



# Zoning Resource Guide

*A resource to help you provide your own informed feedback during the Glynn County Virtual Open House*

From September 10-20, Glynn County is hosting a [“Virtual Open House”](#)—an opportunity for our community to weigh in on potential updates and changes to Glynn County’s 60-year old zoning ordinance. The feedback we submit will be used by consultants to prepare draft changes to the regulations later in the year—on everything from green space to how many homes can be built per acre and protections for our threatened wildlife.

This guide is designed to help you understand the context behind the issues and provide insight about how to think about each question as it relates to conservation. Our goal in providing you this information is not to dictate answers to you. Rather, it is to help you think holistically about Glynn County’s wildlife, communities, and landscapes, and the potential tools that can help preserve them.

**The new zoning ordinance will guide the development of Glynn County decades into the future, so it is critical that we all make our voices heard.** Thank you for taking the time to take this important survey!

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# Topic 1: Density and Design



## [Take the Survey!](#)

As someone who values conservation, it is natural to want to walk through these questionnaires in search of questions regarding open space and conservation. However, the questions about developed spaces are just as important. If we choose poor planning policies to govern the areas in which we all agree development is appropriate, the quality of life in these places will deteriorate, putting more pressure on our treasured rural and wild places for growth.

Rules governing density and design affect everything from green space and water quality to the overall character of a neighborhood. Traditionally, density has been known as a 4-letter word. But in the right places, density is just what a community needs to thrive.

For more information about any of the issues presented in **Topic 1**, please contact: Megan Desrosiers, *President/CEO*, at [megan@onehundredmiles.org](mailto:megan@onehundredmiles.org) or (912) 223-8608.

**Accessory Dwellings:** *Guest houses and similar accessory dwellings are not defined in current regulations. Mother-in-law suites count toward the total number of units in a development. The Envision Glynn plan recommends allowing a wider range of housing types including affordable options. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (Check as many as you like.)*

**Why this question matters:** While it may feel like an allowance for an accessory dwelling unit would increase density, the reality is that these are built on properties where the homeowner is present more often than not. Therefore, whether the structures are used for visiting family members or short or long-term renters, the homeowner maintains close observation over activities occurring in the accessory dwelling unit. Communities with flexible accessory dwelling unit policies are generally more affordable because these units provide a different type of housing for renters.

### *OHM's take:*

- More specificity about definitions, permitted zoning districts, and minimum standards for carriage houses and similar accessory dwellings would be helpful.
- An exemption for mother-in-law suites would provide homeowners more flexibility to accommodate visiting family members and potentially supplement their incomes.

**Forest Agricultural (FA) Zoning:** *The FA Forest Agricultural zoning district currently allows residential subdivisions with half-acre lots. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (Check as many boxes as you like.)*

**Why this question matters:** This is one of the most important questions in the entire survey. That's because, as the survey states, all land zoned Forest Agriculture is currently permitted to contain two homes per acre—this is a big deal. In Glynn County, FA zoning is the most conservation-oriented zoning category we have, yet two units/acre doesn't sound very conservation-friendly, does it?

**Other points to consider:**

- More than 900 acres on the north end of St. Simons Island are zoned FA. Currently, there are only a few dozen homes on this land, but the current zoning code gives landowners the right to build 1,840 units on this land. If landowners ever decided to execute this right, their decision would overburden already stressed public infrastructure and destroy the rural character of this part of the county. As demand for land on St. Simons increases, this will become a real possibility, parcel by parcel.
- Most land west of I-95 in Glynn County is zoned FA. Some of these parcels are larger than 30,000 acres. One purchase of property by a developer who wants to utilize his right to two units per acre could completely transform Glynn County.

**OHM's take:** In order to preserve the rural character of many communities in Glynn County (both west of I-95 and on the north end of St. Simons) and to protect our limited tax resources from haphazard and inefficient growth into remote areas (sewer and water extensions are expensive), we are advocating for a change.

Due to the different scale of each landscape, FA on the island versus FA on the mainland may need to allow for different densities.

- Establish a minimum lot size of 20 acres for new residential lots in this zoning district** – this is appropriate for FA zoning on the mainland. Because the parcels in western Glynn county are so large, a density allowance of one unit per every 10 or one unit per 20 acres is appropriate.
- Establish a minimum lot size of 10 acres for new residential lots in this zoning district** – this could be appropriate for both FA zoning on the mainland and the island.
- Establish a minimum lot size of 5 acres for new residential lots in this zoning district** – this is appropriate for FA zoning on the island. All parcels on St. Simons zoned FA are less than 500 acres. Most are less than 20 acres. Therefore, it would be appropriate to allow a density of one unit per five or one unit per 10 acres on land zoned FA on SSI.
- Allow farm owners in this zoning district to subdivide their land into a limited number of smaller homestead lots for immediate family members** - Of course, farmers should be permitted a limited number of subdivisions for their family members, but two units per acre is too high a density for the remote areas of the county.

