

Amended Comprehensive Plan

for the

City of
Isle of Palms,
South Carolina

Prepared by the
Isle of Palms Planning Commission

Revised May 26, 2015

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INTRODUCTION

In 1994 the State of South Carolina adopted the Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act. This Act revised the State's planning laws, including the process by which municipalities may develop and adopt comprehensive plans. The Isle of Palms Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with the 1994 Act. During the many months of preparation, numerous workshops and public hearings were held and many experts in various fields were consulted. A list of meetings at which the plan was discussed and the topics discussed at those meetings appear in Appendix C. All meetings were open to the public and public participation in the planning process was encouraged.

This Comprehensive Plan is intended to document the history of development on the Isle of Palms, identify the community's problems and needs, and articulate a vision for its future. The Plan is also intended to help guide future decision making in matters affecting the physical, social, and economic growth, development and redevelopment of the community. This plan is not a final product; it is part of a continuing planning process and should be updated and revised as new information becomes available or as new problems and needs arise.

The first plan adopted pursuant to the 1994 Act was adopted in December 1997 and then amended with the addition of time frames for implementing strategies that were contained in the plan in March of 1998. In November 2002, the Planning Commission began on what was intended to be a five year review. However, the number of changes became significant enough to warrant a ten-year update to the plan. The revisions from this review were incorporated in early 2004. The plan was reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2008, and as a part of this review, two new elements were added, Transportation and Priority Investment, as required by the 2007 South Carolina Priority Investment Act. In 2014, the Planning Commission reviewed the plan and recommended that the plan be updated to include information regarding the 2010 Census, the potential impact of the Biggert-Waters Act and beach erosion issues.

The Plan includes nine major elements: Population, Economic, Natural Resources, Cultural Resources, Community Facilities, Housing, Land Use, Transportation and Priority Investment. Each element includes background information, and may also include a list of key issues and a set of goals and

implementation strategies where appropriate. Preceding these elements is an overall vision statement and brief description of the island's location and history.

Time frames and priorities for implementing the strategies contained in this plan are included in parentheses at the end of each strategy.

Vision Statement

Isle of Palms has developed into a premier barrier island residential community with a variety of housing styles, commercial uses and recreational facilities. Despite the natural cycle of beach erosion that is inherent on barrier islands and the extensive development of the island, the natural resources that make Isle of Palms such a wonderful place to live and visit remain intact and in good condition. Measures that will enhance the existing character of the island as a quality place to live, and protect the environment both on and around the island, must be taken to guide development and preserve the quality of life for generations to come.

January 31, 2002 (revised May 26, 2015)

LOCATION AND HISTORY

Location and Climate

Isle of Palms is a seven-mile-long barrier island located eight miles east of Charleston on the South Carolina coast. This long and relatively narrow island varies in width from .35 miles to 1.6 miles, and its slightly curving shoreline has an orientation of southwest to northeast.

For descriptive purposes, the end of the island nearest Charleston is referred to as the “west” end, while the opposite end of the island is referred to as the “east” end. The total area of the island is four and one-half square miles.

The island is bounded on the north by Hamlin Creek and the Intracoastal Waterway, on the east by Dewees Inlet and Dewees Island, on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the west by Breach Inlet and Sullivan’s Island.

The average annual temperature is 66 Degrees F, with a low monthly average of 50 degrees in January and a high monthly average of 81 degrees in July and August. Precipitation averages 46.8 inches annually and varies from 2.1 inches in November to 6.2 inches in August.

History

Originally known as Hunting Island and then between the mid-18th century and 1898 as Long Island, the Isle of Palms served for many years as a place of refuge and recreation and, during the American Revolution, as a staging area for troops. In fact, Breach Inlet at the west end of the island derives its name from an event in 1776, when Sir Henry Clinton’s British troops landed on Long Island and attempted to cross the inlet to Sullivan’s Island to attack the American fort from the rear. Clinton’s troops were intercepted by American troops, led by Colonel William Thomson, and repulsed as they attempted to “breach” the treacherous waters of the inlet, thus giving us Breach Inlet.

In 1898, the first house was constructed on the island by Nicholas Sottile. The next year, Dr. Joseph S. Lawrence changed the name of the island to Isle of Palms and provided the first overland access by means of a trolley rail line running from Mount Pleasant across Sullivan’s Island to Isle of

Palms. Dr. Lawrence was a physician and business entrepreneur who wanted to create a holiday resort. A restaurant and Ferris wheel were opened for island visitors the following year, and in 1902 the Seashore Hotel was completed.

As the island's popularity continued to increase, a long, covered pavilion, which stood until the late 1930s, was constructed along the beach. However, in 1924, Isle of Palms was effectively closed when the ferry service from Charleston to Mount Pleasant was discontinued due to financial difficulties.

In 1926 a wooden bridge replaced the trolley trestle, enabling visitors to come by car. With the opening of the Grace Memorial Bridge in 1929, linking Charleston and Mount Pleasant, and the advent of other road and bridge improvements, it soon became even easier to reach the Isle of Palms by automobile. Isle of Palms, Incorporated, which was formed to capitalize on the improved accessibility of the island, inaugurated a new program of improvements on the island, including paving of roads. But the effects of the Great Depression cut short these plans, and in 1934, the Hardaway Contracting Company took control of the island. Once again, the venture failed as Hardaway's efforts did not generate a return on his investment.

In 1944 J.C. Long, a Charleston attorney, purchased the Hardaway interests and otherwise un-owned portions of the island and formed a new land development company called The Beach Company. Mr. Long immediately began to make major improvements on the island, and the first substantial development of the Isle of Palms began.

Residential development began on the western end of the island, where many of the remaining homes date back to the 1940s. Residential subdivision and construction continued through the 1950s and into the 1960s. In 1975, the City approved plans for the development of a "recreational-oriented residential community" at the eastern end of the island. This private, gated development soon became known as Wild Dunes. The current year-round population is estimated at over 4,000 people with a peak population of 20,000 people during major summer holiday weekends.

In 1953 the island was incorporated as the City of Isle of Palms by an Act of the South Carolina Legislature. The City currently has a council form of government with a Mayor and eight City Council members, each elected to

four-year terms. The City also employs a City Administrator to manage its daily affairs.

The commercial development on the island was originally centered around Ocean Boulevard between 10th and 14th Avenues, known as the “Front Beach” area. The commercial area now includes Palm Boulevard as well. Over the years, the type of commercial buildings have changed from open-air pavilions for seasonal activities to more substantial, enclosed buildings and shopping centers housing businesses which operate year-round. The Island Center on Palm Boulevard opened in 1959, followed by the Ocean Park shopping center in 1992. In the meantime, the Pavilion Shops on Ocean Boulevard opened in 1989. The Sea Cabin condominiums, used mainly for seasonal occupancy, opened in 1980 and 1981. The island has had two hotels and several multi-family developments built since the late 1990s.

The Isle of Palms has experienced many storms and hurricanes, but none as devastating as Hurricane Hugo, which hit the South Carolina coast at midnight on September 21, 1989. This category four hurricane damaged nearly every structure on the island and destroyed more than 200 structures.

In October 1993 the Isle of Palms Connector opened, providing direct access between Isle of Palms and Mount Pleasant over a fixed span bridge. The Connector, named for the late Representative Clyde Moultrie Dangerfield, improved the ability of residents to evacuate in time of emergency.

POPULATION

Characteristics

According to the 2010 Census, the population of the City of Isle of Palms has been fairly stable over the last decade. Between 1990 and 2000 the total population rose from 3,680 in 1990 to 4,538, and then between 2000 and 2010 it dropped slightly to 4,133. During the summer beach season, the island's population rises to 12,000 people and may increase to as many as 20,000 people during peak weekends such as Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day, based on Police Department estimates.

The number of year-round residents of the Isle of Palms is not expected to change significantly in the near future. This can be attributed to: a decreasing supply of residential development sites on the island, especially sites aimed at year-round residents, and a continuing decline in the average number of persons per household.

The 2010 Census indicates a 34% increase in the number of people over the age of 65, with the number of people in every other age category decreasing.

The 2010 Census indicates that the number of housing units increased by ten percent over the 2000 Census to 4,274 units. However, the number of owner-occupied units decreased six percent over the same period to 1,828 units. The Census category that includes units rented on a short term basis and second homes increased by 26% from 1,939 units to 2,446 units.

Population- year round								
		1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	% change
	Isle Of Palms[Census]	1,183	2,657	3,421	3,680	4,583	4,133	-10%
	East Cooper[Census]		23,000	33,200	45,300	59,554	67,843	14%
	Other Barrier Islands[Census]							
	Sullivan's Island				1,623	1,911	1,791	-6%
	Folly Beach				1,398	2,116	2,617	24%
	Kiawah Island				718	1,163	1,626	40%
	Seabrook Island				948	1,250	1,714	37%

Isle of Palms Housing Units							
		1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	% change
	Total[Census]			3,063	3,881	4,274	10%
	Occupied[Census]	821	1,305	1,482	1,942	1,828	-6%
	by Owner			1,172	1,568	1,481	-6%
	by Renter			310	374	347	
	Seasonal/Vacant			2,109	1,939	2,446	26%
	Total within Wild Dunes[as of 4/8/2012]				1,923	2,067	
Vacant Residential Sites				<u>1995</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2010</u>	
	Total			975	375	215	
	Single Family			825	206	117	

Income (per census)

Per capita income- median

Isle of Palms

1980- \$9,177
1990- \$25,421
2000- \$44,221
2010- \$68,759

Mount Pleasant

1980- \$9,038
1990- \$25,421
2000- \$30,823
2010- \$40,808

Charleston County

1980- \$6,358
1990- \$13,068
2000- \$21,393
2010- \$29,738

Household income- median

Isle of Palms

1980- \$24,096
1990- \$60,682
2000- \$76,170
2010- \$86,477

Key Issues

- The impact of a growing seasonal population.
- The impact of a growing year-round population of retirement age (60 years and over).
- .

