



HILTON HEAD ISLAND: Sells Itself

▶▶ Article by Philip A. Schembra

Much of what we know about today's Hilton Head Island, recognized around the world as one of the finest oceanfront residential resort communities on the East Coast, owes a tremendous debt to its early developers. Thanks to their brilliant forward thinking, land planning, design and stewardship of the natural environment, they had the vision to transform a quiet, sleepy Southern resort into the sought-after community it is today.

We have an amazing story to tell, and whether you choose our island as a full- or part-time resident, guest, member of the business community or part of the ever-growing mobile workforce, following are some of the reasons why we call this special place home.

HOW DO WE COMPARE?

Both inside and outside of our resorts, Hilton Head Island is a wonderland of amenities you won't find anywhere else. Start with the blissfully white sandy beaches—all 12 newly re-nourished miles of them. Add to that a cornucopia of cultural treasures like a thriving art and local music scene, Broadway-caliber shows at The Arts Center of Coastal Carolina, the fascinating heritage of the native Gullah, educational programming at the Coastal Discovery Museum, the rich history of Mitchelville and miles of leisure pathways that have earned our town gold level distinction as a bike friendly community. All of that, and we haven't even mentioned the PGA-quality golf or the world-class tennis.

Even setting aside the endless abundance of residential and resort amenities and four-season subtropical weather, you're still left with one of Hilton Head Island's greatest assets: its people. Sometimes we take for granted how wonderful it is to be a part of this community, but it takes a tremendous amount of energy, dedication and hard work from many people to provide our quality of life.

Another major advantage we have over other communities is the creation of the Land Management

Ordinance (LMO), which was drafted during the creation of the Town of Hilton Head Island in 1982, during the term of my wife's cousin, Benjamin M. Racusin, the first mayor of Hilton Head Island. The LMO took unlimited growth to four units per acre, ultimately resulting in us becoming a resale community with very limited developer inventory, as communities who already had their master plan approved were able to continue their development.

The Town of Hilton Head Island's land acquisition program began in 1991 and was designed to manage and control growth on the island. Thus far, this ongoing program has purchased 125 parcels (1,308 acres), precluding the following: 4.57 million square feet of commercial development, 1,365 hotel rooms, 4,637 residential and timeshare units and 43,228 peak-hour driving trips.

THE WORD IS OUT!

Around the world, people are catching on to the many things that make Hilton Head Island special. The resilience shown on our island when Hurricane Matthew paid us a visit in October was astounding. The dedication and hard work of our town, emergency team, first responders, private communities and neighbors was overwhelming. The amount of spirit, volunteerism and willingness to help each other speaks volumes, and is one of the reasons why Travel + Leisure Magazine voted Hilton Head Island No. 1 Island in the U.S. and the World's No. 4 Friendliest Island in 2016.

And those are just two of the many awards, acknowledgements and accolades bestowed on our area. There are too many to mention here, so please visit hiltonheadisland.org/about-the-island/awards to learn more.

So, what does this all mean for the Hilton Head Island Market? Our amenities, our awards and our quality of life all should have a profound effect on prices across Hilton Head Island. We over-deliver in amenities

and under-deliver in price. Look at any other high-end oceanfront residential and resort community, and you'll see that, dollar for dollar, there's nowhere on earth like Hilton Head Island.

One of our biggest challenges in the real estate industry is communicating to all realtors, owners, prospective owners and guests that, as a resale community, the only avenue of generating new property to sell is from existing property owners who want to sell.

RECENTLY, THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS (NAR) ANNOUNCED THAT JANUARY 2017 WAS THE BEST JANUARY IN THE PAST 10 YEARS, WITH SALES GROWTH OF 3.3 PERCENT.

What this will do for years to come will put increased pressure on our prices as supply and demand will always work in the favor of owners. Recently, the National Association of Realtors (NAR) announced that January 2017 was the best January in the past 10 years, with sales growth of 3.3 percent.

As a local realtor since 1976, my experience throughout five recessions is that when the country's economy and real estate sales improve, we all benefit tremendously. The reason is quite simple. We are a niche market, and we only need a small percentage of people who want to relocate or invest in Hilton Head Island, which would, again, put upward pressure on both supply and demand.

I have always believed that our owners choose Hilton Head Island because they love our community and they want to be here with their families, creating lasting memories, having fun with their friends and securing an investment for their future.

In my opinion, if the economy of our country continues to prosper, we can expect strong capital appreciation in the future as more people decide to purchase here. This should be great news for all of us, as with increased demand and limited supply, this represents a great opportunity for those who desire to sell. 📍

Philip A. Schembra grew up in Glen Ridge, New Jersey and earned a business degree from LIU Post in Old Brookville, NY in 1969. He started in the real estate business working for Boise Cascade in a resort in Pennsylvania. Schembra moved to Palmetto Dunes Resort in 1976 to sell developer property and has specialized exclusively in Palmetto Dunes, Shelter Cove and Leamington and is the broker-in-charge of Schembra Real Estate Group at The Plaza at Shelter Cove.