



Town of Hilton Head Island

Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Meeting

**Wednesday, August 19, 2026, 10:00 AM
1 Town Center Court, Hilton Head Island, SC
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 3. Approval of the Minutes**
 - a. Regular Meeting Minutes of June 17, 2026
 - b. Workshop Meeting Minutes of July 15, 2026
- 4. Presentations**
 - a. Report of the Executive Director
- 5. Unfinished Business**
 - a. Discussion of Fiscal Year 2027-2030 Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Strategic Action Plan - Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation
- 6. New Business**
 - a. Discussion and Consideration of the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Small Business Funding Opportunity — Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation
- 7. Public Comment - Non Agenda Items**
- 8. Executive Session**
 - a. Receipt of Legal Advice Related to the Proposed Name Change [Pursuant to South Carolina Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70 (a)(2)]

9. Action from Executive Session

10. Adjournment

FOIA Compliance: Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and the requirements of the Town of Hilton Head Island.

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA"), the Town of Hilton Head Island will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs, or activities. Auditory accommodations are available. Any person requiring further accommodation should contact the Town of Hilton Head Island ADA Coordinator as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours before the scheduled event.

Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) Civility Pledge:

"I pledge to build a stronger and more prosperous community by advocating for civil engagement, respecting others and their viewpoints, and finding solutions for the betterment of my city or town."



Town of Hilton Head Island GULLAH GEECHEE HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION MEETING Wednesday, June 17, 2026, 10:00 AM Minutes

Call to Order

Chair Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

Board Members Present: Louis Johnson, Chair; Shirley Peterson, Vice-Chair; David Ames; Alex Brown; Sarah Eisner; Melinda Tunner; Andre White; and Dave Byrd (non-voting member)

Chair Johnson recognized the recent resignation of Mayor Alan Perry from the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (CDC) Board of Directors and thanked him for his service. Chair Johnson welcomed Council Member Melinda Tunner, who was appointed to the Board pursuant to the CDC bylaws as a Town Council representative for the historic neighborhoods. Mayor Perry provided remarks regarding his decision to step down and expressed his continued support for the CDC. Council Member Tunner expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve and noted her interest in participating in the CDC's upcoming strategic planning process.

Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Ames made a motion to adopt. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 6-0 (Mr. White was not present at the time of the vote).

Approval of the Minutes

Regular Meeting Minutes of March 18, 2026

Mr. Ames made a motion to approve. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 6-0 (Mr. White was not present at the time of the vote).

Presentations

Report of the Executive Director

Executive Director Thomas Boxley provided an update on activities undertaken by the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (CDC) since the last meeting. Mr. Boxley reported on the Land Management Ordinance Task Force, which met throughout May and addressed several topics affecting the historic neighborhoods, including low- to moderate-density districts, subdivision standards, open space, mobility, street and pathway standards, and short-term rentals. He explained that the process is currently in recess while staff and consultants revise portions of the ordinance based on feedback received.

The Task Force is anticipated to reconvene in the fall before recommendations are forwarded to the Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force, Planning Commission, and ultimately Town Council.

Mr. Boxley also provided an update on the 2026 Money Talks Financial Education Series, which began June 16 with approximately 12 participants. The first session focused on non-traditional funding sources and included representatives from financial institutions and other lending organizations. Mr. Boxley noted that participants represented a variety of industries and that the next session, scheduled for June 30 at the Island Recreation Center, would focus on business accounting and taxes. Additional updates included the successful approval of the Hilton Head Island Fishing Cooperative Park naming initiative, participation in the South Carolina Affordable Housing Summit, continued development of the Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) network, and the Design Studio. Mr. Boxley reported that the Design Studio had opened approximately 16 cases during the first half of 2026 involving property development, permitting, demolition, abatement, business licensing, and other property-related questions. He also reminded the Board that a strategic planning workshop would be held July 15 at 6:00 p.m. to begin updating the CDC's strategic plan and encouraged Board and community participation.

Board members expressed appreciation for the work being conducted by staff; there was emphasis on the importance of continued community outreach, financial education, disaster preparedness, and access to resources for residents; opportunities to provide information regarding donations to the CDC through the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry and the importance of making donation information readily accessible to potential supporters; and commended staff for the Money Talks program and its outreach efforts, noting the diverse participation and the value of connecting residents and business owners with non-traditional financing opportunities.

New Business

Consideration of a Resolution Approving the Name Change of the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation to the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Economic Development Corporation — Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, introduced the proposed Resolution to change the name of the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation to the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Economic Development Corporation. Mr. Boxley explained that the proposed change had been under discussion for several months and was intended to more accurately reflect the organization's expanding role in community and economic development. He introduced Richardson LaBruce, an attorney with Finger, Melnick, Brooks & LaBruce, who provided an overview of the legal considerations associated with the proposed name change.

