

THE GENERAL PLAN

2000-2010

A Comprehensive Plan for Rock Hill, South Carolina

Population
Community Facilities
Economic
Housing
Natural Resources
Cultural Resources
Land Use



Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan is a unified process for managing community changes. It provides a graphic representation of current community conditions as well as the area's projected long term growth and other potential changes. It also helps community members better understand the strategic implications of such projected growth or change.

When combined with community input the Comprehensive Plan can help guide area growth, development and public expenditures. Community leaders can make their decisions in a manner more consistent with community heritage, environment, economic interests, and common goals if they are publicly expressed in the comprehensive plan.

State enabling legislation for community planning requires that all comprehensive plans include at least seven key elements, or topics. Each must describe current and projected community conditions, goals and timetables.

The key elements include:

- X Population
- X Community Facilities
- X Natural Resources
- X Cultural Resources
- X Housing
- X Economic Development
- X Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan focuses on all future land use and physical development, by both the public and private sectors. Although the plan provides a long range, comprehensive view of the City for the next 15-20 years, it still remains a general plan, when referring to specific parcels, buildings or property owners.

The Planning Process

The Comprehensive Plan must reflect community goals and objectives that will serve as a guide to both *public and private* development and investment. It reflects the input of many community residents,

businesses and organizations, as well as public officials and staff. It does this by being coordinated with and receiving input from other major community planning processes, such as:

- X Empowering the Vision - Strategic Plan
- X Empowering the Community - Strategic Plan Update
- X Community Development Plan
- X Economic Development Plan
- X RFATS Transportation Plan
- X Consolidated Housing Plan [HUD]
- X Strategic Financial Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is prepared by the Planning Commission as a recommendation to the City Council. It may be prepared as a single document or as a number of distinct elements, each of which must have a public hearing, with 30 days notice, before being adopted by ordinance. The plan may include other community plans by reference.

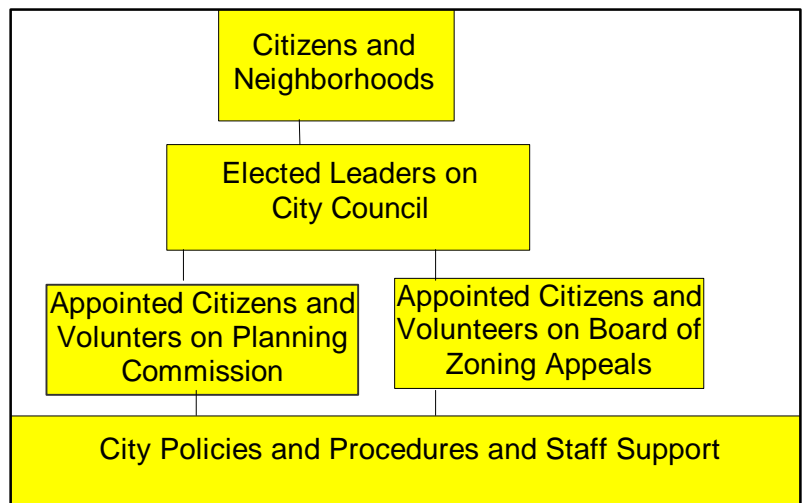
To implement the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, the City Council uses it to guide public and private investment:

- X Public Investment - by setting policy and adopting operating and capital improvement budgets to carry out the public portion of the plan, and
- X Private Investment - by adopting official maps, zoning ordinances, land development and subdivision regulations, and by appointing the Planning Commission, Historic Review Board and Zoning Board of Appeals to help recommend and administer them.

City Council, Planning Commission, other boards and commissions, and city staff, must implement the goals of the Comprehensive Plan by using it to guide the ongoing planning, financing and operation of the City government and its policies, procedures, services and capital investment.

