

Community Assessment Tybee Island Master Plan



Submitted to:

**Georgia Department of
Community Affairs**

By:

City of Tybee Island, Georgia

March 2007



COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Tybee Island Master Plan



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Introduction

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) administers Rules for Local Comprehensive Planning for all Qualified Local Governments in Georgia. The purpose of this program is to provide guidance for long range planning that will accomplish the following goals as outlined by the DCA:

- Involve all segments of the community in developing a vision for the community's future;
- Generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community;
- Engage the interest of citizens in implementing the plan; and
- Provide a guide to everyday decision making for use by the local government officials and other community leaders.

The Rules of Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Chapter 110-12-1: Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, "Local Planning Requirements," were recently updated in May 2005. The updated guidelines require the completion of three major elements, the Community Assessment, Community Participation Plan, and Community Agenda as part of the Comprehensive Plan. The Community Assessment summarizes the local government's evaluation of its development patterns, issues and opportunities, and level of compliance with the DCA's Quality Community Objectives. The Community Participation Plan is a proposal for a community involvement program that will offer a wide range of opportunities to local citizens interested in participating in the development of the Comprehensive Plan. Lastly, the Community Agenda includes an update of the material in the Assessment based on public input, as well as a short and long- term work program and list of policies for land use decision-making.

The Community Assessment and Community Participation Plan must be submitted to DCA for approval prior to the start of the public involvement phase and completion of the Community Agenda. Therefore, the Assessment and Participation Plan must be received by DCA well in advance of the final deadline for Comprehensive Plan submittal. The City of Tybee Island plans to submit the full plan by October 31, 2007.

This document represents the Community Assessment for the City of Tybee Island. It is being submitted to DCA along with the Community Participation Plan and a Technical Addendum containing a detailed census and inventory data assessment. Submittal in February 2007 will allow the City the time necessary to conduct a public involvement program and finalize a Community Agenda prior to the DCA mandated deadline.

The format of this document considers the outline proposed in the State Planning Recommendations, as well as Chapter 110-12-1 of the Rules.

- Section 1 addresses development patterns including current land use, proposed character areas, and areas requiring special attention.
- Section 2 identifies issues and opportunities as they relate to all of the traditional elements including, but not limited to, population, economic development, housing, natural and cultural resources, and land use.
- Section 3 provides a summary of the analysis of the Quality Community Objectives and the City's implementation status.
- Section 4 provides a summary of the Data Assessment of the 2000 Census and community inventory, which is fully detailed in the Technical Addendum.

The City of Tybee Island is currently contending with several issues related to a changing population demographics, increasing property values, and economic development as it relates to drawing and retaining appropriate businesses. The City is fully committed to the comprehensive planning process and is hopeful that this Master Plan will provide an outline for the following:

- Preservation of the City's natural resources;
- Adequate regulation of new development and redevelopment projects;
- Creation of incentives for historic preservation;
- Creation of an alternative transportation network and a safe pedestrian environment;
and
- Development of the framework for an economic development strategy that will revitalize commercial areas and support the tourism industry.

It is the goal of this plan to preserve the quality of life for both seasonal and permanent residents.

