

# Sunset Foresees Its Growth Following Similar Pattern

BY SUSAN USHER

A proposed update of the Sunset Beach land use plan predicts that growth and development of the town will continue "much in the same general pattern" as in the past.

That forecast hinges on two conditions, notes Town Manager Wallace Martin in his summary: continued enforcement of existing local and state regulations and continued public involvement in community decision-making.

Land use has changed dramatically at Sunset Beach over the past 10 years, notes the plan that was presented to the town council last Thursday night. The plan was forwarded to the N.C. Office of Coastal Management for review and comment, the next step in a lengthy approval process that will end in early 1986 with adoption by the Coastal Resources Commission.

The town is characterized as "a family oriented vacation and second home community with seasonal populations reaching as high as 10,000 persons during peak periods, in contrast with a year-round population of no more than 200."

### Base Will Double

The town's \$55,000,000 tax base is expected to double following county revaluation, the study shows. Over the past three years, property values have increased "in an unprecedented fashion," writes Martin. The average cost of a new single family residence is about \$70,000, and no lots on the island sell for less than \$35,000. Oceanfront lots command \$175,000 sales figures.

In terms of development, streets account for nearly half of the town's developed land, single family residences, 25 percent; and commercial development, about one percent. About half of the platted, developable land lies vacant, while almost 75 percent of the total land area within the town is considered to be "undevelopable" under existing regulations.

"Exceptional development" in the area accounts for an increase in housing units from 411 to 744 from 1980 through 1984. In 1984 alone, 95 homes were built. During the same period, 82 new homes were built within the town's extraterritorial fringe and 1985 rates are expected to exceed those of 1984.

"If the average rate of 67 houses per year should continue over the next 10 years," predicts Martin, "the number of houses in the town would roughly double the present number."

### Increasing Demands

If so the town will have to address increased demands on services from sanitation and water service to transportation and public access.

The plan notes nearing completion of the county water main, needs for a system of incineration for garbage disposal, a regional sewer system in the Sunset Beach-Calabash area, the need for improved bridge access to the island and transportation links in the area.

At the Sunset Beach Bridge, for instance, the average daily traffic count in July jumped from 1,300 vehicles per day in 1981 to 3,590 vehicles per day the same month in 1984, compared to a state projection of about 1,400 vehicles then.

The plan also addresses concerns for protection of unique and fragile coastal features such as marshes and coastal waters.

Growth of the area surrounding the town also affects Sunset Beach, since these residents expect to use the local beach. If growth continues at the same rate as from 1980 to 1984, the population of the area around Sunset Beach will double by the year 1990 to at least 6,328.

### Access Needed

Mainland town residents will continue facing the same problems with beach access and parking as do non-residents, the study notes, until a long-range solution is found—possibly publicly financed or encouragement of a private property owner to construct adequate parking as an investment.

However, the study adds, "It is argued that the casual non-resident user of the beach contributes little to the local economy and may actually impose burdens by creating litter, traffic congestion and law enforcement problems."

Also addressed in the plan are flood management, storm hazard mitigation and hurricane evacuation plans, constraints—such as soil types and the need for a sewer system—on development, and policy statements.

### What Next?

Haskell Rhett, state land use planner, said review by state and federal officials should be completed in about 30 days, with comments returned to the town "hopefully

within a month or month-and-a-half," he added. It may be accompanied by recommendations for changes.

"It's a strong suggestion with a possibility of future problems in plan adoption," added Rhett. "But we are not trying to dictate what your policy might be."

Once any changes—such as map revisions already suggested—are incorporated, a public hearing on the revision is held and only then is the plan approved by the town and forwarded to the Coastal Resources Commission for consideration. That can happen probably no sooner than the January 1986 CRC meeting.

### Demand Soars

The council took no action on a proposal from Martin to increase the fee for special trash pickups from \$2 to \$25.

Requests for hauling items to the county landfill that can't be taken to the transfer station—such as construction debris, tree trimmings, appliances and furniture—are "growing by leaps and bounds," Martin said. "It wouldn't cover the expense, but it would cut down the number of times we're called."

"That's a little steep," Councilwoman Hill observed, with Mary Katherine Griffith adding that the higher fee could be charged only if the person wanted immediate pickup.

As an alternative, several members suggested scheduling special pickups at weekly intervals, not on demand.

### Other Business

In other business, the board:

- Elected two extra-territorial residents to the planning board. Schuyler "Sky" Bramley will replace George K. Meier Jr. on the board and Richard Good, previously an alternate, will replace as a regular member Robert McColl, who has moved from the area.

- Adopted a policy, on Councilman Kathy Hill's recommendation, that planning board alternates will automatically advance to regular board membership if the person

## Knapp's Comments Stand In Sunset Hearing Notes

Comments made by a Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association officer during a July 1 public hearing will remain in the minutes over Mayor Pro Tem Ed Gore's objections that they were unrelated "innuendos."

But a majority agreed with Councilwoman Kathy Hill, who told Gore, the subject of the comments, that "All matters in a public hearing should be included in the minutes."

Added Gore, "... if they are apropos." Council members voted 3-2 against deleting the comments from the minutes, but only after an awkward delay in voting.

Gore and Councilman Donald Safrit had voted to delete the comments when Mayor Jim Gordon pointedly waited for Councilman George Foster to speak up.

Foster, along with Councilwomen Kathy Hill and Mary Katherine Griffith, had not voted.

"He hasn't voted yet," Gordon noted, looking at Foster expectantly as most audience members laughed. At past meetings, Foster has frequently voted in apparent tandem with Gore and Safrit.

