City of Isle of Palms South Carolina

Executive Summary

RESEARCH & DISCOVERY FINDINGS



OCTOBER 2026

PREPARED BY BLUE RIDGE CREATIVE MARKETING

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PART A

The Research



SUMMARY OBJECTIVE

Translating a varied backstory into one cohesive system:

Timing

INCONSISTENCY IS THE IDENTITY

Inconsistent brand use has created a fragmented identity, making it harder for residents, visitors and partners to recognize a clear, unified IOP – or to tell what's official.

Opportunity

HOME BEFORE THE DESTINATION

Position Isle of Palms as a beach destination for families across generations – one that still feels like home in every season – distinct from the region's party- and resort-led beaches, without loosening its hold on resident livability.

Review

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT REALLY IS

A summary of the research initiative focused on understanding IOP – from the inside, out. This research informs the core and delivers outward.

The Ask

WHERE THE RESEARCH ULTIMATELY LEADS

Approval on these findings and directives so brand development can move into building one messaging system, a visual identity that matches it, and the governance to keep both consistent.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

How we built the research foundation:

Discovery

START WITH THE ISLAND ITSELF

We began with City plans, surveys, stakeholder interviews, onsite exploration and tourism partner conversations to understand Isle of Palms from the inside out.

Conversation

WEIGHT EACH AUDIENCE INTENTIONALLY

Residents, visitors, businesses, City teams and tourism partners informed the research – with resident input setting the standard for what's true about the island, and visitor input showing what draws people here and brings them back.

Research

VALIDATE PERCEPTION WITH EVIDENCE

We audited the brand, market, tourism and search behavior, owned data and competitive landscape – then tested findings against City goals, channel performance and audience data.

THE ISLE OF PALMS TODAY

A small residential island with destination-scale demand.

AND A STRONG SENSE OF WHAT MAKES IT HOME.

Isle of Palms occupies a distinctive position – a small, established residential community with a public beach, significant vacation-rental inventory and world-class resort amenities.

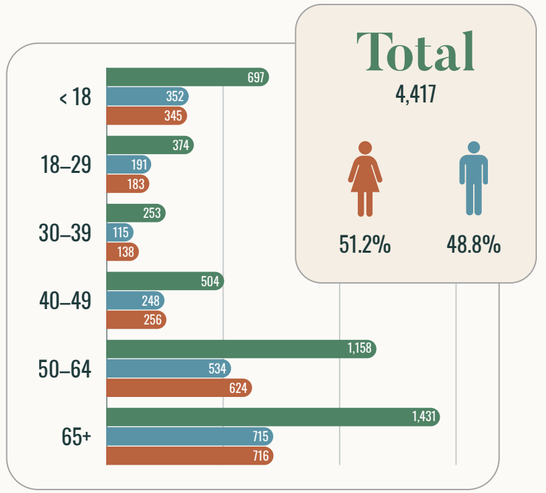
Its natural setting is both its greatest shared asset and a major economic driver. Yet the qualities people associate with the island extend well beyond tourism: ***family traditions, familiar routines, community, and a relaxed way of life.***

RESIDENT DEMOGRAPHIC AT A GLANCE

54.6
RESIDENT MEDIAN AGE (DOWN FROM 56.2 SINCE 2020)

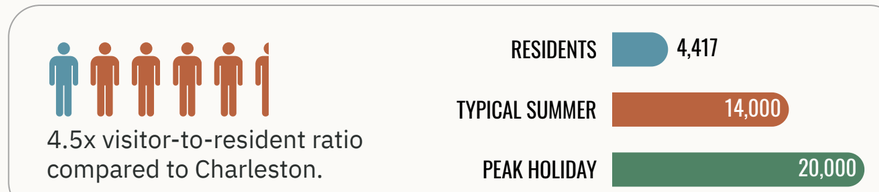
58.6%
OF RESIDENTS ARE 50+ (32.4% ARE 65+)

$128K
PER CAPITA INCOME – 2.3X MORE THAN COUNTY



TOURISM IMPACT

4.5x visitor-to-resident ratio compared to Charleston.



+353%
PEAK SEASON POPULATION GROWTH

38%
ISLAND DWELLINGS HOLD STR LICENSES

33%
OF REVENUE IS VISITOR LINKED

STAKEHOLDER FINDINGS

What are people saying?



PREVIEW

What did stakeholders actually tell us?

STAKEHOLDERS AGREE ON A FAMILY-FRIENDLY ISLAND WITH A STRONG RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY, BUT DISAGREE ON HOW MUCH TOURISM TO ENCOURAGE – AND WHEN.

