

Planning & Zoning Tools for Preserving Historic Communities

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Agenda

Background - Charleston County History

- What are African-American Settlement Communities and why are they significant?

Planning for the Settlement Communities

- What planning tools can be implemented to preserve community culture?

Historic Preservation

- How can traditional historic preservation projects complement planning efforts?

Charleston County

A BRIEF HISTORY LESSON

Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor

- Established by Congress in 2006
- Recognizes the Gullah Geechee people for maintaining their cultural traditions
- Helps preserve and interpret the traditional cultural practices, sites, and resources



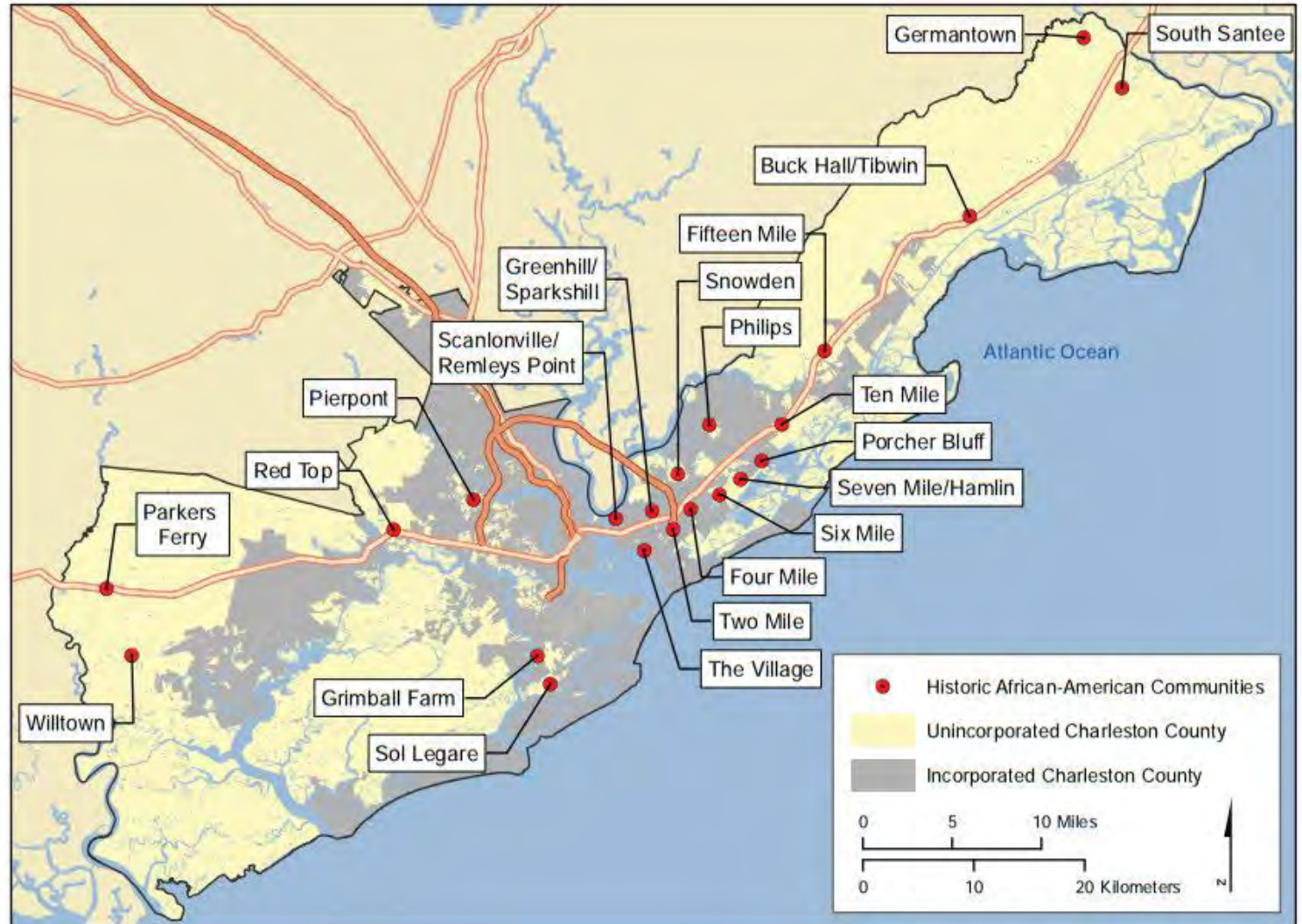
Who are the Gullah Geechee?

- Descendants of Central and West Africans who came from different ethnic and social groups and were enslaved on the isolated sea and barrier islands along the eastern coastline, stretching from southern North Carolina (Pender County) to northern Florida (St. John's County)
- The different languages and cultures meshed to form the creole Gullah Geechee language and preserved African practices in arts, crafts, and cuisine

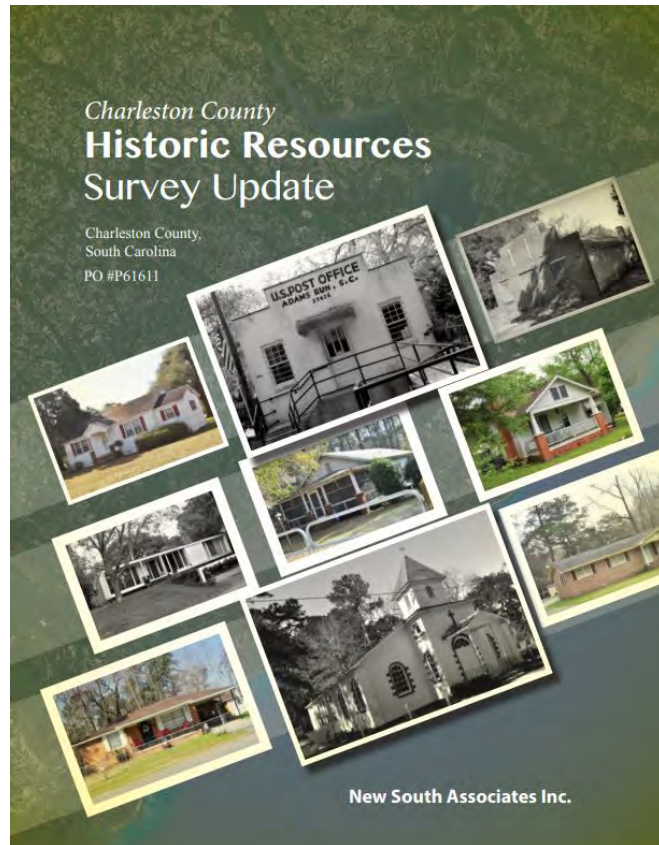


Settlement Communities

- During Reconstruction, after the Civil War, African Americans bought and settled on lands near former plantations throughout the County.
- Segregation and Jim Crow laws resulted in each of the communities establishing their own commercial and civic/institutional uses
 - Most the communities had Masonic Lodges which provided financial support, food supplies, and other necessary resources



Charleston County Historic Resources Survey Update



- Recognized the historic value of the Settlement communities and their cultural value
- Extensive research into the formation of the communities following the Civil War and Emancipation
- Three main types of community development
 - Remnant Freedmen communities
 - Land Commission platted communities
 - Planned Land Cooperative communities

Remnant Freedmen Communities

Development Pattern features:

- Long, thin, and deep lots that maximize frontage on roads and waterways
- Inconsistently sized parcels, ranging from 1-40 acres
 - Over time, these parcels have been subdivided for heirs
- Landlocked parcels and often adjacent to waterways
- Land uses are typically clustered close to the road with deep, rear setbacks
- Lots typically have multiple homes, often close together and with familial ties
- Fences are rare, especially privacy fences
- Agricultural uses were common in past decades but have diminished in recent years



Source: Charleston County (2016), Bing Maps Imagery (2010)



Land Commission Platted Communities

South Carolina Land Commission was a program established by the State legislature in 1868.

Development pattern characteristics include:

- Rectilinear lots ranging from 7-25 acres in size (usually between 8-10 acres in Charleston County)
- Lots are usually oriented to a road
- Most lots have been subdivided into smaller, rectangular parcels over time (often for family members)
- Most lots contain one or more residential uses, with commercial and civic uses clustered near primary roads
- Fences are rarely used



A. Map of the Phillips Community



Planned Land Cooperative Communities

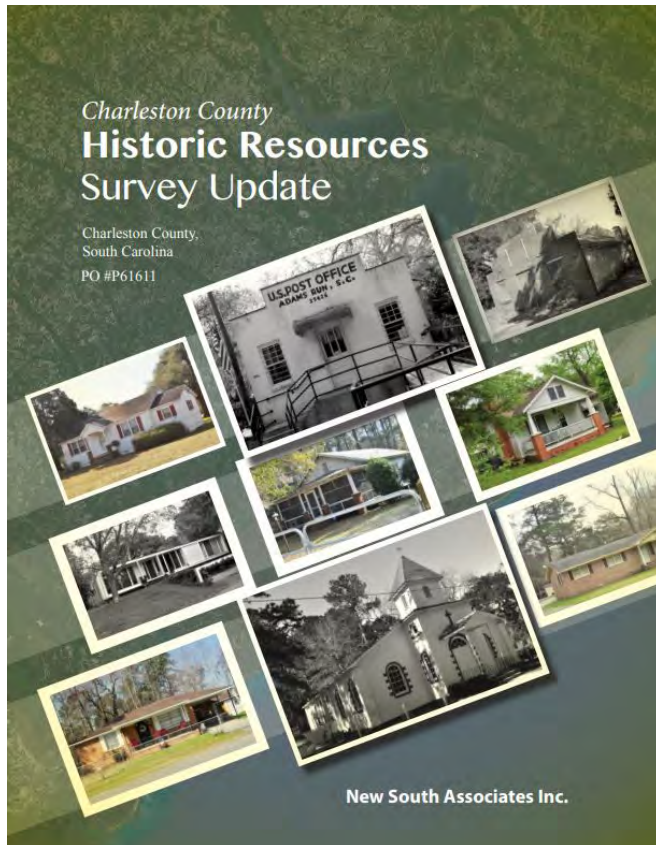
Subscription-based land cooperative ventures by African Americans to purchase former plantation lands

Development characteristics include:

- Gridded street plans with consistent lot sizes
- Large agricultural lots located at the periphery of the community
- Publicly-defined community spaces and cemeteries
- Usually only one residence per lot
- Houses oriented to the main street with consistent setbacks from the rights-of-way



Charleston County Historic Resources Survey Update



- Four of the African-American Settlement communities were designated as **Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places** under Criterion A
 - Phillips (Land Commission platted community)
 - Snowden (Land Commission platted community)
 - Scanlonville (Planned Land Cooperative community)
 - Sol Legare (Remnant Freedman community)
- 16 other communities could be eligible with further research

Heirs' Property

“Family land connects us to each other and reminds us of our past.”

