

Charleston County News Release

MEDIA CONTACT

Jennie Davis, Charleston County Public Information Officer

Phone: 843.958.4012

Email: jdavis@charlestoncounty.org

Release Number: 2640

Date: December 9, 2005

Greenbelt Advisory Board Approves Concept Map, Urban/Rural Definition and Statement of Intent for Allocation of Funds

Deliberation begins on how funds will be divided, meetings on Jan. 10 and 24.

At their Dec. 6 meeting, Charleston County's Greenbelt Advisory Board (GAB) made initial steps in developing the framework for the Comprehensive Greenbelt Plan.

The Greenbelt Advisory Board was created by Charleston County Council to make recommendations on Transportation ("half-cent") Sales Tax expenditures for greenbelt projects. For the 2006 fiscal year, \$5.9 million has been budgeted for greenbelts.

Steps taken at the Dec. 6 meeting include approving a Conceptual Greenbelts Vision Map, adopting a definition of Urban and Rural Areas, and adopting a Statement of Intent for Allocation of Funds to the Urban and Rural Areas.

Greenways Incorporated, the consultant hired to develop the Comprehensive Greenbelts Plan, introduced a Conceptual Greenbelts Vision Map that depicts the greenspace vision of "*Cities and villages surrounded by green*". Illustrated on the map are the proposed public trails, current greenspace, proposed riparian buffers, rural landscapes, cities, and villages.

The map, which received initial approval by the GAB members, will be revised to include more detailed recommendations as the Comprehensive Greenbelts Plan progresses to completion.

GAB members also defined urban and rural areas in relation to the Greenbelts Project by combining the County of Charleston Comprehensive Plan's definition of "urban" and "suburban" into the GAB's definition of "urban," and combining the Comprehensive Plan's definition of "rural" and "agriculture" into the definition of "rural."

To be consistent with the County of Charleston's Comprehensive Plan, all areas within the GAB-defined urban/rural areas fall within the County's Urban/Suburban/Rural Areas Boundary.

To begin development of recommendations for expenditure of greenbelt funds from the Transportation Sales Tax, the GAB members adopted a "Statement of Intent for Allocation of Sales Tax Proceeds for Greenbelts for Urban and Rural Areas of Charleston County, SC."

According to the statement of intent, allocation of Transportation Sales Tax proceeds for the purpose of greenspace conservation and related minor improvements shall be based, in part, on a formula to be defined by the GAB at a later date, which divides the proceeds between urban and rural areas of the County.

All Transportation Sales Tax funding distributed to urban and rural areas of the County shall be based on criteria, established by the GAB, in the form of financial grants. The County will administer the grants program using a scoring system to award the grants.

Approval of the Statement of Intent included a proposed amendment stating the urban funding allocation be used for the prompt acquisition of land and/or purchase of development rights within the urban areas. The development or improvement of these sites will be funded by the municipality (town, city, etc.) in which they are located.

GAB members also begin deliberating on what percentage of funds should be divided between the urban and rural areas. Methods of allocation they considered included population, geographic size, local option sales tax base, registered voters, and the needs expressed by the public.

GAB members did not make a decision regarding the specific allocation amounts, but will continue their deliberations at the upcoming meetings scheduled for Jan. 10 and Jan. 24.

It is anticipated that the Comprehensive Greenbelts Plan, which will incorporate the maps, definitions and statement of intent, will be completed in March and available for public comment. After the public comment period, the plan will be presented to the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission and County Council for approval.

To view the maps and documents approved by the GAB, visit the Transportation Sales Tax Web site at www.smallchangeformbigchange.org.

Please call Cathy Ruff at (843) 202-7204 for more information about the upcoming meetings.