

# CITY OF CHARLESTON PLANNING COMMISSION

## SPECIAL MEETING OF JUNE 23, 2021

A special meeting of the Planning Commission was held **Wednesday, June 23, 2021, at 5:00 p.m.**, virtually via Zoom Webinar. The following items were discussed.

### AGENDA

- I. Presentation of proposed revisions to City Plan recommendations
- II. Public comment period
- III. Request adoption of the Charleston City Plan

**Motion: APPROVAL OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WITH ENCLOSED CHANGES TO RECOMMENDATIONS (8-0)**

**1<sup>st</sup>: JACOBS    2<sup>nd</sup>: BRYANT-JENKINS**

<b>Jimmy Bailey</b>	<b>FAVOR</b>	<b>Charlie Karesh</b>	<b>FAVOR</b>
<b>Loquita Bryant-Jenkins</b>	<b>FAVOR</b>	<b>Sunday Lempesis</b>	<b>FAVOR</b>
<b>Erika V. Harrison</b>	<b>FAVOR</b>	<b>Harry Lesesne</b>	<b>FAVOR</b>
<b>Donna Jacobs</b>	<b>FAVOR</b>	<b>Chaun Pflug</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
<b>Angie Johnson</b>	<b>FAVOR</b>		

## CHARLESTON CITY PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

WITH REVISIONS APPROVED BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS ON JUNE 23, 2021

### ENGAGEMENT

1. Dedicate independent funding and resources for all departments to increase accessibility and promote community integration in planning and other decision-making processes; including additional resources to expand in-house communications capacity.
2. Invest in technology and other tools to expand access to public meetings and ongoing planning efforts.
3. Establish mechanisms to coordinate engagement, education and outreach efforts across all departments.
4. Increase the City's capacity to consistently provide materials and information in both English and Spanish, and to proactively arrange English to/from Spanish interpretation for public meetings.
5. Develop strategies to ensure transparency and accountability for the implementation of plan recommendations, **including a methodology to communicate progress for recommendations put forth in all sections of the City Plan.**
6. **Continue to research and diversify data sources to be data smart thus supporting staff when formulating policy, processes and ordinance development.**

**Motion:** APPROVAL (8-0)

**1<sup>st</sup>:** LESESNE

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** JACOBS

### NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Develop policies and processes to amplify environmental justice considerations in land use, infrastructure and natural resources planning; including the prioritization of environmental justice communities in improvements to the environment and analysis of potential negative impacts of projects on environmental justice communities.
2. Continue to provide and expand the parks system to include large and small parks and promote equitable access and safe alternative connectivity to green spaces and water around the city.
3. Support land conservation around the edges of the Urban Growth Boundary, specifically along the Brownswood Road corridor and south of Cane Slash and Plow Ground Roads on Johns Island; along southern parts of Folly Road on James Island; and areas adjacent to the UGB in West Ashley and the Wando area on the Cainhoy Peninsula.
4. Develop a Greenbelt prioritization plan and work with surrounding jurisdictions to preserve more green spaces, particularly along the Urban Growth Boundary.

5. **Create incentives for the use of conservation easements, including developing a toolkit for green space preservation.**
6. Ensure land development regulations adequately protect the city's farms, prime soils for farming, natural resources and rural areas.
7. Continue to promote planning and zoning policies that align with the “living with water approach” outlined in the Dutch Dialogues Charleston study, including encouraging the use of green infrastructure **in landscaping practices and stormwater management. Green infrastructure includes features such as** bio-swales, porous pavements, rain gardens, and wetland buffers; and other practices that leave existing natural features and ecosystems undisturbed.
8. Dedicate staff and resources to support collaboration between Stormwater Management, Parks and Planning to oversee preservation, creation and maintenance of green infrastructure.
9. Implement recommendations from the Trees to Offset Stormwater study including updating the City’s Tree Protection Ordinance to preserve clusters of trees during the development process, track and increase tree canopy percentages around the city, and prioritize underserved areas or areas with aging inventory for tree planting.
10. Implement land use and transportation planning strategies to account for marsh and wetland migration due to sea level rise, including vegetated buffers to allow space for the marsh or wetland to migrate and restricting development and roadways in tidal flood risk zones.
11. Increase incentives and educational opportunities for residents to increase and maintain green infrastructure on their properties.

**Motion: APPROVAL (8-0)**

**1<sup>st</sup>: LESESNE**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: JOHNSON**

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

1. Build, maintain and preserve an array of high quality cultural facilities and sites, especially in areas of the city with less access to existing cultural resources.
2. Support policies, incentives and plans that stimulate historic preservation, restoration and reuse of cultural resources, especially resources relating to African American heritage and history.
3. Encourage public and private investment in the growth and development of Charleston’s arts community.
4. Support development of community plans for settlement communities within corporate City limits that outline future goals related to preservation, investment and development; and recommendations for policies and other strategies for achieving those goals.
5. Work with neighboring jurisdictions to elevate the voices and concerns of settlement communities in ongoing conversations related to preservation, resiliency,

gentrification and displacement, and future development and infrastructure projects.

