

# Old Town Master Plan & Code

## Bluffton, SC

### PROJECT DETAILS

Project Area:	640 acres
Client:	Town of Bluffton
Year Adopted:	2006
Website:	<a href="http://townofbluffton.com">townofbluffton.com</a>

For more information, visit [doverkohl.com](http://doverkohl.com).



Appropriate infill on Wharf Street will preserve the tree canopy and match the scale and character of existing homes.



The "Four Corners" intersection is at the heart of Old Town, providing an ideal place for a new Town Hall and a re-configured gas station.



New buildings along Calhoun Street have been built in accordance with the Form-Based Code.



### The Project

Nestled along the banks of the May River, the Old Town of Bluffton is treasured by residents and visitors alike for its natural beauty and unique physical character. Once a summer retreat, Bluffton has come into its own as a well-established community, having expanded its territory from one square mile to approximately fifty square miles through the annexation of large parcels of undeveloped land. Given recent growth and development pressures in the Town and region, the Old Town Master Plan is intended to provide a blueprint for future infill development that reflects the eclectic character of the area and a sustainable pattern of settlement. Assisting Dover-Kohl in the creation of the Plan were Chael, Cooper & Associates, Sottile & Sottile, Robert Charles Lesser & Co., Community Land Use and Economics Group, Keane & Co., and Hall Planning & Engineering.

### The Process

Dover-Kohl led a nine-day charrette to develop the Master Plan. An accompanying form-based code was later produced to regulate infill development in Old Town. The Urban Standards establish the physical relationship between buildings, regulating building height, and placement on the lot. The Architectural Standards set approved building materials and configurations for an expanded housing stock that would encompass a wider range of building types and further enhance Old Town's palette of housing, office and retail options. Based on local architectural traditions, the planning team recommended that sideyard houses and live-work units be added to the mix and encouraged a greater use of duplex units, rowhouses, and commercial cottages. Street Standards specify roadway width and sidewalk and street planting locations.

### Plan Principles

Guiding principles for the Master Plan include the restoration and transformation of May River Road/Bruin Road; maintaining the tranquility south of Bridge Street; demanding robust, complete neighborhoods; enhancing connections to the May River; clustering retail in the heart of the Town; requiring the inclusion of affordable housing; shifting into a higher gear with adaptive reuse; requiring stewardship of historic resources; investing heavily in the tree canopy; reforming zoning by adopting a form-based code; designing for walkability first; minimizing pavement; and improving water quality.

### Status

In July 2006 the Bluffton Town Council unanimously approved the Old Town Master Plan as an addendum to the Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan. The Old Town District Code was approved in June 2007. The Town has proceeded with a parking and transportation study for the area, and improvements to May River Road are underway.



# Reconnecting the "Old Main Street" to the May River

A burgeoning oyster harvesting business along with lucrative seaborne trade helped establish Old Town as a viable, Southern river town. Calhoun Street, which terminates along the May River, served as the main commercial center for the area until the 1922 construction of the Houlihan Bridge from Port Wentworth to SC Highway 17, virtually ending commercial trade by water. Calhoun Street maintains its distinct character, featuring charming, small commercial buildings (many of them historic and converted from houses), mature trees and broad tree cover. The Master Plan proposes improvements to reinvigorate Calhoun Street as a flourishing retail destination, including improved sidewalks fronted by mixed-use buildings and a strengthening of the street's relationship to the waterfront.

The Master Plan balances Bluffton's high growth pressures with the town's love and appreciation for the natural environment by reclaiming Calhoun Street as a focal point for the town. Included in the Plan are recommendations for a riverfront park at the terminus of Calhoun Street, which would give residents and visitors alike more access to the May River. This public waterfront space would encourage a more pedestrian-friendly environment and further strengthen the attraction of Calhoun Street as a local and regional gathering place.



This image, taken in 2006, shows the potential for street-oriented buildings along Calhoun Street.



The beginning of Calhoun Street from May River Road is designed with a new mixed-use building at the corner as well as several streetscape improvements such as crosswalks, sidewalks and on-street parking. The intent is to create a main entrance into the center of town leading to the May River.



Homes fronting the proposed riverfront park create natural surveillance.