

CHAPTER 7: REVIEW OF THE CURRENT (2010) CAMA LAND USE PLAN

An assessment to determine whether the policy intent, and the associated objectives and goals, adopted in the 2010 Land Use Plan have been reached is a useful exercise to identify any strengths and/or weaknesses in the Town's existing "development management program". The "development management program" is basically the Town's land-use related ordinances and capital/infrastructure improvement programs. The purpose in assessing the outcomes of the 2010 CAMA Land Use Plan is for the Town to evaluate how effectively it has been able to implement the policies and programs adopted in that plan. A good place to look to see if the desired future growth pattern adopted in the 2010 Plan was achieved, are the 2010 "Vision Statement", polices, and "Future Land Classification" system. These items can be found in Sections 2.3 and 9 of the 2010 Land Use Plan, and are briefly summarized below. This assessment should help identify where any adjustments to existing policies are needed, or where the creation of new policy may be needed. Concurrently, the policies adopted in this plan update will provide guidance for identifying and implementing changes to Town ordinances and programs to further the desired growth pattern established in this plan. The assessment of the policies in the current Town Land Use Plan (2010) shall consider the following factors:

- a) Consistency of current land use and development ordinances with the existing CAMA Land Use Plan (2010) policies;
- b) Implementation of the land use plan's policies by the Town;
- c) Effectiveness of the policies in creating desired land use patterns and protecting natural systems (i.e. water quality); and
- d) Community survey results as a gauge of the overall public opinion in policy effectiveness and implementation.

2010 VISION STATEMENT

Before assessing the individual policies, the Vision Statement should be reviewed as it is intended to set the general direction by which the policies should remain consistent. The Vision Statement adopted in 2010, which was intended to state the desired character for the present day, is as follows:

"The Town of Sunset Beach intends to promote and support the orderly economic and aesthetic growth and development of the community in accordance with its adopted Land Use Plan and development-related ordinances. The Town of Sunset Beach desires to maintain its unique coastal-town character by promoting lower-density and single-family residential development as its primary growth pattern. The Town also recognizes that it coexists with a fragile coastal environment, and it shall seek to preserve and conserve the land and estuarine water, including its

beach and golf course amenities that have made this community a highly desirable place to live. Furthermore, the Town values being responsive to the public and improving the quality of life for all its citizens, to this end, the Town shall continually seek the involvement, input and various viewpoints of its citizens during the Town's official consideration of land use and development decisions."

The vision statement drafted in 2010 is still relevant in 2016. In fact, this vision statement will be used as the 2016 Land Use Plan Vision Statement. Public sentiment and policy regarding maintaining town's character, low density development, and single-family residential land use pattern is still the primary tenet of desired future growth and development policy.

2010 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

The following growth and development issues were completed in the 2010 Land Use Plan. The issues were categorized either as a "Priority" or "General" issue, the latter being of less significance. Many of the issues identified in the 2010 Land Use Plan remain relevant in 2016. The status of each issue is provided.

PRIORITY ISSUES

1. Expansion of Centralized Sewer/Elimination of Septic Systems
 - Status: Mostly complete, approximately 25% of homes remain on septic. This was a major accomplishment that was completed since the adoption of the 2010 Land Use Plan.
2. Stormwater Runoff/Water Quality Improvement
 - Status: Ongoing. Water quality data compiled in 2013 displayed no significant improvement. The Town will continue efforts to reduce stormwater runoff where possible in an attempt to enhance water quality. Moving forward, this will be a priority issue for the Town.
3. Proactively Managing Dimensional Size (lot size, density, and height) of Future Development and Redevelopment
 - Status: Ongoing. The Town adopted a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) in 2012. However, additional amendments are needed to address certain aspects of development and redevelopment. In particular, the density of development and cluster standards should be explored for the Conservation Reserve district.
4. Retaining and Enhancing Community Appearance (landscaping, signage, buffers)
 - Status: Ongoing. Community appearance has improved due to streetscape amenities installed on the island and landscaping of the

bridge and roundabout. Additional enhancements are needed on the mainland and the island.

