

Town of Bluffton Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2027 - 2028



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Greetings from Mayor Larry Toomer

Welcome to Bluffton's blueprint for 2026–2028.

Every two years, Town Council and staff outline the priorities that guide our work. Bluffton's 2026–2028 Strategic Plan is more than a to-do list. It is a commitment to measurable progress and accountability that directly impacts your quality of life.

Why does this matter?

Because clear goals lead to focused action. Over the next two years, Bluffton has prioritized affordable housing because it affects our local economy, workforce and overall quality of life. The Town now has a dedicated staff member reporting directly to the executive department to oversee partnerships and housing initiatives.

Bluffton will continue to protect our natural resources. Starting in 2025, Bluffton strengthens wetland protections, after federal regulations were reduced. These policies protect our coastal environment — the centerpiece of our culture, recreation and seafood industry. Strong wetland protections safeguard water quality, reduce flooding and preserve the natural beauty that defines Bluffton.

I invite you to review the Strategic Plan. It establishes benchmarks and reporting so residents can see how priorities translate into results. It aligns resources and decisions with what matters most.

Our responsibility is simple: plan wisely, act deliberately and protect Bluffton's future.

On behalf of Town Council, thank you for being part of this shared vision.

Larry Toomer
Mayor, Town of Bluffton



Words from the Town Manager

Bluffton's Strategic Plan is a living, working document. It serves as a daily reference guide for Town Council and staff, directing projects, budget decisions and resources for the next two years.

The plan is the result of an intentional process held every two years. Town Council, staff and community leaders gather for strategic planning, where priorities are discussed and aligned before the work begins. From that session, the Strategic Plan is drafted. A detailed Action Agenda then follows, creating a step-by-step guide for daily operations. Together, these documents inform the Town's budget cycle, which runs July 1 through June 30, and form the foundation of our workflow.

This approach has become a template for other cities and towns because it builds consensus early and keeps everyone moving in the same direction. It keeps Council and staff focused on measurable goals and accountable to the residents we serve.

Over the next two years, that work includes resiliency initiatives, strengthened watershed and wetland protections, and continued progress on attainable housing.

If you want to understand how Bluffton does business — how direction becomes action — please review this document and participate in future planning discussions each November.

Thank you for being a part of Bluffton's path forward.

Stephen Steese
Town Manager
Town of Bluffton



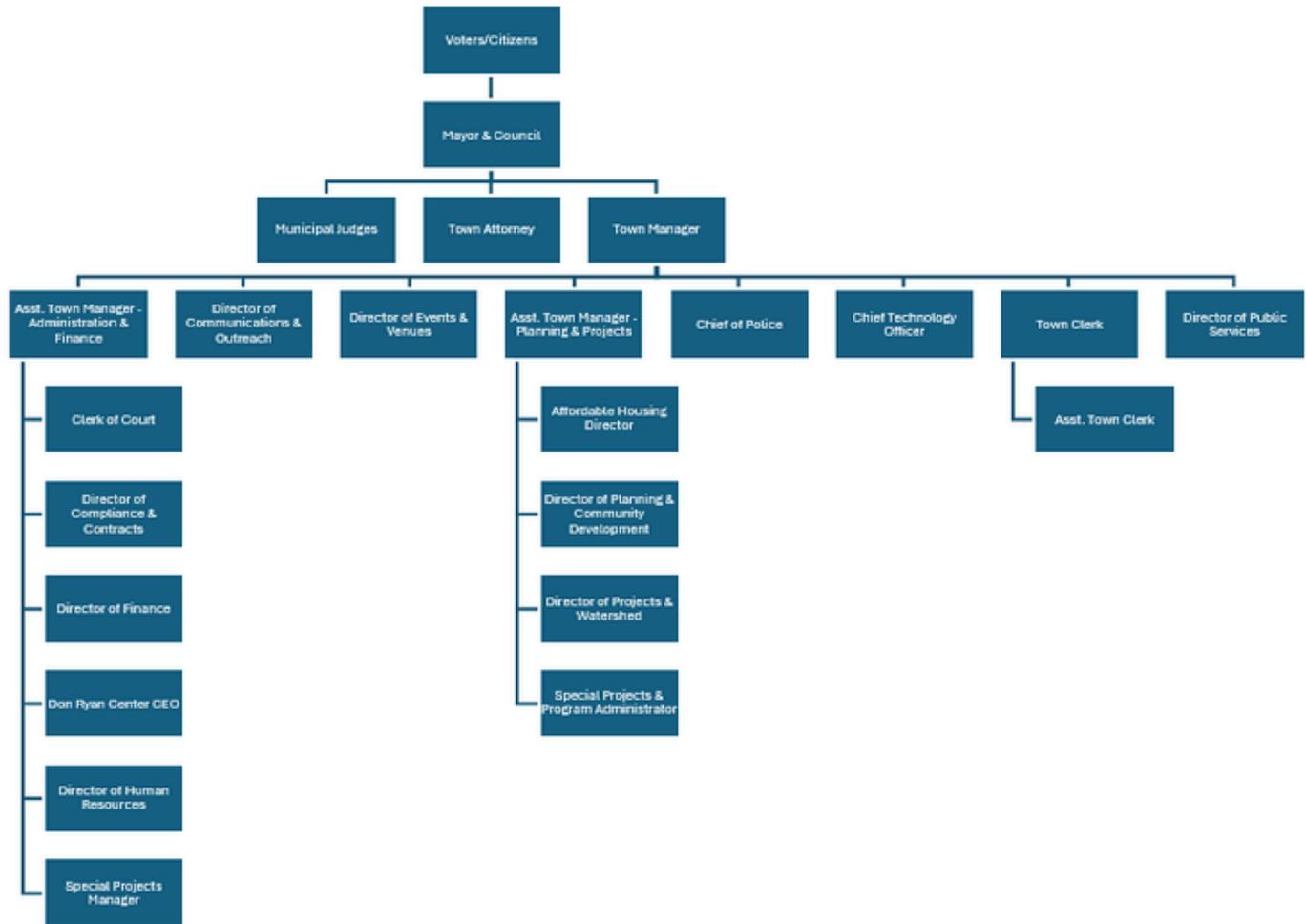
Town Council Members



Councilwoman Bridgette Frazier, Councilman Dan Wood, Mayor Larry Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tempore Fred Hamilton, Councilwoman Emily Burden

Leadership Team

Town Organization



Town Staff Leadership

Town Manager: Stephen Steese, MPA

Assistant Town Manager: Chris Forster, MPA, CPFO, CGFM

Assistant Town Manager: Heather Colin, AICP

Town Attorney: Finger, Melnick, Brooks & LaBruce, P. A. — Terry Finger

Town Clerk: Marcia Hunter

Chief of Police: Joe Babkiewicz

Finance and Administration: Natalie A. Majorkiewicz, CGFO, CGFM

Human Resources: Anni Evans, SPHR, PSHRA-SCP

Municipal Court: Lisa Cunningham

Communications & Community Outreach: Debbie Szpanka

Public Services: Larry Beckler

Projects and Watershed Resilience: Kim Washok-Jones, M.S., CEPSI

Growth Management: Kevin P. Icard, AICP

Information Technology: Tracye F. Stormer, CGCIO

Don Ryan Center for Innovation: Paul Arvantides

Affordable Housing: Victoria Smalls

Events and Venues: Lyndee Simoneaux

Acknowledgements

Mayor and Town Council

We are grateful to the Mayor and Town Council for their leadership, commitment, and passion for the Town and its future. Their support, guidance, and dedication throughout the strategic planning process helped establish a clear direction and purpose for this plan. Their investment of time and thoughtful consideration ensured that the strategic plan reflects both the community's needs and the Town's long-term vision while empowering Town staff to carry that vision forward.

Community Members, Workshop Participants, and Partner Agencies

The Town extends its sincere appreciation to the many community members, stakeholders, workshop participants, and partner and support agencies who contributed their time, ideas, and perspectives throughout the process. Their willingness to engage in thoughtful dialogue, share insights, and help shape the vision for the Town played an essential role in developing a plan that reflects the priorities and aspirations of the community. Their participation and continued partnership are vital to the Town's success as we move forward together.

