

# 4

## *Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan*

### Future Land Use





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## Introduction

This Land Use chapter provides an analysis of existing development patterns, recent planning and plan implementation efforts, and a vision for future land use and growth management policies. This chapter replaces the Future Land Use Plan chapter of the 1997 Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan. The policies in this chapter build on the recommendations of the 1997 Plan and on the recommendations of the Northern and Southern Beaufort County Regional Plans. The policies in this chapter also incorporate the results of the rural planning process conducted during 2007-2008.

### COMMON PLANNING GOALS

The following eleven common land use goals form the foundation upon which the policies and recommendations of the Land Use chapter are built. These goals expand on the original six core planning policies of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan and incorporate the public input gathered during the formulation of the two regional plans. The regional plans included various goals and objectives that were aggregated into the following common land use goals:

- Goal 1:** Beaufort County will work with the municipalities to coordinate growth throughout the county, especially around the current and future edges of the municipalities.
- Goal 2:** Beaufort County will maintain a distinct regional form of compact urban and suburban development surrounded by rural development for the purpose of reinforcing the valuable sense of unique and high quality places within the region.
- Goal 3:** Beaufort County will have livable and sustainable neighborhoods and communities with compatible land uses, mixed-use developments, pedestrian and transportation connections, and integrated open spaces.
- Goal 4:** Development will be coordinated with the planning for and provision of public services and facilities for

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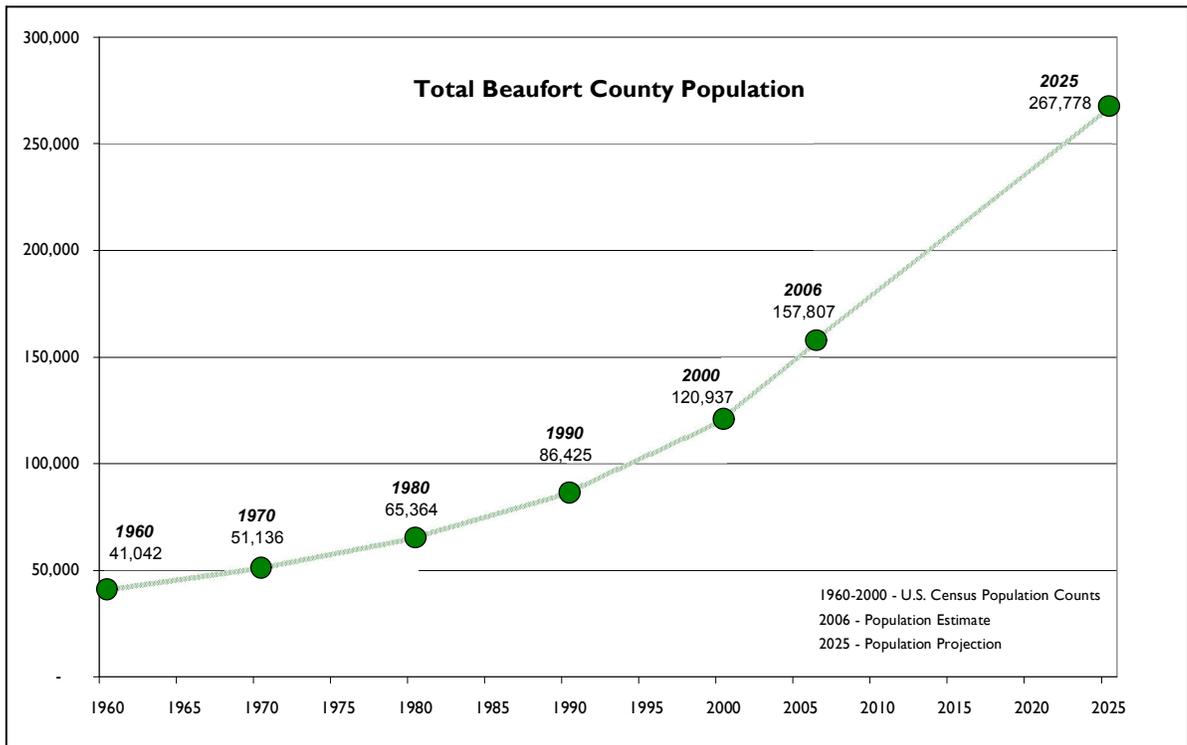
transportation, water and sewer facilities, schools, and other related services.

- Goal 5:** Beaufort County will preserve water quality and protect natural resources by promoting baseline standards for natural resources including salt marshes, marsh islands, coastal waters, and marine resources; trees, forests, and wildlife habitats; beaches and dunes; stormwater management; and open space preservation that each jurisdiction adopts as part of their planning policies and regulations.
- Goal 6:** Methods of creating and permanently preserving a regional open space system will be developed.
- Goal 7:** An integrated cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of the region will be preserved and promoted regionally, and in particular, the ability of indigenous population groups to remain a contributing part of the region and benefit from the opportunities that come from growth will be protected.
- Goal 8:** Affordable and workforce housing will be addressed on a regional basis.
- Goal 9:** There will be a continued collaboration with military facility planners, and in particular will respect the AICUZ contours.
- Goal 10:** The county will maintain a strong community aesthetic that includes the protection of scenic view corridors and regional commercial travel corridors, in order to promote and protect the economic well-being of Beaufort County and supplement the high quality of master planned areas.
- Goal 11:** There will be intergovernmental coordination to implement this plan.



## Historical Background on Growth in Beaufort County

It is only within the last 40 to 50 years that Beaufort County has truly witnessed a surge in population growth brought about initially by the development of tourism on Hilton Head Island in southern Beaufort County and by the growth of the military bases located in northern Beaufort County. Due to Beaufort County's size and overall geography, the county is often seen as being comprised of two distinct areas: southern Beaufort County and northern Beaufort County, divided by the Broad River. This is relevant to the comprehensive plan because the development trends and patterns are varied between these two areas.



### RECENT DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

**Southern Beaufort County:** A majority of the county's recent growth has taken place in southern Beaufort County, originally spurred by the resort and master planned developments on Hilton Head Island. The Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan identifies the following common development patterns prevalent in this portion of the county:

- Large, amenity-based, low-density master planned communities dominate the developed landscape of southern Beaufort County.
- The planning of these communities has been primarily a private sector endeavor with great care given to internal road networks, the delivery of services, and private covenants ensuring that development standards are high within the developments.
- The planned unit development (PUD) has been the preferred zoning tool to facilitate the development of these communities because it provides greater site design flexibility.
- Outside of the master planned communities, government has been faced with the challenge of providing roads, infrastructure, and land use regulations to connect the rest of the community together.
- Many of the region's current transportation inadequacies are a result of poor connectivity between the master planned communities and insufficient land being available for an adequate road network.
- Development is spreading west. Modern development began on Hilton Head Island, spread to the greater Bluffton Area (Bluffton and unincorporated county lands in the region), and is moving toward Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville.
- Currently, all but 11% of the land area of southern Beaufort County is either committed to future development or preserved from development.



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**Northern Beaufort County:** Northern Beaufort County has also continued to grow since the 1950s with the growth of the military bases, the growing popularity of the City of Beaufort's historic district, and the attractiveness of the region's natural and cultural resources. In contrast with the southern portion of the county, the following development patterns have been prevalent in the northern portion of the county:

- Northern Beaufort County has experienced steady growth over the last decade, but it has not grown as rapidly as the southern portion of the county.
- However, growth pressure appears to be increasing in the northern portion of the county, and the county expects that growth pressures will remain steady.

- Most of the growth has been occurring on Port Royal Island and on Lady’s Island.
- There is much more rural land remaining in the northern portion of the county than in the southern portion.
- While there remains rural land on Port Royal Island and Lady’s Island, the bulk of the rural areas are in the Sheldon area north of the Whale Branch River and on St. Helena Island.
- The growth pressures are showing signs of pushing out from the developed areas on Port Royal and Lady’s Islands. However, the opportunity remains for growth in northern Beaufort County to be contained within an efficient growth boundary, preserving rural character, open spaces, and environmentally sensitive resources.
- Cooperative land use planning between Beaufort County, the City of Beaufort, the Town of Port Royal, and the Town of Yemassee is key to managing growth and preserving rural areas.

**MUNICIPAL GROWTH**

One of the most significant development trends since the adoption of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan has been the amount of acreage that has been annexed into municipalities. Beaufort County is home to five municipalities: The City of Beaufort, the Towns of Bluffton, Port Royal, Hilton Head Island, and Yemassee. Each of these communities, along with the county, maintains its own individual comprehensive plan and land use regulations. The percentage of land within the municipal boundaries has grown from 11.4% to 31.7% within the past ten years (see Table 4-1 and Map 4-1).

**Table 4-1: Municipal Growth – 1997-2007**

Jurisdiction	1997 Acreage*	2007 Acreage*
City of Beaufort	2,887	9,977
Town of Bluffton	640	32,845
Town of Hilton Head Island	21,326	21,412
Town of Port Royal	1,145	8,561
Town of Yemassee	794	1,794
Unincorporated Beaufort Co.	208,704	160,907

\*Acreage does not include water and salt marshes

**EXISTING LAND USE PATTERNS**

Beaufort County’s 2007 inventory of existing land uses provides a generalized picture of existing development patterns. The purpose of this inventory is to provide a “snapshot” of what is on the ground today to serve as a benchmark for future analyses of land use patterns. Table 4-2 provides a description, acreage and percentage of total land area for each existing land use category. Maps 4-2 and 4-3 show the distribution of existing land use in northern and southern Beaufort

County respectively. Map 4-4 shows existing land use for Hilton Head Island, which is based on the *Land Use Patterns and Trends Background Report (2005)* of the *Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan*.

**Table 4-2: Existing Land Use Categories**

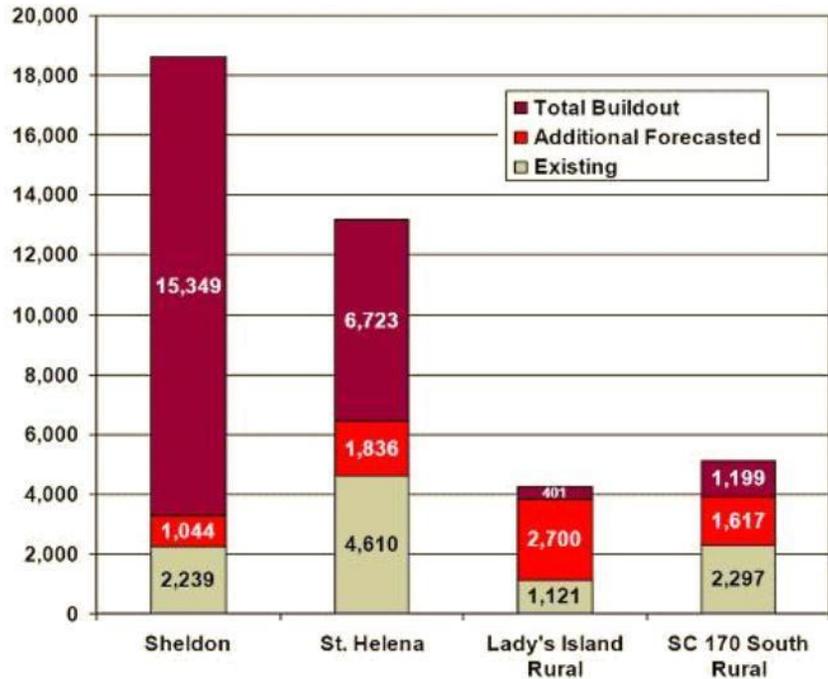
Land Use Category	Description	Acreage	% of Total
Preserved Land	All municipal and county parks and both publicly and privately preserved lands.	37,919	16.1
Rural/Undeveloped	All the currently undeveloped and rural areas regardless if they are committed for future development.	130,128	55.3
Residential/Mixed-use	All single-family and multi-family developments and supporting small-scale commercial and service uses	49,455	21.0
Community Commercial	Includes commercial uses that typically serve nearby residential areas, such as a shopping district anchored by a grocery store.	1,494	0.6
Regional Commercial	Includes those uses due to their size and scale that attract shoppers and visitors from a larger area of the county and outside the county (include “big box” retail uses, chain restaurants, and supporting retail).	2,373	1.0
Light Industrial	Includes business parks, product assembly, distribution centers, major utility facilities, and light and heavy industrial uses.	1,405	0.6
Military	Land owned by the military	12,722	5.4
<b>Total</b>		<b>235,496</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### RURAL DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Currently over 50% of Beaufort County’s land area is classified as rural/undeveloped. One of the goals of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan was to maintain a distinction between rural and developing areas of the County by discouraging intense development and infrastructure investment in rural areas. The analysis below looks at existing development trends in the rural areas of the County and the potential impact of existing land use policies on the future development of rural areas.