Goals and Implementation Strategies

Goal 1.1: Improve services for residents.

Strategy 1.1.1 The City should continue to monitor the Emergency Medical Services serving the island (see also Goal 5.1). *(Ongoing; Fire Department, General Government and City Council)*

Strategy 1.1.2 Recreational opportunities for residents should be expanded or added, including additional safe walking or biking areas on the island (see also Strategy 5.4.3). *(2008; Recreation Department, General Government and City Council)*

Goal 1.2: Balance the needs of island residents with seasonal visitors.

Strategy 1.2.1 Support commercial development only within the parameters set by the existing zoning regulations and consistent with the City's established character as a residential community. *(Ongoing; Building Department and City Council)*

Strategy 1.2.2 While the needs of island residents should be paramount, efforts should be made to adjust the level of City services to meet the needs of seasonal visitors as well. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*

Strategy 1.2.3 The City should continuously monitor and keep records of the effect of seasonal visitors on the quality of life of the permanent residents; this should include, but not be limited to the issues of parking, noise, trash, and general livability. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*

ECONOMIC

Characteristics

Isle of Palms is primarily a residential community with world-class resort amenities and a relatively large commercial base when compared to most other barrier island communities in the area. Of the approximately 2,880 acres on the island, approximately 40.6 acres or 1.4 percent of the island is zoned commercial, excluding resort amenities within the gated section of Wild Dunes. Only a small portion of the commercially zoned land remains undeveloped. The island's economic diversity and high property values provide a strong tax base and has allowed the millage rate, the factor that is multiplied by the assessed value of a property to determine the amount of property tax to be paid, to be the lowest of all municipalities within the Charleston area.

The island's ocean beach, tidal marshland, and marinas constitute the most important economic assets. They are the main reason residents and tourists alike are drawn to the area. Only by maintaining and improving these natural assets will the island's community continue to grow and prosper. The desirability of living near these natural resources has created relatively high property values, which in turn raises the tax base. These same resources attract tourists, which results in accommodations tax revenue. This revenue is essential in the support of services and infrastructure.

The gated community of Wild Dunes includes the major resort, conference, golf and tennis facilities, as well as single-family and multi-family dwelling units. Destination Wild Dunes Incorporated (DWD) owns and operates these facilities and also manages many of the short-term rental properties within Wild Dunes. Short-term rental of these units in season is reaching capacity while unoccupied units remain during the off season. The Planned Development District, "PDD" zoning district, which applies to most of the Wild Dunes community, allows up to 350 inn rooms, 147 of which have been constructed to date in the Boardwalk Inn and The Village.

Key Issues

- Assure continuous economic vitality of the island by maintaining the quality of natural resources and community facilities.
- Assure the quality of life of full-time residents is not diminished by the vacation rental commerce.
- Maintain and expand City services as needed.
- Determine the impact that daily visitors and tourists may have on natural resources, services and infrastructure.
- Maintain a sound tax base on the island.

Goals and Implementation Strategies

Goal 2.1: Balance the needs of residents and tourists with those of the environment.

Strategy 2.1.1: Establish policies and procedures to ensure that beaches, marshlands and marinas are protected and preserved. *(Ongoing; Building Department and City Council)*

Strategy 2.1.2: Encourage business development commensurate with the needs of the local community. *(Ongoing)*

Strategy 2.1.3: Maintain and enhance an effective monitoring system to ensure beaches, marshlands and marinas are properly maintained. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*

Goal 2.2: Maintain a sound tax base.

Strategy 2.2.1: Monitor the activity of the State Legislature to ensure an equitable formulation of accommodation tax revenue for island communities. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*

Strategy 2.2.2: Investigate other sources of revenue that can be generated from daily visitors and longer term tourists. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*

Goal 2.3: Determine the impact of tourists (daily, short-term and long-term) on the island's revenue and cost structure.

Strategy 2.3.1: Initiate comprehensive study by an outside agency to determine economic impact of visitors on recreational facilities, City services and infrastructure. *(2008; Recreation Department, General Government and City Council)*

Goal 2.4: Minimize escalating cost structure.

Strategy 2.4.1: Personnel costs make up approximately three-quarters of the City's general fund expenditure budget. Continually scrutinize planned projects for additional long-term personnel costs that may be associated with them. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*

NATURAL RESOURCES

Characteristics

Isle of Palms, like most South Carolina barrier islands, is characterized by a beach and dune ridge system with an extensive tidal marsh along the northeastern side of the island. The island is surrounded by navigable waters and provides some opportunities for access by boat and numerous beach access points. Prior to development, the island was covered by maritime forest.

Ground elevations on the island range from sea level to 17 feet above mean sea level (MSL) at points along a ridge on the ocean side of the island. However, the topography of the island is relatively flat, with an average ground elevation above mean sea level of only eight (8) to ten (10) feet.

The mean tide range, low tide to high tide, is 5.2 feet with the spring tide range increasing to 6.1 feet. Hurricane water levels are much higher, with the potential for reaching an elevation of 12 feet MSL and wave crests up to 18.6 feet MSL. In 1989 the storm surge from Hurricane Hugo covered most of the island with peak water levels ranging between 15.5 feet above MSL along the beach and 12.5 feet above MSL along the back of the island.

Historic shoreline maps and charts show that the beaches on the Isle of Palms are generally accreting, but the shoreline has cyclical erosional episodes particularly around the unstable inlet zones.

Despite erosion, flooding and susceptibility to coastal storms, the beautiful sandy beaches, marshes, creeks, ocean, clean air, trees, fish and wildlife make the Isle of Palms a very attractive place to live. Protection of these natural resources is essential to maintaining a high quality of life on the Isle of Palms.

Flooding

Because of low ground elevations, virtually the entire island lies within a Special Flood Hazard Area of the National Flood Insurance Program. The most common flood zone designations on the island are AE and VE zones, which delineate the statistical threat of flooding from a “100 year hurricane,”

for which there is a one percent probability of occurring in any given year. Pockets of low elevation, coupled with storm drainage that is significantly influenced by the ebb and flow of the tides, are causes for serious accumulations of storm water, whether generated by heavy rainfall or storm surge.

To minimize the potential for property damage due to flood conditions, the City adopted a comprehensive set of regulations in 1983, which are found in Title 5, Chapter 2, of the Code of the City of Isle of Palms. The City is in compliance with the requirements of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the federal agency responsible for administering the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) which allows its citizens to secure federally backed flood insurance policies. Furthermore, the City participates in the Community Rating System (CRS), which is a program that rewards communities that are doing more than meeting the minimum requirements of the NFIP. The City is presently designated as a “Class 7” CRS community, which entitles its citizens to a 15% discount on flood insurance rates. The goal of the CRS is to reduce the loss of life and property in the event of a flood and to protect the natural and beneficial functions of the floodplain.

Water Quality

The quality of waters surrounding the island is inextricably connected to the quality of life on the Isle of Palms. Early in the 1990s the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) conducted a water quality monitoring program along the Intracoastal Waterway from Charleston harbor to McClellanville. The program monitored water quality at 51 sites in the study area, three of which were located on the Isle of Palms. In addition, DHEC routinely monitors shellfish beds in the Waterway.

Results of the above testing indicate that of the 51 sites in the testing area, as many as 41 sites have not met water quality safety standards for harvesting oysters, and 26 sites have not met safety standards for swimming.

An informed City government and population are required to protect the sensitive ecosystem of the island and the impact of pollutants on its water quality. In an effort to better understand, and ultimately address, the island’s water quality issues, the City Council voted in August 2001 to apply for grant monies to study the waters behind the island. The grant monies were

offered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through DHEC under a program entitled “319 Non-point Source Pollution;” to match funds allocated by the City to pay for the cost of such a study. The study began in August 2001 and was completed in March 2004. Pollutants that adversely impact the island’s back waters are nutrients, pesticides, heavy metals and fecal coliforms.

In 2007, the City developed a program in conjunction with Charleston County to improve water quality and comply with the requirements of the Clean Water Act. This program is explained in more detail in the Community Facilities element of this Plan.

Beach

The Isle of Palms shoreline generally is accreting, with sand bypassing Dewees Inlet and moving onto the northern shoreline in the form of large sand shoals. Once the shoals attach to the beach, the sediment shifts laterally along the shoreline, with the majority moving along the island’s beaches in the direction of Breach Inlet and some moving in the opposite direction onto the Dewees Inlet shoreline. Sediment that moves down the shore accumulates along the southwestern 1.5 miles of the Isle of Palms shoreline, which is accretional over the long-term. Some of the moving sediment bypasses Breach Inlet in the form of sand bars that ultimately attach to Sullivan’s Island.

As a result of the episodic nature of shoal attachment and sediment redistribution, the Isle of Palms shoreline closer to Dewees Inlet tends to exhibit unstable characteristics.

State regulatory responsibility for protecting the beach and dune system rests with the South Carolina Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management (OCRM), which is a division of South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). This state agency was created in 1977 as the South Carolina Coastal Council, when the State Legislature adopted the South Carolina Coastal Zone Management Act, SC Code section 48-39-10, et. seq. The Act also established the first comprehensive set of regulations for protecting coastal resources in the eight South Carolina coastal counties. In 1988, DHEC’s jurisdiction on the beachfront was amended by passage of the South Carolina Beachfront Management Act, SC Code section 48-39-270, et. seq. which was further amended in 1990. In

1998, OCRM began a program to periodically test the quality of water along the shoreline. This testing has proven that the water at the beach is very clean, with only two swim advisories ever issued and the most recent advisory being in summer of 2002.

In addition to state regulatory authority over the beaches, the City of Isle of Palms also exercises jurisdiction over the beach on some issues. In areas where the City retains jurisdiction, it has adopted amendments to the zoning ordinance to protect areas abutting the OCRM jurisdiction. The City has marked the beach access paths with a numbering system that corresponds to the opposing street number. Also, provisions for handicapped accessible parking spaces and paths have been added at the 9th and 21st Avenue beach accesses.

