

MARSHES DISTRICT PLAN





Town of Hilton Head Island Council

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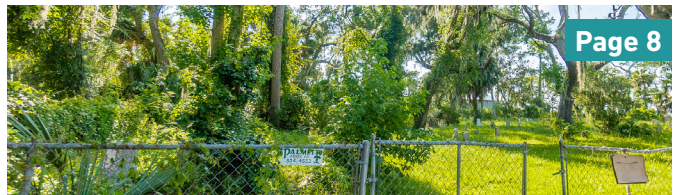
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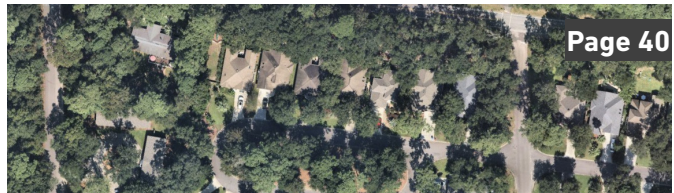
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01 INTRODUCTION

Plan Purpose

The Town of Hilton Head Island is taking a bold and proactive step by developing a holistic vision for growth and conservation. This framework will serve as a starting point for future conversations on the look, feel, and location of growth and reinvestment on the Island.

In 2023, the ongoing interest and energy around the Lowcountry continues to grow. The region is experiencing pressures surrounding its housing market, workforce, transportation network, natural resources, historic neighborhoods, and many other systems. To develop effective and sustainable solutions in order to meet these challenges, the Town has developed a series of District plans that marry Our Plan, the Town's ambitious Comprehensive Plan, with site-specific opportunities and land-use planning.

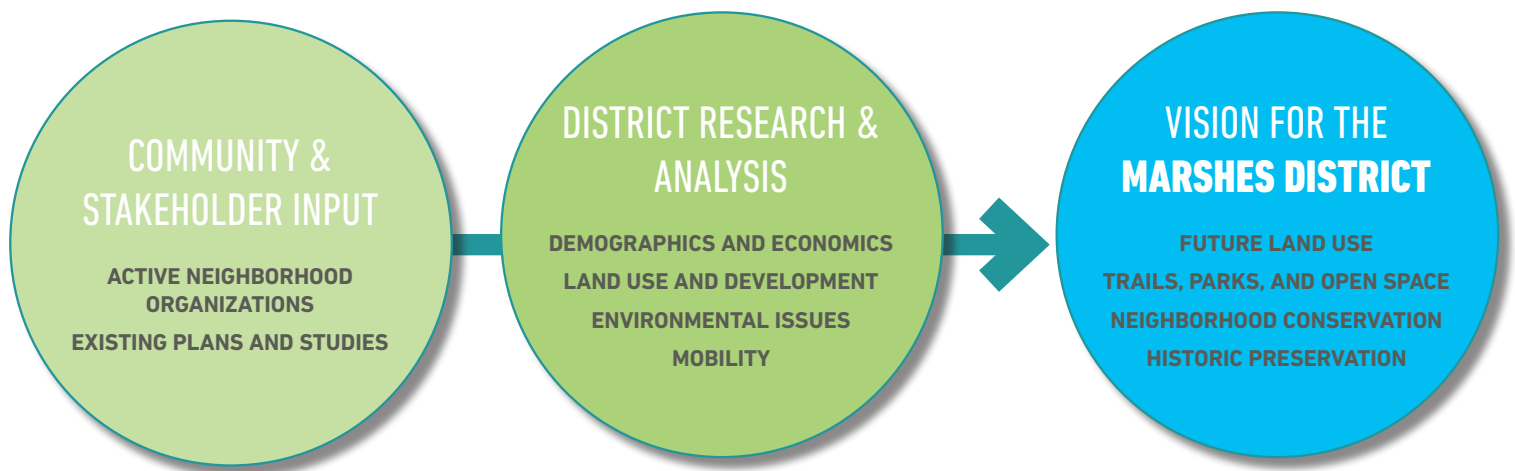
The Marshes District Plan is one in a series of these plans that will present neighborhood-level conditions and trends, establish a clear vision for conservation and growth, and assign specific strategies to improve the quality of life, place, and opportunities for its residents.

The Marshes District is a collection of five historic neighborhoods straddling the meandering marshes of Broad, Old House, and Jarvis Creeks. The neighborhoods, some of the oldest on the Island, are defined by the water's ebb and flow. This lends the District its name, Marshes. More recently, growth pressures across the Island have focused conversations on new housing development. The Marshes District is at the forefront of these conversations, given that the District has outpaced Town-wide household growth and still has some of the largest buildable parcels remaining on the Island. While housing demand continues to rise within the District, the environmental constraints present throughout the Marshes remains a balancing act for growth. Vacant properties, combined with the potential of underdeveloped properties, should be factors for consideration related to future potential development, district character, and historic properties. As projects show little sign of slowing, now is an important time for the communities of this vital District to clearly establish their vision for the future, even if that future looks a lot like their past, alongside an increased emphasis on environmental preservation and resilience.

PROCESS

Beginning in March 2023, a multidisciplinary planning team began to explore the future of the Marshes District and its neighborhoods. Working in close collaboration with the Town Staff and Town Council, the planning team utilized ongoing outreach efforts to better understand the issues and opportunities that are specific to the District. Throughout its work, the team relied on

a significant foundation of existing plans relevant to the area. The District Analysis section presents the team’s distillation of this research and analysis into major strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats facing the District in 2023. This work covered multiple topics including land use, development, housing, mobility, and the natural environment.



Plan Alignment

The Town has completed dozens of pertinent plans and studies through the past decade. These are all appropriately leveraged through the planning process. Three of particular importance are detailed below.

OUR PLAN

As the 2020 to 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Hilton Head Island, Our Plan is a foundational policy guide governing the Town’s direction and priorities. It provides a baseline of existing conditions and outlines goals, strategies, and tactics for the future of the Town and Island community.

The Town’s Our Future community engagement initiative developed the vision for Our Plan. Reinventing Sustainability... Again! is the community’s preferred future for Hilton Head Island for the next 20 years.

GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURE PRESERVATION PROJECT REPORT

The mission of this important plan 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.” With five historic neighborhoods in the District, the guide was integral to the District Plan’s policy agenda.

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

This document reviewed current park conditions and classifications to set a baseline of services and needs for the Town. The plan outlines opportunities for both park improvements and new parks to continue building a system of park spaces and trails that ensure that residents and visitors alike have access to best-in-class parks and open spaces. This plan identifies the need for park investments in the District and is referenced to at multiple points in the Marshes District Plan’s policy agenda.

Themes from Community Conversations

As part of an ongoing effort to develop a cohesive set of planning tools that articulate the needs and desires of community members, the Town has committed to an open and inclusive planning process. Throughout, a set of recurrent themes emerged from community conversations and past plan analysis. These themes align well with the tenets of Our Plan and the core recommendations of the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report.

FOCUSING ON CONSERVATION

Based on the feedback from stakeholders, the Marshes District has an important role to play in achieving the Town’s vision of Reinventing Sustainability... Again! This vision—rooted in conservation and preservation—would see the District maintain its character and sense of scale, while also opening opportunities for investments in parks, pathways, and marsh-oriented conservation projects.

Beyond this core vision, stakeholders expressed four additional areas of concern.

THE PACE AND SCALE OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

The rapid increase in housing demand across the region has created a perceived race to be “last in” on remaining developable parcels in the Town. This pressure is driving conversions and land values are climbing to levels that have spurred increased interest from real estate developers, landlords, and rental companies. The District has some of the youngest housing stock in the Town and has, as a consequence, experienced a higher share of the newer, louder conversations around the form, feel, and location of development.

Stakeholders underscore the importance of matching projects to places and ensuring there is a complementary nature to all developments, especially those at scale.

A NEED TO “LEVEL UP” DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Coupled with the growing angst surrounding development conversations, there is a general sense that more proactive measures can be taken to improve the quality and the appropriateness of projects with the Town’s array of land use regulations. There is interest in reining in the overall density of residential projects to meet the historic averages established over the much longer history of growth in the neighborhoods. Additionally, the guidelines informing architectural standards could be amended and/or extended to better direct residential projects with respect to site planning, form, and overall Lowcountry style.

ANGST ABOUT THE RAPID RISE OF SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Neighborhood organizations have expressed growing concerns about the rise in short-term rentals in historic neighborhoods and in areas in the District traditionally home to full-time residents. There has also been increased scrutiny over new developments that are inconsistent with the scale and form of the surrounding neighborhood.

OPPORTUNITIES TO BETTER CONNECT INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

The Town’s pathway network crosses the District, but can also be extended in several key areas (most notably along Jonesville Road).

02 DISTRICT ANALYSIS

DISTRICT ANALYSIS

The planning team conducted an analysis of existing conditions within the Marshes District. This considers the following:

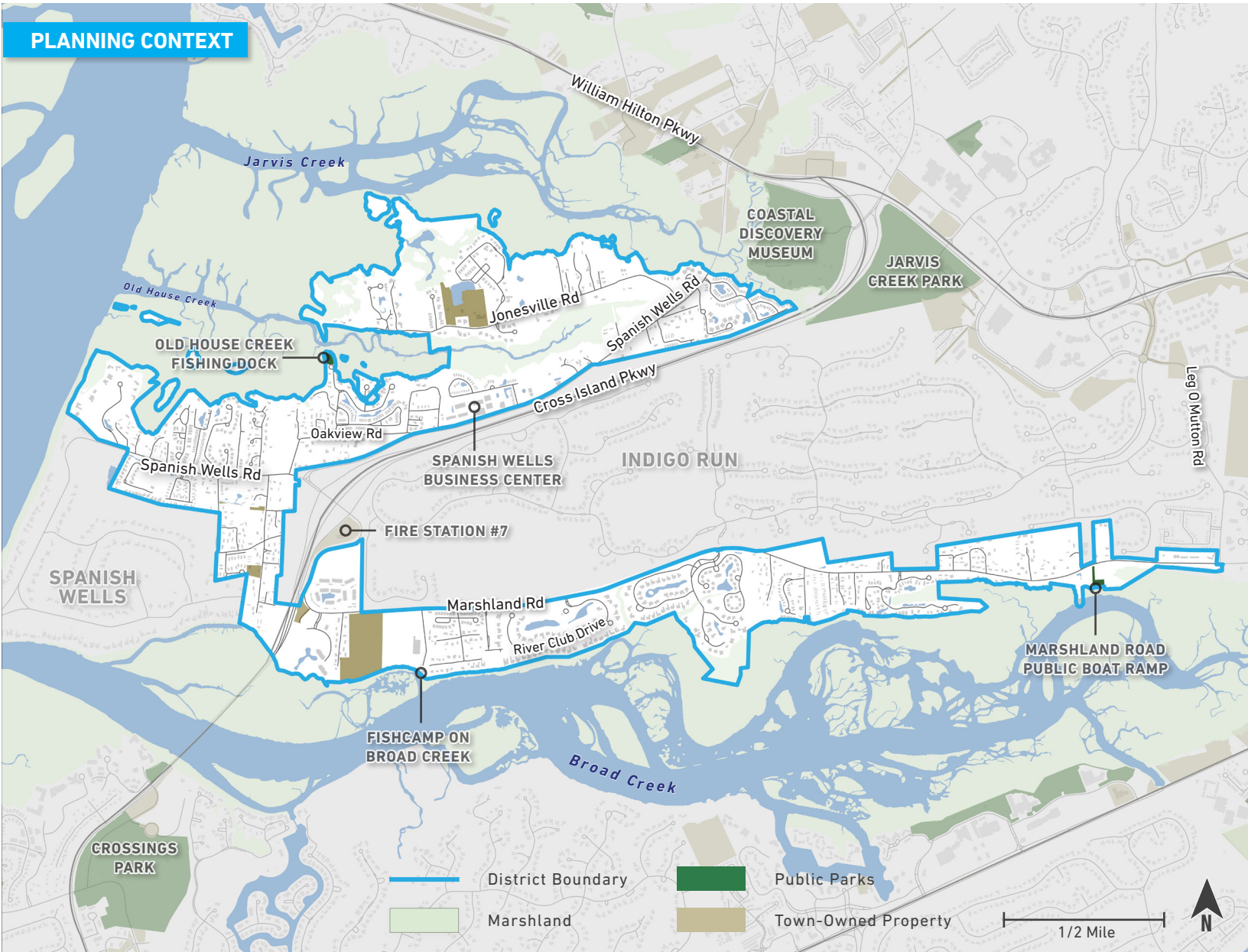
- **Demographics and Economics:** Highlighting key statistics and benchmarks that help tell the District's story of where its been and where its headed.
- **Existing Multi-Use Pathways and Roadway Network:** Understand the existing character and function of streets and multi-use paths in the District.
- **Neighborhood History:** Identify the District's spatial relationship to the rest of the Island and understand the areas of historic and cultural importance in the District.
- **Existing Natural Systems and Floodplain:** Map the waterways, open space, preserves, park space, and tree cover, in addition to how Town-owned properties relate to these systems.
- **Existing Zoning and Land Use:** Understand the issues around existing land use and zoning that the plan should address.

KEY FINDINGS

- The community and neighborhoods making up the District include more full-time residents (lower median age, longer tenure, higher workforce participation, etc.).
- The area is home to a small, but important jobs and business base.
- Housing stock mixes some of the oldest structures on the Island with the largest collection of units built after 2000.
- Densities for homebuilding are increasing with the newest developments pushing projects to the allowable maximum under RM-4.
- Vacant properties when combined with the potential of underdeveloped properties should be factors for consideration related to future potential development, district character and historic properties.
- Besides the Old School House Dock and Beaufort County boat landing on Marshland Road, there is limited access to public parks in the District.

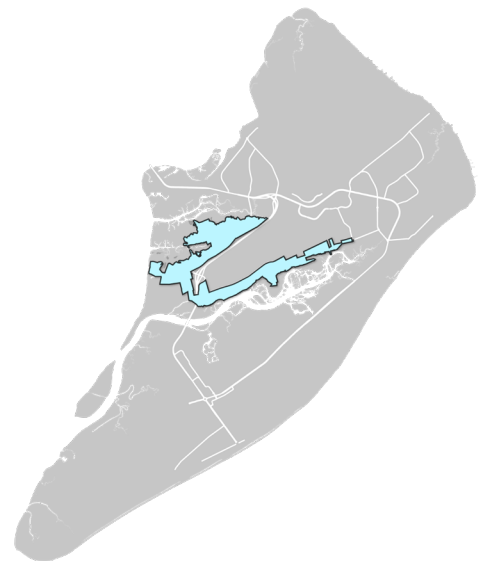


PLANNING CONTEXT



PLANNING CONTEXT

Straddling the Cross Island Parkway, the neighborhoods making up the Marshes District combine five historic communities—Jonesville, Jarvis, Old House Creek, Gardner, and Spanish Wells—with some of the newest community building and development on the Island. The District is almost exclusively residential, except for several long-standing restaurants, churches, and marsh-oriented businesses. The central focus of the District's future land use discussion revolves around a significant abundance of vacant and underdeveloped parcels that still remain within the District. The future of these land areas and their relationship to the existing neighborhoods are examined throughout the District planning process.



DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMICS

The Marshes District has out-paced Island-wide growth in terms of overall population and household formation. With a total population of 2,400 residents in 2022, the District makes up 6% of the Town's total population. From 2010 to 2022, the area added 514 new residents. This 25% increase out-paced the Town, but was consistent with the 20% regional growth rates. Future population projections for the District are dependent on the density of new development for the District's remaining undeveloped and underdeveloped parcels.

