



bluffton  
HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

# RESIDENT *RESOURCE GUIDE*



Your go-to guide for living in Bluffton  
[townofbluffton.sc.gov](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov)



# WELCOME HOME

Whether you arrived yesterday, or generations ago, Bluffton is where your voice matters.

This guide connects you to your Town government and the services that make our community special.

## What's Inside

Consider this your go-to guide for navigating resident resources. Keep it accessible for when you need to know who maintains your roads, who to call about wildlife concerns or how to get involved in Town decisions.

## Why This Guide Matters

As one of South Carolina's fastest-growing communities, Bluffton welcomes people from diverse backgrounds with different expectations about government. This guide helps bridge those gaps, creating a shared understanding about the services available to Town of Bluffton residents.

## Our Promise to You

Town staff are just a phone call, email or visit away. We are always ready to direct you to the right department or agency. *We're here to serve you.*

## Thank You

Thank you for being part of what makes Bluffton special — a community that values its environment, thoughtful growth and most importantly its people.

Throughout this guide, you'll find helpful 'Did You Know?' boxes with interesting facts and tips about Bluffton.



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### DID YOU KNOW?



South Carolina's annexation laws create our zigzagging boundaries. You might cross Town limits several times during your daily commute. **This guide clarifies what services the Town and other government agencies provide.**

# Bluffton's History

First settled in the 1820s on a high bluff overlooking the May River, Bluffton began as a one-square-mile village. Landowners, including plantation owners, built homes here to escape inland heat and illnesses during the summer months. Originally called “May River,” it was officially renamed “Bluffton” in April 1842.

The South Carolina General Assembly incorporated Bluffton in 1852 (though the Act was repealed in 1860). By 1853, a wharf at the foot of Calhoun Street offered steamboat access to Savannah, Charleston and nearby communities.

On June 4, 1863, Union troops attacked then-abandoned village which had become a hub for Confederate spies. The “Burning of Bluffton” destroyed nearly two-thirds of the Town, leaving just two churches and 13 residences standing.

Bluffton recovered during Reconstruction. The Gullah Geechee people — descendants of Africans who had been enslaved — influenced the region as they cultivated a distinct culture, creole language and deep ties to the land. Their traditions, craftsmanship, cuisine and communities shaped Bluffton's identity and continue to define the Lowcountry's cultural fabric today.

Reincorporated in 1903, Bluffton emerged as a regional commercial center. With the 1926 opening of U.S. Highway 17, steamboat service ended and commerce shifted away from the river. Bluffton's population remained small until 1998, when the annexation of parcels of land began expanding the Town's footprint. Today, Bluffton covers more than 54 square miles and blends rich history with planned growth.



## DID YOU KNOW?



The area was first called May River, then Kirk's Bluff, before becoming Bluffton in 1842 as a compromise between the Kirk and Pope families.

*For nearly 150 years, Bluffton stayed one square mile in size. The surrounding land tells a different story:*

## HOW TIMBER SHAPED BLUFFTON'S GROWTH

**1937-1941** Large areas around Bluffton became timber farms for paper making.

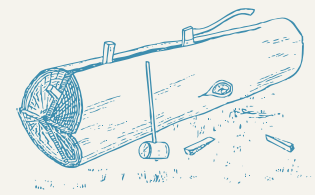
**1993** Del Webb bought 5,100 acres of former timber land to build Sun City.

**1994-1995** Sun City opened and brought new growth to the surrounding area.

**1998** Bluffton began annexing or adding land to help control development.

**1999** International Paper sold 29,264 acres, including the Buckwalter and Palmetto Bluff tracts.

**2000-Present** Bluffton grew from one to more than 54 square miles.



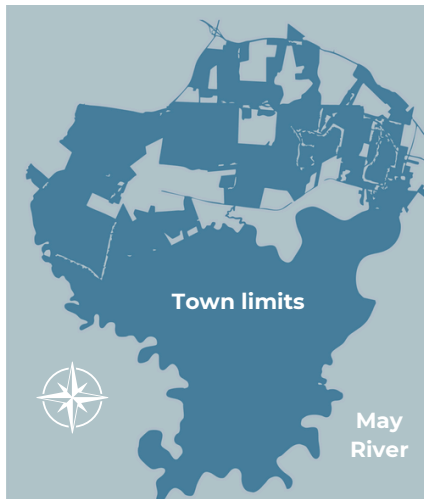
## HISTORIC AREAS

**The Bluffton Historic District** (1996) is on the National Register of Historic Places with 46 historic buildings.

**The Old Town Bluffton Historic District** (2007) is the original one-square-mile area with 86 historic places.

**Take a Walk Through History:** Explore the 30-minute self-guided Historic Old Town Walking Tour to learn about the homes dating back to 1850 that still stand today. Visit the Town website's “Map Gallery” to take the tour online.





# How Bluffton Grew: From 1 to 54 Square Miles

## Our Town's Growth Story

For more than 150 years, Bluffton was just one square mile in size. Today, our Town covers 54 square miles. *How did we grow so quickly? The answer starts in the 1990s.*

## The Turning Point: 1994

In 1994, Del Webb, a national homebuilder, announced plans to build Sun City, a large community that would bring thousands of new homes to our areas. While Sun City is not in Bluffton's limits, the project represented the beginning of the region's growth phase.

**DID  
YOU  
KNOW?**



About 92% of Bluffton is governed by development agreements, many of which were created in the early 2000s.

### BLUFFTON'S TOWN COUNCIL FACED AN IMPORTANT CHOICE:

Watch growth  
happen around them

**OR**

Take an active role in shaping  
how our area would develop

### Council members chose to get involved.

They decided to accept requests from nearby property owners to join the Town (called "annexation"). This allowed Bluffton to guide growth with local rules that protect our natural resources and quality of life.



## Understanding Development Agreements

When large areas of undeveloped land join the Town, Bluffton creates a legal contract with the property owner/developer called a "development agreement."

