

06



community facilitiesnext

Maintain and improve Kiawah's amenities, utilities, and services.

Community Facilities

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.

Big Ideas

Town-owned Community Facility

Objectives

CF1 - Centralize communications across all key stakeholders.

CF2 - Develop a flexible framework for public safety study evaluation and potential implementation.

CF3 - Expand and enhance public community facilities to better serve Kiawah residents and visitors.

Overview

Kiawah Island's essential services are provided by multiple entities. Utilities are managed by Berkeley Electric Cooperative (electricity), Kiawah Island Utility (water and wastewater), Seabrook Island Utility and various telecommunications companies. Emergency services are coordinated among St. Johns Fire Department (fire protection), Charleston County EMS (medical emergencies), and Barrier Island Ocean Rescue (beach patrol and coastal medical response). These organizations collaborate to ensure the safety and comfort of Kiawah's residents and visitors.

The island's community facilities are predominantly operated by private entities. The Kiawah Island Community Association offers members amenities like the Sandcastle and leisure trails, while Kiawah Island Golf Resort manages recreational facilities such as golf courses and tennis courts. Kiawah Partners oversees exclusive club member amenities.

Town of Kiawah Island aims to improve service coordination, centralize communications, and enhance amenities and utilities.



Public Health and Safety

The Charleston County EMS Department provides emergency medical services throughout Charleston County, including the Town of Kiawah Island. When activated, the Kiawah Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is a Town volunteer group that assists the Town emergency management team during hurricane protocols, other town emergency events, and special events as needed.

Fire protection is provided by the St. Johns

Fire District, which operates two stations located on Kiawah Island.

The Town of Kiawah Island does not operate its own police or security force; however, public safety services are offered and are projected to grow. The Charleston County Sheriff’s Department provides law enforcement and investigative support for the Town of Kiawah Island. Additionally, the Town contracts with the Sheriff’s Office for off-duty deputies to provide supplementary

coverage for law enforcement patrols, traffic control, and enforcement. The Kiawah Island Community Association (KICA) provides security services behind the main gate. The Kiawah Island Golf Resort also manages security for their properties.

Health Providers

Several planned healthcare and emergency service developments in the area will improve access and reduce travel time to essential services. The St. Johns Fire Department plans a future station inside the Kiawah River development, located off Betsy Kerrison Parkway.

The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) Sea Islands Medical Pavilion is currently under construction. It represents a healthcare infrastructure investment to serve the Sea Islands communities, including Kiawah Island, Seabrook Island, Johns Island, and Wadmalaw Island.

Additionally, Trident Health has announced plans to construct a new medical facility on Johns Island. This facility will provide emergency care and other medical services to residents of Johns Island and surrounding communities, further expanding healthcare access in the region.

Adding these healthcare facilities will help meet the growing needs of the Sea Islands communities. Johns Island and the surrounding areas have experienced substantial residential development in recent years, with several large-scale communities either under construction or in planning stages. This population growth, combined with the geographic distance from existing healthcare facilities, creates a clear need for expanded medical services in the region. Having accessible healthcare facilities becomes particularly important for residents of all ages who currently face longer travel

times to reach emergency and routine medical care.

The MUSC Sea Islands Medical Pavilion is scheduled to open in late 2025.

The Trident Health facility is expected to begin construction in early 2026.

Public Safety

The Town of Kiawah Island operates under a collaborative law enforcement model that leverages Charleston County Sheriff’s Office services. While the Town does not maintain a dedicated, permanent law enforcement division, residents receive Sheriff services through their County tax contributions. The Town Council has enhanced this baseline coverage by establishing a supplemental partnership with the Sheriff’s office to provide additional deputy presence within municipal boundaries. This enhanced coverage is implemented through a program of off-duty, deputy-sworn personnel.

Public Safety Assessment Initiative

The Town of Kiawah Island is conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and gap analysis of its public safety infrastructure. This evaluation encompasses public safety services, including law enforcement, code enforcement, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and fire department operations. The assessment represents a forward-thinking approach to public safety planning, designed to ensure service delivery aligns with current and future community needs.