Town Leadership and Staff

Special thanks are extended to the Town's leadership team, senior staff, and support staff whose efforts made the strategic planning workshops possible. From coordinating logistics and organizing materials to preparing meeting spaces, arranging meals, and ensuring that discussions remained productive and on schedule, their work was critical to the success of the process. Their professionalism, teamwork, and dedication helped create an environment where meaningful collaboration could take place.



BridgeGroup LLC

The Town also recognizes Bill Stipp and Mike Letcher of BridgeGroup LLC for their guidance and facilitation throughout the process. Their knowledge, facilitation, and ability to translate ideas into actionable strategies helped transform community input and leadership priorities into a clear and implementable plan. Their partnership and commitment to helping the Town move from vision to action is invaluable.

Introduction

1. What is a Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is a roadmap that helps guide the Town's decisions, priorities, and investments over a certain amount of time. It identifies the community's values, establishes a clear mission, and outlines the goals and actions needed to move the Town forward. The plan provides direction for Town leadership and staff while ensuring that those decisions align with the long-term vision for the community. It also serves as a communication tool that helps residents, businesses, and partners understand the Town's priorities and how resources will be used to achieve them.

2. How is the Strategic Plan Developed

The Town's strategic plan is developed through a collaborative process that engages elected officials, Town staff, community partners, and stakeholders. Every two years, the Town works with an outside consultant who provides an objective perspective and helps facilitate discussions that shape the plan.

Prior to the workshops, a survey is distributed to members of Town Council and senior staff to gather input on priorities, challenges, and opportunities within the Strategic Focus Areas. Strategic Focus Areas in the Town of Bluffton include:

- Affordable and Workforce Housing
- Community Quality of Life
- Economic Growth
- Fiscal Sustainability
- Infrastructure
- May River and Surrounding Rivers and Watersheds
- Town Organization

The strategic planning process typically includes two facilitated workshop sessions. On the first day, Town staff work with the consultant to review progress, identify operational priorities, and discuss opportunities for improvement. The second day brings together the Town Council, community partners and staff to discuss strategic direction, confirm priorities, and align goals with the community's long-term vision.

The Town invites community partners and stakeholders to participate in portions of the process. Participants may include representatives from local business organizations, chambers of commerce, Town boards, commissions and committees' members, schools, nonprofit organizations, and regional partners.

3. What is Included in the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan is organized around several key components that guide the Town's decision-making and implementation efforts.

Covenant – Our statement that reflects the shared commitment between Town leadership, staff, and the community to work together toward the Town's future.

Mission – The mission defines the purpose of the Town organization and its commitment to serving residents, businesses, and visitors.

Strategic Focus Areas – Broad priority areas that identify where the Town will concentrate its efforts and resources.

Guiding Principles – Core values that shape how decisions are made and how the Town approaches service, leadership, and community engagement.

Action Agenda Items – A prioritized "to-do" list that outlines specific initiatives and projects designed to advance the Town's guiding principles. These action items provide a clear path for implementation and help ensure accountability and measurable progress. Town staff use these items to develop their annual budget, prioritize staffing and projects, and direct future forecasting.



Mission, Vision and Covenant

Our Mission

We take care of our citizens, the Town and each other by continuously making our community and organization better.



Our Vision



Bluffton, the Heart of the Lowcountry, a Town that appreciates the past, focuses on today and is planning together for a greater future.

Covenant for Bluffton

As citizens of Bluffton, South Carolina, we hold the following to be true:

That social, cultural and economic diversity and inclusiveness are the essence of our community;

That we bear responsibility for the stewardship of nature's blessings entrusted to us in Bluffton and along the May River;

That freedom and civic duty work hand-in-hand to create a culture of individuality and a sense of community;

That our natural, physical and cultural history are worthy of our protection as trustees in order for us to embrace our future. Acknowledging these truths, we aspire to the following goals:

To build upon our historic foundation a future that celebrates diversity, nurtures neighborliness and ensures a future of opportunity for generations to come;

To enhance the natural beauty and the quality of the May River and its watershed;

To protect the architectural heritage of Old Town Bluffton;

To enhance the canopy of trees and natural landscape throughout Bluffton;

To engage the creative human spirit and the arts within Bluffton;

To protect and enhance the oyster, shrimping, and fishing opportunities of the May River;

To provide housing opportunities for all citizens that are decent, affordable, and Bluffton beautiful;

To nurture a respect for each citizen.



Strategic Focus Areas



Affordable and/or Workforce Housing

Guiding Principles
5



Community Quality of Life

Guiding Principles
6



Economic Growth

Guiding Principles
5



Fiscal Sustainability

Guiding Principles
4



Infrastructure

Guiding Principles
4



May River and Surrounding Rivers and Watersheds

Guiding Principles
4



Town Organization

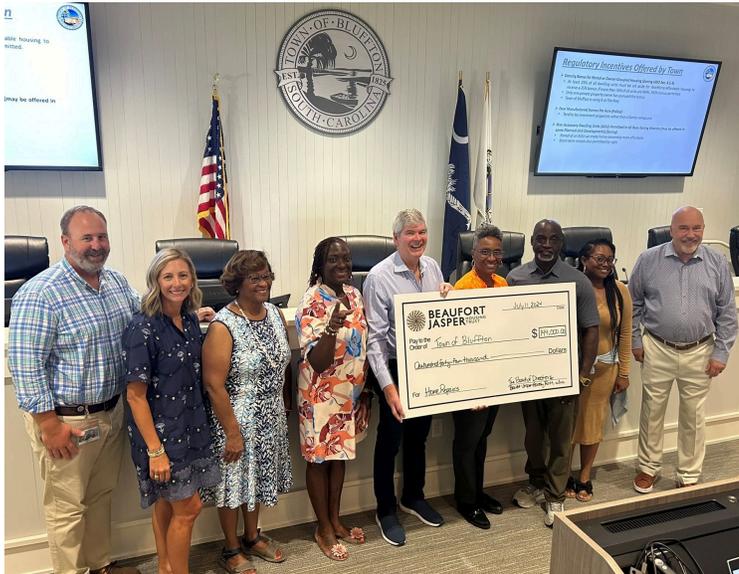
Guiding Principles
6



Strategic Focus Areas

Affordable and/or Workforce Housing

The Town of Bluffton is committed to improving the quality of families and communities, by helping to develop, produce, and/or assist with low-cost affordable and/or workforce (affordable) housing in safe neighborhoods including rental units and home ownership programs. As a regional leader, we will maximize strategic public/private partnerships and enhance ordinances/policies while continuing to provide and seek opportunities for meeting our community's future housing needs.



11 Action Agenda Items

Guiding Principles

Foster private sector partners to design and develop diverse housing options within existing development agreements.

Action Agenda Items **2**

Enhance working relationships with regional partners to address economically diverse and affordable housing options as a region.

Action Agenda Items **4**

Establish easily navigated ordinances and policies that encourage and promote affordable housing while maintaining innovative programs that promote housing options for all.

Action Agenda Items **3**

Continuously seek state and federal government assistance for planning, developing and implementing affordable housing options.

Action Agenda Items **2**

Leverage the Town's position to seek affordable workforce housing allocation with each new development.

Action Agenda Items **0**

Guiding Principles

Foster private sector partners to design and develop diverse housing options within existing development agreements.

Build relationships to facilitate partnerships to develop diverse housing, including establishing incentives.

Action Agenda Items

[Explore Land and Property Re-Development Options for Affordability \(Best Practices\)](#)

[Affordable Housing Public/Private Partnership](#)

Action Agenda Items

Explore Land and Property Re-Development Options for Affordability (Best Practices)

Research other South Carolina municipalities to identify incentives that encourage redevelopment projects incorporating an affordable housing component, and provide resulting recommendations to the Affordable Housing Committee and Town Council for their consideration and potential implementation.

Action Agenda Items

Affordable Housing Public/Private Partnership

Work with developers and others to construct affordable housing units. This includes the Town projects, 1095 May River Road and Livewell Terrace, a partnership with Beaufort Memorial for the construction of affordable rental units. Staff will establish initial current number of units in Bluffton as a baseline.

