

TOWN OF KIAWAH ISLAND | 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

# kiawahnext

Revisions as of 3-6-25

ADOPTED XX.XX.2024



## Acknowledgements

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The planning process was managed by the staff of the Town of Kiawah Island, supported by a team of consultants and additional town staff, steered by the Planning Commission, adopted by the Mayor and Town Council, and envisioned by the residents of Kiawah Island.

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a bold vision for  
**Kiawah's bright future**

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**part one: approach**

# visionnext

*The Town of Kiawah Island is a residential community incorporating a world-class resort and a unique, vibrant shopping village within a natural maritime setting that is being preserved and enhanced for current and future generations.*

The **KiawahNext Comprehensive Plan** is a guiding document for the Town of Kiawah Island. It aligns with its vision to maintain a harmonious residential community that seamlessly integrates a world-class resort and vibrant shopping village within a naturally preserved maritime setting. This plan, reviewed and updated by the Planning Commission with public input and support from Town staff, outlines strategic goals and objectives to guide future Town Council actions on land use, public facilities, economic development, housing, and natural and cultural resources.

**Resiliency** and **Live with Nature** are central to the plan, emphasizing the community’s capacity to adapt and thrive amidst changing conditions and stresses. This comprehensive approach ensures that development on Kiawah Island is in harmony with the environment and resilient to natural hazards. The plan also incorporates detailed elements South Carolina State Law requires, such as economic development, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, housing, land use, transportation, and priority investments.

The **KiawahNext Comprehensive Plan** is a collaborative effort involving community and stakeholder engagement to ensure that it reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of all who call Kiawah Island home. The plan aims to balance high-quality development with preserving Kiawah’s unique natural beauty and cultural heritage, fostering a vibrant and sustainable future for the island community.

Our vision for Kiawah is a timeless and resilient coastal village.

## timeless

[ tahym-lis ]

*of a rich and pure quality that does not change over time and season. Beautiful and enduring ideas that transcend.*

## resilient

[ ri-zil-yuhnt ]

*of a strong, abundant, and irrepressible disposition that can withstand, grow, and thrive in the face of a multitude of conditions.*

## coastal

[ kohs-tl ]

*of, apart of, or relating to the land that adjoins and circumscribes an ocean. Reverence of its waters, systems, habitats, and communities.*

## village

[ vil-ij ]

*a self-sustaining community, including the landscapes, buildings, customs, and leadership that contribute to its livelihood and culture.*

### What Is A Comprehensive Plan?

The Town of Kiawah Island Comprehensive Plan was initially adopted by the Town Council in 1994. SC State Law § 6-29-510 requires that Planning Commissions review the Comprehensive Plan or elements no less than once every five years to determine whether changes in the amount, kind, or direction of development of the area or other reasons make it desirable to make additions or amendments to the plan. The Town of Kiawah Island Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2020. This document includes the following planning elements and satisfies SC State Law § 6-29-510 requirements:

#### Governance Structure (GS)

Unlike the other ten elements, the State does not require this element. It is meant to consider the duties and processes of the town government, apart from the other elements.

#### Population (P)

Considers historic trends and projections, household numbers and sizes, educational levels, and income characteristics.

#### Economic Development (ED)

Considers labor force and labor force characteristics, employment by place of work and residence, and analysis of the economic base.

#### Natural Resources (NR)

Considers coastal resources, slope characteristics, prime agricultural and forest land, plant and animal habitats, parks and recreation areas, scenic views and sites, wetlands, and soil types.

#### Cultural Resources (CR)

Considers historic buildings and structures, commercial districts, residential districts, unique, natural, or scenic resources, archaeological, and other cultural resources.

#### Community Facilities (CF)

Considers water supply, treatment, and distribution; sewage system and wastewater treatment; solid waste collection and disposal, fire protection, emergency medical services, and general government facilities; education facilities; and libraries and other facilities.

#### Housing (H)

Considers location, types, age, and condition of housing, owner and renter occupancy, and affordability of housing.

#### Land Use (LU)

Considers existing and future land use by categories, including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, forestry, mining, public and quasi-public, recreation, parks, open space, and vacant or undeveloped.

#### Transportation (T)

Considers transportation facilities, including major road improvements, new road construction, transit projects, pedestrian and bicycle projects, and other elements of a transportation network.

#### Priority Investment (PI)

Analyzes the likely federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years and recommends the projects for expenditure of those funds during the next ten years for needed public infrastructure and facilities.

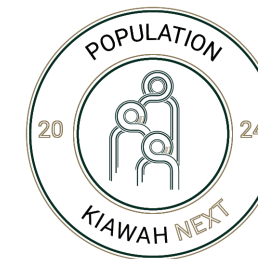
#### Resiliency (R)

Considers the impacts of flooding, high water, and natural hazards on individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, economic development, public infrastructure and facilities, and public health, safety, and welfare.

