



## Future Land Use Vision Character Area Descriptions

---

### Conservation

St. Marys and the surrounding region have a wealth of unique and extraordinary natural resources, which contribute to the quality of life for residents and play an important role in the local tourism industry. This character area identifies those environmental resources that should be preserved for low-impact recreation, multi-use trails, habitat protection, or conservation. This area may include sensitive habitats, coastal marshlands, cultural and recreational amenities.

#### Issues & Needs

- There are unique and sensitive environmental, historic and cultural resources within the City.
- Cumberland Island and the marine environment and waterways in and around St. Marys that allow access to the Atlantic Ocean are a major tourism attraction for St. Marys.
- Access to coastal resources and the coastal environment is a major component of the local character and quality of life for the residents of St. Marys.

#### Development Strategies

- *Look for opportunities to provide more access to the coastal environment through the creation of greenways, multi-use trails, docks, boardwalks, and parks.*
- *Protect important viewsheds within St. Marys.*
- *Adopt and develop funding mechanism to implement stormwater standards consistent with the Coastal Stormwater Supplement.*
- *Discourage development within designated flood zones or Special Flood Hazard Areas.*
- *Maintain natural character and promote conservation through the use of conservation easements.*
- *To the extent possible, create connectivity to greenspace by linking parks, undeveloped areas, and open spaces through a network of multi-use trails.*

### Developing Residential

This character area addresses that area bound by Winding Rd, Colerain Rd, and St. Mary Rd. This area is largely undeveloped but is poised for future growth due to its proximity to the Navy Sub Base and Interstate 95. In many cases, subdivisions have already been platted, but development has not yet taken place. The City has an opportunity to plan for this future growth and encourage more traditional residential development patterns. The focus in this character area should be on a mix of residential densities, connectively within the street pattern, multi-use transportation facilities, and amenities for the residents such as parks, multi-use trails, and neighborhood scale commercial uses.

### Issues & Needs:

- There is a need to provide for moderately priced single family and multi-family townhouse/condominium housing in St. Marys.

### Development Strategies:

- *New development and infill development should include a variety of housing types and densities.*
- *Local neighborhood pocket parks should be included in future developments.*
- *Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions.*
- *New development should be master-planned with mixed-uses, blending residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services, linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision.*
- *Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character.*
- *Consider a zoning change that would allow for form compliance in designated areas.*

### Downtown

Downtown St Marys is ideally located to serve as an economic and recreational hub for the city and as a gateway to the southeastern United States. It already serves as a gateway to Cumberland Island, a strategic naval base, and a welcoming family-friendly small town. This area includes the St Marys Historic District, which is listed on the National Historic Register, surrounding residential neighborhoods, and the commercial corridor of Osborne Rd, east of the Point Peter Rd Intersection. Also included within this area is the waterfront district, which functions as a working waterfront, family activity center, tourist attraction and access point for the ferry to Cumberland Island. The Downtown area of St. Marys has its own unique and creative character, and has the potential to drive future tourism and enhance the sense of place within the City.

### Issues & Needs

- The Waterfront is in need of attention and investment.
- There are vacant and, in some cases blighted, buildings.
- There is limited public access to overnight boat slips.
- There is a lack of entertainment, conference and meeting venues usually found in tourist locations.
- Public transportation to others areas of St. Marys is lacking.
- There is limited access to basic needs, such as shopping, groceries and supplies for residents, visitors, and boaters who do not have access to an automobile.
- There is a desire for more restaurants and retail opportunities in the downtown.
- Existing residential density in the downtown area does not support the desired commercial uses.
- There is limited parking for events that are staged on the waterfront and insufficient parking should the area enjoy increased traffic from redevelopment efforts.

### Development Strategies

- *Review the recommendations of the Downtown St Marys Strategic Vision and Plan and adopt such of those recommendations that are consistent with the Master Plan.*
- *As part of an economic development plan to encourage commercial and retail opportunities and as part of a plan to enhance tourism, consideration should be given to creating a public parking venue in conjunction with a public transportation hub or terminal.*
- *Encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures.*
- *Require infill development and redevelopment to be compatible in terms of architecture, mass, scale and lot location with the existing neighborhood.*
- *Develop public docks.*
- *Improve aesthetics in the Waterfront Area.*
- *Establish and build a hospitality development on the Gateway property., Permit*
- *Permit residential homeowners to have cottages or furnished rooms over garages (FROG).*
- *Require architectural standards that preserve the historic fabric of the neighborhood.*
- *Residential infill development should support the commercial core by including higher density housing options, including upstairs residential, multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums. Consider reductions in minimum residential lot sized to achieve increased densities.*
- *Encourage a mix of retail, office, services that provide for the daily needs of residents and visitors.*
- *Streetscapes should be pedestrian-oriented, with walkable connections.*
- *Road edges should be clearly defined by locating new or rehabilitative construction at roadside with parking in the rear.*
- *Develop ordinances that better define and protect historic properties from demolition and encourage rehabilitation.*
- *Historic properties should be maintained or rehabilitated/restored according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.*

### Inland Residential (Midtown Neighborhood)

This area includes a variety of residential subdivision development patterns. The area east of Dark Entry Creek typically has smaller lot sizes, and homes there have a higher orientation to the street, with shorter front yard setbacks, front porches, sidewalks, and street trees. West of Dark Entry Creek residential development is more consistent with the more recent development patterns found in the Marshside Residential areas. Redevelopment and infill development should be consistent with existing development, maintain the grid street pattern, where appropriate, and continue to sidewalk network. Neighborhood-scale commercial and civic uses are appropriate within these areas better accessibility to services and retail stores for residents. Alternative transportation facilities and access should be provided to allow for pedestrian, bicycle and golf cart travel.

### Issues & Needs

- Lack of connection to other areas of St. Marys other than by automobile.
- Lack of youth oriented supervised recreational and after school facilities.



### Development Strategies

- *Preserve and continue grid street pattern, where feasible.*
- *Encourage infill development that is consistent in architectural style, mass, and scale with existing homes.*
- *Provide multi-modal connectivity to St. Marys Middle School and Mid-Town Renaissance area.*
- *Provide pocket parks where appropriate.*
- *Reinforce stability of area by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties.*
- *Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing.*
- *Allow neighborhood-scale commercial development & activities at suitable locations, e.g. restaurants, grocery store, hardware store, and similar appropriately-scaled retail establishments serving neighborhood residents.*
- *Provide strong pedestrian and bicycle connections to permit residents to walk/bike to destinations in the area.*

### Interstate Access Corridors

This represents the I-95 Exit 1 area and extends along St. Marys Rd to the intersection with State Route 40. It also includes the Hwy 40 Corridor between the Kings Bay Road intersection and Dark Entry Creek Bridge. These corridors are the primary entrances to the City of St. Marys. Focus along these corridors should include landscaping and improved signage to let residents and visitors know that they have arrived in St. Marys. St. Marys Road serves as a main evacuation route for St. Marys and the Navy Sub Base and therefore will have limited access, with frontage roads allowing for future development. The Hwy 40 corridor is likely to face future commercial development pressure due to the expansion of existing development in Kingsland to the west.

### Issues & Needs

- Directional signage is lacking along this corridor.
- The Exit 1 off I-95 is inadequate in design and appearance to serve as an attractive or inviting entry into Georgia and does not encourage people to stop at that exit.
- This route is a major evacuation route for the Navy and development may be limited.

### Development Strategies

- *Exit 1's visitor center should be a showcase entry into Georgia and St. Marys with an emphasis on encouraging tourists to visit St. Marys and Cumberland Island.*
- *Work with state government officials to redesign Exit 1 to better handle the commercial traffic coming on and off the interstate.*
- *Implement a signage and landscaping plan at the intersection of Hwy 40 and St. Marys Road.*
- *Look for opportunities to provide city services and annex undeveloped land on either side of the Hwy 40 corridor.*
- *Maintain a natural vegetation buffer (at least 50 feet in width) along the St. Marys Road corridor.*

- *All new development should be set-back behind this buffer, with access roads, shared driveways or inter-parcel road connections providing alternate access to these developments and reducing curb cuts and traffic on the main highway.*
- *Encourage landscaped, raised medians to provide vehicular safety, aesthetics, and also a pedestrian crossing refuge.*
- *Provide pedestrian facilities/sidewalks behind drainage ditches or curb.*
- *Where possible provide paved shoulders and/or bicycle lanes that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.*
- *Manage access to keep traffic flowing; using directory signage to developments.*
- *Prohibit the addition of any new billboards.*

### Marshside Residential

These are established residential areas with similar post-1960 suburban development patterns, including: curvilinear streets, larger single family lots, limited pedestrian orientation, and large front setbacks. Many of these areas were developed under a masterplan or as a planned subdivision. These areas may contain onsite amenities for residents of the community, water access, and view sheds of the marsh. Future development within these areas should focus on infill housing that is consistent with the existing neighborhood fabric and makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and the large undeveloped lot inventory.

#### Issues & Needs:

- A few areas are not served by St. Marys water & sewer.
- Unincorporated islands exist within New Point Peter.
- Existing undeveloped lot inventory is fairly large.

#### Development Strategies:

- *Encourage infill development on existing lots served by city water & sewer.*
- *Require new subdivisions to tie in to public water and sewer.*
- *Convert private wells and septic systems to public water and sewer service.*
- *Infill development should be consistent with the character and masterplan for development.*
- *Protect and preserve natural resources in these areas including wetlands & coastal marshlands*
- *Larger lots and less dense residential development is appropriate in these areas.*
- *Provide neighborhood focal points by locating community centers, or well-designed small commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences.*

### Midtown Renaissance

This area has the potential to be redeveloped to serve as a commercial center for businesses that would not be suitable for the downtown district but could be convenient enough for residents and tourists staying anywhere in St. Marys. Centrally located, this area sits at the crossroads of Hwy 40 and Osborne St. and currently includes an underutilized shopping center as well as an aging and aesthetically unappealing warehouse/office building. This area includes a commercial corridor from the shopping center north to the Base and east on Osborne to the downtown district. Development along the Hwy 40 and Osborne St. corridors should focus on restaurants, services, and neighborhood-scale commercial

establishments that cater to families and family-friendly activities. Aesthetic improvements are needed to provide an attractive environment for shoppers, and multi-modal connections to the residential areas of St. Marys should be provided where feasible. Enhanced alternative transportation facilities, streetscaping, and landscaping standards are needed to enhance the pedestrian environment. The orientation of the buildings along this corridor should be to the road, with parking largely on the sides or behind the building. Architectural standards for future development and façade renovations for existing structures is recommended. With appropriate planning and investment, this area could be poised to become a shopping destination, providing retail, restaurant, and entertainment opportunities for the residents of and visitors to St. Marys.

#### Issues & Needs

- There is a need for more family friendly activities within St. Marys.
- There is a consumer desire for more retail opportunities
- The Kings Bay Village Shopping Center has significant vacant commercial space.
- Two 5-lane state roads intersect within this area, and make walkability a challenge.
- The aesthetics of this corridor are lacking.
- There are vacant commercial buildings along this corridor.
- There are existing light industrial and residential uses along this corridor that do not fit the intended character.

#### Development Strategies

- *Establish architectural standards for development and redevelopment along this corridor.*
- *Encourage redevelopment and infill commercial development along this corridor.*
- *Improve the safety and aesthetics of the area through streetscaping (i.e. median islands, landscaping, street lighting, and signage).*
- *Regulate commercial signage along this corridor.*
- *Discourage single family residential uses and prohibit the intrusion of industrial uses along this corridor.*
- *Allow a diverse mix of higher-density housing types, adjacent to the commercial development, including multi-family town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums.*
- *Encourage the private development of family friendly activities along this corridor, such as indoor sporting venues, bowling/gaming, skating, etc.*
  - *In cooperation with the owner, encourage further redevelopment of the Kings Bay mall area through a master-planned concept. Retro-fit to be more aesthetically appealing and, therefore, more marketable to prospective tenants to include more commercial structures, pedestrian amenities, landscaping, hardscaping, etc..*
- *Upgrading the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvement, new architectural elements, or awnings.*
- *Providing pedestrian and bicycling amenities, including covered walkways, benches, lighting and bike racks.*

## Mixed Use Medical

The Medical Activity Center includes the Southeast Georgia Health System and is bounded by St. Marys Road, Colerain Road, and Kings Bay Road. Future development should focus on medical services and other uses that promote wellness and community health including senior and assisted living housing, greenspace and recreational facilities, and commercial development consistent with these uses.

### Issues and Needs

- St. Marys has an aging population that will need aging in place services.
- Many residents of St. Marys travel to Jacksonville or Brunswick for medical services.
- This area will face commercial development pressure from Kingsland, so planning and design standards are needed.

### Development Strategies

- *Encourage aging in place resources and facilities including retirement developments, assisted living housing, parks, activities, retail, and medical services.*
- *Encourage planned development or “campus-style” medical developments.*
- *Work with private developers to build tax credit senior housing.*
- *Use landscaping and buffers to separate adjacent use and screen unattractive areas such as parking lots.*
- *Encourage greater mix of uses (such as retail and services to serve hospital employees and residents of senior housing) to reduce automobile reliance/use.*

## Multi-Use Development

This area is made up of the airport site, the Mill Site, and adjacent industrial parks. A mix of commercial, public/institutional and clean industrial uses should be promoted in this area with particular attention paid to the form of development and the manner in which it ties in with the surrounding neighborhoods. This vision for this area is to provide a variety of job opportunities within a range of employment sectors to expand and diversify the economy of St. Marys. Protection of sensitive environmental resources, including the Rookery, and low impact on adjacent residential areas will be an essential element of any future redevelopment.

### Issues & Needs

- A variety of employment opportunities for local residents are needed in St. Marys.
- Assure permanent protection of environmentally sensitive areas within the Mill Site consistent with the conditions imposed when the Mill Site was rezoned.
- There some areas of contamination within the mill site that may require remediation for commercial or industrial development.
- In some instances, the properties surrounding the Mill Site and the airport are falling into disrepair.
- The mill site has significant river access.

### Development Strategies

- *Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized industrial sites to provide a variety of employment opportunities within St. Marys.*
- *Establish and implement stormwater standards within this district that are consistent with the Coastal Stormwater Supplement.*
- *All development within this area should be master-planned, and architectural and design standards should be required.*
- *Encourage the location of light industrial and clean/green manufacturing industries within industrial areas.*
- *Allow for and encourage supporting commercial uses to buffer the industrial development from surrounding neighborhoods and to support the employers/employees at the industrial facilities.*
- *Incorporate landscaping and site design to soften or shield views of buildings and parking lots, loading docks, etc.*
- *Incorporate signage and lighting guidelines to enhance quality of development.*
- *Use buffers to separate adjacent but different uses.*

### South Gate Revitalization Area

This represents land area and neighborhoods that have been directly impacted by factors such as the closing of the South Gate access to the Navy Sub Base. There is opportunity for residential and commercial redevelopment and infill development within this area. Development within this area should focus on providing a mix of residential densities, and improving public transportation access from the neighborhood to retail, services, and schools in the area. Issues & Needs

- This area continues to suffer from a combination of recession, lack of employment and the closure of the South Gate to the Navy Sub Base.
- Many residents do not have safe access to basic retail services and recreational activities.
- There are limited pedestrian and bicycle networks and inadequate and unreliable public transportation.

### Development Strategies:

- *Continue discussions with the Navy to see whether it might be possible to reopen the South Gate for a two to four-hour period to allow easier access to downtown during the lunch hour.*
- *Work with Coastal Regional Transit to improve public transportation services this area.*
- *Provide access to alternative forms of transportation and connections to the other commercial areas of the city.*
- *The redevelopment strategy for the area should focus on preserving and rehabilitating what remains of the original housing stock, while encouraging neighborhood type residential development on the remaining land.*
- *Public grants and private investment should be focused where needed to foster redevelopment and stabilization of the community.*
- *Encourage apartment complex owners to maintain and upgrade rental properties.*
- *Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should be provided to enable residents to walk/bike to work, shopping, or other destinations in the area.*

## SUBBASE Kings Bay Transition Zone

The Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay (SUBASE Kings Bay) occupies about 16,000 acres of land, of which approximately one quarter are protected coastal marshlands. Georgia State Law O.C.G.A. § 36-66-6 requires a 3,000 foot buffer zone around the boarder of any military installation, including the SUBASE, to address issues related to security and land use directly adjacent to it. Zoning and land use decisions within this buffer area with the potential to affect military operations must be coordinated with the SUBASE. The Camden Kings Bay Joint Land Use Study, completed in 2014 through a partnership between the Navy, Camden County, and the Cities of St Marys, Woodbine, and Kingsland, identifies potential development that could occur within this buffer area, as well as the uses that are consistent with the vision and goals of both the SUBASE and surrounding communities.

### Issues & Needs

- The airport site lies within this zone and its operation and/or closure has a direct impact on the SUBASE.
- Some land use changes that have the potential to affect the base do not require rezoning and formal notification of the SUBASE.
- Property that will redevelop outside of this zone, including the Mill site, will still potentially have an impact on the SUBASE and its operations.

### Development Strategies

- *Develop overlay district standards to require Naval review of development applications within the Transition Zone.*
- Engage with the Navy to assure that civilian use of the St. Mary's River, intercostal waterway, and its tributaries does not conflict with SUBASE operations.