



# OUR TOWN

A Newsletter of the Town Of Hilton Head Island

Brought to you by the Town of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov | (843) 341-4600

## INSIDE THIS EDITION

Getting Ready for Hurricane Preparedness .....	2	Lowcountry Celebration Park ...	3
Town Budget .....	3	Around Town.....	4
		278 Corridor Project Update .....	4



MAYOR JOHN J. MCCANN

## Mayor's Update

Teamwork is essential for making progress, and I'd like to thank our Town Council members for working together as a team to move our priorities forward.

Last December, shortly after several of us were elected, we identified top priorities we wanted to focus on this year: the Lowcountry Celebration Park/Coligny Area Redevelopment, the U. S. 278 Gateway Corridor Project, the Mitchelville/Gullah Geechee Cultural Preservation, the Comprehensive Plan Review and Update, and Workforce Development. Eight months down the road, I would say we've made pretty good progress. I attribute this progress to the work our Town staff and our Town Council have put forth.

In June, we broke ground for our Lowcountry Celebration Park, one of the largest projects that the Town has ever

undertaken. Roadway improvements, including the resurfacing of Pope Avenue, have been made in the Coligny area. Since their appointment, the 13 local citizens serving on our U.S. 278 Gateway Corridor Committee have been meeting regularly to strategize and offer input into the process being led by the South Carolina Department of Transportation. Their work is immensely critical.

For Mitchelville/Gullah Geechee Cultural Preservation, a Town consultant presented recommendations to help us make leaps in cultural preservation. Town staff, including our newly hired Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator (see page 4), is evaluating those recommendations to see what is appropriate to implement. We are continuing to work with St. James Baptist Church and Beaufort County on a relocation plan for this historic Gullah church. Protecting this 133-year-old congregation, a religious anchor in the community, is an important move.

We approved a development team and work groups, made up of local citizens, to help us re-write our comprehensive plan - our blueprint for the future. Those groups are meeting regularly to discuss ideas and strategies. As part of workforce development, we hired a housing consultant to help assess our housing needs and develop recommendations we may consider to address this critical need for working Island families and individuals. Those recommendations are being reviewed and prioritized.

Town Council has addressed many other issues as well. If you've ever attended a Town Council meeting or one of our committee meetings, then you've gotten a taste of the numerous challenges we grapple with on a regular basis. Babe Ruth once stated, "the way a team plays as a whole determines its success." As you elected representatives, we put differences aside and approach challenges together. As a result, we're able to stay focused on our priorities and gets things done.



TOWN MANAGER STEVE RILEY

## Town Manager's Update

For the first time, our Town Council adopted a biennial budget. This is a testament to the forward-thinking of Town leaders and staff. Our new budget covers fiscal years 2020 and 2021, and lays the foundation of support for projects we plan to complete over the next 24 months. I applaud our Town Council for a unanimous budget vote, which indicates that each member supports our fiscal vision and long-range planning.

Our budget is a fiscally responsible and balanced financial plan that enables us to respond to the needs of our residents using a limited resource of funds.

Since January 2017, approximately

\$75 million worth of Town funded capital projects have been completed or placed under contract. In our 2019 fiscal year, we saw the conclusion of the beach renourishment project, the USCB Hilton Head Island campus, Office Park Road intersection work, and the Island Recreation Center expansion.

In fiscal year 2020, the Town will be looking to complete some of the major projects started later in fiscal year 2019 such as the intersection improvements at Pope Avenue and Lagoon Road, the resurfacing of Pope Avenue, the extension of Lagoon Road and, of course, the new Lowcountry Celebration Park. Along with capital improvement projects, staff will continue to work on other initiatives far into the new fiscal year.

Workforce development is one of the initiatives Town staff will be hard at work on. We have worked with a consultant on housing for our local workforce. Staff is now gathering data and preparing options on this sensitive topic to present to Town Council. We believe that the redevelopment of vacant commercial spaces should be one of the first options we look hard

at to address this issue. Along with the community, staff has begun working on the Town's Comprehensive Plan for Town Council to review and approve in early 2020. Formed in early 2019, the U.S. 278 Gateway Corridor Committee will work with staff to present project alternatives to Town Council and the S.C. Department of Transportation. Also, to prepare for future uncertainties, we are increasing our operating reserve policy from 25% - 30% to 35% - 40% of the general fund operating budget.

