



Resilience in Vulnerable Communities:

The Preservation of the Gullah Geechee Community on Hilton Head Island

February 19, 2021

Sheryse DuBose, PhD.

*Historic Neighborhoods
Preservation Administrator*



Jayme Lopko, AICP

Senior Planner



Objectives

- Learn about the Hilton Head Island Indigenous Community
- Understanding the Challenges to Sustaining Gullah Culture on Hilton Head Island
- Learn Efforts made towards Balancing Planning Practices with Sustaining Gullah Traditions



Focus Topics



Gullah History



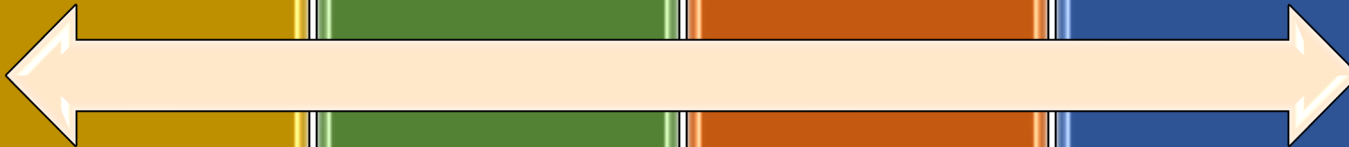
Gullah Culture



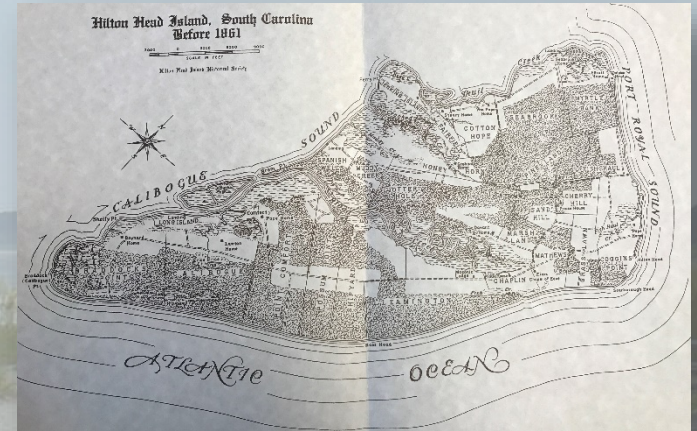
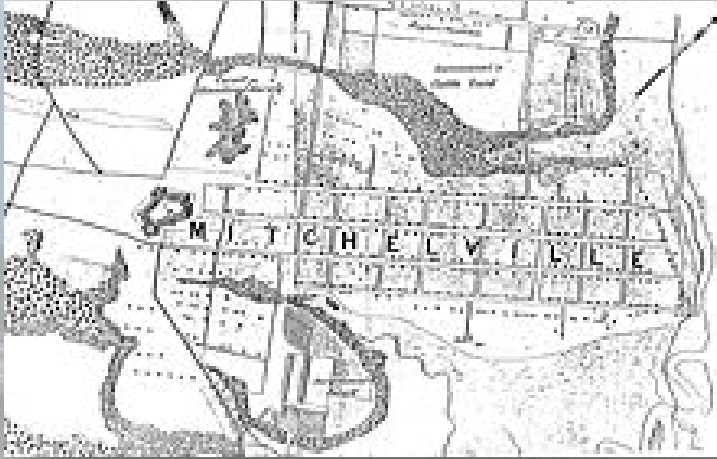
Challenges to
Gullah Land
Retention,
Development,
and
Sustainability



