

INTRODUCTION

Dorchester County is located near the coast of South Carolina, approximately 20 miles northwest of the City of Charleston and approximately 70 miles southeast of the state capitol of Columbia. The region surrounding the county serves as tourist destinations (the city of Charleston and Hilton Head Island) and recreation destinations (including the Atlantic Ocean and Lakes Marion and Moultrie). The two major interstates, which cross through Dorchester County, are I-95 and I-26.

According to the U.S. Census conducted in 2000, Dorchester County's total population was 96,413. The same census information indicated that there had been a population increase since the previous U.S. Census in 1990 of 16.1%. The most recent population, estimate as of July 1, 2007, for the county is 123,505. This marks a 28.1% increase in the past seven years. Dorchester County's population has increased by a total of 48.6% in the past 17 years, a rate much higher than that of the rest of South Carolina's growth rate of 26.4% in that same period. This makes Dorchester County the third fastest growing county in the state. Much of this growth has occurred on the southeast side of the county, within the municipal limits of Summerville and North Charleston.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Dorchester County Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to evaluate recreational facilities, activities and programs currently offered in Dorchester County, gather input from county residents on various recreational issues and guide the county in the establishment and provision of complimentary recreation services. This Dorchester County Parks and Recreation Master Plan consists of an inventory and assessment of all existing park facilities and programs; an evaluation of the residents' satisfaction with those facilities and programs; and recommendations for the establishment and growth of county facilities, programs, and staff. This master plan aims to help meet the current and future recreational needs for the people of Dorchester County.



The Ponds Community Amenity

DORCHESTER COUNTY

Dorchester County is situated between Charleston County (to the south and east), Colleton County (to the west), Orangeburg County and Berkeley County (to the north). There are many natural amenities within the county which include major rivers, wetland areas, state and local parks, and historic sites.

Major roadways that provide regional transportation routes around and through Dorchester County include:

- Interstates 26 and 95
- US Highways 15, 78, 178, and 17A
- State Highways 61, 27, 165, and 642

Much of the existing development within the county occurs along these corridors and at intersections of these corridors.

Two major rivers are located within Dorchester County. The Edisto River flows along the western border of the county. The Edisto River is the world's longest blackwater river and its basin stretches through 12 counties within South Carolina. The Ashley River moves through the southern portion of Dorchester County before merging with the Cooper River to form the Charleston Harbor.

Two of South Carolina's state parks, Givhans Ferry State Park, located on the Edisto River, and Historic Fort Dorchester State Park, located on the Ashley River, both reside in Dorchester County. Colleton State Park also serves Dorchester County, but is located on the opposite side of the Edisto River in neighboring Colleton County.

Figure 1.1 shows the above mentioned existing conditions within Dorchester County.

The incorporated municipalities located within Dorchester County include:

- Harleyville
- North Charleston
- Reevesville
- Ridgeville
- Summerville
- St. George

Harleyville, which is located northeast of St. George and west of Francis Beidler Forest, is about 20 miles northwest of Summerville in the Charleston-Trident Metro area. The population is around 633 within this 0.99 square mile land area according to the town website.

North Charleston is located partially in Dorchester County and the remainder in Charleston County. The part of North Charleston within the county boundary is located in the southeast corner of the county, south of Summerville, with a population of 3,397 residents in 2000. The population of the entire city, in both counties, is now over 85,000, making North Charleston the third largest municipality in South Carolina.

Located only five miles northwest of St. George is the town of Reevesville with an estimated population of 211 in 2006 over a land area of 1.6 square miles.

The town of Ridgeville has a population estimated at 2,026 (2006) and has a land area of 1.82 square miles. Ridgeville is located off US Highway 78 about 11 miles northwest of Summerville.

With a population over 44,000 (2007), Summerville is the largest municipality located within Dorchester County. Sitting on the southeast edge of the county, Summerville was incorporated in 1847, despite being inhabited since the late 1700's. The town's eventual incorporation was spear-headed by the town's effort to protect its pine trees from being harvested for railroad construction. Because of Summerville's early beginnings, there are over 700 homes and buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.