-Center for Heirs' Property Preservation

What is it?

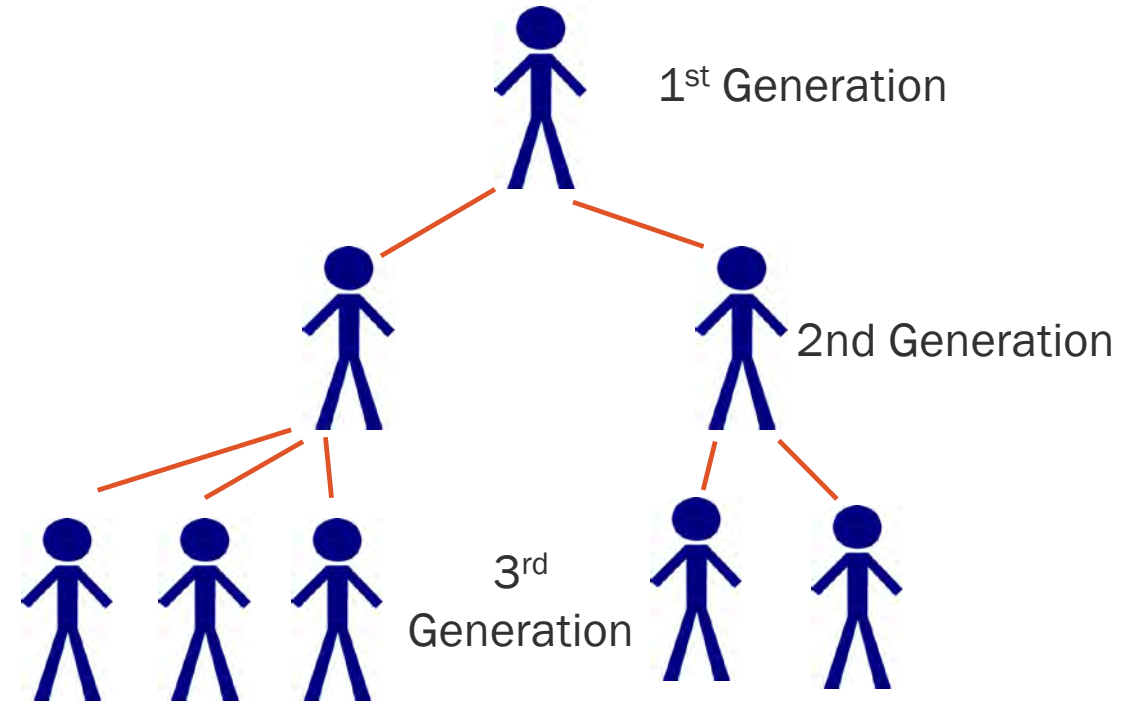
Property transfers from generation to generation without the benefit of wills or estate plans

Why is it an issue?

Heirs may not agree with how to deal with the property. Forced partitions might be necessary or lands can be lost due to tax default.

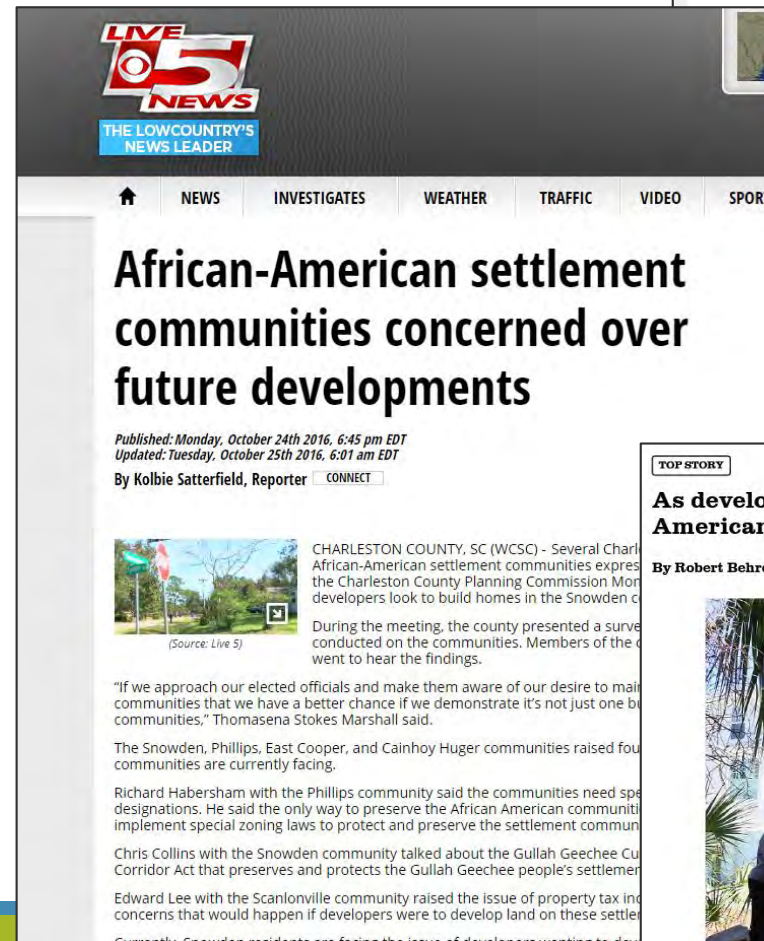
Why should it be preserved?

Heirs' property is part of the history of settlement communities. Organizations such as the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation or Heirs' Property Retention Coalition provide legal services to families.



Community Action

For years, these communities have been active in legislative processes; however, recently the leaders from the different communities have come together to form the **African American Settlement Communities Historic Commission** to collectively voice opinions and institute change at the local level



Mount Pleasant African American Settlement Commission Dedicates New Headquarters

By The Charleston Chronicle | November 2, 2017 | 3



The Peter and Marguerite Johnson Center located at 440 Vening St.

TOP STORY

As development races ahead, so do efforts to save African-American settlement communities

By Robert Behre rbehre@postandcourier.com Mar 9, 2018 Updated 1 hr ago



Planning to preserve the Settlement Communities in Charleston County

1999 Comprehensive Plan and 2001 Unified Development Ordinance

- Special Management Future Land Use designation and implementation
- Settlement Area Study

2015 Five-Year Review of the Plan

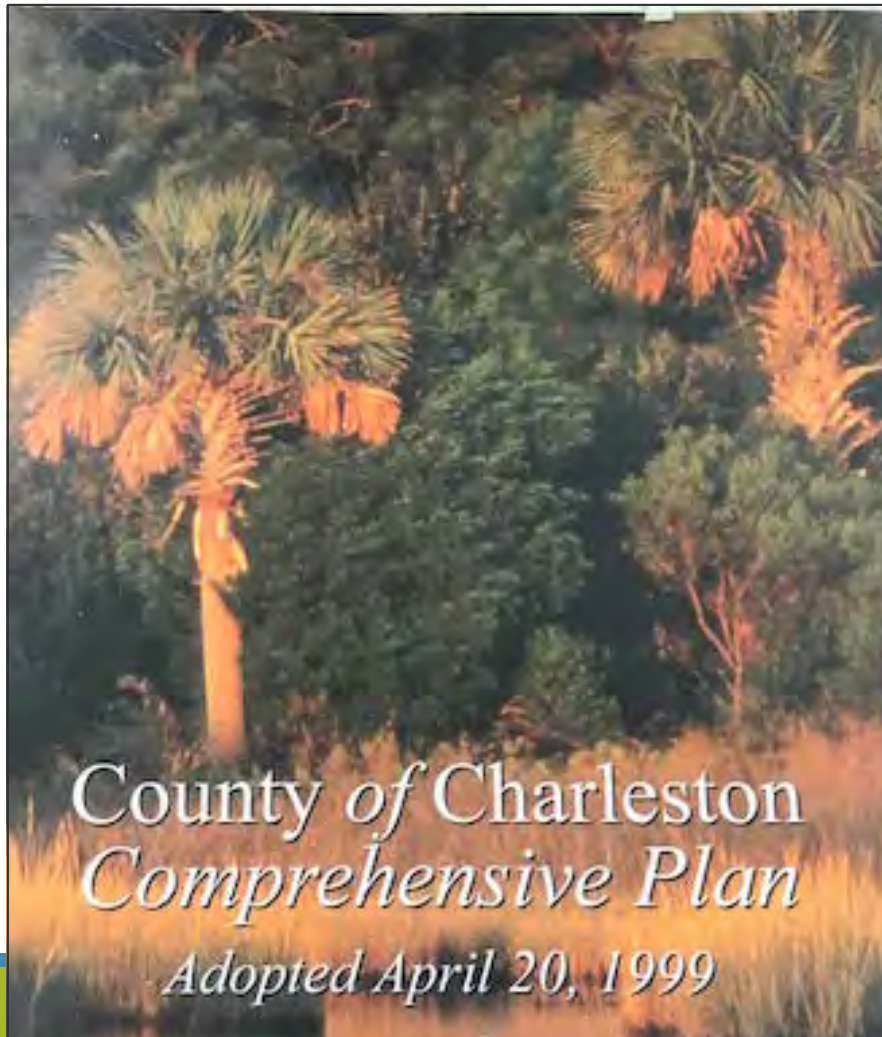
- Cultural Community Protection – New Future Land Use designation

