

APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2020.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

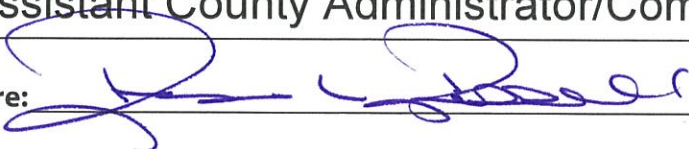
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Charles City County
Program Title: Courthouse Area Plan
Program Category: Community Development with Regional Support

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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2020 VaCO ACHIEVEMENT AWARD NOMINATION

Charles City Courthouse Area Plan 2016-2020

DESCRIPTION:

In 2013, the County began a planning study working with the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission. The planning study lead to the creation of the Charles City Courthouse Area Plan (CHAP) in mid-2015. The objective of the plan is to create a template for reference by the County can refer to guide staff and leadership in relation to future development proposals in areas around the Courthouse. This document is visionary and not site specific and provides overall guidance and direction for the development of the Courthouse Area. A citizen advisory group of property owners in the Court House Area participated in plan development.

PLAN FORMULATION

The County and RRPDC (now PlanRVA) partnered in developing the Charles City County Courthouse Area Plan. The planning area extended from the Virginia Capital Trail (VCT) and encompassing a portion of the Route 5 corridor and Courthouse area. The County has always desired to have a plan showing how the roadside tracts of land can be sensitively developed, integrated with adjacent community facilities, and make best use of the VCT and related bike/pedestrian trails. The plan contained the following items that were produced in collaboration with PlanRVA:

1. **Base Map** - The "Capitalizing on the Capital Trail" base map will be expanded and enlarged to a smaller scale suitable for analysis and planning purposes. Such base map will include information on existing roadways, trails, topography, property boundaries and building footprints.
2. **Existing Conditions** – A GIS layer of existing conditions will be prepared for the base which includes property ownership, existing land use, zoning, water/sewer service areas, traffic issues, and environmental features, including wetlands, flood plains, historic properties, and other pertinent features.
3. **Constraints/Opportunities Analysis** - Key factors that will influence development decisions will be incorporated on a GIS map layer taking into consideration existing conditions and future land use or improvements, i.e. large parcels in single ownership with few environmental constraints with roadway frontage and access to the VCT.
4. **Conceptual Plan** - Using the constraints and opportunities analysis, we will work with County staff to identify possible road access points, pedestrian connections, and conceptual land use layouts that could be supported as well as a guide for setting public and private sector investment priorities to support the desired development.
5. **Implementing Ordinances** - We will assist County staff in a high level review of the existing County Subdivision Ordinance to identify areas where the ordinance language or organization could be strengthened to achieve better outcomes for future development, promoting interconnectivity, safe access and a more desirable land use mix in this area of the County.
6. **Final product** - Will be GIS-based data including any relevant shapefiles and map (.mxd) documents, as well as plotted maps, as requested.

ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE COURTHOUSE AREA

The Charles City County Board of Supervisors had the foresight to identify this area as key to the future development of the County. This section is the center of County activity where the schools, a financial institution, a medical facility, and the County Courthouse and Administrative offices have been located.

Additionally, there is a small restaurant that is located within a historically significant building. Another activity that was spurred as an outcome of this plan is the construction of a “state of the art” library facility at the rear of the Courthouse complex. This facility not only houses typical written materials but also has internet access for County residents. The restoration of the historic courthouse has also occurred as part of this plan. The historic courthouse and an adjacent jail facility have been fully restored and adapted to a house County history center and museum. Finally, the development of and construction of the Virginia Capital Trail (VCT), with grants from Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) links Williamsburg and Richmond via a multi-use, non-motorized path which is parallel to U.S. Route 5.

The citizens involved in the development of the plan represented property and business owners of various backgrounds and social economic status. This group was dedicated to the future and had a vision for their community. The citizens took many hours out of their busy schedules in numerous committee and sub-committee meetings, putting together the goals, objectives, strategies, plans and maps that would achieve the vision for the Charles City Community Plan. The Richmond Regional Planning District (now PlanRVA) provided significant technical assistance in the development of the Courthouse area plan.

RECENT INVESTMENTS IN THE COURTHOUSE AREA

As evidence of how successful the Courthouse Plan has been since its inception, the County has experienced the following recent developments in the area:

- Dollar General Store – purchased property and constructed a store in the approximate center of the Courthouse Area Plan. While such an investment may be considered minor in the major metro areas to the east and west, for the County (which does not have a food store of any type) this is a major step in the right direction to develop a commercial core in the Courthouse area.
- The small restaurant (mentioned above) has expanded its operations and now operates a Bed and Breakfast and is planning a micro-brewery and music venue in a historic barn.
- An investor purchased the old Sheriff’s Office building and has submitted plans to redesign the building to create a Café and Micro-Brewery, a convenience store, telehealth/data center and a space for Community activities. He also has phase 2 plans to offer limited lodging facilities to those who may be using the VCT.
- Charles City County submitted and was awarded an additional VDOT grant to extend a spur of the VCT to the school complex about a mile from the Courthouse Complex. It is under construction now and VDOT expects a completion date of late July of 2020.

INNOVATIVE COMPONENTS:

Although the Plan itself was written in approximately 2+ years, while many other projects were being implemented, the process is a part of an overall County approach to planning for its future. The Board of Supervisors wishes to develop plans and processes that are an outgrowth of community planning and involvement which results in an overall transparent process. This sub-area plan is the first one attempted for Charles City County and provides an overall policy guide for the Community and its future growth. This process was very innovative for Charles City County and introduced new concepts to the Citizens of the area. This process has been accepted as the new path forward to develop community planning efforts.

The citizen group recognized early on, the economic growth pressures on the Charles City Community. Its' strategic location lying between Richmond and greater Tidewater area (Williamsburg) and the booming population growth from both from these areas greatly effect, the development of Charles City County. While the County welcomes some development, it does not desire to be overrun with suburban style development. The County desires to keep the rural character and a vibrant, healthy agricultural economy. The County also wishes to protect its environmental resources to balance the problems that new growth presents. The Charles City Courthouse Area Plan is a first major step in balancing these competing issues and sets the policy direction for the next decade.

A Model Process - The process was innovative because it had no preconceived outcomes. The collaboration of the County residents and businesses were "massaged" into practical yet innovative solutions in the development of this plan. Two members of the County's Planning Department worked closely with the subcommittees to keep the Plan moving properly and in the formulation of the Plan. Plan RVA provided technical support, mapping, and other resources to keep the plan moving forward. This process can be imitated well by other localities as long as this "bottom up" approach is carried out and trust occurs.

Conclusion - Due to the innovative process, the inclusionary nature of said process and the hard work and dedication of the citizens involved as well as the staff of Plan RVA and the County, this nomination for the 2020 VaCO Achievement Awards is presented.

Attachments:

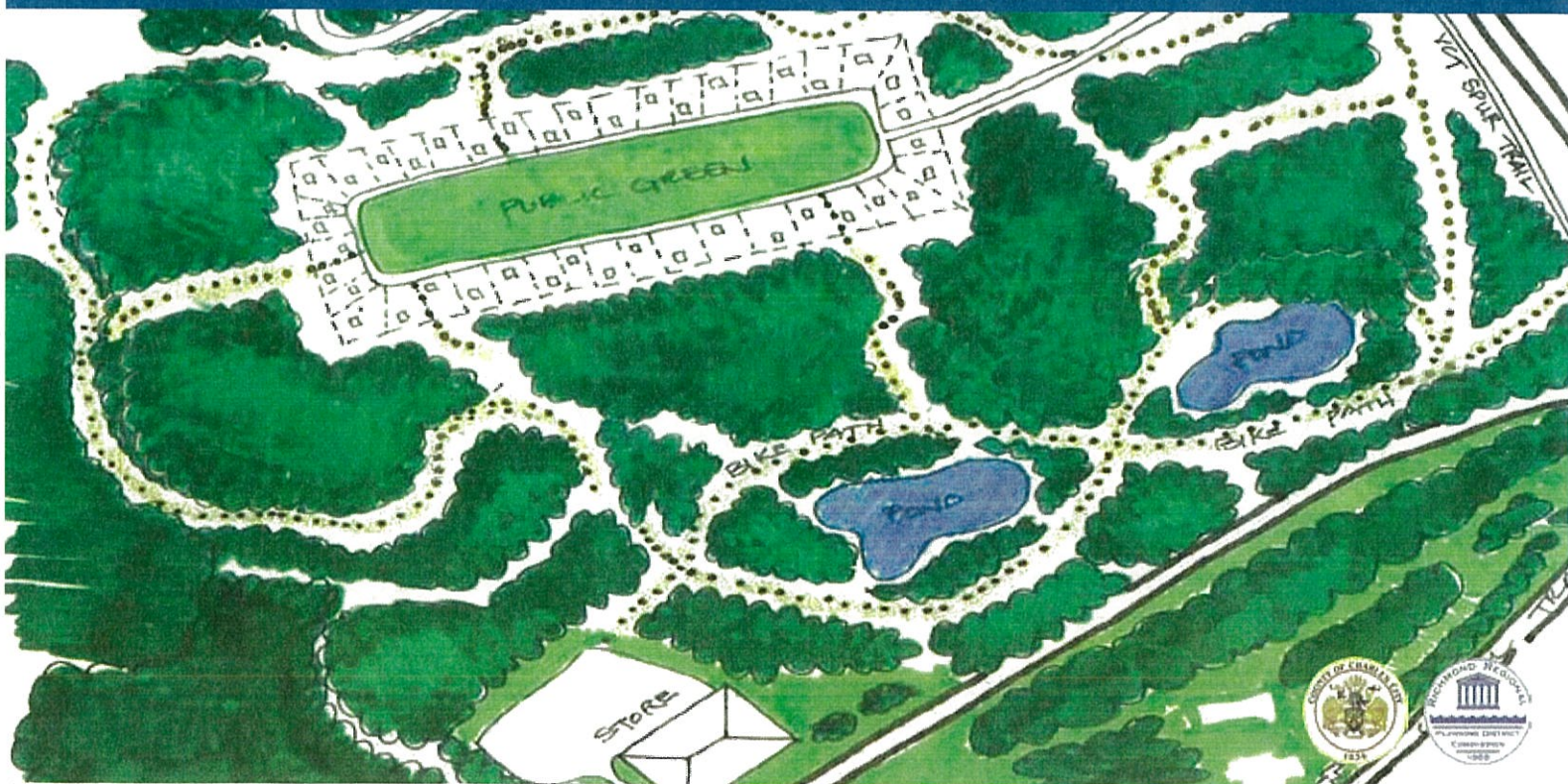
- Charles City Courthouse Area Plan
- Story line from PlanRVA viewable at <https://arcg.is/1L9ivD>
- PlanRVA letter of recommendation



Charles City County

COURTHOUSE AREA PLAN

A guide for development in Charles City's historic center





Introduction

Charles City County is located in eastern Virginia, advantageously located in between the Cities of Richmond and Williamsburg. The Charles City County Courthouse area is a strategic focus area between the two intersections of Route 5 and Route 155 and Route 155 and Lott Cary Road. Adding new housing units, businesses and amenities in the Courthouse area offers the potential to make it a thriving center for life in the County.

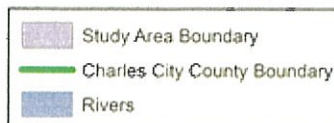
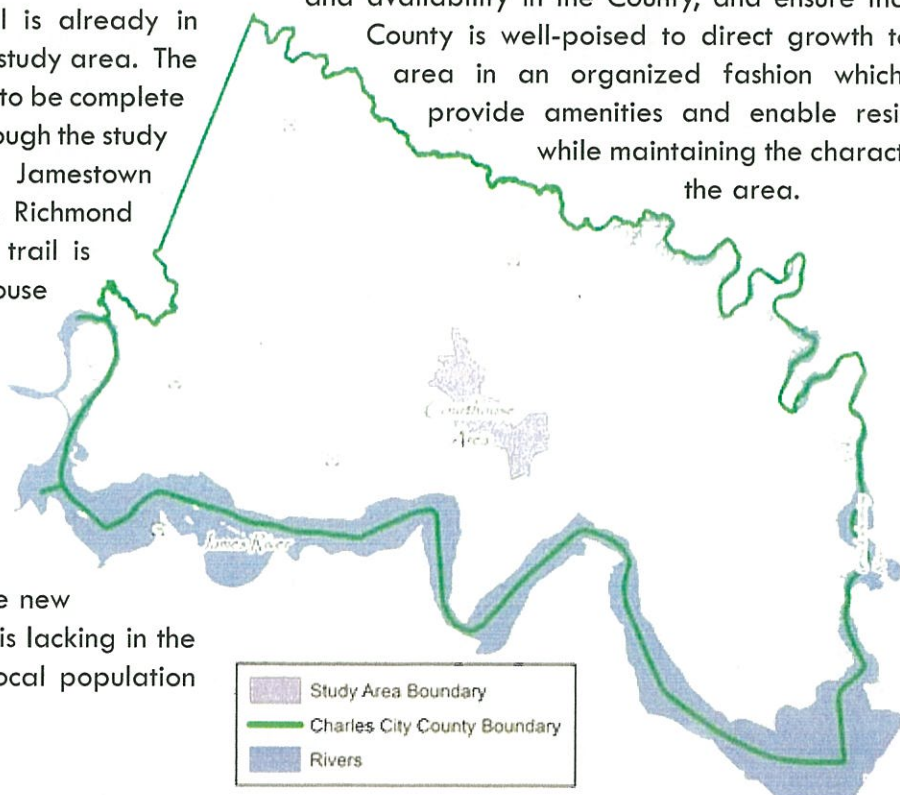
The Virginia Capital Trail, planned to be complete by 2015, will extend from Richmond to Williamsburg, passing the length of Charles City County, along the Route 5 corridor. The trail will be a significant draw for visitors, and the County has potential to build upon the tourist trade the trail will attract and use the opportunity to develop the County's economy.

