

Sustainability Update

City Council Work Session

Monday, July 11, 2022





Greenville Commitment to Sustainability

- Open Space and the Environment a priority in GVL2040 Comprehensive Plan.
- Environmental sustainability included in City Council priorities resolution.
- Sustainability has long been integral to operations and practices of city departments.
- Designation of Sustainability Coordinator in 2020 and subsequent incorporation of Sustainability into Planning & Development Services in 2022.
- Support of Swamp Rabbit Trail and mobility projects.
- Enhanced tree protection standards and launched tree-planting campaign.
- Curbside recycling programs.

Implementation Guidance



Open Space and the Environment

In addition to providing recreational opportunities, open space and parks can significantly improve air and water quality, protect wildlife habitats, create viewsheds, improve groundwater retention, and help prevent flooding. Communities that value open space and parks recognize the trade-offs necessary to ensure the acquisition and preservation of these undeveloped spaces. These trade-offs include the allowance of higher densities in areas designated for development as well as proactive land preservation efforts that must:

- Protect from development land that is currently vacant and located in neighborhoods with little to no green space
- Be co-created with input from neighborhood residents, design professionals, and the City's Parks & Recreation Department
- Integrate newly preserved open space and parks into the City's existing parks and trails network

By carrying out these recommended actions, the City of Greenville will be in a position to meet the open space goals outlined in GVL2040.

PHASE I
2021-2022

Development of a methodology to identify vacant land to preserve and a process to acquire the land or its development rights will be the first steps to pursue. Different approaches to land preservation will be needed based on whether land is within or beyond designated nodes.

Areas outside of identified nodes for future development:

Develop a detailed framework that outlines the initial criteria for prioritizing vacant land acquisition in areas outside of identified nodes. These initial criteria may include:

- **Location** - the vacant property is located in a neighborhood or district that is currently underserved by parkland
- **Availability** - the property must be for sale or property owner open to working with the City land trust or conservation easement
- **Connectivity** - the property should exhibit relatively straightforward prospects to connect to the City's existing parks, trails, and open space areas
- **Economic Viability** - the property has t the market and at a market price respective of appraised value
- **Integral** - the property is essential to the City' overall goal of trail connectivity, park expansion, or similar

Create and engage a task force made up of residents who live in neighborhoods with unequal distribution of and access to green spaces, landscape architects, and Parks & Recreation personnel.

Empower this task force to refine, but not redefine, the recommended criteria and prioritized mapping for Planning Commission and City Council review and approval.

Areas within identified nodes for future development:

As part of the land management regulatory updates that occur during Phase I, mixed-use and/or form-based codes should be established for nodes and corridors that require a minimum percentage of open space or park area for all proposed developments.

Recent Highlights

- **Unity Park** – environmental cleanup, river restoration, wetland protection, open space preservation.
- Restoration and **streambank stabilization** at five locations along Reedy River.
- **EV chargers**– 14 new chargers added to city parking facilities in 2021. Total of 35 free for the public.
- City participated in **Electric Vehicle Stakeholder Task Force** facilitated by the South Carolina Energy Office.
- **Water conservation** – working with Greenville Water to reduce water usage at city parks and fountains.
- Greenville designated as a **SolSmart community** (bronze level) for its efforts to streamline the permitting process for solar panels.



Challenges and Opportunities

- Limited federal action on climate change. Recent Supreme Court ruling in *West Virginia v. EPA* (2022) further restricted federal agencies' ability to regulate greenhouse gases. Returned authority to Congress.
- Recycling, once a revenue generator, now costs money. Fewer materials accepted. High contamination rates.
- Greenville is in a regulated energy market. Opportunities for large-scale renewable energy projects are limited.
- Trend towards corporate sustainability. Demanded by customers and shareholders resulting in increased brand value.
- Opportunities for local governments to lead on environmental sustainability and climate change.





Sustainable GVL

- Sustainability plan completed during July 2021 – June 2022.
- Shi Institute for Sustainable Communities at Furman University assisted with research, analysis, and plan development.
- Public input survey in September 2021 with 343 participants.
- Drop-in open house at Roper Mountain Science Center on September 9, 2021.
- Coordination with city departments on goals and potential projects within the plan.
- Draft plan published and available for public comment in March 2022.
- Updates and draft plan reviewed by Green Ribbon Advisory Committee, which endorsed the plan at its June 28, 2022, meeting.