Community Planning projects

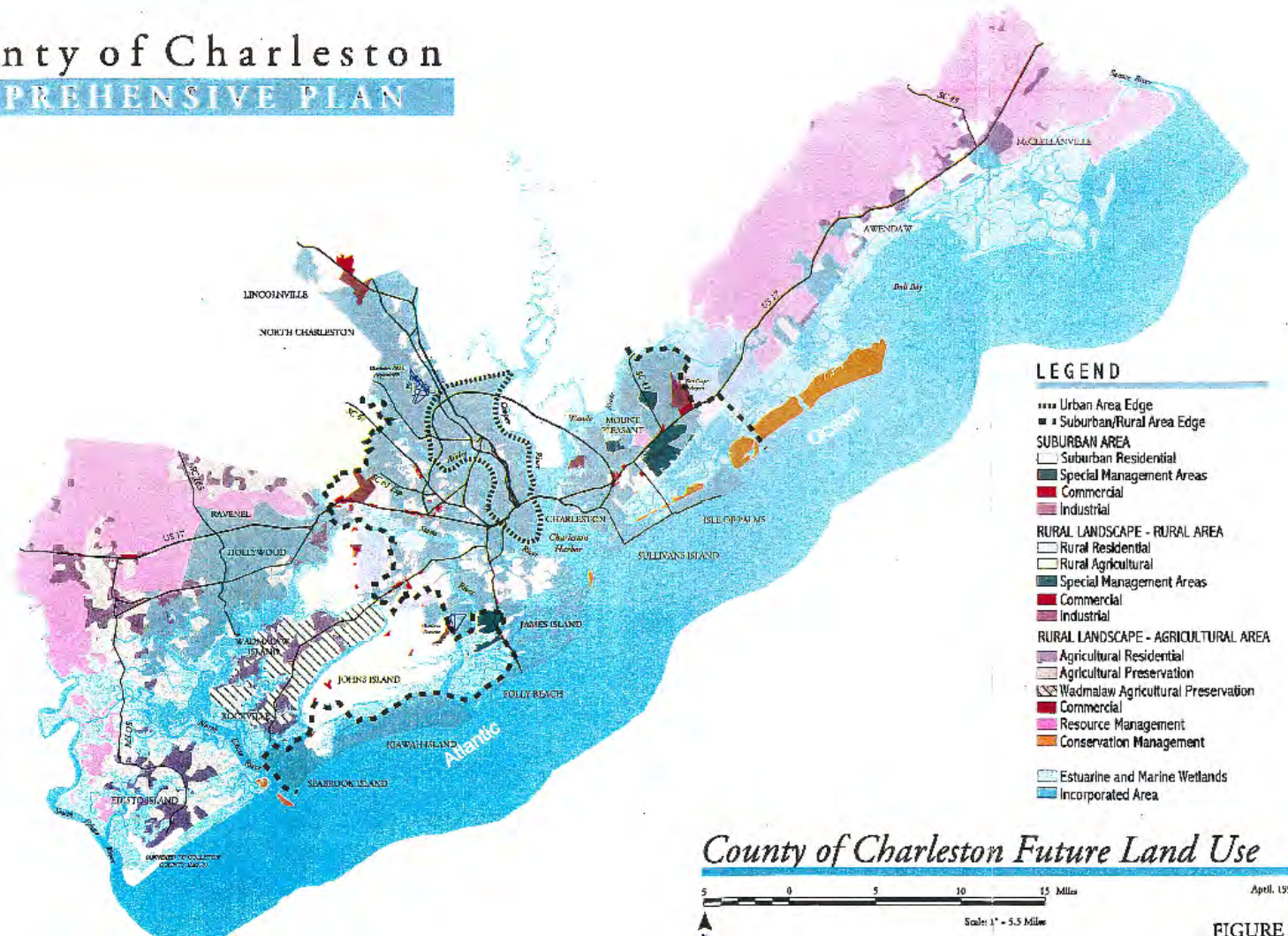
- Parkers Ferry Community
- Sol Legare Community

2018 Ten-Year Update of the Plan

1999 Comprehensive Plan and 2001 Zoning & Land Development Regulations Ordinance (ZLDR)

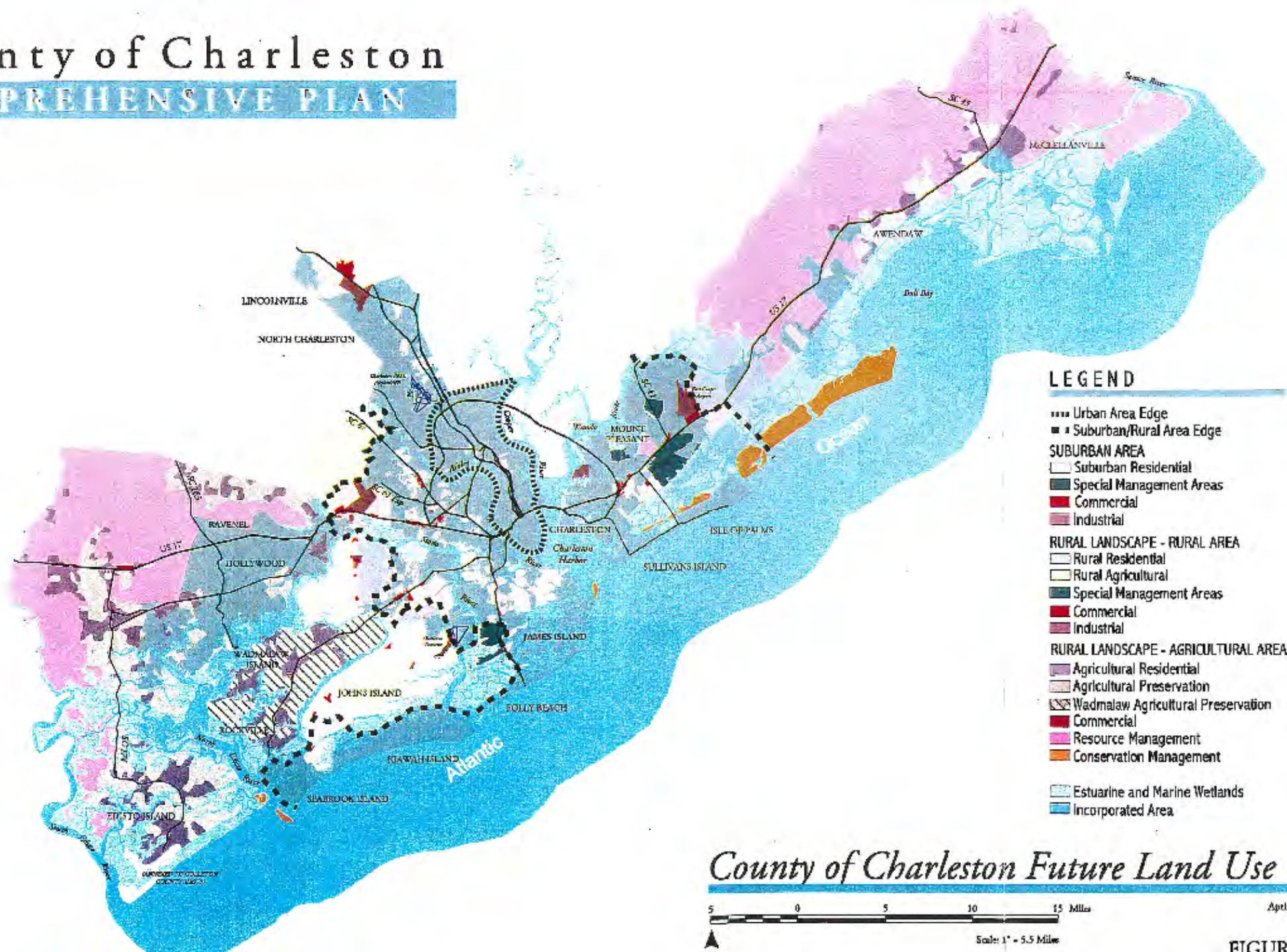


County of Charleston COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



County of Charleston

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



County of Charleston Future Land Use

5 0 5 10 15 Miles

April 1599

FIGURE 3.2.7

County of Charleston COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



James Island Future Land Use

Comprehensive Plan Update, August 2003
Amended October 5, 2004

FIG1

Residential/Special Management Future Land Use Designation



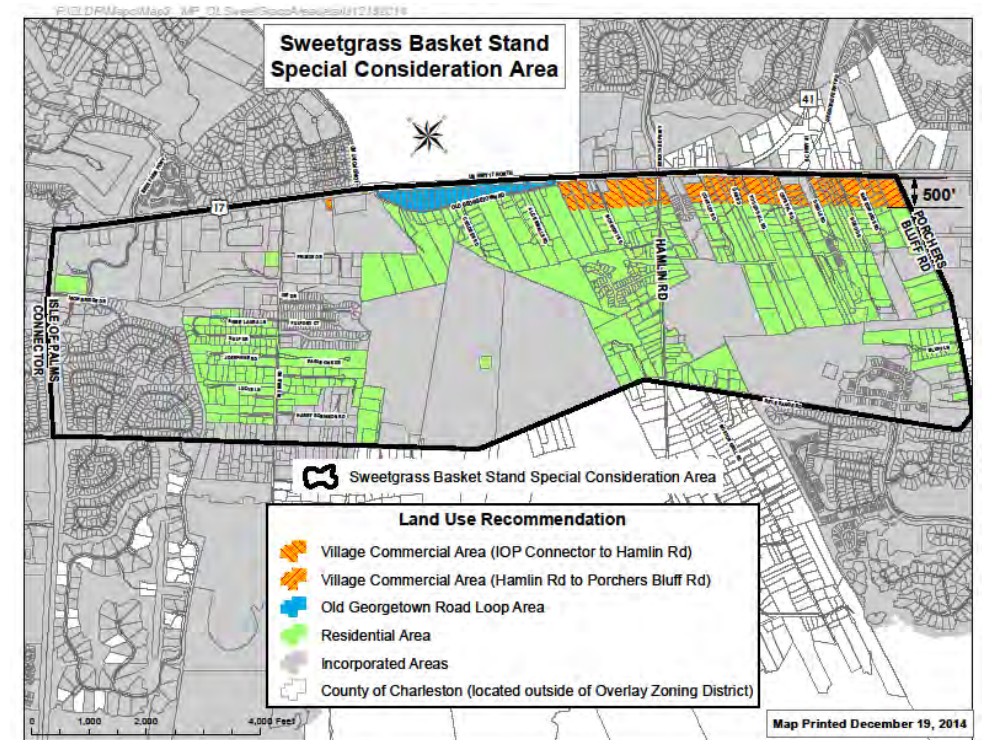
Mt. Pleasant/East Cooper Future Land Use

Comprehensive Plan Update, August 2003
Amended October 5, 2004

FIGURE 3.2.5

Residential/Special Management Future Land Use Designation

Sweetgrass Basket Stand Special Consideration
Area of Mount Pleasant Overlay Zoning District



2015 Five-Year Review of Comprehensive Plan

Created a new Rural Cultural Community Protection Future Land Use Designation

Replaced the Residential/Special Management Future Land Use Designation with the Urban/Suburban Cultural Community Protection Designation

Both designations encourage **community planning** for historic communities to address their individual needs and work with them to identify and attain their community goals.

