

# Media Release



**bluffton**  
HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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## Town Hosts 4th Annual Historic Preservation Symposium

The Town of Bluffton is hosting its fourth annual Historic Preservation Symposium Thursday, May 23 at 5: 30 p.m. at Town Hall (20 Bridge Street). The symposium, “The Bluffton Historic District: Then & Now,” will bring together historic preservation organizations, residents, students, business owners and Town leaders to discuss the importance of historic preservation and the need for infill and development that is compatible and supports the intent of the Historic District. This event is free, and all are welcome.

The event will begin with a “Meet and Greet” with representatives of local historic preservation organizations at 5: 30 p.m. A moderated speaker panel will be from 6 p.m. – 7: 30 p.m. Both segments of the symposium will be held at Town Hall.

The two featured speakers will be Christian Sottile and Josh Martin. Sottile is the principal of Sottile & Sottile, a Savannah-based design firm working extensively in Nationally Registered Historic Districts. He is also a professor of architecture and urban design at the Savannah College of Art and Design and is the former dean of the SCAD School of Building Arts. Josh Martin, currently Palm Beach’s director of planning, zoning and building, brings nearly 20 years of experience in senior roles in Charleston and Bluffton. Formerly Bluffton’s senior planner, community development director and town manager, Martin brings a unique perspective of watching Bluffton throughout the recent years implement plans for historic preservation while promoting business-friendly initiatives.

The Town’s Director of Growth Management Heather Colin said both speakers are uniquely qualified to speak to the planning process and the lessons learned of how the Bluffton Historic District has evolved throughout the last 15 or so years.

“Christian and Josh both have a longstanding history with the Town and both were instrumental in shaping the plans and policies which have resulted in the current Historic District,” Colin said. “Both can speak to what the challenges and opportunities were 15 years ago and how the Town has

either met them or still has them on the radar screen. They will both give a look back as the symposium will also discuss today's challenges and opportunities."

This symposium also celebrates the 23rd anniversary of the designation of the Bluffton Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places.

"For the past three years, there has been standing room only at this symposium. The popularity of this annual historic preservation symposium indicates an authentic desire for many to have a greater understanding of our past residents and how their contributions have shaped our Town's identity today," Town Manager Marc Orlando said.

Orlando also said on behalf of the Town, he wants to sincerely thank Joanie Heyward who has helped organize and coordinate the event for the past years and is a constant champion for the preserving Bluffton's history.

For more information, contact Vicki Smalls via email at [vsmalls@townofbluffton.com](mailto:vsmalls@townofbluffton.com) or by telephone at 843.706.7826.

The public is invited to a reception following the symposium at The Pine House, located at 85 Bridge Street.

#### **Quotes from Town Council:**

##### **Mayor Lisa Sulka:**

"Since 2006, the Old Town Master Plan has been Bluffton's blueprint on how to preserve history and create a Historic District which promotes walkability, connectivity and accessibility," Mayor Lisa Sulka said. "Unlike many municipal plans, this one has never collected dust, it has been our constant guide during the last 13 years."

##### **Mayor Pro Tempore Larry Toomer:**

"This year's speakers will give us a unique perspective. Both of them helped the Town years ago plan for what we have today," Toomer said. "They can give us an overview perspective of what worked, lessons learned and what the options are for the future of Bluffton's Historic District."

##### **Councilmember Fred Hamilton:**

"I have been proud of how the Town has incorporated preserving the Gullah culture within the Historic District. Telling our collective story is important to preserving our past as well as creating a 'sense of place' for the future."

##### **Councilmember Dan Wood:**

"As an elected official and a resident of the Historic District, we hope this year's symposium brings a deeper understanding to our community of the importance of preservation as well as how the Town guides appropriate growth and infill development which reflects Bluffton's character and culture."

**Councilmember Harry Lutz:**

“With ever-increasing development pressure, this is a pivotal time for the future of Bluffton’s historic structures. They are threatened by maintenance challenges and the desire for new buildings. Yet, there is example after example that investing in Bluffton’s history provides an authentic experience which spurs our town’s tourism and economy.”

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