



Strategic Planning Workshop

Thursday, October 31, 2024 at 9:00 AM

Rotary Community Center, 11 Recreation Court, Bluffton, SC 29910

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. Welcome and Introductions

III. Public Comment

IV. Review of Fiscal Years 25-26 Strategic Plan Action Agenda Progress Report

V. Update on Capital Improvement Projects

VI. Working Lunch Presentations

Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority 12:00pm - 12:30pm

University of South Carolina Beaufort 12:30pm - 12:45pm

VII. Discussion of Key Topics

1. Land Acquisition
2. Pedestrian and Safety Improvements
3. Green Initiatives
4. Resiliency Initiatives
5. Affordable Housing
6. Historic Preservation
7. Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Implementation
8. Noise Ordinance

VIII. Town Council Discussion

IX. Summary of Emerging Strategic Planning Workshop Action Items

X. Adjournment

“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 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>

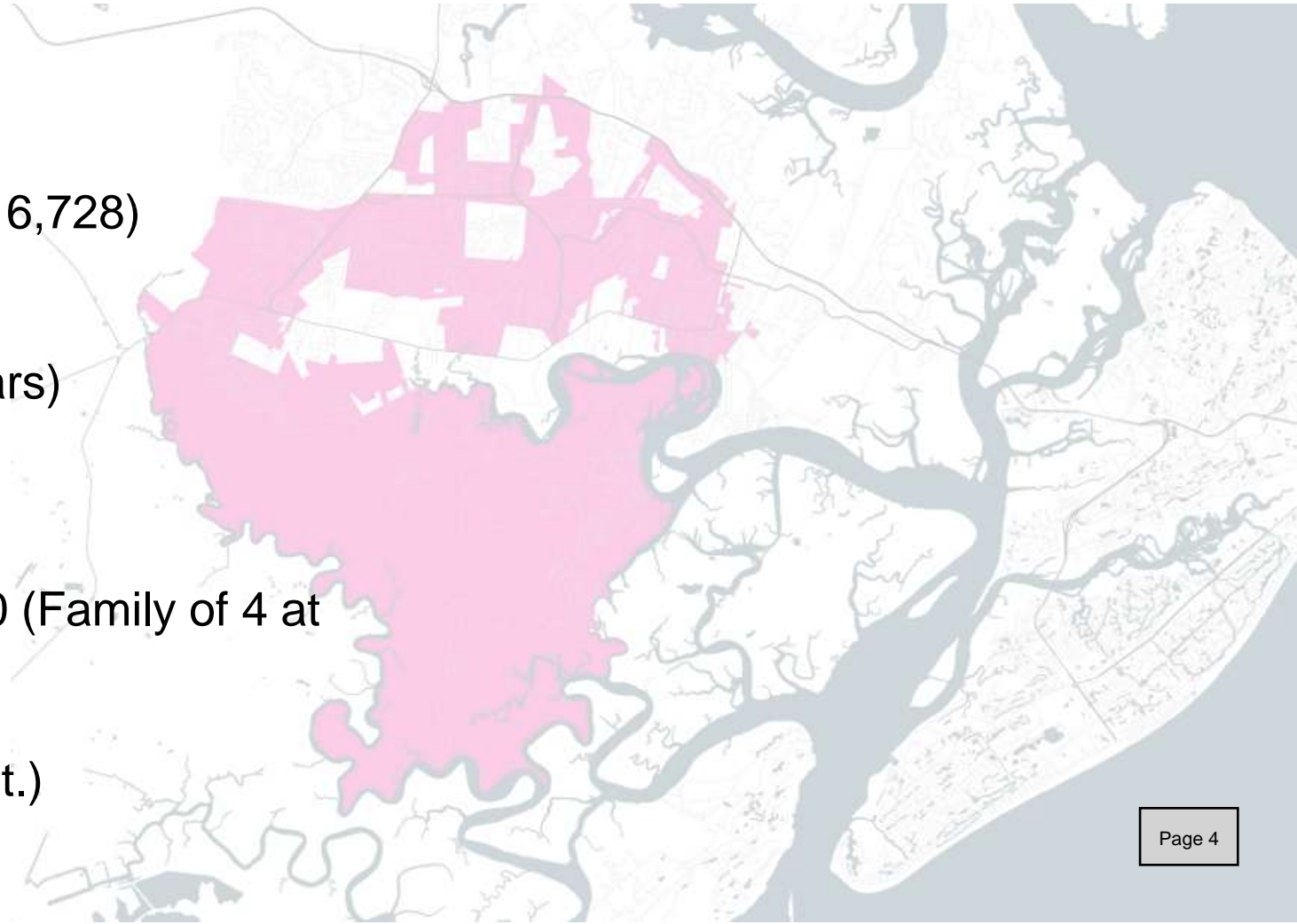
Public comment is limited to 3 minutes per speaker.

Town of Bluffton Strategic Planning Workshop

October 31, 2024

History of Bluffton – Present Day

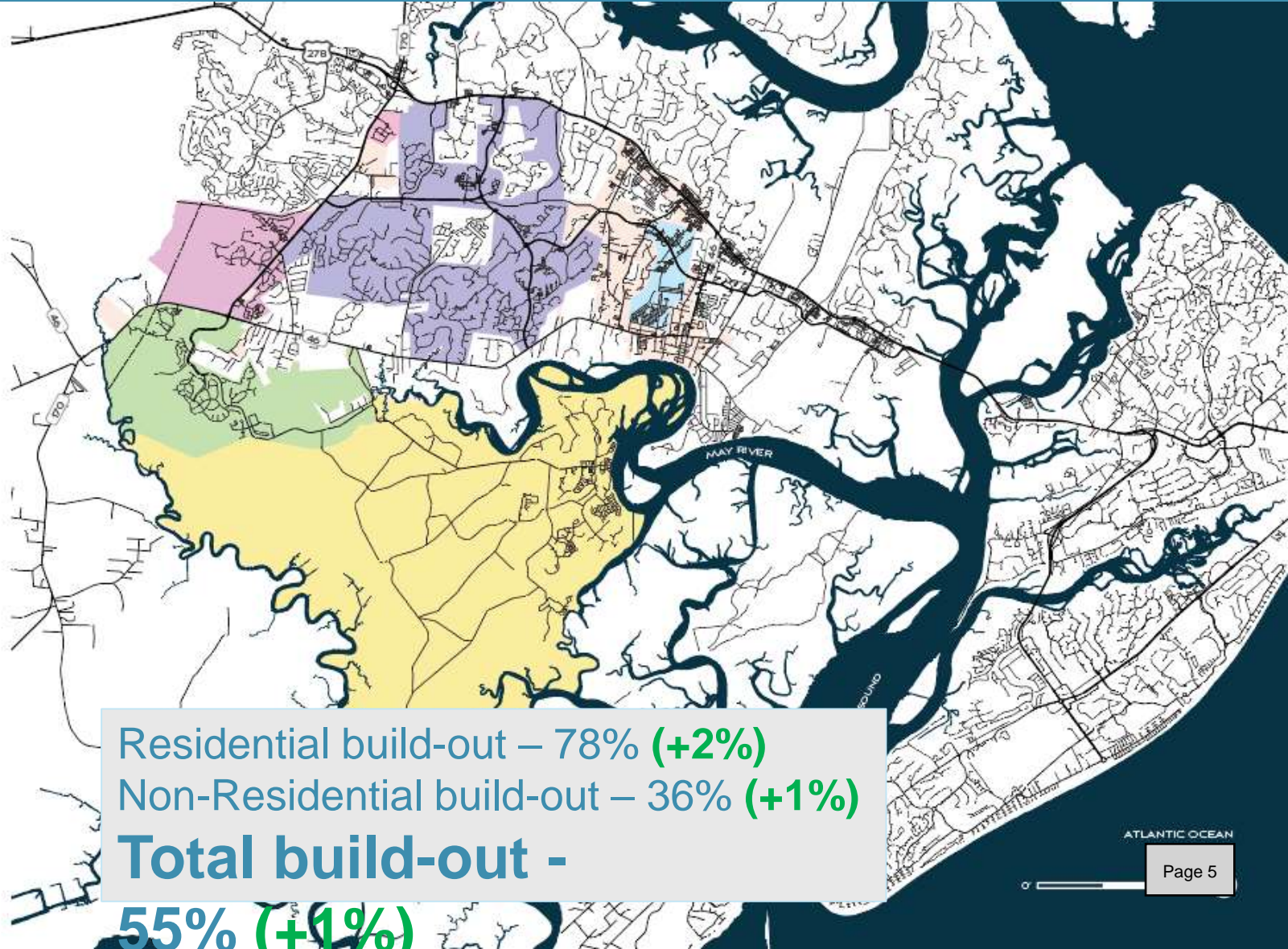
- 54 Square Miles
- Population Estimate: 35,243
 - More than Doubled since 2015 (16,728)
- Median Age: 40
 - 17% increase since 2015 (33 years)
- Median Per Capita Income: \$74,480
- Median Household Income: \$106,400 (Family of 4 at 100%)
- Average Rent: \$2,050 (3 bedroom apt.)
- Median Home Value: \$390,200



Development Agreements

Section III. Item #1.

bluffton
HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY



Bluffton Village - 78% build-out total *(Expired as of 10-17-2024)*

- 84% residential build-out
- 72% non-residential build-out

Schultz Tract - 81% build-out total **(+2%)**

- 95% residential build-out **(+3%)**
- 66% non-residential build-out **(+1%)**

Village at Verdier - 39% build-out total

- 98% residential build-out
- 18% non-residential build-out

Buckwalter - 35% build-out total **(+1%)**

- 75% residential build-out **(+1%)**
- 29% non-residential build-out

Jones Estate - 68% build-out total **(+1%)**

- 80% residential build-out **(+3%)**
- 57% non-residential build-out

New Riverside - 61% build-out total **(+2%)**

- 77% residential build-out **(+6%)**
- 5% non-residential build-out

Palmetto Bluff - 21% build-out total **(+1%)**

- 35% residential build-out **(+3%)**
- 8% non-residential build-out

% Increase Over Last Year

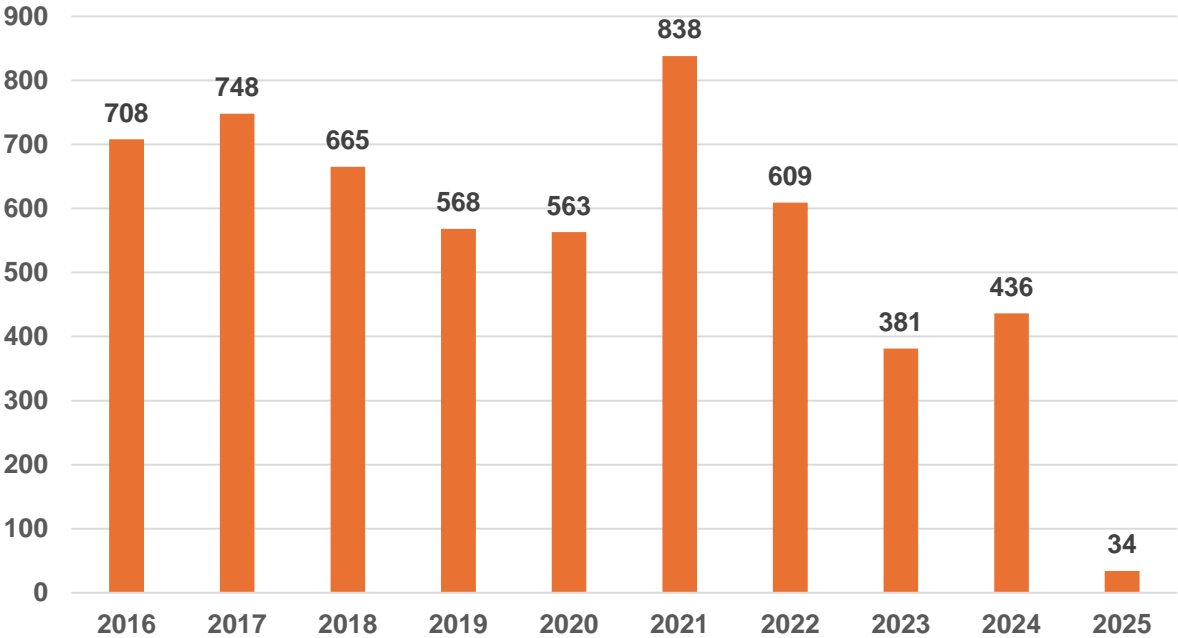
92% of Bluffton is planned & governed by
PUD development agreements.

