



Skull Creek

District Plan

SUMMER 2024 | DRAFT VERSION 3.0





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WHAT IS A DISTRICT PLAN?

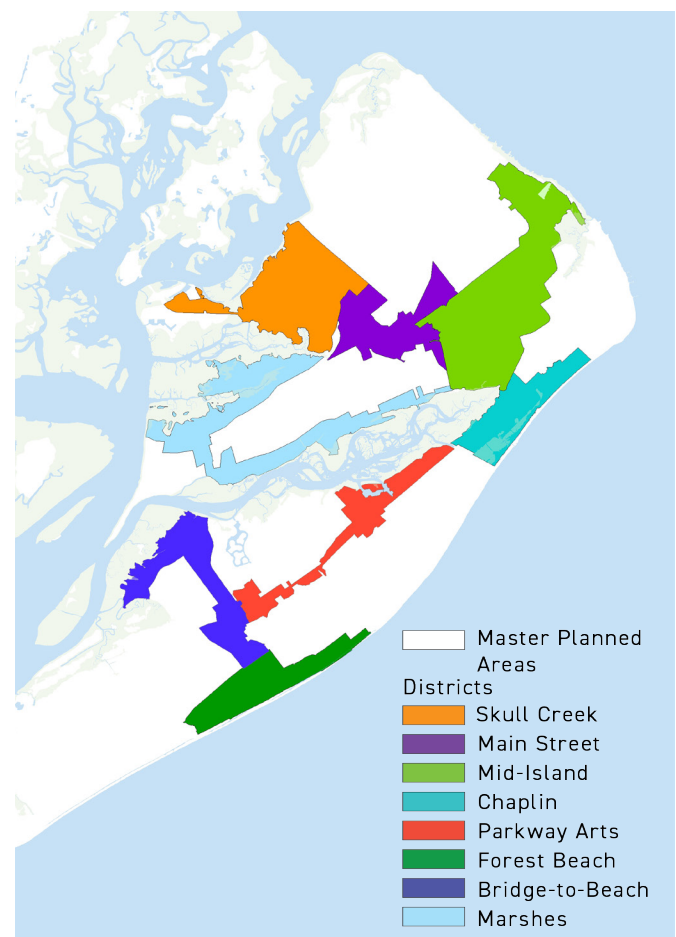
A district area plan is a focused planning document that provides detailed guidance for the development, preservation, and improvement of a specific area within a larger community. It is a vital tool for creating great communities, as it allows for a deep understanding of the area's character, challenges, and opportunities, fostering tailored solutions that resonate with residents and stakeholders.

With approximately 70% of the Island being part of master planned communities, the Island district area planning effort focuses on the areas outside of the master planned developments. Eight district planning areas have been identified: Skull Creek, Main Street, Mid-Island, Chaplin, Parkway Arts, Bridge-to-Beach, Forest Beach and Marshes.

Each of these district plans combines an analysis of existing conditions and trends, history and culture, and district theme and character, with feedback from the community to provide a plan that thoughtfully and intentionally identifies opportunities to enhance the well-being and vitality of each district.

The mechanisms for implementation of the district plans will include Land Management Ordinance amendments, future land use policy and mapping, the Town's Capital Improvements Program, and other collaborative initiatives.

Through district area planning, our Island communities can articulate a shared vision for their future, balancing development and preservation to create places that are not only functional but also vibrant and resilient. It is a process that empowers communities to shape their destinies, ensuring that each area retains its distinct identity while contributing to the overall well-being and prosperity of the larger place.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As one of eight district planning areas, the Skull Creek district is situated on the north end of the Island and is made up of 1,203 acres of the 20,939 acres of the Island's land area. Jenkins Island and Skull Creek serve as the western boundary of the district with Hilton Head Plantation to the north, the Main Street District to the east and the Marshes District to the south. Skull Creek and Jarvis Creek are the primary waterways within the district.

SKULL CREEK DISTRICT OVERVIEW

The District includes the historical gateway to Hilton Head Island and has great cultural significance to the story of Hilton Head Island. Settlements date back hundreds of years with evidence of even older inhabitation dating back to Native American times. The presence of at least two **shell rings** and three historic Gullah neighborhoods are evidence of that past.

Prior to 1956, when the first bridge was constructed to the Island, this District was the major point of access by boat or ferry when most of the land on the Island was used for hunting and timbering. Residents of the Island at that time were mostly part of Gullah communities that relied heavily upon the natural resources of the water and land for their livelihood. The deep waters of Skull Creek offered an abundance of resources leading to the development of a thriving seafood industry. Entrepreneurial families contributed to a vibrant commercial district that included a furniture shop, convenient/general store, music store, post office, magistrate, barber shop, produce stands, restaurants and a motel.

After the construction of the first bridge to the Island in 1956, modern development began. Today, the Skull Creek District is the home to a vibrant mix of neighborhoods, businesses, parks and open spaces that serve as the Island's gateway from the mainland. The Skull Creek District has a



Shell rings are archaeological features found in coastal areas, particularly in the southeastern United States. These rings are circular or horseshoe-shaped mounds composed primarily of shells, typically oyster shells, along with other artifacts such as pottery and bones from prehistoric Native American societies.





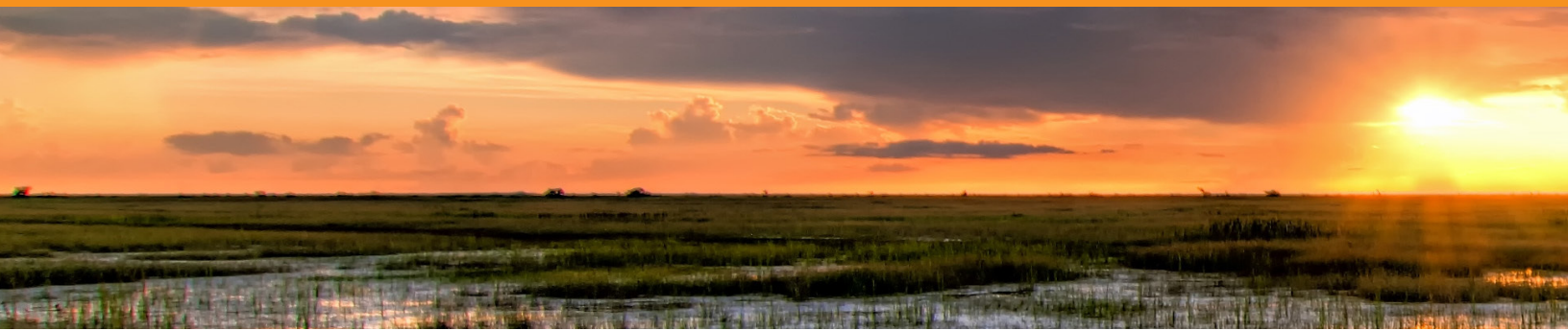
DISTRICT PHOTOS



predominately residential, family-oriented nature, with most of the commercial development located along William Hilton Parkway and Old Wild Horse Road. Water-oriented uses are concentrated along Skull Creek. The future of the Skull Creek district and its neighborhoods are an important part of the Island's legacy.

To better understand the issues and opportunities that are specific to this district, the planning team utilized ongoing planning efforts and current analyses. This included identifying the theme and character of the district along with a SOAR analysis to identify the strengths, opportunities aspirations and results, leading to the development recommendations to guide the district's future.





SKULL CREEK DISTRICT ANALYSIS HIGHLIGHTS

- Skull Creek is one of the fastest growing and most populated districts on the Island outside the planned development communities. Containing more than 8% of the Island's population, Skull Creek is the most densely populated of the eight planning districts.
- Real estate pressures are increasing and have the potential to change the character of the district. The amount of undeveloped property and under-developed property with the district is putting the workforce housing of the district under pressure.
- The district is made up predominately of three Historic Gullah Geechee Neighborhoods: Squire Pope, Big Stoney, and Little Stoney and many historic sites.
- The district also includes Jenkins Island, Honey Horn, business development along the Skull Creek waterfront and commercial along its major and minor arterials.
- The population of the district is increasing but diversity is decreasing, although it is still more demographically diverse than most districts on the Island. There has been a decrease in the Black/African American population and an increase in the Hispanic population.
- The US 278 Corridor Project improvements, which impact the Island's gateway bridge and approaching roadways, will have a direct impact the Skull Creek District. Landing for the Island's gateway, the bridge alignments and William Hilton Parkway, along with the Cross Island Parkway interchanges create the highest traffic volumes on the Island. The section of William Hilton Parkway between Squire Pope Road and Wild Horse Road has one of the highest incidents of traffic accidents on the Island.
- Median home values and incomes are half the Island's overall average. The housing stock is less expensive than Town averages due to types, sizes, and age. More than half of the District's units were built before 1990.
- The median age in this District is 37.4 years old with an average household size of 2.6 persons. The 1,366 Households in this District include many young families with children.
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RECOMMENDATION HIGHLIGHTS

Recommendations for the districts are organized in four categories: Land Use, Character & Zoning, Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability, Community Development, and Connectivity and Infrastructure. These categories help to address all needed enhancements for the district. The Land Use, Character & Zoning category addresses changes the district is facing and how to best monitor these changes within the context of preserving character. The Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability category addresses the environmental resources of the district, their role within the district, and how to protect them to best serve their identified role. The Community Development recommendations address how to best enhance the resources used by the community to help create a sense of place. Connectivity and Infrastructure addresses ways to help connect the areas of district to make it one cohesive place. These solutions are carried out through the Land Management Ordinance, Capital Improvements, Community Outreach, and other Policies. Recommendations help to address the tools needed, the priority of each issue, and the time frame. The recommendations will indicate what comprehensive plan elements, that are being evaluated in this plan, are addressed by each recommendation strategy.

PLACEHOLDER



DISTRICT PLANNING FOR THE ISLAND

The district planning project originated with the development of the Mid-Island District Plan, which was adopted in November 1, 2022. This planning effort was expanded to address the remaining areas outside of the Planned Unit Developments with the goal of creating an Island-wide Growth Framework and Master Plan.

ISLAND-WIDE GROWTH FRAMEWORK & MASTER PLAN

The district area planning process is part of developing a broader growth management strategy for the Island, culminating in a comprehensive Island-wide Master Plan and Growth Framework Map for Hilton Head Island. The master plan will be a consolidation of all district plans along with a Growth Framework Map and Future Land Use Map, which will be influenced by findings from each district and will identify conservation areas and areas for reinvestment across the Island.

A major objective of this process is to delineate locations and boundaries for environmental, neighborhood, and cultural conservation, as well as to identify areas where changes are most likely to occur. This approach will facilitate the development of proactive policies to guide these changes, ensuring that Hilton Head Island evolves positively while preserving its unique character and natural beauty.

The Conditions and Trends Assessment was also completed recently and offers valuable insights into critical changes affecting the Island's demographics, economy, natural environment, and other key systems, ensuring that the unique context of each district is appropriately connected to its relationship and influence on the Island as a whole and will be integral to elements of the Island-wide Growth Framework & Master Plan.





PLANNING CONTEXT

The Town’s Comprehensive Plan, “Our Plan,” is foundational as it sets out the the guiding vision for the Island and any planning efforts. The growth framework and district planning process considers this and other past and present planning initiatives, incorporating specific recommendations from the Gullah Geechee Land and Culture Preservation Report, the Workforce Housing Framework, and the Major Thoroughfares Corridor Plan.

