



Berkeley County, South Carolina
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
February 2021

UPDATE DATE after Public Hearing

Berkeley County COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT February 2021

I. Introduction

The purpose of the Community Needs Assessment is to identify the community development and housing needs of the communities within Berkeley County; particularly the needs of low- and moderate-income (LMI) persons, and the activities that may be undertaken with Community Development Block Grant funds, through the citizen participation plan process. The Community Needs Assessment provides a summary overview of community development and housing needs in the county and examines the special needs of low- and moderate-income persons.

II. Outreach

To formulate an assessment of community needs, reliance is placed on existing sources of data; the US Census, the adopted Comprehensive Plan, feedback from recent public meetings that were held as part of the ongoing One Berkeley Comprehensive Plan update, as well as input from county staff, residents and community organizations. At each County Council meeting there is a specific agenda item which permits county residents to express their concerns about the business of the county or their particular needs. As a result, Berkeley County residents have monthly opportunities to express neighborhood and community needs directly to County Council, in addition to community meetings that Council members regularly attend in their individual Council district.

Finally, each year, the County holds a Community Needs Assessment Public Hearing for the express purpose of soliciting community needs of county residents. This meeting is advertised in a newspaper of general circulation and posted on the County's web site along with other agenda items. Residents and community organizations were given the opportunity to participate in the process at the Community Needs Assessment Public Hearing held in February 2021 and to provide comments via the County website.

III. County-wide Demographics – Based on 2019 Census Estimates

1. Population (2019 Census Estimates)

Total Population	215,044	Vulnerable Populations	
African American/Black	51,611	Elderly > 62	35,991
White	143,219	Female Head of Household	19,235
American Indian/ Alaskan	860	Disabled	30,751
Islander/ Asian	4,946	Hispanic	14,193

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2. Housing Data (2019 Census Estimates)

Total Housing Units - 84,098			
Owner Occupied	55,295	Renter Occupied	21,586
Median Mortgage Payment	\$1,358	Median Rent Payment	\$1,109
Owners paying > 30% of HH Income for Housing	17%	Renters paying > 30% of HH Income for Housing	45%
Vacant Units	7,217		
# Units Lacking Complete Plumbing Facilities	245		
# Units Lacking Complete Kitchen Facilities	240		

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3. Income Data: The following census block groups have been identified as LMI based on 2019 United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Low- to Moderate-Income data for Use in CDBG Grants.

Census Tract	Block Group	Low Income	LMI	LMI Percentage
20201	2	850	1310	51.37%
20904	3	145	350	51.47%
20202	1	360	505	51.79%
20901	2	380	625	52.52%
20405	1	835	1795	52.56%
20903	1	545	1020	52.71%
20809	3	695	1305	52.83%
20901	1	240	325	54.62%
20101	2	625	1260	55.26%
20102	2	530	965	56.43%
20201	1	580	860	58.11%
20401	2	530	1270	58.12%
20401	1	695	1405	59.53%
20302	1	780	1315	60.74%
21000	1	540	1220	61.00%
20725	3	140	335	62.04%
20811	3	235	555	62.36%
20503	1	675	695	64.06%
20506	2	700	1090	67.70%
20718	3	235	965	68.44%
20717	1	655	1300	69.33%
20202	3	740	1035	70.17%
20811	1	1490	2480	71.37%
20725	2	145	270	72.97%
21000	3	995	1405	81.92%
20202	2	345	505	82.79%

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Low to Moderate Income Areas in Berkeley County

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IV. Community Needs

The following have been identified as the Community Needs of the County's low- and moderate-income families and individuals.

A. Housing Needs

Need: Provide opportunities for all residents to live in quality, affordable housing.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Ensure regulations do not preclude or impose burdens on development of housing for special needs groups.
2. Work with developers to review regulations for flexibility, innovation, and costs burdens.
3. Investigate creating incentives in the Zoning Ordinances to provide a portion of each subdivision as affordable housing.
4. Work with housing service providers to identify existing programs or establish new programs that counsel residents on issues limiting home ownership opportunities, such as personal finance, home maintenance, and foreclosure prevention.
5. Ensure all Berkeley residents have access to information regarding their rights to housing opportunities under the Fair Housing laws of SC.
6. Coordinate with the SC Regional Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity and other service delivery agencies, to identify existing programs or establish new programs that counsel residents on issues limiting home ownership opportunities, such as personal finance, home maintenance, foreclosure prevention and coordination of resources.
7. Support the development of affordable housing and diverse housing types.
8. Support development of affordable housing through the improvement and expansion of infrastructure and facilities.