Residential build-out – 78% **(+2%)**
Non-Residential build-out – 36% **(+1%)**
Total build-out -
55% **(+1%)**

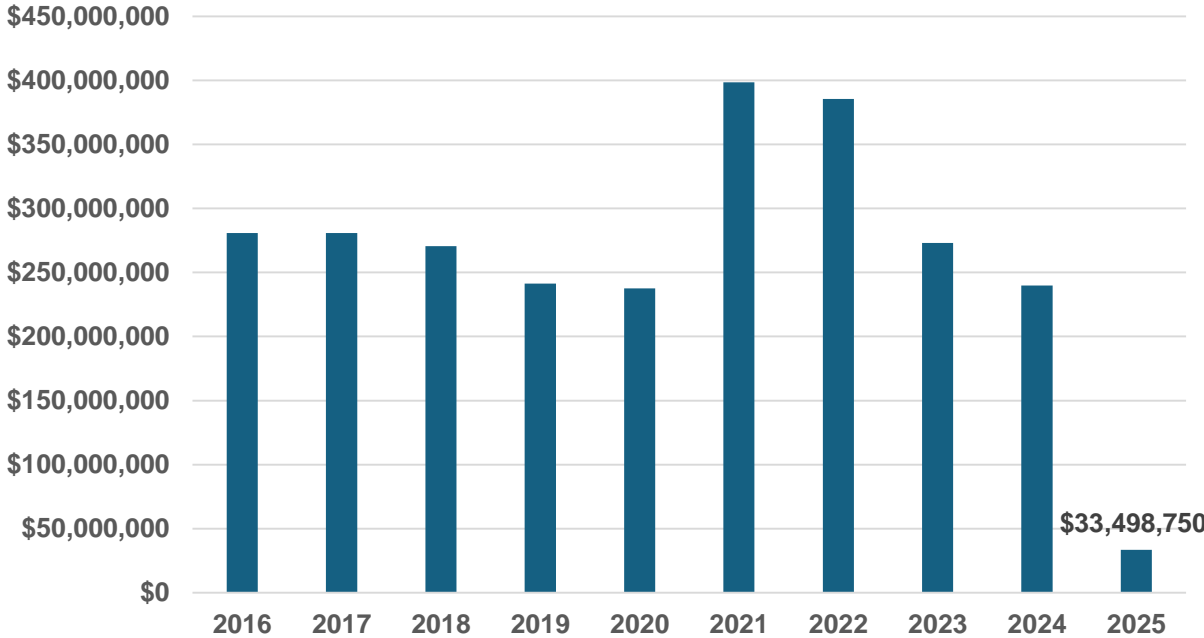
ATLANTIC OCEAN

Single Family Residential

Permits Issued

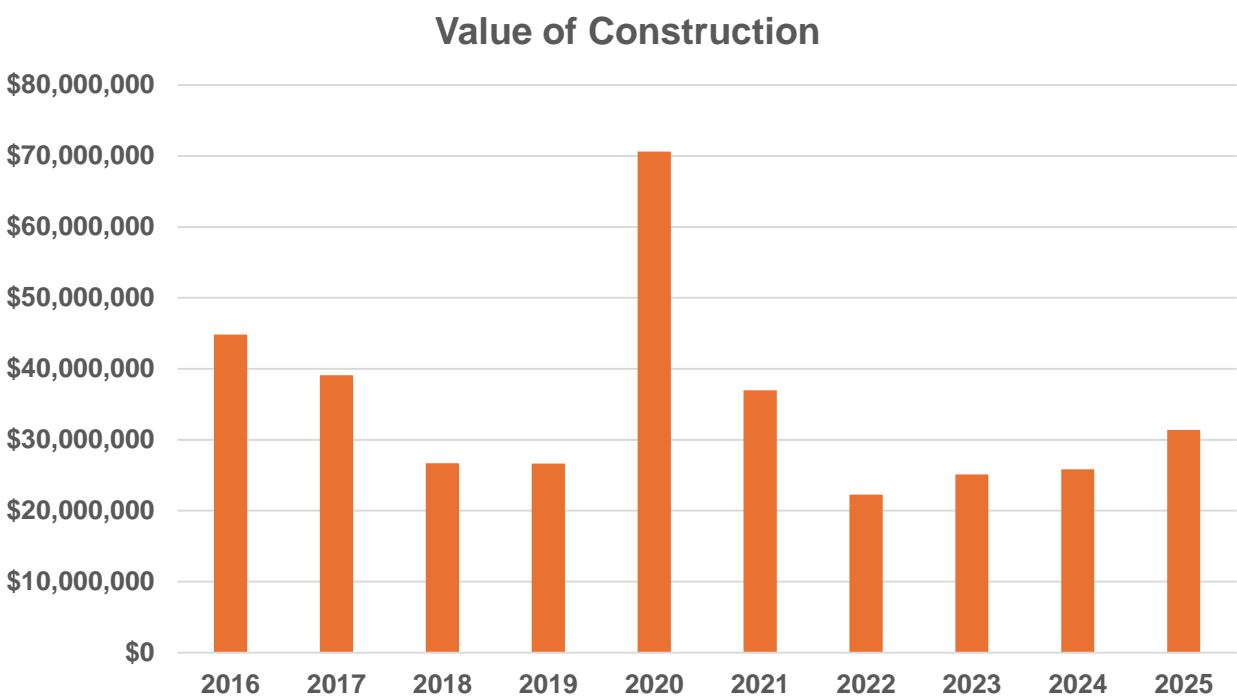
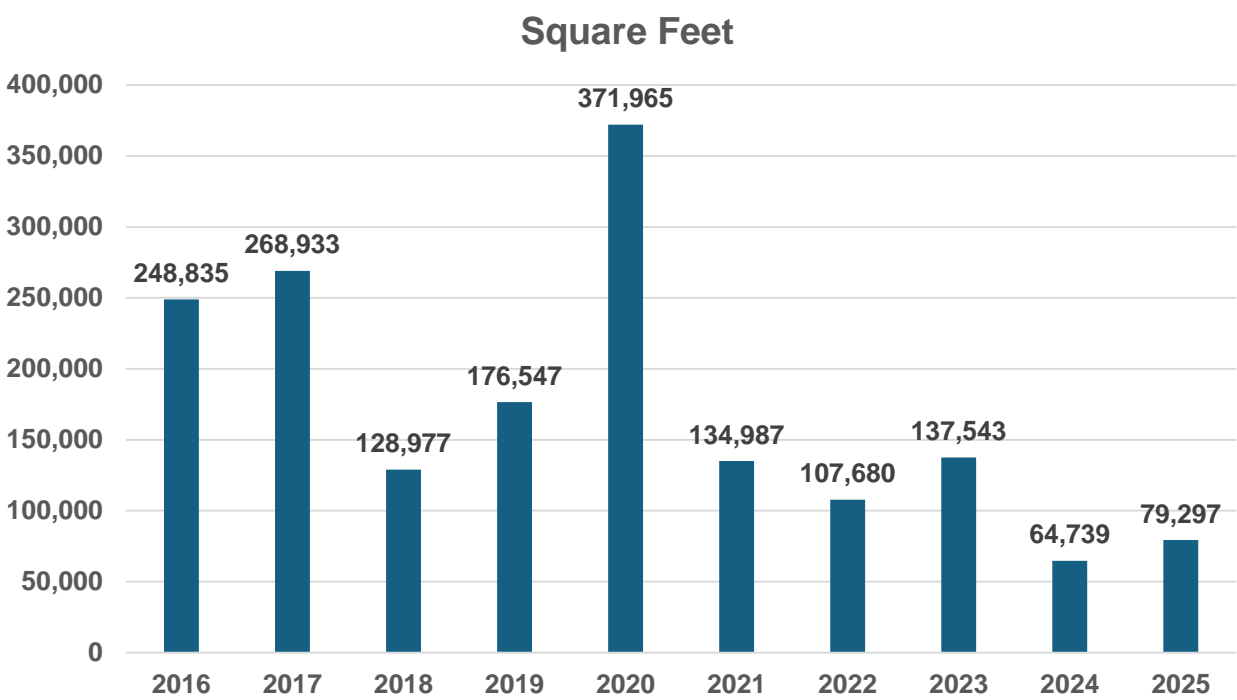


Value of Construction



Years are Fiscal Years
2025 is Quarter 1

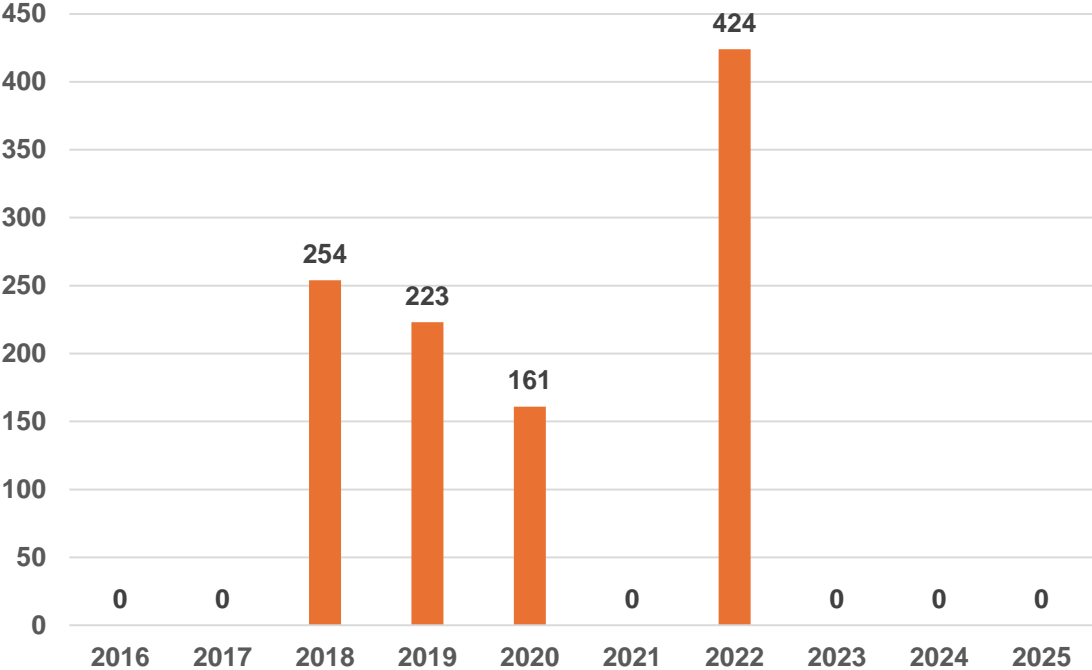
New Commercial Square Feet



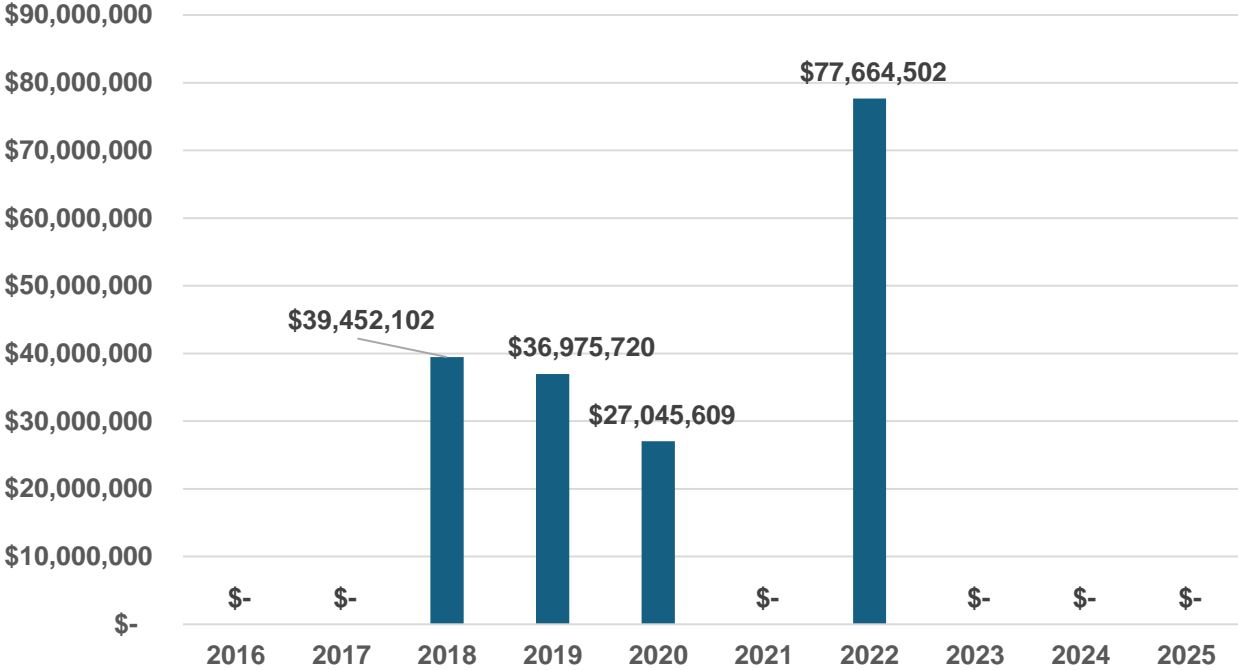
Years are Fiscal Years
2025 is Quarter 1
Includes New Commercial and Commercial Additions

New Multi Family Building Permits

Units



Value of Construction



Years are Fiscal Years
2025 is Quarter 1

Neighborhood Assistance Program



- In FY24, 38 low to moderate income households were assisted with \$278,010.41 in repairs.
- The Beaufort-Jasper Housing Trust awarded the Town of Bluffton and 7 other organizations dedicated to home repair and homebuyer assistance programs in Beaufort and Jasper counties. Bluffton was awarded \$144,000 to go towards home repairs.

