UNION COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040
A SHARED VISION FOR OUR TOMORROW

Public Review

January 26, 2021
Union County is a safe, family-oriented county with abundant opportunities for educational excellence and employment, areas for healthy living, and treasured natural resources.

Photo: Enoree River Palm Trail Bridge, USFS
Goal – Provide safe environments in all communities.

Planning Objectives

• Develop community assessments and strategic plans for safe neighborhoods through partnerships with County departments, agencies, and organizations.

Action Strategies

• Collaborate with County stakeholders, such as a nonprofit organization, to provide for minor housing repair and rehabilitation needs for elderly, disabled, and families in poverty. (short-term)

• Provide for wayfinding signage and landscaping to beautify communities and promote community identification. (short- to mid-term)

• Create a better built environment with local partners through enhancement projects such as sidewalks, trails, lighting, and parks, and through the removal of dilapidated structures, litter, and overgrown lots. (mid- to long-term)
Goal –

Promote excellence in the educational system for lifelong learning.

Planning Objectives

• Offer and promote diverse education opportunities / guest lectures, internships through Recreation Department and partnerships with USC Union, Spartanburg Community College, Union County School District, and Broad River Electric.

• Develop County work experience, mentorship, etc. for student and volunteer learning.

• Collaborate with schools for facilities to be used for community events.
Goal –

Promote excellence in the educational system for lifelong learning.

Action Strategies

• Increase awareness of educational opportunities such as the Community Scholarship and Operation Workforce Training programs. (short-term)

• Partner and communicate with School District representatives through regular meetings and programs. (on-going)

• Develop continuing education programs for inclusiveness, mental health, finances, art, home economics, historical culture, etc. (short-term)

• Promote community school-based events on County’s website and social media. (short-term)

• Develop strategic plans with schools and universities on educational initiatives. (on-going)
Goal –
Implement tools that encourage growth and ensure high quality of life for all.

Planning Objectives
• Achieve financial stability for families in Union County.
• Establish flexible land use regulations that protect employment areas, foster new housing, protect natural resources, and increase opportunities for local entrepreneurship.

Action Strategies
• Communicate need for ordinances and develop tools such as a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and Land Development Ordinances that provide for fiscal programming and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. (short- to mid-term)
• Lower poverty rates and increase median household income and per capita income of families by targeting new employment clusters and supporting required educational training programs. (short- to mid-term)
Land Use Element
Goal –

Designate land to meet the existing and future land use needs of identified development patterns.

Planning Objectives

• Adopt and implement land development ordinances in accordance with the Future Land Use Plan.

Action Strategies

• Conduct an analysis of existing ordinances related to land development and needed regulations. (short-term)

• Prepare a land development ordinance and related maps and engage with residents and stakeholders for community input prior to adoption. (short- to mid-term)

• Redevelop areas near existing infrastructure and public services to minimize cost to serve. (mid-term)
Goal –
Create great neighborhoods to live, work, and play for all residents regardless of age, income, and ability.

Planning Objectives
• Promote the importance of ordinances and regulations to create great places.
• Develop policies that provide choices for families and individuals for housing and education near employment centers.

Action Strategies
• Create ordinances and zoning that allows for a variety of housing options in all residential neighborhoods. (short- to mid-term)
• Require all developments that incorporate residential uses, develop homes that add value to communities through basic architectural design guidelines. (short- to mid-term)
Transportation Element
Goal –

Provide a safe transportation system for all modes of transportation and related facilities as one integrated system that is coordinated and developed with partners and stakeholders.

Planning Objectives

• Design or redesign roads for all transportation modes to enhance safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists.
• Improve the efficiency of the road network by providing connectivity where appropriate.
• Plan transportation facilities to function efficiently and to be compatible with adjacent land uses.

Action Strategies

• Utilize grants to upgrade and maintain existing pedestrian sidewalks and install sidewalks where needed. (short-term)
• Upgrade and install lighting along major streets and corridors to make transportation safer. (on-going)
• Improve the condition of existing walking areas to increase safety of walkers. (short-term)
• Widen Highways 49, 72, and 176 to improve the access to Interstate 26 and Highway 9 between Lockhart and Jonesville. (long-term)
Goal –

Collaborate regularly with stakeholders, agencies, and jurisdictions for planning and implementing transportation improvements that enhance quality of life and economic development.

Planning Objectives

- Continue to work with SCDOT, the State Legislature, and regional partners to establish a public transit program, improve freight mobility, and enhance economic competitiveness and efficiency.

