
The Beach Road and Its Future Development

Conceptual Design Plan



Town of Nags Head, North Carolina
May 2008

Preface

This document is a result of the collaboration between the NC State University College of Design and the Town of Nags Head. Proposed conceptual design plan and recommendations were developed in coordination with the Town of Nags Head's Planning Department and the town's residents to study and establish a framework for improvements and future development on the Virginia Dare Trail (NC 12, also known as "the Beach Road") in Nags Head, North Carolina.

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Chapter I - Introduction and Process

Introduction

The Town of Nags Head is one of the most recognizable community and vacation destinations in North Carolina's Outer Banks. It has a permanent population of approximately 3,000 and almost 4,500 property owners. The peak seasonal population grows to between 50,000 and 60,000 people each year. Nags Head has undergone substantial growth and residential development in the form of single-family rental vacation homes. The town has also been experiencing the loss of local small businesses, which are being mostly replaced with single-family homes for short-stay accommodations, in addition to cottage courts and motels. Development along NC 12, the Virginia Dare Trail, has also been primarily in the form of single-family rental vacation homes.

In January 2006, the Town of Nags Head invited the NC State University College of Design to conduct a study on determining future development trends and character on NC 12, which stretches roughly 6.5 miles along the area north of Whalebone Junction. The area under focus will be referred as "the Beach Road" in this report. The study proposes a vision plan with development strategies and design recommendations which resulted from the analysis of existing conditions, as well as the assessment of community perceptions and expectations. This report incorporates the entire process and it has been prepared for dissemination throughout the broader community.

The main purpose of this study is to provide guidance for future physical development of the Beach Road, which will generate an identifiable area in Nags Head, and provide a destination for both the permanent community and visitors to the area. The study aims to provide guidance for orderly development on the Beach Road that will maintain a sense of place as "a family style beach town," and achieve a cohesive streetscape that lends itself well to nearby uses and the natural environment. It is also among the goals of the project to create a vibrant, mixed-use community that will compliment existing uses along the Beach Road, while enhancing linkages with other areas in town.

Introducing mixed-usage into the area, with small-scale retail activities and a variety of housing alternatives, is an interest of the Town of Nags Head. This would not only help maintain the area's economic growth, it would also help to achieve more a friendly street character while offering more opportunities for both residents and visitors. The project's aim is to plan and encourage a better development pattern, which will establish the area as a separate entity, rather than the road that it is today. Besides introducing mixed uses to the area, the project will encourage more public access to the beach and better designed public spaces, which ultimately provide for a more walkable community. As a result, the Beach Road will become an intensified and vital sector of the town. The town realizes the considerable amount of time needed to see such a transformation, and that to avoid piecemeal decisions, a plan must be in place as soon as possible to ensure future development of the Beach Road and ensure an interconnected whole.

The design recommendations proposed by this study are planning tools based on a vision that will maintain and enhance the character of the area. They aim to address many design issues which will potentially enhance the quality of life on the Beach Road. The design recommendations in this report examine the design of the public realm, streetscapes, the built form, and the scale and character of private development. The concept plans and design guidelines seek to coordinate and provide recommendations for future development efforts between the public and private sectors to produce a unique sense of place for the Beach Road area. These principles, together with appropriate design initiatives including streetscape beautification, aim to become a catalyst for increased local, small-scale commercial activity, further enhancing the Beach Road as an attractive place to live and visit. This study provides a basis for local government decision-making, including future decisions on development approvals and exactions, and provides residents with opportunities to participate in the planning and decision-making processes of their community.

The proposed design recommendations in Chapter IV will address the following elements:

- New design districts and land uses.
- Placement of buildings on site.
- Parking.
- Building design.
- District specific streetscape design.
- Public/right-of-way improvements:
 - Overall streetscape.
 - Sidewalks and pedestrian circulation.
 - Parking.
 - Signage, lighting, and street furniture.
 - Open spaces.
 - Landscaping.
- Implementation strategies.

Design Process

The process for this project and development of the design guidelines have been structured around two distinct phases:

Phase I: Community Conditions

The initial phase focused on a preliminary investigation of the existing conditions on the Beach Road and Nags Head in general. Research and data collection regarding the existing natural and built environments were conducted by students, consisting of research on existing plans, documents, policies, and regulations, as well as observations on specific sites in the Beach Road area. This foundational research to understand the nature, setting, opportunities, constraints, and values of the community comprised the first phase of the work. A presentation of the findings and the initial resident/stakeholder visioning workshop was held in March 2006, where students and Nags Head residents exchanged thoughts on the area's existing conditions (opportunities and constraints), set goals, and discussed what it will take to achieve them.

Phase II: The Beach Road Conceptual Vision Plan

The background research was followed up in the second phase with concept planning and design work leading to “vision plan” preparation. A community vision should be based on the sentiments and values of the community’s members. Accordingly, this phase continued in May 2006 with the second community visioning workshop, bringing together residents and property owners from the Beach Road in order to establish their vision for their community and for the Beach Road overall. Based on the community input, and the opportunities and constraints identified for future physical development in the area, concept designs were prepared. These designs were intended to explore potential physical development patterns, and the distillation of feedback from multiple viewpoints led to a conceptual vision plan and design ideas which finally led to the development of the design recommendations presented in this report.



Top: Participants listening to presentation of initial findings on the area’s existing conditions.

Bottom: Participants in the community visioning workshop discussing strategies for the Beach Road plan.

Chapter 2 - Background and Public Outreach

Historical Context

Recreational tourism has been of historic importance in the economies of many gateway communities all around the nation. Like many other coastal communities in the US, over the last 40 years Nags Head has been transformed into a resort community, one of many on the Outer Banks.

Nags Head has always been a popular destination, known for its classic “Old Nags Head”-style cottages full of character and history. The first settlement of Nags Head occurred over 160 years ago, when a North Carolina plantation owner built the first beach cottage there during the 1830s. Most planters from inland counties settled in the area in order to escape the long, hot, and humid summer, which was believed to foster malaria and other diseases.

The area then started to develop into a prosperous resort settlement, with vacation homes built from the sound to the sea. A massive resort called the Nags Head Hotel was built close to Jockey’s Ridge, and it became the summer focal point of Nags Head. The hotel was later demolished due to the shifting sands of Jockey’s Ridge.

It is still possible to see some of the old cottages along the oceanfront; Nags Head’s Historic Cottage Row District, which stretches for a mile, has been registered on the National Register of Historic Places since 1977. These gray cottages were typically built with hip-roofed porches facing south to break the northeast wind. Many of them were constructed using lumber salvaged from the many shipwrecks that once littered the beach. The cottages also have characteristic propped-shutter windows, weathered wooden shingles, wide gable roofs, single full-width dormers, and protruding built-in benches. These simple architectural characteristics became the symbol of “Old Nags Head Style.”

A Brief Overview of the Beach Road

The Beach Road runs the length of the seashore at Nags Head, meeting US 64 at an intersection known as Whalebone Junction which is a major landmark for the Outer Banks area. This intersection can be confusing because US 158, US 64 and US 264 originate here, and NC 12 (the Beach Road) is the only road that continues north and south of the junction.

Throughout history, pockets of cottages and “Mom and Pop” hotels sprang up along the Beach Road, most notably until the 1960s. In more recent times, Nags Head has been growing from north to south very rapidly. The Beach Road still retains some of its “Old Nags Head Style” cottages, but incremental cookie-cutter residential developments all along the road have changed the character of the area. Hotels, restaurants, piers, incoherent residences, and luxurious vacation cottages now line the road, which remains predominantly vacation-oriented. North of Whalebone Junction, there are

more restaurants, stores, and other commercial activities, and the area is filled with private cottages. The majority of the seasonal and daily shopping areas are all located on US 158. Permanent residents typically live in the middle and western areas of town, and the area south of the Beach Road is mostly residential with no commercial development, and much of the area backs up to the protected National Park.

Due to its popularity as a resort town, the population of Nags Head triples during the summer as tourists visit the area. The increasing number of visitors arriving each summer has also resulted in rapid development of the Beach Road area, consisting mainly of rows of rental beachfront houses, motels and hotels that crowd the ocean. The town is approximately 85% built out, and redevelopment is already occurring in places. Due to rapidly growing residential development interests in the area, the Beach Road is undergoing a transformation that requires new considerations to guide how changes in the area could happen and to preserve its distinct character and its sense of place as a “family-style oceanfront town”.



A view of old cottages.



View of a historic residence with the characteristic architectural style unique to Nags Head. Historical architecture creates a unique sense of place and identity, and adds to the character of the Beach Road.

Current Development Trends on the Beach Road

Significant public investment in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure has been made in many communities. It has been well documented that there is a direct connection between land use and transportation; however, much of the existing land use regulations are based on automobile-oriented development. To fully leverage the assets of transit, sidewalks, and trails, it may be necessary to re-examine and further refine some of the land use regulations applicable to transportation infrastructure, so that they will provide a balance between automobile- and pedestrian-oriented developments.

Increasingly, communities around the nation are seeking ways to encourage non-automotive forms of transportation, for reasons ranging from reducing traffic congestion to promoting personal fitness and economic development. Encouraging compact, mixed-use development patterns in the appropriate areas could greatly enhance the potential of the communities. Most importantly, land use and development that is thoughtfully designed to integrate with existing public pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalks, trails etc.) gives the greatest return on that investment. Many communities already have some existing non-automotive infrastructure, but making connections between destinations and encouraging development in targeted areas will maximize the benefits of those existing resources.

With increasing land value and the attractiveness of the area to summer vacationers, the desire to develop the Beach Road to become a pedestrian-friendly street is on the rise. The design of current development along the Beach Road is largely the result of the regulations that have guided site planning in town over the past several decades. Under current zoning standards and land-use regulations, the largest portion of developed land in the area are zoned C2 (General Commercial District) on the east side of the road, and CR (Commercial Residential District) on the west side. By definition, CR zoning allows for recreational uses and related development types, such as hotels and motels. Uses such as single-family homes and duplexes, municipally-owned public beach access facilities, and restaurants are also permitted in the CR District. C2 zoning allows mainly for the development of commercial facilities, in addition to single-family homes and duplexes.

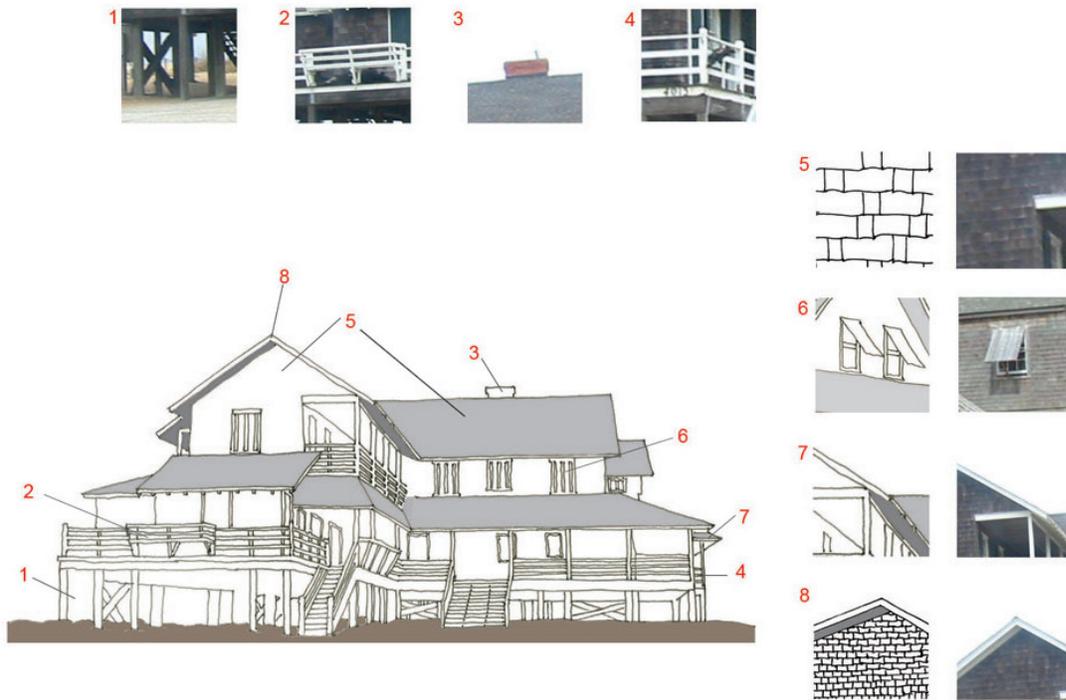
It is a concern that the current definitions of the districts do not anticipate what types of growth or development might occur in the area. However, due to the nature of the ongoing development characteristics and the existing regulations, most of the lots along the Beach Road, which are zoned as C2 or CR, have already been fully or partially developed as single-family residential developments. These homes in the Beach Road area are of varying size, style, and condition. The majority are being utilized as rental houses during summer, and typically stay vacant through the rest of the year. Currently, the remaining vacant lots in these zoning districts are spaced out along the Beach Road and intertwined with developed parcels.

Several small-scale commercial uses, which provide limited necessities such as restaurants and convenience stores for the residents and visitors to Nags Head, are also located in the area. Various staff meetings and brief on-site interviews were conducted to gather more information on the Beach Road and its current development trends, and they revealed that the current parking, setback, and septic regulations make it difficult for business owners to place a building on a site. However, the current lot coverage restrictions are necessary in order to meet septic tank placement/stormwater guidelines. The discussions also revealed that parking regulations and other site guidelines could be more flexible for businesses that were less than 3,500 square feet in size. This would allow for a smaller, "Mom and Pop" business to enter the area without meeting all of the parking requirements.

The Houses of Nags Head

Traditionally, Nags Head has symbolized an informal vacation retreat to its visitors. The local architecture embraces this attitude, taking the shingle style and adding local vernacular detailing. It also reduces the scale of individual buildings to embody the simple elegance of the community. The “Old Nags Head Style” houses include these common characteristics:

- A composition of basic forms with simple additions.
- Pitched roofs with dormer windows and chimney (#3 and #8 below).
- Timber pilings elevating the buildings (#1 below).
- Porches on at least two sides with lean-out porch bench (#2 and #4 below).
- A textured material palette. (#5 below)
- Visible structural bays (#7 below).
- Batten doors and windows (#6 below).



Common characteristics of the “Old Nags Head Style” house.



A view of older houses on the Beach Road with the characteristic old Nags Head architectural style.



A view of current row of multi-family residences from the Beach Road. The designs are typically from purchased plans.

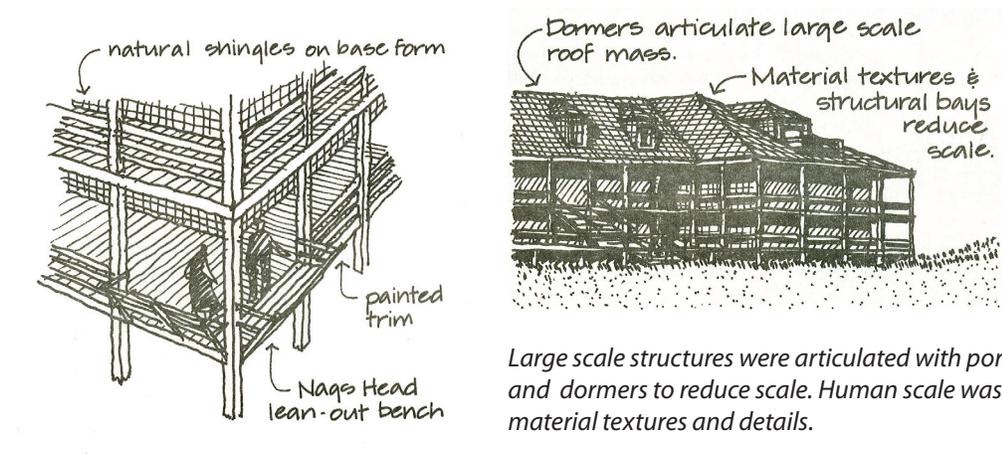
Most of the houses are designed as simple forms with modest additions, all typically wrapped with covered porches to provide a protected space outdoors. The use of pitched roofs and dormered windows allows houses to add an additional story without increasing their scale. The repetition of structural bays and the inherent grain of the building materials used also reduce the visual impact of the large building masses.

The public face of the house, the façade, is also an important element that defines the character of the Beach Road. Porches, windows, and doors in correct proportions, and their associated details all play an important role. Besides the main façade of each house, the other sides of the houses that are visible from publicly accessible spaces should also be taken under consideration.

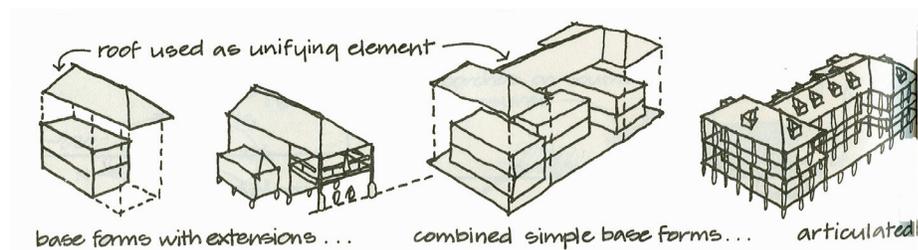
In addition to these architectural elements, other shared elements of the existing Beach Road houses include the setbacks from the street, and the size and placement of the house on the lot. All of these contribute to the public realm of the area. It is very important that each house coordinates with the others within certain areas; setbacks need to be consistent, landscaping needs to be coordinated, and massing needs to be similar.

Old Nags Head Commercial Structures

The older Nags Head commercial structures were conceived as integral extensions of the seaside resort community, and were specifically designed to fit aesthetically within the overall expression. The commercial structures, like the beach cottages, are characterized by their steep roofs, porches, wood shingle roofing, siding, sash windows, and ornamentation.



Large scale structures were articulated with porch columns, benches, and dormers to reduce scale. Human scale was introduced with material textures and details.



Additive form—simple base form with extensions or a combination of base forms.



Views of current commercial sites existing on the Beach Road.

Current Streetscape on the Beach Road

There has been little change in the Beach Road's streetscape in recent years aside from minor road improvements and the installation of a multi-use path on the east side of the street. It is relatively undeveloped, and pedestrian amenities such as street furniture, pedestrian scale lighting, and appropriate wayfinding/signage do not currently exist along this two-lane road.

The topography is characteristically flat, with sand dunes being the only significant natural features in the area. The shape of the peninsula creates long-distance, monotonous views along the road. Local vegetation is very rare, and is generally associated with landscaping on individual lots.

Pedestrian and vehicular circulation on the Beach Road is also linear in nature due to the configuration of the two primary roads (US 158 and NC 12). On-street parking is permitted in many areas along the Beach Road, but it is not encouraged and has even been prohibited in areas that have become safety concerns due to crowding in summer. The area also experiences drainage problems, specifically after heavy rains, causing visual and physical distraction for pedestrians and bicyclers. While the multi-use path is in place on the east side of the road, a continuous path is not in place on the west side, or on other connecting streets.



Above: There are drainage problems along the Beach Road, specifically after heavy rains, causing visual and physical distractions for pedestrians and cyclists.

Left: A view of current streetscape on the Beach Road demonstrating the existing multi-use path.

Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities

The opportunities for balanced development of mixed uses that will help to support and enhance the unique character of the Beach Road include the following:

- Gateways to the ocean and Nags Head.
- Natural and historic attractions (e.g. older houses, piers, etc.), which facilitate a draw of tourists into the community.
- Nags Head's potential to embrace the existing uses and businesses on the Beach Road.
- An active citizenry, including establishment of the Beach Road Committee, with interest in bettering the community.

Constraints

Constraints to creating a balanced mix of land uses on the Beach Road include the following:

- Small lot sizes for mixed-use developments and related requirements, such as the number of parking spaces per establishment, might require lot consolidation prior to development.
- The rising cost of housing, enticing developers to build larger single-family residences and to shy away from multi-family dwellings or small-scale commercial development.
- Insufficient land use categorization, not allowing for envisioning a mixed balance of commercial, residential, and other land uses.

The Public Process



Above and right: Participants in the Community Workshop demonstrating their ideas on a map of Nags Head indicating the opportunities to improve the Beach Road.

Community involvement and interaction is a vital component of the planning and design process. To involve the community in the development of the Beach Road Conceptual Plan, community workshops, mapping exercises, and “visual survey” were conducted. Flyers, newspaper articles, and radio announcements were among the types of media used to promote community involvement.

In March and May of 2006, two consecutive public workshops were held in Nags Head. In the first public workshop, the preliminary research regarding the existing conditions of the Beach Road was presented and the community was asked for feedback. The participants were involved in identifying key issues and locations of major concern throughout the area. After the presentation to the residents, small group discussions were held and a list of general concerns was collected.

