



### **Ridgeland Residents to Vote on Freedom Ridge Park Expansion Referendum on June 3rd**

On June 3, residents of Ridgeland will have the opportunity to vote on a referendum proposing a temporary 2% tax increase on hotels and 1% tax increase on restaurants within city limits. The revenue generated from this tax will be dedicated solely to the expansion of Freedom Ridge Park, further enhancing the city's recreational facilities and positioning Ridgeland as a premier tournament and event destination.

The proposed expansion includes the addition of several new amenities:

- Lit pickleball courts
- Regulation baseball/softball fields – accommodating up to 100 teams per weekend
- New batting cages with artificial turf
- Officials' Headquarters
- Full-size artificial turf soccer fields for ages six through adult
- Festival and special events area
- Multi-use trails connecting with Ridgeland's existing trail system
- Playgrounds
- Pavilions available for rent
- Additional restrooms

The proposed expansion will open new opportunities for large scale regional and national tournaments, resulting in a significant boost in visitation, hotel occupancy, restaurant revenue, and retail activity. The improvements at Freedom Ridge Park will also enhance the quality of life for local residents, offering more recreational opportunities for families, sports enthusiasts, and the community as a whole.

*"Our City has long been a leader in providing our residents an outstanding quality of life, and exceptional outdoor recreation is a key part of that commitment. This expansion will enhance those opportunities and bring a significant economic boost to Ridgeland, allowing us to host national tournaments and much more,"* stated Mayor Gene McGee. *"This is a great opportunity for Ridgeland to build on its legacy as a thriving, family-oriented community."*

The referendum has received support from numerous Ridgeland hotel and restaurant owners and patrons who understand the opportunities it would bring.

Chris Chapman, CEO/President of Explore Ridgeland, echoed the positive impact of the expansion. *“Explore Ridgeland’s mission is to drive and sustain economic growth through tourism marketing and promotion. Sports tourism is a key market for our city already known for elevated shopping, dining, lodging, and outdoor recreation. The Freedom Ridge Park expansion would become a premier facility driving more tournament visitation and boosting the local economy. The total economic impact of visitors in Ridgeland annually is over 130 million, generating over 16 million in state and local tax revenues which are not the burden of our Ridgeland residents. This stay and play sports development benefits every family in Ridgeland and enhances our quality of life.”*

Ridgeland currently already boasts one of the lowest tourist taxes in the state. The proposed tax increase is temporary and will dissolve once the project is fully funded. Ridgeland, known for its vibrant shopping, dining, and business community, will now have the opportunity to solidify itself as a top-tier destination for sports tournaments and special events.