

# 2010 Comprehensive Plan

## City of Greer, SC

### Priority Investment



The priority investment element requires jurisdictions that conduct land use planning and zoning to connect infrastructure projects identified in the comprehensive plan to potential and available funding sources. Strategies should be established that provide for coordination with the counties, municipalities, public service districts, school districts, public and private utilities, transportation agencies, and other public entities that are affected by or have planning authority over the projects and initiatives identified in the comprehensive plan.

### Introduction

In May of 2007, the South Carolina State Legislature amended the Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 with the Priority Investment Act. This amending legislation established the Priority Investment element as part of the Comprehensive Plan. Its aim was to insure that recommendations for infrastructure projects and utilities in the comprehensive plan were made in communication with those other entities responsible for them. Most, if not all, infrastructure projects for schools, utilities, transportation, etc. are not carried out by the city. The City of Greer has been very successful over the past ten years in partnering with school districts, utility providers, transportation agencies and other special purpose districts in developing projects that address current and future growth management.

In response to the Priority Investment Act, the city took the step to institute a formal process for communicating planning and development strategies with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions. The city compiled a list of the various public and private jurisdictions, agencies, organizations and other entities that have a vested interest in the city's planning efforts. Among those included were:



City of Greer, SC

**2010 Comprehensive Plan**

**Priority Investment**

*Spartanburg County  
Greenville County  
Town of Duncan  
Town of Lyman  
Town of Reidville  
Spartanburg County School District 5  
Greenville County School District  
Greer Commission of Public Works  
Blue Ridge Rural Water Company  
Spartanburg Sanitary Sewer District  
Laurens Electric Cooperative  
Duke Energy Corporation  
Taylors Fire and Sewer District  
Lake Cunningham Fire Department  
Boiling Springs Fire Department  
Pelham-Batesville Fire Department  
Reidville Fire Department  
Tyger River Fire Department  
Charter Communications  
Bellsouth Telephone  
Greenville County Redevelopment Authority  
Upstate Forever  
Greer Development Corporation  
Greer Chamber of Commerce  
Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport  
SC Department of Transportation  
SC Department of Health and Environmental Control*



In late 2007 the city hosted a Priority Investment in Our Community meeting to open improved dialogue among these entities that have an impact on, and are affected by, planning and development in the city and the Greater Greer Area. Along with the city presentations were made by Greer Commission of Public Works, the Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport, the Greenville County Planning Department, and the Greer Development Corporation on growth management objectives and initiatives heading into the next 10 years. In addition, the point was made that as work progressed on the update to the city's Comprehensive Plan the city was making it a top priority to work together in a cooperative planning effort since communication among those with a vested interest in the process is crucial to success.

## Cooperative Planning Strategies

The first initiative the city took in supporting the priority investment objective of establishing cooperative planning strategies was to develop a distribution list of those adjacent and relevant jurisdictions that would receive notification of Planning Commission and Boards of Zoning Appeals agendas. This would allow each one to be aware of planning matters being considered by the city and have an opportunity to provide input and comment in that regard. It also opened an additional channel of communication between the city and these other entities for sharing planning strategies based on growth trends and actual development.

A second initiative was to include individuals in the various adjacent and relevant jurisdictions responsible for planning and development to serve on the Steering and Citizen Committees established as part of the Comprehensive Plan development team. Additionally, representatives from locally based agencies, organizations, and companies that have an impact on, or are impacted by, growth and development were asked to serve as well. Together these individuals represented interests from many different perspectives including school districts, economic development, utilities, county planning, developers, and community services.

To date, the result has been encouraging. In considering the impact of actual and forecasted residential and commercial development, the city has been able to effectively coordinate infrastructure, facility and services demands with those entities responsible for providing them. Examples include formulating potential shared use agreements with surrounding fire districts such as Lake Cunningham to the north and Reidville to the south, identifying future road improvements and thoroughfare planning needs with GPATS and the S.C. Department of Transportation, review of the Greenville County School District's Long Range Facilities Plan and Capital Improvement Program, and participation in regional planning initiatives through the Urban Land Institute's Upstate Reality Check for cooperative visioning among public and private entities to achieve shared goals for growth and development of the entire upstate region.



## Identification of Funding Sources

In addition to developing cooperative growth management strategies priority investment asks jurisdictions to make recommendations for infrastructure development in relation to projected funding sources. The reasoning being that in order to properly plan for infrastructure and facility projects there must be an understanding of how they will be funded to avoid unachievable results. Undoubtedly, the premise is sound but to clearly connect funding to a



**2010 Comprehensive Plan**  
**Priority Investment**

project 10 years into the future is difficult. While available funding sources can be identified with relative ease, it seems more prudent to attempt a collective understanding among those responsible for service provision of where growth trends indicate investment should occur. In practice service groups develop growth management strategies that indicate required infrastructure investment and work to attain funding resources involving varied financial management practices as part of their implementation strategies.

Funding mechanisms available to the city for recreation, public services, public safety, transportation, etc. include but are not limited to property taxes, business license fees, user fees, hospitality taxes, accommodation taxes, state and federal grants, tax increment financing, revolving loan funds, general obligation bonds, and state aid to subdivisions. All of these sources are combined or used in ways that allow opportunity for infrastructure and facility funding. In some cases a specific funding source can be tied to a specific project such as using hospitality and accommodation taxation funds to construct recreation facilities or creating a tax increment financing district to build sidewalks, pave roads and light streets in a proposed industrial park.

Other public agencies rely on similar but more limited funding mechanisms such as property taxes being used by school districts or Greer CPW relying on service fees to repay debt incurred infrastructure construction. Funding for private sector infrastructure needs such as hospital construction come from fees for services and non-profit needs are often met by contributions and fundraising. Each of these sources is volatile and subject to economic conditions at a given time. Specifically tying a funding source to a future project can be just as tenuous as recommending the project itself. The need for a given infrastructure or facility project should itself drive the need and means to fund it. However, simply producing a wish list of projects with no realistic means to accomplish them is not in keeping with best management practices.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this comprehensive plan there are many mentions of projects planned for or recommended to address the community's future needs. Specific projects mentioned in this plan that are in or nearing implementation phases are tied to existing or planned funding strategies but there are generalized projects recommended in several strategies for growth management that are not. It is recommended that as projects are prioritized in relation to strategies chosen from those recommended in the plan, that a formalized process be used to ensure funding needs are addressed accurately though coordination with those entities involved. In addition, the city must continue to share planning and development information with relevant jurisdictions and encourage them to do the same.