**Design Standards:** *Today, minimal site, landscaping, and architectural design standards exist only for certain types of development. The Envision Glynn plan recommends better design standards. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (If any regulations change, existing buildings would be allowed to remain as they are and minor renovations would be exempt.) Check as many boxes as you like.*

**Why this question matters:** Great places are recognizable. St. Simons doesn't look like Downtown, and Altama doesn't look like western Glynn County—so design standards should be developed in recognition and celebration of these differences. Design standards that address building materials, height, and landscaping can maintain each community's character and prevent the "sprawl" landscape.

**OHM's take:** Design Standards should provide guidelines for community members and developers to build new structures that enhance an area's existing assets.

- Expanding design standards** should address building materials, landscaping, and other important aspects of building design across the entire county for both commercial and residential development.
- In iconic places, like St. Simons Village, as well as in highly visible areas, like along major corridors, **design standards should be strict**, serving as a tool for preserving the character of the place.

**Historic Buildings:** *Historic buildings are not currently defined or protected, but the Envision Glynn plan recommends that they be preserved. Which of these potential changes to the zoning regulations do you think are most appropriate? (Select one.)*

**Why this question matters:** From early Native American settlements to the importation of enslaved Africans, to the Civil Rights movement, it is important to remember the challenges, celebrations, and everyday lifestyles of our predecessors. Yet, history is lost every day. Many historic structures in Glynn County have fallen into severe disrepair, and restoration can be extremely expensive. Once these structures are lost, they are gone forever.

**OHM's take:** Historic preservation plays an important role in the celebration of our communities and the conservation of our coast.

- Adopting a historic preservation ordinance** would protect the buildings and districts recommended in the Glynn County Historic Resources Survey Report and provide regulations to make sure that new development is compatible.
- Creating historic preservation requirements and incentives without adopting the state model ordinance** is not as holistic as the answer above, which doesn't omit the option of adapting other historic preservation ordinances to Glynn County's needs.

**Fences and Walls:** *Fences and walls currently have some height restrictions but are not otherwise regulated. This allows flexibility for developers and land owners, but may also affect neighboring properties. Which of these potential changes to the zoning regulations do you think are most appropriate?*

We encourage you to answer this question as you feel appropriate, but we do not have conservation-related suggestions to share.

**Signs:** *Signs are regulated in many aspects today, but the results may not meet the community's aesthetic values. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (If any regulations change, existing signs would be allowed to remain as they are.) Check as many boxes as you like.*

**Why this question matters:** Signs are important tools to help visitors and residents navigate a community, but they quickly become eyesores if not carefully regulated. By regulating the type, size, and location of signs in a municipality (as well as the process for erecting new signs), a sign ordinance can preserve or create community character and stop visually-distracting competition between businesses. Furthermore, prohibiting billboards everywhere in the county except for along I-95 will preserve Glynn County's majestic marsh landscapes.

**OHM's take:**

- Our sign ordinances need to be updated to limit the size, height, and number of signs allowed** on both the mainland and island in order to protect our landscapes and viewsheds.
- The county should update regulations governing electronic and illuminated signs** to prevent light pollution.
- Billboards should be prohibited** everywhere except for in the I-95 corridor.

**Street Design:** *The only street design standards today are minimum width requirements. The Envision Glynn plan recommends creating a complete streets policy. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? Check as many as you would like.*

**Why this question matters:** Street design is extremely important to the character and function of a community and its infrastructure. Since WWII, streets have been designed with cars as the primary user, often overlooking the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

Through the decades, streets have gotten wider and less accessible to other users, and sidewalks and bike lanes have not been prioritized. Yet many studies show that streets that accommodate multiple types of users (i.e., not just cars) provide multiple benefits to a community. These fewer pedestrian and cyclist casualties, reduced traffic congestion, economic benefits to businesses, and increased property values for properties along the accessible street, and more.

**OHM's take:** The county should adopt a complete streets policy that would result in more accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians.

- Rephrase street width standards for new streets as requirements rather than minimums** - this may help to ensure that streets are not unnecessarily wide, which impedes safe non-vehicular mobility and increases traffic speed.
- Provide a menu of street designs that would be appropriate for residential or commercial development and different conditions or different zoning districts** - this would be beneficial in setting minimum standards and would help ensure that street designs are appropriately selected for the type of development.
- Require sidewalks, trees, and street lights on new streets in certain areas** - this would help improve the character of areas around Glynn County, facilitate non-vehicular mobility, and improve public safety.

**Street Connections:** *Street or driveway connections are currently required between adjacent office and commercial developments. The Envision Glynn plan recommends increasing connectivity, which would also increase emergency access after storms or hurricanes. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? Check as many boxes as you like.*

**Why this question matters:** Connected streets can significantly reduce traffic congestion. That's because developments that are built with only one egress onto a main road result in reliance on that one road regardless of whether the residents are traveling to a friend's house in a neighboring community, a grocery store along the main road, or out of town.

In a cul-du-sac subdivision pattern of development, every resident of every neighborhood is forced to drive on the major periphery streets. But by connecting the streets within the communities, residents have more options for traveling, the periphery streets handle smaller traffic loads, and the area is built out more like a cohesive community rather than isolated pods of homes. Thus, connected streets leads to greater community cohesion and efficiency.