- On July 9, 2024, Town Council approved an amendment to the Town's Comprehensive Plan, "Blueprint Bluffton," to include a Housing Impact Analysis. This analysis allows local governments to utilize up to 15% of Accommodations Tax (ATAX) revenue to support affordable housing efforts.



THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON

**HOUSING IMPACT
ANALYSIS**

Town of Bluffton Department Highlights

Entrepreneur Program and Economic Development Initiatives

Entrepreneur Program Highlights:

- **Startups:** A diverse range of innovative startups has joined, including Hardee Greens, ChangePoint, Petitek, OPFOB, and others. New additions such as Mencias and Dance Canapé reflect the ongoing vitality of the program.

- **Growth Companies:** Established companies like Beachside Tire, Bluffton Electric, and LaSource are scaling up, contributing significantly to Bluffton's economy.

Key Efforts and Strategic Initiatives:

- **AI Thought Leadership:** The Don Ryan Center (DRCI) is positioning itself as a leader in artificial intelligence (AI) education in the Lowcountry, with multiple speaking engagements to more than 750 people and AI workshops held across the region.

- **Partnerships:** Collaborations with key stakeholders, including the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation, Hilton Head-Bluffton Chamber, and Hardeeville, ensure support for local businesses and startups.

Operations, Marketing, and Future Plans

Ongoing Economic Development Projects:

- Buckwalter Place: Development of *Building A*, which will house the DRCI landing pad, childcare center and other tenants and contribute to long-term financial sustainability. The project is progressing and expected to play a significant role in Bluffton's economic growth.
- Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP): A new marketing strategy and dedicated website (www.blufftonbusiness.com) are helping attract participants for economic growth initiatives.

Operational Growth and Recognition:

Awards and Achievements: The DRCI was awarded the Golden Oyster Award for Chamber Member of the Year, a testament to its contribution to the community.

Expansion Plans: New programs like THRIVE, EVOLVE, and TRADEUP are being developed to support business.

Human Resources Department Highlights

Strategic Initiative: Employee Benefits and Satisfaction

- Institute Paid Parental Leave
 - Established July 1, 2024
- Institute PTO Donation Policy
 - Established July 1, 2024
- Create a Home Buying Assistance Program
 - Town Council approved this July 9, 2024
- Implement the Town's First Annual Wellness Fair Event
 - This was held September 12, 2024

Human Resources Department Highlights

Strategic Initiative: Talent Acquisition and Retention

- Increase Employee/Family Events
 - Ghost Pirate Hockey in February 2024 – 140 attendees
 - Employee Family Day – April 2024 –Buckwalter Park – 80 attendees
- Expand HBCU Outreach
 - Attend HBCU career fairs in February and September 2024
- Create e-mail distribution list to local organizations to advertise open positions
- Classification and Compensation completed May 2024
- Formalize Internship program to be completed

Municipal Court Highlights

- Bluffton Municipal Court is in full compliance; therefore, no further obligation to the ACLU
- Ministerial Recorder is certificated for another ten years after passing examination
- A 2% increase in getting cases disposed within the fiscal year

Fiscal Sustainability

- Action Item: Digital Budget Book
 - Successfully implemented an interactive digital budget book for FY2025 budget
 - Town was awarded the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for its FY2025 budget
 - Received special recognition for the long-range operating financial plans for the 2nd year in a row
 - [Town of Bluffton Digital Budget Book FY2025](#)

Fiscal Sustainability

- Action Item: Finance Process Improvements
 - Implemented new Business License Software - Evolve
 - Applications, renewals, payments, reminders, and correspondence are all done electronically through Evolve
 - Created an increase of 237% in renewals issued in April and 220% in revenue recognized than the year prior
 - Significantly reduced backlog of renewals to be processed and number of refunds to be issued
 - Allowed for Business License Division to work more efficiently and respond to the business community more effectively resulting in more businesses licensed in a timely manner

Information Technology (IT) Department Highlights

Cybersecurity Training

- Employees receive monthly security awareness trainings, including "The Inside Man" which delivers key cybersecurity awareness principles and best practices in each episode.

Document Management System (DMS)

- Project began in 2022 to transfer all Town of Bluffton departmental paper files to a digital platform. To date, eleven (11) of the thirteen (13) departments have been completed. Users are able to access files from any location.

bluffton
HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

A hand-drawn diagram of a garden layout. The garden is enclosed by a fence, with a gate labeled 'Wine-fence'. Inside, there are several plants and areas labeled: 'Pineapple vine' at the top, 'Red hot' (likely Red Hot Poker) on the right, 'Sage, perov' (Sage and Perovskia) on the left, 'Mullein' in the center-left, 'Kirkwood' (likely Kirkwood) on the right, and 'Sitting' (likely Sitting Stone) on the right. There are also several small, colorful illustrations of plants and a central illustration of a person sitting on a bench.

Public Services Department Highlights

Training

- Implementing a new weekly safety training program starting November



Maintenance

- Within Public Services we are now operating with three division: Grounds Maintenance, Facility Maintenance & Roads & Drainage
- Staff has been set up in teams of two allowing for help with tasks throughout the day and efficiency.

Public Services Department Highlights

Storm Prep, Damage & Recovery

- Through 3 named storms Public Services prepared, repaired & recovered
- Reconstruction of the DuBois Pavilion
- Quick response and recovery opening roads over the course of the first 12 hours & opening Town Hall to normal operation
- Efficient coordinated efforts with other Town agencies



Police Department Highlights

Awards

- Medal of Valor- Azahel Young
- 40 Under 40- Lt. Michelle Mayers
- FBINA- Lt. Fazekas
- Town of Bluffton voted as one of the safest cities in South Carolina per the violent crime statistics for 2023.
- Life saving medal awarded to 7 officers for their quick actions during a medical call.



Police Department Highlights

New programs/partnerships

- BPD Mentorship to Hire Program - a program to hire a more diversified staff from members within our community
- Traffic Stop Awareness Program taught in area high schools
- Partnership with NAACP. Monthly meetings to discuss any topic that is of concern from the community.



Growth Management Department Highlights



Historic Preservation

- Squire Pope Carriage House rehabilitation
- Presented at the Southeast Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians (SESAH)

Growth Management Department Highlights

LEAN Process

- Participated in a multi-department weeklong exercise to improve the Commerical permitting process, 'Dirt to Home'
- Proposed Implementation Strategies



Growth Management Department Highlights

Buck Island Simmonsville Plan

- Adopted April 2024
- Included purchase of property on corner of Buck Island Rd/Bluffton Pkwy for future community park
- Recommend the rezoning of two residential properties to the appropriate commercial designation
- Currently in the Implementation Phase



Communications and Community Outreach Highlights

Movie Nights in the Park



Jump Into Summer (Waterslide Event)



Town of Bluffton Independence Day Celebration



Communications and Community Outreach Highlights

Annual Tree Lighting & Christmas Parade



Communications and Community Outreach Highlights

Spooktacular



Concert Series

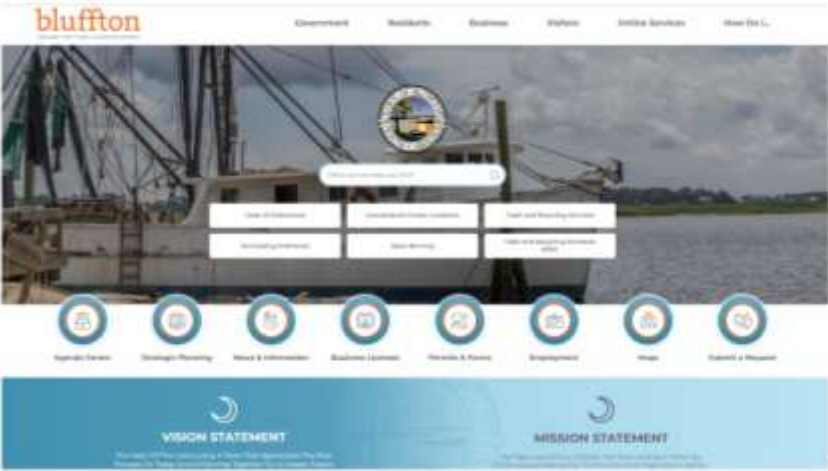


Welcome Center



Communications and Community Outreach Highlights

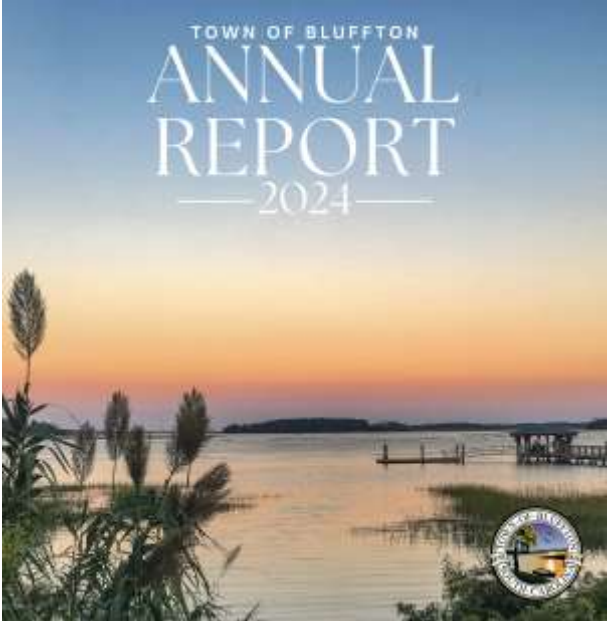
Website Redesign



Semi Annual



Annual Report



Watershed Management Division Highlights



Section III. Item #1.

- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) is updating the May River Baseline Assessment. Final report anticipated in first quarter of 2025.
- SoLoCo Stormwater Regulations and Design Manual Review edits currently proposed. Anticipated for Town Council consideration (by resolution) in first quarter of 2025.
- College of Charleston and SC Sea Grant completing a Resiliency Analysis.
- Established new partnerships with the South Carolina Environmental Law Project (SCELP), Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), Furman University's Shi Institute, and Beaufort County's Regional Resiliency Accelerator Initiative for on-going resiliency-related work.
- 2021 May River Watershed Action Plan Update & Model Report
 - Town's Water Quality Program has completed all data collection needs for stormwater model calibration. Calibration funded by Town Council in FY25 operating budget anticipated. Council contract approval in first quarter of 2025.

FY 25-26 Action Agenda Items

Master Park/Pathway Plan. A Parks and & Recreation Master Plan study will be conducted to determine needs for new parks (neighborhood/regional/passive/recreational trails/green ways and blue ways) and needed improvements/renovations to existing parks. This includes capital improvements to Town Parks outside of general maintenance and repairs.

