



Community Facilities Element

Overview

This element focuses on the activities and entities that are essential to maintaining Oconee County's health, safety, growth and quality lifestyle. These include government facilities and infrastructure, fire protection, health and emergency medical services, education, libraries, and cultural facilities. This element will also include statements of goals and policy recommendations based on the expressed wishes of the citizens of Oconee County.

In recent years, Oconee County has continued to experience rapid population growth and development, resulting in increased demands on community facilities. Governmental facilities have been expanded to provide much needed space for the Department on Health and Social Services for example. Continued renovations and maintenance of existing facilities have continued to be part of the ongoing work of the County. Several changes have occurred in the area of Emergency Management and Fire Service throughout the County, which will serve the County well in the years to come. As we move toward the future, we must continue to look for opportunities, which will improve the overall government facilities and infrastructure, fire protection, health and emergency medical services, education, libraries, and cultural facilities.

Form of Government

Oconee County is governed under the Council-Administrator form of government. Oconee County Council acts as the county's legislative body, and is composed of five members elected by voters in respective districts. The Council's responsibilities include establishing policies, setting taxation levels, and guiding the county's growth within the limits of state and federal law. To execute adopted policies, directives and legislative actions, the Council employs an Administrator, the county's chief administrative officer. The Administrator's duties include directing and coordinating activities of county agencies, preparation of budgets, supervision of expenditures, enforcement of personnel policies, and the responsibility for employment and discharge of personnel. (Home Rule Handbook for County Government, 2000 Edition, South Carolina Association of Counties).

Governmental Facilities

Table CF-1 lists governmental facilities owned or maintained by Oconee County.

Table CF-1

Governmental Office Facilities Owned or Maintained by Oconee County		
Facility	Location	Usage
Oconee County Court House	Walhalla	Courts, Offices
Pine Street Administrative Complex	Walhalla	Administrative Offices
Oconee County Economic Development	Walhalla	Office
Agricultural Building	Walhalla	Offices
Department of Social Services Building	Walhalla	Offices
Oconee County Health Department	Walhalla	Health and Environmental Offices, Clinic
The Rock Building	Walhalla	Offices
Westminster Magistrate's Office (County Maintained)	Westminster	Court, Office
Seneca Magistrate's Office (County Maintained)	Seneca	Court, Office
Public Works Facilities	Seneca	Road and Bridges
Solid Waste Facility	Seneca	Waste Management
Vehicle Maintenance Facility	Seneca	Vehicle Service and Repair
Brown Square	Walhalla	Office Space or Storage
DSS Building (previously Next Day Apparel)	Walhalla	Social Services

Source: Oconee County Planning Department

As Table CF-1 shows, most of Oconee County's governmental office facilities are county owned, with only the magistrate's offices in Westminster and Seneca leased. While the majority of all governmental offices in Oconee County have traditionally been located in the town of Walhalla, the county seat, until the late 1990's they were scattered in various buildings near the courthouse. In 1999, however, most governmental offices were relocated to the Pine Street Administrative Complex. As a result, the citizens of Oconee County are able to conduct most governmental business in one location. Soon after relocation of the county governmental offices, the Oconee County School District began planning to construct their new administrative facility across the street from the Pine Street Complex, further centralizing governmental offices.

Oconee County continues to improve the location and efficiency of government offices. Several departments have relocated to more efficient locations and buildings. The County's Road and Bridges Department, Solid Waste, and the Vehicle Maintenance Facilities are now all located on Wells Highway in the Seneca area. The County also acquired and renovated the former Next Day Apparel building on Kenneth Street in Walhalla. Widely hailed as a model of efficient use of existing space, the project cost less than three million dollars to renovate into an attractive, modern facility. The 75,000 square foot structure is currently occupied by the local office of the State Department of Social

Services, Department of Health and Human Services (approx. 39,000 sq. ft.), and the County Facilities Maintenance Department (approx. 10,000 sq. ft.), with adequate room for at least one or two more agencies in the future.



In the summer of 2001, ground was broken to construct a new courthouse facility in Walhalla. Situated adjacent to the existing structure, the new facility offers much needed space for both judicial and administrative operations. The new structure, planned in a different era than the old courthouse, reflects the requirements of dealing with life in the 21st Century. As a result, the new structure includes both well-designed passive protective measures and state-of-the-art security systems. Although completed in 2003, problematic

issues related to design and construction is still being resolved. When complete, the facility will serve the citizens of Oconee County for generations to come.

