civic Center

The Gaston Civic Center is the former Gaston Elementary School that has been purchased by the Town and converted for civic uses. The Civic Center is located at 131 North Carlisle Street. Within the former school building are:

Town Hall

The administrative offices of the town where building permits and business licenses are issued and where the office of the Mayor is located.

Kitchen

The kitchen has a large dining area where meetings and other functions can be held.

Auditorium

The auditorium is rented out for pageants and other functions.

Meeting Room

The meeting room is used by the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts and other groups on an as-needed basis.

Town Park

Adjacent to the building is a park owned by the Town. The park has a recycled rubber walking track, an old railroad car, and children's playground equipment.

Public Safety

Gaston Police Station and Municipal Court

The Gaston Police Station and the Gaston Municipal Court are located at 186 North Carlisle Street. Public records are kept here. The Gaston City Council meets in the courtroom. The police department consists of a chief, a major/assistant chief, and a captain.

Gaston Fire Station

Fire protection service for the Town of Gaston is provided by the Lexington Fire Services. There are no stations located within the town limits. The Gaston Fire Station (Station #12) services the Town. It is located at 1702 Busbee Road, about five minutes (3.2 miles) from Town Hall. The Gaston Fire Station is equipped with one fire engine with a 1500 gallon per minute (GPM) pump and one tanker with a 750 GPM pump. There are three shifts for around the clock, 365-days-a-year service. There are two staff firemen per shift. The Lexington Fire Services depends on both career and volunteer fire fighters. The Fire Services also provides EMS (Emergency Medical Services) basic life support. Ambulance/EMS services are not routinely posted at the Gaston Fire Station.

Library, Post Office, and Schools

Library

The Gaston Branch of the Lexington County Public Library is located at 214 South Main Street. The branch was established in 1981 in Gaston Town Hall. In 1996, a 2,400 square foot facility was constructed, and in 2009, a 1,600 square foot addition was added. In addition to lending material, the branch offers: programs for children, teens, and adults, a 35-seat

meeting room, and public computers with internet access. Hours of operation are:

Monday 11 – 7

Tuesday and Thursday 10 – 6

Wednesday 12 – 6

Saturday 10 – 1

US Post Office, Gaston

The Gaston post office is located at 220 S. Main Street. Hours of operation are:

Monday - Friday 9 – 12:30 and 1:30 – 5

Saturday 9 – 11

Sunday Closed

Schools

The Planning Act requires a listing of educational areas or institutions in the Cultural Resource Element and the plans for educational facilities to be given in the Community Facilities Element. For easy reference, the Cultural Resources list of Lexington School District 4 schools is repeated here:

Exhibit 5.1

LEXINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT 4 SCHOOLS	
SCHOOL	LOCATION
Early Childhood Center (Preschool-K)	135 Lewis Rast Road, Swansea
Sandhills Primary School (grades 1 and 2)	140 Lewis Rast Road, Swansea
Sandhills Elementary School (grades 3 and 4)	130 Lewis Rast Road, Swansea
Francis Mack Intermediate School (grades 5 and 6)	161 Gaston Street, Gaston
Sandhills Middle School (grades 7 and 8)	582 Meadowfield Road, Gaston
Swansea High School Freshman Academy	1195 I.W. Hutto Road, Swansea
Swansea High School	500 East First Street, Swansea

Refer to Exhibit 5.2 for information on current capacity and projected enrollment for Lexington School District 4 schools. All schools' enrollment is currently below capacity, and the District is prepared to respond to needed expansion as additional capacity is required.

School	Facility Capacity	2016-17 Current Enrollment	
Swansea High	900	659	
Swansea High Freshman Academy	450	216	
Sandhills Middle	650	452	
Frances Mack Intermediate	650	550	
Sandhills Elementary	700	540	
Sandhills Primary	700	516	
Early Childhood Center	800	616	
Projected Enrollment	2021	2026	2031
	1% growth for 5 previous years	2% growth for 5 previous years	3% growth for 5 previous years
<p>Rationale: In the past 5 years, there has been less than 1% growth for Lexington School District 4. We anticipate the same growth will occur for the next 5 years until 2021. From 2021 until 2026, we anticipate a standard growth of 2% each year. In most years, the district uses 2% growth as a standard pattern to determine staffing, etc., unless other factors need to be taken into account. From 2026 until 2031, we would anticipate a 3% growth rate. Given the proximity to Columbia and the utilization of land within the next 15 years, we could conclude that a greater amount of business/industry and families would locate within the boundaries of the district.</p> <p>Facility Upgrades: Upgrades to facilities are ongoing. In regards to increasing the square footage I would anticipate the next addition for classroom space would occur at Swansea High School and Frances Mack Intermediate. Swansea High School will need additional space as the need for additional courses occurs. Frances Mack Intermediate will need additional classroom space within the next 7-10 years. - Dave Toole, Director of Operations Lexington 4</p>			

Recreational Facilities

Gaston Town Park

As noted above, the Gaston Town Park is located within the Gaston Civic Center at 131 North Carlisle Street. The park has a recycled rubber walking track, an old railroad car, and children's playground equipment.

Gaston Ball Park

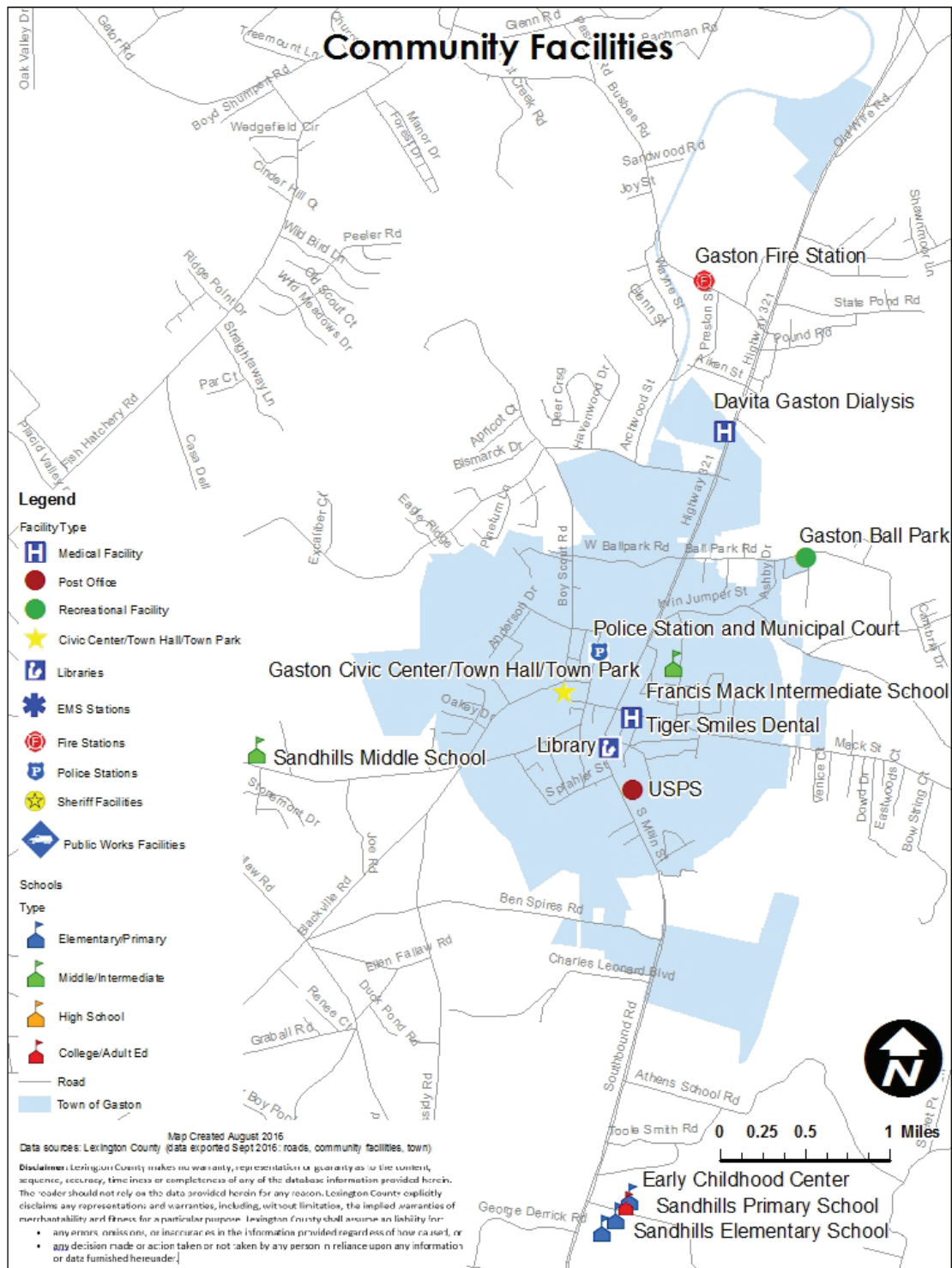
The Gaston Ball Park is a sports complex run by the Lexington County Recreation and Aging Commission. The Ball Park is located at 303 Ball Park Road and contains the following amenities: baseball field, press boxes, community building, canteen, restrooms, playground, and tennis courts.

Medical Facilities

Besides EMS basic life support services provided by the Lexington Fire Services, there are no medical facilities such as hospitals or urgent care in the Town of Gaston. There is a dental office, Tiger Smiles Dental, at 1128 Mack Street. Davita Gaston Dialysis is located at 5220 Highway 321.

Lexington Medical Center, approximately 14 miles away, is the closest hospital. Palmetto Baptist Medical Center, Palmetto Richland Memorial Hospital, and Providence Heart Institute are all located in the City of Columbia. The Moncrief Army Hospital is located on Fort Jackson. Veterans are served by the William Jennings Bryan Dorn Veterans Administration Medical Center in Columbia.

Exhibit 5.3 Gaston Community Facilities



Water and Sewer

Town of Gaston Sewer System

The Town of Gaston refers to their sanitary sewer collection system by two phases, dependent on when they were constructed. Both phases collectively serve 24 commercial customers. The fee for sanitary sewer service is 0.0058 per gallon (\$5.80 per 1000 gallons). The sewer maintenance fee is \$11.76 per month. The service area for the Town's sanitary sewer system is the town limits.

The first phase begins west of the intersection of Mack Street and the railroad tracks, and then runs east along Mack Street for approximately 270 feet before turning north. This gravity line then runs along North Main Street for approximately 1,020 feet before discharging into the IGA pump station wet well.

The second phase begins south of the intersection of North Main Street (Hwy 321) and Wood Trail Drive and runs south along North Main Street. The gravity line then travels eastward, just south of the Advance Auto Parts Store, for approximately 1,870 feet, before discharging into the wet well at the Food Lion pump station.

The gravity sewers feed into two pump stations, which discharge into the Lexington County Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission (LCJMWSC) 12" force main that extends from Swansea to the City of Cayce where treatment is provided. There is an existing agreement between the Town and LCJMWSC that allocates a certain amount of wastewater flow to the LCJMWSC force main and to their capacity rights with the City of Cayce's wastewater treatment plant. This agreement went into effect February 13, 2002, and the flow allocated to the Town is 50,000 gallons per day. The current average flow to the LCJMWSC system is 23,800 gallons per day, so there is ample capacity for expanded use of the system.

Gaston Rural Community Water District

The Gaston Rural Community Water District (GRCWD) is a special purpose district established by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1966. The GRCWD provides water for the Town of Gaston and the surrounding unincorporated areas of Lexington County. Refer to Exhibit 5.6, which shows the GRCWD major water lines. As of 2/27/15, there were 2,961 taps serving a population of 7,186. GRCWD has eight (8) wells and five (5) storage tanks with a storage capacity of 1,050,000 gallons. GRCWD is in the process of installing filtration systems on two of their wells.

Comparing storage capacity to use, GRCWD has ample capacity for additional customers and increased usage before additional capacity will be required. However, GRCWD has the capability of expanding should future demands require.

Exhibit 5.4 Current GRCWD Water Service Fees

Current GRCWD Water Service Fees		
Water Usage	Residential	Commercial
First 2,000 gallons	\$12.00	\$14.25
Additional 1,000 gallons	\$2.65	\$3.08

Lexington County Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission

"The Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission was formed in October 1992 under provisions of existing state code of the Joint Municipal Water Systems Act, and consisted of four (4) initial members, including the County of Lexington, City of Cayce, Town of Pelion and Town of Swansea. Currently, it consists of seven (7) additional members, including the City of West Columbia, Town of Batesburg-Leesville, Town of Springdale, Town of Gaston, the Gilbert-Summit Rural Water District, Town of Lexington, and South Congaree, bringing the current total to eleven (11) members. Its purpose is to pursue, through the cooperative efforts of its representative members, water and wastewater systems expansion within Lexington County in order to promote and support further economic development, and to address health, environmental and quality of life concerns brought on by the lack of such services within the county. Utilizing the system's resources available from its members, as well as the resources of its own, the Commission's goal is to meet water and wastewater service needs in certain unincorporated areas of Lexington County. It is governed by representatives appointed by the governing bodies of its members.

The Commission began officially operating as a separate entity on July 1, 1993, when the Lexington County Council formally conveyed its water and sewer system assets and liabilities to the Commission. Since its creation, the systems assets and the number of customer accounts have experienced growth. The Commission's current area of operations includes more than 50 square miles in Lexington County.

We have extended services into broader areas of the county, including Pelion, Swansea, Gaston, South Congaree and areas north and west of Lexington near Lake Murray. Most of these improvements have been funded through revenue bond issues totaling approximately \$23,000,000 of which more than \$19,000,000 has been for new projects, and the balance was for debt previously issued by the County which was assumed and refinanced by the Commission.

In summary, the efforts of the Commission have resulted in substantially expanded service availability within Lexington County. The overall organizational structure of the Commission has provided a basis for public water and sewer service providers in the county to work together in identifying and addressing water and sewer service needs for our residents, through long-term cooperative, regional planning processes."

<http://www.lcjmWSC.com/>

Exhibit 5.5 Major Sewer Lines

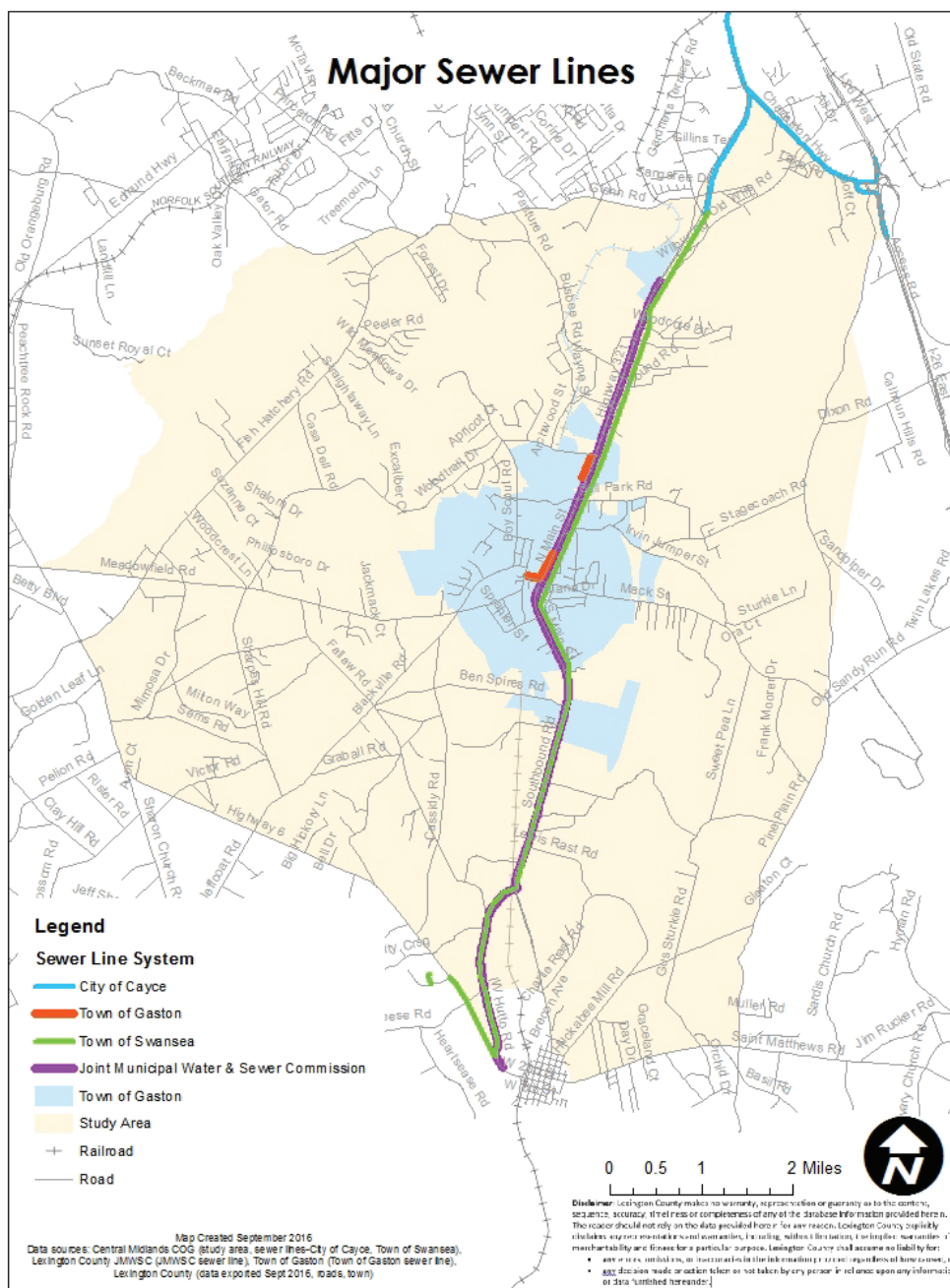
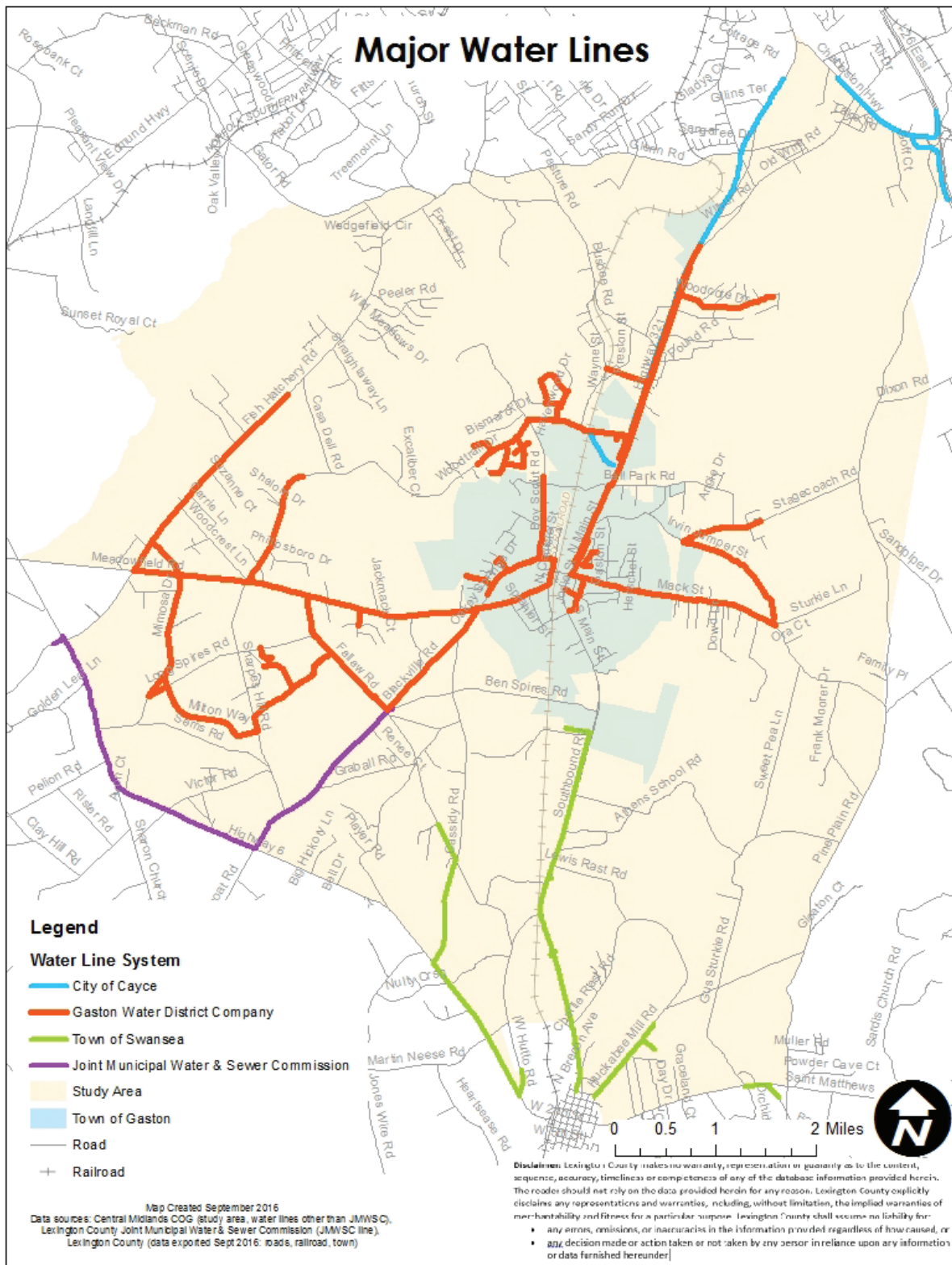


Exhibit 5.6 Major Water Lines



Electricity

Electricity for the Town of Gaston is provided by South Carolina Gas and Electric (SCE&G). SCE&G's Saluda Hydro Plant at Lake Murray dam is a 206 megawatt plan constructed in 1930.

