



STRATEGIC PLAN

January 2018 – December 2022

**Updated November 2022 by the Conservation Commission
(Attachment C)**

Completed with assistance from



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) met on January 21, 2018 with consultants Colleen Bozard and Anne Sinclair for the purpose of developing a five year strategic plan to guide organizational programs and activities. After a brief exercise designed to encourage strategic thinking, Commissioners reviewed their roles and responsibilities and then worked to create vision and mission statements to help guide all planning decisions and future activities. Based on this discussion, the following statements were adopted:

Vision Statement

Our vision is to be the leader in creating a livable balance of development and natural areas by promoting land conservation, preservation of cultural and historic aspects, and sustainable growth in a way that that fosters a high quality of life in Richland County.

Mission Statement

The mission of RCCC is to protect and promote Richland County's natural, historic and cultural resources to benefit its citizens and future generations.

Strategic Analysis

Best practices in strategic planning suggest that an organization gather input on internal and external factors that impact the success of the organization as well as on trends and other environmental influencers. To ensure the data used by the RCCC accurately reflects the needs and perceptions of both internal individuals as well as external constituents, information was obtained from a variety of sources:

- Existing plans including Richland County's Comprehensive Plan;
- Meetings with the staff and leadership of the RCCC; and
- Input from a variety of key stakeholders.

External stakeholder input is critical information to be considered as part of a strategic planning effort. Feedback was solicited for this planning process through individual interviews and two focus groups. One focus group was facilitated with organizations involved in historic preservation (12 attended) and another with organizations involved in conservation or other environmental issues (13 attended). Four individual interviews were conducted with people who have a history of working with the organization. In addition, County Council members were invited to provide input; a total of five council members participated.

The information gathered through this situational analysis was summarized into a succinct document and presented to the RCCC during a planning retreat (see Attachment A). Based on the information shared, Commission members identified the following as the most critical issues currently facing the organization:

- Commission members need to be more aware of plans that are in development before they are asked to approve them. Rubber stamping erodes the Commission's authority as outlined in the ordinance.
- Historical information must be inclusive and accurate.
- The feasibility of establishing a foundation could be explored to expand capacity.
- Richland County citizens need a sound, accurate understanding of the county's history.
- The RCCC's role regarding the county's history has not evolved since its inception despite the fact that the field of history has undergone major transformation.
- The historic work of the Commission is under-supported, even by Commission members.
- Work has been initiated on the development of a land management plan.
- A land management program must assure that land management is consistent across the county and provide a list of what is allowable and not allowable.
- The experience of Pinewood Lake Park can be a learning model for clarifying roles and responsibilities.
- Each property should have a detailed plan.
- Succession planning for replacing Commission members is needed.
- Securing interns could help with capacity issues.
- Social media is not utilized effectively to communicate externally.
- Implementation of the Lower Richland Tourism and Economic Development Plan has been delayed.
- How do we keep Richland County Council better informed?
- How do we ensure assure support of county administration? How do we assure we are invited "to the table" to participate in development and planning discussions?-.
- What is the RCCC's role and relationship with Richland County Council and administration? It will be important to clarify so that RCCC is seen as the "go to" organization for anything related to land conservation and historical or cultural issues.
- How can Commission members be stronger advocates on their own without the staff?
- An advocacy plan is needed.

These issues then guided the development of five measurable strategic goal statements with accompanying strategic initiatives designed to achieve each goal over the next five years. The strategic plan on the following pages has been created around these goals and will guide Commission and staff activities, with its implementation monitored during Commission meetings. The RCCC will employ continuous improvement strategies to ensure the plan remains dynamic and responsive to the changing needs of the county. Building on strengths and

opportunities, staff and committee members will create detailed annual operating plans which specify the activities to be undertaken in pursuit of achieving the plan's intended outcomes. First year efforts will include establishment of baseline data to foster strong evaluation of outcomes and objectives and assure accountability.

Richland County Conservation Commission

Strategic Plan

1/1/2018 – 12/31/2022

Goal #1: To implement a conservation property and facility management program.

Outcomes: Future conservation land decisions by County Council and RCCC follow land management system stipulations.
Land management is consistent across the county.
Land management roles & responsibilities are clearly defined.
Funds allocated for land management are used effectively.

Responsible Party: Ad Hoc Land Management Committee

Strategy A: Develop and adopt a formal conservation and public use land management program that includes records management, inventory development, risk management and security, and property management.

Objectives: *Establish an inventory and classification of all property.
County administration and RCCC staff maintain all property records.
Send annual updates of property records to GIS Department.
Implement security measures at each property.
Define roles & responsibilities for land management.*

Strategy B: Articulate a vision for each conservation land by developing and adopting an individual property plan utilizing sustainability, promotion of compatible uses, and revenue generation (when appropriate) and that ensures the ecological health of the property.

