



Town of Knightdale, NC

OLD TOWN KNIGHTDALE PLAN

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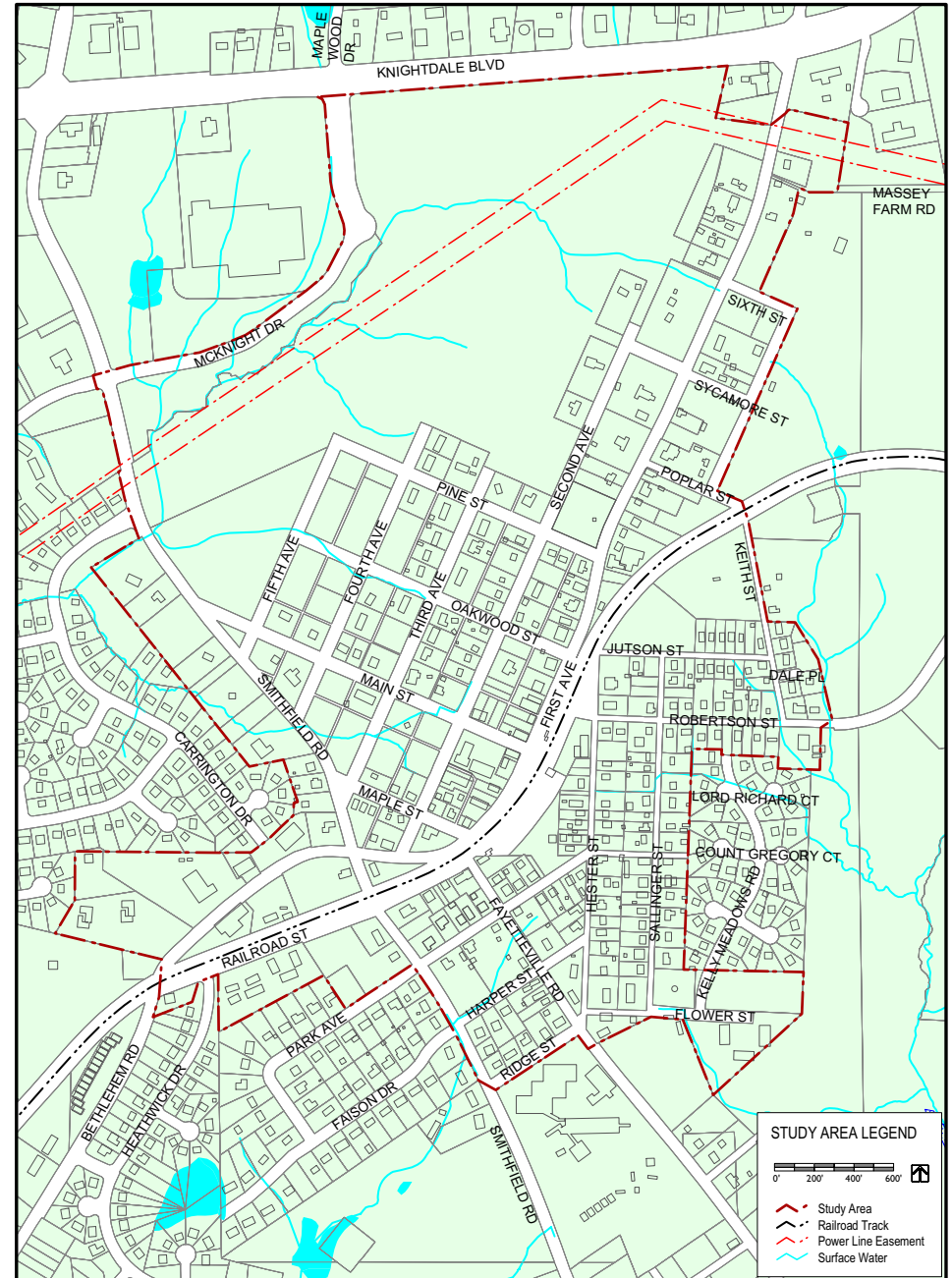
PROJECT BACKGROUND: OBJECTIVES AND SETTING

This small area plan is the third step in a public planning process begun in 2001 with the initial meetings for the 2027 Comprehensive Plan adopted in July 2003. The second step of the process was recently completed with the adoption of a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) in November 2005. Each step has attempted to help the Town determine its future path for developing a unique identity within the capital region. The “Old Town” area is the historic heart of Knightdale and provides an opportunity to develop that sense of identity despite a sweeping downtown fire in the 1940s that destroyed much of the town’s architectural heritage.

An interest by some developers in building small-scale infill housing prompted the Town Council to issue a moratorium on development in the Old Town area until a small area plan, along with any revisions to the UDO, could be drawn up.

The project area covers over 300 acres, includes over 300 tax parcels, and is wholly contained within the Town Center Design District as identified in the 2027 Comprehensive Plan. The recent UDO zoned one-third of the area as a Town Center zoning district, while the remainder was mostly allotted to Residential Mixed-Use zoning and Neighborhood Mixed-Use zoning. A few commercial and residential structures still exist from the Town’s founding days around 1927 (16% of today’s structures), along with the original platted grid street network, part of which has never been opened. The remaining building inventory consists of 45% built between 1940 and 1959, and the final 39% constructed since 1960. Much of it is in a rural pattern of ribbon pavement and swale drainage.

The boundaries of the study area are shown on the accompanying map. Properties adjacent to the study area are also considered in this plan.



PROJECT BACKGROUND: PROCESS

Project Methodology

The approach used to prepare the Old Town Knightdale Small Area Plan is a four-step process in which each step is logically sequenced to build upon the previous step. Each step includes opportunities for public input and is comprised of the following primary tasks:

Task 1: Background Work

Task 2: Charrette and Concept Plan

Task 3: Preparation of Old Town Plan

Task 4: Old Town Plan Presentations and Revisions

Public Process

The Plan is based upon public input that was garnered through meetings and web-based access at each step of the planning process:

- Background trip stakeholder meetings
- Public Kick-off meeting discussion
- Charrette workshop participants plan development and review
- Concept Plan public presentation and discussion
- Concept Plan web availability and comment process
- Draft Plan public presentation and discussion
- Draft Plan web availability and comment process



Opportunities

- Value of small-town character
- Revitalization of the depot district
- Regional transportation access
- Possibilities for use of vacant land

Challenges

- Compatibility of infill development
- Variety & quality of commercial development
- Public safety & property maintenance
- Accessibility for pedestrians

More detail on the input that formed the basis for this plan is found in the “Summary of Public Input” in the Appendix.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: OVERVIEW

Entering Knightdale from the southwest on Railroad Street, one passes through a semi-rural landscape of older houses, then enters a unique setting in fast-growing Wake County. Here is a small-town core that has been bypassed, both literally and figuratively, by highways and most new development.



Old Town Knightdale is at a balancing point today, in a number of ways. Though few historic structures remain, the fingerprint persists of the historic street layout and vintage town pattern. Though facing new challenges, it is a pleasantly old-fashioned place. It is largely overlooked by the outside world, yet many have discovered – or have always known – its quiet charm.



EXISTING CONDITIONS: LAND USE



Knightdale Baptist Church



Hair salon



Single-family residences



Duplex



Single-family residence



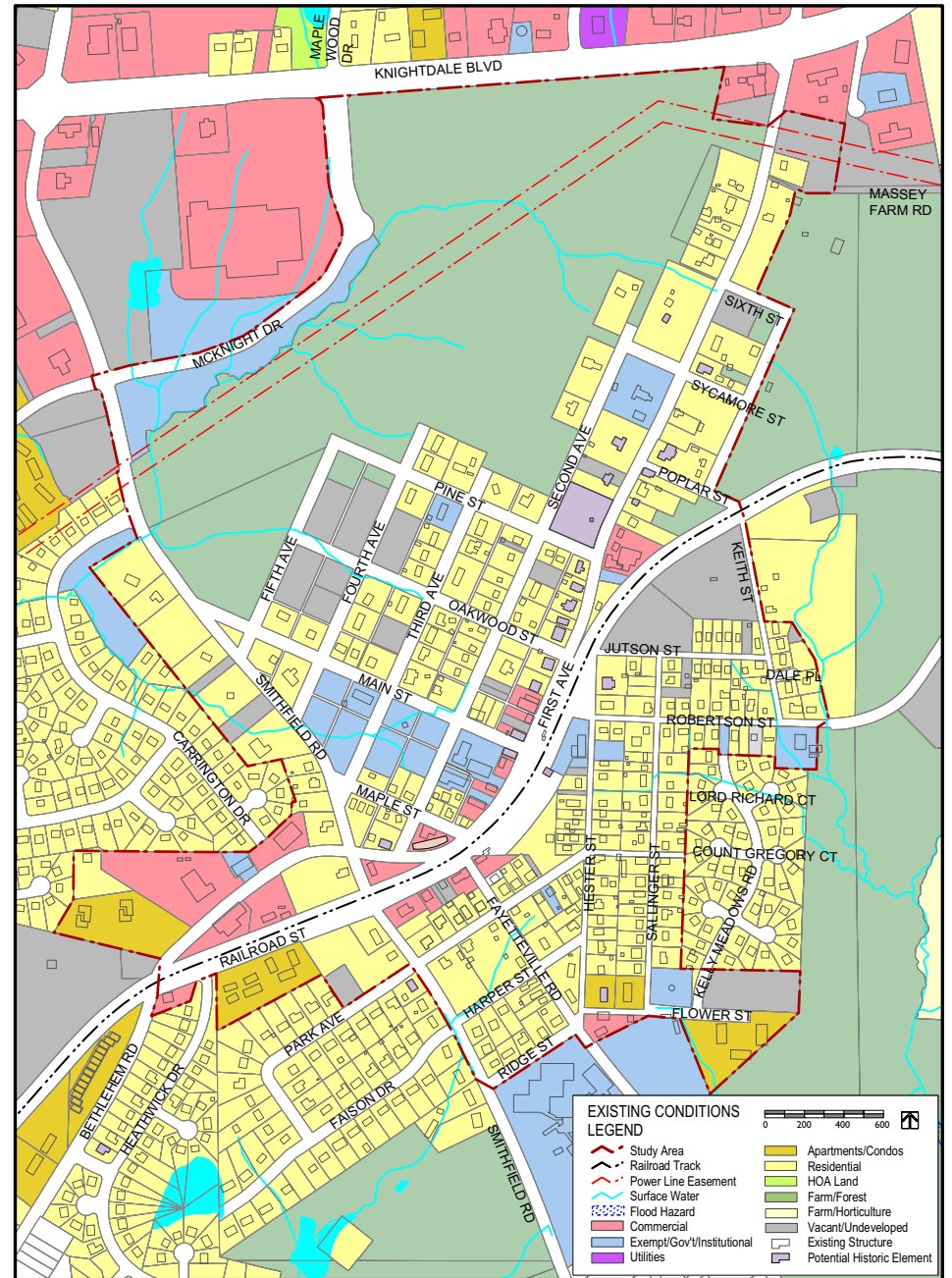
Single-family residence



Multi-family residences



Single-family residence



EXISTING CONDITIONS: LAND USE



Harper Park playground



Commercial buildings



*Vacant land abutting
Knightdale Blvd*



Chamber of Commerce



Commercial buildings



Eastern Wake VFD

EXISTING CONDITIONS: COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Old Town Knightdale is a classic example of a small town landscape in eastern North Carolina. Small blocks form a highly connected grid of streets. Building scale is fairly small, with residences mostly of modest to moderate size, and commercial buildings one or two stories tall. The grandest structures are churches, along with three or four of the larger single-family houses.

Vegetation and green space also contribute to the small-town feel. Large shade trees are abundant, as are mature shrubs and small understory trees such as dogwoods and redbuds. Vegetated swales instead of curb-and-gutter predominate, and picket or wire fencing is common around residential yards. Although there is only one public park, there are large amounts of private

open space such as vegetable gardens, large yards, and cemeteries. Also, the railroad right-of-way provides additional green space where it passes through the center of town. This spot is well maintained and has mature trees and a lawn, appearing very much like a park if not actually functioning as such.



EXISTING CONDITIONS: COMMUNITY CHARACTER

A massive fire in 1940 destroyed most of the older buildings in the commercial core at the south end of First Avenue, and the remaining commercial buildings are largely plain masonry structures without much ornamentation. This area also lacks street trees, street furniture, and other elements of a lively streetscape. However, the general scale of development is pleasing, as is the greenery across the street in the form of

grass and trees along the railroad right-of-way. The local Garden Club has attempted to brighten up this area and create a small landmark, Blue Star Memorial Highway, by installing US and NC State flags on poles, plantings and benches.

Also important to the character of Old Town Knightdale are the two narrow collector streets, First Avenue and Smithfield Road.

Along these roads, mature shade trees and lush vegetation, in combination with narrow pavement width and lack of curbing, give them a rural feel that is no longer common in Wake County towns and cities.

The sense of place in Knightdale is in fact unique, and some residents described this setting as a “hidden gem.”



EXISTING CONDITIONS: COMMUNITY CHARACTER



Houses on First Avenue are characteristic of the semi-rural setting of a railroad village, with picket fences, large lots, multiple outbuildings, and mature shade trees.



Fourth Avenue, an unpaved road, leads south to Main Street, which despite its name is a small, tree-lined road where the primary uses are small dwellings, a church and a park.



An okra patch at the northern end of First Avenue evokes a rural feel. The pie plates were hung to keep deer away.



Pine Street stubs into the undeveloped tract to the north.



The Norfolk & Southern Railroad right-of-way is a defining feature of Old Town.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: CHALLENGES

Like any community, Old Town Knightdale has its share of challenges. Some of these issues include property maintenance, rental housing, infill development, and some constraints on reinvestment in commercial and residential areas.

Although most properties in Old Town Knightdale – including houses of modest size – are well maintained, on some sites there are problems with upkeep and appearance. Rental properties are seen as a destabilizing influence in some cases, because the personal investment of an owner-occupant is not present. This can be a more significant problem where there are higher concentrations of rental property. Owners begin to feel that their property value may be at risk, which in turn can lead to more turnover and additional rentals.

Infill development is a sensitive issue in Old Town Knightdale. Recent changes to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) enabled small houses to be placed on narrow lots. Compared to the existing development pattern in residential areas, the newer houses so developed are felt by residents to be out of context, in terms of front and side yard setbacks, house size, and lot size or width.



Concerns about how infill development fits into existing neighborhoods resulted in the undertaking of this plan.

Moreover, many Old Town residents are disturbed that infill houses in some cases are purpose-built as rental properties. Residents have said they would rather see that their new neighbors have a personal investment (through ownership) in the attributes of existing neighborhoods, such as friendliness, peace and quiet, safety from traffic and crime, and stable property values.

Constraints on reinvestment represent another set of challenges for Old Town. The small commercial district is partly prevented from attaining critical mass because the existing building stock is limited



in size, the land across the street is mostly occupied by the railroad right-of-way, and opportunities for expansion of the district on nearby lands are not clear. There are also some procedural or regulatory hurdles to reinvestment, discussed further within the Market Conditions report.

For residential property owners, factors affecting the decision to reinvest are regulatory (discussed more under Public Policy Context), or related to perceived market conditions (such as the presence of rental housing or other factors affecting property values).

EXISTING CONDITIONS: NATURAL FEATURES & HISTORIC RESOURCES



The Teacherage



Residence



Depot Master's house



Residence



Geology and Soils

Soils in the Knightdale area are formed by weathering of the underlying bedrock, the Rolesville Granite. In some places where the soil is thin, outcrops of this bedrock appear at the surface (photo above). Currently this granite is quarried for use primarily as aggregate (crushed stone), but historically it has been used as building material. Blocks of the stone, which have a characteristic rectangular shape, can often be seen in old chimneys and foundations in eastern Wake County.

Historic Resources

Within this project study area there are approximately two dozen structures and one cemetery that were preliminarily evaluated in 1991 and placed on a National Register Historic District (NRHD) Study List. To date, a full NRHD nomination has not been prepared, but citizens have recently formed the Knightdale Historical Society, Inc. to document the town's history and promote the designation and preservation of the town's historic resources.



EXISTING CONDITIONS: NATURAL FEATURES & HISTORIC RESOURCES

Streams

Like many old roads, First Avenue marks a natural ridgeline, which means that streams that originate in Old Town flow either west via Mingo Creek to the Neuse River (joining it near Anderson Point), or east and then south via Poplar Creek, which also flows to the Neuse. Both are waterways of regional significance, with unspoiled natural areas that are important habitat for many species.

These two stream corridors present an opportunity for greenway trails that connect Old Town Knightdale to parks and recreational areas in and around the Town as part of a regional trail network. The Town's Comprehensive Plan proposes a greenway network with paths along both streams, creating recreational opportunities while also protecting natural areas.



EXISTING CONDITIONS: TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

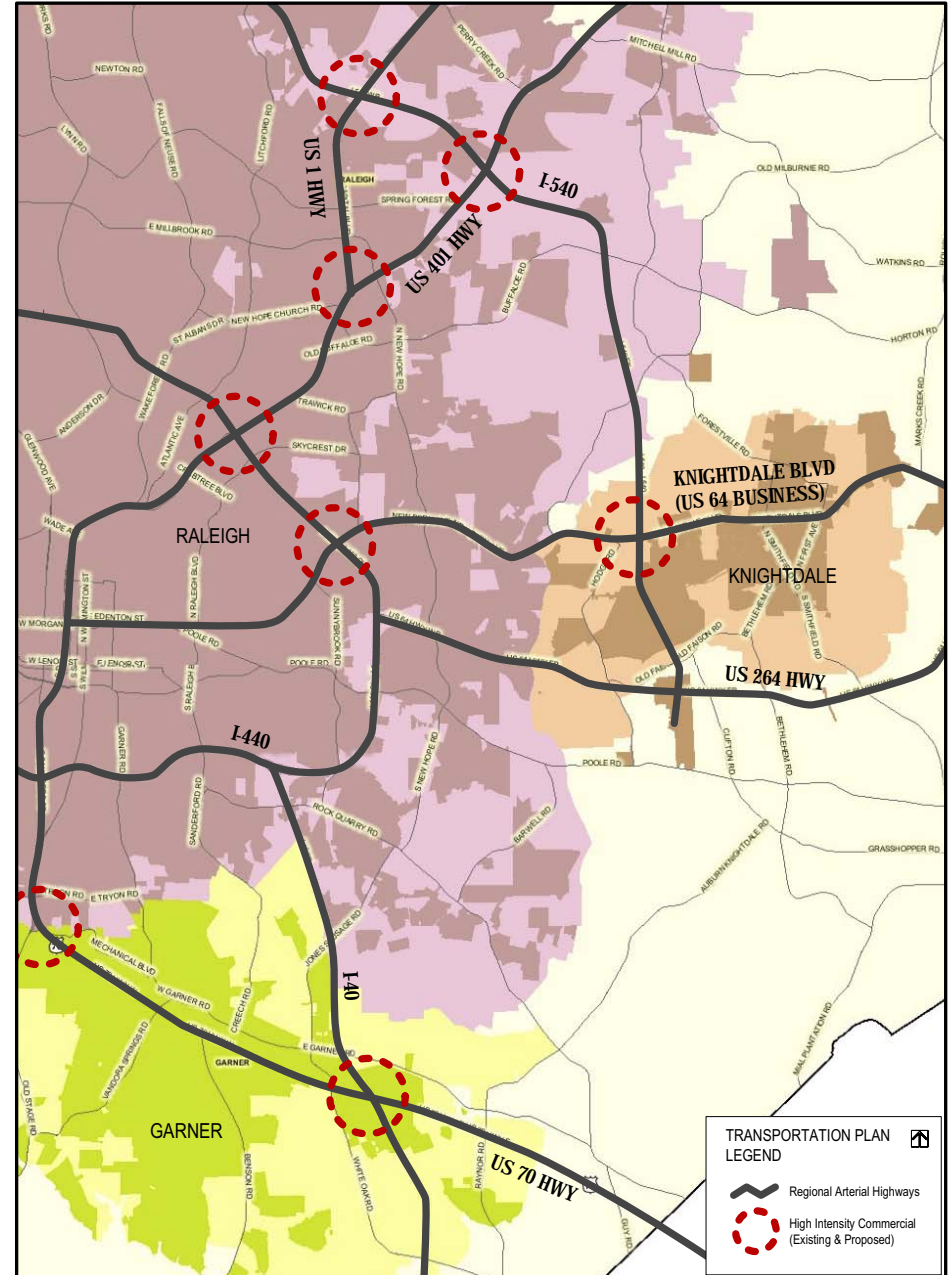
Regional Transportation Findings and Projections

Knightdale's town core is approximately 10 miles east of the State Capitol building in Raleigh. During weekday commuting periods under 2006 traffic conditions, this trip would take about 30 minutes via US 64 Business (New Bern Avenue/Knightdale Boulevard).

The metropolitan area is served by a series of radial highways connecting employment and government centers in urban Raleigh with smaller cities and towns throughout Wake and adjacent counties. Knightdale Boulevard (US 64 Business) and US 64/264 provide direct access from Knightdale to Raleigh. These highways also provide regional mobility to Wendell, Zebulon, and portions of Franklin, Nash and Wilson Counties. The recently completed US 64/264 Knightdale bypass has added considerable new capacity and mobility to the travel-shed.

Other regional radials serving the eastern half of the metropolitan area are US 1/401 north, serving north Raleigh, Wake Forest, Rolesville and Franklin County, and US 70/I-40 east, serving Garner and much of Johnston County.

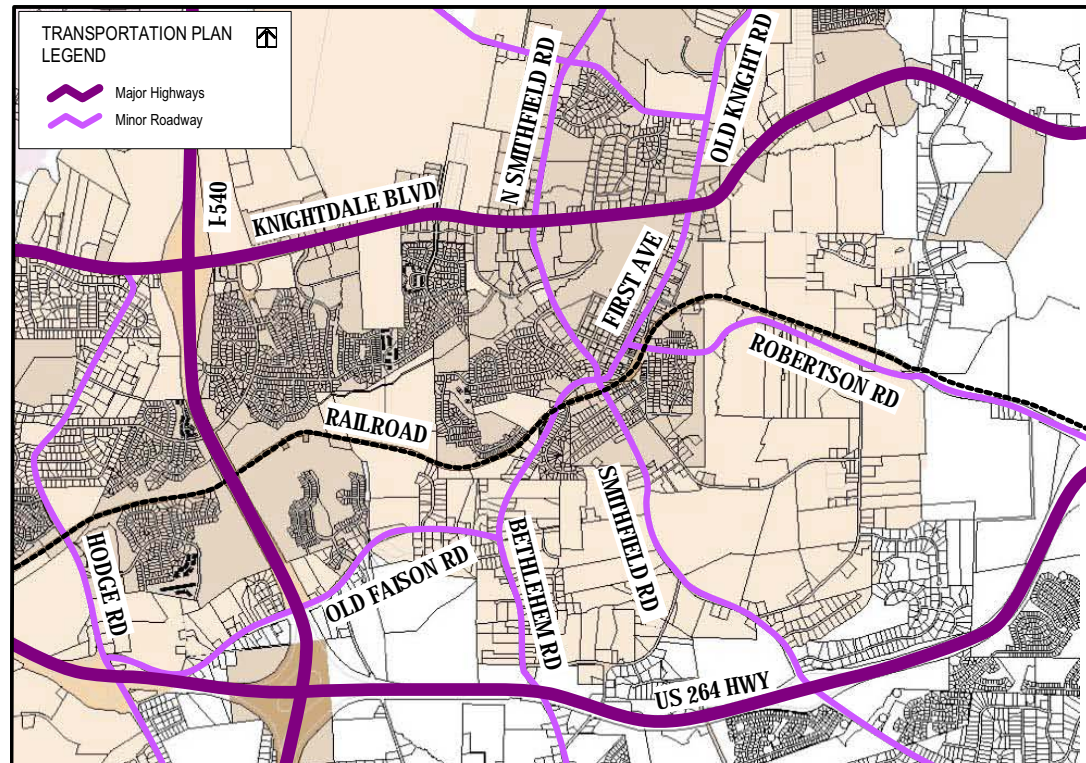
Regional arterials and highways in Knightdale vicinity



EXISTING CONDITIONS: TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

The in-progress I-540 outer loop highway will greatly increase regional accessibility and have far greater effects on Knightdale than did the I-440 beltline. The I-540 outer loop provides much more direct links between Knightdale and major suburban employment centers, including the US 1 corridor and Research Triangle Park, as well as RDU airport. By the time the most recent segment connecting US 1 with US 64/264 opened in January 2007, much of the land surrounding the Knightdale Boulevard interchange was being developed. The areas surrounding these intersections of regional radials with I-540 will experience dramatic increases in commercial development and job growth. A new regional mall, the Triangle Town Center, is now located near the I-540 interchange with US 1. Although with I-40 rather than I-540, White Oak Crossings is located at the intersection with US 70.