Facilities Study and Space Needs. The Town contracted with Creech & Associates to do a detailed space needs analysis, facility conditions assessment, and facility master plan. The study includes Town Hall, the Law Enforcement Center and Substation, along with Watershed and Public Services.

Potential Action Items. The results of the plan and study may spur future Capital Improvement Projects and Strategic Plan Action Items.

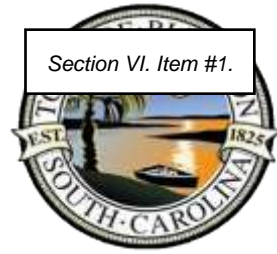
Town of Bluffton Strategic Plan FY 2025 - 2026



Capital Improvements Program Update

Town Council Strategic Plan Workshop
Department of Projects & Watershed Resilience
October 31, 2024

FY24 Completed or Substantially Complete Projects:



➤ **Oyster Factory Park Event Area (\$1.1 million)**

- Completed in May 2024.
- Working on pavilion and drainage repairs.
- Design of restroom expansion is underway.

➤ **Squire Pope Carriage House: (\$1.82 million)**

- Building Construction complete in FY24.
- Landscape construction completed in September 2024.

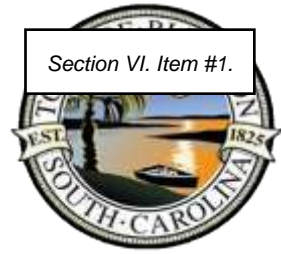
➤ **New Riverside Barn Park Phase 1: (\$3.3 million)**

- Phase 1 (parking, trails, infrastructure, etc.) complete.
- Working on Phase 2 construction (Restrooms, Playground and Barn).

➤ **Oscar Frazier Park Improvements: (\$1.04 million)**

- Rotary Center Hardscape and Rain Garden complete.
- Splash Pad complete and received permit to operate. Ribbon Cutting on 11/5/24.

FY24 Completed or Substantially Complete Projects:



➤ **Park Improvements: (\$1 Million)**

- Buckwalter Place Park – Playground shade sails, signage and landscape.
- New River Linear Trailhead Park Restrooms.
- New Riverside Village Park – Hardscape, lighting and signage.
- DuBois Pavilion repair.

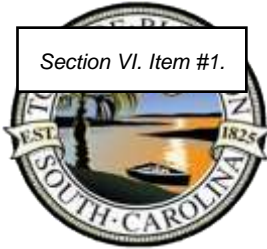
➤ **Streetscapes and Pathways: (\$1.54 Million)**

- Bridge Street Streetscape – Phase 1 (Burnt Church Road to Calhoun Street).
- Historic District Pedestrian Safety Improvements – Phase 1 (Goethe Road intersection improvements).
- BIS Phase 6B Sidewalks and Lighting Closeout.

➤ **Public Sewer: (\$4.35 Million)**

- Historic District Sewer – Phases 2 and 3 (Bridge and Colcock Streets).
- Buck Island/Simmons ville Sewer – Phase 5.

*FY24 Completed or Substantially Complete
Project Photos:*



OYSTER FACTORY PARK EVENT AREA



SQUIRE POPE CARRIAGE HOUSE

FY24 Completed or Substantially Complete Project Photos:



OSCAR FRAZIER PARK SPLASH PAD



BUCKWALTER PLACE PARK SHADE SAILS

Projects Currently Under Construction:

➤ **New Riverside Barn Park – Phase 2 (\$10.9 million)**

- Restrooms, playground, and landscape to be complete by the end of 2024.
- Barn construction to be complete by the end of 2025.

➤ **Welcome Center Upfit (\$123k)**

- Furniture ordered and display cases under fabrication.
- Expected completion in January 2025.

➤ **Buckwalter Place Commerce Park (\$3.3 million)**

- Joint Development Agreement with Parkway Commons I, LLC for construction of 3 buildings.
- Groundbreaking event was held on 10/17/2024.

Projects Currently Under Construction:

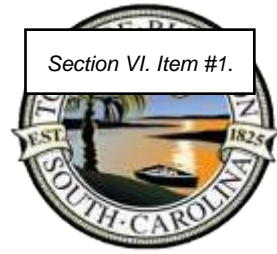


NEW RIVERSIDE BARN PARK PLAYGROUND



BUCKWALTER PLACE COMMERCE PARK

Projects Expected to Start Construction in FY25:



➤ **New River Linear Trail – Phase 1: (\$2.5 million)**

- Design is complete. Permitting underway.
- Bidding in winter 2025 and construction to start in spring 2025.

➤ **Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage Renovation: (\$1.28 million)**

- Design nearing completion. Building construction to start in winter 2025.

➤ **Park Improvements (\$236k)**

- Bidding in winter 2025. Construction of shade sails at playgrounds and public dock bulkhead repair to start summer 2025.

➤ **Buckwalter Place Park – Phase 1 (\$774k)**

- Design 90% complete. Bidding in winter 2024. Construction of restroom addition, lighting, sidewalks and crosswalks to start in spring 2025.

Projects Expected to Start Construction in FY25:



BUCKWALTER PLACE PARK CONCEPT PLAN



SARAH RILEY HOOKS COTTAGE SITE PLAN

Projects Expected to Start Construction in FY25:



➤ **Pritchard Street Drainage and Streetscape: (\$1.7 million)**

- Engineering Design is 95% complete. Permitting and easement acquisition is underway.
- Bidding in winter 2025. Construction to start in early summer 2025.

➤ **Historic District Sewer Phases 4, 5 & 6: (\$1.75 million)**

- Design complete. Bid in fall 2025. Construction to start in winter 2025.

➤ **Historic District Pathways and Pedestrian Improvements – Phase 2: (\$120k)**

- Design and bidding complete. Construction to start in January 2025.

➤ **Bridge Street Streetscape – Phase 2: (\$1.25 million)**

- Design and permitting is underway. Bidding in spring 2025. Construction to start summer 2025.

➤ **Boundary Street Lighting – Phase 2 (\$45k)**

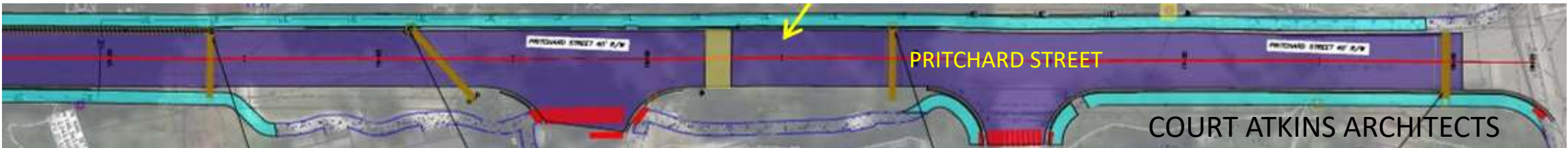
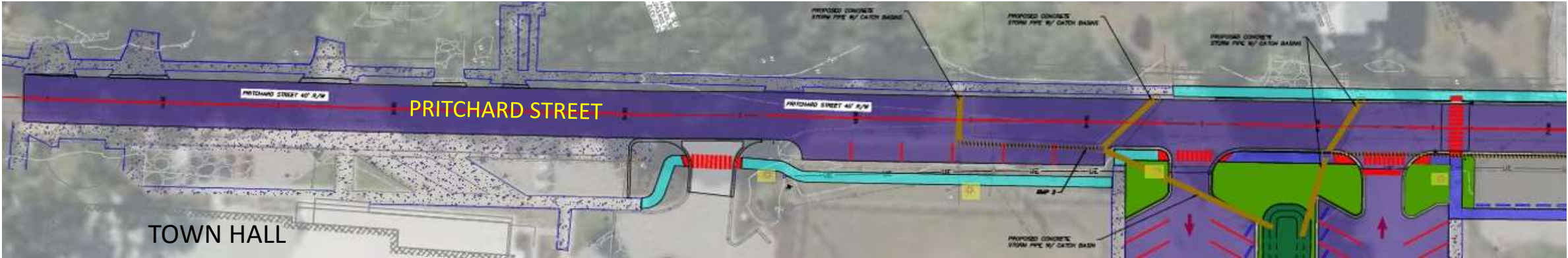
- Awaiting installation by Dominion Energy.

Projects Expected to Start Construction in FY25:



PRITCHARD STREET STREETScape

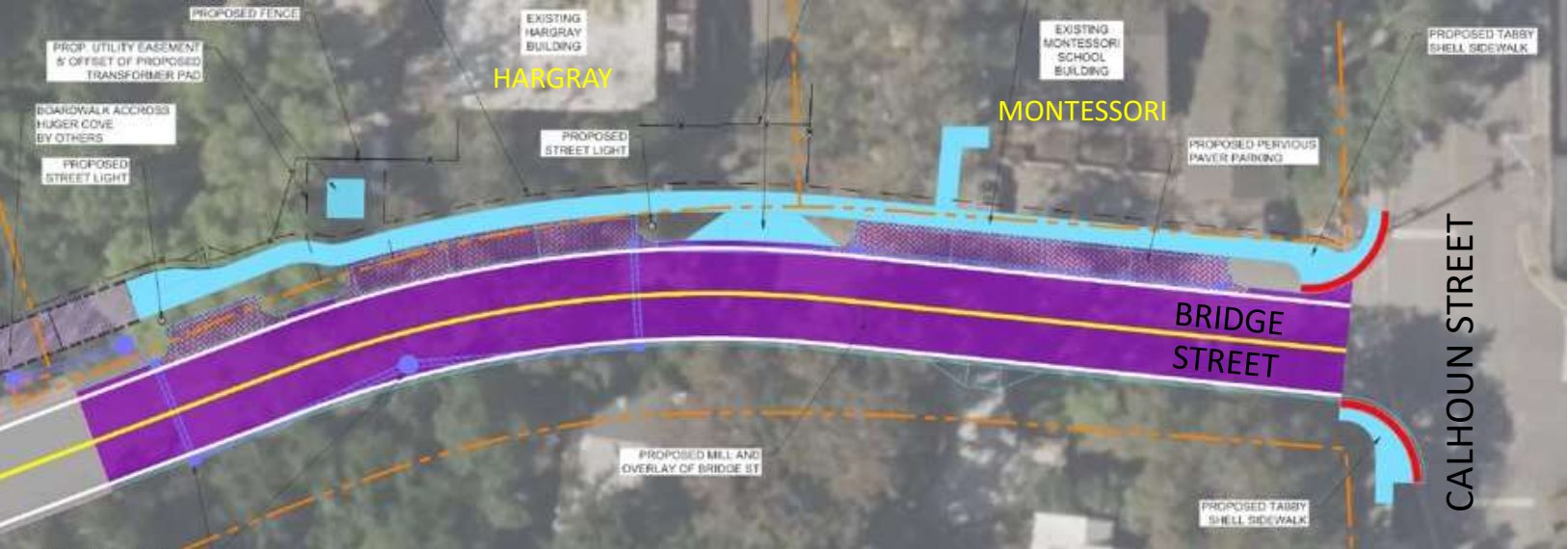
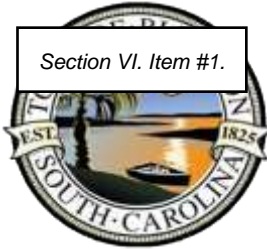
BRIDGE STREET



BRUIN STREET

- New Drainage System = **Brown**
- Limits of Milling and New Pavement = **Purple**
- New Sidewalk : Concrete = **Light Blue** ; Pervious Paver = **Dark Blue**
- New Roll Curb and Gutter : East side starts near entrance to School Parking Lot. West Side starts where new sidewalk begins.
- New Street Lights = **Yellow**.
- New Traffic Calming, Pedestrian and ADA Improvements = **Red Speed Hump = Yellow**.

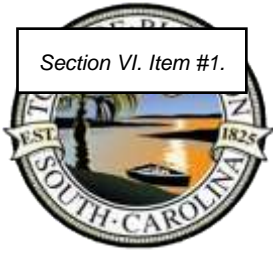
Projects Expected to Start Construction in FY25:



BRIDGE STREET STREETScape PHASE 2



Design Phase – Construction in FY26 and beyond:



➤ **Boundary and Calhoun Street Streetscapes:**

- Design is 75% complete. Requires completion of easement acquisition and permitting.

➤ **Pathway and Pedestrian Safety Improvements – Phase 3:**

- Planning is underway. Construction over multiple years based on Town Council priorities.

