



One Hundred Miles (OHM)
Statement on Glynn County's Zoning Ordinance Revision
July 8, 2022

Glynn County's zoning ordinance is the single-most important policy that will determine the future of our community. Though most of us probably don't think about it all that often, zoning impacts every aspect of our daily lives. It is the blueprint that will grow our economy and guarantee our quality of life for decades to come.

Over the past few weeks, we have watched as the poorly-managed process of revising Glynn County's outdated zoning ordinance dissolve into a dysfunctional mess. It now threatens to destroy Glynn County's unique character, which is the economic driver that leads people to visit, relocate, build businesses, and raise families in our Golden Isles.

Our current ordinance has been responsible for both the beautiful built communities that are a source of pride in Glynn County and some of our most significant problems, which have caused us frustration and shame. This recent draft was created by zoning professionals in order to translate more than 1,000 residents' comments into a cohesive code that will ensure future development improves Glynn County and prevents some of the negative unintended consequences caused by past development.

The members of the Glynn County zoning committee are not zoning experts, and this process is too important to allow them to be led by their biases about regulation, economic development, and politics. Their decision on June 27 to throw out the draft ordinance in its entirety demonstrates that they are unequipped to continue to revise either the draft or our existing ordinance without outside assistance. We must rely on experts to guide the committee through the process of reviewing the draft and engaging the public until we get a workable final product.

One Hundred Miles calls on the Glynn County Commission to reject the committee's recommendation to scrap the draft. Instead, the commissioners should add more people to the committee who represent diverse interests and reengage with a professional facilitator, preferably from TSW, who understands how to best guide discussions about the draft, invite public input, and cohesively manage a complex set of community interests. With a facilitator's help, the committee can work collaboratively towards a final product that balances opportunities for growth with the preservation of our unique quality of life.

**>> To learn more about OHM's position and our involvement in this important process,
please review the following information or visit OneHundredMiles.org/Zoning.**

Why should Glynn County residents care about zoning? Zoning is the tool that every community uses to establish the framework for how, when, and where it develops—a playbook that results in our future landscape, safety, and quality of life. It is not just a tool for developers but for everyone in Glynn County who wants to buy a home, raise a family, or build a business. How we zone and choose to build out our community determines everything from how much traffic we sit in on the way home from work to whether our neighborhoods flood, how efficient our utilities are, whether our children can bike or walk to school, and on and on.

Meanwhile, growth is knocking on our door, and we have a choice to make. Of coastal Georgia's 14 barrier islands, only four are accessible by car—three of which are right here in our backyard. Since 2010, our population has grown 6%, and that rate is expected to accelerate through 2050—exacerbating growth pressure on both St. Simons Island and the mainland. If we wait to respond to those challenges individually, it will be too late. With this zoning revision, we can choose whether we want a select group of developers to determine our future, or whether we will work together to define the community we want to live in, now and for years to come.

All Georgia counties are mandated by law to regularly revisit and revise their zoning ordinances. This is because the state and federal government are constantly updating codes related to safety, technology, energy efficiency and other advancements. Zoning is a critically important process, and if history is any indication, it isn't one we're likely to embark on again anytime soon. We all deserve a stake in the outcome, and we must get it right.

How was the updated draft developed? In 2019, Glynn County began the long-overdue task of revising its outdated and antiquated zoning ordinances—some of which were last updated nearly half a century ago, during the Ford and Carter administrations.

With the help of a consultant, TSW, the county wisely invited the public to participate. According to the county's website, more than 1,000 residents and business owners submitted online comments, attended public meetings, and otherwise shared their ideas and concerns for the future of Glynn County. TSW then took this wide-ranging feedback, along with other technical guides and state and federal guidelines and translated it into a draft revision.

How did the process go awry so quickly? The nine-member Glynn County zoning committee is comprised exclusively of people who earn a living from and benefit from increased development. From the beginning, OHM and other community members expressed concerns about the committee's makeup. While we agree their perspectives are important, we don't believe the development sector should be the only one represented on the committee. Other perspectives and areas of expertise, including tourism, recreation, conservation and wildlife, Gullah Geechee heritage, transportation, historic preservation, and water and sewer, are necessary to add balance and credibility. Otherwise—as we have seen play out—recommendations will be made with only development interests in mind.

