



MEMORANDUM
Town of Nags Head
Planning & Development Department

To: Planning Board
From: Michael Zehner, Director of Planning & Development
Date: April 17, 2020; **updated May 15, 2020**
Subject: Discussion of FY20-21 Planning & Land Use Work Plan

****Updated content in bold underline, deleted material in ~~strikethrough~~****

In discussions with members of the Planning Board at their retreat in January 2020, the Board of Commissioners encouraged the Planning Board and Staff to work jointly on the development of a Work Plan for the next fiscal year in conjunction with the development of the budget, to establish priorities relating to planning and land use; in short, this Work Plan would be a collection of prioritized actions and activities serving as a strategic plan to implement various initiatives and plans.

Staff presented the concept of this Work Plan at the Planning Board's February 18, 2020 meeting; the Board indicated their support for the effort. Following the meeting, Staff developed an initial *Planning & Development Department and Septic Health FY2020-2021 Strategic Work Plan*, **and then subsequent revisions, which is the most recent** attached for the Board's review and input. This ~~initial draft~~ **Strategic Work Plan** was developed based upon the considerations discussed below, and identified activity categories intended to highlight as well as focus the implementation of specific plans, the Vision, Goals, Key Concerns, and Guiding Themes. **In addition to the Strategic Work Plan, a Budget Overview was also developed for the Department as part of the development of the FY20-21 Budget; this Budget Overview is also attached, and has been prepared to align with the Strategic Work Plan.**

For the Board's consideration:

- **Plan Implementation:** Staff would suggest that activities included in the Work Plan focus on implementing the following four (4) plans; implementation matrixes from each are attached:
 - *Town of Nags Head Comprehensive Plan*, July 5, 2017 [LINK](#)
 - *Vulnerability, Consequences, Adaptation, Planning Scenarios (VCAPS) Report*, August 2017 [LINK](#)
 - *Town of Nags Head Parks and Recreation Plan*, January 25, 2012 [LINK](#)
 - *Nags Head Pedestrian Plan*, July 16, 2014 [LINK](#)

Additional consideration should be given to activities contained in the Town's *Decentralized Wastewater Management Plan* (2005) and *Hazard Mitigation Plan* (2015); however, an updated Hazard Mitigation Plan is expected to be presented for adoption in June/July 2020 and the update of the *Decentralized Wastewater*

Management Plan is an active project, expected to be initiated in the current fiscal year.

- **Vision & Goals:** As noted, the Work Plan should serve as a strategic plan to implement various initiatives and plans, but activities in the Work Plan should also work towards achieving the accepted vision and goals for the Town. The following are the vision and goals established within the Comprehensive Plan:

VISION

The Town of Nags Head is a unique coastal community built upon a legacy rooted in shared values, including our most recognized common bond – a love for the Outer Banks. We recognize that the town must be a good place to live before it can be a good place to visit. We strive to preserve and protect the Nags Head character, environment, tourism based economy, and sense of place in order to ensure a high quality of life for residents and a memorable family vacation experience for present and future generations.

We uphold our legacy by protecting and promoting our small town character that includes a sustainable local economy based on family vacation tourism, a high quality beach experience, and small, locally owned businesses. Fundamental to our legacy and quality of life are preserving the historic architecture and culture that distinguishes our town; providing residents and visitors with excellent public services and well-maintained recreational amenities; and ensuring access to a well-protected natural coastal environment.

Our legacy will be strengthened and preserved by a focused, transparent decision making process that is comprehensive and consistent with the community's vision. In order to maintain that focus, our decisions are directed by the five goals described below.

GOALS

1. *Preserve our community's distinctive heritage and unique lifestyle*
 - a. *A relaxed-paced, family beach community comprised primarily of low-density development and open spaces.*
 - b. *A healthy, well-maintained oceanfront beach that is visually and physically accessible and usable; not blocked by large structures.*
 - c. *An environment that reflects the heritage of "Old Nags Head" with unique and eclectic architectural styles, scenic views, and coastal landscapes.*
2. *Protect our critical natural resources and coastal ecosystem*
 - a. *Build and promote a sustainable economy that supports residents and visitors.*

