Salters Creek Neighborhood Plan
A Neighborhood Plan for Salter’s Creek

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May 2008
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As with many urban neighborhoods across the country, Salters Creek has been declining in population and has struggled to attract new residents. The neighborhood’s location along a tidal creek poses a significant problem as the area is prone to flooding which limits growth. However, the natural features of the neighborhood are amenities that could potentially attract new residents to the area.

Several goals can be achieved that challenge the present status of the neighborhood:

- Goal 1: Advocate and ensure a greater availability and choice of adequate, affordable housing for all income groups.
- Goal 2: Develop a greenway through the neighborhood.
- Goal 3: Encourage sustainable practices to ensure the longevity of the neighborhood.
- Goal 4: Maintain the urban character of the neighborhood.
- Goal 5: Develop and maintain a circulation network that promotes safe and alternative methods of transportation.

Outlined in the plan are key objectives which can help the City of Newport News and the residents of the neighborhood to achieve these goals:

- Amend the zoning ordinance to include inclusionary zoning to encourage affordable housing units.
- Incorporate materials and techniques to reduce negative environmental impacts.
- Implement traffic calming measures to create a safer neighborhood and promote alternative modes of transportation.
Existing Conditions
**INTRODUCTION**

In the spring of 2008, a Neighborhood Plan for Salter’s Creek in Newport News, Virginia was proposed to address the needs of the neighborhood and its future development. Over the course of the semester, a plan was devised to address the concerns of sustainability, creating connections with natural resources and affordable housing. The plan will serve as a policy recommendation to the City of Newport News, ensuring that the neighborhood will become a vibrant part of the city.

This document consists of two sections. The first section is comprised of an assessment of existing conditions and a SWOT analysis of the neighborhood. The existing conditions include a brief description of the area’s history and previous plans, as well as detailed reports on land use and zoning, demographics, current building conditions, environmental concerns, crime, surrounding influences, urban design and transportation. The second section details the recommendations for future development in Salter’s Creek. It includes goals, objectives, and implementation time line.

The Salter’s Creek neighborhood is roughly bounded by: Pear Avenue to the east, 27th Street to the north, Hampton Roads Harbor to the south and Salter’s Creek to the west.
History

Before the first Europeans arrived, the area was inhabited by the Kecoughtan Indians, a tribe under Powhatan’s chieftain. The Indians grew a variety of crops and ate the plentiful oysters and fish located in Hampton Roads Harbor. In 1610, Governor Thomas Gates forcibly removed the Indians from the area to allow the Virginia Company of London to establish a settlement. In 1611, Robert Sanford patented the land to the east of Salter’s Creek, then called Salford’s Creek and established a tidal mill. In 1624, Sanford sold a portion (much of what makes up the neighborhood today) of his land to Thomas Celey. The land remained largely undeveloped until 1705, when Celey constructed a plantation to take advantage of the burgeoning market and port located in Hampton, just a few miles away. The area remained relatively quiet until 1862, when the greatest naval engagement during the Civil War, the battle between the Monitor and the Merrimac, occurred in the harbor. The Confederate win secured the safety of the Hampton Roads Harbor and the residents homes and land. The area remained largely undeveloped until the 1880s when the Celey family sold the land to the Newport News, Hampton and the Old Point Development Company.

The explosion of Newport News as a major port during the 1880s coupled with the completion of the C&O Railroad in 1881 and the Electric Avenue trolley line (located on Victoria Avenue) in 1882 attracted many investors and land speculators to the area. During the mid-1880s, the Newport News, Hampton and Old Point Development Company formed and joined together to purchase a total of 1,237 acres of land of what is now occupied by Salter’s Creek and the Wythe neighborhood. The company sold 25 x100 feet lots to the rapidly increasing residential population. The growing industrial workforce, both white- and blue-collar,
responded eagerly to the newly accessible real estate and quickly moved into the area. As development occurred the area was quickly known as Wythe, which was named after George Wythe, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a resident of Hampton. Small stores popped up along 25th Street to serve local needs and by the 1930s major retailers had moved into the community.

In 1916, present day Salter’s Creek neighborhood incorporated itself as the town of Kecoughtan and broke ties with Wythe. In 1926, Kecoughtan had a population of 1,198 people and sought annexation with the City of Newport News. The town became part of the City later that year.

For almost 20 years the neighborhood saw little change. During the mid-1940s, a number of new homes were constructed to accommodate the housing shortage that the whole country faced at the time. The neighborhood started to decline in the late 1970s as the allure of the suburbs beckoned residents to move to larger homes and lots. The commercial corridors along 25th and 27th streets declined as a result of the urban flight and marginal businesses soon populated the once vibrant corridor. The neighborhood has never fully recovered from this urban flight and the current state of the neighborhood is a mixture of incomes and architectural styles representing the many changes the neighborhood has experienced over the last century.

Currently, Salter’s Creek is part of the Southeast Community which includes downtown Newport News.

**Previous Plans**

It is important to understand previous plans for an area, for those documents can identify successful ventures and failures, and demonstrate why one aspect of a plan worked while another did not. Previous plans also give an indication of local government’s vision for the area. This section summarizes information from the 2030 Vision Newport News Comprehensive Plan Draft, the 2007 Southeast Community Design Plan and the Kecoughtan Corridor Plan.

**2030 Vision Newport News Comprehensive Plan Draft**

The City of Newport News is divided into several districts. District I covers the Southeast Community and outlines major goals for the district. Important features of the district plan include maintaining the urban character of the neighborhood with corner markets, eliminating surface parking lots and off-street parking requirements, creating a greenway along Salter’s Creek, reconnecting the community with the waterfront and preserving the historic structures. The plan also outlines a new light-rail transit system with stations located throughout the downtown. Although there are no planned stations located adjacent to the Salter’s Creek neighborhood, the impact of this development could be a positive influence on the neighborhood.

