

LIVABILITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE



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



East Montague



Public Art



MUSC Children's Hospital



Patch Whiskey Mural



Farmers Market

Critical components of neighborhood sustainability are housing conditions and infrastructure. Newer and revitalized neighborhoods benefit from the security and stability that accompany increased property ownership resulting from more recent investments in the community. However, with 43.8% of the City’s housing stock being over forty years old substandard – even dilapidated – housing is not uncommon in locations where the older housing stock is concentrated. Higher proportions of rental properties in these older areas have also been cited as a cause for properties not being maintained or attracting reinvestment. Efforts have been made to address these issues, including funding allocated through the City’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which has enabled over \$2.5 million of investment in rehabilitating 68 homes for eligible residents over the past 10 years.

While many of the newer communities have homeowner’s associations ensure that properties and infrastructure are kept in acceptable condition, older neighborhoods, particularly those with higher proportions of rental and vacant properties, rely on property owners and the City to ensure physical elements are maintained. Preserving and enhancing existing neighborhoods throughout the City can be accomplished through collaborative planning efforts and programs created by neighborhoods and the City, such as an establishment of Residential Improvement Districts. Such efforts would not only promote the stability of existing neighborhoods by monitoring conditions, but also could work to provide new gathering places, as well as improved infrastructure, green space and community facilities.



Home along South Boulevard near Quarterman Park

LQ-GOAL 1: <i>Promote the stability and maintenance of established residential neighborhoods</i>	
LQ-1A	Continue to support neighborhood organizations
LQ-1B	Provide for a “Property Maintenance Inspector” position to address housing issues, including but not limited to, board ups, tear downs and blight removal and continue investment in building and code enforcement
LQ-1C	Encourage the continuation of the Police Department’s landlord registration program
LQ-1D	Identify resources to assist in funding infrastructure improvements in older neighborhoods
LQ-1E	Establish standards to encourage preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing, and encourage reuse of existing, vacant housing (by, for example, allowing re-establishment of legally constructed duplexes, etc. and/or multiple independent units on a single lot regardless of zoning with sufficient proof of legal establishment)
LQ-1F	Support implementation of housing initiatives outlined in the 2010 LAMC Plan

Livability extends beyond the physical construct of neighborhoods. Security and community pride have a synergistic relationship. Providing adequate lighting and addressing unsafe structures can help address blight and reduce crime in older neighborhoods. In addition to infrastructure such as lighting and sidewalks to ensure safe access to goods and facilities, the livability of neighborhoods can also be enhanced through public safety programs and services that are readily available to residents.

North Charleston's Police Department actively seeks to improve communications between neighborhoods and the City on an ongoing basis. Through increased visibility within neighborhoods, Neighborhood Resource Officers and monthly reports to the neighborhoods, the department has established greater community connections. Other organizations, such as Metanoia and Charleston Promise Neighborhood, work to establish community involvement and bolster education of the City's youth. The investment of time and support for such initiatives will enhance the foundation of "community" inherent within neighborhoods.



Chicora Community Garden

LQ - GOAL 2: <i>Foster a sense of security and community pride in neighborhoods and public spaces</i>	
LQ-2A	Continue police outreach efforts and programming that improve communications between neighborhoods and police and foster neighborhood pride, such as RECAP, roll calls, and CAPS
LQ-2B	Support after-school and other programs which provide youth with constructive activities
LQ-2C	Work with neighborhoods to identify infrastructure needs, including lighting and pedestrian improvements
LQ-2D	Evaluate crime prevention techniques that can be achieved through environmental design, such as lighting design, landscaping, increasing pedestrian traffic, and street design
LQ-2E	Continue and enhance the City's investment in code enforcement



COPS Athletic Program

One component of sustainable communities is having a variety of housing types, sizes, and price-points. The City of North Charleston's housing inventory is diverse, with over 48% of all units being Single family detached and another 7% as Single-family attached residences (townhomes). Over the past 15 years, a majority of building permits issued have been for additional Single-family detached residences, followed by multi-family (apartment) units.

There is a greater number of renter-occupied units than owner-occupied homes and, while the number of vacant units has decreased since 2010, 11.6% of all existing units were vacant as of 2017. It is not clear why vacant units are proportionately high even though the total inventory is increasing. Likewise almost 10% of residential lots in the City are vacant - prime for redevelopment. Enacting policies that support reinvestment in these neighborhoods can increase the confidence of owners to redevelop available land and/or renovate vacant housing units to re-establish occupancy. These investments will not only benefit existing neighborhood residents, but also provide additional housing options for current and future residents.

With a median home value of \$155,900, North Charleston home values as reported by the US Census are lower than neighboring jurisdictions and the region in general. However, in the past decade the median home value in the City of North Charleston has increased at a much higher rate than other areas of the region. Average rents have also increased significantly, although not to the extent that rents have increased in other areas of the region.

