

Tappahannock Comprehensive Plan



April 9th, 2024



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Table of Contents

1. The Framework for Comprehensive Planning.....	8
2. The Background for Planning.....	16
3. Land Use.....	22
4. Transportation	38
5. Environmental Protection	52
6. Housing	80
7. Economic Development.....	88
8. Public Facilities & Community Services	102
9. Recreation	119
10. Downtown Revitalization.....	113
Appendix.....	120
- Economic Restructuring Plan	
- Branding & Marketing Plan	
- Implementation Plan	

List of Maps

Map 1: Undeveloped Areas.....	25
Map 2: Future Land Use	26
Map 3: Adopted Zoning Map.....	27
Map 4: Functional Classification of Highways	41
Map 5: Location of Highly Erodible Soils	55
Map 6: Location of Highly Permeable Soils.....	57
Map 7: Location of Hydric Soils	59
Map 8: Location of Steep Slopes.....	63
Map 9: Location of Floodplains	65
Map 10: Location of Wetlands	67
Map 11: Resource Protection/Management Areas.....	69
Map 12: Location of Facilities Providing Boat Access to the Rappahannock.....	76
Map 13: Town-owned Water Service Facilities	105
Map 14: Tappahannock Commercial Corridor.....	123
Map 15: Historic Overlay District	133

NOTE: All maps within this Comprehensive Plan Update are based on the latest available data and information provided by Essex County GIS and other sources. Please consult the Town of Tappahannock directly for specifics regarding parcels or boundary clarifications.

List of Tables

Table 1. Households	19
Table 2. Change in Unemployment between 2010 and 2020	20
Table 3. Essex County Local Option Sales Tax Revenue	21
Table 4. Land Use.....	24
Table 5. Average Daily Traffic on Primary Routes	42
Table 6. Tappahannock November 2021 Mid-term VTrans Needs.....	46
Table 7. 2040 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan Update Projects	47
Table 8. Housing Types	82
Table 9. Housing Tenure	83
Table 10. Essex County Local Option Sales Tax Revenue	90
Table 11. Essex County Average Weekly Salary By Industry.....	90
Table 12. Top 5 Industries by # of Employees in Essex County	90
Table 13. Major Employers in Essex County	91
Table 14. Effect of Estimated Population on Community Systems in Town and Projected Water Demand.	104

An aerial photograph of a town at dusk or night. The town is illuminated by numerous lights, creating a warm glow against the dark sky. In the foreground, there is a large body of water with several wooden docks extending into it. The town is surrounded by trees, and the overall scene is peaceful and scenic. The text "Chapter 1" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Chapter 1

Aerial photo of Downtown.

The Framework for Comprehensive Planning

Overview

Tappahannock is a special place with a unique character, culture, and history that distinguishes this community from hundreds of towns throughout the country. This Comprehensive Plan particularly addresses the preservation and enhancement of these special qualities and that distinctive personality felt by the residents who live and work here. This sense of uniqueness and pride of place are the guiding forces and strongest motivation for those who have contributed to the realization of this document.

As the Town of Tappahannock grows and changes, the policies that govern the Town must grow and change with it in order to maintain a sustainable, balanced community. The Town of Tappahannock Comprehensive Plan (“Plan”) serves as a guide for making those planning and development growth decisions to ensure retaining our community’s welfare. The Plan provides an analysis of the Town’s recent changes and trends to determine which direction to proceed in moving forward into the future. The Plan is a culmination of a cooperative effort, pulling together statistical data, knowledge, and skills of diverse business leaders, residents, and government staff to ensure that the needs and interests of each sector are represented.

This Plan presents a future vision of Tappahannock into the year 2030 along with recommendations for bringing that vision to fruition. The ideas of the Plan are an assessment of the community’s quality of life needs, tempered by what seems feasible and reasonable.

In 2023, a consultant was procured to update the plan to a new layout and refreshed maps and tables. The policies and strategies found in the plan remain unchanged, while minor text and graphical corrections have attempted to make the document more attractive and usable. This document is a “Technical Update” to the Adopted 2014 Comprehensive Plan.

Legal Basis for Comprehensive Planning

The preparation of a comprehensive plan is the legal responsibility of the Town's Planning Commission under Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia. The Plan also serves to satisfy the requirements of Article 2.5 of the Code of Virginia, the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. Any ordinance pertaining to the use of land or growth and development of the Town should conform to the goals, objectives, and policies as they are presented in this plan.

Review of the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan was conducted by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) in 2014 in accordance with Section 15.2-2222.1 of the Code of Virginia. The Transportation Plan was found to be in general conformance with VDOT's Chapter 729 requirements.

Definitions and Purpose

The Comprehensive Plan is an official public document developed by the Town Planning Commission and adopted by the Town Council. The Plan is a general, long-range, policy, and implementation guide for decisions concerning the overall growth and development of the Town.

The Plan is comprehensive as it covers a wide range of topics, which can be influenced significantly by the Town Council and other governing authorities and agencies. The recommendations are broad, rather than narrowly defining decisions for land use at specific sites. The Plan, like most communities, is ever-changing and should be fluid as changes become necessary.

Although adopted as an official public document, the Comprehensive Plan is not a development ordinance. This plan serves as a catalyst and guide to the establishment of, or revisions to, other ordinances or planning tools. These include the zoning and subdivision ordinances, and the capital budget. The Land Use Plan Map, included in this plan, serves to illustrate the mix and location of land uses where the Plan's policies and recommendations will be applied. This mapped information is general in nature and not appropriate for determining the suitability of specific sites for any specific use.

History of the Comprehensive Plan

A planning effort was undertaken by the Town with the assistance of the Urban and Regional Planning Department of the Virginia Commonwealth University in 1989. A Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1991. In 2001, an addendum was added to conform to requirements of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. The Town adopted updates to the Comprehensive Plan in 2007 and again in 2014. The 2014 update expanded upon implementation and was conducted through a collaboration of local, regional, and state agencies as well as residents and business leaders of Essex County and facilitated by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission.

This plan update is based on review of development and demographic data in the Town as well as Essex County data projections, which have prompted modest changes to the 2014 Comprehensive Plan. This Plan is intended to build on those past efforts by updating pertinent data and background information, however, this update is only technical in nature and does not reflect any policy changes.

Components of a Growth Management Program

This Comprehensive Plan provides the basic framework and direction for all components of what may be considered the Town's overall Comprehensive Planning Program. It is not a stand-alone document but is supported and, in turn, supports related planning documents, including:

- Zoning Ordinance, including the Historic Overlay District
- Subdivision Ordinance
- Capital Improvements Budget
- Water Quality Management Plan
- Soil Survey, MPPDC
- Chesapeake Bay Water Quality Improvement Objectives
- Tappahannock's Town Code

This list is not exhaustive, but a sample of documents that, when used concurrently, are the basis for directing and managing growth in Tappahannock.



Goals + Objectives Setting

The Tappahannock Comprehensive Plan is intended to capture a broad community vision of a future Tappahannock. Written statements that describe future expectations are necessary to describe that vision. These statements are intended to be easily understood and generally accepted among the residents and business interests in the Town.

Goals and objectives are found in this chapter and in the subsequent chapters for each functional area of the Plan such as land use, transportation, or community facilities.

Goals are long-range generalized statements that represent the ultimate desires of the Town. The situations and conditions called for in the goals would normally be achieved only through a sustained series of actions over a considerable period of time. The goal statements in this Plan are sufficiently broad to remain valid as people's values change over time. As these values change, the interpretation of the goals will also change. When this happens, the goals will remain in effect, but new objectives may be developed.

Objectives comprise a proposed series of broad target issues that require attention in order to achieve the goals. Objectives are intended to be intermediate steps that are taken toward achieving the long term goals. For each goal, several objectives are established.

Organization of the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into chapters to strategically and comprehensively plan and develop the Town. The information in Chapter 2 sets the basis for the objectives and recommendations to be made based on the Plan. Each chapter includes a discussion of background and analysis, identification of issues, a statement of goals and objectives and a summary of implementation recommendations for each of the functional areas of the plan. Elements in the plan include the following:

- Chapter 1 - The Framework for Comprehensive Planning
- Chapter 2 - The Background for Planning
- Chapter 3 - Land Use
- Chapter 4 - Transportation
- Chapter 5 - Environmental Protection
- Chapter 6 - Housing
- Chapter 7 - Economic Development
- Chapter 8 - Public Facilities and Community Services
- Chapter 9 - Recreation
- Chapter 10 - Downtown Revitalization

The Plan and, in particular, the Land Use Element indicates the proposed general or conceptual development pattern of the community projected to 2030. However, it is not a detailed blueprint. Local conditions, values, and philosophies change as a result of economic and political pressures and the Plan must subsequently be responsive to these changes. The Plan is not a document which encourages regimentation, but is a guide for the orderly and efficient growth of the community. Implementation involves the concerted actions of both Town elected officials and certain appointed boards. This chapter addresses two aspects of plan implementation that need additional treatment, Administration and Enforcement, and Development Standards and Design Guidelines.

Administration and Enforcement

The actions needed to guide construction of plan implementation tools, particularly the preparation of new land use and development regulations, as well as operational features of future administrative structure are summarized below:

1. Where possible, use clear measurable performance standards in ordinances and policies to minimize interpretive confusion.
2. The annual revision to the Town's Capital Improvements Program should be coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan and any recommended amendments resulting from the annual review of the Plan and planning process.
3. The Plan should be reviewed by the local planning commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan at least once every five (5) years according to the Code of Virginia §15.2-2230.