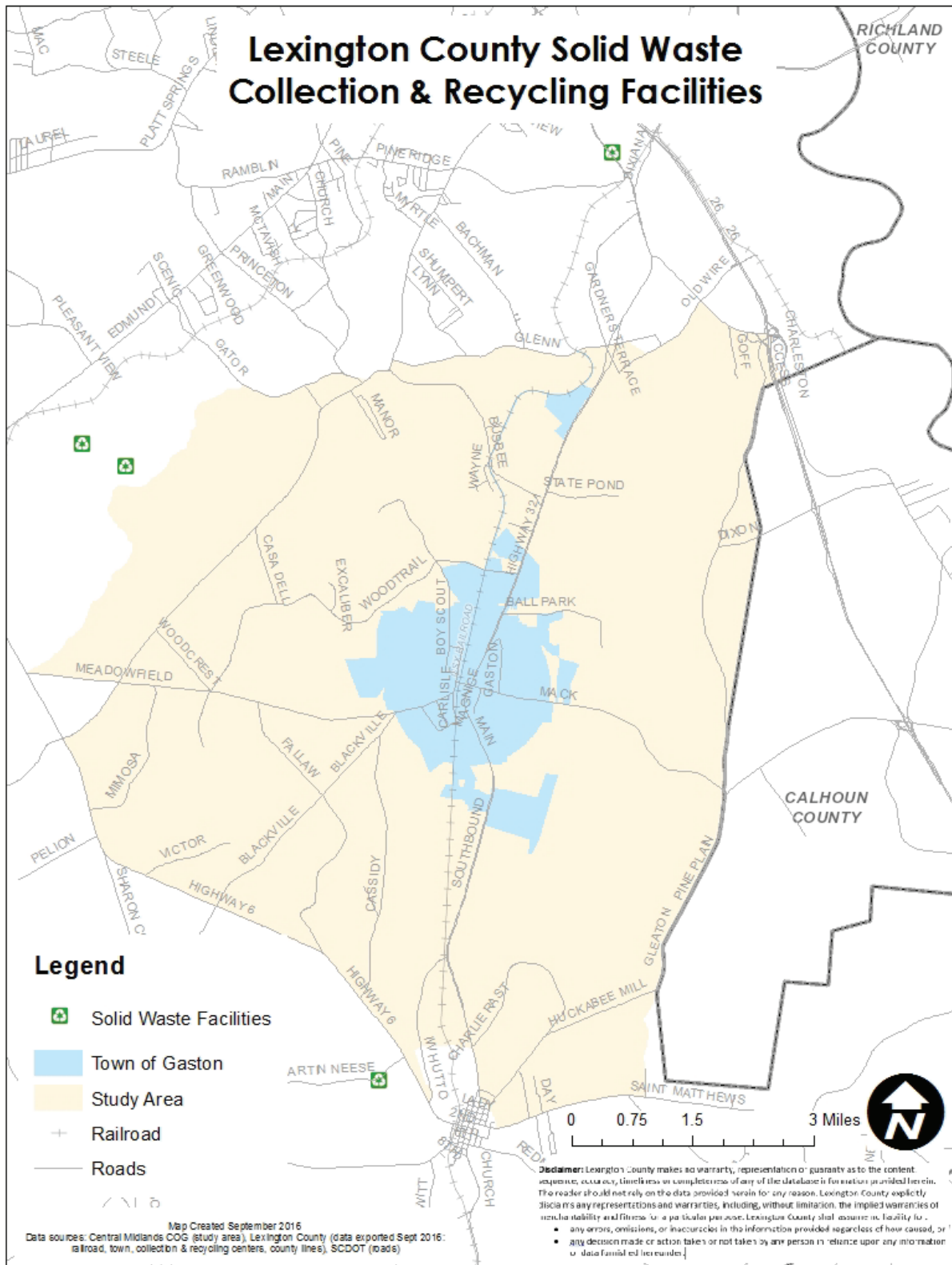
Solid Waste

The Town of Gaston does not provide garbage collection services. Residents and businesses may dispose of garbage and recyclables at County-operated solid waste Collection and Recycling Stations. The closest Collection and Recycling

Stations are the South East Station in Swansea, about 6 miles from the Town, the Sandhills Station between Pine Ridge and Cayce, about 7 miles from the Town, and the Edmond Landfill about 11 miles from the Town.

Residents and businesses can contract with private waste haulers, which include Advanced Disposal and Republic Services

Exhibit 5.7 Solid Waste Collection and Recycling Stations



Communications

Telephone, cable, and internet service providers are Time-Warner Cable, AT&T, and Comporium.

Community Facilities Needs and Goals Statement

Through public input and stakeholder interviews several themes regarding community facilities have emerged. Beyond a dialysis center and a dental office, Gaston has no medical facilities to provide for general health and emergency care. Solid waste and recycling services are lacking. Residents and non-residents cut through town to dispose of trash at the County Solid Waste and Recycling Stations located outside of town. The result is a lot of blown trash that adds to the litter problem. The town's small sewer system is available only to commercial customers. A reliance on septic tanks for residential waste water disposal limits more compact residential development. Failed or poorly performing septic tanks contributes to groundwater and surface water pollution. The need for a new Civic Center that can consolidate the Gaston Town Government services in one location and that could potential house a needed senior center is addressed in the Priority Investment Element. The need for expanded recreational facilities is also addressed in the Priority Investment Element.

Goal

Improve the availability of medical facilities for the Town of Gaston.

Strategies

Work with urgent care providers such as Lexington Medical Center, Palmetto Health, MED Care, or Doctor's Care to provide an urgent care facility for the Town.

Work with Lexington County Fire Services to provide routine posting of EMS services at the Gaston Fire Station.

Goal

Improve the availability of solid waste and recycling collection and disposal services to the Town's residences and businesses.

Strategies

Work with Lexington County to provide a closer, more convenient Solid Waste and Recycling Station for the Town.

Consider negotiating a town-wide solid waste and recycling door-to-door collections service with a private contractor that can provide more favorable rates than what individual residents and businesses are currently paying.

Goal

Sewer service will be more available to Gaston businesses, industry, and residents.

Strategies

- Consider a cost-benefit study for expansion of the Gaston Sewer System
- Explore the options of the Lexington County Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission (LCJMWSC) providing sewer service within the Gaston City Limits. The Town Limits of Gaston would remain the Gaston Sewer System service area. LCJMWSC would be contracted to provide sewer in areas specified by the Town and rates would include revenue for the Town.

CHAPTER SIX: HOUSING ELEMENT

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CHAPTER SIX: HOUSING ELEMENT

The housing stock of the Town of Gaston is a major indicator of lifestyle and social environment. Housing is also a major land use, which greatly influences the character and degree of prosperity of the Town.

Housing is also the major expense in most households. Therefore, a goal of the Town’s housing policies should be to provide affordable housing for all of Gaston’s citizens across all income ranges.

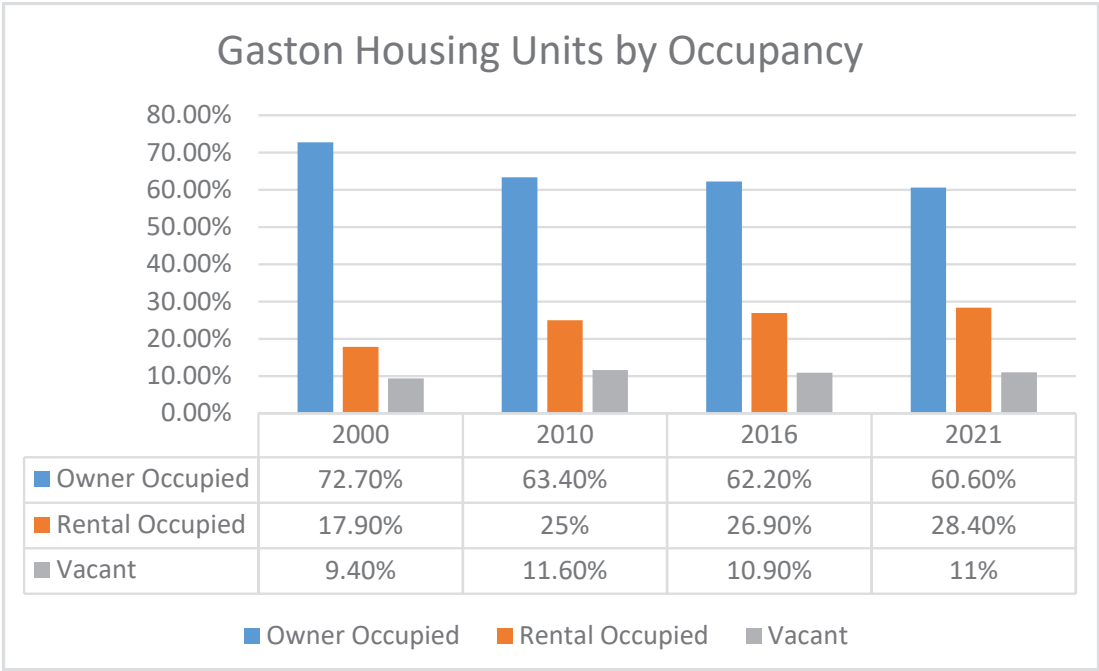
Unless otherwise noted, data in this element is derived from US Census Bureau statistics. The latest attainable figures are used, which typically range from the 2010 decennial census numbers to 2021 projections.

Housing Occupancy Characteristics

There is a total of 778 housing units in Gaston. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the houses are owner-occupied, 27% are rental occupied, and 11% of the houses are vacant.

In 2010, 71.7% of the 633 total housing units were owner-occupied with a mortgage and 43.8% of the housing units were owned free and clear.

Exhibit 6.1 Gaston Housing Units by Occupancy



Since 2000, there has been a steady decline in the number of owner-occupied units and a steady increase in rental units. The percentage of vacant units has remained steady since 2010. These trends are expected to continue for the next five years. Owner-occupancy has traditionally been a sign of vesting in the community and lends to stability of neighborhoods. Whereas the steady decrease in owner-occupancy housing in Gaston may be troubling, this may reflect a national trend. A major factor of the economic downturn of 2009 was the turmoil in housing finances in which many homeowners lost their homes. Although the housing market is bouncing back, full recovery has still not occurred in many areas of the country. One demographic of the Millennial generation is an increased tendency to remain mobile, and the Millennials are more apt to opt for rental over home-ownership. There are financial factors contributing to this tendency, including job insecurity, stagnant wages, and higher education debt. Some analysts state that home ownership is still desirable to Millennials, but they are having to defer home ownership to later in life than had previous generations. Other analysts believe that opting for home rental over ownership is a permanent trend, influenced by many social factors other than purely financial. Home owners, developers, property managers, and real estate brokers will need to monitor the Gaston housing rental and home buyer trends to respond to market demand.

Housing Value

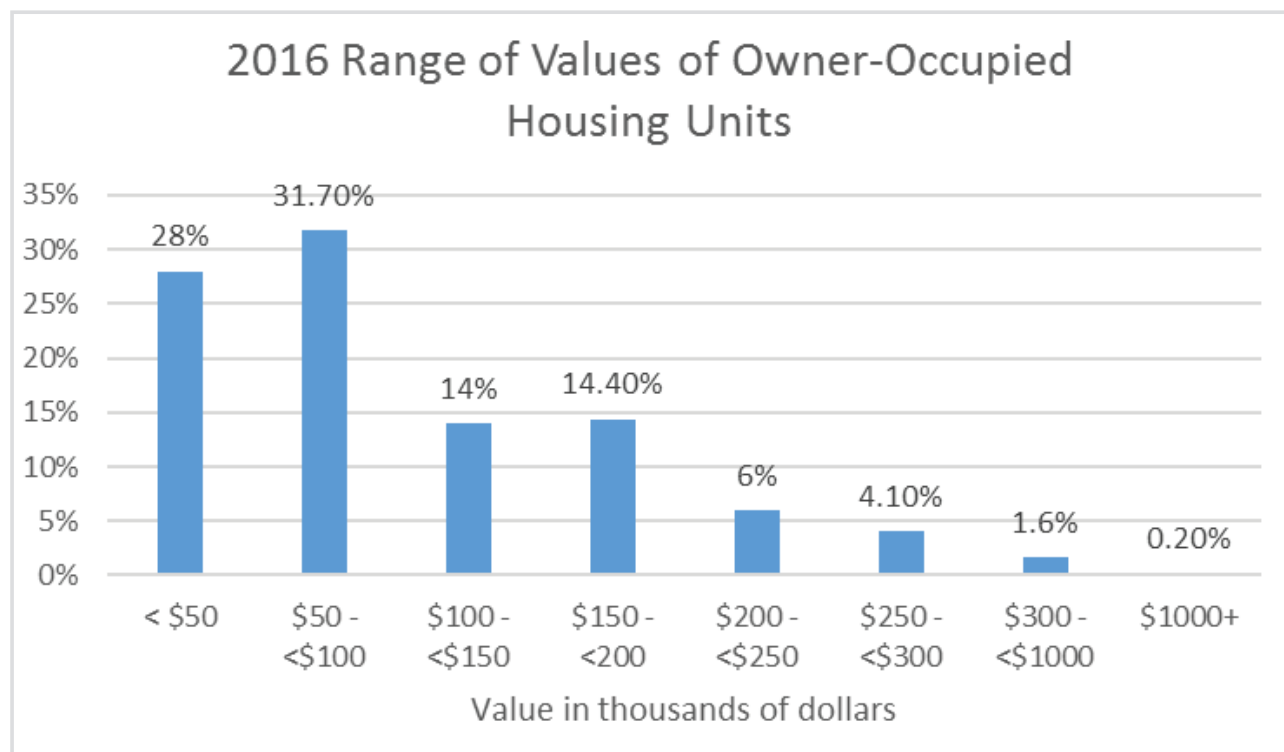
The median home value in Gaston lags significantly behind that of Lexington County and the state.

Exhibit 6.2 2016 Median Home Value

Median Home Value 2016	
South Carolina	\$137,600
Lexington County	\$139,200
Gaston	\$87,755

Of the 490 owner-occupied homes in 2016, 31% were valued at less than \$50,000 and 31.7% were valued between \$50,000 and \$99,999. Only 11.9% of Gaston homes were valued at \$100,000 and over.

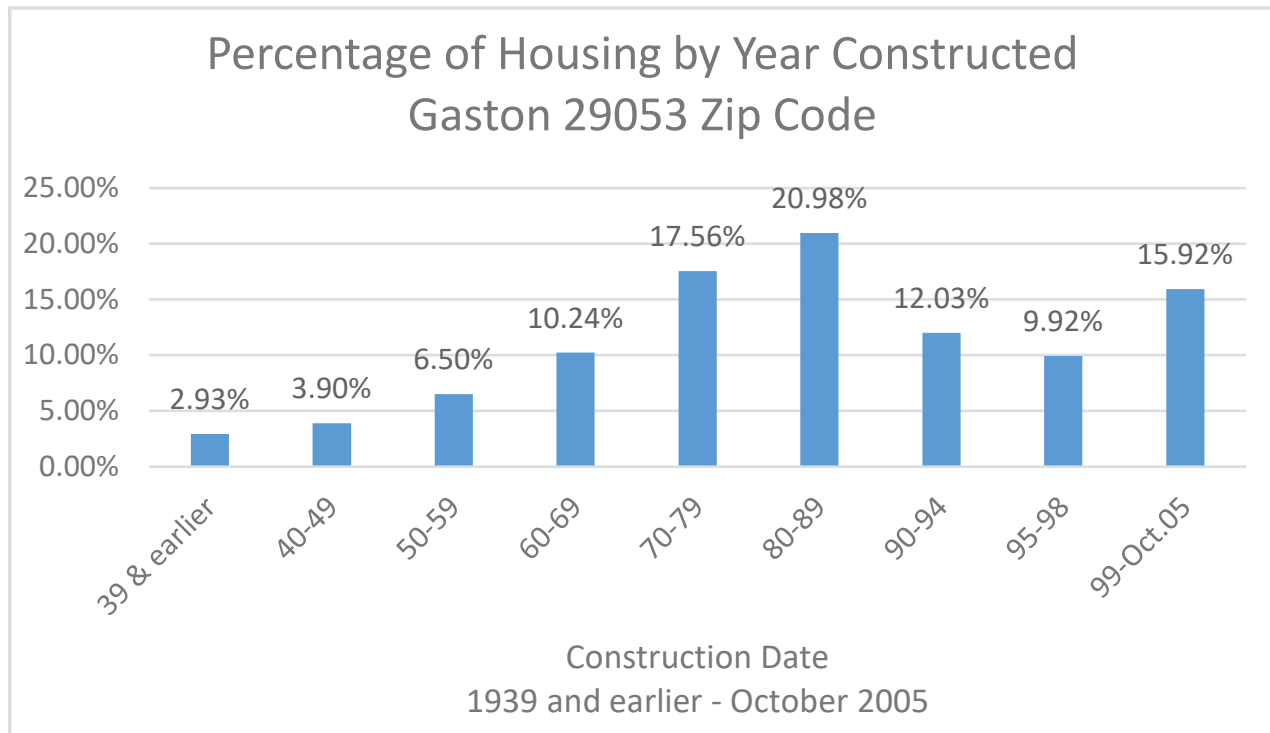
Exhibit 6.3 2016 Range of Values of Owner-Occupied Housing Units



Age of Housing

The average age of a Gaston home (zip 29053) is 24 years. Thirty-eight and a half (38.5%) of Gaston homes were built between 1970 and 1989.

