Chapter 6
Future Land Use Plan

Introduction:

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan outlines the desired land uses for Accomack County. A number of physical factors including roads and transportation, natural resources, proximity to incorporated and unincorporated towns, soil types, proximity to surface water, availability of potable water, adequacy of septic system and/or sewer, and historical development patterns are weighed to create the Future Land Use Plan.

County goals, objectives, and policies along with demographic information, economic factors, resource availability, and other planning documents are also major considerations in the development of the Future Land Use Plan.

In 2008, Accomack County completed a major update revision to its Comprehensive Plan. The 2008 Comprehensive Plan update modified and evolved from the 1997 Accomack County Comprehensive Plan.

The Code of Virginia requires localities to review Comprehensive Plans every five (5) years. The following key factors have occurred since the 2008 Comprehensive Plan update and influence the 2013 review:

- The 2008-2009 national economic downturn
- The release of the 2010 census data
- The visual and anecdotal evidence suggesting that the physical landscape of Accomack County has not changed significantly since 2008

Given these factors, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors have determined that the 2013 Comprehensive Plan review will be limited primarily to the Future Land Use (Chapter 6) section of the Plan. Chapter 6 will contain new data and information. Readers of the Comprehensive Plan are advised that the Executive Summary, Chapter 3, and Chapter 4 contain older information and statistics and may be updated in the future as time and resources permit.

Important demographic and population information from the 2010 census, as well as population projections from the Weldon Cooper Center at the University of Virginia and information from other sources indicate significantly different trends than those noted in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

Population and Projections:

The 2010 census data revealed a population of 33,164 people in Accomack County, which is lower compared to the population of 38,305 people recorded in the 2000 census data. The 2010 Census QuickFacts for Accomack County can be viewed at the following link: http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/51/51001.html

In late 2012, the Weldon Cooper Center (WCC) released population projections for the Commonwealth of Virginia and information specific to Accomack County was provided. The following shows population projections released in 2012.

2010 Census	2020 (WCC)	2030 (WCC)	2040 (WCC)
33,164	33,432	33,568	33,661

The following is a comparison between the 2030 population projections in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and the 2030 populations based on the Weldon Cooper projections that were released in November 2012.

2030 Population Projections (2008 Comprehensive Plan)	2030 Population Projections (Weldon Cooper Center – November 2012)
46,500	33,568

Other noteworthy information from the 2010 census and 2012 Weldon Cooper population projections are as follows:

- A percentage increase of residents age 55 or over and a slightly declining birth rate in the coming decades indicates that Accomack County has an aging population.
- The Hispanic population in Accomack County is increasing.
- On a percentage basis, the White and Black populations in Accomack County are decreasing while other race populations are increasing.

The Weldon Cooper Center population projection data can be viewed at the following link: http://www.coopercenter.org/demographics/virginia-population-projections

Land Demand:

Based on the 2010 Census and Weldon Cooper Center population projections, no adjustments to the Future Land Use Plan Map are necessary.

Major Land Use Planning Issues:

Several key issues directly affect planning for Accomack County land use. These issues address the relationship between land development and the County's resources. These issues include agricultural and forestry land preservation, groundwater protection, natural resource preservation, physical constraints to development, central water and wastewater treatment, the character of development, and the Route 13 highway corridor – all in the context of continuing population growth.

Agricultural and Forestal Land Preservation

Agriculture and forestry are important parts of Accomack County's economy and identity. In 1997 the County had approximately 82,560 acres of land in 22 agricultural and forestal districts. In 2007, the acreage was 80,215, nearly a 2.8 percent decrease in ten years. The land in these districts is protected by state "right-to-farm" legislation which prohibits local governments from restricting agricultural uses within the districts. These districts also offer protection from conversion to other non-agricultural and non-forestal uses and interference from surrounding uses.

The pattern of development within the County can directly impact the viability of agricultural operations. Some of the most productive agricultural soils are also the most suitable for installation of septic systems. Therefore, agriculture is often in direct competition with residential development for land with prime soils. Much of the County's farmland also occupies land that would be desirable locations for waterfront home sites. Accomack County currently offers land use-value taxation on agricultural land, which bases taxes on the actual use of the land, rather than the fair-market value. This removes some of the pressure for land owners to develop agricultural land, although farm land continues to be subdivided and converted to residential use. This division of land results in pockets of residential development located in primarily agricultural areas. Fragmentation of farm land can affect a farm's viability, leaving tracts of land too small or segmented to farm efficiently. Conflicts often arise between home owners and farm operators over noise, dust, smell, chemical use, and hours of operation. The 2006 Agricultural Zoning District amendments allow clustering of residential development and provide the opportunity to buffer new residential development from intensive agricultural activity.

Groundwater Protection

Groundwater is the only drinking water source for Accomack County. In 1976 the Virginia State Water Control Board designated the Eastern Shore as a Ground Water Management Area due to findings of groundwater level declines, well interference and localized groundwater contamination. Groundwater is supplied by the Columbia and the Yorktown-Eastover aquifers. The deeper, confined, Yorktown-Eastover aquifer is the county's drinking water source. This aquifer is recharged by rainwater infiltration. The 1992 Ground Water Supply Protection and Management Plan for the Eastern Shore of Virginia identified the area that recharges the deep aquifer as strip of land that runs along the central portion of the peninsula. The Plan calls for protection of this groundwater recharge spine from contamination threats and decrease in recharge rate due to creation of impervious surfaces. In 1997, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated the fresh ground water that supplies all drinking water on the Eastern Shore of Virginia as the Columbia and Yorktown-Eastover Multiaquifer System Sole Source Aquifer. The 1999 Technical Analysis and Justification for Ground Water Ordinances on the Eastern Shore of Virginia documents the need to manage new development to protect our limited supply of ground water.

Natural Resource Preservation

The County's natural resources base, including forests, fields, marsh, creeks, bays, and barrier islands, has economic, aesthetic, and recreational value, as well as being valuable habitat for a variety of wildlife. High quality surface water is important to the seafood industry and recreational users. The marshes and bays support aquatic life that is important to the development of fisheries. Good soils are essential for productive agriculture. The barrier islands provide important habitat for shorebirds and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. These resources, in combination, compose a natural system which is a unique asset to the Eastern Shore. Care must be taken to ensure that use of these resources does not degrade their value. Land that is not suitable for development, such as marsh land and the barrier islands, should be maintained in a natural state. Important habitat areas should be identified and the conservation of those areas encouraged. Best Management Practices should be used to lessen the impact of various land uses on natural resources.

Physical Constraints to Development

Certain conditions of the physical landscape affect the suitability, safety and desirability of parts of the County for development. The main physical constraints to development in Accomack County are soil suitability for septic systems, flood hazard, and shoreline erosion. The distribution of soils types has profound impact on the pattern of development in Accomack County. The Town of Onancock and Tangier Island are the only areas in the county served by public sewage treatment systems. Since less than half of the soil in Accomack County is suitable for septic system use, large sections of the county are virtually undevelopable.

Some areas of Accomack County experience significant amounts of shoreline erosion. Faced with an eroding shoreline that moves closer to their home each year, homeowners often resort to shoreline hardening structures such as bulkheads, riprap, breakwaters, and jetties. These structures are seldom permanent solutions to the problem and can actually increase the problem. The areas of Accomack County with the highest erosion rates are Bayside marshland and the Seaside barrier islands, which are unsuitable for development. The impact in areas with moderate to low erosion rates can be lessened through limited allowable development densities and shoreline setback requirements.

The Route 13 Corridor

The Route 13 highway corridor is a significant feature of the County's landscape. The highway runs north-south along a ridge of high land in the center of the peninsula, dividing the Shore into "Bayside" and "Seaside" segments. The highway carries traffic through the County, supporting businesses along the highway, and it carries local citizens up and down the Shore to employment, shopping and services, many of which are located within the corridor. This mix of local and through-traffic creates a dangerous situation. Traffic lights added on developed sections of the road to increase safety decrease the efficiency of the road for through-traffic. Route 13 is a major

thoroughfare and part of the National Highway System. If signals increase to the point that highway no longer functions effectively for through traffic, bypass and limited access alternatives may be sought. The Route 13 corridor should be managed to maintain its capacity to handle through-traffic in order to avoid construction of bypasses or a limited access highway which would further bisect the county and isolate existing businesses. Minimum setbacks from Route 13 should be expanded for all land uses. Increased setbacks will promote safety by improving site lines, allow room for shared entrances, reduce traffic noise, and ensure the availability of vacant land if future access roads are needed. In order to maintain the existing high speed sections of Route 13, future development should be limited to existing commercial centers such as T's Corner, Temperanceville, Nelsonia, Fisher's Corner at Route 176, Accomac, Onley, Melfa, Painter, and Belle Haven. These areas already have traffic signals and reduced speed limits to handle local traffic. Site plan review for development along Route 13 should be used to develop plans that minimize curb cuts, make use of joint entrances, and direct traffic to alternative entrances on collector roads when possible.

Municipal Wastewater:

Central Accomack County

Accomack County owns and operates a wastewater collection system located in the central part of the County. The system is made up of a County-owned main (force main and gravity) and privately owned laterals. Service is provided to the Airport Industrial Park at the southern end and businesses along and close to Route 13 between Melfa and Four Corners Plaza in Onley. The line turns west just south of Four Corners Plaza and heads to Onancock.

A map of the Central Accomack Utility Service Area is found at the end of this (Municipal and Private Wastewater) section. The map indicates the County's interest in providing sewer and/or water in these areas.

Sewage treatment is provided by the Town of Onancock at its wastewater treatment by contract with the County. The current contract expires in 2019.