Guiding Principles

Enhance working relationships with regional partners to address economically diverse and affordable housing options as a region.

This includes both public agencies such as Beaufort Jasper Regional Housing Trust, Beaufort County Housing Authority as well as the Community Foundation and Save the Shutters organization.

Action Agenda Items

[Create an Overall Strategy to Improve the Affordability of Housing](#)

[Investigate Creating a Workforce and Affordable Housing Department](#)

[Neighborhood Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#)

[Incentives to Develop Diverse Housing](#)

Action Agenda Items

Create an Overall Strategy to Improve the Affordability of Housing

Develop relationships with housing developments to discuss and explore potential incentives for offering reduced rents.
Research and review strategies used by other municipalities to create informed and effective procedures.

Action Agenda Items

Investigate Creating a Workforce and Affordable Housing Department

Review job descriptions and closely monitor workload demands to ensure responsibilities are aligned appropriately. Consider all available options, including redistributing job duties among existing staff and positions to maximize efficiency. Explore internship opportunities and develop partnerships with regional staff and agencies to provide additional support where possible. If necessary, draft a formal proposal outlining recommended changes to include in the budget review and approval process.

Action Agenda Items

Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP)

Continue to operate the NAP program, documenting number of homes and families assisted, cost and repairs. Continue to monitor and enhance by promoting the program and recommending modifications to the Affordable Housing Committee as necessary.

Action Agenda Items

Incentives to Develop Diverse Housing

Review the effectiveness of current incentives and work to incorporate incentives to develop diverse housing types. Monitor the effectiveness and recommend modifications as necessary. Determine what diverse housing options are available within the Town of Bluffton zoning.

Guiding Principles

Establish easily navigated ordinances and policies that encourage and promote affordable housing while maintaining innovative programs that promote housing options for all.

Action Agenda Items

[Explore Fee in Lieu Structure Changes for Affordability](#)

[Explore Tiny Homes Options and Zoning Implications](#)

[Affordability Covenants](#)

Action Agenda Items

Explore Fee in Lieu Structure Changes for Affordability

Perform a thorough review of best management practices. Analyze historical records to determine when and whether the fees were used for housing development and assess the outcomes. Review the allowable uses for the fees under applicable guidelines and evaluate the implications and required actions if the fees remain unused.

Action Agenda Items

Explore Tiny Homes Options and Zoning Implications

Establish a clear definition of what qualifies as a tiny home. This includes size and structural criteria. Identify the locations in the Town where tiny homes would be permitted and outline the allowable density within those areas. Determine any applicable infrastructure or impact fees associated with development and specify the required building, safety and zoning codes that would need to be met.

Action Agenda Items

Affordability Covenants

Conduct a comprehensive review of the current recorded covenants, evaluating their effectiveness and overall impact. Compare existing requirements with those implemented by other municipalities to identify best practices. Analyze the duration, structure, and specific content of the covenants to determine whether updates or revisions are necessary to ensure they remain relevant and enforceable.

Guiding Principles

Continuously seek state and federal government assistance for planning, developing and implementing affordable housing options.

Action Agenda Items

[Evaluate Improving Affordable Housing Operations Through Restructuring and Community Partnership](#)

[Monitor potential grant opportunities at the state level to support upcoming projects](#)

Action Agenda Items

Evaluate Improving Affordable Housing Operations Through Restructuring and Community Partnership

Continue to monitor pending legislation and work with local delegation to increase and improve the option of affordability housing. Establish standard operating procedures for various operations.

Action Agenda Items

Monitor potential grant opportunities at the state level to support upcoming projects

Work with state legislators to amend and create projects.

Guiding Principles

Leverage the Town's position to seek affordable workforce housing allocation with each new development.

Strategic Focus Areas

Community Quality of Life

The Town of Bluffton will update, support and provide policies, programs, gathering places, and events that sustain our vibrant, unique and authentic community. Our community can come together to celebrate and preserve its culture and history while enhancing the quality of life. Sustainable relationships with the community will be cultivated through citizen engagement, outstanding customer service, and clear, accessible communication.



20 Action Agenda Items

Guiding Principles

Preserve and enhance the historic and cultural identity/resources that reflect the values and traditions of our community. We support and promote cultural activities that reflect our historic legacy.

Action Agenda
Items **7**

Support and create partnerships with public/private educational institutions and local school leadership. Provide multi-generational development programs to ensure quality education and recreational opportunities.

Action Agenda
Items **2**

Create an enhanced connection with neighborhoods throughout the Town through focused outreach and strategic utilization of various communication methods. We will celebrate our accomplishments through focused outreach to the residents.

Action Agenda
Items **3**

Enhance public safety, business process improvements and innovative programs that ensure a safe community.

Action Agenda
Items **2**

Foster and support place-based initiatives and evaluate community policies, programs, gathering places, and events that promote healthy and quality lifestyles for our diverse citizenry.

Action Agenda
Items **4**

Foster town policies and practices that encourage environmentally conscious initiatives, policies and town codes that support a clean, well-maintained, sustainable community that protects our natural resources including the May River.

Action Agenda
Items **2**



Guiding Principles

Preserve and enhance the historic and cultural identity/resources that reflect the values and traditions of our community. We support and promote cultural activities that reflect our historic legacy.

Action Agenda Items

[Explore Ways to Support the Gullah Geechee Heritage Community \(Partnership or Initiatives\)](#)

[Implementation of Cultural District Strategic Plan](#)

[Celebration and Implementation of the Cultural District](#)

[Blueprint Bluffton Comprehensive Plan Review to be in Compliance with State Law](#)

[Buck Island / Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Implementation](#)

[Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage- Construction, Programming and Management of the Town Facility](#)

[Old Town Master Plan \(OTMP\) Update](#)

Action Agenda Items

Explore Ways to Support the Gullah Geechee Heritage Community (Partnership or Initiatives)

Work with Council to establish next steps on how to support and expand the Gullah Geechee community.

Action Agenda Items

Implementation of Cultural District Strategic Plan

Review the action items outlined in the Cultural District Strategic Plan to ensure a clear understanding of priorities and objectives. Identify benchmark reporting dates and associated requirements to track progress and maintain accountability. Map out next steps and clearly outline the process necessary to implement each initiative effectively and in alignment with the plan's goals.

Action Agenda Items

Celebration and Implementation of the Cultural District

Celebrate, promote and continue the Town's cultural district designation. Identify ways to celebrate Bluffton's cultural heritage.

Action Agenda Items

Blueprint Bluffton Comprehensive Plan Review to be in Compliance with State Law

Local planning commissions are required to review their comprehensive plans at least every five years and update them at least every ten years. This requirement is part of the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994. Our 5-year review of “Blueprint Bluffton” which was adopted in November of 2022, will need to happen no later than in November of 2027.



Action Agenda Items

Buck Island / Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan Implementation

Draft a timeline and prioritization schedule of the Buck Island/Simmonsville neighborhood plan implementation strategies (approved May 14, 2024).

Action Agenda Items

Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage - Construction, Programming and Management of the Town Facility

The Town of Bluffton purchased the Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage property in 2021, consisting of .896 acres at 76 Bridge Street. This purchase provides additional public open space along Huger Cove in the Historic District and the opportunity to preserve a significant historic/cultural resource. Proposed improvements include the rehabilitation/reconstruction of the Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage, parking, perimeter walkways, open lawn, observation deck and arbor/swings overlooking Huger Cove, interpretive signage, landscaping and lighting. Construction began in FY26 and will be complete in FY27 Next steps include the programming and management facility to be used as an artisan workshop (artists in residence) per Town Council direction.

Action Agenda Items

Old Town Master Plan (OTMP) Update

Assess the Old Town Master Plan. Provide a report and recommendation to Town leadership with any items that should be reviewed and updated.

Guiding Principles

Support and create partnerships with public/private educational institutions and local school leadership. Provide multi-generational development programs to ensure quality education and recreational opportunities.

Action Agenda Items

[Internships / Recruitment](#)

[Continue to grow relationships with school leadership](#)

Action Agenda Items

Internships / Recruitment

Continue to work with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other organizations to recruit a diverse workforce. Highlight internship growth and “success” stories.