Mr. LaBruce explained that adding "Economic" to the organization's name would more clearly communicate that the CDC is intended to address both community development and

Town of Hilton Head Island Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

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economic development activities. He advised that the name change itself would not alter the organization's legal authority or capabilities, which are primarily governed by its bylaws and applicable law. Following Board approval, the proposed name change would require approval by Town Council, as the Town is the member of the organization, followed by updates to the organization's corporate records, Secretary of State filings, federal records, and governing documents.

Board members discussed the distinction between community development and economic development corporations and expressed interest in ensuring that the organization's governing documents adequately support the programs and initiatives the CDC intends to pursue; potential future funding opportunities and the importance of ensuring that the CDC's name, bylaws, and legal authority are aligned with its long-term mission; and members also expressed concern about making additional amendments in the future and wanted greater clarity regarding applicable State legislation and the organization's authority before proceeding.

Mr. Brown made a motion to table consideration of a resolution approving the name change of the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation to the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Economic Development Corporation until the next meeting to allow for further discussion in executive session and to receive legal advice regarding the matter. Ms. Turner seconded.

Chair Johnson opened the floor for public comment.

There were no comments at this time.

Motion carried 7-0.

Discussion regarding the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation 2026–2030 Strategic Action Plan — Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Mr. Boxley introduced the discussion regarding the update of the CDC's 2026–2030 Strategic Action Plan and explained that the June meeting served as the kickoff for communicating the upcoming strategic planning process. He advised that the Board and community will participate in a strategic planning workshop on July 15, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. Feedback received during the workshop will be incorporated into a draft plan for presentation and review at the August 19 meeting, with the goal of final Board approval in September before the plan is presented to Town Council.

Mr. Boxley encouraged the Board to begin by reviewing the five goals established in the current strategic plan: stabilization and preservation of Gullah Geechee neighborhoods, cultural sites, and history; development of strategic partnerships; community education regarding the CDC; increased access to capital and financial education; and support for Town of Hilton Head Island Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

training and employment opportunities for Gullah Geechee youth. He emphasized that the existing goals provide a strong foundation and suggested that the upcoming process focus primarily on developing updated strategies to achieve those goals, while allowing for new goals if the Board determines they are necessary.

Board members discussed the need to make the updated plan more action-oriented, measurable, and clearly defined; the meaning of terms such as “preservation” and “stabilization,” noting that the plan should recognize not only the preservation of land but also the ability of landowners to use their property as a viable economic resource; the potential for considering “sustainability” as an alternative or complementary concept and the importance of clearly defining terminology and establishing measurable outcomes; increasing participation by Gullah Geechee residents in the local economy through business ownership, entrepreneurship, and generational wealth-building opportunities; the importance of involving the broader community and potential private-sector partners in the strategic planning process; identifying key individuals and organizations that could participate in the July workshop and the possibility of obtaining facilitation assistance for the planning process; and directing staff to incorporate community engagement, measurable strategies, economic participation, and long-term sustainability into the upcoming strategic planning process.

No formal action was taken.

Discussion regarding Funding Strategies and Sustainability for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation — Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Mr. Boxley presented an update on the CDC's funding strategies and long-term sustainability efforts as the organization prepares to enter Fiscal Year 2027. He explained that the CDC has continued to pursue diversified funding sources since 2024, including establishing an account with the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, participating in the RBC Heritage Foundation's Birdies for Charity and Champions FORE Charity programs, conducting private-sector outreach, and maintaining relationships with State and federal elected officials. He also continues to explore opportunities through local, State, and federal grant programs.

Mr. Boxley noted that the current federal funding environment presents additional challenges due to reductions in funding and uncertainty surrounding federal programs. He emphasized the importance of continuing to diversify the CDC's funding sources and increasing private and local fundraising efforts. Mr. Boxley advised that the CDC provides quarterly reports to the South Carolina Department of Commerce regarding its activities and use of State funding and continues to maintain communication with members of the legislative delegation.

Board members discussed the importance of communicating the results of fundraising efforts and demonstrating how funding received by the CDC is being used to achieve measurable outcomes; the need to identify specific projects that could serve as catalysts for private fundraising and demonstrate the CDC's ability to generate community and economic impact; potential opportunities related to the Bryant Road project, the CDC's recently acquired

property, disaster relief efforts, and potential Stoney neighborhood initiatives; the importance of recognizing not only monetary contributions but also the time, expertise, relationships, and other resources that community members and partners may provide; the potential for establishing Board fundraising expectations as part of the strategic planning process; the importance of identifying a project that could demonstrate the CDC's value and establish credibility with outside funding sources; opportunities for continued community engagement through initiatives such as the Fishing Cooperative Park; and the importance of demonstrating tangible results to build public support and future funding opportunities.

No formal action was taken.

Chair Johnson opened the floor to public comment.

Mayor Perry addressed the board regarding the CDC's funding strategies and long-term sustainability efforts.

