



The Town of Hilton Head Island
Public Planning Committee Special Meeting
Monday, August 19, 2019 – 1:00 p.m.
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers

AGENDA

As a courtesy to others please turn off / silence ALL mobile devices during the meeting. Thank You.

1. Call to Order

2. FOIA Compliance - Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and the requirements of the Town of Hilton Head Island.

3. Unfinished Business

4. New Business

- a. Review of recommendations from the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report

5. Adjournment

Please note that a quorum of Town Council may result if four (4) or more of their members attend this meeting.



TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

Community Development Department

TO: Public Planning Committee
VIA: Shawn Colin, AICP, *Director of Community Development*
VIA: Jennifer Ray, ASLA *Deputy Director of Community Development*
FROM: Sheryse DuBose, PhD, *Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator*
CC: Jayme Lopko, AICP, *Senior Planner*
DATE: August 7, 2019
SUBJECT: Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report Acceptance

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Public Planning Committee forward to Town Council a recommendation to accept the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Report (Report).

The Planning Commission met on May 15, 2019 to review the Report recommendations and the response to the recommendations from the Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force (Task Force). The Planning Commission voted 5-0-0 to accept the Report as amended, with the recommendation to forward the Report to Town Council for acceptance and allocate \$105,000 in funding for project implementation.

The Task Force met on April 22, 2019 to discuss the Report. The Task Force voted 7-0-1 to accept the Report and move it forward to the Town Council for acceptance. The Task Force met again May 7, 2019 and voted 6-0-0 to submit their response to the Report recommendations, along with prioritization of the recommendations and a request to allocate \$105,000 in funding for project implementation, to Town Council for approval.

Summary: The Task Force worked with The Walker Collaborative (TWC) consulting firm to draft the attached Report, which contains recommendations for implementation that involve the Gullah Geechee community on Hilton Head Island. The recommendations contained in the Report that were deemed important by the Task Force fell under the three categories of Cultural Preservation, Public Policy, and Heirs Property.

In allowing the Town to move forward with implementing these recommendations, this effort would work towards preserving the historic Gullah Geechee communities that are still present on Hilton Head Island.

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Background: In July 2018, the Town issued a Request for Proposal (RFP), selecting TWC to work with the Task Force to draft the attached Report for implementation. The main topics of focus, per the RFP, include cultural awareness, Heirs' Property, land use, economics and sustainability, education that is specific to the community, and other concerns.

Beginning in September 2018, the Task Force meetings, facilitated by TWC, consisted of stakeholder meetings and community workshops. The comprehensive engagement activities stemmed into 34 recommendations under the major headings of Cultural Preservation, Public Policy, and Heirs' Property. On April 22, 2019, the Task Force reviewed the recommendations from the consultant team and accepted the Report as amended. On May 7, 2019, the Task Force recommended forwarding the Report to Town Council for acceptance along with a request for \$105,000 in funding for implementation.

Exhibit A – Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report Staff Response August 2019

Exhibit B – Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force Response

Exhibit C – Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report

Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report
Staff Response August 2019

Cultural Preservation
Research, Education, and Interpretation
<u>CP-1</u> Promote the use of the Heritage Library Foundation’s resources with the Island’s Gullah People to encourage them to research their history and genealogy. <u>Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response</u> Agree with this recommendation (Short Term). <u>Staff Response</u> Staff would work to determine if the Heritage Library is able to provide services for free or at a reduced cost as well as research opportunities to partner with other organizations (Short Term).
<u>CP-2</u> Initiate a major fundraising effort to expand cultural programs that teach traditional Gullah ways and support the physical development of key interpretive sites. <u>Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response</u> Agree with this recommendation. The Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator (HNPA) should assist the Senior Grants Administrator (Long Term). <u>Staff Response</u> Staff recommends creating a list of grants to address expanding cultural programs (Short Term). The Town’s Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) and the HPNA will support the Senior Grants Administrator in researching and executing fundraising efforts (Long Term).
<u>CP-3</u> Adapt and expand the interpretive themes from the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC) management plan as a framework for Gullah cultural interpretation on Hilton Head Island, and pursue accurate and consistent storytelling. <u>Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response</u> Agree with this recommendation. This could start with the Town’s OCA, but could evolve into something the neighborhoods or community organization can take over (Long Term). <u>Staff Response</u> Storytellers of the Gullah Geechee culture should be encouraged to relay their individual experiences in order to provide personal and different perspectives of the culture. OCA is currently involved with a historical panel representation aided by members of the Gullah Museum and the Mitchelville Preservation Project to ensure accurate presentation (Mid Term).

Short Term (Up to 1 Year); Mid Term (1-2 Years); Long Term (2+ Years)

Cultural Preservation (cont.)

CP-4

Develop a self-guided tour of the Island’s Gullah sites utilizing multiple methods (hard copy maps, site markers, digital technology, etc.) to supplement existing guided tours so that a broader range of interpretative experiences can be available.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation. The OCA should work with the HNPA to create. There is also a recommendation for the Town Council to provide funding (\$25k) (Long Term).

Staff Response

The HNPA will work with the OCA to extend the already established cultural trail to include historically accurate Gullah Geechee sites that will also utilize digital technology (Long Term).

CP-5

Develop a graphically consistent wayfinding and wayside exhibit system throughout the Island to highlight sites tied to Gullah history and culture and to better orient visitors.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation. The OCA should work with the Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator to create. There is also a recommendation for the Town Council to provide the funding for the design (\$5k) (Short Term).

Staff Response

Staff agrees that the OCA and HPNA would work together on the wayfinding and exhibit system. A sign plan would be established by Town staff to ensure that wayfinding signs are cohesive with other designs for signage and include nature-blending colors (Short Term).

Cultural Preservation (cont.)

CP-6

Establish a program for local students to conduct oral history interviews of elderly Gullah citizens to document their way of life in earlier eras before this important information is lost.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation. HNPA should lead this effort with assistance from the OCA. Paid training is needed to ensure the story is consistent. Recommend Town Council provide funding for training (\$10k) (Short Term).

Staff Response

Projects should be established for school-aged children with parental guidance to question older relatives. Because a relationship has already been established between the child(ren) and older Gullah Geechee relatives, this would establish a comfortable setting for passing along the story. Additionally, the storytelling provides the ability for the older Gullah Geechee Islanders to foster cultural ties with the younger generations, which coincides with recommendation CP-8. Staff recommends utilizing the Heritage Library, Penn Center, and the Mitchelville Preservation Project to collect and digitize the personal histories. The HNPA would assist in coordinating this project (Long Term).

CP-7

Establish a program to educate Town officials, area school teachers, and others on Gullah culture so they can better understand the culture and more effectively interact with the Island's Gullah citizens.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation. HNPA should lead this effort with assistance from the OCA and Gullah organizations on the island, not just the Gullah Museum (Short Term).

Staff Response

Staff will identify Gullah Geechee citizens to formulize a cultural and historical training module. Staff recommends including Gullah Geechee history and culture training sessions for new hires and newly elected positions for the Town of Hilton Head. The HNPA would assist in this effort (Short Term).

Gullah Geechee culture and history also needs to be included in the South Carolina educational standards as a part of the curriculum for South Carolina History. Civil War/Reconstruction curriculum for United States History should include the history of the Mitchelville Settlement and the current preservation efforts of the Mitchelville Preservation Park. The HNPA would assist in this effort (Long Term).

<p>Cultural Preservation (cont.)</p> <p><u>CP-8</u> Utilize interactive approaches to interpretation to better engage current and potential new audiences, particularly young people.</p> <p><u>Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response</u> Agree with this recommendation. HNSA should lead this effort with assistance from the OCA (Short Term).</p> <p><u>Staff Response</u> OCA will lead in the technology efforts that are currently underway for better interaction. Staff can assist in publicizing its availability (Short Term).</p>
<p>Heritage Tourism</p> <p><u>CP-9</u> Coordinate promotion of the Island’s Gullah-related attractions with state and regional cultural heritage organizations to attract more visitors to the Island’s Gullah sites.</p> <p><u>Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response</u> Agree with this recommendation. The Chamber’s Visitor and Convention Bureau (VCB) should promote more than just the Gullah Celebrations (Short Term).</p> <p><u>Staff Response</u> This recommendation should be referred to the Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce (Short Term).</p>
<p><u>CP-10</u> Promote the Gullah culture and the cultural resources more prominently within the Island’s overall tourism market to attract more visitors to the island and, in particular, to the Island’s Gullah sites.</p> <p><u>Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response</u> Agree with this recommendation. The VCB should conduct year-round promotion of the Gullah culture. Recommend Town Council provide funding to the Beaufort County Black Chamber to assist with the promotion of Gullah heritage tourism (Short Term).</p> <p><u>Staff Response</u> This recommendation should be referred to Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce or the Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce (Short Term).</p>

Short Term (Up to 1 Year); Mid Term (1-2 Years); Long Term (2+ Years)

Cultural Preservation (cont.)

CP-11

Provide technical and financial support to businesses whose products and/or services are strongly tied to Gullah culture to increase their odds of sustained success.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Short Term)

Staff Response

While the Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce offers technical and financial support for Gullah Geechee businesses, their services are limited due to funding. Staff recommends working with the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association (NIBCAA) who can provide support to implement this recommendation (Mid Term).

CP-12

Establish a Gullah authenticity certification program by which businesses with authentic Gullah services and products can utilize an adopted logo that conveys their status as being certified based on adopted criteria.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Short Term)

Staff Response

This recommendation should be referred to the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission. Staff also recommends that NIBCAA be involved in this program (Long Term)

CP-13

Utilize information from the recently-drafted Economic and Fiscal Impact Study for Beaufort County and the Arts 7 Economic Prosperity 5 report to refine strategies to more effectively promote Gullah heritage tourism for Hilton Head Island.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Short Term)

Staff Response

This recommendation should be referred to the Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce, and NIBCAA to implement (Short Term).

Cultural Preservation (cont.)

CP-14

Establish an open-air market as a pilot program to sell food, arts, and crafts tied to Gullah culture as an economic development initiative for the island’s Gullah community.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree. HNPA should lead with assistance from NIBCAA and assistance with promotion from the OCA. The HNPA should further discuss this with the Gullah community and Task Force before a location is determined (Short Term).

Staff Response

Staff recommends establishing the open air market at a small Town of Hilton Head location such as the Squire Pope Community Center, with the focus being on promoting the event. The Town of Hilton Head Island would be in charge of applications for prospective vendors at minimal cost. In understanding that the open air market is not a flea market, but a market for promoting Gullah Geechee culture and establishing economic development opportunities for said community, the following provisions should be stipulated:

1. Vendors must live within the established Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods.
2. Wares are restricted to:
 - a. Foods that are homegrown/freshly caught and/or Gullah Geechee traditional dishes;
 - b. Authentic Gullah/Geechee handmade arts and crafts;
 - c. Other authentic products of Gullah Geechee tradition.

Dates and times for the open air market will be advertised on the Town website and on social media sites in addition to utilizing other media sources. Larger venues can be explored as participation and interest grow for the event. The HNPA with assistance from NIBCAA would work towards establishing the open air market (Short Term).

Preservation Planning

CP-15

Conduct a comprehensive inventory of cultural resources related to Gullah history and culture on Hilton Head Island to better accommodate future preservation planning for Gullah history and culture.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation. Recommend Town Council provide funding for the comprehensive inventory of cultural resources (\$15k). This may be just an enhancement of what we already have in place (Long Term).

Staff Response

Staff will evaluate the need for an outside consultant to conduct the cultural inventory of Gullah history and culture for Hilton Head Island (Long Term).

Cultural Preservation (cont.)

CP-16

Prepare a comprehensive and detailed cultural preservation plan for the island in general, but to include a focus on Gullah historic and cultural preservation, to expand upon potential preservation benefits of this project.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation. Recommend Town Council provide funding for a cultural preservation plan for the Island (\$50k) (Long Term)

Staff Response

Staff will evaluate the need for an outside consultant to prepare the cultural preservation plan that includes a focus on Gullah Geechee historic and cultural preservation (Long Term).

CP-17

Recognize the Island’s Gullah-associated churches as an important facet of Gullah culture, particularly regarding leadership and communications, to ensure that they are actively involved in all future Gullah-related initiatives.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Short Term).

Staff Response

Staff understands the leadership and communication role of the Gullah Geechee Churches and they will be regarded in any outreach that impacts the aforementioned community (Short Term).

CP-18

Identify an entity to match land owners in the historic Gullah neighborhoods with applicable private developers to increase the land owners’ odds of success with selling or developing their property.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this Recommendation (Short Term)

Staff Response

Staff will direct Gullah Geechee property owners in the historic communities to South Carolina Real Estate Association (SCREA), the Urban Land Institute (ULI), Commercial Real Estate Development Association (NAIOP) and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) mentioned in the Preservation Project Report for the purpose of providing education. Staff recommends the possibility of also utilizing NIBCAA to support this effort (Mid-Term).

Cultural Preservation (cont.)

CP-19 Task Force Recommendation/Planning Commission Approval¹

Recognize the Island's Gullah-associated cemeteries as an important facet of Gullah culture to ensure that they are preserved (Short Term).

Staff Response

Staff understands that the Gullah Geechee cemeteries are important and will research the legal means to ensure preservation (Short Term).

Continued on next page.

¹ CP-19 is a recommendation directly from the Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force. Short Term (Up to 1 Year); Mid Term (1-2 Years); Long Term (2+ Years)

Public Policies

Developmental Approval Process

PP-1

Allow waivers for development application fees and establish a grant program to assist property owners to pay for specific development impact fees for sites within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation. Recommend the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) be changed to waive application fees for the Overlay District. Recommend Town Council establish a fund to assist primarily single-family applicants of low-income status with impact fees (Mid Term).

Staff Response

Staff will establish criteria to waive fees for development applications for properties that are within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District. Before adjusting/waiving impact fees can be considered, the limitations with state law need to be researched (Long Term).

PP-2

“Fast Track” the review process for development applications within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to decrease the land owners’ time and costs associated with development.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Mid Term).

Staff Response

Staff agrees with the recommendation (Long Term).

PP-3

Utilize the Town’s newly-created Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator position to work closely with property and business owners in the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to help them navigate Town regulations related to land use, development, and businesses.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this Recommendation (Mid Term)

Staff Response

Staff agrees with the recommendation (Long Term).

Public Policies (cont.)

Land Use and Development Standards

PP-4

Designate a Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District for all delineated historic Gullah neighborhoods that can serve as the vehicle for many of this report's recommendations.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Staff needs to test design standards to see what could be achieved on Gullah properties (Mid Term).

Staff Response

Staff could consider creating a Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to address the issues in the LMO that impact properties in terms of zoning, buffers, setbacks, and density requirements. These improvements *may or may not* include:

1. Prior to establishing the overlay district, and where possible, rezone the properties in the Gullah Geechee Historic Districts from RM-4 to RM-8 in order to raise the allowable density requirements. Currently the LMO requires that RM-4 zoning allows four dwelling units (DU) per net acre (6 DU are allowed for lots that are at least 3 acres and 8 DU if the lot area is at least 5 acres). RM-8 zoning allows 8 units per acre. Rezoning the properties to where higher densities are allowed addresses the need to place multiple homes on smaller lots, which is a characteristic of single family neighborhoods in the historic communities.
2. Reducing buffers and setbacks 20 to 10 feet may be considered on internal roads within small subdivisions.
3. Establishing open space is not a requirement for small subdivisions, however increasing the allowable impervious surfaces may be taken under consideration in the proposed overlay district.
4. Height of the structures may compensate for lack of allowable width on the small lots, however height may not exceed 45 ft., which is allowable in RM-8, Marshfront (MF), and Stoney (S) historic districts.

As a public benefit, applicants who wish to develop within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District would be encouraged to donate to the Town easements or ROW in order to provide adequate infrastructure to serve development in the area (Long Term).

Public Policies (cont.)

PP-5

Add Family Compound provisions to LMO to be applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to avoid triggering the full range of LMO requirements and fees for small-scaled family, “paper subdivisions.”

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree. Additional opportunities are as follows:

1. To add flexibility, create a waiver from design standards similar to what exists for nonconformities.
2. Increase the number of lots permitted before a major subdivision is required. This would take away infrastructure and open space requirements. Look at a possibility of a sliding scale.

(Mid Term)

Staff Response

Staff may consider adding a Family Compound provisions to the LMO with the following requirements:

1. The property has been owned by a single family for no less than 50 years.
2. Family is defined as spouse; parent(s) and their child(ren); a group of persons related by blood; a group descended from a common ancestor, as in extended family. Persons dwelling in the family compound as defined by proposed compound standards must be related to the property owner by blood, marriage, or adoption.
3. The property can be subdivided without infrastructure with the condition that there is an easement to access the property.
4. The property may be sold or leased to someone within the family.
5. The property cannot be sold or leased for 5 years to someone outside of the family after being established as a family compound.
6. After 5 years, if the property is sold to someone outside of the family, it is the responsibly of the family selling the property to upgrade the infrastructure to meet LMO requirements.

(Mid Term)

Public Policies (cont.)

PP-6

Provide greater flexibility for required road ROWs and drainage easements within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conversation Overlay District to make the development of some properties more viable.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree in part. There is no negative impact from drainage easements so they should not be included in this recommendation. Right-of-way takes away land and density in already developed areas (ex. Where dirt exists). Recommend Town Council support changing the LMO to not take away density when property for a right-of-way (ROW) is donated to the Town
(Mid Term).

Staff Response

Currently, the LMO defines a small lot division as having from two to five homes and only requires an access easement. The placement of an additional home on lots that already have five homes requires the owner to upgrade the easement to at least a 40-foot right-of-way, accommodating buffers and setbacks. In addition to the expense, property owners are concerned that establishing a ROW will impact the allowable density for the property negating the ability to place an additional home. The Community Development Department is currently in the process of amending the requirements, which specify that lot density will be not be impacted when a ROW is required to place additional homes as a stipulation in the Dirt Road Paving Program (Mid Term).

PP-7

Adopt Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to be applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to avoid too much development in Gullah neighborhoods, while allowing land owners to benefit financially from their development potential.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Long Term)

Staff Response

Further research by staff is required to assess how transferring the development rights of property will ultimately impact the property owner, as well as impact the development of the Island overall. Additional legal council may be involved in the implementation of this recommendation (Long Term).

Public Policies (cont.)

PP-8

Utilize a program to purchase development rights from willing property owners within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to preserve ownership of land in historic Gullah neighborhoods, while allowing land owners to benefit financially from their development potential.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree. Families will not lose their land and they will receive funding for density sold; however, they will lose that density for future development potential (Mid Term).

Staff Response

Further research by staff is required to assess how selling the development rights of property will ultimately impact the property owner, as well as impact the development of the Island overall. Additional legal council may be involved in the implementation of this recommendation (Long Term).

PP-9

Amend the Town's Design Guide, as applied to portions of the Corridor Overlay District that are within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District, to better reflect the design tradition of the Gullah culture.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Mid Term)

Staff Response

In preserving the historic characteristics of Hilton Head Island, staff recommends pre-approved design guidelines within the proposed Historic Gullah Geechee Neighborhoods Overlay District that addresses authentic materials, colors, and other details that are characteristics of Gullah Geechee culture to be determined and addressed in the Town of Hilton Head Island Design Guide. These historic designs also should be determined and included as a part of the Town LMO requirements (Mid Term).

PP-10

Explore the potential to base property values for tax assessment purposes in historic Gullah neighborhoods on the land's current use rather than market value to reduce the tax burden and enhance the ability of owners to retain their property.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Long Term).

Staff Response

Staff would defer to this recommendation to the Beaufort County Tax Assessor (Long Term).

Public Policies (cont.)

PP-11

Establish a fund to help property owners avoid losing their property to delinquent tax sales as a way to protect Gullah land ownership on Hilton Head Island.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation. NIBCAA is needed on the island and they can partner with Community Foundation of the Low Country (CFL) to create this fund. The HNPA should assist with providing information and communication (Short Term).

Staff Response

Staff agrees with this recommendation. In addition, the HNPA can work with NIBCAA to assist with implementation (Short Term).

Other Issues

PP-12

Establish a program to educate Gullah residents and others on a wide range of policy issues that impact their lives, including property taxation, land use and development, and heirs property so they can prosper more socially and financially.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation. Continue the current program and expand as needed (Short Term).

Staff Response

Staff agrees with this recommendation (Short Term).

PP-13

Ensure that local financial institutions are meeting the requirements of the federal Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to make loans for economically challenged people and properties to provide greater financial opportunities within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Long Term).

Staff Response

Staff refers this recommendation to NIBCAA (Long Term).

Public Policies (cont.)

PP-14

Establish a program providing temporary and seasonal signs that are compliant with Town regulations to be used within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to expand economic opportunities for Gullah residents and businesses.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Mid Term)

Staff Response

Staff recommends developing temporary wooden seasonal signs that are in compliance with the Town sign ordinance. The signs will be stored and distributed to Gullah businesses from the NIBCAA offices. Staff will also be responsible for processing temporary sign applications for prospective Gullah businesses (Mid Term).

Heirs' Property

HP-1

Utilize the Heritage Library Foundation as a potential first step for Gullah families towards clearing title to their property to overcome heirs' property issues.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with a change in wording: Utilize the Heritage Library Foundation as a potential resource for Gullah families toward clearing title to their property to overcome heirs' property issues (Short Term).

Staff Response

Staff agrees with utilizing the Heritage Library Foundation as a resource to clear title to property. Staff recommends researching additional sources for information and assistance. The HPNA will assist in coordinating this process (Short Term).

HP-2

Leverage a range of local, state, and national organizations involved with addressing heirs' property issues to maximize the Island's potential to address the issue.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Mid Term).

Staff Response

Staff agrees with this recommendation (Mid Term).

Heirs' Property (Cont.)

HP-3

Encourage the Center for Heirs Property Preservation (CHPP) to open a satellite office in Beaufort County to make their resources more readily available to Hilton Head Island's Gullah community.

Gullah Geechee Task Force/Planning Commission Response

Agree with this recommendation (Short Term)

Staff Response

The Center for Heirs' Property Preservation (CHPP) is a non-profit organization based in Charleston, SC that serves Allendale, Bamberg, Beaufort, Berkley, Charleston, Clarendon, Colleton, Dorchester, Hampton, Georgetown, Jasper, Orangeburg, Sumter, and Williamsburg counties. For property owners who do not exceed the lower income requirements, the organization will conduct land title searches, prepare necessary legal documents, schedule land surveys, request legal hearings, and represent land owners in court. Once a month, CHPP sends staff to Beaufort to work with property owners that meet their lower income requirements.

Staff can assist with enabling land owners with heirs' property that meet the income requirements to obtain information and assistance from the CHPP staff in Beaufort (Short Term).

Staff recommends creating an heirs' property resource center locally to be convenient to property owners who are unable to make the trip to Beaufort and as a way to also assist property owners of all income brackets (Long Term).

HP-4

Task Force Recommendations/Planning Commission Approval²

The Task Force recommends that NIBCAA work with the CFL to set up a fund to help pay for the cost of clearing title to heirs' property (Short Term).

Staff Response

Staff agrees with this recommendation (Mid Term).

² HP-4 is a recommendation directly from the Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force. Short Term (Up to 1 Year); Mid Term (1-2 Years); Long Term (2+ Years)

Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force Response to the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report

CULTURAL PRESERVATION

The Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator (HNPA) should play a role in each of these recommendations whether it be leading the effort, providing education or assistance, or in communication.

The Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force (Task Force) recommends that Town Council create an Advisory Committee to work with the HNPA to accomplish these recommendations.

Research, Education & Interpretation

CP-1. Promote the use of the Heritage Library Foundation's resources with the Island's Gullah people to encourage them to research their history and genealogy.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Short Term)

CP-2. Initiate a major fundraising effort to expand cultural programs that teach traditional Gullah ways and support the physical development of key interpretive sites.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. HNPA should assist the Senior Grants Administrator. (Long Term)

CP-3. Adapt and expand the interpretive themes from the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC) management plan as a framework for Gullah cultural interpretation on Hilton Head Island, and pursue accurate and consistent storytelling.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. This could start with the Town's Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) but could evolve into something the neighborhoods or community organization can take over. (Long Term)

CP-4. Develop a self-guided tour of the Island's Gullah sites utilizing multiple methods (hard copy maps, site markers, digital technology, etc.) to supplement existing guided tours so that a broader range of interpretive experiences can be available.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. The OCA should work with HNPA to create. Recommend Town Council provide funding for this (\$25k). (Long Term)

CP-5. Develop a graphically consistent wayfinding and wayside exhibit system throughout the Island to highlight sites tied to Gullah history and culture and to better orient visitors.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. The OCA should work with HNPA to create. Recommend Town Council provide funding for design (\$5k). (Short Term)

CP-6. Establish a program for local students to conduct oral history interviews of elderly Gullah citizens to document their way of life in earlier eras before this important information is lost.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. HNPA should lead this effort with assistance from the OCA. Paid training is needed to ensure the story is consistent. Recommend Town Council provide funding for training (\$10k). (Short Term)

CP-7. Establish a program to educate Town officials, area school teachers, and others on Gullah culture so they can better understand the culture and more effectively interact with the Island's Gullah citizens.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. HNPA should lead this effort with assistance from the OCA and Gullah organizations on the island, not just the Gullah Museum. (Short Term)

CP-8. Utilize interactive approaches to interpretation to better engage current and potential new audiences, particularly young people.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. HNPA should lead this effort with assistance from the OCA. (Short Term)

Heritage Tourism

CP-9. Coordinate the promotion of the Island's Gullah-related attractions with state and regional cultural heritage organizations to attract more visitors to the Island's Gullah sites.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. The Chamber's Visitor and Convention Bureau (VCB) should promote more than just the Gullah Celebration. (Short Term)

CP-10. Promote the Gullah culture and cultural resources more prominently within the Island's overall tourism marketing to attract more visitors to the Island and, in particular, to the Island's Gullah sites.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. The VCB should conduct year-round promotion of the Gullah culture. Recommend Town Council provide funding to the Beaufort County Black Chamber to assist with promotion of Gullah heritage tourism. (Short Term)

CP-11. Provide technical and financial support to businesses whose products and/or services are strongly tied to Gullah culture to increase their odds of sustained success.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Short Term)

CP-12. Establish a Gullah authenticity certification program by which businesses with authentic Gullah services and products can utilize an adopted logo that conveys their status as being certified based upon adopted criteria.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Short Term)

CP-13. Utilize information from the recently-drafted Economic and Fiscal Impact Study for Beaufort County and the Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 report to refine strategies to more effectively promote Gullah heritage tourism for Hilton Head Island.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Short Term)

CP-14. Establish an open-air market as a pilot program to sell food, arts and crafts tied to Gullah culture as an economic development initiative for the Island's Gullah community.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. HNPA should lead with assistance from NIBCAA and assistance with promotion from the OCA. The HNPA should further discuss this with the Gullah community and Task Force before a location is determined. (Short Term)

Preservation Planning

CP-15. Conduct a comprehensive inventory of cultural resources related to Gullah history and culture on Hilton Head Island to better accommodate future preservation planning for Gullah history and culture.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. Recommend Town Council provide funding for the comprehensive inventory of cultural resources (\$15k). This may be just an enhancement of what we already have in place. (Long Term)

CP-16. Prepare a comprehensive and detailed cultural preservation plan for the Island in general, but to include a focus on Gullah historic and cultural preservation, to expand upon the potential preservation benefits of this project.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. Recommend Town Council provide funding for a cultural preservation plan for the Island (\$50k). (Long Term)

Other Issues

CP-17. Recognize the Island's Gullah-associated churches as an important facet of Gullah culture, particularly regarding leadership and communications, to ensure that they are actively involved in all future Gullah-related initiatives.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Short Term)

CP-18. Identify an entity to match land owners in the historic Gullah neighborhoods with applicable private developers to increase the land owners' odds of success with selling or developing their property.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation with new wording: Identify a process to match land owners in the historic Gullah neighborhoods with applicable private developers to increase the land owners' odds of success with leasing, developing or selling their property. (Short Term)

Additional Task Force Recommendation

CP-19. Recognize the Island's Gullah-associated cemeteries as an important facet of Gullah Culture to ensure that they are preserved. *(Short Term)*

PUBLIC POLICIES

The Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator (HNPA) should play a role in each of these recommendations whether it be leading the effort, working with other Town staff, working with other organizations, or in communication.

These recommendations do not apply to heirs' property; however, they can be used as an incentive to encourage families to start the process of clearing title to their property.

Development Approval Process

PP-1. Allow waivers for development application fees and establish a grant program to assist property owners to pay for specific development impact fees for sites within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. Recommend the LMO be changed to waive application fees for the Overlay District. Recommend Town Council establish a fund to assist primarily single-family applicants of low-income status with impact fees. (Mid Term)

PP-2. "Fast-track" the review process for development applications within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to decrease the land owners' time and costs associated with development.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Mid Term)

PP-3. Utilize the Town's newly-created Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator position to work closely with property and business owners in the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to help them navigate Town regulations related to land use, development, and businesses.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Mid Term)

Land Use & Development Standards

PP-4. Designate a Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District for all delineated historic Gullah neighborhoods that can serve as the vehicle for many of this report's recommendations.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. Staff needs to test design standards to see what could be achieved on Gullah properties. (Mid Term)

A. Allow higher densities for the RM-4 and MF zoning districts in the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District so that land owners can better leverage their potential land value.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. Impervious coverage and height may need to be evaluated in order to maximize the permitted density. (Mid Term)

B. Reduce some setback and buffer requirements within zoning districts applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District so that land owners can maximize their development potential.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. Elimination of setbacks and buffers should be included as an option. Setbacks and buffers on access easements are also a problem and should be considered for reduction or elimination. (Mid Term)

C. Reduce the LMO's open space requirements as applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay Zoning District so that land owners can maximize their development potential.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. This may only be needed if buffers are reduced or eliminated. (Mid Term)

PP-5. Add Family Compound provisions to the LMO to be applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to avoid triggering the full range of LMO requirements and fees for small-scaled family "paper subdivisions."

