

SMITHFIELD INDUSTRIAL PLANNING AREA

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PLANNING AREA PROFILE:

Location

The Smithfield Industrial Planning Area is located in the northern portion of the Town of Smithfield. It is bounded on the north by the Town's corporate boundary, on the west by a tributary of the Pagan River and the Town's corporate boundary and on the south and east by the Pagan River. The Planning Area consists of approximately 196 acres.

Existing Land Use and Transportation System

The Smithfield Industrial Planning Area is an intensely developed area that is home to Smithfield Foods' major meat packing and production plants. The meat processing industry has historically served as the backbone of the local economy as the ham products principally produced by Smithfield Packing and Gwaltney, both subsidiaries of Smithfield Foods, are world renowned for their quality and unique smoked flavor. Four separate meat processing facilities are located in the Planning Area: the Gwaltney meat packing plant, the Smithfield Packing plant, the Smithfield Ham and Products production center and the V.W. Joyner meat production facility. In addition to the major industrial area, several single family detached residential estates are scattered among the high land bordering the Pagan River in the northeastern section of the Planning Area, which is commonly referred to as River Oaks. Another residential area, the Pinewood Heights subdivision is located directly adjacent to the packing plants in the western portion of the Planning Area. This neighborhood suffers from a proliferation of dilapidated, vacant and poorly maintained homes and inadequate public utilities. Several of the homes are without adequate well and/or septic facilities, and living conditions within the community can be described generally as poor. Considered together, existing development accounts for nearly 153 total acres in the Planning Area, or approximately 78% of the total land area.

State Route 10 Business serves as the major transportation corridor within the Planning Area, providing connections to the Downtown Area via North Church Street and to the Route 10 Bypass via Berry Hill Road. Each of the existing developments in the Planning Area are accessed either directly or indirectly by the Route 10 Business link. Berry Hill Road provides a direct link from the processing plants to the Bypass and points beyond for the numerous trucks used to transport goods into and out of the meat processing facilities. Together, the Route 10 Bypass and the Route 10 Business link serve as the major entrance corridors into Smithfield from the north.

Traffic congestion at the meat processing plants is a major point of concern among Town residents and Smithfield Foods employees. Many pedestrians converge at a single cross walk during specific times as employees change shifts and typically cross Route 10 Business traveling to and from the facility parking lots in large groups. These groups often force vehicular traffic to stop for long periods of time, creating frustration for drivers and a potentially hazardous situation for pedestrians. VDOT should explore implementing traffic calming devices in order to mitigate the potential hazards in this area (see the Transportation Chapter (Chapter X) for detailed recommendations.

Existing Environmental Considerations

The Planning Area's development potential is constrained somewhat by the presence of the Pagan River and its tributaries along its western, eastern and southern boundaries, respectively. The scenic marshlands and critical slopes of these waterways surround and penetrate the Planning Area to create barriers to construction for a significant portion of the remaining undeveloped land. Nearly eleven percent of the total Planning Area, approximately 21 acres, have topographic and wetland characteristics which make them unsuitable for urban development. While these tidal waterways limit the total buildable area, they provide dramatic siting opportunities from the adjacent ridges. Of the Planning Area's 196 total acres, only approximately 13.4 (7%) have been identified as having prime development potential.

Over the past three decades, the operations of the packing facilities have had a dramatic impact on the Town's environmental resources, particularly the Pagan River. However, in recent years, Smithfield Foods has taken several steps to eliminate many of the serious environmental problems initiated in the plants. The most important of these measures concerned the treatment of waste products created by the plants during the meat production process. In 1997 Smithfield Foods and the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) agreed to install lines allowing the corporation to pump wastewater from its slaughterhouses and meat packing facilities to a regional HRSD facility via a 24" line. This arrangement will enable Smithfield Foods to adequately dispose of its large volume of wastewater in an efficient and environmentally-friendly fashion, as opposed to having to attempt to treat the wastewater on site at the Smithfield and Gwaltney wastewater treatment facilities and then dispose of the treated water directly into the Pagan River, as had been done previously. This new arrangement has effectively mitigated the negative impact of the packing plants on the Pagan River, and improvement in the ecology of the river and its surrounding marshlands has already been noted.

SMITHFIELD INDUSTRIAL LAND USE PLAN

The Smithfield Industrial Planning Area is planned for the continuation and moderate expansion of the existing high density, heavy industrial uses located along Route 10 Business. In concert with the goals and objectives expressed in this Plan with respect to economic development and in particular to the support of existing industry and the encouragement of expansion wherever possible (see Chapter X: Economic Development), the Future Land Use Plan for the Planning Area identifies opportunities for logical expansion of the existing meat processing facilities or for another industrial user that would benefit the Town and its local economy. One of these identified opportunity areas is the Pinewood Heights subdivision. The Town should take the lead in encouraging and supervising the long-discussed redevelopment of the neighborhood, as well as developing a plan for relocating the existing residents. The Future Land Use Plan also calls for the continued conservation of the vacant lands lying east of the plant parking lots between Route 10 Business and the Pagan River.