"If he is going to vote no or abstain," interjected Hill at Thursday's meeting, "he hasn't had a chance. Call for the negative vote."

Pressed to call for the "no" votes, Gordon did. And Foster voted against deletion, with Hill and Griffith concurring.

Gore introduced the topic by saying that when he had motioned at an earlier meeting to approve minutes of the July 1 meeting, he had not included the public hearing that preceded it.

holding a seat is not interested in reappointment or is no longer able to keep it.

Received the July police report, which showed that 113 town citations were written, most of them for illegal parking, said Martin. Chief William Hill also listed four state citations, one breaking and entering, one breaking and entering and larceny, four arrests, one auto wreck, two vehicle towings, five disturbances, two fires and 65 investigations of the shooting of fireworks. Twenty-one messages were delivered. The two patrol cars logged 4,574 miles on 525 gallons of gas.

Another 306 gallons of gas was used by the sanitation department and 54 gallons by the water department.

Learned that the town is awaiting the results of a study requested from Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. with recommendations on the number of street lights needed by the town and where they should be located.

Approved as amended a set of proposed town zoning maps for recording. The board deleted a single line at Gore's recommendation.

Authorized Martin to build an office for the water operator in the bay adjoining the police department, at an estimated cost of \$5,000, with town employees providing the labor.

Approved spending \$4,000 for three drainage projects, two on Inlet and North Shore drives using routine drain lines that run to filter beds in the marsh, and one on 33rd Street which will experiment with use of a catch basin that doesn't allow sand to clog attached short drain lines set in a bed of rock. If the method works it will be used to address a slightly less urgent drainage problem on Second Street.

Citing the possibility of town liability and the setting of precedent for other neighborhoods, took no action on a request to provide a neighborhood accessway so that west end property owners can reach Mad Inlet. A previous set of steps was built there by a private property owner, not the town, Gore noted.

In those minutes, Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association Vice President Warren "Bud" Knapp of Calabash is quoted. "During the public hearing Warren Knapp stood up and stated that prior to the start of the meeting, he was approached by Ed Gore and physically threatened and called a S.O.B. and it was indicated that physical violence could be done to him as others were in the past.

"He said Gore needed to apologize to him as an elected official."

Councilwoman Hill continued her argument that the remarks were made as part of "a public meeting in a public place," adding that all town officials must be "held accountable."

Gore argued that the comments were irrelevant to the topic of the hearing—the proposed annexation of a golf course development—and were "allegations" and "innuendos."

In including them in the minutes, he countered to remarks from Hill and Councilwoman Mary Katherine Griffith, "You're saying they happened. You want them included to add credibility to innuendo... That's the result of what you're doing," he added in response to their denials.

He continued, "The public was not being heard. We were listening to Mr. Knapp make his allegations."

Noting that in the minutes of a prior board meeting, dealing with rezoning, Gore had insisted on including discussion as well as motions, Hill said, "They were put in the minutes. They were allegations also. That was a public meeting. This is a public hearing. I think what goes for one should go for all."



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

## Summer's Last Fling Ends

Families from across North Carolina enjoyed their last long weekend at the beach Labor Day, with occasional rain interfering only a little with their plans. Above,

Clifton Caulder and Angela Bowyer of Laurinburg enjoy the sun at Sunset Beach Monday before leaving later in the day for home—and school on Tuesday.

## Firefighter, Gore Address Taxpayers

Sunset Beach's Volunteer Fire Department paid \$1,900 of its own money to cover the expense of hospital treatment for some members following a July 19 fire that destroyed the Oyster Bay Golf Clubhouse.

That was just one of the operating expenses enumerated by firefighter Richard Edwards in comments to the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association Saturday.

With overcast skies outside, a larger crowd than usual—between 140 and 150, gathered Saturday inside the Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department bay area for the meeting. Among those in the audience "just to listen" were Mayor Pro Tem Ed Gore, along with two family members who mistakenly stood during a members-only count of those who support a high-rise bridge. The vote stalled and a substitute motion carried successfully.

Debate regarding the fate of the pontoon bridge leading to the island dominated the meeting, but there were other items on the agenda.

Edwards pointed out that with the largest-capacity tanker in the county, 7,400 gallons, the 27-member department is frequently called to give mutual aid.

With the area's increasing population and the increased costs associated with firefighting, Edwards predicted, "Ten years from now, we're going to have to have paid firefighters. Of that there's no doubt in my mind."

He criticized county commissioners for what he called "lack of

foresight" in dealing with the problem. "We're between a rock and a hard place—tremendous growth and use and no funds needed to prevent the tragedies like we saw several years ago," added Edwards.

For its part, the association contributes \$100 per year to the department plus \$50 each time it meets, usually several times each year. Its members were urged Saturday to contribute.

Firefighters "shake buckets" near the bridge approach on major holidays as a source of funds. "A lot of people still think it's a toll bridge—we don't tell them any different," Edwards quipped.

While most members of the association disagree strongly with Gore regarding the ideal fate of the town's pontoon-type barge bridge, civility ruled at Saturday's session.

### Not An Adversary

"We don't see him (Ed Gore) here as an adversary," one member reminded the group. "He has problems, we have problems. Maybe we can help each other, maybe he can help us with some of our problems, some of our compromises."

Gore in turn asked the group not to consider him "unapproachable," citing a great concern for the town. He has confirmed plans to seek reelection to the town council.

He said he was there to "retain the quality of life we've all known and enjoyed," not to destroy it.

His remarks were cut short when Secretary Minnie Hunt warned, "30 seconds—you never allow us but about two minutes during town board meetings."

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