**OHM's take:**

- Expand this requirement to other types of development, such as multifamily residential and industrial** - this is beneficial because, in addition to improving emergency escape routes, requiring connection in residential and industrial zoning district will help ease traffic congestions and improve opportunities for non-vehicular transportation.
- Clarify and strengthen requirements to require new streets to be connected to existing and proposed streets** - this would be beneficial, as the requirement would help ease traffic congestion.
- Require residential subdivisions over a certain size on the Mainland to have multiple entrances** - this needs to happen in order to prevent traffic congestions.

**Parking and Loading:** *The minimum amount of parking and loading spaces required today is sometimes more than what is necessary. Learn more Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? Check as many boxes as you'd like.*

**Why this question matters:** Most cities require developers to build parking lots with the day after Thanksgiving in mind rather a regular Tuesday. This over-design can cause massive inefficiencies that lead to poorly-used available land and can have terrible impacts on our environment.

**OHM's take:**

- The county should eliminate the minimum parking and loading requirements** to allow businesses to determine for themselves how best to use their space to accommodate their suppliers and customers.
- The county should allow mixed-use developments to share parking and to count nearby parking spaces toward parking requirements.**
- The county should require parking accommodations for golf carts and bicycles.**

**Building Codes:** *Building codes in Glynn County follow state standards but do not include any additional provisions to prevent property damage from winds and floods in hurricanes or other storms. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? Check as many boxes as you like.*

**Why this question matters:** *Glynn County's building codes are outdated. As a result, even new structures are at a higher risk of damage from wind and storms. The Federal Government provides incentives in the form of reduced flood insurance rates for people who live in communities with strict building codes.*

**OHM's take:** Improving our building code requirements is a win-win!

- Adopting additional codes prepared by the state to help protect new construction from storm damage** would be beneficial for improving our community's resilience and lowering the cost of rebuilding if we experience a hurricane.
- The county should change our adopted version of the International Building Code to require new construction to be designed for higher wind speeds, especially near the coast.**

**Household Size:** *Like all communities in Georgia, Glynn County's existing regulations limit the number of people who can live together in a residence. Existing regulations limit the number of people not "related by blood or marriage" (including roommates or adopted children), and do not allow more than five unrelated people to live together. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate?*

We encourage you to answer this question as you feel appropriate, but we do not have conservation-related suggestions to share.

**Building Height:** *Maximum building height is currently measured either from flood level or ground level (whichever is higher). Which of these potential changes to the zoning regulations do you think are most appropriate? Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate?*

We encourage you to answer this question as you feel appropriate, but we do not have conservation-related suggestions to share.

**Infill Regulations:** *Existing infill regulations control how new houses can be built on small historic lots in existing neighborhoods, and whether those lots can be subdivided (most regulations apply only on St. Simons Island). Regulations try to encourage compatible development, but the Envision Glynn plan and community input on the Zoning Update have suggested they need to be revisited. Check as many boxes as you like.*

**Why this question matters:** "Infill" is the term used for filling in empty lots within existing communities with new structures. In wide open, already-developed spaces, like those on the mainland, incentivizing infill is an important tool for using existing infrastructure—like road and sewer and water capacity—efficiently. However, in more-developed places, like St. Simons, infill can tax already over-burdened streets and sewer systems.

**OHM's take:**

- On the mainland and on SSI, the county should **remove the minimum lot size requirements** and allow maximum units per acre to control density, while allowing for more flexible development patterns.
- On the island, the county should **establish limits on height or size of infill houses** relative to the houses they replace or neighboring structures.
- The county should **limit the area of building footprints, building width, or building depth** in certain zoning districts or on smaller lots, both on the island and mainland.

**Housing Types:** *Current zoning allows for some variety of housing types, including fourplexes and small apartment/condo buildings in several zoning districts. Small houses on foundations are also allowed, but no standards exist, and no regulations for cottage courts are provided. The Envision Glynn plan recommends allowing a wider range of housing types, including affordable options. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? Check as many boxes as you'd like.*

**Why this question matters:** As a community develops, a variety of housing types can accommodate a diverse population in terms of style, size, and affordability.

**OHM's take:**

- The county should adopt codes and regulations necessary to provide minimum design standards for houses under 400 square feet.
- The county should define cottage court as a use or building type and provide minimum standards, and specify in which zoning districts it would be permitted.
- The county should define building types and provide diagrams and standards to show how a variety of housing types could be designed.
- The county should provide minimum standards for all housing types.

Relocating Historic Houses: *Relocating historic houses or other buildings into the county is currently tightly regulated. In most Georgia counties, relocated historic buildings are treated like any other building. Choose one.*

**Why this question matters:** Sometimes the ability to relocate a historic home is the only option for saving it. Homeowners should be able to choose if this is the option right for them.

**OHM's take:**

- The county should remove all zoning regulations related to historic building relocations and let the building code regulate this.

## Reverse Frontage, Commercial Driveway Widths, and Home-Based Businesses

We encourage you to answer these questions as you feel appropriate, but we do not have conservation-related suggestions to share.