These agreements:

- Spell out exactly how the land will be developed
- Include rules for protecting trees and natural resources
- Plan for parks, roads, neighborhoods and businesses
- Set limits on how many homes and buildings can be built
- Do NOT have specific start or end dates

### GROWTH MINDSET



Bluffton is the fifth largest town in South Carolina by land area. Our Town covers 54 square miles, making it one of the biggest in the state.

### Key Annexation Milestones

DATE	SQUARE MILES
1852	1
1998	34.41
2000	50.40
2005	53.63
2010	53.95
2024	54.29

### When was your neighborhood annexed?

View the map gallery



[townofbluffton.sc.gov/686/map-gallery](https://townofbluffton.sc.gov/686/map-gallery)



# Understanding Annexation

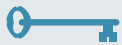
## What is Annexation?

Annexation is the legal process of adding land to a town or city. The process extends the town's borders to include more property and provide town services to residents in return.

## How It Works in Bluffton

1. The property owner must submit a petition asking to join Bluffton.
2. The property must touch current Town limits by land or water (*i.e.*, contiguous).
3. Town Council must vote to approve the request.
4. Once approved, the property becomes part of Bluffton and receives Town services.

### DID YOU KNOW?



By South Carolina law, the Town of Bluffton is prohibited from initiating discussions with property owners about annexation. **The process must be started by the property owners themselves.**

## AM I IN BLUFFTON?

**Have you ever wondered why some neighborhoods are not part of the Town of Bluffton?**

Bluffton's growth from one square mile to 54 square miles happened through annexation, creating a patchwork of Town boundaries.

### How to Check An Address:

1. Visit [townofbluffton.sc.gov](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov)
2. Click on "Map Gallery"
3. Find the "Am I In Bluffton" map
4. Enter the address in the search bar

You can call Town Hall at **843-706-4500** if you need help determining if a property is within Town limits.



## Benefits of Being in Town Limits

1. Police services from Bluffton Police Department
2. Voting for Mayor and Town Council
3. Parks and recreation services
4. Trash and recycling services
5. Participation in Town events and programs
6. A voice in Bluffton's future

## What the Town Can and Cannot Control

### The Town can control:

- Development rules within Town limits
- Standards for protecting trees and natural resources
- Requirements for parks and open spaces
- Design standards for buildings

### The Town cannot control:

- When developers choose to build (even after agreements are signed)
- Land outside Town limits
- Market forces that drive growth
- Responsibilities of other agencies (schools, county roads, water service)



# Government Structure & Elections

Bluffton uses a "Town Council-Manager" form of government. Here's how it works:

- Town council sets policies and project priorities
- The town manager and staff implement these priorities
- The town manager works together with town staff to manage daily operations

## Town Council

Bluffton Town Council includes the mayor and four council members. All serve four-year terms that overlap. This means not all seats are up for election at the same time.

Town council members are non-partisan and represent all residents. Representation is not divided by wards or districts. Residents vote for each seat on the council, not just for representatives from their neighborhood.

**Tip:** Think of the town council as the board of directors, and the town manager as the CEO.

## Election Calendar

Elections happen every two years on odd-numbered years. They don't happen during national election years.

Town elections follow a regular schedule:

- Elections happen every two years
- Elections take place in odd-numbered years
- Elections are held in November

## Council Compensation

Council members receive a salary for their service but do not work "full-time" for the town. The town manager is the full-time employee who oversees daily operations. Salaries help to cover their time and expenses for attending meetings and serving the community.

## VOTER REGISTRATION

### County Oversight

Beaufort County runs all elections in the county, even for the Town of Bluffton. The Beaufort County Board of Voter Registration and Elections manages voter registration, polling locations and the voting process.

### How to Register

Voter enrollment is not automatic. You must register with the County Board of Elections to vote in any local, state or federal election. Contact the Board of Voter Registration and Elections of Beaufort County at (843) 255-6900 or [beaufortcountysc.gov/vote](http://beaufortcountysc.gov/vote)



### Reminder

Polling precincts (voting locations) change based on population changes in the area. It's always a good idea to check your registration and polling location at least two months before an election to ensure your information is up to date.

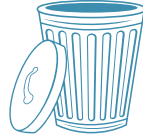
**DID YOU KNOW?**



**South Carolina is an open primary state.** This means you do not declare a political party when you register to vote. During primary elections (the process of selecting candidates), you choose in which party's primary to vote.

# Who is Responsible for What?

## Understanding Local Government Roles



Living in Bluffton means several government agencies work together to provide your essential services. Here's a guide to help you know who handles what for residents within Town limits.

Town of Bluffton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains Town-owned roads, parks, public buildings and public stormwater systems (outside of private neighborhoods)</li> <li>• Provides police services through Bluffton Police Department</li> <li>• Controls land use, zoning and development within Town limits</li> <li>• Contracts with Waste Management for Town resident trash and recycling collection</li> <li>• Issues building permits, business licenses and enforces Town ordinances</li> <li>• Hosts Town Council meetings and community events</li> </ul>
Bluffton Township Fire District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides fire protection and emergency medical response</li> <li>• Operates independently from Town and County governments</li> <li>• Funded through property taxes paid by all district residents</li> </ul>
Beaufort County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains County-owned roads and facilities</li> <li>• Provides law enforcement outside Town limits through the Sheriff's Office</li> <li>• Collects property taxes and maintains property records</li> <li>• Operates public libraries and animal services</li> <li>• Manages voter registration</li> <li>• Runs recreation programs and youth sports leagues</li> </ul>
Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides water and sewer services</li> <li>• Operates water treatment facilities and maintains infrastructure</li> <li>• Governed by an 11-member board appointed by the Governor</li> </ul>
State of South Carolina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds and maintains state roads (SC-46) and highways (US-278)</li> <li>• Issues drivers' licenses and handles vehicle registration</li> <li>• Establishes education standards</li> <li>• Enforces state laws through SC Highway Patrol</li> </ul>

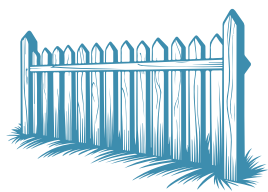
### Need Help?