Objectives: *Individual plans created for each property that includes:*

- 1. Protection of the ecological health of land;*
- 2. Utilization of sustainable management techniques along with compatible public use;*
- 3. Determination of revenue and cost estimates for maintenance and operation including needed staff; and*

4. *Solicitation of input from nearby property owners and other stakeholders as necessary.*

Strategy C: Expand RCCC's capacity to implement a land management program (funding, staff, monitoring).

*Objectives: Secure sufficient staffing to support land management over the next five years.
Obtain additional funding to support land management initiatives.*

Strategy D: Increase the number of conservation easements held by RCCC.

Responsible Party: Conservation Committee

*Objectives: Increase communication with County Council about benefits of conservation easements.
Increase awareness about the benefits of conservation easements.
Increase the number of individuals who indicate interest in a conservation easement.
Implement Conservation Easement Strategic Plan.*

Goal #2: To promote the development and preservation of inclusive and accurate historical resources.

Outcomes: Preservation activities in unincorporated areas of the county are increased.
Additional individuals and organizations express interest in preservation of historical resources throughout the county.
The Historic Resources Guide recommendations are implemented.
Strongly advocate policies for historic preservation such as the Bailey Bill and others.
Outline historic events and places in Richland County by era.
Clarify RCCC's role and reach consensus on future efforts relating to historic preservation.

Responsible Party: Historic Committee

Strategy A: Create and implement a plan to focus and prioritize preservation and education efforts throughout the county.

Objectives: Recruit professional historians to work with the Historic Committee.

Develop additional partnerships with historic and local community groups.
Analyze new federal tax law changes focusing on their implications for historic restoration.
Discuss RCCC's appropriate role in historic preservation in the future.
Integrate Historic Resources Guide recommendations into the plan as appropriate.
Explore funding opportunities to expand historical preservation efforts.
Secure funding to hire contract or permanent staff dedicated to historic and cultural issues.

Strategy B: Develop a web-based community interaction initiative that demonstrates the themes of Richland County history and how different communities and social groups contributed to these themes.

Objectives: *Conduct scholarly research into historical themes.*
Solicit anecdotal research from community groups.
Organize themes by neighborhoods and sites.
Create interactive website.
Document community interaction with website.

Strategy C: Increase education and preservation of historical and cultural resources.

Objectives: *Contract with or hire a professional to develop historical education programs.*
Provide regular educational presentations or a lecture series on themes relevant to county history.
Create visual displays describing accurate information about how structures, events, etc. fit into the county's history.
Increase the number of grants, markers, Bailey Bill publicity and heritage tourism promotion efforts.

Strategy D: Encourage ongoing research to document the history of Richland County with a focus on diverse communities, laborers, small farmers and other overlooked and under-researched groups.

Objectives: *Increase the number of grants that address historical research focusing on under-researched communities.*
Encourage research to identify themes of history within the county.

*Ensure historical preservation and research projects are inclusive and accurate for all populations.
Share results of RCCC's grant funded research countywide.*

Goal #3: To communicate the mission and activities of RCCC.

Outcomes: Increase community awareness of RCCC within Richland County.
Commission members report being fully informed about all RCCC planning efforts.
Commission members increase engagement of County Council to support conservation efforts.
RCCC staff actively participate in county administrative planning and development.

Strategy A: Communicate the mission and activities of RCCC with the public using social media, e-newsletters and presentations to outside groups.

Responsible party: Communication Committee & Staff

Objectives: *Monitor the use of social media, updates to website, access to e-newsletter, number of public presentations and numbers of grant applications.
Expand utilization of social media.
Maximize utilization of RCCC's existing website within county parameters.
Increase distribution of the RCCC e-newsletter.
Increase the number of public presentations about RCCC and its activities.
Increase the number of new applicants for grant funding.*

Strategy B: Utilize proactive two-way communication methods between staff and commission members.

Responsible party: Executive Committee & Staff

Objectives: *Staff assure provision of up-to-date information to Commission members on a regular basis.
Commission members fulfill Duty of Care responsibilities through preparation and review of all communication provided by email.
Commission members and staff participate in informed discussion based on information provided as well as individual commission member areas of expertise and experience.*

Strategy C: Advocate with County Council and county administration about RCCC mission and activities.

Responsible party: Executive Committee & Staff.

Objectives: Increase one-on-one communication with County Council members by Commission members.
Distribute summaries of Commission initiated topics to support RCCC members as they update Council members.
Increase information shared with County Council on RCCC.
Increase information shared with County Administration on activities of RCCC.
Receive regular briefings from County Director of Planning and Development Services on issues relevant to commission.
Actively participate in Richland Renaissance and other planning efforts.

Goal #4: To implement the Lower Richland Tourism Plan.

Outcomes: RCCC adopt plan and forward to County administration.
Implement the recommendations for nature & heritage tourism and small business development.
Identify recreational and entrepreneurial opportunities that RCCC can encourage.