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation with additional opportunities:

- *To add flexibility, create a waiver from design standards similar to what exists for nonconformities.*
- *Increase the number of lots permitted before a major subdivision required. This would take away infrastructure and open space requirements. Look at possibility of a sliding scale for this. (Mid Term)*

PP-6. Provide greater flexibility for required road ROWs and drainage easements within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to make the development of some properties more viable.

TF Response: Agree with part of this recommendation. There is no negative impact from drainage easements so they should not be included in this recommendation. Right-of-way takes away land and density in already developed areas (ex. where dirt roads exist). Recommend Town Council support changing the LMO to not take away density when property for a right-of-way is donated to the Town. (Mid Term)

PP-7. Adopt Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to be applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to avoid too much development in Gullah neighborhoods, while allowing land owners to benefit financially from their development potential.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Long Term)

PP-8. Utilize a program to purchase development rights from willing property owners within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to preserve ownership of land in historic Gullah neighborhoods, while allowing land owners to benefit financially from their development potential.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. Families will not lose their land and they will receive funding for density sold; however, they will lose that density for future development potential. (Mid Term)

PP-9. Amend the Town's Design Guide, as applied to portions of the Corridor Overlay District that are within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District, to better reflect the design tradition of the Gullah culture.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Mid Term)

Property Taxes

PP-10. Explore the potential to base property values for tax assessment purposes in historic Gullah neighborhoods on the land's current use rather than market value to reduce the tax burden and enhance the ability of owners to retain their property.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Long Term)

PP-11. Establish a fund to help property owners avoid losing their property to delinquent tax sales as a way to protect Gullah land ownership on the Hilton Head Island.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation. NIBCAA is needed on the island and they can partner with CFL to create this fund. The HNPA should assist with providing information and communication. (Short Term)

Other Issues

PP-12. Establish a program to educate Gullah residents and others on a wide range of public policy issues that impact their lives, including property taxation, land use and development, and heirs' property so they can prosper more socially and financially.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. Continue the current program and expand as needed. (Short Term)

PP-13. Ensure that local financial institutions are meeting the requirements of the federal Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to make loans for economically challenged people and properties to provide greater financial opportunities within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Long Term)

PP-14. Establish a program providing temporary and seasonal signs that are compliant with Town regulations to be used within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to expand economic opportunities for Gullah residents and businesses.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Mid Term)

HEIRS' PROPERTY

The Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator (HNPA) should play a role in each of these recommendations whether it be leading the effort, working with other Town staff, working with other organizations, or in communication.

HP-1. Utilize the Heritage Library Foundation as a potential first step for Gullah families toward clearing title to their property to overcome heirs' property issues.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation with a change to the wording: Utilize the Heritage Library Foundation as a potential resource for Gullah families toward clearing title to their property to overcome heirs' property issues. (Short Term)

HP-2. Leverage a range of local, state and national organizations involved with addressing heirs' property issues to maximize the Island's potential to address the issue.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Mid Term)

HP-3. Encourage the Center for Heirs Property Preservation (CHPP) to open a satellite office in Beaufort County to make their resources more readily available to Hilton Head Island's Gullah community.

TF Response: Agree with this recommendation, no change. (Short Term)

Additional Task Force Recommendation

HP-4. The Task Force recommends that NIBCAA work with the CFL to set up a fund to help pay for the costs of clearing title to heirs' property. *(Short Term)*

The background of the cover is a painting. It depicts a woman from the Gullah Geechee culture. She is wearing a wide-brimmed, light-colored hat with a red band. Her dress is yellow with white polka dots and a white collar with a red bow. A red sash is draped over her shoulder. She is standing on a reddish-brown dirt path. In the foreground, several white chickens are pecking at the ground. The background shows a field of tall green grass with small red flowers under a blue sky.

Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report

for the
**Town of
Hilton Head Island**

Draft: April 7, 2019

ALFIREALL

Acknowledgements

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PROJECT PURPOSE, PROCESS & CLARIFICATIONS

Project Purpose

A century ago, Hilton Head Island was dominated by the Gullah Geechee people. Because of years of geographic and social isolation, their distinct culture reflects their West African roots in many ways, including language, crafts, foodways, storytelling, traditions, farming, fishing, and relationship to the land. However, following extensive land acquisition by non-Gullah people and the construction of a bridge accessing the island in 1956, a steady trend has occurred that deteriorates the Gullah culture. Because of the alarming decrease in their percentage of population and the corresponding loss of the Gullah Geechee culture, the Town established the Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force in 2017. Their stated mission is to:

“... identify and assist in the preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture for the purpose of detecting and resolving issues specific to its community, including, without limitation, heirs’ property, taxes and land use, economic and sustainability issues for an improved quality of life, and through on-going educational programs, workshops and seminars.”

Accordingly, there are three primary purposes for this project:

- *Create a broad strategy for Gullah Geechee cultural preservation, to include resource preservation and enhancement, interpretation, and heritage tourism.*
- *Identify potential revisions to the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) and other land use and development related policies to better accommodate the use and development of Gullah lands.*
- *Identify tools for addressing the heirs’ property issues, which greatly limit what Gullah land owners can do with their land because of a lack of title to their property and related legal hurdles.*

The balance of this Executive Summary provides an overview of the report’s recommendations.

CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Research, Education & Interpretation

- CP-1. Promote the use of the Heritage Library Foundation’s resources with the Island’s Gullah people to encourage them to research their history and genealogy.
- CP-2. Initiate a major fundraising effort to expand cultural programs that teach traditional Gullah ways and support the physical development of key interpretive sites.
- CP-3. Adapt and expand the interpretive themes from the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage

Corridor (GGCHC) management plan as a framework for Gullah cultural interpretation on Hilton Head Island, and pursue accurate and consistent storytelling.

- CP-4. Develop a self-guided tour of the Island's Gullah sites utilizing multiple methods (hard copy maps, site markers, digital technology, etc.) to supplement existing guided tours so that a broader range of interpretive experiences can be available.
- CP-5. Develop a graphically consistent wayfinding and wayside exhibit system throughout the Island to highlight sites tied to Gullah history and culture and to better orient visitors.
- CP-6. Establish a program for local students to conduct oral history interviews of elderly Gullah citizens to document their way of life in earlier eras before this important information is lost.
- CP-7. Establish a program to educate Town officials, area school teachers, and others on Gullah culture so they can better understand the culture and more effectively interact with the Island's Gullah citizens.
- CP-8. Utilize interactive approaches to interpretation to better engage current and potential new audiences, particularly young people.

Heritage Tourism

- CP-9. Coordinate the promotion of the Island's Gullah-related attractions with state and regional cultural heritage organizations to attract more visitors to the Island's Gullah sites.
- CP-10. Promote the Gullah culture and cultural resources more prominently within the Island's overall tourism marketing to attract more visitors to the Island and, in particular, to the Island's Gullah sites.
- CP-11. Provide technical and financial support to businesses whose products and/or services are strongly tied to Gullah culture to increase their odds of sustained success.
- CP-12. Establish a Gullah authenticity certification program by which businesses with authentic Gullah services and products can utilize an adopted logo that conveys their status as being certified based upon adopted criteria.
- CP-13. Utilize information from the recently-drafted Economic and Fiscal Impact Study for Beaufort County and the Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 report to refine strategies to more effectively promote Gullah heritage tourism for Hilton Head Island.
- CP-14. Establish an open-air market as a pilot program to sell food, arts and crafts tied to Gullah culture as an economic development initiative for the Island's Gullah community.

Preservation Planning

- CP-15. Conduct a comprehensive inventory of cultural resources related to Gullah history and culture on Hilton Head Island to better accommodate future preservation planning for Gullah history and culture.
- CP-16. Prepare a comprehensive and detailed cultural preservation plan for the Island in general, but to include a focus on Gullah historic and cultural preservation, to expand upon the potential preservation benefits of this project.

Other Issues

- CP-17. Recognize the Island's Gullah-associated churches as an important facet of Gullah culture, particularly regarding leadership and communications, to ensure that they are actively involved in all future Gullah-related initiatives.
- CP-18. Identify an entity to match land owners in the historic Gullah neighborhoods with applicable private developers to increase the land owners' odds of success with selling or developing their property.

PUBLIC POLICIES

Development Approval Process

- PP-1. Allow waivers for development application fees and establish a grant program to assist property owners to pay for specific development impact fees for sites within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District.
- PP-2. "Fast-track" the review process for development applications within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to decrease the land owners' time and costs associated with development.
- PP-3. Utilize the Town's newly-created Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator position to work closely with property and business owners in the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to help them navigate Town regulations related to land use, development, and businesses.

Land Use & Development Standards

- PP-4. Designate a Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District for all delineated historic Gullah neighborhoods that can serve as the vehicle for many of this report's recommendations.

- A. Allow higher densities for the RM-4 and MF zoning districts in the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District so that land owners can better leverage their potential land value.
 - B. Reduce some setback and buffer requirements within zoning districts applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District so that land owners can maximize their development potential.
 - C. Reduce the LMO's open space requirements as applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay Zoning District so that land owners can maximize their development potential.
- PP-5. Add Family Compound provisions to the LMO to be applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to avoid triggering the full range of LMO requirements and fees for small-scaled family "paper subdivisions."
- PP-6. Provide greater flexibility for required road ROWs and drainage easements within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to make the development of some properties more viable.
- PP-7. Adopt Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to be applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to avoid too much development in Gullah neighborhoods, while allowing land owners to benefit financially from their development potential.
- PP-8. Utilize a program to purchase development rights from willing property owners within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to preserve ownership of land in historic Gullah neighborhoods, while allowing land owners to benefit financially from their development potential.
- PP-9. Amend the Town's Design Guide, as applied to portions of the Corridor Overlay District that are within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District, to better reflect the design tradition of the Gullah culture.

Property Taxes

- PP-10. Explore the potential to base property values for tax assessment purposes in historic Gullah neighborhoods on the land's current use rather than market value to reduce the tax burden and enhance the ability of owners to retain their property.
- PP-11. Establish a fund to help property owners avoid losing their property to delinquent tax sales as a way to protect Gullah land ownership on the Hilton Head Island.

Other Issues

- PP-12. Establish a program to educate Gullah residents and others on a wide range of public policy issues that impact their lives, including property taxation, land use and development, and heirs' property so they can prosper more socially and financially.
- PP-13. Ensure that local financial institutions are meeting the requirements of the federal Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to make loans for economically challenged people and properties to provide greater financial opportunities within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District.
- PP-14. Establish a program providing temporary and seasonal signs that are compliant with Town regulations to be used within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to expand economic opportunities for Gullah residents and businesses.

HEIRS' PROPERTY

- HP-1. Utilize the Heritage Library Foundation as a potential first step for Gullah families toward clearing title to their property to overcome heirs' property issues.
- HP-2. Leverage a range of local, state and national organizations involved with addressing heirs' property issues to maximize the Island's potential to address the issue.
- HP-3. Encourage the Center for Heirs Property Preservation (CHPP) to open a satellite office in Beaufort County to make their resources more readily available to Hilton Head Island's Gullah community.

NEXT STEPS

This project's next step is a Phase 2, which might be conducted with the help of consultants or entirely in-house by the Town's planning staff. Regardless of how it is conducted, it will take the recommendations of this report and follow through with greater analysis and implementation. For example, some of the recommended revisions of the Town's LMO related to setbacks, buffers, open space requirements, and similar site design issues will need testing using sample sites. Likewise, issues such as pursuing changes to the methods used to assess the value of Gullah lands for property taxing purpose will require further legal research and meetings between the relevant governmental representatives. However, the next steps for more straightforward issues might include simple changes to the text of the LMO, as well as actions by the Town's new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator. Regardless of the details, it is the sincere intent of the Town and its Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force that this report soon transform into tangible action and results.

PROJECT PURPOSE, PROCESS & CLARIFICATIONS

PROJECT PURPOSE

A century ago, the primary (if not sole) occupants of Hilton Head Island were the Gullah Geechee people. Because of years of geographic and social isolation, their distinct culture reflects their West African roots in many ways, including language, crafts (basket weaving, net making, etc.), foodways, storytelling, traditions, farming, fishing, and relationship to the land, among others. However, following extensive land acquisition by non-Gullah people and the construction of a bridge accessing the island in 1956, a steady trend has occurred that deteriorates the Gullah culture. In fact, according to the Town's 2017 Comprehensive Plan (pg. 43), the African-American population (primarily Gullah) has decreased in percentage of the Island's overall population at the following rate:

<u>Year</u>	<u>% of African Americans</u>
1980	14.5%
1985	11.3%
1990	9.5%
1995	9.2%
2000	8.3%
2010	7.5%

"I'm very proud of my Gullah heritage. The more I learn about it, the prouder I become."

- Stakeholder meeting participant

Because of this alarming decrease in their percentage of population and the corresponding loss of the Gullah Geechee culture, the Town established the Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force ("Gullah Task Force") in 2017. Their stated mission is as follows:

The goal of The Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force is to identify and assist in the preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture for the purpose of detecting and resolving issues specific to its community, including, without limitation, heirs' property, taxes and land use, economic and sustainability issues for an improved quality of life, and through on-going educational programs, workshops and seminars.

Accordingly, there are three primary purposes for this project, as follow:

- *Create a broad strategy for Gullah Geechee cultural preservation, to include resource preservation and enhancement, interpretation, and heritage tourism.*
- *Identify potential revisions to the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) and other land use and development related policies to better accommodate the use and development of Gullah lands.*
- *Identify tools for addressing the heirs' property issues, which greatly limit what Gullah land owners can do with their land because of a lack of title to their property and related legal hurdles.*

It is also important to understand the strong relationship between the topics of cultural preservation, public policies and heirs' property. The ultimate goal of cultural preservation is to preserve the very existence of the Gullah people as residents of Hilton Head Island. The best way to achieve that goal is to provide them with economic sustainability. To gain economic sustainability, current challenges related to public policies (LMO, etc.) and heirs' property must be overcome.

PROJECT PROCESS

The process to conduct this project utilizes the Town's appointed Gullah Task Force as a project steering committee to guide the project. The Task Force serves multiple roles within the context of this project, including:

- To guide the tone of the project
- To provide input for public engagement
- To contribute ideas toward the proposed strategies
- To serve as "cheerleaders" for the adoption of the strategies

A four-step process or "scope of work" has been employed by the Consultant Team hired by the Town for this project, as concisely summarized below:

Task 1.0: Project Kick-Off & Research

This initial task served as the research and diagnostic phase of the project. The Consultant Team performed the following sub-tasks prior to, during, and after their two-day Trip #1 to Hilton Head Island:

- Task 1.1: Kick-Off Meetings & Study Area Tour
- Task 1.2: Public Policy Review
- Task 1.3: Heirs Property Research
- Task 1.4: Gullah Culture "Crash Course"
- Task 1.5: Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings
- Task 1.6: Public "Kick-Off" Meeting



A meeting of the Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force on March 5, 2018. (Photo Source: Gluseum.com)

The deliverable for Task 1.0 was the draft Background Study (Appendix A).

Task 2.0: Workshop & Concepts Development

Although public input is a key aspect throughout the life of this project, Task 2.0 featured one of the major pushes to solicit meaningful public participation. The following steps were taken as part of the three-day Trip #2 to Hilton Head Island by the Consultant Team's Project Manager:

- Task 2.1: Strategy Building Workshop (Evening - Day 1)
- Task 2.2: Conceptual Strategies Preparation (Days 2-3)
- Task 2.3: Task Force Meeting on Conceptual Strategies (Afternoon - Day 3)

Task 3.0: Preparation of Draft Strategies

Based upon the Gullah Task Force's and Town's response to the Conceptual Strategies discussed during Task 2.3, a detailed report with draft strategies was prepared to include the following components:

- Public Policy Strategies
- Heirs Property Strategies
- Cultural Preservation Strategies

Task 4.0: Strategies Presentation & Revisions

- Task 4.1: Strategies Presentations
- Task 4.2: Draft Strategies Report Revisions

This project has included an extensive public input component.

Also, a Phase 2 of this project will tentatively occur if deemed necessary by the end of this Phase 1 portion. If conducted, the specific scope would be determined at that time. It would likely provide more specificity and perhaps even feature implementation of certain components of the Phase 1 deliverables. One example might be the drafting of language to amend relevant public policies.

CLARIFICATIONS

Project Terms

Gullah Geechee

This term can sometimes be seen with a hyphen or slash between the two words. For example, early documents associated with the "Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission" utilized the slash, but they later dropped it. Similarly, the Town's appointed "Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force" uses a hyphen. This project for the Town will avoid a slash or hyphen unless it is part of a formal name or title. Also, the word "Gullah" will be used interchangeably to mean Gullah Geechee.

Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force

This formal name determined by the Town and "Gullah Task Force" will be used interchangeably.

Preservation

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "preservation" as "the activity or process of keeping

something valued alive, intact, or free from damage or decay.” Within the context of this project to preserve Gullah culture, the following features are being sought for preservation:

- *Gullah Geechee people* – Given the consistent decrease over time of the percentage of the island’s population that are Gullah, a preservation objective is to stop that trend of decreased population percentage and perhaps even increase it.
- *Gullah Geechee culture* – The Culture that needs preserving and even strengthening includes Gullah customs, spiritualism, music, foodways, language, art, crafts, subsistence off the land and water, and other ways of conducting their daily lives.
- *Gullah Geechee land ownership* – Decreased land ownership has paralleled the Gullah people’s decreased percentage of the population on the island. The minimum objective should be to maintain the current Gullah land holdings in terms of acreage, and even increase the amount of land owned as an ideal to strive towards.
- *Gullah Geechee use of land* – Owning land does not always translate into having a wide range of options for using it. Within the parameters of zoning and other regulations, the objective should be to preserve the current permitted uses of Gullah-owned land, and to even expand the uses where viable – particularly any uses tied to Gullah culture.

Abbreviations/Acronyms

The following abbreviations/acronyms, among others, are used throughout this report:

- Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce (BCBCC)
- Beaufort County Heritage Tourism Corporation (BCHTC)
- Center for Heirs’ Property Preservation (CHPP)
- Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC)
- Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission (GGCHCC)
- Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park, Inc. (HMFP)
- Land Management Ordinance (LMO)
- Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association (NIBCAA)
- Pan-African Family Empowerment & Land Preservation Network, Inc. (PAFEN)
- Public Service District (PSD)
- Right-of-way (ROW)
- Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT)
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)
- Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB)

RECOMMENDATIONS INTRODUCTION

Recommendations Purpose

The overarching purpose of these recommendations are to offer strategies to better preserve Gullah Geechee culture on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. This project and corresponding report feature three key components:

- Create a broad strategy for Gullah Geechee cultural preservation, to include resource preservation and enhancement, interpretation, and heritage tourism.
- Identify potential revisions to the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) and other land use and development related policies to better accommodate the use and development of Gullah lands.
- Identify tools for addressing the heirs' property issues, which greatly limit what Gullah land owners can do with their land because of a lack of title to their property and related legal hurdles.

Approach to the Recommendations

For each of the strategies provided on the following pages, the following format is utilized:

- *Overall Recommendation:* This bold-faced text starts and summarizes each recommendation.
- *Issue Statement:* A summary of the particular issue related to the associated recommendation.
- *Background Study Reference:* An indication of the page numbers of this report's Background Study (Appendix 1) that provide additional information on the issue.
- *Strategy Description:* This part of the recommendation describes the general strategy.
- *Implementation:* This final part of each recommendation will offer ideas related to implementation, such as potential costs, funding sources, and/or responsible parties.

Where strategies or implementation actions suggested by the consultants or the public stakeholders are already being undertaken by the Town or others organizations, it is noted at the beginning of each this report's three topic-based sections – Cultural Preservation, Public Policies, and Heirs' Property. Also, the alpha-numeric designations given to each recommendation do not reflect priority rankings or suggested implementation sequencing. Finally, it should be understood that all recommendations that involve one or more entities other than the Town will require strong teamwork with those entities to ensure that there is optimal coordination and to avoid the Town pursuing actions that may be inconsistent with the objectives of the relevant entities. Similarly, the relevant entities should retain creative control where applicable.

CULTURAL PRESERVATION

The recommendations for cultural resources preservation should not be viewed as a substitute for a comprehensive cultural preservation plan for Hilton Head Island. Furthermore, since the topic cannot be adequately addressed within the scope of this project, a comprehensive cultural preservation plan is recommended as a future project for the Town.

CURRENT EFFORTS

At present, many measures are already being taken by the Town and others. *Examples of current measures that should be continued* include the following:

Provision of public access to Gullah historic sites, such as cemeteries.

The Town has required such access for years as part of their development approval process so that gated communities and similar barriers do not block access. However, some Gullah citizens are still experiencing difficulties accessing sites. For example, security guards at some gated communities may not be aware of the access arrangements or individual property owners sometimes make access very difficult. The Town has been proactive with this issue, but meetings with property managers where such challenges occur may be necessary in the future on an as-needed basis. The Town's new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator could assist with this issue.

Local schools' curriculum and field trips tied to Gullah history and culture.

The Coastal Discovery Museum, Gullah Museum, and the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park (HMFP) have already teamed to create a curriculum about Gullah history and culture. They understand the need, in particular, for Gullah language to be taught to the younger generation before it is lost. Many educators do not possess adequate knowledge of the history and culture of the Gullah Geechee people and may not be able to identify or appreciate the Gullah language when spoken by a students or community members. Efforts should continue to educate teachers about Gullah culture through annual teacher institutes and professional development workshops provided by the Beaufort County School District, partnering with the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, institutions of higher learning, local and regional organizations and local Gullah community members.

Graphically consistent marker program for Gullah neighborhoods and cemeteries.

The Town has a relatively new signage program to identify Gullah neighborhoods. In fact, nine of twelve neighborhoods now have a sign, and the Town plans to install the final three at some point in the near future. The design of the signs is attractive and distinctive, and they have been placed in highly visible locations. In addition, local Boy Scouts have provided signs identifying four of the ten identified Gullah cemeteries using the same design template. There is potential that similar signs can be created for the rest of the cemeteries.

Support for development of key sites such as Mitchelville and the Gullah Museum.

Most key Gullah sites are owned and operated by non-profit entities with very limited financial resources. They typically rely on funding from memberships, donations, income-generating

events and programs, and grants. The master plan for Mitchelville is being funded by the County. The HMFP's Executive Director's salary has been funded by the Town for two years.

Utilization of historic Hilton Head Island Gullah figures and words associated with Gullah culture for street and development names.

Although Gullah culture is central to Hilton Head Island's history, it has limited visibility today. The Town looks for opportunities to heighten its visibility, including with street and development names. Development and street naming is dictated by the Town's Land Management Ordinance (LMO). All street names are approved by the Planning Commission, while development names are approved by Town staff. Various books and manuscripts at the Heritage Library Foundation serve as a good source of information.

Support and promotion of the annual Gullah Celebration sponsored by the Native Island Business & Community Affairs Association (NIBCAA).

Established in 1996, the Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration showcases the cultural heritage of the Gullah people and their history on Hilton Head Island. NIBCAA has a core committee of five persons, as well as ten additional people that make up the individual event sub-committees. The committees reportedly meet monthly for ten months of the year, and weekly for the two months leading up to the event. NIBCAA is the primary sponsor of the event, but other partners include the Native Islanders Property Owners Association, the Town of Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County, and SC Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

As noted previously, the alpha-numeric designations for each recommendation do not reflect their order of priority or suggested implementation sequencing. Also, some of the recommendations under the sub-topic of "Research, Education & Interpretation" could have also been placed under "Heritage Tourism" because they touch on both sub-topics. The following recommendations are offered for the Town's consideration:

RESEARCH, EDUCATION & INTERPRETATION**CP-1. Promote the use of the Heritage Library Foundation's resources with the Island's Gullah people to encourage them to research their history and genealogy.**

Issue Statement: The more knowledgeable local Gullah people are about Gullah history and genealogy, the greater interest and support they will have for Gullah cultural preservation.

Background Study Reference: Page A-11 of Appendix A provides information on the Heritage Library Foundation.

Strategy Description: Increase the awareness of Gullah people about the Heritage Library Foundation's resources for historic and genealogical research. In addition to having more than 4,000 volumes of history, the foundation regularly sponsors helpful courses for the public, such as "Genealogy 101." More specifically, they have a course on African American Genealogy that addresses issues that are directly related to Gullah people. That class costs \$12 for foundation members and \$15 for non-members. One way to make these classes even more accessible to the island's Gullah community might be to offer a discount to people residing within the delineated historic neighborhoods.

Implementation: The Foundation's resources and programs should be promoted to the Gullah community through NIBCAA, the Town's new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator, local schools, churches located within the historic neighborhoods, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, and any other relevant sources. The Foundation might also set up a booth at the annual Gullah Celebration and any similar event to promote their resources.

CP-2. Initiate a major fundraising effort to expand cultural programs that teach traditional Gullah ways and support the physical development of key interpretive sites.

Issue Statement: One challenge to Gullah cultural preservation on Hilton Head Island is that the younger generation, in particular, is not learning about Gullah traditions. It is critical that knowledge about Gullah traditions and culture be passed on as a fundamental part of overall Gullah cultural preservation. Fortunately, programs currently exist at sites such as the Gullah Museum, Mitchelville, the Coastal Discovery Museum, and Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. However, all of these organizations have only small amounts of manpower and funding that limits their ability to provide educational programs. These organizations have coordinated their efforts, to some degree, on educational programs. Both the Town and County have a track record of financially supporting the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park (HMFP).

In addition to educational programming, there is also a need to physically enhance key sites such as the Gullah Museum and HMFP with respect to parking areas, pedestrian circulation, restoration of historic structures, and construction of new buildings. The current master planning process for the HMFP will include a strategy for physical enhancements and financial sustainability, so that issue is being addressed for Mitchelville.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-9 through A-11 of Appendix A provide information on the sites/facilities sponsoring educational programs that are in need of support for physical enhancements.

Strategy Description: Targeted audiences for cultural programs should be relatively broad. However, Hilton Head Island's young residents and tourists should particularly be targeted. Consideration should also be given to allowing Gullah residents to participate at a reduced price or even for free.

To expand the existing programs and to provide needed physical improvements at key sites, a fundraising initiative must occur. Key partners and beneficiaries should include the Gullah Museum, Mitchelville, and the Coastal Discovery Museum. Individuals, organizations, and businesses should be encouraged to donate both their time and money toward this effort. Grant funding should also be sought from the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission (GGCHC), the US Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and private entities such as the Kresge Foundation. Although the recently-established Beaufort County Heritage Tourism Corporation (BCHTC) is another potential candidate, their focus is more on heritage tourism planning and promotion.

Implementation: *The Town's Senior Grants Administrator should pursue grant funding from the funding organizations listed above, with the Office of Cultural Affairs providing support. It is recognized that pursuing grants can be labor-intensive, so deciding which funding organizations to pursue should be strategic. The Town's Culture & Arts Advisory Committee should spearhead the solicitation of funding from local individuals, organizations and businesses with committee members "making the ask."* Board members from the beneficiary entities (Gullah Museum, Mitchelville, and the Coastal Discovery Museum) should also be called upon to solicit local contributions.

CP-3. Adapt and expand the interpretive themes from the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC) management plan as a framework for Gullah cultural interpretation on Hilton Head Island, and pursue accurate and consistent storytelling.

Issue Statement: The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission (GGCHCC) is a federally-designated body to preserve, interpret and promote Gullah cultural heritage as part of a four-state coastal corridor. There are multiple groups that

actively interpret Gullah heritage and culture on Hilton Head Island, including the Gullah Museum, the HMFP, Gullah Heritage Trail Tours, and the Coastal Discovery Museum, among others. It is important that information conveyed about Gullah culture is accurate and consistent.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-9 through A-16 of Appendix A provide information on the key sites/programs noted above.

Strategy Description: The interpretive themes identified by the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC) management plan include the following: language; arts, crafts and music; foodways; and spiritual expression. Based upon extensive stakeholder input, two additional themes are recommended specifically for Hilton Head Island:

- 1) Land & Water - farming, crabbing, fishing, and hunting
- 2) Storytelling – stories, and the art of storytelling

By having each local group that is active in interpreting Gullah heritage and culture telling an accurate and consistent story, interpretation can be more effective and the experience can be more positive for visitors. That positive visitor experience, in turn, will make the promotion of Gullah culture easier and more effective.

Implementation: It is recommended that the Town's Office of Cultural Affairs lead this effort, which should not require any funding beyond that already allocated by the Town for the Director's position. The first step is to confirm that each relevant group has a copy of the GGCHC management plan and is aware of the plan section that addresses history and interpretation. The next step is to meet with them, perhaps as a group, to discuss the merits of consistent interpretation that ties back to the GGCHC, and to secure their commitment to make an effort to be generally consistent with the GGCHC's interpretation. To the extent that the relevant groups have written materials (websites, brochures, etc.), the Office of Cultural Affairs should review them and provide suggestions for any needed edits.