If you're unsure which agency handles your issue, call Town Hall at **(843) 706-4500**.

Our staff will direct you to the right department, even if it's not a Town service.

**DID  
YOU  
KNOW?**

Neighborhood associations (POAs) handle roads, amenities and drainage inside private communities. Turn the page for more about POA responsibilities.



# Who Maintains Your Neighborhood?

## Understanding POAs in Bluffton

Most Bluffton residents (92%) live in communities that are planned communities governed by Property or Home Owners Associations (POAs or HOAs). These associations maintain everything inside neighborhood boundaries after developers complete construction and transfer control.

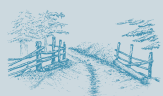
### Large Developments, Multiple Neighborhoods

Major development agreements like Buckwalter and New Riverside function as umbrellas covering multiple neighborhoods. While these communities share the same development agreement, each typically has its own POA with distinct rules and fees.

### Responsibilities

<h4>POA</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private roads within neighborhood boundaries</li> <li>• Sidewalks, streetlights, signage</li> <li>• Stormwater systems and lagoons</li> <li>• Parks, trails, pools and clubhouses</li> <li>• Community landscaping</li> </ul>	<h4>Town of Bluffton</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town-owned roads outside planned communities</li> <li>• Town parks and municipal buildings</li> <li>• Town-owned stormwater infrastructure</li> <li>• Police services and public safety programs</li> <li>• Trash and recycling services</li> </ul>
<h4>Residents</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep storm drains clear of debris</li> <li>• Never dump yard waste in waterways</li> <li>• Pick up pet waste to prevent pollution</li> <li>• Obtain permits before removing trees</li> <li>• Follow your POA's guidelines</li> </ul>	<h4>Contacts</h4> <p>For issues inside your neighborhood (potholes, landscaping, drainage), contact your POA first — not the Town. For broader questions, contact the Town's Growth Management Department at (843) 706-4500.</p>

THE  
8%



Bluffton's oldest neighborhoods — the Historic District, Buck Island-Simmons ville and Goethe-Shults communities — were developed before more recent community planning. The Town implements infrastructure projects in these areas, such as sidewalks, sewer connections, drainage and lighting because there was no planned infrastructure. The other 92% of the town's neighborhoods have the benefit of planned infrastructure and POA.



VIEW OUR  
MAP GALLERY

[townofbluffton.sc.gov/686/map-gallery](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov/686/map-gallery)

# Street Smarts

## Who Maintains Bluffton's Roads?

Different agencies maintain roads in and around Town limits. Knowing who's responsible helps direct your concerns to the right place.



### Town-Maintained Roads

**There are only 17 roads that are under the Town of Bluffton's control.**

Allen St.	Hampton Pkwy.
Boundary St.	Innovation Dr.
Buckwalter Place Blvd.	Lawrence St.
Bridge Street (part)	Lawton St.
Calhoun St.	Progressive St.
Church St.	Pritchard St.
Dr. Mellichamp Dr.	Pope Ln.
Green St.	Thomas Heyward St.
	Water St.

**Remember:** Roads in planned communities are maintained by the POA, not the Town. See page 8 for more information.

### Not Sure Who to Call?

Blue and white signs indicate state roads, and you can contact:

**Town of Bluffton:** (843) 706-4500

**Beaufort County:** (843) 255-2800

**SCDOT:** (843) 524-7255

### Other Road Authorities

#### Beaufort County:

Roads in unincorporated county areas like Bluffton and Buckwalter Parkways.

#### South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT):

Major roads like U.S. 278, S.C. 46 (May River Road), Burnt Church Road

#### DID YOU KNOW?



A Town road must start, finish and be fully contained within Town limits.

### IMPORTANT: GOLF CART LAWS



- Must be registered and insured with SCDMV
- Stay within four miles of your home
- Only drive on roads with speed limits of 35 mph or less
- Cannot drive on leisure paths or sidewalks
- Operate only during daylight hours (additional state laws apply for nighttime use)
- Drivers must be at least 16 years old with a valid driver's license
- Effective May 22, 2025: Seat belts are required for all passengers under 12 years old.

#### DID YOU KNOW?



Bluffton Police officers wear dark-blue uniforms, Beaufort County Sheriff's deputies wear dark-green and tan and State Troopers wear light-blue and gray.

### Take the Pledge!



The Mayor's "Stay Safe, Bluffton!" pledge saves lives by reminding people to #justdrive and prevent distracted driving. Sign today!

Visit the [Town's website](https://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov) to learn more.





# Bluffton Parks

Our Town parks are more than just green spaces—they're where neighbors connect, residents celebrate and our community comes together. From the historic riverfront views at the Town Welcome Center at Wright Family Park to the splash pad at Oscar Frazier Park to the playground at New Riverside Barn Park, explore all the community spaces the Town has to offer.

## RESERVATIONS & AMENITIES

Most Town parks remain open to all residents, with only select amenities available for private reservation.

PARK	Wi-Fi	RESERVABLE SPACES	AMENITIES
DuBois Park	✓	None	Pavilion, Playground, Lawn, Picnic tables, Restrooms
Buckwalter Park Place — Amphitheatre	✓	Entire park with amphitheater	Open area, Walking paths
Buckwalter (Veterans) Park	✓	Entire park or sections	Lawn, Benches, Chairs, Playground, Tables, Veterans Memorial
Martin Family Park	✓	Entire Park	Open area, Walking paths
New Riverside Barn Park	✓	Barn ( <i>Wi-Fi and reservations begin in 2026</i> )	Pavilions, Playground
Oscar Frazier Park	✓	Fields	Splash pad ( <i>seasonal</i> ), Playground, Walking paths
Oyster Factory Park	✓	Entire park or sections	Boat Ramp, Dock
Pritchard Pocket Park	✓	None	Benches, River view
Rotary Community Center	✓	Center (with kitchen, porch, restrooms, tables and chairs)	None
Wright Family Park	✓	Entire park	Benches, Lawn, Restrooms, River view, Town Welcome Center, Walking Path

### DID YOU KNOW?



Not every park in Bluffton is owned and operated by the Town. Beaufort County plays an important role in our regional park system complementing Town parks with additional recreational spaces. The Buckwalter Rec Center, the sports fields at Oscar Frazier Park, the Bluffton pool, the M.C. Riley Sports Complex and the athletic league programs are all managed by Beaufort County Government.

