

# **Status of Gullah Geechee Top Priority Project Recommendations**


























































**January 2022**

# Status of Gullah Geechee Top Priority Project Recommendations

January 2022



 Items completed since October 2021.

Page #	Priority #	Title	25%	50%	75%	100%
3	PP-4	Establish an Overlay District				
4	PP-5	Family Compound/Subdivision				
5	PP-6	Allow Site Design Flexibility				
6	PP-2	Fast Track FC/FS Applications				
7	CP-17	Outreach with Gullah Churches				
8	CP-14	Establish Open Air Market				
9	CP-7	Educate Town Officials and Staff				
10	HP-4	Fund to Clear Property Titles				
11	HP-2	Partner with Heirs' Property Orgs				
12	PP-14	Temporary and Seasonal Signs				
13	HP-1	Heirs' Property Family Research				
14	PP-12	Educational Outreach				
15	HP-3	CHPP Satellite Office				
16	CP-1	Promote Heritage Library				
17	PP-11	Fund for Delinquent Taxes				
18	PP-3	Permitting and Design Studio				

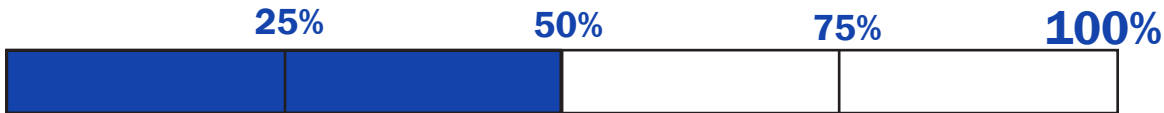
# Priority Recommendation 1



## PP-4: Establish an Overlay District

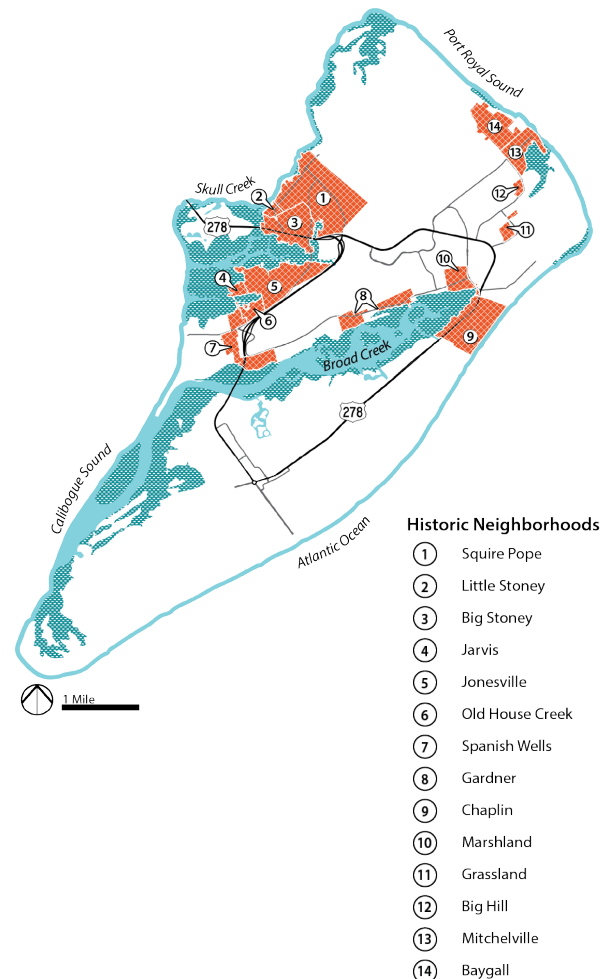
Establish a Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Overlay District.

### Percent Complete



- Reduces buffer, setback, right-of-way, and access easement minimums.
- Creates rights-of-way without reducing density.