**2007 Southeast Community Design Plan**

In 2006, planners, consultants and citizens came together to discuss future opportunities for the Southeast Community. The Plan hopes to achieve several goals such as: enhance gateways and access to the neighborhood, expand retail/mixed-use development, build on existing cultural amenities, connect
open spaces and parks and diversify housing options. The Plan specifically addresses the need to enhance gateways along 25th Street and Chesapeake Avenue as both roads serve as highly traveled entrances into the city.

**Kecoughtan Corridor Plan**

The Kecoughtan Corridor Plan was developed by the City of Hampton and Urban Design Associates as a way to address the revitalization of this once important commercial corridor. Kecoughtan Avenue or 25th Street serves as an important connection between the two cities. Presently, there is no distinction between the cities and creating gateways is an important aspect of the plan. Another goal is to transform the corridor into a grand residential boulevard that conforms to the existing neighborhood pattern of small front yards with a garage located to the rear of the property.
Existing Zoning

Salter’s Creek encompasses 273 acres and has a variety of zoning categories which has maintained the urban character of the neighborhood. There are three main zoning categories: residential, commercial and recreational and are explained below.

For residential uses within the neighborhood there are three different categories and include the following.


R5: Low density multiple family - Elderly homes, multiple family.

R4 is the largest zone within the neighborhood. This zoning designation allows small lot single-family development which follows the pattern of traditional development. R3 is concentrated in the eastern corner of the neighborhood along Chesapeake Avenue. R5 is concentrated along 25th Street and provides a mixture of attached single-family residential dwellings.

For commercial uses within the neighborhood there are two different categories which include the following:

C1: Retail, commercial - Grocery stores, banks, restaurants, places of worship, art studios.
C2: General commercial - Commercial parking lots, pawn shop, auto body repair, automotive repair.

The commercial uses are concentrated along 27th and 25th Streets, as these are the commercial corridors. However, there are some commercial uses scattered throughout the neighborhood, primarily on Buxton Avenue. Corner markets, offices and institutional uses are some of the commercial uses found within the neighborhood.

For recreational uses within the neighborhood there is only one category:

P1: Recreational services

There are two parks located within the neighborhood: Monitor-Merrimac Overlook and Peterson’s Yacht Basin. These parks include a yacht basin, beach, boat ramp, historical features, saltwater fishing, picnic shelters and a playground. No fishing is allowed along Chesapeake Avenue along the Hampton Roads Harbor, as in the past has caused trash and noise to accumulate in the area.
**Existing Land Use**

Within the neighborhood there is a wide variety of land use categories. Approximately 76% of the neighborhood is very low density which suits the single-family composition of the neighborhood. Other land use categories include community facilities such as churches. Vacant parcels compromise 4% of the neighborhood. Other land use categories include highway facilities, retail, low density residential, medium density residential, mixed use, office, parks and open space, retail, utilities, vacant buildings and wetlands.

The wide array of land uses is a result of pyramid zoning that was used until the 1980s. The net effect of pyramid zoning is to pyramid only a few uses to more restrictive zoning regulations while allowing the broader base of uses to be applicable in less restrictive applications. Although this zoning scheme was abandoned, the effects of it are still noticeable today.
Demographics

The Salter’s Creek neighborhood has a current population of 2,538, which is a 10% decrease from 1990. Population trends point to increased population and development in the northern portion of the city. The neighborhood is predominantly African American (88%), as seen in Chart 1, which is atypical for Newport News since African Americans only compromise 38% of the total population in the city. The neighborhood is compromised of 933 households, with an average household size of 2.6. The majority of the households are owner occupied (Chart 2) with 11% of the building stock vacant as shown in Chart 2. The percentage of owner-occupied housing is greater than the city’s rate which suggests that the neighborhood is stable and has residents who are invested in the future of the neighborhood.

The median household income for the neighborhood in 2000 was $31,000 which is 60% higher than the median income for the Southeast Community. However, when compared to the city the median income is 15% less. The educational attainment for the neighborhood is quite diverse; approximately 27% of the residents have less than a high school education which is considerably higher than the city’s 15%. The neighborhood also has a smaller percentage of residents with higher education degrees compared to the city as a whole.

The neighborhood has an unemployment rate of 6% which is double that of the city’s rate. To tackle issues such as unemployment, programs such as Weed and Seed Program provide skills training as well as financial counseling in an effort to make the neighborhood financially stable as well as economically vibrant.
### Table 1. 2000 Census Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Salters Creek*</th>
<th>Planning District I</th>
<th>City-Wide</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>2,538</td>
<td>31,589</td>
<td>180,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Change (1990-2000)</td>
<td>-10%</td>
<td>-16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population below poverty level</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Family Income</td>
<td>$31,331</td>
<td>$25,856</td>
<td>$42,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families below poverty level</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of households</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>13,874</td>
<td>69,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female headed households</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (HS graduate or higher)</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeownership rate</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median home value</td>
<td>$71,366</td>
<td>$65,750</td>
<td>$96,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median rent</td>
<td>$404</td>
<td>$425</td>
<td>$559</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Data was obtained from census tract 303 and block group 5, 6 and 7.
Crime

Crime data was obtained from the Newport News Police Department for the South Precinct for the year 2006. Unfortunately, the data covers both downtown Newport News and the Salter’s Creek neighborhood and therefore negatively skews the perception of crime in the neighborhood. Table 2 lists the types of crimes committed in the South Precinct for the years 1997 and 2006. The data was compared with the overall city to thoroughly display the crime rate in the precinct.

The table shows that high levels of crime occur within the South Precinct. An alarming 70% of the city’s murders occur within the precinct. The high amount of crime that occurs within area is a major deterrent in attracting new residents and makes the current residents feel uneasy about their neighborhood. Fortunately, murder and rape crimes are down from 1997, but aggravated assault, burglary and vehicle theft crimes have increased since 1997. Robbery and larceny crimes have remained the same during the last ten years.