Scan for a complete list of parks and amenities:



For a complete list of park reservations and fees: call or visit [townofbluffton.sc.gov/facilities](https://townofbluffton.sc.gov/facilities)



# Bluffton Community Events

Throughout the year, our Town hosts events that bring neighbors together. Here's what you can look forward to in the Heart of the Lowcountry.

## Year Round

- Movies in the Park Series
- Bluffton Music Concert Series



## Spring

- Arbor Day (April)
- May River Cleanup
- Historic Preservation Symposium (May)



## Summer

- Children's Summer Events (water slides, bounce houses)
- Independence Day Pre-Party and Fireworks
- Independence Day 5K Run/Walk



## Fall

- 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony
- River Sweep Cleanup (September)
- Safety Spooktacular (October)



## Winter

- Tree Lighting, Santa's Workshop and Christmas Movie
- Bluffton Christmas Parade



## More Community Events

Many organizations host public events at Town facilities. Find festivals, markets, parades and more on our Town calendar — your one-stop resource for all public events in Bluffton.

## Stay Connected!

**Check our events calendar:** [townofbluffton.sc.gov/calendar](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov/calendar)

**Follow us:** See back cover for social media accounts.

**Questions? Call:** (843) 706-4500



### DID YOU KNOW?

The New River Linear Trail offers a 6.7-mile round-trip adventure perfect for walking or biking. Built on old railway tracks, this natural path takes you through beautiful forests and wetlands from Sun City to New River.



# Get Involved, Bluffton

Bluffton is best when residents participate. Whether you have one or several hours to give, your involvement matters. There are so many ways to connect with your community and local government.

## Quick Ways to Connect

- Join river cleanups (April/May and September/October)
- Volunteer or join a board (Call 843-706-4500)
- Attend Town Council meetings (second Tuesday of each month)

## Protect Our Waterways

- Participate in river cleanups at Oyster Factory Park
- Keep storm drains clear, especially before storms
- Always pick up pet waste
- Dispose of cooking oils in trash, never down drains

## Connect with Bluffton Police

- Join the C.A.R.E. Program for checking on elderly residents
- Meet officers at community events like Safety Spooktacular
- Request a tour of the Law Enforcement Center
- Support Holiday Toy Drive (November-December)
- Donate to "Shop with a Cop" via the Bluffton Police Department Benevolence Fund



## Apply for Town Boards (Historic Preservation, Planning)

Explore the qualifications for any of the 14 Town boards, committees and commissions via the Town's website.

## Your Voice, Your Bluffton

In Bluffton, the "Heart of the Lowcountry," every resident *matters*. By joining river cleanups, properly disposing of waste or attending Town programs, you become a part of what makes our community special.

### DID YOU KNOW?



#### Mobile Town Hall

Mobile Town Halls bring Town staff and elected officials to your neighborhood or civic organization. Staff presents an overview of Bluffton history, government structure and current projects. Learn who maintains roads, how development works and who to call for different issues. Schedule by calling Town Hall.

# Town Resources at Your Fingertips

The Town of Bluffton offers online tools and resources to help you stay informed, report issues and access services.



## SeeClickFix: Your Direct Line to Town Hall

See a pothole or park issue? Report it through SeeClickFix on the Town website or mobile app. You'll receive updates when your request is assigned and resolved. If it's not a Town responsibility, staff will forward it to the right agency. Visit SeeClickFix on the website.



## Map Gallery: We Have a Map for That!

The Town's Map Gallery offers interactive maps for everything from Town boundaries to historic landmarks. Our 45+ digital maps help you understand property lines, find parks, check zoning and see which roads are maintained by the Town, County, and State.



## Popular Maps Include:

- Am I in Bluffton Map
- Road Maintenance Map
- Historic Resources Map
- Parks and Recreation Map



Visit the website "Map Gallery" to explore.



## Town Website Services

- Apply for permits online
- Rent Town facilities
- Pay business license fees
- Find meeting agendas and minutes
- Request public records
- And so much more!

## REMEMBER

Town Hall is open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. and Fridays from 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

## RESEARCH ANY PROPERTY



### BLUFFTON EXPLORER

Designed for current and potential property owners, the Bluffton Explorer is a useful interactive map.

Search any Bluffton address to find out if it's within Town limits, check zoning, view property information, see flood zones and even view your closest park or trash pickup day. Type any Bluffton address into the search box at [townofbluffton.us/map](http://townofbluffton.us/map).

## DID YOU KNOW?



The Town doesn't monitor non-Town accounts on platforms like Nextdoor. Always verify information via official Town social media accounts before acting on what you read online. See the back cover for a list of official Town social media accounts.





# Building Codes, Permits and Business Licenses

## Building Codes & Safety

Bluffton follows strict building rules to keep everyone safe. All construction projects must meet current International Building Code standards. Before starting any project, residential or commercial, you need proper permits from the Town's Building Safety Division.

## Permits

Always assume you need a Town permit for construction and renovation projects. Some examples of projects that typically require permits are:

- Removing or cutting trees larger than 4 inches in diameter
- Building fences, decks, pools or sheds
- Home renovations
- Re-roofing
- Electrical and plumbing system work
- Installing business identification signs

Permit applications are available online or at Town Hall. The Growth Management Department can help you with requirements — call Town Hall at (843) 706-4500.

## Business Licenses

- Every business operating within Bluffton must have a valid business license, including rental property owners (short- or long-term), home-based businesses and mobile vendors.
- Licenses must be renewed yearly by April 30 through the [Business License Customer Portal](#).