Increased regional accessibility cuts both ways – while it becomes possible to attract new customers from other areas, it is also possible for the local customer base to travel elsewhere to find unique goods and experiences. To date, most of the development proposed for Knightdale’s interchanges with I-540 can be found at



Town of Knightdale

virtually every other major intersection and suburban commercial strip in the eastern metropolitan area. Anyone desiring something unique or different in Knightdale will need to look somewhere other than the I-540 commercial area.

The conventional nature of big box and chain development associated with I-540 may not bring many outside shoppers to

the area, but it will support much of the demand for goods and services within the US 64-264 travel-shed. Many suburban shoppers want to live within 10 to 12 minutes of the shopping, dining and entertainment they use on a daily or weekly basis. This new concentration of shopping, services, restaurants and entertainment should greatly intensify demand for suburban residential development in areas within 5 to

EXISTING CONDITIONS: TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

15 minutes driving time. Areas with less than a 5 minute travel time may be suitable for less suburban developments, such as apartments or townhouses, but convenience is just one of many other factors involved here.

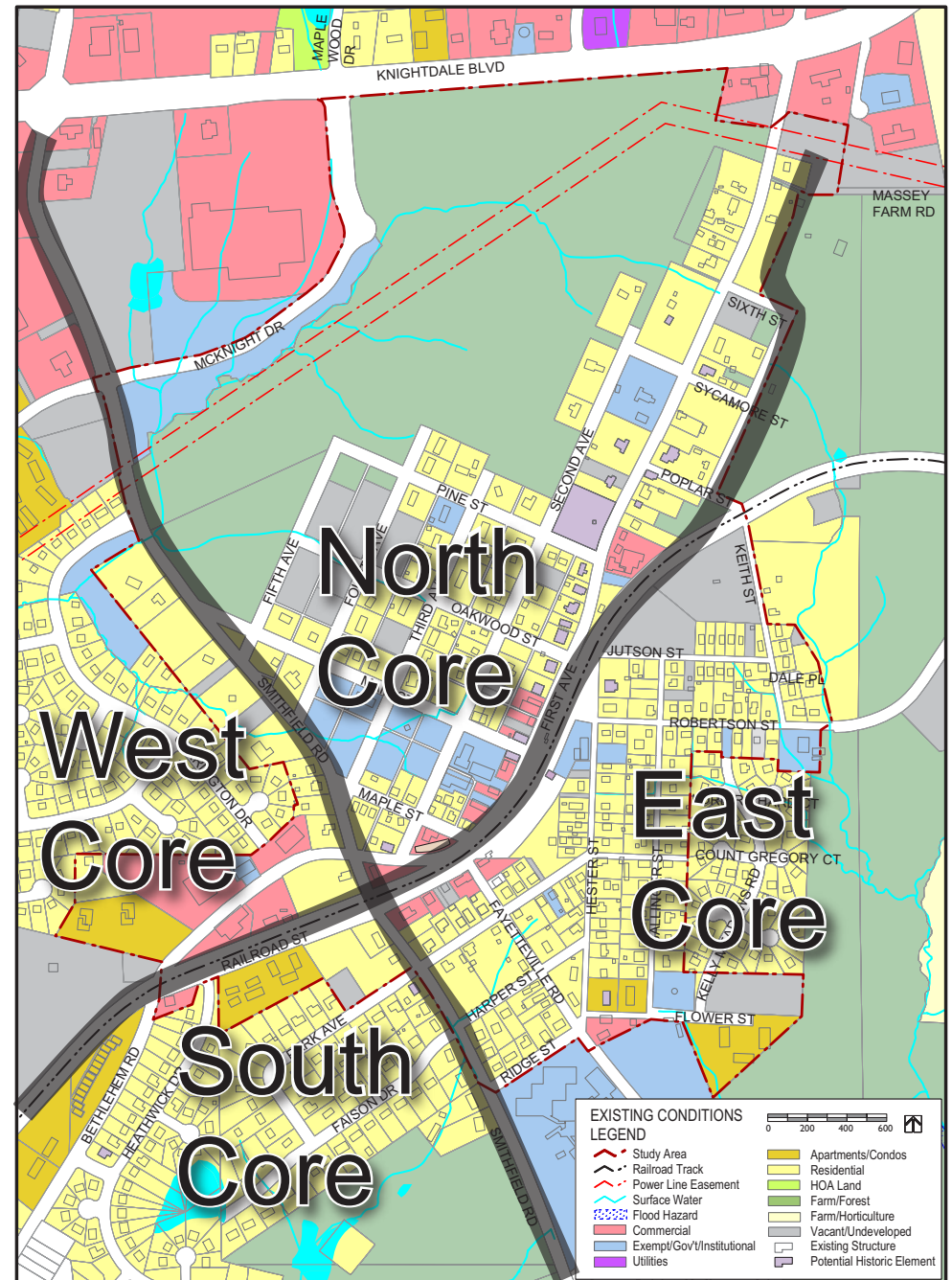
Existing residential development is predominantly oriented towards Knightdale Boulevard, as that is the original commuter route to downtown Raleigh. Much of the new development will be oriented towards roads that will provide access to US 64/264. The most desirable areas will be those with quick access to Knightdale Boulevard commercial development and to US 64/264 for commuting.

Core Area Findings and Projections

Old Town Knightdale to the east of Smithfield Road has a well connected street network. Connectivity across the Norfolk-Southern railroad tracks is limited to the at-grade crossings for Robertson Street, Fayetteville Street, and Smithfield Road, and the lightly traveled Keith Street at-grade crossing.

Old Town has few sidewalks. Most streets are shared, meaning that automobiles, bicycles and pedestrians all use the streets. Most sidewalks are in the commercial area along First Avenue or adjacent to Knightdale Elementary School. In the North Core, streets are generally wider with more open shoulders, while those in the east core tend to be more narrow with limited shoulders. On-street or on-shoulder parking is more common in the east core as well.

*Old Town Knightdale
study area*



EXISTING CONDITIONS: TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

The remainder of the core, to the west of Smithfield Road, has a disconnected street network. The West Core area has only a single way in or out, although it has fairly good internal connectivity. The South Core generally has two entry points per area but is poorly connected internally. There are no sidewalks within either core and all streets must be shared.

Smithfield Road and First Avenue are the major roadways connecting the core area with the rest of town. For core area residents the Knightdale Boulevard commercial areas as well as the US 64/264 commuter corridor are both convenient. However, for travelers along both highways the core area is completely hidden. It is quite possible for someone traveling along Smithfield Road from one highway to another not to realize the core area exists.

Historically, old Knightdale grew up around the train station, so the traditional center of town is the intersection of Main Street and First Avenue. After growing up around the railroad, the town's core has been bypassed twice – first by what is now Knightdale Boulevard to the north and much more recently by US 64/264 to the south. Interestingly, this dramatic

change in transportation patterns has not been matched by changes in development patterns. The traditional center of town at Main and First is now “off the beaten track,” while the most visible intersection of the entire core, Smithfield and First, is one of the least developed parts of the core. It is little wonder then that few people other than Old Town residents know that this area exists.

Transit Service Findings and Plans

Knightdale does not have its own transit or paratransit services. The Triangle Transit Authority (TTA) provides regional transit services, including ridesharing and bus transit. Currently no fixed-route transit, express transit or paratransit services are available through TTA, although ride matching and vanpool services are available. Raleigh's Capitol Area Transit (CAT) bus system does not extend to Knightdale. CAT's Trawick Connector Route bus stop at the New Hope Commons shopping center is the transit service coming closest to Knightdale. CAT's WakeMed fixed route service does not extend east of I-440. Wake Coordinated Transportation Service provides human services transportation six days per week and general public transportation five days per week via TRACS.

TTA's long-range plans include the potential for creating an express commuter bus route from Knightdale to downtown Raleigh along Knightdale Boulevard and New Bern Avenue/Edenton Street. TTA already operates several such routes in conjunction with park-and-ride facilities. Park-and-ride express commuter services are created in an effort to remove automobiles from highways during periods of peak congestion and to offer commuters a less stressful commute while potentially reducing their commuting and parking costs.

Park-and-ride facilities need to be convenient and accessible from the main commuting route. TTA generally uses existing commercial parking areas, such as on the outskirts of shopping centers, so the most likely location for any future express transit service will be along Knightdale Boulevard.

Express commuter services and park-and-ride facilities have virtually no effect on adjacent land uses or development patterns. Service is limited to peak commuting periods and provides an alternative to a car-based commute trip. However, it does not reduce the need for car ownership for all other types of trips, which make up the

EXISTING CONDITIONS: TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

great majority of daily household trips. Nonetheless, a major reason shopping centers offer their parking lots for park-and-ride use is that the mode shift between bus and car encourages commuters to “trip chain”, or link together several destinations. So, while park-and-ride facilities may not change development patterns, these can boost existing businesses while also accommodating commuters’ need to run errands on the way to and from work.

Eastrans is a feasibility study of the potential to create commuter rail service along the existing Norfolk Southern rail line from the City of Wilson into downtown Raleigh. The final report can be found online at http://www.ci.knightdale.nc.us/government/documents/other/eastrans_final_report.pdf. Easttrans was initially conceived as an extension of the proposed TTA commuter rail system, and later as a complementary system that could connect with TTA’s system. As of the time of this planning process, TTA has withdrawn its application for federal “New Start” rail monies and the existing rail system plan is on hold. Indications are that TTA will develop a new regional vision plan that may include rail, bus rapid transit, conventional bus transit, and ridesharing.

The Easttrans study proposes one station location in or near Knightdale’s core area, while noting that Knightdale’s Comprehensive Plan proposes three station locations within the municipal limits. The study also projects that approximately 80% of potential rail transit use will be via park-and-ride facilities, with at least some of the remaining 20% potentially being “kiss-and-ride” users who are driven to the station and then dropped off. Initial service is proposed to be two in-bound trips during the morning commute period and two out-bound during the afternoon period. No reverse commutes are feasible during the low-cost initial phase, nor would non-commute period trips be available. Once the system is established, the study indicates that reverse commutes may become possible and that a mid-day train or bus trip may be offered. Weekend service does not appear to be proposed during either the initial or later phases.

At the same time, the study indicates that a major goal of this rail system is encouraging TODs, or Transit Oriented Development. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that commuter rail services and park-and-ride stations (as opposed to more comprehensive transit systems) have much,

if any, effect on adjacent land uses and development patterns. As with express bus transit, service is limited to peak commuting periods and provides an alternative only to a car-based commute trip, but not to the need for car ownership for all other types of trips. Regardless, designing a pedestrian-friendly, “park once” mixed-use area around a park-and-ride rail station can enhance development opportunities for appropriate businesses and services around the station area.

Utilities

The study area is served by water and sewer provided by the City of Raleigh under contract with the Town. Existing sewer service is provided to the south side of Old Town (over a ridge line that roughly follows the rail right-of-way) via a network of pumping stations. It is anticipated that the development of residential subdivisions to the south and east of Old Town will provide the opportunity to connect the south side of Old Town into the facilities serving the Poplar Creek sub-basin.

MARKET REPORT SUMMARY

This section summarizes the market report located in the Appendix. The market report is an assessment of existing market conditions and overall marketability of the Old Town Knightdale study area. This information is based on reconnaissance but does not represent a market analysis or forecast of land use demand within the area. Rather, the focus of this research is on overall existing market context for the purposes of strengthening the market “identity” for the Old Town core area.

Distinct Business Zones

The Study Area’s business base is characterized by two distinct commercial areas, the Knightdale Boulevard Corridor and Old Town center. These two areas are connected by Smithfield Road and First Avenue, but otherwise have very little in common in terms of identity or business mix.

Knightdale Boulevard is a typical highway commercial strip anchored by several community shopping centers and “big box” retail stores, along with fast food chains and some modest office, service, and industrial use. Commercial uses are clustered along the corridor.

The older commercial center of Knightdale is concentrated on several small streets surrounded by residential uses. Overall, the hub has a basic identity as the service and civic center of a small southern community that retains some physical links to its railroad history.

Commercial uses along Knightdale Boulevard have excellent access to commuter traffic from Knightdale, Wendell, and points further east. However, the core area of Knightdale is not visible from this major regional commuter route, nor from US 64/264 or from any other major regional roads. Therefore, the Old Town center’s lack of visibility is a serious constraint.

In general, the study area is characterized by a typical strip commercial mix of chain retail “big box” stores and nominal office uses that primarily serve the local market and commuters along the Knightdale Boulevard corridor. The mix is weighted towards shopper and convenience goods chain stores, but also includes a number of franchised fast-food restaurants. There are few “sit-down” restaurants in the area and very little entertainment. In contrast, the Old Town core is heavily oriented to personal and auto service establishments,

and is lacking in shopper goods and convenience retail categories. There is no dining or entertainment within the Old Knightdale core.

Market Opportunities

While a market analysis was not completed to quantify the existing and future demand for land uses within the study area, several observations are offered below based on reconnaissance of the existing market.

Housing

Housing demand is increasing throughout the Triangle, and the Knightdale area is clearly capturing a share of this growth. Knightdale has traditionally attracted blue- and pink-collar workers and move-ups from within the Raleigh area. Many of these residents have moved to Knightdale in search of larger lots and more affordable housing. However, the last few years have seen the area capture an increasing share of white-collar professionals and others relocating into the Triangle from other regions.

The Study Area offers an opportunity for those in the market who prefer an older home or a more pastoral rural (rather than

MARKET REPORT SUMMARY

suburban) community setting. Existing housing stock within the study area varies in type and condition. Some existing units, while situated on large lots, are relatively small and have not been updated to meet the demand at the heart of the market for older homes. There are significant opportunities to build on the restoration and upgrading of existing housing, and to develop new housing in the greenfield portion of the study area that is consistent with the character of the vintage stock.

Office

Much of the growth in office demand in the study area will be driven initially by expansion in the household base. That growth will respond to increasing need for finance, insurance, real estate, medical, and professional services to serve the people living in the surrounding area. The aging of the population, and the concentration of retirement populations in Knightdale, will help further increase demand for medical and personal services, which could locate in office space along Knightdale Boulevard. However, there are also opportunities for the town center to capture demand among the small companies and individuals who seek a “main street” location in a converted

house or small office building. If retirement or 55+ housing becomes part of the mix in the Old Town area, then opportunities will increase for professional service offices nearby.

Retail

There is significant competition from the increasing inventory of retail shopping centers being developed along the US 64 Corridor. Opportunities within the Old Town center will increasingly rely on marketing to a specialty/destination niche. Businesses representative of this niche might include craft-oriented producers & retailers such as antique stores, spas/personal service establishments, restaurants, professional services, neighborhood convenience, and gift shops.

Identity Marketing Opportunities

Old Town retains some of its architectural heritage as a rail town, but is also isolated from major market access. As a result, marketing strategies would logically relate to creating destination opportunities at small scale, to attract day-trippers and regional visitors for a small town experience and to build on the growing nearby residential market.

There is a need to build synergies between uses in the core area, such as between the older residential neighborhoods, new residential development, retirement housing, and the First Avenue business district. It is the overall “package” that can help promote improvement in the existing housing conditions, encourage developer interest in new housing, and revive the nascent downtown. An effort to improve the business district will help strengthen the overall identity of the area, encourage reinvestment in the older housing, and promote homeownership in existing homes.

Implementation

Implementation recommendations include strategies specific to business development in the Old Town center and to reinvestment in older housing. The strategies are detailed in the Market Report in the Appendix and listed in the Implementation Section.

PUBLIC POLICY CONTEXT SUMMARY

The Comprehensive Plan and Unified Development Ordinance were reviewed to assess their effect on the development of the study area and to determine areas where policy changes or revisions might be necessary to achieve plan goals. The full public policy review is included in the Appendix, with key points summarized below.

Comprehensive Plan

- A central feature of the Comp Plan is its emphasis on community form and development typology. A Design District Master Plan applies a system in which the use of land is determined by the zoning map, while the design and layout of those uses are determined by the Design District Map and Design Guidelines.
- Similar to the New Urbanist “transect,” a Design Matrix illustrates the spectrum of development conditions from rural to urban. Within the Design Matrix, a “Town Center” designation applies to most of the study area. The intensity of this designation may not be supported by current market demand, consumer preferences, availability of transit in the near term, and type of transit system.

- The Design District Matrix, a tool for guiding the form and character of new development in the Town, reflects the best current thinking in the planning field. However, the village setting of Old Town may never have been calibrated along the spectrum of development types in the matrix, leading to a mismatch between what stakeholders would like to see and what development regulations allow.

- ◇ A modified “Neighborhood” design district, with a “Neighborhood Village” designation focusing on the depot district, should be considered in lieu of the current “Town Center” designation.

- ◇ The Highway design district provides quality standards for development along major roads, including architectural quality and building character, landscaping, parking, and service areas. It could be modified to form a “Boulevard Commercial” designation appropriate for use on the greenfield tract at the north end of the study area.

- The Comp Plan’s emphasis on interconnected street networks and its classification of streets according to typology reflect the best current thinking for creating livable communities that permit convenient transportation alternatives.

- The implementation matrix is somewhat lacking in management and programming / budgeting strategies for achieving plan goals, although these may have been developed internally by Town departments. The Town may find it desirable to provide more structure for this part of implementation by adding management and programming components to the implementation matrix.

Unified Development Ordinance

- The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), which was recently developed as part of Comp Plan implementation, is a quality document which will generally help the Town accomplish its planning and development goals.
- The form and uses allowed by zoning in Old Town are quite different from the built pattern and existing uses. For example, the TC zoning allows much more intense development and a wide range of commercial uses in areas that are currently residential, and applies dimensional standards very different from the existing pattern.
- A pair of new zoning districts are recommended for the residential areas and Depot District of Old Town Knightdale. They should carry out the principles of the Neighborhood

PUBLIC POLICY CONTEXT SUMMARY

design district described in the Comp Plan. The zoning district for the depot district and its expansion area should reflect the principles of a somewhat modified Neighborhood Village focus area as described in the Comp Plan.

- Form and design principles based on those set forth in the “Architectural and Urban Design Principles” section should be applied as part of the zoning districts tailored for Old Town.
- A modified Highway Business district is recommended for the “boulevard office-commercial” area indicated along Knightdale Boulevard. It should apply the good design principles of the HB district, plus additional standards to ensure good layout of buildings, walkways, and vehicular use areas. The allowable uses should be mainly limited to office and professional uses, with a limited amount and range of other commercial uses sufficient to support the office-professional space.
- It is recommended that each of the uses allowed in the zoning that applies to Old Town Knightdale be reviewed to determine which have potential impacts that warrant public hearing review, or have generated citizen complaints. Those uses should be considered for elimination or, at a minimum, should be allowed only through a public hearing review via a Special Use Permit.

Application of additional performance standards might also be warranted, depending on the type of use.

- Section 4.3, Lot and Yard Requirements, requires consistent setbacks for new development within 300 feet or one block of existing development, and should be clarified to apply to residential areas of Old Town, if it does not already.
- Chapter 5 forms a good starting place for architectural standards applicable to existing Old Town lots either as part of a new zoning district for the residential areas, or as part of an NCOD (neighborhood conservation overlay district).
- For infill development and upgrades in the depot district, mixed-use building type standards in Chapter 5 could be modified and tailored according to the Architectural and Urban Design Principles section of this plan.
- For the boulevard office-commercial area at the north edge of Old Town, the commercial building type standards could be modified and tailored according to the guidance in the Architectural and Urban Design Principles section.
- Tree and vegetation preservation standards should be extended to apply to new lots smaller than 2 acres and to

new development on existing lots, if tree protection is to be effective in Old Town (which mostly has existing lots smaller than 2 acres).

- The maximum block length for new streets is somewhat long (660 to 1000 feet, in currently applicable Old Town zoning districts) for the existing urban pattern, which has blocks of only about 300 by 400 feet. These maximums should be shortened to ensure that new street extensions are compatible with existing streets. An indirect routing requirement for new streets in Old Town should also be applied to avoid cut-through and high-speed traffic on new street connections.
- The maximum height for street lights and lights for parking areas (27 feet) should be 16 to 20 feet in Old Town to reflect the smaller scale of buildings and the character of the area. Special upgraded light poles should be required for the commercial area, and the Town’s full cutoff (anti-glare) requirement extended to all new lighting.
- A local street cross-section for a “shared street” type should be added to the infrastructure standards to allow ribbon pavement and swale in areas designated for a shared-street approach in Old Town.

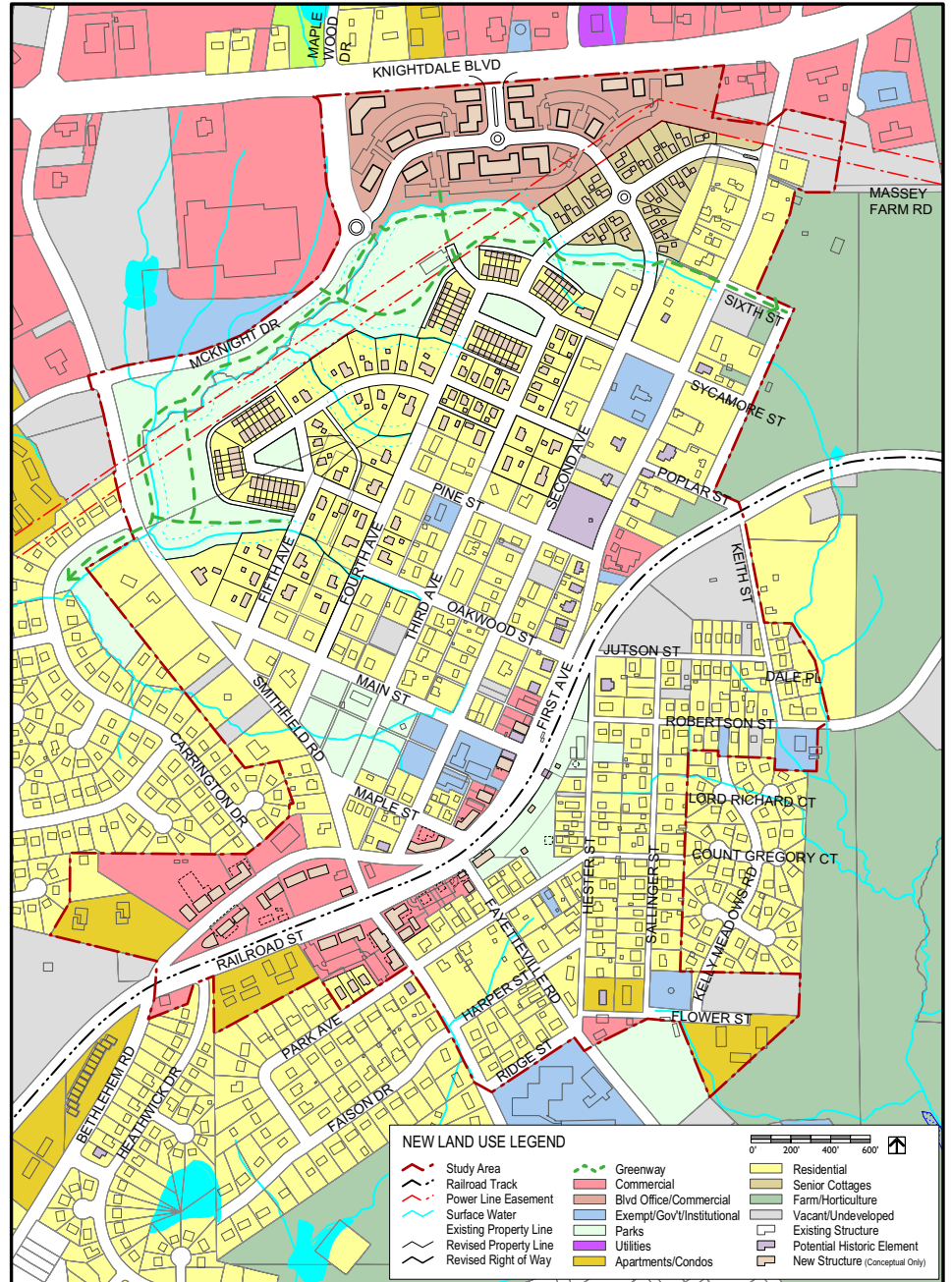
LAND USE

The land use diagram for Old Town Knightdale envisions vibrant neighborhoods, successful commercial districts, and recreational and community/institutional uses, both existing and new. These uses of land are arranged in a physical pattern that enhances community character and allows multiple transportation options, including car travel, walking, and bicycling, as well as potential public transit service.

