



MEMORANDUM

TO: Pat Rooney, ASLA, Interim Director of Growth Management
FROM: Erin Schumacher, AICP, Senior Planner
RE: Old Town Master Plan Update
DATE: 7/12/16
CC: Marc Orlando, ICMA-CM, Town Manager; and
Scott Marshall, Deputy Town Manager

BACKGROUND: The Bluffton Historic District was granted National Historic District designation in 1996 with 54 Contributing Structures and was later established as a "Preserve America Community" in 2005. The Old Town Master Plan was adopted in June 2006. A survey of the Old Town was completed in 2008 and determined that there were 86 contributing structures within the locally designated Old Town Bluffton Historic District.

The Old Town Master Plan serves as a guiding document for future growth and preservation of the Old Town Bluffton Historic District, sets forth principles to protect the National Register Historic District, and serves as a guide for Unified Development Ordinance provisions, application review, and budget and capital improvement programming. Additionally, the Old Town Master Plan was designed to maintain the community character and quality of life that the community offers today. As stated in the Old Town Master Plan, "The Town strives to achieve economic vitality through development and redevelopment while ensuring that Bluffton's community character and historical heritage are preserved." The Old Town Master Plan guides this vision through three principles:

- Preserve and Protect Your Legacy
- Foster Connectedness in all Things
- Nurture Your Memorable Streets

UPDATE: The Old Town Master Plan identifies over 100 implementation strategies to assist in achieving the vision for Old Town. These strategies are organized in the following functional areas:

- Policy Recommendations and Regulatory Changes
- Planning Strategies
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Promotion of Old Town
- Economic Development Strategies
- Funding Mechanisms

Recently Completed Initiatives and Old Town Investment

Since the adoption of the Old Town Master Plan, Town Council has guided the implementation of numerous action strategies through direct input, the Strategic

Plan, annual budgeting, and Capital Improvement Program funding. Highlights on recent activities include the following Town initiatives:

- Amending the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances to add a Sewer Connection Ordinance, establishing uniform sewer connection requirements and standards;
- Town Staff continues to work closely with the BJWSA to identify opportunities for the extension of sewer service in the Old Town and the adjacent areas. Design work for the expansion of sewer service for Jason Street Project is currently being finalized and will extend roughly 5,000 linear feet of sewer line along Jason and Able Streets providing service to 39 homes;
- Improvements to Oyster Factory Park including upgrades to the public boat ramp, construction of a courtesy dock, provision of 58 pervious vehicle and 38 boat trailer parking spaces, construction of an ADA accessible pathway to the new dock, construction of an observation deck, implementation of stormwater BMPs, May River bank stabilization, and provision of various site amenities;
- Stabilizing and initiating the preservation/rehabilitation work on the Garvin House a contributing structure and the earliest known freedman-owned and built home on the May River (built circa 1870);
- Improvements to DuBois Park including construction of perimeter fencing and installation of landscaping enhancements, addition of lighting, installation of synthetic turf improvements at the playground area and the provision of various site amenities; and
- The continual enforcement of the form based code and design standards of the UDO through the Certificate of Appropriateness process and Site Feature Permitting process with over 80 applications reviewed between October 2014 – September 2015.

Current Initiatives and Status

Attachment 1 provides a list of implementation strategies, the party primarily responsible for implementation, and the current status of each implementation item. While many of the initiatives have been completed or are in a state of completion, there are still a number of strategies that have not yet been made a priority and therefore no work, or a significant amount of work, has been completed towards their implementation.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Town of Bluffton 2006 Old Town Master Plan Implementation Strategy