Need: Ensure that all current and future residents have the opportunity to live in sound, healthy and safe housing.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Require all homes to be built to standard building codes, including requirements for indoor plumbing facilities, and to meet require FEMA regulations.
2. Reduce slum and blight in residential neighborhoods through demolition of vacant/abandoned buildings and neighborhood cleanups thus encouraging redevelopment in newly available space.
3. Consider providing incentives to provide affordable housing to reduce overcrowding.
4. Evaluate programs administered by the housing service providers and needs for the County to work more closely with them to:

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- a. Identify older, "under-plumbed" units needing renovations;
- b. Develop a central location that people who need help can contact;
- c. Develop a central location to locate and apply for grants to pay for renovation projects; and
- d. Provide assistance in rehabilitation of properties following natural disasters.

B. Infrastructure Needs

Need: The citizens of Berkeley County will have access to clean water for drinking and other household needs.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Support expansion of existing public water systems to serve rural areas designated for growth, especially those areas that are immediately adjacent to existing systems.
2. Develop and expand water systems in conjunction with other governmental facilities to maximize efficiency of resources.
3. Seek resources to support provision of public potable water sources in the Longridge, Cainhoy/Wando, Betheria, Pringleton and Lebanon areas.

Need: To provide adequate waste disposal systems in the county to protect the health of its citizens.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Provide assistance upgrading existing malfunctioning wastewater systems to designated areas with imminent health threats.
2. Develop and expand sewer systems in conjunction with other governmental facilities to maximize efficiency of resources.
3. Coordinate with various agencies working to reduce and eliminate the number of households without complete plumbing and/or appropriate wastewater disposal systems.

Need: The citizens of Berkeley County will have access to reliable broadband internet services.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Identify areas in the county where high-speed internet access is currently unavailable and/or existing service is unreliable.
2. Identify opportunities to expand and improve internet access to those communities where access is lacking.
3. Coordinate with state and local agencies and broadband providers to develop a plan for providing access to rural areas and seek resources, including CDBG funding, to implement and expand services and/or upgrade existing networks.

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C. Public Facilities

Need: Adopt policies regarding the establishment, expansion, or location of community facilities that are consistent with the County's land use policies.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Provide for equitable distribution of community facilities throughout the county.
2. Develop community facilities in conjunction with other governmental facilities to maximize efficiency of resources.
3. Identify sources of funding for development of each facility.

Need: Provide a variety of recreational activities and facilities that attract new residents and economic development while being compatible with the county's existing character and environment.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Update the needs assessment of deficiencies in existing parkland and recreation facilities to ensure that they are equitably distributed around the County and revise if necessary.
2. Ensure that a variety of recreational activities and facilities are provided to meet the needs of the county's population mix.
3. Place priority on maintaining and upgrading existing facilities and providing new facilities where they are non-existent, particularly income-disadvantaged communities.
4. Address the need for multi-purpose community centers to serve neighborhoods throughout the County.

D. Public Safety

Need: The Sheriff's Office, County Fire Services and Emergency Medical Services departments will work to protect the lives and property of those who reside in or visit Berkeley County using every resource available.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Ensure the personal and property safety of the residents of Berkeley County.
2. Address the need for additional deputies in order to better serve and protect residents of the County.
3. Provide additional police vehicles to better serve residents.
4. Increase law enforcement visibility.
5. Increase citizen participation and neighborhood crime watch in the County in concert with the Berkeley Sheriff's Department's Citizen Academy to afford

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residents an opportunity to learn more about law enforcement and the workings of the Sheriff's Department.

6. Continue expansion of the water system in order that citizens are afforded enhanced fire protection.
7. Assess the feasibility of instituting a county-wide fire protection system.
8. Investigate options for additional fire stations thus providing better coverage.
9. Provide supportive services for special needs populations including youth aging out of foster care, the elderly, the homeless, those fleeing abusive situations, mentally or physically disabled persons, and individuals suffering from addiction.

E. Public Health

Need: Provide the citizens of Berkeley County with convenient and timely access to urgent and emergent healthcare options.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Identify areas in the county where there is limited access to urgent care centers and hospital emergency rooms within a reasonable travel distance.
2. Identify opportunities for public/private partnerships to locate and operate an urgent care medical center or similar in a locality that is easily accessible to low- and moderate-income persons and those citizens living in rural areas.
3. Coordinate with local municipalities to identify existing, unused buildings that could be retrofitted to house a medical care facility.
4. Seek resources, perhaps partly CDBG funding, to help facilitate increasing the availability of health services, including testing, diagnostic and other medical services at a fixed location.

