

## **BLUEPRINT BRUNSWICK II OVERLAY DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CATALYST SITES**

- **Gloucester Street Corridor**
- **US 17 Mixed Use Development**

### **Gloucester Street Corridor**

#### Objectives

The Gloucester Street Corridor extends the length of Gloucester Street from East River waterfront and Mary Ross Park on the west to its intersection with US 17 and the Marshes of Glynn on the East. It is the primary east-west axis of Brunswick's historic plan and the primary east-west street and eastern gateway in today's downtown Brunswick. The first several blocks on the west end contain government, religious and commercial uses, comprised of both historic and newer buildings, creating a consistent fabric of 2-5 story "public" buildings. From its intersection with Norwich Avenue extending the rest of the eastern two thirds of the corridor, Gloucester contains a wide variety of commercial buildings, both new and old, from vacant and derelict to well maintained and active. Nearly half of the parcels on this length of Gloucester are vacant. Even without a detailed analysis it would be safe to conclude that the vast majority of these parcels do not represent the highest and best use of these properties, and therefore are subject to redevelopment pressure, some sooner rather than later. Furthermore little, if any, improvements have been made to the public right-of-way in this area. At the eastern end the intersection of Gloucester with US 17 has been recently improved and landscaped by the Georgia DOT, and has a landscaped entry character, albeit of a "highway" scale.

The public right-of-way in Gloucester Corridor is a consistent 90 feet with 48 ft four lane roadway and an equal 21 ft generous sidewalk environment on both sides of the street. However the condition of this pedestrian environment is generally poor and inconsistent in the corridor from Norwich to Us 17.

The character of this corridor today, therefore, for both the public and private environment, is not in keeping with its important historic and gateway status. To help make necessary improvements and to give the entire length of the corridor a consistent high visibility "civic" status, it is recommended that an overlay zoning district be established with the following objectives:

- 1. To create a coherent and consistent public landscape along the length of the corridor to provide a significant and visually attractive environment for both pedestrians and motorists.***
- 2. To enact design guidelines for private development along the corridor to create a consistent built character and scale befitting this historic street.***

## Overlay District Components

The overlay district would be supplemental to the existing underlying zoning regulations and would contain both public and private design guidelines. It is anticipated that, while some of the public improvements could be implemented with a variety of public funding sources, much of the public environment would be provided by the private sector when adjacent parcels are redeveloped. Therefore design guidelines for the public right of way are recommended to be incorporated in the zoning overlay district. The guidelines should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following areas of concern:

### A. Public environment (see recommended illustrative section)

1. Streetscaping dimensions and paving materials
2. Street tree placement, species and caliper size
3. Street lighting, including both performance illumination specifications for both roadway and sidewalk environments, and specified hardware components.
4. Street furniture components including benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, etc
5. A coordinated signage system for both motorists and pedestrians, including both wayfinding and interpretative signage.

### B. Private Environment

1. A consistent "build to" line at or near the property line along Gloucester Street.
2. A maximum height limit (suggested at 60 ft), with provisions to grant variances for significant towers, steeples, etc.
3. Doorway and fenestration requirements, including at least requiring the primary entrance(s) to face onto Gloucester Street, and a ground floor fenestration requirement (suggested at from 40 – 75% of the ground floor surface)
4. Prohibition of all curb cuts along Gloucester Street, except as provided by hardship variance.
5. Prohibition of all parking lots or structures along Gloucester Street, except as provided by hardship variance, and then only with a minimum setback (suggested at 20-25 ft) with adequate landscape buffering ( suggested double row of trees at a minimum 4 inch caliper and appropriate understory planting).

### C. Public Art and Historic Interpretation

A corridor with the historic and urban design significance of Gloucester Street creates opportunities for installations of public artworks and various elements which provide historic interpretation of the corridor and area. These can be part of the public landscape component of an overlay ordinance or a separate City initiative. Either way it is recommended that a master plan for these elements be prepared that can provide a framework for implementation of individual elements over time.

## **US 17 Mixed Use Development**

### **Objectives**

The recommended US 17 Mixed Use Development Catalyst Site consists of several large parcels on the east side of US 17 north of the Torras Causeway, collectively containing 53 acres. The parcels are either vacant or consist of small buildings that do not comprise the highest and best use of the property. This is due to the long term attractiveness of these parcels for redevelopment owing to three primary factors:

1. Their location on US 17, a corridor of high accessibility
2. Their frontages on marshland on the east side providing excellent views and access to smaller watercraft.
3. The relatively large size of each of the parcels which will accommodate a variety of uses and phased development over time.

While redevelopment opportunities are good for these parcels individually, taken together they represent an extraordinary opportunity which will benefit not only their owners but Brunswick and Glenn County as well. Because joint development will require a high degree of cooperation among owners and significant participation by public entities, including the City of Brunswick, Glenn County and the Georgia DOT, among others, and because development will likely occur incrementally over a long period of time, it is recommended that a framework for redevelopment be put in place that can guide and coordinate development over the long run and “create a “level playing field” for all developers and investors. The tools for this long term development should consist of:

A. The existing US 17 Overlay District, enacted in 2007, for the entire US 17 Corridor from Spur 25 to the Sidney Lanier Bridge. This ordinance is intended as an overlay to the existing underlying zoning and retains all permitted uses in that ordinance. It includes all parcels fronting the corridor and extending a maximum of 250 ft back from US 17 on larger parcels. It contains detailed landscaping, signage and parking requirements that are intended to create a parkway (defined as a “wide scenic road planted with trees”) in order to “improve the visual and economic condition along this section of US17.”

The provisions of this ordinance should be kept for the parcels in the catalyst site but capped at 100 feet from US 17 where the provisions of a second overlay ordinance would take effect. (see below)

B. A new Overlay District Ordinance which includes all of the properties of the catalyst site is proposed to govern the regulation of the uses, the infrastructure and design of development on these sites.

C. A series of financial incentives and public investments to facilitate the attraction and coordination of development on these sites. (See the Blueprint Brunswick Implementation Plan) The City may want to consider the selection of a “master

developer” to coordinate acquisition, infrastructure implementation and disposition and development coordination of designated private parcels.

The objectives of the new overlay district ordinance, herein referred to as the US17 Mixed Use Development Overlay District, therefore, are:

***1. To identify public rights-of-way and easements necessary to provide for circulation, services and access to designated areas of public use and access, thereby creating a “Public Framework Plan”***

***2. To regulate the land use and development requirements for the private development of the specified development parcels***

***3. To establish design guidelines for public improvements on the properties, whether implemented by public or private sector entities***

### Overlay District Components

There are two legal options to enacting this overlay ordinance:

1. Create a “true” overlay ordinance which would supplement the underlying zoning, or
2. Rezone the properties entirely to a “Mixed Use” designation, which would permit completely tailoring all zoning requirements to the particular conditions of these sites.

Further study would be needed to determine the best approach. In either case, however, the important areas of regulation are recommended as follows: (see Illustrative site diagram for locations discussed below)

#### A. Public Framework Plan

- Rights-of-way for internal street grid, which aligns with the City’s existing street grid on the east side of US17.
- Infrastructure; right-of-way and/or easements for infrastructure such as water and sewer lines, storm drainage, power network, etc., where they do not fall within street rights-of-way
- Public spaces; including but not limited to
  - A minimum 50 ft setback from the mean tide marsh elevation for all structures and impervious surfaces
  - Public marshfront parkland (conceptual locations shown on site diagram)
  - A major open space and environmental site at the “Hercules inlet”. extending for US 17 to the marsh front (see diagram)

- Pedestrian circulation; including both street sidewalks and a path/trail system extending through the public open space network. (see conceptual location on the site diagram)

#### B. Private Development Controls

- Land uses; designated by block with all blocks designated as mixed use but focused on specific uses, as shown in the diagram, as mixed use, residential, and hotel/high density residential
- Flood elevation building lines , as designated by FEMA
- Parking access points and curb cuts; these should be allowed on east west streets and not allowed on the north/south frontage streets along US 17 and the marshfront.
- Views toward the marshes should be maximized
- Heights and setback limits need further study but setbacks should be regulated in a small zone between the property line and a small setback such as 25 ft
- Brownfields; establish levels of site contamination and potential mitigation measures and establish the developers' responsibility for such mitigation

#### C, Public Environment Design Guidelines

- Landscape; establish a street tree plan for the public rights-of-way and an allowable plant materials list for planting on private parcels.
- Signage; establish a uniform signage system for roadways, pedestrian paths and entrances to building complexes
- Furniture; establish a street furniture plan for public rights-of-way and open spaces
- Lighting; establish a lighting plan for streets, open spaces and semi-public areas consisting of illumination standards and allowable hardware components.