6. Identify and protect significant sites citywide, including historic houses of worship, cemeteries and burial grounds, that contribute to Charleston's identity and represent its history; especially those sites significant to African-American heritage and history.
7. Increase the amount of markers and monuments documenting sites and key figures culturally and historically significant to Charleston's African-American **communities and other underrepresented communities.**
8. Uphold historic preservation as a form of sustainable development by promoting and creating incentives for rehabilitating and adapting historic buildings for new uses.
9. Update and maintain a cultural resource inventory to evaluate the status of known cultural resources, identify under-documented and/or threatened cultural resources - especially in African-American settlement communities, and prioritize documentation needs and designation recommendations.
10. **Conduct a new historic resources survey for all appropriate parts of the City, especially the Upper Peninsula.**
11. Strengthen policies and allocate resources to address demolition by neglect of historic properties.
12. **Reevaluate the feasibility of an archaeological ordinance for the City.**

**Motion: APPROVAL (8-0)**

**1<sup>st</sup>: LESESNE**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: JACOBS**

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1. Enhance Charleston's role as a regional job center by supporting employment, small business development and sustainable tourism through policies and programs that promote the unique character and sense of place of each area of Charleston and invest in cultural and natural resources.
2. **Dedicate Evaluate the feasibility of dedicating additional** staff and resources **(i.e. an Office of Economic Development)** to create targeted goals for each area of the city, and work with corresponding economic development offices in Charleston and Berkeley counties to unify approaches to regional economic development.
3. Encourage expansion of job training centers for coding, advanced manufacturing, nursing, culinary skills, and independent business management.
4. **Evaluate the feasibility of a partnership** with Trident Technical College at its downtown Palmer Campus to offer training in above items due to proximity to future Lowcountry Rapid Transit
5. Pursue policies and programs to support independent, locally-owned businesses and allow for competition with larger national chains; including creating programs or incentives for preserving legacy businesses and affordable commercial properties, **and providing targeted support to navigate the City's licensing and permitting processes.**

6. Focus on transit-oriented business incentives for offset in parking, business fees, or other fees associated with opening businesses.
7. Increase access to fresh and quality food by attracting grocery stores to food deserts, expanding opportunities for food markets, and promoting small neighborhood groceries like corner stores on the Peninsula.
8. Relax development requirements, such as parking thresholds or licensing, for neighborhood scale retail and restaurants **in areas designated as City Centers, Neighborhood Edge and certain Neighborhood areas** to encourage a mixture of uses in neighborhoods.
9. Continue to create tailored training and support programs for women and minority owned businesses.
10. Continue to coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions to implement economic development recommendations in Plan West Ashley, Epic Center, ReThink Folly Road and the Johns Island Community Plan.
11. Encourage development and redevelopment in areas designated as City Centers as vibrant mixed-use centers providing employment, entertainment, and housing.
12. Create incentives for commercial properties still in the County, but surrounded by the City, to annex into the City of Charleston.
13. Work with adjoining jurisdictions to encourage a mix of services and employment types in existing commercial centers and areas designated as Neighborhood Edge or Job Center, and ensure connections with residential neighborhoods to provide basic services and employment to those living in close proximity.
14. ~~Pursue strategies to promote a diversified economy that provides a variety of jobs paying living wages.~~ **Develop policies, programs, tools and resources to attract and recruit a racially diverse workforce in the City of Charleston and to promote an economy that provides a variety of jobs paying living wages.**
15. Explore opportunities to support new commercial and mixed-use developments to enter into community benefit agreements or other commitments to hiring residents from the surrounding neighborhoods.
16. **Update the city's Tourism Management Plan in a manner that will improve livability for Charleston's citizens while recognizing the importance and economic impact of tourism.**

**Motion: APPROVAL (8-0)**

**1<sup>st</sup>: LESESNE**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: JOHNSON**

## **TRANSPORTATION**

1. Continue to implement recommendations from the Citywide Transportation Plan
2. Continue to promote complete streets in new or redesigned roadways, providing for safe and alternative means of transportation; especially in areas designated as Neighborhood Edge.

