HILTON HEAD ISLAND – OUR FUTURE

VISION AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, USA

15 February 2018

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This report presents the vision and strategic action plan that has been developed following an extensive community engagement process. Throughout 2017, approximately 3,000 people contributed to a series of surveys, workshops and focus group sessions, to explore the long-term future of the Island community. This engagement process was designed to provide an open, inclusive and transparent platform for community members to help create a shared vision and action plan.

This report represents Future iQ's analysis of the engagement outcomes, and how this data has informed the identification of a preferred future and strategic actions. As the project consultant, Future iQ was given the responsibility to develop a data driven process, which has informed this report. The analysis in this report builds on the preceding project reports and engagement analysis. The recommended Key Strategic Action Areas have been developed by Future iQ, drawing directly from the community input gathered during the visioning process. All the concepts and actions presented were discussed during the engagement process. These actions have been structured into a proposed roadmap, drawing heavily from the prioritization conducted at the reconvening of the Think Tank in December 2017. The recommended sequencing has also been influenced by best practice examples of building a realistic pathway to a desired future.

These reports and the data visualization are available on the project portal:

http://lab.future-iq.com/hhiourfuture/

15 February 2018

REPORT PREPARED BY:

future→iQ

HILTON HEAD ISLAND · OUR FUTURE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Hilton Head Island Vision and Strategic Action Plan represents the final element in the year-long Hilton Head Island – Our Future visioning project. The analysis within this report builds on preceding project reports and represents Future iQ's analysis of the engagement outcomes and how this data has informed the identification of a preferred future and strategic actions.

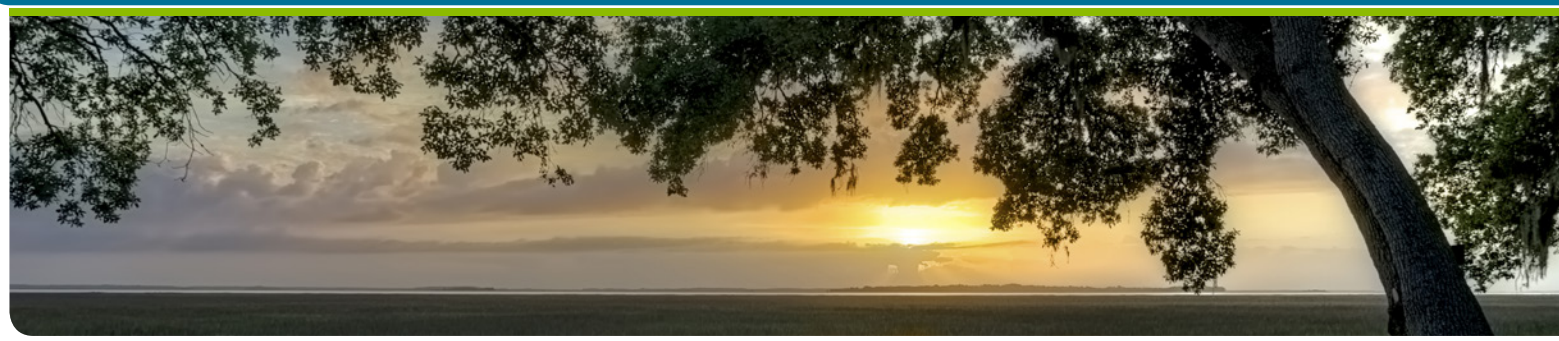
Hilton Head Island – Our Future has brought the citizens of the Island together within a large-scale community visioning process, in order to meet the future challenges of the Island, looking out as far as 2040.

The Hilton Head Island – Our Future visioning process was undertaken by Future iQ to reflect the Town of Hilton Head's desire to develop a long range community vision through a transparent and inclusive community engagement process. There is a stated desire to preserve the heritage and character of the Island while at the same time progressing with "sensitive redevelopment" that continues to attract and retain young professionals, retirees and tourists alike. Taking this complexity into account, Hilton Head Island – Our Future has been a unique community visioning process that will provide a guide to future Island development and help build a comprehensive quality of place that is key to both visitor experience and the life of residents.

This visioning process has built on significant previous planning and preparation by the Town of Hilton Head. Extensive community input and transparent, inclusive engagement was central to the Hilton Head Island – Our Future process. The comprehensive engagement and data driven process progressively focused the discussion on emerging key themes and aspirations for the future. The purpose of the process was to arrive at a 'point of consensus' that represented the shared vision for the future.

This report examines the identification of the preferred future for Hilton Head Island, while discussing the stages of the overall visioning process. The key themes and aspirations which arose from the engagement analysis are included within the strategic action pillars. The key strategic action areas are outlined.

The implementation of the vision will need clear steps and accountability. This report outlines the key metrics to measure the future success of the vision and concludes with a discussion around the topics that will be critical to the future of Hilton Head Island.



2.0 SNAPSHOT OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

The current Hilton Head Island community profile has been documented in the Community Profile and Benchmark Analysis report (April 2017), produced as part of this visioning project. The following sections add additional contextual elements to the benchmark and profile analysis.

2.1 HISTORY OF SETTLEMENT OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

Hilton Head Island has a long and fascinating history. Like many communities, the events of the past, and waves of development, have shaped the unique character, culture and social fabric of the Island community.

The Gullah Geechee culture and community is a compelling and important part of the Island's social fabric.

In 1663, Captain William Hilton sailed on the Adventure from Barbados to explore lands granted by King Charles II of England to the eight Lords Proprietors. In his travels, he identified a headland near the entrance to Port Royal Sound and named it "Hilton's Head". In 1862, the Island's name was changed to Port Royal and finally in 1872, the Island's official name was changed to Hilton Head Island.

During the War of 1812, British troops landed on Hilton Head Island and burned most of the existing Island homes. This was followed by a period of resettlement and by 1860 there were over 20 plantations in operation. At this time, the Island was populated mostly by slaves and overseers who worked with cotton, indigo, and sugar cane.

Hilton Head Island played a major role in the Civil War. In 1861, the largest naval battle ever fought on the American coast was waged between the Union fleet and the Confederates. Fort Walker, which is in today's Port Royal Plantation, was overrun by more than 12,000 Union troops. Many of the Island families had to evacuate their plantation homes. By 1862, with 20-30,000 Union troops, some prisoners, and former slaves, Hilton Head Island's population swelled to over 40,000.

Following the Civil War, hundreds of ex-slaves flocked to Hilton Head Island, where they could buy land, go to school, live in government housing, and serve in what was called the First Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers. A community called Mitchelville was constructed on the north end of the island and became the first "Freedman's" village and was settled by these freed slaves. (*Hilton Head Island: Natalie Hefter, Coastal Discovery Museum, 1998*)

2.2 MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

In broader historical terms, the development of Hilton Head Island has been a recent phenomenon.

In the early 1950s, the Island population was reported as only 300 residents. In 1956, a bridge was constructed that opened the Island to vehicle traffic from the mainland. This was the beginning of the modern development phase on the Island. In 1956 Charles Fraser, the 'Father of the Modern Day Development of Hilton Head Island', had a vision and created a master plan for a world class resort named Sea Pines. The future of Hilton Head Island was at a pivotal and critical moment. Prosperity after World War II provided middle and upper-class Americans with disposable income that could be used to take regular vacations and plan for retirement. (*Hilton Head Island: Natalie Hefter, Coastal Discovery Museum, 1998*)

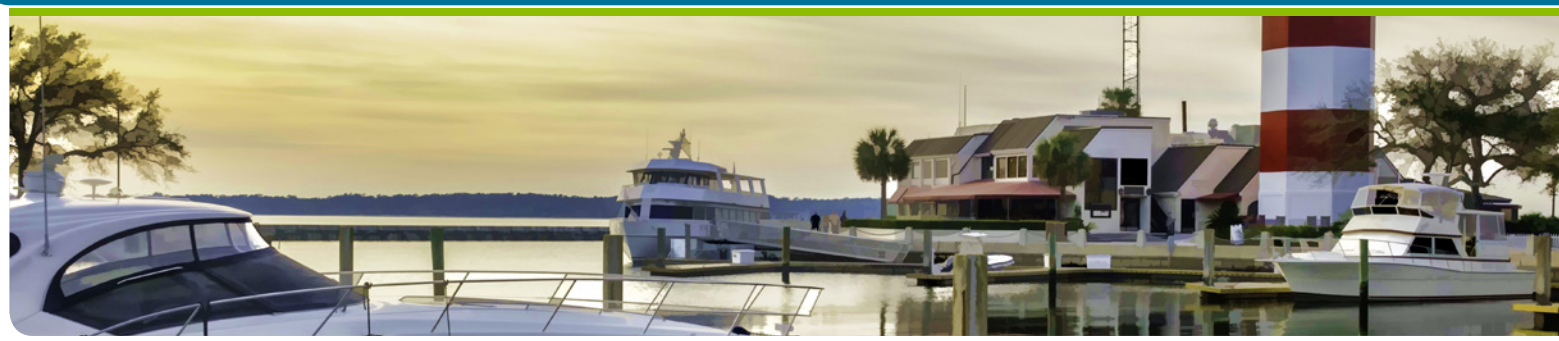
The ethos of the Hilton Head Island community has been strongly shaped by the vision of Charles Fraser. His legacy endures today, and can been seen in the unique visual character and appeal of the Island landscape.

New transportation networks and the availability of automobiles facilitated travel and tourism and retirement home construction boomed. Federal policies incentivized coastal construction in the southeast—at the expense of long-time African American residents—and led to a boom in development.

Charles Fraser fought for a new type of coastal development that would draw in high-end clients by limiting development and maintaining the Island's natural scenery. Fraser immediately started work on his planned community, which he called Sea Pines Plantation. He lamented that coastal tourism created landscapes marred by "ugliness," and his goal at Sea Pines was to "keep out ugliness that seems to follow" tourist development. (*The First Green Developer: William D. Bryan*)

Fraser's brand was built on being green, progressive and environmentally sustainable. The master plan for Sea Pines made preserving ecological integrity a priority, and Fraser later remarked that "one's duty is to dress and keep the earth" and to "protect it for the next generation and the next generation." His vision influenced a wave of development in which other developers sought to replicate the Sea Pines model.

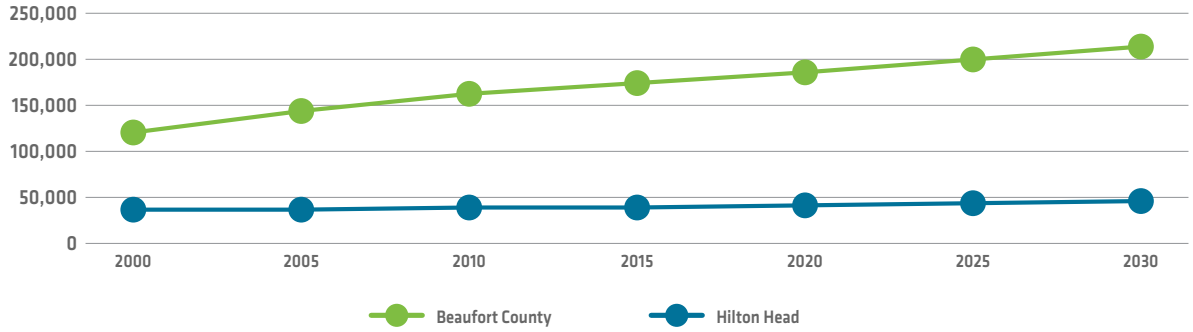
The legacy of Charles Fraser's vision is possibly the single strongest strand of today's community fabric and character. This includes the advent of the 'gated communities'. It has irrevocably shaped the Island's trajectory and in turn, attracted thousands of people as residents and visitors. There is still a strong devotion to the Fraser vision and this was expressed by many current residents on multiple occasions throughout the visioning process. The community engagement sessions held throughout 2017 as part of the visioning process did probe whether this original 'development vision' needed to be expanded and 'updated'.



2.3 CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

The Hilton Head population has gone through rapid growth since the opening of the Island to vehicle traffic in the late 1950's. Over the last decades, the population of residents has grown from nearly 24,000 in 1990 to an estimated population of some 40,500 according to the 2016 census. Over the last decade the population growth rate has been 32%. Based on an extension of trends, the population of Hilton Head Island is forecast to rise to approximately 44,000 by 2030. There is some debate about whether this population growth will eventuate with some anecdotal evidence suggesting that it might be plateauing. Hilton Head Island has a relatively high percentage of two-person households compared to the benchmark communities.

Historic and projected populations from 2000 to 2030 for Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County.



Sources: Beaufort County projections, SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office; Hilton Head Island projections, extrapolated; historic population, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census.

This historic population growth pressure is compounded by the seasonal tourist visitation, which can increase the population to over 150,000 in peak periods. In total, 2.67 million people visit the Island each year according to 2016 census figures. During the visioning process, there was a clear concern expressed about the forecasted population growth and the impact of the large tourism economy. From the surveys and community discussions, it was apparent there is no real appetite for either significant population growth, or expansion of the seasonal tourism numbers. Many people felt the transport and accommodation infrastructure was being over stretched, and the impacts were degrading the unique island experience.

In 2015, the median age was 54.1 and is forecast to increase. Confronting an aging population and the attendant impacts on community character was a significant concern to some community residents during the visioning sessions.

The Hilton Head Island population is aging, and younger demographics are reportedly moving to Bluffton and Savannah. This has significant medium and long term implications for the social fabric and community vitality.

2.4 ETHNIC MAKE-UP AND DISTRIBUTION ON HILTON HEAD ISLAND

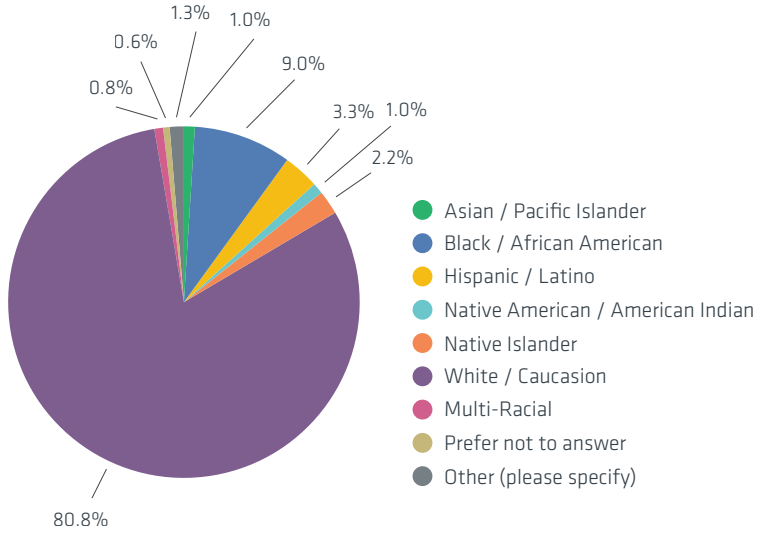
It is important to understand the ethnic make-up of Hilton Head Island. The fabric and character of the Island community is shaped by three unique factors:

- The predominance of gated communities. Some 70% of the Island population lives within these gated communities. They impose varying degrees of restriction regarding access, including no public access and 'pay-to-visit' access. This creates a unique phenomenon of 'communities within communities'. By their very design, gated communities offer a protected sanctuary and are highly controlled and regulated environments.
- Hilton Head Island has long been regarded as a prestigious destination retirement community. Drawn by its reputation and quality amenities, many affluent middle class people have gravitated to the Island as a second home and retirement destination. The large majority of this group are white and have come from across the USA.
- The Gullah Geechee community, also referred to as Native Islanders, are an intrinsically important part of the history and current social fabric. This community has seen its landholdings diminish over the decades and some community members fear an existential crisis without proactive intervention. This culture has a deep history and significance, however it also faces the pressures of out-migration of youth and an aging population.

Understanding the unique aspects of the Island social fabric is especially important in the context of the visioning process. This social fabric is remarkably complex and unusual. While it is a predominately white community, the majority of the white population have moved to the Island from elsewhere, and lack the more traditional multigenerational family structure. By contrast, the Native Islander community has deep history and family lineage reaching back five or more generations.

The Hilton Head Island – Our Future visioning process aimed to have a representative sample of community input. It largely achieved this objective.

Ethnic profile of community engagement survey respondents



2.5 ECONOMIC TRAJECTORY OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

In the Community Profile and Benchmark Analysis study, it was revealed that Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, in comparison to the benchmark communities in the United States, has the greatest median household income, the lowest labor force participation rate, and the lowest unemployment rate. The predominant industries on Hilton Head Island are tourism and retirement related industries.

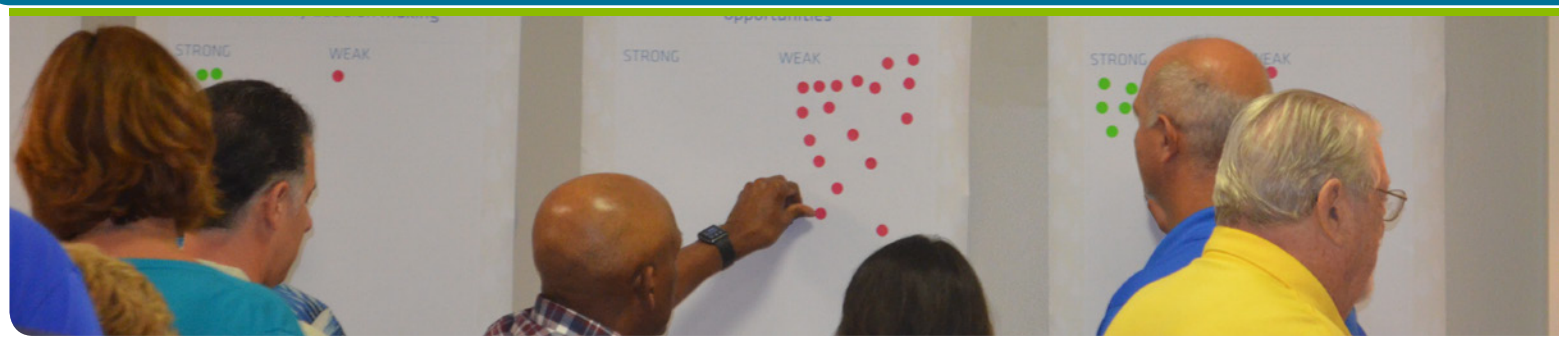
Compared to the benchmark communities, this is reflected in the Island economy having higher presence of economic activity associated with :

- Construction
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Real estate
- Accommodation and food services

The future development trajectory of Hilton Head Island is inextricably linked to the future health of the local economy. This topic was explored in some detail in the visioning process.

However, community sentiment suggests that the historic growth trajectory of retirement communities and tourism development might be approaching (or has passed) its zenith. How then does the local economy remain vibrant when the underlying drivers may begin to diminish? In addition, the macro economic landscape in the U.S. is seeing increased constraints in labor and skilled workforce. Hilton Head Island is based on a labor intensive set of industries, and already employers are facing significant challenges in meeting their employment needs.

An important underlying discussion throughout the visioning process was about the evolution of the local economy. There is a clear concern that any new vision direction does not inadvertently derail a successful local tourism economy, but it was recognized that there are likely to be emerging opportunities in other dimensions of the tourism industry such as eco-tourism. During the community discussions, people also felt that the Island is missing out on emerging 'new economy' dimensions associated with innovation and information technology. Compared to the benchmark communities, Hilton Head Island lags in the healthcare and education sectors, and these both offer significant opportunities for the local economy.



3.0 IMPORTANCE OF VISIONING

It is recognized that effective community planning processes will include robust visioning efforts. This is important to build alignment and focus within both the community and the planning outcomes.

3.1 RECENT VISIONING EFFORTS ON HILTON HEAD ISLAND

The Town of Hilton Head Island has undertaken two previous visioning processes within the last decade. In 2010, Charting the Island's Future – From Here to 2030 was produced in preparation for the Comprehensive Plan rewrite in the same year. Charting the Island's Future – From Here to 2030's vision was:

Hilton Head Island seeks to be a great place to live, work and visit where the natural assets combine with rich history, distinctive amenities, diverse cultures, and forward-thinking management of all the Island's resources into "One Island, One Community"

The Hilton Head Island – Our Future visioning process builds on the previous visioning work, and expands the level of community engagement.