The text below and on the pages that follow describes the various land uses and areas on the diagram: residential neighborhoods, the historic depot district, greenfield (new) development, and parks and public facilities.

Residential areas focus primarily on single-family detached houses. New single-family houses are developed adjacent to existing ones at a similar building scale and lot size. The new houses act as a harmonious transition to small pockets of townhouses and senior housing, which occur in limited amounts and locations consistent with neighborhood stability in the north and west areas of the study area.

Proposed Land Use



RESIDENTIAL USES

The residential areas will enjoy advantages that few neighborhoods in the region can claim: narrow roads shaded by mature hardwood trees, an authentic historical street layout, nearby parks, and a small nearby commercial area.

This small-town setting confers a market premium on existing homes in Old Town, and helps create a strong market for new single-family houses. Zoning rules ensure that infill residential development is compatible with the community's existing built pattern, particularly in terms of lot dimensions, house size, and setbacks.

Townhouses that face onto a common green are integrated into the neighborhood without fundamentally altering its character.

Another development option for single-family houses applies conservation lots that reserve significant natural areas in common ownership. The western side of the study area is a likely location for a conservation development, because multiple streams flowing through the site limit where streets and lot lines can go.



View looking north along Third Ave toward new single family detached homes



Examples of possible townhouses



STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS

Old Town stakeholders strongly support protecting and enhancing existing neighborhoods. To that end, a variety of tools for neighborhood revitalization are recommended. These include zoning tools, rental licensing, code enforcement, low-interest rehab loans, homeownership incentives, and regulatory reform to encourage reinvestment in existing housing stock; more details about these tools are given in the Market Reconnaissance memorandum (see Appendix).

Zoning rules should reflect the community's goals for these neighborhoods, both for the underlying (basic) zoning district and a possible Neighborhood Conservation Overlay district (NCOD). The NCOD is a tool for protecting older neighborhoods by ensuring that the physical character of new development is basically consistent with certain elements of the old. The exact geographic boundaries of the overlay district and the specific provisions would be determined largely through neighborhood input as part of plan implementation, but community members have indicated so far that it should be applied to residential areas on both sides of First Avenue, and should include at least the elements of house size, lot size, and setbacks consistent with neighboring properties.

The underlying zoning should allow a fairly limited range of land uses compatible with single-family housing, and apply dimensional and form standards that reflect the desired physical pattern (mostly detached houses on moderate-sized lots). A neighborhood zoning category is recommended that would allow single-family houses and, for new development areas, townhouses as not more than 25% of the total number of dwelling units proposed.

The Town should invest in infrastructure in Old Town neighborhoods just as it expects to fund infrastructure in newer areas. Upkeep in older areas is as important as imposing quality standards on new development and sends a message about the importance of maintaining community-wide quality of life.

One or more voluntary neighborhood associations would also benefit residential areas. The unity of homeowners will help guide policy decisions of the Town, as well as provide some consensus and security about property upkeep and improvements, crime prevention, and social ties. An example of a voluntary program that a neighborhood association can undertake is designating a "Home of the Month" based on attractive landscaping, home improvements, or



appearance. The homeowner receives a sign for the yard, and the property is featured in the neighborhood newsletter or the local newspaper.

As the market reconnaissance report notes, there are significant opportunities to build on the restoration and upgrading of existing housing stock, since housing in Old Town is somewhat undersized to current market preferences. Regulatory policies should make it easy to upgrade and expand homes in Old Town in order not to put undue limits on the value that homeowners can add. This will serve as a natural prevention measure for new rental conversions, and help ensure that existing homeowners and new buyers will live in the area.

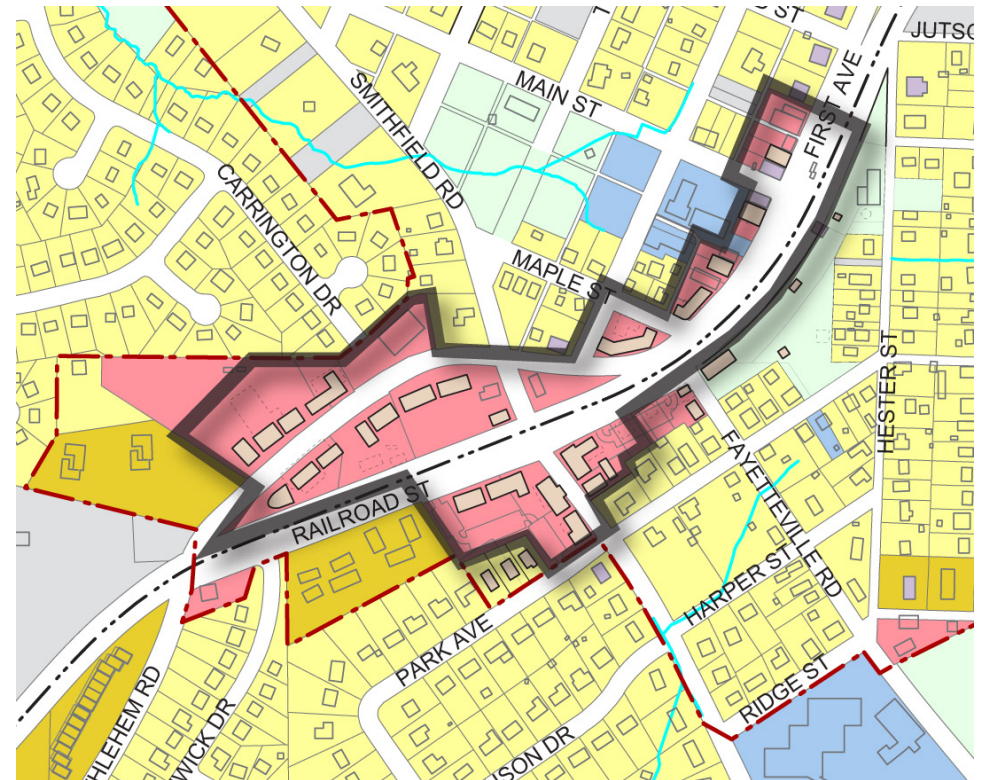
HISTORIC DEPOT DISTRICT

The value of residential areas is enhanced by the nearby “Depot District” – a revitalized commercial district fronting First Avenue, and extending over time into a new expansion area west of Smithfield Road on both sides of First Avenue. It is shown on the map on this page.

The Depot District will draw from an increasing customer base as outlying suburbs continue to develop and modest increases in traffic improve commercial viability. Commercial uses here focus on destination retail as well as neighborhood-serving uses. Since the district is not well located to compete with abundant highway-oriented shopping centers nearby, the retail and service uses here will need to occupy a different niche.

Commercial types that would likely perform well in the depot district are:

- Personal service and convenience uses that serve as an amenity to the surrounding residential areas, such as a day care, small café or coffeehouse;
- Specialty / destination retail – stores that offer unique products not offered elsewhere in the region (as opposed to franchise or chain stores) that attract customers regardless of location, and therefore are not dependent on highway visibility; and
- Small professional offices.



Historic Depot District

HISTORIC DEPOT DISTRICT

Representative businesses might include craft-oriented producers and retailers (such as if the existing stained glass business offered retail merchandise), antique stores, spas/personal service establishments, restaurants and cafés, professional services, neighborhood convenience, gift shops, and office-professional space for small companies and individuals who seek a “main street” location in a converted house or small office building.

A strong marketing strategy building on the unique visual characteristics of the district is crucial for business success. It should focus on:

- (1) the vintage architectural heritage and rail town setting,
- (2) the market base of new residential developments east and south of Old Town that generate pass-through trips, and
- (3) potential expansion of retail opportunities linked to the existing stained glass restoration studio that has national-level exposure.



Depot District storefronts should have inviting window displays and signage



Depot District sidewalks should include pedestrian-friendly elements



Depot District should have parking on-street and behind stores

HISTORIC DEPOT DISTRICT

To supplement the marketing strategy, incentives for business development, improvements to commercial property, and construction of small-scale infill buildings are discussed in more detail in the Market Reconnaissance memorandum (see Appendix).

As part of the strategy, streetscape improvements should reflect good commercial district design, with appropriate street furniture (such as lighting, benches, and trash receptacles). Streetscape improvements such as street trees, wider sidewalks, and bulbouts will make the area more friendly to lingering pedestrians.

Other examples of streetscape enhancements include seasonal plantings of annuals and flowers both in public space (planting beds and sidewalk planters) and private space (window boxes, tubs by storefronts), and outdoor seating (both private for sidewalk cafés, and public benches).



Proposed First Avenue Streetscape (West of Main St)



Proposed First Avenue Streetscape (East of Main St)



Existing First Avenue Streetscape

HISTORIC DEPOT DISTRICT

Design standards for the district will ensure that new development is pedestrian-oriented and visually harmonious; for example, buildings should have a street-front orientation with windows onto the sidewalk, and inviting elements such as canopies for visual interest. The materials

and style of new buildings should augment the vintage/railroad character of the existing buildings.

These improvements are further described and illustrated in the Architectural and

Urban Design Principles section of this plan. Re-investment by the Town in physical improvements to the streetscape and a new community park across the street will also build on visual character and help private revitalization efforts succeed.



Conceptual illustration of new development in Depot District expansion area south of railroad (view looking north along Smithfield Road)

HISTORIC DEPOT DISTRICT

Incentives for revitalization include façade improvement and rehab loans and grants, business micro loans and revolving funds at local banks, tax increment financing, retail entrepreneur grants or rental subsidies, and business technical assistance. To facilitate the renovation and adaptive reuse of existing commercial buildings, the NC Rehab Code should be observed in building standards and inspections.

Attentive management is also key. As detailed in the Market Report for this plan, a strategy / business recruitment committee would help manage the depot district, work with property owners and encourage or recruit infill commercial uses, with a focus on those most likely to enhance the overall district and succeed: specialty retail, craft, professional office, and personal & community services. As an inexpensive starting point, the visibility of the depot district can be enhanced with temporary, changing displays of artwork; placing electric candles in windows, including unused spaces and upper floors, at holidays; and planters or sandwich board signs placed near building entries.

Expansion areas for the depot district (shown on the map on p. 24) exist along both sides of First Avenue and along Railroad Street west of the intersection with Smithfield Road. At the southwest block of this intersection, a community-serving use (such as a senior center or day care) could serve as a destination to draw people off of the main highway and into the old town area. The use should have an “active edge” physically designed to link the interior of the building to the street and sidewalk, perhaps with a small café or even a sit-down restaurant that is integrated with the main building and also acts as a destination. While a large, mixed-use commercial project is probably not viable here, a community or institutional use with active daily use, along with the private “active edge” for retail or food service, can generate daily visitation, enhance the critical mass for a successful commercial district, and create spin-off effects that benefit the overall area.

Adequate institutional and regulatory arrangements for parking are also critical to the success of the depot design district. Parking in the depot district is mostly



A bright new coat of paint and awnings can transform dull building facades

curb (on-street) spaces. Shared off-street lots that take advantage of time-of-day usage patterns are also used, although off-street lots that serve a single building or use are discouraged since they are deadly to community character and walkability. Routes from parking spaces to destinations are mainly along the street and storefronts. For special events in and around the district, overflow parking can occur on grassy areas and road edges.

GREENFIELD DEVELOPMENT

The large vacant tract (“Suggs Tract”) at the north side of the Old Town study area is an excellent opportunity for new development that will enhance the area’s identity, adding value both to the existing neighborhoods and to the new construction on the greenfield tract itself.



*View looking south to new office
and commercial development along
Knightdale Boulevard (in foreground)*

GREENFIELD DEVELOPMENT

Along the tract's frontage on Knightdale Boulevard (as shown on the map, top right), opportunities are highest for new office and commercial space. Particularly because of new subdivisions in the vicinity, there will be a need for finance, insurance, real estate, medical, and professional services to serve the increased household base. Further, aging and retirement trends will increase demand for medical and personal services in potential office space here, which is ideally situated between two planned medical centers.

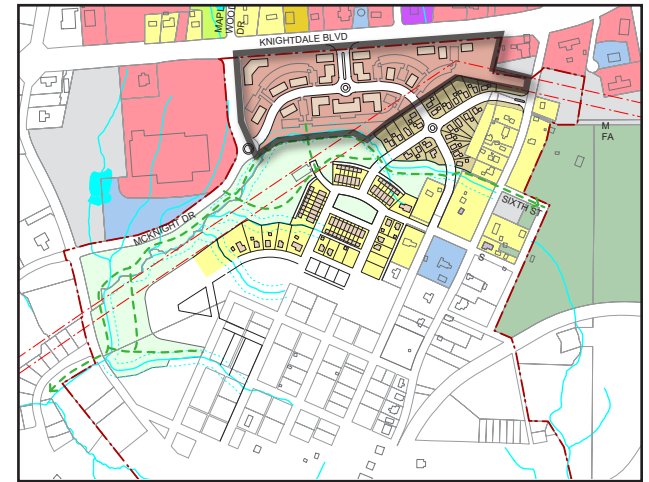
To avoid competing with the depot district, any retail establishments and services in this area should be accessory to or supportive of the primary office-professional uses in scale, amount, and focus. To distinguish the site from existing strip commercial development, it should be developed with a walkable pattern, including good building design and layout, although it will still need a substantial parking and vehicle orientation because of its highly auto-accessible location.

As shown on the lower map on this page, an active living retirement village with quality senior housing is proposed as a transition between new commercial/office development along the highway and the

existing single-family neighborhoods to the south.

No-maintenance patio homes or cottages in a condo ownership form are likely to be successful based on a strong area market for retirement and 55+ living options, as well as a highly desirable location near shopping, pleasant neighborhoods, and recreational opportunities (such as the neighborhood parks and greenway). The active living retirement village will also increase the opportunities for professional service offices and retail nearby. It is well connected to the existing neighborhood and depot district by neighborhood streets and pedestrian connections.

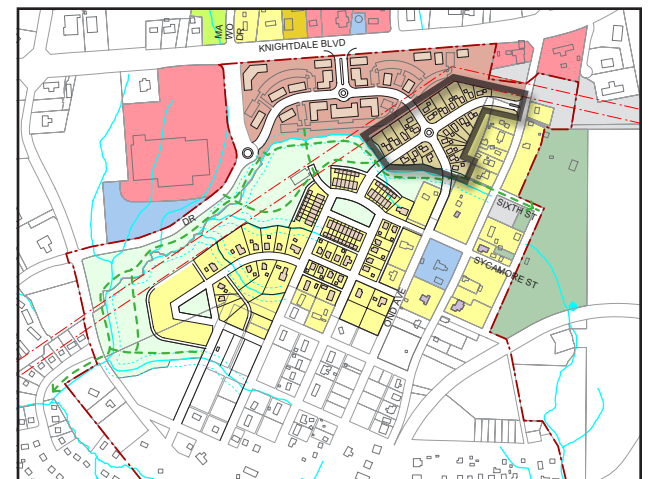
Also on the Suggs tract, wooded buffers along the upper tributaries of Mingo Creek provide separation, but also walkable links, between existing neighborhoods and highway commercial areas. This green space is improved with greenway trails, a dog park, and other amenities that connect and benefit the whole area. One or more small pocket parks are incorporated into the design of the neighborhood extension. These parks and recreational opportunities ensure that lots and residences in this area are at a premium compared to ordinary suburban development.



Office and commercial area



Examples of senior patio homes

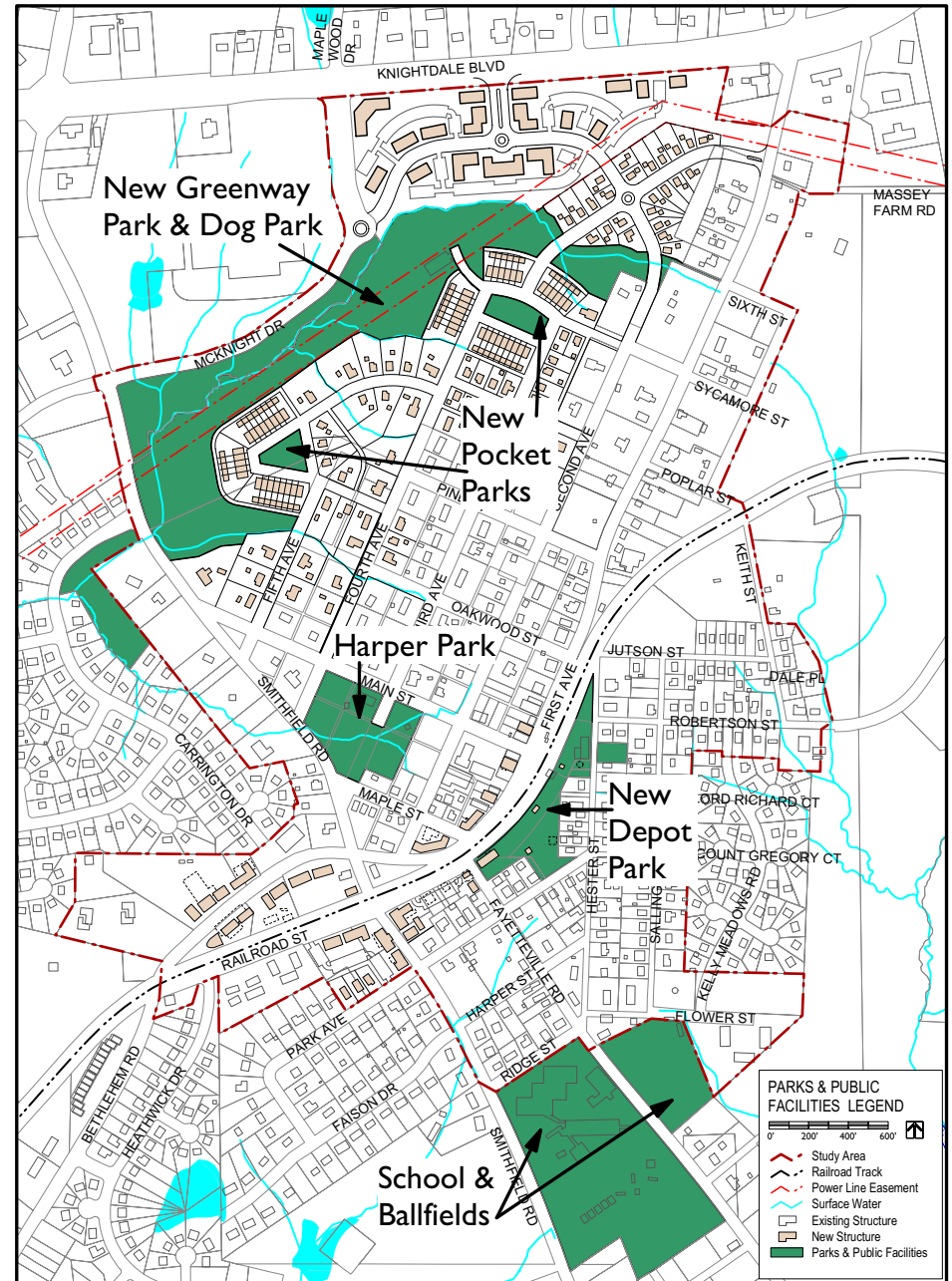


Senior housing area

PARKS AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

In addition to the neighborhood pocket parks in the greenfield area, a primary site for a new park is along the railroad tracks across from the depot commercial district. Standing under the mature trees on this site, one has an excellent view of the historic depot commercial district and the row of historic houses extending north along First Avenue. This spot, like no other, gives one a sense of Knightdale as it was. This highly visible location should be enhanced with a central public place that gives identity to Old Town, both as a landmark to help people identify the “Heart of Knightdale” and to help unify the neighborhoods on either side of the railroad.

Physical improvements could include an outdoor gathering place, such as a small amphitheater with a lawn, for outdoor movies, festivals, and special events; it could also serve as a multi-purpose play area and picnic spot at other times. Tot swings and picnic tables or a shelter might also be located in the park. A water feature would provide particular interest. A reconstructed or relocated railroad depot would serve as a landmark and provide community identity, and could house a community-serving or public use, or serve as a rental facility for special events. Requisite furnishings include waste receptacles, drinking water fountains, and public restrooms.



PARKS AND PUBLIC FACILITIES



Planning and programming for the park are essential to ensure that it appears as a high-quality, well-cared-for place. Regular landscape and building maintenance must be provided for. A small commercial presence in the park (such as a food kiosk) would limit vandalism and misuse of public facilities. Moreover, having food available in or near the park will attract park users. Special events programming is also key. Craft shows, farmers' markets, and summer movies are examples of events that can make the park a community anchor. Wake Forest has an excellent example of a small Saturday farmers' market that could serve as a model for Knightdale, while Saturday night "movies on the green" have proven wildly popular in Southern Village (Chapel Hill) and other communities.



As one Old Town resident observed, people often get to know their neighbors through their dogs



A nearby café or sandwich shop will benefit from a seating area in the park where people can bring their food purchases



Families enjoy parks within walking distance of neighborhoods



Having a community gathering place helps bring neighbors together

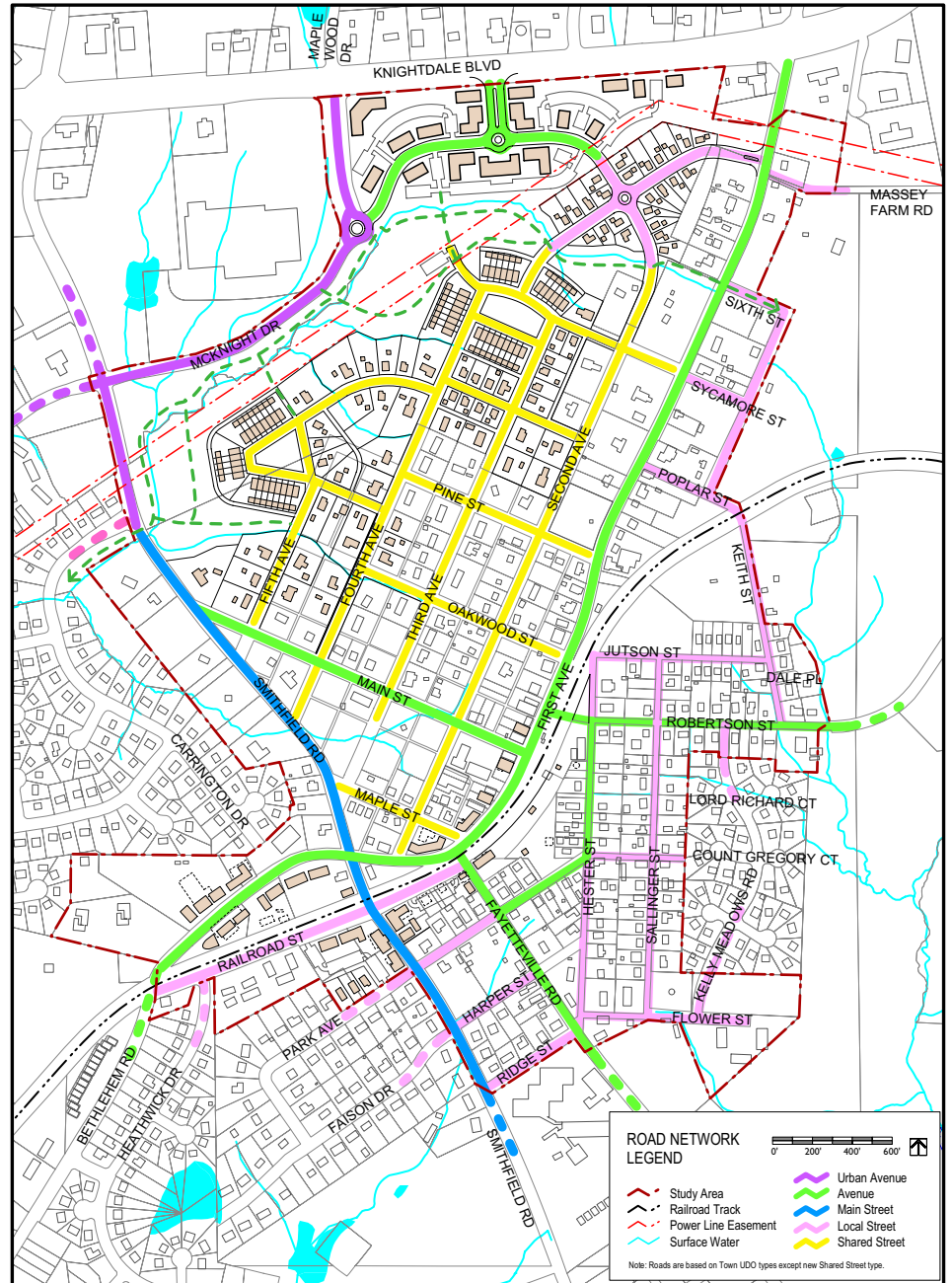
TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW

New roads connecting Old Town to new development are designed to protect community character, walkability, and safety. The existing historic street grid is preserved, and vehicular connections are extended into new greenfield development areas (using indirect routing, “T” intersections, a roundabout, and narrowed pavement) to prevent excessive cut-through traffic.