The preparation of the design guidelines and development strategies incorporated extensive public input and participation. After a detailed inventory and analysis of the existing conditions, the College of Design team facilitated a second community workshop in May 2006 as a way of “brain storming” design strategies for the area. The problems identified and design objectives set by a cross-section of local residents and business owners were further discussed and recorded through these public workshops, and later helped to form the basis of the recommended design guidelines and development strategies.

Participants were directed to work at their tables developing ideas and concepts that would alleviate their concerns in the community. Each group discussed vision, character/identity (building uses, streetscape, public spaces), movement/circulation (pedestrian accessibility, traffic, parking), and other concerns on the Beach Road. The ideas were collected from each group and compiled into a master list of key issues and objectives from which the designing process could build.



Above and right: Participants in the Community Workshop discussing strategies and their ideas for improving the Beach Road in small groups. The group discussions facilitated by the students from the College of Design, NCSU.

Comments from residents of Nags Head represent a mix of desires. While some welcome the prospect of development and generating mixed-use areas/nodes on the Beach Road, there is worry that increased development and related density will destroy the cohesiveness and small beach town charm that Nags Head offers. Generally, Nags Head residents desire a low to medium density build-out for the Beach Road with mixed-use core(s).

Some key concerns of the residents about the Beach Road area included the following:

Land Use

- Not many small-scale commercial uses exist in the area.
- Mixed uses are lacking.
- Current regulations (lot coverage, setback, etc.) make it difficult for small commercial activities to begin or survive along the Beach Road.

Character/Identity

- Housing is too uniform in character.
- The majority of the rental houses are vacant through winter.
- Drainage of storm water is a problem on the street, particularly after heavy rains.
- There are no visual connections to the ocean due to private developments along the ocean side.
- No public open spaces (small parks/playgrounds) exist along the Beach Road. Beach access areas should be better maintained and utilized as public open spaces.
- The parking areas in front of buildings and the overall street look are unattractive. The area needs to be landscaped with local vegetation.
- Above-ground power lines are unattractive.
- There is need for more amenities such as trash cans, benches etc. along the multi-use path.

Parking/Circulation

- There are insufficient parking areas along the Beach Road. On-street parking blocks the entrances to private properties (specifically during summer).
- No walkable activities are available along the Beach Road.
- A dangerous interface exists between bikes and cars.
- There are too many driveways reaching to the street, causing safety concerns for pedestrians.
- There is a need to create bike lanes to separate bikes and pedestrians.
- Cross-walk markings are poor.
- The Beach Road needs better signage for wayfinding.
- There is a need for another path/sidewalk on the west side of the Beach Road for a better walking experience (specifically when it is crowded during summer).

Visual Survey

During the second design workshop conducted in May, 2006, residents in separate sessions were asked to complete the Visual Preference Survey. Each participant was given 20 photos of places from various beach towns around the nation, and they listed what they liked or disliked about the photos while commenting on the applicability of ideas (e.g. mixed uses, height of buildings, streetscape, open spaces, architectural character etc.) to the Beach Road. From this survey, a basic understanding of the aesthetics (i.e. how the overall street would look like), the scale of built forms, and related architectural

preferences of Nags Head residents were gathered. This process was helpful to provide further input for future expected development types along the road.

The percentage values presented below indicate the frequency of each response identified separately for liked and disliked features of each photo. Evaluation of the responses for liked and disliked features on each photo was treated as a separate question. Responses to the visual survey exercise were gathered from 32 workshop participants.



Image 1

47% of the responses indicated that residents liked the scale and order of the buildings, which can also be applicable to the Beach Road (15 responses out of 32 respondents).

The lack of greenery, the architectural design of the buildings, and vast concrete surfaces were listed as disliked features (88%; 28 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 2

Residents liked the idea of preserving the sand dunes and stated the importance of enhancing beach access areas (38%; 12 responses out of 32 respondents).

Many residents disliked the appearance of the staircases leading to the beach/ocean level (66%; 21 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 3

Residents indicated that they liked the design of the structure and the protection of the sand dunes (53%; 17 responses out of 32 respondents).

Residents disliked the height of the structure and the number of steps leading from the top of the dunes to the ocean (59%; 19 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 4

A majority of residents liked the view of the ocean from the beach access areas and commented on preserving or creating visual access corridors to the ocean along the Beach Road as well (91%; 29 responses out of 32 respondents).

No comments were listed as anything disliked (0 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 5

Residents enjoyed the natural look of the greenery and sidewalk accesses (50%; 16 responses out of 32 respondents).

Some residents were concerned about the overgrown vegetation and indicated that the maintenance of vegetation on the street should occur regularly in their town as well. They also disliked the idea of parking on the street (66%; 21 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 6

Residents liked the existence of signage and sidewalk as part of the streetscape and indicated the need for better signage, as well as an additional sidewalk on the west side of the Beach Road (63%; 20 responses out of 32 respondents).

Although they liked the use of natural vegetation on the street, they felt it looked overgrown. The respondents indicated that the maintenance of vegetation on the street should occur regularly (59%; 19 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 7

Residents enjoyed the view of ocean from the street. The comments also indicated they felt that the street width (i.e. with two-lane road and sidewalks on both sides) was appropriate. They commented that another sidewalk (on the west side of the road) is necessary. (16%; 5 responses out of 32 respondents).

The majority agreed that they disliked the visibility of power lines above ground and expressed the need to place them underground on the Beach Road as well (91%; 29 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 8

The majority of residents enjoyed the street elements such as street lights. They also liked the outdoor seating areas, vegetation, sidewalks, and flower beds as a positive contribution to the pedestrian-friendly look of the street (75%). (24 responses out of 32 respondents).

However, some commented that such a look would be too busy for the Beach Road, and disliked on-street parking (28%). (9 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 9

Residents liked the pedestrian-friendly alley and green vegetation (56%; 18 responses out of 32 respondents).

Some of the respondents indicated that the alley was too narrow and disliked the fencing along both sides (50%; 16 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 10

Residents liked the organization of the buildings (44%; 14 responses out of 32 respondents).

Residents disliked the density of the area; it was considered too crowded and busy (59%; 19 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 11

Residents liked the greenery and the existence of benches, and stated that it should be considered for the Beach Road as well (78%; 25 responses out of 32 respondents).

Some commented, however, that the number of the benches shown in the picture and the density of trees were high (31%; 10 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 12

A majority of the residents liked the playground and indicated that there is further need for playground areas on the Beach Road (75%; 24 responses out of 32 respondents).

No negative comments were listed.



Image 13

Most residents considered the image shown of a mixed-use area as pedestrian-friendly, and considered the building scale appropriate for the Beach Road as well (69%; 22 responses out of 32 respondents).

Some residents indicated that the image looked too busy (34%; 11 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 14

Residents liked the mixed-use look of the area and commented on the need to create mixed-use areas on the Beach Road as well (50%; 16 responses out of 32 respondents).

The majority of the residents criticized the urban look of the image and the architectural style of the buildings; it was considered too urban (56%; 18 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 15

Residents considered the image to be pedestrian-friendly (50%; 16 responses out of 32 respondents).

Some indicated that the area shown in the image looked too busy (38%). They also disliked the lack of greenery (12 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 16

Some of the residents considered the image unique (31%). They also indicated that there is a need for such vendors on the Beach Road (10 responses out of 32 respondents).

However, the majority disliked the style and look of the structural elements (69%; 22 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 17

Some residents considered town homes as affordable options (28%; 9 responses out of 32 respondents).

However, the majority disliked the building scale and found it very rigid. It was not considered as a good option for the Beach Road, or for anywhere in Nags Head (75%; 24 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 18

Residents liked the building features such as rooflines, decks, and porches (50%; 16 responses out of 32 respondents).

However, the building surface (width) and height was considered too large and tall for the Beach Road area (63%; 20 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 19

Some residents liked the style of the building (34%; 11 responses out of 32 respondents).

However, it was considered too large and ornate (53%). The majority indicated that the Beach Road already has large houses like this, and they are mostly disliked (17 responses out of 32 respondents).



Image 20

Some residents liked the openness of the street and the parking area (22%; 7 responses out of 32 respondents).

However, the majority indicated that there wasn't enough greenery to soften the look of the surface parking area. They also disliked the huge expanses of asphalt and concrete (63%; 20 responses out of 32 respondents).

The overall results indicated that the residents are in favor of mixed-uses in some of the areas along the Beach Road. However, it is very well stated that the area should continue preserving its small beach town character by applying restrictions to height and related setbacks. It is also among the interests of the residents to see changes on the street look by providing more opportunities to walk around without eliminating cars (more parking areas, additional sidewalk, landscaping, signage etc.). The goal is to provide a pedestrian friendly atmosphere. Although the residents are in favor of seeing varying architectural styles around, they would like to make sure that new developments will still respect the Old Nags Head architecture and scale.

Chapter 3 - Vision Plan

Community Vision

After holding several meetings and community workshops, the following mission statement and communal vision was proposed:

“To help enhance the Beach Road corridor and create a unique, more coherent, and pedestrian friendly district that is a destination for the community of Nags Head and out-of-town visitors. The proposed conceptual plan establishes that the Beach Road will continue to develop, while maintaining its ‘family beach town character’ offering an array of compatible residential, commercial, and recreational uses that are memorable, safe, and accessible to all.”

The communal vision developed for the Beach Road suggests strengthening the character and establishing a strong sense of place for the corridor by building upon the existing attributes of the area, creating and preserving a unique character as a safe, walkable street with a mix of uses, human-scale architecture, and public spaces. A strong sense of place can make the Beach Road an attractive location for recreating, shopping, visiting, and living, thereby increasing the likelihood for an economically viable mixed-use area.

The College of Design team later took this communal vision and, utilizing the basic principles of community and urban design, turned it into conceptual design ideas with recommendations for the future physical development of the Beach Road area. The recommendations included in this document also suggest development standards and actions needed to bring the community’s vision of the Beach Road’s future to realization. It is the hope that this study will provide a basis for local government decision-making, including development approvals and exactions, and will provide residents with more opportunities to participate in the future planning and decision-making processes of their community.

Plan Goals and Objectives

Collective input gathered from the residents through the workshops led to the formation of the following goals and objectives:

Goal Statement 1: Create an attractive and healthy environment that preserves the family beach town atmosphere, and makes the Beach Road an attractive area for living and family recreation.

- Objective—Establish the Beach Road as one entity, with distinct design districts that take advantage of the existing unique characters within the area.

- Objective–Maintain high administration standards for the town’s zoning codes and ordinances while allowing flexibility in regulations, particularly for existing small businesses, to ensure the quality of present and future residential and commercial property.
- Objective–Encourage and support a balanced mixed land use pattern (between commercial and residential uses) that serves the needs and reflects the attitude of residents who envision the Beach Road as a unique, more coherent, and pedestrian-friendly corridor. Encourage mixed-uses in certain areas (see proposed districts in the next chapter) with limited, small commercial activities on the west side of the Beach Road while keeping the east side more residential.
- Objective–Encourage smaller clusters of commercial uses/development on sites that will incorporate open spaces.
- Objective–Allow for economically-efficient use of land on the Beach Road while protecting the natural environment and the town’s character.
- Objective–Explore new zoning concepts and more restrictive zoning regulations in the town’s proposed historic district.
- Objective–Preserve the historic district, fishing piers, and gallery row area as attraction points on the Beach Road.
- Objective–Encourage the incorporation of elements from the historic “Old Nags Head” architectural style into the design of new developments to preserve and complement the historic character of the Beach Road area.
- Objective–Encourage private property owners to make improvements that meet a high standard of design and maintenance of their properties.
- Objective–Encourage more developments that will allow winter activities (museums, galleries, etc.). Create more attraction points on the Beach Road.
- Objective–Create gateway features at the entrance points into Nags Head through the Beach Road.

Goal Statement 2: Protect natural resources and environmentally-sensitive areas on the Beach Road.

- Objective–Increase public access to beach areas, including associated parking facilities, both locally and regionally.
- Objective–Encourage and support an effective program of planning on the Beach Road that will achieve quality development and ensure protection of coastal natural resources and the environment in general.
- Objective–Design and develop a stormwater-management system on the Beach Road. Address drainage problems by continued maintenance and the addition of effective swales and ditches.
- Objective–Engage in a dialogue with state agencies and other local governments that recognize the local impact of regional development patterns in Dare County, and seek cooperative solutions for sustainable development and resource protection.

- **Goal Statement 3:** Establish the Beach Road as a recreational destination for both tourists and local residents by adding more and improving existing public open spaces.
- Objective–Provide continuous visual interest at street level.
- Objective–Use the public realm to unify the overall composition of the street.
- Objective–Create more small parks/playgrounds where possible.
- Objective–Maintain and enhance beach access areas as public open spaces; improve the aesthetic, functional, and recreational aspects of beach access areas.
- Objective–Coordinate public streetscape improvements with private efforts.
- Objective–Make streetscape improvements to enhance the aesthetic character of the area. An aesthetically pleasing streetscape is critical to attracting and supporting retailers.
- Objective–Provide a sufficient number of streetlights specifically designed for the Beach Road that will provide a safe walking experience for pedestrians, while allowing for clear night skies.

Goal Statement 4: Create a safely navigable Beach Road for all town residents and visitors.

- Objective–Design for a “walkable” street, while maintaining functionality for all traffic types.
- Objective–Develop and maintain an efficient, balanced, and safe street system with adequate facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. Construct and maintain adequate, safe bicycle lanes and pedestrian ways (sidewalks) along the Beach Road. Also, create opportunities for more bike/pedestrian activity along east/west arteries. Add buffers between the multi-use path and the road for the perception of safety.
- Objective–Encourage the participation of county and state agencies to assist in promoting and funding a safe and efficient town trolley service.
- Objective–Work to ensure the safety of pedestrians on the Beach Road, and consider the implementation of sidewalks in areas that present safety risks.
- Objective–Encourage developments to consider loading and unloading zones off the Beach Road and multi-use path.
- Objective–Engage in a dialogue with state agencies and other local governments that recognize the local impact of regional development in Dare County and seek cooperative solutions for efficient and equitable transportation services and infrastructure.

Chapter 4 - Design Principles

Overview

As land values continue to rise in the Town, and available space suited for development becomes increasingly scarce, widespread redevelopment of existing areas is likely in the near future. Additionally, the potential for conflicting land uses may increase as traditionally single-family residential properties are threatened by adjacent incompatible uses, such as multi-family residential development or tourism-related commercial businesses. This study aims to promote an economically-efficient use of land on the Beach Road while protecting the natural environment and the area's historic character.

The design and siting of buildings, as well as the visual quality of the street, are important in shaping the character of the Beach Road area. Today, the density and automotive orientation of the existing housing and commercial uses does not provide the Beach Road with a distinctive sense of "place." For planning purposes, this study proposes that the Beach Road be divided into two major, "overlay" mixed-use districts and three sub-districts. This approach is designed to improve the physical environment and the character of the Beach Road.

The mixing of uses is proven to work best when it comes out of a thoughtful plan that emphasizes connectivity among uses. Results may be haphazard when communities simply enable multiple uses with providing proper guidance regarding the mix of uses and how they should be spatially related. To achieve well-planned mixed-use development, the design districts are proposed to act as "overlays." An overlay district is a zoning district that is superimposed over one or more existing districts in order to enable additional restrictions, permit additional uses, or implement density bonuses or incentive zoning to achieve community goals; the underlying zoning remains in place. In the case of mixed-use zoning, it is used to allow additional uses and to provide incentives to achieve local goals. Developers may choose to develop according to the underlying zoning, or alternatively, according to the mixed-use provisions. This encourages coordinated, cohesive development among lots or through lot consolidation. The overlay approach is especially useful when the community wants to promote a unified approach in an area where there are two or more underlying districts.

The overlay, as we have noted, encourages coordinated, cohesive development. Rather than allowing piecemeal development, it encourages a sense of place over a larger area. The overlay allows the community to enable and require a mix of uses and control their features. Changing the underlying zoning to allow a mix by right would only enable it; it would not be required, or controlled, via the special permit process. The overlay concept is especially useful where the desired mixed-use area crosses zoning district boundaries, only includes a portion of a district, or if the community wants to protect commercial uses in specific district areas.

If the community wants to encourage mixed use, the overlay should be structured in a way that is attractive to developers, without onerous requirements. The municipality typically retains control through the special permit process, and can turn down any development not to its liking.

Different communities choose mixed-uses for different reasons. Some see it as an excellent way to incorporate a mix of housing types on a small scale while enhancing the traditional town character. Others see it primarily as a vehicle for revitalizing struggling areas and spurring economic development, or to create or enhance village centers. In developing a mixed-use overlay district, communities should select the advantages that best apply to their situation, and structure the provisions to accomplish their intended goals. Listed below are some of the many benefits of mixed use development:

- Encourages high quality design by providing both greater flexibility and more control.
- Preserves and enhances traditional village centers.
- Promotes a village-style mix of retail, restaurants, offices, civic uses, and multi-family housing.
- Provides more housing opportunities and choices.
- Enhances an area's unique identity and development potential.
- Promotes pedestrian and bicycle friendly destinations.
- Reduces automotive dependency, roadway congestion, and air pollution by co-locating multiple destinations.
- Promotes a sense of community.
- Promotes a sense of place.
- Encourages economic investment.
- Promotes efficient use of land and infrastructure.
- Guides development toward established areas, and protecting undeveloped or outlying environmentally-sensitive resources.
- Enhances vitality.
- Increases revenues.

Proposed Design Districts

The public input process revealed that the Town should enhance the Beach Road's identity as a single place, with distinct design districts that take advantage of the unique character of each area. Therefore, this study proposes a shared sign of design overlay districts, which provides organization for concept plans along the Beach Road and other, related design recommendations. The proposed overlay districts intend to enhance the viability and livability of the Beach Road, as well as its connection to other activity centers in Nags Head.

The purpose of the overlay districts is to promote a village-style mix of retail, restaurants, offices, civic uses, and multi-family housing; to achieve and maintain a unified, pleasing aesthetic/visual quality for

the streetscape, landscaping, and architecture; and to promote alternative modes of transportation on the Beach Road for pedestrians, cars, and allowing for future consideration of local public transit options. Each proposed overlay district is intended to recognize its context and its architectural character by establishing appropriate standards for uses within the underlying zoning districts. The design recommendations provided for each district are intended to preserve the Beach Road's special historic and architectural character, and to protect private property values and public investments in the area by ensuring that the exterior alterations to existing buildings and sites over time are undertaken with sensitivity.

Based on the residents' identification of important areas to preserve or improve, this study proposes that the Beach Road be organized into two major districts (the Whalebone Junction District and the Community Center District) and three sub-districts (the Municipality District, Historic District, and the Art Gallery District) (see the map on page 28). These districts aim to tie together and strengthen existing areas and neighborhoods in a way that encourages interdependence and provides a fuller, richer identity, set of destinations, connections, streetscape, and better gateways on the Beach Road corridor. While these districts have their own unique character and function, a common theme and common design elements link the districts to form and preserve the overall identity of the Beach Road.

