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## Johns Island facing development build-up

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Maybank Highway on rural Johns Island has less traffic congestion than other thoroughfares. It's a stretch of two-lane road lined with small shops, a scattering of professional offices housed in modest clapboard homes and a few larger businesses, plus a library, a post office and a fire station.

However, the highway's traffic is destined to worsen. That's because a handful of major real estate developments—some residential, others a mix of residential and commercial—are in store along Maybank Highway between River and Main roads.

For openers, there is Shade Tree, a 360-acre subdivision off Cane Slash Road behind Maybank Highway. The development will be a blend of single-family houses, townhomes and possibly some affordable housing units. Between 900 and 1,100 residences will be built, according to West Ashley-based landscape architecture firm HLA Inc., which is designing the development's layout and has about 10 projects lined up for Johns Island.

Shade Tree also will include parks, green space and possibly an elementary school. The residences will have a classic Lowcountry architectural design with front porches. Alleyways will connect the streets.

Adjacent to Shade Tree will be Maybank Village, a 70-acre development that will include townhomes, apartments, retail shops and a restaurant. Steered by The PrimeSouth Group, a Charleston-based commercial real estate firm, the project is scheduled to kick off during the first half of 2005 with ground-breaking for apartments. The development is taking over acreage previously earmarked for the Charleston Media Technology Park, a highly touted digital movie studio that instead will be built in Albuquerque, N.M.

The Gardens at Whitney Lake is a 195-acre subdivision slated for north of Maybank Highway, off River Road. Single-family homes, condominiums, apartments and townhouses will be built, totaling about 900 residential units, according to HLA, which is landscaping this project.

The Grove at Fenwick is an 82-unit apartment community under construction



Shade Tree, a 360-acre subdivision, is one of several slated new developments for Johns Island.

on River Road about a quarter-mile north of Maybank Highway. The apartment buildings will stand amid trees, and the community will feature boardwalks and natural systems for collecting rainwater.

All of these developments “emphasize quality of life,” says David Lycke, vice president of HLA. He adds that residents want to enjoy the natural beauty of their surroundings, plus green spaces and parks.

During the past few years, other residential developments along Maybank Highway and River Road have risen. The Villages in St. Johns Woods, a 130-acre subdivision with one-quarter-acre home lots, began in 2002 and will contain about 230 homes, nearly half of which are already built.

Barberry Woods, a 72-lot development a quarter-mile north of The Villages in St. Johns Woods, began construction in August 2003 and is almost built out. The Bend at River Road, a 41-lot subdivision, also began in 2003 and is just about completed.

The forthcoming developments mean an increase in Johns Island's population, which

stands at about 23,500.

While many Johns Island residents are opposed to further development of the island—a “Keep Johns Island Rural” campaign has been active for several years—others look forward to the change.

“We're excited,” says Jenifer Altine, co-manager of the St. Johns Island Café on Maybank Highway. “It'll be great for business.” Over the past few years, with the rise of limited development on the island, the restaurant has noticed an increase in lunch trade, says Altine. But with new communities on the drawing board, Altine believes the restaurant will enjoy more dinner activity in addition to lunch.

Earlier this year, St. Johns Common, a 12-acre office park, opened off Maybank Highway, near the St. Johns Island Café. ■

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