



TOWN OF SEABROOK ISLAND 2019 Comprehensive Plan

**ADOPTED BY SEABROOK ISLAND TOWN COUNCIL
July 23, 2019**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TOWN COUNCIL

R.J. Ciancio, Mayor
John Gregg, Mayor Pro Tem
Skip Crane
Jeri Finke
John Wells

PLANNING COMMISSION

Robert Driscoll, Chairman
Ken Otstot, Vice Chairman
Wayne Billian
Cathy Patterson
Stan Ullner
Lori Leary

TOWN STAFF

Joe Cronin, Town Administrator
Faye Allbritton, Town Clerk/Treasurer
Lynda Stearns
Heather Springs
Tom Strehle



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Topic	Page
1.	Foreword	1-1
2.	Profile of Town Government	2-1
3.	Population Element	3-1
4.	Economic Development Element	4-1
5.	Natural Resources Element	5-1
6.	Cultural Resources Element	6-1
7.	Community Facilities Element	7-1
8.	Housing Element	8-1
9.	Land Use Element	9-1
10.	Transportation Element	10-1
11.	Priority Investment Element	11-1

INTRODUCTION

The *Town of Seabrook Island Comprehensive Plan* was initially adopted by the Town Council on April 27, 1999. Among other things, SC State Law § 6-29-510 requires that Planning Commissions review the Comprehensive Plan or elements no less than once every five years to determine whether changes in the amount, kind, or direction of development of the area or other reasons make it desirable to make additions or amendments to the plan. The *Town of Seabrook Island Comprehensive Plan* was last updated in 2009. This 2019 Comprehensive Plan Update incorporates the results of the Town of Seabrook Island Planning Commission’s complete review of the comprehensive plan and satisfies SC State Law § 6-29-510 requirements.



The Planning Commission completed this 2019 update with input from the public and support and guidance from the professional staff of the Town of Seabrook Island and the Charleston County Planning Department. The Comprehensive Plan seeks to accomplish the Town’s vision – *“To be a residential community where growth is managed, commercial development activities are limited and the natural environment is preserved, while respecting the rights of individuals and their property”* - by articulating goals to guide future Town Council actions regarding the pattern and intensity of land use, the provision of public facilities and services, economic development, housing availability, and natural and cultural resources. In this plan, it is important to keep in mind that the Town of Seabrook Island is unique: most of the Town is a private, gated community. Although zoning and development are governed by Town ordinances, the infrastructure inside the gate is owned and maintained by the Seabrook Island Property Owners Associations (SIPOA) and other private organizations.





PROFILE OF GOVERNMENT

The Town of Seabrook Island, South Carolina, (the “Town”) was incorporated by the State of South Carolina on May 26, 1987. The Town of Seabrook Island operates as a Mayor-Council (“Strong Mayor”) form of government. The Town Council is composed of a mayor and four Council members, and are elected at-large, with non-partisan elections taking place in November of odd numbered years. All terms are for a period of two-years and there is no limit to the number of terms a member may serve. The mayor and Town Council members serve without compensation. The mayor and four Council members comprise the legislative branch of the Town, and it is their duty to set overall policy in matters concerning the operation of the Town’s affairs.

The mayor is the chief administrative officer of the town. He has all the powers prescribed by state law, including the power to:

- Appoint, suspend or remove all municipal employees and administrative officers of the town;
- Direct and supervise the administration of all departments, offices and agencies of the town;
- Preside at all Town Council meetings and vote as a member of the council;
- Act to insure that all laws and ordinances of the town are faithfully executed;
- Prepare and submit an annual budget and capital program to Town Council for review and approval;
- Submit to Town Council and make available to the public a complete report on the finances and administrative activities of the municipality as of the end of each fiscal year;
- Make such reports as Town Council may require concerning the operations and functions which are subject to the Mayor’s direction and supervision; and



- Appoint, with Town Council’s approval, a Town Administrator to assist the mayor in fulfilling his duties.