CP-4. Develop a self-guided tour of the Island's Gullah sites utilizing multiple methods (hard copy maps, site markers, digital technology, etc.) to supplement existing guided tours so that a broader range of interpretive experiences can be available.

Issue Statement: There is currently no single source of information in a user-friendly format to guide locals and visitors to Gullah-related sites. While the Town's Office of Cultural Affairs has a Cultural Trail conveyed through an interactive web-based map, the map has a broader scope of "art, history and pathways." Similarly, Gullah Heritage Trail Tours provides excellent guided tours to Gullah sites, but that differs from a self-guided tour.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-1 through A-8 of Appendix A provide information on Hilton Head Island’s Gullah cultural resources and sites.

Strategy Description: It is recommended that a self-guided tour occur in both a printed “hard copy” brochure format and a web-based interactive digital format accessed by a computer, smartphone, or similar digital device. Perhaps referred to as the “Gullah Trail,” it should include a map with symbols that relate back to a key with written information on the site. A digital version could even utilize narrated dialogue. Sites might also be organized around the four interpretive themes of the GGCHC (language; arts, crafts and music; foodways; and spiritual expression), plus the two proposed new themes per recommendation CP-3. In addition to educating users, self-guided tours should be used to promote the existing guided tours as a logical next step for visitors.

Implementation: This self-guided tour should be spearheaded by the Town’s Office of Cultural Affairs. However, it will require funding to hire consultants to produce it. The costs for creating a hard copy would likely be in the \$15,000 to \$25,000 range, while research will need to be done on how to then translate that information into a web-based tour guide. In addition to the potential funding sources cited for recommendation CP-2 relative to educational programs, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History may be another funding source. However, that source may be challenging given that priority for preservation grants is given to the state’s Certified Local Governments (CLGs), which the Town is not among. CLG designation is limited to communities with a formal historic preservation program (designated historic districts, design review boards, mandatory design guidelines, etc.), which is not recommended for the Town as part of this project.

CP-5. Develop a graphically consistent wayfinding and wayside exhibit system throughout the Island to highlight sites tied to Gullah history and culture and to better orient visitors.

Issue Statement: As indicated previously, the Town has a program to install markers identifying Gullah neighborhoods and local Boy Scouts have installed similar markers at some Gullah cemeteries. The Town currently has some wayfinding signs to orient visitors to key destinations. They consist of the standard green-colored directional signs pointing visitors to locations such as Town Hall. There are also brown directional signs for cultural destinations. However, there is not a distinctive and cohesive system of wayfinding tied specifically to Gullah culture and history. There are also some existing interpretive wayside exhibits at historic sites, such as the marker installed by the State at the Cherry Hill School in 2013. However, such markers are very limited in their interpretive value because they lack graphics and a hierarchy of more detailed narrative.

Background Study Reference: Examples of sites worthy of interpretation are included

on pages A-1 through A-8 of Appendix A, and a photo of a Town-installed neighborhood sign is on page A-12 of Appendix A.

Strategy Description: It is recommended that a cohesive system of distinct directional signs for wayfinding be installed throughout the Island at key intersections and at the destinations. It is also recommended that the very distinctive and visible design of the signs identifying Gullah neighborhoods and cemeteries be used as the design inspiration for this wayfinding signage. It is recognized that approvals from SCDOT and/or the County may be required in many instances for signs located within public ROWs. Also, signage will be limited to directing people to cultural sites and attractions, such as this report's proposed Gullah market (which would have multiple vendors), as opposed to individual businesses.

Interpretive wayside exhibits should also be designed, fabricated, and installed at key sites. Unlike the style installed by the State, they should be consistent with those commonly installed at National Park Service properties and elsewhere. Such exhibits typically feature a hierarchy of text (headings, subheadings, main story, sidebar, etc.) and high-quality graphics. They are designed and placed to accommodate pedestrians rather than drivers, and they should be internal to their site.

Finally, this system of wayfinding and interpretive wayside exhibits should be tied to the recommended self-guided tour map/brochure as proposed in recommendation CP-4 above, and should integrate the logo of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC) into their design.

Implementation: This project should be initiated by the Town's Office of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the VCB. The Town should pursue funding through the VCB, as well as the GGCHC. The costs of wayfinding signage will depend on the number of signs required. For interpretive wayside exhibits, it is preliminarily estimated that each exhibit will cost \$3,000 to \$5,000 to research and design, and another \$1,500 to \$2,000 each to fabricate.

CP-6. Establish a program for local students to conduct oral history interviews of elderly Gullah citizens to document their way of life in earlier eras before this important information is lost.

Issue Statement: This issue ties into the broader issue identified previously in which Gullah culture will slowly disappear if the traditions and customs are not carried on by younger generations. Much of the cultural history can be captured through recorded oral histories from the elderly. The Penn Center on St. Helena Island has sponsored a similar program in the past, but it was limited to former Penn School students, some of whom may have lived on Hilton Head Island.

Background Study Reference: Information on the Penn Center is provided on page A-14 of Appendix A of this report.

Strategy Description: There are at least two options for pursuing a project for local students to conduct oral history interviews of elderly Gullah citizens. Both, and more, should be explored.

Penn Center Model

One option is to meet with Penn Center representatives and learn more about their project to see if it can be replicated. Their program in 2008, the Sea Island Storytellers Workshop for Youth, had the objective of being a training ground for the next generation of Gullah culture bearers. Students, ages 13 through 17, conducted research on the elders of the Sea Islands and former Penn School students, many of whom were in their 70s and 80s when the program occurred. Following their research, the students selected who they wanted to interview and collected their oral histories with video presentations or audio presentations. The students gained valuable experience in research, history, and documentation.

StoryCorps

Another option is to begin a relationship with StoryCorps, a non-profit organization that assists groups with oral history projects. While their employees can actually conduct the interviews for a fee, a more cost-effective approach is to hire them to train local students to conduct and document oral histories.

Implementation: It is recommended that the Town's Office of Cultural Affairs initiate this project in partnership with the Gullah Museum. The first option should be to employ the Penn Center model, which would entail no significant costs. Utilizing StoryCorps for training should be the second option. Their training services start at \$7,000, plus expenses.

CP-7. Establish a program to educate Town officials, area school teachers, and others on Gullah culture so they can better understand the culture and more effectively interact with the Island's Gullah citizens.

Issue Statement: Some Town officials, both elected officials and staff, lack a sufficient understanding of Gullah culture to be able to effectively interact with Gullah people and to fully appreciate their perspective. In particular, the views of Gullah people on land use and development may differ from that of other people living and/or working on Hilton Head Island. Furthermore, learning about Gullah culture could benefit area business leaders and school teachers.

Background Study Reference: Page A-10 of Appendix A provides information on the Gullah Museum.

Strategy Description: One objective of this strategy is to enhance communications and relationships between the Island's Gullah citizens and Town officials. It is recommended that a "crash course" in Gullah history and culture - Gullah 101 - be provided for Town officials. It could consist of a tour of the Island's Gullah sites, a few presentations by Gullah representatives knowledgeable in their culture, and perhaps a few assigned readings. This education program might initially be given to all Town officials and then periodically for new officials. Another version of the program directed at area school teachers could be the Gullah Geechee Teachers Institute. The program might also be connected with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, which has a University of South Carolina Beaufort affiliation. A potential outgrowth of this recommendation should be the establishment of a speakers' bureau that can be utilized by various local groups looking for a speaker on Gullah-related topics.

Implementation: It is recommended that this program be spearheaded by either the Town's Office of Cultural Affairs or the new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator in partnership with the Gullah Museum. Museum officials could provide any reading materials and presentations. Assuming this program is a success, it might be expanded to do the same for the Island's business community in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce. The proposed Teachers Institute facet of this program should be a partnership between the Town and the Beaufort County School District. Coordination should also occur with the GGCHC Commission in case they can provide support in some form and to avoid any duplication of their efforts elsewhere.

CP-8. Utilize interactive approaches to interpretation to better engage current and potential new audiences, particularly young people.

Issue Statement: In general, interest in history and related cultural themes is in decline nation-wide, especially among the younger generations. However, many historic and cultural attractions have found that utilizing interactive approaches to interpretation, including digital technology, is more effective than traditional passive approaches to interpretation.

Background Study Reference: N/A

Strategy Description: It is recommended that interactive approaches to interpretation include the following:

- *Living history opportunities involving the audience:* This approach might entail people representing Gullah people both in the past and present, and having them actively engage with the audience through conversations and cultural demonstrations.
- *High technology interpretation:* An example of high technology interpretation within a museum setting would be interactive touch-screen videos. An example of this type of interpretation in an outdoor context is app-based digital interpretation (videos, etc.) used on iPhones and tied to sites as part of a thematic tour.

This type of interpretation should occur not only at Gullah-related historic sites and attractions on Hilton Head Island, but also within the Gullah-related curriculum already being developed by the Coastal Discovery Museum, Gullah Museum, and the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park (HMFP).

Implementation: This recommendation should be led by the Town's Office of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the Coastal Discovery Museum, Gullah Museum, and HMFP. The specific approaches should be determined with the help of solicited input from the Island's young people.

HERITAGE TOURISM

CP-9. Coordinate the promotion of the Island's Gullah-related attractions with state and regional cultural heritage organizations to attract more visitors to the Island's Gullah sites.

Issue Statement: At present, Gullah Geechee culture and sites lack visibility on Hilton Head Island. The island needs to leverage other cultural sites and entities in the region to increase heritage tourism. This objective will be particularly important once attractions such as Mitchelville are further developed. Every reasonable opportunity for expanded promotion should be pursued.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-1 through A-8 of Appendix A provide information on key Gullah historic sites. Page A-12 of Appendix A provides information on NIBCAA. Pages A-14 through A-15 of Appendix A provides information on the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission (SCAAHC) and its "Green Book." Pages A-13 through A-16 of Appendix A provide information on the GGCHC and various Gullah-related sites and entities in the region.

Strategy Description: The promotion of Hilton Head Island's Gullah-related attractions should be coordinated with others within the GGCHC. In addition to promotional opportunities through the GGCHC, key individual sites and entities to partner with include St. Helena Island and the International African American Museum in Charleston (once it is developed and operational). Representatives of the GGCHC Commission should be invited to make presentations to Hilton Head Island Gullah businesses to teach them how to leverage the corridor to their advantage.

Also, based upon a 1950s booklet that gave advice to African American travelers on where to eat and stay throughout the South, the "Green Book" is now a mobile web/app-based site that promotes African-American cultural sites throughout the state. The only Hilton Head Island sites currently in the "Green Book" are the William

Simmons House at the Gullah Museum, the First African Baptist Church, Queen Chapel AME Church, Fort Howell, Mitchelville, St. James Church, and the Cherry Hill School. It is recommended that all of Hilton Head's key Gullah-related sites and programs be featured in the "Green Book."

Implementation: This effort should be implemented by the Town's new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator through a partnership with the Beaufort County Heritage Tourism Corporation, NIBCAA, and the VCB. They should work directly with the GGCHC and the SCAAHC on these respective issues. With the exception of paying for advertising, which might not even be necessary, there would be no significant costs since the work would be performed by volunteers and/or individuals already being paid as part of their job.

CP-10. Promote the Gullah culture and cultural resources more prominently within the Island's overall tourism marketing to attract more visitors to the Island and, in particular, to the Island's Gullah sites.

Issue Statement: In light of the overall tourism marketing for Hilton Head Island, Gullah history and culture lacks visibility. Given the prominence of the island's golf courses, resorts and beaches, this situation is understandable, but in need of rectifying.

Background Study Reference: Page A-10 of Appendix A includes information on Gullah Heritage Trail Tours.

Strategy Description: Promotion of Gullah culture and cultural resources will be more viable once sites such as Mitchelville can evolve into more substantial attractions. Among the programs worthy of particular promotion is the Gullah Heritage Trail Tours, which is one of the most important existing facets of Gullah-related tourism. It is believed that roughly 10% the VCB's budget currently goes toward heritage tourism, and that is primarily related to the Celebration held every February. To make the VCB more accountable regarding this idea, a target percentage of the budget, such as 20%, should be established as an initial benchmark until sites such as Mitchelville can become more fully developed as major destinations.

Implementation: The Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) will be the most critical entity for this recommendation to be realized since they promote tourism for the Island. The Town's Office of Cultural Affairs and the Black Chamber should partner in spearheading this initiative with the VCB. It is not anticipated that significant additional costs would be required, as this recommendation is more about rebalancing the themes being marketed rather than calling for more marketing.

CP-11. Provide technical and financial support to businesses whose products and/or services are strongly tied to Gullah culture to increase their odds of sustained success.

Issue Statement: There are currently no highly-visible businesses on Hilton Head Island offering Gullah services and products to serve the island's Gullah people, local residents, and visitors.

Background Study Reference: Page A-12 of Appendix A has information on NIBCAA, and page A-15 of Appendix A has information on the Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce.

Strategy Description: Examples of potential businesses that are needed include restaurants selling Gullah foods and shops selling Gullah products (arts, crafts, etc.). Technical support that should be made available includes advice on marketing, financing, book keeping, inventory, and similar business skills. To provide needed technical support and mentoring, utilize the US Small Business Administration's (SBA's) local SCORE program to provide free technical advice to start-up businesses. While businesses with strong Gullah cultural associations should be prioritized, the same support and mentoring might also be made available to residents of identified Gullah neighborhoods even if their businesses do not have strong cultural ties.

Implementation: NIBCAA should spearhead this effort in partnership with the SBA's SCORE program. They should work with SCORE to develop a "business development toolbox." There may be additional support roles, such as promoting the program, for the Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and the Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce.

CP-12. Establish a Gullah authenticity certification program by which businesses with authentic Gullah services and products can utilize an adopted logo that conveys their status as being certified based upon adopted criteria.

Issue Statement: As addressed in the previous recommendation, there is presently a lack of businesses on Hilton Head Island offering Gullah services and products, which inhibits Gullah-related heritage tourism. If and when such businesses can be established, there will be a need to ensure quality control for authenticity, a key ingredient for successful heritage tourism.

Background Study Reference: Page A-12 of Appendix A has information on NIBCAA, and page A-13 of Appendix A has information on the GGCHCC.

Strategy Description: This strategy will require three components: 1) a set of written standards to be used as criteria in determining authenticity; 2) an appointed body to review applications to determine compliance with the adopted standards; and 3) a process for businesses to apply for certification. The GGCHCC should be utilized as a primary technical resource in developing the standards. The appointed body to review applications should consist of respected Gullah citizens on the island, but avoiding

members who may have a conflict of interest, such as an interest in a business likely to seek certification (or likely to compete with businesses seeking certification).

Implementation: The first option should be to approach the GGCHCC to see if they could be encouraged to initiate such a program for the entire corridor. If not, NIBCAA should spearhead this effort, including administrating the application and certification process. They should seek technical advice from the GGCHCC in developing the standards. Finally, if the appointment of local volunteers to the review committee proves to be too politically contentious and/or willing volunteers cannot be secured, volunteers from nearby areas, such as St. Helena Island, might be considered. That approach would allow for a more objective “third party” that would help avoid perceptions of biasness in applying the certification standards.

CP-13. Utilize information from the recently-drafted Economic and Fiscal Impact Study for Beaufort County and the Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 report to refine strategies to more effectively promote Gullah heritage tourism for Hilton Head Island.

Issue Statement: Over the past few years, there has been momentum within the region related to heritage tourism planning. Examples include the GGCHCC and the new Beaufort County Heritage Tourism Corporation. Available fresh data related to the region’s heritage tourism potential should be leveraged to the benefit of Hilton Head Island’s Gullah-related tourism.

Background Study Reference: Page A-15 of Appendix A provides information on the recently-established Beaufort County Heritage Tourism Corporation.

Strategy Description: The Economic and Fiscal Impact Study was prepared by two professors that are part of the University of South Carolina Beaufort’s Lowcountry and Resort Islands Tourism Institute. The Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 report was prepared by Americans for the Arts. First, the results of both reports can be used to sell Hilton Head Island’s citizens, business leaders, and public officials on the potential value of Gullah-related tourism and related arts. Secondly, the results of the impact study’s Heritage Visitor Survey can be used by the Island’s businesses and heritage attractions to better understand what visitors are looking for so they can respond with any strategic adjustments.

Implementation: The sources of the subject studies are the Beaufort County Heritage Tourism Corporation and Americans for the Arts. However, it will be up to individual businesses and heritage site entities to take the initiative to utilize these studies. In the meantime, organizations such as NIBCAA, the Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, and the Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce can promote the studies among their constituents.

CP-14. Establish an open-air market as a pilot program to sell food, arts and crafts tied to Gullah culture as an economic development initiative for the Island's Gullah community.

Issue Statement: As noted throughout this report, Gullah culture lacks visibility on Hilton Head Island. There are also few opportunities for the Island's Gullah people to sell products that reflect their culture short of establishing full-blown businesses that may not be viable. The Coastal Discovery Museum currently sponsors a weekly farmers market operated from October through December, but it does not focus on Gullah-related foods and crafts.

Background Study Reference: N/A

Strategy Description: One possible location to establish an open-air market is the Rowing and Sailing Center at Squire Pope Community Park, which has parking and a pavilion. It might initially be a pilot program to test the market's viability. If it is successful, it can continue indefinitely. Also, if the market outgrows itself, larger alternative sites might be explored and/or additional markets in other Gullah neighborhoods might be considered. Another potential location could be the abandoned Fairfield Square property at 160 William Hilton Parkway. It would have good visibility, but it is privately owned.

Implementation: This pilot market should be operated by the Town's Office of Cultural Affairs in partnership with NIBCAA. Also, the same set of standards recommended in recommendation CP-11 for determining the authenticity of Gullah products might be applied here to determine what vendors can participate.

PRESERVATION PLANNING

CP-15. Conduct a comprehensive inventory of cultural resources related to Gullah history and culture on Hilton Head Island to better accommodate future preservation planning for Gullah history and culture.

Issue Statement: One of the first steps necessary to establish a successful historic preservation program is to fully understand a community's historic resources. While many Gullah-related historic resources have already been identified, a detailed and comprehensive inventory of Gullah-related historic resources does not currently exist.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-1 through A-8 of Appendix A provide some information on existing Gullah-related historic resources. Page A-7 of Appendix A features a map of historic resources in general (not just Gullah) from the Town's current Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy Description: It is recommended that the proposed inventory be conducted by a qualified historic preservation professional who meets National Park Service standards (36 CFR Part 61). A less expensive option, but one that may not be available, is an inventory conducted by historic preservation students from a university in South Carolina or another regional school (University of Georgia, etc.). The format used for the inventory should be consistent with the standards used by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. In addition to documenting historic resources that can be identified through research and field reconnaissance, the inventory should be supplemented with available information on archeological resources. Some of that information might be acquired through the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA), as well as a survey entitled “Archeological Survey of Hilton Head Island” that was prepared in 1987 by the Chicora Foundation, Inc. Because of the threat of looting, location-specific information on archeological sites is often kept anonymous.

Implementation: It is recommended that the Town administer and fund this project by initiating an RFP process to hire a consultant (after first exploring any less costly university options). Because the scope is relatively narrow, focusing on Gullah-related historic resources and sites, and many of the historic resources and sites have already been identified, the estimated cost is \$10,000 to \$15,000.

CP-16. Prepare a comprehensive and detailed cultural preservation plan for the Island in general, but to include a focus on Gullah historic and cultural preservation, to expand upon the potential preservation benefits of this project.

Issue Statement: Hilton Head Island currently lacks a cultural preservation plan that addresses all types of cultural resources for the entire island. This project, which focuses on Gullah history and cultural preservation, provides a component of the Island’s overall history and cultural preservation. However, a broader effort is needed.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-1 through A-8 of Appendix A provide information on existing Gullah-related historic and cultural resources.

Strategy Description: The recommended comprehensive cultural preservation plan should be based on models already existing in the state, some of which can be provided by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. A plan should include a history of the island, interpretive themes, a summary of existing cultural resources (as contained in the recommended cultural resources inventory), and strategies for preservation. As with all plans initiated by a local government, it should also include opportunities for sufficient public input. Much of the information and recommendations generated by this project for Gullah historic and cultural preservation could be integrated into such a plan.

Implementation: It is recommended that the Town administer and fund this project by initiating an RFP process to hire a consultant. The estimated cost for the project is \$30,000 to \$50,000, depending on the detail and scope of work (and the amount of public engagement).

OTHER ISSUES

CP-17. Recognize the Island’s Gullah-associated churches as an important facet of Gullah culture, particularly regarding leadership and communications, to ensure that they are actively involved in all future Gullah-related initiatives.

Issue Statement: The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission’s management plan recognizes spirituality as one of its four interpretive themes. Those same themes, plus others, have been echoed in these recommendations for Hilton Head Island. There are five existing Gullah-associated churches and they are an extremely important facet of Gullah culture, historically as well as today. It is important that these churches continue to survive and thrive with congregations large enough that they can prosper into the future. Churches are not only important to the social fabric of Gullah communities, but they are an important source of communications.

Background Study Reference: Page A-8 of Appendix A provides information on existing Gullah-associated churches on Hilton Head Island.

Strategy Description: A supportive network of churches currently exists through the Beaufort County Ministerial Alliance. On Hilton Head Island, the pastors of the five Gullah-associated churches have an even closer working relationship.

Implementation: The Town’s new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator might be able to build a strong working relationship with the Ministerial Alliance and the church’s individual pastors. The churches should be utilized primarily for communications for Gullah-related issues.

CP-18. Identify an entity to match land owners in the historic Gullah neighborhoods with applicable private developers to increase the land owners’ odds of success with selling or developing their property.

Issue Statement: Once property title issues are resolved, the next hurdle for property owners wanting to develop their land is understanding the complexities of land development. As with most property owners on Hilton Head Island, Gullah land owners could benefit from a relationship with professional developers.

Background Study Reference: N/A

Strategy Description: Although not a role for the Town, another entity should be identified to reach out to developers who might want to pursue relationships with Gullah property owners. This yet-to-be-determined entity could assist in connecting developers with a candidate property owner seeking to pursue a sale or development of their land.

Implementation: This strategy should be the responsibility of an entity other than the Town. Potential organizations that might help identify candidate developers might include the South Carolina Real Estate Association (SCREA), the Urban Land Institute (ULI), NAIOP (renamed the Commercial Real Estate Development Association, but has kept its original abbreviations), and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

DRAFT

PUBLIC POLICIES

An overarching philosophical issue to be considered relates to the development of Gullah lands. One goal identified for the project is the need for Gullah landowners to be able to preserve their land consistent with Gullah traditions and culture. A second goal is to make it easier for Gullah property owners to sell and/or develop their land consistent with modern day market demands. In some respects, these two goals conflict. Optimally, it would be best to provide property owners both options: to preserve their land consistent with Gullah traditions, or sell and/or develop their land consistent with modern day market demands. Whether this is possible is uncertain.

CURRENT EFFORTS

Initially, it must be recognized that the Town and others have already undertaken many measures to address these issues. *Examples of current measures that should be continued* include the following:

Extending public sewer service into the historic neighborhoods.

For years, a number of historic Gullah neighborhoods lacked sanitary sewer systems, which created obstacles for development. However, the Town and Public Service Districts (PSDs) have made great strides in recent years to address this issue. They are currently implementing a five-year \$10 million sewer extension project that will serve approximately 490 of the 900 parcels that lacked sanitary sewer when the project began. Many of these parcels are part of the historic neighborhoods. The biggest hurdle for some property owners is the cost of the tap fee to connect and the conversion from septic, which averages roughly \$6,000 per property. Fortunately, some property owners have received financial help from the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, which provides grants through their Project SAFE. Other assistance comes from the PSD, who offers incremental financing by adding the fee costs to a landowner's property tax bill over a 20-year period.

Paving roads in historic Gullah neighborhoods.

Some historic Gullah neighborhoods are currently served by dirt roads in need of right-of-way (ROW) acquisition and pavement. One of the key hurdles to improving these roads is that most of the land needed for the ROW is privately owned as an access easement with many owners. The land can also be considered heirs' property with no clear title to the land needed for the road. The Town holds public meetings for affected property owners and residents prior to initiating any paving to ensure there is support for the improvements, as 100% buy-in is a requirement. Furthermore, the Town funds the construction of the roads through the Road Improvement Fee.

Encouraging land owners in historic Gullah neighborhoods to seek a reduction in their assessed property value and to pursue any potential exemptions to reduce their property tax burden.

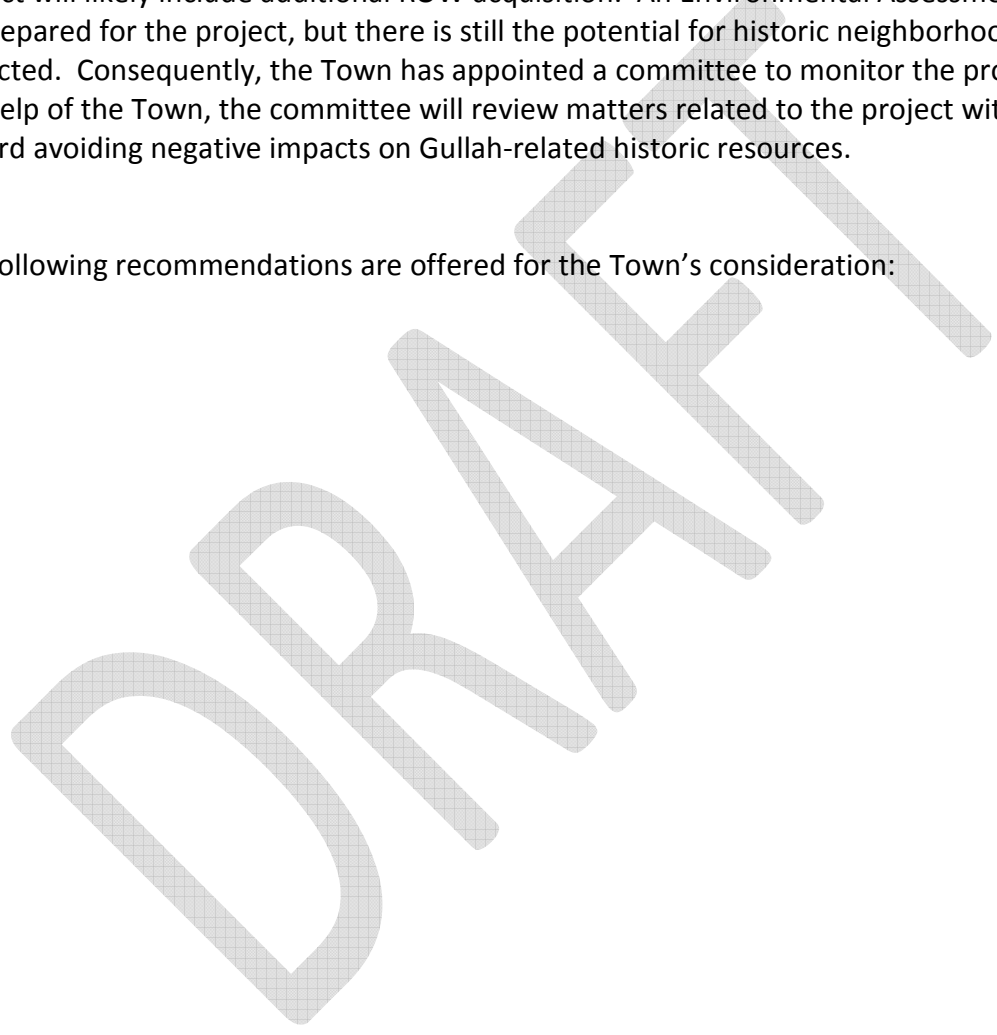
Some Gullah property owners cannot afford to pay their property taxes. When this happens, the result is the taxes become delinquent and the property is sold at auction to pay the taxes.

The Town and the Gullah Task Force have been encouraging property owners in Gullah neighborhoods to seek reduced valuations and to take advantage of all available exemptions. It is anticipated that the Town's new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator will assist even further on this issue.

Monitoring plans to expand US Hwy. 278 so that potential impacts on historic Gullah neighborhoods can be identified and mitigated in advance.

It is anticipated that the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) will develop plans to expand US Hwy. 278 from the western edge of the island to Squire Pope Road. That project will likely include additional ROW acquisition. An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared for the project, but there is still the potential for historic neighborhoods to be impacted. Consequently, the Town has appointed a committee to monitor the project. With the help of the Town, the committee will review matters related to the project with an eye toward avoiding negative impacts on Gullah-related historic resources.

The following recommendations are offered for the Town's consideration:



DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS**PP-1. Allow waivers for development application fees and establish a grant program to assist property owners to pay for specific development impact fees for sites within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District.**

Issue Statement: Some of the development application fees and impact fees required by the LMO are cost-prohibitive for Gullah land owners. The impact fee for transportation is imposed by the Town in the LMO. The impact fees for parks, roads and libraries are imposed by Beaufort County. The sewer and water availability fees are administered by the Public Service Districts (PSDs).

Initially, the idea of waiving some fees was explored. With respect to state laws, no landowner/developer may be required to pay more than their fair share for capital improvements and other activities funded by the fees, and that they receive sufficient benefit in the form of capital improvements for the fees paid. For this reason, if any impact fees were to be waived, another source of funding for the waivers would need to be created to make up the funding shortfall to provide the necessary capital facilities. Given this circumstance, there are real limitations to what fees could be waived. For example, the Real Estate Transfer Fee will sunset at the end of 2024, and any changes to it in the meantime would require both State and County approval. Likewise, the impact fees for parks, roads and libraries are exacted under County ordinances, and the County is unlikely to agree to waive the fees. Research into the sewer and water availability fees administered by the PSDs reveals that there is no flexibility for waiving those.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-28 through A-33 of Appendix A provide information on the Town's LMO, and pages A-35 through A-37 of Appendix A address development-related fees.