The evaluation framework focuses on several critical objectives that will shape the future of public safety services on Kiawah Island. At its foundation, the assessment examines current community policing requirements, establishing a baseline understanding of existing service levels and community expectations. Looking ahead, the analysis

projects how anticipated community growth patterns will impact safety requirements and service delivery demands.

A key assessment component involves identifying gaps in the current public safety service matrix. This analysis will reveal areas where service enhancement or expansion may be necessary to effectively meet community needs. The evaluation includes a comprehensive cost analysis, examining both current expenditures and potential future investments while actively seeking opportunities for cost avoidance through efficient service delivery models.

Code Enforcement Services

The Town maintains a code enforcement program across multiple shifts to ensure community standards and regulations are consistently upheld throughout Kiawah Island. Town-employed code enforcement officers monitor compliance with municipal ordinances and regulations during daytime hours. Evening and weekend coverage is provided through a contract with Barrier Island Ocean Rescue (BIOR), which delivers dual-purpose services. Under this contract, BIOR personnel conduct beach safety and code enforcement operations along the shoreline and supplement the Town’s code enforcement activities inland during evening hours and weekends. This integrated approach ensures continuous code enforcement coverage and enhanced public safety during non-traditional working hours.

Utility Service Providers

The Town of Kiawah Island utility services are provided by various private entities. The Town’s goal is to ensure the highest quality of service, regardless of which entity is responsible for provision.

To achieve this, the Town of Kiawah Island should comprehensively review all utility providers to ensure they maintain high-quality service. This review should ensure appropriate investment to upgrade aging infrastructure and confirm that contingency plans are in place to provide uninterrupted services during storms and other emergencies.

Water and Wastewater Facilities

The Town of Kiawah Island is serviced by two utility providers: Kiawah Island Utility (KIU) and the Seabrook Island Utility Commission (SIUC). Each operates independently to serve their communities with essential water and wastewater services. Both utilities purchase water from St. Johns Water Company, which is sourced from Charleston Water System.

Kiawah Island Utility

KIU, a subsidiary of SouthWest Water Company, provides water and wastewater services to Kiawah Island. The utility maintains and operates the island’s water distribution system. KIU also manages the wastewater collection system and treatment facility that serves the island. This facility processes wastewater through an advanced treatment system before the treated effluent is used to irrigate the island’s golf courses. In 2015, a new water supply line to the Island was installed to connect to the down island pump station on Governor’s Drive. This creates redundancy.

Seabrook Island Utility Commission

The water and wastewater system, which is owned by the Town of Seabrook Island, provides water and wastewater services to

portions of the town, including Cassique, Freshfields Village, and Kiawah River Estates.

Municipal Center Utilities

The Town of Kiawah Island Municipal Center operates on a septic system with water service from St. Johns Water Company. Due to its proximity and KIU’s service boundary limitations, the Municipal Center explored connecting to SIUC’s sewer system, but this request was not approved. As a result, the Municipal Center continues to maintain its independent septic system for wastewater management. The Town will continue exploring sewer options with KIU or SIUC.

Solid Waste Management

The Town of Kiawah Island provides a comprehensive solid waste program for property owners. This service includes garbage, recycling, yard debris, brown trash, paper shredding, and hazardous waste. Garbage service is available curbside and backdoor.

Recycling is available to all single-family homes, homeowner associations, and villa communities. The Town also provides public recycling centers located on Sora Rail Road, the Municipal Center, and behind the KICA homeowner’s association building.

Electric

Berkeley Electric Cooperative (BEC) provides electrical service to Kiawah Island. Electrical lines are installed underground and serve the entire island. Between 2008 and 2010, BEC completed significant improvements to these lines, though the island continues to experience power outages during severe weather events or when underground lines sustain damage.

Communication

Telecommunications services on Kiawah

Island are provided through multiple carriers and infrastructure systems. AT&T is the island’s primary network provider, delivering cellular, cable, and internet services. Additional cellular carriers include Verizon and T-Mobile, while internet service options have expanded to include Xfinity, Viasat, HughesNet, Always ON, Starlink, and T-Mobile Home Internet.

