

THE LOWER SALUDA GREENWAY INITIATIVE



A FLOURISHING GREENWAY.
A HUB FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH.
A CONNECTION BETWEEN COMMUNITIES.



Lower Saluda Greenway Initiative

In April 2017 the Michael J. Mungo Foundation and Lexington County commissioned the Boudreaux Group to plan and host a workshop to explore ways to improve aesthetics and attract new businesses to the St. Andrews corridor in order for it to continue to be a vibrant, beautiful, and inviting gateway to Lexington County.

The Boudreaux Group brought together stakeholders, residents, investors, and community leaders to brainstorm ways to improve the corridor.

Following is the abstract of the three-day workshop including challenges, existing conditions, and exciting vision concepts.

LOWER SALUDA GREENWAY INITIATIVE WORKSHOP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

St. Andrews Road is the gateway corridor to one of the Midlands most beloved and visited attractions: Saluda Shoals Park. The Park has had a tremendous impact on the local and regional economy (over \$18 million dollars in 2016) and continues to attract increasing numbers of visitors and pass holders due to world class soccer and lacrosse fields, tennis courts, and expanded trails and programming. Saluda Shoals Park is the second most visited attraction in the Midlands after Riverbanks Zoo and Gardens.

In addition, St. Andrews Road is home to numerous residential neighborhoods and commercial developments, many that are aging and in need of revitalization. St. Andrews Road has the potential and the capacity to become a beautiful and vibrant corridor that will celebrate the impact of Saluda Shoals Park and attract new businesses, civic facilities and residential opportunities that reflect the mission of the Park and the natural beauty and assets of the Saluda River. Completion of the Lower Saluda Greenway will help transform the area much like the Swamp Rabbit Trail renewed Travelers Rest, SC.

The Lower Saluda Greenway District is on the cusp of becoming not only a home to a vibrant greenway with a world-class park connected to downtown Columbia, but also a vibrant and highly-desirable place to live, raise families, shop, and connect with friends in a creative community.

Harness this opportunity now.






Over the past several decades, the area of unincorporated Lexington County along the St. Andrews Road corridor has gone through several identities: at first, the area was known as “Whitehall,” and was named after one of the original residential developments located in the center of the area. As time passed, the Town of Irmo developed to the north, and the area along the St. Andrews corridor began to lose its identity. Therefore, it was an important aspect of the study to rebrand the area as a district with defined boundaries and to provide it with a distinct name: **The Lower Saluda Greenway District.**

DEFINING THE DISTRICT





The map above shows the highlights of the Lower Saluda Greenway District

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|--|
|  | Schools |  | Residential neighborhoods |
|  | Major commercial areas |  | ICRC facilities including Saluda Shoals, Seven Oaks, and Mungo Parks |
|  | Lake Murray and the Saluda River | | |

ASSETS CURRENTLY IN PLACE

- ☛ Natural resources: The Saluda River and Lake Murray
- ☛ Economic impact of Saluda Shoals Park: \$18 million (2016)
- ☛ Irmo cluster schools: quality education
- ☛ Established, mature neighborhoods with longtime residents
- ☛ Convenient and quality shopping
- ☛ State-of-the-art health care
- ☛ The public library
- ☛ Strong community organizations
- ☛ A faith-based community
- ☛ A pet-friendly community
- ☛ Appearance ordinances and standards being updated by Lexington County



THE CHALLENGES





- ❖ Funding
- ❖ Multi-jurisdictional government in the area
- ❖ Lack of development, planning standards, and ordinances
- ❖ Inequality of Hospitality Tax distribution
- ❖ Outside perceptions of the area due to traffic, schools, run-down landscaping; area is in an urban sag
- ❖ Lack of vision, sense of place, and identity for the community
- ❖ Lack of landscaping at I-26 interchanges
- ❖ Lack of connectivity within the district
- ❖ Lack of maintenance in public rights-of-way
- ❖ No cohesive architectural character
- ❖ Few beautification efforts



AREAS OF STUDY

GATEWAYS





Several key entrances into the district were studied as possible gateways for new signage and improvements to welcome residents and visitors traveling on I-26. The four exits include:

-  Lake Murray Boulevard
-  Harbison Boulevard
-  St. Andrews Road
-  Piney Grove Road

These exits are prime areas for landscaping and signage improvements to provide more formal and identifiable entrances into the Lower Saluda Greenway District.

