

# **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, and 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.

Since 2004, Oconee County has continued in her rapid population growth and development. Continued growth has resulted in increased demands on community facilities throughout the County. 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 has continued to be a 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 Oconee County looks toward the future, she 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, which is composed of five members elected by voters in respective districts, acts as the county’s legislative body. 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**

<b>Governmental Office Facilities Owned or Maintained by Oconee County</b>		
<b>Facility</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Usage</b>
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
<b>Public Works Facilities</b>	<b>Seneca</b>	<b>Road and Bridges</b>
<b>Solid Waste Facility</b>	<b>Seneca</b>	<b>Waste Management</b>
<b>Vehicle Maintenance Facility</b>	<b>Seneca</b>	<b>Vehicle Service and Repair</b>
<b>Brown Square</b>	<b>Walhalla</b>	<b>Office Space or Storage</b>
<b>DSS Building (previously Next Day Apparel)</b>	<b>Walhalla</b>	<b>Social Services</b>

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.

Since 2004, Oconee County has continued 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. The project was completed for less than three million dollars and increased the available space for the Department of Social Services by 39,000 square feet! Ms. Elaine Bailey, the director of South Carolina Department of Social Services

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. Also, the new structure, planned in a different era than the old courthouse, reflects the requirements of dealing with the potential dangers of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. As a result, the new structure will include both well-designed passive protective measures and state-of-the-art security systems.

The new Courthouse was completed in 2003 but today issues regarding the construction are still being resolved. The Justice Department has cited the facility for not complying with the American with Disabilities Act. Efforts to correct this problem are currently underway and the improvements made to the facility will benefit all citizens.

Great 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 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. The system also operates a bookmobile service to offer materials to residents in rural areas of the county. Oconee's libraries utilize an internet-based catalog system, enabling them to take advantage of the latest information technology. 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.

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.

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 build Blue Ridge Elementary School in Seneca. Cost estimates for the facility range from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. Under the proposal several new staff would need to be added to adequately 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.

## 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. Then 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**

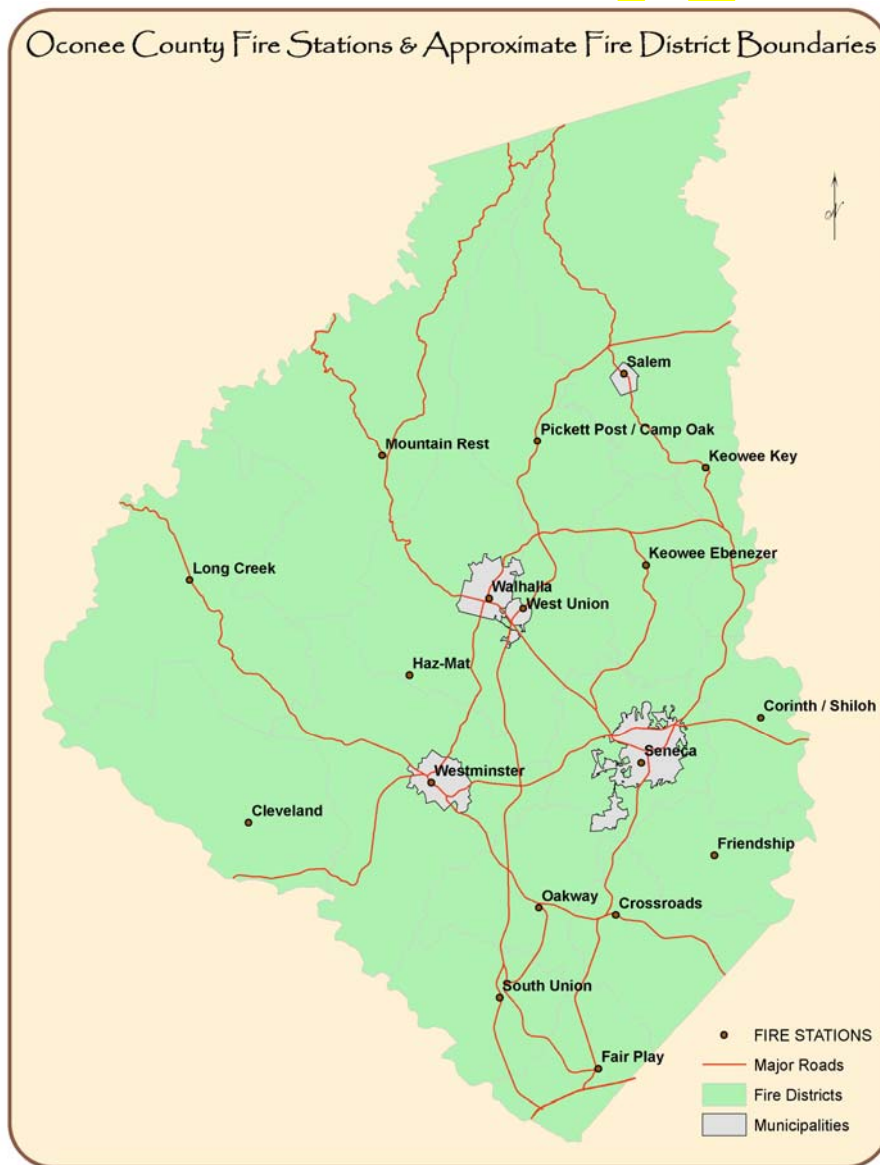
<b>Oconee County Fire Stations</b>				
Station Number	Location (See Map CF-1)	Type of Service (Volunteer or Full-Time)	ISO Rating (April, 2002)	
			Areas within 1000' of hydrant/not over 5 miles road travel from station	All other
1	Oakway	Volunteer	7	9
2	Salem	Volunteer	7	9
3	Corinth-Shiloh	Volunteer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

