Town of Ridgeland Comprehensive Plan

Lowcountry Council of Governments
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Town of Ridgeland Comprehensive Plan

Introduction

The 1994 Enabling Legislation for South Carolina requires that:

"The local planning commission shall review the comprehensive plan or elements of it as often as necessary, but not less than once every five years, to determine whether changes in the amount, kind, or direction of development of the area or other reasons make it desirable to make additions or amendments to the plan. The comprehensive plan, including all elements of it, must be updated at least every ten years."

The *Town of Ridgeland Comprehensive Plan* was approved in 1999. Economic and other conditions in the Town at that time were very different from the present situation, and the fact that the Plan was based on 1990 data and was a very basic document that did not envision the present and future now facing the Town. In combination with major changes in and to Ridgeland since then and more are expected in the foreseeable future, the specified "review" of the existing Comprehensive Plan would not serve the community's needs. As a result, this is even more than the "update," required by the Enabling Legislation in 2009; it is a completely new Plan for the Town of Ridgeland.

Overview of Changes in Town of Ridgeland

Since Plan was completed eight years ago, a number of significant changes have occurred in the Town and in the four-county Lowcountry Region have transformed the planning environment, compared to that which existed in 1999. Chief among these are:

- Rapid Growth. Although the actual population of Ridgeland has not yet grown substantially, the Town's location, its strong and attractive downtown and traditional in-town residential neighborhoods, position it for major increases in the near future. Meanwhile, the Town's economy has been growing, with new commercial and industrial development that brings good jobs and increased wages and income.

- Expectations of Major Growth in the Future. Residential, industrial and commercial developers have been demonstrating their interest in Ridgeland during the past year. The Town occupies a location that is very viable for industrial and commercial uses: three Interstate 95 interchanges, four-lane US 17, CSX mainline freight transportation—all

connecting the Town to the nearby Port of Savannah and the Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport. At the same time, Ridgeland's structure and appearance are attractive to developers and future residents trying to create/recreate and live in traditional communities.

- More Regional Initiatives. The Town of Ridgeland will be impacted by major Region-wide initiatives, including: the Lowcountry Economic Diversification Strategy and the Regional Multi-Modal Transportation Plan. Both are discussed in detail in the relevant sections of this document.

- Restructured Municipal/County Planning. The structures of both the planning jurisdiction and the planning commission in the Town of Ridgeland have recently been changed. The geographic area and the commission's size have been increased, and the planning Commission has been taking on more of a leadership role in the community that it had previously.

A Vision and Planning Goals for the Town of Ridgeland

The Town of Ridgeland presently offers its residents a quality of life that should be protected and enhanced. For instance, the revitalized portion of Ridgeland's Central Business District continues to receive recognition from outside the area for its attractiveness and its commercial vibrancy. The Town's residential neighborhoods, featuring grid-pattern streets lined with generally well-maintained Craftsman bungalows are also noteworthy as is the recreational use of the limited natural features within the existing municipal boundaries. These special qualities and opportunities, however, need to be preserved and extended into new development by means of the new *Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance* and *Design Guidelines.*

To ensure that the anticipated growth, both inside and outside the current municipal boundaries, occurs in a manner which is as favorable for the current residents as it is to the future prosperity of the Town, the following should be achieved:

- ***Land use and development*** patterns should extend the present grid street pattern and building scale, with an emphasis on connectivity between existing and new development by means of pedestrian and bicycle systems, as well as roads. Mixed use developments, with pedestrian-oriented retail and commercial uses will also be encouraged to achieve

this goal. Careful infrastructure planning and capital budgeting should balance the Town 's long range vision with the rights of landowners. New growth should pay for itself without creating undue financial burdens on the Town 's existing population.

- ***Natural and historic resources*** should be protected. Continuing to conserve and encourage the renovation of the many historic Craftsman bungalows in the center of the original Town will not only preserve these valuable resources for present and future residents to live or work in or simply to view, but it may result in some new economic benefits associated with increased tourism. Appropriately scaled and designed infill development will be encouraged to maintain the integrity of the community. As the Town annexes land along rivers, creeks and wetlands, the scenic landscape should also be protected, for recreational uses by residents and to attract visitors and high-quality development.

- The Town of Ridgeland's ***economy*** should continue to expand to include a wide range of business and employment opportunities for residents and an increased tax base to help accommodate the Town's growth. New businesses should be in those industrial and service sectors which would best compliment regional needs and would offer job opportunities with higher pay for Town residents, lessening the need for residents to travel outside the Town for employment. Sufficient appropriately located (that is, at or near Interstate 95 interchanges) serviced land should be designated for industrial purposes. As a result, the safeguards placed on natural and historic resources should not discourage industry, but attract the highest quality operations to the Town of Ridgeland and allow the Town's beauty and natural character to flourish at the same time.

- The Town of Ridgeland should strive to achieve a successful mix of ***housing*** types to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population including an adequate supply of affordable housing that is physically safe for occupants and attractive to neighbors. Affordable housing can be achieved through community support, an emphasis on infrastructure support, and encouragement of development patterns that provide quality affordable housing while minimizing excessive public service demands.

- ***Public services*** must adequately and efficiently meet the demands of the Town's growing population, with infrastructure investments strategically planned to help implement the Town 's land use goals and maximize long term value. To allow for a manageable increase in the level and quality of public services and facilities, a coordinated, comprehensive infrastructure investment plan and capital improvements budget needs to be

implemented. This should detailed include transportation planning to ensure that the increased volumes of traffic accompanying new development do not lead to congestion.

Chapter 1: Natural Resources

The recently-completed *Jasper County Natural Resources Conservation Plan* describes itself as "A concerted community effort to protect the natural resource base in Jasper County for generations to come… " Prepared collaboratively by a wide variety of federal, state, regional, county and municipal agencies and representatives of the private sector, the stated purpose and objectives for the Plan are clear:

> "We wanted to ensure that Jasper County planners, Council members, and communities were prepared to handle effects of development. The foremost goals of this Plan were to assure preservation and conservation of our County's water quality, wildlife populations, natural areas, and working farms and plantations. "

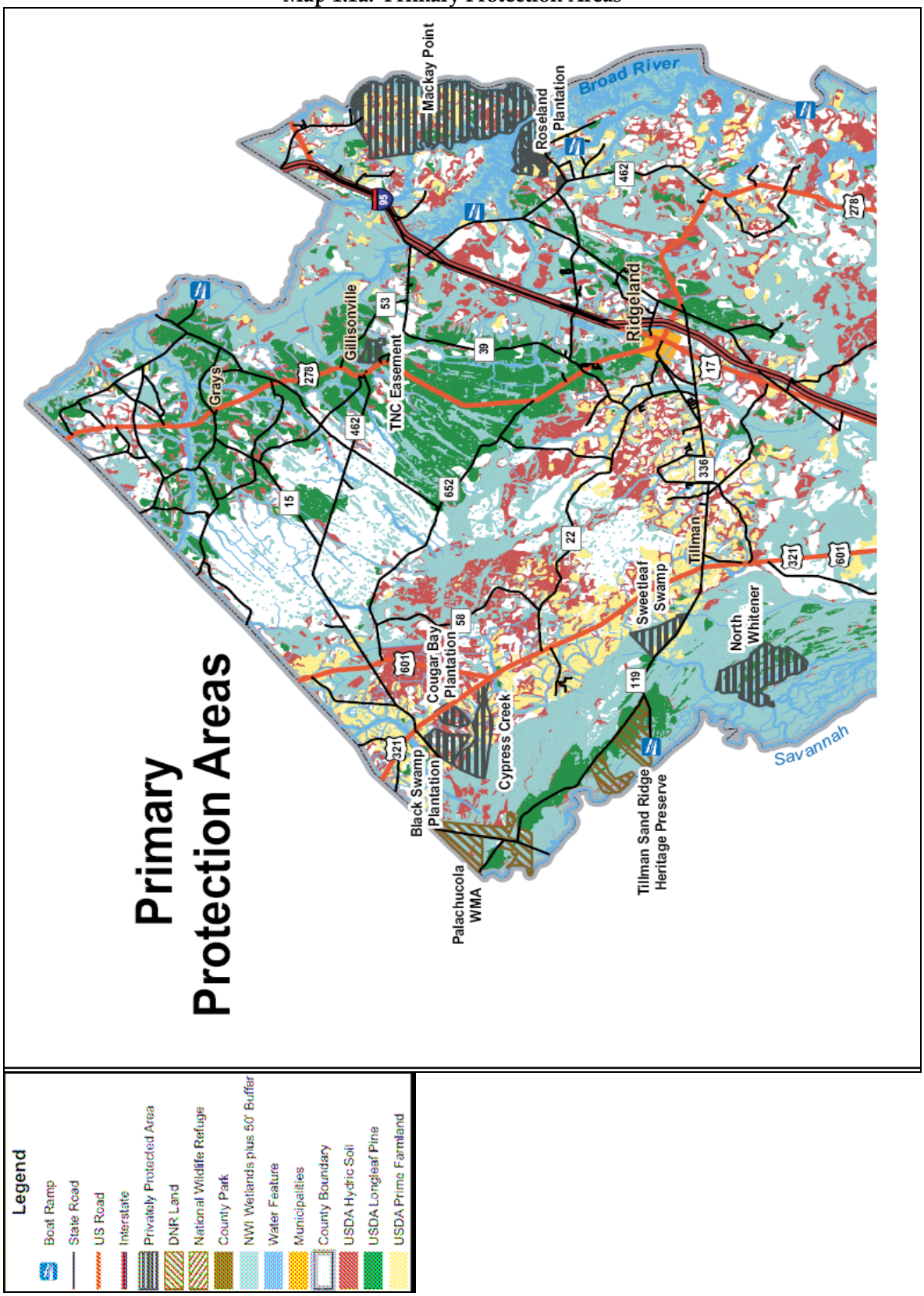
Within its present municipal boundaries, the Town of Ridgeland's natural resources are limited to small amounts of wetlands and the 10-acre green space known as the Blue Heron Nature Trail. A regional attraction for visitors and residents alike, it consists of a half-mile recycled rubber trail around a three-acre pond, and a half-mile of boardwalk through forested wetlands. The Learning Center attracts students from throughout the Lowcountry and other parts of the state.

As the Town expands beyond its present borders, however, it is likely to take on the responsibility of directing and managing new development on land that will contain significant natural features addressed in the Conservation Plan, including (see Map _.1 on following two pages):

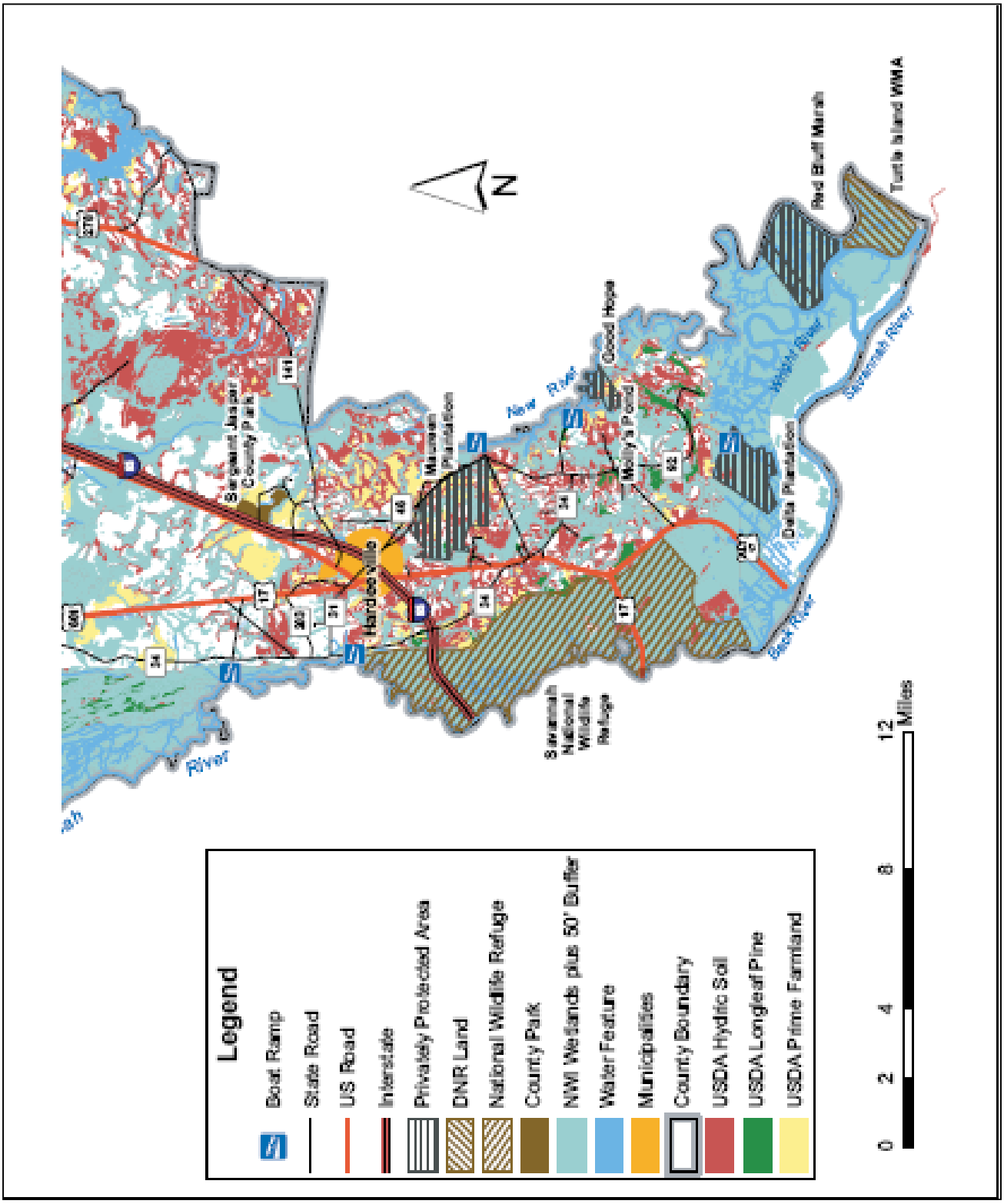
- Wetlands
- Water Features
- USDA Hydric Soil
- USDA Longleaf Pine
- USDA Prime Farmland

The Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Ridgeland should adopt the relevant policies of the *Jasper County Natural Resources Conservation Plan* to protect and conserve natural resources while encouraging compatible growth in the expanded Town. These recommendations (with some modifications) are outlined in the pages following the map.

Map 1.1a: Primary Protection Areas



Map 1.1b: Primary Protection Areas



1.1 STREAMS, RIVERS AND WATERSHEDS

- Implement a combination of regulations and incentives to ensure that development adequately mitigates impacts to water quality and water quantity;
- Encourage low impact development techniques to minimize non-point source pollution and impervious surfaces ;
- Develop minimum buffer requirements along riparian zones;
- Coordinate with state, and federal agencies in making water quality decisions and developing water quality programs;
- Develop and maintain an up-to-date stormwater management plan that addresses flood prevention and water quality.

1.2 WETLANDS AND HYDRIC SOILS

- Update current zoning ordinance and other development regulations to reflect the goal of protection and conservation of wetlands;
- Develop minimum buffer requirements for wetlands;
- Charge an additional mitigation fee for the loss or conversion of wetlands to contribute directly to the protection, restoration, and management of other wetlands in the Town;
- Ensure that existing floodplains are maintained in a state where their essential natural functions can be performed.

1.3 CRITICAL ECOSYSTEMS, HABITATS AND ASSOCIATED FLORA AND FAUNA

- Encourage private landowners to use conservation easements, purchase of development rights, and other conservation related incentives;
- Restore, maintain, manage, and enhance critical landscapes by encouraging landowner partnerships with Federal and State private lands management agencies;

1.4 TRADITIONAL LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Promote forestry and agricultural conservation best management practices for farms, forests, and plantations;
- Establish rural programs such as voluntary agricultural districts, land conservation districts, and rural residential districts;
- Charge an impact fee for development of prime farmlands and redistribute those funds to protect other prime farmlands in the Town.

1.5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL, HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Develop a specific management plan for archaeological, historic, and cultural resources;
- Evaluate, provide, and promote activities, facilities, and educational opportunities to enhance cultural stewardship and tourism opportunities;
- Create historic overlay districts around significant properties for more stringent density and buffer requirements.

1.6 URBAN GROWTH MANAGEMENT

- Protect land permanently through a variety of protective land conservation mechanisms such as easements, purchase of development rights, transfer of development rights, fee simple land acquisitions, and other tools;
- Create an urban greenspace plan to provide urban parks, greenways, and usable natural areas for the public.