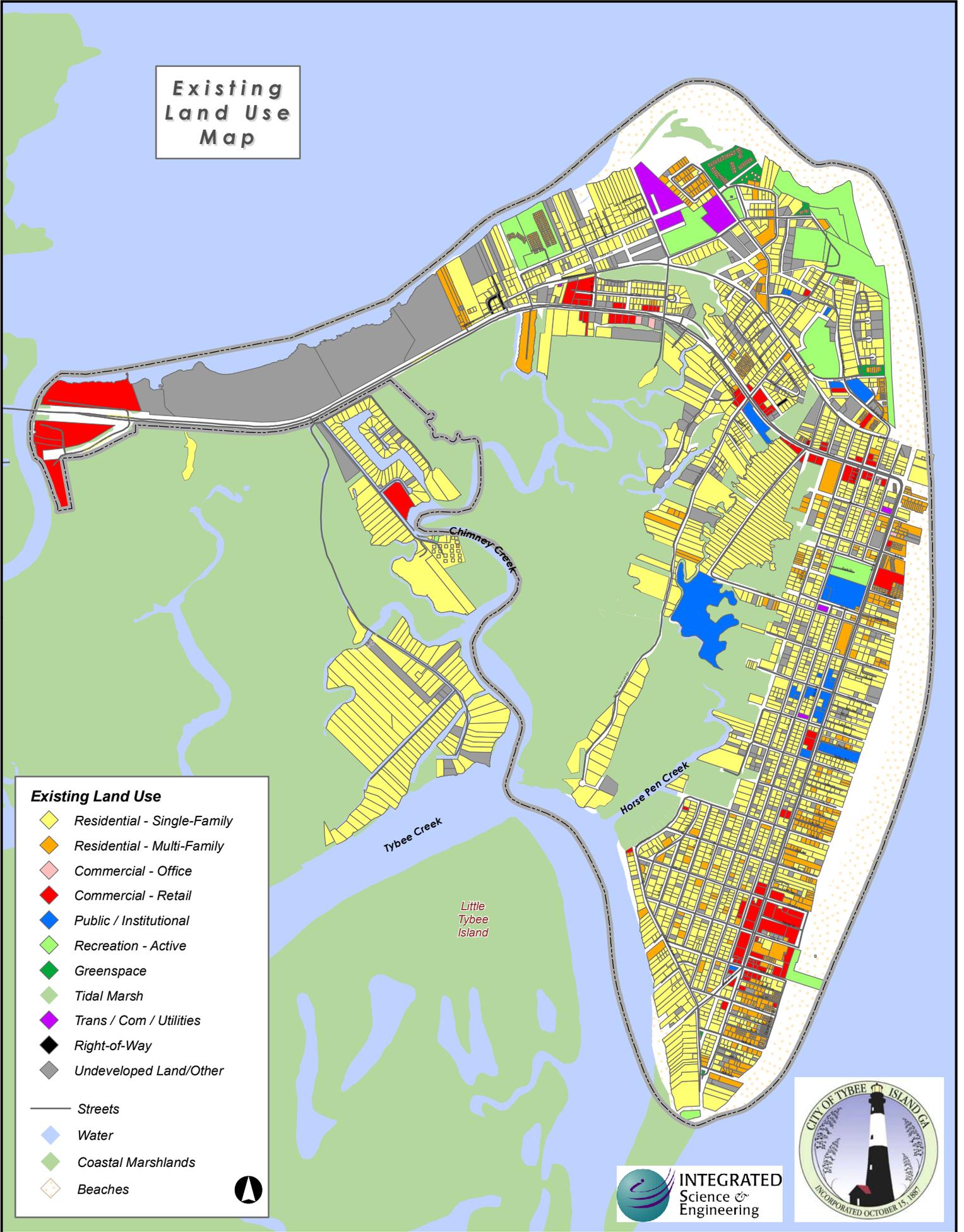
1. Analysis of Development Patterns

1.1. Existing Land Use

The first step in defining a community vision for future growth is to assess existing development patterns and current land use. The future vision must relate to existing development patterns if the goals developed are to be viable and achievable. In order to have an accurate record of the existing land use on a parcel-by-parcel basis, the City of Tybee Island conducted a field survey of existing land use in October 2006. The Standard Land Use categories described in the new DCA Rules for Comprehensive Planning were used as the basis for the Tybee Island's land use collection. The City opted to use additional categories, consistent with those used on the Chatham County-City of Savannah Comprehensive Plan for this assessment. The survey was conducted with a field tablet equipped with both GPS and GIS software. The electronic data meets the requirements set forth in the Rules and a map of current land uses is included in Figure 1 (page 4). For a full-size map please see Appendix A.

- **Residential – Single-Family.** This category is used to describe single-family homes that occupy a single lot.
- **Residential – Multi-Family.** This category is used to describe instances where multiple residential structures are located on a single lot (i.e. Mobile home park), or instances where one structure contains multiple units (i.e. duplexes or condos).
- **Commercial – Office.** This category is used to describe professional office space. Uses that fall into this category include law offices, doctors'/dentists' offices, realtors, etc.
- **Commercial – Retail.** This category is used to describe service related commercial activities, and includes, but is not limited to uses that include bars, restaurants, shops, lodging, gas stations, grocery stores, etc.
- **Public / Institutional.** This category is used to describe certain federal, state, or local government uses, and institutional land uses. Government uses include city halls, government building complexes, police and fire stations, public libraries, post offices, schools, etc. Examples of institutional uses include colleges, churches, hospitals, etc.
- **Recreation – Active.** This category is used to describe areas of land specifically designed for active recreational use. Uses typically include parks, playgrounds, beaches, public swimming pools, etc.
- **Greenspace.** This category is used to describe designated areas of open space that are permanently protected and/or designed for passive recreation.
- **Tidal Marsh.** This category is used to describe undeveloped natural and environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development.
- **Transportation / Communications / Utilities.** This category is used to describe tracks of land dedicated for use by public utilities. Infrastructure for electricity, gas, and water services such as power plants, sewage treatment plants, etc. are included in this category.
- **Right-of-Way.** This category is used to describe areas of undeveloped land used by public/private entities as a means of access to areas requiring routine maintenance or unopened roadways.
- **Undeveloped Land / Other.** This category is used to describe lots or tracts of land that are not currently developed for a specific use, but are likely to be developed in the future.