2,400

DISTRICT FULL-TIME POPULATION, 2022

6%

SHARE OF TOTAL ISLAND POPULATION

+25%

POPULATION CHANGE, 2010-22

953

HOUSEHOLDS, 2022

2.52

AVG. HOUSEHOLD SIZE, 2022

Source: Esri forecasts for 2022 and 2027. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.

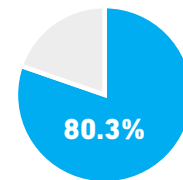
Population Change by District	Pop Change, 2010-2022	Projected Pop Change, 2022-2027
TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND	1%	4%
Marshes	25%	3%
Parkway	53%	2%
Skull Creek	26%	9%
Main Street	1%	1%
Bridge to Beach	0%	4%
Mid-Island	-1%	1%
Chaplin	-6%	7%
Forest Beach	-20%	1%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2022 and 2027. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.

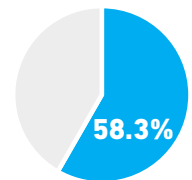
District Households have higher incomes and are younger on average. In 2022, the median household income in the Marshes District was \$120,262, compared to \$103,537 for the Town overall. With a median age of 40, residents are also significantly younger on average. Higher workforce participation rates and a larger average household size point to more full-time residents in the District when compared to the Town average.

Labor Force Participation Rate, 2022

Marshes District

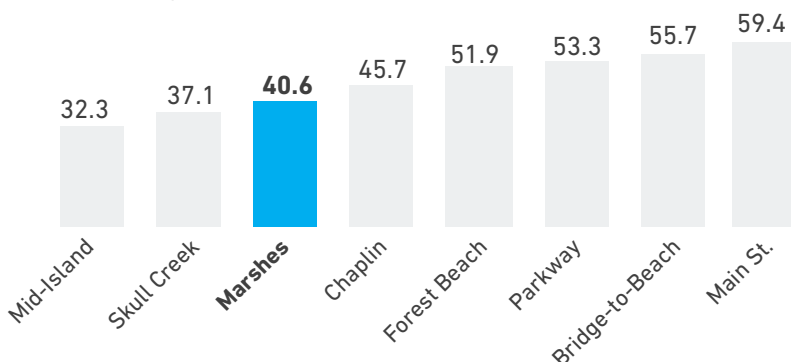


HHI



Esri forecasts for 2022 and 2027.

Median Age by District, 2022



Esri forecasts for 2022 and 2027. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.

\$120,262

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 2022

\$62,527

PER CAPITA INCOME, 2022

Source: Esri forecasts for 2022 and 2027.

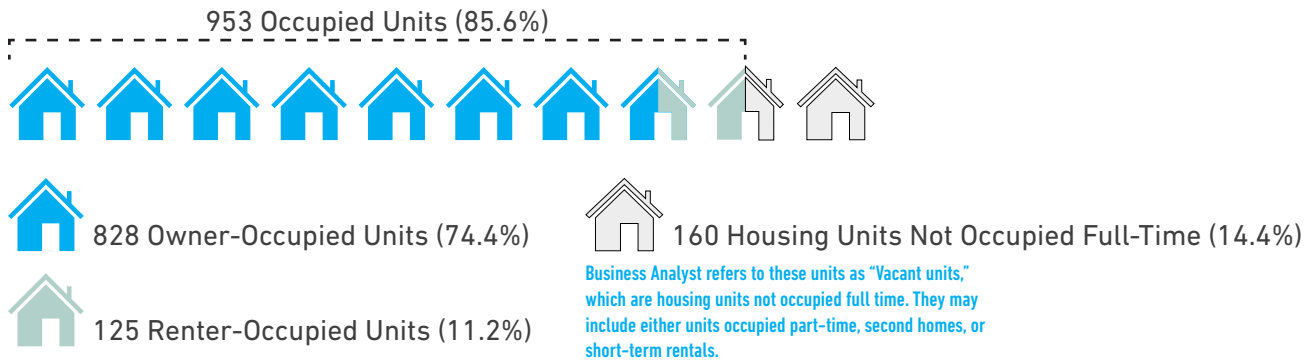
The Marshes District has higher rates of homeownership and year-round occupation. From 2010 to 2022, the Marshes District's population growth has been accompanied by a 66% increase in owner-occupied housing units, which now makes up 3 out of 4 occupied housing units. Overall, permanent occupancy has also increased since 2010 by 34%, now accounting for 85% of the total housing units. Renter-occupied housing units in the Marshes District have steadily declined. From 2010 to 2022, The Marshes District saw a decline both in total renter-occupied housing units (-88) and as a percent of total occupied units (24% in 2010 to 11.2% in 2022). These figures are consistent with Island-wide trends.

1,113
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS, 2022

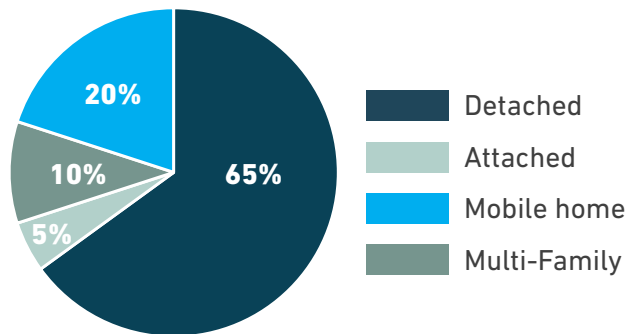
\$451,000
MEDIAN HOME VALUE, 2022

Esri forecasts for 2022 and 2027. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.

Housing Unit Totals and Make-up, 2022



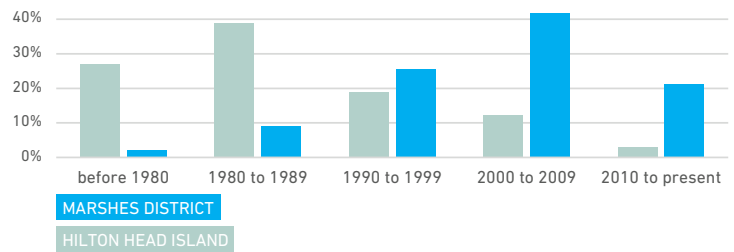
Housing Units by Structure, 2022



U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey

District residents have lower mortgage-to-income ratios. Based on 2022 data, the Marshes District had a median home value of \$451,648, nearly \$80,000 lower than the Island-wide median of \$530,553. Moreover, the Marshes District exhibits a higher median household income, resulting in a significantly better score on the 2022 Housing Affordability Index when compared to the Island-wide statistics. The Marshes District spent an average of 19.8% of their incomes on mortgages, while the Island-wide average was 27%.

Housing Units by Year Built, 2022



Housing product is newer than the Town average.

Just over 60% of the District's housing product was built after 2000, compared to just 18% for the Island overall. These newer units are smaller on average but sell at prices that are consistent with Island averages. This is driving price-per-square-footage for Island real estate higher. Out of the 953 total occupied housing units in the Marshes District, 828 are owner-occupied and 125 are renter-occupied. The vacancy rate (or housing units not permanently occupied) in the Marshes District is drastically lower than the rest of the Island. Currently, only 14.4% of all housing units are vacant, compared to 40.2% Island-wide.

The District’s relatively small jobs base is concentrated in service and construction sectors. There are 89 registered businesses with more than 700 employees. That is three percent of the Island’s total jobs base, made up of 21,400 full-time jobs. The Spanish Wells Business Center II, along Spanish Wells Road has the highest concentration of local businesses. The center, including local employers like La Isla Magazine, Yellow Transportation, Furniture Restorations, among others, is the lone jobs cluster and mixes office, warehousing, and light industrial operations. Old Oyster Factory, located along Marshland Road in the far southeast of the District, is the District’s largest employer with just over 100 staff.

700

DISTRICT FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES, 2022

89

TOTAL ESTABLISHMENTS

3%

SHARE OF TOTAL ISLAND JOBS

Source: Esri forecasts for 2022 and 2027. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.



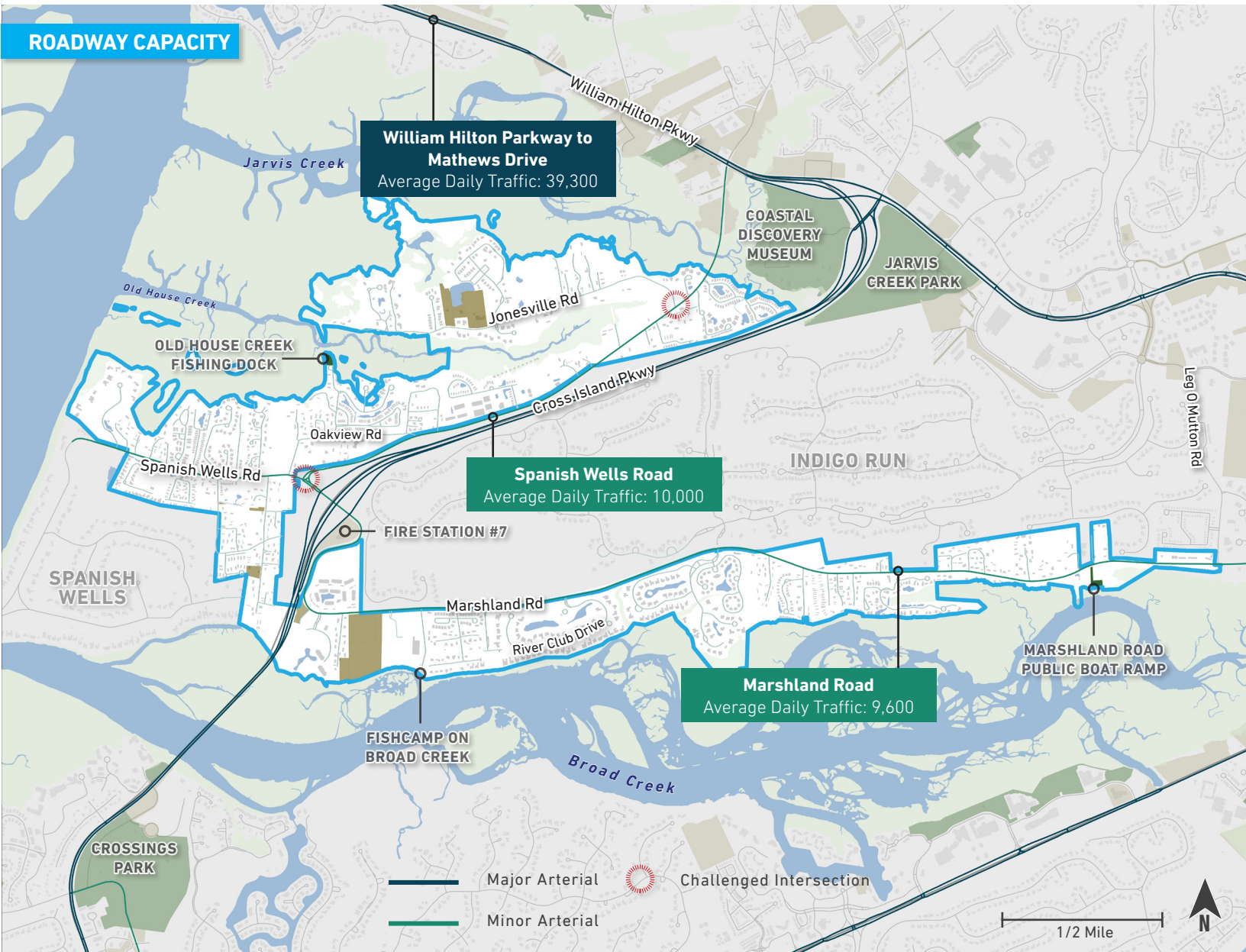
The Old Oyster Factory (pictured left) on Marshland Road is the District’s largest employer. The Spanish Wells Business Center (pictured right) is area’s largest business cluster.

UTILITIES

The entirety of the Marshes District is served by the Hilton Head Public Service District (HHPSD), a special purpose district established by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1969. Its primary purpose is to provide water and sewer services to the north end of the Island. Prior to the creation of Island PSDs, residents of Hilton Head Island relied on private wells for their drinking water until 1957. At that time, the Hilton Head Water Company introduced a community waterworks system, installing water lines and drilling wells across the Island. However, as the community grew and developed, the need for improved services became evident, particularly in areas such as fire protection, water flow, and sewer services.

During its development, Hilton Head Island had multiple separate utilities, both public and private, providing water and wastewater services. In 1995, the HHPSD began acquiring these utilities, which now form its current service area. These utilities include Hilton Head Plantation Utilities, Hilton Head Island Rural Community Water District, Coastal Utilities, Hilton Head Utilities, and two small systems previously served by the Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority. The consolidation of these utilities formed the three public service districts currently serving Hilton Head Island: Hilton Head, Broad Creek, and South Island PSDs.

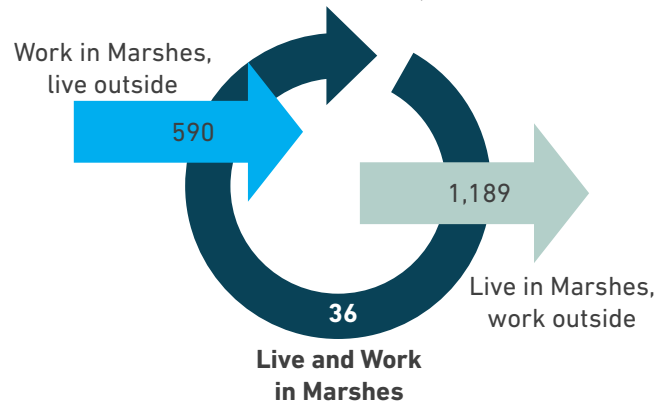
The HHPSD provides both water and wastewater treatment services to its 18,500 customers and businesses. In 2022, the average daily drinking water demand was 11.5 million gallons with a rough unused capacity of two million additional gallons in non-peak conditions. Peak usages fluctuate with visitor season, but of the three districts, the HHPSD has a moderate seasonal fluctuation adding an additional 3.5 million gallons in demand, compared with 4.5 for the South Island PSD. Wastewater capacity is higher, with just over 2 million gallons of treatable capacity remaining. Average daily flow moving to treatment is 3 million gallons. The Island’s three PSD’s re-capture significant water resources through wetland nourishment programs and golf course watering. HHPSD capacity is not anticipated to be a limiting factor on development in the near term.