1.7 NATURAL RESOURCE ECONOMICS

- Expand and diversify wildland recreation opportunities in undeveloped areas of Ridgeland to increase tourist attraction, gain larger local interest and participation, and stimulate the economy;
- Continue to promote the Blue Heron Learning Center as the Regional natural resources education information center to serve the area.

Chapter 2: Historic Resources

2.1 HISTORIC BACKGROUND

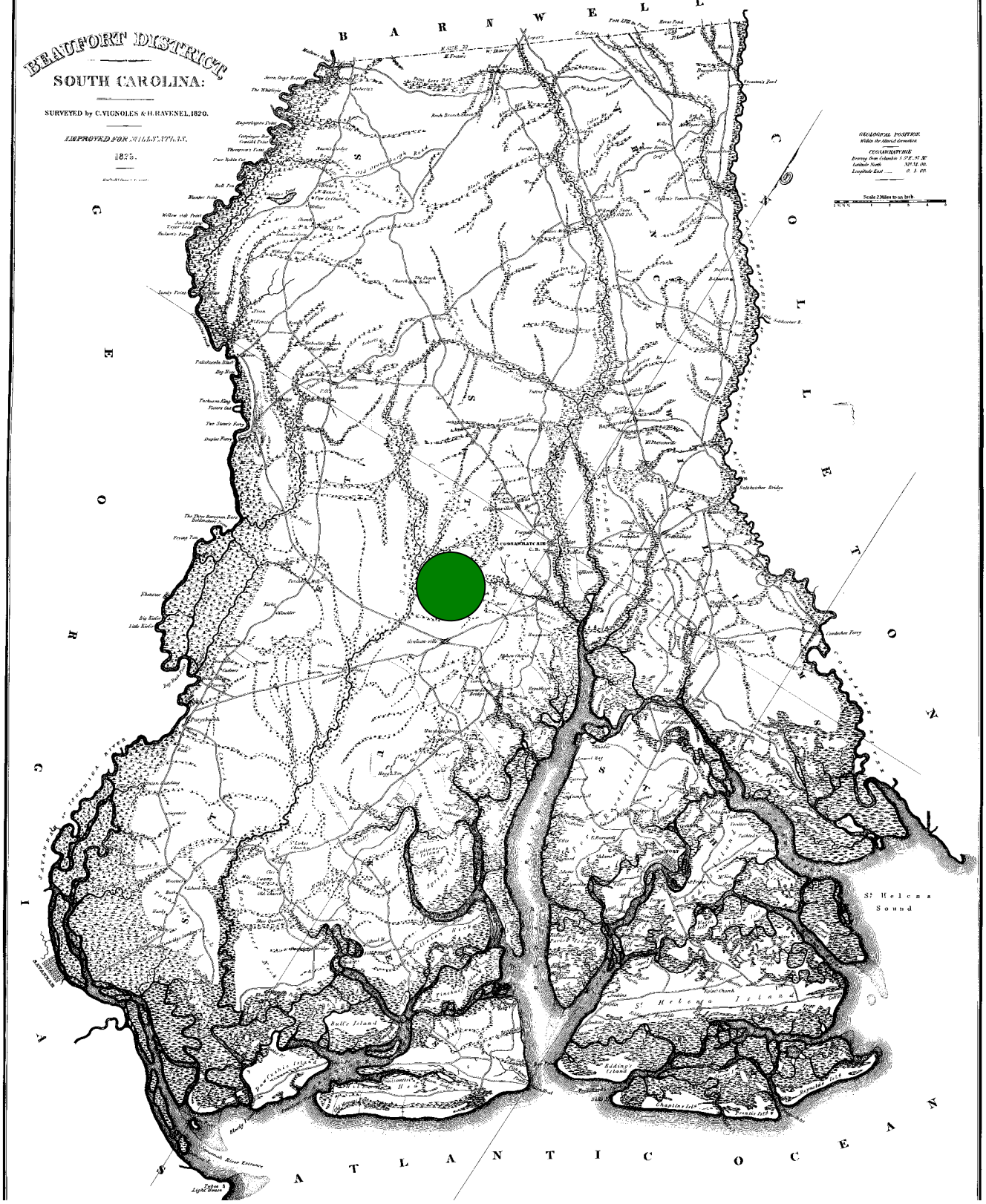
As early as 1825 the Ridgeland area showed up on maps of "Beaufort District," which included present-day Jasper and Hampton counties, as well as Beaufort (see Map 2.1). During the era before the War Between the States, in fact, the district seat was located near Ridgeland in Jasper County—first in Coosawhatchie and then in Gillisonville.

Both before and after the War the area surrounding what is now Ridgeland was the location of many large and prosperous plantations. One of them, Honey Hill, was the site of a Civil War battle. In the early part of the 20th century a number of these plantations were purchased by wealthy northerners for recreation and as investments.

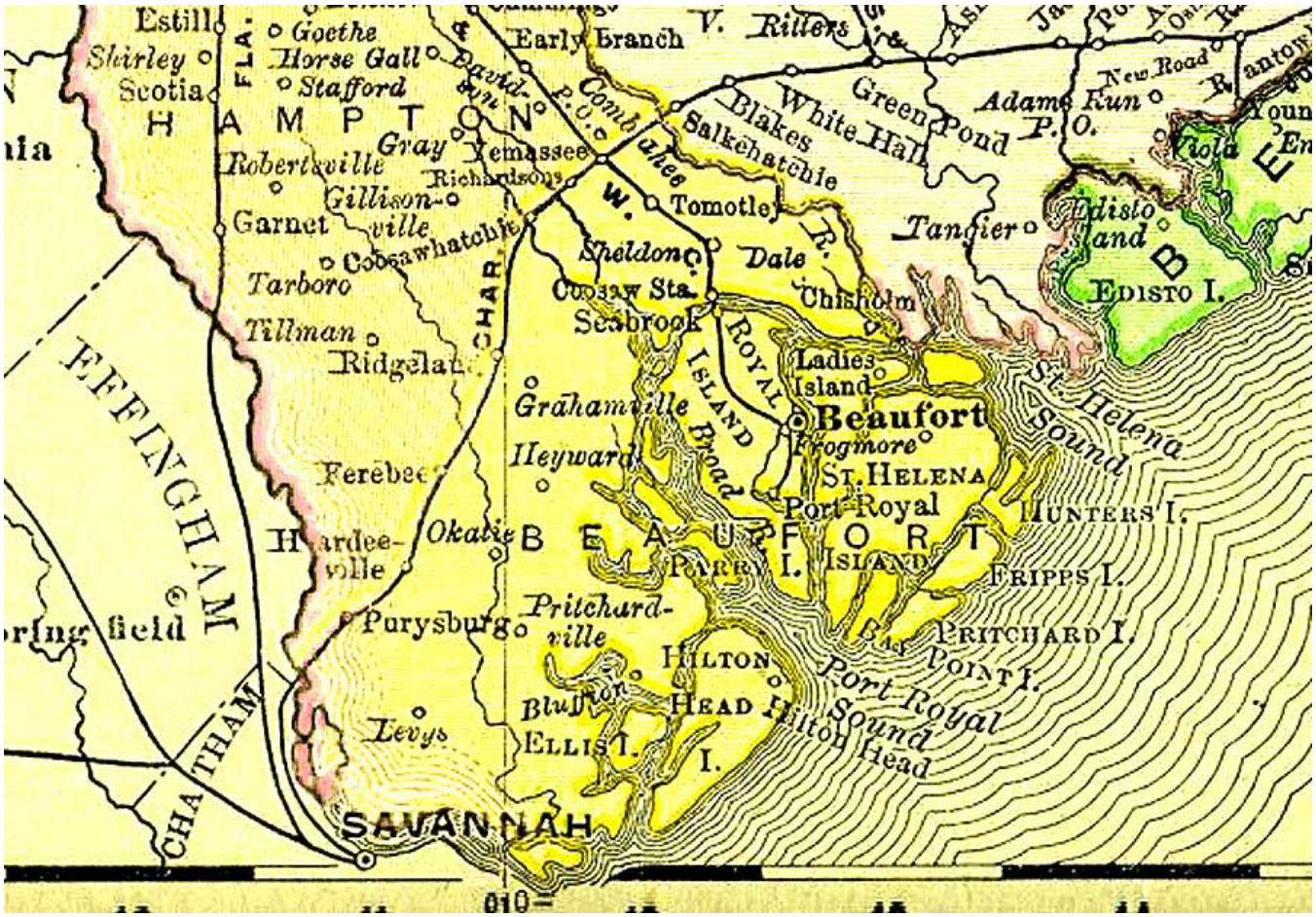
In the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries settlement was slower than in coastal areas because of the lack of transportation, but a network of roads gradually grew, centered on Grahamville. The Charleston and Savannah Railway was begun in the 1850s to connect the two cities; it was completed in 1860, bypassing Grahamville (at the request of the residents). The railroad placed a depot nearby in the hamlet of Gopher Hill, which became Ridgeland (see Map _. 2) in the 1880s. This development foretold the significance of transportation on the economic well-being of Ridgeland that continues to this day and is expected to continue long into the future.

The railroad provided not only the economic foundation for the Town but also its physical form (see Map 2.2), with the railroad and the depot at the center and commercial buildings, some of which are still there, built along Green and Railway Streets to serve arriving and departing passengers. Stores and other enterprises extended along Main Street in the vicinity of the train station.

When Jasper County was created in 1912 as a separate jurisdiction, Ridgeland was the County seat. The Town continued to grow, but at a slow rate.



Map 2.1
Beaufort District 1825



Map 2.2
Railway Lines in the Lowcountry
From 1895 *Atlas of the United States*

2.2 HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

In 1995, Jasper County, in cooperation with the Lowcountry Council of Governments, contracted with Brockington and Associates to undertake a comprehensive survey of the historic resources in Jasper County under a grant from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. The survey report, completed in 1996, contains a compendium of above-ground historical resources in the County including buildings, sites, objects, districts, and structures of historical or architectural significance. Historical research and fieldwork provided additional documentation to serve as an archival record of the County's resources as well as to allow Jasper County to set priorities for the protection and use of its historic resources as it plans for future development.

☙ ***Surveyed Sites.*** The survey project for Jasper County was part of the Statewide Survey of Historic Places being carried out by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The purpose of this statewide survey is to identify resources that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and to provide information to the SHPO as it reviews projects requiring OCRM permits or those receiving federal funding to ensure that the State's historic resources are protected from adverse impacts. The information developed through the Jasper County survey gives the SHPO a basis for these reviews. In addition, properties eligible for the NRHP may qualify for federal and state historic preservation grants and tax incentives that are administered by the SHPO.

Ridgeland currently has two of the five properties in Jasper County listed in the NRHP:

Jasper County Courthouse -- Russell Street, Ridgeland. Built in 1915, this courthouse is a Georgian Revival style structure designed by architect W.A. Edwards.

Church of the Holy Trinity -- Junction CR 13 and CR 29, Grahamville. In 1829, William Heyward donated land at the "crossroads" in the village of Grahamville for the construction of an Episcopal chapel. By 1855, the congregation had outgrown the small frame chapel built in 1830. James Bolan, planter of Bolan Hall Plantation, was a major contributor toward the construction of a larger building, which is still standing.

During the survey, other properties, which appeared to be constructed before 1945 and which appeared to have retained their historical integrity and

condition, were identified. Of a total of 350 sites identified in Jasper County, ***186*** were in the Ridgeland USGS Quadrangle (which includes most of what is now designated as the planning area outside the present municipal boundary); most are actually within the Town. The roster is attached as Appendix A.

Most of these sites date between 1915 and 1945, representative of the period of the Town's greatest growth. As Brockington and Associates observed:

> "Houses in the town reflect this quiet and steady growth, as modest bungalows from the 1920s and 1930s prevail. The area west of US 17, the "Coastal Highway," gives the best evidence of these houses, particularly along Green Street. A strong presence of Craftsman style homes, also popular int the early twentieth century, is also clear, particularly at the corner of Russell Street and First Avenue. Another variation on the Craftsman style, which drew upon Japanese influences, can be see across US 17 on East Main Street,…"

The historic value of Craftsman bungalows has been recognized for at least two decades, especially in the Southwestern United States. However, given the relative "youth" of these structures compared to others in the Lowcountry and nearby Savannah, their significance and the need to preserve and highlight them and their immediate surroundings is a new and growing priority in Ridgeland.

2.3 HISTORIC PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

Local actions and decisions by private property owners and Town Council and Planning Commission will help decide the fate of Ridgeland's irreplaceable historic resources. If these properties are to be protected to maintain Ridgeland's identity and attractiveness for residents, visitors and investors, the Town will need to work with local, regional*, state and federal historic preservation organizations and private property owners citizens to develop an effective preservation program. This program should include, but not be limited to:

- Enhanced development regulations, including incentives to ensure the preservation of historic resources;
- Obtaining National Historic District designation for the combined Overlay Districts and the Central Business District;
- Development of public education programs for both citizens and investors and developers;
- Update of the 1996 "Architectural and Historic Survey of Jasper County, South Carolina," specifically for Ridgeland.

* For instance the Historic Beaufort Foundation is now reaching out to assist communities in the other counties of what was the Beaufort District.

☙ ***Development Regulations.*** The Town has made a good start in its new Zoning Ordinance by designating areas containing concentrations of historic structures as Overlay Districts, with design regulations. However, these sections should be strengthened, through amendments, to include provisions to control demolition of structures. As well new incentives should be considered—in addition to those already available relating to Craftsman bungalows and residential and commercial development—to encourage appropriate new infill development and rehabilitation of and additions to existing buildings.

The preparation of Ridgeland's Design Guidelines should also incorporate historic preservation needs and requirements.

☙ ***Obtain National Historic District Designation for the combined Overlay Districts and the Central Business District.*** Although the Department of the Interior's designation in itself cannot actually enforce historic preservation (zoning ordinances are the required planning instrument), the fact of designation of a district sends a clear signal of its historic value, not only locally but to the United States as a whole. As such, it also makes owners of property within its boundaries eligible for tax incentives and programs which, in turn, make historic preservation and appropriate rehabilitation more economically feasible.

☙ ***Public Education.*** The success of any preservation effort depends on community support. Public education about local historic preservation helps to teach the community that its sense of place depends to a large extent on the preservation of the community, and the buildings and sites that symbolize its history and its identity. This should be a joint effort primarily between the Town and local, regional and state historic preservation organizations and present and prospective developers and builders. For the latter group, emphasis should be placed on the availability and use of zoning incentives and tax advantages.

☙ ***Update the Historic Survey Specifically for Ridgeland.*** This is a very good document, but the project was completed ten years ago, at a time when there was no urgency to preserve historic resources in Ridgeland as there was no pressure for development. As well, in 1996 there was not a recognition of the value of Craftsman homes and the architectural significance of a large concentration of them here.

More details about and architectural photos (showing present conditions) of each of the listed structures (and included in a digitized data base) are needed to aid in the enforcement of zoning ordinances and design guidelines for preservation and rehabilitation of existing structures and the construction of adjacent new buildings.

Sadly, it is likely that an updated survey will also reveal how many historic structures have been lost to the Town since the study was completed in 1996.

GOAL & IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

As both development and pressures for development in the Town of Ridgeland continue to increase, this Goal and these Strategies will become increasingly important in maintaining the quality of life that present residents enjoy and that is attracting visitors, investors and future residents.

GOAL: "Protect and enhance historic sites, structures and resources, and foster compatible new development to maintain the Town's historic and cultural character."

OBJECTIVE #1: Protect historically significant resources by strengthening and enforcing development standards and regulations to ensure compatible development and redevelopment and to minimize encroachment by incompatible land uses.

1. Amend the zoning ordinance with specific provisions to avoid impacts to all historically significant sites and structures. The updated historic inventory should be utilized to direct development.

2. Amend the zoning ordinance to control demolition of historic structures and to limit demolition to only those buildings whose structural integrity has been compromised to be in a condition beyond viable repairs.

3. Provide additional incentives through the zoning ordinance to encourage compatible new development and adaptive re-use of existing structures (for instance, houses as offices and design studios, spaces above stores as loft apartments).

OBJECTIVE #2: Support efforts to involve all members of the community in the preservation of Ridgeland's historic resources.

1. Commit to an ongoing community education and communication program so that the advantages and benefits of preserving Ridgeland's historic resources are clearly understand by residents, business owners, builders, developers and visitors.

2. Seek grant awards and funding to improve and expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities that link historic and cultural resources with existing and planned residential and community developments.

Chapter 3 : Housing

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Housing is one of the most important needs of a town. There must be an adequate supply of housing at all price ranges in order to accommodate individuals who work in the area. Moreover, businesses will be attracted to areas that have adequate housing for their population of workers. Due to the larger percentage of low to moderate income levels in Ridgeland and all of Jasper county there is a focus on the need for affordable housing. While making homes more affordable, the Town still wishes to ensure that they are structurally sound, safe, and comply with all zoning, overlay, and applicable codes and help to implement the recommendations of this Plan.

The statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau of 1990 and 2000 convey an overview of the housing stock for the Town of Ridgeland. The Town of Ridgeland shows great similarities to Jasper County as a whole. Due to the high level of low to moderate income level populations in Ridgeland; there must be a focus on providing housing that is affordable.

3.2 INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Housing Structure Type. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Ridgeland, South Carolina had a total of 605 housing units in 2000 which increased from 1990 when there were a total of 467 housing units. The number of housing units increased 29.5% in the ten years between 1990 and 2000. The population has increased from 1,071 in 1990 to 2,158 in 2000. The population in Ridgeland has more than doubled between 1990 and 2000 while there has been only an increase of about 30% in housing units. This indicates a great demand for housing in the Town of Ridgeland. Jasper County saw a 33.5% population increase from 1990 to 2000 which indicates that the whole region is in need of an increased number of housing stocks.

Table 3.1
Housing Units for the Town of Ridgeland

Housing Units			
	1990	2000	1990-2000 %Δ
	467	605	29.50%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Housing Characteristics, Town of Ridgeland

In Table 3.1 the housing units are separated by structure type for the years 1990 and 2000. Each structure type is broken up into the different housing structures' percentage of the whole. Between 1990 and 2000, there was no increase in single family homes while there was a large increase in multi-family homes. This shows a potential need for an increase development of single family homes as there were not any built for a ten year time span.

Table 3.2
Town of Ridgeland
Housing Units by Structure Type

	1990	1990 Percentage	2000	2000 Percentage
Single Family	343	73.45%	343	56.70%
Multi Family	90	19.27%	258	36.70%
Mobile Home	27	5.78%	36	6%
Boat, RV, Van, etc.	7	1.50%	4	1%
Total	467	100%	605	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Housing Characteristics, Town of Ridgeland

☙ ***Building Permit Statistics.*** As traditional single family homes were becoming less affordable for those in the Town of Ridgeland and all of Jasper County, many of the residents had turned to alternate forms of housing. According to the Jasper County Regional Building Permits, which includes those issued for the Town of Ridgeland, there was an increase of 1,495 dwelling units between the years of 2003 through 2006. For the County as a whole, only 22 percent of those were single family homes, with the other 78 percent mobile homes, mostly built in rural areas and on septic tanks. In the more urbanized Town of Ridgeland, single-family homes still predominate.

In the past and present, mobile homes have been used as an approach to make housing more affordable. As Ridgeland grows outward it will be desirable to find alternatives for affordability because these rural developments septic tanks will contribute to urban sprawl. With increased sprawl, it will be disproportionately expensive to provide with community services and utilities in the future.

Table 3.3
Jasper County Regional Building Permits (including Town of Ridgeland)

	2003	2004	2005	2006
SF Number	63	111	161	227
SF Value	$6,033,664.00	$11,199,465.00	16,505,249.00	26,247,502.87
Average SF (w/o Land)	$95,772.44	$100,896.08	85,000.00	115,627.76
MH Number	249	247	203	228
MH Value	N/A	$8,645,000.00	6,000,000.00	0.00
MF Number	0	0	8	2
MF Value	$0.00	$0.00	2,921,000.00	1,041,626.92
Commercial Number	39	33	31	30
Commercial Value	$13,617,564.00	$11,875,439.00	17,233,724.00	8,609,237.84

Source: County Building Officials

Housing by Age and Condition. Generally, the age of housing stock influences conditions, costs, and maintenance needs of the unit. The U.S. Census Bureau surveys households as to the age of their unit. The survey includes single family, multi-family, owner, and renter occupied. The current age of the existing housing stock is another important factor to consider when looking at the potential of the area for development. Ridgeland should focus on renovating the existing housing stock because the possible historical value and the old age. Also, there is a need to focus on creating new housing because of the average age of the housing stock.

Table 3.4
Town of Ridgeland: Age of Existing Housing Stock

Year Structure Built	# of Units	% Total
1999 to March 2000	3	0.5
1995 to 1998	59	9.8
1990 to 1994	76	12.6
1980 to 1989	92	15.2
1970 to 1979	60	9.9
1960 to 1969	73	12.1
1940 to 1959	165	27.3
1939 to earlier	77	12.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

Table 3.4 (above) compares the chronology of construction dates of units constructed in the Town of Ridgeland from 1939 to March of 2000. The greatest amount of housing was built between 1940 and 1959—a total of 27.3% of all the housing in the Town of Ridgeland. As we approach 2010, these houses will be at the newest over 50 years old. This shows that there may be an increasing need for an opportunity to renovate the existing housing stock.

☙ ***Housing and Tenure of Occupancy.*** According to Table 3.5 the greatest percentage at 56.05% of housing units in the Town of Ridgeland were owner occupied. The greater percentage of owner occupied housing is an indicator of well-maintained houses. However, the Jasper County has a higher level of own occupied houses and a lower vacancy rate in the most recent census of 2000 than the Town of Ridgeland. A positive aspect of the Ridgeland housing stock is that all units had complete plumbing and kitchen facilities from 1990 to 2000 except for one home in 1990 that lacked plumbing. These statistics are better than at the County level, which shows more dwellings lacking kitchen and plumbing.

In comparison to Jasper County, Ridgeland's housing stock has an average age of about eleven years older than the county as a whole. However, the median value of Ridgeland's owner occupied housing units was almost $20,000 higher than that of Jasper County in 2000. This could be a result of the location in the city limits where the land value would be greater than in rural areas.

The two tables on the following pages compare some of the key characteristics of the housing stock of the Town and the County and also show the changes that took place between 1990 and 2000.

Table 3.5
Town of Ridgeland Housing Unit Profile

		1990		**2000**	
Total Housing Units		467		605	
			% of Total		%of Total
	Occupied	430	92.08%	517	86.60%
	Vacant	30	6.42%	80	13.40%
	Owner Occupied	241	56.05%	235	45.50%
	Renter Occupied	189	43.95%	282	55.50%
	Median Year Structure Built	1960		1968	
	Complete Plumbing Facilities	466	97.87%	522	100%
	Complete Kitchen Facilities	467	100%	522	100%
			%Change of 1990-2000		
	Median Value for Owner-Occupied Housing Units	$42,500	94.35%	$82,600	
	Median Gross Rent	$298	52.35%	$454	

Source: U.S. Census 1990 and 2000

Table 3.6
Jasper County Housing Unit Profile

		1990		2000	
Total Housing Units		6070		7928	
			% of Total		% of Total
	Occupied	5298	87.28%	7042	88.82%
	Vacant	772	12.72%	886	11.18%
	Owner Occupied	4132	68.07%	5476	69.07%
	Renter Occupied	1166	19.21%	1566	19.75%
	Median Year Structure Built	1973		1979	
	Complete Plumbing Facilities	5926	97.63%	7629	96.23%
	Complete Kitchen Facilities	5940	97.86%	7608	95.96%
			%Change 1990-2000		
	Median Value for Owner-Occupied Housing Units	$44,400	46.17%	$64,900	
	Median Gross Rent	$265	86.04%	$493	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 1990

Tenure refers to the type of ownership of the unit. The U.S. Census of Population and Housing recognizes two classifications- owner and renter. Table 3.5 and 3.6 above shows the occupancy in greater detail at the county level and Table 3.7 (below) shows vacancy at the Town of Ridgeland level. The amount of unoccupied housing units in the Town of Ridgeland increased from the year 1990 to 2000. However, for the whole county, the vacancy rate slightly decreased from 1990 to 2000. Typically, a high vacancy rate indicates an over supply of housing stock.

Table 3.7
Town of Ridgeland Vacancy

	1990	2000
Occupied Housing Units	430	522
% Occupied	92.08%	86.28%
Total Housing Units	467	605

Source: U.S. Census 1990 and 2000

☙ ***Housing Affordability.*** Housing is considered affordable when the total cost (including utilities, taxes, insurance, and rent or mortgage payments) is no more than 30 percent of the household's monthly gross income.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has the following guidelines for affordable housing:

> Affordable housing is housing that is available for rental or purchase to low or moderate income families at thirty percent of their income. Very low-income families are defined as those earning fifty percent or less of the area median income (AMI) while low-income families are classified as those earning from fifty percent to eighty percent of the AMI.

The table below breaks down what the monthly cost for housing should be, based on the very low, low, and moderate family income levels.

Table 3.8
Affordable Housing Definitions
30% of Income Available for Housing

Category of Family Income	Annual Income	Annual Cost	Monthly Cost
Very Low Income			
50% or less MFI	$19,600 or less	$5,880 or less	$490 or less
Low Income			
50% to 80% of MFI	$19, 601 to $31, 360	$5,881 to $9,408	$491 to $784
Moderate			
81% to 120% of MFI	$31, 361 to $47, 040	$9, 409 to $14, 112	$785 to $1,176

Source: Military Enhancement Committee Affordable Housing Plan, 1995
(MFI-Median Family Income)

Many factors can contribute to housing affordability: the housing finance system, employment and wages, land and construction costs, provision of water and sewer services and regulatory requirements. Many of these factors are dependent on regional, state, and national levels; however, it is important for the Town of Ridgeland to make housing more affordable. Currently, the new zoning ordinance has implemented an incentive for affordable housing (5.3.5 Housing Mix) which will provide flexibility and suggestions for affordable housing developments. More incentives should be considered.

Ridgeland's median household income increased greatly from $16,029 in 1989 to $27,679 in 1999 (the latest year for which data is available). Using the 30 percent of gross income ratio, the median household could have afforded payments of $692 a month for housing in 1999. In mortgage terms, assuming a 100 percent mortgage for 30 years at 7 percent, that household could have purchased a home for $104,000.

Table 3.9
Year 2000 Housing Values for Town of Ridgeland

Value	Number	Percentage
Less than $50,000	34	17.4
$50,000 to $99,999	98	50.3
$100,000 to $149,999	26	13.3
$150,000 to $199,999	18	9.2
$200,000 to $299,999	5	2.6
$300,000 to $499,999	10	5.1
$500,000 to $999,999	2	1
$1,000,000 or more	2	1
Median (dollars)	82,600	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

The table on the preceding page shows the Housing values for the Town of Ridgeland, where over fifty percent of the housing values were between $50,000 and $99,999. The median housing cost for the Town of Ridgeland was $82,600. According to the HUD, no more than thirty percent of the household income should be spent on rent. Looking at the Tables below, it shows that 35.3% (104 units) of renter-occupied units were spending more than thirty percent of their gross rent on housing. The owner-occupied units show that 14.9% (29 units) were spending more than thirty percent of their income on the mortgage payment.

Town of Ridgeland: Monthly Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income in 1999

Table 3.10
Renter-Occupied Units

Rent	Number	Percentage
Less than 15 percent	67	22.7
15 to 19 percent	47	15.9
20 to 24 percent	25	8.5
25 to 29 percent	19	6.4
30 to 34 percent	17	5.8
35 percent or more	87	29.5
Not computed	33	11.2

Source: U.S. Census 1990 and 2000

Table 3.11
Owner-Occupied Units

Rent	Number	Percent
Less than 15 percent	104	53.3
15 to 19 percent	30	15.4
20 to 24 percent	20	10.3
25 to 29 percent	10	5.1
30 to 34 percent	8	4.1
35 percent or more	21	10.8
Not computed	2	1

Source: U.S. Census 1990 and 2000

☙ ***Link between Public Facilities and Housing.*** As housing demand grows, Ridgeland will look beyond its present borders to annex land and it will be necessary to provide services and infrastructure to those areas to facilitate residential growth. It is important to guide growth where the infrastructure will be able to support it in the Town of Ridgeland. If not, there could be costly effects of trying to service demands of these new developments. With growth, there is a greater need for other community services such as fire protection, law enforcement, emergency services, and public education and recreation. These are essential services to the residents of the Town of Ridgeland and should be considered when creating developments that may require increased amount of all these facilities.

Initially, rural housing can be a more affordable type of housing unit because of the less expensive price of land and the lack of urban services. Development that is closer to previous development is more beneficial and economical with services such as water, sewer, electricity, telephones, parks, and roads. Transportation costs for individuals who live in rural areas are greater due to the greater distance to employment, service, and shopping facilities.

3.3 VISION

To ensure safe, affordable, and quality housing is available for all residents that will mirror the existing patterns of the Town of Ridgeland.

While all of the below objectives are the main housing goals for the Town of Ridgeland, they must be met within the context of the Town's planning objectives. This vision should work to build off of the key development and land use recommendations that have been made in the overall Town of Ridgeland Comprehensive Plan. To comply with this plan, housing development must accommodate growth while preserving the current environment.

☙ ***Housing Goals.***

GOAL: Housing Rehabilitation

OBJECTIVE #1: Recognize the importance of upkeep and beautification of housing for the Town of Ridgeland through the tools of zoning, building codes, and design regulations

1. Review, control, and enforce current ordinances
2. Update the Design Guidelines and amend the Zoning Ordinance

3. Keep red tape to a minimum
4. Encourage preservation of old neighborhoods as in the Bungalow Overlay District in the Zoning Ordinance
5. Utilize local historic organizations as facilitators

GOAL: Affordable Housing

OBJECTIVE #2: Ensure that all residents of the Town of Ridgeland have the opportunity to obtain affordable and high quality housing.

1. Affordable housing areas should be scattered rather than concentrated in a specific area of the Town
2. Work with a proposed Regional Housing Authority to create new strategies
3. Develop and expand public/private partnerships to create affordable housing
4. Develop infrastructure for low income/undeveloped areas

GOAL: Homeownership

OBJECTIVE #3: Encourage those citizens in the Town of Ridgeland to maintain homeownership as with it comes various incentives to the community and the resident as a whole.

1. Educate citizens on incentives of homeownership
    a. Economic viability and quality of living
2. Obtain grants and other assistance through the HOME Consortium to facilitate increased homeownership

GOAL: Flexible Development Regulations

OBJECTIVE #4: Incorporate flexibility into development regulations to promote variations in the types of housing stock built in the Town of Ridgeland

1. Focus on cooperative relations among government, developers, and homeowners
2. Maintain regulations that are open for new kinds of development
    a. Be varied in design but are compatible with the area
3. Encourage development in areas of annexation

GOAL: Quality Residential Development

OBJECTIVE #5: Protect the physical safety and visual standards of the community by creating only new housing that will enhance the unique character, culture, and natural resources of the area.

1. Review, Control, and Enforce current ordinances
2. Update Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines to encourage and enable creative forms of new development and rehabilitation to the older housing stock.
3. Encourage collaborative approaches among government, developers, and new homeowners

Chapter 4: Economy

A balanced and well-functioning economy is one that is dynamic, diverse, and sustainable. Diversity in the local economy allows for a wider range of employment and career opportunities for employees and entrepreneurs and also ensures the attraction and retention of qualified and educated workers. An economy that is diverse will attract a wider array of business prospects. A community with diversity in business opportunities, a trained and educated work force, and a dynamic economy is one that is one that functions successfully even during economic downturns.

Ridgeland is extremely fortunate in terms of its location. In fact, it has transportation and other advantages that communities throughout the United States would envy. Attractive to a wide variety of industries and businesses, it has two (and potentially a third) interchange on I 95; it is served by CSX mainline freight trains; it is approximately a half hour from the Port of Savannah, one of the fastest growing and busiest ports in the US; it is less than a half hour from Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport, whose volume of both passenger and freight traffic has also been growing. These advantages should lead to further benefits for the Town.

Ridgeland's economy has recently made significant progress in becoming more diversified with the small but growing manufacturing companies and the recently opened Boat and RV Mega-Store, which are adding more jobs that require technical skills and whose pay is above the state average. More trained technical jobs in Ridgeland are, however, still a goal.

Commercial building permit data is a useful indicator of economic and job growth, but it has not been available just for Ridgeland. However, County-wide data, which include Ridgeland numbers, show a healthy trend upward in commercial development between 2001 and 2005—an 88 percent increase in value (compared to a 6 percent increase in neighboring Beaufort County). More significantly, since a balance between residential and commercial tax bases is a goal of the Comprehensive Plan, the value of commercial development was 104 percent of single-family residential permits (in Beaufort County commercial building permits totaled 8 percent of the value of single family permits).

Table 4.1: Building Permits for New Commercial Construction in Jasper and Beaufort Counties

	Year				
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Beaufort County					
Commercial Number	149	97	111	105	126
Commercial Value	$74,763,469.00	$79,413,634.00	$43,912,940.40	$31,220,589.67	$79,289,124.00
Jasper County					
Commercial Number	29	28	39	33	31
Commercial Value	$9,213,997.00	$14,926,632.00	$13,617,564.00	$11,875,439.00	$17,233,724.00

This translated into higher net taxable sales in Ridgeland between 2001 and 2003 (the only years for which the results are presently available from the SC Department of Revenue). However, the growth rate was lower for Ridgeland than for either Hardeeville or for the unorganized parts of Jasper County.

