

# HILTON HEAD ISLAND

R/UDAT

OCTOBER 5 - 9, 1995

TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND  
SOUTH CAROLINA

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1995

REGIONAL/URBAN DESIGN ASSISTANCE TEAM • THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

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## What is R/UDAT?

### The R/UDAT Concept

The Regional and Urban Design Committee of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) has been sending Urban Design Assistance Teams to various American cities since 1967.

The teams respond to the problems as described by the local AIA Chapters and their community sponsors.

Each Regional/Urban Design Assistance (R/UDAT) is specially selected to include professionals experienced in the particular problems of the area under study. Team members are not compensated for their services and agree not to accept commissions for work resulting from their recommendations.

The team acquaints itself with the community and its people, engages in analysis from a fresh and unbiased perspective, and offers its recommendations for planning and action strategies.

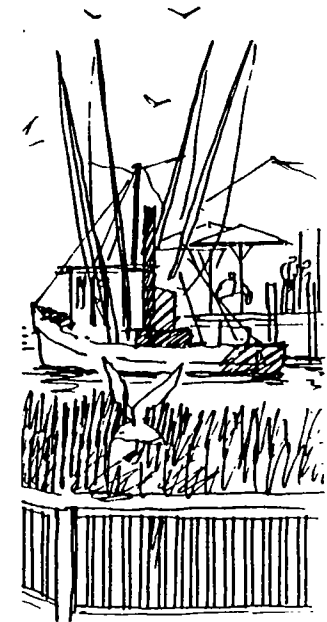
The process is very intense and includes team meetings with community groups, residents, site visits and tours, public hearings and late night work sessions. This report is the end product of the four day effort.

Over two hundred cities with a combined population of more than 25 million citizens have been served and professional services valued in excess of \$4 million have been donated. Hilton Head Island is R/UDAT number 213.

## Making R/UDAT Happen

The R/UDAT program receives many inquiries each year from communities throughout the country requesting assistance. Communities that are selected for R/UDAT visits must demonstrate to the National Task Group community-wide support. This support must come from both the public and private sectors and represent broad support throughout all of the segments of the community. This support must be documented to the R/UDAT Task Group through letters, cash contributions, and in-kind services and contributions.

The citizens of Hilton Head Island, acting through their local R/UDAT Steering Committee, have clearly demonstrated their commitment to R/UDAT.



# HILTON HEAD ISLAND R/UDAT

## Mission Statement

To provide an objective, politics-free process for the Island's northwest quadrant with the goal of bringing that area's development into the Island's economic mainstream; to open up lines of communication among Ward 1's neighborhoods and with the Island community at large; to build trust in an Island wide relationship historically marked by distrust and misunderstanding; and to provide the people of Ward 1 the tools they need to more effectively advance their economic interests.

## Objectives

Outline and initiate a process that would eventually culminate in conceptual land use plans to be used by the four neighborhood groupings in Ward 1. The process should result in neighborhoods consensus on a plan and result in market-based development of areas of the community, not just individually owned parcels. The process must take into account the fractionalized nature of land ownership in the area and recommend funding mechanisms and sources to bring a plan closer to fruition.

Outline a process that would result in a conceptual utilities plan (roads, water, sewer, drainage, electricity and cable television) to be used by the four neighborhood groupings in Ward 1. The process should include funding mechanisms and sources to bring a plan closer to fruition.

Identify mechanisms and funding sources for the legal costs of clearing title to heirs property.

Identify methods to provide property tax relief where appropriate and desired to ensure continued ownership even as the land's market value increased with economic development.

## A Development History of Hilton Head Island

In the span of a few decades, Hilton Head Island transformed from a small rural, agricultural community to a regional urban center and international resort.

But that development has been the tale of two communities. On the 20,000 acres concentrated in large tract ownership in the 1950's, development came relatively swiftly, guided and funded by private interests who employed private controls over future land use to protect, enhance and profit from the Island's natural beauty.

In contrast, the 3,500 acres of Ward 1, held largely in 5- to 10-acre parcels, remains much as it was in 1956 when the first bridge to Hilton Head opened up development to this sea island. The hurdles to reaping the economic rewards enjoyed by land owners in other parts of the Island have to date proved too high for many. They include fragmented land ownership, multiple ownership with clouded legal title ("heirs" property), lack of financial resources, lack of utility services, and an increasing tax burden as development elsewhere boosted land values. Many Ward 1 families have owned and lived on this land since their forebears bought it shortly after the Civil War. Their ties to the land are deep, and it is an inheritance they have protected fiercely to pass on to their children.

Each of the planned communities on Hilton Head (Sea Pines, Palmetto Dunes, Port Royal, for example) began with a conceptual master plan. Such privately funded master plans were the starting points of a 20- to 30-year process of

community building. Such plans typically involved an array of skilled professionals, including landscape architects and land-use planners, architects, market research analysts, land-use lawyers, financial analysts, engineers, golf course architects, naturalists and ecologists and others. Both initial plan development and subsequent plan revisions were costly and time-consuming.

While most planned community development on Hilton Head Island occurred under tight private controls, the period from the mid-1970's to the early 1980's saw the emergence of development marked by higher density and few land-use controls. This type of development sparked the effort to incorporate the Town of Hilton Head Island when critics did not get the response they sought from Beaufort County officials.

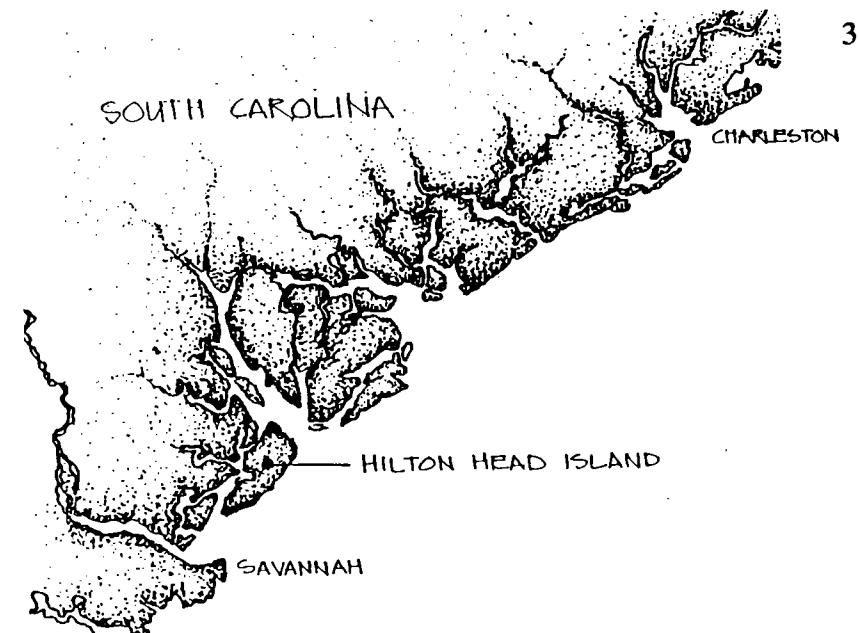
In 1983, Island voters approved a "limited services" government that concentrated initially on the regulation of development and growth. The local branch of the NAACP and many Ward 1 residents fought incorporation because they saw few benefits for their community from a "limited services" government, only higher taxes.

The resulting political climate is one marked by distrust. Many native islanders have seen wholesale change brought to their community's way of life with relatively little perceived economic benefit, particularly as landholders. Some seek ways to hold onto their land as is, but face mounting financial pressures to do otherwise. Others are ready to reap the economic benefits of development, but lack the resources.

The fragmented land ownership and heirs property issues have made even the seemingly simple task of paving a road nearly impossible and has added to the complexity and expense of providing water and sewer service to Ward 1 residents and landowners.

What the Hilton Head Island community now seeks is the end to this separation by degrees of development. The Island can no longer bear the fragmentation brought by economic disparity if it ever hopes to move forward as one community.

*\*Special thanks to Charles E. Fraser for his contributions to this narrative.*



## Introduction

*We're free on Carolina's shore  
We're all at home and free.*

John Greenleaf Whittier

The theme of this report is simple. This R/UDAT is not a study of design or planning, but of a chronic failure of a town to meet its municipal obligations. The town is focusing the costs of remedying the problems of growth on this Island on a small, closed class of its residents---the residents and owners of property in Ward 1. This policy appears to be conscious and permanent, no matter how much it is couched in words of deferral. It appears to be focused on the native Island residents, who have concluded, with some justification, that "we seem to be the real non-conforming use here."

This report sets forth a series of steps we believe that the town can take, if taken promptly, to retreat from this inequity. These are steps that we believe are basic duties of municipal government, and therefore they are not projects for the future, but mandates for the present. We believe that if the town does not implement these steps, it will be in further substantial default of its legal obligations.

It may very well be true that the Island is choked by traffic and growth and that every citizen faces the effects of congestion and perhaps even a sense of paradise lost. It may well be that the plantations were in the aggregate a significant over-development of the Island, because of the traffic and other demands they impose on the Island's resources. What is equally true is that the remedy for this problem is not to impose substantially all the cost of fixing it on the residents of Ward 1.

That, unfortunately, is what at present is being done. It is being done by refusing to see that Ward 1 residents get the same basic services that the residents of the rest of the town have enjoyed for years. It is being done by effectively closing down Ward 1 from development, certainly from the same level and acceptance of development that greeted the master plans for the plantations.

When the town officials say "we are not in the water, sewer, or road business," they miss, in our opinion, the most fundamental of their duties---the duty to provide equal and effective services to their residents. If there is another district or entity around that might take the lead in providing these services, all well and good, but the underlying obligation to pick up the flag if it is dropped by someone else is the duty of the town and the duty of no one else.

5 When the town officials say that we have traffic or other problems that temporarily prevent us from approving development of any size in Ward 1, they are not being entirely candid. It is apparent both in what has been said and done in the past 13 years that the town presently does not intend to permit Ward 1 to develop and that today's "deferral" of development is a prelude to some new policy of tomorrow that will say again that Ward 1 cannot get there from here. It is a simple fact that Ward 1 is not being permitted to develop; the town should face that fact squarely and for its own sake.

There is, finally, an irony in how this is all playing out, an irony that cannot go unnoticed or unmentioned. The native Island people were here first; some of their families go back many generations on this Island. They did not bring development here; left to themselves, they probably would have gone on into the distant future living the quiet, introspective, unchanging lives that most of them value above all else. They are not responsible for the ills of this Island;

their way of life is just as impacted by the congestion and the change as the environment is. They unwittingly mortgaged their way of life to the changes on this Island. And if being somewhere first counts for anything, it must bestow on these Island people a special equity in the well-being and bounty of this place.

To visit on them, therefore, the major burden of fixing the mistakes of growth here is wrong. It is a function not of a balance between right and wrong, but of political power and the neglect of simple justice. We have been profoundly moved, all of us, at how what has happened here to the native Island residents in the last 15 or 20 years cannot be made to seem symmetrical or fair no matter what vantage point is adopted to observe it.

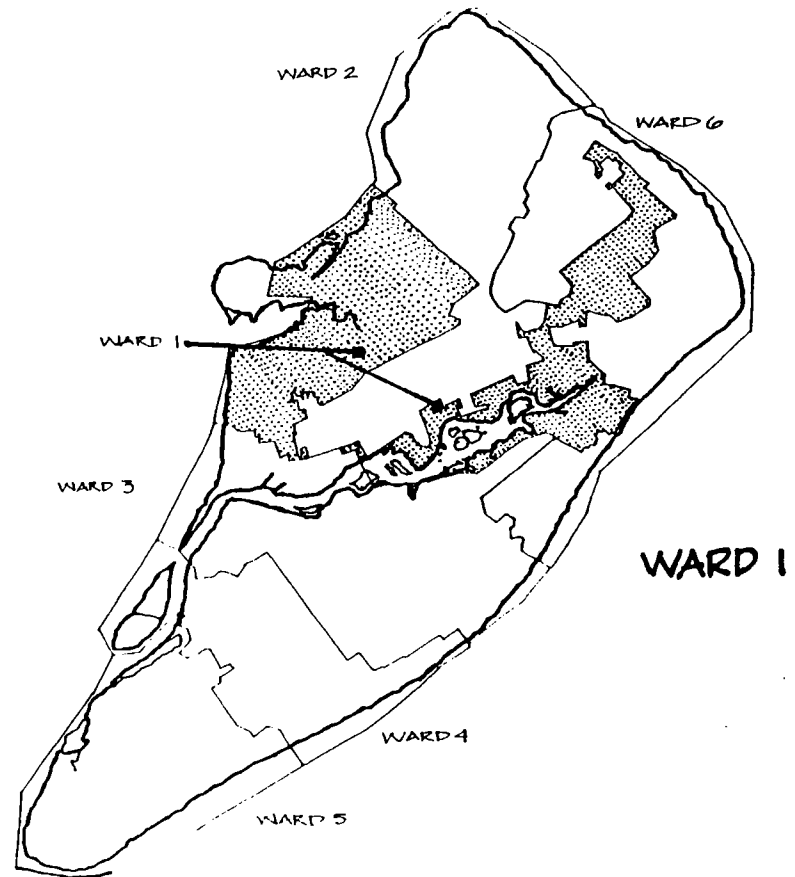
We have suggested that the town adopt a brief, focused, and specific period for master planning for Ward 1, perhaps no more than six months. The deferrals and delays of the last 15 years suggest that any longer period would be another invitation to delay for its own sake. During this period, we believe the town should examine and deal forthrightly with the specific issues that this R/UDAT has developed and set forth in this report. This is not because R/UDAT is able to see what no one else can see, but because R/UDAT has simply articulated in a categorical way what is as plain as the hand in front of your face. These issues are **obvious**.

Within the Ward 1 community there are differences of opinion, some disputes, and some would claim a certain "lack of vision." It is not possible to be too critical of anyone who seems to lack vision, when that person is preoccupied with getting basic services and a right to the use of his or her land. On the other hand, if the town enters into this brief period of planning with an open heart, the citizens of Ward 1 must be

prepared immediately to collaborate to make this period meaningful and productive.

One way in which the citizens of Ward 1 can collaborate is by fixing the problem of the heirs' property. We have suggested the creation of a non-profit corporation to bring within the means of every citizen the clearing of heirs title. We talk more of this plan in this report.

We have enjoyed it here, although this has been a non-traditional R/UDAT. The essence of R/UDAT is design, planning, and the implementation of ideas a whole community can get behind---ideas that the political structure supports, or at least takes seriously. This, at the moment, does not seem to be the definition of the problem here, but we have felt obligated for that fact alone to adopt a different and very direct approach to this problem.





## **Principles**

During the course of the R/UDAT, many issues were raised by those who spoke to the team, at the Saturday morning hearing, in the small group meetings, and one on one in formal and informal encounters. While many people raised specific issues, whether they be the effects of the Traffic Impact Fee or the extension of sewer and water service into Ward 1, others raised fundamental questions about the nature of the community and its history, the role of local government, and the relationship of one part of the community to another. From a wide range of opinions, insights and viewpoints, five basic issues emerged:

- Vision
- Equity
- Responsibility
- History
- Urgency

These issues inevitably define the basic framework within which all other matters, from the most general to the most specific, must be perceived and addressed.

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### **Vision**

Every community has a vision of what it is, and what it wants to become. Hilton Head Island, however, shares two conflicting visions for the same space. Until those visions are resolved into one, the Island can never become a true community.

The plantations were developed as resort communities, selling a idyllic vision unmarred by the realities of the communities from which the vacationers - and later the retirees - came. In this vision, the Native Islanders have become all but invisible. While it would be an exaggeration to suggest that this vision entails the

disappearance of the Native Islanders from Hilton Head Island, it has gone a long way in that respect. The traditional communities are unmarked on Island maps, and the rich history of the Island from the Civil War to the establishment of Sea Pines Plantation gets short shrift in tourist brochures and guidebooks.

This community has no true vision of the future, or if it does, it is of a future that is essentially the present refined and marginally improved. It is no surprise that the Town's comprehensive plan, although detailed and informative, makes no attempt to convey a vision of the future. The creative spirit that characterized the initial development of the plantations appears to have been lost.

Side by side with the plantations live the Native Islanders, a people with a radically different vision of the Island, which is home to them in a more intense and permanent way, an Island to which - despite the pressures of recent decades - they remain committed. Their vision is of a community seeking to survive in and on their land, fighting to do so against almost insurmountable social and economic pressure.

While it appears that much of the Town's majority looks forward to a future much like the present, the same is not true of the Native Islanders. Their future as a community is likely to be either worse - perhaps far worse - or better.

While many Ward 1 residents and property owners with whom we spoke talked of a vision of a place in which they could live comfortably, supported by a strong community, with good public services and economic opportunities, they all realized that this would only come into being through concerted action, not only by themselves, but by the entire Island. The R/UDAT team feels that this is a vision worth working, and if necessary fighting, for.

The goal of making that vision a reality forms the fundamental grounding for our recommendations.

## Equity

Equity is a fundamental principle of American society. It means that different individuals and groups are treated fairly, that resources are fairly divided and shared, and that opportunities are equally available to all. Hilton Head Island falls seriously short of living up to this principle.

Within the Island live two groups, one made up of people whose families have been long-time residents, and another of - more or less - recent migrants. The latter group, largely residents of the plantations, are substantially more affluent as a group than the former, the Native Islanders. By living in the plantations, where services are provided by private associations, the latter enjoy a far higher level of service than the former, who are dependent for public services on a government with a narrow view of its responsibilities to its citizens. While there may be historical reasons for this disparity, and some may try to justify it on economic grounds, the fact remains that it is not equitable. It is not a fair distribution of resources.

That same government, mandated by the majority of its citizens to control growth on the remaining vacant land on the Island, imposes constraints with a heavy hand on the owners of the remaining vacant land, predominately the Native Islanders. By comparison, the owners of the plantations - more than 2/3 of the Island - largely wealthy recent arrivals, obtained vested development rights prior to incorporation of the Town, and are thus immune from the Town's restrictive land management policies. One can argue that this inequity is a function of time, rather than conscious design, but its existence cannot be denied.

Opportunities, in this case for development, have not been equally available.