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 Key, by fees collected from property owners. A relative measure of the success of the fire protection system is shown in the ISO ratings, which vary from 4 to 9, with the lowest found in Seneca, and the highest found in the rural areas farthest from hydrants and a fire station. The ratings, which are periodically updated, are used as factors in determining the cost of fire insurance for homeowners residing in the districts.

Map CF-1 illustrates the approximate location of each fire station. The numbers shown on the map correspond to the individual station number.

Map 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 from 2001 and 2002.

**Table CF-3**

<b>Reported Crime in Oconee County, 2001-2002</b>								
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Murder</b>	<b>Rape</b>	<b>Robbery</b>	<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	<b>Breaking &amp; Entering</b>	<b>Larceny</b>	<b>Motor Vehicle Theft</b>
Oconee Sheriff's Office	2001	0	12	7	191	278	572	78
	2002	4	22	13	211	344	700	102
	<b>2005</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>114</b>
	<b>2006</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>83</b>
Seneca Police	2001	1	3	7	43	64	494	22
	2002	0	3	6	55	57	381	21
	<b>2005</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>34</b>
	<b>2006</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>27</b>
Walhalla Police	2001	0	1	0	69	18	97	14
	2002	1	0	0	30	22	72	3
	<b>2005</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>2006</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>5</b>
Westminster Police	2001	0	0	0	23	9	22	3
	2002	0	0	0	29	39	124	7
	<b>2005</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>2006</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1</b>
West Union Police	2001	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
	2002	0	0	0	2	4	0	0
	<b>2005</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>2006</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

Salem Police	2001	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	2002	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	2005	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
	2006	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comparison of Reported Crime by Agency 2001-2002 & 2005-2006								
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
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
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
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

Source: South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division

\*no data available

The tables above show that Oconee County is blessed with a great police force that is keeping the number of crimes in the County to a minimum. As one would expect the rural nature of the County also contributes to the relatively low number of crimes. Criminal activity tends to increase as one move's from a rural setting to a more urbanized setting. As urbanization continues to increase in the county the effects on the law enforcement will need further study. Questions such as: what is the optimal ratio of officers to population, what additional funding will be needed to maintain and then improve services, how much space is needed, is there a need for an additional command center in the county, and are ways to achieve our goals by using tools like intergovernmental agreements?