In 2010, the Mayor's Task Force for the Island's Future – Vision 2025 was formed to refine the Town's vision and to provide a set of key policies and suggestions for their implementation to chart the course for the Island's future. Mayor Tom Peeples drafted some of the island's most influential leaders to serve on the task force. The Mayor's Task Force for the Island's Future – Vision 2025 was:

"In the year 2025 Hilton Head Island is recognized as the most extraordinary and desirable resort, residential, retirement and business community on the east coast due, in large measure, to its commitment to preserve its barrier island as a natural sanctuary for future generations."

The Hilton Head Island – Our Future (2017-18) visioning is being undertaken to help inform the next round of comprehensive planning for the Town. It aims to build on the previous visioning efforts and deepen and expand this important community conversation through wide scale community engagement.

"With the benefit of strategic commitment and support, it is certainly true that whatever scenarios Islander's envision are possible. This singular and significant visioning initiative will allow them to rise to the surface"

– Mayor Bennett, August 2017

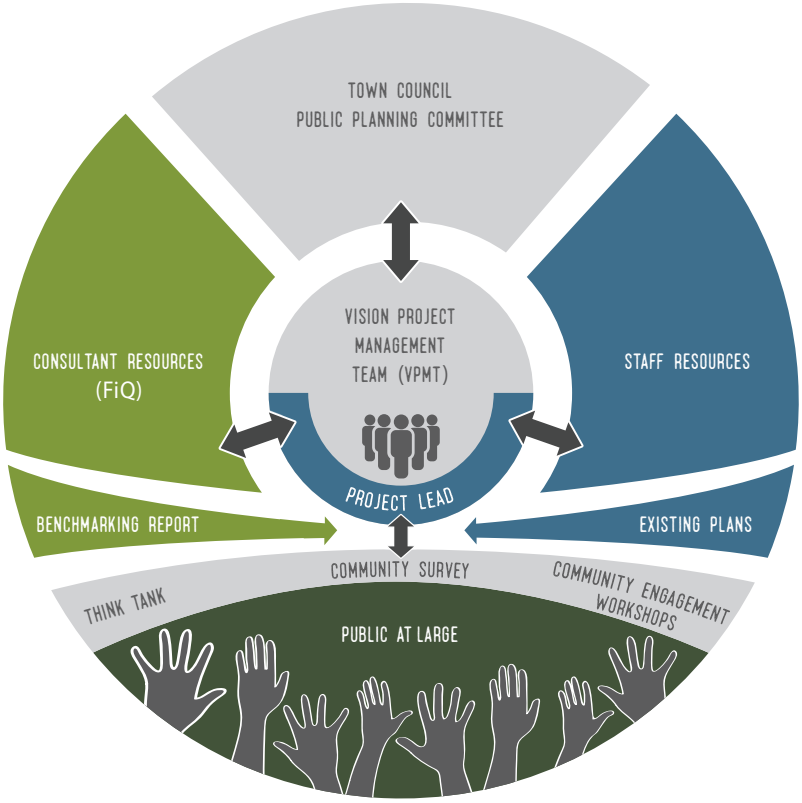
3.2 HILTON HEAD ISLAND – OUR FUTURE VISIONING PROCESS

The current visioning project, Hilton Head Island – Our Future, began in 2016 when the Town Council identified the creation of a comprehensive long-range vision as a priority for the Town. The Council authorized the Public Planning Commission to pursue a Community Vision Process Consultant. Following a competitive selection process, Future iQ was selected to help design and implement this work with Town staff.

The clear mandate from the Council was that the process should be open, inclusive and transparent. To support this mandate in early 2017, Town Council created the Vision Project Management Team (VPMT). This Team was comprised of a diverse group of community leaders, who's task was to set the guiding principles and assure the process meet this mandate.

Members of the Vision Project Management Team included Sandy West (Chair), Denise Spencer, (Vice-Chair), David Ames (Town Council), Alex Brown (Planning Commission), Morris Campbell, John Lundin and Mark O'Neil.

The Hilton Head Island – Our Future visioning process was built to create an open, transparent and inclusive approach to community engagement. This was an important mandate directed by the Town Council.



OUR FUTURE WILL CREATE AN INCLUSIVE VISION AND ROAD MAP TO THE FUTURE, BUILT ON A FOUNDATION OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

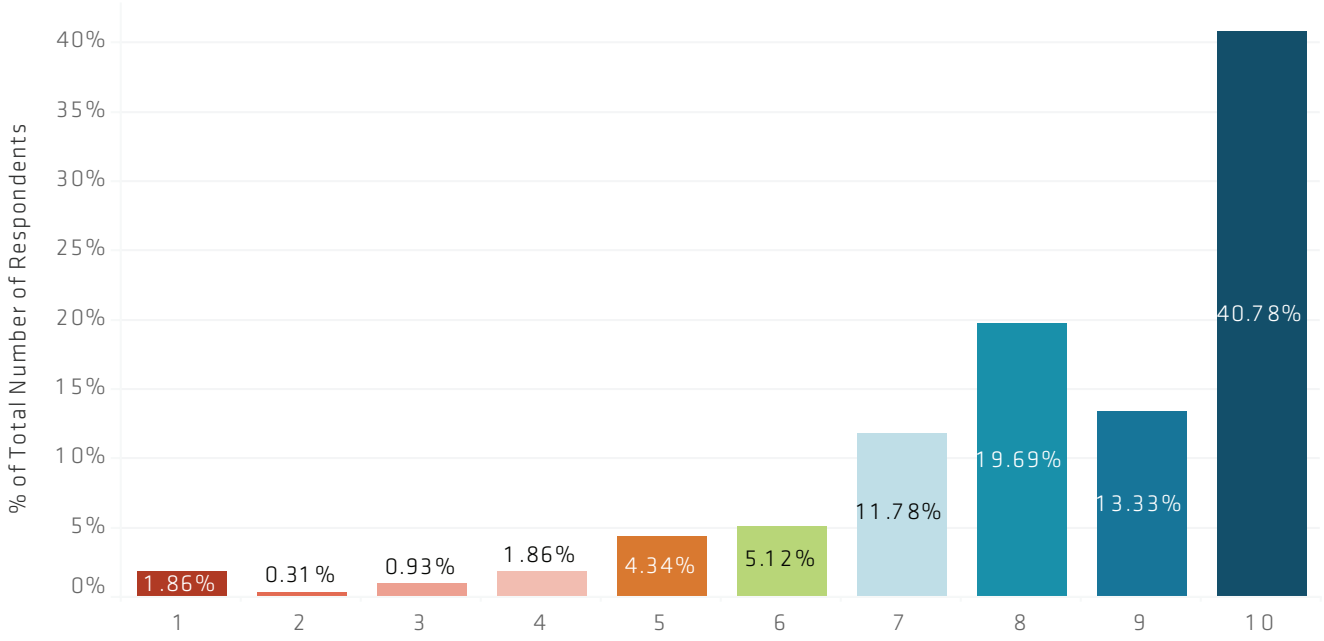
The community visioning process was very strongly supported by the community, and more so by people living outside the gated communities.

3.3 IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A SHARED VISION

As outlined, the Town Council recognized that undertaking a broad community engagement process was crucial. This was also recognized by the wider community. Throughout the visioning process surveys and workshop sessions, community members repeatedly expressed their support and delight at the opportunity to be part of a process to shape the future vision. The following chart reflects the sentiments from the 700 survey responses who completed the vision survey, which was part of the engagement sessions.

Importance of Shared Vision

SCALE: 1 = Not Important; 10 = Highly Important



This data reflects an extraordinary level of recognition and support for the concept of developing a shared vision. Over 40% of respondents scored 10 on the scale, indicating the 'Highly Important' answer. This response was even higher in the respondents living outside gated communities, with 50% of responses at the 10 point.

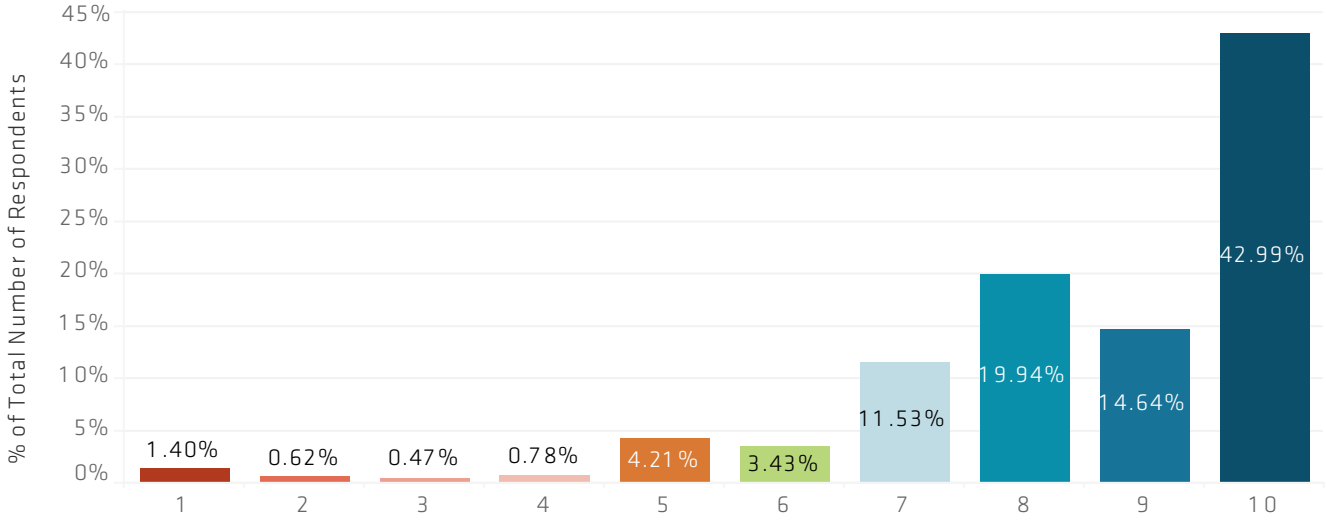
The community members who participated in the engagement sessions believed that the vision process should provide a powerful framework for future community decision making.

3.4 USING THE VISION IN DECISION MAKING

There is a clear recognition of the importance of using the shared vision to guide decision making in the community. The following chart also reflects an extraordinary level of recognition and support for using the shared vision when making decisions, as expressed by the community engagement survey respondents. Over 42% of respondents scored 10 on the scale, indicating the 'Highly Important' answer. This response was even higher in the respondents living outside gated communities, with 53% of responses at the 10 point.

Importance of Using Shared Vision when Making Decisions for the Community

SCALE: 1 = Not Important; 10 = Highly Important



Community members felt that action on the vision would be critical. In fact, one of the predominant concerns expressed in the engagement sessions was 'Would anything happen as a result of the visioning work?'. This concern needs to be addressed in the implementation phases following the vision development. The action plan will endeavor to address this concern.

The community visioning process appears to be happening at exactly the right time. There is a groundswell of interest, support, and encouragement for thoughtful and progressive implementation of change to address the larger systemic issues.

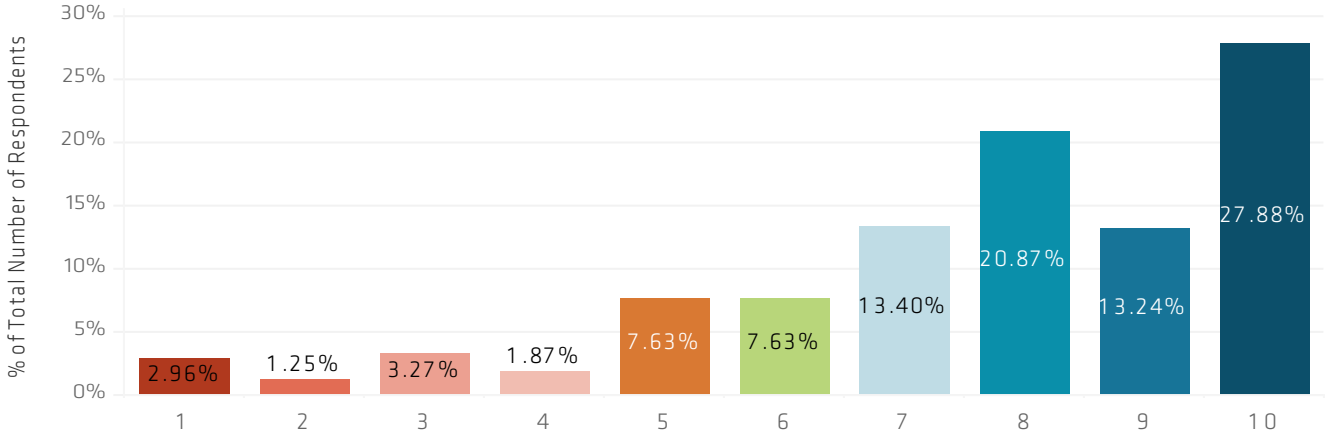
3.5 URGENCY FOR ACTION

One of the notable features of the community engagement discussions was the sense that the Hilton Head Island community needs to address its future as a priority. This sense of urgency seems to be stemming from a series of trends and emergent issues, including:

- Recent severe weather events appear to have brought issues about the future into sharper focus and highlighted that complacency is not a viable option.
- The emergent trend of younger adults leaving the Island seems to have created a sense of concern about the relevance of the Island to future generations.
- The Native Islander community has become more active in addressing areas where they see cause for concern for their future or where inequality exist.
- Workforce issues are creating a squeeze that is impacting many businesses on the island.

Urgency of Action

SCALE: 1 = Not urgent right now; 10 = Extremely Urgent



While many of the identified issues are complex and are not simple quick fixes, a thoughtful co-ordinated plan for the Island can help shape the future outcomes.

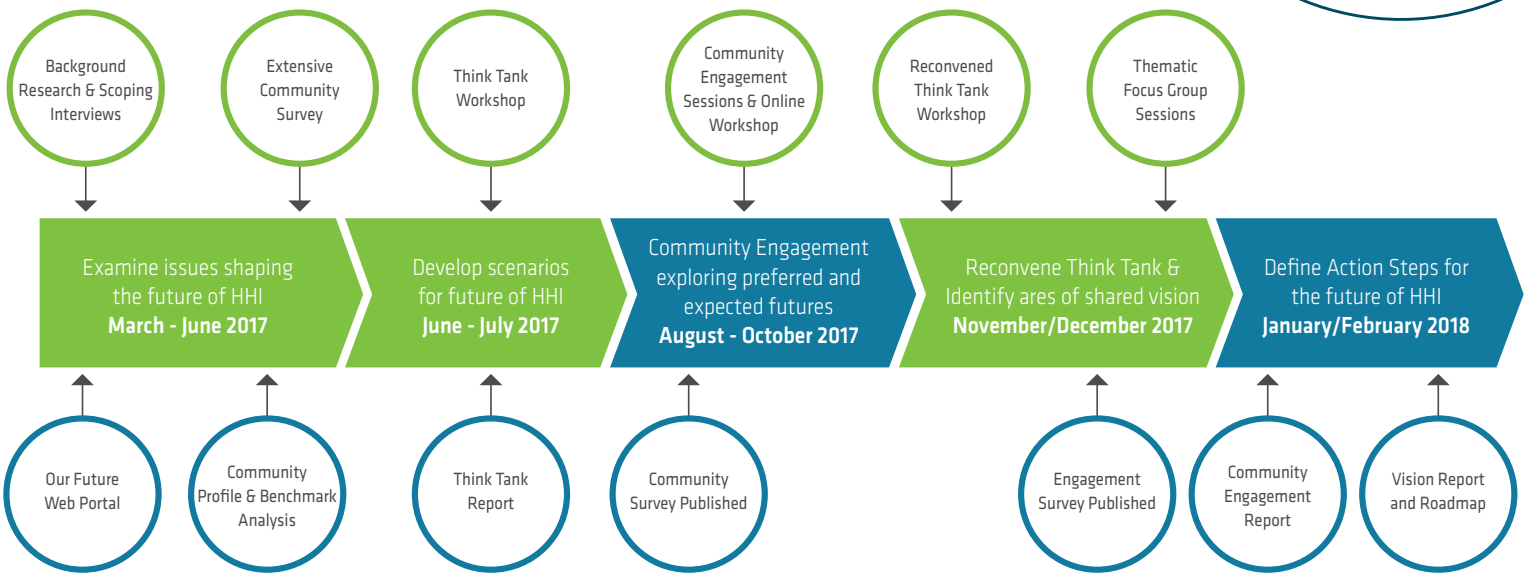
4.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

This section provides a brief high-level overview of the nine-month community engagement work associated with the visioning process. For more information, please refer to the Community Engagement Report which describes the engagement process in greater detail. In addition, the survey results are presented on the project website, including data visualization that allows the user to explore the detail of the survey results.

The systematic steps taken during the community engagement phases have allowed thousands of community stakeholders to contribute meaningful input into the Hilton Head Island – Our Future visioning process.

4.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS TIMELINE

The following schematic outlines the sequencing of the community engagement steps. These steps allowed broad input from thousands of community stakeholders, which was then refined down to clear focus group discussions and deliberation of action steps.



4.2 KEY METRICS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The community engagement work undertaken as part of the visioning process was guided by the mandates for an open and inclusive process. In response, significant efforts were made to ensure that there was a wide demographic spread and a strong representative cross section of the community. All of the sessions were open to the public, and advertised via a variety of mechanisms. In particular, there were several important aspects of the engagement sessions and data analysis:

- Deliberate efforts were undertaken to include typically underrepresented groups. Special workshops were held to include the Hispanic, Native Islander and youth communities.
- The data visualization of the survey results, hosted on the project website, allows an in-depth exploration of the data, including being able to review the results by different population cohorts within the community.

By comparable standards, the community engagement process as part of Hilton Head Island – Our Future produced a fascinating and comprehensive data set. The total number of respondents and the depth of information collected reflects an exhaustive and thorough engagement process.

Key metrics of the Community Engagement Process

KIOSK ENGAGEMENT
100's Hundreds of responses to Hilton Head Island kiosk engagement and the Open Town Hall Engagement Platform

FOCUS GROUP
50+ Six key focus groups with over 50 people

COMMUNITY SURVEY
OVER 2,500
responses with over 1,000 hours of community input

RECONVENE THINK TANK
130 Participants

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS
24 Workshops with nearly 1,000 people; covering all sections of the community

THINK TANK WORKSHOP
150 Participants representing a cross section of the Hilton Head Island community

VISION SURVEY
700 Detailed survey responses

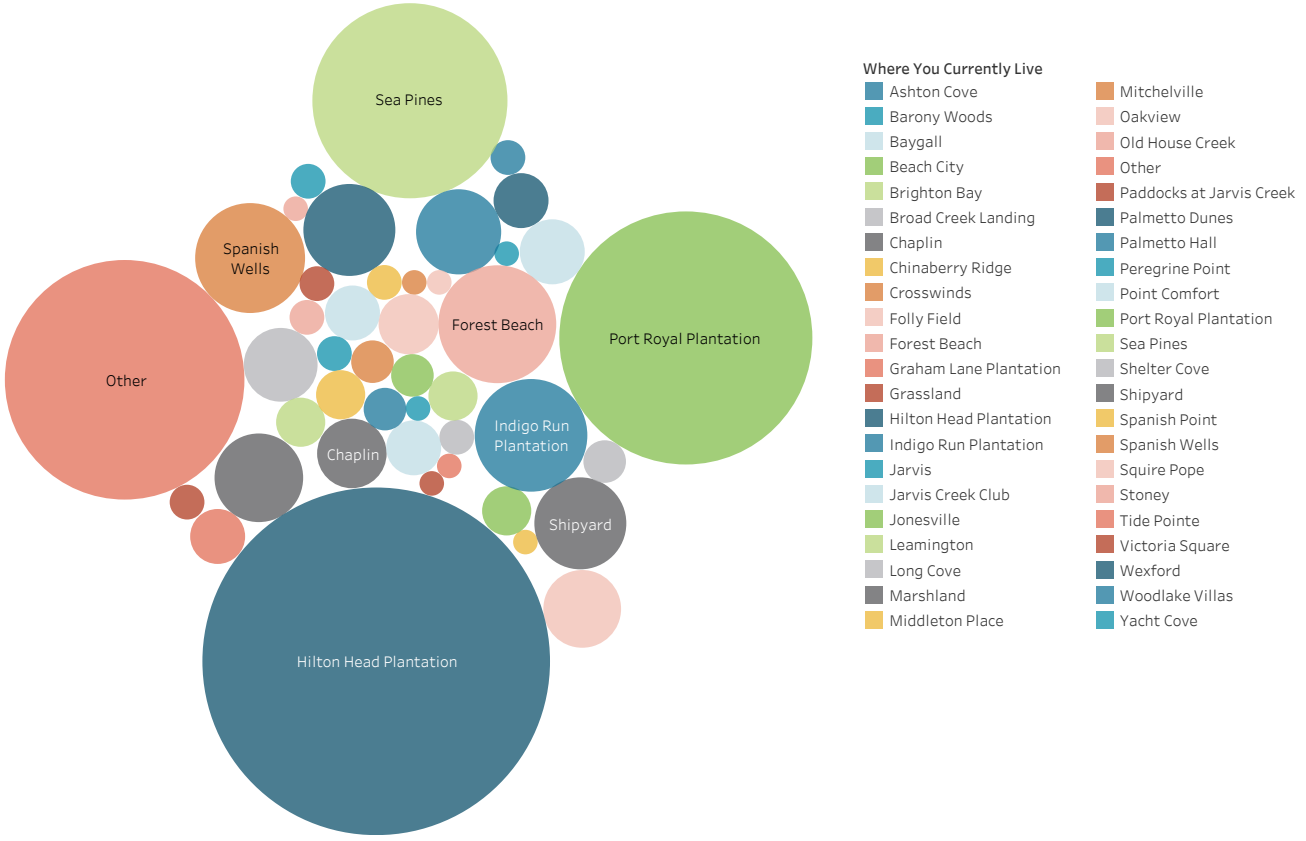
4.3 REPRESENTATIVENESS OF ENGAGEMENT RESPONSES

There was an excellent sample size of participants in the two major surveys conducted as part of the overall visioning process. The profile of the survey respondents can be analysed and compared to the island population by some key variables. The island profile is outlined in the Community Profile and Benchmark Analysis, and the survey respondent profiles are documented in the Community Engagement Report and are available on the project website/portal.