The Conditions and Trends Assessment was also completed recently and offers valuable insights into critical changes affecting the Island's demographics, economy, natural environment, and other key systems, ensuring that the unique context of each district is appropriately connected to its relationship and influence on the Island as a whole.





DISTRICT PLANNING PROCESS

Each district area plan will present recommendations based on the analysis of the district and community feedback. These recommendations will provide thoughtful and intentional direction to enhance the well-being and vitality of each district. They will be developed by evaluating each district with the following tools to ensure a comprehensive understanding of each district.

- 1 Identification of each district's unique theme, character and vision
- 2 SOAR Analysis that examines each district's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
- 3 Assessment of existing conditions based on the required comprehensive planning elements required by South Carolina's Comprehensive Planning and Enabling Act
- 4 Public engagement

1

DISTRICT THEME

District Themes are the overarching qualities that shape the development, functionality, and identity of a specific District within the Island as a whole. Themes can be related to concepts like sustainability, economic development, or cultural preservation, among others. Themes should reflect the unique characteristics, history, and community values within a District and should influence decisions about land use, infrastructure, services, and social opportunities so that these align with the community's values and aspirations.

DISTRICT VISION

The District Vision will serve as the guiding principle for future changes and will drive all of the recommendations outlined in the plans.

DISTRICT CHARACTER

Each district plan will identify the overall character of the district. District character encapsulates the distinct elements or features that define a community, including physical structures, natural surroundings, cultural heritage, social interactions, and economic activities. Understanding and preserving district character is crucial for maintaining the unique identity of each district. Three primary questions will help guide the understanding of each district:

- » **Who does the district serve?**
- » **What should we preserve?**
- » **What should we activate?**

2

DISTRICT SOAR

To further understand the specific strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results that are associated with each district a SOAR analysis was conducted. A SOAR analysis is a strategic planning tool used to identify and evaluate the Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results associated with planning for a community. This will help to identify recommendations that are authentic to each district.

3

DISTRICT CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The analysis of each district addresses the ten required comprehensive planning elements mandated by the State of South Carolina in the Comprehensive Planning and Enabling Act. The Town also has a Parks and Recreation Element.

- Population
- Natural Resources
- Community Facilities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Resilience
- Priority Investment
- Parks and Recreation
- Cultural Resources
- Land Use and Zoning

4

DISTRICT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The community will help guide the development of the plans through a comprehensive public engagement process, including stakeholder engagement and surveys. The final product of this initiative culminates in inspired and cohesive community visions that will drive the districts forward for many years to come. sustainable, and culturally rich community.

By integrating these elements into the analysis, each district can be tailored to address local area needs while aligning with broader community goals. This ensures a cohesive and strategic approach to development, preservation, and enhancement, fostering a vibrant, sustainable, and culturally rich community.

SKULL CREEK VISION

The Skull Creek District will always be the Island's gateway with a unique blend of natural beauty and historical significance. The district continues to be a medium density residential community with more intense waterfront uses that embrace its rich cultural history, reliance on the fishing industry, and presence on and connection to Skull Creek. The future of the district will celebrate its waterfront, protect its environmentally sensitive sites and edges, and continue to evolve as a family-oriented neighborhood.





DISTRICT THEME & CHARACTER

The theme of the Skull Creek district revolves around a harmonious balance between modern development, environmental protections, and cultural preservation. The character of the district encompasses the unique identity and sense of place that defines the district. Shaped by a combination of historical, cultural, architectural, and natural elements, the Skull Creek District reflects the collective history, heritage, and character of the built environment. Theme and character can be better understood by exploring three key questions for the district:

WHO DOES THE DISTRICT SERVE?

- Residents, predominantly young families, and district communities, including Native Islanders and Hispanic populations
- Marina and waterfront users
- Hilton Head Plantation residents and employees
- Hilton Head Island Public School students, parents, and employees
- Employers and employees that live and/or work in the area
- Commuters living outside of the area

WHAT SHOULD WE PRESERVE?

- Existing Historic Neighborhood character and cultural assets
- A variety of housing types and affordability, including workforce housing
- Water quality of waterways, marshes, and wetlands
- Neighborhood parks
- Existing uses and businesses

WHAT CAN WE ACTIVATE?

- Residential development
- Existing and new businesses
- Connected open space
- Connections to district culture
- Workforce housing
- Cultural preservation through Gullah Geechee Trail Wayfinding
- Streetscape improvements and redevelopment of existing sites
- Safe Routes to School
- Public marsh and creek access
- Water quality, resilience planning, and wetland mitigation
- Community assets



DISTRICT SOAR

To understand the specific strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and result associated with the Skull Creek District, the planning team also conducted a SOAR analysis.

STRENGTHS

- Existing Parks History and Culture Town-owned Property
- Existing Public and Civic Uses - Schools, Churches, etc.
- Existing Communities
- Existing Businesses
- Natural Resources
- Community Facilities
- Gateway to Island
- Waterfront Dining and Marinas
- Home Safety and Repair Program

ASPIRATIONS

- Creating a safe and welcoming Gateway to the Island
- Mitigate Gateway to the Island traffic concerns
- Connected and improved streets (Old Wild Horse Road and Gumtree Road)
- Safer speed limit on Gum Tree Road
- Having better Hydrants/Lateral and Trunkline Sewer for the district
- Creating pathways and more usable intersections nearing the schools
- Limits on Short-term Rentals
- Way to navigate Heirs' Property Challenges
- Better Road/Water Sewer/ Stormwater / Pathways/ Broadband/Transit and Mobility
- Boosted environmental protections on sensitive environmental properties
- Control on over development within the district

OPPORTUNITIES

- Town-owned property preservation and use
- Connect Boys and Girls Club with Schools
- Coastal Discovery Entrance Improvements and Connectivity
- Northpoint Workforce Housing
- Old Wild Horse Rd. Redevelopment and Streetscape
- Jenkins Island as potential Workforce Housing Location
- Wetland Mitigation on Town-owned Property
- Gullah Geechee Cultural Trail and Wayfinding Program
- Public Access to Marsh front
- Reinvest in Existing Parks
- Utilize historic sites, as well as parks to celebrate history and culture for landmark protection
- Honey Horn Entrance Improvements and Connectivity

RESULTS

- Well preserved cultural and environmental resources that are celebrated through the character of the district
- Enhanced Historic Neighborhood and island character to promote a sense of place
- Practice sustainable development that preserves the long-term residential feel
- Maintain safe routes and connectivity to schools
- Balance enhancing infrastructure, local businesses, and preserving natural landscapes
- Create a utilized functional community space
- Enhanced community facilities

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

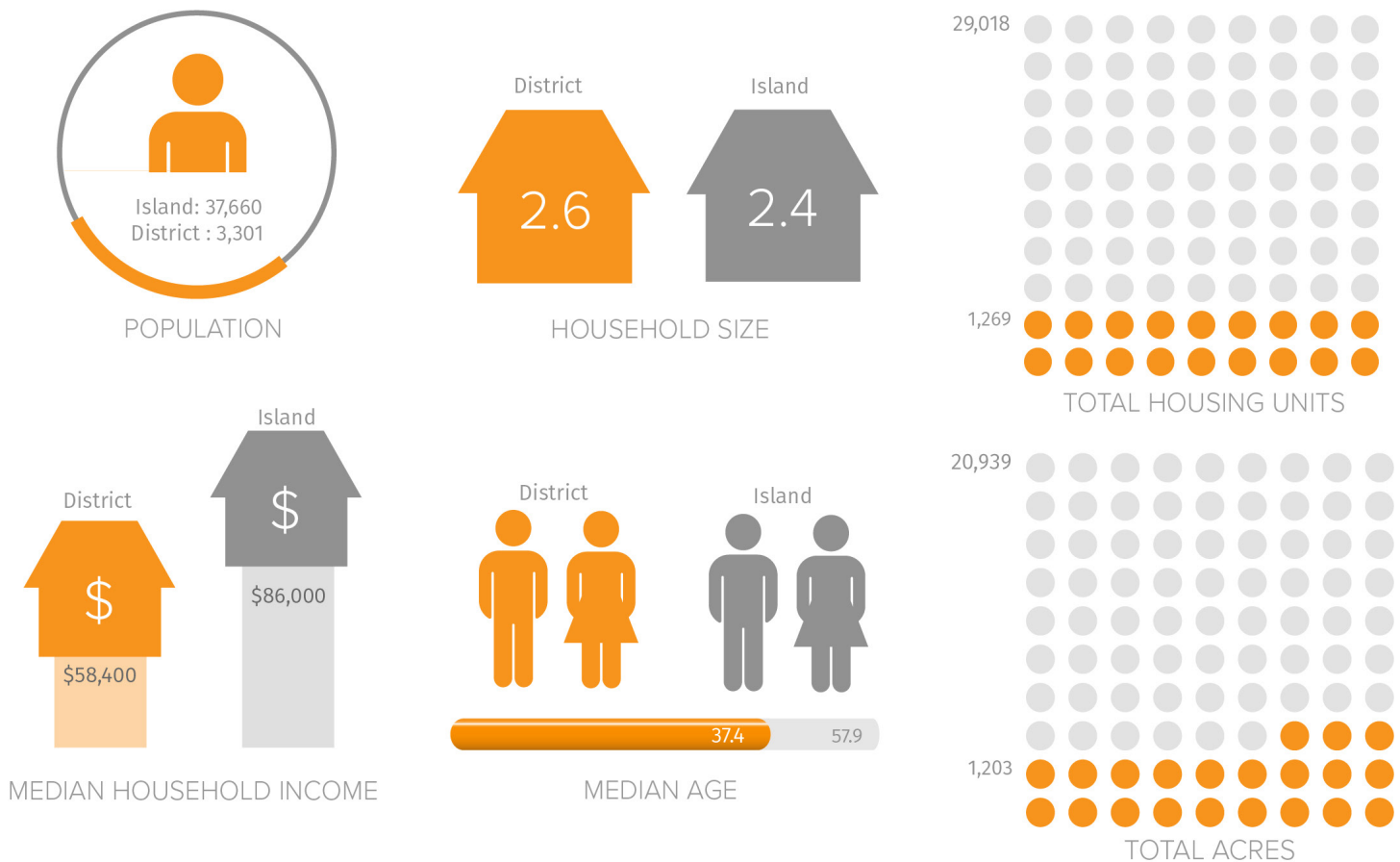
An existing conditions analysis serves as the foundational step in understanding the current state of the district. This comprehensive assessment encompasses demographics, land use patterns, transportation systems, infrastructure, environmental features, and socio-economic factors. Through data collection, mapping, and analysis, insights into the existing dynamics, challenges, and opportunities within the district could be identified. This analysis provides a baseline understanding essential for formulating informed strategies and policies tailored to address the identified needs and capitalize on the existing strengths of the community. This analysis is based on the required comprehensive plan elements for the State of South Carolina and serves as a critical tool in guiding the planning process towards sustainable development, equitable growth, and improved quality of life for residents. The analysis section includes the following and addresses the required elements for comprehensive plans in South Carolina:

- Island and District Comparison
- Population
- Natural Resources
- Housing
- Transportation
- Community Facilities
- Economic Development
- Resilience
- Priority Investment
- Parks and Recreation
- Cultural Resources
- Land Use and Zoning

ISLAND & DISTRICT COMPARISON

The Skull Creek district reflects a blend of cultures, backgrounds, and lifestyles, creating a rich tapestry of community life. It boasts a diverse and vibrant population, embodying the unique charm and allure of coastal living. With its picturesque water views and lush landscapes, the Skull Creek District attracts a wide array of residents, ranging from retirees seeking a tranquil retreat to young families drawn to its quality of life and recreational amenities among its historic neighborhoods.

