

# Charleston City Plan

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The City of Charleston  
Comprehensive Plan  
2020



# Learning from Century V

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# Rewind to 2010

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**Central focus was on mode shift and job creation.**

- It was still a novel concept to link land use with transportation.
- Housing supply was not a major concern.
- Climate change and sea level rise were not part of the discussion.

# Century V Goals

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## **Population & Housing**

Accommodate future population growth through land-use policies that encourage vibrant, safe, and diverse neighborhoods in areas that allow efficient use of space and transportation.

Ensure the Charleston population has access to housing opportunities that provide diversity in building types, availability for all income levels, proximity to transit and accessibility to job centers

## **Economic Development**

Develop and implement a multi-tiered economic development strategy for attraction and retention

## **Cultural Resources**

Charleston will sustain its rich and dynamic cultural heritage

## **Natural Resources**

Protect and preserve our natural resources to the greatest extent practical

# Century V Goals, ctd.

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## Land Use

Develop and maintain a sufficient open space/parks system so that the City is diverse in uses and opportunities and includes natural spaces and wildlife habitat, as well as passive and active recreation with an equitable distribution of parks, trees and pathways throughout the community

Implement land use and transportation planning and policies to create compact, mixed-use projects, forming gathering places and site designed to maximize affordable housing and encourage walking, bicycling and the use of existing and future public transit systems

## Mobility

Seek to offer as many choices for mobility in the City as possible, from modes to routes.

## Municipal Services

Ensure the highest quality public services and facilities to city residents by targeting municipal growth to urban and suburban areas and planning for capital improvements to support city growth.

## Strengths – what the plan and/or implementation did well

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- Maintained integrity of Urban Growth Boundary
- Density increased along transit-friendly corridors (downtown, Maybank Highway and Savannah Highway)
  - Chicken and egg: Even though transit infrastructure not yet there to support the density, the density creates the ridership to support transit
- Significant growth realized in areas targeted for growth (Urban Core and Urban); redevelopment of vacant/under-utilized sites
  - Examples: Citadel Mall and Peninsula
- Preservation of existing neighborhoods

# Weaknesses – where the plan and/or implementation fell short

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- Goals too general
- The highway designation is auto-centric and doesn't encourage mixed-use and higher density development along important transit corridors
- Urban Growth Boundary on James Island doesn't align with Century V recommendations for Folly Road or with Folly Road Overlay
- Preservation of existing neighborhoods at the cost of affordability
- Recommendations for Job Centers not followed to bring more employment near residential
- Water not mentioned – environmental considerations minimal
- Did not manage the edges well, resulting in a lot of growth in the suburban edges. The lower density designation resulted in more spread rather than compact concentrations of denser development and infill.
- Social component of development not addressed (i.e. gentrification, displacement, equity)
- Housing supply not addressed in depth
- Tourism population not considered
- Economic development opportunities given minimal consideration
- Reforming permitting/review process has been in past two plans and remains a major challenge

# Lessons for next time

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- Sea level rise and housing supply should be central focus; as well as linking land use to employment.
- Strike better balance between preservation and affordability. What does “protect neighborhoods” mean? No change at all vs. promote/enhance.
- Strike better balance between general goals and recommendations that allow for flexibility but also specificity for accountability.
- Include context for how other plans relate to the comprehensive plan.
- Rethink highway designation.
- Consider tourism in population and economic development elements.
- Adjust Urban Growth Boundary on James Island to better align with other plan recommendations.
- Recommendations should seek to prevent sprawl and better manage the edges.
- Directly address existing social disparities, potential for gentrification and displacement. The resulting recommendations should promote equity.

## **Physical plan document**

- More user-friendly for lay person
- More legible maps
- Aim to keep it not intimidating – like Century V



# Appendix - Implementation of Century V Recommendations

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**FOLLOWED**








**NOT FOLLOWED**



**TO SOME DEGREE**

# Population & Housing Recommendations

1	Track changes in national and local population and demographic shifts to ensure growth management, housing, land use and transportation policies reflect current trends and projections.	
2	Monitor housing construction permits and sale prices for continuous analysis of housing needs in all areas of the City	
3	Maintain land use policies that allow for and encourage diversity in housing opportunities in a variety of neighborhood contexts	
4	Encourage development of housing in compatible mixed-use neighborhoods and in close proximity to parks, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public transit, schools, and civic uses	
5	Adapt additional development guidelines that allow and incentivize the inclusion of mixed housing types within neighborhoods	
6	Adopt additional zoning rules that will incentivize the inclusion of workforce housing in new and infill developments	
7	Encourage retention of existing housing stock through preservation incentives and rehabilitation programs and code enforcement	
8	Support sustainable housing development through incentives for efficient construction practices and energy efficient buildings	