One unique aspect of Hilton Head Island is the high level of engagement and participation by community stakeholders. This is an outstanding feature of the community where there is a solid percentage of people who take the time and interest to express their views and contribute to the process. This was particularly apparent in the sessions held within the gated communities, within the Native Islander community, and with some industry sectors such as the real estate industry. In addition, special sessions were held specifically for local college and high school students.

A feature of the Hilton Head Island community is its unique social fabric. Survey respondents reflected the many plantations and neighborhoods of the Island community.

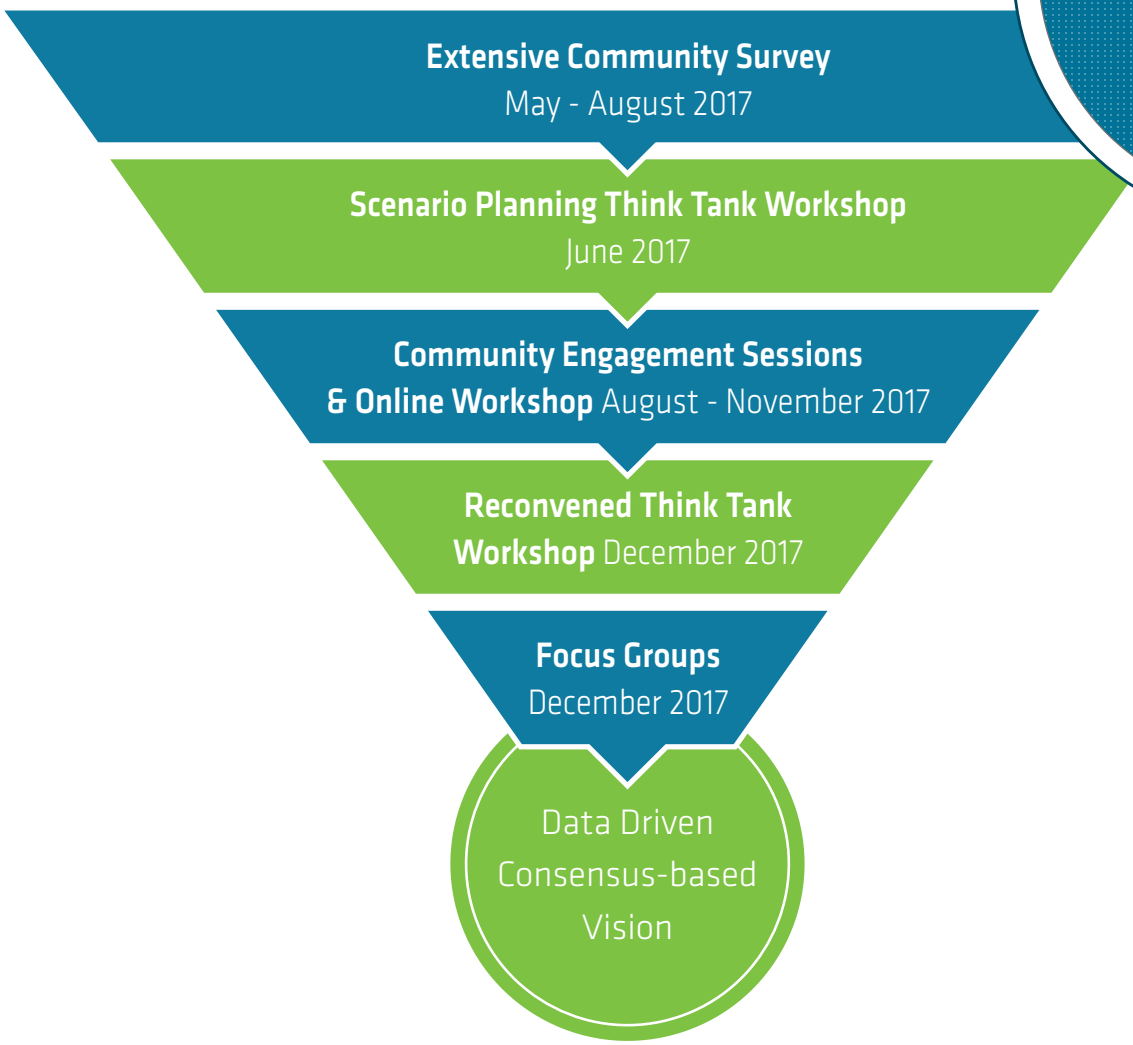
Where Community Engagement survey respondents live



4.4 BUILDING CONSENSUS-BASED VISION

The community engagement process applied in the Hilton Head Island – Our Future project aimed to create a consensus-based vision. The process was a stakeholder and data driven process that progressively focused the discussion on emerging key themes and aspirations for the future. The aim of the process was to arrive at a 'point-of-consensus' that represented the shared vision for the future.

The data driven visioning process helped to discover the 'point-of-consensus' regarding the future vision.



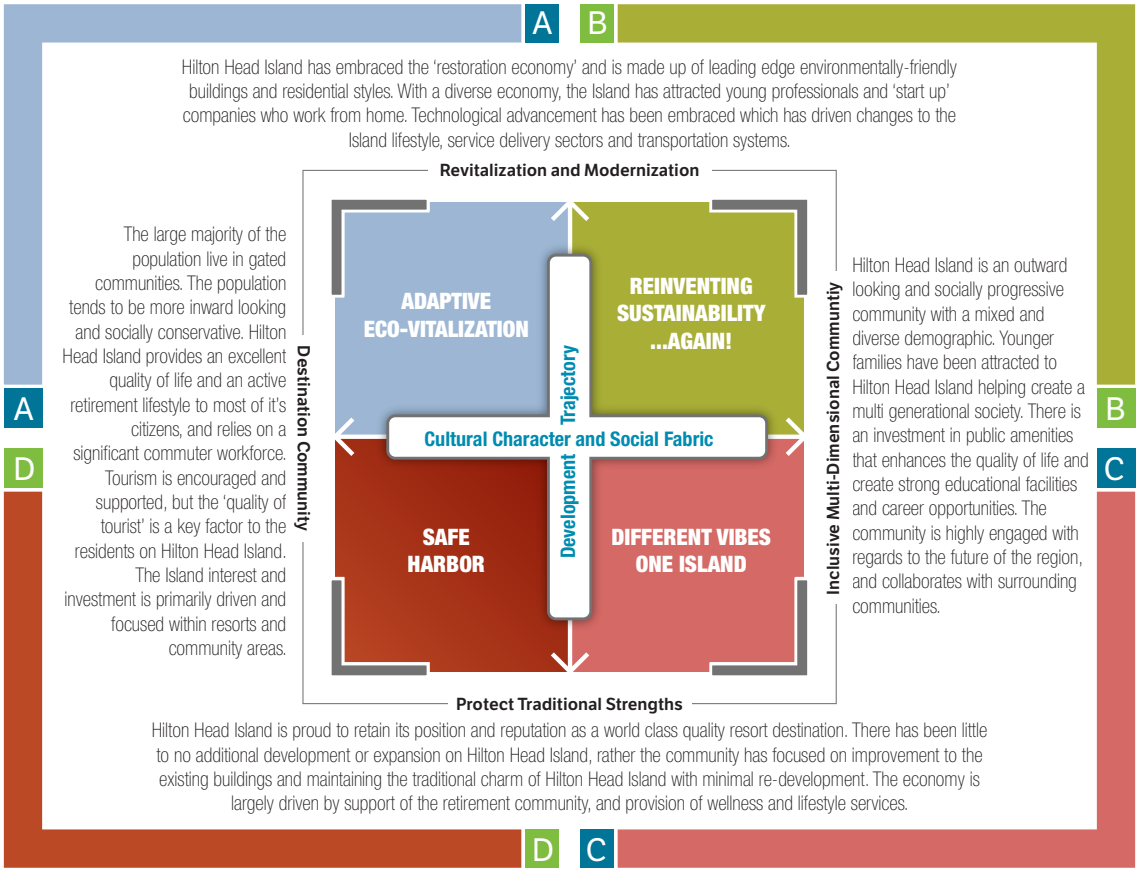
The scenario planning framework proved to be a robust and useful method to 'tease-out' plausible futures and examine potential implications and impacts.

5.0 IDENTIFYING THE PREFERRED FUTURE

The Hilton Head Island – Our Future visioning process was built on a scenario-planning methodology. This allowed the development of a range of plausible futures, which created a framework for community input and discussion. More detail on the process is available in the Hilton Head Island – Our Future Scenario-Based Think Tank Workshop Report (July 2017).

5.1 PLAUSIBLE SCENARIOS OF THE FUTURE

Using this process, the following scenario framework was developed during the Think Tank workshop. This framework was used throughout the community engagement sessions to explore plausible futures and potential implications. In this case, the bottom left hand corner of the matrix represents a future with the least change (status quo), and the top right corner represents a future with most change. The axes were presented as continuums, with descriptions of each end of the continuum providing the edges of the plausible 'scenario space'.



5.2 EXPECTED FUTURE – HEAT-MAPS

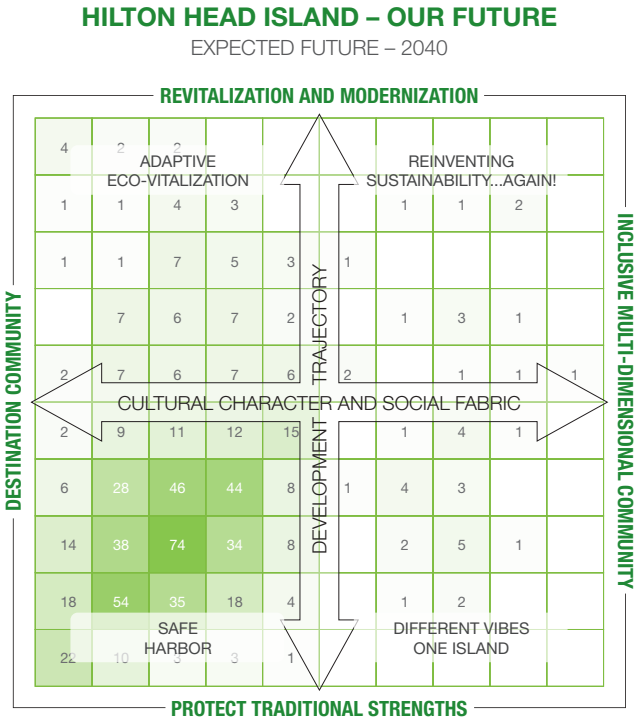
During the Think Tank workshop and the community engagement sessions, participants were asked to consider what they viewed would be the 'Expected Future'. The 'Expected Future' is the one most likely to occur if there is 'no change in what we are currently doing'. Participants were asked to identify the cell within the matrix what they believed represented the 'Expected Future'.

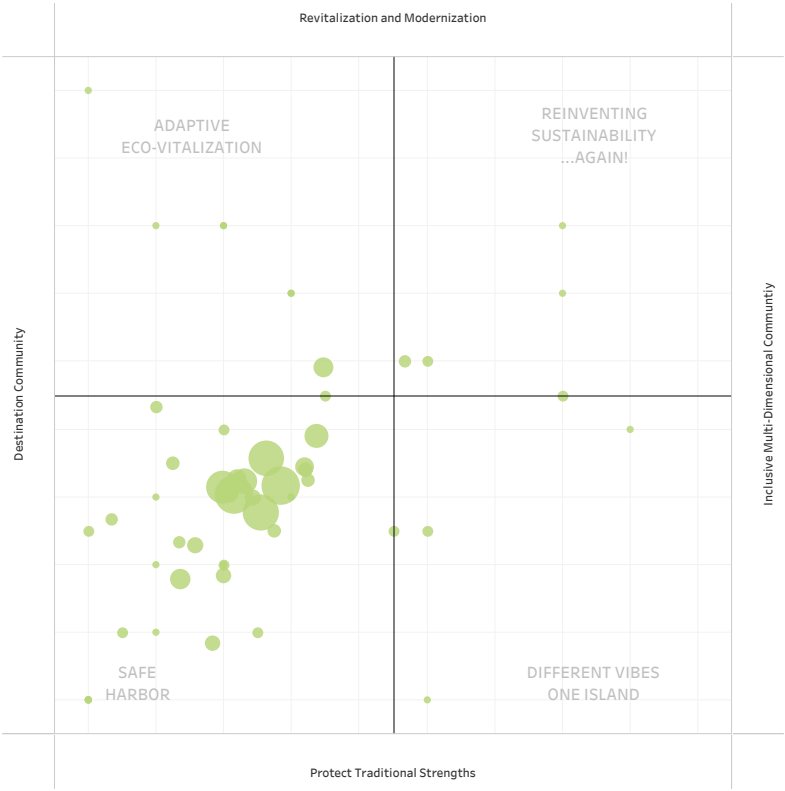
Expected Future – Think Tank

The heat-map shows the majority of responses located the 'Expected Future' in the middle of the scenario space 'Scenario D – Safe Harbor'. There was a strong level of agreement amongst the 150 participants.

Expected Future – Community Engagement Sessions

The heat-map shows the majority of the 700 respondents from the community engagement sessions placed the 'Expected Future' within the scenario space 'Scenario D – Safe Harbor'. This data represents cohort clusters (based on age, gender, ethnicity), so it reflects a first level of averaging. The results identify a strong clustering of results for the 'Expected Future.'





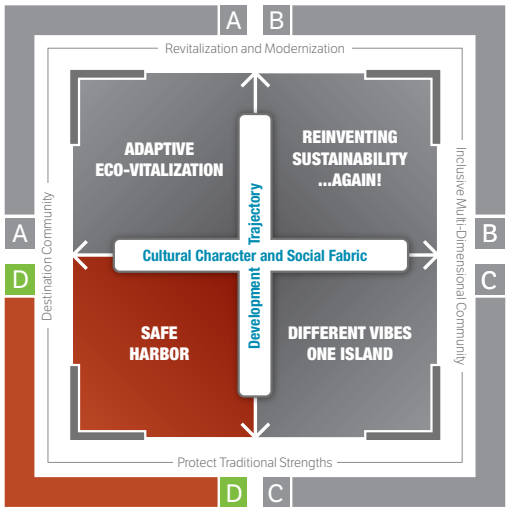
There was high level of alignment, that 'Scenario D – Safe Harbor' reflected the 'Expected Future.' However, many workshop participants believed that this would not represent a desirable future.

5.3 EXPECTED FUTURE – IMPLICATIONS

The engagement process also explored what would be the implications if the 'Expected Future' was to eventuate. This scenario represents a future which would focus on protecting traditional strengths and the retention of the Island as a destination community.

The anticipated characteristics of Scenario D - 'Safe Harbor' include:

- *Tourism is still important and drives demand for large seasonal imported workforce*
- *Expanded main traditional infrastructure of airport, bridges and roads*
- *Active aging population supports expanded strong medical, healthcare and wellness industry and workforce*
- *Community focused inwards on the influential and active retiree population*
- *Traditional style and character of the island is preserved*
- *Investments focus on individual and gated communities.*



DataInsight

Data Insight

From workshop discussions and deeper analysis of the data (available on the project website/portal), the following implications and insights were revealed:

- Respondents from outside the gated communities placed the 'Expected Future' average point further to the bottom left corner, perhaps reflecting greater skepticism about the potential for change. This was also reflected in the tenor of a number of workshop group conversations.
- Most respondents viewed that 'Scenario D - Safe Harbor' reflected more the traditional values of the Island residents, but many people thought that pursuing this direction could lead to an 'existential crisis' for the Island, where it would become dated and the destination appeal and relevance would degrade over time.
- Native Islanders in particular believed that a trajectory towards 'Scenario D - Safe Harbor' could lead to the total loss of their culture and lands.
- Young adults and students who contributed to the workshops commented that 'Scenario D – Safe Harbor' would make the Island progressively less appealing to emerging generations.

5.4 PREFERRED FUTURE – HEAT-MAPS

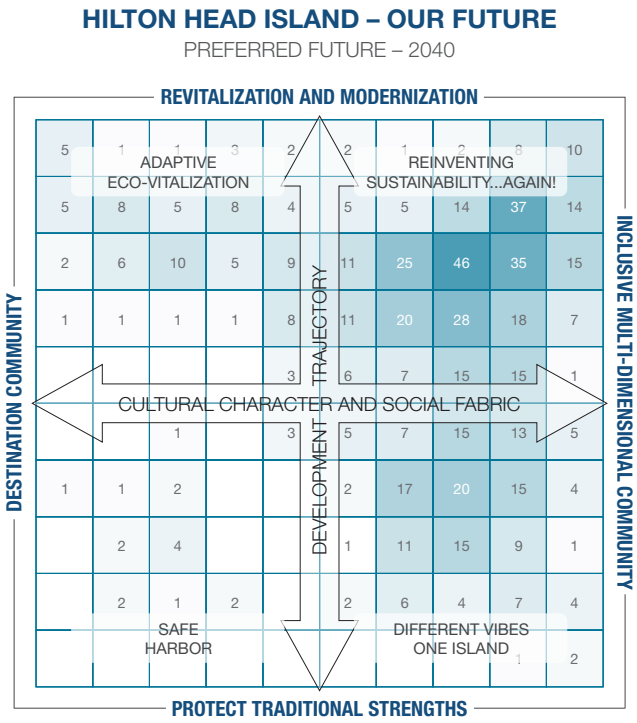
During the Think Tank workshop, and the community engagement sessions, participants were asked to consider what they viewed would be the 'Preferred Future'. The Preferred Future represents the most desired outcome for Hilton Head Island in 2040. Participants were asked to identify the cell within the matrix what they believed represented their 'Preferred Future'.