One of the major issues facing law enforcement throughout the county is jail space. Currently the Oconee County jail does not have enough beds to house the number of inmates residing there. An upgrade to the County jail has been proposed which will ensure the space available to inmates is sufficient to meet state housing requirements. An inmate housing analysis should be conducted to establish the most cost effective method of keeping inmates in a safe and secure environment. Alternative programs for those awaiting trial and have not been found guilty of non-violent crimes should be analyzed.

Once convicted, the State of South Carolina has developed a number of alternative housing options which works to reserve precious jail space for those criminals who truly need it.

One of the programs the State of South Carolina utilizes is called the *Shock Incarceration Program*. This program was established to provide an alternative to traditional incarceration. Young offenders ranging in age between seventeen (17) and twenty-nine (29) years old are eligible for the program. Designed to build discipline, work ethic, strenuous physical activity, and education among other things this program provides the necessary tools for the offender to learn self-discipline, gain a positive attitude, and learn good values and behavior. Programs such have to potential to be adapted in certain circumstance with the inmate population in Oconee County. However, the majority of inmates in the County system are either awaiting trial or under family court penalties.

### **Emergency Medical**

Emergency medical service in Oconee County is provided in conjunction with the Oconee Memorial Hospital, 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 squads are located throughout Oconee County to provide support to the primary emergency service. These units are located in the following communities:

- Mountain Rest
- Oakway
- Salem
- Seneca
- Walhalla
- Westminster

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, high angle rescues, and repelling (Oconee County Community Facilities Plan 1997).

### **Health Services**

The cornerstone of Oconee County's healthcare system is the 160-bed Oconee Memorial Hospital, located near Seneca. The hospital has six centers of service, which include the Women's Center, Surgical Center, Emergency Center, Heart Care Center, Rehabilitation Center, and Wellness Center. In addition, the hospital is involved in several community outreach programs that include Oconee Kids Health, NurseFirst Family Health Center, Occupational Health, OMH HomeCare Network, Lila Doyle Nursing Care Facility, 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 provides information about these facilities.

**Table CF-4**

<b>Health Facilities in Oconee County</b>			
<b>Facility</b>	<b>Type of Care</b>	<b>Operator</b>	<b>Number of Beds/Stations/Participants</b>
Oconee Adult Day Care Center	Adult Day Care	Anderson-Oconee Council on Aging	50
Oconee Community Residence I	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
OMH Home Health	Home Health	Oconee Memorial Hospital	3
OMH Hospice of the Foothills	Hospice	Oconee Memorial Hospital	3
Oconee Memorial Hospital	Hospital	Oconee Memorial Hospital, Inc.	160
Lila Doyle Nursing Care Facility	Nursing Care	Oconee Memorial Hospital, Inc.	79
Mariner Health Care of Seneca	Nursing Care	Pinnacle Care Corporation of Seneca, Inc.	132
Oconee Dialysis Clinic	Renal Dialysis	Bio-Medical Applications of South Carolina, Inc.	14
Country Christian Care, Inc.	Residential Care	Country Christian Care, Inc.	14
Foothills Retirement Center	Residential Care	Foothills Retirement Center, Inc.	82
For A Season Assisted Living	Residential	James Arnold	5

	Care	Stevens, Inc.	
The Inn at Seneca	Residential Care	CaraVita South Carolina, Inc.	50
Lakeview Rest Home, Inc.	Residential Care	Lakeview Rest Home, Inc.	19
Morningside of Seneca	Residential Care	Morningside of Seneca, L.P.	59
Seneca Residential Care Center	Residential Care	Wilburn Hammers	33

Source: SC DHEC Division of Health Licensing

## Infrastructure

### Roads

Over 2,000 miles of roads run through Oconee County. Included in this total are approximately 220 miles of state primary roads, and over 600 miles of state secondary roads. In addition, slightly over 4 miles of Interstate 85 cross the southern tip of the county. Of the remaining 1, 200 or so miles of Oconee roads, about half are owned by the county, and half are private. Approximately 1/3 of the county roads are unpaved. (South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics; Oconee County Community Facilities Plan 1997)

Table CF-5 lists the Oconee County locations having the heaviest traffic volume.