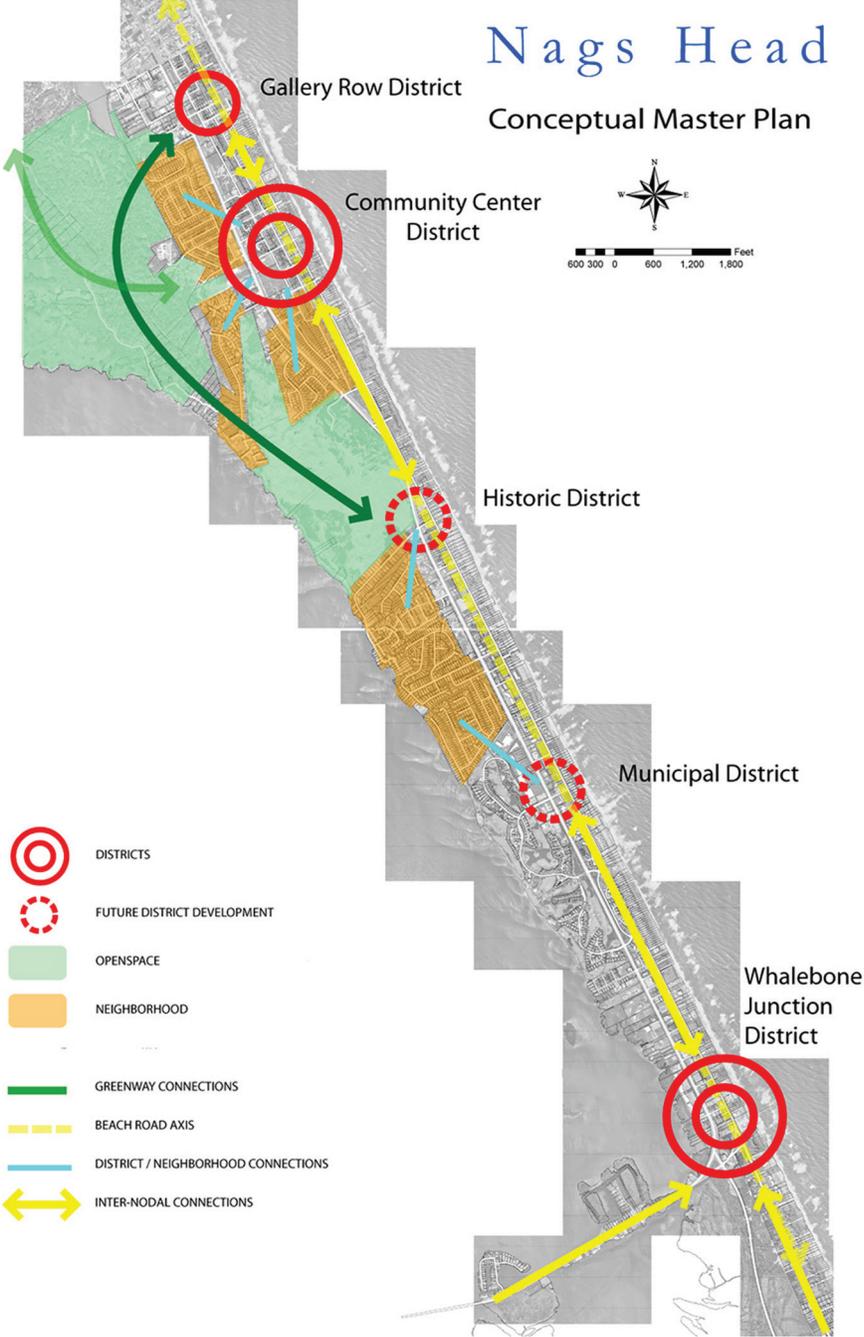
Each district and proposed recommendations for site planning, building design, and public/right of way improvements aim to:

- implement goals and objectives for the orderly development of the town on the Beach Road;
- enhance the Beach Road's unique identity and character, and contribute to a positive beach town image;
- stimulate investment and strengthen the economic vitality of the Beach Road;
- contribute to a positive physical image of the Beach Road; and
- maintain and protect the value of property on the Beach Road.

The design recommendations below highlight the most important design and planning concepts derived from the community workshops. The map on the next page is a conceptual map that is intended to demonstrate the locations of the proposed design districts on the Beach Road area. The following parts of this section go into greater detail and expand upon the design concepts for each proposed district to assist developers and planners in their planning and design processes.

Nags Head

Conceptual Master Plan



A map of districts proposed on the Beach Road. The Beach Road area is subdivided into theme-based districts to create areas with separate and unique identities.

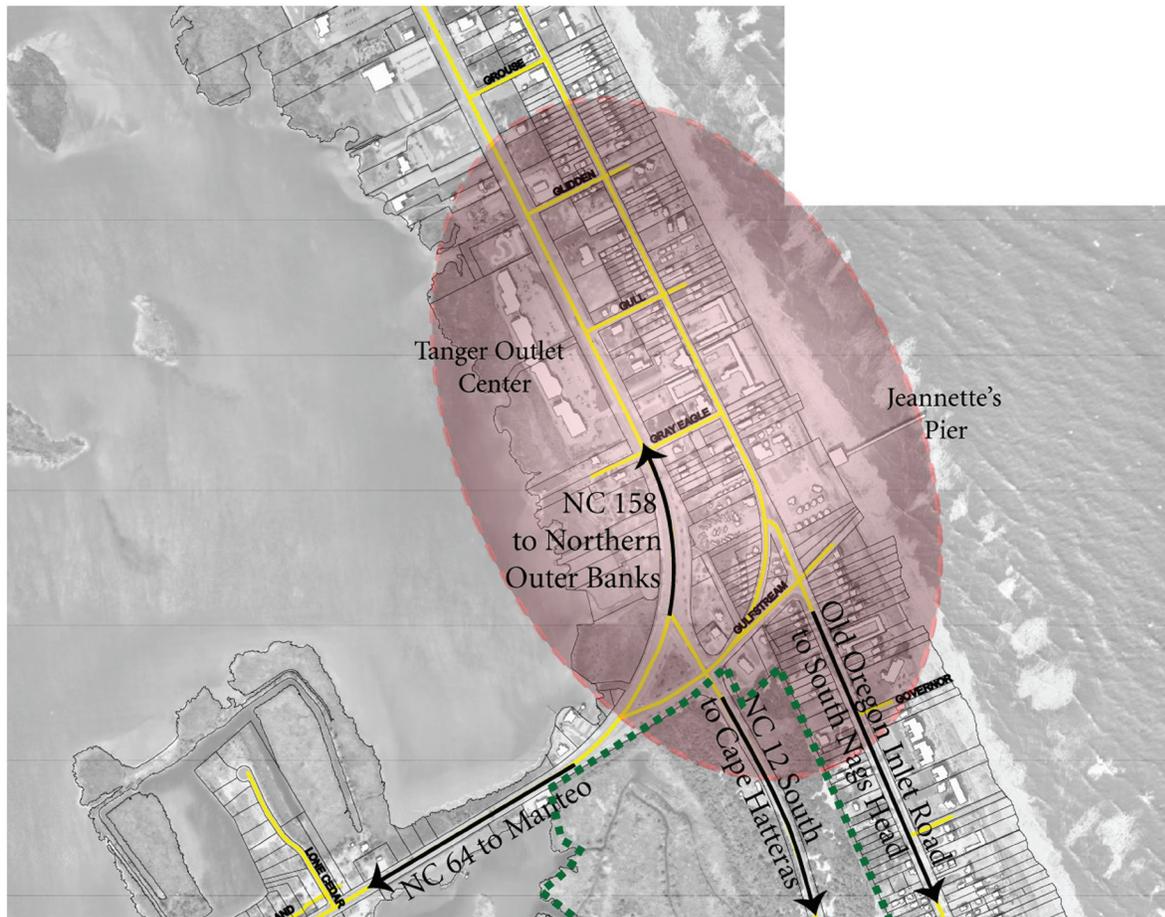
District Specific Guidelines

a) Whalebone Junction District (Southern Gateway – major district)

Overview of the Existing Conditions: Major Identifying Features and Characteristics

One of the entrances to the Beach Road is from US 64 at Whalebone Junction, a major intersection linking north and south sections of the Beach Road to the surrounding areas. As one of the major gateways, Whalebone Junction:

- serves as a landmark highlighting the arrival onto the Beach Road;
- provides a transition from a highway setting; and
- creates a first impression by reflecting the character of the community.

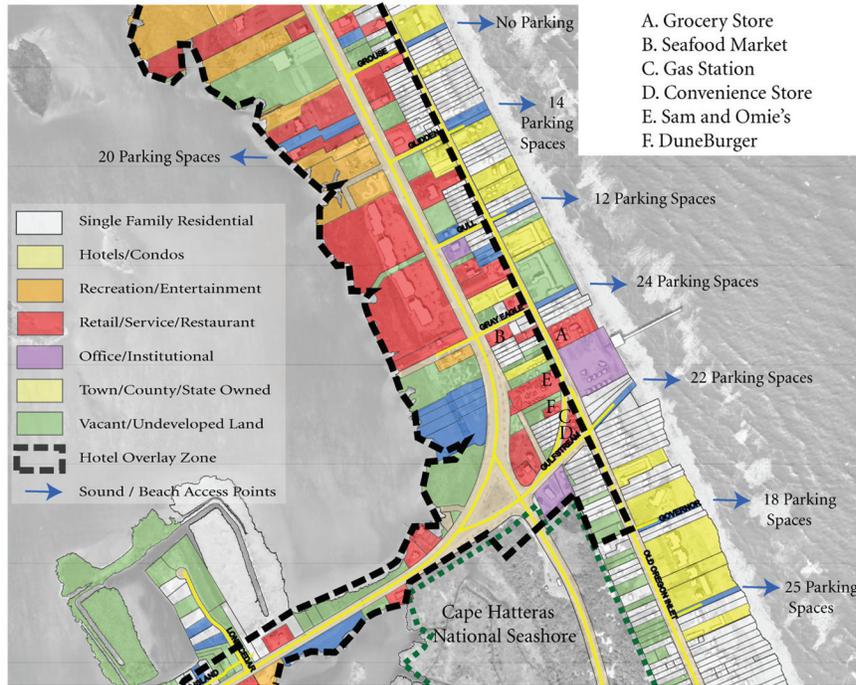


A map of proposed Whalebone Junction District.

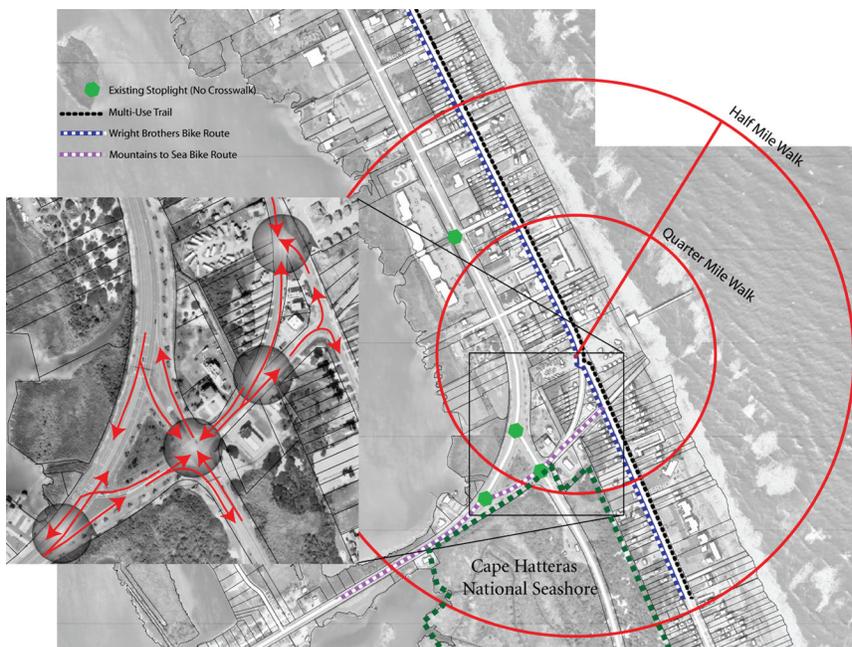
The Whalebone Junction district mainly accommodates commercial uses such as restaurants, hotels, convenience/grocery stores, a gas station, and Jeannette's Pier, most of which are located within walking distance of surrounding residential units. Residents considered this district the heart of the Beach Road, since it accommodates several attraction points (such as the pier) for both residents and

visitors. The area is also in close proximity to a major shopping area along the NC 158 Bypass (Tanger Outlet Center).

The Beach Road is currently the most popular corridor in Nags Head for non-motorized transportation, thanks to the well-traveled multi-use path that runs the entire length of the road's east side, and congestion of bikers and pedestrians along this path is increasing. In addition, the Mountains to Sea bike route enters town across the Washington Baum Bridge, and ends at Whalebone Junction.



Existing land use pattern in the Whalebone Junction District.



Existing circulation pattern in the Whalebone Junction District.

The public input process indicated that residents would like to see more pedestrian activity in the area, so that they can walk to destinations such as shops, restaurants, the pier, hotels, etc. They also indicated that this district currently provides a minimum of opportunities for a walkable environment due to:

- fast automobile traffic, a lack of warnings, and insufficient directional signage at the entrance to the Beach Road and at speed limit changes;
- a lack of entry signs (such as “history” and “welcome” types);
- a lack of traffic calming features; and
- parked cars in front of buildings, or along the road, generating safety concerns for pedestrians and blocking the flow of traffic.



Above Left: A view of the gateway area toward Highway 158 from the Beach Road.



Above Right: The entrance to the Beach Road.

Left: A view of current streetscape at the Whalebone Junction District.

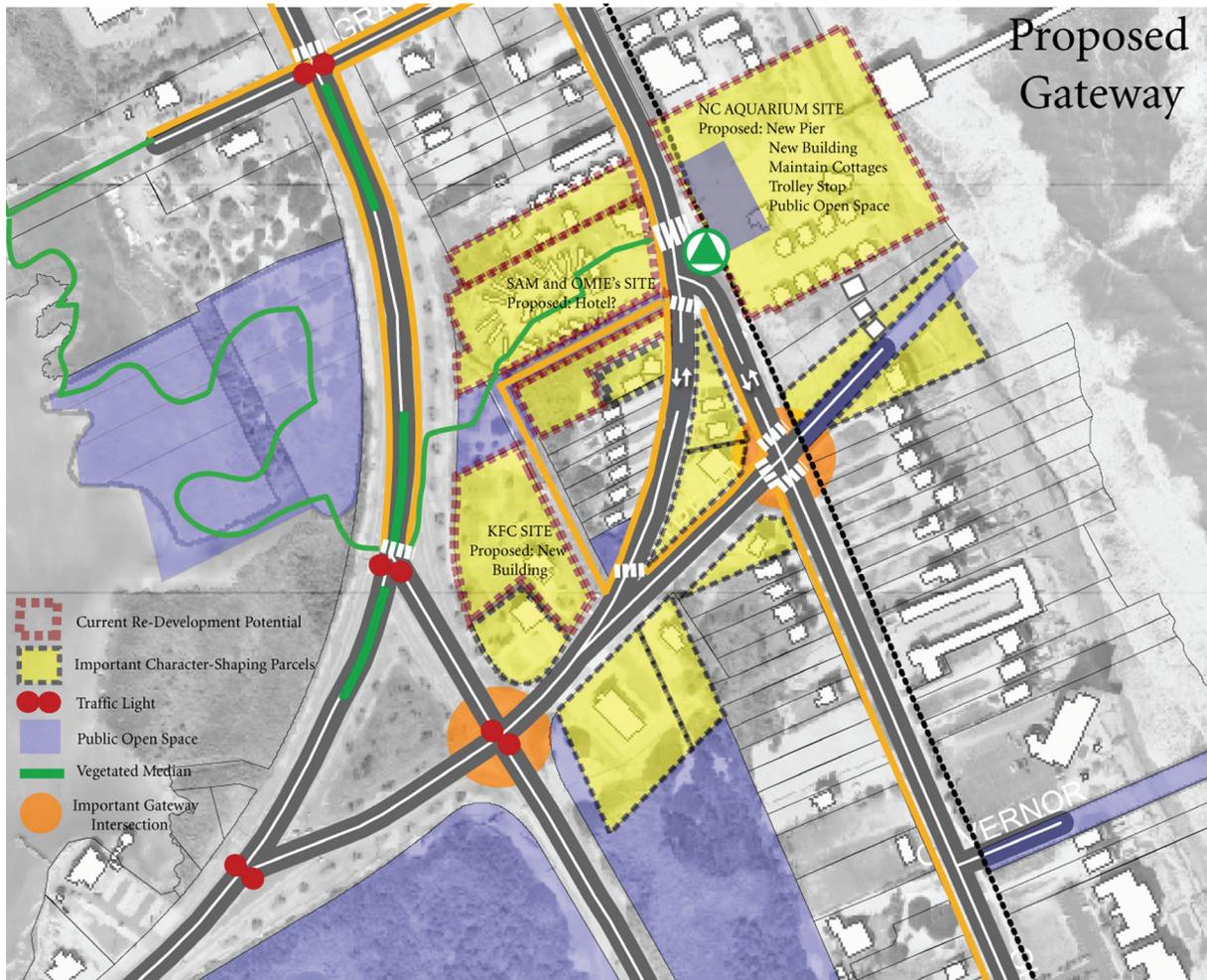


General Physical Improvement Recommendations

The commercial establishments and other developments/improvements in the Whalebone Junction District should serve three purposes: (1) complement the gateway, (2) capture regional traffic, and (3) serve the everyday needs of Nags Head residents.

In order to achieve a distinct gateway at Whalebone Junction District, this study recommends that the Town of Nags Head further studies the two existing major intersections to formulate a more effective traffic flow and a better overall image. These intersections shall be treated as possible gateways, which

will inform drivers that they are entering a special zone that is a slower, pedestrian-friendly traffic environment. These intersections are located where NC 64 meets NC 12 toward Cape Hatteras, and the intersection with Old Oregon Inlet Road leading to the south of Nags Head. These intersections can be improved with better and more welcoming signage, lighting, plantings, and art pieces, and medians can be provided. Crosswalk treatments like signage, lighting, textured pavements, and pedestrian-actuated signals may also be effective.



Proposed gateway at the Whalebone Junction District, indicating opportunities for redevelopment on potential sites, as well as streetscape improvements.

The Whalebone Junction District is proposed as a mixed-use district consisting of mostly commercial (e.g. restaurants) and temporary residential uses, such as hotels/motels; the town can consider multi-family housing on a case-by-case basis. The proposed mixed uses will include projects where different land uses are co-located on one or more parcels, but be contained within different buildings. This district is intended to establish a distinct gateway area, which through its mixed uses, introduces a varied, rich character along the Beach Road. Mixed-use developments that complement Whalebone Junction would enhance the viability of this area as a recreational destination. Additional retailers appropriate for the district can include small food and drink establishments, a sporting goods store, and a grocery store. Additionally, restaurants and bars will complement the area, allowing residents

and visitors to enjoy the scenery while dining and socializing. This will also encourage more use of non-automotive travel options since visitors will not need their cars to reach restaurants from their hotels. The district will also benefit from the proposed pedestrian circulation pattern by using the proposed sidewalks (e.g. on the west side of the Beach Road and on both sides of the bypass area) and trail connections through certain sites (see images below for proposed connections for walking). These improvements will provide pedestrian connections between the bypass and the Beach Road area.



Proposed circulation pattern, including sidewalk and trail connections for the Whalebone Junction District.

Most of the sites in the district are privately owned. Therefore, this study recognizes the need for collaborative efforts between public and private ownerships in order to encourage and realize the construction of the desired developments and connections in the area. This study recommends that sites flanking the Whalebone Junction (due to their location and the potential impact on them from the creation of the entry experience) should be designed and developed in a way to enhance the welcoming, small beach town character of the area. (see the map on page 32).

As an example, two sites—Sam and Omie’s and the NC Aquarium, which are considering new development—were selected to represent the conceptual design recommendations regarding site design, as well as the conceptual view of the street’s appearance following implementation of the

suggested improvements (see pages 40-41). The design of each site within the Whalebone Junction District should:

- facilitate and encourage pedestrian activity, and mitigate existing adverse automobile-oriented planning patterns;
- establish attractive, inviting, and functional arrangements of buildings and parking areas on the site, as well as use high-quality architectural and landscape designs which provide for proper access, visibility, and identity;
- preserve and incorporate natural amenities unique to the site, such as views (e.g. ocean, sand dunes, etc.), mature trees, and other elements, into the project development proposal;
- arrange structures, parking, circulation areas, and open spaces to recognize the particular characteristics of the site, and relate to the surrounding built environment in pattern, function, scale, character, and materials. In developed areas, new projects should meet or exceed the standards of quality set by surrounding development;
- encourage linkages (e.g. walkways, common landscape areas, and building orientation on the site) between compatible commercial and temporary residential uses where appropriate.

This study further suggests the following site design standards for the Whalebone Junction District:

Placement of buildings

- Place commercial/retail buildings closer to the property line, with a setback ranging from 5-18 ft from the street. This will also allow for more room to locate parking behind the buildings.
- A general rule of thumb for human-scaled, pedestrian-friendly streets is that the average building height should be at least one-third of the street right-of-way width to create a sense of enclosure. A maximum of three stories for buildings (or a height of 35 ft.) in the Whalebone Junction District will be a comfortable scale.
- Hotel buildings, with heights ranging between 35-60 ft., will be set back away from the street at a minimum of 50 ft.
- Follow currently applicable zoning regulations regarding side and rear setbacks for each building type allowed in this district.
- Locate buildings parallel to the street; the placement and design of structures should facilitate and encourage pedestrian activity, and convey a visual link to the street and sidewalks.
- Whenever possible, new structures should be clustered to create open spaces (inner courtyards) and pedestrian walkways, and avoid the creation of "barracks-like" rows of structures. These areas can provide great opportunities for outdoor dining/cafe areas as well.
- The building(s), not the parking lot(s), should establish the image and character for the development along street frontages.

