

Town of Irmo, SC Comprehensive Plan



Planning Commission | July 10, 2023

—

Public Hearing & Final Adoption by Town Council
August 15, 2023

Town of Irmo Comprehensive Plan 2023

Town Council

Barry A. Walker, Sr.; Mayor
William Danielson, Mayor Pro-Tem
Kelly Busch
Erik Sickinger
Dr. Barbara Waldman

Planning Commission

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Robert Cox
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Staff

Courtney Dennis, Town Administrator
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Karly Lever, Zoning Clerk

**RESOLUTION OF
THE TOWN OF IRMO PLANNING COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATION OF ADOPTION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994, the Town of Irmo Planning Commission has revised the Comprehensive Plan which contains all elements required by the *South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994* as amended in 2007; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, pursuant to S.C. Code Sections 6-29-520(B), desires to recommend to the Town of Irmo Council the adoption by ordinance the plan;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Town of Irmo Planning Commission that the revised Comprehensive Plan, including the text and maps, are recommended to the Town of Irmo Council for adoption by ordinance, after public hearing, in accordance with S.C. Code Section 6-29-530.

Adopted by the affirmative votes of at least a majority of the entire membership of the Planning Commission this 10th day of July, 2023.


Chairman

ATTEST: 
Secretary

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose and Organization of the Plan

The following information has been developed to serve as a general policy guide for Town officials and citizens to use in planning for future growth and development in and around the Town of Irmo. The plan relates existing conditions to a corresponding list of short-, medium-, and long-term goals that reflect how the town should grow over the next ten years in order to maintain and enhance the current quality of life that makes Irmo such a distinct and desirable community in which to live. The ultimate goal of the plan is to establish a set of guidelines and procedures that will serve as a tool for making informed decisions about land development, economic growth, infrastructure improvements, housing and transportation needs, and protecting natural and cultural resources.

In addition to serving as a valuable short- and long-range planning tool, the comprehensive plan also satisfies the requirements of the South Carolina Local Government Planning Enabling Act of 1994 which establishes the comprehensive plan as an essential first step in the local government planning process. The law tasks the local planning commission with establishing and maintaining this planning process which ultimately results in the systematic preparation and continuous evaluation of the different elements of the plan. Once adopted, the plan will become the blueprint for future growth and development as well as for the preparation and adoption of tools for implementation of the plan to include a zoning ordinance and land development regulations.

Once the comprehensive plan is complete it must be adopted by the local government through the following process:

1. A resolution by the Planning Commission recommending the plan to the local governing body. This resolution must be recorded in the Planning Commission's official minutes and the recommended plan must be forwarded on to the local governing body;
2. A public hearing which must be held at least 30 days after publishing a notice or advertisement in a general circulation newspaper in the community;
3. An ordinance adopted by the governing body which cannot be approved until the Planning Commission has officially recommended the plan as described above.

Because of the dynamic nature of the economy and other factors that can impact a city, town or region, it is important to periodically review and make changes to the comprehensive plan. State law requires that the plan be re-evaluated at least every five years to reflect changes in the growth or direction of development taking place in the community. This can be done all at once or incrementally (i.e., element by element). Every ten years, however, the planning commission must prepare and recommend a new plan to

the governing body. According to this schedule the plan that follows will need to be replaced by a new plan in 2027.

The framework for organizing the Comprehensive Plan as outlined in the SC Planning and Enabling Act requires an examination of the following nine (9) planning elements:

- (1) **Population:** this element includes information related to growth and development trends and detailed demographic characteristics such as age, race, sex, income, poverty and educational attainment.
- (2) **Economic Development:** this element includes information on labor force characteristics, employment distributions by place of work and an analysis of consumer expenditures and gross sales characteristics.
- (3) **Natural Resources:** this element includes a discussion of key environmental characteristics that reflect conservation and mitigation priorities as well as physical limitations to future development.
- (4) **Cultural Resources:** this element includes an inventory of key historic and cultural sites and districts, unique commercial, residential, natural or scenic resources, and any other feature or facility relating to the cultural aspects of the community.
- (5) **Community Facilities:** this element includes a discussion of water and sewer infrastructure, solid waste collection and disposal, fire and police protection, emergency medical services, government and educational facilities and parks and recreational resources.
- (6) **Land Use:** this element includes an analysis of existing and future land use, development capacity, neighborhood and town center development plans, annexation priorities, and zoning and land development ordinances. This element is influenced by all of the other elements and will serve as a primary framework for documenting the development objectives of the town.
- (7) **Housing:** this element includes a discussion of the location, type, age, condition, and affordability of housing as well as occupancy and ownership characteristics.
- (8) **Transportation:** this element includes an inventory of the town's current transportation infrastructure including functional class of roadways, traffic characteristics, transit options, and availability of bike and pedestrian facilities. The element will also discuss the relationship to the regional transportation system and local, regional, state and federal transportation planning process.
- (9) **Priority Investment:** this element is intended to help prioritize and allocate funding for infrastructure improvement projects identified in the other elements of the comprehensive plan.

(10) Resiliency: this element considers the impacts of flooding, high water, and natural hazards on individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, economic development, public infrastructure and facilities, and public health, safety and welfare.

The document is organized so that each chapter focuses on one of these ten elements. In accordance with the SC Planning and Enabling Act the chapter will begin with a discussion of existing conditions, including the presentation of relevant maps, tables, and figures; and will conclude with a list of goals and implementable action strategies that reflect the Town's needs and priorities.

The goals are designed to be broad-based policy statements that reflect the desired vision for future growth and development. The strategies are designed to be realistic and implementable actions that will help to realize these goals, and that can be achieved during the life of the plan. In addition, a general timeframe for implementation accompanies each strategy. These timeframes are broken into the following four categories:

- **Short-term** strategies generally consist of local and regional coordination efforts and planning projects or inventories that do not require considerable staff time or financial resources to implement. Such strategies should be considered for implementation within a 1- or 2-year timeframe.
- **Mid-term** strategies consist of planning projects or policy changes that have an immediate need but may require a significant amount of staff time, coordination and public participation efforts, and the allocation of financial resources to implement. Such strategies should be considered for implementation within a 2- to 5-year timeframe.
- **Long-term** strategies consist of major planning projects or changes in policies or administrative operations and may require considerable staff time, the procurement of professional services, and/or the allocation of significant financial resources. Such strategies should be considered for implementation within a 5- to 10-year timeframe.
- **Ongoing** strategies consist of local and regional coordination efforts, inventories, database maintenance, and planning projects that should be considered for immediate and ongoing implementation.

In addition to providing a list of goals and strategies at the end of each element/chapter, they are also summarized in a policy/plan implementation matrix presented in Appendix A.

1.2. Vision and Guiding Principles

Establishing a vision and guiding principles represents an important first step in planning for the future because it provides a framework from which to develop key policy recommendations. Based on discussions and feedback from the Irmo Planning Commission,

the following vision statement and guiding principles were developed to provide the town with a roadmap for how to grow and develop over the next 5 years.

Vision

The Town of Irmo will provide for the integration of new growth and development that is in harmony with the existing character and quality of life of our community. In order to realize this vision, the Comprehensive Plan will adhere to the following guiding principles:

Guiding Principles

- Foster the development of a distinctive, attractive community, with a strong sense of place
- Grow the town by promoting mixed-use, infill development opportunities including the creation of a Town Center District
- Provide a range of housing types
- Support a diverse and resilient economic base
- Provide a variety of transportation options
- Preserve our natural and cultural heritage
- Facilitate intergovernmental cooperation and coordination

All the goals and action strategies contained within the Plan are intended to be consistent with these guiding principles and represent a step towards achieving the overall vision for future growth and development.

2. POPULATION

2.1. Introduction

The population element of the Comprehensive Plan describes how the town's population and demographic characteristics have changed over the past several decades. Information presented is based on a combination of decennial census data and interim demographic estimates obtained from the American Community Survey (ACS). Information will be provided on a variety of community characteristics including:

- Population Change
- Age Race, and Gender Distributions
- Income Characteristics
- Poverty Levels
- Educational Attainment

The town of Irmo is located in the northeastern portion of Lexington County at the intersection of SC 60 and St. Andrews Road. The town, which extends into Richland County, encompasses approximately 9.2 square miles. Land use in the Town is primarily dominated by low density, suburban-type residential and commercial development and does not have a discernable historic town center or central business district. Most commercial activity stretches along the major thoroughfares of St. Andrews Road and Lake Murray Blvd (SC 60). The Town continues to serve as both an important bedroom community and economic engine for the Columbia Metropolitan area.

2.2. Inventory

2.2.1. Population Change

During the 1980s the town embarked on an aggressive annexation strategy targeting developed and undeveloped residential subdivisions in the area. This strategy accounted for a significant population increase and expansion in land area during this time. Since the 1980s, however, the population of the town has slowed considerably as the supply of undeveloped, buildable land has decreased. This, coupled with an aging population and declining household size accounts for the limited growth between 1990 and the present as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Since 2010, the town has experienced a slight increase in population (~700 people) with a couple of new residential developments and annexations. This trend is expected to continue into the future as higher density developments occur within the town.

Population projections for the Irmo area (which includes areas well outside of the town's existing municipal limits) show that over the next thirty years the population will grow dramatically as areas close into downtown Columbia are expected to absorb a large share of the regional population growth. Much of this growth will need to be accommodated through adaptive reuse of developed properties and through higher density development.

Figure 2.1: Population Change

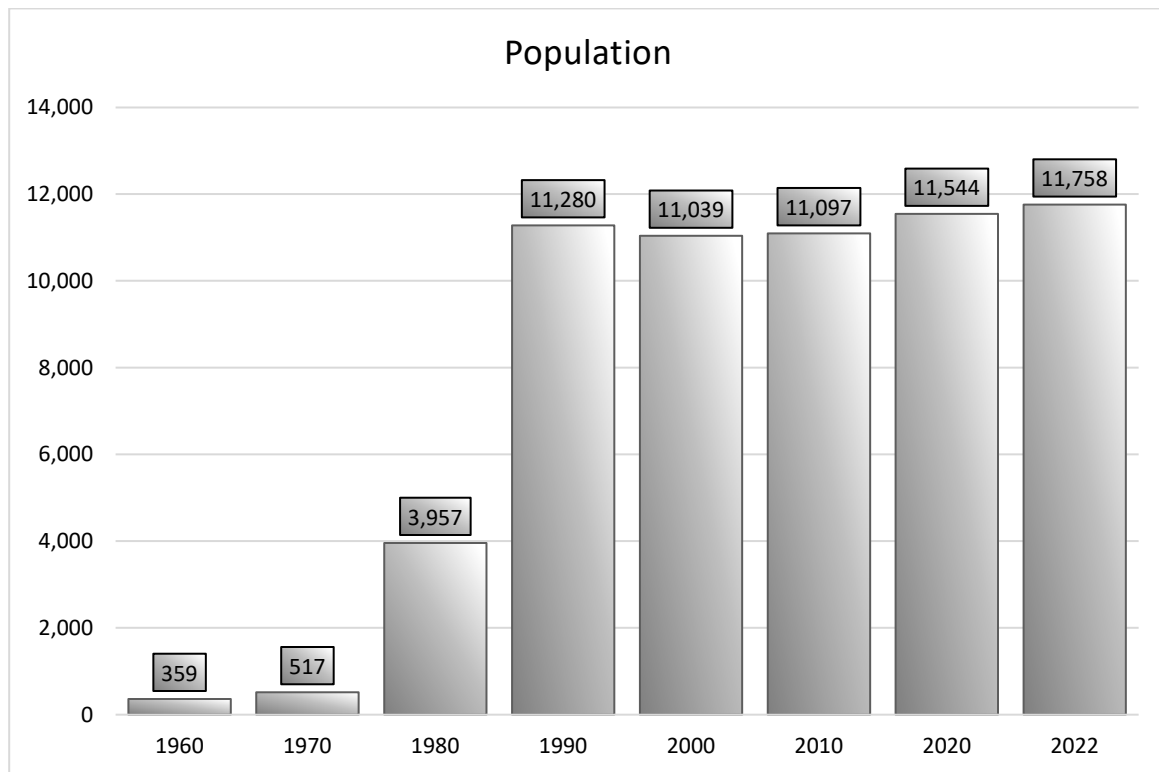


Table 2.1: Population Projections

Planning Sector	2010 Population	2040 Projections	% Change
Dutch Fork	26,159	28,612	9.38%
Irmo	45,230	86,278	90.75%
St. Andrews (Lex. Co)	8,114	8,836	8.90%
St. Andrews (Rich. Co)	28,032	33,292	18.76%

Because the composition of a municipality seldom reflects the size of the larger area of which it is an integral part, the Town will need to actively engage neighboring jurisdictions to coordinate land use planning activities and municipal service delivery in order to protect and maintain the areas existing quality of life. Furthermore, the Town needs to cooperatively examine its annexation strategy in order to determine whether the best way for the Town to grow is (1) through continued annexation, which can have a high municipal service cost and low return on investment or (2) through the facilitation of higher density development and adaptive reuse of existing properties, which can increase the tax base but maximize efficiencies in the provision of services such as police and fire. The Town should consider conducting a more detailed study providing a financial analysis of the costs and benefits of annexation in order to determine the best future growth strategy.

2.2.2. Demographic Characteristics

In 1990, the white population was 88% of the total population, while the black population accounted for 11%. By 2000, the percentages were 78% and 19% respectively, and by 2021 the ACS estimates were 70% white and 28% black. The population of other minority groups has also increased over this same period.

The shift in racial demographic make-up may not necessarily be explained all by an out-migration of white residents, but may also have something to do with the fact that the Town has seen a relative reduction in household size which is indicative of an aging population as children grow up and move away from the area. This is reflected in a reduction of average household size from 3.08 in 1990 to 2.81 in 2000 to 2.53 in 2021.

Table 2.2: Racial Characteristics

Race	2021 ACS	2010 Census	2000 Census
White	8,156	7,604	8,473
Black or African American	3,190	2,910	2,225
American Indian and Alaska Native	69	0	28
Asian	482	107	158
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0	9
Hispanic or Latino	287	192	157 ¹
Some other race	0	0	49
Two or more races	317	272	97

¹ For the 2000 Census the “Hispanic or Latino” category is not mutually exclusive with other categories.

The population is aging; but it is not unexpected or out of line with what is happening nationally. People are living longer, and generally retiring in place as opposed to migrating to retirement-oriented locations. The Town's elderly population (65 and over) tripled between 1990 to 2021, as did the proportion of elderly versus the general population. Projections indicate that this trend is likely to continue into the future, however, recent years have seen an influx of younger families moving into the area because of the good schools and quality of life amenities. This is an important point as the town should make it a priority to continue marketing the town as a viable destination for families with young children.

On the other hand, the rapid growth of the elderly population should also continue to be of great concern. As this segment of the population increases the town will need to be prepared to address the needs of the aging community. Two of the principal concerns of an aging population are (1) the physical or built environment in which they live, and (2) housing. In response to these concerns, the town should consider, and this plan should address the following issues as they relate to the town's growing elderly population:

- **Transportation:** Make getting to places easier. Focus on alternatives to the automobile: i.e., sidewalks, bikeways, and public transportation. Additionally, the town should require installation of easy-to-read directional signs, ramps, and hand rails in all public buildings.
- **Social Environment:** Increase the variety, accessibility and attractiveness of places where people meet, whether by accident or appointment, including passive recreation opportunities such as those available at the two Town of Irmo parks.

In regard to gender composition, the Town of Irmo has a slightly higher female population representing 52% of the total population. This ratio has been generally static since 2000. Tables 2.3 and 2.4 below illustrate these trends in age and gender.

Table 2.3: Age Characteristics

	2000	Pct Total	2010	Pct Total	2021 ACS	Pct Total
0 to 4	821	8.03%	776	6.99%	475	4.10%
5 to 14	1,963	19.21%	1,497	13.49%	1,349	11.65%
15 to 19	855	8.37%	837	7.54%	735	6.35%
Under 20	2,818	35.61%	3,110	28.03%	2,559	22.10%
20 to 24	479	4.69%	648	5.84%	517	4.46%
25 to 34	1,572	15.38%	1,555	14.01%	2,036	17.58%
35 to 44	2,251	22.03%	1,513	13.63%	1,283	11.08%
45 to 54	1,770	17.32%	1,738	15.66%	1,476	12.75%
55 to 64	803	7.86%	1,401	12.63%	1,948	16.82%
20 - 64	6,875	67.28%	6,855	61.77%	7,260	62.69%
65 to 74	329	3.22%	725	6.53%	1,020	8.81%
75 to 84	149	1.46%	303	2.73%	581	5.02%
85+	47	0.46%	104	0.94%	161	1.39%
65 and Older	525	5.14%	1,132	10.20%	1,762	15.21%
Median Age:	34	n/a	37	n/a	40	n/a

Table 2.4: Gender Characteristics

	2000	Pct Total	2010	Pct Total	2018 ACS	Pct Total
Male	5,338	48.36%	5,246	47.27%	5,777	47.80%
Female	5,701	51.64%	5,851	52.73%	6,310	52.20%

2.2.3. Education and Income Characteristics

There exists a positive correlation between land use and the quality of housing, income and education. More highly educated people generally command higher incomes and subsequently reside in higher end homes and neighborhoods.

Educational attainment levels for persons 25 and older have historically been higher in Irmo than in Lexington and Richland Counties as a whole. The trend in higher educational attainment for the Town may be slowing, however, as the percentage of those over 25 years old with a bachelor's degree or higher has remained unchanged at 38% from 2010 to 2021, while the same statistic in Lexington County has risen from 27.7% to 31.5% and in Richland County from 36.5% to 39.7% over the same period. Likewise, the decrease in those over the age of 25 without a high school diploma decreased by 12% in Irmo from 2010 to 2021 from 5.7% to 5% of the population. During the same period Lexington County saw a 31% decrease from 11.9% to 8.2% of the population, while Richland saw a 28% decrease from 11.6% to 8.4%. The overall numbers (as shown in Table 2.8), however, still indicate a community with a relatively high level of education attainment.

Table 2.5: 2021 Educational Attainment

	Total	Male	Female
Population 18 to 24 years	719	387	332
Less than high school graduate	190	78	112
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	176	96	80
Some college or associate degree	381	213	68
Bachelor's degree or higher	72	0	72
Population 25 years and over	8,505	3,988	4,517
Less than 9th grade	211	99	112
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	218	141	77
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1,614	764	850
Some college, no degree	2,277	1,094	1,183
Associate degree	950	537	413
Bachelor's degree	2,267	1,072	1,195
Graduate or professional degree	968	281	687
Percent high school graduate or higher	94.3%	92.7%	93.8%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	35.8%	30.9%	40.3%

Table 2.6: 2021 Educational Attainment Comparison

	Irmo		Lexington Co.		Richland Co.	
Population 18 to 24 years	719		21,808		62,802	
Less than high school graduate	190	26.4%	3,102	14.2%	5,078	8.1%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	176	24.5%	8,060	37%	18,093	28.8%
Some college or associate degree	281	39.1%	8,196	37.6%	32,593	51.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher	72	10%	2,450	11.2%	7,038	11.2%
Population 25 years and over	8,505		202,130		262,135	
Less than 9th grade	211	2.5%	6,155	3%	5,972	2.3%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	218	2.6%	13,265	6.6%	15,485	5.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1,614	19%	54,996	27.2%	56,760	21.7%
Some college, no degree	2,277	26.8%	43,798	21.7%	56,880	21.7%
Associate degree	950	11.2%	20,182	10%	23,100	8.8%
Bachelor's degree	2,267	26.7%	41,024	20.3%	61,175	23.3%
Graduate or professional degree	968	11.4%	22,710	11.2%	42,763	16.3%
Percent high school graduate or higher	8,076	95%	182,710	90.4%	240,678	91.8%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	3,235	38%	63,734	31.5%	103,938	39.7%

Levels of educational attainment can have a significant impact on the income characteristics of a community. Persons in South Carolina without a high school education earn on average 22 percent less than those who have graduated. Persons attending college earn about 17 percent more than those who complete high school but do not move to college. And those who graduate from college generally earn about 44 percent more than those who do not according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Studies show that each year of post-secondary education or training—whenever it occurs in the course of a career—boosts earning power by six to 12 percent on average. Education also pays off for employers. Employer surveys have found a 10-percent increase in productivity for employees with a higher level of education—well over twice the payoff from investments in physical capital.

As shown in Tables 2.7 and 2.9, the Irmo area has a relatively high median household (\$81,830) and family (\$85,227) income. These numbers are up considerably from the 2010 census. Household income is up 44%, family income is up 39%, married couple family income is up 25%, and nonfamily households is up 42%.

Table 2.8 illustrates the number of individuals below the poverty line by percentage of the poverty level. This number has decreased considerably over the last two decades.

Table 2.7: 2021 Income Characteristics

Income	Households	Families	Married-couple families	Nonfamily households
Total	4,567	3,350	2,690	1,217
Less than \$10,000	2.7%	1.5%	0.7%	6.0%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	0.7%	0.5%	0.1%	1.2%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	5.5%	2.4%	2.3%	14.1%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	6.4%	6.3%	2.9%	10.8%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	12.8%	13.5%	8.6%	16.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	15.5%	14.9%	14.3%	15.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	20.9%	21.1%	23.1%	17.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	18.7%	21.2%	25.9%	9.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5.3%	6.4%	7.9%	2.4%
\$200,000 or more	11.5%	12.3%	14.2%	7.1%
Median Income	\$81,380	\$85,227	\$98,726	\$54,323

Table 2.8: 2021 Poverty Level

All Individuals below:	
50 percent of poverty level	252
125 percent of poverty level	941
150 percent of poverty level	1,589
185 percent of poverty level	2,267
200 percent of poverty level	2,688

Table 2.9: 2021 Comparative Income Characteristics

Income	Households			Families			Married-couple families			Nonfamily households		
	Irmo	Lex	Rich	Irmo	Lex	Rich	Irmo	Lex	Rich	Irmo	Lex	Rich
Total	4,567	116k	160k	3,350	78,014	94,445	2,690	57,588	61,510	1,217	37,866	65,786
<10k	2.7%	5.1	9.2	1.5%	3.4	5.5	0.7%	1.5	1.2	6.0%	9.6	15.7
\$10 - 15k	0.7%	3.6	4.4	0.5%	2.5	2.3	0.1%	1.2	1.2	1.2%	6.9	7.6
\$15 - 25k	5.5%	7.6	8.2	2.4%	5.3	6.1	2.3%	2.5	2.7	14.1%	13.7	11.6
\$25 - 35k	6.4%	8	10	6.3%	6.2	8.2	2.9%	4.4	4.7	10.8%	12.2	13
\$35 - 50k	12.8%	12.6	12.8	13.5%	10.6	10	8.6%	8.7	7.3	16.1%	16.5	17.1
\$50 - 75k	15.5%	19.9	17	14.9%	19.5	16.6	14.3%	18.8	14.7	15.8%	19.7	17.4
\$75-100k	20.9%	14.1	12.7	21.1%	15.5	14.6	23.1%	17.1	16.8	17.4%	10.3	8.8
\$100-150k	18.7%	16.4	13.2	21.2%	20.5	17.9	25.9%	24.8	24.3	9.0%	6.8	5.8
\$150 - 200k	5.3%	6.9	6.3	6.4%	9.1	9.7	7.9%	11.7	13.5	2.4%	2.2	1.3
\$200k +	11.5%	5.6	6.1	12.3%	7.3	9.2	14.2%	9.5	13.6	7.1%	2.1	1.6
Median Income (\$)	81,380	65,623	56,137	85,227	78,497	77,390	98,726	94,077	103k	54,323	41,021	36,629

From the information presented in this chapter the following observations can be made:

- A successful annexation strategy in the 1980's produced a substantially enlarged population by 1990, but limited annexations after 1990 resulted in slower population growth in subsequent decades;
- The minority population of the town is increasing as the population ages and a more diverse population base moves into the area;
- The aging population will continue to increase at a disproportionately higher rate than other age cohorts;
- Females continue to out-number males, creating more one-person households;
- Residents continue to place a significant importance on education attainment;
- Income levels are decreasing and there is an increase in the number of people experiencing some level of poverty.

2.3. Population Goals and Strategies

Goal:

Encourage sound development policies that provide a range of housing options, promote mixed use residential and commercial development, and grow the town through infill, adaptive reuse, and targeted annexation

Strategies:

1. Update zoning ordinance and land development regulations to reflect the future land use (short-term)
2. Work with the Greater Irmo Chamber of Commerce to brand and market the Town of Irmo for its high quality of life, friendly business environment, and residential and commercial assets (ongoing)
3. Conduct an annexation/fringe area study to help target and refine short, medium, and long term annexation priorities (mid-term)

Goal:

Create an "Age Sensitive" community that both accommodates an aging population and attracts younger families and millennials

Strategies:

- 1.** Provide a diversity of housing alternatives to include, townhouses, small and large single-family residences, multifamily and accessory apartments, and condominiums, all available at a range of costs:
 - a.** Update zoning ordinance and land development regulations to ensure opportunities for developing a range of housing options within the town (short-term)
 - b.** Work with developers to better understand opportunities and constraints for developing higher density and affordable housing options (ongoing)
- 2.** Provide pedestrian and/or public transportation linkages to increase accessibility and connectivity within the town and between adjacent communities:
 - a.** Work with local and regional partners to identify opportunities for expanding pedestrian and/or public transportation options (ongoing)
 - b.** Develop a town-wide bike and pedestrian connectivity study to identify opportunities for future bike/ped/greenway projects that provide connections between activity centers, community facilities, and transit stops (mid-term)
- 3.** Adapt the environment to meet changing needs of the elderly by encouraging the incorporation of Universal Design principles into all land development and public facility projects within the town:
 - a.** Identify opportunities for updating the zoning ordinance and land development regulations to accommodate universal design principles (short-term)
 - b.** Review existing community facilities to identify accessibility and universal design gaps (mid-term)
 - c.** Review short and mid-term community facility projects to ensure the incorporation of universal design principles into program and construction specifications (short-term)

Figure 2.1: Base Map



Figure 2.2: 2014 Population Distribution



Figure 2.3: 2040 Population Projections

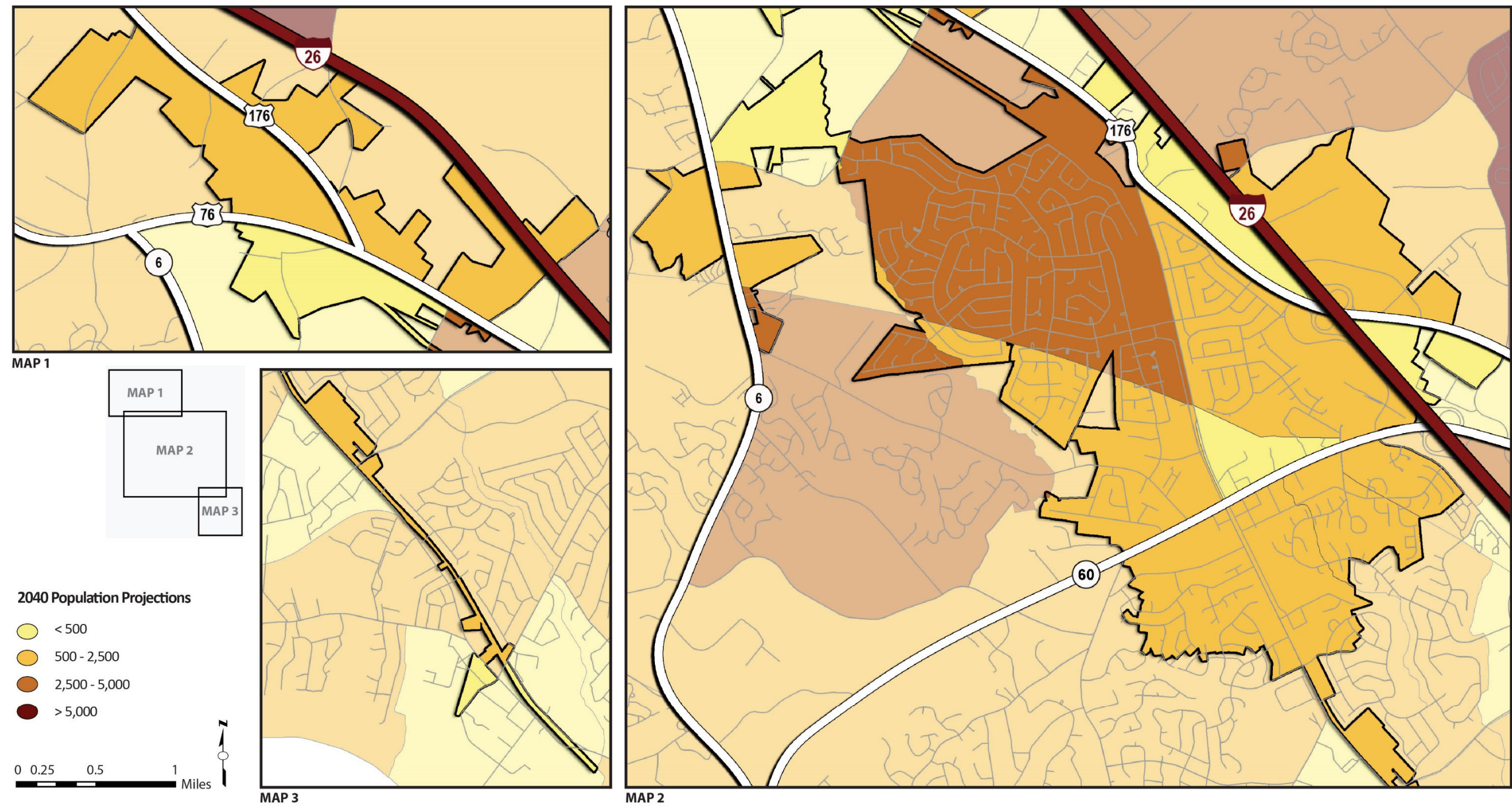


Figure 2.4: 2014 Minority Population

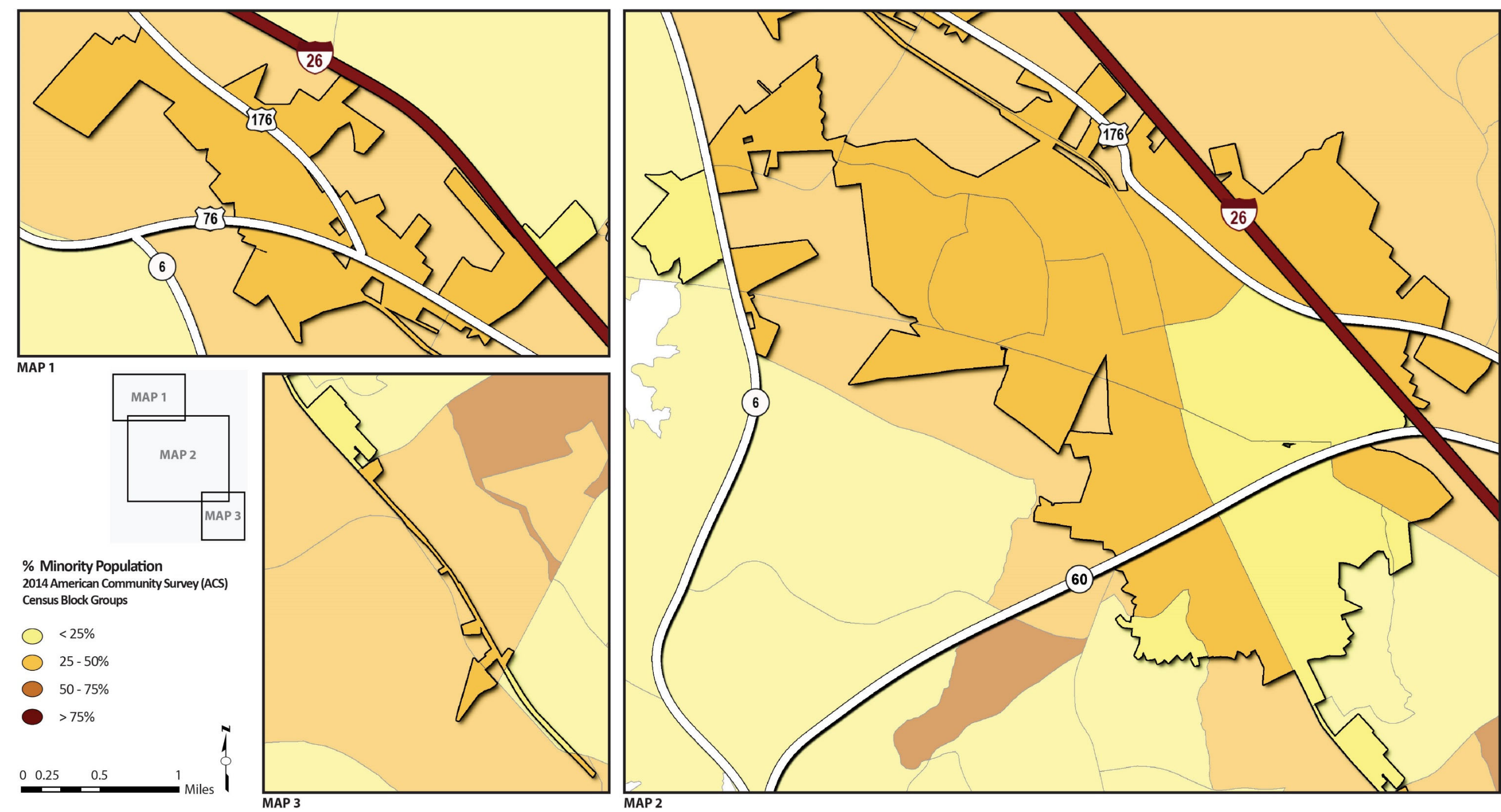


Figure 2.5: 2014 65 and Older Population

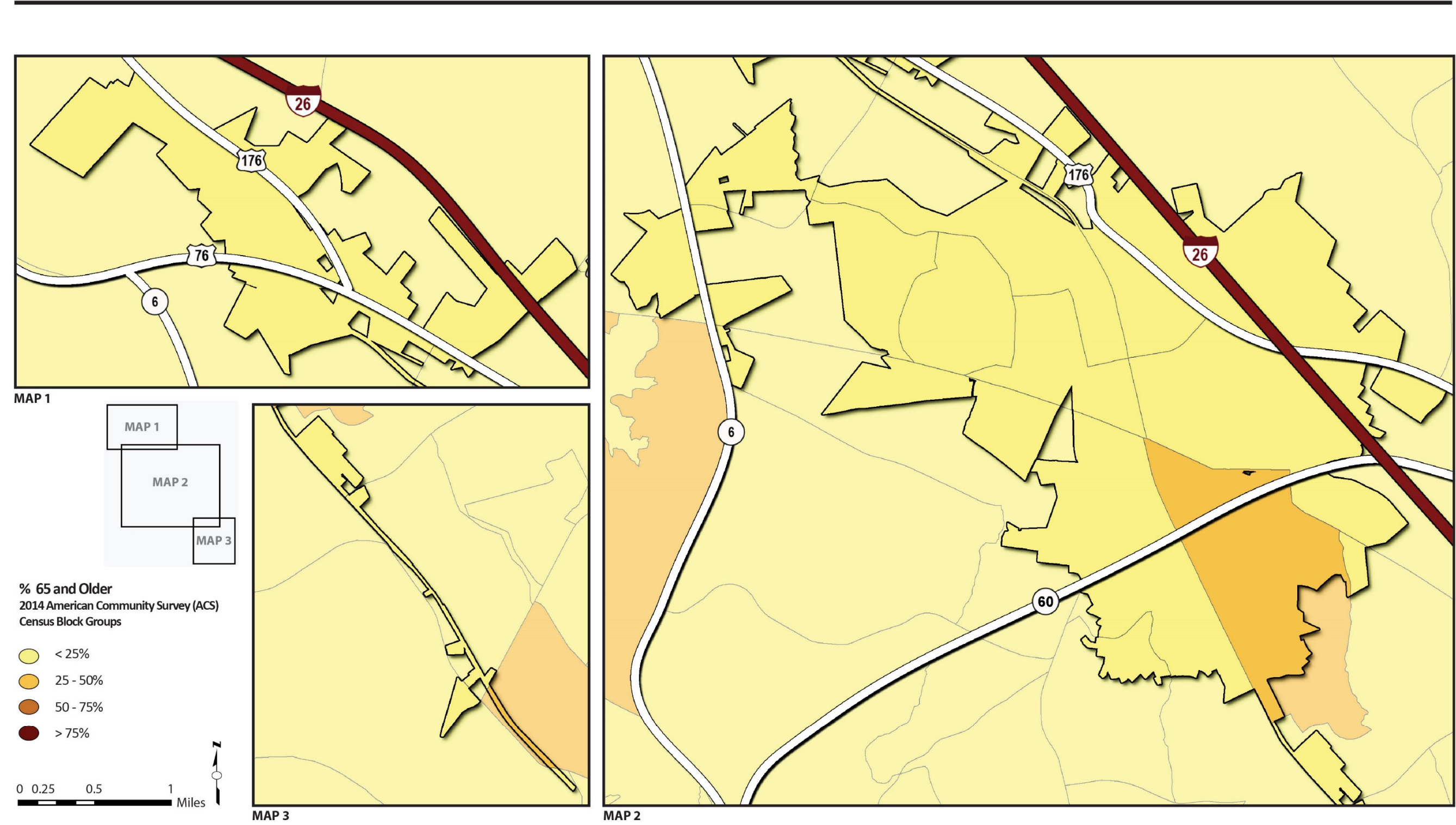
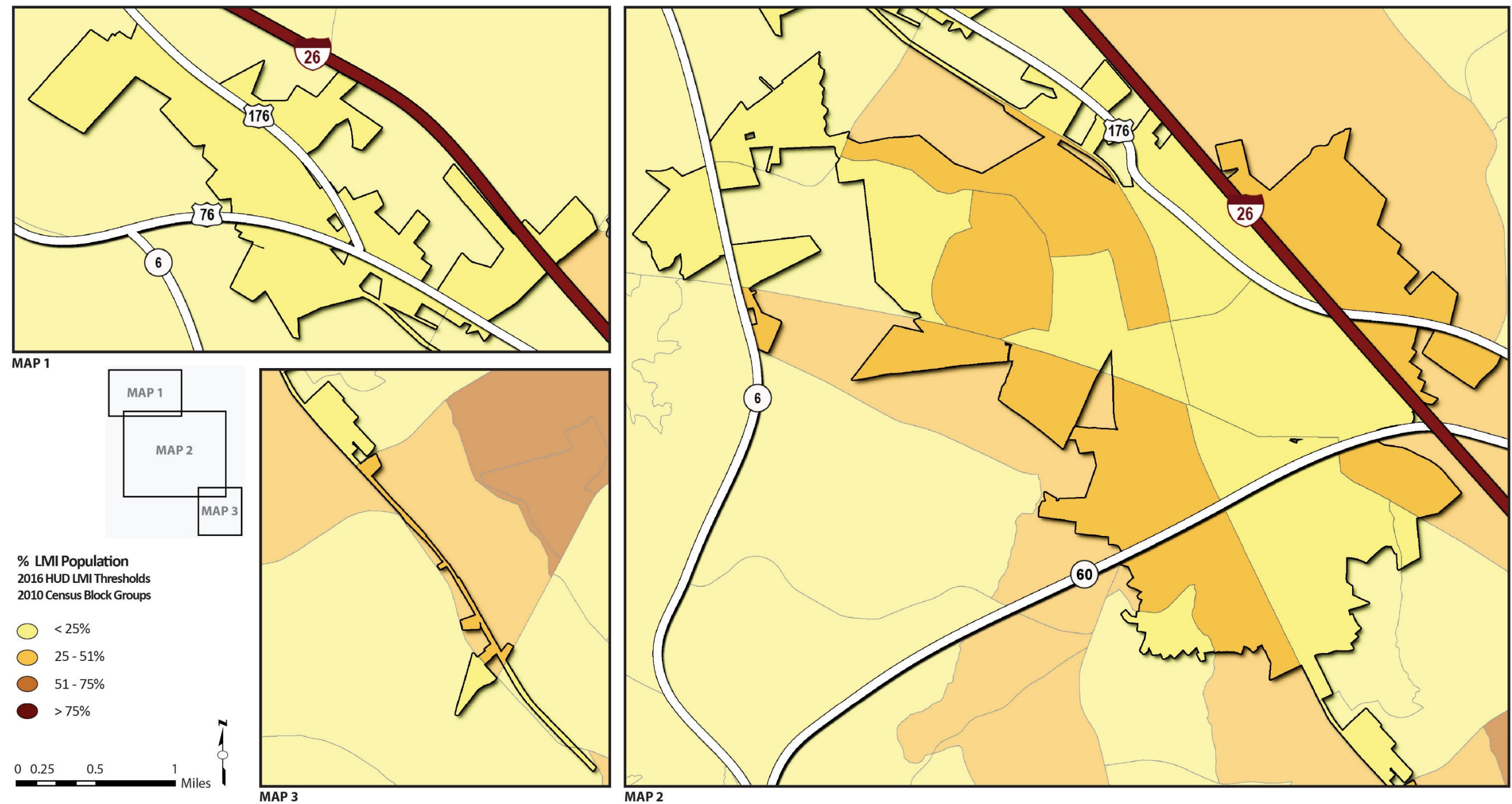


Figure 2.6: 2016 HUD Low and Moderate Income (LMI) Population



3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Introduction

The economic development element of the comprehensive plan presents existing labor force characteristics and provides an analysis of the town's economic base by inventorying employment trends by place of work and industry type.

