

Technical Memorandum 1.0
GOALS FOR THE TOWN OF
ARCADIA LAKES,
SOUTH CAROLINA
Central Midlands Council of
Governments
March 1, 2012

INTRODUCTION

Central Midlands Council of Governments (The COG) was hired by the Town of Arcadia Lakes in August, 2011 to provide technical assistance. The technical assistance consists of reviewing preliminary planning goals developed in a Town Council workshop in August 2011; reviewing different approaches to achieving these goals, including changes in governmental structure, and gathering citizen reaction to the goals and strategies. The COG staff held two public planning workshops in November of 2011. Participants in the workshops made suggestions about how to refine the preliminary goals and how to accomplish them. (All meeting comments are summarized in Appendix 3 at the end of this report.).

After reviewing the material in this report with Council, the remaining steps are:

1. Gather more citizen input by sending a survey to each available address in Arcadia Lakes during **March**.
2. Have another public workshop to review survey results, get citizen reaction to the preliminary goals and governance options during **May**.
3. Make a final report to Council in **June**.

CENSUS ANALYSIS

COG staff compared U.S. Census data from 2000 and 2010 to identify trends and compare Arcadia Lakes to the general population of Richland County. This analysis provides a useful context for goal setting, because Arcadia Lakes is unusual in many ways. The Census data is shown in tabular form in Appendix 2 of this report. Some conclusions from that analysis include:

- The Town's population declined slightly from 882 in 2000 to 861 in 2010.
- The population under 18 years of age declined by 25%.
- The population over age 65 increased by 15%.
- Median age increased from 49.1 to 55.4. (Median age is a statistical middle point---half the population is older than the median age, and half is younger.)

- The number of dwelling units in the Town increased from 389 to 407, an increase of 5%.
- The number of persons in the average household fell 6 percent, from 2.33 to 2.20.
- Owner occupied housing accounts for 88.7% of the housing stock, a very high percentage.
- Thirty one percent of the owner occupied housing units are owned “free and clear” with no mortgage.
- Only 7.4% of housing is rental.
- One person households account for 24.6% of all households in Arcadia Lakes. Two person households account for 49.6%. A total of 75.2% of households consist of only one or two persons.
- Households with children under 18 account for 20.5% of Arcadia Lakes households.

It is important to note the differences between Arcadia Lakes and Richland County overall:

- Richland County grew very rapidly during the past decade, with a 20% population increase, compared to a 2% loss in Arcadia Lakes.
- Richland County has a much higher percentage of persons under 18 years of age and a significantly lower percentage of persons 65 or over.
- Richland County’s median age is 33 years, compared to a 55.4 years median age in the County as a whole.
- Arcadia Lakes, being nearly “built out” has a higher population density than the overall County, with 1,331 persons per square mile, compared to 772 persons per square mile in the County.
- Arcadia Lakes’ 89% rate of owner occupied housing far exceeds Richland County’s rate of 55%.

REFINED GOAL STATEMENTS

The COG was provided with preliminary consensus goal statements developed by Town Council in June, 2011. These preliminary goals were discussed at length in the two public workshops. After the public input sessions, COG staff produced the following refined goal statements:

LONG-TERM GOALS FOR DISCUSSION

- **Proactively plan for the future**
 - Address the physical character and appearance of Arcadia Lakes
 - Improve the Town’s ordinances governing planning and zoning , environmental protection, trees, landscaping, and water quality.
 - Create a town center
- **Build “Community”**
 - Improve citizen communication through:
 - Citizen education on issues and decisions facing the Town
 - Citizen engagement
 - Community volunteer projects and special events to bond the community together.
- **Improve Law Enforcement**
 - Maintain the Town’s safe environment and low crime rate
 - Improve enforcement of traffic laws
 - Improve code enforcement
- **Enhance the Town’s Identity**
 - Capitalize on the Town’s natural beauty and quality of life
 - Capitalize on the lakes and trees, and housing that give the Town a positive identity.
 - Maintain the appearance of the successful signage and banners
- **Environment + Community = Protect & Grow Property Values and the Economy**
 - Recognize that quality of life and the neighborhood character of the Town are its primary economic assets.
 - Recognize maintaining a high level of aesthetic quality and community character is essential to maintain the Town’s appeal.
- **Town Council Demonstrate Leadership – “Lead”**

(The COG staff has left this statement “as is”, feeling that the Council’s decision to involve citizens in an open goal setting process is an excellent example of pro-active leadership, and, otherwise, its up to Council to interpret what this goal means to them and their constituents).