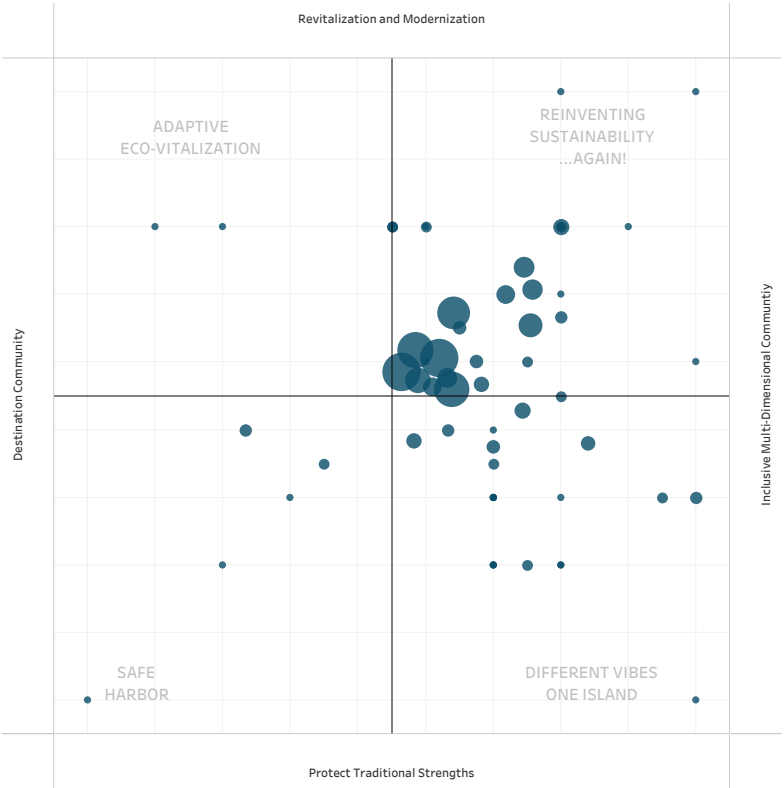
Preferred Future - Future – Think Tank

The heat-map shows the majority of responses located the 'Preferred Future' in the middle of the scenario space 'Scenario B – Reinventing Sustainability.. Again!' There was a relatively strong level of agreement amongst the 150 participants.

Preferred Future – Community Engagement Sessions

The heat-map shows that the majority of the 700 respondents from the community engagement sessions placed the 'Preferred Future' within the scenario space 'Scenario B – Reinventing Sustainability... Again!' This data represents cohort clusters (based on age, gender, ethnicity), so it reflects a first level of averaging. The results identify a solid clustering of results for the 'Preferred Future', however there is a scattering of alternate views.





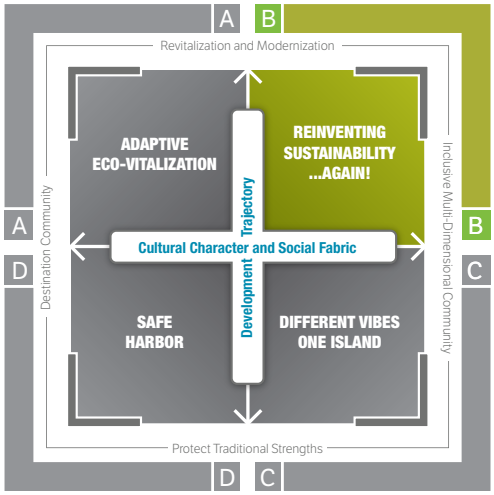
The preferred future, as defined by the emerging 'point of consensus', is within the scenario space 'Reinventing Sustainability... Again!' The concept and potential of this future was tantalizing and exciting to many workshop participants.

5.5 PREFERRED FUTURE – IMPLICATIONS

The engagement process also explored what would be the implications of the 'Preferred Future.' This scenario represented a future which would focus on revitalization and modernization and building an inclusive and multi-dimensional community

The anticipated characteristics of Scenario B - 'Reinventing Sustainability... Again!' include:

- *More diverse community with intergenerational character*
- *Year round tourism seeking cultural and eco-tourism experiences*
- *Enhanced environmental focus and leading edge sustainability approach*
- *International award winning reputation*
- *Diverse economy that includes technology, tourism, environmental services*
- *Alternate transportation systems connecting the Island – mass transit*
- *Some increased density and population with workforce and housing options*
- *More accessible communities and access to water based activities*



DataInsight

Data Insight

From workshop discussions and a deeper analysis of the data (available on the project website/portal), the following implications and insights were revealed:

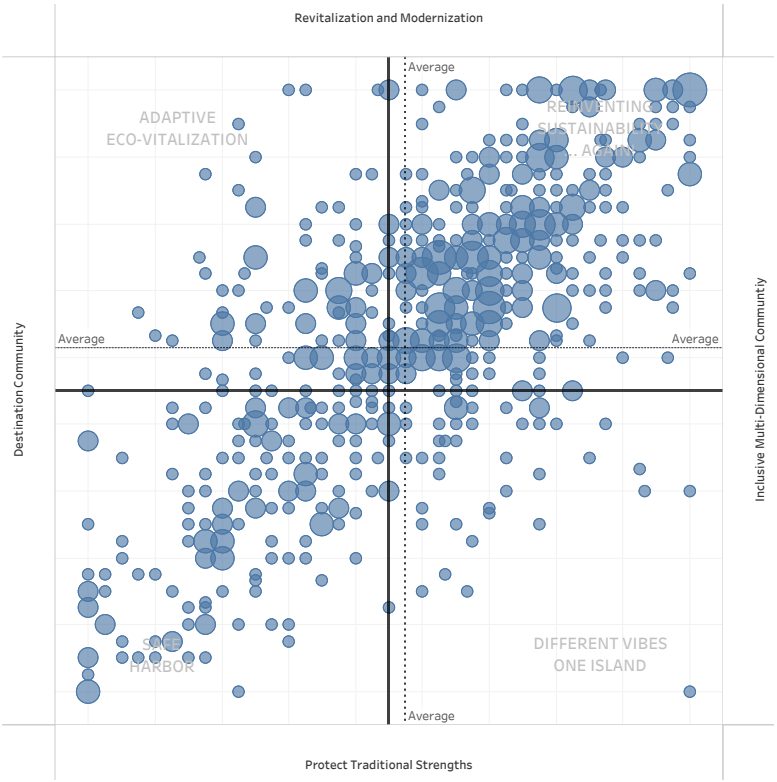
- Respondents from outside gated communities placed the 'Preferred Future' average point further to the upper right corner.
- The younger cohort (10-50 years) placed their 'Preferred Future' further to the upper right corner, reflecting a greater appetite for change. The cohort of 60 to over 80 years was close to the center of the matrix, reflecting an appetite for less change.
- Most respondents viewed that 'Scenario B – Reinventing Sustainability... Again' represented the most challenging level of change, but that it would ultimately be beneficial to the broader island community.

The scenario validation matrix provides evidence that the majority of people will support actions aligned to the underpinning issues defining the 'Preferred Future'. However, there is a large spread, and people at the extremities on the continuums of appetite for change.

5.6 VALIDATION OF THE PREFERRED FUTURE

The heat-maps discussed in previous sections of this report represent participants' high level responses to a plausible scenario matrix. In some ways those responses are intuitive, reflecting a broad reaction to a matrix that lays out 100 possible iterations of the future. In the Hilton Head Island – Our Future visioning process, this was also an important validation step. The validation step aims to determine people's behavioral response to change, and compare that to the 'Preferred Future.'

The following validation matrix is constructed by using each individual's responses to eight questions in the community engagement survey. These questions were based on topics that represented sub-sets of each of the axes. In each question, there was a scale, mirroring the broad continuum of the axes. The responses were then recombined to create an X and Y value and then plotted over the scenario matrix. This process gives an insight into how each individual might respond on a topic by topic level, and if their responses are in-line with the 'Preferred Future.'



Heat-map of Scenario Validation Matrix

This chart plots the recombined X-Y value for each survey respondent. The chart does not have any cohort averaging, so it is showing all respondents as unique points. This chart shows a very similar grouping around the 'point-of-consensus' and a broad grouping similar to the 'Preferred Future' heat map. It also shows the full spread of results, highlighting that within the community, there are views representing the extreme ends of the scenario matrix continuum.

Data Insight

The Scenario Validation Matrix chart shows a very promising alignment to the 'Preferred Future' heat map. This suggests that action and behavior around individual issues will be supportive of the direction required to achieve the 'Preferred Future.'

DataInsight

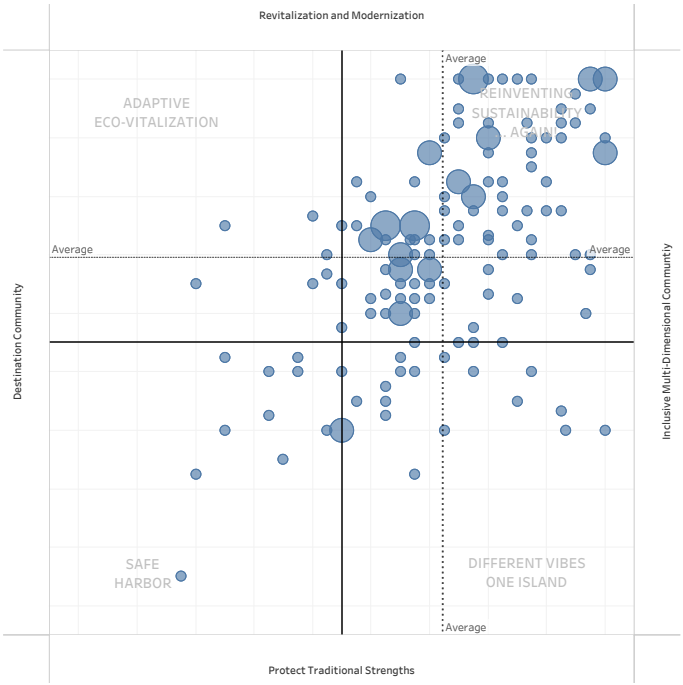
Understanding cohort views is an important part of the visioning process. Younger cohorts and people living outside gated communities had a much stronger appetite for change regarding the future.

5.7 VARIATION IN COHORT VIEWS OF PREFERRED FUTURE

As can be seen in the scenario validation matrix of all responses, there is a concentration around the 'point-of-consensus'. However, there is also an obvious spread of results, reflecting the range of views and appetite for change. The value of the data visualization methodology (refer to the project website/portal), is that it allows better understanding of how various cohorts within the community may differ in their views. Understanding this spread is important, as a visioning process must also reveal to people where their views are aligned to the consensus, and where their views may not align. The information about cohort variations is also important when it comes to action and implementation steps. It helps reveal which locations and which groups or cohorts have the greatest appetite to engage in change-based projects or initiatives. Some examples of cohort differences are shown below.

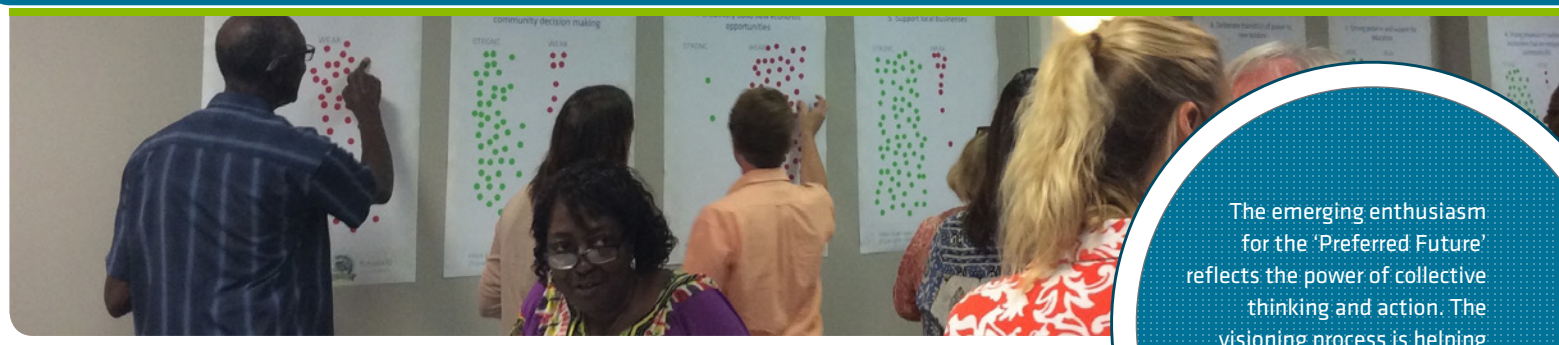
Younger cohorts

This chart shows the scenario validation responses for all 10 to 50 year old respondents. This clearly shows a greater appetite for change, and moving further into the upper right quadrant. A similar distribution pattern is also seen amongst people living outside the gated communities.



Geographic cohorts

The data visualization allows analysis by geographic location of respondents. As an example, this charts shows the response cluster from residents of Port Royal Plantation. This distribution shows a stronger leaning to the status quo minimal change future. This sentiment was reflected in several of the engagement sessions.

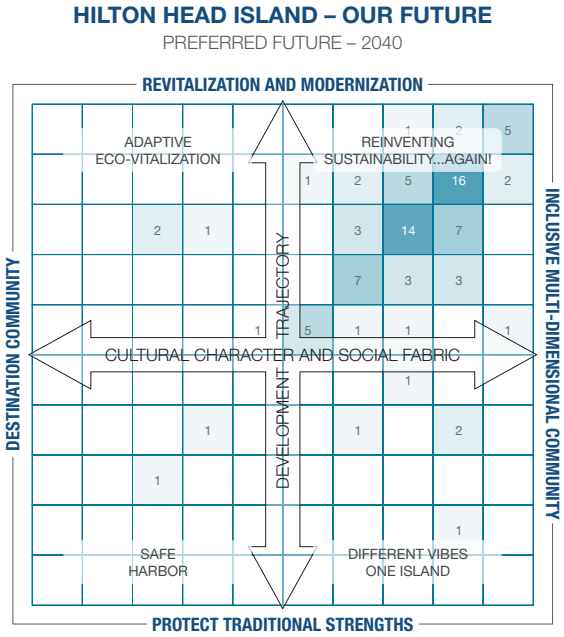


The emerging enthusiasm for the 'Preferred Future' reflects the power of collective thinking and action. The visioning process is helping transcend the traditional boundaries and a truly shared vision is emerging.

5.8 ALIGNMENT AROUND A PREFERRED FUTURE

The Think Tank participants reconvened in December 2017. The participants of the Think Tank represented the community 'custodians of the future', as they were instrumental in the building of the scenarios and many participated in the engagement sessions. The notion of the 'Preferred Future' was discussed, and the heat-maps from the Think Tank were reviewed. This was the first time the participants had seen the heat-maps. The engagement sessions were reviewed, including the charts shown in this report.

The Think Tank participants were asked to reconsider their view of the 'Preferred Future', based on the data visualization and survey results. In particular, it was noted that the younger (10 to 50 year) groups had a stronger desire for change. Given that the vision is intended for 2040, there will be a 20-year pattern of demographic shift (i.e. an individual who is 50 years in 2018 will be 72 years in 2040). Taking into account these variables, the participants were then asked to reconcile the engagement data and indicate their view of the optimal 'Preferred Future' for the Hilton Head Island community in 2040.



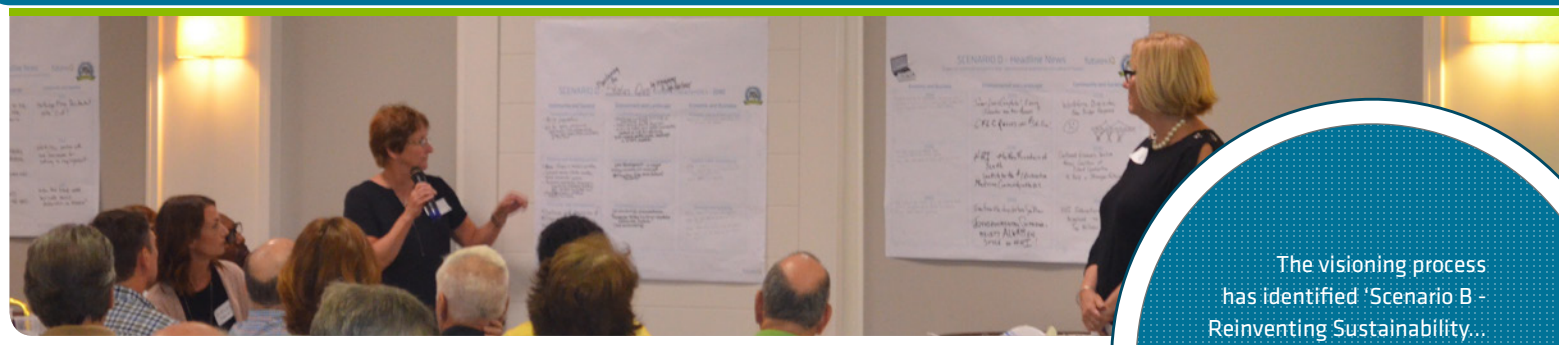
Reconciling the Preferred Future

This chart shows the distribution of the 'Preferred Future' as defined at the reconvening of the Think Tank. This shows a strong clustering around a 'point-of-consensus' well in to the 'Scenario B - Reinventing Sustainability... Again!' scenario space.

Data Insight

This distribution indicates validation of the outcomes from the community engagement workshops. It may also reflect a growing optimism and ambition for a bold vision. This shift was observed through the course of the engagement sessions, where people began to become more energized and emboldened by the notion of the 'Preferred Future.' The collective agreement appeared to encourage community members to think more boldly.

DataInsight



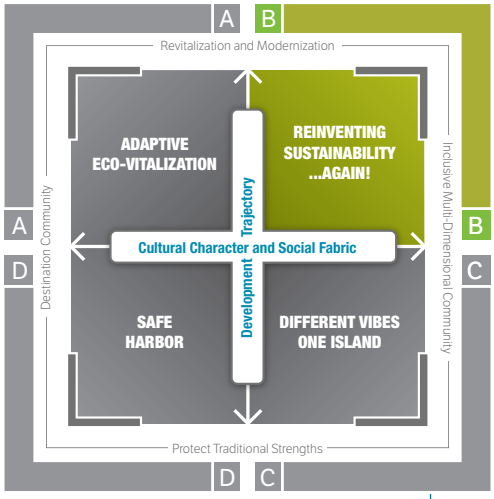
The visioning process has identified 'Scenario B - Reinventing Sustainability... Again!' as the 'Preferred Future.' This scenario description provides a strong vision for the future.

6.0 COMMUNITY VISION

6.1 COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT

The reconvening of the Think Tank identified the 'Preferred Future' as well centered in the 'Scenario B - Reinventing Sustainability... Again!' space. This validates the scenario as the vision for the future of Hilton Head Island.

Reinventing Sustainability...Again!



Hilton Head Island focuses on revitalization and modernization, and building an inclusive and diverse community.

As a result, the Island is now populated with younger and ethnically diverse citizens. Communities have become more accessible and less separated, and mixed use properties with shared living has become increasingly popular with the younger population. A deliberate attempt has been made to source an international population, which has led to a multi-lingual community. The increase in mixed use offerings has enabled a broader range of incomes, and a lower median income making the island more accessible.

An increase in employment has resulted from technology companies relocating to the area. With a family friendly environment, there are now more teaching opportunities and schools. Due to Hilton Head Island's international and award winning reputation, the island is enjoying year-round tourism which embraces both cultural and eco-tourism. The focus on the Island's culture has led to a historical district being set up within the Island, which has encouraged a 'downtown/town center' environment and enhanced walkability. There has been a shift from using cars as the predominant mode of transport to green 'mass transit' and environmentally friendly modes of transport, such as water taxis.

With a shift in focus to the environment, the island experiences an enhanced environmental quality. There is one main sewer system on the Island, a renewable energy infrastructure and more green space. Ecologically friendly businesses have been attracted to set up or relocate to the Island. The new town center has become the economic hub of the Island.