Rural land uses are predominately located in four general areas, including the Sheldon area north of the Whale Branch River, St. Helena Island, northern Lady’s Island, and along SC 170 south of the Broad River. The number of dwelling units that could occur under the existing zoning designations is projected and compared to the number of dwelling units that exist as well as forecasted to occur within the next twenty years.

Figure 4-3: Growth Potential of Rural Areas



While Sheldon has the largest geographic area of rural land uses, St. Helena has the most dwelling units in a rural area, reflecting the relatively higher rural density of existing development. It is also striking that while both Sheldon and St. Helena have extensive remaining capacity for dwelling units (total build out on the chart), the twenty year forecasted growth would consume only a small amount of that capacity.

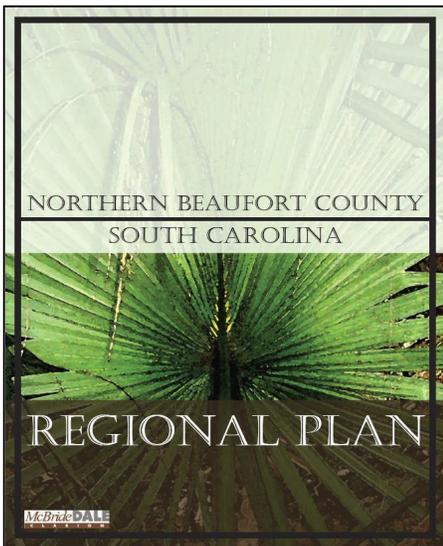
## Planning Framework



In 1994, the State of South Carolina adopted the Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act, which required for the first time that all counties and municipalities regulating land use adopt a Comprehensive Plan. In 1997, Beaufort County was the first county in South Carolina to adopt a Comprehensive Plan pursuant to this legislation. Since the adoption of this plan, Beaufort County has not only taken steps to implement that plan through its Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO), but has engaged in both neighborhood and inter-jurisdictional planning efforts and in innovative programs to put into action the policies of its 1997 plan. The policies and recommendations of this chapter are a result of the integration of these recent planning efforts.

### EXISTING PLANS AND REGULATIONS

**1997 Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan:** The 1997 Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan, entitled “Get a Grip on Our Future”, was designed to guide the development of the county through a 10 to 20 year planning horizon. The plan included goals, policies, and implementation strategies, supported by technical analysis, which covered a number of key planning elements. In particular, the 1997 plan provided guidance in the areas of future land use, natural resources, cultural resources, parks, recreation, and open space, transportation, economic development, affordable housing, and community facilities. In 2002, the county evaluated the comprehensive plan and amended various recommendations based on the strategies the county had accomplished since the adoption of the original plan.



**Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance:** Beaufort County first adopted zoning regulations in 1990. This ordinance was drafted with no supporting comprehensive plan. After Beaufort County Council adopted their first comprehensive plan in 1997, they immediately began drafting their current Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO), which was adopted in 1999. The ZDSO divides the county into eleven base zoning districts (see sidebar on p.7) that implement the plan’s future land use element. In addition to these

**Beaufort County  
Zoning Districts**

**Base Zoning Districts**

- Urban (U)
- Suburban (S)
- Community Preservation (CP)
- Commercial Regional (CR)
- Commercial Suburban (CS)
- Research and Development (RD)
- Light Industrial (LI)
- Industrial Park (IP)
- Rural (R)
- Resource Conservation (RC)
- Rural Residential (RR)
- Rural Business (RB)

**Overlay Zoning Districts**

- Transitional Overlay (TO)
- Airport Overlay (AO)
- Corridor Overlay (CO)
- Cultural Protection Overlay (CPO)
- Commercial Fishing Village Overlay (CFV)

base districts, land may also be zoned with one of five overlay zoning districts, which may apply additional standards to the underlying base zoning district. The ZDSO incorporated characteristics of performance-based zoning providing mixed-use districts and performance standards.

**Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan:** The Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan focused on planning for the amount of growth anticipated over the next 20 years within the southern Beaufort County area. This area encompasses Hilton Head Island, the Town of Bluffton, and the surrounding unincorporated areas of the county. The plan evaluated the impacts of the anticipated growth on traffic, recreation, other public services, and the overall quality of life. As stated in the plan, “the plan explores how the three jurisdictions can work together as a region to keep up with the demands of growth, to protect the fragile coastal environment and to continue to make southern Beaufort County a desirable place to live and work.”

**Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan:** The Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan represents an agreement between Beaufort County, the City of Beaufort and the Town of Port Royal as to how the northern county region will grow and develop. The plan identifies a series of common goals, establishes growth boundaries for municipalities, and includes a land use plan framework that focuses growth in and around the municipalities while preserving over 60% of the land area for rural uses. The plan includes a strategy to promote regional transportation planning. The plan also includes a fiscal analysis and strategy for addressing the costs of the anticipated growth. The final element of the plan is an implementation strategy that focuses on the continued regional cooperation between the county and the municipalities through the adoption of an intergovernmental agreement.

**Community Preservation Plans:** The 1997 Comprehensive Plan recognized that there were several areas throughout unincorporated Beaufort County that possessed distinct qualities. In an effort to protect the character of these areas, the county designated them as Community Preservation (CP) Areas. The 1997 Plan called for detailed community plans to be conducted for each of the CP areas that would lead to design guidelines and community-specific land use and development standards to implement the plans. The 1997 plan originally designated 15 CP Areas with County Council adding the Shell Point CP in 2000. Table 4-4 provides a summary of the status of the 16 CP Areas.

**Table 4-4: Status of Beaufort County's Community Preservation (CP) Areas**



Beaufort County's Community Preservation (CP) Areas

CP Area	Status
Alljoy Road (Brighton Beach)	Completed (April 2005)
Big Estates	Waiting initiation
May River (Bluffton)	Completed (Sept 2010)
Buckingham Landing	Completed (June 2007)
Corners Community	Completed (Feb 2002)
Dale	Completed (Dec 2000)
Daufuskie Island	Completed (Sept 2010)
Lady's Island	Completed (March 2000)
Lands End	Waiting initiation
Polk Village	Removed*
Pritchardville	Waiting initiation
Sawmill Creek	Removed*
Seabrook	Completed (Aug 2003)
Sheldon	Waiting initiation
Tansi Village	Waiting initiation
Shell Point	Completed (Nov 2002)

\*In 2003, Polk Village was rezoned to Urban and Sawmill Creek was rezoned to Rural Residential. This implemented a recommendation from the 5-year review of the Comprehensive Plan in 2002.

### OTHER PLANNING INITIATIVES

In addition to the above plans, the county currently employs several planning tools and strategies to assist in the implementation of the various plans. The following is a summary of some of these tools.

**Rural Policy Assessment:** Beaufort County undertook a comprehensive review and evaluation of planning policies related to development in the rural areas. This effort was a direct implementation strategy dictated by the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan. The results of this assessment are incorporated into the comprehensive plan. Most of the changes are incorporated into this chapter, while others have been incorporated into the Cultural Resources chapter.

### AICUZ Protection and Transfer of Development Rights

**Program:** In October 2004, the County Council, City of Beaufort and Town of Port Royal adopted the Lowcountry Joint Land Use Study (JLUS), the purpose of which was to cooperatively plan for and protect the present and future integrity of operations and training at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort. One of the recommendations that came out of the JLUS was for the three jurisdictions to develop a coordinated "AICUZ Overlay" district for all land affected by accident potential and/or noise zones associated with the air station.



Entrance to the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort

Approximately 13,000 acres of unincorporated land in Beaufort County fall within one or more of the AICUZ footprints, and about 10,000 of these acres are currently undeveloped. In December 2006, the County Council adopted the new overlay regulations, which limited the type and density of development that could occur within the AICUZ boundaries. The City of Beaufort and the Town of Port Royal subsequently adopted the overlay district. To prevent long-term encroachment of incompatible development around MCAS and to provide some economic relief for those landowners affected by the new overlay district, the local governments agreed to explore the feasibility of establishing a transfer of development rights (TDR) program. Such a program would essentially “transfer” development out of the AICUZ zones and “send” it to other “receiving” areas within the growth boundary that have been targeted for additional density. A property owner in the receiving area who agrees to buy the development rights would compensate a property owner within the overlay district who sells their development rights. Through a grant received from the U.S. Department of Defense, the Lowcountry Council of Governments (LCOG) contracted with a consulting firm to evaluate the feasibility of such a program and to develop a specific TDR process for Beaufort County. This project is currently underway. If the program proves to be successful for the AICUZ area, it may be expanded in the future as a way to further preserve land within the rural areas.



Land at the headwaters of the Okatie River preserved through the Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program.

**Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program:** Beaufort County’s Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program (RCLPP), established by Ordinance in 1999, is an effort to provide a means by which lands may be protected by fee simple purchase or conservation easements. Beaufort County contracted with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to manage the program, negotiate with property owners and to assist in the purchase of properties. The Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Board was set up to prioritize properties and make recommendations to County Council. The Board consists of eleven citizens representing a cross section of the County and the municipalities. In 2004, the County adopted a “Greenprint” map to help narrow the geographical areas to target preservation efforts. Based on citizen input gathered at a number of public meetings, TPL developed focus area maps to concentrate the program’s money.

The RCLPP has preserved more than 10,000 acres of land with approximately 120 acres designated as historic, more than 9,000 acres slated for preserves, and over 600 acres established with conservation easements.



