

# The Post and Courier

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## BOOM & BALANCE AN OCCASIONAL SERIES



BRAD NETTLES/STAFF

Morgan Behrens, a resident of Gregorie Ferry Towns in northern Mount Pleasant, finishes cleaning her kitchen June 17. The Clemson University graduate and life coach was able to buy the townhouse as part of a joint venture for service-industry providers and those on entry-level salaries to be able to own a home and begin building equity.

## New projects put dream of owning home within reach

### Townhomes in W. Ashley, Mt. P. examples of efforts to boost affordable housing

BY WARREN L. WISE  
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The skyrocketing price of housing in Charleston has locked many would-be buyers out of the market, but a joint venture program aims to bring ownership to service-industry workers and those on entry-level salaries.

Prosperity Builders, a division of The Berry Co. that focuses on workforce housing, and the nonprofit Charleston Redevelopment Corp. will start construction soon on a 40-unit townhome development in West Ashley with affordability tied to the owner's income.

Bermuda Pointe Towns, off Ashley River Road near Church Creek, will include 30 workforce housing units that will be for sale between 80 percent and 120 percent of



RENDERING/HANS MEIER/PROVIDED

An affordable owner-occupied townhome development is going up off Highway 61 in West Ashley. Bermuda Pointe Towns will be located near Church Creek.

the area median income.

Ten will be offered at the market rate, with pricing starting in the high \$200,000s. Down payment assistance from \$10,000

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### More coverage

To read more stories in the series about growth and development, go to [postandcourier.com/boomandbalance](https://postandcourier.com/boomandbalance)

## Graham will fight Georgia subpoena

### Retains prominent Charleston attorneys in 2020 election probe

BY NICK REYNOLDS  
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COLUMBIA — U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham has hired a pair of high-powered Charleston attorneys to represent him as a Georgia grand jury investigates allegations of interference by former President Donald Trump and his associates in the 2020 presidential election.



Graham

In a letter distributed to reporters July 6, Nelson Mullins attorneys Matt Austin and Bart Daniel said Graham was neither a subject nor a target of the investigation, and that the Fulton County District Attorney's Office is engaging in a "fishing trip" to advance the political goals of the House committee investigating the 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol. The statement said Graham, R-S.C., would fight having to appear for the Georgia proceedings after being sent a subpoena tied to the probe earlier this week.

"As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Graham was well within his rights to discuss with state officials the processes and procedures around administering elections," the letter read.

"Should it stand, the subpoena issued today would erode the constitutional balance of power and the ability of a member of Congress to do their job," the note added. "Senator Graham plans to go to court, challenge the subpoena, and expects to prevail."

Graham was chairman until February 2021.

Graham, a key member of Trump's

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## 12 civilians killed as Russia steps up shelling

### Ukrainians urged to flee Donetsk region

BY FRANCESCA EBE  
and MARIA GRAZIA MURRU  
Associated Press

KRAMATORSK, UKRAINE — Russian shelling killed at least eight civilians in eastern Ukraine over the past 24 hours and wounded 25 more, Ukrainian officials said Wednesday. Pro-Russia separatists said attacks by Ukrainian forces killed four civilians.

The Ukrainian presidential office said Russian forces targeted cities and villages in the country's south-east, with most civilian casualties occurring in Donetsk province, where Russia stepped up its offensive in recent days.

Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said in a Telegram post that two people died

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## City's leafy havens offer refuge, honor role models

Hampstead Square, one of Charleston's oldest parks, was recently refreshed with new landscape, a statue of blacksmith Philip Simmons and chess tables.

MAURA HOGAN/  
STAFF



### New and revitalized parks can boost quality of life

BY MAURA HOGAN  
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Charleston's public spaces are far more than the swatch of green that meets the eye. They can offer a moment of quiet reflection. They can provide a place to gather with neighbors and friends. They can serve as a welcome respite from Charleston's intensifying urban churn.

For city planners and park enthusiasts alike, these green spaces are a crucial part of making life in the city

truly livable.