Strategy Description: Recommendation PP-4 proposes a Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District as a vehicle for implementing several of this report's recommendations related to the LMO. With respect to development application fees, it is proposed that they be waived for applicants within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District. It is proposed that a fund be established to provide grants subsidizing Town transportation impact fees for qualified property owners within the proposed overlay district.

Implementation: This strategy can be implemented through amendments to the LMO. Section 16-2-102.C.2 addresses development application fees by reference, while Section 16-5-116 addresses impact fees. The proposed fund should be established and administered by the Town. It is recommended that, at a minimum, residential projects should qualify for grants. Based upon input from stakeholders, the Town should also consider grants for impact fees related to commercial development. In either case, projects would need to meet specific criteria, and applications could be decided by a

Town-appointed committee of staff and/or appointed or elected officials. One such criterion might be prioritizing Gullah property owners for this grants program, as opposed to out-of-town developers having no connections to Gullah culture.

PP-2. “Fast-track” the review process for development applications within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to decrease the land owners’ time and costs associated with development.

Issue Statement: The time it takes to process a development application has financial implications. Unlike most developers, those costs can be prohibitive for many Gullah land owners.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-28 through A-33 of Appendix A provide information on the Town’s LMO.

Strategy Description: It is proposed that all development applications requested for development in the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District be “fast-tracked” by allowing those applications to “move to the front of the processing line” in the review and approval process once they are determined complete. It is noteworthy that the Town already provides administrative approvals for any application types that they have the authority to so they can avoid lengthy approval processes for applicants.

Implementation: The review process for various types of development applications is established in Chapter 16-2 of the LMO. Amendments for “fast-tracking” development applications in the Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District should be provided in this part of the LMO. They should also be referenced in the Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District provisions. These amendments should be prepared in Phase 2 of this project.

PP-3. Utilize the Town’s newly-created Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator position to work closely with property and business owners in the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to help them navigate Town regulations related to land use, development, and businesses.

Issue Statement: One of the major hurdles for the Island’s Gullah residents and land owners is understanding the complexities of the land use and development regulations. The Town has a strong track record in trying to help applicants navigate the regulations, but they have limited staffing capacity, just like most municipalities. Recently, the Town established a new professional staff position, the “Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator.” The Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator’s advertised job description is to “Initiate, implement and administer a program to preserve the

Island's historic neighborhoods and advance efforts to improve infrastructure in and service delivery to these areas."

Background Study Reference: Page A-12 of Appendix A provides information on the Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator.

Strategy Description: A portion of the Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator's time should be devoted towards assisting land owners within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to better understand the Town's land use and development regulations, and assisting them prepare and process development applications.

Implementation: Since the Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator position will report directly to the Town's Deputy Director of Community Development, this recommendation can be implemented by the Deputy Director.

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

PP-4. Designate a Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District for all delineated historic Gullah neighborhoods that can serve as the vehicle for many of this report's recommendations.

Issue Statement: There is consensus that the Town's Land Management Ordinance (LMO) should be modified to provide more development opportunities for Gullah land owners. Examples of potential treatment for Gullah neighborhoods include waiving development fees and certain impact fees, relaxing certain development standards, and expanding permitted land uses and increasing development densities.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-1 and A-2 of Appendix A provide information on the delineated historic Gullah neighborhoods, and pages A-28 through A-33 of Appendix A provide information on the LMO.

Strategy Description: It is recommended that a Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District be added to the LMO. Its purpose and intent should be to preserve the character and historic integrity of the island's historic Gullah neighborhoods. It should be applied to the historic Gullah neighborhoods delineated in the Town's 2017 Comprehensive Plan (see page A-1 of this report's Appendix A). The overlay should serve as a vehicle for implementing the other recommended LMO revisions found in this report, such as fast-tracking development applications, waiving certain application fees, providing grants to subsidize certain development impact fees, increasing densities, potential reductions in setbacks and buffers, adjusting ROW widths, and adopting family compound provisions. Below is a list of the potential provisions

that might be directly included in this proposed overlay district that are detailed in the following pages:

- Allowing higher densities for the lands zoned RM-4 and MF
- Reducing some minimum setback and buffering requirements
- Reducing open space requirements for residential subdivisions

Implementation: Since the Forest Beach and Folly Field Neighborhood Character Overlay Districts appear to be closest to this proposed overlay for historic Gullah neighborhoods, it is recommended that those districts be used as a starting point for development of the proposed overlay, which will be tailored specifically to the historic Gullah neighborhoods. Because of the unique circumstances of the historic Gullah neighborhoods, however, the adaptation of any templates will need to be substantial. It is further recommended that the overlay district be designed and drafted as part of this project's Phase 2.

- A. Allow higher densities for the RM-4 and MF zoning districts in the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District so that land owners can better leverage their potential land value.

Issue Statement: The most prevalent base zoning districts within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District are:

- Low to Moderate Density Residential (RM-4);
- Moderate Density Residential (RM-8);
- Stoney (S);
- Mitchelville (MV);
- Marshfront (MF);
- Water-Oriented Mixed Use (WMU); and
- Parks and Recreation (PR).

It must first be acknowledged that many of the base zoning districts that currently apply to the proposed overlay district already allow a relatively wide range of land uses. Contemplating whether to broaden the uses allowed in the base districts within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District or increasing densities must always be considered in the context of ensuring sound land use planning and the community's goals for development.

Given these considerations, there may be opportunities to expand some types of uses and/or increase densities and maximum impervious surface coverage requirements. However, they would most likely be modest refinements, given the current development parameters in relationship to the development parameters in base district outside the proposed overlay district.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-28 through A-33 of Appendix A provide information on the Town's LMO, including the most relevant zoning districts.

Strategy Description: Several actions might be taken with respect to modifying the base zoning districts and district regulations within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District. First, the current base districts that apply in the area might be refined in several ways. The current uses allowed by right and conditionally have been reviewed to determine whether it might be appropriate to expand allowed uses in the districts. Secondly, the development parameters have been evaluated relative to district purposes and the other residential, commercial and mixed-use districts in the Town to determine whether modifications make sense. Another potential option to consider is the expansion of the boundaries of existing zoning districts to adjacent lands. Any such actions, however, should balance the desire to provide greater options for Gullah lands with sound planning principles and likely future market demand. Potential changes to existing zoning that should be considered only within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District include the following:

Low to Moderate Density Residential (RM-4): This zoning district is the most prevalent within the Gullah neighborhoods. It allows a maximum density of 4 to 8 units per net acre, depending upon the size of the site. It also allows a relatively broad range of permitted and conditional uses relative to other residential districts. It is recommended that, within the proposed overlay, a maximum density increase of 25% to 50% be considered, which is capped at a maximum density of 10 units per acre regardless of the site size. That increase would result in 5 to 6 units per net acre for sites less than 3 acres in size, 7.5 to 9 units for sites between 3 and 5 acres in size, and 10 units for sites over 5 acres in size.

Moderate Density Residential (RM-8): This zoning district is applied to a relatively small portion of the proposed overlay relative to the RM-4 district. No revisions are recommended for the RM-8 within the proposed overlay areas.

Stoney (S): This zoning district permits a substantial range of uses and densities up to 10 units per net acre. Because the range of uses and permitted density are significant, no changes are recommended.

Mitchelville (MV): Similar to Stoney, this zoning district already permits relatively dense development and a substantial range of uses. No changes are proposed.

Marshfront (MF): This district permits a mix of residential, institutional, and commercial uses. Permitted densities are as high as 10 units per net acre (based upon the optimal street location and a site size exceeding 3 acres). The maximum nonresidential gross floor area (GFA) is 7,000 square feet per net acre, the maximum building height is 45 feet, and maximum impervious surface coverage is 60%. It is

recommended that the limitation of density along major arterial streets (4 units per net acre for sites less than 3 acres, and 8 units per net acre for sites 3 acres and larger) be eliminated so that major arterial sites can have the same density as elsewhere within the MF zoning district.

Water-Oriented Mixed Use (WMU): Allowing even more dense development than the S or MV districts, this district permits a wide range of uses, densities up to 16 units per net acre, and building heights up to 75 feet. No changes are proposed.

Implementation: Following a general evaluation of the primary base zoning districts that comprise the same areas proposed for the overlay district, the only proposed changes for increased density of development apply to the RM-4 and MF districts. Amendments should be considered for the RM-4 section and MF section of the LMO and referenced in the new section for the proposed overlay district. However, before adopting any revised standards for these districts within the proposed overlay, it is recommended that conceptual site plans be prepared for multiple example properties to ensure that the proposed changes will achieve the desired results. In addition to potential allowed density increases, such testing will also need to consider standards for impervious coverages, building heights, setbacks and buffers. As reflected in subsequent recommendations, corresponding amendments to some of those standards may also be necessary to work properly with density increases.

B. Reduce some setback and buffer requirements within zoning districts applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District so that land owners can maximize their development potential.

Issue Statement: Some refinements to the requirements for use and street setbacks and use and street buffer requirements might be achieved to enhance the development potential of Gullah lands without affecting the quality of development or the general character of the Town. However, as noted previously, the merits of relaxing development standards must always be balanced against sound land use planning that seeks to avoid negative impacts from development and maintains desired community development quality and character. Below is a summary of potential revisions to the current LMO setback and buffer requirements:

Adjacent Street Setbacks: These standards refer to the setback that structures must have from their adjacent streets. One potential setback that should be considered is reduction of the required setback for structures 24 inches in height or greater. Similarly, there is the potential to reduce setbacks along arterial streets.

Adjacent Use Setbacks: These standards dictate how far a structure must be set back from the lot line of an adjacent use (there are some existing exceptions when residential subdivisions are adjacent to other residential subdivisions). Although, in the case of single-family subdivisions, these setbacks only apply to the perimeter of

the subdivision, they may still be overly generous in some cases and worthy of reconsideration.

Adjacent Street Buffers: Given that a buffer along a street frontage is more in keeping with an Island character than a historic neighborhood character, the elimination of adjacent street buffers should be considered within the proposed overlay district for all street types other than arterials. For the arterials, the required buffer types might be decreased in width and landscape density.

Adjacent Use Buffers: As with adjacent use setback requirements for residential subdivisions, these buffers only apply to the perimeter of the subdivision rather than the individual lots. Nevertheless, buffer requirements are substantial enough that they have potential for reduction as applied to properties within the proposed overlay district.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-28 through A-33 of Appendix A provide information on the Town's Land Management Ordinance (LMO).

Strategy Description: It is recommended that relief from the LMO's existing use setback requirements be adopted in the proposed overlay district. Likewise, adjacent street buffers should be considered for complete elimination for all but arterial street frontages within the proposed overlay with some level of reduction in the buffers for arterial streets (except for development abutting Industrial uses). This reduction does not apply to buffer height requirements. Consideration should also be given to reducing or even eliminating adjacent use buffer requirements within the proposed overlay when the buffer would apply to like uses and development.

Implementation: Any proposed exemptions from the LMO's setback and buffer standards that might be applied to the proposed overlay district should be noted in the LMO's setback and buffer standards section. Also, these reduced setbacks and buffers should be referenced in the new section for the proposed new section for the proposed overlay district. In order to determine specific adjustments to the setback and buffer standards, it will be necessary to evaluate actual development sites through site planning and confirm where potential adjustments might be achieved without affecting desired community character.

- C. Reduce the LMO's open space requirements as applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay Zoning District so that land owners can maximize their development potential.

Issue Statement: Some LMO requirements impact the development potential of historic Gullah neighborhood lands, as is the case for all lands on the Island. One of those requirements is the Open Space Standards contained in Section 16-5-104 of the LMO. The requirements currently apply only to residential subdivisions constituting a Major

Subdivision (6 lots or more). The standard requires a minimum of 16% of the site be placed in common open space. The common open space is required to be deed restricted or protected through a conservation easement for the use and benefit of the residents of the development.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-28 through A-33 of Appendix A provide information on the Town's LMO.

Strategy Description: It is recommended that the open space requirements be reduced as applied to lands within the proposed overlay district, as follows:

- Increase the number of lots required to trigger this requirement from 6 lots to 10 lots.
- Reduce the amount of required open space from 16% to 10%.

Implementation: The suggested revisions to the LMO should occur in Section 16-5-104 where open space requirements are addressed, and they should be referenced in the new section for the proposed overlay district.

PP-5. Add Family Compound provisions to the LMO to be applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to avoid triggering the full range of LMO requirements and fees for small-scaled family "paper subdivisions."

Issue Statement: At present, a subdivision of six (6) or more lots requires paved roads and other infrastructure, which can be cost-prohibitive for many Gullah land owners. Beaufort County has a Family Compound ordinance in its land development code. It might be adapted as a model for Hilton Head Island's proposed overlay, but the density restrictions of that model would need adjusting to fit Hilton Head Island's existing higher densities. While identifying an alternative for relief from the Town's current subdivision requirements is a worthy objective to pursue, consideration must also be given to avoid adding to the Town's backlog of unpaved roads and infrastructure needs.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-28 through A-33 of Appendix A provide information on the Town's LMO, including current challenges for Gullah land owners.

Strategy Description: The County's existing Family Compound provisions are summarized in this report's Background Study on pages A-37 and A-38 of Appendix 1 under "Potential Model Regulations." Key provisions that could serve as a model to address paper subdivisions within the proposed overlay for Hilton Head Island include:

- Fifty (50) years of ownership of the subject site.
- Familial relationship of those receiving property and/or dwelling unit.
- Five (5) year restriction for leasing or selling the subject property to people not related to the family.

With respect to the last provision, stakeholders have expressed their desire to see such a provision apply to selling, but not to leasing property.

Implementation: The Beaufort County Family Compound provisions summarized in this report's Background section should be used as a starting point to craft similar provisions for Hilton Head Island's LMO within the proposed overlay. Because densities will be greater for Hilton Head Island than those areas of the County where these provisions are applied, accompanying site design standards will be important. Those can be crafted during Phase 2 of this project.

PP-6. Provide greater flexibility for required road ROWs and drainage easements within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to make the development of some properties more viable.

Issue Statement: As in the case of all properties on Hilton Head Island, required road right-of-way (ROW) widths and drainage easements can reduce the amount of potential density for development. These standards can be particularly challenging for smaller parcels. Required ROW widths are determined by the street type. Minimum widths range from 30 feet for cul de sacs to 120 feet for major arterials. Closed pipe underground drainage easements must be at least 15 feet wide. Open channel easements must be at least as wide as the widest point of the top of the channel, plus an additional 15 feet. The Town Engineer can require more width where needed for both types of easements, and shared easements are permitted along lot lines where feasible.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-28 through A-33 of Appendix A provide information on the Town's LMO.

Strategy Description: Two different strategies are offered to address this issue.

First, relief from ROW and drainage easement width requirements should be pursued with revisions to the LMO. Because establishing a ROW also impedes flexibility for future subdivision layouts, another option should be to allow access easements until an area more fully develops.

Secondly, when a new road ROW is established in an area already developed or when created without a development, the land within the new ROW is removed from the amount of land for density calculations. It is recommended that, in such circumstances, the amount of land lost can still be used for calculations within the proposed overlay district.

Implementation: Any LMO revisions consistent with the suggestions above would need to be made in the text for the proposed overlay district. Also, the LMO sections relative

to ROW widths, drainage easement widths, and density calculations would need to be revised accordingly during Phase 2 of this project.

PP-7. Adopt Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to be applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to avoid too much development in Gullah neighborhoods, while allowing land owners to benefit financially from their development potential.

Issue Statement: A handful of communities across the country have successfully used some form of transfer of development rights (TDR) to assist in the protection of environmentally sensitive lands, or mitigate against the idea of “windfalls and wipeouts.” Typically, TDR allows property owners whose lands have lower densities or are being rezoned to lower densities (“sending” areas) to be given certain additional development rights (dwelling units or nonresidential floor area), which could be sold in a transfer to other identified locations (“receiving” areas). It is also conceivable that a sending area might already be substantially developed, but any additional density that zoning may allow is sold as development credits to be applied to receiving areas. Experience suggests that for TDR programs to work successfully: 1) program design must be supported by careful economic/market analysis to confirm there will be reasonable market demand in the receiving areas for units that can transferred from the sending areas; and 2) the regulatory program, and selection of receiving areas in particular, are carefully designed to take advantage of market conditions.

If a TDR program is going to be a viable option to provide additional development rights for property owners within the historic Gullah neighborhoods, the neighborhoods would need to serve as the “sending” areas. The challenge would be:

- Finding the appropriate “receiving” areas where market conditions will maximize the value of transferred residential units or nonresidential square footage; and
- Finding places the Town finds it acceptable to see increased density levels.

While TDRs are authorized in South Carolina, the greatest challenges to this concept are their technical complexity and the necessary study that will be required to make it work. Due to the complexities associated with creating a TDR program, this may not be a viable recommendation for the Town to pursue.

Background Study Reference: N/A

Strategy Description: To be determined

Implementation: If the Town is interested in considering a TDR program for the historic Gullah neighborhoods, it will be necessary to retain the services of consultants with expertise in land economics and the regulatory aspects of TDR programs to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of such a program, and if it is workable, design the

program and the appropriate legislation. Generally, the design of the program would involve the identification of “sending” areas in the historic Gullah neighborhoods, and “receiving” areas in other locations on the Island, where additional development rights are appropriate.

PP-8. Utilize a program to purchase development rights from willing property owners within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to preserve ownership of land in historic Gullah neighborhoods, while allowing land owners to benefit financially from their development potential.

Issue Statement: As in the case of the proposed TDR program, this recommendation recognizes that some land owners in the historic Gullah neighborhoods may not want to develop or further develop their land, but they would like retain their land and benefit financially from their property’s unrealized development potential.

Background Study Reference: N/A

Strategy Description: It is recommended that this program be led by a qualified conservation entity as the first option, with the Town as a fallback if such entities are unable or unwilling to fund the costs of development right purchases. The legal approach might be based upon the Town’s past initiatives to purchase development rights from willing property owners. In those cases, an agreement was negotiated between the Town and property owner stipulating what future develop could or could not occur on the land.

Implementation: The Town’s new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator should reach out to area land conservation entities to gauge their interest in working with land owners in the historic neighborhoods. Examples of such potential entities include the Hilton Head Island Land Trust, the South Carolina Conservation Coalition, the Lowcountry Land Trust, and the Southeast Regional Land Conservancy.

PP-9. Amend the Town’s Design Guide, as applied to portions of the Corridor Overlay District that are within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District, to better reflect the design tradition of the Gullah culture.

Issue Statement: The Town’s Design Guide is applied by the Town’s Design Review Board and staff to all properties within the Corridor Overlay District. Provisions for this overlay can be found in Section 16-3-106.F of the LMO. Except for single-family homes, mandatory design review is required for all alterations to a site or structure in terms of colors, materials, structural changes, landscaping, and signage. Because the requirement is relatively expansive geographically, it includes some lands within the proposed overlay district. The Design Guide is based on a vision for the Island that is

grounded in resorts for tourists and gated communities rather than the Gullah people's historic neighborhoods.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-33 and A-34 of Appendix A address the Corridor Overlay District and the accompanying Design Guide.

Strategy Description: It is recommended that a new section be added to the Design Guide to apply specifically to lands within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District. That section would replace all requirements of the existing Design Guide as they pertain to the Gullah neighborhoods. The new standards should be based (at least in part) on historic development patterns and character found within the neighborhoods prior to the predominance of mobile homes in some areas.

Implementation: The Town has preliminarily indicated that this is a project that Town staff can perform without the unnecessary expense of consultants. Examples of surviving architecture on Hilton Head Island for design inspiration might include the "Blue House" at the Gullah Museum and the Cherry Hill School, both of which feature clapboard exteriors, front porches, and gable roofs with pitches less than 45 degrees. Vibrant colors are also associated with Gullah culture. Fortunately, there are numerous historic photos of Mitchelville and other areas of the island from the 1860s.

PROPERTY TAXES

PP-10. Explore the potential to base property values for tax assessment purposes in historic Gullah neighborhoods on the land's current use rather than market value to reduce the tax burden and enhance the ability of owners to retain their property.

Issue Statement: The current approach of basing assessed property values and property taxes on the market value of the property is grounded in future development potential, which may or may not actually be realized. Even if it can be realized, some historic neighborhood landowners cannot afford to pay their property taxes. Consequently, sometimes their taxes become delinquent and the property is sold by the County at auction. One way the problem might be mitigated is to adjust how property is valued for tax purposes. Achieving such a change, however, is difficult for the Town since the State establishes the rules for how property is to be valued for tax purposes, and the County is the local government authorized by state law to assess property values (Beaufort County Assessor's Office) and calculate taxes (Beaufort County Treasurer's Office).

Background Study Reference: Pages A-34 and A-35 of Appendix A provide information on property taxes.

Strategy Description: It is recommended that a lobbying campaign be initiated to change the State laws so that properties within a specified area for specified reasons can be assessed based upon current use. Based upon political realities, this would need to be an effort that involves multiple jurisdictions and elected officials beyond Hilton Head Island. In fact, given that the issue is particularly impactful on Gullah property owners, the effort might be spearheaded by communities and counties that comprise the South Carolina portion of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, which is a federally recognized and designated area.

Implementation: Before initiating an effort to change the way property taxes are assessed on Gullah lands, further evaluation will be necessary. Specifically, what will need to be determined is:

1. The most appropriate strategy for making such a change, and
2. Whether the investment of time and effort can reasonably be expected to be effective.

Generally, the potential approaches evaluated should focus on possible changes to provisions modifying how Gullah lands are assessed by a partial exemption or general State law changes. If after further evaluation one of these strategies looks promising, a meeting of potential stakeholders should be called and a specific strategy developed.

PP-11. Establish a fund to help property owners avoid losing their property to delinquent tax sales as a way to protect Gullah land ownership on Hilton Head Island.

Issue Statement: As indicated in the previous recommendation, many Gullah property owners struggle to pay their property taxes. Some are unable to pay their taxes and lose their property at auctions. Another issue is that sometimes property owners are unaware their taxes are delinquent and that their land will be auctioned at a County tax sale. While some ideas have been recommended in this report to address this problem, such as lobbying for State legislation to revise how property values are assessed, the problem ultimately comes down to finding the money necessary to assist the property owner to pay the property taxes.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-34 and A-35 of Appendix A provide information on property taxes.

Strategy Description: One alternative funding tool to consider might be a GoFundMe webpage tied to a revolving fund. The Pan-African Family Empowerment & Land Preservation Network, Inc. (PAFEN) is already working on such efforts with a GoFundMe webpage. The Town should coordinate with PAFEN as a potential funding resource. Another potential funding source is the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry.

To address the problem that some Gullah landowners might be unaware that their taxes are delinquent, a person or entity could be assigned to review legal notifications to learn when the property taxes on Gullah-owned lands are delinquent and scheduled to be sold, and make sure the owner(s) are notified.

Implementation: It is recommended that NIBCAA explore funding sources to assist Gullah property owners in paying their delinquent taxes through no interest loans. This should include contacting PAFEN about setting up a GoFundMe webpage, as well as contacting the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry about assisting with funding. Another related effort should include regularly reviewing legal notifications to learn when Gullah-owned lands are tax delinquent and scheduled to be sold, and notifying the owner(s).

OTHER ISSUES

PP-12. Establish a program to educate Gullah residents and others on a wide range of public policy issues that impact their lives, including property taxation, land use and development, and heirs' property so they can prosper more socially and financially.

Issue Statement: There are countless public policies that impact the daily lives of Hilton Head Island residents and workers, including the Gullah community. As just one example, the length and complexity of the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) can be confusing to planners, land use attorneys, and real estate development professionals, much less the average layperson. However, knowledge relating to public policies is a key to saving Gullah land and culture.

Background Study Reference: N/A

Strategy Description: The objective of this strategy is to enhance the general understanding of Hilton Head Island residents, and particularly the Gullah population, on public policies that impact them regularly. It is recommended that a series of meetings be held to educate citizens on topics such as the LMO, property taxes, heirs' property, and financial resources for land owners and businesses.

Implementation: It is recommended that this program be initiated by the Towns' new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator. While it may turn out that the Administrator has to present on all of these issues, an ideal scenario would be the following presenters:

- Land Management Ordinance (LMO) – Town's Community Development staff
- Property Taxes – County's Tax office staff
- Heirs' Property – Center for Heirs' Property Preservation (CHPP) representative

- Financial Resources – Representative from the local Small Business Administration (SBA) office, the Chamber of Commerce, or a local financial institution

PP-13. Ensure that local financial institutions are meeting the requirements of the federal Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to make loans for economically challenged people and properties to provide greater financial opportunities within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District.

Issue Statement: The purpose and intent of the CRA is to encourage commercial banks and savings and loan associations to help meet the needs of borrowers of all economic segments of their communities, including those persons who reside in low and moderate-income neighborhoods. Congress passed the Act in 1977 to reduce discriminatory credit practices in low-income neighborhoods (“redlining”). The CRA instructs the appropriate federal financial supervisory agencies to encourage regulated financial institutions to help meet the credit needs of the local communities in which they are chartered. To enforce the statute, federal regulatory agencies examine banking institutions for CRA compliance, and take this information into consideration when approving applications for new bank branches or for mergers or acquisitions. A key hurdle for many Gullah land and business owners to succeed is accessing capital.

Background Study Reference: N/A

Strategy Description: It is recommended that NIBCAA representatives reach out to the Island’s financial institutions to find out if they are seeking opportunities to meet their CRA obligations by making loans to qualified borrowers in historic Gullah neighborhoods within the proposed overlay district. Although this sort of strategy might normally be undertaken by an economic development office, that office was eliminated in Hilton Head Island in 2016. Georgetown, South Carolina’s economic development office has recently found success by sponsoring “match maker” events bringing together lenders with potential borrowers.

Implementation: Ensuring that the CRA is being leveraged to assist Gullah land and business owners should be shepherded by NIBCAA. The Town’s new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator might also help to educate those who might benefit about the CRA. Since property owners with heir’s property issues cannot secure loans from financial institutions, it must be acknowledged that the CRA, unfortunately, will not be relevant to them.

PP-14. Establish a program providing temporary and seasonal signs that are compliant with Town regulations to be used within the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to expand economic opportunities for Gullah residents and businesses.

Issue Statement: The primary complaint heard from Gullah residents regarding signage is the difficulty they have with the existing regulatory process that applies to their businesses, including home-based businesses. While there are no fundamental problems with the LMO's current application of signage standards, options for assisting Gullah citizens with challenges related to sign regulations should be considered.

At present, the LMO requires Design Review Board (DRB) approval for any permanent signs that are over 40 square feet in area. That provision should allow most proposed signage for Gullah business owners to avoid DRB review. Instead, signs not exceeding 40 square feet in area are subject to administrative review by Town staff. Also, the Town follows the guidelines tied to "Island Character" in the Town's Design Guide, which address signage on pages 27-28.

Background Study Reference: N/A

Strategy Description: It is recommended that a program be initiated whereby compliant signage can be made available and reused because the lettering and design is adjustable. This program would be for Gullah residents and business owners who need temporary or seasonal signs within the proposed overlay district.

Implementation: NIBCAA would be the appropriate sponsor of this program. They could work closely with the Town's planning staff to insure compliance with Town regulations for signage. The Town can also provide information to those utilizing this program that will help them avoid placing signs within a ROW where they are not permitted.

HEIRS' PROPERTY

It is important to remember that, when dealing with the heirs' property issue, there are no easy solutions. Clearing title to property requires a lot of hard work and usually the assistance of an attorney that is skilled in real property and title issues. The best approach is to utilize resource organizations and approaches that have worked in the past.

CURRENT EFFORTS

At present, measures are already being taken by the Town and others. *The principal current measures that should be continued* are the following:

Working with the Center for Heirs Property Preservation (CHPP) to schedule future workshops.

The fact that many Gullah residents lack legal title to their property is a problem that must be overcome before the property can be sold, or a loan obtained to improve the property. This is so, even though the property owner is required to pay property taxes. Unfortunately, resolving the problem is not simple, and usually expensive. The workshops held on Hilton Head Island in February 2018 and March 2019 were a success, as roughly 50 people attended each. CHPP representatives have indicated an interest in conducting future workshops on Hilton Head Island. The Town's new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator should become the Town's key contact person for scheduling and promoting future CHPP workshops. Given that an oyster roast was held in conjunction with the last workshop, and that likely drew greater participation, similar events should be considered in conjunction with future workshops.

Considering valid property tax payers to be qualified applicants for various land use and development applications.

Although lacking title to property may be problematic for property owners wanting to sell their property or to secure a loan, it does not preclude their ability to pursue approvals for land use and development applications within the Town of Hilton Head Island. Some communities require clear evidence of ownership before an application can be submitted for a subdivision, site plan approval, building permit, and similar applications. In the case of Hilton Head Island, evidence of paying property taxes will suffice. That approach is an important one for heirs' property owners and it is critical that it continues into the future.