Other changes have come with the expansion and modernization of governmental facilities. Among the most notable has been the greater reliance on computers and other associated information technology. To coordinate and facilitate this upgrade, an Information Technology Department was created in 2000. Under the direction of this department, county government is using state of the art technology to become more efficient and accessible to the citizens of Oconee through improved existing facilities, as well as newly created ones. Chief among these new tools is the Internet, which allows the public not only to access information 24 hours a day, but also increasingly to conduct necessary business without leaving their homes. In addition, the county's geographical information system (GIS), begun soon after the move to Pine Street, will provide both county government and the public with information about Oconee that was never before available, allowing for better planning and operation in all aspects of county life.

Municipal government facilities are not included in Table CF-1. These are typically located within the jurisdictional limits of the various municipalities.

Libraries

Oconee County boasts a modern library system that has, since 1948, grown to include not only the main library in Walhalla, but also branches in Seneca, Westminster and Salem. In addition to governmental support, the Oconee County Friends of the Library was organized in 1986 to provide services in the areas of financial and volunteer support to supplement the libraries' resources and to stimulate community awareness, use, and involvement with the libraries. The main branch, located in Walhalla, is open seven days a week, and served 228,615 visitors during 2008. Of those, 32,941 were registered cardholders who checked out 293,999 books, CDs, DVDs, magazines, and books-on-tape. In addition, 44,556 people signed in to use the 36 public internet computer terminals at the library. It was a recent recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities *Picturing America* grant.

Oconee's libraries utilize an internet-based catalog system, enabling them to take advantage of the latest information technology. Users of the library system can log



in to the library websites to search, view, and request library materials online. Computers are available to the public for access to the Internet, and wireless technology has been made available in each of the branches, as of August 2009.



The system also operates a bookmobile service to offer materials to residents in rural areas of the county. Along with the bookmobile service, the library offers a summer reading program for youth and adults alike. The program includes creative reading activities designed for specific age groups, as well as events such as Family Movie Night for the whole family at the main library. In addition to its regular holdings, the library system

maintains a collection of area maps dating from the early 1700's, microfilm copies of local newspapers and census records, and genealogical and historical materials from the county. The main library is also a depository for public records related to the Oconee Nuclear Station.

The Oconee County Library Board has been working to update the library facilities in Seneca for a number of years. The Oconee County School District has volunteered to donate land adjacent to the newly built Blue Ridge Elementary School in Seneca. Under the proposal, increased staffing would be added to serve the new library. The Library Plan has also stressed the need for an additional county library in the Fair Play area and they are continuing to work to make that facility a reality.

Other area libraries include the Cooper Library at Clemson University, which houses over 1.5 million books, periodicals and microforms; and the Tri-County Technical College Library, which contains over 35,000 volumes.

Public Safety

The Emergency Management Agency was created in 1980 by the Oconee County Council to insure the complete and efficient utilization of all county facilities to combat disaster from enemy attack or natural disaster. In 2007, County Council consolidated the various agencies and created the Emergency Services Protection Department to coordinate Emergency Management, Rescue, Fire, and Hazmat. The mission of Emergency Management is to protect the people and resources in the county by minimizing damage, injury, and loss of life that results from any type of disaster, provide for the continuity of government, and provide damage assessment in the event of emergencies.

Fire Protection

There are currently seventeen fire districts in Oconee County, with the county providing equipment for fire protection in the unincorporated areas of the districts. Table CF-2 shows the fire stations located in Oconee County, the type of service offered, and the fire insurance classification issued by the Insurance Service Office (ISO Rating) for areas within the various districts.