Working
Towards
Resolution

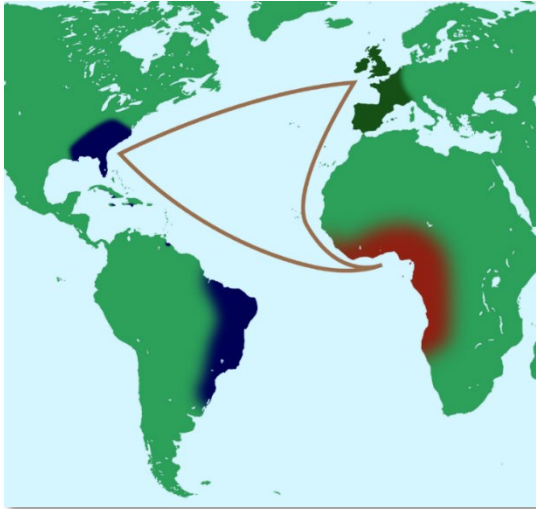


Gullah History



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

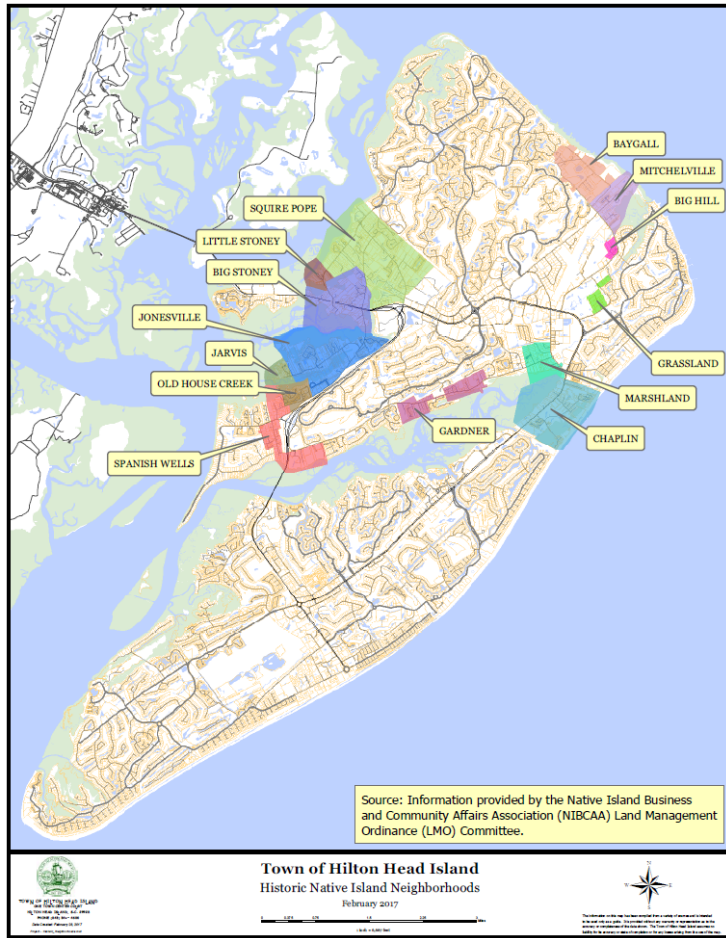
Geography



- Enslaved brought from W. Africa
- Skills Growing Rice and Indigo
- Similar Climates
- Isolation led to Gullah Culture
- Gullah Heritage Corridor from North Carolina to Florida



Settling Hilton Head Island



- Island Plantations
- Mitchelville
- Gullah Landowners Settled into 14 Communities
 - Known for particular specialties
 - Essential Skills Bearer
 - Praise House
 - Neighborhood School



