



## Planning Commission Meeting

Wednesday, April 24, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Theodore D. Washington Municipal Building, Henry "Emmett" McCracken Jr. Council Chambers,  
20 Bridge Street, Bluffton, SC

### AGENDA

This meeting can be viewed live on [BCTV](#), on Hargray Channel 9 and 113 or on Spectrum Channel 1304.

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

#### II. ROLL CALL

#### III. NOTICE REGARDING ADJOURNMENT

The Planning Commission will not hear new items after 9:30 p.m. unless authorized by a majority vote of the Commission Members present. Items which have not been heard before 9:30 p.m. may be continued to the next regular meeting or a special meeting date as determined by the Commission Members.

#### IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

#### V. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- [1.](#) March 27, 2024 Minutes

#### VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

#### VII. OLD BUSINESS

#### VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- [1.](#) Consideration of an Updated Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan (Staff - Charlotte Moore)

#### IX. DISCUSSION

- [1.](#) Workshop Regarding Housing Analysis Required to Obtain Accommodations Tax (ATAX) Funds to Develop Workforce Housing (Staff - Charlotte Moore)

#### X. ADJOURNMENT

**NEXT MEETING DATE: Wednesday, May 22, 2024**

*“FOIA Compliance – Public notification of this meeting has been published and posted in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Bluffton policies.”*

*In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA"), the Town of Bluffton will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs, or activities. The Town of Bluffton Council Chambers are ADA compatible. Auditory accommodations are available. Any person requiring further accommodation should contact the Town of Bluffton ADA Coordinator at 843.706.4500 or [adacoordinator@townofbluffton.com](mailto:adacoordinator@townofbluffton.com) as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours before the scheduled event.*

*Executive Session – The public body may vote to go into executive session for any item identified for action on the agenda.*

*\*Please note that each member of the public may speak at one public comment session and a form must be filled out and given to the Town Clerk. To submit a public comment online, please click here:*

*<https://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/FormCenter/Town-15/Public-Comment-60>*

*Public comment is limited to 3 minutes per speaker.*



# Planning Commission Meeting

Theodore D. Washington Municipal Building, Henry “Emmett” McCracken Jr. Council Chambers, 20  
Bridge Street, Bluffton, SC

March 27, 2024

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairwoman Denmark called the meeting to order at 6pm.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT**

- Chairwoman Amanda Jackson Denmark
- Vice Chairman Charlie Wetmore
- Commissioner Michael Brock
- Commissioner Rich Delcore
- Commissioner Jim Flynn
- Commissioner Jason Stewart

**ABSENT**

- Commissioner Lydia DePauw

**III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Vice Chairman Wetmore made a motion to adopt the agenda.

Seconded by Commissioner Delcore.

Voting Yea: Chairwoman Jackson Denmark, Vice Chairman Wetmore, Commissioner Brock,  
Commissioner Delcore, Commissioner Flynn, Commissioner Stewart

All were in favor and the motion passed.

**IV. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

- 1. February 28, 2024 Minutes

Commissioner Brock made a motion to approve the minutes as written.

Seconded by Commissioner Flynn.

Voting Yea: Chairwoman Jackson Denmark, Vice Chairman Wetmore, Commissioner Brock,  
Commissioner Delcore, Commissioner Flynn, Commissioner Stewart

All were in favor and the motion passed.

**V. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**VI. OLD BUSINESS**

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

- 1. **Proposed Prioritization of Fiscal Year 2025 Capital Improvement Program Projects:** A request by the Town of Bluffton for recommendation of approval to Town Council of the FY2025 Capital Improvement Program. (Staff - Kimberly Washok-Jones)

Staff presented the FY2024 projects in progress and new FY2025 projects. (Staff submitted a clearer version of the spreadsheet that is in the packet to the Commissioners. This spreadsheet is available for viewing by contacting Town Staff.) The Commission discussed art approval, drainage concerns, cove pedestrian bridge project, the Sarah Riley Hooks cottage project, and land acquisition.

Vice Chairman Wetmore made a motion to recommend approval to Town Council with the consideration of removing number 33 and change land acquisition to a priority of one.

Seconded by Commissioner Stewart.

Voting Yea: Chairwoman Jackson Denmark, Vice Chairman Wetmore, Commissioner Brock, Commissioner Delcore, Commissioner Flynn, Commissioner Stewart

All were in favor and the motion to recommend approval was passed.

- 2. Public Hearing - Unified Development Ordinance Amendments (Zoning Text Amendments):** Amendments to the Town of Bluffton's Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23, Unified Development Ordinance, Article 5 – Design Standards, Sec. 5.4 (Wetlands) and Sec. 5.10 (Stormwater); and, Article 9 – Definitions and Interpretations, Sec. 9.2 (Defined Terms). (Staff - Charlotte Moore)

Chairwoman Denmark opened the public hearing. She asked for the first, second and third call for public comment. There were no public comments. The public hearing was closed.

Staff presented. Richardson LaBruce, the attorney for the Planning Commission, provided additional background as to why the amendments were necessary. There was discussion about who determines what is a wetland. A question was asked about a property with dead trees and whether the proposed amendments would have prevented tree loss. Bill Baugher, the Town's Watershed Management Division Manager, replied that it would not.

Commissioner Brock made a motion to recommend approval to Town Council of the amendments to the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances Chapter 23 - Unified Development Ordinance, as submitted by Town Staff, including the following amendment:

1. The addition of the date of adoption of the proposed ordinance to provide a reference date for the National Wetlands Inventory map.

Seconded by Commissioner Delcore.

Voting Yea: Chairwoman Jackson Denmark, Vice Chairman Wetmore, Commissioner Brock, Commissioner Delcore, Commissioner Flynn, Commissioner Stewart

All were in favor and the motion to recommend approval passed.

- 3. Public Hearing - Cornerstone Church Campus Rezoning Request (Zoning Map Amendment):** A request by Nathan Sturre of Sturre Engineering on behalf of the property owners Cornerstone Church of Bluffton and Lalie Mole for approval of a zoning map amendment. The request is to rezone parcel R610 036 000 0014 0000 from Planned Unit Development (PUD) to Agriculture (AG) and Rural Mixed-Use (RMU), and rezone R610036 000 014B 0000 from Planned Unit Development (PUD) to Agriculture (AG). The former parcel is addressed 11 Grassey Lane consisting of approximately 41.29 acres and the latter parcel is addressed 21 Lake Lane consisting of approximately 2.02 acres. (ZONE-02-24-018921) (Staff – Dan Frazier)

Staff presented.

Chairwoman Denmark opened the Public Hearing. She asked for the first call of public comment.

Allen Dise, 284 Wheelhouse Way, Bluffton. Mr. Dise is a member of the Cornerstone Church. Mr. Dise felt the rezoning would be beneficial for the Town, the neighbors and the church.

Mark Cechini, 180 Wheelhouse Way, Bluffton. Mr. Cechini felt that this was not the right use for the property. Mr. Cechini is concerned about the amount of parking that would be needed. He stated that the applicant had not reached out to the neighbors. He is against the development.

Josh Cooke, 41 Buck Point Road, Bluffton. Mr. Cooke spoke in support of the rezoning.

There was a second and third call for public comment. There were no more public comments and the public hearing was closed.

Applicant stated community meeting will be on April 8. Public comment statements were addressed including the difference in zoning and proposed parking. LaBruce reviewed what is being asked of the Commission. There was discussion about if the lighting and parking requirements were different in the Planned Unit Development zoning versus the Agricultural zoning. The Commission discussed what the zoning uses would change to.

Vice Chairman Wetmore made a motion to recommend approval to Town Council.

Seconded by Commissioner Stewart.

Voting Yea: Chairwoman Jackson Denmark, Vice Chairman Wetmore, Commissioner Brock, Commissioner Delcore, Commissioner Flynn, Commissioner Stewart

All were in favor and the motion to recommend approval was passed.

## **VIII. DISCUSSION**

### **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Brock made a motion to adjourn.

Seconded by Commissioner Delcore.

Voting Yea: Chairwoman Jackson Denmark, Vice Chairman Wetmore, Commissioner Brock, Commissioner Delcore, Commissioner Flynn, Commissioner Stewart

All were in favor and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 7pm.

# PLANNING COMMISSION

## STAFF REPORT

### Growth Management Department



<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	April 24, 2024
<b>PROJECT:</b>	Consideration of an Updated Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b>	Charlotte Moore, AICP Principal Planner

**BACKGROUND:** Initially adopted by Town Council in 2009, the *Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan* was developed to address resident concerns related to inadequate infrastructure, land development pressures, and community safety. With the passing of 15 years and an updated Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Town in 2022 (*Blueprint Bluffton*), an assessment of the earlier plan provides an opportunity to determine if identified actions were achieved and whether unrealized actions should continue to be pursued with an updated plan. The update, referred to as the *Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Update*, also allows for the identification of present-day needs and goals. The Town’s Fiscal Year (FY) 23-24 Strategic Plan identifies the Plan update as a priority for its community quality of life focus area. The boundaries of the community are shown in Attachment 1. The proposed plan update is provided as Attachment 2, and the approved 2009 plan is provided as Attachment 3.

The update is divided into three sections: Overview and Background, Existing Conditions, and an Action Plan. The Overview and Background section describes the neighborhood planning process and the Buck Island-Simmonsville community, including a brief historic overview. The Existing Conditions section includes demographic, land use/zoning, housing, transportation/mobility, public safety, public services, and other relevant data that provide a snapshot of the neighborhood’s assets, challenges, and opportunities. The Action Plan includes strategies that can be undertaken to achieve the objectives that were identified by an Advisory Committee through a series of meetings with Town staff, as well as two neighborhood meetings. Responsible Town departments, potential partners and a suggested timeline for completion of the strategies are included.

The acceptance or adoption of the *Neighborhood Plan Update* is not a guarantee or a commitment of Town resources. The identified action items and strategies, depending on their nature, will be considered by Town Council during the annual strategic planning process in which projects for the upcoming fiscal year are identified, prioritized and a budget established.

Neighborhood meetings were held on April 25, 2023, and on March 14, 2024.

Town Staff may continue to make minor revisions to the plan, such as photography. No substantive changes are proposed.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Neighborhood Plan Procedure	Date	Complete
Step 1. Planning Commission Recommendation	April 24, 2024	✘
Step 2. Town Council – Public Meeting	May, 14, 2024	✘

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Recommend approval of the proposed Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update to Town Council with any revisions deemed necessary by Town Staff.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Community Boundaries Map
2. Proposed Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update-Draft 3
3. Approved 2009 Buck-Island Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan

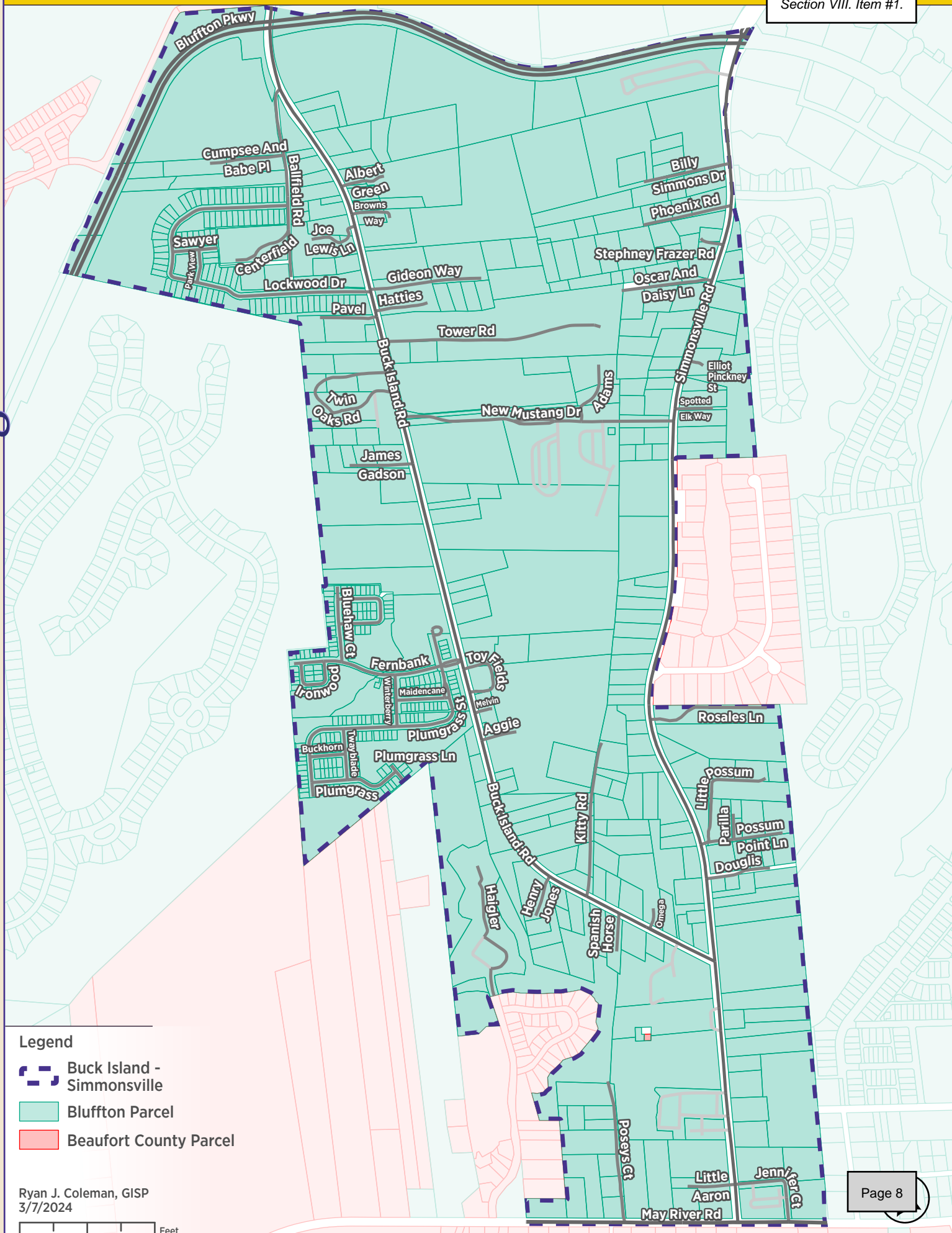


# Neighborhood Plan Area

ATTACHMENT 4

Section VIII. Item #1.

# Buck Island - Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan



- Legend**
- Buck Island - Simmonsville
  - Bluffton Parcel
  - Beaufort County Parcel

Ryan J. Coleman, GISP  
3/7/2024

0 250 500 1,000 Feet





# BUCK ISLAND-SIMMONSVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN UPDATE



## Town of Bluffton [Approval Date TBD] 2024



**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*The Town appreciates the assistance of all who contributed to this plan and attended associated meetings. Special thanks to those individuals who provided guidance throughout the plan development process.*

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

- Larry C. Toomer, Mayor
- Dan Wood, Mayor Pro-Tempore
- Bridgette Frazier
- Fred Hamilton
- Emily Burden

With assistance from:

Lisa Sulka, Mayor (2008—2024)

**TOWN MANAGER**

- Stephen Steese

**ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGERS**

- Heather Colin, AICP
- Chris Forster, MPA, CPFO, CGFM

**TOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT**

- Joseph Babkiewicz, Chief of Police

**TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION**

**TOWN GROWTH MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT**

- Kevin Icard, AICP, Director of Growth Management
- Charlotte Moore, AICP
- Victoria Smalls
- Angie Castrillón, Intern (University of Florida)

**TOWN PROJECTS & WATERSHED RESILIENCE DEPARTMENT**

- Kim Washok, Director, M.S., CEPSCI
- Mark Maxwell, MPA

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

- Ryan Coleman, GISP
- Diego Farias

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

- Dan Wiltse, Bluffton Township Fire District
- Carol C. Crutchfeld, Beaufort County School District

**NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING PARTICIPANTS**

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

- Sharon Brown
- Bridgette Frazier, Bluffton Town Councilwoman
- Carletha Frazier
- Renty Kitty
- E. Jennifer Morrow
- Denolis Polite
- Ray Pringle
- With assistance from:
- Fred Hamilton, Bluffton Town Councilman
- Bertha Gadson
- Rev. Gwendolyn Green



# Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

Page

2	<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>
5	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>
6	<b>BUCK ISLAND-SIMMONSVILLE HIGHLIGHTS</b>
7	<b>INTRODUCTION &amp; BACKGROUND</b>
8	Neighborhood Planning Process
10	Community Location & Character
14	Historic Overview
19	<b>EXISTING CONDITIONS</b>
20	Demographic Profile
26	Community Involvement & Identity
33	Land Use & Zoning
42	Housing
50	Transportation & Mobility
54	Public Infrastructure & Services
62	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
70	<b>APPENDIX</b>
	Maps, Figures, Tables and Footnote References

**Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update**



*Home c. 1930*



*Eagles Field*



*Night of Unity*



*2009 Neighborhood Plan*



*Buck Island & Simmons ville Roads Intersection*



*Bluffton Middle School Sign*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Plan Purpose

Initially adopted by Town Council in 2009, the *Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan* was developed to address resident concerns related to inadequate infrastructure, land development pressures, and community safety. With the passing of 15 years and an updated Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Town in 2022 (*Blueprint Bluffton*), an assessment of the earlier plan provides an opportunity to determine if identified actions were achieved and whether unrealized actions should continue to be pursued with an updated plan. The update also allows for identification of present-day needs and goals. The Town's Fiscal Year (FY) 23-24 Strategic Plan identifies the Plan update as a priority for its community quality of life focus area.

### Plan Overview

This update (*Neighborhood Plan Update*) is divided into three sections: Introduction and Background, Existing Conditions, and an Action Plan. An explanation of each section follows.

The **Introduction and Background** describes the neighborhood planning process and the Buck Island-Simmonsville community, including a brief historic overview.

The **Existing Conditions** section includes demographic, land use and zoning, housing, transportation and mobility, public infrastructure and services information, as well as other relevant data that provide a snapshot of the neighborhood's assets, challenges, and opportunities. An analysis of this data supports the development of goals and objectives.

The **Action Plan** includes strategies that can be undertaken to achieve the objectives that were identified through a series of meetings with the *Neighborhood Plan Update's* advisory committee, Town staff, and that were refined with community input. Responsible Town departments, potential partners and a suggested timeline for completion are included.

The acceptance or adoption of the *Neighborhood Plan Update* is not a guarantee or a commitment of Town resources, and Town Council may opt to re-prioritize strategies. Some or all of the identified action items and strategies, depending on their nature, will be considered by Town Council during the annual strategic planning process in which projects for the upcoming fiscal year are identified, prioritized and a budget established.



Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

<b>Buck Island-Simmons ville Highlights</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Community total square miles</b>
<b>2,157</b>	<b>Population (2020)*</b>
<b>15%</b>	<b>Population increase from 2000 to 2020</b>
<b>831</b>	<b>Anticipated number of new residents based on 2.77 people per household*</b>
<b>32.8</b>	<b>Median age of residents (2020)*</b>
<b>30.9%</b>	<b>Residents aged 17 and under (2020)*</b>
<b>34.5%</b>	<b>Residents who are Hispanic (2020)*</b>
<b>623</b>	<b>Number of individual lots</b>
<b>±94%</b>	<b>Residentially-zoned land in community</b>
<b>396</b>	<b>Residential dwellings planned for area as of April 2024</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Workforce /Affordable dwellings to be constructed by Town public-private partnership</b>
<b>&gt;\$8.3</b>	<b>Millions of dollars invested in community infrastructure</b>
<b>2.65</b>	<b>Total miles of sidewalk installed</b>

\* 2020 U.S. Census



***INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND***

**Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Update**

**NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROCESS**

The development of the Neighborhood Plan Update was guided by a seven-person advisory committee, some of whom participated in the initial plan process in 2009.

A neighborhood meeting was held on April 25, 2023 at the Rotary Community Center at Oscar Frazier Park. The meeting provided an opportunity to update the attendees on the status of projects within the neighborhood, provide an overview of the plan update, and to ask questions of Town staff. Of the 52 people who signed-in, 23 completed a survey (18 of whom were unfamiliar with the 2009 plan). The majority of respondents were residents of the area for more than 20 years. Improvements cited as most needed included a playground and the completion of sidewalks, sewer lines and lighting installation. Vehicular speeding through the neighborhood was also mentioned as a concern.



*Initial neighborhood meeting and presentation by Town staff, April 25, 2023.*

The Advisory Committee met with Town staff on five occasions from May thru August, 2023. The series of meetings provided an opportunity to identify community needs and aspirations relative to the following areas: community involvement and identity, land use and zoning, housing, transportation and mobility, public infrastructure and services. Speakers included Bluffton Town Manager Stephen Steese, Bluffton Assistant Town Manger Heather Colin, Bluffton Police Chief Joseph Babkiewicz, Bluffton Township Fire Marshal Dan Wiltse, and Town of Bluffton Director of Projects and Watershed Resilience, Kim Washok.



## Neighborhood Planning Process



*Posted at the intersection of Buck Island and Simmonsville roads, signs in English and Spanish announced the second neighborhood meeting March 14, 2004.*

The second neighborhood meeting was held on March 14, 2024 with a smaller attendance (33 people signed-in). Town Staff discussed the Neighborhood Assistance Program, provided an update of the status of development projects in the area, and presented an overview of the Neighborhood Plan Update, including the proposed recommendations. Most questions asked of Town Staff related to development projects. With regard to the Plan recommendations, attendees were asked to share their own recommendations by adding them to a strategy board; however, no suggestions were received. Regarding the future Town park to be located at 140 Buck Island, only one suggestion as to possible park amenities was submitted. Opportunities to participate in planning the future park will be available.

The Neighborhood Plan Update was presented to the Planning Commission on April 24 for a recommendation to Town Council.

[COMPLETE WHEN TOWN COUNCIL DECISION FINALIZED.]



*Town staff was available to answer questions from community residents at both neighborhood meetings.*

COMMUNITY LOCATION AND CHARACTER

Generally, the Buck Island-Simmons ville community is located between May River Road to the south and Bluffton Parkway to the north, approximately one mile northwest of Old Town Bluffton. The area is approximately 1.0 square miles. The community takes its name from the two main north-south roads through the community—Buck Island Road (extending from U.S. 278/Fording Island Road south to May River Road/S.C. 46) and Simmons ville Road (extending from U.S. 278 south to its intersection with Buck Island Road). Map 1 on the following page shows its regional location, followed by maps of the plan area (Maps 2 and 3).



The agricultural past of the community is still present in some areas of the Buck Island-Simmons ville neighborhood.

The area was settled by families, including Gullah descendants, who owned and operated small farms. Agricultural land use, however, began to decline in the 1980s as new housing was developed. Parcels of land were often subdivided into small lots to allow family members to build their own homes or were sold to new families or businesses. These changes have led to a diverse residential population.

The area is now characterized as mostly suburban single-family residential with stick-built and manufactured homes, with some large residential or undeveloped lots remaining. In the southern portion of the neighborhood near May River Road there is limited light industrial development and commercial development. Bluffton Middle School was developed in the center of the neighborhood in 2010. Known and anticipated future development at the time of plan preparation includes a single-family subdivision (development is underway), a multi-family apartment complex , and a brewery with associated retail and restaurant.

For the purposes of this Plan, boundaries of the neighborhood differ from the boundaries used in the 2009 neighborhood plan and may differ from the boundaries used by long-time residents. For this update, Windy Lakes residential subdivision is not included as it is not located within Town limits. Likewise, Hidden Lakes subdivision is not included as it is physically separated from the Buck Island-Simmons ville community with the exception of a street connection at Simmons ville Road. In addition, development of Bluffton Parkway and residential and commercial development—especially on Buck Island Road north of Bluffton Parkway—have changed the neighborhood and led to a physical separation.



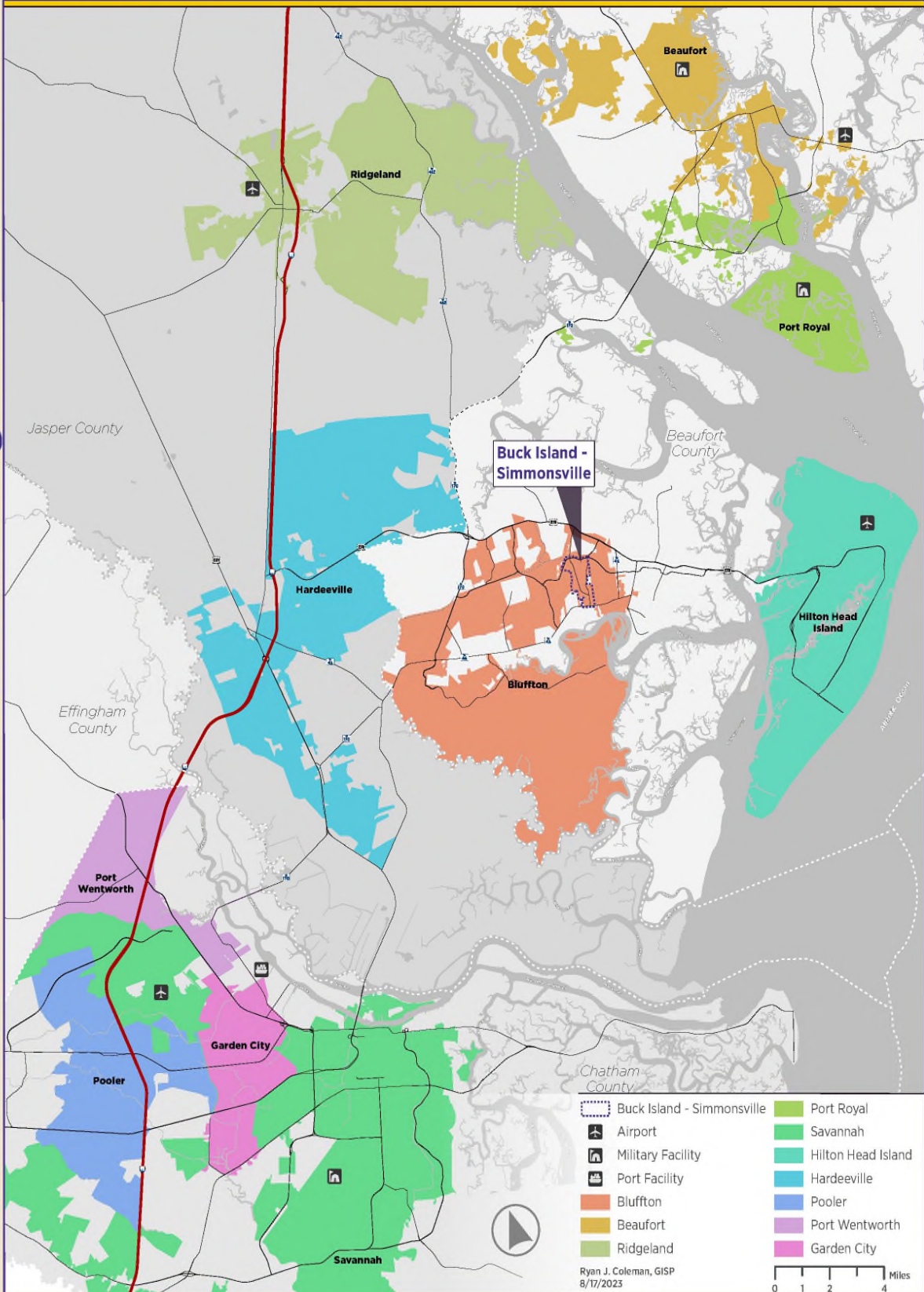
Community Location & Character



# Location

Map 1

## Buck Island - Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan





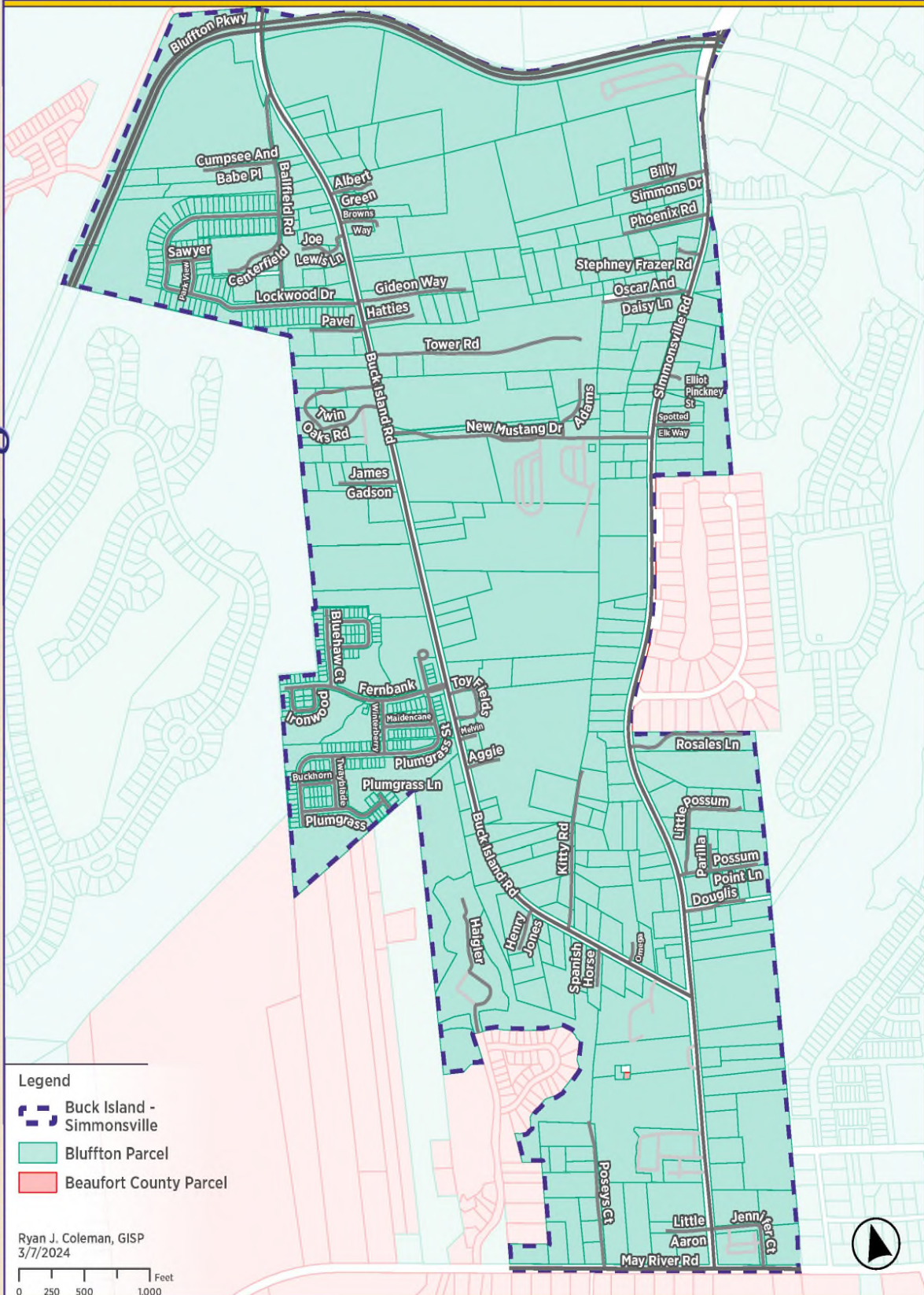
Buck Island-Neighborhood Plan Update



# Neighborhood Plan Area

Map 2

## Buck Island - Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan







# Aerial Photography 2023

Map 3

## Buck Island - Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan



## HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The Buck Island-Simmons ville community takes its name from the two major north-south roads that transect the neighborhood. The road begins at the intersection of May River Road and extends north for approximately 0.3 miles at which point the road forks; Buck Island Road continues in a northwesterly direction and Simmons ville Road begins. Both roads cross Bluffton Parkway and terminate at US-278 (Fording Island Road).

Previously, the section of road from the Buck Island-Simmons ville fork south to May River Road was called “Simmons ville Road,” but it is unclear why the name of this section was changed to “Buck Island Road.” Development along these corridors is predominantly residential with some commercial, mostly in the southern portion of the neighborhood, and the majority of buildings have been constructed since the 1940s. Residential buildings are a mix of early twentieth-century cottages, ranch-style houses, manufactured homes, and modern infill.

The area is characterized by a tight-knit residential community with many long-time residents, some of whom are descendants of early property owners. Over the years, homesteads have been subdivided into smaller lots or sold. The physical evolution of the community is recorded with [historic aerial photography](#) that can be viewed on the Town of Bluffton’s website.

Written history of the community is not readily available and requires more extensive research that is beyond the scope of this plan. Oral histories— anecdotes from existing or former community residents— can also help to provide a fuller picture of the community. An oral history project was conducted concurrently with a historic resource survey completed for the Town in 2019 (*Town of Bluffton Historic Resource Update*) resulting in limited but valuable information, including some information provided in this section.

In 2018 the Town of Bluffton was awarded an **Underrepresented Community Grant** from the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct the before-mentioned historic resource survey of the Buck Island-Simmons ville community, the Goethe-Shults neighborhood, and Old Town Bluffton Historic District. According to the NPS website, the purpose of the grant is to be more inclusive of communities that are not well-represented in the National Register of Historic Places. While the historic resource survey concluded that not enough historic resources existed in Buck Island-Simmons ville neighborhood to establish an historic district, and that no individual structures or sites met the criteria for individual listing in the National Register, some structures and sites are notable, including Eagles Field and the First Zion Missionary Baptist Church Praise House. Information on each follows on the next page.



## Historic Overview



*Eagles Field, as it is known today, has hosted community baseball games for nearly a century.*

**Eagles Field**, located at the southeast corner of Buck Island Road and Bluffton Parkway, has hosted baseball games since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Albert Green first purchased this land in the 1920s and built a baseball field on 14 acres of the property. Green family members maintained and managed the field for more than 50 years<sup>1</sup>. This historic baseball field is home to the Bluffton Eagles baseball team, which is linked to five local Black teams that played in the area beginning in the early 1900s. The Bluffton Eagles team formed when the Buck Island Hawks, Buck Island Eagles, and Troy's

Team combined in 1966 with Sam "Boise" Bennett, Jr. as manager. Bennett, who started playing baseball on a Simmonsville Road-area team when he was young, was the long-time coach and managed the team until he retired in the late 1990s. The related sports complex is named for him. In 1993, the Bluffton Eagles Community Action Committee was created to maintain and manage the field. In 2001, the owner of the property, Del Webb Corporation, deeded the site to the Committee to ensure it would remain the home of the Eagles. The Eagles Field complex includes a playground, basketball court, picnic shelter and is available for event rental.

While not in the boundaries of the plan area, the **Praise House** at 75 Simmonsville Road is associated with the Buck Island – Simmonsville community and is owned by First Zion Missionary Baptist Church, which is located in Old Town Bluffton on Robertson Street. Sited on a lot facing Simmonsville Road, the Praise House is a one-story, wood-frame, gable-roof building with weatherboard siding, standing seam metal roofing, set on a concrete block pier foundation. The west elevation that fronts Simmonsville Road has a central entry flanked by single replacement windows on either side. The building features exposed rafter tails, gable vents, and 2/2 double-hung, wood-sash windows on the north and south elevations. The resource was constructed c. 1850 and was moved here from its original location on nearby Rose Hill Plantation sometime between 1951 and 1958<sup>2</sup>. As cited in the *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, Praise



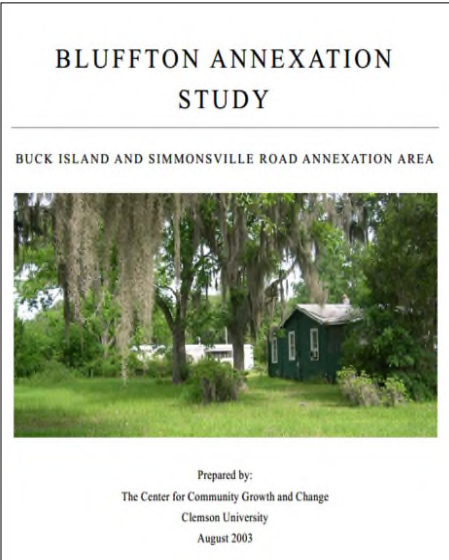
*Relocated in the 1950's from Rose Hill Plantation, this Praise House (c. 1850) is located at 75 Simmonsville Road.*

House was constructed c. 1850 and was moved here from its original location on nearby Rose Hill Plantation sometime between 1951 and 1958<sup>2</sup>. As cited in the *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, Praise

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

Houses (also known as Prayers Houses), were constructed by those enslaved on plantations to provide them a refuge in which to practice their Christian faith. Praise Houses also served as a place in which to hold weddings, funerals, and other events. After the U.S. Civil War, some of these buildings later served as schools and meeting halls<sup>3</sup>.

Also notable is the **Buck Island Cemetery** at 1154 May River Road. While it is not within the *Neighborhood Plan Update* area and is located in unincorporated Beaufort County, it has an association with the Buck Island-Simmons ville community. Dating back to at least the mid-nineteenth century, it is one of several historic Black cemeteries for the greater Bluffton community, and most residents buried here were from the Buck Island and Simmons ville areas<sup>4</sup>.



The Buck Island-Simmons ville community was annexed into the corporate limits of the Town of Bluffton on December 29, 2005, as part of a petition that included nearly 500 parcels. As shown on the Annexation Map on the next page (Map 4), the 2005 annexation included parcels of land adjacent to U.S. Hwy 278, Bluffton Parkway and May River Road.

*A 2003 annexation study was prepared by Clemson University to evaluate the costs associated with annexation of the Buck Island - Simmons ville community.*

Anne Cooke of the **Bluffton Community Association**, also a former Bluffton Town Council member, presented the annexation petition to Town Council at its June 11, 2003 meeting. According to meeting minutes, the need for sewer, sidewalks, and police protection were among the reasons why residents wanted their properties to be incorporated into the Town of Bluffton. At the September 22, 2005 Town Council meeting, an annexation study prepared by Clemson University’s Center for Community Growth and

Change determined that the Town of Bluffton could financially provide the needed services to the area<sup>5</sup>. At this meeting it was also recognized that the minimum number of property owner signatures needed to call a special election to vote on the annexation, 25%, had been obtained. The election was held on December 28, 2005. On December 29, 2005, the Town of Bluffton approved the annexation, which included approximately 1,142 acres, 473 parcels, 517 homes and 400 licensed businesses.





# 2005 Annexation Area

Map 4

## Buck Island - Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan



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***EXISTING CONDITIONS***

**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

The Buck Island-Simmons ville community includes long-time residents. However, as younger generations leave the area and family property is sold, the community is, perhaps, experiencing its greatest period of change in the past century. Its convenient location in the heart of Bluffton and relative affordability in relation to greater Bluffton makes this area attractive for new residents and investors.

As of the plan date, several residential developments have been approved or are proposed within the area, adding nearly 400 new residential dwellings. Based on Bluffton’s 2020 U.S. Census average household size, 2.77 people, upwards to 831 new residents may be possible in the community as the result of these dwellings, continuing to add to its diverse population.

**Available Demographic Data**

An accurate demographic accounting of only the Buck Island-Simmons ville community is impossible because United States Census Bureau (Census Bureau) data boundaries do not coincide with the community boundaries identified for this plan. Additionally, boundary adjustments occur each census, which is undertaken in the first year of each new decade, thus making it impossible to accurately compare earlier data with the most recent data. The last census was held in 2020.

The neighborhood is located in Census Tract 21, the majority of which is within Block Group 21.07 followed by Block Group 21.06 (see Map 5). Block Groups are further broken down into Blocks. The Census Bureau also obtains data in non-decennial years through a process known as the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS data is collected yearly and published as a 5-year estimate, with the most recent being 2017-2021. This plan uses data from both the 2020 decennial census and the ACS.

A Census Tract contains 1,200 to 8,000 people with a goal to keep the size at approximately 4,000 people. Furthermore, Census Tracts are intended to be somewhat homogeneous with regards to demographics and economics. A Census Tract is further subdivided into Block Groups that include approximately 250 to 550 dwelling units. Finally, Block Groups can be subdivided into smaller Blocks to provide demographic information at an almost city block level. The data obtained helps to tell the story of the community and its residents. While Block level data would provide the best demographic information, data is more limited than at the block group and tract level because some personal information may be identifiable given the smaller group of residents.

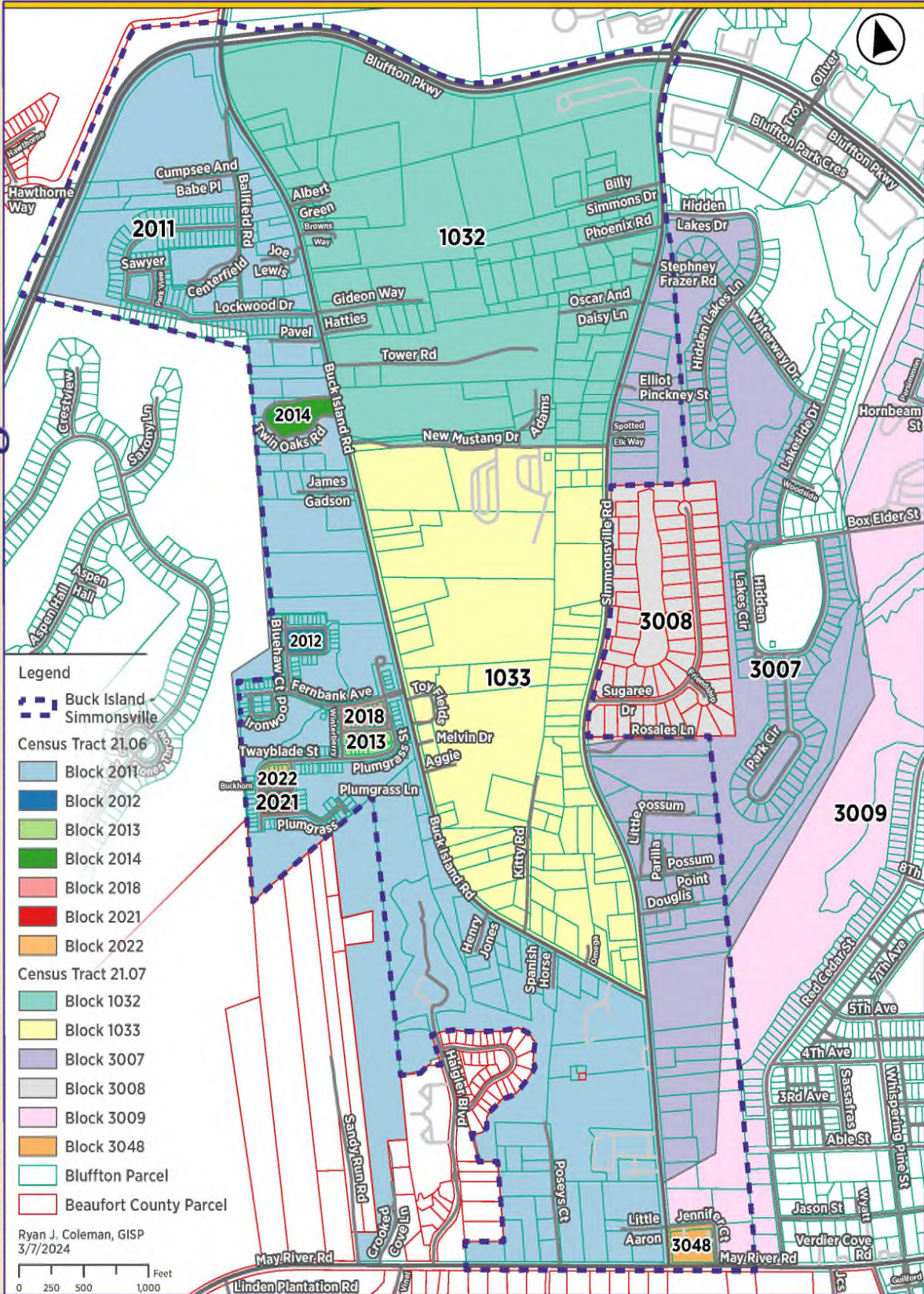




# Census Blocks

Map 5

## Buck Island - Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan



**Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Update**

For Block Group 21.07, Blocks within plan area include: 1032, 1033, 3007, 3009 and 3048. Block 3007 includes portions of the Hidden Lakes subdivision and the Windy Lake subdivision, the latter of which is not located within Town limits. For Block Group 21.06, Blocks include: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2018, 2021 and 2022. Five of the Blocks (12, 13, 18, 21 and 22) are located in Wellstone at Bluffton townhome community. See the Census Map on the previous page (Map 5).

<b>Table 1: Neighborhood Demographics</b>				
<b>Population</b>	<b>BIS 2000 Census</b>	<b>BIS 2020 Census</b>	<b>BIS Change 2000 to 2020</b>	<b>Town of Bluffton 2021 ACS 5yr</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	1,817	2,157	(+15.8%)	27,716
<b>Male</b>	887 (48.8%)	1,066 (49.4%)	(+0.6%)	13,737 (49.8%)
<b>Female</b>	930 (51.2%)	1,091 (50.6%)	(-0.6%)	13,859 (50.2%)
<b>White (alone)</b>	934 (51.4%)	835 (38.7%)	(-12.7%)	21,633
<b>Black (alone)</b>	774 (42.6%)	559 (25.9%)	(-16.7%)	2,212
<b>Some Other Race Alone</b>	109 (6%)	418 (19.4%)	(+13.4)	1,990
<b>Two or More Races</b>	Not available	320 (14.8%)	n/a	1,761
<b>Hispanic</b>	212 (11.7%)	745 (34.5%)	(+22.8)	3,416 (12.3%)
<b>Median Age</b>	Not available	32.8	n/a	38.9
<b>Largest Age Group</b>	Not available	10-14 (10%)	n/a	10-14 (9.4%)

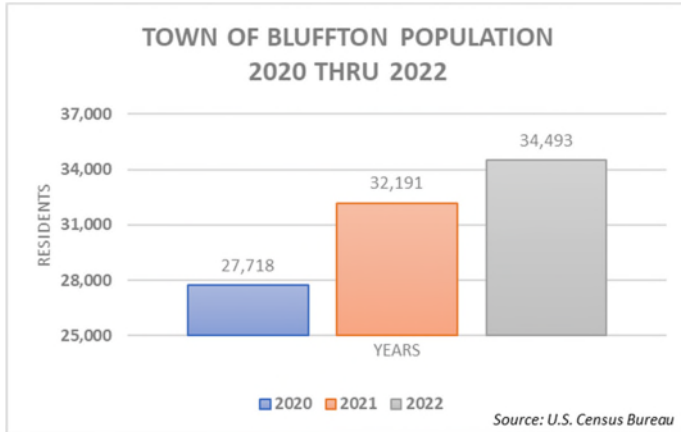
*Source: 2000, 2020 U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2017-2021)*

**Demographic Profile**

**Population**

As indicated in Table 1, the Buck Island-Simmons ville community had a population of 2,157 individuals in 2020—approximately eight percent (8%) of Bluffton’s population of 27,718—and grew nearly 15% from 2000 to 2020. As of July 1, 2022, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the population of Bluffton to be 34,493 residents, a 24.4% increase in just over two years. Figure 1 shows Bluffton’s population change since 2020.

Figure 1



**Gender and Age**

Buck Island-Simmons ville is a youthful community. Those aged 24 years or younger make up 39.1% of all residents. Of this percentage, children under the age of 18 are 30.9%, with boys in this group being the largest age group for the area at 366. The largest age group for women is the 35-49 age range. In comparison, those 24 years or younger are 32.2% of all Bluffton residents, with children under the age of 18 being 26.7% of the group. For both males and females, children aged 10-14 make up the largest age group. See Table 2 on the next page.

Overall, median age has increased in the community, town, and region. The 2020 Census identified the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton metropolitan statistical area among the top three locations in the United States for greatest increase in median age at 47.8 years; Bluffton’s median was 38.9 years. The average age for the Buck Island-Simmons ville community in 2000 was 28.5; in 2020, the median was 32.8. The median age for Hispanic residents in 2020 was one year younger at 31.8 years.

**Race**

Racially, Buck Island-Simmons ville is an area of diverse residents. Residents who identified themselves as one race alone declined from 2000 to 2020. In 2020, as shown in Figure 2 on the next page, approximately 39% of community residents identified as White alone (835) and 26% identified as black alone (559). This decline may be due to the increase of residents who identified themselves as “Some Other Race Alone” (418) or “Two or More Races” (320). Together, these two groups are 34.2% of the overall Buck Island-Simmons ville population. “Some Other Race Alone” means those who did not identify with one of the five Census Bureau race categories, which include Asian, Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander in addition to White and Black.



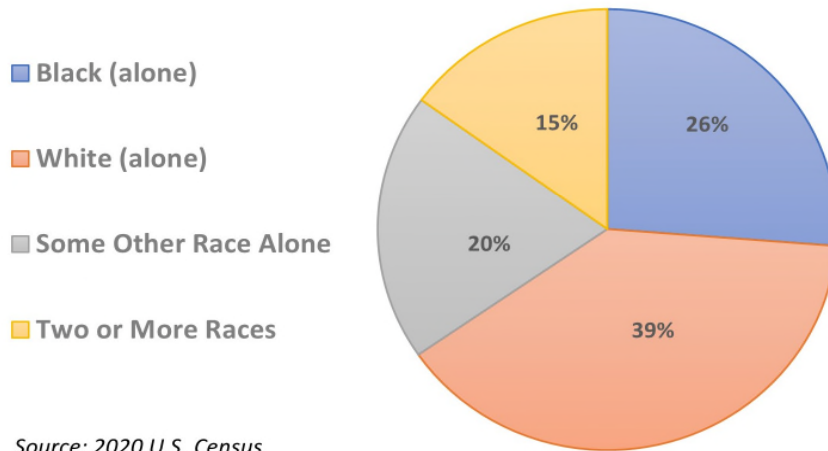
Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

Table 2: 2020 Residents by Gender & Age				
Age Range	Males		Females	
	#	%	#	%
17 & Under	366	17%	300	13.9%
18-24	63	2.9%	115	5.3%
25-34	137	6.4%	167	7.7%
35-49	275	12.7%	322	15%
50-64	156	7.2%	94	4.4%
65-74	53	2.5%	72	3.3%
75+	16	0.74%	21	0.97%
Total	1066	49.4%	1091	50.6%

Source: 2020 U.S. Census

Figure 2

RESIDENTS BY RACE



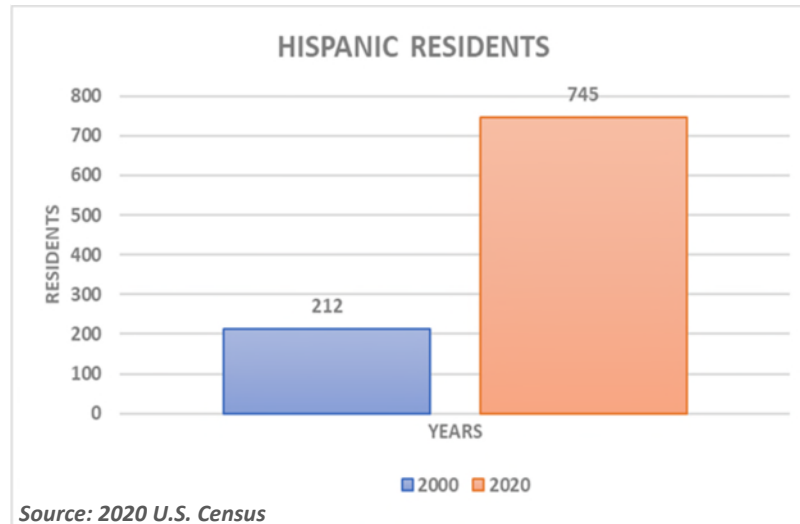
Source: 2020 U.S. Census

### Hispanic and Latino Ethnicity

Hispanic and Latino residents may be any race. Hispanics are from or have origins in one or more Spanish-speaking countries, while Latinos are from or have origins in one or more Latin American countries (Mexico, Central and South America). The increase of Hispanic and Latino residents in Bluffton and the Buck Island-Simmons ville community has been considerable in the last 20 years. As shown in Figure 3, there were 745 Hispanic and Latino residents in the BIS community (34.5%) in 2020, up from 212 residents (11.7%) in 2000. Bluffton's total Hispanic and Latino population in 2020 was 3,416 (12.3%).

Despite the increase in Hispanic and Latino residents, these citizens are under-represented at community meetings and on Town boards and committees. Identifying and understanding why this is will assist the Town with improving engagement.

Figure 3



### Household Types

There were 688 individual households in the Buck Island-Simmons ville community as of 2020. A household includes all the people living in a single dwelling unit who may be related or unrelated. As reported by the ACS 2021 5-year, 86.5% of all households include families with most having a married couple (72.1%). This is followed by non-family households (13.5%), households led by females (13.5%) and households led by males (1.6%).

Additional demographic attributes are available at the higher block group level but are not included in this plan as block groups extend beyond the plan boundaries. The inclusion of data from adjacent neighborhoods would not provide the most accurate portrait of the residents of the Buck Island-Simmons ville community.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND IDENTITY

Community Involvement

While there are individuals who work to better the Buck Island – Simmons ville community, there is no neighborhood association, a voluntary organization for residents. Such an association can advocate for its residents, identify neighborhood issues and work to find solutions and partnerships, share resources, and offer fellowship among other activities. Associations that are registered as a non-profit may also be eligible for certain tax-free benefits and grants. Guides to help form a neighborhood association are available on the Internet. In absence of an association, faith-based institutions can help to fill the void.

Additionally, as some concerns are specific to native residents, a task force could serve as a platform to address issues that are unique to this group and that may include other areas of Bluffton. As an example, in Mount Pleasant, approximately a dozen native neighborhoods or “settlement communities” came together to create a Settlement Communities Task Force to develop a report and recommendations for these areas. The Town of Hilton Head Island has a similar standing group, Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force, to identify and help resolve a variety of issues that are common and specific to native citizens. Gullah communities on Hilton Head Island are referred to as “native islander communities.” Similarly, Hispanic residents could join together to address matters that may be specific to their growing community.



