

TOWN COUNCIL



STAFF REPORT Growth Management Department

MEETING DATE:	August 09, 2016
PROJECT:	Resolution Amending the Town of Bluffton Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy
PROJECT MANAGER:	Brad Mole, Community-Business Development Coordinator

RECOMMENDATION: The Affordable Housing Committee recommends Town Council approve a Resolution amending the Town of Bluffton Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy to:

Background: In 2009, the Town of Bluffton established a Neighborhood Assistance Program that provides various services to assist low and moderate income residents in Bluffton with property repairs and improvements that will help to increase the quality of life for all residents while creating a safer, more vibrant community that retains its character and provides for quality affordable housing.

At their meeting on June 7, 2016, the Affordable Housing Committee recommended Town Council approve the following amendments to the Neighborhood Assistance Policy:

1. Amend the Eligibility portion of the Neighborhood Assistance Program. One requirement currently states the program is available for qualified owners of residential properties within the Town of Bluffton. If approved, the statement would read the program is available for qualified residents of the Town of Bluffton.
2. Amend the Required Applicant Forms and Documentation. Currently required documentation includes Proof of Property Ownership. If approved, the change would ask the applicant for adequate proof of an ownership interest in the Property, whether by recorded title, court order, affidavit or otherwise.

ANALYSIS: Mobile Home Repair: There is an increase in applicants who need repairs done to their mobile homes. Because of Heirs' Property issues, these applicants own the mobile home but not land where the mobile home is placed. We have 10 applicants who don't own the land their home sits on.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution Amending the Town of Bluffton Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy
2. Amended Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy

**RESOLUTION
AMENDING THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM POLICY**

WHEREAS, the need to address quality of life issues for the Town of Bluffton ("the Town") and addressing the concerns and issues of low-to moderate income residents is a priority for the Town; and

WHEREAS, in 2009 the Town of Bluffton, South Carolina established the Neighborhood Assistance Program; and

WHEREAS, the Town has continued to allocate funding with each subsequently adopted Budget for the Neighborhood Assistance Program; and

WHEREAS, on June 14, 2011 Town Council, by Consent Agenda for the Growth Management Update, adopted the Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy to provide guidance with the administration of the program; and

WHEREAS, at various times Town Council, as recommended by the Affordable Housing Committee, has amended the Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy to adapt to the changing needs of the community; and

WHEREAS, on June 7, 2016 the Affordable Housing Committee voted unanimously to amend the Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy to make the resources of this program available to applicants who own the home but not the land

WHEREAS, the Town desires to amend Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy per the Affordable Housing Committee recommendations as detailed below.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN OF BLUFFTON TOWN COUNCIL AS FOLLOWS:

1. Town Council hereby amends the Town of Bluffton Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy, as follows and directs Town staff to immediately institute such amendments:
 - a. Amend the Eligibility portion of the Neighborhood Assistance Program to read the program is available for qualified residents of the Town of Bluffton.
 - b. Amend the Required Applicant Forms and Documentation to read adequate proof of an ownership interest in the Property, whether by recorded title, court order, affidavit or otherwise;

**THIS RESOLUTION SHALL BE EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY UPON ADOPTION.
SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED AS OF THIS ___ DAY OF _____,
2016.**

Lisa Sulka, Mayor, Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

ATTEST:

Sandra Lunceford, Town Clerk, Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

Town of Bluffton
Department of Growth Management
Neighborhood Assistance Program

Policy Statement

The Town of Bluffton has established the Neighborhood Assistance Program to assist low to moderate income residents of Bluffton with property repairs and improvements that will help to increase the quality of life for all residents while creating a safer, more vibrant community that retains its character and provides for quality affordable housing.

Program Overview

The Neighborhood Assistance Program provides Town of Bluffton qualified residents of single-family properties with the following home and community improvements.

1. Home Repair – Assist residents with repairs to the inside and outside of their homes that result in a drier and safer home.
2. Septic System Maintenance/Repair – Provide maintenance, repair or replacement of failing septic systems.
3. Property Clean-Up – Facilitate the removal of debris and other objects, such as abandoned cars and boats, from the property.
4. Abatement/Demolition of Unsafe Structures – Assist with the abatement or demolition of unsafe structures on residential property in accordance with the procedures outlined in Chapter 5, Article 9 of the Municipal Code of the Town of Bluffton. The Town may assume the cost of abatement or demolition for qualified residents if funds are available.
5. Heirs Property Title Assistance – Work with The Center for Heirs Property to provide legal services for property owners wanting to clear title to their land.
6. E-9-1-1 Address Posting – Confirm correct addressing and provide address markers and posting to ensure that properties are correctly marked for 9-1-1 emergency services.

Some requested services may require additional Town reviews and/or approvals. Town Staff will assist the applicant in obtaining the necessary reviews. Fees for building permits and any other Town of Bluffton applications will be waived.

Eligibility

The program is available for qualified ~~owners of residential properties~~ within residents of the Town of Bluffton. The Neighborhood Assistance Program is aimed at low to moderate income residents. In order to qualify, applicants must have an annual household income that does not exceed 60% of the Area Median Income for Beaufort County*. Eligibility for the program is based on the total income of all adults (18 years and older) living in the household and the number of household members.

Expenditures on an individual property may not exceed \$5,000 per fiscal year with the exception of the cost of abatement or demolition of structures declared to be unsafe by the Building Official. Residents may receive assistance once per calendar year unless an emergency situation exists as determined by the Town Manager.

Income verification and qualification is determined through an agreement with the LowCountry Council of Governments. In order to verify income, any (*not all*) of the following types of documentation must be submitted by the applicant and each adult living in the household.

- Three (3) consecutive payroll stubs *or*,
- A completed verification of employment form *or*,
- Social Security annual statement, Retirement statement or stub *or*,
- Bank statements-Deposit Snapshot from bank for social security income or income from other sources *or*,
- Current year income tax return.

Required Applicant Forms and Documentation

The applicant is required to submit the following forms and documentation when requesting any of the services offered under this Program:

1. A Complete Application;
2. ~~Proof of Property Ownership~~ Adequate proof of an ownership interest in the Property, whether by recorded title, court order, affidavit or otherwise;
3. A Total Monthly Income Information form(s) that includes the gross income of each adult member of the household*;
4. Income documentation for each adult member of the household*; and
5. A Temporary Access Easement Agreement which allows Town Staff and Town contractors access to the property for the purpose of evaluating and performing work as described on the work specifications sheet. Other waiver(s) may be required depending on the request type.

Please note that Septic System Maintenance/Repair and E-9-1-1 Address Posting **do not require income qualification.*

Program Administration

The Program is administered through the Department of Growth Management Customer Service Center. Due to the Program scope, several Town Departments are involved and oversee specific responsibilities associated with the Program, as further defined in the Standard Operating Procedures.

The Program is promoted through community outreach to individual property owners, neighborhood groups, service organizations, community stakeholders, public meetings, Town of Bluffton website, Town of Bluffton Customer Service Center, and the media.

Contact Information

Growth Management Customer Service Center
Town of Bluffton
20 Bridge Street
Bluffton, SC 29910

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