Building upon the current efforts summarized above, below are three specific recommendations for addressing heirs' property. It is also important to note that one of the recommendations earlier in this report under "Public Policies" is also tied directly to the issue of heirs' property. That recommendation is *PP-5: Add Family Compound provisions to the LMO to be applied to the proposed Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to avoid triggering the full range of LMO requirements and fees for small-scaled family "paper subdivisions."*

The following recommendations are offered for the Town's consideration:

HP-1. Utilize the Heritage Library Foundation as a potential first step for Gullah families toward clearing title to their property to overcome heirs' property issues.

Issue Statement: The root of heirs' property issues lies in identifying and reaching agreement with relatives who are considered heirs of a particular property. The Heritage Library Foundation is comprised of two main components, one of which is the Hilton Head Island Genealogical Society Group. The Foundation focuses on acquiring, preserving and recording the history of the Island and its people, and making the information available to the public. The library contains more than 4,000 volumes of history-related documents.

Background Study Reference: Page A-11 of Appendix A provides background information on the Heritage Library Foundation.

Strategy Description: The key to better leveraging the Foundation's resources will be getting the word out. That should be done through the following entities, among others: the Heritage Library Foundation, the Gullah Museum, the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park (HMFP), the Town, Gullah neighborhood churches, and the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation (CHPP).

Implementation: With respect to the Town's role in promoting the resources of the Heritage Library Foundation, the Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator can play an important role in promoting the Library among Gullah land owners.

HP-2. Leverage a range of local, state and national organizations involved with addressing heirs' property issues to maximize the Island's potential to address the issue.

Issue Statement: Of the various organizations addressing heirs' property issues, the CHPP, based in Charleston, seems to have the best track record and has an established relationship with the community in light of their 2018 and 2019 workshops. However, there are two drawbacks for some land owners seeking to use their services: 1) they require that clients intend to keep their land in their family and not sell it; and 2) there are income restrictions for those who can become CHPP clients. With respect to income restrictions, their cap is household incomes equal to or less than 200% of the federal poverty guidelines based on the number of people in the household. These requirements will preclude some Hilton Head Island property owners from using their services. Consequently, other organizations should also be leveraged to assist Gullah residents in resolving heirs' property issues.

Background Study Reference: Page A-12 of Appendix A provides information on the new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator, and pages A-40 and A-41 of Appendix A provide information about other organizations beyond CHPP that address heirs' property issues.

Strategy Description: This strategy entails building a working relationship with organizations such as the following:

- *Pan-African Family Empowerment & Land Preservation Network, Inc. (PAFEN):* This Beaufort-based public charity is relatively new and it was “created to help Gullah/Geechee and other African descendants save their land for current and future generations.” Since 2015, PAFEN's "Help Save Gullah-Geechee Land Campaign" has prevented Gullah Geechee owned property with an assessed value of more than \$6 million from being lost.
- *South Carolina Legal Services (SCLS):* This non-profit entity provides free legal assistance in a variety of civil (non-criminal) legal matters, including heirs' property, to eligible low-income residents in the state. It is funded by grants from the federally-funded Legal Services Corporation, the South Carolina Bar Foundation, local United Ways, state court filing fees, and other funding sources. Their closest office to Hilton Head Island is in North Charleston.
- *Heirs' Property Retention Coalition (HPRC):* This is a national organization of lawyers, advocates, and academics heavily involved in litigation, legislative reform, and/or scholarly study related to heirs' property and, in particular, to the preservation of heirs' property within low-income African-American communities.
- *South Carolina Applesseed Legal Justice Center (SCALJC):* Based in Columbia, this non-profit organization was established in its current form in 1998. Their staff includes attorneys, outreach workers and community organizers. Their stated goal is to “influence policymakers to ensure the law is fair, to educate the public and their advocates about the law, and to assist attorneys...” While their current focus does not include heirs' property, there may be the potential if they could be convinced.
- *Black Family Land Trust (BFLT):* Based in Durham, NC, this non-profit's stated mission is “ensuring, protecting and preserving African American owned lands.” While their main focus is on North Carolina, they do serve South Carolina as well. Their “Wealth Retention and Asset Protection (WRAP)” program addresses heirs' property issues through education.
- *Black Belt Justice Center (BBJC):* Headquartered in Washington, DC, this legal and advocacy non-profit organization serves African American farmers, landowners, and communities in the Black Belt region to: retain and increase landownership; to create sustainable land-based cooperatives and entrepreneurial businesses; and to ensure intergenerational and community wealth. They describe the Black Belt as a crescent-shaped agricultural region extending from southern Maryland to eastern Texas that is characterized by its high concentration of African Americans. Their services include community education, heirs' property mediation, and land trusts.

Implementation: This strategy should be the responsibility of the Town's new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator. There should be no significant related costs. One way to remain informed about the activities of these groups is to sign up for their regular newsletters and e-mails, and to occasionally check their websites.

HP-3. Encourage the Center for Heirs Property Preservation (CHPP) to open a satellite office in Beaufort County to make their resources more readily available to Hilton Head Island's Gullah community.

Issue Statement: The CHPP is headquartered in Charleston and serves fifteen counties in the state: Allendale, Bamberg, Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Clarendon, Colleton, Dorchester, Hampton, Horry, Georgetown, Jasper, Orangeburg, Sumter and Williamsburg. Because their main office is a two-hour drive from Hilton Head Island, it is not very convenient for property owners on the Island who need the Center's services. Likewise, it is inconvenient for Center staff to host workshops on the Island. One mitigating circumstance is that a CHPP staff attorney meets on the third Tuesday of each month with area property owners in the conference room of the Coastal Community Foundation in Beaufort. They announce their various locations at all of their seminars.

Background Study Reference: Pages A-39 and A-40 of Appendix A provide information about the CHPP.

Strategy Description: It is recommended that the Town actively encourage the CHPP to open a satellite office in Beaufort County, perhaps even on Hilton Head Island or Bluffton. Although the CHPP is a non-profit organization with limited funding, a satellite office is not out of the question. In fact, they just opened their very first such office in January 2019 in Orangeburg. However, they have indicated that to be able to expand offices, they would need the financial resources to add one or more staff attorneys.

Implementation: This strategy should be the responsibility of the Town's new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator. It should start with informal discussions with one or more key CHPP representatives. If there appears to be interest on the part of the CHPP, a coalition of other interested parties in the county should be formed, including the County, Beaufort, Bluffton and other municipalities within the county. Before making an aggressive "sell" to the CHPP, the coalition should first identify potential office space (which should be minimal in size for a one or two-person staff) that could be provided either for free or at a minimal cost. Also, if this recommendation is ultimately not viable for the CHPP, their current arrangement with the Coastal Community Foundation in Beaufort should continue to be broadcasted, including adding relevant information to the CHPP website.

NEXT STEPS

This project's next step is a Phase 2, which might be conducted with the help of consultants or entirely in-house by the Town's planning staff, depending upon their work load. Regardless of how it is conducted, it will take the recommendations of this report and follow through with greater analysis and implementation. For example, some of the recommended revisions of the Town's LMO related to setbacks, buffers, open space requirements, and similar site design issues will need testing using sample sites. Likewise, issues such as pursuing changes to the methods used to assess the value of Gullah lands for property taxing purpose will require further legal research and meetings between the relevant governmental representatives. However, the next steps for more straightforward issues might include simple changes to the text of the LMO, as well as actions by the Town's new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator.

For each recommendation in this report, a description of the implementation approach is included. Regardless of the issue category of each recommendation, they can all be grouped into the following four implementation categories:

Land Management Ordinance Revisions

The Public Policies section of this report includes numerous recommendations to amend the LMO to expand the land use and development options within historic Gullah neighborhoods. Some of the recommendations hinge upon the designation of a Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District as the vehicle for their implementation (Recommendation PP-4). The creation of this overlay should be an initial step. Next, some of the recommendations related to setbacks, buffers, open space, and similar physical planning standards will require further testing through sample site plan designs. Once fine-tuned, the many proposed LMO revisions can occur by drafting the revised and new text.

Other Policy Revisions

While most of the recommended Public Policy changes are under the control of the Town government, not all of them are. For example, the recommendation to lobby the State and County to amend the way that property is assessed for taxing purposes, to be applied to the state's Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC), is beyond the Town's direct control. That recommendation (Recommendation PP-10) will require additional legal research, coordination with other local governments within the region, and multiple meetings with State and County officials.

Programmatic Initiatives of the Town

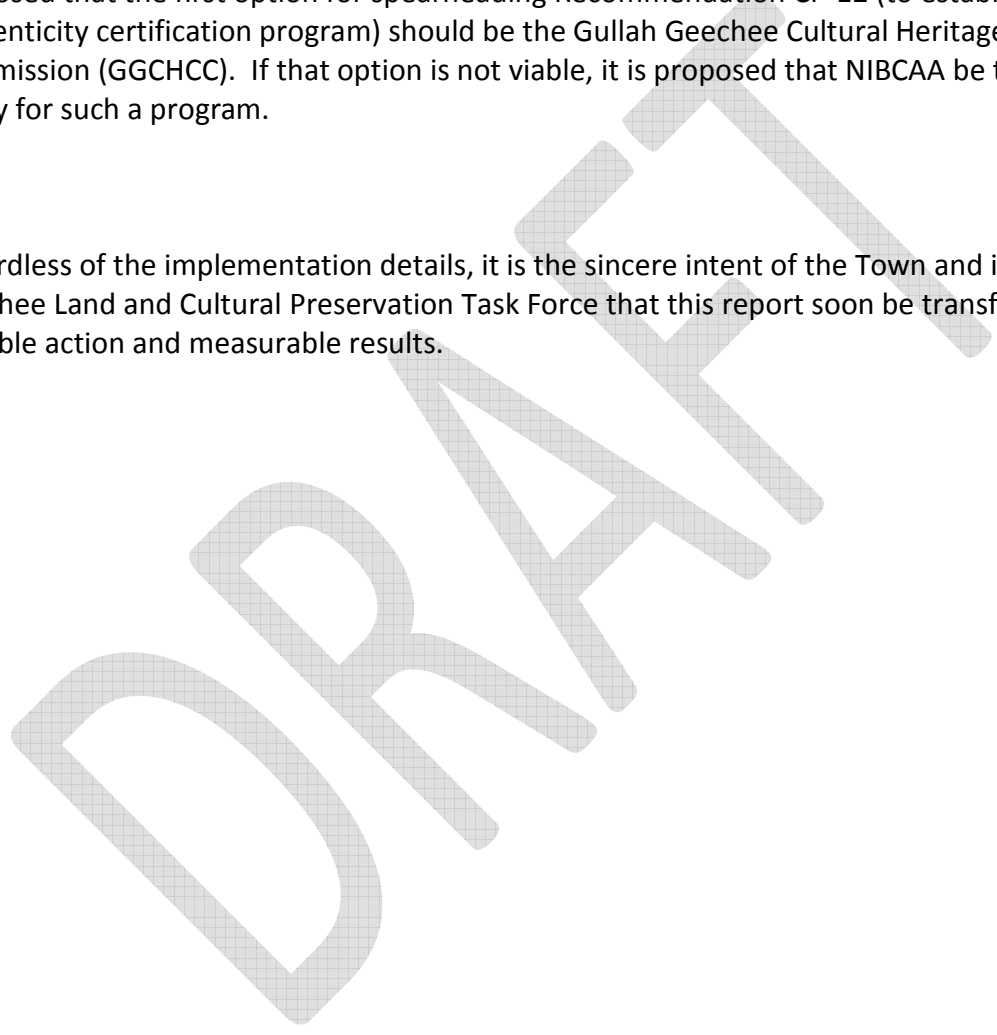
Many of this report's Cultural Preservation recommendations involve programs or projects that will be initiated by Town staff, often in partnership with other entities. For example, Recommendation CP-2 (to initiate a major fundraising effort to expand cultural programs that teach traditional Gullah ways and support the physical development of key interpretive sites) will be a Town initiative. It is proposed that the Town's Senior Grants Administrator pursue grant funding from regional and national organizations, while the Town's Culture & Arts

Advisory Committee should spearhead the solicitation of funding from local individuals, organizations and businesses. However, support to the Town has also been proposed to come from the groups benefiting from this project, including the Gullah Museum, Mitchelville, and the Coastal Discovery Museum.

Programmatic Initiatives of Others

Other recommendations of this report should be spearheaded by entities other than the Town, although the Town’s new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator and the Office of Cultural Affairs will be involved with some recommendations. For example, it has been proposed that the first option for spearheading Recommendation CP-12 (to establish a Gullah authenticity certification program) should be the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission (GGCHCC). If that option is not viable, it is proposed that NIBCAA be the lead entity for such a program.

Regardless of the implementation details, it is the sincere intent of the Town and its Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force that this report soon be transformed into tangible action and measurable results.



APPENDIX A
Background Study

DRAFT

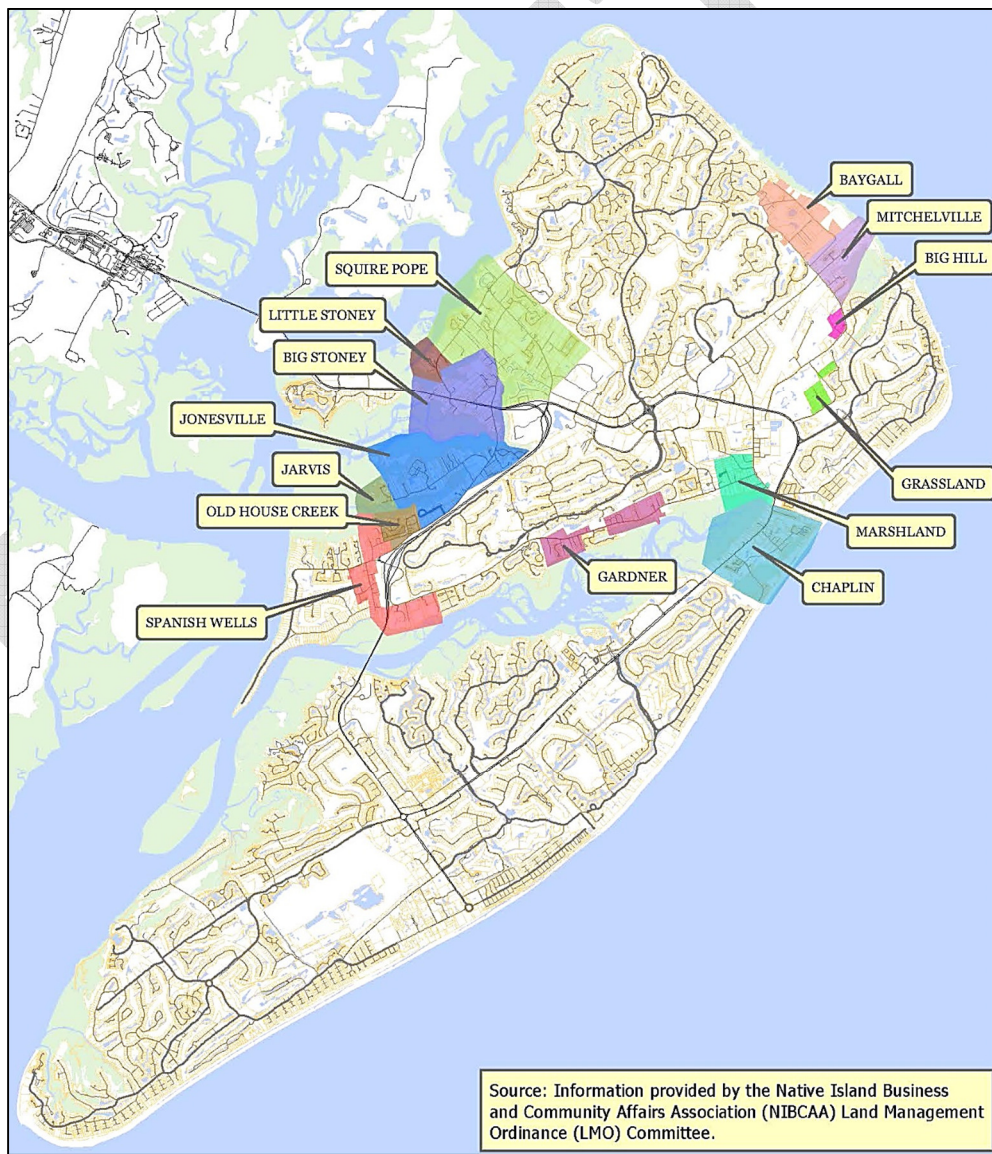
CULTURAL PRESERVATION

HISTORIC PLACES & RESOURCES OVERVIEW

Historic places and resources associated with Hilton Head Island’s Gullah Geechee culture have been grouped into two categories for the purposes of this report: 1) historic Gullah neighborhoods and 2) historic sites. Both categories are summarized below. However, in the case of historic sites, it is not an exhaustive and comprehensive list.

Historic Gullah Neighborhoods

Historically, most neighborhoods included a “praise house,” an oyster house, and a cemetery. Based on the map on page 6 in the Town’s 2017 Comprehensive Plan (see below), all but one of the Gullah neighborhoods are located north of Broad Creek. The exception is Chaplin.

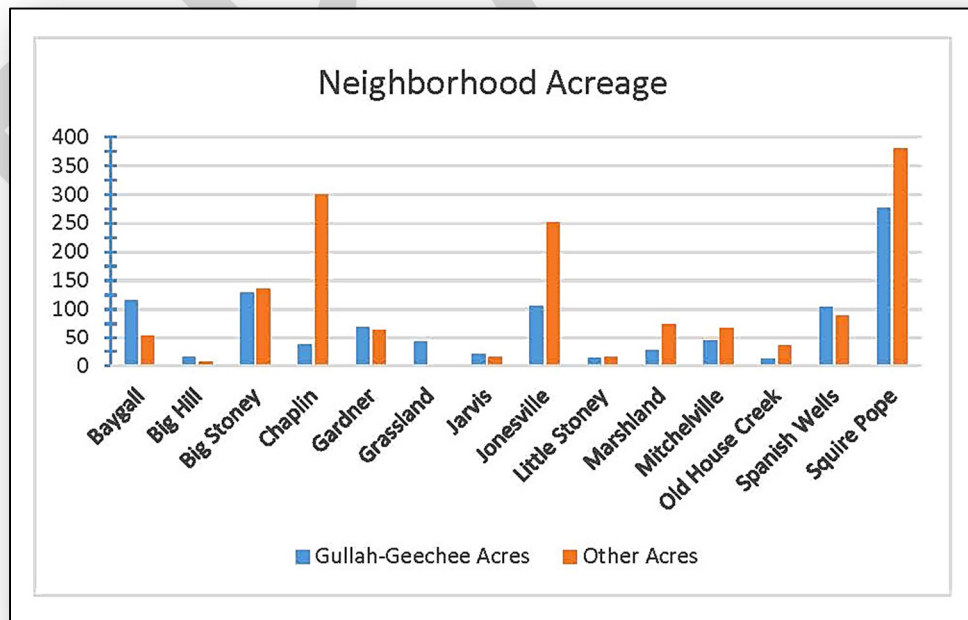


Historic Neighborhoods Map (Source: 2017 Comprehensive Plan)

The historic Gullah neighborhoods were delineated as part of the comprehensive planning process by the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association (NIBCAA) Land Management Ordinance (LMO) Committee. As reflected on the map on the previous page, all of the historic neighborhoods are located on the peripheral portions of the island on or near the waterfront and Broad Creek. Collectively, they comprise over 2,500 acres, of which a little over 1,000 acres are still Gullah owned.

Historic Neighborhood Information						
Neighborhood	Total Acres	Total Parcels	Gullah-Geechee Acres	Gullah-Geechee Parcels	Other Acres	Other Parcels
Baygall	170.22	97	116.15	71	54.07	26
Big Hill	22.91	25	15.37	20	7.55	5
Big Stoney	265.66	181	129.26	97	136.40	84
Chaplin	338.84	386	38.05	50	300.79	336
Gardner	134.21	171	69.78	66	64.43	105
Grassland	42.40	24	42.40	24	0.00	0
Jarvis	36.33	61	20.03	12	16.30	49
Jonesville	358.34	417	106.20	87	252.14	330
Little Stoney	29.13	30	13.67	18	15.45	12
Marshland	101.43	120	27.77	33	73.66	87
Mitchelville	112.03	152	44.25	31	67.78	121
Old House Creek	48.68	148	12.40	14	36.28	134
Spanish Wells	193.42	215	104.26	131	89.16	84
Squire Pope	657.26	1030	276.41	268	380.85	762
TOTALS:	2510.87	3057	1016.01	922	1495	2135

Source: Town of Hilton Head Island



Source: Town of Hilton Head Island - 2017

Historic Sites

As reflected on the map on page 9 of the Town's 2017 Comprehensive Plan (see page A-7 in this Appendix), there are many historical or culturally significant properties associated with the Gullah community, as summarized below.

National Register Structures

Two structures on Hilton Head Island are listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Leamington Lighthouse and Cherry Hill School. Only the latter one is associated with Gullah culture.

Cherry Hill School

The Cherry Hill School, designated on the National Register in 2012, was built in approximately 1937. Located at 210 Dillon Road, it consists of a simple, gable-front rectangular one-room frame and weatherboard-sided schoolhouse on an open brick-pier foundation. It was built by descendants of Mitchelville. The school operated until all African-American children began attending the new consolidated elementary school in 1954. The St. James Baptist Church purchased the school in 1956, and the church extended and renovated the building in 1984.



Cherry Hill School (Photo Source: The Green Book of South Carolina)

National Register Sites

Eight prehistoric and historic sites on the Island have also been placed on the National Register: Green's Shell, Sea Pines-shell ring, Skull Creek-shell ring, Fish Haul Archeological Site, Baynard Ruins, Fort Howell, Fort Mitchel, and Mitchelville (Fish Haul and Mitchelville are part of the same site). Of those, only the latter five have associates with Gullah culture, and only four have strong associations, as summarized below.

Fish Haul Archeological Site

This site is part of the plantation of Colonel John Barnwell and its earliest records date to 1717. Another name associated with the site is Drayton's House. It passed down through the family throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1710 it consisted of 700 acres and the primary crop was cotton. In 1832, one of the descendants – Emma Catherine Pope – married General Thomas Fenwick Drayton. Although they never owned the plantation, General Drayton used the house as his headquarters during the Confederacy's 1861 defense of the Island prior to its capture. The remains reportedly include tabby fireplaces from slave cabins. The graves of slaves existed there until 1950 when they were relocated to the Drayton Cemetery. Added to the National Register in 1988, its address is restricted information per the NR designation, but the plantation in general was located off Beach City Road in the vicinity of Mitchelville Road and Fish Haul Road. It is technically part of the Mitchelville site, which is described below.

Baynard Ruins

The tabby ruins of the historic Baynard estate, which includes the main house as well as slave quarters, have been preserved at Sea Pines. Originally built by Captain Jack Stoney in the 1790s, the Baynard house was once a grand antebellum plantation house overlooking the Calibogue Sound. Legend has it that the house changed hands when Stoney lost a poker game to William Baynard in 1840. Baynard, a successful Sea Island Cotton plantation owner, raised four children at the mansion with his wife, Catherine.

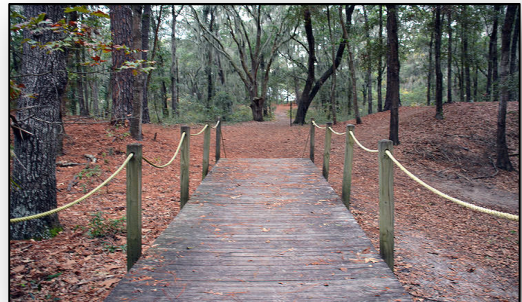


Baynard Ruins (Photo Source: The Local's Guide to HHI - Beach Properties of Hilton Head)

When the Union forces invaded Hilton Head Island in 1861, the Baynards evacuated the property. The residence was raided and served as Union headquarters during the Civil War before being burned shortly after the war. The site's Gullah link is that the enslaved people who worked on the plantation, and it is located off of Plantation Drive near the intersection of Baynard Park Road and Plantation Drive. Today it is accessible to motorized vehicles, open to the public, and interpreted through wayside exhibits. It is owned by the Sea Pines Community Services Associations (CSA) and it is designated as "park/preserve" on the Sea Pines Master Plan.

Fort Howell

Named in honor of Union Brigadier General Joshua B. Howell, it was built in 1864 for the primary function of protecting Mitchelville. It was constructed by the 32nd United States Colored Infantry Regiment from Pennsylvania. An earthen fort, it covers roughly 3 acres that was once part of the William Pope plantation. Located on the north side of Beach City Road approximately 200 feet southwest of the intersection with Dillon Road, it was listed on the National Register in 2011. It was deeded to the Hilton Head Island Land Trust in 1993 to insure its future protection. The site is open to the public, it is accessible through a parking lot and a board walk system, and it is well-interpreted with wayside exhibits.



Fort Howell (Photo Source: HiltonHead-SC.com)

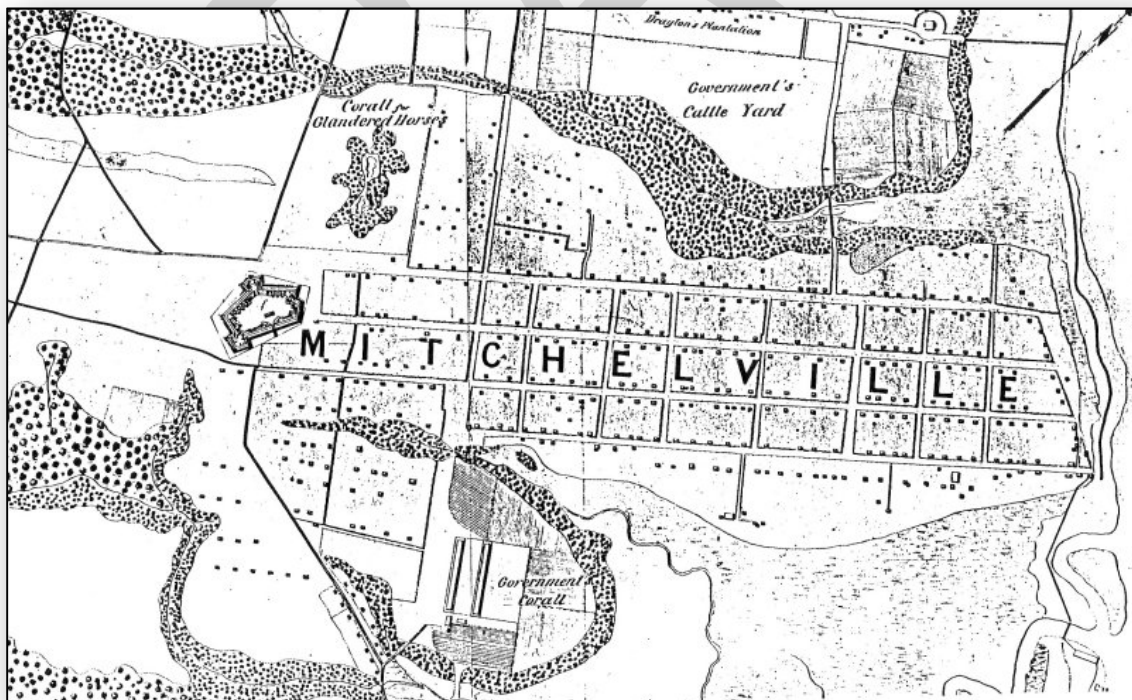
Fort Mitchel

Another earthen Civil War fort listed on the National Register is Fort Mitchel, located at 65 Skull Creek Drive in the northwest end of the Island. It was originally built by the Confederates, but take over by Union troops when they captured the Island early in the war. It is well preserved and features a path system and interpretive waysides, although it has a less direct relationship to Gullah history than some of the other sites, such as Fort Howell.

Mitchelville

Mitchelville was a town built during the Civil War for escaped slaves, located in the northeast corner of Hilton Head Island. It was named for one of the local Union Army generals, Ormsby M. Mitchel. Mitchelville was a population center for the enterprise known as the Port Royal Experiment. The community was established by late-1862 and contained about 1,500 residents by November 1865. The residents of Mitchelville supported themselves largely by wage labor for the military, earning mostly between four dollars and twelve dollars a month, depending on their level of skill. Nearly all of the wage jobs for the residents of Mitchelville ceased when the Union military departed the island in 1868, more than two years after the end of the war. The residents switched to a subsistence farming-based economy, with many forming farming collectives, joining together to rent large tracts of land from the government. Documents show that many of the Hilton Head Island freedmen experienced an extreme shortage of food after the military departed the island.

The site is located on Beach City Road, it is open to the public, and it features interpretive wayside exhibits. It is also part of the Fish Haul archeological site (described previously). It was added to the National Register in 1988. Today, the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park, Inc. (HMFP) is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization whose mission is to replicate, preserve, and sustain the site and to educate the public about the freedmen of Mitchelville. A consultant team was recently hired by Beaufort County to prepare a master plan for the site. The Town has provided substantial support to this site and project, including acquiring the property, leasing it to the HMFP, and funding their Executive Director position for the past two years.