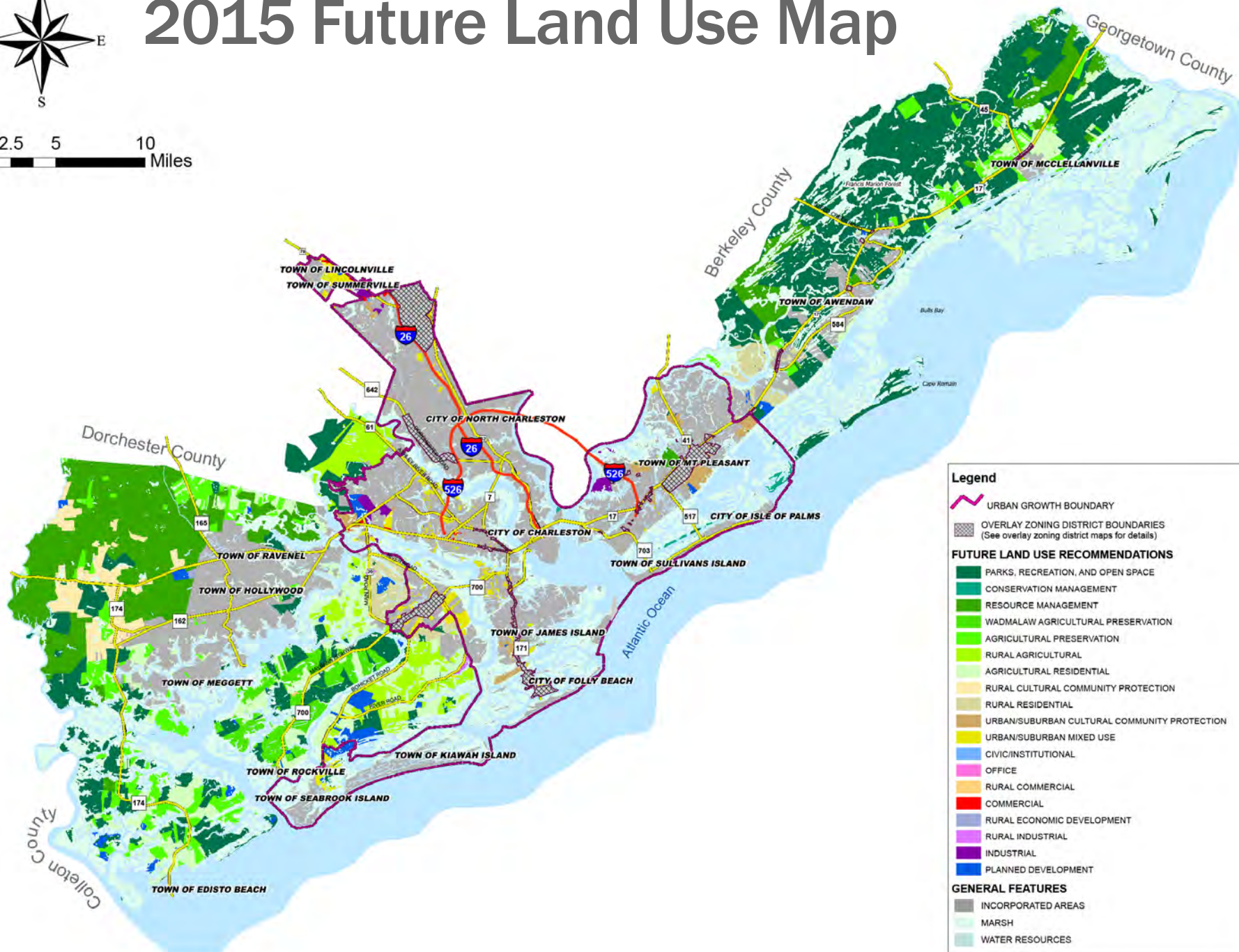
Urban/Suburban Cultural Community Protection

Intended to protect and promote the culture and unique development patterns of existing communities and sustain their strong sense of community. The communities in this designation are characterized by low density single-family residential development, limited commercial activity, and some agricultural uses. Many of the roads are paved with connections to county or state maintained roads; however, earthen roads still exist. Future development should be compatible with the existing land uses and development patterns and the residential density should be a maximum of four dwellings per acre. Compatible institutional, office, and low intensity commercial uses should be allowed to offer services and employment opportunities for local residents, provided the building scale and coverage fits with existing structures. Sweetgrass Basket making, including sales, should be recognized and promoted. Zoning and land development regulations in these areas should be customized to meet the needs of the individual communities.



0 2.5 5 10
Miles

2015 Future Land Use Map



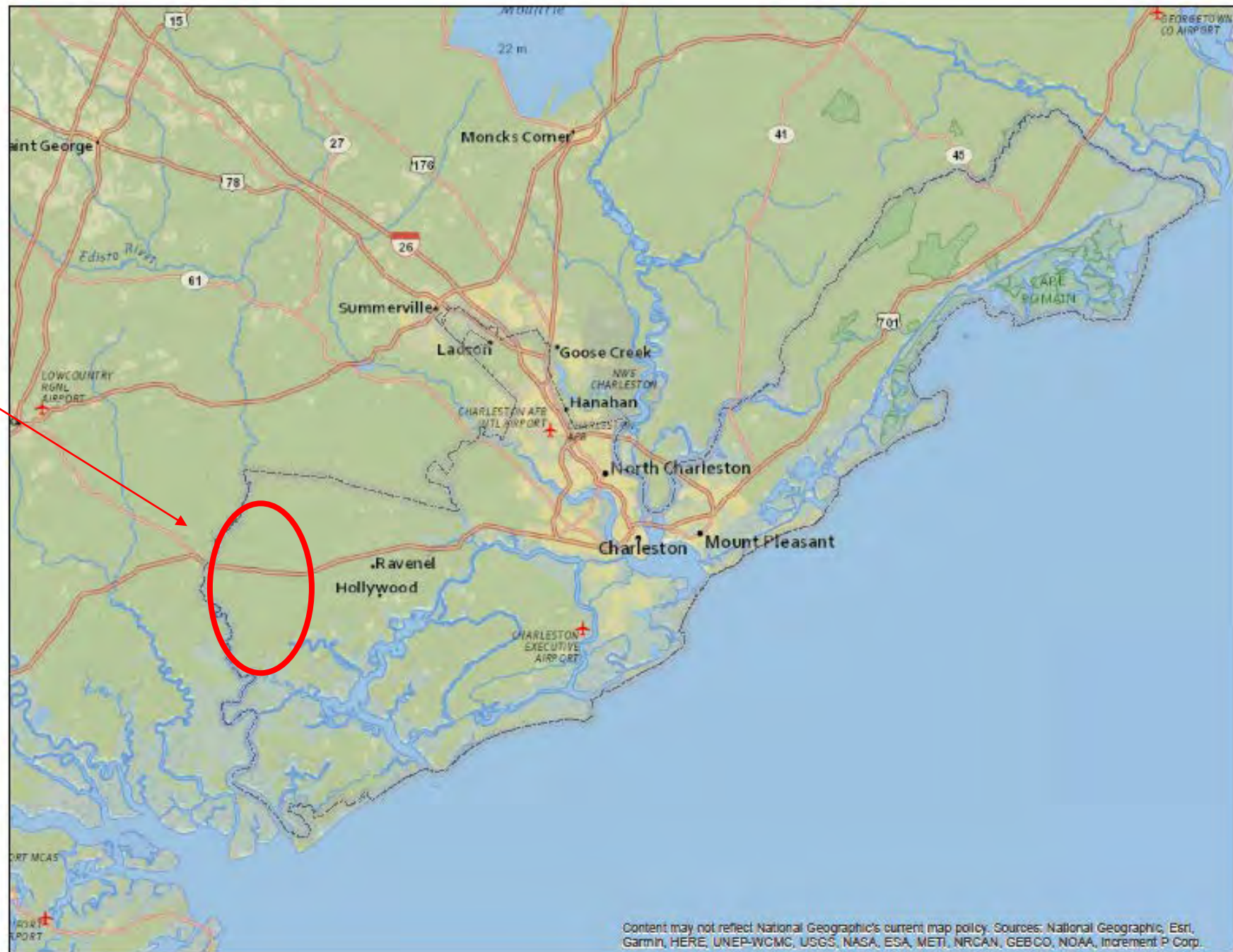
Plan Implementation

Community Planning projects

Parkers Ferry Community

Sol Legare Community

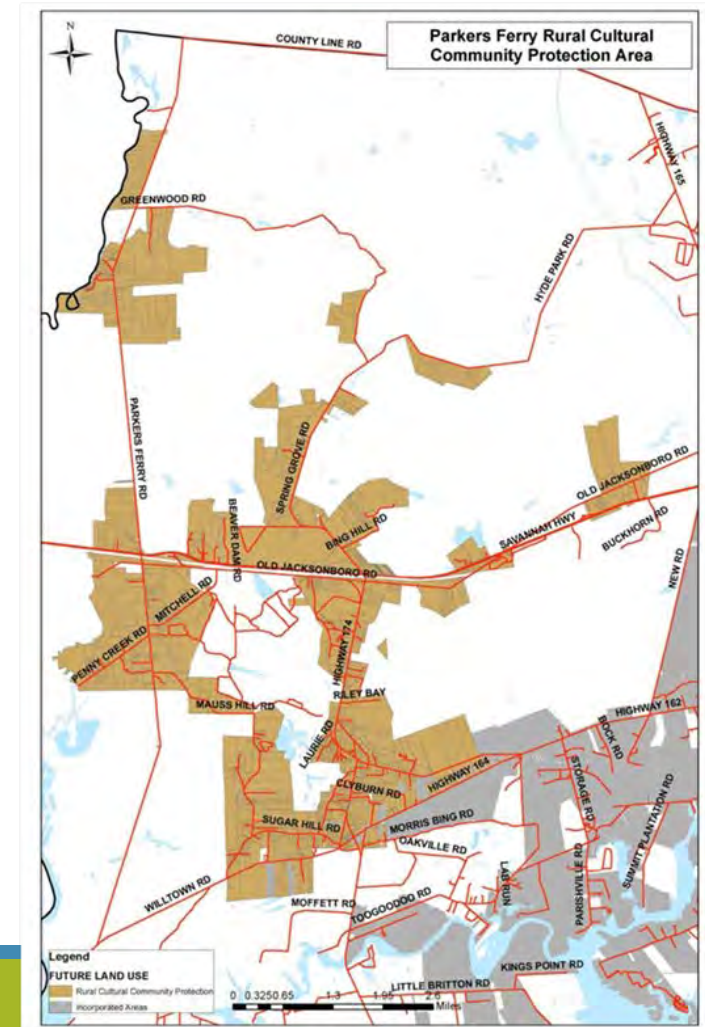
Parkers Ferry Community



Community Plan Study Area

- Pockets of small lots in settlement areas with scattered commercial and civic/institutional uses
- Large tracts of agricultural and timber lands (which were excluded from study area)

