



DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

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Town of Ridgeland, SC

1 Town Square
Ridgeland, SC 29936

Contact:

Aaron Rucker
Director of Planning
arucker@ridgelandsc.gov
(843) 726.7521





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OVERVIEW

The Town of Ridgeland is requesting qualifications from qualified land planning and design firms interested in preparing a master plan for the downtown area, which is split into three distinct Planning Areas and which totals approximately 0.75 square miles. **Deadline For Response: Friday, October 2, 2026, 5:00 PM EDT**

About the Town of Ridgeland

Originally known as Gopher Hill, the Town of Ridgeland was incorporated in 1894 and was the first railroad stop at the highest point in elevation between Savannah and Charleston. With just over 4,000 residents, Ridgeland is one of the last remaining authentic Lowcountry small towns. The broader area has a rich history dating back to the Founding Fathers and the Civil War. Ridgeland is well-known for its commitment to preserving natural resources, small-town charm, and a business-friendly environment. Ridgeland is the county seat, with the Jasper County Courthouse and County offices located in Town.

The Town has a relatively compact footprint centering around the intersection of Main Street and Jacob Smart Boulevard. The Town is characterized by commercial development along the primary roadways, alongside single-family neighborhoods built in the Lowcountry vernacular or otherwise in typical suburban styles depending on the year each neighborhood was built.



Jasper County Courthouse

Ridgeland is well-positioned to attract investor interest. The Town is located near Beaufort, Savannah, Bluffton, and Hilton Head Island, which are all fast-growing areas. Jasper County is the fastest growing county in the United States, with a year-over-year growth rate of 5.7% from 2024 to 2025. Ridgeland is expecting rapid growth alongside the County; according to the Town's estimates, Ridgeland has a population of around 4,000 but predicts that the population could grow to over 12,000 by the year 2040. The I-95 widening project, scheduled for 2027, will improve access to the Town and make it a more desirable place for commuters who work in nearby cities.

Market Guide

The following excerpts are from the Town of Ridgeland Market Guide, 2021 , by Retail Strategies.

Demographics

(Custom Trade Area)

Population

21,218

Households

7,396

Median Household Income

\$40,288

Demographic Profile

(Custom Trade Area)

3 Mile Radius

5 Mile Radius

10 Mile Radius

2020 Estimated Population

Daytime Population

Median HH Income

Number of Households

8,455

7,757

\$35,792

1,506

10,693

8,616

\$36,986

2,251

15,224

13,501

\$41,135

3,911

5 Minute DT

10 Minute DT

15 Minute DT

2020 Estimated Population

Daytime Population

Median HH Income

Number of Households

6,603

6,287

\$34,646

1,441

10,289

8,750

\$36,846

2,755

13,844

11,669

\$39,221

3,594

Children at home

858

Retired/Disable persons

3,394

Homemakers

3,357

Student Populations

3,753

Work at Home

305

Employed

4,686

Unemployed

714

GAP Analysis

(Custom Trade Area)

\$85,507,819

The Gap Analysis is a summary of the primary spending Gaps segmented by retail category. It measures actual consumer expenditures within the City's trade area and compares it to the potential retail revenue generated by retailers in the same area. The difference between the two numbers reflects leakages, or the degree to which consumers travel outside the community for certain retail goods and services. The Gap analysis is a useful tool to gauge retail supply and demand within the community.

Grocery Stores

Foodservice and Drinking Places

Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores

Health & Personal Care Stores

General Merchandise Stores

Building Material and Garden Equipment Stores

Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores

Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores

\$28,056,453

\$18,940,858

\$12,968,892

\$10,485,600

\$4,439,338

\$3,722,520

\$3,683,621

\$3,210,537

Focus Categories

The top categories for focused growth in the municipality are pulled from a combination of leakage reports, peer analysis, retail trends and real estate intuition. Although these are the top categories, our efforts are inclusive beyond the defined list.

Let us know how we can help you find a site!

Grocery

Restaurants

General Merchandise

Home and Garden

Peer Analysis

The Peer Analysis, built by Retail Strategies along with our analytics partner (Tetrad), identifies analogue retail nodes within a similar demographic and retail makeup. The Peer Analysis is derived from a 5 or 10 minute drive time from major comparable retail corridors throughout the country. The variables used are population, income, daytime population, market supply and gross leasable area. The following are retail areas that most resemble this core city:

