



*Balancing cities and villages with greenspace is a major theme of the Greenbelt System. Above, the East Coast Greenway provides some greenspace along a city corridor.*

# GREENBELT SYSTEM 4

## 4.1 Overview

The native Lowcountry landscapes, greenway and trail corridors, undeveloped landscapes and habitat for plants and animals have been defined, both through public opinion and by the passage of the Transportation Sales Tax, as highly desirable landscapes for conservation and protection. The Greenbelt System for Charleston County is designed to protect and conserve these resources and further to connect residents and visitors to these cherished landscapes.

For the purposes of this Plan, there are two distinctly important types of greenspace types that add value and function for the Charleston County community. The first is non-programmed natural open space, which consists of wetlands, marshes, streams, native forests, meadows, and other Lowcountry landscapes. These lands serve to protect the fragile ecology, native plants and animals that inhabit the Lowcountry. The second type is programmed open space that consists of productive lands (managed forest and farm), parks, trails and lands that the County, PRC, municipal, State and Federal governments, and private sector land conservation organizations own and manage. The purpose of this Greenbelt Plan is to conserve and protect both of these landscape types, which in the future can be devoted to 1) preservation of natural resources, 2) preservation of historic and cultural property, 3) protection of scenic landscapes, 4) outdoor access and recreation, 5) protection of public health, safety and welfare.

This chapter defines the vision for a Greenbelt system, describes key landscape components of the proposed Greenbelt and illustrates these components and the overall system through a series of maps. The goal of this



chapter is to define the future pursuits of the Greenbelt program and establish a vision that will meet the needs of Charleston County for the next twenty-five years.

## 4.2 Greenbelt Vision

The Charleston County Greenbelt program must balance resource conservation with economic growth and prosperity. Toward that end, the Greenbelt Advisory Board envisions a philosophy for how the program is both organized and implemented. The GAB views the Greenbelt Program as “Cities and Villages Surrounded by Green.” Under this concept, rural landscape preservation becomes the hallmark of the program. Public access to waterways is increased, but not necessarily by providing more boat ramps. The GAB feels that the public needs access to waterways to participate in traditional Lowcountry pursuits including fishing, crabbing and wading. Public access to greenspace and parkland is increased and improved. The GAB wants to see a proper balance between land that is developed and land that is conserved. Within urban areas, there will be a need to reclaim “brownfields” and other urban landscapes that are currently underutilized. These should be transformed into greenspace for public benefit.

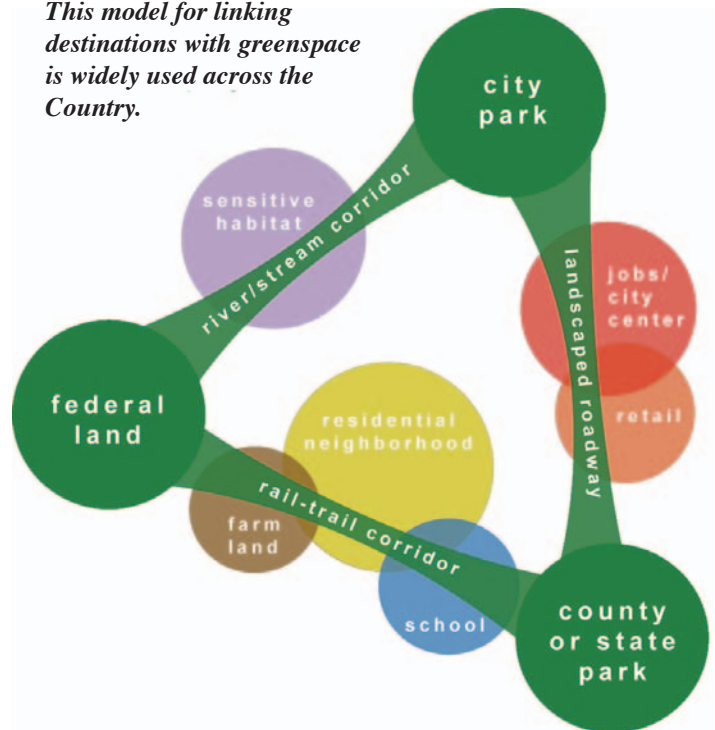
The GAB feels that greenspace needs to be linked from city to city, city to countryside and countryside to countryside. This would occur through the development of a comprehensive network of on-road and off-road greenways and trails. The GAB also wants to make certain that funding from the Transportation Sales Tax Program is leveraged to maximize its potential benefit for all residents of the County. If all of these things can be achieved, Charleston County will remain a liveable and prosperous community well into the 21st Century, and the Sales Tax program will have helped establish a greenprint that can serve to guide future growth and development for decades to come.