Table 4.2: Net Taxable Sales

	2001	2002	2003	Change 2001-2003
Hardeeville	$21,626,303	$25,024,747	$28,700,944	32.71%
Ridgeland	**$33,315,985**	**$40,770,314**	**$43,003,199**	**29.08%**
Unincorporated Jasper County	$129,889,830	$150,857,861	$178,377,327	37.33%

4.1 LABOR FORCE

☙ ***Commuting Patterns and Employment and Wage Growth***. Although diversifying, Ridgeland's economy is still interrelated with that of Beaufort County and Savannah, especially in terms of employment opportunities. Census 2000 commuting data is the most recent available, and it shows that the relationship is two-way, with workers traveling both into and out of Town for employment. Table _.3 on the following page summarizes this.

Table 4.3: Ridgeland Commuting Patterns

	Mean Commuting Time (minutes)	Percent in Car Pools	Employed Civilians	Worked in Place of Residence	Worked Outside Place of Residence	Worked Outside County of Residence	Worked Outside State of Residence
Jasper County (includes communities and unorganized areas)	*34.2*	*25.8*	*8628*			*3,785*	*944*
Hardeeville	29.8	48.1	825	111	699	387	152
Ridgeland	**26**	**34.7**	**633**	**233**	**390**	**260**	**50**

As the economy continues to become increasingly diversified and less dependent upon jobs outside Ridgeland, both the level of out-commuting and the average length of commute (in 2000 it was 26 minutes, which is high for a small community) can be expected to decrease significantly.

Recent job data is available only by County, but Ridgeland's rate is likely similar to that of the County as a whole.

Table 4.4: Private Sector Jobs in Jasper and Beaufort County and the State

Private Sector Employment						
		2002	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*% Change 2002-2005*
Beaufort County	Number of Jobs (annual average)	46,788	48,153	50,187	51,820	10.75%
	Wage (average annual)	$26,251	$27,316	$28,026	$29,351	11.81%
Jasper County	Number of Jobs (annual average)	3,861	4,015	4,302	4,763	23.36%
	Wage (average annual)	$22,931	$24,648	$27,605	$29,543	28.83%
South Carolina	Wage (average annual)	$29,476	$30,240	$31,300	$32,420	9.99%

Since the present out-commuting is to mainly low-paying service industry (especially hospitality and retail) jobs in southern Beaufort County, economic

diversification will strengthen this trend of improved wages for Ridgeland residents.

Unemployment rates continue to be lower than in two of the three other counties in the Region and the state average.

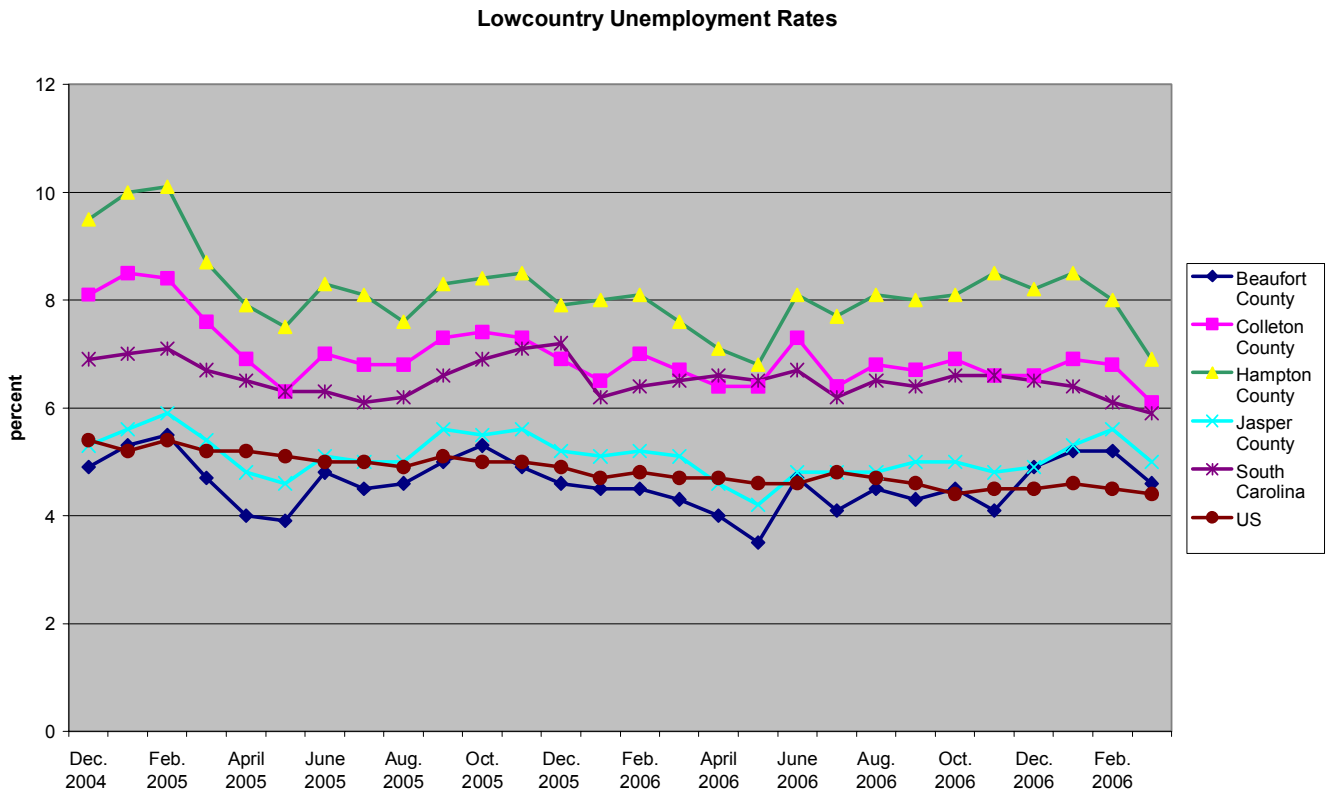


Figure 4.1: Regional Unemployment Rates

☙ ***Education and Training***. The labor force most attractive to potential industry is the one which is highly educated and/or highly-trained. Ridgeland's—and Jasper County's-- level of educational attainment is very low, as the table on the following page shows.

[**Note:** Ridgeland's rates may be a statistical issue related to the presence of the Ridgeland Correctional Institution}.

Table 4.5: Educational Attainment Rates

Educational Attainment for Population over 25 Years Old										
	Less than 9th Grade		**Some High School**		**High School Grad**		**Associate Degree**		**Bachelor Degree**	
	Percent of Adult Population		**Percent of Adult Population**		**Percent of Adult Population**		**Percent of Adult Population**		**Percent of Adult Population**	
	1990	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*	*1990*	*2000*
Ridgeland	**10.63%**	**14.64%**	**27.51%**	**25.68%**	**35.08%**	**34.11%**	**4.51%**	**1.39%**	**5.82%**	**6.45%**
Hardeeville	12.53%	19.81%	24.94%	24.68%	40.57%	32.94%	5.86%	2.33%	3.33%	2.65%
Jasper County	21.65%	12.39%	23.81%	22.46%	35.06%	35.94%	4.03%	3.74%	2.44%	6.16%
Lowcountry Total	11.39%	6.87%	15.83%	13.24%	30.37%	29.22%	5.79%	5.98%	12.90%	15.82%
South Carolina	13.62%	8.31%	18.09%	15.35%	29.50%	29.97%	6.33%	6.68%	11.22%	13.54%

To improve the economic base and performance of Ridgeland, improvement of the facilities and performance of the schools is a paramount need. It is imperative that Ridgeland develop a good working relationship with the School District.

Both Lowcountry local governments and the State of South Carolina have come to realize that a workforce educated and trained for both existing and prospective jobs will be a major marketing advantage in attracting new businesses and institutions. In the four counties of this region educational attainment levels have increased over the past decade and new initiatives are in place or under way in local secondary and post-secondary educational institutions to ensure that the Lowcountry is able to train, nurture and retain a labor force relevant to economic diversification in the twenty-first century.

- ***Secondary/Career Education.*** Ridgeland offers both public and private secondary schooling options, including Beaufort-Jasper Academy of Career Excellence, located along the Beaufort/Jasper line. The programs offered there prepare students in the two counties for careers in:

  Automotive/Electronic Technologies, Information Technology, Health and Human Services, Pre-Engineering, Tourism and Recreation, Culinary Arts, Golf Course Technology

- ***Post Secondary Education. The public and private colleges and*** universities available to Ridgeland residents provide a diverse spectrum of programs that provide the student with either certificate, diploma, undergraduate or graduate degrees.

- ***Continuing Education.*** TCL offers continuing educational programs geared towards those already in the work force or those that have been out of school for some time. Currently the Lowcountry has geared much of its continuing education towards the health sector. Other continuing education courses available in the region are: Building Construction, Computer Training, Culinary Arts, Insurance, Massage Therapy, Occupational Upgrade, Real Estate – Appraisal and Continuing Ed., English/Spanish as a Second Language.

- ***WIA.*** The Lowcountry Workforce Investment Area (WIA) department at LCOG is also involved in the training of prospective job seekers and the area's youth. WIA staff work with the area's educational institutions to help direct those looking for work force education and training and to determine current and future employment trends. Not only does the WIA provide job specific training for prospective employees but it also provides workshops and programs pertaining to work ethics and appearance in order to increase the likelihood of an employee performing to the level expected by employers.

4.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

During the fall of 2004, LCOG and the four counties of the Lowcountry embarked on the development of a strategy for economic diversification. The Department of Defense, through its Advance Planning Grant initiative provided 90 percent of the funding, with each of the four counties providing an equal share of the remaining 10 percent.

The objectives, as stated in the final report were "to assist the four-county region to attract new businesses and target industries to aid in community growth, tax base diversification and quality of life enhancement, and lessen dependency on the three military installations in the region. This plan was formulated taking into consideration the region's economic development goals and objectives while being sensitive to resident concerns about the impact of these initiatives on the overall quality of life and community culture and identity. "

The core of the process was to determine what industries should be in the area. A cluster analysis identified groups of industries linked by common product markets, labor pools, knowledge base, similar technologies, supplier chains, specialized services, networks, and research and development and/or other economic ties. Clusters were pinpointed with the use of local labor and market information, anecdotal information employer feedback and natural resource analyses. Clustering helps establish industry networks that lead to the dissemination of best practices, process innovations, and joint market or product initiatives.

Based on the research and analysis by LCOG and the consultants, and combined with previous work on such issues as freight transportation advantages, existing manufacturers and natural resources in the Lowcountry, a preliminary listing of possible linkages was developed. Linkages within each of these clusters were identified in order to identify targeted companies.

The Lowcountry economic diversification plan focused on the following specific industry clusters:

- Logistics/Distribution centers (emerging industry)
- Health Care/Medical
- Construction
- Wholesale Trade
- Manufacturing

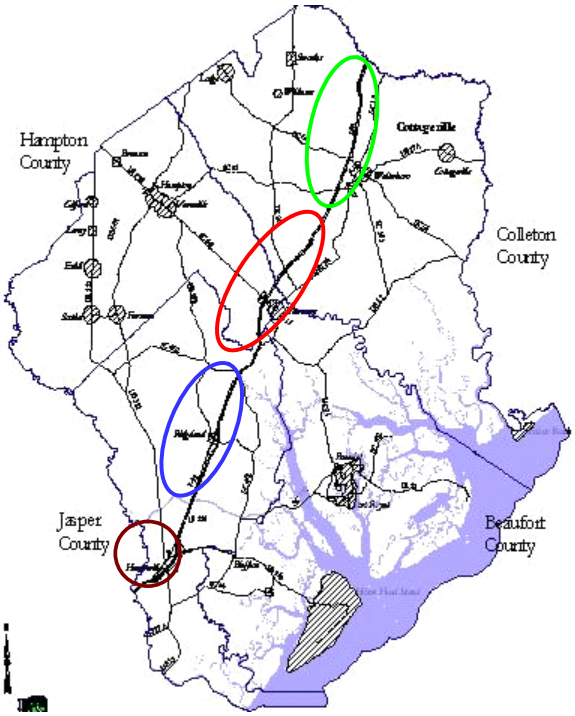
The prospective businesses in these industries can be attracted to the Lowcountry due to a combination of concentrated product markets, supply chains and other demonstrated resources. In addition, these industries present an opportunity to develop jobs with above average incomes in growing industries.

After assessing the region and factoring in the target candidate industries, infrastructure, transportation-logistics, and the region's strengths and opportunities, four economic diversification zones were recommended along I-95. Each zone contains two or more I-95 interchanges. Ridgeland has two zones (see Map 4.1 on following page).

A discussion of Zone 2 and specific recommendations for development of that zone in which Ridgeland is located follow the map on the next page.

I-95 Economic Development Zones

Zone 1: Exits 5, 8
Zone 2: Exits 18, 21, 22, 28
Zone 3: Exits 33, 38, 42
Zone 4: Exits 53, 57, 62, 68



Map 4.1
Economic Diversification Zones

Zone 2: Ridgeland --- I-95 Exit 18, Exit 21, Exit 22 and Exit 28

- ◊ There is no development directly off of Exit 18.
- ◊ Exit 21 has several mid-scale and economy hotels, fast food establishments, strip shopping malls, gas stations, a grocery store, access to the Blue Heron Nature Trail and the new Boat and RV Mega-Store.
- ◊ Gas stations are also present off of Exit 22 with no other development directly off of I-95.
- ◊ Exit 28 has very little development with a small food store and gas stations.

Utilities are present at Exits 21 and 22, which make these exits the ideal location for additional development. The Town of Ridgeland recently zoned a large parcel of serviced land at Exit 22 for industrial use including light manufacturing and distribution uses. Exits 18 and 28 also provide promising opportunities as target business locations, but utilities would need to be available in order to attract companies to these particular exits. The land nearest Exit 18 is likely to be annexed in the near future.

Zone 2 has access to three small public airports including Beaufort County Airport (73J), Ridgeland Airport (3J1) and Hilton Head Island Airport (HXD) in addition to Savannah International Airport (SAV). These public airports may permit the transport of necessary supplies and materials necessary for the target clusters in Zone 2.

With its close proximity to the new Carolina Coastal Medical Center off of Exit 8 and Beaufort Memorial Hospital, which is in association with the Keyserling Cancer Center (slated to open in Spring 2006), Zone 2 is well positioned to attract medical/health care target industries. In addition to this ideal location between key medical/health related organizations a majority of the aging population is located in Beaufort and Jasper Counties making it advantageous for additional healthcare-oriented companies, including testing laboratories, to locate there.

Ridgeland in conjunction with LCOG, Beaufort County, Carolina Coastal Medical Center and Beaufort Memorial Hospital should work together to market Zone 2 to those targeted medical and logistics companies identified below and in *Appendix O* that could reap benefits from this ideal Lowcountry location.

Zone 2 would also be a prime location for a logistics institute (as previously recommended in Section A of the plan) with its proximity to local air, highway, rail lines, the Savannah and Charleston ports (and possible Jasper port) and major educational institutions including the University of South Carolina Beaufort.

Jasper and Beaufort Counties in conjunction with LCOG and USC-B should market Zone 2, the Cypress Ridge Industrial Park and Ridgeland Industrial Park to targeted transportation-logistics companies identified below and in *Appendix O* that could benefit from this central location offering air, rail, port, interstate and educational access.

Zone 2 would be an ideal location to market to the following NAICS industries:

- ◊ 42, 44-45 – Distribution/Logistics
  - Target company distribution/logistics emphasis to include:
    - Machinery
    - Electrical equipment
    - Appliances
    - Transportation equipment

- ◊ 3369 – Other transportation equipment manufacturing (motorcycle, bicycle and related parts, military armored vehicles/components, golf carts, personal watercraft, etc.)

- ◊ 6215 – Medical and diagnostic laboratories (diagnostic imaging centers, home health care services, medical testing laboratories, etc.)

- ◊ 5121 – Motion picture and video industries (motion picture and video production, post production services, etc.)

GOAL & IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR THE ECONOMY

Both the economic development climate and local and regional attitudes have changed considerably in the past few years, and the strategic advantages of Ridgeland's location and the opportunities accruing are now recognized. The *Lowcountry Economic Diversification Plan*, which was completed in September of 2005 outlines an economic role and provides directions for future economic development here.

GOAL: Develop a diversified economic base for Ridgeland that will provide jobs that pay at least the state average wage.