## Contact Information

Building Safety Division: (843) 706-4500

Business License Division: (843) 706-4501 or [businesslicense@townofbluffton.com](mailto:businesslicense@townofbluffton.com)

### DID YOU KNOW?



A **municipal building code inspector** works for a local government and ensures that construction projects comply with building codes, zoning laws, and safety regulations. Their inspections are required for permitting and occupancy approval.

A **private home inspector** is typically hired by a buyer or seller during a real estate transaction to evaluate a home's condition (roof, HVAC, plumbing, etc.) and identify potential issues, but they do not enforce codes or laws.





# Bluffton State of Mind

Our community thrives when we all follow these guidelines that protect our natural beauty and respect our neighbors.

## Quiet Nights

Help everyone rest easy by keeping noise down between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. Save the lawn mowing, construction work and outdoor gatherings for daylight hours.

## Clean Waters Start at Home

Never place yard debris near ditches or storm drains. Proper disposal prevents flooding and protects our waterways.

## Trash Tip

Town residents receive Waste Management service as part of Town services. If your neighbor pays for a separate bill for trash/recycling collection, that is an indicator that the property is outside of Town limits.

**Waste Management** (WM) has a regional office that handles trash and recycling for Bluffton residents. If you need a new cart, you have two easy options:

- Use the [SeeClickFix app](#) on your phone or Town website
- Contact the WM regional representative directly at (843) 557-7777 or email [mmille17@wm.com](mailto:mmille17@wm.com)

## Property Projects

Before posting signs, removing trees, or making exterior changes (especially in the Historic District), check with Town Hall. Most projects require permits to ensure they align with Bluffton's local ordinances.

## Rental Responsibilities

All rental properties must be registered with the Town, whether they're short-term vacation stays or long-term homes.

## Safe Cart Travel

Golf carts need proper SCDMV registration, licensed drivers (16+) and should only operate within 4 miles of home. Seat belts are required for any passenger under 12 years old.

## Business in Bluffton

Running any business that physically operates in Bluffton — even from home — requires a town business license.

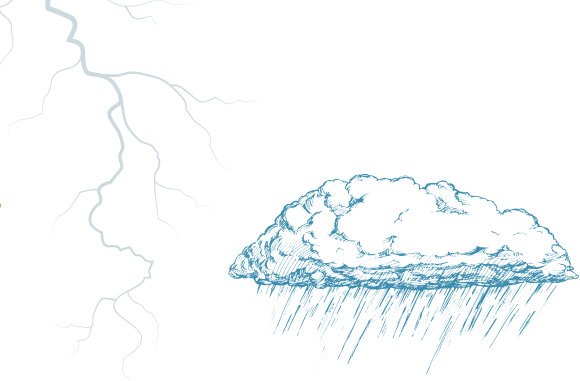
**DID YOU KNOW?**



Lagoons work hard for us! They are not just neighborhood décor. They are a part of the regional stormwater system that captures rainwater, prevents flooding, and filters pollutants before water reaches our rivers. Even the fountains serve a purpose by improving water quality.

**WHEN IN DOUBT, REACH OUT!**

# Working Together During Storms



The Town of Bluffton works closely with local, county, state, and federal agencies to plan for, prepare for and recover from storms. While we coordinate these efforts to protect our community, some aspects of storm response — like evacuation orders, major road closures, and utility repairs — are outside of the Town's direct control.

## Chain of Command During Storms

By understanding this chain of command and knowing what you can control as a resident, we can work together for a safer Bluffton during storm events.

- **Governor:** Orders mandatory evacuations, which counties and municipalities (towns) follow
- **SC Emergency Management Division (SCEMD):** Leads and supports local authorities  
[www.scmd.org](http://www.scmd.org)
- **Beaufort County Emergency Management Division:** Coordinates countywide response  
[bcso.net/our-agency/emergency-management-division](http://bcso.net/our-agency/emergency-management-division)
- **Bluffton Mayor & Town Council:** Issues orders to protect health and property
- **Town of Bluffton Emergency Management:** Coordinates year-round with other agencies  
[www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/462/Emergency-Management](http://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/462/Emergency-Management)
- **Beaufort County School District:** Cancels or modifies school schedules

**DID  
YOU  
KNOW?**



Ever wonder why some residents come home right after a mandatory evacuation while others have to wait? Residents and business employees with goods or services critical to recovery may receive priority re-entry. The Beaufort County Sheriff's Office issues passes through its Incident Emergency Response and Re-Entry Pass System. These are for those aiding in regional recovery. Learn more: [bcso.net/re-entry-passes](http://bcso.net/re-entry-passes)

## Stormwater Management: Know Who's Responsible

- About 92% of Bluffton residents live in neighborhoods with Property Owners Associations (POAs)
- POAs are responsible for maintaining stormwater systems within their communities, which includes lagoons, lakes, drainage pipes and storm drains on private property
- The Town can only maintain stormwater systems on Town property or in public rights-of-way

### What You Can Do:

- Contact your POA first about neighborhood drainage problems
- Clear leaves and debris from storm drains and ditches near your home.
- Make sure gutters and downspouts are clean
- Report flooding in public areas to the Town via SeeClickFix or call (843) 706-4500
- Never drive through flooded areas — turn around, don't drown

#### Complete hurricane information:

[townofbluffton.sc.gov/656/Hurricane-Season](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov/656/Hurricane-Season)

#### BRIGHT IDEA



Evacuate north or west when possible to avoid the worst congestion. Stay Safe, Bluffton!

**DID  
YOU  
KNOW?**



Climate models suggest more frequent and heavier future rain events. The Town works to improve public stormwater systems, offers advice to POAs dealing with flooding issues and coordinates with regional partners on watershed solutions.

# Trees & Wildlife

## Trees in Bluffton

Trees are an important part of Bluffton's beauty. Many areas, like Buckwalter, were once tree farms where paper companies planted rows of pine trees to harvest later.

Bluffton has been a "Tree City USA" community since 2012. This means we care about our trees! The Town never removes or cuts trees without careful thought and approval from trained tree experts. We work to:

- Protect existing trees
- Keep citizens safe
- Strategically plant native species

## Native vs. Invasive Trees

### Plant These:

- Live oak
- Bald cypress
- Dogwood
- Red maple

### Avoid These:

- Bradford pear
- Mimosa
- Chinaberry
- Bamboo

## Wildlife Safety

The Lowcountry is home to many wild animals including alligators. Alligator attacks have been increasing in our area. Be mindful, keep your distance and stay safe.

