

## 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

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### 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

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### 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%
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>644,800</b>	<b>74.5%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
<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%
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>95,300</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>
Other Businesses	10	25,000	2.9%	26.0%
Vacant Commercial	6	100,000	11.6%	2.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>865,100</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>

Note: Square footage is estimated. Based on sample.

Sources: Business owners and Randall Gross /  
Development Economics

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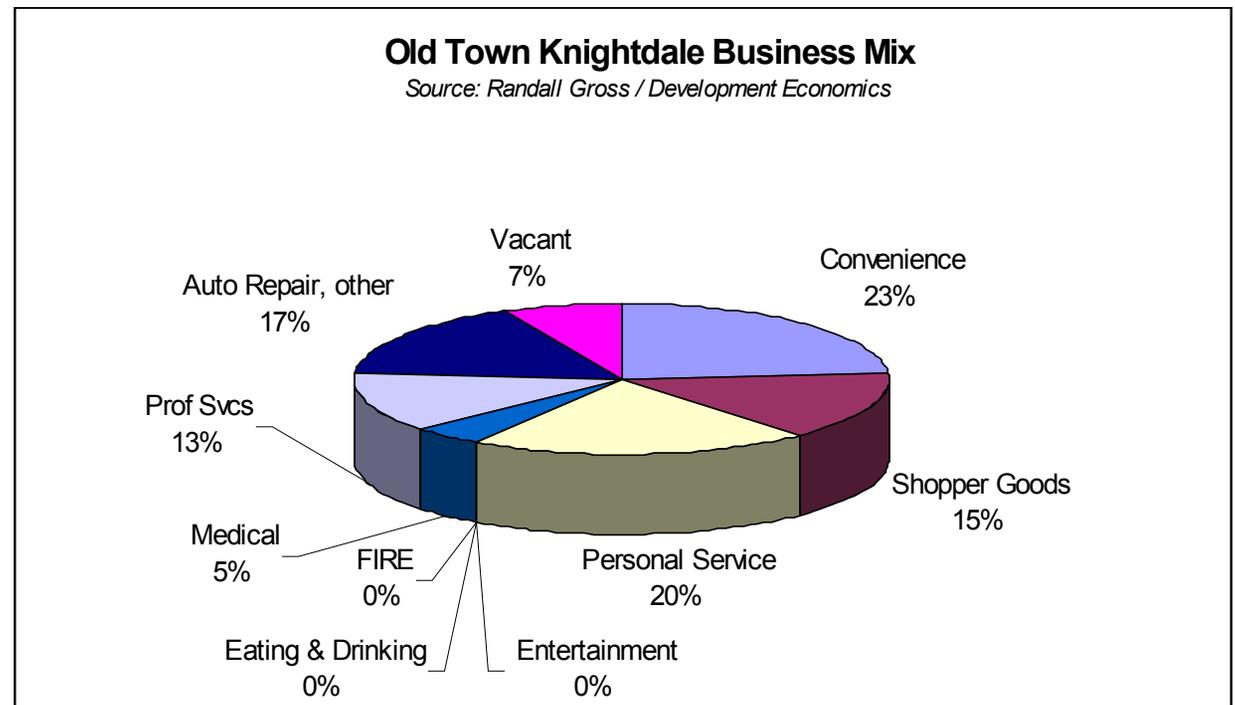
that serve the local area household base, rather than corporate, research, professional/technical, or similar office tenants characteristic of the RTP area. There is very little office space within the Old Town center, other than a few attorneys, dentist, and similar local-serving professionals.

### 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](http://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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## APPENDIX: MARKET REPORT

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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## APPENDIX: PUBLIC POLICY REVIEW

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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## APPENDIX: PUBLIC POLICY REVIEW

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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## APPENDIX: PUBLIC POLICY REVIEW

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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## APPENDIX: PUBLIC POLICY REVIEW

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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## APPENDIX: PUBLIC POLICY REVIEW

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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## APPENDIX: PUBLIC POLICY REVIEW

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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## APPENDIX: PUBLIC POLICY REVIEW

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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## APPENDIX: PUBLIC POLICY REVIEW

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.