3.2. Inventory

The local economy is not confined to what happens within the town limits. It is directly influenced by the larger metropolitan area of which the town is a part. Still, the community is in a position to shape and help stimulate its economy through planning, zoning, creating a healthy and attractive living environment, and facilitating local economic development initiatives. The presence of one of the State's higher performing school districts (Lexington-Richland 5) also plays an important role in driving residential and commercial development in the town.

Historically, the City of Columbia has dominated the regional economy. According to the Census Journey to Work data, of the 4,483 daily commuter trips from the Town of Irmo, 2,620 trips go to the City of Columbia while 640 trips stay within the Town of Irmo. As the state capital, Columbia contains one of the largest employment sectors in the region; government. Ironically, according to the 2010 Census, a higher ratio of government employees resided in the Town of Irmo than in Richland and Lexington Counties as a whole. Government employees still account for approximately one in five of all workers residing in the Town of Irmo; but the vast majority of Irmo's working age population (16 and over) is engaged in private business and is salary employed.

A closer look at the makeup of the civilian labor force reveals that nearly 50 percent of the resident workforce was in management, professional and related occupations. Sales and office occupations accounted for another 30 percent of the workforce. Only a small minority work in construction and production, indicating the dominance of a white collar workforce, and generally moderate to upper income lifestyles. Overall the town of Irmo has seen a slight increase in its labor force (~1.8%) since the 2010 census, which brings it back up to where it was during the 2000 Census.

Occupations typically requiring degrees of higher education have shown an uptick in the last decade, breaking a falling trend indicated in the 2014 ACS. Meanwhile, jobs not traditionally requiring a college degree have fallen below 2000 levels. Unemployment is at historic lows as of the time of writing in June, 2023 - 2% in Lexington County and 2.5% in Richland County.

Table 3.1: Town of Irmo Employment Characteristics

Occupation	2021 ACS	2010 Census	2000 Census
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	6,107	5,994	6,098
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	2,850	2,554	2,690
Service occupations	732	971	763
Sales and office occupations	1,669	1,469	1,693
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	427	392	481
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	429	608	468
Unemployed	-	378	219

Table 3.2: Town of Irmo Major Employment Sectors

Type of Employment	
Accommodations and food service	58
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	1
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	4
Construction-related businesses	20
Education, public administration, health care, and other institutions	102
General sales or services	112
Manufacturing and wholesale trade	26
Transportation, communication, information, and utilities	5

As illustrated from the information presented above, the economy of the Town of Irmo has a strong mix of professional, retail and service jobs. While the town has taken steps to further its economic base, it should do so in a way that enhances the character of the community.

The town lacks a formal “center” but there are opportunities to create “nodes of focus” such as around Town Hall, at the intersection of North Royal Tower Drive and Woodrow Street and at the intersection of US 76 and US 176.

3.3. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal:

Create opportunities for economic growth by growing existing businesses and providing incentives for the recruitment of new businesses and industries.

Strategies:

1. Identify specific gaps and niches in the local and regional economy to assist in building a diversified range of specialized commercial and industry clusters that draw on local advantages (e.g., health care and related industries) (mid-term)
2. Continue to promote the Town of Irmo as a regional shopping destination to foster the development of specialized commercial and retail markets (ongoing)
3. Continue to work with the Greater Irmo Chamber of Commerce, the School District, and other partners to identify and improve quality of life issues relevant to the recruitment of businesses, industries, and commercial developers to the town (e.g., traffic congestion, schools, recreational opportunities, utility infrastructure) (ongoing)
4. Create an economic development plan to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the local economy (mid-term). This plan could include the following:
 - a. A detailed market analysis of the area to identify commercial and industrial opportunities as well as regional retail leakages.
 - b. A commercial building stock survey to assess status of condition and building tenure and ownership.
5. Conduct an annexation/fringe area study to help target and refine short, medium, and long term annexation priorities as they relate to economic growth, and business retention and recruitment (mid-term)

Figure 3.1: Lexington County Unemployment Trends

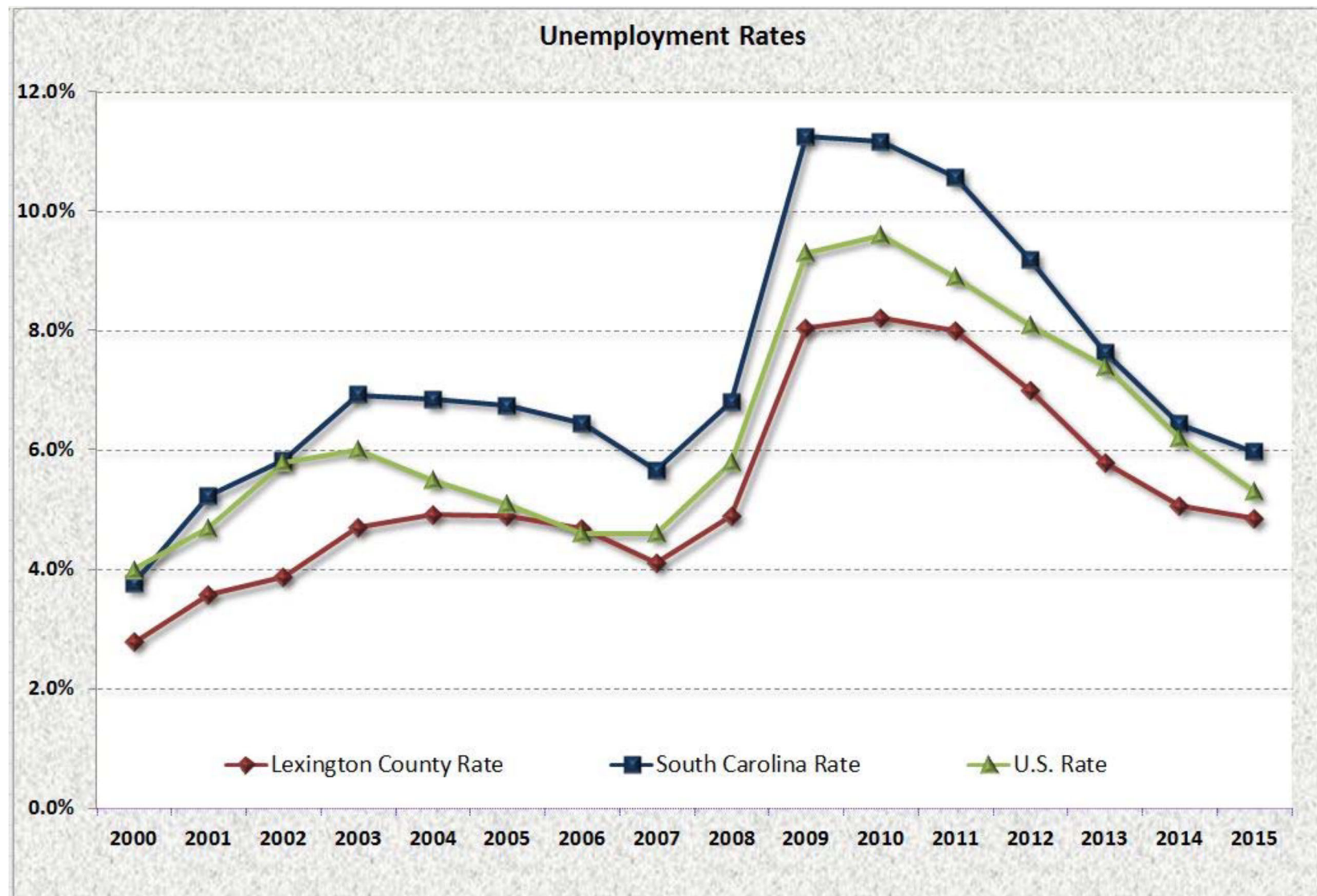


Figure 3.2: Richland County Unemployment Trends

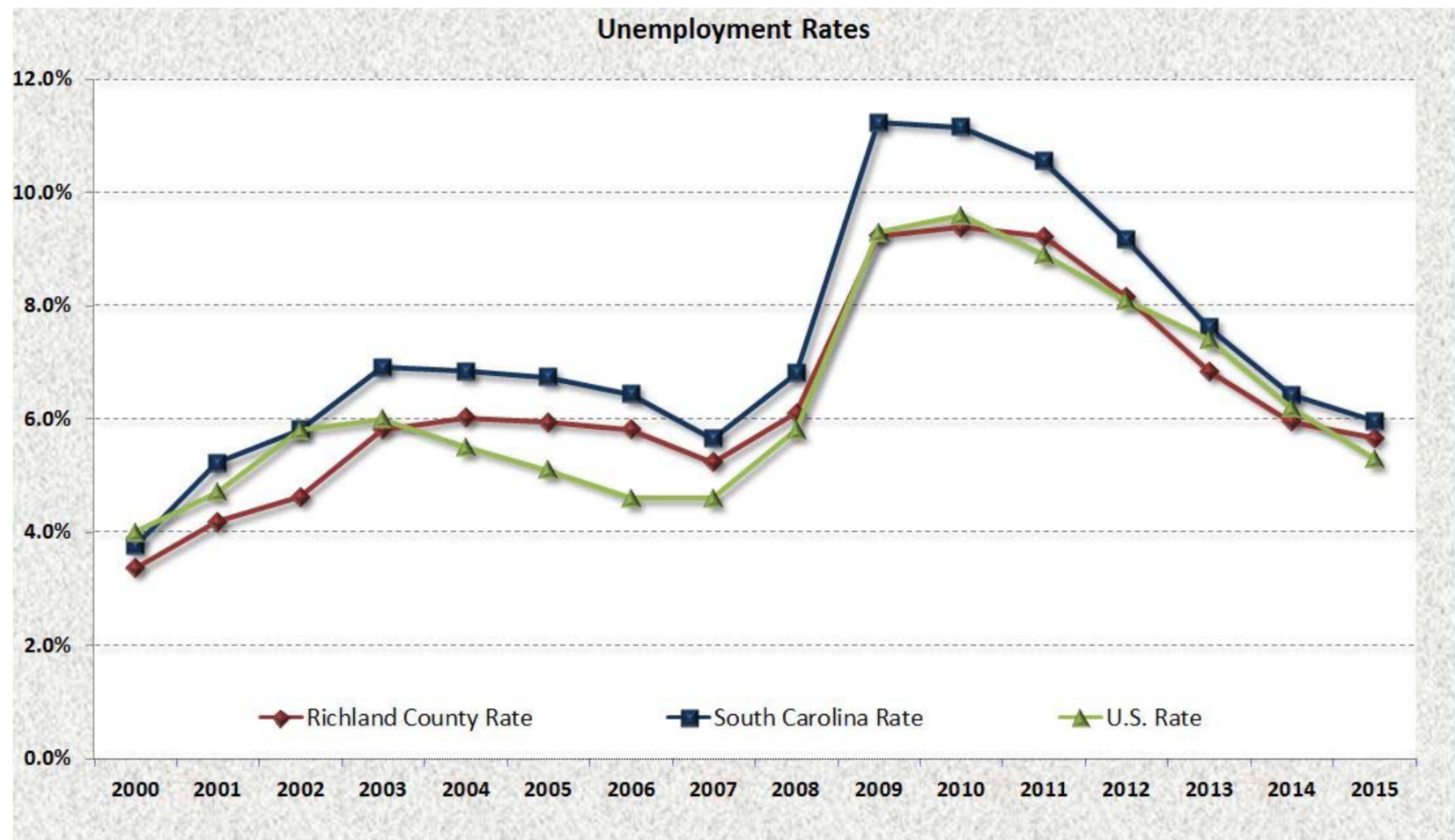
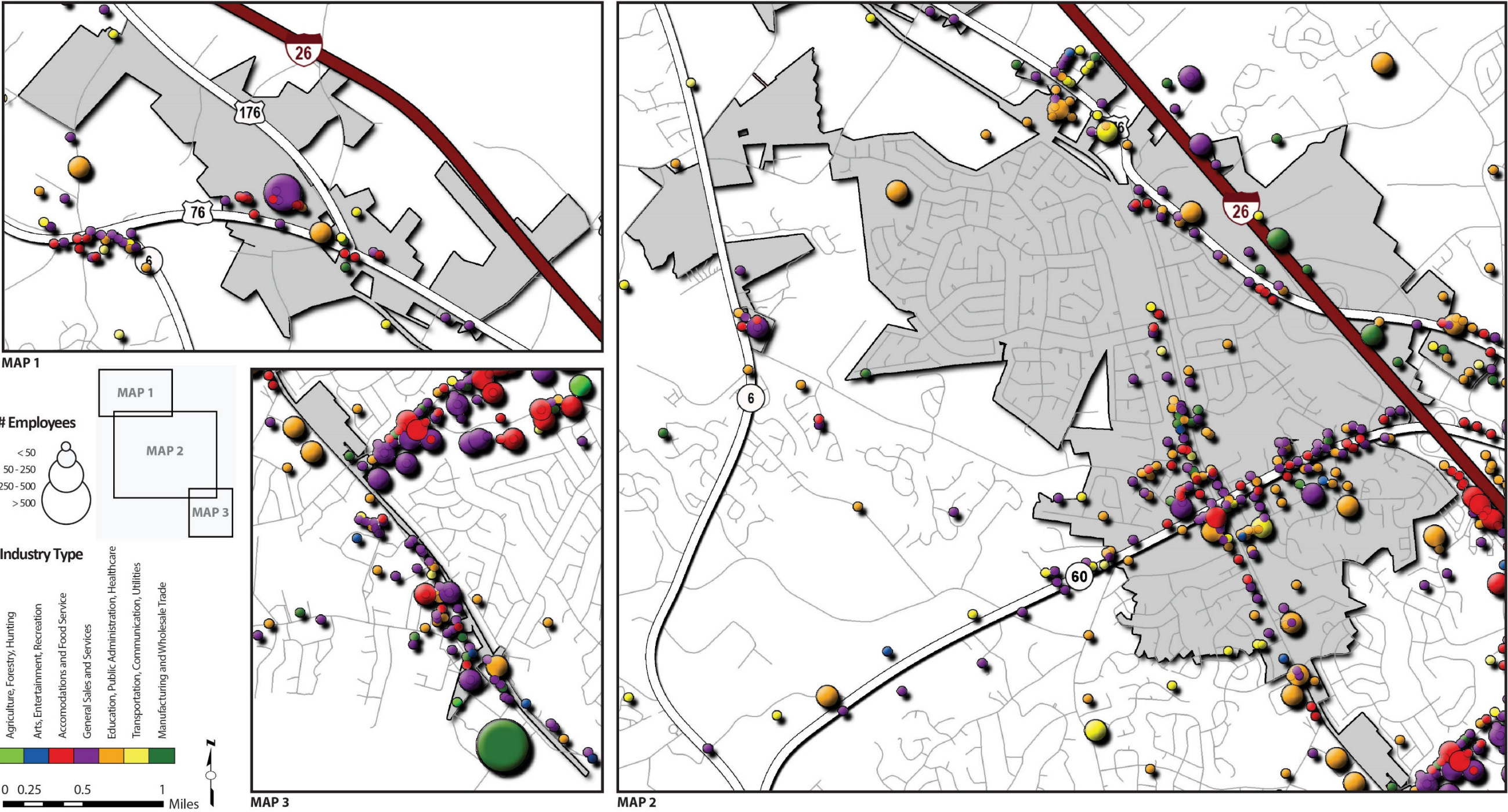


Figure 3.3: 2015 Employment by Type



4. NATURAL RESOURCES

4.1. Introduction

The natural resources element of the comprehensive plan is intended to provide an inventory of significant physical and biological features of the landscape including consideration of:

- Physical Setting
- Climate
- Water Resources
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- Natural Hazards

The purpose is to provide a base from which to guide policy decisions that are related to the use and management of these natural resources, especially as they pertain to the need for protection, restoration, and/or impact the intensity and types of permissible land uses.

4.2. Inventory

4.2.1. Physical Setting

The concept of the ecoregion will be utilized to generally describe the environmental properties of the Town of Irmo. Ecoregions are areas of relative similarity in the type, quality and quantity of environmental and ecological resources. These regions may be greatly generalized (encompassing multiple states) or hierarchically sub-divided and differentiated based on the spatial distribution of soil, geology and ecology. The current system utilized by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has four levels of ecoregions. These levels go from Level I (highest and more generalized) to Level IV (lowest and more differentiated).

According to the USDA, the majority of the Town of Irmo is located in the Southern Outer Piedmont Level IV Ecoregion. The Southern Outer Piedmont Ecoregion, itself part of the Piedmont Level III Ecoregion, is noted for its lower elevations, lower amount of precipitation and irregular plains. Elevation in this region varies from 180ft to around 1500ft above sea level, with a local relief profile of 100ft to 300ft. Ecologically disturbed areas of this ecoregion are dominated by pine tree species, while mixed oak forest tend to populate less altered locations.

Northwest and Southeast portions of the Town are located in the Carolina Slate Belt Level IV Ecoregion, also part of the Piedmont Level III Ecoregion. The Carolina Slate Belt is known for irregular plains interspersed with hills and linear ridges. Elevation varies from 165ft to almost

1200ft above sea level, with a local relief of 100ft to 300ft. Natural vegetation consists of mixed oak and hickory forests, with longleaf and shortleaf pine varieties.

Elevation in Irmo itself is an average of 310ft, with a relief of 210ft. The topography slopes down gradually from northwest to southeast. The highest point, northwest, is around 410ft while the lowest point within municipal boundaries, southeast, is around 200ft.

Soil is the mixture of organic and inorganic materials that accumulates in the upper layer of the earth. Soil properties, such as drainage and physical and chemical composition, affect the kinds of activities supported in an area. It can have an impact on agriculture, urban development and the severity of flooding events.

This majority soil in the Town is characterized by moderate to well drained sandy and silty soil. This type of soil reduces the impacts of flooding, runoff and erosion. Urban development is generally not limited in this kind of soil. Agricultural activities are supported in most of the soil in the Town (barring local feasibility assessments), as only 14.61% (or around 589 acres) of Town area is not considered suitable farmland.

Land cover refers to the natural physiographic and ecological features present in a landscape. It is typically defined as the unaltered biophysical cover on the earth's surface. On the other hand, land use refers to the utilization and possible alteration of land cover for various socioeconomic purposes. Land cover may guide the kinds of land use in an area, but socio-economic and political factors tend to determine what kind of land use takes place. The majority of land cover in the Town of Irmo consists of urban, impervious surfaces. According to the National Land Cover Database (NLCD) classification system, 71.6% of Town area is considered urban. This is followed by 21.7% forest cover. See Table X for more information.

