

Attachment A

**Town of Hilton Head Island
Status of the Gullah Geechee Report
16 Top Priority Recommendations**



May 2022

Status of the Gullah Geechee Report

16 Top Priority Project Recommendations

May 2022



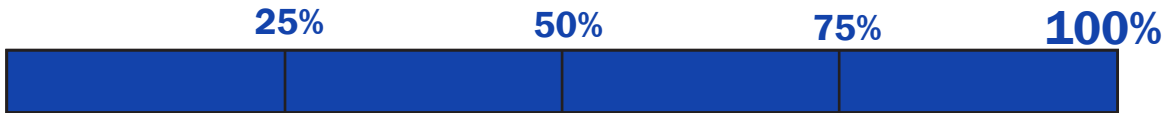
Page #	Priority #	Title	25%	50%	75%	100%
3	PP-5	Family Compound/Subdivision	█	█	█	█
4	PP-6	Allow Site Design Flexibility	█	█	█	█
5	PP-2	Fast Track FC/FS Applications	█	█	█	█
6	PP-3	Permitting and Design Studio	█	█	█	█
7	PP-11	Fund for Delinquent Taxes	█	█	█	█
8	PP-12	Educational Meetings/Workshops	█	█	█	█
9	CP-1	Promote the Heritage Library	█	█	█	█
10	CP-17	Outreach with Gullah Churches	█	█	█	█
11	HP-1	Heirs' Property Family Research Project	█	█	█	█
12	HP-2	Coordinate with Heirs' Prop. Orgs.	█	█	█	█
13	HP-3	CHPP Satellite Office	█	█	█	█
14	HP-4	Fund to Clear Property Titles	█	█	█	█
15	CP-7	Educate Town Officials and Employees	█	█	█	█
16	CP-14	Establish Open-Air Gullah Market	█	█	█	█
17	PP-14	Temporary and Seasonal Signs	█	█	█	█
18	PP-4	Establish an Overlay District	█	█	█	█

PP-5: Family Compound/Family Subdivision

Revise the Land Management Ordinance (LMO) to allow Family Compound and Family Subdivision developments on properties in the Historic Neighborhoods.



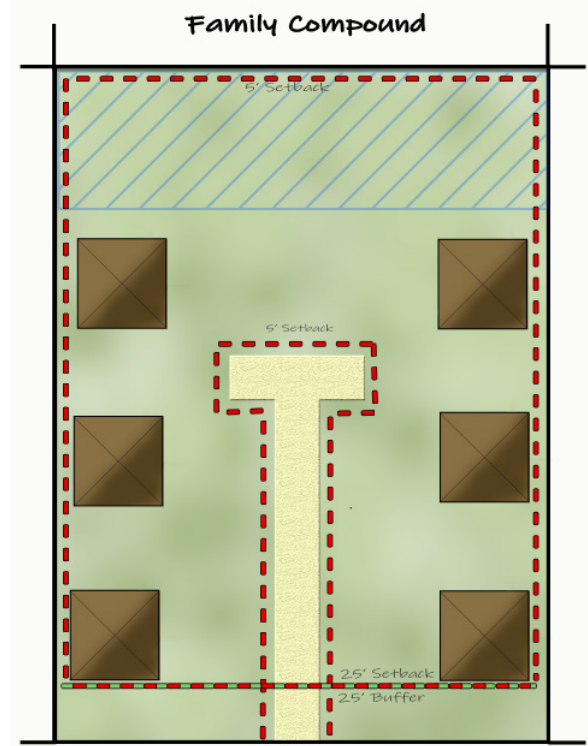
Percent Complete



- **Preserve family land for future generations.**
- **Honor communal living traditions.**
- **Subdivide without prohibitive expenses.**

Overview

- ☑ Posted signs, sent letters, and used the Town’s website and social media sites to notify stakeholders and the public. Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator discussed the amendments with property owners and families and made presentations to community groups.
- ☑ Reviewed and recommended for approval by the Gullah Geechee Task Force, the LMO Committee, the Planning Commission (including two public hearings), and the Public Planning Committee.
- ☑ Adopted by Town Council in July 2021.
- ☑ Working with families to develop a Family Compound or Family Subdivision.
- ☑ Implemented a communication plan to inform stakeholders, churches, and community organizations of the Family Compound/Family Subdivision LMO amendments, including a news release and social media posts.
- ☑ Folded into the Town’s ongoing operations.

