

PRIME NORTH CHARLESTON



A City Primed For Opportunity

INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan is rooted in the principle that if the City knows where it wants to go, it possesses better prospects of getting there. Prime North Charleston has a planning horizon of 20 years, and it is “comprehensive” in that it covers the entire City within its limits, encompasses all the functions that make a community work, and considers the interrelatedness of these functions. It is intended to generate community pride and enthusiasm about the future of the City, thereby ensuring that citizens are engaged in implementation of the plan.

The comprehensive plan provides a basis for evaluating future development, redevelopment and land use decisions within the City of North Charleston. The Plan is designed to:

1. Assist the community in achieving the development patterns its residents’ desire;
2. Provide stable communities bolstered by infill development;
3. Strengthen a sense of place with mixed uses;
4. Support various transportation alternatives;
5. Protect natural resources; and
6. Accommodate economic growth.

Those elements of the community that were considered and evaluated in the development of this plan include, but are not limited to:

- **Population**
- **Housing**
- **Economic**
- **Natural Resources**
- **Cultural Resources**
- **Community Facilities**
- **Transportation**
- **Land Use**
- **Priority Investments**

A vertical timeline of key events in North Charleston, South Carolina, from 1901 to 2019. Each year is enclosed in a yellow circle with a dotted border, connected by a vertical line. The events are listed to the right of each year.

- 1901** Charleston Naval Shipyard established
- 1912** Park Circle planned as Garden Style community
- 1972** North Charleston Incorporates as ninth largest city in SC
- 1976** City ranks as third largest city in SC
- 1989** City takes lead in state for retail sales tax generation
- 1996** Charleston Naval Base closes
- 2008** Construction begins on new 280-acre SCPA terminal
- 2010** Boeing SC opens 787 Dreamliner aircraft assembly plant
- 2019** North Charleston Transit Center Opens

PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A comprehensive plan provides a clearly-stated vision that describes the future of the community. It respects property rights and also encourages and supports economic development. The plan inventories the City's existing conditions and amenities and assesses their functionality and relationship to one another (Appendix A). This inventory enables the City to take stock of where it is today (strengths and weaknesses) and where it wants to go (opportunities and challenges).

The basis for the comprehensive planning process is in the SC Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 (SC Code §6-29-310 through 6-29-1200), which repealed and replaced all existing state statutes authorizing municipal planning and zoning. The 1994 Act establishes the comprehensive plan as the first step of the planning process and mandates that the plan be systematically evaluated and updated. Elements of the plan must be reevaluated at least once every five years, and the entire plan must be updated at least every 10 years.

North Charleston spans three counties and both sides of the Ashley River, ranging from neighborhoods established prior to the Civil War to 20th century suburban subdivisions and 21st century mixed-use communities. As one of its leaders aptly described it, North Charleston's story is a "tale of two cities", with older, urbanizing areas and growing suburbs.

It is a city traversed by corridors that accommodate thousands of commuters (residents and nonresidents) moving between homes and employment centers throughout the City. Since North Charleston's last complete plan update in 2008, the City has further capitalized on its role as an employment and manufacturing hub within the region.

Several large manufacturing facilities, notably Boeing SC and Mercedes Benz, established and/or expanded operations within the City, Palmetto Railways cleared a 118-acre site on the former Navy Base in preparation for a future Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF), and a second major annexation of land west of the Ashley River increased the City's land area by another 2,200 acres. North Charleston is at its "prime" and yet it is "primed" for an even more successful future.

Prime North Charleston is not the City's first Comprehensive Plan. The City adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1999. It was subsequently updated in 2008 and reviewed in 2015. A number of other previous planning initiatives also have informed the development of Prime North Charleston, carrying forward goals that remain to be realized.

Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities (LAMC) Plan (2010): A grass-roots planning effort led by seven environmental justice neighborhoods developed and adopted to address direct and indirect impacts of the State Ports Authority's new terminal. The LAMC Revitalization Plan proposed a set of investment strategies to bring additional housing and commercial activity into this core area of the City.

Partnership for Prosperity Neck Area Master Plan (2014): A framework for catalyst area developments, transportation improvements, land use and urban design principles to serve as a road map for the long-term redevelopment and revitalization of the "Neck" area.

"Yet no matter how good it may be, a plan by itself cannot bring about immediate transformation. Almost always, it is a spark that sets off a current that begins to spread"

-Jaime Lerner, Author
*Urban Acupuncture:
Celebrating Pinpricks of Change that Enrich City Life*

IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Prime North Charleston was developed through collaborative efforts involving citizens, the City of North Charleston Planning Commission, city leaders, and data research and analysis. The City of North Charleston's Comprehensive Plan update was initiated in the Fall of 2018 with an extensive program of activities to engage community groups, stakeholders, residents, and public officials in the process. A variety of outreach methods were used to ensure equitable access to participate in the planning process. Five **public open house events** were held over a two-week period across the City – including one in each of the City's Planning Areas. Numerous meetings were held with groups of **Stakeholders** representing community advocates, economic development specialists, educational and health institution representatives, real estate investors, and neighborhood residents. Additional meetings were held with individual council members, City department leaders and other public agencies.

