

Appendix 4-D

Seabrook – Stuart Point Plan

Purpose

The purpose of the Seabrook-Stuart Point (SSP) Plan is to articulate a direction for future growth and development within the communities of Seabrook and Stuart Point. The Plan addresses land use, recreational opportunities, and community design. The adoption of this plan and its policy statements forms the basis of land use regulations for the community. The plan, as a policy document appended to the County's Comprehensive Plan, is to be used to guide zoning, subdivision, facilities funding and design, and community development decisions made by government officials and agencies. The SSP Plan serves as a foundation and the structure upon which more detailed policies, standards and master plans may be developed. The plan also provides direction to residents, the business community, and investors concerning private development proposals and the location of public facilities.

The goal of the SSP Community Plan is to direct growth into two districts.

1. The mixed-use district is intended to serve the commercial, service and civic needs of local residents. This district also allows higher density residential uses centered on the Whale Branch Middle and Elementary Schools. This district, by directing commercial activity and higher density residential uses into a center, which allows the rest of the community to retain its semi-rural character and natural resources.
2. The residential district is to remain primarily semi-rural residential with generous open space. Opportunities for home occupations, cottage industries and resource-based activities continue to be encouraged throughout both districts.

Current Conditions

The SSP community is a place where a rural way of life still prevails. Commercial businesses are small and locally owned, open space and expansive views are plentiful, and the population is not increasing.

Process

The SSP community planning process was undertaken as part of Beaufort County's Community Preservation Planning Program and has sought to build consensus around a community-defined approach to the future of Seabrook and Stuart Point. The solutions to the issues, which this plan analyzes, have emerged as a result of a continuing dialogue with a wide range of participants, which began two years ago. The goal and activities represent the creativity of the SSP residents.

Listed below are the goals and actions derived from the many issues debated during the SSP Community Preservation planning process. The goals reflect what residents believe will help to build the community. Through a series of public meetings SSP residents

identified important issues to be addressed, each related primarily to the issue of growth and land use. The fundamental question was how to accommodate growth while maintaining the character of the community. Specifically the community had concerns about, and asked the CP committee to consider, the following:

- 1) How to encourage the provision of water service?
- 2) What mix of land uses and development densities are desirable?
- 3) What kinds of businesses are most appropriate and where should they be located?
- 4) How can we improve recreational opportunities?

Based on the information gathered and detailed questions posed by the community, four key areas of concern emerged: land use, recreational opportunities, water service and community design.

Goals and Actions

The SSP community is a place where a rural way of life still prevails. Commercial businesses are small and locally owned, open space and expansive views are plentiful, and the population is not increasing.

General Land Use Goals: Land should be used to the optimum benefit of the environment and the community. In order for relatives to be accommodated as part of an extended household, permission is often sought for an additional living unit connected to the main dwelling or upon the same lot. These are usually referred to as accessory dwelling units or granny flats. This can be in circumstances where a completely separate unit of accommodation would not comply with the normal criteria regarding density, access, space around dwellings and residential amenities. Such proposals are usually extensions, but may be conversions, of outbuildings. They will be treated sympathetically, provided they meet the setback requirements.

Goal: *Ensure that new development and redevelopment maintains and enhances the semi-rural character of Seabrook and Stuart Point.*

- Provide access to local commercial services by developing a mixed used district, centered on the Whale Branch Middle School, which encourages the integration of residential, commercial, civic and public uses while preserving the rural character.
- Permit commercial uses at a scale and intensity that maintains compatibility with residential uses; require new buildings to respect the character of the community.
- Maintain diversity in the type and the character of development and promote various opportunities in the type and the cost of housing.
- Place location limitations and design standards on the development of multifamily uses.
- Develop an appropriate sign ordinance for the SSP area.
- Pursue available funding sources at the State level to provide for public services and facilities, in particular water service.
- Develop design standards to ensure that new development is well designed and in keeping with their surroundings and their adverse impacts upon the character and amenity of the community is avoided.