How Gullah Land was Acquired

(1861) Direct Sales
Tax

(1862) Pre-Emption*

(1863) Philbrick
Experiment

(1865) South Carolina
Reconstruction
Government Program

(1865) Field Order
Number 15*



Gullah - Owned Property on Hilton Head Island

Post Civil War
2,511 Acres

As of 2017
1,016 Acres



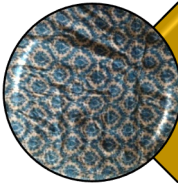
Gullah Culture



Gullah Language



Music/Spirituality



Arts and Crafts



Food



Challenges to Gullah Land Retention, Development, and Sustainability



Challenges

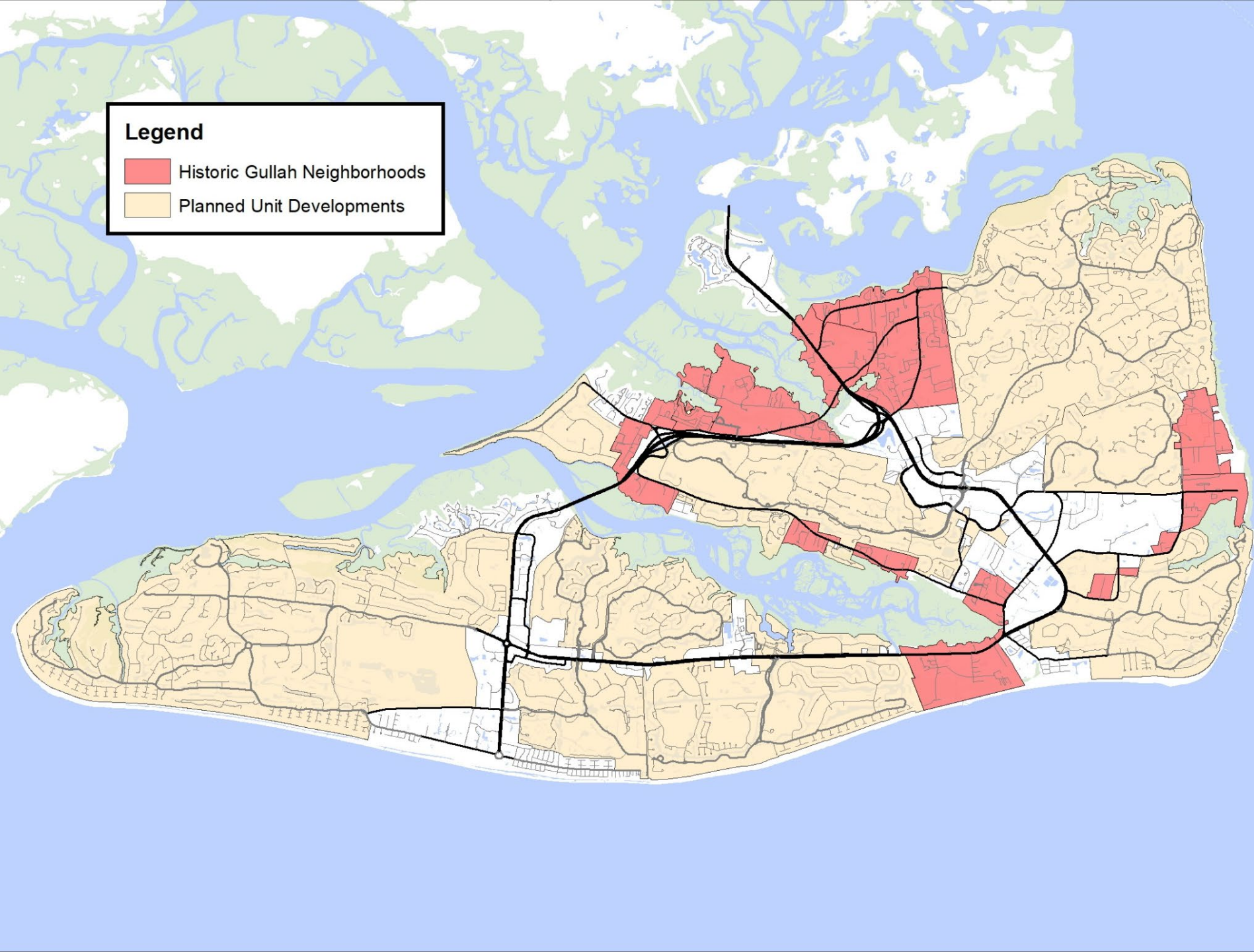


- First Gated Community
- Bridge Built in 1956
- Population Boost in 1980s – Hilton Head Incorporated in 1983
- Limited Service Government
- Rising Property Values – Rising Property Taxes



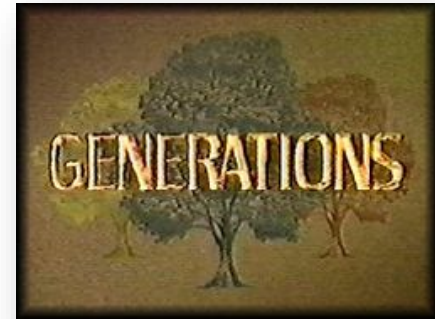
Legend

- Historic Gullah Neighborhoods
- Planned Unit Developments



Development Challenges

- Subdivisions
- Passing down property
- Infrastructure (water, sewer, dirt roads, fire hydrants)
- Heirs Property
- Manufactured Homes vs. Stick Built Homes



Working Towards Resolution

Adopted
Plans

Task Force

Education

Consultant Report

Workforce
Housing

Historic Neighborhoods
Preservation Administrator



Adopted Plans



- 1999 - Ward One Master Land Use Plan
- 2002 - Chaplin Initiative Area Plan
- 2003 - Stoney Initiative Area Plan
- 2020 – Our Plan



Workforce Housing



- What is Workforce Housing?
- Why Is it Needed?
- Importance to Gullah community
- Implementation Challenges
- Current Status