➤ **New River Linear Trail – Phase 2:**

- Design is underway. Construction is anticipated to start in the summer 2025.

➤ **Oyster Factory Park Restroom Expansion:**

- Design complete in FY25. Construction in early FY26.

➤ **Comprehensive Drainage Plan:**

- Heyward Cove Drainage Report is complete. Design underway for additional watersheds.

➤ **May River Watershed Action Plan Impervious Restoration Projects:**

- Preliminary designs are ongoing for eight (8) sites for impervious restoration projects.

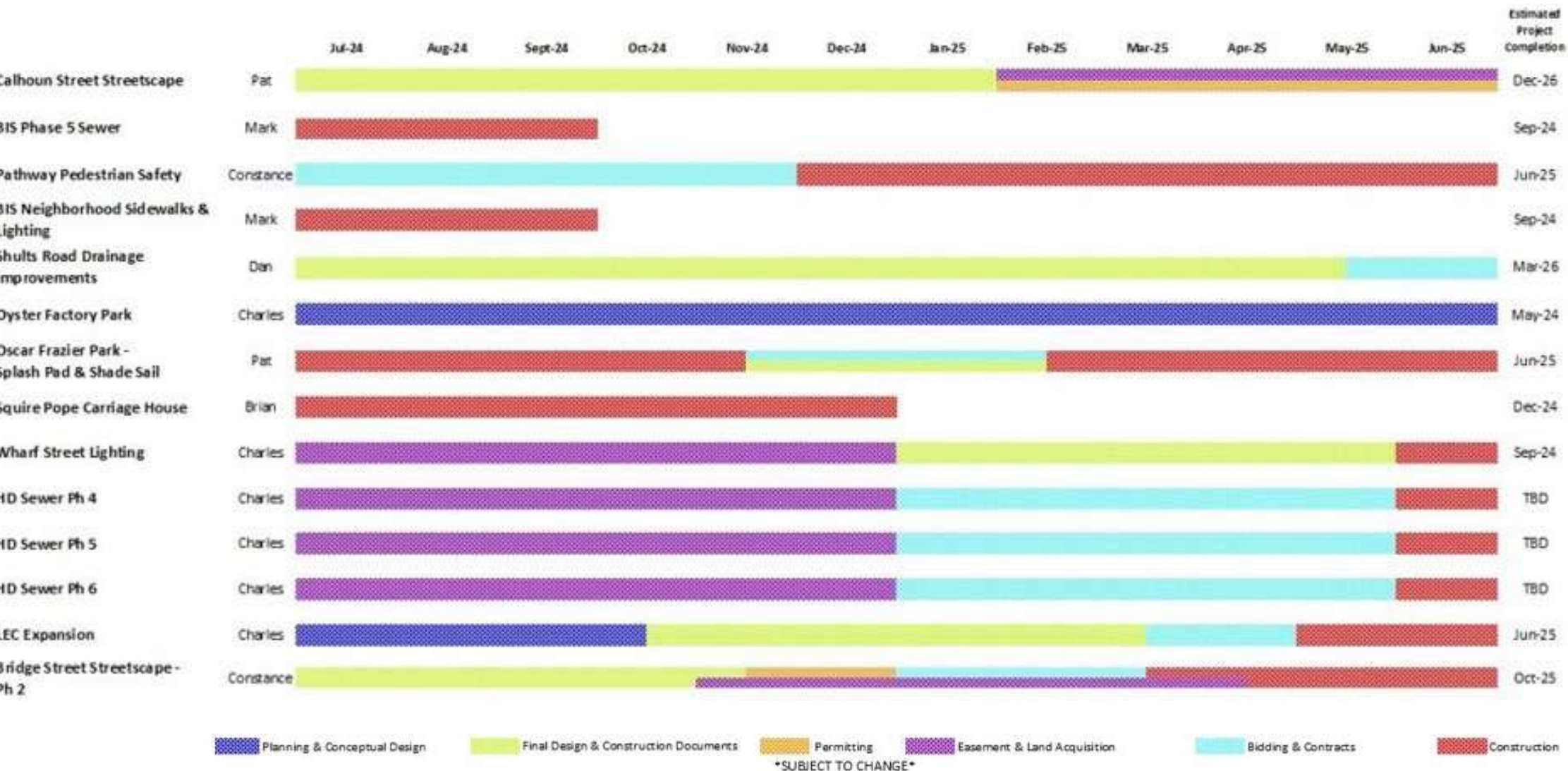
➤ **Town-wide Wayfinding Signage:**

- Contract executed with design consultant on 8/30/2024.

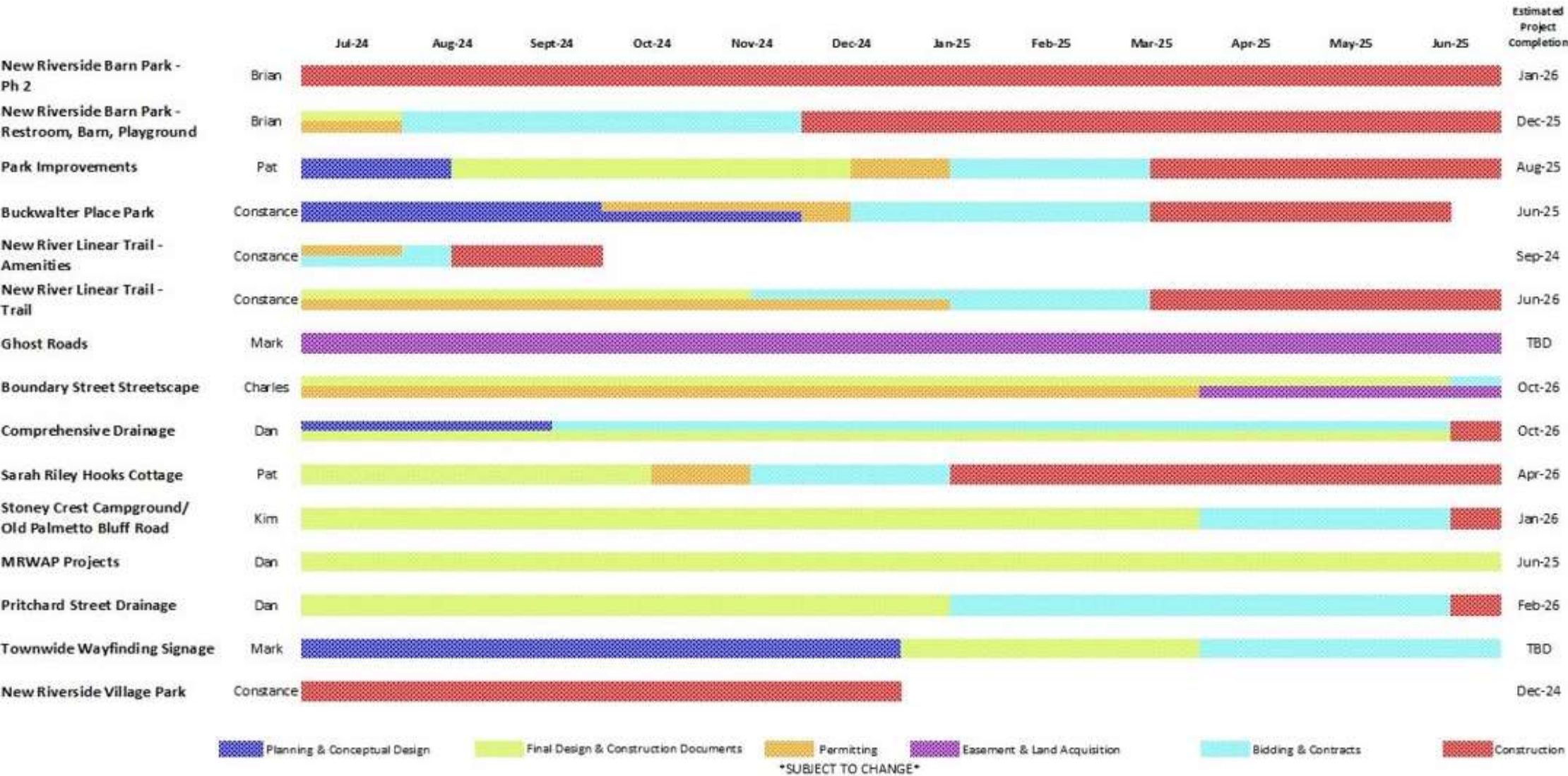
➤ **Sarah Riley Hooks Landscape Development:**

- Design underway. Construction anticipated upon completion of Cottage renovation.

FY25 CIP Master Schedule



FY25 CIP Master Schedule



[Link to CIP Storymap](#)



QUESTIONS & **DISCUSSION**

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HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

Tracked Items Since the Last Strategic Planning Workshop:

- Items mentioned during Council Meetings
- Items from meetings with staff

Receive Guidance and Input from Council:

- Review initial research or designs
- Ensure staff proposals include all Council priorities

Strategic Plan Action Agenda:

- Items for FY 26 Budget
- Prioritization for staff
- Ensure that Council and staff have a shared vision on projects

Overview

KEY TOPICS

- Land Acquisition
- Pedestrian and Safety Improvements
- Green Initiatives
- Resiliency Initiatives
- Affordable Housing
- Historic Preservation
- Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Implementation
- Noise Ordinance

Land Acquisition

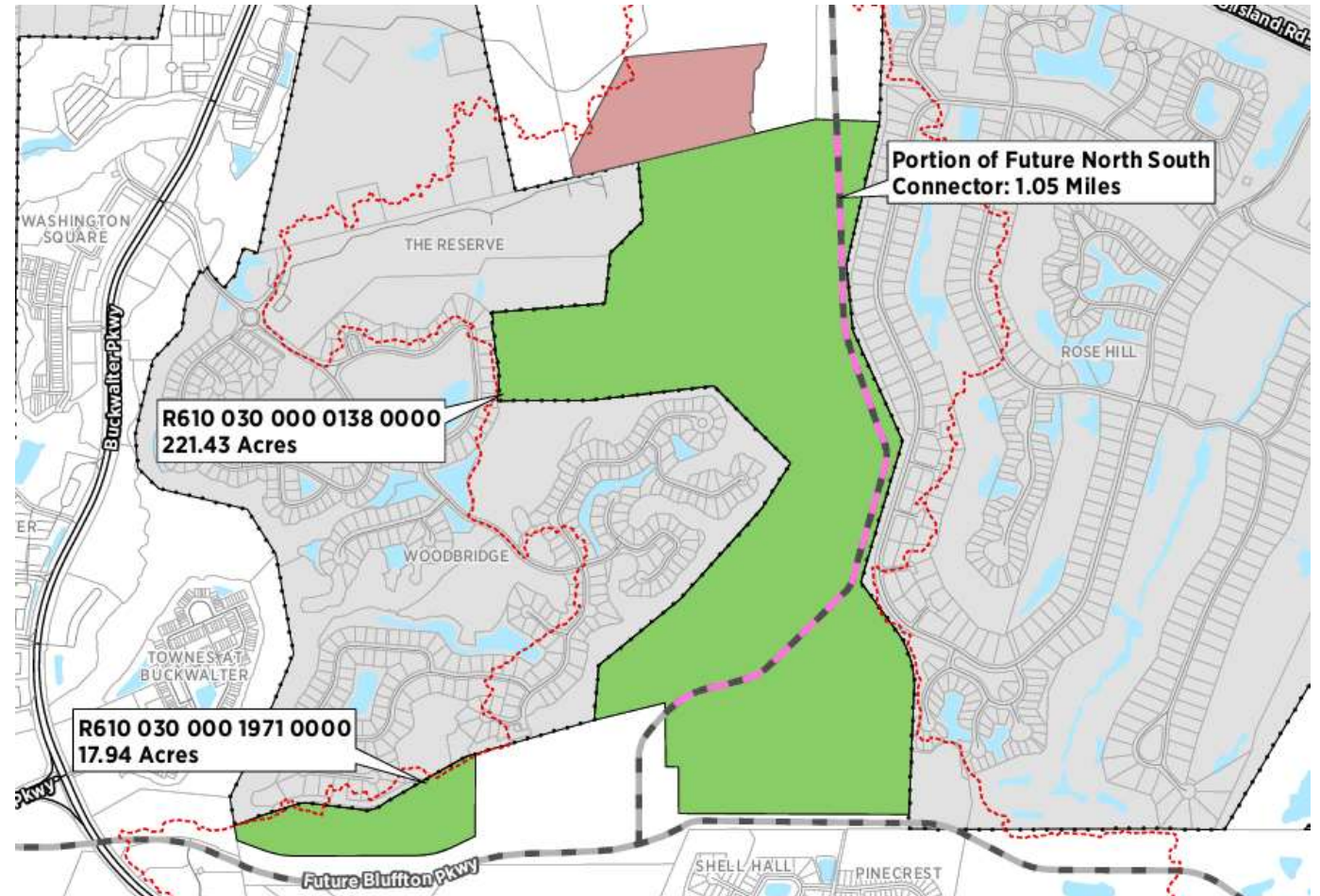
Under Consideration

Beaufort County Green Space Application

Two Parcels totaling approximately 240 acres (221.4 and 17.9 acres)

Estimated value \$2,240,000

Application will be considered by the Committee at their December meeting. Recommendations go to Beaufort County Council for final consideration.