Organization

Modern planning has been a recognized function of local government since early in the century. The City of Hartford, Connecticut, initiated the first formal Comprehensive Plan in 1907 and the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of zoning in 1926. At that time, state enabling legislation was passed, giving municipalities zoning authority [Title 5, Chapter 23]. Counties were granted similar authority in 1942 [Title 4, Chapter 27]. In 1967 additional enabling legislation was passed for counties [Title 6, Chapter 7].



In 1994, the South Carolina General Assembly updated and consolidated all this legislation into the “SC Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act”. This new law, which breaks planning organization into four integral parts:

- X Public Input
- X Governing Body
- X Planning Commission
- X Zoning Administration and Boards

The Public Input Process

As a minimum, state law requires the City Council to have a public hearing with at least 30 days notice before it adopts the Comprehensive Plan or any portions thereof. In fact, Rock Hill has a long history of providing much more opportunity for citizen input and involvement in the planning process.

As far back as 1970, the City involved neighborhood "block clubs" in planning the Model Cities Program. More recently, after the loss of most of the our local textile manufacturing industry by the mid-1980's, the City joined with other local agencies to starting with the community-wide strategic planning process called "Empowering the Vision" in 1988.

Through this process and through its 1996 update called "Empowering the Community", the City has provided close and continuous collaboration between citizens and local government officials.

The current comprehensive planning elements include many of the community goals, objectives, and strategies identified during this process and the resulting community meetings.

The City's commitment to public input has also included:

- X providing numerous public workshops on community issues,
- X opening new channels of public information,
- X providing staff assistance to help and advise neighborhoods associations, as well as
- X including citizens on all major boards and advisory groups.

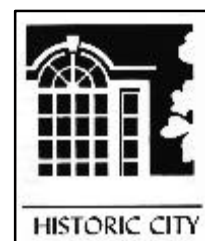
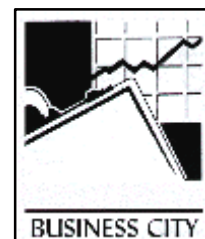
In the past few years, the planning staff has had frequent workshops and public hearings on local land use and development ordinances and regulations, in preparation for updating the comprehensive plan.

This process has included providing multiple public hearings on draft land use and development plans which will be included in the final comprehensive plan.

The Governing Body Role

The City Council is the governing body that must adopt the Comprehensive Plan and the tools to carry it out. The strength of a local planning program can be judged by how the governing body decides daily issues which impact community growth and developments, from major budget items to local traffic problems -- and how closely those decisions reflect adopted comprehensive plans. Other key roles of the City council are:

- X Appointment of the planning commission, the zoning board of appeals, and other important community service board members.
- X Adopting Ordinances necessary to carry out the recommendations of its advisory boards and commissions.
- X Providing sufficient levels of staff support and financial resources through the operational and capital improvement budgets and other funding mechanisms.



Planning Commission Duties

Once created and appointed, the Planning Commission serves as a citizen advisory group to the City Council on planning matters. They are provided staff support by the City, and represent a broad cross-section of the interests and concerns of the community. Duties include carrying out a continuing planning program for the physical, social and economic growth, development and redevelopment of all areas within the City. As a minimum, they will:

- X Draft the seven elements of the comprehensive plan,
- X Recommend means for implementing the Comprehensive Plan to the City Council, and
- X Administer the land development, redevelopment and subdivision regulations.

The Seven Elements

The seven elements of the Comprehensive Plan must be designed to promote the public health, safety, morals, convenience, prosperity, general welfare, efficiency and economy of the City. The mandatory elements are:

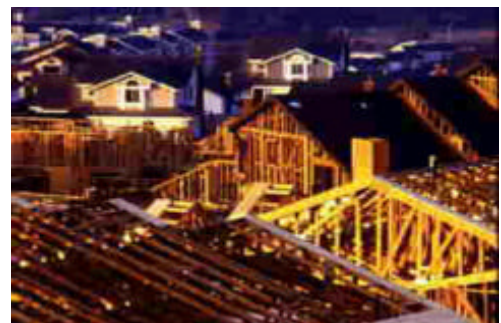
- X Population
- X Community Facilities
- X Natural Resources
- X Cultural Resources
- X Housing
- X Economic Development
- X Land Use

Other elements may be added as needed. Each element must be based on careful study of existing conditions and probable future development. All elements and recommendations must also consider “the wise and efficient use of public funds” and “consideration of the impact on property owners.”

