

*Chapter VI: J*

**LAND USE:  
WEST MAIN PLANNING AREA**

**ADOPTED  
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### **WEST MAIN PLANNING AREA**

#### **PLANNING AREA PROFILE:**

##### **Location**

The West Main Planning Area is located in the western portion of the Town of Smithfield. It is bounded on the north by Mount Holly Creek and the Town's corporate boundary, on the west by Waterworks Road and the Town's corporate boundary, on the south by the upper reaches of Little Creek and the Town's corporate boundary and on the east by the Route 10 Bypass, West Main Street and Cary Street. The Planning Area, so named because of the Town's expressed goal to expand the design influence and spirit of redevelopment witnessed along West Main Street in the Downtown Area westward along Route 258, consists of approximately 862 acres.

##### **Existing Land Use**

The West Main Planning Area is a relatively underdeveloped area which includes a mix of corridor-based commercial, industrial and residential uses bordered by an expanse of vacant property. Its most notable existing uses are the Westside Elementary School, the Jersey Park and Lakeside subdivisions and a mobile home park located in the Woods Edge neighborhood. The Planning Area is also home to the Isle of Wight County Health Department, located just off Grace Street. The Route 258 Corridor is home to a diverse mix of uses, including a general store, a small engine repair shop, a Southern States/Farmer's Service commercial operation, a VDOT park-and-ride facility, a mini-storage facility, several single family residences, and a handful of other light industrial or service related uses. The Town's Public Works facility is also located within the Planning Area on the northwest side of Cary Street.

The Planning Area incorporates the Western Annexation Area, one of three Isle of Wight County territories annexed by the Town of Smithfield on January 1, 1998. This Annexation Area lies principally west of the Westside Elementary School and north of Route 258, with a small exception being several tracts of land south of Route 258 adjacent to a tributary of Little Creek. The vast majority of this land is vacant and maintained as woodlands, wetlands and open fields, supporting little active agricultural activities. The 1992 Comprehensive Plan listed the Jersey Park neighborhood located just north of Route 258 and adjacent to the Westside Elementary School as one of the three major concentrations of blight existing within the Town and placed a high priority on implementing several specific measures to combat the deteriorating housing conditions therein. Several significant improvements were made to the

neighborhood during the 1990's, including the rehabilitation of several abandoned homes and the upgrading of a substandard water line that serves the neighborhood. As a result of these improvements and the investment of private funds and sweat equity in the redevelopment and improved maintenance of the community, the Jersey Park subdivision is now considered a stable neighborhood that should be properly buffered from the future development planned for adjacent lands. Little in the way of significant development or land use change has occurred in the Planning Area since the 1999 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The most noteworthy change has been the development of a self-storage facility to the south of Route 258 near the Town's corporate boundary in what was referred to in the 1999 Plan as Sub-Area 5. The balance of the Planning Area has remained relatively stable over the past decade.

### **Existing Transportation System**

The major roads serving the Planning Area are the Route 10 Bypass, West Main Street/Route 258 (which serves as an extension of West Main Street beyond the Route 10 Bypass intersection and is also referred to as "Courthouse Highway"), Waterworks Road (Route 709) and Cary Street. Each of the existing developments in the Planning Area is accessed either directly or indirectly via Route 258 or West Main Street.

Significant planned transportation improvements in the Planning Area were made in 1999 and include the widening of Route 258 from two to three lanes and the addition of curb and gutter from just west of Route 620 to the Westside Elementary School. This long range project is included in the VDOT Six-Year Plan for Isle of Wight County, but funding, at least for preliminary design, will be shared between the Commonwealth and the MPO. At this time, funding commitments are limited to preliminary engineering, and the MPO is expected to supplement State funding for the engineering work. Construction is projected to be delayed until additional funding becomes available after 2013.

