

Chapter 3

LAND USE

Background and Analysis

General Development Patterns

Rapid residential, commercial and industrial growth has occurred throughout Tappahannock in recent years. New residential subdivisions have been built in the southeastern section south of Hoskins Creek and building pressure for multifamily housing exists in this area as well. The general commercial district extends south from Virginia Street to Bray's Fork at route 360/17 and has become a major commercial corridor serving the adjacent counties in the region and as such has become a boon to Tappahannock. Care must be taken that the character of the Town does not continue to be dominated by the "strip" development which detracts from the Town's rural atmosphere. Industrial growth in the community has been on the decline and is currently not as prominent as it once was in the Town.

A substantial amount of town land is used for public facilities. Such facilities include county public schools, town and county government administration buildings, the municipal airport, the sewage treatment facility, limited river access areas, and additional land which is leased to the Virginia Department of Transportation. There is a portion of the Rappahannock River National Wildlife Refuge just north of the Town, and access to most of the refuge trails is under development at this time.

Undeveloped land throughout the town provides for future expansion of all land uses. Lands bordering the town are also largely undeveloped and allow expansion both for industrial use to the west and residential use to the southeast and north. Isolated nonconforming pockets of industrial, residential and business use must be accessed for their limited future development in order to form compatible land uses.

The existing land use has been influenced by the large tracts of wetlands, associates with Hoskins Creek, which cut through the center of town. The same situation exists in the northern part of town along Tickners Creek.

These lands have been undevelopable in the past and are now restricted from development by current wetland protection laws. This has created extensive open space for a town the size of Tappahannock. Steep slopes to the southwest just outside the town's borders prohibit large scale development and add to the stock of undeveloped open space lands. New environmental soil conservation laws will also tend to limit future development in this area.

The table below illustrates how land is utilized within the town compared to other uses.

Table 3-1
Existing Land Use Within Tappahannock

Land Use	Percent
Undeveloped	41
Public	10
Residential	27
Business	15
Industrial	7

Several opportunities present themselves for Tappahannock's future. There are pockets of undeveloped land along the Route 360-17 business corridor that if left undeveloped, could relieve the monotony of typical strip commercial development that often harms the rural town atmosphere of Tappahannock. Future expansion could take place south, out to Bray's Fork and along the Route 627/Airport Road corridor. Undeveloped lands to the southeast and north, out Route 17, provide an area for future residential expansion.

Finally, the extensive wetlands in and around Tappahannock are protected by state and federal wetlands laws which will assure open space opportunities well into the future.

Through the land use analysis the following assets have been identified:

- The combination of wetlands, steep slopes, county public school lands and airport has provided the town with a large proportion of land for open space which maintains the character of a rural town.
- Route 360/17, a major north-south highway, has provided a large business corridor for economic vitality.
- Large tracts of undeveloped lands on the Route 627/Airport Road corridor provide flat and easily accessible lands for industrial use.
- Undeveloped lands exist for potential residential expansion to the south of Hoskins Creek as well as along DeSha Road.
- Various land uses throughout the town have created non-conforming uses with the adjacent lands. These include:

- The industrial use at the mouth of Hoskins Creek.
- The business use at the Tickners Creek/Route 17 area.
- The industrial use between the mobile home park and the residential area across from the Tappahannock Municipal Airport. Once the planned Tappahannock-Essex County Airport opens the area of the current facility is available for industrial use as well

Developable Lands Analysis

Table 3-2 shows the result of a developable land analysis where existing land use and the Resource Protection Area (RPA) lands (See Chapter 5) were subtracted from the total incorporated area. The developable areas are broken down by planning districts described in the implementation section of this Chapter. From the results of this analysis it can be determined that there is adequate land area within the Town to accept the projected growth over the next twenty years without creating a land monopoly. These acreages are used in subsequent chapters to estimate residential build-out in the Town and to estimate sewer demand during the planning horizon.

Table 3-2
Estimated Developable Land By Selected Planning District (1)
Tappahannock, Virginia

Planning District Acres	
Residential District	70
Mixed Residential Cluster	66.5
General Commercial	87
Industrial	172

Notes: (1) Only includes planning district with significant amount of developable lands rather than scattered infill areas.

Source: Redman/Johnston Associates, Ltd., 1998

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Tappahannock Land Use Plan expresses the Town's goals, objectives and policies concerning the type, location, intensity and quality of public and private land use.

Goal: Expand business use while retaining a rural small town atmosphere.

Objectives:

- Expand the U.S. 17 Commercial District (east side) in the Town to provide greater depth in the direction from Hoskins Creek to the stoplight.
- Provide for conservation land use on undeveloped lands adjacent to, and across from the Southern States buildings which include lowlands from the Hoskins Creek wetlands areas.
- Prohibit further expansion of business use at the mouth of Tickners Creek and industrial use under the Thomas J. Downing Bridge.
- Utilize undeveloped lands to their fullest potential. This includes using the Town's airport should it become available in the future for other uses.

