

Landscape and Tree Preservation Standards
Community Open House

Town of Kiawah Island Municipal Center
4475 Betsy Kerrison Parkway
Kiawah Island, SC 29455

April 10, 2024



LANDSCAPE & TREE PRESERVATION

Why does the Town seek to establish a comprehensive landscape and tree preservation ordinance?

Kiawah's identity has been built on a concept of designing with nature. This represents an embrace of wildlife and nature and the idea that the built environment is truly balanced to the unbuilt environment. In application of this designing with nature concept, Kiawah as a community has historically relied on the Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board to fulfill and administer landscape and tree preservation standards and guidelines. The robust guidelines and standards of the Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board "Designing With Nature" are far more extensive than the minimal standards within the Town's current Land Use Planning and Zoning Ordinance, and they are far more restrictive than most standards within other communities. This has resulted in a standard that many communities envy Kiawah by which developments are nestled within lush vegetation and magnificent landscapes.

As Kiawah continues to grow and mature, the strategies in which landscape and tree preservation guidelines and standards are deployed must also mature or evolve to ensure the concept of designing with nature is not compromised and that this concept is sustained as part the identity of Kiawah.

As we understand conditions are ever-changing, one of the most significant conditions of change is the sunseting of the long term executed development agreement with the master developer. With the Town not having its own comprehensive landscape and tree preservation ordinance that it administers; this creates an opportunity for the Town to cement new strategies and standards in Kiawah's next phase of ensuring designing with nature as a concept is sustained for generations.

Who can develop landscape and tree preservation standards?

The Planning Commission has the power and duty to prepare and recommend for adoption to Town Council the following to implement plans and programs within the Town:

- a. A zoning ordinance that includes zoning district maps and appropriate revisions thereof;
- b. Regulations for the subdivision or development of land and appropriate revisions thereof, and to oversee the administration of the regulations that are adopted by Town Council;
- c. An official map and appropriate revision of it showing the exact location of existing or proposed public streets, highways, and utility rights-of-way, and public building sites; regulations to control the erection of buildings or other structures; changes in land use within rights-of-way, building sites, or open spaces within the Town or specified areas within the Town;
- d. A landscaping ordinance setting forth required planting, tree preservation, and other aesthetic considerations for land and structures;
- e. A capital improvements program setting forth projects required to implement plans which have been prepared and adopted, including an annual listing of priority projects for consideration by the Town Council or other governmental bodies responsible for implementation prior to preparation of their capital budget; and
- f. Policies or procedures to facilitate implementation of planning elements.



Are there standards the Town currently administers?

The Town does not have a comprehensive landscape or tree preservation ordinance. However, there are standards which express some landscape or tree preservation elements for Kiawah.

- Sec. 12-104. - Accessory uses, buildings/structures.
- Sec. 12-127. - Compatibility buffering standards.
- Sec. 12-128. - Access, parking and loading regulations.

Protecting Trees Yields Satisfying Results...

Trees are an essential natural resource, an invaluable economic resource, and a priceless aesthetic resource. Trees play a critical role in purifying air and water, providing wildlife habitat, and enhancing natural drainage of stormwater and sediment control. They also help conserve energy by providing shade and buffering different land uses and beautifying the landscape.

Habitat

Shade

Sound
Barrier

Buffering

Infiltration

Screening

Windbreak

Aesthetics



What elements might a landscape and tree preservation ordinance consider?

- Landscaping Plant and Tree Types
- Landscape Material Specifications
- Street Trees
- Parking Area Landscapes
- Access and Parking Standards
- Vision Clearance and Sight Distance Visibility
- Site Lighting
- Right of Way Buffers
- Compatibility Buffers Types
- Fencing
- Tree Surveys
- Screening
- Installation, Maintenance and Replacement
- Review Procedure and Inspections
- Tree Replacement
- Tree Removal
- Residential vs Commercial

Factors for Kiawah To Consider During This Process...

- **“Designing with Nature” Existing Standards and Guidelines**
 - There is a blueprint to successful metrics already familiar to the Kiawah landscape and design professionals.
- **Native Plants**
 - Inserting Grow Native elements is an opportunity to advance the Town’s objective of more native plant species.
- **KiawahNext**
 - How might changes with Town’s Comprehensive Plan impact these standards?
- **Applicability to Contrasting Neighborhoods**
 - Neighborhoods across Kiawah are unique. Should this exercise continue to capture the unique elements of landscape when comparing the various neighborhoods and developments on Kiawah?
- **Capacity Building for Enforcement**
 - A new arena of robust landscape and tree preservation standards for the Town require accountability mechanisms. What measures should the Town take to ensure enforcement?
- **Standards for Rights of Way**
 - Specific standards can be developed for the main access route onto Kiawah Island as the KIP as well as Beachwalker Drive.

How did we get here?