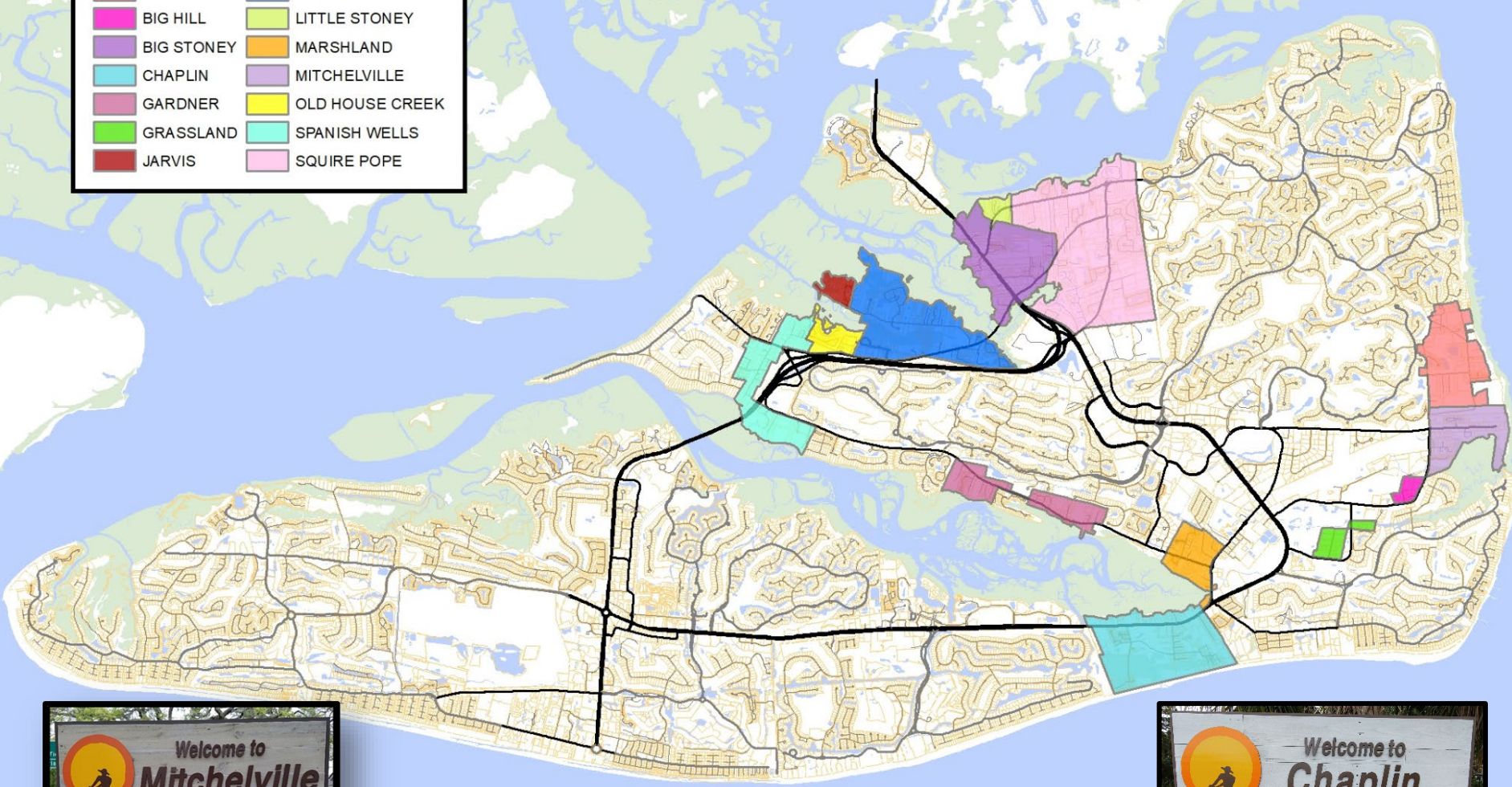
Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force

- Preserve Culture
- Resolve Issues: Heirs Property, Taxes, Land Use, and Economic & Sustainability
- Education



Historic Gullah Neighborhoods

BAYGALL	JONESVILLE
BIG HILL	LITTLE STONEY
BIG STONEY	MARSHLAND
CHAPLIN	MITCHELVILLE
GARDNER	OLD HOUSE CREEK
GRASSLAND	SPANISH WELLS
JARVIS	SQUIRE POPE