**Table CF-5**

<b>Traffic Counts (Locations With An Average Daily Traffic Volume of at Least 5,000 Vehicles Per Day, Oconee County, 1996)</b>			
Rank	Road	Location	Average Daily Traffic Volume
1	I-85	At SC 11	36,900
2	I-85	Between SC 11 and SC 59	33,800
3	I-85	Between SC 59 and SC 243	32,000
4	US 123	At SC 28	24,400
5	US 123	At Pickens County Line	20,500
6	US 123	At SC 59	18,600
7	SC 28	At US 123	16,100
8	US 123	Between SC 11 and Westminster Town Limit	12,000
9	SC 28	At SC 11	12,300
10	SC 130	At SC US 123	6,600
11	SC 59	At Southern Seneca City Limit	5,800
12	SC 130	SC 183	55,100

Source: Oconee County Community Facilities Plan 1997

### Airport

Another key transportation resource in Oconee County is the Oconee Regional Airport, a county owned and operated facility located east of Seneca, lying just across Lake Hartwell from Clemson University. The airport, which has undergone a great many upgrades and expansions over the last decade, is utilized by a number of area businesses and recreation interests. Not only is the facility popular with a growing number of Clemson University football fans that prefer to fly in for home games, but it also provides a convenient way for corporate executives to easily visit their facilities in the Oconee area. Currently, efforts are underway to expand the runway to five thousand feet, enabling larger corporate jets to utilize the airport.

### **Railways**

Oconee County is served by the Norfolk Southern Railway system, which provides freight service to a number of area industries. Entering the county from the east near Clemson, the railroad travels through Seneca and Westminster, and on to Toccoa, Georgia. In addition, passenger service is available in nearby Clemson.

### **Public Transit**

Currently, there are no public transportation systems in Oconee County. At the time of writing, however, consideration is being given to extending Clemson's highly touted CATS bus service into Seneca. If completed, the new link would provide Oconee residents free transportation from Seneca in the west, to Anderson in the east.

### **Water Treatment**

There are five major public water providers located in Oconee County, which in 1997 supplied more than 10 million gallons of water per day. The overall capacity exceeds 14 million gallons, with recent upgrades in some systems greatly increasing the volume. The major providers include:

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

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

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

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

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 Sewer Commission, 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. Future plans include the establishment of sewer service to Oconee County’s I-85 corridor, an effort anticipated to dramatically expand the area’s ability to attract new businesses.

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 does, however, maintain 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**

<b>Oconee County Public Schools</b>	
<b>School</b>	<b>Location</b>
James M. Brown Elementary	Walhalla
Code Elementary	Seneca
Fair Oak Elementary	Westminster
J.N. Kellett Elementary	Seneca
Keowee Elementary	Seneca
Northside Elementary	Seneca
Orchard Park Elementary	Westminster
Ravenel Elementary	Seneca
Tamassee Elementary	Tamassee
Walhalla Elementary	Walhalla
Westminster Elementary	Westminster
Oakway Middle School	Westminster
Seneca Middle School	Seneca
Walhalla Middle School	Walhalla
Westminster Middle School	Westminster
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 nineteen 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 5 members representing Oconee’s voting districts. The district’s total student enrollment in 2003 was counted at 10,136. (2003-2004 Oconee County Profile, Appalachian Council of Government)

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

**Table CF-7**

2001 SAT Results for School District of Oconee County								
Total Number of Seniors	Number Taking SAT 2000	Number Taking SAT 2001	% Tested	Total 2000	Total 2001	Difference	Verbal Average Score	Math Average Score
516	280	231	45	1029	1002	-27	503	499

Source: South Carolina 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 College 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

On the whole, 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 foreseeable 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 impacts 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. Also, a viable system of regular road maintenance should 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 overall 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. Also, there is another reason the lack of planning for future water needs impacts Oconee County residents, for, as never before, water supplies are tied directly to economic prosperity. With water a vital component for many high-tech industries, the lack of a comprehensive plan for supplying water to prime industrial areas leaves Oconee County without a major tool to use in attracting new jobs. 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.

