

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Population is an important element of the Vision 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The population within the Rock Hill 2020 Planning Area will continue to grow over the next 10-20 years. Examining current population characteristics and trends can help us determine growth needs and appropriate policies to meet those needs.

Population Needs

Projecting the number of future residents in Rock Hill is necessary in order to assess future land, public service, and infrastructure needs. The 2020 population projections indicate increased growth within the area, including a total of 82,810 residents within the current City limits, 101,442 within the existing Urban Services Area, and 116,347 within the entire 2020 Planning Area. Rock Hill will need to continually forecast and revise population projections as Census, development, or planning data becomes available.

The first step in evaluating the needs of the City's population and capacity to serve that population will be maintaining, sharing, and disseminating accurate, current data. City departments and partner agencies must standardize demographic, housing, and socio-economic data used for reporting and policy development. Standardized data will increase the ease of information sharing and verification of current conditions within the Rock Hill 2020 Planning Area. It will also make population characteristic projections easier and more readily available to agencies which require them.

In order to serve all sub-populations in the Rock Hill 2020 Planning Area, the City must also keep track of demographic shifts in the overall population. Specific demographic characteristics to be monitored should include age, sex, race, disability status, income level, and others as appropriate. Monitoring geographical and magnitude shifts in these sub-populations will ensure that the City is prepared to address the needs of the entire population as it grows and changes over time.

With increases and demographic shifts in the City population come demands for expansion of public services. Previous sprawl-oriented growth patterns increase the expense and practical difficulty of providing services to residents, especially with respect to staffing and service levels for fire, police, and emergency services.

The issue of growth management (balancing growth with resource preservation and provision of services) is reiterated in the Community Facilities, Housing, Natural Resources, Land Use, and Priority Investment Elements.

The endorsement of the Corridor East Growth Strategy by Rock Hill City Council in 2006 marked a decision by City leaders to grow in a more sustainable fashion to better meet the needs of residents. This strategy directs more compact growth to areas in the eastern part of the Urban Services Area and lands adjacent to the existing city limits, thereby taking advantage of existing transportation facilities and utility services.

Rock Hill must decide through its annexation, development, and growth management policies, what type of community the City will be. Past growth patterns have lent themselves toward a more sprawl oriented, less sustainable land use form which can be a barrier to establishing a City-wide identity and sense of place. Sustainability through quality construction, quality design standards, and comprehensive land use planning will be essential to meeting the needs of these future residents and maintaining the quality of life that attracts residents to Rock Hill.

By following the 2020 Priority Policy Directions identified in the Vision 2020 Plan Summary, Rock Hill can better address current and future population needs. These include:

- ***Focus on Redevelopment and Infill***
- ***Achieve Sustainability***
- ***Plan for Dave Lyle Corridor East***
- ***Enhance Mobility and Connectivity***
- ***Promote Redevelopment and Infill Development Along Key Corridors***
- ***Create Livable Places***
- ***Leverage Resources through Partnerships and Coordination***

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