3. Create a permanent funding stream for construction and maintenance of sidewalks and other pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure citywide.
4. Connect more schools and job centers to neighborhoods with pedestrian pathways and multi-use pathways, and expand opportunities for bike share systems.
5. Advocate for additional rapid transit routes along Sam Rittenberg Corridor, Savannah Highway, Glenn McConnell Parkway, Folly Road, and Clements Ferry Road.
6. Work to improve access and comfort of the CARTA stations in the City of Charleston through connections with neighborhoods and expanding the street furniture and other amenities provided at stops.
7. Work with BCDCOG and neighboring jurisdictions to advance existing plans to provide water taxi/high-speed ferry systems as a public transit option.
8. Research and promote the creation of additional Park-and-Ride routes, such as the Hospitality On the Peninsula (HOP) Route, to connect all areas with key job centers; especially in places that cannot at present support more extensive mass transit such as Johns Island, James Island and Outer West Ashley.
9. Advocate for strategies to improve flow and safety of traffic in heavily congested roadways (such as Highway 61 in West Ashley), including the installation of advanced traffic control devices and other methods that can fit within existing rights-of-way, and that prioritize walkability and preservation of natural and cultural resources.
10. Right-size parking codes including implementing parking maximums, and explore opportunities to allow developers to pay into a parking in lieu fund.
11. Expand publicly accessible electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, especially at rideshare, mobility hubs, on-street peninsula access and City parking facilities and explore the creation of requirements for EV charging infrastructure in new development.
12. Advocate for the completion of I-526 as currently planned with bicycle and pedestrian accommodations and connectivity.
13. Conduct study to understand the specific implications and timeline of the trend toward autonomous vehicles and best practices in transportation planning.
14. Coordinate with Charleston County, Berkeley County and the SC Department of Transportation to retrofit existing and design new public rights-of-ways to increase mobility during flooding events and maximize opportunities to intercept, infiltrate, store and drain water.
15. Work with CARTA to support increased ridership and consequently improved transit options, including encouraging employer-sponsored transit programs and increased mobility options for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
16. **Promote policies and creative incentives to encourage wider, multi-use paths where new pathways are being considered, or widening when feasible for existing pathways; and promote design guidelines that adhere to best practices in bike and pedestrian safety (i.e. separation from**

vehicular traffic and dedicated lanes for cyclists and pedestrians when feasible).

Motion: APPROVAL (8-0)

1<sup>st</sup>: HARRISON

2<sup>nd</sup>: JACOBS

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PRIORITY INVESTMENT

1. Establish adequate public facility standards with consistent service standards throughout the city.
2. Continue to support annexation of areas within the Urban Growth Boundary that are already mostly surrounded by City jurisdiction.
3. Research and evaluate other City services that may need additional funding due to growth and analyze existing City revenue streams for available funds for these services.
4. Prioritize stormwater and flooding solutions for Special Protection Areas (SPAs), older communities, and existing neighborhoods in Tidal Flood Risk zones.
5. Assign priority to areas in greatest need of improved infrastructure and amenities, in tangent with anti-displacement protections.
6. Continue to improve collaboration with other jurisdictions in all key planning activities and major infrastructure projects.
7. Increase coordination with local school districts in regards to plans for future facilities and improvements.
8. Grow the City's capacity to improve maintenance of existing drainage infrastructure.

Motion: APPROVAL (8-0)

1<sup>st</sup>: LESESNE

2<sup>nd</sup>: JOHNSON

## HOUSING

1. Continue to fully implement recommendations from the Housing for a Fair Charleston Report.
2. Strongly encourage **and create incentives for** a diversity of housing types within neighborhoods citywide, including attached-style housing, such as townhomes, condominiums, flats, duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes and allow by right in more base zoning districts.
3. Any future increases to maximum residential densities within the zoning code should be conditional on the basis that a certain percentage of new units be reserved for affordable housing.
4. Strongly encourage development of housing in compatible mixed-use and mixed-income (market rate and subsidized units mixed together within the same development) neighborhoods and in close proximity to parks, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public transit, schools, grocery stores, job centers and civic uses.

Incentivize transit-oriented development and affordable housing development along the future Low Country Rapid Transit route and other key public transit corridors.

5. Expand incentives for affordable housing developments in more base zoning districts, including unit density bonuses, reduced setbacks and lot sizes, and reduced or eliminated parking minimums when located in proximity to public transit. Incorporate a tiered incentive structure for affordable housing projects based on type and level of affordability provided and geographic location, prioritizing City-funded projects.
6. Adopt policies to increase housing security for existing residents in areas at risk of displacement; including policies tailored to preserving historic African American settlement communities.
7. Develop strategies for preserving **existing affordable housing set to expire and** naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) units, throughout the city.
8. Expand partnership with the Charleston Redevelopment Corporation (**Palmetto Community Land Trust**) and establish a land bank for future affordable housing development.
9. Implement policies and allocate resources to reduce regulatory barriers that hinder development of affordable housing and disproportionately burden lower-income and vulnerable communities, including: expedited review and permitting, reduced fees, affordable materials standards, flexibility for design and architectural standards when appropriate, and allocating staff devoted to shepherding projects through the development process.
10. Allocate dedicated resources and staff to assist lower-income homeowners **and African-American owners of historic homes to retain, reinvest, and redevelop their properties to increase the amount of Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing stock. in maintaining their historic homes.**
11. Create a dedicated funding stream for affordable housing development through zoning and other planning tools.
12. Pursue strategies (incentives, policies and educational programs) to encourage landlord participation in rental assistance and other community housing programs; and establish a rental registration program.
13. Continue to leverage funding opportunities for affordable housing at the state and federal level and advocate for legislation that can be used to fund or incentivize affordable housing.
14. Create incentives and policies to increase available housing stock, especially affordable housing stock, through reuse and rehabilitation of existing buildings.
15. Continue to support creation of senior and affordable senior housing in all areas of the city.
16. Continue to preserve and defend existing housing stock through enforcement of the Short-Term Rental Ordinance.