Peer Trade Areas

Manning SC

Gaffney SC

Batesburg SC

Chesnee SC

Aiken SC

Pageland SC

Woodruff SC

Orangeburg SC

500 W Boyce St

1204 Bonner Rd

290 Willis St

5098 Chesnee Hwy

7011 Harvey Ct

209 S Vanhinkle Mungo Blv

341 N Main St

1661 Neeses Hwy

Statement of Purpose

1. The Town of Ridgeland expects substantial population growth. The Town currently has a population of around 4,000 but predicts that the population could grow to over 12,000 by the year 2040.
2. The Town wishes to preserve its small-town charm amid this growth, while directing growth and investment to the underdeveloped properties in the Town's main commercial areas along Main Street and Jacob Smart Boulevard.
3. The Town wishes to guide and regulate new growth to create a vibrant, walkable urban core, where new growth is compatible with existing historic buildings. This will require different strategies in each part of the Planning Area.
4. The Town wishes to prevent new development downtown that is inherently suburban and auto-oriented. Special attention will be needed for the area around Exit 21 of I-95, which has two functions as a gateway into the downtown area while also serving the needs of Interstate traffic.
5. The Town is open to achieving these goals via a wide range of approaches including, but not limited to, new ordinances, SmartCode zoning reforms, large-scale land planning, public-private partnerships, and most notably immediately actionable, small-scale solutions.
6. The Town wishes to grow in a way in which local businesses, property owners, local investors, and local developers can participate and thrive from growth, rather than growth being driven solely by national players.
7. The Town wishes to implement these goals within the bounds of the Town's form-based code, the SmartCode.
8. The Town is open to considering contributions to the public realm to enhance revitalization efforts.

Planning Area Description

The Planning Area covers the main commercial areas of the Town, with a central locus at Main Street and Jacob Smart Boulevard (U.S. Highway 17). Both Main Street and Jacob Smart Boulevard are the primary entrances to the community with direct access to Interstate 95 from Exits 18, 21, and 22.

The Planning Area can be broken into three distinct areas. The consultant shall provide area-specific recommendations for Historic Main Street, Jacob Smart Boulevard, and Exit 21, recognizing that each subarea has different development patterns, transportation functions, historic character, and regulatory needs.

1. The Historic Downtown along West Main Street;
2. the Jacob Smart Boulevard corridor;
3. and East Main Street where it meets I-95 (Exit 21).



Map of the Planning Area.

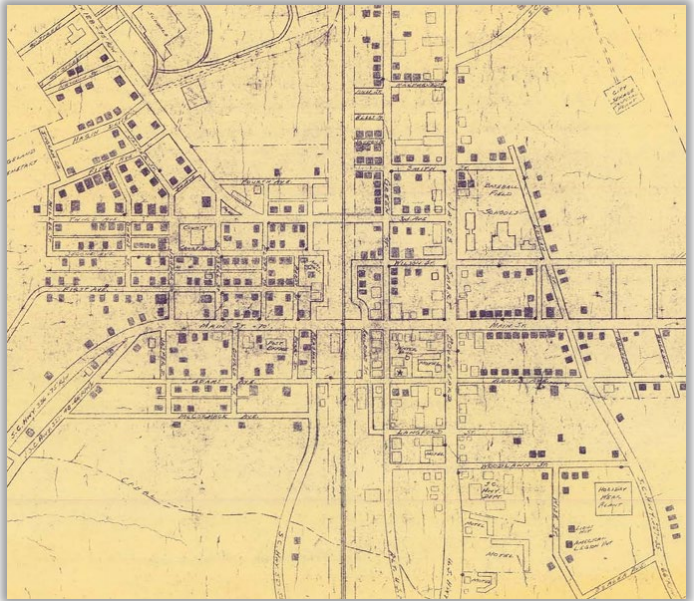
HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

Overview and History

The Historic Downtown is composed of the historic core of Ridgeland, largely built in the early-to-mid-1900s when the Town's growth was influenced first by the railroad and then by its position as the County seat. The Town found its beginnings as the small community of Gopher Hill, which began to grow when the Charleston and Savannah Railway was built through the area in the 1850s. When Jasper County was established in 1912, Ridgeland was made the County seat, cementing its regional importance. As a result, the Historic Downtown centers around two areas: the Historic Main Street where the old railroad station was located, and the Jasper County Courthouse where municipal and county government offices are located.

The surrounding neighborhood composes the oldest intact neighborhood in Ridgeland, surprisingly well-preserved, with nearly all buildings dating back to the early 1900s. Most of these houses were built in the Bungalow, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival architectural styles. There are several notable buildings spread out across this area, including the C.E. Perry House, Ridgeland Centralized Graded School, Pratt Memorial Library, and the Wise House. All of these buildings, possibly the entire Downtown core, may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Main Street includes several important public spaces. The Town Clock and Gopher Tortoise Square are character-defining public squares. There is a small business community including the popular sit-down restaurants Eats and Sweets, Fiddlers Seafood, and Taqueria Rocio. Main Street is anchored by the Morris Center for Lowcountry Heritage, a museum and non-profit space



Map of Ridgeland in 1964, centered on the railroad where it meets the Historic Downtown



Historic C.E. Perry House, c.1900

located in a converted 1930s Sinclair gas station, which is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There are a variety of land uses including restaurants, convenience stores, groceries, retail, offices, pop-up churches, and public squares.