- Drafted LMO amendments.
- Reviewed by Gullah Geechee Task Force, LMO Committee, and Planning Commission.
- Public Planning Committee requested additional research and revisions related to density increase, land uses, and home occupations.
- Research and analysis will be conducted concurrently with the Island Capacity Baseline Assessment. 1st Quarter 2022 - 3rd Quarter 2022.
- Engage on-call code writing consultant to revise amendments. 4th Quarter 2022.
- Present revised amendments to Gullah Geechee Task Force, Planning Commission, and Town Council for adoption. 4th Quarter 2022 - 1st Quarter 2023.



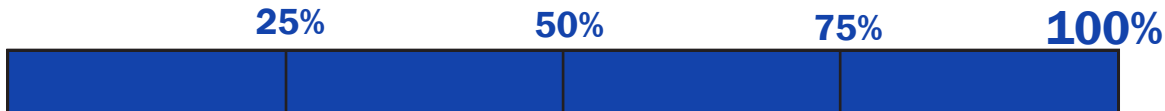
## Priority Recommendation 2

### PP-5: Family Compound/Family Subdivision

Revise the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) to allow Family Compound and Family Subdivision developments on properties in the Historic Neighborhoods.

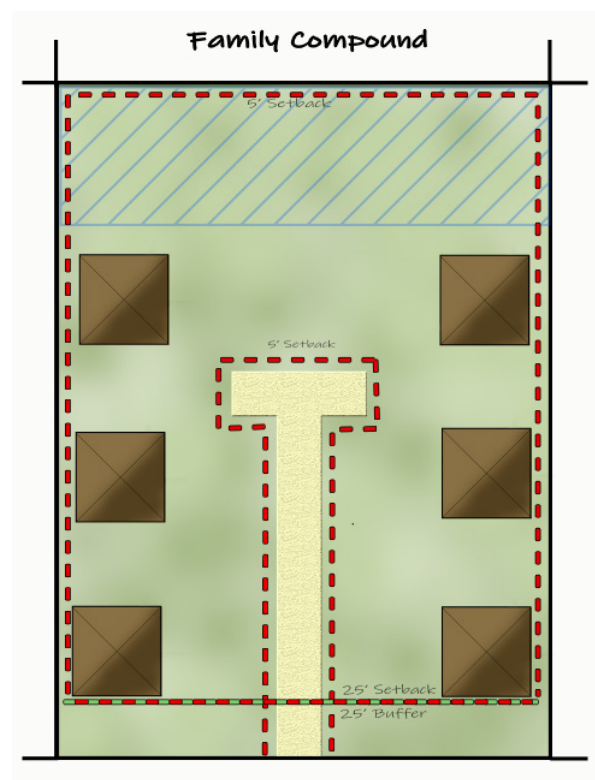


#### Percent Complete



- Preserve family land for future generations.
- Honor communal living traditions.
- Subdivide without prohibitive expenses.

- ☑ Posted signs, sent letters, and used the Town's website and social media sites to notify stakeholders and the public. Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator discussed the amendments with property owners and families and made presentations to community groups.
- ☑ Reviewed and recommended for approval by the Gullah Geechee Task Force, the LMO Committee, the Planning Commission (including two public hearings), and the Public Planning Committee.
- ☑ Adopted by Town Council in July 2021.
- ☑ Working with three to five families to develop a Family Compound or Family Subdivision.
- ☑ Implemented a communication plan to inform stakeholders, churches, and community organizations of the Family Compound/Family Subdivision LMO amendments, including a news release and social media posts.



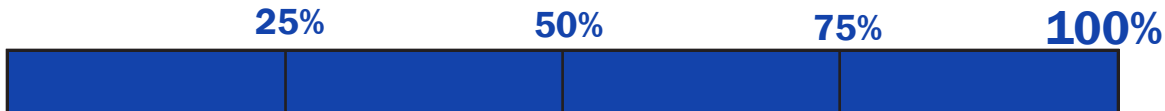
## Priority Recommendation 3



### PP-6: Allow Site Design Flexibility

The Family Compound/Family Subdivision and Dirt Road LMO amendments allow flexibility for development in Historic Neighborhoods.

#### Percent Complete



- Reduces buffer, setback, right-of-way, and access easement minimums.
- Creates rights-of-way without reducing density.
- Applies to properties in Historic Neighborhoods.

