

*Chapter VI: E*

**LAND USE:  
JOHN ROLFE PLANNING AREA**

**ADOPTED  
AUGUST 4, 2009**

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**PLANNING AREA PROFILE:**

**Location**

The John Rolfe Planning Area is located in the northeastern portion of the Town of Smithfield. It is bounded on the north by the River Residential Planning Area and its three stable neighborhoods: Red Point Heights, Pagan Point and the northern half of the Moonefield subdivision, on the west by South Church Street, on the south by Battery Park Road and on the east by Moone Creek. The Planning Area consists of approximately 318 acres.

**Existing Land Use and Transportation System**

The John Rolfe Planning Area has experienced rapid development since the adoption of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Area, which includes an array of residential uses bordered by a mix of corridor-based commercial, industrial and office/service uses, has witnessed the addition of over 300 dwelling units since the 1999 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. Most notable among these are the construction of the Mallory Pointe subdivision, the Church Square assisted living community and the Lakeview Cove condominium/townhouse community. The southern half of the Moone Plantation subdivision has also completed its development potential since the last Plan was adopted. Other notable existing uses in the Planning Area include the Riverside Convalescence Center, the Croatan Landing single family residential subdivisions and the Smithfield Baptist Church.

The major roads serving the Planning Area are John Rolfe Drive, South Church Street and Battery Park Road. The majority of residential uses in the Planning Area rely principally upon John Rolfe Drive for primary access into and out of their communities. As a result of the significant growth witnessed in these Sub-Areas, traffic along John Rolfe Drive, Moonefield Drive and traveling through the John Rolfe/Battery Park Road intersection has increased dramatically over the past decade. The traffic impacts associated with the recent development in the Planning Area underscore the importance of the transportation improvements recommended for John Rolfe Drive and the impacted intersections in the Planning Area. These recommended improvements are outlined in more detail in the Transportation Plan (see Chapter XI).

### **Existing Environmental Considerations**

The Planning Area's remaining development potential is constrained by the presence of Moone Creek along its eastern boundary. The scenic marshlands and associated wetlands of the creek penetrate the Planning Area just north of the Moone Plantation subdivision and effectively prohibit the development of a substantial portion of the undeveloped land in the area. Nearly 34 percent of the total Planning Area, approximately 105 acres, have topographic and wetland characteristics which make them unsuitable for urban development.

### **JOHN ROLFE LAND USE PLAN**

The John Rolfe Planning Area is planned as a mixed-use community incorporating a range of housing options in addition to public uses and commercial and residential/office transitional redevelopment along South Church Street and Battery Park Road. The future development and redevelopment of the Area should occur under the guidance of a master plan for the lone remaining Planning Sub-Area and the multiple properties located within the Redevelopment Area, as opposed to the parcel-by-parcel approach that has historically dominated Town development along its major corridors. This parcel-by-parcel development pattern has contributed to the proliferation of a mishmash of various uses along South Church Street that fail to link together in any sound urban context, thereby threatening the stability of the corridor. By creating a long range plan, the owners of the various properties within the Redevelopment Areas would be able to produce a better product that would appropriately respond to the existing, stable residential neighborhoods in the Planning Area. In the following sections, specific land use recommendations are presented for the lone Sub-Area and for the two Redevelopment Areas identified in the John Rolfe Planning Area.

### **Sub-Area 1 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 1 is located in the central portion of the John Rolfe Planning Area. It is bounded on the west by the Riverside Convalescence Center, on the south by the Lakeview Cove condominium community, on the east by a tributary of Moone Creek and north by Beale Park. Encompassing approximately 5.0 acres, Sub-Area 1 constitutes the largest remaining undeveloped property in the Planning Area. It is planned for parks and recreation uses. It is envisioned as a logical expansion area for the existing Beale Park facility.

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) vehicular access and (2) sensitive environmental areas.

A thoughtful master plan should be created for the Sub-Area which provides for shared vehicular entrance, efficient internal street systems, a trail system with connections to the

adjacent Beale Park and neighborhoods, a detailed siting of proposed active and passive park uses, and protection of its scenic surroundings, sensitive ecology and Moone Creek which forms the eastern border of the Planning Area. The Town should commit to developing a master plan for the park similar to what has been developed for the proposed park at Windsor Castle. Access points into and out of each Sub-Area should be limited along South Church Street, John Rolfe Drive and Lumar Road in order to prohibit the further proliferation of curb cuts and the associated traffic bottlenecks along these roadways. Future active recreational fields and facilities should be sited within the areas which are most conducive for urban land uses, while the fragile environmental areas along the northeast boundary of Sub-Area 1 are to be maintained as permanent open space. Any active use of these "sensitive environmental areas" (situated outside the Sub-Area) should be avoided.

The future use of Sub-Area 1 as a public park facility should be responsive to the existing, adjacent residential uses by incorporating landscape buffers and sufficient setbacks into its final design. Development in Sub-Area 1 should be equally respectful of the existing Riverside Convalescence Center. In order to minimize the future traffic impact of the uses planned for these Sub-Areas, entrances should be efficiently located and designed as part of a master planned internal street system. Access to Sub-Area 1 should be limited to one entrance off an extension of Lumar Drive. Lumar Drive should be extended and dedicated as a public street from its existing terminus to the Sub-Area and any internal parking facility included therein.