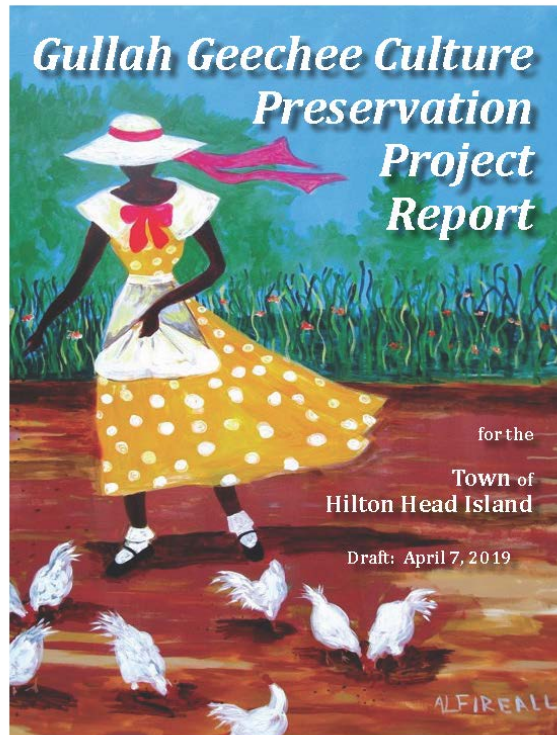
Education



- Community Meetings with Task Force
- Property Tax Workshop
- Heirs Property Seminar
- Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator



Gullah Geechee Culture Preservation Project Report



Three Themes

1. Cultural Preservation
 - 19 recommendations
2. Public Policies
 - 14 recommendations
3. Heirs Property
 - 4 recommendations



Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator

- Liaison between the Town and Historic Neighborhoods
- Continue education efforts
- Establish resources to assist Historic Neighborhoods
- Provide support for existing organizations

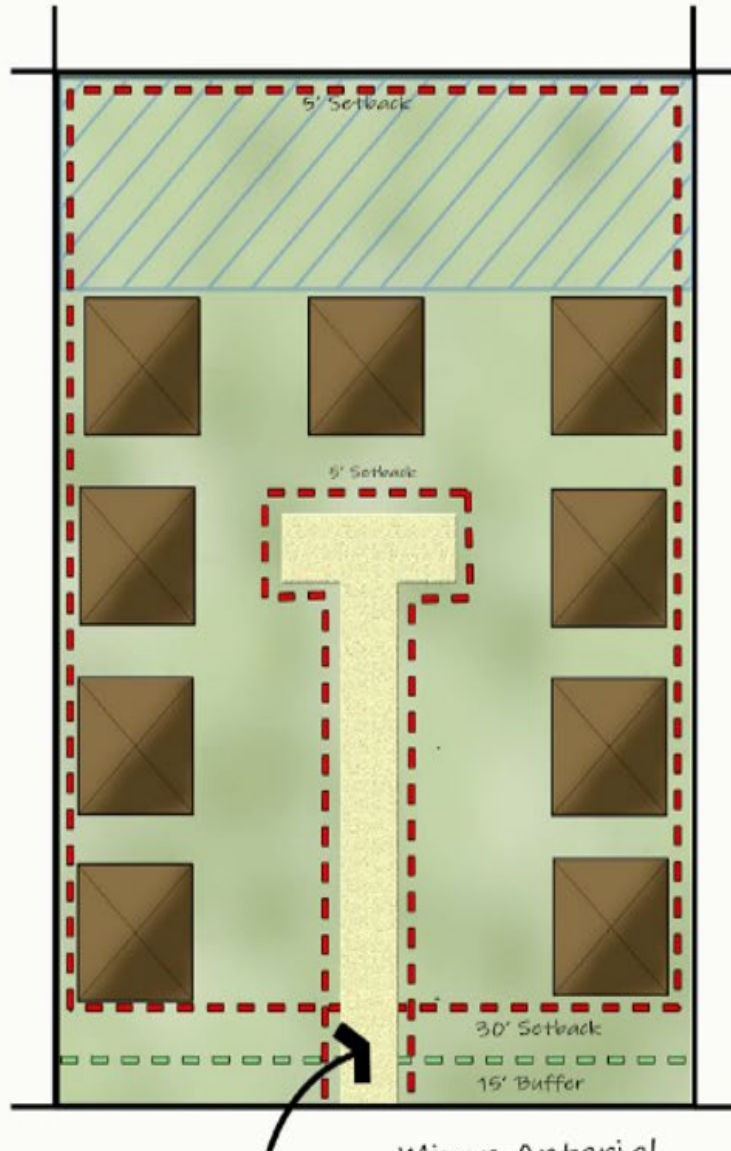


Proposed Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Overlay (HNPO) District

- Encompasses Named Historic Neighborhoods
- Establishing a Definition for “Family”
- Proposals:
 - Decreasing Buffers and Setbacks
 - Decreasing Access Easement/ROW Widths
 - Zoning Change from RM-4 to RM-6
 - Family Compound and Family Subdivision



Family Compound



20' Access Easement with 5' setback required. All weather driving surface to the point of development must be installed.

