

Beaufort, South Carolina
Community Brief

Urban Land Institute
Technical Assistance Panel

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The Task at Hand

The Panel's Charge:

Assist the City of Beaufort with financial and development strategies to preserve the Highway 21 Corridor.

Core Questions:

1. How to encourage public/private partnerships?
2. How to utilize the available legal, political, financial and public relations tools to preserve the rural Highway 21 Corridor?
3. How to identify and purchase development rights of key land parcels to protect the rural-gateway?
4. How can the city and county buy development rights of key land parcels?
How to balance the protection of the rural gateway's view sheds with appropriate development?
5. What are the traffic management constraints and how to overcome them?

Goals of the Urban Land Institute

The goal of the ULI's Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has been assisting communities by bringing nationally recognized real estate, planning, and development experts together to provide unbiased pragmatic advice for addressing complex land use and development issues.

The Technical Assistance Panel (TAPs) Program

Teams of local experts have been brought together to collaborate on a complex land use and redevelopment project in a small community lacking the necessary resources to resolve their issues at hand. Bringing expertise in the real estate, planning and development fields, each TAP team will develop a set of solutions that promote quality growth in the community. All panel assignments promote ULI's mission of providing responsible leadership in the use of the land to enhance the total environment. * No member of the panel has a conflict of interest, real or perceived, by serving on the panel.

Panel Members:

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Community Background

Northern Beaufort County includes four different units of local government, including the City of Beaufort, the Towns of Port Royal and Yemassee, and Beaufort County, each of which is responsible for a wide range of local government services. Each entity has jurisdiction over diverse areas that are unique in their challenges and opportunities, and each entity values their autonomous ability to act in their best interests. Furthermore, there is desire to continue to have distinct and unique communities, each with their own identities. While recognizing this autonomy and uniqueness of interests, there also are many regional growth and development issues that transcend the boundaries of individual jurisdictions. Chief among these are transportation, natural resource protection, education, workforce housing, and providing public facilities. The livability of individual communities or areas is, in fact, heavily influenced by what happens in other jurisdictions. For this reason, it is agreed by all jurisdictions that certain regional planning issues must be addressed through coordinated regional actions. It is critical to the future health and sustainability of the region for the various jurisdictions to come together through a collaborative planning process to address the location, quality, and quantity of future growth.

Coordinated Growth

The Steering Committee of the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan adopted 14 Guiding Principles to serve as the foundation of the regional planning process and to help define the scope of the plan. During the summer of 2006, the Technical Advisory Committee was tasked with evaluating the Guiding Principles and coming up with policy recommendations that would support the principles. The TAC created four following “working groups” to achieve this purpose: (The following text is taken from the Report to the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan Steering Committee 2006.)

1. **Direction of growth** (coordinated growth; consistency environmental standards; quality and form of development; open space; infill and redevelopment; and the Marine Corps Air Station)
2. **Public Infrastructure Needs** (timing and adequacy of public facilities; and fiscal sustainability)
3. **Economic Diversity** (economic health and diversity; socioeconomic diversity; and affordable housing)
4. **Implementation** (consistency of the local comprehensive plans; intergovernmental coordination; and balancing the public interest with private property rights)

Guiding Principle 1: It is imperative that the City of Beaufort, the Town of Port Royal, the Town of Yemassee, and Beaufort County (the Participating Local Governments) coordinate growth in Northern Beaufort County, especially around the current and future edges of the communities.

Recommendation 1.1: The Participating Local Governments should adopt a common future land use plan and consistent development standards to ensure that future growth will occur in an orderly and coordinated manner.

Consistency of Environmental Standards

Natural resource protection is an obvious and classic instance of where impacts transcend political boundaries. Further, the natural environment in Northern Beaufort County is of paramount importance to its life style, image, and economy, more so than in most regions of the country. While each jurisdiction is free to develop natural resource protection measures that best fits its area, there is great value in having an agreed upon base of environmental protections standards below which no jurisdiction should go. Consistency among jurisdictions in standards relating to water quality is especially important.

Guiding Principle 5: The Participating Local Governments will develop baseline standards for natural resource protection for salt marshes, marsh islands, coastal waters, and marine resources; trees, forests, and wildlife habitats; beaches and dunes; and open space preservation that each jurisdiction will be asked to adopt as part of their planning policies and regulations.

Recommendation 5.1: The Participating Local Governments should make it their priority to protect water quality by implementing the recommendations of the Beaufort County Special Area Management Plan (SAMP).