Parking

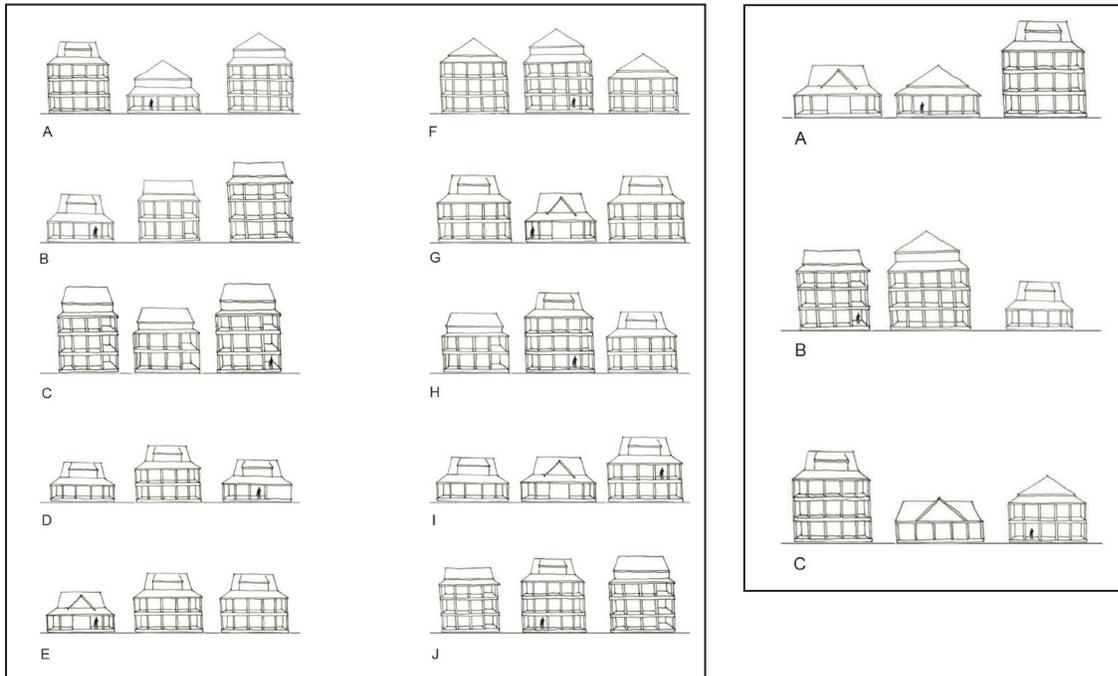
- Minimize the visual impact of large surface parking by locating parking areas to the side or rear of the buildings, where feasible. By locating parking lots to the rear, building frontages will be closer to the street and allow easy pedestrian access.
- A minimum landscaping area of 10-15 ft. shall be provided between any surface parking and the street that is located in front of a building, and shall be implemented in a way that does not distract from the visibility of pedestrians, vehicular access to the sites, and front façades of the buildings. The landscaping on such parking areas should complement the public streetscape.
- Parking lots shall be lit with downward-aimed lighting that complements the public streetscape.
- Promote shared parking and drives between commercial/retail uses, when feasible, to minimize the number of driveways (entry/exit points) reaching the Beach Road. This will also minimize safety concerns for pedestrians.
- Parking lots that accommodate a significant number of vehicles should be divided into a series of smaller, connected lots.
- Parking lots should be separated from buildings by a raised walkway with a minimum width of 4 ft., and a landscape strip with a minimum width of 7 ft.
- Clearly-defined pedestrian paths should be provided from parking areas to primary building entrances and sidewalks along the site's perimeter.
- Parking requirements on site may be relaxed or waived in favor an in-lieu fee program to fund a communal parking area (see more details on page 77 for "in-lieu parking").
- In the future, the town could look into providing trolley services around town. In that respect, the Whalebone Junction District could accommodate a trolley stop to promote transit access. The availability of such infrastructure can help provide the foundation for the development of new shops, restaurants, and public open spaces. All of these measures are ways to improve access to the district.

Building Design

This study also proposes general building design recommendations, to provide design direction and illustrate concepts applicable to both new development and the rehabilitation of existing structures. Within the Whalebone Junction District, these recommendations address the design of private commercial/retail and multi-family residential developments.

- If an overall positive ambiance is to be created, and if historic integrity is to be preserved, new buildings in the Whalebone Junction District shall be respectful of their surroundings.
- Architectural styles that attempt to give references to the Old Nags Head style found in the area are acceptable. Designs that are compatible, but distinguishable from historic examples are encouraged. A different architectural style, specifically for hotel buildings, may be appropriate as long as the style is visually compatible with its surroundings, and is distinguishable as new. Such design will need to be reviewed by the Town of Nags Head Planning Board before implementation.

- The scale of all buildings, including hotels, should be compatible with surrounding development patterns.
- It is encouraged to have varying building heights. However, the difference between adjacent or adjoining buildings should not be more than one story; this creates a similarity of scale that, in turn, will create continuity in the streetscape.
- Hipped or gabled roofs covering the entire building are preferable in this district.
- Large-scale structures should be articulated with porch columns and dormers to reduce scale.
- Porches can be utilized to wrap around the buildings to shade the summer sun. Operable shutters and blinds can provide shade and admit breezes. They can also provide off-season security.
- Deep overhangs can be encouraged on porches (a minimum 10 ft. from the front wall surface).
- Structures should be elevated or raised on piles to allow overwash.
- Provide fewer north-facing openings.



Above Left: Variation in scale and height of buildings adjacent to each other. Average one story difference in height is acceptable between adjacent structures.

Above Right: Avoid placing buildings incompatible with their context and with adjacent structures in terms of height and scale. (Scale is a measure of the size of the building or architectural element in relationship to the dimensions of the average person. In order to preserve the family style beach character on the Beach Road, human scale plays an important role in the creation of sense of place and an intimate family-style beach atmosphere. It is important that the height, mass, scale, and design of any new building is appropriate to the context of the street and adjacent structures.)

Retail/Commercial

- Create visual interest by employing variations in form, building details, and siting for retail/commercial buildings. In all cases, the selected architectural style is expected to provide references to the Old Nags Head Style, and should be employed on all building elevations.
- Retail/commercial buildings in this district shall be no more than two stories (see exceptions for hotels below).
- Boxy, monotonous building façades that lack human scale proportions and contain large expanses of flat wall planes are strongly discouraged. "Big box" retail should be discouraged on the Beach Road.
- Façades are the most important component of commercial architecture; they should have appropriate trim, ample window exposure, and clearly marked entrances.
- Commercial buildings should be designed to take advantage of the street. Porches and overhangs can add to the character of a building, as well as provide pedestrians with protection from the sun. All of these elements are encouraged when appropriate to the architectural style of the building.
- Rooflines should be segmented and varied within an overall horizontal context. Varying heights are encouraged.
- All visible wall siding materials shall consist of one or more of the following materials: cedar shingles (or simulated ones), lap siding, or vertical board and batten that match the character of Old Nags Head style architecture. Other material choices (e.g. stucco, metal, etc.) can be reviewed on an individual basis by the architectural committee established by the Town of Nags Head.
- It is preferred to have the front of commercial buildings and their public entrances face the Beach Road. If the public entrance is allowed on the side of the building, it should be positioned close to the street, and preferably as a corner feature of the building.
- Vertical architectural elements, such as towers, can be used as focal points. Buildings situated on street corners should define the street's edge, as well as create both visual and pedestrian interest. These corner buildings should feature special design features and architectural detailing.
- Linkages (e.g. walkways, common landscape areas, and building orientation) between compatible commercial and residential uses/sites are encouraged where appropriate.

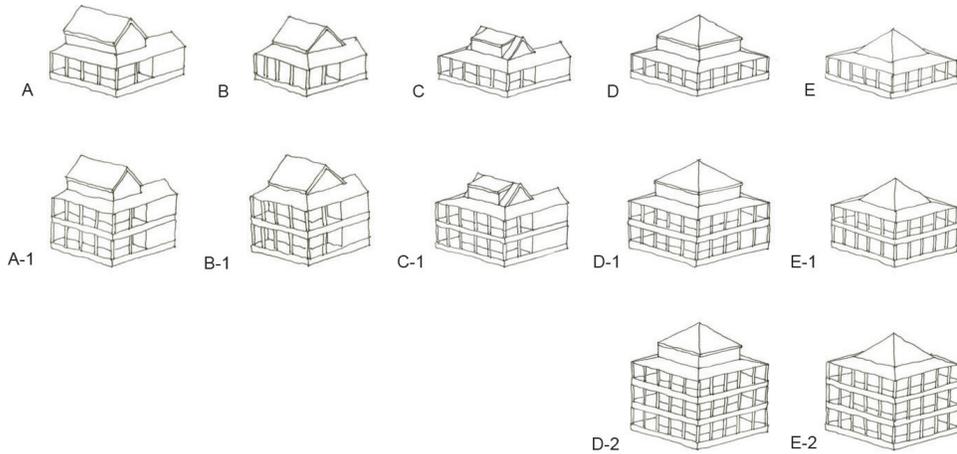
Hotel/Motel

- The scale of hotel/motel buildings should be compatible with surrounding development patterns.
- Walkway, stairway, and balcony railings and other similar details should be stylistically consistent with the building design.
- Mechanical equipment of all types, including swimming pool equipment, should be located to minimize impacts on adjacent uses. Air conditioning units should not be visible from the street.

- Structures over two stories should incorporate interior access to guestrooms. Room entrances using exterior walkways or that are adjacent to parking lots are discouraged.

Multi-Family Residential

- Whenever a proposed multi-family residential building is wider than the existing façades on the street, the proposed façade should be broken down into a series of appropriately proportioned “structural bays” or components, such as a series of columns.
- Multi-family residences should be designed to be compatible with the scale of existing development.
- Limit multi-family residential densities to no more than 12 units per acre. Limiting residential densities will prevent overdevelopment of sites, and will preserve the small-town atmosphere cherished by Nags Head residents.
- Multi-family residential buildings shall be no more than 3 stories in this area (maximum of 35 ft. in height, including the roof line).
- A visual balance or rhythm should be created by the dimensional ratio of multi-family buildings, their parts, and the spaces around them.
- Architectural elements such as balconies, porches, and other elements that add visual interest, scale, and character to the area are encouraged.
- Boxy and monotonous building façades that lack human scale proportions are strongly discouraged.
- Façades shall be broken into distinct 15-20 ft. wide modules or bays, to prevent presenting a monolithic edge to the street. The modules can follow structural, historic, aesthetic, or functional dimensions, but should be contextual to the streetscape.
- Rooflines should be segmented and varied within an overall horizontal context. Varying heights are encouraged.
- Use of vertical elements, such as towers, may be used to accent horizontal massing and provide visual interest.
- Porches are encouraged at both the entry level and on upper floors as well. These will provide additional visual interest, protection from sun and weather, and opportunities for social interaction and street life.
- Flat roofs are discouraged.



Simple base form and variations to be considered for the multi-family residences incorporating varying roof forms and massing.

Streetscape Design

The Whalebone Junction District will serve as the main entry point to the Beach Road from the south. The streetscape at a key arrival point is important as it helps in orientation, and sets the scene for the whole area. These gateway areas are likely to be traffic-dominated spaces. Where pedestrian use needs to be balanced with vehicular requirements, careful design is essential to prevent the creation of clutter, and to clearly establish pedestrian and vehicular areas. The use of barriers to separate different uses should be avoided where possible.

Gateway design, lighting, landscaping, and enhanced sidewalks and pedestrian all incorporate elements to welcome users to the Beach Road.

As a result of the public workshops, the following general design principles for the Whalebone Junction were identified:

- Gateway design is important as an introduction to the Beach Road.
- Reduce visual clutter and extraneous signage on private properties.
- Use a simple, bold design approach.
- Incorporate public art where appropriate.
- Consider the use of trees and plants to set the scene for the Whalebone Junction District.

The following is a list of proposed streetscape improvements:

- Develop a road cross-section that accommodates two sidewalks, two separate bike paths, and swale on both sides, buffering the vehicular and pedestrian traffic from each other (see pages 61-62 for further details).
- Add new crosswalks, and enhance the existing ones, with special pavement and markings.

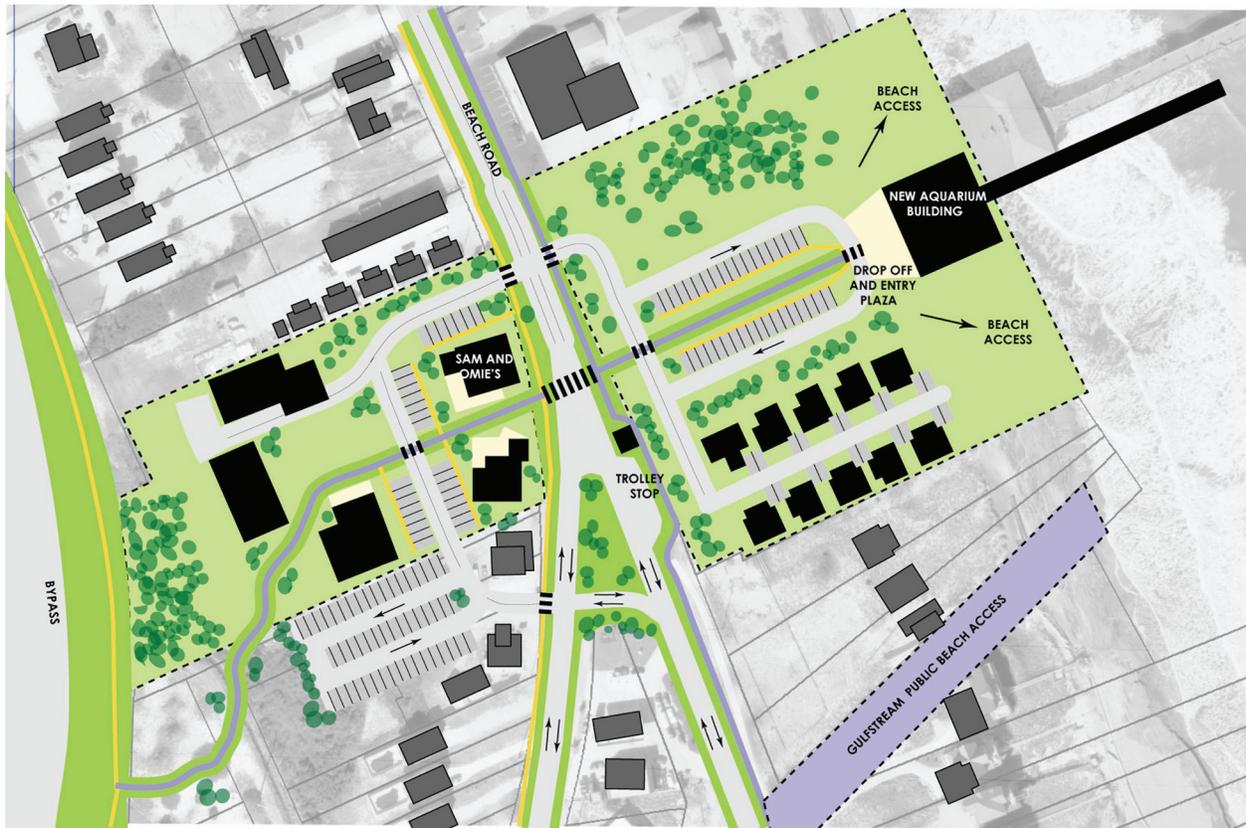
- Reduce the number of driveway openings on the Beach Road in Whalebone Junction.
- Provide new streetlights customized for the Beach Road.
- Surface materials should be simple and easily identifiable.
- Signage is particularly important at gateways. The presence of unnecessary and/or unauthorized signage can detract from the streetscape and can become a barrier to clear orientation and direction finding. Advertising in these areas should be limited.
- Public art can be a good method of creating a positive impression for the Beach Road, and the potential for incorporating art into the streetscape should be investigated.
- Lighting is an important part of the design of gateways. The design of streetlights can be used to reinforce the character of the area. Lighting can also be used to reinforce the streetscape by lighting physical features such as public art, soft landscape, walls, and key buildings.
- Trees, shrubs, and other plantings can be used to reinforce the character of gateways. This landscape is usually seen from a distance or whilst in transit, so it is important for the design of landscape elements to be bold and simple.
- Low maintenance design options such as planting shrubs and groundcovers, ecological planting and wildflower seeding should be considered to reduce ongoing costs and maintenance requirements.
- Gateways set the scene for the area. Maintenance is therefore a key issue; a poorly-maintained arrival space will create a negative impression of both the environment and the area as a whole to visitors as well as locals. Proper maintenance management should be agreed upon at the outset of the gateway design process.

Conceptual Project Example: Application of Several Site and Streetscape Recommendations to the Whalebone Junction District

Conceptual design principles include:

- *A defined street edge (as shown on the east side of the street, Sam and Omie's site) creates a more desirable pedestrian environment.*
- *Internal parking reduces the negative visual impact from the street.*
- *Inward-focusing arrangement creates a "village" feeling, encouraging multiple shopping/dining stops. This can also provide pedestrian connections through various sites. In this case, it provides pedestrian access and connections from the bypass to the Beach Road area. These pedestrian connections and walkthroughs can aid pedestrian circulation, creating a varied pedestrian experience.*
- *Strong connection to adjacent hotel/commercial areas.*
- *The NC Aquarium site features sufficient parking areas, and utilizes landscaping to soften their appearance from the street.*
- *Open spaces and related landscaping facing the street are utilized to enhance the look of the Beach Road.*
- *Buildings with heights ranging from 35-60 ft. (e.g. hotels on the east side of the Road) are set back from the street in order not to distract the street character.*
- *Buildings (such as hotels) are designed to be compatible with surrounding development patterns. Larger buildings have been divided into smaller segments or smaller building masses.*

- One to two story buildings (e.g. restaurants on the east side) are located closer to the street (using a 15 ft. setback) to complement the pedestrian-oriented street character.
- A public parking area, placed between the bypass and the Beach Road area, can be considered. This extra parking would provide spaces serving nearby businesses that might not be able to accommodate enough spaces on-site (see section for parking with more specific recommendations, in-lieu parking program information).



Conceptual site plan demonstrating proposed site design recommendations.



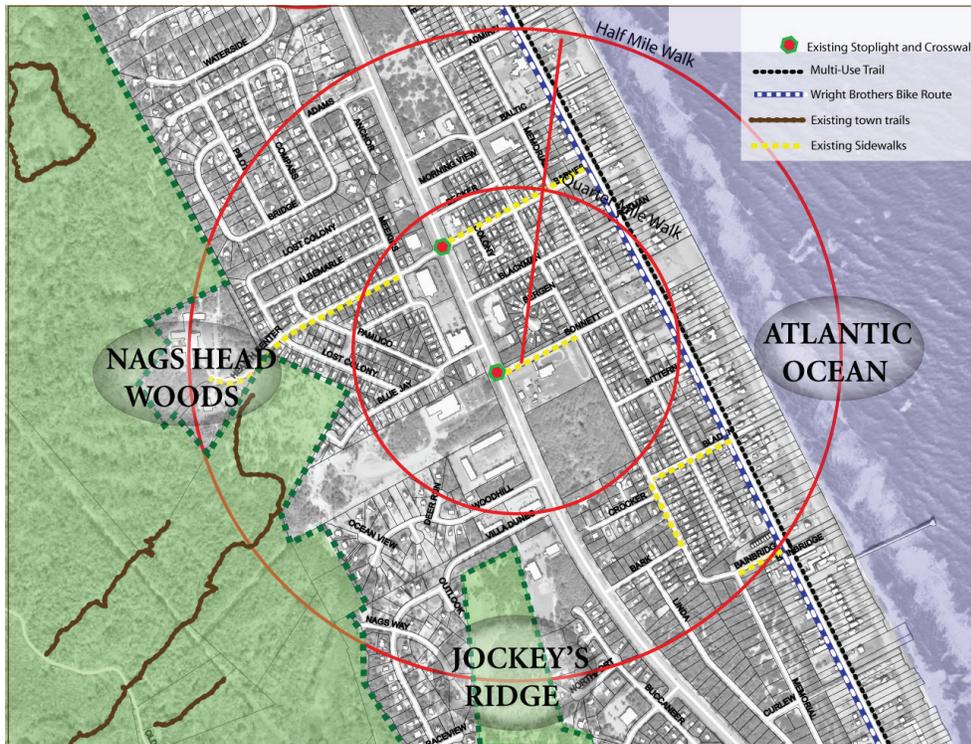
Above: Before and after. Proposed streetscape design for the Whalebone Junction District.

- Driveways eliminated wherever possible; this way, shared openings can be created for future developments.
- Crosswalks enhanced with special pavement.
- Provided new streetlights at a spacing that will not impact the “dark night skies”.
- Sidewalk added on the east side of the road in addition to the multi-use path.
- Bike lanes added on both sides of the street.
- Swales with vegetation (e.g. low shrubs) added on both sides of the street for storm-water drainage purposes.
- Landscaping within 10-15 ft. from the street line implemented in front of buildings to encourage more appealing and inviting façades.