## Regional Growth Management Strategy

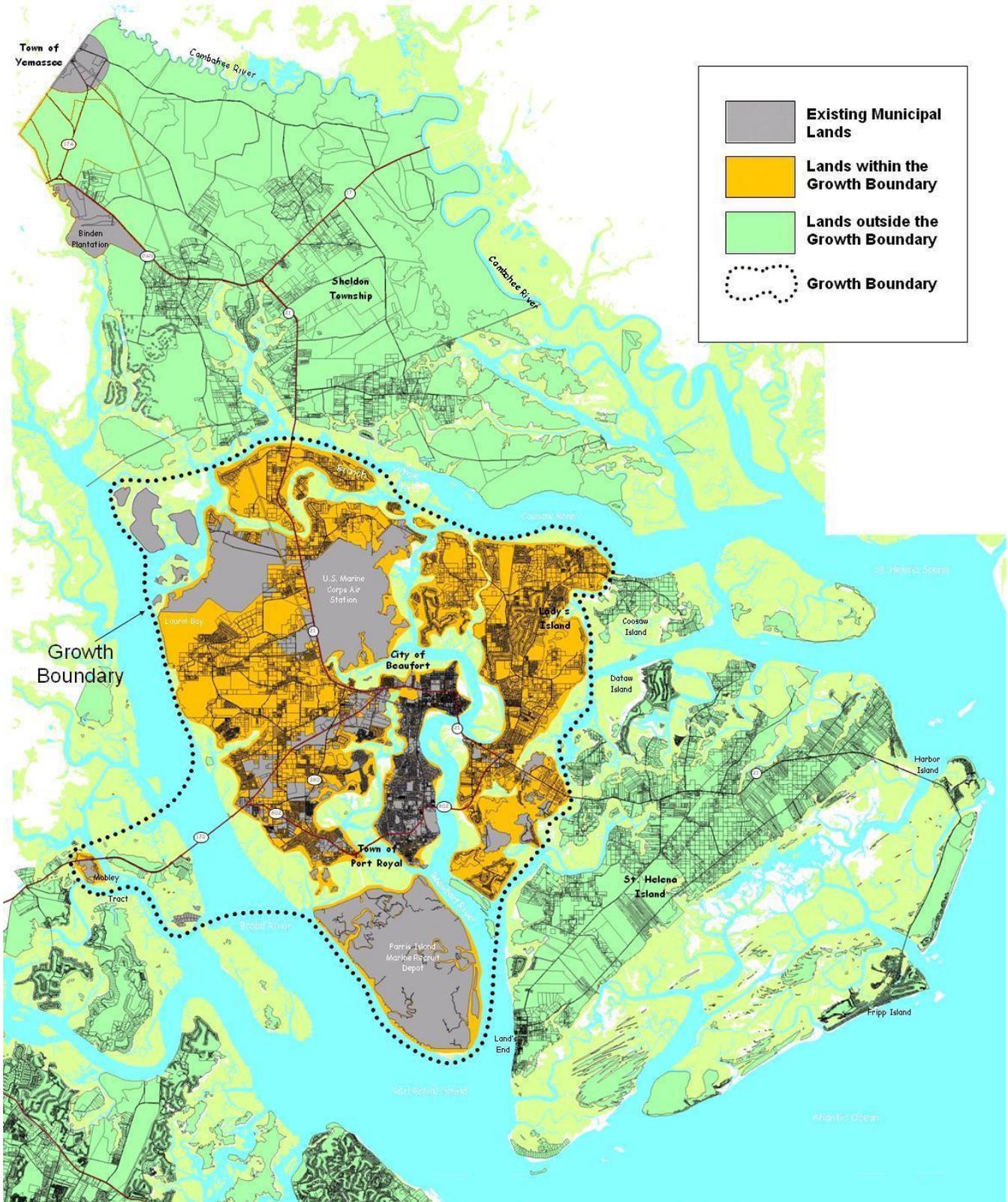
Beaufort County is home to five municipalities: Beaufort, Bluffton, Port Royal, Hilton Head Island, and Yemassee. Each of these communities, along with the county, maintains its own individual comprehensive plan and land use regulations. The percentage of land within the municipal boundaries has grown from 11.4% to 31.7% within the past ten years. Beaufort County's authority to regulate land uses and implement adopted land use policies only applies to the remaining 68.3% of the unincorporated land; a number that is continuing to shrink. It is for these reasons that any countywide growth management strategy must involve joint planning and cooperation between the county and each of the municipalities.

### REGIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN BEAUFORT COUNTY

Based on the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan, this plan recommends a regional growth management strategy for northern Beaufort County and its municipalities that involves:

- The establishment of mutually agreed upon growth boundaries surrounding the municipalities;
- The definition of the municipality's roles within the growth boundaries; and

Map 4-5: Growth Boundaries for Northern Beaufort County



- The definition of Beaufort County's role in the protection and preservation of rural areas outside of the growth boundaries.

This regional growth management strategy replaces the 1997 Comprehensive Plan strategy, which identified priority, transitional, and rural investment areas.

**Establishment of the Growth Boundaries:** The Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan provided a model for implementing the regional growth management strategy. The plan established growth boundaries for the City of Beaufort and the Town of Port Royal. These growth boundaries identify those areas where the municipalities are likely to grow and provide services over the planning horizon period of 20 years. The areas of the county beyond the growth boundary are considered to be rural areas that should be preserved in accordance with the common planning goals in the previous section.

Agreement on the future boundaries of growth was a critical step for the county. Growth boundaries allow for the county and the municipalities to plan for their future growth in an efficient and predictable manner. Growth boundaries also allow the county to plan for protection and preservation of rural areas and focus its attention on countywide issues, such as transportation and protection of environmental resources, in a cooperative manner with the municipalities. This plan recognizes the following principles related to the growth boundaries as identified in the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan:

- That the growth boundaries identify land that is envisioned as future areas of urban and suburban development (with the exception of those areas designated low density residential and rural within the growth boundaries) and land that is envisioned to remain rural in character (outside the boundary).
- That land located inside the growth boundaries (see Map 4-5) is expected to ultimately annex into a municipality with a demonstration that adequate public facilities are available or will be available at the time of development and that negative impacts of development will be mitigated.
- That land outside the growth boundaries is envisioned as developing at rural densities of no more than one unit per three acres gross density unless otherwise subject to existing Community Preservation Districts (CPD).
- That the county does not anticipate that the land outside the growth boundaries will be annexed into a municipality nor is it envisioned as being provided with urban services or developed at urban densities.

- That rural preservation is an important component of the overall system of growth boundaries and that it is in the regional interest to protect rural character and density while allowing economic use of rural property. In order to ensure longtime residents in the rural areas are protected, the county will continue to allow family subdivision exemptions.
- That the county anticipates that it will seek to enhance economic opportunities for rural residents by encouraging nonresidential activities that are compatible with rural areas through uses such as rural business districts, cottage industries, and continued agriculture and forestry.

#### **Annexation Principles for Areas Inside of the Growth**

**Boundaries:** As established above, the County agrees with the importance of establishing growth boundaries and recognizes that annexation is likely within those boundaries. In compliance with the regional planning efforts, the county agrees to work cooperatively with the municipalities to develop a mutual agreement on how annexations will occur, and in particular how land use and service delivery will be addressed relative to the multi-jurisdictional impact. In order to provide for efficient annexation that promotes the goals of this plan and the regional plans, this plan recognizes the following principles, detailed in the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan, as they relate to annexation:

- The county will work with the municipalities to develop mutually agreeable annexation principles that address mitigation of extraterritorial impacts associated with annexations, including protection for designated Community Preservation Districts (CPDs), public facility standards, traffic impact study requirements, baseline open space requirements, and baseline environmental standards that will be met prior to annexation occurring. As part of this plan, the county will work cooperatively to:
  - Develop procedures for notices of proposed annexations by a municipality with an ample opportunity for comment by the county.
  - Develop administrative mechanisms to analyze and mitigate the potential impacts of proposed annexations on the delivery and level of service of public services and facilities, including fire, parks, library facilities, law enforcement, schools, transportation and roads, and public water (river) access in order to assure that adequate public services and facilities will be available to serve development expected as a result of annexations.
  - Develop administrative mechanisms to analyze the impact of proposed annexations on the efficiency of services. This will include the ways in which services can be coordinated among jurisdictions, the avoidance of inefficient overlap of services or

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potential gaps in services, and a fair and proportional funding of services between the municipality and the county.

- When, or if, after review and comment by the county, there is disagreement as to the consistency of the annexation with the regional plan, the participating municipality and the county will work with the municipalities to devise a method by which the two bodies resolve their differences on the matter and come to a mutually agreeable decision.
- The county will work with the municipalities to create mutually agreeable principles that address enclaves of unincorporated county territory within the growth boundaries to provide for the most efficient pattern of land uses and provision of services consistent with the regional plans.
- It is the policy of this plan that land contiguous to municipalities will not be increased in authorized density without annexation to a municipality.
- For properties that are not contiguous to a municipality, the county concurs that the most appropriate method of urban or suburban development is through eventual annexation to a municipality. The county also agrees that it is contrary to this plan for the county and the municipalities to compete for urban or suburban development or to allow the jurisdictions to be a party to zoning “jurisdiction shopping” by applicants. The county will encourage property owners / developers who desire to increase density on non-contiguous property to first explore the feasibility of annexation, including consultation with the municipality and contiguous property owners.
- It is the policy of this plan not to increase density on property within the growth boundaries that is not contiguous to a municipality unless feasible annexation options have been ruled out and until the municipality has been provided the opportunity to review and comment on the request. If it is determined that it is not feasible to annex due to a lack of contiguity, the county will work cooperatively with the municipalities to develop guidelines for municipal review and comment to the county prior to their being considered for rezoning.
- Further, the county agrees that it is in the regional interest to avoid the creation of developed enclaves of unincorporated land that create inefficient service patterns. The county will work with the municipalities to find ways to encourage the eventual annexation of non-contiguous urban or suburban development. Specifically, the county will work with the municipalities to explore legal mechanisms whereby urban or suburban development could be subject by agreement by property owners to annex to a municipality under prescribed circumstances at a later date, subject to law.

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- The county will work with the municipalities to develop guidelines for the protection of existing CPDs within the growth boundaries.
  - When, or if, after review and comment by the municipality, there is disagreement as to the consistency of the rezoning and development standards with the regional plan and agreed upon guidelines, the county and municipality shall devise a method by which the two bodies resolve their differences on the matter and come to a mutually agreeable decision.

### **REGIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR SOUTHERN BEAUFORT COUNTY**

The Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan recommended that Beaufort County, the Town of Hilton Head Island, and the Town of Bluffton work together to develop a joint land use plan that addresses the residential density and land uses within the uncommitted lands in southern Beaufort County. This task is currently being taken up by the Land Use Working Group. The future land use map for southern Beaufort County (Map 4-7) is a result of this cooperative effort and is consistent with the future land use map that the Town of Bluffton adopted as part of its 2007 Comprehensive Plan. The shared land use policies of Beaufort County and the Town of Bluffton in addition to the work of the Southern Beaufort County Implementation Committee have been beneficial in promoting cooperative land use planning in the region.



## Rural Land Use Policies

Since the adoption of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, the preservation of rural areas has been a planning goal. Recent developments in Beaufort County's long range planning process have brought this issue to the forefront. First, growth pressures have continued to intensify in rural areas. Second, the recently completed Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan resulted in a multi-jurisdictional consensus on growth boundaries, outside of which would remain rural. These developments have elevated rural preservation to a regional level, along with the question of balancing the desire to preserve rural areas with the interests of rural residents and property owners.

In 2007, Beaufort County initiated a public process to evaluate the effectiveness of its existing rural policies. The planning process was conducted in a collaborative manner engaging rural residents, county elected officials, large landowners, and other stakeholders.

