

# Southern Shores 2005 Long Range Planning Committee Final Report



Joe Walter, Chairman, Long Range  
Planning Committee



# Background

- A year ago the Council requested an update of the town's five year plan
- Appointed LRP chair and co-chair
- Formed committee composed of cross section of community



# Committee Membership

- Mothers
- Engineers
- Editor
- Consultants
- Warriors
- Fire fighter
- Long-time residents
- Lawyer
- College professor
- Community leaders
- Corporate executives
- Realtor
- New young folks
- Retired folks
- Beach residents
- “Woods and Duners”



# Process

- Met weekly
- Surveyed all property owners
- Researched, asked questions, interviewed various authorities
- Analyzed an array of issues



# Our Vision

- Defined Town's "Mission"
- Identified "Who We Are"
- Established "Core Values"
- Formulated "Strategies"



# Our Strategies

- Protect, enhance our unique Quality of life
- Promote community involvement
- Establish safety preparedness
- Safeguard area's natural beauty
- Support recreational activities
- Lay groundwork for community center
- Maintain responsive, effective, equitable, accountable government



# Sharpening Our Focus

- Identified 7 major issues
  - Transportation
  - Infrastructure
  - Quality of Life
  - Communications
  - Government
  - Public Safety
  - Environment



# Procedure

- Established goal(s) for each
- Developed specific, measurable objectives to accomplish goal
- Determined persons responsible for each objective
- Provided recommended actions for each objective
- Set a timeframe for the action completion



# Priority One Issues

- Build the Bridge
- NC-12...”Superstreet” concept
- Fix congestion at 158/NC-12 intersection
- Dredge the canals
- Improve communications



# Build the Bridge

## Issue Number 1 - Transportation

**Goal 1.1.** Work closely with the “Build the Bridge and Preserve our Roads Committee” to quickly win necessary support and approval to authorize construction of a Mid-Currituck Bridge to reduce traffic congestion on US 158, the Wright Memorial Bridge and on NC-12. Eighty-eight percent of residents and property owners of Southern Shores voted in favor of building the bridge.

**Objective. 1.1.1a** Bring all possible pressure to bear upon NCDOT and the Army Corps of Engineers to overcome their continued opposition to the bridge. Take all necessary steps to facilitate the East Carolina University study grant and to have the NC Toll Authority designate the Mid-Currituck Bridge as a pilot project to be built as quickly as possible as a public/private toll bridge. *Discussion: Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents agree while six percent disagree that the Bridge needs to be built and will increase accessibility to the Outer Banks as a tourist destination.*

**Objective 1.1.1b** Work with state and local representatives to designate the Bridge as a pilot project toll bridge as quickly as possible, and to have the Bridge designated as a priority project for the Toll Authority. *Discussion: Ninety-one percent of respondents agree that the Bridge would significantly enhance hurricane evacuation.*

**Objective 1.1.1c** Pursue qualified private firms to construct a toll road and bridge across the Currituck Sound since no state or federal funding is currently planned or available.

**Responsibility:** Mayor/Council/Town Manager

**Recommended Action:** The Mayor/Council should actively pursue correspondence through the political representatives to the NC State Legislature to the Governor with recommendations derived from the vote of the residents of Southern Shores by way of the Opinion Survey. The “Build the Bridge and save our Roads Committee” should follow the same tact using the same information plus any other data derived from other sources.

**Milestone/Timeframe:** Immediate and continuous.



# Priority Two Issues

- Reduce seasonal traffic congestion
- Fix storm water runoff/flooding
- Build multi-use paths and improve pedestrian safety
- Promote volunteerism
- Enhance town staff efficiency



# Priority Three Issues

- Minimize speeding and short cutting.
- Publish master plan for rebuilding roads
- Enforce Town codes and rules fairly
- Review/update home business ordinance



# Priority Four Issues

- Cost of living and taxes
- Availability of housing for employees to service our community



# Extensive Detail Provided in the Report

- Tabulated results and summary of written comments from 2005 Survey
- Update of actions taken to resolve issues from the 2000 Survey



# Progress Already Being Made

- Proactive role by Council/Town Manager already addressing many of the 65 issues
- SSCA and the CPOA also helping resolve issues



# The Really Good Things

*When compared to other towns*

- Better managed
- Better governed
- Financially sound and debt free
- Healthy emergency fund
- No town provided more or better services
- Lowest tax rate on the OBX
- 2000 –2005 town leadership merits our thanks