St. George, the County Seat, is located in the northwest portion of Dorchester County, and consists of 2.68 square miles within the municipal boundary with a population estimated at 2,120 in 2006.

Figure 1.2 identifies each municipality and land parcels throughout Dorchester County.

NATURAL AMENITIES

Dorchester County has many natural amenities within its boundaries. A variety of land features, bodies of water, daytime and overnight parks, and protected lands are located throughout the county. These areas are not owned or programmed by Dorchester County, but they are open to the public and serve specific recreational needs. The following are a few examples of Dorchester County's natural amenities. All wetlands and bodies of water within the county are shown in Figure 1.3.

ASHLEY RIVER

The Ashley River flows out of the Great Cypress Swamp in Dorchester County, continues on to join the Cooper River forming the Charleston Harbor, and flows into the Atlantic Ocean. Designated as a South Carolina Scenic River in 1998, it was the Lowcountry's first State Scenic River. The river contains a diversity of natural habitats and numerous historic sites of regional and national significance. Many river access points and attractions include Drayton Hall, Magnolia Gardens, Middleton Place, Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site and four public boat landings.

BROSNAN FOREST

Brosnan Forest is a privately owned corporate forest. The Norfolk Southern Company uses the land for corporate meetings, agricultural and recreational purposes, wildlife management and research. Norfolk Southern Company recently partnered with the Lowcountry Open Land Trust to protect 12,488-acres of the forest to make one of the largest conservation easements in the Southeast. South of Francis Beidler Forest and straddling the Charleston-Hamburg railroad line, Brosnan Forest provides a protected habitat for 79 groups of the endangered Red-Cockaded Woodpecker and contains over 6,000-acres of Longleaf Pine forests which are one of the most threatened ecosystems in North America.



Old Fort Dorchester State Park

EDISTO RIVER

Bordering the west side of Dorchester County, the Edisto River is the longest blackwater river in the southeastern United States. From its source in Saluda and Edgefield counties, just above the Piedmont fall line, this river runs 250 miles towards the Atlantic Ocean. The Edisto is a prime habitat for Bald Cypress trees which line the banks along with other water loving plants and wildlife like the Wood Stork and American Alligator. Four Holes Swamp, which is located in Dorchester County, forms a tributary to the lower Edisto River. The Edisto Basin also forms part of the Ashepoo, Combahee and South Edisto (ACE) Basin National Wildlife Refuge. The major recreational activities on the river are canoeing, kayaking and fishing.

FRANCIS BEIDLER FOREST

Located north of Harleyville and I-26, Francis Beidler Forest is globally recognized as a bird sanctuary and old-growth swamp forest of Bald Cypress and Tupelo Gum flats. Within the 45,000-acres that form the Four Holes Swamp, this 15,000-acre forest is privately owned and managed by the National Audubon Society. Francis Beidler Forest contains 1,800 acres of old-growth swamp forest with Bald Cypress trees over 1,000 years old. Amenities in this area include a 1.75 mile boardwalk trail, hiking and canoe trails.

GIVHANS FERRY STATE PARK

This 988-acre park is located on the Edisto River in both Colleton and Dorchester counties. It lies within the National Heritage Corridor and is known for its limestone river bluffs and sinkholes.

OLD FORT DORCHESTER STATE PARK

Located on the Ashley River, this site was established as a trading town in 1695. After being abandoned at the end of the Revolutionary War, this 325-acre site and surrounding forest has been protected and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The most intact structures left on the site are the brick church tower and the fort made of tabby.

EXISTING FACILITIES SUMMARY

Dorchester County does not currently own or operate any recreational facilities with the exception of two senior centers. However, many municipalities and rural communities within the county own, program, and/or maintain parks for recreation. The following list summarizes the existing park and recreation facilities available to the people of Dorchester County. This information will be used to influence future recreation facility recommendations through this Master Plan. Figure 1.4 identifies all existing parks and recreation facilities within Dorchester County.