Discussion and Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing a Partnership with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta — Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Mr. Boxley presented a proposed Resolution authorizing the CDC to establish a relationship with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta (FHLB Atlanta). He explained that the opportunity resulted from relationships developed during the South Carolina Affordable Housing Summit and could provide access to programs supporting housing and community development initiatives. Potential programs include down-payment assistance, construction financing, and other financial products that could support future projects, including potential development of CDC-owned property. Mr. Boxley emphasized that approval of the Resolution would not commit the CDC to a specific project or funding program but would allow the organization to begin the application and eligibility process.

Richardson LaBruce, legal counsel, reviewed the proposed Resolution and Certificate of Incumbency and advised that the documents are standard forms used by FHLB Atlanta. He explained that establishing the relationship would position the CDC to pursue future housing and development opportunities without creating a binding obligation to participate in a particular program. Mr. LaBruce also shared his prior experience with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta through his work with the Beaufort Housing Authority and noted that establishing such relationships can facilitate development financing and improve access to funding opportunities.

Board members discussed the broad language contained in the proposed Resolution and considered the types of programs the CDC may ultimately pursue, as well as potential financial obligations, liabilities, safeguards, and Board oversight; members expressed a preference for identifying specific projects before pursuing funding, while others emphasized that establishing the relationship now would allow the CDC to become eligible and "get in the queue" for future opportunities; and the opportunity to develop a relationship with Optus Bank and other financial partners that could assist with future housing and economic development initiatives.

Mr. Boxley clarified that any specific project or funding application would be brought back to the Board for consideration and approval. Legal counsel advised that the broad language is standard and that the CDC would have additional opportunities for due diligence and Board review when pursuing specific projects.

Mr. Brown made a motion to approve a resolution authorizing a partnership with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta. Ms. Peterson seconded.

Chair Johnson opened the floor to public comments.

There were no comments at this time.

Motion carried 6-1 (Ms. Tunner opposed).

Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

Chair Johnson opened the floor to public comments on non agenda items.

There were no comments at this time.

Adjournment

At 11:32 a.m., Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting.

The full recording and a transcript of this meeting can be found on the Town's website at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov



Town of Hilton Head Island
GULLAH GEECHEE HISTORIC
NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION STRATEGIC
PLANNING WORKSHOP MEETING
Wednesday, July 15, 2026, 6:00 PM
Minutes

Call to Order

Current Vice Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Board Members Present: David Ames, Alex Brown, Shirley Peterson, Andre White, and Dave Byrd (non-voting member)

Board Members Absent: Sara Eisener, Louis Johnson and Melinda Tunner

Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Ames made a motion to adopt. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

New Business

Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Current Vice Chair Peterson opened the floor for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair.

Mr. Brown made a motion to appoint Louis Johnson as Chair. Mr. Ames seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Mr. Brown made a motion to appoint Shirley Peterson as Vice Chair. Mr. Ames seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Workshop Discussion

Discussion of Fiscal Year 2027-Fiscal Year 2030 Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Strategic Action Plan

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director, introduced the strategic planning workshop and explained that the CDC is entering its third year of operations and is therefore beginning the process of updating its existing Strategic Action Plan for FY2027–FY2030. Mr. Boxley reviewed the process used to develop the current plan, including community and Board participation in 2023, and explained that the existing plan established the organization's mission and five strategic goals. The five goals address stabilization and preservation of Gullah Geechee neighborhoods, cultural sites, and history; strategic partnerships; community education and awareness; access to capital and financial education; and training and employment opportunity

for Gullah Geechee youth. The current plan was developed through community engagement and provided the framework for the CDC's first two years of operations.

Mr. Boxley reviewed accomplishments associated with the existing goals, including the CDC's work related to the William Hilton Parkway Gateway Corridor, community engagement in the Stoney neighborhood, the Experience Gullah website and application, the Land Management Ordinance process, the renaming of the Fishing Cooperative Park, and continued work with the Design Studio. He reported that the Design Studio had opened 25 cases as of June 2026, with 11 cases completed, involving a variety of property development and permitting needs. Under the strategic partnerships goal, Mr. Boxley highlighted relationships with the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, RBC Heritage Foundation, University of South Carolina School of Law, community development financial institutions, TD Bank, Community Organizations Active in Disaster, and the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce. He also reviewed accomplishments related to community outreach, the Money Talks financial education series, and youth employment and training opportunities.

Board members discussed the relationship between the existing strategies and the accomplishments presented and requested that the updated plan more clearly connect accomplishments, strategies, and measurable outcomes; the importance of establishing key performance indicators and identifying specific, measurable objectives that could demonstrate the CDC's impact and help communicate the value of continued investment in the organization; the importance of maintaining the Town as a strategic partner, developing a more deliberate fundraising strategy, identifying projects that could attract private and philanthropic investment, and potentially establishing Board fundraising responsibilities and committees, including a development committee; and the importance of aligning the strategic plan with the organization's annual budget and establishing shorter-term priorities and milestones within the broader FY2027–FY2030 plan.