### BALANCING DIVERSE GOALS AND INTERESTS

During the rural policy analysis, it became clear that the term "rural" applies to a complex web of varying concerns and interests. On one hand, the preservation of rural areas accomplishes many planning goals.

- It discourages sprawl by focusing new growth in and around existing developed areas.
- It plays an important role in natural resource protection.
- It promotes fiscal sustainability by making more efficient use of public facilities such as roads.

On the other hand, owners of large farms struggle with maintaining economic viability for their property after their families have farmed it for many generations. Likewise, many small landowners whose families have also owned land for many generations feel that current regulations create injustices by preventing them from subdividing their land into saleable parcels, and feel that they pay taxes with very little corresponding benefits of land ownership. At the same time, low-income rural land owners do not want to see development pressures

unleashed that could result in economic displacement, nor do they want to lose their rural culture.

Finally, Beaufort County's rural areas have a well-established population living in rural settlements with a rich and historic community fabric. St. Helena Island in particular, with its Gullah heritage, is particularly concerned about the protection of these cultural resources. How to balance cultural resource protection while creating meaningful economic opportunities for low-income people is a major planning challenge in the rural areas.

### DEFINING RURAL

While it is difficult to define the specific attributes of rural areas that are desired to be preserved, protected, and promoted, the following characteristics are common attributes cited for rural Beaufort County:

- Places where people live, including clusters of unincorporated and unofficial communities with local place names
- Places with cultural roots and heritage where multi-generational families live, many of whom live on "heirs" property
- Small scale services and businesses that serve rural areas
- Small institutions such as churches, schools, community centers, and post offices
- Agricultural and timbering operations
- Forested and wooded areas
- Low density residential
- Pristine low country natural environment
- Fishing villages

### RURAL POLICY GOALS

The rural policy analysis reaffirmed the importance of rural preservation as a core Beaufort County planning value. The following goals relate specifically to rural areas, building on the common planning goals applicable to all areas of the county. These goals provide the basis for recommendations in this chapter and in Chapter 6: Cultural Resources.

- Beaufort County will recognize rural land uses as a critical element of a balanced regional system of urban, suburban, and rural land uses.
- Beaufort County will promote the permanent preservation of open spaces in the rural areas.
- Beaufort County will promote the long-term viability of agricultural uses.
- Beaufort County will preserve and protect sensitive natural features in rural areas.

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- Beaufort County will promote rural based economic development that benefits local rural businesses and residents.
  - Beaufort County will promote institutional uses in rural areas that are compatible with the rural environment, such as churches, schools, community centers, job training centers, social service agencies, and post offices.
  - Beaufort County will protect cultural and historic resources in rural areas, such as the Gullah culture and Penn Center.
  - Beaufort County will recognize and respect the unique needs of long time landowners in rural areas.



## Future Land Use Plan

The regional growth management strategy, as described in the previous section, establishes a broad and critical regional vision of growth areas and rural areas. This section summarizes the future land use patterns envisioned for Beaufort County within this framework.

The Future Land Use Plan (See Maps 4-6, 4-7, and 4-8) provides for a land use pattern that builds on the regional growth management strategy. First, the broad land use categories are defined based on its location inside or outside of the growth areas. Growth areas are those areas targeted for future population growth and major infrastructure investment over the next 20 years. In northern Beaufort County, growth areas encompass those areas identified within the growth boundaries in the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan. In southern Beaufort County, growth areas encompass those areas identified through the joint land use planning efforts of the Land Use Working Group of the Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan Implementation Committee. Beyond these basic land use categories, there are also special designations described in the *Special Land Use Designations* section that apply to specific areas of the county.- In addition to the definitions, this section also provides basic development guidelines for each land use category that may be built upon based on further planning studies.

Generally speaking, the areas within growth areas are designated for either commercial, light industrial, urban residential, or neighborhood residential uses, and the areas outside the growth areas are designated for rural uses. There are, however, several exceptions to this pattern:

- The area around the Marine Corps Air Station is designated as an Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) as part of the joint planning effort designed to minimize incompatible development within potential noise contours or hazard zones.
- Certain lands within the growth areas are designated as “rural” for the following reasons:

- In areas such as Northern Lady’s Island, the purpose of the rural land use designation is to control growth so that it does not exceed the capacity of available public facilities (primarily roads).
- In areas such as the May River Road (SC 46) corridor and Pinckney Colony, the rural designation serves to protect the scenic qualities and character of the area.
- Outside of the growth areas, there are several areas designated “neighborhood residential”. These areas include Dataw Island, Fripp Island, Harbor Island, Oldfield, Riverbend, River’s End and Callawassie Island. Each of these developments was approved and built as planned unit developments prior to the adoption of Beaufort County’s 1997 Comprehensive Plan or ZDSO. This plan does not envision those neighborhood residential areas expanding beyond their current boundaries.
- The most recent future land use plan adopted and recognized by the Town of Hilton Head Island is from the Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan (see Map 4-8). The Town is in the process of updating its comprehensive plan, which will include an updated future land use plan. Once the Town adopts that plan, the revisions will be made in this chapter.

#### LAND USES IN THE GROWTH AREAS

Within the growth areas is the area where the county anticipates moderate to high intensity residential and commercial development, the provision of the majority of capital investments and municipal growth. This plan establishes the following future land use designations within the growth areas.

**Residential Land Uses:** To promote a desirable regional pattern, new residential uses should develop in a pattern that maximizes the efficiency of regional infrastructure and the avoidance of sprawl or “leap-frog” patterns. Residential uses are encouraged to develop as interconnected neighborhoods, not isolated subdivisions that lack regional connections. Residential areas should promote both local and regional pedestrian connections and should be coordinated with regional parks and open space facilities, and other public facilities such as schools. There are three land use categories within the growth areas that are primarily residential:

- Urban Mixed-Use: Future development within the urban mixed-use area is anticipated to be similar to the type and mix of land use currently found in the municipalities. Infill and redevelopment would be targeted within Beaufort and Port Royal and in the Shell Point areas; parts of Lady’s Island and Burton; and the center of Bluffton. Gross residential densities are between two and four dwelling units per acre with some denser pockets of development.

Commercial uses providing neighborhood retail and services are limited to collectors and arterials and within master planned mixed-use developments.

- **Neighborhood Mixed-Use:** In neighborhood mixed-use areas, residential is the primary use, with some supporting neighborhood retail establishments. New development is encouraged to be pedestrian-friendly, have a mix of housing types, a mix of land uses and interconnected streets. The maximum gross residential density is approximately two dwelling units per acre. No more than 5% to 10% of the land area should consist of commercial development. Commercial uses providing neighborhood retail and services are limited to collectors and arterials and within master planned mixed-use developments. This designation also includes Dataw Island, Fripp Island, Harbor Island, Callawassie Island, Riverbend, River's End, and Oldfield.
- **Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ):** The AICUZ is located in northern Port Royal Island and Lady's Island due to the noise contours and accident potential zones associated with the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station. Residential development and places of assembly (e.g., churches, schools, etc.) should be highly limited in these areas. Light industrial, commercial, and agricultural uses are considered appropriate to this area.

**Residential Development Guidelines:** Future residential development within the growth areas should occur pursuant to the following guidelines:

- Density incentives may be provided for in the zoning and development standards that allow for higher densities when the housing meets targeted housing requirements as identified in the Affordable Housing Chapter of this plan;
- A mix of housing types and densities should be provided in each neighborhood provided the overall density is consistent with the recommendations of this plan;
- Variations in lot sizes and frontage dimensions are encouraged to allow for a range of housing sizes and costs as well as provide for a varied streetscape;
- Mixed-use developments are encouraged to promote pedestrian access to services and facilities while providing internal trip capture to minimize the traffic impact of these developments;
- Incorporate integrated bike and pedestrian trails to link schools, shopping areas, village centers, government buildings, business parks, recreational areas, libraries, and parks;
- A street system of interconnected roads in a grid or modified grid is encouraged while cul-de-sac streets and large, gated developments are discouraged. Gated communities will be limited to those

locations where they will not interfere with the interconnection of major streets or are in areas where they do not limit access to waterfront locations;

- Park and greenspace set asides, or a fee in-lieu of providing parks, should be provided in accordance with the zoning and development standards. Clustering is strongly encouraged to maximize open space and protect natural areas; and
- Where feasible, mature trees will be preserved and street trees will be provided.

**Commercial Land Uses:** Commercial development should embody high quality site plan and design principles, particularly related to landscape, signage, building design and orientation, and parking lot designs. Commercial development should be compatible with surrounding residential areas and should be connected to existing pedestrian systems such as sidewalk and trail systems. Commercial uses should focus on key transportation nodes, avoiding strip patterns. Where appropriate, smaller non-retail commercial uses such as contractor’s offices, small assembly facilities, and light industrial operations that do not adversely impact surrounding retail uses are encouraged. There are three commercial land use categories within the growth areas:

- Core Commercial: Core commercial uses include downtown Beaufort, Bluffton, and Port Royal that are planned to have pedestrian scale, and zero lot line oriented commercial development.
- Regional Commercial: Regional commercial uses are those uses due to their size and scale that will attract shoppers and visitors from a larger area of the county and outside the county. Typical uses include “big box” retail uses, chain restaurants, and supporting retail.
- Community Commercial: Community commercial uses typically serve nearby residential areas, such as a shopping district anchored by a grocery store.

**Commercial Development Guidelines:** Future commercial development within the growth areas should occur pursuant to the following guidelines:

- New development will meet strong architectural, landscaping and site planning standards;
- Off-street connections between adjacent parcels should be established for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic;
- Sidewalks and bike trails should be required to connect with nearby residential neighborhoods;

- Vegetated buffers should be located between incompatible uses;
- Parking lots should be landscaped with interior islands planted with trees and bushes and with a landscaped buffer surrounding the parking area;
- Where possible, all landscaping should be composed of existing native vegetation where possible, particularly mature trees that exist on site; and
- New development will meet strong environmental standards working around the natural features of the site and providing excellent stormwater management.

**Light Industrial Land Uses:** This plan encompasses the recommendations of the regional plans, which identify the need for providing a sufficient quantity of suitably located land zoned for non-retail commercial uses that promote the region's economic health and diversity. There are two light industrial land use categories within the growth areas:

- Light Industrial: Uses in this category include, but are not limited to, business parks, research and development centers, product assembly, distribution centers, cottage industries, and light and heavy industrial uses.
- Research and Development: This future land use designation is intended to provide for offices, laboratories, institutions of higher learning and other research facilities.

**Light Industrial Development Guidelines:** Generally, future industrial development within the growth areas should occur under the following guidelines:

- New development will meet strong environmental standards working around the natural features of the site and providing excellent stormwater management;
- Adequate buffer must be provided between industrial uses and adjacent residential or commercial uses;
- Signage located along access roads should be limited to monument signs, should be a moderate size, and should be well landscaped; and
- Sites should maintain as much of the existing vegetation as possible to minimize large expanses of manicured lawn areas;
- Traffic to and from the site will not have adverse impact on local roads and adjacent residential uses.

