



## Green Infrastructure Plan for Darlington County, SC

### Project Overview and Frequently Asked Questions

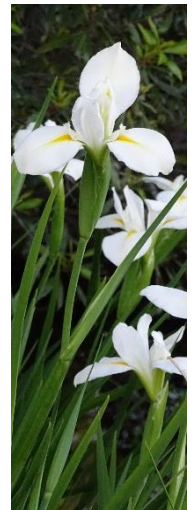
In fall 2015, Darlington County began a project to evaluate and map its highest quality natural resources, such as forests, wetlands, rivers and agricultural soils. These resources are the county's *green infrastructure* because they support the county's growth, economy and lifestyles. Once identified, the county will look for opportunities to protect or restore these natural resources. The project is funded by a grant from the South Carolina Forestry Commission.

See the *Frequently Asked Questions* below to learn more about the planning process.

**What is Green Infrastructure?** Green Infrastructure refers to all the natural assets that help support our community. It includes our trees and forests, waterways, wetlands, soils and natural areas, such as parks and trails. Although we manage our grey infrastructure – roads, bridges, power lines or pipelines – we sometimes forget that we *also* need to manage our 'green infrastructure' too. Trees need to be planted, agriculture and forestry need to be protected, and water needs to be kept clean and plentiful.

**Why do we need to map and manage Green Infrastructure?** Green Infrastructure includes intact forests, tree canopy, wetlands, springs, parks and rivers, or agricultural soils that provide clean water, air quality, wildlife habitat and food. These natural assets create healthful communities and sustain the local economy. However, if we don't know where our green infrastructure is located, we can lose it over time. Communities can reap many benefits from their natural assets if they identify, rank and map them as part of the communities' "infrastructure." Mapping helps determine where we should grow and develop too.

**Why a Green Infrastructure Plan now?** Communities can use their green infrastructure plans for many purposes, such as revitalizing their economy, protecting current and future water supplies, protecting wildlife and biodiversity, providing new outdoor recreation options, informing transportation, comprehensive plans or protecting cultural resources. A computer model has been created to help communities identify many of these resources and thanks to a prior project initiated by the South Carolina Forestry Commission to create a state Green Infrastructure Model, there is extensive guidance on how to do this work.



**Why is Darlington County doing this work?** For many reasons! Following are just a few of them:

#### Economy:

- ✓ Areas with more green spaces are able to better attract top companies and well paid jobs.
- ✓ Counties can save funds in the long run by making better, smarter investments in water, trees, trails, agriculture and parks.
- ✓ Areas near to green spaces have higher property values and sell faster.

#### Food Supply:

- ✓ Pollinators, which we all rely on for food and natural beauty, also need habitat to allow them to do their work! They sustain our flowers, crops and many other plants.



### History:

- ✓ Mapping our landscapes also ensures the settings for our historic and cultural resources such as plantations, archaeological sites, or favorite views are recognized and considered as we grow and develop.

### Safety:

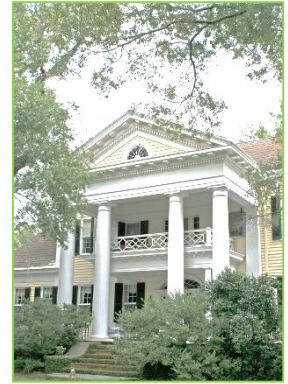
- ✓ Hazards, such as flooding, can be abated or avoided with better planning, thereby saving lives and lessening risks and costs.
- ✓ Greener communities are safer communities; less crime occurs in green areas than areas without green spaces.

### Health:

- ✓ The greener the community, the better the air quality and the healthier the people.
- ✓ A connected landscape is healthier, more diverse and more resilient.

### Wildlife and Environment:

- ✓ When landscapes are connected, wildlife and birds can move across the landscape, ensuring their ability to obtain food, find shelter, and maintain a diverse gene pool for healthy populations. People also need a connected landscape to allow for recreation, adventure and alternate transportation. We can look for ways to maintain existing connections and make new ones too!



**How will the plan be created?** An advisory stakeholder group made up of county agencies and others are reviewing the maps to find the best assets and set priorities. Staff from the nonprofit firm, the Green Infrastructure Center are helping the county create the maps. For more background on green infrastructure planning visit [www.gicinc.org](http://www.gicinc.org)

**How are maps made?** Using the new state model plus local data and satellite imagery, the project will determine the extent of Darlington County's forests, water, soils and many other features that make up the local environment. Once a map is made, it is evaluated to determine if it is correct and if it shows the most important features. Maps can show what is unique, important, or needs more attention. For example, we can also see areas where trees are lacking, or where flooding could be a problem.

**What will implementation of the plan look like?** It's too soon to tell, but other similar communities have reduced stormwater runoff and flooding problems, created green buffers and trail connections, identified areas for gardens, determined areas where agriculture and forestry are best suited and obtained grant funds to support projects.

**Will this plan restrict my property rights?** This plan is not intended to identify land to restrict and it is not a land acquisition project. Just like the Darlington County Comprehensive Plan, this plan will look at the entire county. Any projects that result, will still have to follow all the usual procedures for any new development or changes to public property. This plan may inform plans for future development.

**How can the public contribute?** The county held several meetings in the fall of 2015 to solicit input and once the maps are ready for review, opportunities to comment will be scheduled – likely in the summer of 2016. In addition, citizens can contact Julie Ritz in the Darlington County Planning Department to share ideas or ask questions. Contact Ms. Ritz at 843-398-4610.