- Provide pedestrian and bicycle facilities as a network of connections to housing, schools, commercial areas, parks, and activity centers.

Action Strategies

- Establish a transit program with a Demand Response Service county-wide to provide work and medical related trips. (short-term)
Goal –

Collaborate regularly with stakeholders, agencies, and jurisdictions for planning and implementing transportation improvements that enhance quality of life and economic development.

Action Strategies (continued)

- Implement a Vanpool Program for transit specific work related trips to the major employers in the area. (mid-term)
- Develop an Express Route transit program for medical and commuter trips to Spartanburg from the City of Union. (long-term)
- Develop a bike and pedestrian plan to identify corridors and routes for pedestrians and bicyclists and gaps in connections between facilities. (short-to mid-term)
- Encourage healthy lifestyles by providing connections with sidewalks, multi-use paths, trails, and bike lanes. (mid- to long-term)
Goal –

Preserve and protect the character, compatibly, and aesthetics of existing residential areas and neighborhoods.

Planning Objectives

• Maintain the value of existing housing through proactive code enforcement.

• Require new development to enhance and/or be compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

• Promote programs to help owners improve their home.

• Protect residential areas from illegal land use activities through enforcement of County codes.

• Encourage parks, sidewalks, trails, lighting, and other amenities to promote safe, pleasant, community-friendly neighborhoods.
Goal –

Preserve and protect the character, compatibly, and aesthetics of existing residential areas and neighborhoods.

Action Strategies

• Implement active code enforcement in dense residential areas within Buffalo, Monarch, Ottaray, City of Union, Lockhart, Carlisle, and Jonesville. (on-going)

• Develop ordinance requiring periodic inspections for non-owner occupied housing units to maintain safe living conditions. (short-term)

• Partner with USDA to provide resources for owner-occupied residential upgrades / improvements. (mid-term)

• Develop land use regulations to ensure new developments are compatible with existing residential areas. (short-term)
Goal – Create a diverse inventory of housing product to support growth of Union County.

Planning Objectives

• Detached residential development should coincide with defined planning areas that allow for the retention or development of stable neighborhoods with individual character and identity.

• Medium and high density development should be located in and near mixed-use districts and employment centers and may be used as a transition between residential and commercial areas.

• Housing should be provided in close proximity to transportation, health centers, pharmacies, grocery stores, and open spaces.
Goal –
Create a diverse inventory of housing product to support growth of Union County.

Action Strategies
• Form public private partnerships to develop new housing stock, including workforce housing and adaptive reuse of existing facilities. (mid-term)
• Develop new residential neighborhoods as conservation subdivisions and neighborhood mixed-use near employment areas. (long-term)
• Create housing redevelopment plans for Lockhart, Buffalo, Ottaray, Jonesville and Monarch to utilize existing water and sewer infrastructure. (mid-term)
• Develop opportunities for additional student housing in partnership with the City of Union and other surrounding jurisdictions. (on-going)
• Develop land use regulations to protect new residential developments. (short-term)
Economic Development Element
Goal –

Foster a strong, diverse economy that supports a wide variety of businesses and enterprises.

Planning Objectives

• Increase collaboration and interaction among all economic development partners to forge a stronger, more regionally complementary approach to economic development.

• Increase the diversity and adaptability of the local workforce’s skillset.

• Improve synergy and efficiency of various economic development organizations within Union County.

• Improve the quantity and quality of available workforce.
Goal –

Foster a strong, diverse economy that supports a wide variety of businesses and enterprises.

Action Strategies

• Partner with local professionals and community leadership groups to assess economic development needs of Union County, and to develop an unified vision for future economic development progression. (on-going)

• Partner with local educational and training institutions to research, develop, and implement training programs that meet skillset needs of the national industry. (on-going)

• Develop a marketing plan that leverages differential advantages of Union County and compatibility within the region. (on-going)

• Develop plan to merge Tourism, Economic Development department, and Chamber of Commerce into a new countywide economic development entity. (long-term)

• Leverage Union County Community Scholarship to attract graduating Union County High School seniors to USC Union and SCC Union. (on-going)
Goal –

Foster a strong, diverse economy that supports a wide variety of businesses and enterprises.

Action Strategies (continued)

• Expand technical training opportunities to Union campus of Spartanburg Community College. (on-going)

• Expand and incentivize use of adult and youth apprenticeships among existing industry within Union County. (mid-term)

• Expand utilization of entry level workforce development programs such as Operation Workforce Training within Union County. (on-going)

• Identify U.S. regions with lower levels of economic development activity and actively market job opportunities in Union County to those regions. (mid-term)

• Expand the Career and Technology Education Center. (on-going)
Goal –

Increase the level of industrial economic development activity in Union County.