Community Center District (major district)

Overview of the Existing Conditions: Major Identifying Features and Characteristics

This study proposes that the Community Center District be a pedestrian-friendly commercial center, with its mix of uses providing an opportunity to fulfill daily needs within walking distance, thereby reducing the need for automobile travel. The district is a unique presence on the Beach Road, with its distinctive character and community-oriented public facilities, such as the school and the YMCA. The area also accommodates the regional beach access area (the largest in town), as well as the Nags Head Pier; these attractions draw many visitors, especially in summer. This area is also in close proximity to other attraction points, such as Nags Head Woods, the Town Park, and Jockey’s Ridge.



Existing circulation pattern in the Community Center District.

The public input process indicated that residents would like to see more pedestrian activity in the area, allowing for year-round residents to walk to destinations like the school, YMCA, neighborhood shopping and restaurants. They also indicated that this district can provide more possibilities for living, shopping, dining, and recreation. They stated that the area does not currently provide a walkable environment due to:

- a lack of connections between sidewalks (e.g. Bonnett Street has sidewalks, but it ends where it intersects with the Beach Road);
- cars parked in front of residences or along the Beach Road causing safety concerns for pedestrians and blocking the flow of traffic;
- speeding traffic and uncontrolled intersections causing safety concerns for pedestrians.
- the look of the area is not appealing.



Far left: A look toward the Beach Road from an intersecting street.

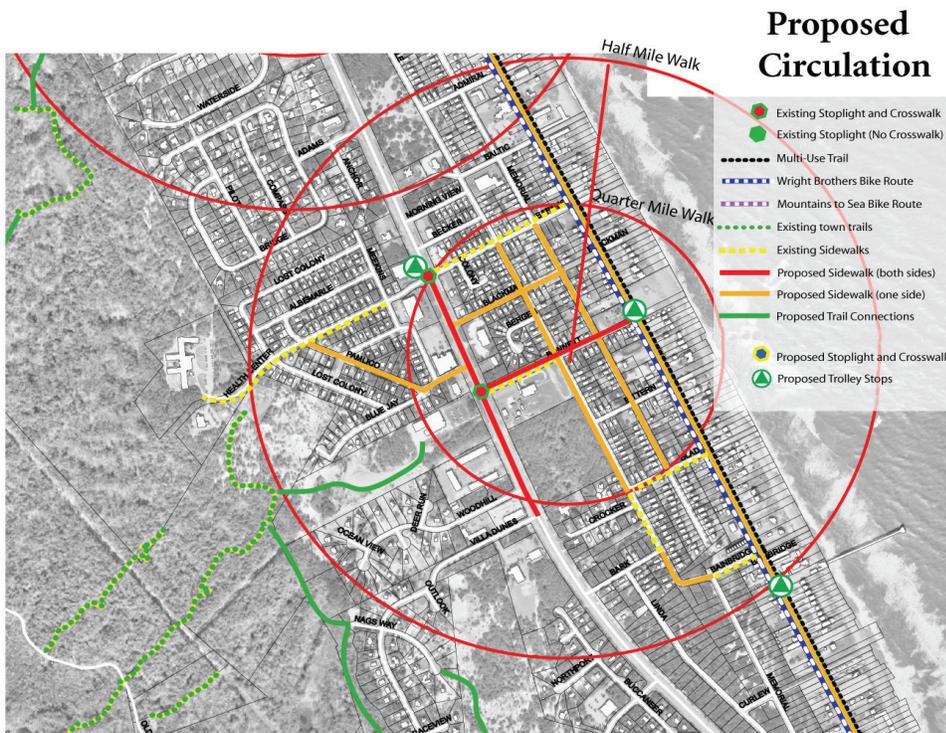
Left: A view of Regional Beach Access area.

General Physical Improvement Recommendations

The proposed Community Center District is an overlay centered on the Bonnett Street axis and covering the surrounding Beach Road area. It is proposed as a mixed-use district, combining both small-scale commercial/office spaces and residential uses as components of a single development. The uses may be combined either vertically or horizontally within the same structure, or can be distributed to different structures on the same site, where feasible. The latter might require future consolidation of smaller lots for mixed-use developments. The district will promote convenient pedestrian shopping and stability for small-scale retail development by encouraging continuous retail frontage in a concentrated area. It will also benefit from the proposed circulation pattern, through proposed sidewalks (e.g. on the east side of the Beach Road, on auxiliary streets, and on both sides of the bypass). These improvements aim to provide connections between auxiliary streets and the Beach Road area.



Proposed Community Center District, indicating opportunities for redevelopment on potential sites as well as streetscape improvements.



Proposed circulation pattern, including sidewalk and trail connections for the Community Center District.

As an example, two corner sites that are in consideration for new development (on Bonnett Street, at the intersections with the Beach Road and with the bypass), were selected to represent the design recommendations regarding mixed-use site design. This example also presents a view of the site and street showing how the suggested improvements would appear after being implemented in the district.

The design of each site along the Beach Road in the Community Center District shall involve the following principles:

- Accommodate neighborhood-oriented retail (e.g. specialty stores), services, eateries, etc. The retail uses should serve the existing residences in proximity to them, be easily accessible to pedestrians, connect well with the fabric of the area, and include small retail establishments.
- Establish attractive, inviting, and functional site arrangements for buildings and parking areas, and high-quality architectural and landscape designs that provide for proper access, visibility and identity.
- Preserve and incorporate natural amenities unique to the site, such as views (e.g. ocean, sand dunes, etc.), into the project development proposal.
- The arrangement of structures, parking, circulation areas, and open spaces should recognize the particular characteristics of the site, and should relate to the surrounding built environment in pattern, function, scale, character, and materials. In developed areas, new infill projects should meet or exceed the standards of quality that have been set by surrounding development.

- Promote residential design that offers a variety in façades, blending multi- and single-family developments without a distinct transition. A variety of building façades will allow diversity in the districts along the Beach Road, but will not segregate uses by density, style, or affordability.

Additional general improvement recommendations for the Community Center District are listed below.

Placement of Buildings

- All new commercial development directly facing the Beach Road shall be encouraged to utilize minimum setbacks from the property line. This will allow commercial frontage along the road to have display windows and pedestrian-friendly access. The setback from other, surrounding side streets (moving away from the Beach Road, east to west) will vary from between 0-20 ft., gradually matching the existing setbacks in other neighboring areas.
- All new commercial buildings shall be oriented towards the Beach Road, and shall be positioned to provide enclosure for pedestrians and to hold the street-edge and corners.
- Mixed-use buildings, with stores at ground level and residences on upper floors, should be designed to be compatible in scale with existing development around them. These kinds of buildings also create an inviting neighborhood shopping environment; they not only create a built-in customer base for new stores, but also promotes a level of activity beneficial to the area.
- New mixed-use developments in the district shall incorporate open spaces, through the clustering of structures, as a unifying feature. This will also avoid creating “barracks-like” rows of buildings. In addition, the common open spaces created, or the spacing between buildings on the same site, can be utilized for outdoor dining areas, if feasible.
- Height differences between buildings shall be no more than one story in height, to provide a smooth transition between building masses.
- Parking lot lighting and building security lighting for commercial uses should be appropriately shielded so as not to spill over into the residential area.

Parking

- Parking on mixed sites shall be located to the sides or rear, when feasible. Car access to the parking area will be allowed from side streets instead of directly from the Beach Road, when possible. This will reduce the number of driveways cutting through the sidewalks, thus enhancing the pedestrian experience on the Beach Road.
- Separate parking facilities should be provided for residential and commercial uses.
- On-street parking will not be allowed on the Beach Road within this district. There will be 1-2 hr. parking spaces allocated along the intersecting/neighboring streets dedicated for use by the surrounding retail (e.g. Bonnett Street).

Building Design

Mixed-Use Buildings

- Mixed-use buildings will be a maximum of 3 stories in height, accommodating one or two

stories of residential uses on the upper levels. Small retail and restaurant uses should anchor the district at street level. A healthy mixture of residential and office uses in the upper floors of these buildings is also a critical component, supporting the safety and economic vitality of the district.

- The design of storefronts should be consistent with the guidelines for commercial development (see previous district requirements for commercial development). The residential portion of a mixed-use structure should be consistent with the design guidelines for multi-family residential development (see previous district requirements for multi-family residential development).
- Mixed-use buildings shall be elevated from ground level (to avoid flooding).
- Porches are encouraged at both the entry level and on upper floors as well. These will provide additional visual interest, protection from sun and weather, and opportunities for social interaction and street life. Nags Head style lean-out benches can also be incorporated into the entry-level porch, where storefronts are located.
- The architectural style and use of materials should be consistent throughout the entire mixed-use project. Differences in the use of various architectural details may occur where the intent is to differentiate between the residential and commercial/office uses, and character of the structure(s).
- Commercial signage should be restrained.
- When residential and commercial uses are combined in the same structure, separate entrances should be provided for each use.
- Large-scale structures shall be articulated with porch columns and dormers to reduce scale. Dormers can articulate large-scale roof mass. Material textures can also be utilized.
- New mixed-use development should be consistent with the established neighborhood character.
- Main roof slopes (excluding dormers) shall have a minimum 8:12 ratio.
- Although the front façades of mixed-use buildings are critical elevations, these buildings should also be designed to be seen from all sides visible from publicly-accessible areas, such as parking areas, bike trails, and walkways. All visible sides of the building are to be designed to complement the front façade.
- The rear side of the buildings may include porches, decks, signage, patios, or special design elements.
- Materials and textures applied to the front façade should continue around the building exposed to the street.

Commercial/Retail Buildings

- (see previous district design requirements for commercial/retail building types)

Streetscape Design

The public workshops identified the following general design principles for the Community Center District:

- Design the district for people, and reduce the impact of vehicles.
- Reduce visual clutter.
- Use appropriate materials. Consider maintenance requirements at the design stage; use hardwearing, low maintenance materials.
- Develop a road cross-section that accommodates two sidewalks, two separate bike paths, and swale on both sides, buffering the vehicular and pedestrian traffic from each other.
- Add new crosswalks, and enhance the existing ones, with special pavement and markings.
- Reduce the number of driveway openings on the Beach Road.
- Provide new streetlights customized for the district centers on the Beach Road.

The reduction in clutter and consideration of the “neighborhood image” will improve the quality of the environment in areas such as the Community Center District. Public investment in the appearance and the development of the street will help bring pedestrian-accessible stores that Nags Head residents currently lack, such as specialty stores. Public investment in the infrastructure, streetscape, landscape and new signs will make the area more attractive and pedestrian-oriented. These improvements will create a sense of place and an identity for the Community Center District.

The design of the mixed-use sites in this district should reflect the desired character for the Beach Road: two- to three-story buildings with retail and residential units shall be located near the sidewalk, with rear parking. The architecture of such a building should likewise exemplify the pedestrian-friendly street character of the Beach Road. Landscaping can function as a traffic calming measure, and can make the retail district more attractive overall. Trees, shrubs, landscaping, and planters should be introduced as buffers between car, bicycle, and pedestrian zones. Likewise, street-side amenities like street lighting, bollards, benches, trash receptacles, and trolley shelters can improve the appearance of the street and make the area more welcoming for shoppers and visitors.

Business signage should also be held to a high standard in the district. Businesses’ signs and/or awnings should be uniform in appearance, height, and materials, and should be permitted only above the windows and doors of the business. The Town should limit the allowable size of signs so that smaller, less obtrusive signs are used.

Generally, less parking is required in a neighborhood retail area. Parallel parking spaces should line the adjacent streets, such as Bonnett Street, to provide convenient parking access to stores. Where additional parking is required, it should be unobtrusive and located behind or beside the building, when feasible. In order to achieve a more pedestrian-oriented environment, the entrances to parking lots from the Beach Road should be minimized by limiting the number of access points along the street. Bike lanes on each side can be added to the Beach Road to connect the district with the existing trail system to encourage further bicycle use in the area.

Conceptual Project Example: Application of site and streetscape recommendations to the Community Center District

- A defined street edge creates more desirable pedestrian environment on the Beach Road. Locate the buildings on the site closer to the street (0-20 ft. from the right-of-way line).
- Internal parking reduces negative visual impact from the street.
- Inward-focusing, clustered arrangement on a site creates a “village” feeling, and encourages multiple shopping/dining stops. This can also provide pedestrian connections through, within and between various sites.
- Clustered arrangements can generate opportunities for open spaces, and related landscaping facing the street that can enhance the look of the Beach Road.
- The shape of the buildings can also help in defining outdoor areas for various uses. For example, an L-shape configuration of a restaurant can provide outdoor areas for dining.
- Mixed-use buildings (with a maximum of three stories) can be considered on corner sites. This can help create distinctive areas by denoting significant intersections or points of interest in district centers.
- The massing of new mixed-use buildings should be sensitive to the scale of the surrounding buildings. The building masses will decrease as they get further away from the Beach Road (from east to west), matching the scale of the neighboring residential areas.
- When this district is fully developed, a trolley stop could be created to promote transit access. This infrastructure will provide the foundation for the development of new shops, restaurants, and public open spaces. All of these measures are ways to improve access to/among the districts.





A view of a conceptual mixed-use development at the intersection of Bonette and the Beach Road creating a focal point for the community in the Community Center District.

Municipality District (sub-district)

The municipality district was designated for future consideration as a sub-district, based on its proximity to existing commercial and office uses concentrated along the US 158 Bypass area. All of the uses in this district should directly benefit the surrounding neighborhoods along the Beach Road. The district has the potential to provide possible small-scale retail/commercial uses, day care, or offices. The area can also supplement existing and future uses in the Whalebone Junction District.

Historic District (sub-district)

The Historic District marks the center of the Beach Road area, and its character is among the most recognizable assets and strengths of the community. Preserving this character and promoting compatible development should remain a top priority, as well as preserving the historic buildings and structures in the area.

Future development in this area is limited to the uses such as single-family detached residences. This study recommends that the Town shall document the patterns and architectural vocabulary of the Old Nags Head Style houses in Nags Head. This documentation can help in maintaining the original character of the existing old structures/buildings. Strict architectural guidelines specific to the Historic District should be studied further and enforced. The Town of Nags Head must review all future development proposals for this district in order to preserve the “family beach-town” atmosphere, and to encourage the protection of the historically- and architecturally-significant traditional Nags Head houses. Currently, the maintenance of older structures/houses relies on the willingness of the owners; there is no enforcement of maintaining these historic assets.

It is agreed that heritage tourism is an important part of the local economy in every community. Architectural features and distinct architectural styles also contribute to a sense of identity, an attribute that is rare and difficult to achieve in newer areas.

Various ways to promote awareness and encourage the maintenance and preservation of historic structures and properties can be considered, an option might be economic incentives. For example, owners of historic properties may be eligible for tax incentives. In some cases, owners may donate a façade easement and take a charitable gift donation. Property tax relief may also be possible.

Historic structures are, by their nature, irreplaceable. They bestow an identity and provide a tangible history of a place. These qualities make them highly desirable to both members of the community and property owners. Maintaining the historic character of the district encourages heritage tourism, which is an important part of the local economy of Nags Head.

Therefore, the design of each site in the Historic District shall involve the following principles:

- Respect the scale, proportions, and character of the surrounding older buildings.
- Preserve and incorporate structures that are distinctive due to their age, cultural significance, or unique architectural style, into the project development proposal.
- Maintain historic buildings and structures by ensuring that any changes, additions, and repairs will not depreciate the original character of the building and the area.

Further general physical improvement recommendations for the Historic District are listed below.

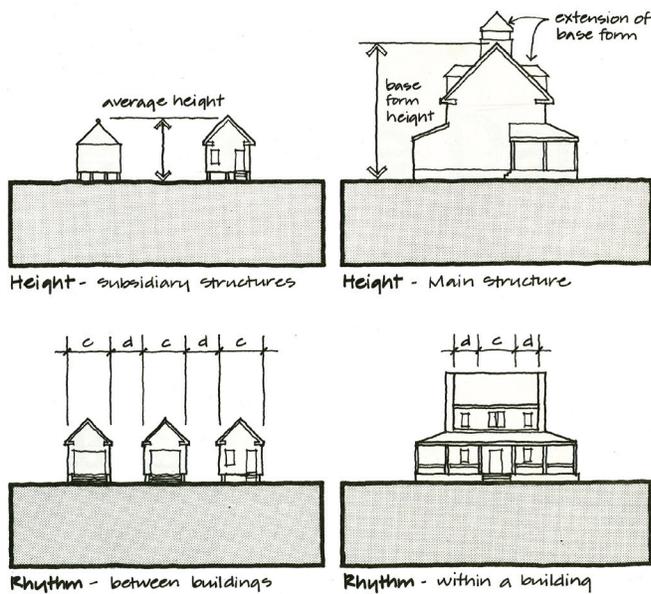
Placement of Buildings

- Variation of building placement and lot development patterns is essential to achieve visual diversity, and avoid monotony in the Historic District.
- Significant natural vegetation should be retained and incorporated into any new project.
- Older residences should be buffered from incompatible existing development in the district. Intensified landscaping, increased setbacks, and appropriate building orientation should be utilized as a means of providing adequate separation between such land uses.
- Promote visual access to old houses and structures from the street.
- Placement of homes at variable front setbacks establishes different patterns of visible open spaces, and creates a visually interesting streetscape. The setback on the east side of the Beach Road within the Historic District is recommended to be minimum 25 ft. from the street line. The setback on the west side of the Beach Road is recommended to be 15 ft. minimum.
- Varying the distance between adjoining homes, or between homes and fences (i.e. varied side yard setback), results in different types/sizes of yards and private outdoor areas, maximizing the use of land and enhancing dwelling privacy.
- Site details shall highlight and provide a sense of pedestrian scale at building entries, and help offset the prominence of cars, garages and driveways.

Building Design

- Preserve the family-style beach atmosphere and encourage the protection of the historical and architectural significance of historic Old Nags Head architectural details by including:

- gabled or hipped roofs;
- dormers;
- unpainted wood shingle roofing and siding;
- double-hung or casement windows with blinds or shutters;
- lean-out porch benches with roof overhangs;
- brick chimneys;
- raised wood pillars; and
- wrap-around porches.



The rhythm of historic building spacing and fenestration or detail articulation should be maintained in the design of new facilities in the Historic District. (image ref. Design Manual, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, NC)

- New developments can encourage varied building design with differences in the massing and composition, not just the finish materials, of each adjacent house. No design may be repeated more frequently than every third house in a row in the Historic District. However, new developments should make references to the Old Nags Head Style by incorporating architectural details taken from it (see above).
- Garages should be located at the side or toward the rear of residential structures, if feasible. Garage doors shall not be located forward of the residence's front façade.
- Building surfacing materials which are the proven equivalent in texture and appearance to historic materials are appropriate; use of historic materials, such as wood shingles or simulated wood shingles, is encouraged.
- New, single-family residences shall be a maximum of two-stories in height.

Parking

- On-street parking will not be allowed in the Historic District.
- Off-street parking in the front yard setback of each property (facing toward the Beach Road) should be limited to a maximum of two cars per household in order to limit visual crowding and distraction from the multi-use path and the from the view of the historic homes.

Streetscape

The Historic District was designated by the public because of their desire to preserve or enhance the area's special architectural and historic character. The streetscape within the district should equally reflect the historic or architectural qualities for which it has been designated.

Visual clutter and a proliferation of vehicular and pedestrian signage should be avoided. Street furniture and lighting should be designed in accord with the historic character of the area. Signage should be avoided unless it is essential. Where appropriate, interpretation of the historic environment should be incorporated as part of streetscape improvements:

- Create locally distinctive designs that reflect the historic character of the area.
- Maintain the historic form of the street.
- Minimize inappropriate signage and street furniture.
- Use suitable surface materials, reuse existing historic materials where possible.
- Reduce the impact of vehicles.

Art Gallery District (Northern Gateway / sub-district)

Overview of the Existing Conditions: Major Identifying Features and Characteristics

The Art Gallery District is proposed as the northern gateway to the Beach Road, and centers on the current "Village Commercial District" designated by the Town of Nags Head. This northern entrance should be a well-defined area that makes one's entrance into the Beach Road a memorable experience. This northern gateway would differ from the Whalebone Junction district in terms of its natural look and low-scale character. This district features a unique presence on the Beach Road, with its distinctive "village" character, including single-family residential uses and existing art galleries. It provides further opportunities to accommodate specialty stores, neighborhood coffee shops, and additional art galleries, as well as single-family residential uses. The area should also maintain its village character with distinctive landscaping and signage marking the entrance to the Beach Road area. The type and proximity of land uses proposed in this district will also yield a walkable, convenient, and distinguished district, with a friendly neighborhood feeling for visitors and residents alike.