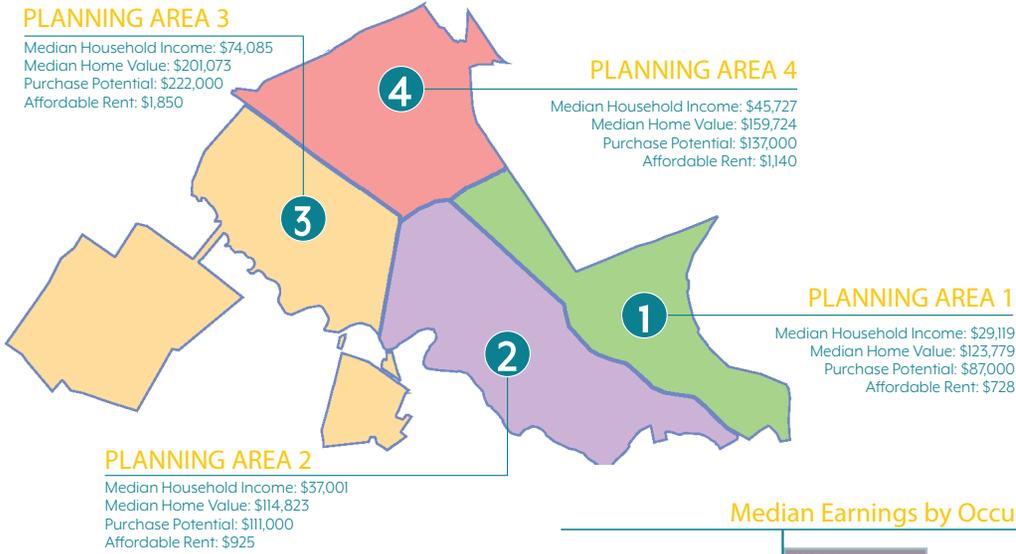
According to a regional study of housing affordability completed in 2015, the City of North Charleston's older neighborhoods, particularly those south of I-526, have the most affordable housing values and rents in the region. Given that these neighborhoods are located both where public transportation is available and closest to some of the region's employment hubs, the relative affordability of these neighborhoods is attracting new residents who are able to pay higher purchase or rent prices. Higher housing values can increase assessment values for others in the neighborhoods, generating higher taxes and/or rents, which can make it more difficult for existing residents to afford to stay.

Households spending greater than 30% of the household income are considered to be "cost burdened". Over 17,000 or 44% of the City's households spent more than 30% of the household income on housing costs in 2017. As depicted in Appendix 1, these cost burdened households are located throughout the city. Recent market studies confirm a regional need for rental units, with a preference for rental and for purchase units to be within mixed-income communities. In addition, citizens have noted needs for additional senior housing options in the City, which include opportunities to "age in place".

LQ-GOAL 3: <i>Support investment in sustainable neighborhoods, including expansion of homeownership opportunities, affordable housing, and infill development</i>	
LQ-3A	Identify appropriate areas for infill development of affordable housing and amend regulations to incentivize development
LQ-3B	Accommodate and incentivize higher-density housing in appropriate areas to increase the potential for additional supply, through use of accessory dwelling units, allowing attached housing in traditionally detached Single-family areas, and other applicable incentives
LQ-3C	Collaborate with housing interests, including the North Charleston Housing Authority and regional housing groups, to find incentives and resources to increase homeownership, financial literacy and ownership retention

Policies and programs that encourage reinvestment in neighborhoods, can increase homeownership opportunities and generate various types of housing that are affordable to a range of household incomes city wide.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



Median Earnings by Occupation



Source: US Census, CTAR, BCDCOG

WHAT'S "AFFORDABLE"?

Housing is considered "affordable" when costs do not exceed 30% of a household's combined annual income. Housing that is "affordable" to one household may not be considered affordable for another. The median household income in 2017 was \$39,944 (30% less than the regional median income), therefore housing less than \$120,000 or \$1,000/month in rent would be affordable to the majority of households. The City strives to ensure a variety of housing options are available so that affordable housing can be attained by anyone wishing to live within the City boundaries.

Housing affordability is a regional challenge. Charleston County has established an Affordable Housing Task Force to research and evaluate programs that can be adopted to maintain and generate housing that is financially attainable to a wide spectrum of households, both for homeownership and for rent. The City of North Charleston's participation on the task force should not limit its exploration of other methods for achieving the same goal for current residents to afford to staying in their current housing and new residents continuing to be attracted to live in the City.

The City's neighborhoods each have a unique character and identity. Each neighborhood within the City should be able to maintain its character and identity in the future as new residents move in and the population grows. New neighborhoods may often have design requirements to ensure future development is consistent with the established community character. Those communities that have evolved without such protections might opt to work with the City to identify what their character is and how to maintain or enhance their identities in the future through the development of specific neighborhood plans.



Ashley Junction



Wescott



Mixon



Charleston Heights

A "palette" of neighborhoods creates the City of North Charleston. Each neighborhood's character is unique and should be celebrated for its individuality.

Likewise not all commercial corridors or area within the City are alike. Therefore there is potential for identifying the character of each corridor and developing guidelines for new development and property re-investments to ensure compatibility with that character as areas redevelop.

LQ-GOAL 4:

Enhance the character, design, and identity of neighborhoods and corridors

LQ-4A	Establish gateways and districts and develop a cohesive branding program for each gateway, district, major commercial node and/or corridor including, but not limited to, wayfinding, gateway planning, and neighborhood branding
LQ-4B	Develop and prioritize a list of improvements to public spaces, including streets and parks, which can serve to enhance visual character and improve the pedestrian environment
LQ-4C	Continue to work with neighborhoods on the installation and maintenance of neighborhood identification signs
LQ-4D	Update the Zoning Regulations to have a consistent sign code throughout the City, with branding for commercial corridors
LQ-4E	Encourage use of design guidelines or performance requirements for new development, including but not limited to, minimum requirements and materials, as appropriate, and consider establishment of a commercial corridor design review board
LQ-4F	Invest public funding in signage, streetscape improvements, etc. to spur private investment
LQ-4G	Establish small area/neighborhood plans for traditional neighborhoods where fragmented land uses exist to develop a framework for future development, redevelopment, and public investment