Concern for the future of “settlement communities” within Mount Pleasant resulted in the development of a report and recommendations.

In 2023, a multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency initiative in Charleston and Berkeley counties called the Gullah Geechee Heritage Preservation Project was established to recognize, document and preserve Gullah Geechee communities with a grant from the National Park Service. A Beaufort County version could be a consideration.

A Neighborhood Watch group previously existed in the community but no longer functions. Advisory Committee members did not recall when meetings ceased. The purpose of a Neighborhood Watch is to bring residents and local law enforcement together to improve resident



## Community Involvement &amp; Identity

safety and prepare for emergencies. Committee members expressed a desire to improve safety in the neighborhood and possibly reconstituting a similar group.

### Community Events

Neighborhood meetings are typically held at Rotary Community Center at Oscar Frazier Park and have also been held in the cafeteria at Bluffton Middle School as there is no community facility within the neighborhood. Other community events within the neighborhood have been held at Eagles Field, a private recreational facility.

For seven years, National Night Out was held at Eagles Field. National Night Out is a nationwide event held each August to strengthen the partnership between the community, local law enforcement and other first responders. The Town of Bluffton retired this event in 2022 in favor of a Safety Spooktacular—a combination of a Halloween event for children and an opportunity to meet first responders and other local service agencies. Safety Spooktacular is held at Oscar Frazier Park.

While discussing community events, the Advisory Committee suggested that another event should be held to bring residents and the Bluffton Police Department together for fun and fellowship. Because resident interaction with law enforcement is too often the result of an unfortunate circumstance, the Advisory Committee felt that an uplifting celebration was in order. This discussion resulted in “A Night of Unity,” to be hosted by the Bluffton Police Department at Oscar Frazier Park. An evening of camaraderie, food, fun, and music from local church choirs was scheduled for September 14, 2023 but was canceled due to poor weather. Because of other already scheduled events, inaugural Night of Unity was held on January 11, 2024 at Buckwalter Place Park. Seven faith-based institutions participated and food and drinks were served.

While not a regularly scheduled event, the Town has also hosted a neighborhood-wide clean-up by placing roll-off dumpsters in the neighborhood to allow residents to remove bulk items and other materials from their property at no charge. Each April Beaufort County and Town of Bluffton employees honor Earth Day with the clean-up of roadside trash throughout the community, including the Buck Island-Simmons ville neighborhood.

### Community Identity and Art

When the Advisory Committee discussed how the Buck Island-Simmons ville community could be recognized, opinions varied. Some questioned if the neighborhood had a real identity.

Community identity is formed by a variety of factors and are often based on land characteristics, how the land is or was used, and who settled the area. Over time, certain events, sites, culture, institutions and businesses, and residents can also factor into the formation of a com-

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

munity’s unique identity. Community identity is a collective identity that can “create pride, self-respect, unity, a sense of belonging, and social responsibility which [can lead] to participation in community activities<sup>6</sup>.” Ways in which community pride could be physically demonstrated follow.

Street Signage

Some communities and districts use signage that may or may not include a unique logo to identify the area. For instance, street entryways into the community or at the intersection of Buck Island and Simmons ville roads could include a welcome sign within the community’s name or some other identifier to recognize and announce the neighborhood.



The above street topper honors early residents of the New Quaker neighborhood of Denton, Texas. Source: cityofdenton.com

Street signs with a “topper” that include a district or neighborhood name and logo have become a popular, relatively inexpensive way to identify an area. The City of Denton, Texas, for example, has a street sign topper program with established guidelines and even issued a call to artists to assist with developing logos for participating neighborhoods.

As Buck Island and Simmons ville roads are both State-owned roads, permission would be required to use the right-of-way and for use of shared signage if residents wish to pursue a similar program. Private driveway signage erected by the Town of Bluffton may be another possibility.

Murals

Murals may also provide an opportunity to celebrate Buck Island-Simmons ville that could be explored.

The photo on the next page shows a building mural in North St. Louis, Missouri that is a “depiction of Black families controlling [their] own culture and food economy by planting, growing and harvesting food from the garden.” The website on which it appears notes that murals “...provide a vibrant visual rendition of [a] neighborhood’s history, its current revitalization projects, and its thriving future. Artistic and cultural revitalization projects like this bring beauty, pride, and cohesion...and point to the positive future to come.<sup>8</sup>”

Small structures, such as utility sheds and even baseball dugouts, can also depict community scenes and history. Recognition of community leaders, as shown in the second photo, could honor those who serve or have served Buck Island-Simmons ville and Bluffton.

Community Involvement & Identity



A building mural in North St. Louis, Missouri celebrates the cultivation of agriculture and community..  
Source: Blackpowerblueprint.org



This high school baseball dugout in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma depicts local educators, athletes, musicians, and authors. Source: KFOR.com



Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

**Construction Fence and Permanent Fence Murals**

Historic images and murals painted or printed on fabric attached to temporary construction or permanent fencing may be another possibility to integrate art into the community. Some communities have developed formal programs for this type of display, such as the City of West Hollywood, California that has an “art on construction fence” program with basic guidelines. Guidelines specific to Bluffton could be established for a similar program through the Town’s Public Art Committee.



*High school students in the Los Angeles area produced artwork for a public transportation project.*

**Utility Boxes**

Another increasingly popular way to celebrate community is the painting or wrapping of utility boxes with art (see photos on next page). Utility box art programs can be found throughout the country and are in partnership with utility providers who must grant permission to use its equipment.

The City of Urbana, Illinois has a utility box mural program that is sponsored by the City’s Arts and Cultural Program and features local artists (see photos on next page)<sup>7</sup>. The Town’s Public Art Committee could explore this possibility.

**Community Spaces**

The City of Urbana has another notable program that incorporates art into community gardens (see photo on next page). The intent is to “...engage in creative placemaking and beautification...” Art is specific to each community garden and uses or supplements the gardens resources, such as seating, planting boxes, signs, walls, posts, and shade screens. Gardens can also serve as small gathering places for residents. While a community garden does not exist within the Buck Island—Simmons ville community, land donation, lease or shared space could be explored.



Community Involvement & Identity

Urbana's  
**UTILITY BOX  
 MURALS**  
 SPONSORED BY  
 The Urbana Arts and Culture Program



**FEATURING**

SELECTED ARTISTS

- ① CONVERGENT EVOLUTION by EKAH  
Crystal Lake Park Aquatic Center
- ② GREENHOUSE II by Megan Hinds  
NE Corner of Race and Main Sts. Urbana
- ③ QUIET MEND 5 by Lisa Kesler  
The Lake House in Crystal Lake Park
- ④ GUILT TRIP by BLACKMAU  
NE Corner of Main and Illinois Sts. Urbana

*Works of local artists are featured on utility boxes throughout the city of Urbana, Illinois.  
 Source: urbanaininois.us*



*Community garden hardscape provides opportunities to showcase artistic expression.  
 Source: urbanaininois.us*



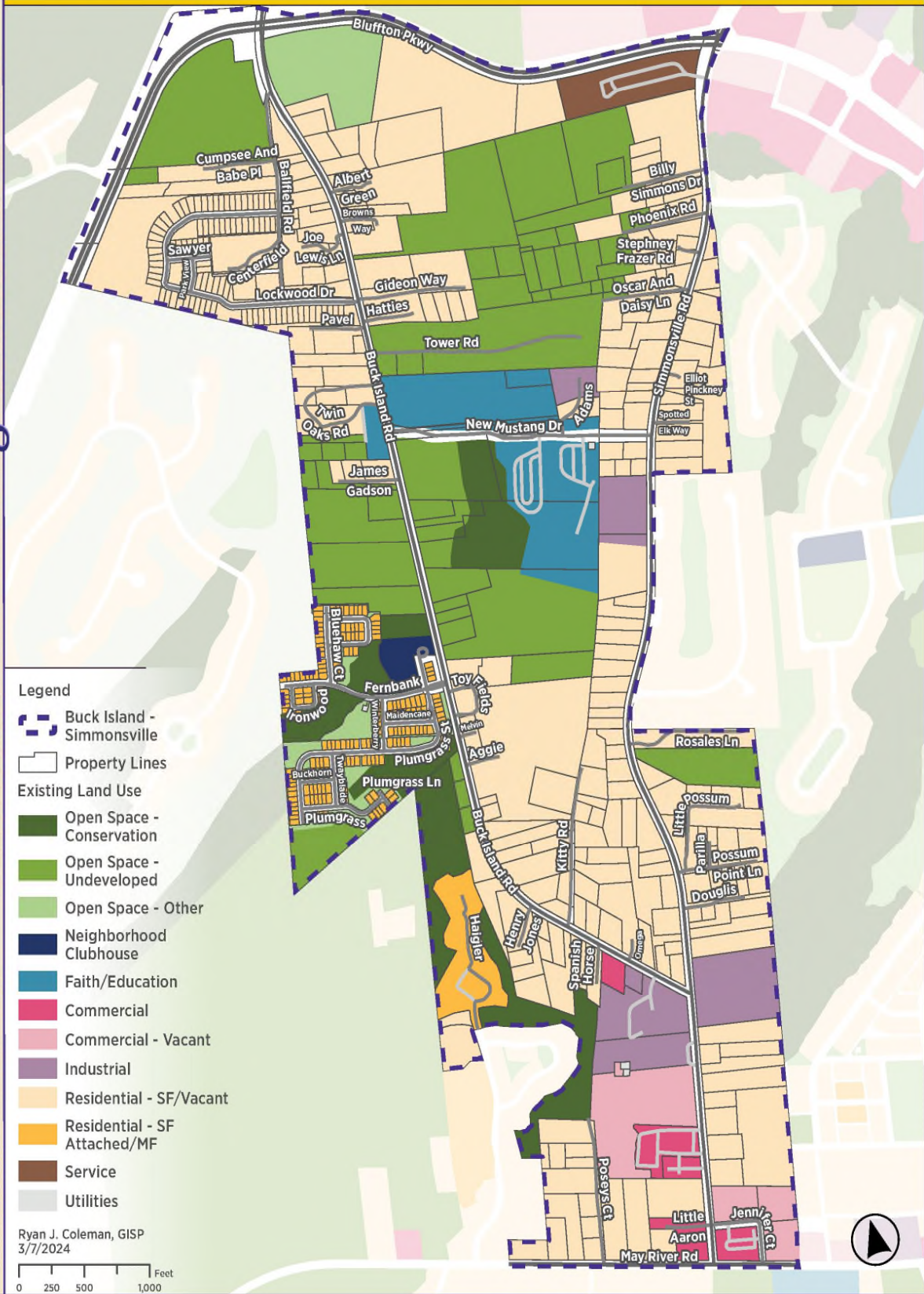
Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Update



# Existing Land Use

Map 6

## Buck Island - Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan



## LAND USE & ZONING

### Existing Land Use and Development

Buck Island – Simmonsville has evolved from a mostly forested and agricultural community with homes on large lots to becoming a highly desirable location for increased residential density and, to a lesser extent, commercial infill development. In the past 20 years, Wellstone at Bluffton townhome development was constructed on Buck Island Road, Bluffton Middle School opened in 2010, and the southern portion of the community—just south of the Buck Island and Simmonsville road intersections—has experienced increased commercial development and includes Grayco Building Center (hardware and building supplies), Back to Nature natural foods and Parker’s Kitchen (gas, convenience store and kitchen). Year Round Pool (swimming pool contractor) and RSI Linen Services have been at their Buck Island Road locations even longer, and both serve regional clients.

More recently, new commercial and residential developments have been approved by the Town of Bluffton or are in the review process within or adjacent to the neighborhood. In August 2022, a preliminary site development plan for River Dog Brewing Company was approved by the Planning Commission for construction at the intersection of Buck Island Road and Jennifer Court. The 50,000 square foot brewery will include 20,000 square feet for a production brewery, with the remainder of the space for restaurant and retail tenants, offices, and a tasting room. Additionally, outdoor dining, a beer garden and an event space with a pavilion are proposed.

The following residential developments were approved within the last few years or are under review at the time of plan preparation:

- **Crowne at Buck Island Apartments:** A 200-unit apartment complex at 412 Buck Island Road located on approximately 10 acres.
- **Hamilton Grove (“Bluffton Assemblage”) Residential:** An 85-unit single-family residential development on an approximately 25-acre parcel located in the general vicinity of Ballfield Road. Land clearing began in September, 2023.
- **Indigo Cove Townhomes:** A 99-lot single family development on approximately 25 acres of land at the northeast intersection of Buck Island Road and Bluffton Parkway.

The Existing Land Use Map (Map 6) on the previous page shows the existing use of all lots in the community as of March, 2024. Of the 10 largest property owners in the area, two are government or quasi-government entities (Beaufort County School District and Beaufort-Jasper Water Sewer Authority), four are residential developments (existing and proposed), and four are private individuals. The School District owns the most property with 15 parcels, approximately 8% of the community.

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

Future Land Use

Development within the Buck Island – Simmons ville community is guided by the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) found in the Town’s Comprehensive Plan known as *Blueprint Bluffton* and shown on page 36 (Map 7). The Comprehensive Plan is the Town of Bluffton’s 10-year vision for the entire community for areas such as transportation, housing, natural and cultural resources, as well as land use.

As it relates to land use, the FLUM serves as a policy map to provide guidance for the generalized character of all land within Bluffton town limits, such as residential, commercial, and industrial. These categories are further distinguished to guide residential density (number of dwelling units per acre) and commercial intensity.

The Town of Bluffton’s FLUM consists of nine character areas or future land use categories, of which six are located in the community. Table 3 identifies the six categories with the percentage of overall land area in the community beginning with the largest category. An explanation of each category is provided in Table 3. The predominantly residential categories of Suburban Living and Lifestyle Housing make up nearly 94% of the community. Less than 30 existing lots are commercially-designated (i.e., Neighborhood Center and Town Center).

The Future Land Use Map and designations are implemented through zoning. Zoning provides specific details, such as permitted uses and development standards, including building setbacks and height. Uses and development standards vary by zoning districts, which is further explained in this section.

**Table 3: Future Land Use by Category**

Land Use	Number of Lots	Percent
Suburban Living	370	59.4%
Lifestyle Housing	214	34.3%
Neighborhood Center	23	3.7%
Community Services	10	1.6%
Town Center	5	0.8%
Recreation	1	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Town of Bluffton GIS



## Zoning

Presently, there are four zoning districts within the Buck Island – Simmonsville neighborhood: Residential General (RG), Neighborhood Core (NC), Light Industrial (LI) and Planned Unit Development (PUD). The character and intent of each district, as described in the Town’s Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), is provided in Table 5 on page 39. The Zoning Map appears on page 38 (Map 8).

As previously noted, zoning districts identify the permitted land uses and provide the building and site development requirements that support the Future Land Use Map designations. These requirements are located in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Building requirements are based on the various “lot types” permitted within a zoning district and include standards for lot width, building coverage, building setbacks, and building height.

For Buck Island-Simmonsville, most land is zoned as Residential General (RG) and consists mostly of single-family homes that are stick-built or manufactured. Limited non-residential uses are permitted as long as the residential character is maintained, including home occupations, short term rental units (leased less than 30 days), homestay rentals (the rental of one bedroom for less than 30 days in an owner-occupied home), bed and breakfast establishments (2-5 rooms), agricultural and institutional uses.

Building design is not regulated for areas not within Old Town Bluffton, some Planned Unit Developments and areas not designated Highway Corridor Overlay District, which is discussed later in this section.

Below are zoning matters identified by the Advisory Committee for future potential study by Town staff:

- *To ensure compatible building scale and residential density, an evaluation of existing zoning allowances should be undertaken to determine if Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) adjustments may be in order;*
- *The policy to allow multiple manufactured homes on one lot to support family compounds also appears to encourage opportunities for investors to create de facto manufactured home parks without typical regulations for this type of use; and,*
- *The sale of produce, seafood, and food products has been common practice in the neighborhood over the years; however, native residents would like to have more income-producing potential for their properties while maintaining the community’s character. Related to this, the home occupation use, as identified in the UDO, is vague and should be addressed.*

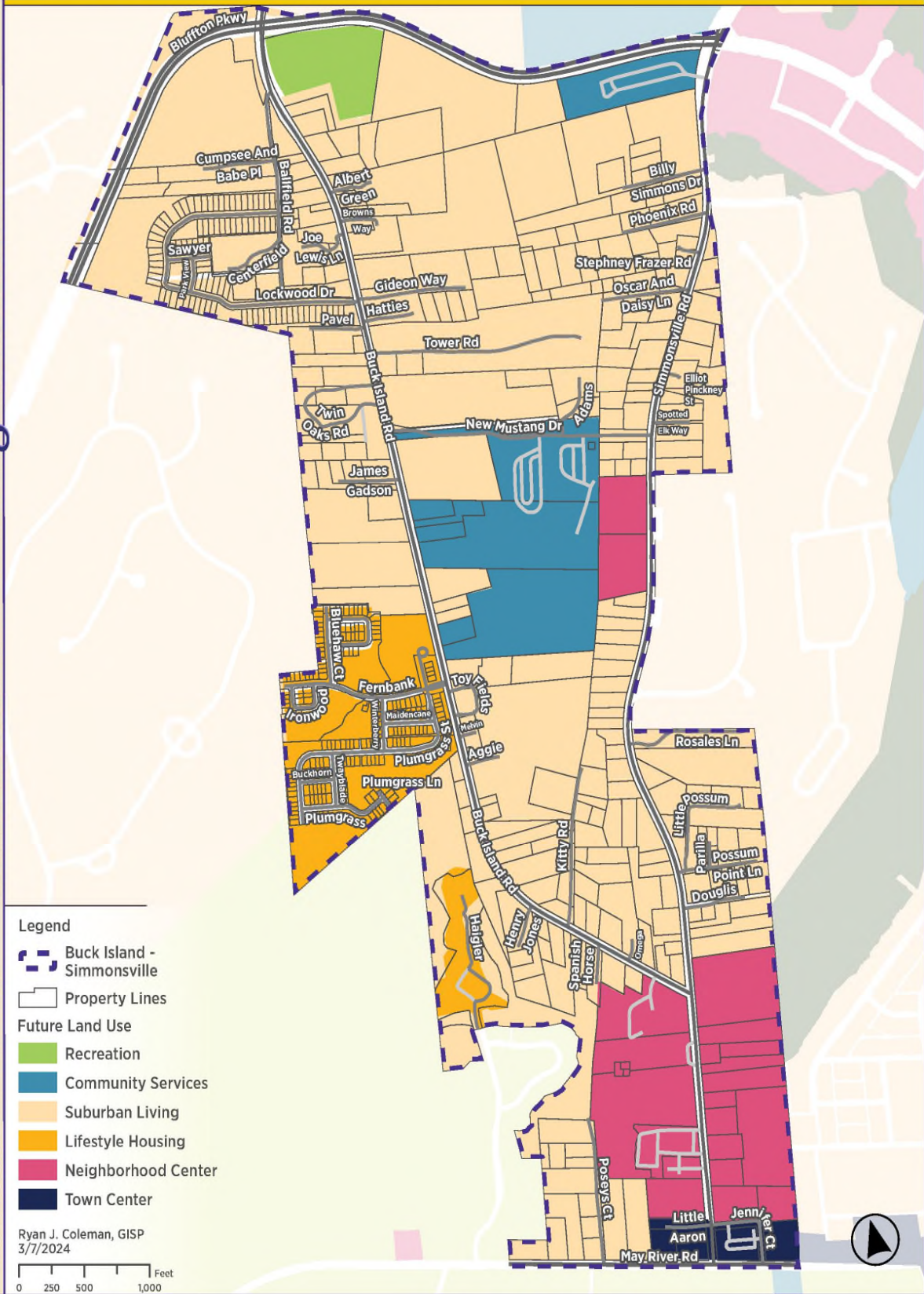
Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update



# Future Land Use

Map 7

## Buck Island - Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan



**Table 4: Future Land Use Categories and Intent**

Future Land Use	Description of Intent
Suburban Living	The Suburban Living category is intended to include low density single-family neighborhoods. Much of this category includes portions of large Planned Unit Developments that are under active construction or are built-out. Allowable density is up to three dwelling units per acre and must be at least one dwelling unit per acre. Community amenities such as trails, parks, and centralized swimming pools are encouraged.
Community Services	The Community Services category denotes those facilities owned and operated by the Town of Bluffton or other public entities. These uses include, but are not limited to, libraries, schools, administrative facilities, police, fire / EMS and water production / treatment facilities. Uses within this category provide for the social, cultural, educational, health, physical betterment and administration of the community. Proposed changes in use to this land use category should be evaluated to determine compatibility with surrounding uses. Due to the varying nature of the uses within this category, there is not one set of defining characteristics to the category. Uses that are insular or campus-oriented should be properly designed to minimize any impacts to surrounding properties.
Neighborhood Center	The Neighborhood Center category is intended to guide emerging neighborhood-focused retail clusters throughout the community. These centers, such as Buckwalter Place, provide the opportunity for residents to be within walking distance of grocers, restaurants, retailers, and medical offices. These centers help establish neighborhood identity and are best served when supported by a mix of middle housing and single family residences within walking or biking distance.
Lifestyle Housing	The Lifestyle Housing category is intended to provide missing middle housing typologies within Bluffton. These missing middle products appeal to a wide range of residents in all stages of life. Inclusion of these housing typologies within the community will allow multiple generations to find affordable living in desirable, walkable environments. Connections to trails, parks, and commercial activity centers create enduring community assets. The Lifestyle Housing category is intended to provide missing middle housing typologies within Bluffton. These missing middle products appeal to a wide range of residents in all stages of life. Inclusion of these housing typologies within the community will allow multiple generations to find affordable living in desirable, walkable environments. Connections to trails, parks, and commercial activity centers create enduring community assets.
Recreation	The Recreation category designates properties used for the purposes of public recreation. This category includes parks, sports fields, and water access points at all scales throughout the community. This category includes both active and passive recreation areas.
Town Center	It is the intent of the Town Center category to support and enhance the existing mix of uses. Infill of additional residential at appropriate scale and density is strongly encouraged. Inclusion of missing-middle housing typologies (multiplexes, townhomes, condos) is encouraged, where appropriate, throughout the district. Commercial buildings are generally 1-3 stories in height and close to the sidewalk. Pedestrian scale and design are important components.

Source: Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan ("Blueprint Bluffton")



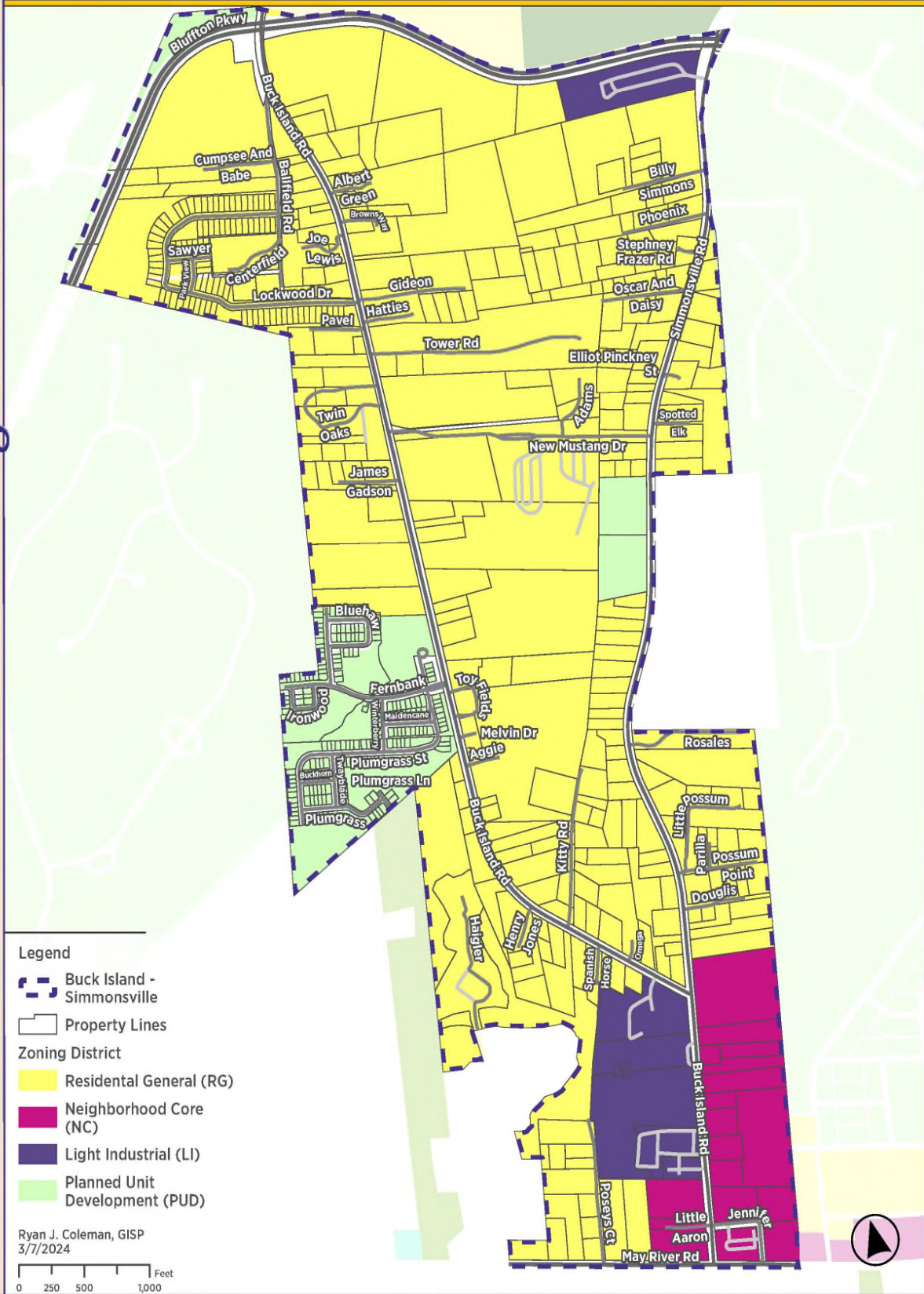
Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update



# Zoning

Map 8

## Buck Island - Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan



- Legend
- Buck Island - Simmonsville
  - Property Lines
  - Zoning District**
  - Residential General (RG)
  - Neighborhood Core (NC)
  - Light Industrial (LI)
  - Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Ryan J. Coleman, GISP  
3/7/2024





**Table 5: Zoning District Categories and Descriptions**

Zoning District	Intended Character and Purpose
<b>Residential General (RG)</b>	
<i>District Character</i>	Moderate-density residential
<i>District Purpose &amp; Intent</i>	The RG district is intended to provide for moderate density residential neighborhoods. This district will include a range of dwelling types in an integrated neighborhood setting with other civic and recreational uses. The regulations are designed to promote neighborhood character and accommodate a variety of dwelling types.
<b>Planned Unit Development (PUD)</b>	
<i>District Character</i>	Mixed use Master Plan Community
<i>District Purpose &amp; Intent</i>	The PUD district is intended to achieve the objectives of the Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan and to allow flexibility in development than could otherwise be achieved through strict application of this Ordinance and that will result in improved design, character and quality of walkable mixed-use developments and preserve natural and scenic features of open spaces.
<b>Neighborhood Core (NC)</b>	
<i>District Character</i>	Moderate intensity, mixed use development
<i>District Purpose &amp; Intent</i>	The NC district is intended to provide a compact, commercial environment with a mix of complementary and supporting services. The NC district will provide nearby residential areas with convenient access to stores, essential goods and services, and workplaces in close proximity to each other.
<b>Light Industrial (LI)</b>	
<i>District Character</i>	Primarily industrial-based employment centers
<i>District Purpose &amp; Intent</i>	The LI district is intended to provide locations for light industrial, research and development, assembly, high technology production, precision manufacturing, and similar primary employment uses. This district can be used to integrate a number of mutually supportive uses within the district to create employment centers. The regulations of this district are designed to accommodate primary employment opportunities and support services that cannot readily fit into other mixed-use centers and/or may require special location considerations and buffering due to the nature or intensity of operations. The regulations are designed to prevent or greatly reduce impacts beyond the property lines.

Source: Town of Bluffton Unified Development Ordinance

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

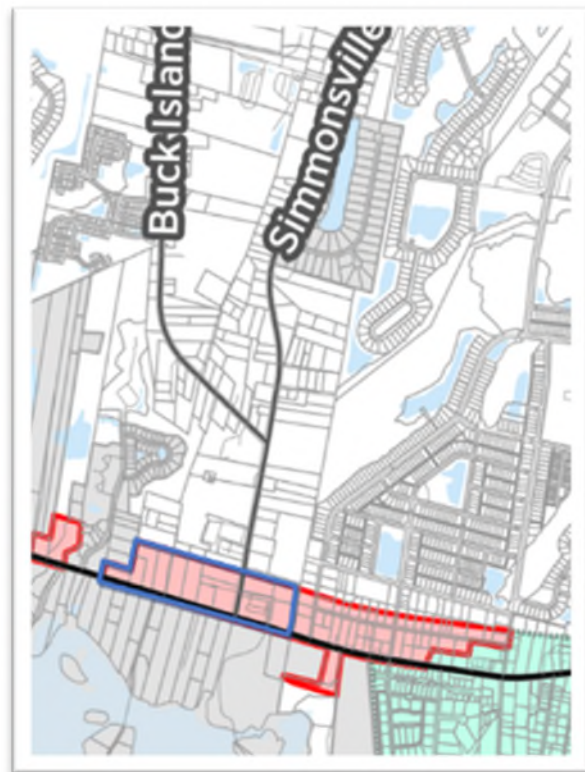
Neighborhood Character and Development Compatibility

Unlike Historic Old Town Bluffton and most developments zoned Planned Unit Development, architectural standards for residential or non-residential buildings do not presently exist for properties in Buck Island – Simmons ville with the exception of those adjacent to and within 500 feet of S.C. Hwy 46 (May River Road) and Bluffton Parkway. Both of these areas are within the Highway Corridor Overlay (HCO) District. The below graphic shows the HCO on May River Road.

As stated in the UDO, the HCO district is “intended to enhance the quality of development, protect and enhance the area’s unique aesthetic Lowcountry character and natural environment, reduce unnecessary visual distractions and to ultimately provide a consistent regional context for architecture, landscaping, and lighting provisions along regional roadway corridors.” New development on parcels within these areas, with the exception of single-family residential, must be approved by the Planning Commission who apply the architectural standards developed for the district.

The Town’s Comprehensive Plan identifies the southern portion of Buck Island Road as part of a “Gateway Area.” As stated in Blueprint Bluffton, the gateway is to Old Town Bluffton Historic District and is intended “to make a statement as to the importance of the district.” Recommendations for the gateway include establishing a character baseline to establish appropriate design standards that may include streetscape elements, such as sidewalks and lighting.

Additionally, the Town’s Growth Framework map, also provided in the Comprehensive Plan, notes that the southern portion of Buck Island Road has a “place type” designation of “hamlet.” According to the Comprehensive Plan, a place type is intended to have “varying ranges of land uses and residential density that are respectful of the surrounding character” to inform both the future land use and zoning. Place types are based on a variety of neighborhood attributes, including “natural re-



The blue outline shows properties within the HCO District located along May River Road and Buck Island Road.

sources, historic fabric, diverse housing, access to nature, mixed-use activity centers, street network and neighborhood structure.”

The Advisory Committee expressed a desire for new development to be compatible with the community without being a burdensome process for applicants. Compatibility can include architecture, and it can also include development standards, such as maximum building height and minimum yard setbacks required of the various lot types allowed in the community. An evaluation of the development standards for the various districts could be undertaken to identify any standards that may be incompatible with the neighborhood.



**Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update**

**HOUSING**

The extension of water and sewer lines to properties previously served by wells and septic systems or that were undeveloped has allowed for more housing units in the neighborhood. The most common type of new housing in recent years has been single-family manufactured homes, a relatively expedient and affordable way in which to create more housing. An overview of housing in the community follows.

**Permitted Housing Types**

A mix of housing types are permitted in the neighborhood and vary by zoning district (Table 6). All zoning districts permit single-family detached homes or dwellings, which is the most common housing type in the community. This housing type does not share a wall with another dwelling, can be a stick-built or manufactured home and is located on its own lot in most cases. There is an exception for manufactured homes, however, which is discussed later in this section.

Multi-family dwellings include at least two residential units located in the same building on the same lot, not on individual lots. Apartment developments are the most common type of multi-family housing type and are permitted only in the Neighborhood Core and Light Industrial zoning districts in the southern portion of the neighborhood. The number of units is determined by a variety of factors, which include but are not limited to permitted maximum building height and footprint, building setback requirements from the property line, required parking spaces and vegetative buffers, and stormwater detention area.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are permitted on the same lot as a larger single-family detached dwelling and are permitted by-right. An ADU can house family members or serve as a long or short-term rental unit for residents or visitors to Bluffton. Short-term rental units require a business license from the Town of Bluffton.

**Table 6: Permitted Housing Types by Zoning District (except PUDs)**

Unit Type	Residential General (RG)	Neighborhood Core (NC)	Light Industrial (IL)
Single-family detached	✓	✓	✓
Single-family attached	✓	✓	✓
Multi-family	--	✓	✓
Accessory Dwelling Unit	✓	✓	✓

There are two properties in Buck Island-Simmons ville that are zoned Planned Unit Development (PUD). A PUD is a zoning district that is created through negotiation with the Town and approved by Town Council after a recommendation by the Planning Commission. A PUD is typically requested to allow innovative development or flexibility that may not be permitted by the Unified Development Ordinance. There are two PUDs in the community: Wellstone at Bluffton Townhomes and Southeastern Property Development, LLC.

Wellstone at Bluffton Townhomes includes 114 attached townhomes and is a completed development.

The Southeastern Property Development, LLC PUD is located on the western side Simmons ville Road, approximately one mile south of Bluffton Parkway, and allows the following residential uses: single family attached, single family detached, manufactured homes, and residential over commercial spaces (or upper-story residential). The maximum density is up to six (6) residential units per acre but could be less due to site and development requirements, such as storm-water detention, vegetative buffers, and parking. The maximum of six units per acre is two more units per acre than is permitted by the predominant Residential General (R-G) zoning district, the most prevalent zoning district in the community. This PUD totals 6.88-acres and contains two lots. One lot is used for a landscape contracting business; the other lot has been cleared but is not developed. A variety of commercial uses would also be permitted by-right and are identified in its development agreement.

### Manufactured Homes

In the Residential General (RG), Neighborhood Core (NC) and Light Industrial (LI) zoning districts, up to four (4) manufactured homes per acre are permitted without the requirement to establish a legal separate lot of record for each home, which is a requirement for stick or site-built homes. This policy was intended to support long-time property owners who traditionally have had family members live in separate homes on the same lot or plan to do so in the future. As this policy is not limited to families, investment property owners also benefit.

With the installation of water and sewer lines throughout the neighborhood, the number of manufactured homes has increased. This may allow for what is, in effect, small manufactured home parks without zoning regulations that are often associated with this use, such as home location on a site, orientation, and skirting requirements. A more formal approach may need to be considered.

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

Neighborhood Assistance Program

The Town of Bluffton initiated the Neighborhood Assistance Program in 2016 to assist qualify- ing Bluffton residents with certain home-related repairs and property maintenance to help preserve existing housing. The majority of applica- tions received for FY22-23 were for homes within the Buck Island-Simmons ville community.



Town staff, including the Workforce and Affordable Housing Manager, confer on an assistance project. Source: Municipal Association of South Carolina

Income qualification is required for “safe and dry” home repairs, property clean-up, tree mitigation, private drive repair to facilitate access for emer- gency vehicles, and abatement or demolition of unsafe structures. Applicants cannot have a household income that exceeds a specified per- centage of the Area Median Income (AMI) for Beaufort County for a given year. The percentage varies by program. Road sign/address posting and some septic system repairs and pump-out requests do not have income requirements.

Because the housing stock in the community is among the oldest in Bluffton, most requests for assistance are from this area. However, because funds are limited and because other factors may affect eligibility for some programs, assistance is not guaranteed by the Town of Bluffton.

For the 2022-23 fiscal year, the Town helped 54 households with a budget of almost \$223,000. To extend its reach and to address rising costs, the budget was increased to \$290,000 for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

The program earned the Town of Bluffton a 2023 Municipal Association of South Carolina Achievement Award for the Public Service category. The Town continues to seek ways in which to enhance and expand the program. For more information, contact the Town’s Workforce and Affordable Housing Manager.



### Workforce-Affordable Housing Opportunities

In 2018, the Town of Bluffton purchased a 1.78 parcel at 1095 May River Road to develop the Town's second affordable-workforce housing development in partnership with Workforce State of Mind, LLC. This public-private partnership will produce 12 townhomes for purchase by income-qualifying households. Four units each will be available to households earning 60, 80 and 100 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) for Beaufort County.

To reduce the cost of each home, the Town will donate the land and provide the developer with reimbursement of fees related to planning, design, permitting and infrastructure expenses. Construction will begin in 2024.



*"The May" is a public-private partnership to develop 12 townhomes for households with incomes between 60 to 100 of Beaufort County's Area Median Income (AMI). In 2023, the AMI was \$111,300.*

### Workforce-Affordable Housing Challenges

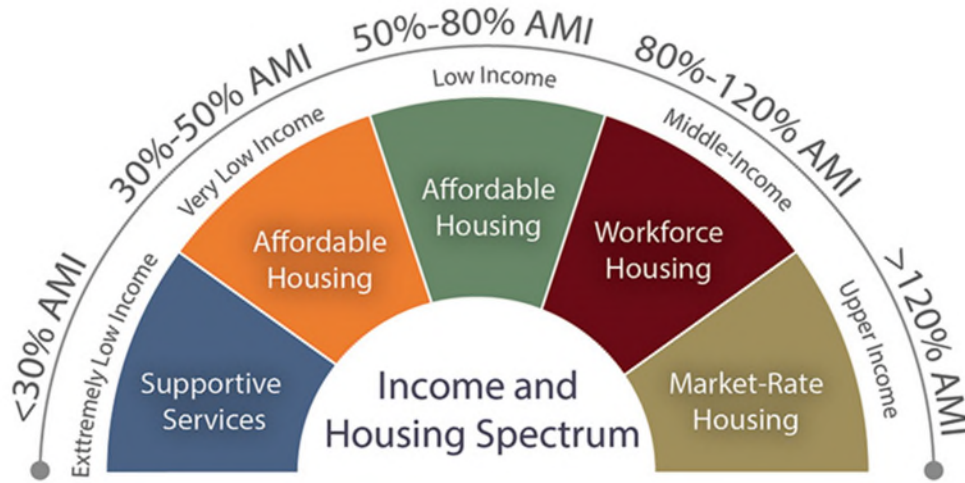
While other housing developments are planned within the Buck Island-Simmons ville community, none are required or are proposed to have residential units that are "set aside" for households whose incomes would be considered in the affordable or workforce housing range. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the 2023 Beaufort County median income is \$111,300. This means that half of all Beaufort County households earn more than the median and half earn less than the median.

As shown in Figures 4 and 5, a household of four earning \$91,800 (110% AMI) would fall in the workforce housing range, while a household of four earning \$73,450 (80% AMI) would fall in the affordable housing range. Market-rate housing, nearly all of the existing and proposed housing in Bluffton, requires household income of at least 120% AMI or \$133,560 to avoid spending more than 30% of household income on rent or a mortgage.

While the Beaufort Jasper County Housing Trust was established to develop new residential units and rehabilitate existing units at or below 100% of the AMI, with the priority at 60% of the AMI, its efforts will not be enough to satisfy the need for housing. Likewise, other endeavors cannot fully meet the demand. Therefore, efforts to preserve existing housing may require more consideration, particularly for areas such as Buck Island-Simmons ville where housing

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

Figure 4



In Beaufort County, the 2023 median household income was \$111,300. To afford market rate housing without spending more than 30% of a household’s income, the household would need to earn \$133,560, more than 120% of the Area Median Income. Source: Camoinassociates.com

Figure 5

2023 Beaufort County Area Median Income Limits								
Income Limits	Number of Persons in Household							
	One (1)	Two (2)	Three (3)	Four (4)	Five (5)	Six (6)	Seven (7)	Eight (8)
<b>30%</b> <i>Extremely Low</i>	\$19,300	\$22,050	\$24,860	<b>\$27,550</b>	\$29,800	\$32,000	\$34,200	\$36,400
<b>50%</b> <i>Very Low</i>	\$32,150	\$36,750	\$41,350	<b>\$45,900</b>	\$49,600	\$53,250	\$56,950	\$60,600
<b>60%</b> <i>Moderately Low</i>	\$38,580	\$44,100	\$49,620	<b>\$55,080</b>	\$59,520	\$63,900	\$68,340	\$72,720
<b>80%</b> <i>Low</i>	\$51,450	\$58,800	\$66,150	<b>\$73,450</b>	\$79,350	\$85,250	\$91,100	\$97,000
<b>100%</b> <i>Median</i>	\$64,300	\$73,500	\$82,700	<b>\$91,800</b>	\$99,200	\$106,500	\$113,900	\$121,200
<b>120%</b> <i>Moderate</i>	\$77,100	\$88,150	\$99,150	<b>\$110,150</b>	\$118,950	\$127,800	\$136,600	\$145,400

The above chart shows the Area Median Income limits for Beaufort County based on the number of people within a household to determine qualification for various housing programs. Income levels are set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

stock is older and preventative maintenance has been deferred, which could diminish the long-term viability of some homes. Prevention may include re-evaluation the Neighborhood Assistance Program and, possibly, seeking partnerships to serve more residents. Additionally, some residents may be able to improve their housing by ensuring they have clear title to their land. Clear title to land may provide options, including subdivision, leasing and selling, to assist financially.

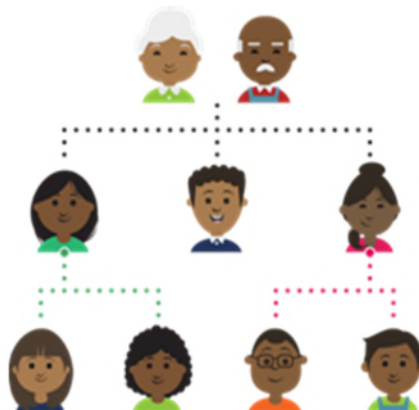
### Heirs' Property and Legacy Planning

“Heirs’ property” refers to land that lacks clear title because the deceased property owner did not have a will or deed at time of death. This leaves the property in legal limbo for descendants.

Without clear title, descendants may have difficulty insuring, developing, redeveloping, or selling family property because legal ownership does not exist. This suspended status creates a variety of difficulties for heirs, all of whom may not be fully known without a genealogical search, live elsewhere and be unable to maintain the property, or who may be unable to afford property taxes, or agree how to resolve matters related to ownership, or some combination thereof.

While it is not known how many properties in the Buck Island-Simmons ville community may lack clear title, they do exist.

Those seeking guidance on this matter should seek an attorney who specializes in estate law or the [Center for Heirs’ Property Preservation](#) located in North Charleston, South Carolina.



*Estate planning can ensure that future generations of family benefit from generational wealth. Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture*



Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

Community Roads

The Buck Island-Simmons ville neighborhood is connected by four main roads: Bluffton Parkway (L-1526), May River Road (SC-46), Buck Island Road (S-29) and Simmons ville Road (S-474). With the exception of Bluffton Parkway, these roadways are owned and maintained by the State of South Carolina. Bluffton Parkway is owned and maintained by Beaufort County.

Buck Island Road, a north-south two-lane undivided road, extends from U.S. Hwy 278 (Fording Island Road) to its junction with May River Road. The Beaufort County Road Functional Classification map designates Buck Island Road as a minor collector roadway from the U.S. Hwy 278 to its intersection with Simmons ville Road. Minor collector streets provide connections to major collector roadways (Simmons ville Road) and arterial roadways (U.S. Hwy 278, Bluffton Parkway and May River Road).

Simmons ville Road is an undivided two-lane road that extends from U.S. Hwy. 278 south to May River Road. The Beaufort County Road Classification map designates Simmons ville Road as a major collector roadway, providing connection to arterial roadways (May River Road, Bluffton Parkway and U.S. Hwy 278). At its intersection with Bluffton Parkway, a dedicated left turn signal was added in response to a request made by community members during the neighborhood planning process in 2009.

Constructed in 2007, Bluffton Parkway is an east-west four-lane divided minor arterial roadway. Within town limits, the parkway extends from Bluffton Road west to SC 170. Eventually, the parkway will extend to or near Interstate 95. In 2022, South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) recorded an average annual daily traffic count of 24,100 vehicles for the Bluffton Parkway segment between Buck Island Road and Simmons ville Road.

New Mustang Drive (previously known as Hyon Road) and Bluffton Parkway serve as the connecting routes between Buck Island and Simmons ville roads. Bluffton Middle School is located on New Mustang Drive. As part of the Town’s Capital Improvement Program, a multi-year project to provide safety improvements for pedestrian pathways is underway and includes Buck Island and Simmons ville roads (Phase 3). Phase 3 will analyze areas such as lighting, signage, walkways, traffic calming, and crosswalks to determine if improvements are necessary to improve safety, ensure compliance with the Americans with



*Buck Island Road crosswalk to be evaluated for safety improvements.*

Disabilities Act standards, and to increase the community's walkability score. A design and construction schedule will be developed after the analysis is completed. The analysis is scheduled for the fiscal year 2024.

May River Road is an east-west two-lane minor arterial roadway. Notably, since the 2009 Plan, a traffic signal has been installed at its intersection with Buck Island Road. Additionally, the portion of May River Road extending from the Beaufort-Jasper County line east to Brighton Beach in the unincorporated Alljoy Community east of Old Town Bluffton was designated as May River Scenic Byway by the State of South Carolina in 1987.

### Traffic Data

According to SCDOT, the latest available data from 2022 shows that the average daily traffic on the Buck Island Road segment from May River Road to Simmonsville Road was 7,600 vehicles. In 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the figure was slightly higher at 7,800 vehicles. Large vehicle traffic, including buses and dump trucks, has been consistent with 426 vehicles per day in 2022 and 410 in 2021. However, there was a significant drop in 2020, with only 212 such vehicles. This could potentially be attributed to the temporary closure of Bluffton Middle School due to the pandemic, resulting in a reduction in school bus traffic.

In community meetings, residents expressed concern with speeding and thru-truck traffic on Buck Island and Simmonsville roads. Since the 2009 Neighborhood plan, speed limits along these roads were reduced. In some areas, the previously posted speed limit was 45, where it is now 40. With regard to truck traffic, the Town does not allow medium and heavy trucks (dump trucks, tractor trailers and semi-trailers) to enter Old Town on May River Road unless drivers have proof of a specific reason. While east bound traffic is directed to use SC 170 to access Bluffton Parkway or U.S. 278, some trucks may travel or be located east of SC 170, thus using Buck Island Road as a connection to those streets. Any restriction of truck traffic would need approval from SCDOT.

### Private Driveways

There are numerous private driveways throughout the community, most of which are unpaved or have a gravel surface. These driveways are mostly the result of land subdivision. Because many of these driveways were not identified with signage, the Town of Bluffton undertook a project in 2011 to install street signs and numerical addresses to both posts and homes. Clear and accurate address and street posting greatly helps emergency vehicles, (including fire, medical, and law enforcement) reach and assist community members as efficiently as possible. Some markers have gone missing since and need to be replaced. During Advisory Committee meetings, both the Bluffton Police Department and Bluffton Township Fire District

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

noted that replacements were necessary and that a joint effort could be undertaken to improve signage and addresses.

Because private drives are not owned by the Town of Bluffton, maintenance is the responsibility of the property owner. However, the Town can assist income-qualifying residents with maintenance when emergency vehicle access is impeded. To qualify, at least 51% of all residential units accessed by the road must have an annual household income that does not exceed 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) for Beaufort County. Table 7, on the next page, shows the private roads identified in the 2009 plan and their present condition, ownership, and maintenance status.

**Public Transportation**

Public transportation is available and offered by the Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority (LRTA). The Palmetto Breeze Transit system operates bus service in five Lowcountry counties and offers multiple routes throughout the Buck Island - Simmons ville neighborhood. Additionally, demand-response services are available, offering door-to-door service for those who are not able to access a bus stop.

As of this writing, commuter Route 804 is available in the neighborhood with three unsigned and unsheltered stops located at Parker’s (6200 Jennifer Court), Resort Services Inc. (336 Buck Island Road) and the Beaufort County Convenience Center (103 Simmons ville Road).

This route serves commuters who travel from outlying counties to their jobs at RSI, Grayco, Bluffton Middle School, and other area businesses on the route including Publix, Kroger, and Walmart. LRTA approximates over 1,000 riders on this route every month. Additionally, Route 308 travels through the Buck Island-Simmons ville neighborhood on its way to transfer commuters who work on Hilton Head Island.

In 2021, Palmetto Breeze Transit launched the Bluffton Breeze, which is a year-round weekday fixed-route service serving the Bluffton community. Bluffton Breeze connects community members with workplaces, residential areas, and businesses located along Bluffton and Buckwalter Parkways. The westbound route includes a stop at the intersection of Bluffton Parkway and Simmons ville Road.

The Palmetto Breeze also includes Easy Breeze ADA paratransit which is a door-to-door service that complements the Bluffton route. Any person with a disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and who lives within three quarters of a mile of bus stop can be picked up at their place of residence.



## Transportation &amp; Mobility

As passenger demand, driver supply, and ridership increases over time, Palmetto Breeze and Bluffton Breeze can adapt to better serve the community.

**Table 7: Status of Select Road Surfaces, Ownership and Maintenance Responsibility**

Road	Condition 2009	Condition 2022	Owner	Maintenance Responsibility
Adams Place	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Albert Green Lane	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Ballfield Rd	Unpaved	Paved	Public	Beaufort County
Billy Simmons Drive	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Brown's Way	Unpaved	Unpaved	Private	Private
Centerfield Lane	Unpaved	Unpaved	Private	Private
Charles Hamilton Lane	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Cumpsee & Babe Lane	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Douglis Lane	Unpaved	Unpaved	Private	Private
Gideon Way	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Hatties Place	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Henry Jones Drive	Unpaved	Unpaved	Private	Private
James Gadson Drive	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Joe Lewis Lane	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Kitty Road	Unpaved	Paved	Public	Beaufort County
Little Aaron	Unpaved	Unpaved	Private	Private
Little Possum Lane	Unpaved	Unpaved	Private	Private
Lotus Court	Paved	Paved	Private	Private
New Mustang Drive (formerly Hyon Road)	Unpaved	Paved	Public	Beaufort County
Oscar and Daisy Lane	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Pavel Street	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Phoenix Road	Unpaved	Paved	Public	Beaufort County
Poseys Court	N/A	Unpaved	Private	Private
Possum Point Lane	N/A	Paved	Private	Private
Ripp Rapp Road	Unpaved	Unpaved	Private	Private
Stephney Frazier Rd	Unpaved	Unpaved	Private	Private
Rosales Lane	N/a	Unpaved	Private	Private
Tower Road	Unpaved	Unpaved	Public	Beaufort County
Toy Fields Circle	Unpaved	Unpaved	Private	Private
Twin Oaks Road	Unpaved	Unpaved	Private	Private

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

An effective bicycle and pedestrian transportation system has the potential to encourage alternative transportation and enhance neighborhood connectivity. During the neighborhood planning process in 2009, community members expressed concern for a lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the neighborhood. These concerns highlighted the growing need for improved safety and convenience for pedestrians—including children walking to Bluffton Middle School—and cyclists alike. In response, the Town of Bluffton embarked on a series of multi-phase, multi-year projects to construct sidewalks along Buck Island and Simmons ville Roads through its Capital Improvement Program.



At the request of the residents, handrails were installed on this Buck Island Road boardwalk for additional safety.

Along Buck Island Road, from Bluffton Parkway to Simmons ville Road, a sidewalk was installed on the eastern side of the road. The sidewalk includes two boardwalks on Buck Island Road that span a ditch (adjacent to Eagles Field) and a low lying area where standing water is not uncommon. The latter boardwalk includes kick rails or plates, a safety feature designed to warn users of their proximity to the edge. Some residents expressed concern that the kick rails were not substantial enough to protect the safety of users, especially children. In response, the Town’s Projects and Watershed Resilience Department installed a more substantial safety barrier that includes handrails.

In 2023, the Town completed construction of the final sidewalk phase, 6B, on Simmons ville Road from Sugaree Drive north to Windy Lake Court. This phase included approximately 2,000 linear feet of sidewalk and is the last segment to provide a continuous sidewalk connection from Bluffton Parkway to May River Road. Drainage upgrades for this

phase were also completed and street lighting will be finalized by Dominion Energy in Fiscal Year 2024.

During the Advisory Committee meeting process, it was mentioned that the five-foot width of the installed sidewalks was too minimal and that a wider sidewalk would have been preferable. The narrow street right-of-way, drainage ditch, utilities, and desire to preserve as many trees as possible resulted in the construction of a five-foot wide sidewalk.

At completion, the total sidewalk linear footage for the Buck Island – Simmons ville community will be approximately 14,000 feet or 2.65 miles. This project was born from the 2009 neighborhood planning process and will be enjoyed by current and future generations of residents.

## Transportation &amp; Mobility

Additionally, the Town of Bluffton will conduct a pedestrian safety assessment along the Buck Island-Simmons ville corridors in Fiscal Year 2024 to determine if any improvements related to walkways, crosswalks, lighting, signage, and vehicular traffic calming measures are needed, as cited in Town of Bluffton *FY23-24 Strategic Plan*. This is in addition to projects identified in the *Sidewalk Accessibility Analysis and Traffic Calming Policy* adopted by the Town in 2021. The status of projects within the neighborhood and throughout Bluffton can be found on the [Capital Project Dashboard](#), which is located on the Town of Bluffton’s website.