The Board further discussed the need to clarify and strengthen the language of the strategic goals. Particular discussion focused on the term "preservation" within Goal One and whether the term adequately communicates the CDC's role in preventing the loss of community ownership and supporting investment and beneficial uses of property in historic neighborhoods. Members discussed reframing the goal to emphasize stabilization and investment in Gullah Geechee neighborhoods, cultural sites, and history. The Board also discussed whether economic development should be identified as a distinct strategic goal, particularly as the CDC considers its role in business development, entrepreneurship, property development, and participation in the local economy.

Members emphasized that the updated plan should clearly distinguish the CDC's economic development role from the preservation and cultural history work of other organizations. Board members discussed Goal Five and the need to broaden the focus from traditional employment opportunities to include entrepreneurship, wealth building, mentorship, internships, education, and long-term pathways for youth. Members emphasized the importance of engaging young people in the CDC's work and developing opportunities that connect youth to Gullah Geechee history, culture, land ownership, entrepreneurship, and community involvement. The Board also discussed the importance of cultural awareness Town of Hilton Head Island Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

and community engagement, including continued neighborhood-based meetings and outreach rather than relying solely on large public meetings. Members noted that meaningful engagement and measurable outcomes should be prioritized over attendance numbers alone and encouraged the CDC to continue developing relationships and trust within the community.

Additional discussion focused on opportunities related to Gullah Geechee cemeteries, the Capital Improvement Program, neighborhood infrastructure, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta, and other potential funding and partnership opportunities. Members emphasized the importance of ensuring that the updated strategic plan reflects the CDC's role in community and economic development and provides clear strategies, performance measures, funding needs, and timelines. The Board supported reformatting the plan to more clearly identify strategies, key performance indicators, accomplishments, committee responsibilities, and fiscal-year priorities.

Mr. Boxley summarized the direction provided by the Board and stated that staff would incorporate the feedback received during the workshop into the updated Strategic Action Plan. He advised that additional community input would be collected through an upcoming drop-in session and an online survey. The public feedback period was expected to conclude August 7, allowing staff time to incorporate the feedback into a draft plan for Board review. The Board discussed the importance of reviewing the draft before the September meeting at which formal adoption is anticipated and requested that additional community recommendations be highlighted for Board discussion.

Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

Vice Chair Peterson opened the floor to public comment.

There was no public comment at this time.

Adjournment

At 7:37 p.m. Mr. Brown made a motion to adjourn. Mr. White seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

The full recording and a transcript of this meeting can be found on the Town's website at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov



TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

TO: Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Board of Directors
FROM: Thomas Boxley, Executive Director
CC: Marc Orlando, ICMA-CM, Town Manager
DATE: August 19, 2026
SUBJECT: Report of the Executive Director

BACKGROUND:

This report outlines the work of the Gullah Geechee Historic Community Development Corporation since our last report on July 15, 2026.

Strategic Planning

Since our July 15 meeting, we have received input utilizing the following methods:

- Drop-in opportunity – July 22, 2026, Town Hall. 12 attended and offered a variety of ideas and feedback.
- Digital survey – has been live since July. We will keep this survey active until close of business Friday August 21 to allow additional time for feedback from the community. At the time of this memorandum, we received feedback from 26 community members.
- We will present a draft as part of our meeting today, continue to craft the final version of the plan.
- Final version presented to Board at the September 16 regular meeting for adoption.

Community Organization Active in Disaster (COAD)

- The group continues to meet monthly. We will be reaching out to additional organizations that can support our efforts. We conducted a tabletop disaster simulation exercise on August 11. This brought together representatives from partnering organizations to including SC Office of Resilience, HHI Emergency Operations, and representatives from 3 of our faith-based partners to walk through

strategic responses based on scenarios developed by our Emergency Operations Manager, Thomas Dunn.

Upcoming Community Events

The following events are being planned and organized collaboratively with the Town CIP, Communications, Facilities, and Planning departments. These will be opportunities to provide project updates and gain feedback.

- **Jonesville** – updates on the status of the RFP for an operator of the stables, discussions regarding traffic calming methods and pathway development that are being considered. Date: September 24, 2026. Time: 5pm-7pm. Location: Jonesville Stables.
- **Spanish Wells** – Updates regarding the RFQ process for redevelopment of the 7 acre Town owned site, proposed streetscaping and neighborhood enhancement options. Date: Mid-October, final date to be announced. Time: to be announced. Location: Town owned 7-acre site.

Money Talks Financial Education

- July 28 Meeting: Business Tax Personal Finance vs. Business Finance
- August 11 Meeting: Fraud Prevention
- August 25 Meeting: Winning Government Contracts

Land Management Ordinance

The LMO Task Force met on Monday August 17. The purpose of this meeting was to review the amendments for that have been made thus far. This includes the following sections:

- Wetland Protection
- Tree Protection
- Jonesville Road: RSF-4
- Bradley Circle: RSF-8
- Subdivision and Residential Development Standards

The proposed amendments will be presented to the Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force on August 24, and to the Planning Commission prior to being presented to Town Council.



TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

TO: Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Board of Directors
FROM: Thomas Boxley, Executive Director
CC: Marc Orlando, ICMA-CM, Town Manager
DATE: August 19, 2026
SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2027-2030 Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Strategic Action Plan

BACKGROUND:

During our July regular meeting staff and the Board revisited our current strategic plan and provided feedback that will inform the development of a plan that will guide the activities of the organization through 2030. Presented to the Board for review is the first draft of the plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

No action necessary.

NEXT STEPS:

Pending any edits to this draft by the Board, staff will place this item on the September Agenda for final approval.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Fiscal Year 2027-2030 Strategic Action Plan Draft



The Town of Hilton Head Island Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (CDC)

Strategic Action Plan

Fiscal Years 2027-2030

Introduction

Founded in 2022 by an act of the Hilton Head Island Town Council, the Town of Hilton Head Island Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (GGHNCD) was established. The defined purpose of the organization: to stabilize, protect, and promote the historic, culturally sensitive communities of Hilton Head Island. The Corporation emerged from a shared commitment to ensure that the Gullah Geechee residents and communities are positioned to benefit from the Island's continued economic growth and not forced out by the pressures of development.

The establishment of the Corporation reflects the recognition that Hilton Head Island's culturally sensitive Gullah Geechee communities are among its most valuable cultural and historical assets. For generations, these neighborhoods have served as centers of family life, faith, entrepreneurship, land ownership, and cultural traditions that define the Island's unique identity. However, increasing development pressures, escalating property values, heirs' property challenges, housing affordability issues, environmental threats, and the risk of cultural displacement have created an urgent need for a community-based organization dedicated to advancing sustainable solutions.

The purpose of the Corporation is to serve as a community development leader that advances economic opportunity while preserving the history, culture, and character of Gullah Geechee neighborhoods. The Corporation works to increase access to capital, promote affordable housing, support entrepreneurship and workforce development, preserve historic and cultural resources, protect community land, and attract public and private investment that directly benefits Gullah Geechee communities.

Mission

To preserve, protect, and strengthen the historic, culturally sensitive Gullah Geechee neighborhoods of Hilton Head Island through community-driven economic development, strategic investment and cultural preservation.

Vision

Thriving Gullah Geechee communities where residents access economic opportunities, expand land ownership, expand, maintain and create generational wealth opportunities, while maintaining their unique heritage and identity.

Key Definitions

Preservation

The protection, maintenance, and stewardship of historic Gullah Geechee neighborhoods, cultural landscapes, buildings, traditions, homesteads, and community assets in a manner that retains their historical, cultural, and social significance for present and future generations. Preservation seeks to sustain the authenticity and integrity of places, practices, and stories while supporting the continued presence of Gullah Geechee residents.

Conservation

The responsible management, restoration, and sustainable use of natural, cultural, and historic resources to ensure their long-term health, resilience, and value. Conservation includes protecting environmentally sensitive lands, waterways, open spaces, and cultural resources utilizing tools such as conservation easements, strategic greenspace investments, while balancing community needs and responsible economic development.

Mitigation

Actions taken to avoid, minimize, reduce, or offset the adverse impacts of development, climate change, infrastructure projects, or other activities that may threaten Gullah Geechee communities, historic neighborhoods, cultural resources, or natural environments. Mitigation strategies may include land acquisition, conservation easements, affordable housing development, infrastructure improvements, relocation assistance where appropriate, cultural resource documentation, environmental restoration, and investments that preserve community character and reduce displacement.

Guiding Principle

The Hilton Head Island Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation recognizes that preservation, conservation, and mitigation are complementary strategies that work together to sustain the cultural heritage, economic vitality, environmental resilience, and long-term well-being of our culturally sensitive Gullah Geechee communities. We support, recommend, and implement these principles in support of our organizational goals and development initiatives.

Goal One: Ensure the stabilization of, and investment in Gullah Geechee neighborhoods and cultural sites and history.

Goal Two: Strengthen the economic vitality of Gullah Geechee communities by creating pathways to wealth and financial stability for residents and supporting the creation, growth, and long-term success of Gullah Geechee-owned businesses.

Goal Three: Build a resilient and financially sustainable organization that serves as the catalyst for transformative community development.

Goal Four: Empower Gullah Geechee youth through leadership development opportunities.

Strategic Goal One:

Ensure the stabilization of, and investment in Gullah Geechee neighborhoods, cultural sites, and history.