A comparison of key demographics can help identify indicators for the Skull Creek district versus the Island as a whole. By identifying key metrics such as age distribution, ethnic makeup, educational attainment, household income levels, and employment statistics, we better understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities facing the district. This can serve as the foundation for developing targeted recommendations to promote equitable growth and development.



SKULL CREEK POPULATION

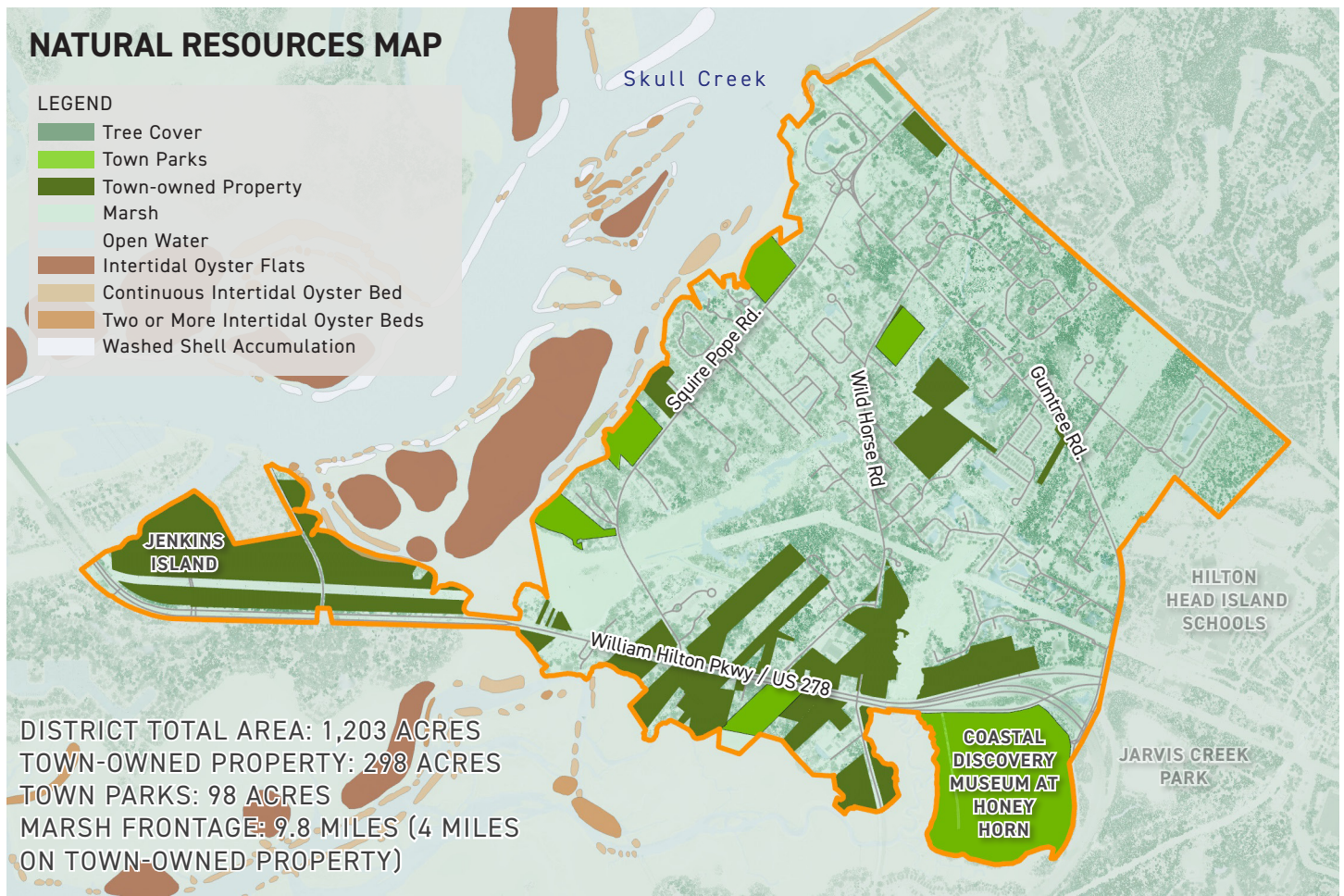
The Skull Creek District is one of the most populated districts outside of the planned developments on the Island. It accommodates more than 8% of the Island's total population and features the highest population density among the eight planning districts. The total population of the district in 2023 was 3,301. The decade from 2010 to 2020, the annual growth rate was 1.87%.

The median age of residents in the district is much younger than the Island as a whole and data indicates the presence of more young families. The Median Age in the Skull Creek District is 37.4. The District also stands out for its significant demographic diversity compared to other districts on the Island.

With a **Diversity Index** of 75.4 and a demographic composition where over 25% of residents identify as black or belonging to other racial categories, Skull Creek ranks among the most culturally diverse neighborhoods on the Island. However, Island-wide, the African American population segment decreased by 400 residents since 2000, the only racial group to do so, conversely the Hispanic populations are increasing.

These figures collectively underscore the dynamic and diverse nature of the Skull Creek District.

Diversity Index summarizes racial and ethnic diversity. The index shows the likelihood that two persons chosen at random belong to different race or ethnic groups and ranges from 0 (no diversity) to 100 (complete diversity).



NATURAL RESOURCES

The Skull Creek District's natural resources serve as the foundation of its identity and allure. The district's creeks and expansive salt marshes provide habitat for a diverse array of plant and animal species, contributing to the Island's overall ecological richness and biodiversity. Recognizing the importance of preserving these natural treasures is critical to the vision for the district. As a cornerstone of the District plan, the preservation and enhancement of the District's natural resources not only safeguards its ecological integrity but also ensure the continued enjoyment and well-being of future generations.

The Skull Creek District comprises 1,203 acres or 5.75% of the over 20,939 acres that make up the Island. The Town owns 298 acres of land within the district, a quarter of the total land area. Among the Town's land holdings, 98 acres are specifically designated as Public Parks, contributing significantly to the area's recreational and environmental resources.

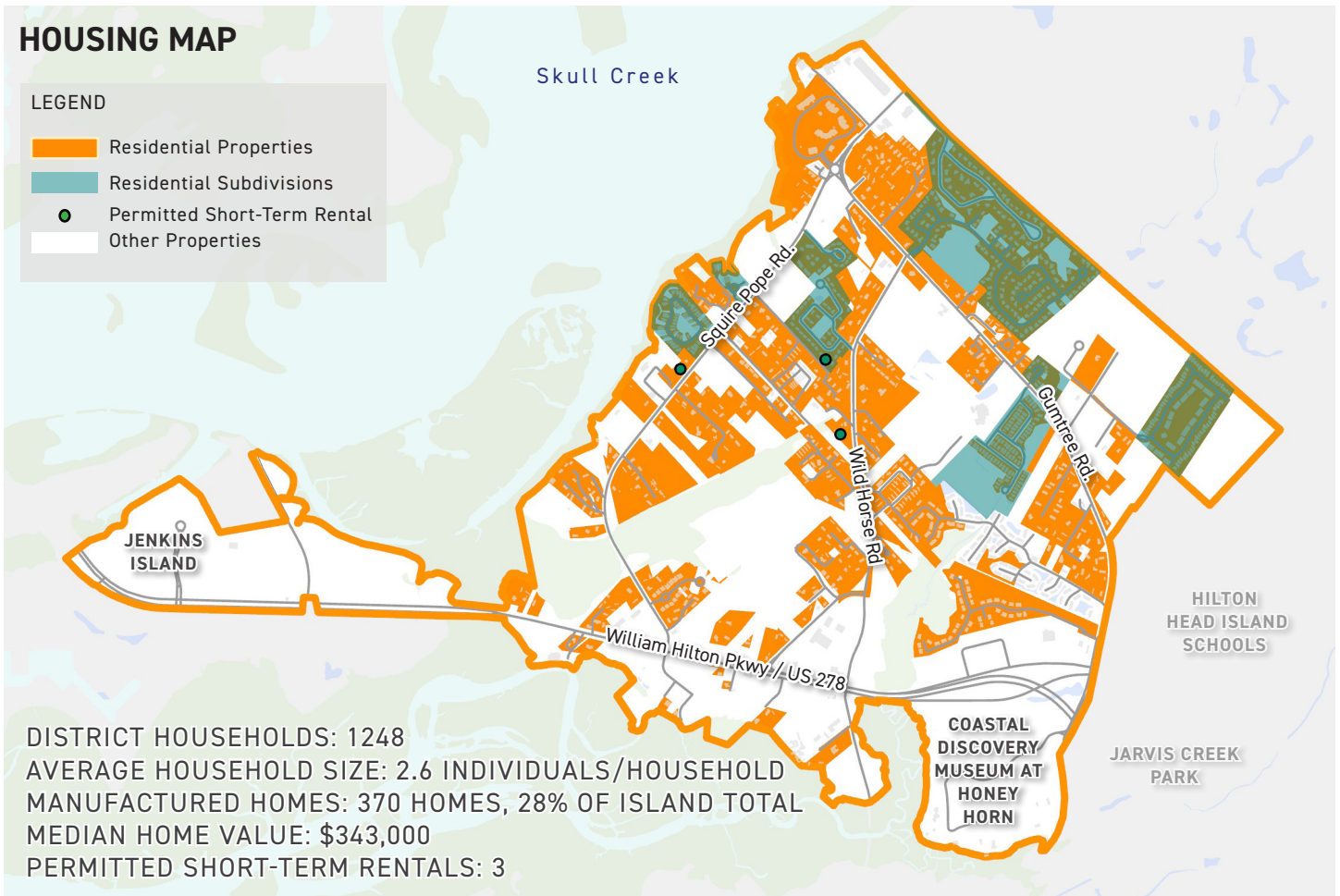
The District features approximately 9.8 miles of marsh frontage, with four miles of this frontage situated on Town-owned land. The remaining 5.8 miles of marsh frontage are located on private property, reflecting a distribution of natural resources across both publicly and privately owned areas within the district.

Tree coverage, natural areas, impervious coverage, and water quality are important factors to consider in this district. Conservation efforts should include land-use policies aimed at protecting sensitive ecosystems, mitigating erosion, and promoting responsible development practices.

Infrastructure upgrades will support sustainability, while climate resilience measures, such as flood defenses and green infrastructure, will protect against environmental impacts.

Protecting the natural environment is a priority, with conservation efforts focused on maintaining the health of the marshes and waterways.