The Isle of Palms Local Comprehensive Beach Management Plan was approved by the City and OCRM in April of 2008. The Plan, which is required by state law and must be updated every ten years, reports on the state of the island's beaches and dunes and provides guidance for the City in managing these important assets.

As a result of a recent episode of excessive erosion on the northeastern end of the island near Dewees Inlet, a \$10M beach restoration project was undertaken in 2008. This consisted of an off-shore dredge pumping sand onto the shore and subsequent monitoring. This project was funded by private and public funds. The method of restoration, off-shore dredging, was recommended by a Long-Term Beach Management Report (not to be confused with the overall Local Comprehensive Beach Management Plan, mentioned above). This report was developed by a group of people with varying interests working with a coastal engineer to develop recommendations that reflect the consensus of the community for future beach management policies and actions. The City continues to monitor erosion on the entire shoreline and occasionally undertakes projects to address affected areas.

In 2015, the City Council approved a resolution expressing the City's opposition to seismic testing and offshore oil and gas development off the South Carolina Coast. Additionally in 2015, the City became the first community in South Carolina to ban the use of single-use plastic bags in commercial operations.

Wildlife and Vegetation

Seven species of birds are listed on the federal endangered or threatened list which may be found in the area. The endangered species are the bald eagle, Bachman's warbler, wood stork and red-cockaded woodpecker. Threatened birds are the piping plover, peregrine falcon and red knot.

The loggerhead sea turtle, a threatened species, visits the island to lay eggs along the beach. South Carolina beaches have the largest number of nest sites in the "population" tracked between North Carolina and Northern Florida. In recent years the nests have numbered between 20 and 60 on the beaches of the Isle of Palms. It is thought that individual turtles may return to historical/ regional nesting sites every two to five years, accounting for the wide fluctuation in the number of nests from year to year. Enforcement of the island's lighting ordinance, which prohibits lighting directed at the beach, as well as ordinances requiring the removal of overnight beach furniture, filling in holes in the sand and properly disposing of all trash and garbage is going to help save this threatened species by protecting nests on the island.

No federally listed endangered or threatened plants are known to be located on the island. The primary tree species on the island are palmetto, live oak, loblolly pine, wax myrtle, and crepe myrtle. In 1989 the City adopted its first tree ordinance to prevent parcels from being completely cleared during development. In 2002, the ordinance was amended to include further protection for all live oak trees and other trees in excess of eight inches diameter.

After hurricane Hugo, Palm Boulevard was lined with palmetto trees through a privately organized and funded "Plant-a-Palm" program.

Key Issues

- Improvement and maintenance of water quality.
- Protection of beach, dunes and marsh lands.
- Protection of wildlife and vegetation.

Goals and Implementation Strategies

Goal 3.1: Conclude whether obtaining an improved flood insurance Community Rating System (CRS) rating is feasible.

Strategy 3.1.1: Pursue improving the CRS rating when feasible. *(Ongoing; Building Department)*

Goal 3.2: Improve the water quality of the ocean, waterway and creeks surrounding the island.

Strategy 3.2.1: Act upon findings of the 319 non-point source pollution grant water quality study with passage of pertinent ordinances to mitigate sources of pollution. *(2008; General Government and City Council)*

Strategy 3.2.2: Establish an ongoing water quality monitoring program for the backwaters. *(2008; Building Department, Public Works and General Government)*

Strategy 3.2.3: Monitor and/or participate in local and regional water quality studies. *(Ongoing; General Government)*

Strategy 3.2.4: Monitor DHEC/OCRM testing of ocean waters impacting the island. *(Ongoing; General Government and Building Department)*

Strategy 3.2.5: Create a public awareness/education program to address the impact of individual actions on the water ecology of the island. *(Ongoing; General Government, Building Department and Charleston County NPDES public education program)*

Goal 3.3: Protect marshes, dunes and beaches.

Strategy 3.3.1: Create a public awareness/education program aimed at protecting the sensitive ecosystem of a barrier island, to include protection of dunes and marshes and their vegetation, as well as the importance of removing animal waste and trash from the beaches. *(2008; General Government and Building Department)*

Strategy 3.3.2: Support efforts to minimize the impact of erosion on the ends of the island including beach nourishment projects. *(Ongoing; General Government)*

Goal 3.4: Promote the maintenance of green spaces throughout the island.

Strategy 3.4.1: Investigate the potential for establishing small parks on City owned, undeveloped green spaces. *(2008; Recreation Department and Building Department)*

Goal 3.5: Protect the island's wildlife and vegetation.

Strategy 3.5.1: Pursue enforcement of ordinance(s) aimed at protecting loggerhead turtle nesting activities and sites. *(Ongoing; Building Department and Police Department)*

Strategy 3.5.2: Support other regulations that protect wildlife and vegetation. *(Ongoing; General Government and Police Department)*

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historic Sites and Buildings

Although the Isle of Palms served a variety of purposes prior to its development as a residential/resort community, very little remains in the way of historic buildings or archeological sites. Currently, there are no sites on the island listed in the National Register of Historic Places. A marker in the first block of Charleston Boulevard tells of Lord Cornwallis and the British troops who briefly occupied the island during the American Revolution.

The Ocean Boulevard commercial district or “Front Beach” area was once the site of open-air pavilions and amusement rides, although none of these buildings remain. The existing office building at the corner of 10th Avenue and Palm Boulevard was once a hotel, and the existing house located next to City Hall was originally the station for the trolley that connected the island to Sullivan’s Island. Also the building on the northeast side of J.C. Long Boulevard near the intersection with Ocean Boulevard, which has been used recently as a gift shop, was for many years the 2nd U.S. Post Office on the island.

Events

The City hosts a number of cultural events on the island. “Piccolo Spoleto Goes to the Beach” is a series of arts performances held in recent years at various venues throughout the island. The City’s Recreation Department organizes several events each year including a Holiday Street Festival, Island Gras, Music in the Park, an Easter Egg Hunt, a Halloween Carnival and Doggie Day. In March of 2003, the City commemorated its 50th Anniversary by holding numerous events including a street dance, a play, a nickel carnival, a Ferris wheel on Ocean Boulevard and two historical displays..

The Isle of Palms has become a popular site for sporting events in recent years. Wild Dunes plans to continue hosting a number of amateur golf and tennis tournaments.

Key issues

Awareness of the island's history

Goals and Implementation Strategies

Goal 4.1: Promote awareness of the history of the island

Strategy 4.1.1: Explore the possibility of establishing a commemorative exhibit online and/or in one of the City's buildings including the collection of historic photographs and documents compiled in 2003 for the City's 50th Anniversary celebration. (2008; *General Government*)

Strategy 4.1.2: Investigate the possibility of permanently marking sites of historical significance on the island and ensuring their preservation. (2008; *General Government*)

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Public Safety

Isle of Palms is currently served by a police force of twenty sworn officers, eleven auxiliary staff, twenty-one patrol cars (five of which are four wheel drive SUVs for patrol supervisors) , one animal control truck, one all-terrain beach patrol truck, and one all-terrain golf cart for parking enforcement. Additionally the police department adds six part-time beach officers for the summer season for parking enforcement and beach patrol. The heavy volume of vehicular traffic, parking, and the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians are currently problems on the island. Also, as the numbers of boats and jet skis on waters around the island increase, regulatory measures may be necessary in the future to ensure that the City's waterways remain safe.

The island has two fire stations which house a total of five apparatus (two fire engines, two ladder trucks and one ladder service vehicle), four pickup trucks and four rescue boats. The Fire Department consists of thirty-five paid firefighters and ten volunteers. The City's current Insurance Service Organization classification is three.

In 2013 the City transitioned from handling emergency calls and dispatching services from within the City to the Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Center (CCCD 9-1-1 Center). The CCCD 9-1-1 Center is a state-of-the-art facility located in North Charleston that handles emergency dispatch services for most of the municipalities in the Charleston area. When the City transitioned to the CCCD 9-1-1 Center, the response protocol changed from one dispatcher handling each call to a system of a call-taker, who focuses on the caller, and a dispatcher, who focuses on dispatching emergency personnel. The City continues to maintain public safety personnel to answer administrative phone lines, transferring emergency calls to the CCCD 9-1-1 Center and monitor radio transmissions

Currently there are no advance care Emergency Medical Service (EMS) vehicles stationed on the island; however, the EMS station is less than four miles away on the Isle of Palms Connector. More than 75 percent of the calls for assistance are medically and/or safety related, and the City has at least four trained first responders on duty each day. First responders are

emergency medical technicians who are authorized to provide basic life support services, including the use of an automated defibrillator. In contrast to County EMS paramedics, City first responders do not transport patients or administer drugs.

In an effort to provide immediate emergency medical response to City residents and visitors, the City will need to ensure that training and funding continues to be available to the Fire Department for this purpose.

Concurrently, the City must continue to work with the County EMS authorities to facilitate optimum response to medical emergencies.

An emergency preparedness plan was developed following Hurricane Hugo which requires annual review and assessment.

Water Sources

The public water on the island is provided by the Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Commission, which was established as a separate entity by City Council in 1992. Previously the utility was privately owned by The Beach Company; it subsequently was purchased by the City in 1991.

The Isle of Palms has developed a two-pronged approach to meet current and future needs for providing potable water that satisfies the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) drinking water standards: ground source water on the island is combined with surface water from the Charleston Commissioners of Public Works (CPW), the largest water and sewer utility in the area. Although abundant on the Isle of Palms, ground source water from wells has high, naturally occurring concentrations of fluoride and minerals. To improve ground source water quality to EPA standards, a reverse osmosis water treatment facility was constructed and placed into service in 1993. However, this facility provides only a portion of the potable water needed for the community. Therefore, in 1994 the Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Commission and the adjacent Town of Sullivan's Island initiated a project to buy potable surface water from the Charleston CPW.