Responsible Party: Executive Committee & Staff

Strategy A: Ensure sufficient capacity to implement the plan.

Objectives: Individuals with expertise in tourism, conservation and small business development recruited to serve on Ad Hoc LR Tourism Committee.
Funding and staffing needs identified.
Obtain funding to implement prioritized recommendations.

Strategy B: Increase engagement of stakeholders (i.e. local community and business leaders, elected officials, county government, education etc.) in implementation of the Plan over the next five years.

Objectives: Increase the number of individuals from Lower Richland involved in implementation of recommendations.
Increase the number of initiatives led by local stakeholders.

Goal #5: To strengthen the capacity of the RCCC to support long term viability and achievement of the mission.

Outcomes: Commission vacancies are filled quickly.
Additional funding is secured for RCCC initiatives.
Leadership vacancies are filled quickly.
Secure additional staffing.

Responsible Party: Executive Committee & Staff

Strategy A: Evaluate potential avenues of soliciting additional funding, to include the possibility of establishing an RCCC Foundation.

*Objectives: Research Information on establishing a foundation.
Present recommendations on the viability of establishing a Foundation to the Commission.
Commission votes on viability of establishing a foundation.
Conduct research and evaluate additional funding alternatives.*

Strategy B: Develop a process to strengthen the capacity and leadership of Commission.

*Objectives: Adopt and annually execute commission member responsibility agreement.
Fulfill Commission member attendance requirements as outlined in the ordinance.
Develop and approve officer and committee chair job descriptions.
Develop leadership succession plan.
Identify methods to work with County Council on recommendations for new appointments.*

Strategy C: Increase the number of staff to implement RCCC initiatives.

*Objectives: Develop new staff job descriptions.
Hire and orient new staff as needs are identified.
Create new internship opportunities.
Expand partnerships with higher education institutions to recruit interns.
Hire new interns.*

ATTACHMENT A



STRATEGIC PLANNING SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

January 2018

Completed with assistance from



Situational Analysis

Introduction

In 2017 the Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) made the strategic decision to initiate a planning process that would provide direction to the organization over a five year period. Best practices in strategic planning suggest that an organization gather input on internal and external factors that impact the success of the organization as well as on trends and other environmental influencers. To ensure that the informational database used by the Commission accurately reflects the needs and perceptions of both internal individuals as well as external constituents, information presented in this report was obtained from a variety of sources:

- Existing plans that involve the RCCC including Richland County’s Comprehensive Plan;
- Meetings with the staff and leadership of the RCCC; and
- Input from a variety of key stakeholders.

This summary document is intended to provide input and direction for the planning process.

Demographic Overview

Richland County is located in the center of South Carolina with a population of 409,549 (2016 census). It is the second most populous county in the state and includes the City of Columbia, the state capitol, and Fort Jackson, a key military training base. While Richland County was officially established in 1785 after the Revolutionary War, for hundreds of years it was home to Native American tribes and later farming communities. Consequently, the county has a rich, vibrant history. Richland County benefits from five rivers, Lake Murray, and the Congaree National Park. It is comprised of a balance of urban, suburban and rural areas. With its long and diverse history and its rich natural resources, Richland County benefits from a commission charged with promoting the preservation and protection of these historical and natural resources.

Organizational Capacity

The Richland County Conservation Commission was created by ordinance in 1998 to promote the protection of the county’s natural, historical, and cultural resources and to promote nature-based recreation and eco- and heritage tourism. Each of the eleven members of Richland County Council appoints a representative to the Commission. The members have backgrounds in land conservation, historic preservation, and other related fields. The Commission serves in an advisory capacity to County Council.

The Richland County Conservation Division in the Community Planning & Development Department provides staff support to the RCCC. Staff includes a Conservation Division Manager, a Conservation Coordinator, and an Administrative Assistant; only the Coordinator is dedicated full-time to the Commission. In addition, RCCC is in the process of hiring a Land Program Planner who will be charged with overseeing park and conservation lands managed by the Division.

The Commission fulfills its purpose by negotiating voluntary protection strategies with landowners through conservation easements and land acquisition, and through grant programs and special projects. RCCC coordinates their conservation efforts with the Richland County Soil & Water Conservation District, as they are housed in the same office and many efforts between the two entities complement each other. Programs currently operated by the RCCC are:

Land Conservation

1. RCCC holds 32 conservation easements.
2. RCCC manages ten county-owned conservation properties.
3. Grants are awarded annually to protect natural resources, improve water quality, build trails, and enhance environmental education.
4. RCCC participates with partner organizations in large-scale conservation efforts such as COWASEE Basin Task Force, Midlands Area Joint Installation Consortium, Congaree Biosphere, and in smaller scale initiatives such as Gills Creek Watershed Association.