ROADWAY NETWORK AND CAPACITY

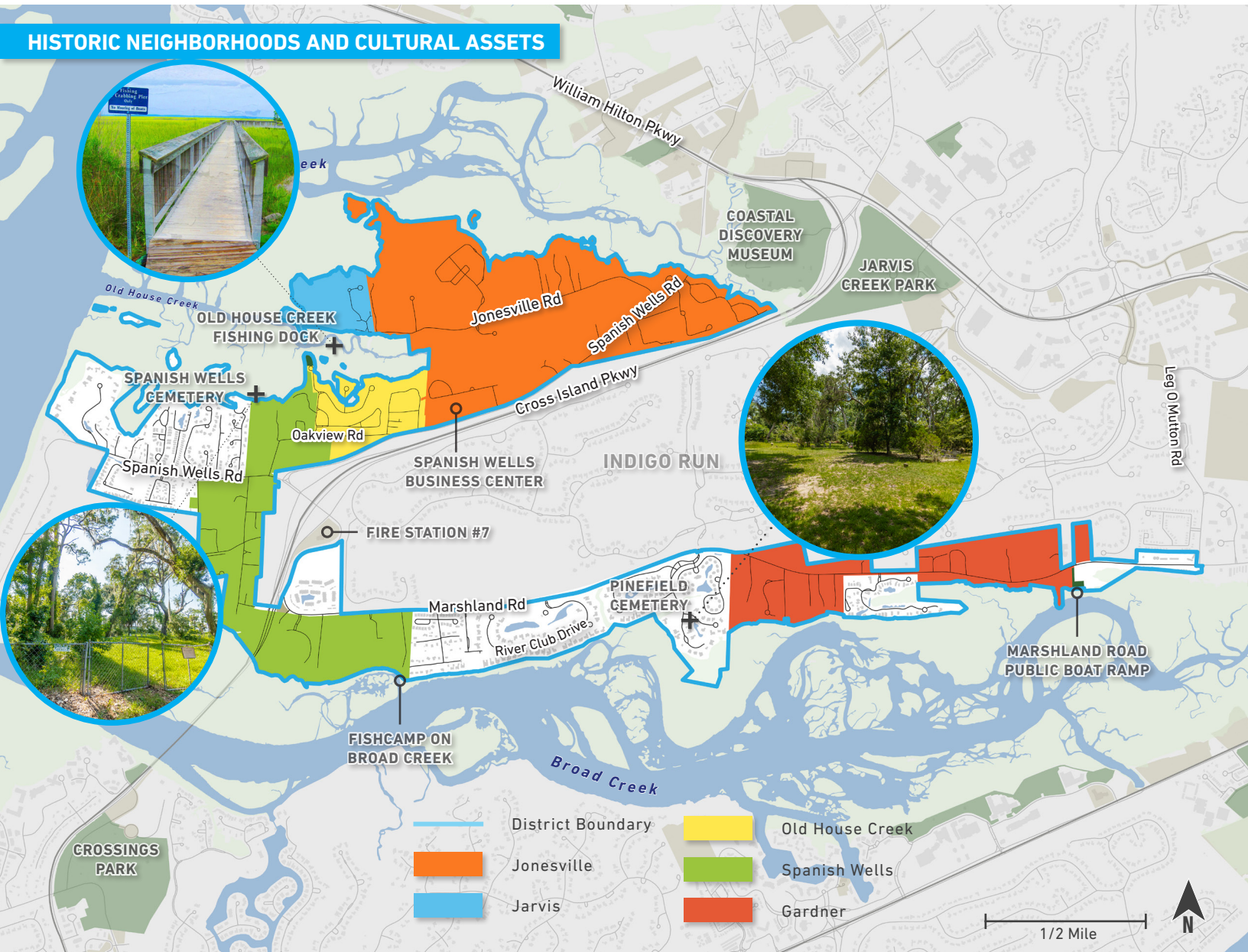
The Marshes District is well-connected to the Island's major arterial roadways, William Hilton Parkway and Cross Island Parkway. Spanish Wells Road crosses the north portion of the District and is using roughly 30% of its existing capacity according to 2022 average daily traffic counts. Marshland Road, which runs through the south portion of the Marshes District, is using 56% of its existing capacity. Other minor arterials, such as Leg O' Mutton Road and Mathews Drive, allow additional access points that connect the District to commercial centers and major roadways. The neighborhoods of the District are attractive to mainland commuters based on their proximity to the bridge. Just over 60% of the area's residents work off-Island.

Inflow and Outflow of Workers, 2019



U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2020).

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS AND CULTURAL ASSETS



HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS AND CULTURAL ASSETS

Historic Neighborhoods make up roughly 83% (1,006 acres) of the land area within the Marshes District, one of the highest concentrated Districts for Historic Neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are primarily zoned as RM-4, which notably permits Family Compounds by right; a land use introduced as a recommendation within the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report. This land use designation aims to uphold traditional Gullah family arrangements and use of land prior to the introduction of zoning laws in the Town. The continued self-sufficiency and economic sustainability of these historic communities are an important aspect of this planning work.

There are three cultural assets in this district, among others that have yet to be identified (the Town has future planned work to further identify other historical and cultural assets across the Island). The Spanish Wells Cemetery is situated on just under two acres and overlooks the Calibogue Sound. This Gullah family cemetery dates back to the early 19th century. Old House Creek Dock or “Freddie’s Place Landing” is one of the most private Hilton Head Island fishing spots. Pinefield Cemetery is one of the oldest burial grounds on the Island with headstones that date as far back as the 1700’s. Pinefield is the resting place of formerly enslaved people as well as several U.S. Colored Troop soldiers that fought for the Union Army during the Civil War.

■ Spanish Wells

The Spanish Wells named after Spanish explorers who dug freshwater wells along Broad Creek neighborhood, has been home to over six generations of Gullah people. The Gullah people in Spanish Wells were known for fishing, crabbing, and oyster harvesting. Prior to the bridge, the island's primarily economic lifeline was connected through Captain Charlie's trips across the water three times a week that delivered people, produce, seafood or goods. Spanish Wells also has a rich and deep history with professional boxing.

■ Jonesville

Jonesville is one of the few communities named after a formerly enslaved landowner, Caesar Jones. The descendants of Caesar Jones have maintained and thrived in the community for generations. Jonesville was known for being an area where skilled craftsmen could be found around the community. The neighborhood was known as the place on the island where one could find shoemakers, carpenters, and wheelwrights among other types of businessmen and services. This aligns with the commercial activity we still see in the area today.

■ Jarvis

The historic Jarvis neighborhood, a historic fishing community, is home to the Old House Creek Fishing Pier. Jarvis was named after a small stream that runs into the island. In the community, there was a store and church that served area residents.

■ Old House Creek

Old House Creek is the tidal creek stretching eastward from the Calibogue Sound along the northern edge of Spanish Wells and Muddy Creek, separating them from Honey Horn. It is also called Muddy Creek and Sandy Creek.

■ Gardner

The historic Gardner neighborhood was named after March Gardner, who as a freedman, worked for a Union soldier and who was able to purchase a large tract of land in the area, which is still home to some of the largest Gullah extended families on the Island. This made Gardner one of the largest landowners in Fish Haul and Mitchelville, while it was established. Several of his descendants, continue to live on the land that he passed down today.

Source: Hilton Head Island's Historic Gullah Neighborhoods - Lowcountrygullah.com

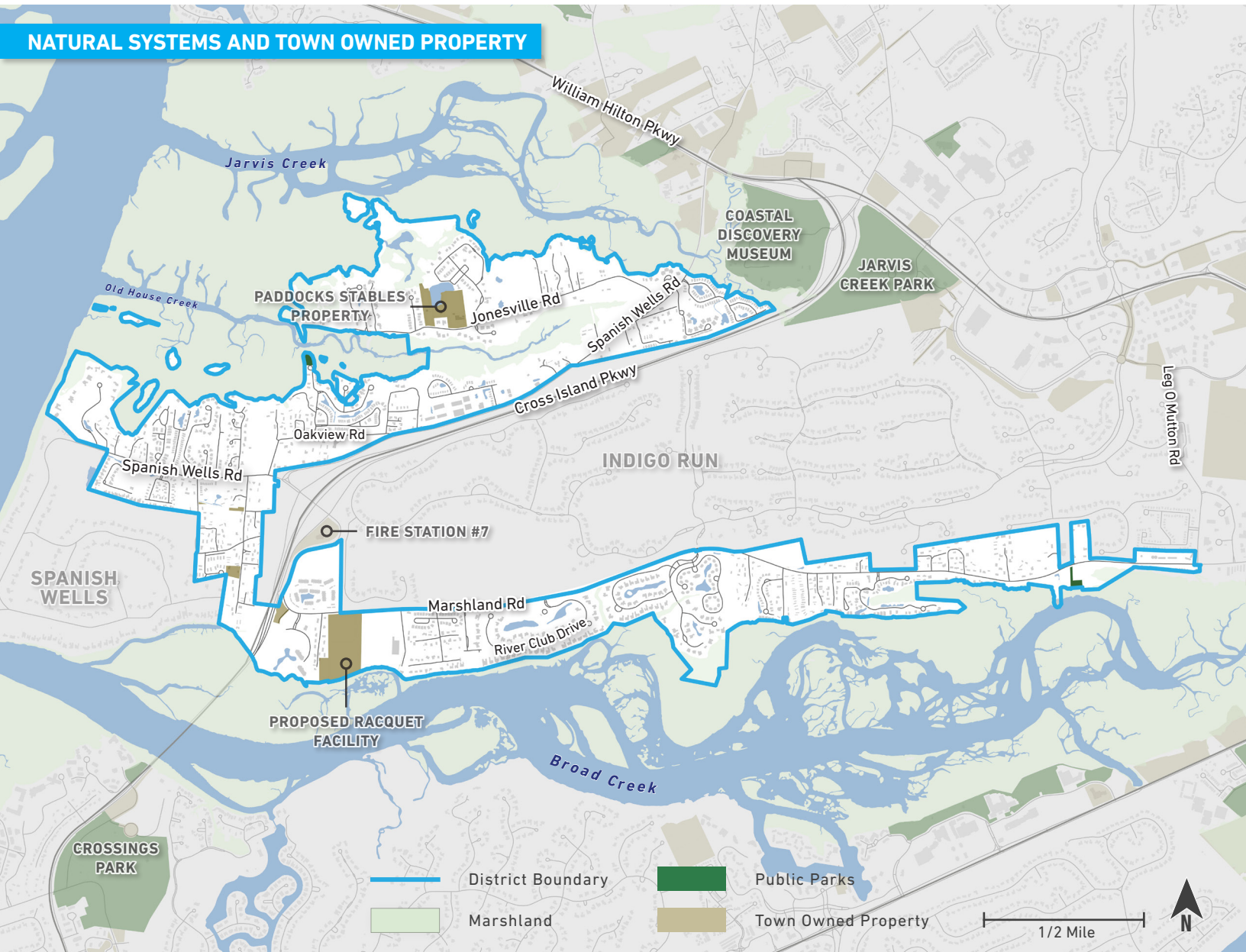
GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURE PRESERVATION PROJECT REPORT

The Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report recommendations for the five historic neighborhoods in the Marshes District focus on areas that are zoned RM-4. As currently written, the code allows a range of 4 to 8 dwelling units an acre depending on whether it is a 1, 3 or 5 acre site. Coupled with existing setback, buffering and open space requirements, this constricts the ability of landowners to develop their property.

Building from the report, the recommendations for the Historic Neighborhoods were driven by the following Town-wide community goals:

- Advance and celebrate Gullah Geechee history and culture.
- Enable Historic Neighborhoods to be economically sustainable.
- Provide for additional uses including neighborhood commercial and home business opportunities.
- Meet the increasing need for housing, including affordable and workforce options, in the Town.
- Allow existing property owners the flexibility to optimize the use of their property.

NATURAL SYSTEMS AND TOWN OWNED PROPERTY



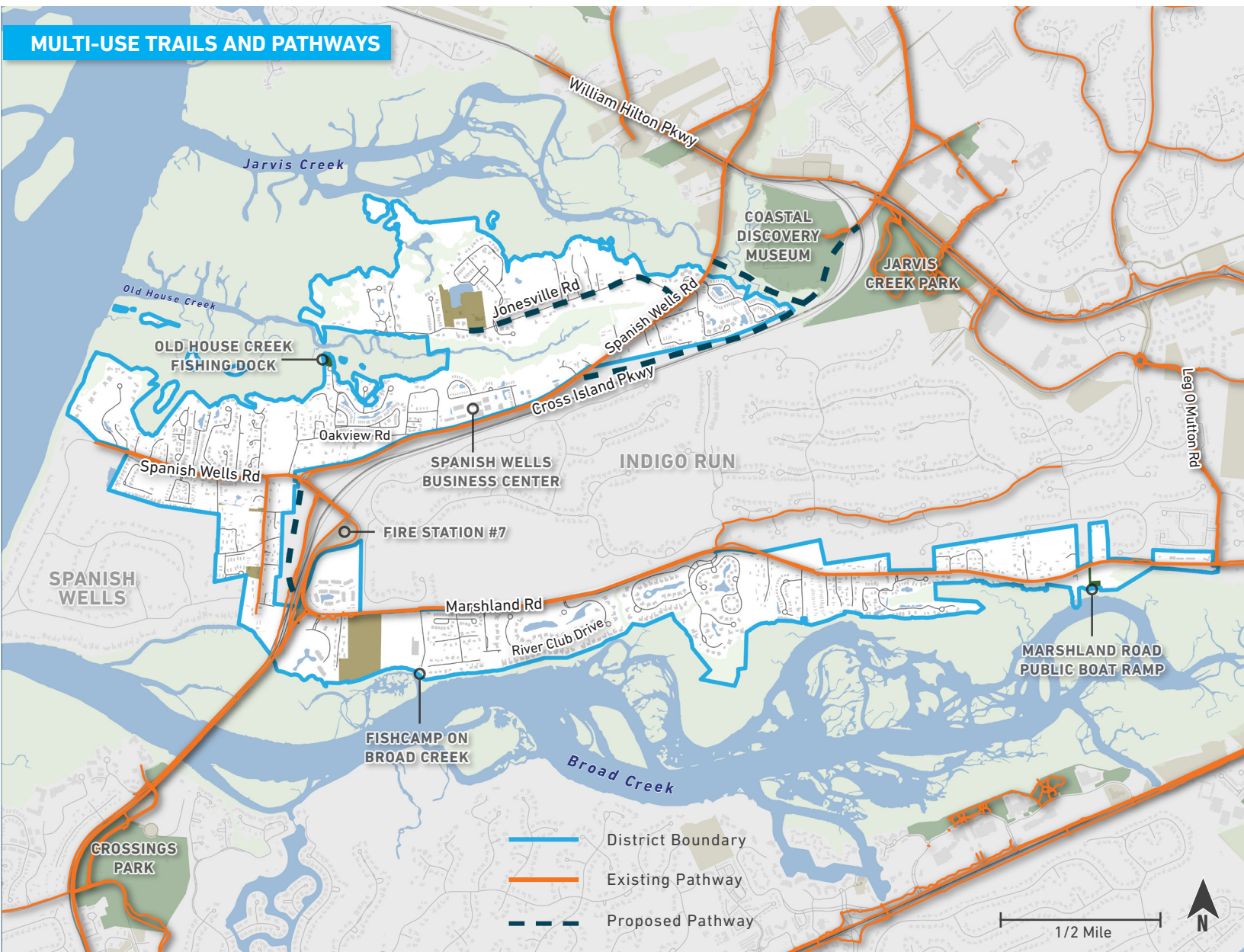
EXISTING NATURAL SYSTEMS AND TOWN-OWNED PROPERTY

Existing public parks, marshland, and water systems are intentionally included on the same map alongside Town-owned properties to illustrate their spatial relationship. While there is currently only one public park in the District (Old House Creek Dock), the Town owns 5 parcels within the Marshes District, where three out of the five are currently open space. A notable parcel, while not fully undeveloped, but recently purchased by the Town, is a 12 acre property along Jonesville Road. The purchase was made in light of recent development pressures within the District, and presents the Town with an opportunity to consider the future use of an ideal parcel in the heart of the Jonesville neighborhood.



The "Stables" property was purchased by the Town in 2023 includes 3 parcels covering 12 acres. A proposal for development of the site was shared spurring the Town's action.