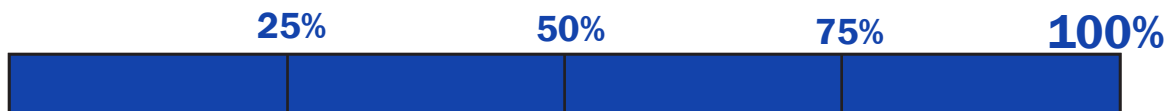




PP-6: Allow Site Design Flexibility

The Family Compound/Family Subdivision and Dirt Road LMO amendments allow flexibility for development in Historic Neighborhoods.

Percent Complete



- Reduces buffer, setback, right-of-way, and access easement minimums.
- Creates rights-of-way without reducing density.
- Applies to properties in Historic Neighborhoods.

Overview

- ✓ Wrote the amendments using input from property owners.
- ✓ Notified stakeholders and the public. Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator discussed the amendments with property owners and families and made presentations to community groups.
- ✓ Reviewed and recommended for approval by Gullah Geechee Task Force, LMO Committee, Planning Commission, and Public Planning Committee.
- ✓ Town Council adopted Dirt Road LMO amendments in November 2020.
- ✓ Town Council adopted Family Compound/Family Subdivision LMO amendments in July 2021.
- ✓ Folded into the Town's ongoing operations.

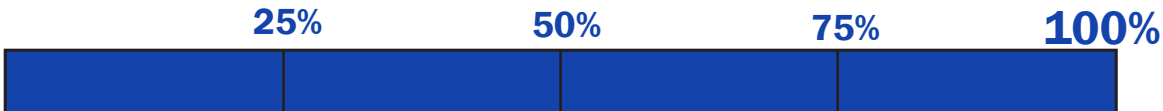


PP-2: Fast Track Family Compound/Family Subdivision Applications

Town staff prioritizes the review of Family Compound and Family Subdivision applications and related building permits.



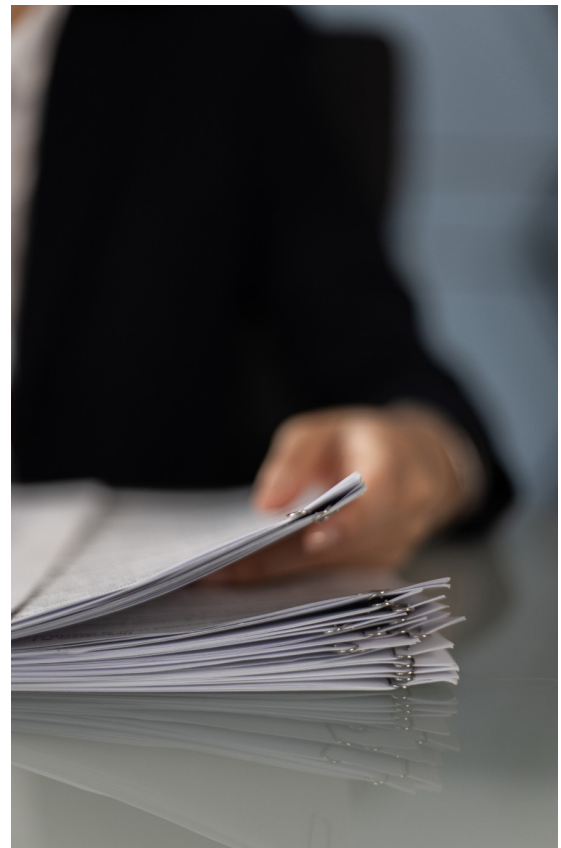
Percent Complete



- **Family Compound/Family Subdivision applications are reviewed before other applications.**
- **Related building permits are fast tracked.**