HOUSING MAP



HOUSING

The Skull Creek district has median home values and incomes that are half of the Island's average. Over half of the housing units were built before 1990, contributing to lower costs. The district includes 1,248 households, averaging 2.6 individuals per household, with many young families. Nearly 370 or 28% of the Island's 1,300+ manufactured homes are located here.

Although the population density is higher than other districts, the district's housing density is 1.1 housing units per acre, compared to the island-wide average of 1.5. From 2010 to 2020, household growth was 2% annually. The median home value is \$343,000, highlighting affordability amid island-wide price increases of 33% from 2021 to 2022.

The town adopted the "Finding Home: Workforce Housing Framework" in 2022, demonstrating a commitment to workforce housing. The district's proximity to jobs, schools, and transportation makes it ideal for future housing if it is sensitive to the natural and built context it is surrounded by.

The historic neighborhoods of Big Stoney, Little Stoney, and Squire Pope, along with newer developments like Bermuda Pointe, Chinaberry, Squiresgate and Carolina Isles, contribute to the district's character. Most neighborhoods are less dense and organically developed. Historic properties often have a mix of residential with a small amount of commercial reflective of the culture.

The district has three permitted short-term rentals. However, the waterfront character and large vacant or underdeveloped properties means the potential impacts of an increase should be assessed and considered. Preserving existing housing, revitalizing distressed properties, and maintaining the district's charm are crucial. The Home Safety & Repair Program is currently available to assist income qualified homeowners with qualified repairs each year. Household incomes at or below 60% of the Area Median Income for Beaufort County, S.C. may qualify.

Future housing initiatives should include diverse options to cater to various demographics, focusing on affordability, and sustainability. Public-private partnerships can offer opportunities for mixed-income neighborhoods.

TRANSPORTATION MAP



TRANSPORTATION

The Skull Creek district is just beyond the Karl Bowers and J. Wilton Graves Bridges, the entry point to Hilton Head Island. Now, William Hilton Parkway (US 278) sees over 50,000 cars daily.

Traffic along US 278 continues to grow. Signalized intersections along US 278 in the Skull Creek Area, in particular, have congestion during multiple hours of the day. Some of this traffic is related to an increasing number of off-island commuters traveling to work on Hilton Head Island. Others are visiting to go to the beaches and other attractions on the Island. Those vehicles are combined with residents and visitors staying on the Island, traveling to shopping, entertainment, recreation and other attractions both on and off the Island.

The various studies of US 278 include traffic modeling that considers commuting traffic from the mainland and traffic associated with modest infill development within Skull Creek.

One of the most significant impact to traffic in the district will be the replacement of the bridges to the Island and associated improvements. The Town is working with South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to improve safety and design for the gateway bridge and US 278 up to the Cross Island Parkway. This aims to enhance corridor safety and efficiency while respecting local properties. Town Council approved a memorandum of understanding with Beaufort County and SCDOT for the preferred design alternative beginning at the bridges coming onto the Island and extending to the Wild Horse Road/Spanish Wells Road intersection. This included project design, historic neighborhood and economic considerations for the corridor.

The Town also continues to support various traffic management tools. For example, a new “adaptive traffic signal system” uses advanced technologies to link the traffic signals and have them respond to changing conditions, which was implemented in 2023.

Major Roadways: William Hilton Parkway, Squire Pope Rd, Wild Horse Rd, Gumtree Rd, Old Wildhorse Rd.

Pathways: Over 10 miles, mostly on one side of major roads, enhancing safety and connectivity. Expansion and improved crossings, especially on William Hilton Parkway, are needed.

Transit: High traffic volumes, especially from off-island workers, cause significant congestion and accidents. Transit options include the Palmetto Breeze commuter line, but no trolley services are currently available.

Future development patterns and roadway improvements should aim to preserve the neighborhood scale of the district and provide a network of pedestrian and bicycle paths will promote alternative transportation methods, while expanded multi-modal options will ensure easy access within the district and to other parts of Hilton Head Island.

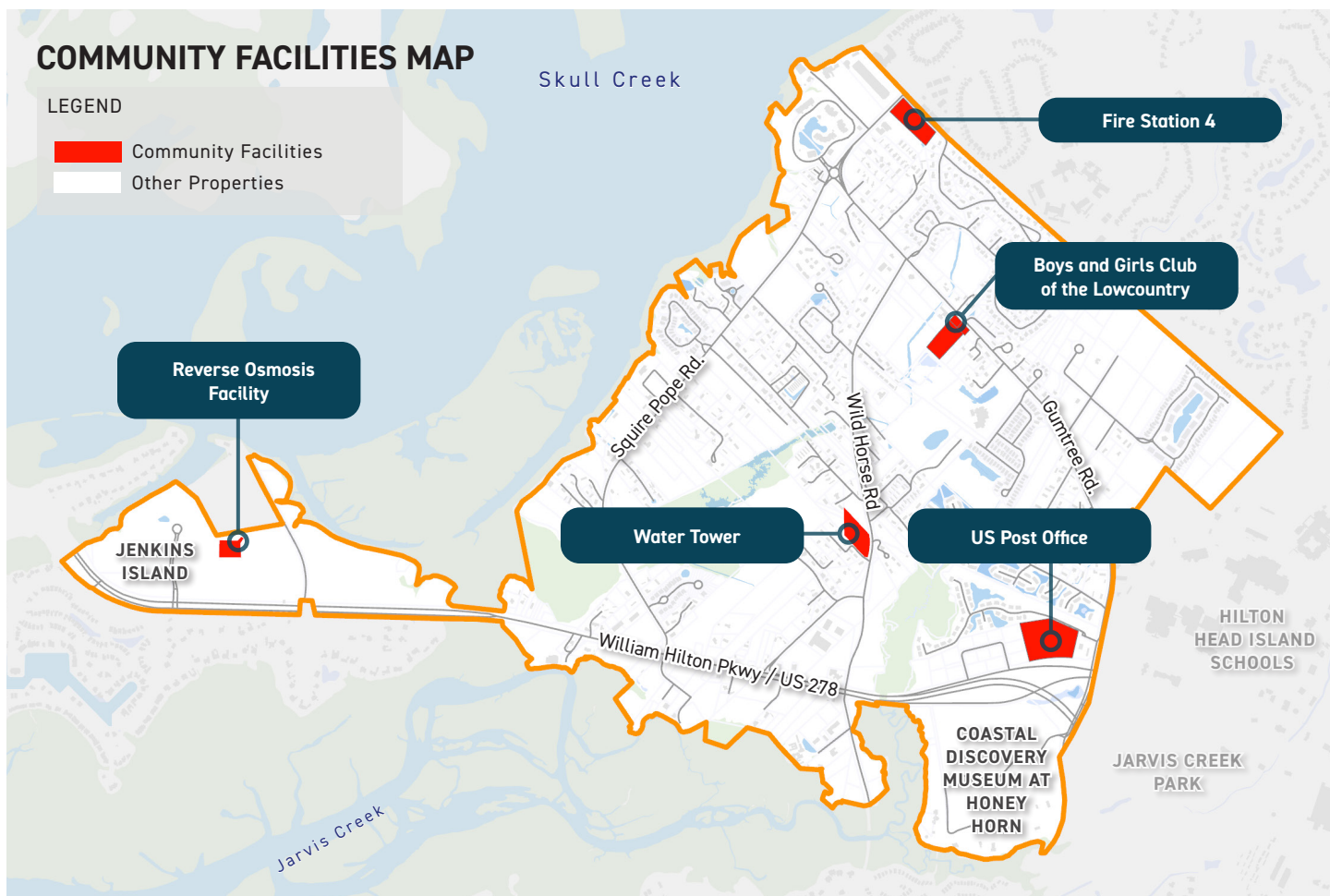
The district should have a strong, welcoming identity through branding and physical improvements, highlighting cultural and natural resources. Improving transportation and mobility is key to connecting the Skull Creek district.

PLACEHOLDER FOR US 278

Additional Project Information

[Link to Town Website?](#)



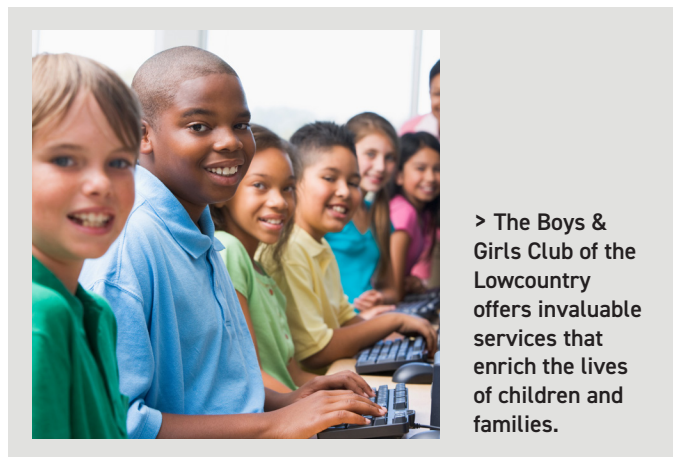


COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Skull Creek District encompasses various essential community facilities. Fire Station 4 operates within the district, ensuring prompt emergency response and fire safety measures. The Boys and Girls Club of the Lowcountry provides invaluable services and support to local youth. The United States Postal Service Office is situated within the district, facilitating efficient mail and package delivery services for residents and businesses alike.

Water and sewer services are provided by Hilton Head Island Public Service District (HHPSD) who also operates a reverse osmosis facility on Jenkins Island. The nature of the development envisioned for the Skull Creek district appears unlikely to create a capacity constraint on the PSD's system. However, all new development and redevelopment requires evaluation by HHPSD to determine its ability to serve the proposed development with water and sewer services.