### **Existing Environmental Considerations**

The Planning Area's development potential is constrained somewhat by the presence of two significant creeks, Mount Holly Creek and Little Creek, along its northern and southern boundaries, respectively. The scenic marshlands and critical slopes of these waterways surround and penetrate the Planning Area to create barriers to construction for significant portions of the land. Nearly thirty percent of the total Planning Area, approximately 236 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 862 total acres, approximately 350 (40%) have been identified as having prime development potential.

## **WEST MAIN FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**

The West Main Planning Area is planned as a mixed-use community incorporating a range of housing options in addition to light industrial and retail uses along its principal corridor, Route 258. The future development and redevelopment of the 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. This parcel-by-parcel development pattern has contributed to the proliferation of a hodgepodge of uses along Route 258 that fail to link together in any sound urban context. By creating a long range plan, the owners of the various properties would be able to produce a better finished development product that would appropriately respond to the existing, stable residential uses in the Planning Area. A thoughtful master planning effort would also allow the Town to better coordinate and time 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 the water and sewer distribution systems are significantly upgraded and extended to adequately serve the planned uses. The Town should also take the lead in encouraging and supervising the extension of the ongoing redevelopment of the West Main Corridor beyond the Route 10 Bypass intersection along Route 258.

In the following sections, specific land use recommendations are presented for the various sub-areas and redevelopment areas identified in the West Main Planning Area.

### **Sub-Areas 1 and 2 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 1 is located in the western portion of the West Main Planning Area. It is bounded on the west by Waterworks Road (Route 709) which serves as the Town's corporate boundary, on the north by the Town's corporate boundary and Mount Holly Creek, on the east by the Westside Elementary School and on the south by Route 258. Encompassing approximately 289 acres, Sub-Area 1 constitutes the largest amount of undeveloped land in the Planning Area and one of the five largest undeveloped areas in the entire Town. It is recommended for low density residential land use. At between 1 and 3 dwelling units per acre, this Sub-Area could yield between approximately 217 and 650 new dwelling units.

Sub-Area 2 is also located in the western portion of the West Main Planning Area, running parallel to Route 258 adjacent to the south of Sub-Area 1. It is bounded on the west by Waterworks Road (Route 709), on the north by Sub-Area 1 and Mount Holly Creek beyond, on the east by and historic home and the Westside Elementary School and on the south by Route 258. Encompassing 23.9 acres, Sub-Area 2 has the potential to support between 187,395 and 468,488 square feet of retail commercial space.

The 1999 Comprehensive Plan recommended that the land be planned for community conservation in an attempt to preserve existing natural features and vegetation, promote interim agricultural and forestry activities and production and encourage the conservation and maintenance of sensitive environmental areas in the Sub-Area. This community conservation designation was selected also as a means of serving as a “holding designation” for the property, acknowledging that the land annexed from Isle of Wight County needed to be zoned in a manner consistent with that which was in place in the County (i.e. for agricultural purposes) and was controlled by only a handful of property owners that had no immediate plans for developing the property.

The community conservation land use designation would allow single family detached residential development at a density of no more than one dwelling unit per acre. At this density, as many as 121 new housing units could potentially be located within the Sub-Area’s 120.8 net developable acres. At the time of the adoption of the 1999 Plan, market conditions and the availability of several preferable vacant parcels currently zoned for low density single family detached residential development within the Town served as strong indicators that the Sub Area was likely to remain undeveloped for the foreseeable future. Clearly, market conditions and net developable land availability within the Town have changed dramatically since then.

In recognition of the changing market conditions, the Town recommends three significant changes to the future land use recommendations for the Sub-Areas: (1) Extend the boundaries of Sub-Area 1 to include the undeveloped land to the east of the Sub-Area and north of the Westside Elementary School; (2) change the future land use recommendation for the land fronting Route 258 between the middle school and Waterworks Road for a depth of approximately 800 feet from Community Conservation to Retail Commercial; and (3) change the future land use recommendation for the balance of the property to Low Density Residential.