- b. A natural environment typified by clean water and a coastal barrier landscape with noninvasive, salt tolerant vegetation.*
 - c. Ocean and estuarine shorelines that are carefully managed to preserve the natural and beneficial functions of the environment while balancing the need to respect private property rights and public access.*
 - d. Plan for the future impacts of sea level rise; ensuring proper policies, plans, and practices for stormwater and wastewater management are in place to sustain the natural environment and maintain a viable family, tourism-based economy.*
- 3. Build and promote a sustainable economy that supports residents and Visitors*
 - a. A diverse supply of housing, including single-family homes and multi-family dwelling units, that meet the needs of residents in all phases of life and for varying income levels.*
 - b. A diverse supply of visitor accommodations, including single-family homes, hotels, cottage courts, and multi-family dwelling units for visitors who desire both short-term and long-term stays.*
 - c. A thriving local business community that offers a wide range of goods and services available to residents and visitors.*
 - d. A premier family beach destination on the Outer Banks, providing an enjoyable and memorable experience.*
- 4. Plan for orderly and sustainable growth and redevelopment*
 - a. A well-organized and compatible pattern of land development and redevelopment through proactive land use and transportation policies.*
 - b. Development that is designed to reduce private property damage and loss of life from major storm events and natural hazards.*
 - c. Safe connectivity and accessibility between neighborhoods, businesses, and recreational opportunities for a variety of travel modes, lessening traffic congestion, and enabling an active and healthy lifestyle for residents and visitors.*
 - d. A place with active and passive recreational opportunities that serve all ages and abilities, creating opportunities for community interaction and healthy living.*
 - e. Preservation and maintenance of legacy commercial businesses.*
- 5. Maintain a well-run and efficient government that provides high quality and cost effective services*
 - a. Develop, fund, and prioritize the Capital Improvement Plan annually to provide for the infrastructure, equipment, and facility needs of the community.*
 - b. Provide the highest quality public safety services possible, and routinely review the public safety needs of the community to ensure that resources are available to meet these needs.*
 - c. Provide friendly and accommodating customer service.*

- d. Communicate town information to residents and visitors through a variety of media that demonstrates the results of measurable goals and objectives.
- e. Advocate for the provision of high quality, responsive services, legislation, resources, and policies from government partners and other organizations that further the vision of the Town of Nags Head.

- **Key Concerns & Guiding Themes:** In the process to develop the Comprehensive Plan, both *Key Concerns* and *Guiding Themes* were identified. These are referenced below, and further expanded upon the Comprehensive Plan.

Key Concerns			
Embracing the Town's Vision	Sustaining the Beach Road's Commercial Character	Diversifying Housing Options	Educating Residents on Regulatory Realities
Preserving Commercial Character	Connecting Key Town Destinations	Adapting to Sea Level Rise	

Guiding Themes		
Architectural Integrity	Beach Road vs Bypass	Protecting Conversion of Commercial Property to Residential
Shopping Centers and Large Format Development	Character Areas	Oceanfront
Preservation of Existing Business	Greater Diversity in Housing and Accommodations	Connectivity
Healthy Small, Local Business Economy	Arts and Cultural Resources	Environmental Quality

- **Work Plan Categories:** For the purpose of the Work Plan, and intended to highlight as well as focus the implementation of specific plans, the Vision, Goals, Key Concerns, and Guiding Themes, Staff is suggesting that Work Plan activities be categorized in at least one of five categories, as follows:
 - Community Character
 - Sustainability & Resiliency
 - Economic & Cultural Development
 - Hazard & Emergency Planning
 - Responsive & Transparent Government

It is likely that many activities will qualify for more than one category. Staff will expand on the criteria for each category within the Work Plan. **These categories have been incorporated into the Budget Overview for the Department and serve as the basis for the Department's objectives for the next Fiscal Year.**

Despite the above and previous work to establish this Work Plan, Staff is cognizant that this Plan will be affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic and impacts to the Town's budget. Operating or CIP funds were anticipated to be used or sought for several projects, but there is obvious uncertainty with respect to the availability of these funds. Projects impacted most are the Workforce Housing, Estuarine Shoreline Master Plan, and Skate Park Renovation projects. Some aspects of these projects may be able to move forward with the use of internal resources, but there will likely be extended timelines. Staff is actively exploring and applying for grants to offset budget shortfalls.