*"I have been a lot of places. I have met a lot of people. I have done a lot of things. But this is home."*

-Perry White (Native)

Native Islanders have not benefited proportionately from the development of the plantations. While there has been some improvement, and some jobs, they have not led to a quality of life that is necessarily better than before. The cost of living on the Island has skyrocketed, so that Native Islanders employed in poorly paid menial positions are often worse off than before. As property values have risen, so have property taxes. Few if any Native Islanders are in positions of power or influence in the public or private sectors of Hilton Head Island. Town government, which reputedly employs no Native Islanders, has not responded to their needs and concerns.

Perhaps the greatest inequity of all is that of the change in the character of the Island. An island which once belonged to the Native Islanders has slipped away from them. The greater part of the Island is off limits, behind locked gates. Islanders whose ancestors are buried in the Harbor Town cemetery must obtain permission from Sea Pines security guards to visit their graves. The Islanders have become virtually invisible to the new residents, who are largely ignorant or indifferent to their traditions, practices, and interests.

Respect for the minority, and a willingness to address its needs and concerns, is essential to equity, and indeed to the practice of democracy. Too often, on Hilton Head Island, the majority has not followed that practice. It is crucial that the imbalance that has been perpetuated for many decades be redressed. That principle has been a central theme in the recommendations that follow.

*"If my home is destroyed I was told I couldn't build it back. If anything happens to my home, I cannot leave. I was born on that site."*

-Lou Ethel Hill (Ward 1 Resident)

## Responsibility

Fundamental to the American civic system is the obligation of all parties to accept responsibility for their communities, whether as citizens or as government. Americans are known as citizens, rather than subjects, in recognition of their commitment to be an active part of their community, rather than a passive spectator to its unfolding. Similarly, the concept of home rule, enshrined since 1973 in the South Carolina Constitution, assumes that in return for the ability to act, local government will take responsibility for its actions. On Hilton Head Island, all parties, but particularly the Town government, have failed to live up to their responsibilities under the American social compact.

The concept of Town government as a "limited service government", excluding large realms of service delivery from its purview, is not a statutory or legal formulation, but a policy decision entered into at the time of incorporation. Whatever merit it may have had at the time, its abandonment as a guiding principle of local government is long overdue. It has served as a means by which Town government has escaped taking responsibility for matters that are rightfully theirs.

**Local government, as the government closest to the people, has a fundamental obligation to ensure, to the best of its ability, that all of its citizens obtain the services that they need, according to generally recognized national or regional standards.** If some other entity, be it the County, the State, or a PSD adequately provides that service, the municipality need not act. If they do not, it is the municipality's responsibility to do so. No principle is more fundamental to the ethic of public service and local government.

Responsibility, however, is a reciprocal relationship between government and citizenry. The abdication of responsibility on the part of Town government is paralleled in the reluctance of much of its constituents to act as citizens. Living behind gates in plantations, they lose track of the fact that they are, whatever their inclinations, also citizens of a public realm, the Town of Hilton Head Island. Rather than cater to the tendency of Island residents to withdraw behind their gates, the Town government and civic leadership have an obligation to foster a sense of citizenship, and a consciousness of their membership in an Islandwide community.

While perhaps more understandable in view of this history of frustration and disappointment, the reluctance of many Ward 1 residents to participate more fully as citizens, both of their own community and of the Islandwide community, will also act as a hindrance to achieving their vision. Exercise of political rights, including voting and active participation, creation of strong organizations to carry out programs and activities on behalf of the community, are all essential parts of any strategy to undo the historic inequities affecting the Native Islander community.

The willingness of Town government to acknowledge its responsibilities to its citizens, and on the part of its citizens to acknowledge their responsibilities to their community and to the public realm, are a basic building block without which no strategy to address the needs of Ward 1 can be successful. Without that commitment on the part of all those involved, it will inevitably fail.

*"This town needs to develop a system of protocol."*

-Thomas C. Barnwell, Jr. (Developer,  
Native)

## History

The dynamics of conflict and inequity affecting what might be called the two cultures of Hilton Head Island are inevitably complicated by the history of those cultures, and the clash that began with the development of Sea Pines in the 1950's. At the same time, the reality of the Island is immeasurably enriched by the rich cultural heritage of the Native Islanders, a heritage which, if respected by the entire Island community, may well become a vehicle for increasing opportunities for participation by the Native Islanders in the larger economy and polity.

During the years following the Civil War, the African-American residents of the Island developed a rich, vital, and distinctive culture with its own language, Gullah, organized around a materially poor but spiritually rich farming and fishing life. Although that culture has suffered under the pressure of dramatic economic and political change, it survives. It is unlikely that the Native Islanders would still exist as a distinct and viable community on Hilton Head without the support provided by their history and culture. One cannot separate their demands for better public services and the culture that gives them cohesion.

It is the recognition of this culture that drives much of the direction of this report. Ward I and its vacant lands cannot be treated as a clean slate to be made available for development, or preserved for environmental or aesthetic reasons. All steps taken by government, whether in the provision of services or the framing of development regulations, must be sensitive to the history and the cultural dynamics of the community. Its survival demands no less.

*"When I look around, I don't see any communities of native islanders on any map. These communities meant a lot to us. To be accepted, we've got to get these communities back on the map."*

-Irvin Campbell (Native)



## Urgency

Little is new about the concerns of the Ward 1 residents. It is unlikely that any issue raised during the R/UDAT visit has not been raised before. The documentation provided to the team shows that in many cases issues have been raised for 10, even 20 years. Most Native Islanders opposed incorporation in 1983, fearing that it would do their community more harm than good. After 12 years, it is hard to argue that they were not accurate in their assessment. The residents of Ward 1 have experienced an extended period during which development opportunities were constrained, needed services were not provided, and bit by bit the island they considered their own slipped further and further from their grasp. The frustration and low expectations of many of the individuals speaking to the R/UDAT team was manifest; indeed, after so many years, it is admirable and surprising that so many residents are still hopeful that the future may bring improvement.

This cannot be expected to continue indefinitely. The team came away with a strong feeling that in some respects the R/UDAT process may be something of a last effort, one final attempt to frame a responsible, effective and comprehensive strategy to redress the inequities of the past and create a new future not only for Ward 1, but for the entire Island. For this reason, we feel strongly that the time during which the team's recommendations can successfully be implemented is not a long one. Without visible results within a short period - certainly within a year or less - the rupture between the Native Islanders and the balance of the Island community may become impossible to heal.

Many of our recommendations are designed to be implemented immediately. Even with respect to issues such as the provision of sewer and water service, where factors beyond the Town's control may delay implementation to 1997 and later, the Town can take key actions, including making explicit policy commitments, immediately. The master plan process for Ward 1, a key recommendation, should be begun immediately, and completed within six months. Adoption of amendments to the Land Management Ordinance to implement master plan recommendations should be complete within a year or less. The time is now, and the need is great. The sense of urgency must not be lost.

*"I've heard a lot of talk, but nobody has done anything at all in the last five years I've been home."*

-William Bligen (Native)

*"We get promises, promises, promises and no action has been done yet. I want to hear when something will be done."*

-Benjamin Miller (Resident)

## **Issues**

Over the course of the R/UDAT, the residents of Hilton Head advanced specific problems that had been left unaddressed or had been addressed unsatisfactorily. These problems were cited as either real or perceived impediments to advancing the overall goals of equity and opportunity for the citizens of Ward 1. In some cases these same items were echoed by residents outside of Ward 1 during the course of public discussion. Each of the eleven items in this section were considered by the R/UDAT Team as substantive issues that begged specific strategies or suggestions for consideration.

## **Heirs Property**

Heirs property is a sign of ancient culture, not a genuine title problem. It should be protected and preserved for its value in representing a special element of the past, if it can be sufficiently clarified and saved from unwarranted expense and delay in fitting it into the modern use of land titles.

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The problem with heirs property, as it has been explained to us, is delay in clearing title and the expense of lawyers' assistance and title searching. We have a proposal to alleviate and perhaps eliminate this problem. It is illustrated by the adjacent diagram.

We propose to create a non-profit corporation under South Carolina law, to be called "The Heirs Property Non-Profit Title Assistance Service," or "Heirs Property Service" for short. Its members will be a co-op of heirs, Ward 1 leaders, bar association volunteers, title searchers and experts, and community historical and philanthropic leaders. Their joint task will be:

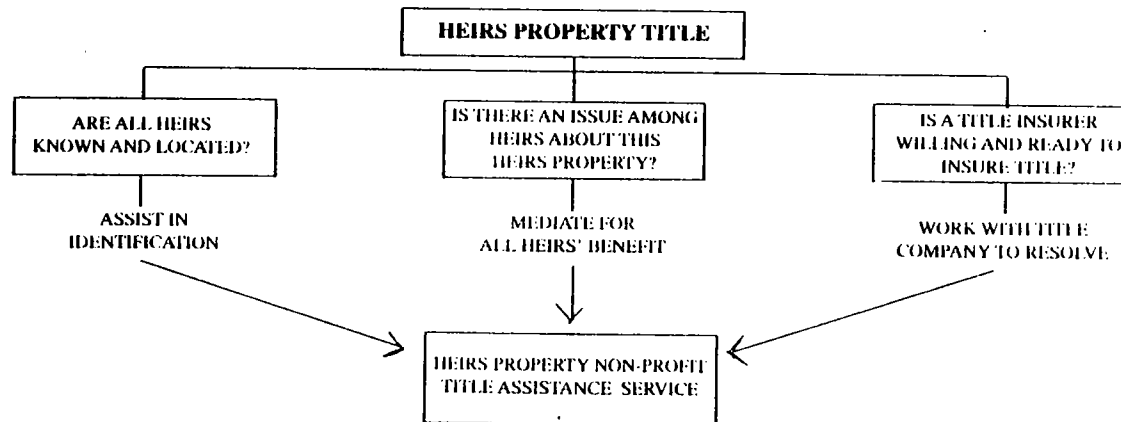
- To preserve heirs property for those who remain dedicated to its ways.
- To offer low- or no-cost legal and title assistance to heirs property owners who desire to straighten out their titles. This would be funded by pro bono legal and title services and grants.
- To ascertain whether there is a possible question among heirs of specific properties about heirs title and, if so, to offer mediation services by bar association volunteers, Ward 1 leaders, or others who will insure the trust of heirs.

- To work with title companies and lenders to resolve quickly heirs property problems, so that land development or transfer is not delayed or derailed.
- To devise by consultation with the Ward 1 community innovative ways to preserve heirs property as part of the Gullah culture, while assuring heirs that their property is prepared and ready for modern real estate transactions.
- To use this practical example of cooperation between the Ward 1 community and the community at large to generate other ways in which these two communities can know and cooperate with each other.

### HEIRS PROPERTY

- RESPECTING TRADITION
- PROTECTING HEIRS FROM EXPENSIVE WAYS TO CLEAR HEIRS' TITLE
- SETTING UP A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION TO HELP CLEAR TITLE

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- NON-PROFIT CORPORATION: A CO-OP OF HEIRS, WARD 1 LEADERS BAR ASSOCIATION, AND COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPIC LEADERS
- PRO-BONO LEGAL AND TITLE WORK
- MEDIATION OF HEIRS PROPERTY PROBLEMS, IF ASKED BY ALL HEIRS



## **Infrastructure and Physical Improvements**

The Town of Hilton Head Island has the fundamental responsibility to ensure that necessary services, whether provided by the Town, Public Service District No. 1 (PSD 1), Beaufort County, or private entities, are available to all its citizens. Among the most important of those services are access to adequate and safe sewer and water service, and access to paved collector roads. The time is long overdue that the Town acknowledge that responsibility.

Over and above the services that have been identified as urgent needs, **the Town must establish a long-term source of dedicated funds for future community improvements, to be used to bring the quality of life in Ward 1 up to the level already available to the balance of the community.** Although this fund can take many forms, its creation is essential to the long-term establishment of balance and equity in the Hilton Head community.

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## **Water and Sewer Service**

Without public water and sewer service, the rational and environmentally-sound development of vacant lands in Ward 1 is not possible. Although there is disagreement on whether extensive reliance on individual wells and septic systems has or has not created problems up to this point, it is clear that it is not an environmentally-or economically-sound long-term solution for Ward 1 property owners.

The expansion of PSD 1 to include the entire Ward 1 has, for the first time, potentially brought the opportunity for sewer and water service to every property in the ward. Whether this is a

*"We just want to get the basic services everyone else is getting."*  
-Veronica Miller (Native)

realistic opportunity or not depends on many factors still undetermined. We believe that making this a realistic opportunity is a key responsibility of town government.

**Working together with the PSD, the County, and other public and private entities, the town must ensure that over the next five years - by the end of 2000 - all Ward 1 property owners will have an economically realistic opportunity to connect to public water and sewer systems.**

Based on discussions with PSD 1, we estimate - once PSD 1 has installed sewer collector lines in Ward 1 - that the cost of connecting to the sewer system will be approximately as follows: Connection fee (to recapture PSD capital costs) of approximately \$8.50 per gallon, and tap-in fee of \$900 per house. This, along with on site plumbing costs, translates to a basic cost, assuming the property is more or less adjacent to the PSD line, of roughly \$5,000 per house. For properties more remote from the line, the cost increases sharply, as lines must be laid and - in most cases - lift stations installed to bring the sewerage flow from the house to the PSD line.

Connecting a house 1,000 feet down a lane from the line can easily add \$35,000 to \$50,000 to the cost. The base cost for a water hookup is estimated at \$1,500. Since fire protection requirements dictate that the water distribution system being installed by PSD 1 be more extensive, most property owners will not incur substantially higher costs than this estimate.

The Town's commitment should be defined as follows:

- **Ensure that PSD 1 provides the sewer collector and water distribution system throughout Ward 1 in a timely fashion; and**
- **Ensure that adequate funds are available to permit every property owner who wants to connect to the sewer and**

**water systems to do so in a manner that is affordable in light of their household income.**

In order to achieve this second goal:

**The Town should establish a program of grants for sewer and water connections for Ward 1 property owners, with the amount of the grant - as a percentage of the cost of the connections - established on the basis of family income.**

The Town would establish a sliding scale for assistance; those families whose incomes were above some reasonably-established level would not be eligible, while homeowners of particularly low income would be eligible for grants to cover their entire cost. Home-owners with incomes between these extremes would be eligible for a partial matching grant.

**PSD 1 should establish a fee structure for connections for Ward 1 property owners that specifically provides for (a) adjustment of fees based on family income; and (b) credit against connection charges to reflect taxes paid to the PSD before the opportunity to connect to the system became realistically available.**

This last point is very important. Although the legal system may have provided no alternative, the fact that many Ward 1 property owners were required to pay taxes to PSD 1 long before they had any opportunity to benefit from any services provided by the PSD raises issues of fundamental equity. Simple fairness dictates that the amount paid by those property owners be - in effect - refunded to them in the form of a rebate, or a credit against their costs of connecting to the system.

The creation of a responsive fee structure by PSD 1, as recommended above, would substantially reduce the extent of

the Town's financial commitment; still, some funding would be required. This funding could be obtained in a variety of ways:

- **The Town should plan to apply for up to \$500,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds for this purpose each year for the next five years;**
- **The Town, and the Ward 1 leadership, should seek private funding through the Deepwell Foundation and Hilton Head Foundation;**

These sources may be enough to cover the cost of this commitment. If not, however, it should be clear that the Town must bear the ultimate responsibility.

- **The Town Council should make a commitment to appropriate up to \$500,000 per year for the next five years to cover the additional cost that must be required.**

No family, however, would be required to connect to public water and sewer except where specific conditions made connections a matter of public health and safety.

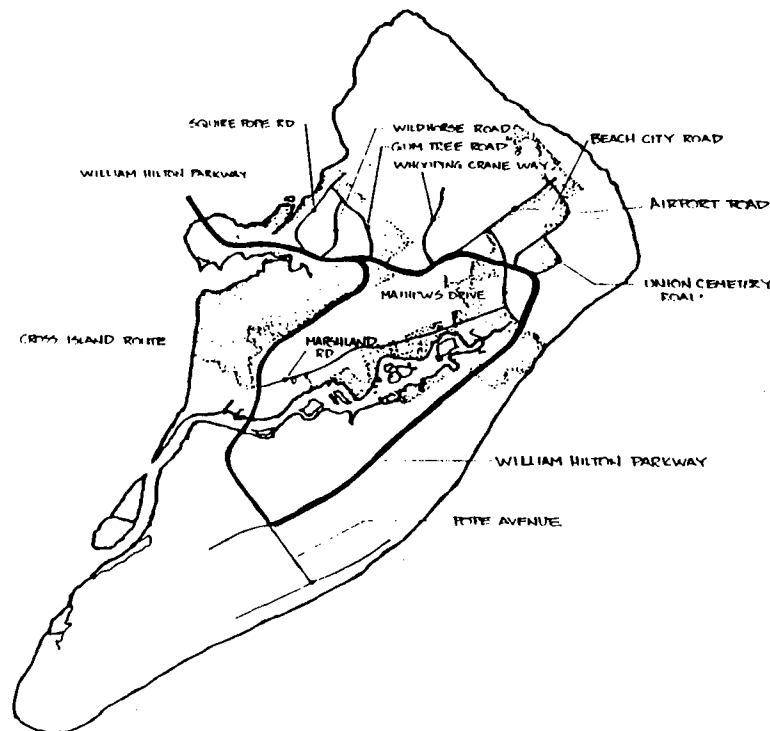
## Road Improvement

The widespread extent of unpaved - and in many cases unsafe - roadways in Ward 1 is a major concern of the residents of the area. The extended delay in the paving of Jonesville Road, although arising from many different factors, has added to the frustration of many residents, who feel that Ward 1 has been significantly underserved in this respect compared to the rest of Hilton Head Island.

Not all public roadways need to be paved. Elsewhere on the Island, and throughout much of rural America, small dead-end lanes serving only a handful of houses are often left unpaved.

*"We need a road. Let's be fair. Treat our road like all the other roads."*

-Ben Miller (Native)



Many unpaved roads throughout Ward 1, however, do not fit that description. In particular, **all collector roads - roads linking one or more local streets and lanes with other, major, roadways - must be paved.** Jonesville Road falls into this category. In addition, certain local streets, even if dead-end, if their length or the number of homes on the street exceed certain minimum levels, should be paved.