KiawahNext adapts the required elements to Kiawah Island's Vision:



*Display and communicate the processes of unique Town and stakeholder*



*Understand the diverse populations of Kiawah today and tomorrow.*



*Analyze trends for the success and prosperity of all Kiawah stakeholders.*



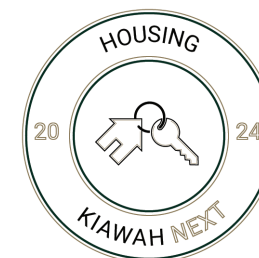
*Preserve Kiawah's greatest natural assets and habitat.*



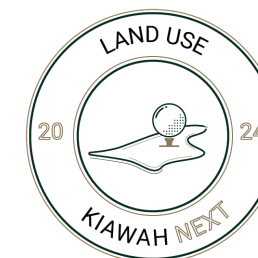
*Amplify and celebrate Kiawah's unique cultures, customs and heritage.*



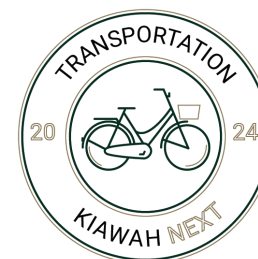
*Maintain and improve Kiawah's world-class amenities, utilities, and services.*



*Continue Kiawah's excellent reputation as a vibrant coastal village.*



*Identify and promote strategies for smart, sustainable, and controlled development.*



*Provide safe mobility options for Kiawah residents, workers and guests.*



*Strategically invest in Kiawah's critical and most at-risk infrastructure.*



*Protecting all Kiawah residents and stakeholders from environmental impacts.*

# processnext

*The KiawahNext Comprehensive Plan is a document crafted for, alongside, and by the people of Kiawah Island. This group consists of various people: the homeowner, the seasonal resident, the worker, the resort staff, the business owner, and the guest. All these types of people have a stake in Kiawah’s success.*

## Overview

The development of the KiawahNext Comprehensive Plan was a collaborative, year-long process. The planning process relied heavily on community and stakeholder input, which included social media, town halls, and digital surveys on the KiawahNext web page.

The engagement campaign was designed to create meaningful and inviting opportunities for community involvement. Focusing on inclusivity and robust participation, this approach led to a more comprehensive and representative planning process than previous efforts. The campaign prioritized diverse community input, resulting in a thorough and collaborative approach to shaping the town’s future.

## Timeline

### February - March 2023 Stakeholder Engagement

In February and March, the planning team hosted 36 focused conversations with key stakeholders who share a vested interest in Kiawah’s success and are knowledgeable to unique subject matter expertise, based on their background or roles. This insight into the workings of Kiawah Island was critical to informing the plan.

### February - July 2023 Community Engagement

The planning team hosted a community survey on the project website, which is home base for digital engagement. This, paired with an in-person survey event at Freshfields Villages, provided vital feedback to kick-start the planning process.

### April - XXX 2025 (TBD) Finalizing the Plan

After public discussion at the Planning Commission meetings and workshops, additional revisions were made, the final draft was presented to the Planning Commission and Town Council for adoption.

## Project Inputs

The community and stakeholder engagement process were designed to capture a wide range of views, ensuring that the planning process could be approached impartially with diverse viewpoints in mind. Engagement sessions were conducted using various means and methods to reach the greatest extent of the Kiawah Island populations possible. This comprehensive approach aims to include perspectives from all segments of the

community, fostering a more inclusive and representative planning process.

The large-scale trends in responses informed the planning process, which was also guided by professionals’ knowledge of best practices and research on transportation, ecological, and socioeconomic systems.



### Community Response

From February until July 2023, the KiawahNext team hosted community engagement events and opportunities, both in-person and digital. This document records and displays the responses to digital and in-person surveys, and examples of community members expressing their goals and aspirations for Kiawah.

the survey. This was the most far reaching of the engagement opportunities and provided the planning team with data on the types of respondents to the survey. The results of these surveys are shown on the subsequent pages.

The digital survey hosted on the project website had more than 2,800 people visit the site, while 847 individuals responded to

**#2,832**  
Unique Visitors to Website

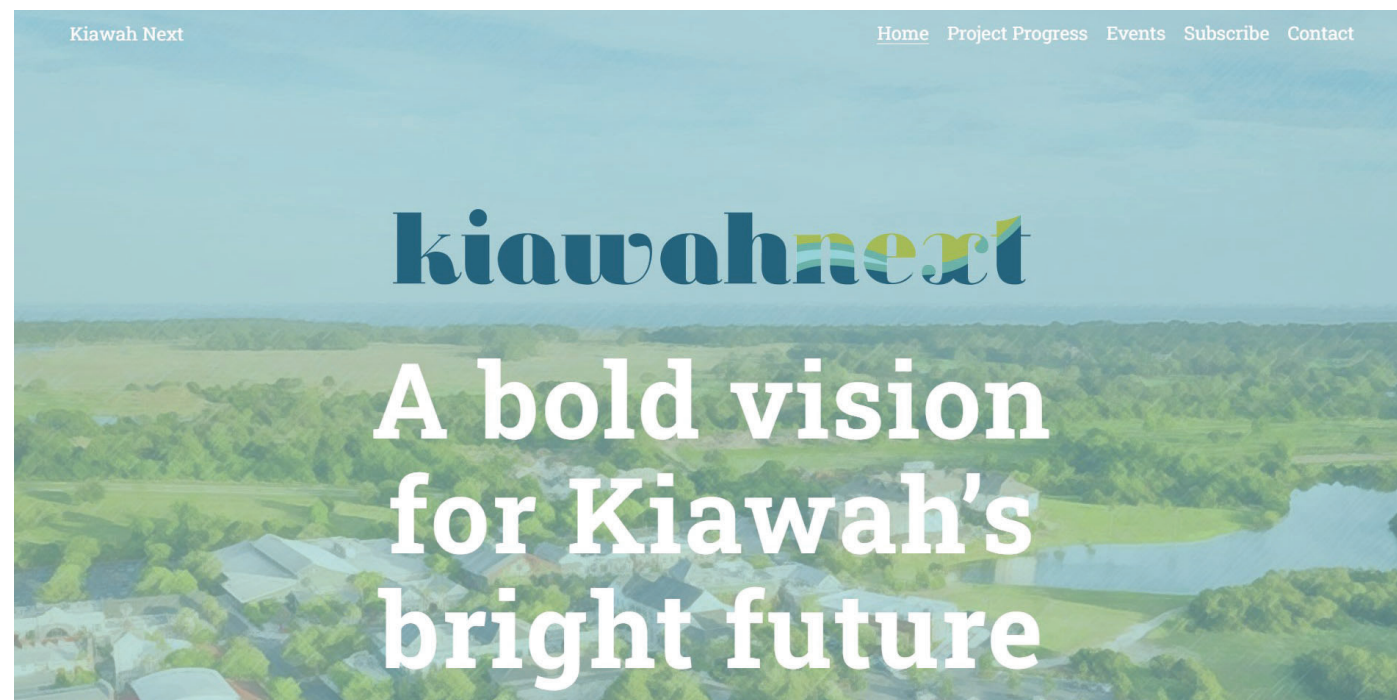
**140.7%**  
Unique Visitors as a Percentage of Kiawah's 2020 census population