The "Courthouse" phase of the trail is already in place and in use, and runs west of the study area. The "Sherwood Forest" phase is expected to be complete by the spring of 2014, and will run through the study area and connect it immediately to Jamestown and Williamsburg, and to downtown Richmond by mid- 2015. In addition, a spur trail is proposed on the west side of Courthouse road, from the Capital Trail to the County school complex. Route 644/ Courthouse Road will be used as the trail through the Courthouse area.

In addition, if more jobs are to come to the County, there will be an increased need for housing for the new workers. Moderately priced housing is lacking in the County, which prevents sustainable local population growth.

The addition of various housing types in the study area will benefit the county as a whole and allow the Courthouse area to become more densely populated and developed as identified in the comprehensive plan and future land use map.

The purpose of this plan is to capitalize on the opportunity presented by increased housing demand and availability in the County, and ensure that the County is well-poised to direct growth to this area in an organized fashion which will provide amenities and enable residents while maintaining the character of the area.






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The Vision for the Courthouse Area

The County's Vision 2030: A Strategic Plan document recommends developing "specific area plans for development areas to guide how developments should look and how community facilities will support these areas including but not limited to water and sewer utilities, underground electric and cable utilities, sidewalks/crosswalks, decorative space lighting, public transportation and open spaces", with the desired outcome of being "prepared to work with private developers interested in pursuing development in the designated development areas". As previously mentioned, the Courthouse Area is considered to be a development center and as such should have an associated specific area plan to guide its future development. In order to craft such a plan, one must first consider the desired vision for the defined area. The vision for the Courthouse Area development center is one of a defined central village and corridor that is home to the government, education and health care services of the County.

The Courthouse Village

The Courthouse Village will consist of mixed residential and business uses served by central utilities that are of a common architectural and landscape aesthetic similar

to that of the existing historic courthouse and grounds. This small core area will be the focal point of the County and will be home to the County's government, schools, visitors and cultural center, and the combined library/Center for Local History. The business uses will be less intensive in nature and will be geared towards tourists and transients, while also providing goods and services to surrounding County residents. The architectural style will be of the colonial period and will consist of brick and wooden siding style facades, landscaped entrances and perimeters, unimposing non-illuminated signage, with parking located towards the side and rear of buildings. Businesses will be encouraged to accommodate cyclists, with the provision of bike racks and bike shops and supplies. Such business uses may include and are not limited to: a period restaurant/tavern; church, bike and ecotourism shop; light retail store; country general store; professional and personal services in a larger development; internet café and coffee house; clothing and consignment store; county oriented gift, wine and book store; and residential and business mixed-use.

Residential uses will be denser in nature and will be part of a larger plan of development that is served by central utilities and supports low impact





environmental design. Residential structures within the development will also follow the colonial period architectural and landscaping theme. Residential uses will abut light-intensive business uses to create a walkable neighborhood that centers on the bike trail and preserves sensitive environmental features. Residential uses may include and are not limited to: (major subdivisions) clustered single family dwellings; townhouses; apartments, multifamily dwellings and condos (duplex, triplex and quadplex); and residential over retail. Residential development will be designed so as to ensure that residents have access to bike trails, walking paths to schools, and landscaped off-street parking.

The Courthouse Corridor

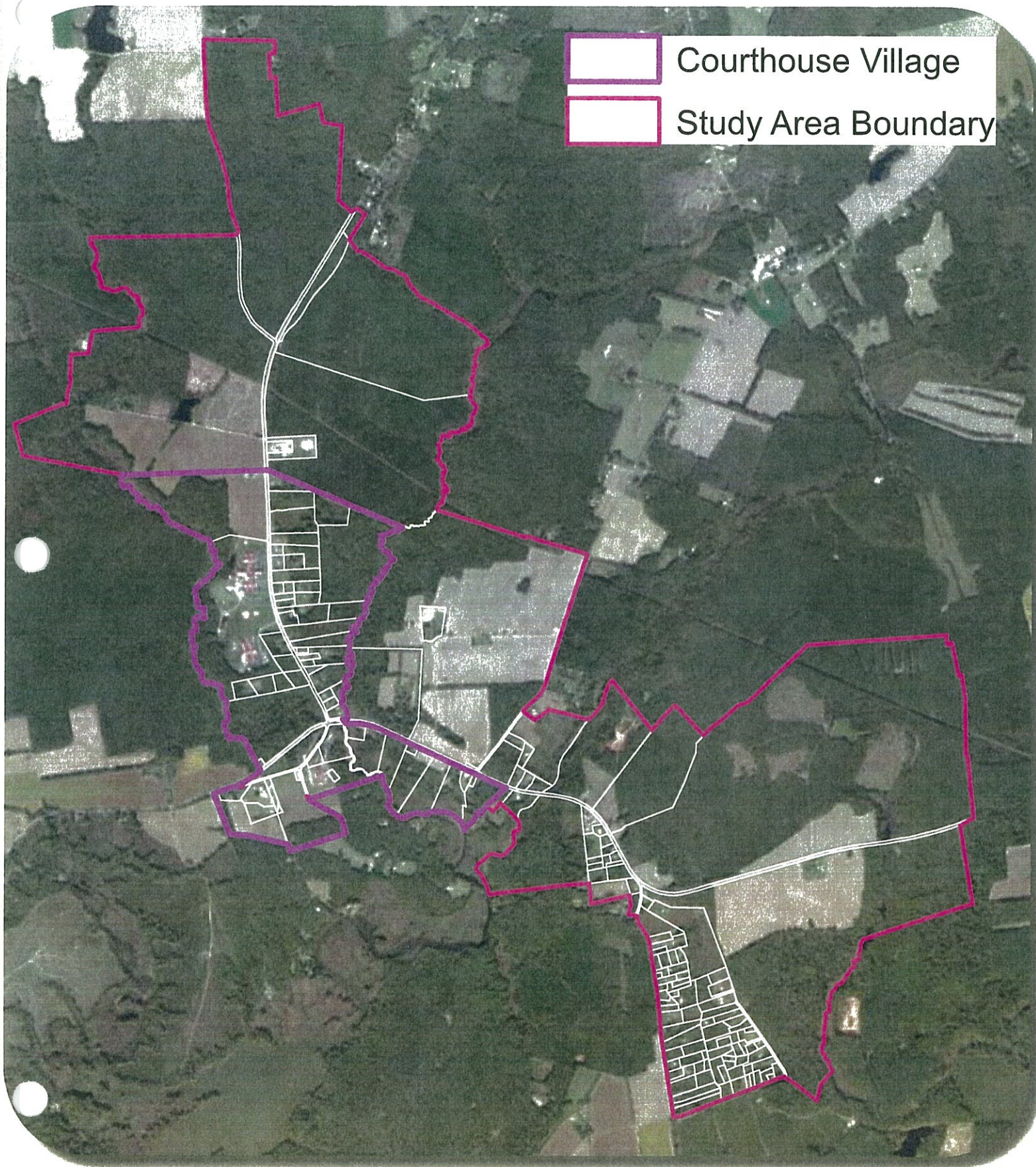
The Courthouse Corridor will be comprised of various retail and commercial, mixed, and residential uses that are served by central utilities. Retail and commercial uses will be general in nature and will cater to surrounding County residents and visiting transients. Such uses may include and are not limited to: a grocery store; dry cleaners; church; general restaurant; gas station and convenience

store; professional and personal services; hardware store; general retail store; medical facilities and offices including drug stores; sporting goods and retail; a business and technology park; financial institutions; general lodging; small amusement enterprise and entertainment; and auto service centers and parts.

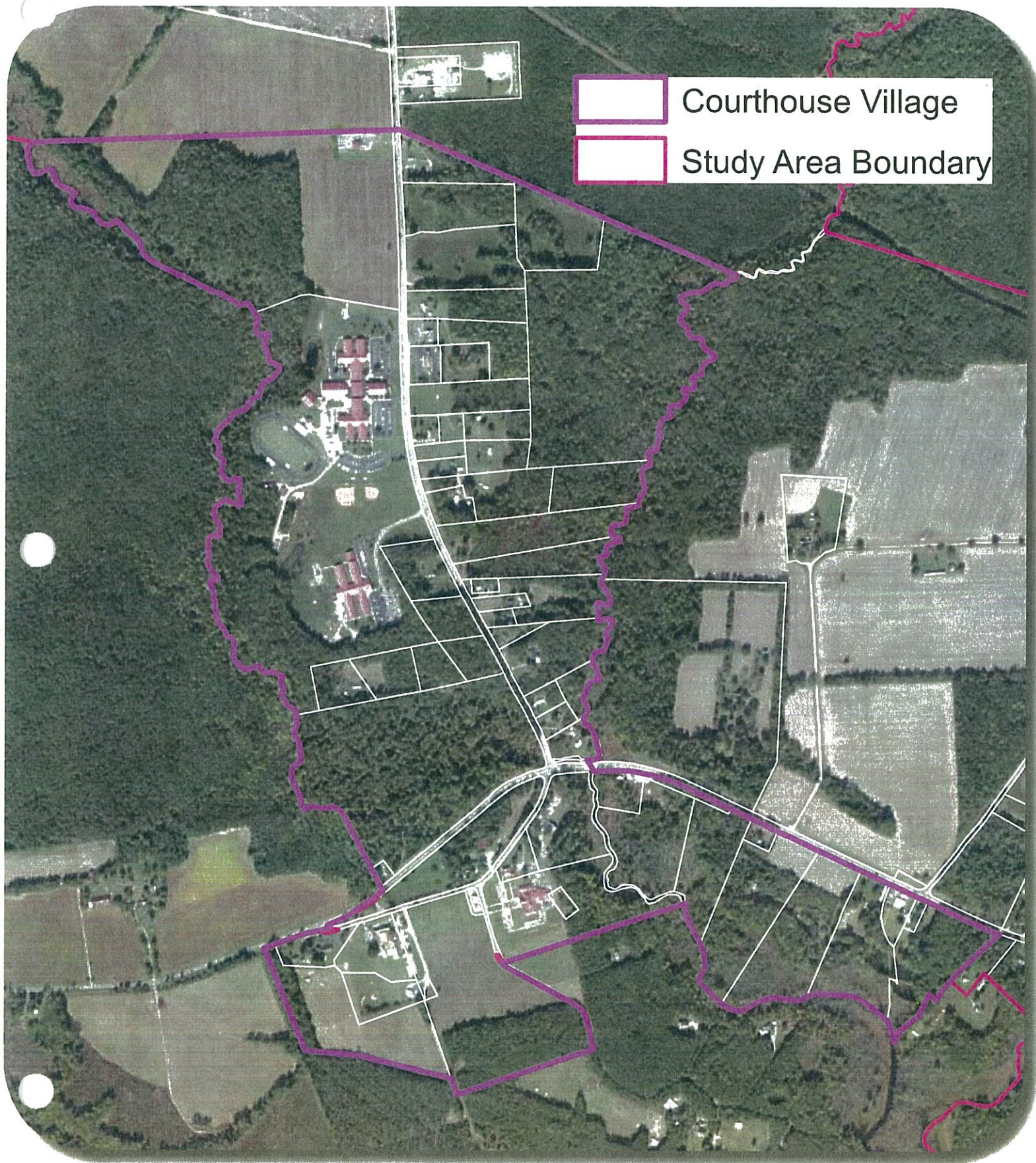
The Courthouse Corridor will also be comprised of residential uses of varying density, type and price that are marketable to all County residents. Residential uses will be primarily comprised of dense single family dwellings on individual lots that are accessed by internal streets and are served by central utilities. Major subdivisions will be permitted and will encourage low impact design to protect sensitive environmental areas while creating a sense of place and community through the inclusion of neighborhood playgrounds and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Multifamily dwellings served by central utilities will be permitted and will provide another means of housing for residents, both young and old. Passive and active recreation will be encouraged and will consist of walking paths, access to bike trails, neighborhood playgrounds, and park-like open space.