Action Agenda Items

Continue to grow relationships with school leadership

Develop and promote programs like Principal's Luncheon, Mayor Service Awards, Stay Safe Bluffton Scholarship Program, etc. Identify other programs and partnerships like USCB/TCL.

Guiding Principles

Create an enhanced connection with neighborhoods throughout the Town through focused outreach and strategic utilization of various communication methods. We will celebrate our accomplishments through focused outreach to the residents.

Action Agenda Items

[Launch a Digital Service Platform/App with Billing, Permits, Service Requests and Alerts](#)

[Community Survey](#)

[Monitor and expand role and offerings of Welcome Center](#)

Action Agenda Items

Launch a Digital Service Platform/App with Billing, Permits, Service Requests and Alerts

Creation of a Town of Bluffton digital app downloadable from app store on any digital device. The app will share current events in the Town for citizens and tourists, link to the Town of Bluffton website for information on billing and permits, and link to information from the Town of Bluffton Police. A test environment will be created and will be polled post implementation on what should be adjusted. Determination will need to be made to establish initial funding, continued costs and technical support.

Action Agenda Items

Community Survey

Update and compare year over year results. Review community needs and goals against Town initiatives.

Action Agenda Items

Monitor and expand role and offerings of Welcome Center

Create and promote educational opportunities for visitors and citizens.

Guiding Principles

Enhance public safety, business process improvements and innovative programs that ensure a safe community.

Action Agenda Items

[Wayfinding and Non Profit Organizational Signage](#)

[Establishment of Public Services Maintenance Zones for Operational Facilities and Grounds](#)

Action Agenda Items

Wayfinding and Non Profit Organizational Signage

Determine organizations that need and want signage. Regulate locations and designs of signage.

Action Agenda Items

Establishment of Public Services Maintenance Zones for Operational Facilities and Grounds

Create districts within the Town of Bluffton and assign a Public Services Team to maintain each district. This model offers a strategic and community-oriented approach to municipal management that will enhance the town's functionality, aesthetics, and civic engagement. Zoning the Town allows for better organization of resources, ensuring that public services are delivered consistently and effectively. Assigning a Team to maintain each zone will allow Public Services personnel to become intimately familiar with the unique needs and assets within their zone, promoting greater ownership and responsibility in addition to quicker response times. Having the same employees consistently working in the same areas will encourage connections between residents and Town employees. These everyday encounters build trust, open lines of communication and provide valuable avenues of feedback for the Town.

Guiding Principles

Foster and support place-based initiatives and evaluate community policies, programs, gathering places, and events that promote healthy and quality lifestyles for our diverse citizenry.

Action Agenda Items

[Create a Strategic Action Plan for a Performing Arts Center \(Funding, Location, Operations\)](#)

[Explore Creation of Recreational Operations/Partnerships by the Town of Bluffton](#)

[Buck Island / Simmonsville Neighborhood Park](#)

[Master Park/Pathway Plan](#)

Action Agenda Items

Create a Strategic Action Plan for a Performing Arts Center (Funding, Location, Operations)

Create a feasibility study to determine the level of community need, overall viability, and potential long-term sustainability. This study would also explore funding options, including grants, sponsorships and fundraising opportunities. The community will be polled to gauge anticipated attendance and interest levels. Related needs would be considered such as the availability of accommodations for performers and attendees as well as any supporting infrastructure required to successfully host events.

Action Agenda Items

Explore Creation of Recreational Operations/Partnerships by the Town of Bluffton

Review the recommendations from the Recreation plan to gain a comprehensive understanding of proposed priorities and initiatives.. Identify specific areas that require improvement and assess any gaps in current services or resources. Determine the funding, staffing and additional support needed using other municipalities as guidelines.



Action Agenda Items

Buck Island / Simmonsville Neighborhood Park

The Town of Bluffton acquired approximately 15 acres located at the southwest corner of the Buck Island Road and Bluffton Parkway intersection for the development of a Neighborhood Park. The project scope will consist of Conceptual Master Planning and design of the proposed park elements to be determined through public input obtained at neighborhood meetings and at Town Council workshops. Final Master Plan, the Final Site Development Plans will be prepared for permitting in FY 26. Construction is proposed to be implemented in FY 27 and beyond..

Action Agenda Items

Master Park/Pathway Plan

Inventory all parks and blue ways (publicly accessible waterways). Determine what needs to be created for community needs.

Guiding Principles

Foster town policies and practices that encourage environmentally conscious initiatives, policies and town codes that support a clean, well-maintained, sustainable community that protects our natural resources including the May River.

Action Agenda Items

Completion of sewer connections through education of the connection policy and implementation of the regulations in the sewer connection ordinance.

Adopt an Organic Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy

Action Agenda Items

Completion of sewer connections through education of the connection policy and implementation of the regulations in the sewer connection ordinance.

Now that sewer projects have (will) be completed, review the sewer connection ordinance and develop a strategy to educate and implement.

Action Agenda Items

Adopt an Organic Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy

Create a holistic , ecologically sound system for managing pests that supports pollinators and beneficial insects, enhances soil health and biodiversity, and creates a resilient and self-sustaining ecosystem. Minimize reliance on chemical inputs by eliminating the use of synthetic pesticides and herbicides, including glyphosate-based products like Prosecutor Pro, across all public lands managed by the Town of Bluffton.

Strategic Focus Areas

Economic Growth

The Town of Bluffton will seek diverse, high quality and sustainable development that will foster local jobs, enhance our quality of life and culture through the strategic pursuit of knowledge-based job sectors. As a regional economic center with a diverse economy, business investment and sustainability will be fostered through streamlined processes, ongoing collaborative relationships, partnerships and/or alliances.



11 Action Agenda Items

Guiding Principles

Ensure the Town's development services, Town policies and priorities are continually streamlined, efficient, customer focused and responsive to efficiently support new growth, local economic development and the long-term success of existing local businesses.

Action Agenda Items **2**

Update and refine a long-range planning vision, comprehensive plan, Old Town Master Plan, Buck Island-Simmonsville Nghd Plan & the May River Watershed Action Plan, that incorporates citizen and stakeholder input to provide a road map for strategic econ. dev., infrastructure & budget planning.

Action Agenda Items **1**

Focus on strategic economic development pursuits that will increase local jobs, generate additional revenue and create demand for supporting businesses in target industries.

Action Agenda Items **3**

Develop and implement a collaborative and supportive policies that grow (Economic Gardening) local businesses.

Action Agenda Items **3**

Support place-based economic development strategies that invest in public amenities to enhance our quality of life and thereby drive economic growth.

Action Agenda Items **2**



Guiding Principles

Ensure the Town's development services, Town policies and priorities are continually streamlined, efficient, customer focused and responsive to efficiently support new growth, local economic development and the long-term success of existing local businesses.

Action Agenda Items

[Create a Small Business Resource \(Advocate\) for Help with Regulatory Navigation](#)

[Policy Improvements/Concierge Approach to Permitting \(LEAN process\)](#)

Action Agenda Items

Create a Small Business Resource (Advocate) for Help with Regulatory Navigation

As part of the Don Ryan Center’s strategic planning initiative, we will create a dedicated Small Business Resource Guide to assist entrepreneurs with regulatory navigation. This role will provide guidance on local, state, and federal requirements, streamline access to permits and compliance information, and serve as a liaison between businesses and government agencies. By simplifying complex regulatory processes, the Center will reduce barriers to growth and foster a more business-friendly environment.

Action Agenda Items

Policy Improvements/Concierge Approach to Permitting (LEAN process)

Continue to review policies associated with various permits, including but not limited to Certificates of Appropriateness (COFAs), mobile home placement permits and mobile vending permits. Referred to as the LEAN process.

Guiding Principles

Update and refine a long-range planning vision, comprehensive plan, Old Town Master Plan, Buck Island-Simmonsville Nghd Plan & the May River Watershed Action Plan, that incorporates citizen and stakeholder input to provide a road map for strategic econ. dev., infrastructure & budget planning.