The other focal point of downtown is the Jasper County Courthouse and the surrounding neighborhood. The Courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and it is flanked by other civic uses such as the Veterans Memorial Park, the Clementa Pinckney Government Building, and Ridgeland Town Hall.

Over the years, the Town has made substantial investments into the area, including streetscape improvements, various public squares, the Farmers Market pavilion, and the renovated Fire Station. However, there is vacant and underutilized land scattered throughout the Historic Downtown, creating opportunities for revitalization and infill redevelopment.



Aerial view of West Main Street



Typical view down West Main Street



Morris Center for Lowcountry Heritage c.1937



Ridgeland Centralized Graded School c.1928



Ridge Pointe Square



Craftsman style house c.1925



Ridgeland Town Hall

Area Vision

The Town is fortunate to have a functional Main Street with an active business community, as well as an intact historic center dating back to the early 1900s. The Town views these as assets that it wishes to safeguard and preserve. Additionally, as the Town grows over time, it wishes to expand its small business community, regulate new buildings to fit in with the existing historic fabric, beautify the Historic Main Street, and communicate the history of the Town to the public at large.

Historic preservation is a major priority for the Town. Preservation protects Ridgeland's small-town charm, the character of its old buildings, and the places that are key to the Town's history. The Town is interested in a variety of preservation strategies including stricter architectural regulations (currently ongoing), establishment of a Landmarks overlay or Historic District to protect the most important structures (prior to 2010, Ridgeland had a "Craftsman Bungalow District Overlay Area" which protected historic structures), establishment of a demolition/major alteration review process, and the addition of buildings (if not the entire historic core) to the National Register of Historic Places.



Bungalow house c.1915

Aside from preservation, the Town also wishes to better communicate Ridgeland's history to the public. Ridgeland has a rich history shaped by the ever-changing agricultural industry, the Civil War, major transportation routes (Atlantic Coast Line railroad, US-17, I-95), and its status as the County Seat; however, much of this history is only known to long-time residents and not properly communicated to newcomers and tourists. The Town seeks to leverage its history as an asset that gives the Town character, makes it a recognized place of importance, and which attracts business and commerce. The Town is interested in a variety of strategies including the further research of historic properties (and publishing that research to the public), listing of buildings to the National Register of Historic Places, placement of historic markers/walking tour signs throughout the Downtown, partnerships with the Morris Center for Lowcountry Heritage, public art/mural programs which reference the Town's history (currently ongoing), and the integration of the Town's history into its civic branding (e.g. references to Gopher Hill, Battle of Honey Hill).

At the same time, Downtown cannot be frozen in amber. There are many vacant or blighted lots Downtown which present opportunities for **infill redevelopment**, especially around West Main Street. The Town envisions these properties being developed and contributing once again to the day-to-day life of a vibrant Downtown core. The Town is fortunate to have a group of private investors, the Ridgeland Development Group, which is actively buying and rehabilitating old structures to this end. The Town wishes to capitalize on this investment by identifying specific properties in need of rehabilitation/redevelopment, coordinating with private property owners on redevelopment, proactively addressing blighted structures, improving the Town's relationships and communications with local businesses, and attracting the right businesses and developers who have an aligned vision for the Downtown's future.

In order to preserve the Town's character and small-town charm, **new construction should be compatible with Ridgeland's historic buildings and neighborhoods**. The Town has an existing architectural code which is currently under revision to encourage Lowcountry, traditional Southern commercial, civic, and early 20th-century architecture. Downtown should have building uses which are compatible with the Downtown area, particularly high-activity frontage uses such as restaurants, stores, and boutique hotels; incompatible land uses (e.g. auto-oriented uses and warehouses) should not be allowed. Housing should be placed above the first floor of multi-story buildings. Some residential buildings have been converted for commercial use; additional conversions should respect the architectural character of the existing buildings.



This vacant land on South Green Street is ripe for infill development.



The old bank building on West Main Street, c.1925, is being targeted by the Ridgeland Development Group for rehabilitation.



This house, c. 1950, was remodeled for PJ's Coffee while retaining its architectural character.

Finally, the Town is interested in **low-cost, high-impact beautification initiatives** which could improve the appearance of the Historic District, especially along West Main Street, to create a more welcoming street environment/public realm. Potential initiatives include, but are not limited to: an expanded flower/landscaping program, new and improved wayfinding signage throughout town, a public art/mural program (currently ongoing), a façade improvement program, new regulations on cluttered/covered storefront windows and signage (currently ongoing), continued improvement of the Town's parks (particularly Ridge Pointe, Harold Turpin, and Blue Heron Nature Trail), and encouragement of outdoor dining for restaurants. Some of these initiatives could start immediately and some are already underway. Others require careful consideration and could take years to fully bear fruit.