# Topic 2: The Environment



## [Take the Survey!](#)

**Open Space:** *Although setback and buffer requirements mean that developers have to provide some green space, no open space is specifically required for new developments. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (These changes may reduce homeowner flood insurance costs.)*

**Why this question matters:** Maintaining open space is important for our environment and quality of life, but not all open space is created equal. Without careful consideration, an open space requirement could lead to areas paved with impervious surfaces, like patios or lawns, which require maintenance and fertilization. These do not provide environmental benefits like nature trails or green stormwater infrastructure. Effective requirements define "open space" to emphasize green spaces or gathering spaces that provide environmental and community benefits.

### ***Other points to consider:***

- Strategically preserving open, natural space will allow for salt marsh migration as this ecosystem moves westward in response to rising sea levels.
- Preserving open space with impervious surface improves the Community Rating System (CRS) score, which lowers flood insurance premiums.
- Allowing developers to apply open space credits to conserve land elsewhere in the county could help prevent habitat fragmentation by conserving large areas of green space where it is most valuable.

**OHM's take:** In Glynn County, open space requirements will be most beneficial west of I-95 and/or north of Harry Driggers Pkwy on the mainland and north of Sea Island Road on the island. This requirement should define open space to have ecological value. While preserving scenic vistas and building amenities are beneficial for property value and creating a sense of place, they cannot be substituted for open green space since they do not serve the same purpose. It's important to address each of these aspects separately.

- Requiring new developments to set aside a percentage of their site as open space** - this will ensure that tree canopy and pervious surfaces are retained, which helps reduce flooding and runoff.
- Providing a density bonus** - If this is coupled with a requirement (above), providing a density incentive for developers willing to go above the requirement will promote open space.

- Allow existing areas of natural or scenic value to count double** - Scenic vistas do not serve the same purpose and should not be substituted for open space. This could result in unintended loss of open space.
- Allow open spaces designed as amenities to count double** - Amenities (e.g. splash pads, patios, playground) do not provide environmental benefits like nature trails or green stormwater infrastructure. Allowing these to count double could result in less investment for natural open space.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Alex Muir, Coastal Advocacy Coordinator  
(352) 327-1837 • alex@onehundredmiles.org

**Lots on Septic Tanks:** *New residential lots with septic tanks are currently required (under certain circumstances) to be larger than lots with public sewer. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (Can select multiple options)*

**Why this question matters:** Septic systems have been used for decades to treat household waste and are a viable option for rural single-family homes. Allowing septic systems anywhere throughout the county can lead to unexpected growth in areas where little to no services are currently provided. This can increase cost of providing critical services to the county and can lead to water pollution when systems are not maintained. Also, in areas where septic is allowed, it is critical that home-owners maintain and service their systems. Septic systems fail and can discharge fecal coliform and other harmful pathogens into public waters if they are not properly managed.

**Other points to consider:**

- Large "community" septic systems (also known as package plants) have a high rate of failure and should be discouraged.
- As flooding from storm surge and stormwater increases, septic tanks near the coast will be negatively impacted by saturation of the ground and increasing water tables.

**OHM's take:** New residential lots within a certain distance of a public sewer line should tie into the sewer system and the County should adopt minimum standards encouraging septic Best Management Practices (BMPs), like mound construction and maintenance requirements, for any new septic system. Rural residential single-family home development with plenty of space to filter wastewater through septic systems can work well.

- Expand this requirement to always require larger residential lots on septic systems** - this is the preferred alternative in rural areas when there is no option for a homeowner to tie into a sewer line.
- Prohibit non-rural uses on septic systems** - this would benefit the community and the environment because most areas of the county where growth is encouraged currently have or will soon have sewer services provided by the Joint Water & Sewer Authority.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Alice Keyes, VP of Coastal Conservation  
(912) 230-6494 • alice@onehundredmiles.org

**Additional Resources:**

- <https://www.epa.gov/septic/types-septic-systems>
- <https://dph.georgia.gov/environmental-health/wastewater-management>

**Light Pollution:** Existing light pollution regulations require new light fixtures to be full cutoff and provide maximum lighting levels, but do not apply to single-family houses except during sea turtle season, and do not fully protect views of the night sky. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (Can select multiple options)

**Why this question matters:** The spread of artificial lighting means most of us no longer experience truly dark nights. Light pollution has serious consequences for human health and a variety of coastal wildlife, including Georgia's threatened sea turtles. In humans, research suggests that artificial light at night can increase risks for obesity, depression, sleep disorders, diabetes, cancer and more. On the beach, nesting sea turtles are deterred by brightly lit areas and hatchlings become misoriented, crawling towards the artificial light source and away from the ocean—often to their death. Thus, light pollution is a form of habitat loss on Georgia's developed beaches.

**Other points to consider:**

- Sea turtle nesting densities on developed beaches in Georgia with artificial lights is lower than nesting on undeveloped beaches. During the 2020 season, St. Simons only recorded 3 loggerhead nests.
- In addition to humans and sea turtles, artificial lighting causes negative health impacts for a variety of insect pollinators, migratory birds, amphibians, nocturnal bats, and other important coastal species.
- Changing to low and shielded (full-cutoff) lights results in energy savings by focusing more lumens on the ground, rather than wasting energy illuminating the sky above the light.