- ☑ Wrote the amendments using input from property owners.
- ☑ Notified stakeholders and the public. Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator discussed the amendments with property owners and families and made presentations to community groups.
- ☑ Reviewed and recommended for approval by Gullah Geechee Task Force, LMO Committee, Planning Commission, and Public Planning Committee.
- ☑ Town Council adopted Dirt Road LMO amendments in November 2020.
- ☑ Town Council adopted Family Compound/Family Subdivision LMO amendments in July 2021.



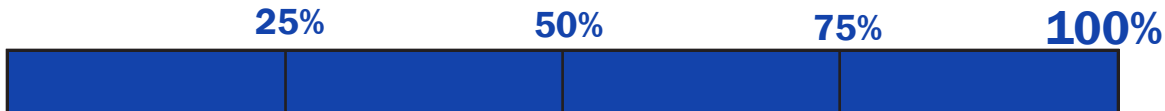
## Priority Recommendation 4

### PP-2: Fast Track Family Compound/Family Subdivision Applications

Town staff prioritizes the review of Family Compound and Family Subdivision applications and related building permits.

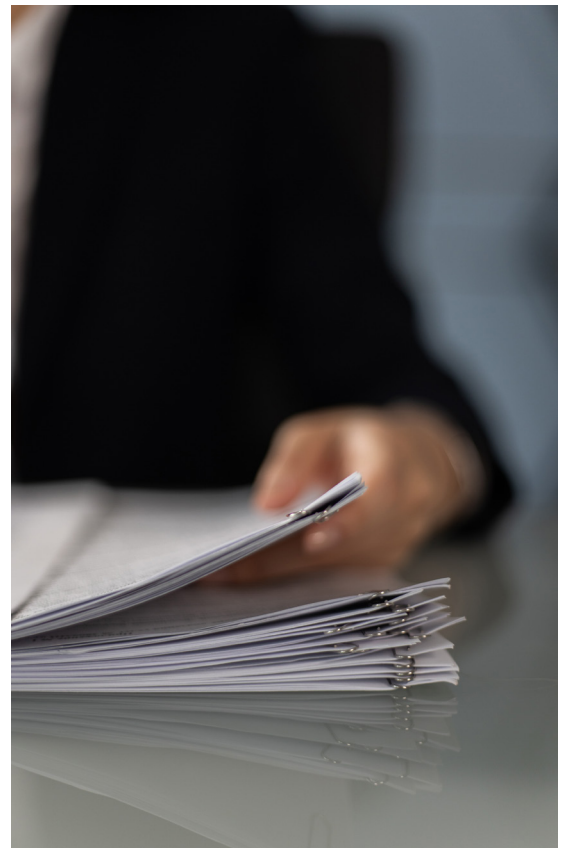


#### Percent Complete



- **Family Compound/Family Subdivision applications are reviewed before other applications.**
- **Related building permits are fast tracked.**

- Review Family Compound and Family Subdivision applications and related building permits prior to other submittals, as specified in the LMO amendments.
- Noted on the Town webpage and application forms the applications will be fast tracked.
- Notified applicants that their applications will be prioritized for review.
- Implemented a communication plan to inform stakeholders, churches, and community organizations of the Family Compound/Family Subdivision LMO amendments, including a news release and social media posts.



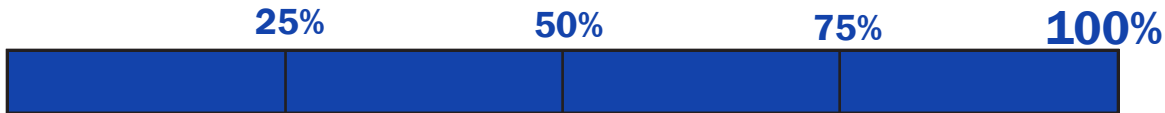
## Priority Recommendation 5

### CP-17: Outreach with Gullah Churches

Work with Gullah churches to gather information, assess needs, and disseminate information.