Anticipated Services

The consultant is expected to provide services to:

- Work with Town Council, the Planning Commission, and the Planning Department to create and/or modify existing ordinances for:
 - Architectural regulations which produce the Town's preferred architectural styles;
 - Signage and storefront window regulations to produce a livelier downtown;
 - Historic protections for old and historic buildings.
- Explore the Main Street South Carolina program and how to leverage assistance.
- Review the zoning standards for T4 and T5 and optimize them for the Town's vision in the Historic Downtown; this could include upzoning parts of the Historic Downtown to T4 or T5.
- Provide recommendations on how the Town can better accommodate redevelopment and infill for private investors while maintaining high architectural and preservation standards.
- Provide recommendations on immediate next steps to beautify the Historic Downtown area.
- Identify sites that are immediately ready for redevelopment in the Historic Downtown.
- Identify historic sites and buildings for the purpose of preservation and adaptive reuse.
- Evaluate what buildings, if not the entire historic core, could be added to the National Register of Historic Places.

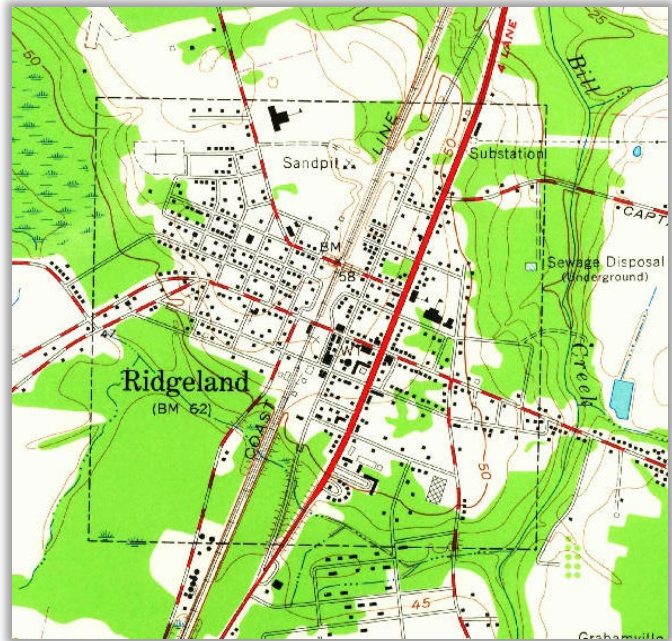
JACOB SMART BOULEVARD

Overview and History

Jacob Smart Boulevard runs perpendicular to Main Street, and it is characterized by a wide variety of auto-oriented uses including general stores, motels, gas stations, auto parts stores, and small retail stores. There are also several abandoned buildings and vacant lots.

In the 1920s, Jacob Smart Blvd became part of the U.S. Highway 17 corridor, one of the most important roads in the country at the time as well as a predecessor to I-95. For decades, it facilitated inter-state travel between Florida and the Northeast until I-95 was built in the 1960s.

As travelers drove through Ridgeland, they brought with them business and commerce, the remnants of which are still present today. The Palms Motel, Forest Motel, and Siesta Motel opened and became fixtures of the highway during this time; only the Forest Motel remains open today. Many gas stations, auto shops, and other auto-oriented uses opened to cater to the traveler market, many of which are still open. To this day, Jacob Smart Blvd is still a very auto-oriented corridor, designed to function as a highway, even though larger volumes of traffic have moved to I-95.



Map of Ridgeland in 1964. Jacob Smart Blvd funneled travelers into the heart of the Town.



The abandoned 'Proctor Building'



Typical view down Jacob Smart Boulevard



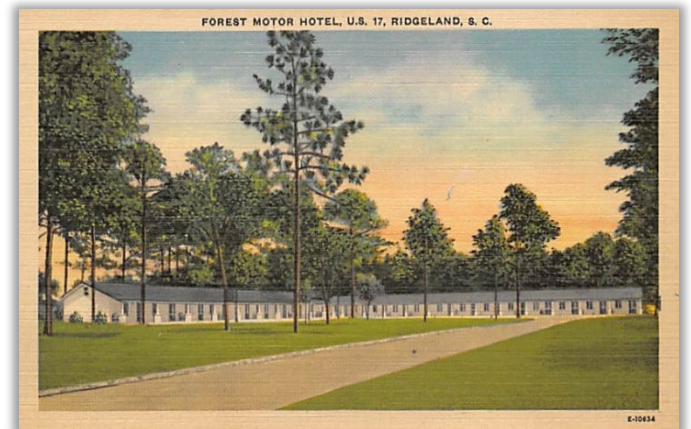
Storefronts at the corner of Main & Jacob Smart



Morris Center for Lowcountry Heritage, c.1937



Ridgeland Centralized Graded School, c.1928



Old postcard for the Forest Motel



Vacant storefront on Jacob Smart Blvd



Palms Motel and Potrero restaurant

Area Vision

Today, many buildings in the corridor have fallen into abandonment. Despite this, Jacob Smart Boulevard is still well-positioned as the Town's central spine, and as the Town grows there is the opportunity to revitalize the corridor.