Staff would recommend that the Planning Board review the information outlined above, and specifically the implementation matrixes from the four (4) plans, as well as the initial *Planning & Development Department and Septic Health FY2020-2021 Strategic Work Plan*, and provide feedback as to whether the Plan sufficiently implements and advances specific plans, the Vision, Goals, Key Concerns, and Guiding Themes in a strategic manner. At the Board's meeting Staff will be prepared to discuss ongoing projects, tentatively identified priorities, and timeline and resource limitations.

Planning & Development Department and Septic Health FY2020-2021 Strategic Work Plan

Activity Categories

- Community Character
- Sustainability & Resiliency
- Economic & Cultural Development
- Hazard & Emergency Planning
- Responsive & Transparent Government

Current FY Projects

- Skate Park Renovation; Phase 1, Assessment of Preferences (Pre-Planning)
- Updated Flood Maps & Ordinance
- UDO Cleanup
- Online Permitting
- Hazard Mitigation Plan Update*
- Workforce Housing*
- CAMA Land Use Plan Update*
- UDO Reference Manual & Permitting Workflow Development*
- Art Mast Project*
- Decentralized Wastewater Master Plan Update*
- Islington Street Beach Access*
- Legacy Establishments/Structures*
- Review of Residential Stormwater Regulations*

FY20-21 Projects

- Estuarine Shoreline Master Plan
- Emergency Operations Plan Update
- Skate Park Renovation; Phase 2, Design & Construction
- Records Management/Digitization, Phase 1
- Whalebone Park; Phase 1
- UDO Update for N.C.G.S. 160D
- Biba Interactive Playground
- Development of Complete Streets Policy
- GIS Platform Update, Phase 1
- CAMA Access Grant - Huron Street
- Workforce Shuttle Coordination; Project CASSI Pilot
- Water Quality Testing
- Develop Business Retention & Succession Resources
- LID Stormwater Demonstration Project
- Update Sign Ordinance

Future Projects

- Implementation of Estuarine Shoreline Master Plan
- Records Management/Digitization, Phase 2
- GIS Platform Update, Phase 2
- CAMA Access Grant
- Skate Park Renovation; Phase 3, Design & Construction
- Whalebone Park; Phase 1
- Weather Station Installation
- Soundside Tidal/Flood Gauges
- Wayfinding Signage Plan

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW

The Planning and Development Department implements Town goals related to the growth, development, environment, and quality of life in Nags Head. The Department is responsible for zoning and subdivision administration, code compliance, floodplain management, erosion and sedimentation control, long-range planning activities, and Planning Board, Board of Adjustment and Arts & Culture Committee staffing. Additionally, the Department provides building permitting and inspection services to enforce state and local regulations relating to the construction, renovation, or alteration of structures to ensure a safe, sanitary, and healthy community. As part of the building inspections function, the Department is responsible for storm damage assessment and repair permits.

The Department is authorized by the State to provide local permitting services under the Coastal Area Management Act ("CAMA") in areas of environmental concern ("AEC"). The Department, therefore, has trained personnel that serve as local permitting officers for CAMA. As a CAMA community, the Town must adopt a local land use plan that complies with CAMA requirements. While the Town's 2017 Comprehensive Plan is the community's guidance document for long-range planning and decision-making, the 2010 Comprehensive Plan serves as the local land use plan complying with CAMA requirements until the State's final acceptance of the 2017 Plan (*review pending*).

The Department strives to provide high quality service for the citizens and visitors of Nags Head, as well as for the other Town departments in support of Board goals, including fair application of ordinances, thorough research and preparation in planning tasks, involving the public in local decision-making, and grant preparation and administration.