Data Insight

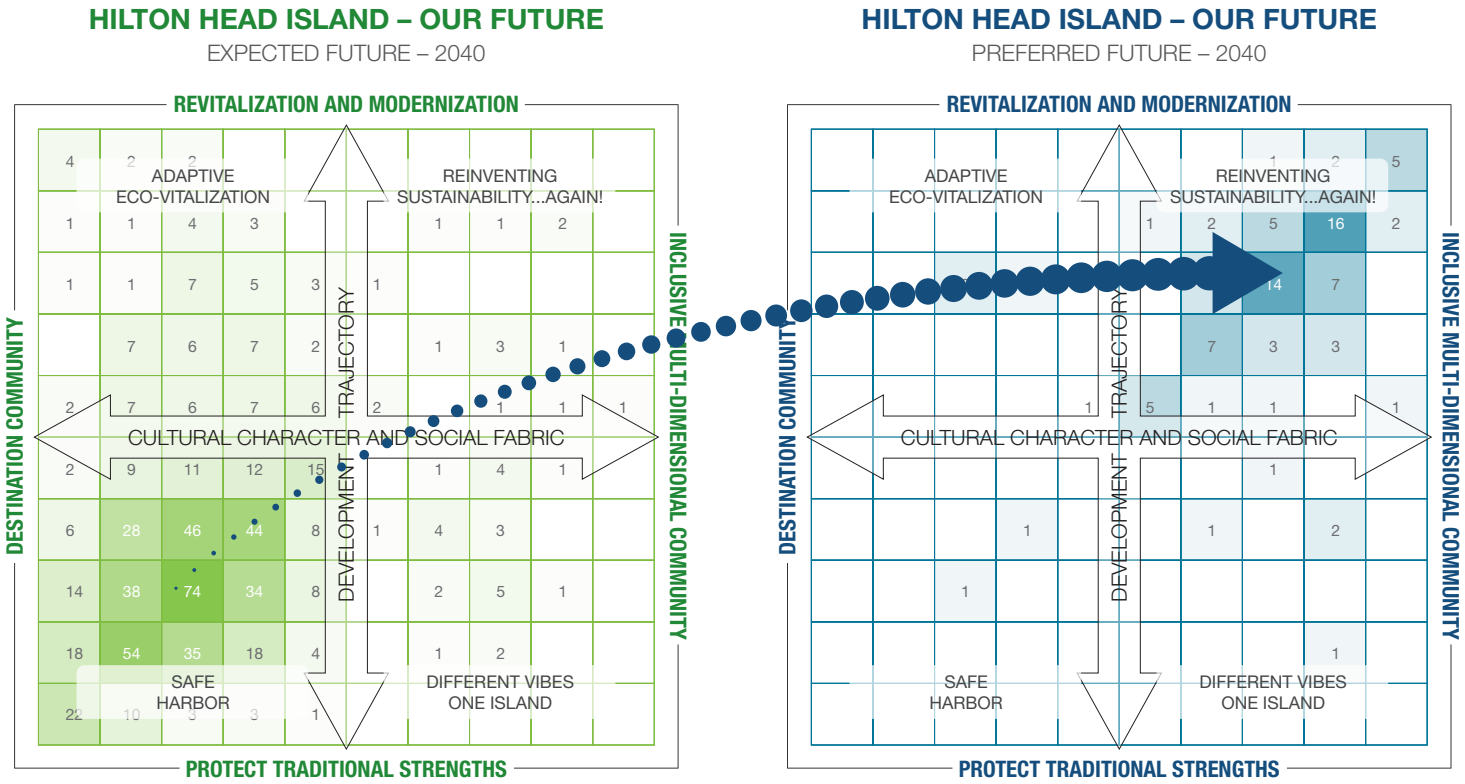
For the most part, throughout the visioning process, there has been consistent alignment that 'Scenario B - Reinventing Sustainability... Again!' represents the 'Preferred Future.' More detail on this scenario description can be found in the Think Tank Report (July 2017)

Closing the gap between the Expected and Preferred Future will require the collective action and commitment of multiple organizations and community groups.

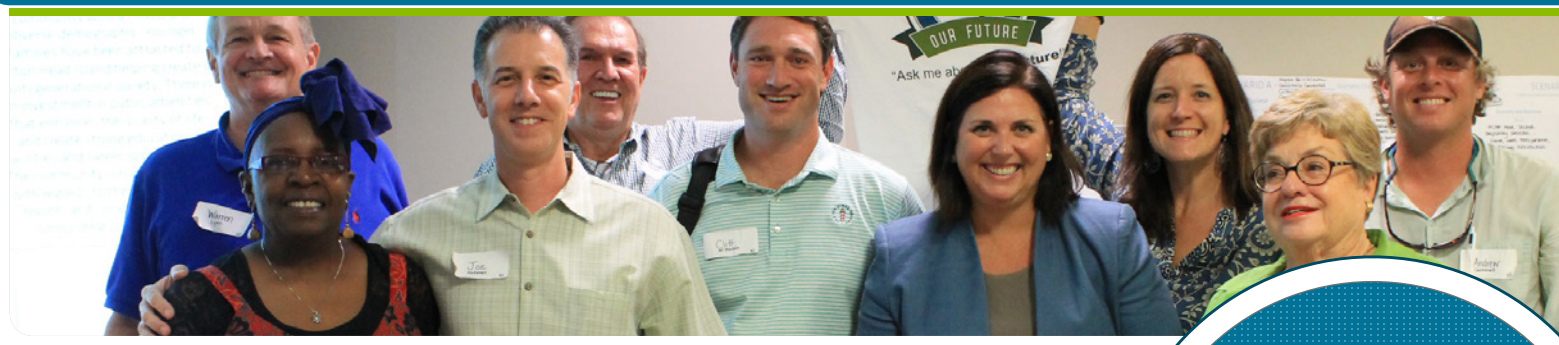
6.2 CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN EXPECTED AND PREFERRED FUTURE

The visioning process has clearly laid out an understanding of what will happen if Hilton Head Island does nothing ('Expected Future') and the deeply held desire people share for a future vision ('Preferred Future'). Closing the gap between the 'Expected Future' and the 'Preferred Future' is the foundation for the strategic pillars and action areas outlined in the Strategic Action Plan Roadmap.

Closing the Gap between Expected and Preferred Future



The path from the 'Expected Future' to the 'Preferred Future' will not necessarily be a direct or linear path. It will require working on multiple interrelated issues at the same time.

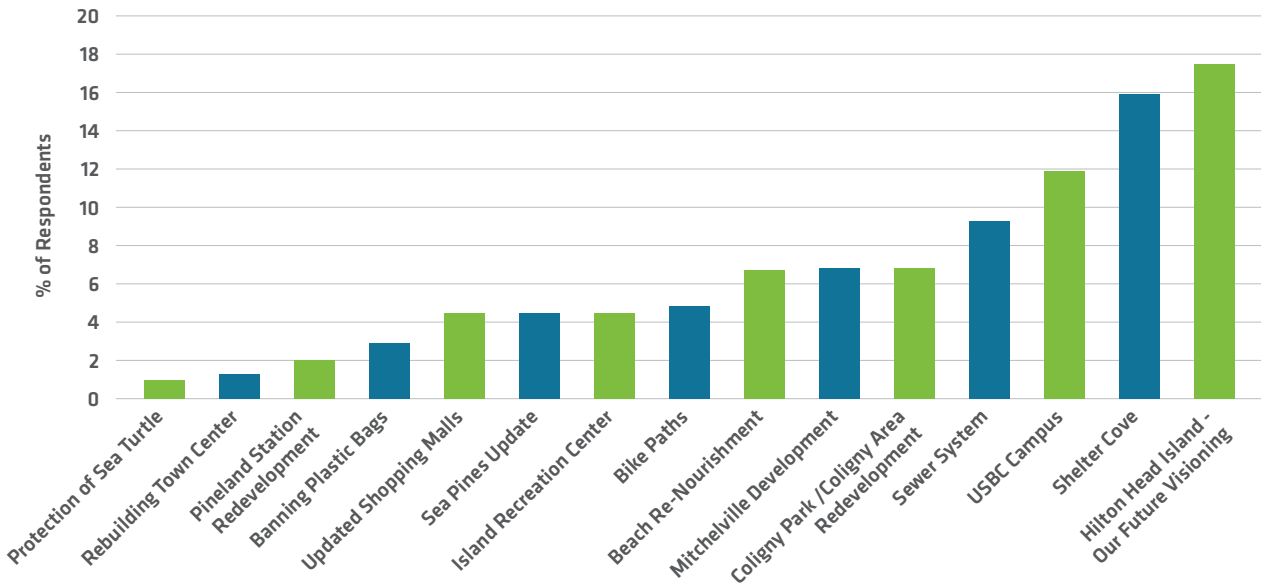


6.3 EXISTING ACTIONS SUPPORTING THE PREFERRED FUTURE

Hilton Head Island is a place that has attracted capable and successful people. In a relative sense, it is already a proactive community with strong public and private sector leadership. There are many active institutions and not-for-profit groups that all materially invest human and other capital into the Island. There have been a number of recent initiatives, investments and community driven projects that are paving the way to 'Scenario B - Reinventing Sustainability... Again!'.

The Hilton Head Island – Our Future visioning process was seen as an important action that represents the essence of the 'Preferred Future' scenario.

What initiatives or developments happening NOW in Hilton Head Island reflect the essence of your preferred scenario for the future?



Data Insight

The recent example of the adoption of a 'plastic bag ban' is a good example of a symbolic step in updating the sustainability framework on the Island. This issue was highlighted as important in the community engagement surveys and workshop discussions.

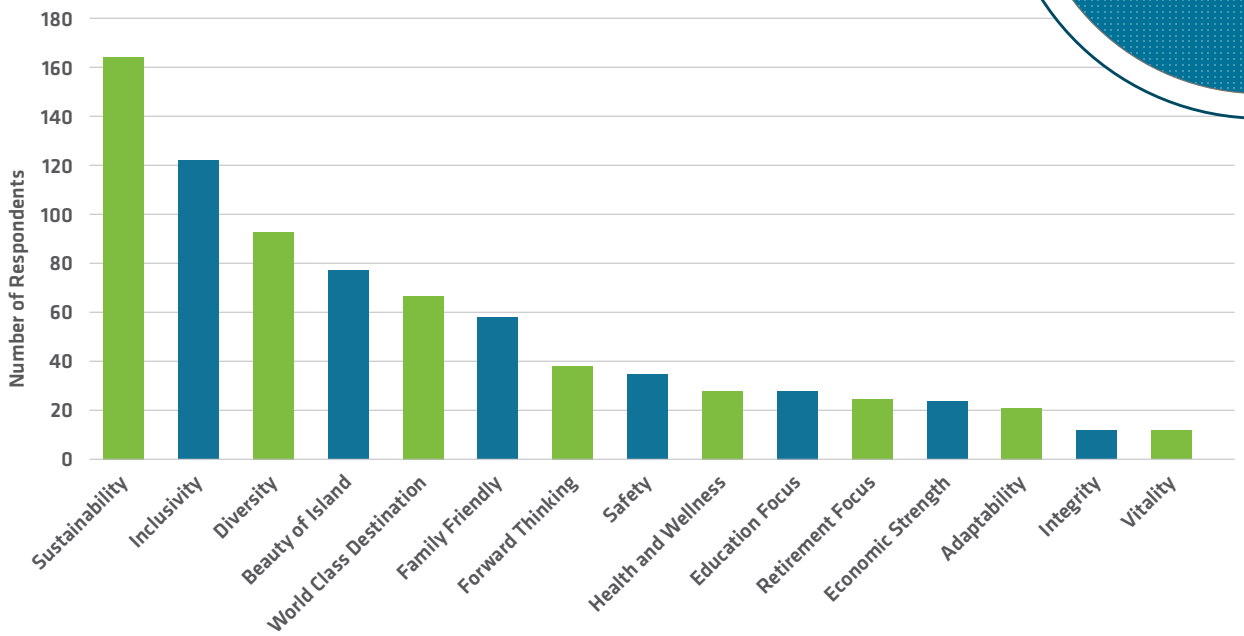
DataInsight

6.4 COMMUNITY VALUES UNDERPINNING THE FUTURE

Understanding the underlying values that resonate within a community is a key part of creating a realistic vision. The following chart shows the responses to an open ended question in the community engagement survey about what people thought were the values that should represent the community of Hilton Head Island. These responses were categorized to create summary data.

The identified important values strongly support the required actions to achieve the 'Preferred Future' for Hilton Head Island.

What do you think are the values that should represent the community of Hilton Head Island in 2040?



DataInsight

Data Insight

The values articulated by people in their responses were strongly correlated with the focus of the 'Preferred Future.' Not surprisingly, topics around 'Sustainability', 'Beauty of the Island' and 'World Class Destination' figured prominently. However, important social dimensions were highlighted such as 'Inclusivity', 'Diversity', Family Friendly' and 'Safety.'

7.0 STRATEGIC ACTION FRAMEWORK

The ideas and recommendations outlined in the Strategic Action Framework have been drawn directly from the scenario planning and community engagement process. The Strategic Action Framework is designed to bring strength and cohesiveness to existing efforts, as well as suggest new areas for action. The action plan is structured around seven key strategic pillars. These pillars, and how they were derived are as follows:

The Strategic Action Framework has been built ground-up, drawing heavily from the community engagement and input. It is intended to produce systemic and catalytic shifts, and lays out a pathway to the preferred future.

1. Relentless Pursuit of Excellence. This quality was reflected throughout the community engagement workshops, and is deep underlying ethos that defines the Hilton Head Island community.
2. Redefining environmental sustainability. This concept is fundamental to the shared vision of 'Reinventing Sustainability... Again!' What defines sustainability on Hilton Head Island needs to be expanded and updated.
3. Revitalizing and modernizing the economy. This is a key outcome of the major scenario shaping axis titled 'Development Trajectory'.
4. Fostering an inclusive multi-dimensional community. This is a key outcome of the major scenario shaping axis titled 'Cultural Character and Social Fabric'.
5. Building a connected and collaborative community fabric. The community engagement workshops highlighted the desire for a more cohesive and collaborative community.
6. Expanding to embrace an integrated regional focus. There was a strong recognition that the solution for a number of the challenges facing the community will include partnership within the larger regional economy and social infrastructure.
7. Innovative approach to create 'right-sized' infrastructure. The issues of transportation and housing infrastructure were highlighted throughout the process. The evolution of technology will create new opportunities for infrastructure solutions that suit future needs.

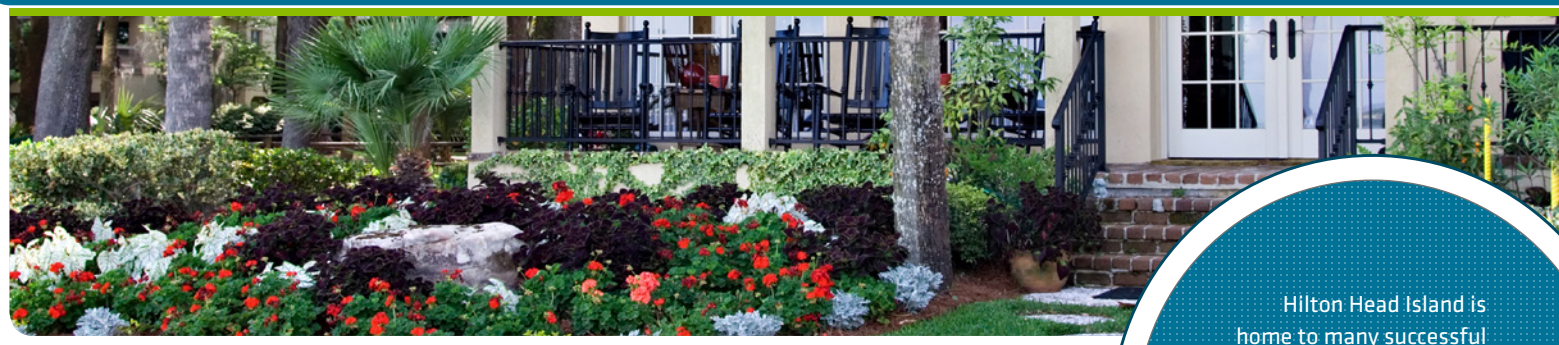
The Strategic Action Framework is not intended to solve all of the community's challenges in the immediate short term. Rather, it presents a series of strategic actions that can be achieved in the short to medium term that will produce long-term results

7.1 STRATEGIC PILLARS

The strategic implementation model outlined below provides a dynamic framework to connect the vision to key strategic pillars. These are the fundamental building blocks for the actions that support the vision. These pillars draw together the themes and engagement topics into meaningful strategic action areas.

"Good management is the art of making problems so interesting and their solutions so constructive that everyone wants to get to work and deal with them."

– Paul Hawken, Author



Hilton Head Island is home to many successful and well connected people. Focusing this human capacity in a positive manner on the 'grand challenges' could help unlock great innovation and enthusiasm.

8.0 STRATEGIC ACTION PILLARS

8.1 RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

8.1.1 IMPORTANCE OF EXCELLENCE

One of the defining features of the Hilton Head Island community engagement workshop dialogue was the obvious passion people have for the Island. Many people are deeply connected to the Charles Fraser vision and hold that vision in high regard. It is apparent that one of the underlying values of many of the workshop participants was a deep appreciation of excellence. This was expressed in conversations in a number of ways:

- Many people on Hilton Head Island don't want to be just part of something ordinary; they want to be part of something extraordinary. They were drawn to the Island by its uniqueness and remarkably original 'natural design' concepts.
- A number of workshop discussions explored themes about being 'best-in-class'. The previous vision statements allude to this desire, and it was reflected in the scenario planning Think Tank and subsequent workshops.
- There is a prevailing sentiment, that Hilton Head Island is 'something special' and something worth protecting.

Where workshop discussions delved into these themes, it appeared to resonate and enthuse local residents. This desire for excellence may also reflect the type of people who are attracted to the Island. Many are highly successful in their careers, and have deliberately chosen this prestigious and well-regarded destination community as their home. The challenge will be to bring this desire for excellence and apply it as an enabling philosophy to tackle the 'grand challenges' on Hilton Head Island. It should not be a stick to measure people or performance against, or an expression of hubris, but rather a way to define aspirations and trigger innovation.

"We fell in love with Hilton Head Island as a result of the planning and vision of Charles Fraser. Yes, it needs a new vision to benefit ALL for generations to come. We ALL need to offer our input into the visioning process to ensure the future quality of life on our Island is maintained."

Andy Twisdale
Community Champion

Hilton Head Island has the opportunity to become the home of excellence. Becoming the laboratory where new solutions are developed and applied could help recapture the spirit and passion of the people.

8.1.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

Engaging in a relentless pursuit of excellence offers a guiding framework for all the actions and decision-making on Hilton Head Island. Some examples of this type of thinking that emerged in the community engagement sessions include:

- How does Hilton Head Island recapture its mantle of being at the very forefront of innovation and application of sustainability?
- Why is Hilton Head Island not the premier 'laboratory' exploring and applying the concept of healthy aging; being the best place to age in the USA?

This desire for excellence does come with challenges. It requires pushing the boundaries on original thinking, and it requires being willing to invest the resources to make it a reality. This is not a concept unfamiliar to Hilton Head Island, and over the years has been applied to a number of community developments and projects. For example, this is reflected in Awards for Excellence in the construction and hospitality industries.

Key Strategic Action Areas:

1. Adopt the ideal of excellence - Seek to apply (or create) best-in-class standards for all major projects on Hilton Head Island. This is not just in the area of construction or development, but for example in the social areas of education, cultural activities, and arts development.

2. Create HHI as an epicenter for excellence – Charles Fraser built something remarkable. He did this through clever investment, staying true to values, and being willing to innovate. Today, Hilton Head Island can do the same. There are challenges the Island faces that require innovation and new thinking, such as transportation, workforce and housing solutions. Some of these solutions can be found in other communities and some will need to be created locally. Hilton Head Island can bring innovation and excellence to bear on local issues by convening expert groups and taskforces to solve difficult issues. This concept has been raised in previous visioning efforts and has great merit.

DataInsight

Data Insight:

The community engagement sessions revealed that there is a deep desire for Hilton Head Island to be great, not merely good. Pursing a culture of excellence will take time and resources. However, the risk of not doing so is that the community may become complacent, second tier, and dated.

8.2 REDEFINING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

8.2.1 IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental sustainability is a foundational value and principle for the people of Hilton Head Island. The legacy of the landscape protection ethos remains today, with nature in the foreground, and human activity in the background. However, from the from the founding steps of modern development in the 1960's, the world of sustainability has moved on. Today, sustainability embraces a much larger definition and includes social sustainability, quality of life, environmental sustainability, renewable energy and broader human impact. There is little question that Hilton Head Island is no longer at the very forefront of the sustainability movement.