A water main was constructed under Charleston Harbor from Fort Johnson to Sullivan's Island, across Sullivan's Island, and under Breach Inlet to connect with the Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Commission lines. In conjunction with this project, a new water main with fire hydrants was installed across Isle of Palms to enhance fire suppression capabilities and provide a major service connection between the two water systems on Isle of

Palms. Also, construction of a new ground storage tank to provide extra water storage capacity for the Wild Dunes area of the island was completed in 1997. The Water and Sewer Commission plans to continue upgrading older, small diameter lines with new, larger diameter pipes to increase water distribution capabilities for the entire island.

To encourage conservation of water, the Water and Sewer Commission uses a conservation rate structure. The Commission uses 300 gallons per day as the average amount used per household.

Wastewater Treatment

A significant portion of development on the Isle of Palms is served by septic tanks. Although all of the development in the gated section of Wild Dunes is served by a sewer treatment system, which incorporates spray irrigation of the golf courses, only some 40 percent of the development outside the boundaries of Wild Dunes is served by a sewer system. Over the years, septic tanks have been permitted in areas where the soils are only marginally suitable for this type of waste treatment.

Installation of public sewers in areas prone to flooding near the beach between 42nd and 53rd Avenues, adjacent to the Recreation Center from 26th to 29th Avenues, and other low areas of the island is supportable from a public health standpoint. Eliminating all septic tanks and replacing them with a public sewer system for the entire island is not a public health necessity at this time but should not be excluded from consideration as conditions and public health standards change. Since the number of residential units constructed in the Wild Dunes community is expected to be considerably less than the total number of units allowed by the original planned development agreement, there may be excess capacity available for extending sewer service to the problem areas on the island. The Forest Trail Wastewater Treatment Plant was replaced in 2014 and was designed to be expanded, if necessary.

To improve the accuracy of water quality monitoring at the Forest Trail Waste Water Treatment Plant, new monitoring equipment was installed in 1994 during a major rehabilitation of the plant. In 2000, a new blower building and new blowers were installed to reduce the amount of noise generated by the facility. The Water and Sewer Commission attempted to improve control of the noise and odors from both systems in recent years.

The City should continue to work closely with the Water and Sewer Commission to assess those areas of the island where the public good would be served by sewer service.

Electrical/ Telephone

Like most jurisdictions, the City is provided with satisfactory electrical power and telephone service by professional and responsive public utility companies. As with many older communities, the majority of these distribution systems are above ground and aging. Wild Dunes has successfully undertaken a project to place all of the utility lines within their community underground. In an effort to reduce outages due to storms and to provide for a more pleasing appearance for the City, those utility providers should be encouraged to replace above ground systems with underground distribution. The City should encourage other utility providers (cable, internet, etc.) to provide a full array of options to City residents.

In 2013, SCE&G installed a second transmission line from the mainland of Mount Pleasant to the Isle of Palms to increase reliability of service in inclement weather and times of high demand. The line was installed by burrowing under the marshes and waterways on the back side of the island.

Stormwater Drainage

During the spring of 1995, an engineering firm hired by the City conducted a comprehensive study of drainage problem areas and recommended how to best drain the areas in question. Cost estimates were also provided in anticipation of a bond referendum to fund these capital improvements. The areas studied included:

- 53rd Avenue
- 23rd Avenue and Waterway Boulevard
- Sparrow and Waterway Boulevard
- 41st Avenue and Hartnett Boulevard
- 3rd Avenue and Charleston Boulevard
- 56th Avenue and Palm Boulevard

The drainage improvement project was estimated to cost in the vicinity of \$7 million. On November 7, 1995 the referendum to fund this project was

soundly defeated by a margin of 9 to 1. Without the authorization of funding, these major drainage improvements are not contemplated for the foreseeable future.

During 2001 Wild Dunes undertook a major drainage project to accommodate the run-off of an upcoming project. The City was able to work in conjunction with Wild Dunes and agreed to pay to upgrade the size of the drainage pipe to accommodate additional drainage from an abutting neighborhood.

In the fall of 2011, the City collaborated with Wild Dunes and completed a \$1.1M drainage project that alleviated many of the drainage problems between 53rd Avenue and 57th Avenue.

In addition to the routine maintenance of existing drainage facilities, which is done with the assistance of the Charleston County Public Works Department and the SC Department of Transportation (SCDOT), the City has been employing an innovative rehabilitation technique that utilizes a water jet and sewer vacuum truck to re-grade and re-sculpt ditches while simultaneously removing spoil material and vegetation. This process has been successful in shaping ditches that were previously difficult to access with heavy equipment. The City plans to continue funding for future maintenance using this same technique.

In 2007 the City developed a stormwater management program to satisfy the requirements of the federal Clean Water Act and participate in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The program includes a series of regulations aimed at controlling stormwater runoff in an effort to reduce pollution and sedimentation. Charleston County is handling the compliance and administration of the program through an inter-governmental agreement with the City.

Parks and Recreation

In addition to the seven mile long public beach, Isle of Palms is served by a centrally located, 9.8 acre Recreation Center bounded by 27th and 29th Avenues, just north of Hartnett Boulevard. The site includes softball, baseball and soccer fields, tennis and basketball courts, a children's

playground, a dog park and a recreation building that was constructed in 2003, housing offices, large multipurpose rooms and a gymnasium.

The Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) owns and operates a regional park on a nine acre tract located between 14th Avenue and the Beachside residential community along the Atlantic Ocean. Like other PRC parks on Folly Beach and Kiawah Island, the Isle of Palms Park has 350 parking spaces with restroom, shower, changing, picnic and volleyball facilities, life guard services, children's play area and beach access for the handicapped. Limited food and beverages are available for sale and chairs and umbrellas can be rented. The Park site is buffered from the Beachside neighborhood by a landscaped berm and is accessible by car only from 14th Avenue. There is a parking fee.

Two 18-hole championship golf courses and a world-class tennis facility, which are available to the public for a fee, are located on the island within the Wild Dunes gated community.

In 2013, the City acquired a one acre tract of land at Palm Boulevard and 18th Avenue. The property is a passive park and has been named Carmen R. Bunch Park. A portion of the funding used to purchase the land came from the Charleston County Greenbelt Program, which dictates that the land always be used as a park.

Public Properties

In January 1999 as a result of a referendum, the City purchased the 5.5 acre marina site and facilities at the north end of 41st Avenue for \$4.25M. The City arranged financing for the purchase through a 20-year bond. The site is bordered by the Intracoastal Waterway and Morgan Creek, providing a premier location for marina, entertainment, and recreational activities. This complex offers a full service marina and overnight berthing, a convenience store, restaurant, boat storage area, a boat launching ramp and other privately operated water-sport businesses.

Prior to purchase, the City contracted for a complete inventory and facilities baseline assessment to ensure that the condition of the facilities was known. In general the facilities include the marina proper with docks, piers, headwalls, and boat refueling equipment; the convenience store that includes restrooms, offices, and gasoline pumps; the boat launching ramp with a

small utility building/restroom abreast of the ramp; and a large two-story restaurant with some built-in food service equipment. In recent years, the City has undertaken major maintenance projects on the marina site including bulkhead replacement, dredging and dock replacement and improvement.

Because of the timing and conditions of the purchase, leases to various businesses vary in length and circumstance. In general, turnover in the marina tenants is extremely rare and vacancies have been filled quickly. While lease revenue is stable, it is not sufficient to fund 100% of the marina cash needs including debt service on both the bond issued to purchase the marina and the subsequent bond issued to replace the bulkhead. The funding gap between marina revenues and expenditures has historically been filled using tourism revenues such as Municipal Accommodations Taxes, Hospitality Taxes and/or State Accommodations Taxes. Once the bonds are satisfied in 2019 and 2016, respectively, the marina is expected to be financially self-sustaining. Meanwhile, the marina has provided the desired marina-type facilities and services to the City population, which was the primary objective of the purchase.

In the short to mid-term, the marina is expected to provide the desired level of marina services to the population and operate on a fiscally sound basis from year to year. Over the longer term, services will continue but not without close attention to modernization and maintenance of the facilities and monitoring of the site's impact on neighboring residential areas. It should be anticipated that capital improvements and some major maintenance costs will surface in future years. These expected costs will be mitigated to a significant extent as the balance owed on the purchase bond decreases and is satisfied in 2019.

In addition to the Marina and recreation facilities, the City owns various buildings on the island. City Hall at 1207 Palm Boulevard is a two story-6,800 square foot building completed in December of 1991. At the base of the connector, a 3,500 square-foot Public Works building was finished in April of 1991, which replaced the original building that did not survive Hurricane Hugo. The City owns two vacant parcels behind the Public Works property. The City's two fire stations, #44-41st Avenue and 30 J.C. Long Boulevard, were built in 2007 and 2008 respectively. These stations replaced structures that were built in 1991, but had to be demolished because of extensive mold infestation. The Water and Sewer Commission's facilities

at 1300 Palm Boulevard were owned by the City; however, in 2014, the City transferred ownership of this and other properties with a contingency clause that the property would come back to the City if it ceased to be used for the provision of public water and sewer service. . The City constructed a public restroom facility at 1118 Ocean Boulevard in 1991 along with a walkway to the beach to ensure that the physically challenged have access to public restrooms and the beach. In future years, the renovation or replacement of this facility will need to be contemplated.

Water access

Public beach access is provided at 56 points between Breach Inlet and 53rd Avenue. Fifteen additional beach access points are provided within Wild Dunes community for residents and guests of Wild Dunes.

Public access to tidal creeks and marsh on the northwest side of the island is limited. At several locations, streets were originally platted to extend to the edge of the marsh but never constructed. The City has formally accepted The Beach Company's dedication of several of these streets to the public.