Table CF-2

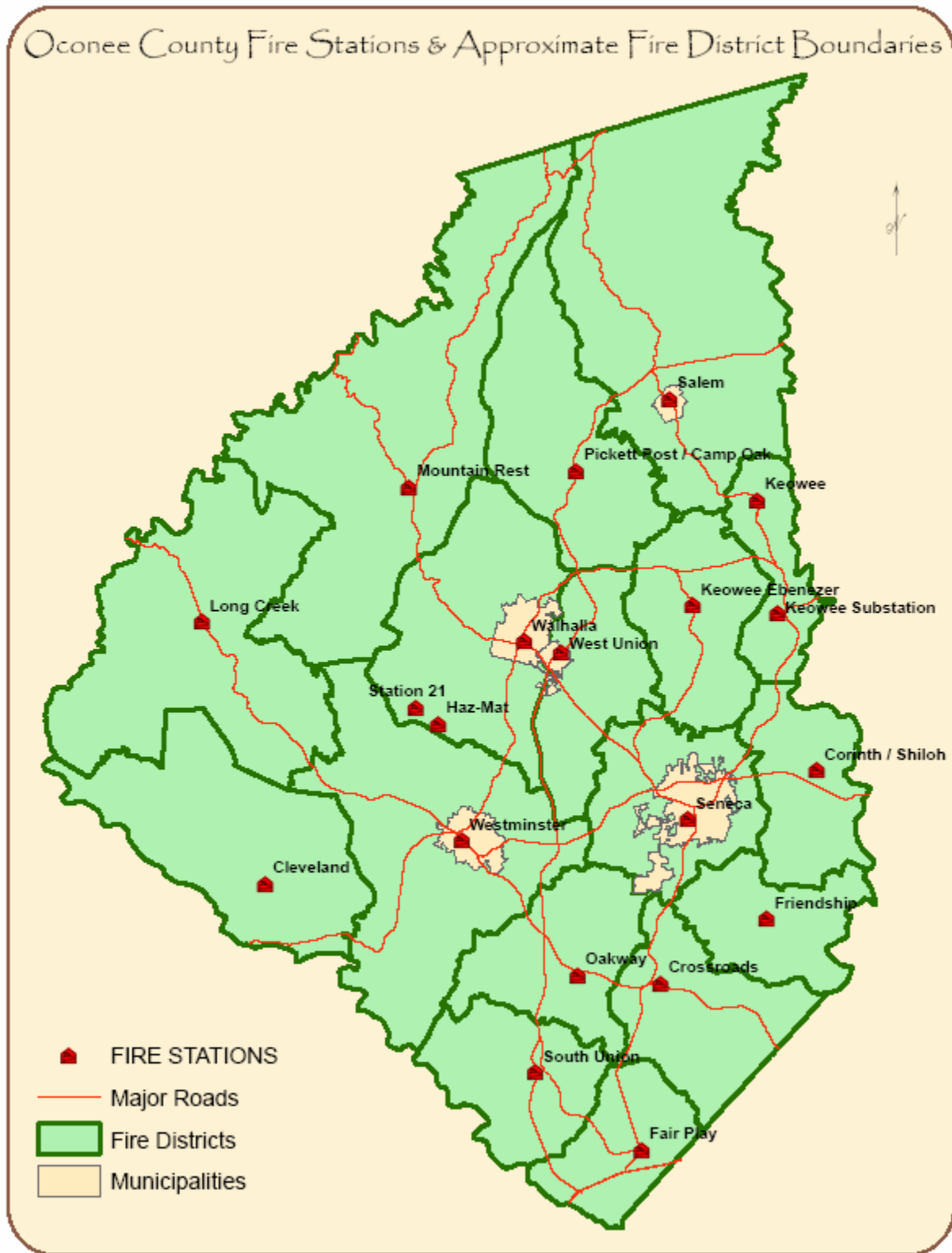
Oconee County Fire Stations				
Station Number	Location (See Map CF-1)	Type of Service (Volunteer or Full-Time)	ISO Rating (April, 2002)	
			Areas within 1000' of hydrant/not over 5 miles road travel from station	All other
1	Oakway	Volunteer	7	9
2	Salem	Volunteer	7	9
3	Corinth-Shiloh	Volunteer	7	9
4	Mt. Rest	Volunteer	7	9
5	Walhalla	Full-Time	4	9
6	Westminster	Full-Time	5	9
7	Seneca	Full-Time	3	9
8	Fair Play	Volunteer	9	6
9	Long Creek	Volunteer	9	9
10	Cleveland	Volunteer	9	9
11	Keowee-Ebenezer	Volunteer	7	9
12	Friendship	Volunteer	5	9
13	Cross Roads	Volunteer	8	9
14	Pickett Post-Camp Oak	Volunteer	7	9
15	South Union	Volunteer	7	9
16	West Union	Volunteer	5	9
17	Keowee	Full Time	4	4

