



## **PRIORITY INVESTMENT ELEMENT**

### **Background**

On May 23, 2007 the General Assembly adopted the Priority Investment Act requiring Planning Commissions to incorporate priority investment analysis in the comprehensive planning process. The Act called for Comprehensive Plans to include a new Priority Investment Element that analyzes the likely federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years, and recommends projects for expenditure of those funds during that time period for needed public infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, roads, and schools.

The recommendation of projects for public expenditure must be coordinated with adjacent and relevant counties, municipalities, public service districts, school districts, public and private utilities, transportation agencies, and other public entities that are affected by or have planning authority over the public project. Such coordination is accomplished through written notification by the local planning commission or its staff to affected parties and the opportunity for those parties to provide comment to the planning commission or its staff concerning the proposed projects. Failure of the planning commission or its staff to identify or notify an adjacent or relevant jurisdiction or agency does not invalidate the local comprehensive plan and does not give rise to a civil cause of action.

### **Priority Investments**

The purpose of this section of the Town's Comprehensive Plan is to focus investment on the priorities identified as critical to the sustainability of the Island. The goal is to coordinate prioritization, planning, and budgeting for these priorities over a ten year period.

The Town of Kiawah Island has identified the following areas as priorities for the community: hazard mitigation, emergency management, infrastructure, beach management and maintenance, and information technology. Each of these areas supports the development of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). These priority areas are discussed further in the following sections.



## **Hazard Mitigation**

Hazard Mitigation involves sustained planning to minimize or reduce long term risk to people and their assets, as well as the economy and the community. The Town of Kiawah Island adopted the Charleston Regional Mitigation Plan in 2004 to address the mitigation of all types of hazards and maintain a high Community Rating System (CRS) resulting in lower insurance costs. Additional information about the program may be found at [www.charlestoncounty.org](http://www.charlestoncounty.org).

Currently, the Town updates its Hazard Mitigation Action Plan and reports the plan's status each June, and submits a Town Council resolution to Charleston County committing its continuance in the program. In 2009, the Town completed a five year federal review of the plan and retained its current CRS rating (resulting in lower flood insurance premiums for property owners).

The Town's action plan focuses primarily on flooding, but should be broadened to more specifically address other known hazards. Expanding the current hazard mitigation plan would require a collaborative effort among Island entities and, in particular, emergency personnel including the St. John's Fire District and Charleston County Sheriff's Department. For a mitigation plan to be successful, it must remain relevant and should be reviewed regularly.

Hazard mitigation planning is included in the Town of Kiawah Island's Priority Investment Element as it sets the stage for determining those critical community assets, including housing, economy, cultural resources, and transportation, that should be prioritized, protected, and maintained. Hazard mitigation plans help communities like Kiawah Island plan for, budget, and justify improvements in order to mitigate the effects of identifiable hazards. Some of the known hazards to Kiawah Island include, but are not limited to, hurricanes, tornados, fires, earthquakes, explosions, erosion, and floods.

## **Emergency Management**

As a coastal community on a barrier island, the Town of Kiawah Island recognizes emergency management as a priority investment. The risk of severe hurricane effects and the remote location of the Island combine to make hurricanes a double threat to Kiawah Island and its population. The Town has developed a written emergency preparedness plan that is updated annually. The Town also hosts an annual disaster awareness day event. The details of the Town's preparedness efforts are discussed at length in Chapter V- Community Facilities.