Development Standards and Guidelines

Development design can be generally defined as the management of the visual and physical development of the built environment. Primary emphasis is placed on the preservation of the Town's character. The intention is to respond to growing public concern about the increasing transformation of Tappahannock's traditional townscape to sprawling suburban residential and strip commercial development similar in nature to the land use pattern ringing most of the surrounding metropolitan centers.

Managing development design to maintain and enhance the aesthetics of the Town is an important component of Tappahannock's Comprehensive Plan. Application of development design standards is appropriate where physical and visual properties of development can significantly influence the character of the Town's suburban areas, as well as urban areas. Development design guidance significantly affects real estate values, community pride, personal enjoyment and satisfaction, and the overall investment climate in Tappahannock.

Zoning Guidelines

The land use plan and zoning map serves as an additional tool that can be used to manage growth. Together, they indicate the appropriate land use for parcels and areas of land throughout the Town. It is recommended that the Town revises its zoning districts, if necessary, to ensure compatibility among land uses and meet the other identified objectives of the Town.

Zoning is the tool by which land uses are regulated and is the primary instrument to carry out growth and development goals of the Comprehensive Plan. The zoning districts identified in the Land Use chapter permit various land uses and require adherence to development standards based on a number of factors, such as uses on adjacent properties or proximity to infrastructure.

Planned Developments

It is the intent that the planned development provisions in the Town continue to permit a variety of dwelling unit types within the same development and to permit much more intense clustering. It is not the intent of this plan to permit a higher density by right than the underlying zoning district; however additional density may be granted through bonuses for amenities in excess of what is required, such as additional park space, or for addressing affordable housing needs.

Residential Planned Developments should permit and even encourage the elements found in traditional neighborhoods so that the new developments become extensions of the Town rather than isolated pockets of residential development. The planned developments should be tied to the older parts of town by a street and sidewalk system. Development should be permitted to be oriented around neighborhood services and accessible by pedestrians. A degree of mixed residential and commercial should be permitted in the neighborhood centers within planned developments.

Landscaping and Tree Preservation

Implementation of landscaping and tree preservation objectives should address the broad issues relating to landscaping in Tappahannock. Landscaping serves many purposes in development. It provides aesthetics with the existing uses and character of a community as well as reduces the impacts of continuous or excessive use of concrete or other hardscape elements. Landscaping is also paramount to protecting the natural environment by acting as a storm water management mechanism. Plantings also help provide clean air quality, bring local temperatures down, and provide shade.

Section 15.2-961 of the Virginia Code allows Tappahannock to adopt an ordinance providing for the planting and replacement of trees during the development process. The law appears to prescribe the minimum as well as maximum tree canopies for towns; however, there is some language to suggest a town could require less stringent regulations. Use of this provision will require State agency interpretation of the law.

Administration and Implementation

One of the most important, yet often neglected, issues to be considered in the formulation of the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Regulations is administration and implementation. Even the most well-conceived plans and ordinances will lose effectiveness (and in some cases be invalidated) without consistent and equitable administration and implementation. The list below shows how different entities will administer and utilize the plan.

Town Council - The Town Council receives recommendations on various types of land development applications from the Planning Commission before voting on final approval of any given project. As elected officials, they are the final decisionmakers.

Planning Commission - The Planning Commission are appointed by the Town Council and are tasked with voting on a recommendation to provide to the Town Council on various land development applications.

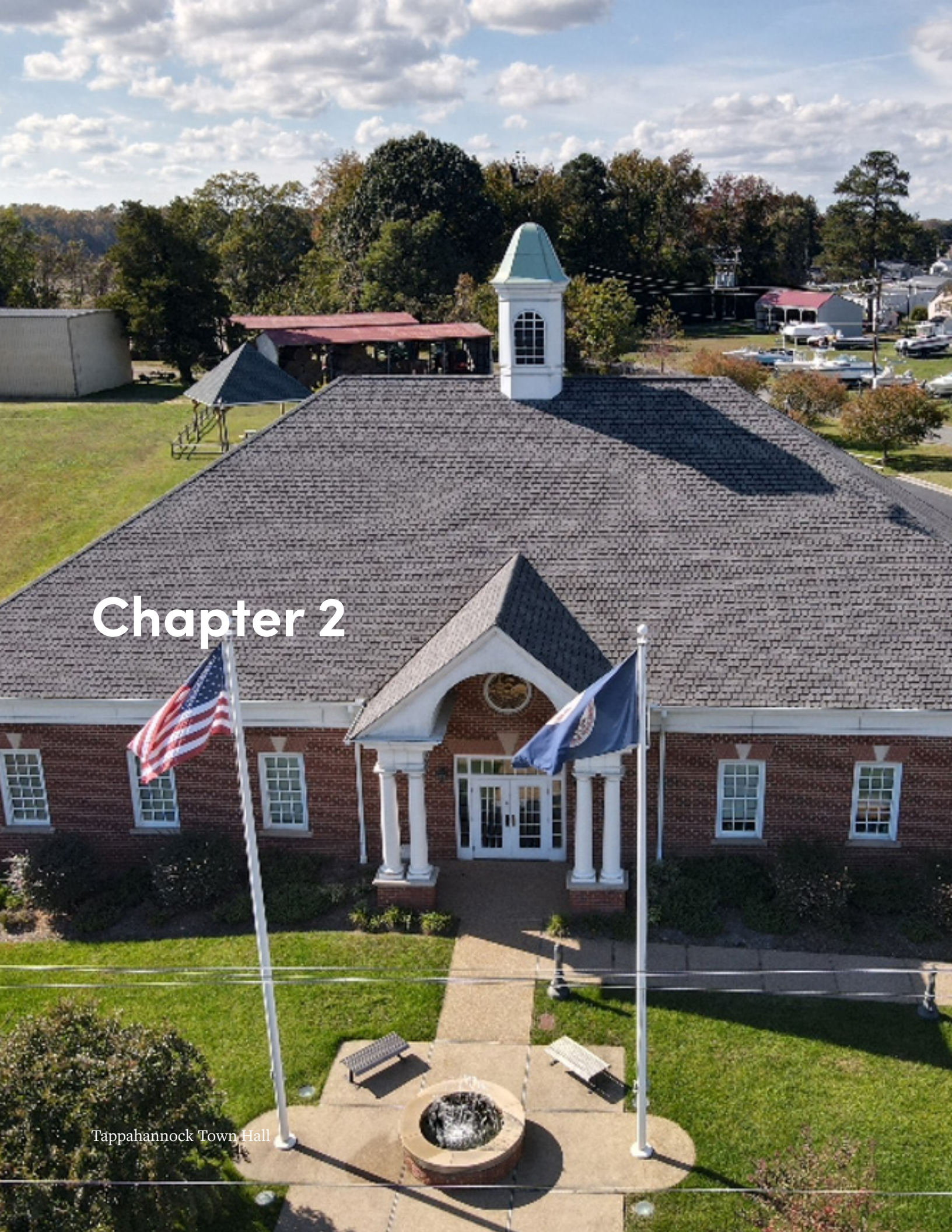
Town's Staff - The Town's Staff ensure compliance with local ordinances and regulations while facilitating various land use applications through the Town's review process. They also provide analysis and recommendations on any given project to the Planning Commission and Town Council. They are the "frontline" of ensuring incoming projects adhere to the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Regulations.

The Public - The public elects Town Council members. They are also able to review the ordinances and Comprehensive Plan. These documents guide the Town Council and the Planning Commission decisions. During Planning Commission or Town Council Public Hearings, or community engagement events, the public may make their voice heard by sharing their thoughts.

Developers - Developers look at a locality like Tappahannock's various planning documents when assessing how to develop property. Depending on the type of project, they will file an application and submit it with the Town for their review or eventual vote.

Chapter 2

Tappahannock Town Hall



Background For Planning

Overview

Tappahannock is an incorporated town located in the eastern portion of Essex County, Virginia. The town is situated along the Rappahannock River within the concave of the urban crescent formed by the metropolitan areas of Washington D.C., the City of Fredericksburg, the City of Richmond, and Hampton Roads. In less than three square miles of land area, Tappahannock features a waterfront overlooking the Rappahannock River, a historic downtown, residential subdivisions, public and private schools, public facilities, an industrial center, a business corridor, and extensive wetland areas. These characteristics combine to make Tappahannock a regional commercial, industrial, and employment center, while keeping a small-town feeling.

Settled in the 1600s, the Town was first called New Plymouth and grew as a port and trade area due to its proximity to the beautiful Rappahannock River. Tappahannock, which currently serves as the seat of Essex County, was first incorporated in 1926. Additional territory was annexed in 1939, 1966, and again in 1976. Tappahannock serves as the commercial hub and the economic base of Essex County. The Town also includes Essex County's administrative buildings as well as Essex County Public Schools which serve the residents of Tappahannock.

