

SUNSET BEACH STREETSCAPE COMMITTEE REPORT



January 26, 2011

As recommended by the Streetscape Committee

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With assistance from Charlene Doolittle on bicycle issues, and Anita August
on grants

SUNSET BEACH ISLAND STREETSCAPE PLAN

OVERVIEW

The Town of Sunset Beach established the Streetscape Committee to develop a proposal for upgrading the look of our Island's gateway within existing zoning regulations (see Attachment 1 for Mission Statement). The area to be considered was Sunset Boulevard from Main Street to the bridge. The Committee consists of volunteers from the Mainland and the Island, including members representing the commercial interests on the Island, residents, and the biking community. Special recognition should go to resident and landscape architect Tim Cate, who was primarily responsible for the architectural rendering of the recommendations and for advice regarding plant selection and lighting. The Committee also received assistance from several members of the North Carolina Department of Transportation, including Michael Lovell, Deputy District Engineer, Stonewall Mathis, Division Roadside Environmental Engineer, Tanya Sokolik-Porch, Jon Roan, Mason Herndon, Environmental Officer, and Debbie Vic. Cindy Nelson ably acted as the Committee's recording secretary.

EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS ON SUNSET BOULEVARD

Sunset Boulevard from North Shore to Main Street is situated within a 100 foot right-of-way. However, the street is not centered. At the north end, there are 48 feet on the east side of the paved road and 32 feet on the west side of the paved road. At the south end, there are 56 feet on the east side of the paved road and 24 feet on the west side of the paved road (see Attachment 2). The east side of Sunset Boulevard is wide enough to accommodate an interior road and parking; the west side cannot be utilized the same way. There are a number of nonconforming commercial buildings on both sides of Sunset Boulevard which either use the limited right of way for customer parking, or have buildings located within that right-of-way.

Please note that our Streetscape recommendations take these limitations into account.

There is an existing retention pond on the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Main Street (east side), but it has been largely filled in with sand and vegetation.

Currently, there are 47 designated parking spaces on the east side of the road. Access to these parking spots is obtained from the interior road on that side of the street. There is also a small grassed area and a sidewalk between the roadbed and the parking spaces on the east side of the street. A few trash cans have been placed on both sides of the road. There are four commercial light fixtures on the east side of the street, and one on the west side.

STREETSCAPE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Our major recommendations fall into three categories – (1) continue the interior access road from Sunset Properties to Sunset Vacations; (2) create oases of plantings all along Sunset Boulevard; and (3) add both a bike lane and a bike/pedestrian lane from Main Street to North Shore (with connection to the bike lanes on the causeway). We believe these recommendations will result in both an increase in attractive available parking, a uniform look for the area, a sense of greenery and lushness along the road, and safety for bikers and walkers. The overall plan should greatly improve the ambiance of the business district on the Island, and create a gateway to the Island that we can be proud of.

We recommend, as shown on the plan, that several parking spaces be removed within the interior access road area to provide a place for trees and plants. While the current area provides for 47 parking spaces, we will actually wind up with 71 designated parking spaces on the east side of Sunset Boulevard once the interior road is continued to North Shore. We may want to consider limiting access to the new parking area far enough away from North Shore to prevent a backup of vehicles along North Shore waiting to turn onto Sunset Boulevard, just as access is limited to the interior road close to Main Street.

We do not recommend that parking be provided on the west side of Sunset Boulevard. That side of the road, which narrows considerably as it nears Main Street, is not wide enough to construct an interior access road. Any parking on the west side would either be parallel parking or vertical parking with cars backing up directly onto Sunset Boulevard. This would create not only a dangerous condition, but would cause major backups during the heavily trafficked months. Further, it would be extremely unsightly – you would face a sea of cars as you crossed the causeway along Sunset Boulevard – not the visual appeal that we should be striving for. We note that we met with the Town’s Parking Committee in September to present our ideas regarding parking along Sunset Boulevard, as reflected in this report. The Parking Committee has endorsed these recommendations.