IMPLEMENTATION CONCEPTS ADDRESSING THE GOALS

The following section summarizes some ideas for implementing the goals. These concepts should be viewed as preliminary. In some cases, more than one alternative implementation approach is given.

1. Proactively Plan for the Future

- a. The *Comprehensive Plan* needs to be updated. This is a legal requirement and an opportunity to create a community vision for the future.
- b. The *Zoning Ordinance* needs to be reviewed and updated if needed. Tree protection, landscaping, traffic impacts, home occupations and accessory housing units for relatives are some areas that have changed since the Ordinance was written.
- c. The SC Planning Enabling Act was amended to include provisions encouraging collaboration and cooperation between adjacent communities on planning and development issues. A.L. needs to formalize a working arrangement with Richland County and F.A.
- d. Planning for bike and pedestrian safety and recreational opportunities needs to be included in plan update.
- e. The Town could annex abutting properties in unincorporated Richland County. Generally, this may not be a productive idea due to the nature of the properties on Two Notch--- much of the corridor needs to be redeveloped.
- f. Overall, the properties adjacent to the Town on Two Notch and Decker are a long term planning concern—they can be assets or liabilities in terms of the image of the Town.
- g. Trenholm Road bisects the Town and is the subject of traffic safety concerns. Possible approaches to traffic calming or coping include the following, in reverse order of difficulty:
 - i. Permanently mounted speed monitors like the one on Arcadia Lakes Drive.

- 1. Speed limit enforcement by law enforcement
 - ii.* Pedestrian crossings, safety islands
 - iii.* Divided boulevard conversion, with landscaped medians
 - h.* The age structure of the Town--- median age is in the 50's, as opposed to the low 30's for Richland County and Columbia--- points to at least two planning concerns:
 - i.* Needs of seniors---housing, transportation, access to medical and social services.
 - ii.* Need for a marketing strategy to maintain high owner-occupancy rates and property values.
 - i.* Town Center or Focal Point
 - i.* Town Centers are usually thought of as mixed use, higher intensity developments with residential, retail, restaurants, employment, etc.—this might work better on the edge or outside the town.
 - ii.* Acquiring a lakefront lot and developing a recreation site for residents was suggested at the workshops. This might be managed by a homeowners association rather than the Town.
- 2. **Build “Community”**
 - a. A concise but informative newsletter and an upgraded web site were suggested at the workshops.
 - b. There is citizen interest in protecting water quality in the lakes---this is an opportunity to harness volunteerism for community projects.
- 3. **Improve Law Enforcement**
 - a. Forest Acres has a large police force and could provide higher level speed limit enforcement on Trenholm Road under contract.
 - b. The Town could explore contracting with the Richland County Sherriff's Dept. for a second tier of services--- more intensive traffic surveillance, for example.
 - c. Encourage citizen involvement in policing—“eyes on the street” can help deter crime.

- d. Consider adding more of the permanently mounted speed indicators (like the one on A.L. Drive.)
 - e. The COG can explore “traffic calming” techniques”, but, due to the nature of Trenholm Road, this might have to start with some small steps. See “Proactively Plan for the Future”, above..
- 4. Enhance the Town’s Identity (Marketing and Image Building)**
- a. The signs, banners and web-site are innovations that have been very effective at t a low cost. The web-site needs to be improved to be more interactive with citizens and to provide a national marketing presence for people consider locating to our area.
 - b. Attracting a new wave of homeowners as the current residents “age out” should be a key marketing goal.
 - c. Does the Town want to hold an annual festival or event to promote itself within the region and State?
- 5. Environment + Community=Property Values**
- a. The lakes give the town its name and, along with the trees and attractive housing, its unique identity.
 - b. Since the town’s image, appearance and quality of life are its greatest assets as a bedroom community, these factors take on a crucial importance in shaping the Town’s future.