Isle of Palms is home before it's a destination, and stakeholders are focused on maintaining that sentiment. While tourism is understood to be economically necessary, most would prefer to welcome families for longer stays and favor fall and winter visitation.

Perception

A LIVED-IN BEACH COMMUNITY

Stakeholders value the island's relaxed, small-town character.

They described a place where children grow up, neighbors know one another and visitors build their own traditions through return trips.

Anchors

THIS IS WHAT HOME FEELS LIKE

Family continuity, nature and everyday freedom came up repeatedly – beach walks, biking, recreation, wildlife and time together across generations.

The Connector was a recognizable moment of arrival and return.

Polarity

TENSION OVER GROWTH

Interviewees valued public access and recognized tourism's role. They also raised concerns around traffic, parking, short-term rentals, large-home redevelopment and the loss of year-round neighbors.

Takeaways

PROTECT THE EXPERIENCE

The brand needs to help illustrate the feeling of home. It is not a party destination – it's a place to relax.

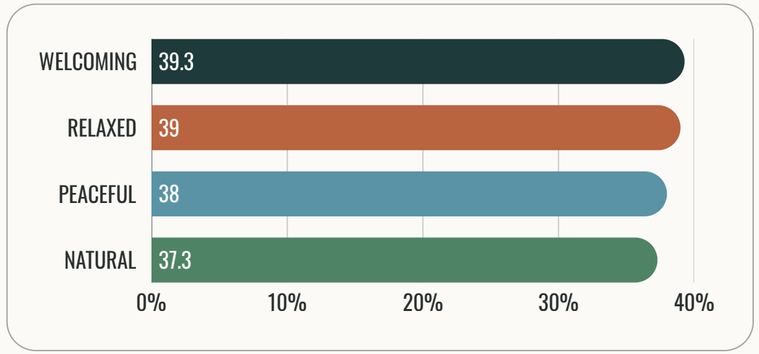
The community (and visitors) care for the neighborhoods, public spaces and natural resources.

PERCEPTION

Whose Isle of Palms is this?

Ask four different groups to deliver the Isle of Palms elevator pitch and you'll land on a different floor. Despite the different relationships to the island, they return to the same qualities – ***a natural, relaxed place where families build lasting memories.***

WORDS THAT WIN



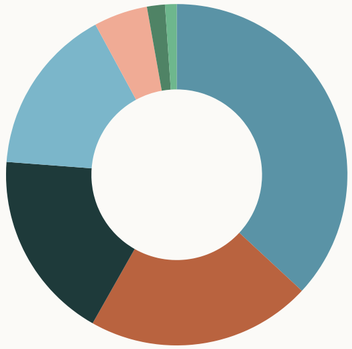
	CURRENT	INTENDED	BRAND	POSITION
RESIDENT	**Family roots** & neighborhood pressures	**Liveable, connected** community	**Home for generations** for kids & *their* kids	"Isle of Palms isn't just a destination. It's home."
VISITOR	**Repeat trips** building family memories	**Welcoming** as cared-for place	**Traditions** where we're ready to relax	
BUSINESS	**Tourism** with local character	**Thriving** as a local economy	**Local businesses** serve as core memories	
CITY	**Resort image** with a small-town reality	**Family-oriented** island life	**Community is the *magic*** made by those who love it here	
ALIGNMENT	PARTIAL	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	ALIGNED

PRESERVATION + POLARITY

What priorities are at play?

Respondents valued the beach, nature, family traditions, and a slower pace. The survey shows where priorities diverge – residents emphasize community and residential character while visitors emphasize ***public beach access.***

WHO RESPONDED?



FULL-TIME RESIDENT	36.9%
FREQUENT VISITOR	21.3%
NOT SPECIFIED	18%
PART-TIME RESIDENT	15.9%
VISITOR	5.1%
BUSINESS OWNER (NON-RESIDENT)	1.7%
BUSINESS OWNER (RESIDENT)	1.1%

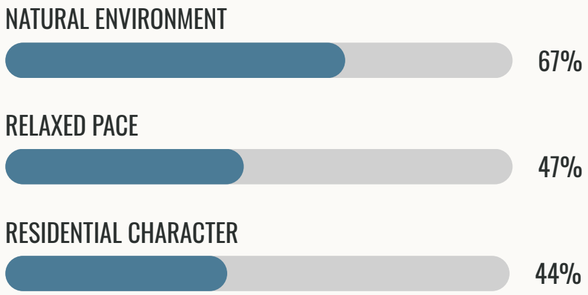
RESIDENTS 52.8%

VISITORS 26.4%

BUSINESSES 2.8%

Preservation

MOST IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE?