Table 4.1: 2014 Land Cover

Land Cover Type	Land Cover Area (Acres/Percentage)
Open Water	7.3 (0.2%)
Urban; Open Space	1240.5 (30.7%)
Urban; Low Intensity	1109.3 (27.4%)
Urban; Med. Intensity	431.9 (10.7%)
Urban; High Intensity	111.6 (2.8%)
Barren Land	36.9 (0.9%)
Deciduous Forest	500.6 (12.4%)
Evergreen Forest	375.0 (9.3%)
Mixed Forest	8.0 (0.2%)
Shrub/Scrub	16.2 (0.4%)
Grassland/Herbaceous	87.4 (2.2%)
Pasture/Hay	112.3 (2.8%)
Woody Wetlands	8.9 (0.2%)

4.2.2. Climate Conditions

Climate is the long term weather trends in a given area. Weather may change daily, but climate is usually measured in 30-year cycles based on prevailing temperature and precipitation patterns. Therefore, while weather over a given year may go through extremes events, the information in this section presents average weather trends over long periods of time.

Annual precipitation in Town of Irmo ranges from a low average of 44 inches to a high of 56 inches. The period of highest precipitation is from January through March. Mean annual temperature for the Town varies seasonally. During spring months, it ranges between a low of 29°F to a high of 50°F. Summer months mean temperatures range between a low of 67°F and a high of 89°F. This becomes important in determining the growing season, as this weather allows between 190 and 230 frost free days.

4.2.3. Water Resources

Watersheds, or drainage basins, are areas where surface water drains to a single point in a lower elevation. Topography delineates the boundaries of watersheds, acting like a funnel and guiding water towards streams. The Town of Irmo lies between the Broad and Saluda watersheds. Access to the Broad, Saluda and Congaree rivers is within 10 miles of Town limits. Lake Murray lies west, within access of Town limits. Tributaries that drain into these larger waterbodies, such as Rawls Creek, Kinley Creek and Hope Creek, intersect the Town limits.

The quality of these water bodies is an important issue, as these serve as recreation locations and important ecosystems for flora and fauna. The Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), maintains a list of impaired water bodies that fall within the guidelines of the 303(d) section of the Clean Water Act. The 303(d) list tracks water bodies that need further investigation to determine what efforts and best management practices are required to bring them to EPA water quality standards. As of 2014, DHEC identified water bodies that fall within the 303(d) impaired water bodies list (Table 4.2.).

Table 4.2: Town of Irmo 303(d) list of Impaired Water Bodies

Station	Location	Impairment
RS-01012	Rawls Creek (W of Irmo)	Biological (Macroinvertebrates)
S-149	Saluda River (at Mepco Electric Plant Water Intake/SSE of Irmo)	Turbidity
S-150	Lorick Branch	Dissolved Oxygen
S-152	Saluda River (below Lake Murray Dam)	Mercury
S-260	Kinley Creek (St. Andrews Rd. in Irmo)	Biological (Macroinvertebrates)

When considering how to improve quality in an impaired body of water, a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) analysis can be performed to determine the level of impairment and better target pollution control efforts. A TMDL is a calculation of the pollutant amount a water body can carry before it is considered unfit for use by EPA water quality standards. A TMDL can be developed for each pollutant of interest in a water body (e.g. dissolved oxygen, fecal coliform, turbidity, etc.). Pollutants may come from multiple sources, be it a point source with a clear cause or a non-point source, which is the accumulation of ambient pollutants in the area.

Non-point sources in particular are a significant issue, as mitigating their effects may involve widespread behavioral or technological changes. Some significant culprits of non-point source contamination are agricultural practices (e.g. pesticide and fertilizer use) and urban land use (e.g. stormwater runoff carrying pollutants to streams on impervious surfaces). These contaminants may travel long distances and affect water bodies downstream, or eventually contaminate groundwater sources.

Several locations around the Town of Irmo were selected for fecal coliform TMDL analysis (see Table 4.2). Fecal coliform are a bacteria group that generally originate in the gastrointestinal systems of warm blooded animals. While fecal coliform may not be harmful in itself, high quantities could reflect the presence of water-borne pathogens. Fecal coliform amounts are presented as Colony Forming Units (cfu) per 100 milliliters (ml), which are derived to daily amounts.

Table 4.3: TMDL calculation for selected streams near the Town of Irmo

Station	Location/Date	TMDL (cfu/day)
S-150	Lorick Branch (Sep 2004)	5.69×10^9
S-287	Rawl's Creek (Sep (2000)	3.46×10^{10}
S-260	Kinley Creek (Sep 2004)	4.91×10^{12}

4.2.4. Environmentally Sensitive Areas

The United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has an inventory of sensitive environmental resources. The USFWS identified 6.1 acres of freshwater forest/shrub wetlands, 29.9 acres of freshwater ponds that are considered environmentally sensitive resources.

The have also identified 4 endangered or threatened species in the surroundings area of the Town of Irmo (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Town of Irmo endangered species list (Source: USFWS)

Species	Status
Red-cockaded Woodpecker (<i>Picoides boarealis</i>)	Endangered
Carolina Heelsplitter (<i>Lasmigona decorata</i>)	Endangered
Canby's Dropwort (<i>Oxypolis canbyi</i>)	Endangered
Smooth Coneflower (<i>Echinacea laevigata</i>)	Threatened

Additionally, 18 migratory birds species utilize the area in their travels (Table X). Altering the environment these species utilize could endanger their long term survival. Therefore, it is important to limit the impact of any future activities in the area during the planning process.

Table 4.5: Town of Irmo migratory bird species (Source: USFWS)

Species	Migratory Season
American Bittern (<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>)	Wintering
Bachman's Sparrow (<i>Aimophila aestivalis</i>)	Year-round
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Year-round
Brown-headed Nuthatch (<i>Sitta pusilla</i>)	Year-round
Chuck-will's-widow (<i>Caprimulgus carolinensis</i>)	Breeding
Fox Sparrow (<i>Passerella iliaca</i>)	Wintering
Kentucky Warbler (<i>Oporornis formosus</i>)	Breeding
Least Bittern (<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>)	Breeding
Loggerhead Shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	Year-round
Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)	Breeding
Prairie Warbler (<i>Dendroica discolor</i>)	Wintering
Prothonotary Warbler (<i>Protonotaria citrea</i>)	Breeding
Red-headed Woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>)	Breeding
Rusty Blackbird (<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>)	Wintering
Short-eared Owl (<i>Asio flammeus</i>)	Wintering
Wood Thrush (<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>)	Breeding
Worm Eating Warbler (<i>Helmitheros vermivorum</i>)	Breeding

4.3. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal:

Provide for the enhancement, protection, and long term maintenance of all water resources and critical habitats/ecosystems within the Town of Irmo and surrounding areas

Strategies:

1. Increase riparian buffer requirements in the Town's zoning ordinance and land development regulations to mitigate flooding and protect water quality (short-term)
2. Strengthen priority tree ordinance and enforcement in the land development regulations to promote the preservation of significant trees as properties develop and redevelop (mid-term)
3. Continue actively participating in regional clean water activities to include:
 - a. Membership in the Lexington Countywide stormwater consortium to increase education and awareness about non-point source pollution in the Irmo area (ongoing)
 - b. Working with stormwater consortium partners and SCDHEC to improve the quantity and quality of water quality monitoring in impaired watersheds and around stormwater outfalls (mid-term)
 - c. Working with Lexington County Department of Public Works to strengthen countywide stormwater regulations and support increased funding for stormwater infrastructure through various means such as implementing a countywide stormwater utility fee (long-term)
4. Work with area residents to develop long term watershed management strategies for the Rawls and Kinley Creek Watersheds and support the creation of a watershed management organization for the larger Lower Saluda watershed or its impaired tributaries (long-term)
5. Encourage the use of green infrastructure and low impact development techniques such as conservation design and bio-infiltration practices to help protect sensitive environmental resources and improve area water quality (ongoing)
6. Establish a network of open space and greenways that connect with parks, riparian areas, residential and commercial activity centers within the Town of Irmo (long-term)
7. Work with municipal planning staff, the planning commission, and the general public to identify priority conservation areas for inclusion in future zoning and land use maps, guiding conservation minded design in the Town of Irmo (mid-term)

8. Work with ICRC, Richland Lexington School District 5, and other regional partners to establish interpretive signage in public areas with key natural resources and environmental education opportunities (ongoing)

Goal:

Provide for the enhancement, protection, and long term maintenance of air quality within the Town of Irmo and in surrounding areas.

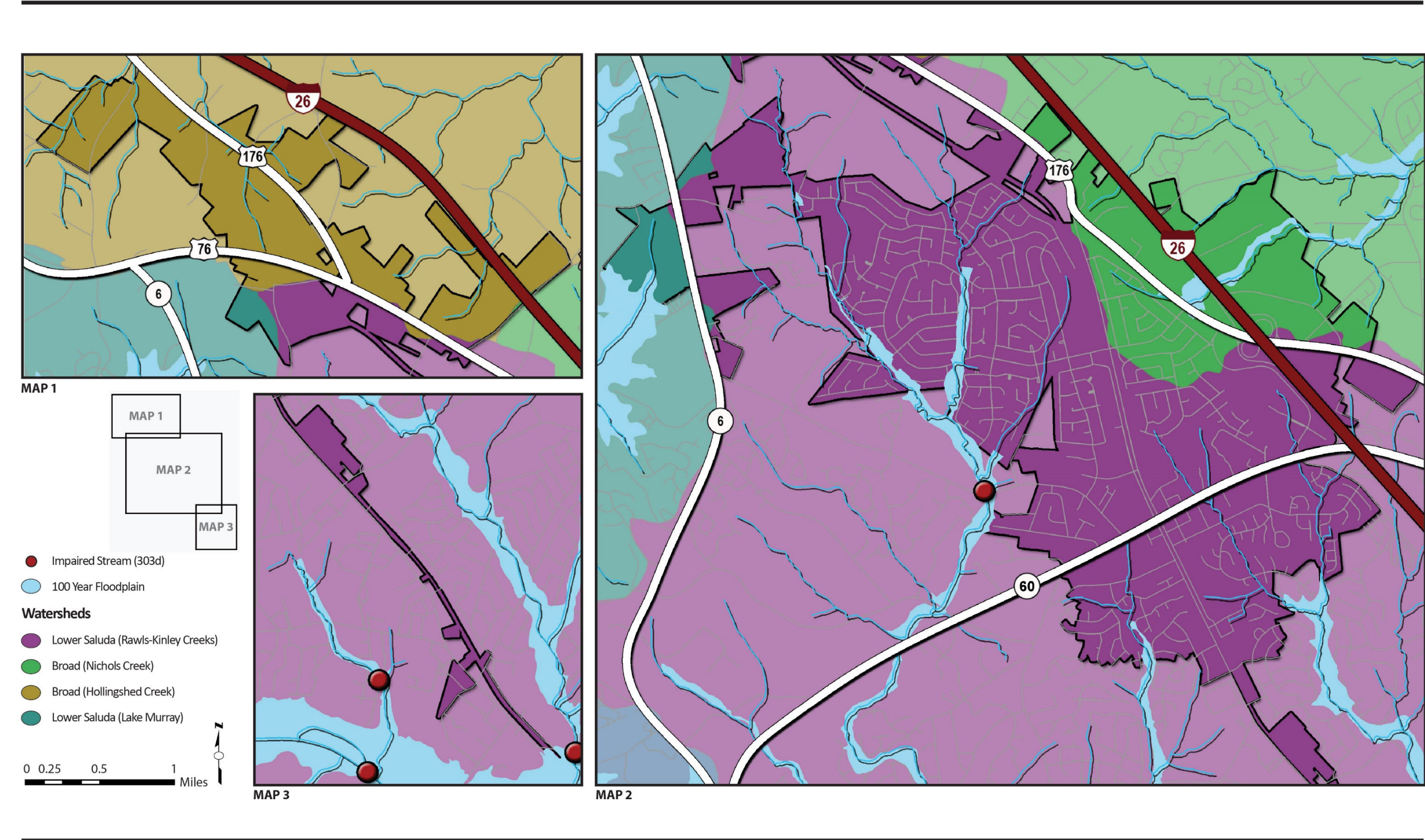
Strategies:

1. Consider revising the landscaping requirements in the zoning ordinance and land development regulations to plant more trees on streets and in parking lots to help absorb pollutants and reduce the urban heat island impact (short-term)
2. Participate in regional clean air activities by becoming an active member of the Clean Air Midlands Air Quality Coalition (short-term)
3. Work with Clean Air Midlands and SCDHEC to help educate area residents about the public health and environmental implications of mobile source emissions and other local sources of air pollution (short-term)
4. Work with Clean Air Midlands and regional transportation agencies to support travel demand management and congestion mitigation measures that decrease the need for single occupancy vehicle use for local and commuter trips (ongoing)

Figure 4.3: Eco-Regions



Figure 4.4: Water Resources



5. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

5.1. Introduction

The Historic and Cultural Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan inventories existing sites of historic and cultural significance for the purpose of providing policy guidance in ensuring the short and long term protection and preservation of these resources. The inventory typically considers sites and/or districts on the National Register of Historic Places as well as those that have not yet been nominated or determined to be eligible.

5.2. Inventory

Irmo, though incorporated in 1890, has a rich heritage dating back to the colonial days of the 1700's. It was during this time that the first wave of immigrants from Germany and Switzerland began to settle in the area known as Dutch Fork. Bounded by the Saluda and Broad Rivers, Dutch Fork provided a haven for the immigrants in their quest for land, an otherwise unattainable goal in their native countries. The Crown of England sought to maintain a presence in the prosperous agrarian culture of the area by providing land grants to the settlers, which helped lay the foundation for the Town of Irmo.

During the five-year period between 1744 and 1749, settlers numbered 423 and owned 21,250 acres of land. Germans continually moved into the area, but this immigration slowed and stabilized by 1760. In time, larger farms began to develop, and a state of order existed with the church as the centerpiece. This era ended with the Civil War, which proved more devastating for the region than the Indian wars and the Revolutionary War combined. Many local families became destitute and reconstruction was disorganized. Through the perseverance of the settlers and the coming of the railroad, the community was built into the prosperous area it is today.

The original charter in 1890 established the Town as one square mile in area. Since then, many changes have aided the town in staking a permanent place in the future of the midlands. First was the arrival of the CN&L Railroad in 1890, to which Irmo owes its existence. The railroad improved transportation, provided farmers and cotton brokers with better opportunities and made Irmo the first water and fuel stop in the CN&L run. The second major development in the area was the construction of the Lake Murray Dam. From 1927 to 1930 more than 4,000 people were employed, providing an economic boon to the area. The lake began filling in 1929, reaching an elevation of 290 feet in 1930. The completion of the project led to the SCE&G being able to provide electricity to most of the Town during the same time.

From 1930 to approximately 1970, Irmo began the transition from a small community to the predominantly suburban city in existence today. This transition was accomplished through infrastructure improvements, chiefly those pertaining to transportation, electricity and education. Paving and widening of major Irmo-area roads such as Highway 76, Highway 60, Woodrow Street and present-day St. Andrews Road (from early 1930's to late 1940's), and

the construction of I-26 and I-20 (in the late 1950's and early 1960's), laid the supporting foundation for the Town's growth. These infrastructure improvements brought in education and governmental improvements. New schools were built, culminating in the construction of the present Irmo High School in 1965. Harbison School (currently site of a Midlands Technical College campus), stands out in the education of the black population in the Dutch Fork area by providing high school level education and teacher preparation.

The Town of Irmo has access to multiple cultural resources within and outside its municipal boundaries. The Midlands Technical College Harbison Campus houses the Harbison Theater. The venue is utilized to present recitals, musicals, plays, and speakers for a variety of topics and themes. Through its "Performance Incubator" program, the theater gives local artist a venue through which they can create new performance pieces that are suitable for touring in other theaters and venues. This gives the Town access to premiere, original performances before they are taken abroad.

The Okra Strut Festival, now on its 43rd year, is one of the biggest celebrations held in the Town of Irmo and has the biggest parade in the state of South Carolina. Started in the early 1970's to fund the construction of a library, it attracts between 55,000 to 60,000 people annually. Money raised by the festival is utilized to fund local civic and school organizations, scholarships, and general improvements in public areas.

In Richland County, serving the greater Columbia area are the Columbia Museum of Art, The State Museum, Edventure Children's Museum, along with several smaller locales. The performing arts are accommodated at the Koger Center, the Carolina Coliseum, Township Auditorium, and at several smaller venues located throughout the City of Columbia. The University of South Carolina strongly influences arts and music in the area.

The South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA) and the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH) maintain a repository of all locations protected by the National Historic Preservation Act. They also provide a list of locations potentially eligible for said protection. The information in this section combines data from these institutions and the Central Midlands Historic Preservation Survey, which maintains an inventory of historical properties in the Central Midlands region.

Due to its centuries long history, the area in and around the Town of Irmo contains multiple historical structures and locations. As some of these structures are located outside of Town limits, the Town does not have a role in the preservation of the properties unless it annexes the site. Not all of these sites are officially part of the National Historical Register, but they are long standing structures in the area. Historical sites include:

- The George Lorick House: built in 1840, this house was previously on Lake Murray Boulevard but has since been moved to a new location.
- The David Nunamaker house: built in the 1700's.

- Derrick Hill: built in the 1840's.
- Raintree Acres Home: predates the Civil War, located in Hollingshed Road.
- Jacob Wingard Dreher House: built in 1850.
- Green Acres: predates the Civil War, surviving occupation and fire by General Sherman and his troops to become the tourist center office at the Lake Murray Dam.
- Lindler Farm House: more than 200 years old.
- Irmo High School: established 1965.
- John Jacob Calhoun Koon Farmstead: built in 1880.
- Pleasant Spring A.M.E.: built in 1869, originally located between what is now SC Highway 60 and Coldstream Drive.
- St. Michaels Evangelical Lutheran Church: organized in the 1700's, containing religious articles dating from the early 1800's.
- Macedonia Baptist Church: rebuilt in 1918 after being destroyed by a storm in 1909.
- Young's Chapel A.M.E.: established 1887.
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church: founded in 1788.
- MT Olive Lutheran Church: organized in 1931.
- St. Paul A.M.E. Church: established in the 1930's.

5.3. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal:

Preserve, protect and promote the natural and cultural heritage of the Town of Irmo and surrounding areas and to utilize these heritage resources to market the town as a tourist destination.

Strategies:

1. Work with the SC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and other non-profit entities such as the Palmetto Trust for Historic Preservation to create and maintain a comprehensive town wide inventory of heritage resources (mid-term)
2. Establish a relationship with local history organizations and Richland – Lexington School District Five to pursue collaborative research projects that will produce interpretive information for local interests and marketing opportunities (long-term)
3. Work with the Greater Irmo Chamber of Commerce, ICRC, and other regional entities to develop and promote new efforts to attract tourists that may be interested in visiting cultural and historic sites and places within the Town of Irmo and surrounding areas (mid-term)
4. Establish informative signage and other interpretive materials and programming related to regional and local heritage resources (mid-term)
5. Partner with Midlands Technical College and Irmo High School to promote the use of Harbison Theater and Irmo HS Auditorium as a premiere theatrical and artistic venues and destinations (short-term)
6. Partner with Saluda Shoals Foundation to promote the building of an amphitheater, providing another cultural venue in the area (short-term)

6. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

6.1. Introduction

The community facilities element of the comprehensive plan relates to the infrastructure necessary to provide adequate services that support the growth and development, health, safety and welfare of the town. This infrastructure includes:

- Utilities (water, sewer, and power)
- Planning, building, and land development regulatory services
- Police protection
- Fire protection
- Sanitation service
- Street lighting and maintenance
- Community Assistance Conduit
- Government facilities
- Educational facilities
- Park and recreation facilities
- Emergency medical facilities

It is important to note that because many of these facilities are not within the sole jurisdiction or responsibility of the town, inter-agency cooperation, coordination and participation is essential. The adequate provision of public services will require the town to continue working with other local governments, such as Richland and Lexington Counties, special purpose districts, such as the Irmo-Chapin Recreation Commission, and private entities, such as health care and solid waste disposal providers.