The County's collection system has a design capacity of 100,000 gallons per day. The current usage puts the collection system at approximately 25% of capacity at approximately 25,000 gallons per day (GPD).

Even with the planned connection of the new Riverside Hospital facility to the County's collection system, the County has plenty of collection capacity to accept additional customers. The County's treatment contract with the Town currently caps the amount treatment available at 80,000 GPD. With the imminent contract expiration, and anticipating a certain amount of sustained growth, current belief is that the County should have ready access to about 100,000 gallons of treatment capacity per day.

Given the availability of the system and the capacity to serve additional customers, new businesses, existing business which require the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) approval for sewage disposal, and residential customers in close proximity should be encouraged to connect to the sewer system.

In addition to the standard reasons for encouraging connections to the County's system, there are some compelling local reasons to do so, and they are as follows:

- The County's sewage collection system is located within the identified groundwater recharge area and connections to the system are preferable to large flows of treated septic wastewater into the groundwater in this area.

- Areas along Route 13, where the sewage collection system exists, especially in the Onley area, experience high seasonal water tables. Connection to the system is a desirable alternative to conventional septic tank and drain field systems in this area, as conventional septic systems do not operate properly when inundated by ground water. Advanced septic systems are available that are better and less susceptible to these sorts of problems, but municipal wastewater solutions are anticipated to be less burdensome on individual owners/users.

- Land values along Route 13 are among the highest in the County, and septic tank and drain fields utilize land that could be used for other purposes if connected to the sewer system. This is especially important in the area where the County's collection system exists, as significant land is also required to be utilized for storm water management systems.

Town of Chincoteague

It is Accomack County's understanding that the Town of Chincoteague is investigating wastewater treatment and a collection system to initially serve the main commercial areas of the Town.

Accomack County supports the Town in its pursuit of a wastewater treatment facility and collection system located on the island. Accomack County has a vested interest in the Town of Chincoteague finding an appropriate solution for discharge of treated effluent from its wastewater treatment facility.

Other Parts of Accomack County

NASA owns and operates a wastewater treatment system at the NASA main-base. The system serves federal facilities in the main-base area and at Wallops Island. By agreement with Accomack County, the Wallops Research Park will be served by the NASA system.

At this time, there does not appear to be a need for municipally owned and operated wastewater systems beyond those already identified in this section. In the event that future municipal

wastewater treatment needs arise, it appears that small collection and treatment systems (under 100,000 gallons per day/treatment) may be adequate.

Private Wastewater Treatment Systems and Public-Private Combined Systems:

Private Wastewater Treatment Systems

Private Wastewater Treatment Systems requiring DEQ's approval should be sized and designed to service the users/development in a clearly-defined service area. The size and design of the wastewater system should correspond with the size of the existing or proposed development for which service is intended and must be constructed within the boundaries of the development. Private systems owned and operated by developers should be carefully scrutinized for quality of proposed construction, maintenance, and continuing financial viability.

The purpose of this is to assure quality infrastructure and to avoid sudden failures and shocks which may affect large numbers of citizens in the future should private ventures prove financially unstable and construction inadequate.

Authority Owned and/or Public-Private Combined Systems

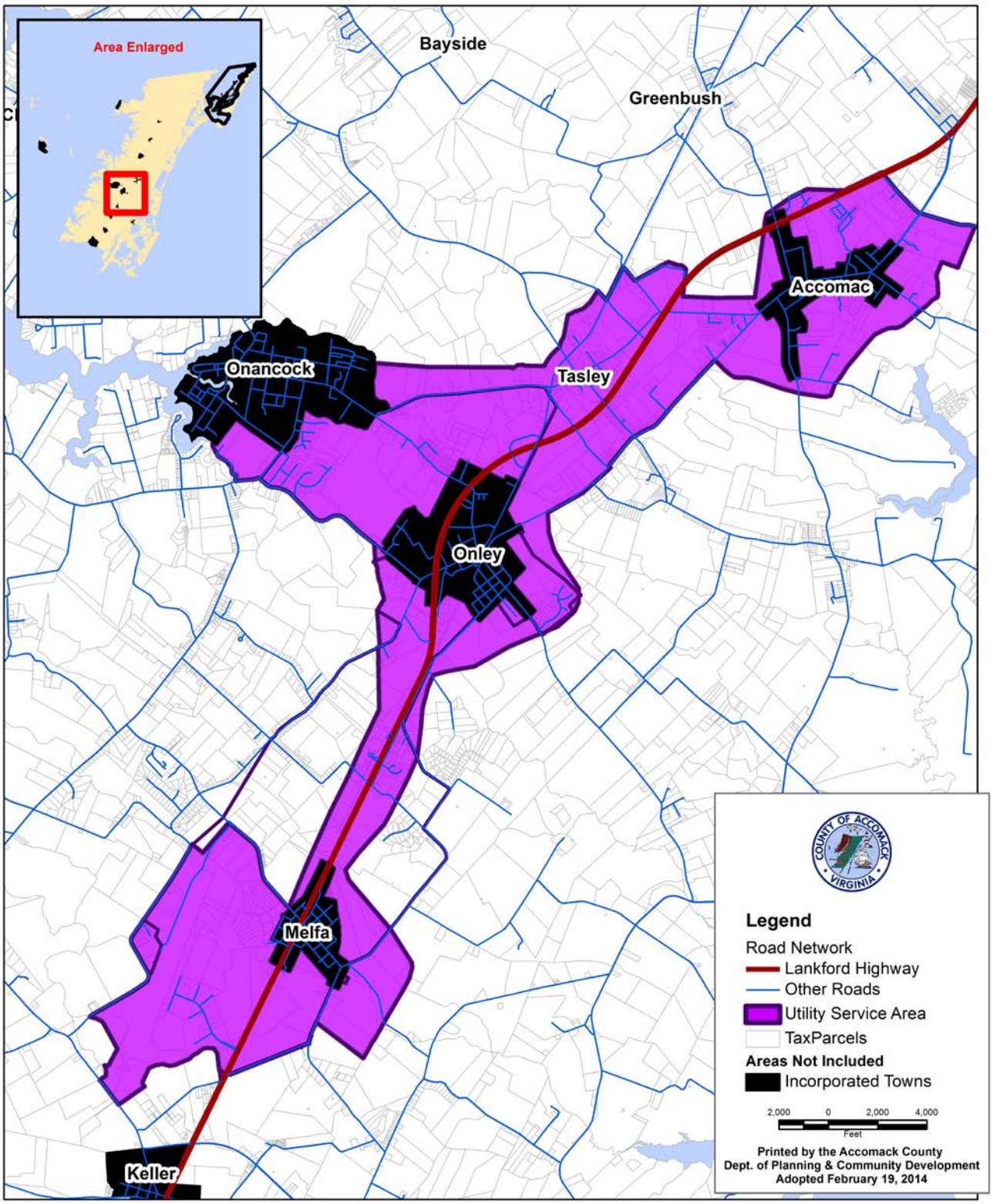
Where it is desirable for the County to consider, an Authority Governed and/or Public-Private Combined Wastewater Treatment System may be proposed. Generally, such a system should have the majority of its ownership controlled by a municipal government (County or Town) or operations under superintending control of the same.

Municipal Water:

The County owns and operates a public water system at the Airport Industrial Park. Other municipal water systems are operated in Chincoteague, Onancock, Parksley and Tangier.

NASA operates a water system and services federal facilities in the Wallops area. NASA will provide water to the Wallops Research Park by agreement with Accomack County.

Central Accomack Utility Service Area



Stormwater Runoff and Management:

As of the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan update, new stormwater regulations at the State level have been adopted and local stormwater management ordinances and programs mandated.

Agricultural construction will be subject to the new stormwater regulations.

Since stormwater regulations and practices are changing, stormwater management is an emerging issue and monitoring is needed. In addition to the new stormwater regulations, the effects of stormwater runoff after heavy rain events are noteworthy, especially in recently developed parts of the County. Additional study of this matter is warranted.

Where practical, the County encourages the preservation of natural resources and use of applicable best management practices to minimize stormwater runoff and stormwater pollution. In many parts of the County, best management practices need to be designed to accommodate seasonal high water tables, flat terrain, discharge to tidal areas, and replicate or utilize natural drainage patterns.

Additional information on this subject may be found at the following websites:

http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/Water/StormwaterManagement.aspx

http://library.municode.com/HTML/13191/level3/CO_CH106ZO_ARTXVICHBAPROVDI.html#TOPTITLE

http://www.co.accomack.va.us/departments/planning-and-community-development/planning/stormwater-management

http://www.co.accomack.va.us/departments/planning-and-community-development/services-and-fees/erosion-and-sedimentation-control

Coastal Resource Management:

The following guidance is offered relative to Coastal Resource Management:

Issue Statement

Coastal ecosystems reside at the interface between the land and water, and are naturally very complex. They perform a vast array of functions by way of shoreline stabilization, improved water quality, and habitat for fishes; from which humans derive direct and indirect benefits.

The science behind coastal ecosystem resource management has revealed that traditional resource management practices limit the ability of the coastal ecosystem to perform many of these essential functions. The loss of these services has already been noted throughout coastal communities in Virginia as a result of development in coastal zone areas coupled with common erosion control practices. Beaches and dunes are diminishing due to a reduction in a natural sediment supply. Wetlands are drowning in place as sea level rises and barriers to inland migration have been created by construction of bulkheads and revetments. There is great concern on the part of the Commonwealth that the continued armoring of shorelines and construction within the coastal area will threaten the long-term sustainability of coastal ecosystems under current and projected sea level rise.

In the 1980s, interest arose in the use of planted wetlands to provide natural shoreline erosion control. Today, a full spectrum of living shoreline design options is available to address the various energy settings and erosion problems found. Depending on the site characteristics, they range from marsh plantings to the use of rock sills in combination with beach nourishment.