Background: Much of the local efforts and initiatives that address water quality and environmental protection in the last seven years are a direct result of the Beaufort County Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) and its recommendations. The SAMP, initiated in 1999, encompassed a wide range of topics and activities ranging from more advanced stormwater controls, wastewater management, and water quality monitoring, to public education and outreach.

Recommendation 5.2: The Participating Local Governments should require all new development to adhere to a common Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP's) Manual.

Background: Traditionally, stormwater management has dealt with controlling the quantity of runoff from a site in order to avoid flooding downstream properties. This measure of stormwater protection, however, does not protect against specific pollutants that impair water quality and threaten shellfish beds. In 1998, Beaufort County adopted the Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP) manual which has specific attenuation standards for two types of pollutants – nutrients (phosphorus) and fecal coliform bacteria. The City of Beaufort, the Town of Port Royal, and the Town of Yemassee currently do not require new development to meet these standards.

Recommendation 5.3: The Participating Local Governments should adopt baseline standards for critical line setbacks and natural vegetative buffers.

Background: The purpose of the natural vegetative buffers is ultimately to improve water quality by capturing sediments and pollution from storm water runoff. Critical line setbacks and vegetative buffers also stabilize the shoreline, reduce flooding and flood damage, preserve the natural habitat and create a sense of place and privacy for the homeowners. Currently Beaufort County requires a 50 foot wide natural vegetative buffer for single family houses and a 100foot wide buffer for all other uses. The City of Beaufort has a 30 foot requirement for single family residential development. An average buffer width of 50 feet with a minimum of 35 feet is required for multifamily and commercial development. The Town of Port Royal and the Town of Yemassee currently only require natural vegetative buffers in specific PUD's or development agreements.

Recommendation 5.4: Where justified, the Participating Local Governments should provide opportunities for limited community uses in close proximity to the OCRM critical line in order to enhance the community's enjoyment of the waterfront.

Background: One criticism of vegetative river buffer standards is that they would preclude the development of regional attractions such as the Waterfront Park in Beaufort, the Battery in Charleston, and Harbor Town on Hilton Head Island. Each of these developments provides the public with views and access to the water. In order to accommodate this type of development and at the same time preventing the degradation of the environment, it is important to establish guidelines that must be met in order to relieve river buffer requirements.

1. The development cannot be on a waterway classified as ORW (Outstanding Resource Waters) and SFH (Shellfish Harvesting Waters) by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).
2. Storm water management must be designed to compensate for the reduction or elimination of the natural vegetative buffer and increase in the amount of impervious surfaces.

Recommendation 5.5: The Participating Local Governments should apply more stringent standards in critical areas such as the headwaters of local waterways, low-lying areas and the ACE Basin.

Background: The SAMP called for the creation of a River Quality Overlay District Ordinance to address such concerns such as setbacks, vegetative buffers and appropriate impervious surface cover limits to minimize impacts of development to salt water marshes. This recommendation would most appropriately be applied in sensitive areas such as headwaters because of their increased vulnerability to pollution.

Recommendation 5.6: The Participating Local Governments should develop and adopt baseline standards for the protection of freshwater wetlands.

Background: With the current condition of Federal and State wetlands protection, the role of local governments is vital to protecting small, "nonjurisdictional" wetlands. Beaufort County has 4 wetland protection regulations, which allow fill for nontidal wetlands less than one acre in size and require mitigation. Of the municipalities, currently only the Town of Port Royal has wetland protection requirements and they are limited to planned communities in the Shell Point Overlay District.

Quality and Form of Development

Northern Beaufort County has a rich diversity of unique “places” – far from the homogeneity of many growing suburban areas. From the rural historic landscape of Sheldon, to the historic neighborhoods of Beaufort and Port Royal, to the coastal island environment of St. Helena, to the new urbanism styles in communities such as Habersham and Point View, the area is home to distinct “forms” of development and environment. As the region continues to feel growth pressure in the future, all agree that we should strive to maintain its unique sense of place.

One of the ways in which a sustainable regional form can be accomplished is to identify a regional vision for the overall form of new development relative to existing development and the natural environment, and then to implement local planning policies and regulations to implement that vision. While each community will continue to have its own responsibility to implement such policies at the local level, the region as whole would benefit from a common understanding of the how the individual communities will fit together as a region. While it would not be desirable to have each community have the same standards – having all the communities look alike would detract from diversity of the area – it will be very desirable for each community to understand where it fits into the regional form.

Guiding Principle 6: This planning process will strive to identify a vision for a regional form of development that addresses rural, suburban, urban, and business patterns of development for the purpose of reinforcing the valuable sense of unique and high quality places within the region.

