



INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In November 2004, Charleston County voters approved a referendum for the one-half of one percent Sales and Use Tax. This historic vote is intended for the protection and promotion of the health, safety, welfare, and quality of life of the citizens of Charleston County, through financing the costs of highways, roads, streets, bridges, and other transportation-related projects facilities, and drainage facilities related thereto, mass transit systems and greenbelts.

Charleston County Council has implemented an open, public process, that includes receiving advice from citizen-led advisory boards, in developing, supplementing and updating the Sales and Use Tax Spending Plan to determine the most appropriate way to accomplish the intent of the Act and the purposes and projects of the Sales Tax Ordinance. The amount of the maximum total funds to be collected and spent on Greenbelt projects and purposes over the 25 year maximum life of the program shall be no more than \$221,571,200. Charleston County began collecting the Transportation Sales Tax on May 1, 2005.

Charleston County and the project consultant, Greenways Incorporated of Durham, North Carolina and White and Smith of Kansas City, Missouri, worked closely with the Greenbelt Advisory Board (GAB) and the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) staff to develop this Greenbelt Plan in full compliance with the requirements of the ordinance. This work addressed four major project elements as required by Charleston County Ordinance 1343:



1.1.1 Major Project Elements

1. An inventory and analysis of current greenspace in Charleston County in the form of a written report and digital geographic information system (GIS) mapping (Chapter 2);
2. A forecast and analysis of greenbelt needs over the next twenty-five years in Charleston County in the form of a written report and digital GIS mapping (Chapters 3 and 4);
3. A comprehensive review of greenbelt funding resources, including, without limitation, analysis of grants, loans and other funding options from all sources, federal, state, local, and private (Appendix F); and,
4. Greenbelt parcel selection criteria, with consideration given to the system employed by the South Carolina Conservation Bank (Chapter 5).

1.2 Greenbelt Advisory Board

A Greenbelt Advisory Board was established by County Council, consisting of fourteen members as follows: nine members appointed by County Council; one member, each, appointed by Charleston City Council, North Charleston City Council, Mount Pleasant Town Council; one member appointed by the County Council Chair from the unincorporated area of the Southern portion of the County; and one member appointed by the Council Chair from the unincorporated area of the Northern portion of the County.

The Greenbelt Advisory Board has been vested with the responsibility to prepare and deliver to the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission and the County Council its findings, recommendations and comments regarding the proposed Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan. The GAB has also sought input from members of the public through an extensive public input process. Following delivery of the report, the GAB is expected to convene for future meetings, from time to time as matters are referred to the Board by County Council.

1.3 Methodology and Process

The County, GAB and consultant utilized a planning methodology that included the involvement of stakeholders including: residents, representatives of user groups; local, state and federal agencies; and others who would share their ideas, aspirations, concerns and suggestions.

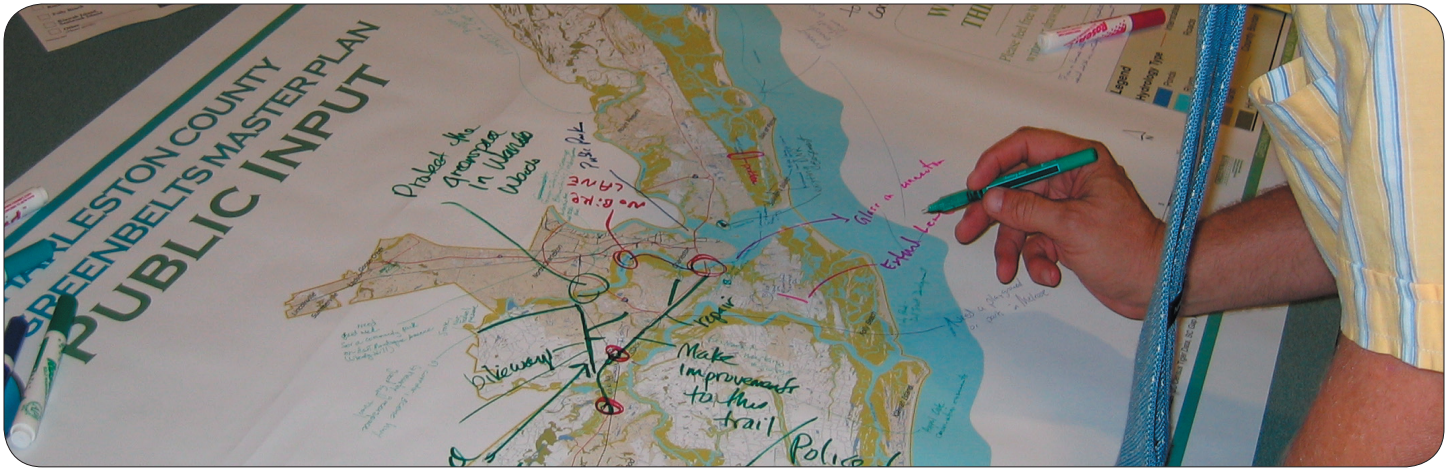
The Public Process consisted of bimonthly meetings between the GAB, County and PRC staff and consultant, and a series of open houses where participants shared both verbal comments and written suggestions. At each public open house, response forms and maps were provided and participants were invited to write down their thoughts.

Review sessions of completed work were held at key junctures in the process including: the initiation of the planning effort, the completion of the analysis of



Shown above is one of the many bimonthly GAB meetings, with County staff and the project consultant in attendance.





Public input maps, like that above, were one of many tools used to collect the views of residents of the County on greenspace preservation.

existing conditions, when draft planning elements and concepts were prepared and upon completion of the final draft plan. Review sessions with the GAB were held on a bimonthly basis and comments were documented.

In addition to the public participation process, the County staff posted results to a project Web site and the consultant published newsletters updating progress and findings of the plan. News releases were also made to local media outlets announcing open houses, and other information about the plan.

An inventory of existing resources was accomplished using existing GIS data and mapping, and by automobile and foot tours of the study area. In addition, previous planning efforts related to the area, such as the County Comprehensive Plan, were assembled and reviewed.

Finally, the consultant drew on its professional knowledge of planning techniques and concepts as well as successful planning in other communities with challenges similar to Charleston County to draft plan concepts.

Ultimately, the final plan evolved out of an iterative approach with ideas passed back and forth between the consultant and the GAB with review and, where appropriate, revision at key steps in the process. Every effort was made to assure the planning process was open, inclusive and responsive -- vital components of a successful plan.

1.4 Document Description

This Plan document includes the following major components:

- An Executive Summary - the findings and recommendations of the plan;
- An Introduction/Overview - the purpose, planning process and guiding principles of the plan;
- Data Collection and Synthesis - type of greenspace, inventory of greenspace resources, growth management plans and regulatory framework analysis;
- Needs Assessment - the level of service needed to meet current and future populations, and the results of scientific survey work that indicates community desires and the “market” for greenspace benefits;
- Greenbelt System - a framework and policy guidelines for conserving greenspace;
- Implementation Program - outline of specific steps for achieving the plan’s key elements over the next twenty five years, including greenbelt selection criteria.
- Appendices - a greenspace glossary, public workshop summaries, relevant ordinances, a conservation toolbox, funding sources, the benefits of greenspace and a list of references.



