

*Chapter V: I*

**LAND USE:  
SOUTHERN GATEWAY PLANNING AREA**

**ADOPTED  
AUGUST 4, 2009**

*Chapter VI: I*  
**SOUTHERN GATEWAY PLANNING AREA**

**PLANNING AREA PROFILE:**

**Location**

The Southern Gateway Planning Area is located in the southeastern portion of the Town of Smithfield. It is bounded on the north by the Route 10 Bypass and the Waterford Oaks planned development, on the west by Cypress Creek and the adjacent marsh, on the south by Smithfield High School and the Town's corporate boundary and on the east by Jones Creek and the Town's corporate boundary. The Planning Area, so named because of its location at the confluence of State Route 10/U.S. Route 258, the Route 10 Bypass and South Church Street, which forms the primary gateway welcoming travelers from points southward to the Town of Smithfield, consists of approximately 745 total acres.

**Existing Land Use and Transportation System**

The Southern Gateway Planning Area is a relatively undeveloped area which includes a mix of scattered single family residences, corridor-based commercial uses and farmland bordered by an expanse of fallow land. Its most notable existing uses are the Smithfield Plaza Shopping Center, an existing horse stable and two large borrow pits, one active and one which is no longer used. The Planning Area incorporates roughly half of the Southern Annexation Area, one of three Isle of Wight County territories annexed by the Town of Smithfield on January 1, 1998. The vast majority of this land is vacant and maintained as woodlands, wetlands and open fields, supporting significant agricultural activities.

The State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 corridor provides the principle source of vehicular access within the Planning Area. The only other state maintained roads of any significance in the Planning Area are Cypress Crossing and Cypress Run Drive, two undivided and unmarked roads serving the horse stables, several residences and the borrow pits in the western half of the Planning Area. No major public transportation improvements are currently planned for the Area. Additional road improvements will be necessary to access the interior parcels from State Route 10/U.S. Route 258.

### **Existing Environmental Considerations**

The Planning Area's development potential is constrained somewhat by the presence of two significant creeks, Cypress Creek and Jones Creek, located along its western and eastern boundaries, respectively. The scenic marshlands and surface tributaries of these waterways surround and penetrate the Planning Area to create barriers to construction for a significant portion of the land. Slightly over twenty percent of the total Planning Area, approximately 125 acres, have topographic and wetland characteristics which make them unsuitable for urban development. While these tidal waterways limit the total buildable area, they provide dramatic siting opportunities from the adjacent ridges. Of the Planning Area's 745 total acres, approximately 42 (57%) have been identified as having prime development potential remaining. Additional undeveloped environmental conservation areas totaling approximately 66 acres have purposely not been included in Sub-Area designation as there are no current plans for the future development of this land. It is projected that these lands identified for conservation will be faced with little development pressure in the near planning term as other, more accessible undeveloped parcels in Town with direct access to public water and sewer service will likely be targeted for development well before these lands are considered. Thus, for immediate planning purposes, these lands have been designated on the Town's Future Land Use Map as Community Conservation lands for which existing uses should be maintained and protected from dense development until market considerations warrant a revised analysis of their particular highest and best uses.

### **SOUTHERN GATEWAY LAND USE PLAN**

The Southern Gateway Planning Area is planned as a mixed-use community incorporating a range of single family residential housing along with retail commercial and motel lodging uses along its principal corridor. These commercial uses are designed to augment the Town's existing commercial base and to support its ongoing effort to increase regional tourism within the community. The future development of the Planning Area should occur under the guidance of a master plan for each Planning Sub-Area, as opposed to the parcel-by-parcel approach that has historically dominated Town development along its major corridors. By creating a long range plan, the owners of the various properties would be able to produce a better product that would identify the highest and best use of each property and allow a design strategy that would appropriately respond to the existing, stable uses found in the Planning Area. A thoughtful master planning effort in this Planning Area would also allow the Town to better prepare its efforts to provide the necessary public services to support future development in the area. No intensive development should take place in the vast amount of vacant land in this Planning

Area until existing water and sewer distribution systems extended to adequately serve the planned uses.