**#3,567**  
Total Website Views To-Date

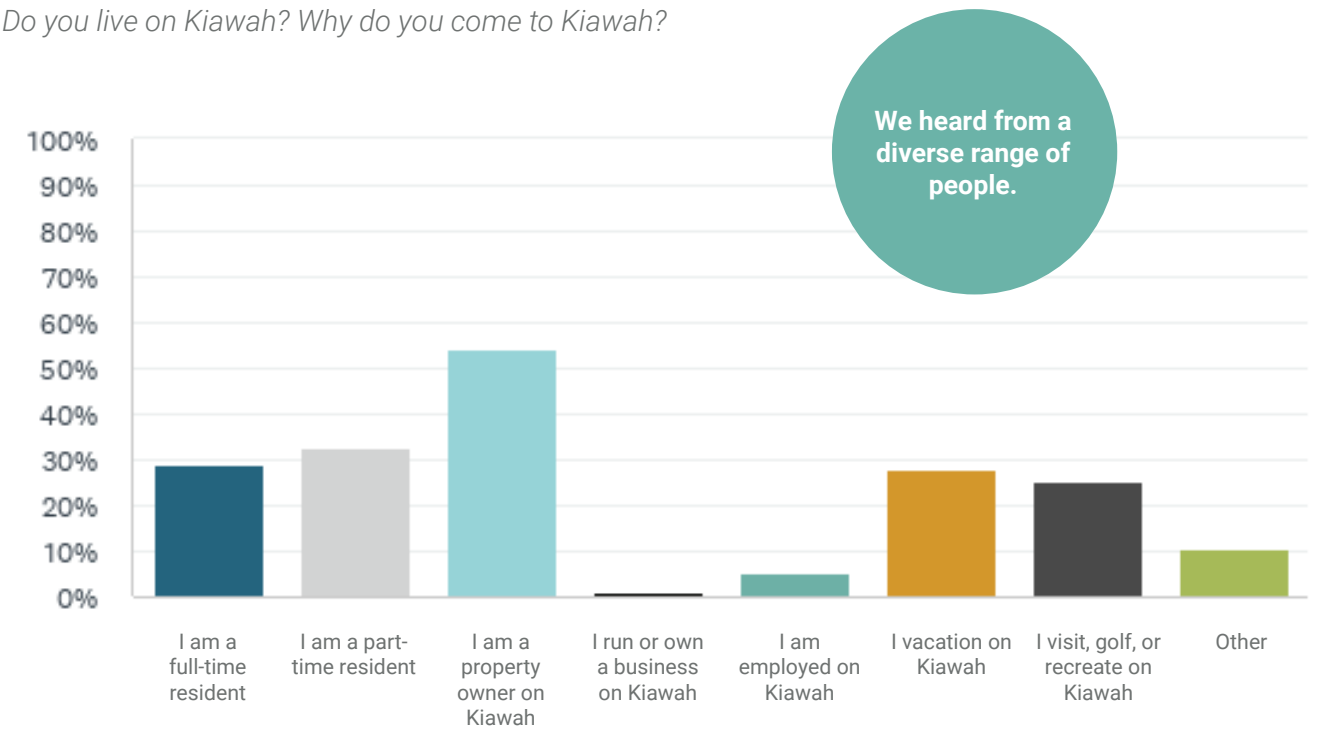
**#847**  
Survey Respondents

**#10,511**  
Survey Question Responses

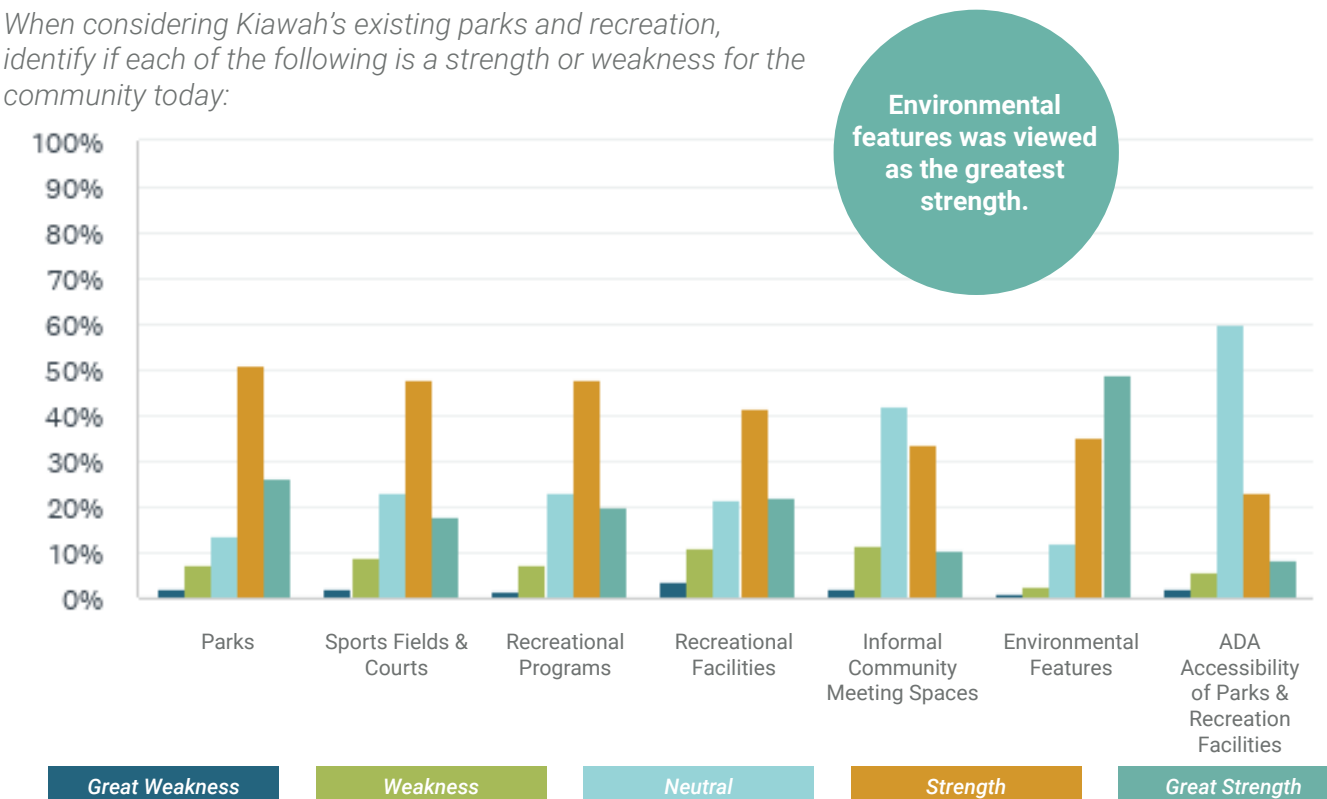
Welcome page to [kiawahnext.com](http://kiawahnext.com) for on-line information, surveys, and plan updates.



Do you live on Kiawah? Why do you come to Kiawah?