While not in the study area, the one-mile segment of Buck Island Road north of Bluffton Parkway to U.S. Hwy 278 was cited in the 2021 *Beaufort County Connects Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (Connects Plan)* as one of the top six areas of the county most in need of new or safer bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The *Connects Plan* identifies this improvement as an immediate term project, or one that should be undertaken within five years from plan adoption. The estimated cost is \$500,000. This project also appears in the *2045 Long Range Transportation Plan for the Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (2045 LRTP)*, prepared by the Metropolitan Planning Organization. The Town of Bluffton applied for U.S. Department of Transportation RAISE grant in 2023 to help fund planning and design of pedestrian and bicycle improvements in Old Town Historic District, the Goethe/Shults and Buck Island-Simmons ville neighborhoods but was not selected. The acronym “RAISE” stands for Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity.



*Approximately 2.65 miles of sidewalks have been installed in the Buck Island-Simmons ville neighborhood.*



**Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update**

**PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES**

The Town of Bluffton began a multi-year process to make substantial infrastructure improvements within the Buck Island – Simmons ville community. Installation of new water and sewer lines, conversion of most septic tanks to public sewer, and construction of sidewalks and lighting have occurred in phased approaches and will be finalized in fiscal year 2024. To date, the investment in these projects has totaled approximately 8.3 million dollars. An overview of these projects follows. The status of these projects and all other any Town projects can be tracked using the [Capital Projects Dashboard](#) on the Town of Bluffton website.

**Lighting**

In the 2009 Neighborhood Plan, residents expressed a need for lighting in the neighborhood to improve visibility and safety. As of the date of this Plan, lights have been installed along Buck Island and Simmons ville roads by Palmetto Electric Cooperative and Dominion Energy in conjunction with sidewalk construction by the Town of Bluffton.

Existing utility poles are being used to support lights, and new poles have been or are in the process of being strategically placed throughout the neighborhood. Because the placement of some new poles must be on private property because of the narrow public right-of-way, collaboration with residents was necessary to obtain a utility easement. The Town anticipates completion of this project, along Simmons ville Road, in fiscal year 2024.

During Advisory Committee meetings, some members expressed concern with low illumination of some areas. Town staff explained that lighting installations are strategically designed to illuminate sidewalks, prioritizing pedestrian areas rather than the roadways. The use of existing utility poles may also cause lighting to be farther from roads. A change to LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs may improve light levels. Town staff will determine if this change may be possible.

**Water and Sewer Facilities**

The Buck Island - Simmons ville neighborhood water and sewer infrastructure is serviced by the Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority (BJWSA); however, some private septic and well systems exist in the neighborhood.

In order to provide water and sewer services to Buck Island Simmons ville residents, a survey was conducted for each home in the neighborhood in 2008 to determine interest. One hundred percent of respondents indicated they desired connection to the new water and sewer

system. The positive responses to the survey allowed the Town to apply for federal grants to pay for the project.

The Town of Bluffton and Beaufort-Jasper Water Sewer Authority began a multi-year collaborative process beginning in 2016 to convert septic systems to public sewer. The new system allows for the treatment of wastewater and will help to avoid leakage that could contaminate the May River and Colleton River watersheds. The final phase, Phase 5, was completed in the summer of 2023. Phase 5 included more than 3,800 linear feet of eight-inch sewer main and over 1,000 feet of water main to serve approximately 38 homes. Thirty-three (33) septic systems will be abandoned in this process.

All homes within 300 feet of a sewer line must be connected. Connections made as part of the Capital Improvement Project were completed at no cost. Future connections may have partial or full reimbursement. Ideally, all homes within the community would eventually be served by public water and sewer.

### Drainage

To reduce the risk of roadway flooding, two roadway culverts crossing Buck Island Road were removed and upgraded with new, larger culverts. These new culverts will better channel water and increase water flow capacity.

Additionally, the Town is pursuing funding for a comprehensive drainage study that will include portions of the neighborhood that drain to the May River (Crooked Cove basin).



*The Buck Island—Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Update Advisory Committee learns about a potential drainage study for a portion of the neighborhood from Town staff.*

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

Public Schools

Bluffton Middle School is the only public or private school located within the neighborhood. [Bluffton Middle School](#), home of the Mustangs, was constructed in 2010 and serves 909 students as of September 19, 2023. Students come from Okatie, M.C. Riley, Red Cedar, Bluffton and Pritchardville elementaries.

The Beaufort County School District allows community groups to use public spaces on school properties, if available, for a fee. Such spaces may include athletic fields, auditoriums, gymnasiums, and media centers. School events take priority and availability may vary by school. Use requests must be made directly to the school.



*Bluffton Middle School serves more than 900 students, including the community's fast-growing Hispanic population.*

Public Trash and Recycling Center

Beaufort County operates a convenience center at 104 Simmonsville Road. The center allows Beaufort County residents to dispose of and recycle certain household items, such as yard waste, paint, appliances, and furniture, in addition to paper, plastic and glass. A full list of accepted items and hours of operation are provided on [Beaufort County's website](#).

Public Parks

While there are no public parks within the Buck Island-Simmons ville community, the Town of Bluffton recognizes the need, especially with the number of children in the area. In March 2024, the Town purchased 15.5 acres of land at the intersection of Bluffton Parkway and Buck Island Road to be used for a future park (140 Buck Island). Residents will be engaged in future planning of the park.

Fire Protection

The Bluffton Township Fire District (BTFD) provides fire and emergency medical service to the Buck Island Simmons ville neighborhood. Service is provided by Station 30, located at 199 Burnt Church Road. Station 30 houses Engine 330 and Beaufort County EMS 6.

BTFD responds to both emergency and non-emergency calls, dispatched from Beaufort County Dispatch. The non-emergency calls are typically services such as "lift and assist" to help immobile individuals, smoke alarms, or calls that are not considered life-threatening. Table 8 shows calls for service to the Buck Island Simmons ville neighborhood from 2019



**Public Infrastructure & Services**

through March 2023. Calls in 2020 and 2021 likely reflect more residents at home during the COVID-19 outbreak.

<b>Table 8: BTFD Neighborhood Service Calls (2019 thru March, 2023)</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Number of Calls</b>	<b>Emergency Calls</b>	<b>Non-Emergency Calls</b>
<b>2019</b>	72	66	6
<b>2020</b>	137	113	24
<b>2021</b>	112	106	6
<b>2022</b>	100	79	21
<b>2023 (thru March)</b>	24	21	3

*Source: Bluffton Township Fire District*

The typical response time from Station 30 to the neighborhood is between three (3) to seven (7) minutes. However, this time can be greater when homes are located on unmaintained private drives that make maneuvering an emergency vehicle difficult, or when street signage or address is missing or not readily visible. While private drives are the responsibility of property owners, the Town of Bluffton can assist income-qualifying owners with maintenance through the Town’s Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) located in the Growth Management department. Additionally, the Town can also help with erecting new and missing street signage. Residents can contact the Town’s Public Services department or make an online report via [SeeClickFix](#).

As some residents speak only Spanish, communication difficulties have occurred when assisting residents. While not a complete solution to address this, BTFD is actively seeking Spanish-speaking recruits to improve its ability to serve Bluffton’s rapidly growing Hispanic-Latino population.

The Fire District has taken proactive steps to enhance safety within the Buck Island Simmonsville neighborhood by updating or installing new smoke alarms. Recognizing the vital role that these alarms play in safeguarding residents, it is crucial to update them as they expire after 10

**Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update**

years. For homes with gas appliances, carbon monoxide detectors are imperative as it is a colorless and odorless gas that may be a lethal threat, making early detection vital. In partnership with the Neighborhood Assistance Program and the American Red Cross, BTFD installed 45 new smoke alarms and two (2) new carbon monoxide detectors free of charge in 12 homes in 2023. At an Advisory Committee meeting, the BTFD representative suggested that both the fire and police departments could join together to check and install detectors, as well as place addresses on buildings to increase safety.

Also, during an Advisory Committee meeting, some members expressed concern with the distance of fire hydrants in relation to some existing homes. A hydrant cannot be farther than 1,000 feet of a new structure, with the ideal location no more than 500 feet. As new homes are established in the neighborhood, especially those along private drives setback from Buck Island and Simmons ville roads, the distance may be greater. The neighborhood has some instances of the separation approaching 800 feet. To reduce the distance, collaboration between BTFD and the Beaufort County Jasper Water and Sewer Authority (BJWSA) will be necessary and may include the Town of Bluffton, and private property owners when a utility easement is required to extend a water line. Improving access to water can reduce property insurance premiums.

**Police Protection**

The Buck Island – Simmons ville community is served by the Bluffton Police Department (BPD). As of 2022, the BPD had 56 sworn police officers, a number the Town seeks to increase to, among other reasons, assign officers to specific neighborhoods to build and enhance relationships with residents and business owners. At present, each shift has one assigned officer per district in the Town.

BPD responds to a variety of types of service calls, ranging from general disturbances, trespassing, to noise complaints, and health and welfare. The Police Department also responds to vehicle collisions, reckless driving, and hit and runs. Between the months of January and July of 2023, the majority of neighborhood calls received by BPD related to activated alarms, noise complaints, domestic incidents, and traffic enforcement.

Bluffton Police also experience similar issues as the Bluffton Township Fire Department with vehicular accessibility and road signage and addresses that may be lacking or not fully visible. The BPD seeks to partner with BTFD to install or reinstall signage and addresses, which could be accomplished during a campaign to check, update, or install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

In an effort to break down the language barrier with Spanish-speaking residents, the Town employs and actively recruits officers fluent in Spanish. Two native Spanish-speaking chaplains are

available as needed. Additionally, BPD has a “Hispanic Hotline” to allow residents to leave a voice message or request that a Spanish-speaking officer return the call. The telephone number for the Hispanic Hotline is 843-706-7806.

During Advisory Committee discussion with the Police Chief, members expressed a desire to strengthen community relations with the department. As is common in other communities, staffing issues are hindering some efforts. To assist the BPD, the establishment of a neighborhood advisory group dedicated to aid in addressing neighborhood-specific concerns was mentioned. While somewhat similar to a “Neighborhood Watch,” members suggested another name to avoid the negative connotation that may be associated with the word “watch.” Community members can also engage with BPD by enrolling in its Citizens Police Academy. This 8-week, free program gives residents an opportunity to learn more about how the police department functions. The Academy covers topics such as the history of the department, traffic enforcement, radar operation, evidence collection, fingerprint recovery, defensive tactics, and firearms.



*Advisory Committee members share their thoughts and concerns with Bluffton Police Chief Joseph Babkiewicz and Bluffton Township Fire Marshal Dan Wiltse.*

Advisory Committee members also suggested that an event was needed to bring neighbors and the department together for fun and fellowship. Too often difficult or tragic circumstances may be the only interaction some communities have with their police department. In response, BPD planned the first Night of Unity event to engage residents and faith-based institutions to come together for an early evening of music, food, and comradery. This event was canceled in September, 2023 due to inclement weather and was held in January, 2024. BPD will have additional events for the community as resources allow.



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**ACTION PLAN**

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

**ACTION PLAN**

The Action Plan includes strategies that can be considered to be undertaken to achieve the objectives that were identified in the development of this Plan Update. Responsible Town departments, potential partners and a suggested timeline for completion are included. The identified strategies are not listed in any particular order.

The acceptance or adoption of the *Neighborhood Plan Update* is not a guarantee or a commitment of Town resources, and Town Council may opt to re-prioritize strategies based on resources and current needs. Some or all of the identified action items and strategies, depending on their nature, will be considered by Town Council during the annual strategic planning process in which projects for the upcoming fiscal year are identified, prioritized and a budget established. It may be possible that additional strategies for the area may be identified after adoption of this plan update.

Abbreviations used to identify the various partners are as follows:

TOB = Town of Bluffton


GM = Town of Bluffton Growth Management Department

PIO = Town of Bluffton Public Information Office

SCDOT = South Carolina Department of Transportation


BJWSA = Beaufort Jasper Water Sewer Authority

**Action Plan**


 <b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT &amp; IDENTITY</b>			
#	Strategy	Team	Timeline
1	Hold at least two community meetings per year and post signs in both English and Spanish.	TOB – Multiple Depts; Residents	1st meeting, March 2024; second, TBD.
2	Develop a logo for the community to help graphically express its identity.	TOB-GM and PIO; Residents	Ongoing
3	Assist residents with the creation of a neighborhood association and provide support, as able, once established.	Residents; TOB – GM and Other Depts	As desired by residents
4	Include more information about the community on the Town of Bluffton’s Buck Island-Simmons ville webpage, including upcoming community events.	Residents; TOB – GM and Other Depts	June, 2024
5	Pursue engagement with Hispanic residents with the assistance of Hispanic community leaders and advocates to encourage participation in the community.	Residents; Hispanic Community Advocates; TOB	December, 2024
6	Strengthen relationships with faith-based institutions to promote Town programs to assist residents.	Places of Worship; TOB – Multiple Depts	Ongoing
7	Incorporate art into the community on both public and private property.	Residents; Businesses; Utilities; TOB-Public Art Committee;	April, 2025
8	Explore the creation of a task force to recognize, document, preserve and further native resident culture and needs.	Residents TOB	As desired by residents



**Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update**

 <b>LAND USE &amp; ZONING</b>			
#	Strategy	Responsibility	Timeline
1	Identify ways in which flexibility in zoning could assist residents to earn income from their property.	TOB-GM Residents	Ongoing
2	Explore the possibility of rezoning two residentially-zoned properties with long-time commercial non-conforming uses on Buck Island Road to an appropriate commercial zoning district.	TOB-GM Property Owners	December, 2024
3	Explore the potential to purchase land and develop a community park.	TOB-Multiple Depts	Purchased by Town in March 2024
4	Evaluate if existing development standards in the community are appropriate for its character, such as maximum building height and minimum building setbacks, and determine if revisions may be in order.	TOB-GM	February, 2025
5	Provide regulations for home occupation use, such as permitted activities, limitation of employees and hours of operation.	TOB-GM	August, 2024
6	Explore the possibility of requiring some level of design review for non-residential and multi-family development, and possibly some minimal requirements for manufactured homes, such as site placement and skirting.	TOB-GM	February, 2025

**Action Plan**


 <b>HOUSING</b>			
#	Strategy	Responsibility	Timeline
1	Explore how to better promote and possibly expand the Town’s Neighborhood Assistance Program to assist income-qualifying residents with certain home repairs and maintenance.	TOB-GM TOB-Affordable Housing Committee Community Partners	Ongoing
2	Help guide residents who do not have clear title to their property to obtain legal assistance.	BIS Residents TOB – Growth Management Center for Heirs’ Property Preservation	Ongoing
3	Identify how affordable housing can be developed and maintained in the community.	TOB – Growth Management	Ongoing
4	Continue to improve efforts to cite illegal placement of manufactured homes and recreational vehicles.	TOB-Growth Management TOB-Police Department (Code Enforcement)	Ongoing
5	Review the Town’s policy to allow multiple manufactured homes per acre without subdivision of land when part of a family compound to avoid the possibility of de facto manufactured home parks.	TOB-Growth Management	December, 2024

Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update

 **TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY**

#	Strategy	Responsibility	Timeline
1	Ensure that private driveways to homes are readily accessible to first responders.	Residents; TOB-Multiple Depts; Bluffton Township Fire District	December, 2024
2	Explore the potential to develop bus stop locations and bus shelters in the area	TOB-Growth Management; Bluffton Breeze	March, 2025
3	Determine if a continuous sidewalk connection from Buck Island Road to May River Road is feasible and explore the possibility of additional gateway elements into the neighborhood, such as lighting, street trees and benches.	TOB-Projects	April, 2025
4	Improve street signage at intersection of Buck Island Road and Simmons ville Road.	TOB-Growth Management; Beaufort County	September, 2024

**Action Plan**

 <b>PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE</b>			
#	Strategy	Responsibility	Timeline
1	Complete installation of pedestrian lighting on Simmonsville Road. (Phase 5, 6)	TOB - Projects	COMPLETED
2	Complete construction of sidewalk on eastside of Simmonsville Road. (Phase 6)	TOB - Projects	COMPLETED
3	Continue regular maintenance of ditches to avoid overgrowth and flooding.	Beaufort County; SCDOT; TOB – Public Works	Ongoing
4	Install a pedestrian safety barrier to the existing boardwalk on Buck Island Road.	TOB – Projects	COMPLETED
5	Consult with Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority (BJWSA) and Bluffton Township Fire District to install fire hydrants in areas that are more than a 1,000-feet from the closest hydrant.	BJWSA; Bluffton Township Fire District; Beaufort County; TOB - Projects	Ongoing
6	Explore whether LED lighting is possible along Buck Island and Simmonsville roads to improve lighting levels.	BJWSA; Bluffton Township Fire District; TOB - Projects; Dominion and Palmetto Electric	Ongoing
7	Work to connect remaining homes with septic systems to public sewer to avoid potential watershed contamination.	BIS Residents; TOB - Projects	Ongoing
8	Conduct a comprehensive stormwater assessment for potential drainage improvements.	TOB – Projects; Community Partners	Ongoing



**Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update**

 **PUBLIC SERVICES**

#	Strategy	Responsibility	Timeline
1	Plan an event for Bluffton Township Fire District (BTFD) and Bluffton Police personnel to install/update smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and install addresses on homes and businesses that are visible.	Bluffton Township Fire District; TOB - Police; TOB – Growth Management	Ongoing
2	Verify if previously installed road markers for private driveways remain in place; erect new markers where necessary.	TOB – Growth Management; TOB – Public Works; Residents	September, 2024
3	Re-establish a program similar to “Neighborhood Watch” with a revised name.	Residents; TOB - Police	As determined by residents
4	Establish a schedule to place a speed trailer on Buck Island and Simmons ville roads. Coordinate with SCDOT to consider other traffic calming methods to slow motorists.	SCDOT; TOB - Police	Ongoing
5	Plan at least one “fun day” neighborhood event with the Police Department and residents.	TOB – Police; Residents ; Houses of Faith	“Night of Unity” held January 11, 2024
6	Identify ways in which additional police presence can be provided in the neighborhood.	TOB - Police; TOB – Multiple Depts; Residents	December, 2024
7	Coordinate with IT/GIS Addressing department to determine if Google Maps can be updated to include missing road names in the community.	TOB – Growth Management	COMPLETED

**Action Plan**

**NOTES**

**APPENDIX**

**Maps**

- Map 1: Location / Vicinity p. 11
- Map 2: Neighborhood Plan Area p. 12
- Map 3: Aerial Photography 2023 p. 13
- Map 4: 2005 Annexation Area: p. 17
- Map 5: Census Blocks: p. 21
- Map 6: Existing Land Use: p. 32
- Map 7: Future Land Use: p. 36
- Map 8: Zoning: p. 38

**Figures**

- Figure 1: Town of Bluffton Population 2020 thru 2022, p. 23
- Figure 2: Residents by Race, p. 24
- Figure 3: Hispanic Residents, p. 25
- Figure 4: Income and Housing Spectrum, p. 46
- Figure 5: 2023 Beaufort County Area Median Income Limits, p. 46

**Tables**

- Table 1: Neighborhood Demographics, p. 22
- Table 2: Residents by Gender and Age p. 24
- Table 3: Future Land Use by Category, p. 34
- Table 4: Future Land Use Categories and Intent, p. 37
- Table 5: Zoning District Categories and Descriptions, p. 39
- Table 6: Permitted Housing Types by Zoning District, p. 42
- Table 7: Status of Selected Road Surfaces, Ownership and Maintenance Responsibility, p. 51
- Table 8: BTFD Neighborhood Service Calls (2019 thru March, 2023), p. 57

## Footnotes

1. Green family members. Interview, Conducted by Rachel Bragg, 9 March, 2019..
2. Kitty, Renty. Interview, Conducted by Rachel Bragg, 9 March, 2019.
3. South Carolina Encyclopedia, University of South Carolina, Institute for Southern Studies, June 20, 2016, <https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/praise-houses/>
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7. City of Urbana, Illinois, September 27, 2023, <https://urbanaininois.us/muralsonglass>.
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# buck island simmons ville neighborhood plan





# acknowledgements

Creation of the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan was a collaborative effort and would not been possible without:

**the vision and dedication of**

the Buck Island Road and Simmonsville Road residents, the Advisory Group, and other concerned stakeholders

**the generosity of**

- Beaufort County Parks and Leisure Service (PALS)
- Bluffton Community Center
- Bluffton High School

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- Planning & Growth Management Department
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Engineering Support Services
- Department of Building Safety
- Bluffton Police Department
- Bluffton Township Fire District
- Beaufort County Traffic & Engineering Department
- South Carolina Department of Transportation
- Beaufort County School District

**the leadership and encouragement of**

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- Josephine Frazier
- Rev. Gwen Green
- Joe Lewis Green, Jr.
- Fred Hamilton
- Renty Kitty
- Sharon Brown

**planning commission**

- Josh Tiller, *Chairman*
- Don Blair
- Dan Wood
- Carmen Gray
- Carletha Frazier
- Joe Naughton
- Emmett McCracken

**town council**

- Mayor Henry “Hank” Johnston
- Lisa Sulka, Mayor Pro Tem
- Fred Hamilton
- Oliver Brown
- Charles Wetmore



03-05-2009 DRAFT

# table of contents

**4** preface

- impetus
- guiding principle
- purpose

**6** the process

- public workshops
- advisory group

**8** the neighborhood

- background and study area context
- demographics
- community inventory

**14** chapter 1: community identity and neighborhood involvement

**17** chapter 2: natural resources

**24** chapter 3: planning, zoning, and development

- planning and zoning
- recent development
- future land use

**35** chapter 4: parks and recreation

**37** chapter 5: community development

**41** chapter 6: public utilities and infrastructure

- water and sewer
- stormwater

**44** chapter 7: traffic and transportation

- streets & circulation
- unimproved streets
- traffic volumes
- planned roadway improvements
- sidewalks & pathways
- public transit

**55** chapter 8: public safety

- police
- fire

**58** chapter 9: implementation schedule and budget

**appendices**

- participants
- time line
- maps

03-05-2009 DRAFT

The Town of Bluffton's Planning & Growth Management Department, in partnership with the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood, is focused on developing a neighborhood plan in response to recommendations provided in the Town of Bluffton's Comprehensive Plan and the community's concern for future conditions of their neighborhood.

While the Town of Bluffton has dramatically increased in size, population, and development in the last decade, the Buck Island Simmonsville (BIS) Neighborhood has remained relatively constant. Recent changes and pending current development loom heavily on the neighborhood, leading the area residents to feel substantial development pressures.

The community's primary goals are to maintain and enhance the stability and security of its residential neighborhood and protect its residential character from commercial encroachment and other nonconforming land uses. Residents fear that the future middle school will have a negative impact on their neighborhood by adding to the recent traffic increases even more. In addition, recent criminal activity in the neighborhood has heightened residents' anxiety about their personal safety. There is a concern from residents that additional commercial development will attract more unlawful behavior.



Figure 1: The Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood has an abundance of natural resources.

## purpose of the plan

Neighborhood planning is a critical tool for guiding the vision of the Comprehensive Plan into a reality. While the Comprehensive Plan establishes a definitive course of growth of the Town as a whole, Neighborhood Plans specify in greater detail how each district of the Town is to accomplish those Town-wide goals. Indeed, much of the vision of the Neighborhood Plan is derived from the Comprehensive Plan.

### the vision statements for the comprehensive plan provided guidance throughout this process:

- We acknowledge and accept our diverse population and strive to offer a high quality of life for all residents, visitors, and workers.
- We strive to maintain our sense of community, diversity, and individuality by preserving our cultural resources.
- We will inventory and protect critical resources in a manner which sustains the vitality, function, and beauty of Bluffton's natural heritage.
- We will work to ensure that every resident has decent, safe, and affordable housing.
- We strive to create a vital, diverse, and sustainable local economy that enhances Bluffton's community resources: human, natural, cultural, and economic.
- We share a commitment to provide efficient and reliable facilities and services for the residents and visitors of the Town of Bluffton.
- We will plan for a balance of land uses that ensure a high quality of life, business opportunity, environmentally protected areas, and proper placement of residential uses.
- We will plan an efficient, adequate, and safe transportation network for all users, including motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- We share a commitment with our neighboring jurisdictions and agencies to work together to plan and construct the public infrastructure needed by the residents of the Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County.



Since conditions within the Buck Island Simonsville (BIS) Neighborhood could change and thus alter the premise for the various recommendations, it is important to review this plan periodically. The recommendations and action strategies listed in this document are designed for a five to seven-year time period. However, planning is a continuous process and the plan is merely a framework from which to build. It is anticipated that necessary changes will be addressed by adjusting the Neighborhood Plan during future updates. Revisions of the plan should be conducted biannually.

The recommendations in this Neighborhood Plan are primarily intended to preserve and enhance the quality of life in the Neighborhood. The desire is to limit commercial impact, promote quality land use, and enhance the safety of the Neighborhood for all residents.

In conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan, the BIS Neighborhood Plan serves as a long-term, comprehensive policy guide for the development of the BIS neighborhood. The BIS Neighborhood Plan is a vision statement of how the community would like to see its neighborhood in the future. It will serve to:

- Enable the Town Council and Planning Commission to establish long-range development policies.
- Provide a basis for judging whether specific development proposals and public projects are in harmony with these policies.
- Guide public agencies and private developers in designing and funding projects that are consistent with Town policies.
- Provide a realistic and fiscally responsible direction for future change in the BIS community.
- Define the generic parameters for zoning ordinance amendments.
- Revitalize BIS by assisting current and future residents and other stakeholders to create a diverse, mixed-income residential neighborhood with peripheral commercial development at the southern boundary.
- Serve as an official, publicly adopted guide to public and private investment in the Neighborhood over the next decade.
- Demonstrate that a high level of consensus has been achieved in major policy areas.
- Clearly pronounce the collective desires of the BIS stakeholders concerning quality of life issues affecting the community in the short and long term futures.
- Encourage existing and potential partners to make BIS a more caring and cohesive neighborhood of stakeholders sharing a common goal.
- Demonstrate the need for community development activities and programs.

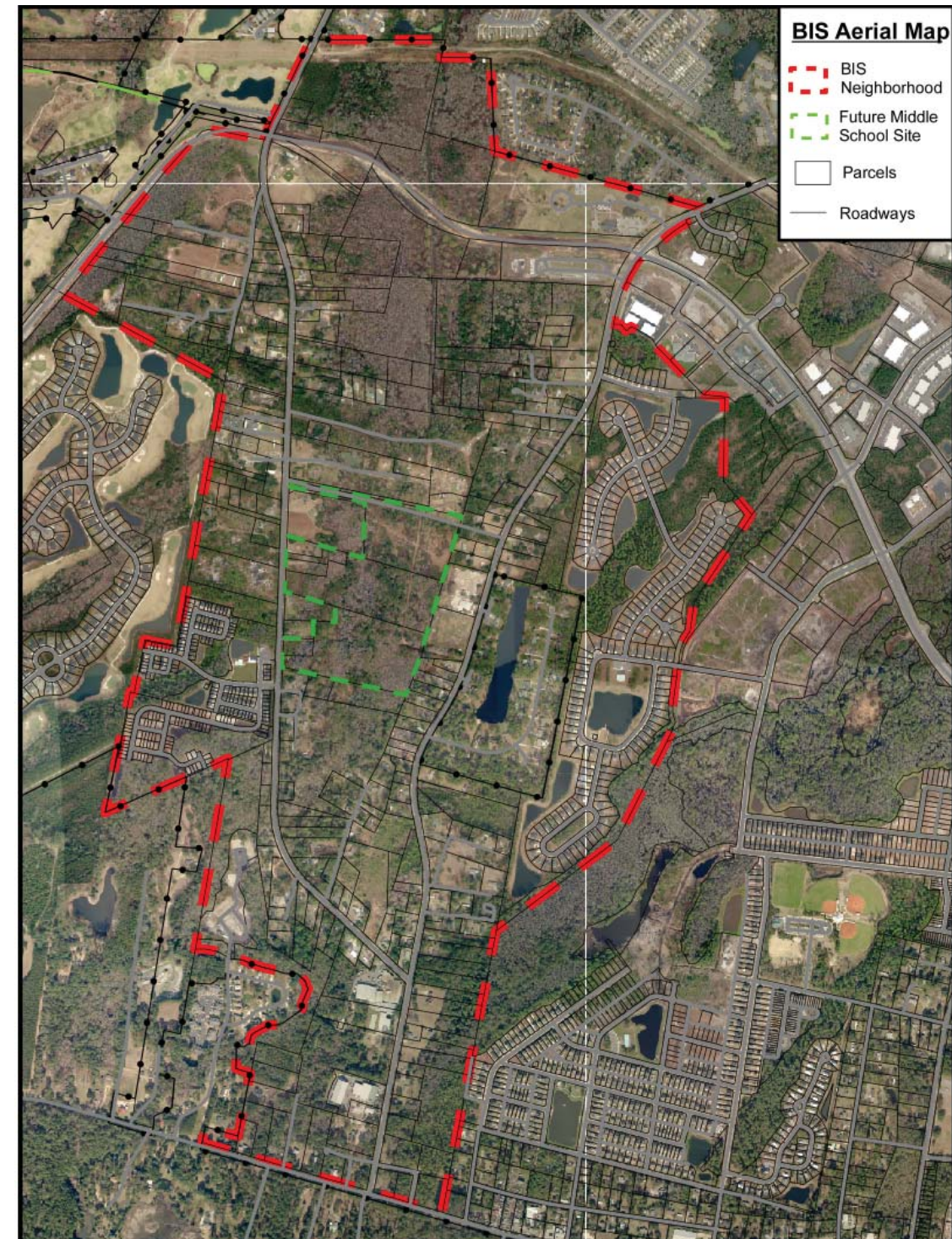


Figure 2: Aerial of the BIS study area.



The Buck Island Simonsville (BIS) Neighborhood planning effort is one of two recommended community planning efforts made through the Town's Comprehensive Plan that was adopted in September 2007. This planning effort is also a result of an overwhelming amount of community concern for existing and future conditions within the Neighborhood.

The effort represents a partnership of interested property owners, community members, merchants, developers, Town staff, local elected officials, county and state agencies, and non-profit organizations.

The BIS Neighborhood Plan was developed during interactive public workshops and a charrette process spanning over seven months. The purpose of the public workshops and charrettes was to provide a forum for residents and community stakeholders to describe their vision for the future of the Buck Island Simonsville Neighborhood. Prior to the start of the planning process Town staff met with the local ministerial group, Town Council, Planning Commission, and community leaders to discuss the planning process and its goals.

Plan recommendations were developed with input from the public workshops, advisory group meetings, elected officials, and Town staff. Identified topic areas were:

- Community Identity and Neighborhood Involvement
- Natural Resources
- Community Development
- Planning, Zoning, and Development
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Utilities and Infrastructure
- Public Safety

**advisory group**

An advisory group was formed as a part of the neighborhood planning process. The advisory group was made up of a combination of residents living in the neighborhood, elected officials, local business leaders, and pastoral leadership within the community.

The advisory group, which met in between the larger public meetings, served two primary roles. The first was to assist Town staff in further identifying community issues and opportunities. The second was to help develop the vision, goals, and objectives of the plan.

The group assisted Town staff in prioritizing major issues in the Buck Island Simonsville Neighborhood. These priorities were derived from workshop conversations, community survey results, and other plan-related discussions. These priorities, as identified by the advisory group, are listed in the appendix in bold.



Figure 3: Public meetings are critical for obtaining feedback from residents.

**public workshops**

The planning process was designed as a collaborative and interactive endeavor. A survey was sent to property owners in the study area to gauge neighborhood satisfaction and determine priority issues to examine through the planning process. The survey results, as well as results of the kick-off meeting, helped form the agendas for the workshop meetings.

Subsequently, a series of charrettes brought decision makers and members of the community together to help shape the direction of the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan. The charrettes brought out issues, opportunities, alternatives, and solutions for current and future planning initiatives. Results of the survey and meetings can be found in .

**kick-off meeting**

The planning process began with a kick-off meeting held on June 2, 2008 at Town Hall, where over 70 property owners, stakeholders, and Town officials were in attendance. The meeting format included the introduction of staff, an overview of the existing condition data collected, and an interactive visioning exercise. Part one of the exercise consisted of a series of questions of likes and dislikes within the community as well as things the community would like to see changed. Part two of the exercise allowed participants to rank their likes, dislikes, and recommended improvements according to priority.

**public workshop I**

On June 16, 2008, Public Workshop I was held at the Oscar Frazier Rotary Community Center. The workshop format was in the form of a charrette. Using large scale maps participants worked in four groups:

- land use and zoning
- traffic and transportation
- housing
- community identity

**public workshops II-IV**

On July 14, August 4, and August 25, 2008 speakers from the Town, County, and State spoke to the community on special projects within the community and about concerns of the community. Speakers for these three workshops included the following Town agencies: the Department of Environmental Protection, Engineering Support Services, and Building Safety. Other speakers included Beaufort County Transportation and Traffic Engineering, South Carolina Department of Transportation, the Bluffton Township Fire District, and Beaufort County School District. Topics such as road improvements, pathways, fire safety, police programs, and building codes were discussed at these sessions. These meetings were set up as forums where the speakers provided short background summaries of current projects/activities, followed by a question and answer session.



Figure 4: Multiple public meetings, involving local community members, helped guide the planning process.



03-05-2009 DRAFT

### background and study area context

The Buck Island Simmonsville (BIS) Neighborhood is located within a mile of Old Town Bluffton. Residents of the neighborhood petitioned the Town of Bluffton for annexation and a special election was held on October 26, 2005. A majority of registered voters voted in favor of the proposed annexation and on December 29, 2005, approximately 500 parcels were annexed into the Town of Bluffton. See Figure 6 for the annexation area.

According to the 2000 census, approximately 1,817 people reside within the BIS annexation area. (Note the annexation area is larger than the BIS study area.)

A strong sense of community exists within the Neighborhood; however, the community's identity is not as easily recognized by Greater Bluffton as it is in the Neighborhood. The majority of the study area's population consists of long-time area residents who are descendants of original property owners. Because of this, the area is characterized by a tight-knit community comprised of large family property lands.

Despite large scale development pressures and outward growth from the Town of Bluffton and southern Beaufort County, the BIS Neighborhood has largely been able to maintain its unique neighborhood characteristics.

While the majority of the study area is zoned General Residential, there are several large tracts of land suitable for development and some property owners are interested in re-zoning their properties to increase their value and land use options. These outside development pressures threaten to undermine and change the BIS Neighborhood's community identity.

The introduction of the Bluffton Parkway through the northern portion of the BIS Neighborhood has also contributed to these pressures, as these frontage properties are much more attractive to developers due to increased accessibility, high traffic volumes, and the creation of major intersections at Buck Island Road and Simmonsville Road. In response to this growing concern for a potential loss of community identity within the BIS Neighborhood, it has been determined that a comprehensive neighborhood plan must be devised in order to aid in guiding future decisions as they pertain to the BIS Neighborhood.

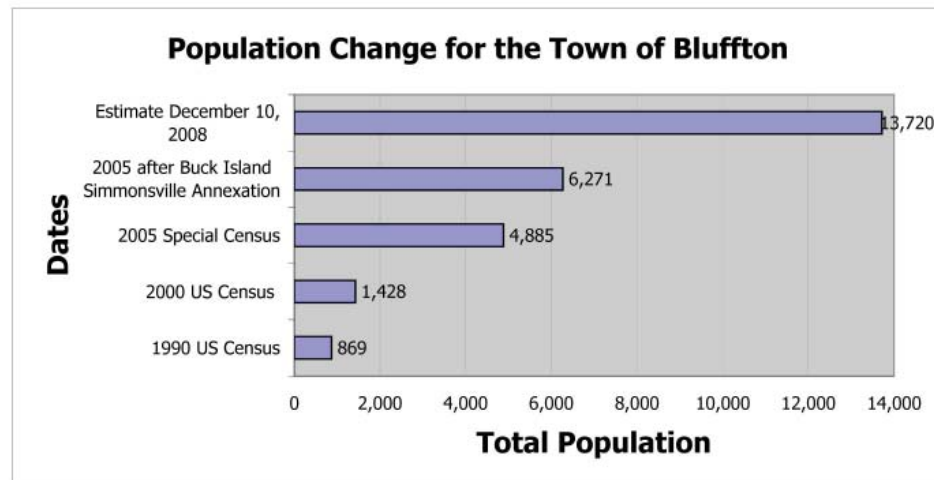


Figure 5: Town Population Projection.

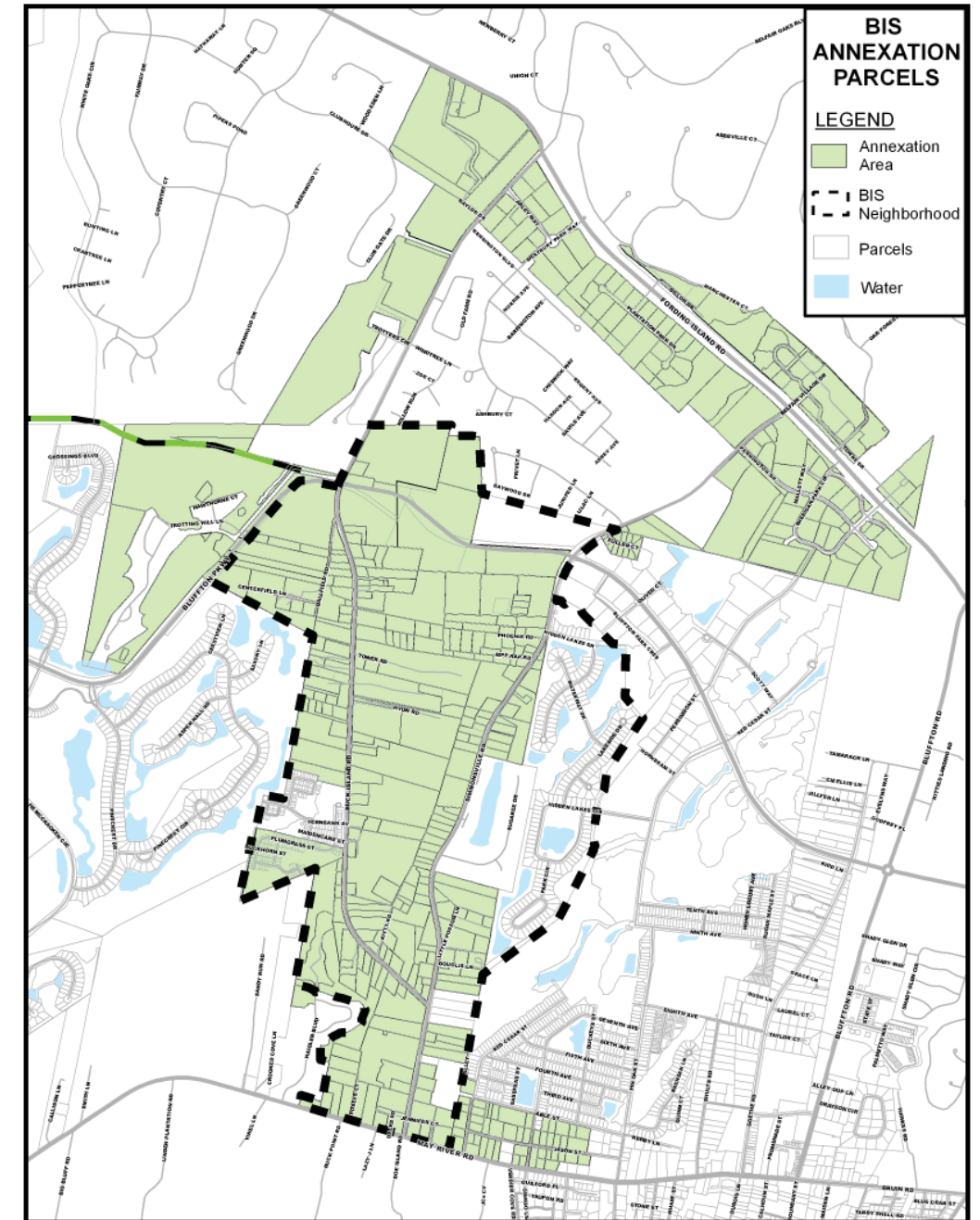


Figure 6: 2005 BIS annexation area.



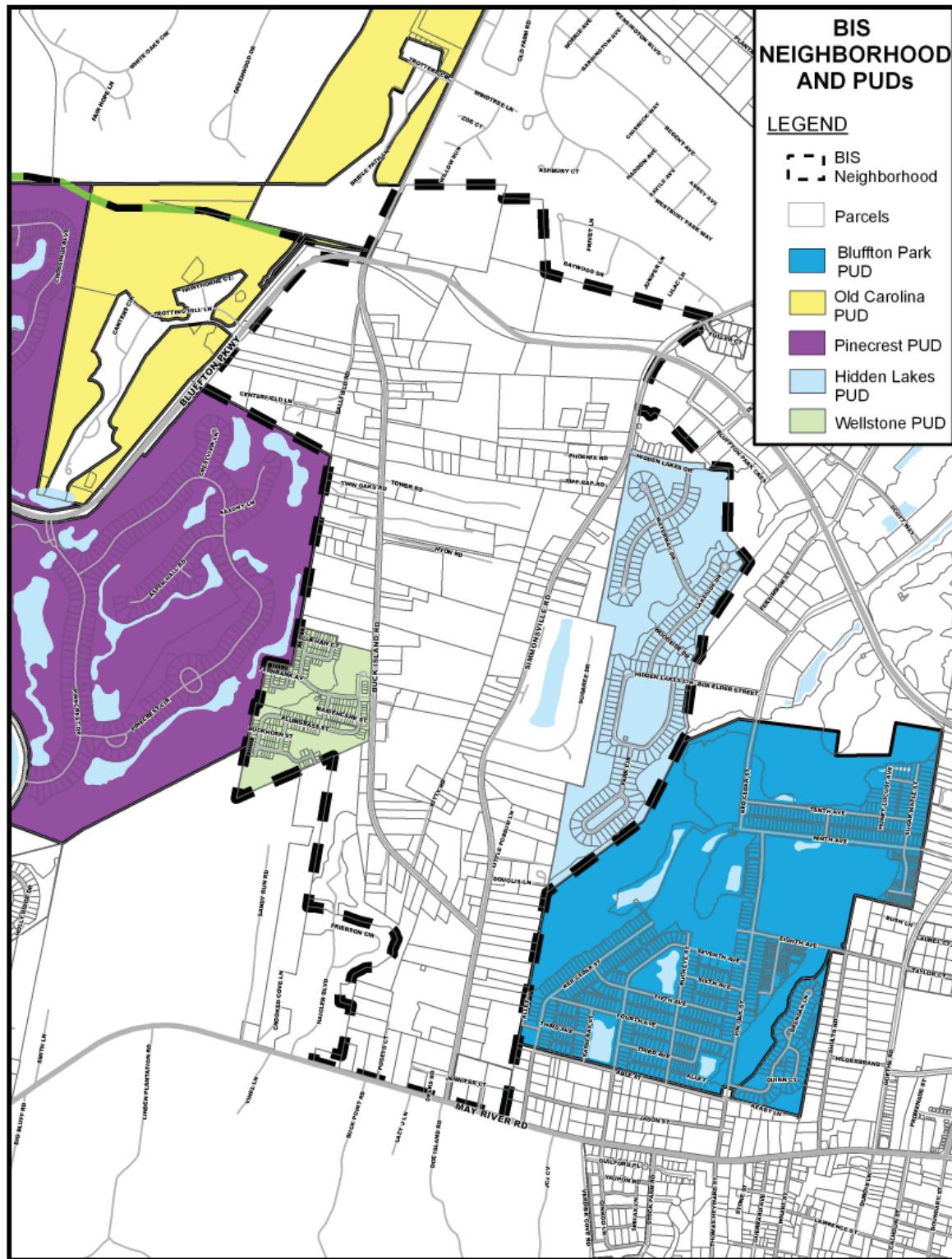


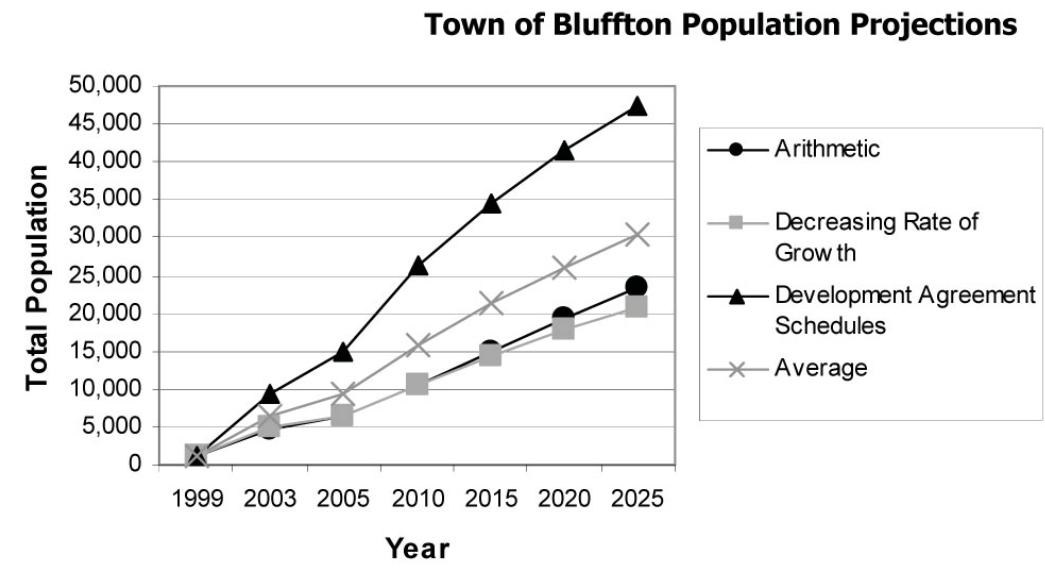
Figure 7: BIS Neighborhood study area and adjacent PUDs.

For the purpose of the neighborhood planning effort, the study area includes only 855 acres of the original annexation area. The BIS Neighborhood boundaries are roughly those properties on or within the Bluffton Parkway to the north, Simmonsville Road to the East, May River Road to the south, and Buck Island Road to the west.

The study area includes all the property that was zoned something other than PUD upon annexation, with the exception of the Sheridan Park commercial center on 278.

The residential communities of Hidden Lakes, Windy Lakes, Vista View Phase III, and Wellstone are also located within the community; however, for the intent of this neighborhood plan, specific recommendations for these areas are not emphasized herein. See Figure 7 for the study area and adjacent residential PUD communities.

Population projections from development agreement schedules estimate a Town of Bluffton “build-out” population of 47,310 by 2025, as shown in Figure 8.



Source: Town of Bluffton Planning and Growth Management Department

Figure 8: Town Population Projection through 2025.

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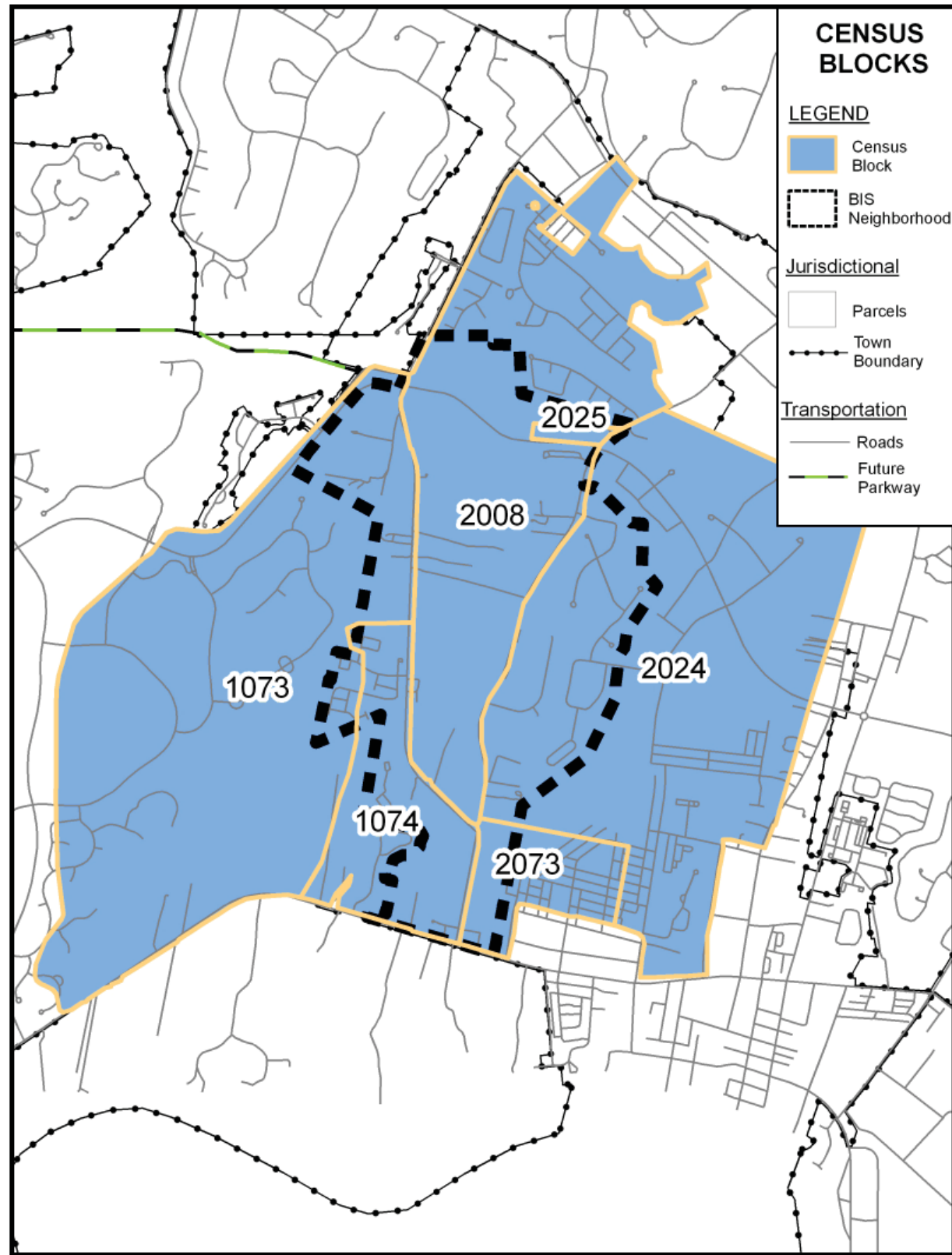


Figure 9: US Census Blocks that comprise the BIS study area.

demographics

The Census data provides good insight about the people and households in the Buck Island Simonsville Neighborhood. However, the data does not provide an exact match for the Neighborhood, as the Census Blocks include some of the surrounding areas, as well.

According to the 2000 Census, the BIS annexation area has approximately 1,817 residents with a median age of 28.5 years. The population is approximately 53.5 percent non-white, which is much higher than the Town average of 36.8 percent non-white.

The Census information was gathered from the 2000 Census and from the following blocks:

- Census Tract: 21
- Block Group: 1, 2
- Block: 1073, 1074, 2008, 2024, 2025, 2073

Figure 9 shows the BIS Census Blocks.

The 2000 Census also lists 614 households in the area, of which, 25 are vacant and 589 are occupied. Of the 589 occupied households, 444 are owner occupied and 145 are renter occupied. See Figure 10 for the summary results.

Census data also shows that the average household size for the area is 2.98 persons, while the average family size is 3.4 persons.

By comparison, these are higher than the figures for the Town of Bluffton as a whole, which averages 2.74 persons per household with an average family size of 3.16.

2000 CENSUS DATA FOR BIS	
Total Population	1,817
White	934
Black	774
Other	109
Ethnicity- Latino	212
Male	887
Female	930
Average Age	28.5
Total Households	589
Families	463
Average Family size	3.4
Housing Units Total	614
Housing Units Occupied	589
Housing Units Vacant	25
Owner Occupied	444
Renter Occupied	145

Figure 10: Results from the 2000 Census.