Overview

- ☑ Review Family Compound and Family Subdivision applications and related building permits prior to other submittals, as specified in the LMO amendments.
- ☑ Noted on the Town webpage and application forms the applications will be fast tracked.
- ☑ Notified applicants that their applications will be prioritized for review.
- ☑ Implemented a communication plan to inform stakeholders, churches, and community organizations of the Family Compound/Family Subdivision LMO amendments, including a news release and social media posts.
- ☑ Folded into the Town's ongoing operations.

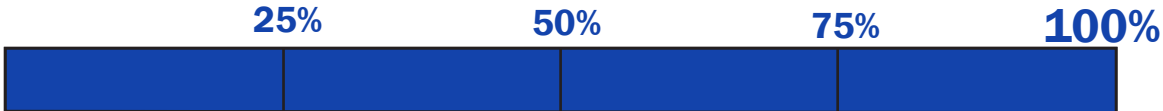


PP-3: Permitting & Design Studio

A one-stop resource to assist property and business owners in navigating the Town's land use and development standards, preparing development applications, and resolving related issues.



Percent Complete



- **Provide personalized guidance.**
- **Current Planning, Urban Design, Fire Rescue, Infrastructure, and Business License assistance.**
- **Reduce barriers to property preservation and development.**

Overview

- ☑ Provides assistance to property and business owners in the Historic Neighborhoods on a variety of issues, including subdivisions; buffers and setbacks; easements and rights-of-way; property access; dirt roads; mobile home placements; building permit issues; addressing; fire hydrants; and code enforcement issues.
- ☑ Offers conceptual site design services and business license assistance.
- ☑ Implemented a communication plan to inform stakeholders, churches, and community organizations of the Historic Neighborhoods Permitting and Design Studio and that staff is available to provide information and assistance.
- ☑ Develop case studies on property development challenges to consider new land use policies.
- ☑ Folded into Town's ongoing operations.

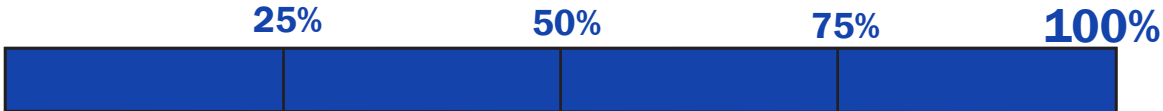


PP-11: Fund for Delinquent Taxes

Establish a fund to help Heirs' Property owners avoid losing their property to delinquent tax sales.



Percent Complete



- **Recommend the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association consider creating a fund with the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry.**
- **Coordinate with related organizations to identify at-risk properties.**
- **Prevent properties from becoming delinquent.**

Overview

- ☑ Met with the lead organizations – the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry and the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association (NIBCAA) – to discuss establishing a fund.
- ☑ If NIBCAA creates a fund, staff will assist with communications.
- ☑ Coordinated with Beaufort County to identify properties that are delinquent and at risk of being lost and provided that information to community organizations that support property owners.
- ☑ Promoted Penn Center’s Land Preservation Assistance Program.
- ☑ Promoted the Pan African Family Empowerment and Land Preservation Network and Lowcountry Gullah, which pay owners’ delinquent taxes.
- ☑ Promoting these organizations and services is folded into the Town’s ongoing operations.