GENERAL ISSUES

1. Impacts Associated with High-rise Bridge
 - Status: Ongoing. Needs remain in order mitigate the impacts of the high-rise bridge. Additional day trippers have increased demand for parking on the island. A roundabout was installed on the mainland entrance to the bridge to increase safety.
2. What Housing Types Should be Allowed?
 - Status: Ongoing. Survey results show that remaining a family-oriented beach with a majority of single-family residences is the desired growth pattern.
3. Types and Scale of Commercial Growth
 - Status: Ongoing. Survey results indicate that minimal commercial growth is desired in the Town. Establishments that support tourism such as restaurants are desired in a low density development pattern.
4. Increasing Public Access/Boat Ramps
 - Status: Ongoing. Increasing public access is always a concern of the general public and citizenry. Since the 2010 Land Use Plan was adopted, a Wildlife Resources Commission Public Access boat launch was constructed in place of the old bridge. Full-service boat ramp facilities may not be feasible in the future; however, opportunities for kayak and canoe launches can be explored.
5. Proactively Manage Intensity (building height and lot coverage) and Density (units per acre) of all new Development
 - Status: Ongoing. Density of new development has remained consistent with the 2010 Land Use Plan. Survey results indicate that lower density development within the Conservation Reserve zoning district is desired.
6. Assess Potential Impacts from Surrounding Area Growth (Myrtle Beach, Brunswick County and Wilmington)
 - Status: Ongoing. Potential impacts of the Wilmington Bypass (I-140) completion should be explored as visitors in the western part of the state will now have more direct access to the Brunswick County beaches. As a result, seasonal visitation and tourism could be increased.
7. Assess Feasibility of More Parks/Recreation Opportunities in the Jurisdiction
 - Status: Ongoing. In 2014, the Town completed construction of a Town

Park on the Intracoastal Waterway. This was a major accomplishment and has increased the availability of recreation facilities on the mainland. In the future, Town officials must establish the intensity of uses to be allowed in the Town Park. The types of uses that take place at this park will continue to be an important issue for Town residents. Assessing the feasibility of additional recreation opportunities, particularly for seniors, will be an ongoing process as the population increases.

8. Ensure Infrastructure Capacity will Meet Expected Growth

- Status: Complete. Water supply and wastewater capacity are the responsibility of the Brunswick County Utility Department. According to the County, demand is not expected to exceed capacity at any time over the next 30 years.

9. Protect Quality Green Space/Open Space (Protect sensitive areas)

- Status: Ongoing. This remains an important issue for the Town. Where opportunities are available the Town will explore options for preserving or protecting quality open space.

10. What Level of Continued Annexation & ETJ?

- Status: Inactive. Involuntary annexation is no longer used as a standard tool for growth and expansion in North Carolina municipalities.

11. Define the Town's Character- Is it a Small Beach Town?

- Status: The Town's character has been established as a small, residential, coastal community. The Town desires to keep this character in the future.

12. Traffic/Transportation Issues and Needs

- Status: Ongoing. The completion of the high-rise bridge and roundabout has alleviated much of the seasonal traffic congestion, but has also increased demand for parking on the island. Bicycle lanes were recently installed on Main Street as an effort to encourage non-motorized users. Providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities remains an important issue for the Town as is the need to increase safety for non-motorized transportation users.

13. Provide Adequate Public Parking/Restrooms for day trippers

- Status: Ongoing. According to survey results, providing adequate public parking for day trippers is a major concern at present. Additional restrooms have been provided since the adoption of the 2010 Land Use Plan.

14. Town Responsibility for Remaining Consistent with Land Use Plan When Taking Public Action

- Status: Ongoing. Development regulations outlined in the UDO are consistent with the 2010 Land Use Plan.

2010 LAND USE PLAN GOALS

The 2010 Land Use Plan identified a series of significant goals related to land use and development. These set of core of goals were to be achieved and/or maintained over a ten-year planning period. As a result, many of the goals have yet to be completed. The status of each goal is provided in the following section.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT RELATED GOALS OF THE TOWN (CORE GOALS)

1. Preserve the traditional character, intensity and density of the residential areas, particularly the existing single-family neighborhoods and areas.
 - Status: Ongoing. Existing single-family neighborhoods have been preserved since the adoption of the 2010 Land Use Plan.
2. Minimize the stress on Town and County infrastructure capacities (i.e. water, sewer, transportation, stormwater, etc.) by encouraging lower densities in future development.
 - Status: Ongoing. Lower density development regulations have been maintained in the Town's UDO.
3. Ensure that redevelopment of currently developed areas are compatible with its surrounding areas, as well as other Town goals.
 - Status: Ongoing. Current development regulations maintain compatibility with surrounding areas.
4. Retain the existing low profile (i.e. building height) of the community, particularly the limit of 35 feet in height for buildings on the island.
 - Status: Complete. Building height limits have remained the same since the adoption of the 2010 Land Use Plan. The Town desires that the building height remain unchanged for the foreseeable future.
5. Implement a sewer system designed with a primary purpose of protecting environmental and human health, while minimizing the potential for "induced development" (i.e. increased building densities and intensities).
 - Status: Complete. Sewer service is available to the majority of Sunset Beach residents. Where service is not available, residents may install and/or maintain an onsite sewage disposal system (septic).
6. Create and implement development standards for the beach entryway that will

focus on clear, compatible, consistent, and comprehensive guidance for potential development/redevelopment. This goal should be implemented in a prioritized timeframe that will allow the Town to have plans and management programs in place concurrent with the completion of the high-rise bridge.