In efforts to reduce crime, the neighborhood began joined the Federal Weed and Seed Program in 2003. The mission of the program is to promote comprehensive strategies to reduce crime and revitalize communities for the improvement in the quality of life for residents. The program has a variety of activities that encourage and assist residents to become leaders, further their education and training and to develop pride in their community. Various organizations located in the city provide services to the neighborhood that otherwise would not be affordable nor accessible by the residents. Another group focused on crime prevention is the Salter’s Creek South Neighborhood Watch. This group has been very successful in making the neighborhood a safer place to live and work in and the strong ties it has developed with the police department make the organization an important institution in the safety of the neighborhood.

Through a series of interviews, a crime hotspot was identified in the neighborhood. A building, notorious for drug dealing and other non-violent crimes, is located on the corner of Buxton Avenue and 19th Street. The neighborhood watch group has organized efforts to reduce these types of criminal activities in the building but have not been successful in their goal to date.

Table 2. Types of Crime in the South Precinct for the Years 1997 and 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Percentage Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated Assault</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>+6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>+2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larceny</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle Theft</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>+3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Newport News Police Department.
Circulation

As a rule of thumb, motorists travel efficiently and safely through communities without congestion only when a high-quality transportation network exists. This section analyzes the existing transportation conditions in the Salter’s Creek.

Roads

Traffic in Salter’s Creek is comprised mostly of motor vehicle traffic and enters and exits the area mainly via 25th Street and 27th Street which connects downtown Newport News and the City of Hampton. All of the streets are two-way within the neighborhood and have a maximum speed of 35 mph.

The street network within the neighborhood has long been evaluated for its traffic capacity and speed rather than its balance for pedestrian comfort. Lane widths in the neighborhood range from 60-120 feet to allow on-street parking as well as access for emergency vehicles to easily enter and exit. The size of the lanes play a primary role in managing traffic speed. The lane widths on primary streets (streets with 80 foot-120 foot curb-to-curb dimensions) are too wide for effective speed management. Even when 8 foot wide parallel parking lanes are placed on both sides of the street, the two remaining 12 foot travel lanes are highway-sized and encourage speeding. Therefore, it is essential that the travel lane width be reduced to 10 foot to discourage speeding. The City of Hampton has reduced lane widths along Chesapeake Avenue to create a more green space along the water and to mitigate speeding. A bike route is located along Chesapeake Avenue that connects the neighborhood with the downtown area, the northern portion of the City and the City of Hampton.
SIDewalks

The neighborhood is composed of a sidewalk system, although there are inconsistencies throughout the neighborhood. Many sections of sidewalk are missing in areas or are not present at all along specific blocks. This pattern is not conducive in facilitating pedestrian traffic and forces people to walk along the grass or in the street which is potentially dangerous for pedestrians. The Planning District I Task Force prioritizes sidewalks and streets in need of repair and improvement. The sidewalks are then poured by the Department of Public Works in accordance with these priorities and funded by Community Development Block Grant Funds.

Traffic Volume

In 2006, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) estimated the daily traffic volume for several major streets and intersections in and around downtown Newport News; however, traffic volumes were only available for some streets in the neighborhood. To get a better picture of the traffic volume, intersections that are located adjacent to the neighborhood are also included within the table. The amount of traffic was measured by the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) which is the total annual traffic estimate divided by the total number of days in the year.

The roads in the neighborhood are highly traveled as they serve as connections to the City of Hampton and other neighborhoods in the City of Newport News. According to the Newport News Department of Engineering, most the segments of roads in the preceding table have experienced a decrease in the amount of traffic volume over the past 5 years. The decrease could be attributed to the overall declining population in the neighborhood and surrounding downtown Newport News.

Bus Routes

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) is responsible for public transportation within Hampton Roads. The Salter’s Creek neighborhood is served with bus stops along 25th, 27th Street and Blair Avenue. This particular route operates throughout the majority of the day and serves to connect downtown Newport News with Downtown Hampton. Along the route in the neighborhood there is a transfer station which provides service to the northern end of the City and to the rest of the Hampton Roads cities.

Light Rail

There is a proposal to construct light rail along the CSX corridor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Traffic Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Segment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th &amp; Roanoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27th &amp; Chestnut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesapeake &amp; Chestnut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buxton &amp; 25th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

which runs parallel to Warwick Boulevard to service the City of Newport News and provide connections with Hampton and Williamsburg with rail service to Norfolk through the new third Hampton Roads crossing. Although this proposal does not directly go through the neighborhood, a section of the light rail system is proposed along 35th Street, which is located five blocks north of the neighborhood. Construction is not projected to begin until 2010 but it could be an attraction for new residents and give alternative transportation options to existing residents.

**Parking**

There is adequate parking within the neighborhood as most homes have a driveway or use on-street parking. Parking is allowed on both sides of the streets with the exception of Chesapeake Avenue, where parking is restricted to the westbound lane and 25th Street where parking is restricted to the eastbound side. No on-street parking is allowed on 27th Street.

Figure 5. Adequate on-street parking.
Surrounding Influences

This section provides a summary of the current conditions that exist outside the boundaries of the neighborhood. The planning process will incorporate an understanding of external influences and dynamics beyond Salter’s Creek boundaries to ensure integration of the Plan with the surrounding area.

City of Hampton

In 2006, the City of Hampton adopted the Kecoughtan Corridor Master Plan. The Plan outlines the desires of the future vision of the Kecoughtan Corridor, which turns into Martin Luther King Boulevard, or 25th Street, in Newport News. Both cities share a border along this corridor and one city’s vision can easily translate into another city’s vision with cooperation. The plan suggests strengthening the gateway between the city lines at Pear Avenue. The presence of gateway will enhance the view and allow people to know when they have entered a place. The new streetscape should consist of a landscaped median, new sidewalks and street trees. The plan represents an opportunity for Newport News and could serve as an example for future development along the 25th Street corridor in Newport News.

