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TIRRELL CITY

**TOWN OF COLUMBIA
IMPLEMENTATION STATUS REPORT ON THE 2010 TYRRELL
COUNTY/TOWN OF COLUMBIA LAND USE PLAN**

INTRODUCTION:

Implementation of the 2010 CAMA Land Use Plan by the Town of Columbia has been impacted by two factors that are not under the control of the town. The economic downturn, especially in housing construction, has resulted in virtually no action in new home construction and left several homes unexpectedly on the market for sale. The nationwide recession was late arriving in Columbia with the economic impacts not really felt until 2010-2011 and it continues to linger.

Hurricane Irene devastated the town with a tornado that damaged or destroyed eleven structures and unprecedented flooding that damaged most homes and businesses throughout the town. Four homes were demolished as the result of flood damage and three homes were elevated. The town is still recovering from the hurricane aftermath.

MAJOR INITIATIVES:

Water system upgrade – The Town of Columbia was poised to take advantage of federal stimulus funding to improve and upgrade both water and wastewater systems. A third fresh water drinking well was added to the system with one-mile of new freshwater drinking line.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion – By early 2014 work will be completed on the expansion of the town's wastewater treatment plant. Capacity will be increased from 300,000 gal/day to 600,000 gal/day. Work includes a new treated wastewater outfall line with added diffuser offshore in the Scuppernong River.

Sewer system improvements – More than 5,500 feet of sewer line and accompanying manholes have been replaced in the Town of Columbia, with more work slated. This work eliminates infiltration and inflow in the areas where work was done.

ACTIONS DELAYED:

US-64 Widening east of Columbia to Manns Harbor and a new 4-lane Alligator River Bridge – Action by the North Carolina Legislature and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NC-DOT) revising the highway funding formula places the planned widening of US-64 and the new Alligator River Bridge in jeopardy. NC-DOT has completed work deciding a final route for the improved highway and bridge if construction should move ahead.

Housing rehabilitation – Loss of traditional Community Development Block Grant funds due to State redirection of funds to infrastructure projects will slow efforts to improve and replace sub-standard housing in the town. The town has significant sub-standard residential units.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Waterfront plan – The Town of Columbia completed a waterfront improvement plan that lays out plans for improved recreational and commercial uses of the Scuppernong River waterfront. Plans call for four finger piers and enhancements for transient boaters and a handicapped accessible canoe/kayak launch. A Waterfront Access grant from the NC Division of Coastal Management will help fund the canoe/kayak launch that is a cooperative project with the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and a B.I.G. grant will help fund the finger piers.

Efforts are underway with Tyrrell County to refurbish the Veteran's Park area on the west side of the river that was damaged by Hurricane Isabel and later used by NC-DOT contractors during bridge construction. Each of these efforts supports the eco-tourism goals of Columbia and Tyrrell County.

US-64/Scuppernong Drive Corridor Plan – Also referred to as a Landscape Plan, this plan was developed by town staff and outside consultants to address unsightliness and safety hazards along the main highway corridor through the Town of Columbia. New business along this corridor are required to address landscaping, parking and general appearance as a condition of site approval by the Columbia Planning Board.

Columbia and Tyrrell County, working with NC-DOT planners, also developed a Comprehensive Transportation Improvement Plan that addresses pedestrian, bicycle and motorists issues along the important and increasingly traveled corridor.

Zoning Ordinance amendments – The Town of Columbia Planning Board is systematically reviewing the 1996 Adopted Columbia Zoning Ordinance for needed revisions and corrections. Meanwhile two amendments have been added to the Zoning Ordinance. They are the Wind Energy Ordinance to address the use of windmills or wind turbines for power generation and the Solar Energy Farm Ordinance. The Solar Energy Farm Ordinance results from commercial interest in locating a solar energy farm within the towns' extra-territorial zoning jurisdiction.

Of a related nature, the Town of Columbia with assistance from the North Carolina Coastal Federation, developed and adopted Low Impact Development (LID) Guidelines for use within the town. Although voluntary, the guidelines provide environmentally friendly methods and practices for residential, institutional and commercial construction within the Town of Columbia.