**OHM's take:** All of these options are important steps to protecting wildlife and human health. In particular, strengthening the beach lighting regulations must be a high conservation priority. Most lighting ordinances were written before advances in scientific understanding and advances in lighting technology. Glynn County's current regulations do not address the quality or wavelength of light, and lack the best practices of other model ordinances on Jekyll Island and in Florida. Sea turtles have been shown experimentally to be less disturbed by long-wavelength light (amber and red).

- Remove the exemption for single-family houses** - this would be a positive step that would help to decrease sky glow, lessen negative impacts from light pollution, and increase views of the night sky.
- Strengthen existing regulations for lighting near the beach** - this is a critical step. Glynn County's current ordinance does not address the quality or wavelength of light, which is critical for protecting threatened sea turtles. The current outdated ordinance needs to be updated in order to protect sea turtles.
- Expand existing requirements to specify maximum light levels at the property line** - this would be another positive step that would also decrease sky glow, lessen negative impacts from light pollution, and increase views of the night sky.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Catherine Ridley, VP of Education and Communications (912) 222-3140 • [catherine@onehundredmiles.org](mailto:catherine@onehundredmiles.org)

**Additional Resources:**

- [Facebook.com/SSITurtles](https://www.facebook.com/SSITurtles)
- <https://myfwc.com/conservation/you-serve/lighting>
- <https://www.darksky.org/light-pollution/wildlife>

**Tree Planting:** *No trees or landscaping are required in new developments today, except for in buffers, although existing trees on St. Simons Island are protected. (This zoning update effort is not proposing any substantive changes to the tree preservation ordinance.) Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (Can select multiple options)*

**Why this question matters:** Maintaining tree canopy in urban, highly-trafficked areas offers shade and improves water and air quality. In rural, lower density areas, trees benefit wildlife and maintain the community's sense of place. Unfortunately, parcels are often clear-cut during construction, because it is more cost-effective for developers. Tree ordinances are used to protect certain tree species and ensure tree canopy is maintained. And establishing standards for planting in new developments and parking lots throughout the county is a good start to maintaining our character areas.

**Other points to consider:**

- Incentivizing rain gardens and xeriscaping (native, water-efficient landscaping) can help effectively use landscaping space in our community for flood mitigation and water conservation.
- A local ordinance could require native species in all plantings to fulfill landscaping goals and protect native wildlife.
- Stipulating a preference for large, native shade trees over decorative trees like crape myrtles, palm trees, and shrubs can help ensure tree canopy is preserved.

**OHM's take:** All minimum landscaping standards should not be too prescriptive, as they can result in highly manicured landscapes. Rather, standards should focus on protecting the Glynn County tree canopy as well as natural and/or open spaces. The referenced tree ordinance only applies to St. Simons Island and should be expanded and amended to include the mainland, particularly the condition that protects mature live oak trees with a diameter at breast height (DBH) of 38" or more.

- Create tree planting standards for all new developments** - this would establish a clear picture of how developments will look and feel after construction and allow for predictable impacts on the county's tree canopy.
- Create tree planting standards for all new parking lots** - this would help provide shade, air filtration, flood control, and character throughout the County.
- Create minimum landscaping standards for all new developments** - this would be beneficial, as long as the requirements encouraged protecting existing green space, planting native species, and installing rain gardens.
- No Change** – this would not protect any large established trees outside of St. Simons Island, would not encourage native planting important to wildlife, and would not benefit the unique character areas identified throughout the county.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Alex Muir, Coastal Advocacy Coordinator  
(352) 327-1837 • alex@onehundredmiles.org

**Additional Resources:**

- <https://gatrees.org/urban-community-forestry/tree-ordinances>
- [https://library.municode.com/ga/glynn\\_county/codes/zoning\\_and\\_subdivision\\_ordinance?nodetd=ARTICLE%206%20-%20General%20Provisions](https://library.municode.com/ga/glynn_county/codes/zoning_and_subdivision_ordinance?nodetd=ARTICLE%206%20-%20General%20Provisions)

**Conservation Subdivision:** *Conservation subdivisions are addressed in conflicting ways in the current regulations. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (These changes may reduce homeowner flood insurance costs.) Can only choose one.*

**Why this question matters:** Conservation subdivisions are designed to minimize development impacts and maximize the benefits of natural landscapes. By retaining green space and clustering homes, these developments can reduce costs for water lines, roads, stormwater management, tree clearing, and landscaping required in new subdivisions. The retention of green space in these subdivisions reduces habitat fragmentation, the urban heat island effect, and stormwater management challenges associated with development.

**Other points to consider:**

- In addition to lowering flood insurance costs, putting open space within these development into conservation easements can provide tax incentives for landowners.
- Conservation subdivisions can facilitate access to recreational opportunities like biking and nature trails, birding, and fishing.

**OHM's take:** Conservation subdivisions should be considered county-wide, particularly in areas that are not yet developed. They should be encouraged in the areas west of I-95 on the mainland, north of Harry Driggers Parkway on the mainland, and north of Sea Island Road on St. Simons Island.