EXISTING FACILITIES INVENTORY:

HARLEYVILLE:

HARLEYVILLE COMMUNITY PARK

- Basketball court – no baskets
- Ballfields - 2
 - 1 - 200' little league
 - 1 - 330' women's softball
- Shelter with picnic tables
- Playground - ages 5-12
- Old school gym converted to meeting hall with restrooms
- Concession stand
- Festival lawn
- Large stage - donated by local cement company
- Historical school entry-way preserved as park gateway with fountain
- Large greenspace in front of stage
- Gravel parking lot
- Paved loop trail (0.33 miles)
- Maintenance and scheduling run by Chief Dye and Harleyville Mayor

JENKINS HILL BALLFIELDS

- Ballfields - 2 (200')
 - Practice field
 - Play field
 - Serves girl's softball up to age 16
 - Temporary outfield fence
 - Leased to town by school board
- Small concession stand
- Grass parking
- Basketball goal - no court
- Serves Ridgeville, Harleyville, and St. George



Harleyville Community Park

ST. GEORGE:

MIMS MAGNOLIA PARK

- Fountain
- Sidewalk through park
- Benches
- Decorative lamp posts
- Planting beds
- Brick walkway to back of park
- Funded by PARD
 - Parks And Recreation Development Fund

ST. GEORGE COUNTRY CLUB (PUBLIC)

- 9-hole regulation golf course
- Putting greens
- Teaching pro
- Tennis courts - 2
- Outdoor pool

ST. GEORGE PARK

- Central shelter
 - Picnic tables - 3
- Playground - 2 sets on either side of park
- Small pond with fountain and bridge
- Small building
- Restrooms
- Grills
- Picnic tables
- Wooden bridges
- Gravel paths with timber border loop trail
- Open lawn
- Gazebo with one table
- Benches
- Bike racks

SUMMERVILLE:**SAUL ALEXANDER PLAYGROUND (2.5 ACRES)**

- Picnic shelter
- Picnic tables - 6
- Playground - Ages 5-12
- Practice baseball field
- Tennis courts - 2

ALSTON BALL FIELD (8 ACRES)

- Baseball fields - 2
- Concession stand
- Practice football field - multi-use field
- Restrooms

ASHBOROUGH BOAT LANDING

- Boat access to neighborhood lake

AZALEA PARK (10 ACRES)

- Brick courtyard
- Bronze sculpture collection
- Gazebo - 2
- Ornamental gardens
- Picnic tables - 2
- Reflection ponds
- Tennis courts - 2
- Walking trails

BUTLER PROPERTIES (7.40 ACRES)

- 10 properties on Butler Street
- Newly purchased property
- No amenities

CUTHBERT COMMUNITY CENTER (1 ACRE)

- Community building
 - Kitchen - no stove
 - Tables and chairs
 - Restrooms

DOTY PARK (4 ACRES)

- Community building
 - Kitchen - no stove
 - Tables and chairs
 - Restrooms
 - Covered pavilion
- Gazebo
- Horseshoe pits - 6
- 24' x 44' park shelter - 2
- Picnic tables - 24
- Playground - Ages 5-12 (not yet built)
- Tennis courts - 6
- Paved walking trails

FAIRSPRINGS STABLES

- Horse boarding stables

GAHAGAN PARK (44 ACRES)

- JERRY BLACKWELL SPORTS COMPLEX
 - Baseball fields - 6
 - Concession stands - 3
 - Football field
- PLANTATION PLAYGROUND
 - Picnic shelter
 - Restrooms
 - Picnic tables - 3
 - Wooden playground - community built

HUGER PLAYGROUND (0.5 ACRE)

- Playground - Ages 5-12
- Picnic tables - 2

HUTCHINSON SQUARE (0.5 ACRE)

- Landscaped town square

HERBERT H. JESSEN BOAT LANDING (0.5 ACRE)

- Boardwalks
- Docks - 2
- Fishing pier
- Picnic tables - 7
- Public boat ramp
- Walking trails - paved