Recommendation 6.1: The Participating Local Governments should adopt consistent corridor overlay district standards among the Participating Local Governments on shared corridors such as SC 170 (Robert Smalls Parkway), U.S. 21 and SC 280 (Parris Island Gateway).
Background: Currently, a patchwork quilt of political jurisdictions exists in Shell Point, Burton, and parts of Lady’s Island. It is important that consistent development standards are required regardless of political jurisdiction. Another important factor is that in some corridors (Boundary Street, Ribaut Road, US 21 on Lady’s Island), development is encouraged or required to be pedestrian friendly and address the street, while on other corridors (Trask Parkway, Robert Smalls Parkway) development is required to be set back from the highway and screened with a vegetated buffer (see **Map 1**). It is important for the County and its municipalities to recognize where it is appropriate to apply these distinct sets of development standards.

Recommendation 6.2: The Participating Local Governments should establish a shared Corridor Review Board for all applicable projects in Northern Beaufort County.

Background: Currently Beaufort County and the City of Beaufort have their own Corridor Review Boards that oversee development in their respective Corridor Overlay Districts. Establishing a shared board would accomplish two objectives:

1. It would provide for more consistency in the application and enforcement of corridor overlay district standards.
2. There is a limited pool of design professionals in northern Beaufort County who are willing to serve on boards. The more boards there are, the more difficult it is to find board members. Specific local design districts such as the City’s historic district and the Traditional Town Overlay District in Port Royal, however, may still be better served by local boards.

Recommendation 6.3: The Participating Local Governments should identify which highways will most likely be widened in the next 20 years and apply corridor overlay district standards accordingly.

Background: Northern Beaufort County's population growth and increased traffic congestion has necessitated the widening of many roads. Road widenings can have a negative effect on the region's aesthetic qualities. Therefore, to preserve highway buffers, it may be necessary to require greater buffer widths along corridors that will be widened in the future. Also, it may be necessary to require interim front yard setbacks in areas where development is encouraged to be pedestrian friendly and address the street. Zero lot line development must be avoided on roads that will be widened to avoid encroachment that may necessitate condemnation to secure additional right-of-way width.

Recommendation 6.4: The Participating Local Governments should develop programs such as Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's), payment in lieu of open space, and density bonuses to encourage clustered village development in rural areas as opposed to low-density sprawling development.

Background: The current density requirement in Beaufort County's rural district is one dwelling unit per three acres. Strict application of this standard may result in low-density suburban sprawl and fragmented open space. A more desired development pattern would consist of higher density hamlets and villages surrounded by large tracts of agricultural land and open space. This type of development could be encouraged by the application of a transfer of development rights (TDR) program or a payment in lieu of open space program (see Guiding Principle 7).

Open Space Preservation

One of the features that most contributes to the character of Northern Beaufort County is its extensive amount of open spaces. These open spaces take many forms – water, marshes, pine forests, farms, and simple vacant land. The long term preservation of some of these open spaces is important to preserve community character. The open space preservation issue is closely tied to both the natural resource protection and regional form issues discussed those respective guiding principles. The preservation of natural resources often also preserves open space, and a well designed regional open space system contributes heavily to an overall regional form. Substantial preserved open spaces that form a regional *system* will not occur without a strong regional effort. It is true that participating local government can and should pursue open space preservation at a local level, but those efforts should be part of a regional framework to ensure that they fit together in such a way that they reinforce natural resource and regional form goals. It is also important to recognize as part of this regional planning effort that the extensive open spaces that currently exist can not be expected to remain without active efforts by the communities. Most open space (other than those already permanently protected) is in private ownership. In a sense, this is “borrowed open space” much of the general public appreciates and enjoys that open space, but we can not expect private land owners to carry the burden of providing open space in the long term.

Guiding Principle 7: This planning process will explore methods of creating and permanently preserving a regional open space system.

Recommendation 7.1: In order to create a regional network of open spaces, four broad based open space acquisition goals are recommended:

1. Preserve large agricultural land holdings on St. Helena Island and north of the Whale Branch River.
2. Maintain a green corridor through the ACE Basin and along the Whale Branch River.
3. Continue to target open space acquisition within the Airport Overlay District (AOD) boundaries around the US Marine Corps Air Station (see Recommendation 12.2).
4. Provide for the passive recreation needs for northern Beaufort County's residents.

Recommendation 7.2: The Participating Local Governments should continue to utilize the "Greenprint" process for targeting the acquisition of future preserved lands.