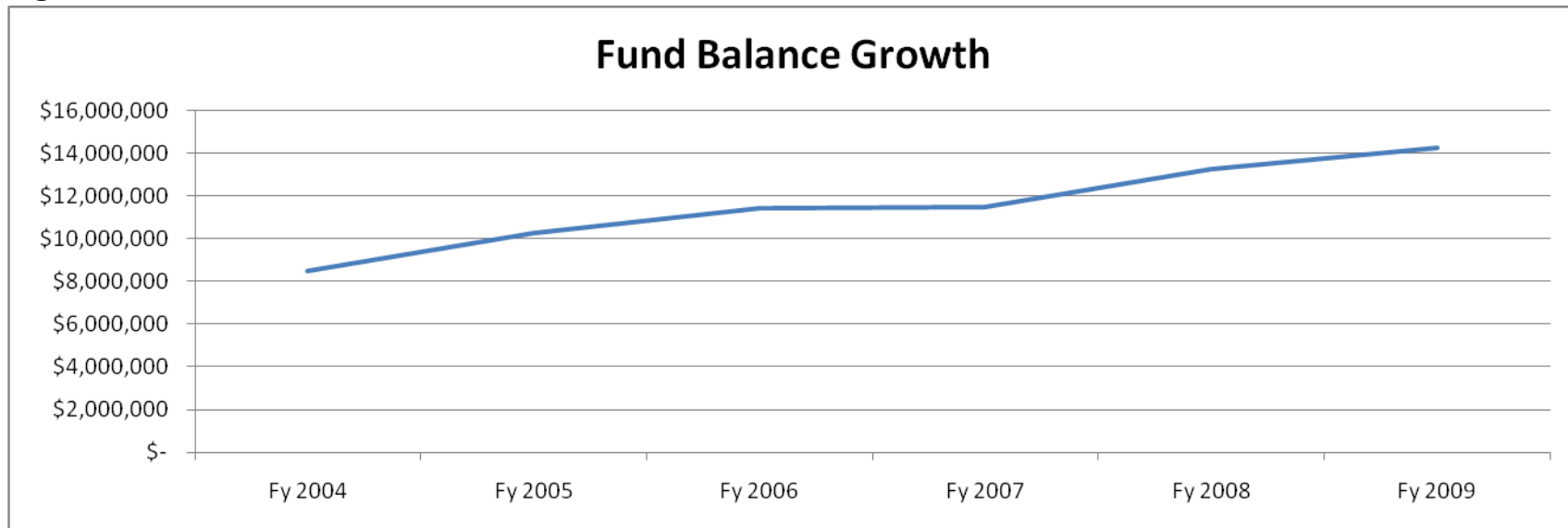
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To prioritize funding for emergency management, the Town should conduct reasonable assessments of the Town's owned infrastructure and identify its replacement costs (see Infrastructure discussions below). Next, the Town should estimate the clean up or recovery costs associated with restoring the Island to its pre-emergency condition. Lastly, the costs for the resources needed to demonstrate readiness and responsiveness should be determined. These estimates should be the basis of a target budget for an emergency preparedness component of the Capital Improvement Plan.

Developing cost estimates should be a collaborative effort among Island entities, the State's Budget & Control Board, private contractors, and other public partners like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Charleston County. This effort should also involve the Town's financial advisors (bankers, accountants, etc.) to measure the financial strength of the Town as compared to the inherent risk of a natural disaster or other emergency. The Town should position itself by seeking a bond rating and discuss available options with financial advisors should a bond issuance become necessary to facilitate any potential recovery.

The Town of Kiawah Island is well aware of the need for funding to respond to a natural disaster, and has been fiscally conservative allowing for the accrual of approximately \$14 million in reserves.

**Figure XI: Fund Balance Growth**





It should be the objective of the Town to seek out other identifiable funding sources to leverage those available in the current reserves. Other possible sources include FEMA – emergency management grants, Homeland Security, and Charleston County.

### **Beach Management and Maintenance**

The most critical priority investment for the beach is the ability to recover from damage resulting from a major storm. In the event of such a storm, the beach could sustain significant damage that could take years to recover from naturally. As the beach is a major contributor to the economy of the Town of Kiawah Island and Charleston County, it is important that it be restored as soon as reasonably possible. Every effort should be made to recognize and budget provisionally for the expense of restoring the Kiawah Island beach to its pre-storm event condition.

Over the past ten years, the Town has held reserves in the Local Accommodations Tax Fund, primarily for preserving the 10 mile Kiawah Island beach. In 2006, these funds were utilized to complete a major beach restoration project totaling \$3.6 million. To date, the fund totals \$3.8 million.

The objective of the beach management and maintenance priority is to provide continuous monitoring of beach erosion or accretion rates, dune formation or other shoreline changes. The results of this ongoing observation should be taken into consideration as part of the planning process and used to identify future needs. Currently, these observations are conducted by Dr. Kana of Coastal Science and Engineering and the results are incorporated in the State mandated Beach Management Plan. As part of the coordination efforts, priorities established should be consistent with the existing Beach Management Plan.



### **Infrastructure**

Infrastructure refers to the physical structures or framework needed for the proper functioning of a community. It includes the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, water, sewer and storm drain improvements, refuse disposal facilities, government buildings, and telecommunications.



### Roads and Bridges

As indicated in the Transportation Element the Town of Kiawah Island owns the Kiawah Island Parkway and Beachwalker Drive and their right of ways. Beachwalker Drive was last repaved in 2003 and landscaped in 2007. As discussed in the Transportation Element, the Roundabout was constructed in 2005 at a cost of \$2.3 million. The Parkway, bridge and bike path project was implemented in 2009 at a cost of \$2.8 million. The bridge is insured at \$1 million and its replacement value is estimated to be at least that amount.