The 'Preferred Future' is called 'Scenario B - Reinventing Sustainability...Again!'. Redefining sustainability and taking a broader integrated perspective could be an exciting evolution. Hilton Head Island has the potential to reclaim its place as a leader in sustainability.

During the visioning workshops, there were numerous discussions regarding the sustainability topic. What is clear is that the notion of sustainability still resonates very strongly with local residents, and it is clearly part of the Hilton Head Island 'DNA'. Some of the key workshop comments and data insights included:

- Hilton Head Island is no longer at the forefront of sustainability. It has been 'riding on the coat-tails' of the Fraser legacy, but has not innovated or kept local practices on track with emerging contemporary developments in sustainability. It is also falling behind with changing generational values.
- Sustainability remains a critically important value to many locals, and reflects part of the Hilton Head Island 'brand'.
- It represents a key desired element of the future – the 'Preferred Future' scenario is termed 'Scenario B - Reinventing Sustainability... Again!'
- There is a clear need to broaden the definition and understanding of sustainability in a modern context. For example, the community cannot be considered to be truly sustainable if there are significant trust divides and potential existential threats to the indigenous Gullah Geechee community.

"It is not enough to do your best; you must know what to do, and then do your best"

– W. Edwards Deming

8.2.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

Sustainability still has the promise to be the defining point of difference for Hilton Head Island. During the visioning sessions, people were able to very quickly list numerous tactical actions that would boost the local sustainability behavior. This ranged from plastic bag elimination, continued protection of Sea Turtles, recycling, Island-wide sewer, allowing solar panels, and other renewable energy steps. However, there are also much bigger systemic issues to examine, including a response to climate change; rethinking the building code, density and design; and, protecting and repurposing open and green spaces.

Sustainability is a cornerstone of the Hilton Head Island history and brand. There is enormous interest and potential in this topic area that could improve the community, economy, and quality of life.

Key Strategic Action Areas:

1. Redefine sustainability – The Island needs to establish a dedicated group or Task Force to redefine what sustainability means for Hilton Head Island. This should include a detailed outline of the modern breadth and definition of sustainability, and how that would translate to all aspects of the Island. This should include recycling, resource management, landscape and marine management, and building construction and materials. This should also include examination of the trend in businesses pursuing environmental technologies, innovation and creativity.

2. Create renewable energy framework – Develop a renewable energy framework for the Island. The macro trends are heading towards renewable source driven virtual power networks. Such exploration should include how to incorporate multiple energy aspects such as solar, wind, biomass, geothermal and even tidal energy, into modern energy systems.

3. Become a location for unique environmental ecosystem research - Hilton Head Island holds the important barrier Island status, and the surrounding lowlands, wetlands, vegetation and marine ecosystems represent intriguing ecosystems. The Island offers a unique location to focus cutting edge research on environmental challenges as a barrier Island, and how to address the current and future challenges of climate change. Hilton Head Island should forge partnerships to position itself as a unique outdoor research laboratory, attracting national talent and projects.

DataInsight

Data Insight:

Sustainability was rated the single highest value in the community engagement surveys. This was of acute interest to younger people on the Island, with many believing the community should aggressively pursue new sustainability actions and focus.

8.3 REVITALIZING AND MODERNIZING THE ECONOMY

8.3.1 IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC RENEWAL

As has been explored in the visioning process, key economic drivers on Hilton Head Island include being a destination for affluent retirees and a destination tourism location. This has been predicated on the trajectory of an expanding resident population and increased tourism visitation. This trajectory has produced sustained growth and economic activity.

During the visioning sessions, a number of people talked about the concept of Hilton Head Island having 'state of the art' telecommunication infrastructure to support telecommuting and technology companies.

During the visioning sessions, there was considerable discussion about the future trajectory of the economy. Many people saw the potential to diversify the economy and build different strengths without undermining the key existing drivers. Some of the key workshop comments and data insights included:

- Supporting a stronger core of resident young professionals was repeatedly cited as an important step. The interest in this topic is to help reverse the trend of young professionals and families moving to Bluffton and Savannah. This provides the way to have more people 'live and work' on the Island. This topic was addressed at some length in the Vision 2025 work undertaken in 2010.
- The scenario planning work conducted at the June 2017 Think Tank, and the subsequent community workshops, highlighted the appetite for Hilton Head Island to embrace the 'restoration economy'. This would be where there is modernization and revitalization that focuses on industries driving leading edge environmentally-friendly buildings and residential styles.
- The restoration economy offers the prospect of new businesses in the 'maker culture' space, that could provide very interesting innovation, especially coupled with the sustainability theme. The 'restoration economy' in this context refers to the concept of renovating and re-purposing buildings and infrastructure. The 'maker culture' refers to the concept of an artisan type approach to construction and small scale manufacturing.
- New technological advancement is driving a lot of economic growth across the county. Embracing new technological advances will help drive changes to the Island lifestyle, service delivery sectors, healthcare, and transportation systems.
- Exploring new dimensions in the tourism industry, especially such as eco-tourism industries, can help connect economic activity to the core values of the Island.

Community stakeholders identified that there appears to be a number of fruitful economic opportunities embedded in the concept of pursuing a restoration and revitalization approach. Shifting from a reliance on seasonal destination tourism and developer-led construction activity will not be without challenges, but will help build an economy more empathic with the Island vision and values.

The visioning process identified many creative ideas for new economic activity. Without action, those with 'mobile opportunities' will go elsewhere – Bluffton, Savannah and beyond.

8.3.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

Hilton Head Island supports a robust local economy and generates strong workforce demand. There are potential emerging stress points to the local economy, notably around issues of workforce constraints and the exodus of businesses and professionals to Bluffton and beyond. The larger systemic threats lay in the area of the perception of the Island as a destination and potential changes in generational preferences, such as the declining appeal of golf as a recreation activity. There will also be potential challenges to the resilience of the local economy in the face of technological advances reshaping retail and professional service industries. The 'Preferred Future' outlines a number of promising economic development areas that can be explored.

Key Strategic Action Areas:

1. Explore the 'Future of Tourism' – Given the importance of the tourism economy, anticipating future trends and needs is pivotal. The continued research of future tourism predications, and connecting that to the 'Preferred Future' for Hilton Head Island is pivotal. This will help understand the potential to stimulate and market for alternative tourism products such as cultural and heritage tourism (especially the Gullah Geechee culture), eco-tourism (in line with the Island's sustainability focus and natural assets) and outdoor recreational tourism. The potential for more locally driven culinary tourism should also be explored.

2. Focus on restoration and revitalization – There is an emerging national trend in restoration and revitalization, particularly as technology and new building materials create new design options. This focus offers the opportunity for significant modernization without expansion of development footprint areas.

3. Build relevance to young professionals - The community engagement process repeatedly highlighted the importance of creating relevance to young professionals and startups in sectors representing the 'new economy'. Being relevant will include the need to embrace technology and offer options for live and work, shared work spaces and other emergent entrepreneurial support measures.

4. Healthy aging economy – The Hilton Head Island population is aging. This offers economic opportunities in sectors such as healthcare, healthy aging, and active retiree support. There is a clear opportunity to leverage the convergence of healthcare and technology and retiree needs to support quality of life.

DataInsight

Data Insight:

- Many of the ideas about how to diversify the local economy involve creating more of a 'circular economy', which includes the concept of capturing more of the value locally. This includes leveraging more tourism related activity around local assets and focusing on revitalization and renewal.

8.4 FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL COMMUNITY

8.4.1 IMPORTANCE OF AN INCLUSIVE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL COMMUNITY

The 'Preferred Future' for Hilton Head Island, as defined in the visioning process, includes being an outward looking and socially progressive community with a mixed and diverse demographic. There is a clear desire to have younger families attracted to Hilton Head Island helping create a multi-generational society. Throughout the visioning process the Hilton Head Island stakeholders reiterated the importance of retaining an inclusive multi-dimensional community.

There was considerable concern expressed that the current trends are unhealthy for the community and would ultimately be unsustainable. These trends include:

- Increasing dependence on daily commuter workforce. This was seen as an unsustainable trajectory that ultimately puts the community at risk of a further constrained workforce. This could be increasingly compounded if some of the planned regional development projects progress and further limitations are imposed on seasonal or skilled worker immigration.
- Loss of a younger population of adults, and the resulting overall aging of the population. There is strong anecdotal evidence that suggests that there is an out-migration of younger families and professionals, preferring Bluffton and Savannah over Hilton Head Island. There is a perception of more vitality and social relevance in these communities.
- Potential decline and loss of the Gullah Geechee community has been a multi-decade concern, first reported in the 1995 RUDAT study. The further loss of this important group would rob the Island of part of its dynamic and unique heritage.
- There are gradual Island population trends toward being dominated by retirees, leading to a greater commuting workforce. This increases the challenge of supporting this aging population.

The gated community structure that dominates the Hilton Head Island land area has been a much favored model. However, housing affordability will require new housing models and some increased density in key locations.

Building an inclusive and multi-dimensional community will require solving some complex issues, including workforce housing, increasing density in some locations on the Island, and securing the future for the Gullah Geechee community. In order to fulfill on the vision, the major issue of housing affordability will have to be tackled. Innovative solutions are available and have been applied in other communities, which are also tackling these complex systemic issues with gentrification of older neighborhoods and urban infill.

8.4.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

The visioning process repeatedly focused on the notion of creating a family friendly community, with a modern progressive feel, while keeping a safe sanctuary atmosphere. A lot of the discussion in the sessions was about managing a fine balance to both keep the community very much the 'unique Hilton Head Island', but also expand its relevance and accessibility to a cross section of young people and professionals. A number of promising areas for action were identified:

There is considerable support for taking proactive steps that will help create Hilton Head Island as a more inclusive multi-dimensional community. People questioned the viability of solely pursuing a 'destination retirement community' model.

Key Strategic Action Areas:

1. Create a world-class active lifestyle and healthy aging community – The desire for excellence on Hilton Head Island is well understood. There seems to be a great opportunity to draw together a focus on creating the Island as a living laboratory where all the best approaches and support for healthy aging can be applied. There is greater understanding of how integrated lifestyle solutions and technology can boost healthy aging, and Hilton Head Island provides an excellent pilot site for world-class innovative application.

2. Provide high quality educational options – Increasingly, great schools are a key metric for attracting families. Ideas for how to boost educational excellence that surfaced in the visioning process included affordable housing to attract high quality teaching staff, and ensuring that leading edge STEM initiatives are strong in the education curriculum. The addition of the USCB Hilton Head Island Campus is seen as a very positive move.

3. Develop more mixed use community nodes – There is a need for more variety in housing and more affordable options for a demographic cross section. Some of the key points from the engagement sessions was the idea of affordable housing, mixed use properties, and family friendly neighborhoods. The Shelter Cove development was seen by many as a promising start, incorporating live and work potential, a strong community hub or node, and open recreation spaces. It will be advantageous to also address affordable and mixed housing is such developments. The Town of Hilton Head Island's current work to develop an Affordable Workforce Housing Strategic Plan is an excellent starting point.

4. Build the diversity of recreational, arts and 'quality of life' offerings – Part of the appeal of Hilton Head Island has been the strong presence of golf recreation facilities. There is some evidence that the singular popularity of golf is declining. In the engagement sessions and scenario development, participants saw the medium term need to consider future re-purposing of some golf facilities into other recreation pursuits. There is emerging strong interest in arts, festivals, and shared community spaces.

Data Insight:

From the community engagement sessions, more that 70% of the younger cohorts (10 – 50 years) favored a strong leaning to creating more diverse residential and neighborhood options.

8.5 BUILDING A CONNECTED AND COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY FABRIC

8.5.1 IMPORTANCE OF A CONNECTED AND COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY FABRIC

One of the strong characteristics in the scenario description of the 'Preferred Future' outcomes was that the 'community unites around a commitment and plan for progressive change'. The issues of connectivity and collaborative behavior was a major focus of the community discussions. This connectivity is referring to the fabric that binds the community together. As has been discussed, Hilton Head Island has a remarkably unique and unusual social fabric with 'communities within communities'. There have been considerable efforts, by many groups over the last decades to build a much stronger sense of community, and that work has been very successful. But the broader community is now desiring even greater connectivity.

This connectivity is a function of both physical spaces and collaborative platforms and approaches. Some of the key topics that were raised during the community engagement sessions included:

Technology offers the chance to help strengthen the community's virtual connectivity. The concept of being a technologically 'fully-connected' community has appeal, and could offer future platforms for collaborating and community organizing.

- Increasing desire to increase connectivity between the gated and non-gated communities. This was expressed at both the physical and collaborative level. Whilst controversial to some, the scenario development work explored the possibility that as societal values change, the gated community concept might not be as appealing to younger generations. It is fully recognized that there are unique governance relationships that define the regulations within gated communities, but this might evolve to greater inclusion in the broader Island community.
- Considerable interest in the concept of more porous boundaries, and people were enthused by the idea of the extension of more accessible bike-ways and walkways that might wind through communities and provide broader coastal access.
- Very strong recognition of the need to work towards a thriving and prosperous Gullah Geechee community on the island, and ensuring this community has a 'seat at the table'. There are unique infrastructure needs that are being progressively addressed by the Town, but work needs to continue.
- There is a macro trend towards more intimate community neighborhoods with gathering and commercial centers. This concept is based on community nodes that provide stronger neighborhood feel, coupled with multimodal means of transportation or connectivity between nodes. This 'nodes and modes' model has been foreshadowed in previous planning efforts and a number of potential node sites have been identified.

The network of connections from Hilton Head Island extends well beyond the Island coast. Turning this into a network of influence can help the community attract the resources for implementing the vision.

8.5.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

The action areas around 'building a collaborative and connected community' aim to create the connective tissue that will stimulate connection and collaborative behavior. This is a fundamental building block of a modern community and helps embed the ideals of inclusive and shared vision and decision making.

Key Strategic Action Areas:

1. Provide mechanisms to building trust – Despite the work to build a sense of 'One Community' and create open dialogue, there still remains some pockets of distrust. This is in part due to historical inequalities and the 'community within a community' phenomena. The visioning process has opened new conduits for communication about shared ideals and outcomes, and has created the forum to begin honest dialogue. This needs to continue and proactive steps must be taken on all sides to seek common ground and address inequalities.

2. Explore a 'nodes and modes' concept plan – The concept of village centers, an Island town center, and community center have been explored in previous visioning work. There is still a strong appetite for such an approach, as people believe it will create the important connectivity. There has also been interest in redeveloping Mitchelville as a center for Gullah heritage and cultural tourism. To lay out a coherent long-term strategy, it is suggested that the community explore a 'nodes and modes' concept that looks at a 20-year process for creating community nodes, and building multiple modes of transport connectivity. The first step should explore how to better connect the existing multimodal transport network and routes to existing nodes. Then, consideration should be given to exploring potential new community nodes, which might for example include infill or redeveloped commercial areas that include new housing options and revitalized commercial space. This can provide the framework that will inform and influence development patterns, housing density issues, and public services.

3. Connectivity to external stakeholders – The Island community has a remarkable network of connections that reach across the country. There is a larger cadre of external stakeholders who have a direct connection to the Island via second homes, investments or as vacation visitors. Building this connectivity will be important, as these external stakeholders offer direct access to expertise and resources that might help implement the vision. Plus, in many cases they are potential future residents.

DataInsight

Data Insight:

From the engagement sessions, people living outside gated communities were much more interested in Hilton Head Island having an 'outward looking focus that leverages new collaborations and shared infrastructure'. Over 70% of this group favored this approach, versus favoring 'maintaining an internal focus and investment on existing community infrastructure'.

8.6 EXPANDING TO EMBRACE AN INTEGRATED REGIONAL FOCUS

8.6.1 IMPORTANCE OF AN INTEGRATED REGIONAL APPROACH

Living on an Island often creates a unique world view, which is a natural consequence of defined boundaries and separation. This can create an 'echo chamber' effect, where the conversation becomes wrapped around the internal Island topics and issues. However, on a relative scale, Hilton Head Island is a modest sized community, albeit 'punching above its weight' in reputation and brand awareness. But the stark reality is that many of the big issues will require a regional perspective and regional solutions. There have been very strong efforts to build these broader collaborative efforts which lays the groundwork for the next evolution.

Getting the regional relationship right can deliver significant benefits to Hilton Head Island, especially the increasingly important connection with the rapidly growing Bluffton community.

Some items make a regional approach logical and these were highlighted in the visioning and focus group discussions:

- Savannah is a growing major urban center. In a world of mass urbanization, people are congregating to such centers, drawn by the appeal of experiences, the opportunity for the exchange of goods and services, and the proximity to similar social groups. Savannah has especially proved to be a magnet for young innovators and entrepreneurs. This creates a dynamic where there is a broad 'arc of innovation' that occurs within an easy to reach concentric circle around such metropolises.
- The Hilton Head Island workforce laborshed extends well beyond the bridge. The Island provides a substantial draw for a wide cross section of skills and professional services. Integrating into, and influencing the regional workforce development system, is a logical and important role.
- During the visioning sessions, the notion of Hilton Head Island being a location for life-long-learning was repeated. In addition, there has been considerable discussion about positioning Hilton Head Island as a 'living laboratory' to explore the implementation of innovation across a suite of topics. The concept of becoming a regional 'educational epicenter of excellence' was supported in the various visioning sessions.

8.6.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

The strong connection into the broad regional system is going to help ensure Hilton Head Island remains vibrant, connected, and relevant. Whilst the Island has thrived for decades as a premier destination location, the rest of the world is catching up. The brand 'Hilton Head' now extends well off the Island, and Bluffton has assumed the mantle as the 'up and coming' vibrant location. While Hilton Head Island will always have the advantage of beach access, many of the quality amenities of resorts, golf courses, and gated communities are being replicated elsewhere. Anticipating and adjusting to these changes will be important.

When is an Island not an Island? Is it when the economic, social, and workforce systems become bigger than the Island?

Key Strategic Action Areas:

1. Strengthen the Bluffton connection – There is ample opportunity to retain the pride and uniqueness of the Island, but seek to think beyond the Island by developing strong partnerships within Beaufort County and the region. The Bluffton connection is critical. They are not a competitor, they are part of the same ecosystem. Finding ways to collaborate can help find shorter term solutions to workforce, housing, and educational needs.

2. Embrace 'Arc of Innovation' – Hilton Head Island is arguably just within the Savannah arc of innovation. Tapping into this will help bring creative thinking and innovation to the identified challenges. In particular, topics about reinventing sustainability, revitalization of the housing stock (maker culture), and deployment of technology all fit well with the emerging cluster of innovation in the Savannah metropolis. Partnering with innovative regional firms on problem solving projects offers interesting potential.

3. Becoming a regional player – Becoming a regional player will help build the Island's heft in important discussions. This requires a two-way transactional approach, where Hilton Head Island needs to bring perspective and ideas to the table. Across the US, and even globally, some cities and regions are becoming the new power-base, offering a more aggressive and nimble approach than most state or national governments.

DataInsight

Data Insight:

Hilton Head Island is at an important pivot point in its history. The regional economy and population is expanding around the Island, changing the fundamental relationship. This is also bringing new people, amenities, resources, and investment to the region.