We recommend implementation of bike/pedestrian lanes on Sunset Boulevard – ideally, six feet on the west side of the street, although we could get away with a four foot lane on this side, similar to the lanes along the bridge and causeway, and six to eight feet on the east side of Sunset Boulevard. To create a safer environment for pedestrians, the east lane could be separated from the traffic lanes with attractive bollards (short vertical posts). We note that the opening of the new bridge has increased the number of bicyclists and walkers to the Island. It is imperative that we provide a safe environment for our community when traveling to and from the Island, and while on the Island



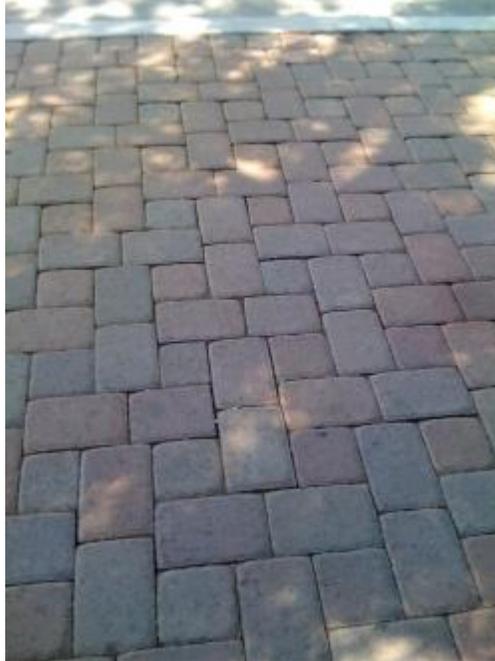
Example of a Bollard

The parking area would be separated from the bike/pedestrian lane with a green strip as wide as can be accommodated within the right-of-way.

We realize that this recommendation is likely to be very costly. DOT gave us several estimates to widen the road bed for bike/pedestrian paths (see Attachment 3), although we are not sure what the cost will actually be. An alternative suggestion to the eight foot bike/pedestrian path on the east side of Sunset Boulevard would be to maintain the current sidewalk/green strip configuration, and continue this to North Shore when the interior road is extended. This will provide a walking path for pedestrians, limiting bicyclists to the west side of the road, and will not result in redoing the existing sidewalk. Please note, however, that the existing sidewalk is not in the best of shape, nor does this sidewalk meet current DOT construction standards. We are not sure if DOT will approve continuing the same type of configuration when the interior road is extended.

The committee debated at much length about the feasibility of using permeable materials to construct the interior road and continue the parking area through Sunset Vacations. If designed and implemented correctly, permeable pavement systems allow at least a portion of storm water to infiltrate, thus reducing peak runoff volumes and flows. North Carolina's Division of Water Quality, under the authority of the Environmental Management Commission, has developed a variety of stormwater programs to protect the waters of the State. More information can be found in the NCDENR Stormwater BMP Manual, <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/wq/ws/su/bmp-manual>. Any disturbance of more than an acre of land to construct the interior road and additional parking will require a CAMA Major permit; we do not know what would be required to get this permit, but protection of the fragile waterway ecosystem should be a primary concern of our community. We strongly feel that the Town would be well served by using materials or methods that would abate stormwater runoff.

The existing storm water retention area at the intersection of Main Street and Sunset Boulevard should be replanted as a rain garden (as shown on the plan) to both increase the visual attractiveness of the area, and to reinstate its usefulness as a location for storm water runoff.