Five marinas are located on the island: two are located at Breach Inlet, and the remainder are on 41st Avenue- the Isle of Palms Marina, Wild Dunes Yacht Harbor and Dewees Island Marina. The Isle of Palms Marina has received approval by the Board of Zoning Appeals to construct a boat storage building with a 192 dry-stack storage capacity but no action on this approval is imminent.

Two City-owned boat ramps are located on the island: a boat ramp near Breach Inlet is available for an annual fee, and a boat ramp at the Isle of Palms Marina is available for either an annual fee or a fee per launch.

Key issues

- Maintenance and improvement of public safety
- Maintenance and improvement of water and sewer facilities
- Expansion of recreational opportunities for island residents
- Improvements of storm water management
- Continued operation and overall stewardship of the City marina facilities

Goals and Implementation Strategies

Goal 5.1: Improve public safety.

Strategy 5.1.1: The City should continue to work with County officials to ensure optimum EMS services on the island and maintain basic medical emergency services through the Fire Department. *(Ongoing; Fire Department)*

Strategy 5.1.2: Develop and implement a method of distribution for the Disaster Preparedness Plan. *(Ongoing; General Government and Fire Department)*

Goal 5.2: Support the installation of water and sewer services where required for public health.

Strategy 5.2.1: The City should meet periodically with the Water and Sewer Commission and strive for a “team approach” to addressing waste water and water issues that will arise in future years. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*

Strategy 5.2.2: In conjunction with the Water and Sewer Commission, the City should take those steps appropriate to facilitate additional sewer service on the island where public health is benefited. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*

Goal 5.4: Improve recreational opportunities for all island residents.

Strategy 5.4.1: Develop a plan to improve alternate modes of transportation on the island including bikeways

and sidewalks with an emphasis on installing sidewalks and improving pedestrian safety (see also Strategy 8.1.3). *(2008; Building Department and Recreation Department)*

Strategy 5.4.2: Inventory unimproved rights-of-way extending to the creeks or marsh for possible use as passive recreational sites not unlike the street ends in the Old Village of Mount Pleasant along the Harbor. *(2008; Building Department and Recreation Department)*

Strategy 5.4.3: Consider additional improvements to the Recreation Center to offer a wider spectrum of leisure activities for pre-school children to senior adults (see also Strategy 1.1.2). *(Ongoing; Recreation Department)*

Goal 5.5: Improve the appearance of the island.

Strategy 5.5.1: The City should continue to support tree-planting programs along streets and develop a long-term plan which prioritizes streets and identifies the types of trees to be used. *(Ongoing; General Government and Building Department)*

Strategy 5.5.2: Consider additional ways of reducing littering on the island. *(Ongoing; Police Department and City Council)*

Strategy 5.5.3: Consider ways of restricting the construction of structures at the ends of docks working in conjunction with the OCRM and the U.S. Corps of Engineers. *(Ongoing; Building Department, General Government and City Council)*

Strategy 5.5.4: Encourage new or replacement electrical distributing systems to be constructed underground. *(Ongoing)*

Strategy 5.5.5: Seek funding sources to place electrical distributing systems underground. *(Ongoing)*

Goal 5.6: The City should take initiatives to address drainage and storm water runoff on the island.

- Strategy 5.6.1: Continue to work closely with County and State agencies to properly maintain existing storm water and drainage systems. Clearly delineate the City's areas of responsibility and take appropriate action where feasible. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*
- Strategy 5.6.2: Consider funding for a comprehensive drainage study that would isolate the highest priority areas and provide engineering options and costs. *(Ongoing; General Government, Public Works and City Council)*
- Strategy 5.6.3: Consider funding options, including special assessments, to address drainage problems. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*
- Strategy 5.6.4: The City should continue to work to remain in compliance with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Phase II as a small MS4 community. *(Ongoing; Building Department, General Government and City Council)*

Goal 5.7: Provide comprehensive and reasonably priced marina services to the public consistent with considerations of the neighborhood location.

- Strategy 5.7.1: Ensure facilities are capable of the highest levels of professional service and provide services at competitive prices. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*
- Strategy 5.7.2: Constantly assess potential improvements and changes to the Marina business make-up to expand Marina service consistent with the existing neighborhood environment. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*

Goal 5.8: Protect and enhance the City's investment in real property.

- Strategy 5.8.1: Periodically review and update the Baseline Facilities Assessment of the Marina complex to ensure the conditions of the facilities are monitored for safety, physical condition, and utility. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*
- Strategy 5.8.2: Make plans to set aside funds for future year maintenance and capital improvements that will be required to protect and maximize the City's investment. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*
- Strategy 5.8.3: Aggressively pursue grants or other external funding sources that will enhance the safety, environmental conditions, facilities, or other features of the Marina. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*
- Strategy 5.8.4: Develop plans for continuous maintenance/repair of various City buildings such as City Hall, the Public Safety building, Fire Station 2, the Recreation Center and the Public Works building. *(2008; General Government and City Council)*
- Strategy 5.8.5: Develop a beautification plan for the Marina complex and lower 41st Avenue corridor to include vegetation, signage, beautification, and architectural scheme. *(2008; General Government and City Council)*

Goal 5.9: Ensure maximum financial return on the Marina facilities consistent with Goals 5.7 and 5.8 above.

- Strategy 5.9.1: Encourage imaginative proposals from marina businesses that will enhance revenues to the City. *(Ongoing)*
- Strategy 5.9.2: Constantly review prevailing rates and fees to ensure revenues are consistent with comparable facilities. *(Ongoing; General Government and City Council)*

HOUSING

Characteristics

Over the years the island has attracted those seeking a permanent residence, a vacation home, an investment opportunity or a retirement home. At the present time, approximately 33% of the housing units on the island are owner-occupied, year-round residential units.

The cost of insurance and the possibility of a major storm are concerns for many of the residents of the island. In 2012, the U.S. Congress passed the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012. One of the provisions of the Act is expected to result in the increase of flood insurance rates to reflect the true flood risk. This provision could significantly increase the cost of flood insurance for the older houses on the island that are not elevated.

Many of the older homes on the island are small, with small kitchens, bathrooms and closets, making them less desirable in the current market. In some instances, the land by itself would be worth more if the house were removed. For these reasons many of these older homes are being replaced by updated structures.

Many homes on the island are on a septic system. Some of these septic systems have no problems and would pass all present requirements for a new system. However, some septic systems that pre-date health regulations do not meet the current requirements. At the present time, the Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Department has the capacity to handle more users, but they do have a maximum capacity. Property owners with substandard septic systems will face a dilemma if the public sewer capacity is met and their existing system fails. Therefore, the cost of connecting to the sewer system may be justifiable for these property owners while there is still capacity at the sewer plant.

Key issues

- Maintenance of a high quality of life for the island residents
- Balancing the increasing property values and the livability of the community

Goals and Implementation Strategies

Goal 6.1: The City should continuously monitor the effect of development upon the quality of life of the existing permanent residents.

Strategy 6.1.1: Continue to track construction trends including: the number of houses demolished each year and the number of square feet, bedrooms and bathrooms of new houses. *(2008; Building Department)*

Strategy 6.1.2: Continually assess ordinances which limit the size and width of houses and the amount of impervious surface on the island. *(Ongoing; Building Department)*

Goal 6.2: Improve water quality associated with residential properties (see also Goal 3.2).

Strategy 6.2.1: Amend the zoning ordinance to limit the density of development allowed on property not serviced by a public wastewater system. *(2008; Building Department and City Council)*

Strategy 6.2.2: Educate the owners of septic systems in the proper maintenance and encourage owners to have their septic systems checked and serviced according to established standards. *(Ongoing; Building Department)*

Strategy 6.2.3: Monitor the amount of impervious surface on residential lots. *(Ongoing; Building Department)*

LAND USE

Characteristics

The island has a long history of being used for recreational and resort activities. Residential construction has continued, and today it is estimated that 4,000 dwelling units are located on the island. The majority of commercial development is located in the center of the island, generally fronting on Palm and Ocean Boulevards in the vicinity of 10th and 14th Avenues. Additional commercial activities are located in Wild Dunes, at Breach Inlet and the City marina.

Planning and Zoning- Historical Perspective

From the early development of the Isle of Palms, there have been quasi-planning/zoning attempts. Generally, these attempts designated some areas for commercial use, for apartment use and for residences. Until recent years the only controls were plat and deed restrictions. Charleston County provided planning and inspection services for the island.

The City of Isle of Palms was incorporated in 1953 and zoning was established on October 25, 1956. Among other elements, the 1956 zoning ordinance addressed non-conforming uses and provided for the lawful continuation of these uses. The 1956 version of zoning was codified along with other City ordinances in 1970. The entire zoning code was subsequently repealed and readopted in April 1975, due to questions about the legal validity of the adoption of the 1956 zoning code.

Repeal and re-adoption, or substantial amendment, occurred again in 1981, 1989 and 1992-1993. The Planning and Zoning Commission was created on December 10, 1986. The City also adopted an ordinance in 1981 creating a Board of Adjustment, which has since been renamed the Board of Zoning Appeals.

In 1975 City Council approved a Planned Residential Development (PRD) zoning district for the eastern, then undeveloped, end of the island. Today this area includes the gated resort community of Wild Dunes and several adjacent residential areas. The PRD was the first zoning agreement of its type in the State of South Carolina. Under the PRD zoning, the eastern end

of the island was developed to include a wide variety of housing types: low to high density single-family detached units, townhouses, and low-rise and high-rise condominium multi-family units. Within the gated section of Wild Dunes many of the approximately 2,067 residential units are used as seasonal rental properties. Wild Dunes also includes offices and conference facilities and other resort amenities.

In the PRD zoning district, the use, subdivision, and development of property is governed through deed restrictions enforced by the Wild Dunes Community Association. Several residential areas outside the gated Wild Dunes community, such as 53rd to 57th Avenues and certain properties on 43rd through 45th Avenues, that are also zoned PRD and also governed by the Wild Dunes Community Association.