The lack of sufficient sewer capacity is a serious impediment to any community's economic development, and Oconee County is no exception. Currently, Oconee County has a single sewer treatment facility that primarily serves the municipalities. As the

county becomes more urbanized and developed, however, limitations placed on the facility will act as a bottleneck to growing the county's economy, eventually threatening the area's quality of life. A solution must be found that allows for an expansion of sewer service to all developing areas of the county. This could come in the form of upgrading the present facility, or the construction of new facilities. While the existing facility has the potential to significantly expand operations, various factors, such as the volume of flow in Coneross Creek, threaten to limit the utilization of the capacity. And, even if such problems are overcome, using the existing plant may not be the most efficient answer for servicing distant areas of the county, such as the I-85 corridor in southern Oconee County. In any event, such efforts will require a new countywide focus by those directing the planning for sewer operations.

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 the establishment of a new facility within the county, or simply to reach a long-term agreement with a facility in another area, a decision on the handling of solid waste in the future is critical if the county is to be able to move onto 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 foreseeable future, new facilities should be planned strictly on the basis of 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 well in the state, sending a significant number of graduates on to higher education. 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. Currently, improvements and upgrades planned for the system should 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, the focus needs to be on continued planning for the growth expected in the county's future. Areas that in the past were thinly populated farming communities, for example, are undergoing rapid growth that will require more services than simply providing a bookmobile stop. Planning for such growth is crucial if these new needs are to be properly met.

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 facilities and 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.

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## Community Facility Objectives for the Future

- 1. Upgrade and maintain county road system in a manner that both meets the needs of Oconee County’s growing population and insures that negative environmental effects are minimized**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Revisit, Adopt, and Implement the Infrastructure Master Plan	2012	Updated
Utilize Capital Improvements Plan to Continue Systematic Upgrading of Road Department as Budget Allows	Ongoing	
Expand Communication with SC Department of Transportation to Insure that State Road Projects Enhance County Growth Management Plans	Ongoing	

Responsible Parties: County Council; Planning Commission; Economic Development Commission; Road Department; SC Department of Transportation; Stakeholders

- 2. Work to enhance and coordinate expansion of potable water service across the county and work to establish a partnership with water providers to increase fire protection throughout the county.**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Revisit, Adopt, and Implement the Infrastructure Master Plan	2012	Updated
Work to Establish Better Communication Between County and Water Providers	Ongoing	
Provide Appropriate Assistance Water Providers in Efforts to Obtain Grants and Other Funding to Expand Water Systems	Ongoing	
Work to partner with public water providers to explore ways of increasing fire protection	Ongoing	Updated
Begin to develop a mechanism for water line upgrades when new development required upgrades to the water system to provide fire protection. Further study will be needed on this issue	2014	Updated
Inventory the amount of water available for development purposes	2014	Updated

Responsible Parties: County Council; Planning Commission; Economic Development Commission; Municipalities and Other Water Providers; Stakeholders

**3. Expand sewer service throughout areas designated by Land Use Element as primary areas of development**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Revisit, Adopt, and Implement the Infrastructure Master Plan	2012	Updated
Work to Establish Better Communications Between County and Municipalities	Ongoing	
Work with Neighboring Counties When Possible to Establish Regional Efforts to Expand Sewer Service into Prime Commercial/Industrial Locations	Ongoing	

Responsible Parties: County Council; Planning Commission; Sewer Commission; Municipalities; Stakeholders

**4. Establish long-range plan for Oconee County's solid waste issues. This may or may not include creation of a new landfill in Oconee County, partnership in a regional landfill, or long-term contract with outside parties. In addition, work to reduce volume of solid waste through increased recycling, composting, and/or other methods**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Revisit, Adopt, and Implement the Infrastructure Master Plan	2012	Updated
Expand Program(s) to Reduce Volume of Solid Waste	Ongoing	
Utilize Capital Improvements Plan to Systematically Upgrade Solid Waste Facilities and Equipment as Budget Allows	Ongoing	

Responsible Parties: County Council; Planning Commission; Solid Waste Department; Stakeholders

**5. Regularly review public safety needs, and enhance facilities as needed**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Monitor Population Growth and Development Throughout County, Establishing and Expanding Public Safety Facilities as Needed	Ongoing	
Provide Local Public Safety Agencies Appropriate Assistance in Obtaining Funding to Expand and Upgrade Operations	Ongoing	
Coordinate Local Public Safety Planning and Activity with Regional, State and Federal Agencies	Ongoing	