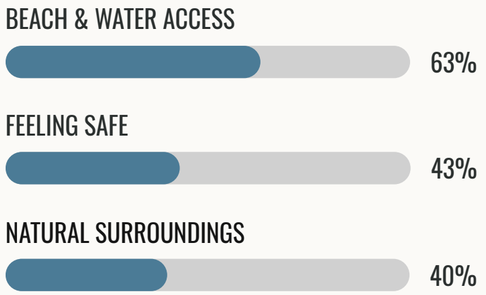


54%
OF RESIDENT RESPONDENTS
Preserve *residential character*

63%
OF VISITOR RESPONDENTS
Preserve *public beach access*

Alignment

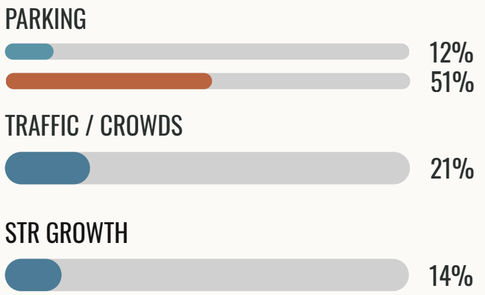
WHAT DRIVES HAPPINESS?



Polarity

RESIDENT
VISITOR

THE NAMED PROBLEM?





COMPREHENSIVE BRAND AUDIT

Where does Isle of Palms stand today?

PREVIEW

How brand clarity can help Isle of Palms meet its goals:

Destination

A TINY ISLAND WITH A DISTINCT IDENTITY

Isle of Palms already owns a distinct sense of place rooted in home, heritage, environment, residential character and community – and it's strong.

Brand

ALIGNED IN MEANING, SPLIT IN USE

The City and its partners largely agree on what IOP represents, but without shared verbal or visual standards, each channel and resource expresses it differently.

Strength

THE CORE & HABITS ARE STRONG

The most valuable equity – home, environment, heritage, and belonging – is authentic, supported across the research, and already visible in parts of the existing brand.

Weakness

THE SYSTEM BREAKS AT APPLICATION

Without centralized standards, templates or governance, consistency depends on individual interpretation – leaving equity opportunity buried, skewed, or disconnected.

MESSAGING & VISUAL

Does the Isle of Palms feel like one place?

Key Findings • Visual

VARYING VISUALS, NO THROUGHLINE

Predominant colorways do exist in two key palettes: green and gold for civic applications and navy and teal for high-volume digital. However, the absence of a centralized visual story has created a collection of assets left to individual interpretation. The result is a disconnected brand system that causes identity confusion.

77%
OF BRAND COLORS IN CIRCULATION ARE ONLY USED ONCE

0
TYPEFACES ARE CARRIED ACROSS CHANNELS OR ASSETS

Key Findings • Messaging

FIVE VOICES, NO CENTER

The City, Chamber, Explore Charleston, Wild Dunes, and Charleston County Parks agree on 4 common threads, but nothing compels them to say it the same.

The Mission + Vision Opportunity

The mission sets a high bar that outward channels rarely show and the vision invites those who come to "live, work and play" – the brand can make that welcome *specific*.

MISSION

To be the most sustainable, family-friendly beach community in South Carolina.

VISION

To be a welcoming, environmentally conscious and resilient coastal community committed to enhancing the quality of life for those who come here to live, work and play.

5
INDEPENDENTLY GOVERNED VOICES SHAPING THE IMAGE

No shared guidelines governing them.

4
COMMON THREADS EVERY VOICE ALREADY SHARES

Location, value, identity, proximity.

DIGITAL CHANNEL AUDIT

What's working & where does the brand break down?

IoP has meaningful reach across high-volume priority channels, but performance is uneven and each channel plays a different role – with the clearest gap being a consistent connection between ***civic communication*** and ***destination storytelling***.

~9:1

NEW EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS VS. UNSUBSCRIBES ANNUALLY

Growing audience with relatively little attrition.

44%

OF ANNUAL SOCIAL VISIBILITY HAPPENED MAY 1 - AUG 1

Peak season is the window to drive awareness – specifically offseason.

34x

FACEBOOK'S VISIBILITY VS. INSTAGRAM YEAR-OVER-YEAR

Heavy & imbalanced concentration on Facebook.

5.5:1

NEW VS. RETURNING USERS VISITING WEBSITE ANNUALLY

Geographically far-reaching episodic behavior than any other channel.

Baseline

UTILITY IS CONSISTENT, EXPERIENCE ISN'T

Channels clearly communicate where IOP is, but civic notices and service information dominate. Beyond a general coastal feel, the brand lacks a consistent character across touchpoints that can speak to audiences alike.

Audience

SOCIAL IS LOCAL BUT WEB TRAVELS FAR

Social audiences skew Charleston-area while the website reaches Atlanta, Charlotte, Raleigh, New York and beyond – making it important to both residents and visitors.