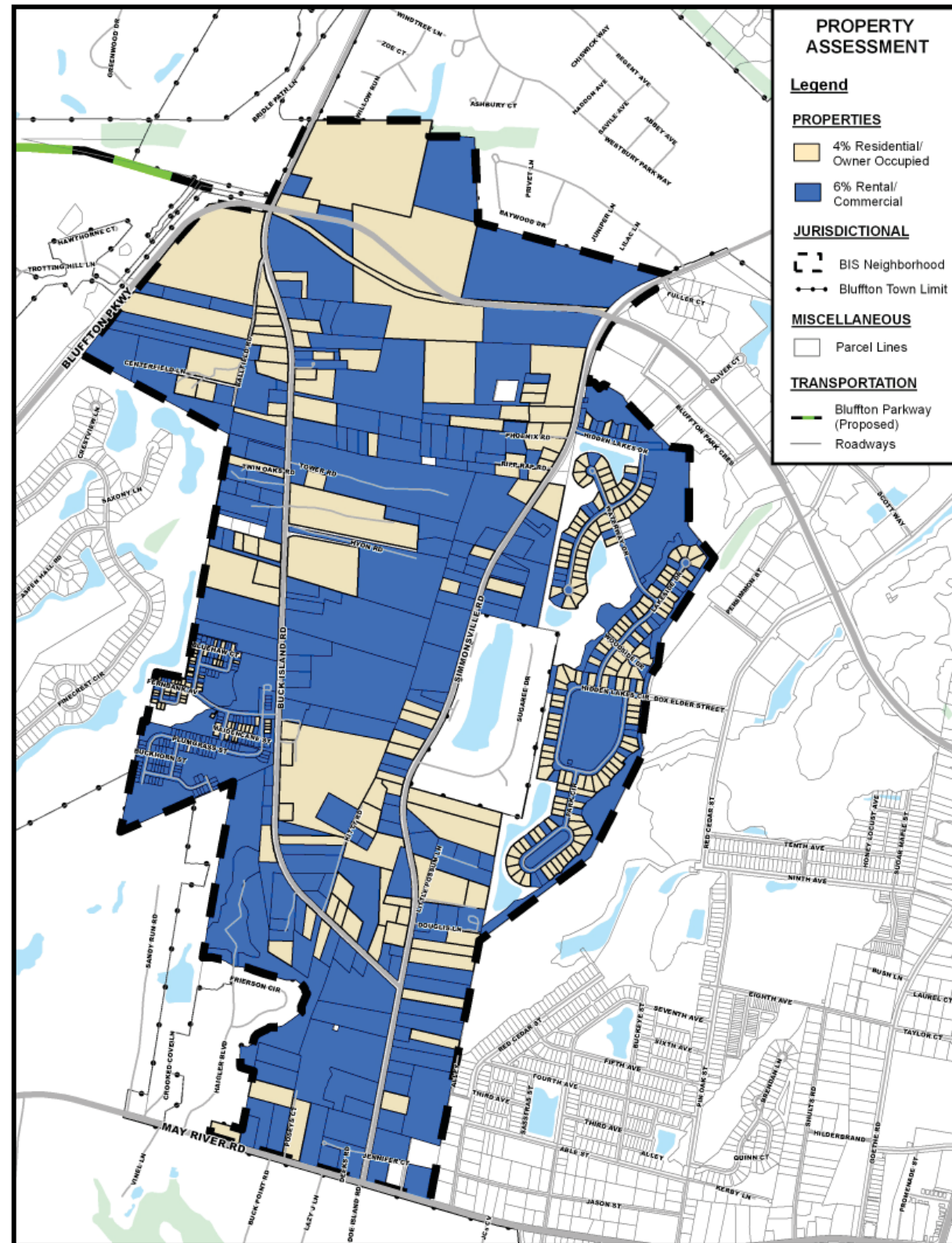


Figure 11: Map of Owner Occupied and Rental Occupied Properties.

According to the Beaufort County Assessor's Office, 33% of the BIS Neighborhood is owner-occupied residential property, while the remaining 67% properties are rental properties or commercial in nature. See Figure 11.

2007 tax assessor's data shows that the 636 properties paid a total of \$118,010.48. Of those 636 properties, 608 properties (95.6%) were listed as residential and 28 properties (4.4%) were classified as commercial. The 2007 property taxes from residential properties in the BIS Neighborhood were \$86,425.76. The taxes collected by the Town of Bluffton in 2007 from the commercial properties in the Neighborhood were \$31,584.72.

There are 34 licensed businesses in the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood, employing more than 450 people. The two largest employers are RSI and Year-Round Pool. Together they employ over 270 employees in the BIS Neighborhood. The majority of neighborhood businesses are operated out of homes. Over 70% of the businesses throughout BIS employ only one or two people.

In 2008, the Town of Bluffton and Lowcountry Council of Governments conducted a Local Income Survey to determine grant eligibility for installation of a new sanitary sewer system. The survey gathered information on the size, economic status, and eligibility of each household for free sewer hookups, as well.

The survey was given to residents along Buck Island Road, south of the Bluffton Parkway, and to residents on secondary roads off of Buck Island.

The survey results found that the majority of people benefitting from the upcoming sewer project are in the low-to-moderate income limits (less than 80% AMI), thus allowing the Town to apply for the federal grant for this project.

**Survey results included:**

Two hundred and sixty (260) respondents;

- Two hundred and twenty-four (224) of the respondents earn less than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) for Beaufort County, SC.

Of those two hundred twenty-four (224) respondents:

- Sixty-nine (69) respondents fall within the Low Income Limits (between 50% & 80% of AMI);
- Seventy-six (76) respondents fall within the Very Low Income Limits (between 30% & 50% of AMI);
- Seventy-nine (79) respondents fall within the Extremely Low Income Limits (less than 30% of AMI).

See Figure 12 for HUD's income limits in Beaufort County.

Area Median Income (AMI)	FY 2008 Income Limit Category	1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person	6 Person	7 Person	8 Person
\$61,500	Low Income Limits (50%-80%)	\$35,300	\$40,300	\$45,350	\$50,400	\$54,450	\$58,450	\$62,500	\$66,550
	Very Low Income Limits (30%-50%)	\$22,050	\$25,200	\$28,350	\$31,500	\$34,000	\$36,550	\$39,050	\$41,600
	Extremely Low Income Limits (less than 30%)	\$13,250	\$15,100	\$17,000	\$18,900	\$20,400	\$21,900	\$23,450	\$24,950

Figure 12: US Department of Housing and Urban Development income limits.

03-05-2009 DRAFT





Figure 13: Occupied structures next to abandoned structures.



Figure 14: A manufactured home park in the BIS Neighborhood.



Figure 15: Overgrown lots and abandoned structures were commonly found during the community inventory.

**community inventory**

A community inventory was performed in the months of February and March 2008, gathering information on all areas in the Town of Bluffton not currently located in a Planned Unit Development (PUD). Over 300 residences were surveyed.

The purpose of the inventory was to verify addresses for the 2010 local census update. In addition, Town staff was able to use the opportunity to gather other data while out in the field.

Field observations, as well as data gathered through the community inventory, show substandard housing, environmental issues, and inadequate infrastructure around and within the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood.

Manufactured housing is the most common type of residential unit within the area, occupying over 46% of the properties. Manufactured housing is not viewed as appropriate affordable housing by federal or state standards due to the fact that they lose value very quickly. In addition, manufactured housing is not built to withstand the extreme weather conditions that Bluffton faces from hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. **See Figures 17 and 18 for the types of structures in the Neighborhood and the year in which they were constructed.**

Of the 146 manufactured houses in the subject area, 17 were either in fair or unsafe condition and 11 of those are believed to be currently occupied. There were a total of 90 single family detached homes inventoried.

Not all properties were accessible during the community inventory and thus may be missing from the community inventory data.

Some of the properties were inaccessible because they are located on private property and because of trespassing regulations. Others were impassible due to roads being blocked by debris or rough terrain.

Between February 2006 and October 2008, the Town of Bluffton issued 18 building permits in the Neighborhood. Eleven of these building permits were for manufactured homes. The others included a demolition permit and miscellaneous repair permits.

More than 40 properties in the BIS Neighborhood were found to be overgrown and/or to contain substantial yard debris or bulk trash. Thirty of these properties were residential.

Drainage problems were also found during the community inventory, with 56 properties experiencing some level of standing water. Problems such as inadequately maintained roadside and property line ditches and dilapidated or failing culverts have been observed within the BIS Neighborhood. These problems cause flooding on both roadways and property, and increase the likelihood for pollution to enter wetlands and watersheds.

There is a need for public infrastructure investment and a strict schedule for maintenance of this infrastructure to help alleviate many of these drainage issues.



Figure 16: Drainage problems are frequent in the Neighborhood.



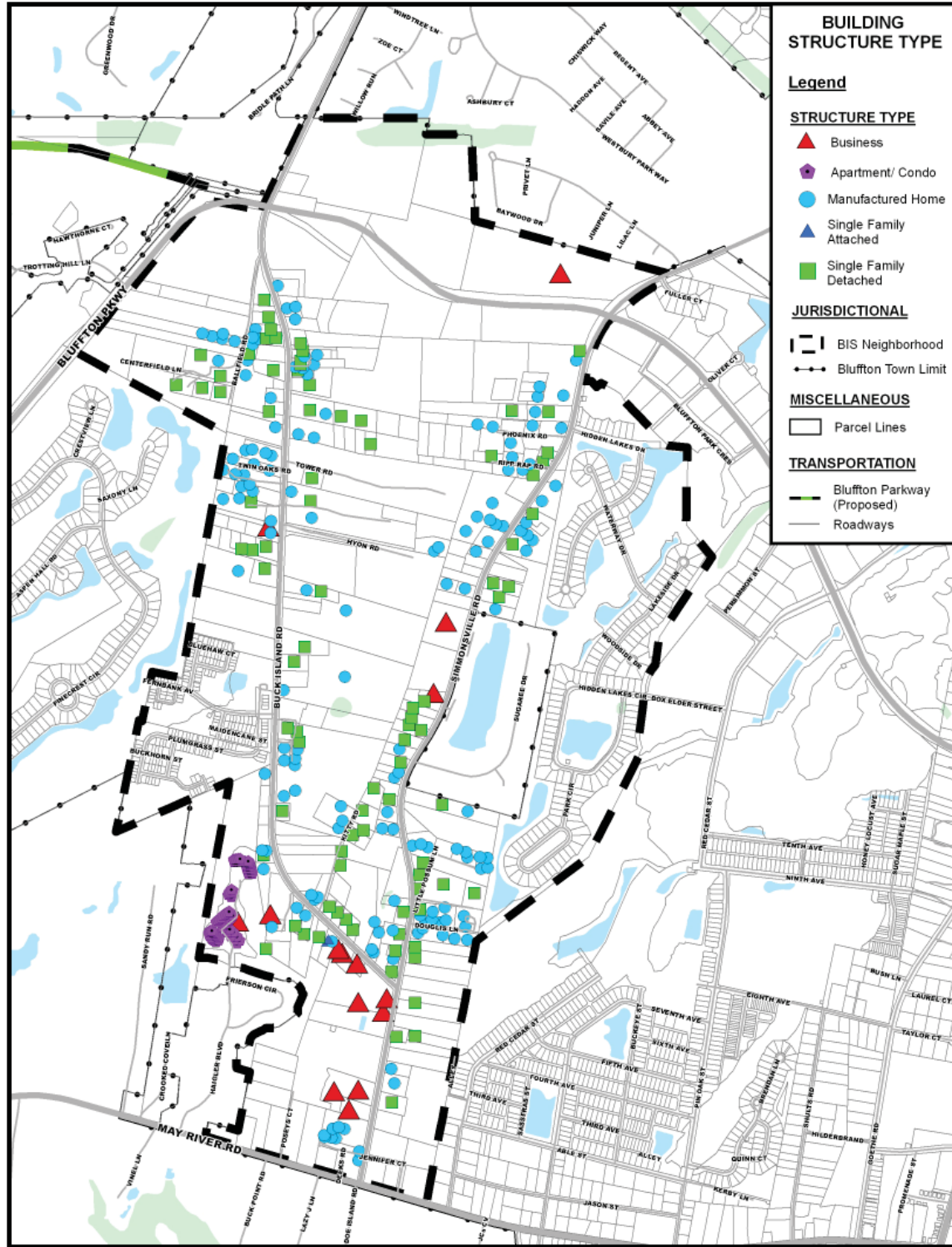


Figure 17: A variety of building structures exist in the community.

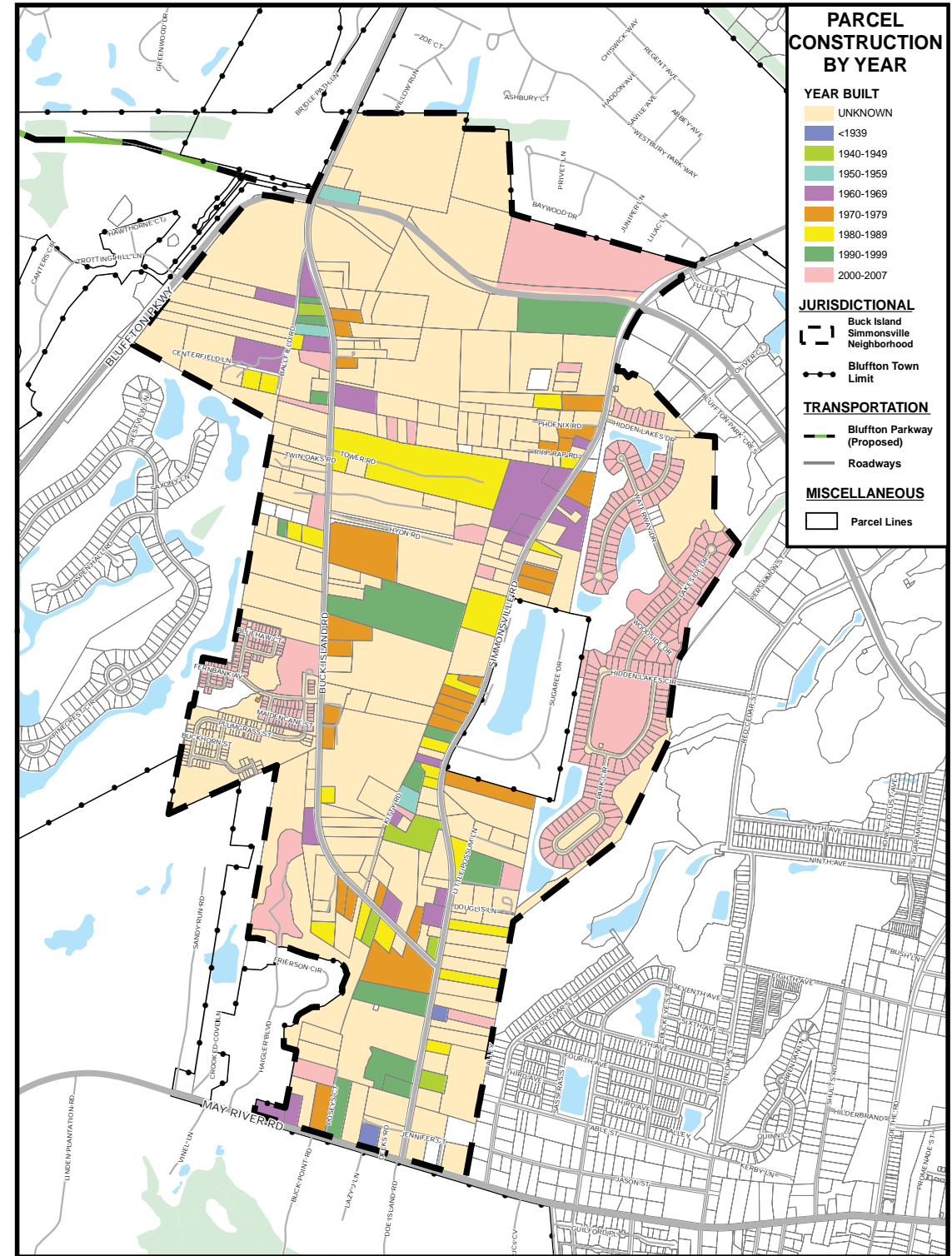


Figure 18: Year of construction by parcel.

03-05-2009 DRAFT



# chapter 1: community identity & neighborhood involvement

03-05-2009 DRAFT



Figures 19 and 20: A well-designed gateway element can help brand the BIS Neighborhood to the greater Bluffton community.



The future of the Town of Bluffton depends largely on having healthy and vibrant neighborhoods. Creating a sense of community begins with resident initiative and participation. Stakeholders must be engaged in the planning and implementation process. The community must encourage cooperative efforts between the public and private entities responsible for implementing plan recommendations.

The more recent subdivisions and planned communities that surround the BIS Neighborhood have an inherent identity through their establishments as planned communities. The ancillary property owners associations and branding identity further reinforce these legally defined neighborhoods.

The BIS Neighborhood suffers from a lack of a visible identity. For example, the community does not have a defined entry with a gate house and sign. There is no public amenity or destination within the neighborhood with which it can be associated. There is no consistent architectural theme or historic period to unify the community. Finally, there is no property owners association to help unite and represent the BIS Neighborhood to the Town, County, general public, or residents

The BIS Neighborhood would benefit from an inclusive

neighborhood organization for communication by all property owners and residents. This could start by expanding the existing Neighborhood Association.

A neighborhood organization is an officially recognized organization for a specific geographic location in which every resident and business within the neighborhood is a voting member. Neighborhood organizations work to reflect the issues and concerns of its members. Neighborhood organizations also have the legal standing to represent the neighborhood to the Town on a variety of issues including land-use and zoning, traffic, parks, and other issues that directly affect a neighborhood's livability.

The Town Council is committed to ensuring that this community-based energy and interest is used productively in municipal decision-making. This is especially important in land-use planning. The Town works with the neighborhood organizations to encourage early participation in the public review process, an open dialogue between applicants and neighborhoods, and improving communications between the development community, citizens, and Town government. This forum would provide the ideal setting to ensure the BIS Neighborhood Plan is

properly implemented.

A neighborhood watch program would also help unite residents by working with law enforcement to keep a trained eye and ear on their community. The program teaches citizens how to help themselves by identifying and reporting suspicious activity in their neighborhood. The social interaction and "watching out for each other" camaraderie tends to strengthen communities and is at the heart of most successful neighborhood watch programs.

Neighborhood watches share one essential concept: bringing community members together to re-establish control of their neighborhoods, promoting an increased quality of life, and reducing the crime rate in the area. The adjacent community of Hidden Lakes recently started its own neighborhood watch program, and residents say that they feel safer, and that the program has provided a social network which has strengthened their neighborhood.



Figure 21: Typical community policing programs that could benefit the BIS Neighborhood.

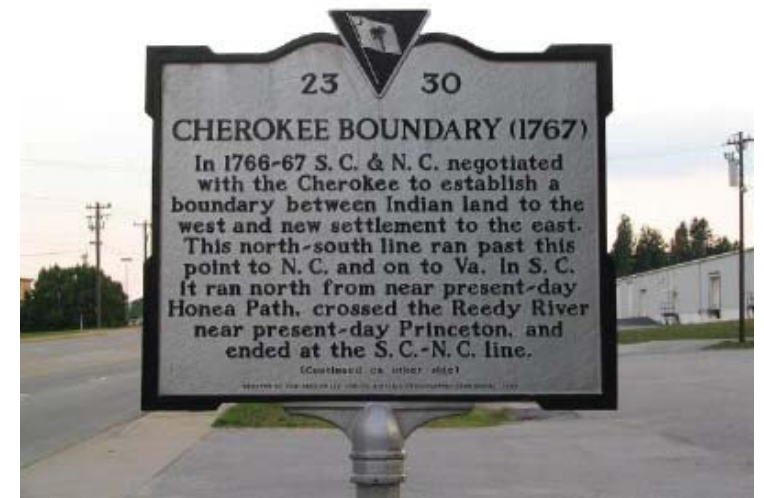


Figure 22: An example of historic signage being used to identify important features.



Community events add to the spirit and vitality of neighborhoods and provide an opportunity for residents to socialize. For generations, block parties have served as a way for neighbors to meet each other. Some block parties are organized around holidays such as the 4th of July or Labor Day, while others may start because of an issue affecting the neighborhood.

The neighborhood organization can help establish the first Buck Island Simmonsville community event. The new middle school will make an ideal location for such an event due to its size and central location.

Due to the lack of neighborhood identity, a branding exercise that includes a name and image package is a recommendation for the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood to consider. Branding is about building affinity for a neighborhood. For a neighborhood brand to be relevant, the brand must flow from the neighborhood itself. The brand identity must focus on the strengths of the community and be understood by the greater Bluffton community.

Another method to help establish neighborhood identity is the creation of a neighborhood gateway. This can be done by creating an entry structure or a distinguishing sign in conjunction with other aesthetic features to emphasize the residential neighborhood. BIS residents have identified the May River Road/Buck Island Road intersection as one gateway. The Bluffton Parkway intersections of Simmonsville and Buck Island roads have also been identified as potential gateways into the BIS Neighborhood. A simple monument sign with appropriate landscaping would go a long way in identifying and branding the BIS Neighborhood. The gateway should be a high-quality design that reflects the character of the residential neighborhood (based on branding initiative.) The Bluffton Parkway and Buck Island gateway is also an opportunity to coordinate with Beaufort County to properly screen the refuse facility so that the Neighborhood's entrance is not such an unfriendly eyesore. **Figure 24 shows some examples.**

These gateways might reduce cut-through traffic, as well. Typically, motorists frustrated by congestion on major arterial and collector roadways will seek shortcuts or less congested routes. By providing these high quality gateway features on Bluffton Parkway and May River Road, some cut-through traffic may be discouraged.



Figure 23: Neighborhood events help strengthen communities.

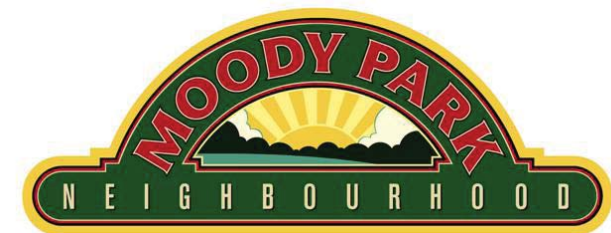


Figure 24: After a branding campaign, new street signs can help reinforce a neighborhood's image and promote the community's identity.



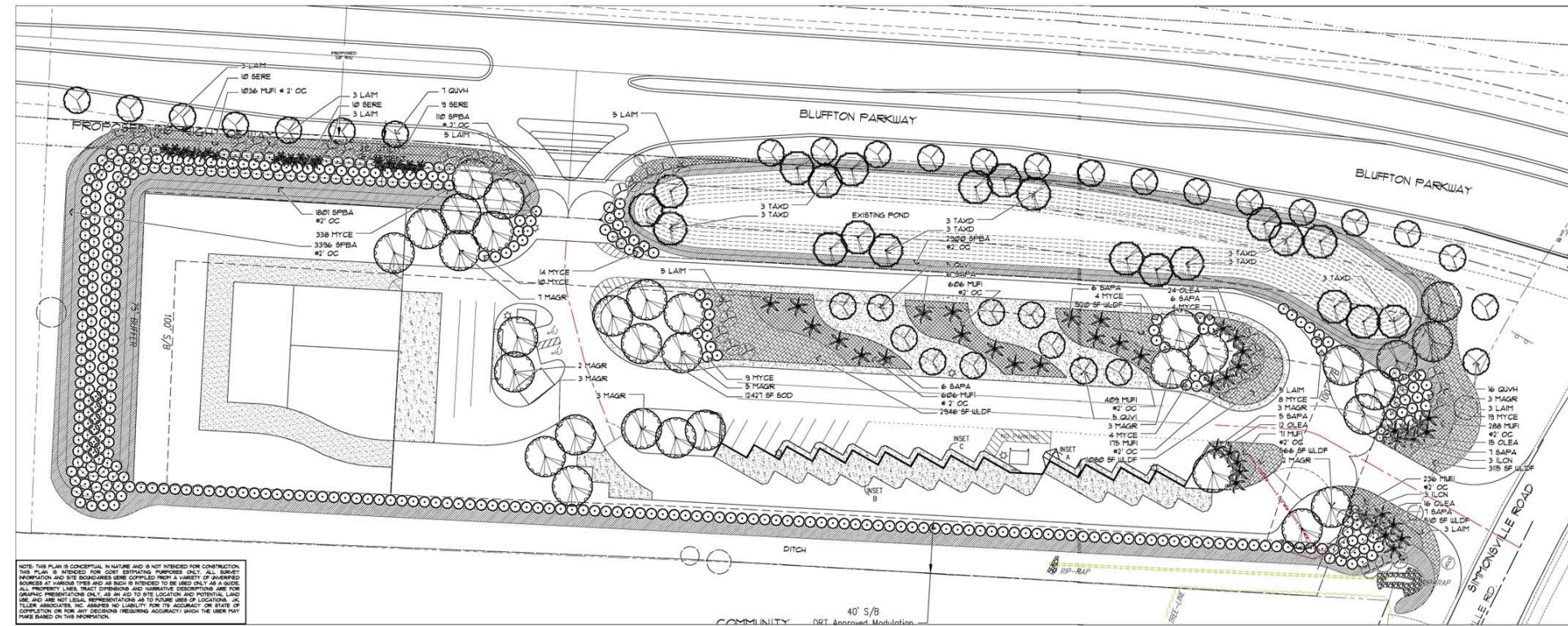


Figure 25: Screen Planting Plan for County Recycling and Refuse Center from JK Tiller Associates, Inc.

03-05-2009 DRAFT

community identity & neighborhood involvement recommendations

Develop working groups for each of the Plan elements	AC, PO, TOB
Hold a public meeting every quarter to review and discuss plan implementation status	AC, PO, TOB
Establish Buck Island Simmonsville as the Town's first official Neighborhood Organization	AC, PO, TOB
Coordinate with the Bluffton Historical Society to identify historic resources (land, structures, events) and promote the local history via markers	BHS, PO
Through a branding process, develop an image package for Buck Island Simmonsville including logo, colors, and tag line	AC, PO, TOB
Reinforce the community boundaries and branding image by installing entry signage and beautification at identified gateway locations	AC, PO, TOB
Install new street signs with the BIS logo/image	TOB, BC
Develop a template for a BIS Neighborhood website and give content control and management to the Neighborhood Organization	TOB, NO
The Neighborhood Organization and the new middle school should adopt Buck Island and Simmonsville roads for regular trash pickups	NO, BCSD
Establish an annual BIS event that highlights the heritage and diversity of the Neighborhood	NO
Establish partnerships with Eagles Field and the middle school to positively integrate these facilities into the Neighborhood	AC, PO, TOB, EF, BCSD
Screen the County refuse facility to create a more aesthetic gateway for the Neighborhood	BC, TOB
Establish a neighborhood cleanup program with community association that allows residents to dispose of white goods and other hazardous household items	TOB, NO

KEY:

AC-Advisory Committee; BC-Beaufort County; BCSD-Beaufort County School District; BHS-Bluffton Historical Society; EF-Eagles Field; NO-Neighborhood Organization; PO-Property Owners; SCDOT-SC Department of Transportation; TOB-Town of Bluffton



# chapter 2: natural resources

The Town of Bluffton has a variety of forests and woodland types, and the Buck Island Simmonsville (BIS) Neighborhood is a prime example of such variety.

These natural features offer many great benefits to the Town and the surrounding areas. Specifically, the forested areas are comprised of both Pinewoods and Hardwood Bottom Wetlands. These forest types provide a wide range of habitats and many opportunities for a variety of plant and animal species, some of which may be endangered. **Figure 28 identifies the areas of wetlands in the BIS Neighborhood.**

Preserving large tracts of habitat, such as the one in the BIS Neighborhood, helps prevent species isolation and extinction. In addition to the other ecological benefits of the forested areas, one of the most important is providing surface water cleansing. The forests and wetlands help clean stormwater before it leaves the BIS Neighborhood. Wetlands are one of the best environments to mitigate flooding, clean stormwater, and provide groundwater recharging.

The BIS Neighborhood is situated in the May River and Colleton River watersheds so any trash, pollution,

or toxins in the BIS Neighborhood will flow into one of these treasured rivers (see **Figure 29**).

Preserving high-quality water in the area is critical to preserving shell fishing, fishing, recreation, and drinking water for Town residents. Without the forests and wetlands to clean the surface water, oysters, crabs, and fish would not only become unfit for human consumption due to pollutants, but many species would die off. The impacts of forest and wetland losses would be devastating to the fishing industry and the traditional way of life in the Lowcountry.

There may also be opportunities for developers to allow Town staff or non-profit organizations to remove native plants in areas that will be cleared for development. Any plants that are removed could be used in public parks, along pathways, or other Town owned property.



Figure 26: Typical forested wetland during dry season

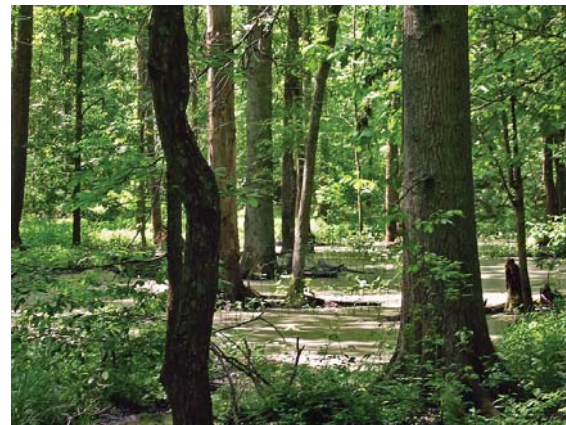


Figure 27: Typical forested wetland during wet season

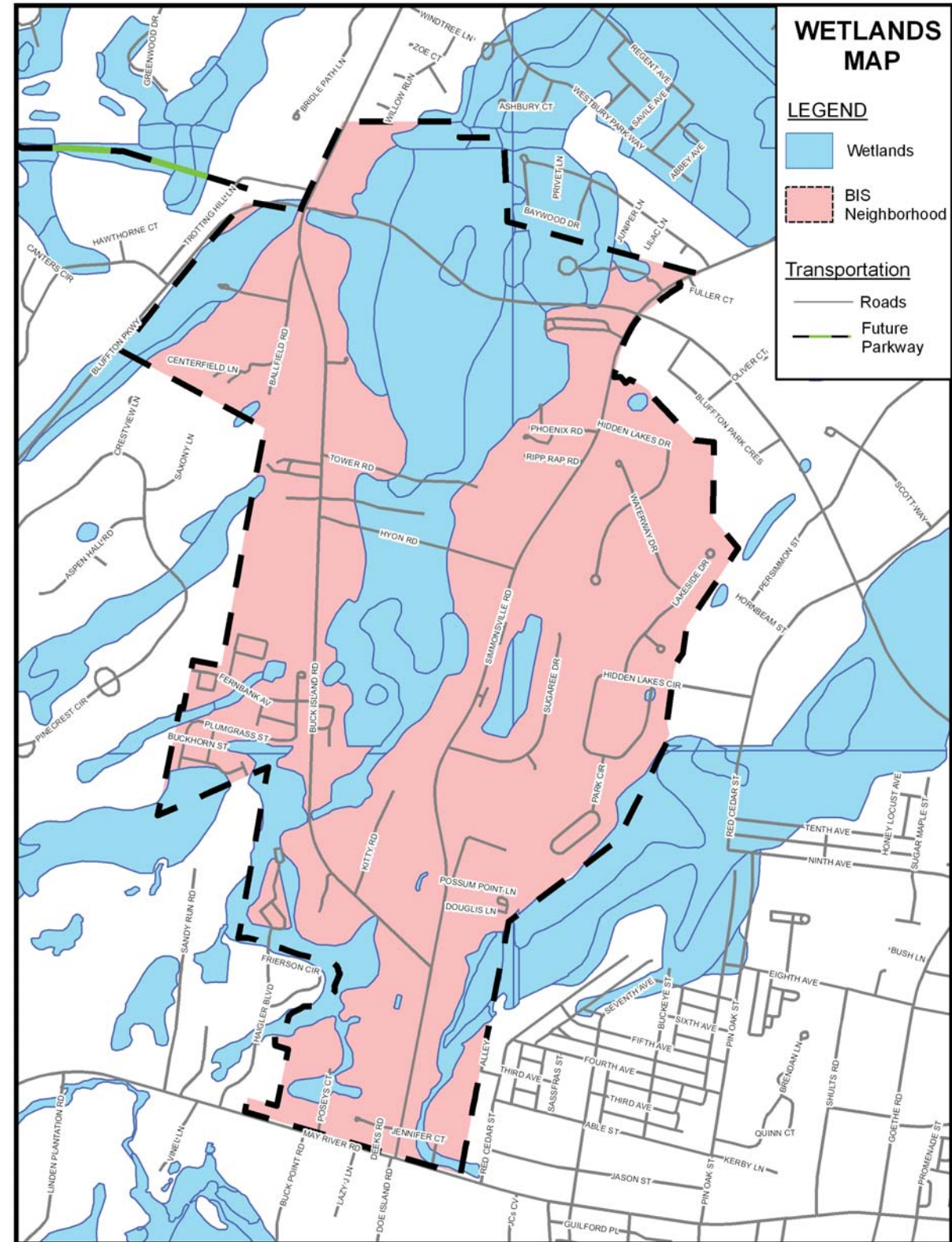


Figure 28: Map of wetlands in the BIS Neighborhood.



03-05-2009 DRAFT

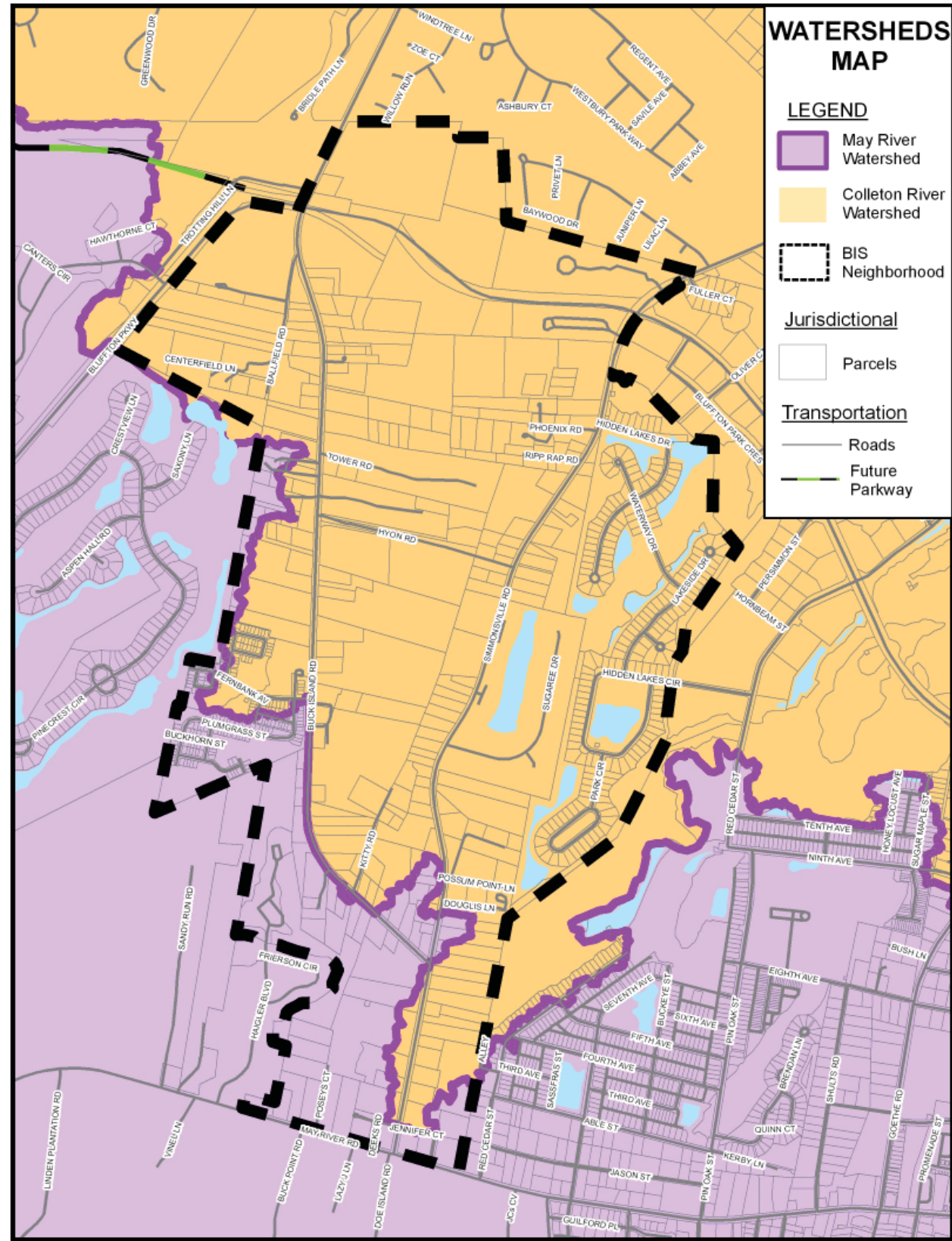


Figure 29: BIS Watershed Map.

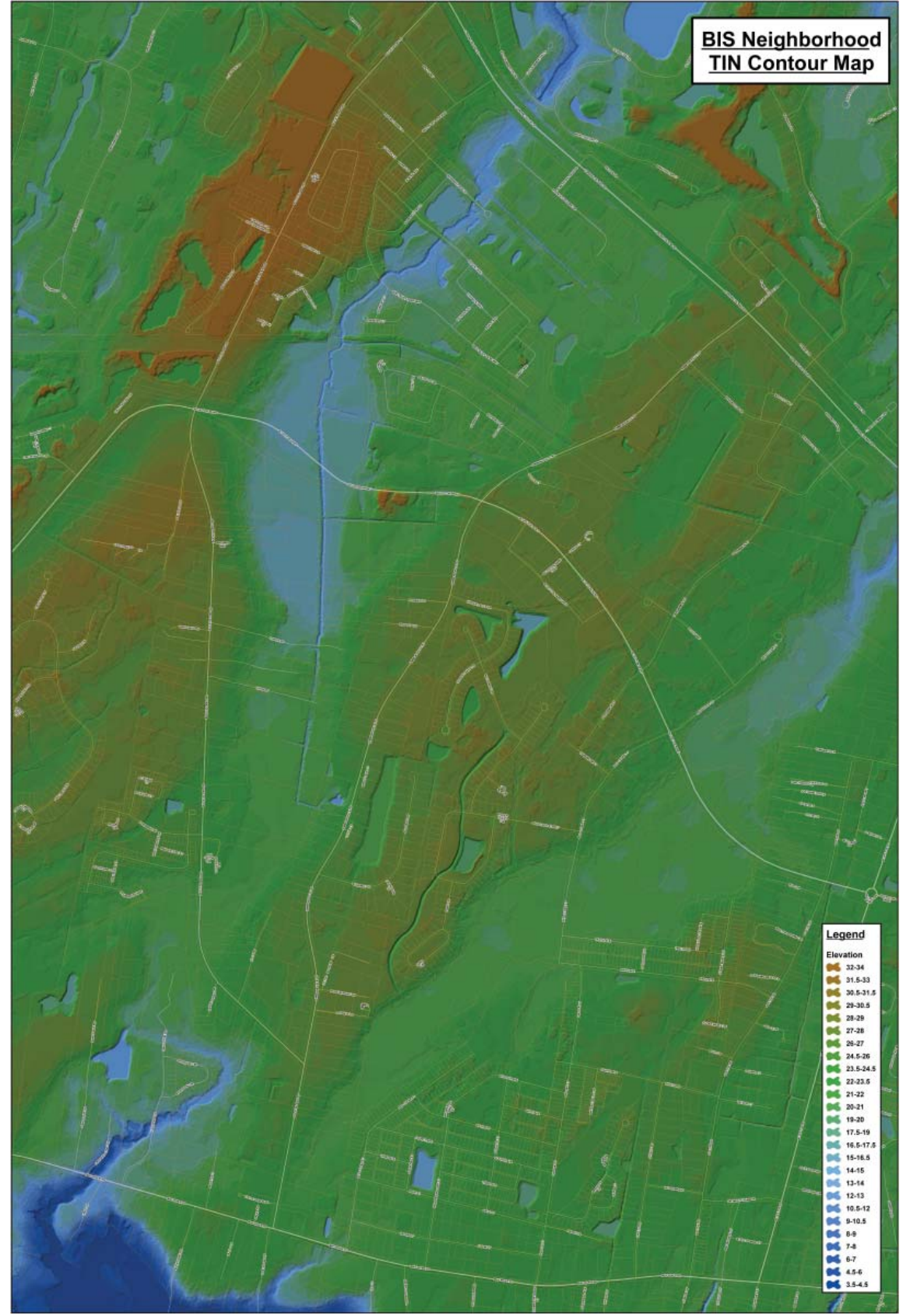


Figure 30: BIS Contour Map.





Figure 31: Example of the abundant tree canopy in the Neighborhood.



Figure 32: Bluffton has many beautiful waterways.



Figure 33: Mature oak trees are found throughout BIS.

The abundant tree canopy also offers great aesthetic value not only to the BIS Neighborhood, but also to the Town as a whole. The significant tree canopy and forested portions of the BIS Neighborhood provide important plant and wildlife habitat. The trees are an asset to the community because they provide summer shade and cooling, help to slow stormwater runoff, reduce noise, and improve local air quality. Large, mature trees throughout the community also help to screen views of adjacent areas and properties, offering privacy for residential properties.

A new Tree Ordinance is currently being drafted, which will include measures to help preserve existing tree canopy in residential neighborhoods. The BIS Neighborhood is a great example of an area that needs to protect the magnificent tree canopy from future development and land disturbance activities.

The BIS Neighborhood is unique in that it contains a large amount of natural resources, while being located in the center of the Town. The Neighborhood has, for the most part, retained the Lowcountry character of its historic roots. However, there is a growing amount of pressure for development in the area, and many of the traditional ways of building around large trees and critical areas are being threatened. It is important to preserve the existing natural resources to maintain habitat, preserve the traditional way of life, clean water, and preserve the aesthetics of the Lowcountry.



Many properties in the BIS Neighborhood rely on septic tanks for both homes and businesses. A recent study was done in the area and found a substantial amount of leaking septic tanks or failing septic fields. Raw sewage leaking out into the environment not only presents environmental hazards, but it also makes life uncomfortable for residents. There is an obvious need to connect properties to a sewer system, which is currently underway. Once the sewer system is fully installed, the environmental damage of leakage will stop, while improving the quality-of-life for those currently relying on malfunctioning septic systems.

A new drainage system will also be installed along the main roads. There are many problems with the existing stormwater drainage, as can be seen by the flooded ditches, yards, and roads. Improvements made to the drainage will help increase quality of life, improve safety, and help protect the environment. Standing water not only damages properties and poses safety threats, but it is also a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other disease carrying insects.



Figure 35: Failing septic tank.



Figure 36: Trash scattered throughout a yard.



Figure 34: Stockpiled equipment and building supplies.



Figure 37: Disposed concrete and other scrap building materials are stockpiled on this Buck Island property.



The future vision for the Neighborhood will provide for an environmental setting that enhances the quality of life for local residents. Preservation of natural resources, keeping open spaces and wildlife corridors connected, and revisions to Town development standards to encourage environmentally friendly development will benefit the long-term ecological health of the region. Some future natural resources concerns include increased development pressure, aging utilities and infrastructure, and an increase in population in the area. In order to protect the forests, wetlands, tree canopy, and other natural resources of the Neighborhood, the Town will work with future developers to preserve as much of BIS as possible. A balance must be achieved between the desire to maintain the benefits of a mature tree canopy, while alleviating some of the maintenance and financial burden to individual property owners. Development tools such as cluster development should also be considered to preserve and protect the natural resources in the Neighborhood.

Figures 38-A-E represent plans and built projects using cluster development principles.

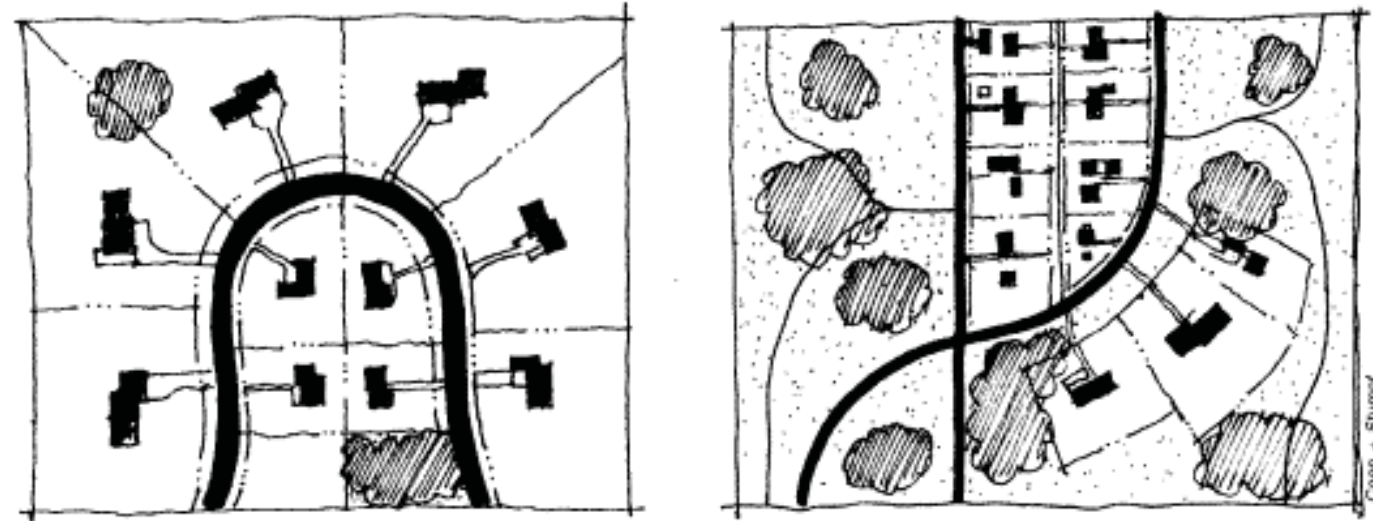


Figure 38-B: Typical development preserves no land (as shown on the left), while cluster development can protect important natural resources (as shown on the right).



Figure 38-A: Cluster development can provide very attractive housing options, while preserving critical lands and community open space.



Figure 38-C: Cluster development provides additional room for other activities. In this example, land is preserved for organic gardening.



Figure 38-D: Cluster development offers abundant open space for residential use.



Figure 38-E: Cluster development can have "old town" charm.



03-05-2009 DRAFT

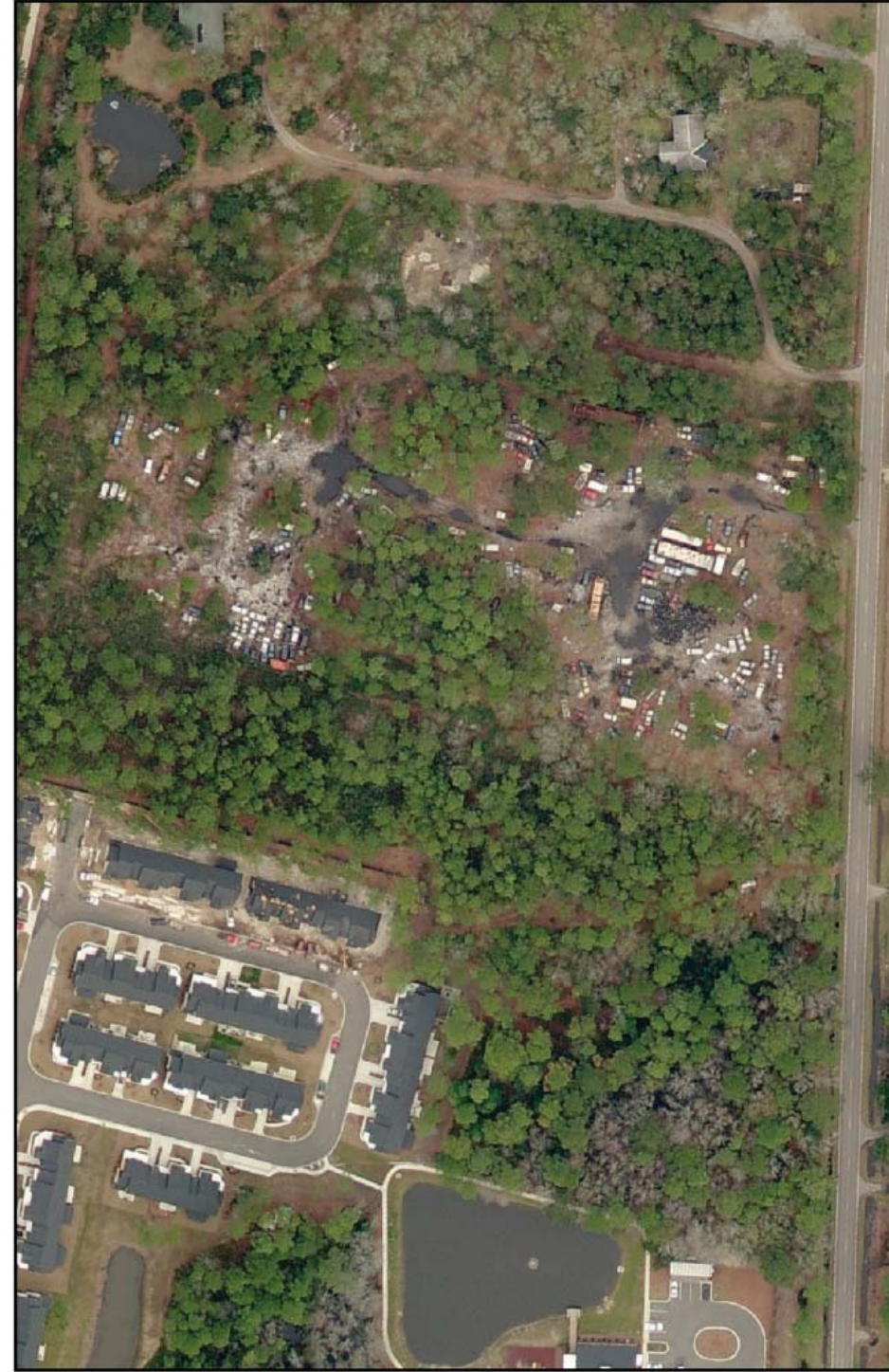


Figure 39-A, B: Abandoned automobiles, trailers, tires, boats, waste, equipment, and building materials pose an environmental hazard to the neighborhood.



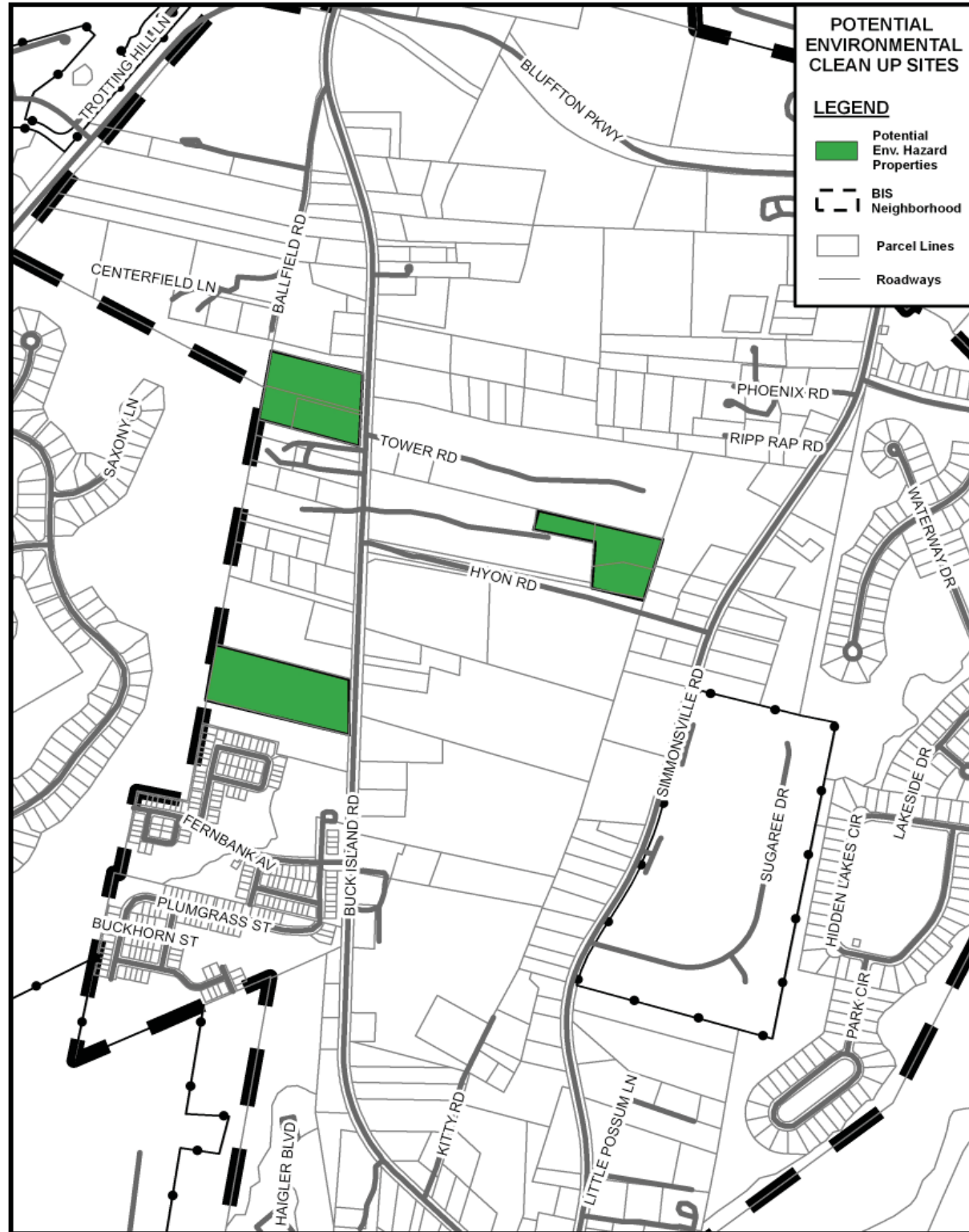


Figure 40: Areas that have stockpiles of refuse that may be environmentally damaging.

natural resources recommendations	Revise the Town of Bluffton Tree Ordinance to include parcels zoned General Residential (GR) to ensure significant trees are preserved	TOB
	Establish a Bluffton tree replacement program that provides the Town an opportunity to install new trees on private property	TOB, PO, NO
	Remove the abandoned automobiles, tires, building materials, machinery, equipment, and boats from properties that pose environmental risks	PO
	Revise zoning code to permit cluster development to avoid ecologically critical areas and preserve rural character	TOB
	Improve the existing logging road from Wellstone to HE McCracken Circle as a nature trail/pathway and preserve the adjacent wetlands	TOB, PO, Pincrest POA
	Provide assistance to residents in preserving tree health	TOB, PO
	Provide septic maintenance program for those with failing septic systems	TOB
	Eliminate septic systems and wells by providing upgraded utilities in the area	TOB
	Improve the County's dirt roads to prevent erosion and sedimentation	BC, PO

**KEY:**  
 AC-Advisory Committee; BC-Beaufort County; BCSD-Beaufort County School District; NO-Neighborhood Organization;  
 PO-Property Owners; SCDOT-SC Department of Transportation; TOB-Town of Bluffton

03-05-2009 DRAFT

chapter 2: natur

# chapter 3: planning, zoning, & development

03-05-2009 DRAFT

The term land use describes the kind of uses (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) found on a parcel of land. The Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood contains a variety of land uses as dictated by previous growth and zoning patterns in place while under the jurisdiction of Beaufort County. The primary land use type in the BIS Neighborhood is a mix of low-density residential and medium-density residential. **Land uses within the community can be seen in Figure 41.**

In Bluffton, Low-density residential is defined as a range of densities from one dwelling unit per three acres to one dwelling unit per acre. Medium-density residential can range from one to three units per acre, usually consisting of single-family homes. Multi-family homes may be permitted as long as the overall allowed density is not exceeded. According to the Town's Comprehensive Plan, medium-density residential uses are proposed for the BIS Neighborhood. Existing medium-density residential



Figure 42: In Bluffton, this scale would be considered High Density residential.

areas within the BIS Neighborhood include areas such as Wellstone, Windy Lakes, and Hidden Lakes.