## Stay Safe Around Wildlife

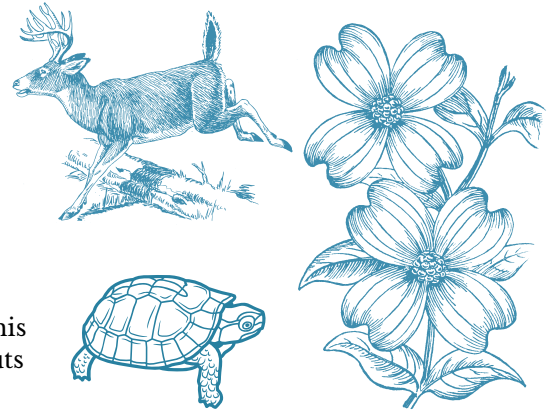
- Never feed wildlife
- Keep pets away from lagoons
- Stay at least 10 feet from water edges
- Be extra careful at dawn and dusk

## Hands Off Wildlife!

Never touch injured or orphaned animals. Call the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (S.C. DNR) at 803-734-3886 (weekdays) or 803-955-4000 (after hours).

## Who to Call

- Tree questions: Town Growth Management Department (843-706-4500)
- Aggressive alligators: S.C. DNR (1-800-922-5431)
- Common areas: Your neighborhood POA



### TREE TIP



Clemson's Bradford Pear Bounty Program lets you trade invasive trees for native ones. Learn more: [clemson.edu/extension/bradford-pear](http://clemson.edu/extension/bradford-pear).

### DID YOU KNOW?



Alligators are most active from April through October and when temperatures are between 82 and 92 degrees.



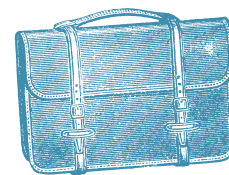
**Important: You need a Town permit to remove most trees that are 4 inches or wider.**

**Remember:** 92% of Bluffton residents live in planned communities where POAs (Property Owners Associations) manage trees and wildlife in common areas. Always check with them first for issues on shared property.





# Bluffton Means Business



## Bringing Services Closer to Home

Did you know about half of Bluffton residents live west of Buckwalter Parkway? Yet, in 2023, this area had less than 20% of the Town's professional services. The Town of Bluffton is working to fix this imbalance with smart planning and financial incentives.

## Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP)

**THE GOAL?** More local jobs, less traffic congestion and better services near your neighborhood.

The Town offers grants to businesses that move to Bluffton's fastest-growing areas. This program helps bring services you need — like healthcare, childcare and shopping — closer to where you live. As a bonus, this reduces traffic on busy roads by cutting down on long drives across Town.

The Town of Bluffton offers financial incentives to encourage businesses to locate in its fastest-growing areas, particularly west of Buckwalter Parkway. Eligible businesses must invest a minimum of \$500,000 and operate within target industries such as healthcare, childcare, affordable housing, mixed-use commercial spaces or corporate headquarters.

The program offers significant savings in permit fees, business license fees and other incentives. Call the Don Ryan Center for Innovation, the Town's economic development department, for more information.

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## Don Ryan Center for Innovation

### Helping Local Businesses Thrive

The Don Ryan Center provides resources for entrepreneurs, innovators and small business owners. Located in Buckwalter Place, this center helps Bluffton businesses grow through:

- Free business advice from experts
- Co-working space and offices
- Networking events

### New Business Hub

In 2025, Bluffton opened one of three new buildings near the Police Department in Buckwalter Place. The Town's facility includes:

- Commercial space for Bluffton businesses
- A childcare center to support working families
- Flexible spaces tailored to startups and growing enterprises

This project combines Town funding (\$4.1 million) with private investment (\$7 million). Contact the Don Ryan Center for Innovation at 843-540-0405 or visit [donryancenter.com](https://donryancenter.com)

## Why This Matters

These programs mean more than just business growth — they create:

- More local jobs
- Services closer to home
- Less traffic on major roads
- A stronger local economy

### DID YOU KNOW?



As of 2025, residential build-out is nearing 80% and non-residential build-out is nearing 40%. These percentages compare what is contractually allowed via development agreements and what has been built.



# The Power of Partnerships

Bluffton doesn't solve regional challenges alone. From flooding to housing, our Town joins forces with neighbors to tackle issues that cross Town lines. Here's how these partnerships make Bluffton better:

## Regional Decision-Making

**Southern Lowcountry Regional Board (SoLoCo)** This collaborative table brings County and Town leaders together to solve regional puzzles like zoning, housing and job growth. Catch their monthly meetings on the last Tuesday of every month at 10 a.m., alternating between Bluffton and Hardeeville.

## Smart Transportation

**Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS)** This planning organization maps out the future of our roads, transit and walkways. Their decisions shape which projects move forward and when construction begins — helping you get where you need to go.

### REMEMBER

The Town of Bluffton only maintains roads that it owns. We cannot fix or work on any county, state, private or neighborhood roads. If you're unsure who maintains your road, call the Town's Public Services Department.

## Cleaner Waterways

**Stoney Creek Sewer Project** A \$6 million partnership with **Beaufort County and Beaufort Jasper Water Sewer Authority** is bringing public sewer to the Stoney Creek area, which is outside of Town limits but greatly affects the May River. The payoff? Less pollution flowing into our treasured May River — a win for everyone who enjoys our waterways.

## Business Growth

**Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation** This partnership rolls out the welcome mat for businesses looking to call Bluffton home, offering incentives that create local jobs and strengthen our economy.

## Buckwalter Place Commerce Park

A joint venture is creating 50,000 square feet of business space near Bluffton Police Headquarters, with the Don Ryan Center for Innovation anchoring 14,000 square feet as a launchpad for local entrepreneurs.