Historic and Cultural Preservation

1. Grants are awarded annually to preserve/restore historically significant buildings and to develop educational and research programs that promote historic preservation in Richland County.
2. RCCC determines eligibility of historic buildings in unincorporated areas of Richland County for the Bailey Bill; staff administers the Bailey Bill, the 20-year tax abatement that advances restoration of historic properties.
3. RCCC funds historic markers.
4. Staff maintains an inventory of historic structures and cemeteries in Richland County.

Special Projects

RCCC undertakes special projects at the request of Council, individual Council members, Administration, and/or Commission members. Examples of such initiatives are:

1. Lower Richland Tourism Plan
2. Richland County Historical Resources Guide
3. Owens Field Storm & Trail Improvements

4. Analysis of current issues with advice to Council, i.e. Palmetto Utilities request to discharge into Spears Creek; SCE&G transmission line near Farrow Road, Haile Gold Mine mitigation, greenways, ordinance and code re-writes, flood property buy-outs.

Complimentary Planning Efforts

County planning documents serve as a guide for both Richland County government and its citizens. The principle plan that guides all activity is the Richland County Comprehensive Plan (described below). Plans with a narrower focus complement the Comprehensive Plan to guide aspects of development within Richland County. Because of the RCCC's role in conservation of natural, cultural and historic resources, many of the recommendations fall within its purview. These plans include:

Richland County Comprehensive Plan

Adopted by County Council in 2015, the Comprehensive Plan was created to be a "blueprint" that provides guidance as to where and how Richland County will grow over the next 20 years. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be the master plan that identifies expected development patterns and guides and facilitates growth in a manner that is respectful of the County's natural and cultural resources. The plan is organized into nine elements: Population, Housing, Cultural Resources, Natural Resources, Economic Development, Transportation, Priority Investment, Community Facilities and Land Use. Two of these elements (Cultural Resources & Natural Resources) fall directly within the purview of the RCCC. All aspects of the strategic plan to be developed will assure achievement of some aspect of this Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, the following plans as well as the historical guide focus on a specific area and support efforts to implement the Comprehensive Plan:

Neighborhood Master Plans

Over the past ten years, Richland County Council has approved ten (10) neighborhood master plans. A Neighborhood Master Plan is a detailed study of specific planning issues relating to a residential neighborhood and its commercial component. Once approved by County Council, the Neighborhood Master Plan is incorporated into the county's Comprehensive Plan. The RCCC is actively involved in several strategies in the Spring Hill and Lower Richland Neighborhood Master Plans.

Lower Richland Tourism Plan

The Lower Richland Tourism plan was created to provide a vision for a sustainable, inclusive tourism economy in Lower Richland County that builds on and strengthens local nature and heritage assets. This plan, still in draft form, provides 88 pages of recommendations related to promoting tourism in Lower Richland to demonstrate how valuable the existing resources can

be when appropriately utilized and is intended to support achievement of the overall Comprehensive Plan. Key recommendations include utilization of several county owned properties currently managed by RCCC.

RCCC Conservation Easement Strategic Plan

RCCC has created a plan to strategically identify future properties through donated easements and purchase of development rights within specific priority areas. Selected properties must also meet at least one of four criteria relating to natural or historic conservation.

Richland Renaissance Plan

Richland Renaissance is a comprehensive solution to various space and other issues facing the government of Richland County and sets in motion a series of transformative initiatives that will be implemented throughout Richland County. It is a multifaceted, countywide plan that includes the acquisition of property and relocation of County departments; establishing strategically placed facilities in various areas of the County to ensure optimal levels of service to rural and suburban residents; creation of the Start Center, an economic engine focused on new business development; connecting historic landmarks and existing trails; and the implementation of a major revitalization project known as Revivify Richland. The RCCC strategic plan will support this Renaissance Plan.

Richland County Historical Resources Guide

RCCC initiated the development of a comprehensive listing of historical resources about the county with an emphasis on areas outside downtown Columbia. This inventory, which includes many pages of recommendations, has been completed and is housed at the Richland Library where it can be updated as necessary.

Existing Properties

Since 2008 the RCCC has acquired 10 tracts of land in locations across the county. These properties hold significant potential for the county as nature parks, greenways, walking trails, river access, and green space. With planning and funding, many of these properties can improve the quality of life for county citizens, become recreation destinations, and generate revenue for the county. RCCC has the opportunity to develop a plan for these properties to realize their potential to promote and demonstrate how natural and heritage lands can provide sustainable economic benefits to county residents so they become valuable for conservation. Steps towards these goals such as acquiring properties, developing plans, and obtaining funds for hiring additional staff have begun. Determination of the next steps and garnering support for them is crucial to maximize these tracts of land for the county's conservation efforts and will be an important area of discussion during the planning process. A list of properties, categorized by their potential use, is attached to this report.