The extension of this Sub-Area boundary is critically important to this area behind the middle school in order to properly plan for the future access to this site, which due to the presence of Mount Holly Creek to the north and the adjacent school and Jersey Park subdivisions is effectively “landlocked” from the primary vehicular corridors within Smithfield. A key land use decision being made with this recommendation is to focus the future development of the “addition area” on residential uses via the connection to the balance of Sub-Area 1, as opposed to tying the land to the adjacent Sub-Area 3 which is recommended for light industrial uses. Given the remote nature of the site and the sensitive environmental factors associated with Mount Holly Creek, a low density residential or community conservation land use recommendation is deemed much more appropriate than that of light industrial uses for this area. The logic behind the recommendation for retail uses is based upon the desire of the Town to expand commercial opportunities along this important entrance corridor in accord with the corridor design guidelines established in the Town Code. This recommended land use is consistent with existing commercial uses across Route 258, although the intent is to promote a master planned commercial development in which the uses will be integrated and accessed via

a single shared entrance, preferably located off Waterworks Road. This land use recommendation extends the entire length between the middle school and the Waterworks Road intersection for a depth of approximately 800 feet to allow for a master planned commercial project which can be professionally designed in accord with the Town Code and the Entrance Corridor guidelines. The land use recommendation for the balance of the Sub-Area is for Low Density Residential uses.

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) the appropriate density of future development, (2) the availability of public utilities, (3) vehicular access, (4) provision of open space, (5) corridor appearance and edge buffering (6) the future of a home located directly west of the middle school which may have historic significance, and (7) sensitive environmental areas.

The Future Land Use Plan for the Planning Area includes an allowance for a logical expansion of the Westside Elementary School facility. Any future development of Sub-Area 1 should incorporate a minimum setback of 50 feet from the school expansion site. This setback should include a landscape buffer put in place as part of the master plan of development which is sufficient to screen and buffer the planned residences from the school facility.

The Town should also consider a thoughtful proposal for a mix of uses which incorporates the entire property into a suitable master plan that could be implemented via the proposed mixed use zoning district.

Although the future land use designation for the Sub-Area promotes a density range that would support up to three residential units per acre, the existing zoning (C-C, Community Conservation) of the properties located within the Sub-Area provides that new residential subdivisions shall only be permitted in the district via special permit and that each subdivision shall not exceed five lots. Thus, any future subdivisions proposed for residential purposes incorporating a higher density must be individually rezoned to a residential zoning district compatible with the Comprehensive Plan and pursuant to the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. The Town should encourage Traditional Neighborhood Development-style development within the Sub-Area. Such development be facilitated and implemented via the proposed TND overlay district. Future development of the Sub-Area should also incorporate affordable, workforce housing opportunities within the new community.

Before any rezoning of this nature would be approved by the Town, adequate public water and sewer service would have to be provided for all planned uses. Currently, public sanitary sewer service culminates at the Westside Elementary School along Route 258. The Town has recently extended its water service beyond the school along Route 258 to Waterworks Road. As a part of this public works improvement, an 8" line was also extended along Waterworks Road to the Town's corporate limits. Future development in the Sub-Area will be able to tap directly into this 8" water line to serve residences; however, the developers of the Sub-Area will be responsible for completing a water line loop within the Sub-Area and for extending the sanitary

sewer line to serve the area. Additionally, no lots shall be permitted with private domestic well and septic utilities except by special use permit for temporary service.