Downtown Newport News

Salter’s Creek is located to the east of Newport News and offers excellent opportunities for the neighborhood. Located within downtown, is the Regional (Downtown) Business District, Seafood Industrial Park, the Port of Newport News, and the Shipyard. The Seafood Industrial Park provides employment in commercial fishing activities and packing operations. The Port of Newport News provides jobs in security, inspections, and heavy machinery operators. The Shipyard provides jobs for high skilled laborers in the construction of Naval submarines and warships. In the Copeland/Newport News Industrial Park, several prominent companies have warehouses and production plants. Marva Maid’s headquarters and milk production plant are located there, as well as Craft Booring Company, and Liebherr Mining Equipment Company, an international producer of mining industry dump trucks.

The downtown is easily accessible from Interstate 664 which connects the cities of Hampton, Newport News and Chesapeake. Salter’s Creek close location to this efficient transportation network and to major employers provides numerous opportunities for the neighborhood. The neighborhood could be a good source of housing for workers who want to live in close proximity to the job market and transportation network while living next to the waterfront.
Southeast Community

The Southeast Community is located to the east of I-644, south of 28th Street, and includes the Salter’s Creek neighborhood. The community is uniquely urban, with small corner convenience stores at the end of many blocks and street activity, such as walking and talking with neighbors, is still very much a part of this community. The community contains a number of historic homes that attract prominent companies have warehouses and production plants. The Southeast Community is also home to 61% of the public housing facilities in the city. The high proportion of public housing concentrates poverty and crime in the community. Several of these public housing units will expire in the next few years and the land will transfer to private developers. The current residents will be responsible for finding other accommodations for themselves. The community is working hard to ensure that these residents have a voice in where they go and are trying to accommodate them within the surrounding communities.

The recently completed Southeast Community Design Study also factors in these future challenges to the community. The Plan recommends the use of inclusionary zoning in order to retain the existing residents and not create a gentrified community that isolates and abandons the existing ones.

Cultural, Community and Recreational Facilities

The Southeast Community is served by a host of cultural and recreational facilities that provide local residents places for relaxation as well as community outreach services. The Doris Miller Community Center on Wickham Avenue provides music, fitness, and Educational classes. The C. Waldo Scott Center for H.O.P.E., also on Wickham Avenue, provides “comprehensive services to educate and foster the growth and development of youth and families.” The Moton Community House, south of 25th Street, is a historic landmark which provides the community with meeting space, cultural art exhibits, and performing arts. Numerous churches within the area also have outreach services that provide similar activities with varied community missions. These organizations have the greatest capacity to make positive changes amongst the community.
Environmental Conditions

Waterfront areas have long been attractive due to their picturesque views and access to water-based recreation. However, as more land is devoted to development, less land is available for water to be naturally absorbed which in effect increases flooding. In order to mitigate these effects, the States of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia banded together in 1980 to form the Chesapeake Bay Commission. The Commission resulted in the signing of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement in 1987 which provides the basis for each state to improve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The following year, Virginia enacted the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and created the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Board (CBLAB). The CBLAB develops regulations and standards for local Bay programs and in 1990 Newport News established its own Chesapeake Bay Preservation Program. In 2005, CBLAB ceased to exist and came under the management of the Virginia Department Conservation and Recreation.

The Salter’s Creek neighborhood is located within the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area (CBPA) and is a Resource Management Area (RMA). According to the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, a 100-foot vegetative buffer must be preserved on parcels developed adjacent to waterways. If this buffer is disturbed or developed, water quality would diminish. Development within the neighborhood must be done sensitively, for if land is improperly used or developed it has the potential for causing significant degradation of water quality or diminishing the functional value of the area. To ensure that land is not improperly developed, the City established a local Wetlands Board to protect CBPA areas in the City in 1990. All proposed development or redevelopment in the delineated CBPA requires
a plan review process. The CBPA review process for residential infill development is reviewed by the Planning Department for the plot plan and then forward the plan to Department of Engineering for review by the Stormwater Management division. The review generally involves an on-site delineation of the RPA and any perennial streams that may be on the property. The review process ensures that non-point source pollution is not increased as a result of the new development.

The neighborhood is also located within a 100-year floodplain. It was developed before the National Flood Insurance Program which requires first floor elevations of structures to be constructed above the 100-year flood plain base elevation.

**Green Foundation**

The Green Foundation’s mission is to promote and preserve green space throughout the City for the benefit of the community and citizens in numerous ways, including
- preserving natural resources
- protecting waterways from pollution
- creating wildlife habitat
- reducing air and noise pollution
- enhancing traffic corridors, residential and business areas
- and making the City more beautiful and enjoyable.

The Green Foundation has established 4 community groups to encourage and enable citizens, businesses, and organizations to get involved or to support the work of preserving a greener future for Newport News.

Figure 7. Vacant lot along Jefferson Avenue.

Figure 8. Same vacant lot with improvements from the Green Foundation.
**Urban Design Analysis**

This section provides an analysis of the urban design and physical features of the neighborhood and how the physical organization impacts human emotion and experience. Such analysis is important to the project because it provides an understanding of what strengths and weaknesses exist in the proposed planning space and presents the possibilities and limitations for the types of planning concepts that are ultimately implemented.

**Views**

Salter’s Creek location along Hampton Roads Harbor provides extraordinary views to the harbor, the City of Norfolk’s shipyard and other natural landscapes such as Salter’s Creek. These views create a unique sense of place and define the area as a coastal neighborhood with access to natural amenities. However, these views are disconnected from the neighborhood as larger homes and buildings have been constructed along the water blocking the view from homes located in the center of the neighborhood.