6.2. Inventory

6.2.1. Utilities (Water, Sewer, and Power)

The City of Columbia provides the water for town residents and businesses and they are routinely upgrading the lines and improving their water quality. In extending water to developing areas in the community, the City prescribes construction specifications and accepts title to and maintenance responsibility for the new lines. Columbia's capacity to

facilitate future development is assured through the 20 million gallon water filtration plant located on Lake Murray.

Sanitary sewer service is handled for the most part by the City of Columbia. Most subdivisions that are in Irmo are served by either the City of Columbia or Blue Granite Water Service.

Power is provided mostly by SCE&G, and has been since 1930 with the completion of the Lake Murray Dam. Mid-Carolina Electric Co-op provides electricity to some areas of town.

6.2.2. Planning, Building, and Land Development Regulatory Services

The purpose and importance of an on-going planning program, as provided by the Town of Irmo, may be summed up in the state's planning enabling legislation (6-29-340) authorizing the provision of such services: "to promote public health, safety, morals, convenience, prosperity and the general welfare as well as the efficiency and economy of its area of jurisdiction."

The Town provides for building inspections through a contract with Lexington County. The provision of this service is intended to ensure public safety, health and general welfare through structural strength, stability, sanitation, light and ventilation, and safety to life and property from fire and other hazards incident to the construction, alteration, repair, removal, demolition, use and occupancy of buildings, structures, or premises. For related reasons, the town also has enacted zoning and subdivision regulations, providing for the orderly and harmonious development of the community.

6.2.3. Police Protection

Police protection is a high profile issue among most Americans today; and while police protection is available from the Sheriff's Department to all unincorporated areas of Richland County and Lexington County, the level of protection is not the same.

The Irmo Police Department has 22 full time officers responsible for the safety of about 12,100 people and an area of 6.4 square miles. This equates to 1.8 officers per 1,000 citizens and 3.1 officers per square mile. Irmo residents generally have enhanced police protection, a more visible police presence, more frequent patrols and property surveillance, and reduced response time to emergency calls. Incentives are provided to officers who live in the town. Presently eight officers live in the town.

6.2.4. Fire Protection

Fire protection is provided to the Town by the Irmo Fire District, which also serves the unincorporated fringe areas of Lexington County. The Fire District has a Class 1 rate throughout its service area which is as low as possible. As a result, annexation of property in

Lexington County will not impact or alter in any way the level or class of service provided by the district.

The situation is a little different in Richland County. The unincorporated fringe area is served by Richland County and Columbia Fire Services, but when annexed into Irmo, the insurance rate may improve, as jurisdiction and responsibility shifts to the Irmo Fire District.

6.2.5. Sanitation Service

The Town of Irmo contracts with a private company for trash, garbage and recycling pickup services. All households are charged an annual service fee. The town collects the fee and pays the contractor.

The service includes once-a-week garbage, recyclable and yard-waste pick-up. Also, white goods pick-up is available once a month.

Businesses contract individually for their own garbage service.

6.2.6. Street Lighting and Maintenance

The Town provides street lighting along all major streets, including Lake Murray Boulevard, St. Andrews Road, and Woodrow Street. The town maintains street rights of way along with public spaces.

6.2.7. Community Assistance Conduit

One of the more important functions of the town is to act on behalf of the community and its citizens. In this regard, the town serves as a conduit to county, state and federal agencies for assistance with community improvement projects and programs.

6.2.8. Government Facilities

The first Irmo Town Hall was built in 1953 on Woodrow Street, near Highway 60, followed by the second Town Hall in 1977. The current town hall, formerly the Mathias-Lown House, was moved to its present site at the corner of Woodrow and Columbia Avenue and renovated in January, 1988.

Located behind the Town Hall is the relative new (1997) municipal building. It is used for town meetings, municipal court, conferences, workshops, etc. A more recent addition to the municipal complex is a new Police Department located on Columbia Avenue that was built in 2005.

6.2.9. Educational Facilities

The first one-room school in Irmo was built in 1865, followed by a seven-room schoolhouse around 1925. The first Irmo High School was built in 1928, the second in 1935. Richtex High School was built in 1953, and the fourth high school — and the third Irmo High School — was built in 1964, with a second story added in 1979-1980. In 2015 a large contemporary fine arts center was added to the Irmo High School.

Irmo is served by the Lexington-Richland Five school district, one of the more respected school districts in the state, and within the plan area, has eight elementary schools, two middle schools and two high schools. Feeding into Dutch Fork High School are H.E. Corley, Dutch Fork, Irmo and Ballentine Elementary Schools as well as Dutch Fork Middle School. Feeding into Irmo High School are Harbison West, Leaphart, Nursery Road and Seven Oaks Elementary Schools, as well as Irmo Middle School. All students in the Irmo and Dutch Fork clusters attend Crossroads Middle School for the 6th grade year only.

The recent upgrades and additions have been completed with a \$243.6 million dollar referendum that was approved by the voters in 2008.

- Renovation and additions to Leaphart Elementary School;
- Renovations and additions to Chapin High School;
- Renovations and additions to Seven Oaks Elementary School;
- Renovations and additions to Irmo Elementary School;
- Renovations and additions to Chapin Elementary School;
- Renovations to Dutch Fork High School;
- Renovations to Irmo High School;
- Completion of the new Spring Hill high school;

Irmo is also served by the Harbison branch of Midlands Technical College, which opened in the late 1970's, as well as several colleges and universities in the City of Columbia.

6.2.10. Park Facilities

Most recreational facilities and services are provided by the School District, Irmo-Chapin Recreation Commission and/or Richland County Recreation Commission, while the Town of Irmo focuses on park facilities. In 2002 the Irmo Town Park opened at the corner of Carlisle Street and Columbia Avenue. In 2012 the Town built a new Veterans Park to honor the military and those who have given the ultimate sacrifice (located just off Woodrow Street along Palmetto Wood Parkway). In 2013 the Town built a beautiful \$2 million dollar

Community Park of Irmo with numerous playgrounds and picnic areas along with a quarter mile walking trail. As of Summer 2023 the Town is nearing the completion of Rawls Creek park, featuring a community garden, two dog parks, and a playground.

6.2.11. Emergency Medical Facilities

Emergency medical services are provided by Lexington County for all areas west of Broad River Road and Friarsgate subdivision, with an EMS unit in the Irmo Fire Station. This unit also responds to any calls in the Richland County portion of town, under a contract with the town. The Lexington Medical Center has an Urgent Care facility along St Andrews Road in the downtown area. The completion in 2014 of the new Palmetto Health Baptist Parkridge Hospital has also brought a number of clinics and doctor offices into the community.

6.3. Goals and Strategies

Goal:

Provide the highest quality of services, meet and maintain high quality of life standards, ensure fiscal responsibility, and encourage sustainable growth and development practices within the Town of Irmo and surrounding areas.

Strategies:

1. Encourage a high level of communication and cooperation between all levels of municipal government, service providers, neighboring jurisdictions, state and regional entities, and the general public (ongoing)
2. Coordinate with partner governments, agencies, and organizations to encourage the development, adoption, and implementation of green infrastructure and low impact development (LID) best management practices for all community facility projects and programs where feasible and appropriate (mid-term)
3. Develop plans in coordination with Richland County, Lexington County, and the City of Columbia to plan for developing areas that will impact the Town of Irmo residents, services, and community facilities (ongoing)
4. Continue to support fire rescue and emergency medical facilities as recommended by officials within these departments and organizations to maintain and improve town-wide response times and ISO ratings (ongoing)
5. Continue the necessary planning/budgeting process to maintain and improve town facilities, services, and assets to include the development of a formalized Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that is coordinated with the priority investment element of the comprehensive plan (mid-term)

6. Continue coordinating with contractual and intergovernmental service providers to ensure a satisfactory level of service, particularly in targeted area of development such as the future town center district (ongoing)
7. Develop a town-wide park and recreation plan that provides a long term look at park and recreation needs in the town to include maintaining existing parks, expanding the park system, coordinating with regional recreation providers (i.e., ICRC), and developing a connected bike, pedestrian, and greenway network (short term)
8. Develop a business attraction strategy to bring more healthy food choices to the Town and create an incentive program to locate, establish, and expand grocery stores and other healthy food purveyors in areas of the town (mid-term)
9. Promote neighborhood retail outlets that sell produce and other healthy food options and encourage the distribution of healthy food in neighborhood grocery stores (mid-term)
10. Enhance and expand existing farmers markets by conducting a farmers market assessment to identify barriers to operations and opportunities for improvement and working with community groups and food system advocates to expand the number of neighborhood farmers markets (short-term)
11. Increase access to fresh produce by creating a permit program for sidewalk produce vendors and expand SNAP/EBT and WIC use at farmers markets (short-term)

Figure 6.1: Water Lines



Figure 6.2: Sewer Lines



Figure 6.3: Community Facilities



7. HOUSING

7.1. Introduction

The housing element of the comprehensive plan provides an analysis of the town's housing stock in terms of type, distribution, age, condition, occupancy, and its ability to accommodate existing and future population growth. In compliance with the SC Priority Investment act, housing affordability issues are also addressed. This includes an analysis of the town's income to housing cost ratio as well as a policy analysis of regulations that may be prohibitive to the provision of affordable housing.

7.2. Inventory

Single-family detached homes dominated the housing market for the past three decades, still accounting for the largest share of the town's housing stock. This number has not likely changed since most of the annexations and new constructions during the recent years have involved single-family detached dwellings. It is a bit unusual for single-family detached housing to comprise such a large share of the market, and is out of line with housing characteristics across the state where multi-family and manufactured homes were nearly 40 percent of the supply.

Several factors contribute to the relative imbalance of single-family homes in the community. During the 1970's and 80's, when the town experienced its biggest population and housing gains, the suburbanization of the community was taking place, paced by single-family housing development. Land was not yet so expensive as to require higher density alternatives. As a suburban community, multi-family housing was generally considered out of character, although now permitted by zoning in the General Commercial zoning district. Zoning restrictions on manufactured homes are more stringent, likely accounting for the decline in such housing since 1990.

Development trends since 1990 point to a gradually changing housing market in Irmo. If the multi-family development along Columbiana Drive, the townhouses on Columbia Avenue, and the renewed interest in age restricted higher density housing are any indication, the community may expect much of its future housing supply to be higher density in nature, particularly in view of the size and location of the remaining undeveloped tracts of land in town.

The market has been shifting toward alternative housing forms, i.e. multi-family and mobile or manufactured homes for the past 25-30 years in the response to the need for lower cost housing, among other things; that these changes have yet to materialize in Irmo in no way rules out such development in the future.

During the period from 2000 – 2010 most of the building permits issued in the Irmo area were for single family dwelling units. However in recent years, the rising cost of site-built, single-family housing has created a market for alternative forms of lower cost multi-family

dwellings and manufactured homes. Mixed-use higher density developments have also become more popular, providing residents to live, work, shop and play in a compact, walkable area. The town may see a growing share of the market to be absorbed by such housing in the future, where zoning allows.

As shown in Figure 7.1 the majority of the existing housing stock in the Town of Irmo and surrounding areas was built between 1960 and 1990. Most of the major subdivisions in the town, such as Friarsgate, were built during the suburban housing boom of the 1960s and 1970s, creating large tracts of low density, large lot residential development. As a result of the automobile oriented focus of this type of development, the commercial tracts that were built up to service these neighborhoods located along the primary roadway corridors in low density strip malls with vast areas of paved parking lots. Based on the Census data for the years that the structures were built, 80% of the structures were built between 1970 and 1989. Another 12% were built from 1990 to March of 2000. Only about 7% were built prior to 1970. The age of the structures is one possible indicator of the condition of the housing stock in the town. There is a general assumption that newer homes, like the town has, are in relatively good condition and are built safely.

Table 7.1: Housing Characteristics

2000 Housing Units	4,027
Owner Occupied Housing Units	81.7%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	14.5%
Vacant Housing Units	3.8%
2010 Housing Units	4,595
Owner Occupied Housing Units	77.4%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	16.8%
Vacant Housing Units	5.9%
2015 Housing Units	4,824
Owner Occupied Housing Units	74.6%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	19.9%
Vacant Housing Units	5.5%
2020 Housing Units*	4,825
Owner Occupied Housing Units	76.2%
Renter Occupied Housing Units	18.4%
Vacant Housing Units	5.4%

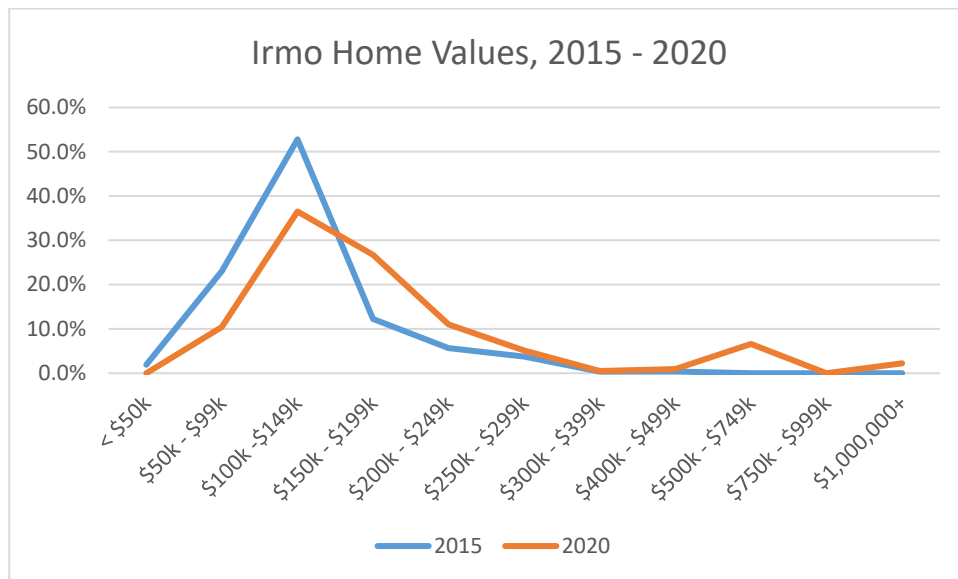
* Source: 2020 US Census

Table 7.2: Owner Occupied Housing Value

2020 Owner Occupied Housing Units by Value	
Total	3,679
<\$50,000	0.0%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	10.4%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	36.5%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	26.7%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	11.0%
\$250,000 - \$299,999	5.1%
\$300,000 - \$399,999	0.5%
\$400,000 - \$499,999	0.9%
\$500,000 - \$749,999	6.6%
\$750,000 - \$999,999	0.0%
\$1,000,000 +	2.2%
Median Home Value	\$154,000

As shown in Table 7.1, 76% of the town's housing units are owner occupied. This is a relatively high number, but the percentage dipped from 82% in 2000 to 75% by 2015 and is now slightly tracking upward. The recent change in home prices has greatly stretched the bell curve. The percentage of homes valued over \$400,000 has jumped from 0.4% to 9.7% of the housing stock, while the percentage of homes less than \$100,000 in value decreased from 24.9% to 10.4%, and the percentage of homes less than \$200,000 decreased from 89.9% to 73.6%.

Figure 7.1: Irmo Home Values



The rising cost of homes would normally be a cause for concern, but that increase is outpaced by an increase in median household income, median household income is up 48% between 2015 and 2021, while families, married-couple families, and nonfamily households have seen similar increases of 30%, 23%, and 55%, respectively.

These characteristics tell us a lot about living conditions in Irmo, which appear to reflect moderate to upper-end living conditions for all home owners, something few communities may lay claim to. Nationally over the last several decades, the number of households increased at a higher rate than the population. The reason for this has been a continued reduction in household size.

Based on data compiled and presented in this section we can make the following observations:

- The composition of housing is trending nationally and throughout South Carolina toward alternatives to site-built, detached single-family housing, e.g. multi-family and manufactured housing, but the trend is not evident in Irmo;
- The size of households is shrinking, giving rise to potential changes in size of housing and accelerating the need for housing;
- The rate of owner-occupancy decreased from 2000 to 2020;
- The housing values indicate the presence of sound housing conditions and the absence of substandard housing throughout the community.

7.3. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal:

Promote quality residential development throughout the Town of Irmo that maintains the character of existing neighborhoods while allowing for more diversity in housing types, density, and affordability

Strategies:

1. Update zoning ordinance and land development regulations to ensure opportunities for developing a range of housing options within the town (short-term)
2. Work with developers to better understand opportunities and constraints for developing higher density and affordable housing options (ongoing)
3. Work with Lexington County, Richland County, and other public assistance agencies and organizations to identify any housing affordability gaps and potential strategies to provide adequate housing opportunities for all Irmo residents (ongoing)

Goal:

Increase the supply of buildable sites for future residential and commercial development

Strategies:

1. Conduct an inventory of undeveloped land and redevelopment/adaptive reuse sites to help target specific types of residential and commercial development in key locations (mid-term)
2. Conduct an annexation/fringe area study to help target and refine short, medium, and long term annexation priorities (mid-term)
3. Explore opportunities for providing market-based incentives for developers to build on key sites identified in the land inventory and annexation/fringe area studies described above (long-term)

Figure 7.2: Year Houses Built

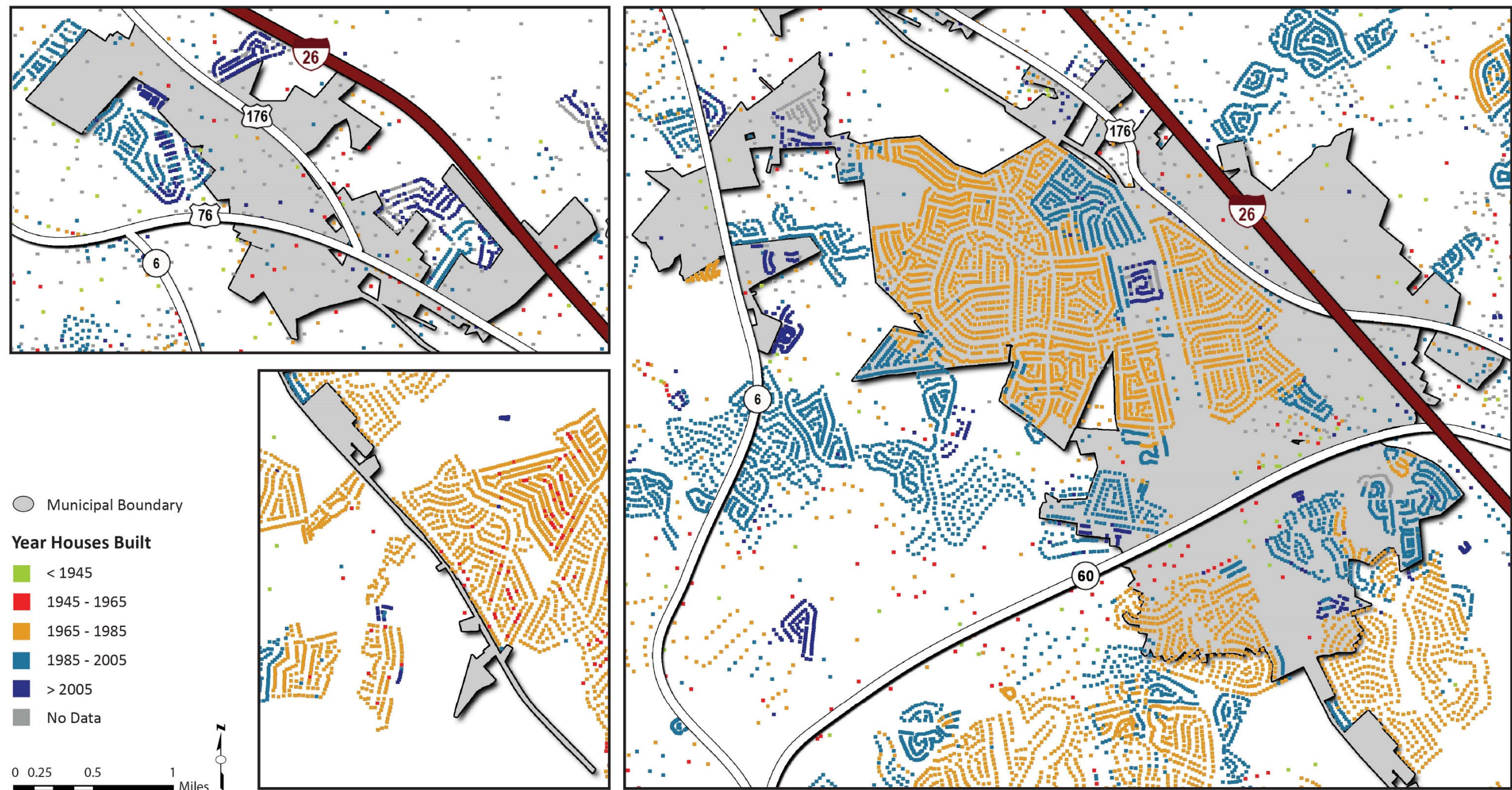


Figure 7.3: 2010 – 2015 Building Permits



8. LAND USE

8.1. Introduction

The land use element of the comprehensive plan presents an inventory of existing land use, a description of current zoning practices, a future land use concept, and a goals and objectives section. The land use element to the comprehensive plan largely reflects and integrates the concepts presented in the other chapters of this document. Many existing conditions and future policy considerations related to population, housing, natural and cultural resources, community facilities, and transportation, have a direct impact on how land is, can, and should be used within the town.