Source: Oconee County Fire Marshal's Office

Table CF-2 shows that there are four full-time fire departments in Oconee County, with the personnel paid for by the various municipalities or, in the case of Keowee, by revenues collected from a special purpose district. Not shown in the chart is Station #21, which was established in 2007 as a paid county station to respond as back up to all volunteer stations on structure fires. The chart also lists the various ISO Ratings for each station, which, for Oconee County, ranges from four to nine, with the lowest found in Seneca, and the highest found in the rural areas farthest from hydrants and a fire station. Used as factors in determining the cost of fire insurance for homeowners residing in the districts, the lower ratings are better.

Figure CF-1 illustrates the approximate location of each fire station.

Figure CF-1



Source: Oconee County Planning Department

Law Enforcement

The unincorporated areas of Oconee County are under the protection of the Oconee County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff, who serves as an elected official, manages a staff of deputies and administrative personnel headquartered at the Oconee County Law Enforcement Center on South Church Street in Walhalla. Although the majority of deputies are focused on patrol duties, a number of different specialties exist within the department. Among these are investigators, narcotics officers, courthouse security, family court officer, civil processors, community services, and beginning in 2001, traffic enforcement.

Oconee County municipalities, with the exception of Salem, maintain their own police departments to provide law enforcement within their jurisdictions. The Oconee County Sheriff's Department serves the town of Salem. Table CF-3 provides a breakdown of Oconee County crime statistics for selected years.

Table CF-3

Reported Crime in Oconee County								
Agency	Year	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Breaking & Entering	Larceny	Motor Vehicle Theft
Oconee Sheriff's Office	2001	0	12	7	191	278	572	78
	2002	4	22	13	211	344	700	102
	2005	1	24	7	209	483	877	114
	2006	3	24	10	216	321	729	83
	2007		27	16	253	388	752	105
Seneca Police	2001	1	3	7	43	64	494	22
	2002	0	3	6	55	57	381	21
	2005	0	5	14	79	96	416	34
	2006	0	6	13	77	118	325	27
	2007	0	4	8	59	69	444	29
Walhalla Police	2001	0	1	0	69	18	97	14
	2002	1	0	0	30	22	72	3
	2005	0	2	3	22	21	98	9
	2006	0	1	2	14	30	77	5
	2007	0	2	7	23	26	103	4
Westminster Police	2001	0	0	0	23	9	22	3
	2002	0	0	0	29	39	124	7
	2005	0	0	0	12	12	57	3
	2006	0	3	3	8	9	41	1
	2007	0	0	9	18	25	67	3
West Union Police	2001	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
	2002	0	0	0	2	4	0	0
	2005	0	0	0	0	0	3	1

	2006	0	0	0	0	1	3	0
	2007	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salem Police	2001	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	2002	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	2005	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
	2006	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2007	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comparison of Reported Crime by Agency								
Agency	Year	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Breaking & Entering	Larceny	Motor Vehicle Theft
Oconee County Totals	2001	1	16	14	326	370	1187	117
	2002	5	25	19	327	466	1277	133
	2005	1	31	24	323	612	1453	114
	2006	3	31	28	315	479	1174	83
	2007	0	33	40	353	508	1367	141
Pickens County Totals	2001	6	35	46	306	631	1896	190
	2002	1	37	34	301	760	1943	253
	2005	2	36	26	324	955	2789	316
	2006	6	36	33	280	772	2401	307
	2007	1	45	46	343	886	2671	326
Anderson County Totals	2001	15	71	172	857	1917	4970	520
	2002	14	80	163	960	1810	5235	732
	2005	16	72	157	839	1912	5843	805
	2006	18	91	162	890	1860	5426	767
	2007	5	63	140	971	2585	5855	895
Greenville County Totals	2001	35	150	575	2193	3402	11236	1152
	2002	30	197	576	2261	3470	10652	1232
	2005	30	187	635	2427	4131	11484	1629
	2006	26	147	633	2368	4525	11008	1733
	2007	30	151	761	2357	4529	11617	1822

Source: South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division

*no data available

One of the major issues facing law enforcement throughout the county is the existing jail facility. This facility is currently inadequate for housing the number of male and female populations. At the time of this writing, the County is reviewing options that will meet state and federal requirements, with appropriate determinations to be made in the near future.