In the following sections, specific land use recommendations are presented for the seven Sub Areas identified in the Southern Gateway Planning Area.

### **Sub-Areas 1 and 3 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 1 is located in the northwestern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north and east by the Route 10 Bypass, on the west by Cypress Creek and on the south by a single family residence, a borrow pit and Sub-Area 3. Encompassing approximately 204 acres, Sub-Area 1 is planned for low density residential uses. This land use designation would allow single family detached residential development at a density of between one and three dwelling units per acre. At this density, between approximately 118 and 353 new housing units could potentially be located within the Sub-Area's approximately 117 net developable acres.

Sub-Area 3 is located in the southwestern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north by Sub-Area 1, on the east by Sub-Area 4 and the Route 10 Bypass, on the west by Cypress Creek and on the south by the town's corporate boundary. Encompassing approximately 208 acres, Sub-Area 3 is planned for low density residential uses. This land use designation would allow single family detached residential development at a density of between one and three dwelling units per acre. At this density, between approximately 173 and 519 new housing units could potentially be located within the Sub-Area's approximately 173 net developable acres.

The major issues involved with the potential development of these Sub-Areas are (1) vehicular access, (2) provision of public utilities, (3) sensitive environmental areas and (4) buffering from adjacent uses. Establishing vehicular access from State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 will be an important consideration for both of these Sub-Areas.

Currently, two large borrow pits are operated on the subject properties. The property owner would like to continue to allow his business associate to operate the borrow pits for the near future. Ultimately, the property owner foresees the operation ceasing in coming years, at which time the pits would be converted into a stand-alone lake covering approximately 45-50 acres. The balance of the site (80-90 acres) could be developed into a residential community surrounding the lake. Significant environmentally sensitive land areas along the western boundary of the property, along with the size and location of the proposed pond limit the

resulting developable property. The Town should encourage clustering of the low density residential uses in order to maximize the preservation of open space within the Sub-Area.

Before any future significant residential development of the properties would be approved by the Town, adequate public water and sewer service would have to be provided for all planned uses. Currently, public water service is provided along Cypress Crossing along an 8-inch water line, while a 30-inch force main maintained by the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) provides sanitary sewer service in the area. Future development in the Sub-Areas will be capably served by simply extending the existing 8" water line to serve residences; however, the extension of sanitary sewer service could be more costly given the distance to the Bypass and the fees involved with tapping into the HRSD line and constructing extensions. An alternative to the HRSD line would be to run a sanitary line via Cypress Crossing from the existing 12-inch Town force main that runs along the State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 corridor. Regardless of the alternative chosen, the future developer(s) will be responsible for extending the necessary public utilities to serve the area as no lots shall be permitted with private domestic well and septic utilities except by special permit for temporary service.

The Town should encourage traditional neighborhood development (TND) within the Sub-Areas. Such a proposal should be implemented through a master plan and accompanying code of development per the proposed TND overlay district as par of a necessary rezoning of the property. The rezoning to this district would necessitate the development of a code of development which would outline appropriate building forms, lot sizes, densities within neighborhoods, street sections, etc.

A thoughtful master plan should be created for the Sub-Areas which provides for home siting and internal roadways within the areas which are most conducive for urban land uses, while the fragile environmental areas along the Sub-Area's western boundary are to be maintained as permanent open space. Any urban use of these "sensitive environmental areas" (situated outside the Sub-Area) should be avoided. The siting of new homes should be gently placed within the angular terrain, employing minimal earthwork and extensive landscaping in order to buffer the homes from the nearby borrow pits and the Route 10 Bypass. The proposed master plan should also protect as many existing trees as physically possible within the future development plan, as the Sub-Area is dominated by mature forest. A master plan approach is critical to insuring that each of these issues is appropriately responded to in the efficient and environmentally sensitive development of this site.