Action Agenda Items

[Develop a Bluffton 2040 Build-Out Plan \(Demographic, Financial, Growth Scenarios\)](#)

Action Agenda Items

Develop a Bluffton 2040 Build-Out Plan (Demographic, Financial, Growth Scenarios)

Multi year plan Year 1 - identify the scope and goal of the project. Year 2 - budget for professional services to assist staff with final plan development. Consider adding to other required planning documents.



Guiding Principles

Focus on strategic economic development pursuits that will increase local jobs, generate additional revenue and create demand for supporting businesses in target industries.

Action Agenda Items

[Conduct Tourism/Lodging Needs Assessment](#)

[Performing Arts Center](#)

[Attract New Business and Employers to the Town](#)

Action Agenda Items

Conduct Tourism/Lodging Needs Assessment

Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to evaluate the demand for lodging and its impact on related community assets, such as a performing arts center, recreation facilities and other event-driven venues. Develop a detailed inventory of existing lodging options, including the total number of rooms, average occupancy and rates, to establish a clear baseline of current capacity and performance. Collaborate with the Chambers to gather data, engage stakeholders and assess market conditions.

Action Agenda Items

Performing Arts Center

The Town of Bluffton recognizes the value of the arts to citizens and visitors. The Town will explore the feasibility and potential economic benefits of a multipurpose performing arts facility. Potential locations, financial costs, economic benefits, tax revenues and program revenues will be identified. The cost estimates of construction as well as strategies for financing the construction of a multipurpose performing arts facility will be identified. A plan for implementation will be developed for community and Council feedback.

Action Agenda Items

Attract New Business and Employers to the Town

The Town of Bluffton, through the Don Ryan Center for Innovation, is committed to attracting new businesses and employers that align with the community's values and long-term vision for prosperity. By working closely with partners such as the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation, Bluffton will build greater awareness of its unique assets, strengthen regional visibility, and foster sustainable economic growth that creates high-quality jobs and diversifies the local economy.

Guiding Principles

Develop and implement a collaborative and supportive policies that grow (Economic Gardening) local businesses.

Action Agenda Items

[Create and Implement AI Training and Education Programs](#)

[Spur Local Entrepreneurship and Innovation](#)

[Enhance Partnerships](#)

Action Agenda Items

Create and Implement AI Training and Education Programs

As part of the Don Ryan Center's strategic planning initiative, we will create and implement opportunities for AI training and education programs designed to equip entrepreneurs, small businesses, and workforce partners with practical, future-ready skills. This initiative will position the Center as a regional leader in applied artificial intelligence by offering accessible workshops, hands-on training, and expert-led sessions that demystify AI and promote responsible adoption. By integrating AI education into our core programming, we will strengthen business innovation, improve operational efficiency for our clients, and support long-term economic growth in the community.

Action Agenda Items

Spur Local Entrepreneurship and Innovation

The Don Ryan Center for Innovation will spur local entrepreneurship and innovation by cultivating a supportive ecosystem where new ideas can thrive and businesses can grow. Through mentorship, education, access to resources, and strategic programs, along with strong partnerships, the Center will empower entrepreneurs to launch and scale their ventures while fostering a culture of creativity and collaboration. This commitment will not only drive economic opportunity but also strengthen Bluffton's reputation as a vibrant hub for innovation and entrepreneurial success.

Action Agenda Items

Enhance Partnerships

The Don Ryan Center for Innovation (DRCI) recognizes that strong, collaborative partnerships are essential to advancing entrepreneurship, fostering economic growth, and strengthening Bluffton's position as a hub of innovation in the Lowcountry. To achieve this, DRCI will pursue a strategic approach that expands, deepens, and diversifies partnerships across public and private sectors..



Guiding Principles

Support place-based economic development strategies that invest in public amenities to enhance our quality of life and thereby drive economic growth.

Action Agenda Items

[Assess the Utilities/Tech Infrastructure Readiness \(AI, Broadband, Automation\)](#)

[The COVE: A Hub for Innovation and Economic Growth](#)

Action Agenda Items

Assess the Utilities/Tech Infrastructure Readiness (AI, Broadband, Automation)

Assess utilities and technology infrastructure readiness, focusing on AI capacity, broadband access, and automation capabilities. Working in partnership with local utility providers and technology stakeholders, we will identify gaps and align on future infrastructure needs to support innovation, attract investment, and ensure the region remains competitive in a technology-driven economy.

Action Agenda Items

The COVE: A Hub for Innovation and Economic Growth

The Don Ryan Center for Innovation's new economic development building, The COVE, will serve as a dynamic hub where entrepreneurs, businesses, and community partners converge to collaborate and grow. Designed to strengthen Bluffton's innovation ecosystem, The COVE will house a dedicated Landing Pad—a flexible space that provides incoming companies and startups with the resources, connections, and support they need to establish and scale in the region. In addition, The COVE will offer leasable spaces for local businesses to start, expand, and thrive, creating an environment that nurtures growth at every stage. By combining state-of-the-art facilities with strategic programming and partnerships, The COVE will expand opportunities for local entrepreneurship, attract new employers, and position Bluffton as a leader in fostering economic development across the Lowcountry.

Strategic Focus Areas

Fiscal Sustainability

The Town of Bluffton will update and refine innovative and responsible policies and business practices to effectively manage its fiscal and human resources. The Town will maintain a stable, transparent, forward-looking financial environment that provides an outstanding quality of life for our citizens. Business practices will be efficient, business friendly and ensure exceptional customer service to all stakeholders and citizens.



7 Action Agenda Items

Guiding Principles

Demonstrate fiscal responsibility through established financial policies, budgeting practices and financial standards that meet the excellence requirements and benchmarks for financial reporting established by the Governmental Finance Officer Association (GFOA) and the Gov. Accounting Stds Bd (CASB)

Action Agenda Items **1**

Implement business processes and operational efficiencies to streamline the cost of government including the examination and identification of the cost of services and recovery policies.

Action Agenda Items **4**

Implement innovative technology initiatives to support Town business processes, customer service and encourage private development investment.

Action Agenda Items **1**

Create and pursue opportunities for collaboration and regional partnerships to maximize resources and address regional issues.

Action Agenda Items **1**

Guiding Principles

Demonstrate fiscal responsibility through established financial policies, budgeting practices and financial standards that meet the excellence requirements and benchmarks for financial reporting established by the Governmental Finance Officer Association (GFOA) and the Gov. Accounting Stds Bd (GASB)

Action Agenda Items

[Revenue Diversification Study](#)

Action Agenda Items

Revenue Diversification Study

Identify and document all existing revenue sources to understand where funds are being generated and how they are allocated. Evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of revenue streams and outline recommendations for additional revenue generators, such as a tag fee or other user-based fees. Determine the specific level of revenue required to support designated services, programs and operational needs.

Guiding Principles

Implement business processes and operational efficiencies to streamline the cost of government including the examination and identification of the cost of services and recovery policies.

Action Agenda Items

[Conduct a User-Fee and Permit Fee Audit to Align Cost Recovery with Service Demand](#)

[O&M Cost/Benefit Analysis with Lifecycle Budgeting](#)

[Purchasing Card Transaction Process](#)

[Payroll Time Entry](#)

Action Agenda Items

Conduct a User-Fee and Permit Fee Audit to Align Cost Recovery with Service Demand

Review the cost of services, to include indirect and staff time, to ensure fees being charged align with the cost on an annual basis. Identify and variances and propose adjustments to the fee structure annually with proposed fiscal year budget.

Action Agenda Items

O&M Cost/Benefit Analysis with Lifecycle Budgeting

Incorporate proactive planning for the life of an asset. This includes determining cost to operate the asset, any costs or benefits associated with disposing or replacing of the asset, evaluating upgrades for gained efficiencies or reduced operating costs, timeline for planned repairs and maintenance, and budget planning for major repairs or replacements based upon the determined age of the asset.

Action Agenda Items

Purchasing Card Transaction Process

The Town will evaluate process efficiencies and program options for managing the Town's PCard program. Staff will evaluate technologies, financial institution offerings and potential rebate options to save the Town time and money. The Town will select and implement updates and changes.

