



Town of Hilton Head Island

Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force Meeting

**Monday, August 5, 2024, 1:00 PM
1 Town Center Court, Hilton Head Island, SC
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers**

The meeting can be viewed on the [Town's YouTube Channel](#), the [Beaufort County Channel](#), and Spectrum Channel 1304.

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 3. Approval of the Minutes**
 - a. Regular Meeting Minutes of May 6, 2024
 - b. Regular Meeting Minutes of July 1, 2024
- 4. Staff Report**
 - a. General Staff Updates - LMO/Districts - Alexis McIlwee, Principal Planner and Shea Farrar, Principal Planner
 - b. Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods
 - c. Home Safety and Repair Program Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods
 - d. Sewer Connection Program Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods
- 5. Discussion Items**
 - a. Hurricane Preparation for Gullah Communities Presentation - Meldon Hollis, previous Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Associate
- 6. Public Comment - Non Agenda Items**

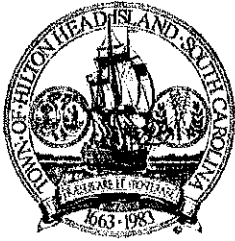
7. Adjournment

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 LAND AND CULTURAL
PRESERVATION TASK FORCE MEETING**
Monday, May 6, 2024, 1:00 PM
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chairman Stevens called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Present were: Lavon Stevens, Palmer Simmons, Tom Henz, John Campbell, Joyce Wright. Absent were Shani Green and Ibrahim Abdul-Malik. Chairman Stevens recognized the presence of Town Council members, Ms. Becker and Mr. Brown and thanked them for taking time to attend this meeting.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

A motion to adopt the Agenda as presented was made by Mr. Henz and seconded by Ms. Wright. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of the Minutes

a. Regular Meeting Minutes of March 4, 2024

A motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes as presented from March 4, 2024 was made by Vice-Chair Simmons and seconded by Ms. Wright. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Appearance by Citizens

Public comments concerning Agenda items were to be submitted electronically via the Open Town Hall Portal. No comments were received, and no citizens appeared to speak.

5. Staff Report

a. Introduction of Principal Planner for Historic Neighborhoods – Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner

Sharonica Gavin was introduced as the new Principal Planner for Historic Neighborhoods, and she expressed her deep passion for preserving our community's rich culture and heritage, having been born, raised and educated in the local area. She defined her role as collaborating with residents, stakeholders, and any other local authorities and organizations to insure this preservation. She expressed her thanks for allowing her to serve in this capacity, and the Committee members welcomed her and offered their support to help accomplish her goals.

b. General Staff Updates – LMO/ Districts – Aaron Rucker, Community Planning Manager

Aaron Rucker, Community Planning Manager, presented his report on two big initiatives moving towards the upcoming Public Planning Committee meeting. The first is the movement forward of the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) that will be addressed for input and direction in a full LMO update meeting being presented on Thursday, May 9 at 10:00 AM, with Staff and the Town's consultant present. The second initiative also being presented on Thursday at the Public Planning Committee meeting is a discussion of the Skull Creek District Plan, where Staff will be seeking input on the approach and organizational template that is being used to develop all 8 Districts going forward, with the Skull Creek District being the first to be discussed.

c. Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report – Alexis Cook, Principal Planner

Alexis Cook, Principal Planner, reported several new cases being worked on for presentation at the next meeting. Since the previous meeting, two design studios have been closed, with 1 new case. That brings the total of cases completed so far to 38, comprised of 29 active projects, with 3 withdrawn projects and 2 duplicates from 2022. Her summary of issues addressed and collaborations with Town Staff and outside agencies and nonprofits are detailed on the Memo included in the Agenda Packet, and she expressed her appreciation for the assistance provided. She provided a brief overview of the types of cases and services provided by the design studio. She described the studio design process as beginning with identification of a possible case, phone call or email introductory contact, offer of a fact finding meeting, details discussed and internal staff review done, and a concept review with citizen providing options, with no obligations to proceed. She noted that with the LMO rewrite in progress, her team will be revisiting Family Compound and Family Subdivision with the consultant, and she will explore the possibility of a virtual attendance by the code consultant at a future meeting of this Committee.

Missy Luick, Director of Planning, noted that the code consultant would be meeting with the Public Planning Committee on Thursday seeking direction on the priority set, then work will begin on modules for the full code overhaul with more interaction occurring with the Task Force at that point.

d. Home Safety and Repair Program Update – Nichte Barrientos, Planner – Economic Development

Nichte Barrientos, Planner - Economic Development, presented the Home Safety and Repair Program update, with a summary of activity outlined in her Memo, which is included in the Agenda Packet. She noted that the role held previously by Chris Yates, Building Official, has been broken down into 2 programs, which are now led by Lydia Lewis, Community Development Administrative Manager, with Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner for Historic Neighborhoods as the Citizen Liaison, who will be presenting future updates. Communication to update all applicants of the program changes and their status in the program is being developed. Various resources are being explored to assist with contractor quoting and to insure a smoother process for all parties involved. She reported that the motion from the last meeting to recommend to Town Council that

additional funding be provided for the programs will be up for Second Reading at tomorrow's Town Council meeting. Staff is also researching additional funding opportunities, as well. Mr. Henz requested future summaries should indicate the start dates. Ms. Barrientos indicated that Town Staff is still working internally on how the process will move forward following the departure of Mr. Yates, and Ms. Luick explained that the Building Department will remain involved in the bidding process, but a new administration team will be utilized for the progression of the applications, with Ms. Gavin managing quality control of the entire program and fielding phone calls. With the possibility of additional funding, the Town wants to ensure that it is ready for the contracting step that all applications are awaiting. The qualification of contractors was outlined by Ms. Luick.