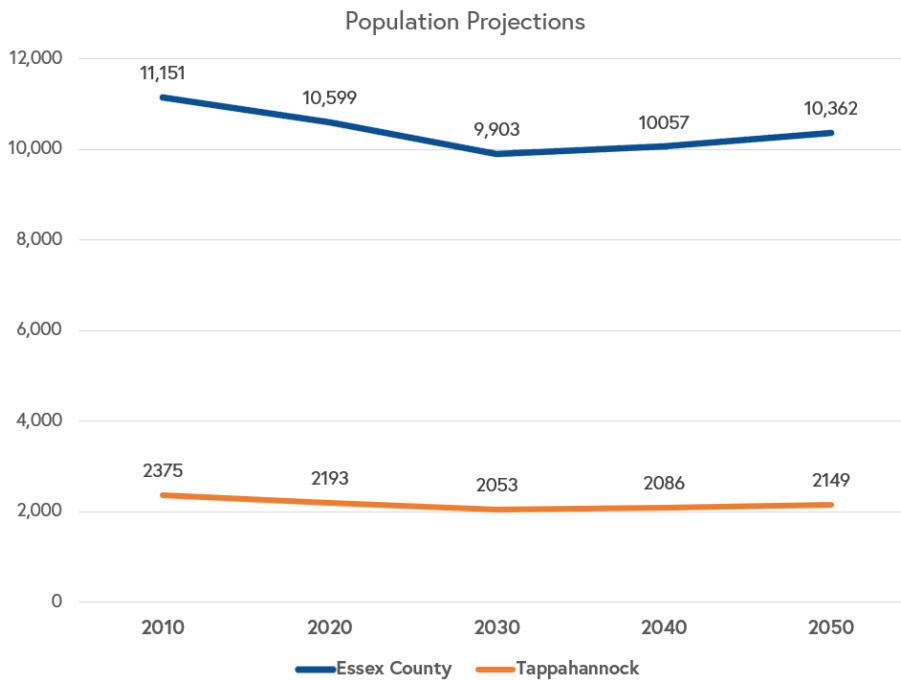
The Town of Tappahannock and the County of Essex maintain a strong relationship, working together to address mutual concerns and goals. The Town serves as the governmental seat for the County, affording ease of communication and visibility among the leaders of each. Also, most of the County's health and public facilities are located in the Town. This central location of schools, library, health department, and social services provides ease of access for both Town and County residents. Also important is the fact that the civic and business interests of the Town and County are not exclusive of each other. In addition, the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission provides a forum for cooperation among local governments, including Tappahannock and Essex County.

Population & Demographic Trends and Projections

Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock have lost population in the previous decade. Recognition of the amount, distribution, and timing of population growth and development are fundamental to the Town's planning. These factors are, in turn, directly related to providing the types of services needed to support the projected population and development growth of Tappahannock and the relative costs of those services.

The 2020 Decennial Census shows that Tappahannock, encompassing an area of 2.75 square miles, has a total population of 2,193, a decrease of 182 residents (-7.96%) from the population in 2010, which was 2,375. The Census also shows the population of Essex County at 10,599, a decrease of 552 residents (-5.07%) from the population in 2010, which was 11,151 residents.

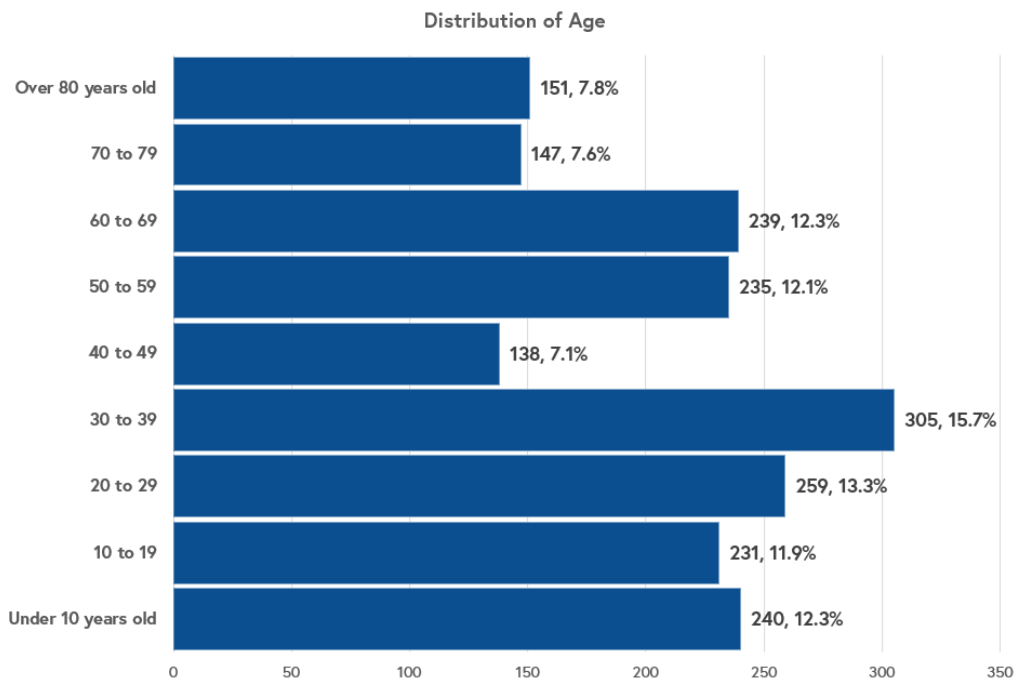
Population projections from the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service estimate that Essex County will decline to 9,903 residents in 2030, but grow to 10,057 total residents in 2040 and 10,362 total residents in 2050. The Town's population is too small to be projected by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, however, if the Town grows at the same rates as Essex between 2030 and 2050, the population will drop to 2,053 in 2030, 2,086 in 2040, and 2,149 in 2050 respectively. This is a slight loss from the 2020 U.S. Census population of 2,193.



Source: U.S. Decennial Census and Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

The data will be used in coming chapters to understand what these various categories and statistics mean to Essex County and the Town, and how they should be used in future planning and policymaking decisions. Factors in transportation improvement projects, public infrastructure expansion and economic growth will have significant influence on the pace and variation of change in growth.

The chart on the next page shows that the largest percentage of the Town's population is between the ages of 20 and 39 (29%). The median age of residents in the Town is 37 with approximately 27.7% at or near retirement age.



A Household is defined as a housing unit occupied by one or more people. The total number of Households in Tappahannock is estimated at 923, with an average household size of 1.99.

The United States Census Bureau defines a family as “a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption.” The total number of families is estimated to be 482 with an average size of 2.72.

Table 1. Households & Families	
Households Total	923
Avg. Household Size	1.99
Total Families	482
Avg. Family Size	2.72

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Yr Estimates

The Town of Tappahannock is served by Essex County Public Schools. The chart below shows the level of educational attainment for all of Tappahannock’s population above the age of 25.

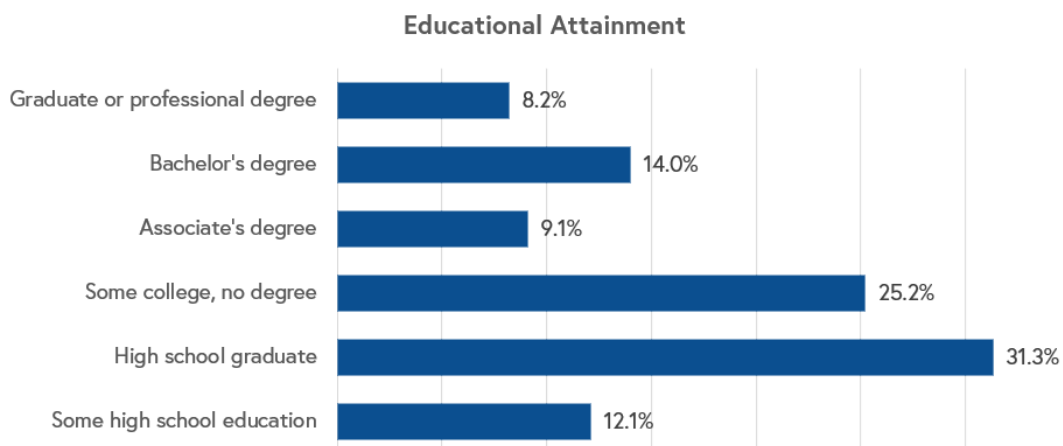


Figure 4. Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Yr Estimates

Education has a strong correlation to higher income earnings. Median earnings for a 25-year-old in the Town of Tappahannock with a high school education or equivalent in 2020 was \$24,716 annually, while those with a bachelor’s degree earned an average of \$54,519 annually. Tappahannock’s Area Median Income is \$37,695, the chart below illustrates the total distribution of income for the Town’s 923 households.