MULTI-USE TRAILS AND PATHWAYS



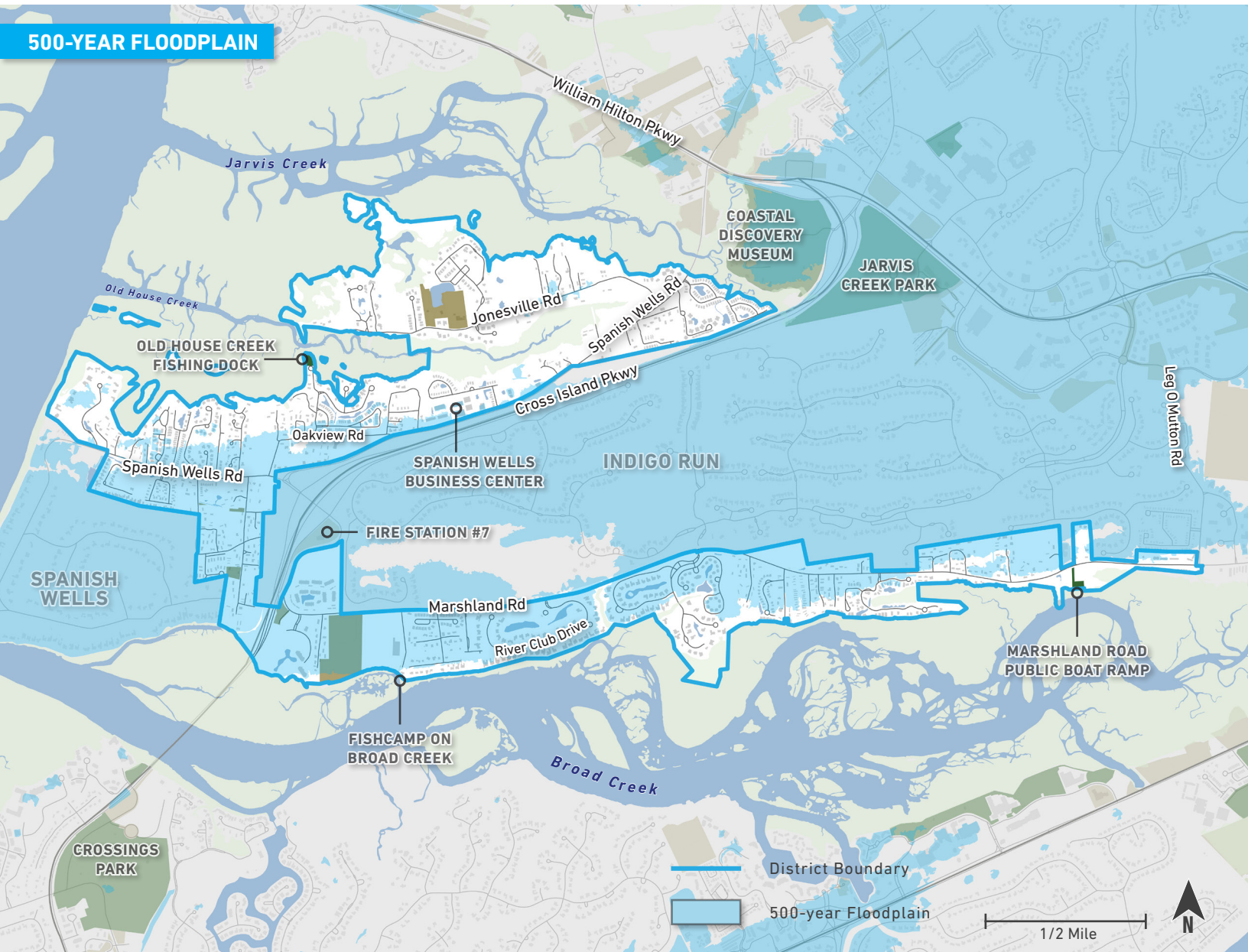
EXISTING PATHWAYS

Roughly 5 miles of public pathways span throughout the Marshes District, running alongside adjacent roadways and cutting through wooded areas or marshlands. However, there are existing gaps in connectivity along Jonesville Road extending west toward the historic Jarvis neighborhood. The Town has initiated designs and permitting for roadway improvements and a potential new pathway along Jonesville Road starting at the Spanish Wells intersection to address this gap.

PARKS, DOCKS, AND OPEN SPACES

Old school house dock and Beaufort County boat landing on Marshland road are the two public “parks” or public marsh access points for recreational uses like fishing and boating. These spaces also help to preserve historic locations for fishing, shrimping and harvesting oysters that have sustained native islander communities for generations.

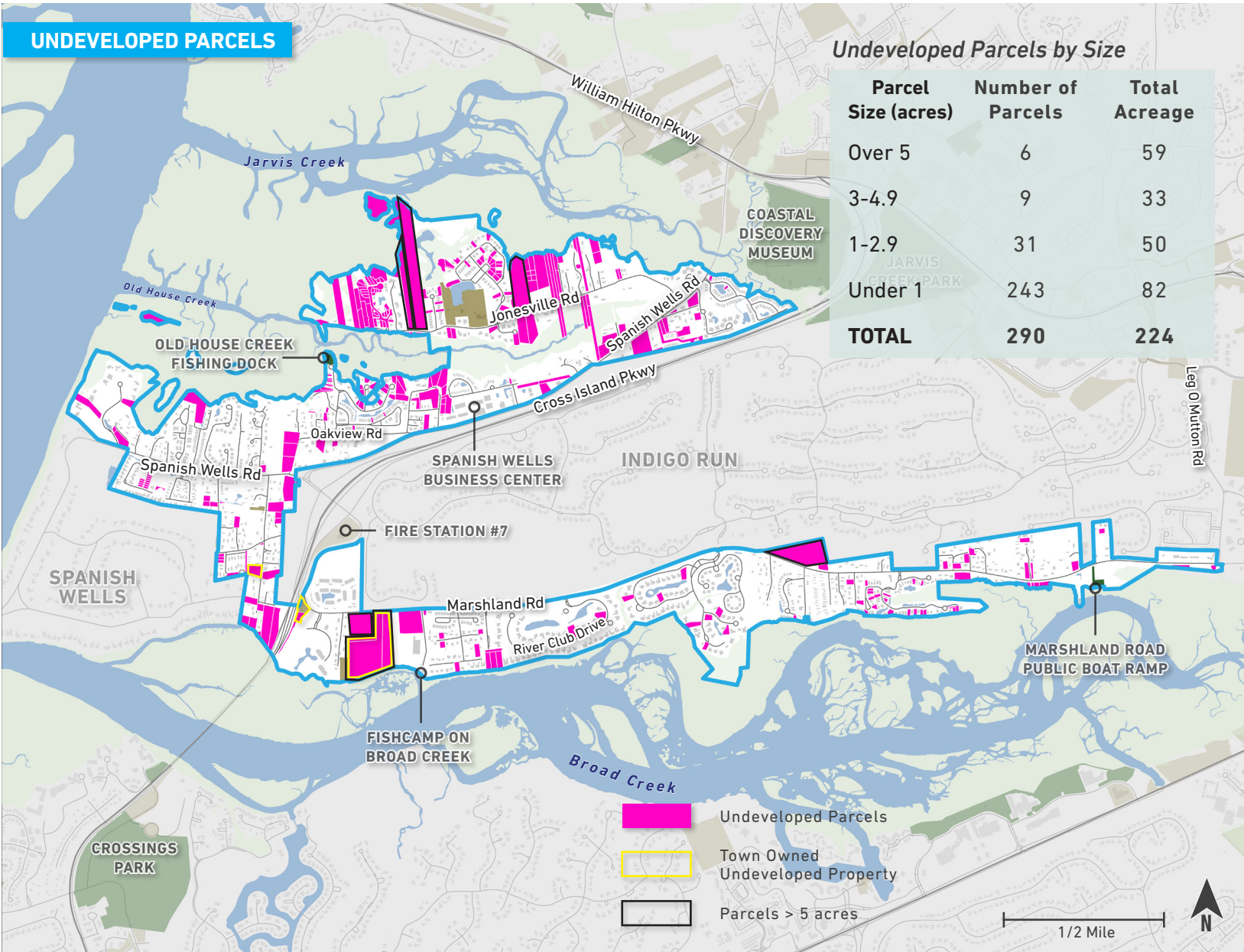
500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN



500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN

555 Acres within the Marshes District falls under the 500-year floodplain, or 44% of the total land area. Areas most susceptible to flooding under this classification are most of the Spanish Wells neighborhood and the southern marshlands leading east into the historic Gardner neighborhood. A 500-year floodplain identifies areas with a 0.2% (or 1 in 500) annual chance of flooding.

UNDEVELOPED PARCELS



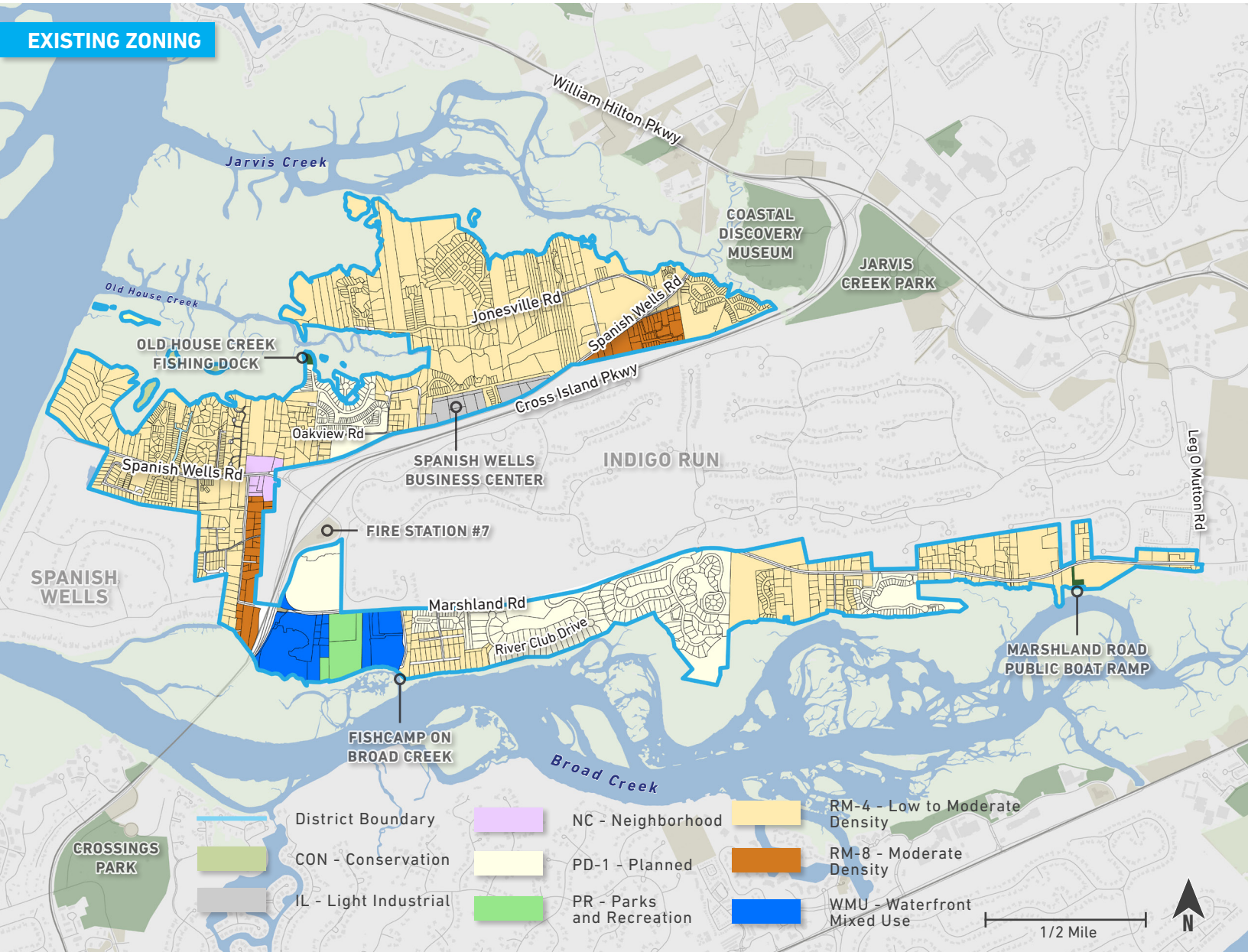
UNDEVELOPED PARCELS

Undeveloped parcels are properties that have not been subdivided or platted. There are 290 undeveloped parcels, accounting for 16% of the total parcels in the Marshes District. These parcels are primarily located in the RM-4 zoning district. Overall, there are very few large and unencumbered development sites remaining in the District. Most of the large vacant parcels measuring over 5 acres in land area are located within the historic Jonesville and Jarvis neighborhoods. This is significant given the potential development densities that may occur pursuant to zoning entitlements on parcels above 5 acres.

UNDER-DEVELOPED PARCELS

Under-developed parcels refer to larger properties (greater than one acre) where the density is significantly lower than permitted by the entitled zoning district. These properties tend to include much older structures and were constructed over longer periods of time. The sites are susceptible to redevelopment in the same manner as undeveloped properties but pose an additional risk with respect to cultural displacement. This is a growing trend in other districts across the Town. There are around 50 acres of under-developed property in the District where - through consolidation or by right - a potential development could take advantage of higher density permissions (up to 8 units per acre) permitted in RM-4 district.

EXISTING ZONING

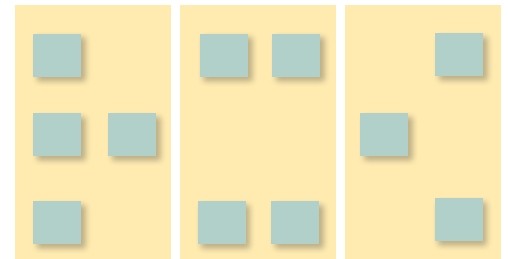


ZONING

The Marshes District is primarily zoned residential with more than two-thirds of the land area designated RM-4 or Low to Moderate Density Residential District. As seen on the existing land use map on the following page, the majority of undeveloped parcels are zoned for RM-4. Current existing dwelling unit density across all residential land areas in the Marshes is roughly 1.1 units per acre. Historic development patterns across

the District were well below the allowable densities. Permitted density in the RM-4 district is up to 8 dwelling units per acre if the parcel is above 5 acres in land area, but more commonly exercised as 4 units per acre. In addition to the residential zoning districts, the area also includes pockets of light industrial (IL) along Spanish Wells Road and neighborhood commercial (NC) at multiple points.

