

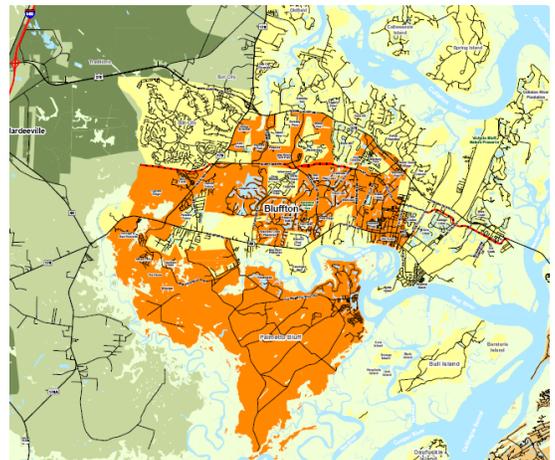


Introduction 1

Welcome to Bluffton!

The Town of Bluffton is located in the heart of the Lowcountry, conveniently situated between Hilton Head, Savannah and Beaufort in southeastern South Carolina. Bluffton has quickly grown from a quaint “One Square Mile” coastal town to a rapidly growing community of over 53 square miles that an increasing number of people come to live, work, and visit.

It is important that as development continues, Bluffton takes advantage of the opportunities provided with this growth while managing the challenges associated with it. A key reason for this Comprehensive Plan is to do just that, to help ensure the right amount and location of land uses while managing impacts to the environment, transportation system, public services, and existing development. Most importantly, it is essential that as Bluffton grows, the Town maintains its unique character or “state of mind.”



1.1 What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Purpose and Scope

The Comprehensive Plan is a document created to guide the future growth and development of the community. A sound Comprehensive Plan helps ensure that Bluffton remains a highly desirable community in which to live, work, and visit. This can be accomplished by preserving and enhancing the qualities of the community that the residents, businesses, and property owners consider important. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to:

- Provide a pattern for land use which will provide a sustainable community with a diversified tax base to support the desired facilities and services with reasonable tax rates.
- Provide a legal basis for zoning and other regulations for the type, intensity, and timing of development.
- Ensure that as development occurs, the most significant cultural and natural features are preserved or enhanced.
- Recommend improvements to the transportation system including roadways that need upgrading, traffic management tools to preserve roadway capacity, access management standards, and non-motorized options.
- Address the desires and needs of the residents, businesses, and property owners to preserve and enhance the community and its natural aesthetics.
- Coordinate land use recommendations with anticipated land use changes, infrastructure improvements, and surrounding communities.

There are a number of ways this Comprehensive Plan can help meet these expectations. The Town Council, Planning Commission, the public, various agencies, businesses and prospective developers can all use the plan to help guide and coordinate decisions, such as:

- To describe the desired future land use pattern and land use types to both guide expectations of those involved in new development and redevelopment and to give the public some degree of certainty about the plans for the future.

- To identify where regional coordination is needed along borders, along road corridors or natural features that run through several communities and to meet mutual goals.
- As a reference to identify and recommend public improvements to roads, streetscapes, entryways, pathways, parks, infrastructure, and public facilities.
- As a standard for reviewing development proposals – to confirm the proposal meets the goals and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan.
- As a criterion for reviewing annexation and rezoning requests – to confirm the request is consistent with the existing conditions, the future land use map, the appropriate timing of the change, consistency with the goals and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan, and potential impacts on Bluffton.
- As a basis for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map - to help realize plan goals.

Enabling Authority

This plan has been developed under the authority of Title VI, Chapter 29, Sections 310 through 1200 of the 1976 Official Code of South Carolina, 1994 Cumulative Supplement. In the preparation of this plan update, the Planning Commission has met or exceeded all requirements contained in Chapter VI of the State Code. This study has been conducted in full compliance with public input requirements.

1.2 Comprehensive Plan Process

The Comprehensive Plan is the essential first step in the overall community planning process. While Bluffton's original Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1999, this update will serve as a base for future planning efforts during the upcoming years.

An assessment of the accuracy of the Plan's originally inventoried data was first addressed. The next step was the development of preliminary visions, needs, goals, and implementation steps. Next, staff received input from the public and officials. From this input, the Plan was refined to state Bluffton's vision on important issues and to serve as a guide for future development and policies.

Throughout the planning process, Planning and Growth Management Staff held a series of public meetings with the Planning Commission and Town Council throughout 2006 and during seven public joint workshops in 2007. Once the complete Comprehensive Plan was prepared, the Planning Commission recommended its approval and was then adopted by Town Council in September of 2007.

1.3 Comprehensive Plan Components

The Comprehensive Plan is comprised of nine main components in accordance with State code:

- Chapter 2 Population
- Chapter 3 Cultural Resources
- Chapter 4 Natural Resources
- Chapter 5 Housing
- Chapter 6 Economic Development
- Chapter 7 Community Facilities
- Chapter 8 Land Use
- Chapter 9 Transportation
- Chapter 10 Priority Investment Act

Within each chapter there is an inventory and analysis of the existing and projected trends. The results of this analysis were used in the establishment of the needs for the community, goals and implementation strategies to achieve those goals. These strategies identify responsible parties and an estimated time frame for completion as identified in the following table.

Implementation Strategies Timeframe	
Timeframe	Length of Time for Completion
On-going	Continuous in its efforts
Short	No more than one year after adoption of the plan
Medium	1-3 years after adoption of the plan
Long	3-5 years after adoption of the plan

In addition to the chapters discussed above, the Plan also contains a technical appendix. Appendix A Technical Data includes a more detailed inventory than is provided in each chapter. The appendix includes additional background data, which may be of interest, but are not essential to the recommended implementation strategies.

Relationship to Other Plans

In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, there are separately published documents that have been adopted by ordinance or resolution that are considered supporting documents to this Plan.

The SC 46 Corridor Plan: A corridor plan developed specifically for the SC 46 Corridor was adopted in early 2007. The plan presents an inventory of six intrinsic qualities of SC 46: natural, scenic, historic, cultural, recreational, and archaeological with recommendations on techniques to preserve the character of the SC State Scenic Byway for future generations. This plan will also assist the Town in its effort to apply for Nation Scenic Byway Designation of SC 46.

The Old Town Master Plan: This sub-area plan focuses on the preservation of the original one square mile of Bluffton and guides future redevelopment. The plan considers the unique issues facing this original settlement including Land Use Schematic; Streetscape and Aesthetics Plan; Development and Infill Development and Redevelopment Strategies; a Directional and Location Signage Plan, a Parking Plan, Pedestrian Access Plan, and associated policies and guidelines.



Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan: Bluffton was heavily involved with the development of this regional plan to address land use patterns and trends, the cost of growth, transportation, parks and recreation, and public schools within Southern Beaufort County. To ensure these topics of regional concern are adequately addressed on a continual basis, Bluffton has developed an on-going relationship with the County and participating jurisdictions to implement the plan.



**Southern Beaufort
County Regional Plan**

It is important to note that in addition to the plans discussed above, additional plans may be developed for sub-areas, corridors, or topics that require further study. Resolutions or Ordinances for adoption of these plans will identify them as supporting documents of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan.