



## Street Assessment Policy

In June of 2013, the Pitt County Board of County Commissioners adopted a policy that will aid homeowners in having NCDOT take over maintenance of neighborhood streets. Over the past few years, Pitt County Planning Staff have noticed an increase in complaints regarding the deteriorating condition of subdivision streets. Upon investigation of the roads, Staff members found that in many instances, the roads had never been turned over to NCDOT for maintenance and now after years of neglect, NCDOT would not assume maintenance responsibilities until significant repairs are made. Closely following North Carolina General Statute 153A-205, the adopted policy allows residents to petition Pitt County to pay for needed improvements so that NCDOT will assume maintenance responsibility. After construction is complete, the residents will then pay back the cost of repairs made over a period of years as part of their annual tax bill. The Pitt County Board of Commissioners has budgeted \$220,000 for this program for FY 2013-2014. Planning Staff are currently assisting two neighborhoods with the petition process.

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# 2013 Pitt County Planning Department Annual Report



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## Solar Farms

As our Nation continues to promote and develop renewable energy, solar energy facilities (solar farms) have emerged as a popular option in our State. According to the Solar Energy Industries Association, North Carolina ranks fifth in the US for Installed Solar Electric Capacity. In late 2012, Pitt County began to receive inquiries from solar energy companies about locating solar farms in the County. An application for a text amendment to the Pitt County Zoning Ordinance was filed in January 2013 to allow Solar Energy Facilities as a permitted use. After compiling research from other jurisdictions within North Carolina and talking with the North Carolina State

Solar Center, Pitt County Planning Staff drafted language that would permit solar farms as a Conditional Use in the Rural Agricultural, Rural Residential, and General Commercial zoning districts. Solar farms would also be permitted, with development standards, in the Heavy Commercial, Light Industrial, and General Industrial districts. On March 25, 2013, the Pitt County Board of Commissioners voted to approve the Zoning Ordinance amendment addressing solar farms. To date, Pitt County has granted one Conditional Use Permit for the construction and operation of a solar farm which is located off Rams Horn Road.



## Awards



Pitt County received an outstanding planning award for the Pitt County, NC 2030 Comprehensive Land Use Plan during the 2013 Marvin Collins Planning Awards Ceremony held by the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA-NC) in Winston-Salem, NC, on September 19, 2013.



On June 7, 2013, the National Association of Counties (NACo) granted Pitt County the 2013 Achievement Award for its program titled "Collaborative Team Builds District Park in the category of Parks and Recreation." Alice Keene is acknowledged for her work in compiling the award nomination, not to mention her long-standing efforts to forge partnerships among the various County Departments to make the District Park what it is today.

## Community Development

In 2012, Pitt County received funding under the North Carolina Finance Agency's Single Family Rehabilitation (SFR) Program. The focus of the program is on financially feasible, moderate rehabilitation. SFR funds are targeted towards owner-occupied units, occupied by households with elderly and/or disabled full-time household members or owner-occupied units with lead hazards with a household member 6 years old or younger. Household incomes must be below 80% of the area median income. These funds allowed staff to oversee the rehabilitation of three homes throughout Pitt County.

Pitt County also received funding through the North Carolina Finance Agency's Urgent Repair Program. This program provides deferred, forgiven loans of up to \$8,000 for emergency home repairs and modifications to very low-income owner-occupied homes with one or more full-time household members with special needs (e.g., elderly, disabled, or a child 6 or under with an elevated blood-lead level). Household incomes cannot exceed 50% of area median income. Six households were served using these funds.

## Neuse River Basin Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

In April of 2012, Pitt, Lenoir, Greene, Jones, and Wayne Counties applied for a grant with the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management (NCEM) for the development of a Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. The County has since been awarded a grant for the preparation of that plan, with Pitt County serving as the lead agency. This regional hazard mitigation plan will provide a dynamic planning document that identifies potential hazards and vulnerabilities, and recommends strategies to reduce short-term and long-term risks to life and property. The Planning Department is pleased to partner with Holland Consulting Planners to develop the plan. Planning staff anticipates finalizing the plan by the end of 2014, and having all involved counties and municipalities adopt the plan by July 2015.



## Recycling Center Surveys

Pitt County Planning staff and interns assisted the Solid Waste Department with surveys of seven Pitt County Recycling Centers in 2013. The main focus of the study was to identify where users of the sites reside. Secondary topics of interest included frequency of visits to the sites, materials brought to the sites, recycling habits, satisfaction with site attendants and site location convenience. In addition, daily traffic count data were collected just prior to conducting the surveys, which were performed from April through July. Survey participants (1,587) were overwhelmingly satisfied with the location of the surveyed recycling center sites and with the site attendants who work there. Nineteen (19%) of respondents visited less than once a week, 40% of respondents visited the sites once per week, 21% of respondents visited the sites twice a week and 20% of respondents visited more than twice a week. The most common type of waste brought was "household garbage" and 47% of respondents brought recyclable materials to the sites. The majority of respondents (85%) live in unincorporated Pitt County. Additional surveys are planned for spring and summer of 2014.



## Maintenance Requirements for Subdivision Streets

In October, the Pitt County Board of Commissioners amended the Pitt County Subdivision Ordinance. After a yearlong study and review process, the Planning Board, a special Street Maintenance Committee, and Planning Staff all recommended the amendments to the Pitt County Subdivision Ordinance to address the issue of maintenance of publicly-dedicated street rights-of-way.

The amendments require that any developer building new subdivision streets post financial guarantees, inspect their roads annually, and fix maintenance violations within a reasonable time frame. These amendments are all intended to ensure that the new roads stay well maintained, small problems don't become larger ones, and streets are taken over by NCDOT as soon as possible. The amendments went into effect on October 22, 2013, and will apply to all new subdivision plans with proposed public streets. Below are some details regarding the amendments:

1. **Financial Guarantees:** Developers must post a financial guarantee of 15% of the total cost of road construction. The guarantee can take the form of cash held in escrow by the county, surety bond, irrevocable letter of credit, or any other form allowed by NC statutes. The guarantees must be valid indefinitely since NCDOT adoption does not follow a specific timeline. Guarantees are returned to the developer once NCDOT officially assumes maintenance responsibility.
2. **Annual Inspection Program:** For each development, the developer's engineer shall submit an annual report noting the condition of the subdivision streets. Any maintenance deficiencies shall be noted in the report. Additionally, the engineer should note the density and build-out of the subdivision so that the developer can better identify when to petition NCDOT to assume maintenance.
3. **Maintenance and Enforcement provisions:** Maintenance violations will be treated as subdivision ordinance violations. The developer will be made aware of maintenance violations as they are identified and given reasonable time to fix these issues.

## E-911 Addressing

Planning Staff continues to enforce the County's addressing ordinance through the ESAVE (E-911 System Address Verification & Enforcement) project. Address numbers are required to be posted on every addressable structure. One ESAVE area was inspected and 363 structures were brought into compliance with the Addressing Ordinance. As part of the addressing program, staff maintained nearly 2500 County street signs. This year, 87 addresses have been assigned.

## GIS Day & Geography Awareness Week



Planning Staff presented County maps and other GIS materials to approximately 80 first grade students at H.B. Sugg in Farmville and 25 kindergarten students at Creekside Elementary in Winterville.

## Website Planning Department Website Statistics

Average Monthly Visitors:  
41,931  
Average Daily Visitors:  
1,379