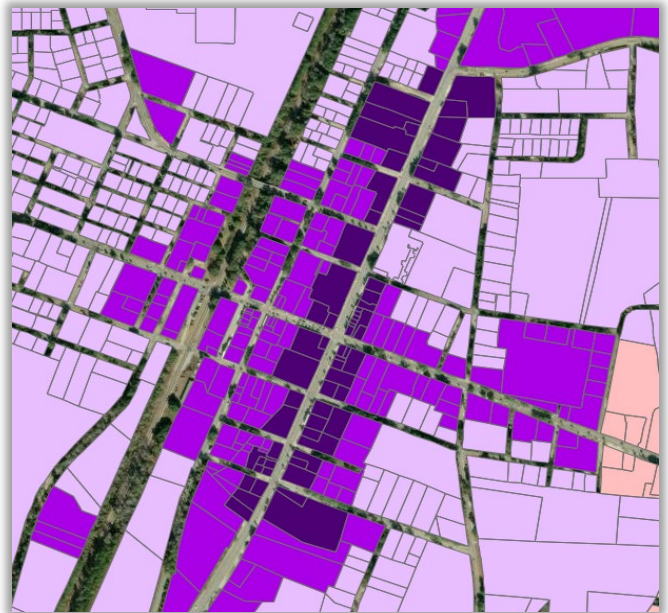
The Town envisions Jacob Smart Boulevard as a **dense, mixed-use street** which will absorb a significant amount of the Town's future growth. This area will become a **vibrant 'Main Street'** with retail, restaurants, housing, hotels, and offices, all laid out along a walkable street grid. **Historic buildings will be preserved and adaptively reused** to showcase the Town's history. New growth will be architecturally compatible with historic buildings, creating a comfortable 'Main Street' environment that is common in towns across the state.

Ridgeland looks to successful precedents in the region, like the revitalization of Old Town Bluffton, where many new buildings have been built in traditional styles to fit in with the surrounding older neighborhood, and Habersham, a New Urbanist community which features local Lowcountry architecture as well as its own walkable Market Street. However, although these are successful precedents, Ridgeland wishes to create a **unique corridor which is authentically Ridgeland**, rather than simply duplicating what has been built in these other communities.

The Town has zoned this corridor with the highest-density zoning districts allowed in the Town, the T5 zone, which allows for buildings up to 3 stories tall and accommodates a variety of uses such as retail, rowhouses, offices, and apartments. As of today, few property owners have taken full advantage of the T5 zoning district. As redevelopment occurs, many of the existing, legally non-conforming uses will give way to the Town's vision for redevelopment.



Jasper County School District building



The Town's highest-density zoning, the T5 zone (dark purple), is centered exclusively on Jacob Smart Blvd.

Anticipated Services

The consultant is expected to provide services to:

- Identify sites that are ready for reinvestment and redevelopment along the corridor.
- Identify historic sites and buildings for the purpose of preservation and adaptive reuse.
- Identify opportunities to enhance the street grid, improving walkability and connectivity.
- Redesign the street layout of Jacob Smart Boulevard to function as a walkable 'Main Street' type destination, including turn lanes at major intersections.
- Review the zoning standards for T4 and T5, as well as pending and enacted ordinances on related issues e.g. architecture and signage and optimize them for the Town's vision along this corridor.
- Provide recommendations for how the Town should address non-conforming, auto-oriented uses along the corridor as it transitions into a mixed-use destination.

EXIT 21

Overview and History

The eastern end of the Planning Area is composed of East Main Street where it meets I-95. This area, known as Exit 21, was largely built out in the 1990s and 2000s as part of a boom in businesses catering to Interstate travelers. The built environment is characterized by auto-oriented uses such as strip malls, gas stations, motels, and drive-through fast food restaurants.

