

# DRAFT

## Town of Kiawah Island | Proposed Beachfront Overlay District Framework

### Key Factors and Indicators:

- The vast majority of Kiawah’s beachfront has been conveyed to the Kiawah Island Community Association, adding a unique protection layer.
- Kiawah’s developed beachfront properties are largely single family residential.
- Remaining undeveloped parcels are principally non-single family residential properties owned by Kiawah Island Golf Resort (West Beach - Old Inn Site, East Beach - Sanctuary).
- Recent multifamily developments have created larger visual presence and impact to beach profile.
- Kiawah beachfront has parcels which extend to the MHW line (West End – Timbers, Cape) (Royal Beach).
- Beachfront Setbacks: Rear setbacks vary for properties adjacent to the beachfront. They range from 20’ to 120’ depending on location and zoning district. Majority of rear setbacks are 25’, 30’, 50’, or 120’ measured from the rear property line. Property rear setbacks also factor in height of structures as the oceanfront setbacks for RST-2 Resort Zoning District include tiered heights lower closer to the ocean.
- Beachfront jurisdictional lines encroach in varied locations across the beach and dune system. These include developed lots along Eugenia Ave, which create areas of concern for long-term resiliency.
- TOKI has recently modified its [Beachfront Jurisdiction and Management Ordinance](#), broadening the definition of beach to encompass primary dune.
- [South Carolina Code of Laws §48-39-280](#) requires SCDES BCM to establish and periodically review two beachfront jurisdictional lines - the baseline and the setback line - which delineate the extent of the state’s direct permitting authority for activities proposed within the beach/dune system critical area. The baseline is the more seaward (towards the ocean) line, while the setback line is the landward (towards the land) line. South Carolina will be updating the jurisdictional lines in 2026.
- 2018 SC Beachfront Jurisdictional Lines provide a mapped reference point.

---

*“How might Kiawah preserve the beachfront to maintain an original vision of the developers allowing a park like setting along the beach and to aid resiliency in long term protection of existing development, promote wildlife habitat and retain aesthetic profile?”*

# DRAFT

## S1. Purpose and Intent

The purpose and intent of the Beachfront Overlay District (BOD) is to:

- Establish a consistent visual, spatial and ecological **transition buffer zone** between the built environment and the ocean, beach and dune system;
  - Protect Kiawah’s **ocean front views** and **the ecological function** of dune systems and maritime habitats;
  - Promote **coastal resilience** and **aesthetic compatibility** through zoning and vegetation standards;
  - Maintain and enhance **visual encroachment** on ocean-facing properties and public vantage points, including boardwalks and beach access paths.
- 

## S2. Applicability & Effect

- The BOD shall apply to all properties within the established district boundaries Beachfront Overlay District, as shown on the map titled, “Town of Kiawah Island Beachfront Overlay Zoning District”
  - The BOD shall apply in addition to the underlying base zoning district standards to impose standards for properties within the district. In cases of conflict between the regulations of this ordinance and other regulations in this Ordinance exist, the regulations of this section shall control.
- 

## S3. District Boundaries

- The Beachfront Overlay Zoning District incorporates parcels within **[150 feet]** of the 2018 South Carolina Beachfront Jurisdictional Baseline established by the state of South Carolina or adjacent to the primary dune line of the beachfront as determined by the Town of Kiawah.
  - Exact boundaries shall be established on the official zoning map and may be refined by GIS overlay.
-

# DRAFT

## S4. Use Regulations

- All uses permitted in the underlying zoning district shall continue to apply, **except as limited or conditioned** by this overlay.
  - **Restricted Uses:** Seawalls, bulkheads or hard erosion control structures (*TBD*)
    - Challenges of seawalls, bulkheads or hard erosion control structures
      - Beach Erosion
        - Passive Erosion: Seawalls stop the natural landward migration of the beach, causing it to narrow and eventually disappear in front of the wall as sea levels rise.
        - Active Erosion: Wave energy reflected off the seawall can scour the base of the wall and increase erosion on adjacent, unprotected beaches.
      - Loss of habitat and biodiversity
        - Seawalls replace natural sandy beach habitat with a hard, artificial structure, negatively impacting plants and animals that depend on the beach for nesting, breeding, and foraging.
        - Studies have shown that beaches with seawalls have fewer and smaller intertidal species and significantly lower numbers of shorebirds and other birds compared to unarmored beaches.
      - Visual and aesthetic impacts
        - Seawalls are often considered visually unappealing and detract from the natural beauty of the coastline, which is important for tourism and recreation in coastal towns.
      - Restricted Access and Public Safety
        - As beaches narrow due to erosion caused by seawalls, access to the beach can become limited or even unsafe.
        - This raises concerns about public safety accessing and navigating the beach and other users of the beach.
-

