

Jekyll Island Authority Selects Linger Longer

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Since the Jekyll Island Authority began seeking a revitalization partner in June, the question has been asked: what does the future hold?

The answers began to emerge on Monday: additional green space, environmental sensitivity, historic preservation, a focus on conservation, full public beach access, and a wide variety of lodging and recreation opportunities for all Georgians.

All this and more was proposed by Linger Longer Communities, which was selected by the board of the Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) as its partner on the long-term revitalization of the island. The Authority based its decision on proposals submitted by four developers for a 45-acre town center, which is approximately one percent of the total acreage of the island. Sixty-five percent of Jekyll must remain undeveloped according to state law.

The selection of Linger Longer Communities from the three finalists marks the first step toward beginning the revitalization effort – giving the public its first opportunity to review the full proposals and participate in the process.

“We are delighted to be chosen by the Authority as its partner,” said Mercer Reynolds, Chairman of Linger Longer Communities, the company that created Reynolds Plantation. “We are proud of the plans we submitted and the team we have assembled. We’re also excited to begin engaging the public in this process and begin incorporating their feedback into our plans.

“Our goal is to set a standard for an inclusive coastal community with sustainable building, environmental sensitivity and amazing amenities for all visitors to Jekyll, whether they are staying the night or visiting for the day,” Reynolds continued. “As a Georgia-based organization, we want to ensure that this will be a plan to make Jekyll an island for all Georgians. We want to help Jekyll serve as a gateway island – a focal point for public education and interpretation of the Georgia coast.”

The 45-acre RFP site is currently occupied by the existing convention center and adjacent oceanfront property on Jekyll Island, including the island’s retail center.

During Monday’s presentation, JIA board members and consultants cited several factors that contributed to the selection of Linger Longer as revitalization partner. In particular, their comments focused on the high percentage of green space, number of affordable accommodations and the creativity of the village design concept. Forty-five percent of Linger Longer’s hotel rooms will be priced lower than \$138 per night, based on average daily rates.

The Process

The JIA issued a request for proposal (RFP) on June 1 to solicit a private partner in the wake of a six-year decline in visitation to the island. During the period 2001-06, travel to Jekyll Island fell by over 13 percent. Lack of revenues has hindered the Authority’s ability to reinvest in maintenance on the island, including existing facilities that are more than 30 years old in many cases. Joining Linger Longer Communities as finalists in the selection process were Trammell Crow Company and Jekyll Island Revitalization Group.

Linger Longer Communities based its submission around design principles that focus on environmentally responsible design, integration of the entire island into a community and celebration of the culture, history and the architectural heritage of Jekyll Island. Its team also considered the recommendations of the Georgia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), the Georgia Wildlife Management Plan (WMP) and the Jekyll Island Conservation Plan to hone the environmental sensitivity of the plan, maximize wildlife habitat preservation and enhance visitors' ability to interact with the island's natural beauty.

Since 1971, development on Jekyll Island has been limited by a state legislative mandate that requires preserving 65 percent of the island in its natural state, leaving 35 percent of the island open to development. The revitalization plan submitted by Linger Longer Communities would affect just three percent of the island's developable land.

For Linger Longer Communities and the JIA, this announcement marks the beginning of the revitalization process. JIA will soon announce the next steps.

Working with the Authority, Linger Longer plans to quickly initiate meetings with community groups and other interested parties.

Proposals were evaluated according to the following criteria: qualifications and competencies of the proposer to complete the scope of the project; adherence to green building practices; quality of the concept plan for the focus area; demonstration of financial viability and sustainability of any new development in the focus area; and clear interest in a long-term relationship with the Jekyll Island Authority.

The Plan

The public is now getting its first look at how Linger Longer Communities recommends revitalizing the village site in a way that is both environmentally sensitive and economically viable. The plan includes a new Convention Center linked to a 400-room Convention Hotel, an economy and a mid-scale hotel, and a mixed-use town center that will provide shopping and dining on the ground floor with vacation rental units in the upper levels.

Vacation cottages and vacation club units – not designed for permanent residency – are planned to be artfully integrated into the Village. Almost 50 percent of the site is designed to be parks, green space and open space, resulting in a net increase in the island's natural areas and permeable surfaces.

Plans call for planting thousands of new trees and creating multiple new parks, including two landmark areas. Hyde Park will feature trails and an extensive freshwater marsh, and Horton Square will consist of a beachside park and a town square in the Village Center which can be used for festivals, informal gatherings, picnics and more.