LEGEND OAKS GOLF CLUB (SEMI-PRIVATE)

- 18-hole regulation golf course
- Tennis courts - 4
- Out door pool

MILER COUNTRY CLUB (PUBLIC)

- 18-hole regulation golf course
- Tennis courts - 4

NEWINGTON PLANTATION (1.05 ACRES)

- Green space
- No amenities

PARKS FIELD

- Ballfields - 5
 - 300' fence
 - 2 - 200' fence
 - 2 - 130' fence

PINE FOREST COUNTRY CLUB (SEMI-PRIVATE)

- 18-hole championship golf course
- Tennis courts - 10
- Junior Olympic-size pool
- Toddler pool
- Bathhouse
- Clubhouse

ROTARY CENTENNIAL PARK

- Boardwalk
- Natural trails
- Observation platform

SAWMILL BRANCH WALK/BIKE TRAIL (6.2 MILES)

- 10' wide asphalt walk/bike trail
- East Richardson Avenue to YMCA - Oakbrook Sports Facility
- Various access points

SHEPHARD PARK (2.65 ACRES)

- Gazebo
- Playground - Ages 5-12
- Reflection pond
- Walking trails (not paved)

WASSAMASSAW COMMUNITY PARK (8.65 ACRES)

- Basketball courts - 2
- Covered pavilion
- Restrooms
- Picnic tables - 8
- Practice baseball field
- Small dog park
- Large dog park
- 24' x 44' park shelter
- Playground - Ages 5-12
- Paved walking trails

WESCOTT PLANTATION (SEMI-PRIVATE)

- 27-hole regulation golf course

COMMUNITY PARKS:

GIVHANS COMMUNITY PARK

- Playground equipment
- Baseball field
- Grass field parking
- Basketball court
- Shelter
- Building
- Bathrooms
- Funded by PARD

RIDGEVILLE COMMUNITY PARK

- Basketball court
- Tennis court
- Shelter
 - Picnic tables
 - Grill
- Volleyball court (grass)
- Swing sets
- Playground - Ages 2-5
- Benches and tables throughout

SAND HILL COMMUNITY PARK

- Ball field
- Concessions
- Restrooms
- Funded by PARD

ST. PAUL COMMUNITY PARK

- Baseball field
- Play structures - 2
 - Wooden play structure
 - Plastic play structure
- Concrete picnic tables
- Swing set
- Shelter with picnic tables
- Restrooms and concession stand in shelter
- Funded by PARD
- Fenced in basketball court

TEXAS COMMUNITY PARK

- Baseball field
- Shelter with picnic tables and bathrooms
- Multiple shelters with new picnic tables
- 3' concrete sidewalk with landing
- Swing sets
- Porch swings
- No directional signage to park
- Funded by PARD

COUNTY**FAITH SELLERS SENIOR CENTER
(SUMMERVILLE)**

- 15,819 SF Building
 - 360 SF computer lab
 - Lounge
 - Small library
 - Pool table
 - Arts and crafts room
 - Ceramics room
 - Relaxing room
 - Exercise room
 - Weight room
 - Stairmasters - 2
 - Treadmills - 3
 - Bikes - 4
 - Bench press - 1
- 4,896 SF Lunch/Multi-Purpose room

DAVID SOJOURNER SENIOR CENTER (ST. GEORGE)

- 5,000 SF Building
 - 1,483 SF Multi-Purpose Room
 - Computer lab
 - Exercise room
 - Craft room

T. COKE WEEKS BRIDGE LANDING

- Boat access to Edisto River

STATE**GIVHANS FERRY STATE PARK**

- Private campsites
 - Electricity and water
- Boat access
- Large grass multi-use field
- Sand volleyball court
- Trails
- Shelter with picnic tables
- Trash/recycle bins
- Educational signage
- Cabins with river/trail access
- Along The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor

OLD FORT DORCHESTER STATE PARK

- Tabby Fort and Church tower only remaining structures on site
- Archeological observation opportunities
- Bathrooms
- Large field
- Picnic areas
- Old cemetery
- Historical markers/plaques
- Small information building with map and large historic model of site
- Along The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor

PRIVATE**BROSNAN FOREST (16,000-ACRES)**

- Basketball court
- Tennis courts - 2
- Volleyball
- Driving range
- Par 3 golf course
- Horseshoes
- Shuffleboard
- Lodges - 2
- Cabins - 10
- Guest houses - 2
- Main lodge (3,000 SF)

DORCHESTER DRAGWAY

- 1/8 mile IHRA drag strip

EAST SHORE HEALTH AND RACQUET CLUB

- Pool
- Group fitness room
- Racquetball courts
- Full weight and cardio room
- Sauna
- Tanning beds

FRANKIE'S FUN PARK

- Amusement park
- Bumper car tracks - 3
- Free-fall ride
- Bumper boats
- Rock climbing wall
- Mini golf
- Driving range
- Batting cages
- Large slide
- Arcade

KING'S GRANT BOAT LANDING

- Playground - Ages 2-5 and 5-12
- Picnic tables
- Boat launch

MIDDLETON GARDENS (65-ACRES)

- River access
- Nature trails
- Challenge course
- Landscaped gardens
- House museum and shop
- Stableyards
- Middleton Inn
- Restaurant
- Edmondston-Alston House

MIDDLETON STABLES

- Craft demonstrations
- Carriage tours
- Eliza's House

YMCA - OAKBROOK SPORTS FACILITY (22 ACRES)

- Indoor/outdoor pool facility
- After-school/summer camp building
- Soccer fields of various sizes - 27
- Baseball fields which convert to soccer fields (included in soccer field count) - 7
- Football field - 1

YMCA - SUMMERVILLE FAMILY

- Gymnastics facility
- Weight rooms - 2
- Spin room
- Cardio rooms - 2
- Aerobic rooms - 2
- Wellness pool
- Childcare rooms and outdoor playground
- Community room

YMCA - THE PONDS (RECENTLY COMPLETED)

- Gymnasium
- Locker rooms
- Wellness center
- Child watch area
- Aerobic studio
- 5+ acres for ballfields
- Amphitheater

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

FRANCIS BEIDLER FOREST (16,000 ACRES)

- Located within Four Holes Swamp
- Old growth swamp forests
- 1.75 mile boardwalk trail
- Hiking trails on old log roads
- 1.5 mile guided canoe trail through swamp



Francis Beidler Forest

EXISTING PROGRAMS SUMMARY

There are several recreational programs offered to residents within Dorchester County. Most programs include active sports. Below are programs offered in the county listed by organization.

FAITH SELLERS SENIOR CENTER (SUMMERVILLE)

- Health and physical fitness courses
 - Aerobics
 - Yoga
 - “Sit and Get Fit”
 - Weight training
 - Enhance fitness
 - Line dancing
 - Chair exercise
- Arts and crafts
 - Ceramics
 - Clay
 - Crafts
 - Quilting
 - Knitting
 - Crochet
 - Painting
- Education
 - Learn about the 50 states
 - Reading, writing, basic math
 - Bible study
 - “Bookmobile”
 - Computer classes
- Cards and games
 - Canasta
 - Bridge
 - Pinochle
 - Mahjong
 - Bunco
- Just for fun
 - Bingo
 - Activity day
 - “Sing-a-Long”
 - Birthday celebration

- Special interest groups
 - Clemson Ladies
 - AARP Member Meeting
 - NARFE Member Meeting
 - Silver-Haired Legislation Meeting
 - Red Hat Society
 - RSVP (Retired Seniors Volunteer Program)
 - Seminars and special opportunities
 - Grandparents Day celebration
 - Widows/widowers support group
 - Tax stimulus preparation
 - AARP defensive driving
 - Accessing the Social Security website
 - Ladies book club
 - Crafts with Heartland Hospice
 - Grandparent/parent support group
- Meal deliveries

DAVID SOJOURNER SENIOR CENTER (ST. GEORGE)