In the long term, the potential rail transit opportunity is maximized via the assemblage of public land adjacent to the rail corridor in the form of a community park in the heart of Old Town. If and when definite rail transit system plans become a reality for the region, the public-owned land is in place here to allow the development of a transit station next to the railroad corridor. Zoning changes could then be implemented to facilitate redevelopment in accordance with detailed plans for transit – whether that takes the shape of park-and-ride facilities or dense transit-oriented development. In the meantime, existing structures and neighborhoods can remain largely undisturbed until clear transit plans are in place.

In the future, any parking facilities to serve the potential transit stop near the depot district should be at a small remove from the boarding area. Trip chaining (additional customer patronage of uses in the depot district) will increase if there is a small distance between car storage and transit.

Road Network



MAJOR ROADS

Currently two roadways within the core area function as minor arterials or major collectors. Smithfield Road serves as a connector between the US 64/264 major arterial and the Knightdale Boulevard (US 64 Business) commercial strip. First Avenue connects the core with Knightdale Boulevard, then becomes Bethlehem Road which connects with Old Faison Road.

Smithfield Road is the more heavily traveled of the two and traffic is expected to increase. Smithfield directly links a US 64/264 interchange with a major intersection on Knightdale Boulevard, so it serves not only residents of neighborhoods and subdivisions along it, but also travelers on one highway seeking to reach the other. Bethlehem Road does not have an interchange with US 64/264 and, although Old Faison does, most highway-to-highway travel using that interchange would use Hodge Road. Once I-540 is complete, much of the highway-to-highway traffic will redirect onto that route.

Residential development east of Knightdale in Wendell may result in much greater travel along Robertson Street (Knightdale-Eagle Rock Road) as an alternate to the Wendell Boulevard-to-Knightdale Boule-

vard route. Knightdale-Eagle Rock Road becomes Robertson Street, which intersects First Avenue near the center of Old Town.

Smithfield Road

Earlier state-level plans for Smithfield Road called for a multi-lane roadway between the two highways. While a multi-lane segment may be appropriate for the commercial node proposed north of the US 64/264 interchange, extending such a wide roadway through the core would have substantial negative effects, including disrupting community cohesion through relocations and creating a pedestrian barrier between neighborhoods and the school and First Avenue commercial district.

The design of Smithfield Road must be responsive to the development along it, since accessibility is more important than mobility along this corridor. While the specific cross-sections and dimensions will need to be determined through engineering studies, the basic concept is for the road to have:

- 4 lanes divided by a narrow median from Knightdale Boulevard to McKnight Drive with turning pockets,

- 3 lanes from McKnight Drive to Carrington Drive,
- 2 lanes from Carrington Drive to Broadway Street, with turning pockets at Main Street, First Avenue, school and Broadway,
- 4 lanes (divided) from Broadway Street to the US 64/264 interchange.

From Knightdale Boulevard south to Broadway, the Smithfield Road right-of-way may be too constrained to permit use of 14-foot-wide lanes to accommodate bicyclists alongside drivers in a shared lane. If this is indeed the case, bicyclists may be better accommodated via a multi-use path along the east side of Smithfield Road providing access to Main Street, First Avenue and Fayetteville Street. South of Broadway there should be sufficient right-of-way to provide wide paved shoulders.

Due to these same right-of-way constraints, it is advisable to initially connect the multi-use path along northern Smithfield Road to the sidewalks or paths along Main Street, and from there connect to other pedestrian paths within the core. If land use patterns change or travel demands indicate a need, a sidewalk along the east side of Smithfield

MAJOR ROADS

Road south of Main Street may become desirable. South of First Avenue, it may be possible to better accommodate some pedestrian travel along Fayetteville Street. While it is usually preferable to have a sidewalk or path along both sides of a major road, it may be more feasible to place a path along the west side of Smithfield if most pedestrian travel demand east of Smithfield Road can be met using Fayetteville Street.

First Avenue

Main Street was built on an axis with the train station, whereas the businesses along First Avenue made it function as the true “main street.” Regardless, First Avenue does not provide the same level of accessibility as Smithfield Road so its main function is to provide direct access to abutting properties and intersecting streets.

The design of First Avenue must be responsive to the development along it, since access is the primary function along this corridor. While the specific cross-sections and dimensions will need to be determined through engineering studies, the basic concept is for the road to have: turning pockets at important cross streets, such as Smithfield Road, Robertson Street, and subdivision entrance streets north and

south of the core, and on-street parking within the central core’s commercial area, as discussed under “Depot Commercial District.”

It may not be feasible to accommodate bicyclists within shared lanes along the northern and southern segments of First Avenue, so from Oakwood Street north it may be preferable to direct bicyclists onto Second Avenue. Wide paved shoulders can be used along south First Avenue and Bethlehem Road to accommodate bicyclists. Due to right-of-way constraints and limited sight lines along South First near Smithfield Road, it may be preferable to direct bicycle travel along Railroad Street to access the central core area.

Sidewalks along both sides of First Avenue are preferred if feasible, and along just the west side if not. Sidewalks here should be thought of as radiating out from the central core in order to connect nearby neighborhoods with commercial, cultural and civic uses. While the Smithfield Road multi-use path is proposed to reach destinations on the other side of Knightdale Boulevard, pedestrian access to Knightdale Boulevard via First Avenue is not an objective until such time as pedestrian accommodations along Knightdale Boulevard are in place.



MAJOR ROADS

Robertson Street

Robertson Street is the “town” end of formerly rural Knightdale-Eagle Rock Road. As of the writing of this document, thousands of houses have been permitted for development along Wendell end of this road. It is expected that some Wendell residents will use Robertson Street as an alternate route to reach Knightdale Boulevard. If designed in accord with its core area context, Robertson Street traffic can help revitalize the depot commercial district along First Avenue.

Within the core area, the design of Robertson Street must be sensitive to its current function as a neighborhood street. While Knightdale-Eagle Rock Road may need to be multi-lane to accommodate traffic volumes and turning movements of the growth along it, the Robertson Road segment needs to remain as slow and narrow as possible. Neither speed nor capacity are important within the core area, and both are limited by the at-grade rail crossing just east of the T intersection with First Avenue. Wayfinding signs should direct drivers traveling from Wendell or

US 64/264 through the commercial area along First Avenue to Smithfield Road. Such signage should help steer most traffic through the length of the depot district while minimizing any neighborhood cut-through traffic.

While specific proposals need to be explored in much more detail through engineering studies, the basic concept is for the road to have:

- a gateway single-lane roundabout at Keith Street, and
- turning pockets at Hester Street, and possibly other intersecting streets.

It should be feasible to accommodate bicyclists within wide shared lanes between First Avenue and Keith Street. Outside of the core area, it is anticipated that a shoulder/swale cross section will be used, so as Knightdale-Eagle Rock Road is improved or expanded, wide paved shoulders should be installed to accommodate bicycle connections between Knightdale and Wendell.



Multi-use path to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians

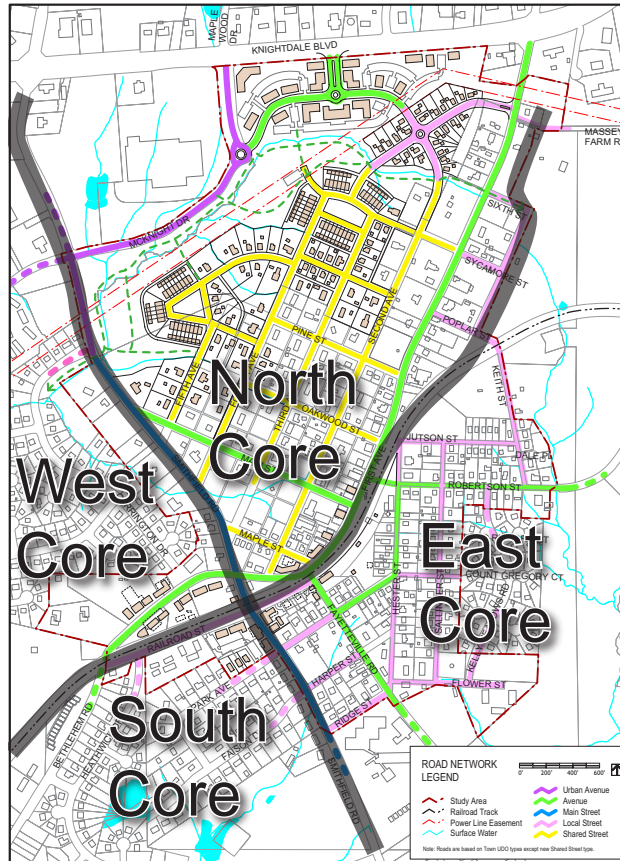
Sidewalks along both sides of Robertson are preferred if feasible, and along just the south side if not. Sidewalks here should be thought of as radiating out from the central core in order to connect nearby neighborhoods with commercial, cultural and civic uses. Pedestrian access to Hester Street and Park Avenue is essential if the area they encompass is to become a successful transit oriented development at some point in the future.

LOCAL STREETS

North Core Neighborhoods

New streets will augment old between North Smithfield and North First Avenue's east side, while connecting McKnight Drive with the depot district. New streets should provide a high level of connectivity within an indirectly routed network that discourages cut-through traffic and speeding. Indirect access includes both T and Y intersections of new and existing streets. From adjacent major roads, direct access to new development will be from McKnight Drive and the northern segment of First Avenue. The indirect "backdoor" access will link old and new neighborhoods for walkers, bicyclists and drivers making short trips along shared streets.

While most existing rights-of-way within the north core neighborhood would permit installation of sidewalks, residents expressed their preference for maintaining the shared street network where cars, both moving and parked, coexist alongside pedestrians and bicyclists. Curb and gutter construction is not needed along existing streets, although flat or horizontal curbing may be desirable as a means of protecting pavement edges. The same should be true of future single family residential development. In contrast, where new streets will serve multi-family or commercial development, curb-and-



Core areas

gutter cross sections with sidewalks may be needed.

New streets should be sufficiently wide so that bicyclists and drivers can continue to share lanes. Slower vehicle speeds can be encouraged by use of traffic calming measures such as reduced curb radii, curb extensions at intersections and mid-block

crossings, and the systematic use of speed humps or speed tables as needed. All traffic calming techniques, as well as all other elements of street design, need to keep the needs of bicyclists in mind during design and maintenance.

The core area's future may include transit oriented development (TOD) from First Avenue east to Hester Street/Park Avenue and surrounding blocks. At this area redevelops and revitalizes, homeowners within the north core neighborhood may want to become part of the TOD. If this neighborhood begins to densify, the desirability of shared streets should be reassessed against the higher pedestrian level of service provided by a sidewalk network.

East Core Neighborhoods

Existing streets will redevelop in the area bounded by the railroad tracks to the north and west and Smithfield Road to the south. As noted under "Major Roadways", Robertson Street may in the future be redesigned to better accommodate core pedestrian traffic and increasing volumes of vehicular traffic from outside of town. Hester Street and Park Avenue would expand as part of future rail transit station

LOCAL STREETS

plans to include wider lanes, turning pockets and wide sidewalks.

Most rights-of-way in east core neighborhoods are too narrow to allow wide shared lanes, on-street parking and sidewalks. In the near term, where street space is most limited yet bicycle travel is desired, it may be more prudent to slow vehicular traffic, rather than widen lanes, as a method of permitting safe shared use. As these streets already have small curb radii and narrow cross sections, slower vehicle speeds can be encouraged by the systematic use of speed humps or speed tables as needed. These traffic calming techniques, as well as all other elements of street design, need to keep the needs of bicyclists in mind during design and maintenance. Examples of elements to be addressed include edge traps or abrupt dropoffs that can catch bicycle wheels or pedals, as well as metal grates, plates, and covers that can affect tires, especially when wet.

Most of the east core's streets are well connected with the exception of Kelly Meadows Drive. Future redevelopment opportunities may allow House Street to connect with Count Gregory Court. In the near

term, a method of permitting non-vehicular access between Sallinger Street and Kelly Meadows Drive would improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.

Neighborhood streets here provide direct access to the school and ballfields. Where feasible sidewalks should be installed on at least one side of each street. If the Eastrans commuter rail station becomes a reality for Knightdale and the east core neighborhoods begin to redevelop in response, at that time densification of development should include provisions to widen rights-of-way to permit sidewalks along both sides as well as on-street parking along one side. This can be accomplished by having new development pull back from the existing street so that new growth is mostly up rather than out.

South Core Neighborhoods

The neighborhoods between south Smithfield Road and south First Avenue/Bethlehem Road are the least intensively developed with the fewest connected streets. For the driver, bicyclist, and pedestrian, there is really no where to go in these neighborhoods but out and back.

The only street here with any through traffic

is Railroad Street. As noted previously within "Major Roadways", Railroad Street may provide what is basically a bicycle bypass of the congested and constricted First Avenue-Smithfield Road intersection area by providing an alternate route linking Bethlehem Road with Main Street, Fayetteville Street, north First Avenue and Robertson Street. As such, it is critical that vehicle speeds along this short but relatively straight segment be kept as low as possible, through use of traffic calming devices if necessary.

The South Core is expected to experience some redevelopment and infill as well as continued new development to the south. Both new development and redevelopment present opportunities to better connect these neighborhoods. Neighborhood connectivity should provide each resident with at least two routes to access their home from a major road. This also improves access for emergency vehicles as well as service vehicles such as school buses and garbage trucks. Improved connectivity also expands opportunities for walking and biking. Currently, the street pattern is so disconnected that a child trying to walk to school would have to cut across private property or take a lengthy indirect route.

LOCAL STREETS

Residential street connections between neighborhoods should not provide a direct route between Bethlehem Road and Smithfield Road. If such a route is desired it should be designed as a collector road, with access limited to neighborhood and subdivision streets but no driveways.

West Core Neighborhoods

The neighborhoods between Bethlehem Road and north Smithfield Road are the newest in the core as well as the most isolated from it. Although the internal connectivity is adequate, external connections of these neighborhoods are limited to Carrington Drive or McKnight Drive – one or the other, as there are no connections between subdivisions. A new development under construction at the time of writing may provide an additional street outlet onto South First Avenue, but at present it is unknown whether there will be street or pedestrian connections between this new subdivision and existing subdivisions accessed via Carrington.

The West Core may experience some continued new development to the west and southwest, although the railroad corridor fragments this area. New development

presents an opportunity to better connect neighborhoods. Neighborhood connectivity should provide each resident with at least two routes to access their home from a major road. This also improves access for emergency vehicles as well as service vehicles such as school buses and garbage trucks. Improved connectivity also expands opportunities for walking and biking. The current disconnected street patterns require a resident trying to walk to the depot district either to cut across private property or take a lengthy indirect route.

In the past the decision was made by residents to wall themselves off from commercial development along south First Avenue. It may be more acceptable for a pedestrian connection between Carrington and First Avenue to be created first, since the main change needed is a gate in the existing fence. Pedestrian access may be all the neighborhood desires or this pedestrian connection may evolve over time into a vehicular street. Any future vehicular connection should include an assessment of the need to traffic calm Carrington to discourage speeding and cut-through traffic seeking to avoid the signal at Smithfield and First.

Depot District

To most travelers on Smithfield Road, the commercial district on First Avenue is nearly invisible. As the area is not suitable for or competitive as convenience retail, being “off the beaten track” is not necessarily a problem. Even destination specialty retail, however, can benefit from some degree of visibility. So rather than attempt to reroute through traffic past business, wayfinding signs at the Smithfield-First Avenue intersection should welcome people to Old Town Knightdale and direct attention to the depot commercial district. A distinctive design will help create awareness about the district.

The primary street segment within the depot district is First Avenue, and the main function of this segment is to provide on-street parking and access to adjacent land uses. The environment for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers engaged in parking must be convenient and comfortable for the district’s economic viability, so vehicle speeds must be respectful of people crossing and slow moving vehicles maneuvering in the street.

LOCAL STREETS

While the specific cross sections and dimensions will need to be determined through engineering studies, the basic concept is for this segment of First Avenue to have:

- on-street parking along both sides – angled, parallel or both,
- bicycle lanes or wide shared lanes,
- a sidewalk along the west side at least 5 feet wide and ADA accessible, and preferably wider,
- bicycle racks,
- street trees and other vertical elements that visually narrow the apparent road width;
- pedestrian crosswalks, possibly raised on top of speed tables, and
- other traffic calming devices as deemed necessary.

Main Street connects the depot district with north core neighborhood streets and with Smithfield Road. The main function of this street is to provide slow speed connections between all of these areas, as well as to the park and recreation facilities along the south side of the street. A secondary function is to provide on-street parking. A sidewalk

or multi-use path along Main Street will connect the Smithfield Road path with the depot district.

The environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers must be convenient, comfortable, and safe – particularly for children and older adults seeking access to the park – so posted vehicle speeds must be respectful of people crossing Main Street as well as drivers accessing neighborhood streets and parking.

While the specific cross-sections and dimensions will need to be determined through engineering studies, the basic concept is for this segment of Main Street to have:

- a multi-use path or sidewalk along the north side,
- marked crosswalks, possibly raised on top of speed tables, at Third and Fourth Avenues,
- on-street parking along the south side by the park,
- on-street parking along both sides near First Avenue, and
- wide shared lanes.



Convenient seating for pedestrians



Sidewalk shared by pedestrians and retail businesses

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK AND TRANSIT CONSIDERATIONS

Bicycle and Pedestrian Network

The depot district on First Avenue and the north core neighborhoods have functional pedestrian networks. Although they are too narrow and generally do not comply with contemporary Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, the depot district does have sidewalks. The north core neighborhoods have a interconnected network of shared streets, which allows residents to move around the neighborhood by car, bicycle or on foot. North core neighborhood residents can easily reach the depot district and the park, but would have difficulty reaching destinations outside of the neighborhood. West core neighborhoods have adequate internal street connectivity, but are even more isolated from destinations outside of the neighborhood.

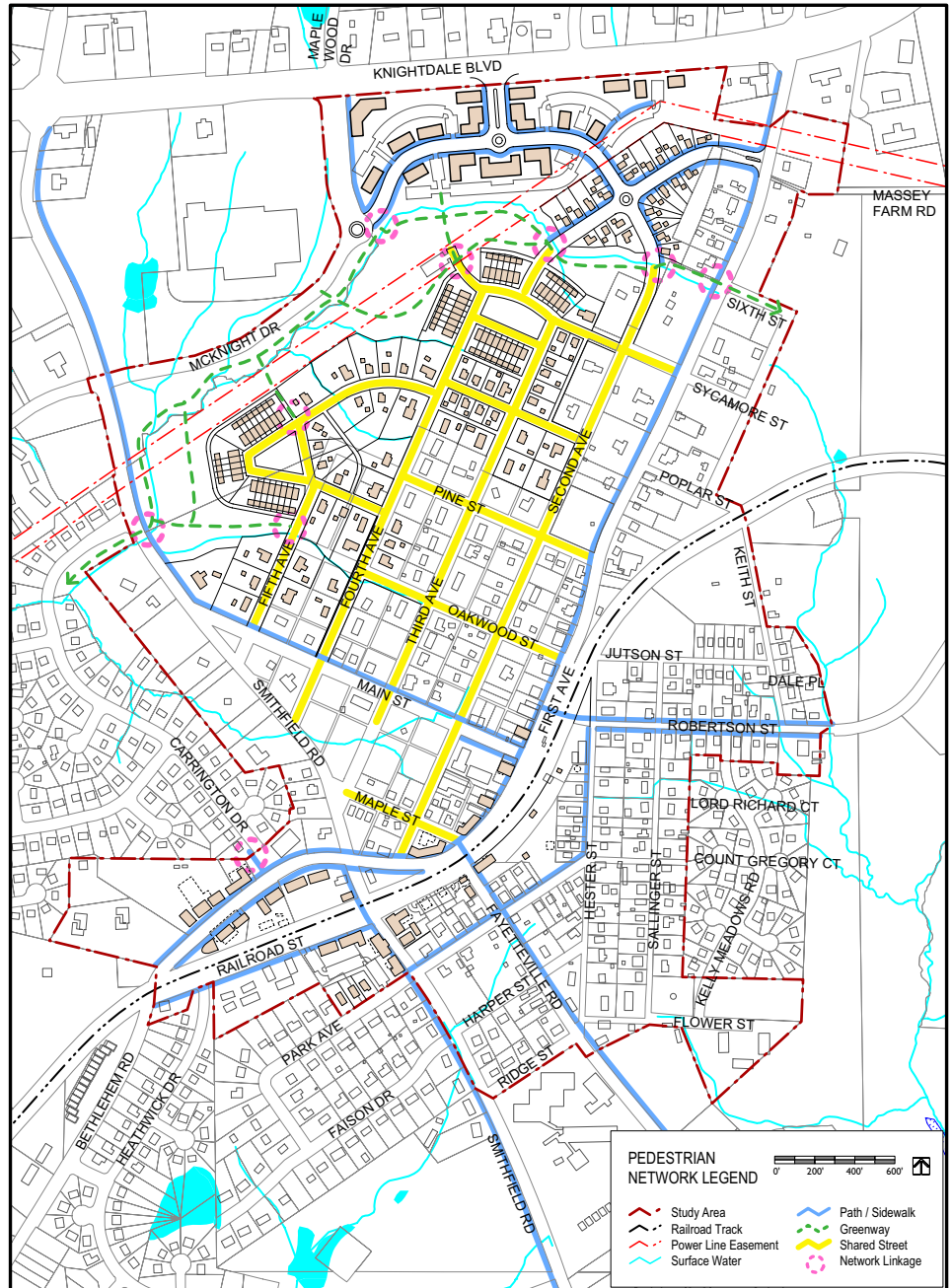


Bike lane



Multi-use path to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles

Pedestrian Network



PEDESTRIAN NETWORK AND TRANSIT CONSIDERATIONS

The east core neighborhoods have the convenience of a connected street network but without the comfort of sufficiently wide shared streets. South core neighborhoods have the lowest connectivity and least pedestrian-friendly streets; moreover, to get to any external destination, residents must cross either south First Avenue or south Smithfield Road. Routing through this area can be so indirect that a child's walk to school here can be as long as if they lived in the north core, even though this area is across Smithfield Road from the school.

Neighborhood-level goals for bicycle and pedestrian improvements have been addressed as part of discussions about major roads and local streets. In a nutshell, the intent is to enhance and expand upon what currently exists in the north core neighborhoods and depot district, and to better accommodate walking and biking in the other neighborhoods while improving both internal and external connectivity.

Core-level goals are:

- connect the core with destinations on Knightdale Boulevard and beyond – particularly the library – via a multi-use path along the east side of north Smithfield Road,

- accommodate bicyclists with wide paved shoulders along Knightdale-Eagle Rock Road, south Smithfield Road and Bethlehem Road, while
- connecting these corridors a multi-use path along Main Street, and bike lanes within First Avenue and Railroad Street.

Rail Transit and Transit-Oriented Development

The Eastrans rail plan proposes a commuter rail along the existing Norfolk Southern line into downtown Raleigh. Commuter rail, which focuses on peak period weekday work trips, does not allow the same redevelopment intensity as light rail or other rail systems that provide transport throughout the day. However, should commuter rail become a reality for Knightdale, all opportunities to harness market forces to create transit-oriented development (TOD) should be explored.

The older parts of the core generally fit the basic concept of walkable community design – moderate residential densities (4 to 6 dwellings per acre) in close proximity to schools, parks, religious institutions and other destinations, accessible via shared streets or a sidewalk network.

TODs, on the other hand, require higher densities (10+ dwellings per acre) in very close proximity to “live/work/play” areas accessible via a highly connected sidewalk network. The development intensities within a TOD can be thought of as a wedding cake – the most intensive uses surround the station and then decrease with distance.

Two aspects of commuter rail must be kept in mind. First, residents would be able to substitute train travel for car travel for the commute trip only. For other types of trips, a car will still be necessary, and so car ownership and use rates will continue to reflect the automobile orientation of the greater community. Second, many commuter rail users will be non-TOD residents, so the station area will require park-and-ride facilities.

Any park-and-ride facilities eventually developed if and when Eastrans becomes a reality should be scattered and located within a 1- to 3-block radius of the station. If commuters simply drove to and from an on-site parking facility immediately next to the station, the surrounding area would see few, if any, economic benefits from

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK AND TRANSIT CONSIDERATIONS

commuter rail. Under this scenario, rail would simply relocate some congestion from highways leading to Raleigh and other job centers to smaller roads leading to the stations, since commuters would come and go in waves.

