

SUMMER JOINT RETREAT SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

On August 18, 2022, members of the Planning Board and the Town Commissioners of the Town of Swansboro held a joint meeting to discuss the continued implementation of the adopted Town of Swansboro CAMA Land Use Plan Update (adopted January 22, 2019). Since the original adoption of that plan, there has been significant progress in accomplishing or pursuing the action steps outlined therein. Also since adoption, there have been events that have arisen that were not anticipated by the plan or have changed the circumstances related to implementation.

The summary of this joint meeting, recorded herein, should help lay out a path forward for the Commissioners, Planning Board, and Town Staff, as they seek to implement the vision of the Plan. Other associated materials from this joint meeting are held by Town Staff and may be accessed upon request.

THEMES FROM THE 2019 PLAN

Managing Growth	Open Spaces and Agriculture	Charm, History, Community, and Character	Downtown
Environment and Wetlands	Maintain Quality of Life	Traffic congestion and NC Hwy 24	Environment and Wetlands

PROGRESS

The following were identified as areas where progress had been made since plan adoption by the Planning Board and/or Town staff.

- Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance – updated 2020, but could be revisited for additional elevation or opportunities for expanded protections.
- NC General Statutes Chapter 160D revisions completed.
- Resilient Coastal Communities Plan phases 1 and 2.
- Addition of public docking space at Moore Street.
- ADA Transition Plan.
- Opportunities for subdivision clustering to avoid negative environmental impacts.
- Interconnectivity standards updated, but not yet using Fire Code Appendix D.

- Continuation of commercial, nonresidential appearance and design standards.
- Investigation of ways of realigning the existing zoning to the future land use map, particularly as it relates to Low Density Suburban Residential future land use character area.
- Conversion to one-way in downtown has been a success.
- Little effort has been made to identify street ends as a way to enhance public trust water access points.

INTERVENING CIRCUMSTANCES AND ISSUES

The recently adopted NC GS Chapter 160D regulations re-organized zoning and development regulation ordinances statewide and required local governments to review and revise their own ordinances accordingly.

The following table represents the relative advantages and disadvantages of each decision-making process relative to different stakeholders.

	Public Participation	Predictability (for Applicant)	Private-Sector Expense/Risk	Local Discretion
Administrative	Low/None	High	Low	Low/None
Legislative	High	Medium	Low/Medium	High
Quasi-Judicial	Low	Low	High	Variable

In addition to the Covid-19 pandemic, other intervening circumstances have sometimes necessitated taking a second look at priorities identified in the 2019 plan document. For instance, the following items are identified:

- Superstreet is currently unfunded, but has had preliminary design; the NCDOT street design will very likely impact businesses.
- Wastewater Treatment Plant decommissioning, shifting treatment to Camp Lejeune.
- Walmart entrance realignment at Norris Road; connectivity limitations, but helped improve conditions.
- The roadway alignment at Leslie Lane presents an opportunity for a major intersection, but lack of connectivity.
- Development continues just outside the Town's limit and likely will continue.
- Census 2010-2020 population growth was significant, at about 25%.

MOVING FORWARD

The most discussed and probably most agreed-upon opportunity for Planning Board-related progress seemed to be the discussion related to land use and development regulation decision making processes. The following table represents a best practices perspective regarding land use and development decision-making and review procedures. It is not necessarily appropriate for every jurisdiction and deference should be given to local conditions and capabilities. For instance, NC GS 160D-803(c) identifies a quasi-judicial process for reviewing and approving subdivision requests. The pros and cons of different approaches should be weighed in conversation with Town staff and legal advisors to find a best fit for the Town.