A map of proposed Art Gallery District.

Existing Land Use



Existing land use pattern on the Art Gallery District.

Currently, the area lacks a signature entry experience from the north, one that would be memorable and unique to the town. The area's proximity to certain areas, such as Nags Head Woods, presents opportunities to enhance different aspects of the pedestrian experience, such as placement of a continuous sidewalk pattern along the Beach Road, and connecting to the woods. This sidewalk pattern would be enclosed by art galleries and natural vegetation. The area currently presents limited vegetation features to provide relief and convenient enjoyment for pedestrians and customers. Current setbacks from the street, which are consistent for residences, art galleries, and specialty stores, also distract from the district's pedestrian experience.

Existing Circulation



Existing circulation pattern in the Art Gallery District.

Based on public input gathered through workshops, the design of each site in the Art Gallery District shall involve the following principles:

- Protect unique neighborhood character of the district.
- Enhance the district's gateway character with the use of distinctive landscaping elements along the street.
- Sustain the artistic heritage of Nags Head and the district with contemporary art galleries. Encourage the use of outdoor space to display art pieces as an extension of the art galleries' interior.
- Provide pedestrian-scale walkways, individual shops, and a distinctive streetscape.
- Encourage compatibility of new development with the existing neighborhood characteristics (scale, proportion, etc.) in the district.
- Create visual interest and variety, while maintaining a sense of harmony and proportion, along street frontages and other portions of the project exposed to public view.

Further general physical improvement recommendations for the Art Gallery District are listed below.

Placement of Buildings

- Significant natural vegetation facing the Beach Road should be incorporated into any new residential project.
- Placement of buildings with variable front setbacks establishes different patterns of visible open spaces, and creates a visually interesting streetscape. The setback is recommended to be a minimum of 25 ft. from the street line for residences. The setback for galleries and specialty stores located directly on the Beach Road is recommended to be a 15 ft. minimum.
- Setback areas in front of buildings can be utilized for displaying artwork or signage.

- Varying the distance between adjoining homes, or between homes and fences (varied side yard setback), results in different types/sizes of yards and private outdoor areas, maximizing the use of land and enhancing privacy.
- Linkages (e.g. walkways, common landscape areas, and building orientation) between compatible commercial uses (art galleries, specialty stores etc.) are encouraged where appropriate.
- The landscaping of setback areas on private properties along the Beach Road should be intensified as part of the gateway's image. Landscaping in residential front yards will also contribute to the area's "village" character. These areas, along with using local trees/shrubs in the streetscape, can provide a natural look along the Beach Road.



The outdoor spaces of art galleries are valuable assets to contribute to the streetscape of the Beach Road.

Parking

- On-street parking will not be allowed along the Beach Road in the Art Gallery District.
- Minimize the visual impact of large surface parking areas in front of galleries by locating them to the side of or behind the buildings, when feasible. By locating parking to the rear of the properties, building frontages (e.g. art galleries and cafes) will be closer to the street and allow easy pedestrian access.
- A minimum landscaping area of 10-15 ft. shall be provided between any surface parking that is located in front of a building. The landscaping shall be implemented in a way that does not distract from the visibility of the galleries and front façades of the buildings, from pedestrians, and from vehicular access to the sites.

Building Design

Art Galleries

- No particular architectural “style” is required for art galleries. High quality, innovative, and imaginative architecture is encouraged. New buildings to be used as art galleries should incorporate varied, unique, and distinctive building design, with variations in their massing and composition (not just with finish materials) in comparison to existing houses in the area. However, the architectural style is expected to complement the residential character of the district. Architectural details that reference the Old Nags Head Style should be incorporated to the design of the art galleries. Architectural elements such as clock towers can be used as focal points in such uses.
- The placement and design of structures should facilitate and encourage pedestrian activity and convey a visual link to the street and sidewalks.
- The building design should take into consideration, take advantage of, and enhance the site’s unique natural amenities.
- Architectural elements such as windows, doors, cornice elements, etc., should create a rhythmic composition, taking into consideration their scale, style, and proportion.
- Front porches that create architecturally attractive semi-private front yard spaces and foster community interface are encouraged.
- The height is limited to a maximum of two stories in the district.



The existing eclectic collection of architectural styles in the Art Gallery District is a valuable asset. New buildings should strive for excellence in architectural design while preserving or adding to the eclectic nature of the proposed Art Gallery District.

Single-Family Residences

- Clear entry space sequences, extending from sidewalks to the front doors, are encouraged.
- Individual dwellings should relate in terms of mass and bulk, but should be distinguishable from one another. Different design compositions, not just finish materials, should be provided on adjacent dwellings. “Cookie-cutter” design solutions are not acceptable. The same building

elevation should not be repeated frequently.

- Encourage a variation of hip and gable roofs.
- Long, invariable exterior walls and monolithic roof forms should be avoided on all structures. Massing offsets, fenestration, varied textures, openings, recesses, porches, etc. are strongly encouraged.
- All elevations should be architecturally enhanced. Building elevations that are visible from streets and open spaces should be significantly articulated. Elements such as recesses of upper level stories, porches, and balconies are encouraged.
- Front porches are encouraged.
- The placement and relationships of windows, doors, and other building openings play a significant role in achieving a unified building composition. Where possible, window sizes should be coordinated vertically and horizontally, and their design should be consistent in terms of style and general arrangement, on all building sides.
- The choice and mix of materials on the façades of residential units and garages have a significant visual impact. Materials should be consistently applied and chosen to work harmoniously with adjacent materials. Piecemeal embellishment and frequent changes in materials should be avoided.
- Exterior materials and architectural details should compliment each other, and should be stylistically consistent.
- Single-family residences are limited to a maximum of two stories.

Streetscape Design

Two important objectives drive the streetscape design of the Art Gallery District. These are:

- Develop an appropriate theme that will reinforce the Art Gallery District as a unique gateway to Nags Head. The gateway design is important as an introduction to Nags Head through the Beach Road. The emphasis of this vision will also help in maintaining the existing neighborhood character.
- Define elements within the public right-of-way, i.e. street furniture, sidewalks, landscaping, signage, lighting, etc., that support and embellish the character of the Art Gallery District.

The general district center streetscape guidelines (mentioned in the previous district centers) are also applicable here. Further design recommendations will include the followings:

- Reduce visual clutter and extraneous signage on private properties.
- Incorporate public art where appropriate.
- Consider the use of trees and other plants to set the scene for the Art Gallery District.



Above: A conceptual view of the streetscape on the Beach Road in the Art Gallery District incorporating the proposed landscaping as part of the gateway feature (Note: the image is not to scale).

Public/Right-of-Way Improvements

These design recommendations aim to provide an enhanced and integrated visual experience within the proposed districts along the Beach Road. To accomplish this vision, it is important to guide development in a coordinated and well-designed manner, that will complement the area's existing character. This can be achieved by promoting an attractive and cohesive streetscape design, and giving careful consideration to public open spaces, individual building design, architectural character, site layout, and landscaping.

Streets, sidewalks, trails, and open spaces are all essential parts of the experience. Streets not only allow vehicular movement between places, but also affect the vitality of districts by either attracting or deterring pedestrian activities. Thus, streets and streetscapes must be designed with both cars and pedestrians in mind, to ensure a vibrant district.

Despite their importance to our daily lives, in recent times streets have lacked investment and good management. In many places, streets and public spaces have become dirty, ugly, and dangerous. This has created problems that go beyond appearance and function, impacting the attitudes and perceptions of the people living in or visiting towns. Well-designed, well-ordered, and well-maintained streets and public spaces are an expression of a confident and caring community. This, in turn, engenders public pride and economic confidence.

The Beach Road has weakly defined points of entry from both north and south. The street lacks the characteristics that provide identity and clarity of location that can be achieved through consistent quality landscaping and street furniture. Coordinated streetscape improvements can be utilized to improve the overall image of the Beach Road by defining, as well as distinguishing, its districts and entry points as desired. All street, sidewalk, and trail elements should include consistent detailing to create a sense of continuity.

Therefore, this study sets out a vision for the Beach Road's overall streetscape and existing public open spaces, based around themes such as making the Beach Road a safer place for pedestrians; valuing the environment and historic community assets; and creating an attractive, pedestrian activity. By providing high quality places on the Beach Road, it is possible to encourage visitors or residents to stay, linger, and return to Nags Head. The overall design principles recommended for streetscape improvement are summarized below.

Overall Streetscape

The proposed overlay design districts provide the context for the recommended streetscape zones. The overlay districts are organized by land use and development patterns. The streetscapes design recommendations respond to those same issues, along with traffic patterns and right-of-ways (see previous sections for districts). The streetscape recommendations define the road cross-section, design elements, and intensity of design in the public right-of-ways. This section provides overall design recommendations and concepts for streetscape improvements within the right-of-way, including signage, lighting, a plant palette for public landscaping, and street furniture. The guidelines encourage high quality, consistent design solutions, and are intended to establish landscaping and street design standards for the Beach Road area.

Private developments that affect the street must also incorporate street and public open space improvements. It is recommended that the Town shall further study and develop streetscape design guidelines which will assist private developers in incorporating these improvements into their site-specific proposals. These proposals should also be developed in liaison with the Town's planning board.

Below, overall streetscape design recommendations for each district center, district edges, and outside-district center areas are presented.

Streetscape in the District Centers

The district centers are the key areas designated on the Beach Road that aim to form pedestrian nodes. They will have lighting, landscaping, and enhanced pedestrian crossings incorporating elements needed to welcome users. Specifics on streetscape design per district are listed in the previous sections, and these provide a framework for future redevelopment projects.

Within the District Centers, the road configuration will consist of two travel lanes (11 ft. wide), with an adjacent bike line (5 ft. wide) on either side. The remaining space will be dedicated to sidewalks (a minimum of 7 ft. wide, both sides of the road), and landscaped swales (5 ft. wide). The swales, which will be 6-15 in. deep and located on both sides of the road, will help collect and direct runoff water after heavy rains. They shall be landscaped with local shrubs and trees for both aesthetic and functional purposes; in general, a system of roadside swales such as this allows for storm water infiltration. Vegetation along the swales enhance the streetscape aesthetic, while filtering pollutants. They also provide a unifying visual element along the Beach Road.



Proposed street section of the district centers on the Beach Road as envisioned in this conceptual plan places emphasis on convenience and comfort for pedestrians, efficient traffic movement opportunities for streetscaping, and an overall aesthetic quality characteristic of a beach town setting. The above drawing illustrates the proposed street section for the district centers.

The following is a list of proposed streetscape improvements for District Centers:

- In major districts on the Beach Road, all the elements—buildings, signs, landscaping, and street furniture—should work together to create a unified, coherent visual identity and public space.
- Pedestrian-oriented areas, particularly in the proposed districts, should have trees/vegetation, controlled amount of lighting, and smaller signs than car-oriented areas on the Beach Road.
- Streetscapes provide visual interest, continuity, identify streets and circulation, and should include a consistent blend of themed street furniture within the proposed major district centers. This shall consist of streetlights, banners, benches, bollards, and trash receptacles. While retaining key detailing for district continuity and identity, these elements should be further specialized to help identify specific districts on the Beach Road.
- Commercial and mixed-use buildings in certain districts should be located close to the public right-of-way to better create and define pedestrian interest. However, building frontages should be relieved with occasional courtyards, passageways, porches, and setbacks to add to the unique, beach town character of Nags Head.
- Buildings that set the tone, and provide visual interest for pedestrians, should carefully define street corners/intersections.
- Patterned pavement and special paving materials can be used to designate intersections, pedestrian crossings, entries, parking areas, and places of special interest. Crosswalks can be raised to provide pedestrian safety, and enhanced with clear markings.

- Eliminate driveways where possible and create shared parking in newer commercial/mixed use developments.
- Provide new streetlights (including lamp-posts) with a simple, easy to maintain design for District centers. The light fixture shall be designed to limit the amount of light that spills into the sky.
- Promote and implement attractive wayfinding and regulatory signage that references specific locations on the Beach Road, and other areas in town.
- The District Centers will have small maritime trees and other shrubs, which are not taller than 15 ft. in height, located in the swales (see street elements palette below page 73). Generally, street trees are to be spaced approximately 42 ft. apart (e.g. the length of two on-street parking spaces). In between trees, shrubs/plants with a lower height will be planted. Street elements, like short walls/benches for seating etc., can be located in District centers.
- Coordinate private landscaping with the public streetscape to provide screening of parking lots, along with visual interest and color.
- Study the feasibility of moving the overhead utilities underground for future development, but only in the proposed major district centers along the Beach Road. Doing so will allow for a clear line of site through buildings and open space, and will also promote walkability throughout the community, with less poles and wires for pedestrians to avoid.



Transitions - District Center

The above drawing illustrates the template/palette of the proposed street amenities for the district centers.

Streetscape in the District Edges

This study recognizes that the streetscape shall not be monotonous all along the Beach Road. Therefore, the streetscape will vary between district centers to the district edges, including areas outside of the districts. The district edges establish the gradual transformation of the streetscape from district centers toward other areas on the Beach Road. The following is a list of proposed streetscape improvements specific for district edges:

- At district edges, install bollards with lights instead of lamp-posts with a simple and easy to maintain design. This will also provide a gradual transition toward the outskirts of the district centers.

- Provide clearly marked crosswalks.
- Plant swales on both sides of the Beach Road with low, local shrubs for both aesthetic and functional purposes. Maritime trees can be located sporadically toward the edges.

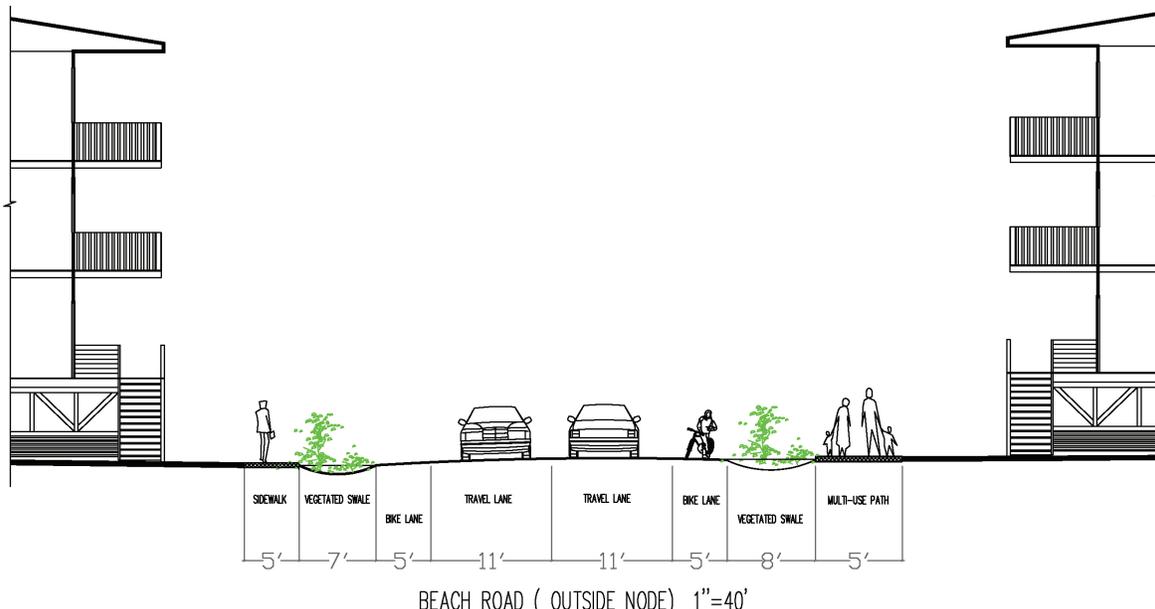


Transitions - District Edge

The above drawing illustrates the template/palette of the proposed street amenities for the district edges indicating the transformation in scale of street amenities.

Streetscape Outside of the Districts

Outside the District Centers, the configuration of the road will also consist of two travel lanes (11 ft. wide), with an adjacent bike line (5 ft. wide) on either side. The remaining space will be dedicated to sidewalks (a minimum of 5 ft. wide, both sides of the road), and landscaped swales (7-8 ft. wide). The swales, which will be 6-15 in. deep and located on both sides of the road, will help collect and direct run-off water after heavy rains. They shall be landscaped with local shrubs and trees for both aesthetic and functional purposes; in general, a system of roadside swales such as this will allow for storm water infiltration.



The above drawing illustrates the proposed street section for outside district centers.

- In between districts, there shall be fewer or no street lights (dark skies).
- Locate painted crosswalks where needed.
- Landscaped swales with shorter, local shrubs/grass will continue stretching on both sides of the road. This will provide a more natural look and convey stormwater runoff.



Transitions - Between Districts

The above drawing illustrates the template/palette of the proposed street amenities outside the district edges indicating the transformation in scale of street amenities .



Above left: Streetscape as it currently exists.

Left: Conceptual streetscape example illustrating the application of design recommendations.

Signage, Lighting, and Street Furniture

Signage, lighting, and street furniture can have a dramatic impact on the visual character of an area. They can help convey an orderly and quality appearance, which can affect the overall ambiance of an area while adding to its comfort and safety. For example, excessive, out of scale signage, or illegible signage can degrade the visual quality of an environment.

These streetscape elements can add to the vitality and excitement of the Beach Road area. Signs, lighting, and street furniture can create a sense of continuity and unity within the proposed districts. Within the constraints necessary to retain an overall identity for the Beach Road, these elements can be specialized to differentiate the proposed districts.

The design guidelines recommended below, together with sets of images selected from various examples, encourage the highest level of design quality while allowing flexibility.

Signage

- Signs should be visually interesting and informative. They should be distinctive and eye-catching, yet simple, avoiding cluttered designs and excess advertising particularly in the district centers.
- Signs should complement the architecture of the building and also provide a unifying element along the streetscape.
- The size, scale, and style of signs should be determined by the scale of the buildings of which they are a part, and the scale and speed that the intended viewer will be traveling (pedestrian vs. vehicle).
- In mixed-use districts and with multi-story buildings, the best placement for signs is along the lintel or sign frieze (generally defined as the area between the storefront or windows and the upper-story windows or cornice). If a porch exists, the signage (preferably double-faced, projecting signs) for individual stores will be placed within or outside the porch area.
- Desirable sign types in the districts with more pedestrian traffic include indirectly lit signs, raised letter signs, monument signs, wall signs, and double-faced projecting signs.
- Monument signs are only applicable for businesses where building setbacks, building orientation, or the design of site and its building(s) make it difficult to provide other types of signage. These signs should be designed so that the style of the sign and its base are consistent with the architecture of the buildings on the site.
- Double-faced projecting signs are desirable along commercial/mixed-use districts, provided that they are of an appropriate size, scale, and location. Projecting signs are attached to a building face and can project outward to 1/3rd the width of the sidewalk (or porch for, mixed-use buildings).
- Specialized town event signs and banners can also be used to define specific districts on the Beach Road.
- Window signs, where lettering is affixed directly on the glass, can be attractive and eye-catching, provided that the style is in keeping with the scale and style of the building.

- Undesirable signs are internally illuminated, plastic, flashing signs, billboards, generic trademark signs, and any sign temporarily affixed to ground floor windows. Roof signs are discouraged.
- Generally, signs should be externally lit with downward facing lights to avoid nighttime glare.
- Signs should be located so that they do not interfere with pedestrian movement or block the sight lines along the road.
- Freestanding signs should be placed within landscaped area(s), perpendicular to approaching traffic, and positioned to provide clear lines of sight at intersections and driveway approaches. For mixed-use areas (such as multi-tenant buildings) freestanding directory signs can be used, with their scale oriented to pedestrians.



The gateways to separate districts should each have their own specialized signage. All district signage should have consistent unifying elements with areas that can be further specialized for specific sites or locations.



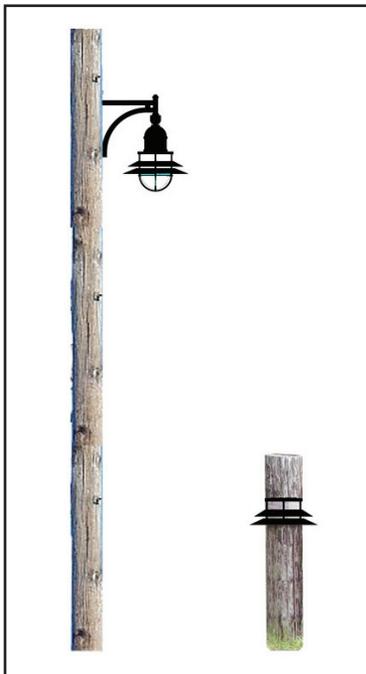
Ground mounted marker effectively placed at the entrance to a craft brewery/ dining establishment,



Good signage in varying colors, shapes, and forms is tasteful, interesting, and easy to read.