- The Tree Preservation Subcommittee set a priority to focus on tree preservation standards for **Phase One** with the intent also develop landscape standards in the next phase.
- Ordinance format, structure and factors to consider were reviewed based on **issues relevant to the Kiawah community**.
 - Existing tree preservation community concerns, overall permitting process, staff resources, implementation, development timeline, etc.
- **Kiawah Context:** Grow Native, Wildlife, Invasive Species (Jim Jordan, TOKI Wildlife Biologist)
- *Designing with Nature* and various jurisdictions tree preservation ordinances were reviewed for understanding and compatibility.
- **Ordinance Implication Analysis** (Jennifer Hayes, KIARB Landscape Coordinator)
- **Design Community Input**
 - Landscape Architects, Architects, Builders, Arborists, Lawn Maintenance Companies

Public Meetings

- Planning Workshops | Design professionals and tree care professionals provided substantive comments and feedback. Ordinance language was presented and revised after each of the workshops.
 - Nov. 8th, Nov. 18th, Nov. 29th
- Planning Commission Recommendation
 - Dec. 6th
- Town Council Public Hearing
 - January 10th, February 6th
- Final Second Reading
 - March 6th (tabled)
 - April 2nd

**REVIEW DRAFT
ORDINANCE
LANGUAGE**

What is the purpose?

The purpose of these regulations is to provide tree preservation and landscaping standards for all properties within the Town of Kiawah Island's municipal boundaries in order to **consistently preserve and enhance Kiawah's natural environment** and to assure the **continuance of significant and specimen trees and forests** for present and future generations.

The **proper care of trees, shrubs and other landscape plants** is important to the implementation of this ordinance. It is the expectation that property owners, tree care professionals and design professionals **utilize industry best practices** in providing the proper care for the overall health of the trees.

Key Factors of Proposed Ordinance

- **Introduces tree preservation standards with mitigation standards for tree removal for the Town of Kiawah Island**
- **Applicable to all non-single-family residential developments.**
 - This is with the intent that the Town will determine the appropriate time in the future where single-family residential developments would also need to comply.
- **Exempts normal tree maintenance / pruning**
- **Introduces Tree Preservation Board for additional layer of review and mechanism for relief from standards if needed**

Key Factors of Proposed Ordinance

- **Aims to avoid duplication of process**
- **Aims to not significantly impact permitting/construction timeline resulting in delay.**
- **Defines additional key terms related to trees**
- **Promotes Kiawah's Grow Native initiative**
- **Folded into current Site Plan Review Process**
 - Tree Survey, Tree Preservation Plan and or Landscape Plan would be submitted along with site package for development, or during submission.

Tree Removal as part of Site Plan Review

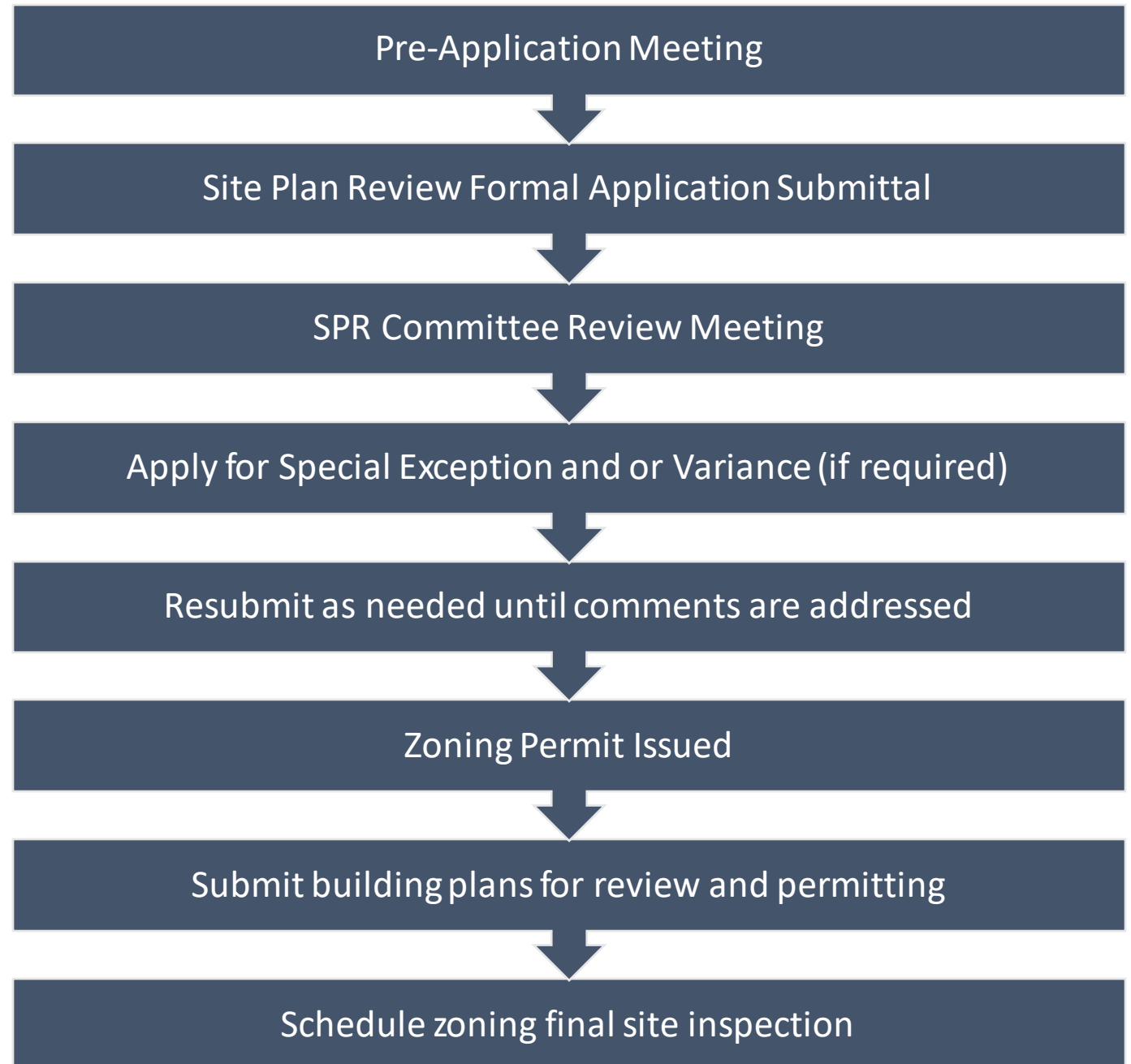
- Tree Survey, Tree Mitigation, Landscape would be an added required document (based on ordinance) to the list of application requirements during the site plan review process.
- If a project requires approval from the Tree Preservation Board that would come before issuance of final site plan review approval.