Background: Federal, state and local governments have been aggressive in securing open space and natural areas in northern Beaufort County. However, *Map 2* illustrates that many of these preserved places are discrete and unconnected. As growth continues to occur, these natural areas will become more isolated and will not effectively be able to support healthy wildlife communities. In addition, as land becomes scarcer, it is more important to prioritize areas with outstanding natural resources in order to target future acquisitions of open space. The "Greenprint" program established by the Trust for Public Lands for Beaufort County is a good strategy for targeting open space acquisition to further regional goals.

Recommendation 7.3: The Participating Local Governments should consider an open space land bank where fees are collected in lieu of open space to apply to the purchase and preservation of larger or more critical lands.

Background: Required open space set asides for major subdivisions and PUD's is a useful tool for enhancing the region's open space network. Poor application of these standards can result, however, in small fragments of open space that provide no real benefit to the larger open space goals of the region. A fee in lieu of open space option could allow developments with no outstanding natural features or resources to pay into a program where the fees could be applied to the purchase (fee simple or development rights) of more critical lands.

Recommendation 7.4: The Participating Local Governments should establish a common definition and baseline standards for regional open space.

Background: Beaufort County, the City of Beaufort and the Town of Port Royal have different requirements and standards for open space when land is subdivided or developed. This recommendation calls for the Participating Local Governments to agree on the required percentage of land area to be set aside as open space when a rezoning or annexation occurs. This recommendation also calls for the Participating Local Governments to agree on a common definition and consistent requirements for open space. This would address such concerns as whether wetlands can count towards required open space, whether stormwater detention ponds could be placed within open space, and to what degree does open space serve recreation needs vs. preservation needs.

Infill and Redevelopment

Infill and redevelopment refers to the development of vacant land that is surrounded by development, or the redevelopment of land that had previously been developed but which is underutilized under current market conditions. While this is not often an issue addressed at the regional level, infill and redevelopment can have regional implications in that may reduce pressure for growth in “greenfield” areas. Thus, while each community will wish to have its individual infill and redevelopment polices to ensure that this type of development occurs in a way that is compatible with the community, the regional plan can embrace the idea of infill and redevelopment as a way to absorb some share of regional growth, perhaps reducing pressure around the edges. Infill development and redevelopment benefits the region by:

- Making better use of urban land supply while reducing demand to develop forested and agricultural land;
- Reducing vehicle trip length to employment, retail and services;
- Making better use of existing infrastructure and public services such as roads, water and sewer, schools and public safety; and
- Replacing abandoned or underutilized commercial and industrial sites

Guiding Principle 10: The regional planning effort will embrace and support the idea of compatible local infill and redevelopment by the local governments.

Recommendation 10.1: The Participating Local Governments should recognize common definitions for “infill” and “redevelopment”.

Background: In order to set up an effective program to target the development of infill parcels, it is important to have a common understanding of what is meant by infill and redevelopment. The following definitions are offered as a starting point for this discussion:

Small Tract Infill Development: The targeting of individual subdivided lots within existing residential subdivisions and commercial strips. Usually necessitates additional subdivision of land. Example: The construction of a single family house, duplex or small apartment building on a single vacant urban lot.

Large Tract Infill Development (leapfrogged parcels): The targeting of larger undeveloped residential or commercial parcels (10 acres or greater?). Development of these sites would require further subdivision of the land. This includes large lots in urbanized areas and areas with concentrations of undeveloped or underdeveloped large lots that have been passed over in favor of larger parcels further from the urban centers (e.g. Burton, Shell Point).

Small Scale Redevelopment: Replacing a single family house on a large lot with several houses or multifamily structures on smaller lots.

Large Scale Redevelopment: Redevelopment of a larger scale that requires the assembly of several parcels, removal of the older structures and the construction of more intense residential or commercial development.

Recommendation 10.2: The Participating Local Governments should identify infill and redevelopment priority areas.

Background: The following infill priority areas are suggested:

Urban Residential neighborhoods with a large number of small vacant lots;

Areas of northern Beaufort County with a large number of undeveloped parcels that are situated close to urbanized areas and public facilities (Burton, Shell Point, Lady's Island Redevelopment District); and Marginal commercial corridors with a large number of vacant or underutilized buildings

(Parris Island Gateway, Trask Parkway).

Recommendation 10.3: The Participating Local Governments should conduct an infill parcel inventory in the identified priority areas.

Background: Once the infill priority areas have been identified, then it will be easier to further identify individual parcels that have development or redevelopment potential. The following are some steps that could be taken to complete this inventory:

Establish GIS "screening" criteria to identify possible infill areas or parcels. Consider such factors as zoning, size of parcels, infrastructure, land use, and constraints to development such as wetlands. For redevelopment, look at such factors as ratio of assessed value of improvements to land value, age of structure, etc. Conduct field surveys to supplement GIS screening – condition of structures, surrounding land use patterns.