The map above of Mitchelville dates from 1864. (Source: Wikipedia)



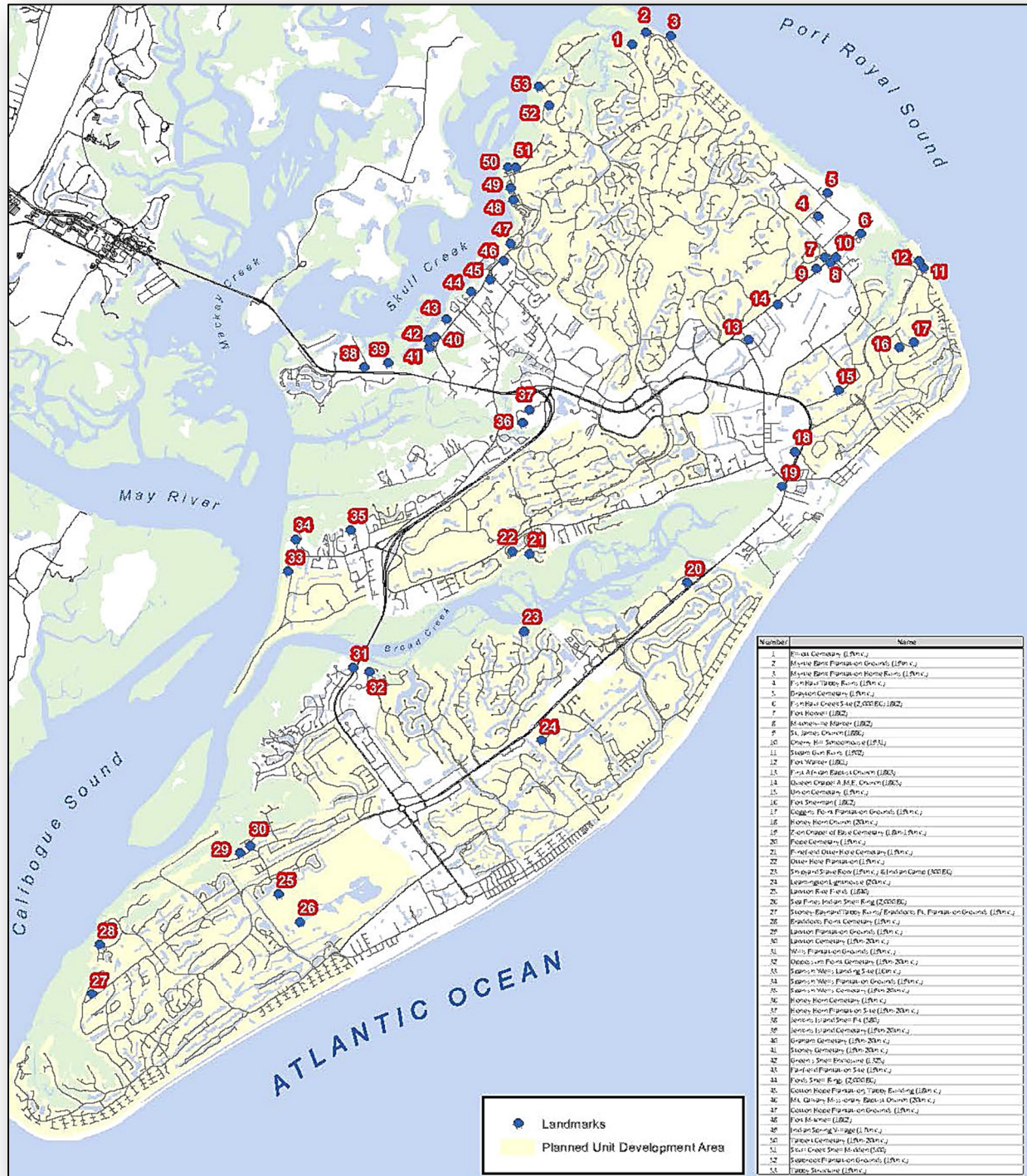
One of eight known photos taken of Mitchelville by Samuel Cooley in 1864. (Photo Source: Finding Freedom's Home: Archaeology at Mitchelville)

According to the Town's 2017 Comprehensive Plan, additional archeological and historic sites have been identified that might be eligible for the National Register designation, but have not been nominated. In fact, a resource for archeological sites, most of which have no direct Gullah connections, is the "Archeological Survey of Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County, South Carolina" prepared for the State and Town by Michael Trinkley in 1987. That study was considered a "preliminary historical study and a reconnaissance level archaeological survey." It was conducted by the Chicora Foundation and partially funded by a National Park Service Historic Preservation Planning Grant administered by the S.C. Department of Archives and History, with matching funds from the Town of Hilton Head Island. According to that study at the time, over 130 archaeological sites had been identified and recorded on the Island. Of those, three were already on the National Register of Historic Places, 27 appeared to be clearly eligible, and at least 95 required further study. Of the many historic sites identified in the map on page A-7 of this Appendix, the following have Gullah ties:

- 1) Elliott Cemetery
- 2) Myrtle Bank Plantation Grounds
- 3) Myrtle Bank Plantation Home Ruins
- 4) Fish Haul Tabby Ruins
- 5) Drayton Cemetery
- 7) Fort Howell
- 8) Mitchelville Marker
- 10) Cherry Hill School
- 13) First African Baptist Church
- 14) Queen Chapel AME Church
- 17) Coggins Point Plantation Site
- 20) Pope Cemetery
- 22) Otter Hole Plantation
- 23) Shipyard Slave Row
- 25) Lawton Rice Fields
- 27) Stoney-Baynard Tabby Ruins /
Braddocks Point Plantation Grounds
- 28) Braddocks Point Cemetery
- 29) Lawton Plantation Grounds
- 31) Wills Plantation Grounds
- 32) Opossum Point Cemetery
- 33) Spanish Wells Landing Point
- 34) Spanish Wells Plantation Grounds
- 35) Spanish Wells Cemetery
- 37) Honey Horn Plantation Site
- 39) Jenkins Island Cemetery
- 40) Graham Cemetery
- 41) Stoney Cemetery
- 45) Cotton Hope Plantation – Tabby
Building

- 46) Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church
- 47) Cotton Hope Plantation Grounds
- 48) Fort Mitchel

- 50) Talbird Cemetery
- 52) Seabrook Plantation Grounds



Historic Landmarks and Archeological Sites (Source: 2017 Comprehensive Plan)

Historic Gullah Churches

Among the four interpretive themes of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC) is spiritualism, which reinforces the fact that churches are an important facet of Gullah culture. Below is a summary of five historic Gullah churches on Hilton Head Island:

Historic First African Baptist Church

Located at 70 Beach City Road, this church was organized on Sunday, August 17, in 1862 in the village of Mitchelville. Reverend Abraham Murchinson was the church's first Pastor. According to the church's website regarding the first service, "It was reported that the number of members present at the service was 120, 70 of which were professing Christians under the rule of their late masters, while the others had been converted and baptized since the Military Occupation of the Island." The church moved to its present location southwest of Mitchelville in 1889.



Historic First African Baptist Church
(Source: Wikimedia)

Queen Chapel AME Church

Located at 114 Beach City Road, this church is located roughly half way between the Historic First African Baptist Church and Mitchelville. It was established in 1865 when the steamship Argo was forced to stop because of bad weather and the ministers on board started the church.

St. James Baptist Church

Located at 209 Beach City Road, this church was founded in 1886 by former members of the First African Baptist Church. It is located in the historic Mitchelville Neighborhood and immediately southeast of the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park (HMFP). According to historians and church members, St. James is the oldest continuously operating cultural institution remaining within the historic Mitchelville Neighborhood. The current church was built in 1972, as a series of fires destroyed earlier structures.

Central Oak Grove Baptist Church

This church is located at 161 Mathews Drive in the Marshland Neighborhood. It was established in 1887 by former members of the First African Baptist Church. This church has sponsored in the past the closing musical event of the Gullah Celebration, which features multiple gospel choirs, including that of the Central Oak Grove Baptist Church.

Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church

Founded in 1914, this church is located at 382 Squire Pope Road in the Squire Pope Neighborhood. As with some of the other churches, it was established by former members of the First African Baptist Church. In 2014, this church celebrated its one-hundred year anniversary with a series of special events.

CURRENT PRESERVATION, INTERPRETATION & TOURISM EFFORTS

Preservation, interpretation and promotion of Gullah culture on Hilton Head Island has occurred in recent years at both the local and regional scales. The information below is based upon circumstances at the time of this report in 2019.

Local Efforts

Among the local efforts to preserve, interpret and showcase Gullah history and culture are the following efforts.

Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park

The stated vision of the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park, Inc. (HMFP) is to preserve a portion of the historic site of what was once Mitchelville and to commemorate the former slaves' "experiment in freedom." This non-profit organization has a diverse 14-member board of directors, an executive director, and very limited support staff. Their offices are located in a Beaufort County building. Once fully developed, the project will incorporate the use of state-of-the-art technological and media platforms that will present the story of Mitchelville, allowing visitors to envision the historic town as it existed in the 19th century. It is hoped that the HMFP will become a key historic attraction for the area. There are already a variety of programs run at the site. For example, Griot's Corner is tailored for K through 3rd grade students that uses storytellers and children's activities to highlight freedom. Likewise, the "Remembering the Days of Mitchelville" play is set in 1867 and introduces audiences to some of the prominent citizens of Mitchelville. Tours being offered include the Roots of Reconstruction, Come Walk with Me in Mitchelville, and Combahee River Raid. Partners identified by HMFP include:

- Town of Hilton Head Island
- Heritage Library
- National Parks Service – Network to Freedom Program
- NIBCAA
- Coastal Discovery Museum
- Gullah Museum
- Community Foundation of the Lowcountry
- Gullah Heritage Tours
- Historic Churches of Mitchelville
- Historic Cherry Hill School
- Beaufort County

As noted previously, a consultant team was recently hired by the County to prepare a master plan for the site. The Town has provided substantial support to this site and project, including acquiring the property, leasing it to the HMFP, and funding the HMFP's Executive Director position for the past two years. The Director's salary funding is an interim arrangement that will eventually be phased out once the organization can become financially sustainable.

The \$250,000 master plan budget is being funded by the County and the first draft is expected to be made available in October or November of 2019. That plan will address a range of important issues, including physical enhancements to the historic site to better convey what the historic village looked like in the 1860s, an interpretive plan, and a market analysis. The four interpretive themes identified thus far include: freedom, democracy, citizenship and opportunity. While the master plan will not attempt to recreate the entire village, it will likely result in the recreation of a small representative portion of it, to include one or more

structures. It has not yet been determined whether admission fees will ultimately be charged to help with financial sustainability.

Gullah Museum

The Gullah Museum, a 501(C)3 organization, was established in 2003 and is committed to maintaining Gullah customs, traditions, language, stories, songs and structures on Hilton Head. Through the support of individuals and institutions, the museum has successfully preserved its first structure - "The Little House," the home of William Simmons. The museum has also completed a documentary entitled "Hilton Head Island Back in the Day: Through the Eyes of the Gullah Elders." Both projects have served as a catalyst for providing context and understanding of the Gullah culture's influence on Hilton Head Island. The museum was founded by Louise Cohen, a Gullah woman raised on the island with a passion for Gullah history and culture. Among her contributions to preserving Gullah culture is to teach the language. Her stated vision for the museum is "to restore the houses that she grew up in, which will become part of the Gullah Museum of Hilton Head Island." The museum is funded via donations and memberships, events and programs with admissions, and sponsorship opportunities for the Gullah Food Festival.



Gullah Museum's Little House (Photo Source: Hilton Head Island, South Carolina – design42.com)

Gullah Heritage Trail Tours

Gullah Heritage Trail Tours was founded in 1996 by a Hilton Head Island Gullah Family Partnership. This family - the Campbells - has been involved in preserving and promoting Gullah cultural heritage for more than 40 years. Based on Hilton Head Island, Gullah Heritage Trail Tours caters to Lowcountry visitors interested in learning about the history of Gullah culture. The tour guides, all of Gullah heritage, were born and raised on Hilton Head Island before the bridge connection to the mainland in 1956. Information on tours, which are conducted via a shuttle bus, is available on the company's website (gullahheritage.com).



Emory Campbell leading a tour (Photo Source: Island Packet)

Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration

Established in 1996, the Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration showcases the cultural heritage of the Gullah people and their history on Hilton Head Island. Held every February, a month that otherwise sees the lowest level of tourism, programming includes a variety of events designed to attract local residents, regional, national and international travelers. The event originated, in part, for tourism and economic development opportunities for minority

businesses. According to the organization, the Celebration has been recognized by the Southeast Tourism Society as one of the “Top 20 Events” in the Southeast. Visitors have an opportunity to experience the food and music, receive firsthand, historical information, and take a journey through the culture via the visual arts. The Celebration is an initiative of NIBCAA in partnership with the Native Islanders Property Owners Association, the Town of Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County, and SC Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

Heritage Library Foundation

The Heritage Library Foundation is comprised of two main components - the Hilton Head Island Historical Society and the Hilton Head Island Genealogical Society Group. These entities are devoted to acquiring, preserving and recording the history of the Island and its people, and making this history available to citizens and visitors. The Heritage Library contains more than 4,000 volumes of history and serves as a valuable resource for history, family heritage research, historic preservation, education, and community outreach. The Heritage Library is one of the most comprehensive in the region, with microfilm readers, computers, Internet access, and collections of books, microfilm, microfiche, CDs, manuscripts, periodicals, video tapes, and maps. Teams of Heritage Library Foundation members and friends work at Fort Mitchel and the Zion Chapel of Ease cemetery. The Foundation assists family historians in publishing research and publishes selected manuscripts of out-of-print works from the Library’s collections.

Coastal Discovery Museum

Founded in 1985, the Coastal Discovery Museum operated at two previous locations before making a giant leap forward in the fall of 2007 when it opened the facility at Honey Horn. A Town of Hilton Head Island property, Honey Horn is home to several of Hilton Head Island’s oldest buildings. Since opening at Honey Horn, the Museum has expanded its offerings of programs, doubled the number of students that participate in museum programs, and hosted dozens of special events and festivals annually. In 2015, the Coastal Discovery Museum joined 200 other institutions around the country in being recognized as a Smithsonian Affiliate. Established in 1996, Smithsonian Affiliations is a national outreach program that develops collaborative partnerships with museums and education and cultural organizations to enrich communities with Smithsonian resources. Between 2015 and 2017, museum staff and board members conducted strategic planning that will direct the Coastal Discovery Museum’s operations, activities, and goals for the future. Examples of their work relevant to this project include partnering with the HMFP on various programs, and the sweetgrass basket making classes they sponsor that are taught by a Gullah basket maker.

Town of Hilton Head Island

The Town also plays an important role in Gullah cultural preservation efforts in a variety of ways. The Town established the Gullah Task Force and has spearheaded and funded this plan to preserve Gullah culture. The vital support the Town provides to the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park has also been noted throughout this report.

Also, the Town’s Office of Cultural Affairs is involved in multiple relevant projects. Examples include: the Cultural Trail, which promotes the island’s art, history and pathways, including



Gullah culture; the office’s website has a full section on Gullah culture and promotes sites such as Mitchelville, the Gullah Museum and the Gullah Celebration; and it promotes cultural events in general through its website calendar, including Gullah-related events. The Town has also recently installed several signs to identify some of the historic Gullah neighborhoods (graphically consistent signs have also been placed at some Gullah cemeteries by local Boy Scouts). Finally, the Town is about to fill a newly-created position: Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator. This position’s stated duties are to “Initiate, implement and administer a program to preserve the Islands’ historic neighborhoods and advance efforts to improve infrastructure in and service delivery to these areas.” The position will report directly to the Deputy Director of Community Development.



New neighborhood sign (Photo Source: Town of Hilton Head Island)

Beaufort County

Hilton Head Island is located in Beaufort County. The county seat is Beaufort, and the population of the County as of the 2010 census was 162,233. Beaufort County is part of the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton-Beaufort Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The County Government is led by an eleven-member County Council. Each Council member represents one of eleven districts, and Hilton Head Island is comprised of portions of Districts 8, 10 and 11. As reflected throughout this report, the County government is an important player in this project for Gullah cultural preservation. For example, the County is funding the master plan currently being developed for the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park. Also, the County controls some issues related to property taxes and impact fees for development, so their support of this report’s recommendations will be important.

Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association (NIBCAA)

Started in 1996 in response to an outpouring of concerns from local residents, NIBCAA was started by a group of minority business owners and community leaders as a community-based organization. The founding members created the organization to foster economic development opportunities and improve the quality of life for the Hilton Head Island community at-large. Their programmatic priorities include entrepreneurship, homeownership, financial literacy, and academic support. However, perhaps most relevant to this project are NIBCAA’s stated cultural preservation efforts to “Raise the awareness of Hilton Head’s indigenous African American community’s arts, crafts and food culture,” including their sponsorship of the annual Gullah Celebration.

Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce

The stated vision of the 1,600-member Hilton Head Island - Bluffton Chamber of Commerce is to encourage their Hilton Head region and community members to be innovative and vibrant through engaging as a leader and supporter of business services and economic and tourism development advocacy. The mission of the Chamber is to advance the common interests of

their members, stimulate the expanding regional economy, and enhance the quality of life for all. Examples of their activities include providing members with networking opportunities, providing them referrals, governmental advocacy, educational programs, and attracting visitors to the area. Their successful results have earned them the National Chamber of the Year award in 2000, 2006 and 2014. Similarly, the chamber’s Visitor and Convention Bureau is one of only 124 Destination Marketing Organizations worldwide that has achieved accreditation through Destination Marketing Association International.

State-Wide & Regional Efforts

Below is a summary of regional efforts related to Gullah cultural preservation, interpretation and promotion at a regional scale beyond Hilton Head Island.

Cultural Heritage Corridor

The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC) was designated by Congress in 2006. The local coordinating entity legally responsible for management of the Corridor is a federal commission established by Congress and titled the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission. The corridor extends along the Atlantic coast from Wilmington, NC, in the north to St. Augustine, FL, in the south. The management plan created for the corridor indicates that there are three key objectives for the corridor:

- Recognize, sustain, and celebrate the important contributions made to American culture and history by African Americans, known as the Gullah Geechee, who settled in the coastal counties of South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida.
- Assist state and local governments and public and private entities in South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida in interpreting the story of the Gullah Geechee and preserving Gullah Geechee folklore, arts, crafts, and music.
- Assist in identifying and preserving sites, historical data, artifacts, and objects associated with Gullah Geechee people and culture for the benefit and education of the public.



Map of corridor from the management plan (Source: Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission - 2012)

The four key interpretive themes created by the plan include: language; arts, crafts and music; foodways; and spiritual expression. These same themes can provide a framework for the interpretation of Gullah culture and history specific to Hilton Head Island.

International African American Museum in Charleston (IAAM)

To be located in at Gadsden’s Wharf in Charleston, where many enslaved arrived from Africa, the IAAM will be a museum, memorial and site of conscience to present the unvarnished

history and culture of the role that Africans and their descendants played in the making of America. It will include immersive, interactive exhibits engaging to all ages. It will also feature the Center for Family History, a leading genealogy archive that will help visitors identify their individual histories. While ground has not been broken yet for the museum's construction, it is expected to occur within the very near future now that their aggressive fundraising goals have nearly been met. While this museum will interpret the African American experience in general, it is anticipated that the Gullah Geechee culture will be addressed as part of the broader story.

Penn Center on St. Helena Island

Penn Center is one of the most significant African American historical and cultural institutions in existence today. Founded in 1862 as the Penn School, a central component of the Port Royal Experiment, it was one of the first schools in the South for formerly enslaved West Africans. It reorganized in 1901 as the Penn Normal, Agricultural and Industrial School and existed for eighty-six years. After the school was removed to the Beaufort County School District, it became Penn Community Services, taking on the mantle of social justice and ushering in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conferences. Although it is not located on Hilton Head Island, the research, interpretation and programming relative to Gullah culture offers tremendous value on a regional scale, including Hilton Head Island's Gullah culture.

Mission Statement

Penn Center will be a world-class organization that serves as a local, national and international resource center and catalyst for the development of programs for community self-sufficiency, civil and human rights, and positive change. Penn Center will encourage the development of critical thinking, creative skills and social consciousness through preserving and documenting history, collecting and exhibiting, presenting and exploring ideas.

South Carolina African American Heritage Commission (SCAAHC)

Founded in 1993 as an affiliate of the S.C. Department of Archives and History and supported by the nonprofit S.C. African American Heritage Foundation, the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission works to identify and promote the preservation of historic sites, structures, buildings, and culture of the African American experience in South Carolina. The Commission's efforts include preserving South Carolina African American culture through education, the arts, historic preservation and tourism. The Commission is comprised of close to 30 volunteer professionals from the fields of historic preservation and interpretation, education, tourism marketing, business development and the arts. This group of professors, tourism professionals, activists and advocates include representatives from all regions of the state of South Carolina.

The Green Book of South Carolina, created by the SCAAHC, is referred to as "A Travel Guide to S.C. African American Cultural Sites." This free mobile travel guide highlights over 300 sites by location and category. Base criteria for inclusion include National Register designation and/or the presence of a State Historic Marker. With an interface similar to that of a tourism app, this mobile-first, web-based guide features detailed listings of significant African American heritage and cultural destinations across South Carolina. Each includes a narrative defining the historic

significance of the site, images, map points, a link to directions and more.

The name of this contemporary travel-planning tool pays homage to the original *Green Book*. First published in 1936 by N.Y. postman Victor Green, the original *Green Book* was an African American travel guide to safe harbors and welcoming establishments across the United States, printed until the mid-1960s. This present-day homage features tourism destinations that impart a new Southern experience, sharing the compelling story of African American heritage in the Palmetto State.



The Green Book app (Source: Green Book website)

Other Regional Efforts

There are additional regional organizations that can play a role in Gullah cultural preservation, such as the following:

Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce

The BCBC is a 501(C)(3) non-profit corporation membership organization dedicated to offering products, services and educational programming for multi-cultural business-owners and professionals within Beaufort and its neighboring communities. The individuals and businesses they serve are federally recognized as disadvantaged business enterprises and/or have been denied access to capital in traditional finance markets. Their offices are located in Beaufort. Among the potential role for the BCBC is the promotion of Gullah sites and culture, as well as technical support for Gullah-owned businesses.

Beaufort County Heritage Tourism Corporation

The BCHTC is a new alliance of Lowcountry leaders who are combining their efforts to promote heritage tourism in the area, with a particular focus on vacationers. Pledges of financial support have already been secured from Beaufort County and the Town of Hilton Head Island. It is this organization's goal to help individual groups and organizations build a coordinated plan around heritage tourism. BCHTC includes the mayors of Bluffton, Beaufort, Port Royal and Hilton Head Island, as well as the Chairman of the Beaufort County Council and the Chair of the Santa Elena Foundation in Beaufort. Most recently, the corporation hired a consultant to research and determine the economic impact of investing in various heritage sites.

*Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition**

According to this organization's website, the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition was founded by Marquette L. Goodwine in 1996, who has since been enstooled as Queen Quet, Chieftess and Head-of-State for the Gullah/Geechee Nation. Reportedly, no other organization in the world existed with "Gullah/Geechee" in the name until the

Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition came into being. Among the organization's key activities are the following:

- Advocating for the rights of all Gullah Geechee people around the world.
- Promoting and participating in the preservation of Gullah Geechee history, heritage, culture, and language.
- Working toward Sea Island land re-acquisition and maintenance.
- Celebrating Gullah Geechee culture through artistic and educational means electronically and via "grassroots scholarship."

The Sea Island Coalition is an annual sponsor of the Gullah/Geechee Nation International Music & Movement Festival™, which moves to different parts of the Gullah Geechee Nation and areas of the African Diaspora. It is also the host of numerous tour and educational groups at their Gullah/Geechee Coalition Center.

* Note: The slash used above between "Gullah" and "Geechee" is provided where it is used as part of an official name or term associated with this organization. Organizations such as the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission have consciously dropped the slash for a variety of reasons they have cited in their materials.

PUBLIC POLICIES

As with most communities, there are numerous studies, plans, ordinances, codes and policies that have been undertaken and adopted by the Town over the years. A review of them reveals that, despite public perceptions, many of the recommendations contained in these documents have been implemented over time. Below is an overview of the studies, plans and policies that are most recent and/or relevant to this project. They are split up into three groups – plans, regulations and other policies. It is important to understand that the summary of relevant plans below is based upon those plans at the time they were written rather than existing circumstances (unless noted otherwise with respect to their implementation status).

PLANS

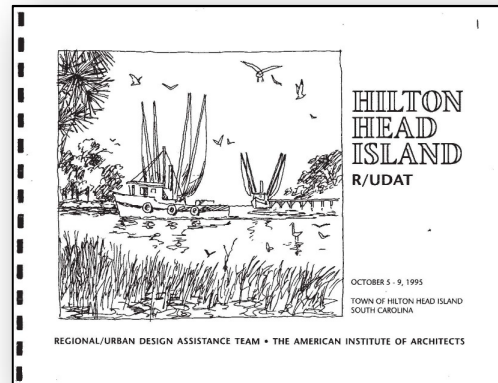
R/UDAT Plan & Response

This plan was prepared in 1995 via a team of volunteers (primarily architects) through the American Institute of Architect's Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) program. Its geographic focus was on the Island's northwest quadrant and surrounding lands encompassing all of Ward One, much of it being Gullah-owned lands. It is somewhat unusual in that it has a companion document – “the response” – that was prepared after the initial plan. Both are summarized below.

R/UDAT Plan (1995)

This plan starts by identifying the key challenges for the future growth and development of this area, which include fragmented land ownership patterns, heirs' property issues in which many properties lack legal title, and the general lack of infrastructure. It also contrasts the radically different perspectives and goals that Gullah people have for the island relative to developers lacking the same ties to the Island. It then lays out a set of five key principles for the plan: vision, equity, responsibility, history, and urgency. The bulk of the plan is a set of recommendations to address the following issues:

- *Heirs Property* - create an entity to provide discounted and pro bono legal services to clear titles.
- *Infrastructure* - implement utility extensions and the paving of unpaved collector roads.
- *Community Development Fund* - adopt tax increment financing (TIF) to fund Ward One improvements.
- *Master Planning & Development Regulations* - enact a transparent process actively engaging stakeholders to result in a clear vision and development regulations for the area.



R/UDAT Plan cover (Source: Town of Hilton Head Island - 1995)

- *Cultural Preservation* - follow a range of recommendations offered to preserve the culture and heritage of the Island's Gullah people, starting with a comprehensive inventory of cultural assets, a local designation and protection program for sites based upon National Register eligibility, and the pursuit of grants for implementation.
- *Property Taxes* - pursue strategies such as: promoting existing agricultural tax assessment provisions, acknowledging environmental constraints when assessing values, designating conservation easements to reduce the tax burden, and providing more advanced notice and options before properties are sold for tax delinquency.
- *Environmental Preservation & Recreation* - increase environmental protections for land and water, and provide better access to waterfront areas and other natural resources.
- *Affordable Housing* - establish a housing office in Town government, pursue state and federal funds and utilize TIF for housing, waive fees for affordable housing, adopt an affordable housing impact fee for market-rate housing, add teeth to the existing affordable housing overlay zone, and create a revolving fund for low-interest loans to upgrade housing.
- *Building the Economic Base* - establish a public/private partnership to provide economic development opportunities to help existing and/or new small businesses in Ward One, allocate a percentage of revenues from the Accommodation Tax to Ward One tourism activities, assign a Town staffer as an ombudsman to work with Ward One businesses, and work with other entities and local lenders to provide small business "gap loans" to businesses that cannot qualify for conventional loans.
- *Good Government* - adopt a philosophy for Town staff to "facilitate first and regulate second," including designating an ombudsman to work with Ward One property owners on land use and development issues, hire mediators to help resolve development issues, conduct public forums to educate property owners on development regulations and procedures, and adopt diversity policies and a commission to expand opportunities for Ward One citizens.
- *Transportation* - adopt a transit system and expand the pathway network to insure strong accessibility in Ward One to important institutional and commercial destinations.
- *Education & Recreation* - increase the number of playgrounds in Ward One, expand the pathway system there (as noted above), increase public beach access, and complete improvements to Taylor Park.

Response to the R/UDAT Plan (1996)

This document was prepared by NIBCAA's Resource Committee for Native Island Affairs and dated November 20, 1996. That group started informally, but was officially appointed by the Town in December of 1995. To review and comment on the plan, four teams were created from the 25-person Committee, and each was assigned at least three of the thirteen topics addressed. The teams met very frequently for several months. One of the first things a reader notices is that the document does not mirror the organization and terminology of the 1995 R/UDAT Plan.

Committee's Stated Vision

Our vision for the Native Island Community of Hilton Head Island is that, we not be treated as, viewed as, nor live as second class citizens; but, as equals of the other communities of Hilton Head Island. However, we must not be forced to become another Plantation, but retain our character and our culture.