## Housing Solutions

### "The May" on May River Road

Town-owned property at 1095 May River Road will soon transform into 12 affordable homes through a public-private partnership.

### Beaufort Jasper Housing Trust

Eight local governments created this nonprofit to tackle our affordable housing shortage. The Trust builds new affordable homes, revitalizes existing ones and helps qualified residents find housing they can afford. Learn more: [bjht.org](http://bjht.org)



# Bluffton Honored



Our Town continues to earn recognition for exceptional governance and community-focused initiatives. These accolades reflect Bluffton's balanced approach to growth and responsible planning.



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Southern Living **MOODY'S**  THE ISLAND PACKET *The Post and Courier*  Municipal Association of South Carolina

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## Safety Excellence

Bluffton earned the #1 Safest South Carolina City ranking from both Safewise.com and Home Security Advisor in 2024.

## The Bluffton Police Department (BPD)

BPD became the first law enforcement agency in South Carolina to employ a full-time Community Mental Health Advocate in 2021. This position bridges the gap between policing and mental health services, ensuring residents in crisis receive proper care.

This approach to mental health earned BPD the Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) Achievement Award for public safety innovation.

## Community Development

*Bluffton's investments continue to garner statewide recognition:*

- The Neighborhood Assistance Program earned a 2023 MASC Achievement Award for its approach to housing stability. The program provides "safe & dry" repairs for income-qualified residents.
- Wright Family Park earned accolades in 2021, celebrating the Town's vision in creating public waterfront access while preserving a historic structure.
- The rehabilitation of the Garvin-Garvey House in 2018 preserved the only freedman's cottage on the May River, earning five preservation awards.
- The Wharf Street Redevelopment Project demonstrated that affordable housing can be both beautiful and centrally located. Southern Living Magazine named it "Best Community Revitalization" project.

## Financial Strength

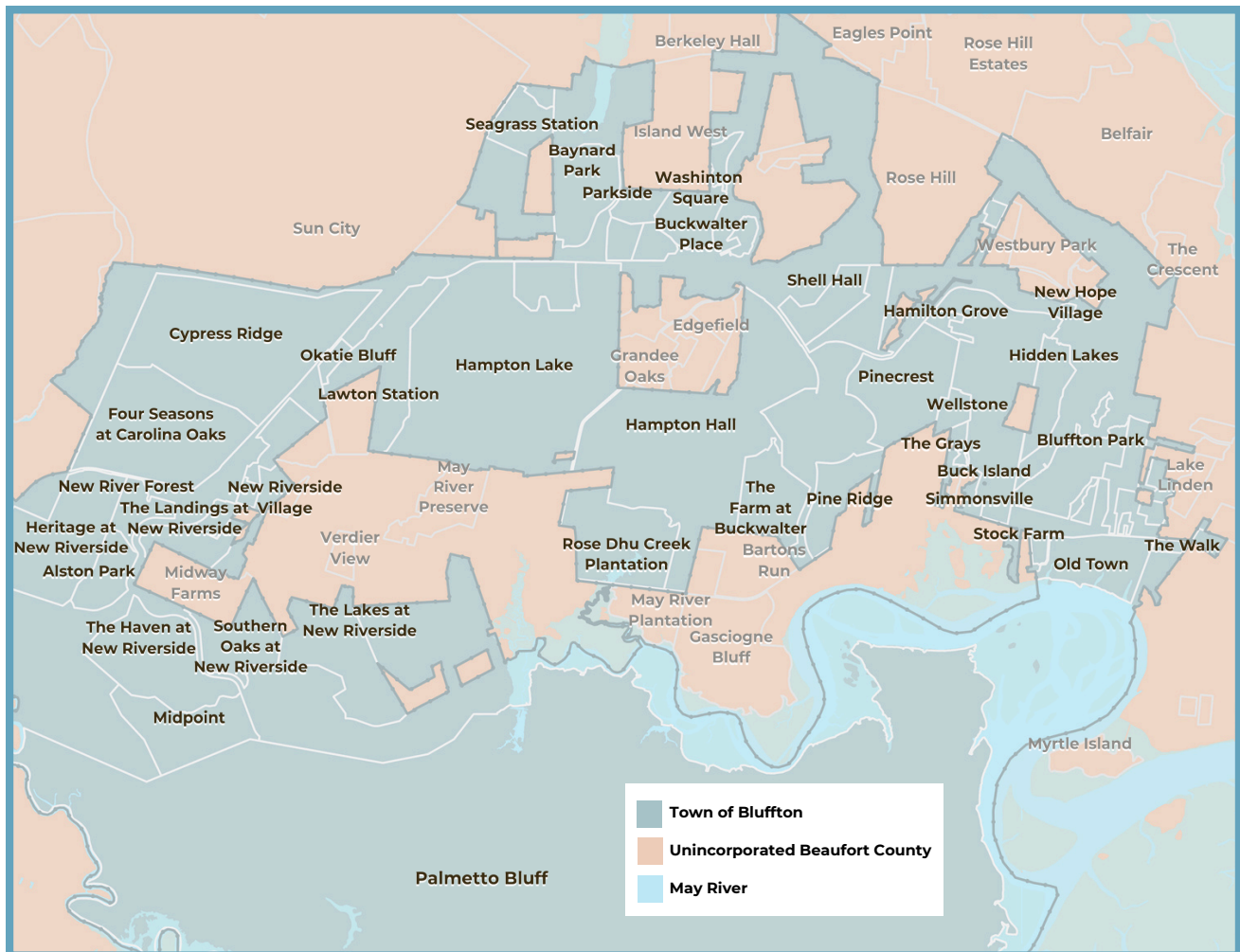
Moody's Investors Service upgraded the Town of Bluffton's bond rating to "Aaa, aka triple-A" elevating the Town's credit rating to the highest rating for a municipality. The Town of Bluffton is the fifth municipality in South Carolina to achieve this status — joining Hilton Head Island, Charleston, Mt. Pleasant and Greenville.