Engagement

NEED-BASED CONTENT DOES THE WORK

Strongest engagement centers on beach conditions, shoreline projects, video and local news. Destination content is limited, leaving too little data to assess its traction.

Application

IDENTITY FRACTURES AT POINT OF USE

Each channel serves its function, but the brand expression changes with the platform. Civic and destination content do not yet feel like parts of one *connected system*.

SYSTEM + GOVERNANCE

Consistency is a resourcing gap rather than effort.

58%
FIND MATCHING COLORS & FONTS THE HARDEST PART

42%
UNSURE THEIR MATERIALS LOOK CONSISTENT WITH THE CITY BRAND

67%
CREATE OR EDIT MATERIALS AT LEAST MONTHLY

Only 8% define it as core part of job.

75%
RELY ON A WORKAROUND WHEN BRAND IS UNCLEAR

Guess, use old files, or skip branding.

14+
DIFFERENT PLATFORMS USED FOR BRANDED MATERIAL CREATION

#1 Priority
THE STAFF WANTS A FINDABLE, FLEXIBLE SYSTEM

Alignment

PROFESSIONAL, NOT DISTINCTIVE

Teams agree that communications should feel professional and clear but are uncertain what makes them distinctly IOP.

Anchor

STRONG HABITS ALREADY EXIST

Teams know where to find and reuse existing assets but reference points vary by department.

Divergence

CONSISTENCY BREAKS AT APPLICATION

Without shared standards, consistency depends on individual interpretation – even when assets are reused.

Application

CREATION HAPPENS EVERYWHERE

Materials are created across departments and software familiar to the user rather than a centralized design function – mostly adapting current assets.

Takeaway

NO SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH

Standards, approved assets and templates live in different places across departments so materials don't always look official. Staff named this their #1 fix.

DESTINATION AUDIT

What does the Isle of Palms really have to offer?

A genuine sense of place, resilient natural environment and locally-owned economy are already healthy and visible, but not always represented. Outward channels default to summer, beach and Wild Dunes – burying heritage, the Connector, marina, independent dining, shoulder seasons, premium lodging patterns, and undercutting environmental leadership.

How to read the table:

Healthy & visible	STRONG
Real, but under-shown	BURIED
Real, but weakened	UNDERCUT
Over-weighted externally	SKEWED

CORE ASSETS

CHARACTER & COMMUNITY	Home before destination	STRONG
	Small-town, anti-party identity	STRONG
	Neighborliness, community	STRONG
	The Connector (arrival as homecoming)	BURIED
	Multigenerational continuity	STRONG
PLACE & ENVIRONMENT	Barrier island (calm, kid-safe surf)	STRONG
	Marsh, tidal creek, pluff-mud	STRONG
	First SC single-use bag ban	UNDERCUT
	Heritage	BURIED
	CRS Class 7 flood rating	STRONG
LIVABILITY & ECONOMY	Lowest millage in the area	STRONG
	Exceptional Rec Department	STRONG
	75% STR / 25% hotel structure	STRONG
	Premium, price-over-volume	BURIED
SEASONALITY	Summer – Peak demand	STRONG
	Fall – "Serene respite" language exists	UNDERCUT
	Winter – Mild, off-season isn't bleak	BURIED
	Spring – Golf/nature; unused capacity	UNDERCUT
FOOD & LOCAL BUSINESS	Independent dining at real quality	BURIED
	Farmers Market	STRONG
	Locally-owned base, chain-resistant	STRONG
RECREATION & AMENITIES	Consistent, reliable beach	STRONG
	Rec Center outdoor gym	STRONG
	Marina (kayak/SUP, charters, eco-tours)	BURIED
	Wild Dunes golf, tennis, spa	SKEWED

CARRY FORWARD

What does Isle of Palms own?

What makes the island *uniquely* IOP already exists – the gap is in how consistently it's clearly represented.

The Gap

FINDING THE CORE

Outside content frames IOP's history as starting in the 1970s (with Wild Dunes) which inadvertently erases the residential-first heritage that's the stronger historical asset – and the Carolina Day heritage that precedes it.

Ungoverned voices and iterative identities have no shared guidelines – the core of nearly every inconsistency found. The equity is real (and rare). What's missing is a system to carry it forward amidst a market of mixed audiences.



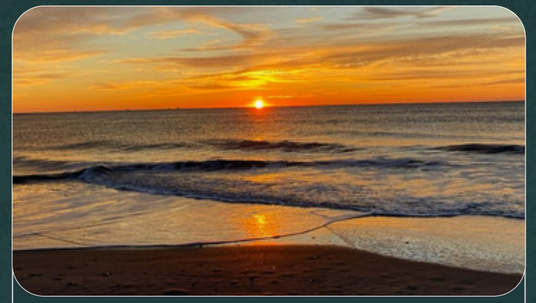
HERITAGE

A seal that carries history – with a palmetto represented *accurately*.