A thoughtful master plan should be created for the Sub-Area which provides for shared vehicular entrances and efficient internal street systems and protects its scenic surroundings, sensitive ecology and the Mount Holly Creek which parallels the northern border of the Planning Area. Access points into and out of the Sub-Area should be limited along both Route 258 and Waterworks Road in order to prohibit the further proliferation of curb cuts along these roadways. The Planning Commission would prefer that all future access to the site be provided via Waterworks Road. As part of this recommendation, Waterworks Road must be upgraded as part of any future development of the site to include necessary turn lane improvements to handle the future traffic demands associated with the proposal. Further, future development along Waterworks Road and Rt. 258 should incorporate appropriate setbacks, landscape buffers and fencing, where appropriate in order to meet the objectives and requirements established by the Town Ordinance and the Entrance Corridor design guidelines. Future development should be sited within the areas which are most conducive for urban land uses, while the fragile environmental areas along the Sub-Area's northern 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 topography of the northernmost portion of the Sub-Area is not suitable for massive buildings and expansive parking; therefore, low density single family detached residential development would be the most efficient use of this segment of the property. The siting of new homes should be gently placed within the angular terrain, employing extensive landscaping and minimal earthwork. The proposed master plan should protect as many existing trees as physically possible within the future development plan. A master plan approach is critical to insuring that each of these issues is appropriately responded to in the proper development of this site.

### **Sub-Areas 3 and 4 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 2 covers approximately 24 acres and is located in the northern portion of the West Main Planning Area. It is bounded on the west and north by the forested land bordering Mount Holly Creek, on the south by the Jersey Park subdivision and on the east by Sub-Area 4.

Sub-Area 3's 24.3 acres are located directly adjacent to Sub-Area 2 and are bounded on the north by the Town Public Works facility, on the east by the Route 10 Bypass, on the south by Redevelopment Area 2 and the west by the Jersey Park subdivision and Sub-Area 2.

Both of these Sub-Areas are planned for light industrial use with an allowable floor area ratio of 0.20-0.30 square feet per net developable acre. At this proposed density, Sub-Area 3's 15.8 net developable acres could support between approximately 137,650 and 206,474 square feet of light industrial space, while Sub-Area 4's 25.6 net developable acres could support between 223,027 and 334,541 square feet of light industrial space. Considered together as one contiguous site,

the two Sub-Areas could support as much as 540,000 square feet of space for light industrial users.

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) vehicular access and (2) buffering. Access is the most critical issue impacting the future land use plan for these Sub-Areas. At present, Pole Road provides the only direct vehicular access to the Sub-Areas. Any future development of these areas for industrial use would necessitate the improvement of Pole Road as a two lane road capable of supporting future trucking and employment traffic demands imposed by the future user(s). As a limited access road, direct access from the adjacent Route 10 Bypass is currently unavailable to these Sub-Areas. It is recommended that once a suitable employment-generating user is identified for these Sub-Areas, the Town and the user should lobby VDOT for a restricted access point along the Bypass into and out of the planned light industrial facility. It is also recommended that these Sub-Areas be developed as a formal light industrial park that would be master planned to incorporate an efficient internal street system that would funnel the majority of its traffic demands to this restricted access ramp, thereby minimizing the burden placed on Pole Road and the Pole Road/Route 258 intersection. If VDOT is unwilling to work with the Town to support such an access, either Pole Road must be upgraded as part of the future development of the Sub-Areas or a suitable parallel road alignment affording a direct connection from Route 258 must be identified and improved. Vehicular connections to the neighboring Jersey Park subdivision, the Westside Elementary School or the adjacent undeveloped property in Sub-Area 1 should be avoided given the disparate projected future land uses.

Another important consideration for the future development of these Sub-Areas is the future stability of adjacent uses: the Jersey Park subdivision to the south and the Town recreational facility and park planned for Redevelopment Area 5 to the east. Further, given the recommended expansion of Sub-Area 1 to include the undeveloped land behind the Westside Elementary School, it is likely that the area directly west of these Sub-Areas will one day support residential uses. As such, the master plan for the recommended light industrial park for Sub-Areas 3 and 4 should include sufficient setbacks and landscape buffers, as provided in the revised Zoning Ordinance, to minimize the impact of light, noise, dust, smoke, vehicular traffic or any other externality on these adjacent uses and net developable areas.

### **Sub-Area 5 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 5 is located in the northeastern portion of the West Main Planning Area. It is bounded on the north and east by Cary Street, on the west by the Route 10 Bypass and on the south by commercial uses adjacent to West Main Street. In the 1999 Comprehensive Plan, the 39.4 acre Sub-Area was planned for low density residential use at one to three dwelling units per acre. At this density, only between 39 and 117 new single family detached dwelling units could be located within the Sub-Area's 22.9 net developable acres. The Plan recommended that the type of housing product developed in the Sub-Area mirror that of the density and quality in design and building materials witnessed in the nearby Goose Hill Creek subdivision which lies directly across Cary Street. In response to the 2005 Citizen's Survey conducted in conjunction

with the Comprehensive Plan Update, the Town has identified this Sub-Area as an ideal location to provide a much needed park. The Survey indicated that Town residents currently feel underserved by existing parks and recreation facilities, particularly in terms of providing active recreation opportunities. Given the location of this Sub-Area within the Town (more specifically its proximity to other Town and County park facilities and the Luter Family YMCA and its potential for accessibility to the Route 10 Bypass) and its ideal topographic attributes, Sub-Area 5 holds strong potential to serve as the requested new Town park facility. It is recommended that the park include soccer, baseball and softball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, bicycle and walking trails, and ample open space. Strong pedestrian and bicycle linkages (via sidewalks and dedicated bicycle paths) connecting the park to the adjacent Luter Family YMCA across Cary Street should be included in the future master plan for the park.

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle access, (2) the provision of safe, accessible and adequate parking and (3) buffering. It is recommended that in order to eliminate the potential for overloading the already strained West Main Street corridor with additional vehicles the primary entrance to the proposed park facility should be located off Cary Street. Ideally, the entrance would be located directly across Cary Street from the Luter Family YMCA in order to build upon the outstanding services provided in the youth and family-oriented facility, and to provide cross-linkages between the two uses. A secondary entrance to the park should be considered from the south via West Main Street provided that the necessary right-of-way to allow access via the adjacent commercial parcels could be obtained. The master plan for the park should also incorporate a parking lot suitable to support peak period demand for the parks uses, which could include festivals, sports tournaments, etc. The park should also include a strong visual buffer to include landscaping, as well as appropriate fencing to protect future park users (especially young children) from the vehicular traffic on the Route 10 Bypass and West Main Street.

### **Sub-Area 6 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 6 is located in the southern portion of the West Main Planning Area. It is bounded on the west by Sub-Area 5, on the north by an assortment of uses fronting Route 258 (including an apartment complex, a mobile home park and an industrial use), on the south by the upper reaches of Little Creek and on the east by the vacant woodlands bordering the Quail Street neighborhood. The 40.9 acre Sub-Area is planned for light industrial use at a floor area ratio of 0.20 to 0.30 square feet per net developable acre. At this density, the Sub-Area could support between approximately 231,609 and 347,413 square feet of new light industrial space within its 26.6 net developable acres.

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) sensitive environmental areas, (2) vehicular access and (3) buffering. A thoughtful master plan should be created for the Sub-Area which protects its scenic surroundings, especially the sensitive ecology found in the adjacent tributaries of Little Creek. Thus, future development plans for any given sector of the Sub-Area should not be approved without a clear vision for the future of

the entire property. Planned light industrial uses should be sited in an industrial park setting in the areas which are most conducive for urban land uses, while the fragile environmental areas along the fringes of the property are to be maintained as permanent open space. The planning effort should include a comprehensive stormwater management analysis of the local watershed to include a formal plan for future management strategies, including any best management practices needed for the future development of the site. Access to the site will be another primary consideration for the future development of the Sub-Area. Right-of-way will need to be obtained via one or more of the properties fronting Route 258. If feasible, two separate main entrances off Route 258 should be incorporated into the master plan of the site, and these entrances should be connected by a thoughtful internal street network. Topographic and environmental concerns on the eastern edge of the property would prevent any feasible direct access to the site via an improved Great Spring Road.