Scattering smaller parking facilities around the station area within a 1- to 3-block radius accomplishes several objectives – it reduces vehicle/pedestrian conflicts between commuters and TOD residents, it reduces peak traffic flows at any one driveway or intersection, and it requires commuters to walk through the TOD on their way from parking to the station and back. It is this last objective that has economic development implications for the existing commercial district, as well as for new commercial development that could spring up around Hester Street and Park Avenue. The commercial land development pattern within a TOD must be coordinated with the parking and pedestrian travel patterns to create maximum opportunities for linked trips or “trip chaining” by commuters. This would occur as commuters utilize service and retail establishments between parking facilities and the station. The decision

whether to commute by car or train can be influenced by other elements of the entire trip experience, so the convenience of coffee, dry cleaning, or the gym can be put to use to influence transportation choices and economic development.

Bus and Van Transit, and Para-transit

Current Triangle Transit Authority (TTA) long range plans include the possibility of providing express commuter bus service to Knightdale. It is already possible to take a TTA coordinated car- or vanpool to Raleigh or RTP. New long-range regional plans may include bus rapid transit (BRT) as an option for eastern Wake and western Johnston Counties.

Neither bus nor vanpool transit services have any land use implications for Knightdale. While it is possible for BRT to result in a TOD around a station, this appears to be more likely in a greenfield setting or near an established employment center.

With no probable land development benefits from bus or van transit, such services are not beneficial to revitalization of the core



Residential development in TOD



Residential development in TOD

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK AND TRANSIT CONSIDERATIONS

area. Thus, if such transit services do become available, it is more important to get core residents to the service than to bring the service within the core.

This is not the case with para-transit, or demand-responsive transit providing services to the disabled, elderly and other non-drivers. Knightdale's population is aging along with the rest of the county, plus it is retaining and attracting a fair number of "near-retirees" who want to live in a small town setting close to their adult children. It is only a matter of time before personal mobility becomes a larger problem.

Personal mobility limitations of older and disabled residents can be overcome three

basic ways – by the resident relocating closer to desired land uses and services, by bringing desired goods and services to the resident, and by providing an alternative to driving. Even with more health services, shopping and recreation being developed in Knightdale, local para-transit services can help residents overcome personal mobility limitations to remain engaged and active within the community.

Para-transit services are well beyond the scope of this core area plan but, since personal mobility will become an issue for core area residents too, the need to further study para-transit is noted to encourage discussion and action.

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

BUILDING HEIGHT & SETBACK

Depot District

YES: Appropriate



Appropriate heights consistent with the existing template are one to two stories. A three-story structure may be permissible so long as no building looms more than one story over existing adjacent. Buildings should generally front directly on the sidewalk, but the occasional small front setback is acceptable as long as it is in active streetfront use (such as outdoor seating) and has design elements to make it inviting.

NO: Inappropriate



Consistent with public preferences and historic precedents in the depot district, buildings should not generally exceed two stories. Building should not be set back from the sidewalk, and no off-street parking should be located between the building and its associated street.

Boulevard Office/Commercial

YES: Appropriate



Commercial buildings in the Boulevard Office/Commercial area should be one to three stories in height, and they should be located close to the primary street. At least 50% of off-street parking should be accommodated behind and to the side of buildings to a large extent.

NO: Inappropriate



Buildings in the Boulevard Office/Commercial area should not exceed three stories in height. Setbacks from the street should not be too deep, and no more than 50% of off-street parking should be located between the building and the primary street.

Residential

YES: Appropriate



Setbacks for residences should roughly equal the existing setbacks on the same block face. Building height should be compatible with structures on adjacent lots.

NO: Inappropriate



Residential structures out of scale with neighboring houses: Houses that loom over adjacent yards are invasive of privacy, while under-sized new houses may harm perceptions of property values.

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

BUILDING SCALE & MASSING

Depot District

YES: Appropriate



New commercial buildings should be compatible with the small to medium scale of existing “vintage” commercial buildings along First Street. Interruptions in the vertical plane of the façade can break larger buildings into multiple masses. Bays and pilasters should be used to reflect the scale and rhythm of vintage commercial buildings.

Boulevard Office/Commercial

YES: Appropriate



Wide façades should be broken up into multiple masses, rather than consisting of a single uninterrupted plane. However, the overall scale could be somewhat larger than in the depot district, since there is no historical precedent on the site.

Residential

YES: Appropriate



Detached single-family houses can vary according to individual taste, so long as their scale is basically compatible with adjacent existing houses. Where patio homes, townhouses, and other residential options are indicated, building masses should be broken into distinct elements through façade projections & recesses, balconies, gable/roofline changes and dormers.

NO: Inappropriate



Large-scale buildings unbroken by individual massing elements would overwhelm the depot district and its vintage setting.

NO: Inappropriate



Large-scale buildings consisting of a single uninterrupted façade plane tend to make new development seem out-of-scale and unfriendly to pedestrians.

NO: Inappropriate



New single-family houses should avoid changes in scale that are incompatible with neighboring houses on the block.

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

FAÇADE DESIGN

Depot District

YES: Appropriate



The building front should have display windows, and building entrances should have entry features such as entry alcoves, canopies, and detailed door surrounds. Transom windows are appropriate. Pedestrian interest should also be created by use of non-structural elements such as awnings, planters, and window boxes.

Boulevard Office/Commercial

YES: Appropriate



Buildings should have transparent, non-tinted windows with a vertical or ganged vertical orientation on all street facades. Building entrances should be set off by entry features such as detailed door surrounds. Where one building houses several establishments, multiple exterior entrances should be used instead of one main entrance to interior offices.

Residential

YES: Appropriate



A variety of design is appropriate according to individual taste. New houses should have the principal entry door and at least two windows facing the primary street, along with a usable front porch. If a garage is present, it should be set back behind the primary façade at least two feet. Lots 50 feet wide or less should have alley access rather than front driveways.

NO: Inappropriate



Poor design is indicated by building fronts lacking in façade elements; no windows or tinted/blind windows; and entry doors that are not demarcated by design elements.

NO: Inappropriate



Façades very different in character to those existing in the depot district are not appropriate, even if their scale, massing, and setback are appropriate. This building is too contemporary and includes excessive first floor glazing and other elements that have little in common with vintage buildings in the area.

NO: Inappropriate



Garages located in front of the front building wall of the house are inappropriate, as are driveways serving narrow lots. House fronts should have windows and doors to create a sense of “facing” the street.

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

ROOF FORMS AND MATERIALS

Depot district



Flat roofs with a front parapet are appropriate on principal buildings in the depot district. Metal, peaked roofs are appropriate on smaller buildings of secondary importance.

Boulevard Office/Commercial



Flat roofs with a parapet façade are appropriate architectural elements, as are gabled roofs as long as they have a maximum pitch of 12:12. Roof materials can be standing-seam metal or shingles of various materials, but shingled roofs should have a dark color.

Residential



A variety of roof forms and materials are appropriate according to individual taste. Roof heights should be compatible with existing houses on adjacent lots (for example, use of a low-pitched roof can ensure that a two-story house does not loom over an adjacent one-story house or infringe on the privacy of its back yard.)

ON-STREET PARKING

Depot district & other commercial



“Head-in” or perpendicular parking should not be used along streets as it is difficult for drivers to negotiate when backing out, making it detrimental to safe driving. Diagonal parking is optimal in the depot district. It is easy for drivers to negotiate and provides more spaces per linear foot of frontage than parallel parking. If state road restrictions prevent diagonal parking, parallel is acceptable. Either way, bulbouts should be used to define the ends of parking rows, help pedestrians cross, and visually narrow the street.

Residential



Informal (unmarked) parallel parking along residential streets is fine, since these areas do not need as much parking as commercial districts. The occasional car parked along the road edge helps to slow traffic by “narrowing” the pavement. For other housing types than single-family houses (such as townhouses), marked spaces may be necessary.

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

OFF-STREET PARKING Depot district



No parking requirement should apply to re-use of existing buildings in the depot district. This will promote re-use of vintage buildings, and prevent the interruption of the streetscape by parking lots.

Any off-street parking that is provided to serve depot district uses should be shared or public parking so that duplicative lots for individual uses do not proliferate, destroying the streetscape. The pedestrian ways from parking to destinations should be along the main street-front sidewalk to the extent possible, and parking should never occur between buildings and the street, but internally to blocks.

SIDEWALKS Depot district and boulevard office-commercial



Boulevard Office/Commercial



Off-street parking should consist of the minimum number of spaces that will adequately serve the development. Parking areas should be broken up into smaller areas serving multiple building entries rather than provided as a single large lot. Most parking should be located to the side or rear of buildings, with no more than half the parking located between buildings and the primary street.

Residential



Garages should not be located between the residence and the street, and narrow lots should be served by alleys to avoid multiple driveway cuts. Where lots are less than 60 feet wide, alleys (or in the case of townhouses, an alternative is clustered garages) should be provided to eliminate multiple driveways and garage doors on the street.

Residential



Shared streets (without separate sidewalks) will predominate in single-family areas. To ensure safety, it is necessary to tame vehicle speed with narrow pavement width and indirect routes to prevent cut-through traffic.

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

STREET FURNISHINGS AND LIGHTING

Depot district



Trash receptacles and benches should be placed at regular intervals consistent with good retail district standards. Seating should be placed so that users face activity and can watch other people. Seasonal plantings and flower boxes (both publicly and privately maintained) add color and a sense that the district is well cared for.

Depot district



Lighting should be no more than 20 feet in height, and consist of decorative fixtures with full cut-off shielding to eliminate glare, and true color rendition. Rather than a Victorian style, an early-mid 20th century fixture (such as the one pictured) may be more appropriate to the vintage setting of the depot district. Street and parking signage should be consolidated to the extent possible by being installed on light poles, rather than proliferating on separate posts.

Residential



Street furnishings are limited in single-family residential areas and consist mainly of lighting. New lighting should be no more than 20 feet high, and consist of decorative fixtures with full cut-off shielding to eliminate glare, and true color rendition (white light). Utilities should be installed underground or in rear alleys for new development.

LANDSCAPING

Residential



Consistent with the existing, informal typology of Old Town neighborhoods, shade trees planted in front yards are more appropriate than street trees at regular intervals. Installation or preservation of shade trees should be required in front yards of new dwellings.

Depot district and Boulevard office-commercial



Street trees should be installed in tree grates at the curb side of sidewalks in commercial areas. Foliage will filter sunlight and soften building edges to create an attractive commercial district.

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

FENCES AND WALLS Commercial



Appropriate materials are metal, stone (especially local granite), and brick. Inappropriate materials are split rail, treated or unpainted wood, chain link, and wire.

Residential



Appropriate materials are stone (especially local granite), wire, and picket. Chain link and unpainted wood fencing is also appropriate in side and rear yards adjacent to the street. Inappropriate materials include chain link with vinyl slats.



IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

The goals of this plan are more than simply aspirational, and the time and energy invested in the plan process – by citizens, Town staff, businesspeople, and property owners – add up to more than just a community-building exercise. The vision articulated by the stakeholders and outlined in this plan is intended to become reality over time. To make this happen, there are specific actions as well as ongoing activities that need to be carried out; this is known as “plan implementation.”

A primary task is to form an implementation committee to lead and oversee implementation. It should be comprised of Town staff, a Town elected official, a member of the Land Use Review Board, and Old Town citizen representatives. The committee may assign and coordinate the actions of others, and its members may also carry out activities themselves. The committee should schedule periodic review of implementation status, for example at quarterly intervals.

Other implementation tasks are described throughout this plan in detail; for convenient reference they are collected and summarized in the Implementation Table beginning on the next page. To increase the likelihood of successful implementation, responsibility for each task is assigned, and a general time frame established for accomplishment. The Implementation Table is intended to serve as the guide for the implementation committee’s activities and periodic status updates.

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

<u>Category and Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
A. Implementation Oversight		
A1. Establish implementation oversight committee composed of elected official, Land Use Review Board member, Town staff and neighborhood representatives; schedule periodic meetings and status updates on plan implementation.	Town Council	Q2, 2007
B. Unified Development Ordinance		
B1. Modify the base zoning districts applied to the residential areas and depot district of Old Town Knightdale. The modified zoning should apply dimensional and form standards that reflect the existing/desired physical pattern (mostly detached houses on moderate-sized lots), the principles of the Neighborhood design district in the Comp Plan, and a Neighborhood Village focus area for the depot district and its expansion area. Review allowed uses to ensure that they are compatible with single-family housing, eliminate incompatible uses, and allow potentially incompatible uses only by Special Use permit and/or added performance standards.	Town Staff	Q2, 2007
B2. Modify the base zoning district for application to the greenfield tract along Knightdale Boulevard. The modified zoning should be based on the design principles of the HB district, plus standards for building layout, walkways, and vehicular use areas. It should limit allowable uses mainly to office and professional uses, with a limited amount and range of other commercial uses sufficient to support the office-professional space.	Town staff	Q3, 2007
B3. Amend the zoning map for Old Town to ensure that zoning is in basic conformity with this Plan.	Town staff	Q2, 2007
B4. Develop a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District for application to residential areas that addresses at least lot size, house size, and setbacks, and possibly other aspects of physical character that are relevant, based on neighborhood concerns.	Town staff	Q2, 2007

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

<u>Category and Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
B5. Clarify or interpret Section 4.3 (Lot and Yard Requirements) to apply to residential areas of Old Town.	Town staff	Q2, 2007
B6. Apply mixed-use building type standards, as modified according to the Architectural and Urban Design Principles section, to infill and new development in the depot district.	Town staff	Q3, 2007
B7. Modify the commercial building type standards to apply to the boulevard office-commercial area at the north edge of Old Town according to the guidance in the Architectural and Urban Design Principles section.	Town staff	Q3, 2007
B8. Extend tree and vegetation preservation standards to Old Town to apply to new lots smaller than 2 acres and to new development on existing lots.	Town staff	Q3, 2007
B9. Amend the street standards to shorten the maximum block length for new streets in Old Town (to be closer to the existing block lengths) and to require indirect routing and other transportation measures for new streets in Old Town as described in the transportation section.	Town staff	Q2, 2007
B10. Amend the standards for lights for parking areas in Old Town to reflect the smaller scale of buildings and the character of the area. Require special upgraded light poles for the commercial area, and extend the Town's full cutoff (anti-glare) requirement to all new lighting.	Town staff	Q3, 2007
B11. Add a "local street" cross-section for a "shared street" type to the infrastructure standards to allow ribbon pavement and swale in areas designated for a shared-street approach in Old Town.	Town staff	Q2, 2007
B12. Review and adjust regulatory policies to make it easy to upgrade and expand homes in Old Town.	Town staff	Q4, 2007
B13. Modify the urban design and architectural standards as needed for Old Town to reflect the Architectural and Urban Design Principles.	Town staff	Q3, 2007
B14. Adopt parking policies to ensure intelligent use of existing and new public parking spaces in the depot district as business revitalization occurs.	Town staff	Q1, 2008

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

<u>Category and Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
C. Capital Improvements Planning & Programming		
C1. Add capital improvements outlined in the plan (such as streetscape improvements, park acquisition & development, sidewalk construction, pedestrian connections, and traffic calming devices) to the Town's capital improvements program. Priorities should include the core goals on p. 40, streetscape improvements in the depot district, and the development of a community park along First Avenue.	Town staff and Town Council	Q2, 2008
C2. Develop specific plans for the community park, linear park facilities, and streetscape improvements to the Depot District, to ensure that these facilities reflect deliberate, high-quality choices to meet community needs and goals (rather than an ad-hoc approach).	Town staff and Town Council	Q2, 2008
D. Community Involvement and Financial and Technical Assistance		
D1. Work with residents to facilitate the formation of a voluntary neighborhood association for the residential areas in Old Town.	Committee	Q1, 2008
D2. Designate a Town staff member as a facilitator to assist property owners and investors with regulatory or procedural hurdles, such as Wake County Department of Community Services inspections, to improving buildings or land; to promote the voluntary use of the NC Rehab Code at the option of the property owner; and to publicize and facilitate the use of SBA 503 loans.	Town Staff	Q2, 2007
D3. Consider the development of a rental licensing program.	Committee	Q4, 2007
D4. Establish a linked-deposit program for low-interest rehabilitation loans to encourage property owners to reinvest in their housing.	Committee	Q2, 2009
D5. Consider establishing a purchase incentive program to fund or waive appraisal fees, origination fees, application fees or other costs associated with the purchase of property for homeownership within a specified district.	Committee	Q4, 2008

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

<u>Category and Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
D6. Consider establishing a program to provide technical assistance to homeowners on rehabilitating and upgrading houses.	Committee	Q4, 2008
D7. Review and adjust regulatory policies to make it easy to upgrade and expand homes in Old Town.	Committee	Q2, 2007
D8. Facilitate the creation of a marketing committee to work with brokers and property owners and increase the market profile of the older housing in the local and regional market, identify them by their historic names, adding low-profile signage to increase visibility and neighborhood pride, and establish a local historic district, and develop marketing materials about incentives.	Committee	Q2, 2009
E. Business Development		
E1. Compete for façade improvement or rehabilitation loans and grants available through the HUD CDBG program through Wake County's Department of Community Services.	Committee	Q4, 2008
E2. For the depot district, establish a Town matching loan/grant program and business micro loans in concert with private contributors such as banks. Consider a Town-administered small business loan guarantee program, in concert with the U.S. Small Business Administration.	Committee	Q4, 2009
E3. Facilitate the formation of a business recruitment committee to attract market-relevant businesses to the depot district and create a marketing strategy based on the components outlined in the Market Report (such as developing incentives, outreach marketing, and technical advisement) and in the "Historic Depot District" section.	Committee	Q4, 2008
E4. Review the possibility of establishing tax relief programs for business development, such as an incentive grant for upper-floor renovation, business property tax credits through the Quality Jobs and Expansion Act, or TIF models.	Committee	Q2, 2009
E5. Review the possibility of establishing grants or subsidies for retail entrepreneurs, such as rental assistance or matching funds, through CDBG grants or from the budget.	Committee	Q4, 2009

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

<u>Category and Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
E6. Work with the Knightdale Chamber of Commerce to bring in business technical advisors to work with local entrepreneurs or small businesses within the depot district.	Committee	Q1, 2009
E7. Work with the NC Main Street program to find ways that its principles and assistance can be adapted for use in the depot district.	Committee	Q4, 2007
F. Other		
F1. Develop an overall marketing program for Old Town that coordinates residential and commercial implementation items.	Committee	Q4, 2009

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

Throughout on-site planning activities, the Project Team met with a variety of stakeholders to collect input relevant to the Old Town Knightdale plan. In numerous individual and group sessions collectively totaling over 25 hours, members of the team heard from residents, property owners, civic volunteers, Town officials, business owners, historic preservation advocates, and other interested persons. The following is a very condensed summary of the observations and comments received throughout the planning process, organized loosely within topical headings.

Infill and Contextual Compatibility

- Strong concerns about code provisions that allow small houses on narrow/small lots in a neighborhood with an existing development pattern of wider lots
- Setbacks in an established neighborhood ought to be the same as the average of those on the same block
- Recent new development has been incompatible with existing development in terms of urban design; new home plans and scale should be more compatible with existing houses
- Tiny rental houses are depressing reinvestment market for existing ranch houses because neighborhood is perceived to be unstable
- Vision that was shown to the community in the Comp Plan process was more upscale than what happened during implementation
- Require 2-story houses, which would eliminate spec building as rentals
- On the vacant land adjacent to Old Town single-family neighborhoods, transition area should also be single-family residential

Transportation and Parking

- Need to calm traffic on neighborhood roads; make safe for children and other pedestrians
- Traffic is increasing on Smithfield Rd as connection between Hwy 64 and 264
- Gridded, interconnected street network is a plus; keep it & extend it into greenfield areas; traffic calming such as T-intersections, narrow pavement width, and offset intersections are essential to successful interconnectivity
- Need sidewalks along major roads (especially Smithfield Road)
- Need crossing improvements at Knightdale Blvd & Smithfield Road intersection
- Eliminate some of the need to drive everywhere
- Do not let Smithfield Road go to 4 or 5 lanes
- Include transportation options for people with physical handicaps
- Need to address parking needs near Harper Park and the First Avenue depot district; include options such as shared parking with church

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

Housing and Neighborhoods

- Houses are believed to be undersized to current purchase preferences; perception is that bigger houses and higher prices are mandated everywhere in Knightdale except Old Town
- Poor maintenance and need for code enforcement on some dilapidated properties
- Protect nice houses on large lots with mature trees on the east side of Smithfield Road
- Old Town neighborhoods are entitled to as much respect and quality standards as new suburban subdivisions
- There are many historic/vintage houses from the period 1910-1930; would like to see these identified with plaques stating the year of construction & original owner
- Downsizing/older buyers like the area because many houses are older but in excellent shape

Environmental

- Stormwater runoff issues and localized ponding/flooding after storms; will get worse if impervious surface coverage increases
- Need strong tree preservation standards in Old Town

Commercial Development

- Current code requirements discourage reinvestment/reuse of older commercial buildings in core; concern about the cost of improvements associated with a change in use
- First Street business district only has 9 small buildings and there is not enough land for expansion to create critical mass
- Commercial businesses on 64 are relocating to I-540; need strategy for 64
- Would like to see viable commercial development in the First Avenue district
- Need flexibility on standards to encourage business development; being too strict with rules interpretation can inhibit business opportunities

Visual Character & Community Identity

- Use the historic nature of old town as a feature, amenity and marketing point
- Preserve historically significant residences
- Old Town is a “hidden gem” for peace and quiet as well as mature trees
- Commercial development in old town needs to be local-serving
- Would like Suggs property to be developed as extension of old town: grid pattern, somewhat denser, mix of uses including cultural uses and senior housing
- Market is felt to be strong for detached single-family houses, patio homes, townhomes. and multifamily for seniors
- Issue with increased rental is potential neighborhood instability

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

Parks and Recreational Opportunities

- Have a place for outdoor movies in the summer, theater in the park, craft shows, other events
- Need more greenways and walking trails like the new park behind Town Hall
- Need a dog park; there is not one east of Raleigh
- Have to cross Knightdale Blvd to get to parks and recreation opportunities
- Library was relocated north of Knightdale Blvd

Strengths of Old Town

- Civic-mindedness among property owners
- Feeling of safety
- Last small tight-knit community in the area
- Extended family networks; mix of ages
- Knowing neighbors and their dogs
- People feel “togetherness” at church, on neighborhood streets, at the park

Weaknesses of Old Town

- Traffic on Smithfield Road
- Residents who aren’t part of the community (renters who don’t have a stake in the neighborhood)
- Duplication in development without character or charm
- Can’t get across major streets on foot, so must drive
- City leadership does not reside in Old Town
- With small lots, can’t add to house because already maxed out on site; value declines as house gets older but can’t be enlarged.

Models

- Selma
- Fuquay-Varina – strong mayoral leadership has successfully brought old and new community together
- Smithfield
- Garner – downtown revitalization effort
- Magnolia Glen retirement village
- Cary (Koka Booth amphitheater at Regency Park)

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September 12, 2006, “Old Town Knightdale Market Reconnaissance”, Randy Gross/Development Economics

This memorandum summarizes a preliminary assessment of existing market conditions and overall marketability of the Old Town Knightdale study area. This information is based on reconnaissance but does not represent a market analysis or forecasts of land use demand within the area. Rather, the focus of this research is on overall existing marketing context for the purposes of strengthening the marketing “identity” for the Old Town core area.

Existing Conditions

A site assessment was undertaken to identify key factors affecting the overall identity and marketing of the Old Town core. These factors relate to location, access, visibility, business “zones,” existing business mix, and competitive context.

Location & Access

US Highway 64 Business (Knightdale Boulevard) provides direct access west into Raleigh (New Bern Avenue / Edenton Street) and east into the rural town of Wendell. This commercial corridor also links Knightdale with I-440 and the Triangle metro area, as well as to the new I-540 currently under construction. The newly opened US 64/264 freeway south of the study area, provides limited-access highway transportation into Raleigh as an alternative for commuters.

The older, traditional core of the study area is accessed from Knightdale Boulevard via Smithfield Road or First Avenue. The town clearly developed as a result of railroad access, and a small depot station house and caboose are still situated in the Old Knightdale core along First Avenue. However, the town is now dependent on Knightdale Boulevard for its market access.

Distinct Business Zones

The Study Area’s business base is characterized by two distinct commercial areas, the Knightdale Boulevard Corridor and Old Town center. These two areas are connected by Smithfield Road and First Avenue, but otherwise share very little in common in terms of identity or business mix.