CONNECTOR

The crossing that turns nearly every arrival into a *homecoming*.



ENVIRONMENT

Upheld as the island's *champion* asset – paramount to preserve.



HOME

A feeling of *belonging*, safety, and stewardship – echoed.

MARKET OVERVIEW

What is the market telling us?



MARKET OVERVIEW

A growing regional market, rising tourism value & a pronounced seasonal divide.

Greater Charleston's tourism economy is generating substantially more economic value without comparable growth in visitation. Meanwhile, surrounding population growth adds pressure to IOP's public beach infrastructure. On the island itself, lodging demand remains heavily concentrated in summer, exposing a considerable difference between peak-season capacity and the remainder of the year.

The Numbers

90K
NEW TRI-COUNTY RESIDENTS SINCE 2020

7.9M
VISITORS ANNUALLY IN CHARLESTON

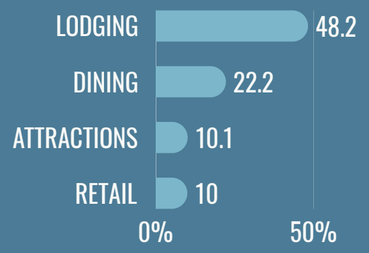
20%
OF CHARLESTON VISITORS VISIT IOP

(Only 4% *stay* on IOP)

5 Cities
OVERNIGHT METRO VISITORS ORIGIN CITIES

Charlotte · Atlanta · New York · Raleigh · Orlando

+26%
IN SPEND PER ADULT PER TRIP ($1212) SINCE 2021



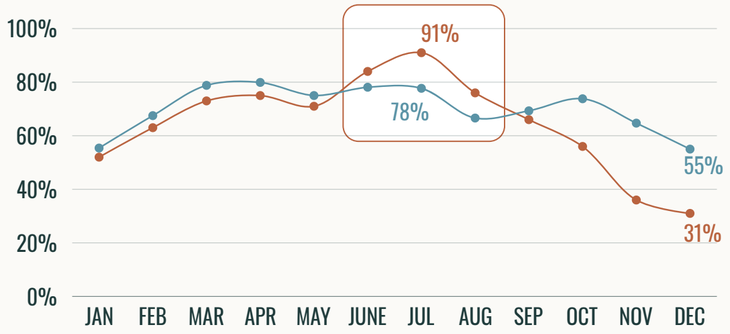
Occupancy

IOP OUTPACES CHARLESTON IN SUMMER

Then trails it from October into the holidays:

- CHARLESTON
- ISLE OF PALMS

ATAX Packet (Oct 2023), OTA Hotel Performance.



DEMAND EXISTS *Monthly Search Volume*	SUMMER	SPRING	FALL
ISLE OF PALMS BEACH	42,033	31,100	15,633
CHARLESTON BEACHES	15,000	15,900	5,967

AUDIENCE OVERVIEW

IOP is found for the beach, but not for the stay.

IOP's website reaches beyond the region (led by Atlanta), but 93% of search clicks are branded with most visits centered on beach logistics. Party-led searches dropped while family-stay searches remain mixed – the people know IOP, but ***the City's channels play little part in the stay decision***.

DEMANDS AS MUCH AS ITS PEERS	6.6K ISLE OF PALMS *Year-round Average*	6.6K EMERALD ISLE *Year-round Average*	2.8K KIAWAH ISLAND *Peak Summer*

	THE BEACH	THE STAY
WHAT THEY SEARCH *Monthly*	**~42K** isle of palms beach	**~48.5K | WILD DUNES ~48%** IOP: hotels 14.8K, vacation rentals 6.6K
WHAT PAGE GOOGLE SHOWED	**~25.5K times** *Beach*	**124 times** *Experience IOP*

Searches for the stay are about as common as for the beach. Yet Google showed the City's *Beach* page ~200x more than the *Experience IOP* page. Demand is balanced, but the City's visibility is not.