Map of Charleston County



Parkers Ferry Community Plan History

- Starting in 2013, staff worked with community members to define the study area boundary, community name, and complete a community needs survey;
- Results of the survey and community input were used to identify specific community needs and potential solutions; and
- Concurrent with these community meetings was the Five-Year Review of the Charleston County Comprehensive Plan, including a new future land use designation (Rural Cultural Community Protection) tailored to the community's needs.

Rural Cultural Community Protection Future Land Use

“... is intended to protect and promote the culture and unique development patterns of existing communities and sustain their strong sense of community”

-Charleston County Comprehensive Plan

Parkers Ferry Community Issues

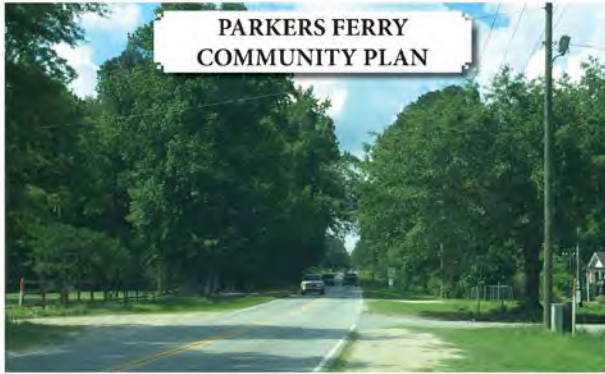


Zoning regulations had “zoned out” commercial uses, making the small businesses that had historically been in the community (general stores, social clubs, etc.) non-conforming.

Land development regulations impeded the subdivision of lands for family members

Heirs' property issues

- If heirs failed to coordinate on paying annual tax bills, land could be lost at the annual tax sale
- Land without clear title cannot be subdivided



A collaborative planning effort to preserve the cultural and natural resources of the historic Parkers Ferry community
Adopted December 15, 2016



Community Plan

Approx. 250 community members participated in community meetings throughout 2015 and 2016

Community plan includes strategies to address planning & zoning issues, employment and economic development, public works/transportation, and public services



Parkers Ferry Community Plan

3. Plan Implementation Strategies

Listed below are the recommended implementation strategies to address the issues identified by the community and achieve their vision for the area.

- 1. Evaluate and update the Community Plan, as needed, with community input.**
- 2. Planning and Zoning Strategies** to allow more flexibility to subdivide property; allow commercial uses and preserve natural and cultural resources.
 - Strategy 2.1: Adopt amendments to the Charleston County Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance (ZLDR), including but not limited to an overlay zoning district, as applicable (a draft overlay zoning district map is included on page 11).
 - Strategy 2.2: Monitor and evaluate the updated zoning ordinance and amend as needed.
- 3. Employment and Economic Development Strategies** to increase employment opportunities for local residents; encourage local retail and personal services; and improve educational and/or workforce training opportunities to build a local employment base.
 - Strategy 3.1: Investigate methods to incentivize new development or redevelopment in identified commercial nodes.
 - Strategy 3.2: Identify and pursue grant opportunities that encourage economic investment in the area.
 - Strategy 3.3: Coordinate with Charleston County Transportation Development Department, Charleston County Public Works Department, and the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to receive updates on Parkers Ferry Area projects.
 - Strategy 3.4: Investigate potential funding sources such as the Rural Transportation Alternatives Program (RTAP) grants for future public works and transportation projects.
 - Strategy 3.5: Coordinate with Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) regarding the Regional Bicycle Pedestrian Plan Update to continue expanding transportation and recreational options for residents.
- 4. Public Works and Transportation Strategies** to improve the quality of the transportation network; and improve the quality of life for residents.

Strategy 2.1: Adopt amendments to the Charleston County Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance (ZLDR), including but not limited to an overlay zoning district, as applicable.

Adopted December 15, 2016

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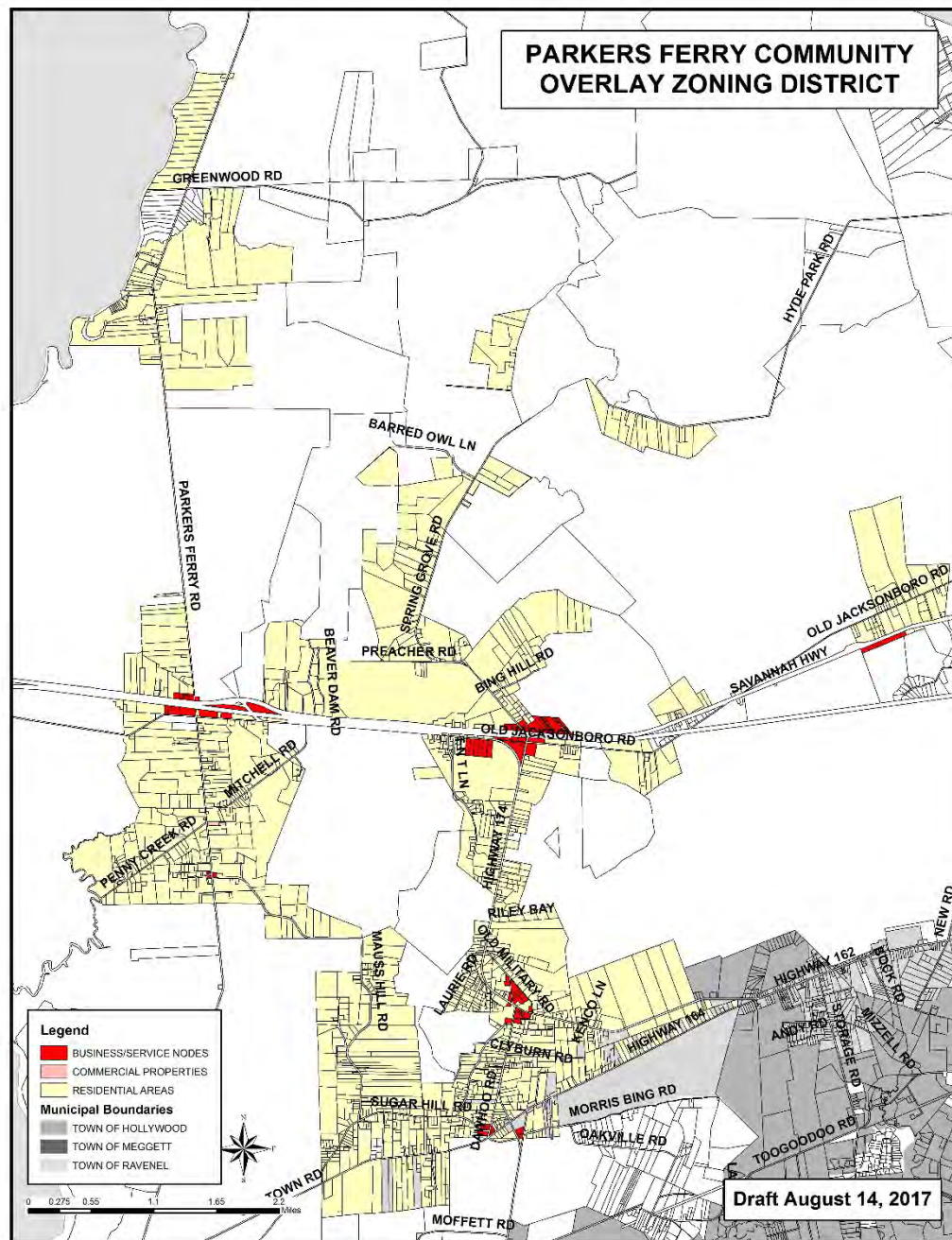
The Parkers Ferry Community Overlay Zoning District (PF-O)

Addresses primary community needs and issues by:

- Preserving the unique cultural heritage of the community;
- Improving potential for retail/public services and employment opportunities; and
- Increasing flexibility to subdivide and develop property.