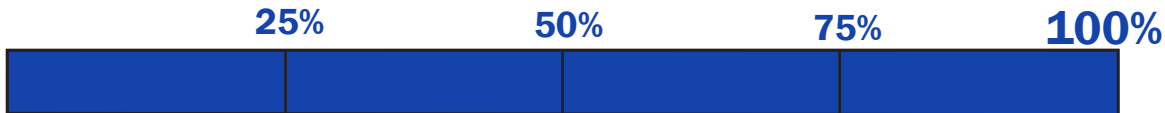




PP-12: Educational Meetings & Workshops

Host educational meetings and workshops on issues that impact Gullah residents, such as Heirs' Property, development standards, and property taxes.

Percent Complete



- Offer quarterly educational opportunities for Gullah community.
- Address Town development standards and challenges that impact Historic Neighborhoods.

Overview

- ☑ Established educational outreach programs on topics such as Gullah History and Culture, Development Standards in Historic Neighborhoods, Addressing Policies, etc.
- ☑ Held Community Education Programs on Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions and Heirs' Properties and Wills.
- ☑ Worked with The Links, Inc. to promote education from the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation on Heirs' Property, Forestry, and Wills.
- ☑ Held small group meetings to update community members on development standards, including Family Compounds and Family Subdivisions.
- ☑ Folded into the Town's ongoing operations.



CP-1: Promote Heritage Library

Promote the use of the Heritage Library's resources for the Island's Gullah people to research their history and genealogy.



Percent Complete

25%

50%

75%

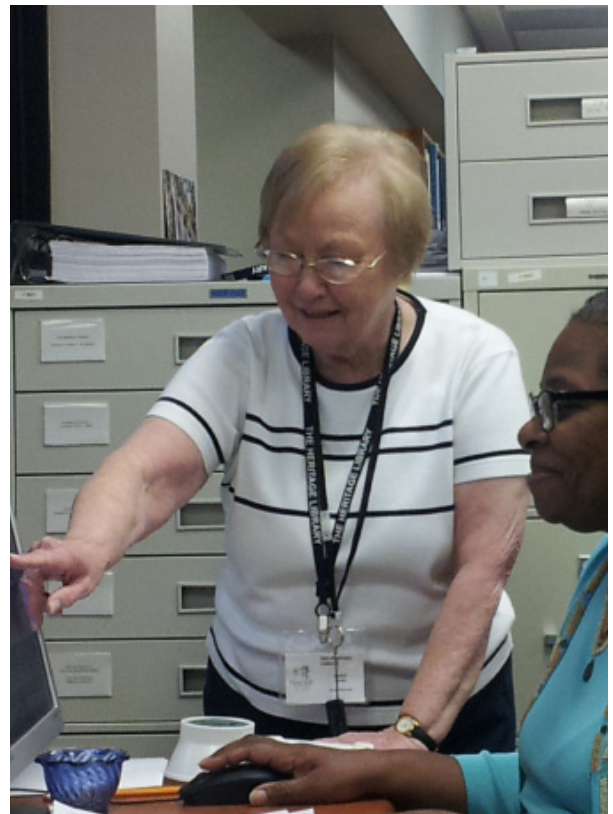
100%



- Increase awareness of the Heritage Library's resources and services.
- Foster knowledge about Gullah history and genealogy.

Overview

- ☑ Promoted Heritage Library on Town's website.
- ☑ Notified Gullah community of Heritage Library events.
- ☑ Established the Heirs' Property Family Research Project.
- ☑ Implemented a sustainable communications plan to inform stakeholders, churches, and community organizations of the Heritage Library's resources and of the Family Research Project.
- ☑ Promoting the Heritage Library is folded into the Town's ongoing operations.

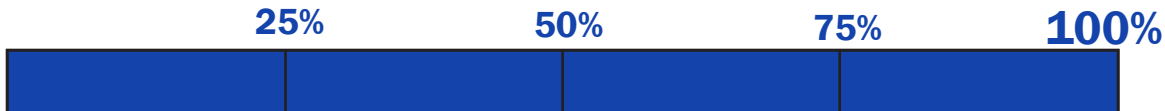


CP-17: Outreach with Gullah Churches

Work with Gullah churches to gather information, assess needs, and disseminate information.