Historic RM-4 Development Pattern

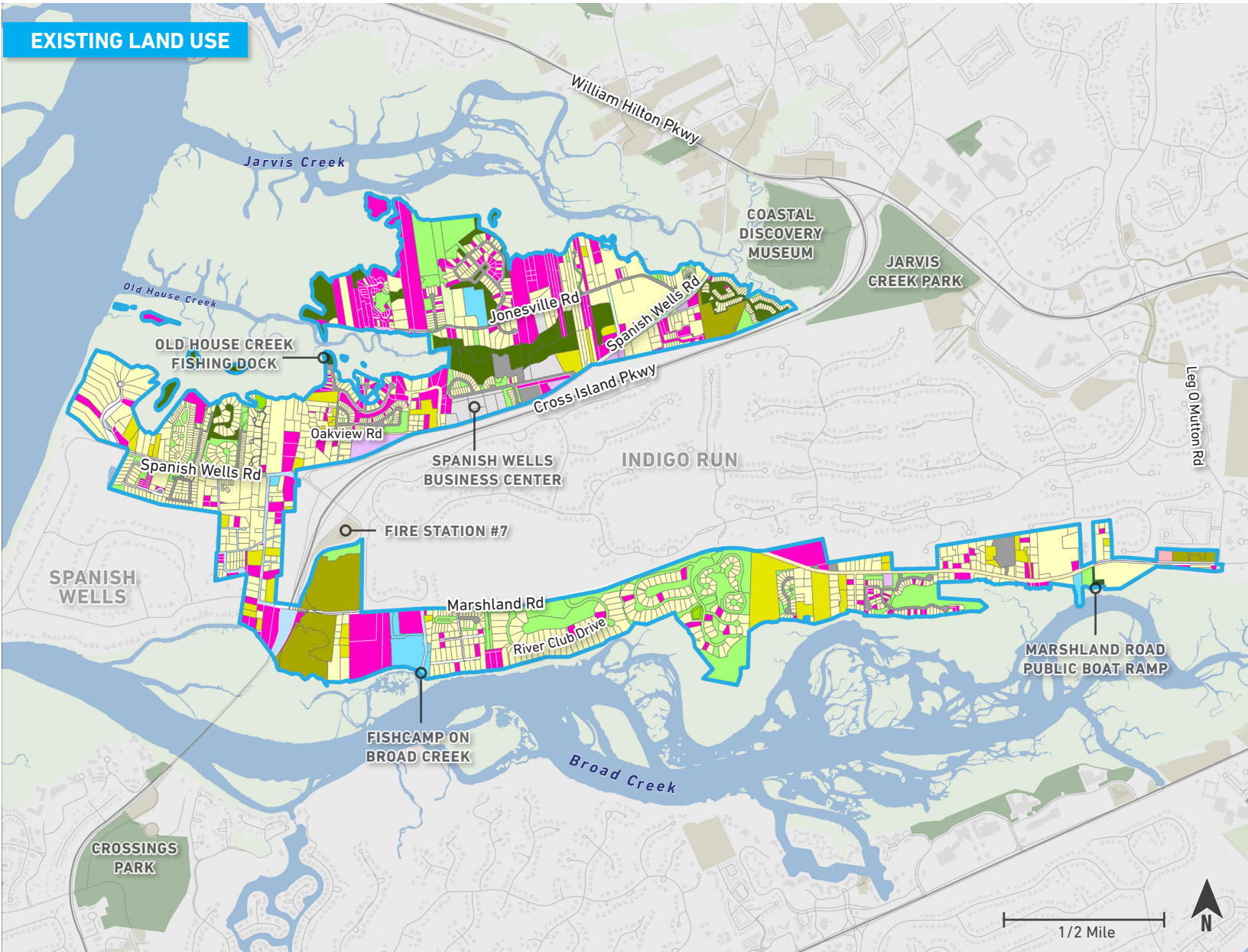


Allowable RM-4 Density: 8 Dwelling Units*

















*4 DUs for lots less than 3 acres, 6 DUs for lots 3-5 acres, 8 DUs for lots greater than 5 acres.

EXISTING LAND USE



LAND USE

While the zoning map legally identifies the Town's planned residential and nonresidential development patterns over a long period of time, the existing land use map shows how parcels are actively being used, regardless of their respective zoning districts. Residential land uses, especially single-family and mobile homes, are the most common land use type throughout the District, followed by vacant or undeveloped land.

	District Boundary		Utility and Vehicle Service (ROW) (33 Parcels)
	Single-Family and Mobile Home (1,222 Parcels)		Open Space and Park-Active Recreation (45 Parcels)
	Multi-Family Mobile Homes (41 Parcels)		Residential Open Space and Golf Course (135 Parcels)
	Multi-Family (11 Parcels)		Agriculture (1 Parcel)
	Retail/Services/Sales (8 Parcels)		Cemetery (3 Parcels)
	Religious Institution and Community Service (6 Parcels)		Other (2 Parcels)
	Light Industrial (6 Parcels)		Undeveloped (292 Parcels)

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

93.5% of land areas within the Marshes District are zoned for residential. Roughly two-thirds of the Marshes District is zoned RM-4, which primarily spans across the Jonesville and Spanish Wells neighborhoods. The other land areas zoned for residential include PD: Planned Development (22%), RM-8: Moderate Density Residential (4%), and RSF-3: Single Family (0.5%).

The District is approaching build out, but land costs are driving higher densities for “last in” projects. Historic residential patterns are less dense compared to contemporary development. Diminishing land resources and rising costs are driving maximum density projects with slimmer profit margins. The net effect is smaller lots and more units developed within less regular sites in terms of overall shape and size. See the comparison images on the next page.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Historic residential development was significantly less dense compared to what is permitted. Current residential zoning districts allow for upwards of 8 times the density compared to the historic residential development patterns. The district’s overall residential density is 1.1 dwelling units per acre currently exist across the 1,088 gross acres of land area.

In 2022, there were 611 total housing units built in the RM-4 zoning district. The Town’s Land Management Ordinance, allows for up to 4-8 housing units per net acre in the RM-4 district. This density requirement is presented as a sliding scale dependent on parcel size, where parcels above 5 acres can be developed at 8 dwelling units per net acre, compared to 4 dwelling units per net acre for parcels under 1 acre. Under this entitlement, there is potential for a significant density increase across the District. While various site constraints limit the amount of units that are feasible, this figure highlights the difference between the existing, residential development density and the entitled permission.

An illustrative case of maximum entitlement within the RM-4 zoning district can be observed in the recent developments along Spanish Wells Road (see images on the next page). The Tansyleaf and

Only 6% of land areas within the Marshes District are zoned for Parks and Recreation, Conservation, and Waterfront Mixed Use. There is a relative shortage of land area designated for parks, conservation, and / or recreation when compared to other Districts across the Island. The Town’s recent purchase of the Paddock Stables along Jonesville Road and its plans to build a tennis facility along Marshland Road will address this issue. There may be further opportunities to connect the District’s pathway network to future marsh-oriented sites as well.

Silver Moss subdivisions divide a 21-acre site into 85 individual parcels or units. The net density of 4-8 dwelling units per net acre is much higher than historic development patterns (see the Jonesville Road example on the next page) that are more common across the district. The Spanish Wells example aligns with the maximum allowance of 4-8 dwelling units per net acre. Considering that common areas and stormwater facilities are factored into the total acreage, individual lots within these neighborhoods are smaller than .25 acres (10,890 sqft.), with some lots even less than 0.1 acres (4356 sqft.).

Historic Neighborhood Pattern - RM4



Contemporary Neighborhood Pattern - RM4



03

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

GUIDING THEMES

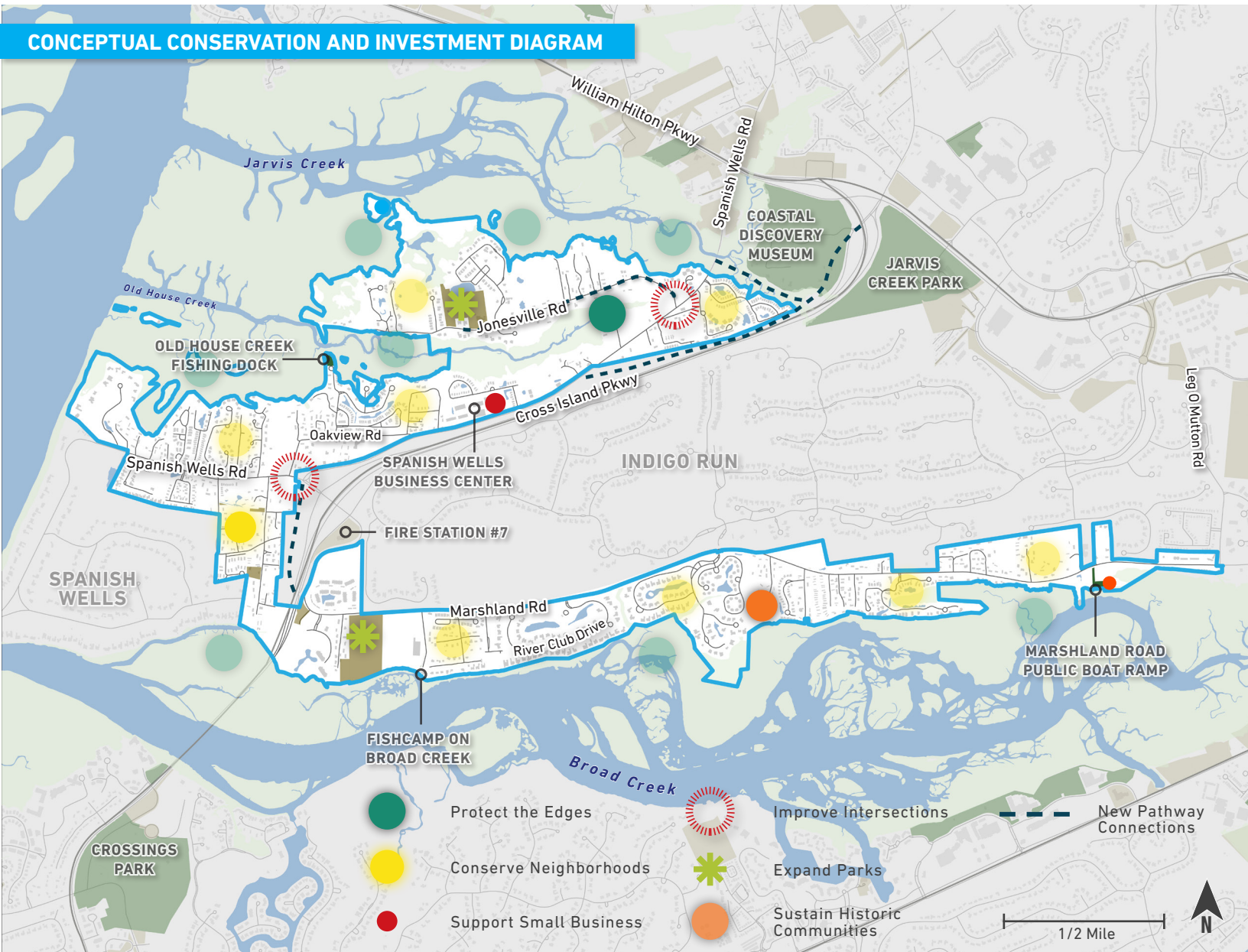
Stakeholder engagement and existing conditions analysis helped the planning team, Town Staff, and Town Council to develop two themes to guide future planning and redevelopment in the Marshes District. Both themes support the overarching desire to **conserve** the District's natural environment and neighborhoods for generations to come. To achieve this outcome, the Town will:

- 1. Protect and Enhance.** The plan will honor people and place by protecting and enhancing the neighborhoods, the culture and history, the natural environment, the preserves and parks, and the overarching character of the Marshes District and the Town. It will do so by investing in new parks, pathways, and open spaces, protecting the character and charm of existing neighborhoods, and sustaining the District's culture, history, and people.
- 2. Connect.** The plan will connect people, open spaces, neighborhoods, and community hubs through a network of pathways, sidewalks, and complete streets.

This section sets the stage for public and private investment in the Marshes District by reviewing design considerations, street characteristics and connections, and future land use. It lays out a basic policy agenda that is grounded in the Town's existing regulatory tools and bodies. Taken together, the plan for future land use and the regulatory framework will set the stage for the long-term maintenance of the Marshes District as an essential and distinct set of neighborhoods based around full-time residents with unmatched access to the Town's unique marshes environment.



CONCEPTUAL CONSERVATION AND INVESTMENT DIAGRAM



CONCEPTUAL CONSERVATION AND INVESTMENT DIAGRAM

The concept diagram visualizes how and where the Town will invest its resources, both in terms of projects and long-term protections in the Marshes District. The future land uses and specific policy agenda are presented later in the section. These are specific tools necessary to initiate and sustain the effort. The diagram is an articulation of the high-level intent of the Marshes District Plan.

The Town intends to conserve the District's natural environment and neighborhoods in the long-term. This does not mean there will be no resources invested in the area. On the contrary, the Town has and will continue to make strategic investments in the District to support the key

themes of this plan. This can include new parks, pathways, enhancements to intersections, upgrades to infrastructure, and general "leveling up" of regulatory tools for site planning and land development. Most critically, the Town will continue to identify and implement tools to ensure the legacy and sustainability of the Town's historic communities with this District having the largest share of historic land in the Town. The maintenance of this legacy is a priority.

FUTURE LAND USE

To conserve the Marshes District for future generations and advance the community goals of the Town, the planning team worked with Town Staff and Town Council to consider changes to land uses in the District. Five objectives drove the proposed Future Land Use Map.

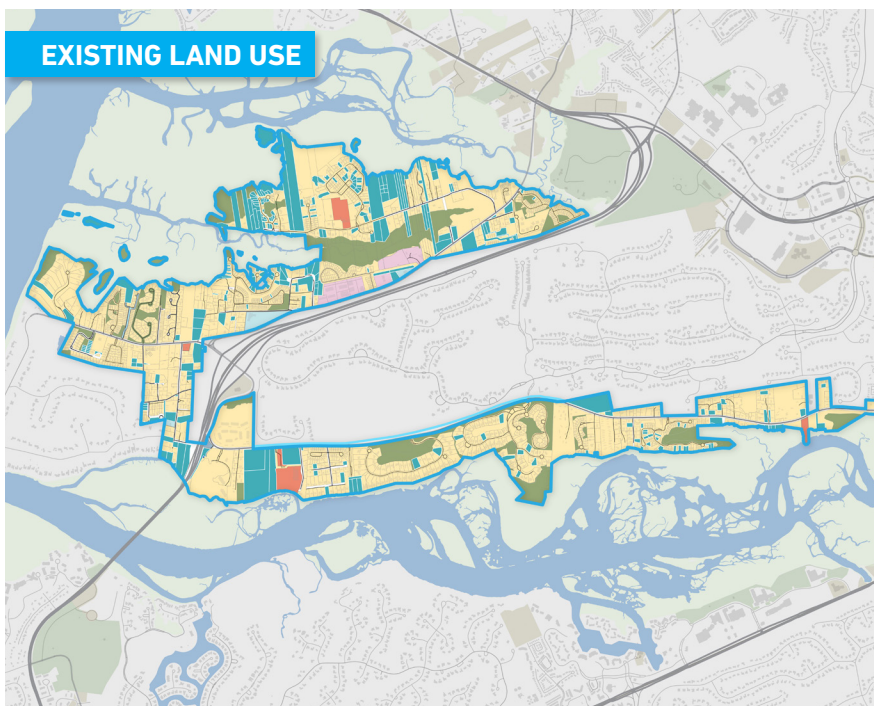
Define and protect parks and open space. Pursue opportunities to introduce new Town parks and programming to the District while also preserving passive open space that provides access to and complements the District's beautiful marshland setting.

Conserve the character of neighborhoods. Evolve development regulations and standards to ensure future projects are consistent, additive, and complementary to the historic building patterns seen across the District's neighborhoods.

Showcase and sustain the legacy and vitality of the District's five historic neighborhoods. Continue to invest in the people and places within the District's five historic neighborhoods. Work with existing tools and incentives to ensure that long-term, generational transfer is an option.

Connect neighborhoods internally and externally. Build on the Town's burgeoning network of pathways through new connections and enhancements to safety and access.

Maintain and support local businesses that are complementary to the surrounding community fabric. Continue to make room for the District's small host of businesses and jobs while ensuring reasonable buffering between these uses and neighborhoods or environmentally sensitive areas.

