



Town of Hilton Head Island

Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force Meeting

Monday, January 6, 2025, 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 November 4, 2024
4. **Staff Report**
 - a. General Staff Updates - LMO/Districts - 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
 - e. Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force 16 Priority Recommendations Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods
 - f. Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force 2025 Priorities - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods
5. **Discussion Items**
 - a. Approval of Proposed 2025 Meeting Dates

6. Public Comment - Non Agenda items

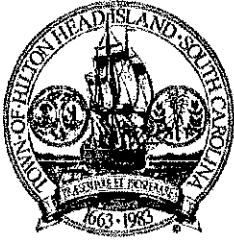
7. Adjournment

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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, November 4, 2024, 1:00 PM
Minutes**

1. Call to Order

Chairman Stevens called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. All members were in attendance except for Ms. Green, who was excused.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Henz moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Ms. Wright seconded. The Agenda was approved unanimously.

3. Approval of the Minutes

a. Regular Meeting Minutes of October 14, 2024

Mr. Henz moved to approve the Minutes of October 14th, 2024. Ms. Wright seconded. The Minutes of October 14th, 2024 were unanimously approved.

4. Staff Report

a. General Staff Updates - LMO/Districts - Shea Farrar, Principal Planner

Shea Farrar, Principal Planner, discussed the progress on Districts and the LMO (Land Management Ordinance). The public engagement meetings are being scheduled for early 2025, with a public hearing for the LMO planned for January. The full LMO overhaul is set to follow in 2025. The Task Force will participate in the public engagement meetings related to the districts and LMO, with priority amendments scheduled for the Planning Commission in November.

b. Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods

Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhood, presented information regarding the Historic Neighborhood Committee and Design Studio Report. There have been 91 total Design Studio requests, with 67 completed, and currently, there are 16 active projects being focused on. There are concerns regarding the financial situations that are causing delays in project progress, as families are waiting for necessary funding to proceed. Ms. Gavin committed to sharing a breakdown of project data by calendar year following the meeting, which will help in tracking project progress over time.

c. Home Safety and Repair Program Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner

Historic Neighborhoods

Ms. Gavin stated that three new Home Safety and Repair applications were received, including two for safety repairs and one for tree removal, indicating ongoing demand for the program. Ms. Gavin discussed the need to encumber funds for the home safety program by December 31st, indicating a deadline for financial commitments. She confirmed the recruitment of contractors for the Home Safety and Repair program and expressed the need for additional contractors to meet the program's demands.

d. Sewer Connection Program Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods

Ms. Gavin updated the Task Force on the Lateral Sewer Connection Program. A total of 45 applications have been received for the lateral sewer connection program, with 31 jobs completed, with 3 under contract, and 6 pending, highlighting the program's activity and need for additional funding. The additional funding required to address the pending jobs is \$82,000, indicating a specific financial need to continue the program's operations.

The Lateral Sewer Connection program involves a collaborative effort between the Town and Deepwell, where applications start with Deepwell and can be transferred to the Town if not approved. There is a concern regarding potential homeowners being advised to hold off on purchasing mobile homes until they are informed about the sewer connection program.

e. Gullah History and Cultural Awareness Program - Angie Stone, Assistant Town Manager

Angie Stone, Assistant Town Manager, stated that the Gullah tours have been implemented quarterly since the Town Council approved the program on September 20, 2022, and many of the town staff have participated in these tours. She also informed the Task Force of the first presentation of the Gullah History and Cultural Awareness Program to Town staff, that is scheduled for this Wednesday, with plans for ongoing training for new staff members.

There were initial hesitations from community members regarding participation in the Gullah video project due to misunderstandings about its intent and concerns over privacy. The Task Force has agreed to continue working on community engagement to secure participation for the video project, despite challenges in obtaining consent from identified community members. Chair Stevens expressed concern about the potential misuse of a video, indicating that past experiences have made them cautious about agreeing to its use without understanding its implications. Public commentor, Dr. Cohen, briefly expressed her interest in reconnecting with Mr. Stevens to review the purpose and intent of the video segment of the program.