- Arts and crafts
 - Crafts
 - Sewing
 - Crochet
- Health and physical fitness
 - Chair exercise
- Games and activities (not the actual sports)
 - Basketball
 - Baseball
 - Volleyball
 - Tally hoop
 - Bingo
 - Nutro bingo
- Just for fun
 - “Sing-a-Long”
 - Birthday celebration
- Seminars and special opportunities
 - Speakers
 - Gospel
 - Prayer network
 - Bible study
- Meal deliveries

DIXIE YOUTH BASEBALL

- Softball
- Baseball

OTHER PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

- Friends of the Edisto River
- National Audubon Society at Beidler Forest

SUMMERVILLE BOXING CLUB

- Boxing

SUMMERVILLE LITTLE LEAGUES

- Baseball
 - Angel Ball: 4 yr. olds
 - Tee League: 5-6 yr. olds
 - A League (Machine Pitch): 6-7 yr. olds
 - AA League (Machine Pitch): 7-9 yr. olds
 - AAA League (Minors): 8-11 yr. olds
 - Major League: 10-12 yr. olds

SUMMERVILLE SERTOMA CLUB

- Football
 - Mighty Mites: 6 yr. olds
 - Bantam: 7-8 yr. olds
 - A: 9-10 yr. olds
 - B: 11-12 yr. olds
 - C: 13-15 yr. olds
- Cheerleading

TRI-COUNTY ELITE

- Competitive cheerleading
- Cheer teams
 - Tiny: 5 yr. olds and under
 - Mini: 8 yr. olds and under
 - Youth/Junior: 11 yr. olds and under
 - Junior/Senior: 12-18 yr. olds
- Dance teams
 - Junior
 - Youth
- Cheernastics
 - 12 yr. olds and up
 - 9-11 yr. olds
 - 6-8 yr. olds

TOWN OF HARLEYVILLE

- Women's softball league
- Girl's softball league
- Pony League baseball
- Men's softball league interest

TOWN OF ST. GEORGE

- Coach Pitch
- Teeball
- Girl's softball league
- Soccer
- Football

YMCA - OAKBROOK SPORTS FACILITY

- Swim lessons (youth and adult)
- Swim Team (year-round)
- Swim birthday parties
- Family Swim Nights
- Youth and adult soccer leagues (fall and spring)
- Youth and adult flag football
- Youth lacrosse league
- Youth baseball leagues (4 -12 yr. olds)
- After-school care
- Summer day camp
- Summer activity camps (soccer, baseball, etc)
- Adult kickball leagues

YMCA - SUMMERVILLE FAMILY

- Personal training
- Floor and water aerobics
- Yoga and Pilates classes
- Spin classes
- Massage Therapy sessions
- Infant/toddler swim lessons
- Gymnastics
- Childcare
- Family Swim Night
- Youth and adult tennis/golf at Legend Oaks Golf Club

DORCHESTER COUNTY SCHOOLS

Public schools within Dorchester County are divided into two school districts: District Two and District Four. The county does not have a shared use agreement with any county school. However, Eagle Nest Elementary School (below), located in School District Two, has a portion of its land on Dorchester County property at the waste water treatment plant. This school has an agreement with the city of North Charleston for public use of its facilities. Dorchester County could implement a similar agreement to use other existing public facilities at county schools on a shared and limited basis. The following summaries provide an overview of each district:

DORCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT TWO

- AREA: East side of county (North Charleston, Summerville and adjacent areas)
- 2007 enrollment: 21,782 students
- School break-down
 - 11 elementary
 - 6 middle
 - 3 high school
 - 1 alternative program (grades 6-12)
 - 1 adult/community education program (pre-k to adult)

DORCHESTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT FOUR

- AREA: Harleyville, Reevesville, Ridgeville, St. George
- 2007 enrollment: 2,328 students
- School break-down
 - 2 elementary
 - 2 middle
 - 1 high school
 - 1 adult/community
 - 1 education center



<http://ees.ddtwo.org/> - Eagle Nest Elementary School