- Status: Ongoing. The creation of an overlay district is currently in process.
7. Reduce the negative effects of stormwater runoff and flooding.
 - Status: Ongoing. The Town is currently pursuing options to create a Stormwater Master Plan.
 8. Ensure that adequate open space and/or recreational areas, including public trust areas, are provided for and enhanced to serve the growing population
 - Status: Ongoing (See number 7 under General Issues). In 2014, the Town completed construction of a Town park on the Intracoastal Waterway. This was a major accomplishment and has increased the availability of recreation facilities on the mainland. Assessing the feasibility of additional recreation opportunities, particularly for seniors, will be an ongoing process as the population increases.
 9. Enhance and increase public parking and public access facilities.
 - Status: Ongoing. Providing public parking for day trippers is a major concern at present. Several existing public access facilities are currently being widened to meet ADA guidelines. In addition, the Town should pursue options for expanding parking at Town Hall.
 10. Preserve the current use of lands with existing golf course facilities (i.e. those areas encompassing and needed for the traditional playing of professional and/or championship level golf), and discourage future residential infill development of those areas.
 - Status: Ongoing. No golf course facility lands have been converted to residential development since the adoption of the 2010 Land Use Plan. However, these lands still remain zoned as MR-3 (mainland residential).

2010 FUTURE LAND USE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

The future land use classification system and the future land use map in the 2010 plan are also useful in evaluating whether desired land-use patterns were maintained and are today consistent with what was intended. The land classification system identified five categories of future land use within the Town's planning jurisdiction: 1) Residential, 2) Commercial, 3) Mixed Use, 4) Institutional/Recreational, and 5) Conservation. The future land use classification system in the 2010 Land Use Plan was primarily based upon the Town's existing zoning districts and corresponding development regulations. As a result, flexibility

in rezoning of land that would be consistent with the future land use is limited. Yet, few rezoning's have occurred since the adoption of the plan. Assuming this trend continues, only minor changes to the composition of the future land use map may be necessary.

The desired growth pattern outlined in the 2010 future land use has been implemented since the plan's adoption. However, public sentiment has noted strong discontent for development that is proposed and/or under construction in the "Conservation Reserve" future land classification category. It should be noted that current zoning district requirements are consistent with the intent of the 2010 future land use classification system. Additionally, the 2010 future land use classification system did not identify golf course lands for conservation/preservation uses. Policies contained in the plan recommended the rezoning of the fairways/course open space from a residential category to a conservation related district that would prohibit infill development.

SUMMARY OF TOWN IMPLEMENTATION AND CONSISTENCY WITH THE 2010 LAND USE PLAN POLICIES

In general, the Town has implemented and remained consistent with the main policies regarding the desired future growth patterns and overall character of the Town. The main policies that were implemented and followed include:

1. Maintaining building heights at 35' for the entire island and single-family on the mainland, and 50' for multi-family on the mainland (i.e. small-town or small scale character).
2. Maintaining the extent of the Beach Business Zoning District so as not to allow multi-family to encroach on the predominant single-family character of the island.
3. Maintaining the Town-wide ratio of single-family to multi-family structures.
4. Allowing for commercial and mixed-use, but discouraging industrial uses.
5. Limiting the redevelopment of single-family to duplex structures to only the oceanfront row of properties.
6. Strengthening stormwater regulations for new development.
7. Completion of a centralized sewage system.
8. Completion of a new high-rise bridge and roundabout.

While a Town goal of the 2010 Plan was to preserve and/or improve surface water quality, water testing by the North Carolina Shellfish Sanitation Branch and the North Carolina Division of Water Resources indicate that water quality has not substantially improved since the adoption of the plan. It should be noted that the most recent data available is from the year 2013. The Town should continue to monitor water quality data to determine improvements. The Town has been proactive in regulating stormwater by adopting Brunswick County's ordinance, which exceeds the state required standards regarding new development.

Implementation of the sewer system addresses some of the pollution sources found in existing development (i.e. failing or improperly managed septic systems), but retrofitting the existing Town-wide stormwater drainage system may be needed. The 2010 Land Use Plan recommended the conversion of existing septic systems to underground rain barrels as a means to lessen stormwater runoff and sedimentation. This recommendation was never implemented as the Town has no means to require such action.

Most of the issues and associated policies in the 2010 Land Use Plan continue to be applicable to the Town today. It is likely that many of the policy statements which reaffirm the Town desired growth pattern will be retained or updated. New policy areas for this Land Use Plan update may focus on addressing water quality problems caused not just from new development, but also from the existing stormwater drainage system. Other new policy areas may be needed on the issues of parking, transportation (motorized and non-motorized), and more restrictive development standards for lands located in the Conservation Reserve district.