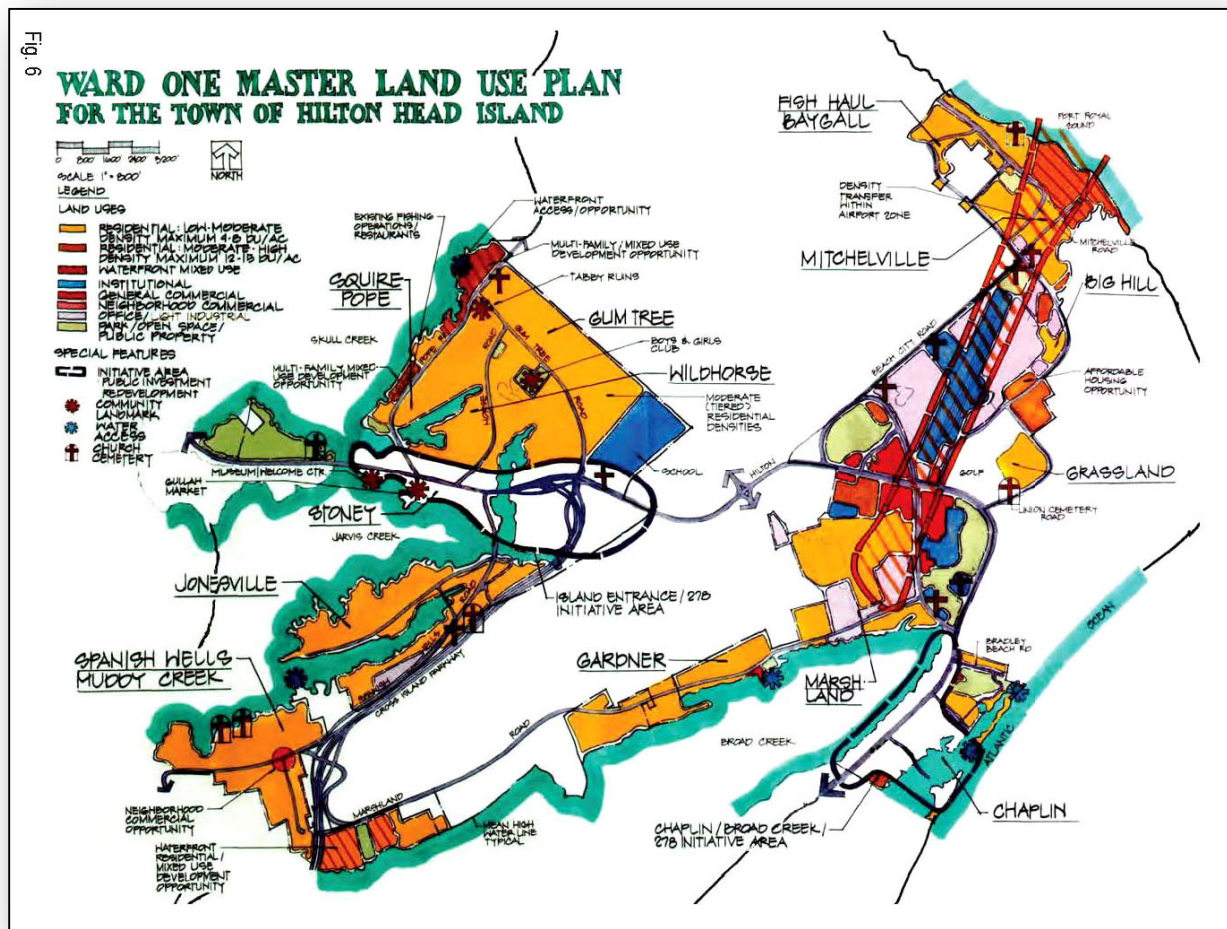
While this document addresses most of the same basic issues, many of the sections have different titles and their sequencing is inconsistent with the plan, making it less user-friendly than it could have been otherwise. Despite the word “response” in this document’s title implying that its authors disagree with the 1995 plan, this document seems to agree with the plan in most respects. It does, however, offer more detail and some additional ideas to the plan. Given that the 1995 plan was created by volunteers spending less than a week in the community, the need to expand on that effort is not surprising. Examples of different or supplemental ideas recommended in the response document, to the extent that they are relevant to this Gullah Culture Preservation Project, include the following:

- Allow more flexibility with development regulations so that housing development can occur on 1 to 5-acre lots in the north end of the Island.
- Seek pre-development funding from the Lowcountry Council of Government for preliminary architectural and civil engineering requirements.
- Use the Technical College of the Lowcountry and USC Beautiful Business Development Center as volunteer consultants to property owners/developers.
- Encourage land owners to employ certified property tax appraisers to seek a reduction in their assessed value to reduce their tax burden.
- Insure that owners are taking advantage of the Homestead Exemption and Agricultural Exemption for property taxes, if applicable.
- Pursue state legislation to roll back property taxes for property owners of record prior to 1956 (the year the bridge was built).
- Relax or fully waive growth control measures as needed, increase permitted densities from 8 units per acre to 12 units per acre, and decrease setback and buffer requirements.
- Where applicable in Ward One, planned unit development (PUD) zoning should replace conventional zoning.
- Streets should be renamed per requests.
- Access to black cemeteries located in gated communities should be achieved.
- To provide more detail to the R/UDAT Plan, this report specifies roads that should be prioritized for improvements in Ward One.
- A wide range of safety improvements should be provided for specific locations, with an emphasis on pedestrian safety.
- The Town should establish a Maintenance Department to maintain the Island’s drainage system, a detailed drainage plan should be prepared, and drainage easements should be secured where needed.
- Establish a Gullah museum, collect materials, document the history through oral histories and similar means, provide interpretive wayside exhibits, and make the Celebration and annual event.

Ward One Plan (1999)

This plan, prepared for the Town by a consultant team in 1999, was prompted by the 1995 R/UDAT plan and response report described above. While those previous efforts were relatively broad with respect to the topics they addressed, this plan indicates that it “deals with the specifics of land use and public facilities” (pg. viii). The plan also explains that it focuses on

Ward One because that is the location of most of the Gullah neighborhoods. The physical components of the plan are highlighted in the plan map below.



Ward One Master Land Use Plan Map (Source: Town of Hilton Head Island - 1999)

Below are some of the most significant recommendations from the Ward One Plan as summarized in the Plan Summary section:

Land Use Element

Replacement of CMU (M-2) Zoning

The Ward One Plan proposes the elimination of CMU (M-2) zoning and its replacement with Low-Moderate Density Residential and Moderate-High Density Residential zones. The Low-Moderate Density Residential category provides for flexible “tiered” densities from four (4) to eight (8) dwelling units per acre, depending on certain performance criteria. The Moderate-High Density Residential category permits densities of up to 12 units per acre. Both categories provide for commercial uses which are compatible with residential communities. This approach, which was subsequently implemented by the Town, responds directly to the plan’s expressed neighborhood desires to:

- Provide greater flexibility for residential use and density;
- Restrict commercial uses which are not desired in residential areas; and
- Encourage, through incentives, greater coordination among neighboring property owners to achieve more efficient development patterns.

Waterfront Mixed Use

Certain waterfront areas in Ward One are among the most scenic anywhere on Hilton Head Island. Most of these areas are appropriate for, and should accommodate, higher-density residential uses, as well as water-related uses such as marinas, restaurants, entertainment activities, compatible motels/inns, timeshares, and public spaces. Where appropriate, the Town should encourage and/or invest in the creation of waterfront boardwalks to link waterfront activities and public spaces.

Initiative Areas

Two "Initiative Areas" along Highway 278 are designated in this plan: at the island entrance in the Stoney Neighborhood and mid-island in the Chaplin Neighborhood. Investments by the Town in these areas will be targeted for revitalization that will enhance economic development opportunities, while improving community character and facilitating safe, efficient traffic circulation. The areas were also suggested for further study and planning.

Regulatory Modifications

The Ward One Plan recognizes that some existing development requirements may be difficult to meet for some small or poorly-configured Ward One properties. These include setbacks and access drive right-of-way dimensions. Specific recommendations are made to lessen the restrictions on certain churches, particularly those in the Airport Hazard Overlay zoning district and the Light Industrial zoning district near the Hilton Head Island Airport. Similarly, recommendations are made to recognize the hardships imposed by the configuration of some heirs' property, and to waive or relax such standards where there is no threat to public health or safety.

Although it is now out of date, one of the most useful tables in this plan is provided below.

SUBAREA	RESIDENTIAL UNITS				Retail Sq. Ft.	Office/Bank Sq. Ft.	Heavy Commercial/ Light Industrial Sq. Ft.	Institutional Sq. Ft.
	Single Family	Multi-family	Mobile Homes	Hotel				
Stoney...	223	408	253	0	138,000	9,000	19,000	414,000
Mitchelville...	61	559	57	125	321,000	84,000	523,000	73,000
Chaplin...	163	500	135	0	678,000	45,000	98,000	101,000
Spanish Wells...	207	0	159	0	19,000	600	106,000	4,000
Total Ward One	664	1467	604	125	1,156,000	139,000	746,000	592,000

Source: Town of Hilton Head Island Planning Department, December 1996 Data

Ward One Master Land Use Plan – Uses by Sq. Ft. (Source: Town of Hilton Head Island – Dec. 1996)

Public Services and Facilities Element

The Ward One Plan recognizes that, in many respects, public facilities in Ward One are inadequate. The Plan calls for a new collaborative effort with Hilton Head No. 1 Public Service District to secure funding necessary to extend sewer service where it is most needed and to make sewer system connections affordable. The Plan calls for similar efforts to correct deficiencies and safety concerns regarding local roads and pathways.

Housing Element

The Ward One Plan recognizes the importance of housing to the future of Ward One. The Plan proposes to expand options for affordable housing and replace dwellings which are in deteriorated condition.

Next Steps: Implementation

Initial actions aimed at plan implementation include the following:

- *LMO Modifications:* Draft, review, and adopt new zoning districts and development standards as recommended.
- *Capital Improvements Programming:* Expedite completion of improvements to planned roads, pathways, drainage and sewer improvements.
- *Initiative Area Plans:* Prepare and act upon more detailed initiative area plans as identified.
- *Support Community Initiatives:* Support local neighborhood planning initiatives and alliances, including the Community Development Corporation and Habitat for Humanity.

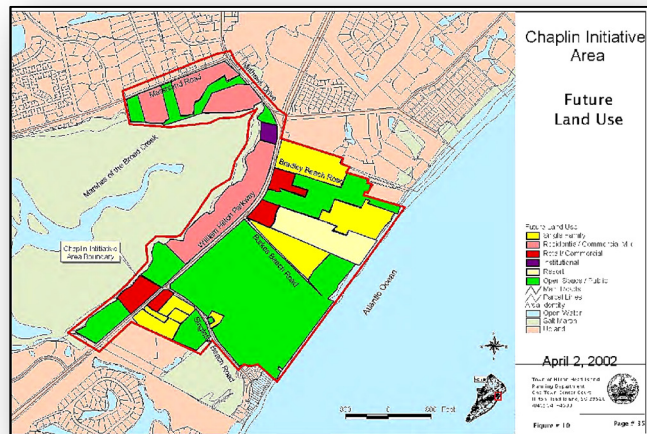
In conclusion, many of the recommendations in this plan can also be found in the R/UDAT Plan and the “response” to that plan. Given that those two earlier efforts included a significant degree of analysis and public input only a few years before the Ward One Plan was prepared, it would have been surprising if the Ward One Plan differed substantially from those earlier efforts.

Initiative Area Plans

One of the recommendations of the 1999 Ward One Plan was to follow up with some more detailed plans for specific areas within Ward One. Below are summaries of two of the resulting plans.

Chaplin Initiative Area Plan (2002)

This plan was prepared “in house” by the Town’s staff, but the charrette process that helped to generate many of the plan’s ideas included volunteers from organizations such as the South Carolina Downtown Development Association (SCDDA) and area designers/consultants. As stated at the beginning of the plan:



Proposed Future Land Use: Chaplin Initiative Area Plan (Source: Town of Hilton Head Island - 2002)

“The purpose of the Chaplin Initiative Area Plan is to develop land use provisions with associated density and determine infrastructure services needed to accomplish the goals and needs for this area of Hilton Head Island. The scope of this plan is therefore focused on land use, density, and infrastructure since many of the components of development were otherwise detailed in the Ward One Master Plan adopted in 1999. As an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan, this plan culminates the planning efforts of the Ward One Master Land Use Plan.”

Below are key recommendations of the plan as summarized in the plan’s Executive Summary:

1. Land Use Regulations

The Chaplin Initiative Area Plan proposes to shape land uses towards a mix of more efficient residential, commercial and tourism development patterns. Proposed land uses take advantage of the strategic location of Chaplin; served by major and minor arterial roads with land fronting along the Atlantic Ocean and uninterrupted views of the marshes of Broad Creek. The net effect is that this Plan confirms some existing development, such as public lands, while creating new zoning districts to allow ocean and marsh-oriented development at an appropriate scale for Hilton Head Island.

2. Infrastructure Improvements

The Ward One Master Land Use Plan specifically designated the Chaplin Initiative Area for study of its infrastructure needs. Investments by the Town and private developers will be targeted for revitalization to enhance economic development opportunities, while improving community character and facilitating safe, efficient traffic circulation. The Chaplin Initiative Area Plan takes into account the current public and private facilities, and proposes to enhance current areas of concern to an acceptable level for Hilton Head Island. The plan calls for new circulation roads; roadway improvements; pathways; intersection improvements; pedestrian facilities at road crossings; and installation of sewer service. In addition, passive and active recreational parks are proposed on public lands.

3. The Chaplin/Marshland/Gardner Property Owners Association

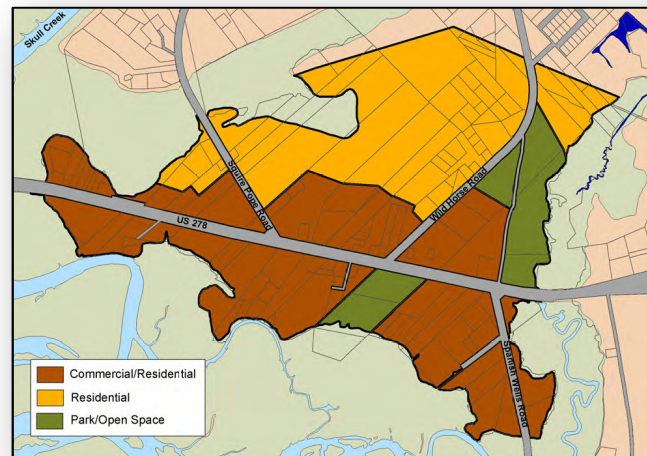
Throughout the development of the Chaplin Initiative Area Plan, the Chaplin/Marshland/Gardner Property Owners Association (POA) provided a forum for the exchange of ideas and opened lines of communication between the Town staff and the Chaplin Initiative Area property owners and stakeholders. This effort by the POA proved vital to the development of the Plan. The Plan views the continued relationship between the POA and the Town of Hilton Head Island as an excellent vehicle to strengthen the ability of the neighborhood to communicate its needs for future public project improvements. Also, the Plan proposes to develop the POA/ Town relationship to mutually support the goals the Plan describes.

Stoney Initiative Area Plan (2003)

As in the case of the Chaplin Initiative Area Plan prepared the year before, this plan was prepared “in house” by the Town’s staff, but the charrette process that helped to generate many of the plan’s ideas included volunteers from organizations such as the South Carolina Downtown Development Association (SCDDA) and area consultants. As stated at the beginning of the plan:

“In 1999, the Town of Hilton Head Island adopted the Ward One Master Land Use Plan as part of the Comprehensive Plan. This Plan identified the Stoney Neighborhood as an area needing further attention due to several unique factors such as unusual parcel configuration, its gateway location and special development opportunities. The Stoney Initiative Area Plan was created to fill the gap in the Ward One Master Land Use Plan. It focuses on land use, density, and infrastructure needs for the Stoney neighborhood and recommends strategies to guide future development and redevelopment opportunities.”

“Needs and Goals of the Initiative Area” are identified in the Plan that focus on land use, density and infrastructure. The Plan further recommends strategies to guide future development and redevelopment opportunities in these three areas. These strategies fall into three major categories: amendments to the Land Management Ordinance, improvements to public infrastructure, and assistance to land owners.



Proposed Future Land Use: Stoney Initiative Area Plan (Source: Town of Hilton Head Island - 2003)

Land Management Ordinance (LMO) Amendments:

- Rezoning to allow a better mix of commercial and residential.
- Revise the Use Table to allow more appropriate land uses.
- Determine whether revisions to the design standards would encourage orientation toward the marsh, and if so, make those revisions.

Public Infrastructure:

- Traffic-related: improvements to William Hilton Parkway, new roads, and intersection improvements.
- Pedestrian-related: pedestrian overpass, improvements to on-grade crosswalks, median landscaping.
- Infrastructure-related: sewer installation, multi-purpose pathways, pathway and crosswalk lighting, installation of distinctive entry sign, bury power lines, improvements to Old Schoolhouse Park.

Assistance to Land Owners:

- Encourage aggregation of properties for more efficient development.
- Encourage local land and business ownership.
- POA establish voluntary design guidelines.
- There are several recommendations dealing with the Town, the Stoney community, and local businesses and organizations working together to help the local land owners redevelop their properties themselves rather than sell to others.

2017 Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive plans typically address a wide range of community-wide issues related to future growth, including: natural resources; land uses; development density, form and character; transportation; housing; and economic development. This plan does all of that. But, understandably (because of the nature of this type of plan), it does not address each planning issue in terms of Gullah culture. However, this plan does address historic and cultural resources, which includes many Gullah resources. Below is an excerpt from this plan with respect to that topic:

Goals: Historical/Cultural Resources

- A. To identify historic and archaeological sites in Hilton Head Island. Various archaeological sites on Hilton Head Island are thousands of years old. A number of churches and cemeteries date back hundreds of years. Even certain modern buildings, which are products of early resort development, have character worth retaining. Without protection these areas may not be preserved into the future. These areas and structures should be recognized and preserved as important elements in the Island's historic heritage.
- B. To provide access to important historic and religious sites located inside gated communities that are currently inaccessible to the public. The Town should encourage improvement of access to these sites, while protecting them from destruction or loss.
- C. To preserve Native Island culture. Increased development and changing demographics have the potential to lead to the loss of Native Islander culture. The Town should assist Native Islanders (Gullah-freedmen descendent) culture with programs that will sustain deep ties to family-owned lands and historic neighborhoods.
- D. To encourage education about the rich cultural heritage of Hilton Head Island.
- E. To celebrate the Town's unique sense of place and character through the preservation and maintenance of cultural heritage and historical resources. The heritage and legacies of the Native Island Community is cherished and capitalized by the development of a center for Gullah studies.

Implementation Strategies: Historical/Cultural Resources

- A. Consider conducting a Town-wide study of all archeological and culturally significant sites.
- B. Consider developing a historic landmarks protection program to preserve important sites and architecture on the Island. Research the need to create an ordinance, regulations, or a zoning district to offer additional protection to historical and culturally significant sites.
- C. Encourage planned communities and other landowners to provide access for family members, friends and historians to cultural and historic sites to respect cultural dignity and allow for maintenance of historic areas.
- D. Improve access to historic sites for educational purposes. Research the options of increasing the ease of accessibility to these sites for education, viewing, and maintenance.
- E. Identify historic landmarks and important archaeological sites with a Historic Resource Survey. Elements of the survey should include development approval incentives for preservation, consideration of variances to encourage rehabilitation, purchase and lease options, and moving certain structures to designated Historic Preservation Zones.
- F. Identify appropriate locations for historic markers that identify important people, places, events, and neighborhoods.

- G. Identify historic figures within Hilton Head Island to use for street naming applications. Various books and manuscripts at the Heritage Library Foundation provide extensive information on historic figures with ties to Hilton Head Island.
- H. Work on public land acquisition to preserve historic and cultural sites for future generations.
- I. Cooperate with the Coastal Discovery Museum to establish a strong Gullah cultural education component at the Honey Horn site.
- J. Promote preservation of Gullah/historical neighborhoods and historic structures to help maintain the Gullah culture.
- K. Support the goals of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor organization and promote the Gullah culture within Beaufort County and on Hilton Head Island.
- L. Promote educational programs and interpretive signage that help residents and visitors of all ages to understand the long unique history and rich cultural traditions on Hilton Head Island.
- M. Preserve the identity of traditional neighborhoods. Officially, recognize historic neighborhood names by showing their locations on Town maps, and by encouraging other mapmakers to also include the names.
- N. Increase education about Hilton Head Island's diverse cultural resources through the following:
 - i. Continue to fund educational programs and cultural celebrations.
 - ii. Apply for grants to fund development of interpretive facilities and programs about cultural/historic resources.
 - iii. Coordinate with Coastal Discovery Museum and other institutions to provide educational materials and hands-on programs to schools and various subcultures to promote cultural understanding.
 - iv. Provide interpretive displays of cultural artifacts and themes at public buildings, such as Town Hall, the Beaufort County library, and Coastal Discovery Museum.
 - v. Increase awareness of the brochure created by the Chamber that includes a driving tour of important historic and archaeological sites on the Island.
- O. Preserve Native Islander and Gullah cultural history through the following:
 - i. Continue to provide financial support for the annual Gullah Celebration through ATAX grants and other appropriate sources.
 - ii. Incorporate Native Islander history into public parks in and near their neighborhoods.
 - iii. Encourage property owners of family cemeteries to provide for the perpetual protection of the cemeteries.
- P. Provide funding and promotion of cultural events for all cultures represented on the Island, from festivals to art exhibits to prominent entertainers.
- Q. Support and improve media coverage for local arts and cultural events through an enhanced relationship with the local Chamber of Commerce and inclusion in the Town's website and newsletter.
- R. Recognize the economic value of Hilton Head Island's arts and cultural resources in tourism.
- S. Consider the creation of a Cultural Committee to promote all cultures through art and photographic exhibits, theatrical and musical performances, sporting events, etc.

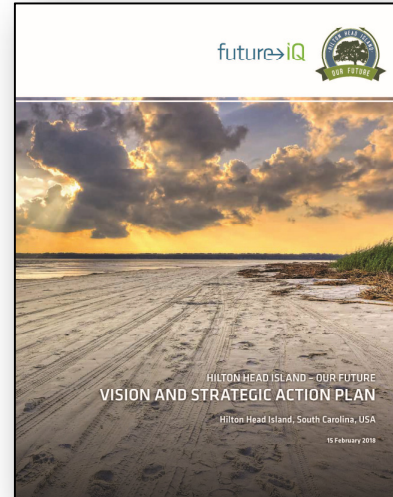
Vision and Strategic Action Plan (2018)

Published in February of 2018, this report conveys the vision and lays out a strategic action plan that was been developed following an extensive community engagement process led by a

consultant firm. Throughout 2017, approximately 3,000 people contributed to a series of surveys, workshops and focus group sessions, to explore the long-term future of Hilton Head Island. According to the report, a key objective was to provide an engagement process that “was designed to provide an open, inclusive and transparent platform for community members to help create a shared vision and action plan.”

The 61-page report features the following key sections (not including some supplemental sections at the end):

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Snapshot of Hilton Head Island
- 3.0 Importance of Visioning
- 4.0 Community Engagement Summary
- 5.0 Identifying the Preferred Future
- 6.0 Community Vision
- 7.0 Strategic Action Framework
- 8.0 Strategic Action Pillars
- 9.0 Integrated Strategic Action Framework
- 10.0 Road Map to the Future
- 11.0 Next Steps
- 12.0 Looking Ahead: Important Topics for the Future



Vision and Strategic Action Plan
(Source: Town of Hilton Head Island - 2018)

With respect to Gullah cultural preservation, it is noted throughout the report and specifically addressed in Section 12 under the subheading “The future of Gullah Geechee culture.” The report recognizes the culture as having strong potential for future tourism on the island, but also recognizes that the Gullah population is in decline relative to the balance of the island. It also makes the connections between the Gullah people, the need to provide more development opportunities for Gullah land owners through increased permitted densities, and the needs for workforce housing. The report also indicates that, as part of this project, a concerted effort was made to engage the Gullah community. It also emphasizes the need for mutual trust between the Gullah community and the broader community in order for progress to be made in securing a positive future for the island’s Gullah people.

Workforce Housing

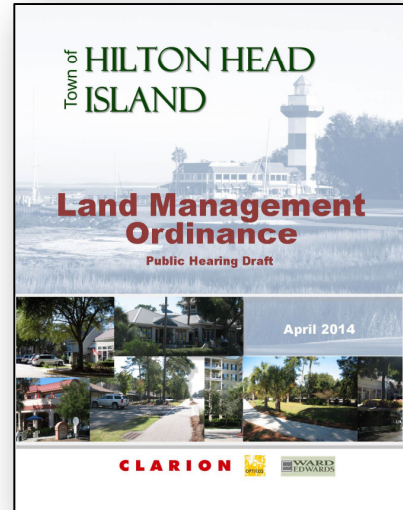
The Town recently embarked on a consultant-led study to identify strategies to overcome the Island’s challenges to workforce housing. This is an issue that is particularly impactful on the Island’s Gullah community for those not already living on land they own. Likewise, Gullah lands that have had their development potential stalled in the past might be candidates for the development of affordable housing once the relevant barriers can be overcome. This project is too early in the process to be able to describe its results. The consultants have indicated that they will be able to present their recommendations to the Town by April of 2019. Also, the consultants for this Gullah culture preservation project and the workforce housing consultants have been in communication to be sure that their respective recommendations will be compatible and not at odds.

REGULATIONS

The primary relevant regulations for this study relate to the Land Management Ordinance (LMO), as described below.

Land Management Ordinance (LMO)

The State of South Carolina allows municipalities to adopt zoning districts and supporting ordinances to regulate the location and density of land uses and other zoning functions (building heights, buffer areas, building setbacks, etc.). These regulations are intended to promote “public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, appearance, prosperity and general welfare.” They also implement the Town’s plans for future growth and development as set forth in the Land Use Element of the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The Town adopted the current zoning districts and regulations in its Land Management Ordinance (LMO), last updated in 2017. Below is a summary of how properties and their owners might legally deviate from the LMO.



Land Management Ordinance Draft - 2014 (Source: Town of Hilton Head Island)

Procedures for Relief from the LMO

Below are three primary policy tools for relief from LMO provisions:

Zoning Map Amendment

Official changes can be made to the zoning districts through a Zoning Map Amendment (ZMA) to allow different land uses and densities for any given property. Proposed ZMAs must be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission and Town Council for final adoption.

Variances

A variance is a departure from the strict terms or provisions of the LMO where enforcement of the LMO would result in unnecessary and undue hardship to the applicant. In granting the variance, the spirit of the LMO must be observed, and public welfare and safety cannot be diminished. A variance is reviewed and granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) based upon specific State-identified criteria.

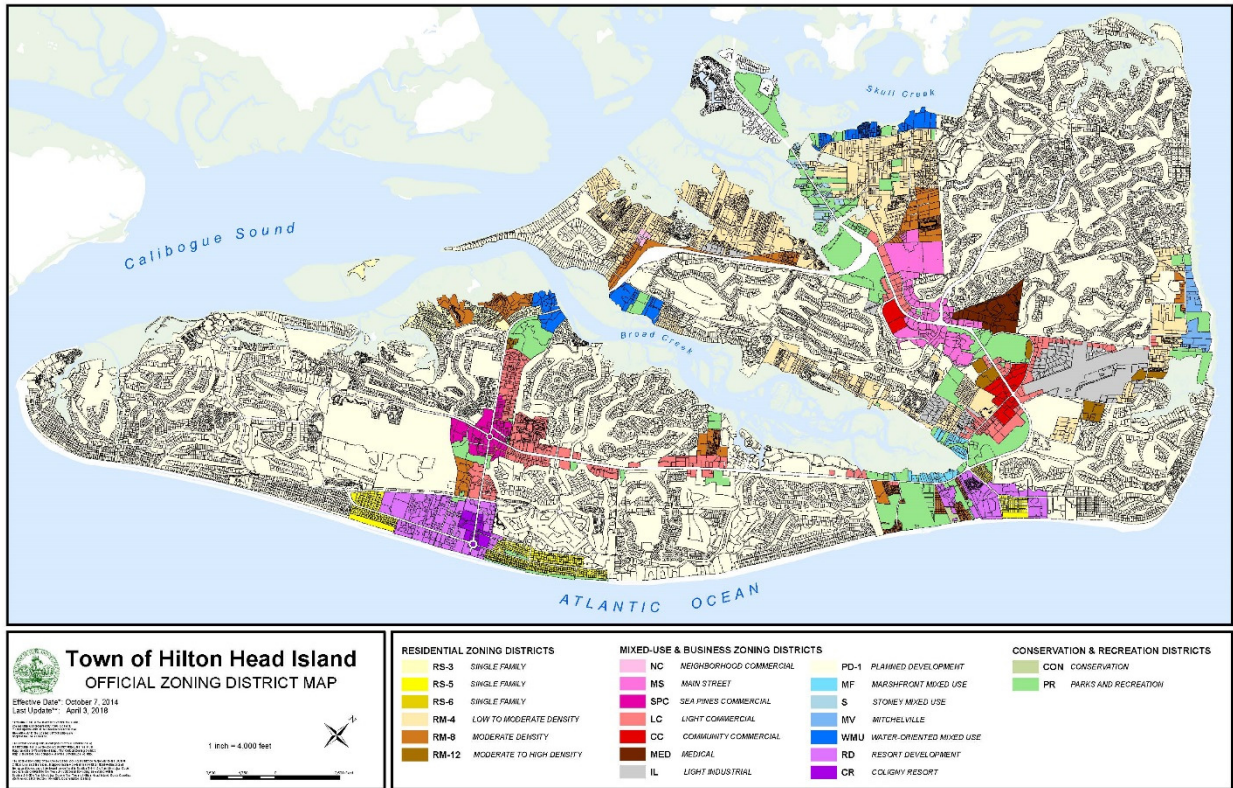
Special Exceptions

A special exception is a policy tool that allows certain land uses subject to standards and conditions in the LMO. These standards and conditions might relate to access, noise, screening, lighting, compatibility with adjoining uses, and traffic generation. As with variances, special exceptions are reviewed and granted by the Town’s BZA.

Zoning Districts

As illustrated on the zoning map below, the Town’s various existing zoning district categories

include: Conservation and Recreation Districts, Residential Base Zoning Districts, and Mixed-Use and Business Districts (Overlay Zoning Districts exist, but are not depicted on this map).