# DRAFT

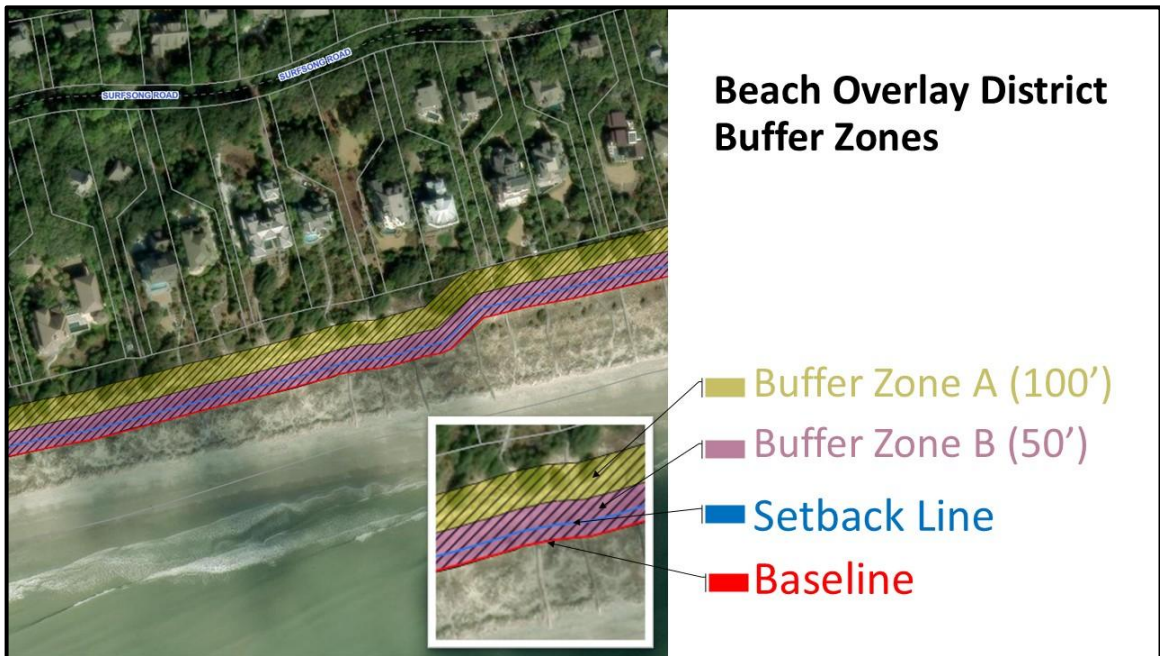
## §5. Development Standards

### A. Buffer Zone A (100')

- A 100' buffer zone shall be established from the 2018 South Carolina Beachfront Jurisdictional Baseline landwards.
  - Proposed structures within the established Buffer Zone A shall have a maximum building height of 10'.

### B. Buffer Zone B (50') - more restrictive

- A 50' buffer zone shall be established from the 2018 South Carolina Beachfront Jurisdictional Baseline landwards.
  - No structures shall be permitted within the established buffer B zone. This includes pools.



### C. Modulated Building Height & Dune Protection

- Any development parcel within the BOD shall have **modulated** building heights to reduce visual massing toward the ocean.
- No grading or site work shall occur, impacting the primary dune without coordination by the Town's environmental /Natural Resources department.

# DRAFT

## D. Vegetative Screening and Native Landscaping

- **Buffer Zone A & Buffer Zone B** - Only **native coastal species** (e.g., sea oats, wax myrtle, yaupon holly) may be planted in the transition zone; invasive species are prohibited.
- No turf grass is permitted in this zone.

## E. Lighting

- **All lighting** shall comply with Tow's Beachfront Management Ordinance
    - Lighting within the overlay zone shall be fully shielded so that no light illuminates the Beach and the point source is not visible from the beach;
- 

## §6. Site Plan Review & Approvals

- All development or redevelopment within the BOD Buffer Zone B shall require **coordination with the Town's Environmental / Natural Resources Department** to ensure minimal disturbance to beach and dune system (primary dunes).
- 

## §7. Nonconformities

- Existing structures legally established prior to adoption of this ordinance shall be deemed conforming but may not be expanded toward the primary dune line or baseline.
  - Renovations exceeding 50% of appraised value shall trigger compliance with the overlay standards.
- 

## §8. Enforcement and Variances

- Relief may be granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals where strict application of standards would result in undue hardship, provided the public interest is not compromised.
-

DRAFT