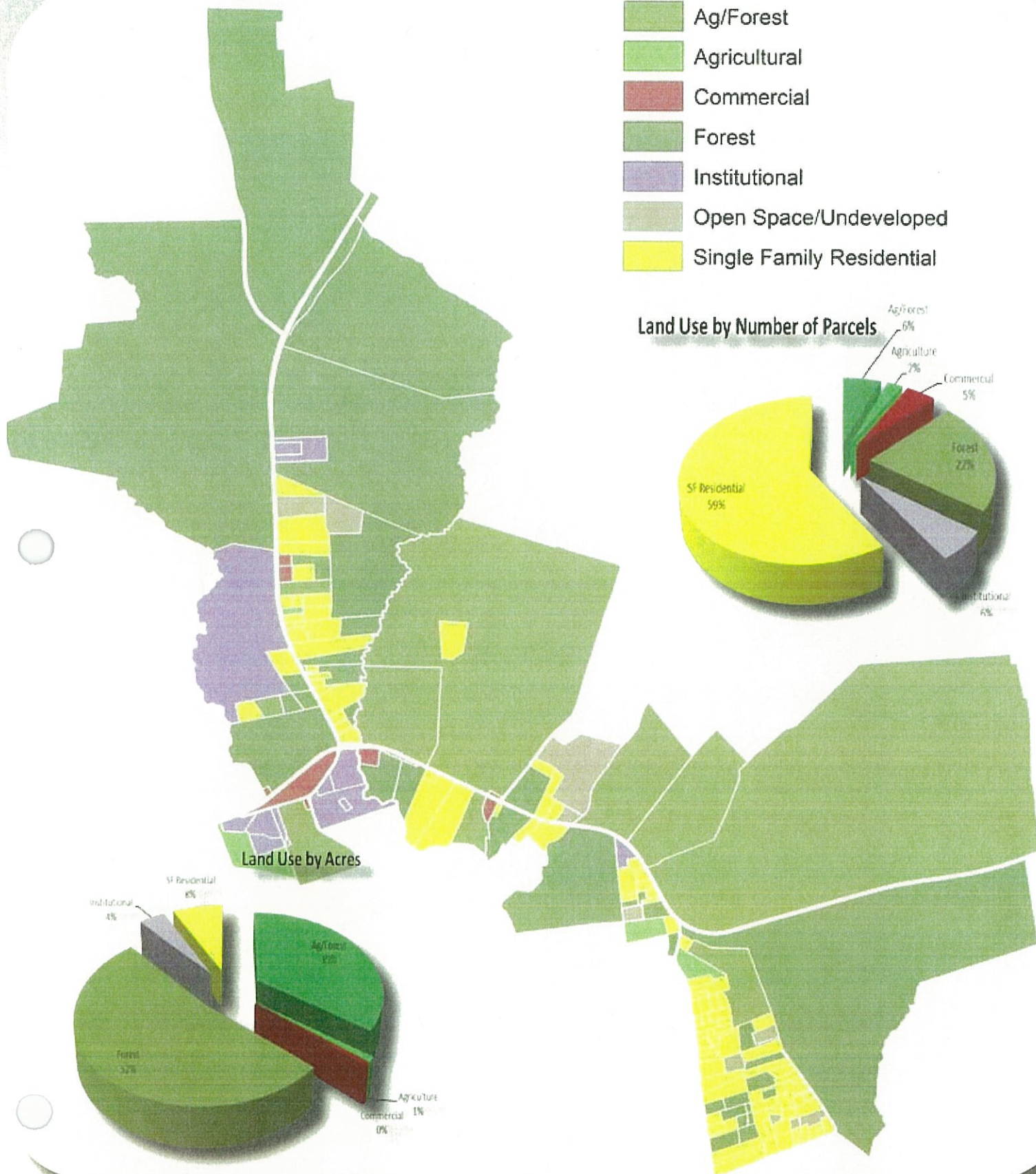
Study Area Map



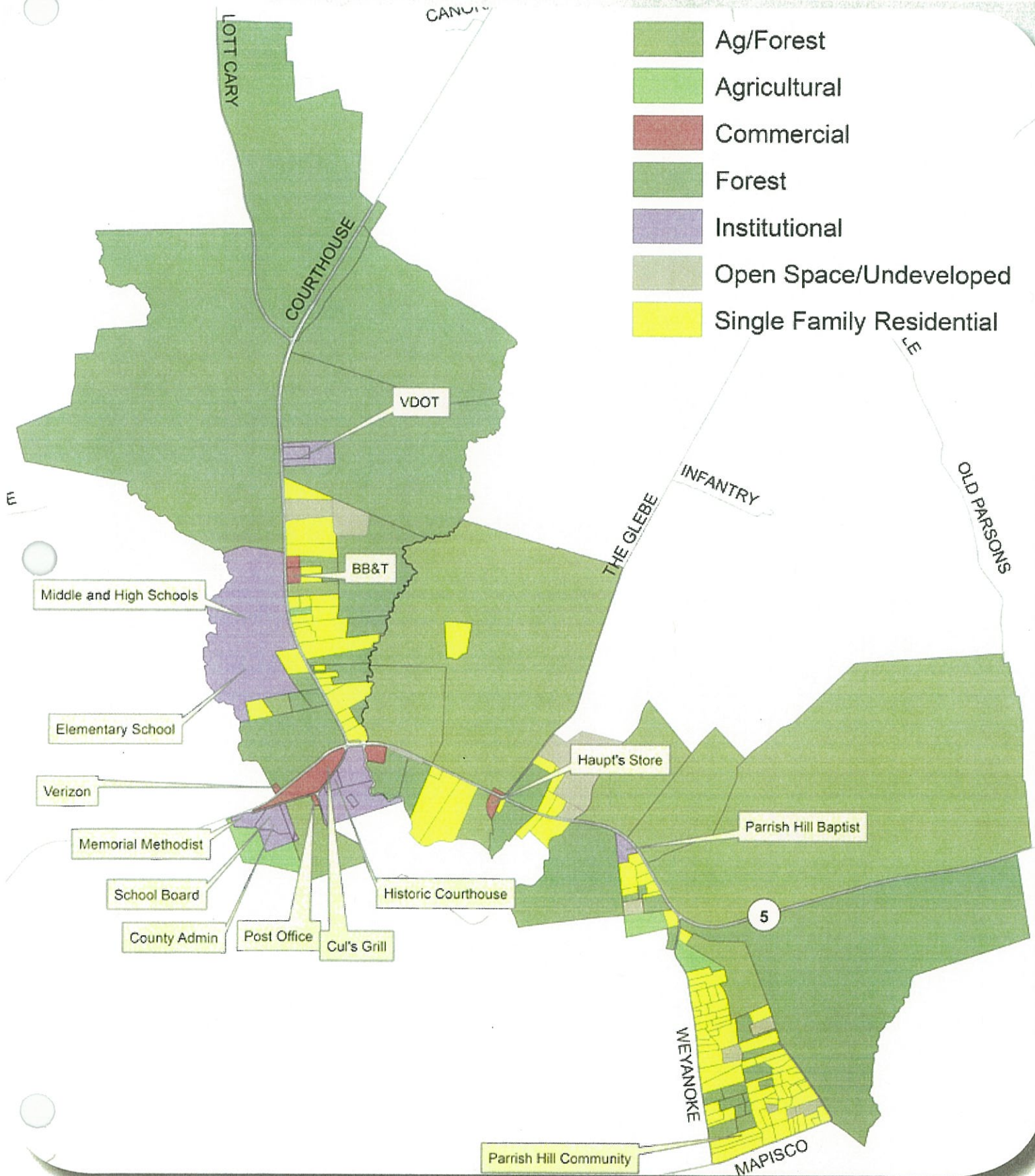
Courthouse Village Map



Existing Land Use



Major Landmarks

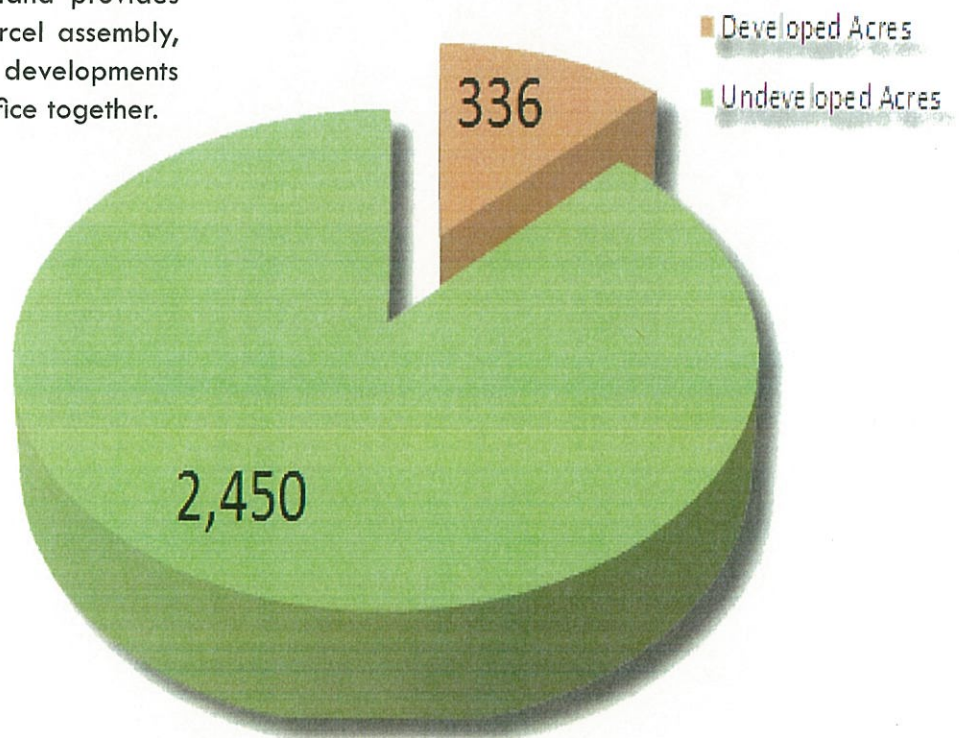
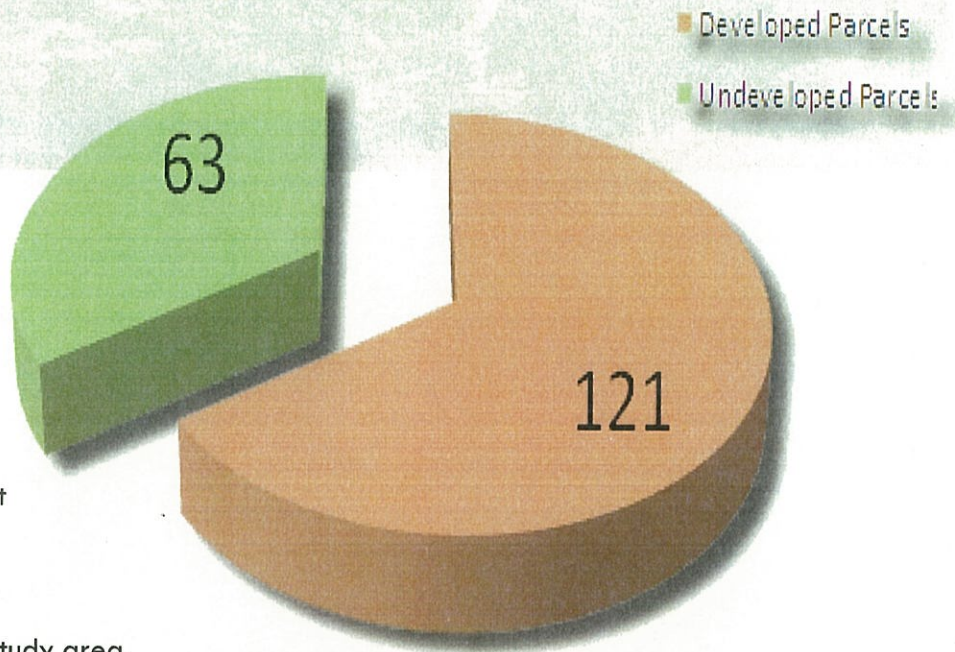


Developed/Undeveloped

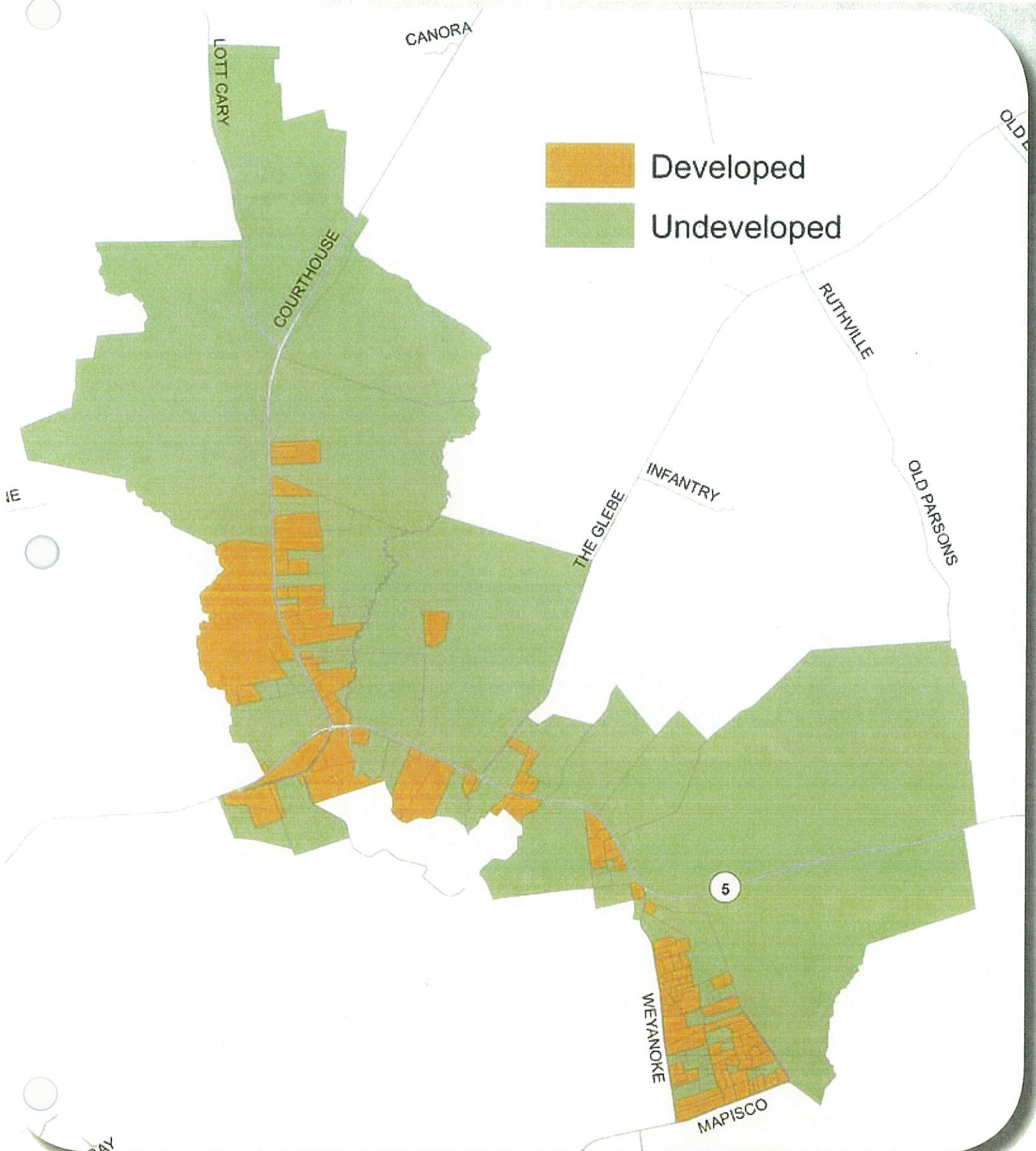
As of November of 2013, the Courthouse study area is approximately 14% developed, with the majority land use being agriculture or forest. Though the majority of *parcels* in the area are developed, this represents a minority of the total land. Small, residential or commercial uses are scattered throughout the area, but the majority of the land is represented by large, undeveloped tracts.