Lastly, our Island continues to be a vacation destination to many, and a place for many people to retire and young families to grow. It is still important that we maintain our facilities and expectations of a diverse residential population as well as visitors that make the Island their destination. As revenue growth slows due to the Town approaching buildout, the challenge will continue to be finding ways to stimulate the economy and realign our funding streams in order to handle residents' and visitors' increasing demands of service. That said, I am always confident and optimistic about the Town's future!

## Celebrating our Friendship and Goodwill

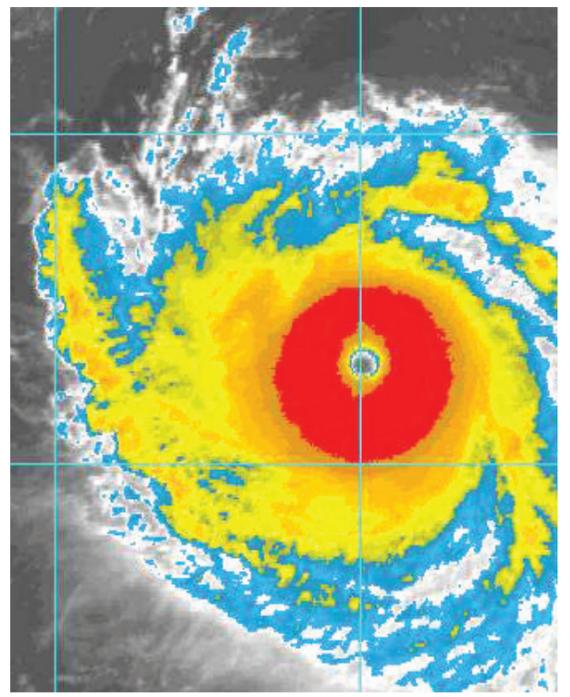
Mayor John McCann, Town Manager Steve Riley and members of the Italian-American Club of Hilton Head were among a delegation that traveled to Verona, Italy, in June, to participate in the signing of a Friendship City pact. The pact - endorsed by Mayor McCann and Verona Mayor Federico Sboarina - is the first step in the process towards a Sister City pact. The goodwill pact also opens the door for the future exchange of ideas on arts and culture, business and trade, community development, and youth and education.



Getting Ready for Hurricane Season:

# Your Questions Answered

The 2019 hurricane season is here. It started June 1 and ends November 30. With two active hurricane seasons behind us, we want you to be ready for the next one. Through our Open Town Hall survey, we asked citizens what questions they have about hurricane season preparation, the Town's response, public evacuations, or in the event of a storm, recovery. We are sharing some of the questions and our answers with you to help you be better prepared for this year's hurricane season. You can also find helpful information in our Town's Citizen's Guide to Emergency Preparedness. English and Spanish versions of the guide are available at all Town Facilities and on the Town's website at [hiltonheadislandsc.gov](http://hiltonheadislandsc.gov).



## **DOES THE ISLAND EVER HAVE A MANDATORY EVACUATION EVEN IF THE STATE OR COUNTY DOES NOT AND IF SO, HOW WOULD WE FIND OUT ABOUT THIS?**

In South Carolina, the Governor is the only person that can order a mandatory evacuation. It is possible that the Island and other low-lying areas along the coast could be evacuated without the rest of the county or state. Such an order would only come from the Governor. Notices of mandatory evacuation generally would be announced at news conferences and through area media, including the state and Town's social media.