**Town of Bluffton
Old Town Master Plan
2016 Implementation Status Update**

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND REGULATORY CHANGES			
Action	Project Complete Status	Point of Contact	Status
1 Adopt the Old Town Master Plan	100%	Growth Management	Complete.
2 Adopt the Old Town Form-Based Code	100%	Growth Management	Complete.
3 Appoint a Town Architect	On-Hold	Growth Management	On-Hold. From time to time architects and designers have contractually provided Town Architect/Designer services. The current budget does not provide for these services.
4 Streamline Development Procedures & Approvals Process	100%	Growth Management	Complete.
5 Adopt a Demolition by Neglect Ordinance	Repealed	Growth Management	During review of the Ordinance during the drafting of the UDO it was discovered the Ordinance was not in compliance with State Law and was subsequently not carried forward into the UDO upon advice of the consulting attorney.
PLANNING STRATEGIES			
Action	Project Complete Status	Point of Contact	Status
1 Confirm Physical and Regulatory Conditions	On-Going	Engineering / Growth Management / IT	In-progress. Survey and other data is collected with CIP projects and Development Plans. Town Staff continues to research street ownership issues. The Town GIS is updated as information is made available.
2 Develop an Infill Development Strategy	On-Going	Growth Management	In-progress. The AHC and TC have approved of the Bluffton Home Series Program. Additionally, Town Council has adopted the Growth Framework Map establishing the Old Town as a Village Center which encourages the continued infill and development of this area.
3 Provide an Adequate Supply of Appropriate Parking	On-Going	Engineering / Growth Management	In-progress. The provision of parking should have both public and private elements, and work sponsored by the Town is underway to assess this issue. For example, the Calhoun Street & Adjacent Area Study calls for demarking additional parking along Bridge Street and Calhoun Street. Town Council adopted an amendment to the UDO allowing for public parking and the UDO parking standards were assessed and found to be deficient. Town Council responded by adopting revisions to the parking standards to require higher intensity used to provide parking to meet the demand. Dr. Mellichamp has also been identified as an area for future public parking improvements.
4 Establish a Parcel Assembly Program	0%	Growth Management	Not started.
5 Institute Bluffton Management Practices for Stormwater	100%	Engineering	Complete. The UDO and Stormwater Design Manual was adopted.
6 Acquire Green Space	On-Going	Engineering / Growth Management	In-progress. Town Staff continues to identify and assess potential sites in the Old Town. Recently, the Town of Bluffton has established an Memorandum of Understanding with Beaufort County to take over the day to day operations and maintenance of Oyster Factory Park.
7 Promote a Rehabilitation/Adaptive Re-Use Strategy	0%	Growth Management	Not started.
8 Establish a Town wide Housing Strategy	100%	Growth Management	Complete. Town Council created the Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) to propose and monitor housing and neighborhood assistance programs. The AHC recommended, and TC approved, the Bluffton Home Series Program and UDO amendments that allow for the replacement of manufactured homes in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District.
9 Affordable Housing Strategies and Inclusionary Zoning	100%	Growth Management	Complete. The adoption of the UDO incentivized workforce housing and required the same in PUDs. Town Council adopted a density bonus program for workforce/affordable housing in May of 2016.
10 Institute Housing Programs	100%	Growth Management	Complete. Town Council created the Affordable Housing Committee to propose and monitor housing and neighborhood assistance programs.