This can be accomplished by implementing the many relevant recommendations of the "Lowcountry Economic Diversification Plan" that deal with both attracting new businesses to Ridgeland and also growing the businesses that are already here. Those that can be impacted by planning and land use regulations include, but are not limited to:

1. Support a Regional Economic Development Alliance that is now in the formation stages and of which Ridgeland is already a participant.

2. Maintain policies necessary to attract the identified candidate businesses to Ridgeland. This includes the designation and servicing of land for distribution centers and other specific industrial purposes at I-95 interchanges (per the "Diversification Zones" map).

3. To attract movie, video and commercial production activities—which generate both direct expenditures and follow-up tourism—Ridgeland should promote its visual assets, namely its historic buildings and its unique community character. Last year the South Carolina Film Office sent a professional photographer to the Town take a number of photos of individual structures and also streetscapes for inclusion in the Film Office's "location archives." Activities that are successful throughout the US, and that have low or no costs associated with them, could include, but not be limited to:

* Establishment of a Film Commission to work with the state Film Office to promote the area. Their work would include obtaining discounts for food, lodging and other services from local businesses;
* Making unused public buildings and spaces available to production companies at no charge;
* Providing police protection at reduced or no charge.

3. The Town should develop cooperative working relationships with Hardeeville and Jasper County and also with the other counties and municipalities in the Lowcountry to stress Regional economic development, in which everyone benefits.

Chapter 5: Land Use

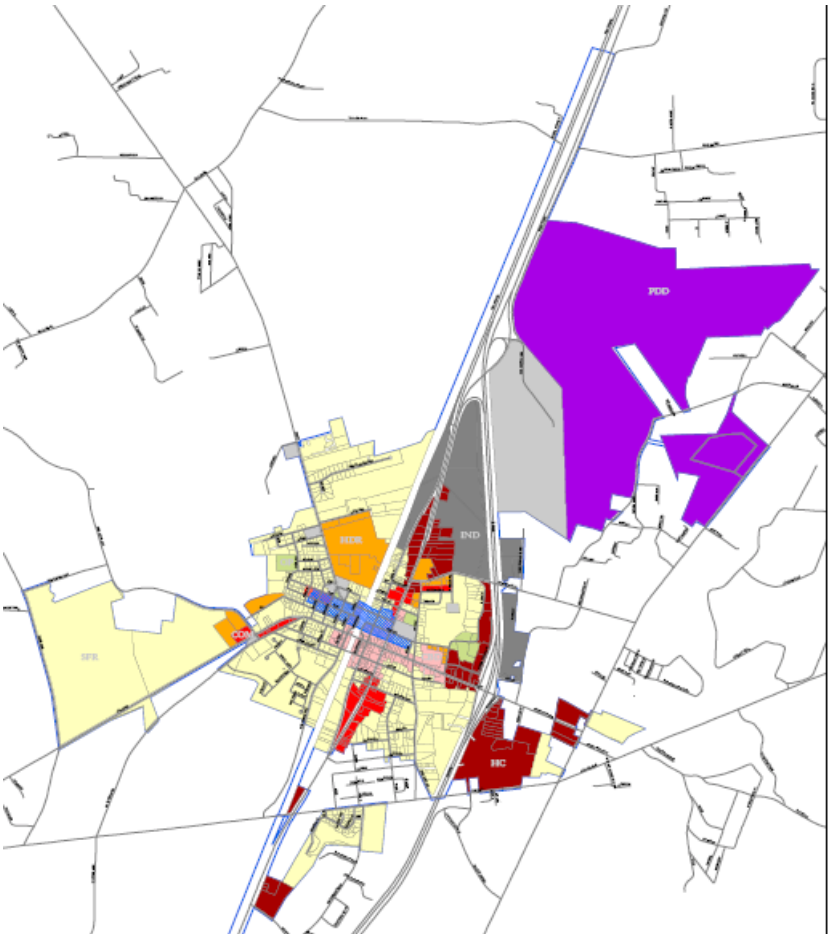
The Town of Ridgeland is faced with the challenge of accommodating new growth while preserving the quality of its existing environment, which is attracting both developers and visitors. The Town's strategic location on Interstate 95, US 17 and the CSX mainline and near the growing communities in Beaufort County and the port-related economic development of Savannah, Georgia, provides Ridgeland with many residential, commercial and industrial opportunities for the future. Now is the time for the Town of Ridgeland to identify specific development goals to establish a solid foundation for properly planned, long-range growth without destroying the lifestyle that current residents enjoy and seek to preserve and that attracts prospective residents and businesses.

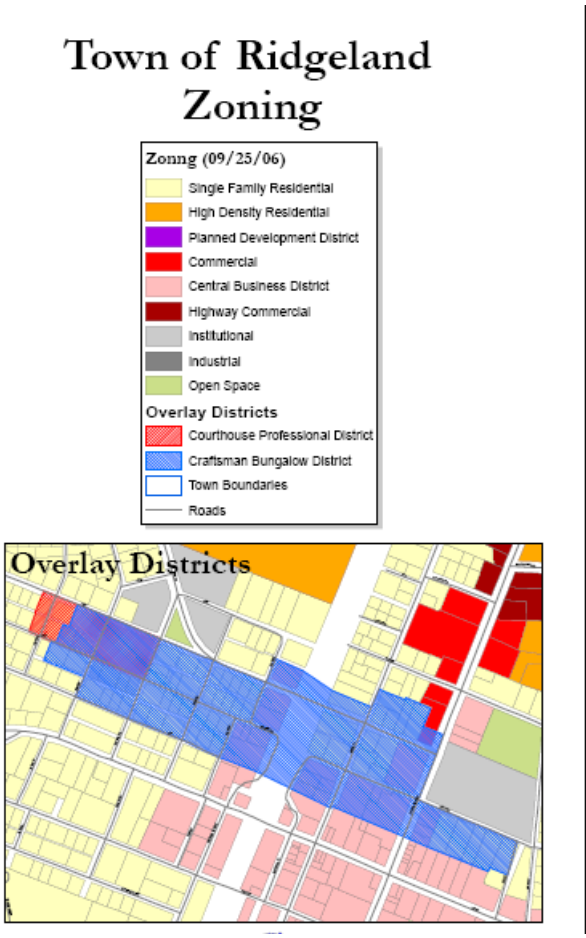
This chapter outlines a basic framework for a balanced and orderly pattern of development for the Town of Ridgeland. The concepts included in this chapter are designed specifically to guide future development in ways that make more efficient use of existing and planned public facilities and services, while preserving and extending the distinctive character of the Town. The framework is not intended to be a detailed blueprint for future development, but rather is intended as a guide for making development decisions, both public and private. The recommendations included in this chapter should be used as the basis for future detailed development strategies and regulations in the Town.

5.1 EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land use, transportation and natural resources (including environmentally sensitive areas) patterns will help determine where future growth will likely occur in the Town of Ridgeland. A general land use and land cover map of the Town and the surrounding area for which the municipality has planning jurisdiction and land that may be annexed, which shows land uses and future development areas follows as Map 5.1

The most densely built-up areas of the Town and its entire planning jurisdiction are concentrated around the historic town center and along I-95. The primary undeveloped areas without major environmental constraints include the area east and south of Ridgeland.





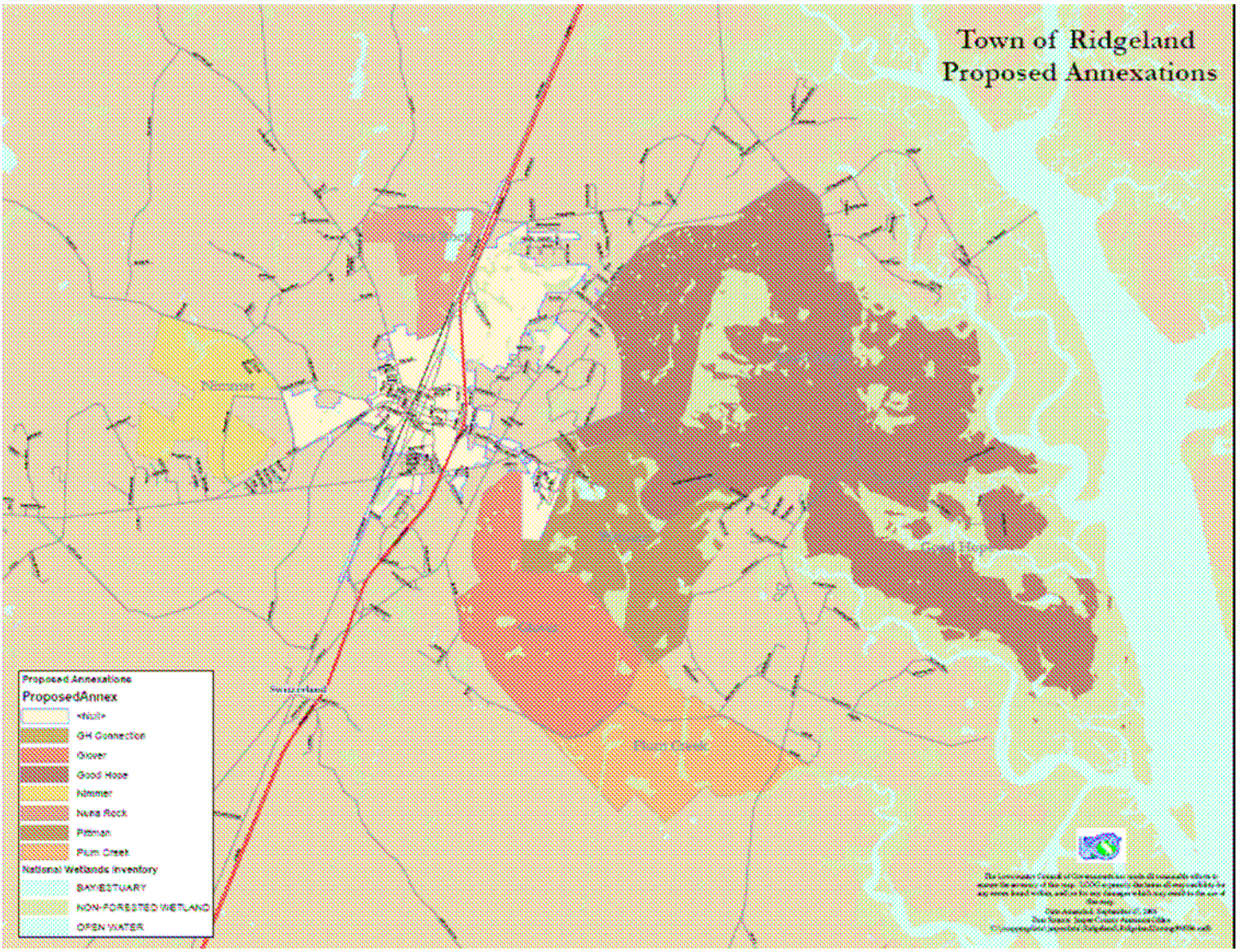
Map 5.1 Existing Land Uses/Zoning

5.2 DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Development trends affecting land use in The Town of Ridgeland are new development, future development demands, and local and regional land use issues. Map 5.2 shows future development areas for Ridgeland.

☙ ***New Development.*** Developments planned, being constructed or recently completed in the Town of Ridgeland and in surrounding Jasper County and nearby Southern Beaufort County that will have an impact on future land use and development in the Town include:

- Industrial and related development along I-95 in Ridgeland
- Major commercial development along I-95 in Ridgeland



Map 5.2 Future Development Areas

- Large-scale mixed use developments being planned for major landholdings near Ridgeland
- New subdivisions planned and/or under construction within and near Ridgeland
- The new USC-B and TCL campuses on the Jasper-Beaufort County boundary
- The proposed bi-state Jasper County Port

☙ ***Future Development Demands.*** The recent residential development trends in Southern Beaufort and Jasper counties will result in a significant increase in

the demand for retail and service uses. With new population centers expected in and near the Town of Ridgeland, many of the new retail establishments will serve the permanent population in these areas rather than catering primarily to the traveler. This provides an opportunity to link residential areas to neighborhood and district retail centers by means of bicycle and pedestrian trails or pathways, thereby minimizing vehicle traffic on major arterials and contributing to energy-saving and residents' fitness efforts.

The Economy Chapter deals with significant opportunities for economic development such as distribution centers and other light industrial development to continue to diversify the Town's economic base. Diversification is essential for Ridgeland's social and economic health for two key reasons:

- A tax base that is balanced between commercial/industrial and residential uses will ensure reasonable property tax rates into the future;
- Providing *good* jobs (that is, ones that are full-time, pay more than the state average wage and offer benefits) will mean that Ridgeland will not become a "bedroom community" from which people commute to better jobs elsewhere.

The types of uses mentioned above depend on the availability of sufficiently large parcels of land served by both freight transportation and utilities. Providing serviced land designated for these uses at I-95 intersections 22 and 18 is of particular importance to achieving economic diversification goals.

☙ ***Land-Use Issues.***

- One of the Town of Ridgeland's biggest land use challenges during the foreseeable future will be to balance the many competing demands for land throughout and around the Town's present and projected future boundaries with the economic, social, housing, historic preservation, transportation and community services needs of present and future residents.
- The other important land use and planning challenge for the future is that large scale developments are expected to take place in areas outside the present municipal boundaries that will be annexed to the Town. Ridgeland must ensure that the planning and land use objectives, guidelines and regulations in the Comprehensive Plan and also the new Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines are implemented and enforced in those areas.

5.3 EXISTING REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Ridgeland is currently operating under *The Town of Ridgeland Comprehensive Plan* approved in 1999. Because of the nature of that plan, combined with major changes in and to Ridgeland since then, and the even larger ones expected in the foreseeable future, the specified "review" of the existing Comprehensive Plan did not serve the community's needs. As a result, this is a completely new Plan for the Town of Ridgeland.

The Town's development regulations contained in the 2006 Zoning Ordinance will serve to implement the planning and other community development policies contained in this new Comprehensive Plan. That Ordinance is being amended and will continue to be amended to accommodate changes over time. Ridgeland's existing Design Guidelines are presently being thoroughly revised in to reflect and incorporate the policies and regulations contained in this new Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance.

5.4 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

This section provides a basic growth management framework for a balanced and orderly pattern of development for The Town of Ridgeland. The concepts included within this framework are specifically designed to:

- Provide for areas to accommodate market demands for new development projected for the Town, including residential, commercial and industrial activities.
- Ensure that new development is connected to existing development and to other new development by means of both roads and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Make more efficient use of existing and planned public facilities and services.
- Preserve the unique character of the Town and extend the traditional street patterns and the scale, quality and design of the existing community into new development within present and future municipal planning boundaries that result from future annexations.

  In other words, as the authors of *The Small Town Planning Handbook* (Third Edition) state:

> "As a community grows and changes, its special character can also change, but good planning can help maintain the certain charms found only in our small towns…The protection and continuation of a town's character, identity, and appearance is a process that goes beyond the tree-lined streets and the storefronts on Main Street...Buildings and public spaces make a community worth caring about.
>
> "Developers, architects, and builders of new buildings and commercial and residential developments must show respect for older buildings and local character, tastes, and traditions. Buildings from different eras with different styles must blend together into coherent districts, neighborhoods, and streetscapes."

Growth management ensures that all projected growth can take place, but in a way that meets these criteria.