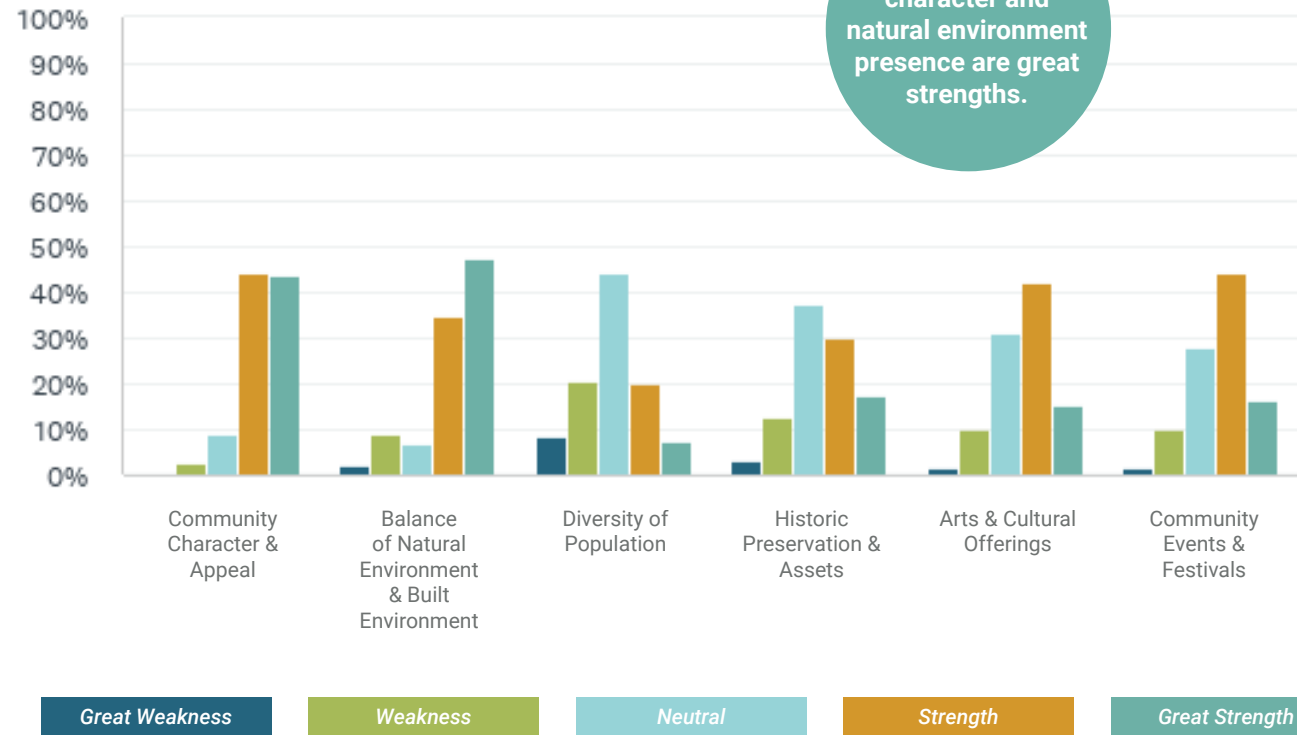


When considering Kiawah's existing parks and recreation, identify if each of the following is a strength or weakness for the community today:

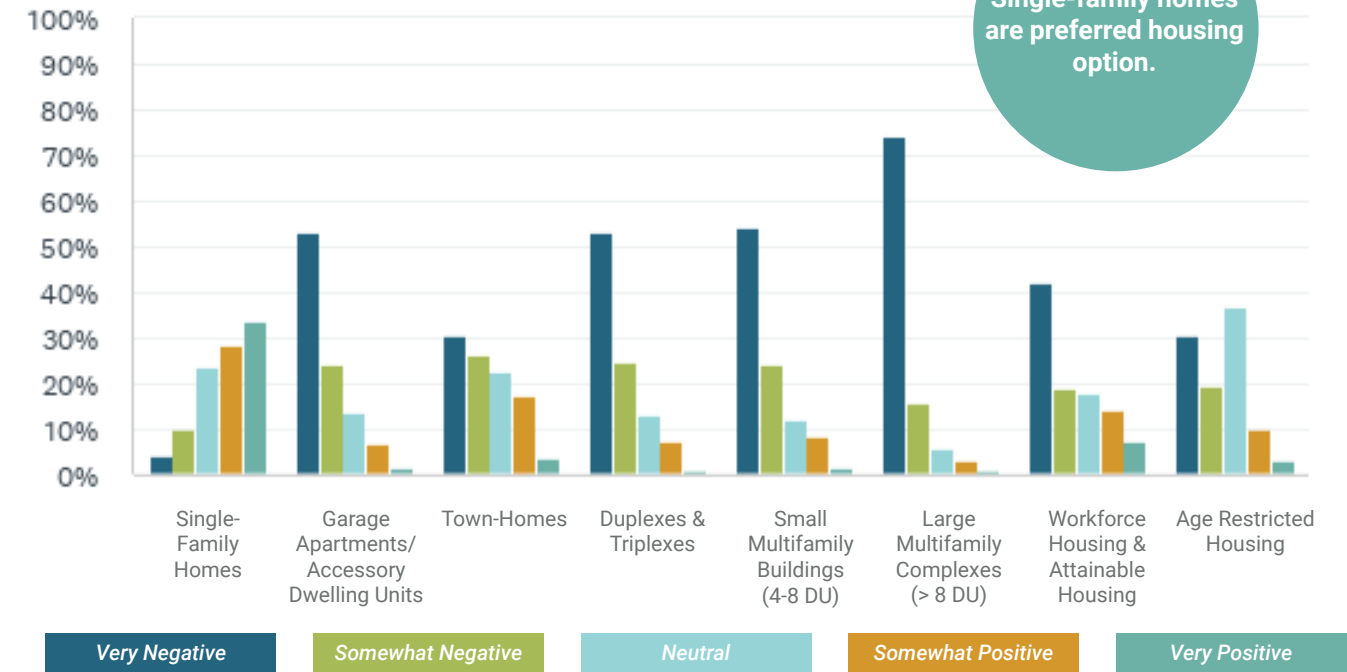


INTRODUCTION

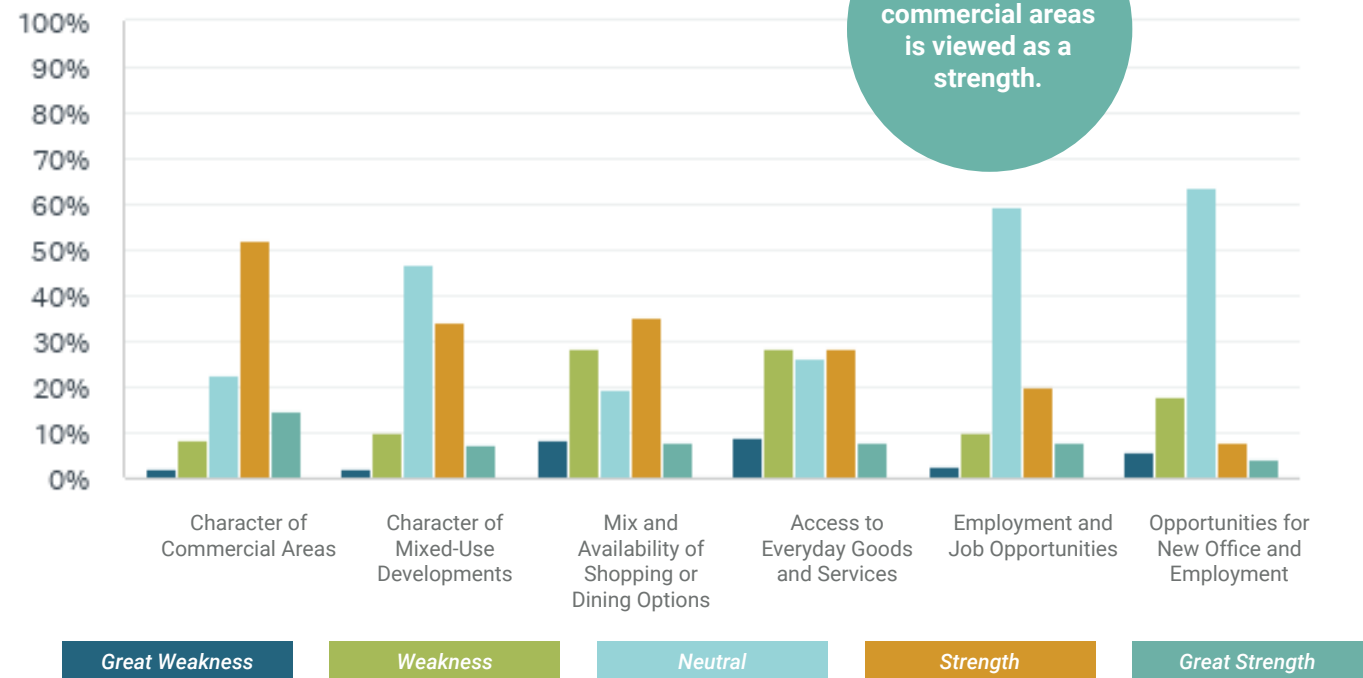
When considering Kiawah's culture and identity, identify if each of the following is a strength