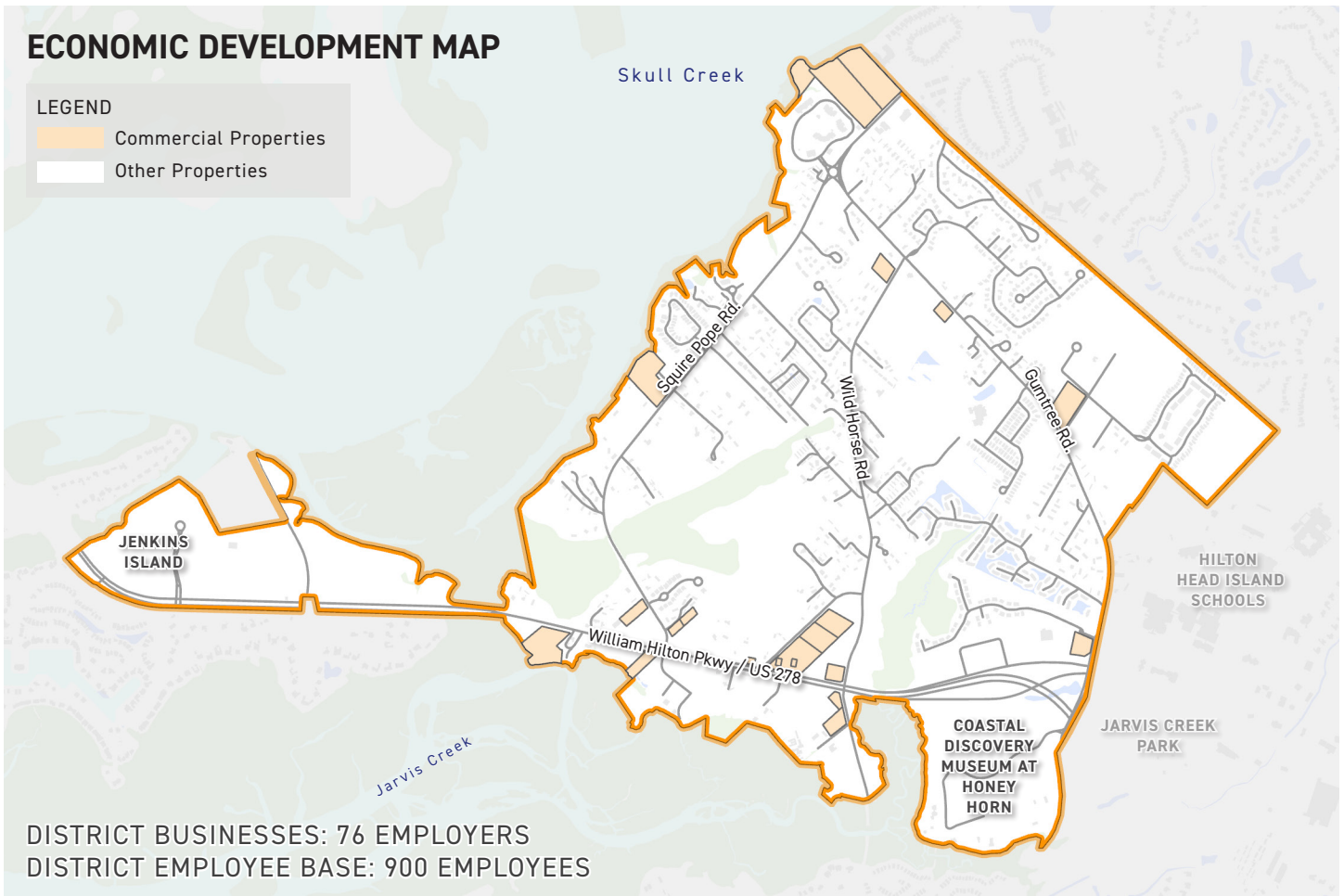
sewer, which can be improved. This can result in pollution of the districts important waterways, negatively impacting the vast natural resources. The Town currently works with HHPSD on a sewer connection program that provides assistance for lateral sewer connections to income qualified applicants. Ensuring access to quality community facilities is paramount.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MAP

LEGEND

- Commercial Properties
- Other Properties



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Historically, the Skull Creek District thrived on fishing and oystering, given its shoreline along Skull Creek. This tradition continues today with the presence of industries, restaurants, and marinas. This made it a gateway from the mainland before the first bridge was built in 1956.

The district features diverse small businesses and mixed-use land development, including waterfront dining, marinas, local offices, and market vendors, many of which are Gullah-owned. These businesses are vital to the district's economy, despite it housing only 4% of the island's jobs, with 76 employers and over 900 employees, predominantly in retail. Its proximity to the largest jobs base along the Main Street corridor, including the Island's school campus and hospital, adds strategic value to the district.

Major businesses include Skull Creek Boathouse, Hudson's Seafood, The Boathouse and Marina, and Benny Hudson's Seafood, centered around Skull Creek's resources. Support for businesses is essential for economic growth, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation in communities through collaborations.

A key focus is enhancing visibility and accessibility for Gullah businesses, supporting a historic hub of commerce. A mixed-use node incorporating Gullah retail, restaurants, and workforce housing would align with traditional land use and enhance business accessibility.

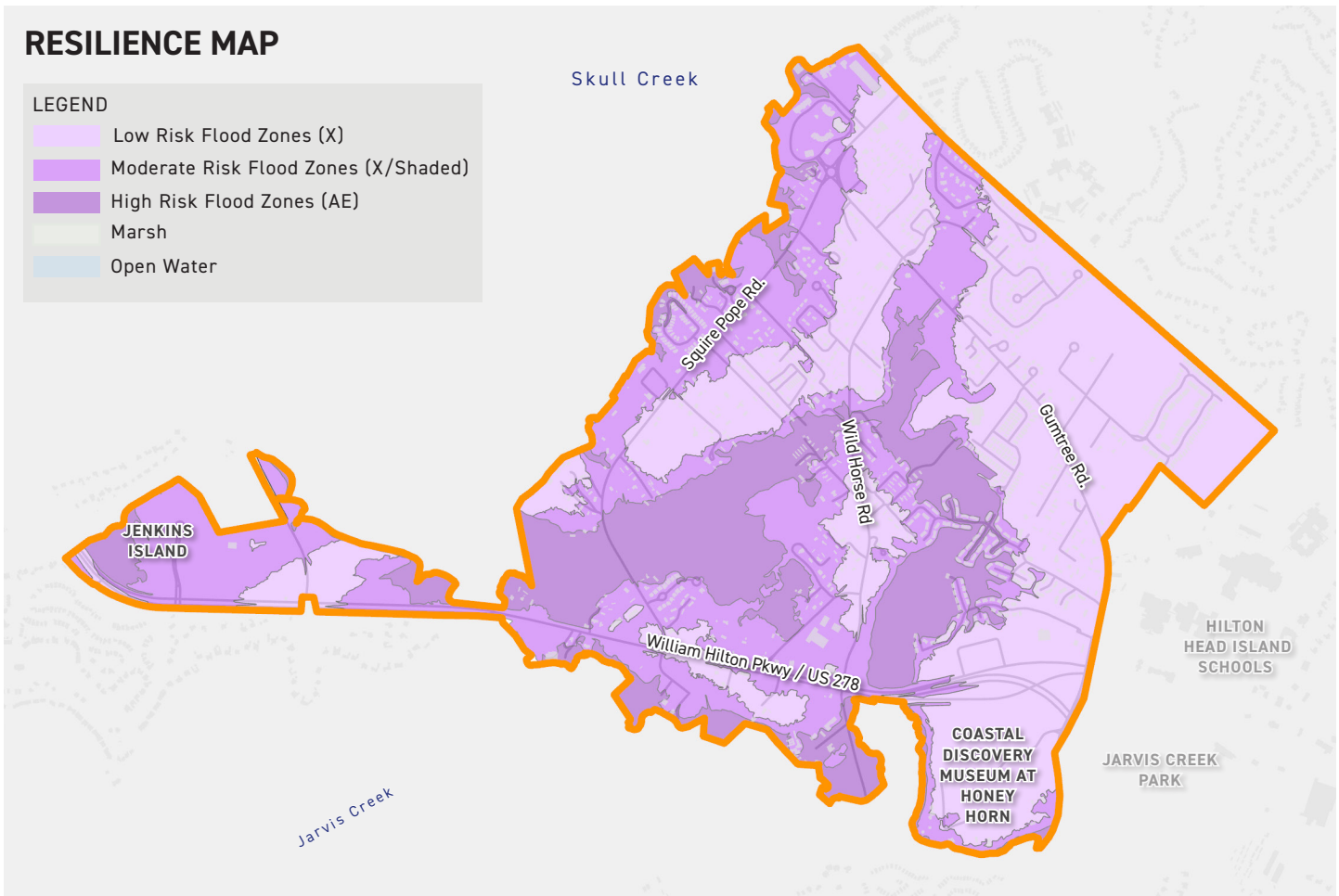
Supporting all businesses in Skull Creek is crucial for the community's prosperity and unique identity. The Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhood CDC provides an opportunity to enhance the cultural presence in the district while fostering stronger connections with local businesses and entrepreneurial ventures, with incentives for eco-friendly and culturally conscious ventures.

Land use and zoning regulations can aim to preserve the district's character by supporting the existing mix and locations of uses and establish requirements to ensure that future development complements the district's character in scale and intensity.

RESILIENCE MAP

LEGEND

- Low Risk Flood Zones (X)
- Moderate Risk Flood Zones (X/Shaded)
- High Risk Flood Zones (AE)
- Marsh
- Open Water



RESILIENCE

The Skull Creek district has seen less development compared to other areas, creating a unique sense of place with its natural environment and historic buildings. The area features tidal creeks, marshes, old-growth vegetation, abundant wildlife, and fisheries.

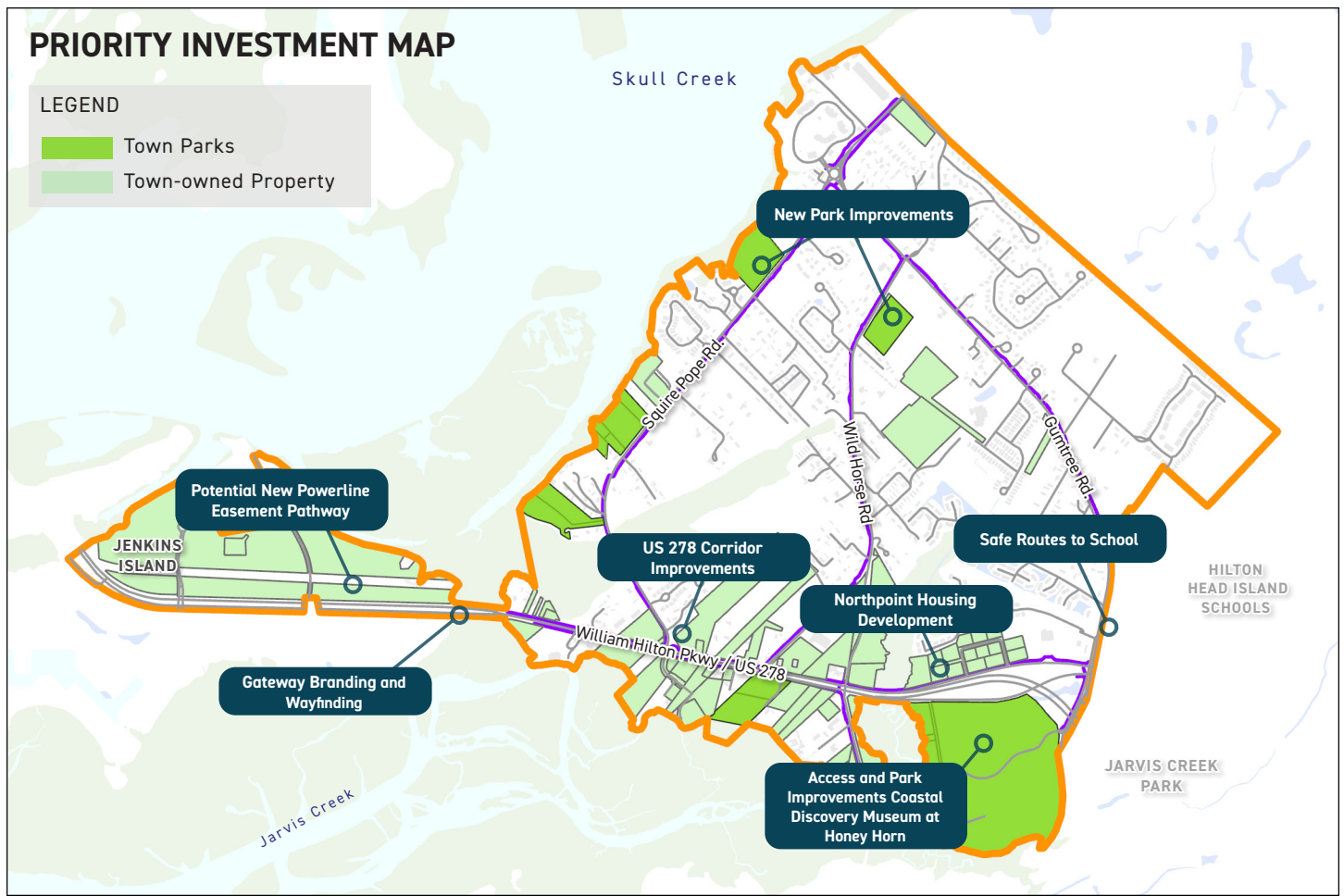
Hilton Head Island's history is shaped by natural forces such as hurricanes and erosion, as well as by its resilient inhabitants. Environmental considerations, especially regarding flood risk zones, are crucial for development and infrastructure planning. Resilient planning incorporates measures such as zoning regulations to restrict development in floodplains and promote green spaces and natural buffers. Infrastructure such as transportation and utilities should be designed to withstand disruptions.