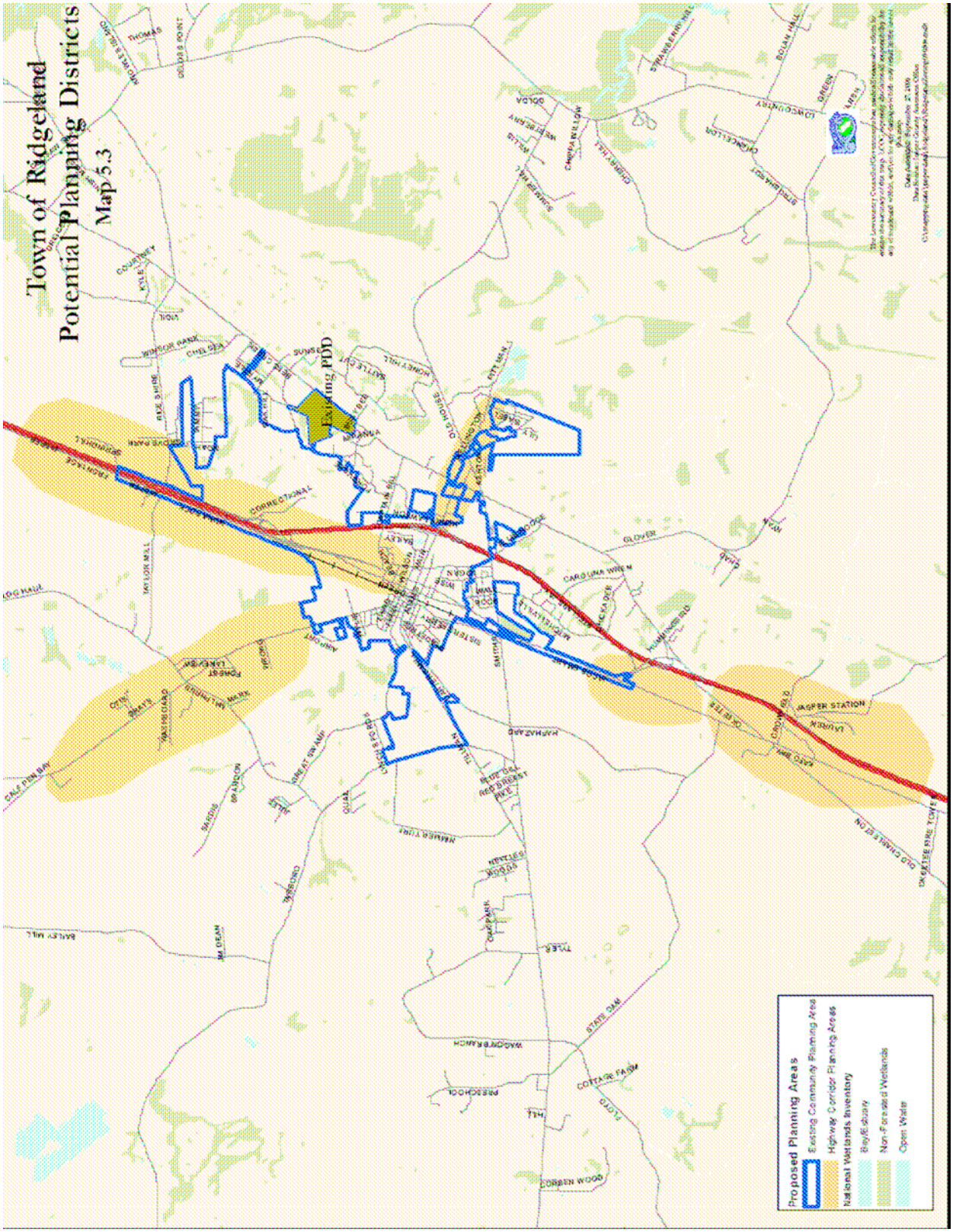
- ***Development Areas.*** Rather than allowing unplanned sprawl to spread out from the Town in a haphazard manner, the recommended framework uses a "development area" concept to manage future growth by encouraging and enhancing the growth patterns that have naturally occurred within the Town. The general purpose for designating development areas is to provide a logical and organized basis for making cost-effective public service and facility investments. Development areas serve to:

- Designate appropriate areas for various types and densities of land use
- Minimize conflicts between neighboring properties and land uses
- Assist in setting priorities for public investment in infrastructure.

Development areas are <u>not</u> zoning districts in that they do not establish boundaries within which certain specific uses are permitted and from which others are excluded. Instead, the recommended development characteristics for the various districts are intended to guide the application of the Town's Zoning Ordinance.

Development areas include the following (see Map 5.3, following, for some potential planning areas)**:**

- Existing Community, centered on Downtown
- Planned Development Districts
- Community Village Districts


Town of Ridgeland
Potential Planning Districts
Map 5.3
Existing PDD
Proposed Planning Areas
Existing Community Planning Area
Highway Corridor Planning Areas
National Wetlands Inventory
Bay/Estuary
Non-Forested Wetlands
Open Water

➢ **Existing Community, centered on Downtown**. This is basically the Town within its original municipal boundaries. The chief goal is to continue to strengthen this area both economically and aesthetically. New commercial and residential development, in the form of infill, is encouraged. Such new development, as well as additions to and renovations of existing structures will reflect the scale, massing and architectural details of the surrounding area; demolition of existing buildings will be limited to those whose structural integrity has been compromised by damage caused by fire, wind, flooding and other disasters and/or lack of maintenance. This will include one or more districts designated for historic preservation, coinciding with the Zoning Ordinance's Overlay Districts.

➢ **Planned Development Districts (PDDs)** are defined as those areas of 100 or more acres in which large-scale mixed use new development will be concentrated, and/or which contain adequate amounts of developable land necessary to support substantial amounts of new development. These areas are the most appropriate locations for a full range of land uses of a more urban character, including a wide range of commercial, residential, and business activities that may not be appropriate for downtown because of size, scale or type. They should have good transportation access to major roads in the Town and an internal transportation system that reflects existing Town pattern and includes bicycle and pedestrian circulation and access for future public transit services. They are or will be served by central public water and sewer systems, or are located where existing services can be most efficiently expanded to support new development. Community development patterns and styles will reflect those of Ridgeland's downtown-centered urban area if they extend directly outward out from the Existing Community (discussed above); if they are separated communities in outlying rural areas, the PDD plans will incorporate and enhance the natural and historic features of their immediate environment.

At the present time there is only one designated PDD in the Town of Ridgeland, but as annexation proceeds in the future, all annexed tracts of 100 or more acres will be classified as PDDs and a District Plan will be prepared for each under the direction of the Planning Commission and the Town administrator. Such plans will follow the policies and regulations in the Comprehensive Plan and also the new Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines. District Plans will also include traffic and other community services impact analyses.

Uses will include, but not be limited to:

- Low- to medium-density mixed uses that may include retail centers and business parks. Retail centers and other commercial services will serve

the needs of the PDDs, but will not weaken the economic function of Downtown Ridgeland. Specialized mixed use "Town Center" types of development will be encouraged in PDDs.

- A variety of housing types and densities.
- Public facilities such as schools, cultural and recreational facilities, and hospitals.

➢ **Community Village Districts.** Community Villages are smaller scale--that is, 10 to 99 acres--new developments that have a distinct identity. These communities will contain a concentration of residential dwellings, and convenience retail stores, churches, home businesses or other uses that serve the immediate area. Most are likely to be extensions of the Existing Community. These areas are ideal locations for neighborhood-scale developments that promote the "small-town" or characteristics of Ridgeland. They are in locations currently served by central public water and sewer systems, or are located where existing services can be most efficiently expanded to support new development. Community Village development patterns and styles will reflect those of the existing, downtown-centered urban area. Environmentally sustainable design and construction will be encouraged.

Uses will include, but not be limited to:

- A mixture of low- to moderate-density, neighborhood-oriented land uses, primarily residential, but will include studios and offices of artists and designers and other home-based businesses.
- Public facilities and services necessary to adequately serve residents, such as community centers, parks, and churches.
- Preservation of historic sites and structures.
- Development that is compatible with the character of these communities.

A Village Plan will be prepared for each under the direction of the Planning Commission and the Town administrator. Such plans will follow the policies and regulations in the Comprehensive Plan and also the new Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines. Village Plans will also include traffic and other community services impact analyses.

☙ ***Highway Corridors*** are especially important in the transportation-centered location that Ridgeland is fortunate to occupy. Large-scale retail, especially "big-box" stores, and industrial and distribution center development

in the Town will be concentrated along I-95, especially at interchanges 18, 21 and 22.

Badly planned development along I-95, as well as along US 17 and US 278, could result in making Ridgeland less attractive for future investment and unpleasant for present residents with the degradation of the visual environment and increased traffic safety hazards. Poorly designed development, and unattractive signs and billboards can subtract from, rather than add to, the community's quality of life. Too many driveway cuts and turning points also limit the capacity of roadways.

Planning policies for development along these highways, and other future major arterial roads, should include at least the following:

- Access driveways spaced to enhance safe traffic flow;
- Traffic impact analysis required to ensure that necessary traffic management improvements (e.g., intersection improvements; traffic lights; turning, deceleration and acceleration lanes; road widenings) are implemented prior to completion of construction and that appropriate payment for those improvements is made by the responsible parties;
- Landscaped buffers along highways and parking lots to enhance the visual quality of new development;
- Sign requirements to prevent unattractive and excessive advertising displays;
- Design guidelines to encourage natural blending of colors and materials;
- Other design and development guidelines in coordination with surrounding Jasper County and neighboring Beaufort County.

GOAL & IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR LAND USE

Land use strategies impact, influence and implement all the other goals, strategies and recommendations in this Comprehensive Plan.

GOAL: Promote an economically viable and elevated quality of living and working environment through balanced growth, compatible land-use patterns, efficient public services and facilities.

OBJECTIVE #1: Enforce the Town's updated development regulations, especially the Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines, to implement the recommendations of this new *Comprehensive Plan.*

1. Utilize the performance standards of the zoning ordinance to promote the appropriate distribution, scale and pattern of land uses throughout the Town and its planning are.

2. Evaluate all development proposals for compliance with these updated regulations.

OBJECTIVE #2: Designate and implement Corridor Overlay Districts to protect the capacity and aesthetics of high visibility, critical highway corridors.

1. Design standards for Corridor Overlay Districts should be in addition to any underlying district standards applicable to a property and should be coordinated, where applicable, with Jasper County.

2. The Planning Commission should develop and prioritize a list of corridors for designation and embark upon their planning.

OBJECTIVE #3: Designate annexed areas that will be the sites of major development as special study areas and prepare Planned Development District or Community Village plans to guide and direct new development that meets the criteria set forth in this *Comprehensive Plan*, the Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidlelines.

Chapter 6: Community Facilities

6.1 OVERVIEW

A recent letter to the Jasper County Sun from Ridgeland showed that the Town is planning to provide the new infrastructure that will be needed in the near future to support the Town's growth. Town Administrator, Jason Taylor, stated:

> *"We are all well aware of the infrastructure that will be needed. We know that we will need new roads, new water and sewer capacity, more police and firemen, new parks for recreation, and a number of other services."*

The Town has already taken steps toward carrying out these infrastructure projects and is very aware of the cost burdens. The Town wants the new growth to pay for itself and has already undertaken measures to ensure this. For instance, they have initiated development fees to cover the cost of additional police and fire services. These fees will help cover the cost of providing service while the development is under construction and before it can be put on the tax rolls. Moreover, developers will help with infrastructure by being required to build their own roads and provide land for public space and recreation. There are traffic studies being taken in order to address the impact fees of upgrading the existing roads to serve these developments. These fees allow for a formal agreement that outlines what is being built, its impact on the existing community, and how it is to be paid for. Finally, developers pay a few that will go into a fund that is set aside to revitalize the existing downtown.

The community facilities element of the comprehensive plan addresses the current infrastructure and community programs that are essential to the health and growth of the Town of Ridgeland. As part of the new Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Ridgeland, the following areas will be evaluated:

- Water and sewer supply and treatment
- Storm Water Drainage
- Solid waste collection and disposal
- Police, fire, and emergency medical services
- Government facilities
- Educational facilities and libraries
- Public Space and Recreational Facilities
- Emergency preparedness

6.2 WATER, SEWER/SEPTIC, STORM WATER DRAINAGE, AND SOLID WASTE

☙ ***Water Usage.*** The Town of Ridgeland has its own water system that serves the incorporated area of the town. The Town of Ridgeland is served by a municipal water system of two wells. The large well pumps approximately 1,250 gallons per minute and the small well pumps about 7,000 gallons per minute. There are five water tanks located throughout Ridgeland's water system. The number of water taps has increased in the area due to the increase in development to approximately 1,400 to 1,500 taps. The Town uses approximately 700,000 gallons of water per day. The Town's water lines are notes on Map 6.1.

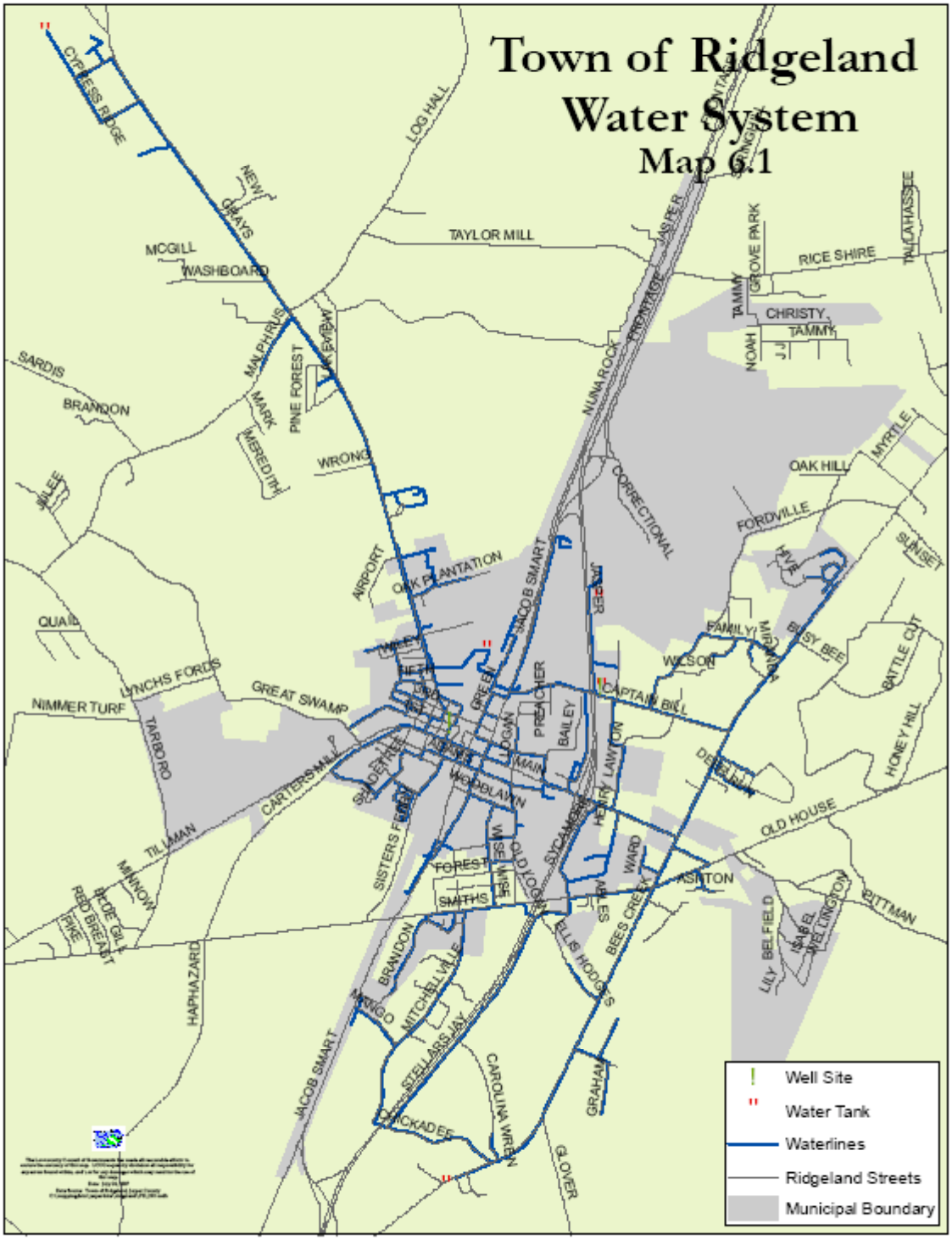
☙ ***Sewer/Septic Issues.*** The municipal sewer system covers the incorporated Town of Ridgeland. This septic system is serving more individuals as new developments grow outward from the Town including both residential and commercial developments. Existing sewer lines are shown on Map 6.2.

