

CHAPTER ONE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/POLICY PLAN

OVERVIEW

Introduction

The Town of Signal Mountain (the "Town") is not the same as it was 75 years ago. It is not even the same place that it was 50 or 25 years ago. Some might say that this is unfortunate. On the other hand, our Town will not be the same as it is now after the next 25, 50 or 75 years. During recent years, our Town has experienced fairly rapid population growth and an increase in the number of businesses along Taft Highway as a result of this population growth. There is no reason to believe that either type of growth will abate. Citizens began voicing concern several years ago that the Town was in danger of losing those values that make it unique. Citizen task forces and advisory committees urged the Town's government to develop a philosophic vision and with a practical range of policies to protect that vision and manage the pace of growth in the Town.

The mission of the Town of Signal Mountain is to be a community that preserves its small town atmosphere by managing growth and requiring development to be orderly and consistent; provides services that are necessary for the well-being and general welfare of its citizens; and endeavors to be a desirable and safe place in which families may live and grow.

In the strategic plan that follows, Town residents have the opportunity to get a clearer understanding of Signal Mountain's development history, demographics, land use plan, potential solutions to current problems, and recommendations concerning future development. This plan is intended to enable the Town to remain true to its heritage by endeavoring to preserve its predominantly small town, family residential character for the benefit of its citizens, now and in the future.

This Executive Summary provides an overview of the major policy recommendations included in the Plan. Sections Two, Three and Four provide more detail on the background, policies and implementation tools summarized in this Executive Summary. This Summary concentrates on the major policies and directs the reader to the various sections of the Plan in which more detail can be found.

Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map of December 1998 for the Town of Signal Mountain, which is incorporated in this Plan by this reference (the "Map") is recorded at Town Hall and on file at the Local Planning Office. Generally, the Map forecasts new residential development in the areas along Shackleford Ridge Road with these new neighborhoods being designed and built to the same density and lot size standards of existing subdivisions in the Town.

When the Planning Commission approved the Map, it specified in the resolution approving the Map that the Planning Commission would reevaluate the Map every three years to determine whether any changes need to be made to the Map. The Town Council shall also reevaluate the Map each time that the Planning Commission reevaluates the Map.

The Map reflects that the Planning Commission and the Town Council believe that the existing developed and undeveloped commercial and other non-residential properties located on the mountaintop are sufficient to serve the needs of the residents of the mountaintop, including the Town's residents, for at least the next few years. As evidence of this, it should be noted that most of the space in the Walden Commons commercial development that is located less than one quarter of a mile north of our Town on Taft Highway has remained vacant since construction was completed. As of September, 2000, Walden Commons was being advertized as an indoor storage facility on local billboards. In addition, there is a large BP station next door to Walden Commons that has remained vacant for some time. Each and every rezoning application for commercial or other non-residential use shall be properly considered in light of available vacant locations located in or near the Town that are already zoned for such use when and if such rezoning requests are made.

DEVELOPMENT POLICY PLAN

Development Goals

The overall goal of this land use and policy plan for the Town is to provide a quality living and working environment for the residents of the Town.

The following goals are general statements that the Town's Planning Commission believes reflect the desires of the citizens regarding the future development of the municipality.

1. To preserve, protect and enhance the quality of life in Signal Mountain while encouraging a continued harmonious and high standard of development.
2. To ensure that all residential developments provide pleasant and harmonious living environments, are served by adequate vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems and are served by adequate infrastructure.
3. To provide for concentrated commercial centers serving the needs of residents.
4. To prohibit the location of heavy industrial uses in the Town; the Planning Commission and the Council shall reevaluate this goal each time that they reevaluate the Town's Future Land Use Map (which is to occur every three years).

5. To provide adequate and efficient public facilities and services, and to provide a diversity of cultural and recreational opportunities.
6. To provide utility services that effectively and efficiently meet the current and anticipated needs of the Town.
7. To provide an efficient and effective transportation system in the Town with appropriate linkages and capacities.
8. To encourage the development of vacant land which has less natural restrictions and which has the necessary infrastructure.
9. To carefully review and consider development proposals on land with natural limitations to assure safety and compatibility of the proposed use of a parcel of land with the uses of other parcels of land located nearby, with no undue burden on taxpayers.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Both objectives and policies are utilized to achieve the goals established in the plan. Objectives are more specific, measurable statements of the desired goals. Policies represent rules or courses of action that indicate how the goals and objectives of the plan will be realized.

