



Sea Island Corridor Coalition
PO Box 533
St. Helena SC 29920
843.838.1888
seaislandcoalition@gmail.com

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Mr. Robert Semmler
Chairman
Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan Implementation Committee
Beaufort County Robert Smalls Complex
100 Ribaut Road
Beaufort SC 29902

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you are aware, Lady's Island is at a crossroads. Increasing growth pressures and multiple jurisdictions' inadequate zoning and development regulations have led to haphazard development. It is an understatement to say that residents are frustrated. The good news is that although exasperated, they are also galvanized to work together with the County and City to develop a better vision and plan for the island.

With that in mind, we are pleased that the Beaufort County Planning Department has taken the initiative to draft a request for proposals (RFP) "from qualified planning firms or land use consultants to facilitate and oversee the development of the Lady's Island Area Plan."

While there are certainly positive elements to the RFP, it unfortunately falls very short of the necessary level of planning, meaningful community involvement, and detail to ensure that future development on the island is inviting, functional and sustainable.

As we read the RFP, Beaufort County is requesting that an outside consultant review and combine existing plans, policies and studies. This review of the existing stable of studies and plans is indeed necessary, but it is only the first step.

As related to Lady's Island, the existing plans, policies and studies all have shortcomings, and those shortcomings are apparent across the Island. The recent scramble to address traffic issues, the shortage of options available in planning decisions, and the standing-room-only turnout of concerned residents at the February 23 community forum are all byproducts of the failure of existing plans, policies and studies to effectively cope with growth on the island.

What is needed is a fresh and comprehensive look at Lady's Island, and the creation of a true Master Plan to guide development on the Island moving forward. There are challenges; a significant percentage of Lady's Island is already earmarked for specific development. But this should not be used as an excuse to refuse to consider the remaining public assets on the island and to consider opportunities for redevelopment in the future.

We recognize that the development of a Master Plan is an economic issue as much as a policy issue. The draft RFP allocates just \$75,000 for its existing-studies review, and if other examples are indicative, an amount on the order of \$400,000 is more likely to be required if we are serious about this endeavor. Keep in mind, we are not dealing with an outpost here, but an island with a population equal to the City of Beaufort and slightly larger than Port Royal.

Lady's Island is in dire need of a substantive re-look of its land use patterns, traffic management, transportation and utility infrastructure, and protected environmental assets. The Sea Island Corridor Coalition and the Coastal Conservation League are fully supportive of such an initiative. But given the option of a "plan of plans" with minimal funding versus a more fully-funded comprehensive review and development of a workable Master Plan, we believe Lady's Island residents would, within limits, support waiting for the latter until required funds can be identified rather than jumping at the former.

What is also clear is that the County cannot undertake planning for Lady's Island alone, given the significant number of properties that are now part of the City of Beaufort. To be successful, the City of Beaufort, Beaufort County, the Lady's Island community, and the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan Implementation Committee all must work together. It cannot be "same bed, different dreams," but instead must be a process built on a common vision and a single-minded commitment to successfully addressing issues of growth and sprawl and livability. No planning regimen will be successful if one party is absent from the table.

In short, the current RFP draft will not result in a sufficiently detailed plan. We point to the Boundary Street Master Plan RFQ (a copy is attached for your convenience) as an example of the depth of effort required to address the needs of Lady's Island. We look forward to working with you and all stakeholders to ensure the final RFP is adequate, and the planning effort that follows it successful. The future of Lady's Island depends on its success.

Sincerely,



Charles G. Newton, Jr.
Chairman
Sea Island Corridor Coalition

Rikki Parker
Project Manager
South Carolina Coastal Conservation League

Cc: Jerry Cook, Mayor, Town of Yemassee
Gerald Dawson, Beaufort County Council
Joe DeVito, Chairman, Metropolitan Planning Commission
Patricia Felton-Montgomery, Beaufort County School Board Chair
Brian Flewelling, Beaufort County Council
Alice Howard, Beaufort County Council
Billy Keyserling, Mayor, City of Beaufort
Tom Klein, Town of Port Royal Council

Mike McFee, City of Beaufort Council
Samuel Murray, Mayor, Town of Port Royal
Tony Crisitello, Beaufort County Planning Department
Robert Merchant, Beaufort County Planning Department
Libby Anderson, City of Beaufort Planning Department
Lauren Kelly, City of Beaufort Planning Department

Attachment