



Proposed Beachfront Overlay Zoning District

December 3, 2025
Planning Commission Workshop





Proposed Beachfront Overlay Zoning District

Purpose & Intent

- I. Establish a **consistent visual, spatial, and ecological transition** buffer zone between the built environment and the ocean, beach, and dune system;
- II. **Protect Kiawah Island's beachfront profile, view corridor and the ecological function** of dune systems and maritime forest habitats;
- III. **Promote coastal resilience** and aesthetic compatibility through zoning and vegetation standards; and
- IV. **Maintain and enhance ocean views** from properties and public vantage points, including boardwalks and beach access paths

Beachfront overlay zoning districts play a crucial role in balancing development needs with environmental stewardship and community interests along coastal areas, as environmental protection, risk management, and preservation of community character. Additional layers of regulation on top of existing zoning laws enhance protection and help manage dynamic beachfront properties.



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Proposed BOD Timeline

- **Planning Commission Meetings:**
 - March 5, 2025 - Introduction
 - August 6, 2025 – PC Discussion
 - September 10, 2025 – PC Recommendation
- **Town Council Workshop: September 23, 2025**
- **First Reading: October 14, 2025**
- **Public Hearing: November 4, 2025**
- **Planning Commission Workshop & Meeting:
December 3, 2025**
- **Second Reading: TBD**



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Key Factors

- 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 massed structures** with more prominent visual presence and impact to beach profile.
- The vast majority of Kiawah's beachfront has been conveyed to the Kiawah Island Community Association, adding a **unique protection layer**.
- Kiawah beachfront uniquely has parcels which extend to the MHW (West End – Timbers, Cape) (Royal Beach).



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Key Factors

- **Beachfront Setbacks:** Kiawah's beachfront has several different zoning districts. 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.



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Key Factors

- **2018 South Carolina Beachfront Jurisdictional Lines provides a mapped reference point.**
- 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.** The proposed ordinance utilizes the 2018 Jurisdiction Baseline with the requirement that the Planning Commission shall provide a recommendation to Town Council no less than 120 days after review of any new jurisdictional lines established by the state.



Ordinance Structure

- Establishes two (2) buffer zones
 - Buffer Zone A (*Most Restrictive):
 - No Structures shall be permitted in this zone
 - Buffer Zone B
 - Structures within buffer zone shall not exceed maximum building height of 10’.
 - Improved areas shall not exceed 20% of total buffer area of the subject property.
- Prohibits Oceanfront Erosion Control Devices
- Beach walkovers are exempt from the proposed BOD.
 - Walkovers are still subject to SCDES Coastal Division Regulations and the Town of Kiawah Beach Management Ordinance.

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Ordinance Structure

- Nonconformity: Existing structures legally permitted prior to effective date are deemed nonconforming structures.
 - **A property owner may rebuild back a legally nonconforming structure which is destroyed by casualty “involuntary”** (*including, but not limited to fire, explosion, named storms or other natural forces, act of God, or the public enemy*)
 - *The structure may be replaced with a structure having the same prior nonconforming dimensional states (size, shape, building footprint, height, density, etc.), provided the replaced structure meets all applicable building code requirements.*
 - Nonconforming Amended Ordinance 2024-25
- Sec. 12-192. - Nonconforming structures.

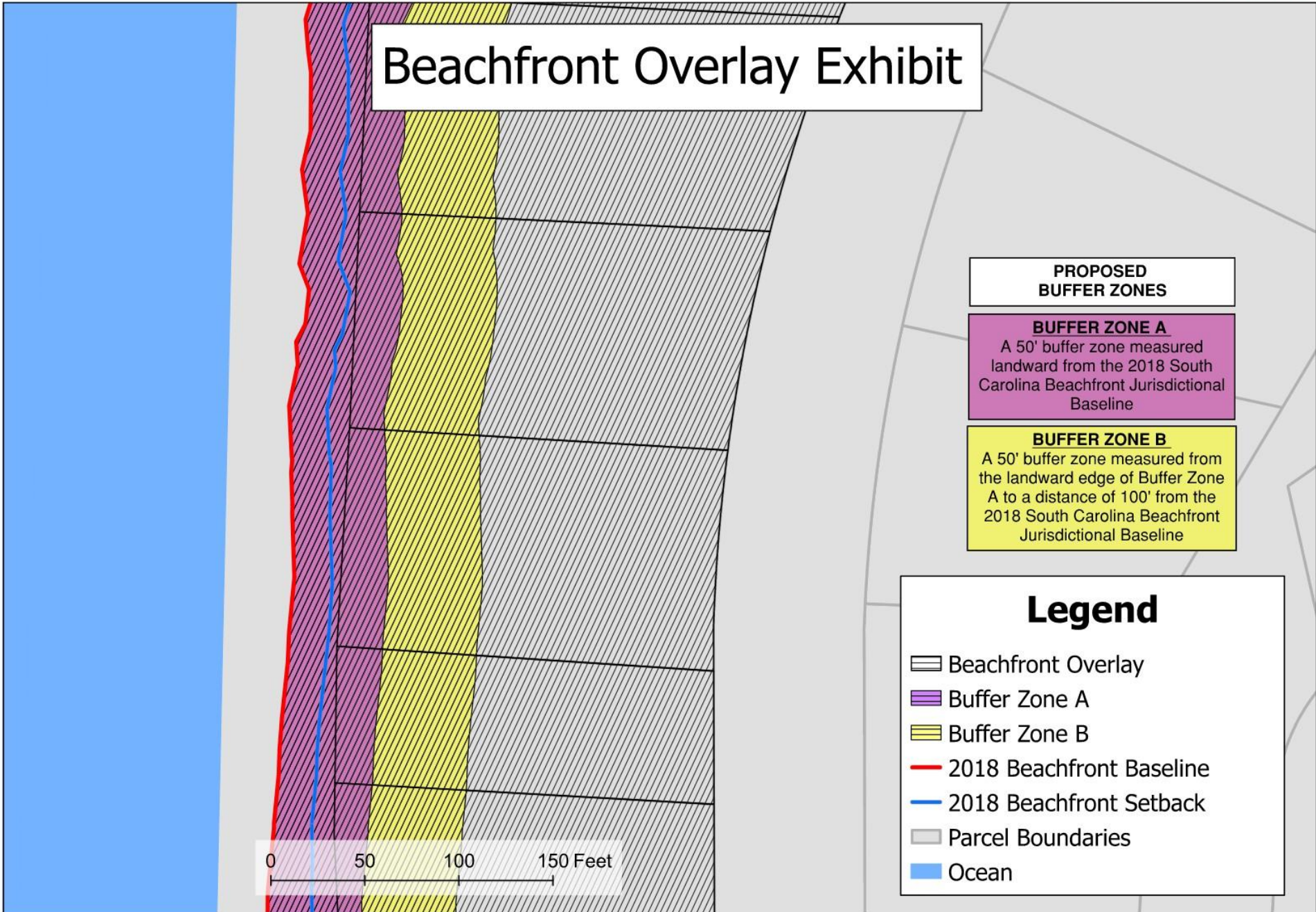


Ordinance Structure

- Landscaping & Tree Preservation – (Tree Preservation & Landscape Ordinance)
 - Only coastal native species may be planted within the proposed buffer zones.
 - Tree removal within the proposed buffer zones are subject to review and approval by the Town
 - Tree pruning shall be kept to a minimum and conform to the existing natural patterns of growth.
 - View corridor pruning shall be subject to review and approval by the Town.

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Beachfront Overlay Exhibit



PROPOSED BUFFER ZONES

BUFFER ZONE A
A 50' buffer zone measured landward from the 2018 South Carolina Beachfront Jurisdictional Baseline

BUFFER ZONE B
A 50' buffer zone measured from the landward edge of Buffer Zone A to a distance of 100' from the 2018 South Carolina Beachfront Jurisdictional Baseline

Legend

- Beachfront Overlay
- Buffer Zone A
- Buffer Zone B
- 2018 Beachfront Baseline
- 2018 Beachfront Setback
- Parcel Boundaries
- Ocean



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Beachfront Overlay Interactive Tool

Written Public Comments:

Persons interested in submitting public comments should email their comments directly to the Planning Department at tokiplanning@kiawahisland.gov referencing the case number (#AZO25-000009) | Proposed Beachfront Overlay Zoning District.