The objectives and policies contained in this document represent the official public policy guidelines concerning land use and transportation matters for decision-making by the Town of Signal Mountain. The policies are presented as guidelines to be followed by developers, builders, neighborhood groups, civic organizations, and other private and public interests engaged in and concerned about growth and development in the community. The policies are also presented so that interested individuals and groups can better anticipate the Town's decisions on future matters.

In the following section, general growth management objectives and policies are presented, followed by objectives and policies for each of the specific land use categories. These policies are the summation of various issues and concerns discussed in greater detail later in this document. This Executive Summary is intended to categorize policies, although several policies are noted in more than one category. The various remaining sections of this Plan should be consulted for background on policy development and for detail on sub-policies and implementation.

General Development and Growth Management

The Town of Signal Mountain fully anticipates continued growth and understands its importance as a part of those forces which may beneficially affect the community's quality of life. At the other end of the spectrum, the policy of "growth at any cost" has long-term detrimental impacts

and is not supported by the Town. The approach taken by the Town will be that of managed growth. To guide general growth and development, the following objectives and policies are adopted.

- A. Objective - Assure the integrity of the natural environment throughout the development process, protect and preserve the existing natural and developed features of the community that contribute to community identity, and preserve the fiscal stability of the Town relative to development and growth issues.

Policies

- 1. The Town shall examine the existing development plan review and approval process and site plan review/approval process to determine whether any changes need to be made to them in-order to try to ensure that all proposed developments will be in harmony with their natural and developed surroundings.

- B. Objective - Provide support for existing Historic Districts as well as future requests for inclusion in the Town's Historic Districts.

Policies

- 1. Emphasis should be given to the upkeep and enhancement of publicly owned historic features.
- 2. Encourage owners of private property that contain historic features to preserve those features in conjunction with any proposed development of the site and work closely with all applicable historic commission.
- 3. Study the development and enforcement of appropriate regulatory measures to preserve historically significant sites.
- 4. Consider the potential impact of development on the historic features of sites, and either require mitigation of adverse impacts where necessary or prohibit such development where such adverse impacts cannot be mitigated sufficiently.

Residential

The majority of the developed land in Signal Mountain is devoted to residential uses, consisting primarily of single-family dwellings, but also including multi-family dwellings. Variations on the traditional single-family dwelling subdivision have been discussed in Signal Mountain as a way to expand housing opportunities while maintaining the essential character of mountain life. Open space overlay zoning guidelines are seen as viable alternatives to previous development types. They will be included in the mix of housing types that may be allowed, subject to appropriate safeguards. To ensure the most appropriate development of existing and future

residential areas in Signal Mountain and its projected growth area, the following development objectives and policies are adopted:

- A. Objective - Provide for a variety of housing types and densities for a range of family incomes, sizes and lifestyles that reflect sensitivity to the natural environment as both an aesthetic and economic asset.

Policies

1. Open space overlay zoning guidelines have been adopted as a method of allowing residential development while preserving sensitive natural areas, where appropriate.
2. The Town has adopted and will enforce permitted densities for the various residential zones to assure continuity, appropriate respect for the natural environment, and availability of infrastructure.
3. The Town shall encourage the use of transitional land uses such as linear greenbelts of other design elements between residential neighborhoods of differing densities, and between residential and non-residential areas in order to enhance compatibility of land uses.

Utilities

The provision of adequate utilities for land development is costly to the general public. In order to achieve proper development and facilitate saving public funds, it is extremely important to coordinate the extension of utilities with the Town's development plan. Alternatives to utility extensions, such as the use of septic systems, must be carefully considered, and all relevant impacts assessed. Given the geography and topography of Signal Mountain, the use of septic systems and other alternative forms of handling wastewater is becoming more common. As such, the Town recognizes its responsibilities in assuring adequate and safe disposition of wastewater as well as the provision of the full range of municipal services. Therefore, the following objectives and policies should be or have been adopted by all agencies responsible for the operation or extension of all forms of utilities, with further detail provided later in this Plan:

- A. Objective - Provide adequate and efficient public utility facilities.

Policies

1. The Town shall develop a wastewater collection plan for undeveloped areas and for areas that are developed utilizing septic systems.
2. Promote efforts by the Electric Power Board to reduce electrical outages.
3. Develop and adopt a Master Plan for Water and Sewerage Services.

4. Require the provision of public services and facilities adequate for the type and level of planned development as a condition of development.
5. Require proper attention to stormwater management as a condition of development.

B. Objective - Provide appropriate standards and guidelines for utility facility improvements and extensions.

Policies

1. Improved septic system standards and inspection processes have been adopted.
2. Develop an education program for the use of septic systems.
3. Encourage the continuation of the current Electric Power Board street light policy and underground utility installation policy.

Transportation

The current and future transportation system in Signal Mountain and its growth area are affected by a number of factors. These factors include the existing street pattern, traffic impediments, major traffic generators, parking needs growth trends, new street construction and the locations of new developments. Although the Town cannot control all the factors which will influence its future transportation system, it can provide direction. The following objectives and policies are presented as a guide to achieving an adequate and efficient future transportation system:

A. Objective - Provide a transportation system that will adequately meet the future needs for growth and development.

Policies

1. Require all new developments to design and install a safe, convenient vehicular street system that functions according to the level of development proposed, and is built according to local standards.
2. Encourage the study of possible new road to the mountain.
3. Require traffic studies for all new commercial, and, where appropriate, other non-residential developments.
4. An Ordinance to control vehicle access from arterial, secondary and minor roads to undeveloped lots and lots proposed for creation by subdivision of property in all zoning districts was adopted in 1998 (Ordinance 98-5).

5. Develop a plan for consistent monitoring of the transportation network.
6. Establish appropriate standards for reviewing and approving major and minor street construction and improvements, for assessing and requiring the addition of alternative transportation methods where appropriate and standards for curb cuts.

B. Objective - Provide for alternative manners of transportation that are safe, functional, and appropriate to the environment.

Policies

1. Encourage development of a regional bikeway and pedestrian trail system.
2. Develop a program to enhance existing mountain stream greenways and create new greenways where appropriate.
3. Evaluate new development proposals for the need for pedestrian walks/paths.

Industrial

Signal Mountain does not rely on large-scale industry on the mountain to provide employment for its residents. Due to its location, excessive truck traffic is not practical and the Town's streets are not designed to accommodate large-scale shift changes. As of October, 2000, the establishment of an industrial base is not considered critical to the Town's economy.

A. Objective - To protect the Town from the adverse impacts associated with large-scale industrial development.

Policies

1. Maintain current practices and policies that do not allow the establishment of an industrial base in the Town. The Planning Commission and the Council shall reevaluate these practices and policies each time that they reevaluate the Town's Future Land Use Map (which is to occur every three years).

Vacant Land/Open Space

As a community grows, a significant amount of land will be pressed into urban development. Unfortunately, some of this land either cannot be developed or would be cost prohibitive to develop due to natural factors. In addition, some of this vacant land would best be utilized as open space. To guide the future development of the vacant lands in the Town, the following objectives and policies are adopted:

- A. Objective - Ensure that adequate open space is provide in the Town to enhance aesthetic concerns, and ensure that appropriate standards and guidelines are followed for development of vacant land.

Policies

1. Open space overlay zoning has been adopted as a method of allowing residential development while preserving sensitive natural areas, where appropriate.
2. Places of rare natural beauty and areas of historic interest should be preserved and maintained.
3. Mature vegetation, especially along stream banks should be protected from indiscriminate removal in order to enhance the aesthetic value of the landscape as well as to control erosion.
4. Develop a program to enhance existing mountain stream greenways and create new greenways where appropriate.

Commercial and Other Non-Residential Uses

- A. Objective - Locate new commercial and other permitted non-residential activities in pre-designated, concentrated areas to reduce adverse effects.

Policies

1. New commercial and other non-residential developments must be located in areas that are zoned for the particular commercial or other non-residential activity and are in accordance with the Town's Future Land Use Plan Map. The Planning Commission and the Council shall reevaluate these practices and policies each time that they reevaluate the Town's Future Land Use Plan Map, which is to occur every three years.
2. Require traffic studies for all new commercial and other non-residential developments and high density residential developments.

- B. Objective - Ensure that all new commercial and other non-residential developments meet appropriate standards and guidelines.

Policies

1. Create a plan for improved streetscapes in commercial areas.

2. An Ordinance to control vehicle access from arterial, secondary and minor roads to undeveloped lots and lots proposed for creation by subdivision of property in all zoning districts was adopted in 1998 (Ordinance 98-5).