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## **INTRODUCTION**

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The Land Use element deals with the development characteristics of the land. It considers existing and future land use by categories including residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, forestry, mining, public and quasi-public, recreation, parks, open space and vacant or undeveloped land. This element is influenced by all previously described plan elements. The findings, projections and conclusions from each of the previous six elements will influence the amount of land needed for various uses.

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## **EXISTING LAND USE PATTERNS AND ZONING**

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Awendaw is a rural community consisting of numerous residential enclaves along Seewee and Doar Roads. Highway 17 has a sprinkling of residences and is the home to the majority of Awendaw's businesses. Between these residential and business pockets, the Town is divided by a vast network of undeveloped forest—primarily the National Forest and several large privately owned parcels. The businesses along Highway 17 occur primarily where Seewee and Doar Roads intersect Highway 17.

Development in Awendaw is controlled by the Awendaw Zoning Ordinance, the Comprehensive Plan, SCDHEC waste treatment regulations and state and federal environmental regulations. The majority of Awendaw is zoned Agricultural General which permits a residence for every 30,000 square feet of land if it meets SCDHEC's standards. The zoning ordinance has a provision that should public water or sewer become available, residential lot sizes may be reduced to 12, 500 square feet. As discussed in the Community Facilities Element, the Town of Awendaw is installing its first phase of a public water system. As anticipated, nearly everyone for whom the system will be available has already signed up for this service. By mid-2005 the public water system will be operating and the potential for requests seeking density increases will certainly follow.

Commercial development is permitted on land zoned General Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial and Planned Development. Light industrial activities are only permitted on Planned Development zoned land. For the past several years the Town has zoned commercial projects as Planned Developments because this is the only commercial category that enables the Town to carefully evaluate each development phase. Currently these intense developments are recommended for the major intersections of Highway 17. When evaluating a proposed rezoning to Planned Development (PD) for a light industrial or intense commercial project, the proposal must not have a detrimental impact on the surrounding area. Each phase of a PD must be approved by the Planning Commission and includes a review of the site plan, landscaping and architecture. This ensures that the developer works with staff and the Planning Commission to accomplish their projects in the best interest of the Town. The recently



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**AWENDAW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

completed first phase of Seewee Outpost, the general store/gas station, is an example of a project which underwent the Planned Development review process. This project is an

example of how the Town's requirements resulted in a design solution that is of high standards.

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**FUTURE LAND USE PATTERNS**

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**Commercial**

The development of Mount Pleasant is inching further and further north up Highway 17 towards Awendaw. Increasingly, Awendaw is receiving inquiries from developers seeking property for light industrial, commercial, and office development. Investors are seeking land for future large-scale residential developments. These facts and the possibility of increased residential density due to public water, serve as a wake-up call for the citizens of Awendaw. The time has come to take a hard look at how the Town can best direct these inevitable changes over the next five years.

Possible commercial development scenarios include the following, from most radical to the most conservative concepts:

1. Permit these activities anywhere along Highway 17 and Seewee and Doar Roads.
2. Permit these activities anywhere along Highway 17 only.
3. Permit these activities primarily at major intersections along Highway 17.

Already certain commercial developments are permitted throughout Awendaw if it is classified as a Special Exception in the Zoning Ordinance and if it is approved by the Board of Zoning Appeals. For example, a pet boarding kennel is a Special Exception and as such may be approved by the Board of Zoning Appeals if upon review, they determine that it will not harm the area in any way. Also the Zoning Ordinance permits businesses that are considered very low-impact Home Occupations. An example of a Home Occupation could be a one-man lawn maintenance company.

The first scenario of permitting commercial development anywhere along Highway 17, Seewee, and Doar Roads is very permissive. A town the size of Awendaw does not need that much commercial development potential. Seewee and Doar Roads are currently characterized as residential roads and by allowing commercial development there, the residential appeal could be jeopardized.

The second commercial scenario of permitting commercial development anywhere along Highway 17 is too permissive for a five year planning timeframe. This scenario could also jeopardize the residential pockets along Highway 17.