### **Redevelopment Area Recommendations**

**Redevelopment Area 1** is located in the northwestern portion of the Planning Area and incorporates a mix of residential, office and service uses. It is bounded on the north by single family detached residences located along Lumar Road, on the west by South Church Street, on the south by Redevelopment Area 2 and on the east by Sub-Area 1. The Redevelopment Area borders South Church Street between Red Point Drive and the vacant lot adjacent to Sub-Area 1, covering approximately 6.8 acres. It is planned for residential-office transitional redevelopment with an allowable floor area ratio density of between 0.20 and 0.30. Based upon the existing development pattern and building area coverages in the Redevelopment Area, it is projected that future redevelopment will effectively gain no new net developable area in terms of estimated land yields. However, it is anticipated that the redeveloped uses will improve general property values in the area and will provide a much more suitable entrance impression for those traveling along South Church Street towards the Cypress Creek bridge and the Downtown area.

**Redevelopment Area 2** is located in the southwestern portion of the John Rolfe Planning Area and is comprised of a poorly connected mix of retail, personal service, medical, automobile dealerships and service and residential uses. It is bounded on the north by Redevelopment Area 1, on the west by South Church Street, on the south by Battery Park Road and on the east by the Mallory Pointe subdivision. Redevelopment Area 2 extends from the southern boundary

of Redevelopment Area 1 and borders both South Church Street and Battery Park Road, each of which function as an important corridor leading into Downtown Smithfield. The Redevelopment Area contains approximately 11.6 acres and is planned for retail commercial redevelopment. Just as is the case with Redevelopment Area 1, it is projected that the future redevelopment of the assorted uses along the corridors will have limited effectively net gain of developable area in terms of estimated land yields given existing lot coverage patterns. Projecting only a 1.0 acre net developable pick up in redevelopment potential along the corridor, it is assumed that the redevelopment of this corridor could lead to the net gain of between 8,712 and 21,780 square feet of new retail commercial space. However, it is anticipated that the redeveloped uses will improve general property values in the area and will provide a much more suitable entrance impression for those traveling along South Church Street towards the Cypress Creek bridge and the Downtown area. The various existing uses in these Redevelopment Areas currently do not represent the highest and best use of the properties. The lot-by-lot development of these Areas 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 local or regional commercial marketplace. The end result is a corridor that does not fit together as a seamless mix of land uses.

The major issues involved with the potential redevelopment of these Areas are (1) implementing entrance corridor guidelines and gateway improvements, (2) acquiring and consolidating the properties within the Redevelopment Area, (3) removing and/or renovating the existing structures and (4) vehicular access.

Together with the assorted existing uses found in Redevelopment Area 1 in the Pagan Pines Planning Area, the mix of uses found in these Redevelopment Areas forms the principle entrance corridors into the Town from the south and east. Unfortunately, in its present state, these uses provide a less than optimal entrance statement for those entering Smithfield. These corridors are lacking any true “gateway” or true sense of beginning and arrival for travel in both directions. The major entrances to the Town should be articulated and clearly defined, offering a clear message that one is entering Smithfield. The perceived entrance to the Town should be defined by physical features rather than strict adherence to political boundaries marked by a simple incorporation sign as is presently the case. Within the context of the recommended redevelopment of these areas, the opportunity exists to more accurately relay the “Smithfield image” to both tourists and residents alike, without sacrificing the rural and historical backdrop that makes the Town so special. The redevelopment process should support the Town’s ongoing effort to upgrade corridor roadway capacities and pedestrian connections, while simultaneously helping local merchants and businesses to provide adequate access to their commercial or service establishments. The Town’s new, formal corridor design guidelines should establish landscaping and signage standards that apply consistently across each corridor and establish feasible strategies and timetables for compliance among existing businesses and landowners located along the corridor.

As a part of its expanded economic development function, the Town could initiate discussions with the property owners in each Redevelopment Area in an attempt to clarify the redevelopment potential of the 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 within the Redevelopment Area that could be marketed to a commercial developer. The Town should also approach the existing businesses located within the Redevelopment Area and encourage them to participate in the redevelopment process. The Town could also explore the potential for implementing a tax increment financing program within the Redevelopment Areas to aid in creating momentum for the proposed redevelopment of the specified portions of the corridors.

Future redevelopment should minimize the number of entrances along South Church Street. Future commercial uses should use shared entrances wherever possible, and parking setbacks should be increased to at least twenty feet in order to provide additional room for landscaping and screening. Parking should be restricted between the building and the roadway for new and redeveloped sites. Furthermore, should existing structures be replaced by new structures (as is anticipated), these new buildings should be placed at an appropriate setback distance from the road. Suitable land uses for the redevelopment effort would include: professional offices, tourist commercial and neighborhood retail commercial uses (including restaurants and possibly small motels if feasible).

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

The Comprehensive Plan projects the John Rolfe Planning Area as an integrated, mixed-use community which will provide several opportunities to meet the Town's long term planning objectives with respect to providing additional retail, office and parks and recreational opportunities, while also providing a suitable transition from its mix of highway related commercial, industrial and office/transitional uses along South Church Street and Battery Park Road to the existing residential uses in the balance of the Planning Area. The plan for this Area also calls for the support of extensive redevelopment along South Church Street and Battery Park Road in order to refine these major entrance corridors. The ultimate goal is to create a more positive entrance statement along these corridors by introducing landscaping and setback guidelines, establishing a more dynamic commercial center and constructing a pedestrian-friendly sidewalk system that links the corridor uses to adjacent neighborhoods.

Given the dramatic growth witnessed over the past decade, the John Rolfe Planning Area has the potential to accommodate little in the way of new development. It holds the potential to expand the existing Beale Park and to pick up a nominal increase in retail commercial or service net square footage through a coordinated redevelopment along South Church Street. All told, it is estimated that these redevelopment opportunities could lead to between approximately 8,712 and 21,780 square feet of additional retail commercial space within the Planning Area. The table on the following page summarizes the development potential of the sole Sub-Area and the two Redevelopment Areas as recognized in the Plan.