The town is reviewing building permit procedures for consistency with the National Flood Insurance Program. No changes have been made in the Columbia Sub-Division Ordinance.

The town continues to rely upon NC Coastal Management Staff to monitor and regulate development along the waterfront and in Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) jurisdiction areas.

Historic District Overlay – The Town of Columbia Planning Board formalized a procedure for removing a designated historic structure from the list of buildings that are historic of contribute to the State and federally designated Columbia Historic District.

The procedure calls for several efforts to save a property from destruction, including a public hearing, before a certificate for demolition can be issued.

Economic Development – Four new businesses are now located along the US-64/Scuppernon Drive corridor. A new oyster bar recently opened in a downtown vacant building and the private Columbia Marina, under new ownership, was completely refurbished following Hurricane Irene. An antique business also opened on Main Street.

Major construction of the non-profit Pocosin Arts building on Main Street was completed in 2013. This facility serves as a teaching area and gallery while providing housing for visiting East Carolina University students and faculty that are doing field studies in northeastern North Carolina.

Efforts are underway to secure a State certificate-of-need to allow construction of a planned 40-bed assisted living facility in the town. Such a facility will be an important health care addition and will also become a major employer.

Expansion and improvements to the Columbia Medical Center have added to the capacity and ability of that facility to serve Columbia and Tyrrell County residents.

UNFORSEEN ISSUES:

Loss of funding – Loss of State funding by the non-profit Partnership for the Sounds resulted in the loss of at least four full-time positions and the potential loss of a corporate office in the Town of Columbia. It may be necessary for the town and Tyrrell County to pick up all of the costs and/or responsibilities for operating the Columbia Theater Cultural Resources Center, River Roaming Cruises and Tyrrell County Visitors Center. The Partnership for the Sounds has been a major eco-tourism booster for the town and county for more than 20-years.

National Flood Insurance Program – Announced price increases for National Flood Insurance Program (flood insurance) coverage will bankrupt many homeowners or make it impossible for residents to secure bank loans needed to purchase and upgrade homes.

Town of Columbia
NCDCM Core CAMA Land Use Plan Implementation Status Report

- 1.1 Tyrrell County/Town of Columbia will work with Pettigrew State Park to increase waterfront access opportunities along the Scuppernong River. *These activities will occur outside of the town limits.*
- 1.2 Town of Columbia will consider revising its subdivision ordinance to include the Provisions of NCGS (160A-381) which allow for requiring the developer of a subdivision to be charged recreation fees. *Developers are required to create recreational areas.*
- 1.18 The Town of Columbia will review their respective zoning and subdivision ordinances to ensure compliance with policies P.18 and P.20 through P.27. *On-Going Activity*
- 1.47 The Town of Columbia will require, where reasonably possible, the use of frontage roads in non-residential development along federal and state major highways. The Town will consider revising their respective subdivision regulations in order to comply with this policy. *This initiative is accomplished through Planning Board review and approval.*
- 1.48 The Town of Columbia will establish a requirement for reverse frontage lots within subdivisions to orient lots towards internal subdivision streets, not secondary roads and highways. *Columbia's Planned Unit Development Ordinance permits and encourages this type of development.*
- 1.49 The Town of Columbia will require the construction of acceleration/deceleration lanes for the entrances to major commercial and residential developments. This should be accomplished through revisions to the town and county's subdivision ordinances. *The site development process encourages this practice.*
- 1.50 The Town of Columbia will consider establishing traffic impact studies for large scale residential and mixed use developments. This requirement will be based on recommendation by each jurisdiction's Planning Board. *Development has not yet required studies of this nature.*
- 1.3 Tyrrell County, in conjunction with the Town of Columbia, will prepare a shoreline access plan and request Division of Coastal Management funding for the preparation of the plan. *This has not been done.*