Exhibit 6.4 Percentage of Housing by Year Constructed 29053 Zip Code



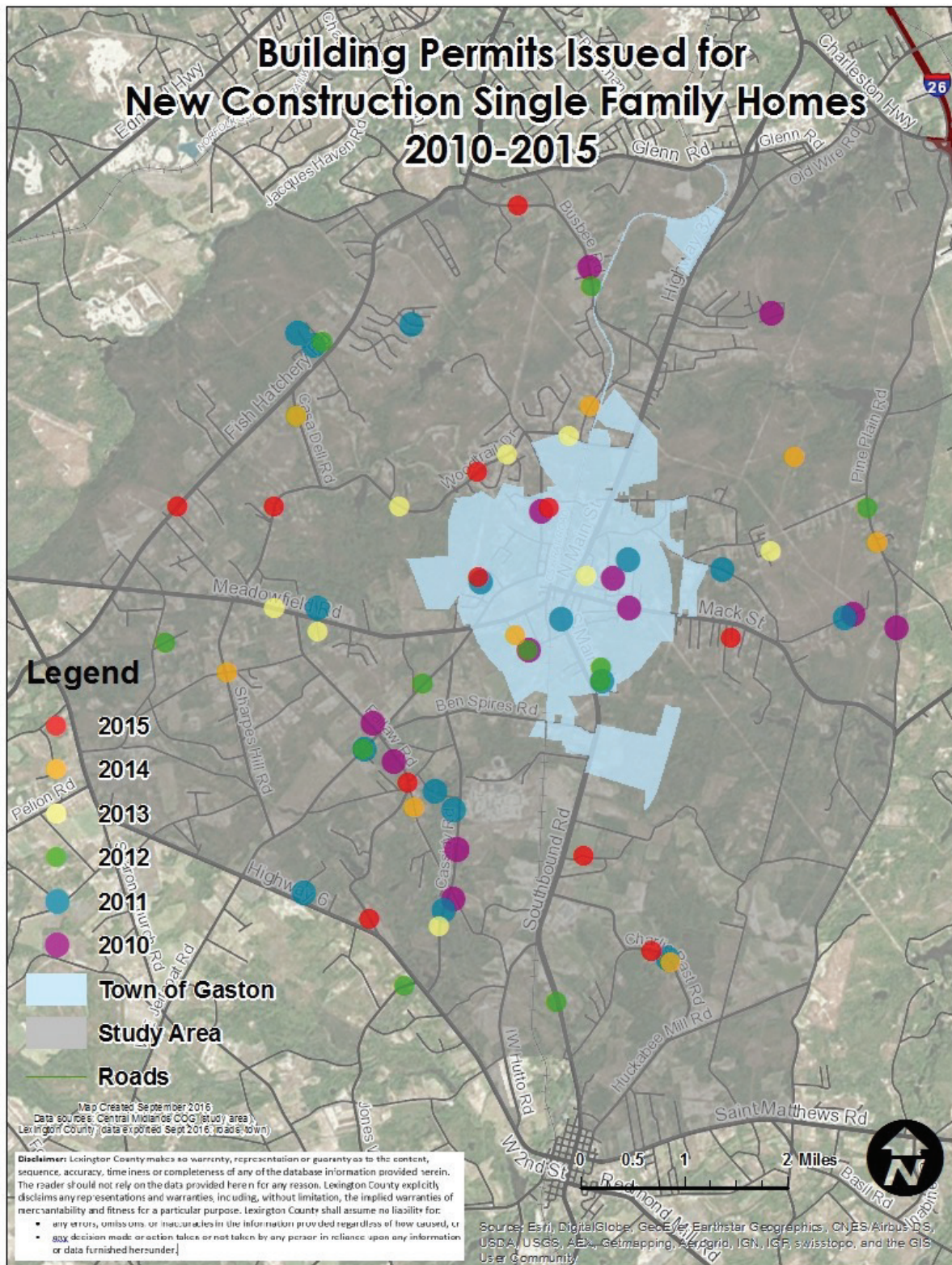
Source: Facts Web 2016

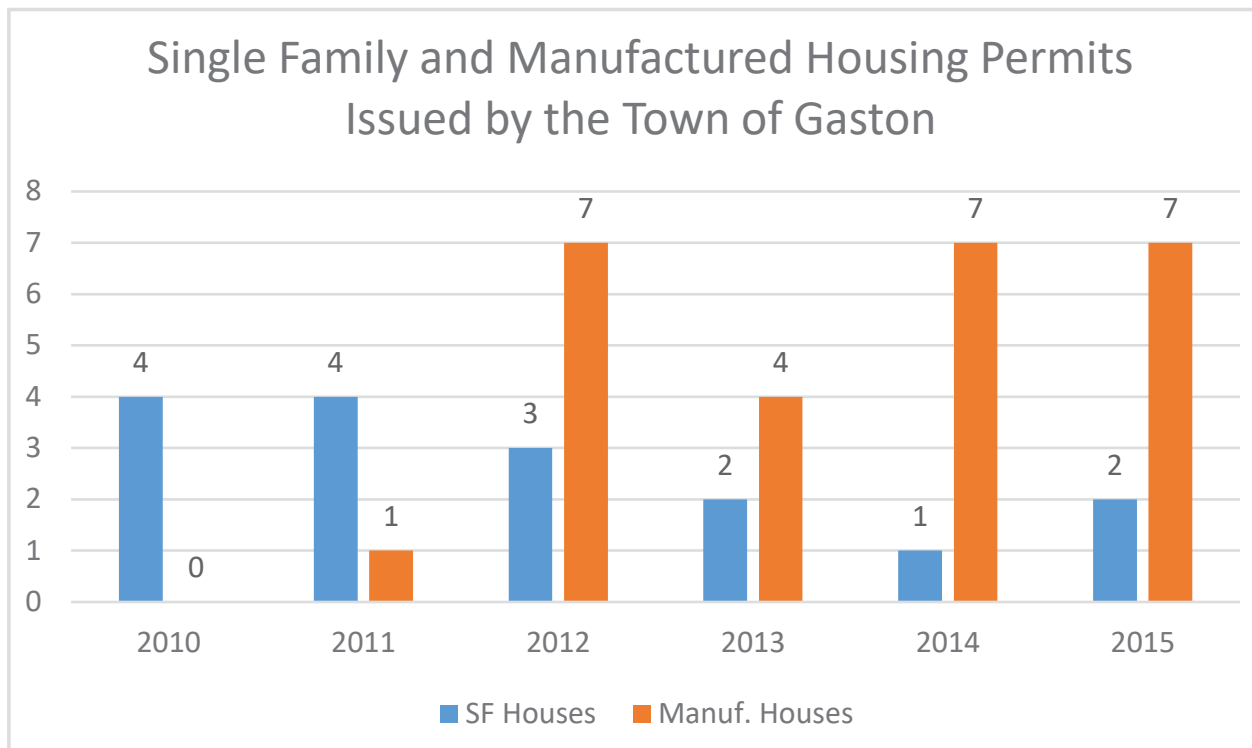
Housing Construction

Housing construction data is derived from various housing permits issued by the Town. Gaston keeps records of all permits issued, but does not keep tabulations of permits issued according to categories such as new construction, renovations, additions, manufactured housing installations, etc. Various agencies and organizations examine the permits and do categorize them according to need for the data. New housing construction is the most prevalent data collected.

Gaston issues far more total building permits annually than just new construction permits. Other building permits include plumbing, electrical, HVAC, roofing, additions, manufactured housing, etc. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2013- 2014, Gaston issued a total of 23 residential building permits, 32 in FY 2014-2015, and 45 in FY 2015-2016.

Exhibit 6.5 shows the single family new construction building permits issued in the study area from 2010 to 2015. No multi-family permits were issued. Comparing new single family housing construction within the Town with manufactured housing installation permits issued indicates that 62.5% more manufactured housing was installed in the five-year period (2010 - 2015) than new single family houses were constructed.





Source: Town of Gaston and Central Midlands Council of Governments 2016

2021 Household Demand

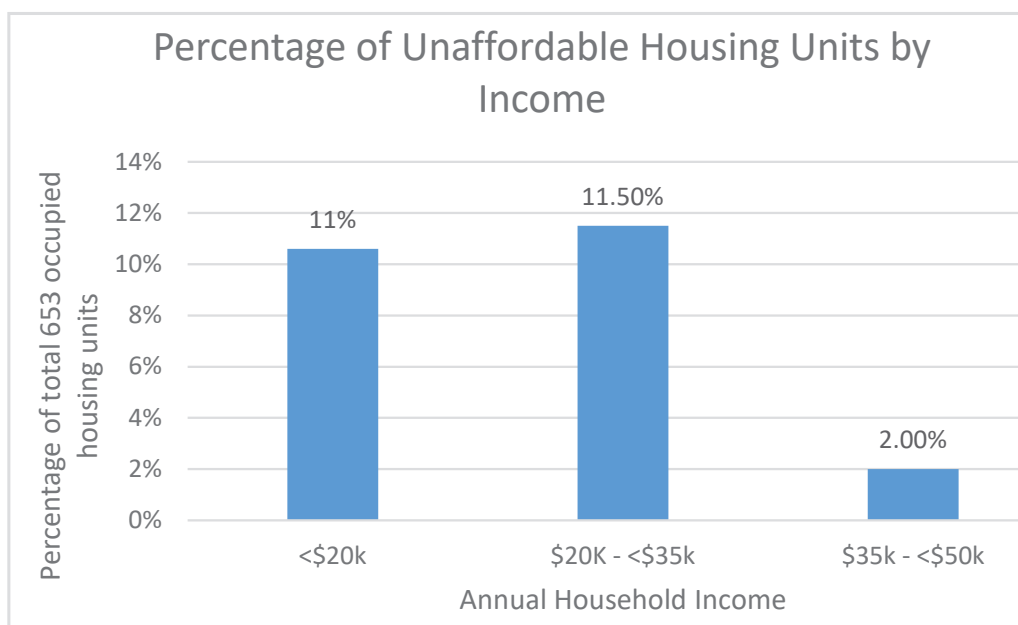
The 2021 population projection for Gaston is 1,999. The 2021 average household size is estimated to be 2.62 persons per household. This is a housing demand of 783 units by 2021. The projected number of total housing units in 2016 is 846. With an estimated 11% vacancy rate, the projected number of available housing units should exceed demand by only 30 units. While these projections do not indicate a shortage of housing units in absolute numbers, the types and varieties of available housing units should reflect the housing needs of the demographic composition of Gaston. Note that no multi-family housing is being constructed. Also, looking at the age of housing, rate of new construction, and housing demand, there is a concern that the supply of new housing to replace aging homes in poor condition may not meet demand.

Housing Affordability

Affordability is a key factor in the housing market. The cost of housing must be in-sync with household incomes if a community is to meet future housing needs. Lending institutions generally base affordability on housing prices not exceeding 2.5 times the gross household income. US Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines gross housing expenses to include utilities for renters and mortgage payments, utilities, taxes, and insurance for homeowners. Under HUD criteria, a housing unit is considered *affordable* if its gross cost does not exceed 30% of the occupant's gross income. Conversely, a household is considered *cost burdened* if its occupants are paying more than 30% of their income for housing costs.

The following is from the US Census Bureau current projections based on the Bureau's 2014 American Community Survey data for Gaston. The median monthly housing costs for owner-occupied housing units is \$584 and \$774 for renter-occupied housing units. According to this data, nearly one quarter (24.5%) of Gaston's occupied units are considered not affordable, or cost-burdened.

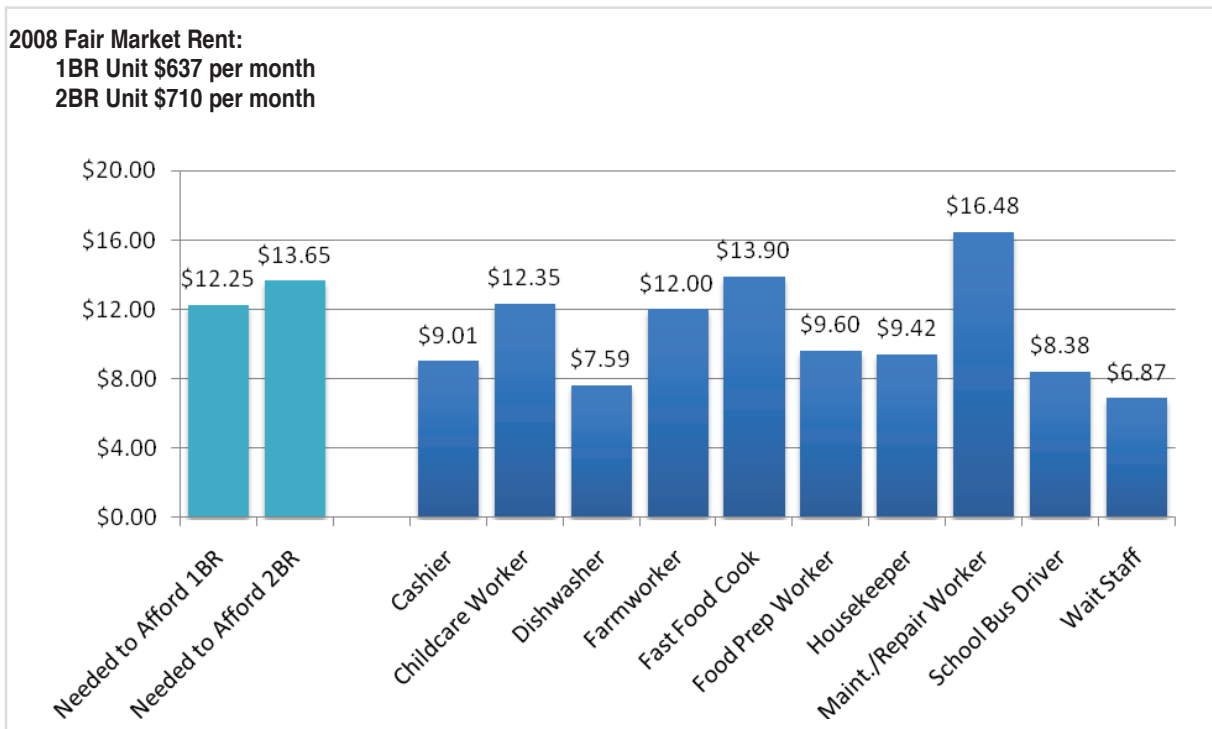
Exhibit 6.7 Percentage of Unaffordable Housing Units by Income



Note: All occupied housing units for households with annual incomes above \$50,000 are affordable.

A 2010 Lexington County Community Development Department study, *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice*, reported that the estimated average 2010 wage of a Lexington County renter was \$10.18 an hour. To afford the fair market value of a two-bedroom apartment at that wage, a renter would have to work 85 hours a week, 52 weeks per year. Or, working 40 hours per week year-round, a household must include 1.3 workers earning the mean rental wage in order to make the two-bedroom apartment affordable. The report goes on to say that if this average worker has a family to support, 82 percent of household income would be spent on housing alone, and 41 percent of rental households would not be able to afford that two-bedroom apartment at all. Scenarios like this lead to doubling-up and overcrowding, as households resort to sharing accommodations, and a dampening of job creation for entry-level positions which pay at or below the average renter's salary. As we have seen in the Economic Development Element, 42.7% of Gaston workers are employed in the services sector, which typically pays low hourly wages. These service sector workers likely occupy the 24.5% of Gaston housing units that impose a housing burden of more than 30% of their income. Although the figures in Exhibit 6.8 are from 2008, today the gap is even greater between low-wage earner actual income and the income needed to afford basic, decent housing. Housing costs have risen while wages have remained stagnant.

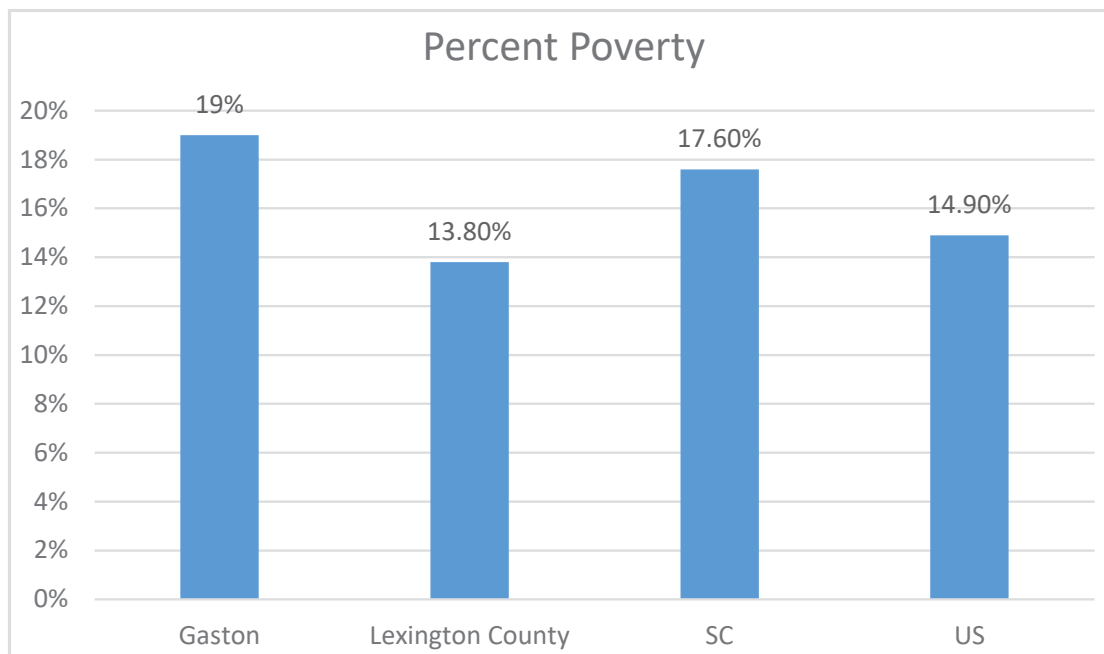
Exhibit 6.8 2008 Fair Market Rent Values



Poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau determines poverty status by comparing pre-tax cash income against a threshold that is set at three times the cost of a minimum food diet. This cost is updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and adjusted for family size, composition, and age of householder. "Family" is defined by the official poverty measure as persons living together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Thresholds do not vary geographically. At 19%, Gaston has a higher poverty rate than the County, the State, or the Nation. In 2014, South Carolina had the 16th highest poverty level among US states. According to 2015 Census Bureau Statistics, 11% of the Gaston population are on Social Security Benefits, and 1% are on Supplemental Security and other public assistance. Gaston's Social Security and public assistance percentages are the same as the State as a whole.

Exhibit 6.9 Percent Poverty



Common Housing Problems of Low Income Residents

As discussed above, the main housing problem is affordability. Other major housing problems also relate to insufficient income of the occupants: substandard housing, energy inefficiency, deferred maintenance, and overcrowding.

Substandard housing

Substandard housing is considered housing that lacks complete plumbing and/or kitchen facilities. In the 29053 zip code, 3.3% of the houses lack complete plumbing facilities, and 3.7% lack complete kitchen facilities.

Housing Assistance Programs

The Lexington County Office of Community Development

Lexington County has participated in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program since July 1, 2000. On July 1, 2008, the County became a Participating Jurisdiction in the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program. These programs are sponsored by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through an annual federal budget allocation.

CDBG Program

The primary objective of the CDBG Program is to develop sustainable communities for persons of low- and moderate-income (LMI), thereby improving the housing, quality of life, and economic conditions of the Lexington community. HUD defines LMI as household income that is less than 80% of area median income.

Exhibit 6.10 FY 2016-2017 Community Development Block Grant Projects

FY 2016-17 CDBG Projects				
Activities	Previous Years Funds	2016 Program Funds		Total Funds Allocated
Infrastructure & Other Public Facilities				
ICRC Universally Accessible Playground		\$300,000		\$300,000
Cayce State Street Area Sewer Line Phase II		\$270,331		\$270,331
BCCEC BLEC Senior Center Roof Replacement		\$166,461		\$166,461
Sistercare Inc., Shelter Facility Upgrades		\$58,462		\$58,462
Town of Summit Park Upgrade		\$56,097		\$56,097
Town of Pelion Park Upgrade		\$56,025		\$56,025
Public Services				
ICRC Afternoon Adventures / Respite Care		\$55,897		\$55,897
LCSD 1- Red Bank Elem Afterschool Program		\$41,669		\$41,669
LICS - Refrigerated Mobile Food Pantry		\$39,600		\$39,600
Midlands Housing Alliance, Inc./Transitions		\$37,000		\$37,000
ICRC Athletic Scholarship Program		\$12,000		\$12,000
LICS - Meals with A Mission		\$6,885		\$6,885
Neighborhood Revitalization				
Central SC Habitat for Humanity	\$107,966	\$54,034		\$162,000
HOME Project Delivery Costs		\$26,700		\$26,700
Town of Pine Ridge Slum & Blight Removal		\$9,199		\$9,199
Administration				
CDBG Program Administration		\$297,590		\$297,590
Contingency				
2016 Project Contingency	\$63,400			\$63,400
TOTAL:	\$171,366	\$1,487,950		\$1,659,316

Source Lexington County Action year 2016 CBDG Programs

The HOME Program

HOME is the largest Federal block grant provided to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households, which is the primary objective of the program. Each year, HOME allocates funding among the states and hundreds of localities nationwide. These funds are often used in partnership with local non-profit and for-profit groups to fund a wide range of activities that build, buy, and/or rehabilitate affordable housing for rent or homeownership or to provide direct rental assistance to low- and moderate-income households.

Exhibit 6.11 FY 2016-2017 HOME Projects

FY 2016-17 HOME Projects				
Activities	2016 Program Funds	Federal Match Requirement	Est. Program Income	Total Funds Allocated
Affordable Housing				
Comprehensive Housing Rehabilitation Program	\$156,708			\$156,708
Acquisition and Affordable Housing	\$125,000			\$125,000
Homeowner Assistance Program	\$80,000			\$80,000
Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO)	\$72,342			\$ 72,342
Administration				
HOME Program Administration	\$ 48,227			\$ 48,227
Lexington County General Fund		\$39,000		\$ 39,000
TOTAL:	\$482,277	\$39,000		\$521,277

Source: Lexington County Action year 2016 HOME Programs

Gaston Residents Receiving CDBG and HOME Assistance

Minor home repair assistance started in 2006. Thirty-seven (37) Gaston homeowners have received assistance at a total of approximately \$176, 301.