Ms. Stone informed the Task Force of the historic signage added to the island related to Gullah culture as a significant achievement. There is a concern about the need for more historical signs to recognize other significant sites related to Gullah culture, indicating that

while progress has been made, there is still work to be done. The Task Force agreed on the importance of recognizing Gullah culture and history through community efforts and historical markers, indicating a collective commitment to this cause.

f. Housing Action Committee Update - Quincy White, Chief Housing Officer

Quincy White, Chief Housing Officer, provided updates on Community Engagement and Events. The Northpoint Workforce Housing Development Agreement has been fully executed, which is a positive development for the community. The project will include approximately 150 to 170 workforce housing units, consisting of one, two, and three-bedroom units. There are several upcoming events scheduled, including an Affordable Housing Symposium on November 12th, and a community cleanup event on November 16th, where volunteers, staff, and residents will collaborate to clean the community and gather feedback for the Neighborhood Stabilization Plan. Participants are encouraged to coordinate with Mr. White or Ms. Gavin if they are interested in having a table at the community cleanup event to provide information about town services.

Mr. Henz stated that there is a concern that not everyone is aware of the Task Force's existence and its efforts in the community, which could hinder engagement. The team plans to reach out to local churches and organizations that have previously conducted community cleanups to engage them in future efforts.

g. Town Open Positions Update - Sharonica Gavin, Principal Planner Historic Neighborhoods

Ms. Gavin reported having open positions in Planning, Finance, and Fire Rescue departments, including roles such as Assistant Planning Director and Firefighter/EMT. There was a concern regarding the lack of accurate information on how long certain positions have been open, indicating a potential issue in the hiring process. Ms. Gavin indicated sharing the timeframes of the currently vacant positions with the Task Force members at a later date.

5. Discussion Items

Chairman Stevens noted that Mr. Henz suggested adding some of the 16 priority recommendations to the Gullah Geechee Task Force meeting agenda to advance the Task Force initiatives.

6. Public Comment - Non Agenda Items

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:53 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: January 6, 2025
SUBJECT: Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio Report

SUMMARY

Following our meeting on November 4, 2024, we have received four new requests for the Historic Neighborhood Permitting and Design Studio. The request includes guidance on heirs' property, zoning allowances and property development.

The report below outlines the overall impact of the program to date.

Reporting Term, October 2021- December 2024

- 95 Total Design Studio requests
 - 67 Completed Cases
 - 20 Active Projects
 - 3 On-hold
 - 17 In-progress, active, under review, working with applicant
 - 8 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: January 6, 2025
SUBJECT: Home Safety and Repair and Sewer Connection Program Updates

SUMMARY

As of our meeting on November 4, 2024, we have received additional Home Safety and Repair applications. In July 2024, the Town relaunched the program with updated internal processes to improve the experience for applicants, contractors, and staff.

The report below outlines the overall impact of the program to date.

Reporting Term: July 2022 – December 2024

Home Safety and Repair Program:

147 Applications received.

- 9 Applications did not meet the income qualifications.
- 4 Applications were withdrawn.
- 19 Applications need additional information.

113 Completed applications received.

- 72 Permitted jobs have been completed for a total of \$968,249.04
 - 19 Tree-pruning or removal - \$60,575.35
 - 53 Home repairs - \$907,673.69
- 34 Permitted jobs, under contract for a total estimated value of \$535,224.00
- 5 Jobs awaiting town visits in 2025
- 1 Job waiting for LCOG approval in 2025 to be added to visit list

The total amount allocated to the program is \$1,499,741.00

Currently, there is no additional funding to execute the program.

Lateral Sewer Connection Program:

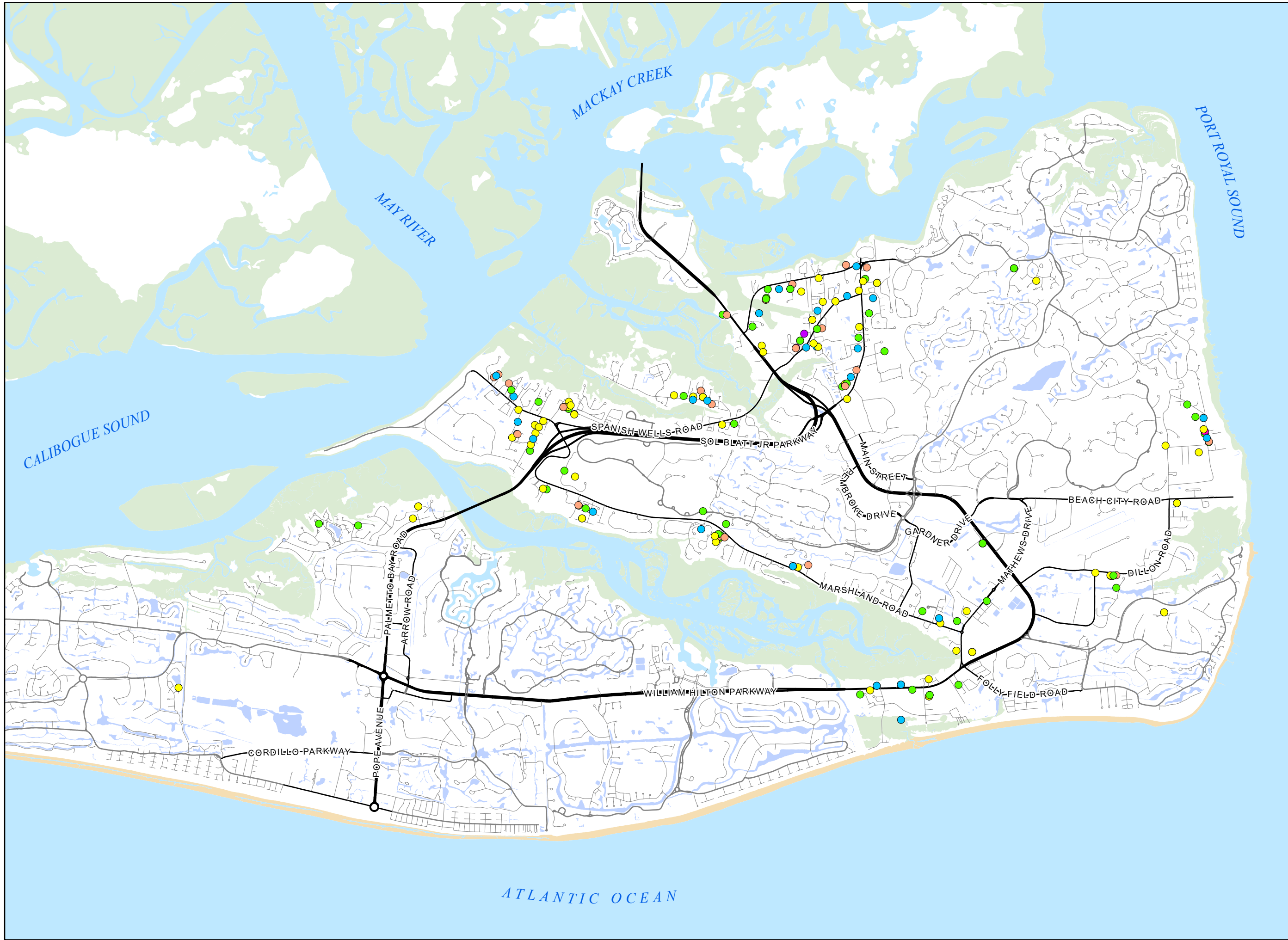
48 Applications received.

- 32 Jobs have been completed and paid in the total amount of \$335,588.08
- 4 Jobs under contract with estimates totaling \$32,800.00
- 5 Jobs pending with estimates totaling \$90,940.00 (awaiting additional program funding)
- 3 Applications were withdrawn.
- 2 Application were not qualified.
- 2 Applications awaiting funds to request estimates from PSD.

The total amount allocated to the program is \$369,417.00
Currently, there is no additional funding to execute the program.

ATTACHMENTS

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



**Home Safety Repair
Project Locations**

Legend

Home Safety Repair
Application Status

- Complete- 72
- Under Contract- 34
- Approved- 5
- In Review- 1
- Additional Info- 19

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

Updated: December 31, 2024



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

The information on this map has been compiled from a variety of sources and is intended to be used only as a guide. It is provided without any warranty or representation as to the accuracy or completeness of the data shown. The Town of Hilton Head Island assumes no liability for its accuracy or state of completion or for any losses arising from the use of the map.

**Sewer Connection
Program
Project Locations**

Legend

Sewer Connection

Application Status

- Complete- 32
- Under Contract- 4
- Pending- 5

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

Updated: December 31, 2024



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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: January 6, 2025
SUBJECT: Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force 16
Priority Recommendations Update

BACKGROUND

A century ago, Hilton Head Island was dominated by the Gullah Geechee people. Because of years of geographic and social isolation, their distinct culture reflects their West African roots in many ways, including language, crafts, foodways, storytelling, traditions, farming, fishing, and relationship to the land. However, following extensive land acquisition by non-Gullah people and the construction of a bridge accessing the island in 1956, a steady trend has occurred that deteriorates the Gullah culture. Because of the alarming decrease in their percentage of population and the corresponding loss of the Gullah Geechee culture, the Town established the Gullah-Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force in 2017. Their stated mission is to:

“... identify and assist in the preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture for the purpose of detecting and resolving issues specific to its community, including, without limitation, heirs’ property, taxes and land use, economic and sustainability issues for an improved quality of life, and through on-going educational programs, workshops and seminars.”