# Economic Development Recommendations







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1	Work to promote and improve local and regional infrastructure	
2	Attract all types of businesses through targeted incentives	
3	Provide business services and allocate resources to supporting and promoting small and local business development	
4	Implement targeted job/work centers	
5	Continue to promote and grow the capacity of minority and women owned businesses in the City	
6	Focus City resources and public finance programs on revenue generators and economic development engines	






# Cultural Resource Recommendations

1	Build, maintain and preserve an array of first-class cultural facilities and sites	✓
2	Support and implement recommendations from the Charleston Preservation Plan including landscape scale preservation efforts on Johns Island and the Cainhoy Peninsula	✗
3	Encourage public and private investment in cultural preservation, development and diversity	✗
4	Support the growth and development of Charleston's art Community	✓
5	Support policies, incentives and plans that encourage and stimulate preservation and growth of cultural resource opportunities, including the economy for heritage tourism	✓









# Natural Resource Recommendations

1	Ensure land development regulations adequately protect the city's farms, prime soils for farming, natural resources and rural areas	
2	Continue to support the use of an Urban Growth Boundary and Greenbelt and Parks system with Charleston County in West Ashley, Johns and James Island, and extend the UGB and Greenbelt goals to include the city's Berkeley County boundary at the Francis Marion National Forest in Cainhoy	
3	Continue to provide and expand the Parks system to include large and small Parks, as well as increased connectivity between greenspaces and public Access to waterways	
4	Continue to implement appropriate building standards for elevation, wind resistance and stormwater management and sustainability practices to plan and adapt to climatic events such as flooding and hurricanes	
5	Adopt stormwater management practices and standards that are 'light on the land,' encourage innovative BMP's and 'green' methods, i.e. bio-swales, porous pavements, rain gardens, etc., for treating stormwater and vegetative buffer requirements to improve the water quality of Charleston	
6	Continue air quality improvements through transportation planning and identifying and supporting local industries to reduce air pollution	

# Natural Resource Recommendations, ctd



7	Continue to play an active role in promoting sustainability initiatives within municipal operations and the Community at large, including: developing plans and education programs that promote sustainability and sustainable development; increase mobility choices; reduce water and air pollution; support energy conservation and efficiency; increase opportunities and funding for renewable energy; and encourage emission reductions and alternative fuels	
8	Continue to pursue a comprehensive reforms of the city's tree protection ordinance to align it with American Forests' recommendation that a city east of the Mississippi River should adopt/meet the goal to achieve/maintain a city-wide the goal to achieve/maintain a city-wide canopy cover of 40%	
9	Encourage small and large landowners to manage their land by the planting of native plant species and the removal of invasive species	
10	Promote sustainability through support for local agriculture and animal husbandry	
11	Inventory and document unique and sensitive natural resources, i.e. tree allees, unique wetlands, unique topographic features, unique waterways, flora and/or fauna habitats	

# Urban Growth Recommendations

1	Support Charleston County's Comprehensive Plan and its designation of an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) protecting rural areas surrounding the City of Charleston and other urban areas of Charleston County	
2	Work together with Berkeley County to have that county adopt a similar UGB system in the Cainhoy Peninsula, in the same location as the City of Charleston's along the inside boundary of the Francis Marion National Forest	
3	Work with Charleston, Berkeley, and Dorchester County residents and their leaders to implement land conservation programs in rural areas	
4	Ensure City land development regulations encourage compact development patterns that minimize consumption of land	
5	Tailor ordinances to complement the way of life in rural areas of the City	
6	Ensure land development regulations adequately protect natural resources in urban and suburban areas of the City	
7	Ensure land development regulations protect existing farms and agricultural use for non-contaminated vacant properties	
8	Ensure land use regulations allow urban agriculture as an alternative land use for non-contaminated vacant properties	









# Urban Growth Recommendations, ctd

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9	Draft a plan within 18 months for management of growth and development on the Cainhoy Peninsula and be completely through the process in 3 years	
10	Consider a Transfer of Development Right program	






# Neighborhood Recommendations

1	Engage existing Neighborhoods in more detailed design studies to examine specifically how growth can improve quality of life	
2	Revise land development regulations to focus on compatible mixing of building types. Buildings must reflect rather than be foreign to Neighborhood scale	
3	Revise land development regulations to allow for sustainable urban farming and small-animal husbandry	
4	Permit a variety of housing, services, workplaces, and civic institutions in Neighborhood settings. Strive to locate such a mix of uses within a five minute walk of any residence.	
5	Concentrate higher density housing within a five to ten minute walk of transit stops	
6	Accommodate the full spectrum of housing for all Neighborhoods by permitting a range of building types compatible with the Neighborhood setting	
7	Provide larger district Parks (50+ acres) for active and passive use within safe biking distance of all residents of the City	
8	Provide Neighborhood Parks (2-20 acres) within a ten minute walk of all homes. Work with Neighborhood councils to find location in existing Neighborhoods and require new Neighborhoods to be designed with usable Parks.	




