What is GVL2040?

The Voices Behind GVL2040

A steering committee of 42 individuals (chosen from 226 applicants) will officially represent the citizens of Greenville and work closely with the City’s planning staff and consultants to guide GVL2040.

From time to time, steering committee members will organize small group conversations with neighbors, peers, and colleagues to learn what people value and how they make choices.

All Greenville residents are invited to participate in surveys through GVL2040.com to learn about key findings and provide insights on what matters most to Greenville and how the community should respond to change.

Each phase of GVL2040 will feature an open house where the public can engage with steering committee members and provide critical input on the direction and content of the project.

Timeline

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WHAT WE BELIEVE

Values and Priorities

WHAT IS HAPPENING

Relevant Trends and Conditions

WHAT MIGHT CHANGE

Growth and Change Scenarios

WHAT WE CHOOSE

Benefits, Costs, and Trade-offs

HOW WE WILL MAKE DECISIONS

Draft Plan and Decision-Making Framework

CONFIRMATION OF OUR VISION

Finalization for Adoption and Implementation

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What is a good comprehensive plan?

Any jurisdiction in South Carolina that wishes to enact and enforce zoning regulations must implement a planning process that conforms with the state’s Comprehensive Planning Act (SC Code Title 6, Chapter 29). Part of the planning process is the development and periodic updating of a comprehensive plan that describes the community’s vision for the future. GVL2040 will serve this purpose for Greenville.

While state law provides general guidance on the content of a comprehensive plan, communities have considerable discretion in deciding what they want from their plan. Some plans sit on a shelf most of the time and are rarely consulted for anything other than regulatory purposes. The best comprehensive plans go a step further and become documents that actively shape how a community thinks about the choices it makes on a day-to-day basis.

How does a good plan become reality?

A comprehensive plan’s vision— as expressed by core values, priorities, preferred outcomes, and recommended strategies—becomes a reality only when a community is willing to make the choices that will bring it to fruition. How the community spends money, shapes regulations and policies, and decides “what goes where” should all be consistent with the comprehensive plan.

What are the hallmarks of a really good comprehensive plan?

- It gets the big things right
  - A good plan identifies a community’s utmost priorities and invests considerable effort into getting them right the first time—thus avoiding the time and expense needed to correct a big mistake.

- It plans for what is known and knowable
  - A good plan creates clarity around trends and issues that are measurable, allowing a community to make well-informed choices that are likely to achieve desired outcomes.

- It provides a decision-making framework for the unknown
  - A good plan recognizes that the unforeseen happens everyday and provides a decision-making framework (tied to core values) for circumstances that cannot be predicted.

If the City Council and other community leaders are truly willing to make decisions consistent with the comprehensive plan, it will be reflected in the following:

- **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)**
  - The CIP involves the annual allocation of resources to pay for improvements to City facilities, equipment, and infrastructure. The comprehensive plan provides significant direction for the CIP.

- **LAND USE AND DESIGN REGULATIONS**
  - The comprehensive plan is the legal basis for the zoning code, which determines land use, density, and other characteristics of the built environment. After the plan is adopted, the code is updated to reflect the plan.

- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY**
  - Actions to promote economic activity of specific types and in specific places—to create jobs, build the tax base, or provide desired services—can be molded to reflect goals, trends, and conditions described in the plan.

- **HOUSING POLICY**
  - Goals related to housing can be realized through changes to the zoning code as well as the allocation of funding to encourage specific types of housing or housing in specific locations.

- **TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**
  - The comprehensive plan influences how federal, state, and local transportation and infrastructure dollars are allocated to improve conditions, boost capacity, or change how infrastructure is used.

- **PARKS AND RECREATION**
  - The CIP, general fund, and zoning code can all be used to support investment in the expansion of parks and recreational facilities to meet quality of life goals expressed by the plan.

- **SMALL AREA PLANS**
  - The comprehensive plan cannot provide detailed direction for what should happen on every block. But subsequent plans for specific neighborhoods and corridors can apply the overall goals of the comprehensive plan at a more granular level.

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What are Greenville’s ‘Big Things’?
And what are the values that should shape how we make decisions?

Our Emerging Priorities, or ‘Big Things’
Based on responses to online surveys, feedback provided during previous open houses, and discussions with the GVL2040 steering committee and other stakeholders, three issues have emerged as top priorities that deserve particular attention in the new comprehensive plan.
All three overlap with one another and can support a wide range of other ambitions, such as sustaining a high quality of life.

Our Emerging Values-Based Decision-Making Framework
These proposed core values and planning principles are still a work in progress but have emerged from several rounds of input and testing by the GVL2040 steering committee and feedback received at the August and November 2019 open houses. Together, the values and principles will form the foundation of GVL2040’s decision-making framework.

Core Values
Our core values are deeply-held, widely-shared beliefs that serve as building blocks for our vision of the future. They reflect what we are willing to defend and fight for.

being an Enterprising Community
being a Resourceful Community
being an Inclusive Community
being a Courageous Community

Planning Principles
Our planning principles are a basis for making decisions about our community that align with our values, our vision for the future, and the strengths that we’re building from.

Listen to historically absent voices
Who else needs to be at the table for us to make an inclusive and well-rounded decision? Who needs ownership in this decision for the community to deem it well-considered?