Example of permeable pavers

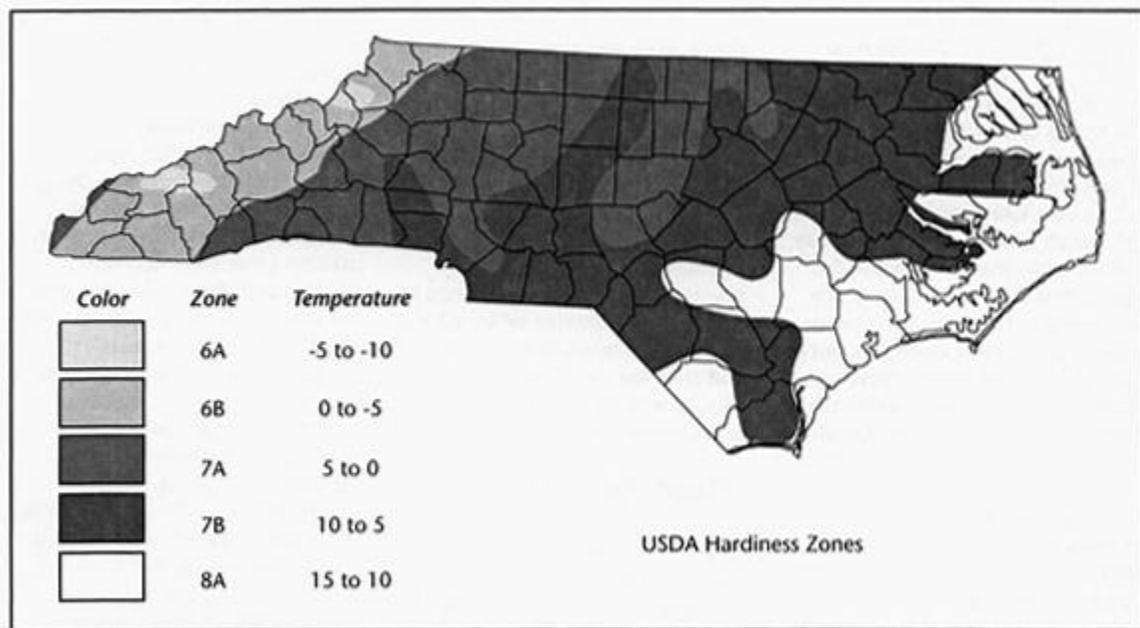
PLANT SELECTION

DOT has stringent requirements concerning the placement of plants within any highway right-of-way. North Carolina General Statute 136-93 provides that “no tree or shrub in or on any State road or State highways shall be planted, trimmed, or removed ...without a written permit, and then only in accordance with the regulations of said Department of Transportation” According to State literature, however, limited funding and manpower prevent the Division of Highways from planting and maintaining shrubs and trees on all roadsides. Planting and maintenance of roadside areas is frequently undertaken by municipalities after permission is granted from the Division of Highways. Before any action is taken on a request for a permit for planting within a municipality, the request must have the approval of the local governing body. A copy of the Division of Highways “Guidelines for Planting within Highway Right-of-Way” can be found at http://www.ncdot.org/doh/operations/dp_chief_eng/roadside/design/graphics/PlantingGuidelines.pdf.

We believe the planting recommendations on the Streetscape plan comply with the requirements concerning the distance from travel lanes, vertical clearance, and sight distances according to the published guidelines. In fact,

one of the primary reasons for the selection of Sabal palms is due to its long narrow trunk which allows for appropriate sight lines.

The plants noted on the Streetscape plan are designed to thrive in the challenging coastal conditions existing on the Island, such as blowing sand, poor soils, high temperatures (low temperatures in the winter), excessive drainage, and salt spray. Most plants will not tolerate salt accumulating on their foliage, making proper plant selection for beachfront landscapes imperative. Further, they require relatively low maintenance and watering. Plant selection is based on the Department of Agriculture’s designation of hardiness zone 8a (see below). A publication from the Brunswick County Cooperative Extension on salt tolerant plants recommended for coastal southeast landscapes can be found at <http://pender.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/71/Salt%20Tolerant%20Plants.pdf>; applicable sections are included as Attachment 4.



North Carolina has three hardiness zones (6,7, and 8) based on the average minimum temperature (°F).

Sabal Palm (also known as Sabal Palmetto and Cabbage Palm) – is highly salt tolerant, is native to the southeastern United States, and survives winter temperatures to 0 degrees when established.



Sabal Palm

Dwarf Sabal Palm (also known as Sabal Minor and Sabal Palmetto) – is a shrub sized palm with bluish leaves, growing (slowly) four to six feet tall and wide, and is used as a specimen or tall groundcover. It is the most widely-distributed palm in the Southeast.