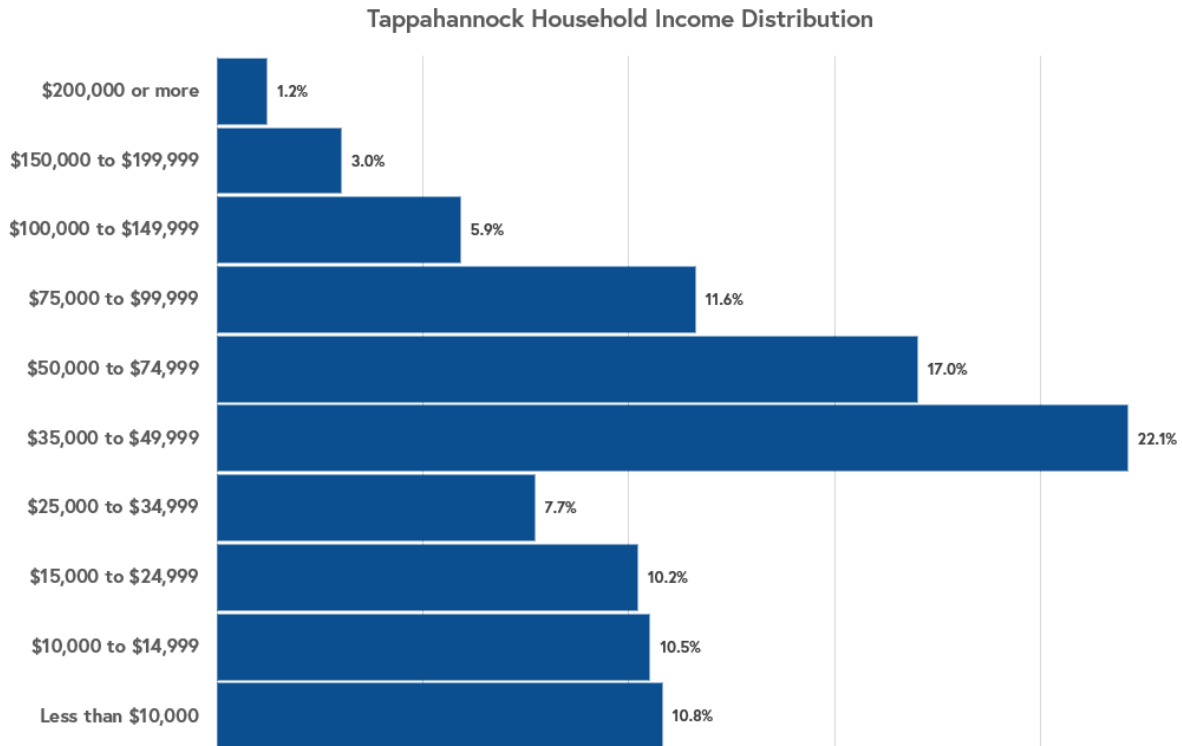


Figure 5. Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Yr. Estimates

Indications of the economic stability of the Town of Tappahannock can be seen by looking at data for the County and region. According to American Community Survey data, the unemployment rate for Essex County was 4.6 percent in 2020 and 3 percent in 2010. The 2020 unemployment rate was higher than the Middle Peninsula region, the state, and the national averages for the same year. The higher rate for 2020 could be due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic. Income figures on a per capita, family, and median household level historically have been lower than the state average. This is partially due to the large number of retirees and elderly on fixed incomes, and also partly due to the high salaries found in northern Virginia (which skewed the statewide average).

Locality	2010	2020
United States	5.1%	3.4%
Virginia	3.9%	3%
Essex County	3%	4.6%
Middle Peninsula	2.65%	2.78%

Source: 2020 U.S. Census, American Community Survey 5-Yr. Estimates and 2010 U.S. Census, American Community Survey 5-Yr. Estimates

Perhaps most impressive is Essex County’s taxable sales revenue for 2020. Essex County reported taxable sales of approximately \$2,357,987 in 2020, an increase from \$1,713,422 in 2010. As the primary commercial and retail center in the County, Tappahannock’s taxable sales account for a large portion of Essex County’s total taxable sales dollars.

Table 3. Essex County Local Option Sales Tax Revenue	
Year	Revenue
2000	\$1,234,370
2010	\$1,713,422
2015	\$1,921,077
2020	\$2,357,987

Source: Essex County

Other factors showing economic growth in the region are an increased work force and rising income averages; however, these factors are distorted due to residents traveling to major employment hubs for higher wage jobs. In addition, there has been an increase in the housing market in the Middle Peninsula. First, the region is within 45 to 90 minutes travel time to the major metropolitan centers of Hampton Roads, Richmond, and parts of Northern Virginia. This allows new residents reasonable commuting time to job centers. Second, the waterfront amenities of the region have attracted many retirees from outside the area to locate here to enjoy the rural and water-related lifestyle.

Population & Demographic Trends and Projections

According to the American Community Survey 2021 five-year estimates, there were 1,179 housing units within the Town as of 2021, reflecting an addition of 48 new housing units from 1,131 housing units in 2010 and an overall total increase of 246 housing units since 2005.

Based on this growth pattern and projections from previous growth and development studies, the Town has remained generally stagnant in terms of growth, however, given its geography this could change.

The form, pattern, and distribution of new development needed to accommodate the population, together with the qualities of commercial and industrial development to meet these residents’ shopping and employment needs, will influence a number of factors which taken together will strongly influence the quality of life in Town.

An aerial photograph of a town, likely in the Southeastern United States, showing a main road winding through the center. The town is surrounded by dense trees with autumn foliage. In the foreground, there is a large white building with a sign that reads "MARTIN'S SALE FURNITURE CO. LTD." and a smaller red building. A church with a steeple is visible in the middle ground. The background shows a vast landscape of trees and fields under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

Chapter 3

Land Use

Goal

Produce a sustainable livable environment for all residents of Tappahannock by providing for a balance in land use patterns that promote preservation of the character, contribute to the efficient service delivery and an attractive coexistence of harmonious land uses.

Objectives

- Expand and enhance the U.S. 17 Commercial District in the Town.
- Identify areas as “enterprise zones” to attract desired businesses and industries.
- Develop and promote downtown Tappahannock as a historic area.
- Increase industrial land use to retain economic potential for Tappahannock.
- Strengthen and diversify the Town’s economic base by encouraging and facilitating the land use needs of industries associated with higher wages.
- Expand residential further to the west and east of the Route 360/17 business corridor.
- Protect residential neighborhoods from encroachment by commercial and industrial activities and through traffic.
- Implement improved, performance-based development standards and revised site plan review procedures to improve the quality of future development and redevelopment in the Town.
- Implement the plans for the development of park and community spaces, such as the “Central Park,” “Hoskins Creek Park,” improvements to the Rappahannock River Park, and other public/private parks.

Analysis

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. Residential land uses are found throughout the Town, with new residential subdivisions most recently built in the southeastern section of the Town south of Hoskins Creek. 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 benefit to Tappahannock. Industrial growth in the community has been on the decline and is currently not as prominent as it once was in the Town, but areas such as the former airport have potential for new development.

A substantial amount of Town land is used for public facilities. Such facilities include County public schools, Town and County government administration buildings, 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 greater pedestrian access is desired. 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 uses must be assessed for their limited future development in order to support compatible land uses.

The existing land use pattern of the Town has been influenced by the large tracts of wetlands, associated 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 standards will also tend to limit future development in this area while protecting the environment.

The table below provides estimates of how land uses are distributed throughout the Town. These acreages do not reflect the total amount of land on any given parcel in direct use, rather the overall acreage of properties under that category of use.

Existing Land Use	Acres	Percent
Residential	156	11%
Commercial	178	12%
Industrial	287	20%
Undeveloped	488	34%
Institutional	285	20%

There are areas of undeveloped land along the Route 360/-17 business corridor that present the opportunity for new development. Future expansion of commercial 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 and industrial expansion.

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

Through the land use analysis, the following underutilized properties have been identified:

- The combination of wetlands, County owned land for public schools, and the former airport property have provided the Town with a large proportion of land for open space. This land currently helps maintain the rural character of the area.
- Route 360/17, a major north-south highway, has provided a large business corridor for economic vitality.
- Large tracts of undeveloped land along the Route 627/Airport Road corridor provide flat and easily accessible lands for industrial use.
- The industrial use between the mobile home park and the residential area across from the former airport location. Once the former airport area is developed with the necessary infrastructure, it will be available for industrial use.

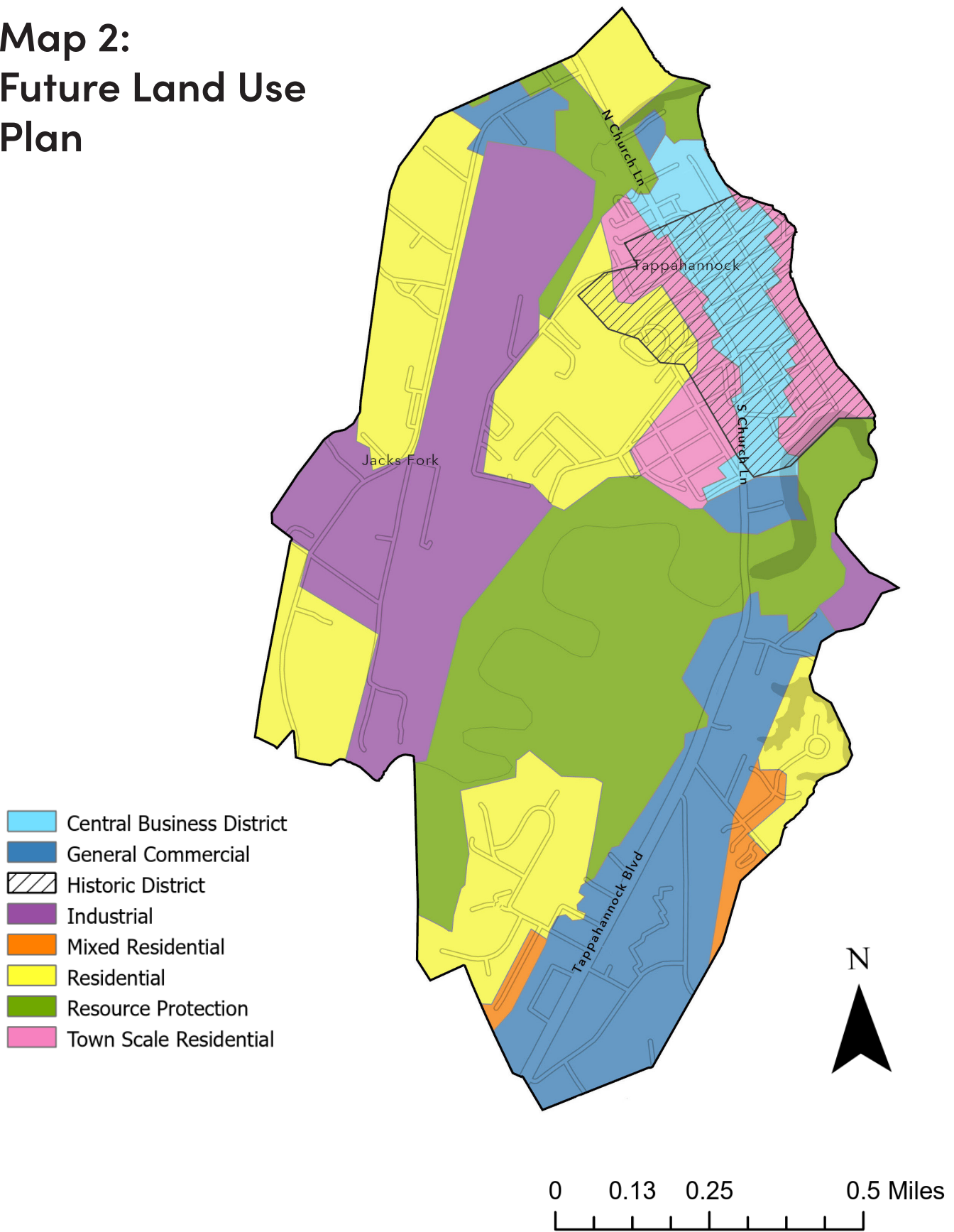
Developable Lands

Table 5 shows the result of a developable land analysis where existing land use and the Resource Protection Area (RPA) lands (See Chapter 5). There are approximately 158 acres in total that are potentially buildable and outside of environmentally protected areas.

Map 1: Undeveloped Areas

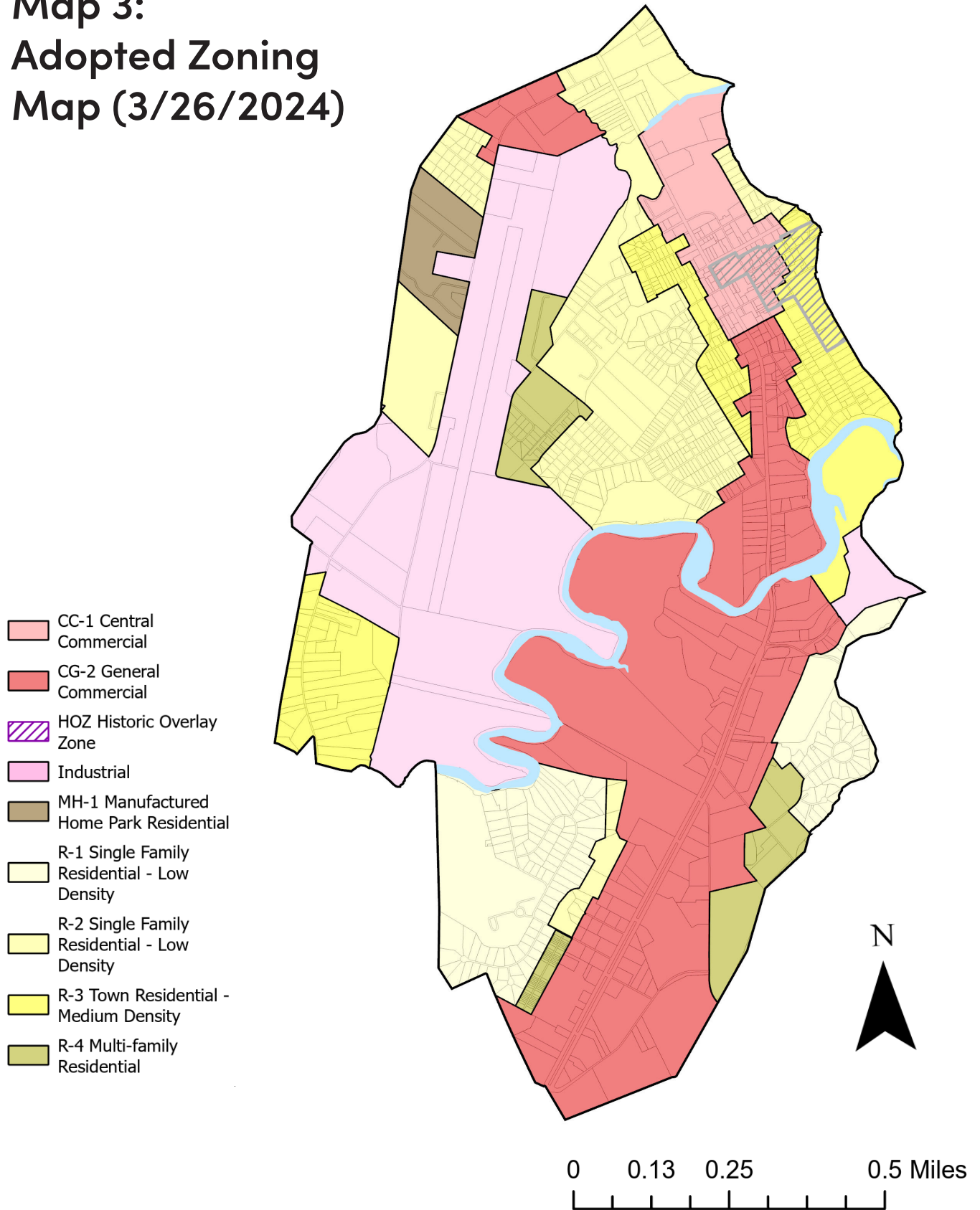


Map 2: Future Land Use Plan



NOTE: This Future Land Use Map was adopted as part of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, as part of the 2024 technical update, the elements of the Future Land Use map highlights only elements within Town Boundaries.

Map 3: Adopted Zoning Map (3/26/2024)



NOTE: This map reflects a new GIS version of the Official Zoning Map in order to provide the Town with a reproducible version. No Zoning Districts have been altered in size for this technical update.

Planning Districts

The Land Use Plan Map delineates areas deemed by the Town to be appropriate locations for private land uses, such as residential, commercial, and industrial uses and public land uses such as parks or schools. The Tappahannock Land Use Plan designates seven (7) general areas or Planning Districts. 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 consistent for 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 dwelling units per acre.

The purpose of the Town Scale 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 Scale District 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.

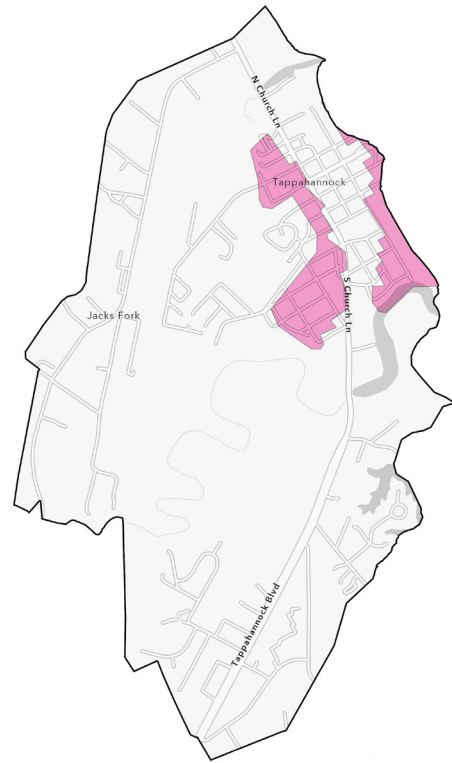
Suburban Residential District

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 per acre.

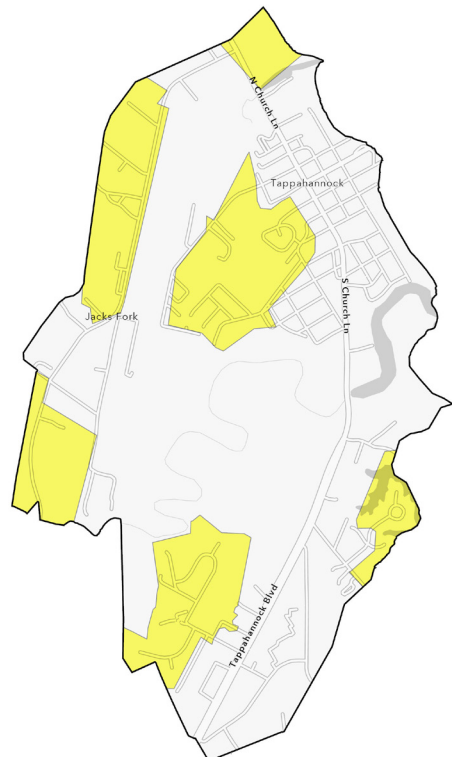
The purpose of the Suburban Residential District classification is twofold. In existing residential areas, the primary purpose is to identify residential neighborhoods that need protection from encroachment by incompatible, non-residential uses. At the edge of these districts, the objective is to serve as a buffer, minimizing the impacts of non-residential uses that adjoin residential neighborhoods. 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.

 Town Scale Residential

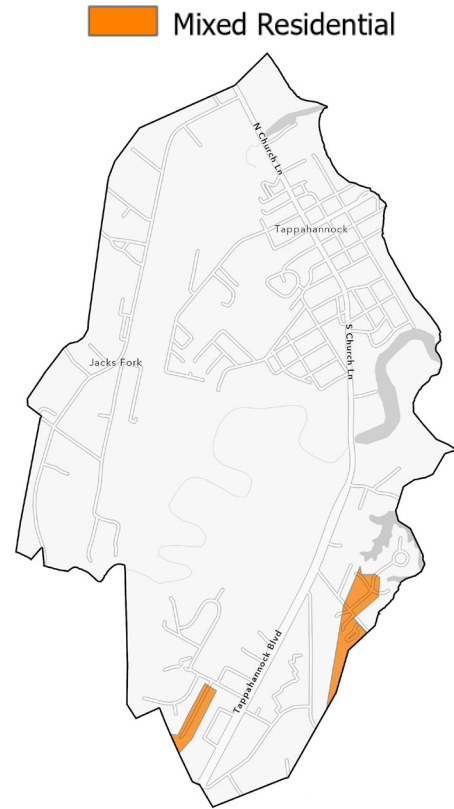


 Residential



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. Development guidelines for this district 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 area.