Traditionally, the Town of Hilton Head Island has taken a limited role in the improvement and maintenance of the Town's road infrastructure, relying largely on the County and State for those services. While it may be immaterial which entity maintains which roadway, as the governmental entity with direct responsibility for its citizens' well-being, the Town has a responsibility to make sure that all roads are improved to acceptable standards.

**The Town should make a commitment that over the next five years, all collector roads in Ward 1 are improved to appropriate paved standard.** In so doing, the Town should seek all available funds, including state gasoline tax funds available through the County Transportation Committee (CTC). To the extent that additional funds are needed, the Town should:

- **Give priority in use of Street Improvement Fee funds for this effort.**
- **Provide additional funds, either through bonding or through annual appropriations, to ensure that adequate funds are available for this purpose.**

One major aspect of this program should be initiated immediately. CTC funds are available only with respect to roads where the right of way is donated to the County. The heirs property issue, which is discussed further below, dictates that the Town must provide up-front funds, and on occasion use its

power of eminent domain, to acquire the right of way which it then donates to the County. In order to have a pool of eligible projects "ready to go" through the CTC, the Town should immediately:



- **Develop a comprehensive list of all roads in need of paving.**
- **Identify priorities among this list.**
- **Immediately move forward, using Town funds, to acquire rights of way for all priority road pavement projects.**

In the event that development subsequently takes place on roads paved with Town funds under this program, the Town may be able to recapture all or part of the funds expended by fees imposed on those developments.

### **Community Improvement Fund**

Ward 1 has consistently received fewer services and resources, despite its greater needs, than the balance of the Town. It is time that the Town made a concerted effort to redress that balance, by creating a long-term dedicated fund to be used for the full range of physical improvements in the Ward 1 community. These funds should be used for public improvements over and above those described here, affordable housing improvements, economic development projects, and other activities that enhance the quality of life in Ward 1 generally, and within the Native Islander community.

There are a number of ways in which such a fund could be established, including use of the tax-increment financing or municipal improvement district provisions of South Carolina law. **We strongly recommend that the Town use the provisions of Title 31 of South Carolina law to make Ward 1 a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, under which all incremental property tax revenues generated from development in Ward 1 would go into a dedicated fund for community improvements as permitted by statute.**

The Town would be required to take a number of procedural steps in order to make this possible. Ward 1 would have to be designated a conservation area, and a redevelopment commission established by the Town. Should this approach be pursued, the ordinance establishing the redevelopment commission should specify that at least a 2/3 majority of the commissioners be Ward 1 residents, since Ward 1 is the area in which the commission will be engaged in activity.

*"When it rains, I have to get a boat to get to my house."*

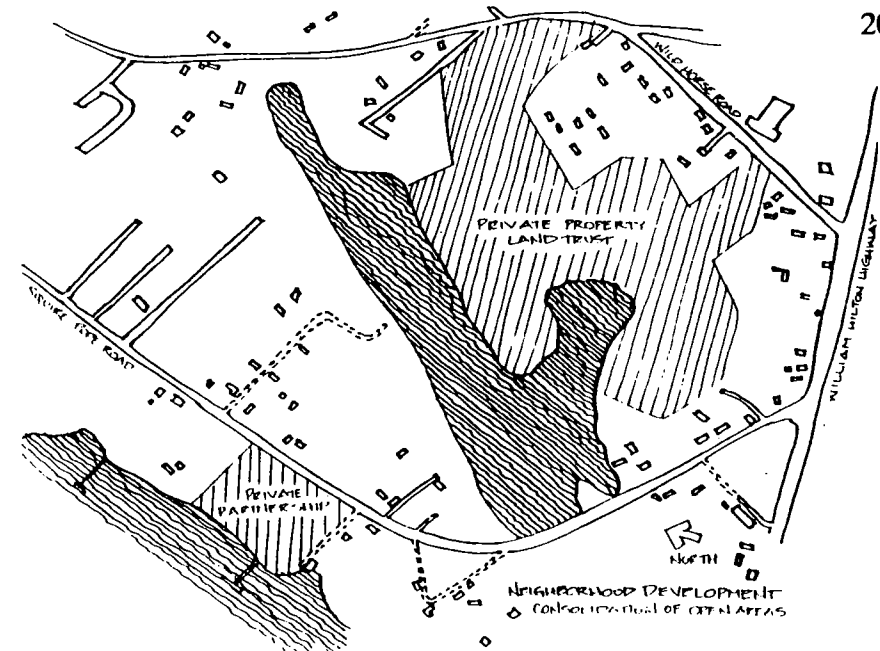
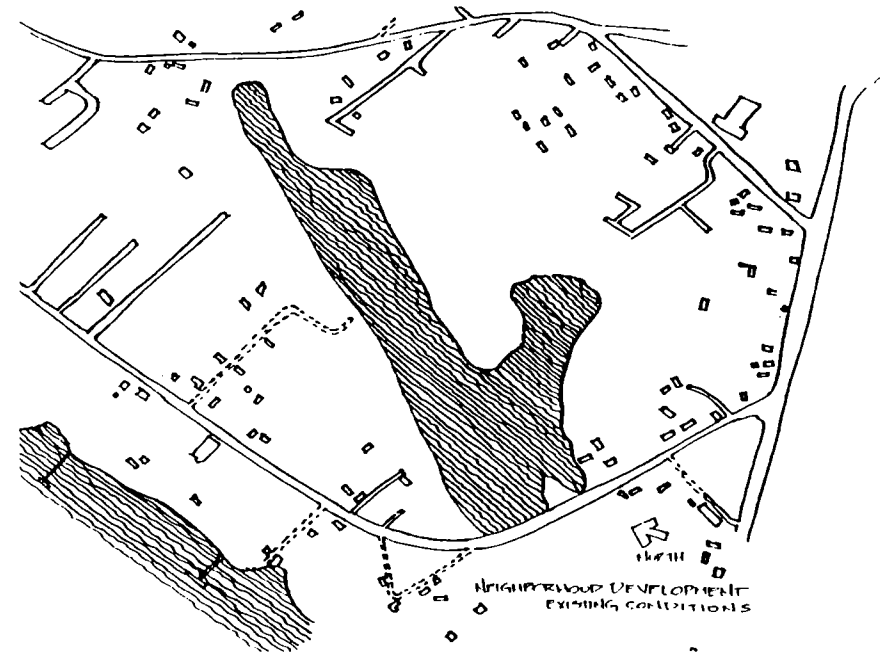
Binah Yates (Gum Tree Rd.. resident)

## Master Planning and Development Regulation

It is no secret that control of growth has been a major priority for Town government on Hilton Head Island since its inception. A major driving force behind the creation of Town government was the desire of much of the community to exert more control over land use decisions, expressed in a desire to impose more stringent controls than those previously imposed by the seemingly remote Beaufort County. The imposition of Town land management regulations, however, had little impact on the Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), since their development rights had already been vested through County approvals. As a result, the effects of downzoning, growth controls, traffic management efforts, and the like, have been felt disproportionately in Ward 1, the only remaining area in which substantial vacant land outside PUDs remained.

The Town has never conducted an appropriate planning process or outcome for Ward 1. Neither of the comprehensive plans adopted by the Town, in 1985 and 1991, laid out any clear planning direction with respect to this area. Although the 1985 plan reads "...in these neighborhoods, area residents will be encouraged to collaborate with the Town to create Neighborhood Plans", there is no evidence that this took place. Town officials were forthright in acknowledging that the M-2 zoning is a compromise "holding zone" designation, and does not reflect a deliberate planning strategy for the area.

What might be characterized as a facsimile of a neighborhood planning effort was initiated by the Town, in conjunction with two leadership groups for different parts of Ward 1, at least in part in anticipation of the R/UDAT study, from April through September 1995. With the assistance of a facilitator hired by the Town, community meetings were held in which community

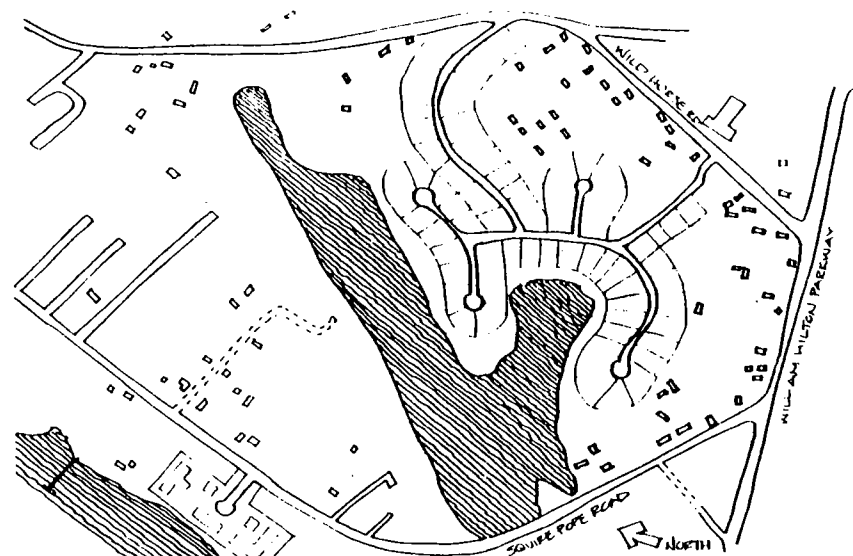


concerns were elicited, and some effort made to establish priorities, at least with respect to the concerns of those attending the meetings. A community survey was mailed to Ward 1 property owners.

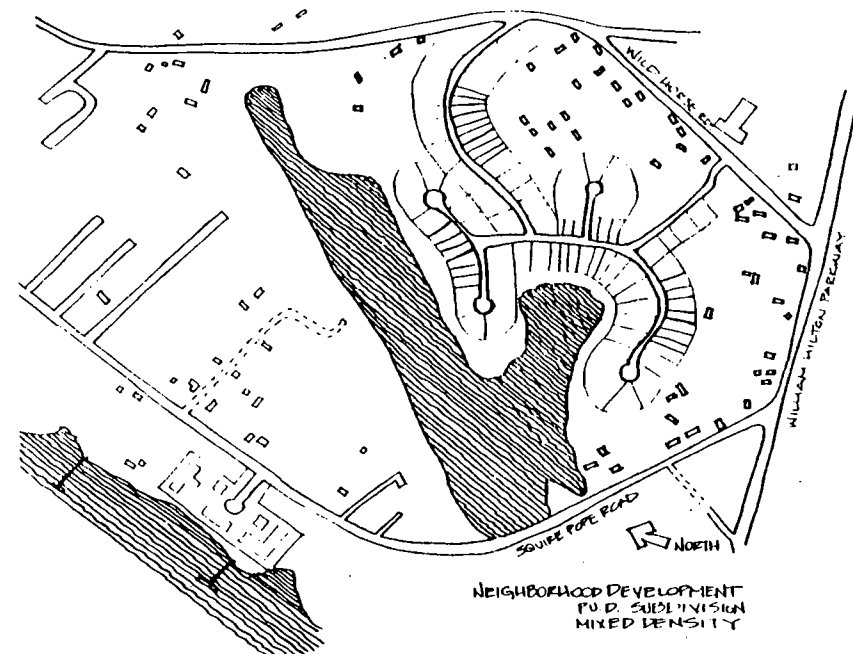
While the issues identified, and the preliminary indications of priorities reflected by a sample of Ward 1 residents, may offer a limited amount of information that can be incorporated into a serious planning process, it is at most a halting, inadequate, first step. One-shot community meetings, and poorly drafted survey questionnaires, are not a substitute for the careful, systematic cultivation of community input and participation over time. There are no short cuts to a real planning process, which should provide an overall direction - even a vision - into which specific recommendations for improvement can be incorporated.

In the meantime, existing development regulations, coupled with the inadequacy of area infrastructure and issues of property ownership, have been a significant constraint on development in Ward 1:

- The M-2 zoning provisions offer only modest density of development, coupled with substantial and burdensome setback and other requirements.
- No planned development option is available in Ward 1.
- Corridor and buffer standards impose significant development constraints, particularly in the context of the small parcels typical of Ward 1.
- Above all, the Traffic Impact provisions of the Land Management Ordinance effectively bars development of parcels by obligating many developers to undertake financially demanding public roadway improvements as a condition of approval.



NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT  
PUD SUBDIVISION  
SINGLE FAMILY LARGE LOTS



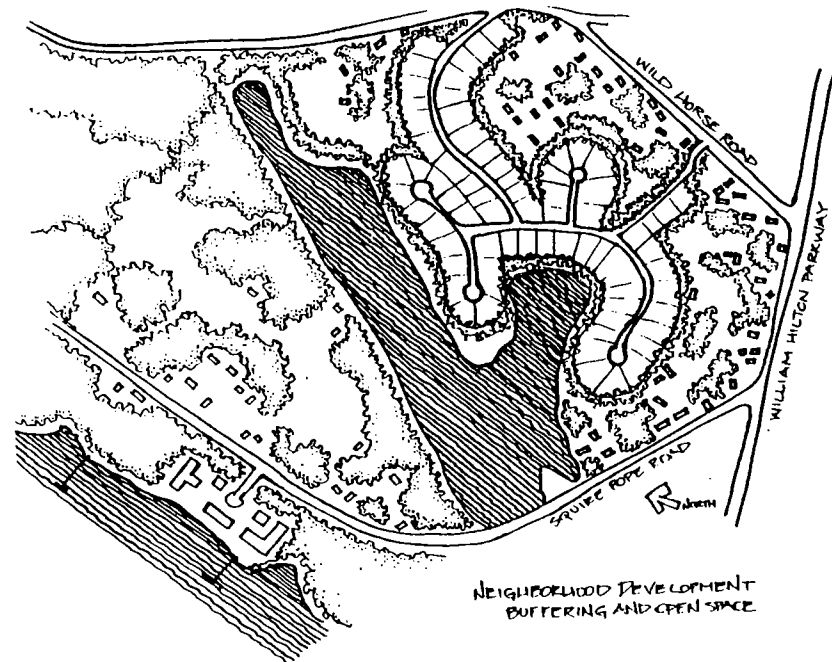
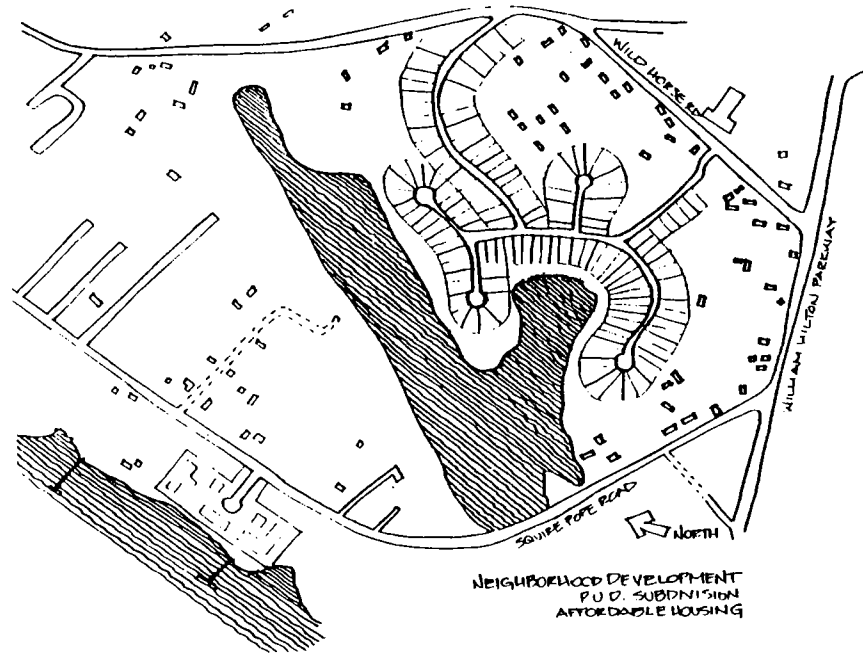
NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT  
PUD SUBDIVISION  
MIXED DENSITY

It is clear as well, from comments of both Town officials and others, that the Town's land use regulatory scheme is one in which broad discretion is given to Town officials, in some cases at the administrative level, and in some at the Council level. This process is little understood by the general public, and it appears that little effort is made by the Town to provide information, or to facilitate applicants' dealing with the system. This further compounds the problem.

**This issue goes beyond that of whether there should be greater opportunities for real estate development in Ward 1. The existing system - the absence of any clear planning direction or vision coupled with restrictive and often arbitrary regulation - actively works to prevent residents and property owners from establishing long-term stability and viability in their community. This is equally true for those who seek to remain on their land as those who seek to develop it.**

According to information provided by the Town, at least 80% of the non-PUD vacant land on Hilton Head Island is in Ward 1. There is no rational basis to prevent large-scale development with respect to much of this land. Substantial non-wetland vacant land parcels exist in the Squire Pope and Jonesville/Spanish Wells area. These areas have, or will soon have, access to adequate sewer and water capacity to accommodate development. These areas will have ready access either to Highway 278 or to the new Cross-Island Expressway, thus minimizing traffic impacts on the Island. Smaller parcels, which also provide reasonable development opportunities, exist within the Bay Gull/Fish Haul and Chaplin areas.

**These areas can accommodate a wide variety of development opportunities, depending on the planning and development goals established by the residents of Ward 1, working together with the Town and other appropriate entities:**





- **Medium and large-scale - principally residential - planned unit development, in the Squire Pope, and possibly in the Jonesville/Spanish Wells and Bay Gull/Fish Haul areas as well.**
- **Residential single family or multifamily development in those areas.**
- **Small scale commercial development tied to Highway 278 in the Squire Pope and Chaplin areas.**
- **Water-oriented development in the Squire Pope area.**

A rational development strategy for these areas can achieve a number of important goals, crucial to the future not only of Ward 1, but to Hilton Head Island as a whole:

- **To provide long-term stability and predictability for the Ward 1 community, as well as for the Island as a whole.**
- **To provide economic opportunities through real estate and economic development to Ward 1 landowners.**
- **To provide opportunities for a more diverse good quality housing stock on the Island, something urgently needed to address the needs of Ward 1 residents, the commuting work force, and the local economy.**

## **Toward a Master Plan for Ward 1**

The four day time frame of a R/UDAT visit is far too short to permit a team to produce a vision, or a coherent master plan, for a community. Instead, what we offer Hilton Head Island is a plan for planning. The recommendations in this section, and some of the examples of potential elements in a plan, are offered for use during the planning process for which we are calling, a planning process which demands intensive citizen participation if it is to be meaningful. Any recommendations we might make with

respect to specific development parcels would be for purposes of illustration only.