AUDIENCE SIGNALS

3-5 Nights
MOST COMMON STAY IN REGION, FOLLOWED BY 6-9

93%
OF IOP SITE SEARCH CLICKS ARE BRANDED

89%
OF SC VISITORS ARRIVE BY CAR
(62% OOS visitors go to beach)

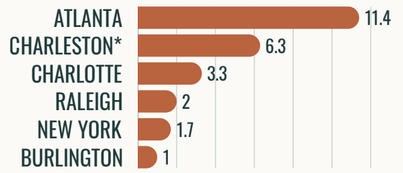
120x
BEACH (360 CLICKS) VERSUS EXPERIENCE IOP (3 CLICKS)

3x
ATLANTA GENERATES FAR MORE WEB TRAFFIC VS THE NEXT CITY
Charleston 3.3K, Mt. Pleasant 3K

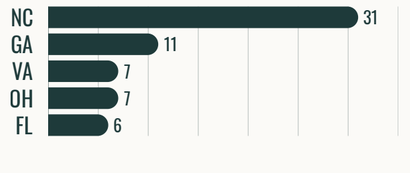
35-64
FACEBOOK AUDIENCE AGE & LARGELY FEMALE
34X more visibility than Instagram

AUDIENCE ORIGINS

IOP 90-DAY WEB TRAFFIC



OOS OVERNIGHT VISITORS TO SC



*Combined Charleston area

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS · REGIONAL

Why do Charleston visitors choose a different beach?

While the sand is the same, each place has staked its own niche: social day-trip central, luxury golf getaway, private secluded paradise, a polished resort stay. None of them own the true family-beach belonging – IOP's natural territory.

	POSITIONING (KNOWN FOR)	AUDIENCE TYPES	VALUE PROPOSITION	MARKETING TACTICS	HOW THEY INTERCEPT IOP
FOLLY BEACH SOUTH CAROLINA	Laid-back, active beach town with a social edge	Families & social groups, beach house & day trips	Beach-town energy & recreation within a Charleston trip	Activity-led discovery stays, events, family & nightlife	Wins Charleston family / social beach house discovery
TOWN OF Kiawah Island ESTABLISHED 1988	Luxury resort island golf (recreation & nature secondary)	Families, multi-gen groups, resort & luxury travelers	Complete island vacation (hotel, villas, homes & amenities)	Stay-first conversion recreation & direct booking	Captures family stay intent (deep resort/ rental planning)
Seabrook Island South Carolina	Private, quiet coastal community; nature & club lifestyle	Families/couples seeking privacy, nature & longer stays	Seclusion near Charleston rentals; recreation & nature	Rental-led trip planning, privacy & itinerary content	Captures quieter stay intent – with explicit rental pathways
Wild Dunes	Resort & family benchmark	Families & resort travelers	Resort/multi-bedroom stays; recreation	Accommodation & family recreation-led booking	Captures IOP stay demand via stronger brand footprint

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS · AUDIENCE-ADJACENT

Family beach – a crowded claim within a day's drive.

These coastal destinations already court overnight families with well-defined, easy-to-picture stays. HHI plans by age, Emerald sells the full beach week, Surfside owns *The Family Beach*, and Pawleys the beach house – yet none can claim IOP's *character*, *community*, or Charleston *proximity*.

	POSITIONING (KNOWN FOR)	AUDIENCE TYPES	VALUE PROPOSITION	MARKETING TACTICS	HOW THEY INTERCEPT IOP
HILTON HEAD ISLAND	Family-friendly, resort, golf & tennis	Families & multi-gen resort travelers	Broad accommodations & deep family recreation	Detailed activity & accommodation planning	Captures family resort & beach house planning, most *vs IOP*
Town of Pawleys Island SOUTH CAROLINA	Quiet, traditional beach house destination	Families seeking relaxed house-based stays	Rentals, marsh & traditional beach experience	Family beach & rental-led story-telling	Competes for the relaxed rental house vacation
EMERALD ISLE NORTH CAROLINA	Family & beach house destination	Families seeking weeklong rental stays	Oceanfront rentals & full beach week experience	Weeklong itinerary & rental-led planning	Makes weeklong beach house stay easy to picture/plan
SURFSIDE BEACH "The Family Beach"	Family & general beach	Families prioritizing easy beach vacations	Explicit family identity & accessible beach stay	*Family Beach* position, activities & lodging	Captures family-beach discovery

GAPS + OPPORTUNITIES

On a crowded coast, where's the space for 'our little sandbar'?

	AUDIENCE	RECREATION	STAY/EXPERIENCE	CONVENIENCE	SEASONALITY
WHAT'S TAKEN?	Competitors skew toward either broad family, luxury/resort, or social/nightlife audiences	Recreation is often anchored to golf, clubs, structured amenities or high-activity beach experiences	Competitors tend to own either resort-led or rental-house-led stays.	Seabrook/Kiawah are more controlled or private whereas Emerald Isle/Pawleys lack Charleston adjacency	Offseason demand exists, but competitors tend to lean on specific hooks like golf, nature or seasonal breaks
WHERE'S THE ROOM?	A more specific relaxed family stay audience	Lower-pressure recreation built around beach, nature, downtime & simple family activities	A flexible resort / rental & community / neighborhood island stay	Quieter island experience that is still publicly accessible & near Charleston	A fall-and-winter stay story built on the island's quiet season – beyond a single amenity

COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

A complete island vacation that still feels like coming home.