e. Sewer Connection Program Update – Nicté Barrientos, Planner – Economic Development

Ms. Barrientos presented the Sewer Connection Program Update, which is included in her Memo, which is a part of the Agenda Packet. She advised that the program would be administered by Lydia Lewis, Community Development Administration Manager, with Sharonica Garvin providing future monthly updates. Communication is being developed to notify all applicants of the changes and the status of each applicant. Clarification was requested on the applications withdrawn and not qualified, which will be researched and presented at a future meeting.

f. Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhood CDC Update – Thomas Boxley, Executive Director Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhood CDC

Thomas Boxley, Executive Director for the Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhood Community Development Corporation, provided an update on activities in which he had been involved since his last report. He noted they had completed strategic planning and budget adoption by the Board of Directors.

g. Bridge Project Status; Stoney Neighborhood – Thomas Boxley, Executive Director Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhood CDC

Mr. Boxley reported that extensive time has been spent with property owners and residents in the William Hilton Parkway Corridor related to mitigation strategies. Based on conceptual design work, the highway is scheduled to expand from 4 to 6 lanes, which would create access and safety issues for property owners along the Corridor. This has been a high priority for the CDC, and the implementation of a strategic plan. He noted there will be overlap with the team from the Community Development Department, and Ms. Gavin will be involved in identifying the priorities by the Task Force that have yet been implemented. He invited the members to a meeting being held Wednesday of the Gateway Corridor Independent Review Advisory Committee, where the consultants will present its recommended alternative plan, with final presentation to Town Council scheduled for June, as yet to be determined. Pending municipal consent, the SC Department of Transportation will be heavily engaged in further design phases. Mr. Boxley indicated he has been in constant communication with many property owners

within the Stoney Community, and considered it a priority to maintain an open line of communication with the Stoney residents and property owners directly impacted. He noted the next meeting of the CDC is May 15, and all members were invited to attend. Chairman Stevens encouraged the members of the Task Force to attend as many meetings as possible so that they can spread accurate information throughout the community.

6. Discussion Items

a. Land Preservation Update – Luana Graves Sellars, Lowcountry Gullah Foundation

While awaiting Ms. Sellars arrival, Tai Scott, asked the Task Force to keep density and the transfer of density rights in the forefront as a high priority when dealing with the LMO rewrite. This would affect families who want to be compensated, remain on their property, but still be able to use the land. Concerning the impact of the Highway 278 changes and impact on the Gullah community, Mr. Scott encouraged open communication with those affected, with just compensation and mitigation to avoid litigation. He also thanked Culture HHI for participating in an event last Saturday at Beautiful Island Square, and invited the public to view the colored bins painted by local young artists.

Ms. Luana Graves Sellars, Founder of Lowcountry Gullah Foundation, presented an update on what has been happening with the Foundation. She identified upcoming workshops scheduled for the remainder of the year on various topics. These can be found in her Memo, along with a flyer being distributed concerning heirs property, which is a part of the Agenda Packet. She noted that they are working with 2 families, who were on the redemption list for delinquent taxes. They are currently monitoring the list that will be coming out in October for delinquent taxes, and contacting those owners to provide assistance. Ms. Sellers reported she is working with Beaufort County to identify property owners and/or heirs property within the Gullah community, with a current number being approximately 1,100, but she explained that identification is not a perfect science and is ongoing. She indicated the list each year tends to be the same people, but the workshops are attracting new people who are in need of help. Discrepancies in ownership and tax records and problems in identifying Gullah owned properties were discussed.

Ms. Wright noted that the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park will be celebrating its upcoming 10th Anniversary Juneteenth, which includes a 5K race, and daily activities. She invited the public to attend one or more of the activities planned, and to explore the changes made at Mitchelville.

Mr. Henz noted a function coming up sponsored by the Lowcountry Gullah Foundation, and Ms. Sellars provided information about the annual fundraising event for the non-profit organization that raises funds to continue to provide workshops and assist in payment of delinquent taxes.

Chairman Stevens noted it was always good to acknowledge and recognize the positive happenings in our community, and he noted that SoundWaves at the Hilton Head

Orchestra offices would be presenting another program, which is part of the Gullah series, with the Ella C. White Memorial Banquet being held May 17 and emceed by Town Council Member Brown. He encouraged attendance and support for these local events happening in our community.

An unidentified citizen reminded everyone that education is an important element in understanding tax bills and clearing heirs property, and he encouraged educational sessions be held on the topic of tax bills.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was declared adjourned at 2:04 p.m.