Memorandum of Understanding

MOU between Town of Bluffton
and Beaufort County School District
on July 10, 2024

Partnership to include acquisition,
land swap and the purchase of
development rights, which includes:

- land swap of a minimum of 10 acres of upland;
- 162 acres of commercial;
- 2 (150 room) hotels; and
- 260 residential dwelling units



Community Quality of Life Focus Area Strategic Initiative: Neighborhood Plans

- Closed on March 4, 2024
- 15.5 Acres
- Zoned Residential General
- Will work with the Community to Plan for Future Park/Community Space



Pedestrian and Safety Improvements

Historic District Improvements Update

- 12 locations along Goethe Road, adjacent to Kirks Bluff and MC Riley sports complex, were part of the 2022 Historic District analysis and have been improved with upgrades to meet current ADA standards.
- A contract awarded for design of 18 locations throughout the historic district. Construction to be completed in FY25.
- 11 additional locations require easements or are proposed to include rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB) and are planned for completion in FY26.



Bluffton Town-wide Improvements Update

- Analysis completed identifying 56 possible locations throughout Bluffton, beyond the historic district, that require upgrades to meet current ADA standards.
- 19 locations were identified as high priority for completion by the end of FY26.
- The remaining locations of the Town-wide analysis will be reviewed and prioritized for inclusion in the CIP 5-year plan.



Transportation

RED DETECTABLE WARNING SYSTEM PAVERS, SPEED HUMP AND LIGHTED CROSS WALKS

Section VIII. Item #1.

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HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

Red pavers in the Historic District area (Martin Family Park)



Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB)
Pedestrian Crosswalk



Bluffton Middle School Speed Hump



Palmetto Breeze Partnership

BUS STOPS, SHELTERS

Section VIII. Item #1.

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HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

- Construction Assistance
 - Easement and/or right-of-way acquisition
 - Maintenance and/or cleaning
- Stops, location
 - Benches, solar lighting, bicycle repair, public art
 - Design is flexible, recommendation is no glass
- Funding for Bus Stop Purchase or Construction
 - Any assistance, such as shovel ready plans to maximize grant requests
- Bus Stop Amenities Plan



Green Initiatives

Single Use Plastic Bag Ban

- Effective date: November 1, 2018
- Restricts the use of disposable and non-reusable bags with some exceptions
- May 13, 2024 the Community Services and Land Use Committee of Beaufort County Council considered modifications to the Ordinance to include the elimination of plastic straws and polystyrene/plastic foam (Styrofoam)
- County Council denied a motion to approve the Ordinance on the May 28, 2024
- Coastal Conservation League made a presentation to SoLoCo on July 23 requesting that there be more public engagement and discussions with municipalities.



Transition To regenerative Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

- Solidify Bluffton's position as a leader in Ecotourism
- Safeguard the community's well-being
- Preserve Bluffton's natural beauty for generations to come
- Prioritizing the safety of our children, pets, pollinators and our environment

Working with Kim Konte of **Non-Toxic Neighborhoods** in conjunction with Eric Maurer from Neudorff, we secured donations of organic, non-selective alternatives for us to demonstrate proof of concept.

Goals

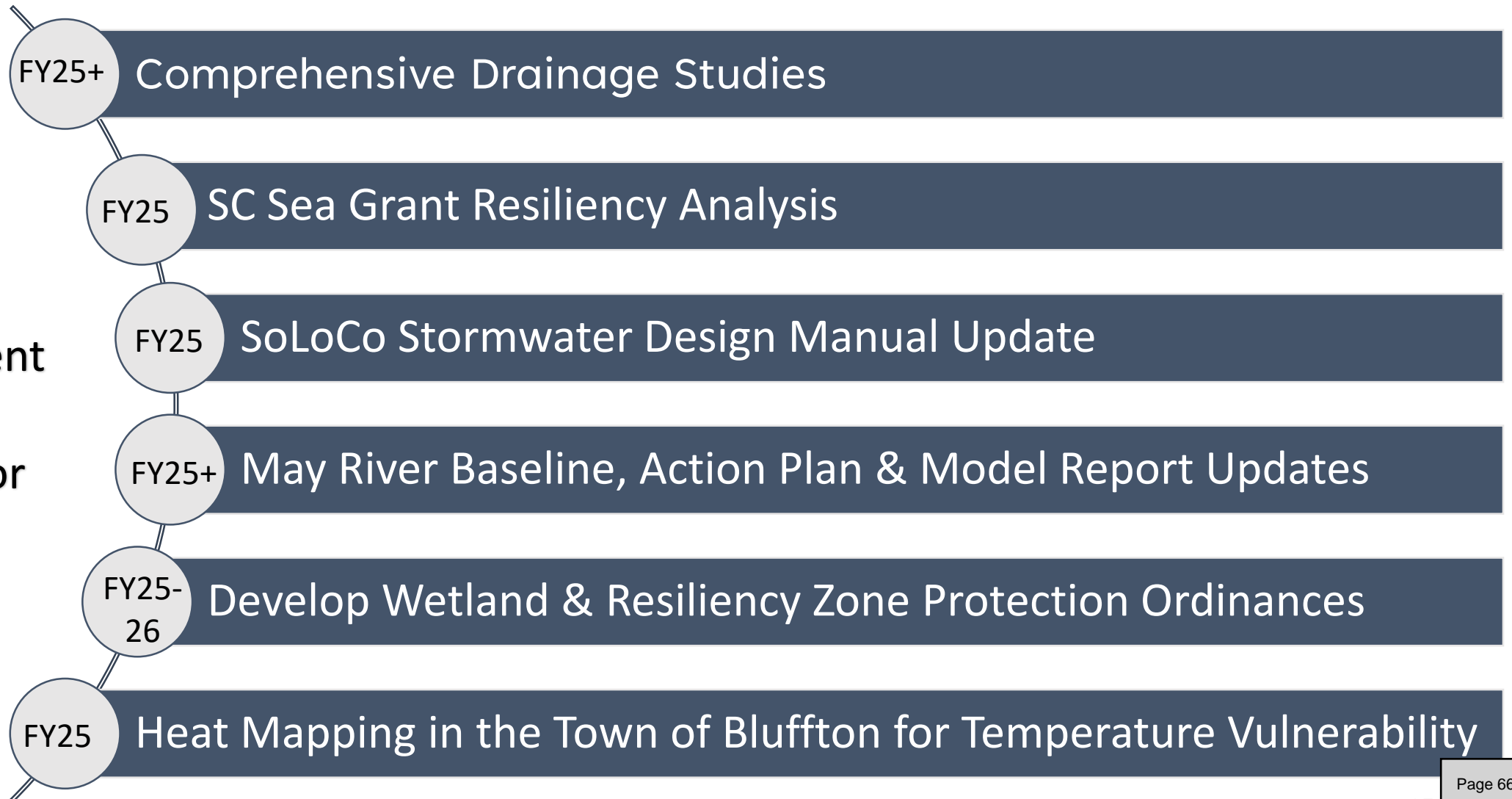
- Use DuBois and Martin Family Park as a trial area
- Prove that these alternatives work
- Do a cost analysis comparing labor & materials of what we presently use verse these alternatives.
- Develop Policy & Procedures for an Integrated Pest Management(IPM) Program



"Protecting our environment is good business"

Resiliency Initiatives

Current
Watershed
Management
Resiliency
Priorities for
FY25-26

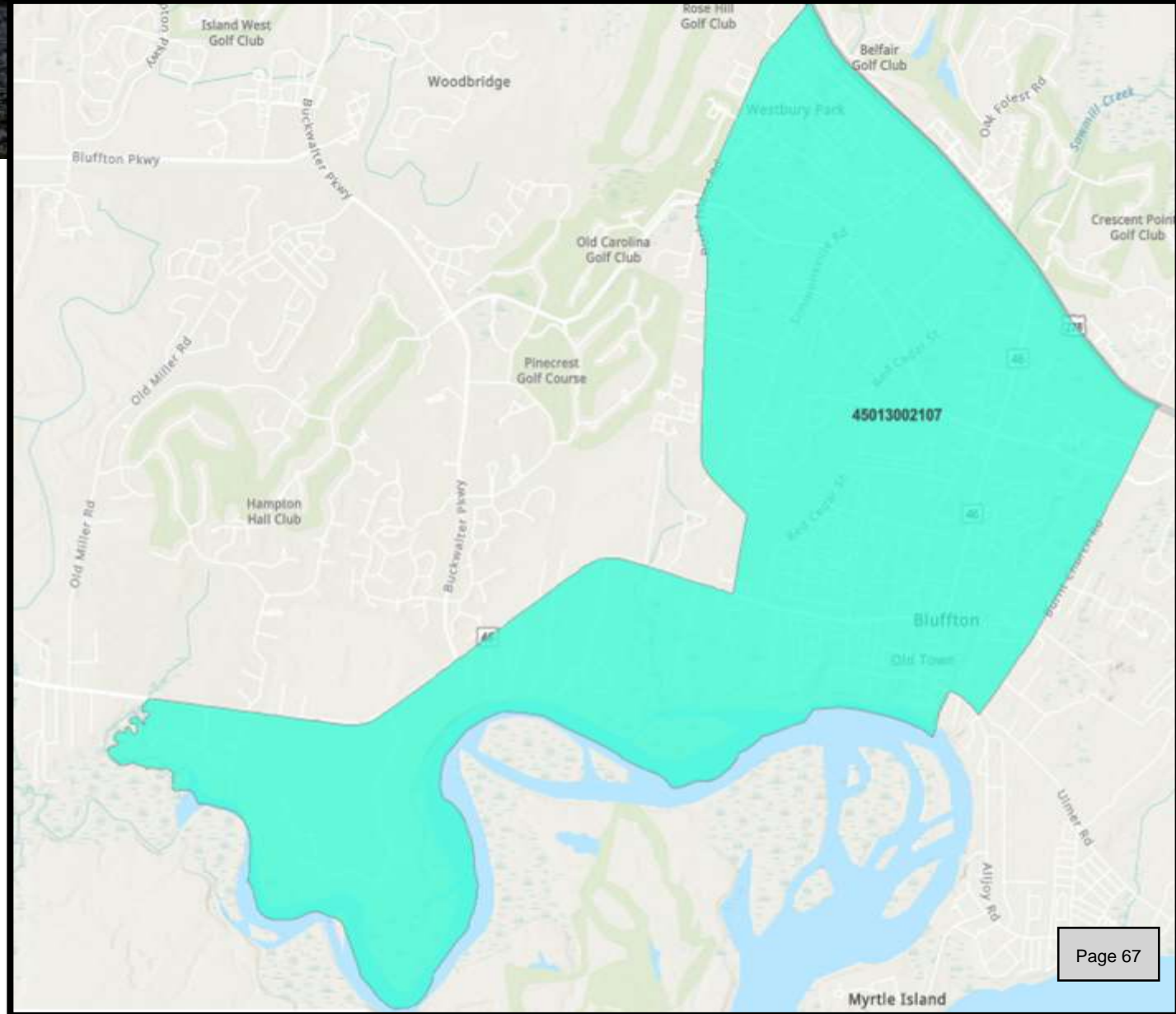


CDRZ TRACT IN BLUFFTON

Section VIII. Item #1.

BACKGROUND:

- Enacted in December 2022, the **Community Disaster Resilience Zones (CDRZ) Act** identifies areas/communities most at risk to natural hazards and climate change, focusing on modern, resilient infrastructure and nature-based solutions.
- CDRZ Tract in Bluffton (census tract number 45013002107) includes Buck Island and Simmonsville areas as well as portions of the County.