Percent Complete



- **Update churches, community organizations, and stakeholders on Gullah-related meetings and initiatives.**
- **Share vital information, such as Town-led COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites.**

Overview

- ☑ Established Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator as point of contact for the Town for all Island Gullah churches.
- ☑ Communicate regularly on Gullah Geechee initiatives, such as the Family Compound/ Family Subdivision LMO amendments.
- ☑ Provide updates regarding Town meetings addressing relevant topics.
- ☑ Receive referrals from churches of community members who need assistance.
- ☑ Folded into the Town's ongoing operations.

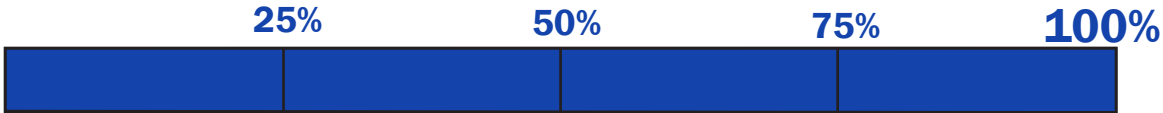


HP-1: Heirs' Property Family Research Project

Develop a program with the Heritage Library Foundation to provide genealogy research assistance for Gullah families seeking to clear Heirs' Property titles.



Percent Complete



- Established the Heirs' Property Family Research Project.
- Partnered with Heritage Library and USCB Hilton Head Island.
- Identify heirs using genealogy research.

Overview

- ✓ Established with the Heritage Library the criteria to accept client referrals.
- ✓ Worked with the Heritage Library to define available services.
- ✓ Partnered with USCB Hilton Head Island to create a dedicated office with equipment and software.
- ✓ Provided the required equipment and software.
- ✓ Held a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Heirs' Property Family Research Project office on the USCB Hilton Head Island campus in August 2021.
- ✓ Promoting this service is folded into the Town's ongoing operations.

**Heirs' Property
Family Research Project**

Sponsored by the Town of Hilton Head Island in partnership with its Gullah-Geekker Culture and Land Preservation Task Force, the Heritage Library and the University of South Carolina Beaufort.

PROJECT PURPOSE:
The project aims to assist families with the genealogy research necessary for building a family tree that can be used for heirs' property claims and will land death, where property is land that has been passed down from the original deed holder to succeeding generations without benefit of a formal will or probate. Although the family members know they own the land, their claim to it has not been established in the courts. This leaves the family without a title and vulnerable to exploitation, no matter who lives there or who pays the taxes, and restricts the land from development.

PROJECT GUIDELINES:

- Clients are accepted for the project based upon a referral from the Office of Historic Neighborhoods Preservation, Town of Hilton Head Island.
- The project is open to Hilton Head Island families that qualify based on their current situation with heirs' property.
- Heritage library volunteers will be assigned to assist clients with genealogy research.
- Families accepted for the project will be contacted by a Heritage Library volunteer.

<small>Sherpae DuBois, PhD Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator Town of Hilton Head Island (843) 341-4882 SDuBois@hiltonheadisland.org</small>	<small>The Heirs' Property Family Research Project Office University of South Carolina Beaufort, Hilton Head Island Campus 1 Sand Shrub Drive, Room 218 Hilton Head Island, S.C. 29928</small>	<small>Sherpae Cottrill Executive Director Heritage Library of Hilton Head Island (843) 856-8590 director@heritagehli.org</small>
---	--	---

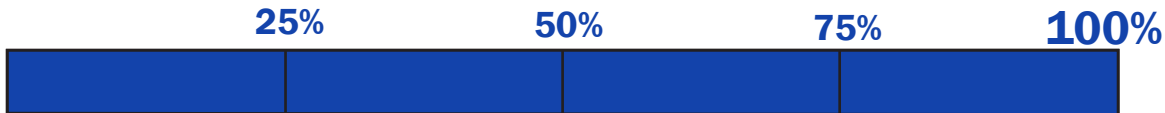
Office hours are by appointment only.
Call (843) 856-8580 to schedule.