Recommendation 10.4: The Participating Local Governments should identify impediments to infill development and develop strategies to overcome the impediments.

Background: There are many real and perceived impediments to infill and redevelopment. These include the cost of redevelopment, possible regulatory barriers, opposition of neighbors (NIMBYism), and lack of developer interest. Below is a summary of these barriers and possible solutions to overcome the barriers:

Cost of Development: Infill parcels typically cost more than land in greenfield sites. While land costs are greater in developed areas, the cost of public services and infrastructure may be less expensive.

Possible solutions: Density bonuses. Fee waivers and subsidies (impact fees, development permit fees). Land assembly by the public sector. Tax abatements or rebates.

Neighborhood Resistance: Neighborhood resistance can delay a project, especially if the land needs to be rezoned.

Possible solutions: Establish design standards that ensure the compatibility of new infill development. Require developers to meet with residents of the surrounding area to solicit their input on the project design before finalizing plans.

Regulatory Barriers: Zoning, subdivision and land development regulations, and even building codes may present obstacles to developing infill sites. Setbacks and minimum lot sizes may frustrate single lot infill development. Density must be addressed – very often infill is only justified economically if increased densities are allowed.

Possible solutions: Consider conducting an infill audit that examines local plans, codes, and practices to identify infill barriers.

Lack of Developer Interest: Developers may be unaware of the market potential for infill development.

Possible solutions: publicize infill parcel inventory and make information available to developers. Provide examples of successful infill development projects

Relationship of Growth to the Military Facilities in Northern Beaufort County

The military facilities in Northern Beaufort County, such as the Marine Corp Air Station, the Naval Hospital, and Parris Island are important components of the regional planning effort. The military facilities are longtime major economic engines for the County, and their continued presence is important to the long term economic health of the region. The Participating Local Governments all agree that this planning effort must respect the operational needs and constraints presented by the presence of the military facilities. The Air Station in particular has potential impacts that affect this planning effort. The Air Station has been clear in identifying its potential impacts on the region through the publication of AICUZ maps (Air Installation Compatible Use Zones). The Station has also been a willing participant in intergovernmental planning efforts designed to plan for the external impacts of the base. Further, potential changes in the Land that has not been previously developed. Also includes agricultural and forested lands.

In 2004 The Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) was prepared and endorsed by Beaufort County, the Lowcountry Council of Governments, the City of Beaufort and the Town of Port Royal. It took the AICUZ information and formulated a cooperative land use planning effort between the local governments and the Air Station.

Guiding Principle 12: The Northern Beaufort Regional Plan will be prepared in collaboration with military facility planners, and in particular will respect the AICUZ contours and recommendations of the JLUS study.

Recommendation 12.1: The Participating Local Governments should adopt standards within the AICUZ contours that discourage development that would adversely affect the mission of the US Marine Corps Air Station.

Background: The JLUS (Joint Land Use Study) Implementation Committee drafted an Airport Overlay District that would restrict land uses within the AICUZ contours to be adopted by Beaufort County, the City of Beaufort, and the Town of Port Royal. The Committee anticipates that all three local governments will adopt the ordinance by the end of 2006. The Airport Overlay District (AOD) essentially has four components.

They are as follows:

Disclosure: All potential homebuyers and renters will be required to be notified that they are in a noise zone and/or accident potential zone.

Noise Level Reduction: New construction will be required to be built to achieve a 25 to 35 decibel reduction from exterior to interior, depending on the noise zone.

Use Limitations: New hospitals, churches, schools, day care centers, multifamily housing and other incompatible uses would not be permitted in the Clear Zone, Accident Potential Zone and Noise Zone 3. Existing buildings would be grandfathered.

Density Limitations: Residential densities will be restricted to avoid encroachment of development around the Air Station.

Recommendation 12.2: The Participating Local Governments should consider such tools as transfer of development rights (TDR) program to compensate affected property owners within the Airport Overlay District (AOD) and continue encroachment partnering acquisition efforts in the vicinity of the Air Station.

Background: Many property owners may be negatively affected by restrictions proposed to be adopted within the AOD boundaries. A TDR program has the potential to offer relief to these property owners. The JLUS (Joint Land Use Study) Implementation Committee recommended that this program will complement the proposed Airport Overlay District ordinance. A conservation partnering program relieves encroachment pressures from either incompatible development and/or loss of natural habitat on training, testing, and support operations at military installations (this could apply to Parris Island some day due to their ranges). The most effective way to avoid encroachment is to prevent incompatible development in the vicinity of the Air Station.

County Zoning Map

