

Introduction

Neighborhoods are the building blocks of a city. Planning at the neighborhood level is fundamentally important to sustain and improve the quality of life a city has to offer. A neighborhood plan is the blueprint that helps a community evolve from where it is today to where its residents and property owners want it to be in the future.

Over the past few years, the Seagate community has seen an increase in requests for rezoning to higher residential densities. In response to this pressure, Seagate residents and planning staff agreed that a neighborhood study was needed. The purpose of the study, the Seagate Neighborhood Plan, is to identify specific long-term goals, aimed at improving the quality of life in the area, with strategies to achieve these goals. This plan enabled residents and property owners to be more active in charting their own course for the future of the community, thereby proactively preventing neighborhood decline, protecting property values, and building a sense of place.

The Wilmington Future Land Use Plan 2004-2025 (FLUP) identifies 13 distinct neighborhood areas. The Greenville Avenue/Seagate area is identified in the FLUP as a “threatened area.” Threatened areas are defined as those experiencing increased crime, decreased owner-occupancy, decreased property values, escalating code violations, and boarded-up houses. Good planning practice dictates that efforts should be made to assist in revitalizing less stable neighborhoods where there is demonstrated interest on the part of residents and property owners. To help achieve these goals, the FLUP calls for the development of neighborhood plans for each area as a supplement to the strategies in the FLUP. Small area plans are critical to effectively plan for transition since more in-depth analysis is needed to determine its impacts. The Future Land Use Plan designations are described in detail in the “Existing Conditions” section of this plan.

This plan provides specific recommendations and strategies intended to take precedence over the more general guidelines of the Future Land Use Plan. This document is adopted as an amendment to the Future Land Use Plan.

Vision Statement

Through the community input process, a vision statement was developed. This vision statement served as a guide throughout the plan development process and will continue to serve as an inspiration for the future of the community.

“Seagate is a cohesive, safe, environmentally sound, well-designed neighborhood that meets the daily needs of residents by promoting the history of the community, ensuring that development is compatible with neighborhood scale and character, and nurturing an environment that promotes community interaction and neighborhood pride.”

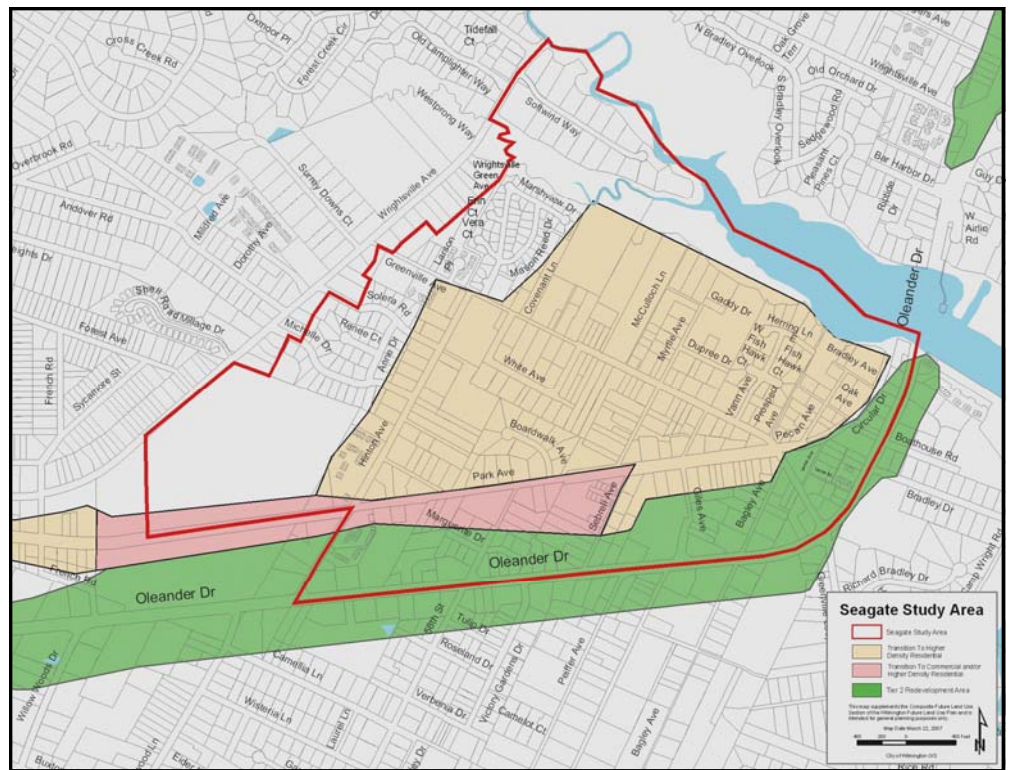
Boundaries

The study area is generally the triangle between Oleander Drive, Wrightsville Avenue and Bradley Creek. This area coincides with the areas designated on the Future Land Use Plan *Transition Map* and incorporates portions of the Oleander Drive *Tier 2 Redevelopment Area*.

Methodology

Extensive field research was conducted in the study area at the outset of the plan development process. In November 2006, a visual survey of each parcel was conducted to verify land uses and photograph each parcel. These photographs are provided as a separate appendix, available in the Development Services Department, the office of the City Clerk, and in the North Carolina Room at the New Hanover County Library (downtown branch).

Following documentation of the existing conditions in the area, four public input sessions were held in early 2007 at Seagate Baptist Church. These sessions were conducted by Planning Division staff to help determine the boundaries of the Seagate study area, to obtain information on the existing conditions in the area, to obtain feedback on the desired future for the Seagate community, and to present staff recommendations to stakeholders.



Boundaries of the Seagate study area (red) shown with the Future Land Use Plan *Transition Area* (tan),

Information collected through field research and public input sessions was combined to develop a vision statement for the neighborhood as well as recommended land uses, zoning, and design guidelines for new construction in the Seagate area. All of these recommendations are presented herein.

Seagate History*

The Seagate community has a rich history dating back over a century. The earliest maps on file with the New Hanover County Register of Deeds, dated 1914, show “Sea Gate Park” (Book 2, Page 31) developed on the site of an earlier town called “Greenville,” which was laid out in a rough square divided diagonally by the beach streetcar line (Park Avenue). The Allard-Newber House, circa 1905, is one of the earliest homes existing in



George Rogers Estate where the Seagate Post Office once operated.

Photo taken circa 1995

Photo courtesy of New Hanover County Library

Seagate.

The business and social center of old Seagate was commonly known as “The Hub,” and was located at the intersection of Greenville Avenue, Pecan Avenue, Park Avenue, Lame Street, Greenville Loop Road, and Bagley Avenue. At the center of this hub was the George Rogers home, where the Seagate Post Office operated until 1932. The old Seagate Station for the Tide Water Power Company Rail Road and grocery stores were also located at The Hub.

Although local oral history describes Seagate as a fishing village, Seagate’s history was greatly influenced by the evolution of transportation and growing interest in the beaches. The Tide Water Power Company, which dates back to 1850, operated the streetcars that carried passengers

from downtown Wilmington to Wrightsville Beach. The train ran along Park Avenue, with several stations located along the way, and crossed Bradley Creek to reach Wrightsville Beach. The Wrightsville Turnpike (now Wrightsville Avenue), alternatively known as “the shell road,” also brought passengers through Seagate. The Wrightsville Turnpike had three toll houses, one at 17th and Dock Streets, one in the Winterpark community, and one in Seagate at the Bradley Creek Causeway (demolished).



Train cars on the Bradley Creek trestle circa 1915

Photo courtesy of New Hanover County Library.

Also of note is “The Moorings,” once the home of Confederate Naval officer John Newland Maffitt, located at the terminus of Pecan Avenue on Bradley Creek. The Maffit home burned in the 1920s and was replaced by the rectory for St. Andrews-on-the-Sound Episcopal Church. Today, The Moorings is a private residence. The hallmark architecture of Seagate, however, is the cottage. The landscape of Seagate was historically dominated by these modest single-family cottages and bungalows.

*History compiled from the North Carolina Room at the New Hanover County Library, primarily from the notes of Thomas Newber.