**A process fully engaging the residents of Ward 1 to create a master plan, followed by a revised body of land use regulations, must begin immediately.** While the specific outcomes of the process should be defined by the community, **the framework and principles for that process, as well as the regulatory ground rules to guide future development, must be clearly established at the beginning.** The following principles should guide the master plan process:

- **The residents of the Ward 1 community must be fully engaged in the process. A detailed participatory process must be developed and implemented, with adequate funding by the Town to ensure that the community is effectively reached and engaged.**
- **The Town must make a commitment to amend its land management ordinance to incorporate the recommendations of the Ward 1 master plan.**

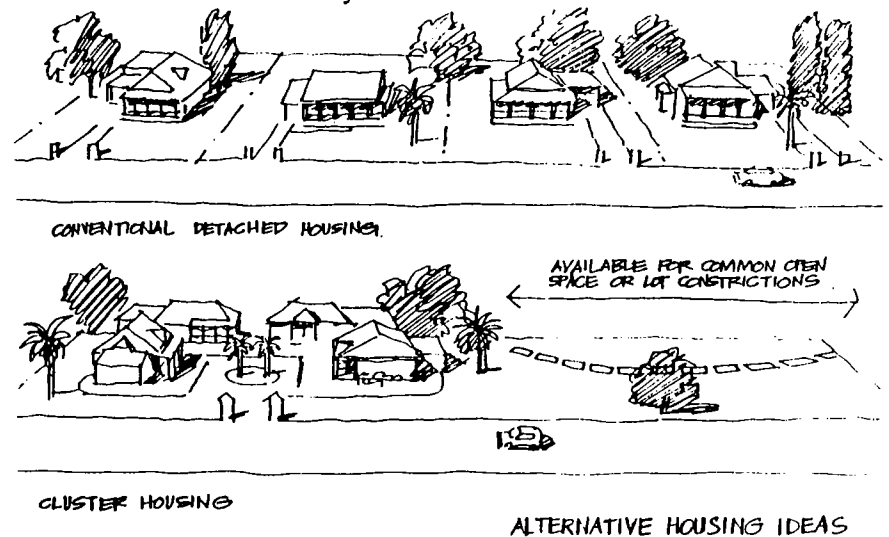
*"In order for the land mass that encompasses Ward 1 to prosper, I think there has to be a cohesive master plan and a cohesive capital investment plan, as well as a vision that is accepted by the whole community."*

*-David Ames (Developer)*

- The plan should seek to create realistic and efficient development opportunities, including planned development options at densities high enough to permit efficient development in conjunction with sound environmental protection principles, while permitting property owners who do not want to develop to maintain their quality of life on a stable, long-term basis.
- The plan should seek to put into place an effective system to permit the transfer of development rights from parcels that are either environmentally sensitive, or which the owners do not want to develop, to parcels suitable for development.
- The traffic impact process should be amended to address the following concerns:
  - The ordinance does not distinguish between development - such as affordable housing - which is serving a population already on the Island or commuting to/ from the Island, and development - such as a new hotel or resort - that triggers additional traffic.
- Developments of the former type, where they can show that they are serving populations already generating comparable traffic volumes on the Island should not be subject to burdensome traffic mitigation requirements.

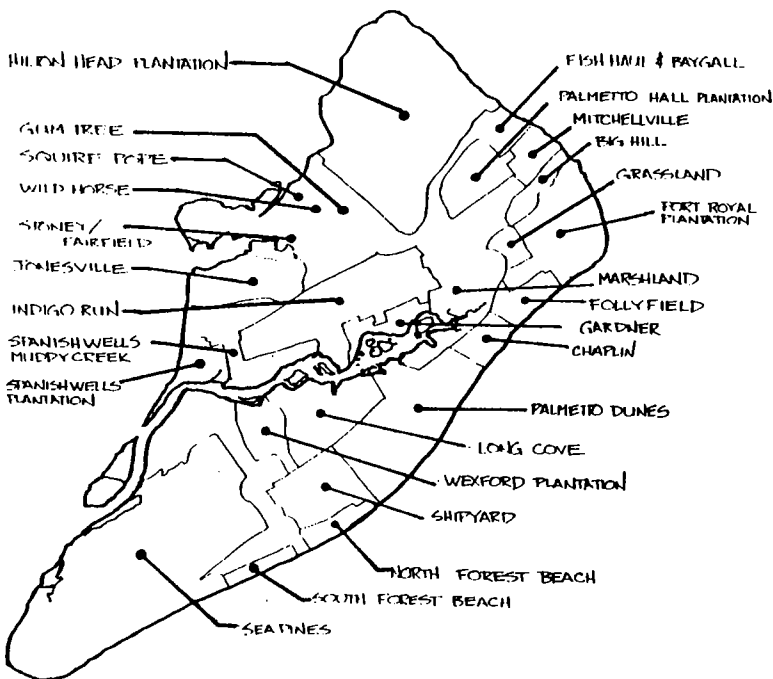
- The ordinance may require a developer to bear the entire financial burden of major traffic improvements even where his/her development is responsible only for a small part of the traffic generating the need for the improvement.
- Developments should not be required to pay for more than their pro rata share of any improvements needed. Additional costs should be borne by the Town, which can then recapture those costs from future developers.

The provision for transfer of development rights (TDR) must be a key element in the future land use regulation of Ward I. Those property owners who wish to remain on their property, or keep it as a family heritage, must not be penalized. By using TDR, families can transfer their development rights to others - enabling them to build at higher density - or transfer development rights within a large parcel to permit clustering and open space provision. Properly designed and administered, TDR can be a major element in ensuring the stability of the Native Islander community.



## Planning at the Neighborhood Scale

A key to any process designed to strengthen the sense of community is a recognition of the central role of neighborhoods in that process. Neighborhoods are not always defined by formal organizations, and are likely to be of smaller scale than the Island's plantations. The Town must recognize the value of neighborhoods in the planning process, opening a dialogue with and between neighborhoods.



To underscore the Town's commitment to neighborhood building, we recommend that the Town adopt the following policy statement, adapted from one prepared in a nearby community:

**The Town will do all it can to promote the development of neighborhood leadership, capacity building (the collective ability of neighbors and neighborhoods to address their common problems), and neighborhood institutional development, believing that strong citizens and their organizations contribute to a healthy community, and further, that in an era of scarce resources, a variety of institutional partnerships will be necessary to accomplish shared purposes.**

Specific steps that should be taken to implement this policy include:

- Inventory existing neighborhoods, bearing in mind that neighborhoods that may not be formally organized into associations may nonetheless have a strong informal leadership structure.
- Recognize neighborhoods as appropriate vehicles for the gathering and dissemination of information.
- Create a formal ongoing mechanism to communicate with neighborhoods, including soliciting of neighborhood comments on official regulations and activities that may affect specific neighborhoods.
- Actively solicit neighborhood participation in identifying potential members for Town boards and commissions.
- Facilitate regular meetings to bring neighborhoods and their organizations together on an Islandwide basis to share issues and concerns, and build a better understanding and mutual acceptance among the residents of Hilton Head Island.

## Culture

**“A history of a people has been hushed, been stilled. . .”**

The people of Ward 1 have witnessed little, if any, public or private resources allocated to the preservation of their culture. Moreover, they have seen opportunity denied or deferred for private development that might stabilize their cultural heritage or allow residents to undertake their own efforts for cultural celebration and retention.

These frustrations reflect one facet of the lack of equity for Ward 1 in general and for its native people in particular. Even subtle reminders of the failure to recognize the cultural presence of the Ward 1 residents persist. For example, maps abound that fail to identify traditional neighborhoods in Ward 1 on Hilton Head Island, yet indicate all of the Plantations and their internal areas and features.

Along with the basic right any people have to parity within the public domain, comes the right to define themselves culturally through their power to choose and be recognized. Ward 1 has a range of cultural and ethnic representation including blacks and whites who live outside of the Plantation walls. These groups have a great cultural and historical diversity.

Within the context of securing equity for the residents of Ward 1, the unique cultural heritage of a segment of the population offers a great opportunity, but also lies at great risk. Indeed, as conditions currently exist, continued inaction poses as great a threat to this population's historic way of life as does any ill-conceived intent to spur opportunity. It can be argued that the

*“In this community, there needs to be a greater use for each other across racial lines.”*

-Louis King (Resident)

limited service government in the Town of Hilton Head Island manifests much of the cultural attrition that has occurred in Ward 1.

## **Native Islander**

Many residents in Ward 1 share a unique historic culture with other settlements along the southeastern United States. This culture is known as Gullah. On Hilton Head Island, people who embody the Gullah culture identify themselves as Native Islanders.

Gullah is a distinct language that is still spoken among many Native Islanders. Moreover, the language is alive and changing. The Gullah culture has been further defined by:

- distinctive, traditional crafts;
- fishing and agricultural commerce;
- land use patterns;
- specific character of communal interaction; and
- sharing of resources.

The treatment of the Native Islanders' cultural heritage is a consistent concern in any discussion about improving the existing conditions or charting the desired destiny of Ward 1 residents. Indeed, in many conversations about the entire Island's future, the need to preserve Gullah culture as the primary and indigenous asset of Hilton Head Island figures prominently. Efforts have been made by local and national scholars to document the history and language of the Native Islanders and several of these enterprises have yielded books, photographs, genealogies and oral histories. The Island Museum has established a sub-committee to develop a Native Island exhibit for the Welcome Center. In addition, Hilton Head Island High School students have conducted some field studies



gathering artifacts and taking oral history. The activities speak to an implicit recognition of this cultural value.

Despite these undertakings on Hilton Head Island, the Penn Center on St. Helena Island Hilton Head Island is the closest major repository of the Gullah culture. By contrast, there has been no clear, consistent and accountable program in force to protect this history or interpret the Gullah Culture of Hilton Head Island **in situ**.

And there is a great imperative to initiate such an effort. By any standard of longevity on the North American Continent, the Gullah settlements rank among the oldest. Over centuries, the habitation of land, the economic underpinnings of life and the generational patterns of family inheritance were remarkably constant prior to the onslaught of adjacent Plantation Community development in the 1950's and 60's. In fact, the degree to which the Gullah had not assimilated into broader patterns of American acculturation has cast it for many as a major local, regional and national asset.

Given the historical linkage of Gullah culture to the land and the geographic specificity of this culture, **its survival is critically dependent on the continued presence of Native Islanders on Hilton Head Island**. The prospect of retaining the Gullah culture in any significant or sustained manifestation would be dismal if the Native Islanders were forced to move off of Hilton Head in any appreciable number for whatever reason. Therefore, any interest in stabilizing this culture exhorts a planning effort to maintain the Native Island community.

Over the years of an uncertain and unbalanced relationship with the Plantations, one fact remains constant: **the Native Islanders of Ward 1 are major stakeholders in the present and future of Hilton Head Island**. Despite that fact, many of the Native Islanders of Ward 1 have been left to struggle to preserve their

culture without the benefit of a specific plan that presents clear and informed choices.

Therefore, residents in the ward have expressed the fear that the development around them and the burdens that they bear will continue the slow, incessant demise of their historical patterns of family life. Of equal concern is that this absence of historical and economic planning may place development initiatives **within Ward 1** at unnecessary opposition to its own historic preservation interests.

During the public sessions of the R/UDAT, it was obvious that some dialogue had begun and action has been taken on selected fronts to document the Native Island Heritage. Some further action would include:

- taking an authoritative inventory of cultural assets within Ward 1 including artifacts and oral history;
- retention of historical artifacts, buildings and sites that reflect Native Island culture within Ward 1 and throughout Hilton Head Island;
- assessment of the cultural and social patterns that the Ward 1 community would like to preserve and weighing that preservation against the opportunities for economic enhancement;
- establishing a sense of ownership and responsibility within the Ward 1 Community for the promotion of the culture, as well as its interpretation and presentation to the public;
- formalizing a link among Ward 1 and the other cultural amenities that the Hilton Head Plantation residents support;
- providing access for Native Islanders to historical sites irrespective of where they may be on Hilton Head Island.

## Inventory of Cultural Assets

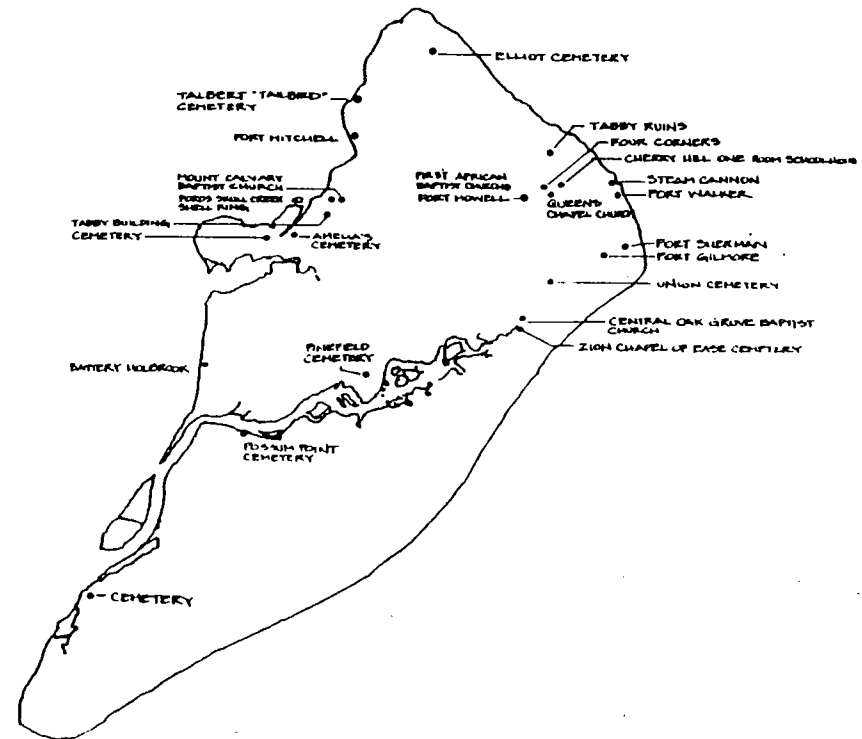
The steps in implementing an effective program for historic preservation vary, but assuming the commitment and the conviction on the part of the Town to preserve this asset is real, then tangible results are achievable. Initial steps towards an historic preservation program would call for Hilton Head Town to:

- institutionalize the process for documenting historic artifacts through its own staff or agencies;
- establish a commission, board or citizen group that is charged with safeguarding the Island's historic stock;
- ensure that all planning studies and updates comply with adopted historic preservation policy and;
- review historic preservation impact as part of the permitting process for development;



- designate support for this group including a staff person who:
  - is trained in historic preservation;
  - has a background in Island culture; and
  - is familiar with local, state and national historic designations, authority, criteria, and benefits.

In case there is any trepidation about the use or necessity for a preservation staff person, there is an extensive list of historical sites that are known on the Island. These sites are illustrated on the historical and cultural site map. As shown on this map, for a community of its size, Hilton Head Island has already identified sufficient **important** cultural artifacts, sites and buildings to warrant and justify an active program for historic preservation.



The staff person assigned for historic preservation should:

- review the list that has been compiled
- investigate other locations across the island that would qualify under national historic register status
- add those qualified to the list;
- identify all sites of historic importance with a wayfinding system (this could be started immediately even without the staff person on board).

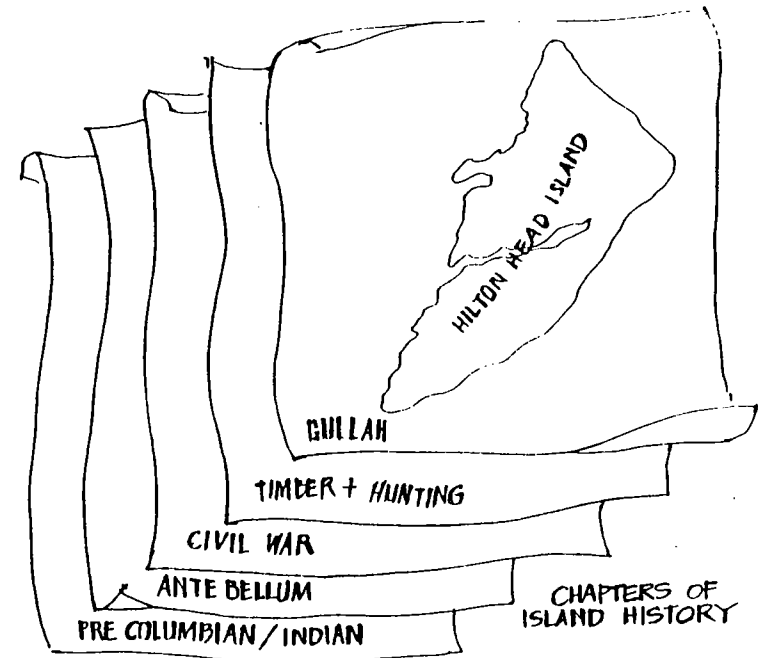
Hilton Head Town can establish Historic Preservation Designations and use the National Register eligibility criteria for the designation of these buildings, sites and artifacts. The preservation guidelines for the districts should be formulated within the appropriate context for existing conditions and future development of the Island.

In cases where the historic commission or advisory group finds that the development opportunity or project mandate outweighs the preservationist value of the specific site or artifact in question, the Town should require the developer (or itself in the case of a public project) to take some clear mitigation of the development's impact, including, but not limited to:

- relocation of the artifact;
- placement of the artifact into a location for public access and interpretation; or
- archival documentation of the artifact.

## Planning for a Future with a History

The Ward 1 Native Island community feels that their heritage is threatened with extinction. The evidence to support their fear is ample and irrefutable. The only way to assuage these concerns and truly address the matter is to incorporate the historic planning component in an overall Master Plan. Therefore, following the historic documentation of the Island suggested previously in this chapter, the next priority should be the effective preservation of the sites, and artifacts across the Island. Within Ward 1, this must be carefully orchestrated to avoid conflicts with the provision of other basic Town services that have yet to be furnished.