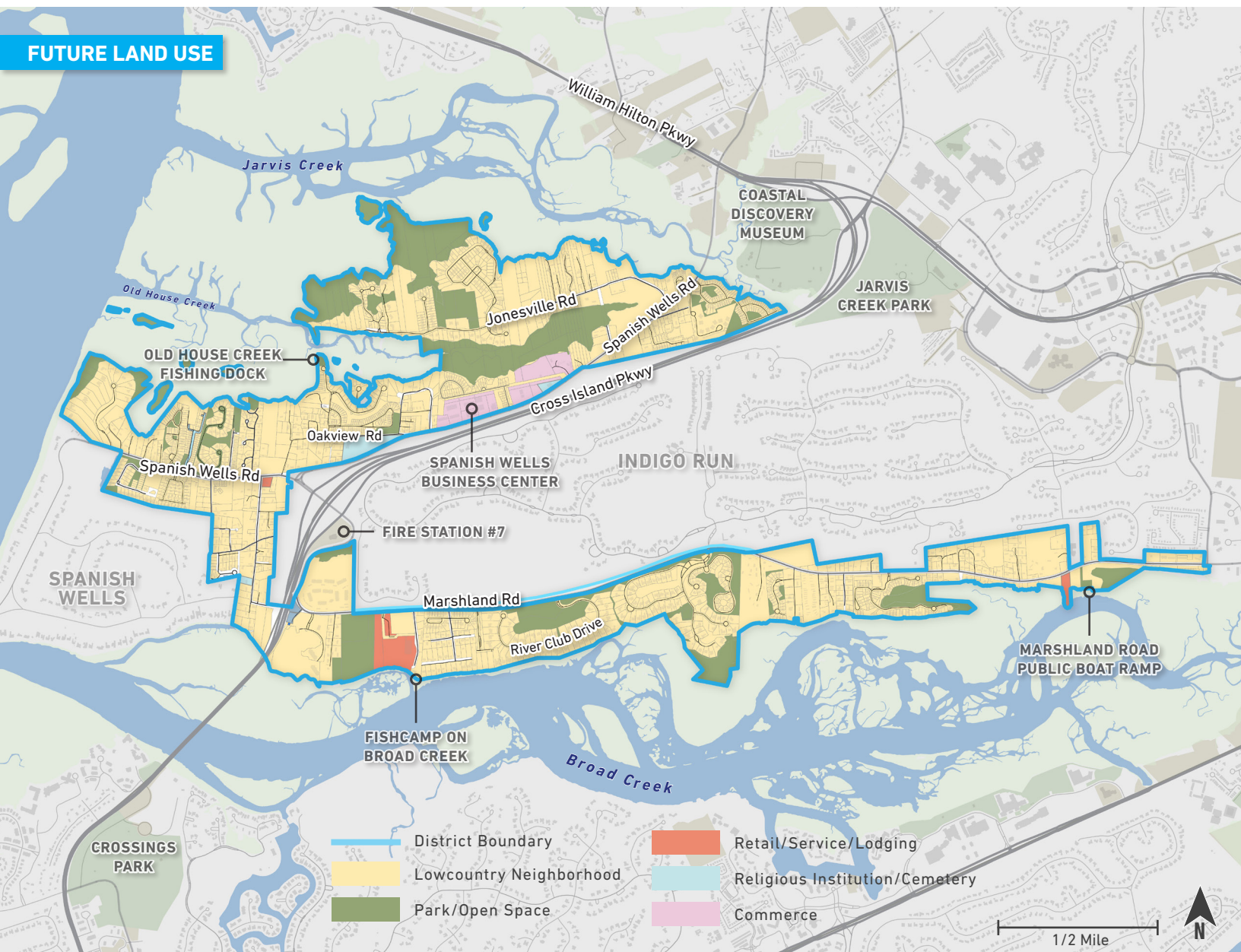


EXISTING LAND USE

Page 23 shows a detailed breakdown of existing land uses. This map consolidates those classifications into 6 groups to compare existing land uses with the Future Land Use Map recommendations.

- District Boundary
- Undeveloped
- Lowcountry Neighborhood
- Park / Open Space
- Retail / Service / Lodging
- Religious Institution / Cemetery
- Commerce

FUTURE LAND USE



FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Future Land Use map is based in the guiding themes of protection and connection. These emphasizes on the importance of environmental, cultural, and neighborhood conservation in the Marshes District. Historic properties and more contemporary residential development are collapsed within the map into a single category, Lowcountry Neighborhood. This residential district will hold the characteristics of low-density housing development while integrating and accommodating the recommendations of the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report with respect to family compounds and scaled development opportunities. This pattern emphasizes thoughtful site plans, quality and regionally contextual architecture, as well as connection to nature. The plan also identifies the natural edges to development through potential park locations and passive open space preservation. Finally, legacy commerce, service, and restaurant uses are maintained as important contributors to the Town’s local economy and sense of place. It is not suggested, however, that the District will grow these uses in the future.

Lowcountry Neighborhood

An Island neighborhood where homes - of various complementary Lowcountry styles - make up cohesive and comfortable neighborhoods. Densities are low and consistent. Multi-use pathways and sidewalks provide access around the community and across the Island. Trees and rich landscaping are abundant. Development densities are limited to less than four units per acre, but permissions from the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report remain relevant for eligible properties. Site plans respect natural features, consider surrounding uses, and contribute to the District's sense of place.



Uses Single Family

Historic properties include mobile or modular residences, family compounds, home-based businesses

Density Family Compounds / Subdivisions*: 6 dwelling units per net acre or less

All other Residential: 4 dwelling units per net acre or less

Height 1-2 stories; 35 feet

Lot Requirements Flexibilities in site design for Family Compounds / Subdivisions.

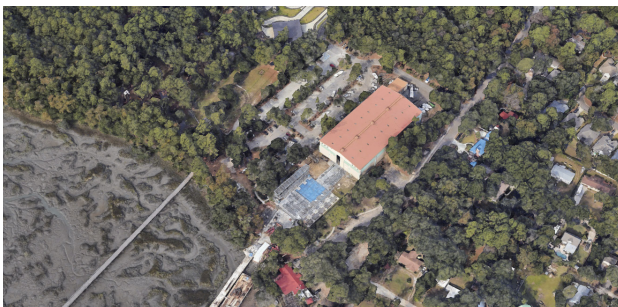
Historic Neighborhoods and the Gullah Geechee Preservation Project

Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions were incorporated into the LMO in 2021 as permitted land uses within Historic Neighborhoods. These land uses are a product of the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report, which recommended the establishment of a land use type that reflects the traditional use of land by Gullah families prior to the adoption of the Town's LMO. The proposed 6 dwelling units per acre maximum density for Family Compounds and Subdivisions takes another step toward further aligning LMO requirements with existing native-owned properties and family arrangements.

To qualify for a Family Compound or a Family Subdivision, 1) the property must be in the same family, which is defined as spouse, parent(s), biologically or legally adopted child(ren), group of persons related by blood, and descended from a common ancestor (as in extended family), 2) the property must be located in a historic neighborhood, and 3) the property must be owned by the same family since 1956.

Commerce

Supportive commercial and / or service-based business centers. Back-of-house activities enable more, on-Island jobs, and maintain a strong local support for key industries like construction, property management, transportation, maintenance, etc. Uses are well-buffered from surrounding neighborhoods with strong standards for environmental site management.



Uses	Commercial Support Services, Warehousing, Light Manufacturing
Density	Max. GFA: 25,000 sqft, FAR at or below 0.4
Height	1-2 stories; 35 feet, or below existing tree canopy

Retail / Service / Lodging

Neighborhood oriented commercial activity such as restaurants and other services. Uses are not clustered and well-buffered from surrounding neighborhoods with ample landscaping and setbacks. Buildings are context sensitive and appropriate based on the subtleties of adjacent neighborhoods and the surrounding, natural environment.



Uses	Retail, restaurant, services,
Density	Determined by design and performance standards
Height	1-2 stories; 35 feet, or below existing tree canopy

Parks and Open Space

Park and open space is important on Hilton Head Island, as it is known for its natural beauty. Areas that are designated park and open space will be protected and preserved to maintain existing natural resources or create passive and active recreational spaces. There are two specific locations for future parks notes on the Future Land Use Map and further explained in the following section.



Uses	Parks, Passive Recreation, Active Recreation, Preservation
Density	N/A
Height	1 story, 30 feet

Religious Institution/Cemetery

Religious institutions on Hilton Head Island are a cultural significant use. There are several large churches in the Marshes District including Grace Community Church on Oakview Road and Resurrection Christian Community Church on Spanish Wells Road. The Spanish Wells Cemetery is a historic location in the District located off of Spanish Well Road via Oak Marsh Drive.



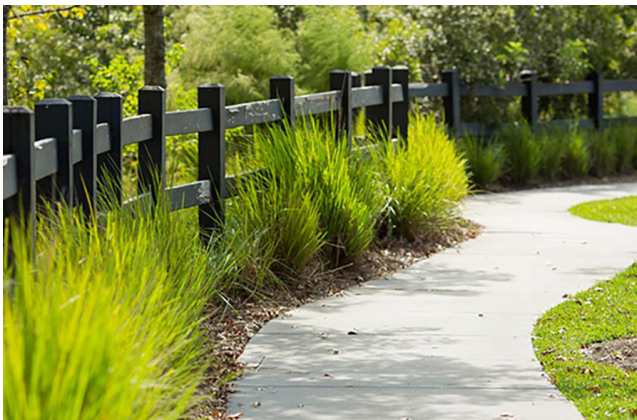
Uses	Office, Institutional, Open Space
Density	Max. GFA: 25,000 sqft, FAR at or below 0.4.
Height	1-3 stories; 45 feet

Streets and Pathways Plan

Building on the functional classification of roadways in the District, this plan establishes the design characteristics or typologies, and advocates for connections and additions to the pathway network. The result is a connected network of people-focused streets and paths that allows residents and visitors to connect into or through the District safely. This will require investment in additional paths, intersection improvements to allow for safer pedestrian crossings, and investment into internal roadways to provide pedestrian scaled connections.

The Marshes District primarily consists of local roads, with Marshland and Spanish Wells Roads the only collectors. The Cross Island Parkway, a major arterial, bisects the areas but is not part of the District. As development projects progress, Jonesville Road may gradually experience scaled increases in traffic volumes. Marshland Road, which services multiple neighborhoods and cuts through toward Mid-Island, features numerous access drives branching off from it. Similar to Spanish Wells Road, Marshland Road also incorporates a pathway running adjacent to the road.

Trails & Pathways



Collector



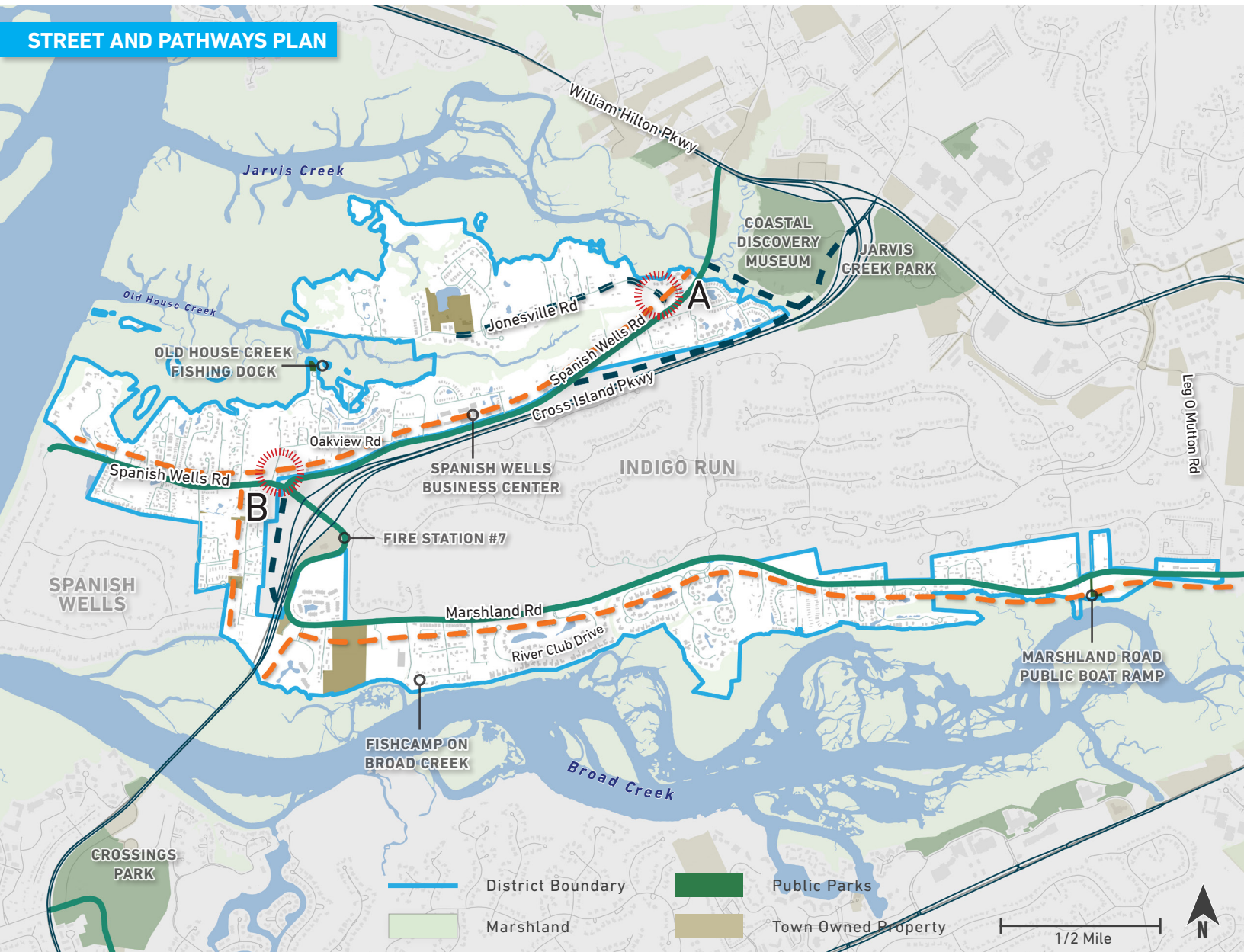
Local Road



Improved Intersection





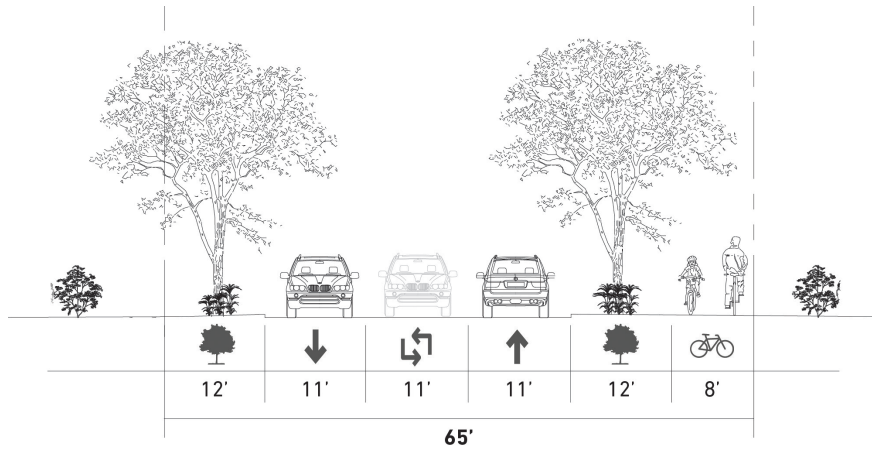
STREET AND PATHWAYS PLAN



CONNECT THE DISTRICT

The District’s existing pathways provide connections to the Town’s larger network. There are opportunities, however, to extend the system along key corridors like Jonesville Road and adjacent to Cross Island Parkway in multiple locations within the District. The Town’s Corridors Plan calls for a number of upgrades to the existing system to improve safety, legibility, comfort, and connections. The proposed sections on the following page introduce a typology for the District’s roadways that match the streets functional classification (local, collector, arterial, etc.) with priority recommendations from the Corridors Plan relating to landscaping, pathway widths, sidewalks, and other characteristics.