8.2. Inventory

8.2.1. Existing Land Use

In order to plan for the future, we need to understand the past and the existing use of the land produced by it. This will help determine future expectations and determines the degree of departure, if any, from the established patterns of growth and intensity which may be applied in planning future development. An existing land use map is presented in Figure 8.1.

Overall land use patterns in the town have changed very little since the initial 1997 land use survey was completed, but there has been an increase in both commercial and residential use. The biggest change to the land use pattern comes as a result of the annexation of property north of town. Much of that annexed property has been developed or is in the process, with Aldi, Starbucks, and SAFE Credit Union the newest additions to Town in that area.

There has also been infilling of established residential areas, and expansion of commercial development along St. Andrews Road and Lake Murray Boulevard. Recent annexations have added to the supply of undeveloped land within the town, which will facilitate the growth of both the commercial and residential base in the town.

The following is an overview and assessment of existing land use (2016) and conditions by functional classification. While the 2016 data included herein is a bit out-of-date, it has been decided that with a fully new comprehensive plan scheduled for 2024, updating this information is unnecessary.

Single Family Residential: Irmo remains a predominately single family residential community. Except for high density areas contained near the junction of US 76 and I-26 and other areas interspersed toward the southern end of town and southwest along Lake Murray Boulevard, residential areas are characteristically low to medium density. Mobile homes constitute a very small percentage of the housing stock

Office/Institutional: This classification; which includes buildings, room or rooms for conducting the affairs of a business, profession, service, industry or government, constitutes

a small percentage of the overall land use in Irmo. Areas used predominantly for office/institutional uses are contained for the most part on or near Lake Murray Boulevard, just off I-26 and off Irmo Drive, St. Andrews Road and Woodrow Street.

Public/Semi-public: This classification, which includes nonprofit religious or public uses such as churches, schools, hospitals and government buildings, does not constitute a large percentage of the overall land use. It is mostly found scattered throughout the community, interspersed with commercial and residential development.

Commercial: These activities are generally located along St. Andrews Road, Broad River Road and Lake Murray Boulevard. The center of these activities is at the intersection of Lake Murray Boulevard and St. Andrews Road. There is little mixing of commercial and residential uses since the residential areas tend to be established subdivisions. Land use incompatibility is more likely to occur when commercial development backs up to an existing residential neighborhood, but even then, the town's "buffer area" requirements are designated to ameliorate the potential impact of such occurrences.

Industrial: Industrial land use does not figure prominently within the Town of Irmo. For all practical purposes, Southland Log Homes is the only industrial activity within the town. The area is not without industry however, as industrial use can be found outside of town on St. Andrews Road and across I-26 along Broad River Road.

8.2.2. Future Land Use

The future land use component establishes town-wide land use and development goals and policies. Specific neighborhood or sub-area goals and policies are established in the Plan Map component. The goals are as follows:

- Promote the development, rehabilitation, and maintenance of residential areas to meet the needs of a diversified population
- Enhance the physical image of the community
- Optimize development opportunities
- Provide a framework for land utilization and development, to ensure an orderly, efficient, equitable and compatible arrangement and distribution of the town's physical resources

Within the core of the town, the accommodation of most new development likely will be due to the redevelopment of property. The town will be challenged to monitor and guide a transitional process that will bring about change in the intensity, quality, and use of land. The impact of these changes will depend in large measure on the effectiveness of the town to guide the redevelopment process and the extension of new development in an orderly, planned fashion.

Inherent in plan-map objectives are policies dealing with the treatment of development. These policies represent legislative intent on the part of the town to meet the development objective of the various areas of the community.

Land use and development objectives are identified on the plan-map by the following classification system:

Land Use Classification	Intensity (Maximum)
Residential Areas	
Single Family	6 units per acre
General	16 units per acre
Commercial	
General	Above .45 FAR
Limited	.25 to .45 FAR
Industrial	Above .45 FAR
Public Resources Areas	.25 to .45 FAR

The objectives and policies of each map designation area as follows

Residential areas – Single Family

Objective: The objective of this designation is to conserve and protect the character and present use of existing single-family neighborhoods and subdivisions and to prohibit any use or development which would compromise or infringe on prevailing uses and/or conditions in such areas. Also, it is designed to further single-family residential development where applicable to undeveloped tracts and parcels so designated.

Policy: Where this classification is applied to the plan-map, the intent of the planning commission and town council is to deny zoning changes or ordinance amendments not in compliance with the Compliance Index established herein. In neighborhoods so designated, any ordinance change not allowed by the Compliance Index should be denied as a matter of policy, pending further study and consideration by the commission and council and subsequent amendment to the plan-map. This designation is applied principally to existing stable single-family residential areas.

Residential areas – General Residential

Objective: That housing is taking on a variety of forms in South Carolina is clear from development trends across the state. Manufactured homes, apartments, duplexes, etc. comprise an increasingly larger share of the housing market. As a result of this changing market, developers need flexibility to meet future demands and preferences.

The objective of the General Residential designation therefore, is to identify areas suitable to and with short and long-range market potential for a wide range of residential options. This designation is applied principally to existing high density residential areas and undeveloped tracts with residential potential. Various types of residential units and higher densities are possible for these areas, thus allowing design and market flexibility in response to local housing preferences and demands.

Policy: The intent of the General Residential classification shown on the plan-map is to accommodate, where appropriate, adjustments and amendments to the zoning map so long as such amendments are in accordance with the Compliance Index contained herein. The type of residential use proposed and the residential zoning requested are to be considered on their merits, together with alternative zoning classifications indicated on the Compliance Index.

Commercial areas

Commercial areas designated on the plan map contain uses providing employment and commerce opportunities and/or land generally suited to the development of such uses, i.e. business, commerce, wholesale, government services, etc. These areas are further classified on the basis of their primary function, existing or planned.

Areas predominantly devoted to or planned for regional or general commercial/business uses are designated General Commercial Areas, encouraging the development of a wide range of commercial and/or business activities. Areas designated Limited Commercial are intended principally to serve and meet community needs and occupy positions contiguous to or in proximity of residential areas.

Objective: As an inclusive commercial designation, the objective of this classification is to accommodate community, regional, general, and other economic activities in areas best suited to such uses, and to minimize their impact on neighboring properties, the transportation network, and environmental resources.

Policy:

General Commercial Areas – The policy regarding areas so designated on the plan map is to promote and accommodate regional or general commercial and business development activity through zoning and other means available to the town. Most of these areas contain shopping centers and general business uses at this time and are zoned accordingly. Others so designated have the potential for such development. Outside of these areas intense and/or large scale business development is discouraged, because of the potential to dilute the cumulative effect of concentrated commerce, and to negatively impact neighboring residential and/or public resource areas.

Limited Commercial Areas – The policy regarding these areas is to accommodate lower intensity community and/or convenience retail and business development in proximity to

residential areas, and to prohibit larger scale and open ended economic development of such areas because of the potential to negatively impact neighboring residential uses.

Also, location policy is to insert lesser intensity convenient retail and service development between existing and planned residential areas, and general commercial or industrial uses – to use this designation as a buffer or transitional area.

Industrial Areas

Objective: The objective of this classification is to promote industrial development in the Town of Irmo in areas so designated

Policy: The policy regarding designated Industrial Area on the plan-map is to funnel industrial development into such areas with potential to accommodate such uses and their suitability to such development.

Also there is the matter of separation of such areas and uses therein from existing or planned residential areas – to better promote land use compatibility and provide order to the development process.

Public Resource Areas

These areas consist principally of educational and recreational sites and facilities.

Objective: The objectives of the plan are (1) to properly link these facilities through a system of pedestrian ways with nearby residential areas, (2) to enhance the compatibility of such facilities with the surrounding uses; and (3) to optimize their contribution to and place in the community.

Policy: to guard against and mitigate any development and/or zoning proposals which would put at risk the continued use of these facilities and jeopardize the safety of persons using such facilities.

Rural/Farming/Forestry Areas

These areas consist principally of rural undeveloped land that may or may not be used for farming and forestry type activities. For the most part these areas are considered to be rural residential in nature (i.e., large lots with a single house surrounded by undeveloped land).

Objective: The objectives of the plan are to protect these areas where appropriate to conserve open space, protect water quality and sensitive environmental habitats, and promote working land use activities where appropriate.

Policy: To minimize the impact of low density residential development by allowing large lot undeveloped areas to persist in the outer portions of the municipal limits. These areas may

remain in agriculture or forestry uses as appropriate depending on the level and type of development on surrounding properties.

Compliance Index Component

Nowhere is the Plan more essential than in the decision-making process involving zoning or rezoning changes. In fact, 6-29-720 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976 (Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994) states that “regulations (zoning) must be made in accordance with the comprehensive plan . . .” However, unless the Plan is clear regarding what constitutes compliance, it may not succeed as a guide to the development and regulatory process.

To clarify the intent of this Plan and what constitutes “accordance” therewith, the use of a Compliance Index is recommended. The Index, presented on the accompanying table, establishes criteria and parameters for determining compliance. It summarizes goals and objectives, and identifies principal uses intended for each mapped area. It also shows compatible zoning districts as well as acceptable alternatives to Plan Map goals, as all are critical to the issue of compliance.

Plan Map designations and the accompanying description on the Index establish the intent of a given map classification and the type of development which fulfills that intent. The compatible use and compatible zoning columns establish criteria for determining plan compliance; and the alternative district column provides for plan flexibility.

The compatible zoning district column provides a range of recommended zoning districts, from few too many, depending on the land use and development objectives for an area. Areas designated Residential Single-family, for example, show very few alternatives. This means that any rezoning requested not listed by the Index should be strongly scrutinized on the basis of non-compliance with the Plan map. This limited rezoning response makes a strong statement for stability and conservation of existing residential resources so classified on the Plan map.

The list of “zoning district alternatives’ is designed to give town officials and developers needed flexibility to meet changing market conditions within the general framework of the Plan; however, the changes permitted by alternative districting or rezoning are inherently limited by Plan map goals and objectives for the various areas.

Where the Plan’s goals are brought into question, the matter should be reassessed by the Planning Commission and Council to determine if they are still representative of the areas in question. If they are, any rezoning change in conflict should be strongly considered for denial on the grounds of “non-compliance.” If, however, there is a deficiency in the Plan or conditions, or objectives have changed, the Plan itself should be amended. In this way, the Commission together with the Council will continually evaluate the Plan for relevance and applicability.

The entire process – evaluating development and rezoning proposals on the basis of the Compliance index – is designed to better infuse the Plan and the planning process into the development and zoning decision-making process.

TOWN OF IRMO PLAN COMPLIANCE INDEX				
Legend	Summary Goals	Principal Permitted Uses	Compatible Zoning Districts	Alternative Zoning Districts
<i>Residential Areas</i>				
Single Family	To protect existing quality single family residential areas	Single-family, detached dwellings	RS	RG, CO
General	To accommodate residential development and allow flexibility to meet market demands for various types of dwellings	Single-family, manufactured homes, townhouses, patio homes, multi-family, cluster housing	RS, RG	CO, CN
<i>Commercial/Business</i>				
General	To concentrate general and large scale business development in areas central and accessible to the community and larger region and promote cumulative attraction.	Big box stores, commercial/regional shopping centers, motels, offices, general business services, etc.	CG, CO, CN	LM, PDD
Limited	To meet commercial and service needs generated by nearby residential areas, transition from residential to commercial	Convenience commercial uses, small scale offices, institutional, service and community support uses.	CO, CN	RG, CG
<i>Industrial</i>	To protect existing industry and promote industrial development through reservation of prime industrial sites	Industrial, wholesaling warehousing and service uses, also general business uses	LM, CG	CO, CN, RG
<i>Public Resource Areas</i>	To protect and enhance the use of such resources	Limited to existing use or variations thereof	Based on resources and surrounding area	
<i>Farming and Forestry</i>	To protect and enhance the use of such resources	Limited to existing use or variations thereof	Based on resources and surrounding area	

8.3. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal:

Provide a framework for land utilization and development that ensures an orderly, efficient, equitable and compatible arrangement and distribution of the town's resources that enhances the physical image of the community, provides a diversity of uses, and promotes growth through infill, adaptive reuse, and targeted annexation strategies.

Strategies:

1. Prepare planning studies as necessary to refine and implement the future land use vision to include gateway site plans/corridor plans for Lake Murray Boulevard, St. Andrews Road, Dutch Fork Road around Wal-Mart
2. Develop zoning ordinance and land development regulation amendments to implement the future land use concepts (short-term)
3. Make other text amendments as necessary to update the zoning ordinance and land development regulations to reflect current conditions. Such considerations include:
 - a. Study minimum density thresholds in residential districts and other districts where residential uses are permitted to better decide where and if denser uses should be permitted (short-term)
 - b. Study clarifying language in zoning ordinance to explicitly allow multi-family developments and add supporting language to define requirements for such developments (short-term)
 - c. Examine parking requirements by NAICS code to determine if they are accurately reflected in the ordinance and identify areas in need of amendment (short-term)
4. Prepare a land development policy and procedure manual and associated forms and worksheets for internal use when processing and evaluation land development and zoning requests (mid-term)
5. Protect quality residential neighborhoods from incompatible development by periodically re-examining buffer yard requirements in relationship to other jurisdictions (ongoing)
6. Continue to ensure that the level and type of proposed residential development will be compatible with the physical limitations of the land and established land uses in an area (ongoing)
7. Continue to work with the Railroad on beautification efforts along the RR right-of-way as a means of softening the presence of the line and "greening the community." (ongoing)

- 8.** Coordinate land use planning and development decision in areas surrounding and impacting the town with other decision-making agencies and institutions in the community to include Richland County, Lexington County, CMCOG, and Richland Lexington School District 5 (ongoing)
- 9.** Protect existing and establish new urban agriculture sites, including home gardens, and urban farms as important community resources and adopt zoning regulations that establish community gardens as a permitted or conditional use in appropriate locations (mid-term)
- 10.** Participate in the development of guidelines and strategies for local institutions to increase purchase of locally grown produce (mid-term)
- 11.** Provide opportunities for community gardens and local food production by supporting the use of public and private vacant lots, including school yards for community gardens (mid-term)

