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## **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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In 1999 the Town of Awendaw adopted its first comprehensive plan in conjunction with Charleston County. As mandated by South Carolina law that plan was to be updated in five years. In January of 2004 Town Council directed staff and the Planning Commission to begin that update. This plan evaluates current conditions, trends and issues related to the town's physical and social fabric, and the economic development of the community. By defining goals, policies and implementation strategies, this comprehensive plan will guide public officials in decision-making that is directed towards a vision for the town's future.

The planning process for the Town has evolved since the development of the initial comprehensive plan. In 1999 all planning services for the Town were handled by Charleston County Planning Department. The Town did not have its own staff, boards or commissions. In 2001 the Town appointed its own Board of Zoning Appeals and Planning Commission and hired its own planning staff. Now all issues dealing with the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance are directed by the Awendaw Planning Department.

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## **ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN**

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South Carolina law mandates that comprehensive plans address seven basic topics or elements, with an analysis of existing conditions; inventories, data, facts and evaluations.

### **POPULATION**

The population element provides a clear picture of who has lived in Awendaw and an idea of who will be living in Awendaw in the next ten years. Population characteristics such as the make up of households, age and gender distribution, racial composition, educational attainment, and income levels of residents are analyzed.

### **HOUSING**

The housing element includes an inventory of existing housing units; types of housing, building permit activity and future estimations, housing occupancy and vacancy rates, and the utilization and condition of housing in Awendaw. It evaluates the diversity of housing existing and proposed for construction in the Town. It also provides an analysis of housing costs relative to income levels identified in the population element, and whether existing housing conditions are still in need of improvement.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

In the Economic element of the comprehensive plan, current trends in Awendaw's economic base are evaluated to define policies and programs that will ensure a healthy



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and stable economic climate in the Town's future. It provides an analysis of the community's wealth and labor force, in addition to employment opportunities. Discussion about potential impacts of future economic development on the Town's infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, and viability of forestry and agricultural operations is included in this element.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The Natural Resource element presents an overview of current conditions and potential issues facing the Town's water resources, air quality, wildlife habitats, and other environmental features. It discusses the value of these resources and techniques available for managing them for the benefit of the Town's ecosystem and economic base. Techniques included in this discussion range from appropriate conservation tools to promotion of compatible land use patterns.

### **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

The cultural resources element provides an overview of resources that Town residents use for recreational, educational, and spiritual purposes. This element looks at historical and natural resources that along with scenic resources give Awendaw its unique character. Specifically it provides an assessment of the historic buildings and structures, archaeological sites, unique natural or scenic resources, educational, religious, and social institutions that provide cultural benefits to the community and contribute to the Town's quality of life. Current efforts to preserve these resources are discussed within this element.

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

This element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses those buildings, land, and services that are provided to the public, Awendaw residents and businesses. Community facilities not only include buildings and services such as fire stations or health departments, but also include infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer systems, and parks. These facilities and services are intended to protect the health and safety, and contribute to the overall welfare, of Awendaw citizens. Information provided in this element has been evaluated to identify facilities and programs that are important to the community's future endurance. It also proposes policies to ensure and enhance provision of all community facilities and services in the future.

### **LAND USE**

The Land Use element of this Plan provides an overview of the Town's existing land use patterns and trends, while discussing planning concepts that can be used to manage land use in the future. It provides a set of guidelines for the Planning Commission and elected officials to follow in making decisions about private development proposals and the location of public facilities. The future land use map identifies where residential and non-residential development should occur to address issues discussed in other elements



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of the plan. It proposes strategies the Town can apply to ensure a healthy balance of land uses while maintaining the Town's existing character.

## **LEGAL AUTHORITY OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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In 1994, the South Carolina General Assembly passed the *South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act (SC Code Sections 6-29-310 through 6-20-1200)*. Prior to this Act, the General Assembly had granted authority to create and maintain a comprehensive planning process through a series of legislative acts. Zoning authority was first granted to municipalities in SC in 1924 (*Title 5, Chapter 23*). The General Assembly extended zoning powers to counties eighteen years later in 1942 (*Title 4, Chapter 27*). Subsequently, local governments relied most heavily on additional enabling legislation included in a 1967 Act of the General Assembly codified in *Title 6, Chapter 7*.

In adopting the Planning Act of 1994, the General Assembly consolidated existing planning legislation into one location within the SC Code. The Act also updated older provisions with current practices and new methods, tools, and procedures for local government planning (MASC 1994). It repealed all prior statutes with planning enabling legislation, effective May 3, 1999. Consequently, all planning programs, zoning ordinances, and other related land development ordinances must be brought into conformance with the Planning Act of 1994 in order to retain validity.

The South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 charges the Awendaw Planning Commission with the responsibility of developing and implementing a continuing planning program for the physical, social, and economic growth, development and redevelopment of areas within its jurisdiction. The Planning Commission is required to establish and maintain a planning process that includes systematic preparation, evaluation, and amendments of a Comprehensive Plan to promote the public health, safety, morals, convenience, prosperity, general welfare, efficiency and economy of its jurisdiction.

## **IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN**

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In order for the goals and policies in the Awendaw Comprehensive Plan Update to be realized, adoption of the plan by Town Council should be followed by a series of implementation actions. These actions involve amending ordinances, establishing new programs and revising routine Town processes, as appropriate, to achieve consistency with the goals and policies in the plan. Implementation strategies and timeframes, included with the goals and policies for each of the elements, indicate actions that may be required to implement the plan.

The 1994 Planning Act designed the comprehensive plan to be the legal basis for land use regulations. Therefore, foremost among these implementation actions should be



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initiation of a process to review and amend various sections of the Town Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. The Land Use element and future Land Use

Map identify and discuss land use categories, preferred land uses, densities of development, and development design patterns that will assist in implementing the plan's goals and policies. Existing zoning district regulations are not necessarily consistent with these categories and should be revised if the plan's goals are to be achieved. Achieving other goals and policies may require the Town to review and revise procedures used to approve land development applications or to plan provision of needed community facilities.

Goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan should be used as a basis for determining the results of implementation strategies. Zoning Ordinance and/or Subdivision Regulation amendments should implement the goals and policies of various elements. Consequently, this plan is intended to serve as a guide for Awendaw officials in determining these regulations and procedures in the future.

Council's adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update does not imply that the goals and policies or implementation strategies of the plan cannot be altered in the future. In fact, the 1994 Act requires that the Planning Commission review the Comprehensive Plan at least every five years, and update the plan when appropriate or at least every ten years. Aside from these mandated review periods, the Town has the ability to review and amend the plan at any time, provided that a public process is established and applied in adopting these amendments. Each new start of the planning process has the advantage of building upon plans created through previous processes. Just as this plan has reconsidered and built upon goals and strategies within the original 1999 Comprehensive Plan and other existing planning documents, future plans will be able to build upon goals and strategies identified in this Plan Update as a guide.

As previously stated, all planning programs, zoning ordinances, and other related land development ordinances must be brought into conformance with the Planning Act of 1994 in order to retain validity. Therefore, the existing 1999 Awendaw Comprehensive Plan is hereby replaced by adoption of the Awendaw Comprehensive Plan Update in 2004.