## **IF LEAVING DUE TO A MANDATORY EVACUATION, ARE YOU ALLOWED TO GO TO A FRIEND OR HOTEL VIA A NON-EVACUATION ROUTE? I KNOW THAT YOU COULD LEAVE PRIOR TO A MANDATORY BUT WHY WOULD YOU UNNECESSARILY?**

If you leave before a mandatory evacuation, you may travel in any direction you wish. After the evacuation order is issued, routes of travel will depend on where traffic control points are put into place. Once the control points are in place, traffic will have a pre-determined flow. By leaving early, you may avoid potentially heavier traffic that may result from a mandatory evacuation.

## **DO YOU CALL FOR MANDATORY EVACUATION WITH HURRICANES CATEGORY 1 AND 2?**

Evacuations are not determined by the category of storm. The Governor uses all available resources including the National Hurricane Center, the National Weather Service and local governments to determine the possible storm impacts to South Carolina. The potential impacts of a storm are what drive the decision to order an evacuation.

## **HOW MUCH ADVANCE WARNING WILL THE TOWN GIVE FOR VOLUNTARY EVACUATION AND WHAT MEDIA WILL BE USED?**

There is no longer a voluntary evacuation notice in South Carolina. If an evacuation is ordered, it will be mandatory. Whenever a storm threatens our area, the Town will use all available communications and media to alert and inform the public.

## **LAST YEAR, THE ISLAND WAS EVACUATED BECAUSE OF A CALL MADE BY THE STATE AND SURROUNDING REGIONS. THEN THE EVACUATION WAS LIFTED, BUT NOT BEFORE PEOPLE LEFT, CANCELLATIONS WERE MADE, REVENUE LOST AND REFUNDED.**

## **WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ENSURE THAT AN EVACUATION IS NOT ORDERED PREMATURELY AGAIN?**

There was some confusion about the evacuation orders that were made last year during Hurricane Florence. The Governor ordered an evacuation of the medical facilities within Beaufort County. He announced that he would sign an evacuation order the following day for the public. However, he did not do so due to the fact that the storm's path had changed substantially overnight. The Governor has to make a decision based on the best information available at the time. Fortunately, Hurricane Florence did not impact Beaufort County. But the storm did demonstrate how complicated it is to forecast hurricanes and the challenging decisions the Governor has to make.

## **AT WHAT POINT DO THE HOSPITALS EVACUATE?**

Hospitals and other medical facilities are required to evacuate when the Governor orders a mandatory medical evacuation. This will normally happen prior to a mandatory public evacuation.



## **IF YOUR CAR IS NOT WORKING OR DON'T HAVE ONE, WHAT IS THE PHONE NUMBER IF YOU NEED A RIDE, WHERE TO GO TO GET A RIDE?**

Beaufort County has developed a county-wide evacuation plan for those who need assistance evacuating. There are six strategically located pickup points around the Island for those who need help evacuating. If you are unable to get to one of the designated pickup points, you can request additional assistance through our Special Call Pickup Program. Once an evacuation has been ordered, just call the Hilton Head Fire Rescue Dispatch Center at 843-682-5125 to request evacuation assistance. The dispatcher will take your information and we will make arrangements to pick you up and take you to the Beaufort County evacuation point at the Hilton Head Island Airport.

## **WHO DO WE CONTACT TO KNOW WHEN WE CAN RETURN TO THE ISLAND?**

Re-entry information will be posted

on the Town's website and the Town's Facebook page and Twitter feed. You may also call 1-800-963-5023 for updates.

## **ARE SAND BAGS PROVIDED BY TOWN OR ELSEWHERE? AT WHAT COST? WE EXPERIENCE COASTAL FLOODING.**

At this time, the Town does not provide sand or sandbags. However, we are evaluating the possibility of providing bags and sand free of charge to residents at a self-service location on the Island.

## **IF WE HAVE EMPTY SANDBAGS, ARE WE PERMITTED TO GET SAND FROM THE BEACH?**

No. You are not permitted to use sand from our Island beaches to fill sandbags.

## **WILL THE RESPONSES TO THESE QUESTIONS BE MADE AVAILABLE ON THE TOWN'S WEBSITE IN WRITTEN FORM FOR THOSE WHO PREFER NOT TO TAKE THE TIME TO WATCH VIDEOS?**

In addition to informational videos, written answers to all of the questions submitted will be available on the Town's website at [hiltonheadislandsc.gov](http://hiltonheadislandsc.gov).