#### Percent Complete



- **Update churches on Gullah-related meetings and initiatives.**
- **Share vital information, such as Town-led COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.**

- Established Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator as point of contact for the Town for all Island Gullah churches.
- Communicate regularly on Gullah Geechee initiatives, such as the Family Compound/ Family Subdivision LMO amendments.
- Provide updates regarding Town meetings addressing relevant topics.
- Receive referrals from churches of community members who need assistance.



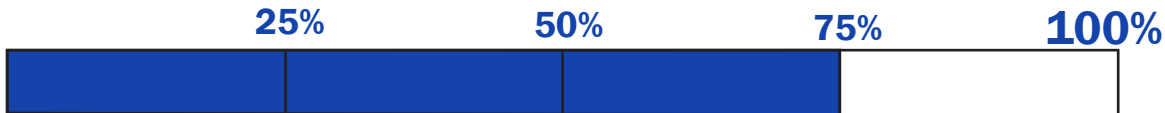
## Priority Recommendation 6

### CP-14: Establish Open-Air Gullah Market

Work with stakeholders to establish an open-air market to promote Gullah Culture and create economic opportunities.



#### Percent Complete



- **Create an open-air market for the sale of Gullah items.**
- **Coordinate the management of the market through Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association.**
- **Evaluate success of temporary location and consider alternate locations.**

#### Overview

- Gathered input from local vendors.
- Coordinated with Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association, Gullah Geechee Task Force representatives, and Culture HHI.  
Considered proposed sites and created a layout of proposed site.
- Wrote a business plan.
- Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association will hire a Community Liason to manage market. 1st Quarter 2022.
- Present Squire Pope Community Park as a temporary location for the market to the Community Services and Public Safety Committee. 2nd Quarter 2022.
- Explore additional locations for the market including Mitchelville Freedom Park, Lowcountry Celebration Park, and the Mid-Island Tract. 2nd Quarter 2022.
- Work with vendors and community organizations to promote the market. 2nd Quarter 2022.





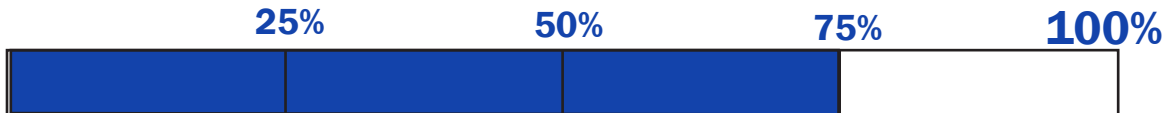
## Priority Recommendation 7



### CP-7: Educate Town Officials & Employees

Develop education programs on Gullah history, culture, development standards challenges, and land use policies for Town officials, employees, and Board and Commission members.

Percent Complete



- Provide quarterly orientation on Gullah history and culture.
- Offer engaging, ongoing learning opportunities such as panel discussions, site visits, and mobile tours.

- Created orientation training on Gullah Community for new hires, newly elected officials, and Board and Commission members.
- Offered staff and Board and Commission training using *Resilience in Vulnerable Communities: The Preservation of Gullah Geechee Communities in Hilton Head, South Carolina* webinar in February 2021.
- Conducted staff training on Family Compound and Family Subdivision LMO amendments in September 2021.
- Received approval of draft program from Gullah Task Force in December 2021.
- Receive approval of draft program from Town Council. 1st Quarter 2022.
- Schedule initial orientation program and organize events. 1st Quarter 2022.



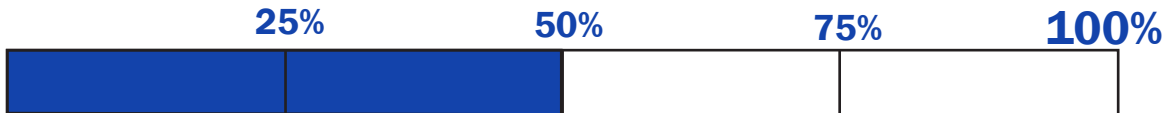
## Priority Recommendation 8

### HP-4: Fund to Clear Property Titles

Establish a fund to help Heirs' Property owners clear the title to their land.