Accordingly, there are three primary purposes for this project:

- Create a broad strategy for Gullah Geechee cultural preservation, to include resource preservation and enhancement, interpretation, and heritage tourism.
- Identify potential revisions to the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) and other land use and development related policies to better accommodate the use and development of Gullah lands.
- Identify tools for addressing the heirs’ property issues, which greatly limit what Gullah landowners can do with their land because of a lack of title to their property and related legal hurdles.

The Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force is guided by the Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report.

SUMMARY

The Gullah Geechee Cultural Preservation Project focuses on preserving and celebrating the rich heritage of the Gullah Geechee community on Hilton Head Island through strategies addressing cultural preservation, public policy, and heirs' property challenges. The report outlines 37 recommendations, with 16 identified as priorities for immediate action, aligning with the Town Council's 2023-2025 strategic action plan. Over 60% of the priority recommendations have been successfully addressed, while the remaining are in progress or actively being pursued.

In the area of cultural preservation, key actions include leveraging the Heritage Library to support genealogy research and heirs' property initiatives, which has been fully operationalized. The Gullah History and Cultural Awareness Program for Town officials and staff has been developed, with the presentation phase completed and a video component underway. Additionally, efforts to involve Gullah-associated churches as cultural leaders have been operationalized, fostering collaboration on future initiatives.

In terms of public policy, expedited permit processes and flexible land-use provisions have been implemented to support development within the Historic Gullah Neighborhoods. Historic Neighborhood Permitting and Design Studio has been established to assist property and business owners in navigating regulations. A delinquent tax fund program has been created through a contracted organization to help prevent property loss, and public outreach initiatives have been launched to educate residents on issues such as land use and taxation. Work is also progressing on zoning amendments and regulatory changes to further support the Historic Gullah Neighborhoods.

For heirs' property issues, significant progress has been made, including the establishment of the Heirs' Property Family Research Project with the Heritage Library. While the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation declined to establish a satellite office locally, alternative measures are in place to connect property owners with needed services. Efforts to create a fund for heirs' property owners to clear titles are ongoing.

This comprehensive approach demonstrates the Town's commitment to preserving the Gullah Geechee culture and addressing critical challenges faced by the community. Through collaboration with the Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force, community organizations, and external partners, the Town is making measurable progress toward implementing the recommendations and ensuring the sustainability of this cultural heritage.

ATTACHMENTS

No attachments.



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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: January 6, 2025
SUBJECT: Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force 2025 Priorities

SUMMARY

The Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force 2025 priorities are as follows:

Public Policies

- Historic Overlay District - This effort will be addressed through Town district planning and LMO Overhaul Project efforts
- Historic Neighborhoods – Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force will be a key reviewer of plans and negotiations within historic neighborhoods
- Family Subdivision/Family Compound - Regulation refinement will be completed as part of the LMO Overhaul Project
- Workforce Housing - Housing initiatives will be prioritized and managed through the Town's Chief Housing Officer
- Internal Coordination – Coordinate with Gullah Geechee Community Development Corporation Executive Director to determine overlap with the Gullah Geechee Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force workplan

Cultural Preservation

- Gullah History and Cultural Awareness Program - The curriculum was approved in late 2022. For 2025, staff will implement the remaining video segment of this recommendation by coordinating with the Town's Community Engagement Division

Refining Recommendations: Continued Efforts

- Historic Neighborhood Permitting & Design Studio
- Family Subdivision and Family Compound implementation
- Heir's property support for property owners and regional coordination
- Delinquent Tax Support Program



The Town of Hilton Head Island
Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation
Task Force
2025 Meeting Schedule

Meetings are generally held in Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers at 1:00 p.m. on the **first** Monday of each month, subject to change with notice.

PUBLIC MEETING DATES	MEETING TIMES
January 6, 2025	1:00 p.m.
February 3, 2025	1:00 p.m.
March 3, 2025	1:00 p.m.
April 7, 2025	1:00 p.m.
May 5, 2025	1:00 p.m.
June 2, 2025	1:00 p.m.
July 7, 2025	1:00 p.m.
August 4, 2025	1:00 p.m.
September 8, 2025*	1:00 p.m.
October 13, 2025**	1:00 p.m.
November 3, 2025	1:00 p.m.
December 1, 2025	1:00 p.m.

Notes: *The September meeting has been moved to Monday, September 8, 2025 because of Labor Day.

**The October meeting has been moved to Monday, October 13, 2025 because the Beaufort County Tax Sale is the first Monday in October.