or weakness for the community today:



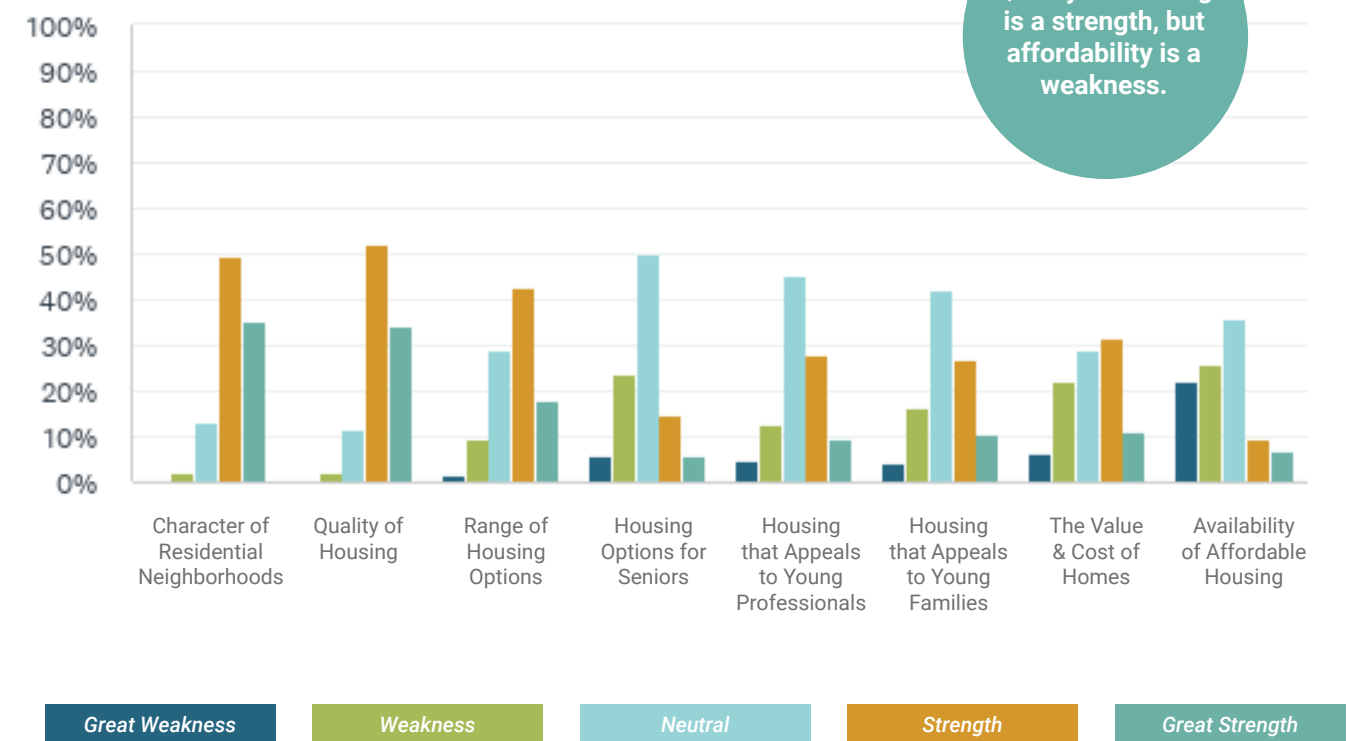
What kind of impact would each of the following types of residential development have on the community?