### **Sub-Area 2 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 2 is located in the northern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north by Cypress Crossing, on the east by State Route 10/U.S. Route 258, on the west by an active borrow pit and on the south by the Smithfield Shopping Center. The Sub-Area is currently home to horse stables and covers slightly over 14 acres and is planned for an expansion of the adjacent retail commercial uses at a floor area ratio of 0.20 to 0.50 square feet per net developable acre per acres. At this proposed density, Sub-Area 4's 11.5 net developable acres could support between approximately 100,188 and 250,470 square feet of additional commercial retail space. Hospitality and restaurant uses are also encouraged within the Sub-Area as supporting land uses.

Sub-Area 2 fronts the Route 10 Bypass, a limited access roadway that affords high visibility to a high volume of regional commuters but prohibits a direct outlet into the property. At present, Cypress Crossing provides the only direct vehicular access to Sub-Area 2, and in its present form, it is unsuitable to support the traffic demands typically associated with the uses recommended for the property. Therefore, any future development of Sub-Area 2 for substantial corporate office and research development would necessitate the improvement of Cypress Crossing into a road capable of supporting future traffic demands imposed by the future user(s).

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) vehicular access and (2) the implementation of the Town's new corridor design guidelines. A master plan should be created for the Sub-Area in order to ensure the efficient allocation of planned retail uses and road infrastructure within the planned development, as well as to provide the necessary access for these uses from State Route 10/U.S. Route 258. The recommended master plan guiding future development in the Sub-Area should incorporate two separate, consolidated entrances into the new infill retail area: one each off Route 10/258 and Cypress Crossing. These consolidated entrances will allow the necessary access into the infill retail area without adding to the proliferation of curb cuts that already exists along this important entrance corridor. The master plan should also respond to the new corridor design guidelines currently under development by the Town with respect to set backs, landscaping and parking standards for the future development in the Sub-Area. It should also include a siting plan that would allow the future retail user to maximize exposure to the Route 10 Bypass while still meeting the requirements of the corridor design guidelines and providing appropriate landscaping, parking and pedestrian access from its entrance off Cypress Crossing. The sidewalk improvements recommended for both sides of the road on Route 10 Bypass and the State Route 10/U.S. Route

258 corridor as part of the Town's new Sidewalk Plan (see the Transportation Plan provided in Chapter XI for a more detailed summary of the Plan) should also be incorporated into the master plan.

#### **Sub-Areas 4 and 5 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 4 is located in the southern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north by the existing Smithfield Plaza shopping center, on the west by Sub-Area 3, on the south by the Town's corporate boundary, and on the east by Benns Church Boulevard (State Route 10/U.S. Route 258). The entire Sub-Area is undeveloped, and much of the land is actively farmed. The 34.5 acre Sub- Area is planned for retail commercial use at 0.20 to 0.50 square feet per net developable acre. At this density, between 240,451 and 601,128 square feet of retail commercial (including supporting uses such as lodging facilities and restaurants) could be located within the Sub-Area's 27.6 net developable acres.

Sub-Area 5 is located in the southern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area, just east of Sub-Area 4 along Benn's Church Boulevard. It is bounded on the north by existing retail uses, on the west by Benn's Church Boulevard, on the south by the Town's corporate boundary, and on the east by Sub-Areas 6 and 7. The entire Sub-Area is undeveloped, and much of the land is actively farmed as well. The 36.9 acre Sub- Area is planned for retail commercial use at 0.20 to 0.50 square feet per net developable acre. At this density, between 241,105 and 602,762 square feet of retail commercial space (including supporting uses such as lodging facilities and restaurants) could be located within the Sub-Area's 27.7 net developable acres.

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) vehicular access, (2) the implementation of the Town's new corridor design guidelines and (3) buffering adjacent uses.