- Require new large subdivisions on the Islands to be conservation subdivisions** - the outcome of this option, while beneficial, would omit many areas in western Glynn County where forested areas could be protected by a conservation subdivision requirement. Ideally the requirement would extend to the entire county (below).
- Require new large subdivisions county-wide to be conservation subdivisions** - this option is most beneficial and would lead to subdivisions that work within the landscape rather than transforming it.
- Do not require conservation subdivisions anywhere, but allow them by regulating density with maximum housing units per acre rather than minimum lot size.** - this is an improvement compared to existing zoning, but is not ideal because it would likely minimize the use of conservation subdivisions compared to the options above.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Alex Muir, Coastal Advocacy Coordinator  
(352) 327-1837 • alex@onehundredmiles.org

**Coastal & Environmental Regulations:** *Existing environmental regulations protect beaches and dunes but do not go beyond state requirements for stream or marsh setbacks, and do not allow shorelines and marshes to migrate over time, or otherwise protect property from flooding and sea level rise. If any regulations change, existing buildings would be allowed to remain as they are unless destroyed by a natural disaster. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (These may reduce homeowner flood insurance costs.) Can select multiple options.*

**Why this question matters:** While local coastal and environmental regulations must comply with state law/rules, every county is allowed to adopt more protective standards through local codes and ordinances. Utilizing local standards in addition to state standards helps a community account for its own land use needs and incorporate future adaptation and resilience strategies that are not addressed in state regulations. Improving coastal and environmental regulations protects public health and safety and can lower flood insurance rates by reducing risk.

**OHM's take:** Pursuing all of the listed changes in this section would be valuable—giving our community the chance to update outdated codes, add additional protective measures for new developments that we know will be threatened by rising seas and storms, and to ensure sensitive habitats can adapt to changing conditions.

- **Increase the existing marsh setback from 25 to 50 feet** - this would help Glynn County minimize impacts from flooding, prevent erosion, protect property, protect wildlife habitat, and maintain water quality
- **Remove loopholes in existing marsh protection regulations for lots platted before 2015, lots with more than 18% of their area in the buffer, and other exemptions** - this would clarify how the marsh setback should be implemented throughout the county to achieve the intended goal of the state legislation adopted in 2015 - to protect state marshlands, in trust for the people, from land-disturbing activities related to development and construction.
- **Prohibit the construction of sea walls in marshes, but provide standards for living shorelines to provide natural protection from erosion** - this would encourage developers to consider the benefits of stabilizing marsh banks in a way that integrates natural plant and animal communities into designs for controlling erosion.
- **Increase the existing stream setback from 25 feet to an average of 75 feet average and a minimum of 50 feet** - stream setbacks are a zoning tool that would help Glynn County minimize impacts from flooding, prevent erosion, protect property, protect wildlife habitat, and maintain water quality.
- **Adopt a setback from wetlands of at least 25 feet** - a wetland buffer would maintain the natural vegetated cover along the waterway, protect property, and conserve natural resources adjacent to wetlands.
- **Clarify the existing beach and dune protection regulations, and align their requirements with the Georgia Shore Protection Act** - this would allow the County to update local ordinances with the new definition of "dynamic dune field" from state law amendments made in 2019 and to strengthen local setback rules designed to protect private property near the state-managed dunes.
- **Establish more strict regulations for construction within the coastal high hazard area** - this would address the dangers of building in areas where waves and fast-moving water can cause extensive damage during a base flood event, and certainly damage during a hurricane-type storm event.
- **Rezone sensitive coastal or environmental areas to CP Conservation Preservation** - this would help protect environmentally sensitive areas, like marshes and wetlands in the western portion of the county. Marshes east of I-95 make up most of the Conservation Preservation zoning in Glynn County, but areas west of I-95 could also benefit from this zoning.

## Coastal & Environmental Regulations *(continued)*:

- Establish a coastal overlay zone to require more environmentally appropriate development near the coast or in sensitive areas** - this would result in area-specific planning standards that address particular aspects like sea level adaptation, site coverage, and/or freeboard requirements. Base zoning districts remain the same while the overlay district applies additional criteria.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Alice Keyes, VP of Coastal Conservation  
(912) 230-6494 • [alice@onehundredmiles.org](mailto:alice@onehundredmiles.org)

### *Additional Resources:*

- <https://coastalgadnr.org/MarshShore>
- [https://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/wp-content/uploads/archive/documents/Doc\\_457.pdf](https://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/wp-content/uploads/archive/documents/Doc_457.pdf)
- <https://coastalgadnr.org/LivingShorelines>

**Freeboard:** *The floor level of new buildings is currently required to be one foot above flood level. Envision Glynn recommends protecting new construction from flooding and sea level rise. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (If any regulations change, existing buildings would be allowed to remain as they are.) Choose only one.*

**Why this question matters:** The amount of freeboard used will influence the risk of flooding. Freeboard requirements ensure that the first floor of a dwelling is above the base flood elevation, meaning it is above the highest elevation of the surrounding area. According to intermediate projections from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Georgia can expect 2 feet of sea level rise in the next fifty years, which will lead to increased flooding from storm surge and high tides.

### *Other points to consider:*

- Communities along Georgia's coast typically require anywhere from 1 to 3 feet of freeboard, with exception for homes that are at greater risk and must be built on stilts.
- Most of Glynn County is located in high-risk flood zones.