8.7 INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO CREATE 'RIGHT-SIZED' INFRASTRUCTURE

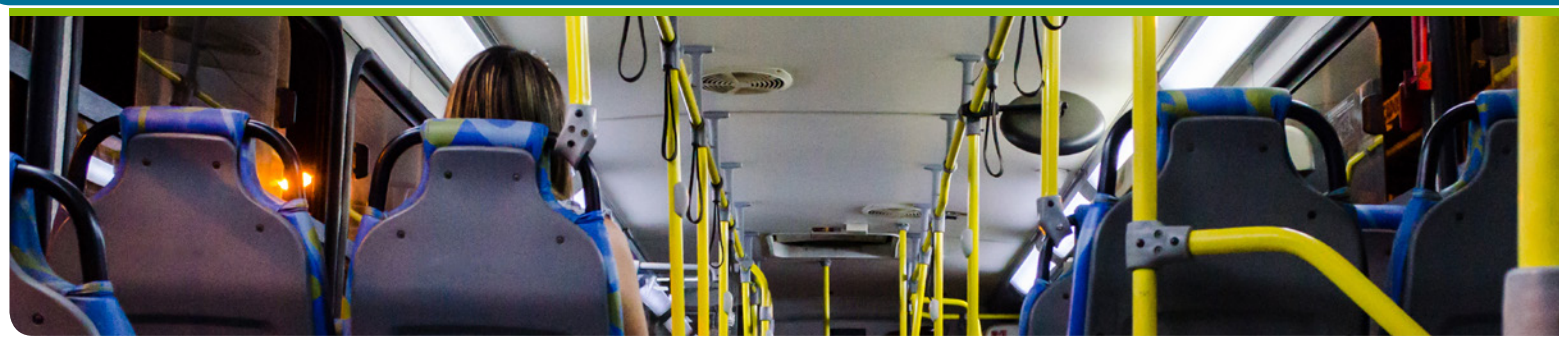
8.7.1 IMPORTANCE OF 'RIGHT-SIZED' INFRASTRUCTURE

The infrastructure issues of housing, transportation and public amenities have been a major topic of discussion throughout the entire process. The transportation and traffic issues are particularly prominent in people's minds, and the 8:00 am daily traffic congestion on the bridge onto the Island is most notably referenced. Many of the initial responses and comments reflect traditional approaches to infrastructure – which is 'make it bigger'. However, through the visioning process, the potential implication of emerging technology was explored. Within the timeframe of the visioning process, society is likely to witness remarkable changes because of new technological evolution as part of the next industrial revolution. Some of these technologies and their potential impact on infrastructure include:

Emerging trends are disrupting traditional business models and systems. This will cascade down to changing infrastructure needs and use. Understanding and anticipating these changes will help in making decisions on expensive and long term infrastructure projects.

- Within the next two decades, we are likely to see the widespread deployment of autonomous electric vehicles. While there is some debate about how this will actually impact commuting and travel patterns, there is little doubt it will have profound impacts on traffic flows and all related issues such as parking infrastructure, roads, bridges and so on. Such autonomous fleets are likely to operate as smart systems, and therefore manage congestion in different ways.
- The advent of 'online' shopping is changing the retail landscape. Massive distribution systems are providing home delivery in ever-decreasing time-cycles. This is placing pressure on traditional mall or strip mall shopping complexes, and they are repurposing more space for lifestyle and entertainment facilities.
- Battery storage and renewable energy systems are radically changing energy production, storage and distribution systems. Already we are witnessing the first large community scale virtual energy systems made up of interconnected storage and generation units.
- Medical advances and the capacity for health monitoring technologies may lead to the dispersal of health care into smaller community based systems, or even home based health care.

The key insight from these trend lines is that Hilton Head Island needs to be thinking about 'right sized' infrastructure. This is the concept of anticipating changing demands and service delivery models.



8.7.2 KEY STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS

Hilton Head Island has a chance to 'leap-frog' the infrastructure needs by thinking about how emerging technology can provide creative solutions.

1. Island scale transportation systems – Hilton Head Island has demonstrated the potential of alternate transportation networks. The widespread deployment of bike trails demonstrates the appetite for alternative solutions. There is the potential for a range of small scale alternate multi-modal and public transportation systems on the island that would connect nodes of development. The same multimodal system could connect residential areas to business districts and workplaces.

2. Regional transportation systems – There is a strong interest in finding ways to provide a stronger public transportation system between Hilton Head Island and the Southern Beaufort County region. The focus should be on environmentally friendly transportation systems which will improve connectivity between the Island and the mainland and take account of future trends in technology.

3. Right-sized neighborhood locations – As has been discussed, there is an identified interest in more neighborhood nodes on Hilton Head Island. Both Millennial and Baby Boomer generations share a desire for community spaces where people can socialize and entertain. However, these can be in a range of sizes and scale. In some cases, people expressed the desire for a larger neighborhood center on the north end of the Island. In other cases, people discussed the potential for smaller community connection points. This is an area that requires more investigation, and a better understanding of exactly what people might be seeking in the future. This topic could also be impacted by future trends in urban living (such as increased density) and implications of future transport systems (such as autonomous cars).

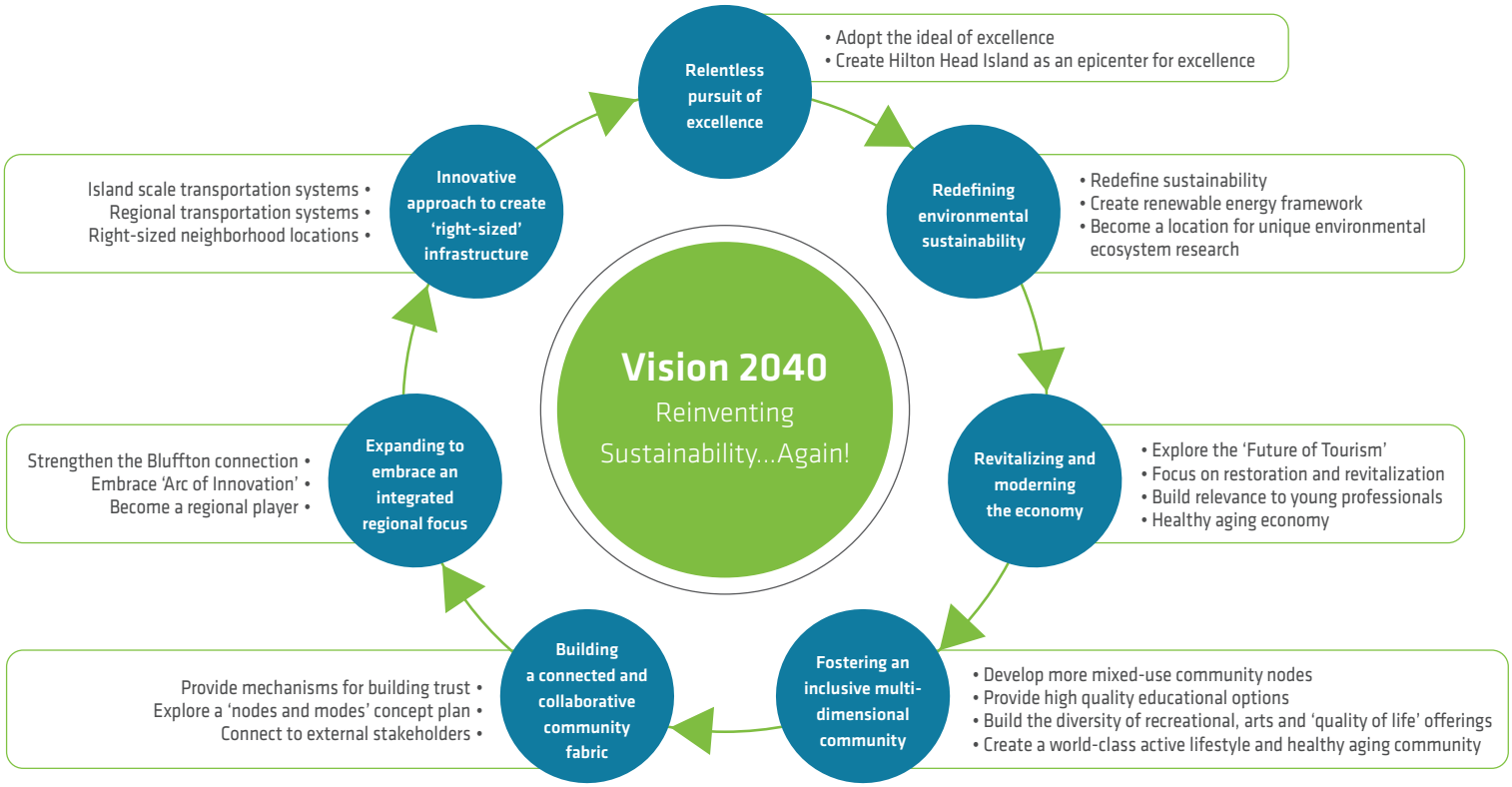
Hilton Head Island's path to the future will require not only alignment with past planning, but an honest, in-depth look ahead to the continually evolving aspirations of all Island stakeholders.

DataInsight

Data Insight:

Transportation issues were one of the highest rated areas of concern in the community surveys. People saw that traffic congestion is negatively impacting the quality of life on Hilton Head Island.

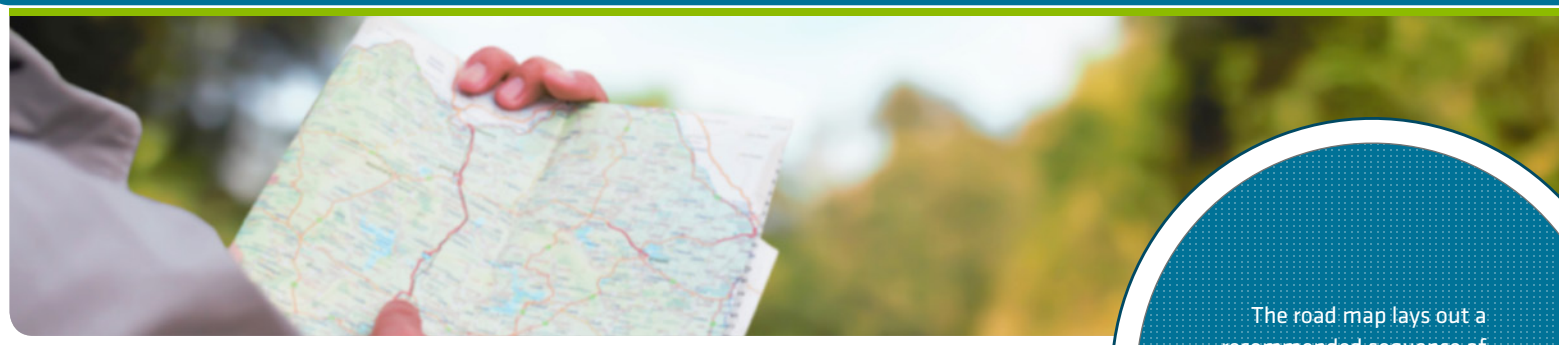
9.0 INTEGRATED STRATEGIC ACTION FRAMEWORK



9.1 DYNAMIC SYSTEMS-THINKING APPROACH

The concept behind the Strategic Action Framework is built on a systems-thinking approach. Each part of the approach needs to enable and empower the other elements. For example, a focus on the pursuit of excellence is a mind-set that will bring a sharp edge to thinking and action in all areas. The vision that has been identified by the community stakeholders on Hilton Head Island will require ambitious change and bold action. However, it is an Island community with real limitations regarding resources to implement actions. Therefore, every opportunity must be used to maximize the impact of the investment of resources and peoples' efforts.

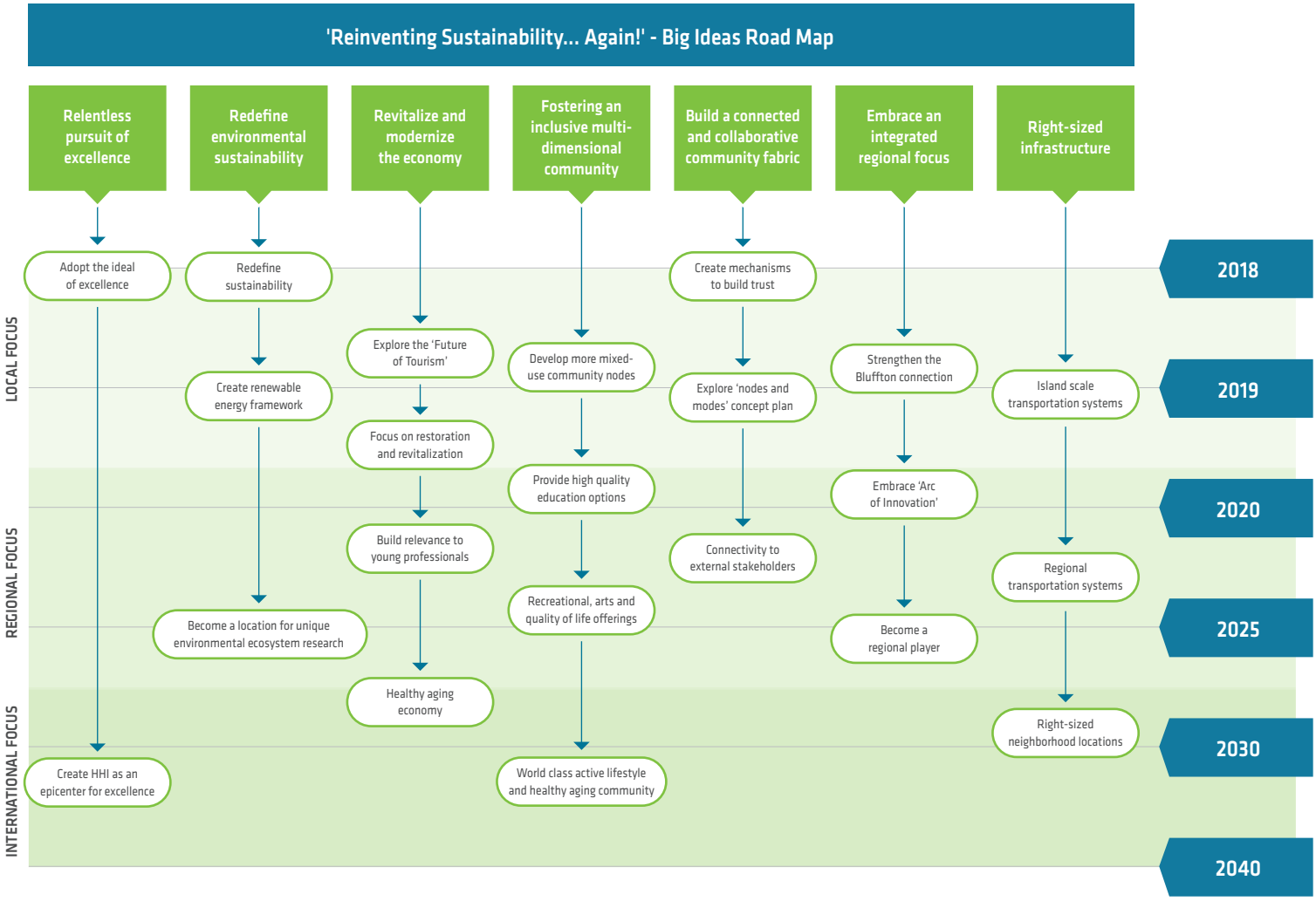
A systems-thinking approach is required to understand how to best implement actions and leverage momentum and synergy.



The road map lays out a recommended sequence of key strategic actions. These actions build the pathway to the 'Preferred Future'.

10.0 ROAD MAP TO THE FUTURE

The 'Road Map to the Future' lays out a high-level recommended sequencing of key strategic actions. These major actions represent the 'big ideas'. These are the building blocks that connect key action steps to the community vision for the future. The proposed Road Map shows the major steps that can build significant progress over time. The sequencing was built from the initial prioritization work done at the reconvening of the Think Tank participants , and drawn from best practice examples of implementation.



"All you need is the plan, the road map, and the courage to press on to your destination."

– Earl Nightingale, American Radio Speaker and Author

With the vision work completed, it is time to pivot to implementation. This implementation plan aims to build the foundational building blocks for long term action, and lays out the pathway to the desired future.

10.1 RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN 2018-19

The Recommended Action Plan for 2018-19 builds directly from the Road Map. The early phases of action focus on key building blocks. The focus is initially on local issues, then moves more to regional scale actions. The proposed short term actions lay the foundation for longer term future implementation work. The Town of Hilton Head Island's comprehensive planning process, beginning in summer 2018, provides the ideal framework for much of the proposed initial action steps.

Institutional Steps

2018

- **VPMT** endorse Vision Report
- **Town Council** accept Vision Report and adopt vision
- **Comprehensive Planning Process** utilize Vision Report
- **Anchor Public Institutions** invited to incorporate Vision Report into their Strategic Plans

2019

- **Property Owners Associations** invited to adopt the vision and key actions

Relentless pursuit of excellence

ADOPT THE IDEAL OF EXCELLENCE

ACTION: Town Council foster an environment of excellence in all projects and comprehensive planning. Communicate this ideal to all key organizations and citizens.

OUTCOME: Set a contextual value of excellence for all Island activities and future investments.

Redefine environmental sustainability

REDEFINE SUSTAINABILITY

ACTION: Establish dedicated group to develop an Island sustainability plan to include all contemporary measures. Group to identify implementation timeline and key action steps.

OUTCOME: Position Hilton Head Island as a leader in the application of modern sustainability principles.

CREATE RENEWABLE ENERGY FRAMEWORK

ACTION: Town to work with PUD's, POA's and Anchor Institutions to develop renewable energy policy and implementation framework for the Island.

OUTCOME: Trigger new investment in renewable energy systems, and position HHI as leader in application of new technology.

Revitalize and modernize the economy

EXPLORE THE 'FUTURE OF TOURISM'

ACTION: Commission study to look at long term tourism trends and the potential to broaden the year round tourism industry on the Island.

OUTCOME: Position Hilton Head Island to evolve the tourism industry in promising new directions, which are aligned with the Vision.

FOCUS ON RESTORATION AND REVITALIZATION

ACTION: Begin research on how to trigger a boost in the local restoration and revitalization economy and capacity.

Fostering an inclusive multi-dimensional community

DEVELOP MORE MIXED-USE COMMUNITY NODES

ACTION: Complete Affordable Workforce Housing Strategic Plan and encourageaffordable house projects in identified suitable community nodes. Develop creative approach to stimulate innovative housing affordability options, including live and work locations.

OUTCOME: Provide affordable and mixed housing options.

Build a connected and collaborative community fabric

CREATE MECHANISMS TO BUILD TRUST

ACTION: As part of the Vision implementation and comprehensive planning process, convene key community and organizational groups to build collaborative dialogue and strong open feedback mechanisms.

OUTCOME: Build open communication and a foundation of trust.

EXPLORE 'NODES AND MODES' CONCEPT PLAN

ACTION: As part of comprehensive planning, examine the viability and concept of a long term 'nodes and modes' configuration across the Island.

OUTCOME: Position Hilton Head Island to be future ready, and have an evolving community fabric and neighborhood structure.

Embrace an integrated regional focus

STRENGTHEN THE BLUFFTON CONNECTION

ACTION: As part of comprehensive planning, factor in the importance of Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County to the transportation and workforce issues. Establish collaborative working groups to seek greater integration of planning and public investment.

OUTCOME: Build strong interdependent linkages between the Bluffton community and Hilton Head Island.

EMBRACE 'ARC OF INNOVATION'

ACTION: Begin building links to innovative research institutions and industry groups in the Savannah Region.

Right-sized infrastructure

ISLAND SCALE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

ACTION: Undertake detailed exploration and begin implementation of an Island-wide transportation network, that connects multi-modal routes, and provides environmentally friendly modes of transport.

OUTCOME: Reduce local traffic congestion and build greater multimodal connectivity.

"Good leaders organize and align people around what the team needs to do. Great leaders motivate and inspire people with why they're doing it. That's purpose. And that's the key to achieving something truly transformational."
- Marillyn Hewson, CEO, Lockheed Martin

10.2 OPPORTUNITY AND RISK ANALYSIS

Throughout the engagement process, participants explored those actions that could potentially drive Hilton Head Island towards or away from the 'Preferred Future' identified in the scenario planning process. Although unforeseen events and opportunities may present themselves and cause readjustments along the way, the key to a successful plan will be avoiding the pitfalls of known steps that will take the organization off the path to its 'Preferred Future.' Combining input from the various engagement activities, below are some markers that may be used as Hilton Head Island follows its roadmap.

What will drive us TOWARDS the preferred future?	What will drive us AWAY from the preferred future?
Leadership and community commitment to implementation of the vision	Inaction and a lack of engagement from leadership and community members
Education and communication about the shared vision for Hilton Head Island	Poor communication by leadership to community members
Dedicated action groups set up for each of the strategic pillars	Leadership pursuing self-interested agendas
Relentless pursuit of excellence with emphasis on transparency and inclusivity	Destructive internal competition among community groups (gated/non-gated communities)
Creating a culture of visioning, where the community is looking forward, and connecting actions to the long-term vision	Actions taken without the community vision in mind
Accountability and measurable outcomes throughout the implementation of the vision	Lack of funding support for the vision plan initiatives
Collaborative strength through effective leadership	Inaction from leadership after a succession of visioning projects. This will lead to a very disillusioned community

The key to success for Hilton Head Island's vision will be consistent engagement and goal setting by the leadership around the action steps. Consistent and effective communication, transparency, and collaboration will encourage participation and a sense of ownership for all stakeholders.