Comprehensive housing rehabilitation assistance started in 2008. Nine (9) Gaston homeowners have received assistance at a total of approximately \$125,000.

The down payment assistance program started in 2009. Eighteen (18) Gaston homeowners received \$5,000 in home down payment and closing costs for a total of \$90,000.

Additional Affordable Housing Assistance Programs

According to the Lexington Office of Community Development, additional resources available in Lexington County to provide affordable housing options include the following federal, state and local programs:

a) SC State Housing and Finance Development Authority provides low interest rate housing loans and down payment assistance and administers rental assistance programs in seven (7) counties (Clarendon, Colleton, Dorchester, Fairfield, Kershaw, Lee, and Lexington). The Section 8 tenant-based assistance program, Housing Choice Voucher Program, provides housing vouchers paid directly to participating landlords to subsidize the rent on housing units of the tenant's choice anywhere in the service area (initially). Currently there are 60 voucher participants in Gaston which is 7% of all voucher participants currently renting in Lexington County.

The SC State Housing and Finance Development Authority (the Authority) waiting list is currently closed to all categories of applicants until further notice due to the number of applicants currently on the waiting list and the amount of time it is taking the Authority to assist those families. For the Housing Choice Voucher Program, The Authority is unable to predict exactly when it will be able to offer rental assistance to those applicants who were already on the waiting list before it was closed. This is primarily due to the large numbers of applicants on the

waiting list, the number of families the Authority is currently assisting, and the funding level provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Basically, HUD only allows housing authorities to assist a specific number of families and expend a specific amount of funding to assist those families. Therefore, the Authority must terminate one family's rental assistance - which occurs for various reasons - before it can assist another family.

- b) Project-Based Section 8 Assistance** - In addition to the Section 8 tenant-based assistance program, rental assistance under the Section 8 program can also be project-based. The assistance is provided directly from HUD to project owners that rent apartments to qualifying tenants. According to the SC State Housing and Finance Development Authority, there are no project-based housing units in Gaston.
- c) Federal Housing Administration Mortgage Insurance Programs** - Section 221(d)(3) and 221(d)(4) insures mortgage loans to facilitate the new construction or substantial rehabilitation of multi-family rental or cooperative housing for moderate-income families, the elderly, and the handicapped. Single Room Occupancy (SRO) projects may also be insured under this section.
- d) Section 202 Elderly and 811 Handicapped Housing Programs** - Sections 202 Elderly and 811 Handicapped Housing programs allow long-term direct loans to private nonprofit sponsors, such as religious groups or agencies for the handicapped, to finance rental or cooperative housing facilities for the elderly or handicapped persons. Households of one or more persons, the head of which are at least 62 years old or are handicapped, are eligible for this assisted Multi-Family Tax Exempt Bond Financing Program Housing.
- e) Rural Development** - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development provides direct or guaranteed loans and grants for the purchase and development of decent housing in rural areas. Rural Rental Housing loans are made to finance the construction and site development of multi-family apartments for people with very low, low, and moderate incomes. In some projects, units are reserved for people aged 62 and over.
- f) The State's Multi-Family Tax Exempt Bond Financing Program** provides permanent financing for properties being developed for multi-family rental use. Owners must agree to rent some of the apartments in projects to low- and moderate-income tenants for at least 15 years. To qualify for financing, for-profit or nonprofit development teams should have sufficient experience in designing and developing affordable multi-family rental housing to assure the successful completion and operation of the projects.
- g) Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC)** provides a dollar-for-dollar reduction in tax liability to owners of affordable rental housing for the acquisition and substantial rehabilitation or construction of projects where some of the apartments are rented to low-income individuals and families. Since 1996, the state has provided a LIHTC to three projects which consist of 242 low-income units.

Potential Impediments to Affordable Housing

Zoning

Zoning may limit the areas in which multi-family (apartments) and public housing can be located. Zoning district regulations that disallow density (large lot sizes, deep setbacks, etc.) are impediments to affordable housing.

Land Development Regulations

The intent of residential land development regulations is to protect the environment while building quality communities. Many developers blame what they consider to be excessive development standards as an inability to provide affordable houses. Waiving development standards as a means of reducing housing costs should be thoughtfully considered because affordable housing does not need to be second class housing stripped of all the amenities and development standards that add to the quality of life enjoyed in other residential developments. Affordable housing can also be accomplished without bypassing environmental standards that benefit the entire community.

Housing Needs and Goals Statement

Gaston is projected to have sufficient housing stock to meet overall housing demand. However, the composition of households is becoming more diverse and a variety of housing types will be needed to meet the diverse needs of Gaston home owners and renters. Data has shown that the need for affordable housing is great and current assistance programs are insufficient to meet the need.

Housing Goal One - All existing housing stock will be in good repair.

Strategy

Work with the Lexington County Community Development Department in providing information and assistance to homeowners and landlords of substandard units on the availability of low income housing repair and renovation assistance programs.

Housing Goal Two - Gaston will have a variety of housing types to meet the needs of all households.

Strategy

Provide residential zoning district regulations that will allow a variety of housing types within a development.

Housing Goal Three - Housing in Gaston will be affordable to all residents.

Strategies and Incentives

Zoning District

Create a zoning district designed to encourage affordable housing. Elements of this zoning district could include: Higher density housing.

- Closer setback requirements.
- A network of interconnecting streets designed for multimodal (automobile, transit, pedestrian, bicycle) use.
- Mixed residential use -single-family, town homes, patio homes, multi-family, etc.
- Allow neighborhood oriented commercial uses.
- Allow civic and institutional uses.
- Provide for public spaces.
- Require inclusion of affordable housing units as a condition for rezoning.

Other Incentives

- Waiver of development permit and sewer tap fees - or refund upon certification of affordability of housing units.
- Pre-approved design standards so that the Planning Commission review is not required for an individual project.
- High priority permit review to streamline the permitting process.

Affordable Housing and Mobility

The current pattern of residential developments results in housing units isolated from work, shops, schools, and services with no means of safe and efficient transportation available other than by automobile. Those without any or with limited access to an automobile are often limited in their access to healthy foods, health care, and other essentials. Furthermore, lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities discourages active lifestyles. Pedestrian access is key to the healthy independence of low-income persons in general, and in particular the young and the elderly. There is a clear link between the development and design of the built environment and public health; and this link is particularly evident in the consequences of residential subdivision development. All residential development and redevelopments should include the following elements. For affordable housing developments, they are essential.

- Location within walking distance of transit service where provided.
- Provide for mixed-use developments that allow residents to walk or bike to work, to social and recreational activities, and to visit their neighbors.
- Provide for mixed-use developments that include small, neighborhood-scale commercial uses, such as shops, cafes, bakeries, and other types of service businesses. Integration of such service-oriented businesses can provide community members the option of walking rather than depending on an automobile. The promotion of small scale neighborhood commercial establishments such as corner grocery stores easily accessed by walking or biking can also help increase access to healthy foods where otherwise an (potentially unavailable) automobile trip to a supermarket would be required.
- Walking and bicycle facilities should be provided that are accessible to all residents in the development, and development plans should provide for transportation connections between the development and adjacent residential and commercial developments. Bicycle and pedestrian connections between parcels within commercial developments should be off-street where practicable.

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CHAPTER SEVEN: LAND USE ELEMENT

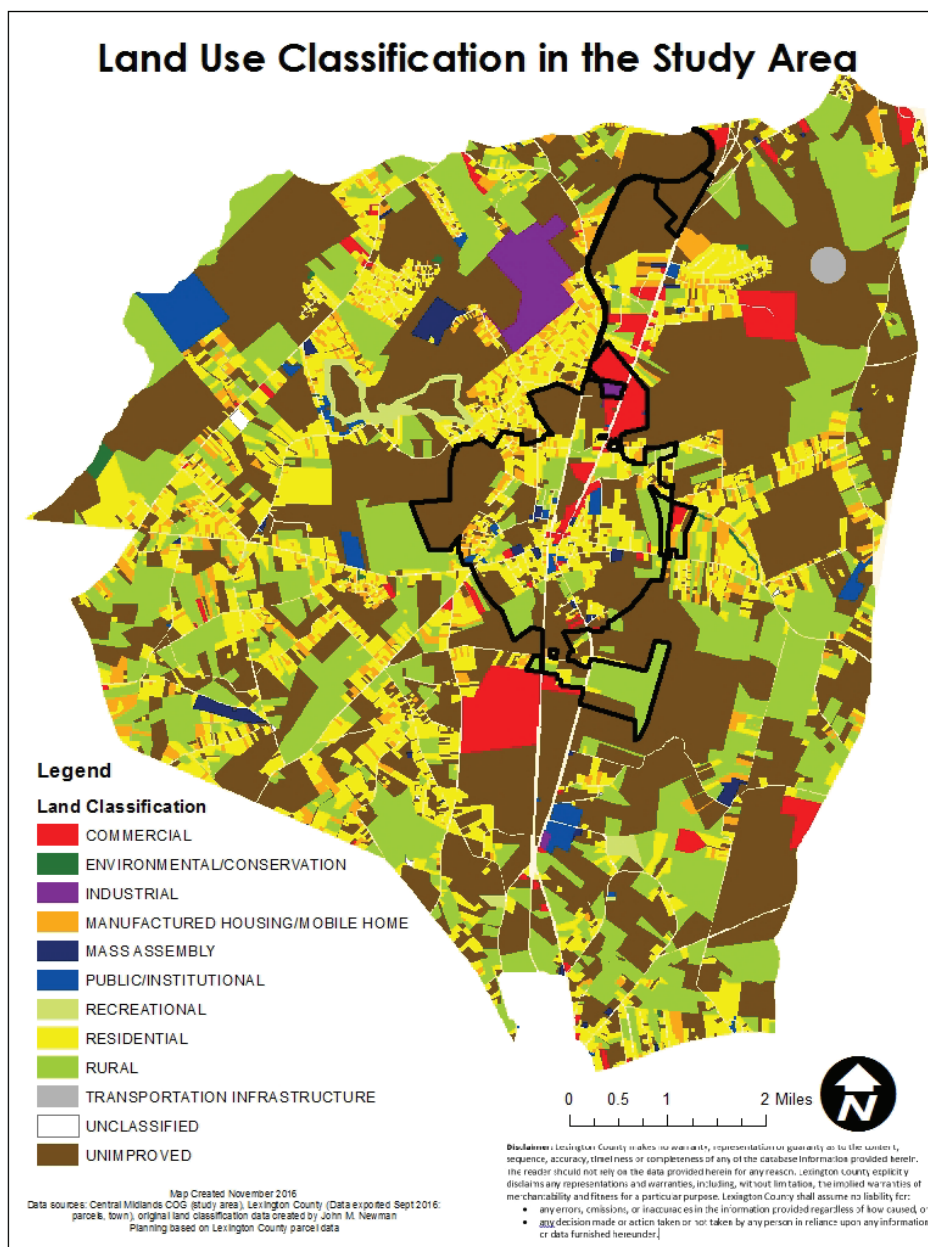
The way the land is being used and plans for future use of the land is the heart of the comprehensive plan. Transportation, economic development, housing, and all the other elements of a comprehensive plan are all tied to the physical land of a jurisdiction.

Current Land Use

Current Land Use Classification and Mapping

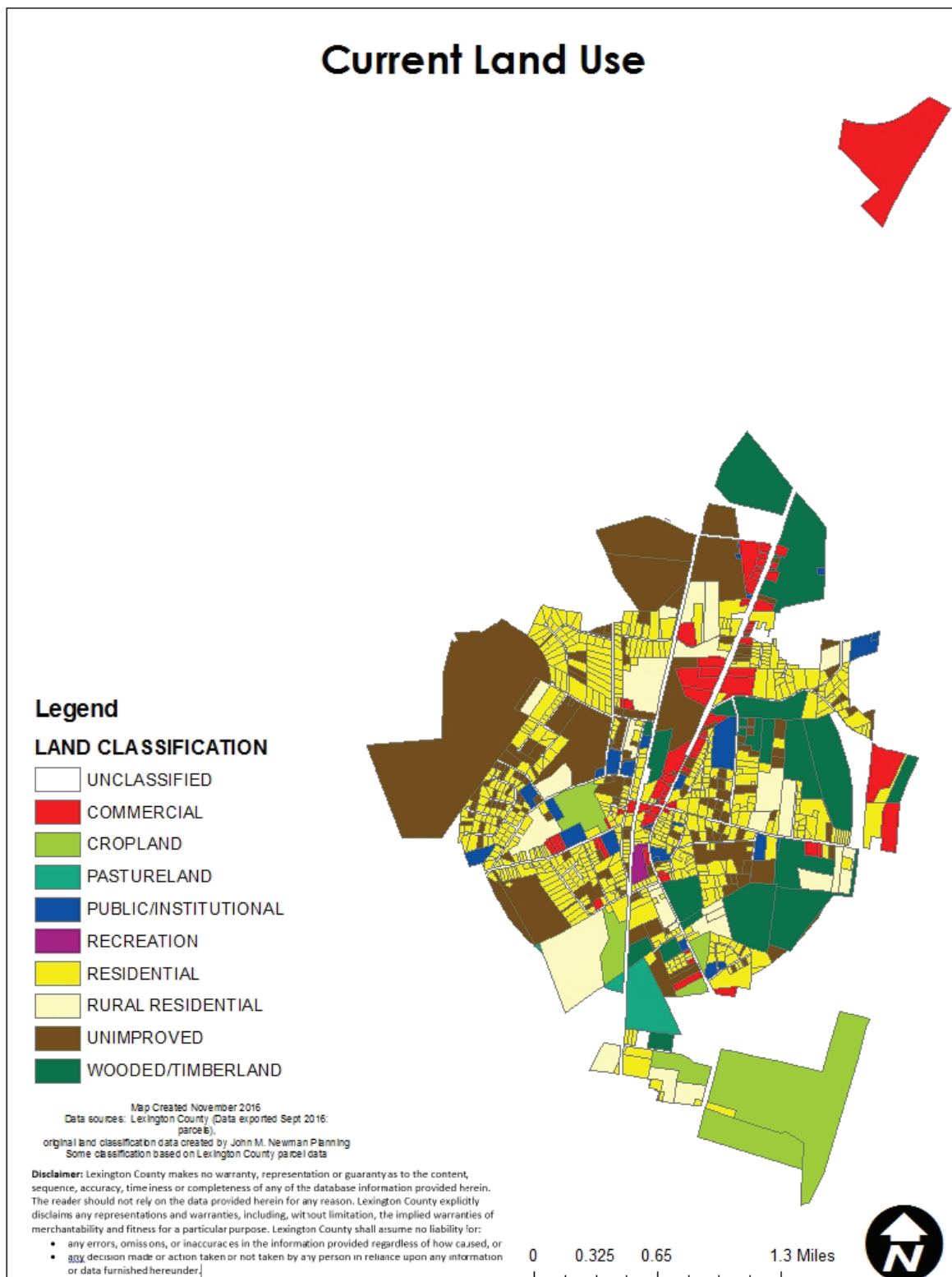
For a generalized look at current land use within the Town and the Study Area, county assessor's tax assessment categories were grouped to determine general land use categories. This is useful in showing how land use in the Town relates to land use in the surrounding area. In general, land use within the Town is compatible with the rest of the study area. Residential land use within the Town is generally contiguous with residential land use in the study and concentrated along transportation corridors. Area outside of the town limits, and land classified as rural or unimproved within the Town, are contiguous to like land uses in the unincorporated portions of the study area. Such compatibility is desirable as differences in jurisdictional zoning and land development regulations could lead to conflicting land uses.

Exhibit 7.1 Study Area Current Land Use



A more detailed land use analysis was conducted within the Town limits. Assessor's data was verified and supplemented by physical surveys of each parcel. Some parcels could not be accessed because of trespassing issues and land use could not be determined from the public right-of-way. For these parcels, the latest aerial photography and assessor's data was used.

Exhibit 7.2 Classification of Gaston Current Land Use



Gaston Current Land Use Classifications

Residential

Residential uses include all housing types in the Gaston Central Core. These are single family site-built homes, manufactured housing and mobile homes, and modular. No duplexes, apartments, or other multi-family housing were identified. Although some of the residences are unoccupied, a judgement of permanent versus temporary non-occupancy was not made.

Rural Residential

These are mostly larger parcels in the rural periphery of town. Many of these parcels are assessed for agricultural uses as discussed below, but are also used as residences of the property owner or tenants. As with the Residential classification, Rural Residential uses represent all housing types: single family site-built, manufactured housing and mobile homes, and modular. No duplexes, apartments, or other multi-family housing were identified. Again, some of the residences are unoccupied, but a judgement of permanent versus temporary non-occupancy was not made.

Cropland

These parcels were identified in the physical surveys as currently planted in crops. No attempts to differentiate between types of crops were made.

Pastureland

These parcels were identified in the physical surveys as currently being used as pasture. No attempts to identify any pastured animals were made.

Commercial

The commercial classification encompasses all types of commercial uses - including wholesale, retail, food, and services as well as neighborhood-oriented and rural-oriented establishments.

Public / Institutional

Public / Institutional uses include government facilities such as town hall, post office, schools, and library; and private institutions such as civic organizations and churches.

Unimproved

Unimproved parcels are parcels within the Central Core that have not been developed. As discussed below, these parcels are ripe for infill residential and commercial development. Some of these parcels contain good farmland soils that could be preserved for agricultural uses.

Recreational

Recreational uses within Gaston include parks, campgrounds, and ball fields.

Unclassified

These parcels contain structures whose uses could not be determined.

Current Land Use Pattern

Growth within the Town, as in general within Lexington County and its other municipalities, has historically developed along transportation routes. Clusters of mixed development occur at crossroads, and corridors of commercial development occur along major roads. The predominance of the automobile as the chief means of transportation has strongly shaped this development pattern.

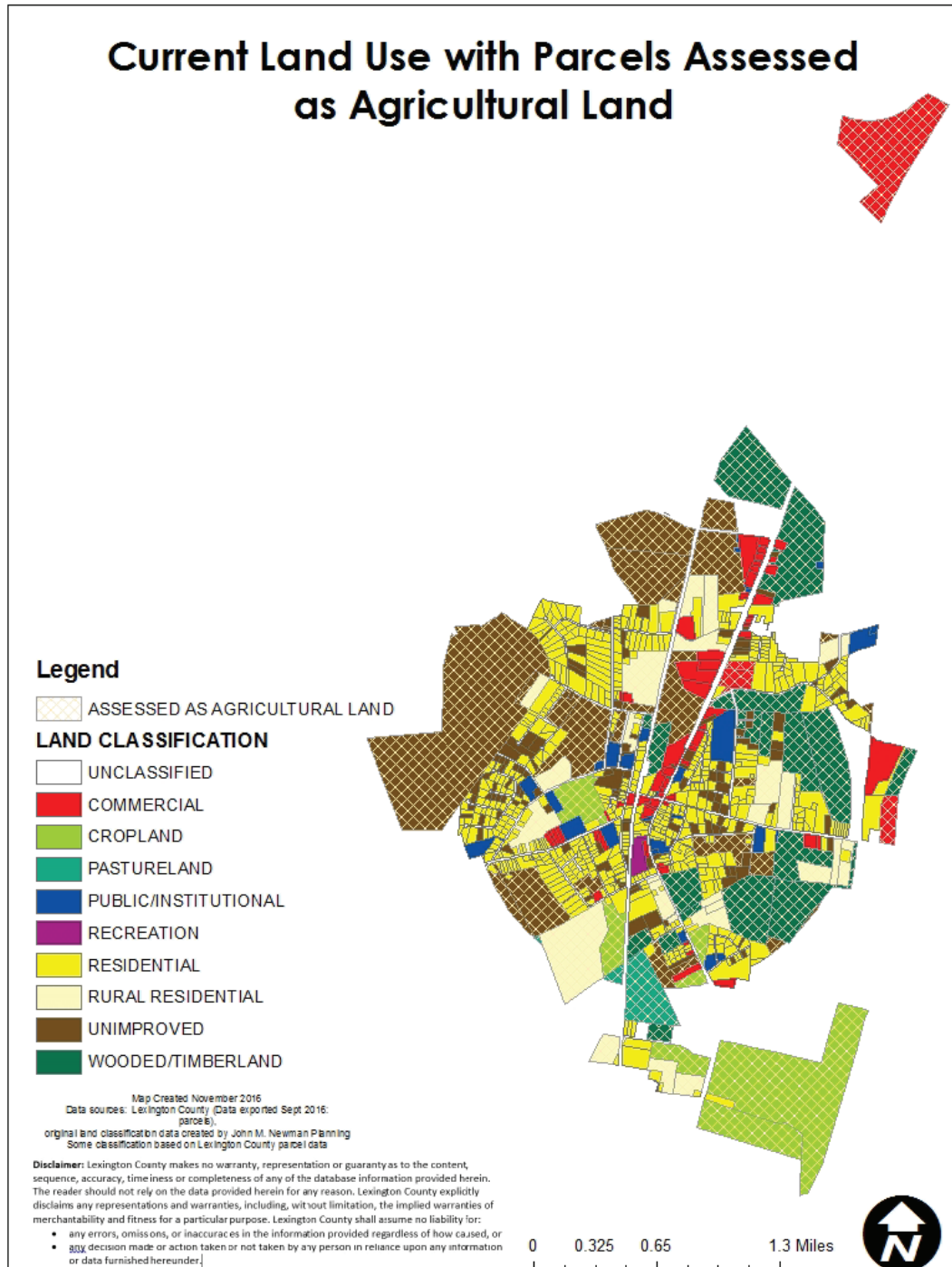
The agriculture roots of Gaston are reflected in the current development pattern of the town. Most of the Town remains assessed by the County as currently used for agriculture. These uses include crops, pasture, and timber lands. Most of these properties are on the periphery of the Town, with the Central Core primarily used for residential, commercial, and institutional purposes.