Sustainable GVL

Focus Areas:



Built Environment



Climate & Energy



Air & Water



Transportation & Mobility

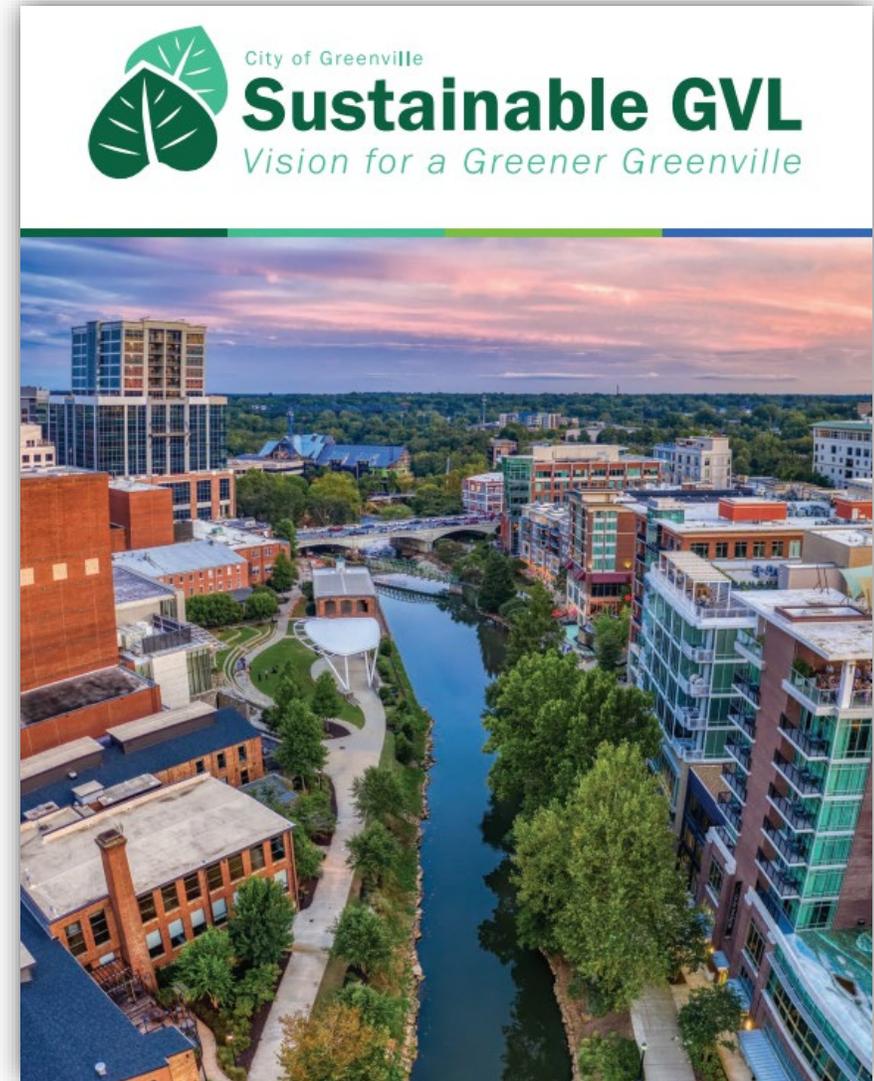


Goods & Services



Community Engagement

<https://greenvillesc.gov/SustainableGVL>



Sustainable GVL – Key Recommendations

- Public education on sustainability topics such as recycling, invasive species, home energy savings, and alternative transportation.
- Work with a consultant to prepare a detailed climate action plan.
- Develop resources to support businesses interested in becoming more sustainable.
- Add a dedicated position with expertise in energy and sustainability.
- Establish an interdepartmental working group to coordinate on sustainability projects and initiatives.
- Install solar panels at more city facilities.
- Add more electric vehicles to the city's vehicle fleet.
- Incorporate sustainability elements in the new development code.



Next Steps

- Establish an interdepartmental working group to coordinate on sustainability projects and initiatives.
- Fill vacant planner position with someone with expertise in energy/sustainability.
- Build out city sustainability website with sustainability information, educational materials, and local resources.
- Develop a year-round calendar for sustainability programming.
- Partner with sustainability organizations on educational programming, volunteer events, and community initiatives.
- Apply for grants to support energy efficiency projects.
- Consider hiring a consultant to prepare a detailed climate action plan.

Questions & Discussion

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Sustainable GVL website:

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