Minor Arterial



Town of Hilton Head Island

Historic Neighborhoods
Preservation District
(HNP-O)

Family Compound
Example

Parcel Size: 1.5 Acres
RM-6 = 9 Units

Legend

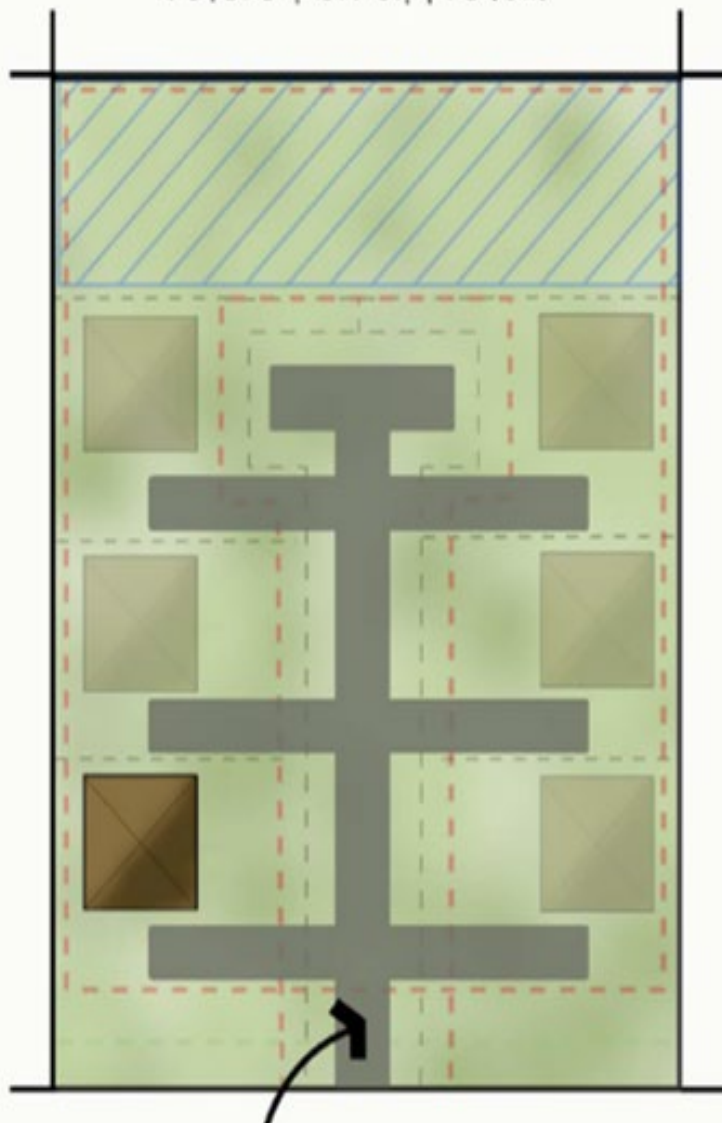
- Parcel Lines
- Buffer Lines
- Setback Lines
- House 40'x40'
- Stormwater (+/- 20%)
- All-weather driving surface

Scale: 1"=40'