Land Use Policies

Agricultural

Special agriculture assessment of real property taxes is granted under SC Code of Laws title 12, chapter 43, for qualifying properties currently in agricultural and timber production. Lexington County currently has 2,106 acres of land within Gaston Town Limits under special agriculture assessment. These lands comprise most of Gaston – 60% of the total land area of the Town. Agriculture real property must be used for agricultural purposes; thus, property owners are incentivized to maintain agricultural practices on their properties to retain the special agricultural assessment. Refer to Exhibit 7.3. Agriculture assessed properties not fully devoted to crops, pasture, timber, and other agricultural uses are often used for additional purposes: primarily as residences of the property owners or tenants. Such parcels are identified as Rural Residential on the Current Land Use Map.

Exhibit 7.3 Special Agriculture Assessed Parcels



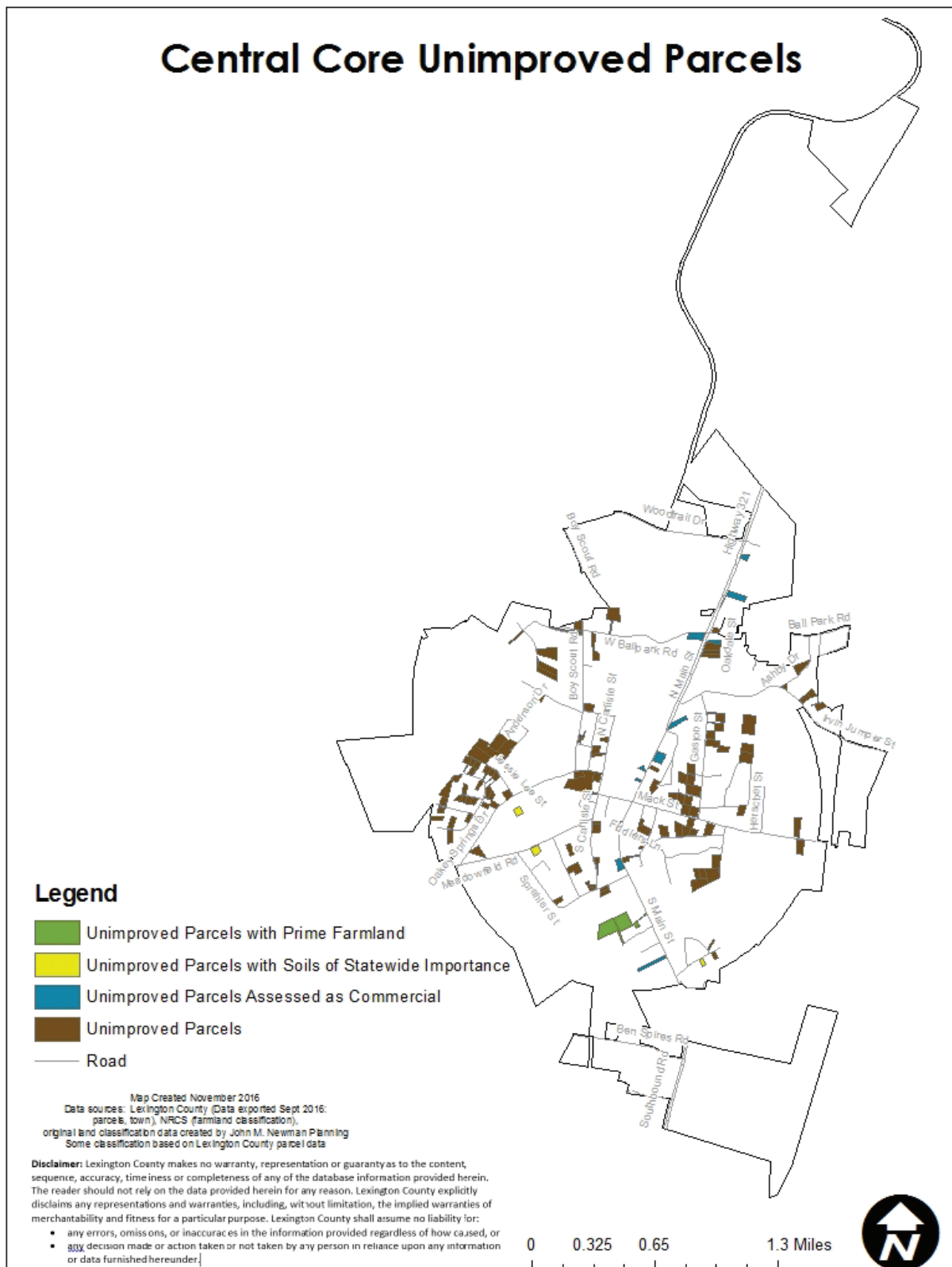
As discussed in the Natural Resource Element, only 6.2% of Gaston land is classified as prime farmland and 7.6% is classified as soils of statewide importance. Much of these soils are on properties that are assessed as agriculture real property. However, there are a few undeveloped parcels that contain prime farmland or soils of statewide importance that aren't being utilized for agriculture. Refer to Exhibit 7.4. There are three parcels containing a combined 9.7 acres of scarce prime farmland that could be put to productive agricultural use. There are another three undeveloped parcels comprising 2.5 acres of soils of statewide importance that aren't being utilized for agricultural purposes.

Central Core

The Central Core is the more urbanized area of town that contains denser residential development, and the majority of the commercial and public / institutional establishments. Generally, the Central Core is surrounded by rural residential and agricultural uses.

Concentrating new development as much as possible within the central non-agricultural core of the town minimizes development cost and preserves rural lifestyles and land resources. Such development optimizes investments in existing infrastructure, and minimizes investments in new and expanded infrastructure. The necessity to construct new roads, or extend water, sewer, power, and telecommunication lines and services to accommodate new development will be minimized. Central Core development strategies include:

- **Infill Development:** Infill development means developing unimproved parcels that are surrounded by developed land. Within the Center Core of the Town, 132 parcels are unimproved; meaning they are vacant lots without structures. Eleven of these parcels are assessed as commercial. Refer to Exhibit 7.4. These commercially-assessed properties are located along Main Street and are prime lots for commercial development. Altogether, the unimproved parcels comprise 11% of the center core the Town. There also appear to be a few unimproved parcels associated with adjacent commercial and institutional uses that are underutilized by the owners. These parcels could be used for business expansion or could potentially be sold for future development.
- **Redevelopment:** Redevelopment means redeveloping dilapidated, poor-quality, and/or underutilized residential, commercial, and industrial developments. Several such residential and commercial properties were observed during the land use surveys. Many of these properties were unoccupied and provide no functional use. Suitable existing structures can be rehabilitated for the use for which they were originally constructed or repurposed for different uses. Dilapidated structures can be removed to make way for new development.



Future Land Use

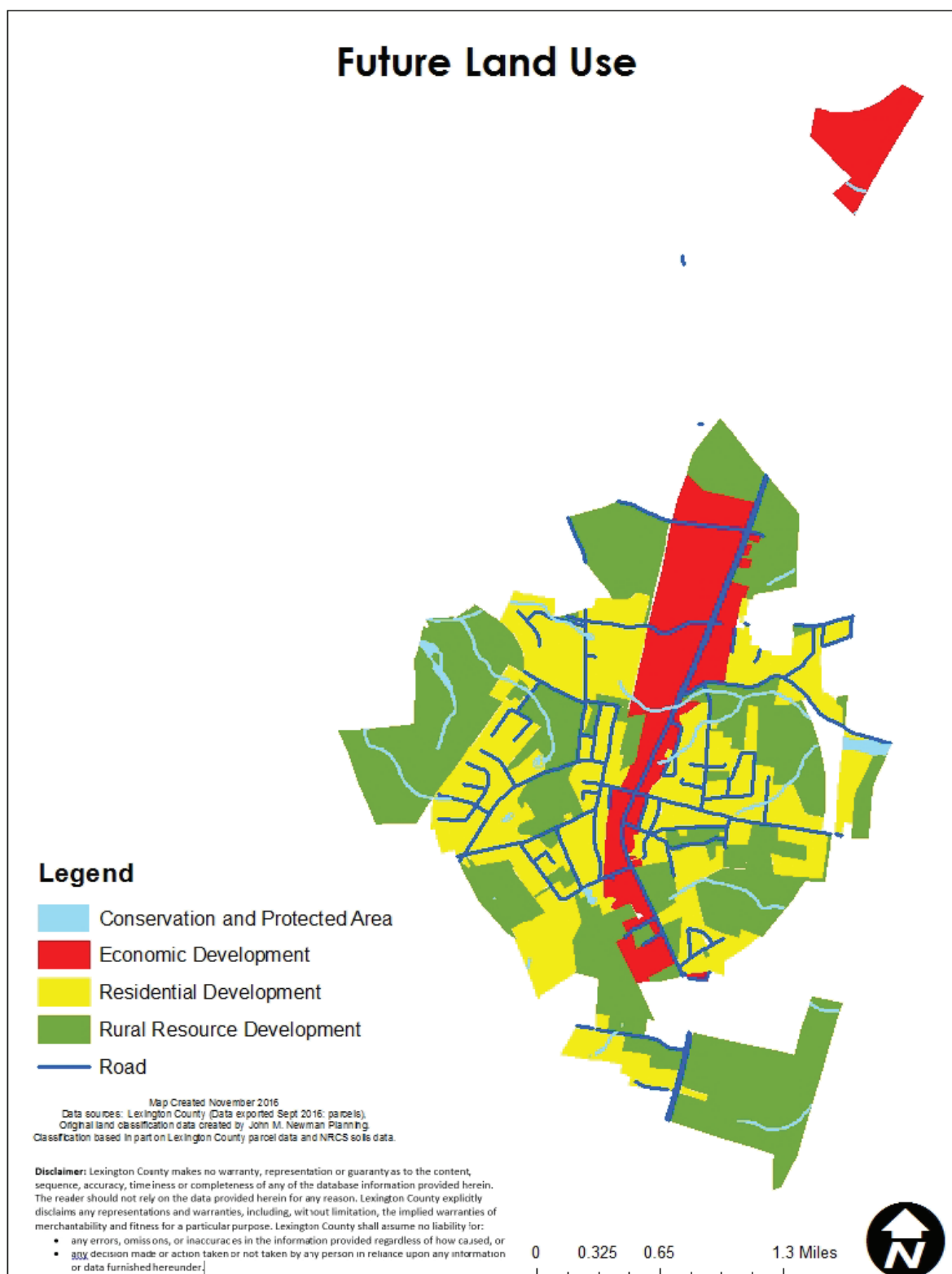
Future land use policies are the prime instrument to define how the Town of Gaston wishes to grow over the next ten years. Town leaders and citizens recognize that the Gaston population and economy are growing and will continue to grow throughout the ten-year planning horizon. Whereas growth inevitably brings change, it is the expressed desire and vision of the Town to retain the rural and small town qualities that Gaston enjoys today. The land use policies as detailed above are designed to meet this objective. The objective of future land use planning is to accommodate growth in a manner that reflects how the Town envisions itself in ten years. For Gaston, this means allowing for growth within the current development patterns of town. Areas projected to receive development growth over the next ten-year period, as well as land designated for agriculture and conservation, can be delineated on a Future Land Use map.

Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map is designed as a guideline for drawing zoning district boundaries, reviewing applications for zoning map amendments (re-zoning), and permitting land development applications. Decisions on the conformity of future proposed projects to the Comprehensive Plan should not be made solely on consulting the Future Land Use Plan Map; rather, the map should be used in conjunction with the policies, goals, and objectives as detailed in the Comprehensive Plan as a whole.

There are no quantitative definitions for each classification that will delineate hard and fast land use lines on the map. Lines between land use classifications should be viewed as transition zones between land uses. Furthermore, land use classification boundaries are subject to revision as future land use designations will be tied to knowledge of planned state and federally funded infrastructure (i.e. transportation) projects. There will be inevitable adjustments in long-range planning made in response to development pressures; economic trends and developments; and national, regional, and local socio-economic and demographic forces which will also require adjustments to the Future Land Use Map.

Land use and development objectives are identified on the Future Land Use Map by the following land use classifications. They are based, in part, on factors influencing development, growth projections, existing land use, land use issues, and goals.



Gaston Future Land Use Area Classifications

ED – Economic Development Areas

Areas so designated contain principally the full range of business, commercial, employment, industrial, institutional, and service uses and are projected to accommodate the bulk of such development in the future. However, this designation does not exclude prospects for residential development. Residential development located within ED areas could shorten the time and distance between the work place and home. Many existing residential parcels are located in ED designated areas. The principles applied to Residential Development areas below will also apply to residential enclaves within the ED areas. Buffering, lighting, and landscape regulations should be developed to protect existing residential development within the ED districts as adjacent parcels are converted to commercial and other non-residential uses.

Policies promoting compatible mixed uses should be further pursued. In the Main Street general commercial corridor, residential apartments over shops could afford live-work-shop opportunities and reduce automobile dependence.

Specific sites within the designated ED area may be identified for their industrial potential. Criteria for industrial sites include: relatively level topography, facilitated by, or planned for, water and sewer, easy accessibility to major arterial roads, and rail accessibility.

Such conditions uniquely qualify these areas for most industrial uses, prompting their reservation principally for future industrial development. This could be accomplished by pre-zoning such parcels as industrial.

The overall objective of the Economic Development classification is to permit land use and development flexibility to accommodate the economic market place and better serve the residents of Gaston by clustering employment and business uses as a means of:

- Protecting land values
- Optimizing the use of land resources by discouraging such development in the designated rural resources, residential, and conservation protection areas of the Town
- Maximizing use of fiscal resources and infrastructure investments in support of economic development

RD – Residential Development Areas

Areas designated for residential development are intended to accommodate the full range of housing types. The predominant housing types in Gaston are site-built single family dwellings and manufactured housing, mobile homes, and modular units. However, as is demonstrated in the Population and Housing Elements, changing demographics coupled with the need for more affordable housing requires a variety of different housing types. Lack of public sewer for residential uses will preclude large residential developments with more compact housing units such as apartment buildings, town homes, and patio homes unless community on-site septic systems can be provided. Such developments are not in keeping with traditional Gaston residential patterns. However, small-scale development of a variety of housing choices can be accommodated and is needed to suit the changing housing needs of Gaston residents.

Whereas it is the policy to fully utilize the potential for infill and redevelopment strategies within the Gaston Central Core to meet future housing needs, it may be necessary and desirable to permit new residential developments (subdivisions) within the Town Limits. See Exhibit 7.3. The preferred option for locating these developments are on the Rural Residential parcels of the current land use map that are not under special agricultural assessment.

Neighborhood Commercial

Within Residential Development districts, small-scale commercial businesses as well as churches and schools should be encouraged to locate within or near newly developed residential areas. Small-scale commercial uses in this case are defined as businesses or offices that are manned during business hours, do not require large-scale deliveries, and do not produce excessive levels of light or noise. Examples include shops, cafes, bakeries, and other types of service businesses. Integration of such service-oriented businesses can provide community members the option of walking rather than depending on an automobile, and can result in reduced automobile traffic on the road system. Such small-scale commercial businesses also generate light daytime activity in neighborhoods, which can help to reduce crime during the hours when many homeowners are typically at work. The promotion of small-scale neighborhood commercial establishments such as corner grocery stores, easily accessed by walking or biking, can also help increase access to healthy foods where otherwise an (possibly unavailable) automobile trip to a supermarket would be required. Similarly, redevelopment plans for older neighborhoods should include zoning allowances for the continuation and/or reestablishment of such small-scale neighborhood commercial uses. Design standards for both new and revitalized residential developments should provide for bicycle and pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks, paths, and bike lanes that will facilitate safe and enjoyable walking or biking commutes to these neighborhood commercial establishments, as well as encourage physical activity.

New residential or redevelopment plans should provide for transportation connections between the development and adjacent residential and commercial developments. Bicycle and pedestrian connections between parcels within developments should be off-street where practicable.

Neighborhood-oriented goods and services can be conveniently located in proximity to residential neighborhoods when the neighborhoods are protected from any negative impacts of sight, sound, and smell through performance zoning criteria. Larger commercial centers and industrial development would typically be reserved for areas receiving Economic Development land use classifications.

RR - Rural Resource Development Areas

As noted, over 60% of the land area of Gaston is under special agriculture assessment. The objective of the Rural Resource Development (RR) land use classification is to preserve the rural areas in the periphery of town outside of the Central Core area and to preserve land for agricultural uses. Current land uses in the RR districts include:

- Parcels of land that are assessed as agriculture outside of the Central Core
- Unimproved parcels containing prime farmland and soils of statewide importance that are not currently assessed as agriculture

Most areas classified as RR on the Future Land Use map generally are outside the path of projected development, characteristically rural and predominantly undeveloped at present time. Moreover, few changes to these areas are anticipated during the ten-year life of this Plan (2016 - 2026). This, however, is not to minimize the importance of these areas to the Town. Open lands, woodlands and wetlands are essential to clean air, water, wildlife, and many natural cycles, and a balanced environment. Therefore, they should be protected from encroachment or misuse. Many of the areas classified as Conservation and Preservation lie within the RR areas. Rural Resource Development means realizing the full potential of these areas as “working lands:” agriculture, forest and timber, hunting, fishing, pasture land, etc. The development and intensification of agricultural uses can capitalize on the abundance of Gaston’s rural resources. The objective of this designation is to preserve and protect the Town’s rural environment while more fully developing its rural resources. This objective may be carried out through application of rural zoning and monitoring development proposals that have a potential to compromise the utility and function of such areas.

Rural development includes low-density residential, rural commercial properties, and institutional development. Similar to the neighborhood commercial establishments discussed for the Residential Development areas, rural commercial establishments to serve the needs of the rural residents of the Town should be allowed.

Conservation and Protected Areas

Conservation and Protected (CP) areas include existing public parks and preserves and land under private conservation easements. Conservation and Protected areas include jurisdictional wetlands, flood plains, and protected species habitat. They also include preserves and land under private conservation easements. These CP areas can be located within ED, RD, and RR land use areas. With the scale of the Future Land Use Map, some such areas will not be identified on the map; however, they should be protected - **regardless of their delineation on the Future Land Use Map.**

Other no-growth areas include lands that are undevelopable because of unstable and/or highly erodible topography such as steep slopes and soil types unsuitable for construction. With the scale of the Future Land Use Map, all such areas will not be identified on the map; however, **development on these lands will be restricted regardless of their delineation on the Future Land Use Map.**

The CP areas shown on the Future Land Use map are wetlands as designated by the National Wetlands Inventory, Lexington County-designated stream water quality buffers, Federally-designated flood zones, and areas of unstable soils. Any areas under private conservation easements, areas of protected species habitat, and other areas requiring and deserving of conservation and protection have not been identified.

Land Use Needs and Goals Statement

Gaston is well-positioned to maintain the small-town values expressed in the vision statement. Most of the urban development is concentrated in the Central Core of the Town, and there is room within the Central Core to accommodate future urban growth. Around this Central Core are the rural areas of the Town that can accommodate new residential development, if required, and still protect agricultural uses that are under special agriculture assessment within the majority of the Town.

Land Use Goal One

Gaston will enjoy a balanced environment, providing for rural and urban lifestyles.

Strategy

Develop zoning districts and district regulations that will implement the land use policies and comply with the Future Land Use classifications and map.

Land Use Goal Two

Agricultural lands will remain in agricultural uses.