Town Zoning Map updated April 3, 2018 (Source: Town of Hilton Head Island)

Application of Zoning to Gullah Neighborhoods

The majority of Hilton Head Island’s Gullah-owned lands exist in the Gullah neighborhoods located in the north half of the Island, as identified earlier in this Appendix (see pages A-1 and A-2). Of those lands, the following zoning districts are the most prevalent:

- **Low to Moderate Density Residential (RM-4):** This designation is particularly dominant in the following neighborhoods – Squire Pope, Big Stoney, Jonesville, Spanish Wells, Gardner, and Mitchelville. While most of these lands are relatively close to the waterfront, they typically do not directly front the waterfront. This district permits by-right single-family, multi-family, and group living, as well as various institutional and civic uses, some of which are only conditionally permitted. The maximum impervious coverage in both districts is 35%, and the maximum building height is 35 feet. The permitted densities are tied to the size of the site: 4 units/net acre for the smallest sites; 6 units/net acre for 3+ acres; and 8 units/net acre for 5+ acres. The maximum non-residential gross floor area (GFA) is 6,000 square feet per net acre. Conditionally permitted uses include bed and breakfasts, convenience stores, open air sales, and other commercial services.
- **Moderate Density Residential (RM-8):** This designation permits single-family, multifamily,

group living uses, educational uses, other commercial uses, government uses, religious institutions, and boat ramps, docks, and marina are allowed by right or subject to specific conditions/standards established in the LMO. The maximum impervious coverage in both districts is 35%, and the maximum building height is 45 feet. The maximum density in the RM-8 allows 8 units per acre. Nonresidential uses can be developed up to 6,000 square feet of gross floor area per acre.

- *Stoney Mixed Use (S)*: This zoning is limited to the Big Stoney neighborhood, but is only applied to a relatively small amount of land flanking both sides of Hwy. 278. The stated purpose is to “encourage cooperation between property owners in the development of their properties, to provide for connectivity between properties, and to create an atmosphere that is more pedestrian friendly...” It permits a relatively broad range of uses, including multi-family, single-family, various civic and institutional uses, resort accommodations, commercial recreation, offices, retail, dining, entertainment, various auto-oriented businesses, and agriculture. Seafood processing is a conditional use, among many others. Residential densities allow a maximum of 10 units/net acre. Hotels are allowed 35 rooms per acre. Non-residential gross floor areas may be up to 7,000 square feet per net acre, and buildings may be as high as 45 feet.
- *Mitchelville (MV)*: These lands are found along the waterfront of the Mitchelville and Baygall neighborhoods. They are intended to “recognize the historical and cultural significance of this area.” It permits a relatively broad range of uses, including agriculture, mixed use, multi-family, single-family, various civic and institutional uses, resort accommodations, commercial recreation, offices, retail, dining, and several water-dependent uses, although seafood processing is a conditional use. Densities are tied to uses, but residential densities allow a maximum of 12 units/net acre. Hotels are allowed 35 rooms per acre. Non-residential gross floor areas may be up to 8,000 square feet per net acre, buildings may be as high as 75 feet, and the maximum impervious surface coverage is 50%.
- *Marshfront (MF)*: These lands are found in the Marshland and Chaplin Neighborhoods. The stated purpose of the MF district is “to provide for a mix of uses such a residential, institutional, and commercial uses at a scale suitable for the district. The district is intended to be a service area for the occupants of the Resort Development (RD) District located on the opposite side of U.S. Highway 278 located in the vicinity of Folly field Road.” This district encourages development that maximizes views of Broad Creek, and the LMO indicates that environmental, aesthetic, and traffic concerns are significant within portions of this district. Permitted densities are tied to the size of the site and street type. On major arterials, 4 units/net acre are allowed for sites less than 3 acres, while 8 units/net acre are allowed for sites 3 acres and larger. On other street types, 6 units/net acre are allowed for sites less than 3 acres, while 10 units/net acre are allowed for sites 3 acres and larger. The maximum non-residential gross floor area (GFA) is 7,000 square feet per net acre, and the maximum building height is 45 feet, and the maximum impervious surface coverage is 60%.
- *Water-Oriented Mixed Use (WMU)*: These are waterfront lands located in neighborhoods such as Squire Pope and Spanish Wells. They are intended for water-oriented residential and

commercial uses. Permitted uses include mixed use, multi-family, single-family, various institutional and civic uses, resort accommodations, commercial recreation, offices, retail, dining, entertainment, specific auto-oriented uses, and agriculture. Seafood processing is a conditional use, among many others. Residential uses can be up to 16 units/net acre, hotels are allowed 35 rooms per acre, the maximum gross floor area is 8,000 square feet per net acre, the maximum building heights is 75 feet, and the maximum impervious surface coverage is 50%.

- *Parks and Recreation (PR)*: These lands are found in Chaplin, Marshland, Big Stoney, Spanish Wells, Mitchelville, Baygall, and isolated areas within Squire Pope. They are limited to publicly-owned lands for only active recreation, passive recreation, and environmental conservation.

In addition to the basic zoning requirements, there are also numerous requirements for street setbacks, use setbacks, and buffers. It is also noteworthy that much of the lands adjacent to Gullah neighborhoods are zoned and developed as Planned Unit Developments (PUDs). That option is difficult for most Gullah lands because of the fragmented nature of their lands, as PUDs have minimum site sizes. The Planned Development Overlay (PD-2) district requires parcels between five (5) and 249 acres in size. In addition to many Gullah-owned lands being too small to meet these standards, the heirs' property issues often preclude the assemblage of land into sufficiently sized sites for a PD-2 development.

The development parameters (including densities) in the commercial and mixed-use districts within the historic Gullah neighborhoods are reasonably comparable to development parameters outside the district, with the exception of nonresidential densities and maximum impervious coverage requirements (where they are modestly lower), relative to the development parameters for most other moderate and higher density districts in the Town. See Table 1: Development Parameters for Other Commercial and Mixed-Use Town Districts.

District	Residential Density (Net Acre)	Nonresidential Density (GFA/Net Acre)	Building Height (Feet)	Impervious Surface Coverage (%)
Community Commercial (CC)	N/A	10,000	45	60
Resort Development (RD)	16	8,000	Varies from 45-75	50
Main Street (MS)	12	9,000	45	60
Sea Pines Circle (SPC)	12	10,000	45	60

Setback & Buffer Requirements

Below are observations regarding current LMO setback and buffer requirements:

Adjacent Street Setbacks: These standards refer to the setback that structures must have from their adjacent streets. Because some of the existing requirements in Table 16-5-102.C of the LMO are relatively modest, they are not good candidates for reductions. The minimum setback for most streets is 10 feet (for structures less than 24 inches in height) to 20 feet (for structures 24 inches in height or greater). While only arterial streets require greater setbacks, which range from 30 to 50 feet (depending upon the type of arterial), many such streets are found in the historic Gullah neighborhoods. One potential setback that might be considered is reduction of the required setback for structures 24 inches in height or greater. Similarly, there may be the potential to reduce setbacks along arterial streets.

Adjacent Use Setbacks: These standards dictate how far a structure must be set back from the lot line of an adjacent use (see Table 16-5-102.D of the LMO). The minimum is typically either 20 feet or 25 feet, depending upon the uses and district. The greatest setback requirement is between single-family houses and industrial uses, which is 40 feet. There are also provisions for setback encroachments for features such as fences, walls, awnings and lighting fixtures. Although, in the case of single-family subdivisions, these setbacks only apply to the perimeter of the subdivision, they may still be overly generous in some cases. For example, a single-family property could be directly adjacent to another similar single-family subdivision, and applying the required 20 foot setback on the side yard of both adjacent subdivisions would result in a 40 foot separation between buildings.

It is noteworthy that there are some existing exceptions when residential subdivisions are adjacent to other residential subdivisions. For Minor Subdivisions and Small Residential Subdivisions, the setback may be reduced by as much as 50%. Also, within any district, it might be reduced by 10% if the site meets all six of the listed criteria, which consider hardships and avoiding/mitigating any adverse impacts that might otherwise occur from the relief. Regardless of those existing exceptions, it might be reasonable to decrease the required use setbacks for any scenario whereby like uses and development types abut one another within the proposed overlay.

Adjacent Street Buffers: The Town's street buffer requirements are contained in Tables 16-5-103.D and 16-5-103.F. There are five different buffer types (A through E) defined in the LMO, and they apply to both street and use buffers. Buffer type A applies to all streets other than arterials. Minor arterials require buffer type B and major arterials require buffer type E. For each buffer type, there is an Option 1 and 2. Option 1 always requires more buffer depth, but Option 2 requires more landscaping material as a buffer to compensate for the lesser depth. For example, Option 1 for buffer type A requires at least 20 feet of depth, while Option B only requires 10 feet of depth. Given that a buffer along a street frontage is more in keeping with an Island character than a historic neighborhood character, the elimination of adjacent street buffers might be considered within the historic Gullah neighborhoods for all street types other than arterials. For the arterials, consideration might be given to decreasing the required buffer types in width and landscape density.

Adjacent Use Buffers: The Town’s adjacent use buffer requirements are contained in Tables 16-5-103.E and 16-5-103.F. As noted above, there are five different buffer types (A through E), but only four are applied to adjacent use buffers (A-D). A is the least rigorous and applies to uses such as single-family subdivisions when abutting like uses, while D applies to industrial uses when abutting single-family subdivisions and similar uses. As with adjacent use setback requirements for residential subdivisions, these buffers only apply to the perimeter of the subdivision rather than the individual lots. Nevertheless, buffer requirements are substantial enough that they may have potential for reduction as applied to properties within historic Gullah neighborhoods. For example, adjoining single-family subdivisions are now required to provide a use buffer type A (10 or 20 feet in depth), when like uses and development would not seem to need to be buffered from one another. Consideration might be given to reducing or even eliminating these types of buffer requirements within historic Gullah neighborhoods.

Current Challenges with the LMO

As noted previously, numerous Land Management Ordinance (LMO) revisions have been implemented per the Ward One Master Plan, the Stoney Initiative Area Plan, and the Chaplin Initiative Area Plan. Regardless of these changes intended to better accommodate the Gullah neighborhoods located in Ward One, recent public input conducted as part of this project has revealed the following challenges, among others, that property owners and developers still claim to encounter with the LMO:

- Subdivisions of 6+ lots require paved roads and other infrastructure, making “family subdivisions” difficult.
- Various impact fees also make it a challenge for many Gullah land owners to develop their land.
- Road setback, use setbacks, and buffer requirements make it challenging to develop small lots.
- Relatively low-density restrictions make it difficult to develop land (most stakeholders claim to need at least 12 units/acre for viable development).
- Street ROW and drainage easement width requirements are considered as often being too wide and preclude the development of small lots.

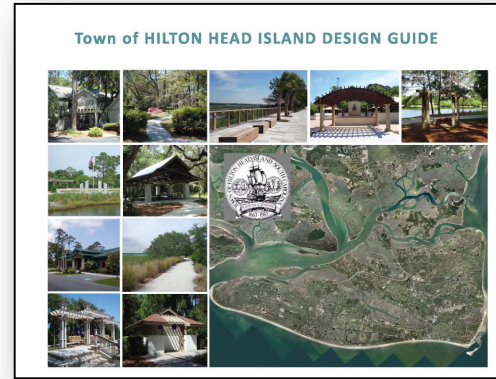
It is noteworthy that past efforts by the Town have sought to address these same issues. In many cases, LMO provisions have actually been revised, but the perception is that they still exist. Thus, greater education about the LMO may be needed.

OTHER POLICIES

Design Guide

Within the Town of Hilton Head Island’s development regulatory context, “Design Review refers to the protection of the aesthetic and visual character of the Island for all properties that lie within the Corridor Overlay District (which includes property along the major roads and waterfront).” Design review pertains to all alterations to a site or structure in terms of colors,

materials, structural changes, landscaping, and signs. The Town’s adopted Design Guide is used by Town staff and the Town’s appointed Design Review Board (DRB) to ensure that development projects are consistent with Hilton Head Island’s character, although they do not apply to single-family houses. The stated Island Character Vision Statement is as follows:



Town of Hilton Head Island Design Guide
(Source: Town of Hilton Head Island)

“Development shall exhibit a harmonious relationship with the natural environment by blending the principles of sensitive site planning, skillful architectural design, and an emphasis on landscaping that preserves and enhances the native vegetation.” It is noteworthy that these guides are based upon a resort community character that is blended with the natural environment, as opposed to Gullah culture. DRB applications are categorized into the following four groups:

- Alterations/Additions
- Minor External Changes
- Signs
- New Development (Conceptual and Final)

The Town’s planning staff can review all minor external changes instead of requiring DRB review.

Tax & Fee Policies

The most significant tax and fee policies relative to this project include the property taxes assessed by the County, business taxes/fees assessed by the Town and County, and Public Service District (PSD) fees, as follows.

Property Taxes, Exemptions & Delinquency

Beaufort County collects property tax revenues for the Town of Hilton Head Island. Real property and mobile homes are valued by the Beaufort County Assessor’s Office and the taxes are calculated by the Beaufort County Auditor’s Office. All residential and commercial property in the County is taxed at a 6% assessment rate. An exception is an owner-occupied legal residence, which may qualify for the 4% Special Assessment Ratio. Tax amounts, which are established by the County, are based on the value of the property being taxed and the millage being applied. Below are some of the additional exemptions and special assessment ratios that might be relevant to Gullah property owners:

- *Agricultural Special Assessment*: granted to taxpayers using their property for agricultural purposes.
- *Disability Exemptions*: granted by the South Carolina Department of Revenue for certain medical disabilities, disabled veterans, and other similar circumstances.
- *The Homestead Exemption*: granted to taxpayers who are over 65, or have been certified as totally and permanently disabled by a State or Federal Agency, or are legally blind.

- *Active Duty Military Exemption:* granted to active duty military stationed within Beaufort County whose State of record is not South Carolina.

Property tax payments are due each year by January 15th. Properties that are delinquent on paying taxes are auctioned by the County in accordance with South Carolina State Statute 12-51-50. The delinquent tax sale is an open auction held annually on the first Monday in October. To avoid the auction of property, delinquent taxpayers must pay before 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the sale. Payments are not accepted the day of the tax sale. Regulations for property taxes are established by the State and the Town has very little control or influence over them.

Beach Preservation Fee & Accommodations Tax

All individuals or businesses renting sleeping accommodations for ninety (90) days or less are required to open an account with the Town's Business License Department to remit quarterly payments of 3% of their gross revenue by the 20th day of the month following each quarter. Of that amount, 2% goes to the Beach Preservation Fee and 1% goes to the Accommodations Tax. In South Carolina, the rental of "transient accommodations" is subject to a 2% Accommodations Tax, in addition to the 5% Sales Tax, and any applicable local tax. Also, the governing body of a qualified coastal municipality (such as the Town of Hilton Head Island) may impose a beach preservation fee not to exceed one percent. Such fee is established through an ordinance and it is subject to a referendum. Payment coupons for the current year are mailed when an account is opened. Renewals occur each year in January or February. Coupons must be remitted to the Town by the 20th day of the month following the quarter. In the event that beach preservation fees are not remitted to the Town, the violator must pay a penalty of five (5) percent of the unpaid amount for each month or portion thereof past due until all beach preservation fees are paid in full.

Hospitality Tax

In accordance with South Carolina statutes, "a local governing body may impose, by ordinance, a local hospitality tax not to exceed two (2) percent of the charges for food and beverages. However, an ordinance imposing the local hospitality tax must be adopted by a positive majority vote. The governing body of a county may not impose a local hospitality tax in excess of one (1) percent within the boundaries of a municipality without the consent, by resolution, of the appropriate municipal governing body. All proceeds from a local hospitality tax must be kept in a separate fund segregated from the imposing entity's general fund. All interest generated by the local hospitality tax fund must be credited to the local hospitality tax fund."

Hospitality taxes are paid by consumers/patrons of restaurants, lounges, grocery stores, convenience stores, and any other establishments that sell prepared food and beverages. It generates approximately \$4.8 million annually for the Town of Hilton Head Island that is dedicated to pay debt service on a \$10 million bond for public safety projects and other capital improvement projects. Payment forms are mailed when an account is opened. Renewals occur each year in January or February. Forms must be remitted to the Town by the 20th day of the month following the quarter. In the event that local hospitality taxes are not remitted to the Town, the person failing to remit them must also pay a penalty of five (5) percent of the unpaid amount for each month or portion thereof until the taxes are paid in full.

Real Estate Transfer Fee & Land Acquisition Program

The Real Estate Transfer Fee is 0.25 of 1% on each real estate transaction in the Town. It generates an average of \$4.2 million annually that is dedicated to the Land Acquisition Program. This fee is usually included in the closing costs of a real estate transaction. The fee is collected by Beaufort County for the Town. It will “sunset” on December 31, 2024.

The Town's Land Acquisition Program began in earnest in 1991 and was modeled after a program created in Nantucket, Massachusetts. The Town's goal was to manage and control growth on the island. Rather than taking land, the Town Council sought to purchase land at fair market value. Land acquisition became a “Smart Growth” tool for the Town, and some of the lands acquired are located in or near Gullah neighborhoods in the north half of the Island. According to the Town’s website regarding this program:

The program has enhanced property values; reduced potential development, particularly along U.S. 278; reduced potential traffic; kept the island green; preserved historic sites; and created opportunities for park and recreation development. As a result of this program, the Town has:

- Purchased 145 parcels of land totaling 1,308 acres for a total expenditure of \$171.8 million;
- Precluded 4.57 million square feet of commercial development;
- Precluded 1,365 motel rooms;
- Precluded 4,637 residential and timeshare units; and
- Precluded 43,228 PM peak-hour driving trips.

Impact Fees

Impact fees are due before a building permit will be issued for both residential and commercial construction within the Town of Hilton Head Island. There are two types of impact fees. One is a Beaufort County fee and the other is a Town of Hilton Head Island fee:

Beaufort County Impact Fee

The Beaufort County fee, which is applicable in the Town of Hilton Head Island, is composed of three charges: parks, roads and libraries. All three fees are applied to building permits for residential units, including single-family houses, manufactured houses, and multi-family and duplex construction. Park and library fees are standard amounts, while road fees change based on the use.

Town of Hilton Head Island Impact Fee

The Town of Hilton Head Island assesses a transportation impact fee on all new development. Transportation impact fees are used to finance qualifying transportation improvements. They are based on the applicable land use category and the projected number of vehicle trips generated by that particular use. The fee required for single family residential construction is \$635 for structures under 1,500 square feet of total construction (heated and unheated space combined). Structures over 1,500 square feet of heated and unheated space are charged a fee of \$816. Manufactured housing is assessed a flat fee of \$410 per unit.

Public Service District (PSD) Fees

The PSD charges a variety of fees, but perhaps the most significant are the “availability fees.” The PSD charges both a Water Availability Fee and a Sewer Availability Fee. These fees are charged to properties that have water and/or sewer service available, but are not connected to the systems. These fees apply to vacant lots, as well as homes and businesses that are not connected to the services. A property can be charged one or both fees. All lots within 100 feet of an existing gravity or low-pressure sewer main, or an existing water main with the ability to provide immediate service, are charged availability fees, with the following exceptions:

- Unbuildable lots
- Lots without free and easy access to the nearest main

Unbuildable lots consist of designated wetlands, inundated property, and designated open space. Lots without free and easy access to the nearest main are lots within 100 feet of the main, but where no public road right-of-way nor easement exists, which therefore would require crossing another piece of property to serve the subject property. The Water Availability Fee is \$100 per year and the Sewer Availability Fee is \$300 per year. Availability Fees are collected through a customer’s Beaufort County property tax bill, which result in an added cost to a tax bill that is already relatively high.

Potential Model Regulations

While not part of the Town’s existing regulations, there are others in other jurisdictions, such as Beaufort County, that could serve as future models for the Town of Hilton Head Island. They include the following:

Beaufort County Family Compound Regulations

Key standards in the County’s Family Compound provisions that could be considered for adaptation for Hilton Head Island include:

- Fifty (50) Years of Ownership.* A single member of the family, multiple members of the family, or an unbroken succession of family members shall own a family compound property for no less than 50 years. All owners of the property shall request the family compound.
- Familial Relationship of those Receiving Property and/or Dwelling Unit.* The person(s) for whom the family dwelling units are built and/or the property subdivided shall be related to the owner of the property by blood, marriage, or adoption.
- Property May be Subdivided.* Family compounds shall be developed and the dwelling units built, or the family compound property may be subdivided and conveyed by the landowner to a family member to build a dwelling unit. Family compounds that are subdivided are limited to the maximum number of units without clustering.

There is also a five-year restriction for leasing or selling the subject property, as follows:

Leasing. No family dwelling unit shall be leased for five years from the date of approval unless the lessee is related to the property owner by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Conveyance of Land Approved as Family Compound. No portion of a tract of land approved as a family compound in accordance with this Section shall be conveyed for five years from the date of approval of the family compound unless the grantee is related to the property owner by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Other important provisions of the County's regulations relate to site design. Two alternative site planning approaches are allowed: "conventional form" and "traditional cluster." Permitted densities are tied to the site size, but the conventional form permits no greater density than one unit per acre, and the traditional cluster form permits no greater than two units per acre. However, permitted densities decrease in either scenario as sites get larger. For Family Compounds that are clustered, there is no minimum lot area, and the minimum separation between dwelling units is 15 feet. For Family Compounds that are not clustered, the minimum lot area is one-half acre.

Cottage Development Regulations

Cottage Development standards found in some other communities, and that could be adapted for Hilton Head Island if family compound provisions were to be adopted, typically permit small lots clustered around a common open space that accounts for approximately 30% of the total site size. They also include housing unit size limits, design standards minimizing the visual impact of garages, minimized street widths, and an emphasis on pedestrian pathways. However, the types of architectural design standards found in most Cottage Development provisions might be cost prohibitive for land owners in Hilton Head Island's historic Gullah neighborhoods.

HEIRS' PROPERTY

EXISTING CHALLENGES

As defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), "Heir property refers to land that has been passed down informally from generation-to-generation. In most cases, it involves landowners who died without a will. Heirs' property is land owned 'in common' by all of the heirs, regardless of whether they live on the land, pay the taxes, or have ever set foot on the land." According to the Center for Heir's Property Preservation, based in Charleston:

"In the Lowcountry, heirs' property (HP) is mostly rural land owned by African Americans who either purchased or were deeded land after the Civil War. Historically, HP owners were routinely denied access to the legal system; could not afford to pay for legal services, and didn't understand or trust the legal system. As a result, much of this land was passed down through the generations without the benefit of a written Will, or the Will was not probated within the 10 years required by SC law to make it valid – so the land became heirs' property. Often the family members didn't know that."

Because these landowners lack clear title to their property, they are precluded from selling their properties or securing loans for property improvements. For many years now, heirs' property has been the leading cause of African Americans losing their land. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, roughly 80% of land owned by African Americans has been lost since 1910 because of heirs' property issues. The heirs' property issue is an especially pronounced challenge on Hilton Head Island.

EXISTING RESOURCES TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE

Fortunately, there are multiple organizations that focus on this issue and that can be leveraged as a resource for Hilton Head Island's Gullah population, as follows:

Local & Regional Organizations

Resource organizations based in Charleston and Beaufort, respectively, include the following:

Center for Heirs' Property Preservation

The Center is based in Charleston and covers a 15-county service area that includes Beaufort County and Hilton Head Island. According to the Center, as of 2012, there are roughly 47,000 heirs' properties in the region. The Center focuses specifically on this issue and has the potential to be a key resource for Hilton Head Island's future efforts in



This gentleman can now remove a sign installed by someone else to sell his land after gaining title to his land. (Source: Center for Heirs' Property Preservation)

addressing this topic. They offer an hour of free advice to people dealing with the heirs' property issue, although it is limited to people who would like to keep the property rather than selling it. They must also meet certain income level requirements and they must provide (or create) a family tree. The Center can help clients create a "family presentation," which is helpful to achieving "family agreement," which is considered by the Center to be the key to success in addressing this issue. Until family agreement is reached, the Center will not take on a case, and once a person becomes a client, they must meet with the Center staff in person rather than via telephone. According to the Center, clearing a property title can take from six months to several years. Along the way, it also requires a great deal of "hand holding" by the Center's staff. In addition to working directly with clients, the Center holds periodic educational seminars on the heirs' property topic, including their well-attended workshops on Hilton Head Island on February 24th of 2018 and March 16th of 2019. Based on conversations with one of their staff members as part of this project, they are willing to have additional future workshops on Hilton Head Island. It is also noteworthy that a CHPP staff attorney periodically meets with area property owners in the conference room of the Coastal Community Foundation in Beaufort. For more information on this organization, the Center's website address is www.heirsproperty.org.

Pan-African Family Empowerment & Land Preservation Network, Inc. (PAFEN)

This Beaufort-based public charity is relatively new and it was "created to help Gullah/Geechee and other African descendants save their land for current and future generations." They rely heavily on volunteers for the following types of roles: webmasters, grant writers, appointment schedulers, fundraising event workers, community outreach presenters, and office clerks. They assist landowners with filling out paperwork for homestead exemptions, tax rate reductions, installment property tax payments, and referrals to agricultural and heirs' property title clearing programs.

Since 2015, PAFEN's "Help Save Gullah-Geechee Land Campaign" has prevented Gullah Geechee owned property with an assessed value of more than \$6 million from being lost through South Carolina Delinquent Tax Sales and heirs' property disputes in Beaufort, Colleton, Georgetown, and Horry counties. Since 2016, when necessary, this entity has lobbied the Hilton Head Island Town Council seeking more flexibility for the Gullah community under the LMO. PAFEN's annual Stand4Land Taxpayer Empowerment Workshop has been their free signature outreach event since 2017 to provide a wide-ranging series of educational, financial, and referral resources to help sustain long-term property ownership. Presenters have included: the Beaufort County Assessor, Auditor, and Treasurer; the Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce; SC Legal Services; the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation; SC Lowcountry SCORE; the Consumer Credit Counseling Services of the Savannah Area; the S.C. Forestry Commission; USDA-Rural Development; and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

They also established a satellite Stand4Land Taxpayer Empowerment information kiosk at the Plantersville Community Center in Georgetown County in 2018. The PAFEN Family Empowerment Resources & Training Center is located in Beaufort's Regions Bank Building, 69 Robert Smalls Parkway, Suite 4E. Hours are by appointment only, and their main phone number is (843) 812-3558.

State-Wide & National Organizations

The following resource entities include one in South Carolina and one that is nation-wide.

South Carolina Legal Services (SCLS)

SCLS provides free legal assistance in a variety of civil (non-criminal) legal matters to eligible low-income residents in the state. SCLS is a non-profit corporation funded by grants from the federally-funded Legal Services Corporation, the South Carolina Bar Foundation, local United Ways, state court filing fees, and other federal, state and local funding sources. Applications for legal assistance can be made via the organization's website (www.scllegal.org) or in person at their local offices. Their closest office to Hilton Head Island is in North Charleston and their toll-free phone number is (888) 720-23200. This organization lists "Heirs' Property Issues" among their priorities in their publication entitled "South Carolina Legal Services Priorities for 2017" (page 5).

Heirs' Property Retention Coalition (HPRC)

The Heirs' Property Retention Coalition (HPRC) was formed in the summer of 2006 as a national organization of lawyers, advocates, and academics heavily involved in litigation, legislative reform, and/or scholarly study related to heirs' property and, in particular, to the preservation of heirs' property within low-income African-American communities. HPRC has both organizational and individual members, all of whom bring significant expertise and experience to the table. Some HPRC members are local organizations that have been working on the ground in their area for decades, while others are national organizations that bring a broader regional perspective to HPRC's work. HPRC's success derives from its highly inclusive structure, which encourages participations from a broad range of organizations and individuals with a common goal of preventing African American land loss.

The stated mission of the HPRC is "to stem the tide of heirs' property land loss, particularly among families of color in the southeast, so that such families can retain their ancestral land and maintain it as a sustainable asset for future generations." To this end, they develop and facilitate the collaborative action of organizations that help low-income families, specifically by: a) connecting such organizations and partners to legal and land planning resources inside and outside the Coalition; b) developing and centralizing practice materials and research libraries; c) providing for intra-Coalition case referrals; d) organizing the gathering of empirical information about the scope of heirs' property and land loss; and e) supporting legal reform efforts at the state level.

South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center (SCALJC)

Based in Columbia, this non-profit organization was established in its current form in 1998. Their staff includes attorneys, outreach workers and community organizers. Their stated goal is to "influence policymakers to ensure the law is fair, to educate the public and their advocates about the law, and to assist attorneys..." While their current focus does not include heirs' property, there may be the potential if they could be convinced.

Black Family Land Trust (BFLT)

Based in Durham, NC, this non-profit's stated mission is "ensuring, protecting and preserving

African American owned lands.” While their main focus is on North Carolina, they do serve South Carolina as well. Their “Wealth Retention and Asset Protection (WRAP)” program addresses heirs’ property issues through education.

Black Belt Justice Center (BBJC)

Headquartered in Washington, DC, this legal and advocacy non-profit organization serves African American farmers, landowners, and communities in the Black Belt region to: retain and increase landownership; to create sustainable land-based cooperatives and entrepreneurial businesses; and to ensure intergenerational and community wealth. They describe the Black Belt as a crescent-shaped agricultural region extending from southern Maryland to eastern Texas that is characterized by its high concentration of African Americans. Their services include community education, heirs’ property mediation, and land trusts.

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