**Rural Land Uses Inside Growth Areas:** While rural land uses are targeted for protection outside of the growth areas, there are areas of the county within the growth areas where the Future Land Use Plan recommends rural land uses and densities. These areas should retain

their rural character with low-density residential development, supporting small-scale commercial development, and agricultural land uses. The maximum gross residential density in rural areas is one dwelling unit per three acres. Rural land uses within the growth areas should meet the development guidelines established for rural land uses outside of the growth areas.

### LAND USES OUTSIDE OF THE GROWTH AREAS

The policies outlined in this section are a result of a comprehensive review and evaluation of existing rural planning policies. Land uses for the areas of Beaufort County located outside of the growth areas are classified into the following categories:

**Rural:** Rural areas are situated outside of the growth areas. Except where noted, these areas should retain their rural character with low-density residential development, supporting small scale commercial development, and agricultural land uses. Future development in rural areas is anticipated to be similar to the type and mix of land uses currently found in the Sheldon area, St. Helena Island, and along the SC 170 corridor between McGarvey's Corner and the Broad River Bridge. The maximum gross residential density in rural areas is one dwelling unit per three acres. Rural areas should not be targeted with the development of major public infrastructure or the extension of public sewer service except where a documented health, safety, and/or welfare condition warrants such an expansion.

**Rural Development Guidelines:** Future development in the rural areas should occur pursuant to the following guidelines:

- Utilization of the purchase of development or transfer of development rights program (as described in the Recommendations section) is highly encouraged in this area to preserve open space and the rural character;
- Higher densities may only be considered when appropriate wastewater treatment is available and the higher density is offset by preserved land; and
- The clustering of development may be considered as a rural and natural resources preservation technique when the proposed development maintains the overall proposed gross density and is clustered on lots compatible with surrounding areas.
- Small-scale commercial (primarily retail and service uses) that serve the surrounding rural neighborhoods are encouraged where there are existing concentrations of commercial uses such as Lobeco and Garden's Corner.



Albany Grocery Store in the Dale Community Preservation Area.

**Rural Community Preservation:** These areas correspond with the areas designated as “community preservation areas” in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan that are located outside of the growth areas. The

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rural community preservation areas are proposed to serve the surrounding rural community with small-scale retail and service uses and low to moderate density residential with a gross density of approximately one dwelling unit per acre. Community-based planning is recommended to protect the unique qualities of these areas.

**Rural Community Preservation Development Guidelines:**

Future development in the rural community areas should occur pursuant to the following guidelines:

- Development with the community preservation areas should comply with the development standards of the Community Preservation Area Overlay district in the ZDSO unless the county has prepared a detailed plan for the area.
- In cases where a community preservation area plan has been established, new development and redevelopment should occur pursuant to the recommendations and guidelines of the applicable community-based plan.

**Resource Conservation Areas:** Resource conservation areas are those areas, which are not accessible by land or are environmentally sensitive due to their soils and/or location. Resource conservation areas are primarily those areas, which have the following characteristics:

- Are barrier islands and islands within the major waterways of the county;
- Have significant natural resources;
- Have significant archeological resources;
- Are difficult to access; or
- Pose a higher potential for water quality impacts from septic systems.

**Resource Conservation Area Development Guidelines:** Due the highly sensitive nature of these areas and poor access, future development in the resource conservation areas should occur pursuant to the following guidelines:

- The density of these areas is limited to one unit per ten acres;
- Uses are limited to single-family residential uses, parks, recreation, and government uses;
- Generally, clustering of homes is not recommended;
- The removal of existing vegetation, particularly native vegetation, should be minimized; and
- The maintenance of a 100-foot buffer along all waterways is critical and therefore required.

**Cultural Protection Area (Overlay):** The traditional cultural landscape and its physical setting on St. Helena Island is a treasure of national significance. As one of Beaufort County's last substantially rural sea islands and the center of its most notable concentration of Gullah culture, the island requires an additional level of development standards to protect this important resource. In order to protect this vital cultural heritage of St. Helena Island, the county has developed the Cultural Protection Overlay to prevent rural gentrification and displacement of residents in these cultural communities. The intent of this overlay is to protect this area from encroaching development pressures. While growth is not discouraged, the quality and rate of growth is of concern. Rapid in-migration would substantially alter the traditional social and cultural character of St. Helena Island. Also, gentrification could drive up land values, making the continuation of the Island's traditional way of life cost prohibitive. The Cultural Protection Overlay encompasses the entire island and acknowledges its historic cultural landscape and the sense of community that has existed on the island for 300 years. As the revisions to the ZDSO are developed, it will be necessary to fully evaluate what defines St. Helena Island as a significant traditional cultural landscape, as well as to assess the contribution of the Gullah culture, in order to develop specific provisions within the overlay district that will result in effective long-term protection for the culturally significant aspects of the island.

**Cultural Protection Overlay Development Guidelines:** Future development in the cultural protection areas should occur pursuant to the following guidelines:

- The following uses are considered incompatible with the purpose of this area and should be discouraged or prohibited.
  - Gated communities, which are intentionally designed or developed to prevent access by nonresidents.
  - Resorts that could include lodging that serves as a designation point for visitors, or is located and designed with some combination of recreational uses or natural areas such as marinas, beaches, pools, tennis courts, golf courses, equestrian uses, and other special recreation opportunities. This use does not include ecotourism or its associated lodging.
  - Golf courses that includes regulation and par three golf courses and related uses (e.g., clubhouse) having nine or more holes.
- Beyond the limitation of uses above, development should be consistent with the underlying future land uses and their applicable development guidelines.

**Commercial Fishing Villages (Overlay):** The fish and seafood industries have provided strong cultural contributions to Beaufort County over the years even though the industry has declined in size and

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scale over the years. The county has established commercial fishing village areas with the following goals:

- To provide for the maintenance and enhancement of the commercial seafood industry and related traditional uses such as retail, storage, repair and maintenance, that support the commercial seafood industry.
- To preserve and/or recognize existing and potential commercial fishing areas and related activities or developments.
- To minimize and reduce conflicts between the seafood industry and residential developments by reducing the potential for land use conflicts between the two types of uses.

Within the commercial fishing village areas, only uses that are related to the commercial seafood industry are permitted including, but not limited to, those uses intended for the processing, manufacturing, storage, wholesale, retail, and distribution of commercial fishing products. In addition to these primary uses, these areas are also envisioned for related uses such a marine related retail, small restaurants, boat chartering, and other similar uses.

### **SPECIAL LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

Within the county, there are several special land use designations specified on the Future Land Use Map that are defined below and are not defined based on their location inside or outside of designated growth areas.

**Community Preservation Areas (Overlay):** The unincorporated areas of the county today include several existing communities in a variety of sizes and land uses, each with a different character. These communities, whether towns or just neighborhoods are recognized as important areas in this plan as they help create a sense of place in the county as important places to live, work, and play. In order to preserve and protect these areas, the county will continue its efforts to preserve these communities through community preservation area planning, zoning overlay districts, and special plan recommendations identified in this plan and in the regional plans.

**Community Preservation Area Development Guidelines:**

Generally, future development in the community preservation areas should occur under the following guidelines:

- New development should infill around and between existing homes with a similar density and character;
- The character of new homes should be based on the height, massing, and setback of the surrounding homes;
- New homes should have complementary architecture to surrounding homes;

- Greenway buffers should be maintained between existing communities and new development that may occur around the community preservation areas;
- The character and layout of the existing street network should be maintained and enhanced;
- Commercial nodes, whether neighborhood or larger scale commercial, should be maintained around existing commercial sites and expanded pursuant to detailed community preservation plans;
- All of the siting and design standards identified for new commercial and mixed-use development should be applied in accordance with detailed community preservation plans; and
- New commercial buildings should be designed around the size and scale of the surrounding neighborhoods.

**Corridor Overlay:** Much of the allure of Beaufort County is in the unique blend of the natural and built environment. To protect the county's special and desired character, new development along arterials and major collectors should have strong architectural, site design, and landscaping standards. A Corridor Review Board, consisting of design professionals and laypersons should provide oversight to insure that the development guidelines established below are met.

- The architecture of new development should be innovative and of high quality that blends with the natural surroundings and incorporates Lowcountry elements. Pitched roofs, exposed rafter ends, muted colors and context sensitive materials are encouraged. Blank building facades and long unarticulated rooflines are discouraged;
- Landscaping should include a diversity of plant materials, overstory trees in the parking areas, foundation buffers, and requirements to save and work around existing trees. Where appropriate, buffers along the highway should be provided;
- Lighting standards should be geared toward reducing glare for passing motorists. Fixtures should be required to be "cutoff", that is they are required to direct their light downward so the lighting source cannot be visible from the highway; and
- Monument signs are encouraged by limiting the height and overall size of highway signs. Internally illuminated signs are prohibited. Signage colors are required to be muted and signage materials should match those used on the building.

**Preserved Lands:** This land use category includes all park lands, public lands, and private lands that are preserved through conservation easements.

**Military Areas:** This land use category includes all military installations including Parris Island and the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station.



## Recommendations

### **Recommendation 4-1: Use the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Element as an Implementation Tool**

This comprehensive plan and the future land use element were created to serve as a guide for future growth and development. As such, the comprehensive plan and this future land use element should be used as a strategy to implement the recommendations of the regional plans and other county planning efforts. More specifically, this plan can be used:

- As decision-making tool when evaluating proposed developments, rezonings, and any other decision that may impact, or be impacted, by growth (e.g., public facilities).
- As a framework for the cooperation of planning activities and plan review with the municipalities as outlined in this plan and the regional plans.
- To update the ZDSO as described in Recommendation 4-6.

### **Recommendation 4-2: Implement the Northern and Southern Beaufort County Regional Plans**

Beaufort County has adopted both the Northern and Southern Beaufort County Regional Plans and will strive to implement the plans as outlined in each individual plan. This effort will involve county actions as described below and as detailed further in each of the individual plans:

- The county will assist in the implementation of the regional plans through participation in the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan Oversight Committee and the Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan Implementation Committee;
- The county will participate in the drafting and execution of intergovernmental agreements to ratify key plan elements; and
- The county will participate in the Technical Advisory Group and various working groups, organized during the regional planning efforts, for ongoing planning initiatives.

**Recommendation 4-3: Adopt and Implement the Recommendations of the Rural Policy Assessment**

Once the county completes the rural policy assessment process that is currently underway, the county should review the recommendations and consider for adoption. Upon adoption, this plan, the ZDSO, and other county plans should be amended to incorporate the recommendations.

**Recommendation 4-4: Update the County Land Use Regulations**

Beaufort County will update the county's zoning and development standards ordinance to incorporate the related recommendations of the regional plans and to facilitate the Future Land Use element of this comprehensive plan. In particular, the county will consider incorporating the following recommendations:

- Incorporate the development guidelines and recommendations established in this plan and in the regional plans; and
- Encourage mixed-use developments, where proposed, through revisions that will expedite review procedures and provide density incentives.
- Codify requirements that allow for the county, municipalities, the school district, and where involved, the military, to review and comment on major development proposals and annexations. This action would require that any application for an annexation or proposed rezoning will be sent to the planning directors, or similar official, of the relevant review body prior to the public hearing on the application. Any comments provided by such planning official will be included in the review packets for the subject annexation or rezoning.