Flood zones, defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), indicate varying levels of flood risk. High-risk zones (100-year floodplain) have a 1% annual chance of flooding, while moderate-risk zones

(500-year floodplain) have a 0.2% chance. Low-risk zones have minimal flood risk. In the district, 38% of structures (450 buildings) are in moderate- to high-risk zones, while 62% (730 buildings) are in low-risk zones. Strategic planning, robust land use regulations, and mitigation measures are essential for sustainable development and flood resilience.

The Town can preserve the district's unique environment for future generations through strategic acquisitions to reduce development pressure and policies such as transfer of development rights to protect sensitive lands and redirect density to more suitable areas.

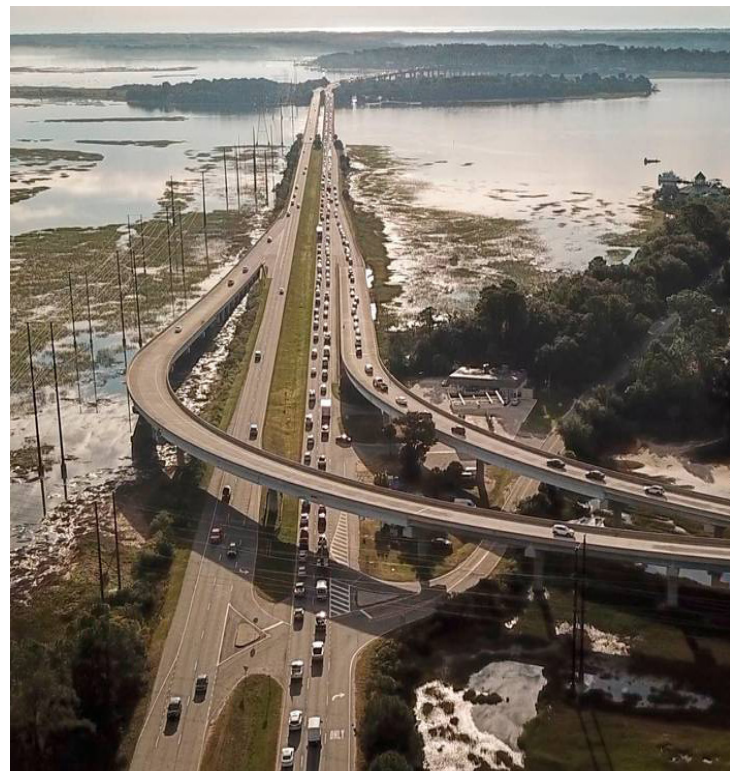
Land use and zoning regulations can incentivize low-impact development and best management practices, showcasing the Town as a leader in sustainability and environmental protection.



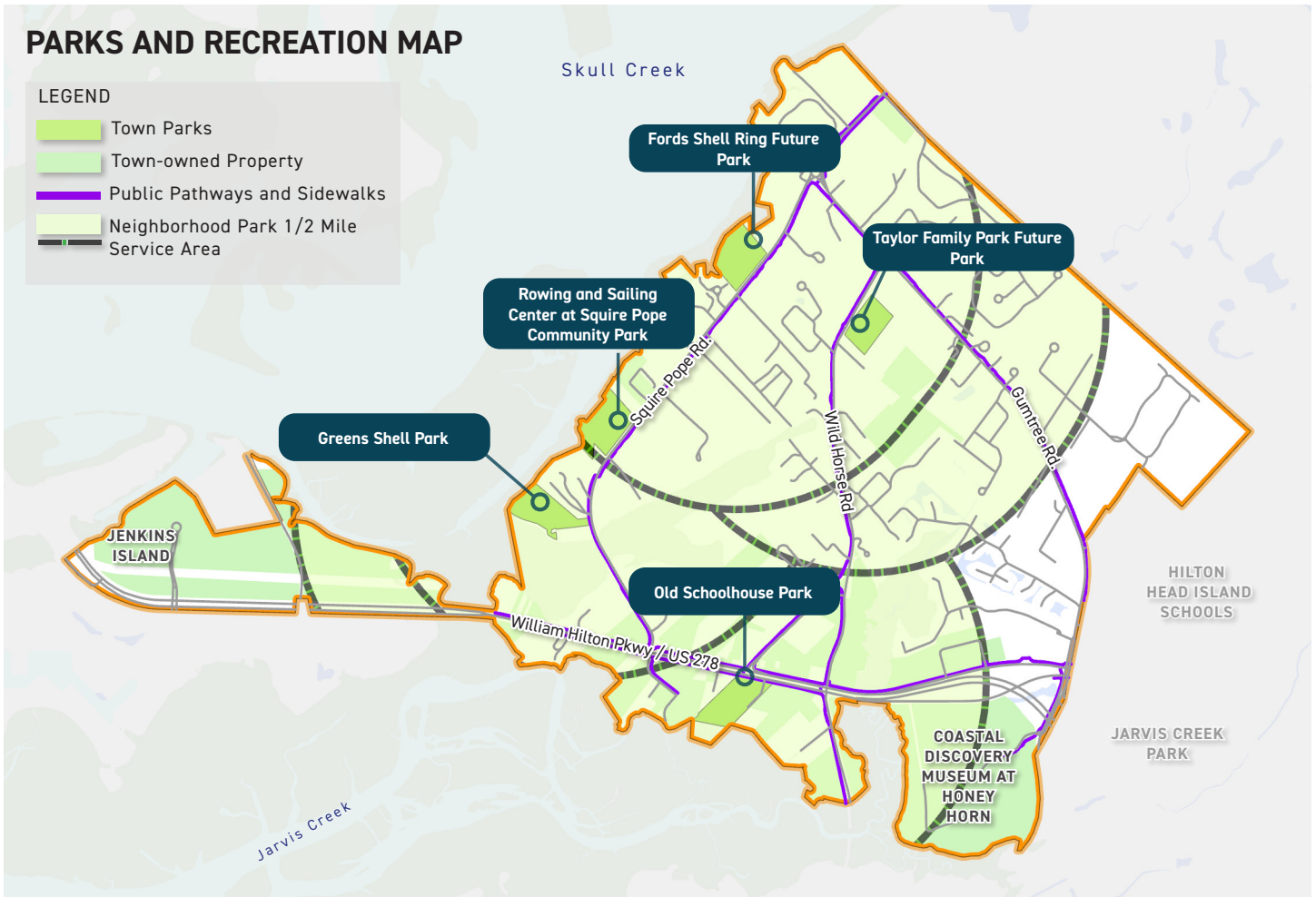
PRIORITY INVESTMENT

The Town of Hilton Head Island has undertaken significant capital improvements aimed at enhancing the community's infrastructure and amenities. These improvements encompass various areas such as transportation, public spaces, facilities, and utilities. Key projects include the expansion and renovation of roadways to alleviate traffic congestion, the enhancement of parks and recreational facilities to promote active lifestyles, and the modernization of utility systems to ensure efficiency and sustainability.

Additionally, investments have been made in projects focused on environmental resiliency, such as stormwater and the preservation of natural habitats. These capital improvements reflect the Town's commitment to fostering a high quality of life for residents and visitors alike.



PARKS AND RECREATION MAP



PARKS AND RECREATION

Residents and visitors benefit from the network of parks and pathways, which offer opportunities for outdoor recreation, wildlife observation, and environmental education in the Skull Creek District. These facilities create a balance of health and wellness through exercise, education, and sociability.

The Skull Creek district is home to six public parks, as well as over nine miles of marsh-frontage, with 20% of this frontage owned by the Town. There are significant opportunities to introduce more and enhanced park spaces to complement the residential, family-oriented nature of the district. As one of the cultural hubs of the Island, the area also lacks a large, formalized community meeting place. The Town must explore options to introduce a venue to serve the historic neighborhoods and families.

By adding pocket parks at strategic locations and trails along major easements the Town will help maintain the residential feel of the district while also connecting

different areas. There's also an opportunity to connect these trails to the larger proposed cultural trail, creating pathways for residents and visitors to enjoy the district's offerings.

Projects like the Town's Cultural Trail provide educational opportunities to highlight and showcase the district's rich cultural history and can link the district with eco and cultural tourism, which could be expanded into a district branded amenity.

EXISTING PARKS AND AMENITIES:

Among the 298 acres of Town-owned property in this District, 98 acres are specifically designated as Public Parks.

Green's Shell Park: Picnic pavilion, playground, basketball court, restrooms, small parking areas, mature trees, adjacent to Amelia White Cemetery and Greens Shell Mound archaeological site.



Rowing and Sailing Center at Squire Pope Community Park

Hilton Head Park (Old Schoolhouse Park): Six pickleball courts, basketball court, open fields, parking lot.

Rowing and Sailing Center at Squire Pope Community Park: Access to Skull Creek for non-motorized boats, fishing pier with ADA kayak launch, fire pit, playground, restrooms, picnic tables, grills, pavilion.

Honey Horn: Home to the Coastal Discovery Museum with educational exhibits on the environment, culture, and history of the Lowcountry, primarily accessible by car.