Stakeholder Input

External stakeholder input is critical information to be considered as part of a strategic planning effort. Feedback was solicited for this planning process through individual interviews and two focus groups. One focus group was facilitated with organizations involved in historic preservation (12 attended) and another with organizations involved in conservation or other environmental issues (13 attended). Four individual interviews were conducted with people who have a history of working with the organization. In addition, County Council members were invited to provide input; a total of five council members participated. The information presented below is a summary of the input received.

Organizational Purpose

Participants were asked to provide their perceptions of what the purpose of RCCC is. Focus group members and individual interviewees spoke about the purpose being to serve as the liaison between citizens and county government so that county government will be responsible for historical, cultural and conservation efforts, enhancing what makes the county great. A second purpose identified was communication. RCCC's purpose is to tell stories about the history and culture of the county, educate the public about historic and ecological issues and share information about grants, technical assistance, and possible partnerships that are available. Finally, participants believe the purpose to be to provide funding and technical assistance through the grants program.

In addition, individual stakeholders and council members noted that the purpose is focused on identifying key historic and natural properties, promoting the conservation and preservation of these properties, and supporting the organizations that work on these efforts.

Organizational Strengths

Each participant was asked to identify the primary strengths of Richland County Conservation Commission. Strengths are characteristics of RCCC that they can build future efforts upon.

Focus group attendees identified the grant program as one of the top strengths of RCCC. They appreciate the diversity of projects that are funded, the streamlined grant process, the flexibility of projects that are funded and the funding committee itself. RCCC's staff provides excellent support, shares resources, and encourages collaboration. RCCC's ability to develop and maintain partnerships with a variety of diverse organizations and individuals enables it to serve as a key source of information and guidance. Finally, RCCC's ability to educate and advocate with the general community, to serve as a source of information with the community, County Council and other decision makers is a key strength.

Individual stakeholders interviewed echoed the sentiments of the focus groups. In addition, they described the Commission members as dedicated, committed, diverse, and informed. Commission members have a strong relationship with County Council and council members are appreciative of their guidance. Because the RCCC is a millage agency, there is a source of income to fulfill the mission. RCCC's partnership with the University of South Carolina has

enabled it to conduct a variety of projects, particularly in the area of cultural and historic preservation. Two interviewees stressed the importance of the mitigation bank and its opportunity to generate revenue for the county along with preserving significant property.

Organizational Challenges

Participants were also asked to identify weaknesses and challenges within the organization. These challenges will need to be addressed in order for RCCC to move forward effectively.

Focus group attendees identified issues around communication and public relations as one of the primary weakness of RCCC. Some participants noted they do not know what other things that the agency does and remarked that the scope and breadth of what they do is unknown. They struggle to tell about RCCC's successes. They urged the RCCC to improve its communication through diverse approaches-to various populations. The website does not list all pertinent information (i.e. mission) and the name does not convey historic or cultural focus, only conservation.

Individual interviewees reiterated the need to "tell the story" of the RCCC, its purpose, its programs, and its successes. Several noted that it is important to spread the word about grant opportunities as it appears that the same organizations receive grants and that other groups may be unaware of opportunities to apply. One interviewee encouraged the RCCC to set priorities for the use of grant funds and another urged greater focus on the unincorporated parts of the county such as the Bluff Road area, Blythewood and St. Andrews.

Several interviewees noted that the RCCC has the potential to be a greater part of the overall plans of the county but seems hesitant to use that potential. They noted that the RCCC has an important role in the future of the county and could become more involved in the overall conversation. Staff are seen as an underutilized asset. Also, several stakeholders encouraged the RCCC to become more engaged with county council and share funding requests earlier rather than later.

External opportunities

Participants were asked what opportunities exist in the community that RCCC should take advantage of. These opportunities are external to the organization.

Focus group participants suggested opportunities for additional promotion and communication, particularly consistent branding and stronger promotion of the Bailey Bill. Educating citizens and elected officials was also identified. Another predominant opportunity identified related to programming. A number of suggestions were identified, including:

- Establishing districts taxed at a lower level because they have specific purpose (i.e. Wetlands) to limit development;
- Focusing on smaller, more urban easements (i.e. along creeks & rivers), perhaps fee simple acquisitions;

- Increasing recreation opportunities on properties they currently own, providing nature based tourism opportunities; and
- Implementing the Lower Richland Tourism Plan.

Finally, participants noted an opportunity to focus more on historic and cultural areas, perhaps defining economic values to historic and natural preservation to help citizens understand the importance of these domains.

Several stakeholders encouraged the Commission to focus on parts of the county that do not attract as much attention as other parts of the county. In addition, while the RCCC is a millage agency, individual stakeholders encouraged them to explore securing additional funding through grants for specific projects and maximizing their current funds. Other individual suggestions included:

- Increasing engagement among younger citizens;
- Becoming proactive prior to a building being demolished to preserve its history even if the building itself cannot be preserved;
- Establishing a second mitigation bank with the revenue set-aside to purchase land for conservation and public use;
- Increasing their presence within county government, including being more active during the county's process to update its zoning and land development codes; and
- Holding an annual meeting/workshop to share information and highlight successes.