Nothing brought that notion home like the pandemic. Left with fewer options to safely gather, city dwellers in droves sought refuge and recreation in Charleston parks and gardens, taking to their winding paths to jog or cycle, or taking up residence on benches to enjoy their leafy surroundings.

"The pandemic's made it very clear that public space is critical infrastructure," Jason Kronsberg, the city's parks director, told The Post and Courier. "When you're in an urban setting and you may not have a yard or you live in an apartment, public space is all you have."

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New report details missed chances to stop Uvalde shooting. **A7**

### LOCAL

Woman killed in crash with North Charleston officer. **A3**

### SPORTS

Quarterback Mayfield traded from Cleveland to Carolina Panthers. **C1**

### E-PAPER

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# New projects aim to help workers afford homes

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to \$80,000 will be offered, depending on income.

## Qualifying

The area median income for a single person in Charleston County is \$64,300. A buyer who meets those qualifications would could get up to \$50,000 in down payment assistance. One making 80 percent of the area median income could qualify for up to \$80,000 in down payment aid. Someone earning 120 percent of the area median income could get up to \$10,000 in down payment help.

The loan is forgiven at a percentage each year that the home is occupied. If the buyer sells the property before the entire loan is forgiven, the remainder must be repaid. That amount would then transfer to a new owner to help with down payment assistance.

The financial assistance comes through The Berry Co.'s partnership with the Charleston Redevelopment Corp., which uses grant money from the city of Charleston to help with housing affordability.

"The goal is to make sure someone does not unduly benefit from the subsidy, and they achieve affordability for a long period of time," said Fred Johnson, CEO of the Charleston Redevelopment Corp.

The three-story units are expected to begin pre-selling by late summer in 10 buildings on 5 acres on an extension of Waterfowl Lane, where new homes are being built behind the project.

"There are a lot of people who can afford to buy one of them and they don't know it," said Tony Berry of The Berry Co. of Mount Pleasant.

"It's a good way for a young individual to start building wealth."

The project comes on the heels of a similar townhouse development in northern Mount Pleasant.

Prosperity Builders partnered with Housing for All Mount Pleasant on the 36-unit project on Winnowing Way off S.C. Highway 41. Eighteen of the units have been completed. The remainder will be finished in August.

All of the two- and three-



GRACE BEAHM ALFORD/STAFF

**Tony Berry with The Berry Co. of Mount Pleasant discusses developing Bermuda Pointe Towns, a new West Ashley townhome community with the focus on buyers tied to the area median income. The development is meant to provide owner-occupied homes to service-industry providers and those on entry-level salaries so they can begin building equity instead of paying rent.**

## New townhomes

Bermuda Pointe Towns on Ashley River Road will be priced for ownership based on area median income for buyers. Service-industry workers and those on entry-level salaries may qualify based on their incomes.



SOURCE: ESRI

BRANDON LOCKETT/STAFF

bedroom units have sold to qualified buyers earning up to 80 percent of area median income. Prices ranged from the mid \$200,000s in the first phase to the low \$300,000s for the second half of the units. Down payment assistance was not offered.

## 'Paying less'

Morgan Behrens, 28, is one of the new townhome owners. The Mount Pleasant native and Clemson University graduate bought her two-bedroom unit for \$259,900 this year after locking in an

interest rate of 3.3 percent shortly before borrowing costs began to climb.

Her monthly payment is \$1,267 and her homeowner's association fee is \$250, putting her monthly payment at \$1,517.

"I'm now paying less to own my home than some of my friends are paying in rent," the life coach said.

The median rent in Mount Pleasant for a two-bedroom apartment was \$2,080 in June, according to the latest report from Apartment List, a San Francisco-based online multifamily marketplace firm. The median rate in Charleston for a similar unit stood at \$1,611.

After college, Behrens lived with her parents and worked two jobs. She eventually landed a job as a life coach two years ago, earning between \$40,000 and \$45,000 a year, enough to afford the 1,036 square feet she now calls home but far short of what it would take to buy a single-family home in the Charleston area.

