



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2030





# MISSION

Dorchester County Government delivers essential services that contribute to the wellbeing and quality of life of its citizens. In doing so, we seek to meet the collective needs of our citizens in a cost-effective manner.





# VISION

The government of Dorchester County, in partnership with its citizen and businesses, will play a leadership role in achieving a balance between growth, the environment, and preservation of the unique cultural and natural characteristics of Dorchester County.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dorchester County Strategic Plan serves as a comprehensive roadmap to guide the County's decision-making, resource allocation, and service delivery over the next several years. Its purpose is to define a clear direction for the County's future, ensuring alignment of daily operations and long-term initiatives with the community's needs and expectations.

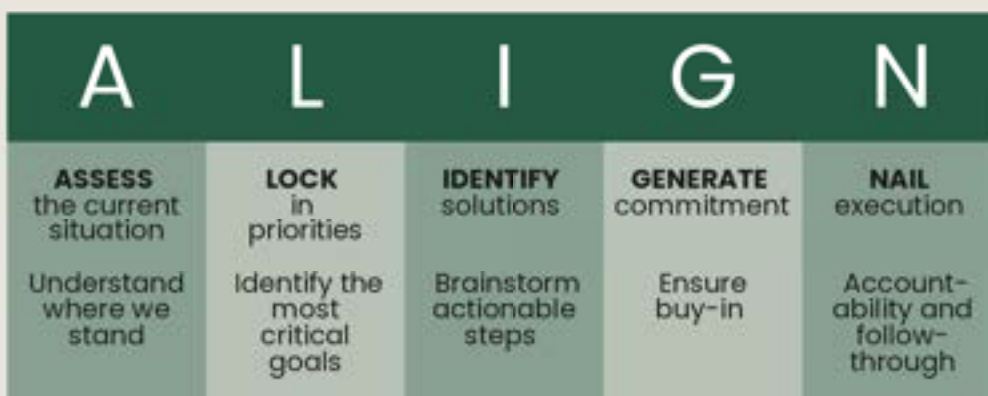
Grounded in Dorchester County's mission to deliver effective, efficient, and responsive services while fostering a high quality of life, the strategic plan reflects the County's vision of a thriving, safe, and connected community. Each goal and objective within the plan support this vision, focusing on community health, infrastructure development, managed growth, public safety, service excellence, and workforce investment.



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This strategic plan establishes clear priorities and measurable objectives, providing a framework to track progress over time. Through regular performance monitoring and reporting, the County can evaluate outcomes, adapt to emerging challenges, and ensure continuous improvement.

Beyond guiding internal operations, the strategic plan serves as a communication tool for the public—offering transparency into the County's priorities, rationale for major initiatives, and commitment to accountability. Residents, businesses, and stakeholders can use the plan to understand where the County is headed and how their input influences policy and action.



*Lichtman, B. (2025, February 11). Why many strategic plans stall – and how to keep them on track. SmartBrief*

Ultimately, this strategic plan advances Dorchester County as a high-performing organization. It strengthens collaboration across departments, promotes data-informed decisions, and ensures that services are organized and delivered in ways that are efficient, equitable, and responsive to the evolving needs of the community.



# OVERVIEW

Dorchester County began its strategic planning efforts in 2002, aligning plan updates with the fiscal year budget process. Since then, rapid growth and increased service demands have led to evolving strategic priorities.

In 2019, the County partnered with the Riley Center for Livable Communities to update its plan—called the Strategic Direction—focusing on key areas such as Infrastructure, Economic Development, Growth Management, Education, Funding, and Parks & Recreation.

Separate strategic plans were later developed by the Public Safety Group (2021-2025), Economic Development, and Emergency Management, all aligning with the 2019 Strategic Direction.

For the 2025 update, County leadership decided to integrate the Public Safety plan into the broader County strategic plan, while maintaining Economic Development as a standalone plan.

Strategic planning for 2025 began in January with a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) survey distributed to department heads, elected officials, and appointees. Participants were also asked to envision what they would want to see and hear if they returned to the County after five years. A total of 39 responses were received.

In February, a full-day leadership and strategic planning retreat was held with staff and officials. The event opened with a leadership presentation by the South Carolina Association of Counties, followed by progress updates on the County's existing plans. Attendees reviewed the SWOT results and participated in group exercises on prioritization, goal setting, and strategy development. Input from the retreat was analyzed to identify common themes.

