



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 citizen 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 a lot of sensitive environmental, historic and cultural resources within the City.
- Tourism in St. Marys is dependent on access to the water and environmental resources such as Cumberland Island.
- Residents of St. Marys value access to coastal resources and the environment is a major component of the local character and quality of life.

Development Strategies

- *Protect wetland and the coastal marshlands through implementation of a buffer.*
- *Look for opportunities to provide more access to the coastal environment through the creation of greenways, multi-use trails, docks, boardwalks, and parks.*
- *Continue to protect and preserve historic/cultural resources within the City and provide public access to these resources, where reasonable.*
- *Protect important viewsheds within St. Marys.*
- *Adopt and 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 by promoting use of conservation easements.*
- *Create connectivity to greenspace by linking parks, undeveloped areas, and open spaces through a network of multi-use trails.*
- *Set aside land for pedestrian and bicycle connections between schools, churches, recreation areas, city centers, residential neighborhoods and commercial areas.*

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. 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, connectivity 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:

- Undeveloped land available for future residential development
- There are undeveloped lots available in planned subdivisions that are likely to be developed in the near future.

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 a 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.*
- *There should be strong connectivity and continuity between each master planned development.*
- *There should be good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail/commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points.*
- *Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character.*
- *Wherever possible, connect to regional network of sidewalks and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and golf carts for both transportation and recreational purposes.*
- *Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking, and addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.*

Downtown

The Downtown St Marys Strategic Vision & Plan describes the Downtown as “As a hub for maritime trade, an international crossroads, a bustling mill town, a gateway to Cumberland Island, a strategic naval hub, and a welcoming family-friendly small town, [that] has undergone many transformations since the city’s founding in 1787.” 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. Infill development, historic preservation, alternative transportation options, and economic development along the waterfront are key to achieving the vision for this area.

Issues & Needs

- The Waterfront is in need of attention and investment.
- There are vacant and, in some cases blighted, buildings in areas of the Historic Downtown.

- There is limited public access to overnight boat slips.
- Connection 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.

Development Strategies

- *Implement recommendations of the Downtown St Marys Strategic Vision and Plan.*
- *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.*
- *Increase hotel/motel options in the downtown area through implementation of the Gateway project.*
- *Include direct connections to other areas of St. Marys through a trail network.*
- *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 in the center, 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 very pedestrian-oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses.*
- *Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear.*
- *Protect historic properties from demolition and encourage rehabilitation with appropriate incentives, including tax incentive programs.*
- *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 and can provide better accessibility to services and health food options 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

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 encourage these 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. Redevelopment of Exit 1 and implementation of a signage and landscaping plan for the intersection of St. Marys Rd and Hwy 40 are priorities for placemaking along this corridor and within the City. St. Marys Road serves as a main evacuation route for St. Marys and the Navy Sub Base and therefore will likely 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
- Exit 1 off I-95 is very difficult to navigate, and does not encourage people to stop at that exit.
- This route is a major evacuation route for the Navy and access may be limited.

Development Strategies

- *Implement a signage and landscaping plan at the intersection of Hwy 40 and St. Marys Road.*
- *Work with GDOT to implement improvements to Exit 1.*
- *Look for opportunities to provide city services and annex undeveloped land on either side of the Hwy 40 corridor.*
- *Install landscaping, welcome signage and a multi-use trail/sidewalk along the St. Marys Road 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 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.*
- *Unacceptable uses: 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:

- Some areas are not served by sanitary 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*
- *Provide water and sewer service universally throughout these developments*
- *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*
- *Promote connectivity within and to each subdivision by providing vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail/commercial services, internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points.*
- *Provide neighborhood focal points by locating schools, community centers, or well-designed small commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences.*
- *Add traffic calming improvements, sidewalks, and increased street interconnections to improve walk-ability within existing neighborhoods.*

Midtown Renaissance

This area has the potential to be redeveloped to serve as a regional commercial center for the City and surround areas. Centrally located, this area sits at the crossroads of Hwy 40 and Osborne St. and currently includes an underutilized shopping center as well as the old Gillman Bag Building. This area also includes a commercial corridor extending south along Spur 40, intersects Osborne, and provides a connection to the aquatic center and parks at the northern end of the historic 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 were 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 St. Marys.

Issues & Needs

- There is a need for family friendly activities within St. Marys.
- There are insufficient retail opportunities within the City.
- The Kings Bay Village Shopping Center has vacant an underutilized commercial space.
- Two 5-lane state roads intersect within this area, and make walkability a challenge.
- The old Gillman Bag Company Building occupies a large footprint, and is not the preferred use for property fronting Osborne Rd.
- The aesthetics of this corridor are lacking.
- There is a lot of vacant and underutilized commercial buildings along this corridor.
- There are intrusions of light industrial and residential uses along this corridor that do not fit the intended character.

Development Strategies

- *Establish landscaping and architectural standards for development 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 location of family friendly activities along this corridor, such as indoor sporting venues, bowling/gaming, skating, etc.*
- *Encourage redevelopment of the St. Mary's mall area through a master-planned concept. Retrofit to be more aesthetically appealing and, therefore, more marketable to prospective tenants:*

- *Building new commercial structures at the street front, taking up a portion of the oversize parking lot and creating a shopping “square” around a smaller internal parking lot.*
- *Reconfigure the parking lot and circulation routes for automobiles.*
- *Provide pedestrian and bicycling amenities, including covered walkways, benches, lighting and bike racks.*
- *Adding landscaping and other appearance enhancements, trees in the parking lot to provide shade and help reduce storm water runoff.*
- *Should include relatively high-density mix of retail, office, and services to serve a regional market area.*
- *Design should be pedestrian oriented where feasible, with strong, walkable connections between different uses.*
- *Traffic calming measures should be implemented to improve walkability and pedestrian bicycle safety.*
- *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.*
- *Connect this area to other parts of St. Marys through a system of sidewalks and multi-use paths.*

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 designed to support these uses.

Needs and Issues

- 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 masterplanning 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.*
- *Require connectivity through a system of sidewalks, bike lands and multi-use paths.*

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 elements of any future redevelopment.

Issues & Needs

- A variety of employment opportunities are needed in St. Marys
- There are sensitive environmental resources within the mill site.
- There some areas of contamination within the mill site that would have to be remediated to allow for commercial, industrial or residential development.
- The airport is extremely underutilized and is limited in its use by its proximity to the Navy Sub Base.
- The airport cannot be decommissioned and redeveloped without funding assistance from the Federal government.
- The industrial park areas adjacent to and serving the airport are underutilized and failing 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.*
- *Ensure that any future development of the mill site protects the rookery and provides a significant buffer around it.*
- *Establish and implement stormwater standards within this district that are consistent with the Coastal Stormwater Supplement.*
- *Provide public access to the water through the mill site, at the site of the closed landfill.*
- *All development within this area should be master-planned, and architectural and design standards should be required.*
- *Multi-modal transportation access and connections should be provided.*
- *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.*
- *This is a potential location for an RV park.*
- *Develop or, where possible, retrofit as part of planned industrial park having adequate water, sewer, storm-water, and transportation infrastructure for all component uses at build-out.*
- *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.*

- *Encourage greater mix of uses (such as retail and services to serve industry employees) to reduce automobile reliance/use on site.*
- *Encouraging pervious paving and other green infrastructure stormwater practices.*
- *Use buffers to separate adjacent but different uses.*

South Gate Revitalization Area

This represents land area and neighborhoods that have been directly impacted by 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 alternative transportation access from the neighborhood to retail, services, and schools in the area. There is opportunity to connect the residential neighborhoods within this area to jobs created at the future Multi-Use Development Area, and for commercial development within this area to serve the nearby industries and their employees.

Issues & Needs

- There is significant disinvestment in this area due to closure of the South Gate to the Navy Sub Base
- Many residents do not have safe access to basic services, such as healthy food and schools
- There is limited pedestrian and bicycle network

Development Strategies:

- *Support any efforts to reopen the South Gate*
- *Improve pedestrian and bicycle environment through installation of sidewalks/bike lanes, traffic calming measures, and streetscapes.*
- *Provide access to alternative forms of transportation*
- *Provide connections to Airport Employment Center, Town Center Urban Anchor, and Commercial Activity Corridor*
- *The redevelopment strategy for the area should focus on preserving and rehabilitating what remains of the original housing stock, while rebuilding, on the remaining land, a new, attractive neighborhood following the principles of traditional neighborhood development.*
- *Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing.*
- *Public assistance and investment should be focused where needed to foster redevelopment and stabilization of the community.*
- *Encourage more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties.*
- *Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should be provided to encourage residents to walk/bike to work, shopping, or other destinations in the area.*
- *The existing street grid pattern should be preserved and continued, ensuring that streets are connected to disperse traffic, shorten walking/biking trips.*
- *Design features that encourage safe, accessible streets should be employed – such as, narrower streets, on-street parking, sidewalks, street trees, and landscaped raised medians for minor collectors and wider streets.*

- *Encourage architecturally compatible neighborhood commercial development and redevelopment at appropriate locations, which would provide a suitable location for restaurants, grocery stores, hardware store, and similar appropriately-scaled retail establishments serving neighborhood resident.*

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.
- Civilian use of the St. Mary's River, intercostal waterway, and its tributaries has the potential to conflict with SUBASE operations, and must be coordinated.

Development Strategies

- *Develop overlay district standards to require Naval review of development applications within the Transition Zone.*