Approved:

The recording of this Meeting can be found on the Town's website at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov



Town of Hilton Head Island
**GULLAH GEECHEE LAND AND CULTURAL
PRESERVATION TASK FORCE MEETING**
Monday, July 1, 2024, 1:00 PM
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Lavon Stevens called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Simmons moved to adopt the Agenda as presented. Mr. Abdul-Malik seconded. The Agenda was unanimously approved.

3. Presentation

- a. Gullah History and Cultural Information Program for Employees - *Luana Graves Sellars, Sankofa Communications*

Chair Lavon Stevens stated today we are previewing the Gullah History and Cultural Program which is one of the recommendations we developed here at the Task Force.

This presentation is mainly for employees and staff here at the Town. The hope is, as we recognize the Gullah Geechee Culture locally, that we would have a better way to interact and to understand the culture when it comes to interaction between Town employees and the public.

Mr. Stevens introduced Luana Graves Sellars, who gave the presentation.

A question and answer period followed the presentation.

Chair Stevens then thanked everyone for coming.

4. Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

No one spoke.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:28 p.m.

Approved:

**The recording of this Meeting can be found on the Town's website
at www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov**



TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force

TO: Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force
FROM: Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods
VIA: Missy Luick, Director of Planning
VIA: Shawn Leininger, Assistant Town Manager – Community Development
DATE: August 5, 2024
SUBJECT: Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report

SUMMARY

Reporting Term, October 2021- July 2024

- 86 Total Design Studio requests
 - 65 Completed Cases
 - 16 Active Projects
 - 8 On-hold
 - 8 In-progress, active, under review, working with applicant
 - 5 Withdrawn and or inactive

Issues Addressed

Staff have assisted residents with a wide range of issues:

- Drafted conceptual site designs.
- Discussed resolutions to access issues, including access relocation.
- Drafted concept site access designs (to create or relocate access easements or rights-of-way)
- Drafted landscape plans meeting LMO requirements.
- Discussed application requirements for Family Subdivision, Family Compound, Subdivision and Small Residential Plan Review applications.
- Discussed density requirements.
- Assisted with street name applications.
- Discussed property line boundary adjustments and the Plat Stamp application process.
- Discussed conversion of Development Plan Review applications to Family Compound applications and conversion of conventional subdivisions to Family Subdivisions.
- Corrected addresses.
- Discussed flood elevation requirements.

Collaboration

Providing these services required collaboration with Town staff from several departments, including Development Review & Zoning, Urban Design, Stormwater, Engineering, Natural Resources, Legal, Building Inspections, Capital Improvement Projects Division, and Fire Rescue.

Staff also collaborates with outside agencies and nonprofits, including Palmetto Electric, Hilton Head Public Service District, Deep Well, Heritage Library, Habitat for Humanity, and Lowcountry Gullah Foundation.

Note: To preserve residents' anonymity, details of the services provided are described generally.



TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force

TO: Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force
FROM: Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods
VIA: Missy Luick, Director of Planning
VIA: Shawn Leininger, Assistant Town Manager – Community Development
DATE: August 5, 2024
SUBJECT: Home Safety and Repair and Sewer Connection Program Updates

SUMMARY

Reporting Term: July 2022 – July 2024

Home Safety and Repair Program:

140 Applications received.

- 9 Applications did not meet the income qualifications.
- 3 Applications were withdrawn.
- 23 Applications need additional information.

105 Completed applications received.

- 38 Permitted jobs have been completed for a total of \$536,700.04
 - 6 Tree-pruning or removal - \$21,318.35
 - 32 Home repairs - \$515,381.69
- 4 Permitted jobs, under contract for a total estimated value of \$42,648.00
- 63 Jobs awaiting town visits, bids, or permits

Total funding spent and committed to date - \$579,348.04

The balance of funding remaining to execute projects is \$913,183.00

Lateral Sewer Connection Program:

38 Applications received.

- 2 Applications were withdrawn.
- 1 Application was not qualified.
- 3 Jobs with estimates in progress with the Public Service District.
- 29 Jobs have been completed and paid in the total amount of \$299,063.95
- 3 Jobs to be scheduled with estimated costs of \$44,420.00