# Neighborhood Recommendations, ctd

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9	Expand park connectors like greenways and bikeways by seeking partnerships with utility providers for use of utility corridors and expanding use of unused rail corridors	
10	Provide community agriculture opportunities within a ten minute walk of all homes	
11	Provide a productive environment for review of new development projects that includes citizen involvement early in the process	




# Gathering Place Recommendations

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1	Working with surrounding neighborhoods, create appropriate area plans and zoning for Gathering Place locations around the city for new mixed-use, walkable centers	
2	Assure that plans for Gathering Places are as transit friendly as possible	
3	Focus City development efforts on these sites, including possible public participation in infrastructure or incentives to make them as economically feasible as possible	

# Existing Traffic Patterns Recommendations

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1	Seek to enhance the City's network with road improvements. Coordinate road improvements with SCDOT, CHATS, and Charleston and Berkeley Counties	
2	Monitor streets with decreasing traffic load for potential "road diets" and conversion of vehicle space to pedestrian, bicycle, and/or transit space	
3	Monitor routes with increasing traffic load for enhanced transit routes and possible physical improvements to handle traffic loads	

# Street Recommendations









1	Design new streets and improve existing streets to accommodate walking, bicycling, and vehicle travel	
2	Adopt the new draft Street Standards as the City's policy for future Street design and retrofit	
3	Monitor all resurfacing of streets in the City for the possible inclusion of bike lanes where road widths allow. Work with SCDOT to accommodate non-standards lane widths where possible so that bike lanes can be included	
4	Target transportation investments to enhance the existing transportation network. Coordinate these improvements with SCDOT, CHATS, and Charleston and Berkeley Counties	
5	Prioritize improvements to existing thoroughfares and bottlenecks at major intersections and bridge locations	

# Network Expansion Recommendations




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1	Assure that new Neighborhood, commercial, and mixed-use developments are fully connected on all sides	
2	Seek to create as many network connections as possible between key suburban arterials. Add any needed connections to the <i>City's Master Road Plan</i>	
3	Implement connections designated in the <i>City's Master Road Plan</i> . Coordinate with SCDOT, CHATS, and Charleston and Berkeley Counties for inclusion on any needed priority lists.	

# Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Recommendations

1	Create and implement Street Standards and City policy that requires every Street that is built to be a “complete Street” including facilities for all mobility types and with urban design elements that help to facilitate alternative modes of travel, such as Street trees and on-Street parking	
2	Implement the routes and improvements shown on the attached pedestrian and bike plan maps using a set of new Street Standards	
3	Further enhance and update the proposed and planned network shown on the accompanying maps as funds permit	
4	Work with the City’s Bike and Pedestrian Committee and Community to encourage and facilitate multiple modes in every way possible	
5	Ensure that the City’s pedestrian amenities accommodate all users, regardless of disability	
6	Implement the recommendations of <i>West Ashley Greenway Master Plan</i> and continue efforts to improve facilities along its route	
7	Construct the bicycle/pedestrian lane for the Ashley River Bridge	
8	Establish an agreement with local utilities for use of utility corridors as walking and bicycling paths	





# Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Recommendations, ctd.

9	Seek funding to support the aforementioned recommendations and improvements	
10	The City should work to make sure that every residence in the City is within a half-mile (10 minute walk) of a dedicated bike and/or bike/ped facility	
11	The City should analyze streets that are currently serving the greatest traffic volumes to assure that those streets are safe for pedestrians and bicyclists as well, and if not, target these streets for high priority pedestrian and bicycle improvements	




# Public Transportation Recommendations

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1	Work closely with CARTA to identify optimal transit routes and locations for current and future transit stops	
2	Promote walkable Neighborhoods and Developments, with appropriate densities to support key transit corridors	
3	Continue to protect the railroad right-of-way running the length of the peninsula and connecting downtown with North Charleston and Summerville for use as a future transit corridor	
4	Study potential transit stops along the rail corridor connecting downtown with North Charleston and Summerville and coordinate land use recommendations in these areas to encourage compact, mixed-use development around these locations	