I-95 was built through Ridgeland in the 1960s and completed statewide by 1978. I-95 routed traffic around Ridgeland with no immediate access to the Town's commercial areas; only Exits 18 and 22 existed at the time. Exit 21 opened in 1990, which gave Downtown Ridgeland direct access to the Interstate. The land immediately around the interchange was acquired and developed by national hotel brands, fast-food chains, and gas stations, which catered directly to Interstate travelers. Much of the market demand focused here, rather than on the Historic



View of East Main Street at Exit 21

Downtown. At the time, Exit 21 was viewed as a boon for the Town, as it brought in many national brands, a large commercial tax base, and better access to I-95. Exit 21 remains an attractive area for national brands, more so than anywhere else in the Town, due to the visibility and access from I-95.

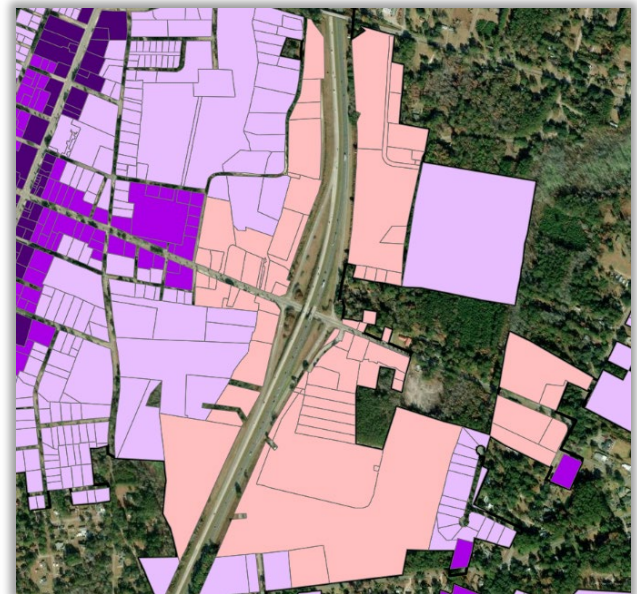
This area was developed in a relatively short time span, between the 1990s and 2000s, but there was very little coordination between properties during this time; as a result, many places do not internally connect with one another, and it can be confusing to navigate the area. For example, Pizza Bella and New Hong Kong restaurant are located right next to each other yet have separate parking lots and separate entrances to the street.

Tucked into this commercial area are Ralph Tuten Memorial Park and the Blue Heron Nature Trail. These are high-quality public spaces on their own but are affected by the public realm surrounding them. Ralph Tuten Memorial Park is surrounded on one side by the Burger King drive-thru, and on the other side by the BP gas station parking lot. The Blue Heron Nature Trail is adjacent to the commercial area and not very well connected; to access the Blue Heron Nature Trail, drivers must drive through the BP gas station parking lot.

This area has its own special zoning district, *SD-Exit 21*. This is a flexible zone which allows a wide variety of uses by right, including hotels, offices, retail, restaurants, a variety of civic uses (e.g. museums and libraries), a variety of auto-oriented uses (e.g. gas stations and drive-throughs), hospitals, schools or colleges, and an array of light industrial uses. Many of these uses are wholly incompatible with one another, and the Town wishes to improve this corridor by creating more cohesiveness with the downtown core.



Due to a lack of coordination, each building has its own standalone parking lot, some of which do not connect to each other, all laid out in an illogical manner.



The Town's SD-Exit 21 zoning district (pink) covers an extensive amount of land around the I-95 interchange.



Blue Heron Nature Trail



BP, Shell, and Dairy Queen



OYO Hotel



Burger King



Ralph Tuten Memorial Park



Jasper Station Shopping Center

Area Vision

The Town considers Exit 21 a **'gateway' to the Town**, where visitors and newcomers get their first impression of the Town of Ridgeland. This area currently gives the impression of auto-oriented sprawl meant for people to quickly arrive then leave, but not stay. It is not differentiated from other highway exits along I-95. It does not present Ridgeland's unique small-town charm.



View of Exit 21 from the I-95 overpass

The Town envisions Exit 21 to be **redeveloped in the style of a traditional town center**, similar to what is envisioned for the rest of the Planning Area, but with additional flexibility to accommodate the needs and services of the I-95 traveler market. This long-term vision will take years, even decades, to realize, so this vision must be approached with a long-term mindset but also reflect more immediate solutions.

The Town intends for Exit 21 to be carefully approached so that **new development balances automobile access with walkability and aesthetics**. This includes redesigning the area with a coherent street grid, intuitive connectivity between places (for both pedestrians and drivers), and new buildings which match the character of a traditional Main Street. At the same time, the Town understands that this area will have to accommodate gas stations and drive-thru restaurants to stay relevant to the I-95 traveler, so that Exit 21 is still easy and attractive for I-95 travelers to navigate and visit.