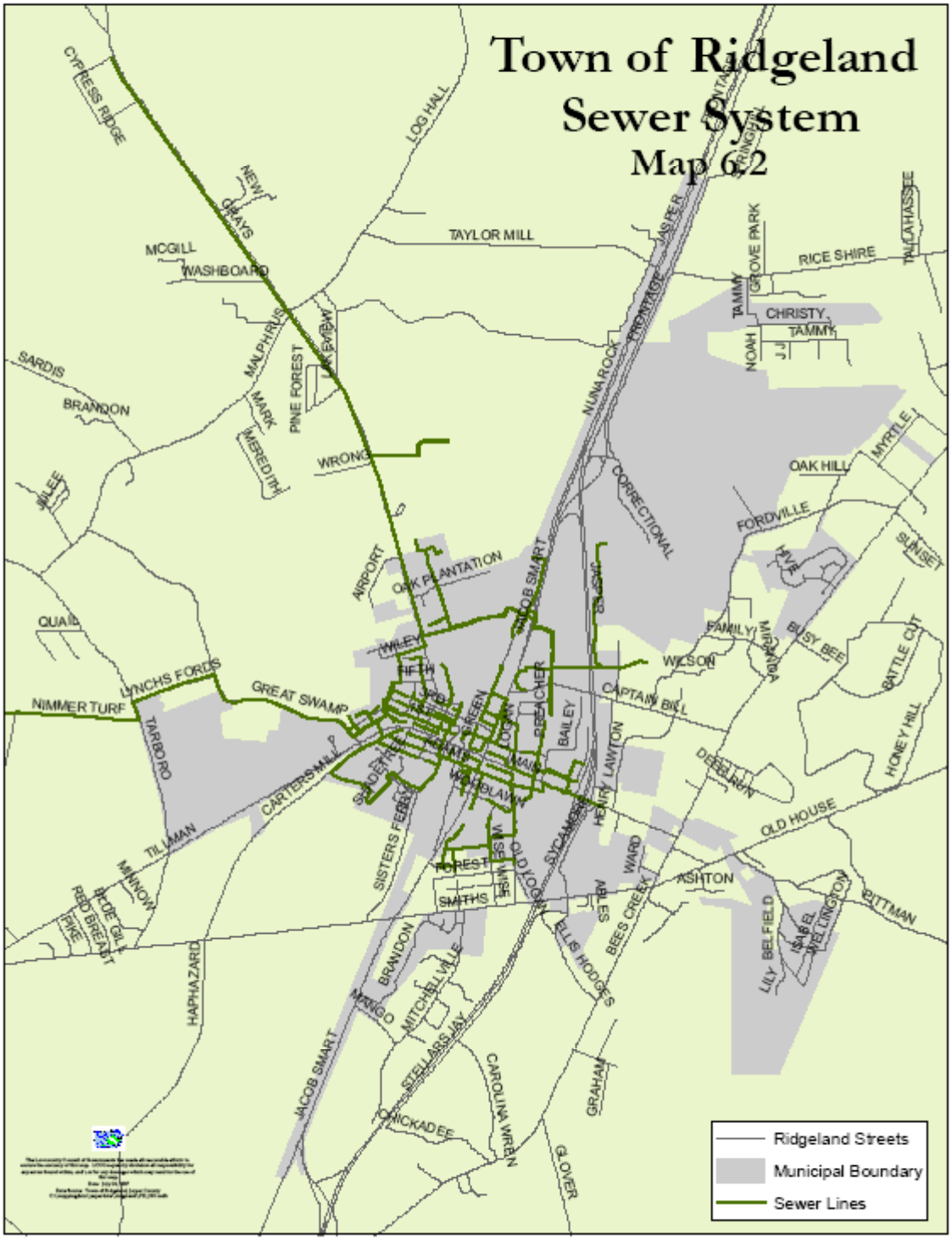
The Town's Plant is located on Preacher Street and fifteen pump stations are located within the Town. The plant has the capacity to treat up to 800,000 gallons per day (gdp) of effluent (liquid waste). The Town is currently using about 600,000 gdp, which is close to capacity. The Water and Sewer Department Manager is currently working with engineers on an expansion of this plant in order to handle the increased capacity that the area will see with its increased growth. DHEC requires that the plant initiate plans to expand because it is only allowed to reach an eighty percent capacity level. The Town will use the new developers to aid in paying for this increased level of service through place development fees.

☙ ***Storm Water Drainage.*** The South Carolina Department of Transportation currently handles the storm water drainage issues of the Town of Ridgeland. The Town has become increasingly concerned about the effects of storm water on the natural environment. The Town is currently working towards initiatives that will address these concerns such as short and long term recommendations to improve drainage.

☙ ***Solid Waste Collection and Disposal.*** The Town of Ridgeland has a contract with a private company called Waste Pro for Solid Waste Collection for curb-side pickup and recycling. There is a Waste Pro headquarters for South Carolina located in Ridgeland.

Jasper County provides six fully-staffed convenience centers (drop-off collection sites) across the County. Although Ridgeland contracts for curbside pick up of solid waste, town residents are also allowed to use the County's convenience centers at no charge. There is a county convenience center located in Ridgeland that is an acre or more, entirely paved with concrete pads for bins and equipment, and is fenced and landscaped. Sites are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week. The sites accept household solid waste for disposal as well as aluminum, plastic, glass, newspaper, cardboard, scrap metal, yard waste, batteries, used oil, anti-freeze, hydraulic fluids, and tires for recycling. The high quality configuration and operation of the Jasper County collection centers has resulted in them being used as a model for other counties. Garbage is compacted and delivered to Hickory Hill landfill.


Town of Ridgeland
Water System
Map 6.1
Well Site
Water Tank
Waterlines
Ridgeland Streets
Municipal Boundary
CYPRESS RIDGE
LOG HALL
NEW GRAYS
MCGILL
WASHBOARD
TAYLOR MILL
JASPER
GROVE PARK
RICE SHIRE
TALLAHASSEE
TAMMY
CHRISTY
TAMMY
NOAH
J.J.
SARDIS
BRANDON
MALPHRUS
MARK
MEREDITH
PINE FOREST
WRONG
NUNA ROCK
FRONTAGE
CORRECTIONAL
OAK HILL
MYRTLE
FORDVILLE
SUNSET
AIRPORT
OAK PLANTATION
JACOB SMART
QUAIL
LYNCHS FORDS
GREAT SWAMP
NIMMER TURF
TARBORO
CARTERS MILL
TILLMAN
MINNOW
RED BREAST
PIKE
HAPHAZARD
FAMILY
WILSON
BUSY BEE
BATTLE CUT
CAPTAIN BILL
PREACHER
BAILEY
HENRY LAWTON
DEBLIN
HONEY HILL
OLD HOUSE
WOODLAWN
MAIN
SYCAMORE
WARD
SISTERS FORD
FOREST
SMITHS
WISE
OLD LOG
ELLIS HODGES
BEES CREEK
WASHTON
BITTMAN
LILY BELFIELD
ISABEL
WELLINGTON
BRANDON
MITCHELLVILLE
STELLARSJAY
CAROLINA WREN
GRAHAM
GLOVER
CHICKADEE


Town of Ridgeland
Sewer System
Map 6.2
Ridgeland Streets
Municipal Boundary
Sewer Lines
CYPRESS RIDGE
LOG HALL
NEW
GRAYS
MCGILL
WASHBOARD
TAYLOR MILL
JASPER
GROVE PARK
RICE SHIRE
TALLAHASSEE
TAMMY
CHRISTY
TAMMY
NOAH
J.J.
SARDIS
BRANDON
MALPHRUS
MARK
MEREDITH
PINE FOREST
WRONG
NUNA ROCK
FRONTAGE
CORRECTIONAL
OAK HILL
MYRTLE
FORDVILLE
SUNSET
HAYES
FAMILY
MINNIE
BUSY BEE
BATTLE CUT
HONEY HILL
QUAIL
AIRPORT
OAK PLANTATION
JACOB SMART
JASPER
WILEY
FIFTH
WILSON
CAPTAIN BILL
LYNCHS FORDS
NIMMER TURF
GREAT SWAMP
TARBORO
CARTERS MILL
BEACHER
BAILEY
LOGAN
MAIN
HENRY LAWTON
DEERLAWN
HONEY HILL
OLD HOUSE
TILLMAN
MINNOW
SISTERS FERRY
FOREST
SMITHS
OLD LOGAN
SYCAMORE
WARD
ASHTON
BEES CREEK
BITTMAN
RED BREAST
PIKE
BLUE GILL
HAPHAZARD
BRANDON
MITCHELLVILLE
MANGO
ELLIS HODGES
LILY BELFIELD
ISABEL
WELLINGTON
JACOB SMART
STELLASSJAY
CAROLINA WREN
GRAHAM
CHICKADEE
GLOVER

6.3 POLICE, FIRE, AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

☙ ***Fire Department.*** The Town of Ridgeland Fire Department is located in the center of town and is currently the only facility. The department is rated by ISO as a class four fire department. The fire fighting force consists of approximately fifteen volunteers and ten full time employees who staff the station twenty-four hours per day. The fire department maintains these ten paid employees including the Chief. The Town of Ridgeland Fire Department maintains three pump trucks, one ladder truck, and one rescue/command truck.

The coverage area of the Town of Ridgeland Fire Department is the Town of Ridgeland. Any area outside of that five mile radius will require a new fire department facility. In the near future, there are to be multiple annexations into the city which will determine where a new facility is to be placed. The amount of population that moves into these areas will determine where the first new facility will go and how many new fire department employees will be needed.

☙ ***Police Department.*** The Town of Ridgeland has one police department located at One Town Square in the same complex as the Town Hall. The police force contains one chief of police, thirteen full time officers, seven reserve officers, and a two-man interdiction team. The Town of Ridgeland is in the process of planning for a new police department that is separate from the Town Hall in order to better meet the needs and safety of the community. As the population grows, there will be a growth in the force as new officers will be added to the department to maintain safety.

☙ ***Emergency Medical Services.*** Jasper County EMS serves the Town of Ridgeland with these first response services. The County EMS has one station located at 1509 Gray's Highway that serves the northern part of the county which includes the Town of Ridgeland. The station has one ambulance with two emergency care personnel who are on-site 24 hours a day, seven days a week at this location. There are two other EMS stations that serve other areas of the county that can be used as emergency services if the EMS for northern Jasper district is already attending to another emergency. Each of these stations also contains one ambulatory unit and two emergency care personnel who are on-site 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In the near future, there will be a need for an EMS station in the Town of Ridgeland as its population increases and these services must be expanded for the safety of the community.

☙ ***Government Facilities.*** The Town currently maintains a municipal complex at One Town Square, consisting of the Town Hall which includes the town's human resources, clerk, financial, planning, and police department. With the increasing demands of the community and annexations, the Town will need to have more employees and additional space at Town Hall. The Jasper County Courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is located in Ridgeland. It houses the Municipal Court in the Town Hall (shares the Council Chamber).

The Town of Ridgeland has developed plans for a new Town Hall, which will be better equipped to facilitate growth. Functions will be separated, and the Municipal Court and the police department will have their own facilities.

6.4 EDUCATION FACILITIES & LIBRARY

☙ ***Public Schools.*** Ridgeland is in the Jasper County Public School District, which is a single district that serves the entire county. There is one high school (Jasper County High), one middle school (Ridgeland Middle), one elementary school (Ridgeland Elementary), and one vocational school (The Academy for Career Excellence). For those who wish to put their children in a private school, the Town of Ridgeland has one private institution that serves grades K-12. Currently, there is a new school complex that has been built to serve the children in the area of the Town of Ridgeland. This complex contains an elementary, middle, and high school in one area for the Town of Ridgeland. All the students, K-12, from Northern Jasper County currently occupy the new space. Students from southern Jasper County currently occupy the old Jasper County High building and are to move into the new location by the end of October, 2007.

☙ ***Public Library.*** Ridgeland contains one library, the Jasper County, or Pratt Memorial Library, on Wilson Street which is a part of the Allendale-Hampton-Jasper Regional Library System. The headquarters for Jasper County is located at this branch in Ridgeland. Those who live in Hampton, Jasper or Allendale counties have access to all of the branches of this library system. Pratt Memorial Library has a branch manager, one full time employee and two substitute part time employees. This branch is open Monday through Saturday varying hours. Their services include internet, children and adult level books, Xerox, South Carolina History, CD, DVD, video, reference, genealogy, magazines, and newspapers.

6.5 PUBLIC SPACE AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Ridgeland is at a perfect location for all forms of recreational activities. From the beginning, it has been an area for hunting with many of the clubs headquartered located at area plantations. With its close location to freshwater and seawater, there is a wide array of water-related activities available. There are two parks called Ridge Point Square and Harold Turpin Park which has tennis courts for use. Also, Ridgeland has its own skate park. For those who enjoy golf, at Sgt. Jasper Country Club, there is a nine-hole golf course. The Town is aware that there is a need for new parks for recreations and is hoping to start the creation of this infrastructure with increased growth.

Public space can be used as a huge asset for the beautification and increase in the community's quality of life. These spaces can be used for parks or other recreational facilities. The Town of Ridgeland is working on creating incentives for the creation of public spaces in the community. The Town is working to preserve and encourage these types of spaces through the Open Space Natural Conservation District and the Outdoor Recreational Overlay District. The Town also now requires that new developers must dedicate land to for parks and recreational uses.

6.6 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

With its inland location, Ridgeland is not at as high of a risk for natural disasters in comparison to those coastal towns. However, since it is located along Interstate 95, it will be a strategic point when there are Hurricane and other forms of evacuation. Of all the forms of natural disasters, Ridgeland has the highest vulnerability to Hurricanes. The probabilities for hurricanes and tropical storms are highest from June 1 through November 30, with August and September being the most active months. It has a mid level probability of 39.5% that one or more hurricanes will strike the Town of Ridgeland in a year time frame. Hurricanes and storm surges up to level four have struck Jasper County and Ridgeland in the past. These storms, as well as lesser ones, have the potential to cause great damage.

There are also winter and spring storms that bring high wind and flooding to the area. It has a very high probability of 66.71% that a wind storm will hit the area in a year time span. However, even though Ridgeland is located in the Lowcountry region it does not have a high vulnerability to flooding. Only a small portion of the Town lies within 100 year flood zone and storm surge is less likely to reach the town because of its inland location.

In spite of the Town of Ridgeland's good fortune regarding storms and damage, the Town has been a key player in working with other community leaders in Jasper County and the Lowcountry region to develop and adopt a Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan "is the representation of the jurisdiction's commitment to reduce the risks from natural hazards, serving as a guide for decision makers as they commit resources to reducing the effects of natural hazards". Those who formally adopt the plan and are documented within it are eligible for FEMA pre-disaster mitigation funding.

6.7 GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal 1: Provide efficient and adequate delivery of public services to meet the needs of the population of the Town of Ridgeland and those who visit.

Goal 2: Pursue opportunities to expand and improve public services and/or facilities to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ***Maintain Community's Unique Character***
  - Provide development guidelines sensitive to the natural environment and community's objectives.
  - Maintain new growth that is at a balanced level and compliments the Town.

- ***Sewer/Septic and Water Concerns***
  - New developments should be encouraged, through the use of incentives such as low tie-in fees to use the sewer system instead of septic tanks.
  - Develop a long term plan which prioritizes a sewer expansion plan for new growth areas.

- ***Open Space/Natural Resource Conservation***
  - Determine the carrying capacity of the Town's natural resources and any man-made facilities.
  - Maintain current conservation standards and encourage the creation of more public green spaces.

- ***Capital Improvements***
  - Develop an inventory of public facilities and capacity with a map indicating the location of the facilities and the areas the Town is willing to serve in the future.

- Complete a five-to-ten year projection of future service demands and maintenance needs with a list of priority projects.
- Develop a capital improvements budget, listing the time, location and financial arrangements for different projects. Based on the recommendations of the consultants, the Town should prioritize projects and research grants and other sources of funding.
- Develop a plan for having all electric utility lines underground; this may include renegotiating electric and cable franchise agreements.
- Maintain new development taxes and fees to ensure the maintenance and development of community facilities is feasible.

6.8 SUMMARY

The community facilities element of the comprehensive plan addresses infrastructure and community services. Ridgeland has a great number of community facilities for its relatively small size. Moreover, the Town of Ridgeland is preparing itself well for future growth with the new schools, the required provision public open space by developers, increased development fees and the extension of utilities and other emergency services outward. The Town is continuously involved and motivated to prepare itself for future growth that best compliments and benefits Ridgeland.

Chapter 7: Population

7.1 POPULATION GROWTH

Since 1990 the pace of population growth in the Lowcountry has led that of the state, with Beaufort and Jasper counties consistently being two of the fastest growing. The number of people living in Ridgeland has also increased, but growth between 1990 and 2000 included the addition of a 1,200+ inmate population at the South Carolina Ridgeland Correctional Institution in 1995. Without the inmates Ridgeland's population would have been 1,437 in 2006

As a result, the table below shows Ridgeland's population in 2000 and 2006 both with and without the inmate component, which yield more realistic and comparable growth rates.

Table 7.1: Population Growth: Ridgeland and Jasper County

	Census 1990 Population	Census 2000 Population	Percent Change 1990-2000	July 1, 2006 Population	Percent Change 2000-2006
Jasper County	15,487	20,678	33.52%	21,809	5.47%
Ridgeland (with inmates)	1,071	2,610	143.70%	2,637	1.03%
Ridgeland (without inmates)	**1,071**	**1,310**	**22.32%**	**1,437**	**9.69%**
Hardeeville	1,583	1,793	13.27%	1,850	3.18%
Balance of Jasper County	12,833	16,367	27.54%	17,322	5.83%

7.2 POPULATION FORECASTS TO 2026

In the foreseeable future—the next 15 to 20 years—the Town of Ridgeland is very likely to undergo a different scale and type of growth than it has experienced in the past. To accommodate this new development it will be necessary for the Town to expand beyond its current municipal boundaries by means of annexation.

At this stage it is not possible to estimate what levels of population growth this will represent and when it will occur. There a number of very large-scale residential and mixed-use developments that would be annexed into the Town

are in the preliminary planning stages. However the present state of the housing market and related financial and economic conditions—nationally, regionally and locally—make the timing of development uncertain at this time.