Strategies

1. Utilize infill and redevelopment opportunities within the Central Core.
2. Direct additional residential development towards the larger parcels around the Central Core that are identified as Rural Residential on the Current Land Use Map.
3. Discourage non-agriculture development of remaining prime farmland and soils of statewide importance.
4. Encourage higher intensity use of land under special agricultural assessment. Fruit and vegetable crops and dairy products should be especially encouraged to meet the growing demands for fresh, local produce.

Land Use Goal Three

Gaston will protect its environmental resources.

Strategies

1. Observe and enforce the Lexington County water quality buffer regulations on the Town's streams and water bodies.
2. Do not permit development in delineated wetlands.
3. Do not permit building in areas where soil and slope conditions are not suitable for development.
4. Do not permit development in flood zones unless Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulations are observed.

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CHAPTER EIGHT: TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

When the South Carolina Local Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 was first passed, transportation issues were addressed within the Community Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan. In 2007, the SC State Legislature passed the Priority Investment Act, which amended the 1994 Comprehensive Planning Act to require a separate Transportation Element to inventory and analyze issues impacting the local transportation network. The Act stipulated that this analysis must be multi-modal in nature: meaning that all forms of transportation should be considered, not just the roadways designed for motor vehicle movement. The Transportation Element should assess the needs for major road improvement, new road construction, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, rail, and transit. The Act also required that the Transportation Element be developed in accordance with the Land Use Element to ensure compatibility and coordination between transportation priorities and existing and future land use policies.

The Transportation Planning Process

Transportation infrastructure construction and improvements come with a very high capital cost. Therefore, most local governments must depend on federal and state government programs for funding their transportation projects. However, local governments do have a limited degree of control over transportation project planning and how funds are spent through participation in urban or rural transportation programs that are funded through federal and state legislation. In South Carolina, state and federal programs are administered by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). SCDOT passes eligible funds through the regional transportation planning body, the Columbia Area Transportation Study (COATS). COATS is administered by the Central Midlands Council of Government (CMCOG). Gaston is represented in COATS through the Lexington County appointee to the COATS Technical Advisory Committee and the representatives from Lexington County on the CMCOG/COATS Board of Directors/Policy Committee.

Federal Legislation and the Regional Planning Process

The primary legislation for funding federal and state maintained road projects comes through the current federal surface transportation bill, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, signed into law on December 4th, 2015. The FAST act is the first federal transportation bill "...in over a decade to provide long-term funding certainty for surface transportation infrastructure planning and investment. The FAST Act authorizes \$305 billion over fiscal years 2016 through 2020 for highway, highway and motor vehicle safety, public transportation, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety, rail, and research, technology, and statistics programs. The FAST Act maintains our focus on safety, keeps intact the established structure of the various highway-related programs we manage, continues efforts to streamline project delivery and, for the first time, provides a dedicated source of federal dollars for freight projects. With the enactment of the FAST Act, states and local governments are now moving forward with critical transportation projects with the confidence that they will have a federal partner over the long term." (FAST Act website <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/>)

In the case of urban areas, which are defined as having a population of 50,000 or more, the surface transportation bill requires that certain transportation planning be done through a designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). As discussed above, COATS is the designated MPO for Gaston. In rural areas (those communities not meeting the urban population threshold), transportation planning is conducted through a Rural Planning Organization (RPO). The Central Midlands Council of Governments serves as the RPO of the rural areas of its member region. Other transportation projects are funded and implemented directly through the state departments of transportation.

The primary responsibility of both an MPO and RPO is to develop a multi-modal long range transportation plan (LRTP) that examines transportation needs over a 20- to 30-year planning horizon. The LRTP specifically identifies potential infrastructure improvements that will help address these needs and proposes a financial plan for using federal and state funds to implement the highest priority projects. This prioritized list is generated through a technical rating and ranking process defined by the South Carolina Department of Transportation Reform Bill (Act 114). The prioritization process includes an assessment of each proposed project in terms of financial viability, public safety, economic development, traffic congestion, environmental impact, and several other important criteria. The projects which rank highest on this list become part of the "fiscally constrained" plan, which means they have federal and state funding associated with them. All other projects remain on the "unconstrained" or "unfunded" Aspiration project list. The fiscally constrained projects go into a five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is regularly amended to remove completed

projects and to add on new projects based on priority ranking to maintain a five-year program horizon.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), maintains a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The STIP contains all of the MPO's and RPO's TIPs as well as their own projects to be completed within a six-year period.

The STIP is the State's six-year transportation improvement program for all projects or program areas receiving federal funding, including bridge replacements, congestion mitigation and air quality, interstate maintenance and upgrades, roadway resurfacing, safety, primary and secondary road system upgrades, transportation alternatives, and federal lands projects. The STIP covers all federally funded improvements for which funding has been approved and are expected to be undertaken during the upcoming six-year period. The document is scheduled for updating every three years and is revised on a continual basis to reflect the latest program and project information. The SCDOT Commission, as well as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transportation Administration (FTA), approve the STIP.

Gaston Federally Funded Transportation Projects

There are currently no federally funded transportation projects within the Gaston Town Limits, but there are some nearby projects that have improved or will improve transportation in the Gaston Area:

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

- Road widening of Fish Hatchery Road from Case Dell Dr. (S-868) to Glenn Rd. (S-875). Status- Aspirational (unfunded)
- Widening Fish Hatchery Road Charleston Highway to Pine Ridge Road (S-103). The purpose of the proposed project is to improve traffic flow and safety on Fish Hatchery Road between US 321 and Pine Ridge Road (S-103). This project will need to consider system linkage, increasing capacity, addressing transportation demand, improving safety, and address roadway deficiencies. This goal is to be accomplished by widening the existing 2-lane roadway to a 5-lane with paved median, sidewalks, and bike lanes. Status - Prioritized (funding identified) \$20,320,016
- Left turn lane on US 321 onto State Pond Rd. (S-1697). Status- Aspirational (unfunded)

Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

Interstate 26 exit 119 between Gaston and Pine Ridge. Redesigned interchange and bridge improvements. Running total estimated cost: \$32,459,674

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program - (STIP)

Traffic circle at intersections of Meadowfield Road, Woodtrail Drive, and Sharpes Hill Road. Status: Completed in August, 2016

The South Carolina C-Fund Program

Most federal transportation funds are only eligible for expenditure on federal and state maintained roads, usually defined as the National Highway System (NHS). However, many transportation needs of local communities pertain to county and municipality maintained roads, many of which are not paved. The primary source of funding for paving and resurfacing these roads is provided by the South Carolina County transportation fund program - known as the C-Fund. This program was originally established to fund the construction of local roads and streets that directly benefited local residents, primarily for the improvement of existing farm-to-market roads. Today, eligible C-Fund expenditures include engineering, construction, and field contract management for paving and resurfacing projects, as well as program administrative expenses, county or state highway bond debt service, sidewalk construction, and limited expenses for the fabrication and dedication of road signs. However, since funds are so limited, most South Carolina counties restrict funding to road paving and resurfacing projects.

In accordance with Section 12-28-2740(A) of the SC Code of Laws, funding for the C-Fund program is derived from 2.66 cents of the 16 cents per gallon state gasoline tax. This money is deposited into the SCDOT County Transportation Fund, where it is allocated back to the counties based upon the following three-part formula:

- 1/3 based on ratio of land area between county and state
- 1/3 based on ratio of county population to the state population
- 1/3 based on ratio of rural road mileage in county to rural road mileage of the state

State law requires the establishment of a County Transportation Committee (CTC) to prioritize projects and allocate funding. The members of the CTC are appointed by the County's legislative delegation and the number of committee members varies from county to county. In Lexington County, the County Council serves as the CTC and makes all program and funding decisions.

The CTC can use these funds for any eligible project as long as a minimum of 25% is used for improvements on the state highway system. The remaining 75% can then be used for local paving and resurfacing projects. Lexington County CTC FY 2015-2016 allotment was \$4 million, from which \$1 million was available for municipal projects. No projects were funded for the Town of Gaston. The FY 2017 allocation is also \$4 billion, but no new projects have been approved as yet.

Much like with the federal and state transportation planning process, the total amount of funding needed to adequately maintain the county and municipal road systems far exceeds the annual CTC allocation.

Gaston Road Network

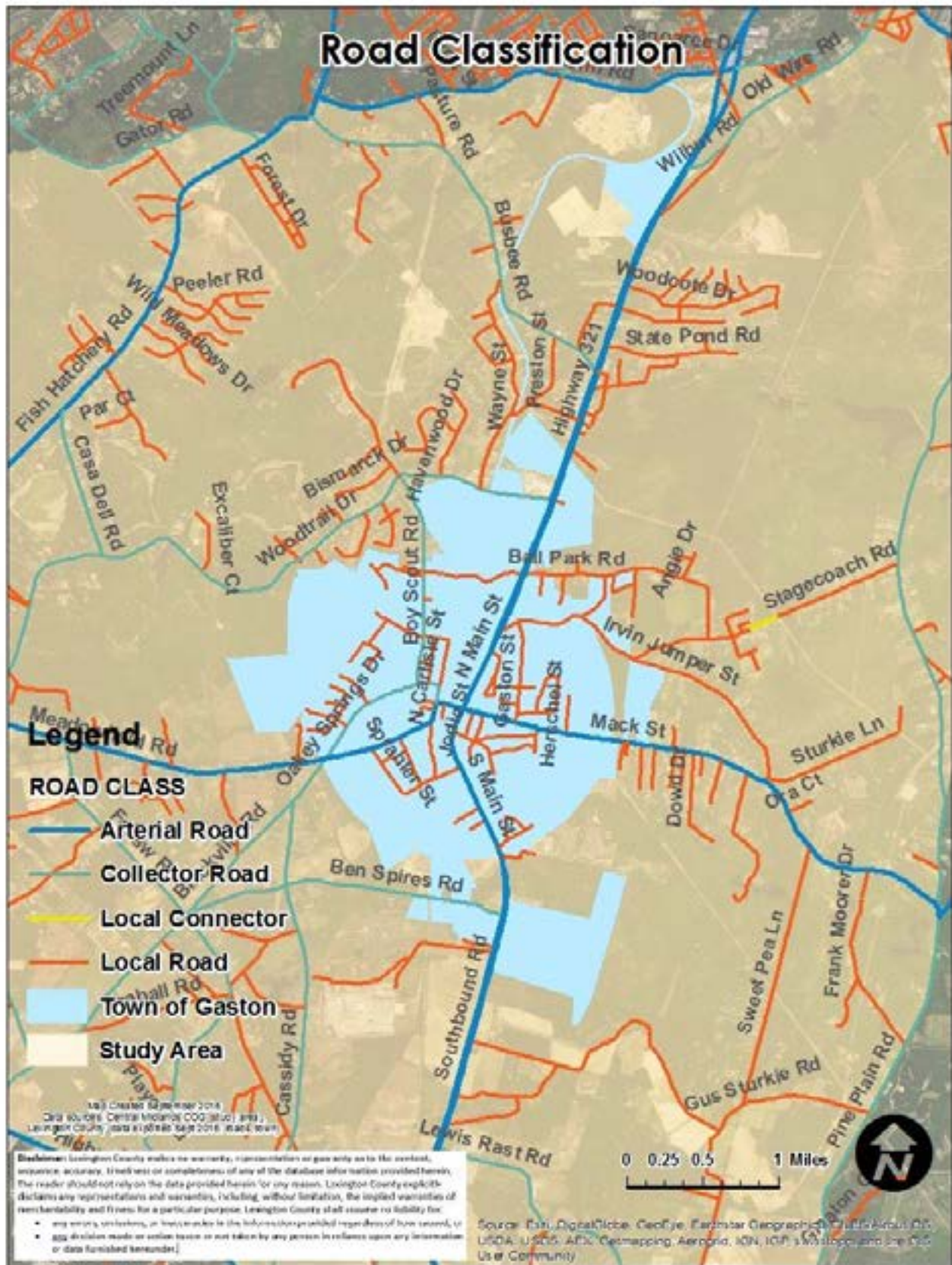
Functional Classification

Functional classification designations for roads in South Carolina are officially made by the SCDOT with recommendations and input from the relevant MPOs and RPOs. Final approval is made by the Federal Highway Administration. The last update to the Lexington County Functional Classification was made in January, 2015. Exhibit 8.1 explains the Functional Classification System.

Exhibit 8.1 Functional Classification System

Functional Classification System	
Functional System	Services Provided
Freeway	Provides high mobility with low access, no traffic signals, and full control of access
Arterial	Provides the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest uninterrupted distance, with some degree of access control.
Collector	Provides a less highly developed level of service at a lower speed for shorter distances by collecting traffic from local roads and connecting them with arterials
Local	Consists of all roads not defined as arterials or collectors; primarily provides access to land with little or no through movement. A local connector collects traffic from and distributes traffic to local streets within neighborhoods, commercial, and industrial districts. Connectors are usually longer than other local streets and primarily serve access to local functions and, again, are not designed for through traffic.

Exhibit 8.2 shows the road functional classification within the Town of Gaston. Not all roads have received classification. The small roads not shown on the maps are considered local roads. There are two arterial roads which intersect in central Gaston, effectively dividing the Town into quadrants: US 321, Main Street, runs the length of the Town from north to south. Mack Street, State Road 32-65, runs the width of town from east to west. Collector roads within the Town are Woodtrail Drive, Boy Scout Road, Oakley Springs Drive, and Ben Spires Road. All other roads are classified as local.



Daily Traffic Volumes and Levels of Congestion

The most readily available data source for measuring traffic volumes on the Lexington County road network is the Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) counting system. The AADT's counts are collected by SCDOT from their network of counter stations which are set up on many state maintained roads and some county roads presumed to carry significant volumes of traffic. This data provides a daily traffic volume number that is averaged over the course of a year. Because this data is reported annually going back multiple years, it is often possible to examine traffic growth over time which gives a clear indication of which facilities are most impacted by growth and development trends.

Traffic volumes expressed in AADTs are a good indicator of how heavily a road is used. However, AADTs are not a good assessment of congestion. A two lane road with an AADT of 20,000 will be more congested than a four lane divided highway with the same volume of traffic. Therefore, traffic engineers often use a Level of Service (LOS) indicator of the degree of congestion. The LOS provides a ratio of the volume of traffic to the capacity of the road to handle traffic. This ratio is then measured on a scale representing six different levels of service with letter designations for each one ranging from A to F. LOS A represents the best operating conditions (or least amount of congestion – open road), while LOS F represents the worst operating conditions (or most amount of congestion – traffic jam). Intermediate grades of B, C, D and E reflect incremental increases in congestion, with LOS D representing an acceptable LOS for future operating conditions by SCDOT standards. An LOS of C can be considered a targeted amount of congestion, while an LOS of A or B indicates an underutilized roadway.

The following descriptions reflect the North American Highway LOS standards per the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM), as well as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Geometric Design of Highways and Streets ("Green Book"):

LOS A: free flow. Traffic flows at or above the posted speed limit and motorists have complete mobility between lanes. The average spacing between vehicles is about 550 feet or 27 car lengths. Motorists have a high level of physical and psychological comfort. The effects of incidents or point breakdowns are easily absorbed. LOS A generally occurs late at night in urban areas and frequently in rural areas.

LOS B: reasonably free flow. LOS A speeds are maintained, maneuverability within the traffic stream is slightly restricted. The lowest average vehicle spacing is about 330 feet or 16 car lengths. Motorists still have a high level of physical and psychological comfort.

LOS C: stable flow, at or near free flow. Ability to maneuver through lanes is noticeably restricted and lane changes require more driver awareness. Minimum vehicle spacing is about 220 feet or 11 car lengths. Most experienced drivers are comfortable, roads remain safely below but efficiently close to capacity, and posted speed is maintained. Minor incidents may still have no effect but localized service will have noticeable effects and traffic delays will form behind the incident. This is the target LOS for some urban and most rural highways.

LOS D: approaching unstable flow. Speeds slightly decrease as traffic volume slightly increase. Freedom to maneuver within the traffic stream is much more limited and driver comfort levels decrease. Vehicles are spaced about 160 feet or 8 car lengths. Minor incidents are expected to create delays. Examples are a busy shopping corridor in the middle of a weekday, or a functional urban highway during commuting hours. It is a common goal for urban streets during peak hours, as attaining LOS C would require prohibitive cost and societal impact in bypass roads and lane additions.

LOS E: unstable flow, operating at capacity. Flow becomes irregular and speed varies rapidly because there are virtually no usable gaps to maneuver in the traffic stream and speeds rarely reach the posted limit. Vehicle spacing is about 6 car lengths, but speeds are still at or above 50 mph. Any disruption to traffic flow, such as merging ramp traffic or lane changes, will create a shock wave affecting traffic upstream. Any incident will create serious delays. Drivers' level of comfort become poor. This is a common standard in larger urban areas, where some roadway congestion is inevitable.

LOS F: forced or breakdown flow. Every vehicle moves in lockstep with the vehicle in front of it, with frequent slowing required. Travel time cannot be predicted, with generally more demand than capacity. A road in a constant traffic jam is at this LOS, because LOS is an average or typical service rather than a constant state. For example, a highway might be at LOS D for the AM peak hour, but have traffic consistent with LOS C some days, LOS E or F others, and come to a halt once every few weeks.

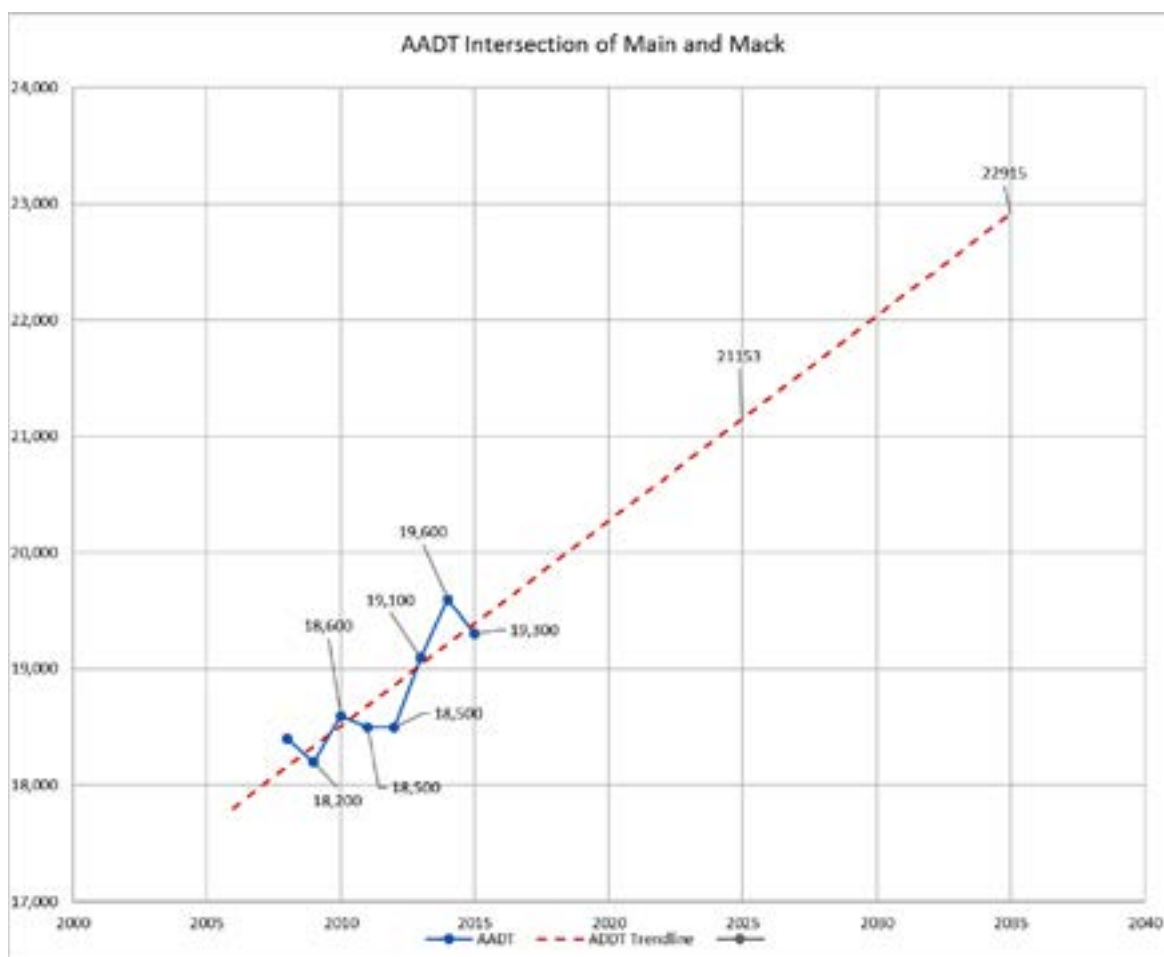
Exhibit 8.3 shows the 2015 AADT counts in Gaston. As one would think, the highest AADT is on Main Street (US 321) at the Mack Street intersection – the two arterial roads in the Town.