Research continues to support that these approaches combat shoreline erosion, minimize impacts to the natural coastal ecosystem and reinforce the principle that an integrated approach for managing tidal shorelines enhances the probability that the resources will be sustained. Therefore, adoption of new guidance and shoreline best management practices for coastal communities is now necessary to insure that functions performed by coastal ecosystems will be preserved and the benefits derived by humans from coastal ecosystems will be maintained into the future.

Policy Statement

In 2011, the Virginia Assembly passed legislation to amend §28.2-1100 and §28.2-104.1 of the Code of Virginia and added section §15.2-2223.2, to codify a new directive for shoreline management in Tidewater Virginia. In accordance with section §15.2-2223.2, all local governments shall include in the next revision of their comprehensive plan beginning in 2013, guidance prepared by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) regarding coastal resource management and, more specifically, guidance for the appropriate selection of living shoreline management practices. The legislation establishes the policy that living shorelines are the preferred alternative for stabilizing eroding shorelines.

This guidance, known as Comprehensive Coastal Resource Management Plan, is being prepared by VIMS for localities within the Tidewater region of Virginia. It explicitly outlines where and what new shoreline best management practices should be considered where coastal modifications are necessary to reduce shoreline erosion and protect our fragile coastal ecosystems. This guidance will include a full spectrum of appropriate management options which can be used by local governments for site-specific application and consideration of cumulative shoreline impacts. The guidance applies a decision-tree method using a based resource mapping database that will be updated from time to time, and a digital geographic information system model created by VIMS.

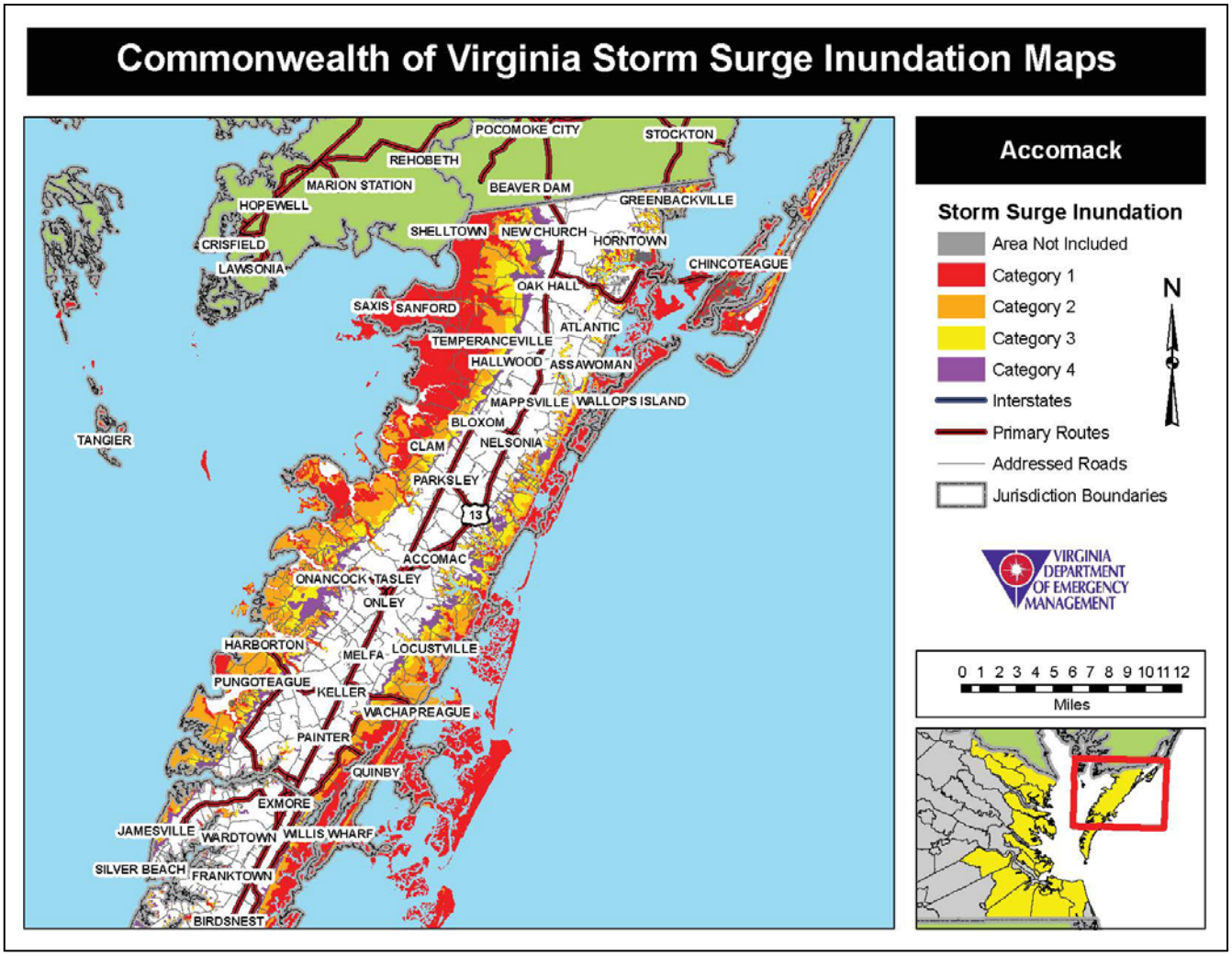
Recommendations:

- Refer to the guidance presented in the locality's Comprehensive Coastal Resource Management Plan (CCRMP) prepared by VIMS to guide regulation and policy decisions regarding shoreline erosion control.
- Utilize VIMS Decision Trees for onsite review and subsequent selection of appropriate erosion control/shoreline best management practices: http://ccrm.vims.edu/decisiontree/index.html.
- Utilize VIMS' CCRMP Shoreline Best Management Practices for management recommendation for all tidal shorelines in the jurisdiction.
- Consider a policy where the above Shoreline Best Management Practices become the recommended adaptation strategy for erosion control, and where a departure from these recommendations by an applicant wishing to alter the shoreline must be justified at a hearing of the board(s).
- Encourage staff training on decision making tools developed by the Center for Coastal Resources Management at VIMS.
- Follow the development of the state-wide General Permit being developed by VMRC.
- Ensure that local policies are consistent with the provisions of the permit.
- Evaluate and consider a city-wide permit to expedite shoreline applications that request actions consistent with the VIMS recommendation.
- Seek public outreach opportunities to educate citizens and stakeholders on new shoreline management strategies including Living Shorelines.
- Follow the development of integrated shoreline guidance under development by VMRC.
- Evaluate and consider a locality-wide regulatory structure that encourages a more integrated approach to shoreline management.
- Consider preserving available open spaces adjacent to marsh lands to allow for inland retreat of the marshes under rising sea level.
- Evaluate and consider cost-share opportunities for construction of living shorelines.

Sustainability:

Surface water (Atlantic Ocean, Chesapeake Bay, ponds, creeks, branches, guts, ditches, and wetlands) is a significant part of the County's landscape. With the amount of surface water evident, there is local interest in sea level rise/recurrent flooding, hurricane impacts/storm surge predictions, flooding due to Nor'easters, and flooding due to deferred ditch maintenance.

The following map which relates to storm surge is provided for informational purposes and in part, forms the basis for hurricane evacuations:



Broad Constraints versus Site-Specific Constraints:

The various important constraints to development in the County, such as poor soils for septic systems, and Agricultural and Forestal Districts (AFDs) can be viewed from two perspectives:

1) Broad constraints that apply generally to a large area

2) Site-Specific constraints that vary in intensity within the bounds of a specific tract of land or smaller area.

Land use policies should provide guidance for both of these perspectives. Areas with severe and consistent constraints should have generally restrictive policies applied to them (for example discouraging rezonings and infrastructure expansions), whereas areas with variable constraints in which some sites or portions of sites have few constraints while others nearby have severe constraints, could have more permissive policies. Further, some areas have inherent conflicts between opportunities and constraints, such as portions of the Route 13 corridor that fall within the spine groundwater recharge area. In these cases, site-specific policies may be applied that allow for some development while simultaneously ensuring that some land is also protected.

In general, the greater the constraints to development a property has, as shown on the land use analysis maps of this plan, the greater the restrictions the County will impose for on-site development of the property.

Character of Development (traditional patterns, human scale, pedestrian access, etc.):

Many of the county's community development and preservation goals can be achieved or enhanced if new development occurs in a compact, traditional pattern, similar to the pattern that exists in the County's existing historic towns and villages. This pattern would feature generally interconnected street networks, mixed uses in the core areas, relatively narrow neighborhood streets, a variety of lot sizes and building sizes, generally deep lots, a variety of front setbacks in residential neighborhoods, and houses typically featuring sitting porches as the most prominent element of the front facade, rather than garage doors. This concept is particularly important and relevant in the expansion areas of existing towns and villages, such as around Onancock and Onley.