# Our Analysis

- Major progress during past five years
- Prepared for the next five
- Southern Shores finances, assets and resources have been prudently managed
- Town is wisely capitalizing on Volunteers who are leading the way building a better community



# Fine Stewardship..... Excellent Management

- Tight fisted budgetary control
- Lowest ratio of employees to permanent residents
- Well formulated zoning rules and ordinances
- Economical service decisions



# Time to Go to Work

- Prepared to discuss priority issues and recommended actions
- Town retreat scheduled 12/13 January
- Ensure Southern Shores continues to be the premier place to live on the OBX

Statistical Comparison of Outer Banks Towns for FY2005-2006

	Duck	Kill Devil Hills	Kitty Hawk	Manteo	Nags Head	Southern Sho
Population (Year round) NC State Data	509	6,434	3,301	1,103	2,992	2,462
Total Parcels of Property (Dare Cty Records)	2,764	7,154	3,548	1,503	5,459	2,924
New Assessed Value of OBX Towns 2005	\$2.028 Billion	\$2.349 Billion	\$1.265 Billion	\$0.576 Billion	\$2.880 Billion	\$1.626 Billion
Town's Property Tax Rate in Cents per \$100 of	\$0.0900	\$0.2000	\$0.1800	\$0.2150	\$0.1475	\$0.0850
Dare County Property Tax Rate	\$0.2500	\$0.2500	\$0.2500	\$0.2500	\$0.2500	\$0.2500
Total Town & County Tax Rates	\$0.3400	\$0.4500	\$0.4300	\$0.4650	\$0.3975	\$0.3350
Miles of local Streets (State Data)	0	61.17	21.02	1.72	36.47	37.2
Total Full Time Employees (Less Water Dept)	16	89	38	24	105	23
Police Department Employees						
Full-time Officers	8	31	17	9	24	11
Reserve Officers	0	0	3	0	0	1
Fire Department Staff						
Full-time Paid Members	1	19	5	2	26	0
Part-time Paid Members	2	0	19	0	10	0
Unpaid Volunteers	6	37	12	41	25	43
Ratio of Police to Perm Residents	1 to 63	1 to 207	1 to 178	1 to 122	1 to 124	1 to 214
Ratio of Police to Parcels of Property	1 to 345	1 to 230	1 to 191	1 to 167	1 to 227	1 to 254
Ratio of Town Employees to Residents	1 to 31.8	1 to 72	1 to 87	1 to 46	1 to 28.5	1 to 107



# Improve Communications

## **Issue Number 4 - Communications**

*DISCUSSION: Many written responses from the 2005 Questionnaire/Survey identified information about town rules, regulations and current affairs not always being widely disseminated and frequently missed, misunderstood and/or ignored as the “Worst” things about Southern Shores. Local media coverage of Southern Shores affairs needs to be improved. E-mail information distributed by the town staff is very informative, however, only 50 percent of our property owners are subscribers. Town Council meetings are usually attended by a fair number of interested persons, but many local people and non-resident property owners remain uninformed or confused about key decisions and matters of local interest. The cost of frequently mailing information has become burdensome to the town’s budget, limited staffing and financial resources.*

**Goal 4.1** Strengthen **Communications** to increase awareness and understanding among residents and property owners of Southern Shores about existing policies and regulations, upcoming community issues and concerns as well as new policies, issues and activities. Develop plans and policies in coordination with appropriate local and regional media contacts, periodically evaluating needs and adjusting as necessary. Improve communications with residents and all property owners.

**Objective 4.1.1** Coordinate and communicate more systematically with all property owners, residents, rental agencies and seasonal renters to promulgate, educate and advise about town affairs. E-mail and Internet capability are useful in this regard, but more residents and owners should be encouraged to provide their email addresses to the town. More frequent, specifically targeted town communications could also alleviate some of the perceived problems. The SSCA’s “Southern Shorelines” newsletter, produced every other month, could also be a useful platform for raising awareness of town affairs.

**Responsibility:** Mayor/Town Manager

**Recommended Action:** Communicate as outlined above. Establish a media liaison to work with area print and broadcast media to determine their needs and provide necessary information. Plus, consider establishing a volunteer communications task force to identify needs, options, develop a long-range communications plan and draft materials.

**Milestone/Timeframe:** ASAP



# NC-12

**Goal 1.2.** Develop plans and policies and coordinate with local, state and federal officials to alleviate the growing NC-12 traffic problems affecting Southern Shores citizens particularly during the tourism season.