## **SIGN UP FOR EMERGENCY ALERTS**

The Town's free e-subscription service enables residents to subscribe to emergency alerts via email or text. Our e-subscription service will be used in conjunction with our existing media and **Citizen Hotline (1-800-963-5023)** to provide emergency information. We will use the "Emergency Alerts" topic of our e-subscription service during an emergency or disaster, particularly in an evacuation or during the recovery from an event that has caused significant damage. The Town encourages residents to sign up for the e-subscription service and link it to their cell phone so they can receive messages in a timely manner. Standard text messaging rates may apply. Visit [hiltonheadislandsc.gov](http://hiltonheadislandsc.gov) to sign up.

## **HOW TO STAY INFORMED IF YOU'RE OUT OF TOWN**

While out of town, you can obtain updated information about Hilton Head Island by calling 1-800-963-5023 toll free. Recorded messages will advise of road conditions, damage estimates, utility restoration, shelter information, re-entry times and other pertinent information. You may also access information at: [www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov](http://www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov) [www.bcsco.net](http://www.bcsco.net) [www.facebook.com/TownofHiltonHeadIslandSC](http://www.facebook.com/TownofHiltonHeadIslandSC) [www.twitter.com/TownofHHI](http://www.twitter.com/TownofHHI)

# 2020-2021 Fiscal Year Budget: Five Things You Need to Know

Our Town Council unanimously passed the budget for the 2020 and 2021 fiscal years. Here are five things you need to know about our new budget.

**1. Town staff, for the first time, presented a biennial budget.** "This is a sign that the Town is forward-looking and putting an emphasis on sustainability and long-term projects," said John Troyer, Director of Finance. Although the budget covers two-years, it still has to be reviewed and approved annually, as there may be adjustments.

**2. The 2020 budget is \$79.1 million - \$500,000 less than the 2019 budget.** The 2021 budget is even less at \$78.6 million. Our overall budget covers general service, debit service and capital improvements.

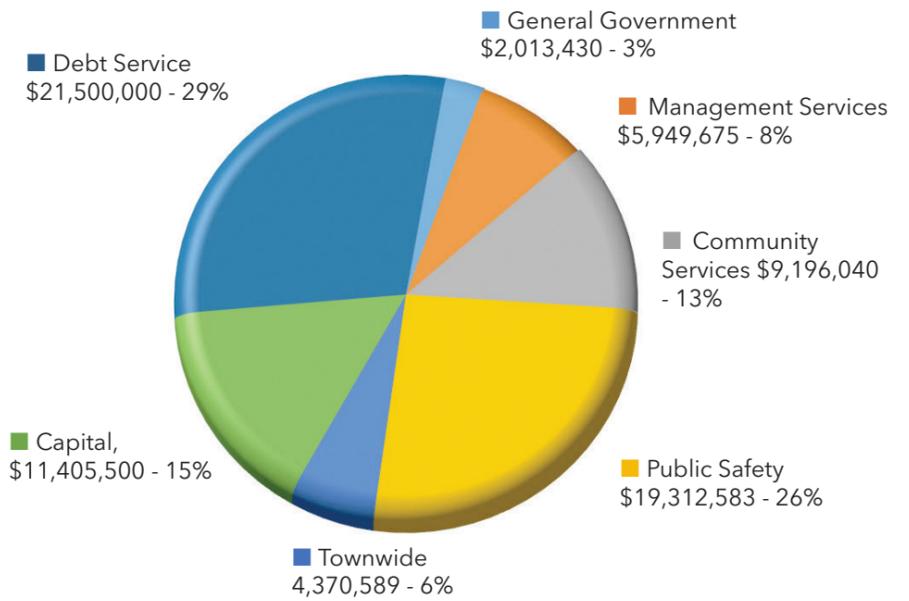
**3. Capital improvement funding for 2020 pays for** key road improvements, pathway improvements, replacement of fire station #2, infrastructure improvements and our new signature project - the Lowcountry Celebration Park.