Goal: Increase industrial land use to retain economic potential for Tappahannock.

Objectives:

- Expand future industrial use past the airport, along the Route 627/Airport Road corridor.
- Include the existing airport as an industrial land use when it becomes available through the development of a new airport.
- Industrial Zoning should be designated along a truck by-pass around the Town.

Goal: Expand residential land uses to provide housing for future residents.

Objectives:

- Expand further residential use north out Route 17, and to the west and east of the Route 360/17 business corridor.

Goal: Produce a desirable residential environment for all residents of Tappahannock

Objectives:

- Protect residential neighborhoods from encroachment by commercial and industrial activities. Require landscaping for future non-residential

development within the Town for greater aesthetic appeal.

- Require buffers between incompatible land uses.
- Require commercial and office property abutting residential areas to provide measures designed to reduce detractive impacts and nuisances to the residential areas. Improvements should be sought in existing situations whenever permits are applied for to permit expansion or alterations.
- Protect residential neighborhoods from through traffic by providing for a carefully considered and coordinated plan for highways, streets and intersections.
- Implement improved, performance-based development standards and revised site plan review procedures to improve the quality of future development and redevelopment in the Town.
- Acquire the land under the Thomas J. Downing Bridge or other potential waterfront areas and develop an urban park to improve the downtown environment.

Goal: Land use patterns within the Town should preserve the present character and contribute to the conservation of land, effective delivery of services and an attractive, harmonious mixture of land uses.

Objective:

Single-family and multi-family residential, commercial industrial and residential uses should mix harmoniously within the Town with less intense uses being buffered from the other uses by appropriate setbacks and landscaping.

Goal: The Town should discourage development which would place an unnecessary burden on local residents or create undesirable consequences and living environments.

Objectives:

- Objective analysis of physical conditions should be made to determine that prospective development can be located safely.
- The developer should provide necessary public services designed exclusively for the benefit of the new development.

MAP 3-1:
Tappahannock Land Use Plan

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Planning Districts

The Land Use Plan Map (Map 3-1) delineates areas deemed by the Town to be appropriate locations for private land uses, such as residential, commercial, and industrial uses and public uses such as parks. The Tappahannock Land Use Plan designates ten (10) general areas or Planning Districts (see Map 3-1). The Planning Districts were derived from a combination of determinants including: existing land use patterns; projected growth and development trends; the natural capacity and suitability of the land to support development; the availability or proposed future availability and adequacy of development infrastructure (roads, sewer and water), and the goals, objectives and policies expressed by the Town. Each district description outlines the general type, intensity and character of development that should occur within the district.

Residential Districts

The primary existing and planned residential areas of the Town have been categorized into the three separate districts: Residential, Town Scale Residential, and Mixed Residential Cluster. Although the goals, objectives and policies for residential development are equally true in each district, as residents in residential neighborhoods have similar requirements, the existing character of each district differs, both as a function of design and density.

Town Scale Residential Districts

Town Scale Residential includes those existing residential neighborhoods which exhibit urban characteristics, such as a close proximity to the downtown core, and a manner of addressing the street which instills an urban feel. These existing areas generally exhibit recognizable historic qualities and are subject to pressure for changes in land use. In addition, this category includes existing and proposed developments with urban densities. Densities in existing Town Scale Residential areas range from four to six to dwelling units per acre.

The purpose of the Town Residential classification is to recognize the unique problems associated with existing urban residential neighborhoods, particularly older neighborhoods and to provide appropriate areas for infill development at similar densities.

In the case of the former, the primary aim of the Town is to protect the existing character of those residential neighborhoods from encroachment by adjacent nonresidential uses and from incompatible intensification of residential uses within that may have a deleterious effect on its character and quality.

Residential (Suburban) District

Existing suburban neighborhoods in Tappahannock are typical of such communities built in the latter half of the 20th century. For the most part these areas consist of detached single family

units. Suburban Residential areas have densities ranging from two to five dwelling units acre.

The purpose of the Suburban Residential District classification is twofold. In existing residential area the primary purpose is to identify residential neighborhoods that need protection from encroachment by incompatible, non-residential uses. At the edge of these districts, the objective is to minimize the impacts of more intense, non-residential uses that adjoin residential neighborhoods. This includes ensuring that provisions are made for landscaping of future non-residential development and for buffers between incompatible land uses. In the context of the Transportation Plan, these neighborhoods should be protected from through traffic.

For those vacant lands that occur in these Districts the purpose of the classification is to identify areas wherein the Town will foster additional development of a Suburban Residential character.