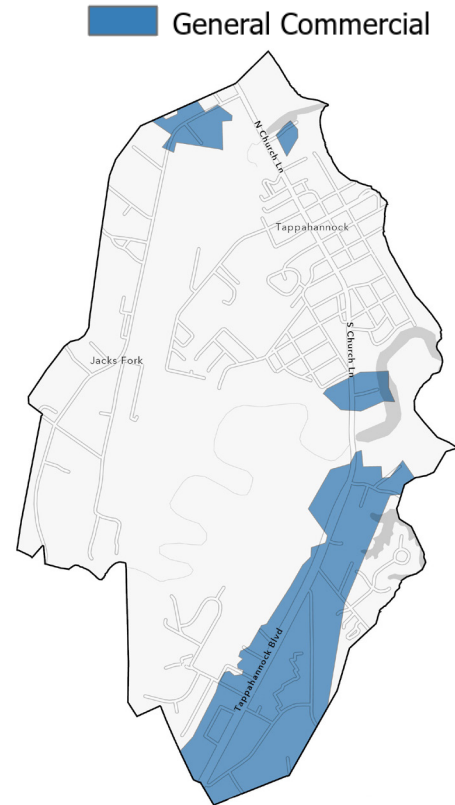
Business Districts

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.

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 continuous commercial corridor along major highway routes. Vacant land in this 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.

Undeveloped areas within the General Commercial District such as the area around Route 698 (Hobbs Hole Drive. /White Oak Drive.) provide an opportunity for significantly improving the quality of commercial development within the Town. 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.

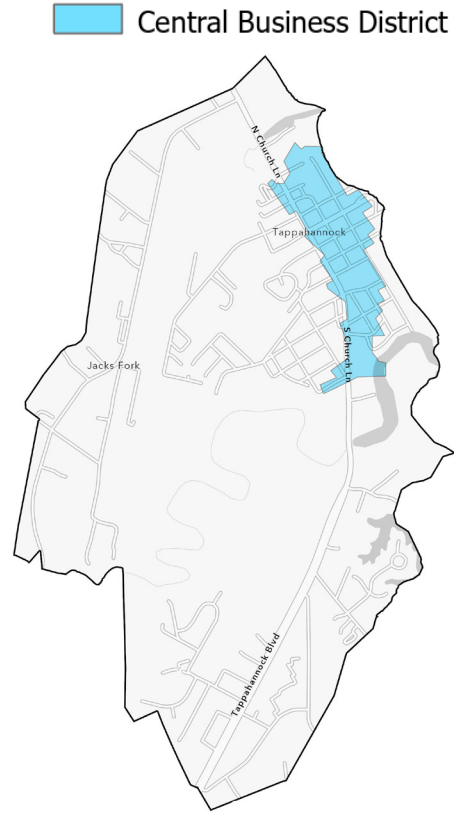


Central Business District

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 an 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 Town and County in the face of changing consumer preferences.

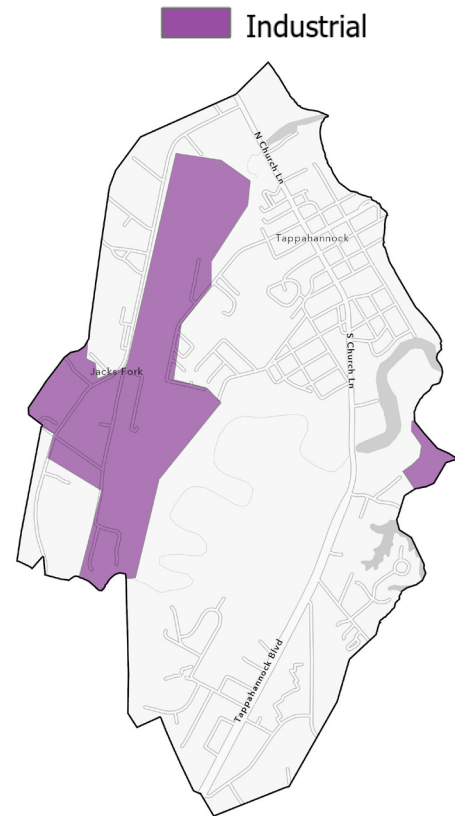


Industrial District

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 former airport site.

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

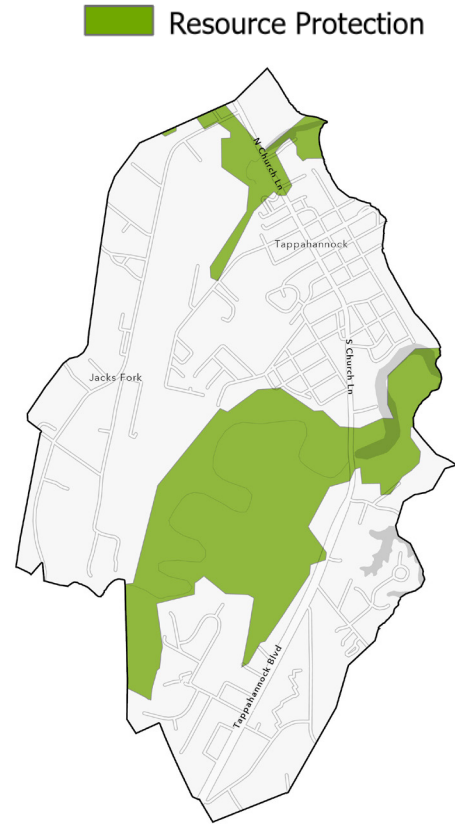
In recognition of the need to continue to provide additional, diverse job opportunities for residents of Tappahannock and Essex County, it is proposed that areas be reserved for development into business and employment clusters or parks. This district is located to the northwest of the existing industrial 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%, 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 intent of the Highway Corridor District 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 the corridor and to provide guidelines to ensure that buffering, landscaping, lighting, signage, and proposed structures are internally consistent and of a quality which contributes to the Town character. Development of parcels 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 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.

Corridors within 500 feet of the right-of-way of the major arterial 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 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.

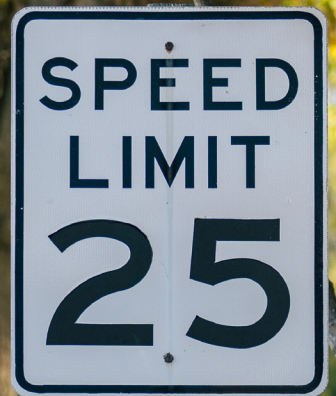
Policies in place that are specific to the Highway Corridor include:

- Buffering requirements to screen unattractive buildings from view and 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 should be located in groups to identify entrances to sites.
- Traffic calming measures should be implemented within the Highway Corridor to make Tappahannock move livable and pedestrian friendly.

Implementation Recommendations

- Require incompatible land uses on 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.
- Require nonresidential developments to provide adequate lighting, landscaping, and buffer yards abutting residential districts and between incompatible uses within the Town for greater aesthetic appeal. Objective analysis of physical conditions should be made to determine that prospective development can be located safely and harmoniously.
- Revise Zoning Ordinance to include language that would establish the Highway Corridor District as a zoning overlay district rather than a concept.
- Acquire the land south of Thomas J. Downing Bridge or other potential waterfront areas in an effort to improve the downtown environment.
- Draft a cost sharing policy that would require developers to contribute to costs incurred by a higher demand as a result of their development.
- Update Zoning Ordinance and other development regulations for consistency with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
- Expand future industrial use along Route 627/Airport Road. Designate and develop former airport property for a light industrial land uses when necessary infrastructure becomes available. Industrial zoning should be designated along a proposed truck by-pass around the Town.
- Require developers to contribute to accommodating increased service demands created for the benefit of the new development.

Chapter 4



Transportation

Goal

Coordinate transportation infrastructure with land uses.

Provide for a safe, efficient multi-modal transportation network that facilitates traffic while reducing congestion and noise on primary streets.

Promote and provide alternative modes of transportation for people and freight.

Objectives

- Reduce through traffic on US 360/17 in Tappahannock by creating alternative routes around the central business district.
- A bypass alignment study should be initiated to examine alternate routes. The Town will cooperate with other agencies to ensure that the new truck bypass, designed by VDOT and any new development that fronts the bypass, is regulated as a controlled access facility. The Town will also work to implement best access management practices on new development.
- Reduce traffic on all roads by utilizing transportation alternative methods other than increased capacity that will increase vehicle occupancy and/or decrease reliance on motor vehicles.
- Improve internal circulation of traffic throughout the Town of Tappahannock.
- Coordinate with VDOT to identify and make recommendations on necessary improvements and expansions to the road network.
- To address the lack of public transportation, the Town will work with the County and other agencies to explore rural transit and other transportation demand management options for Town residents.

Analysis

Although the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has primary responsibility for the public highway system, each locality plays a crucial role as a partner in transportation planning. This holds true because of the locality's ability to identify highway improvement needs which coincide with land use and development policies and regulation in the jurisdiction. Tappahannock's growth along with a general increase in travel throughout the region will mean more traffic on local highways. Thus, transportation has become a growth management issue for the Town and clearly indicates that the Tappahannock transportation system for the year 2030 will require special consideration.