Industrial and commercial uses are largely confined to the southern portion of the community, around and south of the Buck Island and Simmonsville roads intersection. A mixed-use property that is not yet developed, known as the Southeastern Development Property, lies along Simmonsville Road near the center portion of the Neighborhood. Adjacent to this property is the recently sited and approved Bluffton Middle School, a property which encompasses nearly 5% of the Neighborhood. In 1980, Beaufort County located a garbage transfer site at what is now the southwestern corner of the intersection of Simmonsville Road and Bluffton Parkway. A ball field is located on the northern edge of the community, at the intersection of Buck Island Road and Bluffton Parkway.



Figure 43: In Bluffton, this scale would be considered Medium Density Residential.



Figure 44: In Bluffton, this scale would be considered Low Density Residential.

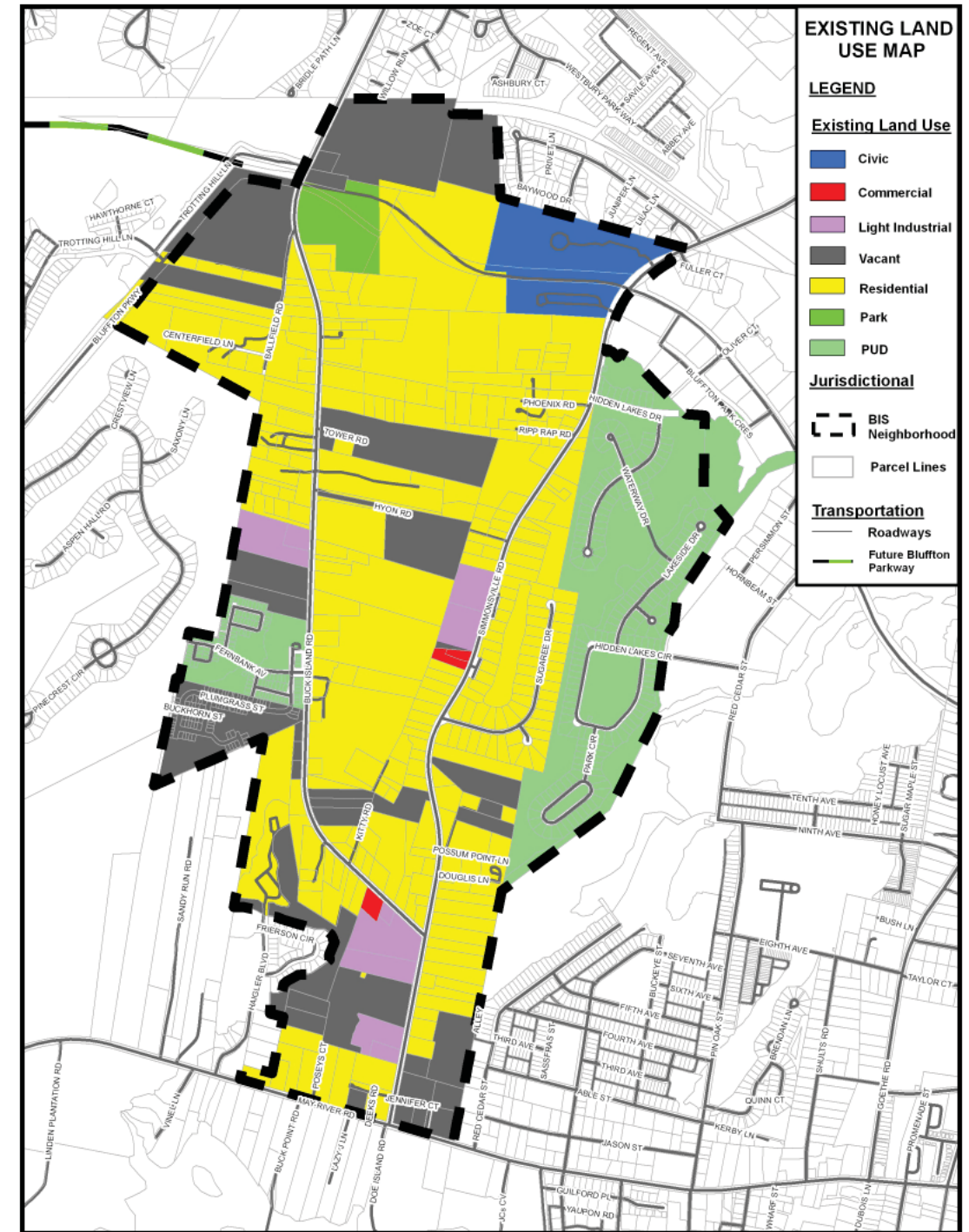


Figure 41: Existing Land Use map.



Zoning is a tool that allows the Town to guide development by regulating the physical form and kinds of uses on a parcel of land. These controls are based upon the need to prevent overcrowding of land, congestion on the streets, undue concentration of population, and the mixing of incompatible land uses. More importantly, zoning provides a basis for guiding and ordering the pattern of future development. The study area is primarily a residential community, thus 85% of the area is zoned residential, 10% commercial, 4% industrial, and 1% mixed-use.

There are currently four zoning districts within the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood:

**general residential (GR)**

The General Residential District is designed to provide for a variety of low-density, residential uses, including single-family, two (2) or three (3) family, and manufactured home dwellings. The intent of the District is to provide areas primarily for residential uses, and to discourage any encroachment by uses which may be incompatible with such residential use.

**light industrial (LI)**

The purpose of this District is to provide a suitable environment for uses generally classified as research and development, assembly, high technology production, precision manufacturing, and light industry. The LI District excludes heavy manufacturing operations which tend to be more objectionable to the community, and industries which are less clean. Industries in the LI District are required to have high performance standards with minimal hazardous waste, air and water pollution, and other off-site nuisances.

**village commercial (VC)**

The purpose of this District is to encourage the formation and continuance of a healthy environment for commercial uses that are located and sized so as to provide nearby residential areas with convenient shopping and service facilities. Another purpose is to promote the location of a mixture of housing types and prices and stores/offices/workplaces in close proximity to each other to provide a balanced mix of activities, foster a pedestrian-oriented community center, and reduce traffic and parking congestion. Other goals include accommodation of essential public utilities and public safety services,

avoidance of strip highway commercial development, and large regional businesses, or other land uses which might compromise the historic commercial character of the District.

**planned unit development (PUD)**

The purpose of this District is to encourage flexibility in land planning that will result in improved design, character, and quality of new homogenous and mixed-use developments. Other purposes of the District are to promote the most appropriate use of land, facilitate the provision of streets and utilities, and to preserve open space and the natural and scenic features of the property.

Figure 45 is the current Zoning Map for BIS.

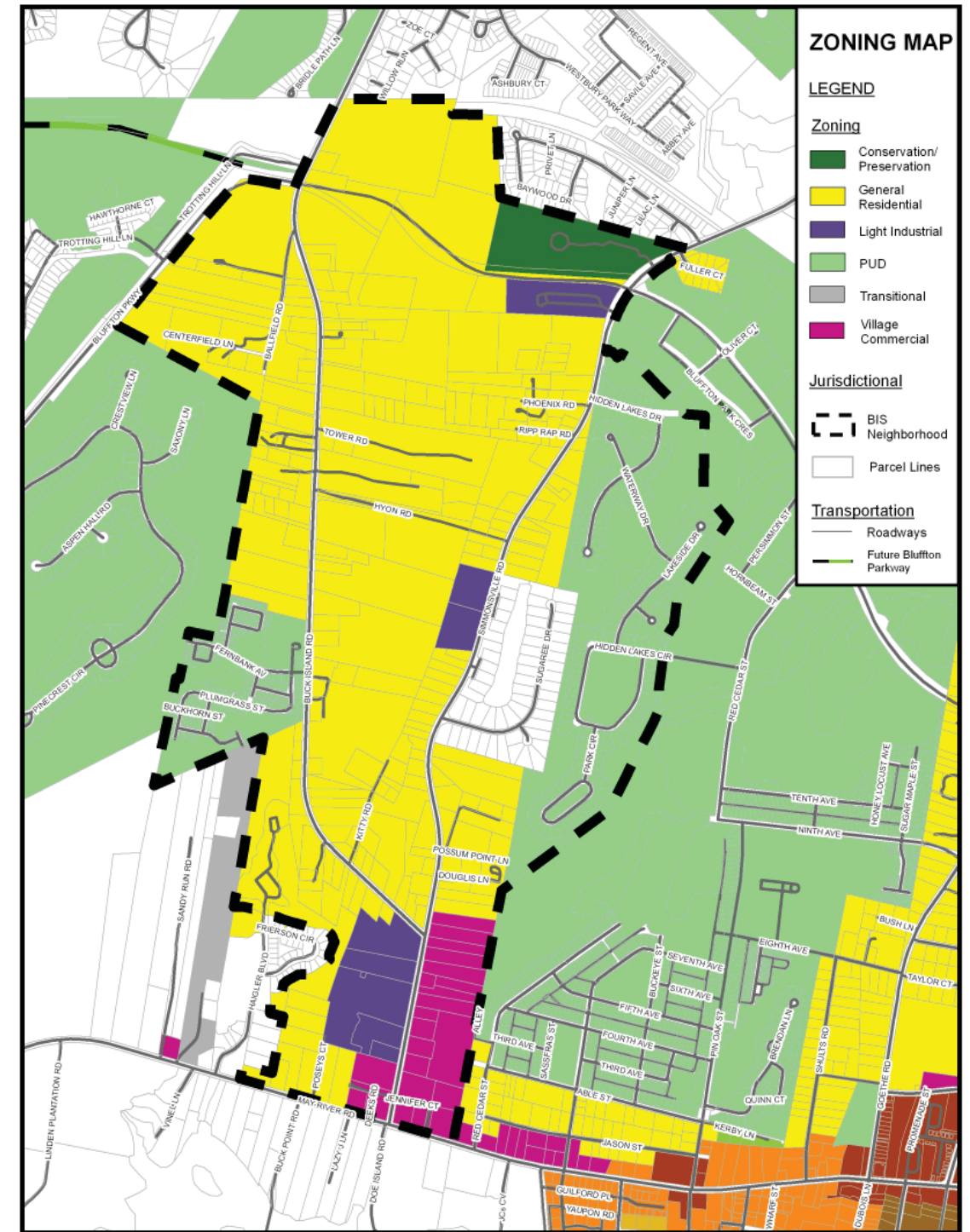


Figure 45: Zoning in BIS.

03-05-2009 DRAFT

03-05-2009 DRAFT

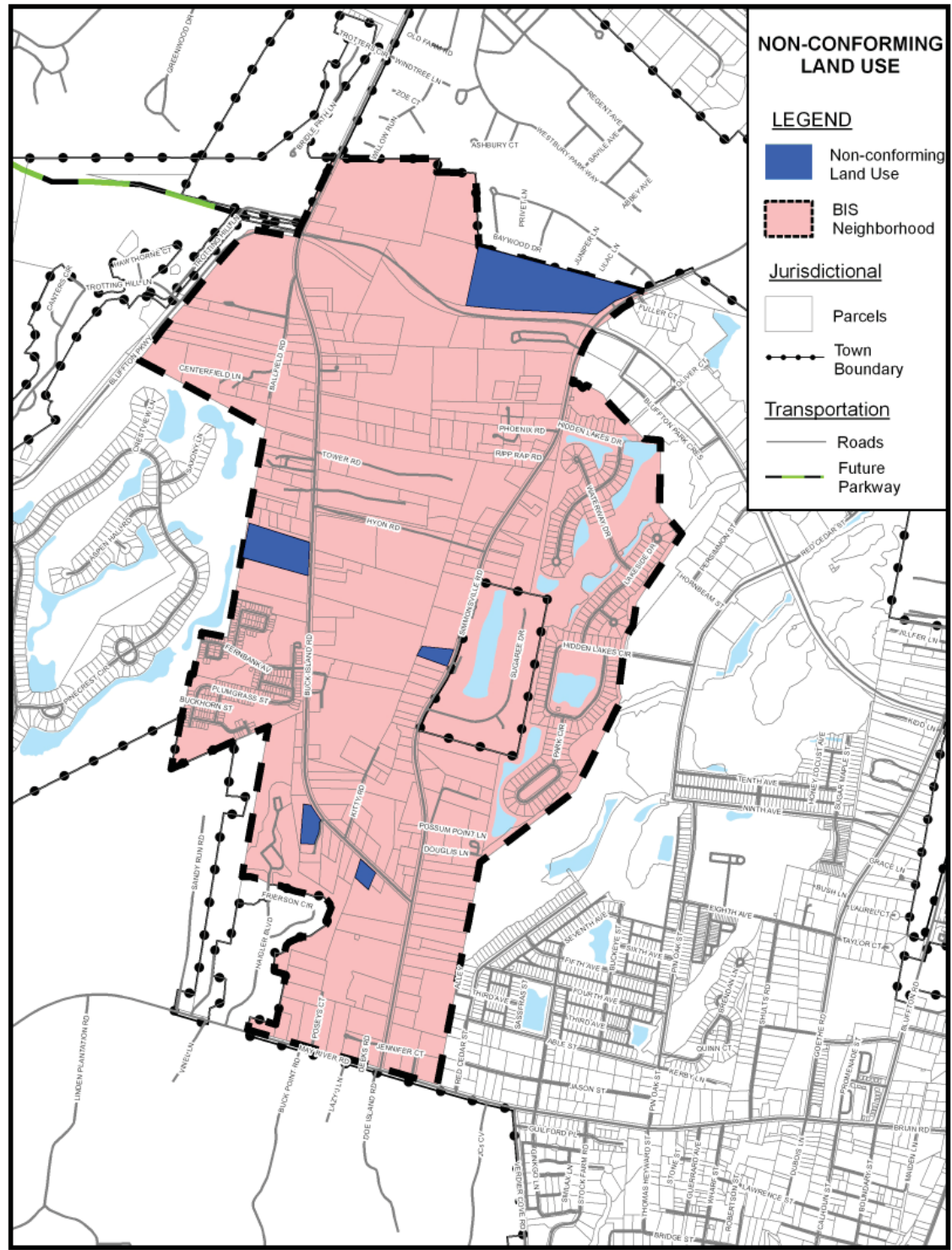


Figure 46: Non-conforming land uses in BIS.

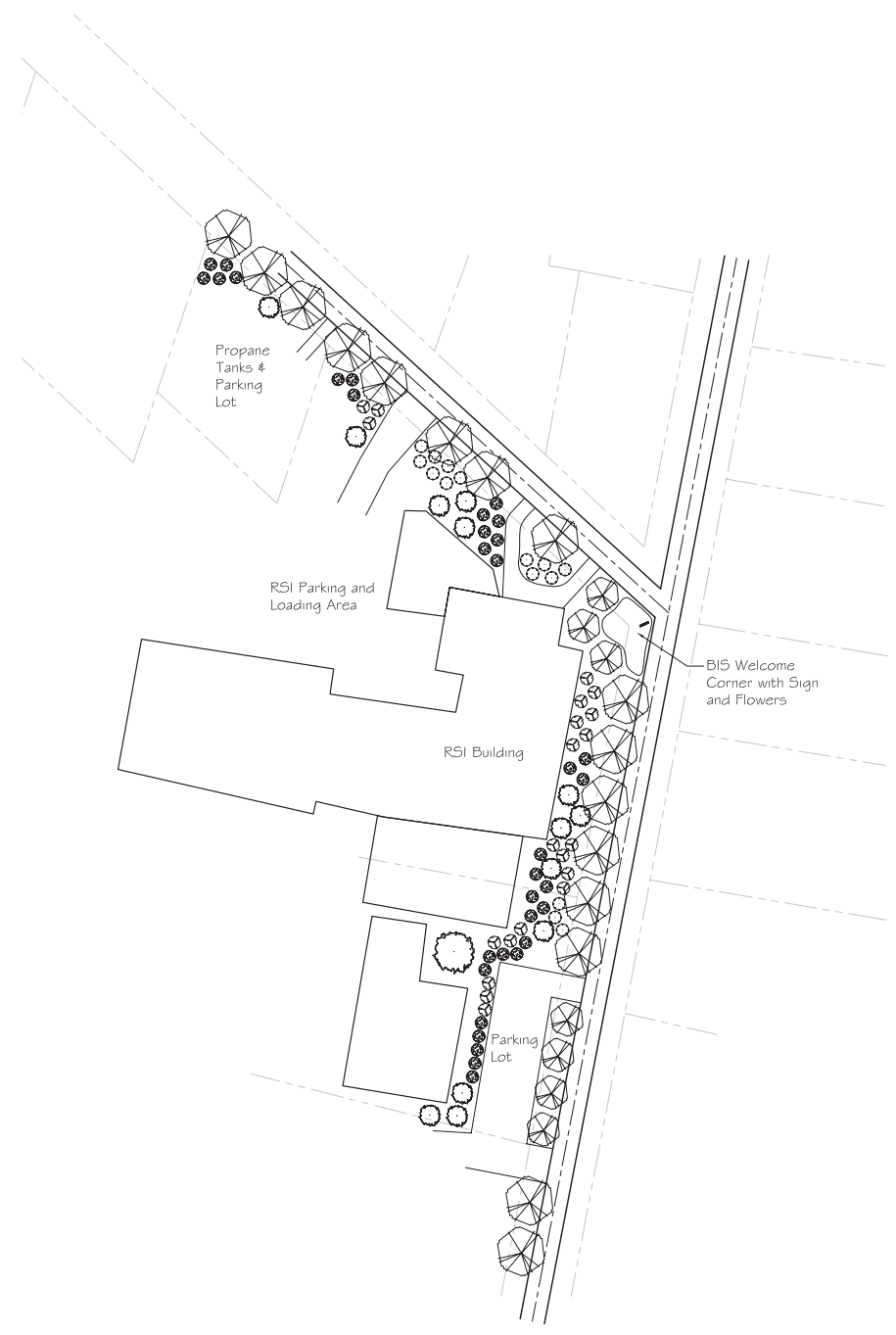


Figure 47: Screening opportunities.

There are many parcels throughout the study area that contain commercial structures despite the fact that the parcels themselves are zoned for residential use. These structures were either in place prior to annexation into the Town and were developed under previous Beaufort County zoning designation or had made considerable progress towards development of the site under the jurisdiction of Beaufort County and hence were allowed to continue towards completion, as a vested right. It should be noted that these non-conforming parcels and the land uses currently occupying them may continue in perpetuity as non-conforming structures and uses as long these structures are not enlarged or the use is not abandoned for a time period of six months or more. The Town should ensure that non-conforming structures and uses are properly screened from adjacent residential uses to alleviate aesthetic incompatibilities. **Figure 46 shows the non-conforming land uses in the Neighborhood.**

Land uses within the Neighborhood can be in conflict with each other. A visual screen can help alleviate these conflicts by providing attractive buffers, as **shown in Figure 47.**



recent development

Within the past few years there has been a surge of development around the Buck Island Simmonsville (BIS) Neighborhood. The three communities within the Neighborhood – Hidden Lakes, Wellstone, and Windy Lakes are all Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) consisting of land plans that are medium-density residential in nature.

PUDs are a common development model in this area, as they offer flexibility in land planning. PUDs also encourage the developer to go above and beyond the requirements of standard zoning.

Another common component of development is a development agreement. Development agreements allow a developer to lock in existing land use regulations for an extended period of time. Many times, development agreements result in a higher level of community amenities. A commitment of funding to provide open space and public infrastructure is also a result of the development agreement process.

The neighboring community to the north, Old Carolina, is also a medium density PUD. The Old Carolina Golf Course was annexed as a part of the Buck Island Simmonsville annexation in 2005. Traditions at Old Carolina, consisting of 134 residential lots, was not annexed and remains a portion of Beaufort County. In 2006, the annexed area was rezoned from General Residential to PUD. The master plan for the annexed portion of Old Carolina allows for 199 apartment units and 55 single family dwelling units.



Figure 48: The Traditions at Old Carolina.

Within the southwestern portion of the study area, the Vista View development is a mixture of 72 low-to-moderate income single and multi-family apartment units and related amenities. This project was phased over several years and maintains a 100% occupancy with a long waiting list. The community is an example of how well-managed, affordable housing apartments can be integrated into a neighborhood without negative impacts.

The adjacent Buckwalter PUD contains over 5,000 acres and is located to the west of the BIS Neighborhood. Pinecrest is the closest neighborhood to BIS and borders the western Neighborhood boundary. To the east of the BIS Neighborhood, commercial development within Bluffton Park has stretched towards the Simmonsville Road and Bluffton Parkway intersection.

Red Cedar Elementary, located within Bluffton Park and adjacent to the Hidden Lakes subdivision, is currently under construction and is projected to open in the fall of 2009.

Bluffton Station, a village commercial scale development, is architecturally designed to reflect the Lowcountry character and to blend in with the surrounding neighborhood. Bluffton Stations is located on a 1.7 acre parcel at the northeast corner of Buck Island Road and SC 46. The project will consist of a market store, an eight pump gas station, a 1,336 square foot car wash and pet wash, and six buildings ranging from 900 square feet to 2,000 square feet in size to be used for planned shopping, specialty retail, and professional offices.

This project was well received by the BIS Neighborhood and should be used as a model for future commercial development in the BIS Neighborhood area.

Figure 49 shows an illustrative site plan for Bluffton Station.

Bluffton Middle School, a 142,000 square foot facility located on 41.84 acres in the heart of the BIS Neighborhood, has been sited with the intent of providing a centralized location

for the Town of Bluffton’s middle school students who will be attending the new school.

The school site will include recreational facilities such as a basketball court and athletic fields. Other site improvements will include extending Hyon Road to connect Buck Island and Simmonsville roads, providing access to the site from both thoroughfares. Sidewalks are also being installed along Hyon Road for pedestrian access to the school.

Unfortunately, the school’s budget did not allow for a more extensive sidewalk or pathway system, so it is imperative that the Town, Beaufort County School District, South Carolina Department of Transportation, and the property owners work together to improve these critical pedestrian connections.

All students attending the school will be given bus service until adequate pedestrian access is constructed. The state has developed a 1.5 mile radius for students who will no longer receive bus service after pedestrian infrastructure is in place. **Figure 50 is the overall site plan for the new Bluffton Middle School site.**

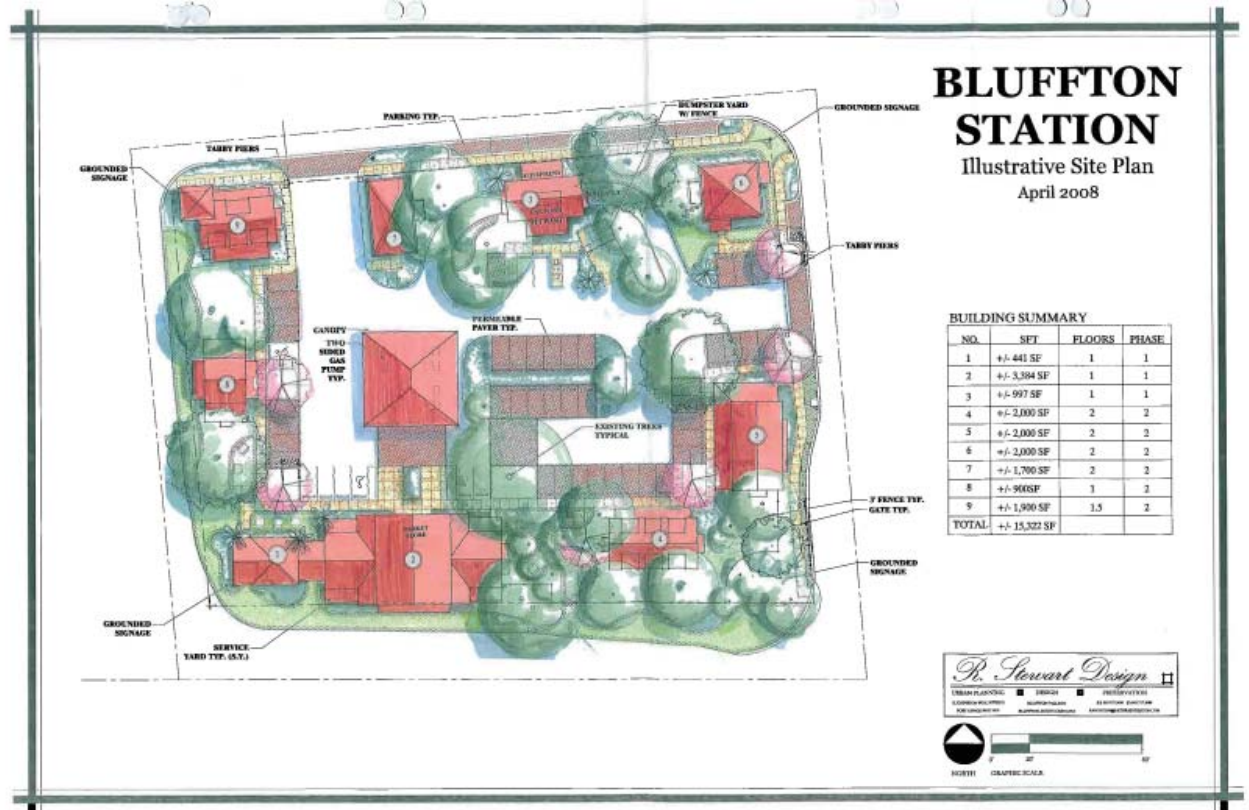


Figure 49: Bluffton Station illustrative site plan.



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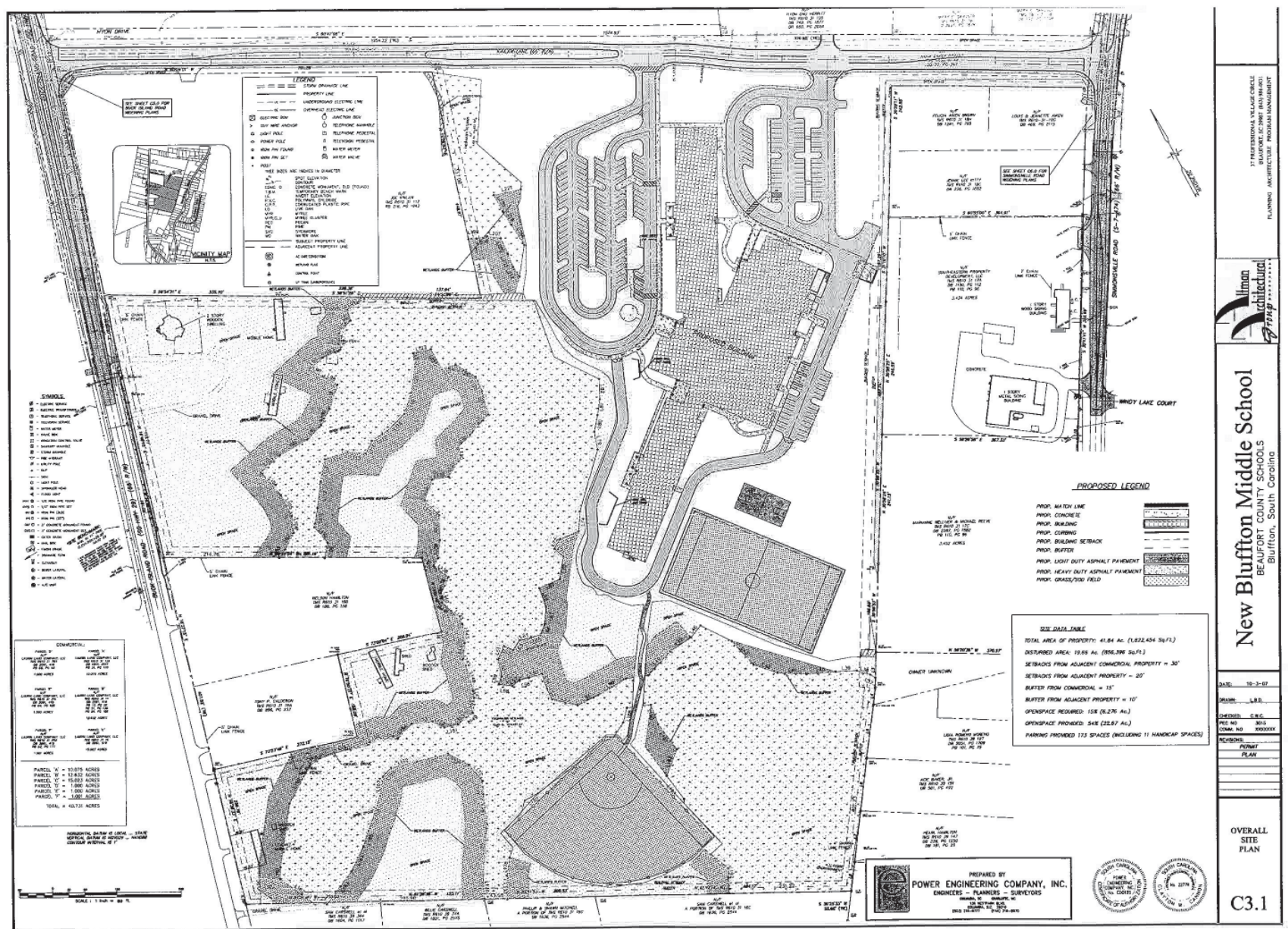


Figure 50: Bluffton Middle School plan

Southeastern Property Development, a mixed-use project adjacent to the Bluffton Middle School site along Simmonsville Road, will have a total of 87,800 square feet of commercial, warehouse, retail, service, and office space within a 6.88 acre site (see Figure 51).

The property was rezoned from Light Industrial (LI) zoning to PUD in February 2008. This project met opposition from local residents who expressed concerns over allowing commercial uses within the central portion of Simmonsville Road corridor, specifically citing concerns over increased traffic on a roadway which already has been considered to be in need of improvements.

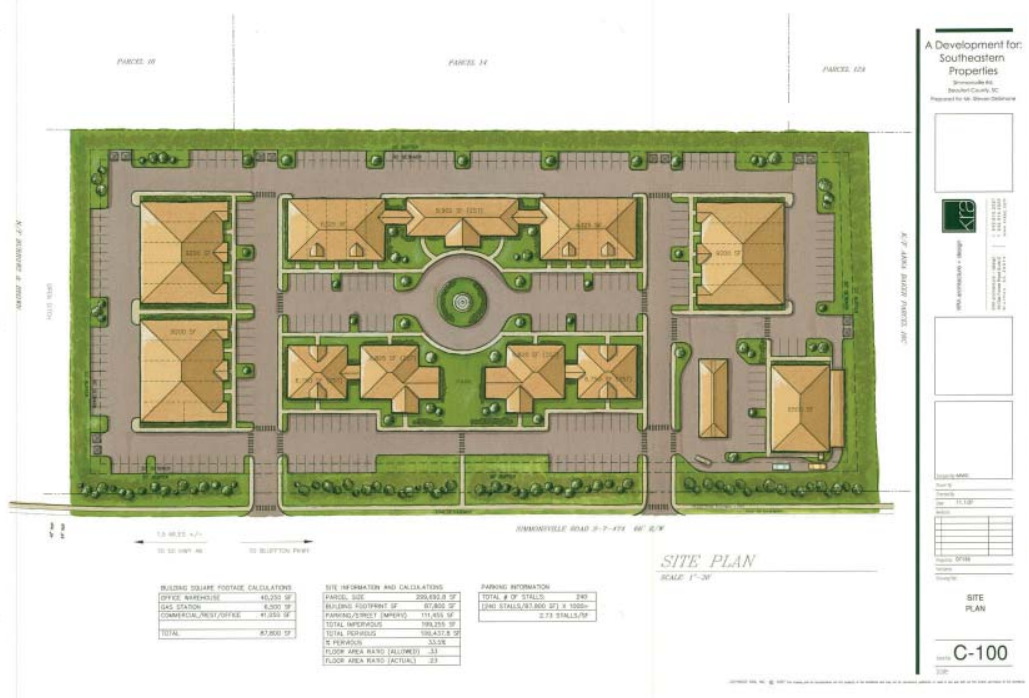


Figure 51: Illustrative site plan for the Southeastern Property



future land use

Through the planning process, the majority of the BIS stakeholders prefer that future land uses mimic the current land uses and that zoning be maintained in its current designated configuration. Therefore, commercial, industrial, and large-scale institutional uses should be restricted from the core of the residential portion of the community. Commercial uses should be low-intensity and fit into the context of the BIS Neighborhood’s scale with small signage and neighborhood-appropriate architecture and size.

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM), as identified in the Comprehensive Plan, identifies uses within the community as mostly residential. Larger properties within this classification are frequently subject to minor subdivisions (the partitioning of a parcel into five or fewer smaller parcels.) These minor subdivisions should be evaluated for the possibility of population and related municipal cost increases associated with utility and infrastructure improvements.

Figure 52 is the future land use for the BIS Neighborhood. Figure 53, on the following page, shows what the future land use was for the northern portion of BIS prior to an amendment in 2007.

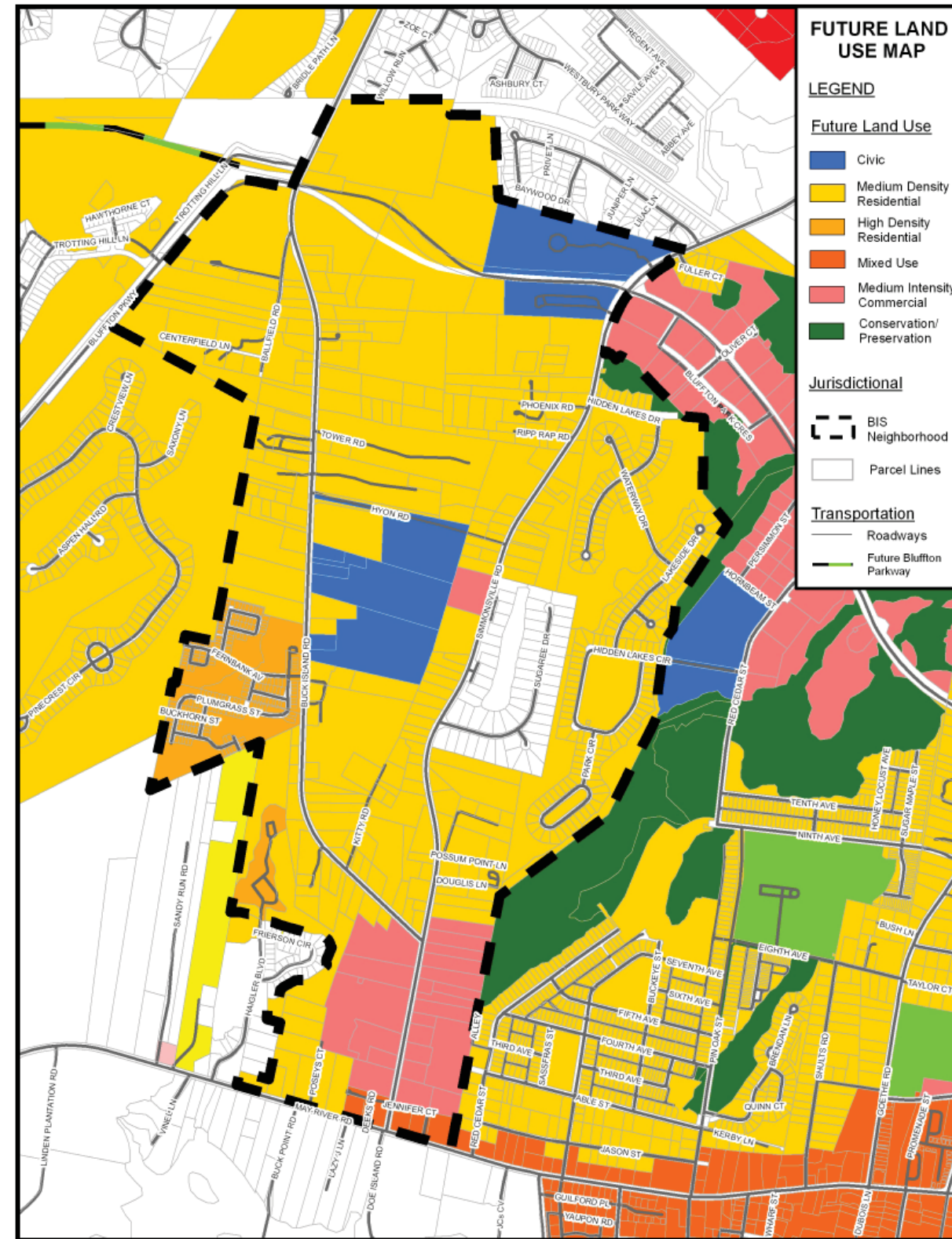


Figure 52: Future land use for the BIS Neighborhood



Areas of commercial land use have been identified to be located primarily along the southern portion of Buck Island Road. Institutional and civic uses have been identified as remaining on the Bluffton Middle School site and the County waste transfer site. It is important that the Town work to minimize the impact that additional civic or institutional facilities may have on the BIS Neighborhood.

Although the BIS Neighborhood is primarily residential in character, its perimeter contains commercial activity and applications for additional commercial development continue to be submitted to the Town. The application of the Buck Island Square property located at the southwestern corner of Bluffton Parkway and Buck Island Road that was requesting a rezoning, has recently been withdrawn. It appears, at this point, that the Buck Island Square property will be used as residential housing. The pending application of the Old Carolina Shopping Center property located at the northeastern corner of this same intersection proposes using a mixture of residential and commercial structures, including a gas station and grocery store. **Figure 54 shows the locations of these two properties.**

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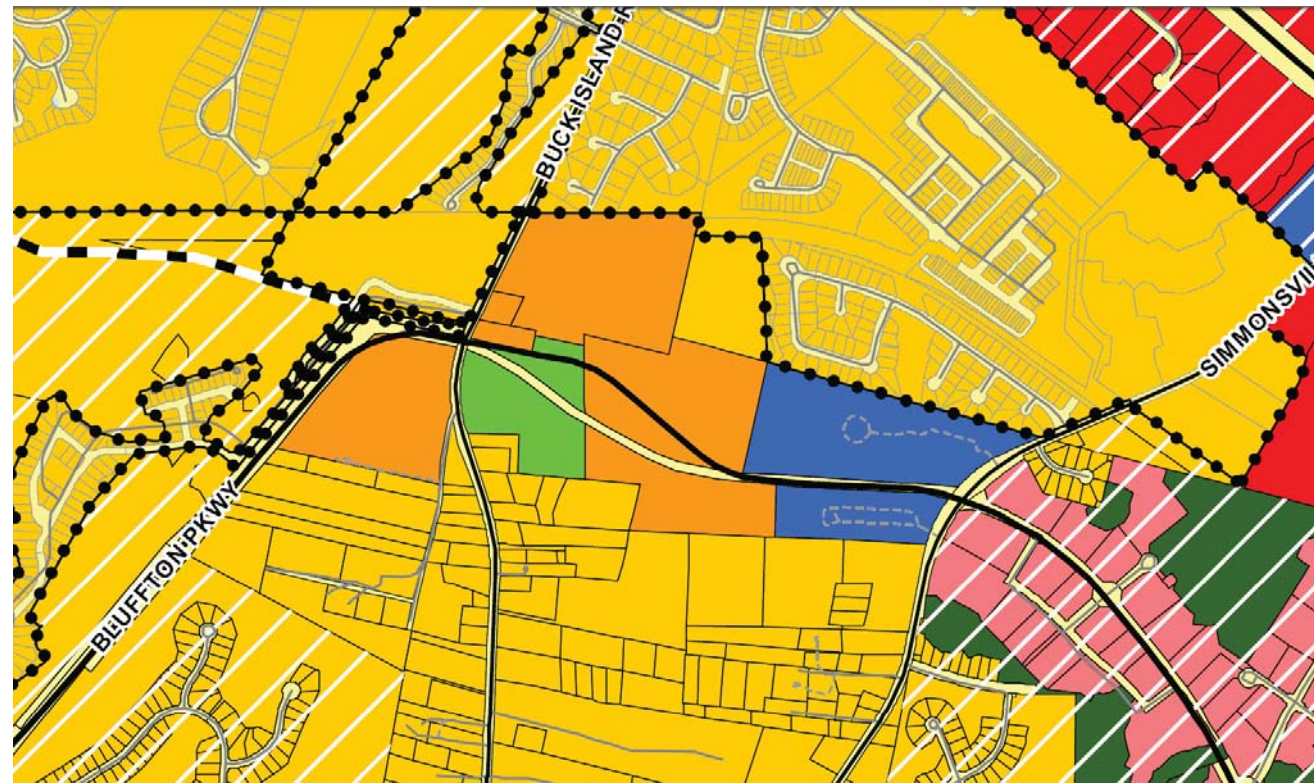


Figure 53: The darker orange represents high-density residential in this 2007 Future Land Use Map. The official map was amended in the Spring of 2007, changing the classification to medium-density residential, as shown in Figure 53.

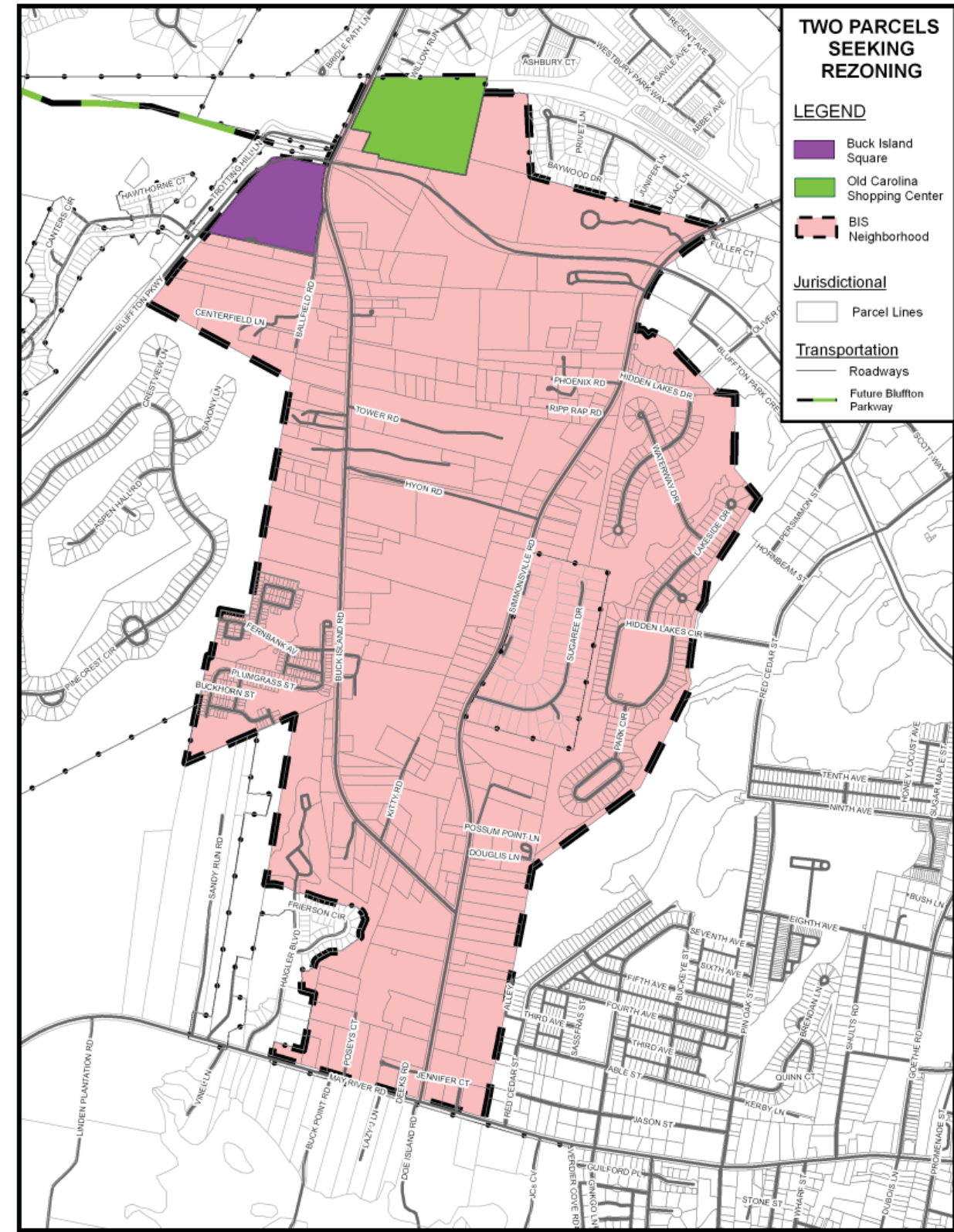


Figure 54: Buck Island Square (withdrawn) and Old Carolina Square locations



Throughout the planning process, BIS residents continually voiced concerns over the Buck Island Square and Old Carolina projects. They cited concerns about increased traffic on already inadequate roadways, increases in property taxes, and incompatibility with the existing neighborhood in terms of character and land use intensity. See Figures 55 and 56 for the proposed site plans. It is vital that the Town staff, Planning Commission, and Town Council carefully assess the impact of rezoning requests. A careful assessment should help ensure compatibility with the existing neighborhood, thus helping to fulfill the needs and objectives of the BIS Neighborhood Plan. Due to the proximity to the predominately low to medium density residential uses prevalent on adjacent properties, these properties should remain at a zoning designation of General Residential at this time.

There are numerous vacant properties throughout the Neighborhood that will eventually be filled with residential homes. Many of these properties are located in the interior portion of the Neighborhood, with no access to public roadways and are landlocked. Relying on the current road layout will result in every property having a curb cut or private drive off of Buck Island or Simonsville roads. In order to avoid creating excessive curb cuts and private drives, additional connector roads may be warranted. There has been discussion about the need for a new north-south road from the Bluffton Parkway that runs parallel to Buck Island and Simonsville roads. This road would take traffic off of the main roads and open up these landlocked properties for development, something that may not be supported by the greater community.

Bluffton's population continues to increase, and the population inside the BIS Neighborhood is no exception. Based on existing zoning in the Neighborhood, it is conceivable that 565 residential homes could be built. In order to limit the adverse impacts of residential buildout on the community, the current road layout may need to be improved to include additional connections. This is critical to maintaining a sustainable community.

Any future rezoning requests should be carefully reviewed by Town staff, Planning Commission, and Town Council ensure proposed development is in harmony with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan and the land use intensity and character of the Neighborhood. It should be noted, however, that some degree of commercial development within the BIS Neighborhood area could help in procuring funding for requested area improvements such as pathways, road widenings, and sewer/water line extensions.

Similarly, some properly-scaled neighborhood commercial businesses at the perimeter of the BIS Neighborhood could actually be a convenience for residents, like Bluffton Station.

If such rezonings are approved through public process, the Town should work with the respective developers to ensure that the projects are aimed at fulfilling community needs while also fitting into the BIS neighborhood's character context. These developments should consist of a mix of housing styles and price points and contain neighborhood commercial that is pedestrian-oriented and limited to a village scale retail and service.

It is important that these developments also consider the need for additional community facilities to be utilized by residents of the study area, including but not limited to community centers, active and passive parks offering a variety of programming opportunities, pathways, and civic uses, all amidst a pedestrian-oriented streetscape.

BUCK ISLAND SQUARE ALTERNATE LAND PLAN

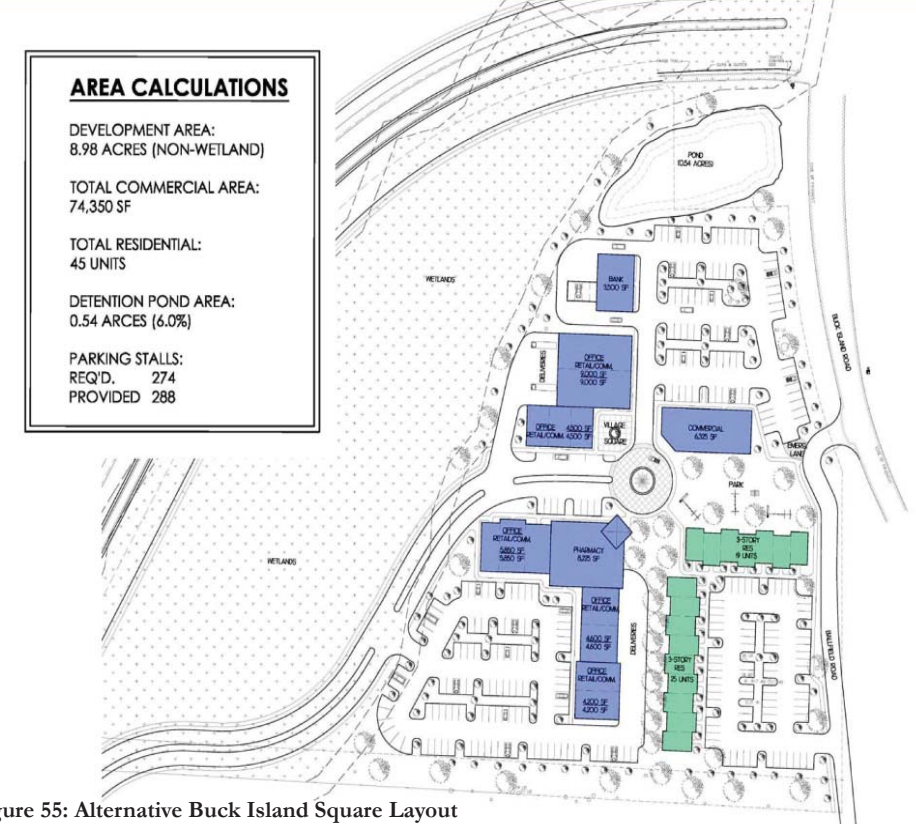


Figure 55: Alternative Buck Island Square Layout

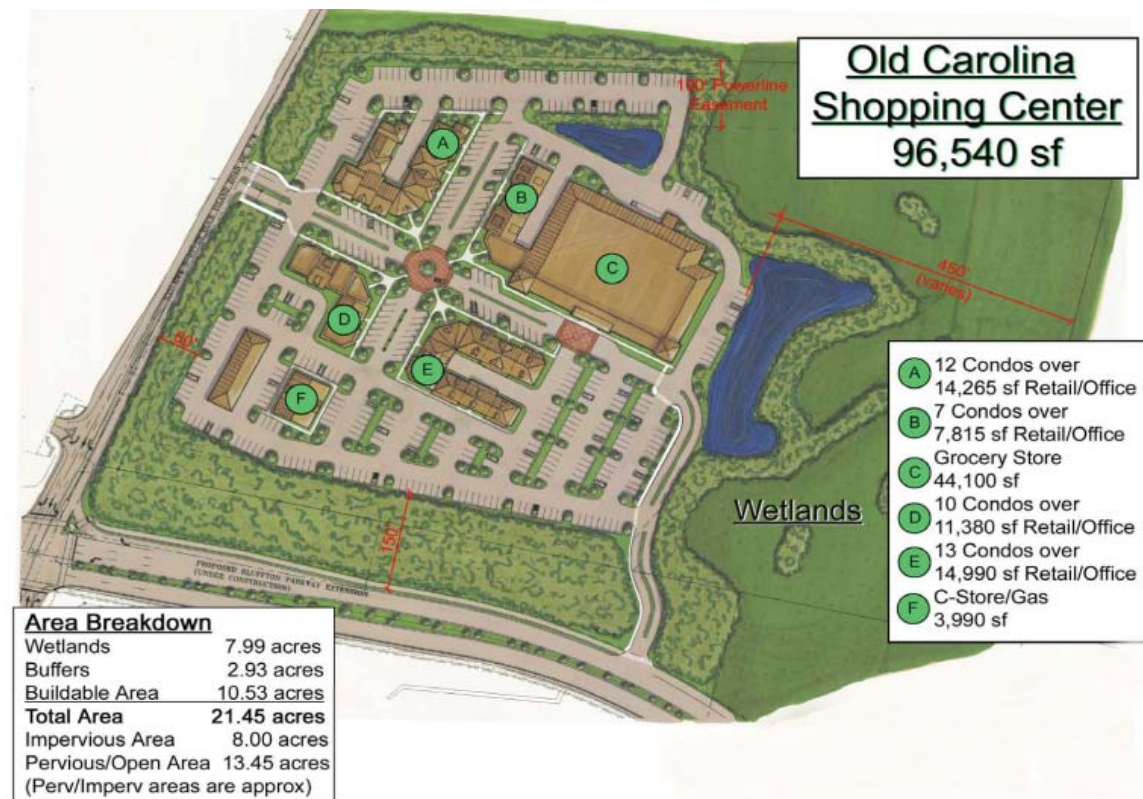


Figure 56: Old Carolina Shopping Center illustrative site plan

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Chapter 3: Planning, Zoning, & Development



Land uses around and south of the Buck Island Road and Simmonsville Road intersection should be limited to residential or village scale commercial uses. Due to current zoning designations of Village Commercial District (VCD), the nearby presence of a large employer in RSI, and the retail/service development of Bluffton Station, this intersection has the opportunity to become a true gateway node of commercial designed for the enjoyment and convenience of the entire Neighborhood.