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CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS			
Action	Project Complete Status	Point of Contact	Status
1 Reconstruct May River Road/Bruin Road	75%	Engineering	In-Progress. In early May the decision was made to forego the grant funding, and proceed with the standard SCDOT approval process. An analysis of the potential additional costs and lengthy SCDOT review/approval process led staff to the conclusion the accepting the grant funding would result in extra costs almost equaling the amount of the grant, as well as much as a 4 to 6 month delay in the start of the construction. The SCDOT officials agreed to release the Town from obligations under the grant. Staff and the engineering Consultant are currently working through the traditional encroachment permit process with the SCDOT District office. Easement acquisition from 39 property owners is underway. The project has been advertised for bids. Start of construction is anticipated in early fall.
2 Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure Improvements & Service Expansion	On-Going	Engineering	Town Staff continues to work closely with the BJWSA to identify opportunities for the extension of sewer service in the Old Town. May River Watershed Sewer Master Plan identified all areas un-served by sewer and developed proposed approaches & cost estimates for the provision of service. The engineering for Jason Street Sewer is currently being finalized. An agreement was reached with BJWSA where they will contribute \$200,000 towards the completion of the sewer and will manage the project. This project will provide sanitary sewer service to 39 homes and commercial facilities through the installation of approximately 5000 feet of pipe.
3 Initiate Increased Tree Plantings	On-Going	Engineering / Growth Management	In-progress. As part of CIP projects in the Old Town, Town Staff has included tree and plant material in the overall projects. Additionally, Town Council created the Beautification Committee that, as part of the Tree is the Key Tree Management Program, proposes and monitors programs for beautification, including the planting of trees on both public and private property. Recent tree plantings include those at Oyster Factory Park, Dubois Park, and the Tom Herbkersman Commons.
4 Acquire and Improve a Waterfront Park (Calhoun Street)	On-Hold	Engineering / Growth Management	On-Hold.
5 Improve Pedestrian/Cyclist Facilities on Bridges	N/A	Engineering	Paused. Current State regulations prohibit this action.
6 Upgrade the Town Dock (Calhoun Street)	100%	Engineering	Complete. Work performed by Beaufort County.
7 Build a New Town Hall	On-Hold	Engineering / Growth Management	In-progress. Purchased land at Bluffton Village. Planning, design, and construction activities are not currently programmed in the CIP. Planning and design work for the renovation of the existing facility/site are currently underway as an alternative to the above.
PROMOTE OLD TOWN			
Action	Project Complete Status	Point of Contact	Status
1 Promote the Old Town Master Plan	On-Going	Growth Management	In-progress. The Master Plan is regularly referenced in presentations, media releases, reports, and other documents as the guide to the Old Town.
2 Celebrate Old Town	On-Going	Growth Management	In-progress. Numerous events and gatherings are held in the Old Town throughout the year, including a weekly Farmers Market that is ranked as the best in the State and one of the best in the United States. The Old Town serves a focal point and model for the pride and character of Bluffton. Old Town is prominently featured in the new "Heart of the Lowcountry" branding campaign. The Town recently held the inaugural historic preservation symposium in honor of the 20th anniversary of the National Register nomination for the Bluffton Historic District in 1996 and May as National Preservation Month to promote education about preservation topics.
3 The Bluffton Historical Preservation Society Create a Partnership with the Old Town Merchants Society for Promotion of Old Town Businesses	On-Going	Bluffton Historical Preservation Society / Old Town Merchants Society	In-progress. Both organizations continue to share information and work to promote the Old Town and its businesses. They have joined together under the umbrella of the state designated Cultural District to work towards district wide initiatives.
4 The Bluffton Historical Preservation Society Establish a Revolving Loan Fund for Historic Preservation	0%	Bluffton Historical Preservation Society	Not started.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES			
Action	Project Complete Status	Point of Contact	Status
1 Conduct Annual Inventories of Land Uses	On-Going	Growth Management	In-progress. Town Staff maintains an Existing Land Use Map as part of the Comprehensive Plan.
2 Target Specific Businesses for Location in the Old Town	On-Going	Growth Management	In-progress. Town Staff continues to work with real estate and business professionals on identifying appropriate locations for business both within and outside of Old Town.
3 Establish Economic Development Programs Supporting Old Town	On-Going	Growth Management	In-progress. The Old Town HD Application Program is being further refined to ensure the process is streamlined, has a high level of customer satisfaction, and protects Historic District.
4 Provide Technical Assistance for Businesses and Retailers	On-Going	Growth Management	In-progress. The Chambers of Commerce, Old Town Merchants Society, Don Ryan Center for Innovation, businesses, and other organizations hold regular training and support activities.
5 Promote Retail, but not Everywhere	On-Going	Growth Management	In-progress. The Master Plan was used in defining zoning districts in the development of the UDO resulting in the establishment of the most intense uses and densities along Calhoun Street and May River Road. Further, the Master Plan continues to serve as a guide in promoting the location of land uses. Recent ordinance amendments regarding parking, outdoor entertainment, noise, restaurant use, and outdoor patios have been undertaken to ensure that adequate facilities are present when development occurs.
6 Initiate a Wayfinding Signage Program	100%	Engineering / Growth Management	Complete. In early 2016 signage consolidation occurred at the 4-way stop and additional wayfinding signage for public parks and historic sites was installed.