Sub-Areas 4 and 5 both directly front the Benn's Church Boulevard (State Route 10/U.S. Route 258) corridor and enjoy excellent visibility and easy access to this major entrance corridor. In Sub-Area 5, access should be provided solely through the existing signals (i.e. the existing Edwards home site across from the Cypress Creek Street intersection and Cypress Creek Plaza and at Turner Drive intersection) and from Waterford Oaks via Canterbury. Further curb cuts along Route 10 should be avoided at all costs. Access to the interior of the sites should be provided via the existing intersections/signals along Route 10. In the long-term planning horizon for the Sub-Area 4 property, the potential exists to access the southern half of the property from Turner Drive in the County. Both Sub-Areas 4 and 5 should incorporate a sufficient easement within any future development plans to allow sufficient vehicular and sidewalk access to the adjacent Sub-Areas planned for residential uses. A 60-foot easement is

recommended by the Town. Sub-Areas 4 and 5 should also incorporate the sidewalk improvements recommended for both sides of the road on Route 10 Bypass and the State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 corridor as part of the Town's new Sidewalk Plan (see the Transportation Plan provided in Chapter X for a more detailed summary of the Plan). Any future development proposal should include a traffic impact analysis compliant with State 527 legislation. As part of this analysis, the need for additional turn lanes and turn and taper along Rt. 10 & U.S. Rt. 258 shall be analyzed.

The Town believes that the future development of these Sub-Areas should provide a "sense of arrival" and "destination" for those entering the Town of Smithfield from the south. As such, uses should be appropriate to the gateway and designed in a manner that fits the character of the Town. The Town also recommends limiting the depth of retail commercial uses to approximately 800 feet off the Benn's Church Boulevard in each Sub-Area. The Town seeks a landscape berm and landscaping within a forty foot setback along Benns Church Boulevard (Rt. 10 and U.S. Route 258). The berm should be at least four feet in height and should include landscaping such as bushes or trees on its top. Further, the Town recommends that future development along Benns Church Boulevard include a landscape buffer of a minimum of 40 feet along the corridor. This buffer should include significant landscaping or perhaps a berm to limit the visual impact of future commercial retail/office development recommended for the property.

Future development should respect architectural style, including lighting and signage standards which reflect quality and feel of Smithfield, as outlined in the entrance corridor design guidelines. The Town shall expect future development along the corridor to incorporate the use of colonial architecture in future development of the properties, to include colonial-inspired lighting standards for all parking areas and travelways.

The Town would be willing to consider a mixed use development consisting of a mix of commercial and office uses along the corridor, but only those that will be satisfied with achieving access via one of the two existing curb cuts/signals along Route 10 adjacent to the property.

### **Sub-Area 6 and 7 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 6 is located in the northeastern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north by the residential portion of the Waterford Oaks subdivision, on the west by State Route 10/U.S. Route 258, on the south by Sub-Area 7 and on the east by the marsh adjacent to Jones Creek. This Sub Area covers slightly over 106 acres and is planned for low density residential land uses, supporting a recommended density of between one and three dwelling units per acre. This density is consistent with the adjacent Waterford Oaks neighborhood (i.e. 1-3 dwelling units per acre). At this proposed density, Sub-Area 6's 51.4 net developable acres could support between approximately 51 and 134 new dwelling units.

Sub-Area 7 is located in the southeastern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north by Sub-Area 6, on the east by State Route 10/U.S. Route 258, on the west by State Route 10/U.S. Route 258, and on the south by a tributary of Jones Creek and the Town's corporate boundary. This Sub Area covers slightly over 20 acres and is planned for attached residential uses at a recommended density of 6-8 dwelling units per acre for the southern half of the property. At this proposed density, Sub-Area 7's 15.7 net developable acres could support between approximately 94 and 126 new dwelling units.

The Planning Commission believes that the tributary to Jones Creek which bisects the two Sub-Areas and the marsh adjacent to Jones Creek on the eastern edge of the property should be protected from future development. As such, the Planning Commission expressed a desire for the tributary to serve as a buffer between the land areas proposed for attached residential and single family residential development.

The major issues involved with the potential development of these Sub-Areas are (1) vehicular access, (2) provision of public utilities, (3) sensitive environmental areas, (4) buffering from adjacent uses and (5) the promotion of traditional neighborhood development.