KEY INTERSECTIONS





Three key intersections were identified as having the most potential for improvement to further define the district:

-  The intersections at St. Andrews Road and Piney Grove Road
-  The intersections at Piney Grove Road and Old Bush River Road
-  The intersections at Lake Murray Boulevard at Old Bush River Road
-  The intersection at Lake Murray Boulevard at St. Andrews Road

All of the key intersections provide opportunities for the creation of a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly district. Additional landscaping along these intersections with mast-arm traffic signals and graphic pole banners can greatly improve the aesthetics of these intersections.

PRIMARY CORRIDORS AND IMPROVEMENTS

The primary connecting corridors within the district include:

-  St. Andrews Road
-  Old Bush River Road
-  Piney Grove Road
-  Lake Murray Boulevard

8 These provide prime opportunities for the addition of street trees, planted medians, buffered sidewalks, and bike lanes.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Driving along St. Andrews Road adjacent to the railroad tracks across from Murraywood Shopping Center; Lake Murray Boulevard in the distance.



Exiting from the Interstate 26 interchange onto St. Andrews Road heading towards Irmo



Approaching the Piney Grove Road intersection, driving along St. Andrews Road; Old Bush River Road seen in the distance



Driving along Lake Murray Boulevard heading from St. Andrews Road toward Interstate 26



Driving along Old Bush River Road heading towards Saluda Shoals Park (note the “share the road” sign despite unfavorable conditions for bicyclists)



Approaching the railroad crossing at the Shaw plant (seen in the distance) driving along St. Andrews Road.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Sidewalk along St. Andrews Road approaching the intersection at Piney Grove Road.



St. Andrews Road at the intersection with Old Bush River Road (Piney Grove Road in the distance)



Approaching the Piney Grove Road intersection, driving along St. Andrews Road; Old Bush River Road seen in the distance

“Property, sales, and income taxes make up 86% of local revenues in the suburbs. As median income falls, housing values and local tax revenues fall, and local government revenues also fall.”

—First Tier Suburbs Council
National League of Cities

WHAT CAN THE FUTURE HOLD FOR THE LOWER SALUDA GREENWAY DISTRICT?

- ☛ Completion of the Lower Saluda Greenway
- ☛ An engaging community of residents who support the vision
- ☛ Strong, connected commercial nodes
- ☛ Efficient and safe public transit
- ☛ Good jobs and access to regional high-tech jobs
- ☛ Partnerships with USC and Midlands Technical College and Columbia College
- ☛ Vibrant arts and culture
- ☛ Standards and ordinances that support the vision; beautification projects, appropriate scale and development; and public-private partnerships
- ☛ Expansion of Saluda Shoals Park and its amenities, such as the universally-inclusive playground
- ☛ Ability for residents to age in place aided by top healthcare systems
- ☛ Young families living in and owning homes as they gravitate toward:
 - ☛ Award-winning schools
 - ☛ Established neighborhoods that have been revived
 - ☛ The ability to walk and bike to restaurants, shopping, and parks
 - ☛ Greenways throughout the district
 - ☛ Beautiful properties and landscapes
 - ☛ Safe neighborhoods
 - ☛ Small town charm with unique character



GATEWAYS

The image below shows what the interchange at Interstate 26 and St. Andrews Road looks like in its present condition. The interchange is a prime location for the addition of colorful landscaping and signage to welcome visitors and passersby to the Lower Saluda Greenway District.



GATEWAYS

The illustration below demonstrates what the interchange could look like with recommended improvements. The addition of trees along the exit ramps and colorful swaths of foliage and flowers on either side of the interstate creates interest and will make the gateway look and feel welcoming. This illustration serves as an example of what could be done at the other three interstate interchanges in the district at Piney Grove Road, at Harbison Boulevard, and at Lake Murray Boulevard.



GATEWAYS

The image below shows what the view looks like from St. Andrews Road just after exiting Interstate 26 heading towards Irmo. This area is a prime location for the addition of gateway signage and landscaping to welcome passersby and visitors to the Lower Saluda Greenway District of Lexington County.



GATEWAYS

The illustration below demonstrates what the gateway could look like. Note the monument sign: this will help brand the area as the Lower Saluda Greenway District and the trees and landscaping will make the gateway more aesthetically pleasing. This gateway serves as an example of what can be done at all four exits from Interstate 26 leading into the district. These gateways help define thresholds of entry into the district and provide great opportunities for graphic branding of the district.