**4. Our debt service fund has an 11.2 percent reduction** - from \$24.2 million in fiscal year 2019 to \$21.5 million in fiscal year 2020. Troyer attributed this reduction to the Town paying off a bond debt for beach renourishment.

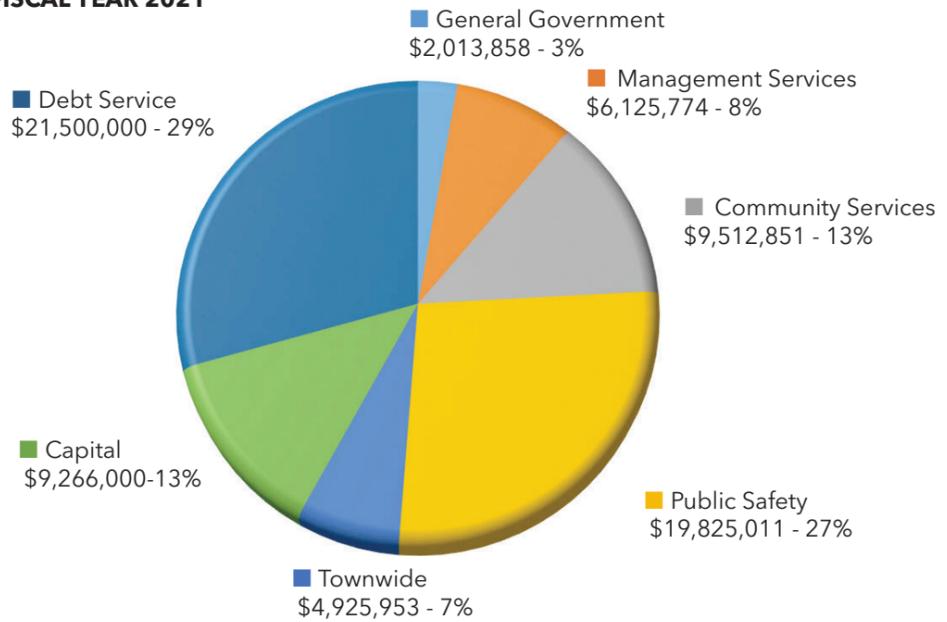
**5. With the creation of a natural disaster fund two years ago,** the Town is preparing itself to respond to hurricanes and other natural disasters. It issued bonds to generate reserves and levied a five mil property tax increase for five years to repay the bonds. This five mil funding will be in its third of five years in this new fiscal year. Currently, \$60 million is available in the fund for disaster response.

Visit [hiltonheadislandsc.gov](http://hiltonheadislandsc.gov) to review a complete copy of the budget.