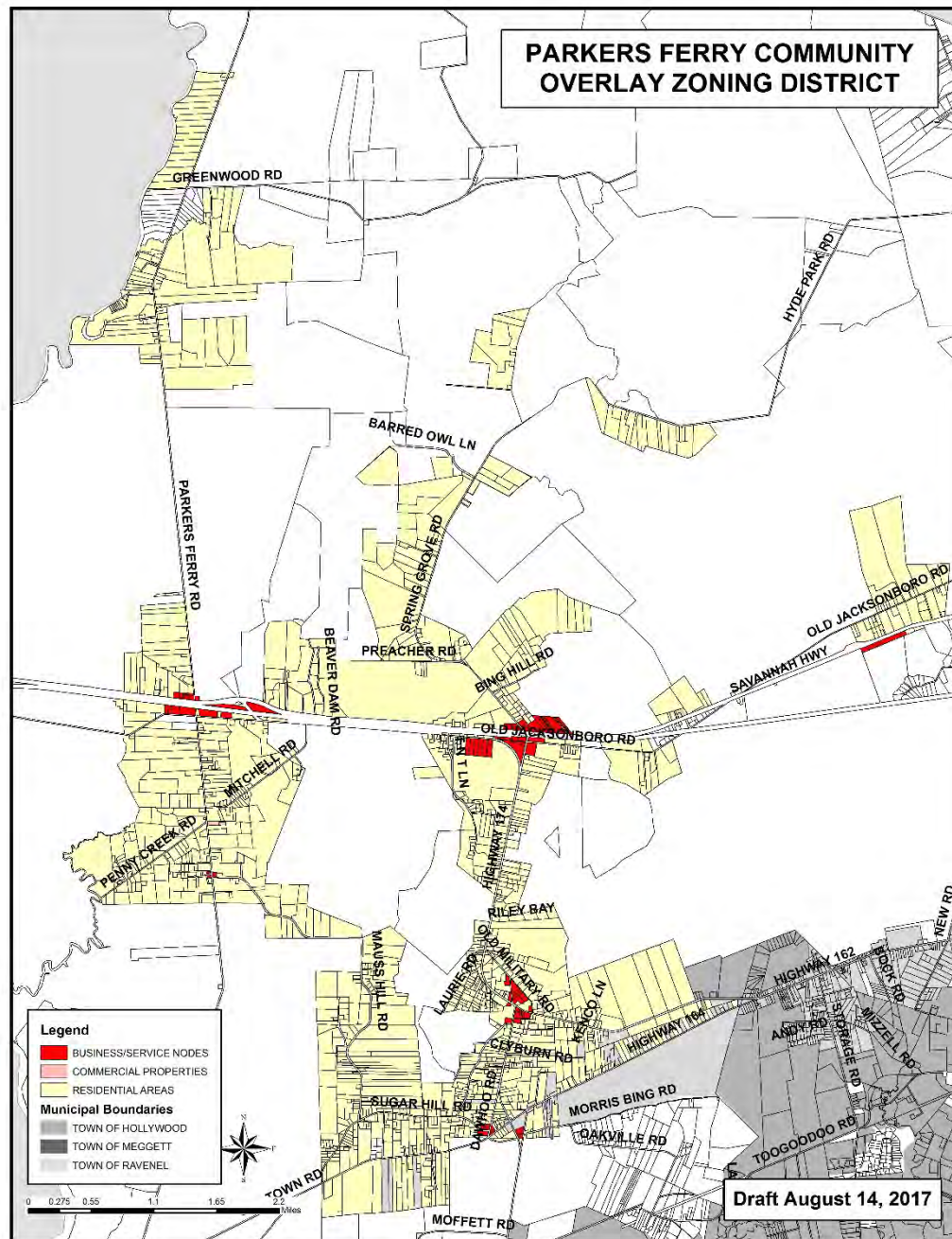
Creates two PF-O development districts:

- Residential Areas; and
- Business Nodes and Commercial Properties



Residential Areas

- The PF-O provides additional flexibility for parcels within the Residential Areas designation, including:
 - An expansion in the number of homes allowed;
 - More flexibility in lot requirements to enable subdivision;
 - Increased ability to develop Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs);
 - More flexibility regarding home occupations; and
 - Providing additional permitted uses allowed.



Business Nodes and Commercial Properties

Business Nodes are intended to allow the establishment of the businesses the residents want to see in the community in the future.

- Six Business Nodes;
- All commercially zoned parcels retained their commercial zoning either as part of a Business Node or as a “Commercial Property” (properties that are zoned commercial but not located in a business node; and
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are allowed with the same restrictions as the Residential Areas district.

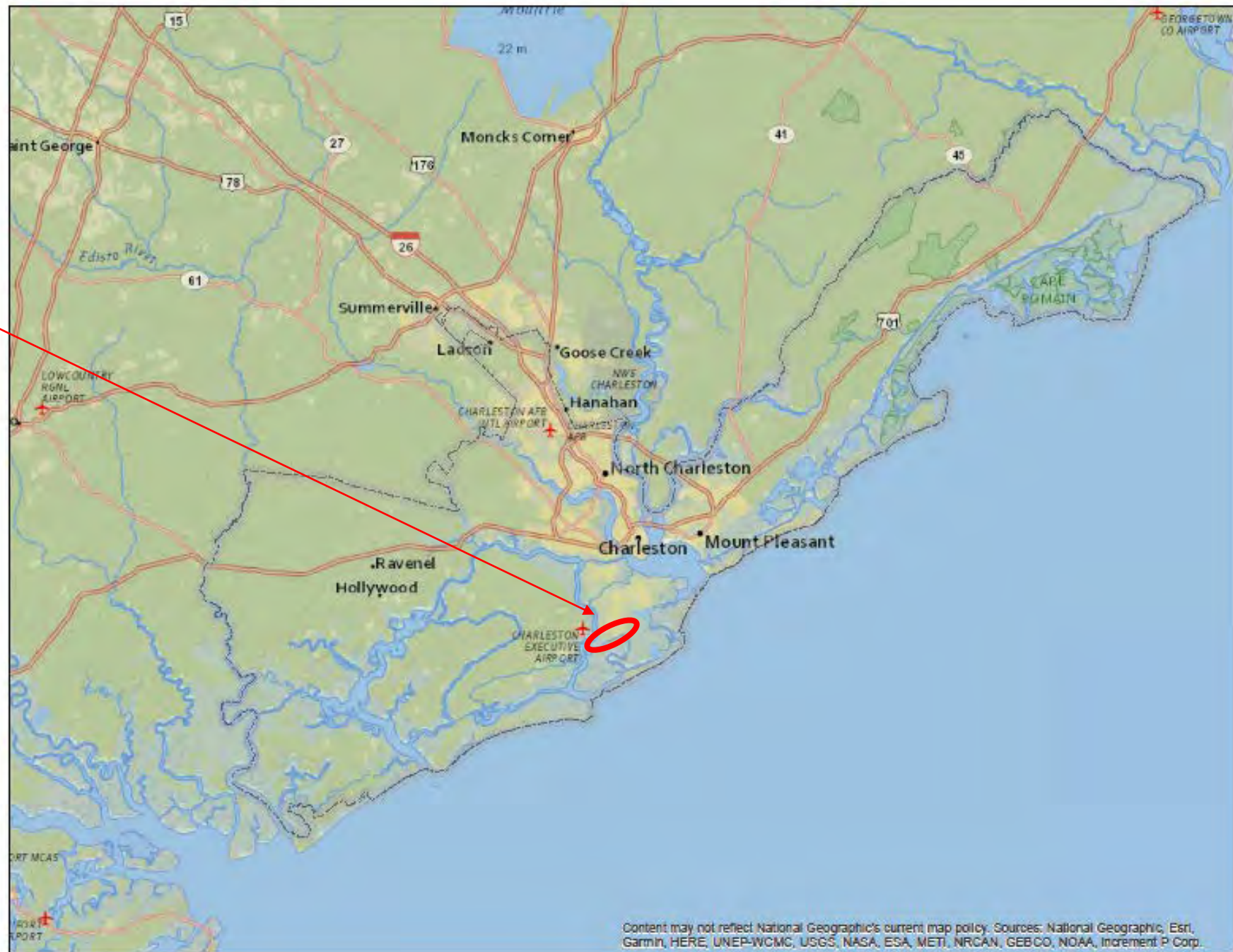
Results of Parkers Ferry Plan & Overlay

Encourages community preservation

Provides opportunities for residents to subdivide their property for family members wanting to return to the area

Offers more opportunities for economic development and employment, contributing to community vitality

Sol Legare Community Planning Project

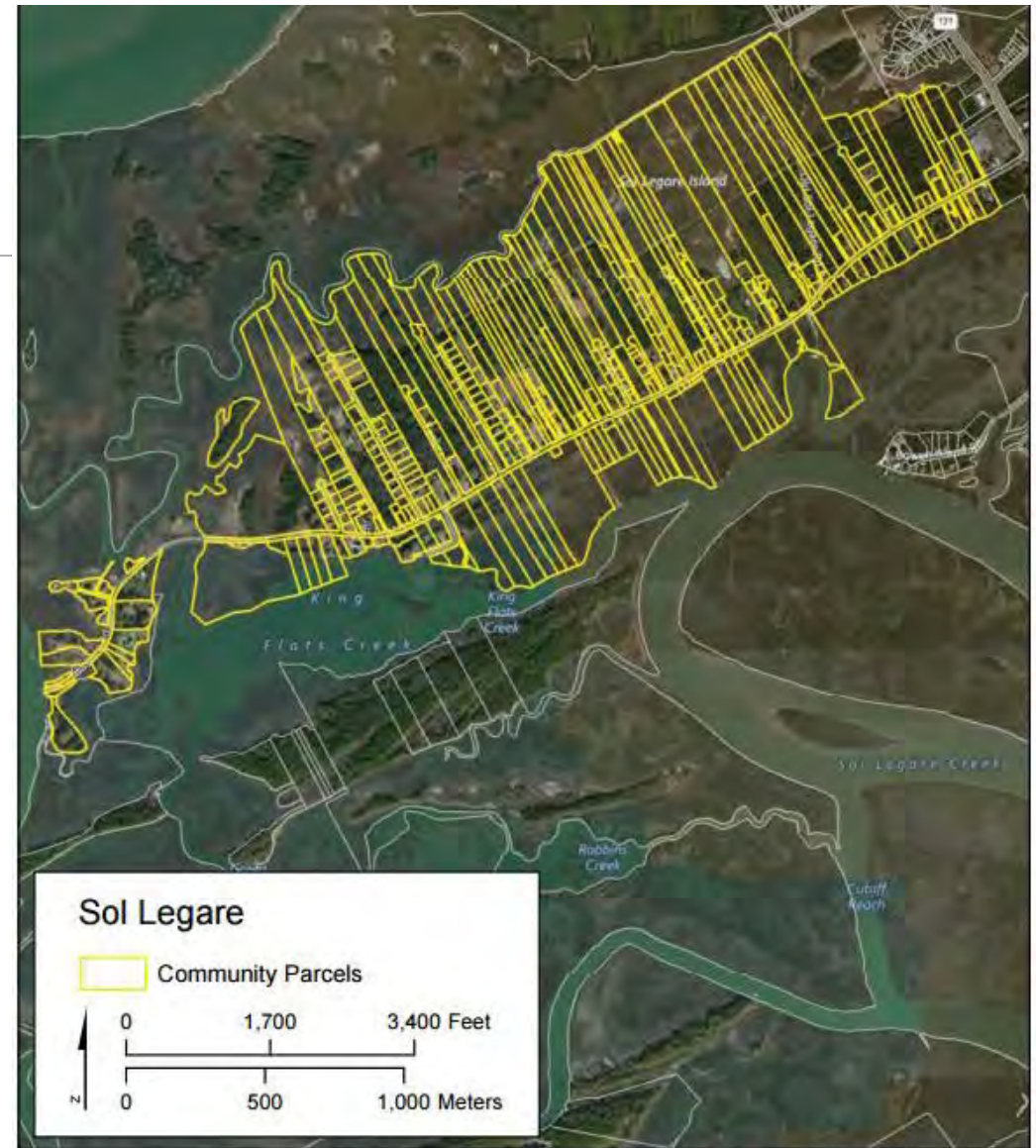


Sol Legare Project History

Sol Legare is a historically African-American community (freedmen remnant settlement type) that was first settled post-Reconstruction Era.