Lighting and Street Furniture

- Lighting and street furniture should contain consistent, unifying elements throughout the entire Beach Road area. In major district centers, lighting and street furniture can be specialized to create a sense of identity as long as they contain the unifying elements.
- Lighting should be designed to accommodate the scale of the user. Thus, there should be taller lighting fixtures for vehicular traffic and shorter lighting fixtures for pedestrian movement. For streets with both types of movement, multiple types of lighting can be used concurrently.
- The design of street furniture should be coordinated along the Beach Road for improved appearance and quality. Create a set of street furniture that will reflect the character of the Beach Road.
- The street furniture elements can include benches, trolley shelters, trash/recycling receptacles, information/wayfinding structures, and bicycle racks.



Lighting features can be simple and durable but aesthetically pleasing by using varying materials that can fit in the character of the area and provide quality illumination for pedestrians and motorists.



Street furniture or edge definers (e.g. bollards) can be specialized to designate specific destinations or districts. Convenience for the pedestrian are critical in creating a pleasant and well used mixed use core. A comfortable bench can provide much desired rest stop for a wide variety of users in the core. Even planter walls can provide necessary short-term seating .

Open Spaces and the Natural Environment

Public open spaces and the natural environment serve a very important role in communities. This study recognizes the limited open space opportunities directly accessible on the Beach Road. The area can benefit from various existing open space opportunities, and the pedestrian connections provided to other existing areas in town. A series of small public open spaces, including courtyards, corner building setbacks, and beach access areas, can be incorporated into the fabric of the streetscape of the Beach Road.

Public input revealed that one key characteristic enjoyed by the local community is the existing natural landscape in Nags Head, such as the sand dunes and local vegetation. Preserving and enhancing the existing natural landscape and open spaces on the Beach Road can also provide ecological services such as providing wildlife habitat space, air and water purification, and groundwater recharging. In coastal areas like Nags Head, open spaces with vegetation can help protect against coastal/sand dune erosion. Open space is also invaluable as a recreational amenity.

Historically, the primary public open space resources in Nags Head have been the ocean, beach access areas, and fishing piers. For example, these piers have been in operation for decades, providing public access, and parking, to the shoreline and safe, convenient spots for fishing. Typically, old piers and parks in most beach towns serve as “anchors” of small, tourism-based commercial hubs, providing convenience services, souvenirs, dining, and related services to visitors and residents alike. The Beach Road can benefit equally from such opportunities already existing in the area.

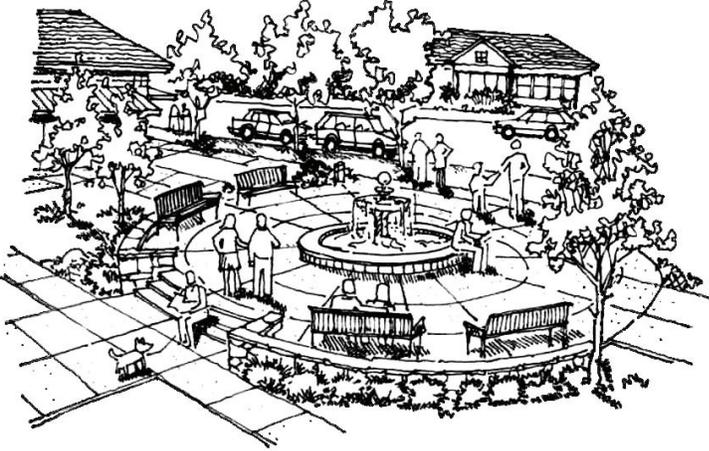
It is an objective of this study to ensure adequate public access to the shoreline, and adequate public “community spaces” on the Beach Road that town residents and visitors can enjoy.

Therefore, this study proposes the following design recommendations for public open spaces on the Beach Road:

- Public open spaces should be carefully integrated into the fabric of the Beach Road and contribute to the pedestrian experience.
- Consider the beach access areas located on the Beach Road as part of the public open space network.
- Create a hierarchy of better-landscaped and better-designed public beach access areas as pocket parks with ample shade that will also complement the streetscape along the Beach Road. This can also help to add vitality and choice to the pedestrian experience, and better function for the beach access areas.
- Attention to the availability of pedestrian amenities, such as seating and comfort in public spaces, is crucial. Public spaces that include landscaping and other elements can create a pleasant and relaxing environment.
- Entrances to a public space should be inviting, and provide unobstructed visual and pedestrian-safe access from the sidewalk or adjacent buildings.
- The use of permeable paving features is encouraged at beach access areas.
- Private developments can also be incorporated as public spaces on the Beach Road. For example, spacing between buildings or setbacks on mixed-use sites can be utilized for outdoor eating and seating purposes.
- The use of special permeable paving features and public art in such private complexes can add richness to the environment, and are encouraged as long as they are consistent with the character of the Beach Road.



Beach access areas are important assets to the existing streetscape on the Beach Road. The image on the left illustrates a conceptual view of a regular beach access area incorporating the proposed streetscape design principles.



Open spaces on mixed use sites or beach access areas can be vibrant public spaces if they contain elements of a well designed gathering place: a strong water element, outdoor seating, consistent landscaping, and specialized paving.



A conceptual view of the Regional Beach access area with the proposed design elements. Larger beach access areas can incorporate elements such as playgrounds, seating areas etc.

Landscaping

Landscaping is an important part of the streetscape. It is essential to the creation of attractive public spaces and pedestrian-friendly streets. Currently, the Beach Road has random landscaping, which lacks continuity and consistency. The existing natural beach landscape theme should be protected and enhanced to create a stronger sense of place, and to strengthen the historic “beach town” theme of Nags Head.

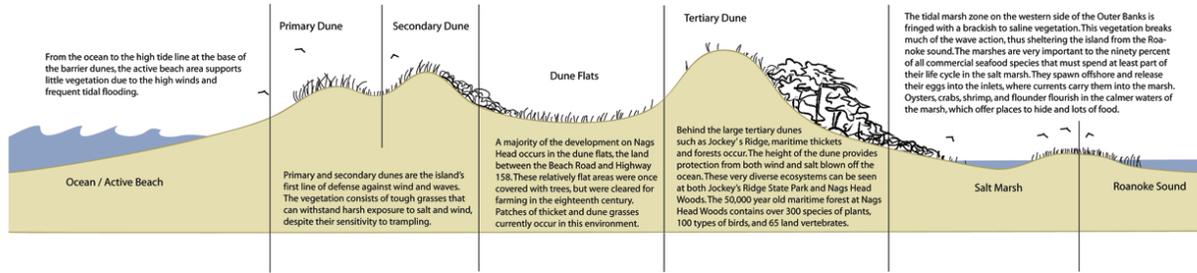
Natural vegetation is also essential to dune stabilization. Grasses, shrubs, and trees catch moving sand and stabilize it with their root systems. This preserves the protective dune system that helps to prevent erosion and ocean overwash. A zonal distribution of vegetation occurs due to variations in wind speed, salt spray exposure, water supply, soil nutrients, and salinity.

A majority of the development in Nags Head occurs in the dune flats, specifically the land between the Beach Road and NC 158. These relatively flat areas were once covered with trees, but were cleared for farming in the eighteenth century. Patches of thicket and dune grasses currently exist in this environment.

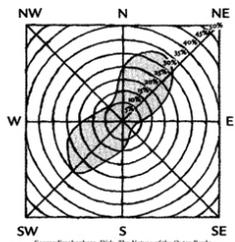
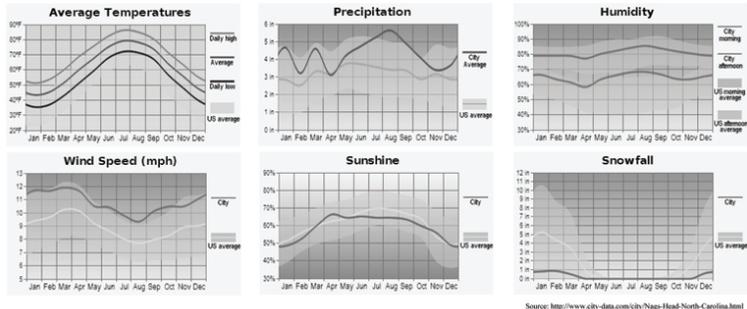
Landscaping techniques that eliminate or significantly reduce the presence of native trees and other native vegetation can have a detrimental impact on air, water, and environmental quality in the area, and diminish the community's character. The objective with this study's approach is to encourage the use of landscaping techniques that preserve native vegetation, which will also enhance further both property values and community character.

This study proposes the following design recommendations as part of the proposed landscaping on the Beach Road:

- Tree selection should be used to enhance the local identity unique to the Beach Road area (See page 73 for Landscaping Characteristics unique to Nags Head).
- Landscaped areas should be designed with the objective of minimizing long-term water use. The use of native, drought tolerant plants and efficient irrigation practices is recommended. Any plants selected must be resilient, salt tolerant, and low maintenance.
- Smaller shade trees should be considered, particularly in the proposed district centers along the Beach Road and by surface parking lots. This will create a sense of rhythm and continuity, while providing shade for pedestrians and parked cars.
- Landscaping should be used as a buffering technique to soften the impact of adjacent land uses which may be different in scale, use, or design. In such cases, landscaping can also be used in conjunction with low walls and fences as well.
- Shrubs and trees can be used in the proposed swales as buffers, allowing for the natural collection of water, as well as diverting and directing water run-off after heavy rains.
- Landscaping should not interfere with sightlines for drivers and pedestrians at intersections, crossings and driveway entrances.



Dunes:	Sand Flats:	Maritime Thicket:	Maritime forest:	Marsh:	Estuary:
 American beach grass <i>Ammophila breviflora</i>	 Bushy beardgrass <i>Andropogon glomeratus</i>	 Wax myrtle <i>Myrica cerifera</i>	 Live oak <i>Quercus virginiana</i>	 Sea oxeye <i>Borrichia frutescens</i>	 Smooth cordgrass <i>Spartina alterniflora</i>
 Sandbar <i>Cenchrus tribuloides</i>	 Seaside goldenrod <i>Solidago sempervirens</i> Var. <i>mexicana</i>	 Trumpet Creeper <i>Campsis radicans</i>	 Longleaf pine <i>Pinus palustris</i>	 Salt meadow cordgrass <i>Spartina patens</i>	 Cattails <i>Typha angustifolia</i>
 Sea oats <i>Uniola paniculata</i>	 Whitetop sedge <i>Dichromena colorata</i>	 Yaupon holly <i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	 Bayberry <i>Myrica pensylvanica</i>	 Glasswort <i>Salicornia herbacea</i>	 Black needlerush <i>Juncus roemerianus</i>
Other Vegetation: Purple mulberry <i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i>	Other Vegetation: Silverling <i>Baccharis halimifolia</i>	Other Vegetation: Red cedar <i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Other Vegetation: Red cedar <i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Other Vegetation: Black rush <i>Juncus roemerianus</i>	Other Vegetation: Sawgrass <i>Cladium jamaicense</i>
Asters <i>Aster</i> sp.	Dune elder <i>Iva imbricata</i>	Wax myrtle <i>Myrica cerifera</i>	Wax myrtle <i>Myrica cerifera</i>	Marsh elder <i>Iva frutescens</i>	Big cordgrass <i>Spartina cynosuroides</i>
	Groundsel tree <i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Red bay <i>Persea borbonia</i>	Red bay <i>Persea borbonia</i>	Sandrush <i>Fimbristylis castanea</i>	
		Loblolly pine <i>Pinus taeda</i>	Loblolly pine <i>Pinus taeda</i>		



Source: Frankenberg, Dirk. *The Nature of the Outer Banks*. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1995.
Nags Head receives gentle southwest breezes in the summer and strong northeast storm winds in the winter. These back and forth wind patterns are responsible for building up the large dunes of Jockey's Ridge.

An ecological transect showing the various zones and plant communities that occur naturally on the Outer Banks barrier islands.

Overall Sidewalk Connections and Pedestrian Circulation to/from the Beach Road

The Beach Road is currently the most popular corridor for non-motorized transportation, due to the multi-use path running the length of the east side of the Beach Road. The Regional Wright Brothers Bike Route also runs the length of the Beach Road.

Unfortunately, there is no connectivity between existing sidewalks in town and those along the Beach Road. There are also several hiking trails in Nags Head Woods and Jockey's Ridge, though their connectivity to neighborhoods and the Beach Road activity centers are limited. NC 158 is currently a major barrier to pedestrian circulation, with no sidewalks and five lanes to cross.

It is expected that seasonal traffic congestion is likely to increase on the Beach Road, and is unlikely to be mitigated by significant roadway improvements during the next 5 to 7 years. This is due to the lack of feasible right-of-way for major roadway expansion on the Beach Road. However, there is an urgent need to improve traffic flow during peak tourist season. It is recommended that the town consider studying the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of providing a seasonal trolley service, pedestrian improvements, and/or other options.

A new sidewalk on the west side of the Beach Road, in addition to the existing multi-purpose path, is proposed as the unifying element that knits the proposed Districts and other areas together. It also provides pedestrian linkages to the adjacent businesses, open spaces, and neighborhoods located off the Beach Road. Sidewalks, specifically in the district centers, are the principle place of pedestrian activity, including movement and social interaction. It is also designed to accommodate many of the streetscape elements that are found in the public right-of-way. These include trees, landscaping, lights, street furniture, etc. For this reason, the sidewalk must be designed with a set of minimum design standards. These standards should ensure that the sidewalk would function not only to provide safe, direct, and convenient access to buildings or parking lots, but also create a strong sense of visual connectivity within the districts, and help make the districts enjoyable.

The following guidelines apply to the proposed sidewalks that provide connections within the districts, and from to the rest of the town:

- Sidewalks on the Beach Road should be a minimum of 5 ft. wide to accommodate larger volumes of pedestrians, increased activity, and pedestrian amenities such as street furniture and lights. The sidewalk width is also dependent on surrounding uses and the scale of the street.
- A 7-8 ft. wide planted swale (buffer) will provide the necessary separation from vehicular traffic.
- Sidewalk surface materials must be permeable, permit ease of use with no obstructions, and allow for maintenance (i.e. regular cleaning).
- Provide connections to each main district by adding sidewalks on the auxiliary streets that intersect with the Beach Road. This will add to the walking experience in the districts by connecting various destinations off the Beach Road (e.g. beach access areas, outlets, piers, Jockey's Ridge, Nags Head Woods, neighborhoods in the bypass area etc.).
- Sidewalks should be designed as handicapped accessible, as set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- The Town should consider creating an integrated trail system, which will connect the sound area, districts on the Beach Road, and other destinations in the town. The trail system connected to the sidewalks on the Beach Road should be clearly marked with consistent signage and lighting where appropriate.
- Landscaping and shade trees should be incorporated into the sidewalk design in the proposed districts.
- Amenities, such as benches, public art, and bike racks, can be strategically placed along the sidewalks, especially in the district centers and closer to attraction areas located on the Beach Road. The incorporation of these amenities into the sidewalk/trail design will enhance the user's experience, and create more interesting public spaces.

Parking

Tourists and residents alike come to the Beach Road to enjoy the natural environment and the ocean. The majority of these visitors arrive by car. Unfortunately, there are currently very limited parking and retail/commercial uses on the Beach Road. Without easily accessible parking, visitors may decide to patronize businesses in neighboring communities with more convenient parking. Likewise, potential business owners may be attracted to areas with different zoning regulations governing parking for commercial uses. Both of these scenarios affect an essential element of the town's economy, and thus the continued vitality and future economic success of small businesses on the Beach Road depends heavily on providing access to convenient, strategically-located parking.

The most effective way to maximize such access, besides parking provided on individual sites, is through the creation of an integrated district parking system. This system should provide short, medium, and long term parking options in a number of strategically located areas. These different areas should be integrated into the design of the streetscape and surrounding residences, both architecturally and in scale.

- The district parking system should maximize the convenience of parking, while minimizing its impact on the street's visual quality and pedestrian movement along the Beach Road.
- The different components of the system should be easily located and identified through the use of consistent, unifying lighting and signage.
- On-site parking lots for individual establishments, particularly in district centers, shall be located behind the buildings. Loading areas for delivery and service vehicles will be off the Beach Road also. This will help in maintaining a streetscape, which emphasizes a direct connection between pedestrians, buildings, and the landscape.
- The Town should also consider running a trolley for shoppers and beachgoers on the Beach Road, particularly during summer. Nags Head residents that participated the community workshops also raised the issue, highlighting the necessity for it and the benefits that the town would gain. A trolley would help bringing people to the Beach Road, as well as bringing beachgoers into other areas of town for dining, shopping, and entertainment. A trolley would also help alleviate traffic and parking on the Beach Road, making the environment more pedestrian-friendly.

On-Street Parking

Currently, there are limited on-street parking opportunities on the Beach Road. There are a number of benefits that on-street parking provides: convenience, separation between the street and pedestrians, slower traffic, and so on. However, community workshops revealed that residents are not in favor of on-street parking on the Beach Road, due to crowding problems in the area during the summer season. Therefore this study proposes that:

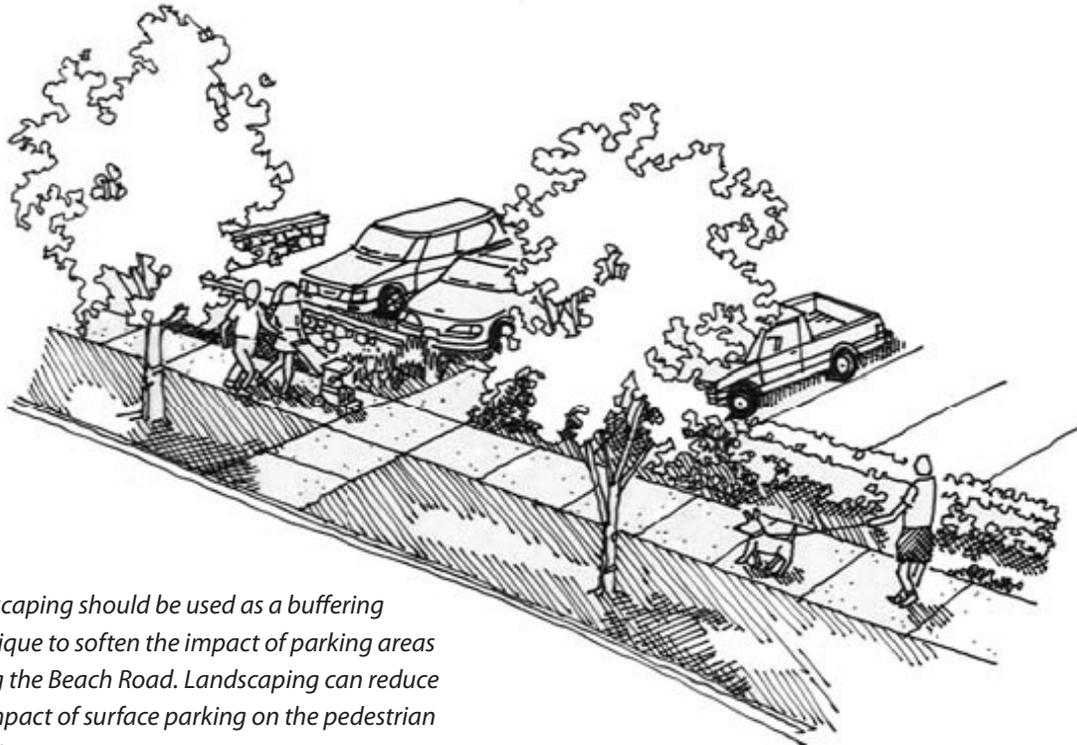
- On-street parking along the Beach Road shall not be allowed.
- On auxiliary streets intersecting with the Beach Road, short-term parallel parking for retail/commercial uses should be allowed. Parallel parking provides fewer traffic disruptions.
- Parking streets—streets that include parking as a key design element, and often incorporate other pedestrian friendly elements such as sidewalk and landscaping—are recommended as east-west connectors in the town, especially between the bypass and the Beach Road (e.g. Bonnett Street). These parking streets shall also enhance the access to the proposed major districts and destinations on the Beach Road area.

Parking Lots

Incorporate a number of design elements in parking lots that will be more convenient and pedestrian friendly. Clearly designate parking areas and pedestrian crossing areas through the use of landscaped islands and specially-textured permeable paving, create pedestrian links to buildings, and increase pedestrian safety and comfort through the inclusion of benches and lighting.