Mixed Residential Cluster District

The Mixed Residential Cluster District is to provide for areas within the Town where higher density and more intense development can be accommodated. These areas are presently served or can be readily served by sewer and water facilities. Development in this District will differ from traditional forms of development in providing a comprehensive approach to site planning. This form of development will permit the planning of a project and the calculation of densities over the entire development, rather than on an individual, lot-by-lot basis. It also involves a process which revolves mainly around site-plan review, in which Town officials have considerable involvement in determining the nature of the development. This form of development is characterized by a unified site design (Master Plan) that addresses the number of housing units, the manner of clustering buildings and providing common open space, the distribution of density, and the mix of housing types and land uses. Development of new sites adjacent or near to established neighborhoods would be required to buffer the edges to minimize impacts on nearby established neighborhoods. This approach acknowledges existing development patterns and recognizes historic development conditions. In short, higher residential densities or mixed use will be permitted only in such areas where infrastructure in the form of water' sewer and transportation systems would not be adversely impacted or could be accommodated within a defined geographic cell.

Business Districts

General Commercial District

The General Commercial District includes the entire Route 17 highway corridor from Virginia Street to Brays Fork. Where developed, these areas exhibit the general visual characteristic of highway corridors along which piecemeal "strip" development has occurred. Uses include retail sales and business service establishments such as community shopping centers, fast food restaurants, and service stations. This corridor is the primary entrance point to the Town from the south.

A large portion of the General Commercial District is already developed. These existing commercial uses have an established form and require a different treatment than will future

development. Areas of existing commercial use may need to be further broken down in the zoning ordinance to provide more distinct treatment of these existing developed commercial areas. The business district created should provide different treatments for the range of use from neighborhood business to highway oriented commercial uses and establish access control and landscape or buffer performance standards appropriate to their redevelopment or infill development over time. Where possible, service roads or access management policies should be established in existing commercial areas adjacent to the major transportation routes to minimize the effects of local traffic on the capacity of the roads to carry thru-traffic capacity which is the primary function of these routes.

Since the current version of the Comprehensive Plan, development has taken place along Church Lane/Tappahannock Boulevard. The Town has relocated its offices from Duke Street to Church Lane, a restaurant has built along the corridor, a building supply company has sited at the intersection of Tappahannock Boulevard and White Oak Drive, and the Bank of Essex has constructed a new headquarters just south of the intersection of Tappahannock Boulevard and Hobbs Hole Drive.

Undeveloped areas within the General Commercial District such as the area around Route 698 (Hobbs Hole Dr. /White Oak Dr.) on the other hand provide an opportunity for significantly improving the quality of commercial development within the Town. Site plan review and approval procedures for these areas should be required. This offers several advantages in coordinating new activities with existing ingress and egress points along the local street system. Traffic controls can be provided in accordance with anticipated volumes. On-site parking facilities and internal traffic patterns are also controlled via the site plan review process. The more detailed zone mapping in this district should emphasize the configuration zones to achieve a greater depth-to-frontage ratio in dimensions.

The purpose of the General Commercial District is to recognize areas of the Town that, due to their historic development pattern or current zoning, form a more or less continuous commercial corridor along major highway routes. Vacant land in the District is intended to provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for additional future commercial service activities which would generally serve a wide area and need to be located along existing major thoroughfares. For the most part, uses in this District are not characterized by extensive warehousing, frequent heavy truck activity, open storage of material, or nuisance factors of dust, odor, and noise associated with manufacturing.

Central Business District

The Central Business District, which has historically been the center of commerce and business in Tappahannock, contains a mix of public institutions, as well as business, service, and commercial establishments which comprise a significant portion of the Town's economy.

The Central Business District is an urban area with the dominant feature being architecture; i.e., buildings enclosing spaces and the spaces are places of intense human interaction. Privacy in urban environments requires enclosures, patios, or rooms. In order to provide the intensity and diversity of choices that make urban centers people-magnets, high densities are essential. It remains the classic urban design-type of environment in which buildings define and enclose

spaces. The Central Business District in Tappahannock is an example of urban environment whose scale is in keeping with the rural qualities of the County in general. A mix of commercial shopping facilities, service industries, offices, public and institutional buildings, other intense non-residential uses, and town scale residential are typical uses.

The purpose of the Central Business District designation is to recognize the unique role of the Central Business District in Tappahannock's land use and to continue to provide for a compatible mixture of commercial, cultural, institutional, governmental, and residential uses in a compact, pedestrian oriented, traditional town center that serves as the focal point for surrounding residential areas. The primary land use and community facility objectives for the CBD are to maintain and enhance the CBD as a center of governmental, professional, and mercantile activities in the County in the face of changing consumer preferences.

Industrial District

Included in this District are those areas of the Town which have been developed for industrial uses and vacant land planned for business and industrial expansion in the future. A characteristic of this District is large sprawling buildings with associated parking areas. Due to the large parcel sizes upon which they are located, their visual impact is somewhat lessened. The existence of undisturbed natural areas surrounding these uses also helps soften adverse visual effects. Generally these areas are located near the existing Town airport.