A relaxed, residential-feeling island where families can spend an entire beach vacation with the recreation and conveniences of a resort destination alongside the proximity of a large, high-value metro area. Each peer owns one or two of these strengths – Folly owns the lived-in beach town, Kiawah and Wild Dunes own resort recreation, Seabrook owns the quiet residential stay.

None of the competitive set combines all four in one place:

THE SPACE BETWEEN



WHAT THE RESEARCH MAKES CLEAR

Six key findings driving the directive home:

#1

ONE ISLAND TOLD FIVE WAYS

Stakeholders describe "home before destination," while outside channels sell a Charleston-adjacent resort ➜ ***Unify the identity so all parties align.***

#2

FAMILY IS THE THROUGHLINE

“Family”/”home” appeared the most in survey responses. Visitors return for multigenerational traditions. ➜ ***Family connects residents and visitors, on an island where ~60% of residents are 50+.***

#3

TOURISM & RESIDENCY SHARE ONE REVENUE BASE

About a third of City revenue is visitor-linked and 38% of dwellings hold STR licenses ➜ ***The two cannot be separated in positioning.***

#4

VALUE IS GROWING FASTER THAN VOLUME

Charleston (higher-spend) set records in 2025 while the Grand Strand (higher-volume) declined ➜ ***IoP occupancy shows capacity is in the off season.***

#5

IOP IS FOUND FOR THE BEACH BUT NOT THE STAY DECISION

IOP doesn’t rank competitively or broadly – most search results are branded (ie. Isle of Palms beach) ➜ ***Family-stay demand is mixed but present, yet City channels aren’t part of that decision.***

#6

CONSISTENCY REQUIRES GOVERNANCE – NOT JUST DESIGN

Consolidation without a named owner and asset library will re-fragment ➜ ***Brand system must consider City team applications to ensure sustainability.***

PART B

The Directive



ICP · DIRECTION

Belonging — defined by islanders, shared with guests.

Each group experiences the island differently and each helps sustain the relationships, traditions and daily life that make it feel like home. Together, they make IOP a distinct community – not just one of Charleston's beaches.

	ROOTED ISLANDERS	RETURNING FAMILIES	QUIET-SEASON GATHERERS
			
PROFILE	Full-time, part-time and second-home residents whose routines, traditions and care for the island make it a community over *just a beach*.	Drive-market families and multi-generational groups who make IOP their annual beach week, often for decades. They already love the island.	Couples, empty-nesters, and milestone gatherers whose calendars aren't set by the school year – rather their optimal timing.
IOP FIT	**Home** – neighbors, nature, rooted routines	**Tradition** – time together, annual connection	**Gather** – unhurried, off the summer clock
BRAND TRUTH	**Rings true** – Who the City serves daily and the people the brand has to ring true to before it speaks to anyone else.	**Deepen** – Opportunity is not volume, but value – longer stays and repeat visits as guests who look after the island like home.	**Invite** – Come while the island is at its most residential – slower pace, mild weather, open beaches, marsh, and golf.

**Final ICPs will be defined in the brand strategy (Milestone 2).*

STRATEGIC BRAND DIRECTIVE

Position IOP as the family beach island that still feels like home.

The research points to an identity Isle of Palms already has. Each directive below answers a key finding from stakeholders and data, so the brand can make that identity clear to residents and visitors alike. Together, they advance the City's Strategic Plan by managing growth pressure, building trust through consistent communication, sustaining revenue, protecting quality of life and leading on the environment.

Positioning Territory

NESTLE INTO ITS NATURAL NICHE

A complete island vacation that still feels like coming home.

Core Equity

CONVEY IOP'S UNIQUE CHARACTER

Real island community, natural beauty, familiarity, and traditions passed between generations.

Audience Priority

PRESERVE 'OUR LITTLE SANDBAR'

Residents set the bar the brand must ring true to while it deepens returning family traditions with longer stays and invites quiet-season guests. Day visitors are welcome – *with house rules*.

Desired Perception

EMBRACE AN ENDURING IDENTITY

IOP seen as a welcoming island community where every generation feels at home.

MESSAGING DIRECTIVE

Coalesce the message around a fixed core.

Set the voice, hierarchy, and vocabulary with which the official statements will be built so everything after is backed by a fixed core.