#### Percent Complete



- **Create a Community Foundation of the Lowcountry fund to clear Heirs' Property titles.**
- **Preserve family land by preventing sales by non-resident owners.**

- Met with Community Foundation of the Lowcountry to discuss creating a fund.
- Researched Farm Service Administration Heirs' Property Relending Program as possible funding source.
- Informed community members of process to clear property titles and promoted organizations on Town's website.
- Explore the opportunities and responsibilities associated with creating a fund with the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry.  
2nd Quarter 2022 - 2nd Quarter 2023.



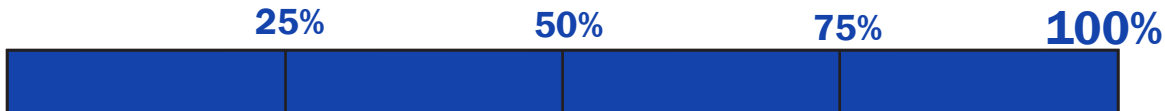
## Priority Recommendation 9

### HP-2: Coordinate with Heirs' Property Organizations

Connect with organizations that can provide legal assistance and/or education for property owners seeking to clear Heirs' Property.



#### Percent Complete



- Understand services provided by Heirs' Property organizations.
- Establish relationships with those organizations.
- Direct Heirs' Property owners to the appropriate resources.

- Established connections with South Carolina Legal Services, South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center, Black Belt Justice Center, Black Family Land Trust, and the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation.
- Created a summary of the services each organization provides for reference and distribution to the Gullah community.
- Continue to refer Heirs' Property owners to the appropriate organization to meet their needs.



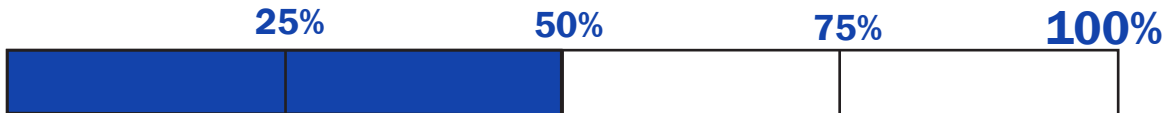
# Priority Recommendation 10



## PP-14: Temporary and Seasonal Signs

Establish a program to provide temporary and seasonal signs for Gullah businesses in Historic Neighborhoods.

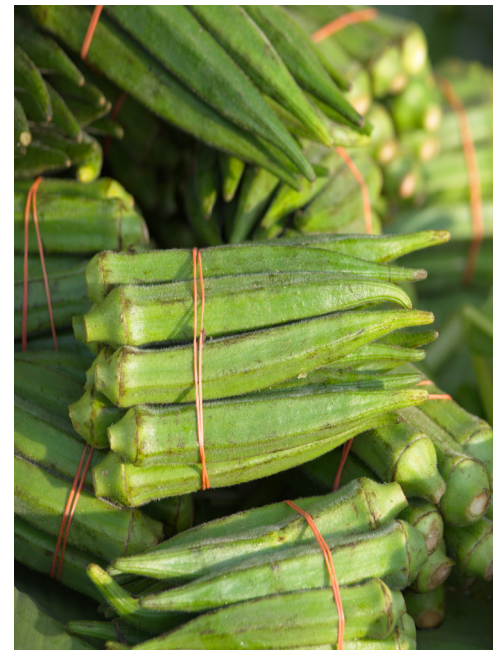
### Percent Complete



- **Identify Gullah businesses with shared signs.**
- **Expand opportunities for Gullah residents and businesses.**
- **Portable, reusable signs distributed by Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association.**

### Overview

- Coordinated with the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association on proposed program.
- Prepared initial sign design and cost estimates.
- Presented program to Public Planning Committee in June 2021. Received feedback and request for additional detail.
- Presented additional detail to Public Planning Committee in July 2021. Received additional feedback and requests for additional detail.
- Identified 10 Gullah businesses that would use the signs to sell their produce and fresh seafood.
- Engage on-call code writing consultant to draft LMO amendments. 1st Quarter 2022.
- Present amendments to the Planning Commission, Public Planning Committee, and Town Council. 2nd Quarter 2022 - 3rd Quarter 2022.
- Partner with the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association to manage the distribution and maintenance of signs. 3rd Quarter 2022.