**Motion: APPROVAL (8-0)**

**1<sup>st</sup>: LESESNE**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: BAILEY**



## LAND USE

1. Make the best use of the highest land around the city for residential, commercial and mixed-use development, especially areas around current or future public transit corridors.
2. Reduce densities on low-lying areas vulnerable to flooding, and eliminate development in future marsh migration areas. Adapt and defend structures currently in these areas wherever feasible.
3. Pursue further studies of middle ground areas (between Tidal Flood Risk and High Ground Zones) and develop land use strategies based on analysis of individual drainage basins and stormwater easements.
4. Develop proactive measures to educate property owners and potential developers as to parcel elevation, areas of known flooding, drainage basins, soil types and drainage easement challenges that inform stormwater management on their site.
5. Underscore responsibility of effective water management on higher ground of the city to better protect middle and lower ground downstream.
6. Encourage use of green stormwater infrastructure including clusters of trees, use of pervious surfaces, green roofs, etc.
7. Further limit fill-and-build construction methods in areas vulnerable to future flooding and potential marsh migration.
8. Encourage walkable, efficient neighborhood patterns that support connectivity, mobility and health through development regulations and incentives.
9. Create a new zoning ordinance that is based on elevation, tied to the dynamic nature of sea level rise and other climate change implications, and that applies conservation design principles and other recommendations in this plan to all new and infill development.
10. Support the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) through land use regulations and incentives, continued coordination with adjacent jurisdictions and by protecting land outside the UGB via land acquisition, park development and conservation easements.
11. Continue to work collaboratively with Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) and North Charleston to provide for transit-oriented developments along the Lowcountry Rapid Transit Corridor.
12. Continue to improve collaboration with adjoining jurisdictions to make the best use of high ground, limit use of low-lying areas, create compatible densities and increase connectivity.
13. **Continue research and outreach efforts with African-American Settlement Communities to ensure future development and land use recommendations are in concert with communities' goals.**

Motion: **APPROVAL (8-0)**

1<sup>st</sup>: **LESESNE**

2<sup>nd</sup>: **BAILEY**

## RESILIENCE AND EQUITY

1. Work with other City departments to implement the recommendations in the All Hazards and Vulnerability Risk Assessment, Sea Level Rise Strategy, Climate Action Plan, Trees to Offset Stormwater and Dutch Dialogues Charleston.
2. Work with other City departments to implement recommendations from the Special Commission on Equity, Inclusion and Racial Conciliation, when finalized.
3. ~~Fund and create an integrated flood protection plan for the peninsula that includes a storm surge barrier protection system.~~ **Update the Downtown Plan to fully implement recommendations from various plans and studies that address flood protection, new development and redevelopment, and tourism management.**
4. Develop and fund a program to address lack of access to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other disaster assistance aid for lower income households and heirs properties.
5. Collaborate with regional and state partners to increase preservation and restoration of saltwater ecosystems like our marshes and wetlands as these are key carbon sequestering assets.
6. Create design guidelines for renewable energy standards in the historic district, with measures in place to prevent placing additional burdens on lower-income households.
7. Expand incentives for sustainable construction and renewable energy via the zoning code, such as building certification programs like Charleston RISES.
8. Create more incentives that empower individual property owners and small-scale developers to play a more prominent role in efforts to increase resiliency and affordability in the Charleston area.
9. Continue to promote urban agriculture and community gardens, especially in areas qualifying as food deserts.
10. Reduce emissions to 50% below 2018 levels by 2030 to mitigate the city's impact on climate change.
11. Reduce emissions to net zero by 2050.
12. **Continue to study the effects of extreme heat and pursue policies that protect people in all areas of the city from extreme heat, especially lower income and elder community members who may have more limited ability to adapt.**
13. Prioritize City Plan recommendations that advance resilience and equity, included in the Resilience and Equity Recommendation matrix on pages \_\_.

**Motion: APPROVAL (8-0)**

**1<sup>st</sup>: HARRISON**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: LESESNE**