Implementation Tools

The available *means for implementing* the Comprehensive Plan include the following tools:

- X Zoning Ordinances and Official Zoning Map
- X The Official Street and Public Facility Map
- X Landscaping Ordinances [new requirement]
- X Capital Improvement Plan [new requirement]



Another set of major implementation tools is the Land Development Regulations Ordinance.

Land Development Regulations

The Land Development Regulations are in a separate document, adopted by the City Council by ordinance after public hearing. They are a major tool for implementing the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan.

The development regulations are administered by the Planning Commission, usually during its review and approval of new development or major redevelopment plans. Sometimes, for smaller renovation, redevelopment projects or building permit reviews, planning staff may interpret these regulations just as the zoning administrator interprets zoning ordinances.

Appeals on staff decisions or interpretations are submitted to the Planning Commission for resolution. Appeals of Planning Commission decisions are submitted to district court.

Zoning Administration and Boards

These three other zoning components are important to the implementation of the local comprehensive planning function:

- X Zoning Administration,
- X Board of Zoning Appeals [BZA or Zoning Board], and
- X Board of Architectural Review [Or Historic Review Board]:



Zoning Administration

The zoning administrator issues zoning permits and makes sure submitted plans comply with the zoning ordinance before building permits or certificates of occupancy are issued. This requires interpretation of the current zoning ordinances as drafted by the Planning Commission and adopted by the City Council. Decisions of the zoning administrator may be appealed to the board of zoning appeals.

Board of Zoning Appeals

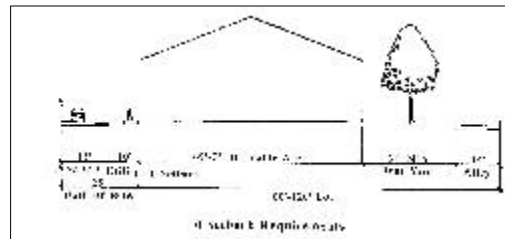
Created and appointed by the City Council, this citizen board serves as an appeals board for disputes arising from the enforcing of the zoning code. Enabling legislation spells out three major responsibilities of the BZA:

- Hear appeals from decisions and actions of the zoning administrator.
- Grant a variance from the zoning ordinance if it meets the carefully stated standards for an “unnecessary hardship” [Note that use variances will not be allowed].
- Permit uses by special exception if the conditions for granting such exceptions are spelled out in zoning ordinance.

Board of Architectural Review

Sometimes called the Historic Review Board, this board derives its authority through the text of a zoning ordinance that establishes historic and architecturally important districts, neighborhoods or scenic areas.

To protect valued historic structures or districts, review and approval of the board is required prior to undertaking various building activities. The Historic Review Board is charged with developing an Historic Review Policy and with recommending historic districts or properties to the City Council. Once adopted by ordinance, the board monitors historic properties, with staff support provided by the Planning Department.



Adoption and Update of the Comprehensive Plan

To prepare for the adoption of the general plan, the City Council, upon recommendation of the Planning Commission, has already made a number of changes to its existing zoning and land use regulations, required by the new law.



Upon adopting this plan by city ordinance, after a 30-day public notice, the City must review the plan every five years and update the entire Comprehensive Plan at least every 10 years. During the first five-year period, any required elements not included in the initial ordinance will be completed and added after similar public notice and ordinance. Not all elements must be updated at the same time.

The Comprehensive Plan may incorporate other plans or documents by reference. This document will be added to the initial three Rock Hill Comprehensive Plan elements adopted in 1999: Population, Community Facilities and Land Use, Part One. The following sections represent the remaining elements: Economic Conditions, Housing, Natural Resources, Cultural Resources and the amended Land Use.