Action Agenda Items

Payroll Time Entry

The Town will evaluate process efficiencies and program options for managing the Town's payroll time entry system. System of record for all time keeping will be maintained by the Finance department. Staff will standardize timekeeping town wide and automate remaining manual processes to save time and resources as part of managing the Town's payroll.

Guiding Principles

Implement innovative technology initiatives to support Town business processes, customer service and encourage private development investment.

Action Agenda Items

[Position Control](#)

Action Agenda Items

Position Control

Implement position control Munis module to better track, manage, and control personnel and budget.

Guiding Principles

Create and pursue opportunities for collaboration and regional partnerships to maximize resources and address regional issues.

Action Agenda Items

[Expanding Opportunities Through Grants](#)

Action Agenda Items

Expanding Opportunities Through Grants

The Don Ryan Center for Innovation is committed to actively pursuing grant opportunities that help offset operational expenses and fuel the growth of its programs. By searching for and securing local, state, federal, and private grant funding, the Center ensures greater sustainability while expanding the resources available to entrepreneurs and small businesses. These efforts not only strengthen the Center's ability to deliver high-impact programs but also allow for continuous innovation, ensuring Bluffton remains at the forefront of economic development and entrepreneurial support in the Lowcountry.



Strategic Focus Areas

Infrastructure

The Town of Bluffton will strategically plan, implement and maintain current and future infrastructure and facilities that support the community's quality of life, economic viability, and protects the environment. We will partner with outside agencies to support their infrastructure efforts that impact the Town of Bluffton.



17 Action Agenda Items

Guiding Principles

Establish routine and industry best practice maintenance guidelines to monitor the efficiency and operability of current below and above grade infrastructure and facilities.

Action Agenda Items **1**

Identify programs, technologies or resources to compliment current operational practices that ensure the sustainability of existing infrastructure and facilities.

Action Agenda Items **6**

Establish long-term planning, prioritization and investment strategies for future infrastructure and facilities that improve the quality of life or citizens while being financially sustainable.

Action Agenda Items **9**

Create, pursue and maintain collaborative partnerships to maximize and leverage outside agency's infrastructure to benefit our residents.

Action Agenda Items **1**

Guiding Principles

Establish routine and industry best practice maintenance guidelines to monitor the efficiency and operability of current, below and above grade infrastructure and facilities.

Action Agenda Items

[Long-Term Roadway Asset Management and Resurfacing Plan](#)

Action Agenda Items

Long-Term Roadway Asset Management and Resurfacing Plan

Develop and implement a multi-year, data-driven schedule for road resurfacing and routine maintenance to preserve roadway conditions, improve safety, and extend the lifespan of transportation assets. The plan will prioritize projects based on pavement condition, traffic volume, and risk, and will include detailed cost estimates for each phase of work. This approach supports proactive budgeting, minimizes emergency repairs, and ensures efficient allocation of resources while maintaining reliable and safe road infrastructure for the community.

Guiding Principles

Identify programs, technologies or resources to compliment current operational practices that ensure the sustainability of existing infrastructure and facilities.

Action Agenda Items

[Promote/Advocate Long Range Transportation Plans with Regional/State Partners](#)

[Fiber to Town Facilities](#)

[Town Facilities ADA Compliance Implementation](#)

[New Riverside Barn Park Public Services Building and Park Facility Phases](#)

[Public Services Expansion & Watershed Facility](#)

[Old Town Master Plan Drainage Improvements Study](#)

Action Agenda Items

Promote/Advocate Long Range Transportation Plans with Regional/State Partners

Strengthen inter-agency alliances to advocate for and implement comprehensive long-range transportation plans that benefit our community and the broader region.

Action Agenda Items

Fiber to Town Facilities

To provide better network coverage in the Oscar Frazier Park area, a fiber connection will be run from Public Services to Oscar Frazier Park and terminate at the Rotary Center. The Welcome Center experiences spotty network coverage due to Wi-Fi only connectivity to the Town of Bluffton's network. A fiber connection run from Town Hall to Squire Pope will provide stable network connectivity.

Action Agenda Items

Town Facilities ADA Compliance Implementation

Renovate and implement ADA compliance measures in all existing facilities and properties.

Action Agenda Items

New Riverside Barn Park Public Services Building and Park Facility Phases

Combined 2 duplicate items - HC and KG will update description. Project scope includes the design, permitting and construction of a 40' x 70' Public Services Building, access road, and associated infrastructure at the New Riverside Barn Park. Design and permitting to be complete in FY26 with construction proposed in FY27. The establishment of a secondary Public Services Building will improve accessibility and response time to the town owned properties West of Buckwalter Parkway. Having multiple buildings will allow the town to decentralize services and enable more efficient day to day operations. A secondary building will also support new development and allow the Town to better service growing areas.

Action Agenda Items

Public Services Expansion & Watershed Facility

Project includes feasibility studies, design, permitting, construction documents and construction for a proposed Public Services facility expansion and a new Watershed facility at Oscar Frazier Park.

Action Agenda Items

Old Town Master Plan Drainage Improvements Study

This project consists of drainage inventory, assessment and recommendations for drainage improvements for four large watersheds within the Historic District and the Rose Dhu Creek Watershed. Heyward and Guerrard Cove Reports are complete and Crooked Cove is underway. Rose Dhu Creek Watershed Study will begin in 2026. A HMGP grant application has been submitted for funding of the Huger/Verdier Watershed Study. Work on these studies will continue through FY27.



Guiding Principles

Establish long-term planning, prioritization and investment strategies for future infrastructure and facilities that improve the quality of life for citizens while being financially sustainable.

Action Agenda Items

[Pedestrian and Vehicular Interconnectivity](#)

[New Riverside Barn Park Phase 2 Trails & Disc Golf](#)

[Stoney Crest Campground/ Old Palmetto Bluff Rd](#)

[Historic District Overhead Powerline Conversion](#)

[Boundary Street Streetscape](#)

[Calhoun Street Streetscape](#)

[Pathway Pedestrian Safety Improvements](#)

[Oyster Factory Park](#)

[Bridge Street Streetscape and Underground Power Burial](#)

Action Agenda Items

Pedestrian and Vehicular Interconnectivity

Advance roadway connectivity and encourage the integration of pedestrian pathways whenever possible for existing and future development.

Action Agenda Items

New Riverside Barn Park Phase 2 Trails & Disc Golf

This project includes planning, design and construction of the second phase of trails and a proposed disc golf course at the New Riverside Barn Park. Design is planned to be complete in FY26 with construction proposed in FY27.

Action Agenda Items

Stoney Crest Campground / Old Palmetto Bluff Rd

In partnership with BJWSA and Beaufort County, install mainline and sewer connections to the neighborhood homes.

Action Agenda Items

Historic District Overhead Powerline Conversion

Project includes easement acquisition, design, permitting and construction to accommodate the burial of overhead power lines within certain areas of the Historic District not currently covered in streetscape projects. These areas include the conversion of the main transmission lines on May River Road and underground power conversions on Maiden, DuBois, Green, Lawrence, Waters and Boundary south of Bridge Street. Included in this project would be the right of entry and conversion of individual power services to existing homes and businesses.

Action Agenda Items

Boundary Street Streetscape

This project includes the design and construction of roads, parking, curbing, walkways, crosswalks, utility relocations, drainage improvements, lighting and traffic calming measures inside and adjacent to the Boundary Street right of way.

Action Agenda Items

Calhoun Street Streetscape

This project consists of planning, design and construction of streetscape improvements for Calhoun Street from May River Road to Water Street. Improvements may include pervious paver parking, road resurfacing, sidewalk widening, defined crosswalks, drainage/stormwater improvements, street lighting, signage, site furnishings, landscaping and utility relocations.

Action Agenda Items

Pathway Pedestrian Safety Improvements

This project consists of the design and construction of improvements to walkways, crosswalks, traffic-calming measures, lighting and signage for Town-wide pathways. Individual improvement projects are based on the Town of Bluffton Sidewalk Accessibility Analysis. Phase 1 and 2 improvements are complete. Phase 3 includes the completion of pedestrian safety improvements within the Historic District areas, including pedestrian activated flashing beacons at selected May River Road intersections. In addition Phase 3 will include the design of crosswalk improvements outside of the Historic District such as New Riverside Drive. Construction of Phase 3 is proposed to begin in FY27.