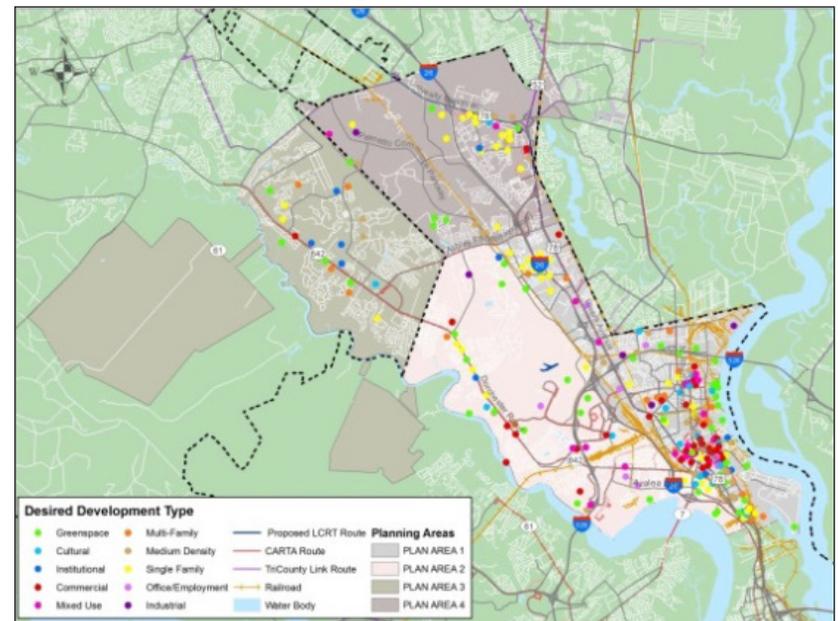
A project website – www.primenorthcharleston.com – was established with an **Online Survey** that residents could complete at their convenience. Over one thousand surveys were completed and submitted to the project team, with approximately 84% of respondents being North Charleston residents. Lastly, project team members interacted with residents at several community events, such as the Harvest and Latin American Festivals, to provide information about *Prime North Charleston* directing residents to additional resources encouraging them to further engage in the planning process. The public input gathered has been considered, in conjunction with a data-driven evaluation of conditions within the City related to demographics, housing, cultural and natural resources, public facilities and services, economics, transportation and land uses (Appendix I), to determine needs to be addressed in the comprehensive plan. In addition, many of the outstanding needs identified in previous plans have been integrated into this assessment to identify and define its vision, goals, policies, priorities and implementation strategies.

Participants were asked for input on how the City should accommodate growth. Attendees at almost all meetings ranked encouraging development of vacant and under-utilized property as the preferred means of accommodating growth.

In addition, participants in the workshops and online survey cited the following as key elements of their vision for the future of North Charleston:

- Housing attainability and affordable spaces for commerce,
- Planning for diverse land uses and preserving open spaces,
- Ensuring equitable access to necessary goods and services, and
- Preservation of existing neighborhoods with adequate and improved infrastructure.

The input from participants has become the pillars for the guiding principles which form this Plan. Participants in the planning process are confident that the City can achieve its goals because of its commitment to residents and businesses.



VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The City of North Charleston envisions its future as a sustainable and resilient community

....where the quality of life is enhanced by connected communities and equitable access to gathering places;

....where growth and development have been planned to respect natural systems and connect its people to nature;

....where a vibrant and diversified economy provides employment opportunities to all residents;

....where residents and visitors can move around and connect with necessary goods, services and activities using diverse transportation options.

As such, this Plan is based on the following Guiding Principles:

1. Livability and Quality of Life:

As the City grows, ensure a high quality of life city-wide by enhancing and connecting communities and building well-designed neighborhoods, encouraging infill and redevelopment and providing accessible new gathering places within communities throughout the City

2. Sustainable Growth and Resiliency:

Balance growth impacts with the needs of the environment to ensure sustainability and resiliency

3. Economic Opportunity:

Support a vibrant and diversified economic climate that provides an equitable range of employment opportunities, retains existing businesses and attracts new businesses

4. Mobility and Connectivity:

Connect residents and visitors with employment, shopping, educational institutions and activity centers through safe and efficient multi-modal regional transportation systems

ASSETS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

For many cities across the country, growth is an enviable situation to face. Yet along with growth comes challenges: accommodating growth while preserving existing neighborhoods, providing consistent and adequate public facilities and services, minimizing impacts on valuable cultural and natural resources and managing the movement of people and goods along principal corridors. Prime North Charleston looks at where the City is, what it wants to be, and how to get there to ensure the City is PRIME(D) for its future.

Our People, Our Neighborhoods, Our Housing

North Charleston is a city of many diverse neighborhoods, some of which were established a century before the City was incorporated. Each community has a distinct history and character. Residents within these neighborhoods look forward to opportunities that will maintain or enhance their quality of life and access to goods, services and economic opportunity. Yet at the same time, these same residents are concerned that the character and affordability of their neighborhoods are threatened by the possible impacts of new development encroaching into existing residential areas.

In the past eight years, the City's population has increased by over 13,400 people to approximately 111,000 residents in 2017. Much of the growth has been concentrated in specific areas of the city, principally within new developments along I-26 and along Dorchester Road within Dorchester County. Assuming the City continues to maintain the current average annual growth rate of 1.7%, another 50,000 people may call the City home by 2040.

The current population is diverse racially, ethnically, and economically. The population continues to be dominated by young adults (twenty and thirty-“somethings”), followed by very young children. At the same time, a higher proportion of residents are older adults (ages 50-75) than ten years ago which contributes to a slight increase in the median age of residents from 30.6 in 2010 to 32.5 years of age in 2017. The population is almost equally balanced between African Americans and Whites. Since the year 2000, the Latino community has doubled in proportion to comprise 10.4% of the population.

In light of a population that is growing and changing, the City seeks to preserve its diversity, celebrate its history, and ensure its neighborhoods retain their character while accommodating new development that will enhance infrastructure and community facilities that foster a sense of security and community pride.



Oak Terrace Preserve (photo credit – CTAR)