### 4.2.1 The Importance of Hubs and Spokes

Connections to the land are one of the most tangible products of this Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan. The physical framework of the Plan is based on a popular national concept known as “Hubs and Spokes.” Under this concept, residential, commercial and business landscapes are linked to parks, preserves and open space via

## *The Hubs and Spokes Model*

*This model for linking destinations with greenspace is widely used across the Country.*



greenway corridors. For residents of the County, this will mean improved access to the outdoors for recreation, non-automobile transportation, and participation in activities that can improve health, fitness and quality of life.

The hubs and spokes concept determines that within any given landscape there are areas of land that serve as either traffic generators and/or destinations for human activity. Additionally, there are landscapes that communities should appreciate for their ecological value and work to protect these landscapes from encroachment and development. These origin and destination hub landscapes are linked by a variety of “spokes” or linear landscapes that include waterways, landscaped roadways and utility corridors. The hubs and spokes model provides for maximum connectivity between origin landscapes and destinations. As an element of the County’s transportation system, multi-purpose trails should be aligned along roadways within ample rights-of-way that accommodate bicycle and pedestrian trails.



INSERT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK MAP



INSERT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK MAP



INSERT URBAN/RURAL MAP



INSERT 2030 URBAN GROWTH MAP



### 4.3 Rural and Urban Landscapes Defined

For the purposes of the Charleston County Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan, urban and rural areas have been defined by the Greenbelt Advisory Board in a manner that is consistent with the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan (Adopted April 20, 1999 and Updated and Adopted November 18, 2003 and October 5, 2004). The Urban/Suburban Area Boundary is the demarcation between the Urban/Suburban Areas and the Rural Areas of Charleston County, as depicted in the adopted Charleston County Comprehensive Plan.

Rural Areas are defined to include the West St. Andrews area in West Ashley, Wadmalaw Island, Edisto Island, the St. Pauls area, Hollywood, Meggett, Ravenel, Rockville, Awendaw and McClellanville and portions of Johns Island, West Ashley and East Cooper areas as defined as lying outside the Charleston County Urban/Suburban Area Boundary.

Urban Areas are defined to include the Charleston Peninsula, the City of North Charleston, Lincolnville, Mount Pleasant, Isle of Palms, Sullivan's Island, James Island, Folly Beach, Kiawah Island, Seabrook Island, and portions of Johns Island, West Ashley and East Cooper areas as defined as lying within the Charleston County Urban/Suburban Area Boundary.

### 4.4 Greenbelt System Components

Charleston County has been growing at an accelerated rate during the past decade. According to the Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson University, the County can expect its growth rate to remain steady for the next twenty-five years, transforming much of the rural character of the County into urban and suburban land uses (see graphic on p. 4-6). The County's recently adopted Comprehensive Plan was specifically crafted to anticipate this growth and guide it into areas of the community where it should occur, and in a manner that balances resource conservation with land development. The County is preparing this Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan in response to this growth, and future growth projections. The County is in need of a land resource stewardship program that protects valued green space before it is permanently lost to development. Other communities throughout the United States have used

an open space goal or "target" to publicly declare the community's intent to balance growth and development with land conservation.

As defined within the Needs Assessment chapter of this report, the consultant recommends that Charleston County establish a planning goal of protecting 30% of land and water resources as future green space. This 30% goal is recommended as a minimum target for greenspace conservation based on the ecological, social, economic, and political realities of Charleston County. This target is provided to ensure that the quality of life for the remainder of the 21st century is progressive, sustainable, healthy and economically viable. The 30% goal would be applied to Charleston County as a whole and not necessarily through a parcel-by-parcel application.

Reaching this goal will not be easy. It creates a greater stewardship responsibility for the County, its municipal and private sector land conservancy partners and residents. Additionally, reaching this goal in no way should negatively influence land prices or private property values throughout the County. These prices and values will continue to increase, even as more greenspace is protected and conserved. Thirty percent permanently protected open space will require Charleston County to balance its rate of land development with an increased rate of conservation and protection. The County is not expected to achieve the goal all by itself. This Plan defines a strategy for how this goal can be accomplished through partnerships with other public sector and private sector partners, and by the leveraging of Greenbelt proceeds from the Transportation Sales Tax.