The Town is unique among other South Carolina municipalities in that two private, non-profit organizations, SIPOA and Seabrook Island Club (SIC), provide many services that are typically performed by governments. Examples include most road and drainage maintenance, security, and recreation. However, the Town provides several services to its citizens including, but not limited to:

- Public Safety: Town-wide law enforcement through contract with Charleston County Sheriff’s office and code enforcement;



- Street, Landscaping and Drainage Maintenance: Seabrook Island Road from the roundabout at Betsy Kerrison Parkway to the front entry gate;
- Planning and Zoning Administration, Building Permitting and Code Inspections: Through the Town Administrator and agreement with Charleston County;
- Beach Maintenance and Safety: Beach patrol; beach monitoring and enforcement of leash laws; and
- Communications and Emergency Preparedness: The Town maintains a Comprehensive Emergency Plan, and an Emergency Preparedness Webpage on the Town’s website.

The annual budget serves as the foundation for the Town’s financial planning and control. Each year the Town Administrator prepares a draft budget for the mayor to review and present to council. By law, the Town is required to have a balanced budget. The draft budget is accompanied by detail of each revenue and expense item. The Town budgeted revenue sources are identified as both unrestricted and restricted. The latter consist of revenues received from the state accommodations tax, county accommodation tax and state alcohol tax, and may only be spent as mandated by applicable statute or rule. While municipalities are legally empowered to collect taxes on real and personal property, the Town does not currently levy a property tax millage. Additional information regarding the Town’s annual budget is included in the Economic Development Element of this Comprehensive Plan Update.

Boards, Committees and Commissions

The Town relies heavily on boards, committees and commissions to conduct functions normally performed by departments of a Town government. The Town has boards, committees and commissions as required by statute and special committees to review and recommend policies, activities, and ordinances. Current and previous agendas and minutes are available on the Town website

(www.townofseabrookisland.org) These committees include the following:

ATAX Advisory Committee

The Seabrook Island Accommodations Tax (ATAX) Advisory Committee is a local advisory committee which was established by Town Council pursuant to Section 6-4-25 of the S.C. Code of Laws. The ATAX Advisory Committee consists of seven members, a majority of whom are selected from the hospitality industry. At least two of the members must be from the lodging industry and at least one member shall represent local cultural organizations. Committee members are appointed by Town Council and serve for a term of two years. The ATAX Advisory Committee meets at least one time per year for the purpose of reviewing and providing recommendations to Town Council on the expenditure of funds generated by the 2% State ATAX. By law, State ATAX funds must be used exclusively for the promotion of tourism, arts and cultural activities within the community.

In FY 2019, the town appropriated State ATAX funds for the following tourism-related events and activities:

- Seabrook Island Beach Patrol (\$40,000)
- Fourth of July Celebration (\$20,000)
- Kick It at Bohicket (\$17,000)
- Billfish Tournament & Dolphin Slam (\$10,000)
- Alan Fleming Tennis Tournament (\$10,000)
- Charleston Regional Visitors Guide Ad (\$10,000)
- Dolphin Education Program (\$10,000)
- SC Women's Golf Association Open (\$5,000)

Board of Zoning Appeals

The Seabrook Island Board of Zoning Appeals is a quasi-judicial board which was established by Town Council pursuant



to the requirements of the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 (S.C. Code of Laws Section 6-29-780 et seq). The Board consists of five members, each of whom must be residents of the town. Board members are appointed by Town Council for a five-year term. The Board has three specific powers, duties, and responsibilities:

- To hear and decide appeals for variances from the requirements of the zoning ordinance when strict application of the provisions of the ordinance would result in unnecessary hardship. State law outlines four criteria which must be met in order to qualify for a variance, and it is incumbent upon the applicant to demonstrate how the request satisfies each of the four criteria;
- To permit uses by special exception when designated within the zoning ordinance; and
- To hear and decide appeals where it is alleged there is an error in an order, requirement, decision or determination made by an administrative official in the enforcement of the zoning ordinance.

Planning Commission

The Seabrook Island Planning Commission was established by Town Council pursuant to the requirements of the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 (S.C. Code of Laws Section 6-29-780 et seq). The Commission consists of five members, each of whom are appointed by Town Council for a term of two years. Each member must be a registered voter of the town and shall either reside or own property within the town limits. No member may hold any other public office in the town or county.