Ralph Tuten Memorial Park and the Blue Heron Nature Trail are strong assets for Ridgeland, but their full potential has not been realized. Today, Ralph Tuten Memorial Park is very self-contained and overshadowed by highway-style signage; in the future, it should be a highly visible public square and a focal point of the Exit 21 area. The Blue Heron Nature Trail is hidden from view with no clear entry point; in the future, it should be a visible place with an obvious, welcoming entrance. The Blue Heron Nature Trail is currently being expanded with new trails; the main area around the pond is primed for a design overhaul. A dog park ought to be considered for the area as well, either as a standalone park or as a part of the Blue Heron Nature Trail.

As Exit 21 faces market competition from other exits outside of Ridgeland (e.g. the Buc-ee's that is slated for Exit 8), it is important that Exit 21 is able to **differentiate itself and provide something unique and desirable to Interstate travelers**. Many of the ideas and principles in this vision (a Main Street atmosphere, improvements to the Blue Heron Nature Trail, a new dog

park) could help Ridgeland differentiate itself while leaving a good impression on visitors and staying economically competitive.

Finally, the Town wishes to address the section of Exit 21 which has already been developed (west of the interchange), but also to **plan proactively for Grahamville Road**, which runs east from the interchange to Bees Creek Road. As the Town grows and new housing developments are built along Bees Creek Road, this area is positioned for future commercial development, and whatever is built should be included as part of the Town's broader vision for the Exit 21 area.



Grahamville Road is adjacent to the Exit 21 interchange, but this area has not been extensively developed.

In anticipation of the Downtown Master Plan, Ridgeland Town Council is moving forward with a moratorium on certain kinds of uses currently allowed in the SD-Exit 21 zoning district. This temporary measure will allow the Town to create a plan for the Exit 21 area and update the zoning district to match the new plan.

Anticipated Services

The consultant is expected to provide services to:

- Redesign East Main Street and Grahamville Road to function as a walkable 'Main Street' and vibrant gateway that prioritizes transformative placemaking and public amenities.
- Identify sites that are ready for acquisition and redevelopment along the corridor.
- Review the zoning standards for the SD-Exit 21 zone and optimize them for the Town's vision along this corridor.
- Provide recommendations for how the Town should address non-conforming, auto-oriented uses along the corridor as it transitions into a 'Main Street' type destination.
- Provide recommendations for how the Town can coordinate with businesses along the corridor to improve and redesign the corridor without disrupting business activity.
- Assist in improvements to, and better connections with, Ralph Tuten Memorial Park and the Blue Heron Nature Trail.

PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

- **MASC/Ridgeland Downtown Revitalization, circa 1992.** The Town updated Main Street and commercial core with palm trees, brick sidewalks, and green lamp posts.
- **SmartCode, 2010.** The Town developed a form-based zoning code through a grant received by the Coastal Conservation League. The code emphasized design standards and building function, with the goal of building a sustainable, urban atmosphere.
- **Comprehensive Plan, 2025.** The Town updated its Comprehensive Plan with a particular focus on Downtown growth and revitalization.
- **I-95 Widening, Ramp Redesigns & Wayfinding Signage, 2026.** Ongoing work with the SCDOT to widen I-95 and redesign of exits around Ridgeland. Slated to begin construction in late 2027.



Brief on the Comprehensive Plan

Ridgeland recently updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2025, which includes ample discussion of the Town's vision for its Historic Main Street. Included here is a list of pages from the Comprehensive Plan which the Town's Planning Staff recommend for review.

- **Pages 6-7:** Discussion about Strengths, Weaknesses, Major Changes, Opportunities, and Desires based on public engagement. The Downtown area is central to conversations about the Town, so it is mentioned multiple times.
- **Pages 16-27:** Clearly stated outline of the Town's goals, many of which center around Downtown. Pages 20–21 focus exclusively on Downtown.
- **Pages 42-45:** Discussion about Ridgeland's history, population growth, drivers of that growth, Ridgeland's position relative to others in the region, and characteristics about Ridgeland's population.
- **Pages 48-49:** Discussion about Ridgeland's population growth projections.
- **Page 116:** Brief overview of Ridgeland's Downtown area as an asset to be built upon.
- **Pages 154-159:** the Implementation Strategy for the Comprehensive Plan, outlining actionable items the Town can work towards to achieve its Comprehensive Plan.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Core Anticipated Services

Phased approach: Each of the three separate Planning Areas will be broken into three separate phases. It is expected that the Historic Downtown phases 1 through 3 will occur first, then Jacob Smart Boulevard next, and finally Exit 21.

Phase 1: Assess Baseline and Set Strategic Direction

- Gather data, analyze strengths and opportunities, and identify potential incentives.
- Develop the area's overall vision based on community priorities and outline public investment and incentive opportunities.

Phase 2: Produce a Roadmap

- Building on the vision from phase 1, create a plan to achieve that vision and the elements needed for success.