- Because surface parking lots tend to create gaps along the sidewalk and interrupt the activities along the street, they should be located in ways that minimize their direct visibility from the Beach Road.
- Surface parking lots should contain interior landscaping with shade trees and Outer Banks landscaping features. One tree per three parking spots is recommended.
- Shared entrances for parking lots should be encouraged in order to minimize vehicular traffic across the sidewalk, and to minimize conflict with pedestrian movement on the Beach Road.
- Surface parking lots should be designed to avoid large expanses of pavement (e.g., asphalt). The use of landscaped islands is an effective way of reducing the amount of asphalt, provide separation for vehicles, and making the parking lot comfortable and aesthetically pleasing.
- Consider the use of permeable pavement. It allows water to seep through its surface, promoting natural filtration, reducing the amount of pollution that tends up in the water supply, reducing sedimentation of waterways, and eliminating the need for costly drainage systems. It allows the soil to absorb rainwater, allowing for the replenishment of ground aquifers, a source of drinking water for many communities. Permeable pavement can be applied to a variety of uses, including walkways, driveways, and sidewalks, and comes in a variety of materials, including asphalt, concrete, and block pavers. All of these provide a sturdy surface for walking, parking, and driving.
- Pedestrian movement through a parking lot should be safe, convenient, and clearly demarcated with upgraded pavement or pavement markings.

- Landscape buffers, in conjunction with dividers, should be constructed to provide separation and screening of the parking lot from the street, adjacent land uses, or establishments. Techniques for screening surface parking lots include perimeter-landscaped buffers of shade tree plantings or up to three-foot-high screening shrubs or walls.
- Lighting for safety and security purposes should be included in the design of parking lots. The type of lighting should be in conformance with lighting standards established for the entire Beach Road area—i.e. pole style and color, bulb type, mounting height, etc.—and adhere to the “dark skies” design principles.



Landscaping should be used as a buffering technique to soften the impact of parking areas facing the Beach Road. Landscaping can reduce the impact of surface parking on the pedestrian experience.

In-Lieu Parking Fees and Programs (see also Appendix for the reference article)

In-lieu parking fees and programs can also be considered in the major districts, particularly in the Whalebone Junction District. There are a range of potential benefits that can be provided by the establishment of an in-lieu parking fee program. There are, however, some disadvantages and potential pitfalls that must be considered as well. This program has to be studied further by the Town of Nags Head.

A review of the literature helped to identify the following potential benefits associated with an in-lieu parking fee program:

- A key concept in planning for pedestrian commercial/mixed-use districts is to provide a continuous series of retail/commercial uses, avoiding “dead spaces” that break up the pedestrian experience. An in-lieu program can result in a more effective and economically vital shopping/mixed-use district, which will also help in reducing the need for driveways and parking spaces required for businesses.

- Through an in-lieu fee and parking program, the total amount of parking needed to adequately serve the area can be reduced. As public parking is available for shared use, the number of spaces required is lower than if each individual property must provide its peak parking supply on-site. For instance, in mixed-use sites, restaurants can use a higher proportion of a public parking supply in their peak evening period, while commercial properties can use a higher proportion in the afternoon. Another example pertinent to the study area is the use of parking for summer beach recreation parking needs.
- An in-lieu program provides another mechanism for the provision of parking, thereby reducing the need for variances. This helps to ensure that all landowners are treated equitably.
- Additional funding for public parking improvements is generated, potentially speeding the provision of additional public parking. Moreover, funding accompanies the development that increases the need for such parking.
- By providing an additional, readily available option for developers to address the often-difficult issue of meeting parking requirements, an in-lieu program increases the feasibility of development or redevelopment, particularly for small lots.

Common Characteristics of Fee In-lieu Programs

Based upon the review presented above, the following are the common characteristics of existing programs implemented in various communities:

- A separate fund is established that is reserved for the future provision of publicly accessible parking spaces.
- The program is limited to non-residential land uses only.
- The program is available within a specified area only, such as a defined mixed-use zoning district.
- Payment is typically due prior to issuance of a building permit, or a certificate of occupancy if a building permit is not required.
- Strict standards for the location of parking facilities are not defined (such as “spaces must be provided within 500 feet of each individual development parcel for which in-lieu fees are paid”), nor are specific locations established when the program is implemented. Instead, parking location decisions are made over time, reflecting the changes in need and opportunities to provide it. In other words, developers (or their lenders) are not guaranteed that a specific number of spaces will be provided within a specific walking distance.

Potential Disadvantages and Challenges

The following are possible reasons why an in-lieu fee program may not be appropriate:

- The timeliness of fund usage can be a challenge. Such programs have run into political trouble where fees have been collected for a long period before any parking spaces have been constructed. Areas where the expected number of projects that would take advantage of the program is low may therefore not be appropriate locations for it. Moreover, as the rate of inflation in construction costs and land prices can outstrip the interest rate gained on the funds, delays in

construction can effectively degrade the ability of the program to result in parking supply. A long lag time between the first collection of funds and the provision of parking has been a problem for some jurisdictions, particularly for smaller communities.

- Parking must be provided in reasonable proximity to the properties contributing fees. To be effective for individual commercial property owners (and their financiers), spaces need to be provided with a reasonable walking distance of each property. Areas where there are limited or no opportunities for public parking facilities may find this to be a problem.
- Sufficient funding needs to be available, either through the in-lieu program or from other sources, to ensure that parking is actually provided. In particular, if the first few developments taking advantage of an in-lieu program are relatively small (and therefore do not generate funds sufficient to construct a parking lot), this could require some initial public funding.
- Lenders need to be assured that the financial success of a development will not be limited or precluded by the lack of timely and convenient parking provided through the in-lieu program. Some lenders might be reluctant to lend on a project without on-site parking, or a guarantee for timely and convenient parking.
- The local jurisdiction needs to devote staff time to establishing and maintaining the program. However, the ongoing staff time needed after the program is implemented is reported to be minimal, and would not require any increase in staff levels. Furthermore, by providing a consistent means of addressing parking requirements, rather than through case-by-case review of private off-site parking agreements, local staff time spent on parking issues could potentially be reduced.

Setting the Fees

A key issue in an in-lieu fee program is setting an appropriate level for the fee. There is not any legal requirement that fee levels be set to reflect the full cost of the provision of parking. Fees are set in one of two ways:

- Fees can be set on a case-by-case basis, calculating the cost of the land plus the cost of construction for a parking space. This has the advantage of ensuring that the fee fully reflects the cost of land, which can vary by location or over time, but has the disadvantage of requiring an appraisal on each application. As the appraisal might require four to six months, developers find it difficult to financially plan their projects. In high land cost areas, this can result in very high fees.
- Per-space fees can be set uniformly for all projects. A recent survey of cities with in-lieu programs indicated that 37 of 46 cities have established a uniform fee (In Lieu of Required Parking, Donald C. Shoup). Most set their in-lieu fees lower than the cost of providing a public parking space, as the full costs were felt to be “too high.” There is no legal constraint on how this fee is set, and the individual fees vary widely.

Some programs also allow developers to remove existing parking spaces (thereby allowing other uses of the property) by paying the in-lieu fees, in order to encourage consolidation of parking into public lots, as well as redevelopment of older properties.

Chapter V - Implementation

Design, Site, Use, and Implementation Overview

To provide further detail for the recommended districts, schematic site designs were drawn up to illustrate crucial elements of the plan. These elements involve streetscape design and proposed uses, making redevelopment a sensitive matter, and calling for integration with the existing settings on the Beach Road. Besides context sensitivity and other criteria that governed selection of the recommended design ideas, each use also has its own particular requirements for success.

The purpose of the site plans in the previous sections is to provide graphical, conceptual suggestions to meet the design goals of the proposed redevelopment. They are intended to serve as reference materials for the preparation of public and/or private redevelopment project concepts. The site plans/designs should be read as core concepts to guide redevelopment, whose details can be flexibly interpreted. They convey the general mass and placement of buildings, landscaping, etc., but do not consider detailed building design. Perspective sketches that accompany the site plans also give a sense of the look and feel of the design proposals.

This document aims to be effective in regulating the design, character, and use of new developments in two primary ways:

- 1) to advocate for and highlight a preferred development concept; and
- 2) to provide an opportunity to identify site and community assets relevant to the projects.

Thus, it is important to recognize this document as extensions of the town's efforts to enhance the Beach Road area.

Implementation of Recommended Design Guidelines

It is the responsibility of the Town of Nags Head and its departments, as well as other public agencies and community organizations, to review, administer, and develop further studies on issues considered in this document. Implementation of the ideas generated through this study will require interagency coordination between not only the Town's departments, but also with other agencies and community organizations within and/or outside of the County's sphere. Doing so will not only concentrate the efforts of all of these agencies and organizations to a common end, but will enable efficient timing and lessen the overall costs associated with implementation. Conversely, it will also depend on the citizens who came together to make this vision; transforming ideas into actions will depend on the collective will of the public—as well as political representatives, government officials, developers, architects, and planners—and the degree to which they can cooperate.

The implementation actions of this chapter are designed to carry out land use, transportation/ circulation, and community design strategy recommendations of the proposed Beach Road Plan. They provide the Town of Nags Head and other private and public partners with direction to guide future development and investment on the Beach Road. Specifically, the implementation action schedule in this chapter outlines general timeframes and responsibilities for a range of actions.

While all of the Plan’s recommendations are important for consideration, the immediate implementation actions outlined in the following pages will establish a significant foundation upon which to build. The path to realizing these recommendations will require a clear, focused approach. The specific actions identified here aim to help provide the organizational and programmatic infrastructure that will lead to the Beach Road vision’s successful fruition.

To ensure completion of the plan’s recommendations, regular reviews of the status of the implementation actions are paramount. As part of these periodic reviews, the responsible implementer(s) listed for each action should reassess the resources available to complete each action according to the stated time frame, and adjust the time frame or priorities as needed. Most importantly, private sector stewards, community members, and plan advocates who are dedicated to the plan’s realization should maintain the momentum by continuing to meet as a Beach Road Committee, reviewing the actions’ status and acting as project leaders to track project implementation. Finally, a highly graphic and publicly visible checklist should be placed in a civic space to publicize and celebrate the plan’s benchmarks, so that its momentum continues to build.

Planning Actions Schedule

Specific planning and implementation actions for the Beach Road Development Plan strategies and recommendations are listed in the tables below. Actions are assigned a time frame and an implementation leader or leaders. They are proposed with the understanding that some actions will need to be adjusted, others replaced with more feasible proposals, and that future circumstances may affect a proposed implementer’s ability to take action.

Time frames are approximate, and will be determined by available resources. Until applicable actions are implemented, the plan’s strategies and recommendations are intended to guide the town’s decision-making process.

Implementation Programming

Action	Time Frame	Proposed Implementer
Establish a Beach Road Advisory Group (a taskforce as part of the Beach Road Committee) to track the achievements of the plan, review the status and prioritization of implementation actions, and advocate for the plan’s realization.	1 year	The Beach Road Committee
Review the proposed districts and advocate for implementation actions.	1 year	The Beach Road Committee The Town of Nags Head Planning Department

Action	Time Frame	Proposed Implementer
Install and maintain a highly graphic Plan Implementation Checklist in a civic space to publicize and celebrate achievement of the plan's benchmarks.	1 year	The Beach Road Committee

Land Use Implementation

Action	Time Frame	Proposed Implementer
In parallel to Land Use Plan update efforts, reflect the recommended land use strategies, design guidelines, and proposed Beach Road district specifications.	1-2 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Develop Catalytic and Opportunity Sites		
Develop Catalytic Development Site #1: e.g. Whalebone Junction – Areas around Sam and Omie's. Support private development of mixed-use retail and temporary housing (hotel), which will adhere to development design guidelines proposed in this study (Pages 40-41-).	2-5 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department Private Developers
Develop Catalytic Development Site #2: e.g. Area at the intersection of Bonnett Street and the Beach Road. Support private development of mixed-use retail and housing by helping property owners consolidate parcels (Pages 50-51).	3-7 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department Private Developers
Establish Economic Development Strategies		
Establish an economic development advisory group. Develop a targeted recruitment program with strategies to attract specific small businesses from the retail and hotel sectors, and include identification of opportunity sites and locations. Key sectors include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail attractions (such as souvenir shops); • Entertainment attractions such as additional restaurants; • Neighborhood retail uses, especially grocery stores and pharmacies; • Hotel developers/operators; and • Art galleries and cultural attractions. 	1-2 years	Board of Commissioners The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Develop coordination between the summer-time market and retailers, including joint marketing and physical linkages.	1-2 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Maintain and Enhance Parks and Open Space		
Establish an Open Space Community Advisory Group, within the Planning Department involving community members, to help enhance open spaces and determine recreational needs and opportunities in town (including the Beach Road area).	1 year	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department

Action	Time Frame	Proposed Implementer
Develop a Park and Open Space Plan which identifies future open space needs, and includes acquisition strategies, incentives, and design guidelines.	1-2 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Improve some of the beach access areas to be a more effective venue for community events/activities.	1-2 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Create a Historic Preservation Commission and Overlay Zone		
Establish a Historic Preservation Commission that can address both immediate and long-term historic preservation policies, initiatives, and incentives; inventory historic resources.	1 year	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Work with the community to establish a Historic Overlay District as proposed in this study.	2-3 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Traffic and Gateway Enhancements		
Prepare a Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Plan, and ensure the immediate redesign of the Whalebone Junction area as a main gateway, including continuous sidewalks, pedestrian amenities, off-street parking, reduced travel speeds, and signage.	2-3 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Improve the Pedestrian and Bicycle Environment		
Develop a Pedestrian Improvements Plan and a coordinated implementation program for improving the town's designated primary and secondary pedestrian connections, and implementing enhanced intersection crossings, pedestrian and bicycle trails, on-street bicycle connections, traffic calming strategies, and other pedestrian amenities. Include street amenities for future transit ridership, such as potential trolley stops.	3-5 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Propose the Town Transit System		
Conduct a study to initiate a Town Circulator trolley route.	3-5 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Develop a Coordinated Parking Strategy		
Improve parking wayfinding signage to advertise the location and number of available spaces.	3-5 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department

Urban Design Strategies Implementation

Action	Time Frame	Proposed Implementer
As part of the proposed Pedestrian Improvements Plan (see above) and the Beach Road District Streetscape Plan, identify and prioritize pedestrian amenities, including funding sources and potential locations for improvement. Amenities include public art, sidewalks, landscaping, seating opportunities, and other amenities recommended in this study.	1 year	The Beach Road Committee The Town of Nags Head Planning Department

Programming Strategies Implementation

Action	Time Frame	Proposed Implementer
Coordinate and improve marketing efforts.	1-2 years	The Beach Road Committee
Promote the Beach Road's heritage, culture, and distinct proposed districts/sub-districts.	1-2 years	The Beach Road Committee The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Market both Nags Head and the Beach Road as a winter and summer destination to increase year-round hotel occupancy rates	Ongoing	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Develop a Signage and Wayfinding Program		
Establish a Signage and Wayfinding Committee.	1 year	The Beach Road Committee
Develop a comprehensive streetscape and wayfinding signage design palette.	1-2 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Design distinct district signage.	2-3 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Identify significant sites and event locations for interpretive signage.	2-3 years	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Develop Public Safety and Security Programs		
Prioritize locations for trash/recycling bins, public restrooms, and street lighting.	1 year	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Enhance Activity and Event Programming		
Strengthen activity/event programming and promotion for events throughout the year, including both winter and summer seasonal events.	Ongoing	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department
Promote activities for youth and families with children.	1 year	The Town of Nags Head Planning Department

Funding Mechanisms

To successfully implement a design program for the Beach Road Study Area, funding and financing mechanisms need to be investigated, and an overall strategy developed. These investigations should include potential assistance from various governmental sources, and public/private partnerships involving community groups, civic groups, and business organizations. Some of the potential sources of funding are identified below:

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) – A community design program that improves the economic quality, public facilities, and living environment for the residents of a community, may qualify for a block grant. CDBG grants, which are administered by the individual states, are available to communities with a population of less than 50,000.

America the Beautiful Program – This federal program promotes tree planting through volunteer activity. Regional forestry offices will be responsible for distributing the funds. Priority will be placed on programs that specifically emphasize volunteer activity and community involvement.

In addition to government funding sources, civic groups, charitable foundations, private corporations, fund-raising projects, or any combination of these may support specific urban design projects. Some of these potential sources are indicated below:

- Contributions to trust funds having non-profit, tax-exempt status. These funds could then be utilized for specific projects.
- Tax-deductible contributions to community foundations, in which the collected funds are distributed to community projects.
- Private foundations having tax exempt, non-profit status, which distribute donations to worthwhile projects.
- Interest accrued from an endowment fund could be used to support a long-term project while the principal is retained.
- Non-monetary support, including volunteer programs, could contribute.

Short-term strategies

Zoning Reform

While intended to provide flexibility, the Town of Nags Head's current zoning classifications do not provide an adequate level of control or guidance for mixed-use development. In order to promote the type of development recommended in this plan, overlay-zoning classifications should be employed in and around the proposed mixed-use districts. The town's overlay zoning code can be revised to be more conducive to successful small-scale retail developments. The zoning ordinance is a tool with which the town can spell out the type of development that the community prefers. Therefore, it is critical that the ordinance be reconsidered, so that it more closely matches the vision to accommodate small retails/businesses in the Beach Road area.

Design Reform

Nags Head's zoning code should include design regulations, especially for features in the public realm. Requiring certain design features will help develop the distinctive appearance described in the proposed district plans. Appropriate design regulations include sign standards, sidewalks, buffer areas, landscaping requirements, parking lot design, and so on. Codifying the design recommendations suggested in the district plans can ensure that new developments conform to the vision outlined for each district.

Building Capacity within the Community

The Town of Nags Head should engage local leaders, and expand its staff to oversee and manage proposed planning/design efforts. This expansion of planning and implementation capacity is required to ensure that the districts attain the type of business mix and support the type of active small-business environment outlined in the district plans. The town should retain the services of an economic development planner, who can spearhead efforts to build partnerships within the business community and other redevelopment stakeholders. An investment in planning capacity will benefit the community as a whole, and lay the groundwork for the more complex and costly redevelopment strategies.

The planning staff should:

- maintain an inventory of available commercial space;
- steer developers and businesses to the most appropriate location for their needs;
- retain businesses and attract new smaller retailers to the Beach Road; and
- promote the town and apply for development grants.

The town should further actively develop a public outreach program. The purpose of this program is to involve members of the community in the local government process, and to educate people in matters of community development/growth and related changes. The Town of Nags Head should establish committees, which will provide a voice for the community at the town and County level, facilitating interaction between the Town of Nags Head, the county, and the public on a regular basis. The participation of these committees in the planning process is essential, and of great value to the town.

Long-term Strategies (more than 3 years)

Public Investment on the Beach Road

Public workshops indicated that the efforts to encourage mixed-use developments that will preserve and enhance the character of the Beach Road are vital to the residents of Nags Head. It is hoped that the Beach Road shall continue to accommodate yearlong residences, while continuing to be a vital recreational and tourist destination, with its pedestrian-friendly streetscape, piers, beach access areas, art galleries, retail shops, and restaurants.

While location is important in all real estate development, it is more critical for mixed-use projects. Not every site is suited for mixed uses. Some sites, because of location, parking, and design limitations, are undesirable for commercial uses.

Retail businesses typically look for four main elements in any site: visibility, parking, signage, and access. The relative importance of each of these elements will change depending on the nature of the business. For instance, since most coffee shops are convenience businesses rather than a destination location, business owners will search for sites that have good parking opportunities on the street or in the surrounding area, proximity to other retail businesses that will draw additional customers, an attractive building, and the opportunity for good signage. The convenience of the site is critical for such businesses. As more of a destination location, a restaurant might value parking over access because the average customer might visit only once or twice a month. For temporary residents in town, their proximity to shopping, recreational and cultural activities, and to restaurants are important, preferred attractions.

Connecting the Beach Road to the rest of the town should be a priority. All of this public investment will create a critical mass of activity that will support Beach Road businesses and transform it into the regional destination that it has always had the potential to be. While this development effort is a significant and costly investment for the community, it is likely to catalyze future, controlled development efforts in the community overall. Nonetheless, additional analysis and extensive public input should be sought before proceeding.

Conclusion

The Town of Nags Head has strong and unique assets that can form the basis of a successful mixed-use district development effort along the Beach Road. In order to take advantage of its waterfront, history, and visitors, there are a few important steps the town should take.

By assuming a leading role in the redevelopment effort, the town can directly shape the future of its retail areas. In both the short and long term, the planning department can identify the priorities, partners, resources, and possibilities for making the town's redevelopment efforts as effective as possible.