COMPREHENSIVE DRAINAGE STUDIES

Section VIII. Item #1.

Purpose

Identify & determine stormwater infrastructure conveyance systems by type, condition, size, and owner.

Identify stormwater infrastructure conveyance systems in need of maintenance, repair, or upgrade in size or type.

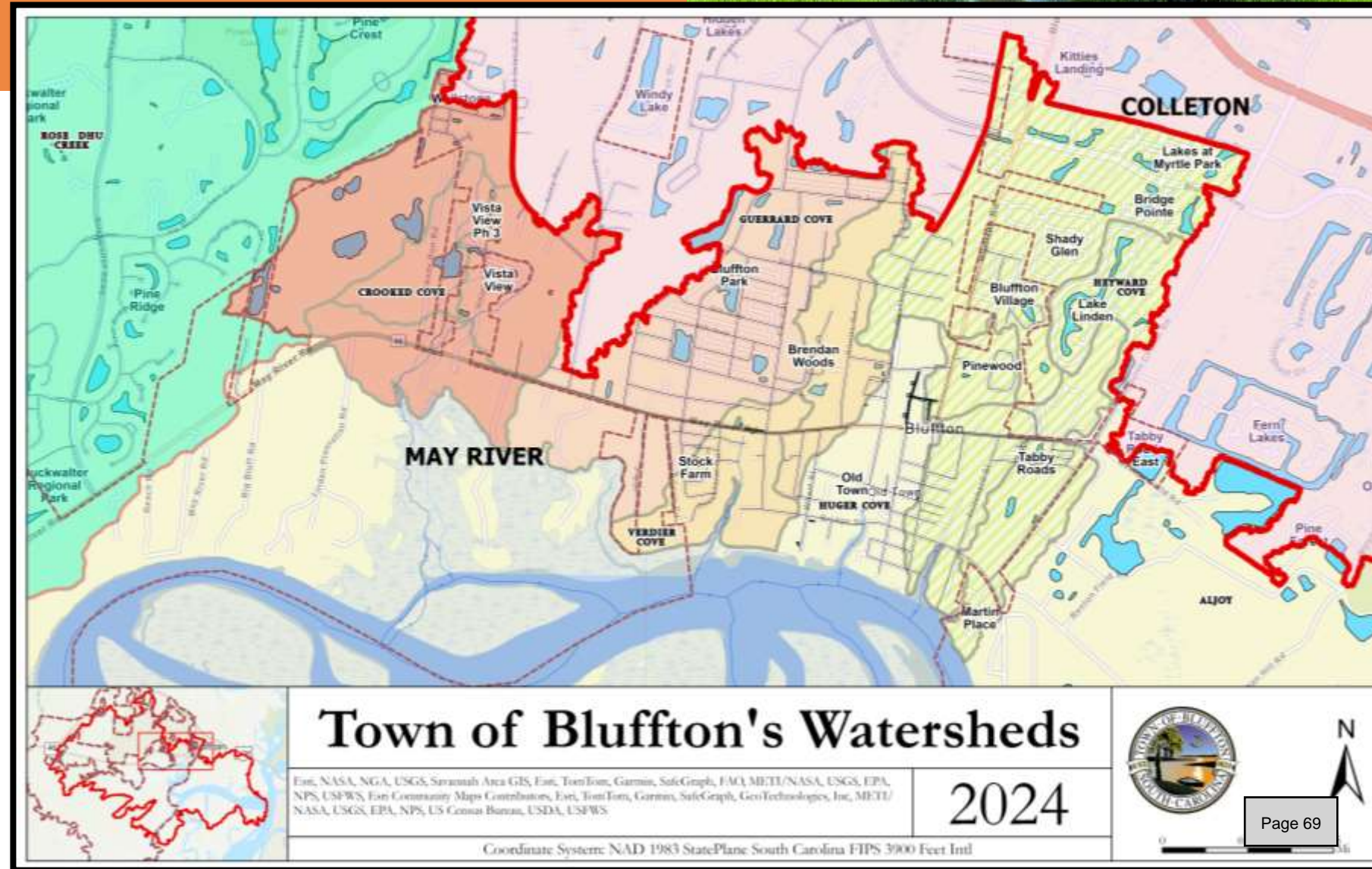
- Town asset improvement construction will be proposed as individual CIP projects in future Fiscal Years.

Identify critical stormwater storage areas and primary conveyance systems for protection.

COMPREHENSIVE DRAINAGE NEXT STEPS

Section VIII. Item #1.

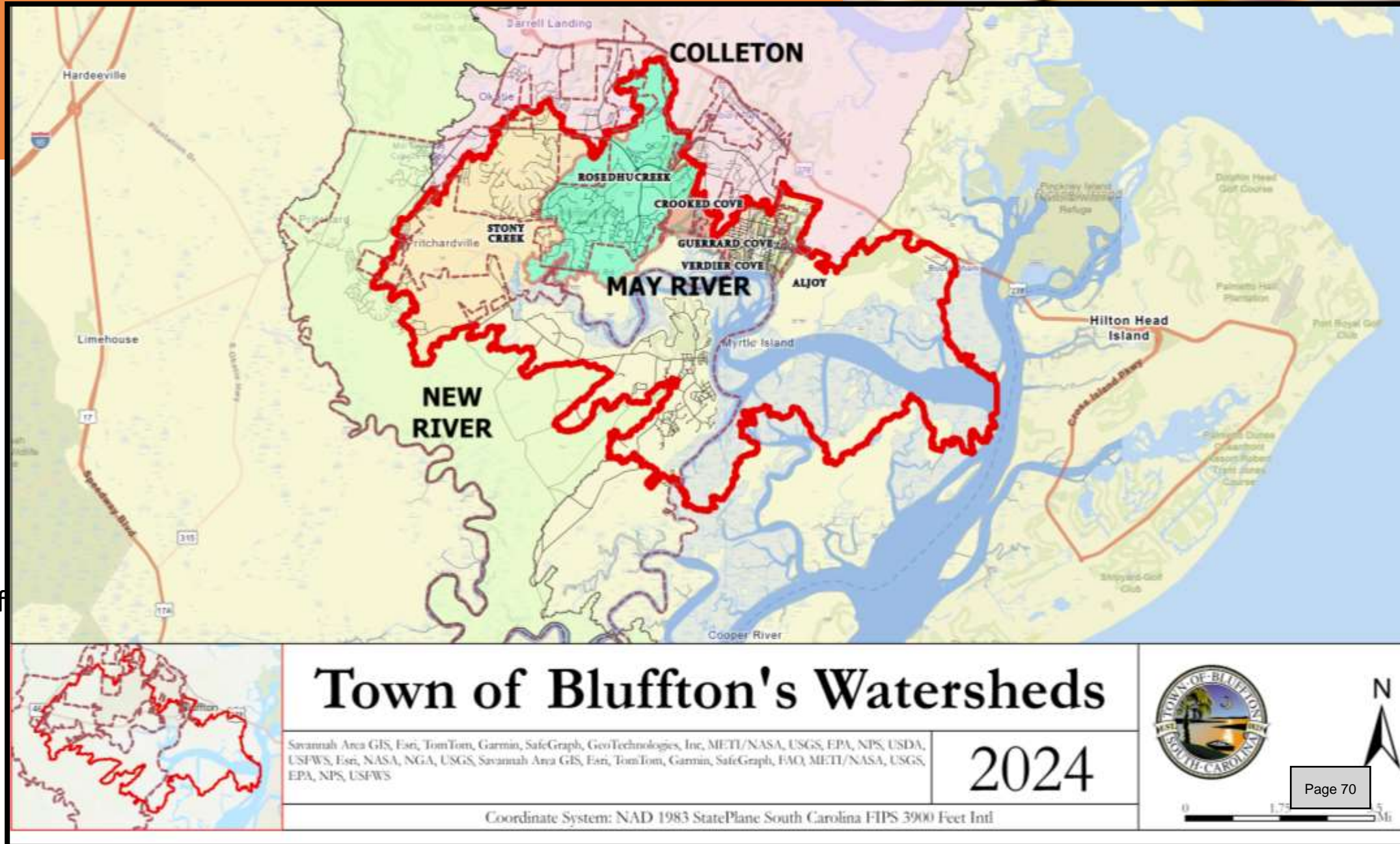
- Completed Heyward Cove in October 2023.
- Completed infrastructure assessment in Crooked and Guerrard Coves. Modeling underway.
- Verdier and Huger Coves proposed in FY25 includes portion of CDRZ. Potential BRIC Grant(~\$278,000) under FEMA review.



COMPREHENSIVE DRAINAGE NEXT STEPS

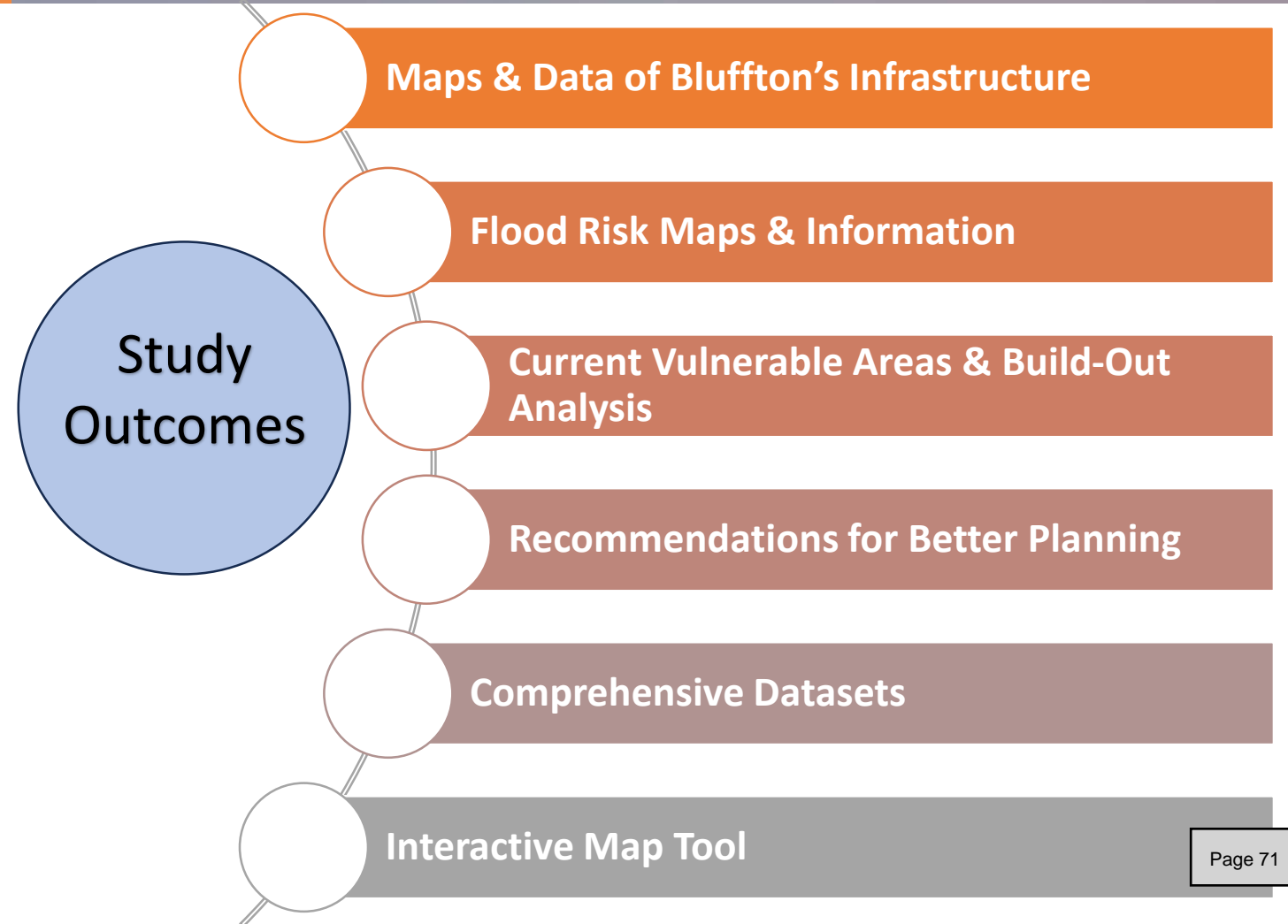
Section VIII. Item #1.