Emergency Medical

Emergency medical service in Oconee County is provided in conjunction with the Oconee Medical Center, whose ambulance fleet and paramedics are available 24 hours per day. In addition, mutual aid is provided to Anderson and Pickens Counties in South Carolina, and Rabun and Stephens Counties in Georgia.

Six rescue squad divisions are located throughout Oconee County to provide support to the primary emergency service. These units are located in the following communities:

- a. Mountain Rest
- b. Oakway
- c. Salem
- d. Seneca
- e. Walhalla
- f. Westminster

Three additional sub-stations are located at Keowee Key, Fair Play School, and the Long Creek Fire Department. Oconee County provides vehicles, training, and supplies for the units, which are staffed by approximately 150 volunteers. Among these are special squads trained for diving, swift water rescues, high angle rescues, and rappelling.

Because of the proximity to Lakes Hartwell, Keowee, and Jocassee, scenic rivers and waterfalls that increases public use and access to recreational waters, the Oconee County Emergency Rescue staff encounter unique situations that require special training and skills. In addition to providing fire safety coverage on the lakes during the 4th of July weekend, the staff also provide lake safety patrol coverage throughout the year. During 2008, the staff responded to 4 drownings, 3 medical responses with transport on the lakes, 2 boat recoveries, 1 cardiac emergency, and 30 search and rescues. The rescue squad was dispatched to 4,305 calls during 2008.

(Oconee County Community Facilities Plan 1997 and www.oconeesc.com/emprep/rescue_squads.htm)

Health Services

The cornerstone of Oconee County's healthcare system is the Oconee Medical Center, which recently completed a new 155-bed patient tower. Located in Seneca, the hospital has ten centers of service, which include the Outpatient Infusion Center, Clemson Health Center, Women's Services, Surgical Services, Rehabilitation Services, Emergency Services,



Pain Management, Diagnostic Services, the Lila Doyle Long Term Care Facility, and Inpatient Services. In addition, the hospital is involved in a number of community outreach programs, including Oconee Kids Health, NurseFirst Family Health Center, Occupational Health, OMH HomeCare Network, and Medication Access. (2003-2004 Oconee County Profile, Appalachian Council of Governments)

Oconee County is also home to a wide variety of other healthcare related operations, including various residential and nursing care facilities, a dialysis clinic, a blood donation facility, a sports medicine practice, and a number of other medical specialists. The Division of Health Licensing of the South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control licenses a number of health facilities located across Oconee County. Table CF-4 (below) provides information about these facilities.

Table CF-4

Health Facilities in Oconee County			
Facility	Type of Care	Operator	Number of Beds/Stations/Participants
Oconee Adult Day Care Center	Adult Day Care	Anderson-Oconee Council on Aging	50
Blue Ridge Surgery Center	Ambulatory Surgery	Blue Ridge/Clemson Orthopedic Assn, LLC	4
Oconee Community Residence 1	Intermediate Care for Mentally Retarded	S.C. Dept. of Disabilities and Special Needs	8
Oconee Community Residence 2	Intermediate Care for Mentally Retarded	S. C. Dept. of Disabilities and Special Needs	8
Oconee Home Health	Home Health	Oconee Medical Center	3
Oconee Hospice of the Foothills Cottingham House	Hospice	Oconee Medical Center	15
Oconee Hospice of the Foothills	Hospice	Oconee Medical Center	3
Oconee Medical Center	Hospital	Oconee Medical Center	160
Lila Doyle Nursing Care Facility	Nursing Care	Oconee Medical Center	120
Seneca Health & Rehabilitation Center	Nursing Care	SSC Seneca Operating Co., LLC	132

Oconee Dialysis Clinic	Renal Dialysis	Bio-Medical Applications of South Carolina, Inc.	14
Country Christian Care, Inc.	Alzheimers Care	Country Christian Care, Inc.	14
Foothills Assisted Living	Alzheimers Care	Cite Health Mgmt. Services, Inc.	76
Benton Village of Seneca	Alzheimers Care	Seneca Senior Living LLC	62
For A Season Assisted Living	Residential Care	James Arnold Stevens, Inc.	5
The Inn at Seneca	Alzheimers Care	ALC TISSC, LLC	50
Lakeview Assisted Living	Alzheimers Care	Lakeview Assisted Living, Inc.	19
Morningside of Seneca	Residential Care	Morningside of Seneca, L.P.	59
Seneca Residential Care Center	Alzheimers Care	Wilburn Hammers	33

Source: SC DHEC Division of Health Licensing

Infrastructure

Water Treatment

There are five major public water providers located in Oconee County. Four of these major systems are owned by county municipalities, and the other is a special purpose district. Currently, all of the major water providers are in the process of expanding and upgrading their systems to meet the growth anticipated coming.