In 2000 the name of the zoning district for planned developments changed from Planned Residential District (PRD) to Planned Development District (PDD). The new designation more accurately describes the land use activities.

Land Use Activity – Overview

Detached residential dwelling units represent the principal land use on the island. Medium and low-density dwellings are the most predominate form of housing. Approximately 33% are owner-occupied with the remaining 66% being either second homes or rental units. Many of the residential areas are characterized by relatively low height profiles, extensive vegetation and a general feeling of open spaces. While there are properties scattered throughout the island that contain two or three residential units, the major multiple unit complexes are located within either the “Front Beach” area or Wild Dunes.

Commercial development is limited in terms of the total island acreage. Less than 2% of the island is zoned commercial, excluding the resort amenities within the gated section of Wild Dunes. Commercial uses are primarily oriented to providing for the immediate needs of the local population and the resort/seasonal activities. Only a small portion of commercially zoned land remains undeveloped. Major shopping facilities are located off the island.

Public uses include those normally associated with a small community. City

Hall houses the City Council, administration and the Building Department.

The Fire Department, Police Department, Recreation Department, and the Public Works Department are located in separate facilities. The Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Commission (separate from City Government) maintains an office building, a sewage treatment plant and various water storage/distribution facilities.

Public recreational uses include a City Recreation Center, a City Marina, a beachfront County Park and two boat landings. Within the Wild Dunes complex are golf, tennis and swimming facilities. Additionally, a private marina is located at Breach Inlet. The island is surrounded by water access opportunities inclusive of the ocean, beach and back creeks. Part of the island borders directly on the Intracoastal Waterway.

The island does not have any presence of industrial, agricultural, and mining activities. Due to a limited transportation system, the high demand for residential property, land values, and the risks inherent on a barrier island, it is unlikely that these uses will occur in the future.

Plan Concept

In accord with the Vision Statement, the primary planning concept is that of “enhance the existing character of the island as a quality place to live and protect the environment both on and around the island” The existing development pattern, both in terms of the land use types and the geographic allocation of these uses, is viewed as being the desired future pattern. The objective of the plan is to preserve the existing land use relationships.

In order to preserve the island character it is important to identify some of the underlying considerations:

1. The Comprehensive Plan is a statement defining a desired future. Zoning and other municipal regulations provide the implementation tools that allow the Plan to be achieved. The color-coded map in Appendix A is the Land Use Plan and the color-coded map in Appendix B is the current Zoning District Map. Both can be amended through procedures prescribed by law. The maps must always remain compatible and not in conflict.

2. The primary land use activity has been and should continue to be low and medium density residential uses.
3. The scale and density of new development and the expansion of existing development should not disrupt the neighborhood "family" atmosphere of the island.
4. The design of structures and the placement of these structures should maintain a sense of open space and utilize vegetation to soften the effects of impervious surfaces.
5. Many dwelling units are rented to guests visiting the island and, within reason, this is an accepted practice. Each dwelling, by virtue of its design, has a maximum occupancy level that is intended to limit activity to a level that is not disruptive to the neighborhood.
6. Commercial uses provide important services to the community. Some characteristics associated with commercial activity, such as traffic, parking, noise and light, can cause conflict with adjoining residential uses. Potential conflicts can be minimized through the use of good site design and buffers where appropriate. Parking for commercial uses should be accommodated on-site or in designated areas in close proximity to the business. On-street parking in areas not designated for parking is not a satisfactory solution.
7. The core of the City is generally defined as being the intersection of the IOP Connector and Palm Boulevard encompassing the major commercial, governmental and "Front Beach" areas. The most significant visual impression of the island occurs when one enters on the IOP Connector. It is important that the appearance of this core area continues to convey both civic image and commercial viability. Efforts to coordinate the continuity of design of both structures and the streetscape are deemed important to promote island identity.
8. It is recognized that the beach and other recreational opportunities on the island are of exceptional quality and draw many non-residents during peak periods. The City is responsible for their basic care and protection during their visit. As such, it is necessary to ensure that the public safety and other basic services are maintained commensurate with the increased demands.

9. Portions of the island are served by septic tank disposal systems. In some instances these systems operate marginally and at certain times may be dysfunctional. It is important that these areas be identified and action taken to upgrade the septic systems or to provide public sewer. Areas with poor drainage should be considered as the first priority for the installation of public sewer.
10. The protection of the natural resources both on and around the island is of critical importance especially with respect to water quality. The preservation and enhancement of this asset requires increased sensitivity to the amount and nature of runoff that moves from the island into the water.
11. The occurrence of periodic natural disasters causing extensive destruction on the island is a highly probable situation. Local government will be faced with immediate demands for recovery and reconstruction. The Land Use Plan provides the guide for reconstruction. While temporary regulatory procedures may be required, the Plan should not be compromised during the reconstruction period.
12. The island fronts to the Atlantic Ocean, backs to the estuaries, and is subject to the forces of wind and wave. Much of the island is in flood zones established by the federal government. The availability of flood insurance is directly tied to compliance with federally required building standards. It is important that strict compliance be maintained.

Key Issues

- Protection of the Public Health, Safety and Welfare.
- Ensure compatibility between the Comprehensive Plan and the regulatory ordinances.
- Appearance of the commercial and “Front Beach” areas.
- Ensure the adequacy of the infrastructure to support continued development, expanded uses and demands created by seasonal peaks.
- Preservation and protection of natural resources.

Goals and Implementation Strategies

Goal 7.1: Improve zoning regulations to protect the established character of the island.

Strategy 7.1.1: Make appropriate amendments to the zoning ordinance which reflect the goals and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan. *(2008; Building Department and City Council)*

Strategy 7.1.2: Monitor the growth implications the unincorporated areas lying between Isle of Palms and the mainland could have on the Isle of Palms. *(Ongoing; Building Department)*

Strategy 7.1.3: Implement the Land Use Plan by rezoning areas not currently in compliance to the appropriate zoning districts. *(2008; Building Department and City Council)*

Goal 7.2: Protect residential areas from adverse impacts of commercial development.

Strategy 7.2.1: Develop plans and policies which use public improvements to prevent or mitigate adverse impacts of commercial development upon residential properties. *(2008; Building Department and City Council)*

Goal 7.3: Ensure that the design and appearance of new commercial development or renovations to existing commercial structures is appropriate to the island and compatible with surrounding commercial and residential structures.

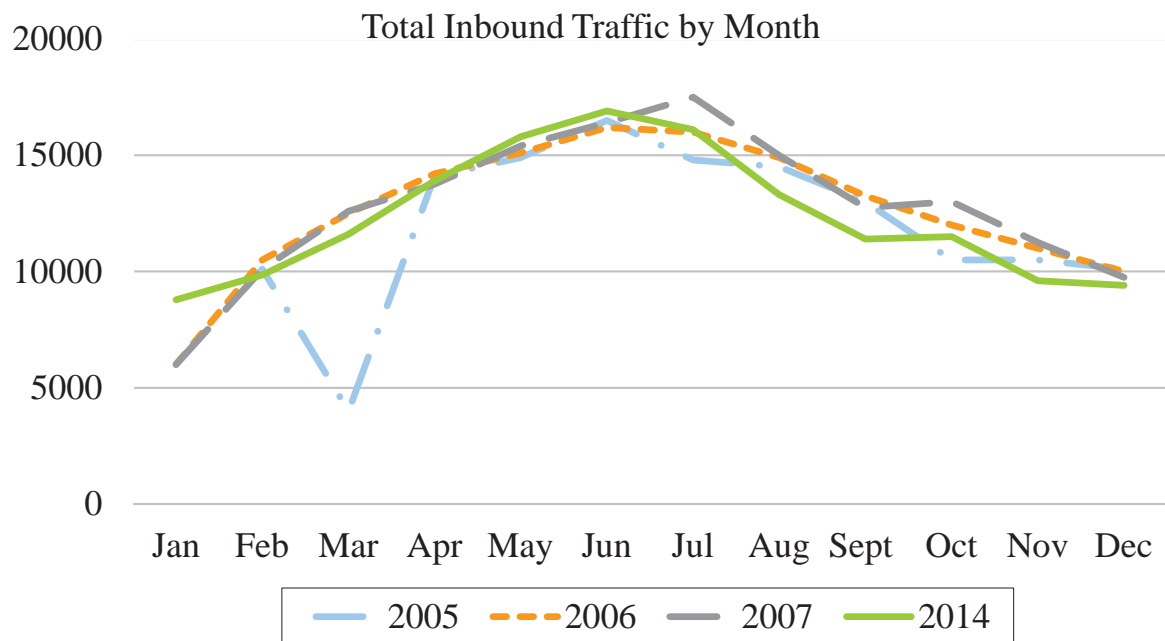
Strategy 7.3.1: Consider developing voluntary design guidelines that help define the desired characteristics for the appearance of commercial structures. *(2008; Building Department and City Council)*

Goal 7.4: Ensure the adequacy of the infrastructure to support continued development and expanded uses.

Strategy 7.4.1: Continue to improve and expand the drainage system to alleviate the problems in those areas that drain poorly. *(Ongoing; Building Department and Public Works Department)*

TRANSPORTATION

The Isle of Palms is accessible by two routes. First, SC 703 connects the island to Sullivan’s Island by way of the Breach Inlet bridge as well as Sullivan’s Island to Mount Pleasant by way of the Ben Sawyer Intracoastal Waterway bridge. Second the Clyde M. Dangerfield Highway SC 517 (Isle of Palms Connector) provides a fixed span, direct connection to Mount Pleasant. The illustration below is based on the traffic counts coming on and off the island from the years of 2004 to 2008. As expected, the traffic increases dramatically in the summer months as a result of seasonal visitors (additional traffic counts are available in Appendix C-1).