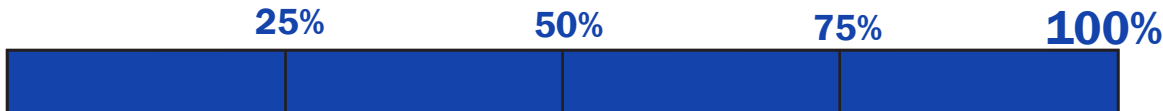
# Priority Recommendation 11



## HP-1: Heirs' Property Family Research

Develop a program with the Heritage Library Foundation to provide genealogy research assistance for Gullah families seeking to clear Heirs' Property titles.

### Percent Complete



- Established the Heirs' Property Family Research Project.
- Partnered with Heritage Library and USCB Hilton Head Island.
- Identify heirs using genealogy research.

- ✓ Established with the Heritage Library the criteria to accept client referrals.
- ✓ Worked with the Heritage Library to define available services.
- ✓ Partnered with USCB Hilton Head Island to create a dedicated office with equipment and software.
- ✓ Provided the required equipment and software.
- ✓ Held a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Heirs' Property Family Research Project office on the USCB Hilton Head Island campus in August 2021.

**Heirs' Property Family Research Project**

*Sponsored by the Town of Hilton Head Island in partnership with its Gullah Geechee Culture and Land Preservation Task Force, the Heritage Library and the University of South Carolina Beaufort.*

**PROJECT PURPOSE**  
The project aims to assist families with the genealogy research necessary for building a family tree that can be used for heirs' property claims and valid land deeds. Heirs' property is land that has been passed down from the original deed holder to succeeding generations without benefit of a formal will or probate. Although the family members know they own the land, their claim to it has not been established by the county. This leaves the family without a title and vulnerable to exploitation, no matter who lives there or who pays the taxes, and restricts the land from development.

**PROJECT GUIDELINES:**

- Clients are accepted for the project based upon a referral from the Office of Historic Neighborhoods Preservation, Town of Hilton Head Island.
- The project is open to Hilton Head Island families that qualify based on their current situation with heirs' property.
- Heritage library volunteers will be assigned to assist clients with genealogy research.
- Families accepted for the project will be contacted by a Heritage Library volunteer.

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SheryseD@hiltonheadislandsc.gov

**The Heirs' Property Family Research Project Office**  
University of South Carolina Beaufort  
Hilton Head Island Campus  
1 Sand Shark Drive, Room 218  
Hilton Head Island, S.C. 29928

**Barbara Catenacci**  
Executive Director  
Heritage Library of Hilton Head Island  
(843) 686-6560  
director@heritagella.org

**Office hours are by appointment only.**  
Call (843) 686-6560 to schedule.

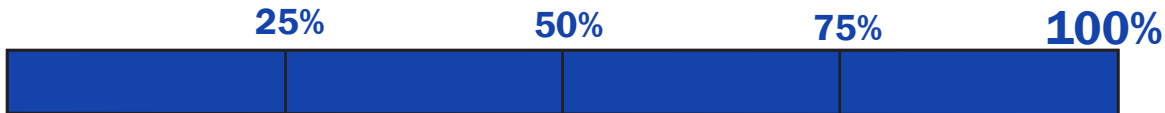
## Priority Recommendation 12



### PP-12: Educational Meetings & Workshops

Host educational meetings and workshops on issues that impact Gullah residents, such as Heirs' Property, development standards, and property taxes.

#### Percent Complete



- Offer quarterly educational opportunities for Gullah community.
- Address Town development standards and challenges that impact Historic Neighborhoods.

- ☑ Established educational outreach programs on topics such as Gullah History and Culture, Development Standards in Historic Neighborhoods, Addressing Policies, etc. to be held quarterly. Held a Community Education Program on Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions on September 30, 2021. Another program on Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions is scheduled for October 20, 2021.
- ☑ Worked with The Links, Inc. to promote education from the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation on Heirs' Property, Forestry, and Wills.
- ☑ Held small group meetings to update community members on development standards, including Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions.