The Commission is responsible for undertaking a continuing planning program for the physical, social and economic growth, development and redevelopment of land within the town. To fulfill this role, one of the primary functions of the Planning Commission is to prepare, review and periodically update the town's official comprehensive plan. In order to implement the recommendations of the plan, the Commission is also charged with preparing and recommending to Town Council specific instruments and measures, including:

- Zoning ordinances, zoning district maps and appropriate revisions thereto;
- Regulations for the subdivision and development of land;
- An official map and appropriate revisions showing the exact location of existing or proposed public streets, highways, utility rights of way and public building sites, with regulations and procedures for administering the official map ordinance;
- A landscaping ordinance providing required planting, tree preservation and other aesthetic considerations;
- A capital improvements program listing projects required to implement the adopted plans; and
- Policies and procedures to implement adopted elements of the comprehensive plan. These policies and procedures may cover such topics as expanding corporate limits, extending public water and sewer systems, dedicating streets and drainage easements, and offering economic development incentive packages.

The Commission is responsible for overseeing the administration of subdivision and land development regulations upon adoption by Town Council, including, but not



limited to, the review and approval of subdivision plats and commercial developments. The Commission may also be tasked by Town Council with reviewing and providing recommendations on any other municipal matter.

Public Safety Committee

The Seabrook Island Public Safety Committee is a standing committee of the Town which was established by ordinance of Town Council. The Public Safety Committee is chaired by the member of Town Council who has been designated as the town's Public Safety Official. Additional at-large members may be recommended by the chair and appointed by the full Council. Committee members serve for a two-year term which runs concurrent with the mayor's term.

The Public Safety Committee is tasked with the following responsibilities:

- Reviewing and recommending updates to the Town's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan;
- Identifying resources to ensure the safety and well-being of the public;
- Coordinating with outside entities and community organizations on emergency management and disaster response planning;
- Coordinating with emergency service providers (Police, Fire and EMS) to plan for and respond to potentially unsafe or life-threatening situations;
- Reviewing and providing recommendations for on-call service contracts including, but not limited to, debris management and debris monitoring services; and
- Undertaking public relations activities to increase the public's awareness of potential hazards including, but

not limited to, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes and earthquakes.

The Public Safety Committee meets on an as-needed basis, as determined by the chair.

Utility Commission

Following a successful referendum in 1995, the town acquired the island's water and sewer system from Heater of Seabrook, Inc., a private utility owned by Minnesota Power and Water. The Seabrook Island Utility Commission (SIUC) was established by ordinance of Town Council for the purpose of managing operations and maintenance of the town's water and sewer system. The SIUC provides water and wastewater service to all residents and businesses within the town. The SIUC also provides wastewater treatment to certain areas outside the town limits, including the nearby developments of Cassique, Freshfields Village and Kiawah River Estates. Members of the SIUC are elected by the residents of the town. Each member is elected to a six-year term, and elections take place in November of odd-numbered years. In the event of a vacancy, the mayor and Town Council may appoint a new member to fill the remainder of the unexpired term.

The SIUC has been vested by Town Council with the following powers and duties:

- To have full control and management over the town's water and sewer system;
- To supply and furnish water and sewer services, and require payment of such rates, tolls, and charges as it may establish from time to time for the use of such services;
- To have complete authority to service all customers formerly served by Heater of Seabrook, Inc. and to



Chapter 2 – Profile of Town

assume all contractual obligations of Heater of Seabrook, Inc.;

- To make a full and complete statement in a standard accounting format to the Town Council each month of all receipts and disbursements during the previous month;
- To submit an annual financial report to the Town Council in a standard accounting format;
- To take all actions it deems necessary to establish and operate the town's water and sewer system, unless provided to the contrary by town ordinance or state statute; and
- To expend the funds it receives from the operation of the town's water and sewer system.

However, the SIUC does not have the authority to:

- Incur any indebtedness as evidenced by monetary loans without prior approval of Town Council; or
- Provide service to new customers outside the town limits (or outside of those areas with prior contractual obligations at the time the system was acquired) without prior approval from Town Council and the holding of a public referendum.

Ways & Means Committee

The Ways and Means Committee is a standing committee of the town which was established by ordinance of Town Council. The Ways and Means Committee is a "committee of the whole" and is made up of the mayor and all four members of Town Council. Committee meetings function as a type of "workshop" or "work session" prior to the monthly Town Council meeting. The purpose of the committee is to relax the usual limits on debate, allowing a more open and thorough discussion of matters pending before Town Council. Any item requiring a

final vote will be taken up during a subsequent Town Council meeting.

The Ways and Means Committee holds its regular meeting on the third Tuesday of each month (one week prior to the regularly scheduled Town Council meeting), except in instances when this date, or the date of the Town Council meeting, conflicts with the observance of a town holiday, in which case the meeting may be held on an alternate date.