HP-2: Coordinate with Heirs' Property Organizations

Connect with organizations that can provide legal assistance and/or education for property owners seeking to clear Heirs' Property.



Percent Complete



- Understand services provided by Heirs' Property organizations.
- Establish relationships with those organizations.
- Direct Heirs' Property owners to the appropriate resources.

Overview

- ☑ Established connections with South Carolina Legal Services, South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center, Black Belt Justice Center, Black Family Land Trust, and the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation.
- ☑ Created a summary of the services each organization provides for reference and distribution to the Gullah community.
- ☑ Continue to refer Heirs' Property owners to the appropriate organization to meet their needs.
- ☑ Promoting these services is folded into the Town's ongoing operations.

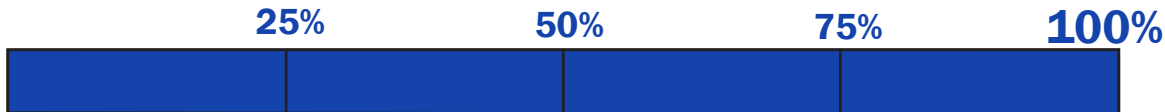


HP-3: Create Center for Heirs' Property Preservation Satellite Office on Hilton Head Island



Provide information and assistance to Heirs' Property owners regarding the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation. Explore establishing a satellite office on Hilton Head Island.

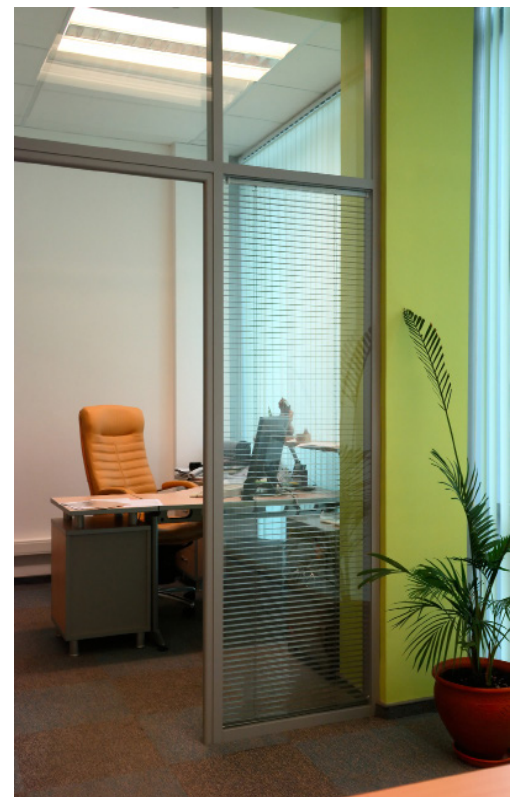
Percent Complete



- **Promote Center for Heirs' Property Preservation services to qualified Heirs' Property owners.**
- **Facilitate consultations with Center for Heirs' Property Preservation for Island clients.**

Overview

- ☑ Discussed the possibility of establishing a satellite office with the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation's Chief of Operations.
- ☑ The Center is not interested in establishing a satellite office at this time. The Center provides services for 22 counties, and there aren't enough property owners on the Island who need their services to provide a satellite office.
- ☑ Staff will revisit the idea of a satellite office with the Center if the need arises.
- ☑ Promoted Center for Heirs' Property Preservation services to qualified property owners.
- ☑ Promoting these services is folded into the Town's ongoing operations.