Knightdale Boulevard Corridor. Knightdale Boulevard is a typical highway commercial strip anchored by several community shopping centers and “big box” retail stores, along with fast food chains and some modest office, service, and industrial use. Commercial uses are clustered along the corridor but also within a semi-circle formed by McKnight Drive. Key shopping centers and anchor uses in this area include Steeple Square (anchored by Food Lion), Lowe’s, Wal-Mart, and Knightdale Crossing Shopping

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Center (formerly anchored by Winn-Dixie). Banks located on pad sites are the primary office use in the area. An industrial area is located off of Forest Drive.

Old Town Center. The older commercial center of Knightdale is concentrated on several small streets surrounded by residential uses. The commercial node is characterized not by retail uses but rather by personal and automotive service establishments. The old railroad caboose serves as a focal point for the small, traditional railroad node located along First Avenue. A fitness center, glassmaker, and auto repair businesses represent the diverse service uses in this area. South across the rail line is another small business area along Railroad Street. Several small barber shops / personal service businesses are located in this street and scattered along Fayetteville Street and a few other roads in the area. Several civic uses (e.g., County Voluntary Fire Department, Knightdale Baptist Church, Lion's Club) are also located in the Old Town center. Overall, the hub has a basic identity as the service and civic center of a small southern community that retains some physical links to its railroad history.

Visibility

Commercial uses along Knightdale Boulevard have excellent access to commuter traffic from Knightdale, Wendell, and points further east. However, the core area of Knightdale is not visible from this major regional commuter route, nor from US 64/264 or from any other major regional roads. Rather, the town center is accessible via a minor arterial road (Smithfield Road) and a collector road (First Avenue/Bethlehem Road) that meander south from Knightdale Boulevard. Visibility for the Old Town node from Smithfield Road is not very good, with most existing businesses located off of this “main” road along First Avenue and Railroad Street. None of these are commuter routes that offer access or visibility for pass-through traffic that would build market support for Old Town. Therefore, the lack of visibility is a serious constraint.

Existing Business Inventory

Existing business uses were inventoried within the study area from field reconnaissance and square footage is estimated based on a visual survey. The uses were aggregated into two distinct business zones – the Knightdale Boulevard Corridor versus the Old Town center.

The two areas together have a total estimated inventory of more than 140 businesses occupying approximately 765,000 square feet of retail and office commercial space. There is also an estimated 100,000 square feet of vacant space located in this area, accounting for 11.6% of total commercial space. A large share of this vacant space is concentrated in the Knightdale Crossing Shopping Center, where the Winn-Dixie store has vacated a large anchor space.

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Retail

Almost 100 retail businesses collectively occupy about 645,000 square feet, which is roughly the size of a modest shopping mall. About 42% of retail store space is in shopper goods stores (e.g., Wal-Mart, Lowe's, Dollar General, and smaller businesses), while 14% is in convenience goods (e.g., CVS, Food Lion, florists, etc). Almost 10% of the businesses are restaurants, but two-thirds (15 out of 22) are fast-food and take-away establishments. Among the fast-food restaurants are the following:

Dunkin Donuts	McDonalds
Bojangles	Waffle House
Hardees	Subway
Burger King	Papa John's
Arby's	Kentucky Fried Chicken
Taco Bell	Wendy's

There are also some personal service businesses (e.g., hair & nail salons) in the area, accounting for 3% of the retail space overall, but accounting for 28% of the business space within the Old Town center. There are very few shopper goods stores, and no restaurants or entertainment businesses in the older area.

Office

There is an estimated 95,000 square feet of office space in this area, with a least 30 businesses. Office space is occupied by banks and other financial institutions, attorneys, accountants, medical clinics, realtors, insurance agents and others. In general, the office space includes primarily tenants

Table 1.

BUSINESS USE BY TYPE, OLD KNIGHTDALE AND AREA, 2006 (estimate)

Type of Use	Sample # Businesses	Estimated Sq. Ft.	Share of Total	Share in Village
<u>Retail</u>				
Convenience	13	120,400	13.9%	7.7%
Shopper Goods	25	366,800	42.4%	1.6%
Personal Service	19	28,900	3.3%	28.0%
Eating & Drinking	22	77,700	9.0%	0%
Fast Food/Take-Out	15	51,000	5.9%	0%
Entertainment	-	-	0%	0%
Sub-Total	94	644,800	74.5%	3.6%
<u>Office</u>				
Finance	11	36,000	4.2%	0.0%
Insurance	4	8,700	1.0%	0%
Real Estate	3	6,500	0.8%	0%
Medical	6	22,100	2.6%	8.1%
Atty, Other	7	22,000	2.5%	22.7%
Sub-Total	31	95,300	11.0%	7.1%
Other Businesses	10	25,000	2.9%	26.0%
Vacant Commercial	6	100,000	11.6%	2.8%
TOTAL	141	865,100	100.0%	4.5%

Note: Square footage is estimated. Based on sample.

Sources: Business owners and Randall Gross /
Development Economics

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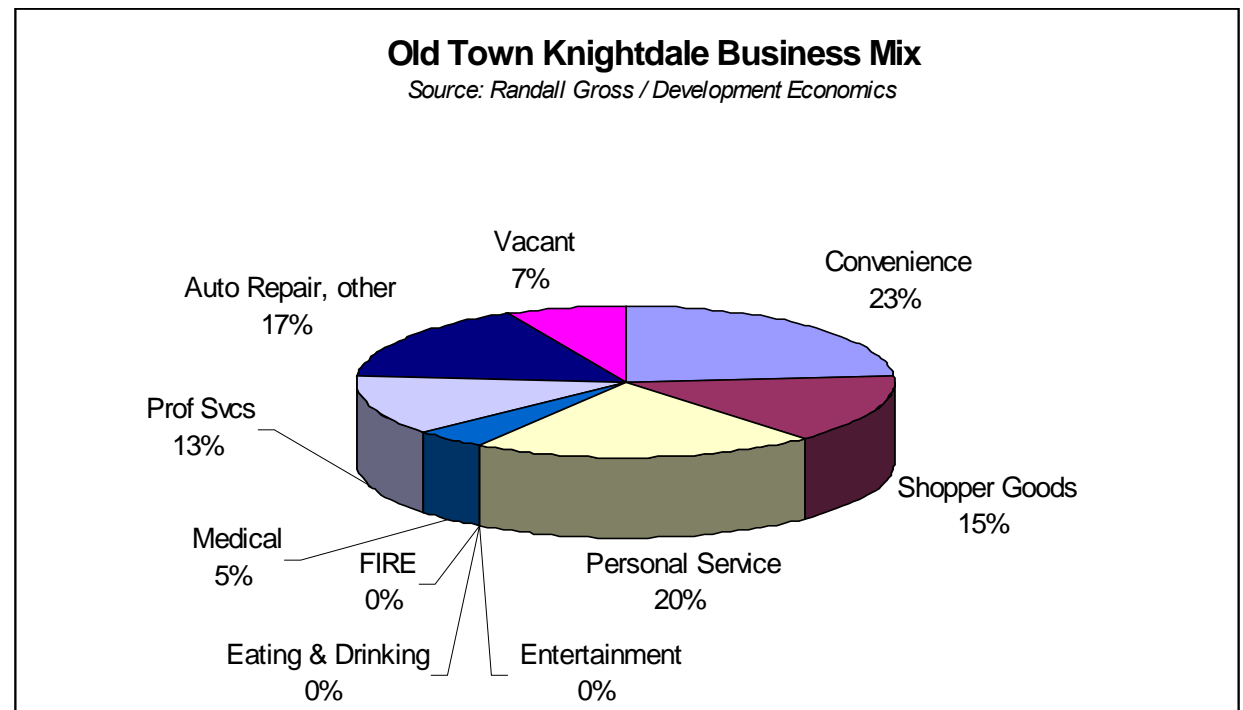
that serve the local area household base, rather than corporate, research, professional/technical, or similar office tenants characteristic of the RTP area. There is very little office space within the Old Town center, other than a few attorneys, dentist, and similar local-serving professionals.

Other Businesses

Other commercial business space is occupied by automotive service and other repair/service businesses, which represent less than 3% of overall commercial space but account for about 26% of space within the Old Town core. There is also an industrial business area off of Knightdale Boulevard. The commercial business inventory is summarized in the following table.

Summary

In general, the study area is characterized by a typical strip commercial mix of chain retail “big box” stores and nominal office uses that primarily serve the local market and commuters along the Knightdale Boulevard corridor. The mix is weighted towards shopper and convenience goods chain stores, but also includes a number of franchised fast-food restaurants. There are few “sit-down” restaurants in the area and very little entertainment. The Old Town core is heavily oriented to personal and auto service establishments, and is lacking in shopper goods and convenience retail categories. There is no dining or entertainment within the Old Knightdale core.



Competitive Commercial Areas

The natural retail trade area for Old Town would include residential areas around Knightdale and further east into Wendell. Old Town businesses would compete with existing retail establishments not only along the Knightdale Boulevard corridor west into Raleigh but also with businesses to the east in Wendell.

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Wendell is characterized by a small business district with typical “Main Street” establishments clustered, like in many North Carolina communities, on either side of the rail line. The area is also served by national chains including Citgo, McDonalds, Dollar General, Food Lion, Family Dollar, and others. Wendell is located 15 miles from Raleigh, so it is far enough away that most convenience shopping is done within Wendell itself or along the Knightdale Boulevard corridor.

The Knightdale Boulevard Corridor has substantial retail inventory, not only within the Knightdale area, but further west into Raleigh. From I-440 east, New Bern Avenue (US Highway 64 Business in Raleigh) is characterized by significant new residential and retail commercial construction, with large “big box” retail chains represented. Commercial activity is also significant from I-540 (including Shoppes at Midway Plantation and Village Park Commons, with a total of more than 850,000 square feet under development) into Knightdale. However, there is limited commercial use east from Knightdale along Knightdale Boulevard until the Wendell central business district. Altogether, the Knightdale Boulevard Corridor has an estimated 1.5 to 2.0 million square feet of competitive retail commercial space.

MARKET REVIEW & OPPORTUNITIES FOR IDENTITY MARKETING

This section provides a brief market overview and suggests concepts for identity marketing within the historic business district of Old Knightdale.

Development Trends & Proposals

The Town of Knightdale has provided information on development projects under construction, in various stages of planned, or proposed within the Town borders. These projects are summarized below.

Current / Under Construction

- Mingo Creek Subdivision. Located on the west side of the Eastern Wake Expressway (I-540) and south of the railroad. A total of 488 units planned, including 281 units under construction since project start in 2000. Speculative apartment and townhouse developments are proposed adjacent to this project.
- Churchill Subdivision. Situated across from Mingo Creek on the east side of I-540. A total of 544 units are planned, including 96 units currently under construction or completed since the project started earlier this year. A small speculative development has been proposed adjacent to the south-eastern edge of Churchill.

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- Princeton Manor Subdivision. Located on the western side of Knightdale, north of the rail line, this project has 446 units planned and 209 units under construction. The project started approximately 2002.
- River Estates Townhomes. Located on the west side of I-540 at Lynnwood Road, this townhouse project was built starting in 2004 and had 47 units. These houses may have some comparability to possible higher-density development within the town center.
- Widewaters Village Subdivision. Situated south of Knightdale Boulevard between Planters Walk and Parkside, this project includes a total of 258 residential units completed or under construction. The project started construction in 2003. The 332-unit Widewaters Commons Apartments are under development just north of the single-family subdivision and south of Knightdale Boulevard.
- Magnolia Place Subdivision. This project is located near the intersection of Forestville Road and North Smithfield Road near Edinburgh's Keep, just north of Knightdale Boulevard and Old Knightdale. The project, begun in 2001, has 54 units completed or under construction. The 288-unit Berkshire Park apartment complex is currently being proposed just south of Magnolia Place, on the north side of Knightdale Boulevard.
- Emerald Pointe Subdivision. Located at Old Knight Road and Aqua Marine Drive, this large residential subdivision has 374 units planned and 280 units under construction, beginning in 1995. This is one of the few residential developments located north or west of Old Knightdale.
- Shoppes at Midway Plantation. This retail/commercial project on Knightdale Boulevard is well underway with completion set for this year. The big-medium box project includes a total of 420,699 square feet plus seven outparcels. Anchors, including Target, have already opened. But, many of the smaller spaces in outbuildings are not yet leased.

Planned

- Poplar Village. A mixed use community that will include 272 residential units plus office/commercial space is planned just south of I-540 and US 64/264. Construction on this project has not yet begun.
- Beaver Dam Plantation Subdivision. This 243-unit residential development has begun site improvements and is planned for

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Horton Road (and Old Crews Road) surrounding Beaverdam Creek and north of the town center area.

- Brookefield Station Subdivision. Located west of the town center near Lewis Landing, this project has begun site improvements and is planned to include 130 units.
- Langston Ridge Subdivision. Situated south of Knightdale Boulevard and west of I-540 off of Hodge Road, this project is preparing to begin site improvements and is planned to include 226 residential units, filling out much of the western portions of Knightdale west of I-540.
- Panther Rock Subdivision. The developer of this 475-unit project has submitted preliminary site plans. The project would be located south of the US 64/264 and west of I-540, in the southwestern corner of Knightdale.
- Village Park Commons. This 430,650 square-foot retail/commercial project is planned and approved on Knightdale Boulevard (just west of Parkside). It includes the new Super Wal*Mart, which is expanding and relocating from a smaller 85,000 square-foot store adjacent to the study area.
- Riverview Commons. This 86,440 square-foot retail/commercial center is planned at Poole and Hodge roads, west of the planned I-540 in the southwest portion of Knightdale. An apartment complex has been proposed for development adjacent to this commercial site.

Proposed / Speculative

- Developers are considering residential development on a large parcel sandwiched between Widewaters (n), Churchill (sw), and Brookfield (e). Another speculative development is being considered at Old Crews and Forrestville roads, across from the Beaver Dam Plantation project. However, that project would require utility extensions.
- Cypress Tree. Speculative development located south-west of the Old Town center off of Smithfield Road near Broadway. This project is waiting on other projects to gain utility capacity extensions. If developed, this project would generate important market support and household expenditure potential for the town center.
- Harper Tract. Another speculative development south and west of the Old Town core, this residential project borders the

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study area between Robertson and Fayetteville streets. It is also waiting on utility connections.

- Wilder Tract. This speculative residential development would be located just north and east of the Old Town core, east of North First Avenue and the railroad. The project is waiting on utility connections.
- ETD/Wardson. A large tract within the Town's ETJ could be developed with 1,000 residential units (single-family, townhouses, and apartments), plus retail. The zoning application process is just starting. The project would be located north-east of the study area, on the south side of Knightdale Boulevard at Massey Farm Road.
- Carter Development. Several large developments have been proposed along both sides of the I-540 Corridor, north of Knightdale Boulevard. The Carter site may include medical uses including a branch of Duke Health, plus medical office space and retail. Northern portions of this site are more likely to include high to low-density residential. Another site further north might include higher-end residential.
- Riddle Property. Commercial/office development proposed on 21 acres along the relocated Lynnwood Road and the south side of Knightdale Boulevard. The property may include medical uses, including a branch of Rex Hospital.
- Several additional retail/commercial developments are proposed, including redevelopment of the Square D property on Knightdale Boulevard near Rose of Sharon, plus a commercial center at the Neuse River, on Knightdale Boulevard west of I-540. Wake Med has proposed a new medical facility east of the study area near US 64/264 and Knightdale-Eagle Rock Road.

Absorption Summary

Based on this summary of recent development, the Town of Knightdale may have absorbed an average of about 203 new residential units per year since 2000. Given that there are 2,664 units planned (or to be built in existing projects), then it will take another 13 years to build out this development based on recent absorption patterns. This inventory does not include any of the proposed developments, which could add thousands of units. Of course, Knightdale's absorption is likely to increase in coming years as the area becomes more aggressively marketed and other portions of the Triangle become built-out or too expensive for the middle market.

Knightdale has had estimated net absorption of about 280,000 square feet of retail/commercial space during the last five years, or about 56,000 square feet per year. While there has been new space coming on line, several older tenants (e.g., Winn Dixie) have closed. Much of the new space is being built along Knightdale Boulevard, in direct competition with the core of Old Town.

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Market Opportunities

While a market analysis was not completed to quantify the existing and future demand for land uses within the study area, several observations are offered below based on existing market reconnaissance.

Housing Housing demand is increasing throughout the Triangle, and the Knightdale area is clearly capturing a share of this growth. Knightdale has traditionally attracted blue- and pink-collar workers and move-ups from within the Raleigh area. Many of these residents moved to Knightdale in search of larger lots and more affordable housing.

However, the last few years have seen the area capture an increasing share of white-collar professionals and others relocating into the Triangle from other regions. The Town of Knightdale has been orienting its approvals process to encourage development of mid- and high-range housing in order to diversify the mix. The area also appears to be attracting an increasing share of 55+ residents, some of whom relocate to be close to their children who work at RTP or elsewhere in the region. At present, brokers estimate the mix of buyers at 70% Raleigh move-ups and 30% relocations.

The Study Area offers an opportunity for those in the market who prefer an older home or a more pastoral rural (and not suburban) community setting. In fact, some of the recent housing sales have been to relocating empty nesters who desire the slower, small-town ambiance of Knightdale. Existing housing stock within the study area varies in type and condition. Some existing units, while situated on large lots, are relatively small and have not been updated to meet the demand at the heart of the market for older homes. These factors may help explain why the housing is more affordable (per square foot) and why investors have converted certain units to rental.

The falling homeownership rate has alarmed some of the long-time residents who do own their homes. Because of the relatively low rents garnered for these properties, investors (some of whom are absentee landlords) are also less apt to maintain the condition of the housing and to expend resources to manage its tenants. Thus, the physical marketability of the housing stock has no doubt impacted on the overall conditions within the Study Area and on the homeownership rate.

At the same time, there are many lovely homes, including several historic properties that contribute to the overall small-town ambiance of the two older residential neighborhoods within the Study Area. Even some of these properties, however, suffer from a lack of investment and have not been upgraded to suit the needs of the modern homebuyer. There are some exceptions, including one house on the market that was recently restored to its original condition, including sanded hardwood floors and original windows, but with certain modern conveniences and upgrades.

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There are significant opportunities to build on the restoration and upgrading of existing housing, and to develop new housing in the greenfield portion of the study area that is consistent with the character of the vintage stock. There are also opportunities to capture more of the emerging 55+ as well as retirement market through development of new single-family detached, attached or mid-rise housing in the areas closest to Knightdale Boulevard.

Office Much of the growth in office demand in the study area will be driven initially by expansion in the household base. That growth will respond to increasing need for finance, insurance, real estate, medical, and professional services to serve the people living in the surrounding area. The aging of the population, and the concentration of retirement populations in Knightdale will help further increase demand for medical and personal services, which could locate in office space along Knightdale Boulevard (with the study area ideally situated between two planned medical centers).

As such, much of this demand would be captured along the key commercial corridors. However, there are opportunities for the town center to capture demand among the small companies and individuals who seek a “main street” location in a converted house or small office building. If retirement or 55+ housing becomes part of the mix in this area, then opportunities will increase for professional service offices nearby.

Retail There is significant competition from the increasing inventory of retail shopping centers being developed along the US64 Corridor. Opportunities within the Old Town center will increasingly rely on marketing to a specialty/ destination niche. Businesses representative of this niche might include craft-oriented producers & retailers (such as if the existing stained glass business offered retail merchandise), antique stores, spas/personal service establishments, restaurants, professional services, neighborhood convenience, and gift shops).

Because the core area lacks good visibility and access, the development of new housing and employment generators nearby is that much more important. Most of the existing and planned residential development on the western edge of Knightdale will not have a significant impact on the market for the town center. However, proposed residential developments on the eastern edge (and to the south) of the study area will provide an important market base as these residents will be more inclined to commute through or visit the town center en route to Raleigh or Knightdale Boulevard. Improved road access from these areas west to Smithfield Road / Knightdale Boulevard will become critical.

Developments on this eastern fringe include the ETD/Wardson, Wilder & Harper tracts, and Cypress Tree. Utility connections to these properties will help speed development, thereby assisting in creating a stronger market for the core. At the same time, absorption

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patterns may not support all of this development unless a strong marketing strategy can be developed that builds on the unique characteristics of the town center itself. These synergies are discussed further under marketing.

Identity Marketing Opportunities Old Town retains some of its architectural heritage as a rail town, but is also isolated from major market access. As a result, marketing strategies would logically relate to creating destination opportunities at small scale, to attract day trippers and regional visitors for a small town experience and to build on the growing nearby residential market. In addition to the rail heritage, Old Knightdale also benefits from having an anchor craft business (stained glass) that has unique national exposure. Building on this niche may provide for an interesting mix of businesses that would be relatively unique but popular in the Triangle region.

There is a need to build synergies between uses in the core area, such as between the older residential neighborhoods, new residential development, retirement housing, and the First Avenue business district. It is the overall “package” that can help promote improvement in the existing housing conditions, encourage developer interest in new housing, and revive the nascent downtown. Marketing of the business district by attracting small entrepreneurs through a proactive effort can be maximized if coordinated with development of new and infill housing in this area. This approach is consistent with the manner in which a “new urban” project developer markets the retail “town center” as an amenity to attract homebuyers to that concept. Any effort to improve the business district will help strengthen the overall identity of the area, encourage reinvestment in the older housing, and promote homeownership in existing homes.

Implementation

Several recommendations have been made for implementation, some of which have been captured in other portions of this plan. The following summarizes strategies specific to business development in the town center and to reinvestment in older housing through a “Neighborhood Investment District (NID).”

Business Strategy The business strategy focuses on strengthening the business district as an amenity by encouraging reinvestment and new business development. As noted previously, the business district can serve as an important amenity that adds value and reinvestment potential for existing and new housing stock within the study area.

Incentives There is a need to encourage a revival in the business district through incentives that make it easier and more desirable for businesses to locate there and for investors to improve property and develop small-scale, infill commercial buildings. Various incentives could be included as part of an overall “package” for businesses within a defined development “district” to attract investors. Among the potential incentives are the following:

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- A Town Facilitator, an existing staff member who would assist property owners or investors with regulatory or procedural hurdles, such as Wake County Department of Community Services inspections, to improve their buildings or land.
- Rehabilitation Building Codes. North Carolina has adopted Statewide codes that allow for easier rehabilitation of existing buildings. The Town Facilitator might work with the County to allow for better use of these new codes for rehabilitation within older commercial districts. More information about the code can be found at www.ncrehabcode.com.
- Façade Improvement or Rehabilitation Loans and Grants. There are funds available through the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to assist communities with rehabilitation of building stock in their business districts. Knightdale does not qualify as a CDBG Entitlement City, nor can it apply directly for the State's non-entitlement grants. Rather, Knightdale must compete for such grants through Wake County's Department of Community Services. There are also opportunities for Knightdale local government to provide matching loans or grants, in concert with private contributors such as banks. Local government might work with area banks to design a local rehabilitation loan program and matching grant that could be administered by the banks, with backing from local government to reduce risk (and therefore reduce the interest rate on the loan). Another option is provided by the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Corporation, which offers grants through a Building Rehabilitation Program. However, Knightdale may not necessarily qualify as it is not located in one of the State's more impoverished counties, targeted for the program. Historic preservation incentives such as tax credits are discussed elsewhere in this plan.
- Business Micro Loans. Similarly, local banks could establish a revolving loan fund in concert with local government to assist small businesses located within the special district. Some communities administer their own small business loan guarantee programs, in concert with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Businesses also work directly with the SBA (e.g., SBA 503 loans for long-term capital acquisition, administered in Wake County by the Capital Economic Development Corporation). A typical business loan program package might feature 8% loan for working capital or gap financing, 4% loan for energy-efficiency improvements, and 0% loan for accessibility improvements.
- Property Tax Abatements. While local governments in North Carolina cannot offer tax abatement per se, there are opportunities for Knightdale to offer a "payment in-lieu of" tax program. In this program, the local government can return an amount paid or anticipated in property tax revenue through a direct grant program. By doing so, local government can incent re-investment and revitalization under certain circumstances and in certain districts. There are examples of payments "in-lieu-of" (typically a negotiated amount) in North Carolina communities. Lincolnton offers an incentive grant for upper-floor renovation, offering \$10 for every \$100 in assessed value for building space placed back in service. Often, the grant amount is determined based on a tax

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increment financing (TIF) model, where the grant is equal to the amount in added tax revenue anticipated as a result of renovation or new construction. Finally, business property tax credits are available under certain circumstances through the State's William S. Lee Quality Jobs and Expansion Act.