**OHM's take:** We should increase freeboard requirements county-wide. A 3-foot freeboard requirement on St. Simons Island and on properties adjacent to tidal marshes would improve the resilience of structures in Glynn County. We can expand upon freeboard requirements by adopting flood prevention design standards, similar to Tybee Island's Flood Prevention Ordinance.

- Increase this requirement so all new buildings would have to be at least two feet above flood level (This option may reduce homeowner flood insurance costs.)** - this would benefit all Glynn County residents and help to reduce flood insurance costs for all residents.
- No change - keep existing regulations as they are** - this would ignore all the evidence that shows sea levels are rising and storm events are causing more damage than ever before.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Alex Muir, Coastal Advocacy Coordinator  
(352) 327-1837 • [alex@onehundredmiles.org](mailto:alex@onehundredmiles.org)

**Natural Disasters:** *Under current regulations, buildings that are damaged or destroyed by a hurricane or other natural disaster must be rebuilt to follow all zoning regulations if the reconstruction cost is more than 50% of the value of the building and certain other criteria apply. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (These changes may reduce homeowner flood insurance costs.) Can only select one.*

**Why this question matters:** When natural disasters destroy buildings and structures, owners must decide whether to rebuild or to abandon the development. These times are opportunities to consider employing adaptation and resilience strategies that can prevent damage from similar disasters in the future. Scientists and researchers have unveiled useful information we did not have when structures were previously built in Glynn County, but that could now be employed to improve our resilience.

**Other points to consider:**

- When the decision is made to rebuild after a disaster, any rebuild must occur following updated design standards to ensure homes can withstand future disasters.
- Homes destroyed by natural disasters, particularly flooding, are at risk of experiencing repetitive loss when the next natural disaster strikes. Not requiring a rebuild to comply with updated standards could leave structures more vulnerable in the future.

**OHM's take:** Requiring a rebuild is beneficial because it will allow for the use of up-to-date flood maps, planning strategies, and construction components, making rebuilt structures more resilient to future events. Additionally, we should consider implementation of a local buyout program, which provides an option for residents to sell their property at fair market value, then be used by the local government as a natural storm buffer. These programs were successful for local governments in the Northeast after Hurricane Sandy.

- Temporarily waive this requirement when a state of emergency is declared or a certain category storm impacts Glynn County** - this would only allow expedited approvals for reconstruction and would be harmful to not require up-to-date information and construction codes.
- Keep this requirement, but develop a plan to expand County staff capacity after storms, or to allow faster approvals for reconstruction that does not increase floor area** - this would allow the County opportunities for adaptation to improve our community's resilience to natural disasters.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Alex Muir, Coastal Advocacy Coordinator  
(352) 327-1837 • alex@onehundredmiles.org

## Buffers

We encourage you to answer this question as you feel appropriate, but we do not have conservation-related suggestions to share.

**Energy Codes:** *The latest energy codes are not yet required in Georgia or Glynn County, so new construction does not have to be as energy efficient as it could be. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? Can select multiple options.*

**Why this question matters:** Energy efficiency is an effective way to combat climate change. Energy efficient appliances and technology available today are quite affordable.

**OHM's take:** Glynn County should require new construction to be as energy efficient as possible in order to cut down on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, coal ash production, and to conserve water resources (used abundantly in energy production). All opportunities to address the county's energy codes should be considered and updated appropriately. Additionally, water efficiency is equally as critical, so the county should consider adopting water use standards to comply with or exceed those set forth in the 2010 Georgia Water Stewardship Act.

- Adopt the latest nationally-recognized energy codes for new residential and commercial construction** - this will ensure new construction in Glynn County is using up-to-date standards for energy usage, but will only provide minimal energy efficiency benefits.
- Adopt an energy standard such as the National Green Building Standard for new residential and commercial construction (this would ensure maximum efficiency, but flexibility in compliance)** - this is an ideal solution for helping Glynn County decrease GHG emissions and production of coal ash.
- Adopt nationally recognized energy performance standards only for new commercial buildings** - this is not ideal because it will omit residences, where much of our energy is consumed, and could mean less cost savings for residents in new homes.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Alice Keyes, VP of Coastal Conservation  
(912) 230-6494 • [alice@onehundredmiles.org](mailto:alice@onehundredmiles.org)

**Pervious Pavement:** *Pervious pavement currently counts toward maximum site coverage and is prohibited in parking lots with more than 10 spaces. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? (These changes may reduce homeowner flood insurance costs.) Can select multiple options.*

**Why this question matters:** Pervious materials, also referred to as porous or permeable materials, are often used as an alternative to hard pavement that does not allow rainwater to filter through to the soil. Grass is the most natural pervious material, but many types of pavement materials and grid systems can be used in developments to allow stormwater to filter through voids in the pavement surface, and infiltrated into the soil.

**Other points to consider:**

- Pervious surfaces help to reduce stormwater runoff, alleviate flooding, and increase groundwater recharge. Impervious surfaces exacerbate runoff and flooding and decrease the rate of groundwater recharge.
- Should Glynn County adopt the Stormwater Supplement designed for coastal Georgia counties to reduce the impact of stormwater (see later survey question), pervious materials are an excellent alternative to fulfill the goals of managing stormwater and minimizing impact to the surrounding environments.