Currently, a 7.3 acre site is for sale within the Village Commercial District. It is situated directly east of the Buck Island-Simmonsville split and could ultimately become the low-scale commercial and residential center focused specifically on providing employment opportunities and goods/services for the BIS Neighborhood. Figure 58 shows a conceptual design for this property.

03-05-2009 DRAFT



Figure 57: This property represents a great opportunity for a neighborhood center and gateway into the community, and is already zoned for such.



Figure 58: Conceptual 7.3 AC Village Commercial at Buck Island Rd/ Simmonsville Rd intersection



The BIS Neighborhood has ample vacant and under utilized land that can be developed in a positive manner to revitalize the community. There are dozens of small single-family lots that are vacant or contain rental manufactured homes. The highest and best use for these parcels is single family homes or duplexes. This type of infill development should be sought via partnership between the Town and interested property owners. Modular or prefabricated homes are relatively inexpensive and can easily be placed on these properties. These quality built structures provide a safer and more cost efficient home for tenants, while also improving the appearance of the neighborhood that will ultimately leverage additional investment. **Figures 59 through 61 show how infill works with the existing neighborhood to help improve current conditions and provide additional housing.**

**Figure 62 shows vacant properties of the BIS Neighborhood.** Local builders should also be considered for these small infill projects through a joint-venture agreement with the property owner. The builder provides the house and the property owner provides the land so that they are partners in the development and will share in the sale or rent of the property/house on a pro-rata basis. The Town can facilitate these partnerships and provide additional incentives as necessary.

Larger redevelopment sites are also plentiful and should be marketed as such with the property owner's permission. For example, the 13.7 acre Little Possum/Douglas properties could be redeveloped with up to 30 new affordable homes in a quality-designed neighborhood with proper utilities and infrastructure. To ensure that the new dwelling units are not cost-prohibitive for the local workforce, financial assistance and incentives should be sought from the Town and its affordable housing partners. Other potential large redevelopment sites include the Ballfield Road area and Twin Oaks. **Figure 63 shows these larger redevelopment properties.**



Figures 59-61: Vacant single-family lots represent great infill opportunities throughout the Neighborhood.

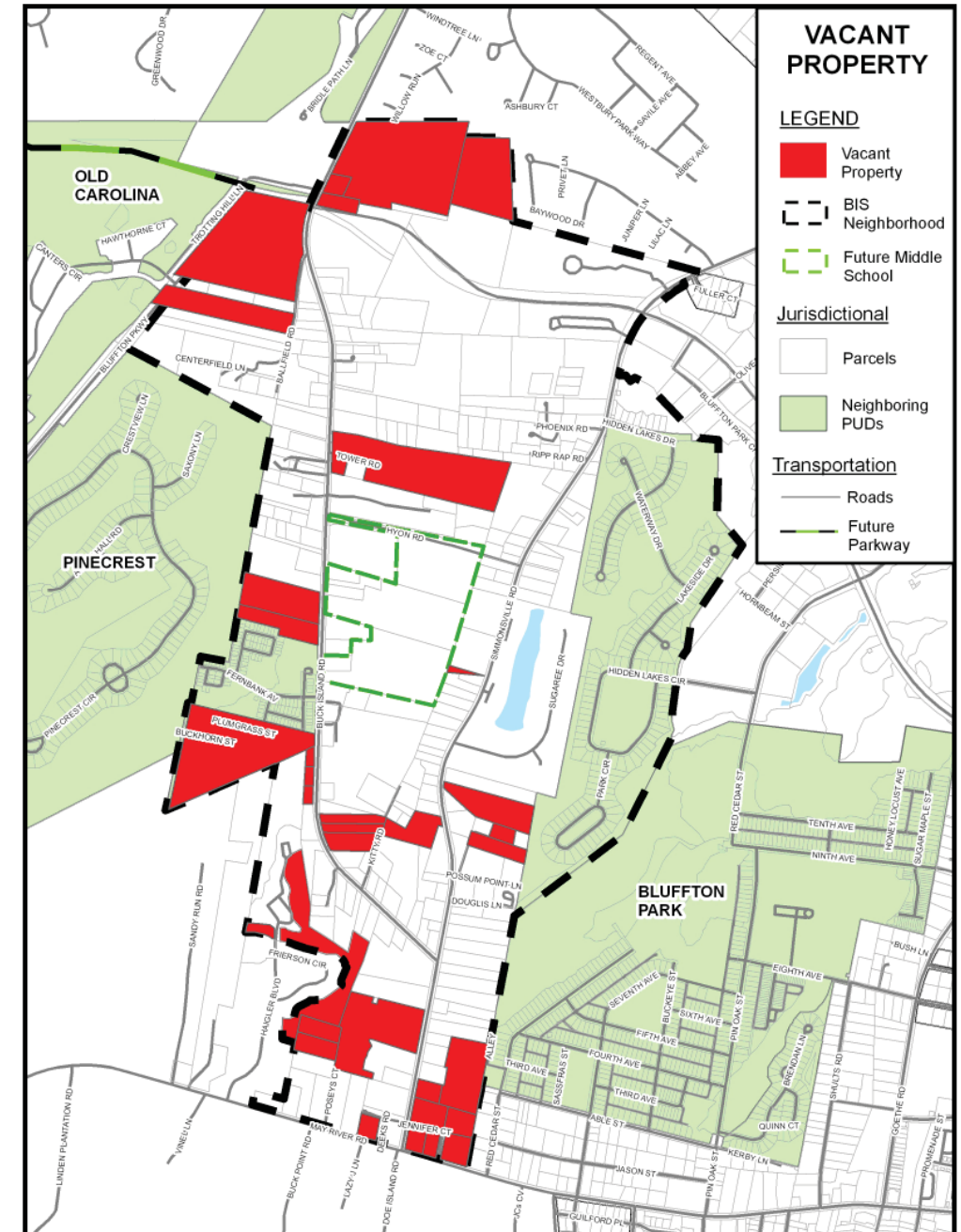


Figure 62: Vacant property locations in the BIS Neighborhood.

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chapter 3: planning, zoning, & d



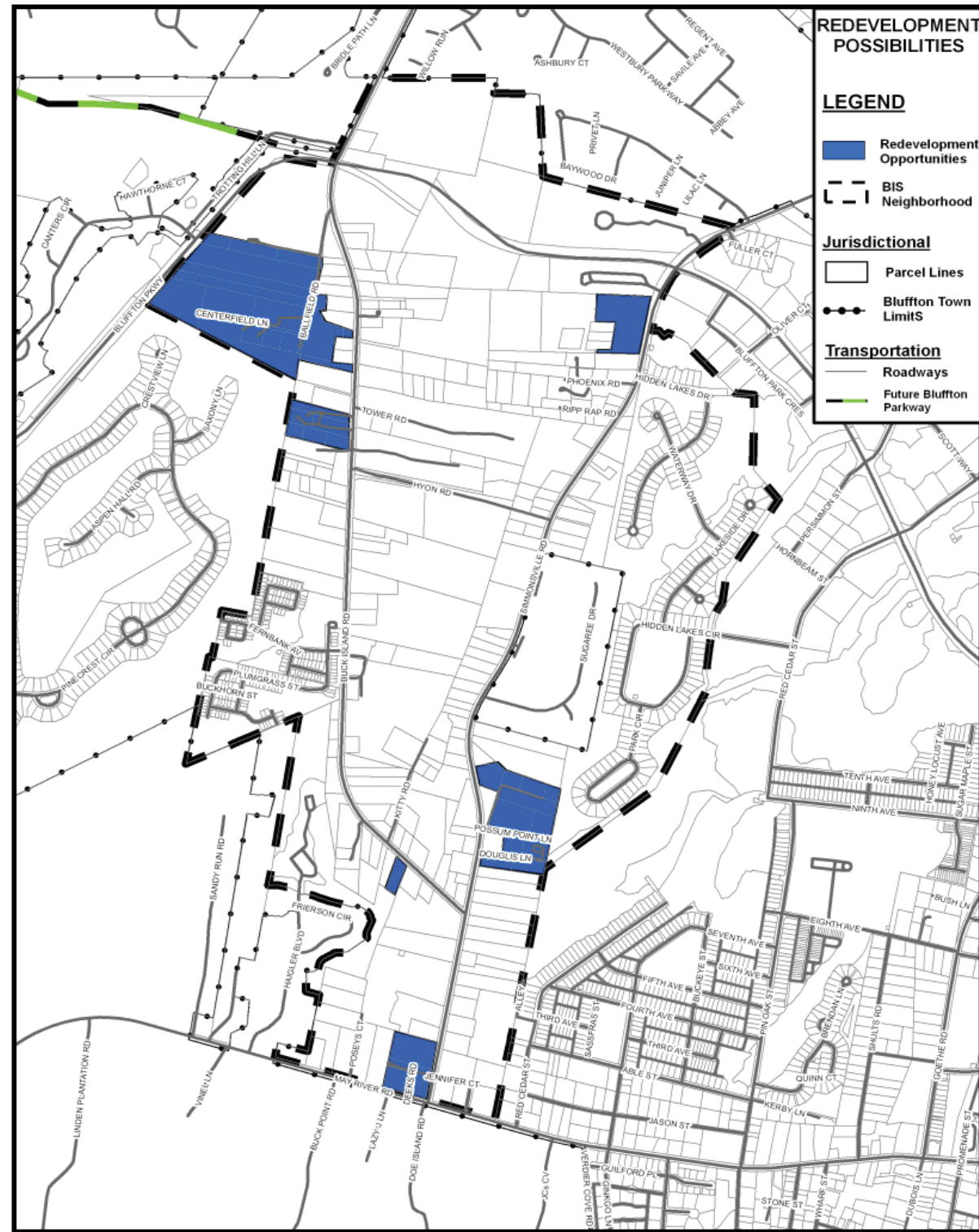


Figure 63: Areas best suited for redevelopment.

planning, zoning, & development recommendations

Encourage the demolition of buildings that cannot be rehabilitated at a reasonable cost	TOB, PO
Restrict new flag lots	TOB
Review and strengthen parking standards, promoting the use of shared parking to reduce the quantity of parking lots while ensuring that adequate parking is appropriately placed and provided.	TOB
Review the ZDSO to ensure that requirements provide for adequate screening of commercial/industrial uses to adjacent residential structures.	TOB, PO
Require small-scale signage for any business within the Neighborhood Plan area.	TOB, PO
Work with the property owner and listing agent of the 7.3 acre VCD property site near the Buck Island Rd/Simmons Rd intersection to market appropriate redevelopment	TOB, AC, PO
Seek redevelopment opportunity for small infill properties	TOB, PO
Restrict commercial, industrial, and large-scale multi-family development in the core of the Neighborhood	TOB
Mandate pathway contributions through easement donations or outright construction requirements (ordinance revision)	TOB, PO, NO
In partnership with the property owners and community leaders, seek redevelopment opportunities in the communities of Little Possum, Douglis Lane, Twin Oaks, and Ballfield Road.	TOB, PO
Assist heirs property owners to obtain clear title to their land	TOB, PO
Identify parcels with adjacent conflicting land uses and develop beautification/screening plans for each	TOB, PO
Review the ZDSO to ensure that adverse impacts from residential buildout will be minimized (lack of connector roads)	TOB
Ensure that Old Carolina Shopping Center is developed as residential	TOB

**KEY:**  
 AC-Advisory Committee; BC-Beaufort County; BCSD-Beaufort County School District; NO-Neighborhood Organization; PO-Property Owners; SCDOT-SC Department of Transportation; TOB-Town of Bluffton



## chapter 4: parks & recreation

Recreation and open space add economic, social, environmental, and aesthetic value to neighborhoods. Well-planned spaces can promote community investment, educate citizens about the environment, contribute to a community's unique character, and create a sense of place by linking surrounding structures.

Within BIS, the opportunity exists to provide park spaces that are accessible, attractive, and appropriately programmed via collaboration among the local schools and residents. The Town should work in partnership with Beaufort County Parks and Leisure Services (PALS) to identify areas within the Neighborhood that could accommodate a future park or recreational facility.

It may be pertinent to explore the possibility of acquiring portions of BIS's major central wetland system for use as an interpretive park consisting of boardwalks and nature trails. This partnership could also be used to foster community summer camps and recreational programs. For example, Red Cedar Elementary School, located within Bluffton Park, is exploring the possibility of educational programs centering on interpretation of wildlife within the proposed man-made wetland park at the B-11 site, positioned south of the school along Red Cedar Street. The opportunity exists at the Bluffton Middle School site to incorporate a similar interpretive program within the open space and wetland system that lie on and adjacent to the middle school property.

When the new Bluffton Middle School opens in 2010, it can provide traditional recreational opportunities for the Neighborhood. Likewise, the new Red Cedar Elementary School in Bluffton Park is within easy walking distance to the BIS Neighborhood, as long as connecting pathways or sidewalks are developed. The Beaufort County School District allows for the utilization of recreational facilities for all schools under its jurisdiction through a recreational use policy. The Town should work with the School District and other developers to ensure pathways and sidewalks are available to access these facilities. The Town should continue working collaboratively with Beaufort County PALS,

the Beaufort County School District, and not-for-profit organizations to provide improved access to neighborhood facilities for community services, programs, and activities.

Within the BIS Neighborhood, there is one recreational facility – the Bluffton Eagles ball field. The Bluffton Eagles ball field, owned by the non-profit Bluffton Eagles Community Action Committee, hosts baseball games, community dinners, and community events. Owners of the ball field have met with the Town and neighborhood residents and are committed to improving and modifying the ball field for future community use. **Figure 64 shows the proposed enhancements.**



Figure 64: The proposed enhancements to the Bluffton Eagles Baseball Field.



Proposed improvements include enhancing the existing adult baseball field by re-orienting the field to allow for additional seating, concession areas, and rest rooms. The enhancements also include additional areas for barbecue pits and eating areas to better serve the community as a year-round gathering location, as well as the additions of a new little league baseball field, a fitness trail with interpretive botanical gardens, and a 4,000 square foot community center. The additional investment in this field will lead to an increase in recreational programs and enhance the accessibility and capacity of an existing facility that has great potential as a community gathering space.

There are other recreational facilities and open space areas located outside of the BIS Neighborhood that are also open for public use. Buckwalter Community Park is a 103.3 acre regional park located along the Buckwalter Parkway. The park will consist of a variety of recreational opportunities including athletic fields, a community recreation center, three baseball fields, a swimming pool, tennis courts, and pathways. These pathways should be linked to pathways along Bluffton Parkway to allow for easy pedestrian access from the BIS Neighborhood to the regional park. Oscar Frazier Park and Oyster Factory Park both combine functional open space with a variety of recreational activities. **Figure 65 shows park and school locations in and around the BIS Neighborhood.**

The recently constructed extension of Bluffton Parkway through the northern portion of the Neighborhood provides pathways for recreational and pedestrian use. These pathways are connected to a larger, growing system of interconnected linkages that allow for non-vehicular movement throughout the Town of Bluffton. The expansion of this pathway system along Buck Island Road and Simmonsville Road would provide for additional recreational opportunities, as well as provide pedestrian travel throughout the Neighborhood in a much safer manner than what currently exists.

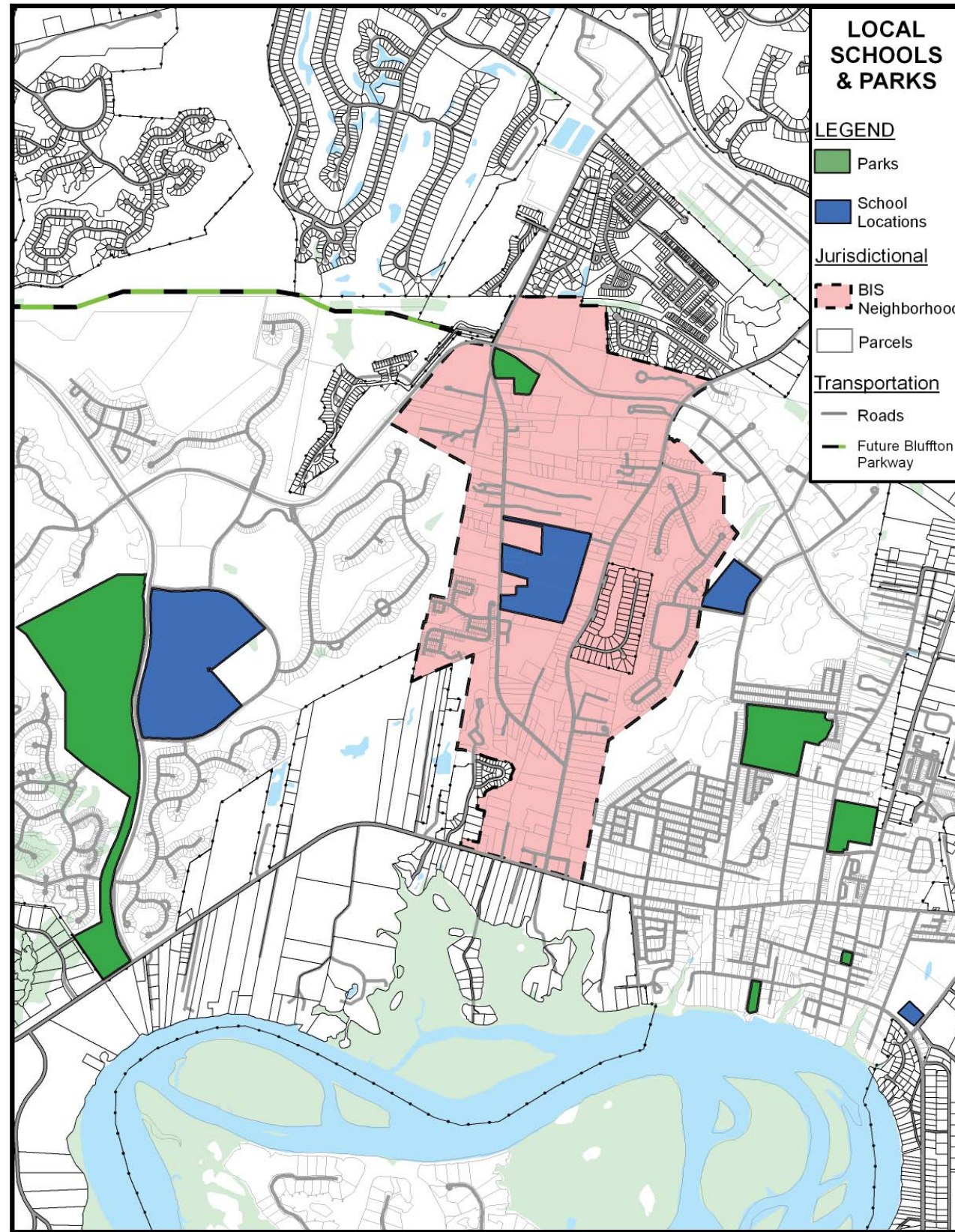


Figure 65: School and park locations within walking distance of the BIS Neighborhood, if pathway connections were made.

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**parks & recreation recommendations**

Enhance Eagles Field with proposed improvements to the existing field, a new little league field, a community center, and other recreational features in partnership with not-for-profit entities and ensure that the park is open to BIS residents during normal operation hours unless otherwise reserved	TOB, EF, AC, PO
Identify locations for new open space/park land	TOB, PO
Identify environmentally sensitive land and ensure that it remains protected	TOB, PO
Ensure that the school site is open to the BIS community-establish a written commitment	TOB, PO, BCSD
Create interpretive wetland trails throughout the Neighborhood	TOB,PO

**KEY:**  
 AC-Advisory Committee; BC-Beaufort County; BCSD-Beaufort County School District; NO-Neighborhood Organization; PO-Property Owners; SCDOT-SC Department of Transportation; TOB-Town of Bluffton



# chapter 5: community development

Situated in the middle of “new Bluffton” and its thousands of new homes, the Buck Island Simmonsville (BIS) Neighborhood appears poised for improvement and revitalization. Although optimistic about the future of the Neighborhood, many property owners are concerned that physical improvements could leave many long-time and elderly residents vulnerable. This concern underlies many of this Plan’s recommendations, which offers strategies to assist these susceptible residents wishing to remain in the BIS Neighborhood.

With the large amount of vacant land and rental manufactured homes in the Neighborhood, a great opportunity exists to introduce new, owner-occupied, affordable housing in the community. The neighborhood goal is to have a geographic balance of quality, affordable housing without creating a large concentration of any one income level in a particular development or area.

Increased housing costs, coupled with relatively low wages, make home buying difficult for lower income families, young couples, and single persons. These households are often concerned with saving money for down payments and closing costs, as well as other monthly incidentals for such items as taxes, insurance, and maintenance.

For some previous homeowners, life cycle changes may also bring about decisions to rent rather than own. Therefore, to fulfill the housing needs of all residents, Bluffton will need an adequate supply of housing for all incomes and lifestyles, with emphasis placed on the development of affordable housing.

Town codes relating to zoning and community maintenance are a means of ensuring that the community’s land uses are compatibly located to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the Town. Minimum safety and sanitation levels for property owners and tenants are critical to the health and quality of life for all neighborhoods.

Investors or potential property owners may not want to spend money in neighborhoods that look unkempt. The results may

include decreased property values and a continuation of more irresponsible property owners buying into the community. This cycle will continue without proper code enforcement.

The community inventory for the BIS Neighborhood indicated a large concentration of manufactured homes in the community. Seventeen of these were identified as either in fair or unsafe condition. Another 40 properties had severely overgrown vegetation and dozens of others had significant debris accumulated.

During the public workshops, residents continued to ask the Town for assistance in housing rehabilitation and neighborhood cleanup efforts. Similar requests were made for redevelopment and infill incentives, home ownership assistance, and overall code compliancy aid. As a result, the Town has drafted a community development program dubbed R3 to begin to fulfill these requests. R3 stands for Remove, Renovate, and Rejuvenate. While this program will ultimately be available to all TOB residents, the initial launch of these services will occur in the BIS Neighborhood.



Figure 66: Example of cleared, vacant land located in the BIS Neighborhood that provides an opportunity for new housing development.



Figure 67: Abandoned manufactured housing is prevalent in the BIS Neighborhood.



Figure 68: A condemned home in the BIS Neighborhood.



Figure 69: Vacant and abandoned houses can be found throughout the BIS Neighborhood.

03-05-2009 DRAFT

chapter 5: community



Specifically, the Town's R3 program, if adopted, would provide financial assistance to LMI residences for the following:

- Junk/derelict vehicle removal - Property owners would sign over the car title to the Town. If a title is not available, property owners would sign a hold-harmless agreement with the Town prior to the vehicle being removed.
- Bulk trash/debris removal - The Town would pick up accumulated bulk items from residential properties including: appliances, household hazardous waste, boats, campers, motors, tires, debris, and other unsanitary materials.
- Structure demolition and removal - The Town could assist with the demolition of unsafe, abandoned or uninhabitable structures (a detached residential one-or-two-family structure or accessory structure, including manufactured homes).
- Septic maintenance - The Town could provide grants to assist with the maintenance, repair, or replacement of substandard septic systems.
- Home inspections - The Town could reimburse residents for professionally administered home inspections.
- Down payment towards home purchase - The Town could provide a portion of closing costs for residents that make less than 80% of the area median income (AMI). The new residence would be within the Town limits and the applicant would attend a home buyer education program.
- Mortgage interest rate/term reductions - The Town could help lower monthly mortgage payments for qualified residents by buying-down interest rates and/or better payment terms.
- Heirs property clearance - The Town could pay for mediation services and associated legal fees to help residents gain a clean title or dispose of their property.
- Home repairs - The Town could provide financial assistance to help residents remedy code violations and make repairs to single family homes. Funds would be used to address items that may pose a threat to the health and safety of the occupants prior to addressing items that are solely cosmetic in nature.



Figure 70-A: A typical house before renovation.



Figure 70-B: The same house after financial assistance for home repairs.



Figure 71-A: A typical house before renovation.



Figure 71-B: The same house after financial assistance for home repairs.



Figure 72: Demolition assistance can remove unsafe conditions from the Neighborhood, while also providing redevelopment opportunities for additional housing.



The BIS Neighborhood has several large pockets that are ideally suited for redevelopment (see Figure 64). These properties currently house multiple rental manufactured homes or are family compounds with numerous dwellings for large families. These properties are not being maximized to their highest and best use and represent a great opportunity for the owners to improve community conditions, make money from their land, and improve their quality of life. Similar redevelopment opportunities exist on smaller parcels throughout the Neighborhood. Small scale infill construction can have a significant impact on the community and leverage additional investment in the BIS Neighborhood, as there is a proven “domino effect” with this type of infill strategy.

Some of these larger redevelopment sites include Twin Oaks (5.0 acres), the Douglas Road and Little Possum properties (13.7 acres), Tower Road (18.3 acres), and the area surrounding Ballfield Road (38.0 acres). The Town should work with these property owners to determine their interest in redeveloping their property and can help solicit investors seeking to joint-venture with the property owners.

Figure 73 shows detached residential infill off of Kitty Road. Figure 74 shows a 34-unit townhouse development tucked into the woods on Tower Road. The images in Figures 75 and 76 represent single-family attached houses that would provide attractive and affordable housing for the Neighborhood.



Figure 73: Conceptual residential infill on 5.72 acres of Kitty Road property provides for 15 new, single-family homes and could also include a new pedestrian pathway between Buck Island and Simmonsville roads.



Figure 75



Figure 76

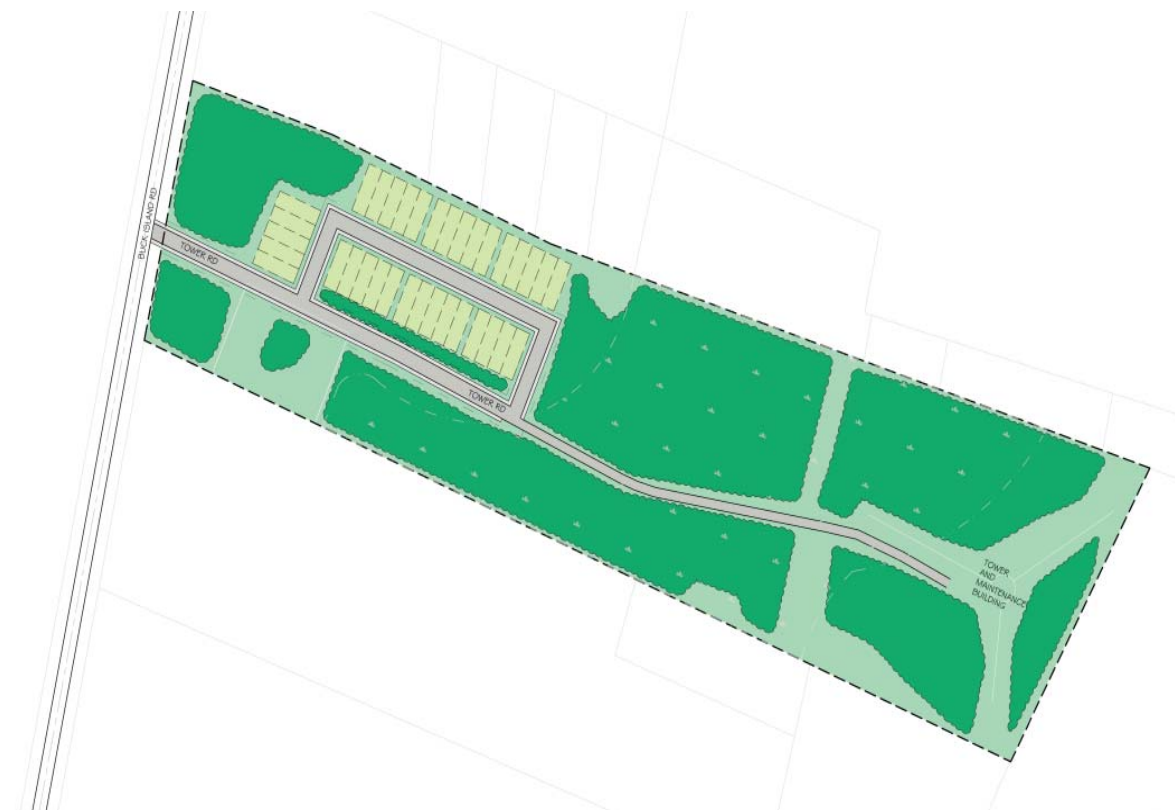


Figure 74: Conceptual infill residential on Tower Road shows 34 new lots tucked in an 18.3 acre property. The existing woods, wetlands, and significant trees are all preserved.



As an established neighborhood, there is a need for reinvestment in the BIS Neighborhood to maintain existing housing stock. The condition of many manufactured homes in the BIS Neighborhood are clearly substandard, yet many appear to be occupied. The Town Building Safety Department needs to inventory each of these properties to properly evaluate the conditions of the dwelling units. Financial assistance and/or redevelopment incentives can then be tailored on a case by case basis.

It is important to note that the redevelopment goals outlined in this Plan are not intended to gentrify the community or remove any particular price point or dwelling unit type. BIS Neighborhood residents need affordable and safe housing. It is the joint responsibility of the property owners and the Town of Bluffton to ensure that such housing opportunities exist. Specifically, the goals are to promote and encourage a mix of housing types, styles, and prices to ensure that the BIS Neighborhood can accommodate a variety of household incomes and lifestyle choices. Further, the goal is to promote home ownership and discourage activities on properties which may lead to a detriment to the property owner or Neighborhood, while offering education and assistance for cleanup and repair opportunities to residents and landlords to prevent the displacement of families from their homes.



Figure 77

community development recommendations

Sponsor/provide educational workshops focusing on housing options and home ownership	TOB, BC, NO
Review property maintenance standards and enforcement provisions to ensure that properties are safely maintained; improve regulatory enforcement as needed	TOB
Conduct community awareness programs on blighting influences, regular refuse collections, and comprehensive code enforcement efforts	TOB, NO
Enforce Town ordinances and building codes focusing initially on junk cars, illegal dumping, and dilapidated/abandoned structures	TOB
Provide financial assistance to help LMI property owners repair their homes	TOB, NO
Remove/ demolish structures that are unsafe and abandoned/ uninhabited	TOB
Remove bulk trash and refuse from residential properties (including appliances, boats, tires, and motors)	TOB
Remove the abandoned automobiles, machinery, equipment, and boats from properties that pose environmental risks by providing financial assistance to help property owners remove unsafe and hazardous conditions	TOB
Offer a neighborhood clean-up program that provides two curb-side clean ups per neighborhood per year	TOB
Adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance, workforce housing ordinance, or moderately priced dwelling unit program	TOB
Establish an “affordable housing fund” that would fund affordable housing efforts. Funds could come from “fees in lieu of” providing affordable housing from future inclusionary zoning	TOB
Evaluate providing rebates for or exemptions to affordable housing units from impact fees	TOB, BC
Identify and inventory a list of available land and/or redevelopment lots available for new housing units and seek out joint venture opportunities between the property owner and local builders	TOB, PO
Encourage infill projects by waiving/rebating development fees and property taxes	TOB, BC
Encourage public and private developers to explore new design concepts, such as row houses, and to provide quality, affordable housing opportunities in an aesthetically pleasing manner	TOB
Establish new incentives and financial assistance programs to fill in the gaps	TOB

**KEY:**  
 AC-Advisory Committee; BC-Beaufort County; BCSD-Beaufort County School District; NO-Neighborhood Organization; PO-Property Owners; SCDOT-SC Department of Transportation; TOB-Town of Bluffton



# chapter 6: public utilities & infrastructure

## water and sewer

Beaufort – Jasper Water & Sewer Authority (BJWSA) is a public, non-profit organization which provides water and sewer services to the Town. Currently, the sewer is located on a forced main, a piping system that uses electrical pumps at a nearby pump station to allow for the movement of wastewater. However, many of the older residential properties in the Buck Island Simmonsville (BIS) Neighborhood currently do not have access to adequate sewer facilities and operate on septic tanks. The Town should seek ways to extend both sewer and water lines to supply all residents with public services.

In order to provide water and sewer services to all BIS residents, a survey was sent to each home in the project's target area, which totals 88 homes. One hundred percent of the respondents said that they would like to be hooked up to the new sewer system. In addition to the survey, an infrared aerial survey was taken in order to determine how much sewage, stormwater, and/or septic systems were leaking into the watershed. The aerial survey found 27 areas of concern, which will need to be verified in the field. Many septic systems fail without notice, causing a threat to human health and to the environment. Some failed systems cannot be repaired and require new drainage fields for proper functioning. When lots are small, finding a replacement field can be difficult or impossible.

The Town of Bluffton, Lowcountry Council of Governments, and Beaufort County, in cooperation with BJWSA, are working together to provide a high-quality sewer system to the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood.

To support the effort to provide citizens with better sewer service and protect the area's natural resources, the Town of Bluffton has secured grant funding for the construction of additional sewer service within the target area. The

\$500,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), in conjunction with contributions from the Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority, Beaufort County School District, and a Town investment of \$750,000 will provide sewer service to approximately 300 people along Buck Island Road.

The first phase of the sewer project runs along Buck Island Road from Hyon Road north toward Eagles Field. Connections will be made to properties adjacent to Buck Island, including the Ballfield - Centerfield area and Twin Oaks. Depending on the timing of contract finalization for the construction of the sewer and the acquisition of easements, construction is slated to begin in the first quarter of 2009 and conclude in 2010.

The installation of this sewer line will help to improve quality infrastructure and environmental problems in the target area by eliminating the need for septic tanks. Subsequent phases of this sewer extension are anticipated for the entire BIS Neighborhood. The Town will explore grant and other funding options to make these extensions possible.

**Phase 1 of the sewer project is shown in Figure 78.**



Figure 78: Phase 1 of the sewer project along Buck Island Road



**stormwater**

An inadequate stormwater control system can have negative impacts on citizens and the environment by causing stagnant water in ditches, ponding on roadways, transportation of pollutants into receiving waters, and erosion and/or flooding.

Recently, the Buck Island Simmonsville (BIS) Neighborhood has been prone to such issues as they pertain to its stormwater control system. One of the primary problems observed within the area include the ponding of water on roadways due to either under constructed ditches and swales or the presence of a significant amount of debris within these features that has restricted the flow of stormwater through them.

Because the roads and drainage ditches are the legal responsibility of the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), the Town has requested that the state provide the necessary maintenance to these ditches and culverts. However, because of the importance of this project, the Town has already begun many of these improvements and has budgeted an additional \$100,000 to complete these required projects. Hopefully SCDOT will reimburse the Town for this work so that these funds can be respent for other projects.

Areas where this work has either taken place or is scheduled to take place include the large north-to-south primary channel that lies between Buck Island and Simmonsville roads, which has been cleared of restrictive vegetation from the southernmost point of the channel to the power line easement north of Bluffton Parkway, the channel to the north of Eagles Ballfield, the lateral channel south of Wellstone, and roadside ditches along both Buck Island Road and Simmonsville Road.

In addition to the clearing of these channels, the Department of Environmental Protection will be monitoring the construction of the primary stormwater ditches that are either being discharged into by or constructed in conjunction with Bluffton Middle School to ensure proper design and mitigate any additional drainage problems that may arise from the construction of this facility. The Town has also conducted inspections on culverts located underneath driveways or roadways to assess their structural integrity and recommend replacement pipes as needed.

One such location where inspections have been completed is Kitty Road, which is scheduled to be replaced by Beaufort County to ensure proper stormwater flow underneath the road. It is imperative that the Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County continue to monitor stormwater flow and drainage patterns within the study area to further protect environmental assets and quality of life for the citizens within the Neighborhood.

Figure 79 shows the current drainage projects in the Neighborhood.

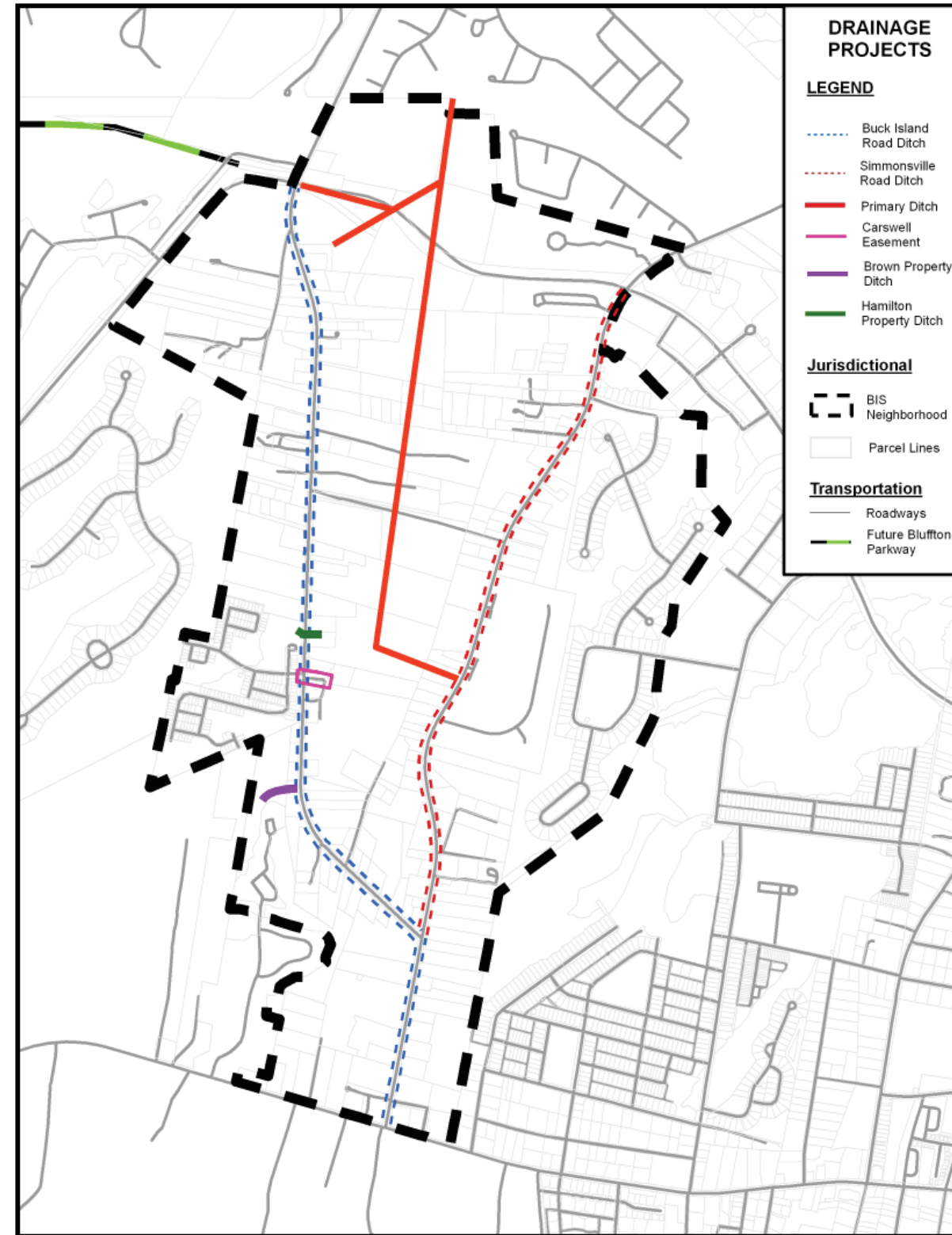


Figure 79: Current drainage projects in the BIS Neighborhood.





Figure 80: Typical clogged culvert found along the roadways.



Figure 81: Primary ditch that has been cleaned out and is functioning properly.

public utilities & infrastructure recommendations	Complete Phase 1 of the sewer installation project in coordination with the middle school road improvements (Buck Island from Ballfield to Hyon)	TOB
	Identify appropriate Phase 2 and Phase 3 project areas for sewer installation	TOB
	Coordinate subsequent sewer phasing with other utilities and pathways plan	TOB
	Apply for grants and other methods of funding for additional sewer extension phases	TOB
	To foster community accountability, storm drains should be marked with statements to remind residents that stormwater drains into valuable watersheds	TOB
	Continue CIP funding in full for the BIS stormwater projects in FY 2009	TOB
	Establish an annual maintenance budget to keep these ditches clear and culverts unobstructed	TOB
	Provide public water for all residents	TOB

**KEY:**  
 AC-Advisory Committee; BC-Beaufort County; BCSD-Beaufort County School District; NO-Neighborhood Organization;  
 PO-Property Owners; SCDOT-SC Department of Transportation; TOB-Town of Bluffton



# chapter 7: traffic & transportation

A visual field study of the Buck Island Simmonsville (BIS) Neighborhood was made during the planning process to evaluate the condition of the Neighborhood's infrastructure. This assessment focused on the existing infrastructure including the evaluation of public sidewalks and streets.

## streets & circulation

Both the State and County classify roads based on the national function classification system. These classifications categorize roads based on the primary intended use and function of the road, the types of travel accommodated, and physical factors such as length, travel speeds, and number of lanes.

In Bluffton, roadways are further distinguished by their corridor character (see the Land Use Chapter in the 2007 Comprehensive Plan). Together, functional classification and corridor character describe road "typologies." Roads are classified into the following categories:

- **principal arterials:** Move vehicles over relatively long distances, such as across town. Principal Arterials typically have the highest traffic volumes and speed limits, and more lanes than other roads. Since the emphasis is on through traffic, these roads typically have more signal green time at signalized intersections than side streets, and access points should be spaced far apart to limit disruption of traffic flow. US 278 is a Principal Arterial.
- **minor arterials:** Interconnect and augment the principal arterial system. Roads in this classification typically accommodate shorter trips than those associated with Principal Arterials, and thus have lower traffic volumes, lower speed limits, and fewer lanes. Compared to Principal Arterials, these offer a balance between through traffic and access to adjacent land uses. Bluffton Parkway is a Minor Arterial.
- **major collectors:** Connect arterial roads and local roads. This type of road serves locally oriented traffic, such as circulation between residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. Buckwalter Parkway is a Major Collector.
- **minor collectors:** Connect local roads to major collectors and arterials. Buck Island Road is a Minor Collector.
- **local roads:** All the other roads, public and private, in Bluffton. Small, residential streets, such as Ballfield Road, are Local Roads.

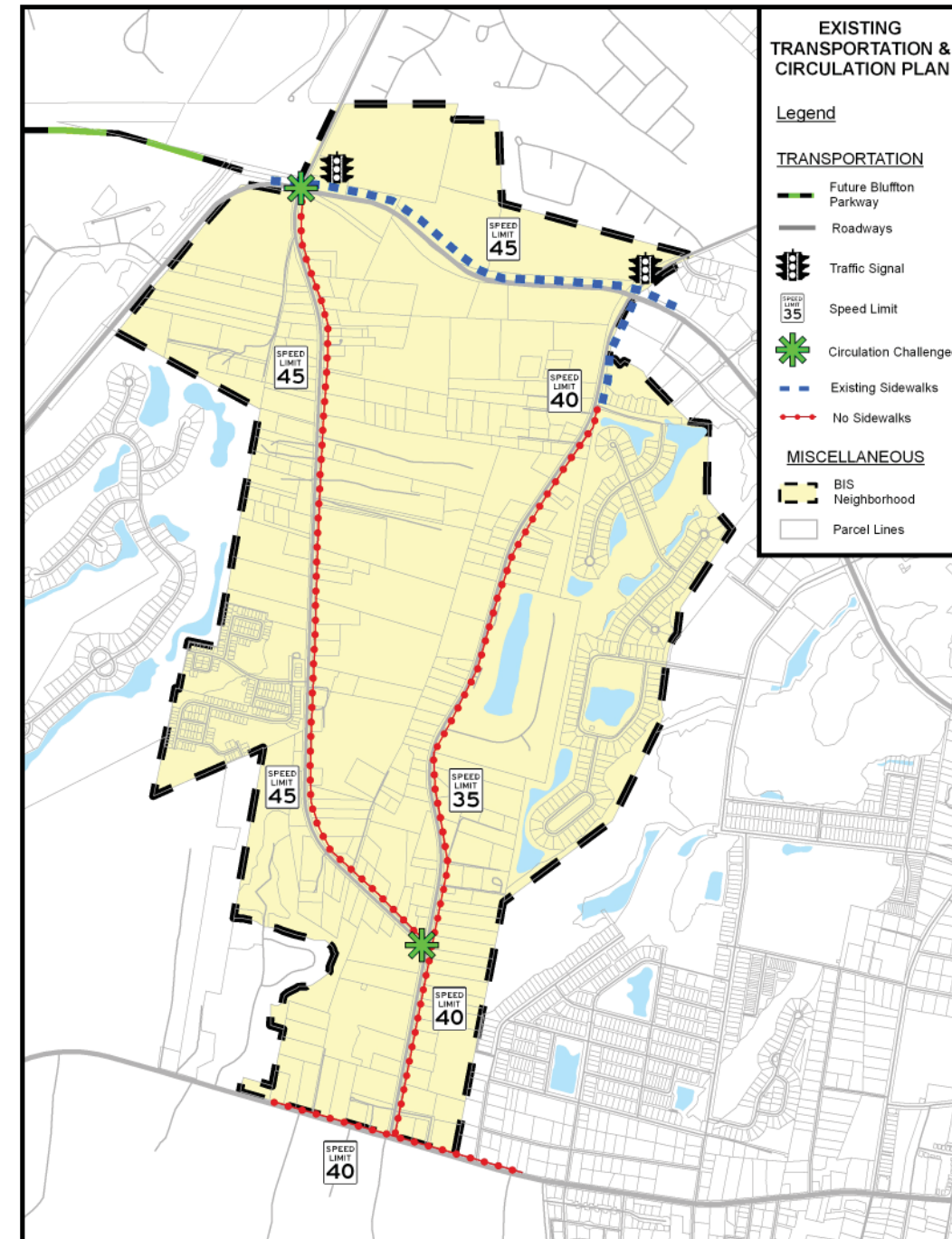


Figure 82: Existing transportation conditions.



The BIS Neighborhood has a wide range of roadways. From private drives to public thoroughfares, paved to unpaved, the roadways vary considerably. The major streets serving the Neighborhood are Bluffton Parkway, May River Road, Buck Island Road, and Simmonsville Road. It should be noted that approximately 26% of the streets in the Neighborhood are unimproved, dirt roads. **Figure 83 shows the type of roadways and their lengths.**

Bluffton Parkway is a 4-lane, median divided highway and is classified as a Minor Arterial with a posted speed limit of 45 mph (see **Figure 87**). The Parkway borders the northern part of the Neighborhood and was opened to traffic in 2007. Under the jurisdiction of Beaufort County, the road parallels US 278 and was constructed to relieve US 278 and provide local traffic with improved mobility options. Traffic signals exist at both Buck Island Road and Simmonsville Road intersections.

SC 46/May River Road borders the Neighborhood to the south, and is a two-lane street that is classified as a Minor Arterial (see **Figure 86**). May River Road provides access to Bluffton and runs east-west, and is under the jurisdiction of SCDOT. Currently, this intersection is not signalized and is controlled by a stop sign on Buck Island Road. May River Road has a posted speed limit of 40 mph.

Buck Island Road is a two-lane street that runs north-south between May River Road and US 278, crossing Bluffton Parkway, and is classified as a Minor Collector (see **Figure 85**). Under the jurisdiction of SCDOT, a stop sign controls the intersection with May River Road, and the intersection at Bluffton Parkway is controlled by a traffic signal. Residents have requested a left turn arrow for north bound traffic. This street has a posted speed limit of 45 mph (see **Figure 87**).

street type	length	percent of total
paved	47,335 Feet	72.77%
unpaved	16,998 Feet	26.13%
planned/future	714 Feet	1.10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	65,047 Feet	100%

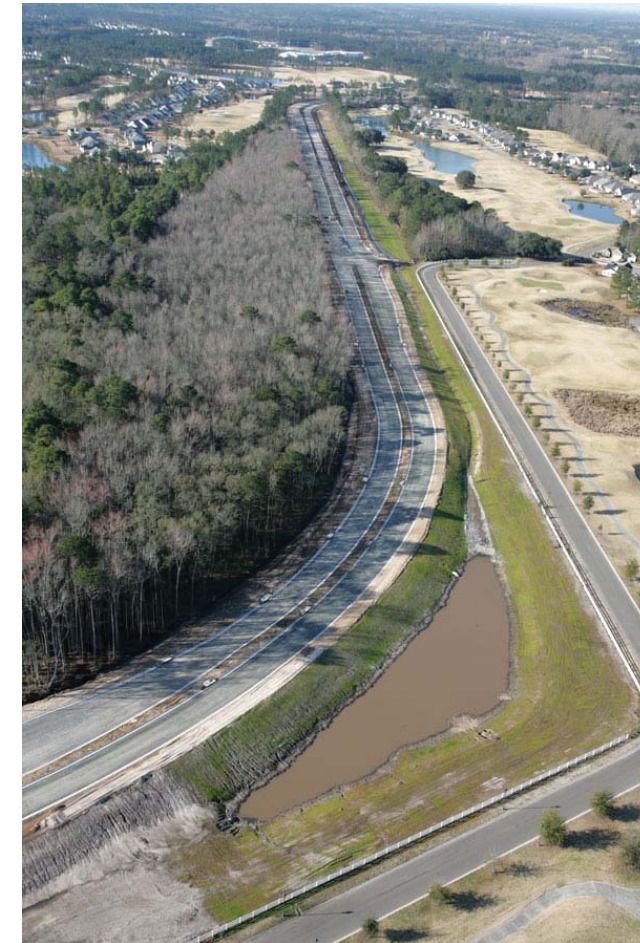
**Figure 83: Street type and length.**



**Figure 84: Buck Island Road.**



**Figure 85: May River Road.**



**Figure 87: Bluffton Parkway.**





Figure 87: Buck Island Road posted speed limit.



Figure 88: There are several speed reduction signs along Buck Island Road and Simmonsville Roads.

Simmonsville Road is a two-lane street that also runs north-south between Buck Island Road and US 278, crossing Bluffton Parkway. Similar to Buck Island Road, it is also under the jurisdiction of South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) and is classified as a Minor Collector. At its intersection with Bluffton Parkway, a traffic signal controls traffic. Residents have requested a left turn signal for north bound traffic.

New residential and commercial development in and around the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood has led to the increase in traffic on the street network. Because of the residential character of the Neighborhood, the Town should consider requesting that the SCDOT restrict truck traffic from Buck Island and Simmonsville roads. Restricting through truck traffic would lessen the traffic on the roads, as well as improve pedestrian safety.

Many of today's neighborhoods, shopping centers, and other developments are built with cul-de-sacs and looping streets so that there is only one way in and one way out (see Figure 90). Everyone must use the same street to enter and exit a development. This creates pockets of isolation and limits the choices people have to travel, forcing them to use certain streets and travel greater distances to get to their destination. In turn, this results in more traffic on our arterials and other streets, including both Buck Island Road and Simmonsville Road.

In the BIS Neighborhood, many new developments such as Wellstone and Hidden lakes are examples of new development with only one point of entry and exit with cul-de-sacs, looping roads, and dead-ends.

Historically, older neighborhoods and cities used a street grid, such as those seen in Old Town and Bluffton Park, as well as cities such as Beaufort, Charleston, and Savannah. This gives people many ways to travel to and from a location and makes travel easier and more time efficient. The street grid is also more efficient and has more capacity than a typical suburban street network that exists in Bluffton, reducing traffic on any one road.

The concept of connecting destinations and improving accessibility is commonly referred to as interconnectivity. Interconnectivity can be accomplished in many ways, such as discouraging neighborhoods with cul-de-sacs and encouraging a gridded street network. Another way is to build or connect developments with streets and pathways, extend streets or pathways from a cul-de-sac and connect to nearby development, use utility easements or go alongside easements, and build new connector roads such as Hyon Road that will connect Buck Island Road and Simmonsville Road. Another example is the proposed frontage road system parallel to US 278 that will connect adjacent properties.



Figure 89: Bluffton's abundance of cul-de-sacs result in poor circulation and have negative traffic impacts.



**unimproved streets**

Within the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood are 14 public and private streets, which are unimproved - meaning they are unpaved, dirt roads (see Figure 91). These unimproved streets are either maintained by the property owners themselves, or by the Beaufort County Department of Public Works.

Some of these private dirt roads represent a potentially dangerous situation because of their condition. The surfaces of these roads are so uneven or narrow that a fire truck or ambulance would have a difficult challenge getting to a house during an emergency. Fortunately, Beaufort County is improving three of the four public dirt roads in 2009: Ballfield, Kitty and Phoenix roads.



Figure 90: Unimproved dirt roads are difficult to maneuver, particularly for emergency vehicles.

STREET OWNERSHIP & MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES			
street	condition	ownership	maintenance responsibility
Ballfield Road	Unpaved	Public	Beaufort County
Brown's Way	Unpaved	Private	Private
Centerfield Lane	Unpaved	Private	Private
Douglis Lane	Unpaved	Private	Private
Henry Jones Drive	Unpaved	Private	Private
Hyon Road	Unpaved	Private	Private
Kitty Road	Unpaved	Public	Beaufort County
Little Aaron	Unpaved	Private	Private
Little Possum Lane	Unpaved	Private	Private
Lotus Court	Paved	Public	Beaufort County
Phoenix Road	Unpaved	Public	Beaufort County
Ripp Rapp Road	Unpaved	Private	Private
Sugaree Drive	Paved	Public	Beaufort County
Tower Road	Unpaved	Public	Beaufort County
Toy Fields Circle	Unpaved	Private	Private
Twin Oaks	Unpaved	Private	Private
Windy Lake Court	Paved	Public	Beaufort County

Figure 91: Street ownership and maintenance responsibilities.