Figure 8.1: Existing Land Use

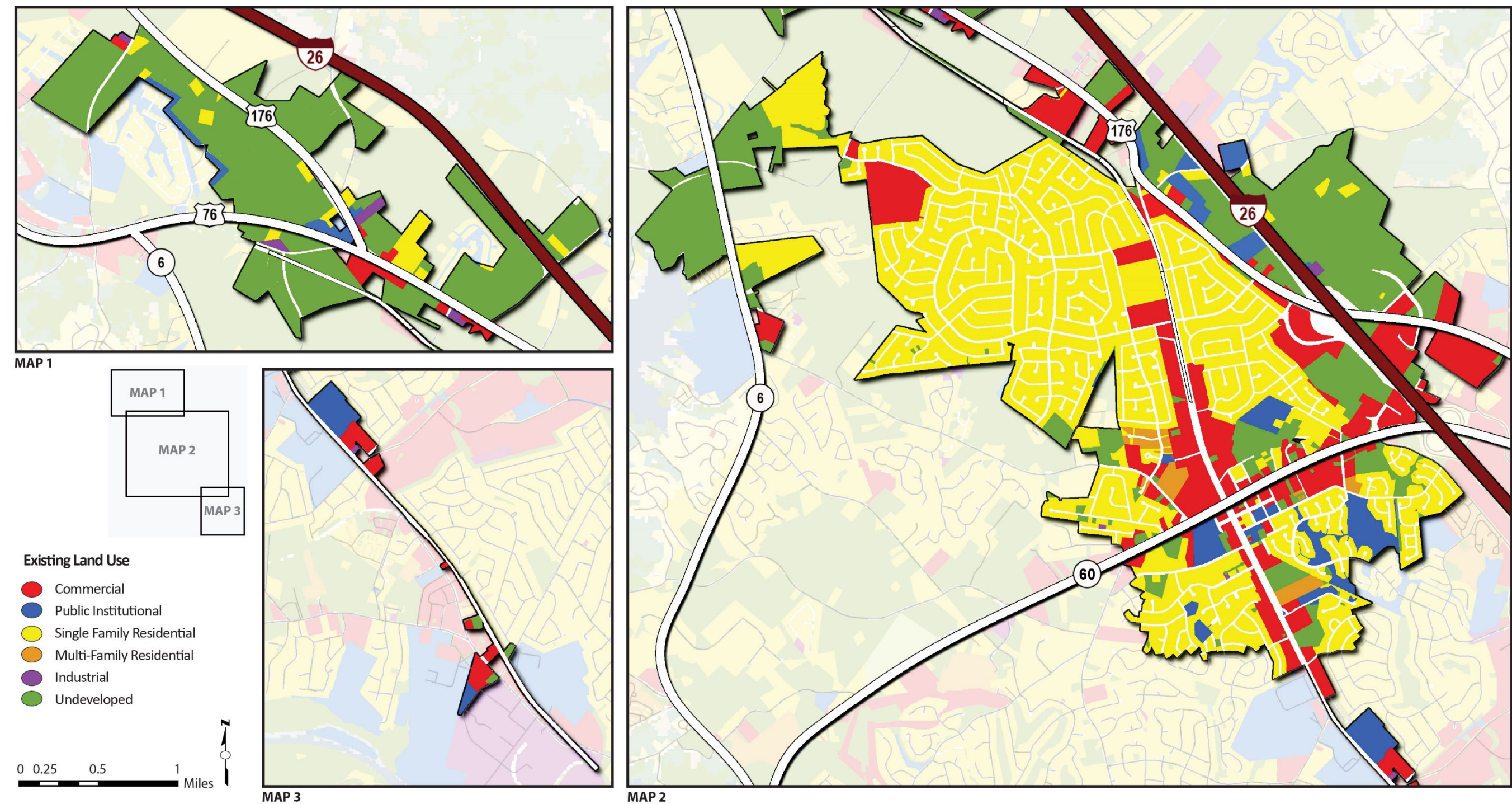


Figure 8.2: Zoning

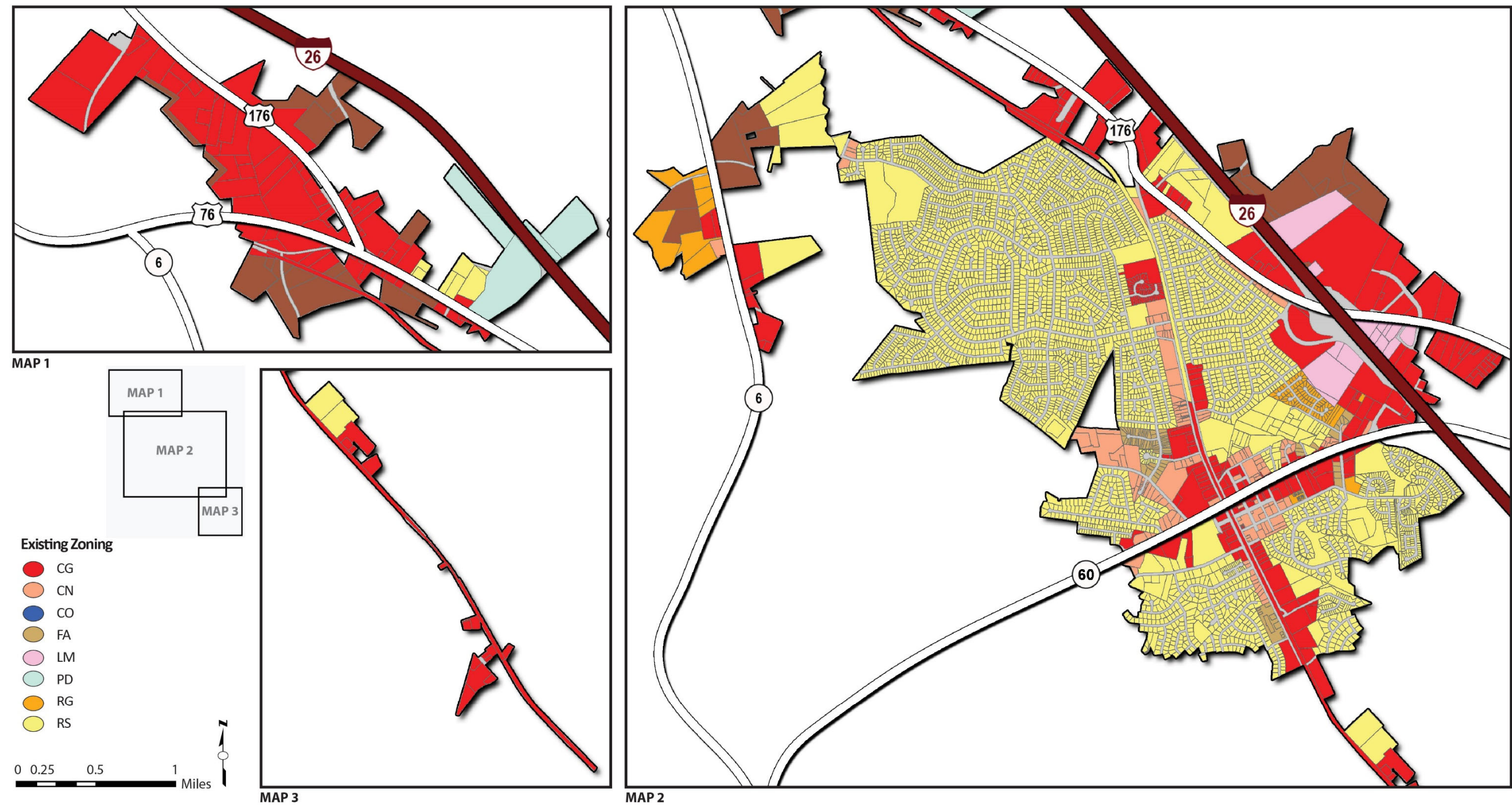
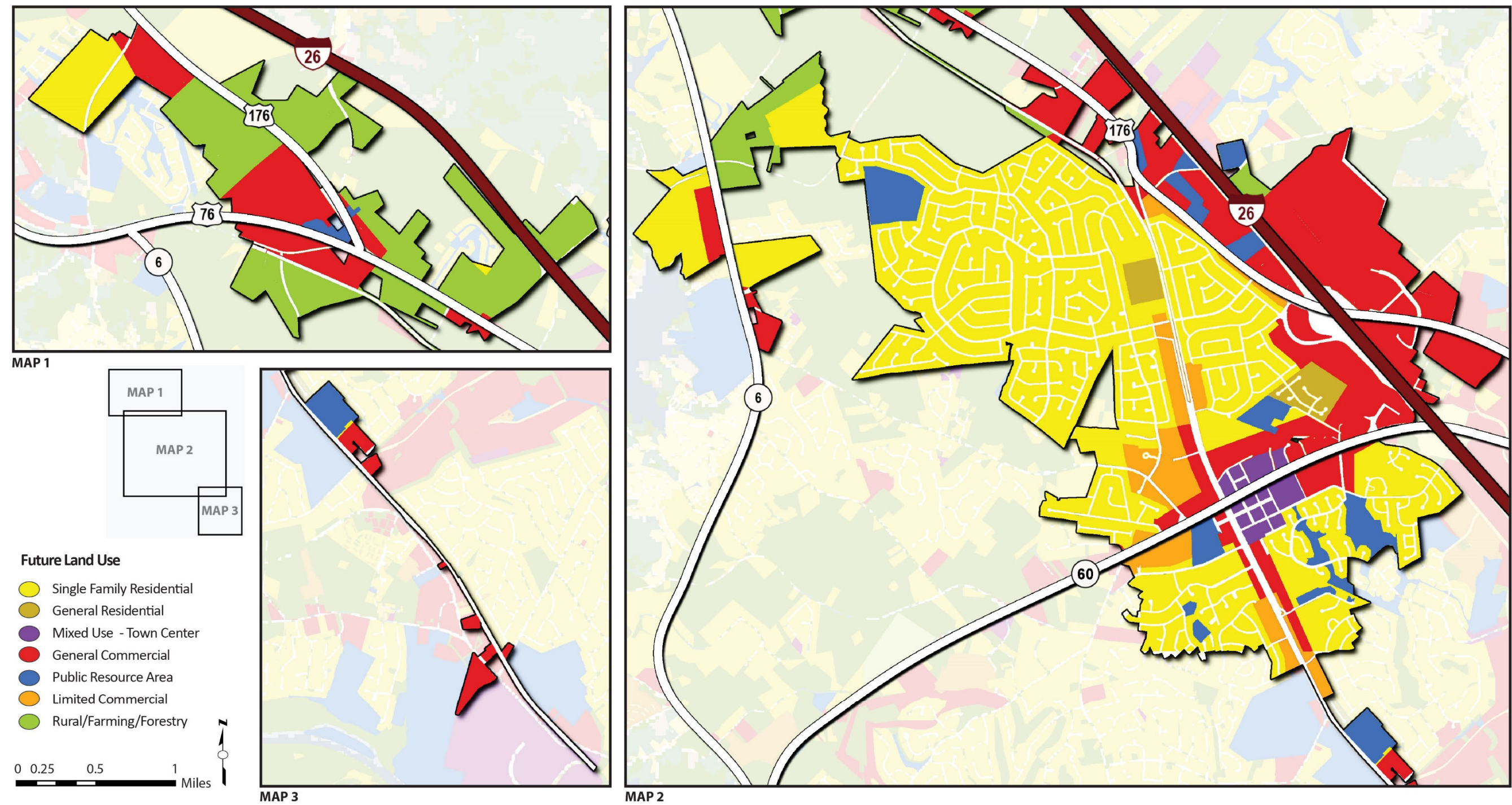


Figure 8.3: Future Land Use



9. TRANSPORTATION

9.1. Introduction

The transportation element of the comprehensive plan inventories and analyzes issues impacting the local transportation network. The SC Priority Investment Act, which amended the comprehensive planning act to require a separate transportation element, stipulates that this analysis be multi-modal in nature and therefore include a comprehensive needs assessment of road improvement projects, new alignments, transit service, and bike and pedestrian facilities. This element also must be developed in accordance with the land use element to ensure compatibility and coordination between transportation priorities and existing and future land use policies.

9.2. Inventory

The growth of Irmo during the last three decades was made possible by the improvement of the road system in and around Irmo. This began with the paving of SC Highway 76 in 1925 (formerly Old State Road which was opened in 1747) and widened in the 1930's. Following this was the paving of SC Highway 60 (Lake Murray Boulevard) in 1929 to provide access to the just-completed Lake Murray Dam. Woodrow Street was paved in 1939 from SC Highway 60 to SC Highway 76, and in 1949 allocation was obtained for the purpose of paving several streets, including present day St. Andrews Road, Lexington Avenue and Gibbes Street. Money was obtained in 1960 to pave most of the remaining roads in town. The completion of the two interstates in the area – I-26 in 1959 and I-20 in the early 1960's – made an immense impact on the growth and development in the community.

The community's transportation system consists of a street and highway system of arterials and collectors, and a non-passenger-carrying rail line which bisects the town, operated with daily freight service by the CSX Railroad.

I-26 and I-20 serve the Irmo area with connections to interstate and intrastate locations. Major collectors serving the area include Royal Tower and Friarsgate Boulevard in Friarsgate and Woodstream in the Murraywood Subdivision. Arterials in the area are heavily traveled roads such as I-26, US 76-176, Lake Murray Boulevard, St. Andrews Road and Harbison Boulevard.

Traffic Counts (AADT Annual Average Daily Traffic counts)

Since 2009, the traffic growth patterns in Irmo for the major roads increased but so has the planned improvements. Even with the planned road widenings, several roads will exceed capacity in 2030 and beyond. These roads include Dreher Shoals Road (SC 6), Lake Murray Boulevard (SC 60) and I-26.

Table 9.1: 2016 Average Annual Daily Traffic (2016)

					forecasts by linear regression			Road	v/c 2015	level 2015	v/c 2030	level 2030	v/c 2050	level 2050
Rt	RT#	STNAME	2010	2015	2020	2030	2050	Capacity						
US	76	BROAD RIVER RD	21,400	22,450	24,862	29,402	38,482	10,800	208%	F3	272%	F3	356%	F3
US	176	BROAD RIVER RD	10,550	12,650	10,308	10,699	11,481	10,800	117%	E	99%	C	106%	D
SC	6	DREHER SHOALS RD	11,700	12,400	12,957	15,696	21,173	10,800	115%	D	145%	F1	196%	F2
S-	27,42	WOODROW ST	5,083	5,050	5,116	5,254	5,531	10,800	47%	A	49%	A	51%	B
S-	36	ST ANDREWS RD	16,600	16,633	17,735	18,129	18,915	24,800	67%	B	73%	B	76%	C
S-	1862	N ROYAL TOWER DR	10,100	9,800	10,395	10,023	9,279	10,800	91%	C	93%	C	86%	C
L-	4701	COLUMBIANA DR	13,750	13,200	12,560	11,885	10,533	9,800	135%	F3	121%	E	107%	D
SC	60	LAKE MURRAY BLVD	21,050	22,150	26,297	31,024	40,477	24,800	89%	C	125%	E	163%	F1
S-	757	HARBISON BLVD	9,300	8,800	10,931	12,098	14,433	24,800	35%	A	49%	A	58%	B
I-	26	I-26	68,000	73,200	82,860	96,632	124,176	87,900	83%	C	110%	D	141%	F1

Significant improvements to the road network over the years include the widening of Lake Murray Boulevard from the town to the dam, the relocation of the railroad crossing along Woodrow Street with the addition of a traffic light, and the addition of traffic light at the intersection of Columbia Avenue and Columbiana Drive. In 2007, Richland County hired a consultant to identify transportation needs in the county. The Richland On the Move transportation plan recommends the following transportation improvements in the Irmo area:

- Widen Broad River Road to 3 lanes from Royal Tower Road to the Peak Interchange of I-26;
- Improve the intersection of Lake Murray Boulevard and Kinley Road;
- The addition of sidewalks on Columbiana Drive from Lexington County to Lake Murray Boulevard
- The addition of sidewalks on Broad River Road from Royal Tower Road to the Peak interchange;
- The addition of sidewalks on Broad River Road from Lake Murray Boulevard to Western Lane;
- The addition of bike lanes on Columbiana Drive from the Lexington County line to Lake Murray Boulevard;
- The addition of bike lanes from Dutchman Boulevard from Broad River Road to Lake Murray Boulevard;
- Bike lanes and restripe of Broad River Road/Lake Murray Boulevard from I-26 to Harbison Boulevard;
- Bike lanes and restripe of Dutch Fork Road from Johnson Marina Road to Bickley Road;
- Shoulder improvements on Broad River Road from Woodrow Street to the Newberry County line;
- Shoulder improvements on Dutch Fork Road from Broad River Road to Bickley Road;
- Shoulder improvements on Broad River Road from Royal Tower Road to the Peak interchange;
- Bike lanes on Broad River Road from Lake Murray Boulevard to Western Lane.

Of all these projects, only the intersection of Lake Murray Boulevard (SC 60) and Kinley Road (S-670) has been completed from the Richland On the Move transportation plan. Many of the remaining projects have included in the list of Richland County One Cent Sales projects [listed below].

Richland County One Cent Sales Tax

The widening category is Broad River Road –US 176 (five (5) lanes from Royal Tower Road (S-1862) to Dutch Fork Road –US 76 and three (3) lanes from Dutch Fork Road – US 76 to Peak

Exit 97 with planning and engineering to begin in FY 2016; Right of way programmed to begin in FY 2018; with construction to start in FY 2020 and take 2 to 3 years to complete. This project will include bike lanes and sidewalks. Total cost is estimated at \$29 million.

COATS 2016-2022 Transportation Improvement Program

As part of interstate improvement list is the widening I-26 from SC 202 (Exit 85) to Broad River Road- US 176 (Exit 101) from four lanes to six lanes and replacing or improving the bridges in this segment to meet current height standards.

Transportation Alternatives Projects [TAP] (MPO Enhancement Projects)

Active TAP projects in Irmo are: Palmettewood Parkway sidewalk; Carlisle/Moseley Street sidewalks; and Brickling Road sidewalk. Previous projects include: College & Eastview sidewalks; Carlisle Street Phase 1 & II sidewalks; S. Royal Tower Drive sidewalk; and Saint Andrews Phase 1 & II sidewalks.

COATS 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan – Moving the Midlands

The widening category is Broad River Road –US 176 five (5) lanes from Royal Tower Road (S-1862) to Dutch Fork Road –US 76 is on the Cost Constrained Improvement List with a price tag of \$25 million.

On the Prioritized List of Intersections is Lake Murray Boulevard (SC 60) at Columbiana Drive. On the Aspiration List is Broad River Road (US 176) at Elliott Richardson Road (S-3950). Neither of these projects are in the COATS 2016-2022 Transportation Improvement Program.

SC Interstate Projects

Carolina Crossroads [I-20/I-26/I-126] starts on I-26 at Broad River Road (US 176) and travels east to the Congaree River and on I-20 from the Saluda River to the Broad River. The purpose of this study is to reduce congestion, improve safety (reduce accidents) and improve air quality in the Midlands. The recently signed S-1258 Bill will finance many of improvements on these interstates and adjacent and parallel roads to better accommodate the commuter and freight traffic.

The I-20/I-26/I-126/I-77/SC 277 Corridor Management Plan began in 2016 will recommend road and interchange improvements or other alternatives to ease congestion in and around Columbia. Any improvements should ease traffic in and near Irmo as they are implemented.

Transit

The Comet has a new dedicated revenue source with the Richland County One Cent Sales Tax and are researching new routes to better service Richland County citizens. Town officials should contact the Comet and investigate a route from Harbison Boulevard north on Saint

Andrews Road and Woodrow Street to the Walmart at Broad River Road (US 176) and Dutch Fork Road (US 76). If Lexington County would support transit in the future, a route on Lake Murray Boulevard (SC 60) and south on North Lake Drive (SC 6) to downtown Lexington would be a good connector.

Daily service is provided by Comet routes 30 and 31 providing connections to the downtown Columbia hub on Laurel at Sumter Streets.

Intercity Travel

Greyhound Bus and Southeastern Stage operate a depot at 710 Buckner Road off I-20 between N Main Street - US 21 and Fairfield Road - US 321. Megabus operates from the same downtown Comet hub.

Columbia to Charlotte Shuttle provides house to Charlotte Airport terminal service daily via minivans, vans and buses. With no parking hassles in either Columbia or Charlotte Airport, this service offers an alternative to Columbia Metropolitan Airport in Cayce.

The Amtrak Station at 850 Pulaski Street near Huger Street just south of Gervais Street offers one [Silver Star] northbound and one southbound connector between midnight and 6am daily. These trains travel to Washington/New York/Boston and Ft Lauderdale/Miami, respectively.

A regional multimodal transportation center could co-locate all train, intercity bus services and a Comet hub in one location. It will offer bicycle and pedestrian access along with taxi and Uber parking.

A Columbia to Newberry commuter rail has been completed for COATS which would have a stop in Irmo. Unfortunately the costs of double tracking most of this line makes the cost of this project prohibitive as this time. This project however, could be a low cost alternative to widening I-26. Columbia to Charlotte train route is being studied by SCDOT and would an alternative to driving or flying to Charlotte. COATS staff is assisting in this study.

Pedestrian/ Sidewalks

The Town of Irmo has improved the pedestrian transportation system with the construction and extension of sidewalks throughout much of the community. Annually, the town applies for grant funds to extend sidewalks where needed to improve and make safer pedestrian mobility. Continued solicitation of grant funds for sidewalk extensions and/or improvements are projected for several areas of the community.

An updated sidewalk plan will be beneficial to any new Transportation Alternatives Projects applied through COATS.

USDOT

Since the last update of this document, two transportation bills have passed: MAP 21 [Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act –PL 112-141] in 2012 and FAST Act [Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act PL 114-94] in 2015. Both of these acts require performance based measures to justify any new project. These measures will include congestion, safety, air pollution and environmental concerns.

The future

Uber and Lyft (alternatives to the traditional taxi service); and Autonomous Vehicle (driverless vehicles); and home delivery of groceries will change driving habits in our town. High occupancy lanes (HOV) and commuter rail on the I-26 could also affect the local roads in Irmo.

9.3. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal:

Provide a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system that allows for adequate vehicular circulation, provides for bike, pedestrian, and transit accessibility, and promotes public safety.

Strategies:

1. Continue to work with SCDOT, Richland County, Lexington County, the City of Columbia, and CMCOG to maintain and improve current levels of service on area roadways (ongoing)
2. Continue working with CMCOG, Lexington County, and SCDOT to identify and prioritize needed road and intersection improvements (ongoing)
3. Develop a detailed plan for the design and implementation of a town-wide bike/pedestrian/greenway network that provides connectivity between neighborhoods, commercial areas, and activity centers, and adjacent jurisdictions (mid-term)
4. Explore updating land development regulations to include the requirement of traffic impact assessments for new residential and commercial developments (short-term)
5. Examine methods for assessing the true costs of development in terms of traffic impacts, infrastructure, and services to be included as a part of the development review process (mid-term)

- 6.** Explore opportunities for exacting development impact fees to help pay for road and other needed infrastructure improvements as a result of development activity (short-term)
- 7.** Utilize site plan review and approval process to ensure the orderly extension of the road system and proper siting of development in relation to existing and/or proposed streets (ongoing)
- 8.** Update zoning ordinance to add language promoting street connectivity between subdivisions and to provide multiple access points (short-term)
- 9.** Examine other the potential for developing and funding other locally needed road projects to include:
 - a.** Salem Church Road connection to US 76 near the Walmart
 - b.** Extension of Woodrow street to the old New Life Fitness Center
- 10.** Work with Lexington County to examine options for a local option sales tax to pay for transportation improvements (short-term)
- 11.** Continue applying for transportation alternative funds (TAP) to implement streetscaping and bike/ped projects (ongoing)
- 12.** Support travel demand management strategies for commuters such as ridesharing and telecommuting (ongoing)
- 13.** Continue working with the Comet to identify opportunities for expanding transit service within and the Town of Irmo (short-term)

Figure 9.1: 2015 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT)



10. PRIORITY INVESTMENT

10.1. Introduction

The Priority Investment Act was signed into law by Governor Sanford on May 23, 2007. The law amends the Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 with the intention of improving the planning and multi-jurisdictional coordination of public infrastructure decisions and to encourage the development of affordable housing and traditional neighborhood design. To accomplish these goals, the act amends the housing element with new requirements related to affordable housing, and adds two new elements. These include a separate multi-modal transportation element that focuses on facility improvements, and a priority investment element, which requires local governments to assess the availability of public funds for infrastructure improvements and to prioritize these improvements for expenditure over the course of the next ten years.

The act also gives local governments the flexibility of designating specific “priority investment” areas within their jurisdiction that will promote and direct growth where existing or planned infrastructure can support higher intensities of development. Local governments are also encouraged to use a wide range of market based incentives to foster public and private investment in projects within these priority investment areas that meet affordable housing, design and density requirements, and financial planning goals of the Priority Investment Act.