GOVERNANCE ALTERNATIVES

Town Council members have noted that many citizens want more and better services currently provided by the Town. Most services are provided by the County, and the Town’s ability to implement higher levels of service is limited by a small budget, with no property tax; a small staff; and legal considerations involving the enforcement of codes. Staff reviewed possible alternatives for the form of governance.

1. Remain As An Independent Town with More Staff
 - a. If Arcadia Lakes remains as an independent town, consider a full time Town Clerk. Consider keeping Town Hall open all day or all day 4 days a week.
 - b. Also consider a contract with a part time or on-call town administrator. This could be a retired administrator, or an assistant administrator from

- another town. Consider how much work there would be and its nature.
- c. A management firm experienced in day to day management of large residential developments is another possibility to explore.
 - d. A citizen suggested “hybrid government”---the existing Town structure, augmented by a strong, organized volunteer component. This holds some promise, although it can be hard to maintain volunteer efforts long-term.
 - e. Staffing and town projects would have to fit within the Town’s budget, unless additional revenues form taxes or fees could be obtained.
2. Become Part Of The City of Forest Acres
- a. At the public workshops, there did not seem to be much support for merging with Forest Acres.
 - i. Pros would include reduced costs of garbage pickup. The administrative, legal and financial burdens of operating the town would go away. The Town would have service from F.A. Police Dept.
 - ii. Cons include an increase in property taxes, a loss of the Town’s identify, and less direct input into local government.
 - iii. Forest Acres has not been asked about this formally, and it is not necessarily a given that they would be interested.
3. Keep Things The Way They Are
- a. This does not require increases in fees or taxes.
 - b. This retains the direct and “undiluted” access to the town’s elected officials and the identity of the Town. These were important to many workshop participants.
 - c. This option does not provide for much in the way of major changes in services.
4. Other Observations On Governance
- a. COG staff is working on estimates of net financial impact on homeowners: total property taxes minus savings on utilities and garbage pickup and Federal and State income tax.

- b. Although the Town has a healthy fund-balance relative to the size of the Budget, caution is advised in making any significant withdrawals. Without first consulting with the Town's auditor and attorney on potential needs that might arise and what would be an appropriate size for the unrestricted fund balance.

APPENDICES

1. Arcadia Lakes Base Map**
2. Census Data
3. Summary of Public Forum Comments
4. Public Workshop Slide Presentation **

**Posted Separately on Arcadia Lakes Web Site

(Posted Separately on Arcadia Lakes Web Site)

APPENDIX 1:

ARCADIA LAKES BASE MAP

APPENDIX 2:
CENSUS DATA

TABLE 1

2010 Census: Trends

	2000	2010	% Change
Population	882	861	-2 %
Under 18 years	178	133	-25 %
Over 65	209	240	+15%
55 to 65	137	197	44%
Median Age	49.1	55.4	+12.8 %
Dwelling Units	389	407	+ 5%
Av. Household Size	2.33	2.2	-6%

TABLE 2:

Household Characteristics

	Number	Percent of Total
Owner Occupied Housing	361	88.7 %
Owned "Free and Clear"	113	31 % (of owner units)
Renter Occupied Housing	30	7.4 %
Vacant	16	3.9
One Person Households	96	24.6 %
Two Person Households	194	49.6 %
With Children Under 18	80	20.5 %

TABLE 3:

Comparison to Richland County

	Arcadia Lakes	Richland County
2010 Population	861	384,504
2000-2010 Change	-2%	+20 %
Persons under 18	15.4 % of total	22 % of total
Persons Over 65	27.9 % of total	9.8 % of total
Median Age	55.4	33
Population per sq. mi.	1,331	772
Owner Occupied Housing	89 %	55 %