Of the 2,787 total acres which make up the study area, only 336 acres are developed, with 2,450 remaining in the natural state.

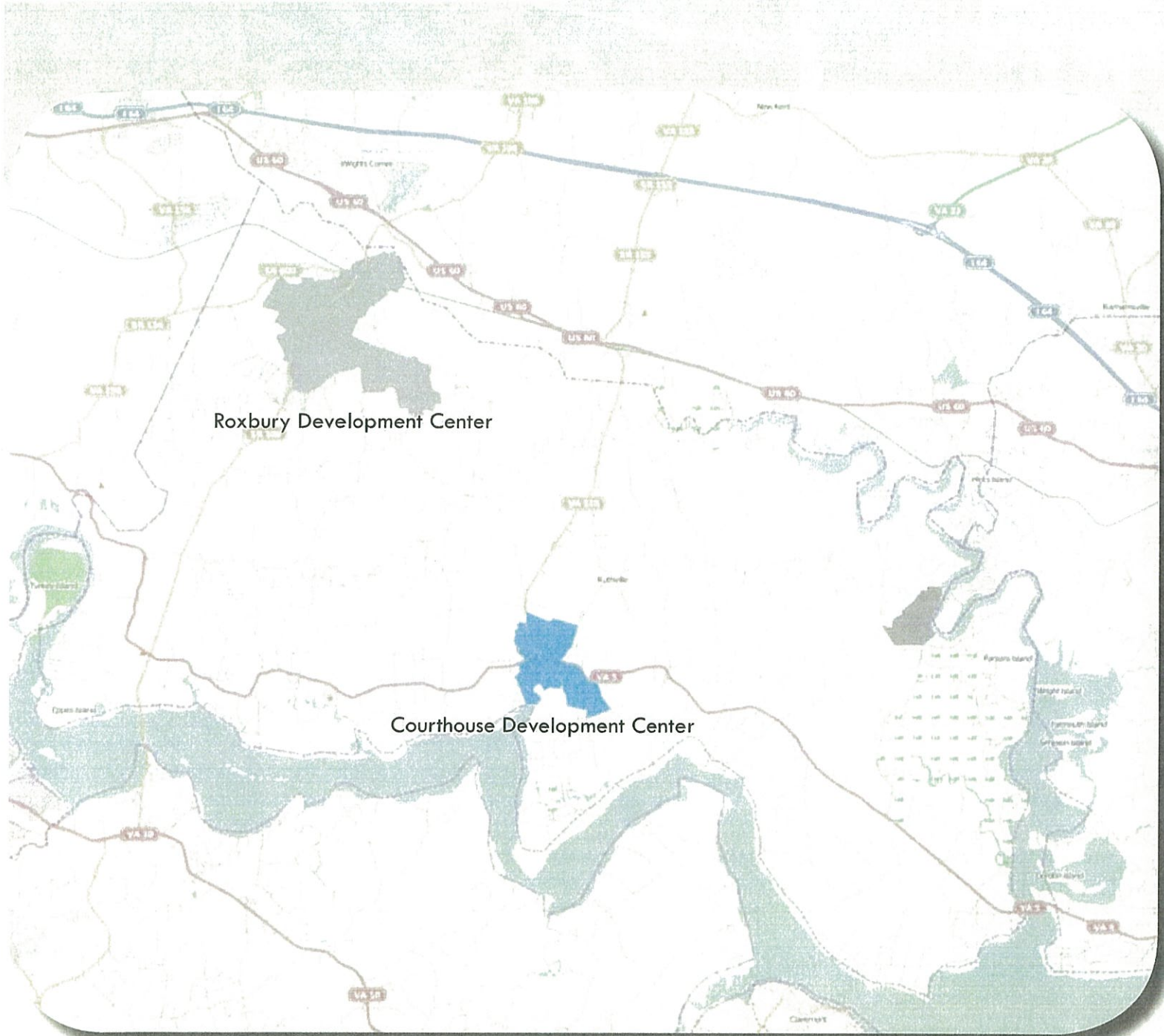
The existence of these large tracts of land provides opportunity for development without parcel assembly, and particularly lends itself to mixed-use developments combining residential, commercial and office together.



Developed/Undeveloped





Future Land Use



The County's comprehensive plan shows the Courthouse area as a "Development Center", indicating that this is one of only a few areas to which significant growth should be directed.

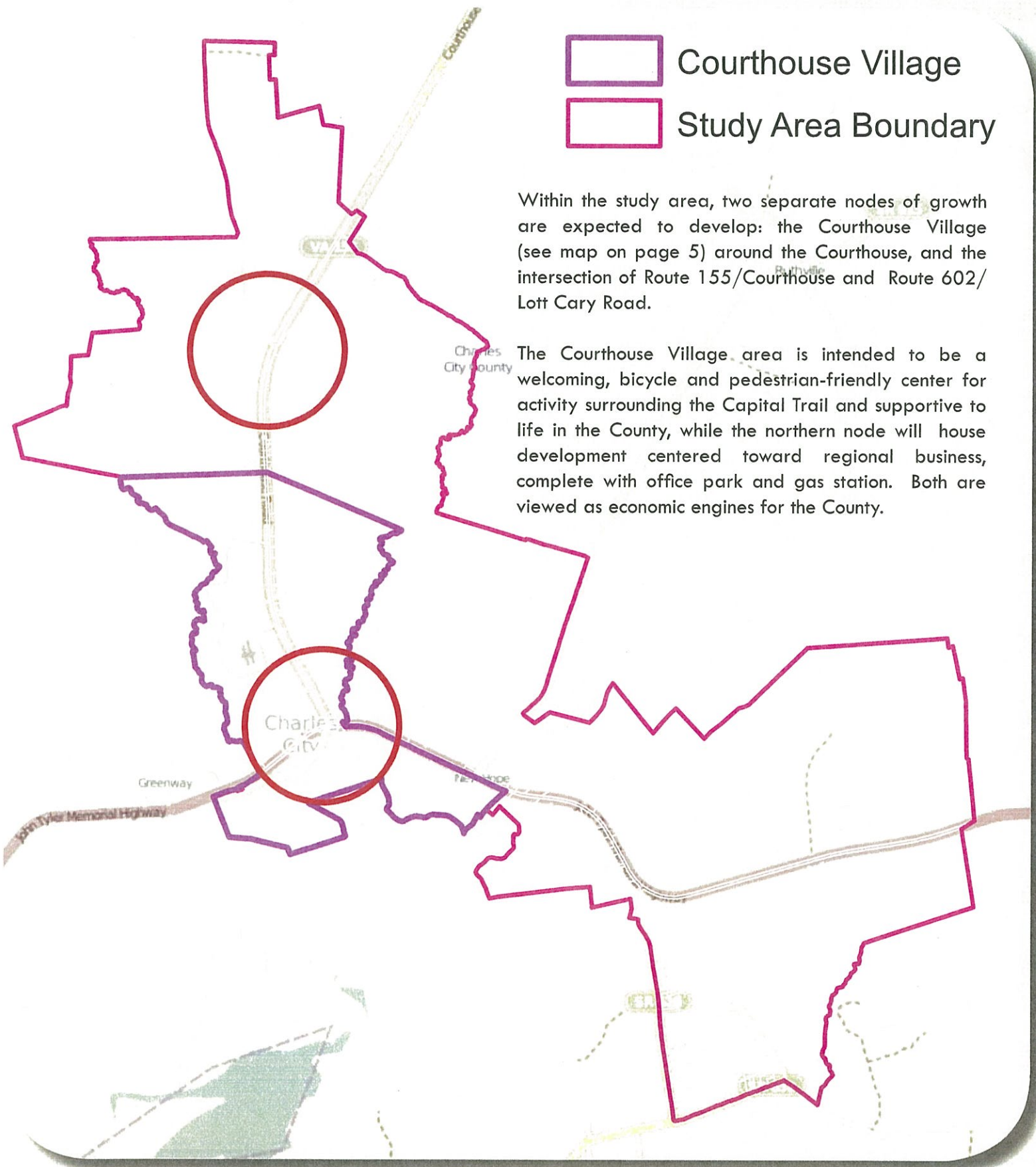
The map above shows the two development centers described in the County's comprehensive plan: Roxbury and Courthouse.

Growth Nodes

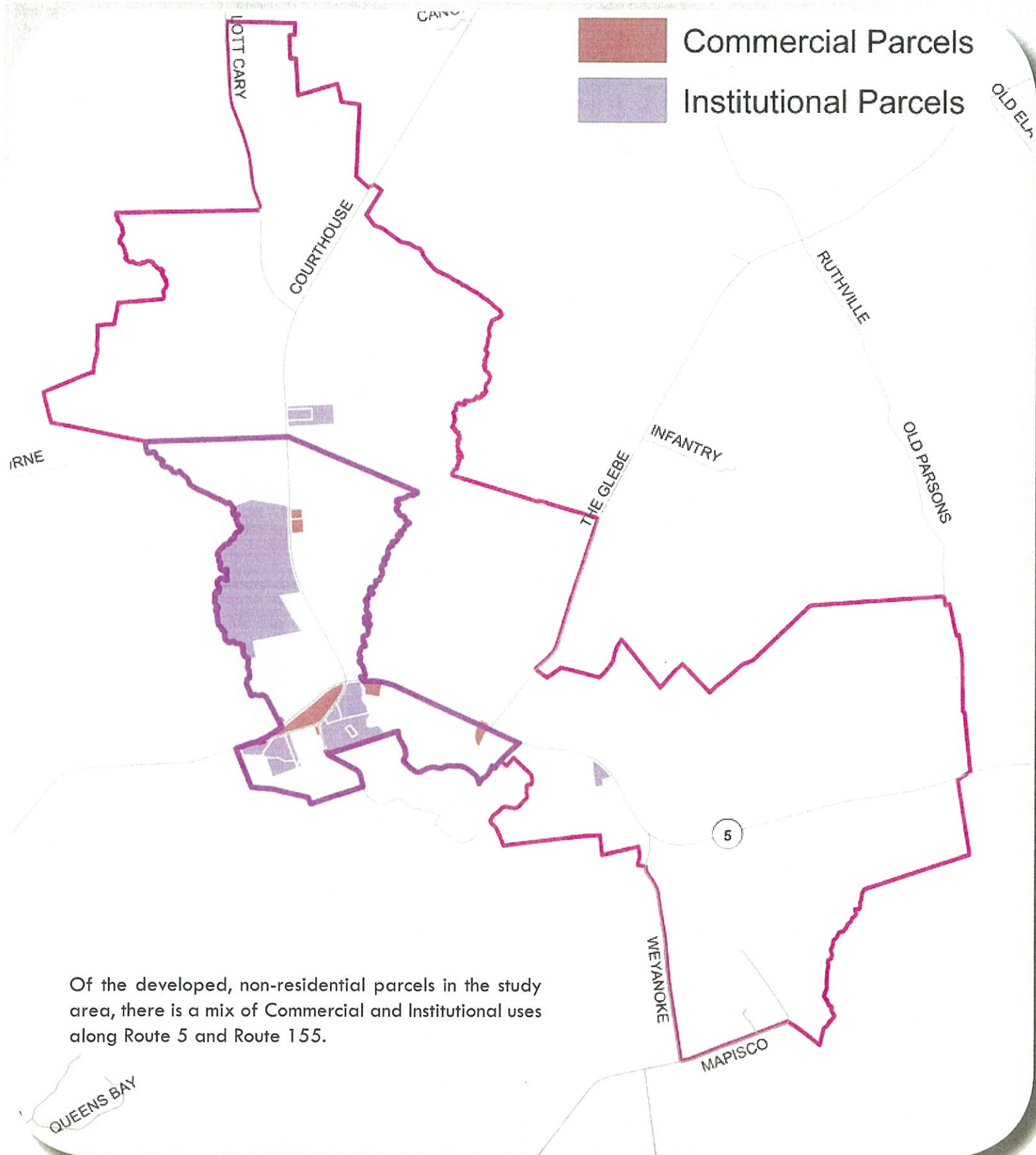
-  Courthouse Village
-  Study Area Boundary

Within the study area, two separate nodes of growth are expected to develop: the Courthouse Village (see map on page 5) around the Courthouse, and the intersection of Route 155/Courthouse and Route 602/Lott Cary Road.