The major providers include:

- a. Salem Water Department
Owner: Town of Salem
Primary Source: Wells
Service Area: City limits, with expansion along Highway 130

- b. Seneca Light and Water
Owner: City of Seneca
Primary Source: Lake Keowee

Service Area: City limits and adjacent areas extending approximately 10 miles north and south

- c. Walhalla Water Department
Owner: City of Walhalla
Primary Source: Coneross Creek
Service Area: City limits, Town of West Union, and adjacent areas

- d. Westminster Commission of Public Works
Owner: Town of Westminster and private investors
Primary Source: Chauga River
Service Area: City limits and adjacent areas

- e. Pioneer Water System
Owner: Customers within system
Primary Source: Purchased water from Seneca and Westminster water systems
Service Area: Southern Oconee County extending into western Anderson County

In addition to the major providers listed above, a number of private suppliers offer service to residents living in developments across Oconee County. (Oconee County Community Facilities Plan 1997)

Sewage Treatment

Public sewage treatment is provided by the Oconee County Joint Regional Sewer Authority, which operates a treatment facility that primarily serves the municipal wastewater collection systems of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster. These individual systems combine to create a service area focused on the “triangle” region between the cities. In addition, lines have been constructed to serve the US 76/123 corridor east of Seneca, establishing southeastern Oconee County as one of the most attractive areas for development in the region. At the time of writing, plans are being finalized for the establishment of sewer service in and around Oconee County’s I-85 corridor, an effort anticipated to boost dramatically the area’s economic development.

The existing sewer treatment facility is located at 623 Return Church Road, south of Seneca on the banks of Coneross Creek. The facility treats in excess of 1 billion gallons of wastewater per year, as well as processing more than 3,000 tons of sludge annually. In the late 1990’s, the facility’s capacity was expanded from its original 4 million gallons per day to 7.8 million gallons per day. While the plant is currently operating far below its maximum volume, restrictions placed on the system by outside factors, not the least of which being the flow rate in Coneross Creek, preclude utilization of much of the excess capacity.

As well as the public sewer system, several private providers offer service to some of the larger residential developments in the county. Among these are Chickasaw Point and Foxwood Hills on Lake Hartwell, and Keowee Key on Lake Keowee. (Oconee County Community Facilities Plan 1997) In 2000, the village of Newry, previously served by a failed private system, was connected to the public sewer system in a joint effort by Oconee County and the City of Seneca.

Solid Waste

The Oconee County Solid Waste Department is located on Wells' Highway, near Seneca, SC. As Oconee County does not operate a countywide solid waste collection program, it provides residents with eleven manned convenience centers located across the county. Currently, all of the county's solid waste is hauled to landfill facilities in Homer, Georgia. The county maintains a Construction and Demolition (C&D) Landfill near Seneca.

Education

Elementary and Secondary Education

Oconee County is home to a number of educational facilities. The majority of the elementary and secondary facilities are public schools, which are owned and operated by the School District of Oconee County. Table CF-6 lists the public schools in Oconee County.

Table CF-6

Oconee County Public Schools	
School	Location
James M. Brown Elementary	Walhalla
Blue Ridge Elementary	Seneca
Fair Oak Elementary	Westminster
Keowee Elementary	Seneca
Northside Elementary	Seneca
Orchard Park Elementary	Westminster
Ravenel Elementary	Seneca
Tamassee Elementary	Tamassee
Walhalla Elementary	Walhalla
Westminster Elementary	Westminster
West-Oak Middle School	Westminster
Seneca Middle School	Seneca
Walhalla Middle School	Walhalla
Seneca High School	Seneca
Tamassee-Salem High School	Salem
Walhalla High School	Walhalla
West-Oak High School	Westminster

Source: Oconee County School District

In addition to the traditional schools listed in Table CF-6, the Oconee County School District operates an adult education program, an alternative school program, and the Hamilton Career Center, all located in Seneca.