In the following sections, specific land use recommendations are presented for both of the Sub-Areas and for the lone Redevelopment Area identified in the Smithfield Industrial Planning Area.

Sub-Area 1 Recommendations

Sub-Area 1 is located in the northern portion of the Smithfield Industrial Planning Area. It is bounded on the north by River Oaks Lane and the Town's corporate boundary, on the west by Route 10 Business, on the south by the Smithfield Foods plant parking facility and on the east by Sub-Area 2. Sub-Area 1 is heavily wooded and forms a natural buffer between Route 10 Business, the parking lot and the packing plants and the estates in the River Oaks neighborhood overlooking the Pagan River. The Sub-Area covers approximately 11 acres and is planned for light industrial development at a density and intensity of use lower than that currently witnessed in the industrial area across the road. Although it is relatively unlikely that the land will be developed in the near planning term, it does represent a logical area for any required future expansion of the existing industrial area or for a new light industrial user who would like to locate in Smithfield or in close proximity to the existing industrial uses. Under the light industrial land use designation, a floor area ratio of 0.20-0.30 square feet per net developable acre would be allowed. At this proposed density, Sub-Area 1 could support between approximately 70,000 and 105,000 square feet of light industrial space within its 8.0 net developable acres

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) the appropriate density and intensity of use of future development and (2) buffering to protect the nearby residential uses. Due to the proximity of the existing residential estates in Sub-Area 2, the Plan recommends that light industrial uses would be preferable for this Sub-Area over more intense and noxious industrial uses as they will be less likely to negatively impact the nearby residences in River Oaks. Acceptable economic development uses for the Sub-Area would include: corporate headquarters, high-technology offices, research and development facilities, light assembly and manufacturing centers and distribution and warehouse facilities. This land use category allows for the planned facilities to cover a lower percentage of total site area than is witnessed in the Town's existing industrial area and would ensure that the primary functions of the planned uses will be conducted entirely within an enclosed building and any exterior storage operations would be heavily regulated. Site planning for the site should emphasize high quality design standards incorporating extensive, mature landscaping to serve as a buffer between the future light industrial use and the nearby residences. Future structures and parking facilities shall be sited in such a way that the landscaping buffer will minimize the impact of light, noise, dust and other externalities on the scattered single family detached residences in Sub-Area 2.

Sub-Area 2 Recommendations

Sub-Area 2 is located in the northeastern portion of the Smithfield Industrial Planning Area. It incorporates the River Oaks neighborhood and is bounded on the north by the Town's corporate boundary, on the west by Sub-Area 1 and the parking lots serving the meat processing facilities, on the south by marshlands adjacent to the Pagan River and on the east by the Pagan River. The 8.7 acre Sub-Area is planned for community conservation. This land use designation allows extremely low density residential development at a ratio of up to 1 dwelling unit per acre. At this density, approximately five additional single family detached dwelling units could be located within the Sub-Area's 5.4 net

developable acres, assuming that a special use permit could be obtained for the site. It is hoped that the type of housing product developed in the Sub-Area would mirror the density and quality in design and building materials evidenced in the existing residential developments located adjacent to the Pagan River.

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) vehicular access and (2) sensitive environmental areas. The existing residences in the Sub-Area are accessed from Route 10 Business via River Oaks Lane which forms the Town's corporate boundary. It is projected that this road could adequately support the future development planned for the Sub-Area given the relatively small increase in density if these residences are properly planned. Any future subdivision within the Sub-Area will have to incorporate public roads, as private roads are prohibited in new subdivisions in the Town.

Existing vegetation in the Sub-Area should also be maintained as much as possible and should be incorporated into a thoughtful landscaping plan for the site in order to preserve the existing rural character of this area adjacent to the river. Future residences should be sited well away from the river on the high lands in the central portion of the Sub-Area. Future development should also incorporate adequate stormwater management measures, including best management practices if necessary, to ensure that the new residences do not negatively impact the quantity or quality of water draining into the river.

Redevelopment Area Recommendations

Redevelopment Area 1 is located in the southwestern portion of the Smithfield Industrial Planning Area and incorporates the Pinewood Heights subdivision. It is bounded on the north by Berry Hill Road and Smithfield Foods property, on the west by marshlands adjacent to a tributary of the Pagan River, on the south by the Pagan River and on the east by the Smithfield Foods meat processing facility and more specifically, its wastewater treatment lagoon. The 17 acre Redevelopment Area is planned for heavy industrial development once the existing residents have been relocated and the homes have been razed. This redevelopment project would serve a need expressed repeatedly in public work sessions by the Planning Commission, Staff and concerned residents with respect to the less than satisfactory living conditions witnessed in the neighborhood and the need for additional lands suitable for economic development uses, specifically heavy industrial uses. At an allowable floor area ratio of 0.20 to 0.30 square feet per acre, the Redevelopment Area could support between 155,500 and 259,000 square feet of new heavy industrial space within its 11.9 net developable acres.