The median price of a house in the Lowcountry

stood at \$360,000 in January, when she bought her townhome. In May, the median price ballooned to \$425,000 in the Charleston area.

At the upper end of her salary, she would have been paying 45 percent of her income for the monthly mortgage to buy a \$360,000 house. The general rule is no more than 30 percent of income should go toward housing.

When Behrens bought her townhouse, the median price of a house in Mount Pleasant was \$583,000, far above what she or most people on entry-level salaries could afford.

Behrens called the joint venture to make townhouses affordable to own "a really great initiative" that is "necessary" in the current housing market.

"For young adults, it's hard to start a job and pay a mortgage and buy groceries and everything else," she said.

For Behrens, the opportunity came along at the right time.

"The payments are manageable," she said. "It's nice not to have to stress about that."

## Interested in applying?

Prosperity Builders and Carolina One New Homes plan to host a community meeting in late August to discuss the Bermuda Pointe Towns project with interested buyers. The date, place and time have not been set.

For more information, contact [bptowns.com](mailto:bptowns.com) or call Ali Bring at 843-226-1043 or Denise Henderson at 843-291-4281.

## In the works

Will Jenkinson, the broker in charge of Carolina One New Homes, sells units for the new townhome communities after helping the developer find land.

"A lot of people in this bracket have given up hope of ever owning a house," Jenkinson said. "It is attainable, and a lot of it is educating consumers that there is an opportunity."

He is working with Prosperity Builders on two other market-rate, Charleston-area developments now in the early stages. Those are the 72-unit Twin River Towns at 1176 Clements Ferry Road and The Oaks at St. Johns, with six units off Cayla Street on Johns Island. The projects do not have income restrictions or down payment assistance.

The two-story Twin River Towns will include 48 three-bedroom units and 24 with two bedrooms. Pricing will start in the low \$300,000s. Construction is expected to be completed in the spring of 2023.

The Oaks at St. Johns, also two stories, will offer two units with two bedrooms and four with three bedrooms.

Pricing will start in the low to mid-\$300,000s. Construction should be completed in March 2023.

Jenkinson said all of the projects are a cooperative effort to create workforce housing opportunities throughout the Lowcountry. "This is about creating home ownership where you earn wealth through equity," he said.

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# City's new and refurbished parks making a big impact downtown

**PARKS**, from A1

## Historic square

This summer, the city is rolling out new or refurbished public spaces that offer greener vistas and gathering spots.

On peninsular Charleston, some recent projects and refurbishments have also served to recognize people and places specific to the neighborhoods in which they are situated. These include historically Black communities that continue to lose their foothold downtown but remain integral to its history.

On the East Side, at 67 Columbus St., historic Hampstead Square is part of the oldest green space in Charleston, dating back to 1769, when Henry Laurens laid it out.

"Being the first publicly dedicated space in the city of Charleston, it is certainly important and iconic," said Kronsberg, who had been aiming to revitalize the public space for years, with plans waylaid by pandemic-related budget issues.

Since 2015, the square's southwestern quadrant has been defined by a bronze statue of Philip Simmons, the celebrated blacksmith whose masterful wrought iron work graces numerous homes throughout the city. A former East Side resident who died in 2009, Simmons was known to frequent Hampstead Square.

Created by sculptor Tom Durham, the statue was situated at the Josiah Smith Tennent House on East Bay Street before relocating to its current prominent place

when its former home was sold.

The park had lost its former aesthetic luster, but help was on the way. The neighborhood came together to champion its revitalization. In a public-private partnership, the city enlisted a landscape architect and solicited input from the neighborhood to enhance the rectilinear space.

The public/private partnership involved the Charleston Parks Department, an AARP grant of \$12,000, as well as commensurate funds raised by East Side residents.

"We ended up with a really great, diverse planting palette," Kronsberg said, noting that it was one that worked in Charleston's subtropical climate and kept robust by a new irrigation system. The park also now has game tables welcoming denizens to linger over chess or checkers, along with a sodded green lawn.