On June 27, less than one month into their review, the committee voted to ask the County Commission to throw out the entire draft zoning ordinance prepared by TSW. While we appreciate that some members approached their work thoughtfully and with respect to public input, others mocked commenters they disagreed with and called for this very outcome from the very first meeting. If the loudest and angriest voices in the room are allowed to derail this important process, they will waste more than three years of taxpayers' investment and make a mockery of all who are working so hard to better our beloved Glynn County.

What are the "unintended consequences" of zoning? Members of the zoning committee talk a lot about "unintended consequences." A few committee members have gone so far as to state that this draft is an attempt to stymie growth. But the very real and negative unintended consequences that will result from a poorly designed ordinance include increased traffic, destruction of historic homes, sunny day flooding, industrial operations polluting and disrupting residential neighborhoods, threats to

protected wildlife, negative impacts to our economy and tourism industry, and the loss of Glynn County's unique character—just to name a few.

We agree that a zoning ordinance can and should be clear, concise, and easy to understand. But brevity does not always result in clarity. An unintended consequence of scrapping large sections of our ordinance is one where every stakeholder is left to guess for themselves what they can or cannot do. To avoid confusion, it is important that—with the help of an experienced consultant—each section of our ordinance plainly spells out what is expected of developers, business owners, and residents alike.

How has (and hasn't) One Hundred Miles been involved? In the July 2 edition of *The Brunswick News*, committee member Neal Boatright accused One Hundred Miles of "hijacking" the rewrite because we want to "kill development in Glynn County." This is patently false. Like everyone else in Glynn County, we had the opportunity to participate during the public comment process, and we did. Our feedback related to only a small portion of the draft ordinance. Some of our input was included and some was not. The draft written and produced by TSW includes some proposals we support, others we disagree with, and many on which we have no opinion.

Recognizing the importance of zoning and the impact it has on our landscape, we have always encouraged everyone—not just our members or friends, but everyone across Glynn County—to participate in whichever ways they feel comfortable. And because zoning can often be difficult to understand, we compiled resources and background information about the issues. Connecting people to opportunities to take action for our communities is a core tenant of One Hundred Miles' mission. Our county benefits when everyone who has a stake in its future participates in the public discourse—even when we don't always agree.

We're proud of this work and have always been transparent about our participation. Our resources are freely available on our website, OneHundredMiles.org. OHM staff regularly attend the committee meetings and occasionally make comments on issues where we have perspectives to add. If anyone has questions about our involvement or lack thereof, we invite you to contact us directly, at (912) 264-4111.

To turn OHM's participation in the public process into some sort of conspiracy is a distraction. It may be a convenient strategy for Neal Boatright and other developers who want to throw a wrench into a process they don't like, but it is an irresponsible one. Further, it is slap in the face of all the community members who devoted their time and gave their own input to the authors of the draft ordinance, as well as to the taxpayers who invested \$250,000 for it to be written.

Is OHM anti-development? No. OHM is not anti-development. We are engaged in this process because, like you, we are invested in Glynn County and are living and raising our families here. More than anything, we want our community to grow and succeed, now and into the future. Integral to this success is a well-planned ordinance that offers opportunities for everyone to thrive, not just a select group of developers.

The attempt to throw out the ordinance is reckless and irresponsible. Accusing One Hundred Miles of using the ordinance to stymie growth is offensive. Together these actions prove that this committee is not equipped to continue to revise either the draft or the existing document without outside expertise and assistance.

Why is a facilitator necessary? Does it need to be TSW? A trained facilitator with a background in zoning best understands how to lead complex discussions, answer questions, and balance community input. While it does not have to be TSW, they are the ones most familiar with Glynn County's ordinance and the public comments that have been provided thus far and would not require additional resources to get up to speed. Regardless, the right leader will help this committee get back on track and stay productive, for the benefit of all of Glynn County.