Planning Objectives
• Foster an industrial economic environment that is conductive to supporting and growing industry in Union County.

Action Strategies
• Expand industrial grade sewer from the City of Union to the Trakas Industrial site. (short-term)
• Develop comprehensive solutions for water and sewer infrastructure in the Lockhart and Carlisle communities. (long-term)
• Widen Highway 49 to a 4-lane divided roadway from the City of Union to I-26. (long-term)
• Develop five and ten year industrial product development plans which identifies estimated capital requirements, targeted industrial sectors, and product specifications. (on-going)
• Develop a county wide water and sewer authority. (mid-term)
Goal –
Increase level of commercial economic development activity in Union County.

Planning Objectives
• Foster a business environment that is conducive to supporting local entrepreneurship and growing local businesses.

Action Strategies
• Update and maintain buildings and facilities that can be marketed for local business development. (on-going)
• Offer incentives to businesses, such as tax breaks or rent waivers, to attract businesses to the County. (on-going)
• Develop five and ten year commercial product development plan which identifies estimated capital requirements, targeted commercial sectors, and product specifications. (on-going)
Goal –

Increase level of commercial economic development activity in Union County.

Action Strategies (continued)

• Develop public private partnerships to execute commercial product development plan. (on-going)

• Develop joint city/county incentive plans to support commercial product development plan. (on-going)

• Develop countywide water and sewer authority. (mid-term)

• Develop countywide fire authority. (short-term)
Goal –
Upgrade and maintain existing technology infrastructure to promote new industries and businesses.

Planning Objectives
• Increase broadband throughout Union County and industrial areas to offer higher internet speed capabilities.

Action Strategies
• Partner with local telecommunication companies to apply for federal grants and loans to install new lines at reasonable prices. (short- to mid-term)
• Survey the local businesses, current industries, and community members to analyze the effectiveness of the current services supplied. (short-term)
Goal –
Attract new industries and businesses while preserving and protecting the agricultural presence.

Planning Objectives
• Create additional certified industrial sites located in centers throughout the County, and develop and implement additional strategies to enhance business recruitment, retention, and local entrepreneurship.
• Regulate designated areas of growth throughout Union County.

Action Strategies
• Identify and prepare sites that can be developed for commercial and industrial use. (on-going)
Cultural Resources Element
Goal –

Preserve and maintain sites and structures that serve as significant, visible connections to Union County’s cultural, social, and architectural past.

Planning Objectives

• Identify funding resources, both private and public, to preserve and reuse culturally significant properties.

• Emphasize preservation and adaptive reuse as the preferred approach to the management of historic properties.

Action Strategies

• Evaluate properties for new historic designations and districts. (on-going)

• Secure funding for improvement of designated historic properties and rehabilitation of significant structures such as the Sims and Lockhart schools, Union County Jail, and other resources. (short-term)

• Ensure new development reflects the character and historic references of the site when preservation or adaptive reuse are not possible. (on-going)
Goal –

Build the cultural foundations by involving broad segments of the community in the production, support, and presentation of cultural programs.

Planning Objectives

• Expand access to all cultural programs.
• Promote various modes of transportation connecting residents with cultural resources.

Action Strategies

• Promote and develop cultural programs for residents of all ages, including theatrical, musical, dance, and other performing arts activities. (on-going)
• Develop cultural programs and presentations specific to African American history in Union County. (on-going)
• Provide infrastructure for walking, biking, and transit. (mid-term)
Natural Resources Element
Planning Objectives

• Coordinate with local agencies and private land holders to explore all possible resources for the public acquisition of permanent open space and new recreational opportunities.

• Expand access to and enjoyment of the Sumter National Forest.

Action Strategies

• Encourage the utilization of Sumter National Forest resources and amenities such as campgrounds, trails, and access points to blueways. (short-term)

• Develop new trails that continue the Palmetto Trail, the Flat Stack Trail, and the Union Memorial Trail, and provide greenways along the Broad, Enoree, and Pacolet rivers. (short- to mid-term)
Goal –

Improve Water Quality and Resources

Planning Objectives

• Concentrate new development in areas that are least susceptible to erosion into water bodies to reduce water pollution.

• Promote stormwater management techniques that minimize surface water runoff in public and private developments.

• Encourage private property owners to conserve water and plant native or drought-tolerant vegetation in order to reduce the need for irrigation.