Future Land Use Analysis - Opportunities and Constraints:

<u>McHarg Analysis</u>

Accomack County is located on a narrow peninsula, with various environmental and public facility resource constraints that have a generally linear overall pattern. This geography lends itself to a "McHarg" analysis of land use opportunities and constraints. This type of analysis is named after its inventor, the planner and landscape architect, Ian McHarg, author of the classic planning book *Design With Nature.*

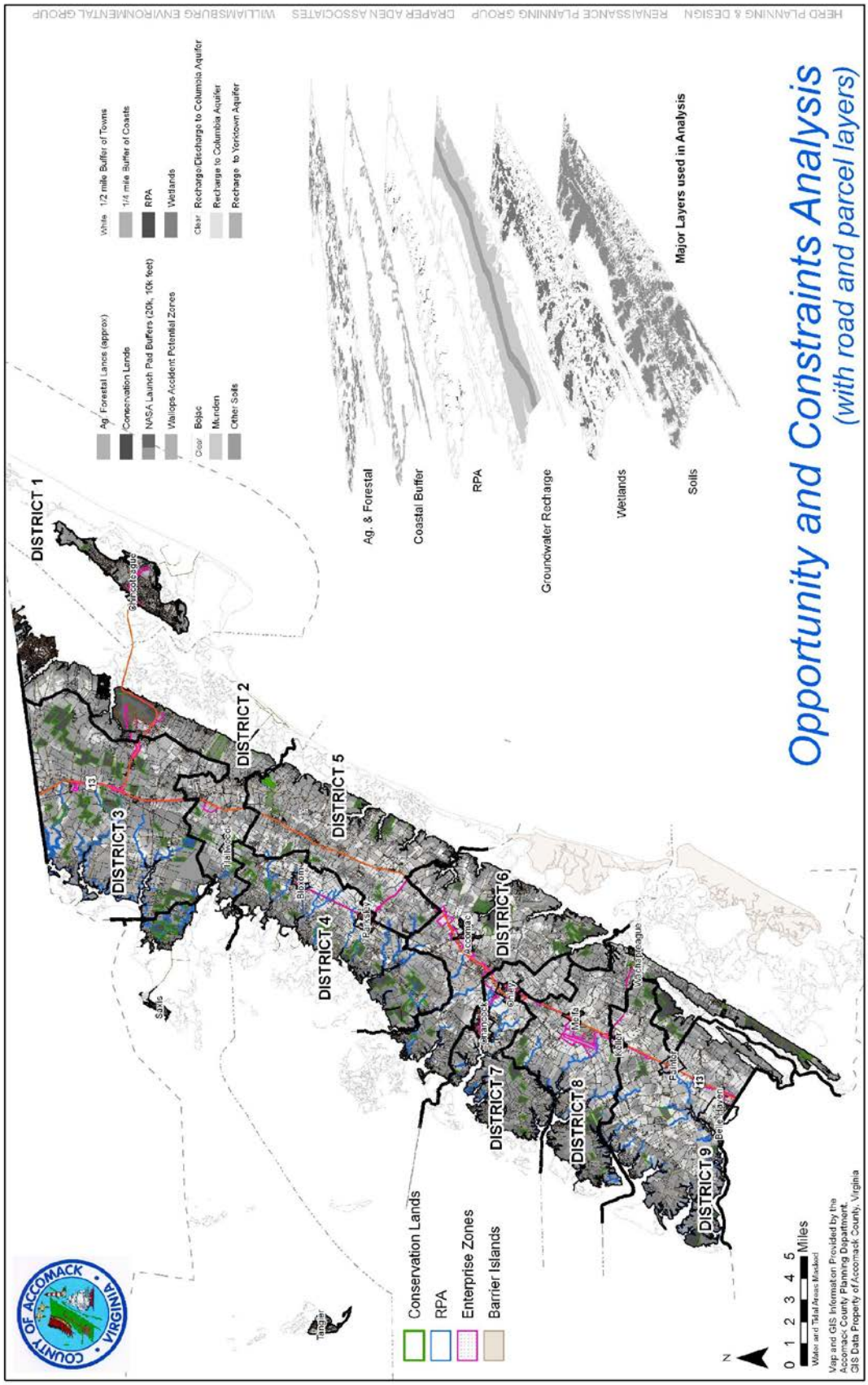
In this type of analysis, the major kinds of opportunities and constraints for human settlement are mapped. The maps are then overlaid on top of one another. When combined together into a single, multi-layer map, these overlays visually indicate the variations in levels of constraints for development between various areas. The resulting map shows the most suitable areas for future development.

This process was carried out in October, 2006, using the County's Geographic Information System data. The key factors or data layers that were incorporated into the McHarg layers as constraints and opportunities were the following and mapped in gray tones:

- Agricultural and Forestal Districts (AFD)
- Coastal Buffer (1/4 mile setback)
- Conservation lands (lands under easement)
- Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Areas (RPA)
- Groundwater recharge spine (recharge to Columbia and Yorktown aquifers)
- Wetlands
- Soils (Bojac, Munden, others)
- Proximity to existing towns (within ½ mile radius)
- NASA launch pad buffers (20,000 and 10,000 feet)
- Wallops Airport Accident Potential Zones
- Existing Zoning (mapped as color layer)

In the initial analysis, each of these factors were given essentially equal or proportional weight in terms of importance. During the course of the Planning Commission review, some layers were examined individually, such as Bojac soils and Agricultural and Forestal Districts, in order to consider circumstances in which one factor might overwhelm all other considerations in terms of its importance as an opportunity or constraint to development. The McHarg Analysis is summarized on Map 6-A. *Please note that the election districts on Map 6-A on the following page reflect the 2001 election districts, not the 2011 election districts.

Map 6-A


Opportunity and Constraints Analysis
(with road and parcel layers)
Major Layers used in Analysis
Ag. & Forestal
Coastal Buffer
RPA
Groundwater Recharge
Wetlands
Soils
DISTRICT 1
DISTRICT 2
DISTRICT 3
DISTRICT 4
DISTRICT 5
DISTRICT 6
DISTRICT 7
DISTRICT 8
DISTRICT 9
Conservation Lands
RPA
Enterprise Zones
Barrier Islands
Miles
Water and Tidal Areas Masked
Map and GIS Information Provided by the Accomack County Planning Department.
GIS Data Property of Accomack County, Virginia

Public Input:

In addition to the GIS data, consideration was given to the input received from citizens at the public workshops in September 2006, regarding land suitability for development and conservation. At these workshops, a total of 15 small workgroups of citizens, representing a wide spectrum of viewpoints and geographic areas, brainstormed their ideas for the future land use pattern in the County, looking 20 to 30 years into the future. The amount of agreement among the groups was striking. The major themes that were broadly shared by the citizens at these meetings were:

- Concentrate development around existing towns and villages
- Provide for large lots (low density development) close to the water/shorelines
- Provide for smaller lots (higher density development) close to services (towns and villages)
- Cluster businesses on Route 13
- Preserve wetlands, groundwater, and agriculture.

The Draft Future Land Use Map was presented at a series of four public meetings in January and February 2007, and revisions were subsequently made based on public discussion and comments. Ideas and issues discussed at these meetings included:

- Affordable Housing
- Economic Development
- NASA
- Subdivisions/Existing Development
- Apply Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act to the Seaside
- Need for better Stormwater Management and Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinances
- Zoning Districts
- Zoning Ordinance Review
- Land Use Value Tax
- Tax Assessment
- Water Quality/Shellfish
- Agriculture/Seafood/Forestry
- Wastewater Treatment
- PUD (Planned Unit Development)
- Population/Carrying Capacity of the County
- Sea Level Rise
- Alternative Energy
- Waterfront Protection
- Public Safety
- Public Access
- Conservation Areas

- Drainage
- Infrastructure: Water & Sewer, Roads, Schools, Trash, Fire & Rescue
- Roads/Route 13
- Enterprise Zone
- Ground Water
- Septage Lagoons
- DEQ Policies
- Mobile Home Parks/Substandard Housing
- Poverty Map

Future Land Use Plan Concept:

The following narrative is a description of the concept for Accomack County's land use plan. The plan is illustrated through the Accomack County Future Land Use Map. Components of the future land use plan are based on:

- 2010 Census and Weldon Cooper population projections as of October 2013,
- Growth and change indicators identified in the inventory section of this plan,
- Studies done by the Planning Commission in recent years,
- Input from citizens at large during the plan update process, described above,
- The "McHarg" analysis described above, and
- The policies set forth in Chapter Five.

It is important to note that many land areas in the County are suitable for more than one use, and thus, "trade-offs" must be weighed and judgments made as to priorities. An example is the conflict between the opportunity for development along the Route 13 corridor due to its good access, and the fact that it is also generally the most important area for groundwater recharge, a constraint to development. Another example are areas bordering the shorelines, which need to be preserved in order to maintain water quality for local water-related businesses, yet are also places where many people wish to live, due to the scenic quality and water access.

Overall guidelines for the future land use recommendations are generally consistent with those of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, and are as follows:

- Because Accomack County has adopted Agricultural and Forestal Districts which recognize designated land as, "land which requires conservation and protection of food and other agricultural and forestal products and as such is a valuable natural and ecological resource," land in Agricultural and Forestal Districts should be designated as Agricultural on the Future Land Use Map, except for certain areas that may be particularly suitable for other types of uses in the long-term;

- Because most development occurring in Accomack County is dependent on septic systems for waste disposal and because the Health Department has identified Bojac soils as the soil type which will best support septic systems, areas which are not located in Agricultural and Forestal Districts and in which Bojac is the predominant soil type should be among those considered for future development.
- In order to encourage development which is in character with historic and existing development patterns, location and density of development should be in keeping with the pattern of development around villages and towns and should conform to the comprehensive plans of incorporated towns where applicable. Similarly, land along the Route 13 and Route 175 corridors generally offers good opportunities to accommodate future development. However, one of the major conflicts for land use designations is the fact that the Route 13 corridor generally coincides with the groundwater recharge area. Thus, some trade-offs in priorities must be made.
- Because of the importance and sensitivity of water resources to the County's economy, areas bordering the Bayside and Seaside shorelines, areas bordering creeks, and areas of wetlands, are not as suitable for development as most other areas.
- Because of the importance of groundwater to the County's future, the groundwater recharge spine is an area that should also be preserved to the extent feasible.

