

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

EXISTING CONDITIONS

- The vast area “west of the Ashley” includes land within the City of Charleston, Charleston County, and St. Andrews Public Service District (PSD). City and County boundaries in West Ashley are intermingled and confusing, presenting planning and service challenges.
- Settlement in West Ashley dates to 1670 (Charles Towne Landing). Development has generally progressed from the east to the west. The Post-War period saw rapid expansion of suburban bedroom communities and small businesses. In the 1970s, West Ashley’s commercial corridors became lined with shopping centers and strip malls.
- West Ashley’s aging commercial corridors contain building sites with the greatest opportunity for change and improvement.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

- The West Ashley community wants to preserve its unique neighborhood character.
- West Ashley’s community character and identity is weakened by vacant strip malls, generic and aging shopping centers, and lack of identity at entryways.
- Many residents commute to work outside West Ashley, which contributes to traffic problems and decreases to quality of life.
- Many residents also are required to drive for shopping, dining, entertainment (particularly west of 526).
- There is a strong community belief that growth, particularly high density growth, happened in West Ashley without full regard to the infrastructure needed to support the growth and how this growth would impact the existing residential character.

VISION

Grow in the right places, in the right ways:

- Preserve neighborhood character; focus new development in clear, identified areas.
- Enhance community brand and identity.
- Reuse vacant commercial sites, and improve the character of those sites.
- Shorten trips with new work, entertainment, and recreation destinations.
- Provide better infrastructure to support the growing population.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Formally adopt the *Plan West Ashley* vision.
- Coordinate implementation activities with Charleston County, Regional and State planning bodies.
- Develop community engagement strategies to improve communication, education, and participation for residents around locally important community design and land use issues.
- Develop a set of urban design principles for key sites and corridors.
- Establish a joint City/County Design Review Board (DRB) for key commercial corridors.
- Establish a West Ashley Community Brand & Identity Committee.
- Pursue neighborhood preservation.
- Draft and adopt mixed-use regulatory standards to replace and modernize existing zoning, to guide new development on commercial corridors, entryways, and other focused priority progress areas.
- Enhance and beautify West Ashley gateways with appropriate signage and landscaping.
- Add streetscaping (landscaping, lighting, sidewalks, etc.) along key commercial corridors.
- Evaluate progress.