Dwarf Sabal Palm

Parson's Juniper – is a superior juniper with rugged character widely used in commercial landscapes. It has gray-green foliage on stiff, wide-spreading branches. It is a good groundcover for hot, dry areas.



Parson's Juniper

Ornamental grasses – There are many highly salt tolerant ornamental grasses suitable for our area (see Attachment 4). Below is an example of Muhly Grass, one of the grasses listed in that attachment.



Muhly Grass

The plan also calls for grassed areas. These areas will obviously require additional maintenance and irrigation, but will achieve the most attractive look for the streetscape plan.

LIGHTING

Proper lighting greatly enhances a nighttime experience, as well as creates a safe environment for pedestrians and motorists. The plan calls for twelve lights along Sunset Boulevard (we currently have five).

DOT requires that poles generally must be 12 to 15 feet high, must be breakaway and must be impact resistant. The lighting concept we would like to see followed consists of decorative, low level, white light fixtures. The light should be directed downward for area and ground illumination, to avoid light pollution. The fixture should not have a commercial feel or look and should be somewhat nautical if possible. We recommend a 12 foot fixture – the lowest height allowed by DOT. The placement of these fixtures, due to existing conditions, favors staggering them on both sides of Sunset Boulevard. The existing lights in the extension should be replaced with the same fixtures selected. Below are examples of actual lights that could meet these suggestions.



SIGNAGE FOR SUNSET BOULEVARD

We recommend that a large “Welcome to Sunset Beach Island” sign be erected on the Southwest corner of Sunset Boulevard and North Shore Drive. Also, an Island wide speed limit sign of 25 mph could be posted at the juncture of the causeway and the Island, which would eliminate the need for speed limit signs along Sunset Boulevard.



Example of an entrance sign
appropriately landscaped

ANNUAL PLANTERS AND OTHER ACCESSORIES TO ENHANCE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE BUSINESS DISTRICT

We would like Sunset Boulevard to be an attractive place for property owners and visitors alike. To this end, in addition to the major streetscape recommendations, we suggest the following enhancements. Please note that whatever we install should be consistent throughout the area.

We have not included recommendations for planting annuals or perennials because of the high maintenance requirements. We do believe, however, that flowering plants would add greatly to the ambiance of the business corridor. One possible solution is for the Town to purchase and provide large attractive permanent containers to any business that would be willing to provide the daily maintenance that such planters would require. Individual property owners could also assist in the planting and care of these containers with an “adopt a planter” program.

We would also like the Town to consider purchasing bike racks to be placed at various locations, and provide attractive trash and recycling containers to

be placed in the grassy strip between the pedestrian/bike lane and the interior road on the east side of Sunset Boulevard.



Example of a planting container



Example of an attractive bike rack



Example of an attractive trash receptacle

OUTSIDE GRANT AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

We have had a number of discussions with DOT representatives concerning the availability of State funds to finance some of our recommendations. The North Carolina Department of Transportation features an Enhancement Program designed to “benefit the traveling public and help communities increase transportation choices and access, enhance the built or natural environment and create a sense of place.” Included in the twelve qualifying activities are bicycle and pedestrian facilities and safety, scenic or historic highway programs, landscaping and other scenic beautification, and environmental mitigation. Details can be found at <http://www.ncdot.gov/programs/Enhancement/>. Some of the Streetscape plan’s proposed improvements would qualify for enhancement funds. Under this program, the Town pays for the improvements and then is reimbursed if approved for 80 percent of the cost.

In addition to DOT enhancement funds, there are numerous grant possibilities for funding the bike lanes. The Town’s Bike & Pedestrian Steering committee may be exploring these possibilities, and should include Sunset Boulevard enhancements in their request.