**Objective 1.2.1** Under no circumstances allow NC-12 to be widened. *Discussion: From analysis of the Southern Shores Questionnaire, 1272 property owners urged “do nothing to NC-12” while only 102 property owners urged widening NC-12 to five lanes if the Mid-Currituck Bridge was not built. Only three percent agreed that five lanes were best for Southern Shores. Survey respondents overwhelmingly voiced strong opposition to widening the road for an array of reasons. Road widening would devastate both Southern Shores and Duck, with 94 percent agreeing that it would alter the Town’s character. Eighty-eight percent agreed that it would decrease property value. It would make ocean access for Southern Shores Westside residents and visitors extremely difficult and dangerous. It would not alleviate road congestion. Plus, any consideration of road widening should not be undertaken until after the Bridge is operational and the change in traffic pattern and volume is clearly and accurately understood.*

**Responsibility:** Mayor/Council/Town Manager

**Recommended Action:** The Mayor/Council should actively pursue correspondence through the political representatives to the NC State Legislature to the Governor with recommendations derived from the vote of the residents of Southern Shores by way of the 2005 Opinion Survey. The “Build the Bridge and Save our Roads Committee” should follow the same tack using the same information plus any other data derived from other sources.

**Milestone/Timeframe:** Immediate and continuous.

**Objective 1.2.2** Find a good solution for making NC-12 less hazardous for pedestrians to access the beach. The new beach crosswalks are a good initiative, however, some drivers may disregard the signs and painted street crossings. Evaluate the necessity to install pedestrian controlled lighting in front of the crosswalks.

**Responsibility:** Mayor/Council/Town Manager

**Recommended Action:** Investigate the NCDOT website recommendations for dealing with pedestrian safety issues. Invite an NCDOT traffic safety engineer to visit the Town and hold a workshop on the issue.

**Milestone/Timeframe:** In time to implement a program prior to the 2006 tourist influx.



# Multipurpose Paths

**Objective 2.1.4** – Expand multi-purpose path network in Southern Shores for enjoyment of cycling, strolling, exercising, jogging enthusiasts. *Discussion: The various multi-purpose paths throughout the town received many favorable comments from Town Survey respondents. There was strong support to expand these networks in Southern Shores. Enhanced safety for the increasing number of young children in the community was frequently cited. The OBX Tourism Board has contributed \$50,000 annually to assist the town in funding for construction. The Spindrifft multi-use path was funded by an additional \$75,000 from the town's Capital Asset budget.*

**Responsibility:** Town Manager/Council

**Recommended Action:** It is strongly recommended that the town continue to pursue expanding these paths. The town Capital Asset Improvement plan calls for construction of a path along South Dogwood Trail beginning in FY 2005-2006 with further expansion to East Dogwood Trail during the next two years. A total of \$450,000 (including \$150,000 from the Tourism Board) has been budgeted for this three-year initiative. Because of its proximity to the Kitty Hawk Elementary school, this portion of the path will materially contribute to the safety of our young children.

**Milestone/Timeframe:** Quarterly progress review



# 158/NC-12 Traffic Congestion

**Goal 1.3** Develop plans and mechanisms to minimize Southern Shores seasonal traffic congestion.

**Objective. 1.3.1** Work with Kitty Hawk, Dare County and NCDOT authorities to explore options to alleviate weekend bottleneck and traffic congestion at the intersection of US 158 and NC-12. This intersection presents the single most difficult challenge because of high traffic volumes. *Discussion: Estimates made by NCDOT indicate peak summer Saturday vehicular traffic flow will increase from 50,000 to more than 100,000 vehicles in the next 10 to 15 years. The two-hour traffic delays at peak times are becoming common place. Currently NCDOT has a \$320,000 planning project underway to study only intersection alternatives. It seems apparent to most residents of Southern Shores that the Mid-Currituck Bridge would alleviate the problem, however, there was a reluctance on the part of NCDOT and others to address this issue. An expanded study, a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, called the Currituck Sound Area Transportation Study, is now being conducted by NCDOT with the help of the engineering and consulting firm of Parsons Brinkerhoff. The Mid-Currituck Bridge and the US 158/NC 12 intersection are now a part of that study. Under the current schedule the Final Environmental Impact Statement will not be completed until 2008. This means that alleviation of the traffic problem at the intersection of US 158/NC 12 could not proceed until after that time. In fact, knowledgeable authorities believe that in view of current permitting and design timetables, no work on the intersection could be started for 10 years and then it would take 22 to 30 more months to complete.*

**Responsibility:** Mayor, Town Council, Town Manager

**Recommended Action:** Put together an action oriented team of movers and shakers from the area similar to the Build the Bridge team to focus all appropriate attention on this major problem for the Outer Banks.