In April, County Council held its first of three budget retreats. Staff presented progress updates from the 2019 plan and shared key themes from the February retreat. Council members provided feedback on missing or overlooked priorities.

Staff then developed a strategic mapping tool and consolidated priorities into six core areas: Community Health, Growth Management, Infrastructure, Public Safety, Service Delivery, and Workforce. These focus areas informed the draft goals and objectives, presented to Council in May. Staff held follow-up meetings with Council members and department heads to align goals and objectives, along with more granular details to develop strategic actions.

The final goals and objectives were approved by County Council at their June 5 budget retreat. From June through August, staff compiled action planning considerations and hosted an action planning workshop for section owners and contributors. The workshop allowed staff to finalize SMART strategic actions for the first two years of the plan.

# STRATEGIC GOALS & OBJECTIVES

## COMMUNITY HEALTH

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### Goal:

Improve access to equitable, sustainable, and integrated health services for all residents.

### Objectives:

- Expand access to healthcare through partnerships with the Medical University of South Carolina's future St. George Primary Care, urgent care providers, and mobile health programs.
- Enhance senior services by improving Dorchester Senior Centers and ensuring equitable services across locations.
- Increase mental health, behavioral health, and substance use disorder services, including opioid abatement, recovery residences, and homeless support programs.
- Collaborate with non-governmental organizations for outreach, education, and coordinated care.
- Address homelessness with expanded transitional housing, warming centers, and targeted assessments, especially in the western end of Dorchester County.
- Promote active lifestyle through accessibility to trails, blueways, and other recreational opportunities.

### Actions:

Dorchester County is broadening access to healthcare through new facilities, urgent care, and partnerships with MUSC and community providers, while also expanding mental health, substance use, and senior services. Residents can expect stronger support for vulnerable populations through new housing and shelter options, mobility solutions, and expanded outreach programs. Recreation opportunities will grow with updated park plans, new trail connections, and improved access to blueways, while a feasibility study will guide future animal shelter services to meet community needs.



# INFRASTRUCTURE

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## **Goal:**

Develop and maintain resilient, efficient, and environmentally responsible infrastructure to support current and future community needs.

## **Objectives:**

- Implement capital improvement projects for water/wastewater (e.g., Lower/Central/Upper Plants) and collaborate with Orangeburg County, Lake Marion Regional Water Agency, Dorchester County Water Authority, and other area water utilities.
- Advance the Transportation Sales Tax Program for improved roads and consider alternative transportation (bike, pedestrian), and public transit improvements.
- Address environmental health issues: fluoridation, PFAS, landfill capacity, stormwater management, and solid waste services.
- Expand broadband and GIS capabilities for smarter infrastructure management.
- Promote conservation through greenbelt programs, land acquisitions, and environmental health assessments.
- Implement floodplain management activities in conjunction with the Community Rating System to mitigate the impact of flooding.
- Support economic development through strategic infrastructure investments that enhance access to industrial parks, commercial corridors, and rural development areas.
- Evaluate and improve airport operations, access, and Aeronautics Board effectiveness.
- Prioritize airport improvement funding to support development and planning for airports in Summerville and St. George.

## **Actions:**

The County is investing in water and wastewater upgrades, road projects, and trail extensions to keep pace with growth and improve daily life. Stormwater systems will be upgraded to reduce flooding, and conservation initiatives will preserve natural spaces. Broadband and GIS technology will expand access to services and information, while airports in Summerville and St. George will see improvements that support both community use and economic development.

# GROWTH MANAGEMENT

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## Goal:

Manage and guide responsible, balanced growth while preserving community character and resources.

## Objectives:

- Continue to implement the Library Master Plan to include constructing new facilities in Downtown Summerville and Ridgeville.
- Control sprawl through zoning, land use, and smart growth initiatives, including Ridgeville Residential Improvement District and water/wastewater service boundaries.
- Expand access to affordable, attainable housing through partnerships and consider incentive opportunities.
- Coordinate with municipalities on redevelopment, stormwater, and transportation projects.
- Pursue public-private partnerships for amenities like parks, trails, and sports facilities.
- Promote access to quality education to public schools, vocational, technical, and other institutions of higher education.
- Facilitate economic vitality by aligning land use planning with targeted industry recruitment, mixed-use development, and infrastructure investment to support commercial nodes and employment centers.

## Actions:

Residents can expect new libraries in Summerville and Ridgeville, stronger tools to guide responsible growth, and incentives that encourage affordable housing. Neighborhood revitalization projects, redevelopment studies, and watershed planning will improve infrastructure and environmental resilience. Partnerships with schools, nonprofits, and businesses will expand recreational facilities, strengthen educational opportunities like dual enrollment, and open doors to new innovation and economic development hubs.