The Courthouse Village area is intended to be a welcoming, bicycle and pedestrian-friendly center for activity surrounding the Capital Trail and supportive to life in the County, while the northern node will house development centered toward regional business, complete with office park and gas station. Both are viewed as economic engines for the County.




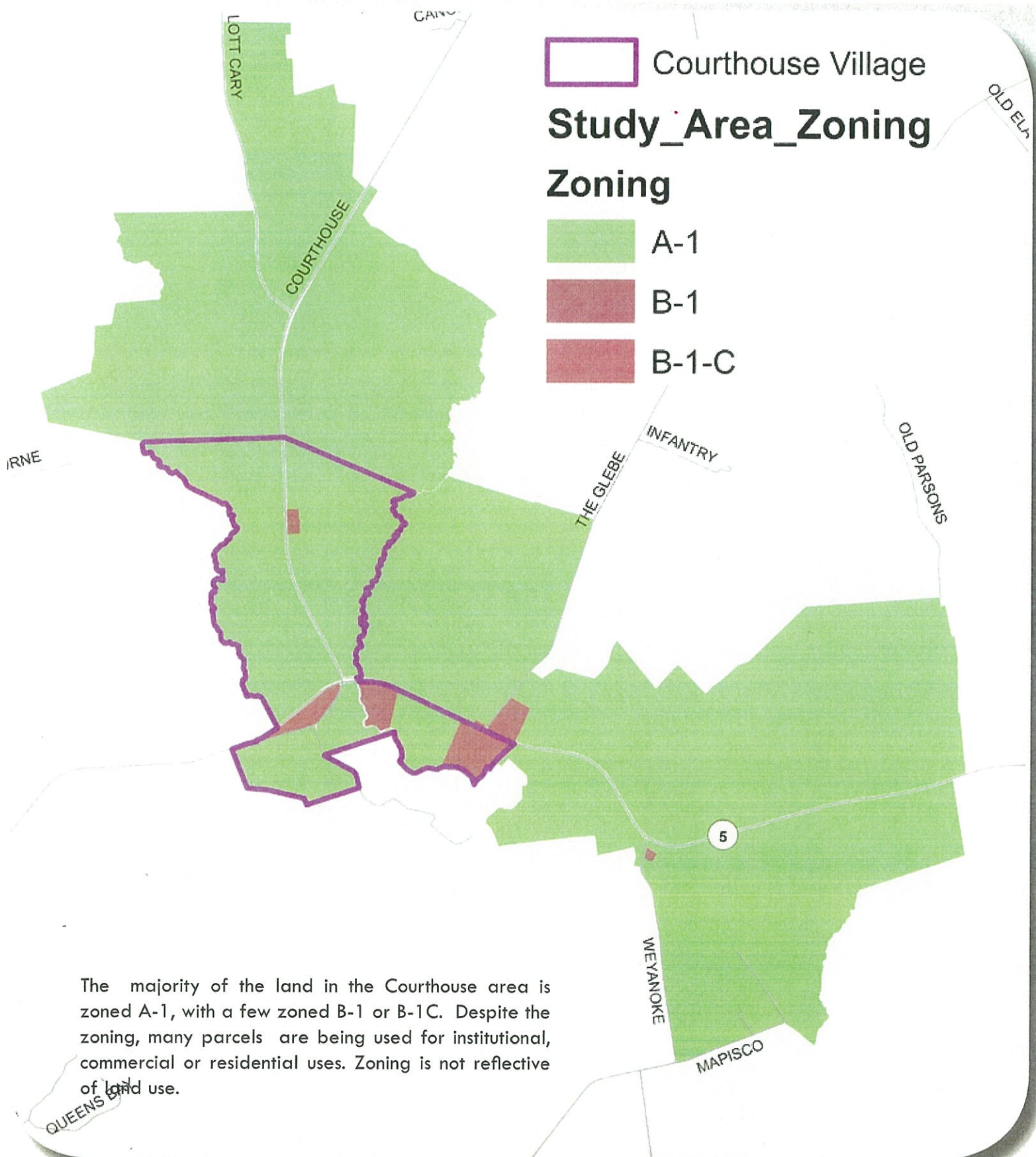
Commercial and Institutional Uses



Current Zoning

Courthouse Village Study_Area_Zoning Zoning

-  A-1
-  B-1
-  B-1-C

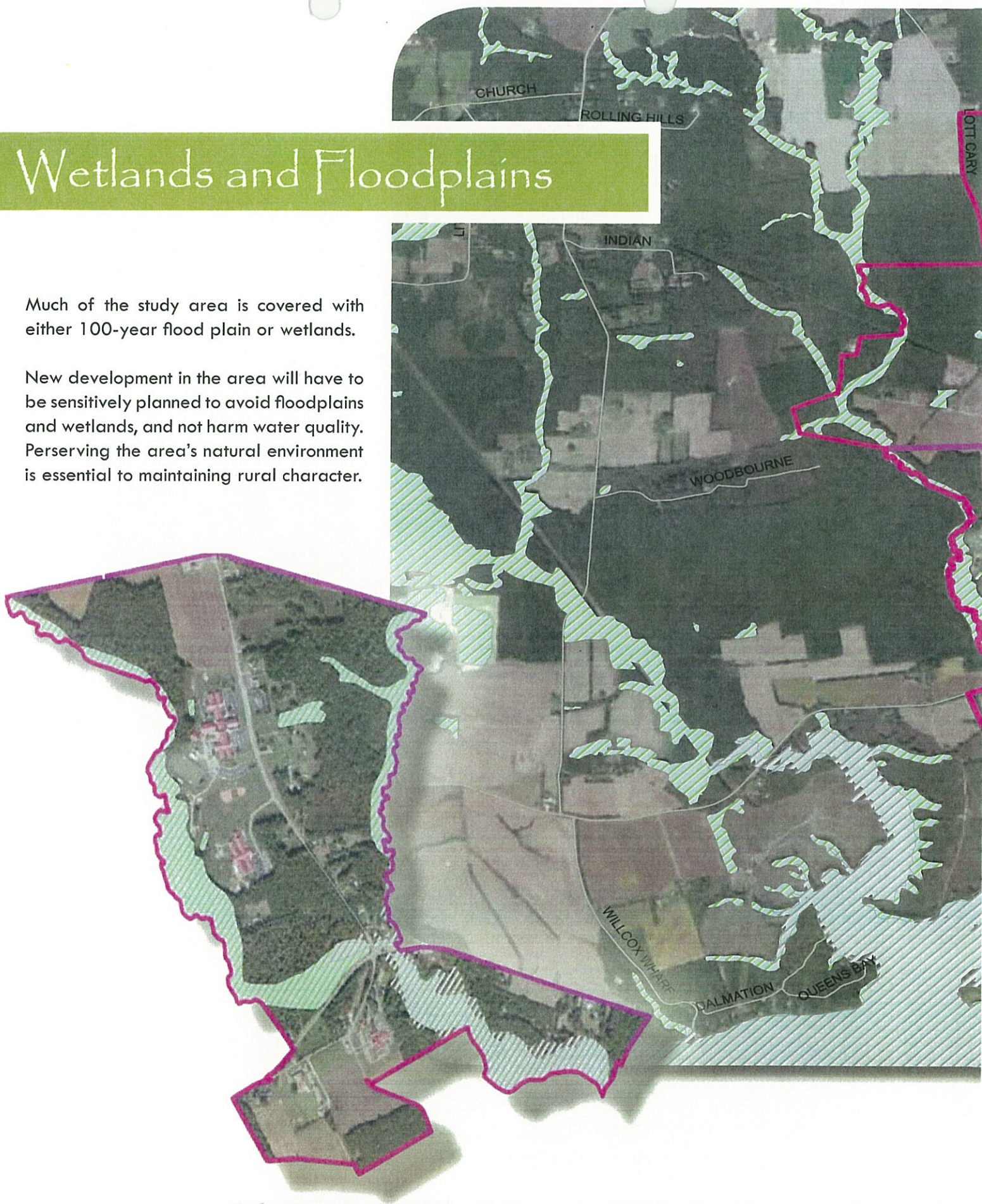


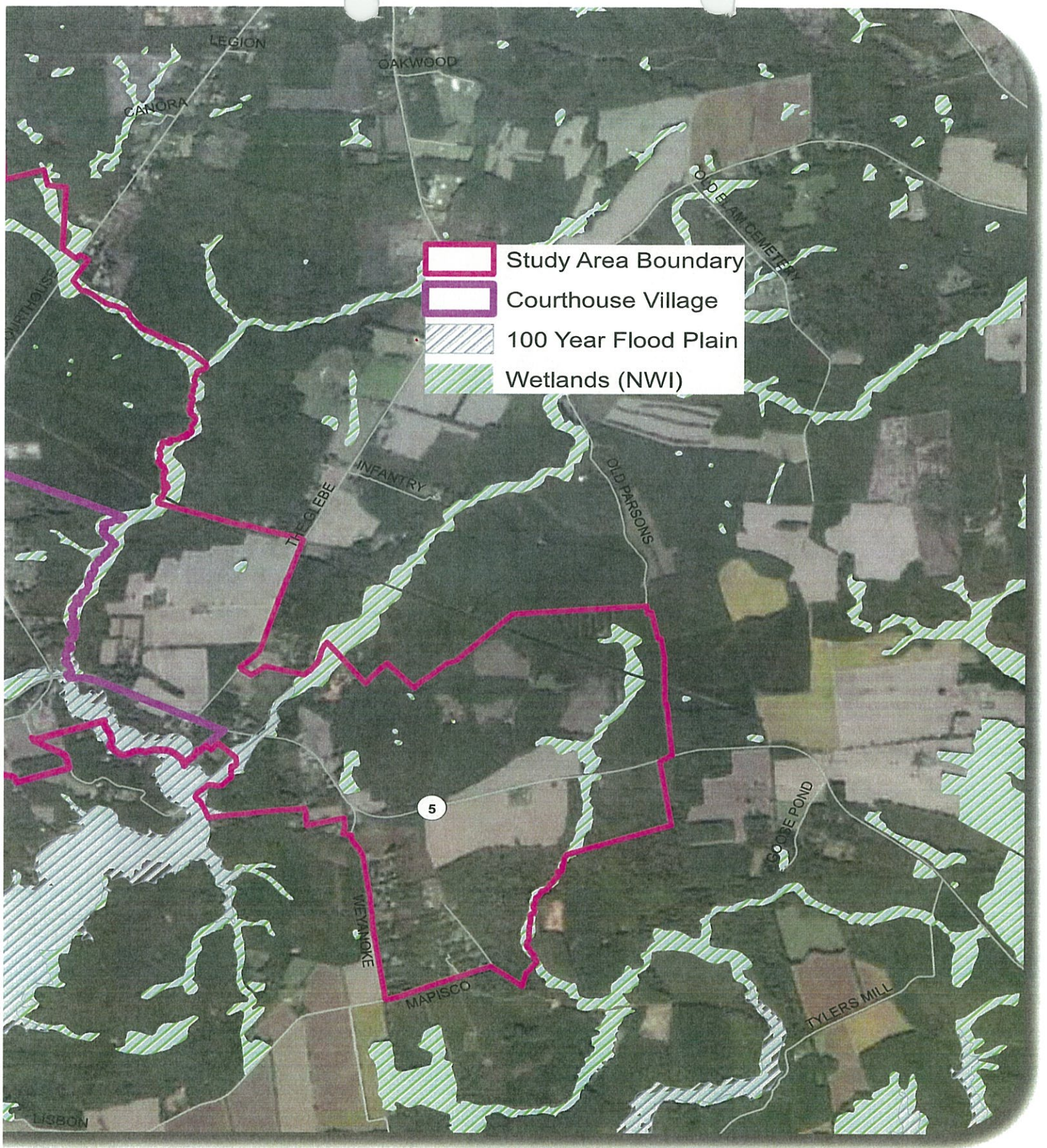
The majority of the land in the Courthouse area is zoned A-1, with a few zoned B-1 or B-1C. Despite the zoning, many parcels are being used for institutional, commercial or residential uses. Zoning is not reflective of land use.

Wetlands and Floodplains

Much of the study area is covered with either 100-year flood plain or wetlands.

New development in the area will have to be sensitively planned to avoid floodplains and wetlands, and not harm water quality. Preserving the area's natural environment is essential to maintaining rural character.