**Milestone/Timeframe:** Beginning in 2006. We cannot wait 12 years for a solution.



# Canals

**Objective 2.1.3** – Implement a long range plan to keep the canals and lagoons in Southern Shores dredged to the proper depths to provide continuous navigation and adequate storm water runoff. *Discussion: Many respondents from the Town survey indicated that the canals and the lagoons were one of the area’s nicest features and one of the prime reasons they sought to purchase property in Southern Shores. Unfortunately, the canals have tended to silt up over the years and it is critical that they be dredged as quickly as possible. Severe weather, fallen trees and the lack of bulk heading on many of the undeveloped properties have contributed to the problem. Storm water runoff, lawn care products, fertilizers and lack of circulation to cleanse the canals and lagoons are now creating potentially unhealthy and stagnant conditions. State funds are being sought to help fund the dredging project. The town hopes to receive \$480,000 from the state in each of the next two years and expects to contribute \$120,000 in each of those years to fund the project. Permits with the various governmental agencies and other parties have been submitted. Spoil sites have been identified. The project is targeted for commencement in the latter part of calendar 2006. Every effort must be made to ensure that no further delay occurs because canal transit by boat will be greatly constrained and the presence of mosquitoes will be significantly increased. Property values could be adversely impacted and the natural beauty enjoyed by town residents and visitors could receive a most undesirable setback.*

**Responsibility:** Town Manager, Town Council

**Recommended Action:** Press forward vigorously to receive approvals from all concerned. Make sure funding becomes available soonest. Investigate possibility of helping with dredging aspects by utilizing town’s volunteers. Consider a requirement for property owners to install and maintain bulk heading or other measures to stabilize the shoreline and to be responsible for canal overgrowth.

**Milestone/Timeframe:** ASAP



# Left Turning Vehicles

**Objective 1.2.3** Seek alternatives to minimize hazards for left turning vehicular traffic throughout the Southern Shores portion of NC-12.

**Responsibility:** Mayor/Council/Town Manager

**Recommended Action:** The super street concept depicted in the Outer Banks Transportation Study Preliminary Report is a possible alternative for Southern Shores. A feasibility study group or committee should be appointed in early 2006 to work with the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) North Carolina State University to identify and determine the cost, and potential for such a plan. *See Attachment A, pages 8-9, which is a portion of the super street outline.*

**Milestone/Timeframe:** Beginning in 2006

**Goal 1.3** Develop plans and mechanisms to minimize Southern Shores seasonal traffic congestion.



# Storm water

**Objective 2.1.2** Determine the impact of storm water runoff/flooding in Southern Shores and develop a plan to resolve it. The Town is preparing an overall storm water management plan, plus doing a special study of the Chicahawk area (Chicahawk Trail, Clam Shell, Deer Path, and Trinitie). These neighborhoods suffered during last summer's long rains and some areas continue to suffer from even an occasional cloudburst. At the same time, Southern Shores has formed a Storm Water Management Policy Advisory Committee which is working with the town of Duck and NCDOT studying the areas along NC-12 where flooding regularly occurs. The studies are expected to be completed by next fall. In each case, the contractor was told to look towards low-cost, natural improvements in lieu of man-made structures. After review by the Storm Water Management Advisory Committee, recommendations and/or solutions will be forwarded to the Town Council.

**Responsibility:** Town Council/ Planning Board/Storm Water Management Policy Advisory Committee

**Recommended Action:** Review existing laws and plan, investigate storm water issues in Town and Dare County, and review studies in response to the 2004 flooding and ongoing nuisance flooding. Continue to aggressively work with residential and commercial developers to provide on-site storm water management.

**Milestone/Timeframe:** Six months



# Speeding and Shortcuts

**Objective 1.3.3** Devise various techniques to reduce speeding and minimize heavy truck and tourist shortcuts through local roads. Although an irritant to local residents, police traffic stops and unmanned speed warning radar devices have been effective on weekends during heavy transitional rental periods. Parked or unoccupied police cars might be an effective tool to deter speeders and cut through traffic.

**Responsibility:** Town Manager and Police Chief

**Recommended Action:** Investigate options and implement most viable solutions.

**Milestone/Timeframe:** Within 2006 time frame with milestones to be reviewed each six months by the Planning Board.