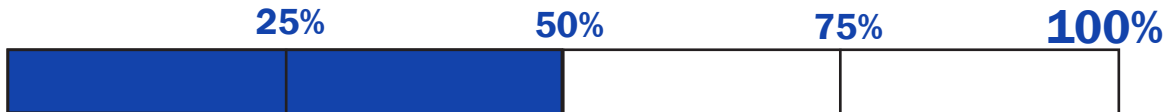
## Priority Recommendation 13



### HP-3: Create Center for Heirs' Property Preservation Satellite Office on Hilton Head Island

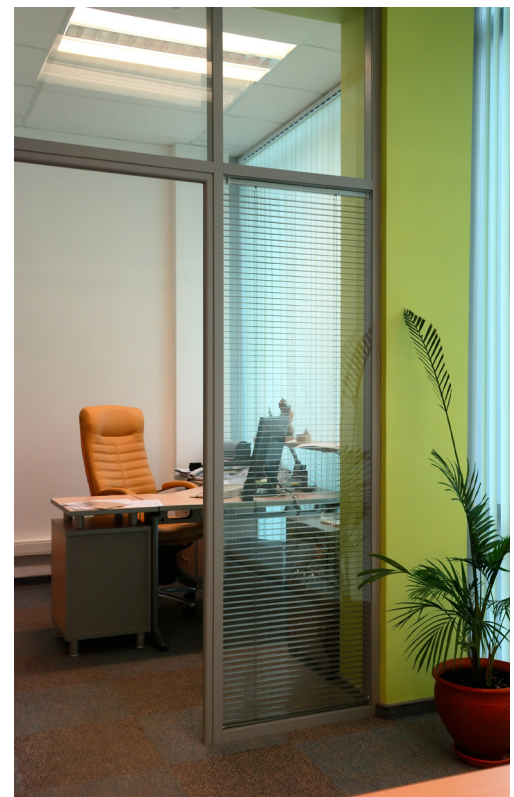
Provide information and assistance to Heirs' Property owners regarding the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation. Explore establishing a satellite office on Hilton Head Island.

#### Percent Complete



- **Promote Center for Heirs' Property Preservation services to qualified Heirs' Property owners.**
- **Facilitate consultations with Center for Heirs' Property Preservation for Island clients.**

- Promoted Center for Heirs' Property Preservation services to qualified Heirs' Property owners.
- Offered Island clients of Center for Heirs' Property Preservation the use of the Heritage Library Family Research Project office at USCB's Hilton Head Island campus for virtual meetings, if needed. (Current Center for Heirs' Property Preservation services are only offered via virtual platforms.)
- Continue to investigate the possibility of creating Center for Heirs' Property Preservation satellite office on Hilton Head Island, including recurring costs and alternative options. 2nd Quarter 2022 - 2nd Quarter 2023.



## Priority Recommendation 14

### CP-1: Promote Heritage Library

Promote the use of the Heritage Library's resources for the Island's Gullah people to research their history and genealogy.



