

# COASTAL OBSERVER

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## PAWLEYS ISLAND

### Town looks for ways to preserve older homes

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

As the town of Pawleys Island looks for ways to preserve its traditional beach houses, there is a growing concern that the town's own rules are driving new buyers to tear down old houses.

That's because the town requires buildings be brought into compliance with those rules when the cost of improvements exceeds 50 percent of their value.

"Are we discouraging owners - or buyers - from maintaining and improving the livability of older homes, therefore encouraging or requiring their replacement?" Bill Otis, the former mayor, asked.

He proposed a remedy to the town Planning Commission this month. The town could exempt "historically significant" structures of a certain age from the 50 percent rule.

But Otis, who served as mayor for 20 years, said even if the town amends its requirement, improvements to structures would still trigger compliance with federal flood regulations.

"I do think it's important to distinguish between the flood section of our code and all the other sections," Town Administrator Dan Newquist said.

The town requires houses to be raised 3 feet above the minimum required by federal regulations as part of a program that reduces premiums for federal flood insurance policies.

Otis told the commission that the issue is personal. A house that's been in his family for 73 years is now up for sale. He said that has prompted questions about how much renovation can be done and where the balance will tip toward a teardown.

The town adopted its unified development code in 2003 "with the objective to bring all structures on Pawleys Island into zoning compliance over time, including setbacks, etc.," Otis said. "This was probably the right thing to do at the time."

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Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

## TRADITIONS

### Food pantry hands out 260 turkeys in 55 minutes

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The volunteers were due at 7:30 to get ready for the 9 a.m. distribution of Thanksgiving turkeys. There were already people waiting.

One resident of the rural Sampit community said he left the house at 4:15 and was at the Baskerville Food Pantry at 4:45 a.m. He was third in line.

"The cost of groceries stays high," said Josh Bullock, who organized the turkey and produce giveaway for the third year. "People come and get food from us."

This was the biggest year for the turkey giveaway with 260 birds being distributed in 55 minutes. Participants also received a grocery bag with carrots, zucchini and apples.

The Lowcountry Food Bank provided 100 turkeys and 8,000 pounds of produce, said

SEE "FOOD," PAGE 2

Anna Boyette, 11, gets turkeys ready to hand out. At right, apples are added to the grocery bags. Below, Howard Lauderback stocks bags.



## ENVIRONMENT

### Iconic bird no longer endangered, but not out of the woods

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

A small bird that has a big impact on land use decisions on the Waccamaw Neck came off the federal list of endangered species this week.

The red-cockaded woodpecker is no longer facing extinction, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but it remains a threatened species. The "downlisting" was hailed as a milestone by federal and state officials.

Others aren't so sure. "I'm skeptical for a lot of reasons," said Amy Armstrong, executive director of the S.C. Environmental Law Project, who spent four years managing red-cockaded woodpecker habitat for the state Department of Natural Resources. "They are still highly vulnerable and highly at risk."

The small black and white birds, with a barely visible red streak on the head of the males, live in old-growth pine forests. They nest in cavities that they dig out of the trunk. Centuries of logging and timber management that replaced slow-growing longleaf pines with other species such as loblolly that provided pulpwood and were harvested regularly reduced the woodpecker's habitat.

"They are iconic, and people feel very strongly about them," Armstrong said.

The red-cockaded woodpecker was listed as endangered when the Endangered Species Act was adopted in 1973.

"Through decades of collaborative efforts from a wide coalition of partners, we have brought this iconic species back from the brink of extinction, ensuring that future generations will continue to see these incredible birds thriving in their natural habitats," Interior Secretary Deb Haaland said in announcing the downlisting last month. "This is another important accomplishment in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's implementation of the iconic

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Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

Giany Guedjo helps Waccamaw Intermediate students pick cabbages from the school's garden last week.

## NONPROFITS | Carolina Human Reinvestment

### Gardens are growing more than just crops

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Since Carolina Human Reinvestment started a community garden in Pawleys Island in 2020, school children have been visiting to learn where food comes from.

Students at four county schools no longer have to visit it because the nonprofit has brought gardens to them.

"The idea is to take the big garden to the schools. Originally the big garden was designed for the kids," said Giany Guedjo, executive director of Carolina Human Reinvestment. "Gardening and farming is almost like a lost art these days. Getting the kids to learn about how to grow their own food and how to interact with the outdoors is

very key for us."

The nonprofit, founded in 1992, provides youth in Georgetown and Horry counties with after school programs, mentoring and counseling programs.

The first school garden was at Waccamaw Intermediate.

The program is not just about gardening, Guedjo said. There's science and math involved.

Gardening is a very "tangible" lesson, he added. The kids can see the plants, smell them and touch them, and then taste what the plants produce.

The intermediate school started an organic garden during the 2010-11 school year as part of a "green" initiative. The program continued until schools were closed in March 2020 because of the global pandemic.

demic.

The idea was revived in 2023.

A few months after schools closed, Carolina Human Reinvestment started the community garden by planting sweet potatoes, okra and tomatoes.

Since then the nonprofit has expanded its crops and donated more than 12 tons of food to families and food programs in the county.

"The growth has been amazing," Guedjo said.

The school program has also expanded to Waccamaw Middle, Rosemary Middle and Andrews Elementary.

Guedjo doesn't want it to be just an afterschool program.

"We want to be part of their growth as a whole. We try to

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