- 1.4 Tyrrell County and the Town of Columbia will pursue funding under the North Carolina CAMA Shoreline Access funding program (15A NCAC 7M, Section .0300, Shorefront Access Policies). *An application for funding is in-process.*
- 1.5 Tyrrell County and the Town of Columbia will pursue private sources of funding for the development of shoreline access facilities, including donation of land. *No such opportunities have occurred at this time.*
- 1.71 The Town of Columbia will support projects that will increase public access to shoreline areas. *Efforts are on-going, including a canoe/kayak launch and finger piers at the waterfront.*
- 1.7 The Town of Columbia will continue to enforce its current zoning and subdivision regulations. The town will extend its ETJ to the one-mile limit allowed, reflecting recent annexations that have moved the town limits outward. *Columbia is updating its Zoning Ordinance; ETJ extends one mile outward.*
- 1.9 The Town of Columbia will permit residential development to occur in response to market needs provided that the following criteria are met:
- (1) Due respect is offered to all aspects of the environment.
 - (2) If deficient community facilities and services are identified, the town should attempt to improve such to the point of adequately meeting demands.
 - (3) Additional residential development should concurrently involve planning for improvements to community facilities and services if excess capacity does not exist within those facilities and services.
 - (4) Residential development is consistent with other Tyrrell County and Town of Columbia policies and land use map as contained in this plan update. This action will be enforced through the Town of Columbia zoning and subdivision ordinances. *Columbia supports the statement outlined within this implementing strategy.*
- 1.14 The Town of Columbia will pursue Community Development, North Carolina Housing Finance Agency, and United States Department of Agriculture funds from state and federal sources for rehabilitation or redevelopment of substandard housing. *On-going*
- 1.15 Columbia will pursue all grant funding opportunities available to assist in enhancing the eco-tourism industry within the county. Columbia will continue to seek funding under all grant programs that will improve or increase that availability of services within the County. *On-going*
- 1.23 The Town of Columbia will rely on the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Coastal Management to regulate development through the CAMA permitting process. It will rely on the regulations of other state and federal agencies with regulatory authority, as well as existing local development regulations, to mitigate threats to AECs. *On-going*

- 1.24 Columbia continues to rely on State agencies, including NCDENR, on the enforcement of all land development regulations. *On-going*
- 1.19 Tyrrell County will work in conjunction with the Town of Columbia to discuss the option of developing an industrial park. Establishment of this facility will require resources from both the town and county. *The Town has zoned an area for a future industrial park.*
- 1.20 The Town of Columbia will review its existing zoning ordinance for compliance with these policies. *Process has been completed.*
- 1.25 In order to monitor possible sea level rise, The Town of Columbia will implement to following:
- Rely on the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Coastal Management to monitor and regulate development in areas susceptible to sea level rise and wetland loss.
 - Rely on state and federal agencies to monitor the effects of sea level rise and cooperate with local, state, and federal efforts to inform the public of the anticipated effects of sea level rise.
 - Consider updates or amendments to its land use plan policies as necessary to protect the county's public and private properties from rising water levels.
 - Support bulkheading to protect its shoreline areas from intruding water resulting from rising sea levels.
 - Consider establishing setback standards, density controls, bulkhead restrictions, buffer vegetation protection requirements, and building designs through the Building Code and Town of Columbia Zoning Regulations. *On-going*
- 1.56 In response to possible sea level rise, the Town of Columbia will review all local building and land use related ordinances and consider establishing setback standards, density controls, bulkhead restrictions, buffer vegetation protection requirements, and building designs which will facilitate the movement of structures. *The Town has increased its freeboard requirement.*
- 1.30 Tyrrell County, in conjunction with the Town of Columbia, will seek funding and technical assistance to prepare a county-wide master drainage plan and develop a stormwater management plan and ordinance to aid in eliminating standing water, and to require that all development address stormwater management. This should include a water quality component. Additionally, this plan should address a comprehensive strategy for the clean out of the county's arterial canal system. *This work is underway with assistance from ARC & D.*