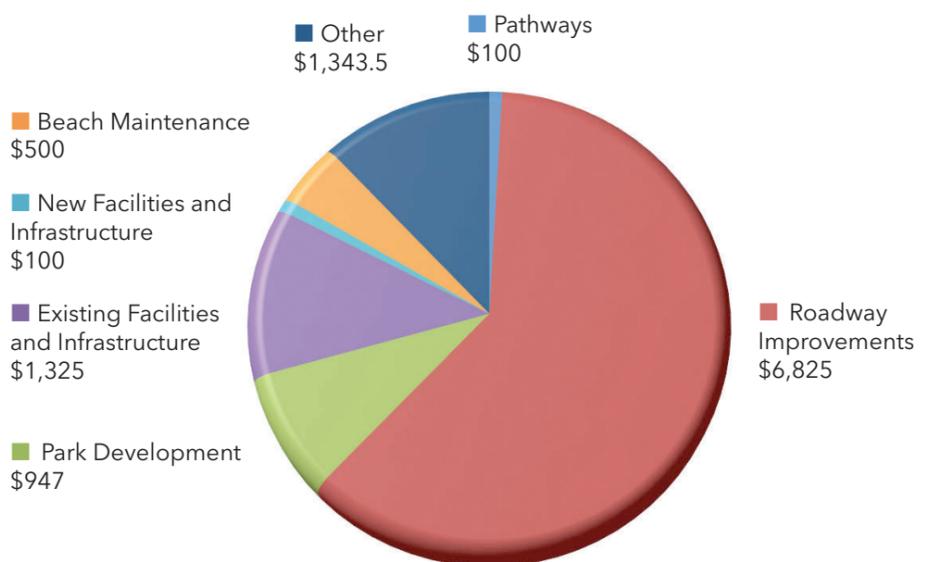
## CONSOLIDATED BUDGET SUMMARY - GENERAL, DEBT, AND CIP FUNDS FISCAL YEAR 2020



## CONSOLIDATED BUDGET SUMMARY - GENERAL, DEBT, AND CIP FUNDS FISCAL YEAR 2021



## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS BUDGET FY 2020



# Coming Summer 2020: The Lowcountry Celebration Park

Town officials, joined by staff from the Children's Sandbox Museum, broke ground for the new Lowcountry Celebration Park that will be located off Pope Avenue, near Coligny Beach Park. The \$14 million project will be completed in the summer of 2020. The groundbreaking event marked the start of construction for the highly anticipated Park, expected to greatly revitalize the Coligny area. The Park will have a large lawn and stage for festivals, concerts and other gatherings, a destination playground with an iconic ship, the Sandbox Children's Museum, walking trails and boardwalks, exercise stations, additional parking and improved access to beach parking. "This project will transform this area from a summertime hot spot to a year-round attraction," said Town Manager Steve Riley. The Town hired Nix Construction of Hilton Head



Island as the lead contractor. Carolina Parks and Play and Landscape Structures are constructing the iconic ship, named the *Adventure* after the ship that Captain William Hilton, the explorer for whom Hilton Head Island is named, sailed to the Island in 1663. Follow our progress over the next year on Facebook/TownofHiltonHeadIslandSC.

Island as the lead contractor. Carolina Parks and Play and Landscape Structures are constructing the iconic ship, named the *Adventure* after the ship that Captain William Hilton, the explorer for whom Hilton Head Island is named, sailed to the Island in 1663. Follow our progress over the next year on Facebook/TownofHiltonHeadIslandSC.

# Around Town

## OUR PLAN: The Town's Comprehensive Plan Rewrite is Underway with Citizen Involvement



How and where our community goes through 2040 is the direction nearly 100 local residents and community leaders will determine as they dive into rewriting the next comprehensive plan for the Town of Hilton Head Island.

In May, the Town kicked off the rewriting process for Our Plan - as the comprehensive plan is called - with a Development Team,

seven work groups and one task group made up of residents with diverse experiences and backgrounds. Appointed by the Town Council, the Development Team meets regularly to ensure there is meaningful collaboration between the groups and that the adopted principles and process are followed for Our Plan.

"It's important to have community involvement in this process. The people who live and work here have a stake in the kind of community we become over the years. I'm excited to have their input," said Taylor Ladd, Project Lead for Our Plan.

Work groups meet bi-monthly to outline goals, strategies and tactics related to core values established during the Our Future project. This input will be used to shape Our Plan. The core values include:

- Relentless Pursuit of Excellence.
- Redefining Environmental Sustainability.
- Revitalizing and Modernizing the Economy.
- Fostering an Inclusive Multi-Dimensional Community.
- Building a Connected and Collaborative Community Fabric.
- Expanding to Embrace an Integrated Regional Focus.
- Innovative Approach to Create Right-Sized Infrastructure.

Another component of the Our Plan project is the creation of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, one of Town Council's priorities for 2019. The Parks and Recreation Task Group, a sub-group of the Fostering an Inclusive Multi-Dimensional Community core value, is tasked with making sure parks and recreation strategies are incorporated into Our Plan.

The public is invited to attend any meetings for Our Plan and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. For more information, contact Taylor Ladd at [taylorl@hiltonheadislandsc.gov](mailto:taylorl@hiltonheadislandsc.gov) or 843-341-4607.