Responsible Agencies: County Council; Planning Commission; Sheriff’s Department; Emergency Management; Local Public Safety Agencies; Stakeholders

**6. Provide support for local schools in efforts to enhance and upgrade educational opportunities for area residents**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Provide the School District of Oconee County Appropriate Assistance in Efforts to Enhance and Upgrade Education	Ongoing	
Utilize Capital Improvements Plan to Upgrade and Expand County Library System as Budget Allows	Ongoing	
Monitor Growth and Development Throughout County to Determine Areas of Greatest Need	Ongoing	
Work to establish criteria for locating new schools, with special consideration to the available infrastructure, access, and traffic planning	2011	Updated Goal
Continue to look for opportunities to support and enhance job training, education, and adult back to school programs	Ongoing	Updated Goal

Responsible Agencies: County Council; Planning Commission; School District of Oconee County; Libraries; Stakeholders

**7. 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**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Review and Update Community Facilities Plan, Amending to Reflect Impact of Recent Growth and Development and Needs of Aging Population	2011	Updated date
Utilize Capital Improvements Plan to Systematically Construct and Upgrade Facilities Identified in Community Facilities Plan	Ongoing	
Look for alternative to tax payer financing of projects such as private partnerships, user based fees, etc.	Ongoing	Updated goal

Responsible Agencies: County Council; Planning Commission; Stakeholders

**8. Revisit and adopt the Infrastructure Master Plan**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	
Revisit, Adopt, and Implement the Infrastructure Master Plan	2012	Revised Goal and date

Responsible Agencies: County Council; Planning Commission; Economic Development Commission; Sewer Commission; Municipalities; Utilities; Stakeholders

**9. Identify, secure and develop additional property for county-owned industrial park(s) in prime industrial areas**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Identify, Evaluate and Prioritize Prime Industrial Areas Throughout the County	Ongoing	
Work with Public and Private Entities to Secure Funding for Potential Projects	Ongoing	
Purchase and Develop Prime Properties as Funding Becomes Available	Ongoing	

Responsible Parties: County Council; Economic Development Commission; Planning Commission; Stakeholders

**10. Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport, including expansion of the runway length to 5000 feet, installation of modern aircraft instrument landing system, and construction of additional hanger space**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Complete Expansion of Runway Length to 5000 Feet	2007	
Install Modern Instrument Landing System	2005	
Construct Additional Hanger Space as Needed	Ongoing	
Utilize Capital Improvements Plan to Continue to Upgrade Facility as Allowed by Budget	Ongoing	

Responsible Parties: County Council; Planning Commission; Aeronautics Commission; Stakeholders

**11. Improve communication and cooperation between county government and local municipalities; work to develop coordinated 5 and 10-Year capital improvement plans**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeline	2009 Update
Provide Appropriate Assistance to Municipalities in Economic Development Efforts	Ongoing	
Partner with Municipalities to Develop Coordinated 5 and 10-year Economic Development Plans	2014	Updated date

Responsible Agencies: County Council; Economic Development Commission; Municipalities; Stakeholders

**12. Work to guarantee adequate water treatment and distribution systems for present and future economic development in Oconee County**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Establish Partnership with Municipal Water Providers and Pioneer Rural Water District to Develop Mechanism Allowing Extension of Service into Unincorporated Areas of the County, and Collection of Water Revenues from these Areas	2012	Updated date
Extend Water Service to the I-85 Corridor to Increase Economic Development Potential for the County	2010	Updated date
Plan for Extension of Water Service to Additional Areas of the County, including US Highway 123 and SC Highway 28 Corridors	2012	Updated date
Identify and Establish Revenue Sources such as Special Tax Districts and Local Option Sales Taxes to Fund Water System Extension	2015	Updated date
Assist Municipalities in Inventorying Current Condition of Their Water Infrastructure Systems to Determine Ability to Accommodate Future Growth	2014	Updated date
Encourage Water Providers to Coordinate Efforts with Other Utility Providers in Planning for Future Growth	2012	Updated date
Work to partner with public water providers to explore ways of increasing fire protection	Ongoing	Updated
Begin to develop a mechanism for water line upgrades when new development required upgrades to the water system to provide fire protection. Further study will be needed on this issue	2014	Updated