- 1.31 The Town of Columbia will support control of forestry runoff through implementation of Forestry Best Management Practices as provided by the North Carolina Division of Forest Resources. *On-going Efforts*
- 1.32 The Town of Columbia will consider adopting a landscaping ordinance to require that a buffer of trees/vegetation be left between rights-of-way and any clear cut areas be consistent with applicable state and federal regulations. Additionally, this ordinance will aim to increase the aesthetic quality of entry corridors and the town's main thoroughfares as redevelopment occurs. *On-going efforts requiring NC-DOT Cooperation.*
- 1.33 The Town of Columbia will consider adopting and enforcing a stormwater control ordinance which should include regulations for water detention and/or retention facilities in new developments and provide regulations to control the amount of impervious surface in a development. *Included in the Town's Subdivision Ordinance and Low Impact Development Guideline.*
- 1.53 The Town of Columbia will continue to enforce its Floodplain Ordinance and participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. It will rely on the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Coastal Management to monitor and regulate development in areas up to five feet above mean high water susceptible to sea level rise and wetland loss. Subdivision regulations will be enforced requiring elevation monuments to be set so that floodplain elevations can be more easily determined. *On-going*
- 1.54 The Town will monitor development proposals for compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and will continue to enforce local land use ordinances to regulate development of freshwater swamps, marshes, and 404 wetlands. *Limited areas within the Town of Columbia*
- 1.60 The Town of Columbia will rely on the technical requirements and state program approval for underground storage tanks, and any subsequent state regulations concerning underground storage tanks adopted during the planning period. *Columbia relies on NCDENR for the enforcement of environmental regulations.*
- 1.34 The Town of Columbia will implement a public education campaign regarding the impacts of stormwater runoff and methods of reducing stormwater runoff pollution. *On-going*
- 1.38 Columbia will identify and contact state and federal agencies that provide typical and non-typical funding sources for assistance in providing water and sewer facilities. *The Town continues to improve water and sewer services using USDA, CWMTF & NCRC funding.*

- 1.37 The Town of Columbia will amend the future land use map, when needed, to reflect the county's water and sewer extension projects as they are planned. *The Town continues to upgrade.*
- 1.39 The Town of Columbia will consult the future land use map when considering new public facilities and private development. *On-going*
- 1.57 The Town of Columbia will use the future land use maps to control development. These maps are coordinated with the land suitability map and proposed infrastructure maps. Columbia continues to use the CAMA Land Use Plan when making decisions related to the extension of public facilities and development in general. *The plan is used in addition to the Town's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances.*
- 1.40 The Town of Columbia will consider revising water and sewer extension policies to ensure that public/private cooperation in the provision of infrastructure to serve new development is encouraged. *These policies are already in place. As the development and expansion of infrastructure continues, the current water and sewer extension policies will be reviewed and revised as deemed necessary.*
- 1.78 Tyrrell County and the Town of Columbia will provide sufficient emergency services to all residents. *Columbia supports the Tyrrell Volunteer Fire Department and Tyrrell County Sheriff with annual appropriations.*
- 1.51 The Town of Columbia will solicit local civic organizations to commit to the beautification of selected areas which will require initial labor for construction/ planting and long-term regular maintenance. *Columbia is working with the Columbia Rotary Club to improve parks.*
- 1.52 Columbia will request that the NCDOT Division of Highways implement its wildflower research project and the Adopt-a-Highway program along US 64. *On-going discussions with NCDOT*
- 1.55 The Town of Columbia permits redevelopment of previously developed areas, provided all applicable policies, regulations, and ordinances are complied with. The town will encourage redevelopment as a means for correcting housing problems, upgrading commercial structures, and historic preservation (through rehabilitation and adaptive reuse). Redevelopment, including infrastructure, should be designed to withstand natural hazards. Columbia continues to support and encourage redevelopment of substandard properties, including housing. The Town continues to secure grant funding through various federal agencies aimed at rehabilitating and/or replacing dilapidated homes. *On-going*
- 1.58 Tyrrell County and the Town of Columbia will cooperate with adjacent counties to protect water sources. *On-going, through Tyrrell County Water*

Management study and inter-local agreements between Columbia and Tyrrell County.