In Fiscal Year 2020-2021, the Department will continue the implementation of the following principle plans: *Town of Nags Head Comprehensive Plan*, July 5, 2017; *Vulnerability, Consequences, Adaptation, Planning Scenarios (VCAPS) Report*, August 2017; *Town of Nags Head Parks and Recreation Plan*, January 25, 2012; *Nags Head Pedestrian Plan*, July 16, 2014; *Decentralized Wastewater Management Plan*, 2005; and *Hazard Mitigation Plan*, 2015. (*An updated Hazard Mitigation Plan is expected to be presented for adoption in June/July 2020 and the update of the Decentralized Wastewater Management Plan is an active project, expected to be undergoing updating during the fiscal year*)

GOALS AND FOCUS

As established with the *Town of Nags Head Comprehensive Plan* and included in the Town's *Vision Statement*, the principle goals of the Department are as follows:

- Preserve our community's distinctive heritage and unique lifestyle

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- A relaxed-paced, family beach community comprised primarily of low-density development and open spaces.
- A healthy, well-maintained oceanfront beach that is visually and physically accessible and usable; not blocked by large structures.
- An environment that reflects the heritage of “Old Nags Head” with unique and eclectic architectural styles, scenic views, and coastal landscapes.

- Protect our critical natural resources and coastal ecosystem
 - Build and promote a sustainable economy that supports residents and visitors.
 - A natural environment typified by clean water and a coastal barrier landscape with noninvasive, salt tolerant vegetation.
 - Ocean and estuarine shorelines that are carefully managed to preserve the natural and beneficial functions of the environment while balancing the need to respect private property rights and public access.
 - Plan for the future impacts of sea level rise; ensuring proper policies, plans, and practices for stormwater and wastewater management are in place to sustain the natural environment and maintain a viable family, tourism-based economy.

- Build and promote a sustainable economy that supports residents and Visitors
 - A diverse supply of housing, including single-family homes and multi-family dwelling units, that meet the needs of residents in all phases of life and for varying income levels.
 - A diverse supply of visitor accommodations, including single-family homes, hotels, cottage courts, and multi-family dwelling units for visitors who desire both short-term and long-term stays.
 - A thriving local business community that offers a wide range of goods and services available to residents and visitors.
 - A premier family beach destination on the Outer Banks, providing an enjoyable and memorable experience.

- Plan for orderly and sustainable growth and redevelopment
 - A well-organized and compatible pattern of land development and redevelopment through proactive land use and transportation policies.
 - Development that is designed to reduce private property damage and loss of life from major storm events and natural hazards.
 - Safe connectivity and accessibility between neighborhoods, businesses, and recreational opportunities for a variety of travel modes, lessening traffic congestion, and enabling an active and healthy lifestyle for residents and visitors.
 - A place with active and passive recreational opportunities that serve all ages and abilities, creating opportunities for community interaction and healthy living.
 - Preservation and maintenance of legacy commercial businesses.

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- Maintain a well-run and efficient government that provides high quality and cost effective services
 - Develop, fund, and prioritize the Capital Improvement Plan annually to provide for the infrastructure, equipment, and facility needs of the community.
 - Provide the highest quality public safety services possible, and routinely review the public safety needs of the community to ensure that resources are available to meet these needs.
 - Provide friendly and accommodating customer service.
 - Communicate town information to residents and visitors through a variety of media that demonstrates the results of measurable goals and objectives.
 - Advocate for the provision of high quality, responsive services, legislation, resources, and policies from government partners and other organizations that further the vision of the Town of Nags Head.

These goals will serve to direct the focus and priorities of the Department, and based upon these, the following *Activity Categories* have been identified to align Department focus and priorities with specifically identified objectives and performance indicators, related to one or more of these *Categories*:

- Community Character
- Sustainability & Resiliency
- Economic & Cultural Development
- Hazard & Emergency Planning
- Responsive & Transparent Government

OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Objective - Community Character: Preserve and enhance community character and the Town's distinctive heritage

Performance Indicators and Specific Projects

- Complete FY19-20 project to address legacy establishments and structures with respect to land use regulation.
- Complete FY19-20 project to make improvements to the Islington Street Beach Access.
- Continue community outreach, monitoring, and compliance enforcement of Short-Term Rental regulations; provide periodic reporting to the Board of Commissioners on progress and strategies to improve compliance.
- Pursue DCM/CAMA Access Grant funds for improvements to the Huron Street Beach Access.

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- Explore opportunities to initiate neighborhood-based planning focused on identified Town districts.
- Continue to focus Department operations on efforts to achieve the identified objective.

Objective - Sustainability & Resiliency: Support long-term sustainability and resiliency by protecting natural resources and pursuing environmentally conscious actions

Performance Indicators and Specific Projects

- Complete FY19-20 project to update the Town's CAMA Land Use Plan (*review pending*).
- Complete FY19-20 project to review Residential Stormwater Regulations, implement recommendations (as applicable), and develop training and community education opportunities.
- Complete FY19-20 project to update the Town's Decentralized Wastewater Master Plan.
- Initiate and execute the development of an Estuarine Shoreline Management/Master Plan, including the securing of funding for the project.
- Take on water quality sampling/testing "in-house" in support of the Todd D. Krafft Septic Health Initiative Program; align with water quality sampling/testing in support of stormwater initiatives and consider program improvements as part of the update of the Decentralized Wastewater Master Plan.
- Develop a LID Stormwater Demonstration Project as a community education tool.
- Develop a Complete Streets Policy to enhance opportunities and conditions for non-motorized mobility.
- Look for opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint resulting from the Department's operations and regulations.
- Continue to focus Department operations on efforts to achieve the identified objective.

Objective - Economic & Cultural Development: Pursue opportunities to enhance the viability and vibrancy of the Town's business and cultural environment

Performance Indicators and Specific Projects

- Complete FY19-20 project to install Art Masts in locations within Town.
- Complete or determine status of FY19-20 project to study and develop a plan addressing housing needs for the Town's workforce.
- Complete FY19-20 project to determine preferences for the renovation of the Town's Skate Park.
- Initiate Phase 1 of a study to determine opportunities for the improvement of Whalebone Park.
- Coordinate with stakeholders working on a workforce shuttle and consider opportunities for pilot programs to test shuttle viability.

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- Complete an update of the Town's Sign Ordinance.
- Develop plans and implement further fitness-focused enhancements at Dowdy Park, including the Biba Interactive Playground platform (or similar) and multi-generational opportunities.
- Work with the business community to develop resources for business retention and succession.
- Continue to support and work with the Arts and Culture Committee to pursue funding and organize activities that promote arts and cultural activities throughout Town.
- Continue to focus Department operations on efforts to achieve the identified objective.

Objective - Hazard & Emergency Planning: Proactively work to mitigate hazard impacts and establish plans and procedures for hazard and emergency response and recovery

Performance Indicators and Special Projects

- Complete FY19-20 project to update the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Complete FY19-20 project to update the Town's Emergency Operations Plan; pursue funding needs or otherwise determine method to update.
- Complete FY19-20 project to update the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance in coordination with the update of the FEMA F.I.R.M. for Dare County.
- Identify and participate in activities to continue sea level rise and climate adaptation planning with North Carolina Sea Grant and other partners.
- Continue to focus Department operations on efforts to achieve the identified objective.

Objective - Responsive & Transparent Government: Advance and establish a Department culture and systems that provide responsiveness and transparency to the public

Performance Indicators and Special Projects

- Complete FY19-20 project to correct identified errors within the Unified Development Ordinance; establish a plan and schedule for the periodic correction of errors identified in the future.
- Complete FY19-20 project to institute online permitting and establish support for the submittal of digital applications and plans; institute a schedule for regular communications with the building community and the general public on the use of online tools and updates on general Department business.

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- Complete FY19-20 project to develop a Reference Manual for the Unified Development Ordinance and document and refine Department workflows; project focus should address streamlining of processes, clarity and consistency of forms, materials, and customer guidance and education.
- Initiate Phase 1 of the Records Management/Digitization project by assessing needs, exploring resources, identifying funding requirements, and soliciting information and proposals.
- Update the Unified Development Ordinance consistent with the requirements of N.C.G.S. 160D.
- Initiate Phase 1 of the GIS Platform Update project by assessing needs, exploring resources, identifying funding requirements, and soliciting information and proposals.
- Annually (FY), working with Staff, the Planning Board, and the Board of Commissioners, prepare a Department Strategic Work Plan identifying and prioritizing special projects and initiatives; provide periodic reports on status and performance.
- Continue to identify and seek grant and funding opportunities to offset Department and Town costs related to operating and capital budgets.
- Continue to focus Department operations on efforts to achieve the identified objective, including, but not limited to, pursuing opportunities to cross train staff and tracking permit review and issuance times.