Critical Issues and Priorities

Finally, all participants were asked to identify what they believe to be the top issues that RCCC should be addressing over the next five years.

Focus group attendees identified the following as primary issues:

- Grant funding. Grants should be project based and funding amounts should be increased to assure a bigger impact. Bricks and mortar funding should continue. Finally, they'd like RCCC to share information about grant opportunities offered by other entities and share the grant expertise within the Commission.
- Increased awareness. Not everyone knows what the commission does. Additional discussions could be facilitated and more information shared on projects, on available resources, and who is involved with different projects. RCCC should increase efforts to educate citizens and promote the benefits of conservation. Individual stakeholders interviewed reiterated this and one encouraged RCCC to ensure it differentiates itself from Historic Columbia.
- Additional suggestions were to increase staff, increase outreach to schools, and proactively acquire as much property as possible in any fashion.

In addition to the issues identified in the focus groups, individual stakeholders added the following:

- Solicit public input. Several individual interviewees encouraged the RCCC to reach out to the public for guidance in developing priorities. Their perspective is that the public should play a key role in guiding how funds are spent.
- Property management. Several interviewees noted that the RCCC has recently been charged with actively managing property. While RCCC staff has had oversight and varying degrees of property management, this role will increase in the future. This is a change in the original purpose set out in the ordinance establishing RCCC and the RCCC needs to determine how to fulfill this important function. How the RCCC manages property will set the tone of future requests to manage property and ensure public access.
- Strengthen RCCC's role within Richland County government. The RCCC has the opportunity to be play a larger role in determining the future growth and development of the county. Commission members can advise county council members and county staff can advise on how the county will grow and develop.
- Increase funding. Stakeholders urged the RCCC to solicit additional funds for special projects.

Discussion Topics

Based on the information provided, the RCCC will work to identify the strengths of the organization that future efforts can be built upon, the weaknesses of the organization that must be addressed to be successful, opportunities & threats that can impact future growth, and the critical issues facing the organization. This report outlines a number of key factors that can be incorporated into this discussion:

- **Property Utilization and Management.** Steering the use of RCCC properties and managing these properties will increase over the next few years. Discussions must include how RCCC will determine the best use for these properties, deciding which properties will initially be prioritized, the funding needed to fulfill the agreed-upon use, and RCCC's capacity to manage this new role effectively.
- **Community awareness.** There is a significant opportunity to increase awareness of RCCC's purpose and its successes, to solicit input on potential projects and priorities, and increase applications for the grants programs. Expanding education about Richland County's very rich vibrant history as well as about the value of conservation and natural resources is needed. Many believe the purpose of RCCC is to serve as a liaison between citizens and the county and improved awareness and education efforts could further this purpose. The staff is very knowledgeable and respected; their ability to share more information in diverse ways could only be a benefit to future growth.
- **Advocacy.** The RCCC is in a unique position to educate and advocate for a greater understanding of historic, cultural, and conservation benefits. Staff have the ability to be more proactive within county government and Commission members have the

opportunity to be stronger advocates with County Council members. RCCC staff could take a more active role in supporting and planning county growth and development. Since each Commission member is appointed by a councilmember, they have a direct line of communication with County Council. They could become more engaged with County Council and take more initiative on being a strong advocate for conservation and preservation.

- **Increase Funding.** While the RCCC does receive funds, they have the opportunity to solicit additional funds to fulfill its purpose. An exploration of expanding conservation and historic preservation grants and increasing grant award amounts to local grantees would enhance the RCCC's ability to fulfill its purpose.
- **Capacity.** As plans are created to identify strategies for the next five years, a discussion about organizational capacity should also be included. Capacity includes staff and Commission support as well as funding.

By developing a strategic plan that positions the RCCC to fulfill these various functions, the Commission will be able to support the citizens of Richland County to preserve and celebrate its natural, historic and cultural heritage.