Phase 3: Adopt

- Translate the preferred concepts established in phase 2 into implementation documents for adoption by Town Council and execution by staff.

Core Deliverables: The consultant will be expected to produce, at a minimum:

- existing conditions analysis;
- developing and executing a community engagement strategy;
- downtown vision and illustrative concepts;
- recommended projects with priorities and cost ranges;
- ordinance/code audit;
- ordinance-ready overlay/SmartCode language;
- funding and grant strategy/incentives for private reinvestment;
- actively participating in visioning, development of alternative scenarios, and final recommendations/presentations to Council.

Infill and Redevelopment: The consultant should be able to identify and evaluate sites that are immediately ready or strategically positioned for acquisition, reinvestment, redevelopment, and infill within the Town's targeted Planning Areas. The consultant should evaluate opportunities for public and private investment and provide recommendations for how the Town can better

facilitate redevelopment and infill while maintaining appropriate architectural, historic preservation, and community standards.

Historic Preservation: The consultant should identify historic sites, buildings, and structures appropriate for preservation and adaptive reuse; evaluate whether individual buildings, districts, or portions of the historic core may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places; and recommend appropriate historic preservation strategies, protections, and incentives.

Zoning and Ordinances: The consultant should review existing zoning standards and related ordinances applicable to each Planning Area and evaluate them to ensure they align with the Town's vision. The consultant should also review existing, pending, and proposed regulations related to architecture, signage, storefronts, historic preservation, and other development standards and recommend ordinance amendments that establish clear and achievable standards consistent with the desired character and development pattern of each area. Recommendations should address architectural and site-design standards, signage, storefronts, windows, streetscapes, landscaping, and other elements that contribute to attractive, active, and pedestrian-oriented environments.

Transition Design Pattern: The consultant should evaluate existing auto-oriented and non-conforming uses within areas targeted for transition or redevelopment and provide recommendations for managing the transition toward more walkable, mixed-use development patterns. These recommendations should balance the Town's long-term vision with the continued viability of existing businesses and should identify strategies for incremental redevelopment that minimize disruption to business activity. The consultant should recommend approaches for coordinating with property owners, businesses, private investors, and other stakeholders to advance redevelopment and corridor improvement goals while encouraging investment and maintaining community activity.

Coordination with Stakeholders: Throughout the process, the consultant should work collaboratively with Town Council, the Planning Commission, the Planning Department, property owners, businesses, private investors, and other appropriate stakeholders. The consultant should conclude the work with a clear implementation strategy identifying immediate, short-term, and long-term actions; prioritizing regulatory, capital, public-realm, preservation, and economic-development strategies; identifying potential public investments, partnerships, incentives, and other tools to catalyze private redevelopment; and providing recommendations for phasing and next steps.

Submittal Requirements

Firms shall submit written qualifications which clearly demonstrate their ability to provide quality services in a timely and cost-effective manner. Submittals should include the following:

- General Firm background
- Documentation of experience on similar projects (include client references)
- Outline of proposed work-plan and schedule including a summary of current workload
- Organization of personnel and contractors
- Include the dollar value for each project task to include:
 - Billing rates for each individual assigned to the work
 - Travel rates per diem
- Letters of recommendation and references
- Subconsultant information (if any). The preferred firm will have the in-house resources to perform work
- Design schedule showing all critical paths and key milestones

The firm may submit any additional supporting information which it deems relevant or important under this section. Additional supporting information is limited to no more than 20 pages.

It is highly desirable that the team have demonstrated experience preparing downtown master plans, form-based code amendments, overlay districts, historic downtown design standards, projects involving traditional architecture and New Urbanism, and implementation strategies for small towns or rural communities.

The firm shall be prepared to present to the Town Council their qualifications and approach, including all elements and recommendations as directed by the Town, prior to final selection.

Evaluation Criteria

The criteria used to evaluate the RFQ responses will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- 20 % Qualifications of the respondent, specifically as they relate to this project.
 - 20 % Experience of the respondent on similar projects and the individuals who would be assigned to this project.
 - 15 % Public participation strategies and past participation results from similar projects.
 - 20 % Available resources to complete the project and overall cost-effectiveness. This criterion would include any tools, personnel, resources, or methodologies commonly used by the respondent that may be applicable to the project categories.
 - 15 % Responsiveness to the RFQ.
 - 5 % Professional references.
 - 5 % Body of work, both completed and ongoing.
- (Items listed above are not necessarily listed in order of importance)

ADDENDA TO RFQ

During the period provided for the preparation of proposal documents, the Town may issue Addenda answering questions, clarifying or modifying this RFQ. Such Addenda will be numbered consecutively and shall be posted on the Town's website at www.ridgelandsc.gov/bid-opportunities Notifications will also be sent by email to registered bidders.