Do no harm to our assets without committed mitigation
Does the proposal in front of us put at risk any of the assets and qualities that have helped our community prosper? If it does, how can those risks be mitigated?

Apply the ‘Triple Bottom Line’
Does this make sense for our community financially, socially, and environmentally? If it doesn’t, how can we achieve as much balance as possible between the three?

Set a standard we can be proud of decades from now
Does this uphold our community’s high standards? Would we be proud to be associated with this in the future? Does it reflect the level of leadership and standard-setting that our community strives for?
Planning for what is known

What do we know about our region and what is likely to happen?

Over the past two decades, Greenville-Spartanburg has been one of America’s fastest growing metropolitan areas. The region’s Long Range Transportation Plan and Greenville County’s new comprehensive plan both expect this to continue—and both project that Greenville County will have approximately 200,000 more people in 2040 than it does today. This means that the City of Greenville is very likely to continue growing as it absorbs some portion of the County’s new residents.

What do we know about issues related to our emerging priorities?

All three of GVL2040’s emerging priorities have been influenced by regional population growth, and by Greenville’s status as the county’s biggest employment center. The second GVL2040 open house in November presented detailed findings related to each of the emerging priorities.

Getting from home to work in less than 20 minutes remains the norm – 66% of Greenville residents did so in 2017 compared to 67% in 2010. But traffic counts in many parts of the city have risen considerably since 2011, in part due to significant growth in the number of people commuting into Greenville from all across the region and the already high and growing reliance on automobiles.

While expanded capacity and engineering efficiencies have allowed the region’s road systems to absorb growth for years, chokepoints in the system are expected to multiply by 2040 as population and job growth continues space.

Housing prices—and inequality—are rising

Housing prices have been rising—which reflects growing demand and high levels of confidence. Median home values have risen 25% faster than inflation since 2010, and median rents have risen 15% faster than inflation.

Levels of housing affordability have remained largely steady because incomes have risen along with prices and rents.

But for those with low or stagnant incomes, housing opportunities are shrinking. Homebuying options for households making $60,000 or less have been reduced, and there aren’t enough rentals affordable to households making $20,000 or less.

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How should Greenville change between 2020 and 2040?

The outcomes we want to achieve on priority issues...

Work by the GVL2040 steering committee in December, along with feedback from the public open house in November at East North Street Academy, identified specific outcomes to achieve by 2040 for each of the three emerging priorities. These prioritized outcomes, along with preferences related to how outcomes should be achieved, provide important direction for the GVL2040 planning process. Importantly, the outcomes that have been prioritized—with the exception of maintaining water quality—reflect a desire to achieve conditions by 2040 that would be regarded as improvements or progress compared to 2020.

What might change look like – and what types of change do we prefer?

Change will happen between now and 2040 - that is a certainty. But how should Greenville change? And to what extent will different paths to 2040 produce outcomes that are most important to Greenville residents – especially in relationship to the ‘big things’?

Based on preferred priorities, values, and outcomes expressed during the GVL2040 process, and what is known about recent trends and conditions, three scenarios have been developed to depict alternative paths for getting to 2040. The purpose of these scenarios, as presented in detail at this open house, is to understand what people like and don’t like about each one so that a preferred path can be used as the basis for specific recommendations in the comprehensive plan.

SCENARIO #1
Stay the course, with small adjustments

With Greenville County expected to grow by 220,000 residents over the next 20 years, this scenario demonstrates what could happen if development in the City of Greenville continues to follow current zoning codes and building patterns, and if small policy changes are made in relation to the ‘big things.’

SCENARIO #2
Steer growth to corridors and nodes

This scenario demonstrates what could happen if an effort is made to increase the density of development in select areas in order to absorb growth and contribute to the achievement of outcomes related to the ‘big things.’

SCENARIO #3
Steer growth to corridors and nodes while also preserving land

This scenario demonstrates what could happen if Scenario #2 were to be supplemented by an effort to conserve a portion of the city’s remaining vacant land and to incorporate more green space within nodal developments.

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The outcomes we want to achieve on priority issues...

- Affordable Housing Opportunities
  - There are more affordable housing options in downtown Greenville
  - Workers that earn close to the minimum wage can afford decent housing options
  - It is possible for working class households and families to own a home in Greenville

- Transportation and Congestion
  - Bus service accommodates my schedule and I use it more often
  - Congestion related to everyday errands is reduced
  - Transportation investments should strive to balance access and mobility with optimal land use and quality urban design
  - Transportation investments should strive to optimize the appeal and utility of alternative transportation

- Green Space and the Environment
  - The waterways in the city are fresh and the supply of drinking water remains safe and reliable
  - Greenville’s carbon footprint is reduced
  - Offsets should be required for environmental impacts
  - As a ‘Precautionary Principle’, projects must either provide proof of no environmental harm or an explanation of how potential harms will be mitigated
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  - Affordability should be mixed or integrated into typical neighborhoods
  - Affordable housing should be located near transit opportunities

PRINCIPLES TO SHAPE HOW WE ACHIEVE THESE OUTCOMES

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QUALITY OF LIFE

OUTCOMES TO ACHIEVE BY 2040

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