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Gary Parker, Administrator • Larry Crim, Asst. Administrator



Sunset Boulevard South Street Scape Steering Committee

Mission Statement

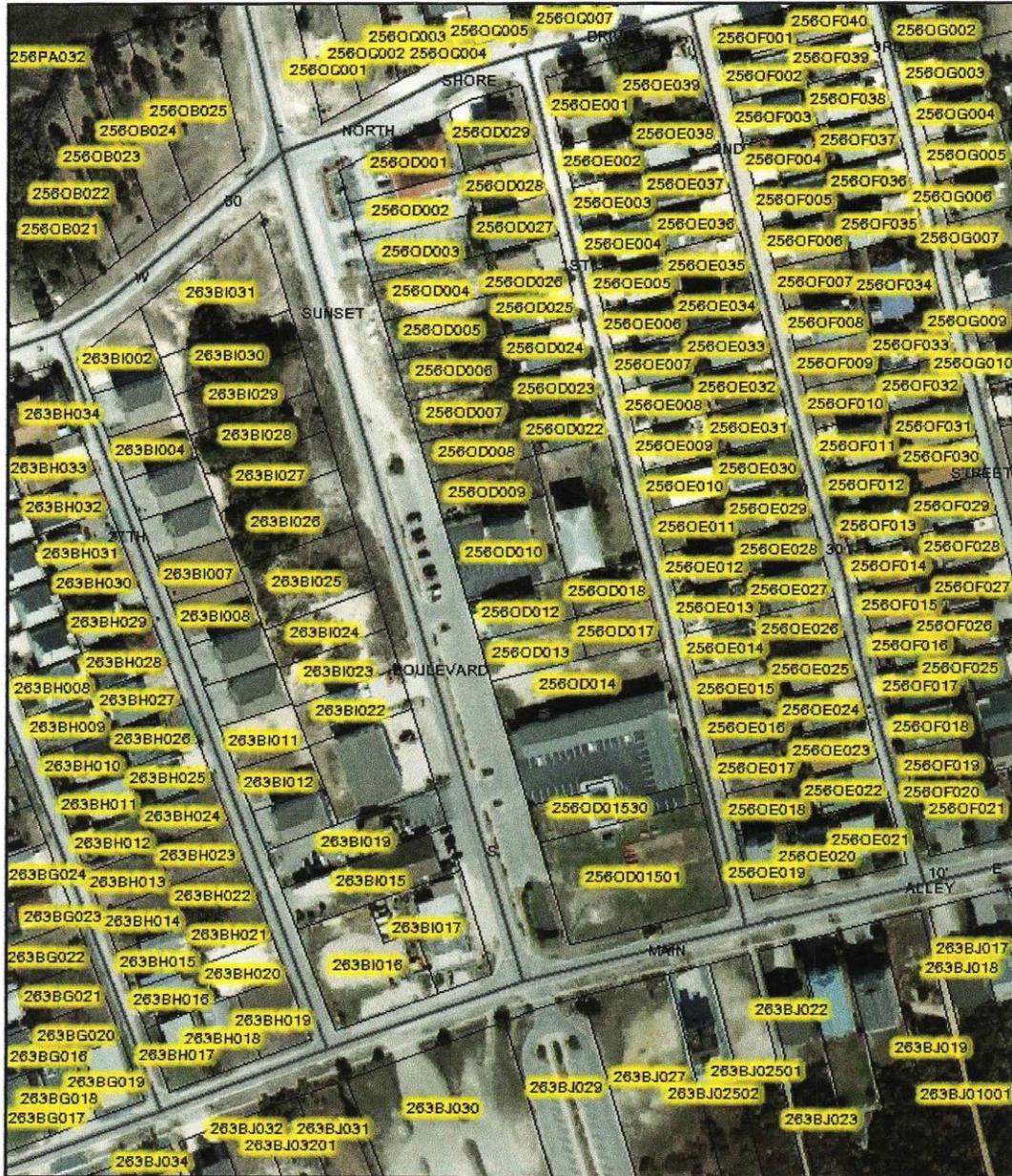
Committee members will be asked to work with appropriate Town Staff and a selected landscape architect to develop a proposal for upgrading the look of our island's gateway within existing zoning regulations. The initial area to be considered is on Sunset Blvd South from the bridge to Main Street. Once a landscape plan has been presented, approved and funded by the Town council, it is expected that town personnel will manage the implementation of the project after the installation of any lines related to the planned sewer project.