When considering Kiawah's existing commercial areas, identify if each is a strength or weakness for the community today:

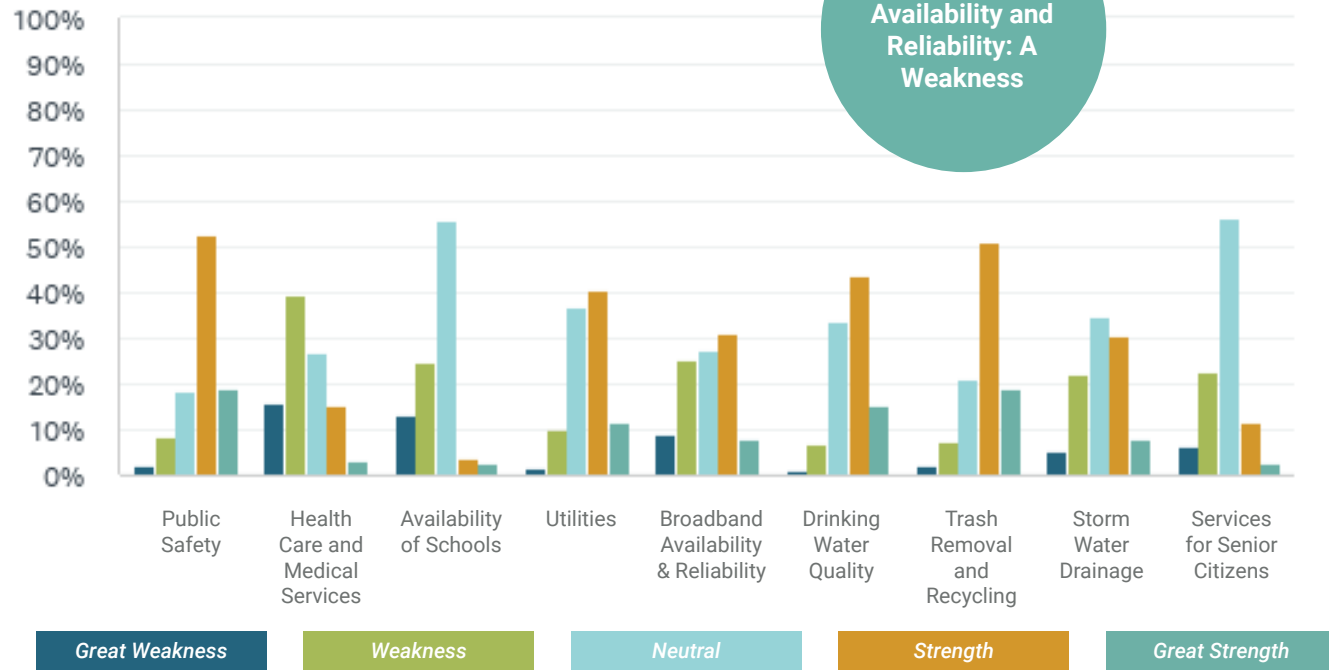


When considering existing housing and residential areas, identify if each of the following is a strength or weakness for Kiawah today:

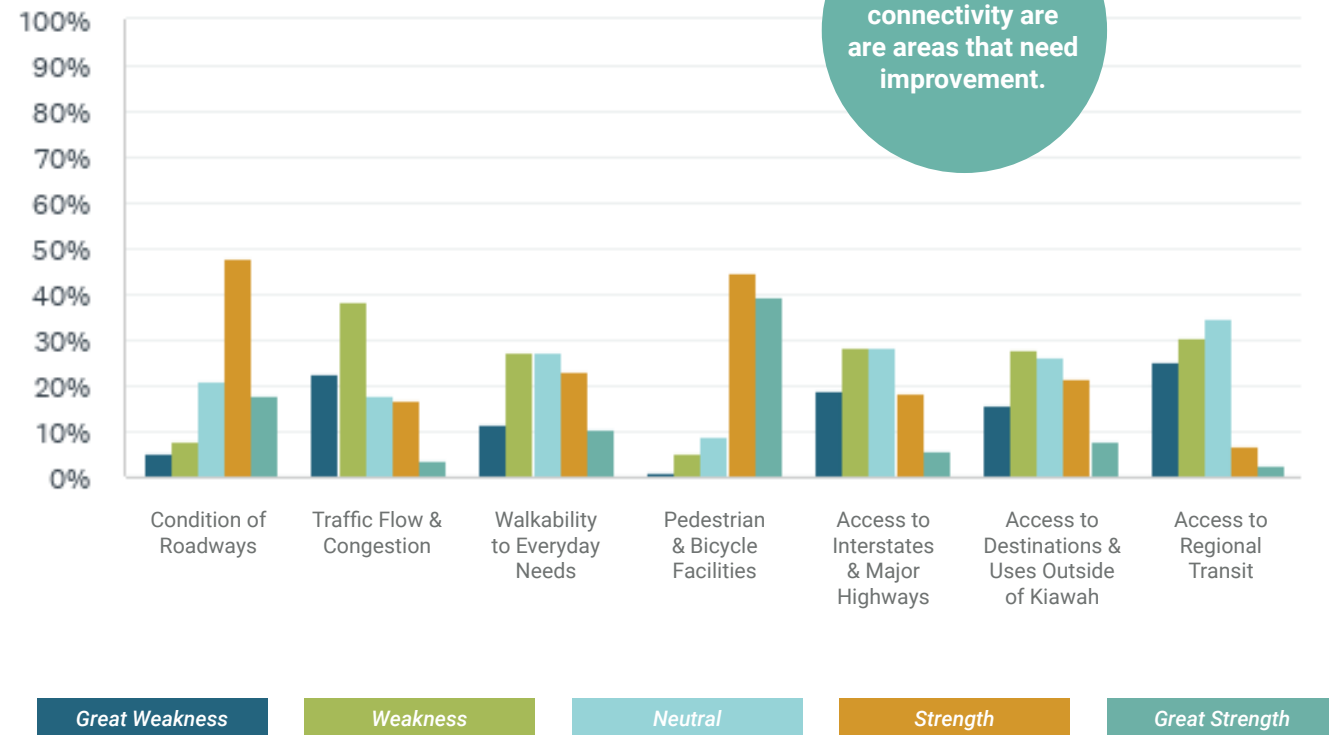


**INTRODUCTION**

When considering Kiawah's existing community facilities and services, identify if each of the following is currently a strength or weakness:



When considering Kiawah's existing transportation networks, identify if each of the following is a strength or weakness for the community today:



**Previous Plans and Efforts**

**KiawahNext replaces the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, later revised in 2019. It synthesizes the studies, research, and recommendations from a wide variety of recent plans and documents to create a unified strategy for the Town of Kiawah Island. Other adopted plans, studies, and efforts included in this plan:**

**Town of Kiawah Island Planning Plans and Efforts**

**“Native Plant Database”, Town of Kiawah Island**

An online database of native trees, shrubs, perennials, vines, ferns, and grasses that provides detailed information on growing conditions, size, flowering information, salt tolerance, deer resistance, and the wildlife value for each plant.

**The 2020 Local Comprehensive Beach Management Plan**

The plan serves as a planning and decision-making tool to inform the past and current state of the beach and the aimed efforts to maintain and improve its quality.

**“Bird Research”, Town of Kiawah Island**

Kiawah Biologists conducted research projects involving Kiawah’s diverse bird population. Capturing birds and banding them with a unique identifier gives biologists insight into the health and demographics of our island’s bird population.

**“White-tailed Deer”, Town of Kiawah Island**

Surveys are conducted for two consecutive nights during September/October and December/January. The survey is 18.2 miles long and covers most of Kiawah Island.

**“American Alligators”, Town of Kiawah Island**

The survey, conducted annually, covers most of the island’s ponds. It records the total number of alligators and estimates their length.

**“Save Kiawah Bobcats”, Town of Kiawah Island**

The Kiawah Bobcat GPS Project is the longest, continuous GPS study on bobcats in the world and was developed by the Town of Kiawah Island, in partnership with the Kiawah Conservancy, in 2007.

**Comprehensive Marsh Management Plan**

The Comprehensive Marsh Management Plan (CMMP) is envisioned as a living document focusing solely on the marsh and integrating various management tools.

**Kiawah Island Parkway Traffic Update**

The Town of Kiawah Island collected traffic data as well as Intersection and Corridor studies in 2022.

**Kiawah Island Housing Market Study**

The Town of Kiawah Island engaged HR&A to conduct a market study assessing the long-term health of Kiawah’s housing market, which was completed in August 2020.

**Budget at a Glance**

The Town of Kiawah Island’s fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30th. Town Council adopts a budget each year to allocate funds for the many programs, services, and projects provided for residents and visitors.

**Kiawah Goes Green Initiative**

This initiative aims to formalize a strong commitment by Kiawah’s major entities, stakeholders and the community to continue our focus on environmental stewardship, sustainability and the advancement of eco-friendly public and private practices across the entire island.



**Emergency Preparedness Plan**

The risk of severe hurricane effects and the island’s remote location combine to make hurricanes a double threat to Kiawah Island and its population.

**Flood Mitigation and Sea Level Rise Adaptation**

This report attempts to identify ways in which rising seas and changing weather patterns might impact Kiawah, assess its potential vulnerabilities to those changes, and suggest practical actions that Kiawah might take to mitigate those vulnerabilities and ensure a prosperous future.

**Annexation Policy Plan & Procedures Manual**

This plan outlines the process and intent of annexation into the Town. Annexation is transferring parcels of land from unincorporated areas of Charleston County into the service area and jurisdiction of the Town of Kiawah Island.

**Kiawah Island Stakeholders Plans and Documents:**

**Kiawah Conservancy 2030 Strategic Plan**

Lays a foundation to guide a path for the continued success of Kiawah Island’s natural beauty and ecological health for generations to come.

**Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board Standards and Guidelines**

- “Designing With Nature”, Intended to encourage construction of excellent architectural design appropriate to the surroundings, unique climate conditions, and other environmental factors indigenous to Kiawah.

**Kiawah Island Property Report**

Kiawah Island Real Estate report reports sales data trends on the island.