- Allocate land for commercial development that is closely related to the amount needed by the community.
- Allow accessory dwelling units.
- Develop standards to encourage affordable housing in planned communities. Some of the larger housing sites, where a planned community may be developed, should accommodate a mixture of dwelling types and sizes including a substantial proportion of homes suitable for smaller households.

Parks and Recreation Goals: Provide recreational opportunity through the use of a quality park system utilizing county, and school district resources. Recreation facilities should be safe and of a high quality. Additional recreational services should be developed around existing facilities, the Seabrook community center and the Whale Branch Middle and Elementary schools.

***Goal:** Provide recreational opportunity through the use of a quality park system.*

- Encourage the development of shared recreational facilities at Whale Branch Middle and Elementary schools.
- Make a special effort to assist the Whale Branch Middle and Elementary Schools in developing their trail and recreational program.
- Investigate the development of passive recreational facilities at area schools.
- Provide public places and open spaces that complement the public realm and create identifiable focal points within the Seabrook–Stuart Point Mixed-Use District.

Design Goals: Visual compatibility is an objective measure that will be developed based upon the County's vision of rural character. It should be assured through development regulations and design standards, for example, density, size and location of clusters, screening from the roadway, and other requirements. Design elements or features such as marshes, existing vegetation, mature landscaping, historic farmsteads, archaeological sites and even open fields can maintain a semi-rural characteristics if included as part of a development. The design elements of the rural built environment include traditional buildings such as barns, farmhouses, traditional shops, feed stores, and roadside stands. Commercial development can be built to resemble traditional rural buildings to blend in with rural character.

Well-designed buildings fit in with their surroundings and satisfy the needs of the occupants and the general public. Good design can help promote sustainable development, improve the quality of the existing environment and, thereby, attract businesses and investment. Encouragement will be given to appropriate rural design. There will be considerable scope for originality and innovative architectural solutions. Good design relates well to its surroundings, enhances the quality of experience for its users, and contributes to public enjoyment of an area. Visually intrusive development, on the other hand, can spoil the quality of the environment for all. Seabrook and Stuart Point residents recognize that good quality rural design helps to create, sustain and improve the quality of the rural environment. The economic and social values of maintaining an attractive rural environment for businesses and visitors are equally

acknowledged. However, visual compatibility should not be used to preclude traditional rural uses by focusing on “prettiness.”

Goal: *Develop a safe and aesthetically pleasing rural community through the orderly development of land and appropriate rural design and uses.*

- Preserve groups of buildings of special character, architectural quality and/or historic interest, particularly the McLeod Farmstead.
- Create a strong “sense of place”.
- Enhance entryways to the community.
- Implement a streetscape program that creates a visually attractive, safe and comfortable street and gives scale and definition to the public realm.
- Provide sheltered bus stops along the Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority bus route.
- Identify ways to build upon the history of Seabrook and identify sites for historic markers.
- Develop standards for the quality of design, permitted building materials to be used, site design, layout and scale of buildings.

The SSP Plan provides a goal and policy framework for guiding community development and promoting high-quality public facilities. Nevertheless, the Plan should not be viewed as a static document. It is meant to be reviewed, debated and modified as necessary to account for changing conditions and community values.

Implementation

The time and effort spent in producing this Plan is worth nothing without implementation. It is implementation and agreement on methods of implementation that will bring the Plan to life and initiate an evolution of activity that will move the SSP community toward the fulfillment of its goals. This section outlines the activities that must be pursued to carry out the Plan.

Preparation and adoption of the Plan is a beginning step in its implementation. Its basic purpose is to provide a guide for specific action. The Implementation Plan identifies techniques, strategies, and methods for carrying out the recommendations contained in the SSP Plan. The major implementation processes described include the SSP Community Preservation Land Development Standards, the County’s Capital Improvement Program, the annual review and update process, general plan update and specific implementation program.

The SSP Community Preservation Land Development Standards: The SSP Community Preservation Land Development Standards is a regulatory tool used to define districts within the Community Preservation area for the purpose of controlling and guiding land use and development. These standards are the primary instrument for implementing land use policies. The County’s review and adoption of the land development standards are important first steps in this plan’s implementation.