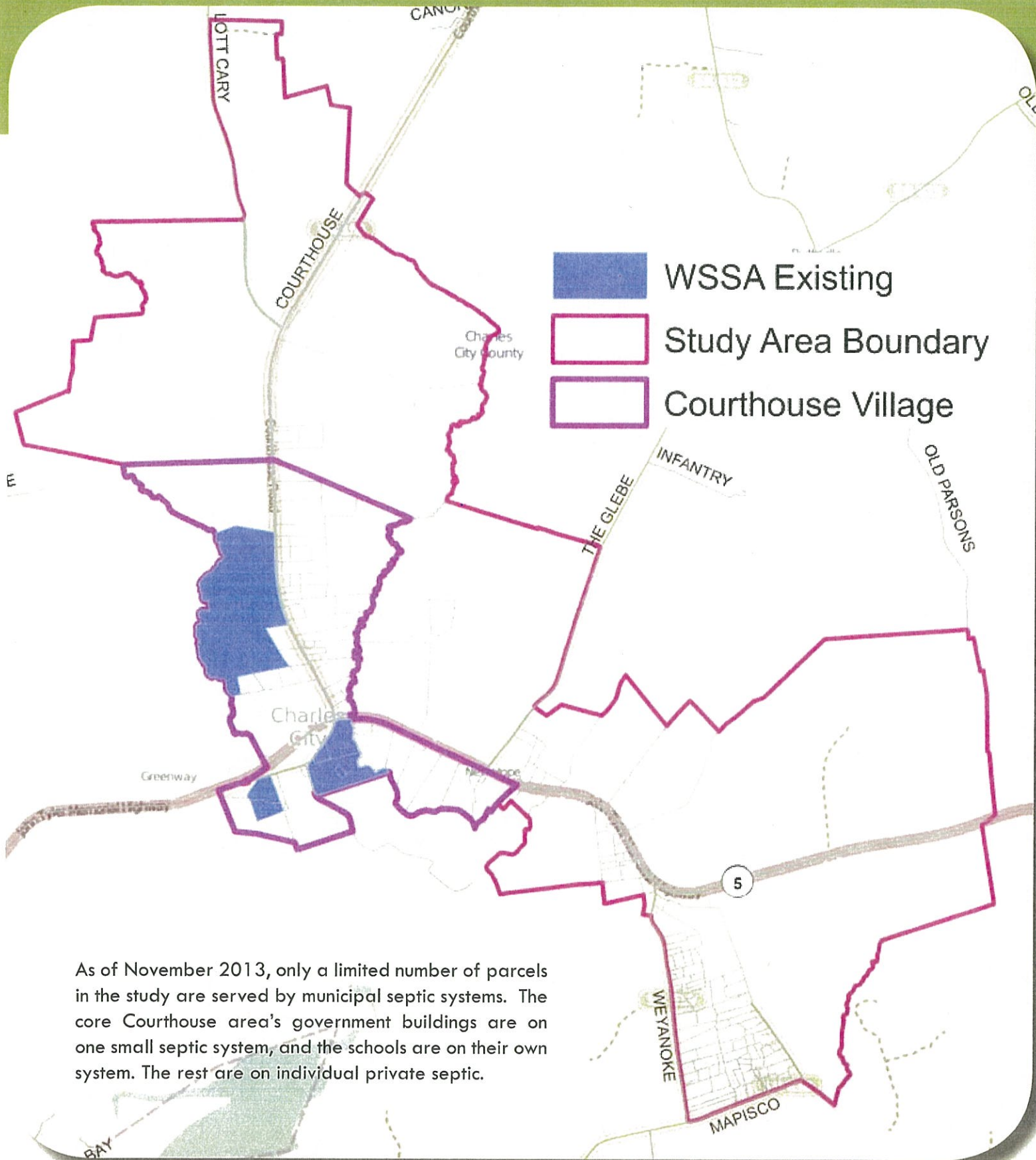




Water Sewer Service Area Scenarios

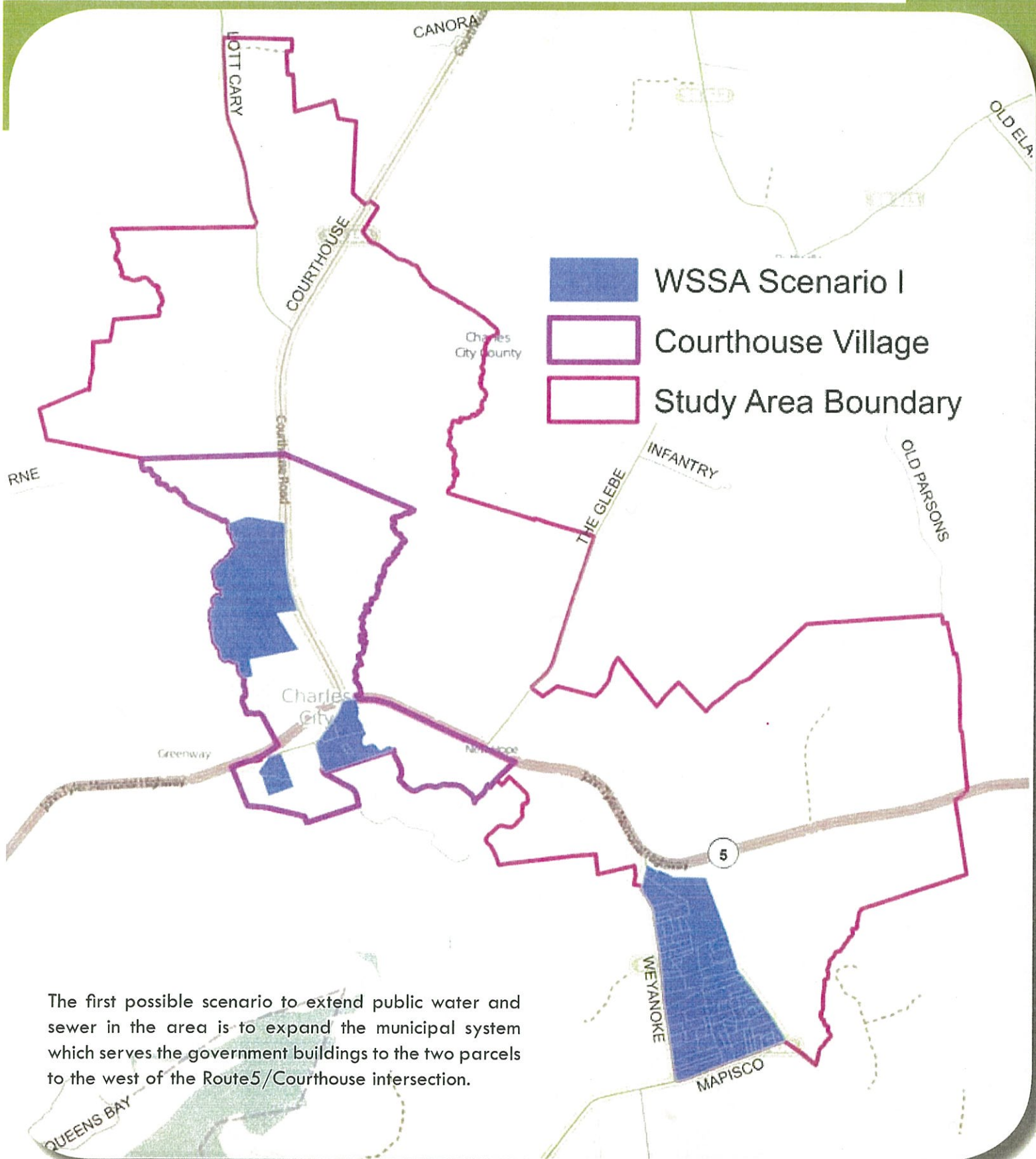
The maps on the following pages show four potential scenarios for expansion of municipal water and sewer service. Water and sewer service expansion would greatly affect development potential in the Courthouse area.

Water Sewer Service Area - Existing



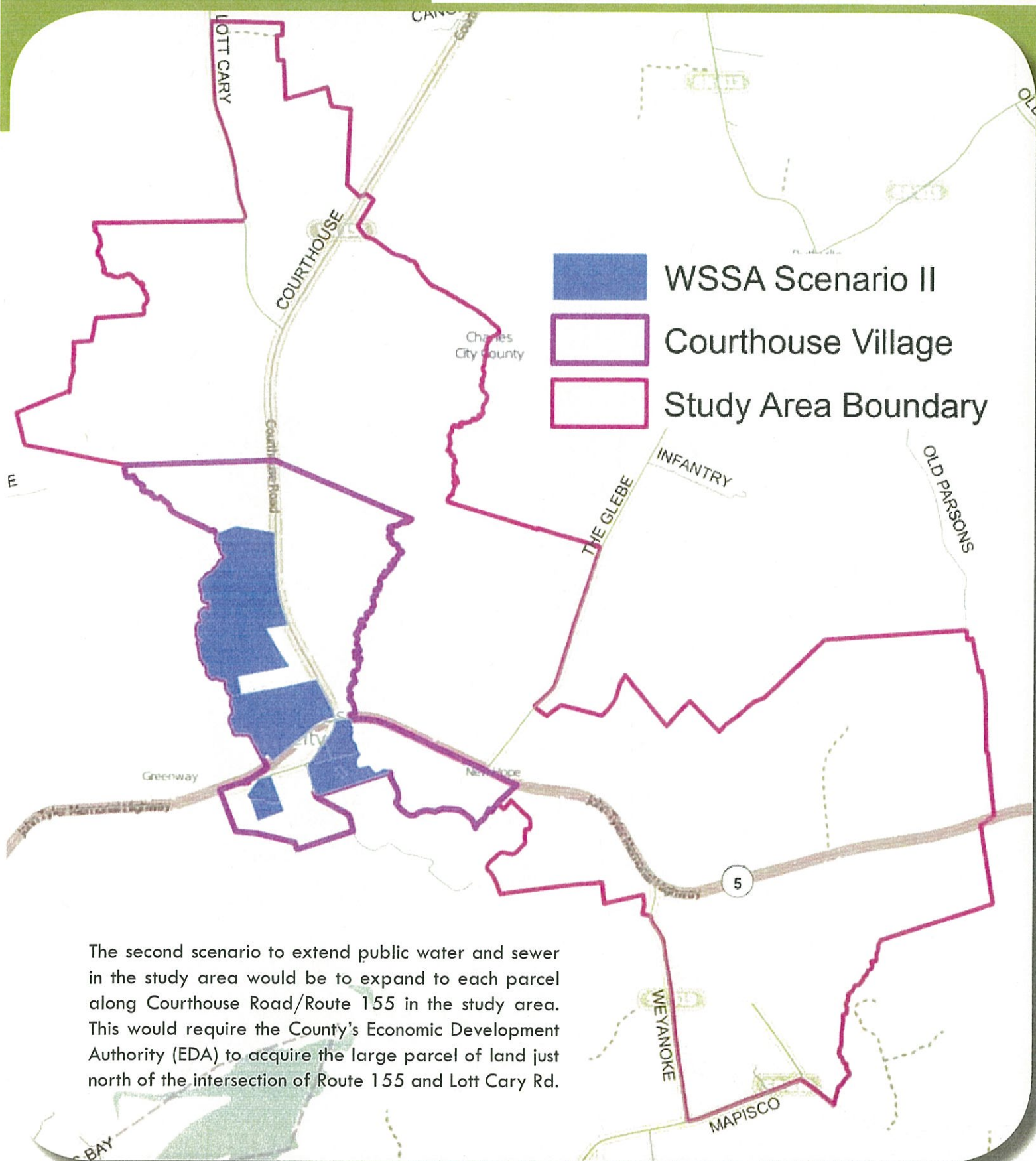
As of November 2013, only a limited number of parcels in the study are served by municipal septic systems. The core Courthouse area's government buildings are on one small septic system, and the schools are on their own system. The rest are on individual private septic.