The purpose of the Industrial District is to establish appropriate areas that will be reserved for light to medium industrial use and necessary supporting accessory uses and facilities. The site should be large enough to be designed as industrial parks that complement surrounding land uses by means of appropriate location of buildings and service areas, attractive architecture, effective buffering, and substantial site landscaping.

Business and Employment District

In recognition of the need to continue to provide additional, diverse job opportunities for residents of Tappahannock and Essex County, it is proposed that areas be reserved for development into business and employment clusters or parks. This district is located in the County on the northwest of the existing industrial area and would be served by the proposed bypass. This district coincides with an area being considered by the County and is roughly four hundred acres, of which some three hundred appear suitable for development.

This area, like the Industrial District, should require sites to be large enough to be designed as industrial parks that complement surrounding land uses by means of appropriate location of buildings and service areas, attractive architecture, effective buffering, and substantial site landscaping.

Resource Protection District

The Resource Protection District includes those existing natural areas in the Town which are

likely to remain in their natural state, or if used will serve as parkland. These areas include slopes in excess of 25 percent, the 100-year floodplain, Resource Protection Areas (RPA) associated with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, perennial and intermittent streams and stream buffers, non-tidal wetlands, and town parklands.

The purpose of the Resource Protection District is to recognize general areas where sensitive natural features and other development constraints limit uses, or where special land use development requirements are imposed for the express purpose of protecting and enhancing water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and maintaining or protecting sensitive wildlife habitats. Included in this classification are areas best suited to open space or low intensity recreation uses. Permitted development in these areas should be strictly regulated, to ensure minimum adverse environmental impacts, or limited, with special attention given to maintaining natural conditions.

Highway Corridor District

The Highway Corridor District is intended to address architectural and aesthetic controls as well as special access and buffering requirements along the Town's major highway.

The Highway Corridor District is an area within which certain specific public policies relating to protection of Highway functions and landscape aesthetics would be administered by the Town through overlay zone regulations in the Zoning Ordinance. Views afforded to drivers and passengers, whether residents, workers or visitors, traversing the major transportation routes of the Town provide a lasting visual and, therefore mental, impression of the Town's character. Although the visual experience probably forms only a small part of a person's overall experience in the Town, it, nevertheless, is of special public concern and requires public attention if the Town's image is to be a positive one now and in the future.

Not all development in Tappahannock requires the same level of public scrutiny. The most critical visual areas lie along the major transportation routes since they are shared by all citizens and tourists. Hence, corridors of 500 feet from the right-of-way of the major transportation route rights-of-way are identified for specific regulatory provisions.

The visual character today along these corridors is diverse, ranging from areas primarily rural, natural, and scenic to areas with disorganized and cluttered roadside development. The intent of the policies for the Highway Corridor is not to preclude the diversity that already exists; but, rather to encourage and better articulate the variety of visual experiences along the highway corridors of existing and proposed routes classified as major roads in the Town.

The purpose of the Highway Corridor District is to protect and improve the quality of visual appearances along these linear corridors and to guidelines to ensure that buffering, landscaping, lighting, signage, and proposed structures are internally consistent and of a quality which contributes to the Town character. Future development of lands within the Corridor should be subject to the policies specific to the particular Land Use District in which they lie (and ultimately the particular zoning district in which they occur), as well as the following policies that are specific to the overlay corridor. These policies are not intended to restrict or prevent the

construction of buildings within each Corridor, or to require the removal of existing structures. The Corridor policies are not setback requirements, although certain minimum setbacks will be required to protect highway rights-of-way and maintain sight clearances for traffic safety.

The corridors along U.S. 17 for a distance of 500 feet from the right-of-way are designated as the Highway Corridor Overlay District. Other routes such as the proposed bypass may be established in the future as determined appropriate.

Policies in place that are specific to the Highway Corridor include:

- Buffering requirements to screen unattractive buildings from view and which provide for a mix of canopy, understory tree and shrub level plantings will be more substantial in the Corridors.
- Special standards for signage height, design, size, materials, and lighting to maintain and enhance visual qualities will be required. Special consideration of new development within this district including assessment of visual impact of development, assessing predevelopment visual conditions and how the proposed development will affect them will be made.
- Consideration will be given to subject new development within the Highway Corridor to review by a Corridor Review Committee (CRC) or an architectural review committee which would make recommendations to the Planning Commission.
- Service roads or at a minimum joint access drives should be required where they would enhance safety and achieve efficient access control within the Highway Corridor District.
- Landscaping should be used to soften lighting and signage impacts and to be located in groupings to identify entrances to sites.
- Traffic calming measures should be implemented within the Highway Corridor to make Tappahannock more livable and pedestrian friendly.