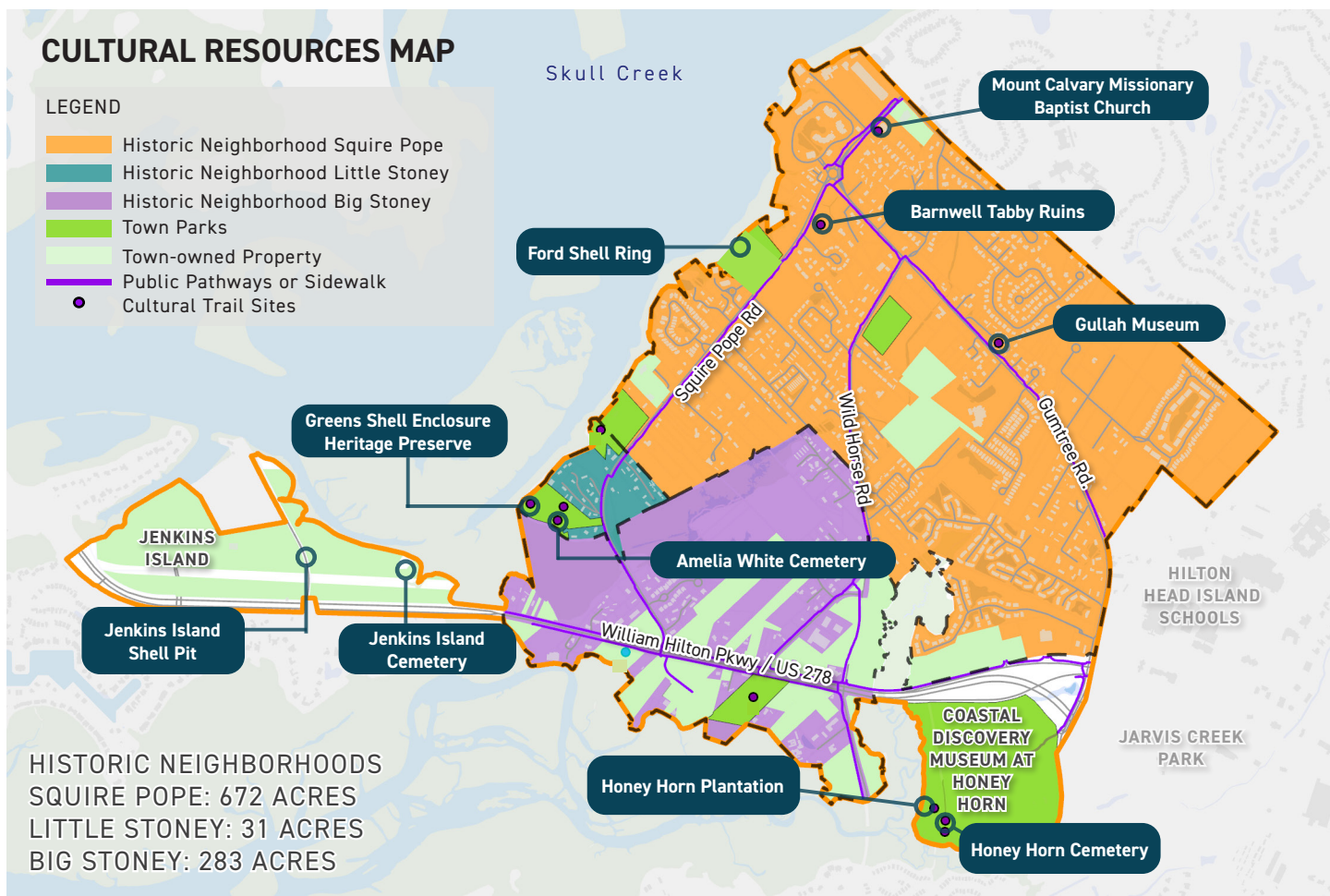
Taylor Family Park: Currently under development, featuring bike and pedestrian paths, passive recreation, parking, activity zones, and sheltered space.

Ford Shell Ring: Under development, with access and parking improvements, trails, earthen drives, gates, fencing, and interpretive signage.

These parks have potential for events and interactive elements to boost community engagement. Most parks serve nearly all districts within a 1/2-mile service area, accessible through non-vehicular modes.

Social connections will be strengthened through public gathering spaces, parks and community events. New pathways will help improve mobility and also improve access and recreational opportunities.





CULTURAL RESOURCES

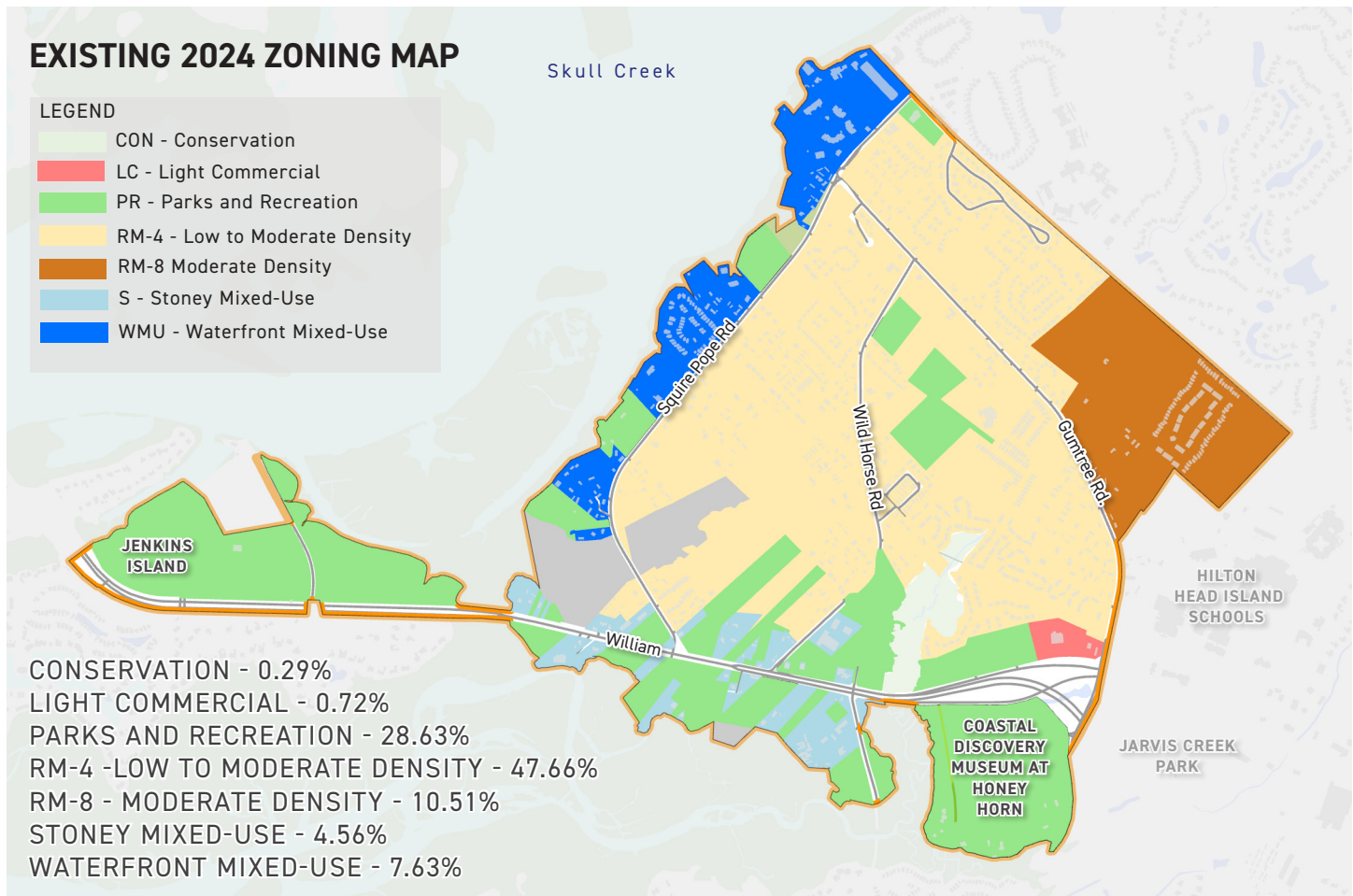
Skull Creek's cultural resources provide a rich tapestry of experiences that captivate the senses and deepen connections within the community. The neighborhoods of the Skull Creek district are some of the oldest on Hilton Head Island. With traces of settlement dating back centuries, this high ground between the creeks has hosted Native American tribes, generations of Gullah families, and is now a vibrant and diverse community. The district is home to two shell rings and three historic Gullah neighborhoods: Squire Pope, Big Stoney, and Little Stoney.

The Gullah people, through their distinct language, traditions, and customs, have left an indelible mark on the district's identity. For centuries, they maintained a strong connection to their African roots, preserving their ancestral language, spiritual beliefs, and culinary traditions. Their expertise in rice cultivation and expertise in fishing contributed significantly to the Island's economy and culture. Today, various cultural events in the district showcase Gullah music, storytelling, crafts, and cuisine.

Several significant Gullah sites are located in the district and are part of a Cultural Trail established by the Town's Office of Cultural Affairs, such as the Gullah Museum of Hilton Head, Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, the Cotton Hope Plantation House featuring Tabby Ruins, and the Amelia White Family Cemetery. This concentration of cultural and historic landmarks is significant, with over a dozen points of interest distributed throughout the district.

A new signature cultural trail would enhance the island's gateway and connect these historic sites. The Gullah Geechee Historic Neighborhood Community Development Corporation can also strengthen cultural presence and improve local business ties. Protecting and showcasing these historic and cultural sites, along with the work of local artists and craftsmen, is crucial.

Land use policies and regulations must be understanding and sensitive to the Gullah culture and allow historic properties the opportunity to be used in a manner that is supportive.



LAND USE AND ZONING

The Skull Creek District on Hilton Head Island is characterized by a diverse mix of zoning classifications that reflect its historic and contemporary development patterns. Residential zoning dominates much of the district, with areas designated for lower density, single-family homes that preserve the traditional character of neighborhoods such as Big Stoney, Little Stoney, and Squire Pope. The residential zones typically restrict large-scale commercial developments, ensuring that the residential nature and historical charm of these neighborhoods are maintained.

In addition to residential zones, the District includes several commercial and mixed-use zones, particularly along major thoroughfares like William Hilton Parkway and the district's extensive waterways. These zones allow for a blend of residential, retail, and office uses, promoting a vibrant, community-oriented environment. The mixed-use areas are intended to support local businesses, provide amenities to residents, and encourage pedestrian-friendly development. They include provisions for home-based businesses, reflecting the district's

historical patterns of mixed land use.

The district also features specific zones aimed at preserving open spaces, cultural landmarks, and environmentally sensitive areas. These include zoning for parks, cultural trails, and historic sites, such as the Gullah Museum and the Sailing and Rowing Center at Squire Pope Community Park.