Another important consideration for the future development of this Sub-Area is the impact of the proposed use on the numerous adjacent, stable land uses. The master plan for the recommended light industrial park should include sufficient setbacks and landscape buffers, as provided in the Town's Zoning Ordinance to minimize the impact of light, noise, dust, smoke, vehicular traffic or any other externality on these adjacent uses. The use's hours of operation and peak transportation demands should also respect the existing nature of the surrounding community and not pose any undue hardship on existing homeowners, business and retailers.

## **REDEVELOPMENT AREA RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Redevelopment Area 1 Recommendations:**

Redevelopment Area 1 is located in the eastern portion of the West Main Planning Area. It is bounded on the north and west by Sub-Area 4, on the south by Route 258 and on the east by the Route 10 Bypass. The 2.6 acre Redevelopment Area is located within the right-of-way of the Route 10 Bypass and is maintained and under the complete control of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Currently, it is used as a commuter parking lot for employees of the pork production plants or other nearby businesses. Along with several adjacent commercial uses, it forms the principle gateway into the Town from the north and west, and as such, provides as a less than optimal entrance statement for those entering the Town of Smithfield. Although the Town has little, if any, regulatory control over the appearance and use of the site, it has worked with VDOT in recent years to add landscaping in order to improve the visual image provided at the intersection of Route 258 and the Bypass. Further improvements are needed to transform this site into an appropriate gateway for the community. Although it is anticipated that VDOT will retain the existing use of the site in the near planning term, it is recommended that the Town continue to lobby the State to provide appropriate landscaping, buffering and signage improvements that will fit in nicely with the Town's planned entrance corridor improvement program and form an inviting statement to connect travelers on the Bypass to the Historic Downtown Area and waterfront.

### **Redevelopment Area 2 Recommendations:**

Redevelopment Area 2 is located in the eastern portion of the West Main Planning Area. It is bounded on the north by Route 258, on the west by an apartment complex, on the south by the Quail Street neighborhood and on the east by the Route 10 Bypass. The 11.9 acre Redevelopment Area is planned for retail commercial use at a floor area ratio of 0.20 to 0.50 square feet per net developable acre. At this density, the Sub-Area could support between approximately 37,000 and 94,000 square feet of new gross leasable space within its 4.3 net developable acres. The Redevelopment Area is currently home to a convenience store and other “underdeveloped” commercial uses. It is recommended that these parcels be combined in order to provide a sufficient amount of acreage to support a retail commercial use that would provide the highest and best use for the property, as well as improve the image of the gateway area represented at the Route 258/Route 10 Bypass intersection.

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 and (3) vehicular access. As with any major redevelopment project involving multiple property owners, this first issue can become a substantial hurdle. The Town should open 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.

### **FUTURE LAND USE SUMMARY**

The Comprehensive Plan projects the West Main Planning Area as an integrated, mixed-use community which will provide several opportunities to meet the Town’s economic development objectives with respect to additional light industrial development, as well its objectives relating to the much-needed provision of additional parks and recreation spaces. Equally important, the plan also attempts to shape a suitable transition in land use from its mix of highway related commercial, industrial and high density residential uses along Route 258 to the expanse of undeveloped land bordering the Mount Holly and Little creeks. The Planning Area also has the potential to introduce a new traditional neighborhood development project to Smithfield in the undeveloped property adjacent to the Route 258 and Waterworks Road.

The West Main Planning Area has the potential to accommodate a significant number of new households (between 217 and 650 at full build-out). It also has the potential to provide between 592,285 and 888,428 square feet of new light industrial space and between 187,395 and 468,488 square feet of new retail commercial space. The development of this Planning Area should provide significant non-tourist related 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 several of the identified net developable properties within 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.