The 30% open space goal is not a product of a scientific formula, but rather, is based on understanding two land use planning concepts – ecological carrying capacity and an appropriate balance between developed and undeveloped land. The first concept relates to the County's need to sustain plant and animal habitats, ensure good water and air quality, and protect native Lowcountry ecosystems. These pursuits are the top rated concerns of citizens that participated in the preparation of this Plan. The second measure is human related and deals with economic and political realities, values associated with aesthetics, sense of place, and maintaining sufficient outdoor access and recreational opportunities.



The practice of combining these two measures to determine an appropriate conservation target is the state-of-the-practice land use planning philosophy, emerging across the United States. Other communities and counties throughout the United States have successfully adopted and implemented similar goals for greenspace conservation.

It is important to recognize that the County and its public sector partners have already protected green space throughout the County. Of the 669,440 acres of total land area within the County, approximately 161,384 acres are currently under some form of public and private sector protection and conservation. Within the Needs Assessment chapter, the consultant defined that a 30% goal for open space conservation would yield a target for an additional 40,000 acres of land and water to conserve and protect during the next 25 years.

The framework for the Greenbelt system can further be illustrated by different landscape components that respond to areas of interest and need defined by County residents. These components represent major land areas of the County where conservation and protection is necessary in order to meet the needs of County residents and achieve the vision defined by the GAB. The Greenbelt Components include the Francis Marion National Forest, future regional parks identified by the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission, future wetlands that are needed in both urban and rural landscapes, rural greenbelt lands, urban greenbelt lands and greenway corridors. This system is summarized in the following chart and described in greater detail on the following pages. The chart illustrates a goal or target for each Greenbelt component and then defines this as a percentage of the total 40,000 acre goal.





Charleston County Greenbelt System Components		
<u>Component Description</u>	<u>Target Acres</u>	<u>Percent of Goal</u>
<b>Rural Greenbelt Lands</b> - Represents a minimum "target" recommendation by the consultant. Desired acreage would be conserved through various acquisition methods using Conservation Toolbox and Sales Tax proceeds, specifically targeting lands noted in the Comprehensive Plan as high priority Resource Management areas.	16,240	41%
<b>Francis Marion National Forest</b> - Based on multi-agency MOU that identifies this as the amount of private land holdings within the Francis Marion National Forest Proclamation boundary.	10,275	26%
<b>Lowcountry Wetlands</b> - Represents an "infill" and "as needed" recommendation by the consultant for both rural and urban landscapes where additional wetland protection is needed.	5,610	14%
<b>PRC Regional Parks</b> - Based on PRC Open Space Analysis.	4,675	11%
<b>Urban Greenbelt Lands</b> - Represents a minimum "target" recommendation by the consultant; takes into account wish lists provided by North Charleston, Mt. Pleasant, Charleston and beach communities. Also based on PRC Open Space Analysis for urban areas.	2,000	5%
<b>Greenway Corridors</b> - Based on a 200 mile system of greenways throughout the County. Greenways would be 50-foot wide corridors.	1,200	3%
<b>Total Targeted Greenspace (25 year projection)</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>100%</b>



#### 4.4.1 RURAL GREENBELT LANDS

##### DESCRIPTION:

The delineation of Rural and Agricultural Areas in the Future Land Use section of the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan was used to determine Rural Greenbelt Lands (Charleston County Comprehensive Plan, Figure 3.2.1).

##### PUBLIC ACCESS AND USE:

Typical uses for Rural Greenbelt Lands include rural parks, cultural/historic sites, productive lands, and water access.



##### DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:

Rural Greenbelt Lands include 'Resource Management Areas' that generally encompass undeveloped lands used for timber production, wildlife habitat, recreational and commercial fishing, and limited agriculture. According to the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan, these areas also encompass significant acreage of fresh, brackish, and saltwater tidal marshes, as well as important habitat for nongame and endangered species.

##### AREA OF LAND TARGETED FOR CONSERVATION: 16,240 acres (41% of total greenbelt area)

The project consultant recommends a target of 16,240 acres of Rural Greenbelt Lands to be conserved through various acquisition methods, using the Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan's Conservation Toolbox and the Greenbelt portion of the Transportation Sales Tax proceeds. Specifically targeted lands include high priority areas identified as "Resource Management Areas" in the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan (p.3-2-10 and Figure 3.2.7).