The School District of Oconee County currently operates seventeen elementary, middle, and high schools under the direction of the Superintendent of Education. The Superintendent, the school district's chief administrative officer, is hired by the Oconee County School Board; a body comprised of five members representing Oconee's voting

districts. The district’s total student enrollment in 2008 was 10,716. (SC Annual School District Report Card Summary, SC Department of Education)

Table CF-7 provides an overview of Oconee County student’s results of the 2001 Scholastic Aptitude Test.

Table CF-7

SAT Results for School District of Oconee County					
School Year	Total Number of Seniors	Number Taking SAT	Percent Tested	Composite Scores	Comparison to 2000 score of 1029
2001	516	280	45	1002	-27
2007	604	254	42	1040	+11

Source: South Carolina Department of Education and <http://www.ed.sc.gov/topics/assessment/scores>

The Education Foundation is a non-profit organization that operates as a collaborative effort between local civic groups, community boards, and city and county departments to enhance the teaching of science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics, and service learning (STEAMS). The Foundation awarded over \$95,000 during two recent years for this purpose. (Superintendent’s Report, SC Annual School District Report Card Summary, SC Department of Education)

In addition to public schools, several private schools are located in Oconee County. Among these are the Oconee Christian Academy, the Faith Center Academy, and the Tamassee DAR School. Other private institutions, typically church supported, may also be found in and near the county. Also, the Clemson Montessori School, in nearby Clemson, is an option for some Oconeeans. The Wilderness Camp School in Westminster, as well as the Wilderness Way Girls Camp School in Fair Play, offers alternative educational options for at risk teens.

Higher Education

Although there are no colleges or universities located within the county, a number of institutions of higher learning are within easy commuting distance for Oconee residents. Included among these is Clemson University, one of the leading land grant universities in the nation. Also nearby are Anderson University and Southern Wesleyan University, both private Christian-oriented schools; and Tri-County Technical College, part of South Carolina’s world-class technical education system that offers students industrial, business, technological and university transfer programs. In addition, a number of private institutions offer various business and trade programs for Oconee residents.

Analysis

Overall, Oconee County is served by modern, relatively efficient community facilities. In fact, compared to those living in other areas of similar size and population, Oconee's residents are fortunate in many ways. The challenge facing the county, however, is not to simply maintain what exists now, but to provide for the expansions and upgrades that will be necessary in the coming years. Most sources indicate that the population of Oconee County will continue to grow rapidly in the near future; and given the proximity of both metropolitan Atlanta and Greenville, there is little doubt that it will. For citizens to maintain control of how their community develops, therefore, it will require planning years in advance- if the county is not adequately prepared to manage future challenges, it will be run over by them. The area's community facilities, which play a major role in establishing and maintaining the county's lifestyle, are therefore of vital interest.

Maintaining a system of good roads will be a major issue for Oconee County. As the area's population grows, existing roads will naturally become more crowded, entailing either the improvement of current routes, as well as the construction of new ones. However, as much of Oconee County's appeal is directly tied to its natural assets, planning and developing new thoroughfares in a manner that least influences these resources is vital. Issues such as the negative effects of impervious surfaces on groundwater, and the impact of additional roads in sensitive areas must be closely looked at to avoid negating the benefits of adding new roads. In addition, a viable system of regular road maintenance must be adopted and adhered to if waste is to be avoided.

Oconee County's water supply is an item of vital interest to all area residents. Currently, a handful of public water suppliers provide the more developed areas of the county with water, with a number of smaller private suppliers offering service to individual communities. There is, however, no unified plan for developing water service across the county, leaving many areas without access to a public water system. In years of normal rainfall, most residents in such areas are able to fill their needs from private wells. But during periods of drought, such as Oconee County experienced during the past decade, groundwater levels can become dangerously low. Further compounding the problem is the number of wells that now experience the inflow of pollutants during dry weather, forcing even some of those with sufficient volume to seek an alternative supply of safe drinking water. In addition, the lack of planning for future water needs impacts Oconee County's economic potential, for, as never before, water supplies are a prerequisite for attracting good jobs. With water a vital component of the operation of many high-tech industries, the lack of a comprehensive water plan leaves Oconee limited. Therefore, to meet both the physical and economic needs of the county, it is vital to establish a planning process that provides for the expansion of water supplies into any area requiring it.