An equally delicate and necessary coordination must occur between the entrepreneurial enterprises that will be the locomotive for stabilizing and expanding Ward 1's economic base and the historic preservation effort. Any planning process should also recognize the traditional community housing patterns in Ward 1 that are important to the current residents.

Within this due diligence, proactive, contextual planning demands the intelligent transformation of historical sites, such as cemeteries, churches and commemorative markers, into public interpretive spaces. Where properties adjoining historic sites have commercial or retail uses, the adjoining historical elements should be appropriately buffered in a manner that does not compromise the nature of the historic site.

In instances where the buffer cannot be achieved on the historic property, the town can adopt and enforce an ordinance as part of its zoning that requires commercial development to provide the buffer to leave the character of the historic sites unmolested.



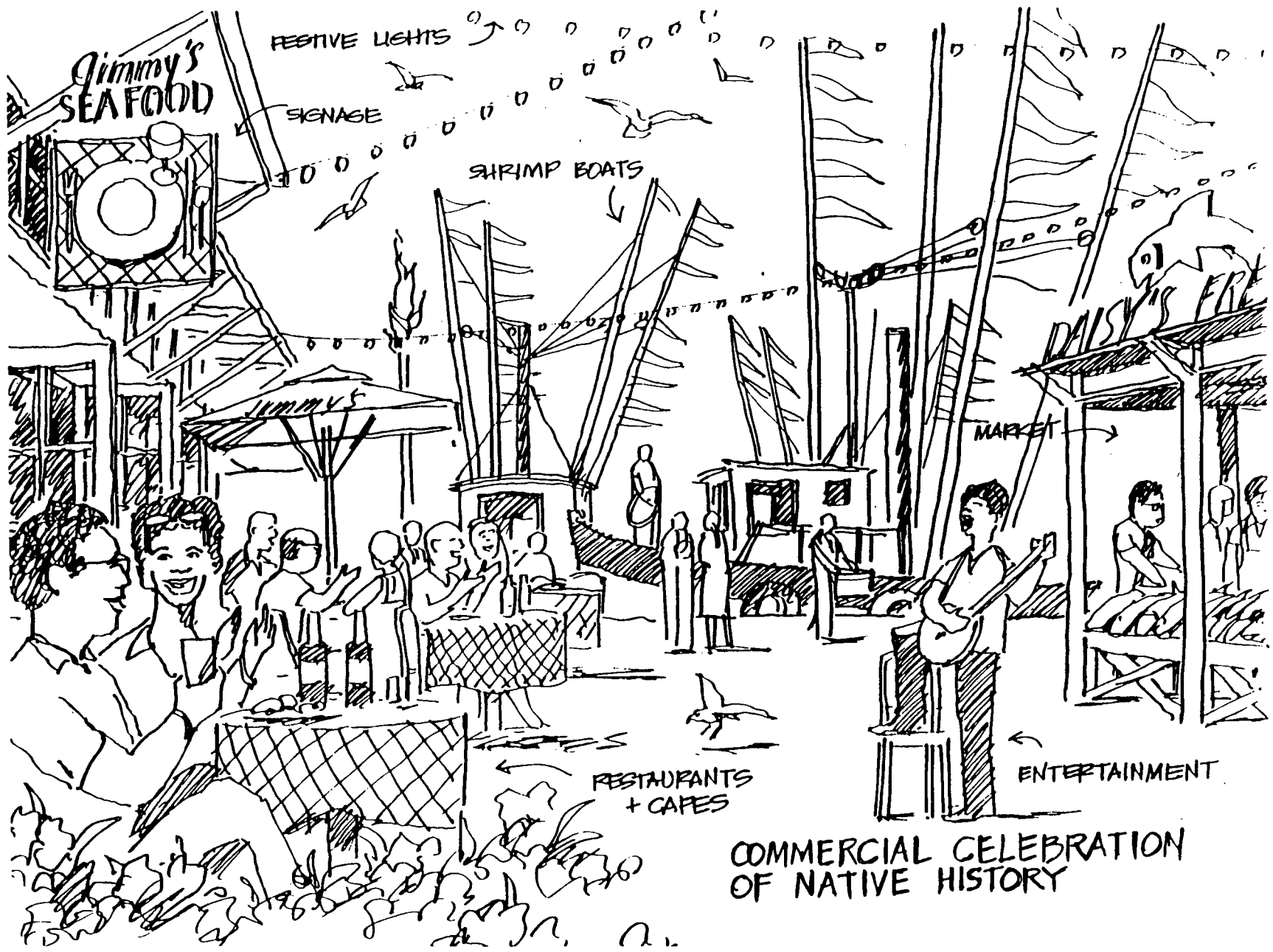
## Recommendations

The R/UDAT team recommends several actions under the rubric of cultural enhancement and preservation that the Town should undertake. These include:

- adopting as part of the Town of Hilton Head's mission statement the promotion and enhancement of Native Island culture to provide for the enriched learning and enjoyment of all of the Island's citizens;
- facilitating linkages among the Island's various cultural offerings and aggressively seeking regional, national and international recognition of the unique Island culture;
- aggressively seeking shared funding for all cultural efforts and institutions through stimulating private support for the preservation of Native Island culture;
- aggressively applying for state and federal historic grants and providing matching moneys or in kind staff time to secure these funds for initial implementation of the programs suggested in this report;
- directing the respective boards, interest groups, citizen action committees and other organizations that charge themselves with the cultural quality of life in Hilton Head to include the theme of preservation of Native Island culture as part of their overall mission;

*"Preservation of culture and preservation of environment. If we don't emphasize those, we have lost a valuable part of the family."*

-Emory Campbell (Native)



FESTIVE LIGHTS

SIGNAGE

SHRIMP BOATS

Jimmy's  
SEAFOOD

JIMMY'S

DAILY'S FIRE

MARKET

RESTAURANTS  
+ CAFES

ENTERTAINMENT

COMMERCIAL CELEBRATION  
OF NATIVE HISTORY

- including in the Master Plan for Ward 1 a cultural facility that will host certain Island wide events and programs;
- ensuring that members of the Ward 1 Community are **appointed to all cultural institution boards on the Island that benefit from public finding**. These members should serve with the same rights and responsibilities as any other member of the respective institution;
- appointing a team of firms under a unified scope of services to **work with the Ward 1 Community** and the Town of Hilton Head Planning and Community Development staffs to develop a Master Plan that allows Ward 1 residents to clearly and faithfully communicate their interest in the interpretation of their own culture. (This is such a specialized effort that the Town would need to solicit the services of a dedicated team with expertise in cultural preservation, physical design and economic planning.)

Even with the successful adoption of these measures, many challenges will continue that test the commitment of the Town and all of the neighborhoods. Given the way the development patterns have been allowed to ensue across Hilton Head Island, Ward 1 will face some extremely difficult decisions in prioritizing the importance of historic preservation and retaining traditional social patterns against the prospects for future economic development. As stated previously, it is wrong to assume that the two agendas of historic preservation and development growth must be in conflict; but it is dangerously naive to presume that there will be no tangible and, at times, difficult trade-offs demanded of the Ward 1 communities as result of guiding preservation and development interests in tandem.

The residents of Ward 1 and the Town of Hilton Head Island will need to be constantly vigilant to assess these trade-offs on a regular basis. They must ensure that both cultural and economic interests are balanced in response to the Ward 1's declared needs. Again, this overview may be accomplished through establishing any number of neighborhood associations for Ward 1 suggested under the Master Plan recommendations in this report.

In turn, the Town of Hilton Head government must accept its responsibility to supply the staff and consultant resources to assure that the Native Islander population can shape its destiny. In pursuing this future, the Native Islanders should be free to enjoy and maintain the essence of who they are, who they have been for decades, with a sense of confidence and authority.

*"By preserving the culture and history of the native community, a sense of place and a better quality of life will be established."*

-Bob Dickensheets (Historical Preservationist, Resident)

## The Property Tax Burden

The burden of property taxes falls harder on many Ward 1 residents, because their incomes have often remained low, while the value of their property - as determined for tax assessment purposes - has skyrocketed. While property values may be higher in other parts of the Town, incomes are generally substantially higher as well. The fact that residents of Ward 1 receive fewer services than residents of other wards contributes to the lack of equity that is experienced by the Native Islander community. The high tax burden has led to frequent situations where lower-income Ward 1 property owners have been unable to meet their tax bills, often losing their property at tax sale auctions to speculators and investors.

Existing state law provides the Town and the County - which administers property taxation for the Town - with little discretion to adjust property taxes, or to address many of the concerns raised by Ward 1 residents in this area. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the Town and County have not aggressively sought to use such flexibility as they have in the interests of Ward 1 taxpayers. While it may be worthwhile to press for changes to the State Constitution and State statutes, it must be recognized that significant change in this area - at a time when the entire property tax system is under close scrutiny at the State level - is likely to be both slow and difficult. At the same time, there are many specific steps that can be taken by the Town and County working together to try to address the needs of Ward 1 residents within the existing statutory framework.

- **The Town should initiate an aggressive program, including retaining qualified staff, to enable qualified Ward 1 property owners to take advantage of the agricultural tax assessment provisions of Chapter 43 of Title 12.**

*"The original owners from 50 years ago have been bypassed by development, yet have had their taxes increased year after year....The Public Service Districts have been taking money from us long enough. It's time to pay it back."*

-Benjamin Moore (Ward 1 Resident)

State law permits property owners meeting certain criteria with respect to use of their land for timberland or farming to have their property assessed at the value associated with that use, rather than the development value permitted by Town zoning. With appropriate technical assistance, it is likely that many Ward 1 property owners would be able to take advantage of this legal option to reduce their property taxes.

- **In assessing Ward 1 property, the tax assessor should work closely with the Town Department of Community Development to identify any and all constraints on the development of each parcel arising from environmental restrictions or development regulations, and to adjust the value of the property to take into account the diminution of value associated with these constraints.**

For example, a property that is sandwiched between a highway and a marsh, each one triggering substantial setback and/or buffer requirements, thus sharply reducing the developable area, is substantially less valuable than a parcel of comparable size in the same area without similar constraints. Similarly, if a development regulation has the effect of deferring potential development of a parcel for some extended period, that regulation diminishes the value of the property. These factors should be taken into account.

- **The Town should encourage owners of environmentally-sensitive land to record conservation easements on their property. Such action results in the property being treated as agricultural land for property tax purposes.**

Under current law, only perpetual conservation easements entitle property owners to such tax treatment. The Town should press its legislative delegation to amend State law to permit similar tax

treatment, with appropriate rollback provisions, to be available for time-limited conservation easements with terms of not less than 5 years.

- **The Town should work with the County to develop an efficient notification system to ensure that Ward 1 property owners in tax arrears (a) receive advance notice that their property will be subject to tax sale; (b) receive information about their rights in the event of tax sale; and (c) receive information about payment plans and other means of rectifying their tax arrearages.**

The Town should also consider the creation of a loan fund to assist long-term, lower income, Ward 1 property owners to pay delinquent property taxes. The Town could then take a lien against the property for the amount of the loan, which would be paid in the event of sale of the property.

**Native Islander families have held on to their Island property through hard times for well over a hundred years. Where the town is in a position to help Ward 1 property owners buffer their property against the challenges of development pressure and value appreciation, it must - within the flexibility permitted by State law - accept the responsibility to do so.**

## Environmental Preservation and Recreation

The island of Hilton Head is one of natural and physical beauty and is a resource within itself. Much of the central portion of island is covered with marsh land which is a home for several species of wildlife, both flora and fauna. The southern shores of the island are sandy beaches which provide views and access to the Atlantic Ocean. There are also several pine forests remaining on the island which have not been destroyed by development. These areas are essential for sustaining the cultural, recreational and environmental health of the island.

### Broad Creek

The Broad Creek is a tidal inlet which extends across the island north of Highway 278. It consists of eight miles of wetlands with estuaries which extend into developed areas. Much of Broad Creek runs through Ward 1 which allows unique opportunities for public access and protection. This area is in danger of depletion due to encroaching development and because of bacteria-heavy water the creek has pollution problems. This area is important for the maintenance of a balanced ecosystem and is important to overall physiology and drainage of the island.

*"I have a dream that every child on this island will have a safe place to play which is convenient."*

*"Having an ability to connect with the rest of the island is a very important thing."*

-Jim Robinson (Resident)

This area also offers special educational and recreational opportunities. Wetlands are unique environments which provide opportunities to view wildlife, fish, boat and hike. Because of the location of Broad Creek in relationship to the rest of the island opportunities can be provided for all to participate in these activities. These activities also provide opportunities for cross cultural contact. When one is enveloped by the beauty and spirit of nature it hardly matters if your neighbor in communion is newcomer, native or tourist.



## Boating

The team recommends limiting of boat traffic in the creek and encouragement of the use of non motorized boats which don't leak oil and gas into the creek.

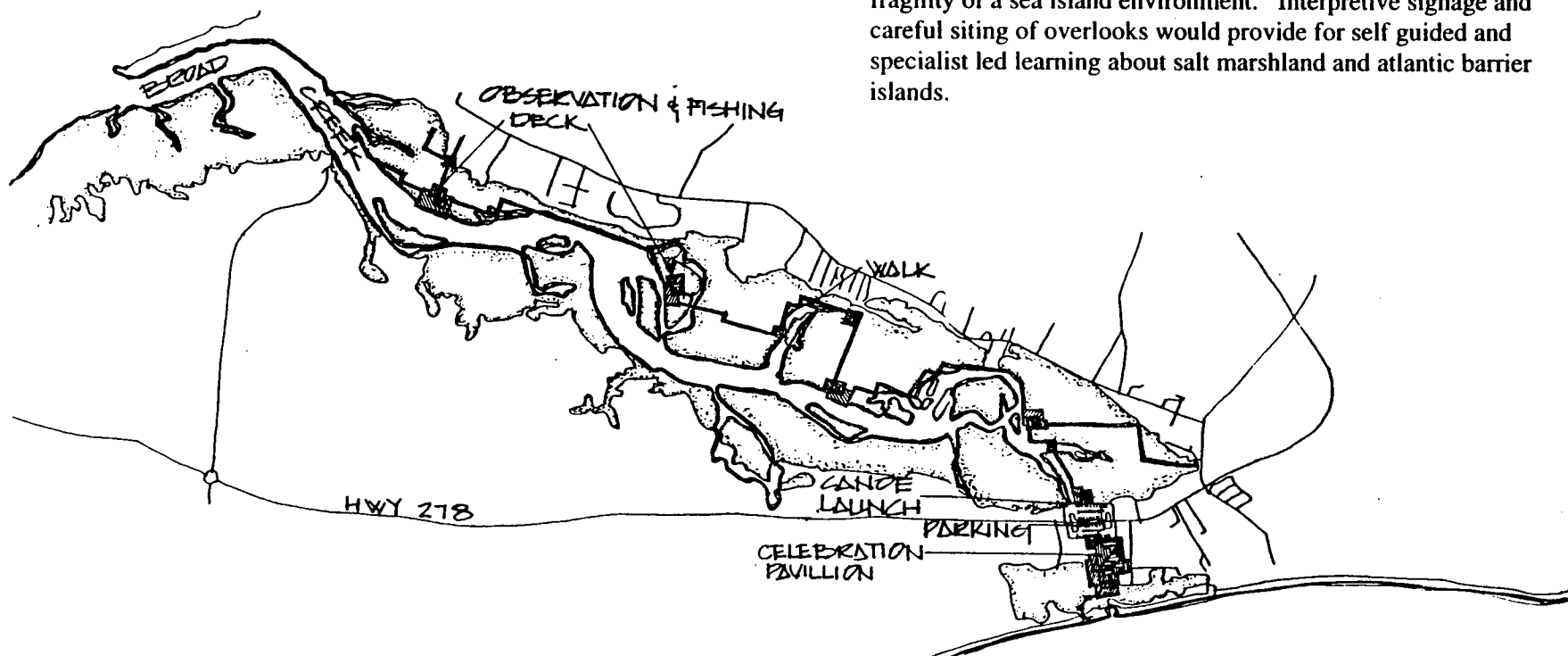
## Fishing

The shell fish in Broad Creek is no longer safe for human consumption due to the pollution of the waters. This pollution comes from several sources including drainage and leaking of

sewage into the creek. The team recommends that a clean up of the creek be undertaken and that central sewer systems be mandated so that the waters can be fished again.

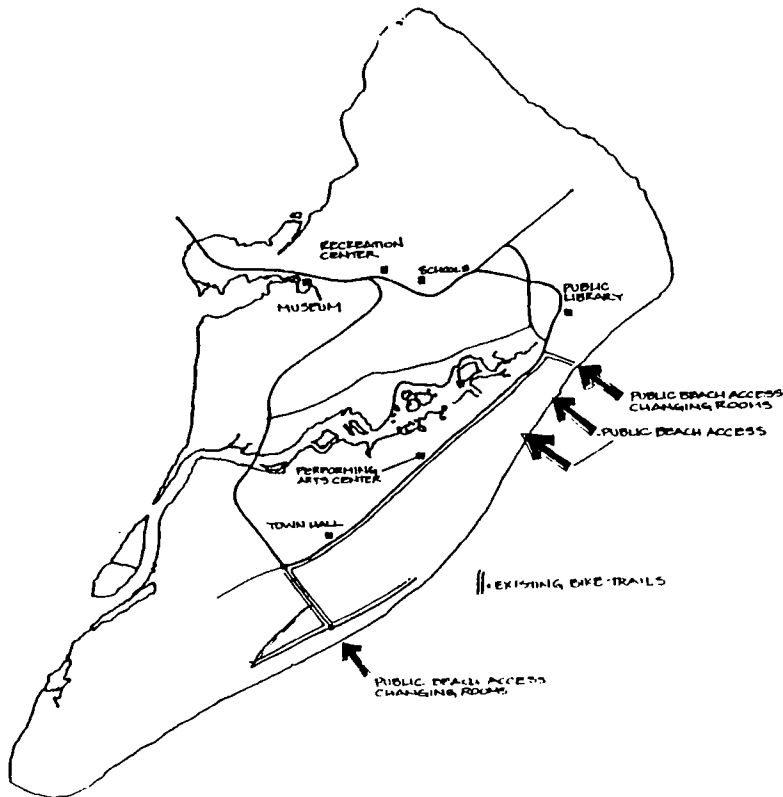
## Wetlands Walk

The team proposes a wooden walk to be built along the northside of Broad Creek which would traverse the wetlands. The walk would have wooden decks which would allow the opportunity for access to the creek and recreational opportunities. The development of this walk and designation of this area for public access and recreation would enhance preservation efforts. The walk is also an important tool for educating people about the biology, character, ecology and fragility of a sea island environment. Interpretive signage and careful siting of overlooks would provide for self guided and specialist led learning about salt marshland and atlantic barrier islands.