As a priority investment, the Town's roads and bridges should be assigned useful lives and maintenance schedules tied to these useful lives. Maintenance should include establishing base line or current condition of the roadway, bridges, curb cuts and associated sidewalk or bike paths. Budget funding should be linked to coincide with the replacement schedules.

Possible additional funding sources for the road repairs and/or replacement include South Carolina Department of Transportation, Charleston County C-Funds, and the Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Council of Governments. The Town will aggressively seek access to these funds and incorporate them into the Capital Budget for Infrastructure investments.

### Water and Wastewater



The water and wastewater service to Kiawah Island is owned and operated by the Kiawah Island Utility Company. The original water lines servicing the Island are estimated to be 30 years old and have experienced numerous breaks requiring minor repairs. Currently, the system has the capacity of producing 1.7 million gallons of water per day and provides service to 3,750 customers.

As a priority investment, the Town will seek to work with the Kiawah Island Utility Company to identify funding sources when replacement of the current system is required. The objective is not to manage the responsibility of another entity, but rather to recognize the potential risk of system damage since it is the sole water and sewer service supplier for the Island. Ideally, the system would be evaluated

as compared to the current number of customers and planned future growth of the Island. This effort would serve as a joint public/private partnership for the health and welfare of the residents.



### Storm Drain Improvements

The Town will seek to identify, locate, and log all storm drains on Town-owned streets or easements. Their current condition will be evaluated upon identification and systematically scheduled for maintenance based on their projected useful lives. They will be repaired as those along the Parkway were repaired in 2009 and along Beachwalker Drive in 2007. However, as a priority investment, this approach will allow for proactive maintenance or replacement to ensure that they are in working order and do not jeopardize functionality of the overall storm drain network managed by the Kiawah Island Community Association.

### Municipal Buildings

The Town's Municipal Center and garage are the single largest facility owned by the Town of Kiawah Island. The structures are 13 and 12 years old respectively and have required minor renovations and improvements over the last five years. The buildings are valued at \$1.9 million. A strategic maintenance and replacement plan is necessary to budget for the replacement and repair of major parts of the building. These include the roof, HVAC systems, plumbing, windows, protective shutters, emergency generator, and interior repairs.



### **Information Technology**

#### Geographical Information System (GIS)

The Town has a geographical information system that is used to produce limited mapping for beach related studies, Project Impact, and debris removal. When originally purchased, the system was valued at \$50,000, but is underutilized. The goal is to increase the systems benefit to the Town and maximize its usage. Additional uses that have been identified include plotting GIS points for all Town-owned infrastructure, water hydrants, solid waste routes, and conservation areas. This level of usage will require additional training, layers of information and hardware. Investments for this resource should be budgeted on an annual basis and upgraded/maintained continuously.



## Wireless Internet Connectivity

Kiawah Island is known for its natural pristine environment and thick tree canopy. As a consequence, internet and cellular service on the Island is compromised in some areas. Another priority investment is the creation of a Wi-Fi network throughout the island and the expansion of cellular service to the Island. Together, these improved services will enhance residential service, business operations, economic trade and tourism on Island. A feasibility study should be conducted to identify the technology, hardware and capital resources required to develop an island wide Wi-Fi network and cellular service.

## **Implementation**

The major implementation strategies for the Priority Investment Element include conducting a thorough hazard assessment, community appraisal, and developing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). These implementation strategies are discussed in the following sections of this Element.

### Hazard Assessment

The first step to emergency preparedness is assessing a community's risk exposure and analyzing hazards. The process of hazard assessments is a method to prioritize and allocate resources to proactively mitigate hazards to the Town of Kiawah Island.

### Community Appraisals

A community appraisal focuses on local assets, resources, and activities as well as gaps, barriers, and emerging needs. The process of identifying and appraising this information will help build collaborative partnerships through the following:

- clearly understand the context in which residents live and the issues residents want to address;
- locate hidden strengths or underutilized resources that could be developed;
- determine which resources could contribute to comprehensive strategies, and in what way;
- design effective, collaborative strategies that engage residents because they respond to important conditions; and
- empower residents and community members by giving them a role in designing and implementing the strategies.

The process of conducting a community appraisal involves (1) scanning the community to locate existing information, (2) developing a resident focus, (3) identifying community assets and the degree to which they are accessible to the people



who can benefit from them, and (4) analyzing the information obtained. Once completed, the next step is forming partnerships and coordinating efforts to implement the goals identified. An appraisal should be an ongoing process and updated during Comprehensive Plan reviews.

### Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

The objective of the CIP is to plan and coordinate the financial resources necessary to prioritize investment. The CIP would cover a ten year period and allow for the following:

- Facilitates coordination between capital needs and the operating budgets;
- Enhances the community's ability to obtain a credit rating in the future and avoid sudden changes in any potential future debt service requirements;
- Identifies the most economical means of financing capital projects;
- Increases opportunities for obtaining federal and state aid;
- Relates public facilities to other public and private development and redevelopment policies and plans;
- Focuses attention on community objectives and fiscal capacity;
- Keeps the public informed about future needs and projects;
- Allows local government to reduce duplication; and
- Encourages careful project planning and design to avoid costly mistakes and help a community reach desired goals.

The CIP should be implemented by Town Council during the annual budget process and will involve the evaluation of projected fund balances as compared to the 10 year funding requirements for each priority. After adoption of the 10 year plan, the Town should review the progress of the plan annually, make adjustments or modifications, and incorporate recommendations from the Planning Commission as deemed appropriate.

The Town should also seek to invest funds and match their maturities so that they coincide with the planned time frame for the construction or renovation of priority investments as outlined in the CIP.

As such, the CIP will be a dynamic document that will chart the planning and funding for major capital projects or priorities within the community. Town Council should receive quarterly financial reporting for the CIP and discuss these findings in open session during Ways & Means Committee meetings.





## Coordination

One of the challenges to the implementation strategy is the required coordination and planning across jurisdictions and public/private partnerships.

The coordination would involve federal, county and state resources and private entities including the Kiawah Island Community Association, Kiawah Island Golf Resort, Kiawah Development Partners, Berkeley Electric Cooperative, and Kiawah Island Utility. The coordination would involve aligning development plans of the various entities with those of the Town and identifying financial resources to ensure that common priorities are funded in a time frame to prevent detriment to the community.

Coordination would also involve evaluation to prevent duplication of effort and the most effective use of resources. Further coordination would be allowed for public-private partnerships to accomplish similar goals to the extent that this is feasible. Lastly, the coordination among these entities would seek to leverage financial support to maximize the benefit to the Kiawah Island community.

## Goals

To help the Town further realize its Vision, the following goals should be considered:

**1. Conduct an assessment to identify the Town’s exposure to all types of hazards, using the Charleston Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan as a baseline, and consider appropriate mitigation steps and associated resources or funding needed.**

	<b>Implementation Strategy</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
a.	Lead a collaborative effort to develop a detailed and organized hazard mitigation plan to reduce disaster losses.	Town Administrator	By 2012
b.	Plan for, budget, and justify improvements identified through the hazard assessment to mitigate the effects of potential hazards.	Town Administrator	By 2012
c.	Position the Town to seek a bond rating should bond issuance become necessary to facilitate disaster recovery.	Town Administrator	By 2012



**2. Establish a process for regularly conducting community appraisals of existing resources and assets and identify gaps, barriers, and future needs.**

	<b>Implementation Strategy</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
a.	Use surveys, Town Hall meetings, and other methods to seek input from residents, as well as public and private entities to identify desired community services, facilities, and programs.	Town Administrator	By 2012
b.	Form partnerships to coordinate and implement additional identified priorities.	Town Administrator	By 2012
c.	Identify feasibility, community impact and potential costs associated with implementing new initiatives.	Town Administrator	Ongoing

**3. Establish a Capital Improvement Plan**

	<b>Implementation Strategy</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
a.	Budget for an emergency preparedness component of the Capital Improvement Fund, and other actions to mitigate hazard risks.	Town Administrator	By 2012
b.	Seek additional funding sources for priority investments to leverage existing Town funds.	Town Administrator	By 2012
c.	Develop maintenance requirements, replacement plans and budget requirements for infrastructure and other assets, tied to estimated useful lives and anticipated maintenance schedules (see Transportation Goal #2.a.).	Town Administrator	Ongoing

**4. Focus the Town’s investment on the priorities identified as critical to the sustainability of the Island.**

	<b>Implementation Strategy</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
a.	Work with utility companies to ensure adequate replacement plans for utility service to the Island.	Town Administrator	By 2012
b.	Identify, locate and log all storm drains on Town-owned streets or easements—develop maintenance and/or replacement schedules (see Transportation Goal #2.a.).	Town Administrator	By 2011
c.	Continue to monitor beach erosion or accretion rates, dune formation or other shoreline changes. Use the Beach Management Plan as a planning tool for establishing beach-related priorities.	Wildlife Biologist Environmental Committee	Ongoing



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d.	Consider additional uses of the Town-owned GIS system. Provide additional training, information and hardware as required.	Town Administrator	Ongoing
e.	Conduct feasibility studies regarding development of (i) an island-wide Wi-Fi network and (ii) cellular service. Consider external resources to support such studies.	Town Administrator	By 2010