In spite of these reservations, it is useful to have population projections as benchmarks against which to monitor growth. An essential condition is that they should be updated annually as the housing market and the economy change and as planned developments come closer to being implemented.

Two sets of forecasts were prepared for Ridgeland:

- One using the average annual growth rate (2.23%) between 1990 and 2000;
- The other using the average annual population growth rate (1.62%) between 2000 and 2006.

To develop population forecasts, the average annual growth rates, without the inmate population, were utilized to give a more accurate view of likely trends; the population shown for the base year 2006 also does not include the inmates at the Ridgeland Correctional Institution.

Table 7.2: Ridgeland Population Projections 2006-2026

Ridgeland Population Projections 2006 - 2026			
	1990-2000 Rate	**Current Population 2006**	**2000-2006 Rate**
Average Rate/Year	*2.23%*	1,437	*1.62%*
2011	1,610		1,556
2016	1,804		1,684
2021	2,021		1,823
2026	2,264		1,974

7.3 INCOMES AND POVERTY

Significantly, as the population grew, the economic conditions of the population improved as well, both absolutely and in comparison to the rest of Jasper County. Ridgeland residents have higher incomes than previously and a smaller portion of the population is living below the poverty level than in 1990.

Table 7.3: Ridgeland and Jasper County Income and Poverty Levels

Ridgeland and Jasper County Income and Poverty Levels

	Median Household Income		**% Change 1990-2000**	**% Individuals Below Poverty Level**		**% Change 1990-2000**
	1990	**2000**		**1990**	**2000**	
Ridgeland	$16,029	$27,679	42.09%	21.5%	20.0%	-6.98%
Hardeeville	$18,466	$28,977	36.27%	28.4%	27.7%	-2.46%
Jasper County	$18,071	$30,727	41.19%	25.3%	20.7%	-18.18%
South Carolina	$26,256	$37,082	29.19%	15.4%	14.1%	-8.44%

The increase in income and decline in poverty rates is a result of improved employment conditions in the Town, the County and the Region. Section 5 of this document discusses that in detail.

7.4 AGE GROUPS

AGE GROUPS

Unlike the rest of the Lowcountry and the state of South Carolina, and the entire United States, Census data showed that the percentage of Ridgeland's andJasper County's older population did not increase between 1990 and 2000. As the table on the following page illustrates, the population aged 65 and over declined significantly; the population aged 45 to 64 (a number of whom would be classified as "Baby-Boomers") also decreased, although to a lesser extent. Young children and school-age children also declined as a percentage of the population. Significant growth, however, occurred among the population aged 18 to 44. This is the group that generally makes up much of the labor force and has the largest rate of new household formation.

Table 7.4: Age Group Composition

Age Group Composition: Percent of Population												
	0-5 years old		6-17 years old		18 - 24 years		25 - 44 years		45 - 64 years		65 years +	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Ridgeland	8.70%	5.90%	18.80%	9.00%	9.80%	16.60%	27.80%	44.50%	17.20%	15.80%	17.70%	8.20%
Hardeeville	0.20%	9.30%	23.40%	21.60%	10.50%	11.40%	30.80%	30.30%	14.80%	16.30%	9.10%	10.90%
Jasper County	8.80%	7.20%	22.80%	19.50%	9.70%	10.30%	28.10%	30.70%	17.90%	21.20%	12.60%	11.00%
Lowcountry Total	8.30%	7.00%	19.20%	17.90%	12.40%	10.70%	30.10%	27.80%	17.70%	22.50%	12.40%	14.20%
South Carolina	7.30%	6.60%	19.00%	18.60%	11.60%	10.20%	31.90%	29.60%	18.50%	23.00%	11.30%	12.10%

7.5 ETHNICITY

The years since 2000 (see Table _.5 on the following page) have seen a truly notable increase in the Hispanic population of the Lowcountry, with Jasper County's rates of increase truly the most dramatic. [**Note:** Recent —that is, post-Census—race and origin data is only available at the County level; the trends are applicable to the Town of Ridgeland]. Given the difficulties of obtaining truly accurate data about the total Hispanic population in communities throughout the US, it is likely that even these comparatively high numbers are low.

The growth of the Hispanic population has implications for the future of Ridgeland. It has the potential for altering the historic balance between the African-American and white segments of the population. The fact that the Hispanic populace has different social and cultural values than the long-term residents may introduce a new set of needs to be met. The different perception of "community" among these newcomers may mean that a special communication program will be needed to ensure that Hispanic residents understand Ridgeland's planning and development objectives.

Table 7.5: Ethnicity

			Race			Origin
		Total Population	Total White	Total Black	Other Races	Total Hispanic
Beaufort	**2000**	120,937	89,065	29,340	2,532	8,208
	2005	137,849	104,351	30,141	3,357	11,921
	2006	142,045	107,883	30,590	3,572	12,618
	% Change 2000-2006	17.45%	21.13%	4.26%	41.07%	53.73%
Colleton	**2000**	38,264	21,478	16,180	606	551
	2005	39,430	22,519	16,228	683	737
	2006	39,467	22,679	16,106	682	758
	% Change 2000-2006	3.14%	5.59%	-0.46%	12.54%	37.57%
Hampton	**2000**	21,386	9,301	11,918	167	547
	2005	21,329	9,278	11,923	128	630
	2006	21,268	9,223	11,844	201	643
	% Change 2000-2006	-0.55%	-0.84%	-0.62%	20.36%	17.55%
Jasper	**2000**	**20,678**	**9,472**	**10,941**	**265**	**1,190**
	2005	**21,398**	**10,319**	**10,825**	**254**	**1,872**
	2006	**21,809**	**10,595**	**10,895**	**319**	**2,258**
	% Change 2000-2006	**5.47%**	**11.86%**	**-0.42%**	**20.38%**	**89.75%**
Lowcountry	**2000**	201,265	129,316	68,379	3,570	10,496
	2005	220,006	146,467	69,117	4,422	15,160
	2006	224,589	150,380	69,435	4,774	16,277
	% Change 2000-2006	11.59%	16.29%	1.54%	33.73%	55.08%

Note: The numbers of white, black, other and Hispanic add up to more than the total county populations because Hispanic residents have been counted as members of one or more of the other races as well.

7.5 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Ridgeland's levels of educational attainment, including the percentage of adults who have graduated from high school, are generally better than those of the rest of Jasper County. However, the percentage of adults with either two-year or four-year degrees, though, is definitely lower than the four-county Lowcountry average or the South Carolina average. This has important implications for economic in Ridgeland, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 7.6: Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment for Population over 25 Years Old										
	Less than 9th Grade		Some High School		High School Grad		Associate Degree		Bachelor Degree	
	Percent of Adult Population		Percent of Adult Population		Percent of Adult Population		Percent of Adult Population		Percent of Adult Population	
	1990	**2000**	**1990**	**2000**	**1990**	**2000**	**1990**	**2000**	**1990**	**2000**
Ridgeland	10.63%	14.64%	27.51%	25.68%	35.08%	34.11%	4.51%	1.39%	5.82%	6.45%
Hardeeville	12.53%	19.81%	24.94%	24.68%	40.57%	32.94%	5.86%	2.33%	3.33%	2.65%
Jasper County	21.65%	12.39%	23.81%	22.46%	35.06%	35.94%	4.03%	3.74%	2.44%	6.16%
Lowcountry Total	11.39%	6.87%	15.83%	13.24%	30.37%	29.22%	5.79%	5.98%	12.90%	15.82%
South Carolina	13.62%	8.31%	18.09%	15.35%	29.50%	29.97%	6.33%	6.68%	11.22%	13.54%

Chapter 8: Transportation

Since its beginnings, the development and the fortunes of the Town of Ridgeland have been dependent upon transportation more than most communities. Its early growth (as Gopher Hill) was due to the completion of the Charleston and Savannah Railway in 1860 and the location of a railroad depot in the small village (see the "Historic Resources" section for details and historic maps).

During the second quarter of the 20th century Ridgeland's economy again received the benefit of transportation when US 17 became the major north-south east coast highway to rapidly growing Florida. Gas stations, restaurants and motels sprang up to serve travelers. The next major advance in transportation, though, was not beneficial to the Town; the construction of Interstate 95 drew traffic away from US 17 and Ridgeland. The eventual construction of an interchange intersecting with Main Street was a partial remedy.

More recently the Town has come to benefit once again from transportation; its strategic location is recognized by businesses and investors, as discussed in the "Economy" section of this Plan.

The foresight and planning already underway in the Town will maintain these benefits and take advantage of new trends in providing transportation in the Lowcountry. At the same time, Ridgeland will be to avoid future problems such as traffic congestion and after-the-fact funding of transportation improvements necessitated by growth.

There are a number of transportation issues that the Town is already addressing or that need to be addressed—both as soon as possible and on a continuing basis. Advance planning will ensure that they are opportunities for Ridgeland's future rather than eventual problems:

- Development at Interstate 95 interchanges
- Traffic impact of new developments
- Continuation of traditional grid pattern
- Bicycle and pedestrian movement
- Public transit readiness
- Freight movement

All of these matters are also dealt with by the *Lowcountry Long-Range Regional Transportation Plan* (April 2007), required by SCDOT and the responsibility of the Lowcountry Council of Governments. Policy recommendations for the Town of Ridgeland will, as a result, not be in conflict with those for the Region.

The following sub-sections consist of brief discussions of each of the issues and policy recommendations. All of the transportation recommendations in this Plan are expected to protect and limit the disruption to the natural resources of the Town now and in the future.

8.1 DEVELOPMENT AT INTERSTATE 95 INTERCHANGES

Ridgeland is extremely fortunate to have three Interstate 95 interchanges within its present municipal boundaries, with a fourth (Exit 18) likely to accompany expected annexations.

Development plans for each interchange should be prepared in order to ensure that:

- The Town's many planning and economic development goals and objectives, as outlined in this Comprehensive Plan and stated elsewhere by Ridgeland, are met;
- Present and projected traffic movements, both freight and passenger, are facilitated.

This will include designating the appropriate types and amounts of land use—such as large tracts to be utilized for distribution centers and other light industrial purposes at Exits 22 and 18—at each interchange and ensuring that provisions of the Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines are enforced.

As well, traffic at each interchange should be monitored yearly, using SCDOT's Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes, the SCDOT TransCAD traffic model (currently being calibrated for the Lowcountry) and traffic generation projections for each expected development. By doing so, the Town will be able to anticipate interchange improvements needed ahead of time and to ensure that those projects are on the LCOG/SCDOT project list to obtain Federal and State funding.

8.2 TRAFFIC IMPACT OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

While traffic movement within Ridgeland is now relatively uncongested, expected residential, commercial and industrial development will change that condition. The type of change likely can already be seen at Exit 21 of Interstate 95; the Boat and RV Megastore, for instance, is already adding vehicles to an interchange that was designed before the present tourism-related development (motels, restaurants and gas stations) were built.

The Town's recent requirement that developers provide traffic impact analyses and to contribute financially to the mitigation of potential traffic problems is essential if future growth is to be a benefit rather than a burden. Innovative "traffic-calming" solutions, in keeping with Ridgeland's existing community patterns and design, should be utilized, including roundabouts/traffic circles.

8.3 CONTINUATION OF TRADITIONAL GRID PATTERN

This has been recommended in the "Land Use" section of this Plan and an incentive to encourage it is included in the Zoning Ordinance:

> **Traditional Grid Pattern Incentive**
> Residential developments that are designed as an extension of the Town of Ridgeland's traditional "grid" street pattern are eligible to receive a density bonus of ten (10) percent.

In addition to the community design and visual benefits, roads and streets laid along a gridiron configuration offer the greatest amount of flexibility for traffic management and for alternative transportation modes, as is discussed in the two following sub-sections.

8.4 BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

A number of local, Regional, state and national trends are increasing the importance of walking and cycling as alternative forms of transportation. The outcomes of improving the availability of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in Ridgeland include:

- The opportunity to reduce reliance on the automobile;
- A less congested road system;
- A reduction of ground level ozone and reduction of dependence on fossil fuels;
- More livable and walkable communities.

In planning terms, cycling and walking will be facilitated by using the following two approaches:

1. Linkages between residential areas, community facilities, cultural and natural resources should be incorporated into development plans.

2. Commercial, residential and mixed-use developments should include lanes and sidewalks for bicyclists and pedestrians, bicycle parking and links among residential and commercial nodes.

The Town's Zoning Ordinance already contains an incentive to encourage these inclusions:

> **Pedestrian Walkways Incentive**
> Developments which install a system of pedestrian walkways that connect to the Town of Ridgeland's existing sidewalk circulation system are eligible to receive a density bonus of ten (10) percent. To be eligible for the density bonus, all inhabitable units within the development must be located within 500 feet of such a walkway.

8.5 PUBLIC TRANSIT READINESS

The reasons for encouraging the provision of public transportation services are similar to the outcomes for bicycle and pedestrian facilities listed on the previous page.

The Lowcountry Council of Governments and Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority (dba Palmetto Breeze) are working together to plan the expansion and extension of a variety of public transit services throughout the Region. At this time scheduled fixed route service is not feasible in Ridgeland: as population numbers and densities increase, such bus transit is likely to become viable in the future when the following "Transit Propensity Thresholds" (recently proposed by SCDOT) are met:

Transit Propensity	Household Density (households/acre)	Employment Density (jobs/acre)
Low	0-3	0-4
Medium	3-10	4-20
High	More than 10	More than 20

To ensure that the Town is able to take advantage of future public transit services, new development should follow the same grid pattern as that of the original community; cul-de-sacs should be avoided as they cannot accommodate buses.

8.6 FREIGHT MOVEMENT

It is now a fact in the US that freight transportation and economic development are closely related, or, as a presenter at a SCDOT/FHWA (Federal Highways) training session advised, "Be 'freight-friendly' …. This will lead to decisions by site locators regarding operational advantages."

Future employment-generating light industrial development in Ridgeland is likely to be related to freight transportation (both trucks and railways) logistics and centered around I 95 interchanges, as discussed in the "Economy Section."

To make sure that Ridgeland can take advantage of its strategic location and freight transportation advantages, the following should be implemented:

1. Plan highway and other improvement projects that will improve the flow of freight into, out of and within Ridgeland. Trucks are the predominant form of freight transportation in the Lowcountry (as well as the entire US) and are expected to remain so. Both their needs (e.g., turning radii at intersections) and the conflicts they can create (e.g., turning movements off busy highways that do not have turning lanes) should be taken into account.

2. Encourage the development of a specialized truck service center at an I95 intersection as an economic development opportunity and to make a statement about the Town's "freight-friendliness." At the present time there is not such a facility in the area.

3. Coordinate freight transportation planning efforts with Economic Development planning in Jasper County, the Lowcountry and in the Savannah area to ensure that future internal and externally-generated demands for transportation networks and facilities are identified and taken into account.

Chapter 9: Implementing the Comprehensive Plan

Once adopted, the Comprehensive Plan can be implemented through a number of techniques including projects, programs, administrative procedures, and legislative actions taken by the Council of the Town of Ridgeland. The listing of strategies presented in the preceding chapters can be used as a checklist to assist the Town with its annual review of its progress in implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Many of the implementation strategies can be grouped into projects or programs. Included here are the major projects which should be initiated soon after approval of the Comprehensive Plan.

1. **Update the County's Zoning Ordinance to reflect the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan.**

Although the Zoning Ordinance is less than two years old and reflects most of the policy recommendations contained in this Plan, changes are needed to accommodate both new policies and changes in the socio-economic and development environment in Ridgeland and the Region.

2. **Prepare a 5-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP).**

A CIP is necessary to identify and project infrastructure requirements including water, sewer, parks, roads, public safety facilities, and other capital projects. The CIP is a useful tool in prioritizing facility needs, and identifying costs and funding options for those facilities. The CIP should be updated on an annual basis in conjunction with the County's overall budgeting process.

3. **Develop and implement an impact review and permit tracking system for new development.**

An updated development review system will enable the Town to review new developments more efficiently for compliance with regulations, and for cumulative impacts on natural resources and community facilities. A computerized permit tracking system, designed to work in conjunction with a GIS system, will give Ridgeland the ability to show development trends graphically for future planning purposes.

4. **Enhance working relationships with local, state and federal agencies, surrounding counties, municipalities, and special interest groups.**

The Town should strengthen relationships with the following organizations: Jasper County School District, state and federal regulatory authorities (Corps of Engineers, US Fish & Wildlife, SCDHEC, SCDNR, OCRM, FEMA, USEPA, the National Parks Service, and others), environmental groups (Soil & Water Conservation Service, Clemson Extension Service, State Forestry Commission, conservancy groups, large land owners and foresters), active County and regional economic development groups, local historic preservation groups, and others as identified.