**Buildings Style**

The development of the neighborhood over the past century has resulted in a mixture of architectural styles. The buildings range from American Four-Square, Craftsmen, Colonial Revival, Cape Cod, Ranch and Modern commercial. The presence of many styles gives the neighborhood an eclectic feel and shows the phases of growth in the area. However, the mixture of styles has produced a variety of setbacks, scale and
spaces between adjacent buildings, giving a sense of uniformity. The majority of buildings are built close to the street with a modest front yard.

The older homes in the neighborhood are generally built closer together with a small ancillary structure located behind the house. The newer, infill buildings are typically constructed on larger lots with garages located on the front of the houses.

The building heights range from one to four stories, with the tallest building being the Riverside Rehabilitation Hospital located on Chesapeake Avenue.

**Street Furniture**

Currently, modern lantern streetlights are the only sidewalk amenities which are uniform throughout the entire neighborhood. There are no benches, tree boxes or any other type of street furniture or accessories on the sidewalks that creates a sense of place. There is no visible tree planting pattern as some streets are lined with a uniform tree pattern while others streets have a variety of tree setbacks and an intermixing of bushes and hedges.

**Gateways**

Entrance into the neighborhood is achieved through three main thoroughfares: 27th Street, 25th Street and Chesapeake Avenue. Located on 27th Street are two sign that mark entrance into Salter’s Creek, although the eastbound sign has been destroyed. Along 25th Street and Chesapeake Avenue are signs that mark the entrance into the City of Newport News but does not designate the neighborhood that the motorists or pedestrian has entered.
**STRENGTHS:**
- Strong neighborhood frame - street grid and blocks
- Orientation to water and creek
- Access to downtown and regional roads
- Stable neighborhood
- Multi-modal transportation options
- History

**WEAKNESS:**
- Poorly maintained commercial properties
- Lack of identifiable entrances
- Flood prone area
- Development is limited to certain areas
- Adjacent to high crime area

**OPPORTUNITIES:**
- Capturing Section 8 housing vouchers
- Downtown Newport News and City of Hampton job market
- Community-oriented religious institution

**THREATS:**
- High crime in adjacent neighborhoods
- Unpredictable economic market
- Absentee property owners

Figure 13 and 14. Examples of strengths of the neighborhood.

Figure 15 and 16. Examples of weaknesses of the neighborhood.
Foundations of The Plan
The Vision

The Salter’s Creek is a vibrant, safe, mixed-use neighborhood adjacent to downtown Newport News. The neighborhood is composed of a variety of household types as well as affordability levels. An important element of the neighborhood is the connection to Hampton Roads Harbor and Salter’s Creek through a greenway which provides recreational space for both residents and visitors. The importance of the waterfront ensures that sustainable practices are integrated into the design of the neighborhood to minimize adverse effects to the sensitive environment. The area has a strong sense of place, and Salter’s Creek enhances the Southeast Community and the City of Newport News.
**Goal 1. Ensure a greater availability and choice of adequate, affordable housing for all income groups.**

Over the last twenty years housing prices have nearly doubled in Newport News. The increase of housing costs has squeezed many citizens out of the housing market. Loans and subsidized housing have provided some relief to this problem; however, as the market shifts, new alternatives must be developed.

The number of housing units in District I has also decreased over the past two decades while other districts have experienced tremendous growth. As the investment moves away from the Southeast Community and into the northern and western portions of the City, alternatives need to be developed to attract new residents to the area. Approximately 90% of the city is currently developed and the need for redevelopment will increasingly represent a key component of economic growth. The Southeast Community and Salters Creek can use these opportunities to offer sustainable, affordable housing choices.

**Objective 1.1 Inclusionary zoning will be encouraged to provide affordable housing choices.**

Inclusionary zoning is a key to providing affordable housing within the neighborhood. This zoning tool encourages the private sector to include a percentage of affordable units as part of a market rate development. The fundamental purpose of inclusionary zoning is to allow the development of affordable housing to become an integral part of new development. A typical inclusionary zoning ordinance will set forth a minimum percentage of units to be provided in a specific development that are affordable to households at a particular income level, generally defined as a percentage of the median household income. In many ordinances, some form of incentive is provided by the municipality to the developer in return for the provision of affordable housing. These incentives can take the form of waivers of zoning requirements, including density, area, height, open space, use or other provisions; local tax abatements; waiver of permit fees or land dedication; fewer required developer-provided amenities and acquisitions of property; fast track permitting; and/or the subsidization or provision of infrastructure for the developer by the jurisdiction.

Inclusionary zoning is not the total answer to filling a community’s affordable housing gap, but it can play an effective role in addressing a significant part of the problem. In fact, one of the greatest benefits of inclusionary zoning is that it helps communities avoid concentrations of low income households and the concurrent community problems those concentrations produce.

*Figure 17. Affordable housing units.*
Objective 1.2 Multi-family housing should be intermixed with single-family housing.

The neighborhood has a variety of zoning categories and to maintain the urban character and establish more opportunities for multi-family, a zoning overlay district shall be created for the neighborhood. The overlay will also provide that design standards such as height, setbacks and material use will be consistent with the surrounding area.

Currently, the zoning ordinance dictates that residential uses are not allowed along the traditional commercial corridors. The incorporation of a residential uses will not create opportunities for increased residential units but will create a mixed-use area which is important in the longevity of an urban neighborhood.

Objective 1.3 Establish connections with private non-profits in the housing market to keep housing affordable to low and moderate-income households.