***Alignment with Town Council Goal 7, Action Item 5**

Strategies/ Tactics:

- Develop neighborhood improvement and revitalization plans and strategies with community, building upon the work that has been completed (RUDAT, Stoney Area Initiative Plan, etc.). – FY27
- Continue and enhance the services provided through the Historic Neighborhoods Permitting and Design Studio. Ongoing
- Build upon the resiliency work of the Community Organization Active in Disaster (COAD) – Ongoing
- Document history, location, access and ownership structure of the Gullah Geechee cemeteries. – FY 27-28 (Engage GIS, Churches)
- Acquire strategic properties. – Ongoing (117 WHP, Old Wildhorse Road)
- Support heirs' property resolution. – Ongoing (Low Country Gullah, Handy Law Firm, Beaufort County Tax Assessor's Office)
- Support workforce and affordable housing production. – Ongoing (Bryant Road)
- Identify, inventory and honor significant cultural sites. – Ongoing (Landmark Protection, Experience Gullah)
- Partner with Town CIP department to prioritize projects and align with budget. – FY 27 – Ongoing
- Create a neighborhood real estate acquisition fund. – FY 28
- Support expanded cultural tourism efforts. Ongoing (Experience Gullah outreach, Fish&Grits, HMFP – 27)
- Strengthen marketing opportunities with the Hilton Head Island Airport. – FY 27
- Support artists, artisans and the expansion of festivals and events. – Ongoing (Office of Cultural Affairs – Fish&Grits, HMFP Family Reunion, Experience Gullah)
- Support the designation of specific areas of the HHI trail system as heritage trails. – FY 28 (GIS, Cultural Affairs, SC Tourism)
- Support the development of cultural marketplaces, food enterprises and food entrepreneurs. – FY 30
- Support storytelling and digital archival of records. – Ongoing (Experience Gullah, 10 Million Voices, Heritage Library partnership, support for existing institutions)

Strategic Goal Two:

Strengthen the economic vitality of Gullah Geechee communities by creating pathways to wealth and financial stability for residents and businesses.

***Alignment with Town Council Goal 7, Action Item 5**

***Aligned with Town Council Goal 7, Action Item 6**

Strategies/ Tactics:

- Establish a Gullah Geechee Community Investment Fund. – FY 27-28
- Develop a revolving loan fund to finance small businesses, housing rehabilitation, and community facilities.
 - – FY 27-28
- Create microloan and grant opportunities for startup entrepreneurs. – FY 27-28 (Fascade grant, Pitch Competition)
- Partner with Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs). – FY 27-28
- Develop impact investment opportunities for mission-aligned investors. – FY 27-28 (Heritage Foundation 26, Develop new partnership)
- Financial literacy education. – Ongoing (Money Talks Yr.3)
- Support business technical assistance opportunities. – FY 27 (Money Talks)
- In partnership with the Town Procurement department, develop and support procurement opportunities. Ongoing (Doing business with the Town)
- Support tourism-related enterprises. – FY 28
- In partnership with the DMO, support business marketing opportunities. – FY 28
- Create business incubator space. – FY 29-30
- Develop cooperative business models. – FY 28-29

Strategic Goal Three:

Build a resilient and financially sustainable organization that serves as the catalyst for transformative community development.

***Alignment with Town Council Goal 7, Action Item 7**

Strategies/ Tactics:

- Maintain the strategic partnership with the Town of Hilton Head Island. Ongoing
- Build out the CDC Main Headquarters (117 William Hilton Parkway). FY 28
- Diversify revenue streams. – FY 27-28
- Increase philanthropic partnerships. – FY 27-28
- Strengthen board governance and fiduciary oversight. – FY 27 (Finance, Development, Executive and Ad Hoc Committees)
- Develop board committees to support the work of the organization. – FY 27 (Finance, Development, Executive, Ad Hoc)
- Develop a sustainable board and committee meeting schedule – FY 27
- Strengthen data management systems. – FY 29-30
- Build regional partnerships. – FY 27
- Create a Community Development Finance Program to identify, secure, and manage public and private funding opportunities. – FY 28
- Establish a Gullah Geechee Community Investment Fund to provide flexible financing for neighborhood revitalization and economic development projects. – FY 29
- Pursue Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) partnerships to increase access to affordable capital. Ongoing (Climb Fund, SC Community Loan Fund)
- Create a program-related investment (PRI) strategy to attract investments from philanthropic foundations. – FY 28 (Development Committee)
- Develop mission-related investment (MRI) partnerships with financial institutions and impact investors. – FY 28 (Development Committee)
- Create a donor-advised fund and legacy giving program to encourage long-term philanthropic investment. – FY 27-28 (Development Committee)
- Establish an endowment fund to support long-term organizational sustainability. FY 29-30 (Development Committee)
- Build partnerships with national and regional foundations. – FY 28 (Development Committee)
- Engage financial institutions through Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) investments. – FY 27-28 (Development Committee)
- Develop corporate sponsorship opportunities. – FY 28
- Establish impact investment opportunities for mission-driven investors. – FY 28 (Development Committee)

- Partner with universities and research institutions to pursue collaborative opportunities. – FY 28
- Expand professional staff with expertise in real estate development, grant management, finance, housing, and community engagement. – FY 28
- Develop succession planning and leadership development programs. – FY 27

Strategic Goal Four:

Empower Gullah Geechee youth through leadership development opportunities.