Hilton Head Island's path to the future will require not only alignment with past planning, but an honest, in-depth look ahead to the continually evolving aspirations of all Island stakeholders.

10.3 KEY METRICS TO MEASURE FUTURE SUCCESS

Understanding and measuring progress will be an important part of implementing the Vision. The proposed metrics address the Vision's action areas. Used correctly, metrics can provide a powerful feedback loop to understanding the effectiveness of investment in programs and identify emerging gaps.

The following proposed metrics are connected to key strategic pillars:

- Awards in Excellence given to HHI
- Clear alignment between the Town's Comprehensive Plan and the vision for HHI
- Increased renewable energy options for HHI residents
- Participation of minority groups in community activities and leadership roles
- Preservation of green spaces and ecosystem health
- Evidence of environmental ecosystem research activities
- Expansion of tourism options such as culturally oriented, recreational or eco-tourism
- Increased year-round tourism activity
- New initiatives supporting entrepreneurship, innovation and start-ups on the Island
- More young professionals living and working on the Island
- Increased services for an aging population
- New job opportunities for youth and young professionals
- Availability of additional housing options appealing to mixed demographics
- Increased diversity in recreation and arts facilities
- Updated community infrastructure with 'green' development
- Creation of community nodes and village centers over time
- Expansion of island based transportation systems, and reduction of local congestion
- Expanded educational opportunities for all ages
- Increased leadership involvement in regional activities
- Expanded transportation options between HHI and Southern Beaufort region
- Increased alternative transportation options on HHI

In developing and using such metrics, it is important to consider benchmarking progress using a comparison over time. By comparing progress of the action areas at different points in time, the metrics will give an indication of the trajectory of that item.

"The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with but whether it is the same problem you had last year."

– John Foster Dulles, Former U.S. Secretary of State

Mechanisms need to be created which will allow activated community stakeholder to participate in further developing the big ideas identified in the Key Strategic Action Areas.

11.0 NEXT STEPS

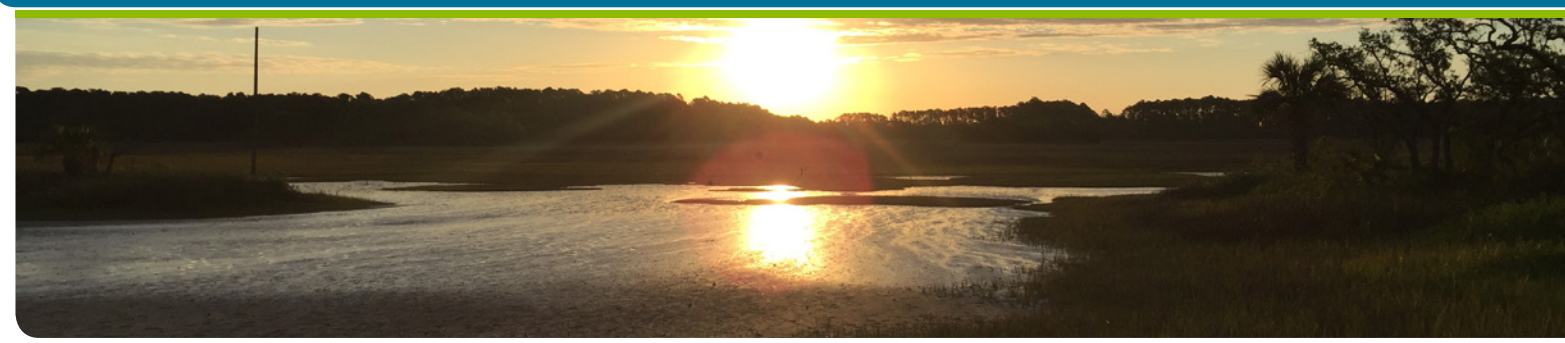
The Hilton Head Island – Our Future initiative has produced the following outcomes:

- Built a detailed understanding of the community's views across a range of important topics and future shaping factors
- Allowed detailed examination of plausible future scenarios and directions, and built an understanding of the implications of these future options
- Through extensive community engagement, identified and coalesced support around a shared vision for the future called 'Reinventing Sustainability… Again!'
- Identified key strategic pillars and key action areas, representing the big ideas and bold steps required
- Begun the process of prioritizing actions and sequencing these into a broadly defined road map to the future.

This work has been built on open public participation and thoughtful and constructive dialogue. However, this work is only the beginning. The vision looks out to 2040, and the roadmap begins to lay out a pathway. Now the next phase of work needs to begin. The following institutional next steps are recommended:

- Community input, via survey, to validate and prioritize the strategic action pillars and proposed action areas
- Consideration of this Vision and Strategic Action Plan (February 2018), by the Vision Project management team, and their recommendation to Town Council.
- Consideration and acceptance of the Vision and Strategic Action Plan and adoption of the vision 'Reinventing Sustainability… Again!, by the Hilton Head Island Town Council.
- Incorporation of the key elements of the vision into the Town of Hilton Head Island's next comprehensive planning process
- Discussion with other key anchor organizations within the Island and Beaufort County about how to collectively implement portions of this Vision and Strategic Action Plan.

An outstanding feature of the Hilton Head Island – Our Future process was the depth and intensity of engagement by residents and stakeholders. There is a large very active, well connected, engaged cohort within this community, who took this process very seriously. These same people see the visioning process as an extremely important tool for community dialogue and for collective action around shared challenges. There would appear to be great value in keeping this engagement process moving through into the more detailed development of the Key Strategic Action Areas. Each of these topics requires deeper consideration, and a Phase 2 of the visioning process in 2018 would allow ongoing participation and contribution by activated community stakeholders.



12.0 LOOKING AHEAD: IMPORTANT TOPICS FOR THE FUTURE

The topics and discussion presented in this section are the consultants perspective and reflections on two important issues. These are deep underlying issues, that potentially will have a significant impact on the future of the Island and the community. They are topics which we recommend are worthy of ongoing consideration.

Hilton Head Island needs to find the way to have an open dialogue about climate change, and how the Island can best mitigate and prepare. This community has the potential of providing a national model, for how coastal and barrier Island communities can address this important trend.

CONSULTANT'S PERSPECTIVE

12.1 CLIMATE CHANGE AND RISING SEA LEVELS

As an Island community, one of the most pressing potential long term issues for Hilton Head Island is rising sea levels. There is little doubt that climate change is real, and "scientific evidence for the warming of the climate system is unequivocal" (NASA). Hilton Head Island's land values, property uses, tourism and natural resource management will be impacted by rising sea levels and if severe weather events occur more frequently.

During the community survey, nearly 1,300 people responded to an open ended question about the biggest threats in the next 20 years. The responses showed significant responses about climate change, rising seas levels, global warming and hurricanes. However, people did not appear to feel comfortable in discussing climate change during the public workshops.

What do you believe are the biggest threats to the future of Hilton Head Island in the next 20 years?

12.2 THE FUTURE OF GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURE

CONSULTANT'S PERSPECTIVE

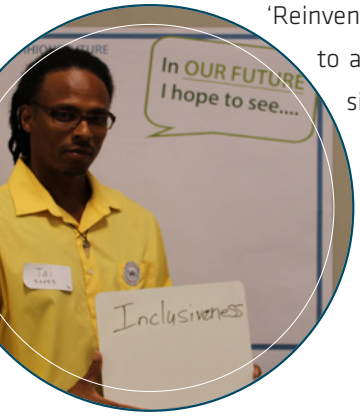
During the Hilton Head Island – Our Future project considerable efforts were made to engage with the Gullah Geechee community and the Hispanic community. These efforts were in response to the direction of the Town Council and the Vision Project Management Team, and reflected a desire for an open and inclusive process.

Continuing to build trust between key sections of the community is essential. Long term shared prosperity and collaborative approaches can only be built on a foundation of deep mutual respect and trust.

The Gullah culture represents a fascinating living history. The culture has survived over the years by Gullah elders passing down the language and traditions to their children. The Gullah Geechee people of the Low Country and Sea Islands of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina are a distinctive people. They are distinct among African American peoples as they depend as much upon maritime resources as upon land resources

However, the modern development of Hilton Head island has seen Gullah land ownership contract dramatically. This was highlighted in the 1995 R/UDAT (Regional / Urban Design Assistance Team) report that examined the situation facing the Gullah people on the Island. This report highlighted the inequalities and revealed how this important group was feeling excluded and marginalized. Much has been done to improve the situation over the last 20 years. However, the recent community engagement sessions highlighted that many of these frustrations and concerns remain present, and the feelings run deep.

The visioning process did provide a venue for some of these concerns and frustrations to be expressed. But the future of the Gullah people is one of an uncertain trajectory. It is possible to see the Gullah community continue to gradually lose its land base and population, and over time become little more than an historical relict. It is also possible to see a future where the Gullah community becomes a more important, included and celebrated part of the unique social fabric. The 'Reinventing Sustainability… Again!' scenario appealed to many people, as it offers the most viable pathway to an inclusive future. The solutions to many of the identified issues are not short term, nor are they simple. They will require both sides 'leaning-in' and proactively engaging to find innovative solutions and produce positive outcomes. Meaningful progress will also help the community deal constructively with other minority and marginalized groups on the Island.



12.3 CHANGING THE CONVERSATIONAL FOCUS - LEAVING A LEGACY

CONSULTANT'S PERSPECTIVE

Hilton Head Island has an abundance of passionate and engaged citizens. Many of these citizens hold strong views on certain topics. This is to be expected from an educated and successful community.

Hilton Head Island has the potential to be a living demonstration of how a diverse community can pull together to solve its grand challenges.

However, it was noted during the community engagement sessions that sometimes there can be a sharp edge to the discussion. While most people engaged thoughtfully and respectfully, there was a definite tendency for some discussions to devolve into censuring others or being dismissive of alternate views. This was observed more so on Hilton Head Island than in other comparable communities. This behavior has the potential to detract from an inclusive community process, and can deter participation. In such an environment, potential outcomes will be degraded, and leadership can struggle to emerge.

A community is always made up of diverse views, people of different backgrounds and sometimes competing priorities. This will give rise to differences in aspiration and appetite for change, and as the data visualization of the survey results shows, Hilton Head Island is no different. This can end up as an outcome that is the collective accumulation of ideas and aspirations, that propels new thinking and visionary thinking. Or, it can be a process that creates a 'death by committee' situation where great ideas are deconstructed and picked apart until nothing is left.

A successful community finds the way to conduct civil discourse; to seek and find common ground. This may require people who are resistant to change, to give a little. It may require people who have a thirst for change, to understand that sometimes it is important to slow down and bring everyone along for the journey. At the end of the day, Hilton Head Island is an island in the ocean. What happens in the future will be a function of the collective ideals and actions of its residents and stakeholders.

There is a compelling opportunity for community members to act now for future generations, and to create a lasting legacy. The vison represents an enticing pathway to leave the Island in a healthy, sustainable state. This will only be achieved by the collective actions of a community working together.

"Civility is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos."

- George W. Bush

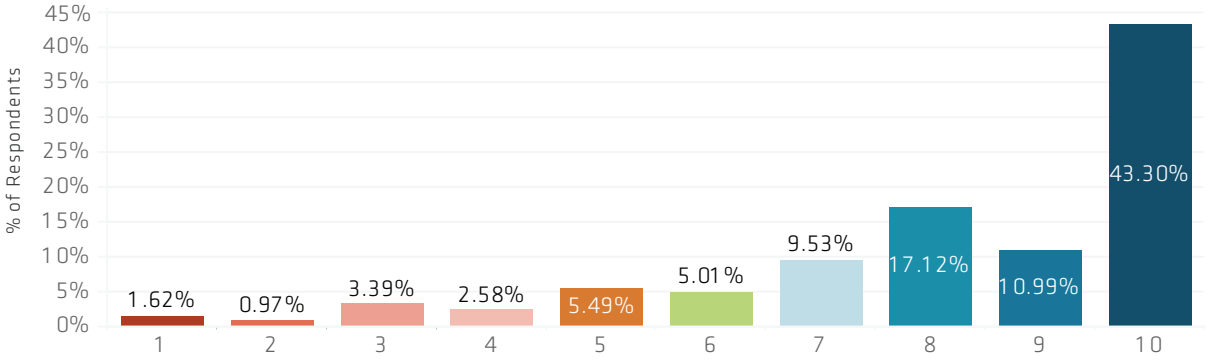
There was overwhelming agreement that the visioning process was both very valuable and has been carried out at the right time for the future of Hilton Head Island.

13.0 VALUE OF THE VISIONING PROCESS

It has been recognized that effective community planning processes need to include robust visioning efforts. This is important to build alignment and focus within both the community and the planning outcomes. The participants were asked for their perspectives about the value of the visioning process. There was a remarkable level of appreciation and perceived value in the visioning process. This reiterated the participants view that the visioning process was the most important existing action supporting the Preferred Future, as discussed earlier in the report.

Value of Visioning Process

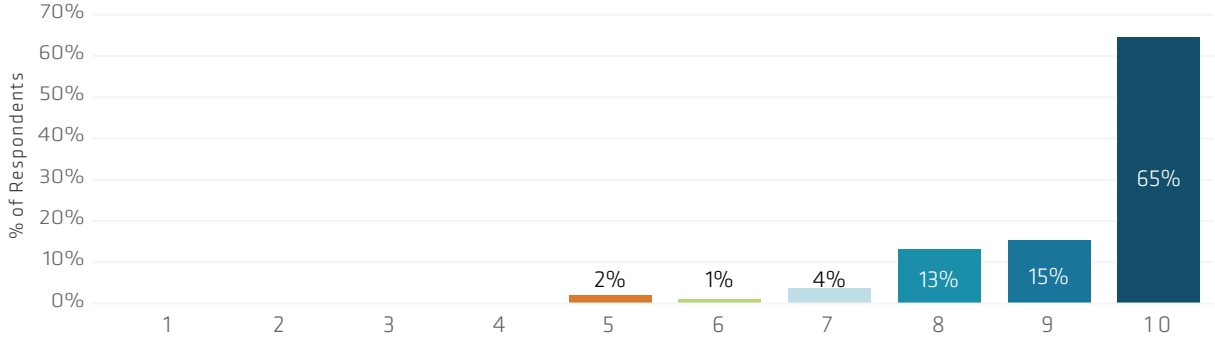
SCALE: 1 = Waste of time; 10 = Very Interesting and Valuable



One of the notable features of the engagement discussions was the sense that the Hilton Head Island community needs to address its future as a priority. There was overwhelming agreement that this was a good time to explore the future of the Island through the visioning process. Coupled with the level of perceived positive value regarding the process, this provides a clear mandate from the Hilton Head Island community of the need to implement the vision as a matter of urgency.

Do you think it's a good time to be exploring the future of Hilton Head Island?

SCALE: 1 = Not a good time; 10 = Extremely good time



14.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Future iQ would like to acknowledge the substantial support from the staff at the Town of Hilton Head Island, Town Council, Town Manager and the Vision Project Management Team (VPMT) for the significant time and effort put into the planning and execution of the Hilton Head Island – Our Future visioning project. We would like to thank Emily Sparks and Jennifer Ray from the Town of Hilton Head Island, who both provided strong leadership, guidance and support for this work.

We would also like to particularly acknowledge the Vision Project Management Team (VPMT) for setting the guiding principles and their commitment to openness, inclusivity and transparency throughout the project. The VPMT consisted of the following individuals:

- Sandy West, Chair
- Denise Spencer, Vice-Chair
- David Ames, Town Council
- Alex Brown, Planning Commission
- Morris Campbell
- John Lundin
- Mark O'Neil

Finally, we would like to recognize and thank the people of Hilton Head Island for their exceptional commitment, energy and participation in this very valuable process.

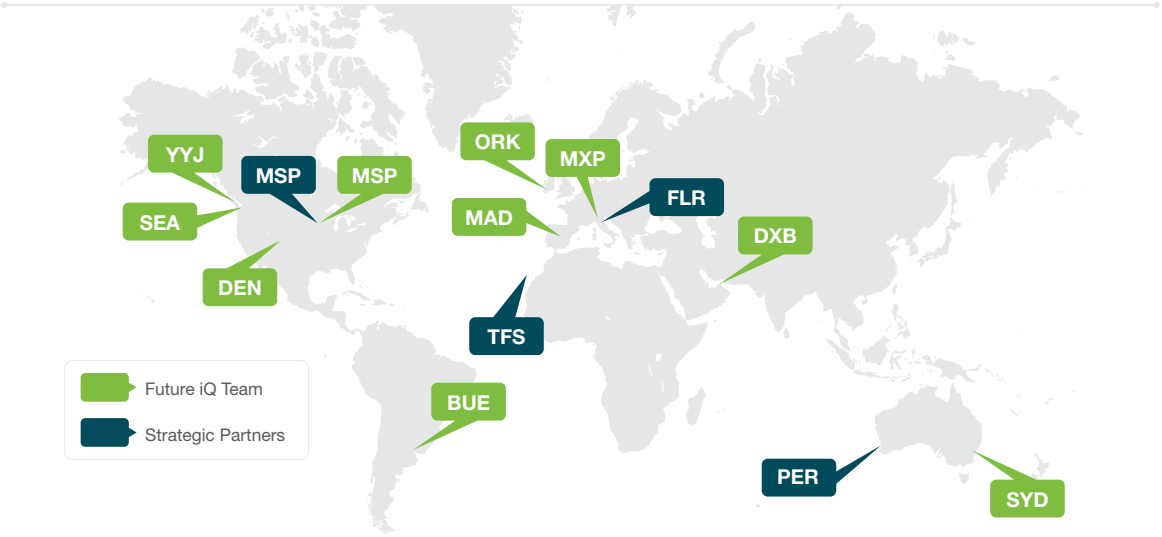
The people of Hilton Head Island demonstrated exceptional commitment, energy and participation in this very valuable process.

The Vision Project Management Team (VPMT)

15.0 ABOUT FUTURE IQ

Future iQ specializes in the development and application of scenario planning, network analysis, industry and regional analysis, and stakeholder engagement. The company specializes in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist organizations, regions and industries plan for the future.

future→iQ GLOBAL PRESENCE - LOCAL SOLUTIONS



FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about Future iQ, and our recent projects visit www.future-iq.com
or contact us by email at info@future-iq.com

Hilton Head Island - Vision and Strategic Action Plan prepared by:

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As CEO of Future iQ, David specializes in creating future planning approaches for the use in regional, community and organizational settings. David has worked in the field of organizational and regional economic and community planning for over 20 years. His work in community and economic development has earned his work international, national and state awards.

CELINE BEURLE, COO, FUTURE IQ

With an academic background in Sociology and Philosophy, Celine is passionate about understanding society and this has led to her ongoing interest in pursuing societal change. She has drawn upon her research background, to write policy and scientific papers. Drawing upon her life-long passion to instigate change, Celine has led many major projects and initiatives within her career, and is passionate about helping to create powerful and effective future strategies for communities and organizations.

16.0 FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Hilton Head Island – Our Future, please contact:

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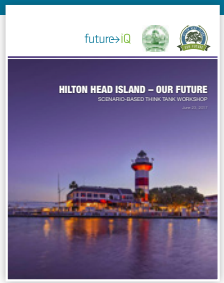
FOR MORE DETAILS, AND TO ACCESS COPIES OF ADDITIONAL REPORTS, PLEASE VISIT:

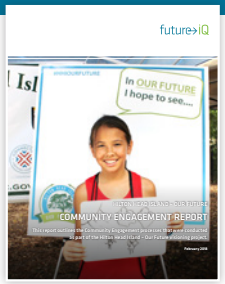
www.future-iq.com or http://lab.future-iq.com/hhiourfuture/

Town of Hilton Head Island Community Profile and Benchmark Analysis
May 2017



Hilton Head Island – Our Future Scenario-Based Think Tank Workshop Report
June 2017

Hilton Head Island – Our Future Web Portal
2017 - 2018



Hilton Head Island – Our Future Community Engagement Report
February 2018

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