To facilitate a variety of housing options and households within the neighborhood, connections with local non-profit organizations should be encouraged to attract investment to the area. The Peninsula Community Development Corporation (PCDC) is a private, nonprofit housing organization created by the Newport News Office of Human Affairs. Their mission is to provide successful community-based, affordable housing solutions. PCDC helps low and moderate income families become first-time homeowners by building and rehabilitating quality affordable and energy efficient houses in their neighborhood. PCDC addresses the area’s affordable housing needs through three programs:
The “Homes You Can Afford” Revitalization Program for first-time home buyers, a Comprehensive Counseling Program, and a home buyers club to help residents develop the financial control necessary for homeownership: HomeOwner GOLD.

Another program is the Virginia Housing and Community Development Corporation (VHCDC). VHCDC is a privately funded, non-profit organization based in Portsmouth and helps to support the transformation of low-income, distressed communities into vibrant places to live, do business, and work. The organization works to provide access to housing and resources for low and moderate-income households and other disadvantaged people.

VHCDC also provides education and training opportunities for residents and property owners to empower them to improve their quality of life and advance the quality of rental-housing stock and provide opportunities for community investment in affordable single-family homes, temporary shelters and single-parent housing facilities.

**Objective 1.4 Develop alternative affordable housing strategies.**

To produce a variety of housing choices, innovative solutions for affordable housing should be developed. The City can take a role in the responsibility of providing affordable housing for its residents through a series of programs. Many localities across the country have implemented the following programs: subsidizing non-profit organizations and loan write downs with tremendous success in increasing the supply of affordable housing units. The Map on page 25 shows the number of vacant lots in the neighborhood compared with those lots owned by the City. The
City could transform these vacant lots using the afore-mentioned programs to expand housing options for residents. Goal 2. Develop a greenway/recreational trail.

The natural amenities of the neighborhood are a positive force to attract residents as well as visitors to the area. However, there is no link that connects the neighborhood to these amenities.

**Objective 2.1 Create a Greenway along Salter’s Creek and Hampton Roads Harbor.**

According to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) a greenway is defined as open space corridors that can be managed for conservation, recreation, and/or alternative transportation. Greenways often follow natural or existing land or water features such as ridgelines, stream valleys, rivers, canals, utility corridors, abandoned rail lines and others. Although each greenway is unique, most connect recreational, natural, cultural, and/or historic areas. Some greenways are designed for people to use for recreation and non-motorized transportation, while others are designed for wildlife, biodiversity, and scenic beauty. Greenways may be publicly or privately-owned.

The Salters Creek trail should begin at Buxton Avenue adjacent to the drainage creek and wind through the area to connect to the Hampton Roads Harbor near the Monitor-Merrimac Overlook and continue along Chesapeake Avenue to terminate at the City of Hampton.

Along the creek, the greenway should be constructed from a rot resistant wood such as cedar, redwood or tamarack to reduce maintenance costs and should be slightly elevated above the marshy land. To accommodate travelers the trail should be a minimum of 8 feet wide to allow two-way traffic to comfortably on information about the creek’s environmental dynamics and other educational information pertinent to the local area.

Along the waterfront section of the greenway, crushed rock should be used as it provides a firm walkway as well as requires little maintenance. This section of the greenway should include benches, trash receptacles and serve as an area to meet people.

**Objective 2.2 Partnerships between private/public enterprises should be developed for the development and Maintenance of the trail.**

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) provides new impetus for trail development and maintenance through several programs. Funded by the National Recreational Trails Act, a component of ISTEA, the Virginia Recreational Trails Fund Program was established to provide and maintain recreational trails and related facilities. Administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), grant funding may be provided to private individuals, organizations or government agencies, but must consider guidance from the DCR Trails Advisory Committee, which advises DCR on trails-related issues.

**Objective 2.3 Coordinate trail plans with all road improvement projects.**

With the construction of the greenway throughout the neighborhood other road improvement projects should be coordinated to reduce costs and inconvenience to residents. These projects should be coordinated to incorporate recreational trails and safe and convenient trail crossings into the design of new roads and roadway improvements.
Figure 18. Before picture of Chesapeake Avenue along the proposed greenway.

Figure 19. After of proposed greenway along Chesapeake Avenue.
pass. Also, plaques should be established along the greenway on information about the creeks environmental dynamics and other educational information pertinent to the local area.

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**Goal 3. Encourage sustainable practices to ensure the longevity of the neighborhood.**

Salter’s Creek location is prone to flooding and therefore sustainability is an important issue to address. To minimize negative impacts to the local waterways, best management practices will be encouraged throughout the neighborhood. The main culprit are impervious surfaces (roads, sidewalks, roofs) which decreases the amount of land for rainwater intake via natural soaking and absorbing and therefore increases stormwater runoff. Government studies have shown that up to 70% of the pollution in streams, rivers and lakes is carried there by stormwater. Stormwater carries a host of contaminants from the land into the water such as, sediment, phosphorus, nitrogen, toxic metals, herbicides and pesticides, organic material, oil compounds, and bacteria.

**Objective 3.1 New development shall not adversely affect the sensitive wetland environment of the neighborhood.**

All proposed development or redevelopment in the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act requires a plan review process. According to the City’s ordinance, development is defined as construction or substantial alteration of facilities or structures. Redevelopment is defined as the process of developing land in the CBPA that is previously developed to at least sixty percent impervious area within the preceding five years.

Development or redevelopment within the neighborhood should be sensitive to the areas unique environment and
minimize the negative impacts to the area through increased development. Development should not result in an increase in non-point pollution and required standards for development should be developed. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation has outlined 10 general principles to reduce adverse impacts on the land and local environment (See appendix for more information). Some examples of best management practices include the following.