Strategies/ Tactics:

- Support the development of internship opportunities for youth with various departments at the Town of Hilton Head Island. – FY 28
- Establish a youth advisory council to provide input on GGHNCDC initiatives. – FY 28
- Offer business incubator experiences and summer entrepreneurship camps. – FY 29
- Support expanded financial literacy education for youth covering budgeting, banking, investing, credit, taxes, and wealth building. – FY 28
- Partner with local employers and educational institutions to support youth learning opportunities. – FY 29 (BC School District – summer jobs program?)
- Promote participation in cultural events and heritage celebrations.
- Secure funding for youth internships. – FY 28
- Develop mentorship networks connecting youth with professionals. – FY 28

Additional Community Priorities

Community Leadership

- Community lead planning and decision making.

Environmental Resilience

- Promote climate resilience, disaster mitigation planning, and sustainable development.

Regional Collaboration

- Strengthen partnerships with government agencies, educational institutions, philanthropic organizations, tourism entities, and private-sector partners.

Community Feedback: Drop-in Event and Survey

The following information was derived from community members that participated in our drop-in event and the online survey

Goal One: Ensure the stabilization and investment in Gullah Geechee neighborhoods, cultural sites, and history.

Comments

- Protect current neighborhoods
- Maintain and identify all current historical sites with signage
- Educate the community on historic sites
- Identify pre-development funding
- Allow the use of tiny homes
- Approve assessor dwelling units on feasible lots
- Explain the concept of long-term leasing of property
- Promote family meetings on the future use of property
- Offer individuals new ideas for use of land and how to build wealth
- Planners need to understand the negative impacts of development on native islanders historical sites (i.e. Talbird Cemetery)
- Educate community members about opportunities to participate on TOHH committees and the importance of it.
- Let's have a "State of the Community" hosted at a local church
- Allow the use of RV's on property in historic neighborhoods
- Identify/ provide funding for land surveys for heirs property
- Ensure cemetery signage (i.e. Jenkins Cemetery)
- Find appraisal companies that are fair and reasonable to African American properties
- Need maintenance of infrastructure
- Offer home repairs and improvements at a reasonable cost
- Need a Cultural Center

Goal Two: Strengthen the economic vitality of Gullah Geechee communities by creating pathways to wealth and financial stability for residents and supporting the creation, growth, and long-term success of Gullah Geechee-owned businesses.

Comments

- Form partnerships with local institutions and "experts" for planning
- Offer financial literacy courses
- Continue Money Talks sessions
- Work with current business community and see if there are needs (confidentially)
- Promote smart borrowing and flexible repayment opportunities.

- Establish business incubators
- Provide education regarding insurance, including life, auto, and homeowners' coverage.
- Improve marketing for the Money Talks Small Business Series.
- Conduct follow-ups after Money Talks sessions.
- Offer one-on-one business assistance.
- Identify/ create scholarships and colleges for youth.
- Provide education on Jobs and how to invest in trading.

Goal Three: Build a resilient and financially sustainable organization that serves as the catalyst for transformative community development.

Comments

-

Goal Four: Invest in the future of Gullah Geechee communities by empowering youth through leadership development, entrepreneurship, and lifelong skill-building.

Comments

- Host financial classes for youth. Teaching them how to save and the benefit of doing so.
- Create opportunities for youth to engage in internship/ learning opportunities that can convert to employment
- Create opportunities for youth to engage in internship/ learning opportunities that can convert to employment



TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

TO: Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Board of Directors
FROM: Thomas Boxley, Executive Director
CC: Marc Orlando, ICMA-CM, Town Manager
DATE: August 19, 2026
SUBJECT: Discussion and Consideration of the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation Small Business Funding Opportunity

BACKGROUND:

One of the primary goals identified within the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (GGHNCD) Strategic Action Plan is to strengthen entrepreneurship and support the long-term sustainability of businesses operating within Hilton Head Island's Historic Neighborhoods. The Strategic Action Plan recognizes that expanding access to business education, technical assistance, capital, and networking opportunities is essential to creating generational wealth, preserving community assets, and fostering a thriving local economy.

We have advanced this goal through the Money Talks Small Business Series, an educational initiative providing entrepreneurs with practical training on topics including access to capital, legal considerations, accounting and tax planning, business banking, fraud prevention, and doing business with local government. While the Money Talks Series equips business owners with the knowledge and resources necessary to establish and manage successful businesses, many entrepreneurs continue to identify access to capital as one of the most significant barriers to business growth.

To address this need, we are proposing the Full Count: A Gullah Geechee Pitch Competition. This event will serve as a business funding initiative designed to complement the Money Talks Series. The purpose is to provide eligible entrepreneurs with an opportunity to compete for business investment funding. Together, these initiatives create a continuum of support by combining business education with direct financial investment, allowing entrepreneurs to apply the knowledge gained through the educational series toward the continued growth and expansion of their businesses.

Our long-term goal is to develop this event into an annual signature entrepreneurship initiative of the GGHNCDC. We will award \$25,000 in total investment prizes to businesses demonstrating strong operational readiness, an understanding of their market, and potential for growth. Beyond the financial awards, the initiative is intended to increase business visibility, encourage entrepreneurial excellence, strengthen relationships between local businesses and community leaders, and further position the GGHNCDC as a catalyst for economic development within Hilton Head Island.