Land Use Categories:

Land use categories were developed for the 1997 Comprehensive Plan to promote a balanced, safe and orderly pattern of development. These categories reflect traditional land uses as well as the goals, objectives and policies of the 1997 plan, and remain appropriate as an organizing framework for the updated plan.

These categories are used to develop revisions and updates to the Accomack County Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance, and in decisions regarding rezoning and special permit approvals. However, these categories are not intended to be an all-inclusive list of districts for zoning ordinance revisions. Any additional categories or sub-categories that promote the stated goals, objectives and policies of this plan may be developed and proposed.

The general location of the land use categories described below are depicted on the Future Land Use Map. The Future Land Use Map designates the most desirable locations for various types of future development. A good deal of development has occurred over time in areas that have been determined to be undesirable for future development based on the criteria provided above. It is recognized that this existing development shall continue to exist in these areas and it is not proposed that areas currently zoned for a particular use be rezoned to a lesser use category. However, in areas where the existing zoning or pattern of use is inconsistent with that designated in the future land use plan, further extension of that use should be discouraged and development

in surrounding areas should be consistent with that proposed in this plan.

Conservation Areas

The purpose of Conservation Areas is to preserve and protect Accomack County's areas of ecological importance on which development of any intensity would be damaging or unsafe. Areas that should be in the conservation district include marshland and the undeveloped barrier islands. Allowable uses in the Conservation Area would include docks and piers, duck blinds and wildlife observation platforms constructed in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Accomack County Wetlands Board.

The County's target outcome for the Conservation Area in the long-term is to have no new development through regulations and conservation easements.

Agricultural Areas

The purpose of Agricultural Areas is to provide an area for the production of agricultural and forestry products. Regulation of this area should minimize obstructions to the efficient and economical production of these products. Examples of the types of primary uses allowed in this district are agricultural and horticultural uses such as raising of crops, nurseries, orchards, vineyards, raising of livestock, forestry, poultry houses, sawmills, game preserves, and aquaculture operations. Residential uses would include housing for property owners, family of property owners, and those employed full-time on the property. Examples of secondary uses allowed in this area are single-family dwellings, accessory dwellings, cluster development, seasonal farm labor housing, public safety facilities, and other public uses.

The County's target outcome for this area in the long-term is to have as little new non-farm development as possible, through zoning regulations, Agricultural and Forestal Districts, cluster development, conservation development designs, and conservation easements. The target density for individual, developed properties in this area would be no greater than approximately one dwelling per five to ten acres, on average, and a far lower overall density. While a five to 10-acre density would, in theory, still exceed the ideal amount for these areas in the very long term, it would be low enough to limit the most serious and immediate impacts of residential development on natural resource systems, especially if carried out in a clustered pattern using conservation design techniques.

However, even a 10-acre average density would be excessive if it occurred on every farm. Further, at current growth rates such a level of development would not occur for several decades. It is therefore critical that the county continually monitor the rate, location, and impact of all rural residential development activity. The county's number one planning objective is to "direct development towards existing population centers." Development patterns should be measured against this objective on an annual basis. If the county observes a multi-year trend of increasing rates of rural subdivisions combined with decreasing amounts of land in Agricultural and

Forestal Districts, and/or in agricultural production, it should revisit the zoning regulations for residential development in the rural areas. Rezonings to higher intensities should not be approved in this area.

Rural Settlement Areas

The purpose of the Rural Settlement area is to facilitate rural residential growth complementary to and in the vicinity of existing residential villages and hamlets that dot Accomack County's countryside. Examples of secondary uses allowed in this area are accessory dwellings, cluster development, public safety facilities, and other public uses. Clustering options could be provided to allow smaller individual lot sizes if a portion of the development site is set aside as open space. New rural settlement areas should be located along, but not necessarily fronting, existing roads with adequate capacity, on soils with good septic suitability, and/or adjacent to existing settlements or subdivisions.

The County's target outcome for this area in the long-term is to blend new development with existing development in clustered, rural residential development that reflects and perpetuates the County's existing, historic land use pattern. Cluster development and conservation development designs are encouraged to blend with existing settlements. The target density for this area would be approximately one dwelling per two to three acres, on average. Rezonings to higher intensities should not be approved in this area.

Residential Areas

The purpose of Residential Areas is to allow for new residential development in existing communities for those who chose to live on moderately sized lots. Examples of secondary uses allowed in this area are home occupations, public safety facilities, and other public uses. New Residential Areas should be located adjacent to existing residential areas located outside of flood zones that have roads with adequate capacity and soils with good septic suitability.

The County's target outcome for Residential Areas in the long-term is to provide medium density residential development that reflects the surrounding area. The target density for this area would be approximately one dwelling per acre, on average. Rezonings to higher intensities should not be approved in this area.

Village Development Areas

The purpose of Village Development areas is to allow for a mix of residential and commercial uses in keeping with the traditional development pattern of Accomack County's villages and towns (subject to wastewater treatment capability). These areas should be compact, with interconnected street networks, parks, sidewalks and a mix of uses, convenient to both motor vehicles and pedestrians.

The County's target outcome for Village Development Areas is for the vast majority of future residential development to be located there, and that they be the major location of future

neighborhood commercial and institutional development. Depending upon the mix of uses and the availability of central water and wastewater treatment, overall residential densities would be planned to be in the range of one-half to one acre per dwelling, on average, including a variety of lot sizes and dwelling types; thus net densities may be four dwellings per acre or higher. Rezonings to higher intensities, including Planned Unit Developments (PUD) should be encouraged in this area, provided that the policies of this plan are met, including the features listed above.

Development within designated Village Development Areas should occur in a pattern that blends with and complements the existing, traditional pattern of streets and lots within the historic areas. This would include generally narrow streets, a mixture of lot sizes and building types, generally narrow, deep lots, as well as walkways and on-street parking within the public right-of-way.

It is critical that new development, including the extension of central wastewater treatment systems, be phased such that development will generally extend outward from the existing core of existing towns and villages. As development occurs, it is also critical that all streets and walkways be interconnected into a loose, grid pattern in order to disperse traffic, provide multiple routes between destinations, and create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

In those places where a Village Development Area abuts the Route 13 corridor, it is essential that motor vehicle access be managed so as not to impede the efficiency and safety of Route 13. New development in such areas must keep new access points to Route 13 to an absolute minimum, must coordinate entrances and crossings with adjacent properties, and must provide necessary turn-lanes and any other safety measure that are appropriate to the specific site.

Multiple-family housing developments should generally be located in or near incorporated towns. Village Development areas are appropriate locations for apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and similar types of developments designed to satisfy rental and for sale market needs.

To the extent possible, multiple-family housing developments should be in close proximity to goods and services for the convenience of residents and to afford residents of the developments with transportation alternatives to personal vehicles, such as walking, biking, or using other transportation forms. Where appropriate, sidewalks, lighting, and other amenities should be provided.

The Planning Commission has identified a need for additional market rate multiple housing options for people working in the education, medical, and aerospace professions.

Planned Unit Developments in Village Development Areas should achieve the following:

- Promote mixed use developments.
- Generally be consistent with, and developed in accord, with the Village Development purpose, targets, and development types outlined above.
- That the development is of appropriate size and scale for the Eastern Shore of Virginia.
- That phasing of the development is linked to market conditions conducted by an analyst selected by the County and paid for by the applicant.
- That the PUD complements nearby development.
- Be designed and constructed to create a sense of place where building placement, sidewalks, trees, landscaping, parks, and other amenities are connected in a manner to encourage human interaction.

Commercial Areas

The purpose of Commercial areas is to provide appropriate locations for a broad range of business activities which may be characterized by heavy traffic, noise, or other factors that could be considered a nuisance to residential uses. Examples of primary uses allowed in Commercial areas would include large-scale office complexes, banks, large-scale restaurants, theaters, large-scale retail stores, gas stations, service garages, recreational centers, warehouses and wholesale stores, funeral homes, large hotels and motels, public safety facilities, and other public uses.

The County's target outcome for this area is that it be the location of large scale, intensive commercial enterprises, but that such development be clustered at key access points on Route 13 or Route 175, with managed access, and street connections to adjacent properties. Future commercial development must be required to provide adequate stormwater management and ground water protection, and should be held to reasonable standards with regard to the aesthetics of site design, architecture, landscaping, and lighting to minimize adverse impacts on the surrounding community.

Industrial Areas

The purpose of Industrial Areas is to provide a suitable location for industrial activities with minimized interference from or impact to adjacent land uses. Examples of allowable uses would include light manufacturing, food preparation and processing, bottling plants, electronics production, metal fabrication, garment manufacturing, recycling facilities, inter-modal transportation of goods, warehousing facilities, public safety facilities, and other public uses. Industrial Areas should be located near adequate transportation facilities, including highway, railroad, and waterway access points.

The County's target outcome for this area is that it be the location of large-scale, intensive industrial enterprises, with managed access, buffers and other regulatory controls to protect adjacent properties, and adequate stormwater management and groundwater protection.

Amount of Land Designated:

The total amount of land designed on the Future Land Use Map for each of the land use categories is shown in the table below. This total acreage is larger than the estimate of actual land demand, mainly due to the designation of substantial areas as "residential" which are aimed at reducing development pressure on the agricultural and conservation areas, and "rural settlement" areas, which are expansions of existing rural neighborhoods. In addition, some properties within each of the designated categories are either already developed or will not likely become developable in the foreseeable future. The "extra" total acreage suggests that the County needs to monitor development within the village development areas, including phasing development so it occurs as incremental extensions outward from the existing historic cores of each village area.