Capital Improvements Program: Another tool for implementing the Plan is the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) which establishes schedules and priorities for all public improvement projects within a five-year period. The County first prepares a list of all public improvements that will be required in the next five years, including transportation and community facility projects. Then all projects are reviewed, priorities are assigned, cost estimates prepared, and potential funding sources identified.

The CIP typically schedules the implementation of a range of specific projects related to the Comprehensive Plan and Community Plans, particularly the restoration and upgrading of existing utilities and infrastructure facilities. Construction of public facilities and infrastructure is an important link between the development of SSP and the implementation of the SSP Plan. Based on an annual review, the CIP shall be reexamined for consistency with the goals and actions of this Plan. The CIP shall also be revised to include projects identified within the SSP Plan. In this way, the CIP serves as a financial planning document as well as a physical-planning document. It permits the construction of improvements identified in the SSP Plan.

The five-year CIP shall be used to enable the implementation of the SSP Plan policies in a manner which is consistent with the goals and actions identified. The CIP can also be used to implement growth strategies in the SSP Plan by locating and programming public facilities and infrastructure for lands within the approved SSP Community Preservation area. Finally, by stipulating the desired community projects and improvements, the SSP Plan provides the guide for desirable public facilities and services.

Annual Review: The county administrator shall submit an annual report to Beaufort County Council on the status of the Plan and the progress of its application. By going through this process, it is possible to regularly reexamine the plan's premises and evaluate progress made on its implementation. Implementation actions may need to be modified as additional information is received. The County Administrator, along with the lead departments identified in Table I, is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the SSP Plan.

The annual review process provides an opportunity to update and refine the policies expressed in the SSP Plan and to monitor and evaluate the progress of the implementation strategies and programs incorporated therein. This process is the vehicle by which the county, private property owners, developers, community groups or individual citizens request changes to the goals and actions of the SSP Plan. The review and amendment process includes citizen participation, through community meetings to familiarize SSP residents with the amendment proposals and at formal public hearings before the Planning Commission and County Council.

General Plan Update: The SSP Plan reflects a ten-year planning period. This period allows for the systematic implementation of desired projects, land use patterns, and installation of required public improvements. To provide for flexibility and responsiveness to change, the Plan also should be comprehensively reviewed and revised, if appropriate, at four-year intervals. This periodic update enables the Plan always to maintain at least a 10-year time frame.

The update of the Plan is not synonymous with total revision. Once adopted, the Plan establishes a basic policy framework that must be followed over time. The purpose of

reviewing the Plan at intervals is to allow it to adjust to changing conditions, the availability of more recent planning data, and shifts in community values. When revisions to the Plan are proposed, SSP residents and property owners should be invited to participate in the formulation of the changes.

Implementation Actions

I: Identify Grants: Federal and State grants-in-aid are available to assist with land use planning facility improvements and other services and improvements. Coordinating grant proposals with the directives of the Plan is a positive step toward accomplishing the goals of the Plan. Most grants require matching funds by the receiving municipality. The County's contribution may be met by in-kind contributions from various departments and also through departmental budgets. Additional sources for funding are:

- (A) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): The Community Development Block Grant Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban development and provides assistance for programs and projects directly aimed at the type of projects identified in the SSP Plan. The Community Development Block Grant funding is allocated on an annual basis and can be used for a variety of projects contemplated in The SSP Plan.
- (B) Beaufort County Transportation Committee (C Funds.): This funding source is generated from gasoline sales tax funds appropriated to the county from the state and administered by the Beaufort County Transportation Committee. Permitted projects includes road paving, sidewalks, curb improvements, walking paths, bus shelters and road signage. Projects other than road paving projects require a "special project application" which are accepted every three years.
- (C) The Beaufort County Tree Fund: There are funds generated from projects where the Development Review Team determined that the required replacement of trees was not feasible or not desirable, such reductions are subject to a general forestation fee. The funds collected through this forestation fee may be used by the County to plant trees and other landscaping in highway medians and along roads, and to provide general landscaping such as those identified in the SSP Plan.
- (D) The Rural & Critical Land Preservation Board: This advisory board was established to protect rural and critical lands through the Purchase of Development Rights, voluntary programs and other mechanisms. The Board is mandated to establish criteria and a ranking system to rank land parcels, that are approved by County Council. Beaufort County currently levies and designates 2 mills in ad valorem taxes in order to acquire land for conservation, farmland protection, and open space preservation.