- Propose continuing analyses throughout Town watersheds.
- Council direction on prioritization of analyses.



SC SEA GRANT RESILIENCY ANALYSIS

- College of Charleston and the S.C. Sea Grant Consortium are developing resiliency-focused scientific models with community members' engagement.
- Anticipated final report in January 2025.
- Data findings to be shared regionally because of large project area.





- **Proposed Edits:**

- Provide clarifications on implementation of stormwater practices;
- Enhance enforcement capabilities for post-construction maintenance of pre-MS4 communities;
- Promote the use of Better Site Design principles through credits towards meeting stormwater retention volume requirements; and,
- Minor text edits.

- **Next Steps:**

- Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee and Planning Commission review prior to end of calendar year 2024.
- Town Council consideration for Resolution to amend SOLOCO Design Manual first quarter of 2025.

MAY RIVER BASELINE ASSESSMENT, ACTION PLAN & MODEL UPDATES

Section VIII. Item #1.

May River Baseline Assessment

- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) completing updates.
- SCDNR interim report prior to end of 2024.
- Final report anticipated in first quarter of 2025.

2021 May River Watershed Action Plan & Model

- May River headwaters water quality model:
 - FY25 - 26 calibrate model with additional data. Staff currently drafting scope of work.
 - Calibrated model will provide better estimates of bacteria loadings, hydrologic processes, water quality assessment and evaluation.
- Impervious surface restoration projects:
 - Completed eight (8) sites' geotechnical evaluations and began initial design work.
 - Completed a BMP Scoring matrix to rank feasibility and effectiveness of proposed BMPs.
 - Identified an additional fifteen (15) sites for future restoration projects.

WETLAND & RESILIENCY ZONE PROTECTION ORDINANCES

Section VIII. Item #1.

BACKGROUND:

US Supreme Court's May 2023 decision changed the definition of Waters of the United States (WOTUS) and federal wetlands protections. There are no State wetland regulations currently in place.

FY25 NEXT STEPS:

Contract award anticipated for Town Council consideration in January 2025 for creation of both ordinances.

Wetland Protection Ordinance

- Intended as an immediate act of protection to create:
 - A map of wetland areas within the Town,
 - Town of Bluffton wetland regulations, and
 - An opportunity for potential regional approach to wetland protection.

Resiliency Zone Protection Ordinance

- Protect primary conveyance systems and critical stormwater storage areas (identified through Comprehensive Drainage Studies).
- These areas may exceed Federal and Town wetland protection areas to provide flood prevention and mitigation opportunities.

Current Partnerships

- Working with the South Carolina Environmental Law Project (SCELP) and the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) to ensure applicability throughout Town's jurisdiction.
- On-going conversations with Beaufort County Government.



Proposed FY26 Wetland Restoration Program

- Classify and evaluate wetlands within the Town's municipal limits.
- Develop a condition assessment of all mapped wetlands in the Town to:
 - ⑩ Select priority restoration and conservation opportunities,
 - ⑩ Identify where water quality services may be vulnerable,
 - ⑩ Identify potential areas for stormwater storage expansion, and
 - ⑩ Assess potential impacts of projects on wetlands.

HEAT MAPPING IN THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON FOR TEMPERATURE VULNERABILITY

- Furman University's Shi Institute's Applied Research Team has completed a **free** heat mapping analysis for the Town of Bluffton to identify areas/neighborhoods that may be more vulnerable to future increasing temperatures.
- This heat mapping analysis will be used in course-based projects for a Furman course.
- Student groups will draft narratives that depict what futures may be possible for Bluffton based on what mitigation actions the Town may choose to implement.

FURMAN UNIVERSITY
DRAFT HEAT MAP FOR
TOWN OF BLUFFTON

Municipal boundary



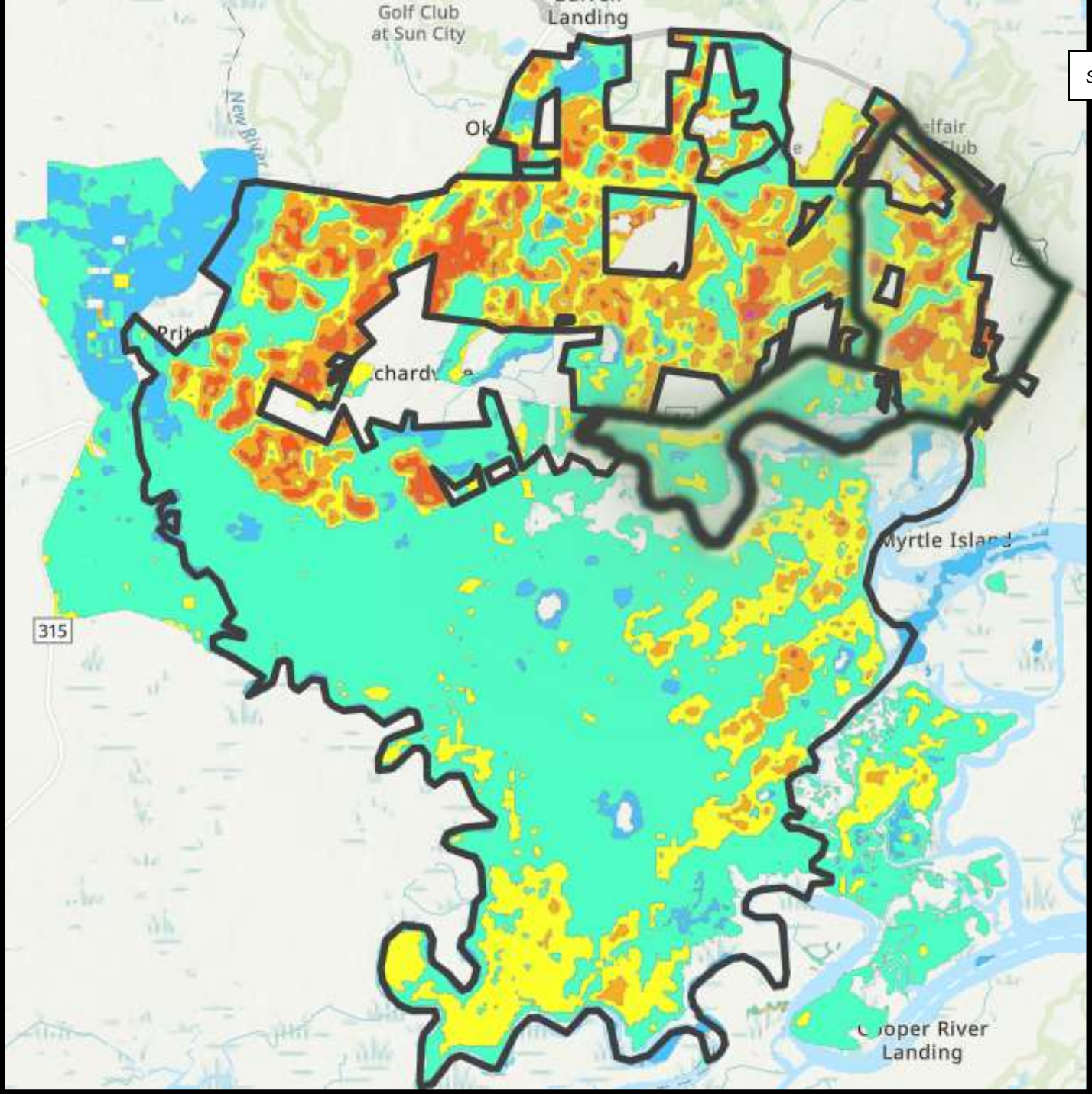
FEMA Community Disaster Resilience Zones



Heat contours

Temperature contours (regions)

Lower-bound land surface temperature



FY26 & BEYOND PROPOSED RESILIENCY NEXT STEPS

Section VIII. Item #1.



Resiliency StoryMap:

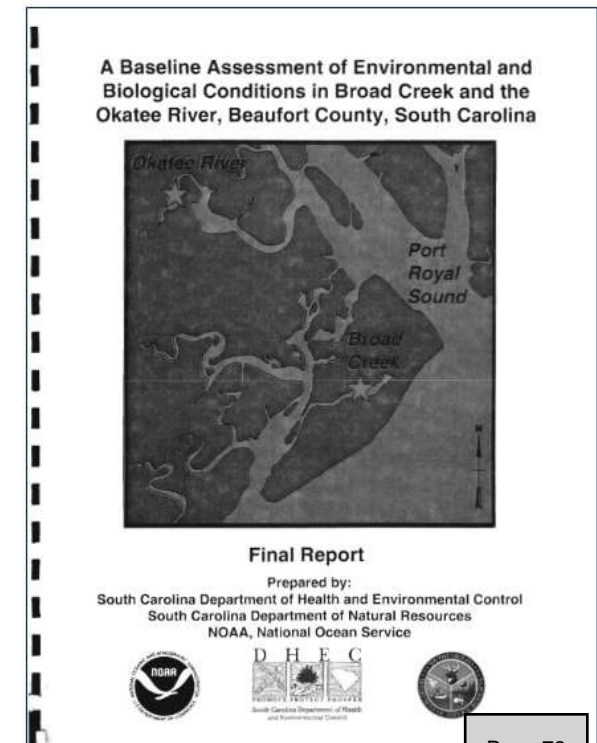
- Staff development in progress to provide community awareness and educational opportunities.

Resiliency Plan:

- Draft a Town of Bluffton Resiliency Plan utilizing recommendations from all ongoing studies, federal and statewide data, and the USCB water quality statistical review of Town monitoring data.

Okatie River Baseline Update:

- Partnership with Beaufort County to update SCDNR's 2000 "*A Baseline Assessment of Environmental and Biological Condition in Broad Creek and the Okatee River, Beaufort County, South Carolina.*"



Affordable Housing

Fee In Lieu

- Consideration of including a fee in lieu for the future construction of affordable housing.
- It was previously discussed in 2020 when affordable housing (AH) was added as a requirement for new or amended PUDs; however, removed prior to second reading.

Incentives

- Provide pre-approved building plans
- Expand allowable housing types
- Consider increasing height/density and other flexible zoning incentives
- Continue to identify financial incentives that Town and other agencies may be able to provide to reduce expenses
- Consider increasing the required affordability time period (>30 years)
- Continue researching and consideration of Town purchases of land to lease for AH construction

Historic Preservation

Inclusion of Tiers in the Contributing Resources List

- **Tier One:** Resources that are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Tier Two:** Resources that are “contributing” to the Bluffton (National Register) Historic District (1996).
- **Tier Three:** Resources that are “non-contributing” to the Bluffton (National Register) Historic District (1996) and “contributing” to the Old Town Bluffton Historic District (2007) as determined by Town Council, updated May 10, 2022.
- **Tier Four:** Resources that are only “contributing” to the Old Town Bluffton Historic District (2007) as determined by Town Council, updated May 10, 2022.

Buck Island Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Implementation

Buck Island Simmonsville NGHD Plan

KEY TOPICS

Community Involvement & Identity

- Action Item #7 Incorporate art into the community on both public and private property.
- Scheduled a neighborhood meeting for early next year to update on projects, private developments, police, fire, NAP, etc.
- Begin park planning process—with input from the community.

Land Use & Zoning

- Action Item #3 Explore the potential to purchase land and develop a community park.
- Land purchased, community input underway (last neighborhood meeting included opportunity, could be included in 2025 tabling events)

Public Services

- Action Item #6 Plan at least one “fun day” neighborhood event with the Police Department and residents.
- Scheduled a neighborhood meeting for early next year to update on projects, private developments, police, fire, NAP, etc. Begin park planning process—possibly start with a survey of residents.

Other

- During steering committee meetings, it was requested that Town Staff research a Gullah-Geechee Committee, similar to Hilton Head Island’s. This has been completed.

Noise Ordinance

Noise Ordinance

The Noise Ordinance was approved April 8, 2014.

Recently public comments were stated during a Town Council meeting concerning noise generated from Special Events in Old Town.

Before Staff moves forward with additional research and feedback, staff requests feedback on the following questions:

- Is the noise level too high?
- Is the issue associated with permitted special events?
- Should staff revisit the approved hours of noise at events?
- Should the number of events be limited as well as the capacity?
- Is the concern the type of noise emitted from special events, such as vibration or bass?



Additional Topics



bluffton

HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

Thank You