The island’s cellular infrastructure consists of seven towers of varying heights, ranging from 65 to 173 feet, operated by different owners including Crown Castle, American Tower, Berkeley Electric, and Kiawah Island Golf Resort. Despite this infrastructure, portions of the island experience significant coverage challenges, particularly in areas east of Turtle Point. Coverage analysis reveals that the limited height of several towers, many under 100 feet, restricts their effectiveness in providing comprehensive cellular service. This is especially problematic for Verizon customers in the eastern portion of the island, where coverage notably diminishes due to the carrier’s limited presence on towers beyond Turtle Point.

The Town Council should consider modernizing its cell tower ordinance to address these coverage gaps. Current regulations emphasize co-location and concealment requirements while limiting tower heights, creating challenges for carriers attempting to upgrade their equipment or expand coverage. Updates to the ordinance should carefully balance improved cellular coverage needs with maintaining.

Kiawah’s distinctive character, potentially including revisions to height restrictions and concealment requirements that would enable more effective cellular infrastructure while preserving the island’s aesthetic values.

Central Communications Channel

The Town proposes a Central Communications Channel to coordinate all key island stakeholders, which is managed and operated by the Town of Kiawah Island’s Public Safety or Communications Department. This department would be responsible for overseeing the communication system, ensuring its effectiveness, and maintaining its operation.

The proposed system would include:

- A dedicated emergency communications center within the Town Hall.
- A multi-platform approach, including a mobile app, text alerts, email notifications, and a centralized website.
- Regular training and drills for all stakeholders to ensure familiarity with the system.
- Clear protocols for information dissemination during both routine and emergencies.
- Integration with existing emergency management systems at the county and state levels.

By centralizing communication under the Town’s authority, Kiawah Island would have a unified and direct method of communication, eliminating confusing or conflicting information. This approach would ensure that all stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and visitors, receive timely, accurate, and consistent information. In an emergency, this could prove critical to the swift response of dedicated personnel and the safety of the island’s population.

The Town would also establish a Communication Liaison Committee, comprising representatives from key

stakeholder groups, to provide input and feedback on the system’s operation and effectiveness. This collaborative approach would help maintain open lines of communication between various entities while ensuring a streamlined and efficient information dissemination process.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure

Up to 300 electric vehicles (EVs) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) are registered on the Island. As the number of EVs on the roads of Kiawah continues to rise, the island (Town) should contribute to this green effort of island residents and visitors by implementing a standardized network of EV Charging stations. Many of the HOA regimes on the Island prohibit the installation of private charging stations.

Currently, the Town of Kiawah Island has installed three public EV charging stations located behind Town Hall.

Amenities

While limited due to its private, gated nature, public amenities on Kiawah Island play a crucial role in the community’s landscape. As the Town embarks on long-range planning, it should evaluate opportunities to expand its role in providing public amenities despite current constraints. The beach represents the primary public amenity, managed by the Town of Kiawah Island to ensure local oversight of this vital natural resource. This management structure allows for community-focused stewardship while maintaining public ownership.

Currently, the Town’s role in providing public amenities is constrained by its lack of landownership behind the gate, where all island residents reside. Beyond the Municipal Center, which serves administrative functions and provides limited meeting space, the Town has limited ability to provide traditional municipal amenities behind the gates. Looking ahead, the Town should consider strategic opportunities to acquire land or expand the Municipal Center complex to enhance public offerings. This could include exploring partnerships with private entities for land acquisition, evaluating potential sites for new public facilities, or reimagining the current Municipal Center to incorporate additional community amenities. Such initiatives would need to carefully balance the island’s private character with the growing need for public spaces that serve both residents and visitors.

This forward-thinking approach would require careful consideration of funding mechanisms, operational responsibilities, and integration with the island’s established character, while ensuring any new public amenities meet the evolving needs of the Kiawah community.

Beachwalker County Park operates under a 99-year lease agreement established in 1976 between Kiawah Partners and the Charleston County Government. Managed by the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission, it provides an essential public access point to the beach.

The Kiawah Island Community Association provides property owners with access to a network of amenities across the island. These include the Sandcastle, three boat or kayak launch facilities, three observation towers, miles of leisure trails, and over 30 beach access boardwalks. The Housing Market Study found KICA’s amenities competitive with peer associations like the Sea Pines Community Services Associates.