RECOMMENDATION:

Item for review, discussion and vote. Staff recommend approval of this agenda item.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. The Full Count: A Gullah Geechee Pitch Competition Overview



Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

The Full Count: A Gullah Geechee Pitch Competition

Competition Overview -

In support of our stated objective, to support the advancement and sustainability of the historic and culturally sensitive Gullah Geechee communities of Hilton Head Island, and in alignment with our strategic goal number four, to increase access to capital and financial education, The Town of Hilton Head Island Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation presents The Full Count: A Gullah Geechee Pitch Competition.

In the game of baseball or softball, a batter has an opportunity to hit the ball into play. In a pitch count, the first number represents the number of balls, the second number represents the number of strikes. The defensive player in direct competition with the batter is the pitcher. The pitcher's objective is to strike out the batter in three legal attempts. The reference to full count is a time at which the batter has a last opportunity to hit the ball into play. In our analogy, the *Full Count*, the business owner represents the batter. Our competition, while it may not be the last "at-bat" for the business owner, we are encouraging our business owners to "swing" with intentionality: as if this opportunity was their last "at-bat."

Our goals for this event are to build and strengthen the business community and to provide direct access to capital for small business owners on Hilton Head Island.

Important Dates/Times -

August 31 – Application window opens for participants
 September 14 – Application deadline (No applications accepted after 5pm EST)
 September 28 – Round One Initial screening complete
 September 30 – Notifications to applicants sent for Semi-final Round participation (electronically, snail mail)
 October 6 – Semifinal Round – Location to be announced. Time: 5:30pm-8pm
 November 9 – Final Round – Location to be announced. Time: 5:30pm-8pm



Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Competition Process and Scoring Criteria -

First Round – Eligibility Screening

Business owners will make application with the CDC for participation. Each application will be reviewed in house by CDC staff and a panel of volunteer reviewers. Referrals will be made for participation in round two (not to exceed 15).

Scoring Criteria

Minimum Score to Advance: 70 Points

Criteria	Description	Maximum Points
Legal Business Entity	Registered with the South Carolina Secretary of State (proof required).	35
Town Business License	Holds a current Town of Hilton Head Island business license.	35
Years in Business	Preference given to businesses operating five (5) years or less.	10
Historic Neighborhood Location	Business is owned or operated within a Historic Neighborhood as identified by the Town of Hilton Head Island.	10
Native Island Heritage	Business is owned or operated by a Hilton Head Island resident who can demonstrate ancestral or familial ties to the island prior to 1956.	10
	Total Possible Score	100

Semi-final Round – Business Presentation

Semi-finalists will have the opportunity to publicly present their business to the semi-finalist panel of judges. Participants will have ten minutes to present their business concept to the judge's panel. The judges in this round will be responsible for scoring the applicant based on the criteria. Judges will recommend three finalists.

Scoring Criteria

Minimum Score to Advance: 80 Points

Top Three (3) scoring applicants advance to the Final Round.



Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation

Criteria	Description	Maximum Points
Problem & Opportunity	Defines a meaningful problem and demonstrates why it is important to solve.	20
Solution / Value Proposition	Presents a compelling, differentiated, and clearly articulated solution.	20
Market Opportunity	Demonstrates a clear understanding of the target market.	20
Traction & Validation	Demonstrates customer demand, revenue, partnerships, competition, or market validation.	20
Team	Demonstrates the experience, skills, and commitment needed to execute the business model.	20
Total Possible Score		100

Final Round – Pitch Competition

Competitive round characterized by a seven-minute presentation with eight minutes of Q&A from the judges panel per participant. We will invite the community to attend and participate in this event. Judges will be responsible for scoring the finalists based on the established final round criteria and ranking the finalists first, second, and third.

Scoring Criteria

Finalists will be evaluated and ranked based on the following criteria.

Criteria	Description	Maximum Points
Business Model	Demonstrates a viable and sustainable business model.	30
Market Strategy	Clearly explains how funding will support growth and expansion.	30
Competitive Advantage	Demonstrates meaningful differentiation from competitors.	30
Presentation Quality	Delivers a clear, organized, and persuasive presentation.	5
Question & Answer	Responds confidently and effectively to judges' questions.	5



**Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods
Community Development Corporation**

Criteria	Description	Maximum Points
	Total Possible Score	100

Prize Structure -

The Full Count Gullah Geechee pitch competition will award \$25,000 in local business investment.

First Place: \$15,000.00

Second Place: \$6,000.00

Third Place: \$4,000.00

Initiative Impact -

The Full Count: A Gullah Geechee Pitch Competition represents more than a business competition—it is an investment in the future of Hilton Head Island's Gullah Geechee community. By combining access to capital, technical assistance, and opportunities for business exposure, the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation seeks to empower entrepreneurs to build sustainable businesses and strengthen the local economy. Through this annual initiative, the GGHNCDC reaffirms its commitment to preserving the cultural legacy of the Gullah Geechee people while fostering innovation, economic opportunity, and long-term community prosperity.