Mayor Ronald F. Klein • Council: Len Steiner • Ron Watts • Louis DeVita • Bob Bobinski • E. Wilson Sherrill

Part of North Carolina's Brunswick Islands

Attachment 1

Brunswick County, NC



Disclaimer: Map and parcel data are believed to be accurate, but accuracy is not guaranteed. This is not a legal document and should not be substituted for a title search, appraisal, survey, or for zoning verification.

Map Scale
1 inch = 173 feet

<http://gis.brunasco.net/printPreview.aspx?PrintOptData=Brunswick County, NC|0|0>true|fals...> 9/15/2010

Attachment 2

CONSTRUCTION ESTIMATE

District Three Division Three County: Brunswick

Route Sunset Beach Work Order N/A

Description _____

Length _____ Estimated Construction Time N/A

Typical Section

Surface:	Type	<u>SF 9.5 A</u>	Thickness	<u>2"</u>	Width	<u>4'</u>
Binder:	Type		Thickness		Width	
Base:	Type	<u>B 25.0 B</u>	Thickness	<u>5"</u>	Width	<u>4'</u>
Other:	_____					

Notes: _____

ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE	AMOUNT
Mobilization (LS)		\$50,000.00	\$0.00
SF 9.5 A (TON) <i>asphalt</i>	700	\$65.00	\$45,500.00
I 19.0B (TON)		\$55.00	\$0.00
B 25.0 B (TON) <i>base under surface mix</i>	2500	\$77.00	\$192,500.00
ASP for Plant mix PG 64-22 (TON)	209	\$500.00	\$104,500.00
Ditch Construction (CY)		\$8.50	\$0.00
Pipe Replacement (LF)		\$52.00	\$0.00
Shoulder reconstruction (SHM)	2	\$3,000.00	\$6,000.00
Seeding & Mulching (AC)	5	\$2,000.00	\$10,000.00

4' widening of current road from N. Shore to main St.

ESTIMATED COST OF CONSTRUCTION:	<u>\$358,500.00</u>
Traffic (Signals, traffic control, etc.):	N/A
Right of Way:	N/A
Environmental:	N/A
Engineering:	13.5% N/A
Other:	N/A
Contingency: (____%)	N/A <i>2</i>
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST:	<u>\$358,500.00</u>

Computed by Michael C. Lovell Date June. 1, 2009

Approximate cost per linear foot

 \rightarrow \$19.57

This formula is the the total approximate cost divided bt length times 2 sides of the roadway.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension

SALT TOLERANT PLANTS

Recommended for Coastal Southeast Landscapes

Coastal Challenges

Plants growing at the beach are subjected to environmental conditions much different than those planted further inland. Factors such as blowing sand, poor soils, high temperatures, and excessive drainage all influence how well plants perform in coastal landscapes, though the most significant effect on growth is salt spray. Most plants will not tolerate salt accumulating on their foliage, making plant selection for beachfront landscapes particularly challenging.

Palms—*Highly Salt Tolerant*

Common Name

Botanical Name Height x Spread (ft.) Soil Exposure

Dwarf Palmetto* *Sabal minor* 4-6 x 4-6 Moist to Well Drained Sun to Part Shade

Cabbage Palm, Palmetto* *Sabal palmetto* 10-20 x 10-15 Well Drained Sun

Saw Palmetto* *Serenoa repens* 3-5 x 4-8 Moist to Well Drained Sun to Part Shade

Ornamental Grasses—*Highly Salt Tolerant*

Common Name

Botanical Name Height x Spread Soil Conditions Exposure

Pampas Grass

Cortaderia selloana 8' x 6' Moist to Well Drained Full Sun

Lyme Grass

Leymus arenarius 2' x 4' Well Drained to Xeric Full Sun

Maiden Grass

Miscanthus sinensis 4'-8' x 3'-6' Moist to Well Drained Full Sun

Muhly Grass*

Muhlenbergia capillaris 3' x 3' Well Drained to Xeric Full Sun

Bitter Panicum*

Panicum amarum 3' x 2' Well Drained to Xeric Full Sun

Sand Cordgrass*

Spartina bakeri 3' x 3' Well Drained Full Sun

Attachment 4