- **Retail Entrepreneur Grants and Subsidies.** Many private developers are now offering temporary rental assistance or direct subsidies to attract small specialty retailers to projects where they are trying to market housing. This incentive is increasingly offered by local governments for downtown revitalization as well. While few North Carolina communities are offering a direct "subsidy" to businesses, many do provide incentives that amount to a cash allowance. In Wilson, for example, the City provides rental assistance for businesses in an amount up to \$6,000 for one year or \$8,400 for two years. Rocky Mount offers \$10,000 for two years in a 50% match. These programs are funded either through CDBG grants or from local budgets.
- **Business Technical Assistance.** The Town should work with the Knightdale Chamber of Commerce to bring in a merchandising specialist or other technical assistance on a one-time or once-per-year contract to work with local entrepreneurs or small businesses within the district (or those who wish to locate within the district).

Marketing Coupled with the incentive program would be an outreach marketing strategy. When a business district lacks direct visibility or access, then marketing becomes that much more important. It is recommended that Knightdale form a business recruitment committee, to include members appointed by the Mayor or other administrative official in concert with the Chamber of Commerce. This committee would work with existing and potential property owners and help encourage infill development in the business district. The committee would focus on matching the aforementioned incentives to the entrepreneurs and property investors; and with outreach marketing to specialty retail, craft producers, professional office, and personal & community service businesses that might wish to locate in the district.

Another marketing and downtown development strategy that has been used with success in historic central business districts is the National Main Street program. This program, as administered by the North Carolina Department of Commerce, appears to be geared toward downtown districts that are larger than Knightdale's depot district. It is also based on a model that may not specifically address Knightdale's unique needs. However, even if Knightdale does not qualify for participation as a NC Main Street community, certain aspects of the program may be helpful, and the community should investigate the publications and technical assistance that the program has to offer. Specifically, information on tax credits and property/business owner organization may be useful.

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Neighborhood Investment District (NID)

Within both of the older residential sections of Old Town, there is the need to encourage pro-active re-investment in housing for homeownership. The Neighborhood Investment District (NID) initiative is intended to accomplish this through stronger regulation as well as through financial and other incentives.

Regulation (“sticks”) Code enforcement and other regulatory tools are discussed elsewhere in this report. In addition to stronger code enforcement, there is the opportunity to develop a rental licensing program like those found in other North Carolina communities that requires landlords to meet certain standards in order to receive renewals on their licensing for rental property. Communities that have adopted rental licensing requirements, or similar programs, include Raleigh, Chapel Hill, Asheville, and Gastonia. Durham is developing a rental licensing program. Other communities outside North Carolina with programs include Fort Collins (Colorado), Kansas City, Wilmington (Delaware), and a number of communities in Minnesota and Maryland.

Incentives (“carrots”) There are several incentives that can also be implemented in tandem with stricter enforcement of regulations. Tax abatements, as discussed for commercial properties, can be provided based on the cost of rehabilitation (investment) made into properties. The Town can also establish a linked-deposit program for low-interest rehabilitation loans to encourage property owners to reinvest in their housing.

Homeownership can be encouraged through purchase incentives, where the Town works to help fund or waive appraisal fees, origination fees, application fees or other costs associated with the purchase of property for homeownership within a specified NID. These incentives are often funded through a local or state Housing Trust Fund (HTF), which has revenues dedicated for this purpose. The HTF is in turn financed through various means, such as late tax payment penalties, transfer tax revenues, and other sources. Where the local government does have some control over a tax or fee, then it can be used either as a waiver or as a source of revenue for the program. As with commercial investors, the Town can also provide technical assistance, such as through a “Paint & Porch Program” that brings out specialists to work for free with property owners on the best ways to rehabilitate and upgrade their houses. Technical assistance can be coupled with rehabilitation loans or grants as part of the Paint & Porch Program.

Finally, the Town can help remove some of the existing regulatory barriers that prevent existing homeowners from expanding their properties. Many of the existing homes in Old Town are less marketable because they are relatively small and do not meet the current market standards for size or layout. Therefore, strict regulation on the expansion of these homes only serves to make them less marketable and encourage rental use over homeownership, resulting in worsened physical conditions. Encouraging reinvestment in properties, including expansion, is essential and should be regulated primarily in terms of predictable, basic standards for design

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and form. A potential tool for this purpose (Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District) is discussed in more detail in the “Neighborhoods” section of the Plan.

Marketing As with the business district, it is recommended that Knightdale encourage the creation of a marketing committee to work with brokers and property owners and increase the market profile of the older housing in the local and regional market. Some ways to enhance the identity of the older neighborhoods might include referring to them by their historic names (if those exist) or creating new names for them, and adding low-profile signage to neighborhood entries to increase visibility and neighborhood pride. The committee would also develop marketing materials that would discuss the various aforementioned incentives. This committee would coordinate with the business district committee (and perhaps one member from each committee would serve on the other) as part of an overall marketing program for Old Town.

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Public policy documents that will shape the vision expressed for Old Town Knightdale include the Town's 2027 Comprehensive Plan and its Unified Development Ordinance, which governs zoning and subdivision matters. The implementation measures contained in the Old Town plan occur in the context of these existing documents.

In general, plan implementation requires some adjustment to public policy to advance plan goals arising from stakeholder preferences and the community's vision for itself. To that end, the following review of existing public policy documents describes the existing policy context and identifies areas where policy adjustments are needed.

While the Town's public policy surrounding growth and development is for the most part sound, in certain cases changes are needed to achieve the results that citizens have said they want. This report includes recommendations for changes and adaptations to development regulations and other public policies to serve the public interest and advance the city's goals.

I. 2027 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The update of the 1993 comprehensive plan resulting in the 2027 Comprehensive Plan (referred to hereafter as the "Comp Plan") was undertaken to create a quality vision for the Town's future in light of recent, strong growth pressures that are expected to continue. Knightdale is far ahead of many communities in having a Comp Plan that is intentionally structured around the most up-to-date concepts in planning today.

Stakeholder input

Strained road capacity and loss of community character as well as open space were among the top concerns expressed by stakeholders during the development of the plan. Other public input received during the Comp Plan formulation process relating to the Old Town study area strongly reflected a desire to retain the community's small town atmosphere (as opposed to conventional suburban growth patterns), while also offering some of the advantages of city life. Protecting the historic core was another goal, as was the potential opportunity for passenger rail service using the existing right-of-way. People also wanted to see more varied and higher-quality housing and retail development throughout the Town. Arts and cultural facilities, medical centers, and technical training centers were viewed as needed keystone projects.

Plan structure

Recognizing the importance of urban form in creating a memorable and livable community, the Comp Plan incorporated transportation, parks and recreation, open space and greenways, utilities, design districts, community services, and small area planning components

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into a unified vision for the community's future. The underpinning of these components was made up of visioning and resource analysis components, as well as statistical and historical background. Implementation strategies, including growth management recommendations, were included to bring the plan goals to fruition.

Finally, a series of Focus Area Plans was contemplated, with one focus area incorporated and reservation made for those still to be developed. The Old Town planning effort was undertaken in part as a result of the identification of the need for special attention to the area with a more focused plan.

Goals and principles

Goals and principles of the Comp Plan include good urban design that respects traditional town and rural settings, as well as the cultural, natural, and historic setting; livable neighborhoods; vibrant economic opportunities with equal access to all citizens; and responsive government structure and fiscal policy. The potential use of the existing railroad line or right-of-way for passenger transportation also is a major driver behind the urban core (Town Center designation) in the Comp Plan.

Design and form

A central feature of the Comp Plan is its emphasis on community form and development typology. A section called the Design District Master Plan applies a system to new development in which the use of land is determined by the zoning map, while the design and layout of those uses are dictated by the Design District Map and Design Guidelines.

Design Guidelines in the plan set flexible parameters for the form and character of development. They are applied through development plan review, and all new construction is to conform to the guidelines.

In addition to the general guidelines, more tailored guidelines apply to each of the different design districts. The character of the guidelines for the various districts ranges from rural to urban, with the Town Center being the most urban. A Design Matrix similar to the well-known new urbanist "transect" illustrates the spectrum of development conditions from rural to urban. The Countryside and Town Center design districts, as set out in the plan, lie at each end of the matrix. In the middle, the Neighborhood district occupies the mid-range, and Neighborhood Villages are intended as focal areas for mixed-use development of somewhat higher intensity serving the walkable radius of the surrounding neighborhood.

Town Center design district

The Town Center design district calls for the most urban pattern of any district – a compact mix of commercial uses and higher-

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density housing at the intensity “required to support a regional transit stop.” One problem in applying this urban pattern is that any potential transit system is still in the preliminary stages, and much work remains to be done before a degree of certainty is obtained concerning the development of the system. Changing the development rules prematurely could result in significant changes to the neighborhood without the assurance that transportation options will in fact be realized.

Another difficulty is that the specific type of transit system also affects the degree of intensity that can occur around it. A commuter rail line (versus a comprehensive regional rail system) will not facilitate high-intensity mixed-use development, but is suited more to park-and-ride or kiss-and-ride facilities in a suburban setting, because of its limited trip replacement capacity for non-commuter trips (which constitute the majority of trip generation associated with development).

Finally, the market demand and consumer preferences that generate and support Knightdale development are not necessarily oriented around a demand for “downtown” facilities and services of the type described in the Town Center design district. The indications are that people move to, or reinvest in, Knightdale as a place where they can still find a small town or suburban setting that is high-quality and yet cost-effective compared to other locations in the regional market. Demand for higher-intensity urban living, on the other hand, is better satisfied by other locales at present. While this preference may change over time, to prematurely exchange the existing character of Old Town residential areas for an altogether different character is to abandon the known valuable qualities that are currently driving reinvestment in Old Town (stability, peace and quiet, village community character, and so on) for an unknown set of characteristics, with unpredictable effects. Unpredictability is a known disincentive of both commercial and residential reinvestment, thus having strong potential for harming the Old Town area.

The Town Center urban concept is not without merit. Its principles may be applied advantageously at such time as financing and regional partnerships begin to make a regional rail system a reality. Whether that is over the long term or sooner depends on many variables. At such time as detailed transit system planning is undertaken and more characteristics of the system are known, it will be crucial to undertake a high-quality, in-depth study to determine an appropriate pattern of development around transit stations. Zoning changes and development standards will need to be tailored to the specific station and system type (commuter or regional passenger rail) at that time.

Recommended approach

The recommendation of this review, in the meantime, is to exchange the Town Center design district designation for a form of the Neighborhood design district specifically intended for Old Town (it might perhaps be called the “Old Town Neighborhood” design district). The guidelines for the Neighborhood district are very closely allied to the needs (and existing pattern) of Old

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Town neighborhoods. Also supporting this concept, the framework of the Neighborhood district contains a description of the “Neighborhood Village” focus area concept, which would be well suited to the revitalization and extension of the depot commercial district. Just as described in the Neighborhood Village concept, the depot district can be the walkable focus area providing a mix of uses serving its surrounding neighborhoods and, to some extent, the additional market that passes through the area from new development outside Old Town.

With just limited exceptions, the design guidelines for the Neighborhood district would be very appropriate to the type of development that stakeholders strongly agreed they would like to see continue in Old Town. The exceptions are sidewalks on both sides of the street (which are not necessary in the case of shared streets with low speed / low volume traffic, as in most Old Town neighborhoods); and installation of street trees (which, to be consistent with the informal rural character of landscaping in Old Town neighborhoods, should only be installed commercial areas, or in any areas having housing types other than single-family detached). In other respects, design guidelines 1 through 16 of the Neighborhood design district are strongly matched to the needs of Old Town Knightdale neighborhoods and mixed-use areas. These guidelines can be adapted and tailored to the needs of the district by incorporation of the Architectural and Urban Design Principles of this Old Town plan.

With these changes, an appropriate set of guidelines for Old Town will apply and shape an urban form that meets several goals:

- It is strongly desired by Old Town stakeholders;
- It will result in a highly marketable and predictable development pattern, adding value to existing homes and commercial buildings; and
- It is a traditional type of village “urbanism” that promotes sustainability and community, goals that are associated with the best current thinking in town planning.

Highway design district

The Comp Plan states “The Highway District is established to provide primarily for auto-dependent uses in areas not amenable to easy pedestrian access and a comfortable pedestrian environment. It is the intent of the Highway District to serve not only the Knightdale community, but interstate travelers as well. Because of the scale and access requirements of uses in this category, they often cannot be compatibly integrated within the Town Center or Neighborhood Center Districts. Development at district boundaries must provide a compatible transition to uses outside the district; property boundaries adjacent to freeways or expressways will require a 50-foot foliated buffer yard; and frontages on major or minor thoroughfare or collectors will require formal street tree planting.”

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The Highway District potentially could be suited in a modified form for application to the office-commercial area recommended in the land use portion of this Old Town plan for the vacant parcels bordering Knightdale Boulevard. Many of the district design guidelines are appropriate to the type of development this plan recommends for that area. Specifically, the guidelines call for quality architecture including four-sided architecture, coordinated architectural character among adjacent buildings, recesses, projections, windows, and other details on visible sides of buildings, “porous” exteriors (entries and display windows) for smaller establishments within a large building, landscaped buffer yards along highways, limitations on more than 50% of parking between the front of buildings and streets, and screening & unobtrusive location of equipment and service areas.

These guidelines, while specifically intended for use along I-540 and 64 Bypass corridors, would be appropriate for office-commercial development along Knightdale Boulevard where easy arterial road access is also present. Modifications to the design guidelines might require further breaking up large buildings into sub-units with smaller façades or individual buildings, and ensuring that internal circulation drives resemble an interconnected street network and have access points to adjacent areas (while configured to prevent excessive cut-through traffic).

Greenways

Greenway segment alignments in the Comp Plan are indicated along Smithfield Road north and south from the study area, along Mingo Creek to the west, and along the railroad alignment to the east. The western alignment along Mingo Creek would connect the northern (vacant) part of the study area through the Planter’s Walk neighborhood and ultimately to the Neuse River just north of Anderson Point Park. (This segment would also connect Old Town Knightdale to the North Carolina Mountains-to-Sea Trail currently under development.) The eastern alignment would pass through rural areas and ultimately to Mark’s Creek, a waterway and watershed with special scenic and environmental qualities. The 4-part priority phasing program outlined in the Comp Plan would place Smithfield Road linkages in Phase 1, and the Mingo Creek and Mark’s Creek linkages in Phase 2.

Parks and recreation

This Old Town plan recommends new parks that fit within the framework outlined in the existing Comp Plan. New parks meeting the “pocket park” specifications in the Comp Plan are recommended in areas of new neighborhood development, especially on the northern vacant portion of the study area. Also, this Old Town plan recommends a new neighborhood-level park adjacent to First Avenue. While somewhat smaller than the typical neighborhood park size specified in the Comp Plan (10 to 16 acres), the park will rank as a key attractor for the heart of the community and anchor for the historic heart of Knightdale. In that respect it meets some of the criteria for a community park (such as improvement with special event area or performance space, and its role as a community anchor). However, other community park facilities such as ballfields, recreation centers, and swimming pools are clearly not well suited

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to the site size and role of the First Avenue park.

The exact categorization of this new park within the context of the Comp Plan is not critical. What is important is that the park be designed as an attractant for daily activity in the heart of town. More details on the physical planning, management and programming that will help accomplish this goal are included in the description of parks in this Old Town plan.

Transportation

The transportation component of the 2027 Comp Plan provides for a number of progressive concepts in transportation planning. Notable examples are the reclassification of the road system to updated street typologies (for example, exchanging principal arterial” for “parkway,” “major/minor thoroughfare” for “boulevard,” and “collector” for “avenue”). New street cross-sections were adopted in the 2004 UDO revision to implement this change, and as they exist now are very appropriate for traditional town planning goals. Also, the Comp Plan’s emphasis on interconnected street networks in a modified grid reflects the best current thinking for creating livable communities that permit convenient transportation alternatives, while also acknowledging topographic and environmental constraints of the terrain.

Recommended new street cross-section

Within the framework of the Comp Plan, another street cross-section should be added to the UDO for use in Old Town neighborhoods. It would utilize ribbon pavement with swales or stabilized flat pavement edges, and instead of sidewalks apply a shared-street concept. Rather than regularly planted street trees, any required tree installation for new houses would be in front yards. This additional cross-section would be applied in Old Town neighborhoods for existing or proposed areas of single-family homes that are low-traffic and can support “shared streets.”

The inclusion of this street cross-section will provide a street typology in the UDO and Comp Plan that is in line with the existing character of Old Town that residents say they prefer, and legitimize its extension into new adjacent single-family areas where it can be safely used. Naturally, this street cross-section would not be applied to pockets of townhouses, multi-family, or other higher densities of housing. These should have street improvements that reflect their needs (street trees at regular intervals, sidewalks, etc.)

Looking at its specific geographic application, the new cross-section can applied to the northern, vacant area as it is developed for areas of new single-family development adjacent and similar to existing single-family blocks. It would not be applied to any townhouses, patio homes, or to the east side of the study area because of the somewhat higher density and smaller lot size in that section, which tend to require a somewhat more hardened street form. Infill rezonings on the east side requiring upgrades to curb-and-gutter sections

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might need some degree of commitment from the Town to install upgrades along street segments along adjacent properties, so as not to result in “piecemealing” the streets (where a small section of curb-and-gutter street with sidewalk exists in isolation, while the rest of the street stays as it is). An advantage of the Town’s commitment to this expenditure would be the strong signal it sends of the Town’s willingness to continue reinvesting in the neighborhood.

Implementation strategies

The implementation section of the Comp Plan is divided into two main categories, growth management strategies and ordinance revisions. The growth management strategies reflect in large part the joint effort by Wake County and its municipal partners, including Knightdale, to identify coordinated but independent actions that could be undertaken to address pressing needs generated by growth in the region. Since the completion of the joint effort near the end of 2003, the commitment to it by the elected board of Wake County appears to have weakened, and a subsequent effort (known as the Blue Ribbon Task Force) developed a somewhat different approach. Nonetheless, the goals and strategies that were identified by the Town of Knightdale and tailored to address its own needs can certainly continue to be pursued by the Town to the extent that the Town and its elected leadership see fit. Many of the action items have, in fact, been completed already.

Ordinance revisions specified in the Comp Plan were undertaken resulting in a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) that was adopted in 2005. This document is more specifically discussed below.

One area where the Comp Plan does not have extensive implementation strategies is management and programming. In addition to ordinance revisions and growth management goals, the Town’s ongoing administrative and policy actions have great relevance to plan implementation. The Town may want to consider adding an updated action list to the Comprehensive Plan to reflect ongoing oversight and attention to management, programming and budgeting that help to carry out the Comp Plan goals and vision. Calendaring, monitoring and allocation of responsibility to specific departments or positions are part of ensuring that management and programming are implemented in furtherance of plan goals.

This Old Town plan has a number of management, programming and budgeting recommendations as plan implementation items. They could be added to the Comp Plan action items, or they could simply be retained as part of the Old Town plan and calendared or monitored by the planning department and other Town departments as appropriate.

II. UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

Revisions to the UDO were undertaken soon after the adoption of the Comp Plan and followed the framework of design districts and form regulations outlined in the Plan. Overall, the revisions were intended to accomplish a number of objectives, including making the ordinance clear and free of conflicting standards; improving the review and approval procedures and process; updating definitions, allowable uses, and development standards to reflect the Town's planning and growth management goals; adding clarity to review standards; and applying quality design and urban form specifications as a major part of the ordinance framework.

The resulting ordinance is a quality document which will help the Town accomplish its general planning and development goals. A review of the ordinance provisions that specifically relate to Old Town planning goals is provided as follows.

Design district matrix and zoning categories

As noted under the Comp Plan discussion above, the framework of community form and design regulation in Knightdale occurs under the design district matrix, with planning and zoning concepts organized according to the spectrum of rural-to-urban development along the matrix (sometimes called the transect).

In the UDO, Section 2.1, General Intent and Establishment of Districts, notes that a “rural street typically has no curbs or sidewalks and its buildings look like farmhouses or barns. An urban street ... may have curbs and gutters, regularly placed street trees, sidewalks, and building forms that include common walls, flat roofs, and cornices. Each Transect zoning category has detailed provisions for each neighborhood, for density, height, street design, the design of parks, the mix of uses, building design, parking, and other aspects of the human environment.”

Matching the setting of Old Town Knightdale to the correct condition within the Design District matrix (similar to the new urbanist transect) is a key to calibrating its zoning. The matrix reflects a rural-to-urban continuum with the most urban condition at one end. The most urban condition in Old Town consists of the old depot-related commercial district, where commercial buildings front directly on the sidewalk, curb and gutter is present, and lot coverage is highest.

Other parts of Old Town reflect a position on the matrix that is town-oriented, but still low-intensity, development. That is, lots are roughly rectangular, and streets are laid out in a highly connected, small-block grid pattern. These are strongly town-oriented conditions. However, the development pattern (the building-to-void arrangement, and the degree of impervious/paved coverage) is strongly influenced by the semi-rural, village setting: that is, houses are mostly set back on their lots and surrounded by yards, roads are

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ribbon pavement, and building styles are low-intensity and informal – as opposed to high degrees of lot coverage and strongly urban architectural forms. Landscaping, too, is informal, with organic/ clustered forms rather than regularly planted street trees or other strongly geometric or hardscaped elements.

All degrees of the rural to urban transect need not necessarily be represented in all communities. At their most intense, small towns may reach a degree of urban intensity less than that found in the core of metropolitan areas. The precise degree of urban intensity depends on the community's individual conditions, especially its market conditions and transportation infrastructure. Moreover, the unique setting of the community and the preferences of its citizens will set every town apart from any other.

Each community's transect should be calibrated to match the desired and appropriate range of conditions for the community's needs, rather than attempting to include all levels of the transect in every community. Sensitive calibration of the transect to the community will result in a “niche” position for that community, in which it retains unique qualities not common to any other town or city in the region. This can be an advantage in the market as people “vote with their feet” and choose the type of environment where they want to live.

Comparing Knightdale's design district matrix to Old Town existing conditions, the most intense level matches only the few commercial block fronts facing First Avenue. Much of the rest of Old Town matches the transect zone of T3 or T4. This is the existing condition; matching future conditions (new development) depends on citizen preferences and market conditions, to a large degree.

The stakeholder preferences and the market reconnaissance conducted for the Old Town plan revealed that at present these factors militate strongly for a match to T3 or T4 along the matrix for Old Town neighborhoods, or approximately the “Neighborhood” design district and zoning categories. For the depot commercial district, preferences and market conditions match it closely to a more urban level (approximately T5, with some modification such as a three-story height limit so as not to overwhelm its historic character), which would correspond well to the “Neighborhood Village” concept for mixed-use focus areas serving the “Neighborhood” design district. The zoning recommendations in this report are tuned accordingly.

Zoning districts

Zoning districts in Old Town Knightdale include Open Space Preserve (OSP), Residential Mixed-Use (RMX, maximum density 18 dwellings per acre), Neighborhood Mixed-Use (NMX, no maximum density), Town Center (TC, no maximum density), and Highway Business (HB). In general, the dimensional standards of these districts promote a very compact urban form, with very narrow minimum lot widths such as 30 feet or no minimum, and small or no front setbacks. The uses that are allowed by right in most of

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these districts, especially the TC district, are very broad and extend to some fairly intense commercial retail and service types (including banks, restaurants, and stores up to 50,000 square feet). The form and uses are quite different from the built pattern and existing uses in much of the areas of Old Town, which consist mainly of single-family and some duplex houses on modest to moderate size lots as well as mostly small-scale commercial establishments, and it is this divergence that has many Old Town residents nervous about future development in the study area.

Town Center district

The UDO states the Town Center district “is coded for the traditional downtown area and the identified new town centers at future commuter rail stations. Individual buildings are encouraged to be multi-story with uses mixed vertically, street level commercial and upper level office and residential.” It goes on to state, “It is the purpose of these regulations to encourage vitality by excluding certain activities which have a negative effect on the public realm through auto-dominated or non-pedestrian oriented design or uses.” The description of TC zoning does not match the existing context of the lands in Old Town Knightdale zoned as this district, and if developed at the density and intensity that the zoning district allows, but without extensive transit service available, the traffic impact would completely overwhelm the existing area road network (since there would be no other option for daily trips in and out of the area.) Moreover, even if commuter rail were an available transit option, it would not obviate the need for other daily trips (such as for shopping, services, and education) which constitute the great majority of average daily trips for typical households.

In the short time that TC zoning has been in place in Old Town neighborhoods, the early indications are that market conditions plus zoning rules may not produce quality high-density development in this zoning district. Clearly, the intent behind the TC zoning is not to produce small rental houses, yet these have been built in a number of locations. On the contrary, the intent was to produce a high-quality, high-density transit-oriented area. However, the market and infrastructure conditions apparently cannot yet support that goal at the present time – there is no clear, immediate plan for transit service to the area, and the residential demand is focused on reasonably priced single-family houses with yards. Thus, the unintended effect of the zoning when combined with market and infrastructure conditions is to generate something different than the full range of quality mixed-use town center development that the zoning would actually allow.

