

Chapter VI: F

**LAND USE:
PAGAN PINES PLANNING AREA**

**ADOPTED
AUGUST 4, 2009**

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PLANNING AREA PROFILE:

Location

The Pagan Pines Planning area is located in the center of the Town of Smithfield. It is bounded on the north and east by South Church Street, on the west by Cypress Creek and its adjacent marsh and on the south by State Route 10 Bypass. This area has been included for study as a formal Planning Area due primarily to the Planning Commission's concern that the land along South Church Street is currently underdeveloped. An additional planning objective with respect to the Planning Area is to identify specific issues threatening the stability of the adjacent Grimesland neighborhood and to formulate recommendations concerning the Town's future approach to these issues. Including this South Church Street frontage, the Planning Area consists of approximately 256 acres.

Existing Land Use and Transportation System

The Pagan Pines Planning Area is an effectively built-out area consisting of a poorly planned mix of corridor based uses along South Church Street and an older, stable residential neighborhood located between South Church Street and Cypress Creek. This neighborhood is marked by a progression in lot sizes from the smaller, urban-sized lots fronting Wilson Road and Magruder Road to the larger estate lots that overlook Cypress Creek. A Town well (the South Church Street well-No.3), a 400,000 gallon elevated water tank and a rescue squad facility are also located in the southern portion of the Planning Area, while Wilson Road is home to a 150,000 gallon water storage tank. Of the Planning Area's 256 total acres, approximately 248 (96%) have been identified as being developed. The South Church Street corridor is home to an odd assortment of commercial, residential, office and service uses that are poorly linked. This hodgepodge of poorly linked uses has evolved as the direct result of the parcel-by-parcel development that has dominated the maturation of the corridor over the years. With few exceptions, each individual parcel was developed without consideration of adjacent properties and their existing or future uses. As a result of this lack of vision and proactive planning for the corridor, underdeveloped parcels dominate this important entrance corridor.

South Church Street accommodates the vast majority of internal street movements and connections to major arterials within the Planning Area. This minor arterial distributes local traffic to Talbot Drive, Heptinstall Avenue and several other minor residential streets that form the internal street network within the Pagan Pines neighborhood. South Church Street serves as

the Town's primary commercial corridor, as well as the primary entrance corridor into the Downtown Area from areas south of Smithfield.

Existing Environmental Considerations

Although the Pagan Pines neighborhood lies directly adjacent to Cypress Creek and its surrounding marsh, the boundaries of the Pagan Pines Planning Area were purposely drawn so as to not include these sensitive environmental areas since the surrounding land is effectively fully developed. This strategy was undertaken in order to focus specifically on the issues threatening the stability of the neighborhood. Thus, although existing uses within the Planning Area clearly impact these environmental resources, only approximately 8 acres of sensitive environmental areas were identified within the Planning Area. These areas include marshlands that extend into the neighborhood and for the sake of simplicity, were not separated from the existing land uses delineated within the Planning Area. In terms of new development or redevelopment within the Planning Area, future activities will be limited to minor infill, rehabilitation or redevelopment projects which, if properly designed and managed, should have little or no impact on these valuable environmental resources.

PAGAN PINES LAND USE PLAN

The Pagan Pines Planning Area is planned as a stable residential area bordering a likely commercial redevelopment area along South Church Street. Future redevelopment activities within the Planning Area should occur under the guidance of a master plan for the identified Redevelopment Area, as opposed to the parcel-by-parcel approach that has historically dominated Town development along its major entrance corridors.

In the following sections, specific land use recommendations are presented for both the Sub-Area and for the Redevelopment Area identified in the Pagan Pines Planning Area.

Sub-Area 1 Recommendations

Sub-Area 1 occupies the vast majority of the Pagan Pines Planning Area, extending from the commercial uses bordering South Church Street to the marsh adjacent to Cypress Creek and incorporating the entire Grimesland neighborhood. It is bounded on the north and west by Cypress Creek and its adjacent marsh, on the east by the commercial uses described in Redevelopment Area 1 below and on the south by the Route 10 Bypass. Encompassing approximately 200 acres, Sub-Area 1 is effectively completely developed. Small infill opportunities do exist within existing parcels, but these are few in number and improbable in terms of the likelihood of being capitalized on during the upcoming planning term and therefore are not calculated into a net developable acreage calculation. Thus, it is anticipated that although the Sub-Area is planned for low density residential development, it is highly unlikely that it will support any additional dwelling units. Future development activities in the

Sub-Area will most likely be limited to rehabilitation and redevelopment projects on existing structures.

The major issues involved with the future stability of this Sub-Area are (1) stormwater management and (2) the impacts of the recommended redevelopment activities planned for Redevelopment Area 1. The Pagan Pines subdivision was developed without modern stormwater management facilities. For the most part, small, ill-equipped ditches or side swales adjacent to the minor residential streets are relied upon to store and transport surface stormwater flows in the absence of more formal curb and gutter and piping designs. During heavy storm events, these facilities typically fail to properly handle the stormwater flow and minor flooding occurs in the streets and in residential yards. In several sections of the Planning Area, the lots do not even have these primitive ditches or swales to manage storm water. Thus, drainage in Grimesland is a major concern for residents and Town officials. Unfortunately, given the mostly flat terrain of the neighborhood and the compact nature of the lots, the addition of sufficient stormwater management facilities in the Area would be very costly and perhaps prohibitive. The Town should initiate a Comprehensive Stormwater Management study to analyze existing problems in this and other existing established neighborhoods and to provide possible design solutions and recommended financing strategies for each area.