Exhibit 8.4 shows the increase in the AADT at this intersection between 2008 and 2015. A trend analysis predicts an AADT in ten years (2025) of 21,152 and an AADT of 22,915 in 2035. The SCDOT maximum AADT for a LOS C on a five lane undivided arterial (US 321) is 33,600. Barring any unanticipated development in the Gaston vicinity over the next ten years, traffic congestion will not be a problem.

Exhibit 8.3 2015 Traffic Counts in Gaston

Town of Gaston 2015 Traffic Counts		
ROUTE	ROUTE LOCATION	ESTIMATED AADT
US 321	S – 1507 to Sprahler Street	11,200
US 321	Sprahler Street to Mack Street	13,800
US 321	Mack Street to US 321	19,300

Exhibit 8.4 Traffic Counts on Main Street at Mack Street 2008 - 2015 With Projections



SCDOT, John M. Newman Planning

Road Maintenance, Repairs, and Improvements

Refer to Exhibit 8.5, which is Lexington County's map of roads in the Gaston vicinity, color coded to show who has responsibility for maintaining each road. Exhibit 8.6 is a close-up of Gaston roads. Although the map shows that Gaston has responsibility for maintenance of two very short roads: Juanita Drive and Austin Court, the Town of Gaston does not maintain any roads within the Town. All road maintenance, repairs and improvements are the responsibility of the

State, the County, or are private roads which the owners are responsible for maintaining. Gaston currently does not have land development regulations beyond the site development standards found in the Lexington Land Development Manual (LDM). The LDM is enforced by Lexington County Public Works through an agreement between the Town and the County. Land development (subdivision) standards adopted by the Town would allow the Town to decide on road construction standards, sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities, bicycle facilities, trails, access requirements, and other transportation standards for new or redeveloped residential subdivisions and commercial and industrial developments. Currently, the only option the Town has to influence these transportation decisions is to petition the Lexington County COATS Policy and Technical Advisory Committees or the Lexington County Council/County Transportation Committee to make transportation facility improvements within the Town of Gaston.

Exhibit 8.5 Road Maintenance in the Gaston Vicinity





Multi-Modal Transportation

Multi-modal transportation means the utilization of all forms of transportation: automobile, freight, bicycle, pedestrian, air, train, and transit. Multi-modal transportation policy encourages people to use alternative modes of travel – biking, walking or using transit – by providing safe routes to destinations. Interconnected streets reduce distances between points and make destinations easily accessible by multiple methods of travel. Although the option of driving to a destination still exists, better connections make the choice of an alternative mode for shorter trips much more appealing. In some commercial areas, connections between adjacent buildings can be so poor that patrons are forced to return to their cars, drive back out to a busy road, travel a few hundred feet to the adjacent parking lot and park again to reach a neighboring building.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Most modern development patterns maximize convenience and safety for the automobile driver, but not for the pedestrian or cyclist. As a result, a pedestrian must often travel a route much longer than the direct distance to their destination. For people to choose to walk or bike on neighborhood streets, the routes must be safe and convenient. Streets must be designed with many different users in mind to encourage non-vehicular travel. Without a comfortable and safe environment for all users, people will continue to rely on the car for trips to and from home and will be discouraged from walking or cycling as a form of healthy physical activity.

South Carolina's mild winters and moderate temperatures throughout most of the year should make walking a popular activity among Gaston's residents. There is substantial evidence that if safe and adequate facilities are provided, many people will choose to walk to work, to run errands, and to obtain personal services.

Gaston's retail and commercial developments, as with most urban centers who have experienced the majority of their growth and development since the automobile became the dominant form of transportation, are in large part accessible only by automobile along roads that have the heaviest traffic. Potential shoppers are left with fewer choices but to fill up the tank and drive. Yet, walking can be a critical form of transportation, particularly for older adults who no longer drive, young people who cannot yet drive, and for people who do not have access to a vehicle. Beyond consideration of walking as a means for transportation, walking also serves a vital role in maintaining and improving one's health.

Complete Streets

Complete Streets is a different way to think about designing, building, and using our streets. Instead of a single user – the automobile – complete streets are designed to accommodate all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and the automobile. Complete Streets make for livable, walkable, healthy communities. Businesses along corridors that have undergone a reduction in lane widths, striping of bike lanes, and the installation and widening of sidewalks have noted increases in sales and patronage from nearby residents, who enjoy the reduced congestion and increased convenience found along Complete Streets. The downtown experience of several South Carolina cities and towns has shown that when streetscapes are designed to human scale, downtowns appear more inviting and livable and become destinations where people naturally want to congregate. Downtowns with Complete Streets are healthier due to decreased automobile emissions and encouragement of physical activity.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT) supports the complete streets concept. In February 2003, the DOT Commission approved a resolution affirming that bicycling and walking accommodations should be a routine part of the Department's planning, design, construction, and operating activities; and will be included in the everyday operations of its transportation system. On the local level, sixteen South Carolina cities, towns, and counties have adopted Complete Streets resolutions, ordinances, and policies.

The DOT also has a policy of taking local jurisdictions' bicycle and pedestrian plans into consideration when planning and designing road construction and improvements in applicable locations.

Safe Routes to School

South Carolina is the only state in which the State Department of Education owns, operates, and maintains the fleet of school buses that service all South Carolina public schools. This bus service is not required to provide pick-up and drop-off within a 1.5-mile radius of schools. For students living within this 1.5 radius who walk and bike to school with non-existent or inadequate facilities such as sidewalks and bike lanes, getting to school can be unsafe.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a growing nationwide and international movement that brings together parents, schools, and community leaders to encourage students, including those with disabilities, to walk and bike to school. SRTS activities and resources focus on improving walking and biking conditions around schools while building healthy habits and safety skills. The SC Department of Transportation created the Safe Routes to School Resource Center in the fall of 2010 to help schools, school districts, and communities throughout South Carolina to build and sustain SRTS programs. SRTS Resource Center partners receive technical assistance and program support at no cost, with individualized plans developed for each partner school based on a safety assessment. The safety assessment is an interactive assessment of the physical environment with regard to school transportation and is a partnership between SC Department of Health and Environmental Control's Office of Healthy Schools and Division of Injury and Violence Prevention, the SC Safe Routes to School Resource Center, and the SC Department of Transportation. The assessment is conducted on a single

day during a 1.5-hour time period and is designed to:

- Assess the current infrastructure for walkers, bikers and car riders.
- Identify potential recommendations for safety improvements.
- Observe school dismissal and discuss the safety of pick-up procedures.

Currently, no Lexington School District 4 schools have participated in a SRTS program.

Transit

The Central Midlands Transit or COMET is a bus service that operates in Richland and Lexington Counties. Currently, the only service areas in Lexington County are in West Columbia and in the Bush River Road / Saint Andrews area. So, there is currently no transit service available for the Town of Gaston. In planning for future transit systems for the Town, it should be recognized that transit systems are most convenient and yield the greatest ridership when a rider's origin and destination are located within walking distance of the transit station or stop. By placing more housing near planned transit stations and stops (and transit stations and stops near existing housing developments), more people are likely to use transit and will walk to the station, rather than drive. It is just as critical for efficient provision of transit opportunities that work sites be located within walking distance of transit service.

Rail

The CSX Railroad line passes north to south through the center of the Town. This is a freight line with no stops within the Town. The closest commuter rail access is in Columbia.

Air

The Columbia Metropolitan Airport is in West Columbia, thirteen miles from the Town. Private air strips are located at the Darden Airport, at 487 Peachtree Road, and the Gaston Airport, at 1021 Kenneth Drive.

Needs and Goals Statement

The Town of Gaston has no 'ownership' of the transportation network within the Town. Responsibility for the maintenance, repairs, and improvements of existing roads lies with the county and state. Currently, Gaston has no transportation development standards to specify when and how roads, sidewalks, paths, trails, or other transportation facilities should be constructed whenever a residential, subdivision, or commercial development plan is proposed within the Town.

Although Gaston has a sufficient road system to accommodate automobile use, the Town's transportation system is inadequate to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians, and there is no transit service.

Goal

Gaston will assert more influence and control over the Town's transportation systems.

Strategy

As discussed above and in more detail in Chapter 3, Gaston has an agreement with Lexington County for the County to administer and enforce the Land Development Manual within the Town. The Manual provides parameters and criteria for addressing some of the specific issues which must be resolved during the planning, designing, and construction phases of land development. The minimum standards for site and land development are intended to protect and promote the general welfare. However, the Manual does not include residential subdivision and commercial regulations for sidewalks, paths, bike lanes, or other bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities. Gaston should create its own land development standards that include:

- For street designs for which sidewalks are not planned or required, multi-purpose paths, trails, and/or greenways designed to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-automotive traffic should be required in residential and commercial developments. The system of sidewalks, paths, trails, greenways, or a combination thereof, should be designed such that every lot in the development or building in commercial development has access to the system. Connectivity of the system to nearby schools, businesses, institutions, and other facilities should be provided as applicable and practicable. Where not currently applicable, dedication of right of way should be given for the installation of sidewalks, paths, trails, greenways, or a combination thereof, for connectivity to future nearby schools, businesses, institutions, and other facilities.

- Poor connectivity often restricts the viability of bicycle and pedestrian transportation, making driving the most attractive travel option. Cul-de-sacs lengthen distances for travelers, discourage pedestrian travel, and make transit service more difficult to operate and use while placing an added financial burden on local governments that must provide emergency, safety, and maintenance services. Use of cul-de-sacs and dead end streets should be restricted and only allowed by the Planning Commission on a case-by-case, site-specific basis. When cul-de-sacs and dead end streets are allowed, require connection to the nearest practicable street by sidewalks, paths, trails, greenways, or combination thereof.
- Provide for enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities within a 1.5-mile radius of schools within which school bus service is not required.

Strategy

Adopting a Complete Streets policy and developing a master bicycle and pedestrian plan will help ensure quality COATS and DOT projects and will aid in obtaining grant monies for sidewalks, trails, and other pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Strategy

Support Safe Routes to School safety audits, walk plans, and infrastructure improvements.

Strategy

Become engaged with the Lexington County Council in its function as the County Transportation Committee and as COATS board members. Communicate with the Lexington County Transportation Technical Advisory Committee representative. Make these officials aware of needed transportation improvements and new facilities within the Town of Gaston.

CHAPTER 9:

PRIORITY INVESTMENT ELEMENT

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CHAPTER 9: PRIORITY INVESTMENT ELEMENT

Background

In May 2007, an amendment was enacted to the Local Government Comprehensive Planning Act of 1994 (The Planning Act) which requires local governments' comprehensive plans to include a Priority Investment Element. The Planning Act Priority Investment Element requirements are as follows:

The Priority Investment Element "...analyzes the likely federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years, and recommends the projects for expenditure of those funds during the next ten years for needed public infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, roads, and schools. The recommendation of those projects for public expenditure must be done through coordination with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies."

The Priority Investment Act encourages local jurisdictions to examine their long-term capital and public facility needs so that they may provide a framework for financing capital projects over a five-year horizon.

Priority Investment Funding Sources

Potential funding sources for the priority investment projects identified in this plan are given as well as funding sources that may be available for other future capital projects. The funding sources listed here are funds that can be received directly to the Town of Gaston, not indirectly through County, Council of Governments, State, or Federal projects.

General Fund

The General Fund provides for the funding of all Town of Gaston governmental functions that are not otherwise funded through special accounts (sewer sales and tap fees and the Collard Festival). These funding sources include business license fees, building permit fees, franchise fees, distributions from the Municipal Associations tax and debt collection programs, lease and rental income, and miscellaneous fees for services (faxes, photocopies, etc.). The three-year average general fund revenue from all sources (FY 2013 – FY 2016) is \$418,988.

These funds are generally spent on general government services, public safety, public works and utilities, and health and human services. Expenditures include, but are not limited to, salaries for department employees, supply and fuel costs, and building improvements. Capital and infrastructure are funded in part through the General Funds. The Police Department is an enterprise fund as it generates the revenue primarily through fines, penalties and grants to fund police department operations.

Ad Valorem Taxes

Chapter 6, Article 1, of the General Ordinances of the Town of Gaston provides for an annual property tax. Although the Town of Gaston does not currently collect ad valorem (property) taxes, in South Carolina, ad valorem property taxes are very often among the most significant revenue sources of municipalities. Property taxes are based on the assessed value of residential and commercial units. The tax rate is generally reflected in mills or the millage rate. A mill is a unit of monetary value equal to one tenth of a cent, or one thousandth of a dollar. For example, a tax rate of 150 mills translates into a

\$0.15 tax per \$1.00 of assessed value. In general terms, the appropriate tax or millage rate for a taxing entity is reached by dividing the assessed value of all property to be taxed into the revenues needed to be generated by the property taxes. Determining factors on how high individual property taxes will be are:

- The amount of revenue needed to be raised by the taxes
- How dense or sparse residential, commercial, and industrial development is in the jurisdiction - The fewer improved properties that are taxed, the higher the tax will need to be.

General Obligation Bonds

Larger capital and infrastructure investments are often funded through General Obligation (GO) Bonds. The town, city, or county government itself serves as collateral and, as such, GO Bonds are backed by the 'full faith and credit' of the jurisdiction. Since GO Bonds are seen as safe investments, a town may be able to secure favorable interest rates. The principle and interest on the bonds are paid for through property tax levies. The State constitution limits the amount local governments can borrow through GO Bonds to eight (8) percent of the County's total assessed value. Therefore, ad valorem taxes would have to be in place before GO bonds would be available to the Town of Gaston.

Revenue Bonds

Revenue bonds are issued on revenue from service fees that are obligated to service the bond debt. The revenue is used to pay both the principle and interest. Revenue bonds do not count against the government's bond capacity, but the interest rates are higher than that of GO Bonds.

State Revolving Fund

The Sate Revolving Fund (SRF) program provides low interest rate loans for building or repair to wastewater and drinking water plants or distribution systems. The program is run by the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the Office of Local Government (OLG).

Impact Fees

Impact fees are intended to defray the costs to the government in services provided to new development. The fees are based on the capital and operating costs of these new services and are paid for by the developer or owner.

Developer In-Kind Contributions

In some instances, the owner(s) of property seeking entitlements for their land may elect during the development review process to donate right-of-way or construct certain “oversized” capital projects simply for the public good as well as to serve their development. The type and/or magnitude of these contributions vary greatly from location to location and owner to owner.

South Carolina Energy Office (SCEO) ConserFund

ConserFund is a revolving loan program administered by the Energy Office for energy-efficiency improvements in state agencies, public colleges or universities, school districts, local governments, and private 501 (c)(3) organizations. The loan program is focused on supporting the implementation of energy-efficient improvements that provide long-term cost reductions and energy savings.

State Infrastructure Bank

The South Carolina State Infrastructure Bank funds major qualified projects for constructing and making improvements to major highway and transportation facilities through competitive loans and other financial assistance programs.

Local Accommodations Tax

A Local Accommodation Tax (ATAX) is levied on the rental of rooms, lodging, or sleeping accommodations. Local governments in South Carolina are authorized to levy a tax of up to 7% of gross proceeds derived from business owners renting rooms, lodging, or sleeping accommodations and an additional tax of up to 5% on additional guest services at facilities not otherwise taxed. Revenue from Accommodations taxes must be used for tourism-related expenditures. Lexington County has an ATAX, but the Town of Gaston does not.

Local Hospitality Tax

A Local Hospitality Tax is levied on customers purchasing prepared foods and beverages from providers located within the respective jurisdiction. South Carolina counties are authorized to levy a hospitality tax of up to 2% if approved by a majority of the county council. The tax is limited to 1% if not also approved by municipalities within the county. Hospitality taxes must be used for tourism-related expenditures. Lexington County has a Hospitality Tax, but the Town of Gaston does not.

C-Funds

“The C-Program is a long-established partnership between the [South Carolina Department of Transportation] SCDOT and the forty-six counties of South Carolina to fund the improvements of state roads, county roads, city streets, and other local transportation projects. The C-Funds are derived from 2.66 cents per gallon of the state gasoline tax. These funds are distributed to each of the 46 counties based on a three-part formula. The formula allocates one third of the C-Funds based on the ratio of the land area of the county to the land area of the state, one third based on the ratio of the county population to the state population, and one third based on the rural road mileage in the county to the rural road mileage in the state. By law, each county is responsible for establishing a County Transportation Committee (CTC) appointed by the county’s legislative delegation. The number of members on the committee can vary from county to county. [In Lexington County, the County Council serves as the CTC and approves of all expenditures.] The CTC is entrusted with the authority to select and approve projects to be funded utilizing C-Funds. The law stipulates that the counties spend at least twenty-five percent of their apportionment of C-Funds based on a biennial averaging of expenditures, on the state highway system for construction, improvements, and maintenance. Furthermore, the counties are to spend no more than seventy-five percent of their apportionment each year on their local system. Also, the balance of uncommitted funds carried forward from one year into the next cannot exceed three hundred percent of the county’s total apportionment for the most recent year” (SCDOT website). These funds reimburse the municipalities and counties for specified projects approved by the CTC. As a result, C-Funds are restricted for specific uses and cannot be used for all capital projects. More often than not, C-Funds are used for street/road paving and repaving projects. The Town of Gaston must apply to the Lexington CTC for funding of local transportation projects.

Local Improvement Districts

South Carolina municipalities and counties are authorized by section 4-9-30(5)(a) of the SC Code of Laws to create Local Improvement Districts (LIDs) in which property taxes are levied to fund capital projects. Generally, the affected property owners in the district must agree to the new property tax assessment. Capital projects can be bond-financed and the debt serviced over time with revenue from the special property tax. Again, LID financing would only be available to Gaston if the Town were to collect ad valorem (property) taxes.

Local Option Sales Tax

South Carolina counties may pass by a voter referendum an additional 1% sales tax to fund capital projects within the county and its municipalities. The citizens vote yes or no to the entire list of projects. A similar Transportation Sales Tax can be approved by the same method to fund only transportation-related projects. Locally, these taxes are referred to as pennies for progress. Lexington County held a referendum for a Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) in 2014. The Town of Gaston submitted three projects for inclusion:

1. A new civic center
2. A baseball field complex
3. A town fountain with signage and sidewalks

The civic center and the baseball complex were selected for inclusion in the LOST referendum. The referendum did not pass.

Grants

Grants are one-time funds awarded to the Town for specific projects. Often these grants require local matching of a certain percentage of the grant. There are no assurances that previously awarded grant monies will be available to fund future projects. If, however, the past is a good indicator, it can be assumed that some amount of grant funding will be available for funding future projects, and monies for matching funds should be built into the General Fund and special accounts.

The Central Midlands Council of Governments (CMCOG) is a good resource for identifying Federal grant monies. Programs change from time to time. Current programs include:

1. The Community Development Block Grants Program (SC Department of Commerce)
 - o Community Development Programs
 - § Community Infrastructure
 - § Community Enrichment
 - § Neighborhood Revitalization
 - o Business Development
 - o Regional Planning
2. US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration Programs
3. US Department of Agriculture Rural Development Programs for communities offers a wide range of funding programs in many program areas including:
 - o Water and Wastewater
 - o Community Facilities
 - o Energy Development
 - o Housing
4. SC Transportation Alternative Program
5. SC State Housing and Finance & Development Authority
 - o Home Investment Partnership Program
 - o Housing Trust Fund

Lease-Purchase Agreements

Lease-Purchase Agreements allow a local government to acquire capital assets by making a series of lease payments that are considered installments towards the purchase of the asset. Under a lease-purchase agreement, the local government acquires full ownership of the property covered by the lease by making all of the lease payments over the full term of the lease.

Priority Investment Projects

Although the 2014 Lexington County Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) did not pass, there is still support from Gaston leadership and citizens for the Civic Center that was submitted for consideration. There has also been strong support for a senior center. The Planning Commission recommends substituting a 7,300 sq. ft. senior center in the Civic Center complex for the gymnasium that was included in the LOST projects list:

New Gaston Civic Center

The proposed 13,000 square foot facility would include:

- Gaston Town Hall and meeting space (1,350 sq. ft.)
- Gaston Police Department, Town Hall office, State Trooper office (1,200 sq. ft.)
- Senior Center (7,400 sq. ft.)¹
- Wellness equipment room (1,000 sq. ft.)
- State Trooper Substation (1,500 sq. ft.)
- Lobby, kitchen, restrooms, and storage (2,050 sq. ft.)