Oconee County's solid waste situation remains tenuous at best, with the question of how to handle the area's future solid waste an issue of much debate. A long-range plan that delineates the way in which the county will handle its solid waste over the next several decades is greatly needed. Whether by a joint effort with other jurisdictions to create a regional landfill, or by the establishment of a new facility within the county, or by simply reaching a long-term agreement with a facility in another area, a decision on the handling of solid waste is critical if the county is to be able to move on to other issues. In addition, efforts to decrease the volume of waste produced, such as promoting an increase in recycling,

should be considered. One possible solution may be the establishment of a “pay as you throw” program, which has been used effectively by other jurisdictions to more fairly charge system users for the amount of solid waste they generate. Finally, as expansion and upgrading the system of recycling centers will likely be an ongoing effort for the near future, new facilities should be planned strictly based on population growth and development.

Oconee County is fortunate to have access to a number of quality educational institutions. The School District of Oconee County has created a system of public education that consistently ranks among the best in the state. And, although there are no colleges located within the county, Oconee is surrounded by a number of schools of higher education, providing area residents with easy access to a wide variety of educational choices. To insure that Oconee County’s residents have the best opportunities possible, therefore, the county should look to establishing closer bonds with these institutions, utilizing all available talent, and carefully considering the impact of future county actions on the overall quality of education. Closely connected to this is the direction taken by the county library system. Improvements and upgrades planned for the system will provide Oconee County with excellent facilities that can easily meet the needs of county residents. As with so many other items considered in this element, however, one of the main limiting factors is money, for major renovations and new facilities continue to increase in cost. But as is the case with so many other public facilities, revenues spent on a project are often recouped many times over in ways that cannot be easily shown on a spreadsheet. Therefore, Oconee County must move ahead with needed upgrades to the library in the most expeditious manner possible, while naturally seeking to be cost efficient, but not ignoring those benefits that lie beyond the scope of the bank account.

Oconee County is undergoing changes never before experienced. As the population grows, areas of the county that were formerly fields and pastures are fast becoming residential developments, shifting the population distribution from the traditionally “built up” areas into other places, and necessitating the creation of facilities to service the new residents. In the past, simply providing well-maintained roads may have been all that a local government needed to offer a population, but in today’s increasingly urban world, a wide range of services and facilities are often demanded of local governments. Many feel that those services that were once mere conveniences have become necessities. Therefore, to insure that it lives up to these new responsibilities, Oconee County must carefully plan all of its actions, avoiding waste and inefficiency where possible. If this is accomplished, the disruption resulting from future changes can be minimized, allowing for continued service to current residents, while preparing to meet the needs of those still to come.

Community Facility Objectives for the Future

The following objectives are intended to address those needs and desires established within the Community Facilities Element. See the 'Goals' section of this plan for specific strategies and timelines for implementation.

1. Work to guarantee adequate water distribution systems for present and future economic development in Oconee County.
2. Improve and expand wastewater treatment within Oconee County.
3. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process so as to insure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions, and the opportunity to better manage anticipated future conditions.
4. Develop and implement an effective Capital Projects Program that provides the highest level of service and facilities for Oconee County's citizens.
5. Explore and evaluate alternative methods of obtaining revenue and grant monies to fund capital improvements and new infrastructure.
6. Create and/or update plans for specific priorities.
7. Complete and properly maintain Oconee County's Geographic Information System (GIS).
8. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.
9. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.
10. Seek local, state, and federal funding support in efforts to expand and enhance educational opportunities for Oconee County residents.
11. Upgrade solid waste facilities to improve services and allow for needed upgrades and expansion to provide for anticipated growth.
12. Regularly review public safety needs and enhance facilities as required.
13. Work to address the age-related problems that may arise among Oconee County's aging population, particularly focusing on issues not adequately dealt with by state and federal efforts.

14. Upgrade and maintain the county road system in a manner that meets the needs of Oconee County's growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the county.

15. Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport in a manner that not only serves existing clientele, but will establish the facility as one of the premier small airports in the nation.

16. Establish programs to review all existing community facilities to determine needed changes resulting from both the aging of the facilities and the rapid population growth of Oconee County.

17. Promote a countywide arts program to facilitate an appreciation for the arts and other cultural facilities found within Oconee.