Site Plan Review Process

Site Plan Review (SPR) is a process used to examine all proposed developments, except for single family detached residential, for the purpose of ensuring compliance with local and state requirements. The purpose of a site plan review is to ensure that all applicable requirements of the zoning ordinance are complied with prior to the issuance of a zoning and building permit. The SPR Committee consists of representatives from various state and local agencies who will address the issues of the project including zoning, building codes, health standards, traffic/highway regulations, drainage/road requirements, compliance with wetland regulations and Storm Water regulations.

[View the Town's Land Use Planning and Zoning Ordinance](#)



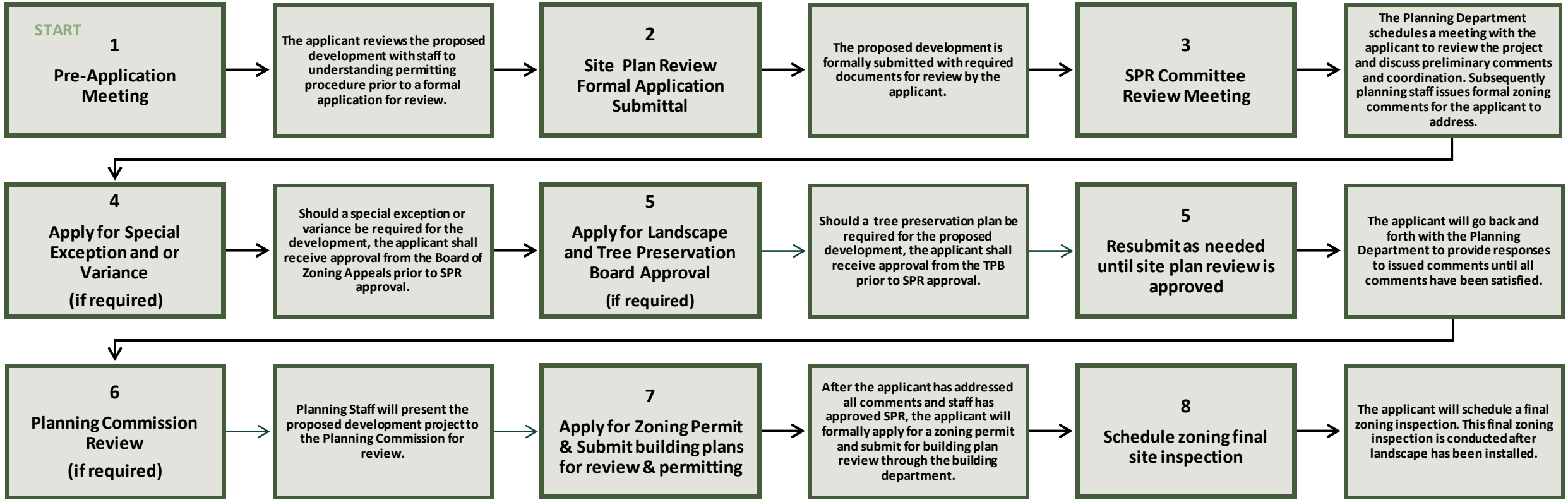


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Next Steps

- Consideration for phased implementation
 - Propose future time where single family residential would comply with the ordinance
 - Determine grace period for projects already advancing permitting
 - Schedule Open House with Design Teams upon adoption to share the ordinance
 - Communicate with Property Owners new standards
 - Develop Charter and Rules of Procedure for Tree Preservation Board
- Prepare for Phase II of ordinance which focuses on landscape standards