**OHM's take:** New residential and neighborhood developments should be encouraged to use pervious pavement for parking areas. Parking lots should be required to install pervious pavement, especially for overflow parking and shared areas that are not regularly used. Increasing the use and installation for pervious materials must be accompanied by guidance for installation and maintenance of pervious materials, along with amendments to the County's requirements for curb design allowing for the use of swales that can help facilitate the effectiveness of pervious materials.

- Update the definition of "site coverage" to encourage pervious pavement** - this would minimize runoff and be beneficial.
- Allow some parking spaces in all parking lots to be pervious** - this option does not require or incentivize the use of pervious parking. Requiring some parking spaces to be pervious will minimize runoff and reduce flood risks (see below).
- Require some parking spaces in all parking lots to be pervious** -this would minimize runoff from parking lots significantly and would be most appropriate for overflow parking and shared areas that are not regularly used.
- Allow a portion of pervious parking spaces to count toward any open space requirements** - parking spaces, whether porous or impervious, should not be count toward open space requirements, but should be considered when impact fees are calculated.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Alice Keyes, VP of Coastal Conservation  
(912) 230-6494 • [alice@onehundredmiles.org](mailto:alice@onehundredmiles.org)

**Site Coverage:** *Site coverage restrictions are currently provided in some zoning districts. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? Can only choose one.*

**Why this question matters:** Site coverage, or the land that is built upon in a development, prevents stormwater from seeping into the ground. It is a major development aspect that creates negative impacts to surrounding sites, habitats, and tree canopy. Larger buildings with greater site coverage typically means more energy usage, more stormwater runoff, and less green space.

**OHM's take:** The Glynn County Commission is considering adopting a development impact fee, and site coverage would play a major role in how the county staff administers that new program. As such, establishing a standardized method of determining site coverage in all districts will be a critical step (including guidance on how impervious pavement is considered when developing on a site). Establishing site coverage limits specific to the county's diverse character areas seems the best path forward. This approach will not apply a blanket standard throughout the county but will allow for flexibility in development design.

- Add site coverage limits to all zoning districts** - this means that all new development, regardless of location or land use, would have a site coverage limit. This would be appropriate if each character area had specific coverage limit for the included zoning districts.
- Add site coverage limits only on the Islands** - this option is not ideal because it would omit the mainland, where there are many benefits to gain from implementing site coverage limits for future development.

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Megan Desrosiers, President/CEO  
(912) 223-8608 • [megan@onehundredmiles.org](mailto:megan@onehundredmiles.org)

## Site Coverage Variances

We encourage you to answer this question as you feel appropriate, but we do not have conservation-related suggestions to share.

**Stormwater Management:** Existing county engineering standards allow developments the flexibility to use low impact development practices rather than conventional engineering, based on state standards. Which of these potential changes do you think are most appropriate? Can select multiple options.

**Why this question matters:** Stormwater runoff from large areas of impervious surfaces can wreak havoc on our environment and downstream neighbors (just ask our friends in College Park!) The Coastal Stormwater Supplement was developed for coastal Georgia communities and offers a holistic approach to addressing stormwater in the unique sandy environment of coastal Georgia. Many of the methods and techniques described in the Stormwater Supplement include Low Impact Design (LID) standards.

**OHM's take:** Glynn County must consider a holistic approach to addressing the challenges of stormwater runoff. The Coastal Stormwater Supplement and its associated model ordinance is the most effective path forward. Low impact design standards are only one piece of the solution preventing stormwater from running off property and causing problems downstream, but they are critical nonetheless.

- Provide specific criteria for low impact design to ensure that it is effective and environmentally sensitive** - this change would ensure that the most beneficial practices are implemented.
- Expand or reference design guidelines outside the zoning ordinance to ensure developers are familiar with best practices** - this would be a positive step toward educating developers and should be coupled with the adoption of the Coastal Stormwater Supplement.
- Create incentives for developments that use low impact design** - this would be a positive step to managing stormwater runoff and should be coupled with the adoption of the Coastal Stormwater Supplement.
- Require stormwater to be treated before draining into marshes** - we recognize that this could be a costly endeavor, but in order to protect our salt marsh as Glynn County grows, we must ensure that harmful chemicals running off of parking lots, lawns, roofs, and other stormwater-generated surfaces are properly treated and do not destroy our signature landscape.
- Update stormwater ordinances to match model ordinances and adopt the Coastal Stormwater Supplement** - this is the preferred solution and would be the most comprehensive approach to stormwater management for the county to adopt. (**Note:** The link to "model ordinances" provided on the survey site takes you to stormwater standards in Metro Atlanta, the Piedmont area of the state with very different soils, topography and development pressures. We support this answer choice, but suggest adding a comment that the ordinance must be tailored to our coastal region.)

**OHM Contact:** Please contact us to learn more! Alice Keyes, VP of Coastal Conservation  
(912) 230-6494 • [alice@onehundredmiles.org](mailto:alice@onehundredmiles.org)

#### **Additional Resources:**

- The website with all the elements of the Stormwater Supplement, including a direct link to the coast's model ordinance can be found here: <https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch/storm-water/georgia-epd-coastal-stormwater-supplement-stormwater>