Zoning is not enough, by itself, to produce the desired uses and development type. Other factors must exist to bring these about. So, until those other factors are brought into being, the zoning focus should be on creating a high-quality setting that works within the existing infrastructure and market. Doing so will produce a desirable, stable, walkable neighborhood with high amenity (large trees, nearby retail district, calm streets, etc.) and a unique market position in the Triangle region. If concrete transit plans and funding are achieved in the future, the zoning and other policies can be amended to reflect those different conditions, permitting the development

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of transit-oriented densities. In the meantime, there is no need to undermine stable neighborhoods before the infrastructure for serving a very different type of development is actually known to be on its way.

Currently, the TC district applied to much of Old Town allows multifamily dwellings of more than 4 units per building, banks, medical services, auto parts sales, general retail of up to 50,000 square feet, restaurants, and vehicle repair and body work. These uses, and any others that are determined to be incompatible, should be eliminated from areas not indicated for commercial use in the land use diagram of this Old Town plan. Some uses, such as auto parts sales and repair, should also be deleted from the list of allowed uses as well and have nonconforming status or become a special use subject to performance standards and board approval.

A new zoning district or districts applied to the residential areas and depot district of Old Town Knightdale should reflect the Neighborhood design district with a Neighborhood Village focus area applied to the depot district and its expansion areas. An interpretation of this concept (made consistent with the uses and development types indicated on the land use diagram and accompanying explanatory text in this Old Town plan) should determine the uses and form allowed by zoning in these areas. Additional form and design principles that could be made applicable to these areas through zoning are found in the Architectural and Urban Design Principles section of this Old Town plan.

Highway Business

The Highway Business district includes quality provisions to ensure that highway-oriented commercial development occurs consistent with community goals for character and function. It includes access management provisions designed to limit the number of driveways along the highway frontage, landscape buffer provisions along the street frontage, with exceptions for access points, and requirements that structures be set back 10 to 90 feet from the right-of-way.

This district, with modifications, could be adapted to suit the “boulevard office-commercial” area indicated along Knightdale Boulevard in the Old Town land use plan diagram. It is recommended to allow primarily office and professional uses, along with accessory retail and personal service uses limited to a scale supportive of the office uses (so as not to allow destination or specialty retail that would draw customers away from the depot district). The zoning district form standards would reflect the good design principles of the Highway Business district, plus additional standards to implement the Architectural and Urban Design Principles section of this Old Town Plan. The district should be tailored to ensure good layout of buildings, walkways, and vehicular use areas on sites in this zoning district, even though development in the district will primarily be driven by accessibility to the major road (Knightdale Boulevard).

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Dimensional standards

Chapter 4, General Lot & Structure Provisions, provides dimensional standards for lots and yards (setbacks or build-to lines), encroachments, building height, and locational standards for accessory structures and the like. Taken together with Chapter 5, it gives the main principles that create overall community form in the Town.

Section 4.3, Lot and Yard Requirements, states that “Front and side yard setbacks shall be consistent with . . . the average setbacks for all principal structures within 300 feet or one block length (whichever is greater).” It is unclear whether this provision was applicable to the new structures on Second Avenue which have caused so much concern among Old Town stakeholders, but if applied to all new development it should prevent similar situations from occurring. In addition to the use and form revisions recommended in this public policy report, this provision should be retained and applied to residential areas of Old Town.

Building types and architectural standards

Chapter 5 applies building type and architectural standards to development in the Town. Single-family lots in approved subdivisions are exempt; in other words, the ordinance does not apply to existing lots. If this provision is removed, this chapter would be a good starting place for architectural standards generally applicable to the existing Old Town lots and possibly related to an NCOD (neighborhood conservation overlay district). The basic goals of this section are admirable, and the Town has shown its collective vision in applying them. There is every reason to extend these protections to the character of Old Town neighborhoods, which will help stabilize and enhance their value as a quality living environment. The protections can be fairly basic. The general scope should be compatibility in terms of scale of buildings, height of buildings, proportions, and façade elements.

For mixed-use building types, which could apply to infill development and upgrades in the depot district, first-floor transparent windows and pedestrian features are required; no expanses of blank wall may be longer than 20 feet; and service/delivery entrances must be away from the public street. For commercial building types, these are allowed to be automobile-oriented, but are still required to have first-floor pedestrian interest, no blank walls longer than 20 feet, and detailing such as windows and doors as well as primary entrances on the street side.

Clearly, the UDO has established high-quality design guidelines for commercial and mixed-use buildings. For Old Town, it is recommended that these be augmented with standards tailored to the depot district (not necessarily more costly or more burdensome) that will help it thrive as an attractive place, and for the boulevard office-commercial area at the north edge of the study area. The Architectural and Urban Design Principles section of this Old Town plan provides more detailed guidance on recommended design principles in the various areas of Old Town, including residential neighborhoods, the depot district, and the boulevard office-commercial area.

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It is worth mentioning that signage provisions in the UDO (Chapter 12) make adequate provision for appropriate use of sandwich board and projecting signs, two types that are particularly suited for use in the pedestrian-oriented setting of the depot commercial district. Sandwich board signs, in particular, are allowed without a permit (facilitating their use), and must be located and maintained in accordance with certain guidelines to promote pedestrian safety and visual character.

Open space

Chapter 7 gives minimum open space requirements (applied per bedroom to residential units) and provides standards for the configuration and improvement of required open space, including recreational open space for passive and active use. The standards of this chapter appear to be adequate. New open space in Old Town Knightdale should also generally conform to the Old Town plan in concept, type and layout.

Tree protection and landscaping

The tree protection and landscaping provisions of Chapter 8 apply to new development and expansions over 25 percent of gross floor area or parking, on lots of 2 acres or more. Thus, the tree protection provisions do not apply to lots of less than 2 acres, which includes most residential lots in Old Town. The Town may wish to apply some vegetation preservation standards to smaller lots or new development on existing lots – for example, no removal of trees within 20 feet of a public right-of-way without a permit. Tree protection provisions for older cities and existing neighborhoods should be consulted and considered for potential use in Old Town.

From a plain reading of the chapter, the applicability of section 8.7 is somewhat unclear. It appears to require every single-family lots to have at least one large shade tree for each 2000 square feet of lot area up to 20,000 square feet. However, Section 8.2 D exempts lots less than 2 acres from the tree protection requirements of the chapter. The section may need to be clarified depending on its interpretation as a tree protection or a landscaping requirement, and to clarify whether the required large shade trees can ever be removed (for example by the property owner). By itself and in combination with Section 8.11.F.3.a. (disturbance of any required landscaped area or vegetation constitutes violation), it appears that removal is prohibited.

Buffer yards

Buffer yard requirements are a typical suburban zoning solution to resolving compatibility between adjacent uses. In considering the impact of buffer yards on Old Town Knightdale, it would be consistent with village character to limit the application of suburban-style buffers between adjacent uses. Since the ordinance requires a buffer when developing any use on a property abutting a less intense zoning district, conceivably there could be a residential use in the NMX district that is required to have a 20-foot buffer next to GR-8 property developed with a similar use.

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An improved remedy for addressing different adjacent uses would be designing buildings and sites to minimize harm to adjacent property (such as loading or service areas) and using good building design. A well-designed commercial building can be appropriate near a residential area, while a suburban-style landscape buffer is an indicator that something about the design of the uses is so incompatible that they have to be physically separated.

Circulation and connectivity

Chapter 9 ensures the creation of a connected circulation system that allows travel by car, on foot, or by bicycle. New subdivisions must carry out the Town's arterial and collector street plans through dedication and construction of improvements. New streets must utilize existing stub-outs. In Old Town, these provisions will be helpful to the implementation of a connected street system into the vacant lands at the northern edge of the study area, at such time as those lands are developed.

Other good quality standards of this chapter concern street arrangement, connectivity, cross-access, and limitations on cul-de-sacs. The maximum block length is somewhat long (at 1000 feet for GR-8 zoning, 800 feet for RMX, and 660 feet for NMX and TC) for the existing urban pattern which has blocks of only about 300 by 400 feet (longer in the long direction, in some instances). These standards should be adapted to continue the existing pattern in the northwest half of the study area, so that new neighborhood streets in development to the north will be fairly consistent with existing neighborhood streets.

Pedestrian connectivity is required by Section 9.5, which provides standards for pedestrian crossings, walkways, and other improvements. These standards are applied only to new development by the ordinance, which means that (if the UDO is the only vehicle for promoting them) Old Town will be unlikely to see these improvements except if large amounts of property are redeveloped. To address this shortfall, the Town will need to take affirmative steps to retrofit Old Town with missing pedestrian improvements where they are needed. This means installing improvements especially in the depot district to allow better access on foot – bulbouts, curb extensions, and refuge medians are some of the improvements that would enhance foot traffic. It also means installing pedestrian improvements on Smithfield Road and at the Knightdale Boulevard intersection. A program of financing and installing these improvements will ensure that Old Town, as the walkable heart of Knightdale, is not left out of the pedestrian circulation system that is required in new developing areas of town.

Parking standards

The parking standards in Chapter 10 recognize the harm that excessive or poorly sited parking and loading facilities may cause. Development in the TC district is exempt if it does not cause an increase of more than 25 percent of floor area or increase the number of parking spaces required by more than 25 percent. Also, uses in the TC district may achieve alternative compliance by paying in-lieu

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fees to a parking fund for Town-owned parking lots. These are positive provisions that help “tame” parking and prevent excessive standards that tend to inhibit re-use of commercial buildings in older developed areas.

Shared parking of up to one-half the required spaces is allowed under certain conditions – for example, where the time of peak use differs between two uses. On-street parking is allowed to count toward the off-street parking requirement.

In addition to these helpful provisions, if the depot district is to revitalize, proper parking management will be necessary to ensure efficient use of parking resources, which will always face some physical constraints in this area due to the available land. Examples of parking management policies that could be applied to the depot district include prohibiting owner/employee parking in on-street spaces that should be reserved for customer use; placing limits on long-term parking and reserving the most convenient spaces for short time periods (from one-half hour to two hours, depending on the uses they serve); and other parking management approaches for older commercial areas.

Bicycle parking provisions might be augmented with a standard to ensure that appropriate fixtures are used. Many bike parking fixtures in common use, such as serpentine and comb racks, are inappropriate because they do not allow bikes to be made fully secure, or they too easily result in damage to wheels or frames through twisting. The best type of rack allows a bike to be affixed laterally, rather than perpendicularly, and the best location is a visible spot near entrances and within sight of a storefront window.

Lighting

Chapter 11 includes quality provisions concerning outdoor lighting configurations and amount. For example, it provides that lighting shall not shine directly into the yard or windows of an adjacent residence, which is important in protecting privacy and aesthetic concerns for homeowners.

The specified maximum height for street lights and lights for parking areas (27 feet) could be made shorter in Old Town (16 to 20 feet) to reflect the smaller scale of buildings and the character of the area. Also, the non-cutoff allowance in Section 11.2 F may result in lights that glare upward. The term “vertical illumination” could be defined and qualified to ensure clear interpretation. Upward illumination ordinarily results in glare and is not helpful to pedestrians; any light shining above horizontal should be directed at an object or building wall that is deliberately illuminated, rather than light shining upward and not being fully “captured” by an illuminated object.

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Nonconformities

Nonconforming situations are governed by Chapter 13. The provisions of this chapter require that whenever there is an expansion to the heated square footage of a non-residential or multi-family use, the lot shall comply with street improvement requirements including sidewalks and curb and gutter.

The impression of some residents of Old Town is that this requirement also applies to single-family houses, and that the requirement tends to suppress reinvestment in single-family homes because residents can't add to their homes without a costly upgrade to street standards. Based on a review of the ordinance and consultation with planning and building staff, this is not the case. The exemption for single-family residences should remain in place.

In general, it is important for the Town to make it easy and desirable for owners to reinvest in their existing homes. Continuing investment by owner-occupants is vital to neighborhood quality. When reinvestment stops, neighborhood decline sets in; the housing stock becomes degraded in quality and appearance, owners move out, and rentals increase. It is very important to facilitate the process for owners to invest in their own homes, and improve their living quarters so that they can stay in place or sell at a higher price. The perception that other owners are staying and improving their properties is essential for maintaining neighborhood vitality. Moreover, because houses in Old Town residential areas are undersized to current market preferences, the ability to enlarge and improve these homes is essential to their remaining competitive in the marketplace.

Development process

Chapter 15 provides updated rules governing the development review and approval process. A review of the text does not reveal any major problems in this area.

Since Old Town neighbors have requested that the Town take steps to ensure that adequate notice occurs to neighbors of proposals that could affect their interests, it is recommended that certain uses be allowed only through a public hearing review. Streamlined administrative review, applying additional performance criteria and development standards through the provisions of Chapter 3 (Additional Use Standards), is fine for certain uses. For other uses with higher potential to affect Old Town planning goals and neighborhood concerns, it may be the case that a public hearing should still be required to provide adequate notice. This will not only notify concerned parties of proposals, it will also introduce a level of discretionary judgment by elected or appointed board members, which allows more flexibility than Town staff, as employees, are in a position to apply.

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A full review and assessment of the types of uses in each Old Town zoning district is beyond the scope of this report, but the process for such an assessment would be to review each of the allowed uses (or, to apply a more abbreviated process, to compile a list of uses that have generated citizen complaints) and determine which have potential impacts large enough to warrant public hearing review under a Special Use Permit.

Infrastructure improvement requirements

Chapter 17 categorizes all streets as level one, two, or three, and include street types from alleys, local streets, main streets, avenues, boulevards and freeways. Street cross-sections included for each type are appropriate for good community design, and should be augmented (as previously noted in this plan) by an additional local street cross-section that allows ribbon pavement and swale in areas designated for a shared-street approach in Old Town. For main streets, recent amendments have included diagonal parking as an allowed option (in addition to parallel parking), and it is the preferred alternative for on-street parking in the depot district.



The Concept Plan was developed during the three-day charrette held in September 2006. In it, the ideas and solutions offered by citizens during the charrette workshop were harmonized and refined using the professional expertise of the consulting team.

Introduction to the Old Town Knightdale, NC Concept Plan

SUMMARY

The Concept Plan for Old Town Knightdale envisions vibrant neighborhoods, successful commercial districts, new development that enhances the existing community, and transportation options that meet multiple needs. Residents of Old Town will enjoy the best of both worlds: the authentic physical and social setting of a small town, yet with ready access to shopping and employment that the greater region offers. This combination will make Old Town one of the premier residential areas in the region.

The authentic setting confers a tremendous marketing advantage for Old Town. Few other sites in the Triangle enjoy the elements that characterize the heart of Knightdale: narrow roads shaded by mature hardwood trees, an authentic historical street layout, long-established neighborhoods where residents enjoy peace and quiet with their neighbors. If properly protected and enhanced, this authentic setting will confer a market premium on residences in Old Town, and also heighten business opportunities in the small commercial district fronting the railroad tracks (former downtown).

All elements of the plan are intended to strengthen and complement each other. For example, the value of residential areas is enhanced by appropriate nearby commercial districts and by neighborhood parks. Similarly, commercial areas benefit from the proximity of residential areas and the marketing advantage conferred by appropriate enhancement of the area's visual character.

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

The strongest single message received from the community during the background interviews and charrette workshop was that citizens in Old Town treasure their neighborhoods. They are concerned, however, about new rental housing, and the compatibility of infill development with the community's existing built pattern, particularly in terms of lot size, house size, and setbacks.

The concept plan proposes to strengthen the existing neighborhoods in Old Town with a combination approach, using regulatory tools, management / programming solutions, and incentives to enhance stable neighborhoods and to help challenged areas.

Regulatory tools include zoning revisions that would ensure the compatibility of infill development with the existing built pattern. These could take the form of a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District, or simply revisions to the existing UDO to address the items of greatest concern. The overlay district would govern lot dimensions, house size, and setbacks, and possibly additional elements, depending on what residents feel is important; the geographic boundaries of the overlay district and the specific restrictions would be determined largely through neighborhood input. Other regulatory tools include property maintenance standards, some form of rental licensing, and better code enforcement to help protect owners' investments in their homes. Identification and removal of any regulatory barriers that discourage re-investment will also help neighborhoods.

Management and programming solutions could include incentives such as tax abatements in return for rehabilitation of existing homes, a linked-deposit program to assist in financing home improvements, and technical assistance. Home ownership programs to help people move from rental to ownership will increase owner-occupant investment in residences. Institutional partnership in marketing Old Town neighborhoods and creating a recognizable place identity will also enhance the value and stability of the area. Finally, public investments should continue to be made in Old Town neighborhoods to the same extent that public funds are expended on improvements in suburban and outlying areas.

GREENFIELD DEVELOPMENT

The large vacant tract at the north side of the Old Town study area is an excellent opportunity for new development that will enhance the area's identity, adding value both to the existing neighborhoods and to the new construction on the greenfield tract itself. Along the tract's frontage on Knightdale Boulevard, opportunities are highest for new commercial and office space. The site would be developed with a compact, walkable pattern to distinguish it from existing strip commercial development.

Moving south, an active living retirement village or other quality senior housing is proposed as a transition between new commercial/office development along the highway and the existing single-family neighborhoods to the south. No-main-tenance patio homes or condos would benefit from a strong market for retirement living options and a highly desirable location near shopping and pleasant neighborhoods.

Closer to the existing single-family neighborhood, new residential would be developed at a similar size and scale to existing houses and lots. A wooded buffer along the stream provides separation between houses and commercial areas; this green space is improved with a greenway trail, dog park, and other amenities. One or more small pocket parks are incorporated into the design of the neighborhood extension; these amenities ensure that lots and residences in this area are at a premium compared to ordinary suburban development. Opportunities for modest density increases may also exist – a block of townhouses fronting on a common green could be integrated within the larger area of new single-family houses without fundamentally altering its character. Another development option for new residential would be conservation lots that reserve significant natural areas in common ownership. On the Concept Plan diagram, the loop road at the western side of the greenfield area shows a likely location for a conservation development; the multiple streams flowing through the site render it less suitable for standard lots and streets.

TRANSPORTATION

The key features of transportation elements in the concept plan are community character, connectivity, walkability, and safety.

The existing historic street grid is preserved where it now exists, and further connections are extended into new greenfield development areas. These street connections are routed through “T” intersections and other diversions to prevent cut-through traffic at unsafe speeds for residential areas.

Smithfield Road and First Avenue are envisioned as “green gateway corridors” whose visual character signals that one is arriving in a special place. Traffic on these minor arterials serving Old Town Knightdale will continue to increase as the greater area develops. For the near term, the concept plan indicates no alterations to these roads. As the traffic load increases, any alterations to accommodate greater volumes should follow context-sensitive road design principles. For example, instead of widening or adding lanes to the entire length of the road, the roads should remain two lanes wide with pocket turn lanes added only at the locations where these are necessary for safety and adequate throughput. This

approach will allow roads to accommodate a higher throughput without higher speeds. Moreover, limiting the amount of widening and reconfiguration of these roads will allow existing tree canopy and other vegetation to be retained.

So that pedestrians can safely walk between Old Town and surrounding areas, sidewalks are added along Smithfield Road and First Avenue, and pedestrian crossing improvements are shown at the intersection of Smithfield and Knightdale Boulevard to allow foot travel to the school, library, and Town Hall. Local residential streets (such as Second and Third Avenues) will continue to use the existing “shared street” approach; under this concept, traffic volumes and speeds are low enough that pedestrians and cars can make way for each other as needed, so no sidewalks are indicated. Greenways will also facilitate pedestrian movement between Old Town and adjacent areas.

In the near term, transit options for Old Town can include paratransit (such as demand-responsive / dial-a-ride services) and extension of existing TTA bus service into the area. For the longer term, the potential rail transit opportunity is maximized via the assemblage of public land adjacent to the rail corridor in the form of a community park in the heart of Old Town (discussed below). If and when definite rail transit system plans become a reality for Knightdale and the region, the assemblage of public-owned land at the park location is in place to allow the development of a transit station at the adjacent railroad corridor. At such a time, zoning changes could be implemented to facilitate redevelopment in accordance with detailed plans for transit needs – whether that takes the shape of park-and-ride facilities or dense transit-oriented development. Meanwhile, the near-term approach allows existing structures and neighborhoods to remain largely undisturbed until more clarity exists regarding transit possibilities.

BUSINESS DESIGN DISTRICT (DEPOT COMMERCIAL AREA)

The Concept Plan foresees the commercial district around the former depot as an amenity that enhances the value of the surrounding residential districts. This district will draw from an increasing customer base as outlying suburbs continue to develop and modest increases in traffic improve commercial viability.

The depot district cannot compete with the highway-oriented shopping centers already so abundant in the area. Instead, retail and service uses in Old Town will need to occupy a different niche. Commercial types that would likely perform well in the depot commercial district are personal service and convenience uses that serve as an amenity to the surrounding residential areas, such as a day care or a small café or coffeehouse; specialty / destination retail – stores that offer unique products not offered elsewhere in the region (as opposed to franchise or chain stores) and therefore are not so dependent on highway visibility; and small professional offices.

Physical improvements, maintenance, and good urban design are key to the success of the depot business district; hence it is indicated on the Concept Plan as a “Business Design District.” Streetscape improvements should reflect good commercial district design, with appropriate street furniture (such as lighting, benches, and trash receptacles). Design standards for the district will ensure that new development is pedestrian-oriented and visually harmonious; for example, all buildings should have a street-front orientation with windows onto the sidewalk and inviting elements such as canopies for visual interest. Street trees and seasonal plantings will also send the message that the public as well as the private sector is investing in the depot district.

A combination of incentives and marketing are used to revitalize the commercial district. Incentives include façade improvement and rehab loans and grants, business micro loans and revolving funds at local banks, Town property tax abatements, retail entrepreneur grants or rental subsidies, and business technical assistance. Marketing approaches include the formation of a business recruitment committee to work with property owners and encourage infill commercial uses, with a focus on those most likely to enhance the overall district and succeed: specialty retail, craft, professional office, and personal & community services. Adequate institutional and regulatory arrangements for parking are also critical to

the success of the depot design district.

Across the street from the depot business district, active uses such as a senior center and day care center provide more daily visitation and enhance the critical mass necessary to achieve a successful commercial zone. Also enhancing critical mass and allowing for expansion, additional area for new commercial development is indicated on the plan diagram to the west of the intersection of Smithfield Road and Railroad Street.

PARKS

In addition to the neighborhood pocket parks in the greenfield area discussed above, a primary site for a new park is along the railroad tracks across from the depot commercial district. Standing under the mature trees on this site, one has an excellent view of the historic depot commercial district, as well as the lovely row of historic houses extending north from the commercial area along First Avenue. This spot, like no other, gives one a visual sense of Knightdale as it was.

This highly visible location should be enhanced with a central public place that gives identity to Old Town, both as a landmark to help people identify the “Heart of Knightdale” and to help unite the neighborhoods on either side of the railroad. Physical improvements could include an outdoor gathering place, such as a small amphitheater with a lawn, for outdoor movies, festivals, and special events; it could also serve as a multi-purpose play area and picnic spot at other times. Tot swings and picnic tables or a shelter might also be located in the park. Another improvement that would serve as a landmark and promote community identity would be a reconstructed or relocated railroad depot, which could house a community-serving or public use, or serve as a rental facility for special events.

IMPLEMENTATION

To achieve the vision outlined in the Concept Plan, it is necessary that public policy, including regulations, programming, and budgeting, promote the goals and objectives of the plan. This includes such items as zoning and related development regulations, including tree preservation standards and infrastructure requirements, which should promote the community’s goals for visual character and built form, encourage re-investment in existing neighborhoods, and assure that nearby property owners are given sufficient notice of proposed changes that could affect them.

Spending by the Town is also critical. Public investments in Old Town should be made to a similar degree as in more suburban outlying areas. Planning ahead for items that will be funded is necessary to ensure that each year’s budget continues to advance the plan goals, including infrastructure improvements, incentive packages and financing, and operational tasks that will be performed by Town staff or contractors.

The timing and assignment of responsibility is another critical part of implementing the plan. The finalized master plan for Old Town Knightdale will outline key tasks going forward with suggested responsible entities and a recommended implementation timeline.

Finally, a key element of plan implementation is citizen involvement. A plan implementation oversight committee can make regular progress checks and help identify action items and carry them out. The committee members can also serve as liaisons to other institutional and private partners, and their personal networks allow them to serve as informal facilitators and communicators to ensure that the wider community continues to be involved as the plan vision becomes reality.

CONCEPT PLAN

*Concept Plan for Old Town
Knightdale which emerged from the
September 2006 charrette*