Figure 92: Private road signs are indicated in blue.



03-05-2009 DRAFT

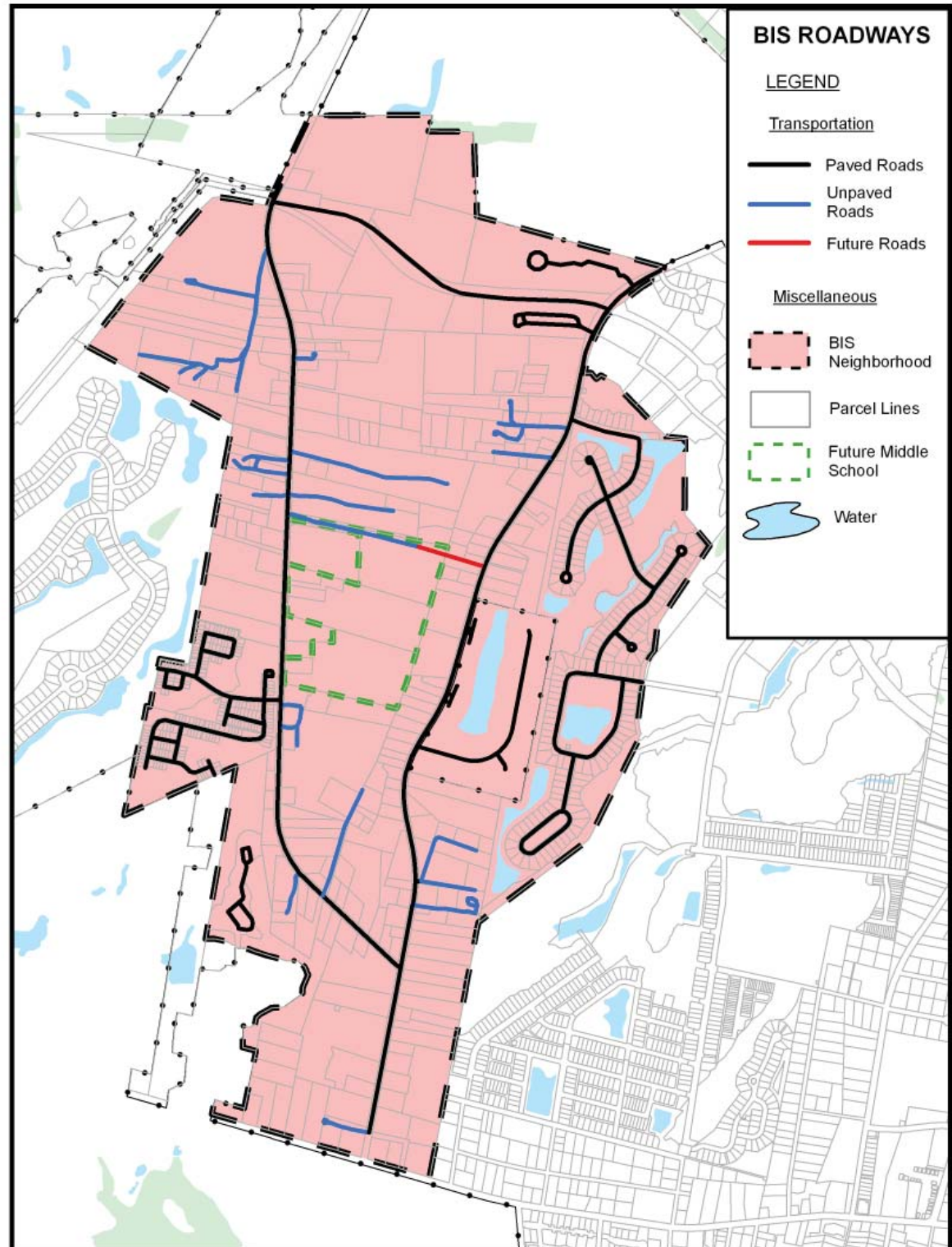


Figure 93: Overall street type in the BIS Neighborhood.

traffic volumes

As part of the BIS Neighborhood Plan, traffic counts were conducted to determine how much vehicular traffic is on Buck Island Road and Simonsville Road. These counts will assist staff and other agencies in various transportation and land use planning efforts for the BIS Neighborhood.

Study results indicate that the section of Buck Island Road between the Buck Island-Simonsville intersection and north of the May River Road intersection is the busiest section of street in the Neighborhood with an average of 6,500 vehicles per day. Simonsville Road between Buck Island Road and Bluffton Parkway carries approximately 4,500 vehicles per day, and Buck Island Road between Bluffton Parkway and Simonsville Road carries approximately 2,500 vehicles per day. Weekend traffic was noticeably lower on all both roads. **Figure 94 summarizes the results of the traffic counts.**

BUCK ISLAND RD. & SIMMONSVILLE RD. TRAFFIC VOLUMES		
Location	Weekday Average (vehicles per day)	Weekend Average (vehicles per day)
Buck Island Rd. (South of Simonsville Rd., near Resort Services, Inc.)	6,500	4,600
Buck Island Rd. (South of Wellstone Neighborhood)	2,500	1,800
Simonsville Rd. (North of Buck Island, South of Hyon extension)	4,500	3,750

Figure 94: Traffic volume.



**planned roadway improvements**

Just north of the Neighborhood, Simmonsville Road from US 278 to Bluffton Parkway is scheduled to be widened from a 2-lane street to a 4-lane street with a median. The project is scheduled to start in spring of 2009 (see figure 103) and take one year to complete. The project is estimated to cost \$6 million.

Bluffton Parkway Phase 5B is proposed to extend from Buck Island Road to Buckwalter Parkway. This project is intended to create a continuous roadway from US 278 near the Hilton Head Island bridge to SR 170 and relieve the jog that overlaps with Buckwalter Parkway.

Bluffton Parkway Phase 5B consists of a 4-lane median divided highway with 8-foot wide pathways along each side and will be approximately 2.5 miles in length. The project is currently on hold due to other priorities and a lack of funding. **Figure 95 shows the realignment of Bluffton Parkway.**

Beaufort County Public Works is planning to pave Kitty Road, Ballfield Road, and Phoenix Road in the spring and summer of 2009 (see figure 97). Proposed improvements include paving an 18-foot to 20-foot wide street without curb and gutter. Driveways would then be tied into the new street with drainage culverts underneath the driveway. Instead of curb and gutter, drainage swales with rock check dams paralleling the newly paved street will collect and manage stormwater runoff from the street.

Typically, in order to pave unimproved streets, Beaufort County Public Works must first obtain right-of-way and/or easements from adjacent property owners, permission from all utility companies to either cover or relocate the individual utility, and obtain permits from South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). Upon obtaining the necessary right-of-way, easements, and permits, the project must then go out to bid and be awarded to a contractor to perform the actual work. This process can easily take between one to two years.

With all new residential developments in and around the BIS Neighborhood, it is becoming increasingly more important to determine the transportation impacts of additional projects on the street system and prior to approving any more large developments.

Various computer simulation models are used to evaluate traffic operations. These models can analyze intersection operations and street networks along a corridor and include the network for a town, county and region.

These models can identify immediate and long term capacity deficiencies and evaluate alternative solutions such as adding turn lanes to intersections, new street connections, and new roads.

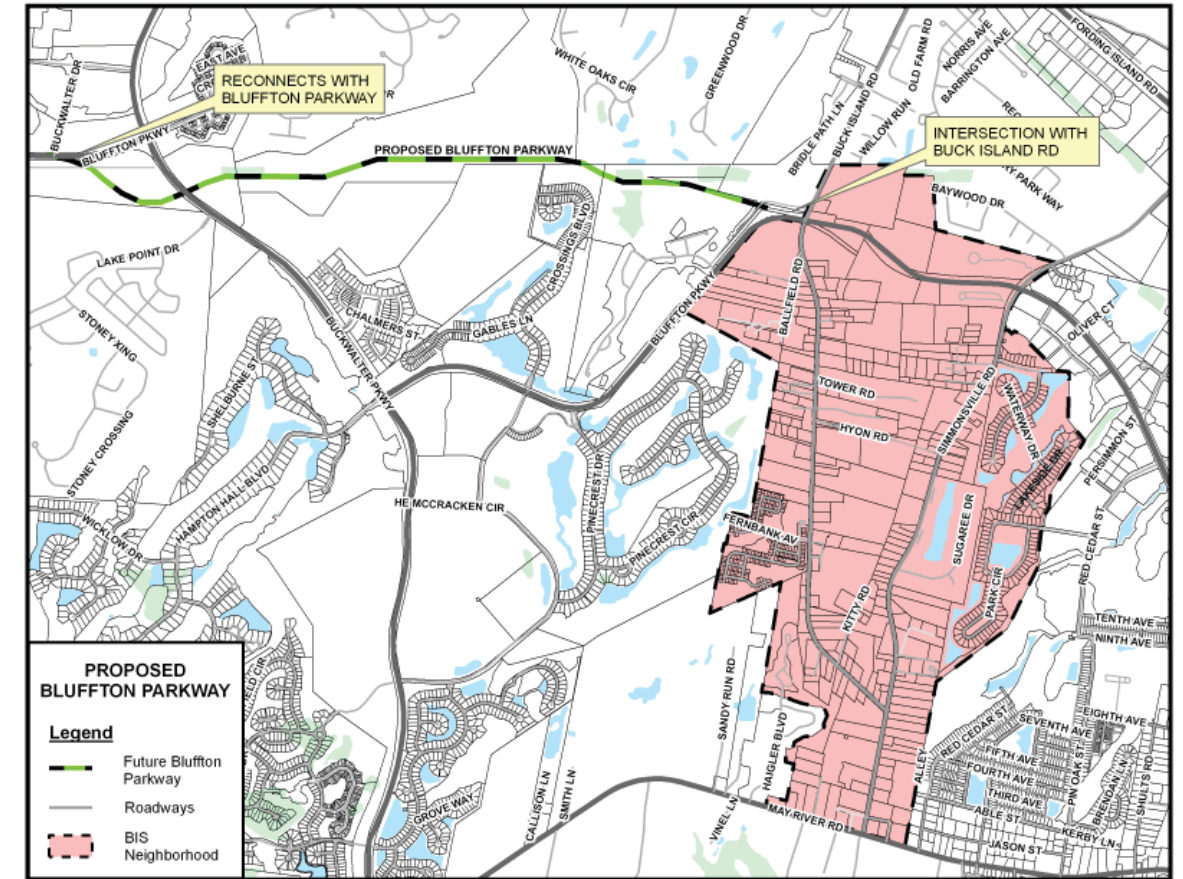
Both Beaufort County and Hilton Head Island use a network model (TRANPLAN) to estimate future traffic volumes on the road network based on current volumes and expected development. Bluffton planning staff provides information on approved new developments so the model can be updated to reflect changes. This enables the Town and County to identify where improvements may be needed to meet projected demand and plan for road projects in a timely manner.

In order to provide access to the northern interior portions of the Neighborhood, a north-south road from the Bluffton Parkway to Hyon Road has been discussed. If such a road were installed, it would help eliminate excessive future curb cuts and private drives that may have an adverse effect on the community. However, it is unlikely that public dollars could be justified for building this half mile road, and the property owners do not seem to support this project. If a developer were to assemble a critical mass of this vacant land, then the Town should negotiate the construction of this north-south road to serve the development, thus limiting impacts on Buck Island and Simmonsville roads.

Street	Length	Estimated Cost
Ballfield Rd	0.2 miles	\$120,000
Kitty Rd.	0.2 miles	\$120,000
Phoenix Rd.	0.1 miles	\$60,000

Source: Beaufort County Public Works

**Figure 96: Proposed street improvements.**



**Figure 95: Future realignment of Bluffton Parkway.**



**Figure 97: Existing Bluffton Parkway.**

03-05-2009 DRAFT



Having multiple roads for drivers to use helps create a safer, more walkable community by lowering the traffic volumes and vehicle speeds. Connector roadways not only spread traffic onto more streets, thereby lessening the burden of any one or two streets, but they also provide more efficient access throughout the Neighborhood. Emergency vehicle access will also be enhanced, allowing faster response times for emergency personnel.

The Town of Bluffton, in cooperation with Beaufort County and the South Carolina Department of Transportation, should set up a system to respond to neighborhood traffic that could include evaluation of traffic calming measures where conditions may be improved.

The intersection of Buck Island and Simmonsville is not the safest or most functional due to its angled orientation. Old Carolina, as part of its traffic mitigation associated with the impacts caused by Old Carolina Apartments, is required to improve this intersection with a northbound dedicated left turn lane on Buck Island; however, the BIS neighbors have requested that the Town evaluate the feasibility of a roundabout at this location. The roundabout might provide a gateway element and also reduce traffic volumes and speed. Conceptual drawings indicate that a roundabout would require additional right-of-way from adjacent property owners, but this could be incorporated into the redevelopment site on the east. Of course, any changes to the intersection will have to be approved by SCDOT. **Figure 98 shows the existing intersection, while Figures 99 and 100 show conceptual upgrades.**

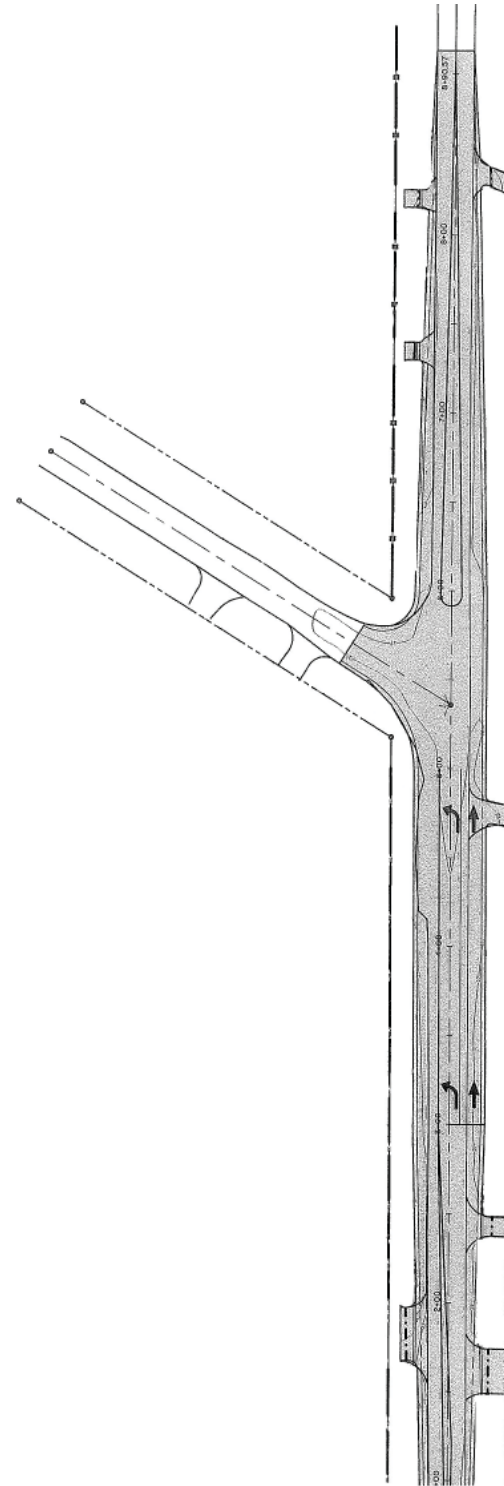


Figure 99: Conceptual left turn lane at the Buck Island Road/ Simmonsville Road intersection to be installed by Old Carolina.

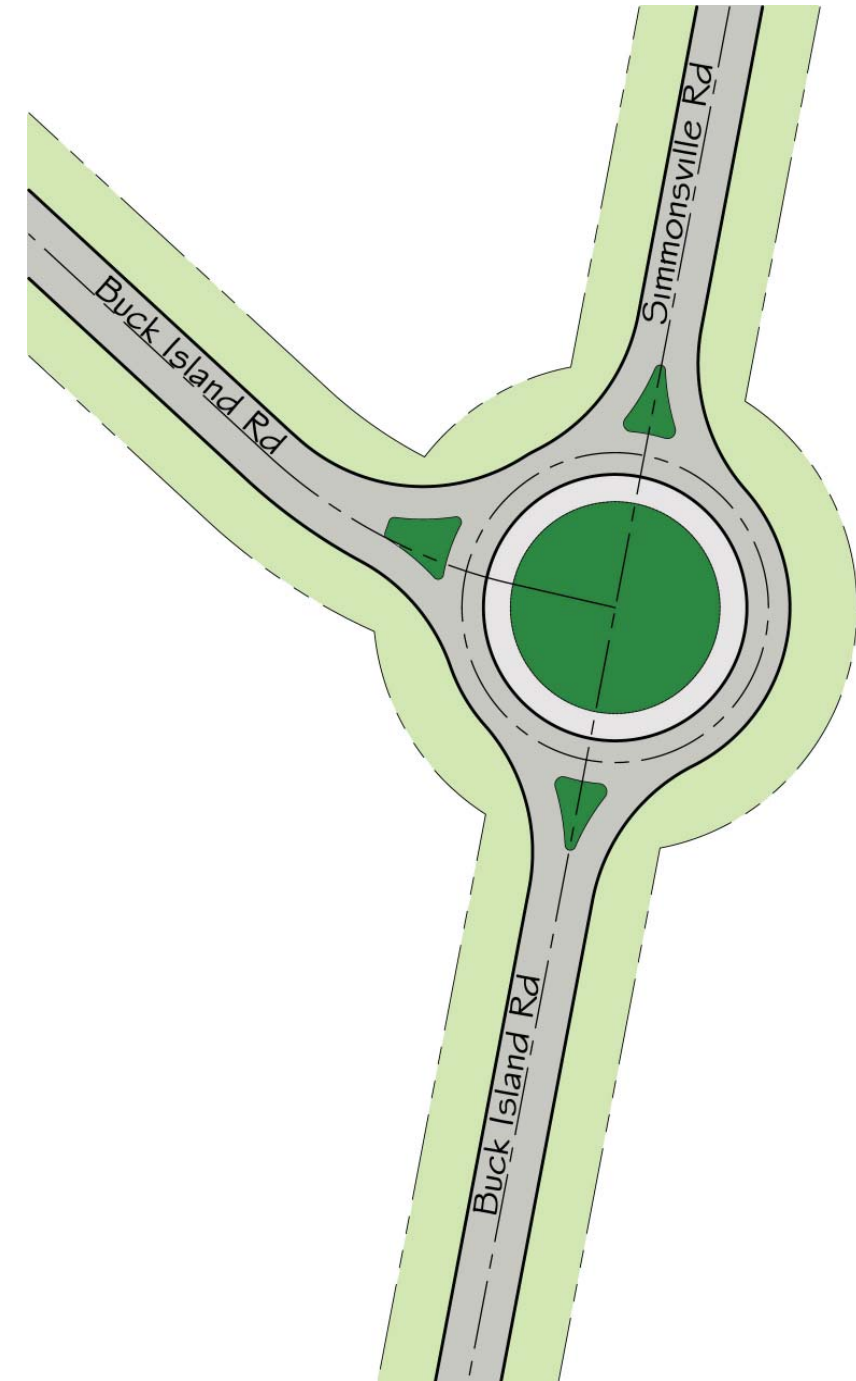


Figure 100: Conceptual roundabout at the Buck Island Road/ Simmonsville Road intersection.



Figure 98: Current Buck Island Road/Simmonsville Road intersection.

03-05-2009 DRAFT

**sidewalks & pathways**

During the planning process, a large volume of pedestrian traffic was observed throughout the study area despite the absence of sidewalks. Pedestrian traffic often occurs within the roadways and along the edge of roads where no sidewalks exist. This is obviously a highly unsafe practice but is one of necessity for many BIS residents. The only existing sidewalks in the community are along the Bluffton Parkway and along the northern portion of Simmonsville Road.

Walking and bicycling are viable modes of transportation. For many of the residents, walking and bicycling may be their primary mode of transportation. When compared to driving a car, walking and bicycling reduce pollution, reduce wear and tear on the roads, and are more environmentally friendly.

**Figure 101 indicates walking distances to local school and parks via existing and proposed routes.**

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 4,654 pedestrians in the United States were killed in traffic crashes in 2007, of which 106 occurred in South Carolina. Most pedestrian fatalities occurred in urban areas, at non-intersection locations, at night. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, "Pedestrians are the second largest category of motor vehicle deaths, after occupants." An unfortunate pedestrian fatality occurred in September 2008 when a Bluffton resident was walking near her home along Buck Island Road just south of Simmonsville Road and was struck by a car. No sidewalks exist along the street for pedestrians, nor is there any street lighting to improve visibility at night.

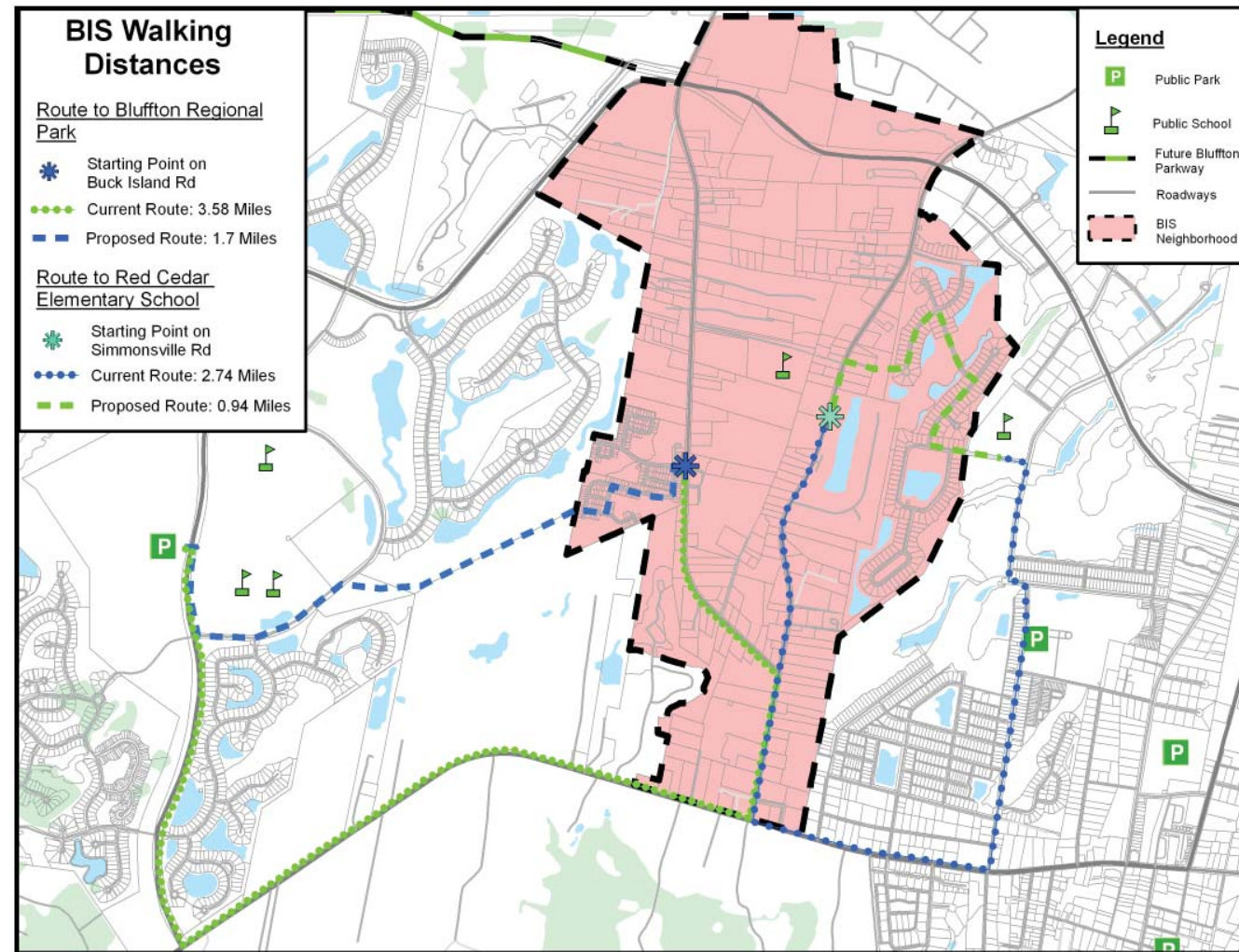


Figure 101: Current and proposed walking distances from the BIS Neighborhood to adjacent amenities.

03-05-2009 DRAFT



Pedestrians must walk in the street or dangerously close to moving vehicles on what little shoulder exists within the BIS Neighborhood. This problem is further compounded by the roadside drainage ditches that accommodate water but are difficult to traverse. At nighttime, driver visibility is considerably shorter than daytime because vehicle headlights only provide visibility for a few hundred feet in front of the car.

Streetlighting would improve driver nighttime visibility and increase driver perception and reaction to the conditions ahead, including the opportunity to see pedestrians, bicyclists, and other objects in or along the road.

A bicycle and pedestrian transportation system that effectively serves the needs of cyclists and pedestrians, encourages alternative transportation, and provides a continuous network of attractive pathways throughout the BIS Neighborhood, is a priority for residents.

Planning for pathways along Buck Island and Simonsville roads is critical to accommodating pedestrians and cyclists. On one side of the street, Buck Island Road would need approximately 10,225 linear feet and Simonsville Road would need approximately 5,800 linear feet.

Installing sidewalks could require additional right-of-way or easements, possible utility relocations, cutting down trees, driveway reconstruction and other challenges associated with construction of sidewalks. However, if the property owners, Town, and

County work together, appropriate pathway locations can be built in the near future.

**Figures 102 and 103 show conceptual street sections and pathway placement options.**

The Beaufort County School District, as part of the new Bluffton Middle School, will be installing 970 linear feet of sidewalk on Buck Island Road, 50 feet of sidewalk along Simonsville Road, and 2,000 linear feet along Hyon Road. However, these limited sidewalks will not provide adequate safe routes to the school. The School District does not normally provide bus service within a 1.5 mile radius of a school, but in this case, the District is committed to busing students to the school until pathways are installed (see Figure 105).

If funds are available, as part of the Phase 1 Buck Island Sewer project, the Town of Bluffton will also be installing pathways on top of the sewer as it runs along Buck Island Road. This sidewalk measures approximately 3,325 feet in length and will connect to the sidewalk that leads to the new middle school. With these improvements, a total of 9,750 linear feet remains to be built on both Buck Island and Simonsville Roads.

**Figure 104 shows current and proposed future pathways in and around the BIS Neighborhood.**

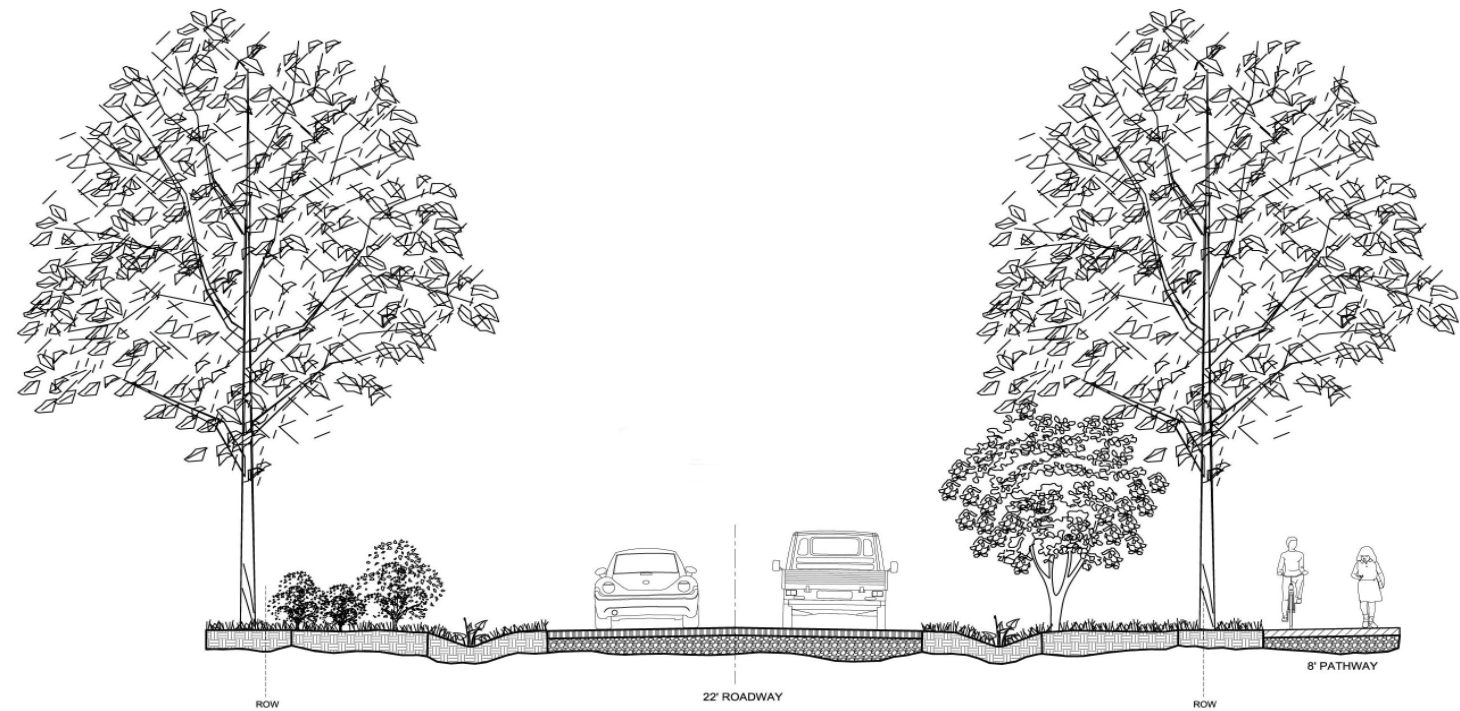


Figure 102: Conceptual streetscape with safety separation between road and pathway. Pathway is located on private property with an easement.

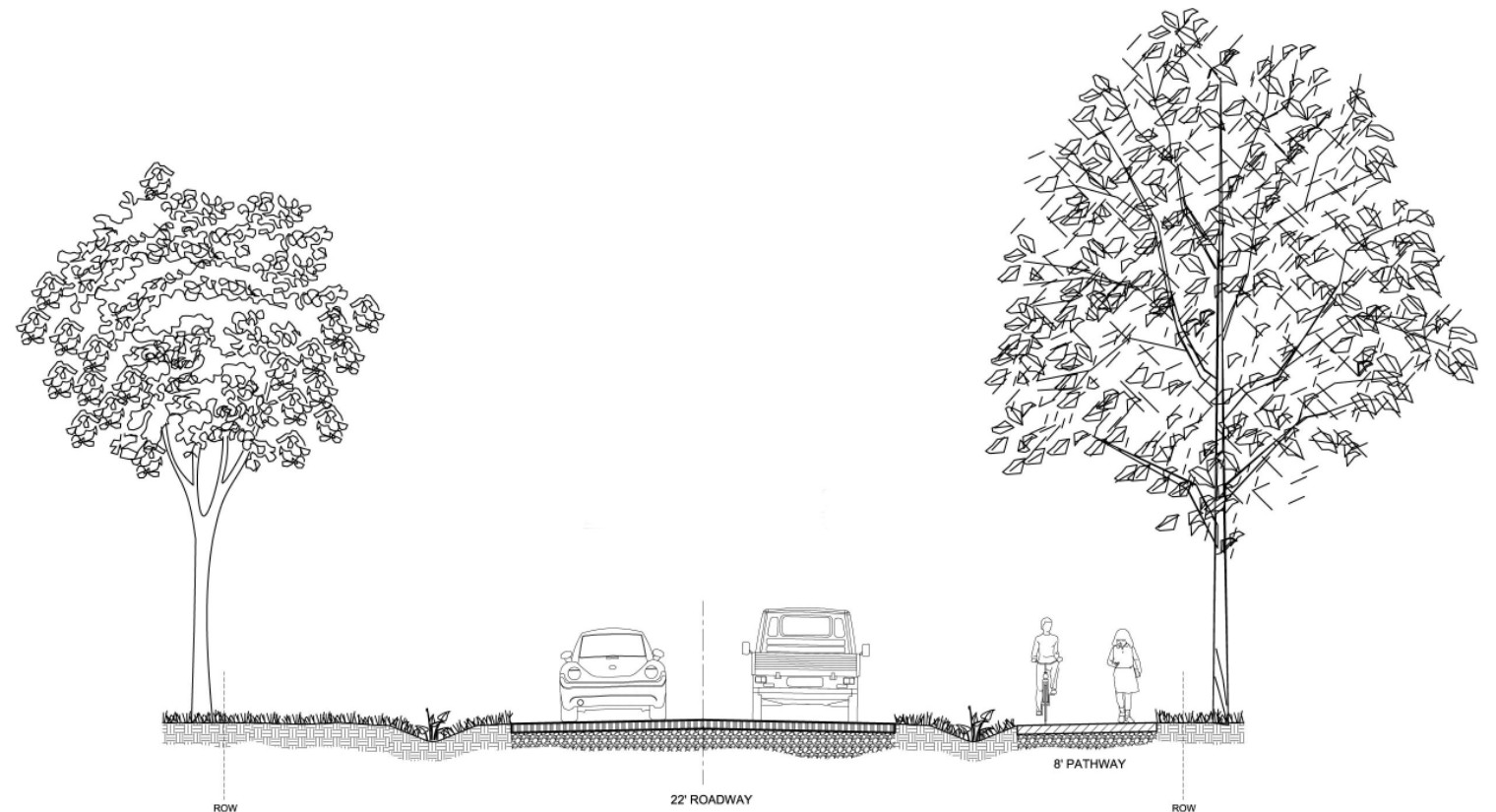


Figure 103: Conceptual streetscape with pathway adjacent to roadway.



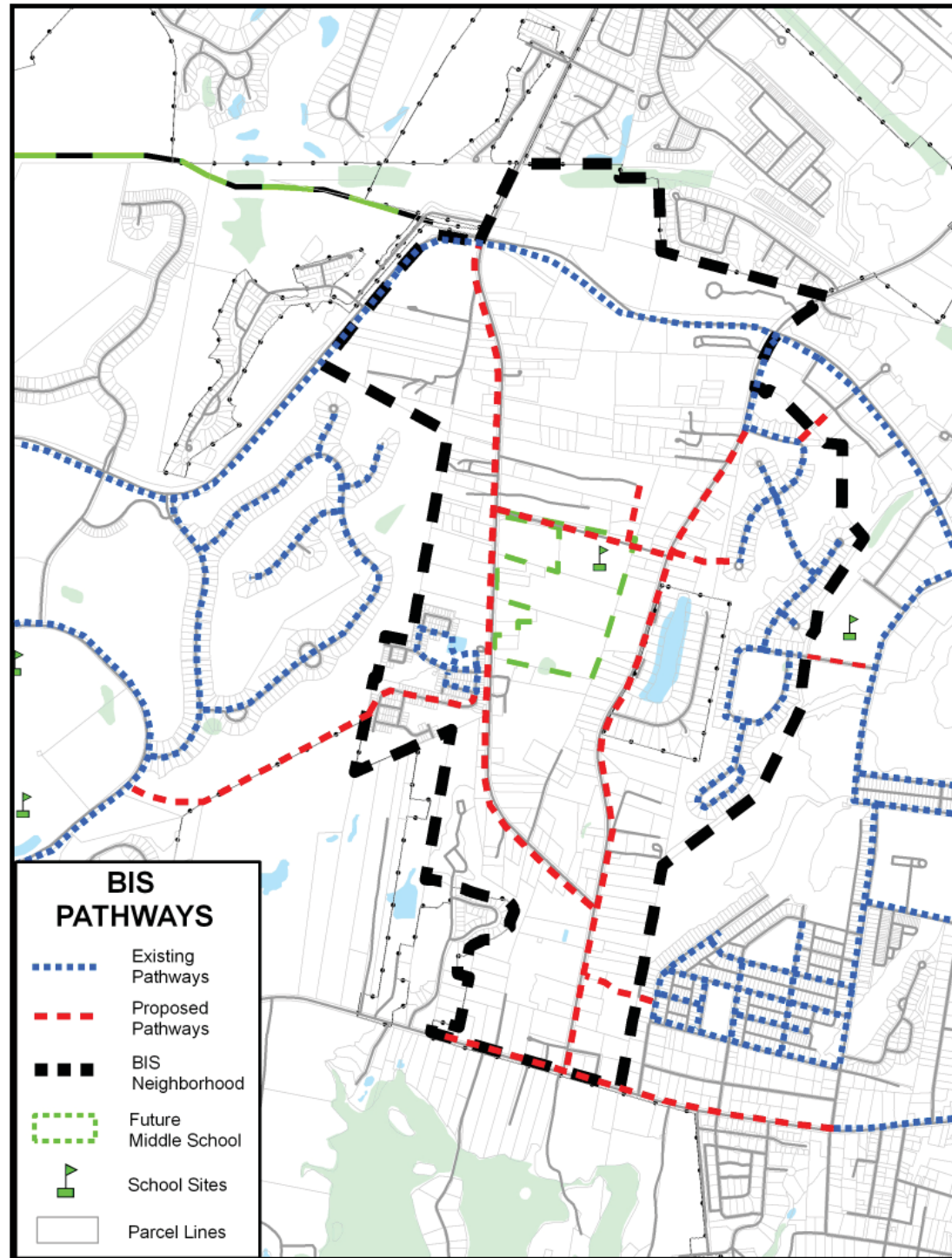


Figure 104: Pathways in and around the BIS Neighborhood.

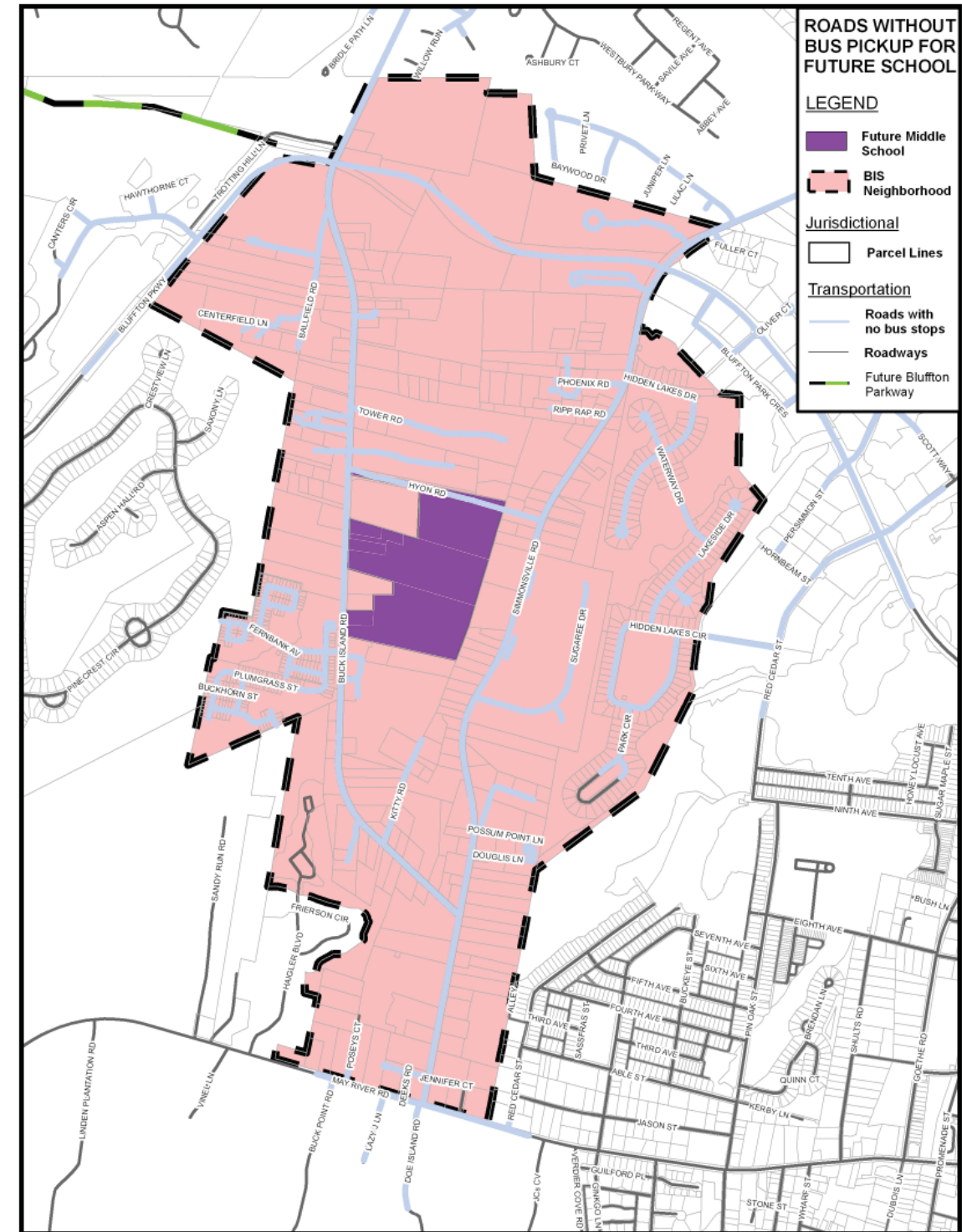


Figure 105: BCSD policy does not provide for bus service within 1.5 miles of a school if sidewalks and other safety considerations are in place.

03-05-2009 DRAFT



**public transit**

The Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority (LRTA), established in 1978 under the Regional Transportation Authority Law, provides transit service for people commuting to various jobs on Hilton Head Island and points in between. Additional services provided by LRTA include Medicaid transportation, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) transportation, vanpooling, and human service agency transportation. The public busing system established is called the Palmetto Breeze.

Today, Palmetto Breeze provides an alternate mode of transportation. It provides fixed route and demand response or “dial-a-ride” services, where patrons can call and schedule to be picked up and dropped off at various locations. Additionally, riders may flag-down a bus at any time, giving people more access to bus service than the typical transit system. Additional transportation services include contract services with various social welfare service agencies and resort hotels and a medical transportation service which utilizes volunteer drivers.

Route 503 runs through the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood, and Route 308 stops at Resort Services, Inc., where an estimated 20 to 30 people regularly use Palmetto Breeze for their transportation to and from work. Some common stops in the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood area include:

- Roses Day Care—Buck Island Road
- Resort Services Inc.— Buck Island Road
- Bluffton Eagle Field— Buck Island Road
- Vista View Apartments— Haigler Boulevard

As demand increases over time through increases in ridership, Palmetto Breeze can adapt and add stops where needed to serve the community.



Figure 106: Palmetto Breeze buses

03-05-2009 DRAFT

**traffic & transportation recommendations**

Create better street signage for road identification	TOB, BC
Provide streetscaped entry ways into the BIS Neighborhood (Buck Island from May River to Simmonsville, Simmonsville from Bluffton Parkway to Hidden Lakes, and Buck Island from Bluffton Parkway to Ballfield)	TOB, NO
Enforce maintenance standards for private roads to ensure EMS efficient access and proper stormwater management	TOB, BC
Conduct quarterly detailed traffic counts on Buck Island and Simmonsville to monitor changes resulting from school, traffic calming, and other road improvements	TOB
Ensure interconnectivity by extending Box Elder between Hidden Lakes and Red Cedar Elementary	TOB
Determine a pathway phasing plan in conjunction with sewer and school project and adopt in CIP, as well as establish a pathways phasing plan for the remaining portions of BIS that include financing options (including SCDOT, impact fees, CIP, and other funding sources).	TOB, PO, BCSD
Acquire sewer and pathway easements for construction	TOB, PO, BCSD
Establish an annual maintenance budget for pathways	TOB
Install a roundabout or signal at Buck Island Rd and May River Rd intersection	BC, TOB
Install a roundabout at Buck Island Rd and Simmonsville Rd intersection	BC, TOB
Adopt an interconnectivity ordinance to address pathway easement acquisition and vehicular connections	TOB
Restrict truck traffic on Buck Island and Simmonsville	TOB

**KEY:**

AC-Advisory Committee; BC-Beaufort County; BCSD-Beaufort County School District; NO-Neighborhood Organization; PO-Property Owners; SCDOT-SC Department of Transportation; TOB-Town of Bluffton

## chapter 8: public safety

**police**

Currently the Bluffton Police Department has a department of 38 staff. During each shift there is at least one officer assigned to each district and one officer who is able to assist each district as needed.

Based on data received from the Police Department, there were 847 calls for service within the BIS Neighborhood from January 1, 2008 to October 6, 2008. These calls for service were for Buck Island Road, Simmonsville Road, Wellstone, and Hidden Lakes. There were 429 total offenses for these areas in the same time frame.

The Bluffton Police Department responds to a variety of types of service calls. They respond to alarm calls, including both residential and business alarm activations. They also respond to vehicle collisions, noise complaints, and other disturbances. Disturbances include calls for disorderly conduct and other general behavioral issues that do not necessarily result in criminal charges. They also respond to calls for Domestic Disputes and other Criminal Domestic Violence cases. Domestic Disputes do not result in criminal charges, while Criminal Domestic Violence cases do result in criminal charges.

The top five types of crimes in the Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood have been identified as:

- Assault and Battery, including Criminal Domestic Violence, and any other physical disturbance calls. The statistics combined both Simple Assault & Battery and Assault & Battery that may involve a weapon (High and Aggravated).
- Vandalism, including fired gun shots.
- Larceny, including thefts, illegal use of credit cards, and financial frauds.
- Unlawful Communication, including phone and internet based harassment complaints.
- Burglary.

In the meetings and discussions that have taken place with community residents, the issue of Criminally Reckless Behavior was the number one issue that made the residents feel unsafe. Drugs, potential gang activity, alcohol, and gun culture are the issues that are causing fear for the residents of BIS.

Specifically, the residents have voiced concerns about:

- Drugs
- General Disturbances
- Traffic concerns (speeding, reckless, DUI, crashes)
- Property Crimes
- Alcohol Crimes

A large percentage of the criminal activities that take place can be linked to drug-related crimes. Many arrests that were made in burglary cases were found to have drug connections. Many of the disturbances, particularly shots fired or shooting complaints, were concentrated in areas with high drug activity.

Much of the information gathered through interviews by law enforcement closely aligns with the concerns of BIS Neighborhood residents. Officers specifically spoke about the drug culture that has invaded the BIS area and the fear that it causes among the majority of residents. The officers mentioned that the jurisdictional holes cause a problem in policing because many of the criminals escape into those areas or come from those areas. In addition they mention poorly marked roads and dirt paths as areas that are difficult and dangerous for police to access.

Quality policing requires a strong partnership between police and the communities they serve. It is critical that regions or areas develop advisory groups to help police address specific issues. This group would help identify issues and communicate with affected citizens.



Figure 107: Police presence is a major factor in reducing crime.



Figure 108: Police officers on bicycles can access more areas than those in cars.





Figure 109-111: After school activities are proven to keep kids safe and offer educational opportunities.

The long term plan for the Bluffton Police Department calls for the establishment of a neighborhood services/community services division. This division would be responsible for working hand in hand with neighborhoods to eliminate long standing or complicated problems. Some of the services offered would be residential safety checks, the establishment of a crime free housing zone (this technique is used widely in Savannah, GA with great success), provide crime prevention assistance, and would provide continuity to the neighborhood organization. The BIS Neighborhood should be the first zone to receive a neighborhood services officer.

The Bluffton Police Department has relied on the Beaufort County Drug Task Force for its drug operations for over three years. While some impact has been made, it is critical that the Town's Police Department assume responsibility for this function and focus its efforts on assisting Town residents. The department has established the Problem Solving Team to begin tackling this effort. The team will focus on the elimination of areas where drugs, drug dealers, and drug users feel safe in conducting their illicit activities. The team will also look to partner with other entities that may assist in this task. Finally, the drug enforcement plan for the BIS Neighborhood should be reviewed with the above mentioned committee so that all citizens are aware of the Police Department's activities.

It has been shown that an area which appears to be abandoned or rundown attracts a criminal element. This theory is commonly called the "broken windows" theory. It is critical that the BIS Neighborhood clean up and remove all debris, trash, abandoned vehicles, and dilapidated residences. Once criminals realize that this area is valued and cared for, they will understand they cannot hide there.

The police department believes that the new middle school will provide a good opportunity to establish after school programs that keep kids safe and engaged. Studies have shown areas with boys and girls clubs, police athletic leagues, and other safe education based programs have significantly lower violent crime numbers than similar areas without those programs. It is a matter of public safety priority to provide places and activities for juveniles, so that they do not fall prey to criminals.

On a number of occasions, officers' response to criminal activity has been delayed due to poorly marked roads in the BIS Neighborhood. In addition to poorly marked roads, there is a series of unnamed and unmapped dirt paths that allow criminals avenues of travel outside of public view.

The rate of traffic crashes in the BIS Neighborhood is quite high, and Simmonsville Road was recently cited in a state report as one of the deadliest roads.

The Bluffton Police Department must develop traffic control strategies that include aggressive enforcement but also some traffic calming measures to decrease speeding violations along thoroughfares. This is essential with the opening of the new middle school. Unfortunately, the narrow road and lack of shoulders do not lend themselves to traditional traffic enforcement so alternate strategies should be developed. These could include the use of bikes or motorcycles to monitor speed.

Crime typically occurs in the dark, making it critical to get adequate street lighting on Buck Island and Simmonsville roads. This will not only make the area less inviting for criminal activity, but the lighting will increase traffic safety. This could be incorporated with the sewer and pathways projects as each phase is completed.



Figure 112: Police also help at traffic accidents.



**fire**

The study area is within the service coverage jurisdiction of two fire stations, each with varying response times and dispatch personnel. The response times listed below are given from the shortest time it takes a responder to reach a point of access within the Buck Island Simmonsville (BIS) Neighborhood to the longest time it may take for a responder to reach the approximate point of transition:

- Station 30 (located at the corner of Burnt Church Road and Bridge Street): Dispatch of Engine 320 – Response time: 3-7 minutes
- Station 35 (located along Highway 278): Dispatch of Engine 325, Truck Company 275, service/support unit, and Battalion Chief – Response time: 4-7 minutes

The fire department is operating under an ISO classification of 3 for locations within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant for the Neighborhood. ISO classifications measure a community’s ability to provide public protection in the event of a fire, with a scale ranging from Class 1 (exemplary public protection) to Class 10 (fire-suppression program does not meet ISO minimum standards).

Specifically focusing on the BIS Neighborhood, local fire officials have taken note of several complications and issues that are currently impeding the department’s efforts to provide the most complete fire coverage possible for the area. The department has found that the Neighborhood possesses a large amount of unimproved, narrow driveways with numerous potholes, ruts, and other problems that make it either very difficult or nearly impossible to operate a fire apparatus. Many of these driveways were allowed through the subdivision of land parcels under the purview of Beaufort County.

As a result of these subdivisions, many structures do not have a posted address and street lighting has been noted as being inadequate in locations, making it difficult for responders to locate a property in the event of an emergency. Fire officials also cite the presence of deep drainage ditches along roadways and within property boundaries as factors that restrict their ability to properly attack a growing fire situation and access buildings. Piles of debris and abandoned vehicles located throughout the Neighborhood also impede the department’s ability to fight fires and can become fire hazards in and of themselves



Figure 113: Bluffton fire station

<b>public safety recommendations</b>	Decrease the speed limit on Buck Island Rd and Simmonsville Rd to 35mph	SCDOT, TOB
	Utilize speed monitors to create driver awareness of posted speed limits	TOB
	Evaluate the use of bicycle and motorcycle officers to enforce speed limit (lack of shoulder for traditional enforcement)	TOB
	Ensure that the Bluffton Middle School and Eagles Field are built/redeveloped with CPTED strategies	TOB
	Provide free exterior lights or motion detectors to residents	TOB
	Addresses on all structures for EMS	TOB
	Establish a neighborhood public safety advisory committee	TOB, NO
	Establish a Neighborhood Services Division	TOB
	Establish a Drug Enforcement Plan	TOB
	Assist in the creation of after-school programs (seed money)	NO, BCSD
	Map and sign all pathways and roads	TOB
Install street lighting on Buck Island Rd and Simmonsville Rd	SCDOT, TOB	

**KEY:**  
 AC-Advisory Committee; BC-Beaufort County; BCSD-Beaufort County School District; NO-Neighborhood Organization; PO-Property Owners; SC-DOT-SC Department of Transportation; TOB-Town of Bluffton



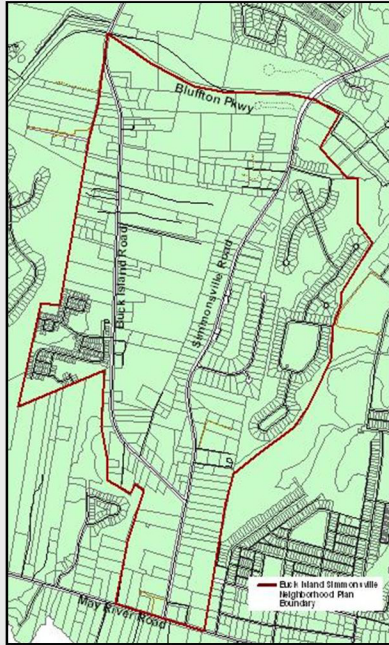
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# APPENDICES



**BUCK ISLAND ROAD AND SIMMONSVILLE ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD  
COMMUNITY PROFILE SHEET\***

**BUCK ISLAND ROAD AND SIMMONSVILLE ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD  
COMMUNITY PROFILE SHEET\***



**BACKGROUND HISTORY**

- Annexed into the Town on December 29, 2005.
- 473 Parcels were annexed through the BIS annexation process.
- The boundaries for the neighborhood planning area are: to the north, Bluffton Parkway, Simmons ville Road to the East, Buck Island Road to the west and May River Road to the south. (The current neighborhood planning area does not include entire annexation area).