WSSA - Scenario I



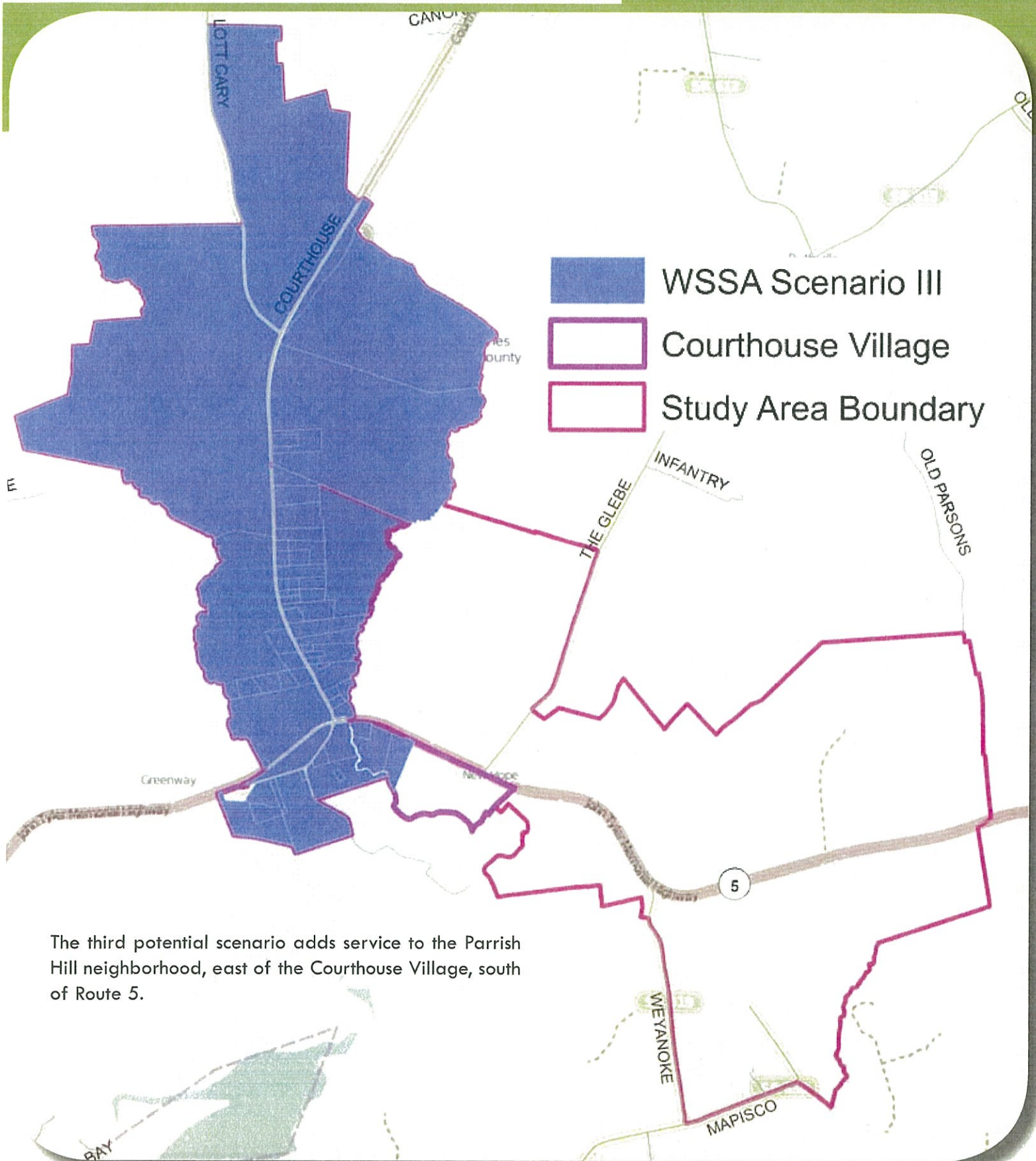
The first possible scenario to extend public water and sewer in the area is to expand the municipal system which serves the government buildings to the two parcels to the west of the Route 5/Courthouse intersection.

WSSA - Scenario II

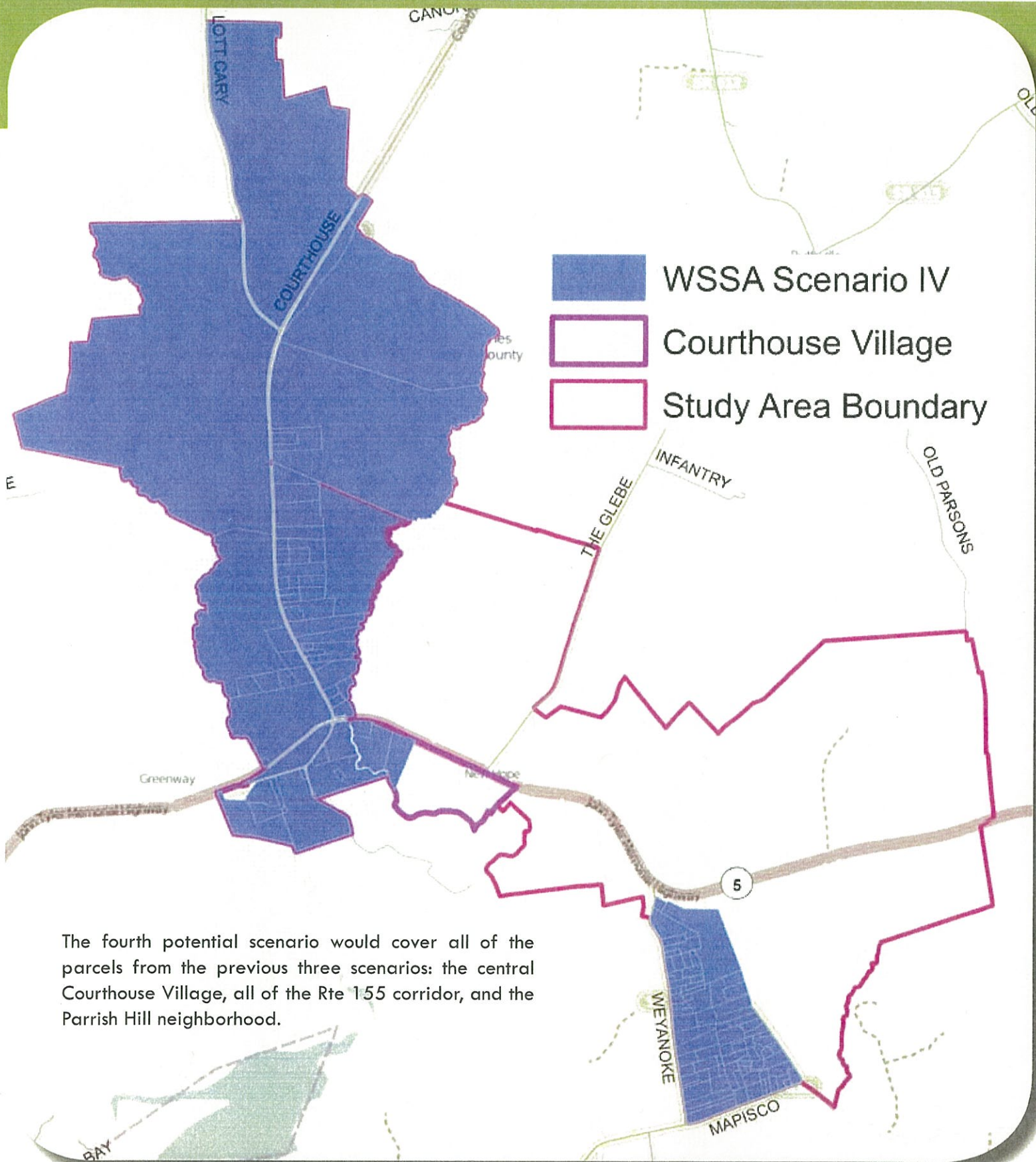


The second scenario to extend public water and sewer in the study area would be to expand to each parcel along Courthouse Road/Route 155 in the study area. This would require the County's Economic Development Authority (EDA) to acquire the large parcel of land just north of the intersection of Route 155 and Lott Cary Rd.

WSSA - Scenario III



WSSA - Scenario IV

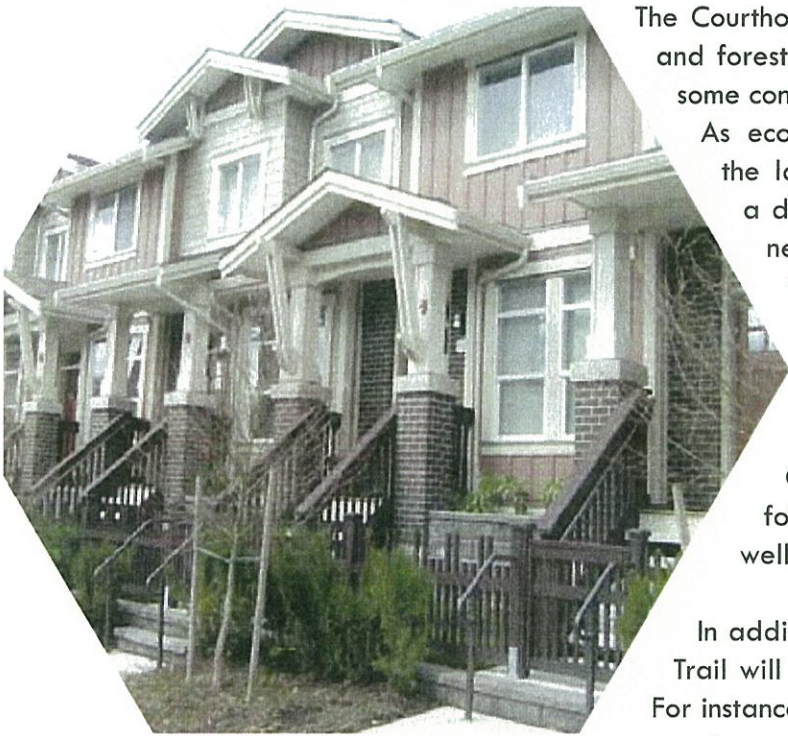


The fourth potential scenario would cover all of the parcels from the previous three scenarios: the central Courthouse Village, all of the Rte 155 corridor, and the Parrish Hill neighborhood.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

WHAT TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT ARE NEEDED IN THE AREA?

RESIDENTIAL UNITS



The Courthouse study area, other than the previously mentioned fields and forest, is a mix of single-family residential and institutional, with some commercial.

As economic development opportunities increase in the County, the lack of workforce housing will become more and more of a deterrent. A significant number of new housing units will be needed, and it makes sense to guide this development into the Courthouse area for many reasons. First, the County can provide services to more residents by having them locate in one area, and the residents can enjoy close access to schools, medical facilities and government services, as well as commercial uses.

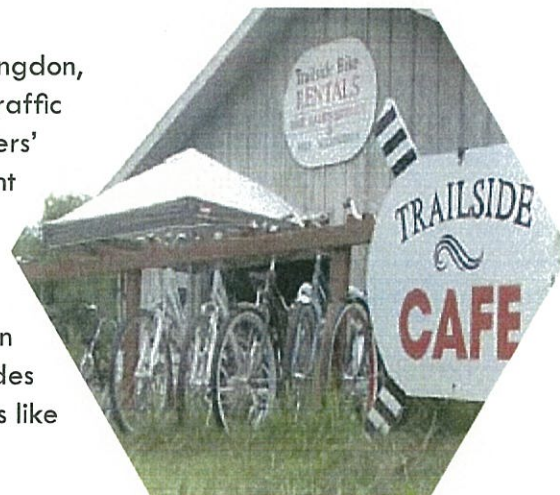
Commercial and new office development would naturally follow as well, potentially both in an office/industrial park as well as some small offices in new mixed-use communities.

In addition to services for new residences, the users of the Capital Trail will be able to support new businesses specific to their needs. For instance, they will need lodging, a restaurant, and small stores for groceries and bike parts/services.

CAFE OR RESTAURANT

Other bicycle trails in Virginia, such as the Virginia Creeper Trail south of Abingdon, have shown that a trailside eatery is not only able to be supported by the traffic the trail brings, but that it is a welcome and meaningful addition to the trail users' experience. Though there will be far less trail traffic in the winter months, current and future County residents will also be able to patronize the trailside eatery, as there are currently limited dining options in the area.

Options are available to satisfy this need: a new cafe or restaurant could open in the study area along the trail; or a new store could open which provides outdoor seating and food service in addition to groceries and bicycle amenities like tire pumps and bike rentals.





FARMERS MARKET PAVILLION

No formal venue for local farmers exists to sell produce in the County. One potential anchor use for the Courthouse area is a permanent farmers market pavillion structure. This could be used for produce sales, or a formal farmers market on certain days, and used for other events, like concerts or private party rentals, on other days.

It would provide a community center for the Courthouse area, encourage the purchase and consumption of healthy foods for area residents, and be a potential income source for the County.



GROCERY STORE



As more and more people move to the Courthouse area, the lack of fresh food options will become more and more apparent. At a certain threshold of population, a grocery store can be supported in the study area to serve existing and future residents, to keep dollars spent on food in the County, and to provide for all the needs of County residents

VISITOR LODGING

The Courthouse area is the middle point on the Capital Trail between Richmond and Williamsburg. It is an excellent place for trail riders to stop and spend the night, to break up their city-to-city trip. Other than a few bed and breakfasts scattered throughout the County, few establishments exist for tourists and trail users to stay. This means that they have limited options to spend the time in the Courthouse area, and tourist dollars will continue to stay in Richmond or Williamsburg.

Ideally visitor lodging should be located directly on the Capital Trail, in the core Courthouse area.



What Does this Development Look Like?

Although many typical agricultural activities are in concordance with the historic, rural nature of Route 5 and the Virginia Capital Trail, there are many uses allowed (either permitted or by special use permit) in the A-1 district that, if developed, would disrupt the trail experience and lose the character of the area, making it a less desirable place to live and work. It is essential that new development is respectful of the nature of the area, both in form (see below) and in the preservation of open space (facing page).

(Please note that these examples are for aesthetic purposes and not the result of market analysis.)