-  Intersection Improvements
-  Potential Multi-use Pathway
-  Existing Multi-use Pathway
-  Collector Road Typology
-  Local Road Typology



Marshland Road

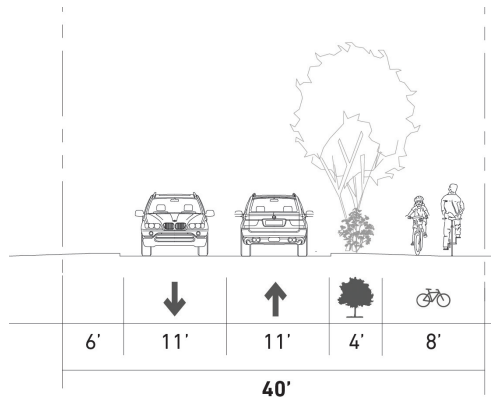
Marshland Road should emphasize pedestrian crossings, landscaping buffers, and access management. A consistent section would include 60ft of right-of-way, landscape buffers, and a pathway.

Spanish Wells Road

Spanish Wells Road is a critical collector street for District residents as it bypasses William Hilton Parkway and services its neighborhoods. Its 65 foot right-of-way width allows for a full-width pathway. Additional improvements should include landscape buffers.

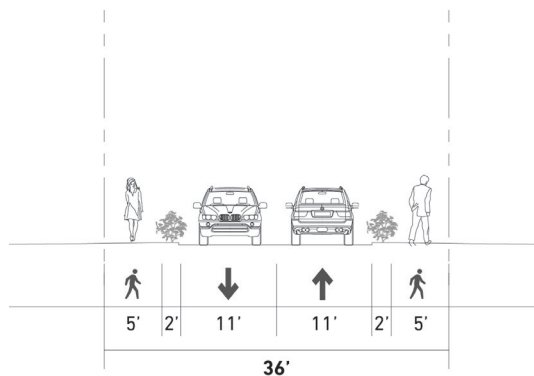
Jonesville Road

Jonesville Road, a two-lane local road with 35 to 40 feet of right-of-way, is being upgraded with a pathway that connects to Spanish Wells Road. Adding an 8ft landscape buffer between the driving lane and the pathway would enhance the pedestrian experience and improve safety.



Local Streets

For any future subdivisions in the Marshes District, sidewalks are a priority and essential components of all newly constructed local roads. Additionally, integrating street trees within the median separating the driving lane and the sidewalk would enhance the overall design and pedestrian connectivity.



INTERSECTION MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENTS

In the long-term, two of the District’s intersections should be evaluated in terms of safety and efficiency. The two intersections, pictured right, include Spanish Wells Rd. / Marshland Rd. and Spanish Wells Rd. / Jonesville Rd. Traffic volumes through the intersections are relatively low, less than 10,000 average daily movements, but the Town’s 2023 Corridors Plan recommends rolling analysis and improvements to all medium to large intersections over the next decade.

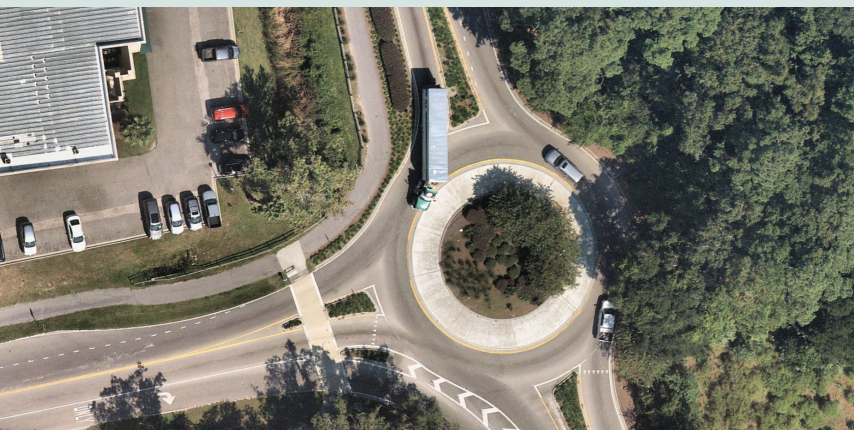
Given the relatively low volume, there may be opportunities to handle each intersection with a rotary or circle design. A similarly scaled project was recently completed at Marshland Road and Mathews Drive. This new system allows for continuous movements, greater visibility, improved landscaping opportunities, and better safety. Visibility is a key concern at intersections in the District. The circle design eases drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians into the flow of movement and almost completely removes the opportunity for side-impact crashes.

As pedestrian improvements continue to connect onto Spanish Wells and Marshland Roads’ existing pathways, the Town should continue to monitor daily pathway and trail usage to better understand future strategic interventions. These may include additional crosswalk infrastructure, road segments for traffic calming, landscaping, and signage.



MARSHLAND ROAD / MATHEWS DRIVE CIRCLE

The roundabout at Marshland Road and Mathews Drive was installed in 2015 to improve traffic flow safety and to discourage drivers from using Mathews Drive as a shortcut from William Hilton Parkway. The project cost a total of \$692,000.



04 IMPLEMENTATION

ACTION PLAN

Implementation of the Marshes District Plan is guided by a set of Strategic Actions that will enable the Town of Hilton Head Island to take a methodical approach to conserving and advancing the District. These actions represent the key steps that the Town should consider to follow through on the community's vision as embodied in this district plan. This will require leadership from the Town of Hilton Head Island, cooperation of key property owners, and continued collaboration with residents and other community members.

Each strategic action includes a set of tactical steps to organize and initiate positive movement. When applicable, these tactics are arranged sequentially and include references to the time frame, responsibilities, and any essential partnerships that are necessary to move the work forward. The detailed matrix follows on page 50.

A **Align Land Management Ordinance (LMO) provisions to the intent of the Lowcountry Neighborhood Character Area.** The zoning districts within the Marshes District and their respective development permissions are misaligned with the existing development pattern within the District and the community's vision for the future of the area's neighborhoods. The older neighborhoods within the District exist at a much lower dwelling unit density than the RM-4's maximum allowable density. Over time, newly built subdivisions have increasingly utilized this maximum entitlement to get the most out of parcels. As a result, the scale of new neighborhoods do not align with the historic Lowcountry built form found throughout the District.

At a broad level, the Town can begin to remedy this mismatch by amending LMO provisions related to density requirements and permitted land use in order to articulate community standards for future developers. Since the LMO is an outward-facing public document which sets the precedent for the future built form in the Town, the Town should continue to encourage amendments that emphasize consistency, user-friendly as well as measurable requirements, and timeless enforcement mechanisms.

TACTICS

- A1: Consider removing "sliding scale" density provisions and establish a consistent dwelling unit density (4 units per acre) requirement regardless of parcel size, with exceptions for family compounds and family subdivisions.
- A2: Consider whether alternative existing base zoning designations (such as RSF zones) in the Town's current LMO better align with the existing development scale of historic neighborhoods and are thus more applicable to the area.

LAND MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS PLAN

In 2023, the Town Council initiated an assessment of the LMO's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). With the assistance of a code assessment consultant, Town Staff identified code deficiencies and devised a plan to update the LMO. The full process will span five phases. Phase 4 will address residential and commercial development, design standards, and natural resource regulations. Phase 5 will include a comprehensive review of all chapters, overall code organization, and user-friendliness of the code, and will incorporate amendments to further align the LMO with Our Plan and integrate the District planning outcomes through the Town's Growth Framework.

- A3: Introduce floor area ratios as a new tool for evaluating compliance to base zoning district requirements, similar to provisions included in existing neighborhood overlays, in order to encourage a scale consistent with residential structures that attract year-round occupants.
- A4: Reassess the permitted principal and accessory land uses, along with any specific use criteria.
- A5: Enhance performance standards and criteria for site construction and management to protect the public health and safety of residents on adjacent lots during all phases of development.
- A6: Review enforcement procedures, continue to optimize staff procedures to proactively address violations, and continue to provide online FAQs modeled after short-term rental website page.

KEY TERM

Floor Area Ratio: The ratio of a building's total floor area or square footage to its lot size. This is a method for regulating the mass and coverage of a building, home, or structure on a site.

B Bolster guidelines and introduce standards with respect to Lowcountry residential architecture. The Town can expand upon existing design guidelines to achieve a more focused direction on the future form and function of new developments. This would help to blend new neighborhoods into the historic character of long-standing neighborhoods, while also setting a precedent for environmentally resilient land practices. The findings can be summarized in three key points:

- 1. The purview of the Design Review Board can be simplified and expanded.** The current land areas under the purview of the Design Review Board process consist of parcels within 450 feet of each side of major and minor arterial streets, within 500 feet landward of the Ocean & Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) Base Line, within 500 feet of the OCRM Critical Line, and within the Resort Development (RD), Sea Pines Circle (SPC), and Coligny Resort (CR) base zoning districts. These parameters should be reconfigured to minimize complexity and to retain a consistent Lowcountry architectural style throughout all non-PD land areas within the Town.
- 2. Design Guidelines can potentially turn into Development Standards.** There is potential to incorporate the guidelines from the Town's Design Guide into the LMO as required development standards, which could be further applied to a broader set of development applications. Potential guidelines that could be translated into zoning standards include those concerning existing vegetation and significant trees, setbacks and buffers, parking, stormwater management, architectural form, massing and scale, and tree requirements.

3. Other communities have evolved their guidelines in a similar way. Communities such as the Town of Bluffton have incorporated measurable building form and scale requirements across all zoning districts, including dimensional standards for a wide variety of lot types such as a Small House Lot, Medium House Lot, Small Mixed-Use Lot, and Civic Lot. Each lot type includes the respective zoning districts where it is allowed, in addition to minimum lot width, maximum building width, setbacks (front, rear, side), minimum lot coverage, and minimum and maximum building height. Implications for the Town include the opportunity to enact measures aimed at establishing a well-defined built form at the lot level. This holds particular significance for areas like the Marshes District, which contains undeveloped parcels susceptible to subdivision.

TACTICS

- B1: Develop a clear, community driven architectural standard for Lowcountry residential development that reflects the character of long-standing neighborhoods.
- B2: Incorporate the most critical design guidelines within the Town’s Design Guide into the LMO as design standards.
- B3: Consider expanding the geographic purview of design guidelines or standards.
- B4: Utilize design standards to enforce more sustainable and resilient land use, including expanding provisions for stormwater management, vegetative buffers, and trees.

KEY TERM

Design guidelines: Non-compulsory recommendations for the look and feel of proposed development projects.

C Address and amend subdivision regulations to match the intention of Lowcountry neighborhood characteristics. Contemporary development projects over time have become inconsistent with older development with respect to density and site orientation. The Town should consider how potential major subdivisions are governed to ensure future projects have an additive relationship to surrounding neighborhoods. This relates to access management, aesthetics, and overall site design. In addition, it is critical to ensure that the provisions that regulate Major and Minor Subdivisions do not add to an increasing number of residential structures that promote transient occupancy. Bolstering the standards for Major Subdivisions, especially within Historic Neighborhoods, will allow them to better align with the existing, Lowcountry residential scale.

TACTICS

- C1: Require sidewalks for all new roads within major and minor subdivisions to ensure connectivity to existing and future pedestrian-oriented infrastructure projects.
- C2: Reevaluate suitable locations for zero lot line subdivisions in the Town, considering the existing built form in Historic Neighborhoods and environmentally constrained areas.

KEY TERM

Zero Lot Line: Buildings that are constructed directly on the property boundary line.

- C3: Consider expanding buffer requirements for subdivisions adjacent to existing residential lots.
- C4: Realign open space requirements for subdivisions with the Town’s conservation and resiliency goals.
- C5: Evaluate the need for explicit and defined protection of environmentally sensitive areas, historical sites, and cultural assets within major and minor subdivision plans.
- C6: Provide clear front, side, and rear yard setback requirements.
- C7: Improve access management and phased connectivity requirements.
- C8: Eliminate potential loopholes to zoning provisions, such as vague language (i.e., Greatest extent feasible, sufficient, attractive, minimizing adverse impacts), “encouraged” rather than “required”, and any non-measurable, enforcement deference to the Official, adding more pressure on Town staff to interpret the relationship between development applications and LMO requirements.

D **Expand parks and open space options throughout the District.** There are currently no Town-owned parks within the Marshes District. However, the recent acquisition of properties by the Town presents an opportunity to expand parks and recreational amenities to the area. This would offer residents enhanced access to the marshlands and waterfront areas, while also potentially expanding the connectivity of existing trails. The two main properties that present opportunities for this future expansion are the Racquets facility along Marshland Road and the Paddock Stables along Jonesville Road.

The Marshland Road Racquet Facility will include 24 tennis courts, a welcome center, paddle craft launch, park space, playgrounds, restroom facilities, and shade structures. A boardwalk is planned to connect Marshland Road to the rest of the site and to Broad Creek.

The recently acquired Paddock Stables is over 8 acres and includes undeveloped land, stables, traditional farm structures, and water features. Conversations around future direction for this Town-owned property were underway at the time of the plan.

TACTICS

- D1: Build the Racquet Facility on Marshland Road.
- D2: Explore options for public use of the Paddocks Stables.
- D3: Identify neighborhood-parks and open space opportunities with Marshland access.
- D4: Expand sidewalk connections through existing neighborhoods with priority connections to multi-use pathways and existing parks and cultural sites.

THE MARSHLAND ROAD RACQUET FACILITY & NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

The proposed Marshland Road Racquet Facility unites three key components within one space in the Marshes District: neighborhood amenities, Island-wide recreation, and the natural environment. The facility will feature 24 tennis courts as well as a welcome center for players, and will also provide a nature play area, a boardwalk through the wetlands, and a paddle craft launch on Broad Creek. This mixture of amenities creates both a neighborhood park within the Marshes District and a robust recreational facility to be enjoyed by the entire Island. This facility would connect to the existing pathway on Marshland Road to allow bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, with an opportunity to connect to Broad Creek Marina via a direct pathway from the park. The existing natural features such as Broad Creek and the large wetland on the northern portion of the property are left undisturbed by the park programming to maintain a balance of nature and recreation throughout the facility.



E **Extend and improve pathways.** The Marshes District is connected to some of the Town’s major public pathways, including routes that circle the Island which can be accessed on Spanish Wells and Marshland Roads. However, there are limited public pathway connections that extend into the residential neighborhoods throughout the District. With major pathways making up the spine of the Marshes District, expanding public pathways within the District will connect more residents to critical walking and biking paths that provide access to the entire Island. There is also the additional opportunity to use SCDOT right-of-way and an overhead electrical easement to provide a direct connection from Spanish Wells Road (at Butterfly Road) to Gumtree Road, with this alignment running adjacent to Cross Island Parkway.

TACTICS

- E1: Build the Jonesville multi-use pathway and connect it to the path running adjacent to Spanish Wells Road.
- E2: Study potential connection between Spanish Wells Road pathway and Jarvis Creek Park.
- E3: Study and extend additional pathways connections throughout the District that will link neighborhoods to important amenities such as commercial centers, parks, community facilities, and points of interest.
- E4: Prioritize connections to nearby recreation facilities such as Jarvis Creek Park and the Coastal Discovery Museum.
- E5: Consider District connectivity to future recreation facilities such as the proposed Racquets Facility and the Stables property.
- E6: Plan for adequate bicycle parking at all new Town parks.
- E7: Implement the Corridors Systems recommendations for improving existing and future trails across the District (in terms of safety, signage, alternative connections, etc.).