Appendix 3:
Summary of Public Workshop Notes

PUBLIC MEETING NOTES: NOVEMBER, 2011

20 YEARS FROM NOW WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE:

- Good schools
- Town attracts population that wants good schools
- A strong sense of community and quiet & safe
- A town center with commercial?
- Redevelop town hall area?
- Don't deteriorate
- Bring in new people, regenerate with younger families
- Annexation depends on Decker redevelopment
- Trenholm Road – make it look good

TRENHOLM ROAD CONCERNS

- Trenholm traffic
- Creates an identity crisis
- Trenholm Road is dangerous due to topography and high speed traffic
- Turn a liability into an asset --- make it a gateway
- How do we lobby for change at the highest level?
- There is a 40 mph zone on hill into our town.
- How to slow down? Stop lights?
- Traffic lights on Trenholm
- Traffic calming
- How to divert trucks to alternate routes
- Arcadia Lakes divert traffic
- Traffic circle at Trenholm/ Arcadia Lakes Drive
- Traffic improvements such as curve straightening issue made things worse

LAW ENFORCEMENT/PUBLIC SAFETY/CODE ENFORCEMENT

- Law enforcement – needed to stop speeding
- Distinction between civil / criminal law
- Law enforcement
- Speed cameras
- Fireworks – fire safety during holidays
- Noise ordinance, litter ordinance

- Parcel on E. Arcadia Lakes
- Tear-downs (someone buys a house, tears it down to build a bigger one.)
- Ownership of lakes by landowners limits enforcement actions
- Contract with a police officer. Contract with a Richland County deputy?
- Sharing ordinances with neighboring towns, county
- Hiring off duty cops take away from the benefit of the Richland County
- Agreement
- What's a legal issue, what's a neighbor problem
- Tree ordinance should require removal of trees with bug or disease infestations
- Magistrate can enforce ordinances.
- Storm water – town center on the lakes near Trenholm would create a common community bond based on the natural environment,.
- Storm water- take an advocate role

COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

- use web page
- Web internet email
- Common interest is lakes. Inform citizens how to keep lakes viable, protect the asset
- Partner with Gills Creek Watershed Association
- Booklet on town, watershed, etc
- Speaking out = better communication
- Create a town center
- Canoe put-in on the lake
- Arcadia Lakes Drive Trenholm – traffic calming, streetscape, signage/quality
- Ordinances are on the website
- Remember not everyone uses the internet
- Keep newsletter
- Cordially remind people of code violations
- Benchmarking – transparent communication systems, website. See Bluffton's site.
- Update website for families searching for homes.
- Web- update faster – who makes decisions?
- Can't see the lakes because of brush around the lakes

- Green space?
- Develop lake / green focal points

SERVICES

- Services- need law enforcement, protection, garbage service
 - Settle on garbage service – been up & down – stay with one plan
 - Road maintenance – sidewalks, maintenance, street sweep
 - Budgeting is a one year rodeo
- Services to provide:
 - Law enforcement
 - Clean streets
 - Fire insurance rating – keep it up
 - More services: but what would it cost?
 - Do we have access to services we don't know about it?
- Consolidating: what is the best way to get services?
- Who takes care of pine straw, debris removal, trimming, etc in street rights of way?

NEEDS OF AN AGING POPULATION

- Aging population – how to stay at home
- Richland county sheriff's department helps seniors
- Senior Resources- provides private pay services for seniors.

GOVERNANCE

- Voice in land development outside boundaries
- Like having a direct , undiluted voice to Town Council
- Hybrid model – contracting, citizen volunteer service
- Ask in the survey: Would you participate as a volunteer?
- Accessibility to Council is important
- Be protective of the reserve (budgetary fund balance).
- Annexation to expand tax base? Risks?
- “What if” plans for catastrophes

(Posted Separately on Arcadia Lakes Web Site)

APPENDIX 4:

PUBLIC WORKSHOP SLIDE PRESENTATION