## Environmental Leadership

As development pressures increase, the Town of Bluffton has established itself as a regional leader in environmental stewardship:

- The Post & Courier highlighted Bluffton as "one of South Carolina's first local governments to adopt wetland regulations."
- The Island Packet recognized Bluffton's "first-of-its-kind local ordinance" to protect wetlands when state and federal regulations do not.

# Bluffton's Boundaries



## Understanding Bluffton's Boundaries

Have you ever noticed how Bluffton's Town limits create a patchwork pattern? Some neighborhoods are part of Bluffton, while others nearby are not. These unincorporated areas surrounded by Town limits are called "doughnut holes."

Examples include Woodbridge and Sandy Pointe neighborhoods off Buckwalter Parkway.

By South Carolina law, the Town cannot initiate annexation of a property. Property owners interested in joining Bluffton must start the process themselves by contacting the Town. This law explains why our boundaries zigzag throughout the region.

**Remember:** If you live in a planned neighborhood, your POA handles road maintenance, storm drainage, and common areas within your community. The Town does not maintain these private areas.

### Not Sure Which Area You Live In?

You can find out if an address is inside the Town limits by:

1. Visiting the Town's website at [townofbluffton.sc.gov](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov)
2. Clicking on "Map Gallery"
3. Using the "Am I In Bluffton?" map tool
4. Entering the address



# Contact Directory

## Town of Bluffton

**Main Phone:** (843) 706-4500

**Address:** 20 Bridge Street, Bluffton, SC 29910

**Hours:** Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; Friday, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

**Website:** [townofbluffton.sc.gov](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov)

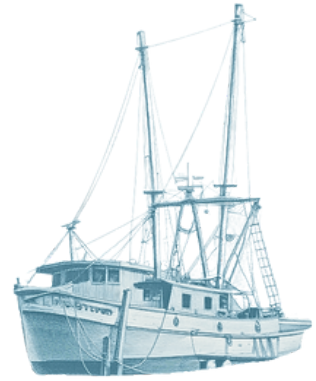
**All departments may be reached by calling the main phone number unless otherwise noted.**



Department	Department
Town Manager's Office	Questions about town policies, council decisions or community partnerships
Bluffton Police Department	Crime reporting, safety concerns, domestic violence resources, mental health crisis support Emergency: 911 Front Desk: (843) 706-4550 Non-Emergency Dispatch: (843) 524-2777
Growth Management Department	Building permits, development questions, historic preservation, tree removal
Building Safety Division	Building inspections, code violations, safety concerns
Business License Division	New business licensing, renewals, business questions Call (843) 706-4501 or email <a href="mailto:businesslicense@townofbluffton.com">businesslicense@townofbluffton.com</a>
Finance Department	Questions about payments, contracts or procurement
Capital Projects & Watershed Management	Environmental issues, stormwater concerns, questions about town construction projects
Communications	Public information/Freedom of Information Act/Mobile Town Hall requests, website, newsletter and social media
Events & Venues	Town events, special events permits, facility rentals, Garvin-Garvey House, Welcome Center and park rentals
Public Services Department	Park maintenance, drainage issues, storm cleanup in public areas
Information Technology	Questions about Town maps, addressing
Human Resources	Employment opportunities with the Town
Don Ryan Center for Innovation	Small business support, entrepreneurship resources, economic development questions Call (843) 540-0405 or visit <a href="http://donryancenter.com">donryancenter.com</a>

# Your Voice, Your Town

Bluffton's strength comes from its people. Every vote, idea, and act of service helps shape our future. Whether you attend a public meeting, serve on a board, report a concern or simply stay informed, your involvement matters and your voice makes a difference in our community.



WHEN  
IN DOUBT,  
REACH  
OUT!

Your participation matters — and so does having the right information. Always check the Town's website and official social media accounts for accurate updates. Non-Town accounts on platforms such as NextDoor are not monitored by the Town.

## Ways to Get Involved

### Vote

Beaufort County's Board of Voter Registration and Elections manages all elections. Municipal elections are held in odd years. For voter registration information, call (843) 255-6900.


### Attend Public Meetings

Town Council meets the second Tuesday of each month at Town Hall, 20 Bridge Street. Find agendas and information about addressing Council in the "Agenda Center" on the Town's website. Search for "Meeting Videos" on the Town's website to watch from home.

### Serve on a Town Board

The Town of Bluffton has 14 boards, committees and commissions where you can serve. All members are appointed by Town Council. Visit [townofbluffton.sc.gov/299/Boards-Commissions-Committees](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov/299/Boards-Commissions-Committees) to learn more.

### Report Concerns

Download the SeeClickFix app  or use the Town's website to report infrastructure issues. You'll receive real-time updates about how your concern is addressed. For waste and recycling issues, use the Waste Management contact information on page 16.

### Stay Informed

- Town website: [townofbluffton.sc.gov](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov)
- Social media: See the back cover for a list of official Town accounts
- Schedule a Mobile Town Hall: Learn more about this service on page 13



**Remember, this is your Town. Your participation makes Bluffton stronger.**

Town of Bluffton  
PO Box 386  
20 Bridge Street  
Bluffton, SC 29910



## Online Resources

**Report Issues:** [townofbluffton.sc.gov/628/SeeClickFix](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov/628/SeeClickFix)

**Map Gallery:** [townofbluffton.sc.gov/686/map-gallery](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov/686/map-gallery)

**Event Calendar:** [townofbluffton.sc.gov/calendar](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov/calendar)

**Park Reservations:** [townofbluffton.sc.gov/facilities](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov/facilities)

**Hurricane Information:** [townofbluffton.sc.gov/656/Hurricane-Season](http://townofbluffton.sc.gov/656/Hurricane-Season)

WHEN  
IN  
DOUBT,  
REACH  
OUT!



### FACEBOOK

@TownBlufftonSC  
@blufftonpolice  
@DonRyanCenter



### LINKEDIN

@town-of-bluffton  
@donryancenter



### INSTAGRAM

@townofbluffton  
@blufftonpolice  
@donryancenter



### NEXTDOOR

@town-of-bluffton  
@bluffton-police-  
department