0 25 50 100 Feet

Regular Subdivision

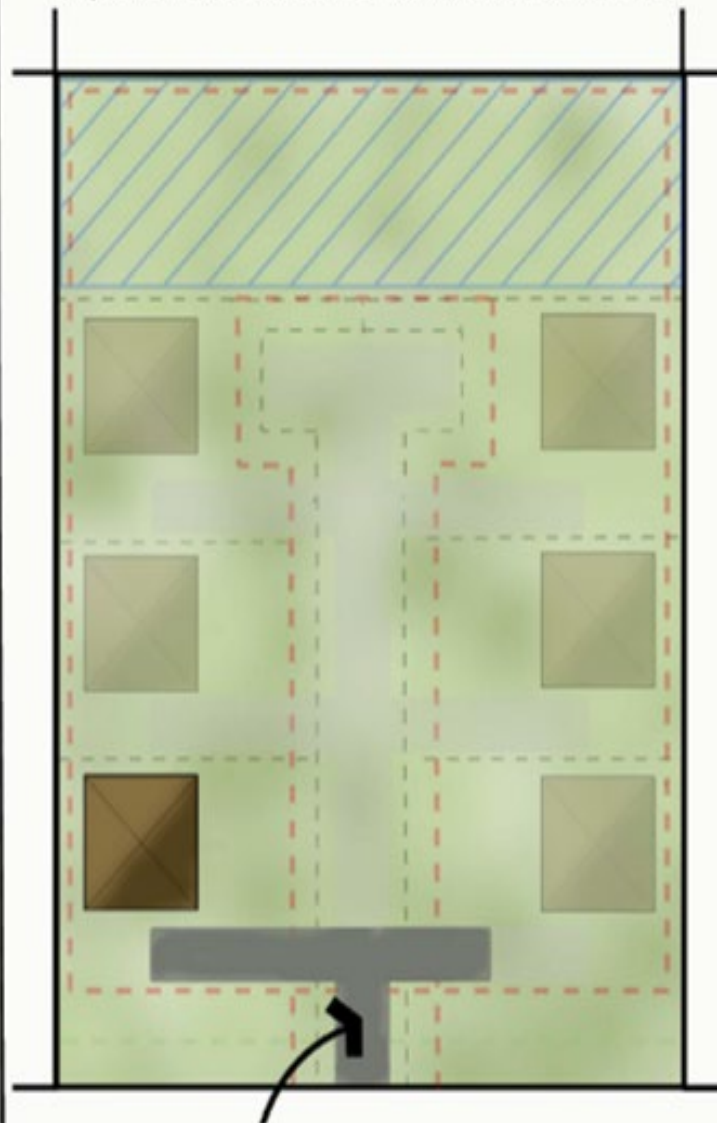
All infrastructure required
before plat approval.



40' Right-of-Way
required and all access
must be installed at one time.

Family Subdivision

Incremental installation of
infrastructure as homes are built.



30' Right-of-Way required,
but only access to the point of
development must be installed.



Town of Hilton Head Island

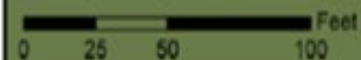
Historic Neighborhoods
Preservation District
(HNP-O)