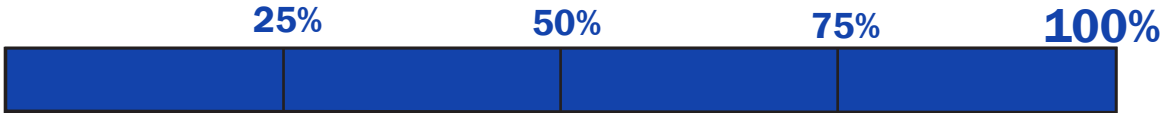


HP-4: Fund to Clear Property Titles

Establish a fund to help Heirs' Property owners clear the title to their land.



Percent Complete



- **Recommend the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association consider creating a fund with the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry to clear Heirs' Property titles.**
- **Preserve family land by preventing sales by non-resident owners.**

Overview

- ☑ Met with the lead organizations – the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry and the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association (NIBCAA) – to discuss establishing a fund.
- ☑ If NIBCAA creates a fund, staff will assist with communications.
- ☑ Held Community Education Programs on Heirs' Property challenges and resources.
- ☑ Providing education on Heirs' Property and promoting organizations that can assist Heirs' Property owners is folded into the Town's ongoing operations.

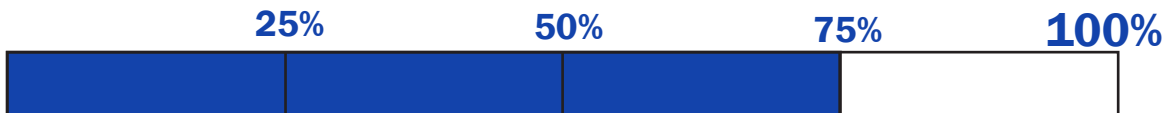




CP-7: Educate Town Officials & Employees

Develop education programs on Gullah history, culture, development standards challenges, and land use policies for Town officials, employees, and Board and Commission members.

Percent Complete



- Provide quarterly orientation on Gullah history and culture.
- Offer engaging, ongoing learning opportunities such as panel discussions, site visits, and mobile tours.

Overview

- Created a draft Gullah History and Cultural Education Program for new hires, newly elected officials, and Board and Commission members.
- Program consists of an initial orientation training with ongoing educational opportunities.
- Received feedback from the Gullah Task Force on the draft Program.
- Need a recommendation from the Gullah Task Force.
- Need review and acceptance from Town Council.
- If approved by Town Council, staff will implement the program with initial events targeted for the 4th Quarter of 2022.
- Program will be folded into the Town's ongoing operations.

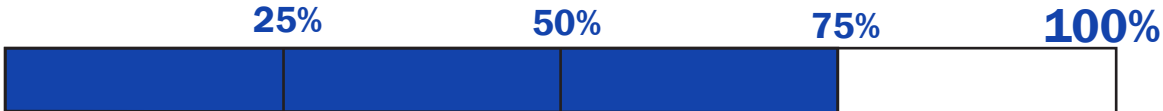


CP-14: Establish Open-Air Gullah Market

Work with stakeholders to establish an open-air market to promote Gullah Culture and create economic opportunities.



Percent Complete



- **Assist the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association (NIBCAA) as they establish an open-air Gullah market.**
- **Promote the market to the Gullah community and the public.**
- **Consider providing a new location for the market on the north end when the US 278 Gateway Corridor project is complete.**

Overview

- Gathered input from local vendors.
- Drafted a business plan.
- Coordinated with NIBCAA, the Gullah Task Force, and Culture HHI to consider Town-owned sites for the market. NIBCAA selected Lowcountry Celebration Park.
- Execute a communications plan to help NIBCAA promote the market.
- Evaluate the success of the market and consider providing an alternative location on the north end of the Island, if desired by NIBCAA.