# The Town Welcomes



## Sheryse DuBose: New Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator

Sheryse DuBose has joined the Town as its new Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator. Sheryse's role is to initiate, implement and administer a program to preserve the Island's historic neighborhoods. She will serve as the first point of contact for members of the public seeking technical assistance for properties within the designated historic neighborhoods, including the Gullah Geechee communities. Sheryse grew up in Gardner, one of the Island's historic Gullah communities, and has spent the last 25 years researching and advocating for the preservation of Gullah Geechee communities. She can be reached at [sherysed@hiltonheadislandsc.gov](mailto:sherysed@hiltonheadislandsc.gov) or 843-341-4683.



## U.S. 278 Corridor Improvements: Improving Traffic Along U.S. 278 Through Growth Modeling

If you've sat in traffic on U.S. 278 as it weaves onto Hilton Head Island, you've probably asked "where is traffic coming from and how can traffic conditions be improved?" There are no easy answers. But, clues to making conditions better may be found in "modeling" traffic growth.

Traffic grows in relationship to factors such as population growth, changes in employment and economic development opportunities, tourism activity, and the movement of goods in to, out of and through a region. They play a role in estimating future traffic. Understanding how traffic volumes have changed over the past five years is beneficial to understanding the current environment. Historical growth trends do not tell the full story of future traffic conditions.

A S.C. Department of Transportation project team used the Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS) Regional Travel Demand Model to help estimate what future traffic would look like along U.S. 278 and surrounding roadways in 2040. The model uses data such as estimated population, employment growth and the influence of tourist activity on traffic and travel patterns for Beaufort, Colleton, Jasper and Hampton counties to forecast future traffic.

To account for the consistently high summer tourist volumes, while balancing the off season, the project team determined that the "30th highest day" volumes would be used for the analysis of the intersections. For example, if you ranked all the traffic volumes (number of cars on the road) for a year from highest to lowest, the number of vehicles estimated on the 30th from the top would be used to assess transportation needs. This value represents more cars on the road than under "average daily" conditions. Additionally, it accounts for seasonal tourists without over-designing the roadway for the busiest day of the year, which could result in constructing too many lanes and using more public infrastructure dollars than appropriate for the community's needs. This method is consistent with traditional traffic engineering practices and accounts for the fluctuation in traffic conditions throughout the year in a community that experiences heavy tourist traffic.

Through ongoing traffic studies, the project team is making determinations about traffic lanes and traffic operations improvements (traffic signals, access management and signage) that may support the safe and efficient movement of cars through the corridor.

### U.S. 278 Gateway Corridor Committee Work Update

The U.S. 278 Gateway Corridor Committee, appointed by the Hilton Head Island Town Council, has been meeting with community groups and residents to share information and gather feedback on the South Carolina Department of Transportation's U.S. 278 Corridor Improvement Project. If you're interested in having a committee member give a presentation about the project to your community or neighborhood association, please contact Charles Cousins, Special Assistant to the Town Manager, at [charlesc@hiltonheadislandsc.gov](mailto:charlesc@hiltonheadislandsc.gov) or 843-341-4692.



You are Invited to an SCDOT

## PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday, September 19th | 5:00 - 7:00 PM  
Open House, No Formal Presentation

Boys & Girls Club of Hilton Head Island  
151 Gumtree Rd, Hilton Head Island, SC

[www.scdot278corridor.com](http://www.scdot278corridor.com)



## Senior Planner Taylor Ladd Named Project Lead for Our Plan

Taylor Ladd is the new Project Lead for the Town's Our Plan project, through which the Town's Comprehensive Plan will be rewritten. In her role, Taylor will guide citizen committees through the rewrite process and help educate and engage the public. She's also the Project Manager for the Town's Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Taylor joined the Town in 2018 as a senior planner in the Town's Development Review and Zoning Division. Taylor can be reached at [taylorl@hiltonheadislandsc.gov](mailto:taylorl@hiltonheadislandsc.gov) or 843-341-4607.