Total funding spent and committed to date - \$343,483.95

The balance of funding remaining to execute projects is \$25,933.05

ATTACHMENTS

1. Home Safety and Repair Project Locations
2. Sewer Connect Project Locations

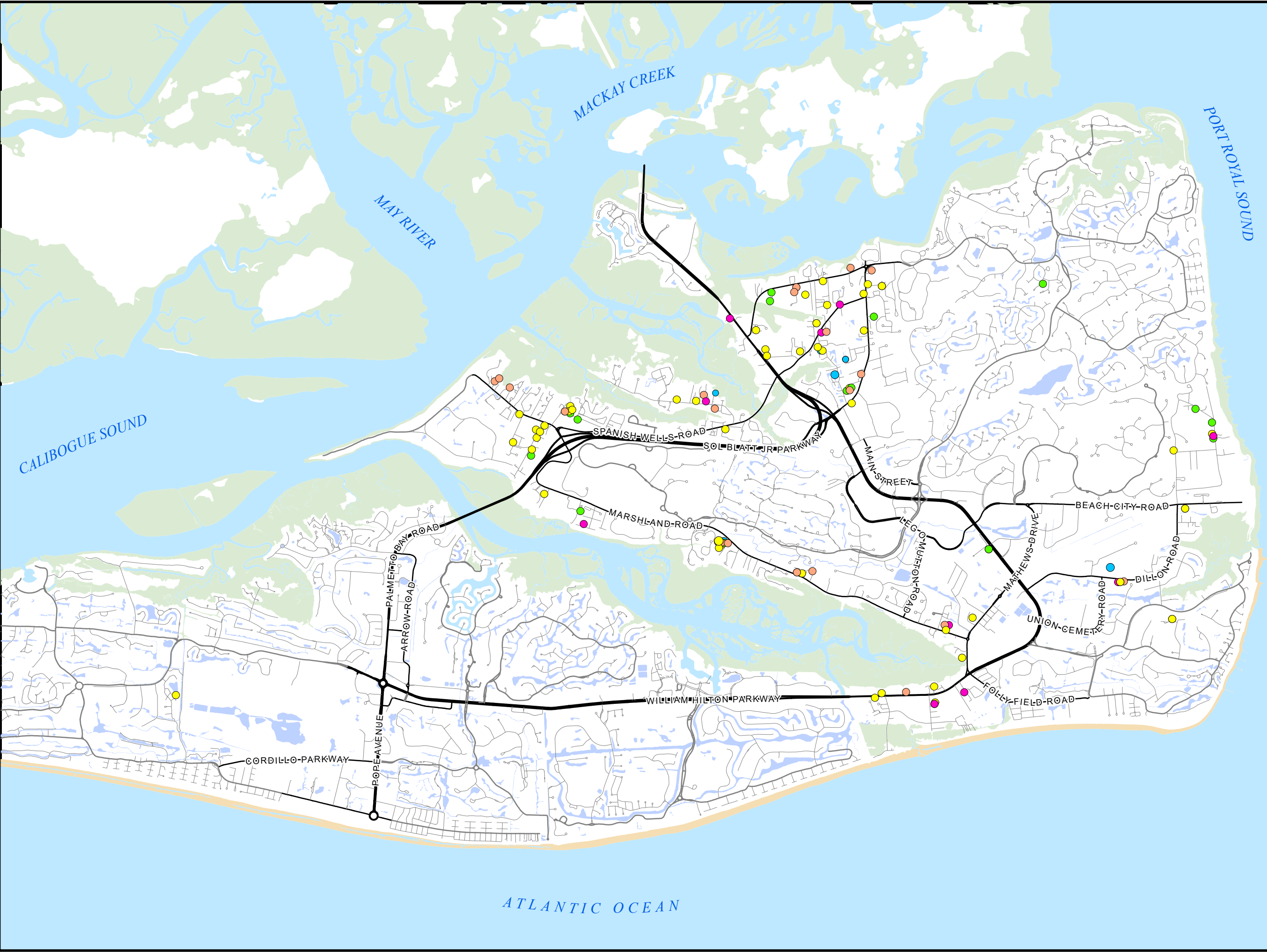
Home Safety Repair
Project Locations

Legend

Application Status

- Complete-38
- Under Contract-4
- Pending-63
- Approved-105
- In Review-0
- Additional Info-23

*Colored markers indicate areas of
program utilization, signifying multiple
applicants.



TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND
ONE TOWN CENTER COURT
HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C. 29928
PHONE (843) 341- 4600