Existing Land Use Map



1.2. Community Character Areas

The DCA has required the development of “Character Areas” as part of the new Rules for Comprehensive Planning to acknowledge the visual and functional differences of various neighborhoods. By identifying desirable neighborhood characteristics, the City of Tybee Island will be able to provide more specific guidance for future development through appropriate planning and implementation within each Character Area. The Character Areas identified in Figure 2 (page 15) and defined below identify areas that presently have unique or special characteristics that need to be preserved or have potential to evolve into unique areas. It is important to note while reviewing the Character Area map and descriptions that the identified character may not be accurate for every single parcel, but is rather the overall defining character of the area as a whole. The development strategies identified within each Character Area are not requirements, but recommendations for the desired types of development and redevelopment. The strategies will be utilized to help define short-term activities and long-term policies for future growth within the City of Tybee Island. The following development strategies should be considered citywide, where appropriate:

- Architectural and landscaping standards should be developed and enforced to reflect the character of the area.
- Enforce existing City codes, development standards, and design guidelines.
- Historic structures should be identified and preserved, and the City should provide incentives for their restoration.
- New development, redevelopment, and restoration should be consistent with existing character of the area in terms of architecture, use and density.

1.2.1 Arts, Eats, Eco Activity Center

This area functions as an activity center with a concentration of uses including shopping, crafts, restaurants, and eco-tourism. There are a higher percentage of year-round residents and single-family homes within this character area.

Recommended Development Strategies:

- New development, redevelopment, and restoration should be consistent with existing character of the area in terms of architecture, use and density.



- Down zoning within the Highway 80 commercial corridor should be discouraged. Establish a set of standards for a maximum percentage of residential use on a per parcel basis to allow for mixed-use.
- Encourage commercial and mixed-use infill development and redevelopment along Highway 80 commercial corridor.
- Architectural and landscaping standards should be developed and enforced to reflect the character of the area.
- Enhance pedestrian movement through streetscape improvements.
- Support the continued development of the Tybee Island bikeway including bike lanes and multi-use trails.
- Establish standards and design guidelines for signage. Develop a “theme” for signage to ensure that it is consistent and fits with the character of the area and the island as a whole.
- Allow for an appropriate mix of retail, residential, and tourist related uses consistent with the vision of the plan.

1.2.2 Back River Neighborhood

This area is the unique residential neighborhood located on the south side of the island adjacent to the Back River. Characteristics of this neighborhood include waterfront lots, beach access along the Back River, public access to water, open space, and scenic views. A few low impact commercial service uses are also located within this area.



Recommended Development Strategies:

- New development, redevelopment, and restoration should be consistent with existing character of the area in terms of architecture, use and density.
- Encourage traffic calming measures to create safer pedestrian mobility.
- Historic structures in this area should be restored and/or preserved whenever possible.
- The City should provide appropriate incentives for historic restoration projects.
- Establish and enforce a set of landscaping and architectural guidelines to preserve the scenic value of the area.
- Preserve and enhance public access to waterways and beaches.

1.2.3 Beaches

The beaches character area includes the undeveloped natural and environmentally sensitive beachfront and dune system not suitable for private development. This area provides recreational opportunities for residents and a destination for tourists. Beachfront locations and access is an amenity and serves to increase property values and tax revenues for the City. Protecting this community resource is an essential to the quality of life on Tybee Island.



Recommended Development Strategies:

- Property should be maintained in a natural state.
- Prohibit any development of beach or dune system.
- Continue to buffer development from beaches and dune system through development regulations.
- Utilize the dune crossing boardwalks to provide education on the beach/dune system, local flora and fauna, and natural resources protection.
- Promote this area for recreation and as a destination for tourists.
- Promote the conservation of greenspace adjacent to beaches and dune system.
- Develop a plan to maintain beach access dune crossings with the least amount of impact to the dune system.
- Investigate a plan to reinstall some portion of the Strand along the beachfront adjacent to the Pavilion.