The major issues involved with the future redevelopment of this community focus upon (1) the future of the existing neighborhood residents, ie. equitably relocating the existing residents to a better living environment, either within the Town or within Isle of Wight County, (2) rezoning the subject parcels and (3) encouraging private investment in the redevelopment of the community to include the relocation of the existing residents. The future of the Pinewood Heights subdivision represents one of the most critical issues addressed by the Planning Commission and Town Council in planning for the long term future of the Smithfield community during the development of this Comprehensive Plan. In the summer of 1998, the Town Council listed the resolution of the future of the neighborhood as its fourth most important strategic goal for the upcoming planning period.

Pinewood Heights consists of approximately 40 duplex residential structures (containing 80 total dwelling units). The community is located directly adjacent to the Smithfield Foods meat packing plants, more specifically, the plant's wastewater treatment facility. Over the course of the past decade, the community has increasingly lost its suitability as a livable residential community. The neighborhood has a high rate of vacant, abandoned and poorly maintained homes, as well as a high majority of absentee owners. Noise, smell and industrial traffic generated by the adjacent packing plants cannot be reasonably prevented from negatively impacting this community and any future Town investment in utility, street or home rehabilitation improvements is highly discouraged.

After much public debate during the development of the 1992 Land Use Plan, the neighborhood was designated for industrial use. Soon thereafter, the Town received a grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and commissioned a planning study focusing on the best possible redevelopment alternatives for the community. The study recommended that the existing residents be relocated and the existing structures be razed to make way for industrial redevelopment. Several alternatives were developed as to the most feasible means of financing the relocation of the residents. The recommended solution called for the Town to share the cost of relocation with future redevelopment partners. It was hoped that a substantial portion of the Town's share of the relocation cost could be obtained via a grant from the State DHCD office. After much deliberation, the Town determined that the cost associated with relocating the existing residents (estimated at approximately \$3.5 million) was prohibitive.

After further deliberation during the recent revision to the Town Zoning Ordinance, the subdivision remains zoned for attached residential use and development. As a part of the zoning revision process, discussion has been revived between the Town and residents and landowners in the neighborhood in the hopes of establishing a constructive dialogue concerning a feasible solution to the existing problems in the subdivision. During the course of these discussions, Town officials have become convinced that the future redevelopment of the neighborhood is inevitable and that the Town's clear objective is to develop an equitable and financially feasible strategy through which the land could be redeveloped for heavy industrial uses. The first step in this process is to place the recommended future land use designation of heavy industry on the subdivision. The next logical step would be to rezone the parcels to I-2 (Heavy Industrial). Although the rezoning of the neighborhood to an I-2 designation would not necessarily guarantee the expedient conversion of the land, it would show the Town's commitment to fulfilling its stated goal and objective for the community. It is hoped that this commitment would be met with a similar commitment from private investors in the redevelopment of the site. These investors would be expected to bear the vast majority of the financial burden involved with the relocation of the existing residents. The Town should also explore the potential of obtaining a State grant to aid in the redevelopment effort. It is anticipated that an agreement to some form of cost-sharing with property owners with respect to the relocation of existing residents and the provision of the necessary public utilities to the redevelopment project would be reached and that the redevelopment effort could begin within the next five to ten years.

FUTURE LAND USE SUMMARY

The Comprehensive Plan projects the Smithfield Industrial Planning Area as an intensively developed area which will provide several opportunities to meet the Town’s stated economic development objectives with respect to allocating additional industrial development, while also providing a clear transition from its existing and planned industrial uses to the delicate highlands and marshes bordering the Pagan River to the east that merit conservation. The Smithfield Industrial Planning Area has the potential to accommodate approximately five new households within this conservation area. It also has the potential to provide between 70,000 and 105,000 square feet of new light industrial space and between 156,000 and 260,000 square feet of new heavy industrial space. All told, the development of this Planning Area should provide significant employment and revenues for the Town.

The table on the following page summarizes the development potential of each of the Sub-Areas as recognized in the Plan.

**FUTURE LAND USE PLAN
SMITHFIELD INDUSTRIAL PLANNING AREA**

Sub-Area	Sub-Area Acreage	Net Developable Acreage	Recommended Use	Density	Yield
1	11.4	8.0	Light Industry	0.20-0.30	69,69€ - 104,544 sf
2	8.7	5.4	Community Conservation	1	5 - 5 du
Sub-Area Total	20.1	13.4	Estimated Totals: Community Conservation Light Industry		5 - 5 du 69,69€ - 104,544 sf
Redevelopment Area					
1	17.0	11.9	Heavy Industry	0.30-0.50	155,50€ - 259,182 sf
Redevelopment Area Total	17.0	11.9	Estimated Totals: Heavy Industry		155,50€ - 259,182 sf
Sensitive Environmental Areas	21.1				
Existing Urban Development	152.5				
Planning Area Total	195.7	25.3	Estimated Totals: Community Conservation Light Industry Heavy Industry		5 - 5 du 69,69€ - 104,544 sf 155,50€ - 259,182 sf