- 1.62 The Town of Columbia will implement the following actions through local ordinances to improve water quality.
- Use watershed-based land use planning
 - Protect sensitive natural areas, including coastal wetlands
 - Establish buffer network
 - Minimize impervious cover in site design
 - Limit erosion during construction
 - Maintain coastal growth measures
 - Restoration of impaired waters
 - Management of the cause and sources of pollution to ensure the protection of those waters currently supporting their uses allowing for reasonable economic growth.
 - Reduction of nutrients in Tyrrell County waters.

The Town has implemented voluntary Low Impact Development Planning. Columbia continues to support and work closely with State and Federal agencies charged with overseeing the enforcement of environmental regulations.

- 1.69 The Town of Columbia will continue to support the activities of the North Carolina Division of Travel and Tourism; specifically, the monitoring of tourism-related industry, efforts to promote tourism-related commercial activity, and efforts to enhance and provide shoreline resources. *Columbia continues to focus on tourism based business as an emerging industry that will be instrumental in future economic development efforts.*
- 1.70 The Town of Columbia will continue to support the activities of the Partnership For The Sounds in their efforts to promote tourism and protect the sensitive eco-system within the county. *Due to shifts in State funding, the Partnership For The Sounds may cease operations. The Town is looking at various options regarding ongoing operations for the PFS facility.*
- 1.72 The Town of Columbia will support North Carolina Department of Transportation projects to improve access to and within the county. *Columbia continues to work closely with NCDOT to plan for and facilitate road improvements into and out of the county, including US-64 multilane and a new Alligator River Bridge.*

- 1.73 The Town of Columbia will support the following in the pursuit of industrial development:
- Encourage placement of new industrial development to have minimum adverse effect on the Town's ecosystem and by encouraging areas of such uses be considered first when suitable infrastructure is available consistent with the growth policy of the future land development map.
 - The Town of Columbia will re-zone additional parcels for industrial and commercial use along existing growth corridors with adequate infrastructure existing or planned and, when the need is demonstrated, provide a consistent growth policy with amendments to the future land development map when revision is needed.

Columbia continues to engage in the recruitment of industry. These efforts target industries that will not have an adverse impact on the County's natural resources. *The Town has zoned an area for light industrial development.*

- 1.76 Floodplain regulation is a concern in the Town of Columbia. To accomplish protection of public health and service needs, the Town of Columbia will:
- Continue to enforce the flood hazard reduction provisions of the Tyrrell County and Town of Columbia Land Development Ordinances.
 - Prohibit the installation of underground storage tanks in the 100-year floodplain.
 - Prohibit the development of any industry within the 100-year floodplain that may pose a risk to public health and safety. Such industries may include but not be limited to: chemical refining and processing, petroleum refining and processing, hazardous material processing, or storage facilities.

The Town of Columbia remains a member of the NFIP and maintains a proactive floodplain management program.

- 1.80 The Town of Columbia will continue to support state and federal programs that are deemed necessary, cost-effective, and within the administrative and fiscal capabilities of the Town of Columbia. These include:
- Community Development Block Grant Program
 - Coastal Area Management Act, including shoreline access funds
 - Farmer's Home Administration Federal Grant Program
 - Federal Emergency Management Program
 - Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)

The Town of Columbia continues to support all listed State and Federal agencies.

- 1.81 The Town of Columbia will selectively support state and federal programs related to Tyrrell County and the Town of Columbia. The town, through its boards, and committees, will monitor state and federal programs and regulations. It will use opportunities as they are presented to voice support for or to disagree with

programs and regulations that are proposed by state and federal agencies.
These efforts are ongoing.

- 1.82 The Town of Columbia officials will continue to work with state and federal agencies to ensure continued dredging and maintenance of channels and rivers as needed to keep these facilities open to navigation. These efforts shall comply with applicable state and federal regulations. Channel maintenance has major economic significance and is worthy of state and federal funding.

These efforts are ongoing, including Keeping channels free of Alligator Weed.