Acreage of Future Land Use Areas

Rural Settlement Area	3,002 Acres	/ 11 sites
Rural Settlement Area B	1,424 Acres	/ 5 sites
Residential Area	2,443 Acres	/ 11 sites
Village Development Area	5,141 Acres	/ 23 sites
Village Development Area B	1,821 Acres	/ 7 sites
Commercial Area	887 Acres	/ 9 sites
Industrial Area	1,997 Acres	/ 15 sites
Agricultural Area	182,243 Acres	
Conservation Area	69,545 Acres	

Criteria for Evaluating Development Proposals to Implement the Land Use Plan:

Proposals for development, including applications to rezone property to a more intensive zoning district, will be evaluated from the site specific viewpoint as well as from the overall viewpoint of the entire designated Future Land Use Area.

In making decisions about any proposal for development within any particular Future Land Use Area, the county will seek to achieve the proper balance or mix of land uses within the area, particularly with regard to the Village Development Areas. Because the Village Development Areas are depicted as general locations for a mix of urban uses, the county will monitor the balance of approved uses over the course of time. Thus, the approval of a particular use at a particular time within a Village Development Area does not mean that the same type of use will necessarily be approved later on an adjacent site, because a key purpose of this future land use area is to have the appropriate balance of uses and not necessarily all of one type.

Applications to rezone property will be judged in light of all of the goals, objectives, and policies of this comprehensive plan, with the following criteria serving as primary factors. Failure to meet any one or more of these criteria may be sufficient basis to deny a rezoning. The relative importance given by the Board of Supervisors to each criterion will depend on the specific case,

and the purposes of zoning as set forth in §15.2-2283 will also apply.

1. *Location* – the location of the proposal in relation to the Future Land Use Map designations (Chapter 6) and the location policies in the text of the plan (Chapter 5).

2. *Supply of zoned land* – whether or not the County currently has sufficient zoning capacity in the appropriate locations for the proposed uses, in relation to the projected land demand analysis contained herein.

3. *Adjacent uses* – whether the proposed uses are compatible with current and planned adjacent uses. (Consideration of proffered conditions to mitigate any incompatible aspects would also be a factor, as indicated in criterion #6).

4. *Public facility capacity* – the existing and planned capacity of water, wastewater treatment, roads (including traffic safety as well as capacity), schools, parks, emergency services, etc. (in the long term, the County should establish performance standards for public service delivery).

5. *Environmental impact mitigation* – whether the environmental impacts of the proposed uses can be adequately mitigated by the applicant.

6. *Proffered conditions* – whether the conditions proffered by the applicant are sufficient to mitigate all of the impacts caused by the development to a reasonable degree.

7. *Overall pattern of future development in the Future Land Use Area* – whether there is already a sufficient amount of land planned or approved for the proposed use, in which case the county may choose not to approve a rezoning that would add to that existing supply of zoned land.

8. *Density* – the density or intensity of proposed development on the site, as well as what the effect would be on the density of the overall area.

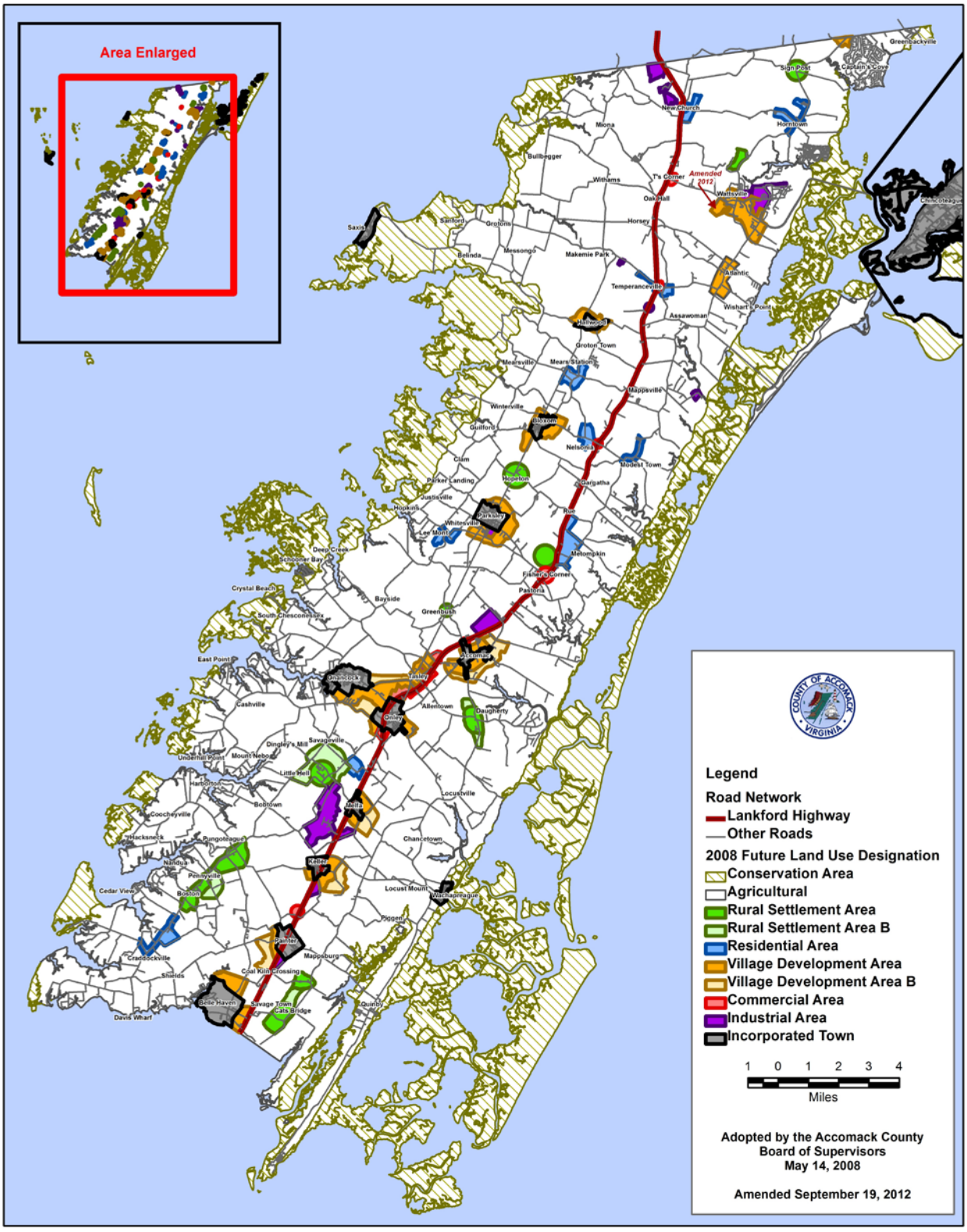
9. *Land use mix* – the mix of land uses on the site and what effect the proposed use would have on the overall land use mix in the area.

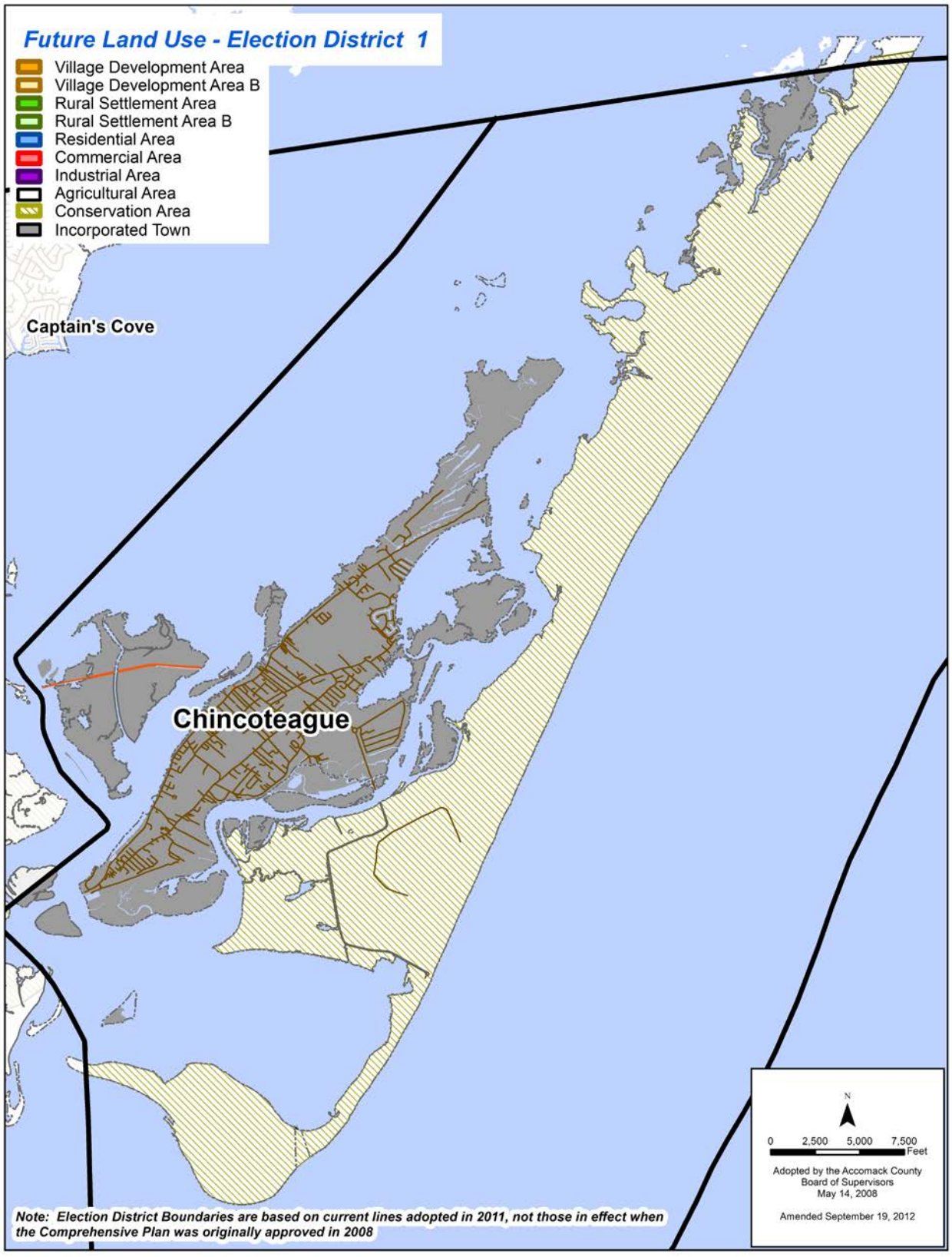
10. *Public input* – relevant factual information provided by the public that is received before or as part of a public hearing that would have an adverse impact on the health, safety, and welfare of the residents.