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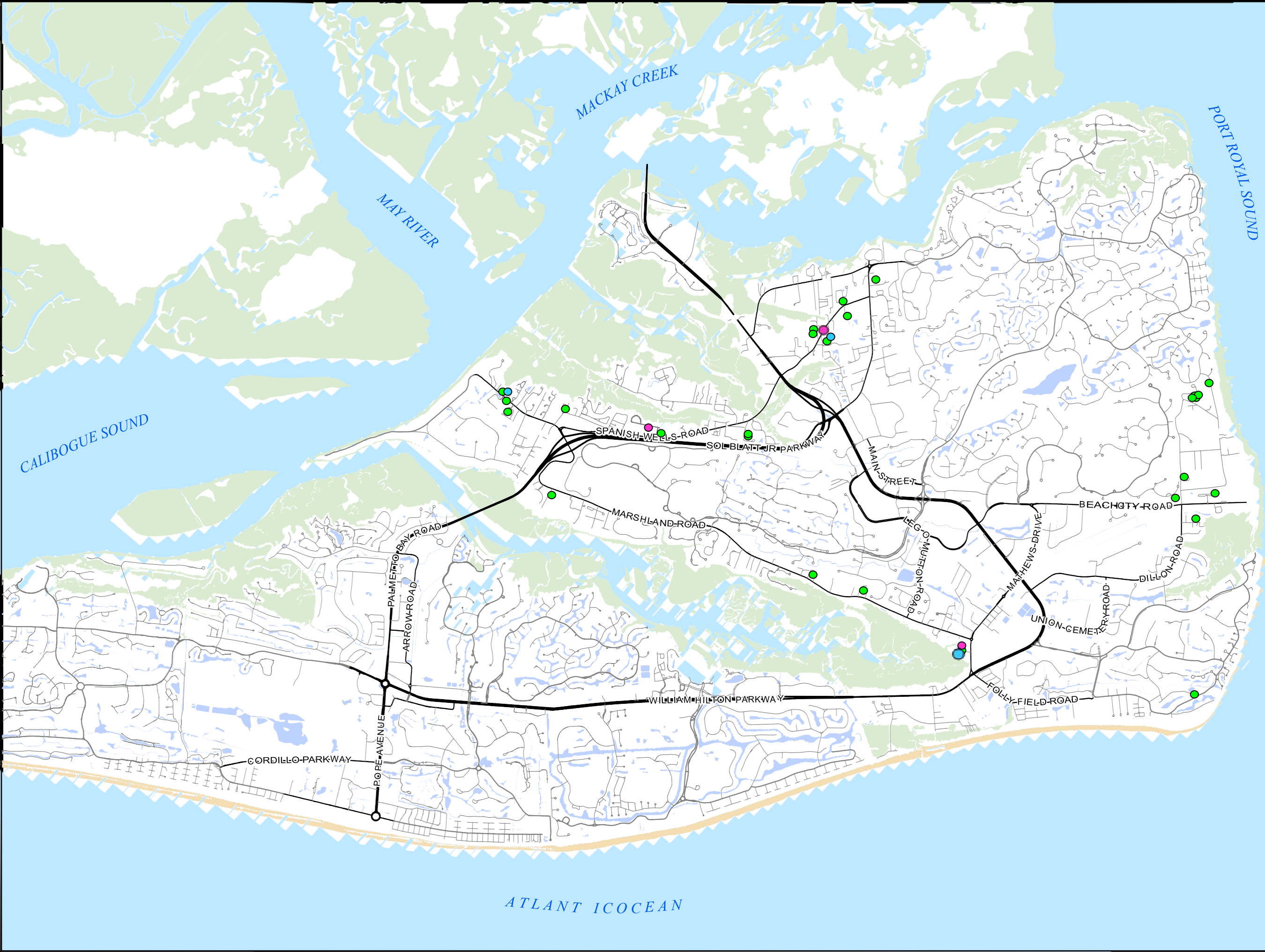
Sewer Connection
Project Locations

Legend

Application Status

- Complete-29
- Under Contract-3
- Pending-3

*Colored markers indicate areas of program utilization, signifying multiple applicants.



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TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force

TO: Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force
FROM: Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods
VIA: Missy Luick, Director of Planning
VIA: Shawn Leininger, Assistant Town Manager – Community Development
DATE: August 5, 2024
SUBJECT: FEMA Policy Changes for Gullah Communities

SUMMARY

Mr. Meldon Hollis, Political Science and Emergency Management Professor (Retired) will be presenting on FEMA policy changes specific to Gullah communities.

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

1. FEMA Policy Changes
2. Reformed FEMA Disaster Assistance Program
3. Community Resource Coordination

ATTACHMENTS

1. FEMA Policy Changes for Gullah Communities

Gullah-Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

August 5, 2024

FEMA Policy Changes for Gullah Communities

Meldon S. Hollis, Jr.

M.A. , JD, MPA

Professor, Political Science and Emergency Management (Retired)

Counties at the Greatest Climate Risk

County ↕	Heat ↕	Wet Bulb ↕	Farm Crop Yields ↕	Sea Level Rise ↕	Very Large Fires ↕	Economic Damages ↕
Beaufort County, SC	6	9	8	7	3	9
Pinal County, AZ	10	6	8	1	6	7
St. Martin Parish, LA	7	10	8	4	3	7
Colleton County, SC	6	9	8	6	3	8
Wakulla County, FL	7	9	8	4	1	9
Assumption Parish, LA	6	9	7	7	2	9
Jefferson Davis Parish, LA	7	10	8	4	1	8
Livingston Parish, LA	7	9	8	6	1	8
St. John the Baptist Parish, LA	6	9	8	6	2	8
Jackson County, MS	6	9	8	4	3	8
Hyde County, NC	4	7	7	10	2	9
Jasper County, SC	6	9	8	4	3	8

Colorado State University's July prediction for the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season

2024 FORECAST AS OF 9 JULY 2024		
Forecast Parameter	CSU Forecast	1991–2020 Average
Named Storms (NS)	25*	14.4
Named Storm Days (NSD)	120	69.4
Hurricanes (H)	12	7.2
Hurricane Days (HD)	50	27.0
Major Hurricanes (MH)	6	3.2
Major Hurricane Days (MHD)	16	7.4
Accumulated Cyclone Energy (ACE)	230	123
ACE West of 60°W	140	73
Net Tropical Cyclone Activity (NTC)	240	135

*Forecast includes Alberto, Beryl and Chris

Colorado State University updates its forecast for the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season July 9, 2024. GRAPHIC PROVIDED BY COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

FEMA changes policy that kept thousands of Black families from receiving disaster aid

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is ending a policy that had prevented many Black families in the rural South from getting help after natural disasters. The agency announced Thursday that it will no longer require disaster survivors living on inherited land to prove they own their homes before they can get help rebuilding.