KEY INTERSECTIONS

The image below shows an aerial view of the intersection at Old Bush River Road and Lake Murray Boulevard. This large intersection is not pedestrian-friendly in its current state, but has great potential for streetscape improvements and gateway signage.



KEY INTERSECTIONS

The illustration below demonstrates what the intersection could look like with added landscaping, planted medians, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and crosswalks, mast-arm traffic signals, and the addition of gateway signage on the southeast corner of the intersection. Lake Murray Boulevard is the northern boundary of the Lower Saluda Greenway District and “welcome” signage could provide graphic branding opportunities and a defined threshold of entry into the district.



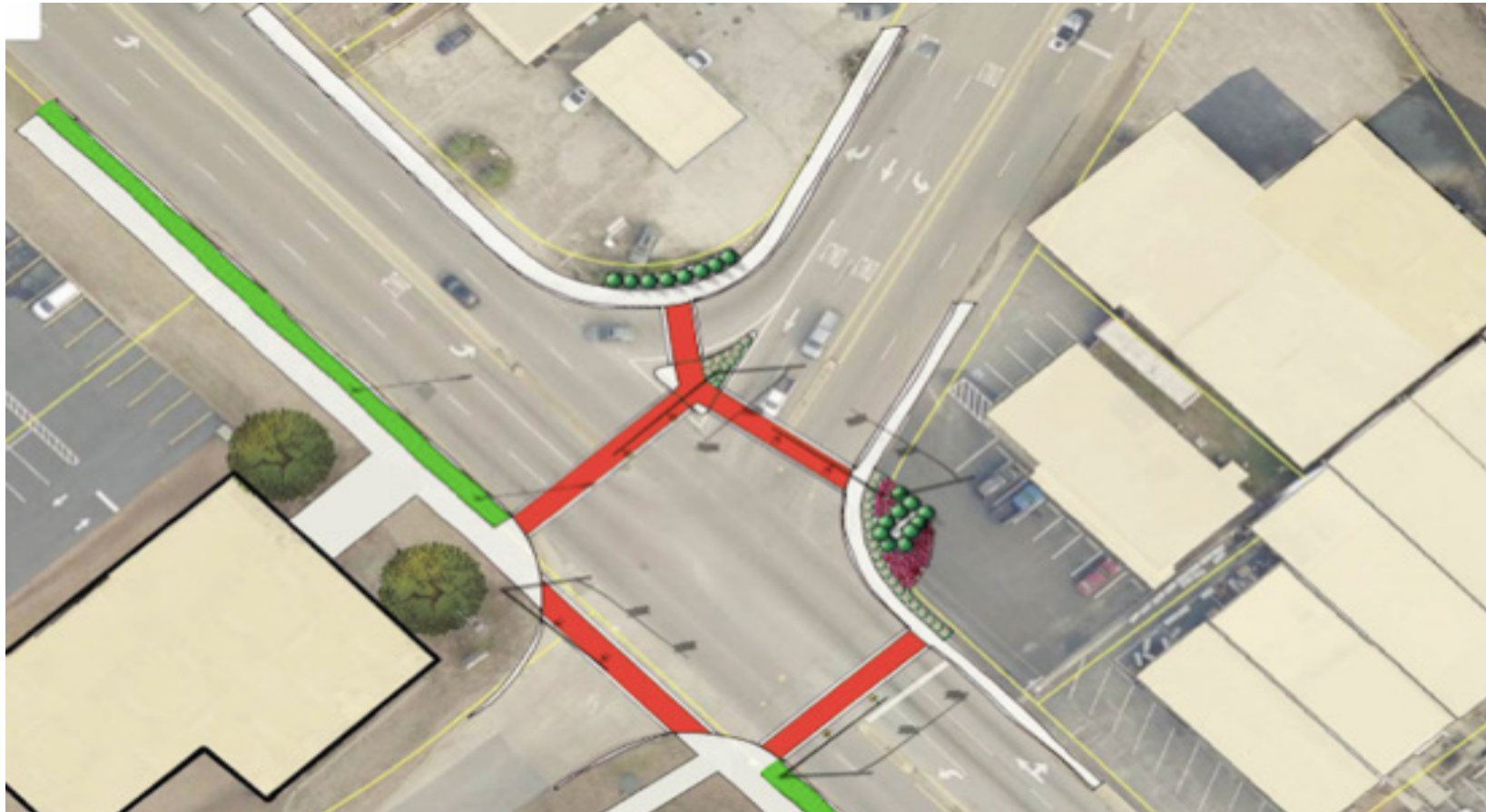
KEY INTERSECTIONS

The image below shows an aerial view of the intersection at St. Andrews Road and Piney Grove Road. This large intersection is not particularly pedestrian-friendly now but has great potential for streetscape improvements and additional development.