## Beach Access

Currently there are only four public accesses to the beach. There are also limited parking facilities at these access points and no public facilities for enjoying these areas. A public place where one can watch the sunset without having to stay in a designated public right of way or keep moving along should be provided.

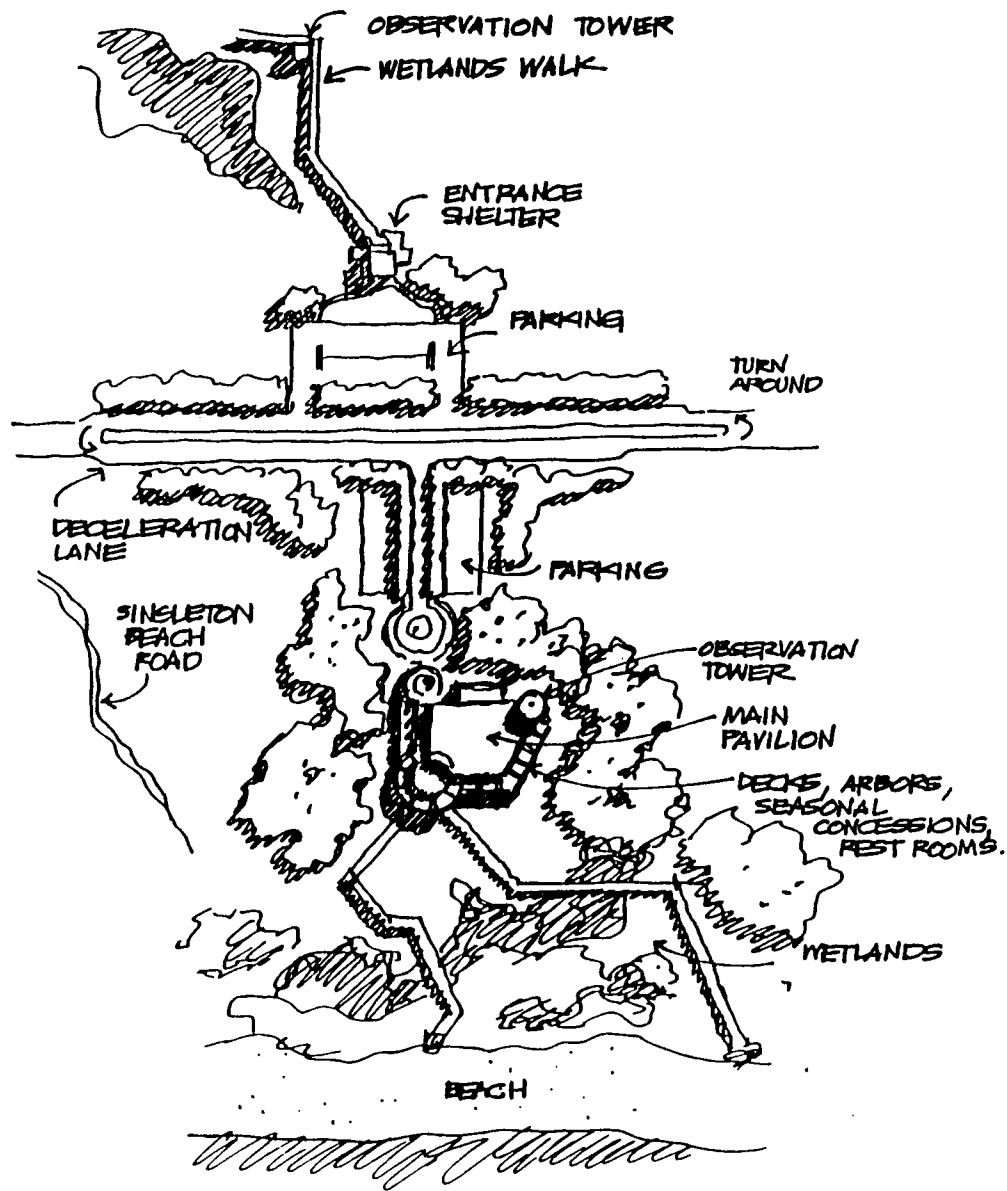


## Celebration Pavilion

The team recommends that a public pavilion be built on the property between Singleton Beach Road and Bradley Beach Road on the south side of highway 278. There is a need for a place for community celebration and to have cultural and local events by which citizens may share in civic pride. Such a focal point deserves a setting among the most important natural assets of the island. This site offers a view of the ocean and from an observation tower a view of the beautiful Broad Creek Wetlands Environment. Parking will also be provided.

It is important to reiterate the significance of access to the preservation of natural resources. Without access, communities often forget what resources they have and how important it is to nurture and preserve them.



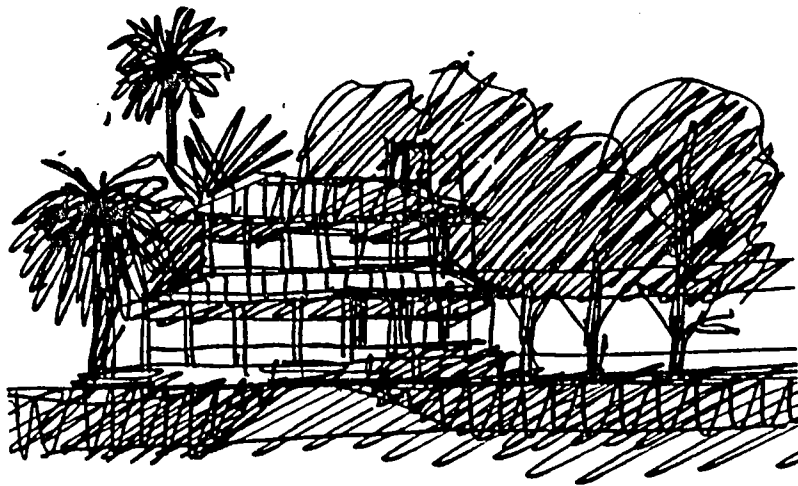


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NATURAL RESOURCES CELEBRATION

*"Those jobs are paying us \$6 an hour and rents are six or seven or eight hundred dollars. Those figures just don't add up."*

*-Bill Ferguson (Town Council  
Representative for Ward 1)*



## **Affordable Housing**

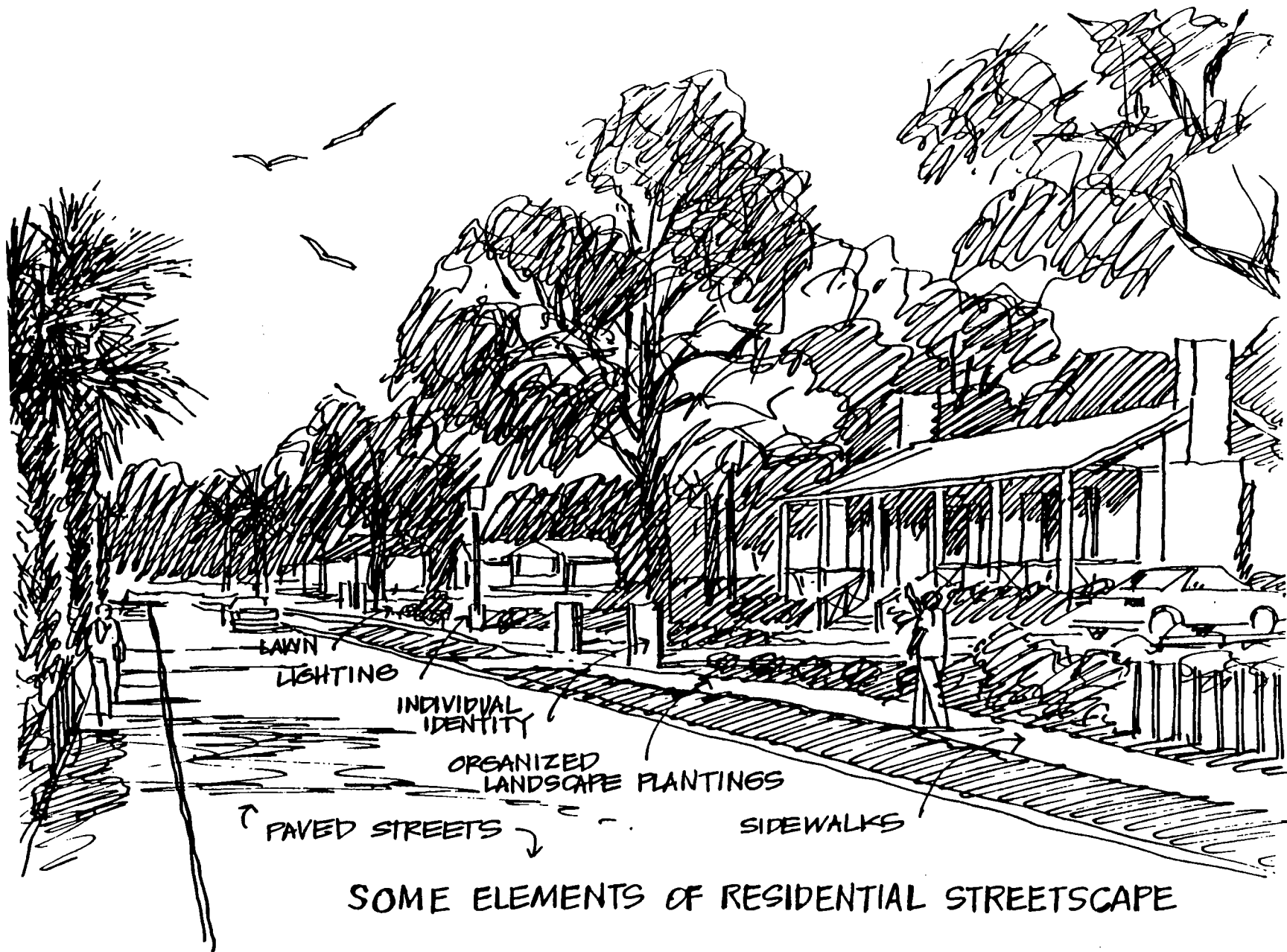
Affordable housing is a major problem on Hilton Head Island. There are many different affordable housing issues on the Island, however, some more visible than others:

- A large part of the labor force commutes, often inordinately long distances, to work on Hilton Head. With the growth of job opportunities in the Bluffton area, lack of affordable housing on the Island may soon impair the ability of the local economy to maintain its labor force.
- Many lower income families in Ward 1 live in inadequate housing, double up, or are spending disproportionate amounts for decent shelter.
- Lower income home owners find it impossible to obtain adequate affordable funds to make necessary improvements, while young home buyers purchase mobile homes, sacrificing long term quality and durability, because of the high cost of permanent housing.

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This issue has been in the forefront of public discussion on the Island for many years, with few results. A limited number of units have been constructed, many of them through the initiative of one Native Islander developer. Although the Town enacted an Affordable Housing Overlay Zone, the Town Council has voted down the only two proposals to seek to take advantage of it. Unlike many towns and cities throughout the nation, the Town of Hilton Head Island has no housing authority or agency, no housing staff, and no programs designed to address the housing needs of either present residents or workers. Although Beaufort County has a housing authority, it has never undertaken activities on the Island.

Almost every American town or county in which similar affordable housing problems exist has established one or more



SOME ELEMENTS OF RESIDENTIAL STREETSCAPE

housing programs, agencies or corporations to address this problem. Nearby Charleston, with a population only slightly larger than Hilton Head, has a wide array of programs and resources, as do affluent communities around the nation from Princeton, New Jersey to Aspen, Colorado. **The Town of Hilton Head Island has never addressed this problem. It is long overdue in taking responsibility to develop solutions.**

The full range of programs and activities to address affordable housing needs is beyond the scope of this report. The following activities represent the minimum that the Town must do, in order to begin to address the needs:

- **Create an affordable housing office in Town government with the responsibility to (a) undertake studies to determine housing needs, including specific numbers and types of housing units needed, and the number of substandard units in need of upgrading; (b) establish targets for affordable housing production in the community; (c) act as an advocate/ombudsman to developers of affordable housing to obtain municipal and other approvals; (d) actively seek Federal and State funds for affordable housing activities, including both new construction and improvement of existing homes; and (e) identify appropriate locations for affordable housing, and use Town property acquisition funds to ensure that they are made available to qualified non-profit or for-profit entities for development.**
- **Adopt a Town policy committing to seek available Federal or State funds, and utilize available local resources, including Tax Increment Financing, in order to facilitate affordable housing developments.**

- **Adopt a Town policy waiving all municipal fees, including permit fees, traffic impact fees, etc., for new developments containing at least 25% units affordable to households earning less than 75% of the area median income.**
- **Establish a Housing Impact Fee, under which developers of all housing other than affordable housing, and all non-residential development, throughout the Town, would pay an appropriate fee to be deposited into a Housing Trust Fund.**
- **Amend the Affordable Housing Overlay Zone to provide that developments meeting the explicit criteria of the ordinance are approved administratively, rather than requiring Town Council approval.**
- **Establish a revolving fund, using a combination of private, CDBG, State or Town funding sources, to provide low-interest, long-term or deferred payment, loans to lower income Ward 1 homeowners to make repairs needed for safety or code reasons, upgrade the quality of their housing, or expand the housing in order to eliminate overcrowded conditions.**

Finally, although it does not appear that any community-based nonprofit development corporation capable of developing affordable housing (other than Habitat for Humanity), or able to carry out property improvement programs, currently exists, the Town should actively encourage qualified individuals, not only in Ward 1 but throughout the Island, to come together to create such an entity. Should one be established, the Town should provide start-up and pre-development funds, in the form of a deferred loan, to enable the group to become an effective delivery mechanism for affordable housing in the community.

## Building the Economic Base

Fostering the economic development of Ward 1 is in the interest not only of Ward 1 and its residents, but of Hilton Head Island as a whole. The area already has a rich foundation of small businesses, land suitable for development - including substantial frontage on Highway 278 - and an enterprising and productive workforce. The challenge facing the Town, as well as the Native Islanders themselves, is to create the opportunity for Ward 1 residents to participate fully in the Island economy, in the process building the long-term viability of their community. As the economic base of Ward 1 improves, its tax base will grow, and Ward 1 residents will become more active participants in the local economy.

The creation of an strong community economic base must bring together many elements. The development of an economic strategy for Ward 1, however, must incorporate a further perspective; specifically, that Ward 1 residents are seeking an economic base which will be compatible with their culture, history and environment, and that they should not be expected to sacrifice the essence of their community for short term economic gain.

As a foundation for the development of the Ward 1 economic base, the area has significant assets:

- adequate land for both development and preservation;
- historic areas, landmarks, and artifacts which should be preserved, and which can be turned into an economic asset;
- a rich history of shrimping which should be supported and enhanced both as a basic industry and a tourism component;
- a base of service industries with opportunity for expansion.

Indeed, as the R/UDAT team noted, the small businesses of Ward 1, many of which are owned and operated by Native Islanders, fill many important niches in the Islandwide economic base, providing a variety of services not anticipated in the master plans of the plantation developers.

The Town and the business leadership of the Island have a compelling interest in fostering a stronger economic base in Ward 1, which can both strengthen the Islandwide economy and diversify the range of tourist and visitor attractions offered by Hilton Head. **The Town should take the lead in framing a public/ private partnership designed to offer meaningful economic development opportunities for existing and new businesses in Ward 1, including the following steps:**

- Provision of ready access to the water and sewer services which have long been available to the majority of the Island;
- Creation of a zoning and regulatory climate which encourages responsible development without punitive fees or delays, including changes to existing land use regulations which unreasonably limit the use of small and medium-sized parcels with highway frontage;
- Provision of increased access to capital through a gap loan program, described in further detail below;
- A targeted financing program for development and expansion of tourism-related business ventures, including start-up funds, construction of facilities, purchase of equipment, or expansion.

The Town receives a substantial amount annually from the Accommodation Tax. After the initial \$25,000 collected has been deposited into the Town general fund, 65% of the remainder is available to finance a wide variety of tourism-related activities. **Town Council should adopt a policy formally committing at least one half of this amount, or 1/3**



**of the total to the development of tourism-related facilities in Ward 1, with particular emphasis and priority on facilities and activities that build on the history and culture of the Native Islanders for purposes of tourism development.**

- expansion of the Small Business Assistance Center operated by the Chamber of Commerce to focus specifically on Ward 1, with emphasis on providing technical assistance in financing, marketing, and business planning. This effort should seek to utilize the large pool of retired residents holding a variety and often sophisticated business skills, who would be willing to volunteer their expertise in business development, management, and risk evaluation to assist new or emerging small business operators. As a secondary benefit, such a program, by bringing together retired plantation residents with Ward 1 residents could be a significant step in fostering a “one island” attitude on the part of both groups;
- establishing a program in the hospitality industry designed to mainstream Native Islanders into management training programs in area hotels, resorts and convention facilities;
- a commitment by the hospitality industry to enter into contracts with Native Islander businesses to provide services to their hotels and resorts. This will not only support the development of the Ward 1 economic base, but should provide greater long-term stability for the industry in the event that transportation problems and competition from mainland development reduce the flow of labor onto the Island;
- the Technical College of the Lowcountry should establish an on-site Ward 1 storefront training facility to ensure the availability of relevant educational opportunities on an ongoing basis to Ward 1 residents.

Fostering of economic development is an appropriate, even necessary area of responsibility for Town government. **The**

**Town should make a commitment to support small business in Ward 1, by assigning a qualified staff member to act as a single point of contact or ombudsman for small business in Ward 1.** This person would facilitate contact between business and Town Hall, assisting Ward 1 businesses, to the extent possible, in their dealings with other governmental agencies.