Transportation planning is an essential link to implementation of the Land Use elements of the Comprehensive Plan and one should be considered when outlining goals of the other. Transportation facilitates growth by providing better accessibility and more visibility. The goals and objectives statement contained in this chapter provides general guidance for developing more specific policies and implementation approaches. Background for transportation planning is provided through an assessment of the existing transportation network, of highway capacity, of safety conditions, and of planned improvements and pertinent issues, problems, and opportunities.

Safe and efficient transportation systems for the movement of people and goods remain fundamental to the continued economic growth and development of small urban areas such as Tappahannock. With considerations for certain social and environmental issues, transportation planning for the Town of Tappahannock is an integral part of this comprehensive planning process.

Tappahannock is fortunate to have a navigable waterway and a major river crossing as well. Primary highway transportation routes intersect in the central business district and are a primary contributor to the Town's economic growth.

The Town of Tappahannock is served by the Saluda Residency within the Fredericksburg Construction District of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). VDOT maintains area maintenance facilities within the corporate boundaries of the Town. As the Town does not maintain its own roads, VDOT performs the actual work in addition to regular assignments.

Functional Classification of Highways

The skeletal framework of the Town's highway system is the arterial and collector highways shown on Map 4-1. The map also reveals that the majority of the highway system is composed of local roads and secondary highways primarily functioning to provide access to individual properties. The State's classification is based on the Federal Functional Classification of Highways which further classifies highways as rural or urban based on the proportions of vehicle miles of travel and road mileage. Characteristics of the broad classification of highways are as follows:

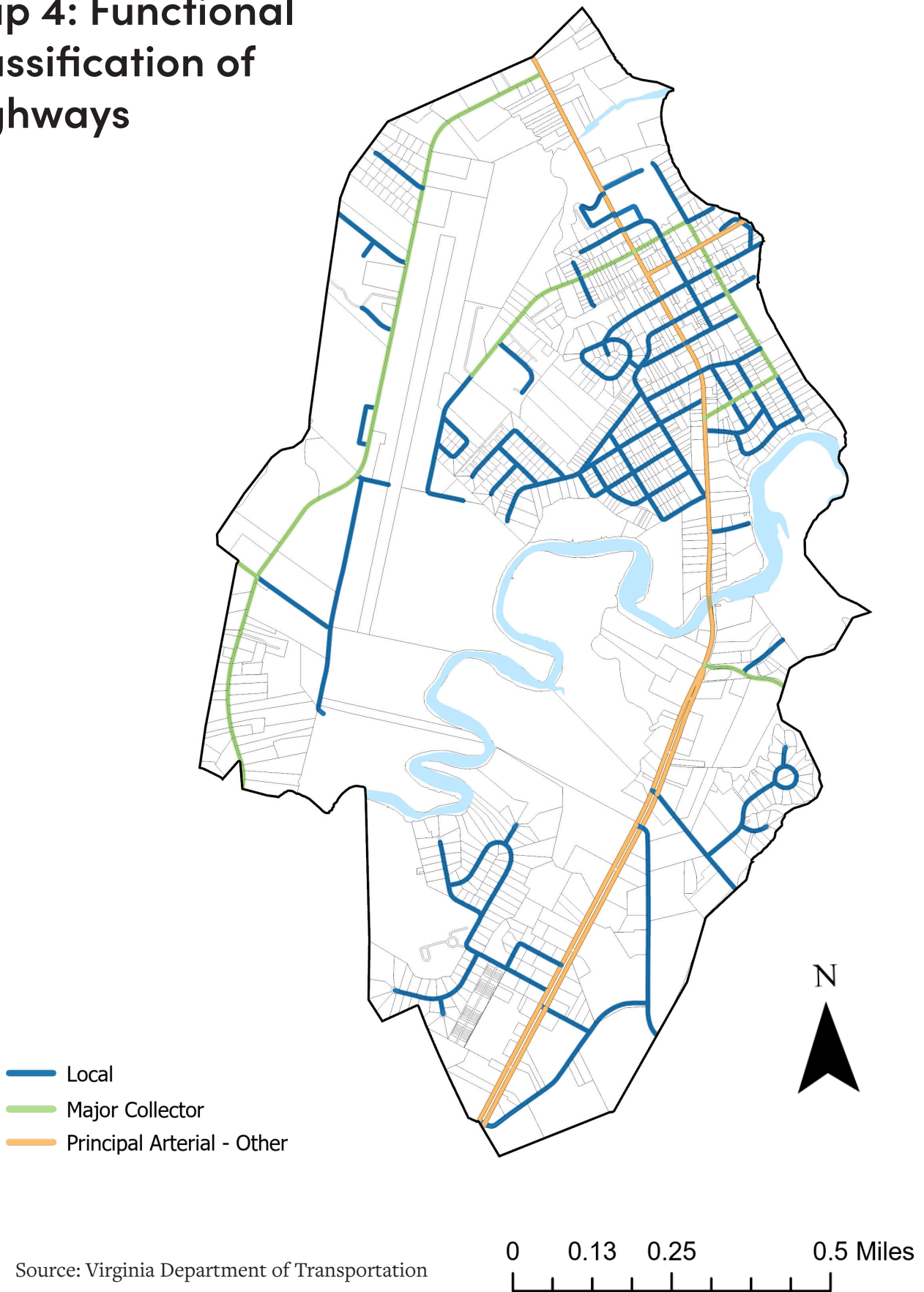
- Principal Arterial: Carries a high volume of traffic for intrastate, inter-county, and inter-city travel.
- Minor Arterial: These roads normally serve the higher classification roads providing access to and from the arterial.
- Major Collector: Serves intra-county and inter-community travel, but at a lower volume, and usually connects to an arterial to provide access to the surrounding land. They may serve community shopping areas, schools, parks, and cluster developments.
- Minor Collector: Serves intra-community travel at a volume below the major collector and provides access to property using lower order roads and sometimes direct access from itself.

Primary Highways

The US 360/17 connection in downtown Tappahannock at Church Lane/Tappahannock Boulevard, provides the only means of arterial access for east/west and north/south through traffic in Essex County. US 360/17 also serves as local traffic access in the central business district and the business corridor area. By performing this dual function without a through traffic relief facility, US 360/17 is often overloaded at peak hours of operation. US 17 is currently functionally classified as a principal arterial and is identified as a Virginia Corridor of Statewide Significance (COSS) by VDOT. US 360/17 serves as a major freight route and provides direct access to major commercial and employment hubs in the North such as Fredericksburg down to the Hampton Roads area in the southeast.

Major collectors in the town include Desha Road, Airport Road, Mount Landing Road, Marsh Street, S. Water Lane, Wright Street, and Richmond Beach Road.

Map 4: Functional Classification of Highways



Traffic Volumes and Trends

According to the US 17/360 Corridor Study (2022), average annual daily traffic (AADT) volumes have remained constant or decreased slightly on the corridor since 2002. A 2020 VDOT publication showed the total average daily traffic (ADT) on US 17 through the Town at 20,000 vehicles per day, slightly less than the traffic count of 23,000 vehicles per day in the 2010 publication. Despite this slight decrease, which may possibly be attributed to changes in travel patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic, these volumes reflect the importance of this route as a major arterial highway serving the town. Table 5 shows ADT Trends of Primary Highways in the Tappahannock area from 2010 to 2020.

Route	From	To	2010	2020	Truck Traffic
1	S. Church Ln. Tappahannock	US 360 (Tappahannock)	23,000	20,000	7%
2	US 360	N. Church Ln. Tappahannock	7,400	6,400	7%
3	Church Ln. Tappahannock	E US 17	23,000	20,000	7%
4	E US 17	Richmond County Line	14,000	12,000	5%

Source: Average Daily Traffic Volumes on Interstate, Arterial and Primary Routes, VDOT, 2010 and 2020 editions.

It is uncertain if the historically flat trend will continue or if the region will experience economic growth, which could fuel traffic volume growth. For planning purposes, the US 17/360 Corridor Study (2022) anticipates that future traffic volume will increase along routes US 17 between Brays Forks and the northern Town limits by 0.5% per year, US 360 by 1% per year, and 0.5% per year for all other intersecting streets.

Capacity Analysis

“Level of service” (LOS) is often used as a measure of system performance in transportation planning analysis and to define public policy concerning highway performance. LOS is also used in traffic impact analysis to determine local traffic impacts of proposed developments. Definitions of level of service differ for intersections and roadway segments, for city streets, and for controlled access highways. The LOS for a roadway should reflect the projected demands of the Land Use Map. Circulation systems are generally adopted within the Transportation Element, and traffic volumes and flows generated from the aggregate of the land uses and densities of the Land Use Map must be supported within that LOS.

Highway traffic congestion is expressed in terms of Level of Service (LOS) as defined by the Virginia Department of Transportation Manual and the Highway Capacity Manual LOS is a letter code ranging from “A” for excellent conditions to “F” for failure conditions. The conditions defining the LOS for roadways are summarized as follows:

- LOS A - Free-flow (FF) operation
- LOS B - Reasonably free-flow, Ability to maneuver is only slightly restricted, Effects of minor incidents still easily absorbed
- LOS C - Speeds at or near FF, Freedom to Maneuver is noticeably restricted, Queues may form

- LOS D - Speeds decline slightly with increasing flows, Density increases more quickly, Freedom to maneuver is more noticeably limited, Minor incidents Create queuing
- LOS E - Operation near or at capacity, any disruption causes queuing, no usable gaps in traffic stream
- LOS F- Breakdown in flow, demand is greater than capacity

US 17 through downtown Tappahannock flows freely with little to no congestion except during peak hours of the day. Outside of peak hours traffic flow is rather reasonable with maneuverability moderately restricted. During peak hours, moderate stacking may occur. Motorists generally reduce speed through downtown due to the narrowing of the roadways and the presence of heavy semi-truck traffic. As traffic maneuvers through downtown, vehicle speeds are consistent with posted rate and little to no stacking occurs.