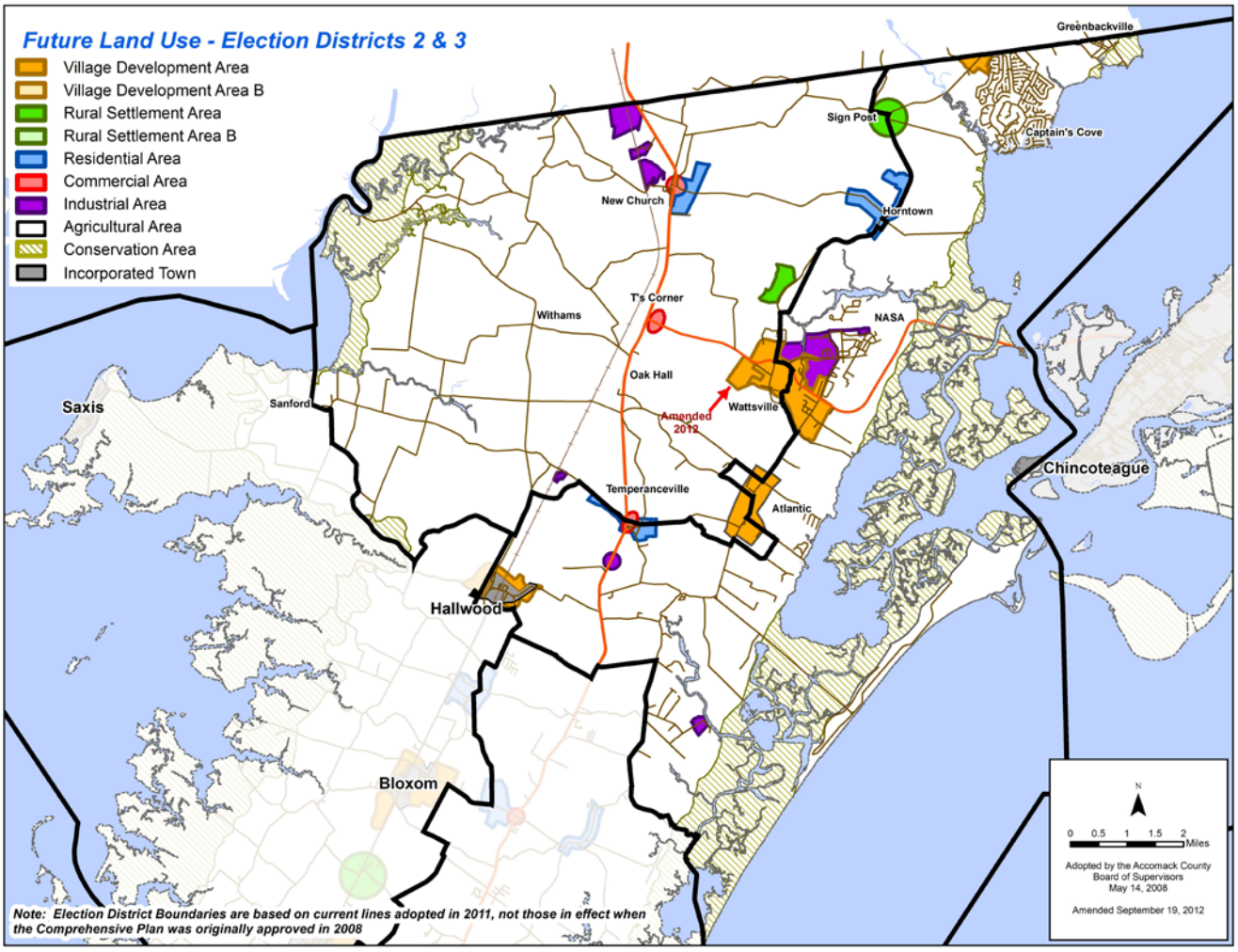
Future Land Use Maps:

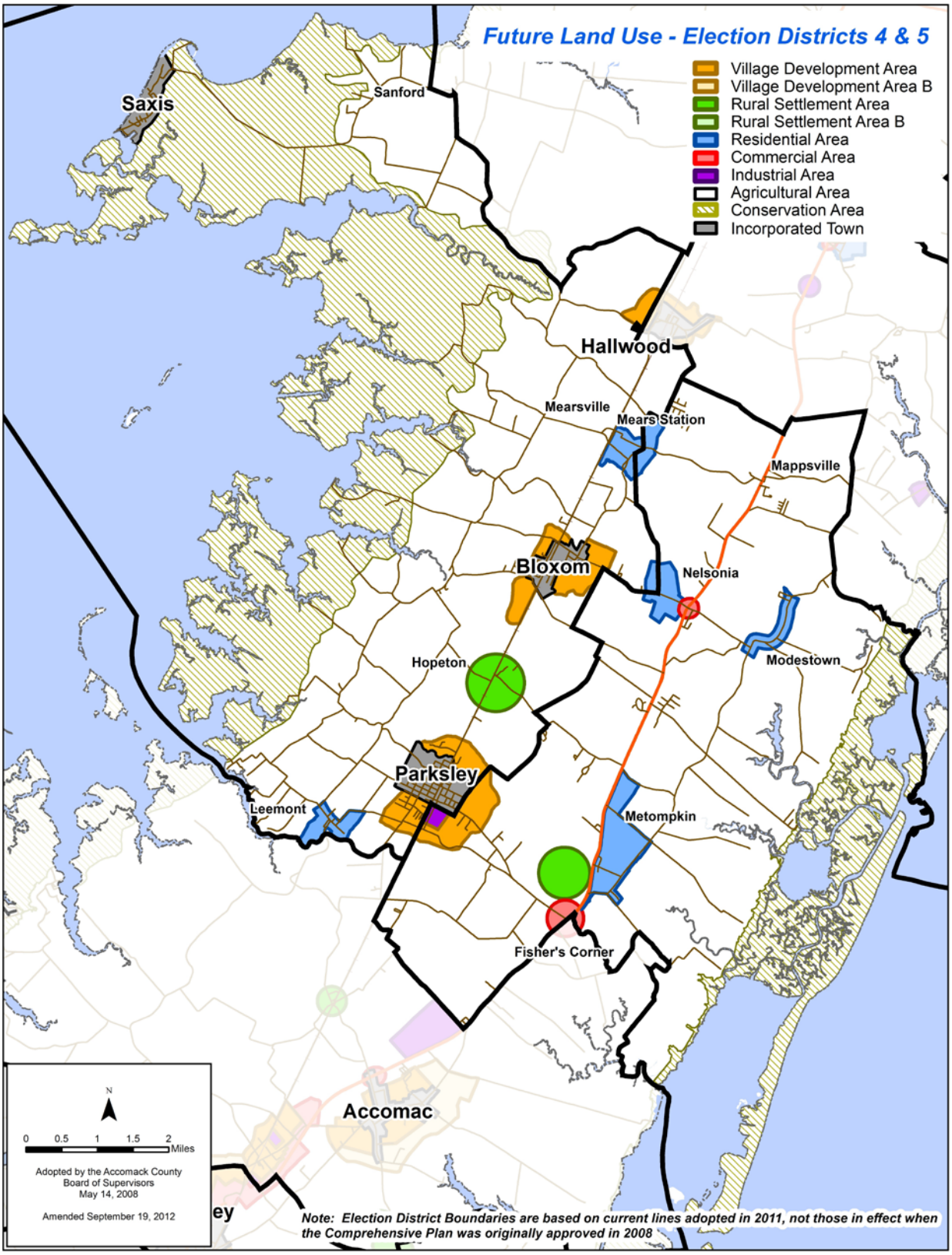
The following Future Land Use Maps show the 2008 Future Land Use Plan Maps, which have been updated to include the 2011 election district boundaries and to reflect the 2012 Future Land Use Amendment.