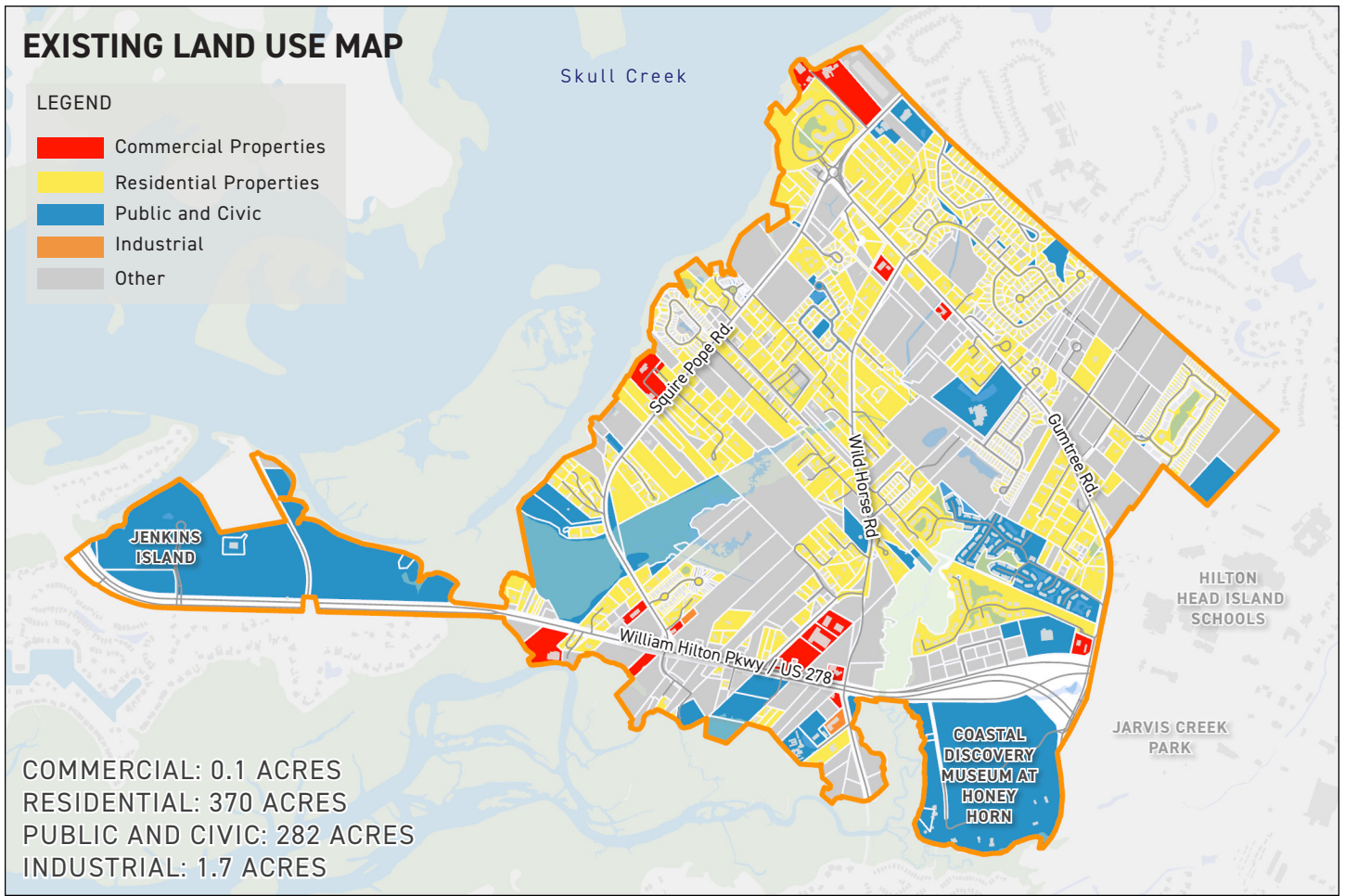
Zoning changes must help maintain the scale of new developments, ensuring they complement the district. Maintaining the scale and charm of the District also involves supporting local businesses and limiting large-scale commercial developments, as well as preserving the residential nature of its neighborhoods. Thoughtful land use planning can promote context-sensitive residential and mixed-use developments that reduce traffic and enhance walkability. Any zoning changes must ensure that development within the Skull Creek District is balanced with the need to protect and celebrate its unique cultural and environmental resources.

EXISTING LAND USE MAP

LEGEND

- Commercial Properties
- Residential Properties
- Public and Civic
- Industrial
- Other

COMMERCIAL: 0.1 ACRES
 RESIDENTIAL: 370 ACRES
 PUBLIC AND CIVIC: 282 ACRES
 INDUSTRIAL: 1.7 ACRES



EXISTING LAND USE

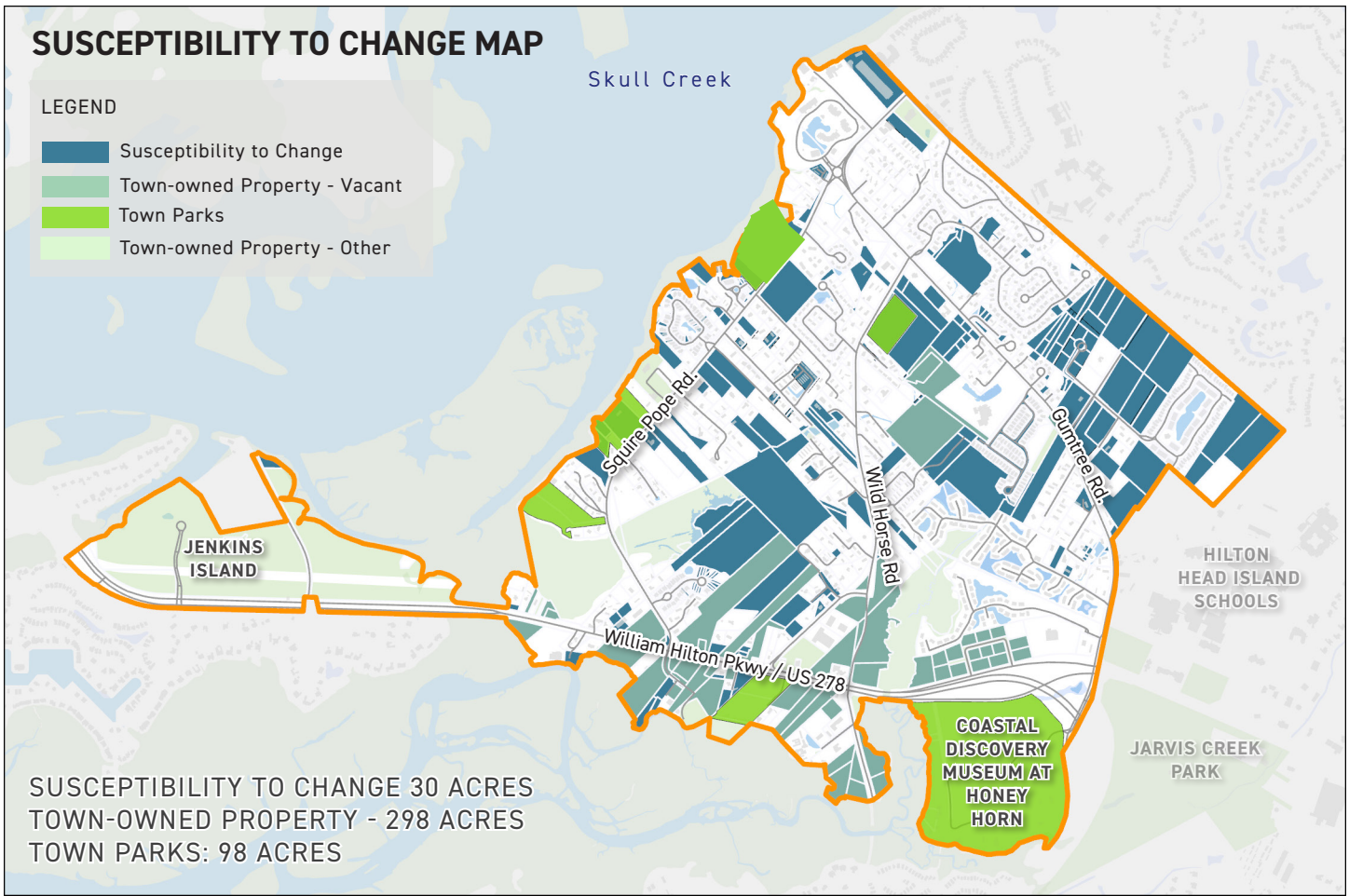
The majority of the existing land use in the district is residential. Small areas of commercial and office uses are located primarily along William Hilton Parkway and Old Wild Horse Road. An exception to this pattern is tucked along Skull Creek where multi-story timeshare, waterfront dining, marinas and docking uses are located.

There are a limited number of commercial businesses, with some clustering observed along the waterfront areas, while home-based businesses show a declining trend. Currently, Skull Creek houses 76 businesses employing 900 individuals, making it one of the smaller employment bases among the Island's districts. However, its proximity to the largest jobs base along the Main Street corridor, including the Island's school campus and hospital, adds strategic value to the district.

Changes in land use should complement the existing character of the district, improve accessibility to the waterfront and protect environmental resources.

PLACEHOLDER

Additional Text and
 Infographic



SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE

Susceptibility to change is assessed by identifying properties that are vacant, properties developed below the entitled density, and properties with buildings older than forty years in age. More than 30 acres are categorized as “susceptible to change,” primarily due to under-development, meaning the amount of current development is less than what is allowed by the zoning. Additionally, the average building age dates back to 1968 and totaling 75,000 square feet of commercial space.

The primary driver of susceptibility to change within the district is the presence of 105 acres of privately held undeveloped land outside the floodplain. While the district includes over 300 acres of undeveloped land, more than two-thirds of this land falls either under Town ownership or within the high-risk flood zone.

Changes in these areas should be balanced through thoughtful land use planning to promote context-sensitive residential and mixed-use developments that reduce traffic and enhance walkability.

PLACEHOLDER
 Additional Text and
 Infographic

FUTURE LAND USE TYPOLOGIES

PLACEHOLDER



FOCUS/STUDY AREAS

PLACEHOLDER

RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER STUDY

To guide the recommendation on the character of residential development, the planning team reviewed developments within the Skull Creek District. In each example of residential development the existing zoning category, allowed density, and resulting development density is identified. All of these examples fall between 3 and 6 dwelling units an acre.

Hanahan Place



RM-4 Low - Moderate Density

Max. Density: 4 du (6 du if lot area is at least 3 acres; 8 du if lot area is at least 5 acres)

20 Single-family units

4.2 acres

3.3 du/acres



Squire Pope Mobile Home Park



RM-4 Low - Moderate Density

Max. Density: 4 du (6 du if lot area is at least 3 acres; 8 du if lot area is at least 5 acres)

9 Single-family units

6.8 acres

3.5 du/acres



Carolina Isles



RM-4 Low - Moderate Density

Max. Density: 4 du (6 du if lot area is at least 3 acres; 8 du if lot area is at least 5 acres)

81 Single-family units

12.5 acres

6.1 du/acres



Cotton Point



MF- Marshfront Mixed Use

Max. Density: Along major arterials - 4 du (8 du if lot area is at least 3 acres)
Along other streets - 6 du (10 du if lot area is at least 3 acres)

14 Single-family units

2.6 acres

3.79 du/acres





RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Previous Chapters outlined the existing conditions, trends and options that were discussed during the development of this Plan. The resulting recommendations outlined in this chapter are intended to meet the needs of current and future residents and visitors. Cumulatively, recommendations seek to balance growth and redevelopment in a way that conserves the natural environment, acknowledges cultural heritage, and reflects the unique characteristics of Skull Creek.

Recommendations are listed by topic in the next few pages, which include Land Uses and Character, Zoning or the Land Management Ordinance, and Capital Improvements (physical improvements such as parks, workforce housing, pathways, streets, infrastructure). Recommendations have been designed to be “actions” where implementation and be measured.

Actions were prioritized through a community engagement process that considered factors such as the relative importance, public need, integration with other projects, cost, and potential funding. This initial set of actions and priorities may be altered through future conversations and design studies.

Some of the ideas are policy based, where actions will be advanced by actions of the Town Council, Planning Commission and Town Administration in everyday practice. Others will require refinements to the Town’s Ordinances, the Land Management Ordinance, gradual changes to the Zoning Map, and Capital Improvements Program. Some may require collaborative partnerships between the Town and other agencies, non-profits, and private parties.

PLACEHOLDER