Rain gardens and bioretention facilities are stormwater best management practices (BMPs) that utilize plants to filter sediment and treat runoff. These simple and effective filtering processes also bring an aesthetic beauty to the area as well. A “rain garden” is a man-made depression in the ground that is used as a landscape tool
to improve water quality. The rain garden forms a “bioretention area” by collecting water runoff and storing it, permitting it be filtered and slowly absorbed by the soil. The bioretention concept is based on the hydrologic function of forest habitat, in which the forest produces a spongy litter layer that soaks up water and allows it to slowly penetrate the soil layer. The site for the rain garden should be placed strategically to intercept water runoff. The rain gardens would function well adjacent to runoff points i.e. parking lots, driveways and other impervious surfaces.

Vegetated swales are long narrow landscaped depressions used to collect and convey stormwater runoff, allowing pollutants to settle and filter out as the water infiltrates into the ground or flows from one bay to the next through the facility. In addition to providing pollution reduction, flow rates and volumes can also be managed with vegetated swales, as check dams are provided every 12 to 20 feet to slow and pool water.

Another technique to reduce stormwater runoff is to use pervious surfaces throughout the neighborhood. Pervious surfaces allow inflow of rainwater into the underlying construction or soil. Traditional surfaces such as concrete, asphalt effectively seal surfaces and repel water and prevent precipitation from infiltrating soils.

When designing pervious pavement systems, the infiltration rate of the native soil is a key element in determining the depth of base rock for the storage of stormwater, or for determining whether an underdrain system is appropriate. Traffic loading and design speed are important considerations in determining which type of pervious pavement is applicable. Pedestrian ADA accessibility, aesthetics, and maintainability are also important considerations, depending on pavement use.

**Goal 4. Maintain the urban character of the neighborhood.**

**Objective 4.1 25th and 27th Street should become a mixed use corridor.**

To encourage the urban character of the neighborhood, portions of 25th and 27th Street should become a mixed-use corridor. The mixed-use corridor would encourage a variety of housing choices and commercial uses similar to the initial pattern of development. See Zoning Overlay Map on page 24.

Along the corridors, commercial uses should be used on the bottom floor and the upper floors should be for residential uses. This will allow higher densities of people while preserving the sensitive environment of the neighborhood.

**Objective 4.2 Create Desirable development along the re-zoned corridors.**

New mixed-use development should be designed to encourage pedestrian activity to create an active commercial node. The building should be located close to the front property line to create a consistent building edge along the sidewalk. Off-street parking should be located to the rear and/or side of the building, not in front of the building. A rear lane should be used for circulation and a drive through if desired. A small parking lot beside the building is permitted, however, it should be no wider than 60 feet and should be screened from the sidewalk with a low wall or hedge. The building should contain generous shopfront windows that are used for displays as well as to view into the store.
Goal 5. Develop a transportation network that suits the urban character of the neighborhood.

According to the Virginia Department of Transportation, “Bicycling and walking are fundamental travel modes and integral components of an efficient transportation network. Appropriate bicycle and pedestrian accommodations provide the public, including the disabled community, with access to the transportation network; connectivity with other modes of transportation; and independent mobility regardless of age, physical constraints, or income.” The following bicycle and pedestrian accommodations will ensure good connectivity with the greater Newport News transportation network while at the same time encouraging healthier and more environmentally sound forms of transportation. The following traffic calming recommendations will help to ensure that safe and limited interaction occurs between vehicular and bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

Objective 5.1 Implement traffic calming measures to decrease speeding throughout the neighborhood.

Continued growth and decentralization throughout the United States have increased the number of cars on streets and highways. High traffic volumes and speeds, especially on residential streets, reduce the quality of life for residents because of concerns about safety, noise, and pollution. As a result, many neighborhood residents have expressed interest in undertaking traffic calming as a means of decreasing the cars’ dominance. Traffic calming encompasses a series of physical treatments that are meant to lower vehicle speeds and volumes by creating the visual impression that certain streets are not intended for high-speed or cut-through traffic. Thus, traffic calming can improve safety for pedestrians and reduce noise and pollution levels. Examples of these measures include bulbouts, speed humps, chicanes, and traffic circles.

The most effective traffic calming measure for the neighborhood is speed humps, which are rounded raised areas of pavement typically 12 to 14 feet in length. They are placed typically 300 to 600 feet apart and are constructed from different materials to provide visual differences between the road and the speed hump. However, bicyclists prefer that it not cover or cross a bike lane. The City of Hampton has already employed this traffic calming measure along Chesapeake Avenue and should be continued along the street to further reduce speeding and make motorists more visible of pedestrians and cyclists.

Another method to reduce speeding and increase pedestrian safety is to reduce the lane width. Lane widths in the neighborhood vary from 60-120 foot curb to curb dimension which is more than sufficient to handle on-street parking on both sides and two-lane traffic. Arterial streets are typically 100-120 feet and cross streets are typically 80 feet. Specific thoroughfares for each of the neighborhood streets are proposed below.
objective 5.2 install Sidewalks and crosswalks at strategic locations throughout the neighborhood.

The absence of sidewalks is a deterrent to pedestrian movement, forcing pedestrians to either create their own impromptu paths through yards and private property or interact with vehicular traffic in an often dangerous manner. To avoid such hazardous situations and to promote walking as a method of transportation, all streets will include sidewalks. These infill sidewalks will be constructed of a smooth, permanent surface to facilitate ease of walking for children, the elderly and the disabled including wheelchair traffic.

Several areas have been identified in the neighborhood as having missing sidewalks which limits pedestrian traffic. Listed below are the missing sidewalks.

Another important safety measure for pedestrians is the use of crosswalks. Crosswalks provide pedestrians with safe areas to cross wide streets and allow motorists to easily see pedestrians crossing the street. Crosswalks should be placed along 25th Street to connect neighborhood and the commercial corridor. The number of bus stops along 25th Street makes the area popular with pedestrian so to provide a sense of security and recognition amongst motorists crosswalks should be installed at strategic locations. The map shows the exact locations.
**Objective 5.3 Enhance gateways into the neighborhood to create a sense of place.**

Gateway signage will identify the Salter’s Creek neighborhood as a unique place by notifying motorists and pedestrians when they enter and leave the neighborhood. It is important that the design and style of the signage compliments the lighting and street furniture along the corridor to create a cohesive image between the gateway and streetscapes.

