



## Charleston County Greenbelt Program Rural and Urban Grants Programs

### Application Instructions FY26 Summer Cycle

Charleston County's Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan provides guidance for spending the greenbelt portion of the Transportation Sales Tax. The purpose of Urban and Rural Grants Programs is to distribute the greenbelt portion of the Transportation Sales Tax proceeds in an equitable manner for the conservation of greenspace throughout Charleston County. The plan assigns the Greenbelt Advisory Board (GAB) with the responsibility of administering both the Urban and Rural Grants Programs.

The instructions below should be adhered to in the completion of an application. Direct questions regarding the application process to Kylie Jeffords, Program Manager – Grants Administration at 843-202-7228 or [cjeffords@charlestoncounty.org](mailto:cjeffords@charlestoncounty.org).

#### I. Application Period

Applications for both the Rural and Urban Grants Programs may be submitted beginning Monday June 2, 2025, and must be received by end of business on Friday, July 25, 2025. Applications will not be accepted after the deadline.

#### II. On-Line Application Submission

Applications ***must*** be submitted on-line. In order to access the on-line application, applicants must complete the Notice of Intent Form found on the Greenbelt website Apply page, <https://greenbelt.charlestoncounty.org/apply.php>. Once the completed Notice of Intent Form is received and approved, the applicant will be emailed access to the on-line application form.

**Applications missing information or any of the required attachments may be deemed incomplete and removed from consideration.**

#### III. Pre-Application Meetings

Pre-application meetings are ***not*** mandatory for the application process. However, if you should desire to meet regarding your project, or if you need technical assistance, please contact Kylie Jeffords at 843-202-7228 or [cjeffords@charlestoncounty.org](mailto:cjeffords@charlestoncounty.org).

#### IV. Funds Available

Approximately \$23 million is available.

#### V. Rural/Urban Area Definition

Projects funded with Rural Program monies must occur in the Rural Area of Charleston County defined by the County's Comprehensive Plan as the municipalities and unincorporated areas that are located outside the Charleston County Urban Suburban Growth Boundary. These areas include the West St. Andrews area in West Ashley, Wadmalaw Island, Edisto Island, the St. Pauls area, Hollywood, Meggett, Ravenel, Rockville, Awendaw, McClellanville and portions of Johns Island, West Ashley and East Cooper.

Urban areas of Charleston County are defined by the Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan as the municipalities and unincorporated areas that are located within the Charleston County Urban Suburban Growth boundary, as defined within the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan.

The municipalities and unincorporated lands within this boundary include:

City of Charleston	Town of Mount Pleasant
City of Folly Beach	City of North Charleston
City of Isle of Palms	Town of Seabrook Island
Town of James Island	Town of Sullivan's Island
Town of Kiawah Island	Town of Summerville
Town of Lincolnville	Unincorporated

#### **VI. Urban Allocation of Funds**

The urban allocation will be divided among the municipalities and unincorporated areas located inside the County's Urban Growth Boundary, according to the population of each Unincorporated areas that are located within the Urban Area will apply for grant funding through the Urban Grants Program. All unincorporated areas will be considered as a single land area and their total population used to determine the amount of their allocation.

#### **VII. Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipients**

Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient definition: Charleston County or a municipality in Charleston County; any agency, commission, or instrumentality of the County or municipality within Charleston County; a not-for-profit charitable corporation or trust authorized to do business in this State and organized and operated for natural resource conservation, land conservation, or historic preservation purposes, and having tax-exempt status as a public charity under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and having the power to acquire, hold, and maintain interests in land for these purposes; an agency or instrumentality of the United States Government; and any other entities as may be approved at the discretion of County Council on a case-by-case basis.

#### **VIII. Allowable Costs**

In accordance with the Charleston County Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan, Charleston County will operate a rural grants program to promote rural land conservation, wetlands protection, historic and cultural preservation, parkland acquisition, greenway and trail acquisition, and waterway access acquisition. Except for the minor improvements stated below, rural funds can be used for the acquisition of land and/or purchase of development rights on property within the rural area.