The land was subdivided into long-lot farms with access to both the waterways and the main road (Sol Legare Road).

The community was designated as “eligible for the National Register of Historic Places” in the *2016 Charleston County Historic Resources Survey Update*.



Sol Legare Community Plan

The community thrived throughout the twentieth century, with successful small businesses such as Backman's Seafood and Mosquito Beach.

As zoning regulations evolved, many of the commercial businesses in the area became legal non-conforming uses. Modern-day subdivision regulations prohibited further subdivision of properties.



Sol Legare Overlay Zoning District

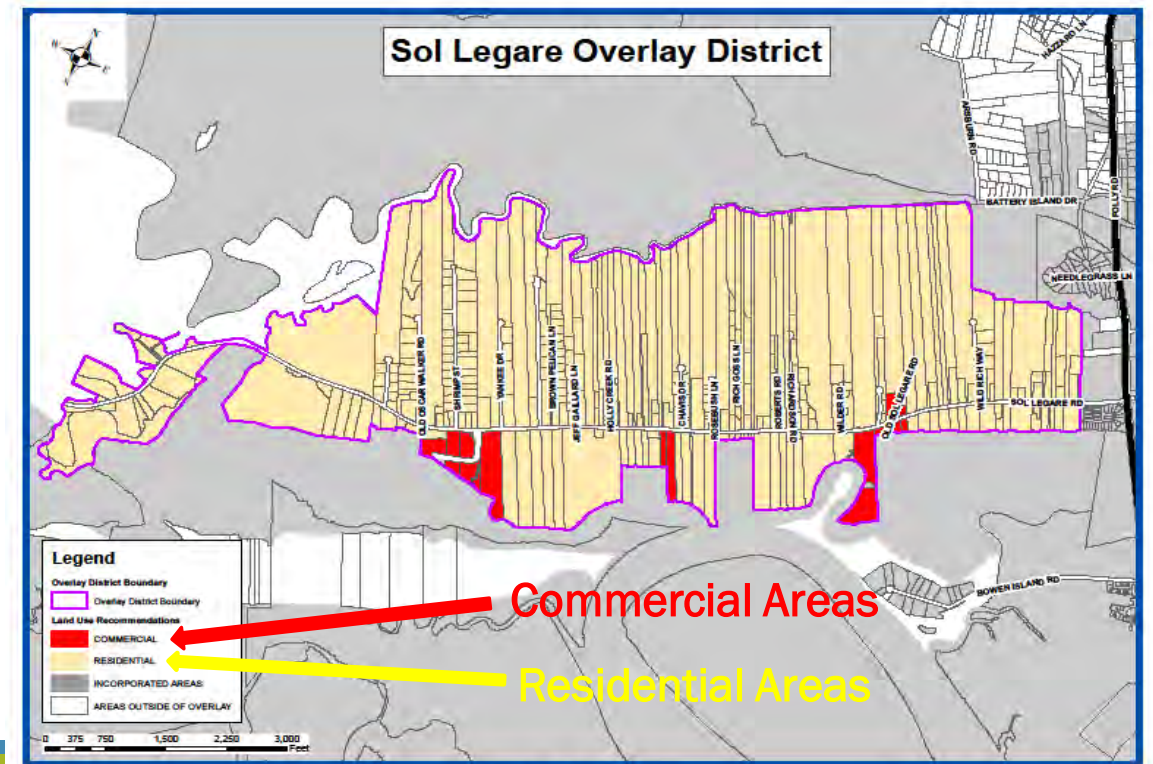
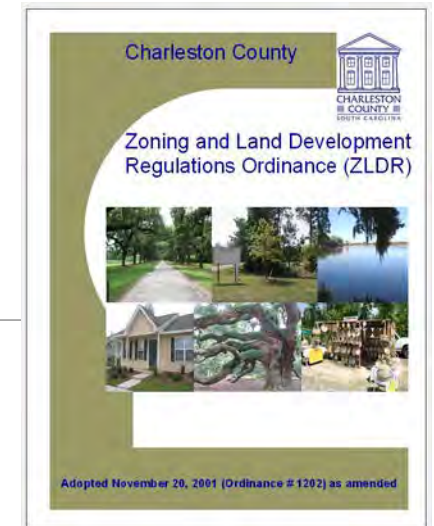
Establishes flexible subdivision options for the unique long, narrow lots in the area

- Decreased setbacks

- Maximum building sizes for single-family homes

Allows for the redevelopment of properties that have historically had commercial uses (e.g. Backman's Seafood, Mosquito Beach, etc.)

Relaxes standards for home occupations and accessory dwelling units (ADUs)



James Island, SC

DRAFT - November 2017

Residential Area

Similar to the current zoning, Special Management 3 (S-3), with added flexibility

	S-3 Development Option	SL-O Development Option
MAXIMUM DENSITY	3 dwelling units per acre	3 dwelling units per acre
MINIMUM LOT AREA	14,500 SF; 12,500 SF if public water and/or sewer is available	10,000 SF
MINIMUM LOT WIDTH	80 feet; 70 feet with public water and/or sewer is available	50 feet
MINIMUM LOT WIDTH:DEPTH RATIO	None	None
MINIMUM SETBACKS		
Front/Street Side	25 feet	10 feet
Interior Side	15 feet	5 feet
Rear	25 feet	5 feet
OCRM Critical Line	30 feet	30 feet
MAXIMUM BUILDING COVER	30% of lot	30% of lot
MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT	35 feet	35 feet
MAXIMUM BUILDING SIZE	None	2,500 SF

Note: the SL-O option only applies to lots less than 110 feet in width.

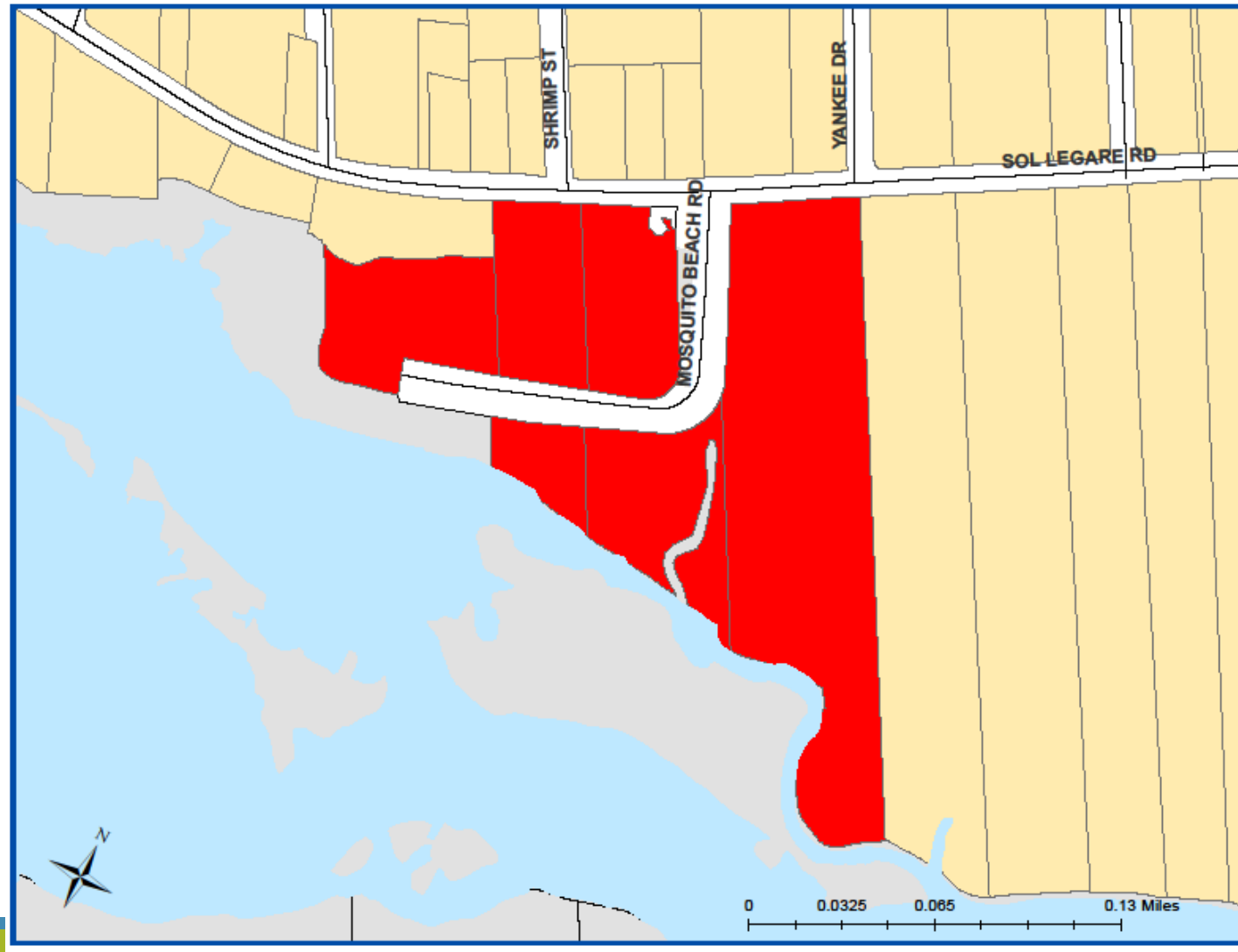
Designating the Commercial Areas

The community stated that they would like to see former commercial properties have the opportunity to redevelop, but they do not want to see many new commercial uses develop.