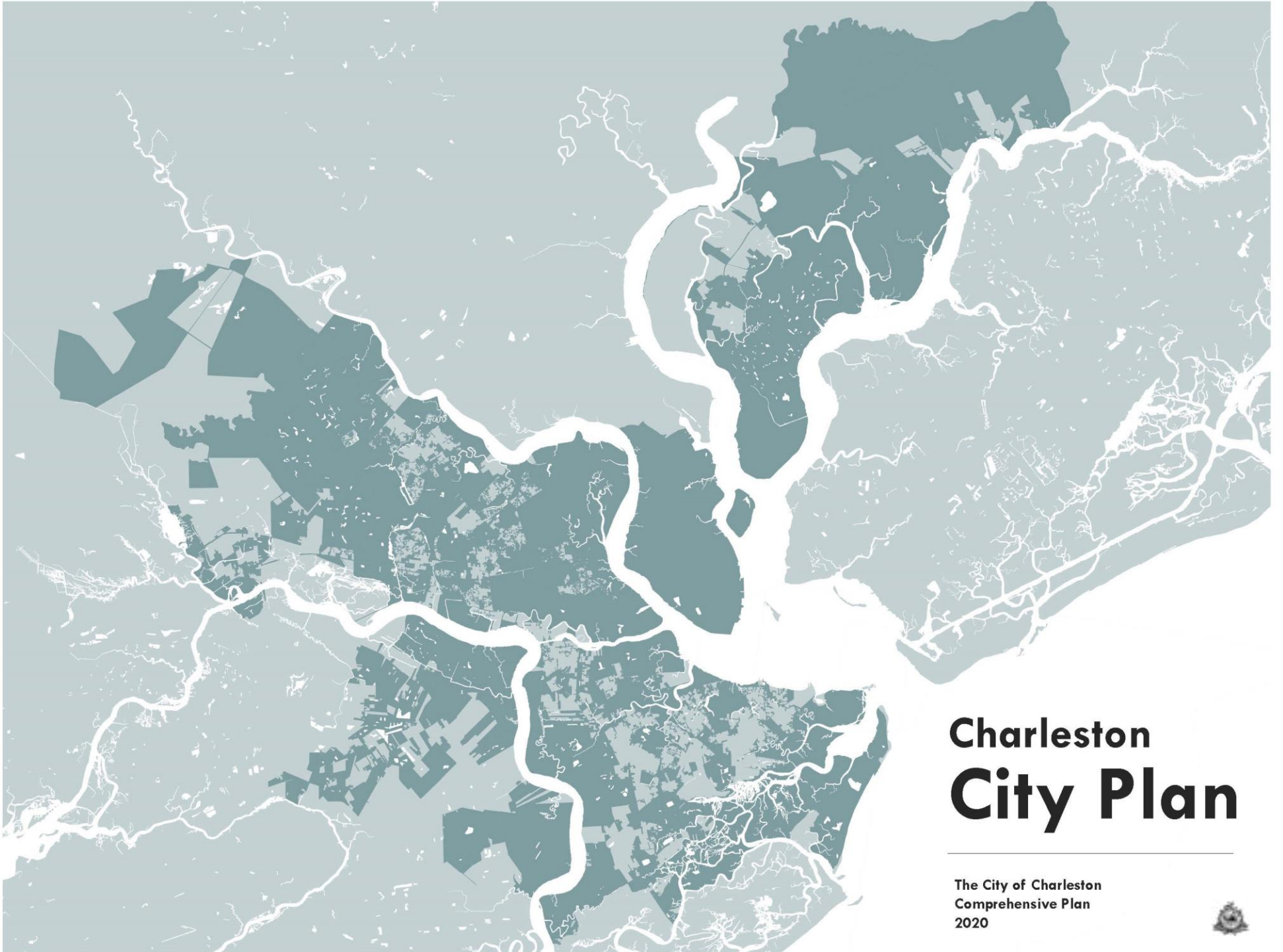
# Water Transportation Recommendations

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1	Continue efforts to enhance service between the Peninsula and Mount Pleasant, with enhanced and better located dock locations downtown	
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# Municipal Services Recommendations

1	Establish adequate public facility standards consistent with the service standards throughout the City	
2	Continue to focus the City's annexation efforts on urban and sub-urban areas within the Urban Growth Boundary	
3	Manage the provision of municipal services and facilities in rural, suburban and urban areas	
4	Continue to implement impact fees for environmental series and public safety facilities that will ensure the adequate provision of these services to growing areas of the City	
5	Provide an annual report of development impact fee funds and purchases	
6	Identify sources of fund that can be used to offset the costs associated with waiving the impact fees for affordable housing	
7	Re-evaluate the existing impact fee program prior to its expiration	
8	Research and evaluate candidates (facilities and equipment) for the existing impact fee program	
9	Research and evaluate other City services that may need additional funding due to growth and analyze existing City revenue streams for available funds for these services	



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