The total length of roads on the island is estimated to be 35 miles. Most roads outside Wild Dunes are under the jurisdiction of the SCDOT. The total miles of state roads on the island is estimated to be 21.75 miles. A few roads or sections of roads have been accepted by the City. Some roads, however, have never been formally accepted by any government jurisdiction. Roads within the Wild Dunes gates total 12 miles and are privately owned and maintained.

Maintenance for roads within the State system is provided through an agreement between Charleston County and the SCDOT. The City is

responsible for Ocean Boulevard between 10th and 14th Avenues, 18th Avenue, part of Hartnett Boulevard, most of Forest Trail, the cul-de-sac on Pavilion Boulevard, and 27th, 28th, and 29th Avenues between Hartnett and Waterway Boulevards.

Currently, bikeways and sidewalks are provided in only a few areas outside Wild Dunes. These existing bikeway/sidewalk facilities are not interconnected and some are in need of repair. There is a recognized need to fund bikeways and sidewalks to facilitate non-vehicular traffic on the island to reduce vehicular/pedestrian/bike conflicts. Various projects are underway in the Charleston area including a bike route that will connect the Isle of Palms to downtown Charleston and ultimately Folly Beach

In the summer months, the number of cars parking near the beach increases dramatically. Beach visitors typically park at the Front Beach Area or on the edge of the road on Palm Boulevard or other rights-of-way near the beach. On the edge of the roadways, currently there is no system to manage where or how visitors park, which creates confusion and congestion for visitors and residents. However, the City has initiated efforts to address these issues including making physical improvements, gathering public input and hiring a professional transportation firm to advise on the matter.

Key Issues

- Improvements in transportation facilities.
- Planning for a parking system that would balance the needs of visitors and residents.

Goals and Implementation Strategies

Goal 8.1: Improve traffic flow and reduce congestion on the roadways of the island.

Strategy 8.1.1: Continually assess stop sign locations on the island to determine proper and legal placement. (*Ongoing; Public Works*)

Strategy 8.1.2: Ensure an adequate number of speed limit signs on all streets to encourage compliance and improve safety. (*Ongoing; General Government and Police Department*)

Strategy 8.1.3: Develop a plan to improve alternate modes of transportation on the island including bikeways, golf carts and low speed vehicle facilities and sidewalks while improving pedestrian safety. (*2008; Building Department and Recreation Department*)

Strategy 8.1.4: Develop a management plan to lessen the effects beach traffic has on the island's roadways. (*2009; Building Department*)

Goal 8.2: Discourage non-resident parking and traffic in residential neighborhoods.

Strategy 8.2.1: Encourage appropriate measures including signs, traffic restrictions and parking restrictions. (*Ongoing; Police Department and City Council*)

Goal 8.3: Improve accuracy of data collection related to traffic patterns.

Strategy 8.3.1: Encourage appropriate measures to collect accurate traffic counts including the installation of new hardware at the key points of ingress and egress of the island. (*Ongoing; Police Department and City Council*)

PRIORITY INVESTMENT

As required by the Priority Investment Act of 2007, an analysis was conducted of the likely federal, state and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities on the Isle of Palms. Because many of the projects included in this element are roadway and drainage improvements, they could be funded by the Charleston County RoadWise program. Other infrastructure projects will probably need to be funded in a traditional manner because the Isle of Palms does not qualify as low-income, making grant money unlikely.

Installation of public sewers in areas served by septic systems and having marginal soils should be considered a priority for future projects. Specifically, septic tank systems in the areas near the beach between 42nd 53rd Avenues, adjacent to the Recreation Center from 26th to 29th Avenues and in low areas of the Forest Trail subdivision are affected by flooding and seasonal high water and would benefit from public sewer service.

Because the island is relatively low in elevation and prone to drainage problems, the City will need to identify the most problematic drainage areas and find solutions to move stormwater to the appropriate outfalls. In the Public Facilities element of this plan, several drainage projects are identified. In addition to these projects, many other areas drain poorly, which should be addressed by future drainage projects.

A large portion of the City's electrical distribution service, which is provided by South Carolina Electric and Gas, is provided through lines running above ground. It would be desirable from a maintenance and appearance standpoint to have all of the lines transferred to an underground distribution system.

Providing a safe and efficient system for cyclists, pedestrians, golf carts and low speed vehicles to circulate the island will reduce roadway congestion and parking problems and should be a priority.

Key Issues

- Improve transportation and drainage facilities
- Improve public health by extending the public sewer system to areas service by septic systems in marginal soils

Goals and Implementation Strategies

Goal 9.1: Improve drainage in those areas that drain poorly.

Strategy 9.1.1: Identify problem areas and appropriate funding sources.

Goal 9.2: Improve traffic flow and reduce congestion on the roadways of the island.

Strategy 9.2.1: Expand the system of bike lanes and walking paths.

Goal 9.3: Improve public health by extending the public sewer system to areas service by septic systems in marginal soils.

Strategy 9.3.1: Identify problem areas and appropriate funding sources.

APPENDIX A:
Summary of Meetings

1998 Update

- 8/2/93 Discussed idea of updating the island's Comprehensive Plan.
- 9/20/93 Discussed outline of plan and types of information needed.
- 11/22/93 Discussed land use, transportation, parking, recreation, and public safety issues.
- 12/8/93 Discussed land use and other issues and made recommendations.
- 7/13/94 Revisited the issue of updating the island's Comprehensive Plan with the Commission which included four new members.
- 9/28/94 Work session to discuss each of the seven elements of a comprehensive plan as listed in the new state enabling legislation.
- 10/26/94 Work session including presentations by Police Department and Water and Sewer Commission.
- 12/1/94 Work session including presentation by IOP Public Works Department, Chief Building Official and City Administrator.
- 12/14/94 Work session by County Public Works Department on road and drainage maintenance.
- 2/2/95 Work session including presentation by Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission on proposed park.
- 5/24/95 Work session including presentations by the Recreation Department and Councilmember Allen, and the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- 6/28/95 Work session with Earl Hewlette of Destination Wild Dunes, Janice Ashley and Lori Bennett, the incoming and outgoing

presidents of the Commerce Association, respectively, and John Darby, Vice President of the Beach Company.

- 7/26/95 Work session with Debra Hernandez of the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management and Ed Haselden, Chief Building Official and Zoning Administrator for the Isle of Palms.
- 8/23/95 Work session with Robert Clark of the SC Department of Transportation and Police Chief Tommy Buckannon.
- 9/27/95 Work session to discuss the Wild Dunes PRD and other aspects of the current Zoning Ordinance.
- 10/25/95 Work session with attorney Roy Bates to get a legal overview of the “planned residential district” type of zoning and the island’s PRD zoning district in particular.
- 11/26/95 Work session to continue discussions of the PRD district and other aspects of the Zoning Ordinance and land use map.
- 1/31/96 Work session to review the January 28, 1996 draft of the Comprehensive Plan.
- 2/28/96 Work session to review the February 24, 1996 draft of the Comprehensive Plan.
- 3/13/96 Review of the March 4, 1996 draft of the Comprehensive Plan following the regular meeting.
- 3/27/96 Review of March 21, 1996 draft of the Comprehensive Plan and future land use map referenced in Strategy 1.4 of the Land Use section. The Commission agreed to give final review to the revisions to this draft and the recommended future land use map at their April 10, 1996 regular meeting.
- 4/10/96 Review of the April 2, 1996 draft and future land use map changes. The Commission agreed to refer this draft and future land use map to City Council with request for a joint meeting of

the City Council and Commission at which the Commission would present the plan to Council.

- 7/10/96 Public hearing on April 19, 1996 draft of plan before the Planning Commission.
- 7/30/96 The Planning Commission reviewed all comments received in writing and at the July 10, public hearing and agreed upon all changes to the April 19, 1996 draft.
- 8/14/96 The Planning Commission reviewed the final copy of the Comprehensive Plan and referred it to the City Council for adoption.
- 9/11/96 The Planning Commission agreed upon revisions to the plan concerning changes to the PRD zoning district.
- 12/11/97 The Planning Commission agreed upon revisions to the plan concerning the sewerage of the island.
- 2/20/97 The Planning Commission agreed upon revisions to water quality section and the goals and implementation strategies concerning water quality.
- 3/3/97 A special meeting of City Council and the Planning Commission was held to introduce the Council to the Plan and explain the process of preparing and adopting the plan.
- 3/20/97 A special meeting of City Council and the Planning Commission was held to begin a page-by-page review of the plan.
- 5/14/97 A special meeting of City Council and the Planning Commission was held to continue the review of the plan.
- 6/11/97 The Planning Commission reviewed revision suggested during the Commission's work session with City Council and adopted a resolution recommending the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Plan to City Council for adoption.

- 10/28/97 Public hearing on the June 11, 1997 draft of plan before City Council.

- 12/ /97 City Council adopts the June 11, 1997 Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Plan with the exception of implementation time frames which are to be recommended to the Council by the Planning Commission for their adoption.

- 3/11/98 The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed time frames for implementing strategies contained in the plan and approved a resolution recommending the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Plan, as revised by the addition of implementation time frames, to City Council for final adoption.

2004 Update

- 6/13/01 The Planning Commission discussed the 1994 Planning Legislation's requirement to review the plan every five years and agreed to begin the review.

- 7/18/01 The Planning Commission discussed the confusion of the Wild Dunes PDD; as well as the need for new statistics for review (Census, SCDOT traffic counts and County Assessor's Office data).

- 9/12/01 Commission member Dick Cronin reported on findings of the PDD issues.

- 11/14/01 The Commission reviewed and discussed the statistics relating to the Population Element.

- 1/23/02 The Commission held a workshop with the BCD Council of Government to discuss their possible involvement in the review or drafting of the plan.

- 2/13/02 The Commission held a workshop with the Director of the Recreation Department, Norma Jean Page, to discuss the Cultural Resources Element. They also reviewed a draft of the Community Facilities Element.