Urban grants are to be used primarily for land conservation through acquisition or purchase of development rights on property within the urban area. However, some grant funds can be used to support the development of related minor improvements that in essence provide for public access and use of conservation lands.

Minor improvements that may be funded with Greenbelt funds will be limited to: boardwalks, foot bridges, unpaved trails, unpaved roadways, and unpaved small parking areas. The cost of these improvements must be included in the budget portion of the application form.

Beach municipalities (Folly Beach, Isle of Palms, Kiawah Island, Seabrook Island and Sullivan's Island) may submit applications to use their urban allocations to place allowable minor improvements on land they currently own. The municipality would have to agree to place the land under the same covenants and restrictions as all other lands protected with greenbelt funds. **The applications for minor improvements are limited to the beach communities listed above.**

In addition to the allowable minor improvements, funds from the Greenbelt Program may be used for administrative costs and expenses that are customary and reasonable to the acquisition of property.

#### **IX. Disallowable Costs**

Items that will NOT be funded with Greenbelt monies include, but are not limited to design fees, deed stamps, property taxes, projects with NO endorsement from the appropriate municipality, and any other improvements outside the allowable minor improvements listed above. These other improvements may be included in a particular project but cannot be funded with Greenbelt proceeds.

#### **X. Applicant and Landowner Disclosures**

The application requests information from both the applicant and landowner. The applicant and landowner shall complete all information on the appropriate form. The landowner must sign the landowner disclosure form. In the event a landowner signature cannot be obtained, applicant must demonstrate a good will effort was made to obtain the signature.

#### **XI. Program Requirements**

Rural Greenbelt Lands include “Resource Management Areas” that generally encompass undeveloped lands used for timber production, wildlife habitat, recreational and commercial fishing, and limited agriculture. According to the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan, rural areas also encompass significant acreage of fresh, brackish, and saltwater tidal marshes, as well as important habitat for non-game and endangered species. Typical uses for Rural Greenbelt Lands include rural parks, cultural/historic sites, productive lands, and water access.

Urban Greenbelt Lands contain the greatest population density and intensity of development, as well as the greatest concentration of jobs and economic activity. Conservation of greenspace for various uses will be crucial in offsetting the negative impacts of increased density. Typical uses for urban greenbelt lands include urban parks, cultural/historic sites, reclaimed greenspace, greenway corridors and water access.

- A. An Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient independently or in conjunction with the landowner may apply for a grant from the Greenbelt Fund to acquire an interest in land identified in its application. Within five business days of the applicant’s submittal to the Greenbelt Bank, the **applicant** must notify in writing any adjacent landowners and other property owners within 300 feet of the proposed parcel of the applicant’s submittal to participate in the Greenbelt program. Contiguous landowners and other interested parties may submit in writing to the board their views in support of or in opposition to the application. Based on a review of these submissions, or in any instance where the board determines the public interest so requires, it may hold a public hearing on the application at which the Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient, contiguous landowners, and other interested parties may be heard.
- B. Before an award to disburse greenbelt funds for the purchase of any interest in land, the Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient receiving the funds must notify the owner of the land, that is the subject of the Greenbelt Fund grant, of the following in writing:
  - 1. that interests in land purchased with greenbelt funds result in a permanent conveyance of such interests in land from the landowner to the Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient or its assigns; and
  - 2. that it may be in the landowner’s interest to retain independent legal counsel, perform appraisals, create surveys, and seek other professional advice; and
  - 3. the application must contain an affirmation that the notice requirement of this subsection has been met.
- C. Urban municipalities may submit applications for projects within their jurisdiction. The projects will be funded in accordance with the municipality’s allocation based on population. Conservation organizations and other entities meeting the definition of an Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient may apply for funding within an urban municipality **ONLY** if the project is

endorsed by the appropriate municipality. A resolution from the municipality endorsing the project and authorizing the application to the Urban Program must be attached to the completed application form. The resolution must explain the municipality's rationale for endorsing the specific project.