#### Percent Complete

25%

50%

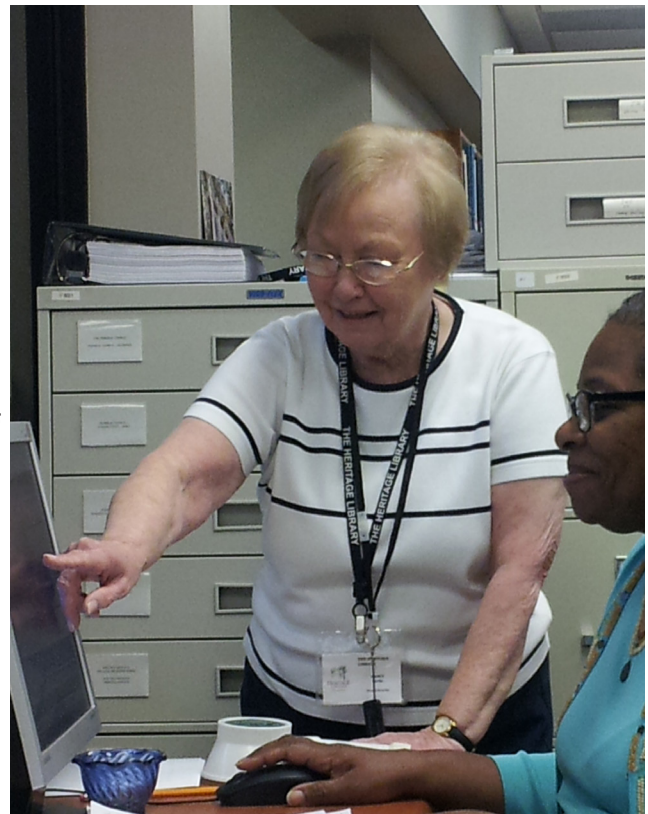
75%

100%



- Increase awareness of the Heritage Library's resources and services.
- Foster knowledge about Gullah history and genealogy.

- ☑ Promoted Heritage Library on Town's website.
- ☑ Notified Gullah community of Heritage Library events.
- ☑ Established the Heirs' Property Family Research Project.
- ☑ Implemented a sustainable communication plan to inform stakeholders, churches, and community organizations of the Heritage Library's resources and of the Family Research Project.





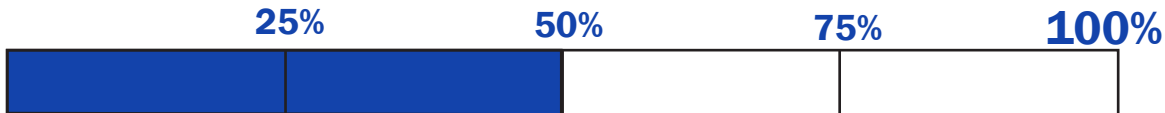
## Priority Recommendation 15

### PP-11: Fund for Delinquent Taxes

Establish a fund to help Heirs' Property owners avoid losing their property to delinquent tax sales.



#### Percent Complete



- **Create a fund with the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry.**
- **Prevent properties from becoming delinquent.**
- **Coordinate with related organizations to identify at-risk properties.**

- Promoted Penn Center's Land Preservation Assistance Program in February 2021.
- Promoted the Pan African Family Empowerment and Land Preservation Network, which pays owners' delinquent taxes.
- Coordinated with related organizations such as Lowcountry Gullah to identify properties that are delinquent and at risk of being lost.
- Explore the opportunities and responsibilities associated with creating a fund with the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry.  
2nd Quarter 2022 - 2nd Quarter 2023.



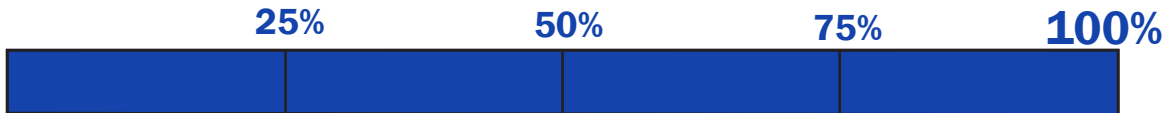
## Priority Recommendation 16



### PP-3: Permitting & Design Studio

A one-stop resource to assist property and business owners in navigating the Town's land use and development standards, preparing development applications, and resolving related issues.

#### Percent Complete



- **Provide personalized guidance.**
- **Current Planning, Urban Design, Fire Rescue, Infrastructure, and Business License assistance.**
- **Reduce barriers to property preservation and development.**

- Provides assistance to property and business owners in the Historic Neighborhoods on a variety of issues, including subdivisions; buffers and setbacks; easements and rights-of-way; property access; dirt roads; mobile home placements; building permit issues; addressing; fire hydrants; and code enforcement issues.
- Offers conceptual site design services and business license assistance.
- Create a communication plan to inform stakeholders, churches, and community organizations of the Historic Neighborhoods Permitting and Design Studio and that staff is available to provide information and assistance.