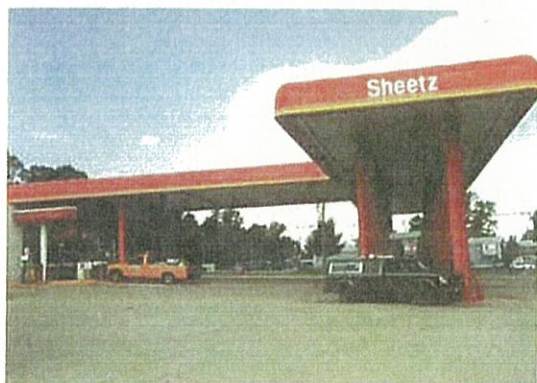
Choices for Virginia Communities



Chain
Drug Stores



Fast Food
Restaurants



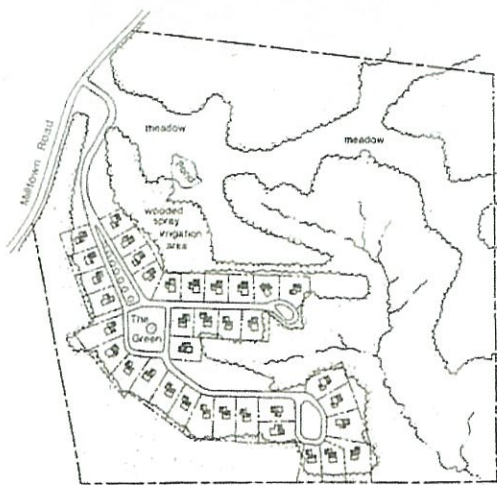
Gas Station
Canopies



Preservation of Rural Character and Open Space



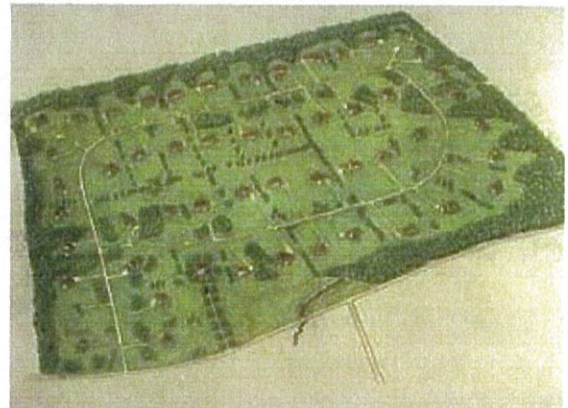
⑤ (Left) "Yield plans" to determine density: Under Pennsylvania's Growing Greener program, conventional yield plans like this, demonstrating the feasibility of 18 two-acre lots in the two-acre district, are no longer allowed. (Right) Village design under Growing Greener is an alternative option. It illustrates how lot yield could be doubled as a strong incentive for developers to produce layouts following certain hamlet design principles, including 70 percent of the unconstrained land remaining as permanent open space.



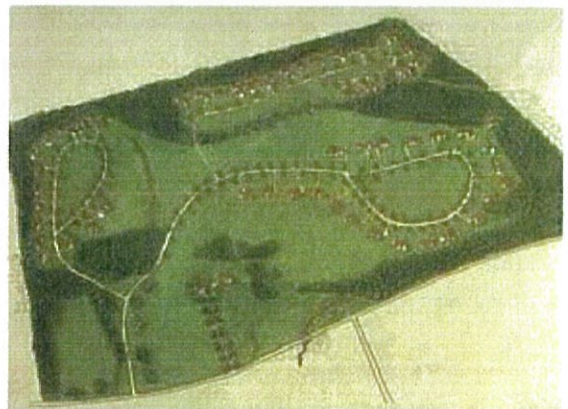
Open Space Site Design



Virginia farm before development



Virginia farm after conventional development



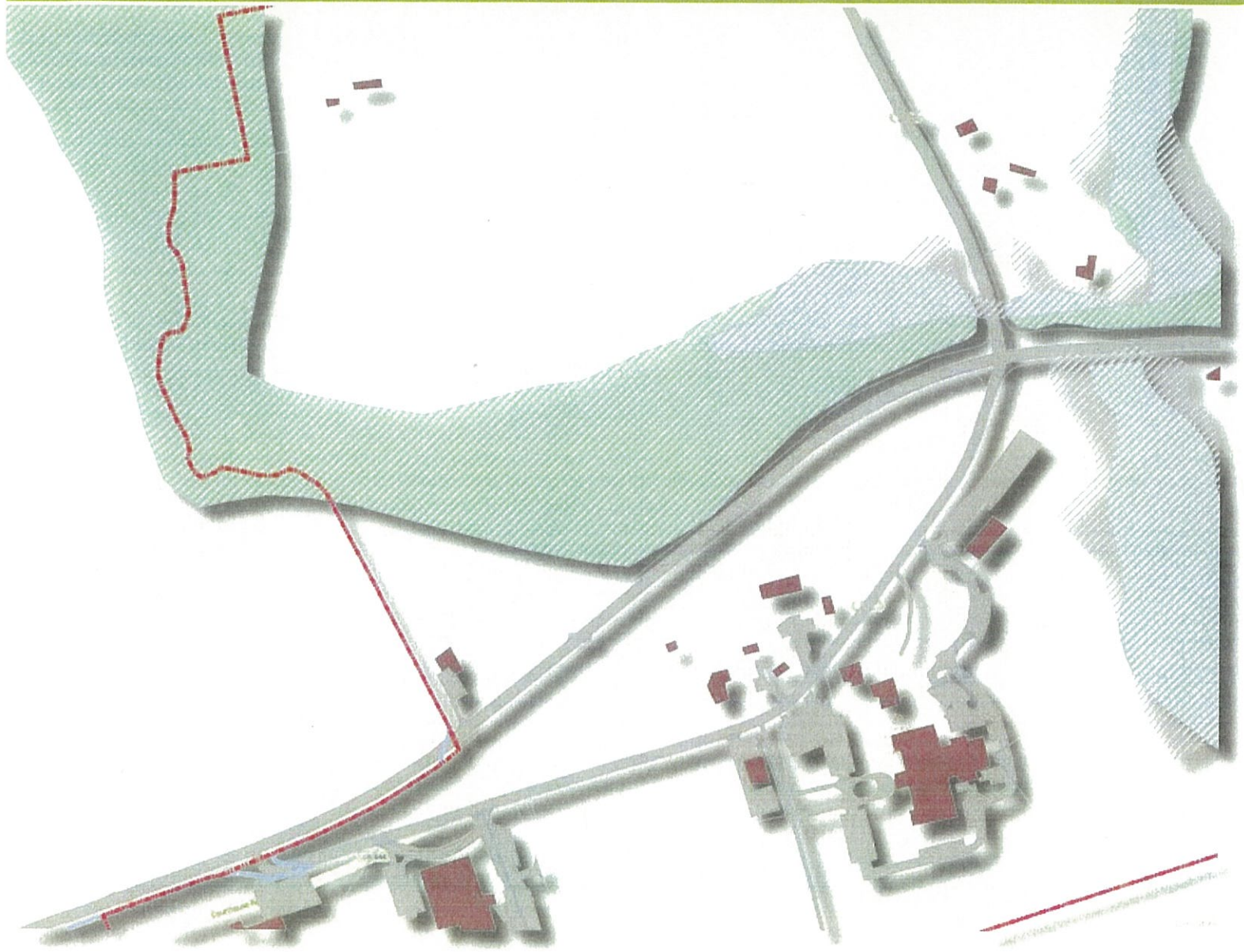
Virginia farm after open space development

Source: Better Models for Development In Virginia



All images by Randall Arendt. Adapted from PAS Report 523/524: *Crossroads, Hamlet, Village, Town: Design Characteristics of Traditional Neighborhoods, Old and New*; revised edition, 2004.

Courthouse Village Existing



The above map shows parcel lines, buildings (in red), roads and parking lots (in grey) in the three largest undeveloped parcels in the Courthouse Village area, with 100-year flood plain and wetlands overlaid (grey hatches and blue hatches, respectively).

Courthouse Village Buildout



The drawing above shows three of the most central parcels in the Courthouse Village which are currently undeveloped and privately-owned. This buildout scenario shows five clusters of housing around a public green, with each cluster facing a semi-private green. Bicycle and pedestrian paths run through the wetland area, man-made ponds mitigate impervious surface, and a store on Route 5 is accessible from the development via the bicycle and pedestrian paths. The design incorporates 49 single-family units while preserving open space and rural character.

Courthouse Village Existing and Buildout



The above map shows the maps on pages 24 and 25 combined, with new and existing development as well as wetlands and floodplain.

Courthouse Village Buildout



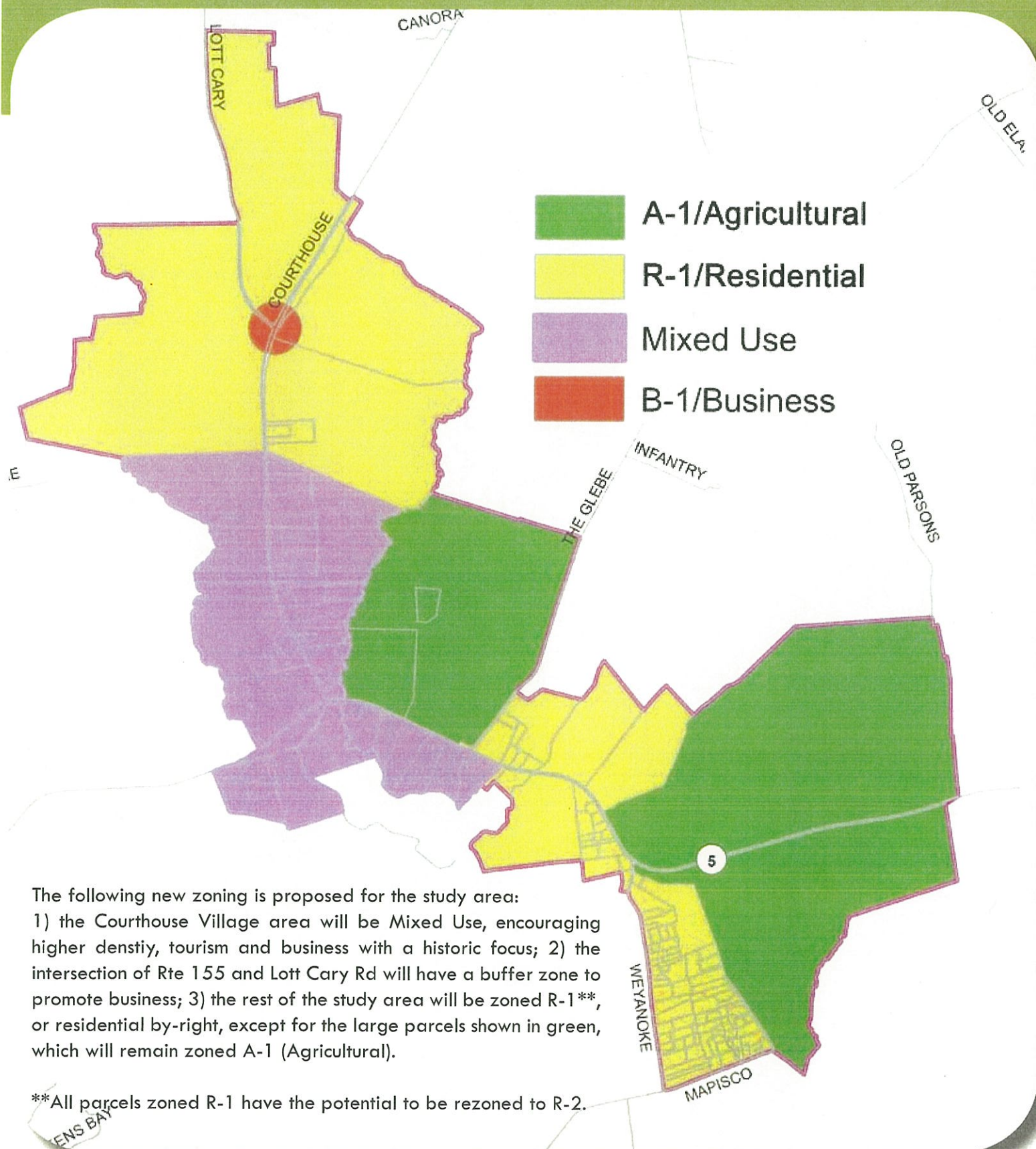
The above map shows a similar development, with 42 single-family units each facing the public green and backing to forest. The houses are shown at staggered setbacks to seem further apart.

Courthouse Village Drawing

This drawing gives a closer example of what the development could look like.



Proposed New Zoning



The following new zoning is proposed for the study area:

1) the Courthouse Village area will be Mixed Use, encouraging higher density, tourism and business with a historic focus; 2) the intersection of Rte 155 and Lott Cary Rd will have a buffer zone to promote business; 3) the rest of the study area will be zoned R-1**, or residential by-right, except for the large parcels shown in green, which will remain zoned A-1 (Agricultural).

**All parcels zoned R-1 have the potential to be rezoned to R-2.



1

Establish zoning language to define the character and scope of development in the Courthouse Development Center and Courthouse Village

2

Develop new zoning categories for Village Mixed-Use and business Development

3

Change County-wide setback requirement to allow business in the Courthouse Village to interact with the Capital Trail users

4

Streamline development process, primarily residential development in identified area

5

Encourage business and business-friendly practices — rebates, investments, economic development website, creation of tourism and cultural trail

6

Establish utilities to create a defined sanitation and water district with well-established policies and guidelines

7

Be proactive in speculative rezoning



June 25, 2020

Gary Mitchell, Department of Community Development
Charles City County, Virginia
P.O. Box 66
Charles City, Virginia 23030

Dear Mr. Mitchell:

Please accept this letter of support regarding your application for a Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Award. PlanRVA was delighted to assist you with the subject of your application, the **Charles City County Courthouse Area Plan**.

We thoroughly endorse the goals of this study and believe it will enhance future growth in this area of Charles City and help provide a greater sense of community for its citizens.

If there is anything else we may do to assist you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mark Bittner
Director of Regional Planning & GIS
mbittner@planrva.org

**Ashland | Charles City | Chesterfield | Goochland | Hanover | Henrico | New Kent | Powhatan |
Richmond**

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