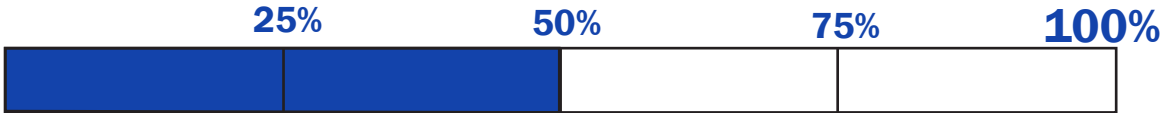


PP-14: Temporary and Seasonal Signs

Establish a program to provide temporary and seasonal signs for Gullah businesses in Historic Neighborhoods.



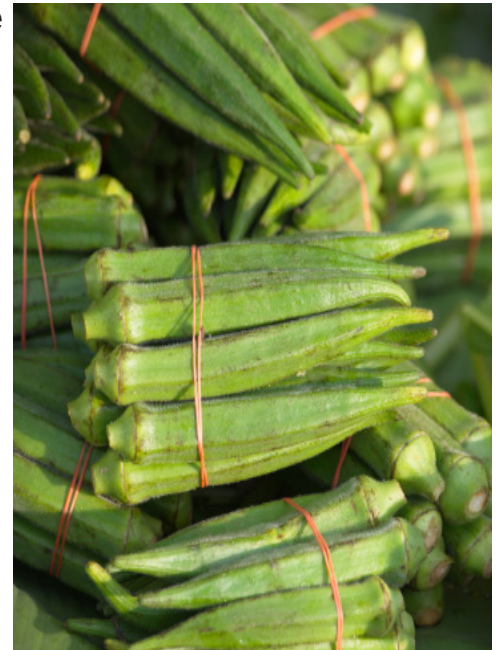
Percent Complete



- **Identify Gullah businesses with shared signs.**
- **Expand opportunities for Gullah residents and businesses.**

Overview

- Proposed to the Public Planning Committee in June 2021 amending the LMO to allow seasonal and temporary signs with a uniform design to be used within the Historic Neighborhoods to advertise homegrown, freshly caught, and handmade items.
- The Committee expressed concerns about the number of signs that may be displayed since the Historic Neighborhoods cover a large portion of the Island.
- The Gullah Taskforce identified ten Gullah businesses that could potentially benefit from these signs.
- Staff will work with the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association (NIBCAA) to inform Gullah-owned businesses how they can purchase and display LMO compliant portable signs.
- If the current LMO standards for portable signs don't meet the businesses' needs, staff will recommend amendments.

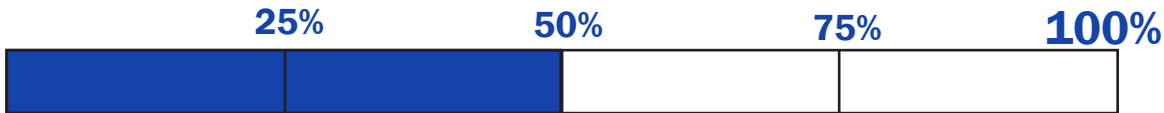


PP-4: Establish an Overlay District

Establish a Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Overlay District.



Percent Complete



- **Preserve the character and integrity of the Historic Neighborhoods.**
- **Encourage the preservation of Gullah-owned land by amending development standards that limit development, particularly for traditional family living patterns.**
- **Examine additional development challenges identified by property owners and the Gullah Task Force.**

Overview

- Drafted LMO Amendments to establish an overlay district.
- Reviewed by Gullah Geechee Task Force, LMO Committee, Planning Commission, Public Planning Committee, and Town Council.
- Town Council approved elements of the overlay district in July 2021.
- Approved elements: Family Compounds; Family Subdivisions; reduced buffer, setback, right-of-way, and access easement widths; and creating rights-of-way without reducing density.
- Examine additional challenges to development in Historic Neighborhoods and forward any possible solutions to Town Council as soon as possible.
- Revisit additional code modifications upon completion of the Conditions and Trends Assessment and the creation of the Growth Framework and Island Master Plan, to begin in the 4th Quarter of 2022.