Action Strategies

• Evaluate the development of a lake project (i.e. Patriots Lake) as a means for recreation, hunting, fishing and to be used as a water reservoir to house water for human consumption. (short-term)
Goal – Improve Water Quality and Resources

Action Strategies (continued)

• Rebrand John D. Long Lake and develop for camping and recreation. (short- to mid-term)

• Work with local and regional partners to improve and restore surface water to its natural condition. (short-term)

• Require the use of low-impact development techniques to best manage stormwater and minimizing impermeable surfaces. (on-going)
Goal – Protect, Enhance, and Restore Natural Resources

Planning Objectives

• Encourage the protection of mature, native tree species to support the ecosystem, provide shade, and enhance the aesthetics of new and existing development.

• Protect riparian habitat corridors by requiring sufficient setbacks for new development adjacent to creek slopes; maintaining natural and continuous creek corridor vegetation; and protecting plant communities from the adverse effect of increased stormwater runoff, erosion, and sedimentation.

Action Strategies

• Protect native wildlife habitats by limiting or avoiding new development that encroaches into important native habitat areas; limits the range of the protected species; or creates barriers that cut off access to food, water, or shelter of listed or protected species. (short-term)
Community Facilities Element
Goal –

Provide well-maintained and high quality community facilities, services, and programs.

Planning Objectives

• Ensure community facilities and services are maintained in a fiscally responsible manner.

• Coordinate with outside service providers to ensure services provided enhance quality of life for residents.

• Ensure water service is available for current and future residents in a cost-efficient manner.

• Identify community resources needed to protect residents and critical infrastructure in the event of a natural or manmade disaster.

Action Strategies

• Develop a Capital Improvements Program that implements the capital recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. (short-term)
Goal – Provide well-maintained and high quality community facilities, services, and programs.

Action Strategies (continued)

• Ensure that new development contributes its fair share of the community facility related costs that are associated with growth. (short-term)

• Ensure capacity for safe drinking water and wastewater treatment is sufficient to serve current and future needs of Union County. (short-term)

• Provide an adequate and cost-effective solid waste collection and disposal system that also encourages County resident to reduce, re-use, and recycle. (ongoing)

• Maintain and enhance recreation opportunities at park, fields, and open space to meet recreation needs. (ongoing)
Goal –

Provide well-maintained and high quality community facilities, services, and programs.

Action Strategies (continued)

• Provide for exceptional fire and police services and facilities that adequately protect the health, life, livelihood, and property within Union County. (on-going)

• Evaluate public buildings to enhance space, function, and appearance. (on-going)

• Develop a communications program using website, pamphlets, and articles in the local media to increase public education on community facilities. (on-going)

• Identify and develop a plan to retrofit critical facilities and install backup generators as necessary. (mid-term)

• Evaluate the feasibility and identify potential funding for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) P-361 Community Safe Rooms for Tornadoes and Hurricanes, as such facilities may be stand-alone structures or incorporated into school facilities or on other community assets and facilities. (mid-term)
Goal –

Provide equitable access for all residents to community facilities, services, and programs.

Planning Objectives

• Provide all residents equitable access to community facilities.

• Promote various modes of transportation connecting residents with community facilities.

Action Strategies

• Promote and develop community facilities for residents of all ages, including library satellite locations, parks, and recreation facilities. (on-going)

• Establish a regional African American museum for Union County. (short- to mid-term)

• Develop a public transit system. (on-going)

• Partner with agencies to provide a mobile Farmers Market for food deserts in Union County. (short-term)
Goal –
Collaborate with partners to develop programs and services that improve the health for residents of all ages and abilities.

Planning Objectives
• Support facilities, programs, and policies that make active living a convenient choice.

Action Strategies
• Transition the Union County Public Health Task Force into the Union County Healthy Community Council to gather data and to explore feasible policies and actions to advance health and health equity in all policies. (short-term)
• Develop a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for Union County to determine potential health impacts based on policies, programs, and projects. (short-term)
Goal –

Collaborate with partners to develop programs and services that improve the health for residents of all ages and abilities.

Action Strategies (continued)

• Develop a Health and Active Living Plan to improve public health. (short-to mid-term)

• Develop a comprehensive drug abuse prevention, intervention, treatment plan and include law enforcement to minimize the supply of illegal drugs. (mid-term)

• Support options for unconventional settings for health care services to improve and expand health care access for underserved communities that may include community centers, schools, places of worship, retail pharmacies, and mobile health units. (mid-term)

• Utilize TeleHealth as a means to improve and expand healthcare to underserved communities and outlying areas in Union County. (short-term)
Goal –

Develop an infrastructure throughout Union County that promotes active living for residents of all ages and abilities.