**Finally, the Town should work with other public entities as well as local lenders to establish a small business gap loan program, to provide access to capital for viable existing small businesses, or credible start-up businesses, which are unable to qualify for traditional bank loans because of insufficient collateral, high debt ratios, insufficient cash flow, and similar factors.** Such loans would fill the gap between the amount available from a bank and the borrower’s needs, usually 25 to 40 percent of the total amount. Such a program will be self-sustaining, although operating costs will have to be raised separately. Possible funding sources include CDBG, the Small Business Administration, local private sources (including banks acting under their Community Reinvestment Act obligations), and Town funds.

Given the strong visitor-related economy of Hilton Head Island, the skills and resources of the Ward 1 community, and the tourist development opportunities inherent in their traditions and natural setting, the economic development opportunities in Ward 1 are virtually unlimited. Those opportunities can only be realized, however, if Town government and the local private sector, particularly the financial community, share in making them possible.

*"...instill a sense of belonging,  
a sense of usefulness,  
a sense of competence that is respected, and  
a sense of influence over their lives."*

*-David Johnson (Resident)*

*"Few opportunities for development can happen due to the  
traffic impact fee."*

*-Gerry Venable (Resident)*



## Good Government

We recognize that the Town Government of Hilton Head Island is pivotal to the eventual success of any efforts in Ward I. We also recognize that Town Government is constantly faced with balancing diverse constituent interests and searching for common solutions. This process, however, must always be driven by a commitment to basic equity for all citizens. While the R/UDAT focus is specifically on Ward I, it is part of a larger community; as such, these recommendations require sensitivity and commitment from the entire community. In that context, these recommendations are intended to help the community establish a positive framework to meet its future.

## The Political Context

The consideration and implementation of the Ward I plan do not occur in a vacuum. The Hilton Head Town government exists in a community of diverse opinions and complex needs. While the town is financially healthy by any standard, the public demand for services will always exceed available revenue. The underlying premise of availability of basic services and equity for all residents should drive all financial deliberations. Some issues must go beyond discretion and become obligations. The decisions necessary to address Ward I issues will not come without financial cost, and the resolve of elected officials and staff to redress historic inequities is necessary to ensure success.

The Town has adopted a number of regulations and programs to protect the environment, manage growth, defer traffic impacts, and acquire open space. In several cases, such as the traffic management plan, these regulations have placed an inordinate burden and constraint on the residents of Ward I. The Town must measure narrow enforcement of these regulations against the overriding value of providing an equitable opportunity for

Ward I to participate in the economic opportunities which have been so long available to the rest of the Island.

At the time of incorporation, Hilton Head Island adopted the philosophy of a “limited service government”, a concept never defined in law. The philosophy that “less government is better government” is not new. However, residents of Ward I have for years paid taxes with little commensurate return in services. While there are a number of agencies and government entities with responsibility for providing certain services, Hilton Head Island Town government must become an advocate on behalf of all of its residents; and when such advocacy fails, assume the direct responsibility to provide basic services. This extra effort is legitimate and appropriate even for a government that has defined itself as a limited services government. Ward I is not asking for a favor, they are simply asking to “catch up” and to be given the opportunity to be productive participants in the economic base of their island.

At the same time, the Town government must go beyond the delivery of necessary services. The times demand a government which reaches out to the citizenry of all wards, which acts as an educating and informing body, rather than a narrowly regulatory one. The following recommendations are grounded in the above principles.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Accept the premise that the municipal government of the Town of Hilton Head Island is the agency which is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all residents of the Island are afforded basic services; including water, sewer, and paved roads. The Town must take the lead pursuing all alternative methods of providing such services, including coordination with Public Service Districts, county, state and federal government, and outside organizations such as the Deep Well Foundation and the Hospital Foundation. While grant programs should be utilized as appropriate, the ultimate

responsibility for ensuring that such basic services are available in a timely fashion falls upon Town Government, and is such a fundamental obligation that it cannot be delayed.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Town staff should adopt a philosophy that their role is to facilitate first and regulate second. The Town should play a positive role as a problem solver who can provide technical expertise in addressing issues. For example, in considering a potential development proposal, the philosophy should be "... how can we work to better identify potential impacts and potential solutions that are realistic and cost effective...." This should be a foundation for rebuilding trust that town government will work for, rather than against, Ward I residents.

This strategy will probably require that the Town hire or assign an ombudsman to assist smaller landowners in going through the planning process. The ombudsman's role is to be an advocate for the landowner and good land use at the same time. These interests are not mutually exclusive. The ombudsman should be given a title and status that recognize the importance of this issue.

**RECOMMENDATION:** In instances of conflict over Ward I development plans, the Town should provide outside mediators to get past anti-growth emotions and into substantive, issue-based, negotiations. The role of the mediator is to translate concerns into common interests, to the extent possible, and to shift emotion away from issue analysis, always driven by the fundamental assumption that Ward I has the right to share in the economic opportunity previously afforded the rest of the island.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Town should consider a series of workshops or a citizens planning academy to provide a forum on how the current land use regulatory process works, and to encourage a thoughtful community discussion around growth

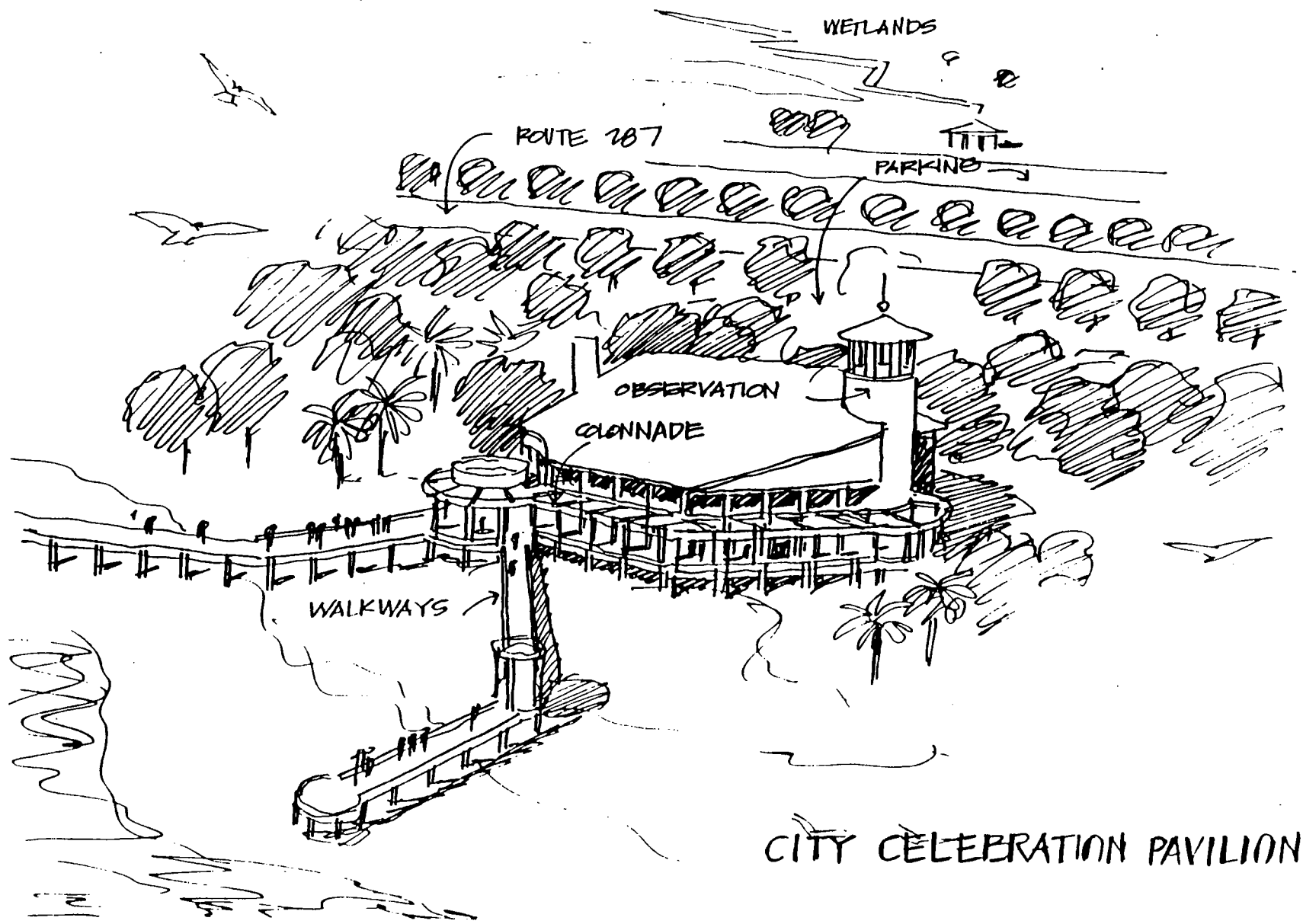
*"The worst thing we have is the fear of the unknown."*

-Tom Peebles (Town Council Rep.,  
Candidate for Mayor)

Dorothy Perkins (Town Council)

*"We are an island..."*

*"This is not viewed as an ordinance that will be here in perpetuity."*



WETLANDS

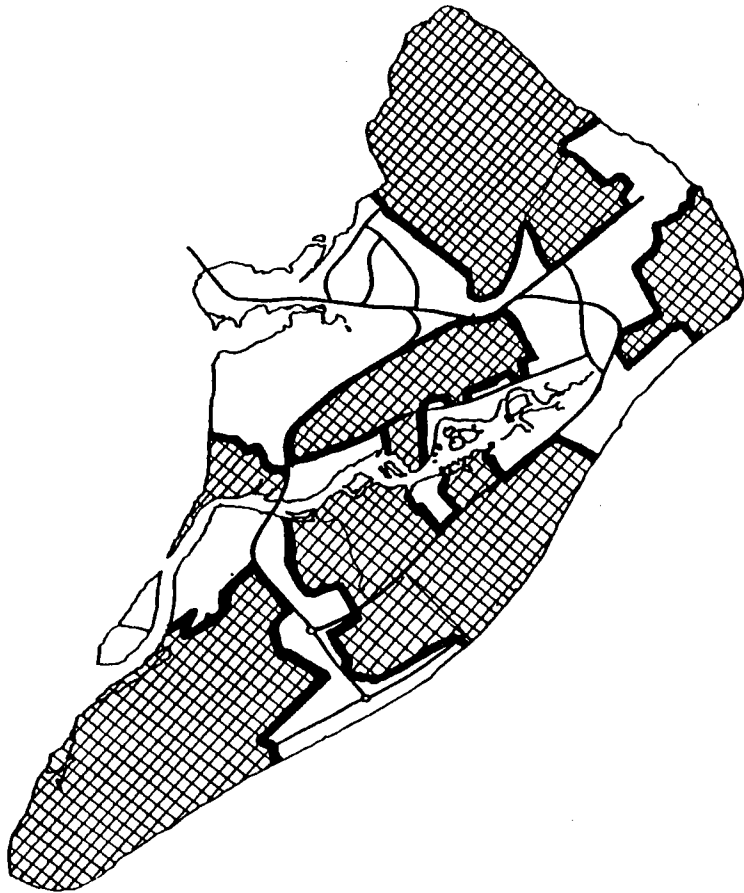
ROUTE 287

PARKING

OBSERVATION  
COLONNADE

WALKWAYS

CITY CELEBRATION PAVILION



and development issues. City regulations, policies, and procedures should be translated into easily-read booklets which identify the rules, the philosophy behind the rules, examples of how the rules apply, and the discretion available in applying the rules.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Town should undertake a program to ensure diversity in its workplace by:

- providing employment opportunity information to the Native Islander community;
- examining minimum job requirements to ensure that they are reasonable and applicable;
- providing internship and summer employment opportunities with the town, in particular those leading to professional and management opportunities, to Native Islanders;
- actively recruit Native Islanders to a full range of Town staff positions as vacancies occur.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Establish a public information program designed to reach all residents of Hilton Head. This may include components such as:

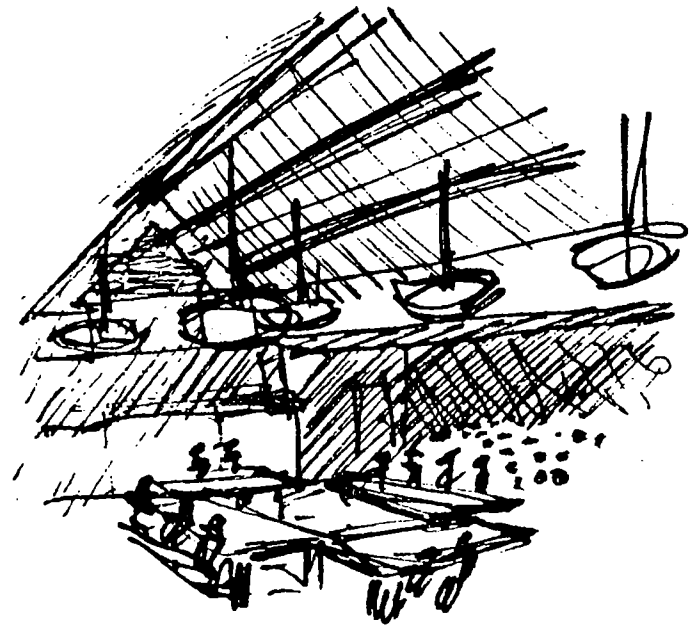
- a regular Town newsletter mailed to every household on the Island, providing substantive information on issues facing the community;
- factual and useful information should be provided, particularly in Ward 1, concerning issues which may be of concern to residents. For example, some residents are concerned that if their house is destroyed by fire or mishap, they cannot rebuild. A basic, plain English explanation of this issue could be mailed to residents;
- The Town manager and key staff should conduct an open, free breakfast in each ward, beginning in Ward 1, at least every 3 months, to provide an open-ended opportunity for

residents to ask questions and get answers. This may start slowly because of years of mistrust, but the Town Manager should persevere;

- The Town which should conduct one study session per year in Ward 1 specifically including a bus tour of the area followed by a “ward health report,” and a discussion of issues facing the ward. This would eventually be appropriate in other wards also, but the immediate need is Ward 1;
- The town should take the lead in insuring that Ward 1 residents are actively solicited for service on all of the boards and commissions of the community, and supported once they are appointed.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Establish a Hilton Head Island Diversity Commission, which would act as an advisory committee to the Hilton Head Town Council. Its primary role would be to recognize, support, celebrate and preserve the island diversity. This would include an effort to identify and preserve the historic cultural contribution of the Native Islanders to Hilton Head, including efforts to identify and preserve native islander historical sites and the Gullah language and songs which are fundamental to Hilton Head’s heritage. The commission should celebrate diversity while also bringing the Island together around common values of respect and acceptance.

All of these steps, which are common among local governments throughout the United States, are designed to achieve a single goal: to bring Town government into a closer, more constructive relationship with all its citizens, and to enable it to become a partner in building a better Hilton Head Island for the future.



## Transportation

Town government on Hilton Head Island takes pride in its awareness and sensitivity to environmental issues. Indeed, the traffic impact fee ordinance, which has been the source of such concern in Ward 1, is driven at least in part by environmental concerns, prompted by increasing traffic congestion on the Island's roads. At the same time, however, Town government, as well as local business and civic leadership, have been reluctant to grapple with the underlying transportation issues. While the Town continues to promote automobile-dependent development through its land use regulation, little or no effort is being made to foster alternative modes of circulation to reduce the Island's overwhelming dependency on private automobiles.

**Town government should take the lead, bringing together the public and private sectors, to develop a Islandwide transit system.** This system should be designed to accomplish the following:

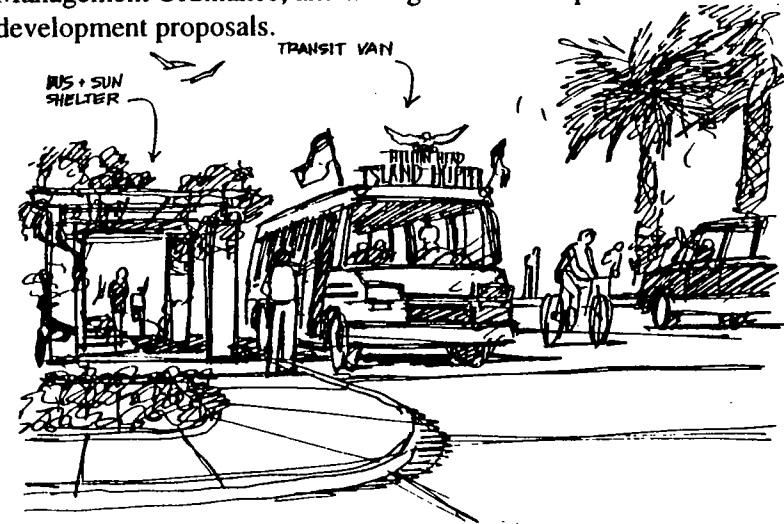
- Provide convenient transportation to and from Island destinations for both visitors and local residents;
- Provide transportation for Island workers, including convenient connections with buses from the mainland;
- Reduce the number of rental cars used by Island visitors;
- Encourage both residents and visitors to explore and utilize the entire Island, rather than limiting their stay to their plantation or resort destination;
- Reduce air pollution by reducing private and rental automobile use; and
- Extend the life cycle of major Island roadways.

While a transit system will not pay for itself, it represents a legitimate use of public funds. It generates long-term savings

from reductions in traffic congestion, demand for additional roadway construction, environmental improvement, and improvements to the local economy. It is likely that the Town government could negotiate a sharing of the subsidy cost of the system with the local hospitality industry. The system would most probably utilize small and medium-sized vans rather than full-size buses, and would emphasize flexibility of routes, frequency of service, and convenience.

The Town has already initiated plans for a pathway system on the Island. **The pathway system should be systematically designed to maximize its use not only for recreation, but to encourage use of bicycle riding and walking as a means of moving around the Island, including facilitating access for school children - particularly within Ward 1 - to reach the school campus safely, as well as to reach heavily utilized recreational facilities.**

Finally, the Town should adopt a policy of actively fostering public-transit sensitive land development, both through its Land Management Ordinance, and through review of specific development proposals.