- D. All interests in lands acquired with Greenbelt Funds must be held by the Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient approved by the board to acquire the interest in land; except that an interest in land obtained with Greenbelt funds may be assigned from one Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient to another upon approval of all members of the Greenbelt Advisory Board by majority vote.
- E. Except as provided above, no interest in land acquired by an Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient with Greenbelt funds may be extinguished, sold, transferred, assigned, alienated, or converted to a purpose or use other than that set forth in the grant award, without securing a:
  - 1. recommendation from the Greenbelt Advisory Board, following a finding of fact that the land no longer exhibits the characteristic that qualified it for acquisition with funds from the Greenbelt fund; and
  - 2. majority vote of all members of Charleston County Council.
- F. If any interests in lands, that have been acquired by an Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient with Greenbelt funds, are extinguished, sold, transferred, assigned, alienated, or converted pursuant to the above stipulations, the Eligible Greenbelt Fund Recipient extinguishing, selling, transferring, assigning, alienating, or converting the interests in land shall replace them with interests in land of substantially equal current fair market value, with any deficit being made up by contribution (cash or in-kind at the discretion of the board) to the Greenbelt fund. The replacement land must also exhibit characteristics that meet the criteria of this ordinance. The Greenbelt Advisory Board must verify that suitable replacement interests in lands have been identified and will be obtained before authorizing that any interest in land purchased with monies from the Greenbelt fund be extinguished, sold, transferred, assigned, alienated, or converted.
- G. Interests in land acquired with Greenbelt Funds must be managed and maintained in order to perpetuate the conservation, natural, historical, cultural, open space, and recreational uses or values for which they were originally acquired. Uses which are adverse to the original purposes for which the interests in land were acquired with Greenbelt funds are not permitted without securing a:
  - 1. recommendation from the Greenbelt Advisory Board, following a finding of fact that the use is one that furthers the original purpose of the Greenbelt Plan; and
  - 2. majority vote of all the members of the Charleston County Council.
- H. Funds from the Greenbelt Program may not be used to acquire interests in lands or other interests in real property through the exercise of any power of eminent domain or condemnation proceeding that is contrary to the wishes of the landowner.

## **XII. Evaluating Applications**

The Greenbelt Advisory Board (GAB) has assembled a subcommittee to evaluate applications for both the Rural and Urban Programs. The subcommittee will review the applications using the program criteria and present findings to the full Greenbelt Advisory Board. In addition, each application will be reviewed for completeness and to ensure all required attachments are included. **Applications missing information or any of the required attachments may be deemed incomplete and deferred until the next funding cycle.** Based on the availability of funding and application scores, projects will be recommended to Charleston County Council for funding. Any application with a score under 50 may be deferred.

**XIII. Award of Urban Grants**

Once applications are approved, grant agreements that outline the terms and conditions will be developed between the County and appropriate parties.

**XIV. Distribution of Funds to Grant Recipients**

Upon completion of a project that has met all of the funding requirements, reimbursement in the specified grant amount will be provided to the applicant at the time of closing, when the property is acquired and the deed is recorded.

**XV. Evaluation of Awarded Grants**

At least annually, County Greenbelt staff will conduct monitoring visits of Greenbelt properties to ensure compliance with all Greenbelt deed restrictions and program requirements.

**NOTE:** Charleston County and the Greenbelt Advisory Board(GAB) reserve the right to request additional information not included in the application or instructions. Additional appraisals, surveys, environmental assessments, etc. may be requested by Charleston County and/or the GAB. These Application Instructions may be revised or updated to correct errors, for clarification, and to reflect the GAB's and Charleston County's policies, conditions or requirements for Greenbelt Grants, or for other reasons that the GAB and Charleston County believes will best accomplish the mission of the Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan.