

## ***Chapter 1: Land Use***

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### **1.1 Overview**

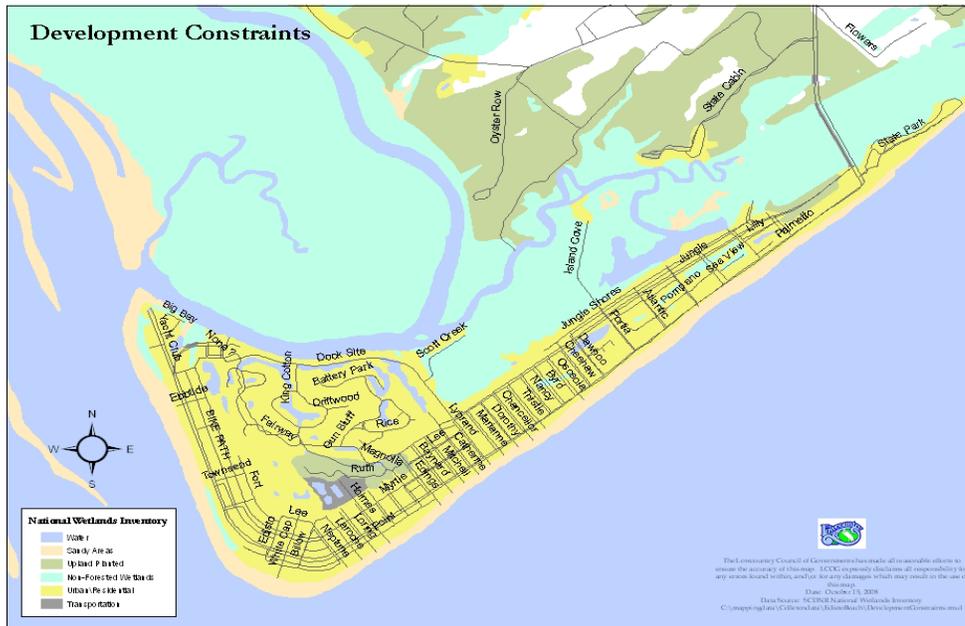
The Town of Edisto Beach is faced with the combined challenge of accommodating new development while preserving the quality of its existing environment, which is what continues to attract new residents, investors, builders and visitors.

This chapter outlines a basic framework for future development for the Town of Edisto Beach. The concepts included in this chapter are designed specifically to guide future development in ways that make efficient use of existing and planned public facilities and services, while preserving and extending the distinctive character of the Town. The framework is not intended to be a detailed blueprint for future development, but rather is intended as a guide for making development decisions, both public and private. The recommendations included in this chapter should serve as guidance for future detailed development strategies and regulations, including a thoroughly updated Zoning Ordinance, in the Town.

Existing land use, streets and roads and natural resources (including environmentally sensitive areas) patterns have helped determine existing patterns of growth in the Town and will continue to do so in the future. (See Map 1.1 on the following page.) More than almost any other community in the Lowcountry, the fact that Edisto Beach occupies most of a barrier island, connected to the mainland by one narrow causeway, conditions and limits how much future growth can be accommodated.

Based on these geographical conditions, and because the Town started out as a resort community, Edisto Beach has developed differently than most communities in the area. Historically, American towns and cities have grown up from the core outward, starting with small settlements that combined both residential and business uses in the same building or in close proximity to each other. Later, uses were separated, with the historic center of the community becoming a mostly commercial uses downtown and residential sections located away from the center.

Map 1.1



In Edisto Beach, with the ocean and the beach as the joint *raison d'être* for its existence, homes and cottages were originally located along the beachfront, first near the north end of the island, and the oldest homes are still located there. As vacant land became unavailable, new beachfront sections were opened to the south and construction also extended inland. A true downtown never evolved. Since the population consisted generally of summer residents and visitors, there was no need for many of the professional, business and retail services found in ordinary year-round communities. Even though the full-time population of Edisto Beach has grown since 1990 (see “Demographics” section of the Plan), there are still not enough people living in the Town year-round to support most businesses and services. Part-time resident and visitor numbers are adequate to sustain only a small number of specialized retailers and others who cater to those markets.

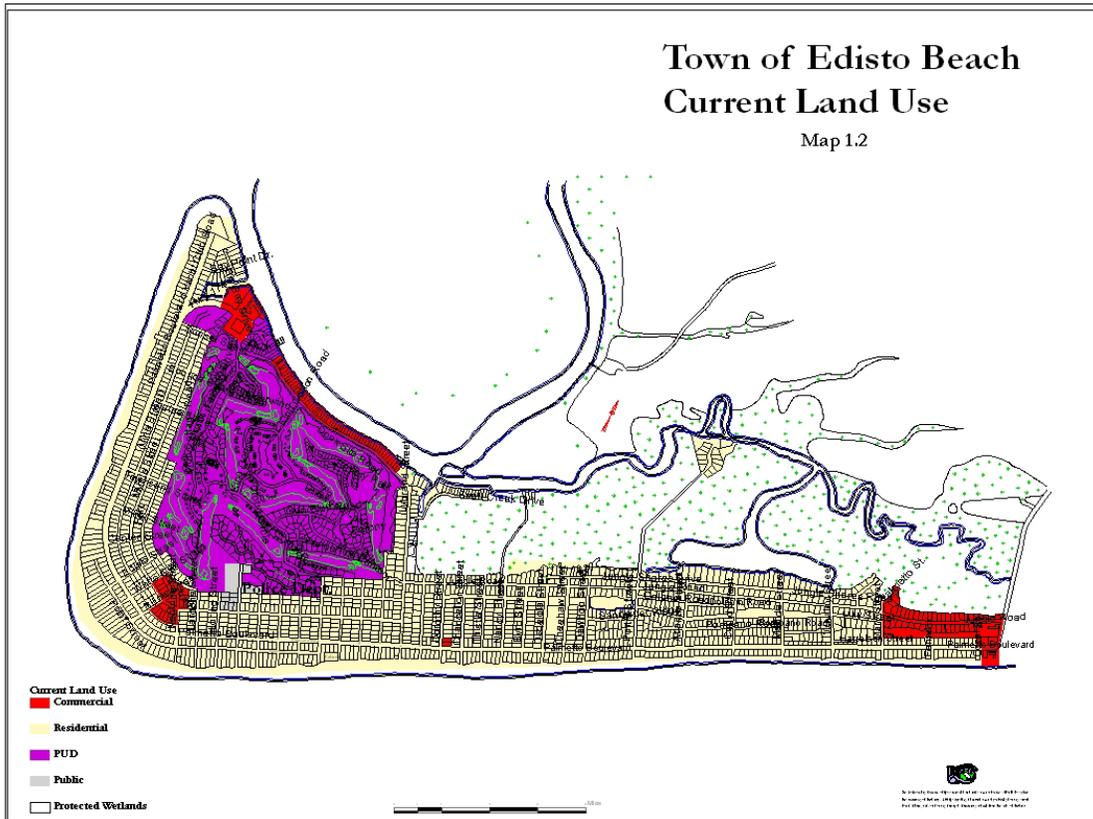
## 1.2 Current Land Uses

Map 1.2, on the following page, shows a general map of current land uses. Most of the developed land in Edisto Beach is used for residential purposes. Zoning permits single-family houses, duplexes, apartments, and condominiums in specific districts, but the predominant housing form is single-family dwellings.

Several small commercial areas exist in the Town of Edisto Beach, primarily accommodating grocery and convenience stores, specialty retail and services, offices and restaurants that serve both residents and visitors. Existing commercial development is primarily concentrated at the north end of the island, on Palmetto Boulevard where Highway 174 enters the Town, and on Dock Site Road on the marsh side of the island across from the Ocean Ridge Resort entrance. A few other small sites exist scattered throughout the Town.

The preservation of open space has been important to Edisto Beach. The Town has purchased seven lots on Jungle Road and constructed a pocket park near the entrance to the island, a lot across the street on the same road that is currently used for parking and the former Bell Buoy property for a water front park and related historic/cultural uses. Other small, scattered sites throughout the Town hold such ancillary uses as wells for the Town water system and pumping stations for the sewer system.

Map 1.2



A second unique public land use area near the Town is the Edisto Beach State Park located at the east end of the island, and extending north of the Town's limits onto Edisto Island. The 1,255 acre park offers camping and day recreational activities on both the beach and the marsh as well as in interior areas.

The Planned Unit Development District (PUD) land use allows for the flexible arrangement of a variety of uses if the area in question is planned as a unified development with commercial, residential, and recreational land uses designed to complement and interact with each other, and the transportation network designed as an integral part of the parcel. The Wyndham Vacation Resort®—Ocean Ridge is currently the only PUD district in the Town.

## 1.3 Development Trends

Edisto Beach's relatively remote location and its history and continuing role as a vacation and second home location, combined with its increasing popularity with retirees, will prevent it from being seriously affected by the need for economic diversification that is a priority for other communities throughout the Lowcountry. However, other economic, market and social changes are expected to impact the Town. They include an aging population (in Edisto Beach and the rest of the US), a growing appreciation for the features and benefits of traditional communities, and a desire to incorporate the preservation of historic and natural resources into new development and redevelopment. The ongoing financial and economic downturn is resulting in a significant reduction in building and development activity and an equally significant reduction in the ability of individuals and families to purchase second homes and for the older population to retire and move to new locations. Continuing high gasoline prices are enhancing the popularity of communities where it is possible to use walking, cycling or small open vehicles (i.e. golf carts, etc.) as a means of transportation. Furthermore, the designation of Highway 174 as an historic byway will increase the attractiveness of Edisto Beach.

On the ground, these trends will result in less pressure for growth in the short-term. Over the longer term, different, and possibly less expensive, approaches to development are likely to be required, including:

- infill and redevelopment in and near existing built-up areas;
- smaller residential structures;
- innovative approaches to connecting new and existing development by means of bicycle, pedestrian and small open vehicle facilities;
- development of the Bell Buoy Park

All of these potential changes can accrue to the advantage of Edisto Beach if the appropriate land use regulations (that is, an updated zoning ordinance and new design guidelines) are used to make and implement decisions.

## 1.4 Land Use Issues

- Even land designated for commercial uses within the Town of Edisto Beach is increasingly being developed as single-family residential and new businesses are locating outside the present municipal boundaries. This issue is particularly important to the Town of Edisto Beach for two reasons. *First, the Town is often asked to provide municipal services to those businesses outside the limits, while not receiving tax revenues.* Second, the Town of Edisto Beach has only one entranceway, and the Town has an interest in protecting the visual integrity of that corridor as well as regulating the traffic flow along it. This is evident by the Town leadership and support which helped lead to Highway 174 being designated as a federal scenic byway on the Island. Pushing commercial development outside the Town limits local government control. Therefore, the Town can either direct development to obtain a viable commercial center within its boundaries or can work toward annexing or gaining extraterritorial jurisdiction over commercial development in the area.
- The Town of Edisto Beach currently has no planning control over other areas directly adjacent to its borders. The Town is primarily interested in protecting the visual and aesthetic character of the entranceway, but is also concerned with allowing room for future growth of the Town. All possible options should be thoroughly assessed before a specific one is selected.
- The Town has already acquired some land for permanent open space purposes, but needs more to meet the present and future needs of Edisto Beach. To provide the maximum aesthetic and recreational benefits for present and future Edisto Beach residents and visitors, to the extent feasible, open spaces should be linked. In new developments and in the redevelopment of older areas, open space allocations should be required, and those new open spaces should be integrated with new and existing sidewalks, walking and bicycle trails, natural waterways and wetlands and other open space.

## **Goals**

- Promote land use efficiency, quality, and the preservation of local character.

## **Recommendations**

### **Current Land Use**

- Determine the physical and environmental abilities of the Town of Edisto Beach's natural resources to accommodate future development.
- Encourage continued focus on low density residential land uses with limited clustered commercial development.
- Continue to support a program to prohibit and methods to eliminate collection systems that directly discharge storm water to surface waters other than the lagoon system designed for that purpose. Such a program will impede non-point pollution from entering sensitive natural areas.
- Continue to participate in the ocean water quality monitoring program.

### **New Developments**

- Ensure that development regulations are written to ensure the preservation and the extension of the unique character, appearance and culture of Edisto Beach. An updated Zoning and Development Ordinance should be developed to ensure that regulations reflect the policies and recommendations contained in this Plan.

- Utilize the performance standards of the updated Zoning Ordinance to promote the appropriate distribution, scale and pattern of land uses throughout the Town and its planning area.
- Evaluate all development proposals for compliance with these updated regulations.
- Develop design guidelines as part of the updated zoning ordinance sensitive to the natural environment and the community's objectives.
- Require all developers to contribute easements, land, or funds to a trail/bicycle system which provides linkages between parks and recreational areas.
- Require interconnectivity of new development and redevelopment projects with the existing built-up areas via pedestrian and bicycle trails through the use of zoning and incentives.
- Create provisions in an updated Zoning Ordinance that encourages preservation of older homes and traditional resources of Edisto Beach. The updated ordinance should continue to limit square footage, but it should also create regulations and guidelines that ensure the preservation of the Town's uniqueness.
- Require developers to take responsibility for the infrastructure needs of proposed developments. Impact fees are needed to properly share the costs between new and existing users. The fees should be codified to ensure uniform enforcement.
- Allow Town staff to approve plat changes involving minor subdivisions

- Based on recommendations developed in the Area Wide Water Quality Management Plan, review future land use and development standards to ensure compatibility.

### **Rental/Time Share Units**

As part of the preservation and of the Town's unique identity, Edisto Beach should consider the following issues for future policy development:

- Institute a systematic monitoring by location, duration and occupancy to determine trends of short-term rentals and to assess environmental, economic and traffic impacts island wide.

### **Future Land Use Policy Issues**

- Complete and expand the stormwater runoff project to ensure that drainage from land use activities has a rate of flow and volume characteristics as near to predevelopment conditions as possible to protect water quality.
- Encourage development along Highway 174 that enhances the Town's image and sense of community while encouraging safe and efficient traffic flow along the corridor. Continue discussions with Colleton County and begin discussions with Charleston County and the affected landowners about land use and development controls, whether through annexation or by extra-jurisdictional means. A long term plan to direct development in the areas adjacent to the Town in both Colleton and Charleston Counties should be created to maintain the Town's quality of life and guide development that affects the quality of life of residents and visitors.