Fixed Core

ONE VOICE THAT SPANS AUDIENCES

AUDIENCE	MESSAGING PRIORITY
RESIDENTS	Ring true to the island they live on.
RETURNING FAMILIES	Deepen their tradition with longer stays, repeat visits, and shared care.
QUIET SEASON GATHERERS	Invite them to the island at its most residential.
DAY-TRIPPERS	Welcomed, with house rules.

OBJECTIVE

Create a single, authentic system that carries IOP's character across every touchpoint – one core story that rings true to residents, deepens the bond with returning families and invites quiet-season guests in.

VOICE DIRECTION

IOP's voice is understated, plain, and quietly confident – the way a neighbor speaks, earning trust through what's already true.

PRIORITY

Lead with the island experience and sense of belonging. Then support it with beach, recreation, proximity to Charleston, accommodations, and practical visitor information.

GUARDRAILS

Resident trust is what keeps the welcome sustainable. Messaging must work for residents and visitors in tandem – welcoming without overselling the superlative, community-minded without sounding exclusionary, and never positioned as a generic resort, luxury enclave, party destination or high-volume attraction.

VISUAL IDENTITY DIRECTIVE

The right system is the one in which IOP can see itself.

Every piece of research points the same direction: Residents and visitors already describe the island in strikingly consistent terms earned by the destination itself – ***natural, quiet, relaxed, understated, classic, welcoming, unpretentious, quietly confident***. What's been missing is a single centralized identity that captures IOP's core character, built authentically to gather what already exists into a recognizable system.

OBJECTIVE

Build from what already belongs to IOP to create distinction from the island's existing equity – its heritage, sense of place, familiarity and understated character – rather than imposing a new personality onto it.

IDENTITY BEHAVIOR

Create an adaptable system to stay consistent without looking repetitive. The core should remain recognizable while composition, imagery and expression flex to fit different audiences, content and contexts.

UNIFIED SYSTEM

Turn that character into a recognizable system by creating one visual foundation with a clear hierarchy of core elements so every application feels unmistakably connected to the same place.

SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE

Make consistency easy to maintain by centralizing the assets, rules and ownership needed so staff and partners can apply the identity correctly without relying on a designer every time.

PART C

The Alignment

SUCCESS MEASURES

How will we know the rebrand worked?

These five measures translate into metrics tracked across the advisory period – with most already carrying a baseline for a real measured starting point. A detailed success measurement framework will be included in the rollout plan.

Ongoing

SENTIMENT & IDENTITY

Strengthen resident pride and willingness to recommend IOP with a distinctly recognizable identity that reflects shared sentiment, island character, and IOP's environmental leadership.

BASELINE

98% agree "safe"
76% strong quality of life

Near-Term

AWARENESS & ENGAGEMENT

Increase the number of newsletter readers, website traffic, and social media engagement.

BASELINE

533K Annual site visitors
6.5K Email subscribers
15.2K Facebook followers
6.9K Instagram followers

Long-Term

TOURISM YIELD & AUDIENCE SHIFT

Increase length and value of stays outside summer – from returning families and quiet-season guests without compromising resident quality of life.

BASELINE

74% Jan-Aug occupancy
$818 ADR (Summer)
91% July peak occupancy
48% Oct-Feb occupancy

Authority

SEARCH & DISCOVERY

Grow regional authority – IOP's own channels are found and chosen for the family trip-planning decision.

BASELINE

Beach (+12K% clicks) vs Experience IoP page
93.4% branded search
Wild Dunes (27.1K/mo) vs IoP rentals (6.6K/mo)

Operational

ADOPTION & GOVERNANCE

Internal ease of implementation, template adoption, and governance followed across departments.

BASELINE

22 colors, 25+ fonts
75% staff operate from individual interpretation
5 ungoverned voices

NEXT STEPS

What are we asking the city to approve today?

Milestone 1 closes with alignment on what we've learned, what it means, and the direction it sets for the brand. Today, we're asking the City to approve these findings and directives so that the team can begin building Milestone 2 – Brand Strategy & Messaging.

Now

WRITTEN APPROVAL DUE OCTOBER 16, 2026

Sign-off from Douglas Kerr & ATAX of this Executive Summary Report.

Next

ALIGNMENT WORKSHOP BY OCTOBER 21, 2026

A 1-hour alignment workshop with the City is done prior to Milestone 2 kick-off.

Then

KICK-OFF MILESTONE 2: BRAND STRATEGY

Brand Strategy begins at the completion of the alignment workshop and presented ~2 weeks later.

After

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT BEGINS

Concept selection (Milestone 3) to be approved by November 20, 2026.

THANK YOU

“

When you cross the peak of the connector and see the island, you feel like you're home.

COMMUNITY INTERVIEW #5

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CREATIVE MARKETING

www.weareblueridge.com
hello@weareblueridge.com
703.675.2092