1.2.4 Beachfront Neighborhood

This area includes the neighborhood adjacent to the beach on the east side of Butler Avenue. It is defined by a mix of single-family, multi-family, condominium, and commercial properties. General characteristics of the area include old-growth trees, on-street parking, wide streets, alleys, and public & private beach access.



Recommended Development Strategies:

- New development, redevelopment, and restoration should be consistent with existing character of the area in terms of architecture, use and density.
- Historic structures in this area should be restored and/or preserved whenever possible.
- The City should provide appropriate incentives for historic restoration projects.
- The pedestrian environment should be enhanced where feasible.
- Old growth trees should be preserved.
- Public beach access should be preserved, maintained, and enhanced as necessary.

1.2.5 Coastal Marshlands

Coastal marshlands are undeveloped natural and environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development. These areas provide a habitat for a number of marine and wildlife species and are among the richest source for nutrients in the world. Marshlands supply a buffer against flooding and erosions and offer natural recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.



Recommended Development Strategies:

- Property should be maintained in a natural state.
- Restrict development and encroachment into this area.

- Promote the use of conservation easements to protect marshland that is in private ownership, i.e. King's Grants.
- Promote areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.
- Support the use of these areas for shellfish aquaculture as appropriate.
- Encourage the restoration of oyster reefs through established programs.
- Require the use of naturally vegetated buffers adjacent to marshland to mitigate the impacts of development.

1.2.6 Inland Cottage Neighborhood

This character area describes the traditional neighborhood along the west side of Butler, which contains narrow, tree-lined streets laid out in a grid pattern. The area is varied in land use as it contains permanent residential properties, multi-family homes, rental properties, parks, low-impact commercial establishments, and public buildings. Residential development within this area contains both traditional and historic cottage homes, large new residential houses and multi-family units. This area provides for alternative transportation routes by providing an alternative automotive travel route to Butler Avenue, a bike path, and stop signs to slow the movement of vehicular traffic creating a more pedestrian friendly environment.



Recommended Development Strategies:

- New development, redevelopment, and restoration should be consistent with existing character of the area in terms of architecture, use and density.
- Permit only compatible uses including low density residential, public/institutional, and low impact commercial.
- Develop and implement design and architectural standards.
- Implement streetscape improvement to improve the pedestrian/bicycle environment and encourage safety and mobility.
- Historic structures in this area should be restored and/or preserved whenever possible.
- The City should provide appropriate incentives for historic restoration projects.

1.2.7 Lazaretto Creek Maritime District

This area is comprised of developed and undeveloped land along Highway 80, adjacent to Lazaretto Creek that serves as a “community gateway” to the island. This area functions as a maritime and activity center for residents and tourists and offers public recreational access to the water via Lazaretto Creek. Uses currently found in this district include the shrimping industry, dolphin tours, parasailing, kayaking, recreational boating, restaurants, and residential properties.



Recommended Development Strategies:

- Establish standards and design guidelines for signage. Develop a “theme” for signage to ensure that it is consistent and fits with the character of the area and the island as a whole.
- Consider the design and installation of community gateway signage and associated beautification measures along Highway 80 as you enter/leave the island.
- Allow for development of retail, restaurants, and other services that serve the year-round and seasonal population.
- Provide signage for landmarks and commercial businesses in this area.
- Improve the pedestrian environment to allow for pedestrian/bicycle movement throughout the area.

1.2.8 Marshfront Neighborhood

These neighborhoods are fronted by coastal marshlands and contain a wide mix of new and old residential development and a sporadic mix of commercial properties. Coastal marshlands surround these areas and many lots contain access to the water via tidal creeks. The surrounding marsh provides scenic views, natural resources, a recreational amenity, and dock access to the water. Due to the close proximity of marshland and local waterways, land use and protection of natural resources



requires special consideration in these neighborhoods. The nature of existing zoning classifications has preserved some undeveloped land within these areas.

Recommended Development Strategies:

- New development, redevelopment, and restoration should be consistent with existing character of the area in terms of architecture, use and density.
- Permit only uses compatible with the character of the area.
- Permit only uses that will not adversely impact the marsh environment.
- The City should establish and enforce marsh buffer standards, and identify uses that will be allowed within the buffer and those that will be prohibited.
- Establish landscaping and architectural standards to maximize to scenic value of the area.