## Education and Recreation

Education and recreation are, in many respects, the only areas in which the entire Island - at least its younger population - comes together. Although there are small private schools serving the Island population, the children of all economic and social groups attend the local public schools, which are located in an attractive campus setting in the heart of Ward 1. All communities on the Island share a commitment to quality education, a commitment that is reflected not only by the Beaufort County Board of Education, but in the efforts of organizations such as Community Education and Training and the Boys and Girls Club. This commitment is one of the positive features of life on Hilton Head.

While the Town has begun to make significant investment in recreational facilities, additional facilities are needed, as is better access through a pedestrian and bicycle pathway system to recreation and education facilities. We recommend that the Town pursue the following initiatives:

- **Increase the number of well-located playgrounds in Ward 1;**
- **Ensure that the pathway network provides for ready pedestrian and bicycle access to the public school campus, and to recreation facilities from nearby areas;**
- **Increase beach public access, including both creating more beach access points, and providing both convenient pedestrian and bicycle pathways as well as additional parking facilities at key beach access points. Island residents should be able to obtain passes enabling them to park free at metered beach lots.**
- **Complete improvements to Taylor Park.**

One further area is worth noting. Not only the plantations, but Ward 1 as well, contains a high percentage of senior citizens in its population. Unlike the plantations, however, few if any activities and resources for senior citizens - beyond those offered by their families and neighbors - are available in Ward 1. The Town and County should look closely at this area, and develop plans either for a senior citizen recreation facility, or for specific senior citizen programming in an appropriate location in Ward 1.



## **Conclusion**

Most R/UDATs deal mainly or exclusively in problems of design or planning, with the kinds of issues or ideas that a majority of the voters in a community might adopt. Some R/UDATs feel called on to do more. This is one of those R/UDATs that fall in the second category.

This has not been an easy report to write, and the language of this report has been debated at length by the R/UDAT team. We have been loathe to create controversy or take sides, but in the end we have agreed that the controversy already exists and that one side to it has substantially the right of the dispute. We are forced by the special circumstances of this report and what we have seen to speak very plainly and clearly about what we believe are the special obligations of the Town of Hilton Head Island---obligations that are not presently being met and that the Town still seems unready to meet.

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There is a serious and apparently permanent inequity in the way the Town has used its powers to accomplish what the residents of the plantations clearly want for this island. They wish to impose stringent development controls and protracted growth limitations on the owners of property in Ward I and the native residents of this island. They have used growth control ordinances and traffic impact fees, the refusal to extend basic facilities, and the recurrent refrain that the Town is a "limited service government" to avoid the Town's basic duties to the residents and property owners of Ward I.

In this report, we have identified a number of specific and explicit steps that, if taken immediately, will substantially remedy this injustice and will go a long way to see that it cannot happen again. These steps would remedy the lack of master planning in Ward I that occurred in the years when other parts



of the island were, first, master planned and, second, permitted to develop to their full potential. The first residents of the island became the last to benefit from this development, and the town has now told them essentially that they must sacrifice their right to services and development for the greater good of limiting growth in the island.

We do not believe that the steps we have outlined are options, but obligations. They are not a matter of mood, but command. This command arises in the basic duty of government to treat its citizens equally. It arises in the theory that "we sink or swim together" and that one group cannot be made to pay a disproportionate and unjust price when another group of citizens concludes that it wants some great and expensive public good, but does not wish to pay for it. The United States Supreme Court, which interprets our Constitution, has been in recent years quite outspoken on this point.

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We are aware that the basic services and rights that Ward 1 should have---and which the remainder of the island has had in abundance---have been denied for a very long time. This denial, we find, could have been foretold in the incorporation of the Island government, because no one made many bones at that time about how the town would attempt to limit government services by imposing growth controls and refusals to provide services. That decision seems clearly to have been aimed at Ward 1, which was the last remaining unplanned part of the island. If facilities and development were going to be denied, it did not take very long to figure out who would be the one to pay the price. History has proved this assumption to be correct. Ward 1 was the obvious choice to lose, and Ward 1 has lost.

To say it has been unjust to visit on the oldest inhabitants of this island the costs of rolling back and remedying the excesses of development is an understatement. The native island

residents were here generations before this problem was created; they did not create the development or the congestion, and they did not profit from it. They do not to this day enjoy easy access to the plantations and their amenities. Left to themselves, their children and their children's children might very well have perpetuated the old island way of life, which if nothing else was the very antithesis of the development the island has undergone. To conclude that these oldest residents on the island must pay to rectify the planning mistakes of the plantations is unjust, and in the opinion of experts on this issue, this policy may already have created substantial legal jeopardy for the town.

This report has set forth the steps to withdraw from this confrontation---the steps to fix the problem, not to escalate it. But we would be remiss and lacking in candor if we did not say that we see very serious risks to the town in the continued refusal to do simple justice to the native island citizens and the residents of Ward 1.

We hope the town will implement these steps. We will return, if called upon, to help in their implementation to assure equity and their legal rights to the citizens of Ward 1.



M.P. RLL

## **Credits**

The R/UDAT Steering Committee and the Team would like to recognize the genuine interest, special efforts, and community leadership Mr. Eugene Wiley provided the Hilton Head Island R/UDAT project. Mr. Wiley's early support was instrumental in making the Hilton Head Island R/UDAT a reality. His community spirit and leadership will be missed by all.

Mr. Eugene Wiley  
The Golden Rose Restaurant  
1925-1995

## **R/UDAT Steering Committee**

Murray Christopher, Chairman  
David Ames  
Martha Baumberger  
Mike Bell  
Emory Campbell  
John Curry  
Bill Ferguson  
Sharon Harvey  
Marie Hartis  
Jakie H. Lee, AIA  
Veronica Miller  
Alexandria Patterson  
Steve Riley  
Dale Strecker, AIA  
Porter Thompson

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Retired, Former Mayor  
Town of Hilton Head  
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Insty-Prints  
LBMP Architects  
Hilton Head Hospital  
Searchlight Realty  
Town of Hilton Head  
The FWA Group  
Chernoff/Silver

## **R/UDAT Advisory/Resource Group Members**

Rev. Douglas A. Bowling	St. Andrews Methodist Church
Brian Carmines	Hudson's Seafood Restaurant
Charles E. Fraser	The Fraser Group
Christopher Green	The Handyman
Rev. Charles Houston	Mt. Calvary Baptist Church
Denson Hutchinson	HHI Assoc. of Realtors
Douglas A. Kennedy	Leadership Hilton Head
J. C. Lawyer	Retired
Bill Marscher	Greater Island Committee
William G. Miles	HHI Chamber of Commerce
Jack Miller	HHI Hospitality Association
Rev. John Miller	First Presbyterian Church
Lou Perella	Louis Sterling, Inc.
Ben Racusin	Former Mayor
Paul Sukernek	Public Service District #1
Rev. Ben Williams	Mt. Calvary Baptist Church

## **Volunteers**

Judy Gallagher	J. C. Lawyer
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Bucky Porter	Amy Cross
Millie Stivers	Helen Bryan
Sally Cardamone	Mary Ellen Shephard
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Susan Ketchum	Sandy Graves
Jan Dyer	Barry Taylor
Barbara Catenaci	Cindy Hague
Brian Campanella	Kaye Black
Earl Denty	Andrea Wozniak
Liz Cartwright	Diane Ackerman
Cain Haley	

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Special thanks to early members of the Steering Committee for their vision, leadership, and support:

Tom Hund, AIA	The FWA Group
Fran Smith Marscher	The Island Packet
Janet Smith	The Island Packet
Eugene Wiley	The Golden Rose Restaurant

## **Cash Contributors**

American Institute of Architects, South Carolina Chapter  
American Institute of Architects, Hilton Head Island Chapter  
Association of Realtors, Hilton Head Island  
Atlantic Savings Bank  
Central Oak Grove Baptist  
First African Baptist Church  
First Union Bank  
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Louis Sterling, Inc.  
Mt. Calvary Baptist Church  
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New Church of Christ  
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Shell-Mark Ent. dba McDonalds  
St. James Baptist Church  
T. D. Peeples Construction, Inc.  
Town Hilton Head Island  
Wachovia Bank  
Westin Resort

## **Media Coverage**

Joy 108.7 FM WIJY Radio  
The Island Packet  
The Carolina Morning News  
Hilton Head News  
WJWJ  
WHHI

To the numerous Hilton Head Island residents, community groups, business people, government officials, and religious leaders who participated in the R/UDAT project, the Steering Committee and the Team thank you for your support, interest, and participation. Without the benefit of the thoughtful exchange of diverse ideas and opinions, this R/UDAT report would not have been possible. Your input was invaluable!

**In any effort of this magnitude, there are bound to be omissions and errors. We realize that there are those who have been inadvertently omitted, and to those unsung heroes, we extend our sincere appreciation and apology!**

## **In-Kind Services and Contributions**

A Shore Thing  
Abe's Native Shrimp House  
American Institute of Architects, Hilton Head Island  
David Ames  
Avis Rental  
Carmine's Restaurant  
Chamber of Commerce, HHI  
Crowne Plaza Resort  
John Curry  
Curry Printing & Copy Center  
The FWA Group  
Gail & Vaughn Office Products, Inc.  
Haig Point  
Hampton Inn  
Hargray Telephone Company  
Harris Teeter, Main Street  
Hilton Head Rental Center  
Hyatt Regency Hotel  
Insty-Prints  
Island Reprographics  
Island Vision Video  
Joe Pinckney  
LBMP Architects  
Long's Travel  
Low Country Adventures  
McCracken Middle School  
NationsBank  
Native Island Business Association  
Penn Center  
Pro Photo Inc.  
Piggly Wiggly, Shelter Cove  
Pineland Mill Shops  
Publix Grocery  
Sam's Club Membership Warehouse

Schilling's Boathouse  
Sprint Cellular  
Steel Horse Helicopters, Inc.  
T. D. Peeples Construction, Inc.  
The Camera Place  
Town of Hilton Head Island  
Tri Comm Productions  
USAir  
USAV  
Vaughn Business Systems  
Wal-Mart  
Ward I Women  
Westin Resort  
Wexford Realty  
Zonta Club of Hilton Head Island

## R/UDAT Team Members

### Joe Champeaux

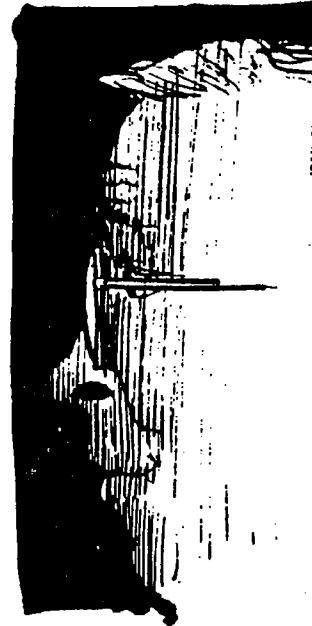
Champeaux, of Lake Charles, Louisiana., team chairman, holds degrees from Tulane and Rice Universities and served as director of city planning in Lake Charles from 1968 - 1972. He took part in a joint U.S. - Japan conference in 1972 in Tokyo on urban design and seismic safety. He was recently inducted into the American Institute of Architects' College of Fellows.

### Michael Rock

Rock has been city manager of Lakewood, Colorado since 1972 and has 23 years of experience as a manager. In Lakewood, he was responsible for establishing design standards for business and residential properties to increase the livability of the community. He holds degrees from the University of Northern Colorado, Metropolitan State College, The University of Colorado at Denver, and the Brookings Institute and serves on the board of the Colorado Housing Finance Authority.

### Diane Jones Washington

Washington is a landscape architect from New Orleans. Her firm, Terra Designs Inc., provides land-planning services to public and corporate clients. She holds degrees from the University of California at Berkeley and Washington University in St. Louis and has worked in California, Maryland, and Louisiana.



### **William Aaron Gilchrist**

Gilchrist is Director of Planning and Engineering for the City of Birmingham, Alabama. He is a registered architect and holds three degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology including his Bachelor of Science, Master of Architecture, and Master of Business. An advocate for community based urban design, he is a member of the American Planning Association and the American Institute of Architects.

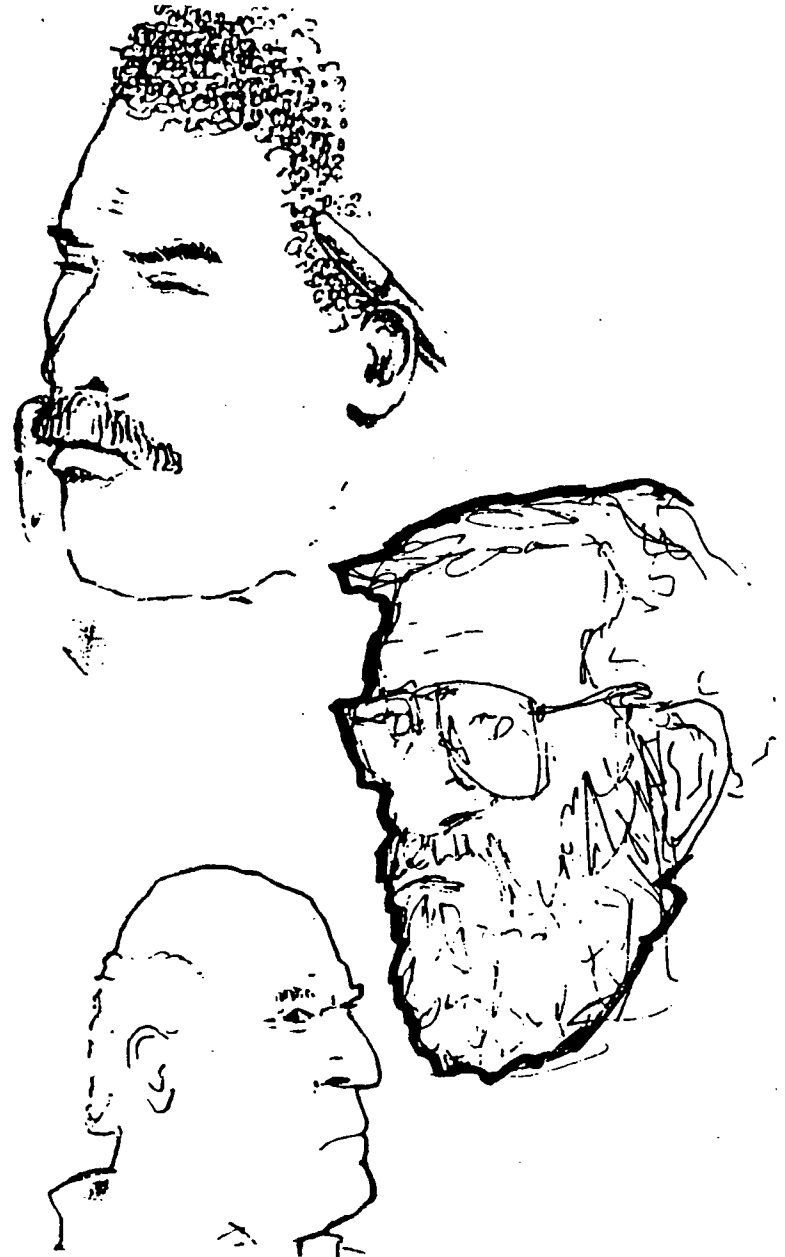
### **Alan Mallach**

Mallach is Director of the Department of Housing and Development in Trenton, New Jersey, where he is responsible for the city's housing, planning, and economic development activities. He is a specialist in planning strategies for mixed-income communities and challenging exclusionary land-use practices. He holds a degree from Yale College and has taught at Rutgers Law School and the New Jersey School of Architecture. Mallach is also a recognized expert in the field of late 19th and early 20th century Italian opera.

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### **Malcolm Misuraca**

Misuraca is a San Francisco trial lawyer with more than 30 years experience with civil cases. He has served as a professor and lecturer at the University of Hawaii Law School, The John F. Kennedy Law School in California and the University of California Law School. He sued the city of Petaluma, California in 1973 in a challenge to the city's growth ordinance. He holds degrees from Georgetown University and the University of California.



### **Peter Hasselman**

Hasselmann of California is an architect, urban designer and artist known for his ability to integrate a variety of viewpoints into his sketches. He has participated in studies of 16 U. S. cities and assisted in the design of the Baltimore interstate highway system, resorts in Saipan, Mexico, Spain and Japan and advised the city of Atlanta on how to respond to the planning opportunities raised by the 1996 Olympic Games. He holds a degree from the University of Illinois.



### **Mark Maves**

Maves of Washington, D. C. is an architect and urban designer. A principal of FEEK-Architects, he has served as a consultant to the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Endowment for the Arts. He was a recent chairman of the AIA's National Regional & Urban Design Committee and holds degrees from the University of California at Berkeley.





## R/UDAT Student Assistants

The student assistants for the R/UDAT team are all graduate students at Clemson University working toward their Master of Architecture degrees.

### Kert Huggins

Huggins, who grew up on Hilton Head Island, received his Bachelors Degree of Science at Clemson in the field of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management. He worked for three years in Edisto Beach, SC, Summit County, CO and Hilton Head before returning to graduate school. His father, Kermit Huggins, has been designing on the Island for over 20 years.

### Rudi Elert

Elert is from Wayne, New Jersey, and came to South Carolina five years ago to study architecture. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Architecture from Clemson. He worked in Atlanta for architect Rob Miller before returning to graduate school.

### Dana Strickland

Strickland, of Greenville, South Carolina earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Architecture and Urbanism from Smith College. She worked for the Architect of the Capitol in Washington, DC for two years before returning to South Carolina to attend Clemson.

### Chris Youngblood

Youngblood, from Jonesville, SC, obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Architecture from Clemson. Since graduating, he has studied architecture in Genoa, Italy, and currently works for Barry Bankes Architecture in Greenville.

### Dennis Blaschke, Jr.

Blaschke is from Houston, Texas, and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Design from Texas A & M University. He spent a year teaching high school before returning to graduate school at Clemson.

### Hilary Stevens

Stevens is from Orlando, Florida, where she has worked in the office of HHCP Architects. She graduated from Savannah College of Art and Design with a Bachelor of Architecture degree as well as a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Historic Preservation.