The stability of the Pagan Pines neighborhood also hinges on the future redevelopment of the South Church Street corridor (Redevelopment 1). The majority of the lots along Wilson Road lie directly adjacent to the uses along South Church Street. Clearly, the planned future redevelopment of these uses must be sensitive to the noise, light, traffic, drainage and other impacts they might have on the adjacent neighborhood. Future redevelopment plans must incorporate sufficient buffering and modern stormwater management practices to minimize the negative externalities impacting the Pagan Pines community in order to allow it to maintain its existing character and quality of life.

Redevelopment Area Recommendations

Redevelopment Area 1 is located in the eastern portion of the Pagan Pines Planning Area and incorporates the vast array of commercial, office, service and residential uses that line the western edge of South Church Street between Talbot Drive and Heptinstall Avenue. It is bounded on the north by Talbot Drive, on the west by Sub-Area 1, on the south by the access road leading to the Town rescue squad facility and the Town well and water tower and on the east by South Church Street. The 41.1 acre Redevelopment Area is planned for retail commercial use at a floor area ratio of 0.2 to 0.5 square feet per net developable acre. At this density, the Sub-Area could support between 16,030 and 40,075 square feet of new gross leasable space within its 1.8 net developable acres.

This Area has been identified by the Town Planning Commission as being suitable for redevelopment. Every lot within the Area contains frontage on South Church Street, the Town's primary commercial corridor and major entrance corridor into the Downtown Area

from the south. Given their potentially prime commercial locations, several parcels within this Area can be appraised as being currently underdeveloped, as many of the properties are deteriorating and/or unresponsive to their existing market potentials.

Several of the various existing uses in this Redevelopment Area currently do not represent the highest and best use of the properties. These uses include several scattered single family residences, offices and an assortment of small service-oriented businesses. The lot-by-lot development of this corridor over time has led to a haphazard collection of land uses that do not fit together in a coherent mix of uses or capture a significant portion of the regional commercial marketplace.

A thoughtful master plan should be created for the Redevelopment Area which would spell out the appropriate land uses, provide a buffer for the neighboring residential uses in Sub-Area 1 and protect the environmental resources associated with Cypress Creek to the west. Suitable land uses for the redevelopment effort would include: offices, tourist commercial and neighborhood commercial uses and possibly a new motel.

The major issues involved with the potential redevelopment of these Areas are (1) acquiring and consolidating the properties within the Redevelopment Area, (2) removing and/or renovating the existing structures, (3) vehicular access and (4) responding to the applicable Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act requirements. As with any major redevelopment project involving multiple property owners, this first issue can easily become a substantial hurdle. The Town should open discussions with the property owners in the Redevelopment Area in an attempt to clarify the redevelopment potential of the identified underdeveloped properties. If the current owners show no interest in redeveloping the properties on their own, the Town could explore the possibilities of acquiring the properties and consolidating them into one contiguous parcel that could be marketed to a commercial developer. Due to the narrow depth of many of the parcels along this corridor (especially between Mercer Street and Heptinstall Avenue), the Town should encourage property owners in this area to consolidate adjacent parcels in order to provide sufficient space to adequately support appropriate commercial uses. The Town should also approach the existing businesses located within each Redevelopment Area and encourage them to participate in the redevelopment process.

The proposed plan for the Redevelopment Area should minimize the number of entrances along South Church Street and support the sidewalk and road improvements planned for the street (see the Transportation Chapter for more details). Currently, due to the haphazard, parcel-by-parcel development of the corridor, little distinction is made between sidewalk and street along the corridor and excessive curb cuts are poorly marked and create additional traffic congestion along this valuable entrance corridor. Future commercial uses should use shared entrances wherever possible and should avoid excessive curb cuts for vehicular access across clearly defined pedestrian walkways.

All future redevelopment in the Planning Area also needs to respond to the applicable Chesapeake Bay requirements relating to water quality standards. The development of necessary stormwater management facilities to serve proposed redevelopment projects should be included in this consideration in order to protect nearby Cypress Creek. Future development should also employ extensive landscaping and minimal earthwork. The master plan for the Redevelopment Area should be developed in harmony with the goals, objectives and recommendations provided in the Town's entrance corridor study.

FUTURE LAND USE SUMMARY

The Comprehensive Plan projects the Pagan Pines Planning Area as an integrated mixed use community which provides a transition from its highway related commercial uses along South Church Street to the single family homes which border Cypress Creek. Future redevelopment should be designed in harmony with its adjacent uses and the picturesque surroundings beyond in order to retain its environmental beauty and to support the Town's goals for improving the appearance of its major entrance corridors. The Pagan Pines Planning Area has the potential to accommodate between 16,030 and 40,075 square feet of new commercial space. The redevelopment of this Planning Area should provide commercial and tourism-based employment and revenues for the Town. However, the active use of these properties may not occur for many years because there are no pending development plans for the Area. In the interim, the Town should encourage the creation of a master plan for the Redevelopment Area which respects the adjacent neighborhood and the natural environment. No development should take place until the transportation improvements planned for South Church Street are completed.

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