**Recommendation 4-5: Continue to Utilize and Expand Existing Tools to Further the Policies of the Comprehensive Plan**

This plan identifies some of the major tools, beyond zoning, that the county already uses in order achieve the goals established as part of this plan. The county should continued to utilize these tools, identified in *Planning Framework* section, with the following recommendations:

- Implement the TDR program recommendations that arise from the evaluation currently underway as part of the AICUZ Overlay district surrounding the Marine Corps Air Station.
- Consider expanding the TDR program, described above, based on the results of the initial program around the Marine Corps Air

Station to preserve rural areas and provide financial relief to large rural property owners.

- Continue to utilize the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program as its strategy for purchasing development rights. This program should be used to preserve as much rural lands as feasible. For the purposes of this comprehensive plan update, the county should also consider revisions to the current program to encourage more protection of rural and critical lands on St. Helena Island and in Sheldon.
- Continue to promote the establishment of conservation easements as a method of protecting rural lands, natural resources, and the rural character of Beaufort County. This program should be further studied by the county and coordinated with the efforts of the TDR and PDR programs as well as the Open Lands Trust.

#### **Recommendation 4-6: Utilize Development Agreements to Accomplish Goals of this Plan and the Regional Plans**

The county should utilize development agreements, where feasible, to accomplish the goals set forth in this plan and the regional plans. These agreements can be utilized to implement a number of the recommendations including coordinating development in the growth areas and protecting the rural character of the county.

Any development agreement must be consistent with the comprehensive plan and land use regulations that will be implemented following plan adoption. Development agreements are discouraged in areas where development impacts may affect the provision of essential services and available infrastructure. The process by which the agreement is negotiated must be a public process to ensure that potentially affected citizens are notified and aware of any potential impacts.

#### **Recommendation 4-7: Establish and Adopt Baseline Standards for PUDs and Development Agreements**

The county will work with the municipalities to establish and adopt uniform baseline standards for Planned Unit Development (PUDs) and development agreements. For PUDs, the standards should address the following issues, at a minimum:

- Open Space;
- Environmental Protection;
- Traffic Mitigation;
- Connectivity; and
- Access Management.

For development agreements as described in the previous recommendation, the following minimum regulations and recommendations should apply:

- Require compliance with the uniform baseline standards established for PUDs, to the maximum extent allowed by law.
- Establish criteria allowing the agreement to be re-opened if defined conditions occur. These conditions should include:
  - A phasing schedule that requires phases to be completed within a specified period of time; or
  - A schedule that requires the transportation analysis and mitigation requirements to be re-evaluated after certain thresholds are reached, to ensure transportation impact and mitigation issues are addressed.
- Recognition that subsequently adopted laws are not in conflict with the development agreement, and can be applied, if at a public hearing the local government determines:
  - There are substantial changes that have occurred within the local government in pertinent conditions existing at the time the development agreement was adopted, which changes, if not addressed by the local government, would pose a serious threat to the health, safety, and welfare of the community;
  - The new laws address these problems and are essential to addressing them; and
  - The laws expressly state they are to apply to the development agreement.
- Recognition that subsequently adopted laws can apply to the development agreement if it is based on substantially and materially inaccurate information supplied by the developer.
- In addition, baseline indicators should be established in the agreement itself, focusing on areas such as impacts on public facilities. Development exceeding the baseline indicators would be required to be re-opened.

#### **Recommendation 4-8: Continue to Develop and Update Community Preservation Plans**

Since the adoption of the 1997 plan, the county has embarked on detailed planning efforts for several community preservation areas. Due to the unique qualities of these areas, it is important for the county to continue these planning efforts to address other community preservation areas. In particular, this plan recommends the following actions:

- Complete the May River (Bluffton) Community Preservation Plan
- Complete the Daufuskie Community Preservation Plan

- Pursue the Sheldon Community Preservation Plan
- Jointly prepare the Pritchardville Community Preservation Plan with the Town of Bluffton in accordance with the recommendations of the Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan.
- Evaluate the need for Community Preservation Area designations for Lands End, Tansi Village, and Big Estates.

**Recommendation 4-9: Promote Appropriate Infill Development and Redevelopment in Accordance with this Plan**

Many small commercial parcels located in the unincorporated areas of Beaufort County, along the edges of the municipalities, are in need of redevelopment. There is also a need to encourage infill development rather than continued sprawling development or “leapfrog” developments. Currently, redevelopment and infill development are addressed by requiring higher standards for architecture, landscaping, and site design for new projects. This existing policy does not take into account the large number of small properties are often overlooked for investment in favor of developing on greenfields due to the size of the property and the difficulty and expense of complying with the zoning regulations. The county encourages infill development and redevelopment as an alternative to new development, particularly in areas where public facilities are readily available. This plan recognizes the following definitions of infill development and redevelopment as it relates to future land use. Furthermore, any implementation strategy that addresses issues related to infill (e.g., land use regulations) should incorporate appropriate infill regulations pursuant to these definitions.

- Small Tract Infill Development is related to undeveloped individual lots within existing residential subdivisions and commercial strips. Development on these sites is generally targeted toward the construction of single-family homes, duplexes, small apartment buildings, or small commercial buildings on single vacant urban lots without the need for further land subdivision.
- Large Tract Infill Development (leapfrogged parcels) is related to larger undeveloped residential or commercial parcels that are 10 acres in size or greater. These lots are typically found in urbanized areas with a concentration of undeveloped or underdeveloped lots that have been passed over in favor of larger parcels further from the urban centers (e.g. Burton, Shell Point).The development of these sites could require further subdivision of the land.
- Small Scale Redevelopment occurs when a large single-family lot in an urban or suburban neighborhood is subdivided into smaller lots for further single-family residential development or is redeveloped as multi-family housing. Small-scale redevelopment may also refer to

the redevelopment of small, underutilized commercial lots in urban or suburban commercial areas.

- Large-Scale Redevelopment refers to the redevelopment of a larger scale that requires the assembly of several parcels, removal of the older structures, and the construction of more intense residential or commercial development.

In addition to incorporating the above definitions into other planning efforts, the following are targeted recommendations related to infill development and redevelopment.

- Explore ways to facilitate integrated stormwater management systems for clusters of small parcels;
- Develop incentives for developments on infill or redevelopment sites;
- Incorporate context-sensitive design standards for various scales of infill development and redevelopment to promote compatibility with surrounding developments, where appropriate; and
- Utilize the regional Geographic Information System (GIS) to identify and market undeveloped or underutilized sites.

#### **Recommendation 4-10: Develop Regional Demographic Models and a Regional Growth Tracking System**

Beaufort County will work cooperatively with the municipalities to develop a regional demographic and land use model of existing and forecasted population, including permanent and seasonal population. This model should be maintained through a multi-jurisdictional effort. At a minimum, the system should consist of existing and forecasted seasonal and permanent population data; a consistent classification system for existing and future land use; and a regional land use model that monitors remaining growth capacity and assesses the impacts of land use decisions on the region.

In addition to the regional demographic model, the county will work with the municipalities to create and maintain an improved regional growth tracking system, including a land demand and land use forecasting model integrated with other regional models (such as the transportation model) that can be used by all entities for planning purposes. This recommendation would mirror the recommendation in the regional planning efforts and would involve the creation of a regional database and model that would likely build on the existing traffic model and its traffic analysis zones, but it could be expanded for use in a wide range of planning efforts by local and regional agencies. Specifically:

- The county's new Land Development Office (LDO) program should be configured to count certificates of occupancy by tax district and address.

- The LDO development counts will be integrated with GIS traffic analysis zones through address or parcel ID numbers.
- A growth report will be periodically generated to show the change in growth by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ), by tax district, and by jurisdiction.

#### **Recommendation 4-11: Establish Joint Corridor Planning Efforts and Joint Corridor Review Boards**

Beaufort County will work with the municipalities to establish coordinated review, administration, and enforcement of development to maintain the views and images of the low country created along designated regional scenic corridors. For areas of the county where there is an opportunity for joint corridor overlay districts (e.g., U.S. 278, SC 170, SC 46, Buckwalter Parkway, and Burnt Church Road in southern Beaufort County), the county will work with the municipalities, by intergovernmental agreement, to create a Joint Corridor Overlay District between the county and related municipality to consolidate administration and enforcement responsibilities.

Important elements of this recommendation include:

- Defining distinctions between urban, suburban, and rural roads and applying corresponding architecture, landscaping, lighting, signage, and streetscape standards for each road type.
- Including uniform standards consistent with the corridor plans, which can be adopted by the county and related municipality for the subject corridor.
- Including additional standards to provide heightened protection for scenic resources along the May River Road (SC 46) and Okatie Highway (SC 170).

#### **Recommendation 4-12: Develop Detailed Area Plans**

Jointly prepare a detailed land use plan for the uncommitted lands in southern Beaufort County, and potential redevelopment areas where densities could be increased. The joint land use plan should address the following elements at a minimum:

- The residential density and land uses of the uncommitted lands;
- Lands with infill potential;
- Lands where mixed use development should be encouraged;
- Public facilities and services for the planning area;
- A plan for the Bluffton Community Preservation District;
- The future growth boundaries of Bluffton and Hardeeville; and
- Recommendations on how the coordinated land use policy will be implemented through a seamless set of zone districts and

development standards between the County, Bluffton, and neighboring jurisdictions (as appropriate).

Until the joint land use plan is completed, the county and the Town of Bluffton should adopt an interim policy that states annexations and rezonings within the study area shall conform to the Future Land Use element of this comprehensive plan.

**Recommendation 4-13: Formalize Regional Planning Efforts with Neighboring Counties and Municipalities**

Formalize regional planning cooperation and collaboration between Beaufort County, Jasper County, and the City of Hardeeville to plan on a wider regional basis. As part of this recommendation, the county incorporates the following recommendations from the Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan:

- The county will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville to identify a common geographic area of interest, issues of common concern, and commitment to provide staff support to address common issues related to future land use, public facilities (especially transportation and the new port), and natural assets and environmental protection.
- Staff representatives from Jasper County and Hardeeville will be invited to participate as members of the southern Beaufort County working groups, on a permanent basis.

The County should also expand these cooperative planning efforts to other neighboring counties and municipalities such as the Town of Ridgeland and Hampton County.

- County working groups, on a permanent basis.

**Recommendation 4-14: Annual Monitoring**

Beaufort County should commit to a process of annual monitoring to chart the progress of the implementation of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan. The monitoring process should focus on those issues that would benefit from annual reporting as determined by the Planning Commission. Beaufort County should coordinate this process with the municipalities.

**Recommendation 4-15: Rural Small Lot Subdivision**

Beaufort County should modify the ZDSO to allow for small lot rural subdivisions:

- For areas north of the Whale Branch River and on St. Helena Island, allow parcels of record in rural zones to have three by-right subdivided lots, after which the base underlying zoning density would apply.

- For areas on Port Royal Island outside of the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ), allow parcels of record in rural zones to have two by-right subdivided lots, after which the base underlying zoning density would apply.
- Provide for a minimum lot size of one acre for such by-right subdivided lots.
- In connection with this recommendation, rezone land currently zoned Rural Residential to the Rural zoning designation.
- This policy should not apply to rural and rural residential properties located south of the Broad River, on Lady's Island, on Coosaw Island, and within the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ).

#### **Recommendation 4-16: Rural Conservation Subdivisions**

Beaufort County should modify its rural cluster subdivision and planned community provisions to allow for traditional rural uses such as agriculture and forestry on set-aside open space.