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**AWENDAW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

The final scenario continues the policies already adopted by Awendaw. There are still numerous opportunities for development at or near these intersections. For the central commercial area at Highway 17 and Doar and Seewee Roads, the Town Center Plan is

still very relevant. As envisioned by the plan, Town Center will some day be a pedestrian-oriented commercial district.

For light industrial opportunities a logical opportunity exists to expand the town's existing area at Hunley Industrial Park on Highway 17 just north of First Seewee Missionary Baptist Church. There are several large tracts in the area with the potential for comprehensively planned industrial parks.

**Residential**

Possible residential density scenarios include the following, from most radical to the most conservative concepts:

1. Permit increased density (from 30,000 sq. ft. to 12,500 sq. ft. lots) on all land currently zoned Agriculture General. (The zoning ordinance currently contains this statement for land served by public water or sewer)
2. Permit increased density only in areas around the intense/commercial intersections of Highway 17.
3. Require 30,000 square foot to 1-acre lots.

Before evaluating the residential scenarios, one should review the current density and its implications. Currently, the town's only residential zoning category is Agriculture General (AG) which permits one residence for every 30,000 square feet of area. If all AG land were developed at the current density of 30,000 square feet per residence, that could result in a total of 6,447 residential units or 19,470 persons total. Obviously, not every parcel is entirely developable given soil limitations, wetlands, and existing developed areas.

The first residential development scenario would permit increased density on all land currently zoned Agriculture General (AG) from 30,000 sq. ft. to 12,500 sq. ft. lots. The development pattern at this density would be a town with lots just over a quarter of an acre. If all AG land developed as quarter acre lots that could result in 17,760 residential units total or 53,635 persons total. This is a very rough figure based on a low estimate of 15% undevelopable land (roads, buffers, easements, wetlands...). The big question for Awendaw is does it want to see itself as a town of this size at some point in the future.

The second scenario permits increased density only in areas around the intense/commercial intersections of Highway 17. This concept permits limited areas of higher density while also protecting the environmentally sensitive areas around the



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Intracoastal Waterway. By increasing the density in certain areas, development costs decline potentially creating an opportunity for more affordable housing. Smaller, more affordable lots are appropriate in certain areas where the town wants to encourage

affordable housing. This concept makes sense near businesses that these residents might be able to reach by walking.

The third residential scenario would not permit any density increases. This policy could limit the town's ability to attract new affordable housing opportunities. On the flip side, for environmentally sensitive areas, larger lots could offer greater opportunities for mitigating development impacts such as leaving natural buffers.

Low and moderate density residential projects both have positive and negative implications. The key for Awendaw will be in determining if and where each type of housing might work best.



## 8: Land Use

EXISTING CONDITIONS

### AWENDAW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

#### Goals, Policies and Strategies

**Goal:** Maintain a healthy balance of land uses while accommodating proposed alterations of existing land uses and preserving the town's rural character.

Policy	Implementation Strategies	Suggested Schedule / Responsibility
A. Permit commercial development at major intersection.	1. Evaluate each request based on its total impact. The Town should continue to support the Town Center Plan as opportunities to implement its recommendations present themselves.	Ongoing/ Staff, Boards, Council
B. Permit Industrial Development around Hunley Park Industrial Park.	1. Evaluate each request based on its total impact.	Ongoing/ Staff, Boards, Council
C. Permit medium density (12,500 sq. ft. lots) around commercial nodes.	1. Evaluate each request based on its total impact.	Ongoing/ Staff, Boards, Council
D. Continue to maintain Awendaw as a fully self-supporting town with opportunities for living, working and playing within the town boundaries.	1. Implement strategies of this plan.	Ongoing/ Staff, Boards, Council
E. Continue an aggressive annexation policy to increase the land area of the town.	1. Establish a committee to work with council to identify areas to annex.	Ongoing/ Council with Committee
F. Explore landscape and design regulations to ensure the highest quality of life in the town.	1. Review other ordinances.	Ongoing/ Staff, Boards