For years, FEMA has required applicants for disaster aid to provide a deed or other formal proof of homeownership. In parts of the Deep South, FEMA has rejected more than a third of disaster aid applicants for this reason.

Families living on heirs' property will now be allowed to self-certify that they own their homes. FEMA will also accept letters from local officials and bills for home repairs as proof of ownership.

[FEMA changes policy that denied disaster aid to many Black families - The Washington Post](#)

FEMA responds to natural and manmade disasters

Natural Disasters

- TORNADOS
- HURRICANES
- DROUGHT
- WILDFIRES
- WINTER STORMS
- FLOODS
- EARTHQUAKES
- VOLCANOES
- LANDSLIDES
- TSUNAMI'S
- DAM FAILURES



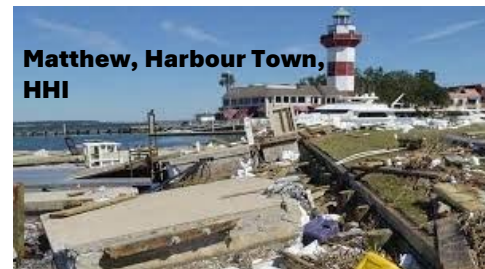
Manmade disasters

- Chemical spills
- Nuclear accidents
- Acts of terrorism



Other

Pandemics



THE STAFFORD ACT PROCESS

The Governor must request assistance.

Preliminary Damage Assessment provided to the FEMA regional director.

The president declares a disaster.

Federal government pays 75%-100% of the recovery costs and adds mitigation

FEMA funds 3 kinds of programs:

- Individual assistance
- Public Assistance
- Mitigation

FEMA Reforms Disaster Assistance Program to Help Survivors Recover Faster

Establish new benefits that provide flexible funding directly to survivors when they need it most.

- * Establishing Serious Needs Assistance
- * Establishing Displacement Assistance

Cut red tape and expand eligibility to reach more people and help them recover faster, while building back stronger.

- * Removing Loan Application Requirements
- * Helping Underinsured Survivors
- * Simplifying Assistance for Entrepreneurs
- * Expanding Habitability Criteria
- * Making Accessibility Improvements

Simplify the application process to meet survivors' individual needs and meet people where they are.

- * Removing Barriers for Late Applicants
- * Streamlining Temporary Housing Assistance Applications
- * Simplifying the Process for Appeals

To benefit survivors, FEMA has:

Established new benefits that provide flexible funding directly to survivors when they need it most.

Establishing Serious Needs

Assistance: FEMA is standardizing immediate financial support for survivors by replacing the Critical Needs Assistance program with a cash relief program called Serious Needs Assistance. Previously only provided based on a disaster-by-disaster evaluation, Serious Needs Assistance will now be available in all disasters receiving Individual Assistance. The payment of \$750 for households with serious needs will help cover immediate expenses related to sheltering, evacuation and meeting basic household needs. This payment would be in addition to other eligible assistance that may be provided to survivors based on their unique circumstances.

Establishing Displacement Assistance: Recognizing the immediate housing needs for survivors after a disaster, FEMA is creating a new benefit called Displacement Assistance. This assistance is designed for survivors who cannot return to their home following a disaster and provides them with greater flexibility in making the best decision for their immediate housing needs. Displacement Assistance will provide eligible survivors with up-front funds to assist with immediate housing options of their choice, such as costs associated with staying with family and friends, until they are able to secure a rental option to focus on their long-term recovery.

FEMA has:

Cut red tape and expanded eligibility to reach more people and help them recover faster, while building back stronger.

Removed Loan Application Requirements

FEMA is removing the requirement that survivors apply for a U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) loan before being considered for certain types of financial assistance. Previously, FEMA required survivors apply for these loans before receiving assistance for personal property and other non-housing losses. Survivors reported significant confusion that FEMA processes required they apply for a loan they did not want. This change will simplify the disaster assistance process and give survivors the ability to apply for help from FEMA and SBA at the same time.

Help for Underinsured Survivors

FEMA is streamlining insurance-related rules to help survivors who do not receive enough assistance from their insurance company to cover their rebuilding costs. Previously, if a survivor received \$42,500 from their insurance company (the 2024 maximum amount of money Congress authorizes FEMA to provide for repairs), a household was ineligible to receive additional assistance. It did not matter if the insurance payment would not cover all rebuilding costs or if the survivor had losses not covered by insurance. Under this amended approach, financial assistance is now available up to the \$42,500 cap, to cover costs not reimbursed by insurance including deductibles and underinsured losses.

FEMA has:

Expanded Habitability Criteria

FEMA is simplifying its definition of “habitability” to broaden eligibility to include repairs to homes with pre-existing conditions. Previously, if a home had a leaky roof prior to a disaster, that area of the home would not qualify for FEMA supported repairs. These changes mean that survivors who need to fix a disaster-damaged home, may qualify for FEMA support, to include home repair regardless of pre-existing conditions, so the home is in a safe and sanitary condition. This change eliminates current limitations that home repair assistance will be provided only for components that ensure habitability and the requirement that components were functional pre-disaster. It also expands eligible hazard mitigation measures beyond essential components of a residence to include the prevention of future damage to any disaster-damaged part of the residence. Lastly, it confirms in regulation FEMA’s enhanced flexibility on documentation that will satisfy proof a residence is owner-occupied for those disaster survivors who do not hold a formal title or lease.