Action Agenda Items

Oyster Factory Park

This project is a continuation of the Oyster Factory Park improvements per the 2016 Conceptual Master Plan. Proposed FY26 improvements include drainage and paving improvements at the food truck access road, repairs to the existing pavilion, installation of public art and completion of the restroom expansion design and permitting. FY 27 improvements includes the completion of the restroom expansion construction, and design of the , bulkhead/boardwalk near the Bluffton Oyster Company.

Action Agenda Items

Bridge Street Streetscape and Underground Power Burial

Bridge Street is a major east-west connector road in the Historic District that parallels the May River. This project includes the planning, design and construction of new streetscape improvements including drainage infrastructure, sidewalks, on-street parking, street lighting, crosswalks, and ADA compliance features on Bridge from Burnt Church Road to Thomas Heyward Road. The project will be implemented in two phases. Phase 1 is complete from Burnt Church Road to Calhoun Street. Phase 2 is located west of Calhoun Street to Thomas Heyward Road. The goal is to improve overall pedestrian circulation and safety and provide a stormwater retrofit that will reduce runoff, bacteria and pollutants to improve overall water quality entering of the May River. Design of Phase 2 is complete and construction is planned to begin in 2026.

Guiding Principles

Create, pursue and maintain collaborative partnerships to maximize and leverage outside agency's infrastructure to benefit our residents.

Action Agenda Items

[Explore Micro Transit Options for the Town](#)

Action Agenda Items

Explore Micro Transit Options for the Town

Review options for microtransit services such as utilizing vans, shuttle, or smaller vehicles to provide point-to-point, corner-to-corner, or stop-to-hub mobility within defined, low-density areas. These services can provide a more convenient alternative to traditional, fixed-route transit. Contract with local agencies during festivals.

Strategic Focus Areas

May River and Surrounding Rivers and Watersheds

The Town of Bluffton is committed to protecting and enhancing the environment of the May, Okatie/Colleton and New Rivers and their watersheds. The Town will support and encourage initiatives that continuously improve the water quality and the economic viability of the watersheds. The Town of Bluffton is the Heart of the Lowcountry and the May River is the Heart of Bluffton. We will celebrate the May River while our community's history, culture, and environment is protected for future generations.



14 Action Agenda Items

Guiding Principles

Support initiatives, such as the May River Watershed Action Plan, to improve water quality of the May, Okatie/Colleton and New Rivers and their watersheds.

Action Agenda Items **4**

Seek collaboration and partnerships that protect, and improve the May, Okatie/Colleton and New Rivers and their watersheds.

Action Agenda Items **2**

Celebrate the May River, its heritage and importance to the community.

Action Agenda Items **1**

Support active planning and management for resilience of natural resources and our response to weather events, future disasters and changing environmental conditions.

Action Agenda Items **7**

Guiding Principles

Support initiatives, such as the May River Watershed Action Plan, to improve water quality of the May, Okatie/Colleton and New Rivers and their watersheds.

Action Agenda Items

Evaluate Implementation of the Sewer Connection Ordinance Enforcement

Work with May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee (WAPAC) to Establish and Guide FY27-FY28 Priorities

May River Watershed Action Plan Impervious Surface Restoration Projects

Baseline Assessments of other Town Watersheds

Action Agenda Items

Evaluate Implementation of the Sewer Connection Ordinance Enforcement

Work with Beaufort Jasper Water and Sewer Authority to identify which residential and commercial properties currently have access to sewer service but have not connected. Conduct a thorough analysis to determine the fiscal impact of implementing the ordinance and any other implications. Evaluate any broader operational or community impacts and, if necessary, develop and recommend amendments to the ordinance.

Action Agenda Items

Work with May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee (WAPAC) to Establish and Guide FY27-FY28 Priorities

At the July 24, 2025 WAPAC meeting, the committee voted to recommend a list of May River Watershed Action Plan initiatives as proposed priorities for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027-2028 Strategic Plan for Town Council's consideration. For more information, please refer to the attached staff report from the July 24, 2025 WAPAC meeting, which outlines these seven (7) priorities.

Action Agenda Items

May River Watershed Action Plan Impervious Surface Restoration Projects

May River Watershed Action Plan Impervious Surface Restoration and Water Quality Projects. Utilize the 2025 1D PCSWMM model and assessment of 2021 Action Plan projects and locations to inform data-driven decisions, prioritizing projects that deliver the best balance of cost and stormwater benefit.



Action Agenda Items

Baseline Assessments of other Town Watersheds

Conduct assessments of the current environmental health status of the Town's watersheds, comparing them to historical conditions to identify management opportunities, starting with the New and Okatie Rivers. Prioritize cost-sharing partnerships with other regional governments within these watersheds to fund these assessments. Where feasible, incorporate resilience-related elements into these assessments.



Guiding Principles

Seek collaboration and partnerships that protect, and improve the May, Okatie/Colleton and New Rivers and their watersheds.

Action Agenda Items

[Public-Private Partnerships](#)

[Regional Stormwater and Resilience: Planning and Collaboration](#)

Action Agenda Items

Public-Private Partnerships

Work closely with the Town's grants administrator to identify and pursue public-private partnership (PPP) opportunities that secure grant funding for stormwater infrastructure improvements. These partnerships will aim to support communities within the Town's jurisdiction by assisting with grant applications and management.



Action Agenda Items

Regional Stormwater and Resilience: Planning and Collaboration

Actively seek opportunities to enhance regional stormwater and resilience standards. Participate in regional meetings and governance initiatives, including working groups such as the Southern Coastal Regional Resilience Working Group and the Southern Lowcountry Stormwater Ordinance and Design Manual Working Group.

Guiding Principles

Celebrate the May River, its heritage and importance to the community.

Action Agenda Items

[Storm Drain Art Program](#)

Action Agenda Items

Storm Drain Art Program

Continue to develop a Town of Bluffton Storm Drain Art Program with the purpose of increasing awareness of the storm drainage system, engaging residents and artists, and educating the public on the connection between stormwater runoff in Bluffton and our local rivers, such as the May River. Monitor and evaluate programmatic success via artist participation and public engagement.

Guiding Principles

Support active planning and management for resilience of natural resources and our response to weather events, future disasters and changing environmental conditions.

Action Agenda Items

[SoLoCo Stormwater Regulations and Design Review](#)

[Developer Participation Program for Public-Private Partnerships](#)

[Implement Tree Canopy and Heat Mapping Outcomes](#)

[Consider the Establishment of a Wetland Restoration Program](#)

[Implement Resilience Analysis Recommendations](#)

[Resilience Plan & Implementation Schedule](#)

[Conduct Comprehensive Drainage Studies and Implement Recommendations from Completed Assessments.](#)

Action Agenda Items

SoLoCo Stormwater Regulations and Design Review

Complete an assessment of stormwater regulations and Design Manual in the Unified Development Ordinance, particularly through evaluation of existing Low-Impact Development (LID) standards to ensure intended outcomes are being met and modify the regulations, if necessary.

Action Agenda Items

Developer Participation Program for Public-Private Partnerships

Initiate the development of a Developer Participation Program—a public-private partnership aimed at encouraging developers to invest in stormwater infrastructure projects that go beyond their individual developments, thereby strengthening public safety and the overall resilience of the stormwater conveyance system.

Action Agenda Items

Implement Tree Canopy and Heat Mapping Outcomes

Utilize insights from the SC Forestry Commission technical assistance grant and Furman University's heat mitigation outcomes to develop and implement tree-related projects, policies, programs, and partnerships (the 4P's). Integrate tree canopy and heat mapping data with community goals to ensure that tree planting initiatives align with local priorities and maximize environmental benefits. Evaluate and consider implementing heat mitigation projects recommended by Furman University.

Action Agenda Items

Consider the Establishment of a Wetland Restoration Program

Consider the establishment a Wetland Restoration Program dedicated to enhancing and restoring critical wetlands. Identify, classify, and prioritize wetlands within the Town's jurisdiction to target opportunities for restoration, enhancement, and construction. Focus on improving water quality, restoring ecological services, enhancing stormwater flood protection, and ensuring shoreline resilience.