- 3/13/02 The Commission reviewed public safety issues and the Community Facilities and Cultural Resources Elements of the plan.
- 4/10/02 The Commission discussed statistics relating to the Housing Element and general trends noticed in the housing market.
- 5/8/02 The Commission discussed amendments to the Housing and Natural Resources Elements of the plan.
- 11/11/02 The Commission discussed amendments to the Land Use Element of the plan.
- 1/8/03 The Commission discussed amendments to the Land Use Element of the plan.
- 2/12/03 The Commission held a brainstorming session on the Economic Element of the plan.
- 3/12/03 The Commission held a work session with Fire Chief Ann Graham to discuss EMS needs on the island and related public safety issues.
- 4/16/03 The Commission agreed to send the draft plan to the Council of Governments for their review and asked for a legal opinion on whether or not the amount of re-drafting constituted a review of the plan or an update.
- 7/9/03 The Commission discussed the revisions to the plan suggested by the Council of Governments.
- 10/15/03 The Commission held a workshop with City Council to explain the changes that the Commission was recommending and gather feedback from Council members.
- 11/19/03 The Commission reviewed comments, written and oral, made by City Council members during and after the workshop.

- 1/14/04 The Commission reviewed the draft changes to the plan with particular attention given to the repetition of issues.
- 2/11/04 The Commission reviewed the draft plan and agreed to advertise a public hearing for the plan in April 2004.
- 3/10/04 The Commission reviewed the revised Land Use Map prepared by Charleston County Planning Department.
- 4/14/04 The Commission reviewed the final draft of the plan and passed a resolution to recommend the adoption of the plan by City Council.

2008 Review

- 4/9/08 The Planning Commission discussed the 1994 Planning Legislation's requirement to review the plan every five years and agreed to begin the review.
- 5/14/08 The Planning Commission went through each element and agreed that the plan should be reviewed and did not need to have a full update. 8/13/08 The Planning Commission met and discussed the newly required Priority Investment Element.
- 9/10/08 The Planning Commission met and reviewed the plan in its entirety and discussed the newly required Priority Investment Element.
- 10/8/08 The Planning Commission met and agreed to add the development of a parking management plan as a strategy in the Community Facilities Element.
- 11/12/08 The Planning Commission met discussed EMS response and how to improve the description of this in the Plan.
- 1/21/09 The Planning Commission recommended the amended document be adopted by City Council.
- 8/12/09 The Planning Commission recommended that the title of the document be changed to the "Amended Comprehensive Plan".

2015 Update

- 3/20/13 The Planning Commission discussed the fact that a new census had been completed since the last review of the plan. The census showed that the population had decreased slightly and the number of housing units had increased slightly. The Commission reviewed the Vision Statement and the Population Element of the Plan.
- 4/10/13 The Planning Commission reviewed and edited the Population and Economic Elements.
- 5/8/13 The Natural Resources Element was discussed. Information regarding erosion and loggerhead turtles was added.
- 6/12/13 The Planning Commission discussed the Cultural Resources Element of the plan and agreed that the Plan should better describe the events and services offered by the City's Recreation Department.
- 7/10/13 The Community Facilities Element was discussed and the Commission agreed to elaborate on the electrical distribution system and the additional transmission line that is being added and highlight efforts to place lines underground.
- 8/14/13 The Planning Commission discussed the Housing Element of the Plan. Particular attention was paid to the effects of the Biggert-Waters Act.
- 9/11/13 The Land Use Element of the Plan was discussed. It was noted that the Plan had excessive information about the areas that are controlled by Wild Dunes, but outside of the gate and edits were suggested. The Commission also agreed to eliminate strategies dealing developing a GIS system as Charleston County was providing this service.
- 10/9/13 The Planning Commission discussed the Transportation Element of the Plan and agreed to expand the strategies involving alternate modes of transportation to include golf carts

and low speed electric vehicle. Particular attention was paid to the traffic count graphs included in the plan.

11/13/13 The Transportation Element and the Priority Investment Elements of the Plan were discussed. It became apparent that the traffic counts being collected were inaccurate and therefore the data included in the plan should be deleted as it would be outdated and not useful.

4/30/15 A joint workshop was held with the Planning Commission and the City Council to discuss the proposed amendments to the Plan.

APPENDIX B:
List of Sources

Clemson Study, May 1987

1989 & 1993 Isle of Palms Comprehensive Plan

U.S. Census

1990 Housing Atlas, Berkeley- Charleston- Dorchester Council of Governments

Metropolitan Charleston 1990-2015, Planning for Change, BCD Council of Governments, Spring 1995

Stormwater management System, Isle of Palms Flood Plain Management Study, U.S. Soil Conservation Service, June 1990

Isle of Palms Local Comprehensive Beach Management Plan, 1993

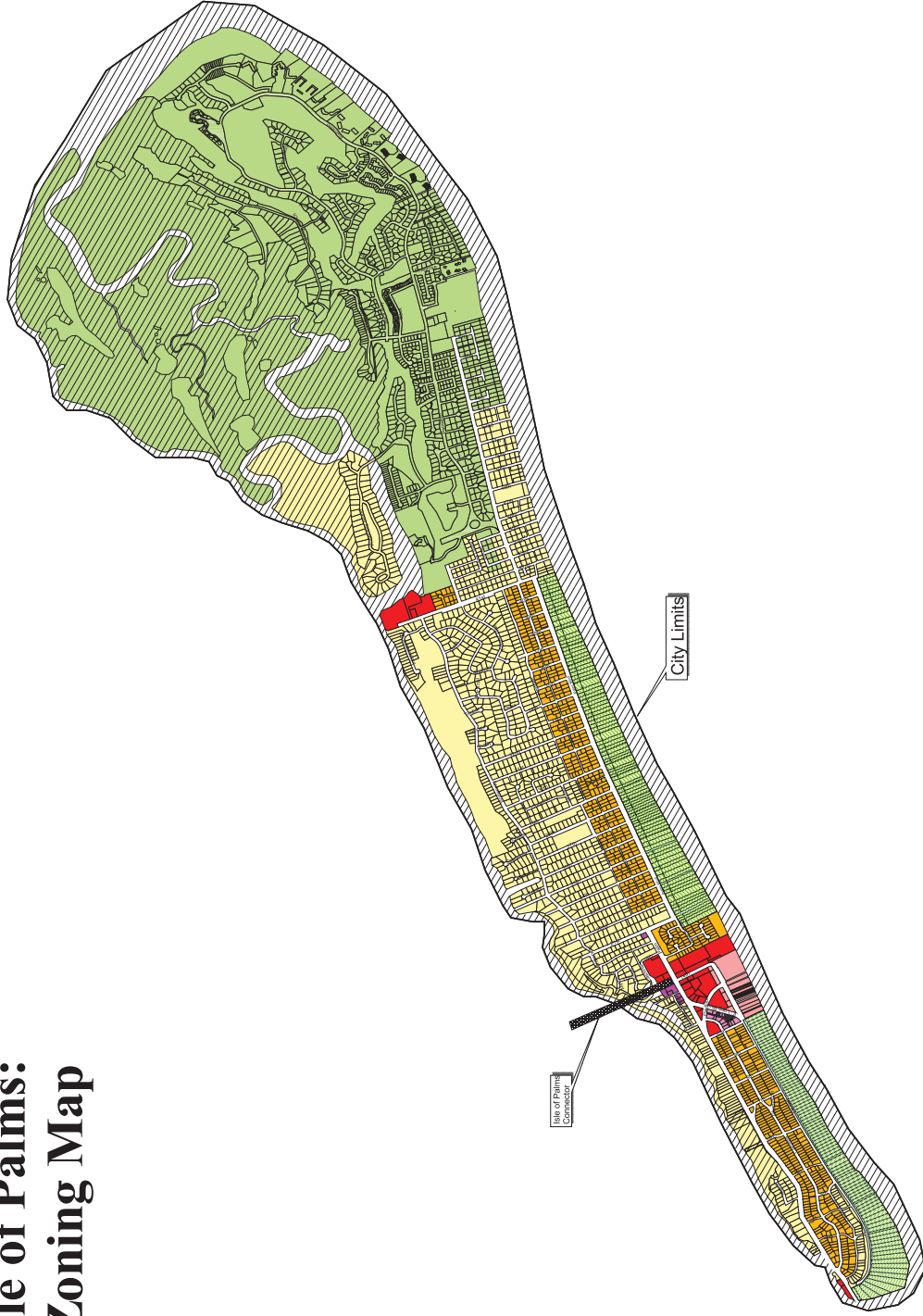
OCRM non-point source pollution study, 1994

Charleston Convention and Visitors Bureau

Wild Dunes Community Association Residential Status Report

Comprehensive Planning Guide for Local Governments, Municipal Association of South Carolina, August 2001

City of Isle of Palms: Official Zoning Map



Legend

Preservation Overlay District P2
 Preservation Overlay District P1
 Conservation Overlay District

Zoning

GC1
GC2
GC3
LC
PDD
SR1
SR2

Note: Conservation Overlay (CO) District includes all properties which are designated as Critical Areas by the South Carolina Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources. The CO District includes all pieces of natural and man-made highland.

By official action of the City Council, the following changes were made to the official zoning map of the City of Isle of Palms, South Carolina, effective September 26, 2004:

All lots on the seaward side of Ocean Boulevard, from Beach Inlet to Teeth Avenue were changed to the SR1 (P2) zoning district.



Disclaimer: This map is a graphic representation of data obtained from various sources. All efforts have been made to warrant the accuracy of this information. The City of Isle of Palms, South Carolina, disclaims all responsibility and liability for the use of this map.

Data Path: X:\land\charleston_coltw\isp\zoning_map2.apr



This is to certify that this is the Official Zoning Map referred to in section 5-4-3 of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Palms, S.C.; adopted pursuant to the 1994 Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act on _____, 2006.

Approved by: _____
 Attested by: _____