**Existing Conditions**

Population

- According to the 2000 Census, approximately 1,492 people reside within the entire Buck Island/Simmons ville Road annexation area. (Source: 2000 Census).
- The population is 53.5 percent non-white, compared with a non-white population of 36.8 percent for the town as a whole. (Source: 2000 Census).
- The average number of persons per housing unit within the annexation area, or average household size is 3.05, compared with the current Town household size of 2.68. (Source: 2000 Census).

Land Use

- Predominantly residential in nature.
- Some commercial and light industrial developments also exist in the community.
- The residential communities of Hidden Lakes, Windy Lakes and Wellstone are within the community and are Planned Unit Developments. These three communities will not be included in the planning area, although residents will be informed of meetings and welcome to participate.

Housing

- 311 properties were surveyed during February and March 2008.
- 268 residential properties in the area were surveyed and 15 commercial.
- Main purpose of the inventory was to verify addresses for the local census update.
- There were a total of 92 single family detached homes inventoried and two (2) single family attached.
- Mobile homes are the most common homes within the area, occupying over 56% of the properties in the area.
- Of the 174 mobile homes in the subject area, 34 appear to be either in fair or unsafe condition, 17 of those are believed to be currently occupied.

Transportation

- Road network within the area consists of mostly state roads with road maintenance provided by SCDOT. There are also a few county roads and private roads in the community.
- Existing roads are two lane roads and are heavily traveled by both pedestrians and vehicles. Speed limits are as follows:

Buck Island Road	40MPH
Simmons ville Road	40MPH
Bluffton Parkway	45MPH
May River Road	30MPH

- Limited number of sidewalks available or pedestrian connections, which make travel for pedestrians unsafe.
- 2007 Traffic Volumes (Average Annual Daily Traffic)

Buck Island Road from SC 46 to Simmons ville Road	7,700
Buck Island Road from Simmons ville Road to US 278	3,300
Simmons ville Road from Buck Island Road to US 278	4,400

(Source: SCDOT)

Public Facilities

- Beaufort Jasper Water Sewer Authority provides water and sewer service to town residents.
- Due to the rural nature of some properties in the area, residents currently use a septic system for sewer needs.
- During the community survey, 82% of the properties that were found to have drainage issues were located in the BIS area.

Public Safety

- Currently Bluffton Police Department has a department of 38 staff: one (1) chief of police, two (2) support employees and three (3) part time crossing guards.
- Top five types of crimes in the Buck Island and Simmons ville Road area have been identified as: 1) Domestic, 2) Drugs, 3) Vandalism, 4) Burglary, and 5) Shootings.
- Based on data received from the Police Department, crime during 2007 had declined but rose 10% from January 1, 2008 – March 31, 2008.

\*Inventory gathered for Data Inventory Sheet is a draft and is not finalized.  
Source: Town of Bluffton Planning Growth & Management.



**Buck Island & Simmonsville Roads Neighborhood Plan:**  
 KICK-OFF - COMPILED GROUP SUMMARIES  
**JUNE 2, 2008 - TOWN HALL - 6PM**

**Years of Residency?**

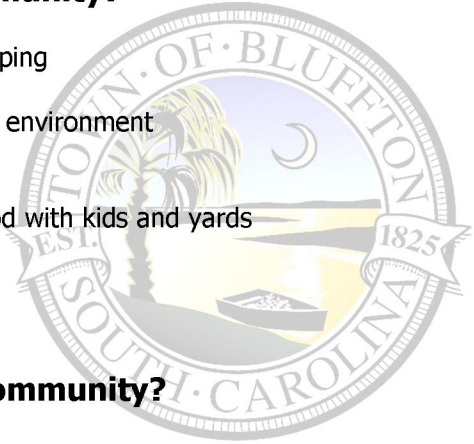
YEARS	NUMBER OF RESIDENTS
1-10	11
10-20	8
20-30	16
30 OR MORE	15
OTHER (OUTSIDE OF AREA)	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>

**What do you like about the community?**

1. Single-family housing (no apartments)
2. Trees and aesthetically pleasing landscaping
3. Peaceful and quiet neighborhood
4. Rural residential setting and low density environment
5. Privacy
6. Quaint character
7. Off Rte. 278, off parkways, neighborhood with kids and yards
8. Space, large lots and houses
9. Location
10. Affordable area

**What do you dislike about the community?**

1. Traffic and congestion
2. Traffic light at Simmonsville and the Bluffton Parkway (going north on Simmonsville, there is no left arrow to turn on the Parkway- dangerous)
3. Trash on streets (especially from vehicles going to the County convenience center)
4. No vegetative buffer around the dump
5. Crime (especially around apartments)
6. Planning geared toward developers
7. Lack of safety at Buck Island and SC 46 intersection
8. No lights
9. Unfinished circle at SC 46 (Bluffton Road) and Bluffton Parkway (out of project area)
10. Clear-cutting
11. New high-impact development
12. Dirt roads – maintenance and condition of existing dirt roads, access to property using dirt roads
13. Drainage problems with dirt roads
14. School and related traffic
15. No sidewalks for pedestrians
16. Run-down condition of Eagles Field
17. Specimen trees being removed.
18. Housing - lack of maintenance, rundown condition, some residences vacant and unoccupied.
20. Proposed school is coming before sidewalks
21. There is hope for Buck Island, but not Simmonsville – Simmonsville Road houses are closer to street, not allowing as much room for widening, sidewalks and turn lanes



**Buck Island & Simmonsville Roads Neighborhood Plan:**  
 KICK-OFF - COMPILED GROUP SUMMARIES  
**JUNE 2, 2008 - TOWN HALL - 6PM**

**dislikes continued -**

22. Town needs to listen to what community wants instead of developers
23. Issues with drainage along roadways when it rains or storms
24. Lack of recreation/open space within the community
25. Litter
26. Lack of enforcement of Town Codes

**Desired Changes you'd like to see in the community?**

1. Maintain low density housing
2. Prevent clear-cutting
3. Ensure landscape buffers, increase width and ensure restoration with existing development and proposed
4. More landscaping and higher percent of open space
5. Housing improvements – improve appearance and maintenance. Clean up abandoned and unsafe housing.
6. Grants and financing for improvements – would like to know what grants, funding mechanisms, cost-sharing, creative financing opportunities, etc. are available to improve housing, run sewer, and pay for other infrastructure needs.
7. Sidewalks
8. Notice about new development in the neighborhood along with an opportunity for input.
9. Improve and upgrade the ballpark. Identify areas for parks and open spaces
10. Trees – preserve
11. Pave the dirt roads
12. Community Center
13. Dog Park
14. Remain residential, no more commercial
15. No more development until roads are widened - Moratorium
16. Town listens to what community wants instead of developers
17. Updated infrastructure - sewer
18. Improve traffic along corridors
19. Litter control
20. Look into programs that deal with property maintenance/up-keep to encourage those that can not afford to do so.
21. Better address or identify affordable housing mechanisms for the community
22. Identify areas for bike paths, sidewalks & signage
23. Sensitive placement/ integration of commercial development within the community
24. Police Department should provide more of a community presence
25. Better enforcement of Town Ordinance
26. Better landscaping of new & existing developments; recycle facility needs better landscaping.
27. Town Services - provide equal services for all residents
28. More traffic lights (timing, safety and reconfiguring)

**Are you planning to stay in the community?**

1. Yes, most participants
2. Yes, more affordable than other areas in the town

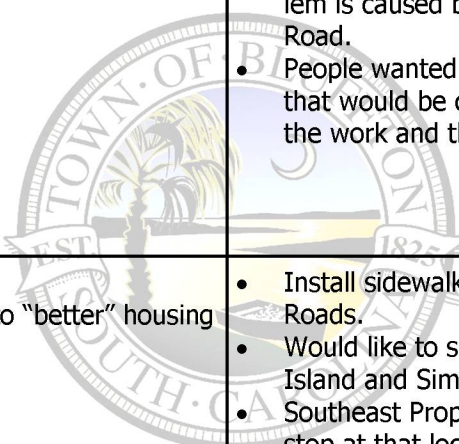




**Buck Island & Simonsville Roads Neighborhood Plan: Workshop I - GROUP VISIONING SUMMARIES**

**JUNE 16, 2008 - OSCAR FRAZIER COMMUNITY CENTER - 6PM**

	<i>LAND USE</i>	<i>HOUSING</i>	<i>TRANSPORTATION</i>	<i>IDENTITY BRANDING*</i>
<b>GROUP I</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the neighborhood residential</li> <li>Maintain current zoning</li> <li>Consider commercial on a case by case basis (suggested only by Paul Hamilton and William Bennett)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist with the physical condition of existing homes</li> <li>Pave streets, create bike paths and parks</li> <li>Mix up the density (low density can create sprawl)</li> <li>Mobile homes are ok; maybe add modular home/small series homes</li> <li>Create residential buffers</li> <li>Create an incentive to hook into sewer for LMI</li> <li>Heirs property; fixed income assistance</li> <li>Create more SF market rate and affordable homes</li> <li>Provide loan interest loans for owner occupation</li> <li>Habitat infill</li> <li>Provide free paint and septic maintenance</li> <li>School traffic is impacting the residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install sidewalks on both Buck Island and Simonsville Roads</li> <li>Would like to see bicycle lanes and/or a pathway along Buck Island and Simonsville Roads (not as much interest compared to sidewalks, but still important).</li> <li>Provide a bicycle lane or path along Hyon Road</li> <li>Southeast Property Development - w/ a proposed gas station, concern expressed about children walking and bicycling down Simonsville Road, to and from school and homes (Need sidewalks and a pathway).</li> <li>Install street lights</li> <li>Install either a traffic signal or roundabout at SR 46 and Buck Island Road. People were concerned about congestion at that intersection and the difficulty of making left turns from Buck Island Road onto SR 46.</li> <li>Concerned about traffic speeding through neighborhood</li> <li>The posted speed limits on both roads are too high; people would like to see them reduced to either 35mph or 40 mph maximum</li> <li>Bluffton Parkway &amp; Goethe Road – difficulty making left turns from Goethe Road onto Bluffton Parkway, part of this problem is caused by traffic using the roundabout at Bluffton Road.</li> <li>People wanted to know about the proposed improvements that would be constructed as part of the school, the scope of the work and the schedule.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gateways                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locations                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May River Rd &amp; Buck Island Rd</li> <li>Buck Island Rd &amp; Bluffton Parkway</li> <li>Simonsville Rd &amp; Bluffton Parkway</li> <li>Split of Buck Island Rd &amp; Simonsville Rd</li> </ul> </li> <li>Most Important Gateway: Buck Island Rd &amp; Bluffton Pkwy                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong need to enhance the ball field since it is the main gateway</li> <li>All groups agreed this is the main gateway</li> </ul> </li> <li>BIS is a gateway to Old Town Bluffton</li> <li>Gateway Improvements                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bellfield enhancements</li> <li>Screen Dump</li> <li>Streetscape extended to BIS neighborhood</li> <li>Better Signage to identify the roads</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Neighborhoods within the BIS area                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few residents named Wellstone, Windy Lakes, &amp; Hidden Lakes. Most agreed there are no neighborhoods within the neighborhood. Only parcels defined by Family names, but they are all one family/neighborhood.</li> <li>No need to rename/brand Buck Island Simonsville Community (unanimous)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Miscellaneous Facts                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simonsville Rd named after property owner William (Billy) Simmons</li> <li>Buck Island Rd named after Buck Island Plantation where many families were employed in the past</li> <li>Laundry facility might not be beautiful but is very important to the community due to the number of jobs it provides</li> <li>Community members interested in working with school to hold annual gathering to raise money to be used within the community for improvements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>GROUP II</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the neighborhood residential</li> <li>Improve roads</li> <li>Maintain current zoning</li> <li>Keep the neighborhood family-oriented</li> <li>Acquire land for open space and recreation</li> <li>Visually buffer county dump</li> <li>Consider transportation before any development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waive the mobile home impact fee</li> <li>Provide incentives to get residents into "better" housing</li> <li>Provide housing improvement funds</li> <li>Remove junk</li> <li>Offer grants and loans</li> <li>Offer tax incentives/rebates</li> <li>Elderly and long-term residents are a priority</li> <li>Get renters into their own home</li> <li>Section 8 is ok for SF homes</li> <li>No more density</li> <li>Provide sewer fee assistance</li> <li>Provide more detached SF homes</li> <li>Improve Eagles Field; provide a park at Buck Island &amp; Simonsville Road</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install sidewalks on both Buck Island and Simonsville Roads.</li> <li>Would like to see bicycle lanes and/or a pathway along Buck Island and Simonsville Roads.</li> <li>Southeast Property Development – would like to see a bus stop at that location.</li> <li>Would like to see LRTA use the smaller buses and have more stops in the neighborhood.</li> <li>Install street lighting</li> <li>Install either a traffic signal or roundabout at SR 46 and Buck Island Road. As in Group 1, people were concerned about congestion at that intersection and the difficulty of making left turns from Buck Island Road onto SR 46.</li> <li>Concerned about traffic speeding through neighborhood</li> <li>The posted speed limits on both roads are too high; people would like to see them reduced to either 35mph or 40 mph maximum.</li> <li>Bluffton Parkway &amp; Goethe Road – difficulty making left turns from Goethe Road onto Bluffton Parkway, part of this problem is caused by traffic using the roundabout at Bluffton Road.</li> <li>Build new road south of Centerfield Road</li> <li>People wanted to know about the proposed improvements that would be constructed as part of the school, the scope of the work and the schedule.</li> </ul>	<p>*All four groups are summarized as one due to the responses being so similar for every group.</p>



**Buck Island & Simmonsville Roads Neighborhood Plan: Workshop I - GROUP VISIONING SUMMARIES**

**JUNE 16, 2008 - OSCAR FRAZIER COMMUNITY CENTER - 6PM**

	<i>LAND USE</i>	<i>HOUSING</i>	<i>TRANSPORTATION</i>	<i>IDENTITY BRANDING</i>
<b>GROUP III</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure compatibility between future land uses and zoning (especially between the school and Southeastern Property)</li> <li>• Improve roads</li> <li>• Protect home based business and ensure legal continuation of existing businesses</li> <li>• No additional gas stations</li> <li>• Commercial north of Southeastern Properties (Renty Kitty)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are too many apartments-too much density</li> <li>• Provide affordable housing</li> <li>• No mixed-income (the upper income residents push the lower income residents out)</li> <li>• Provide down payment assistance to get people into their own homes</li> <li>• Section 8 for SF, but not MF (no more Bluffton House examples)</li> <li>• Stabilize existing income base</li> <li>• Install a police substation</li> <li>• JV with property owner &amp; small developer for infill, including JV commercial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install sidewalks on both Buck Island and Simmonsville Roads.</li> <li>• Want pathways and NOT bicycle lanes on Buck Island and Simmonsville</li> <li>• Install street lights</li> <li>• Install either a traffic signal or roundabout at SR 46 and Buck Island Road. People were concerned about congestion at that intersection and the difficulty of making left turns from Buck Island Road onto SR 46.</li> <li>• Concerned about traffic speeding through neighborhood.</li> <li>• The posted speed limits on both roads are too high; people want to see them reduced; traffic speeding problems.</li> <li>• People wanted to know about the proposed improvements that would be constructed as part of the school, SED, the scope of the work and the schedule.</li> <li>• Bluffton Parkway and Buck Island/Simmonsville Road intersections – problems making left turns from the side streets onto the Parkway (poor sight distance).</li> <li>• Traffic signal timing for left turns needs from the Parkway onto the side streets needs to be checked.</li> <li>• Add roundabouts to SR 46/Buck Island Road and to Buck Island/Simmonsville Road intersection.</li> <li>• Check street curvature - difficulty seeing around curves.</li> <li>• Widen the streets sparingly</li> </ul>	
<b>GROUP IV</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new commercial development (because of property tax hikes)</li> <li>• Improve roads</li> <li>• Upgrade and enhance community- housing rehab and restoration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No more apartments</li> <li>• SF affordable</li> <li>• Modular homes are ok</li> <li>• Provide repair assistance</li> <li>• Long standing residents are a priority/provide subsidies on a need basis</li> <li>• Emphasize owner occupation</li> <li>• Provide tax rebates</li> <li>• Promote assistance to neighborhood</li> <li>• Assist with septic maintenance</li> <li>• Stabilize existing income base</li> <li>• Clean up existing property/remove junk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install sidewalks on both Buck Island and Simmonsville Roads.</li> <li>• Want pathways and/or bicycle lanes on Buck Island and Simmonsville</li> <li>• Install street lights</li> <li>• Install either a traffic signal or roundabout at SR 46 and Buck Island Road. People were concerned about congestion at that intersection and the difficulty of making left turns from Buck Island Road onto SR 46.</li> <li>• Concerned about traffic speeding through neighborhood</li> <li>• The posted speed limits on both roads are too high; people want to see them reduced; traffic speeding problems.</li> <li>• People wanted to know about the proposed improvements that would be constructed as part of the school, SED, the scope of the work and the schedule.</li> <li>• Add roundabouts to SR 46/Buck Island Road</li> <li>• Add connecting streets near the Parkway</li> <li>• Add street furniture, benches</li> <li>• How will drainage be handled?</li> </ul>	





## Workshop II & III Follow Up

### Infrastructure—Roads, Sewer, Sidewalks

- Q. Will a new road be constructed using utility easement from Bluffton Parkway to go south to the school?**
- A. The current entrances to the middle school site have been approved by the county and state DOT agencies. The District does not believe a single entrance along the route discussed to be a practical solution. In addition to the land purchase that would be required, this solution would provide only a single entry point for the school site.
- Q. How much of an easement will be necessary for installing the sewer?**
- A. Tentatively about a 20 foot easement.
- Q. Will there be only one (1) lift station?**
- A. Yes and it will be sized to accommodate the entire lengths of Buck Island/Simmonville Rd.
- Q. Have we identified easement areas?**
- A. The town has identified 23 easements. There will be a workshop with the community in the future to discuss these easements.
- Q. Should parental traffic be moved to Simmonsville Rd because it's closer to the actual school area? What about school buses? Can decision be changed?**
- A. School will be submitting to SCDOT for review by their Traffic Engineering office in Columbia. There are state guidelines that must be followed regarding turn lanes, bus traffic, and other traffic to make sure it's constructed safely and correctly. If the plans are approved by SCDOT, then the school applies for an Encroachment Permit.
- Q. Is the sidewalk on Hwy 46 & Buck Island going to service the school?**
- A. The sidewalk will stop at the parkway. To connect the existing sidewalks someone would need to apply for an Encroachment Permit. The Town would have to build the sidewalk and apply for the encroachment permit.
- Q. What about bicycle lanes? Are there going to be bicycle lanes for the middle school students to use? Would the town purchase property for pathways to connect pathways to thoroughfares and provide safe ways for children and avoid traffic congestion?**
- A. The SCDOT has no plans to widen Buck Island Road or Simmonsville Road beyond the Bluffton Parkway. Therefore SCDOT will not be pursuing any bicycle lanes for those facilities at this time.
- Q. Is there a road or public access through Hidden Lakes for access to the school?**
- A. A public access connection as part of the overall approval of the master plan is proposed thru the neighborhoods; plans go back to 1985. The Initial Master Plan for Bluffton Park and Hidden Lakes were designed for interconnectivity and planned for the community before the school.

- Q. Studies have shown that wider roads (designed to SCDOT standards) always encourage higher speeds despite posted speed limits. Will this not increase the danger to pedestrians and residents in this area?**

A. SCDOT adheres to widely accepted design and construction guidelines on its facilities. These guidelines take into account safety of motorists and pedestrians and efficiency of the facility. The portion of Simmonsville Road that is being widened will have 11' travel lanes which is a foot narrower than the common 12' travel lane most commonly seen.

- Q. It's difficult to make left turns off of Bluffton Parkway onto Burnt Church Rd. Will there be a signal prior to the extension of Bluffton Parkway?**

A. A signal is currently being installed and should be finished in the next couple months. When the parkway is extended, the light will be modified accordingly.

- Q. It's difficult to make left turns off of the parkway onto both Buck Island and Simmonsville Roads. Are there any proposed signal modifications?**

A. Signal modifications are proposed to add left turn arrows and to protect the left turns. This may be done in conjunction with some proposed developments coming into town on the corners.

- Q. Is Simmonsville Rd going to be widened and will a traffic light be added?**

A. To date no other traffic improvements are proposed.

- Q. The concrete curbing on the side of the road makes it difficult to get broke down vehicles off safely. Can this be changed?**

A. Vertical face curbing is used for drainage; urban vs. rural section does not have curbing. SCDOT does not use vertical face or roll back but use a 45 degree mountable curbing along bike lanes so people can "bail out". This option will be used on Simmonsville Rd.

- Q. When do you expect to begin the future expansion of Bluffton Parkway to the bridge?**

A. The right of way acquisition will begin in the fall and construction is expected to begin in the fall of 2009.

- Q. What is the status of the roundabout on 46? What's its time frame?**

A. Construction of the roundabout will be a part of the widening of Highway 46. It will be a two lane roundabout.

- Q. Will there be a multi-use pathway connecting to the school? Bicycle lanes?**

A. A 5 foot sidewalk on the school property will be provided; school cannot afford to do both. The sidewalk will be on one side of the road.

### Middle School

- Q. When will construction on the school begin?**

A. Construction is expected to begin early August.

- Q. What is the length of the left turn lane?**

A. The length of the turn lane will be dictated by DOT. The turn lane may possibly be 300 feet?

**Q. When is the school expected to open?**

A. The construction will take about 18 months and is expected to open mid-year in 2010.

**Q. What will be the start time of the school? Will it be later because studies have shown middle schoolers need more sleep?**

A. No calendar or schedule has been established for the school.

**Q. Will the school cause the traffic problems that MC Riley has caused?**

A. Traffic studies have been prepared and reviewed by the Town and County for this project site.

**Q. A lot of wetland areas exist on the property, is there room for outdoor activity?**

A. A ball field, playfield, tennis courts are all proposed.

**Q. Why did the school choose this site?**

A. It is located in the center of where the students are. 12 sites were considered, but this was the one that provided adequate area. 45 acres were needed for the school.

**Q. Why build one big school on 45 acres? Why not build smaller schools, 5 schools on 9 acres and include them into neighborhoods?**

A. State dictates what you must have, parking, fields, separate areas for buses and cars. Most of the acreage is for parking and fields.

**Q. How will bus traffic and parental traffic be circulated? Which roads will be used?**

A. The school has not made a final decision on this yet. They will separate bus and parental traffic, but allow traffic to use both Buck Island and Simmonsville Roads to disperse it better.

**Q. Will the school cause drainage problems for the surrounding residents?**

A. All Stormwater designs must be approved by several government agencies including the Town of Bluffton. The approved Stormwater plans for the school included a review of the pre-development versus post-development peak runoff rate to prevent downstream flooding. No issues should be created as a part of the construction.

**Q. Will the school recreational facilities or playfields be available for community use?**

A. The school will work with the community for joint use like any other school.

**Police Department****Q. Where are calls for service concentrated?**

- A. They vary by grid, but there are 3 top calls for service.
1. Traffic Related Calls
  2. Disorderly Conduct (fights, drinking, etc)
  3. Domestic Violence

**Q. What does a resident do when a resident calls and is treated unfairly or there is a lack of service?**

- A. A resident may file a complaint in a number of ways. They may file a complaint online, come to the police station, or call chief on his cell phone. The police department is using several new methods to prevent poor service. Methods include:
1. Early warning software - logs all calls about an officer (good and bad) and sends an alert when necessary
  2. A brochure will be given to every person who calls for service. The brochure will include a returnable survey about service.
  3. Supervisors will randomly choose 5 people a month to call to survey about their call for service.

**Q. Are employees of the police department subject to random drug tests?**

A. Yes, the police department just signed with Dr's Care to conduct drug tests. At this time all employees will be tested at the same time.

**Q. What is the time frame to start a neighborhood watch program?**

A. It is a national program and the local accreditation will be complete in January. The residents will need to be trained prior to the actual start of the program locally. If interested, residents should contact Sergeant Norberg.

**Q. What are the plans for controlling drug trafficking locally?**

A. Drug trafficking is tracked and processed by the Beaufort County Sheriff Department. Our town police department can work to make it difficult for local drug houses to conduct business. They may be cited for traffic, loud noise, etc.

**Q. How can we keep kids involved, educated, and out of trouble?**

A. There is a program called Explorer Post. 30 kids have graduated and we are working on an incentives program to keep them involved. The department is also working on a new program for classroom guidance for juniors and seniors. The final method at this time is to work on a youth core initiative/alternative for troubled youth. This would give alternatives without taking away all of their rights during the first offense.



## Building Safety

Safe Home Program: Comprehensive, hurricane & severe storm damage mitigation program (www.scsafehome.com) provides -\$25 inspections through grants (would typically cost \$150)

Eligible homes - homes under \$300,000 in value

Homes between \$150,000- \$300,000 in value would get matching funds for up to \$5,000

Homes under \$150,000 in value would get up to \$5,000 towards repairs

Requirements for inspection:

Resident of the town

Home must be owner-occupied

Home valued under \$300,000

Current on taxes

Proof of insurance

**Q. Could the town host a community information workshop or education classes?**

A. The town cannot assist the resident on the grant application, but can speak with a resident about the program.

**Q. Are there any circumstances where the fee for the inspection is waived?**

A. Not at this time. Council has already approved to waive \$125 of the fee. The inspection requires 1 hour to complete as well as a 7 page in office report.

### SPEAKER CONTACT INFO.

Frank Hodge  
Director  
Building Safety Department, Town of Bluffton  
706 - 4523

Bob Fletcher  
Director  
Engineering Support Services, Town of Bluffton  
706 - 4535

Jeff McNesby  
Director  
Department of Environmental Protection, Town of Bluffton  
706 - 4594

Colin Kinton  
Beaufort County Traffic & Transportation Engineer  
470-2631

John Boylston  
South Carolina  
Department Of Transportation  
803-737-1527

Chris Poe, PE  
Facilities Planning & Construction  
Beaufort County School District  
322-0783

Colonel David McAllister  
Chief of Police  
Bluffton Police Department  
706 - 4550



PUBLIC MEETING WORKSHOP IV  
 Consolidated List of Priorities  
*(Taken from Kick-Off Meeting & Public Workshop I)*

RANK	PRIORITY IDENTIFIED
1	Install sidewalks/Pathways on Buck Island Road & Simmonsville Road
2	Make sewer improvements on Buck Island Road & Simmonsville Road
3	Improve drainage along Buck Island Road & Simmonsville Road
4	Provide for recreational facilities and/or establish partnerships with existing facilities
5	Install a left turn signal at northbound Buck Island & Parkway & Simmonsville Road & Parkway
6	Reduce speed limit on Buck Island road to 35MPH
7	Coordinate with Eagles owners to improve the ballfield's appearance
8	Establish a Neighborhood Watch Program
9	Make streetscape improvements along Buck Island Road & Simmonsville Road to include landscaping, benches & street lighting and a turn lane and/or landscaped median.

10	Landscape & screen Bluffton Recycle Center
11	Install a traffic signal or traffic circle at 46 & Buck Island to improve current & future traffic pattern(s)
12	Install a police substation
13	Create better street signage for road identification
14	Install a traffic circle at the Buck Island & Simmonsville Road intersections
15	Identify & create community identification/gateway signage at community entrance(s)
16	Establish a Litter Control/Adopt-A-Highway program



## Summary of Community Survey Results As Of August 19, 2008

➔ 96 surveys received as of August 19, 2008

➔ 26 people live in actual plan area (others in Wellstone, Hidden Lakes, & Windy Lakes)

➔ Length of time in community?

- ◆ Less than 6 months – 2
- ◆ 1-5 years – 57
- ◆ 6-10 years – 7
- ◆ 11-20 years – 14
- ◆ 21-40 years – 7
- ◆ 41+ years – 7

➔ Top 3 "likes"

- ◆ Proximity/Location – 21
- ◆ Friendly – 17
- ◆ Quiet/Peacefulness – 15

➔ Top 3 "dislikes"

- ◆ Uncleanly – 21
- ◆ Traffic/Road Conditions – 20
- ◆ Lack of Sidewalks/Bike Path – 9
- ◆ Run Down - 9

➔ Top 3 Changes

- ◆ Bikepaths/Sidewalks – 12
- ◆ Clean Up – 11
- ◆ More Security/Greater Police Involvement – 8

➔ Other

- ◆ 48 want more recreational facilities
- ◆ 31 walk/cycle at least once a week
- ◆ 71 Plan to stay in community
- ◆ Many mentioned they don't walk/cycle because of danger or lack of sidewalks, but would if they were available.
- ◆ Many don't want additional subdivisions because they feel there is enough housing and traffic as is.
- ◆ Many want to see a dog park in the community.

Town of Bluffton  
Buck Island/Simmonsville  
Community Survey



1. You are a (please circle one):
  - a. Homeowner
  - b. Land Owner (vacant land)
  - c. Renter
  - d. Business Owner
  - e. Landlord
  - f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
2. If you answered "Other" to question #1, what is your connection to or role in the community?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. If you are a resident of the community, what street do you live on?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If you are a business-owner in the community, what street is your business on?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. If you are a business owner, do you also live in the community? YES NO
6. If you are a property owner in the community, where is your property located?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How long have you lived in or been a part of the community? Check one.  
 \_\_\_ less than 6 months \_\_\_ 1 to 5 years \_\_\_ 6 to 10 years  
 \_\_\_ 11 to 20 years \_\_\_ 21 to 40 years \_\_\_ 41 or more years
8. What do you like about your community? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
9. What would you like to stay the same about your community? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
10. What don't you like about your community? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



Dear Buck Island Simmonsville (BIS) property owner,

Below is a list of the top recommendations for the neighborhood which were discussed at the recent January 13<sup>th</sup> BIS Neighborhood Plan meeting. These recommendations and your ranking of each is very important to the Town's upcoming budget process so please take the time and rank the recommendations based on their order of importance to you, a Buck Island Simmonsville property owner.

Town staff will tabulate the priorities and present the final rankings. We will post on the Town's website and present at the February 3<sup>rd</sup> Planning Commission-Town Council Workshop. These rankings will assist the Town in determining which projects are funding priorities for your neighborhood.

The complete Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan can be found on the Town's home page: [www.townofbluffton.com](http://www.townofbluffton.com) (click the BIS link in the lower left hand corner). The draft Neighborhood Plan also contains a complete list of all recommendations put forth by the community (see page 60).

**Please return this completed form with your rankings and any comments on the plan by January 30, 2009.**

***Please note there are two pages to the ranking survey!***

Drop off:  
 Town Hall-Planning  
 20 Bridge Street  
 Mondays-Thursdays 8:00 am – 5:30 pm  
 Fridays 8:00 am – 1:00pm

Fax:  
 Planning & Growth Management Department  
 843-706-4515

Mail:  
 Town of Bluffton  
 Planning-BIS Neighborhood Plan  
 20 Bridge Street  
 Bluffton, SC 29910

Email: [KWoodruff@townofbluffton.com](mailto:KWoodruff@townofbluffton.com)

**PLEASE RANK EACH RECOMMENDATION  
 1 BEING TOP PRIORITY AND ENDING WITH 19.**

<b>Rank 1-19</b>	<b>COMMUNITY-BASED &amp; TOWN-BASED INITIATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
	Develop working groups for each of the BIS Neighborhood Plan elements (i.e. Public Safety, Traffic & Transportation, Community Development)
	Hold a public meeting every 3 months to review and discuss BIS Neighborhood Plan implementation status
	Establish BIS as Town's first official Neighborhood Organization; consider utilizing the Bluffton Area Community Association as Neighborhood Organization
	Develop a BIS Neighborhood website and give control & management to the Neighborhood Organization
	Encourage demolition of buildings that cannot be renovated at reasonable cost
	Seek redevelopment opportunity for small infill properties
	Restrict commercial, industrial, and large-scale multi-family development in the core of the Neighborhood
	Provide adequate screening of commercial/industrial uses to adjacent residential structures
	In partnership with the property owners & community leaders, seek redevelopment opportunities within Little Possum, Douglass Lane, Twin Oaks, & Ballfield roads
	Identify parcels with adjacent conflicting land uses and develop beautification/screening plans for each
	Ensure Bluffton Middle School is open to the BIS community
	Provide educational workshops focusing on affordable housing options and first time home ownership
	Provide rebates or exempt affordable housing units from impact fees
	Establish an affordable housing fund to provide affordable housing
	Identify appropriate Phase 2 and Phase 3 project areas for sewer installation & coordinate with utilities and pathways
	Seek out grants and other funding methods to pay for additional sewer extension phases
	Restrict truck traffic on Buck Island and Simmonsville roads
	Determine pathway phasing plan in conjunction with sewer and school project and adopt in Town budget
	Decrease speed limit on Buck Island and Simmonsville Roads to 35mph

***(Continued on other side)***



PLEASE RANK EACH RECOMMENDATION BELOW, STARTING WITH **1** AS YOUR TOP PRIORITY AND ENDING WITH **17**.

Rank 1-17	BUDGET-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS
	Provide financial assistance for those with failing septic systems
	Remove junk automobiles, tires, building materials, machinery, appliances, and boats from properties that pose environmental risks
	Improve County dirt roads to prevent erosion and sedimentation
	Assist heirs property owners to obtain clear title to their land
	Continue to evaluate need for new incentives and financial assistance programs to help supplement BIS Neighborhood improvement programs
	Offer residents free paint and supplies for home maintenance
	Provide down payment assistance to low to moderate income residents in BIS neighborhood
	Provide financial assistance to help property owners repair their homes
	Provide financial assistance to property owners to remove unsafe and hazardous conditions from their property
	Offer a neighborhood clean-up program that provides curb-side pickup
	Complete Phase 1 of sewer installation project (Buck Island from Ballfield to Hyon)
	Provide public water for all residents
	Continue funding for the BIS stormwater projects through June 2010
	Establish a Town budget for yearly maintenance to keep ditches clear and culverts cleaned out
	Acquire easements for sewer and pathway construction
	Create after-school programs including the Bluffton Community Center
	Install street lighting on Buck Island and Simmonsville Roads

**Your Town of Bluffton Property Address:**

\_\_\_\_\_

We look forward to receiving your feedback and thank you for your participation!

**Survey Results- pg. 1**

Rank	Community-Based & Town-Based Initiative Recommendations
1	Restrict commercial, industrial, and large-scale multi-family development in the core of the Neighborhood
2	Identify parcels with adjacent conflicting land uses and develop beautification/screening plans for each
3	Seek out grants and other funding methods to pay for additional sewer extension phases
4	Encourage demolition of buildings that cannot be renovated at reasonable cost
5	Provide adequate screening of commercial/industrial uses to adjacent residential structures
6	Identify appropriate Phase 2 and Phase 3 project areas for sewer installation & coordinate with utilities and pathways
7	Determine pathways plan in conjunction with sewer and school project and adopt in Town budget
8	Restrict truck traffic on Buck Island and Simmonsville roads
9	Ensure Bluffton Middle School is open to the BIS community
10	Seek redevelopment opportunity for small infill properties
11	Decrease speed limit on Buck Island and Simmonsville roads to 35mph
12	Hold a public meeting every 3 months to review and discuss BIS Neighborhood Plan implementation status
13	In partnership with the property owners & community leaders, seek redevelopment opportunities within Little Possum, Dougls Ln, Twin Oaks, and Ballfield Rd
14	Develop working groups for each of the BIS Neighborhood Plan elements (i.e. Public Safety, Community Development)
15	Establish BIS as Town's first official Neighborhood Organization; consider utilizing the Bluffton Area Community Association as Neighborhood Organization
16	Provide educational workshops focusing on affordable housing options and first time home ownership
17	Develop a BIS Neighborhood website and give control & management to the Neighborhood Organization
18	Provide rebates or exempt affordable housing units from impact fees
19	Establish an affordable housing fund to provide affordable housing

**Survey Results- pg. 2**

Rank	Budget-Based Recommendations
1	Remove junk automobiles, tires, building materials, machinery, appliances, and boats from properties that pose environmental risk
2	Install street lighting on Buck Island and Simmonsville roads
3	Offer a neighborhood clean-up program that provides curb-side pickup
4	Complete Phase 1 of sewer installation project (Buck Island from Ballfield to Hyon)
5	Acquire easements for sewer and pathway construction
6	Provide financial assistance to property owners to remove unsafe and hazardous conditions from their property
7	Provide financial assistance for those with failing septic systems
8	Establish a Town budget for yearly maintenance to keep ditches clear and culverts cleaned out
9	Provide public water for all residents
10	Create after-school programs including the Bluffton Community Center
11	Continue funding for the BIS stormwater projects through June 2010
12	Provide financial assistance to help property owners repair their homes
13	Continue to evaluate need for new incentives and financial assistance programs to help supplement BIS Neighborhood improvement programs
14	Improve County dirt roads to prevent erosion and sedimentation
15	Offer residents free paint and supplies for home maintenance
16	Assist heirs property owners to obtain clear title to their land
17	Provide down payment assistance to low to moderate income residents in the BIS Neighborhood



**Implementation Schedule Budget**

Action Item	Responsible Party & Implementation Partners	Start Date	Complete Date	Cost	Town of Bluffton			Comments
					CIP	Annual Cost	Staff/Dept	
Develop working groups for each of the Plan elements	AC, PO, TOB	Apr-09	Ongoing	-			ALL	Staff will support each group, which will be formed by residents contacted by the AC
Hold a public meeting every quarter to review and discuss plan implementation status	AC, PO, TOB	Jul-09	Ongoing	-			ALL	TC workshop
Establish Buck Island Simmonsville as the Town's first official Neighborhood Organization	AC, PO, TOB	Jul-09	Ongoing	-			PGM	Establish NO policies with TC & work with the Advisory Committee to explore moving the Community Association into the NO
Establish a neighborhood cleanup program that allows residents to dispose of white goods and other hazardous household items; offer a neighborhood clean-up program that provides two curb-side clean ups per neighborhood per year	TOB, NO	Feb-09	Ongoing	\$37,500.00		Y	PGM, ESS, DEP	Create a crossfunctional team to evaluate the options
Revise the Town of Bluffton Tree Ordinance to include parcels zoned General Residential (GR) to ensure significant trees are preserved	TOB	Underway	Jul-09	-			DEP, PGM	Final draft finished by end of June 2009
Establish a Bluffton tree replacement program that provides the Town an opportunity to install new trees on private property	TOB, PO, NO	TBD	TBD	TBD			DEP	
Enforce the Municipal Code regarding outdoor dumping of debris and refuse	TOB	2009	Ongoing	-		Y	DEP, BSS	Create a crossfunctional team to evaluate the options
Remove the abandoned automobiles, machinery, equipment, tires, and boats from properties that pose environmental risks by providing financial assistance to help property owners remove unsafe & hazardous conditions from their properties; Enforce Town ordinances and building codes focusing initially on junk cars, illegal dumping, and dilapidated/abandoned structures; Remove concrete stockpile from the Buck Island property	TOB, PO	Mar-09	Jun-09	\$150,000.00		Y	PGM, ESS	Initial implementation will begin by targeting almost two dozen abandoned, blighted structures throughout the BIS Neighborhood. Some properties will excess garbage, white goods, junk cars, boats, and other refuse will also be targeted during the initial implementation.
Evaluate allowing the Town to remove plants from properties to be cleared for development, as part of development agreements, in order to transplant for Town projects	TOB	Mar-09	Ongoing	-			PGM, DEP	Create a crossfunctional team to evaluate the options
Improve County's dirt roads to prevent erosion and sedimentation	BC, PO	2009	2011	\$300,000.00				BC paving Kitty, Phoenix, and Ballfield; need to schedule Tower
Encourage the demolition of buildings that cannot be rehabilitated at a reasonable cost; provide financial assistance to help property owners remove unsafe conditions from their land	TOB, PO	Mar-09	Ongoing	\$70,000.00		Y		Demolish top 10 in 2009
Review zoning ordinance to ensure requirements provide adequate screening of commercial/industrial uses to adjacent residential structures.	TOB	Feb-09	Apr-09	-			PGM	Staff is reviewing & will forward revisions to PC in April
Ensure that Old Carolina Shopping Center is developed as residential	TOB, AC, PO, EF	Underway	-	-			PGM	Buck Island Square has withdrawn their application; Old Carolina Shopping Center will be at Planning Commission on March 25, 2009
Restrict commercial, industrial, and multi-family development in the core of neighborhood	TOB	Ongoing	Ongoing	-			PGM	
Assist heirs property owners to obtain clear title to their land	TOB, PO	Feb-09	Jun-10	\$20,000.00		Y	PGM	Contract with Center for Heirs Property; starting with the Kinlaw property
Identify parcels with adjacent conflicting land uses and develop beautification/screening plans for each	TOB, PO	Mar-09	Jun-09	-			PGM	TOB is drafting site specific improvement plan for PO to install; TOB could provide grant to assist
Ensure that the school site is open to the BIS community- establish a written commitment	TOB, PO, BCSD	Feb-09	Apr-09	-			PGM	TC requesting access
Remove bulk trash and refuse from residential properties (including appliances, boats, tires, & motors)								
Review property maintenance standards and enforcement provisions to ensure that properties are safely maintained; improve regulatory enforcement as needed	TOB	Mar-09	Jul-09	-			BSS, DEP, ESS, PGM	Create a crossfunctional team to evaluate the options
Conduct community awareness programs on blighting influences, regular refuse collections, and comprehensive code enforcement efforts	TOB, NO	Jul-09	Ongoing	TBD			PGM	Evaluate bimonthly community update
Complete Phase 1 of the sewer installation project in coordination with the middle school road improvements (Buck Island from Ballfield to Hyon)	TOB	Underway	Jul-10	\$1,800,000.00	Y		ESS, DEP, PGM	
Identify appropriate Phase 2 and Phase 3 project areas for sewer installation; coordinate subsequent sewer phasing with other utilities and pathways plan	TOB	Feb-09	Apr-09	-	Y		ESS, DEP	
Apply for grants and other methods of funding for additional sewer extension phases	TOB	Feb-09	May-09	-			ALL	CDBG public hearing Feb. 24; likely grant submission following
Continue CIP funding in full for the BIS stormwater projects in FY 08	TOB	Underway	Jun-09	\$78,000.00	Y		DEP, ESS	Do not cut budget!
Establish an annual maintenance budget to keep these ditches clear and culverts unobstructec	TOB	Jul-09	Jul-10	\$10,000.00		Y	ESS, DEP	Develop budget for entire town; this reflects just BIS \$
Conduct quarterly detailed traffic counts on Buck Island and Simmonsville to monitor changes resulting from school, traffic calming, and other road improvements	TOB	Feb-09	Ongoing	-			PGM, Melvin	Rotating between 3 different locations, 5-7 days at each location
Ensure interconnectivity by extending Box Elder between Hidden Lakes and Red Cedar Elementary	TOB, Hidden Lakes POA	Feb-09	Aug-09	-			PGM	Refer to master plans for requirements and then enforce
Determine pathway phasing plan in conjunction with sewer and school project and adopt in CIP; establish a pathways phasing plan for the remaining portions of BIS (10,375 LF); Create a financing plan for construction of pathways including CIP, SCDOT, private sidewalk assessments, impact fees	TOB, PO, BCSD	Feb-09	Sep-09	-			ESS, PGM, DEP	
Acquire sewer and pathway easements for construction	TOB, PO, BCSD	Mar-09	Jun-09	TBD			ESS, PGM, DEP	
Decrease the speed limit on Buck Island and Simmonsville to 35mph	SCDOT, TOB	Apr-09	Mar-09	-				DOT denied initial request, TOB redoing traffic counts including speed limit data that will be evaluated in April
Addresses on all structures for EMS	TOB	Jul-09	Oct-09	\$1,000.00		Y	BSS	Buy numbers
Establish a neighborhood public safety committee	TOB, NO	TBD	TBD	-			BPD	Chief to determine schedule
Map and sign all pathways and roads	TOB	Feb-09	Jun-09	TBD			PGM, BPD	
Install street lighting on Buck Island and Simmonsville	SCDOT, TOB	2010	TBD	TBD			ESS, PGM	Install with pathways
Coordinate with the Bluffton Historic Society to identify historic resources (land, structures, events) and promote the local history via markers	Bluffton Historic Society, PO	TBD	TBD	TBD				
Through a branding process, develop an image package for Buck Island Simmonsville including logo, colors, and tag line	AC, PO, TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	
Reinforce the community boundaries and branding image by installing entry signage and beautification at identified gateway locations	AC, PO, TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, ESS	
Install new street signs with the BIS logo/image	TOB, BC	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, ESS	
Develop a template for a BIS neighborhood website and give content control and management to the Neighborhood Organization	TOB, NO	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, IT	

**Implementation Schedule Budget**

Action Item	Responsible Party & Implementation Partners	Start Date	Complete Date	Cost	Town of Bluffton			Comments
					CIP	Annual Cost	Staff/Dept	
The Neighborhood Organization and the new middle school should adopt Buck Island and Simmonsville roads for regular trash pickups	NO, BCSD	TBD	TBD	TBD				
Establish an annual BIS event that highlights the heritage and diversity of the neighborhood	NO	TBD	TBD	TBD				
Establish partnerships with Eagles Field and the Middle School to positively integrate these facilities into the neighborhood	AC, PO, TOB, EF, BCSD	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	
Screen the County refuse facility so that creates a more aesthetic gateway for the neighborhood.	BC, TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD	Y		PGM, ESS	Budget ranges from \$250-\$400K; will need to spread over two years of CIP and share costs with BC
Revise zoning code to permit cluster development to avoid ecologically critical areas and preserve rural character	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	Defer to smart code
Improve the existing logging road from Wellstone to HE McCracken Circle as a nature trail/pathway and preserve the adjacent wetlands	TOB, PO, Pinecrest POA	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, ESS, DEP	Need easement from property owner; determine interim improvements and maintenance; determine how to extend logging road/trail thru wetlands to school
Provide septic maintenance program for those with failing septic systems	TOB, PO	TBD	TBD	TBD		Y	DEP	Allocate annual budget
Eliminate septic systems and wells by providing upgraded utilities in the area	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			ESS, DEP	
Restrict new flag lots	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD				
Review and strengthen parking standards, promoting the use of shared parking to reduce the quantity of parking lots while ensuring that adequate parking is appropriately placed and provided.	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD				
Require small-scale signage for any business within the neighborhood plan area.	TOB, PO	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	
Develop a land plan for the 7 acre tract at the Buck Island-Simmonsville Road split and coordinate with property owner and listing agent to seek appropriate investor	TOB, AC, PO	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	Market driven but TOB to coordinate with listing agent
Seek redevelopment opportunity for small infill properties	TOB, PO	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	
In partnership with the property owners, seek redevelopment opportunities in the communities of Little Possum, Douglas Lane, Twin Oaks, and Ballfield Road.	TOB, PO	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	With the owners permission, draft feasible redevelopment plans for properties
Enhance Eagles Field with proposed improvements to the existing field, a new little league field, a community center, and other recreational features in partnership with not-for-profit entities and ensure that the park is open to BIS residents	TOB, EF, AC, PO	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	
Identify locations for new open space/park land	TOB, PO	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, DEP	
Identify environmentally sensitive land and ensure that it remains protected	TOB, PO	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, DEP	Coordinate with property owners to determine best method to preserve critical lands
Sponsor/provide educational workshops focusing on housing options and home ownership.	TOB, BC	TBD	TBD	TBD		Y	PGM	Start with hire of R3 coordinator
Provide financial assistance to help property owners repair their homes	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD		Y	PGM	
Adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance, workforce housing ordinance, or moderately priced dwelling unit program; Establish an "affordable housing fund" that would fund affordable housing efforts. Funds could come from "fees in lieu of" providing affordable housing from future inclusionary zoning; Rebate or exempt affordable housing units from impact fees.	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	Affordable housing committee/ TC policy decision
Identify and inventory a list of available land and/or redevelopment lots available for new housing units and seek out joint venture opportunities between the property owner and local builders	TOB, PO	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	
Encourage infill projects by waiving/rebating development fees and property taxes	TOB, BC	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	Policy decision first, then take to TC/NC on a case/case basis
Encourage public and private developers to explore new design concepts, such as row houses, and to provide quality, affordable housing opportunities in an aesthetically pleasing manner.	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	
Establish new incentives and financial assistance programs to fill in the gaps	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM	Start with hire of R3 coordinator
Offer residents free paint and supplies for home maintenance	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD		Y	PGM	Start with hire of R3 coordinator
Provide downpayment assistance to LMI residents moving into the neighborhood	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD		Y	PGM	Start with hire of R3 coordinator
To foster community accountability, storm drains should be marked with statements that remind residents that stormwater drains into valuable watersheds	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			DEP	
Provide public water for all residents	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			DEP, ESS	
Create better street signage for road identification	TOB, BC	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, ESS	
Provide streetscaped entryways into the BIS neighborhood (Buck Island from May River to Simmonsville, Simmonsville from Bluffton Parkway to Hidden Lakes, and Buck Island from Bluffton Parkway to Ballfield); elements include pathways, canopy trees, pedestrian lights	TOB, NO	TBD	TBD	TBD	Y		ESS, PGM	Include in sewer-pathway-ROW plan; installation may happen in later years
Enforce maintenance standards on private roads to ensure efficient EMS access and proper stormwater management	TOB, BC	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, BSS	Determine applicable standards for every private road and then determine improvement plan
Establish an annual maintenance budget for pathways	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			ESS	
Determine the necessity and feasibility of a traffic circle or signal at Buck Island and May River Road intersection	BC, TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD				Evaluate options
Install a traffic calming/gateway element at Buck Island and Simmonsville Road intersection	BC, TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD	Y			Evaluate options within this timeframe (not install)
Adopt an interconnectivity ordinance to address pathway easements and vehicular connections	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD				Town-wide ordinance for all commercial properties; consider impact fees for residential construction
Utilize speed monitors to create driver awareness of posted speed limits	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			BPD	Chief to determine schedule
Evaluate the use of bicycle and motorcycle officers to enforce speed limit (lack of ROW for traditional)	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			BPD	
Ensure that the school and Eagles Field are built/redevelopment with CPTED strategies	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, BPD	
Provide free exterior lights on motion detectors to residents.	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, BPD	Start with hire of R3 coordinator
Establish a Neighborhood Services Division	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			BPD	Chief to determine schedule
Establish a Drug Enforcement Plan	TOB	TBD	TBD	TBD			BPD	Chief to determine schedule
Establish after-school programs	NO, BCSD	TBD	TBD	TBD			PGM, BPD	



**PLANNING COMMISSION**



**STAFF REPORT**

**Growth Management Department**

<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	April 24, 2024
<b>PROJECT:</b>	Workshop Regarding Housing Analysis Required to Obtain Accommodations Tax (ATAX) Funds to Develop Workforce Housing
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b>	Charlotte Moore, AICP Principal Planner

**BACKGROUND:**

In 2023, Act 57 was signed into law to amend the South Carolina Code of Laws to allow local governments the opportunity to use up to 15% of their local accommodations tax revenue (ATAX), as well as revenue remitted to local governments under the 2% ATAX statute, for the development of workforce housing.

The Act defines workforce housing as “residential housing for rent or sale that is appropriately priced for rent or sale to a person or family whose income falls within thirty percent [30%] and one hundred twenty percent [120%] of the median income for the local area, with adjustments for household size, according to the latest figures available from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).” As of 2023, the median household income for Beaufort County is \$111,300.

To receive ATAX funds, the Town must complete a “Housing Analysis” per Sec. 6-4-12 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, which requires an amendment or addendum to the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. The Housing Analysis must include information about the effect of the proposed amendment on housing, including the effect on each of the following:

- The cost of developing, constructing, rehabilitating, improving, maintaining, or owning single-family or multifamily dwellings;
- The purchase price of new homes or the fair market value of existing homes;
- The cost and availability of financing to purchase or develop housing;
- Housing costs;
- The density, location, setback, size, or height development on a lot, parcel, land division, or subdivision; and,
- An analysis of the relative impact of the ordinance on low- and moderate-income households.

“Housing Costs” are those related to the development, construction, financing, purchase, sale, ownership or availability of a median-priced single-family residence. The analysis could include estimates for larger developments to understand the long-term effects of Act 57.

The Housing Analysis must be submitted to the South Carolina Department of Revenue and the Tourism Expenditure Committee prior to adoption of the amendment by Town Council; however, neither entity is required by state law to review or approve the analysis, according to the Municipal Association of South Carolina. Town Staff is in the process of preparing the report, which will be presented to the Planning Commission on May 22.

Once the amendment is adopted, Town Council can apply funds in a variety of ways, including distributing funds to non-profit and for-profit organizations to develop workforce housing, internal transfers for capital projects or debt service on those projects, as well as allocating annual funds for any government-sponsored housing program\*. The program to use ATAX funds will end December 31, 2030.

\*Source: Burr Forman (2024, April 10), burr.com, <https://www.burr.com/newsroom/articles/recent-changes-to-accommodations-tax-statutes-to-promote-workforce-housing-development>.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Comprehensive Plan Procedure	Date	Complete
Step 1. Planning Commission Workshop	April 24, 2024	x
Step 2. Planning Commission Public Hearing and Recommendation	May, 14, 2024	x
Step 3. Town Council – 1st Reading	June 11, 2024	x
Step 4. Town Council Meeting – Final Reading and Public Hearing	July 9, 2024	x

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** This item is for information only. The Housing Analysis will be presented to the Planning Commission on May 22, 2024 for a review and recommendation to Town Council.