The plan is designed to make the island more accessible and attractive to potential visitors from Georgia and nearby states. Linger Longer believes that implementing the plan would make Jekyll an appealing destination for families, regional business and governmental associations, and state and regional corporations.

As proposed, the center of the new Jekyll Island Village will be an active and vibrant village center with amenities, services and entertainment for visitors. In addition to shopping and dining options, the Village will encompass the new Environmental Discovery Center, an educational center focused on Jekyll's ecological heritage.

The Village will have a series of distinct and varied “neighborhoods” linked together by pedestrian paths, trails, “green” streets and lanes. A continuous pedestrian promenade adjacent to the dunes provides a connection for visitors to beach access points, the Village center, Convention Center and accommodations. The character of the buildings will be a blend of the historic architecture that evolved in response to the coastal environment with green design elements and systems that conserve energy and resources.

The plan calls for close adherence to newly developed Earthcraft Community Coastal Guidelines so that all site planning, development and construction will follow state-of-the-art sustainable building practices. All commercial buildings will also meet or exceed LEED Silver Standards, and all flat-roofed buildings will be “green roofs”. All ground surfaces within the Village, including all new roads and sidewalks, will be pervious surfaces, and the Village will have comprehensive rain and water runoff capture systems.

A new Convention Hotel will create a landmark at the eastern terminus of Shell Road and would be linked with a new Convention Center in a neighborhood designated as Vail’s Call, named in honor of the first international telephone call made from the island by Theodore Vail. The mid-scale and economy hotels, with proposed average daily rates similar to rates at existing hotels on the island, would be located adjacent to the Village Center.

Other new neighborhoods outlined in the plan are the North and South Colonies – both cottage districts designed in the spirit of the island’s Historic District. These new districts will be tucked into a network of paths and lanes surrounded by live oaks and inland wetlands.

The team approached the revitalization project by considering the whole island as a single community. While focusing on the Village center as the hub of the island’s retail, dining and lodging activity, the plan is designed to bring connectivity to the different sections of the island.

“A primary aspect of the Jekyll Island experience is immersing the visitor in its singular ecologic environment,” said Jim Langford, project executive for Linger Longer. “We hope to make it easier for visitors to connect to all the various coastal habitats the island has to offer through nature trails, bike pathways and parks that knit together the assets of Jekyll Island into a continuous fabric.”

The Team

As the JIA’s revitalization partner, Linger Longer Communities brings a philosophy of creating communities in respect of their natural surroundings. Rather than rely on its expertise alone for this project, Linger Longer called on internationally recognized industry partners to assemble a development team. These include development partners Harbor Hotel Investors, LLC and E.H. McMullen & Associates.

Harbor Hotel Investors invest in full service hotels, resorts and related real estate. John Griswold, as president of Harbor Hotels, brings to the team over 30 years of hospitality, real estate and management expertise. E.H. McMullen & Associates is a development firm with more than 30 years experience with the marketing and sales of fractional and timeshare products within mixed-use developments.

Consulting advisors include Southface Energy Institute, a nonprofit organization providing technical assistance for the design and construction of environmentally sensitive and energy-efficient homes; Jacobs Engineering Group, one of the world’s largest providers of professional technical services including scientific and specialty consulting, such as environmental and civil engineering; Urban Design Associates, an urban design firm with

more than 40 years' experience in creating successful neighborhoods, waterfronts and downtowns; PKF Consulting, an international firm of management consultants, industry specialists and appraisers for the hospitality, real estate and tourism industries; and Applied Technology & Management, Inc., an engineering group that is the largest and one of the most experienced coastal planning, environmental engineering, and design firms in the U.S.

About Linger Longer Communities

Headquartered in Greensboro, Georgia, Linger Longer was formed in 1985 by Mercer Reynolds and Jamie Reynolds to develop Reynolds Plantation, one of Georgia's premiere mixed-use developments. Reynolds Plantation is a 10,000-acre golf and lake community featuring 99 holes of championship golf and 80 miles of shoreline. Additional Linger Longer Communities include Reynolds Landing at Lake Oconee, a resort community centered around a classic Bob Cupp golf course, and Achasta in historic Dahlonega, Georgia.

Communities developed by Linger Longer feature the cornerstone principals of creating meaningful, long-lasting communities with minimal natural disturbance and exceptional amenities. Stewardship of the land, expansion of historic preservation and strengthening wildlife preservation are hallmarks of its planning and operations.

For more information on the Jekyll Island revitalization project, visit [RediscoverJekyll](#). For more information on Linger Longer Communities, visit [Linger Longer](#).

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