FEMA has:

Simplified Assistance for Entrepreneurs

FEMA is simplifying the process so entrepreneurs, gig workers and other self-employed individuals can more easily reopen their businesses after a disaster. Previously, FEMA required self-employed individuals to apply for an SBA disaster loan to cover all business losses. As a part of the new regulations, FEMA may provide self-employed survivors with some initial financial support to replace disaster-damaged tools and equipment, or other items required for a specific trade or profession. This assistance remains subject to the \$42,500 maximum cap above which SBA disaster loans will continue to provide additional federal support.

Made Accessibility Improvements

Survivors with disabilities can use FEMA funding to make certain accessibility improvements to homes damaged by a declared disaster. This change helps survivors with disabilities improve their living conditions by making their homes even more accessible than they were pre-disaster. Previously, FEMA could only help with accessibility items directly damaged by the disaster or that were not present before the disaster but are required due to a disaster-caused disability.

FEMA has:

Simplified the application process to meet survivors' individual needs and meet people where they are.

- **Removing Barriers for Late Applicants:** Recognizing the challenges already confronting disaster survivors, those requesting approval for a late application no longer must provide documentation supporting the reason for their late application.
- **Streamlining Temporary Housing Assistance Applications:** FEMA is reducing documentation requirements for applicants seeking continued temporary housing assistance. Individual caseworkers will also engage closely with survivors who continue to request assistance to ensure applicants have support throughout their entire recovery process and have greater visibility on when their rental support will end.
- **Simplifying the Process for Appeals:** Survivors who wish to appeal FEMA's decisions on their eligibility will no longer need to provide a signed, written appeal letter to accompany the supporting documentation.



FEMA expects the changes to take effect for new disasters declared on or after March 22, 2024.

In addition to the planned updates, FEMA has already made the DisasterAssistance.gov and Transitional Sheltering Assistance websites more accessible and easier to navigate for survivors.

- **Streamlining the DisasterAssistance.gov Website:** New updates to the fully reimagined Disasterassistance.gov website have made applying for disaster assistance faster than ever. The online application now provides survivors with easy navigation, visual progress tracking and individualized information collection. For example, survivors now are only prompted to answer questions that apply to their specific circumstances. This change will reduce time burdens for survivor's post-disaster, when they are in greatest need and the most overwhelmed. For most disaster survivors, this change is expected to reduce the registration time by more than 15%.
- **Improving the Transitional Sheltering Assistance Website:** Survivors will find it easier to utilize FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance program to book lodging and contact participating hotels directly to find temporary lodging solutions. Prior to the updates, survivors would find an unfiltered list of lodging options. Now, the website provides photos and user-friendly sort and filter features. Updates have also been made to improve user experience on mobile devices, making the process easier for survivors to navigate and find lodging.

FEMA INDIVIDUALS AND HOUSEHOLDS PROGRAM (IHP) – HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Direct Housing Assistance

- Multi-Family Lease and Repair: Allows FEMA to enter into lease agreements with owners of multi-family rental properties located within or near declared areas to make repairs or improvements that provide temporary housing to eligible applicants.
- Transportable Temporary Housing Units: A readily fabricated dwelling (i.e., a Recreation Vehicle or a Manufactured Housing Unit) purchased or leased by FEMA and provided to eligible applicants for use as temporary housing for a limited period of time.
- Direct Lease: Existing ready-for-occupancy residential property leased for eligible applicants and, if necessary, modified or improved to provide a reasonable accommodation for an eligible applicant with a disability, for use as temporary housing.
- Permanent Housing Construction: Home repair and/or construction services provided in insular areas outside the continental United States and in other locations where no alternative housing resources are available, and where types of housing assistance FEMA normally provides, such as Rental Assistance or other forms of direct assistance, are unavailable, infeasible, or not cost-effective.

DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

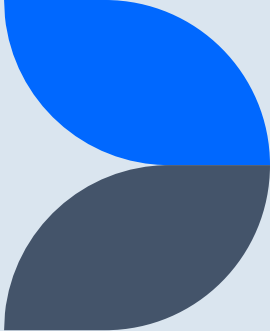
The DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships seeks to build bridges across the whole community and to help overcome coordination challenges and engage a broad cross-section of faith-based organizations (FBOs) in all stages of the disaster cycle. Marcus Coleman-Director

Mobilizing Faith-Based Community Organizations in Preparing for Disaster

This 8-hour, planning and management-level course trains faith-based community organization (FBCO) representatives, management-level emergency managers, and first responders from small and rural communities to strategically mobilize and engage members of FBCOs, including religious charities, nonprofits such as the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, churches (both affiliated and unaffiliated), temples, synagogues, mosques, and NGOs etc., in a reciprocal approach to disaster planning that is integrated into current local and statewide emergency management efforts.