APPENDIX A

RCCC Conservation Properties							
Property Name	TMS#	Acres	Location	CC Dist.	Potential Use	Needs	
Recreation Properties							
Longtown	R17500-03-67	241	west of Longtown Rd, north of Clemson Rd.	2, 7	Greenway with connection to Longleaf Middle & Sandlapper Elem.	concept/master plan	
Mill Creek Upper Tract	R21200-01-01	769	west of Old Bluff Rd; Mill Creek Club Rd. access	10	Nature park	master plan; land mgr.	
Mill Creek Lower Tract	R21100-01-01	1786	west of Old Bluff Rd; Mill Creek Club Rd. access	10	Nature park	master plan; land mgr.	
Cabin Branch tracts, McGregor	R24600-01-63 et al	677	east of Lower Richland Blvd; north & south of Air Base Rd.	10, 11	Eco- and agri-culture tourism	master plan; land mgr.	
Pinewood Lake Park	R19011-02-10	44	Old Garners Ferry Rd.	11	community destination	land mgr.	
Broad River, Columbia Rowing	R07415-01-01	30	w. side of Broad River, immediately s. of 1-20	4	walking trails, river access	master plan	
Zorba's	R16907-03-05, 08	2.7	2628 Decker Blvd.	8	pocket park	concept plan	
Natural Areas							
Westwood Arboretum	R09206-08-11	3	access from Jackson Ave or Hilltop Place	4	neighborhood nature preserve	should be city-owned	
Blue Ridge Terrace	R09411-05-71	3	east of Blue Ridge Terrace	7	neighborhood green space	none	
Rice Creek parcels	R20300-02-34, 40	10	east of Rice Creek Farms Rd.	8	connection to future nature park; wetlands - leave natural	acquisition of Kaiser property	

ATTACHMENT B

Proposed Commission Roles & Responsibilities Agreement

Basic Roles and Responsibilities of the Richland County Conservation Commission

(Adapted from Board Source)

1. Ensure the Commission fulfills its purpose as outlined in Ordinance No. 054-98 HR.
2. Support and advise Richland County Council and the staff of the Conservation Division of Richland County in all matters relating to the purpose of the Commission.
3. Meet attendance requirements as written in the ordinance: "A member of the Commission who shall be absent for 50% or more of the meetings of the Commission during any 24-month period shall be deemed to have forfeited their membership and shall be removed without further action by the Commission or the County Council."
4. Fulfill duty of care by acting in a prudent manner when making a decision, conduct due diligence, and act in good faith.
5. Ensure effective planning.
6. Advise Richland County Council on expenditures from the Richland County Conservation Commission Fund and management of properties held by the Commission on behalf of Richland County.
7. Determine programs and services and monitor impact.
8. Enhance the organization's standing with the members of Richland County Council and the citizens of Richland County.
9. Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability.
10. Orient new Commission members and assess Commission performance.

As a member of the Richland County Conservation Commission, I agree to fulfill these responsibilities to the best of my ability.

Signature

Date

ATTACHMENT C



Updated Strategic Plan

November 2022

Goal #1: To implement a County-owned Conservation property and facility management program, promote and encourage conservation practices, and manage the Community Conservation grants program.

Outcomes:

1. Future conservation land decisions by County Council and RCCC follow land management system stipulations.
2. Land management is consistent across the county.
3. Land management roles & responsibilities are clearly defined.
4. Funds allocated for land management are used effectively.

Responsible Party: Natural Resources Committee

Strategy A: Develop and adopt a formal conservation and public use land management program that includes records management, inventory development, risk management and security, and property management.

Objectives:

1. Establish an inventory and classification of all property.
2. County administration and RCCC staff maintain all property records.
3. Send annual updates of property records to GIS Department and appropriate regional/state conservation property inventories.
4. Implement security measures at each property.
5. Define roles & responsibilities for land management.

Strategy B: Articulate a vision for each County-owned conservation land by developing and adopting an individual property plan utilizing sustainability, promotion of compatible uses, and revenue generation (when appropriate) and that ensures the ecological health of the property.

Objectives: *Individual plans created for each property that includes:*

1. Protection of the ecological health of land.
2. Utilization of sustainable management techniques along with compatible public use.
3. Determination of revenue and cost estimates for maintenance and operation including needed staff.
4. Solicitation of input from nearby property owners and other stakeholders as necessary.

Strategy C: Expand RCCC's capacity to implement a land management program (funding, staff, monitoring).

Objectives:

1. Secure sufficient staffing to support additional land management responsibilities and programming over the next five years.
2. Obtain additional funding to support land management initiatives.

**Strategy D: Increase conservation lands held by RCCC.
Responsible Party: Natural Resources Committee**

Objectives:

1. Increase communication with County Council and County property owners about benefits of conservation easements.
2. Increase awareness about the benefits of conservation easements.
3. Implement Conservation Easement Strategic Plan.
4. Expand mitigation bank opportunities and income potential.
5. To generate income from timber harvest as recommended in the Forestry Stewardship Plan.

Goal #2: To promote the development and preservation of accurate historical resources.

Outcomes:

1. Preservation activities in unincorporated areas of the county are increased.
2. Additional individuals and organizations express interest in preservation of historical resources throughout the county.

Responsible Party: Historic Committee

Strategy A: Create and implement a plan to focus and prioritize preservation and education efforts throughout the county.

Objectives:

1. Clarify RCCC's role and reach consensus on future efforts relating to historic preservation.
2. Develop additional partnerships with professional historians, historic groups, and local community groups.
3. Staff will analyze new federal tax law changes focusing on their implications for historic restoration.
4. The Historic Resources Guide's recommendations are assessed in concert with other cultural and historical organizations to recommend further action.
5. Explore funding opportunities to expand historical preservation efforts.
6. Develop cooperative relationships with community-based organizations whose purposes are dedicated to the type of work the commission was created to support.
7. Identify, develop, and advocate for historic preservation policies and regulations established by the federal government, the State of SC, and local governments.