Accomack County 2008 Future Land Use Map (As Amended in 2012)




Future Land Use - Election District 1
Village Development Area
Village Development Area B
Rural Settlement Area
Rural Settlement Area B
Residential Area
Commercial Area
Industrial Area
Agricultural Area
Conservation Area
Incorporated Town
Captain's Cove
Chincoteague
N
0 2,500 5,000 7,500
Feet
Adopted by the Accomack County Board of Supervisors
May 14, 2008
Amended September 19, 2012
Note: Election District Boundaries are based on current lines adopted in 2011, not those in effect when the Comprehensive Plan was originally approved in 2008


Future Land Use - Election Districts 2 & 3
Village Development Area
Village Development Area B
Rural Settlement Area
Rural Settlement Area B
Residential Area
Commercial Area
Industrial Area
Agricultural Area
Conservation Area
Incorporated Town
Greenbackville
Sign Post
Captain's Cove
New Church
Horntown
T's Corner
Withams
NASA
Oak Hall
Saxis
Sanford
Wattsville
Amended 2012
Chincoteague
Temperanceville
Atlantic
Hallwood
Bloxom
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles
Adopted by the Accomack County Board of Supervisors May 14, 2008
Amended September 19, 2012
Note: Election District Boundaries are based on current lines adopted in 2011, not those in effect when the Comprehensive Plan was originally approved in 2008


Future Land Use - Election Districts 4 & 5
Village Development Area
Village Development Area B
Rural Settlement Area
Rural Settlement Area B
Residential Area
Commercial Area
Industrial Area
Agricultural Area
Conservation Area
Incorporated Town
Saxis
Sanford
Hallwood
Mearsville
Mears Station
Mappsville
Bloxom
Nelsonia
Hopeton
Modestown
Parksley
Leemont
Metompkin
Fisher's Corner
Accomac
N
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles
Adopted by the Accomack County Board of Supervisors
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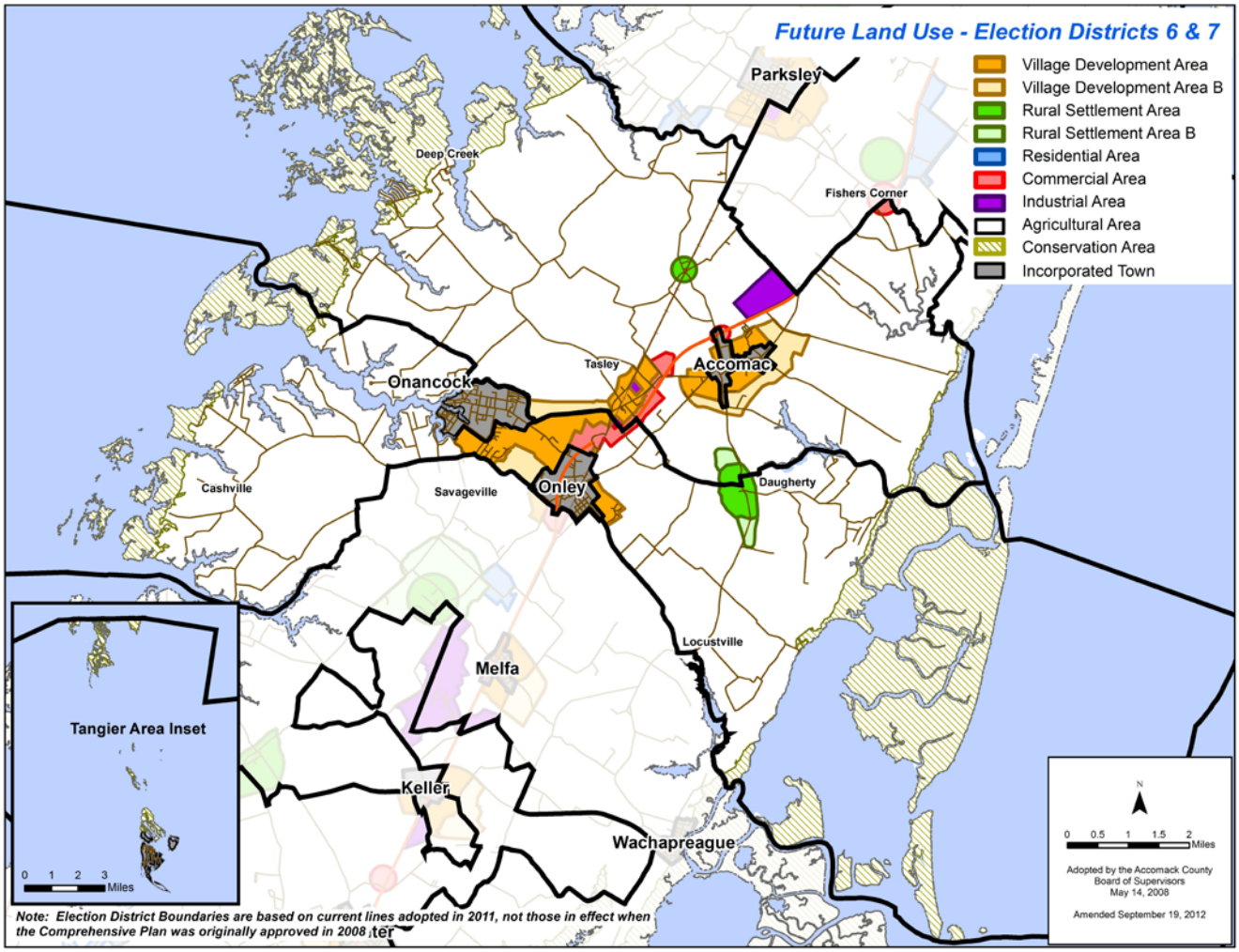
Future Land Use - Election Districts 6 & 7
Village Development Area
Village Development Area B
Rural Settlement Area
Rural Settlement Area B
Residential Area
Commercial Area
Industrial Area
Agricultural Area
Conservation Area
Incorporated Town
Parksley
Deep Creek
Fishers Corner
Tasley
Accomac
Onancock
Cashville
Savageville
Onley
Daugherty
Locustville
Melfa
Keller
Wachapreague
Tangier Area Inset
0 1 2 3 Miles
N
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles
Adopted by the Accomack County Board of Supervisors May 14, 2008
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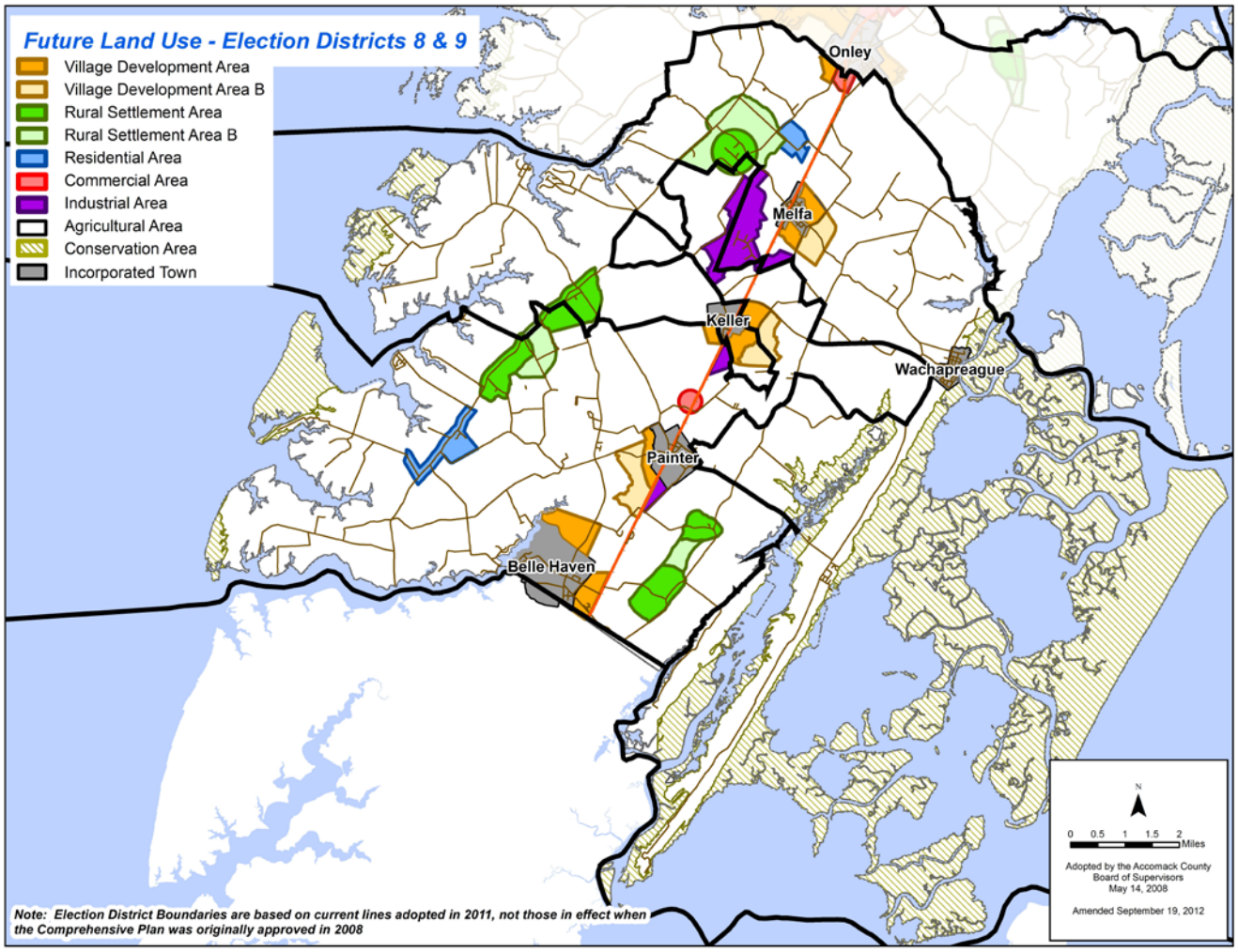
Future Land Use - Election Districts 8 & 9
Village Development Area
Village Development Area B
Rural Settlement Area
Rural Settlement Area B
Residential Area
Commercial Area
Industrial Area
Agricultural Area
Conservation Area
Incorporated Town
Onley
Melfa
Keller
Wachapreague
Painter
Belle Haven
N
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles
Adopted by the Accomack County Board of Supervisors May 14, 2008
Amended September 19, 2012
Note: Election District Boundaries are based on current lines adopted in 2011, not those in effect when the Comprehensive Plan was originally approved in 2008