1.2.9 North Beach Neighborhood

This area contains a significant amount of natural, cultural, and historic resources. The broad collection of land uses also includes new larger-scale residential developments, traditional cottage-style homes, townhomes, condominiums, restaurants, and other public uses. Two of the City's most notable historic sites are located in this area including the Tybee Lighthouse and Fort Screven Museum/Battery. Other characteristics include narrow streets, street trees, public and private beach access, public parking, pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and public parks.



Recommended Development Strategies:

- New development, redevelopment, and restoration should be consistent with existing character of the area in terms of architecture, use and density.
- Develop and implement design and architectural standards.
- Establish standards and design guidelines for signage. Develop a “theme” for signage to ensure that it is consistent and fits with the character of the area and the island as a whole.
- Historic structures in this area should be restored and/or preserved whenever possible.
- The City should provide appropriate incentives for historic restoration projects.
- Pursue Historic District/Historic Structure designations for appropriate areas within this district.
- Ensure continued preservation of old growth trees, parks, and greenspace.

- Allow for the development of low-impact commercial uses near to public amenities including North Beach access, Lighthouse, and Fort Screven.
- Support the continued development of the Tybee Island bikeway including bike lanes and multi-use trails.

1.2.10 Riverfront Neighborhood

This Character Area includes the developed and undeveloped area north of Highway 80. This area contains a significant amount of natural and environmentally sensitive areas with public and private access to the Savannah Harbor. There is existing residential development and the potential for additional development within this area. The neighborhood also has the potential to be connected to the Arts, Eats, and Eco Activity Center, North Beach Neighborhood, and McQueen's Trail/Fort Pulaski via the proposed multi-use trail/greenway system.



Recommended Development Strategies:

- New development, redevelopment, and restoration should be consistent with existing character of the area in terms of architecture, use and density.
- Permit only uses compatible with the existing character of the area, as well as uses that will not have an adverse impact on the marsh and riverfront environment.
- Establish a set of landscaping and architectural standards to maximize to scenic value of the area.
- Continue to work to preserve Battery Halleck (and any other archeological resources) and its connection to multi-use trail system and Fort Pulaski.
- Encourage projects that will implement the proposed multi-use trail system.
- Consider the potential to provide additional parking within this area with transportation to other areas of the island.

1.2.11 Tybrisa Neighborhood

This Character Area is defined by a dense mix of residential uses that includes single-family, multi-family, and vacation rentals. The area is mainly defined by its proximity to the Strand, beach, and pier. There is a high ratio of rental property and seasonal residents in this neighborhood.



Recommended Development Strategies:

- Future development and redevelopment should be very pedestrian-oriented with safe connections to adjacent neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- This area is appropriate for residential development that contains a mix of densities and housing options (i.e. multi-family homes, townhouses, condos, apartments, etc.).
- Mixed-uses should be encouraged to provide for the daily needs of residents and tourists.

1.2.12 The Strand

This area is the traditional “main street” district of the island that acts as a focal point for residents and tourists. The main street area provides for a mix of uses including shopping, restaurants, hotels/B&Bs, museums/public education, and the Tybee Pavilion and Pier. Due to the many activities available in this area, there is a significant amount of pedestrian traffic. Public parking is also available in this area.



Recommended Development Strategies:

- Downtown development should include a mix of uses (i.e. retail, office, restaurants, etc.).
- Allow only uses that are compatible with desired main street character and uses.

- This area is appropriate for residential development that contains a mix of densities and housing options (i.e. multi-family homes, townhouses, condos, apartments, etc.).
- Implement streetscape improvements to encourage safe pedestrian mobility and improve stormwater drainage.
- Landscaping and beautification projects should be implemented and maintained to improve the aesthetics of the area.
- Establish a set of landscaping and architectural standards to maximize the scenic value of the area.
- Historic structures in this area should be restored and/or preserved whenever possible.
- The City should provide appropriate incentives for historic restoration projects.
- Encourage infill development or redevelopment of existing vacant property and structures.
- Encourage redevelopment of under-utilized properties.
- Develop a plan to “re-install” Strand boardwalk/multi-use trail.

Community Character Map

- Character Areas**
- Arts, Eats, Eco Activity Center
 - Back River Neighborhood
 - Beaches
 - Beachfront Neighborhood
 - Coastal Marshlands
 - Inland Cottage Neighborhood
 - Lazaretto Creek Maritime District
 - Marshfront Neighborhood
 - North Beach Neighborhood
 - Riverfront Neighborhood
 - The Strand District
 - Tybrisa Neighborhood
 - City Limits