- Adjust rural subdivision regulations to facilitate and provide incentives for clustering.
- Permit required open space to be retained in private ownership with a conservation easement that would permit agriculture and forestry.

#### **Recommendation 4-17: Small Rural Businesses**

Beaufort County should evaluate its ZDSO to provide more flexibility and overcome obstacles to the establishment of compatible rural businesses.

- Consider changes to the ZDSO to place more emphasis on performance standards rather than use-restrictions for cottage industries, home occupations, and rural businesses.
- Establish a Rural Business District at Garden's Corner.

#### **Recommendation 4-18: Small Landowner Liaison**

Beaufort County should provide education and assistance to small rural landowners on development options available in rural areas.

- Provide public education in the form of brochures, workshops, and other outreach efforts for small rural landowners about family compounds, rural business options, cottage industries, home occupation, and small-lot rural subdivision options.
- Consider creating a County Staff Liaison position to assist small rural landowners in the development review process.

Chapter  
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Land Use

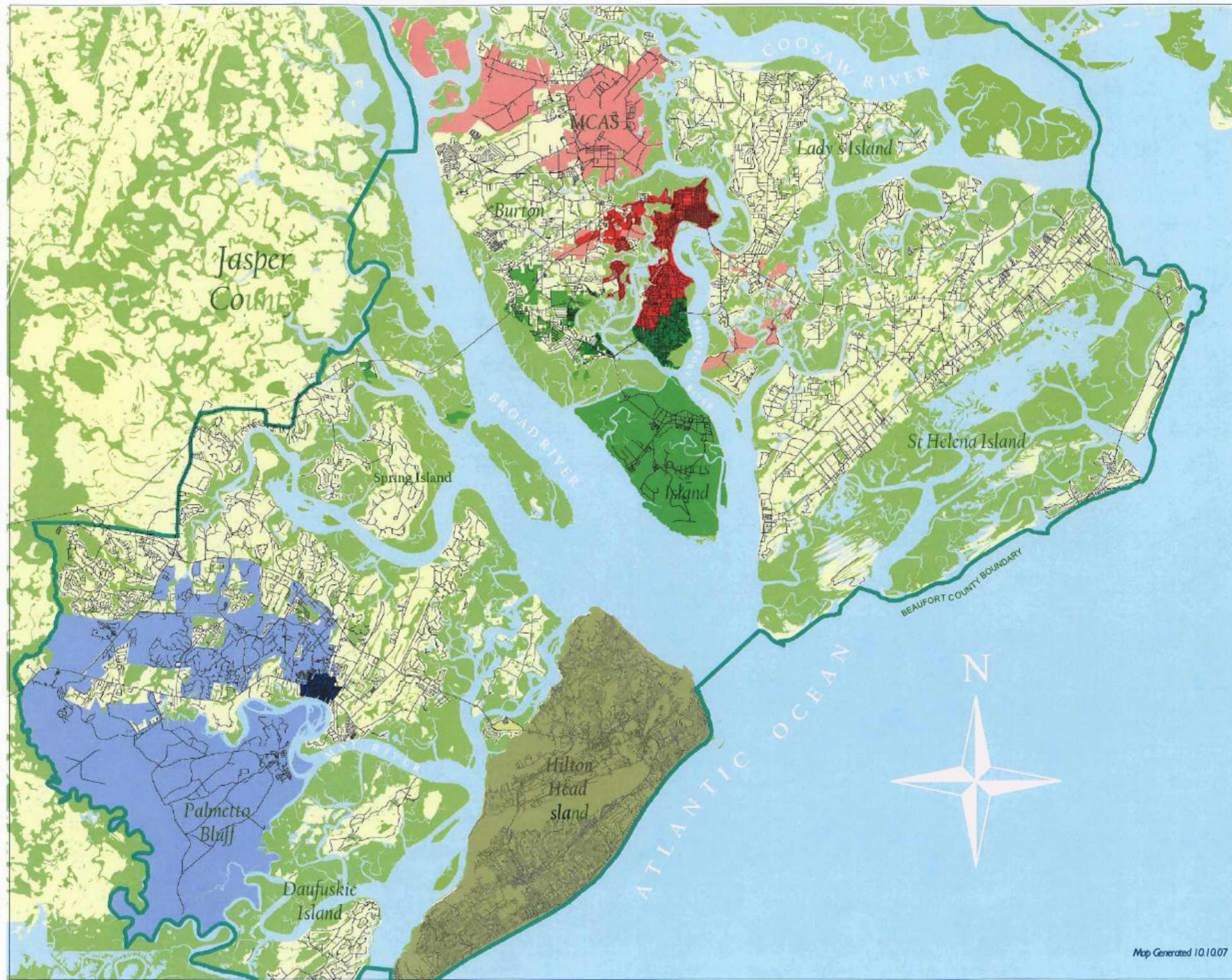
Map 4-1

**Municipal Growth  
1997 - 2007**

LEGEND

- City of Beaufort 1997
- City of Beaufort Expansion 2007
- Town of Port Royal 1997
- Town of Port Royal Expansion 2007
- Town of Bluffton 1997
- Town of Bluffton Expansion 2007
- Town of Hilton Head Island 1997
- Town of Hilton Head Island Expansion 2007

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Map 4-2

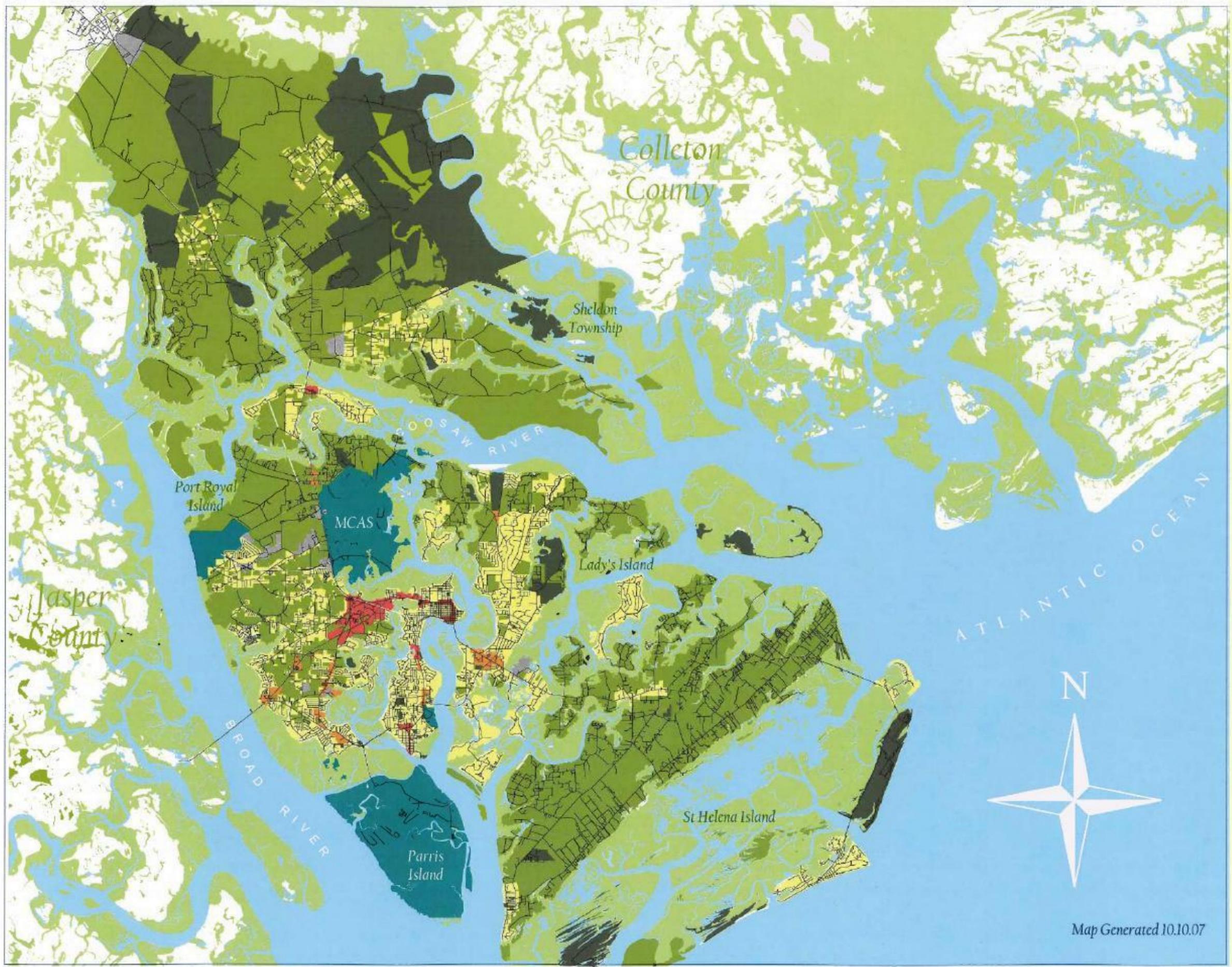
**Existing  
Land Use**

Northern Beaufort  
County

LEGEND

-  Preserved Land
-  Rural / Undeveloped
-  Residential / Mixed-Use
-  Community Commercial
-  Regional Commercial
-  Light Industrial
-  Military

