

TOWN COUNCIL



STAFF REPORT Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	June 13, 2018
PROJECT:	Consideration of a Resolution Amending the Town of Bluffton Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy, Amending the Requirements for Qualification for Private Road Repair
PROJECT MANAGER:	Kevin Icard, AICP Planning & Community Development Manager

RECOMMENDATION: The Affordable Housing Committee recommends that Town Council approve a Resolution amending the Town of Bluffton Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy, amending the requirements for qualification for private road repair as well as other clarifications to the policy.

BACKGROUND: In 2009, the Town of Bluffton established a Neighborhood Assistance Program that provides various services to assist low-to-moderate income owners of single-family properties in Bluffton. These repairs and improvements 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 the May 01, 2018 meeting, the Affordable Housing Committee recommended Town Council approve language changes within the Neighborhood Assistance Program and Private Road Repair Program. Current private road repair language states a private road can be repaired if it is unsuitable for emergency vehicle access as determined by the emergency service agencies providing such service. The proposed change to private road repair policy is to require a minimum of fifty-one (51%) of the number of residential units on improved properties to be income qualified. The proposed language and changes identified in Attachment 1, Exhibit 1 are highlighted in red and items to be deleted are struck through. The income verification will be based on eighty percent (80%) or less of the most recent AMI for Beaufort County.

South Carolina courts have routinely found that ensuring safe, decent and suitable living environments for low-to-moderate income families and individuals constitutes a valid public purpose. Including the affordability condition to the private road repair program verifies that it benefits low-to-moderate income families.

ATTACHMENTS:

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

Attachment 1

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 May 01, 2018 the Affordable Housing Committee voted unanimously to amend the Neighborhood Assistance Program Policy to approve language changes within the Neighborhood Assistance Program elements and private road repair program; and

WHEREAS, the Town desires to amend the 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 shown in Exhibit 1, which is attached and incorporated here to.

Attachment 1

THIS RESOLUTION SHALL BE EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY UPON ADOPTION. SIGNED,
SEALED AND
DELIVERED AS OF THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2018.

Lisa Sulka, Mayor
Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

ATTEST:

Kimberly Chapman, 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 Elements Overview

The Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) is designed to assist low-to-moderate income families that live in the municipal boundaries of the Town of Bluffton while ensuring that they have safe, decent and suitable living environments.

Limits on Applications / Qualifications

Qualified **applicants residents** may receive assistance for one of the following home and/or community **assistance** improvements once per calendar year unless an emergency situation exists as determined by the Town Manager.

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.

1. **Home Repair** – Assist residents with repairs to the inside and outside of their homes that result in a drier and safer home. In order to qualify, applicants must have an annual household income that does not exceed sixty percent (60%) of the Area Median Income for Beaufort County.

Expenditures on an individual property may not exceed \$15,000 per fiscal year with \$10,000 roof repairs and \$5,000 safe and dry repairs with the following exceptions;

1. The expenditure limit shall not apply to the cost of abatement or demolition of structures declared to be unsafe by the Building Official.

2. An additional \$5,000 for safe and dry repairs can be spent on an individual property after being presented to the Affordable Housing Committee to verify that the request meets the guidelines of the program.
2. **Septic System Repair/Sewer Connection** – Provide maintenance, repair or replacement of failing septic systems. Septic System Maintenance/Repair ~~does not~~ require income qualification.
3. **Property Clean-Up** – Facilitate the removal of debris and other objects, such as abandoned cars and boats, ~~white goods (air conditioners, dishwashers, clothes dryers, freezers, refrigerators, kitchen stoves, water heaters, washing machines, trash compactors, and microwave ovens)~~ from the property.
 1. Contractors will not remove yard debris.
 2. No debris can be removed from property considered heirs' property.
 3. Applicants must have an annual household income that does not exceed sixty percent (60%) of the Area Median Income for Beaufort County.
4. **Private Road Repair** – Program for private roads that are unsuitable for emergency vehicle access as determined by the ~~Town of Bluffton Police Department, Bluffton Township Fire District, and Beaufort County EMS. emergency service agencies providing such service.~~ Fifty-one percent (51%) of all residential units on improved properties on a private road that need repairs for emergency access must have an annual household income that does not exceed eighty (80%) of the Area Median Income for Beaufort County.
5. **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 who do not exceed 80% of the AMI for Beaufort County if funds are available.
6. **Heirs Property Title Assistance** – Work with the Center for Heirs Property Preservation to provide ~~legal~~ services for property owners wanting to clear title to their land.
7. **E-911 Address Posting** – Confirm correct addressing and provide address markers and posting to ensure that properties are correctly marked for 911 Emergency Services (**Police, Fire, and EMS**). E-911 address posting ~~does not~~ require income qualification.
8. **Bluffton Home Series** – The Town of Bluffton offers assistance to income-qualified residents interested in purchasing a home through this program. The Workforce Homeownership Program seeks to increase homeownership

opportunities to low and moderate income families. [More information about this program can be found at www.blufftonhomeseries.com](http://www.blufftonhomeseries.com)

9. **Wharf Street Redevelopment Project Homes** – Assist with the resale, maintenance, and monitoring of these **six** homes. The Town of Bluffton will perform annual monitoring on all homes that are part of this program.

Eligibility

Lowcountry Council of Governments (LCOG) Income Verification

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. 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. 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.

Program Administration

The Program is administered through the Department of Growth Management Planning and Community Development. 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 Planning and Community Development
Town of Bluffton
20 Bridge Street
Bluffton, SC 29910

Brad Mole, Community - Business Development Coordinator
Email - bmole@townofbluffton.com
(Phone) 843-706-7818