F. Food Access

Need: Ensure that the citizens of Berkeley County have access to quality, healthy food

Implementation Strategies:

1. Identify food deserts – areas with limited access to buy affordable, quality fresh food – within the County, factors contributing to those areas being designated as food deserts (low- to moderate-income, access to transportation, lack of grocery stores providing fresh produce at reasonable prices, etc.), and how to address the issue.
2. Work with existing agencies that operate food pantries to provide new or additional services, and/or expand their distribution area.
3. Establish a regularly occurring food market/farmers market in an area that is currently underserved by large grocery retailers.

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G. Economic Development

Need: Encourage the location and expansion of industries in rural areas for the provision of needed jobs.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Encourage and support efforts of the rural communities to implement strategic economic development plans.
2. Work with industries to identify and recruit potential spin-off industries.
3. Use CDBG funds for infrastructure or other commercial/industrial improvements to stimulate the creation of jobs, at least 51% of which will be for low- and moderate-income persons.
4. Target recruitment and retention of a diversity of industries.
5. Participate in cooperative regional efforts to identify prospective industries and enable them to select locations that maximize the potential of future success.
6. Work with a varied assortment of quality manufacturing and service industries to provide a diversification of job opportunities and income levels.
7. Increase access to transportation options.
8. Provide access to higher education and training to close the skills gap.
9. Ensure adequate access to broadband internet.
10. Encourage the development of affordable workforce housing.

H. Obstacles to Economic Competitiveness

Need: Ensure and promote community sustainability by providing new or improved opportunities for economic development and job creation for LMI persons in the County.

Implementation Strategy:

1. Provide necessary community facilities to support economic or redevelopment, building on community assets and resources.

I. Workforce Development

Need: Promote opportunities for job training opportunities and job creation for LMI persons.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Provide adequate education and training opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed.
2. Target recruitment and support development of existing industries requiring the occupational skills and education of the existing labor force base.

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3. Promote opportunities to maintain low levels of unemployment and reduce underemployment of County labor force.

J. Neighborhood and Downtown Revitalization

Need: Encourage and create economic opportunities through job creation and downtown revitalization in the County's small towns.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Promote economic opportunity through new or improved availability of infrastructure and services to small businesses and ensure accessibility thereto for low- and moderate-income persons.
2. Encourage the redevelopment of downtown and neighborhood areas.

VI. Priorities and Planned Actions

A. Top 3 priority needs:

1. Infrastructure
2. Rural Economic Opportunities
3. Access to Healthy Food

B. Actions to be undertaken to meet the needs

Each of the above referenced items has been rated by community need and consideration of benefit to LMI residents.

1. Infrastructure

a) Implement the Berkeley County Water & Sanitation's (BCWS) developed plan of action for future water and sewer projects based on residents' requests, needs and the feasibility of providing services to those who lack adequate service.

b) Identify areas in the county where high-speed internet access is currently unavailable and/or existing service is unreliable and coordinate with state and local agencies and broadband providers to develop a plan for providing access to rural areas and seek resources, including CDBG funding, to implement and expand services and/or upgrade existing networks

2. Rural Economic Opportunities

- a) Work with a variety of quality manufacturing and service industries to provide a diversification of job opportunities and at multiple income levels in rural areas;
- b) Ensure the County's labor force has access to training and employment;

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- c) Ensure recruited industries have access to an educated and trained labor force; and
- d) Ensure there is adequate broadband access available in rural areas.

3. Access to Healthy Food

- a) Work to improve people's access to food in areas of the County that qualify as food deserts.
- b) Work with agencies that operate food pantries to provide new or additional food services, and/or expand their distribution area to LMI areas in need, particularly those that are located in food deserts.

C. Activities for CDBG funding consideration and rationale

The upper part of Berkeley County is predominately LMI and it is hoped that upgrading the community and water/sewer facilities, as well as broadband access will increase the chances for expanded economic development activity to serve and support quality of life enhancements for the low- and moderate-income residents. Expanded broadband access will also be a beneficial service to those who find themselves working and schooling from home more as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Additionally, this same area of Berkeley County has limited to no access to after-hours healthcare. The closest hospital/emergency department/urgent care is located in Moncks Corner. Reasonable access to quality healthcare at all times of day, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, could certainly benefit the low- to moderate- income residents who may not have the means to access care after regular business operating hours.

The 2020-2021 CDBG Program has been amended to include funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief Economic Security Act (CARES Act). In addition to traditional CDBG-eligible project funding, CDBG-CV funds are being made available for certain activities that specifically prevent, prepare for and respond to the Coronavirus. Potentially eligible activities include qualifying Community Services and Critically-Needed Public Facility Improvements. Examples include, but are not limited to: funding food pantries and food distribution/delivery for elderly or other primarily LMI residents, increasing the capacity and availability of targeted health services, and equipment and public improvements needed to expand or improve broadband internet access.