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# Chapter 4 Land Use

Map 4-3

## Existing Land Use

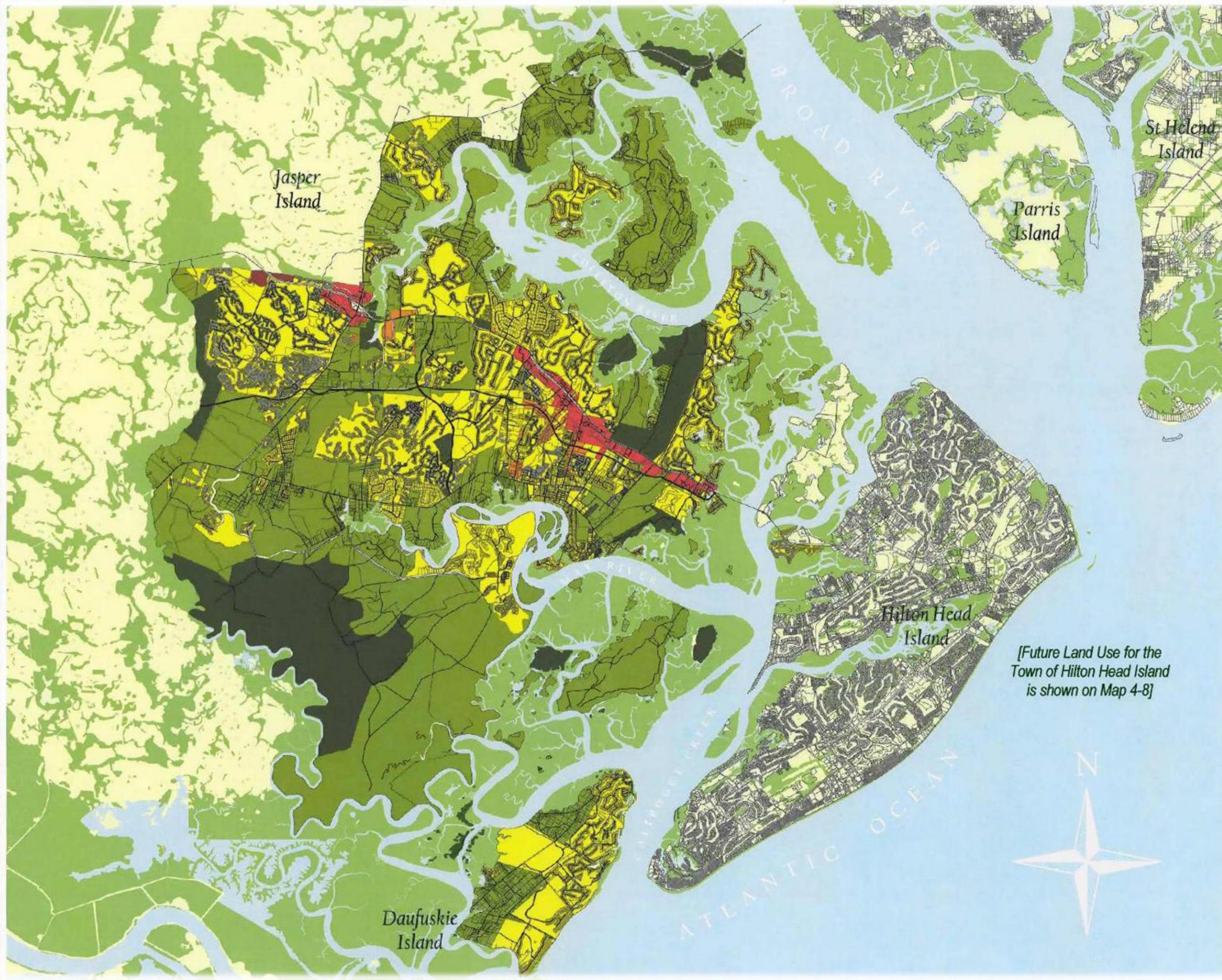
Bluffton Area &  
Daufuskie Island

-  Preserved Land
-  Rural / Undeveloped
-  Residential / Mixed Use
-  Community Commercial
-  Regional Commercial
-  Light Industrial
-  Military

[Future Land Use for the  
Town of Hilton Head Island  
is shown on Map 4-8]



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Map 4-4  
**Existing Land Use**  
The Town of Hilton Head Island

LEGEND

- Residential
- Residential / Amenity
- Non - Residential
- Institutional
- Resort
- Park / Preserve / Island
- Undeveloped / Semi-Rural

Source: The Southern Beaufort County  
Regional Plan -  
Land Use Patterns & Trends  
Background Report 2005

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Land Use

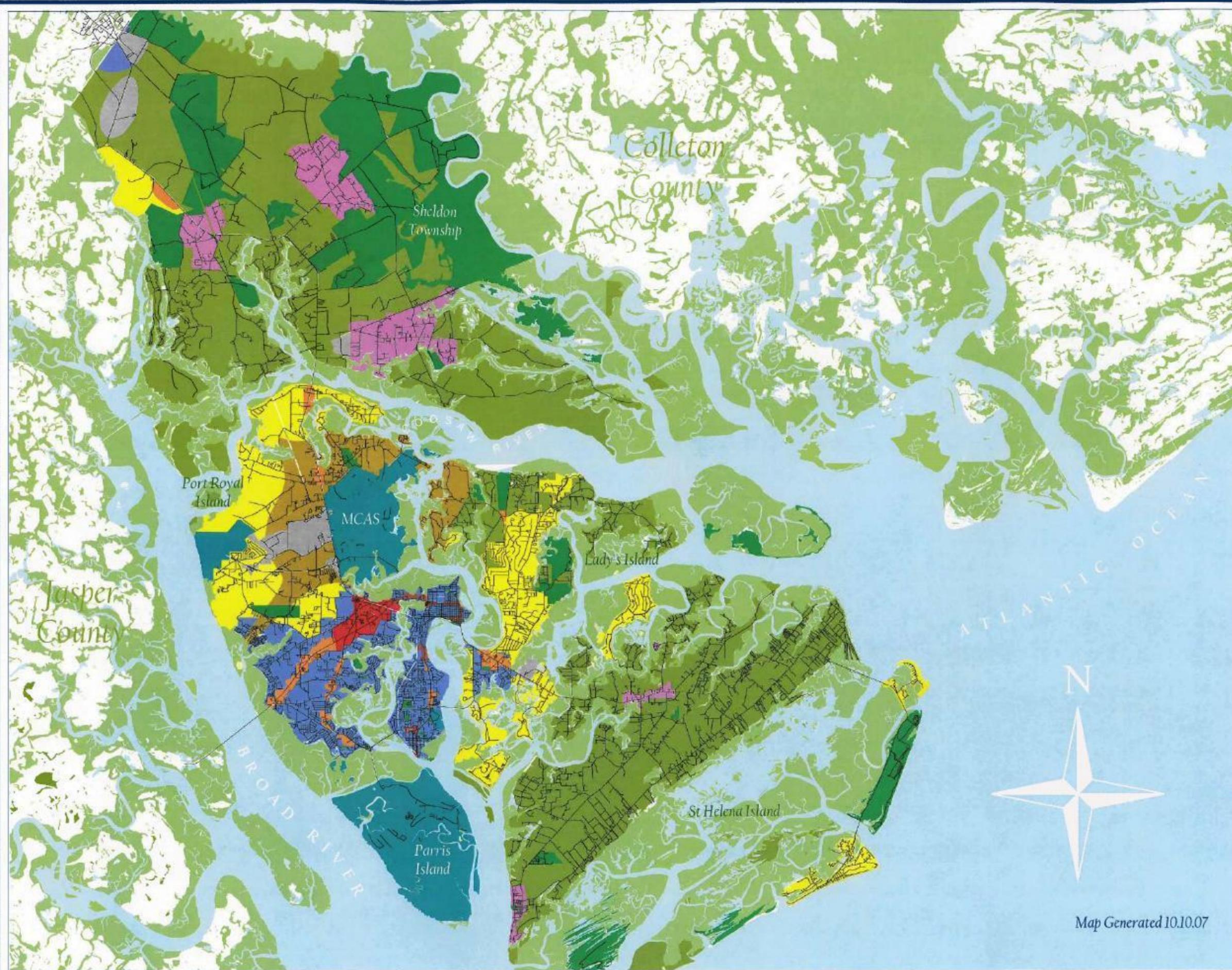
Map 4-6  
Future  
Land Use

Northern Beaufort  
County

LEGEND

-  Preserved Land
-  Rural
-  Air Installation Compatible Use Zone [AICUZ]
-  Rural Community Preservation
-  Neighborhood / Mixed-Use
-  Urban / Mixed-Use
-  Community Commercial
-  Regional Commercial
-  Core Commercial
-  Research & Development
-  Light Industrial
-  Military

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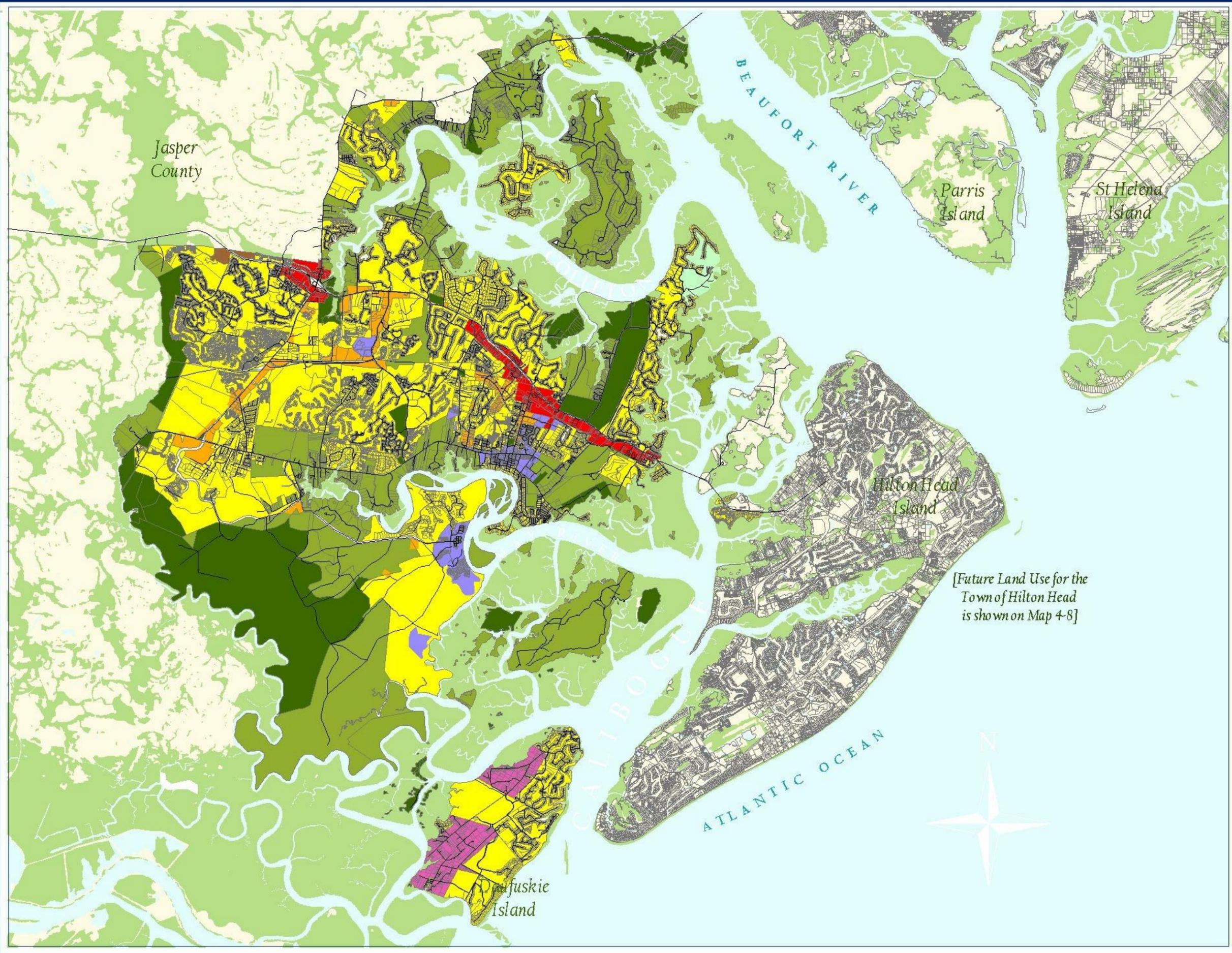
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**Chapter  
4  
Land Use**

**Map 4-7**

**Future  
Land Use**

**Bluffton Area &  
Daufuskie Island**



- Preserved Land
- Rural
- Air Installation Compatible Use Zone [AICUZ]
- Rural Community Preservation
- Neighborhood / Mixed-Use
- Urban / Mixed-Use
- Community Commercial
- Regional Commercial
- Core Commercial
- Research & Development
- Light Industrial
- Military

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Map 4-8  
**Future  
Land Use**  
The Town of  
Hilton Head Island

LEGEND

- Residential
- Residential / Amenity
- Non - Residential
- Institutional
- Resort
- Park / Preserve / Island
- Undeveloped / Semi-Rural

Source: The Southern Beaufort County  
Regional Plan -  
Land Use Patterns & Trends  
Background Report 2005

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