The nonprofit Charleston Parks Conservancy is playing a key role as well. It will provide maintenance for the park, continuing a relationship that has proved mutually beneficial to both the city and the conservancy.

"I always say that the Parks Conservancy can't do what the city does, but the city can't do what the Parks Conservancy does," Kronsberg said.

And that partnership has made a positive impact on the neighborhood. Park spaces can create neighborhood camaraderie because they're owned by everybody.

At Hampstead Square, the group effort included literally digging into the project. The Parks Department in-



FILE/ANDREW J. WHITAKER/STAFF

**Construction workers with Pleasant Places Inc. build a fountain at Shiloh Park in Charleston's Cannonborough-Elliottborough neighborhood in May. Where a former Charleston church was located, Shiloh Park has plans for local artwork along with a wall art installation by artist Cedric Umoja.**

vited the neighborhood to come out, rounding up the East Side Neighborhood Association, the Garden Club of Charleston and the Parks Conservancy.

"We all got our hands dirty and we all planted plants," Kronsberg said, adding that it created a sense of ownership with all who joined in. "Everybody had a little piece in this one."

## A moment of reflection

Tucked behind the Charleston County Public Library along Alexander Street, passersby will now come upon another landscaped site. The new Susie Jackson Freedom Memorial Garden opened to the public on June 17, the seventh anniversary of the mass shooting at Emanuel AME Church.

It was named in honor of

Jackson, an active member of Emanuel. At 87 years old, she was the eldest of the nine congregants killed there in 2015 mass shooting.

Situated behind the library at 68 Calhoun St., it is accessible by a main path from Calhoun Street as well as from Alexander Street, where Jackson lived for more than 50 years.

Its creation represents another public/private partnership, too. It included the city, Charleston County, the Parks Conservancy, and surrounding neighborhood residents and businesses.

Working with Jackson's family, the Parks Department drafted several concepts before landing on the design of a Charleston garden. The plot, which is approximately one-tenth of an acre, is defined by a brick fountain, Palmetto trees and gravel paths.

Nine Japanese blueberry

trees have been planted in honor of the nine lives lost during the tragedy. The garden also includes five Noisette roses, representing each of the survivors.

Benches and additional plantings will also be installed, and the Calhoun Street pathway will be cultivated to offer a lush entrance. "The landscape of that pathway is becoming another alleyway of Charleston," Kronsberg said, adding to others that are a hallmark of downtown Charleston.

## An undulating art park

In Charleston's Cannonborough-Elliottborough neighborhood, Shiloh Park is now under construction, green-ing up an 8,000-square-foot plot at 172 Smith St., where Shiloh AME Church was once located.

With its proximity to Derreef Park, which has a playground and a praise house that is used for events and exhibits, the need for such considerations was already addressed. The neighborhood could take a different tack with its concept.

The result is an art park with both permanent and temporary installations. It represents another project developed in close conversation with the neighborhood, by way of discussions with the Cannonborough-Elliottborough Neighborhood Association.

Rather than take the approach of a Charleston garden, Kronsberg said the city elected to do something

"maybe more organic, and perhaps a little whimsical," inspired by the work of Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, who often starts his designs by creating a painting.

As an art park, Shiloh also helps to augment the city's present dearth of permanent public art installations. The process of approvals can prove sufficiently difficult to getting such projects to fruition.

Underway is a design including a subtropical plant palette with bigger leaves and a variety of palm trees that are not typically used in Charleston. Those are positioned along undulating paths with water features, all of which come together to create a neighborhood oasis.

And about that art. A vibrant cobalt blue mural by Columbia-based artist Cedric Umoja is in the works. There will be four spaces for permanent art, and two additional spaces will accommodate rotating art.

There is more to come, as well. The next goal is to upgrade Conway Park, which is on the East Side near the Hampstead Square quadrant with the Philip Simmons statue.

Said Kronsberg: "Like Mayor (Joe) Riley said, 'Every square inch of park space we can create is a good square inch.' And Mayor (John) Tecklenburg said, 'Nobody complains about having too many parks.'"

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