Family Subdivision
Example

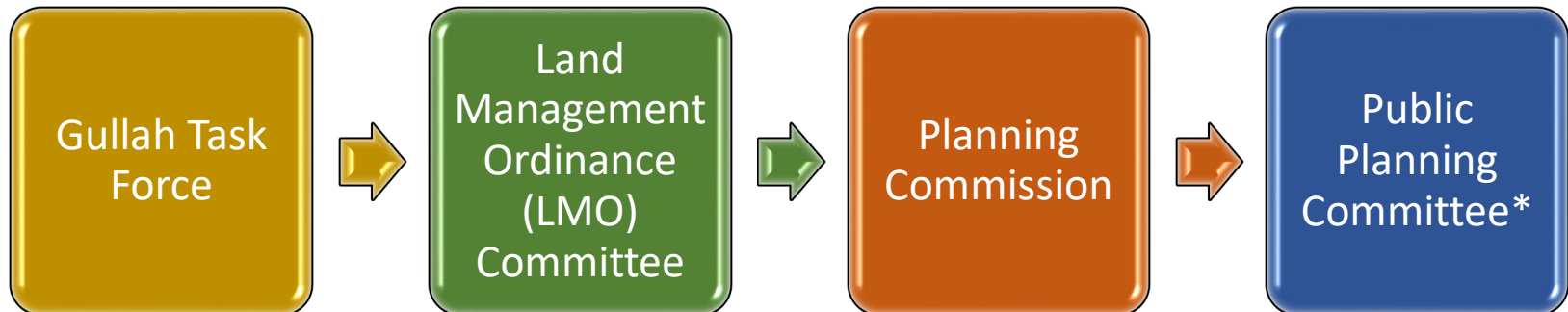
Legend

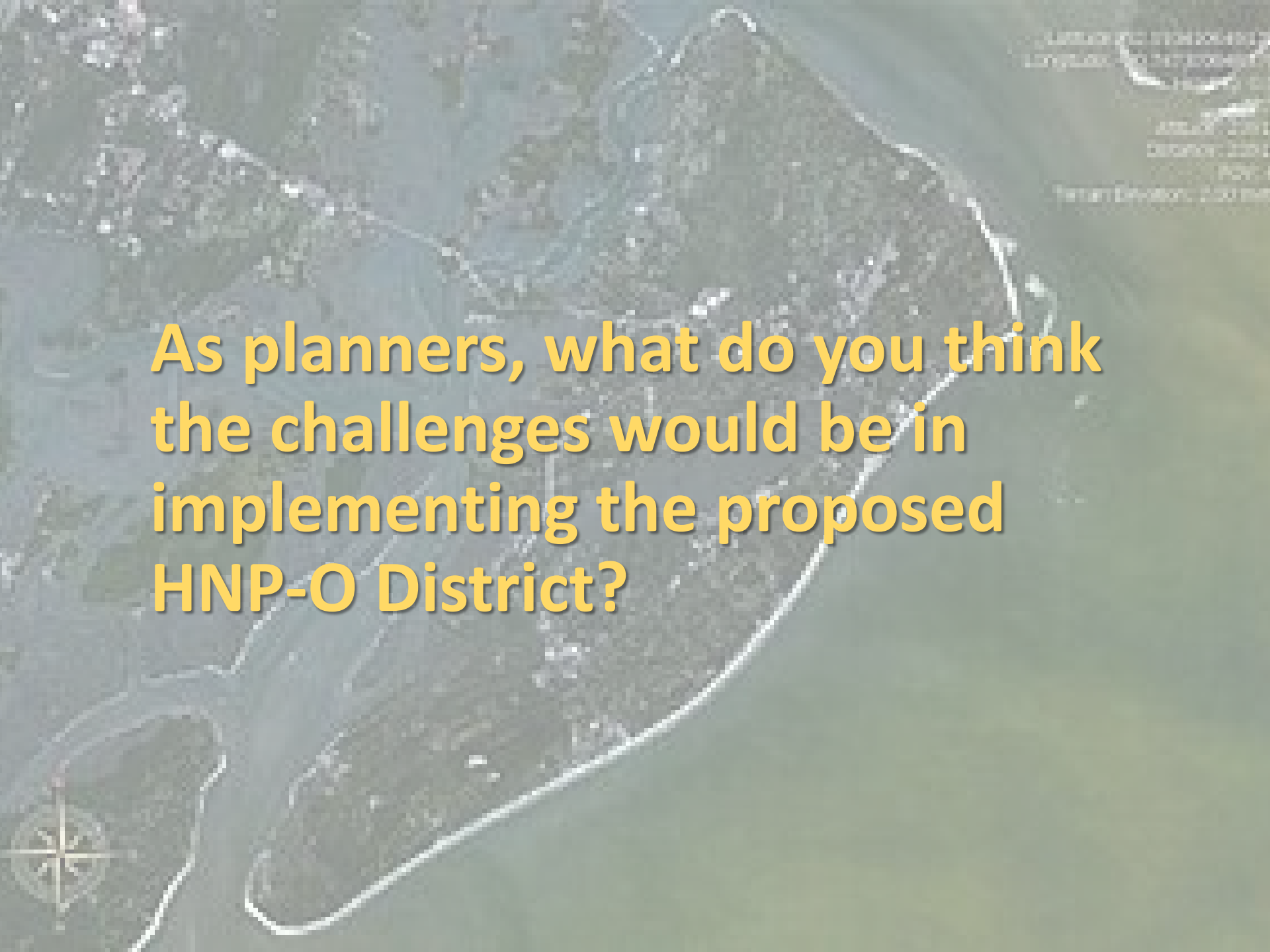
- Parcel Lines
- - - Buffer Lines
- - - Setback Lines
- - - Lots
- House 40'x40'
- Stormwater
(+/- 20%)
- Road &
Driveways

Scale: 1"=40'



HNP-O District Process Timeline



An aerial photograph of a coastal region, likely a bay or inlet. A white line outlines a specific area, possibly a proposed district or park. In the bottom left corner, there is a compass rose. In the top right corner, there is some faint, partially legible text that appears to be metadata or map information.

As planners, what do you think
the challenges would be in
implementing the proposed
HNP-O District?

Challenges to Proposed HNP-0



- Large Focus Area
- May Attract Developers
- Concerns with Higher Densities

Questions?

Resilience in Vulnerable Communities: The Preservation of the Gullah Geechee Community in Hilton Head Island

Email the presenters:

Sheryse DuBose, PhD. - sherysed@hiltonheadislandsc.gov

Jayme Lopko, AICP - jaymel@hiltonheadislandsc.gov

Visit the Town of Hilton Head Island Website at:
[https://hiltonheadislandsc.gov/departments/commdev
/lmoamendment.cfm](https://hiltonheadislandsc.gov/departments/commdev/lmoamendment.cfm)





Thank you!

Town of Hilton Head Island
Community Development Department