Strategy B: Increase education and preservation of historical and cultural resources.

Objectives:

1. Provide funding for organizations to develop programs.
2. Provide funding for organizations to provide programs.
3. Create visual displays describing accurate information about how structures, events, etc. fit into the county's history.
4. Increase the number of grants, markers, Bailey Bill publicity and heritage tourism promotion efforts.
5. Update the RCCC Cultural Heritage Resource Inventory and Directory website.
<http://historicrichlandcountysc.com/>

Strategy C: Encourage ongoing research to document the history of Richland County with a focus on diverse communities, laborers, small farmers and other overlooked and under-researched groups.

Objectives:

1. Increase grant funding that addresses historical research focusing on under-researched communities.
2. Encourage research to identify themes of history within the county.
3. Ensure historical preservation and research projects are inclusive and accurate for all populations.
4. Share results of RCCC's grant funded research countywide.

Goal #3: To communicate the mission and activities of RCCC.

Outcomes:

1. Increased community awareness of RCCC within Richland County.
2. Commission members report being fully informed about all RCCC planning efforts.
3. Commission members report increased engagement of County Council to support conservation efforts.

4. RCCC staff actively participate in county administrative planning and development.

Strategy A: Communicate the mission and activities of RCCC with the public using social media, e-newsletters and presentations to outside groups.

Responsible party: RCCC & Staff

Objectives:

1. Monitor the use of social media, updates to website, news releases, number of public presentations and numbers of grant applications.
2. Expand utilization of social media.
3. Maximize utilization of RCCC's existing website within county parameters.
4. Increase the number of public presentations/ceremonies about RCCC and its activities.
5. Increase the number of new applicants for grant funding.

Strategy B: Utilize proactive two-way communication methods between staff and commission members.

Responsible party: RCCC & Staff

Objectives:

1. Staff assure provision of up-to-date information to Commission members on a regular basis.
2. Commission members fulfill Duty of Care responsibilities through preparation and review of all communication provided by email.
3. Commission members and staff participate in informed discussion based on information provided as well as individual commission member's areas of expertise and experience.
4. Commission members inform staff of discussions with, and information provided by, Council.

Strategy C: Advocate with County Council and county administration about RCCC mission and activities.

Responsible party: Executive Committee & Staff.

Objectives:

1. Increase one-on-one communication with County Council members by Commission members.
2. Distribute summaries of Commission initiated topics to support RCCC members as they update Council members.
3. Increase information shared with County Council on activities of RCCC.
4. Increase information shared with County Council liaison on activities of RCCC.
5. Increase information shared with County Administration on activities of RCCC.
6. Receive regular briefings from County Director of Planning and Development Services on issues relevant to commission.
7. Increase council presentations on commission projects by commissioners, including the Annual Work Plan.

Goal #4: To implement the Lower Richland Tourism Plan.

Outcomes:

1. Recommendations are implemented the for nature & heritage tourism and small business development.
2. Recreational and entrepreneurial opportunities that RCCC can encourage are identified.

Responsible Party: Executive Committee & Staff

Strategy A: Ensure sufficient capacity to implement the plan.

Objectives:

1. Individuals with expertise in tourism, conservation and small business development recruited to serve on LRTP Steering Committee.
2. Funding and staffing needs identified.
3. Obtain funding to implement prioritized recommendations.

Strategy B: Increase engagement of stakeholders (i.e. local community and business leaders, elected officials, county government, education etc.) in implementation of the Plan over the next five years.

Objectives:

1. Increase the number of individuals from Lower Richland involved in implementation of recommendations.
2. Increase the number of initiatives led by local stakeholders.

Goal #5: To strengthen the capacity of the RCCC to support long term viability and achievement of the mission.

Outcomes:

1. Commission vacancies are filled quickly.
2. Additional funding is secured for RCCC initiatives.
3. Additional staffing is secured as needed.

Responsible Party: Executive Committee & Staff

Strategy A: Develop a process to strengthen the capacity and leadership of Commission.

Objectives:

1. Adopt and annually execute commission member responsibility agreement.

2. Fulfill Commission member attendance requirements as outlined in the ordinance.
3. Develop and approve officer and committee chair job descriptions.
4. Provide informational opportunities at meetings for commissioners to learn rules, roles, and responsibilities.
5. Identify methods to work with County Council on recommendations for new appointments.

Strategy B: Increase staff to implement RCCC initiatives.

Objectives:

1. Develop new staff job descriptions.
2. Hire and orient new staff as needs are identified.
3. Seek partnerships with higher education and non-profit institutions to create opportunities for intern/student involvement.