JONESVILLE ROAD MULTI-USE PATHWAY AND ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

As of May 2023, the Town has begun surveying existing conditions along Jonesville Road to begin working on roadway traffic safety enhancements and the addition of a new pathway adjacent to Jonesville Road. The proposed improvements would begin at the intersection of Jonesville and Spanish Wells Roads and continue to the end of Jonesville Road. The improved Jonesville Road design will enhance safety conditions for vehicles and provide a new pathway for cyclists and pedestrians. Survey work has been completed in the Summer of 2023.

F Monitor and manage short-term rentals in the District.

As of June 30, 2023, the Town has received over 6,600 short-term rental (STR) applications, with several short-term rental properties actively permitted within the Marshes District. While recently adopted licensing procedures do not yet present sufficient data showing long-term trends, they have exposed the scale of the current short-term rental climate across the Town. Since 2020, short term rentals made up two-thirds of all new business license applications. While short term rental properties are not as common within the Marshes District, limited space in other areas of the Town paired with denser new development within the District signals that this number may grow quickly.

The previous lack of requirements for short-term rentals resulted in an imbalance between residential and resort districts, leading to negative impacts for full-time residents. To address this issue, the Town Council passed an ordinance in May 2022 that outlines regulations for managing short-term rentals for the entire Town.

The ordinance, which came into effect in January 2023, establishes various requirements pertaining to permits, vehicles and parking, noise management, violations, complaint tracking and response, and trash storage and removal. To operate a short-term rental, individuals must follow specific steps, including obtaining a business license, collecting 11% accommodation taxes, acquiring an annual short-term rental permit, and submitting a site plan for single-family dwellings. Additionally, the Town has established a complaint hotline dedicated to resolving any issues related to potential violations of any requirements outlined in the ordinance.

TACTICS

- F1: Study a District-by-District STR management program that is proportional to the visitor-to-resident ratio.
- F2: Study a cap on STRs in the Marshes District based on the ratio of full-time residents to visitors.
- F3: Continue to proactively monitor complaints to ensure compliance with existing regulations.

KEY TERM

Short-Term Rental Property: any residential property in the municipal limits of the Town of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, that, in whole or in part, is offered for lease or occupancy under a lease or any other form of agreement, for periods of less than thirty (30) days.



Support historic neighborhoods. The Marshes District is home to five historic neighborhoods that make up a vast majority of the land area. These include the Jonesville, Jarvis, Old House Creek, Gardner, and Spanish Wells neighborhoods. The Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report recommended changes to the Town’s Land Management Ordinance (LMO) to provide more development opportunities for Gullah landowners. This would involve relaxing certain development standards, expanding permitted land uses, and increasing development densities. In the five Historic Neighborhoods in the Marshes District, the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report recommendations focused on the areas that are zoned RM-4. As currently written, the code allows a range of 4 to 8 dwelling units an acre depending on whether it is a 1-, 3- or 5-acre site. Coupled with existing setbacks, buffering, and open space requirements, this constricts the ability of landowners to develop their property. The report also noted that commercial services such as bed-and-breakfasts, convenience stores, and open air sales be allowed.

The Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report recommended a Historic Gullah Neighborhoods Conservation Overlay District to address these issues. To allow for greater regulatory clarity, the planning team recommends that these overlay goals be accomplished through an update to the base zoning and the creation of design standards. Historic development patterns in the Marshes District reflect lower overall densities when compared to Town-wide averages. This, coupled with environmental sensitivities, suggest lower overall density permissions within the District’s five historic neighborhoods. The spirit of the regulation—to provide more development opportunities for Gullah landowners—should be maintained in the District but calibrated based on the environmental and community context. Rather than 8 dwelling units per acre maximum on eligible properties, the planning team recommends a 6 unit per acre cap. This surpasses the 4-unit threshold for non-qualifying properties presented through an earlier District recommendation but stops short of the full permission extended in areas with better access, proximity to services, and complementary development patterns.

Building from the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report, the recommendations for the Historic Neighborhoods were driven by the following community goals to:

- Advance and celebrate the history and culture of the Native Islanders.
- Enable Historic Neighborhoods to be economically sustainable.
- Provide for additional uses including neighborhood commercial and home business opportunities.
- Meet the Town’s increasing need for housing, including affordable and workforce options.
- Allow existing property owners the flexibility to optimize the use of their property.

TACTICS

- G1: Adopt consistent, uniform density standards and development patterns.
- G2: Amend the LMO to allow for 6 dwelling units per net acre for Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions in Historic Neighborhoods
- G3: Calibrate setback and buffering (internal) and open space requirements to allow for infill development.
- G4: Allow for neighborhood commercial and home business opportunities.
- G5: Promote reasonable use mixes on a site that is consistent with historic patterns: 75% residential and 25% neighborhood commercial.
- G6: Promote gentle, incremental infill.
- G7: Continue to allow Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions.
- G8: Proactively monitor tax-vulnerable properties to ensure long-term family ownership (if this is the desire of the family).
- G9: Conduct an updated survey of native-owned properties.

H **Continually address access, safety, and congestion.** There is growing concern regarding the vehicular road network, particularly due to the increased traffic volume generated by new projects—specifically those along Jonesville Road. The implications of this heightened volume on intersection capacity, safety, and efficiency warrant continued attention. Of note are two intersections that require specific attention: Spanish Wells Rd. / Jonesville Rd. and Spanish Wells Rd. / Marshville Road. Given that this is primarily a commuter neighborhood, certain peak hours during the day may over time experience higher traffic counts. It thus becomes crucial to prioritize maintenance, management, and monitoring to address these issues effectively. These concerns tie into the broader Corridors Plan, emphasizing the need for appropriate road treatments to maintain up-to-date infrastructure. As the street network evolves over time, these roadways will naturally exhibit the characteristics assigned to their respective typologies by this plan and reinforced through the Town’s 2023 Corridors Plan.

As pedestrian improvements continue to connect onto Spanish Wells and Marshland Roads existing pathways, the Town should continue to monitor daily pathway and trail usage to better understand future strategic interventions. These may include additional crosswalk infrastructure, road segments for traffic calming, landscaping, and signage.

TACTICS

- H1: Study improvements for Jonesville Rd. / Spanish Wells Rd. intersection.
- H2: Study improvements for Spanish Wells Rd. / Marshland Rd. intersection.
- H3: Continue to monitor overall roadways capacity.

I **Increase the resilience of the Marshes District.** The Marshes District is fundamentally a water-oriented District vulnerable to flooding and storm surges. As the Town moves forward with the planning initiatives outlined in this plan, environmental resiliency needs to be at the forefront of each implementation process. Through LMO amendments, specifically regarding subdivision regulations, lot requirements, and landscaping, the Town should consider ways to decrease impervious surface coverage, increase tree canopy coverage, and implement tree planting requirements over time. In addition to meeting baseline LMO requirements, the review of any new subdivision should account for the site’s environmental impact, which means not only identifying sufficient stormwater, wetland, and landscaping infrastructure, but also how those facilities interact with the rest of the built structures and their placement on the site.






TACTICS

- I1: Integrate future recommendations through resiliency planning efforts with respect to sea-level rise and vulnerability.
- I2: Update stormwater monitoring and requirements for flood-prone zones.
- I3: Continue to assess LMO requirements through an environmental resiliency lens.

Implementation Strategy







The following matrix organizes the strategic actions and related tactics by their relative time frames, responsibilities, and potential partners. The time frame includes immediate term tactics (0-1 year), short term tactics (1-3 years), medium term tactics (3-5 years), long term (beyond 5 years). See the key to the right. Responsibilities are assigned with the Town department organizational structure. Where relevant elected or appointed partners or non-Town partners may be required and are noted.

KEY

- 0-1 year 
- 1-3 years 
- 3-5 years 
- 5+ years 
- Continuous 

ACRONYMS

PC: Planning Commission
 PPC: Public Planning Committee
 TC: Town Council

STRATEGIC ACTION AND TACTICS	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	PARTNERS
A. Align LMO (Land Management Ordinance) Provisions to the Intent of the Lowcountry Neighborhood Character Area			
A1 Consider removing “sliding scale” density provisions and establish a consistent dwelling unit density (4 units per acre) requirement regardless of parcel size, with exceptions for family compounds and family subdivisions.		Community Development	PC, PPC, TC
A2 Consider whether alternative existing base zoning designations (such as RSF zones) in the Town’s current LMO better align with the existing development scale of historic neighborhoods.		Community Development	PC, PPC, TC
A3 Introduce floor area ratios as a new tool for evaluating compliance to base zoning district requirements, similar to provisions included in existing neighborhood overlays, to encourage a scale consistent with residential structures that attract year-round occupants.		Community Development	PC, PPC, TC
A4 Reassess the permitted principal and accessory land uses, along with any specific use criteria.		Community Development	PC, PPC, TC
A5 Enhance performance standards and criteria for site construction and management to protect the public health and safety of residents on adjacent lots during all phases of development.		Community Development	PC, PPC, TC
A6 Review enforcement procedures, continue to optimize staff procedures to proactively address violations, continue to provide online FAQs modeled after short-term rental website page.		Community Code Enforcement	

STRATEGIC ACTION AND TACTICS	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	PARTNERS
<i>B. Bolster guidelines and introduce standards with respect to Lowcountry residential architecture.</i>			
B1 Develop a clear, community driven architectural standard for Lowcountry residential development that reflects the character of historic neighborhoods.	●	Community Development	Design Review Board, Consultant, PC, PPC, TC
B2 Incorporate the most critical design guidelines within the Island's Design Guide into the LMO as design standards.	●	Community Development	Design Review Board, PC, PPC, TC
B3 Consider expanding the geographic purview of design guidelines or standards.	●	Community Development	Design Review Board, Town Council, PC, PPC, TC
B4 Utilize design standards to enforce more sustainable and resilient land use, including expanding provisions for stormwater management, vegetative buffers, and trees.	●	Community Development	Design Review Board, PC, PPC, TC
<i>C. Address and amend subdivision regulations to match the intention of Lowcountry Neighborhood characteristics.</i>			
C1 Require sidewalks for all new roads within major and minor subdivisions to ensure connectivity to existing and future pedestrian-oriented infrastructure projects.	●	Community Development	PC, PPC, TC
C2 Reevaluate suitable locations for zero lot line subdivisions in the Town, considering the existing built form in Historic Neighborhoods and environmentally constrained areas.	●	Community Development	PC, PPC, TC
C3 Consider expanding buffer requirements for subdivisions adjacent to existing residential lots.	●	Community Development	PC, PPC, TC
C4 Re-align open space requirements for subdivisions with the Town's conservation and resiliency goals.	●	Community Development	PC, PPC, TC
C5 Evaluate the need for explicit and defined protection of environmentally sensitive areas, historical sites, and cultural assets within major and minor subdivision plans.	●	Community Development	Parks and Recreation Commission, PC, PPC, TC
C6 Provide clear front, side, and rear yard setback requirements.	●	Community Development	Design Review Board, PC, PPC, TC

STRATEGIC ACTION AND TACTICS	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	PARTNERS
C7 Improve access management and phased connectivity requirements.	●	Community Development	PC, PPC, TC
C8 Eliminate potential loopholes to zoning provisions, such as vague language (ie. greatest extent feasible, sufficient, attractive, minimizing adverse impacts), “Encouraged” rather than “Required”, and any non-measurable, enforcement deference to the Official, adding more pressure on Town staff to interpret the relationship between development applications and LMO requirements.	●	Community Development, Community Code Enforcement	PC, PPC, TC

D. Expand parks and open space options throughout the District.

D1 Build the Racquet Facility on Marshland Road.	●	Community Development	Parks & Recreation Commission, Town Council
D2 Explore options for public use of the Paddocks Stables property.	●●	Community Development	Parks & Recreation Commission, Town Council
D3 Identify neighborhood parks and open space opportunities with Marshland access.	●	Community Development	Parks & Recreation Commission
D4 Expand sidewalk connections through existing neighborhoods with priority connections to multi-use trails and existing parks and cultural sites.	●	Community Development	

E. Extend and improve multi-use trails.

E1 Build the Jonesville Road multi-use trail and connect it to the path running adjacent to Spanish Wells Road.	●	Community Development	Town Council
E2 Study connection between Spanish Wells Road trail and Jarvis Creek Park.	●	Community Development	PPC, Parks & Recreation Commission
E3 Study and extend additional trails connections throughout the District that will link neighborhoods to important amenities such as commercial centers, parks, community facilities, and points of interest.	—	Community Development	PPC, Parks & Recreation Commission







STRATEGIC ACTION AND TACTICS	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	PARTNERS
E4 Prioritize connections to nearby recreation facilities such as Jarvis Creek Park and the Coastal Discovery Museum.		Community Development	PPC, Parks & Recreation Commission
E5 Consider District connectivity to future recreation facilities such as the proposed Racquet Facility and the Stables property.		Community Development	PPC, Parks & Recreation Commission
E6 Plan for adequate cycling parking at all new Town parks.		Community Development	PPC, Parks & Recreation Commission
E7 Implement the Corridors Systems recommendations for improving existing and future trails across the District (safety, signage, etc.)		Community Development	PPC, Parks & Recreation Commission

F. Monitor and manage short term rentals in the District.




F1 Study a District-by-District STR management program that is proportional to visitor to resident ratio.		Community Development	Town Council
F2 Study a cap on STRs in the Marshes District based on the ratio of full-time residents to visitors.		Community Development	
F3 Continue to proactively monitor complaints to ensure compliance with existing regulations.		Community Development	




G. Support historic neighborhoods.

G1 Adopt consistent, uniform density standards and development patterns.		Community Code Enforcement	Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods
G2 Amend the LMO to allow for 6 dwelling units per net acre for Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions in Historic Neighborhoods.		Community Development	PPC, Town Council
G3 Calibrate setback and buffering (internal) and open space requirements to allow for infill development.		Community Development	PPC, Town Council, Design Review Board

STRATEGIC ACTION AND TACTICS	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	PARTNERS
G4 Allow for neighborhood commercial and home business opportunities.		Community Development	Planning Commission
G5 Promote reasonable use mixes on a site that is consistent with historic patterns: 75% residential and 25% neighborhood commercial.		Community Development	Planning Commission
G6 Promote gentle, incremental infill.		Community Development	
G7 Continue to allow Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions.		Community Development	
G8 Proactively monitor tax vulnerable properties to ensure long-term family ownership (if this is the desire of the family.)		Community Development	
G9 Conduct an updated survey of native-owned properties.		Community Development	

H. Continually address access, safety, and congestion.

H1 Study improvements for the Jonesville–Spanish Wells intersection.		Community Development	Beaufort County, SCDOT
H2 Study improvements for Spanish Wells–Marshland Road intersection.		Community Development	Beaufort County, SCDOT
H3 Continue to monitor overall roadways capacity.		Community Development	Beaufort County, SCDOT

STRATEGIC ACTION AND TACTICS	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	PARTNERS
<i>I. Increase the resilience of the Marshes District.</i>			
I1 Integrate future recommendations through resiliency planning efforts with respect to sea level rise and vulnerability.		Community Development	
I2 Update stormwater monitoring and requirements for flood prone zones.		Community Development	
I3 Continue to assess LMO requirement through an environmental resiliency lens.		Community Code Enforcement	