Action Agenda Items

Implement Resilience Analysis Recommendations

Identify opportunities to implement elevation-based zoning in low-lying areas, enhance the Town's Flood Management Policies, and strengthen the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program. Explore financial incentives to encourage more resilient development, and leverage conservation tools and funding strategies to expand Bluffton's Land Acquisition Fund, with a focus on prioritizing high-impact parcels. These initiatives should seek to address multiple Town objectives and deliver interconnected benefits for identified vulnerabilities.

Action Agenda Items

Resilience Plan & Implementation Schedule

Continue to develop a Resilience Plan centered on the Town's natural resources to help Bluffton and its ecosystems withstand, adapt to, and recover from environmental change. The Plan should consolidate data collection efforts, reduce risks associated with identified vulnerabilities, actively engage the community, coordinate regionally, and organize, prioritize, and implement actionable strategies for long-term resilience. Create an implementation schedule for the Resilience Plan.



Action Agenda Items

Conduct Comprehensive Drainage Studies and Implement Recommendations from Completed Assessments.

Conduct a comprehensive inventory and assessment of storm drain features to evaluate their effectiveness and ensure they function as designed. Continue to map inundation zones for various storm magnitudes and identify areas requiring drainage improvements or maintenance. Continue developing a Resilience Condition, based on these inundation areas, that accounts for evolving environmental factors, such as sea level rise and more intense storms. Use these studies to guide data-driven decisions for the Town's resilience strategies, policies, projects, and governance by implementing recommendations from completed assessments.

Strategic Focus Areas

Town Organization

The Town of Bluffton will update and refine programs, policies, and projects that create a clean, safe, and sustainable workplace. The Town will provide a working environment and benefits to attract and retain a workforce that is committed to outstanding service for its citizens at an exceptional value for their tax dollars.



10 Action Agenda Items

Guiding Principles

Establish clear management expectations for all employees and volunteers of the Town.

Action Agenda Items **2**

Develop initiatives to improve communications and transparency for Town employees.

Action Agenda Items **0**

Create and maintain a culture of ownership by empowering employees to make decisions. Ensure employees have the necessary intellectual and physical resources to efficiently and effectively perform their jobs and provide excellent customer service.

Action Agenda Items **3**

Implement programs and develop projects that create a professional, safe, value-oriented, accountable and responsive work environment with opportunities for education, advancement, and job fulfillment.

Action Agenda Items **2**

Evaluate and implement opportunities to foster employee involvement in meaningful ways that strengthen their relationships internally and within the community to promote a sense of cooperation and unity.

Action Agenda Items **2**

Develop training, systems, and policies that continuously improve governance and teamwork between the Mayor and Council, the Town Manager, the Leadership Team, Town Staff and the various boards and commissions.

Action Agenda Items **1**

Guiding Principles

Establish clear management expectations for all employees and volunteers of the Town.

Action Agenda Items

[Employee Handbook Update, including Policies and Benefits](#)

[AI – Develop a comprehensive policy framework guiding the Town of Bluffton's responsible and effective use of Artificial Intelligence](#)

Action Agenda Items

Employee Handbook Update, including Policies and Benefits

In collaboration with legal counsel, we are performing a comprehensive update of the Employee Handbook to ensure all policies and benefits remain competitive and fully compliant with evolving labor laws. This initiative modernizes our workplace standards to better support our workforce while mitigating institutional risk for the Town.

Action Agenda Items

AI – Develop a comprehensive policy framework guiding the Town of Bluffton’s responsible and effective use of Artificial Intelligence

Support the development of a comprehensive AI policy framework to guide the Town of Bluffton’s responsible and effective use of Artificial Intelligence. This framework will establish clear governance standards, ethical guidelines, data privacy protections, and risk management protocols while encouraging innovation and operational efficiency. By creating a structured approach to AI adoption, the Town can leverage emerging technologies with transparency, accountability, and public trust.

Guiding Principles

Develop initiatives to improve communications and transparency for Town employees.

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Guiding Principles

Create and maintain a culture of ownership by empowering employees to make decisions. Ensure employees have the necessary intellectual and physical resources to efficiently and effectively perform their jobs and provide excellent customer service.

Action Agenda Items

[Develop a Career Pathway and Succession Roadmap for All Departments](#)

[Employee Benefits and Satisfaction](#)

[Talent Acquisition and Retention](#)

Action Agenda Items

Develop a Career Pathway and Succession Roadmap for All Departments

We are establishing a formal career pathway and succession roadmap to improve employee retention and institutional stability across all departments. By developing this comprehensive plan, the Town ensures a consistent talent pipeline and the seamless transition of leadership roles for years to come.

Action Agenda Items

Employee Benefits and Satisfaction

Recommend the adoption of new and updated employee benefits policies to enhance overall satisfaction and support. This includes updating paid parental leave to align with the State Attorney General's guidance on stillbirth, expanding bereavement leave to include miscarriage, and introducing new "Pawternity" and "Pawreavement" leave options. These updates, along with a comprehensive legal review of the employee handbook, will ensure compliance and demonstrate the Town's commitment to employee well-being. Annually, staff will compare and review employee medical benefits.

Action Agenda Items

Talent Acquisition and Retention

Formalize and expand talent management programs to proactively address recruitment and retention challenges. The proposed actions include creating and implementing a comprehensive succession plan for the entire Town, developing a formal internal communications strategy, expanding the quarterly employee newsletter to improve engagement, and formalizing the employee onboarding program to ensure a positive and effective introduction to the Town.

Guiding Principles

Implement programs and develop projects that create a professional, safe, value-oriented, accountable and responsive work environment with opportunities for education, advancement, and job fulfillment.

Action Agenda Items

[Implement Recommendations from AI Policy Committee for Future/Current Impacts](#)

[Employee Wellness and Recognition](#)

Action Agenda Items

Implement Recommendations from AI Policy Committee for Future/Current Impacts

Operationalize the AI Policy Committee's recommendations to ensure responsible, secure, and efficient use of artificial intelligence across Town operations. This includes integrating approved policies into current workflows, establishing oversight procedures, supporting staff training, and preparing the organization for future AI-related impacts.

Action Agenda Items

Employee Wellness and Recognition

Develop and promote a comprehensive initiative to significantly enhance employee well-being, professional growth, and financial security. This initiative includes a plan to revitalize the annual Health and Wellness Fair into a week-long series of events, as well as to formalize a structured cross-departmental job rotation program to foster collaboration and career development. Additionally, it is recommended that the Town conduct a feasibility study on a paid workers' compensation supplement program, which would provide crucial financial support to employees who sustain a significant on-the-job injury.

Guiding Principles

Evaluate and implement opportunities to foster employee involvement in meaningful ways that strengthen their relationships internally and within the community to promote a sense of cooperation and unity.

Action Agenda Items

[Launch a Bluffton Talent Pipeline](#)

[Internship/Fellowship Program](#)

[Form a Recruitment and Retention Committee](#)

Action Agenda Items

Launch a Bluffton Talent Pipeline Internship/Fellowship Program

We plan to launch the Bluffton Talent Pipeline Program to strengthen our local workforce by expanding existing internships and increasing our presence at regional career fairs and high schools. This initiative aims to cultivate home-grown talent and provide clear entry points for residents to build meaningful careers within their local government.

Action Agenda Items

Form a Recruitment and Retention Committee

Building on the success of the Police Department's model, we are forming a Town-wide Recruitment and Retention Committee to unify our talent acquisition strategies and reduce turnover. This collaborative group will work in conjunction with public safety leadership to share best practices and ensure the Town remains an employer of choice across all departments.

Guiding Principles

Develop training, systems, and policies that continuously improve governance and teamwork between the Mayor and Council, the Town Manager, the Leadership Team, Town Staff and the various boards and commissions.

Action Agenda Items

[Revise Monthly Department Reports to Better Serve Town Council and the Public](#)

Action Agenda Items

Revise Monthly Department Reports to Better Serve Town Council and the Public

Determine content and formatting of the monthly information distributed to Town Council and the public.