How to Apply for FEMA Assistance

You may apply for the Individuals and Households Program or check your application



DisasterAssistance.gov. You may also access FEMA via a smartphone by downloading the application from our website or through your mobile provider's application store.

By Phone

You may call FEMA toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (1-800-621-3362) to apply for assistance or check your application status.

If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability and use a Text Telephone (TTY), you may call 800-462-7585.

If you use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS), please use the standard toll-free FEMA Helpline at 1-800-621-FEMA (1-800-621-3362).

In Person: You may visit a FEMA Disaster Recovery Center (DRC). To look up DRC locations:

Visit DisasterAssistance.gov

Check FEMA's mobile app

Or call the FEMA Helpline at 1-800-621-FEMA (1-800-621-3362)

Disaster Survivor Assistance team members may also visit door-to-door in your area.

They will have official FEMA photo identification.

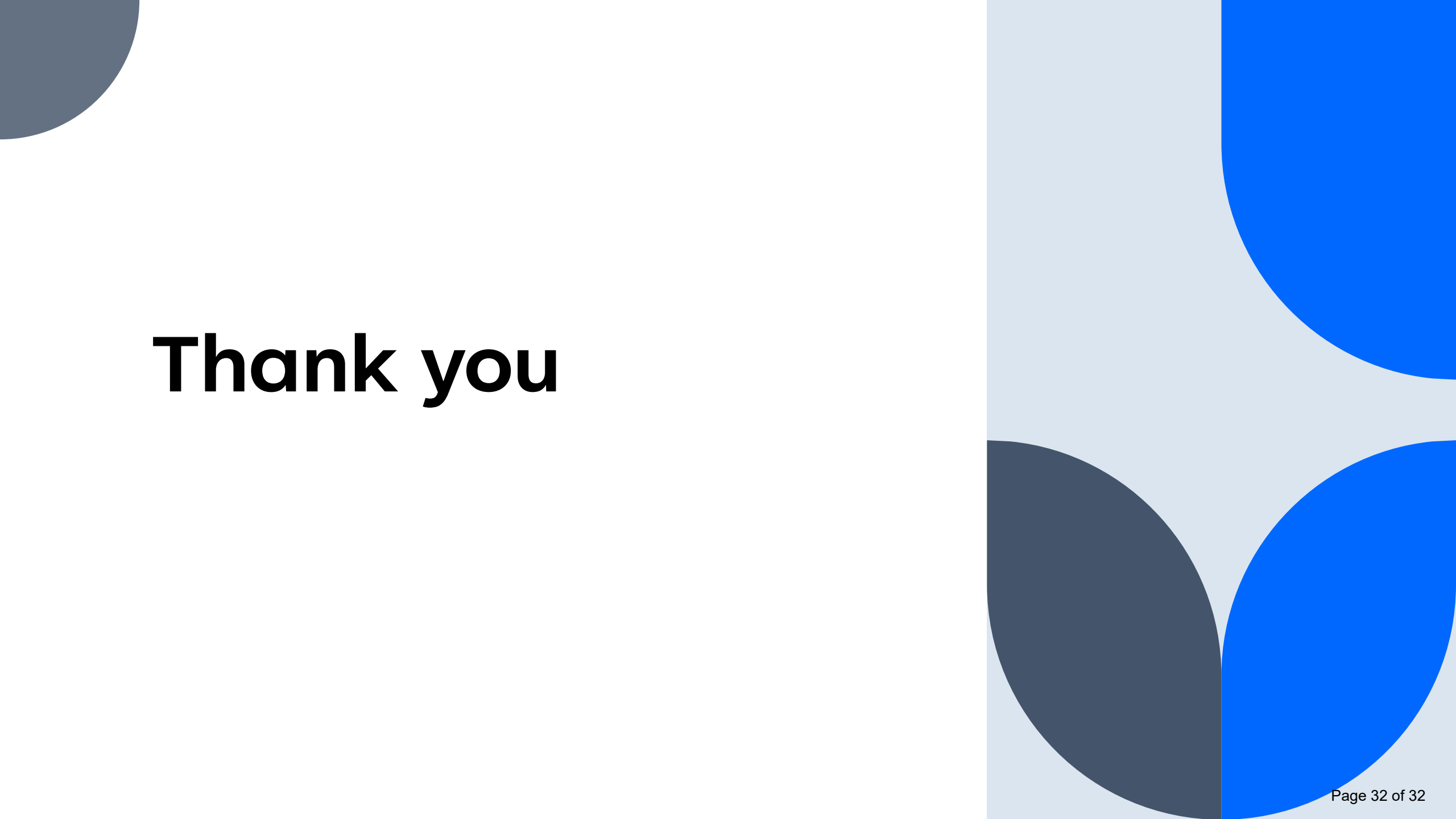
By Mail or Fax

You may mail updates to your application by mail or by fax.

Mail To:
FEMA
P.O. Box 10055
Hyattsville, MD 20782-8055

Fax To:
Attn: FEMA
800-827-8112

- Documents You Need to Provide to FEMA**
- * Insurance determination letter.
- (Note: FEMA cannot provide assistance for losses that are covered by insurance.)
- * Proof of occupancy or ownership
 - * Proof of Who You Are



Thank you