# PUBLIC SAFETY

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## Goal:

Strengthen public safety services through investment in personnel, facilities, technology, and community engagement.

## Objectives:

- Expand public safety capacity with personnel, apparatus, and capital improvements.
- Improve emergency response operations and emergency dispatch coordination.
- Expand detention center capacity and assess future needs.
- Enhance emergency preparedness through partnerships, response and recovery planning, and community education.
- Develop a comprehensive infrastructure protection program to mitigate natural and man-made hazards, as well as identify alternative revenue sources.

## Actions:

Public safety services will expand through new staff, upgraded facilities, and replacement of aging vehicles and equipment. Emergency response will improve through regional dispatch systems and mutual aid agreements, while detention center planning will address medical, intake, and rehabilitation needs. Preparedness programs will strengthen community resilience through partnerships and neighborhood-based teams, and new infrastructure protection measures will safeguard residents from both natural and man-made hazards.





# SERVICE DELIVERY

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## Goal:

Deliver responsive, transparent, and efficient services that meet community needs and exceed expectations.

## Objectives:

- Enhance customer service through training, standards, and response tracking.
- Expand services with AI-powered chat solutions, automation, and other emerging technologies.
- Increase internal and external communications through citizen surveys, public information campaigns, "Do More Dorchester" storytelling, and creative staff and community recognition.
- Strengthen community engagement through programs including a Citizens Academy, Heirs Property Education, and public transparency initiatives.
- Enhance services for veterans, seniors, and vulnerable populations through targeted programs and facilities.
- Promote a safe working environment for employees and visitors and safe work practices to prevent and reduce accidents and injuries.

## Actions:

Residents will see more responsive services through customer service training, AI-powered tools, and improved communications like surveys and storytelling campaigns. Engagement will grow with new programs such as a Citizens Academy and Heirs Property workshops, while targeted outreach will expand services for veterans, seniors, and vulnerable residents. Workplace safety initiatives will support County employees, ensuring services are delivered efficiently and with care.



# WORKFORCE

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## Goal:

Attract, retain, and develop a high-performing, diverse, and engaged workforce.

## Objectives:

- Improve recruitment and retention through competitive compensation, incentive pay, student loan debt assistance, sign-on bonuses, and internships.
- Expand professional development to existing and new programs including LEAD training, apprenticeships/internships, tuition reimbursement, and growth ladders.
- Foster a positive organizational culture through employee appreciation events, recognition programs, and satisfaction surveys.
- Address workforce needs in key positions and long-term vacancies through targeted recruitment and retention efforts.
- Support work-life balance with childcare programs and flexible policies.
- Develop succession planning, performance management, and market-competitive compensation strategies.
- Promote a healthy work environment by implementing the "Do Well DC" program.

## Actions:

The County is improving recruitment and retention through competitive pay, internships, youth outreach, and student loan assistance, while also expanding professional development and career ladder programs. Employee satisfaction and recognition will be enhanced through surveys, appreciation programs, and redesigned resources, while wellness and work-life balance initiatives will strengthen the overall workplace culture. These efforts will ensure a strong, motivated workforce ready to deliver high-quality services to the community.





A photograph of the Dorchester County Courthouse, a large, two-story building with a classical facade featuring a portico with columns. The building is surrounded by lush green trees and a well-maintained lawn. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The word "SUMMARY" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on the left side of the image.

# SUMMARY

Dorchester County's 2030 Strategic Plan represents a shared commitment to progress, collaboration, and accountability. It reflects the collective input of County Council, staff, and community partners who are dedicated to shaping a stronger, healthier, and more resilient future. Each focus area—Community Health, Infrastructure, Growth Management, Public Safety, Service Delivery, and Workforce—translates ideas into action, with clear objectives and measurable steps that will guide implementation over the next several years. This plan is more than a roadmap—it is a living framework that evolves with the needs of the community.

Through ongoing evaluation, performance tracking, and open communication, Dorchester County will continue to adapt and improve its services, ensuring that every initiative contributes to a safer, more connected, and more prosperous place to live. Together, we are building a future where innovation, responsibility, and collaboration drive meaningful results for all who call Dorchester County home.





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**KNOW MORE. DO MORE.**

*TOGETHER, WE ARE SHAPING OUR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE.*