The signage will identify the city and located below will be the name of the neighborhood. These types of signage will be used at entrances into residential neighborhoods that are on or close to the boundary of the City such as the intersection of Pear Avenue and 25th and 27th Street. The signs will also serve to let people know they are entering specific Newport News neighborhoods.

Along the interior of the city simple signage with the name of the neighborhood would be appropriate. The older, dilapidated signage should be removed immediately as it shows that the care of the neighborhood has been disregarded as well as a poor perception from the outside community.

**Objective 5.4 Increase opportunities for alternative transportation methods.**

Currently, there is only one bike lane that runs through the neighborhood. However, there is no designated lane for bicyclists which could potentially pose a threat to bicyclists as well as motorists. Bicycle lanes should be limited to one side of the street and be boldly marked with signage on the asphalt. In locations where bicycle paths cross streets in mid-block, rumble strips and clear pavement markings or raised road surface denoting the crossing should be utilized.
To ensure the overall success of the plan, it is important that the City adopts this plan and the zoning amendments therein, as a guide to all subsequent decisions to be made for the Salter Creek neighborhood. The following are specific implementation strategies to ensure that the plan goals are met.

The implementation strategies are divided into Immediate (0-2 years), Intermediate (2-5 years), and Long Term (5-15 years).

**Housing**

1.1 The City should amend the zoning ordinance to allow inclusionary zoning for the benefit of the whole City.

1.2 The City should provide expedited permit process and density bonuses for developers.

1.3 The City should mandate that 15% of market rate housing developments will be affordable to for households who fall below the 30-80% area median income for housing developments that contain 10 or more rental units.

1.4 Re-zone portions of 25th and 27th Street as R9 to allow multi-family to be intermixed within the neighborhood.

1.5 Establish a revolving fund with private partnerships to stimulate development.

1.6 The City should provide land “write downs” to stimulate development for affordable housing units.

**Greenway**

2.1 The City should make the greenway a part of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (CBGN) to establish links with other surrounding parks and recreational areas in the bay.

CBGN includes portions of Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania and links natural, cultural, historical, and recreational sites throughout the Chesapeake Bay region to enhance people’s connection to the resources in meaningful ways that foster conservation and restoration of the Bay. To join the network a short application process is required but the benefits are enormous as the network has access to grants and money from the federal government to improve trails, provide educational features and maintain ways.

2.2 The City should establish educational plaques along the greenway and waterfront area to educate visitors on the importance of the local environment.

2.3 The City should join the Virginia Recreational Trails Fund Program to receive funding for trail development and maintenance upkeep.

2.4 Raise funds from the local community through programs such as “Recognition Walk” which allow donations in exchange for the donators name to be engraved along the walkway to help defray construction costs.

2.5 The city should coordinate and work with the local residents to create the greenway.
2.6 Coordinate the engineering and transportation departments to schedule projects within the neighborhood to reduce costs and inconveniences in the neighborhood.

**Sustainability**

3.1 The City should establish best management practices to guide new development.

3.2 Vegetative swales should be located along Petersons Yacht Basin, Monitor-Merrimac Overlook, along Beechwood Avenue (between 19th and Blair) and along drainage ditches that run through the neighborhood.

3.3 Pervious surfaces should be used in the parking lots of Petersons Yacht Basin and the Monitor-Merrimac Overlook.

**Urban Character**

4.1 The City should re-zone portions of 25th and 27th as R9 to allow a mixture of residential and commercial uses.

4.2 The City should identify blighted properties and willing sellers to transform the corridor into a mixed-use zone.

4.3 The City should adopt guidelines for desirable development.

4.4 The City should reduce off-street parking requirements and encourage shared parking within the 25th and 27th Street corridors.

**Circulation**

5.1 The City should decrease lane widths along Chesapeake Avenue and install traffic humps.

5.2 The City should install crosswalks and sidewalks at the specified designations. See Page 34.

5.3 The City should place gateways along Chesapeake Avenue, 25th Street and 27th Street.

5.4 The City should plant street trees along Chesapeake Avenue, 25th Street and 27th Street.

5.5 The City should create bike lanes throughout the neighborhood to better facilitate alternative modes of transportation.
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Sources


Chesterfield County Housing Survey: Jefferson Davis Highway Corridor. 2004


City of Hampton. Kecoughtan Road Corridor Master Plan, 2006.


Building Inventory and Existing Conditions & Uses

Building conditions in Salter’s Creek were determined using the criteria of the Chesterfield County Housing Survey. The condition of each building’s roof, gutters, exterior walls, storefronts, windows, and doors were rated as Good (Figure A1), Moderately High (Figure A2), Moderate (Figure A3), Moderately Low (Figure A4) or Dilapidated (Figure A5). According to the survey standards, Good is defined as those elements in good condition with no signs of wear are evident; Moderately High is defined as those elements that are intact and in good condition with few signs of minor wear or aging; Moderately Low is defined as those elements with heavy wear and aging and in need of repair or replacement; and Dilapidated is defined as those elements that require complete repair and in need of replacement.

Over 1,000 buildings were surveyed and the majority of the buildings were in moderate to moderately high condition. The Good structures were concentrated along Pear Avenue and Chesapeake Avenue, while the interior blocks had a scattering of building conditions. Of the surveyed buildings, only one-percent are vacant and are mainly concentrated along Buxton Avenue. The owners of the vacant properties, with the exception of one, live in the Hampton Roads area.

Building conditions reflect the stability of the neighborhood and the perception of the area from an outsiders view. The current state of the neighborhood requires slight improvement but overall appears stable and diverse.

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