Working with the community, we identified the following commercial areas:

- Mosquito Beach
- Backman's Seafood property(s)
- Seashore Lodge
- Vacant snack/convenience stores at 1981 and 1987 Sol Legare Road

Mosquito Beach



Mosquito Beach



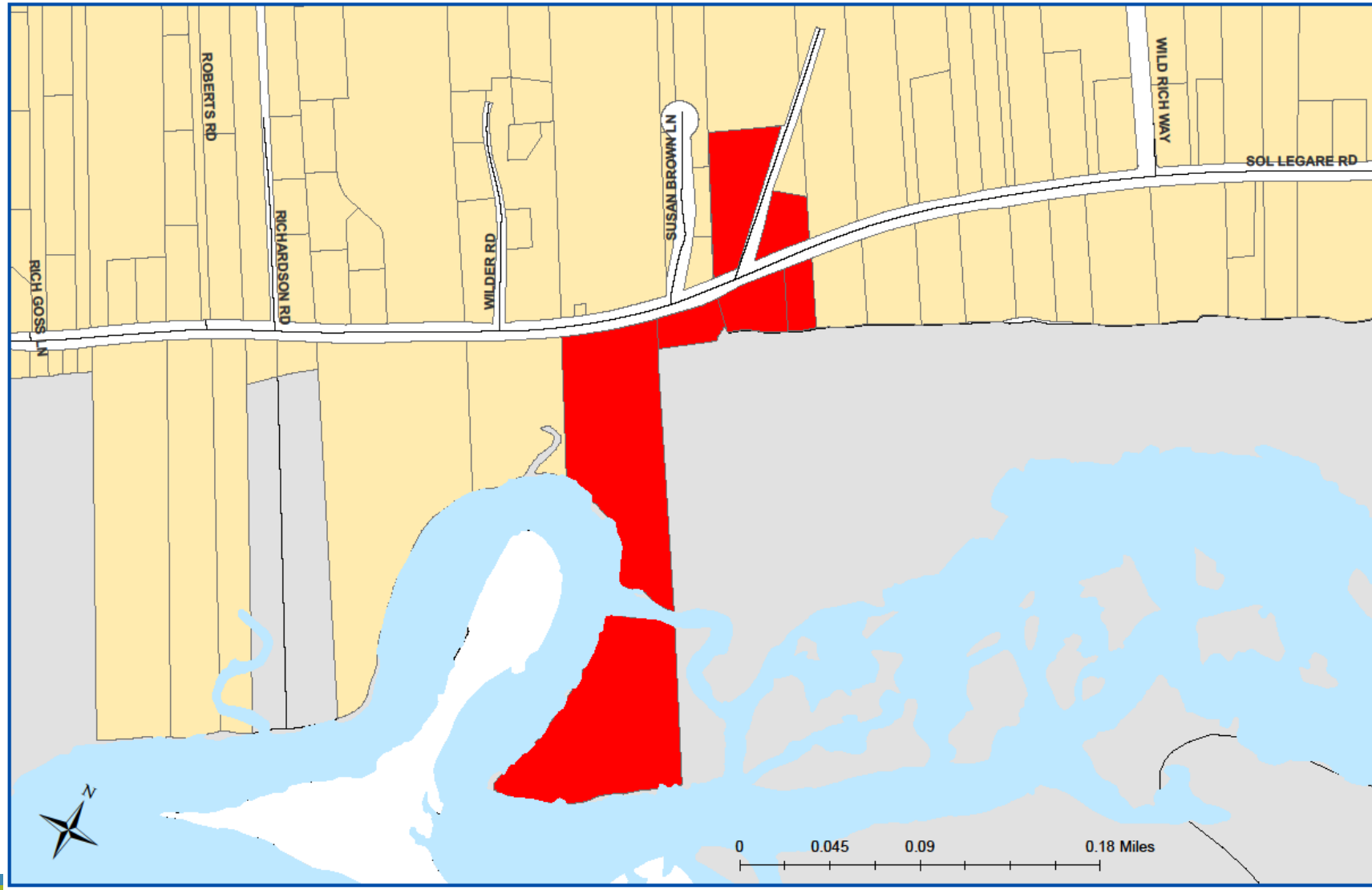
1981 and 1987 Sol Legare Road



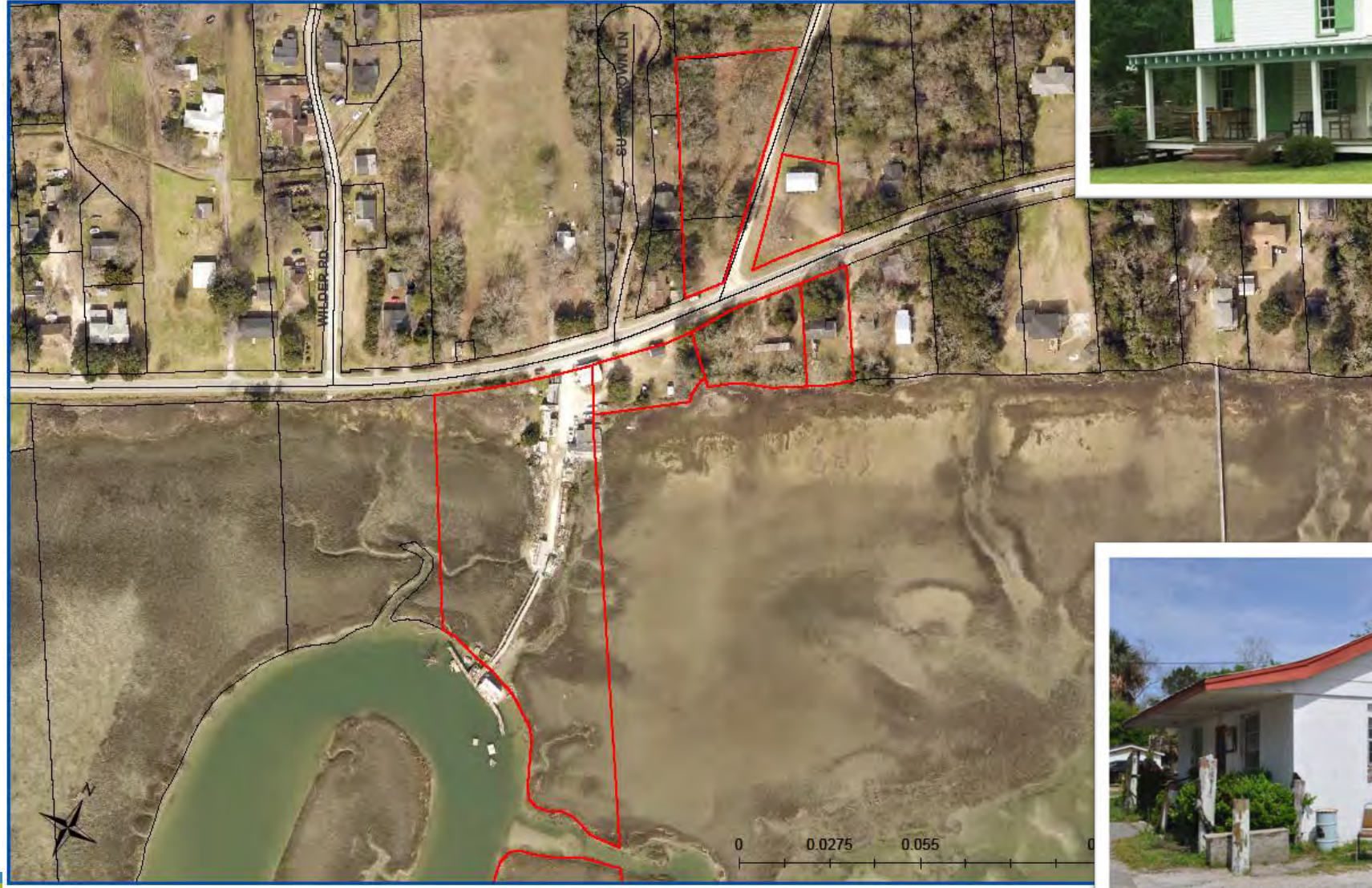
1981 and 1987 Sol Legare Road



Backman's Seafood and Seashore Lodge Area



Backman's Seafood and Seashore Lodge Area



Examples for future efforts

The Sol Legare and Parkers Ferry projects serve as examples for planning in other areas of the County

- Opportunity for collaboration with the Town of Mount Pleasant

County Planning was awarded the Whitelaw award by Historic Charleston Foundation in May 2018 for these unique preservation planning projects



2018 Ten-Year Update of the Comprehensive Plan

Collaboration with the African American Settlement Communities Historic Commission to update the Cultural Resources Element

Coordination with the Town of Mount Pleasant as they update their Plan

- Future Project: Update the Mount Pleasant Overlay Zoning District to be an area plan that recognizes the significance of the settlement communities, keeping preservation and community vitality in mind.

3.4.3: CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT GOAL

Cultural, historic and archaeological resources, unique settlement patterns of traditional Lowcountry communities (such as historically African-American communities and family settlements), and traditional activities (such as Sweetgrass Basket Making) should be preserved and protected from potential negative impacts of growth and development.

Proposed new Cultural Resources Element strategy:

Work with communities along the Gullah Geechee corridor to establish ways to preserve the unique settlement patterns and community character.

Historic Preservation Planning

Historic Preservation Ordinance

National Park Service Civil Rights Grant: Oral History Project

Historic Preservation Ordinance

Establish a local register of historic places

- African American settlement communities can apply to be listed as historic districts

Require a Certificate of Historic Appropriateness for:

- Demolitions, alterations, new development, etc. of historic properties
- Subdivisions and site plan review applications for properties within 300' of historic properties or districts



A. Map of the Phillips Co





National Park Service Civil Rights Grant Project

Oral History project
interviewing alumni from
South Carolina equalization
schools, specifically W.
Gresham Meggett High
School, located in the
Grimball Farm settlement
community

- Grimball community leaders are heavily involved in the project and want to use a portion of the High School as a community center/museum



Resources

- Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor
- Charleston County Historic Resources Survey Update (2016)
- Charleston County Parkers Ferry Community Plan + Overlay Zoning District Regulations
- Charleston County Sol Legare Community Plan + Overlay Zoning District Regulations

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Charleston County Zoning & Planning Department

<https://www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/zoning-planning/index.php>