

TOWN COUNCIL QUARTERLY WORKSHOP



STAFF REPORT

Projects and Watershed Resilience Department

MEETING DATE:	July 21, 2026
PROJECT:	Update and Discussion Related to the Buck Island Road Park
PROJECT MANAGER:	Patrick Rooney, Capital Improvements Program Manager

REQUEST: Staff requests that Town Council review the results of public engagement surveys and provide input related to the proposed recreational uses for the Buck Island Road Park.

BACKGROUND: Town Council approved the purchase of 15.12 acres at 140 Buck Island Road on 3/4/2024. The purpose of the acquisition was to reduce residential density within Buck Island/Simmons ville Neighborhood area and provide a location for a future neighborhood park. The need for a neighborhood park is identified in the Buck Island-Simmons ville Neighborhood Plan Update (2024) Action Plan – Land Use & Zoning Strategy #3, “[Explore the potential to purchase land and develop a community park](#)” (pg. 64).

The property is currently vacant and consists of 8.53 acres of upland and 6.59 acres of wetland (Attachment 1). With the adoption of the FY26 Consolidated Budget, Town Council allocated funding for the park’s design. Subsequently, Staff engaged with Wood + Partners to lead the public engagement process and provide conceptual design services.

Public engagement to identify desired park features began in Spring 2025. Town Staff presented the results of a survey obtained from Bluffton Middle School students at the 10/21/2025, Quarterly Workshop. The survey included 563 responses from the students indicating their preferred recreational uses to be included at the park (Attachment 2).

At the October 2025 Workshop, Council requested Staff solicit additional input from a broader age group of citizens living in the adjacent neighborhoods. Two public engagement efforts have since been completed including a Public Open House/Input Session at the Rotary Center on 2/25/2026 (Attachment 3) and a mailed survey sent in April 2026 to 900 area residents within the Buck Island, Simmons ville Rd. and Pinecrest neighborhoods. The results of the two additional public engagement exercises will be presented at the 7/21/2026 Town Council Workshop (Attachment 4).

NEXT STEPS: Based on input received from Town Council at this Workshop, the Capital Improvements Program Staff will work with a multidisciplinary design team - including civil engineers, architects and landscape architects - to prepare a final master plan, construction

documents and obtain necessary regulatory permits for the park. Design and permitting tasks are anticipated to be substantially completed in 2027. The construction schedule will be determined based on funding allocations provided in future fiscal year budgets.

SUMMARY: This project was an identified need in the Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Update (2024) and originated with the adoption of the Town of Bluffton FY26 Consolidated Budget and aligns with the following **Strategic Focus Areas and Guiding Principles** identified in the FY25-FY26 Strategic Plan:

- **Community Quality of Life – Guiding Principle #4:** Foster and support place-based initiatives and evaluate community policies, programs, and gathering places, and events that promote healthy and quality lifestyles for our diverse citizenry
- **Infrastructure – Guiding Principle #3:** Establish long-term planning, prioritization and investments strategies for future infrastructure and facilities that improve the quality of life for citizens while being financially sustainable.

Consistent with these guiding principles, staff request Town Council to review public engagement surveys and provide direction regarding the preferred recreational elements for the proposed Buck Island Road Park to allow for master planning and final design to proceed.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Site Location Map
2. Bluffton Middle School Survey Results
3. Public Open House/Public Input Session Results
4. Mailed Survey Results