

LAND USE

OVERVIEW

The Land Use Element is the centerpiece of the Comprehensive Plan, and represents a culmination of the issues, information, analyses, goals, and objectives of the other required elements of the Plan that address Population, Economic Development, Housing, Cultural Resources, Natural Resources, Community Facilities, Transportation, and Priority Investment. The subsequent elements influence the Land Use Element and profile the various types of land use to include single-family and multi-family residential, commercial, public and institutional, parks, open space, agricultural, and mixed-use.

Development of the Land Use Element is also the most challenging task in the comprehensive planning process. The Element recognizes current and historical trends while providing an opportunity to reflect on strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Because the process relies on numerous variables, crafting a future land use plan is not an exact science. While facts and data play important roles in the creation of the element, public and individual opinions, beliefs, and values are equally important yet difficult to quantify. Variables including market demand, land availability, population and economic trends, the environment, transportation, community character, current policies, natural disasters, and the provision of community facilities and services must also be considered in land use planning.

The purpose of this Chapter is to profile existing land use patterns and trends and forecast future land use. The existing land use inventory has been developed using the parcel-based land use data from the County's Geographic Information System (GIS). The Future Land Use Plan reflects the community's desire to guide and direct growth and includes goals and implementation strategies that support and reflect those outlined in other elements of the Plan. The Future Land Use Map included in this chapter is a visual representation of the land use goals and implementation strategies that have been developed under the other planning elements.

When preparing the land use element and the Future Land Use Map, it is important to integrate land use planning with the other elements. While certain land use needs are met in response to market forces for certain land uses or in response to community desires for patterns such as mixed-uses, other needs are influenced by the other elements. Thus, land use needs may be further defined by policies for transportation, open space protection etc.

EXISTING LAND USE

To plan for future development in and around Laurens County, it is necessary to inventory current land uses, assess development patterns and trends, identify undeveloped areas, examine the impact of existing land use regulation, and evaluate the capability of existing conditions to accommodate the future land use needs of the community. An inventory of existing land uses within the County was developed through an extensive geographic information system (GIS) analysis of digital mapping data. Mapping of existing land uses integrated land use category definitions and Laurens County Assessor tax parcel data, as well as staff knowledge of the area, and reflects the use of the properties at the time of the map development. Public roadways and railroad transportation rights-of-way were not assigned existing land use classifications.



The Future Land Use Map is a blueprint for the future development of Laurens County, setting the context and providing a vision for future growth. Implementation of the Future Growth Management Areas will be accomplished through regulatory measures included in the County's Land Development Regulations.

Development of the Future Growth Management Areas is anchored by land use data reflected in the current land use map. Proximity to metropolitan urbanized areas, abundant natural and recreational resources, and major transportation routes (Interstate 385 and Interstate 26) have established Laurens County as a key component of commerce, recreation, and cultural resources in the Region. Established land uses have evolved and matured over time and have been incorporated in the Growth Management Area Map.

POTENTIAL GROWTH AREAS

In planning for the future growth and development of Laurens County, it is necessary to look beyond the current trends and consider potential growth areas.

Although seriously hampered by natural and other constraints, there are areas that have the potential to be developed in the coming years. These potential growth areas were selected because they met the following criteria:

1. The area is located along a major corridor; and
2. It may be possible to provide more cost-effective water and sewer service.

These areas contain large parcels that can be master planned through cooperative efforts between the County and the owners to best serve the needs of all involved.

Land identified as having the potential for future development or redevelopment have one or more of the following characteristics:

1. A highly visible and strategic locations that encourages development proposals that are well designed and provide an opportunity for higher density, mixed use development.
2. Properties that can be well buffered from surrounding uses.
3. Properties that front on a major thoroughfare.
4. Properties that are in or near an existing activity center or open space.
5. Are located within the growth management area.

Goals/Implementation Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame	Completion Date
Goal: To direct future development into an efficient and serviceable form that will preserve the County's predominately rural character.			
Compile and integrate all existing master plans into a comprehensive master plan.	Planning	Short Term	
Develop a preservation plan that identifies and protects environmentally sensitive and historically significant areas, sites, and properties.	County Council Planning Technical Review Committee	Short Term	
Direct County development to areas contiguous with urbanized areas that are served or will be served with adequate public facilities such as roads, sewer, and water.	County Council Planning	Ongoing	
Complete a cost-benefit analysis for all developments.	County Council Administration Technical Review Committee	Ongoing	
Work with property owners to encourage master planning of vacant and/or redevelopment tracts along Growth Management Areas	County Council Administration Planning Commission Planning Property Owners Technical Review Committee	Short Term	
Review and develop a range of incentives to promote desirable development and preservation of farmland, forested areas, greenways, open space, and rural character.	County Council Administration	Mid Term	
Require that transportation, environmental, and economic impact statements be provided as part of any development application that results in a more intense range of land uses.	County Council Planning Commission Planning Technical Review Committee	Ongoing	
Require that developers pay a share of the associated costs for additional public facilities and services generated by the development to ensure that adequate public facilities are in place or proposed before development is approved.	County Council Planning Commission	Short Term	

Develop performance corridor districts within the Growth Management Area to establish character and development standards for critical districts and corridors. These should include landscaping regulations, protection of views and vistas, land development regulations and controlled access points along all roads.	County Council Planning Commission Planning Technical Review Committee	Short Term	
Develop land use policies and performance standards for new development that limit average residential growth, as measured by residential building permits, and encourage development to be phased so as not exceed the County's vision of maintaining an average annual growth rate.	County Council Planning Technical Review Committee	Short Term	
Encourage cluster development through density incentives. Incentives should increase as developers use smaller percentages of the site for construction, leaving the remainder as park, greenway, open space, or naturalized areas.	County Council Planning Technical Review Committee	Ongoing	
Establish tree protection guidelines, bufferyards, streetyards for development areas.	County Council Planning		
Develop buffer zones to reduce potential conflicts between non-compatible uses such as farming and large commercial or industrial development.	County Council Planning Technical Review Committee	Short Term	
Require new development of redevelopment to utilize natural topographic features and/or planting screens to shield development from public roads and adjoining properties, thereby preserving scenic vistas and rural character.	Planning Technical Review Committee	Ongoing	