Total estimated cost: \$2,000,000

Town Fountain (Located at the Civic Center)

- Large fountain
- Town of Gaston sign at the base of the fountain
- Sidewalks in the area of the fountain for pedestrians

Total estimated cost: \$169,000

Land acquisition and site preparation, landscaping, and other site improvements

Total estimated costs: \$2,000,000

Total costs of Civic Center Project: \$4,169,000

Sidewalk Project

The Planning Commission is in support of implementing a sidewalk improvement and expansion program. The Planning Commission has heard of prior discussions, planning, and investigations into funding opportunities for such a project. However, the Commission has no details on these activities. If there is community and Council support for a sidewalk project, the Planning Commission will research the scope and costs of a sidewalk program that can be included in the five-year capital improvement program as discussed below.

Financing the Priority Investment Projects

Local Options Sales Tax

The total estimated cost of the Civic Center project is \$4,169,000. The costs for a sidewalk project are unknown at this writing. If another Local Option Sales Tax referendum is initiated by the County, the Civic Center and sidewalk project can be submitted for inclusion on the list.

General Obligations Bonds

General Obligation (GO) Bonds can be obtained at very favorable interest rates, but the municipality must have property taxes for servicing the bond debt to qualify for GO bonds.

Revenue Bonds

Revenue bonds are issued at a higher interest rate than GO Bonds and rely on revenue from the financed project rather than property taxes to service the bond debt. Revenue bonds would not be applicable for the Civic Center and sidewalk projects.

Local Improvement Districts

Local Improvement Districts are a method available to municipalities who impose property taxes to financing such projects. Gaston does not have a property tax.

¹ The LOST proposal was for a 7,400 sq. ft. gymnasium

Hospitality Tax

Gaston does not currently collect hospitality taxes. Proceeds from the hospitality tax must be used for financing tourist-related projects. If Gaston were to impose a Hospitality Tax, a sidewalk project would qualify if it could be demonstrated that sidewalk improvements could increase tourism. It is not known that any of the activities at the proposed Civic Center would qualify. The Department of Revenue would have to be consulted on the qualifications for Hospitality Tax revenues to fund these projects.

Grants

These projects could potentially be funded through the Community Development Block Grant program. The Civic Center could potentially be financed through Rural Development grants. South Carolina Parks and Recreation Development (PARD) Fund grants may be available for funding the senior center and wellness equipment in the Civic Center and for the sidewalk project. Other grant programs might be available. Funding for a sidewalk project could potentially be funded through the Columbia Area Transportation Study (COATS) MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) or the Lexington County Transportation Committee (CTC) as discussed in the Transportation Element. However, funding for MPO and CTC transportation projects is already inadequate to meet the many area transportation needs. The Central Midlands Council of Government Community and Economic Development Division and Transportation Planning Division should be consulted about the requirements and availability of grant programs.

Needs and Goals Statement

If the Town is to commit to realizing the priority investment projects, funding sources must be secured. Without ad valorem taxes, the Town's current revenues will be insufficient to fully fund these projects as currently scoped.

Priority Investment Goal

Gaston Town government will provide improved services, enhanced recreational activities, and increased civic pride through its priority investment projects.

Strategy

Develop a five-year Capital Improvement Program:

- Utilize the detailed Civic Center project costs submitted to Lexington County in 2014 for the LOST projects requests and update these costs for a revised project cost estimate
- Develop scope and determine costs of a sidewalks project for the Town
- Coordinate with the CMCOG on application for any eligible grants

Once total cost and funding has been determined, develop a five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for implementing the priority investment projects. These projects may take longer than five years to complete. The CIP should be structured as a rolling five-year program: as one year is closed, a new year is added. Phases of each project to be completed within each year and associated expenditures should be determined for the five-year period. These figures should be included in the annual budget. Non-monetary, project-related milestones should also be provided. Adjustments can continually be made to account for actual completion time-frames and expenditures.

CHAPTER 10: GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES TIME FRAME

The following is a summary table of the Comprehensive Plan elements' goals and implementation strategies. Some goals and strategies are presented in this table in an abbreviated form. Refer to the corresponding elements for more detailed discussions of the goals and strategies. This table also gives the implementation time frame and positions and organizations responsible for and assisting in the implementation.

Population Element			
Goal	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsible and assisting positions and organizations
Achieve higher educational attainment	Work with schools, PTO, and concerned citizens to instill importance of higher education	On-going	Gaston Town Government, Lexington District 4 and guidance counselors, PTO
Promote Healthy Eating and Active Living Policies	Promote production, sales, & consumption of local, fresh, healthy food	On-going	Gaston Town Government, Clemson Extension, ESMMLC, SCDA, SCDHEC
	Promote Active Lifestyles	On-going	Gaston Town Government, ESMMLC, SCDHEC, SCDOT, Lexington County Planning and Community Development
	Support Eat Smart Move More Lexington County (ESMMLC)	On-going	Gaston Town Government
Economic Development Element			
Goal	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsible and assisting positions and organizations
Create a town with amenities to attract desirable employers to Gaston	Provide development standards that include an interconnected system of multi-use paths, sidewalks, trails, and greenways	March 2018	Gaston Planning Commission and Town Council
Revitalize the Agricultural Economy	Provide incentives to increase commercial farming	On-going	Gaston Town Government, Clemson Extension, SCDA, LCSWCS, MFA, MLFC

	Consider a Gaston Farmers Market	January 2018	Gaston Town Government, local farmers
	Support restaurants and stores that serve and stock local foods	On-going	Gaston Town Government, ESMMMLC, SCDHEC, MFA
	Best collards contest	On-going	Gaston Town Government
Create a workforce prepared for higher paying jobs	Attract higher paying businesses to town	On-going	Gaston Town Government, Chamber of Commerce, Central Carolina Alliance
	Foster workforce training and education	On-going	Gaston Town Government, Midlands Tech., USC
Provide quality daycare and after school programs	Support the expansion of Lexington School District 4 early childhood education & after school programs	On-going	District 4, PTO
	Encourage local industries to provide in-house child care programs and flexible work schedules for working parents	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, Central Carolina Alliance
	Provide incentives for local private childcare providers	On-going	Gaston Town Government
Natural Resources Element			
Goal	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsible and assisting positions and organizations
Preserve Agricultural Land	Create Agricultural Zoning District	March 2018	Gaston Planning Commission, Gaston Town Council
Maintain a high degree of environmental quality for the Town of Gaston	Raise water quality index through stormwater management permit	Undetermined – dependent upon SCDHEC	Gaston Town Council, Lexington County Public Works Stormwater Division, SCDHEC
	Participate in Midlands Air Quality Forum	On-going	Gaston Town Government, Lexington County, CMCOG, SCDHEC

Be prepared for natural disasters	Work with the Lexington County Emergency Management Division to educate the Town leaders, first responders, and citizens on how to prepare for emergencies.	On-going	Gaston Town Government, Lexington County EMD
Cultural Resources Element			
Goal	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsible and assisting positions and organizations
Gaston will enhance its historical resources	Survey, record, list, and protect the Town's archeological and historic assets	On-going	Gaston Town Government, SCDAH
Community Facilities Element			
Goal	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsible and assisting positions and organizations
Improve the availability of medical facilities for the Town of Gaston	Work with urgent care providers to provide an urgent care facility	December 2017	Gaston Town Government, Urgent Care providers, Chamber of Commerce
	Work with Lexington County Fire Services to provide routine posting of EMS services at the Gaston Fire Station	December 2018	Gaston Town Government, Lexington County Government, Lexington County Fire Services
Improve the availability of solid waste and recycling collection and disposal services to the Town's residences and businesses	Work with Lexington County to provide a closer, more convenient Solid Waste and Recycling Station for the Town	December 2018	Gaston Town Government, Lexington County Government, Lexington County Solid Waste
	Consider negotiating a town-wide solid waste and recycling door-to-door collections service with a private contractor for favorable rates	April 2018 (for FY 2018 – 2019 budget)	Gaston Town Council, private waste haulers

Sewer will be more available to Gaston businesses, industry, and residents	Consider a cost-benefit study for expansion of the Gaston Sewer System	April 2018 (for FY 2018 – 2019 budget)	Gaston own Government, CMCOG, DHEC
	Explore contracting with LCJMWSC to provide sewer within the Town Limits	April 2018 (for FY 2018 – 2019 budget)	Gaston own Government, CMCOG, DHEC, LCJMWCS
Housing Element			
Goal	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsible and assisting positions and organizations
All existing housing stock will be in good repair	Work with the Lexington County Community Development Department in providing information and assistance to homeowners and landlords of substandard units on the availability of low income housing repair and renovation assistance programs	On-going	Gaston Town Government, Lexington County Community Development Department, CMCOG
Gaston will have a variety of housing types to meet the needs of all households	Provide residential zoning district regulations that will allow a variety of housing types within a development	March 2018	Gaston Planning Commission, Gaston Town Council
Housing in Gaston will be affordable to all residents	Create a zoning district designed to encourage affordable housing	March 2018	Gaston Planning Commission, Gaston Town Council
Land Use Element			
Goal	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsible and assisting positions and organizations
Gaston will enjoy a balanced environment, providing for rural and urban lifestyles	Develop zoning districts and district regulations that will implement the land use policies and comply with the Future Land	March 2018	Gaston Planning Commission, Gaston Town Council

	Use classifications and map		
Agricultural lands will remain in agricultural uses	Utilize infill and redevelopment opportunities within the Central Core	On-going	Gaston Planning Commission, Gaston Town Council
	Direct additional residential development towards the larger parcels around the Central Core that are identified as Rural Residential on the current land use map	On-going	Gaston Planning Commission, Gaston Town Council
	Discourage non-agricultural development of remaining prime farmland and soils of statewide importance	On-going	Gaston Planning Commission, Gaston Town Council
	Encourage higher intensity use of land under special agricultural assessment	On-going	Gaston Planning Commission, Gaston Town Council
Gaston will protect its environmental resources	Observe and enforce the Lexington County water quality buffer regulations	On-going	Gaston Planning Commission, Lexington County Public Works Stormwater Division
	Do not permit development in delineated wetlands	On-going	Gaston Planning Commission, Lexington County Public Works Stormwater Division, USACOE
	Do not permit building in areas where soil and slope conditions are not suitable for development	On-going	Gaston Planning Commission, Lexington County Public Works Stormwater Division
	Do not permit development in flood zones unless Federal Emergency Management Agency	On-going	Gaston Government, Lexington County Public Works Stormwater Division, SCDNR Flood Mitigation Program

	(FEMA) regulations are observed		
Transportation Element			
Goal	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsible and assisting positions and organizations
Gaston will assert more influence and control over the Town's transportation systems	Create land development standards that include bicycle and pedestrian street design with enhanced facilities near schools	March 2018	Gaston Planning Commission, Gaston Town Council
	Adopt a Complete Streets Policy	January 2019	Gaston Town Council
	Support Safe Routes to School	On-going	Gaston Town Government, SRTS, Lexington District 4
	Engage in County Transportation Committee and COATS decisions	On-going	Gaston Town Government
Priority Investment Element			
Goal	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsible and assisting positions and organizations
Gaston Town government will provide improved services, enhanced recreational activities, and increased civic pride through its priority investment projects	Develop a five-year capital improvement program	April 2018 (for FY 2018 – 2019 budget)	Gaston Planning Commission, Gaston Town Council

ABBREVIATIONS

CMCOG = Central Midlands Council of Governments

COATS = Columbia Area Transportation Study

EMD = Emergency Management Division (Lexington County)

ESMMLC = Eat Smart Move More Lexington County

LCJMWCS = Lexington County Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission

LCSWCS = Lexington County Soil & Water Conservation Service

MFA = Midlands Food Alliance

MLFC = Midlands Local Food Collaborative

PTO = Parent, Teacher Organization

SCDA = South Carolina Department of Agriculture

SCDAH = South Carolina Department of Archives and History

SCDHEC = South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

SCDOT = South Carolina Department of Transportation

SCDNR = South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

SRTS = Safe Routes to School

USACOE = United States Army Corps of Engineers

Comprehensive Plan Review and Updating

The Planning Commission must review the comprehensive plan or elements of the plan as often as necessary. Section 6-29-510(E) of the Planning Act requires a Planning Commission review at least every five years to determine if changes in the amount, kind, or directions of development of the area or other reasons make it desirable to make additions or amendments to the plan. Since there will be a decennial census in 2020, a five-year review will be required in 2021 to, at minimum, update data per the latest census findings. A full update of every element of the comprehensive plan is required at least every ten years.

APPENDIX: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Gaston Comprehensive Plan Public Input Meeting

On October 18, 2016, Gaston hosted a Comprehensive Plan public kick-off meeting at the Town Hall auditorium. The purpose of the meeting was to explain what a Comprehensive Plan is and to get the public's input on a variety of issues that would be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The meeting notice is included at the end of this Appendix.

Outline of Public Input Meeting Discussion Topics

What do you like most about Gaston?

- Small town atmosphere
- Social - friends, neighbors, family
- Closeness to Lexington and Columbia
- Cost of living? - housing costs

What do you like least about Gaston?

What kinds of things do you think should be celebrated about Gaston?

(These kinds of things can be used to organize celebrations and focus marketing of their town)

How would you like to see Gaston grow in the next ten years?

(Many small towns across SC are losing population. Gaston is growing.)

- Keep it pretty much the same
- Encourage more people to move to Town
- Bring in more employment
 - Businesses
 - Industry
- More housing developments inside the Town Limits
- More Commercial establishments
 - What kind?
 - Big box retail
 - Restaurants and entertainment - what would you like to see in both
 - Retail / shops
 - Other
- Create a Town center

What services would you like for the town?

- Fire - does the Gaston Fire Station provide adequate protection?
- Police - is public safety an issue? Crime?
- Medical - urgent care? EMS Do they have adequate medical facilities?
- Garbage pick-up and recycling
- Recreation
 - Ball fields
 - Parks
 - Trails / walking paths
 - Gym
- Other services
 - Child care
 - Adult care
 - Senior center

- Teen / youth activities
- other

Priority Investment Areas

What areas of town do you think need attention? What needs to be done and why?

- Residential areas
- Commercial areas
- Rural areas
- Industrial areas

Transportation

- Needed road improvement - problem areas
 - Traffic congestion
 - Road conditions
 - Dirt road pavement
- Interest in making the Town more walkable?
- Bicycle facilities?
- Trails
- Transit - bus

Water and Sewer

- Is access to public water adequate?
- Do we need more coverage of public sewer?
 - Residential
 - Gaston sewer only for commercial
 - Lexington County Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission (LCJMWSC) coverage adequate?

Appearance

- Impression of general appearance of Town
- Is landscaping, streetscaping an important issue?
- Are signs a problem? Should Gaston have sign regulations?

Housing

- Overall condition of housing
- Enough rental properties?
- Multi-family (apartments)
- Housing types
 - Singles
 - Single parent households
 - Senior citizens
 - Couples with families

Economic Development

- Are there any jobs or industries you would like to see recruited?
- What current employment sectors need strengthening?

Key Public Comments and Opinions

The primary opinion was that Gaston's citizens like the small rural town atmosphere. While they are agreeable to change and improvements, they don't want to lose "what makes Gaston, Gaston."

Likes

- Rural, small town atmosphere
- Proximity to urban amenities
- Proximity of the fire department

Wants

- More of a town center - have government facilities in one location
- More sidewalks
- Newer buildings should have public water and sewer
- Increase sewer availability
- Increased funding through better code enforcement and permitting
- EMS service at Gaston Fire Station
- Doctor's office or critical care facility
- Better 'sit down' restaurants
- More police presence
- Senior Center
- More locally owned businesses - not big box retail

Issues

- Revenue
 - Property tax can pay for desired town amenities, but watch out for waste, misuse of funds
 - Hospitality taxes should be investigated
 - Apply for federal, state, and grant funding
- Appearance is very important
 - Litter is a problem
 - Signs need regulating
- Federal and state storm water management mandates are costly
- Beware of growth for growths sake - may have to deal with undesirable traffic and noise
- Agriculture and home gardens are an important aspect of the Gaston community
- Need more public engagement in the community

Coordination with Neighboring Jurisdictions

As noted in the Priority Investment Element, the Planning Act requires that Comprehensive Plan recommendations on public infrastructure projects must be done through coordination with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies. In practice, South Carolina Jurisdictions accomplish this coordination by providing neighboring jurisdictions and agencies access to their draft Comprehensive Plans and providing them an opportunity to comment. In early January 2017, a link to the draft Comprehensive Plan that had been posted on the Town website was mailed to the following:

Town of Chapin

Town of Gilbert

Town of Lexington

Town of Pelion

Town of Pine Ridge

City of Cayce

City of Columbia

City of West Columbia

Town of Irmo

Town of Swansea

Town of Summit

Town of Batesburg-Leesville

Town of South Congaree
Town of Springdale
Lexington County Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission
Gaston Rural Water District
Lexington County Recreation and Aging Commission
Lexington County Community Development
Lexington County Planning and GIS
South Carolina Department of Public Safety
Richland County Planning and Development Services
Orangeburg County Planning
Calhoun County Building and Planning
Aiken County Planning and Development
Newberry County Planning and Zoning

Each jurisdiction and agency was given an opportunity to comment through the public comment period running through February 13, 2017. A copy of the notification letter is included at the end of this appendix. No comments were received.

Draft Comprehensive Plan Public Presentation

On January 10, 2017, a public PowerPoint presentation of the draft Comprehensive Plan was held at the Town Hall auditorium. The notice of the meeting was sent out in bulk mail to the 29053 zip code. A copy of the notice is included at the end of this appendix. All in attendance were encouraged to review the entire draft Comprehensive Plan which had been posted on the Town website. Public comments were to be received through February 13, 2017. Although the presentation was well-received by those in attendance, no comments were received.

TOWN OF GASTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Public Input Meeting
7:00 PM Tuesday, October 18, 2016
Gaston Civic Center Auditorium
131 N. Carlisle Street

Gaston is writing its first Comprehensive Plan: a master plan for the Town for the next ten years. The Comprehensive Plan will help guide the Mayor and Council on making decisions about the priority of future projects and how to respond to future growth. Come give your ideas on what Gaston should look like now and in ten years' time and make suggestions about how to get there.

Your voice is important and the Town wants your input! Please join us for an introduction to the Comprehensive Planning process. Plan to participate and encourage your family, friends, and neighbors to do the same.

To: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
From: The Town Gaston
Re: Gaston Comprehensive Plan

Section 6-29-510(D)(9) of the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act requires local governments' Comprehensive Plans to include a Priority Investment Element which: "analyzes the likely federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years, and recommends the projects for expenditure of those funds during the next ten years for needed public infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, roads, and schools. The recommendation of those projects for public expenditure must be done through coordination with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies. Therefore, the Town of Gaston is providing you with the Gaston Planning Commission's draft Comprehensive Plan for your review and comment.

The Comprehensive Plan can be reviewed on the Town of Gaston's website at <http://gastonsc.org/home/>
The priority investment element is in Chapter Nine. You may send comments in writing to:
Town of Gaston
P.O. Box 429
Gaston, SC 29053
Or through e-mail us at townofgaston@gmail.com

Comments will be received during the public period through February 13, 2017. The Planning Commission will consider all comments in making their final Comprehensive Plan recommendations to Town Council. I look forward to receiving and comments and suggestions you may have.

Sincerely,

Troy R. Bivens, Mayor

PUBLIC NOTICE
TOWN OF GASTON GENERAL ELECTION

Public Notice Town of Gaston General Election Notice is hereby given that a General Election for the Town of Gaston shall be held Tuesday, January 24, 2017 for electing one Mayor and two Council members.

People desiring to vote in the upcoming election must be registered by December 17, 2016. To register, update, or obtain information on absentee ballots, please contact the Lexington County Board of Voter Registration at (803) 785-8362.

Polls shall open at 7am and remain open without interruption at the Gaston Town Hall 131 North Carlisle St Gaston until 7pm.

PUBLIC NOTICE
PLANNING & ZONING PUBLIC MEETING

The Planning & Zoning Committees will hold a public meeting on January 10, 2017 at 7pm, located at 131 North Carlisle Street, Gaston, SC in the auditorium, to discuss the Gaston Comprehensive Plan:

A presentation and review will be given on the draft Comprehensive Plan followed by a question and answer period
The draft Comprehensive Plan will be posted on the Town website and written comments will be received until February 13th

The Planning Commission will review and consider public comments received and make any final revisions to the Comprehensive Plan and send the Plan to the Town Council for adoption.

Please join us.