A master plan should be created for each of these two Sub-Areas in conjunction with the plans for Sub-Area 5 in order to ensure the efficient plans guiding the future development of the property. Access will play a vitally important role in the future development of the site. Access to the Sub-Areas shall be limited to a well-planned and integrated system of internal streets which connect to the planned shared entrances in Sub-Area 5. The Town believes that it is critically important for the future development of the property to be integrated both internally and externally with the neighboring Waterford Oaks project via Canterbury Drive. Further, the internal transportation program for the site must be designed to respect the existing environmentally sensitive areas within the property and to avoid any future curb cuts by tying into the existing signalized intersections.

The provision of public utilities to the planned development will be another important consideration in the planning of each Sub-Area. Each Sub-Area could easily obtain water service via an extension from the existing 8-inch line that currently runs along State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 to the Smithfield Plaza Shopping Center. Sanitary sewer service is provided in the Planning Area via a thirty-inch HRSD force main that runs along this major entrance corridor. Future development in each of the three Sub-Areas would need to tap into this HRSD line in order to extend a serviceable line to planned residences. Subdivisions in these Sub-Areas would need to obtain an easement for the line extension from adjacent properties. The future developer of Sub-Area 5 will also have to obtain an easement to extend a water line extension from the existing 8-inch line that runs along Route 10/258 to serve planned uses. The costs involved with obtaining these easements and constructing the necessary utility line extensions dictate that these Sub-Areas will most likely not be developed in the near planning term as other better located, vacant residentially-zoned lands are absorbed first by market demand. Thus, it is anticipated that these Sub-Areas will not be developed for several years. Regardless, none of the three Sub-Areas should be developed until the necessary public utility improvements are put in place.

Each of these three Sub-Areas is impacted by the presence of sensitive environmental areas. The development potential of Sub-Area 6 is particularly constrained by the presence of a tributary of Jones Creek which bisects the property. While this tributary and its adjacent marsh limit the development potential of the Sub-Area, it provides dramatic siting opportunities overlooking the waterway. Similar opportunities are available overlooking Cypress Creek in the western portion of Sub-Area 7. The final development plan for both of these Sub-Areas must ensure that residences and supporting infrastructure pieces are sited sufficiently away from these environmentally sensitive areas in order to minimize their impact on these valuable resources while still maximizing the valuable views. Future development in each Sub-Area should also be well buffered from adjacent planned commercial uses with appropriate landscaping as is provided for in the revised Town Zoning Ordinance.

Another important consideration for the future development of these Sub-Areas is the future stability of adjacent uses. Each development should incorporate sufficient landscaping and setbacks to create an appropriate buffer to minimize the impact of the future uses on adjacent uses, particularly adjacent, existing residential properties.

These Sub-Areas afford the Town an ideal opportunity to promote traditional neighborhood development. The Town should encourage any future development of the property to consider

a master planned, TND approach to be implemented via the proposed TND overlay zoning district.

#### **FUTURE LAND USE SUMMARY**

The Comprehensive Plan projects the Southern Gateway Planning Area as an integrated, mixed-use community which will provide several opportunities for the Town to meet its economic development objectives with respect to retail commercial development and tourism support. The plan for this area also provides a suitable transition from its mix of highway-related commercial uses along State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 to the rural, undeveloped lands adjacent to Smithfield High School and beyond in Isle of Wight County. Future end users that would generate new professional job opportunities, expand upon the existing lodging infrastructure, enhance the Town's position in the regional retail marketplace, respect the Town's new corridor design guidelines and fit as an appropriate use within the area's role as a visual gateway should be actively targeted and solicited as part of the Town's new more proactive economic development function.

According to the adopted Future Land Use Plan, the Southern Gateway Planning Area holds the potential to accommodate between approximately 436 and 1,153 new households. It also has the potential to provide between approximately 581,744 and 1,454,360 square feet of new retail commercial space. The active use of these properties may not occur for many years as there are no pending development plans for the Area. In the interim, the Town should encourage the creation of a master plan for the various Sub- Areas designated above which respects the natural environment and efficiently provides suitable building sites to meet Town planning objectives. No development should take place until the required and extensive utility improvements are completed.

The table on the following page summarizes the development potential of each of the Sub-Areas as recognized in the Plan.