Planning Objectives

• Connect communities through safe, tree-shaded bike and pedestrian sidewalks, trails, greenways, and protected bike lanes.

• Provide all residents with safe and inviting access to open spaces, parks, and trails.

Action Strategies

• Work with the Union County School District, neighborhoods, and developers to secure grant funding and build safe routes to schools. (short- to mid-term)

• Implement the Future Land Use Plan and develop compact mixed-use districts and land uses that offer housing choices with sidewalks, trails, parks, open space, and bike lanes. (short- to mid-term)
Goal –
Develop an infrastructure throughout Union County that promotes active living for residents of all ages and abilities.

Action Strategies

• Develop and improve park, trail, and river facilities at Renaissance Park, Lockhart Flat Stack Trail, Palmetto Trail, and along the Broad, Pacolet, Enoree and Tyger rivers. (on-going)

• Implement the Walkable Union Pedestrian Plan to develop bike lanes, sidewalks, and crosswalks within and adjacent to the Union County Opportunity Zones. (short- to mid-term)
**Goal –**

Provide healthy food access for all neighborhoods in Union County.

**Planning Objectives**

- Provide for local food production that supports commercial and non-commercial farms.
- Support food distribution systems that provide greater access to healthy food for all neighborhoods.

**Action Strategies**

- Recruit Food Markets to provide fresh vegetables and fruits to outlying areas. (on-going)
- Evaluate current farmers markets to enhance services for the community. (short-term)
Figure 12.1 2017 Education Attainment Population 25 Years and Over

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>S. Carolina</th>
<th>Union County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 9th Grade</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th - 12th Grade No Diploma</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goal – Support the Union County School District to promote excellence in education for all ages.

Planning Objectives

• Collaborate with Union County School District on partnerships for shared use facilities, programs, and developments that enhance community learning and recreation opportunities.

Action Strategies

• Coordinate with the Union County School District, industries, and workforce development to develop student pathways for work experience opportunities, apprenticeships, and student-learning opportunities. (ongoing)

• Establish an Education Excellence Council with County officials, School representatives, community organizations, business/industry, and regional and state officials to communicate quarterly on challenges and opportunities (i.e. Project Lift example). (ongoing)
Goal –
Support the Union County School District to promote excellence in education for all ages.

Action Strategies (continued)
• Develop a program for all students age 4 and above to attend full day public school. (on-going)
• Develop a civics concentration as a required course in high school and as an adult continuing education class. (short-term)
• Develop a Business/Industry/Places of Worship mentor program for middle grade students to motivate educational achievement and graduation (i.e. Opportunity Fair example). (on-going)
• Coordinate with partners to establish a Volunteer Reading Program for primary students to assist with reading readiness. (short-term)
• Establish an adult continuing education program beyond High School. (mid-term)

Comprehensive Plan Draft January 2021
Goal – Enhance educational programs.

Planning Objectives
• Identify opportunities for new educational programs.

Action Strategies
• Evaluate the establishment of a charter school for Union County. (short-term)
• With community partners, create a charter school program for Union County. (short- to mid-term)
Priority Investment Element
Goal –
Foster growth and ensure developments contribute to the cost of public facilities and impacts on services and programs.

Planning Objectives
• Prepare a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) to plan for future delivery of public services.
• Develop a Capital Improvements prioritization and timeline schedule.

Action Strategies
• In collaboration with the Planning Commission, plan a ten-year financing strategy for capital improvements and annual operating needs. (short-term)
• Ensure the CIP supports the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. (short-term)
• Conduct CIP annual review by departments to enhance accountability. (on-going)
Goal –

Collaborate with other agencies and jurisdictions on public infrastructure improvements.

Planning Objectives

• Identify funding through public and private sources to expand transportation, water, and sewer systems.

Action Strategies

• Establish quarterly meetings with regional partners to discuss land use and utility services. (short-term)

• Plan and create regional programs to fund water and sewer enhancement projects. (mid-term)
Goal –
Partner with the private sector on community development projects.

Planning Objectives
• Foster economic development through public-private partnerships for the enhancement of public infrastructure and facilities.
• Promote Opportunity Zones as areas for redevelopment and capital improvement projects.

Action Strategies
• Market locations for community development projects and recruit public-private partnerships. (ongoing)
Next Steps

1. Public comments received during January and February, 2021.

2. Edits made as needed and final plan prepared.