10.2. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal:

Participate in an ongoing dialogue with all relevant public and private entities and neighboring jurisdictions in order to facilitate better communication and coordination in the planning and implementation of public facilities and land development projects.

Strategies:

1. Work with all service providers to monitor the demand and capacity of the services, but to also prioritize areas for future investment (ongoing)
2. Provide written notification to all relevant parties of major development proposals and infrastructure improvement projects that might impact their service areas or jurisdictions (ongoing)
3. Provide an opportunity for comment by relevant parties for major development proposals and infrastructure improvement projects (ongoing)

4. Develop and maintain a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for budgeting the provision of services and infrastructure improvements in relationship to projected revenues and funding streams (mid-term)
5. Encourage public and private investment that benefits the mixed use areas surrounding the town center enhancing its ability to foster and maintain economic vitality (long-term)
6. Maintain an official contact database for dissemination of written notifications. Example: Notifying School district and Lexington County of major proposed subdivision (short-term)
7. Include in written notifications information on scheduled public meetings and/or other public comment opportunities such as Council Meetings or internet surveys (ongoing)

Goal:

Encourage and accommodate public and private investment in key areas of the town by communicating and coordinating plans, creating market based incentives, and prioritizing strategic public infrastructure investments.

Strategies:

1. Implement a streamlined development review process for mixed use and environmentally sustainable low impact development proposals (long-term)

11. RESILIENCY

11.1. Introduction

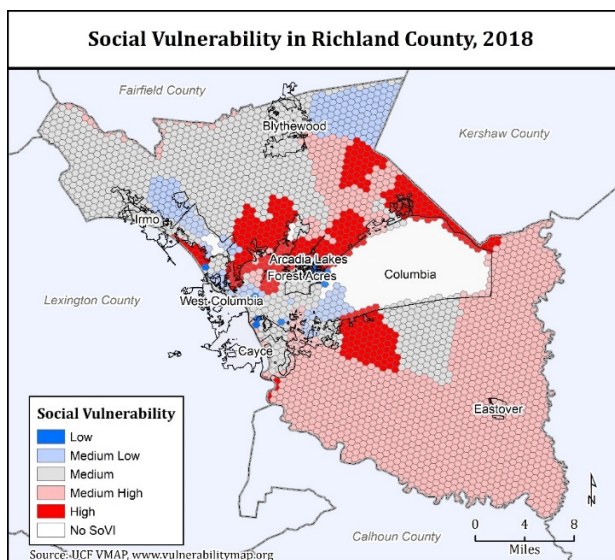
The Disaster Relief and Resilience Act of 2020 amended Section 6-29-510 (D) of the SC Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act to require the development of a separate resiliency element for the Comprehensive Plan. Per the requirements of the act, the element should consider the impacts of flooding, high water, and natural hazards on individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, economic development, public infrastructure and facilities, and public health, safety and welfare. The element should also promote resilient planning, design and development; be coordinated with adjacent jurisdictions and agencies; and be coordinated with the other elements and the comprehensive plan goals and strategies.

11.2. Inventory

11.2.1 Natural Hazard Risk and Vulnerability

The Town of Irmo is vulnerable to a number of natural hazards. This vulnerability is not just a result of physical and environmental characteristics but is also a result of social vulnerability, which refers to the characteristics of a population in terms of the ability to anticipate, cope with, and recover from the impact of natural hazard events. Social vulnerability can be calculated with a composite index based on wealth, sex, age, employment, poverty, race, ethnicity, and transportation access. As shown on Map 11.1, the Town generally has a medium social vulnerability rating, with the areas to the southeast of Town having a medium high rating, and the areas southeast of Town in Lexington County having a high social vulnerability rating.

Figure 11.1: Social Vulnerability



Based on historical events, the Town of Irmo is the most at risk for the following types of natural hazards: extreme heat and drought; hurricanes, tropical storms, severe thunderstorms, and heavy precipitation events; and flooding. Table 11.1 summarizes historical hazard events in Richland County, and Table 11.2 provides an overall risk assessment for Richland County. Natural hazard risks in Lexington County are very similar, particularly for the areas around the Town of Irmo.

Table 11.1: Natural Hazard Historical Events and Loss in Richland County

	Direct Losses (Property and Crop)	Total USDA Crop Indemnity Payout****	Direct Injuries and Fatalities	# Of Loss-Causing Events	Frequency	Recurrence Interval (in years)	Future Changes
Flooding	\$36,580,114	\$118,153	40	177	4.9%	0.2	▲
Hurricane	\$105,686,154	\$69,076	32	10	1.1%	0.94	▲
Tornadoes	\$19,554,807	n/av	18	18	1.6%	0.61	▲
Thunderstorm* *	\$11,411,990	\$4,700,180	16	321	31%	0.03	▲
Lightning	\$6,474,975	n/av	65	84	1.4%*	0.73 days*	▲
Wind	\$10,228,633	\$98,201	18	348	18%	0.06	▲
Hail	\$728,465	\$180,631	3	76	5.7%	0.18	▲
Fog	n/av	n/av	n/av	n/av	0.08%*	12.7 days*	◀▶
Winter Storm	\$18,260,484***	\$94,208	7	57	0.47%	2.1	▼
Cold*****	\$11,679,375	\$274,192	5	35	49%	0.02	▼
Heat	\$12,746,647	\$2,393,606	7	14	25%	0.04	▲
Drought	\$16,069,921	\$6,445,058	0	16	0.4%	2.5	▲
Wildfire	\$401,355	n/av	0	3	0.09%*	10.8 days*	▲
Earthquake	0	n/av	0	0	0.03%	40	◀▶
TOTAL	\$238,143,545	\$14,733,305	211	1125			

* daily frequency/recurrence calculations instead of years

**coastal storms combined with thunderstorms/severe storms

***no 2004 ice storm losses reported by NWS

****hazards with n/av have no event records that resulted in USDA Crop Indemnity Payouts

*****cold hazard totals already included in winter storm totals

▲ indicates that future increase in occurrence and/or impacts is likely

▼ indicates that future decrease in occurrence and/or impacts is likely

◀▶ indicates that either no change in future occurrence or impacts is expected or that a determination of future changes cannot be made

Table 11.2: Overall Risk Assessment for Richland County

Hazard	Geographic Extent of Hazard Threat (THR)	Vulnerability (VUL)	Severity of Consequence (CON)	Severity of Consequence (CON) subcomponents				Overall Risk
				Future Climate Impacts		Historical Impacts	Priority Hazards ²	
Winter Weather	Isolated	Low	Moderate	Unlikely to worsen	↔	Minor	High	Low
Extreme Heat	Widespread	High	Severe	Likely to worsen	↑↑	Major	High	High
Droughts	Isolated	Low	Severe	Likely to worsen	↑↑	Minor	High	Medium
Tornadoes	Scattered	Medium	Moderate	Somewhat likely to worsen	↑	Major	High	Medium
Tropical Storms	Widespread	Medium	Severe	Likely to worsen	↑↑	Extensive	High	High
Wind	Isolated	Low	Moderate	Somewhat likely to worsen	↑	Extensive	Medium	Low
Extreme Cold	Isolated	Medium	Minor	Unlikely to worsen	↔	Major	Medium	Low
Earthquakes	Widespread	High	Moderate	Somewhat likely to worsen	↑	Minor	Medium	Medium
Flash Floods	Widespread	High	Severe	Likely to worsen	↑↑	Extensive	Medium	High
Lightning	Widespread	High	Moderate	Somewhat likely to worsen	↑	Extensive	Low	High
Hail	Isolated	Low	Minor	Somewhat likely to worsen	↑	Minor	Low	Low
Thunderstorms	Widespread	Medium	Moderate	Likely to worsen	↑↑	Extensive	Low	High
Fog	Widespread	High	Minor	Unlikely to worsen	↔	Minor	Low	Low
Wildfires	Isolated	Low	Moderate	Likely to worsen	↑↑	Minor	Low	Medium
Riverine Floods	Widespread	Medium	Moderate	Likely to worsen	↑↑	Minor	Low	Medium

² CMCOG 2016 Hazard Mitigation Plan - <http://www.centralmidlands.org/pdf/CMHMP%202016%20-%20Final.pdf>

Extreme Heat. Extreme heat and drought impact all of Richland and Lexington County. On average the Irmo area experiences 21-26 days a year of greater than 95 degree temperatures. Periods of greater than 100 degree temperatures can be experienced in May, June, July, August, September, and October. The year 2020 tied with 2016 for the warmest year on record. Extreme heat represents a significant public health concern, especially for vulnerable populations.

Drought. Sustained periods of drought can significantly impact water and sewer utilities, agriculture, recreation, and associated industries. On average the Irmo area experiences 15-19 weeks per year in drought status. This is slightly higher than other areas of Richland County which experience 15-17 weeks a year of drought. Since 1960, 16 loss-causing drought events in Richland County have caused over \$16M in damage.

Hurricane/Tropical Storms/Severe Storms. All of Richland County is at risk from severe storms, hurricane force winds, and associated heavy precipitation. The Irmo area typically experiences 8-11 severe storm warnings per year. Significant hurricane/tropical force wind events impact the county approximately every 7 years. The Midlands area, including the Town of Irmo also serves as a host for coastal area evacuees. Recent events include Dorian (2019), Michael (2018), Florence (2018), Irma (2017), Mathew (2016). Tropical storms and hurricanes are also expected to increase in frequency and intensity in future years as a result of climate change.

Flood Risk. Flood damage in the Town of Irmo and surrounding areas results from localized heavy precipitation and flash flooding due to poor drainage and residential and commercial development within or adjacent to flood prone areas. Older neighborhoods such Friarsgate, were largely built out prior to the implementation of modern stormwater regulations and development standards. These areas are especially vulnerable to flooding and have the potential for damage during major rain events. Significant rain events like the one experienced in 2015, which caused flooding along Rawls Creek, are expected to increase in frequency and intensity in future years as a result of climate change.

11.2.2. Economic Resiliency and Recovery

Economic resilience is the ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from any type of major disruption to the local or regional economic base. A disruption can be caused by the loss of a major employer, by a downturn in a specific industry or cluster, by a larger economic recession, or by a man made or natural disaster. In order for a region to be resilient, it must be able to adequately evaluate socio- economic risk and vulnerabilities, assess potential impacts, and build the institutional capacity to mitigate, respond to, and recover from an event. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated just how socially and economically vulnerable communities are, as it has impacted most every sector of the local and regional economy, and has exacerbated many pre-existing socioeconomic disparities, such as job, food, and housing insecurity.

Figure 11.2: Extreme Heat

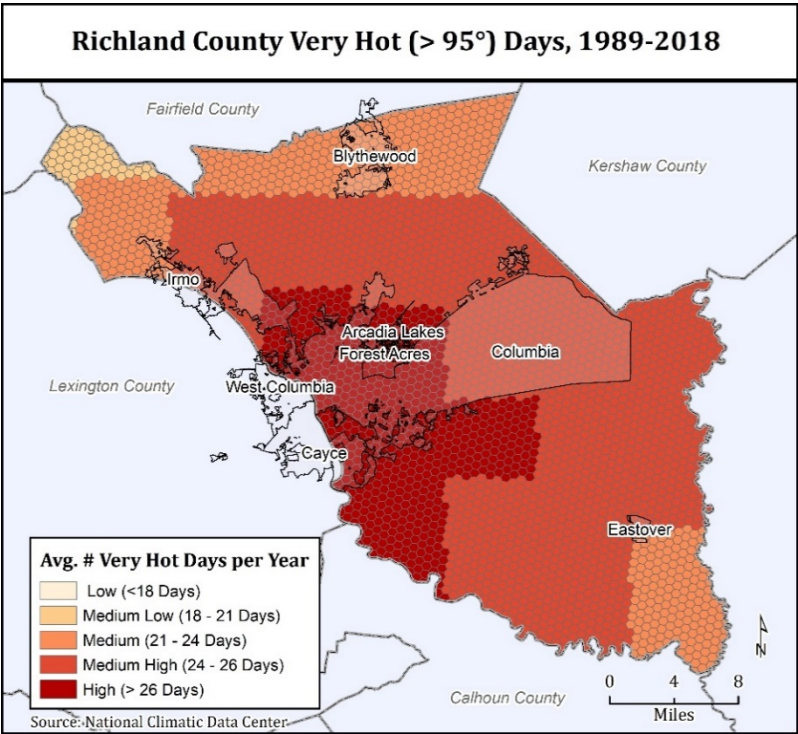


Figure 11.3: Drought

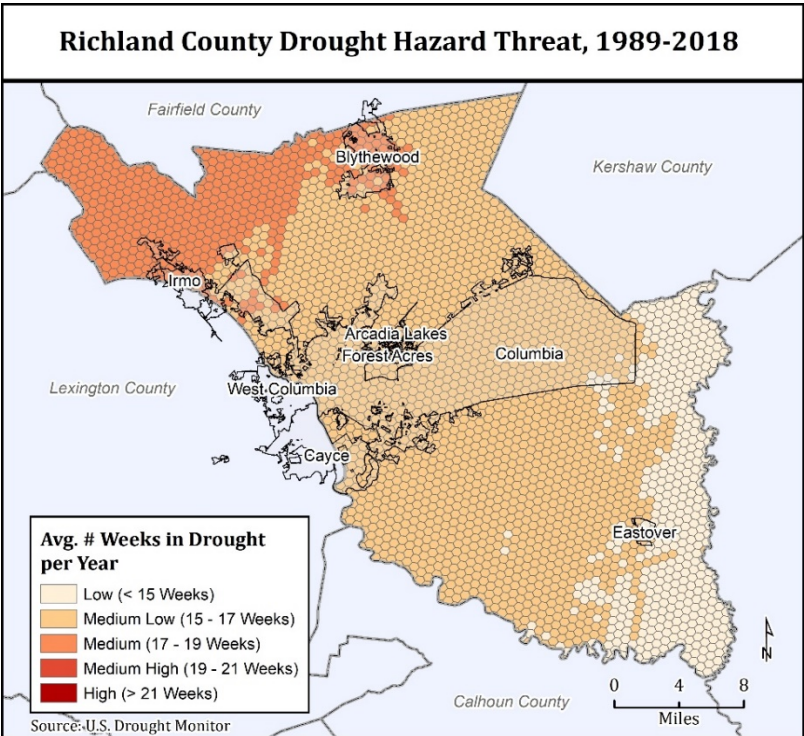


Figure 11.4: Severe Storms

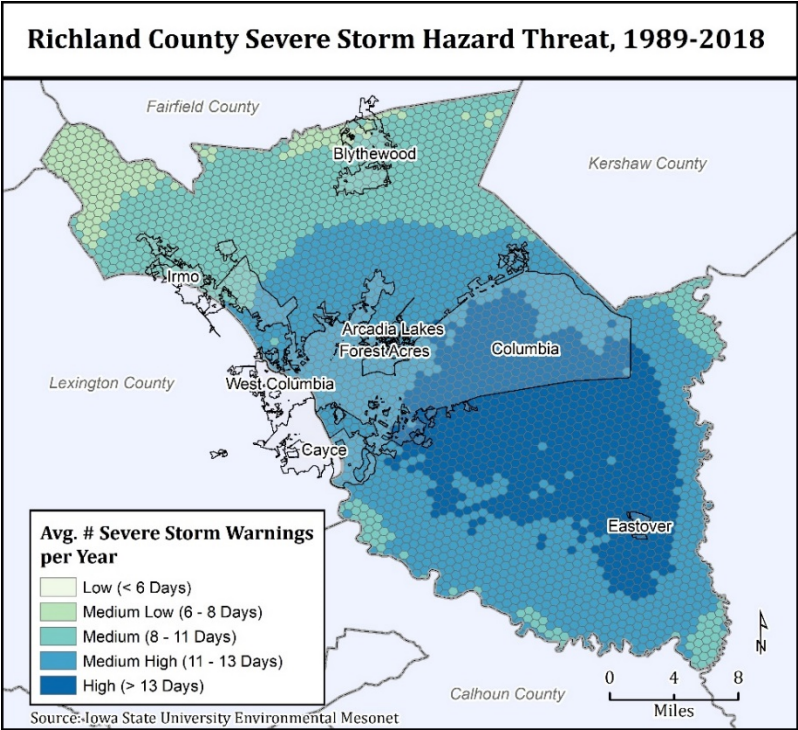
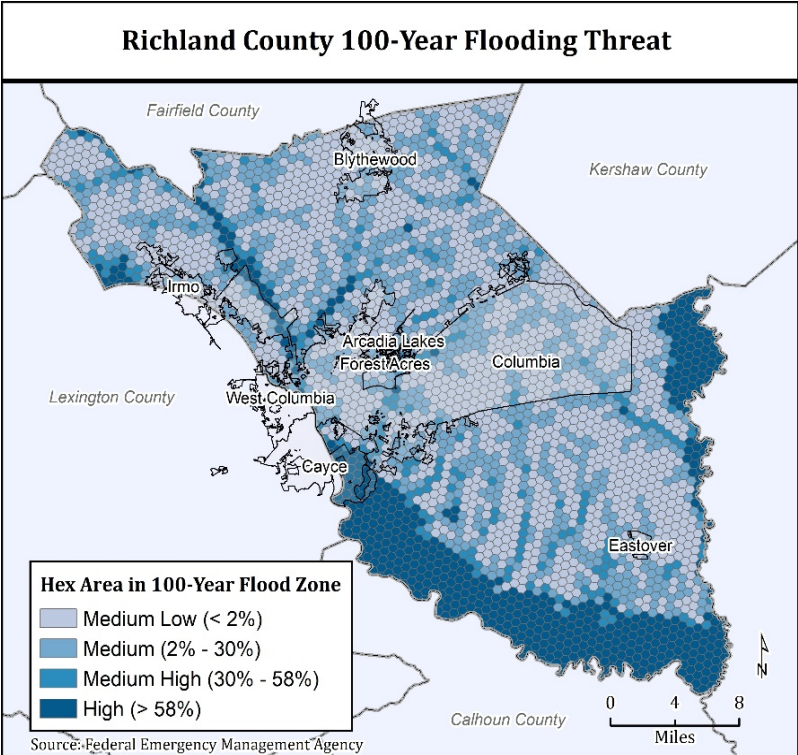


Figure 11.5: Flooding



11.2.3. Intergovernmental Coordination

The Disaster Relief and Resilience Act requires local governments to provide written notification by the local planning commission or its staff, to adjacent jurisdictions and agencies, regarding proposed hazard resilience, recovery, response, and mitigation projects.

Relevant jurisdictions, partners, and organizations to be notified of proposed projects are listed in Table 11.3.

Table 11.3: Partner Organizations and Agencies

Local Governments	State and Regional	Other Organizations
• Richland County Emergency Management • Lexington County Emergency Management • City of Columbia • Town of Chapin • Town of Lexington	• SC Office of Resilience • SC Disaster Recovery Office • SC Emergency Management Division • SC DNR Flood Mitigation Program • SC DNR State Climatology Office • SC Department of Public Safety • SC Department of Transportation • Central Midlands Council of Governments	• Richland Lexington School District Five • Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission • Neighborhood Organizations • United Way of the Midlands

11.5. Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal:

Strengthen the Town of Irmo's ability to respond to and recover from natural hazards, economic downturns, and other community vulnerabilities

Strategies:

1. Work with Central Midlands Council of Governments to update, adopt, and maintain the Richland County, Lexington County, and Town of Irmo portions of the 2021 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (short-term)
2. Review and update priority hazard mitigation strategies identified in the 2021 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and identify funding opportunities for implementation (medium-term)
3. Coordinate resilience efforts with neighboring jurisdictions and partner agencies/organizations to include developing a contact database of stakeholders and system for outreach and coordination (ongoing)
4. Support local and regional economic recovery and resilience initiatives
5. Enforce and update the town zoning and stormwater ordinance to restrict development in the floodplain (ongoing)
6. Identify, contact, and coordinate removal or remediation of any repetitive flood loss properties (ongoing)
7. Clean power line and utility easements of debris and remove taller trees near critical facilities (ongoing)
8. Develop and publicize water conservation practices to respond to drought declarations from area water providers (ongoing)