Inventory the amount of water available for development purposes	2014	Updated
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Responsible Agencies: County Council; Economic Development Commission; Municipalities; Stakeholders

**13. Improve and expand wastewater treatment within the county**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009-Update
Establish Partnership(s) with the Municipal Sewer System Providers and the Oconee County Sewer Commission to Develop Plan to Extend Service into Unincorporated Areas of the County	2009	
Establish Partnership(s) with Oconee County Sewer Commission and Municipal Sewer Providers to Coordinate Efforts to Provide Sewer to the I-85 Corridor within 10 years; Included in this Effort will be the Construction of a Wastewater Treatment Facility Capable of Expansion to Serve Both Present and Future Needs of the Surrounding Region, Including the South Carolina Welcome Center Area, Oconee County Exits 1-4, and Areas in Anderson County that may be the Focus of Projects Developed Jointly by Oconee and Anderson Counties.	2009	
Plan Extension of Sewer Service to Additional Areas Near Highways U.S. 123, SC 28 and the Oconee County Airport	2009	
Establish Partnership(s) with Local, Regional, State and Federal Agencies to Find Funding Sources for Wastewater Treatment Needs- This Effort May Include Establishment of Revenue Sources Such As Special Tax Districts and Local Option Sales Taxes	Ongoing	

Responsible Agencies: County Council; Planning Commission; Economic Development Commission; Sewer Commission; Municipalities; Stakeholders

**14. Work to establish plans to meet the transportation needs of Oconee County for the next 30 Years**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Updated
Finalize Road Maintenance Plan giving special attention to those road identified in the primary development areas on the future land use map	2010	Updated goal
Identify High-growth Areas and the Best Way to Serve Them	Ongoing	
Examine Possibility of Constructing a Southern Bypass Around Seneca	2009	
Develop Methods of Encouraging Through Oconee County on Route from Atlanta, GA to Ashville, NC	Ongoing	

Responsible Agencies: County Council; Planning Commission; Economic Development Commission; South Carolina Department of Transportation; Stakeholders

**15. Upgrade solid waste services in key industrial areas of Oconee County**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Continue to Work to Establish a Future Regional Landfill	Ongoing	
Work to Develop Solid Waste Research Facility at a Regional Landfill	Ongoing	
Identify and Construct Additional Construction and Demolition Landfill Sites Within the County	2007	

Responsible Agencies: County Council; Planning Commission; Solid Waste Department; South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control; Stakeholders

**16. Work to develop a planning process focused on establishing an efficient, equitable, and mutually compatible distribution of land uses that supports economic development while providing for future changes**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Continue Support of Comprehensive Planning Process that Accurately Inventories and Analyzes Existing County Conditions	Ongoing	
Consideration of Countywide Zoning Process that Includes Public Education and Opportunities for a Wide Range of Public Input	2007	

Responsible Agencies: County Council; Planning Commission; Stakeholders

**17. Expand efforts to increase tourism revenues**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Work with State and Federal Agencies to Access Additional Monies as Available	Ongoing	
Develop and Host Regionally and Nationally Promoted Sporting and Recreational Events	2007	
Continue to Support Local Festivals, Entertainment Events, and Other Tourism Activities in Oconee County	Ongoing	

Responsible Agencies: County Council; Economic Development Commission; Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission; Stakeholders

**18. Work to renew and expand local agribusiness opportunities**

Implementation Strategies:

Strategies	Timeframe	2009 Update
Work with State and Federal Agencies to Attract Agribusiness-Related Grants and Revenue Sources	Ongoing	
Support Efforts to Establish Pilot Programs Related to New Agricultural Methods, Technologies, and Products	Ongoing	
Provide Appropriate Assistance to Efforts to Expand Non-traditional And Specialty Agribusiness Opportunities	Ongoing	

Responsible Parties: County Council; Economic Development Commission; State and Federal Agricultural Agencies; Stakeholders

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