II. Prioritize Projects and Add to CIP: Table I summarizes the implementation actions recommended in The SSP Plan. In addition, the

projects are prioritized, a responsible department is assigned, and the timing for implementation of the specific action is noted.

- III. Schedule Implementation:** The implementation of the SSP Plan will be monitored. Some items are expected to be completed quickly. For others, especially those items that need additional funding, it may be harder to schedule a firm completion date. Nevertheless, the status of every item proposed in the Plan will be tracked. A check date, if not a completion date, will be set for each item. This tracking chart will be updated regularly, as more information becomes available and as the status of each project changes. An update report is scheduled for the Fall of 2001 to summarize the overall implementation status of the recommendations of the SSP Plan.
- IV. Commitment and Support:** Thus, while the SSP Plan provides the framework for community development, the everyday action of the County shapes the community. The manner in which the Plan is implemented is the real test of the County's commitment to the goals, objectives, and policies.

By adopting the Plan, the County Council will demonstrate the County's commitment to the implementation of the Plan. However, every action item listed in this Plan will require separate and specific implementation. Adoption of the Plan does not begin the implementation of any item. The implementation will require specific actions by the SSP community, the County and other agencies. The Plan will be supported and implemented by:

- **County Boards, Commissions, and Staff:** The numerous boards and commissions of the County will look to The SSP Plan when they need guidance about the neighborhood. The Planning Commission will already know if a proposed zoning change in the SSP CP area is appropriate and supported by the residents and businesses of the community. Additionally, County staff will use the Plan as a guidance document for review of projects and programs.
- **County Department Budgets:** Each year every County department puts together a budget that states the department's priorities for the coming year. By bringing the strengths and desires of the community to the attention of County departments, the SSP Plan will help them prioritize those projects that help safeguard the community's assets while addressing its needs. Allocating dollars to certain programs and activities inevitably results in setting policy priorities that are critical to the implementation of the SSP Plan. The budget instructions to department heads shall require that proposed expenditures include reference to items in the Plan that will be implemented with the funds.
- **Capital Improvement Projects:** There are many projects in the communities that require major capital expenditure. In these instances, the guidance provided by the Plan will be critical to

guarantee the project will proceed in a fashion that keeps in mind the overall long term interests of the community.

- Other Agencies and Organizations: Other agencies and organizations outside County government will play an essential role in the implementation of the Plan. As these agencies look for public input, the SSP Plan will be available as a clearly articulated vision of the direction the community desires to go.
- Community Monitoring of Implementation: The Community Planning Process has established a healthy dialogue among local residents concerning the future of the community. A number of citizens have thus far been involved in planning discussions. SSP has always been characterized by active citizen involvement, and this should continue to be standard policy. The planning process will affect everyone in the community, and everyone should contribute to planning decisions. The SSP Plan Implementation Tracking Chart (Appendix A, included in the back packet) provides a way to easily check the status of the implementation of the Plan. For each action proposed in the plan, the chart lists the contact, the estimated cost, the current status and comments. This chart will be updated by the SSPCP group as the status of the projects change and as new information is available.

Conclusion

The SSP planning process has been an extensive collaborative two-year project, that has created a substantial body of work. The process was conducted in conjunction with Beaufort County's Community Preservation Planning Program and was directed by the SSP Community Preservation Committee with assistance from County staff and a professional design consultant team. Public outreach was extensive and many community issues and ideas were identified. The Plan was created to address these issues and provide a five to seven-year framework for action.

The purpose of planning is implementation. The SSP Plan identifies the overall development needs in SSP, the tasks involved in addressing them, the various parties who should perform these tasks, and the level of participation sought from these parties. The SSP community group should continue to advocate for themselves, their community, and the Plan. The ultimate success of the SSP Plan will be determined, in large part by the collective efforts of this group, along with Beaufort County Council, the County Administrator, the Planning Division, and concerned citizens in general.