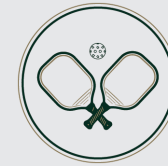
As identified in the Town’s 2020 Housing Market Study, Kiawah Island’s private amenities position Kiawah uniquely among its peers. The Kiawah Island Golf Resort is a major provider, offering five world-class golf courses, The Sanctuary Hotel and Spa, multiple dining venues, and tennis facilities. These amenities are available to both residents and resort guests.

Further enhancing the island’s private amenities, Kiawah Island Club operates two additional golf courses, The Beach Club, Sasanqua Spa, and several dining establishments available to Club members. This tiered amenity structure differs from some competitor communities like Palmetto Bluff, where all owners have universal access to club amenities. For owners not part of the KI Club, amenity access through KICA, while competitive with peer associations, provides fewer options than communities with mandatory club membership.

Freshfields Village, owned by EDENS, is a village-style shopping center with multiple dining options and various services. Its central green space serves as a gathering area for community events.

Collectively, Kiawah Island features an impressive array of private recreational facilities, including seven golf courses, over 15 restaurants, two luxury spas, multiple sports facilities, and numerous other amenities. This diverse range of high-quality offerings has established Kiawah as a premier resort and residential community, catering to varied interests and lifestyles while preserving the island’s natural beauty. The Housing Market Study emphasized that while these private entities are responsible for their facilities and reinvestment decisions, their continued success contributes to Kiawah’s overall competitive position among peer communities.

As Kiawah evolves, the Town recognizes the need to take a more active role in providing public amenities through potential expansion of the Municipal Center and strategic land acquisition. This forward-looking approach would enhance the island’s amenity offerings while maintaining the successful balance between public accessibility and private facilities, defining Kiawah’s character.



GOAL:

Maintain and improve Kiawah’s amenities, utilities, and services.

Objective CF1

Centralize communications across all key stakeholders.

Strategy CF1.1

Determine the feasibility of creating a Centralized Communications Channel to share and align all island-wide messaging to reach community members on facility updates.

- Effectively communicate with the population of Kiawah, while reducing communication fatigue.
- Coordinate across member organizations to collect, consolidate, and streamline messaging.
- Define the most effective channel to reach the greatest number of Kiawah’s population.
- Identify and brand the channel for effective awareness.

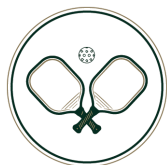
Objective CF2

Develop a flexible framework for public safety study evaluation and potential implementation.

Strategy CF2.1

Develop a post-study review and implementation framework.

- Form a review committee (e.g., Public Safety Committee) to assess study recommendations.
- Engage key stakeholders and community members on potential implementation actions.
- Create a feedback mechanism for gathering input on proposed options
- Develop an action plan based on committee findings for Town Council consideration.



community facilities objectives and strategies

Objective CF3

Expand and enhance public community facilities to better serve Kiawah residents and visitors.

Strategy CF3.1

Evaluate opportunities for expanding public amenities through strategic land acquisition and facility development.

- Conduct a feasibility study to assess potential expansion of the Municipal Center complex to accommodate additional community facilities.
- Identify and evaluate available land parcels along Kiawah Island Parkway for potential acquisition.
- Explore opportunities to acquire property adjacent to or across from the current Municipal Center.
- Evaluate the potential acquisition of the Kiawah Island Real Estate building to repurpose for public use.
- Assess community needs and preferences for new public facilities through surveys and public engagement.
- Develop a long-term funding strategy for land acquisition and facility development.

Strategy CF3.2

Create a comprehensive master plan for new public facilities that complements existing private amenities..

- Engage professional planners to develop conceptual designs for potential facility expansions.

Strategy CF3.3

Foster partnerships and explore funding mechanisms for public facility development.

- Research potential grant opportunities for public facility development
- Investigate public-private partnership opportunities for land acquisition or facility development.
- Consider municipal bonds or other financing options.
- Develop a timeline for phased implementation based on funding availability.
- Create an operational plan for maintaining and managing new facilities.