Administrative	Planning Board	Board of Adjustment	Town Council
Zoning Permits (sign, fence, change of use, etc.)	Rezoning (recommendation)	Special Use Permits	Rezoning
Subdivisions and Plats	Ordinance Amendments (recommendation)	Variances	Ordinance Amendments
Administrative Amendments (e.g. – to previously approved development plans), Traffic Impact Analysis, etc.		Administrative Appeals	
Site Plans			

The following ideas or issues were also discussed and are presented in no particular order or priority:

- Creating a wetland easement program as an incentive for private property owners to protect wetlands on their property. Overall, this may blossom into a more extensive examination of ways to prevent wetland filling or destruction and could lead to revising or adding policy language to the CAMA land use plan to prohibit negative impacts to wetlands.
- Finding and downzoning undeveloped, unentitled properties to a more appropriate zoning district based on the adopted future land use map.
- Identifying and reexamining the Suburban Town Center nodes in the future land use map, given recent changes (Norris Road driveway realignment, future NCDOT Hwy 24 street design, etc.) and consider realignments of the map to better fit expected future conditions.
- Possible development of another residential or agricultural district that better bridges the gap between the existing zoning districts and the future land use map without creating an overabundance of nonconforming parcels.
- Examine updates to Town ordinances, such as the table of permitted uses, to streamline regulations and make as much as possible administratively processed. Many towns that are not used to handling certain development applications will process them as quasi-

judicial items, such as special use permits. However, with the right development standards in place, many of these can be handled administratively, but care must be taken to ensure that what you ask for is what you want. A study of the old town character, as primarily occurs in the Coastal Traditional Neighborhood area, could also be undertaken, with subsequent codification of those design standards to allow new parts of Swansboro to resemble the older parts of town. Conversations with emergency services and public works departments can help ensure that the best of the old is combined with the best practices of today. If concern remains, the use of special use permit review could be tiered, such that development of particular impact always triggers this heightened level of scrutiny. The following standards could be considered:

- o In addition to the listed uses requiring special use review by the table of permitted uses, the following development types have significant town-wide impacts and require special use permits:
 - Any nonresidential or mixed-use development encompassing 100,000 or more square feet of gross floor area or more.
 - Any residential development or subdivision involving 200 dwelling units or more.
- Reviewing and updating all adopted Town plans. Some town plans are no longer relevant or sorely outdated. The Planning Board could review them one-by-one, retain recommendations that are still relevant and update those that are outdated. These should then be brought to Council for review and readoption. Staff or board members should be identified for implementing each plan or plan element and regular reporting or accountability should become a standard procedure. Establishing quarterly progress reports can help Council remain aware of implementation and prioritize resources to accomplish plan goals.
- Additional facade grants or appearance incentives along Hwy 24 could enhance the appearance of the Town for travelers. Identification of additional or realigned roadways could also help provide connectivity and an intuitive street network. Coordination with NCDOT and future Hwy 24 design plans will be necessary.
- Research the annexation of existing “doughnut” parcels – tracts that are surrounded by current corporate town limits – and pursue annexation. This may require coordination with the state legislature.
- Review current annexation policies and formalize triggers for the exact moment when voluntary annexation should be applied for by the land owner. For instance, it could be required prior to platting or prior to building permit issuance.
- Additional standards for Traffic Impact Analyses could help prevent negative impacts to the transportation network. For instance, the following might be useful triggers:
 - o A Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) shall be required for projects that are anticipated to generate 100 or more peak hour vehicle trips, based on the latest edition of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Traffic Generation Manual.
 - o A TIA shall be required for projects that are anticipated to generate 1,000 or more average daily trips (ADT), based on the latest edition of the ITE Traffic Generation Manual.
 - o A TIA may also be required, at the discretion of the Planning Director, Town Engineer, and/or the decision-making body in the following instances:

- Major or minor thoroughfares near the site are experiencing significant delays.
- Traffic safety issues or high vehicle crash history exist at intersection(s) served by the proposed development.
- The site is located in a highly congested area (where volume-to-capacity ratios are greater than 1.0).
- An associated or proposed rezoning to a more intensive district would create more intensive trip generation than the current Comprehensive Plan anticipates.