KEY INTERSECTIONS

The illustration below demonstrates what the intersection could look like with added landscaping, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and crosswalks, and mast-arm traffic signals. This intersection also provides an opportunity for an additional building or development on the southwest corner, as the outparcel has already been prepared for the construction of a new building.



CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

The image below shows Old Bush River Road in its current state with no sidewalks, bike lanes, or street trees. As this road is a highly-trafficked area, it is recommended that this corridor be improved by adding sidewalks, a bike lane on either side, street trees, and possibly a middle turn lane.



CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

The illustration below shows a section view of how the roadway could look with the proposed improvements.



CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

The image below shows the view driving along St. Andrews Road approaching Piney Grove Road. This area is a prime location for the creation of planted medians, street trees, and graphic branding for the Lower Saluda Greenway District.



CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

The illustration below demonstrates what the corridor could look like with added landscaping, planted medians, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks with a landscape buffer, decorative street lighting, and dedicated bicycle lanes. These improvements not only make the area more pleasant to drive through, but they will also make it safer and more pleasant for walking or biking. This area of St. Andrews Road was used as an example to visualize the improvements that could be done along the entire corridor.



CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to improvements to the roadways and sidewalks along the St. Andrews Road corridor, many parking lots, shopping centers, and businesses provide opportunities for lower-cost improvements that can have a big impact on the revitalization along the St. Andrews Corridor.



CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

The illustration below demonstrates the dramatic improvement that can be created with lower-cost solutions such as landscaping and colorful plantings around signage and parking lots. Creating incentive programs for business owners to do such improvements could have a big impact on the corridor both aesthetically and economically by attracting new visitors, businesses, and residents to the area.



CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

To support the vision of the corridor means demonstrating the natural beauty of the Saluda River and enabling residents or visitors to walk and bike around the district. Thus, the design of future development should reflect this vision through the architecture, landscaping, and corridor improvements. Currently, the St. Andrews Corridor has many smaller developments without consistent architectural character, all with parking lots along the roadway, and many curb cuts and driveways interfering with the safe use of sidewalks.








CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS







The illustration below shows how future development will create both distinct character within the district's architecture and foster an environment in which walking or biking is safe and enjoyable. This is best accomplished by making sidewalks wider, adding shade and foliage, and relocating parking lots to the rear of buildings, rather than leaving them adjacent to the road. With these improvements, the Lower Saluda Greenway District will have a new, authentic sense of place that celebrates the Saluda River and the spirit of the community.



Within 3-6 Months






-  Designate the Lower Saluda Greenway District
-  Create the Lower Saluda Greenway District Alliance
-  Require DOT to regularly maintain sidewalks on St. Andrews Road
-  Work with law enforcement to control and stop graffiti
-  Support the enforcement of updated Lexington County appearance ordinances

Within 6-12 Months

-  Complete a market and branding study for the Irmo Schools cluster and for the Lower Saluda Greenway District
-  Complete an economic analysis study for the Lower Saluda Greenway District
-  Construct a landscaped gateway at Interstate 26 and St. Andrews Road
-  Create development and design standards for the Lower Saluda Greenway District
-  Provide incentives for commercial redevelopment and public-private partnerships
-  Resolve Carolina Water issues

RECOMMENDED CATALYST PROJECTS

Long Term Projects

-  Continue resolving Carolina Water issues
-  Create sustainable funding sources for the Lower Saluda Greenway District
-  Continue to implement the visions and priority projects for the Lower Saluda Greenway District
-  Improve the St. Andrews/Piney Grove/Old Bush River Road intersection
-  Road diet on St. Andrews Road consisting of landscaping, usable and safe sidewalks, and signage





Lower
Saluda Greenway Initiative