According to the 2022 the US 17/360 Corridor Study (2022), the issues regarding free flow of traffic on US 17 are primarily due to access spacing rather than congestion. The only location with congestion issues in the US 17/360 study corridor is the intersection of Queen Street and US 17 (Church Lane). Aside from this intersection, most of the US 17/360 corridor does not experience significant congestion (i.e., none of the other intersections operate at LOS E or D overall) during the peak hours. Similarly, forecasts for 2040 reveal significant congestion issues only at the intersection of Queen Street and US 17 (Church Lane). Minor delays are expected for a number of left turn and side street movements and some queues are expected to extend beyond the provided storage areas, but largely the study area intersections are expected to operate well in 2040.

Safety

According to the US 17/360 Corridor Study (2022), 377 crashes occurred along the study corridor from December 2015 to November 2020. About one-third of crashes resulted in injury. There were no crashes resulting in a fatality in the 5-year analysis period. Of the 377 crashes, 8 resulted in suspected serious injury, 129 resulted in suspected minor injury or possible injury, and 240 resulted in property damage only. Over 50% of crashes occurred in the midday period, from 10 am to 4 pm. The P.M. peak (4 pm – 7 pm) and the A.M. peak (7 am to 10 am) were the other two highest crash times during the day.

The study identifies five intersections for potential safety improvements (PSI). These locations are noted below.

- Rt. 17 (Church Lane) at US 360 (Queen Street) (42 crashes); ranked as the top intersection for potential for safety improvement in the corridor and as a ‘very high’ priority need from VTrans
- Rt. 17/360 (Tappahannock Blvd) at Ball Street (32 crashes); second highest PSI for the corridor
- Rt. 17/360 (Church Lane) at Duke Street (24 crashes)
- Rt. 17/360 (Tappahannock Blvd) at Winston Road (15 crashes)
- US 360 (Queen Street) at Cross Street (14 crashes)

There are concerns that the Hurricane Evacuation Route that follows US 17 through Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock will not provide a safe route for people to escape an oncoming natural disaster. There are areas along this route that are known to flood in strong storms, such as Tickner’s Creek by June Parker Marina. Several roadway segments have been identified as vulnerable under the VTrans Flooding Risk Assessment. If flooding were to occur during an evacuation, the traffic directed up this highway would have to be rerouted along secondary roadways. There are concerns that secondary roads do not have the traffic volume capacity to handle a hurricane evacuation, and the safety personnel in the area would be overwhelmed. US 17 has been designated as a “Hurricane Evacuation Route” for not only the residents of the Middle Peninsula Region, but some of the Hampton Roads area as well.

Transportation Demand Management

Mass Transit

Bay Transit operates “The Rivah Ride” – a deviated fixed-route service in the Town of Tappahannock. The route runs every hour on a set schedule, but with an advanced reservation, the bus can deviate up to 0.75 miles off of the route.

The Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission administers a Rideshare program which is available to Tappahannock residents. Implemented through the Department of Rail and Public Transit’s Transportation Demand Management Plan, the program works to reduce transportation demand needs by offering carpool and vanpool match services to Tappahannock residents and residents of other localities in the Middle Peninsula.

Park & Ride

Currently, there are no official Park & Ride locations in Tappahannock. The nearest locations are the Loretto Lot in Essex County and the Route 360 Lot in King William County.

A proposed park and ride location is a VDOT lot located on US 17 (Tidewater Trail) at US 360 across from Hospital Road. The lot is paved and is used for staging of VDOT vehicles. It is an ideal location for commuters taking US 360 into the Richmond area or US 17 to Fredericksburg.



Rail Transportation

No direct access to rail service is available for the Town of Tappahannock. The nearest rail services are those offered in Richmond and Fredericksburg. No proposed extension of rail service to Tappahannock is being considered.

Air Transportation

The airport facilities have been relocated five miles west of Tappahannock. The airport opened to the public in 2007 and consists of approximately 421 acres and is developed with public infrastructure such as water and sewer services and broadband services are available. The runway is approved for planes up to 30,000 pounds. Plans for redevelopment of the former Tappahannock airport location are underway.

There is a heliport located at VCU Health Tappahannock Hospital in Essex County which services the medical facility.

Water Transportation

Waterways in Tappahannock are navigable; however, commercial use of the waterways is limited due to lack of access and facilities. Commercial transport to Newport News from Tappahannock is limited to some light barge activity, although potential exists for the expanded use of this waterway for transport. Presently, water navigation on the Rappahannock is predominantly private pleasure craft. Public ramps are maintained at Dock and Prince Streets, however, the Prince Street ramp is limited to non-motorized boats. The Town is currently exploring funding opportunities for a waterfront park that would allow water access and other opportunities. As a member of the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority (PAA), the Town should work closely with the PAA to seek opportunities to develop additional access to water.

Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan

Sidewalk maintenance and improvements are a primary concern among officials and residents in Town and throughout the Middle Peninsula. Pedestrian access in Tappahannock is marred by the location and condition of the sidewalks. Sidewalks are located directly adjacent to the US 360/17 roadway, and given the high traffic volumes on the facility, create an unsafe condition for pedestrians. Most of the sidewalks are found in the area of Town between Queen Street and Hoskins Creek. Safer access is needed to connect pedestrians to destinations in other parts of Town such as schools, the library, recreational facilities, and shopping. While many of the sidewalks are in poor condition, most intersections do provide curb cut ramps for persons with physical disabilities. Many of the side streets do not have sidewalks, or if they do, they too are directly adjacent to the roadway. Although modern pedestrian crossway signalization has been installed at the intersection of US 360/17 and Route T-1005, Prince Street, much could be done to improve access for foot traffic. Additionally, signalization and cross walks are needed at several intersections. Few well-marked crosswalks exist in Tappahannock.

Bicycle facilities such as paved bicycle lanes and signage along cycle friendly routes are not available in the Town. Heavy traffic and difficulty in providing adequate improvements to existing major thoroughfare presents safety concerns for cyclists along major roadways in Town. Cyclists are encouraged to use less traveled routes in Town.

Documented pedestrian and bicycle improvement needs include:

- Improvements along US 17/360 with specific sidewalk, crosswalk, and multi-use path projects recommended for White Oak Drive to Teakwood Drive and Teakwood Drive to Richmond Beach Road. (2022 US 17/360 Corridor Study)
- Improvements to existing pedestrian sidewalks and footpaths in the Church Lane/Queen Street intersection, specifically one that connects the corner of Queen St West and Church Lane North to the library. (2014 Comprehensive Plan)
- Pedestrian stoplights and a crosswalk at the corner of Church Lane North and Queen Street East, at the corner of Church Lane South and Queen Street East, and at the corner of Queen Street West and Church Lane North providing safe, suitable facilities to accommodate the heavy pedestrian traffic. (2014 Comprehensive Plan)
- Pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Tappahannock Boulevard, Airport Road, Desha Road, and along Queen Street east of Church Lane. These locations are ideal for pedestrian and bicycle facilities due to their connectivity to higher density residential neighborhoods and public facilities such as schools and parks. While these roads are identified in the Middle Peninsula Regional Bicycle Plan, most are not adequate to serve bicycle traffic. Roadway widths need to be increased to accommodate multiple users of the roadway. Signage should also be provided along designated bike routes. (2014 Comprehensive Plan)
- The Town should also designate local routes which will pull separate bicycle traffic from more heavily traveled roads. At the Town's suggestion, MPPDC staff will seek grant funds for a comprehensive study of sidewalk and bicycle improvements. (2014 Comprehensive Plan)

Recommended Improvements

VTrans is the state’s multimodal surface transportation plan, developed by the Commonwealth Transportation Board in partnership with the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIP). The plan identifies mid-term needs, long-term risks and opportunities, and strategic actions to advance multimodal transportation in the state. VDOT allocates funds to projects based on how they align with the goals of the VTrans Plan. The Town’s identified VTrans needs are identified in the table below.

Table 6. Tappahannock November 2021 Mid-term VTrans Needs		
Number	Location	Need
1	N. Church Ln. (Southbound)	Capacity Preservation, Transportation Demand Management
2	S. Church Ln. (Southbound)	Capacity preservation, Transportation Demand Management Road Segment Safety Improvement Intersection Safety Improvement Capacity
3	S. Church Ln. (Southbound)	Capacity Preservation Transportation Demand Management
4	Marsh St. and N. Church Ln.	Intersection Safety Improvement
5	Queen St. and S. Church Ln.	Intersection Safety Improvement
6	Queen St. and Cross St.	Intersection Safety Improvement
7	Queen St. (Eastbound and Westbound)	Road Segment Safety Improvement
8	Prince St. and S. Church Ln.	Intersection Safety Improvement
9	Duke St. and S. Church Ln.	Intersection Safety Improvement
10	Virginia St. and S. Church Ln.	Intersection Safety Improvement
11	Tappahannock Blvd. (South and Northbound)	Capacity Preservation Transportation Demand Management
12	Tappahannock Blvd. (Northbound)	Capacity preservation, Transportation Demand Management Road Segment Safety Improvement Intersection Safety Improvement Capacity
13	Richmond Beach St. and Tappahannock Blvd.	Intersection Safety Improvement
14	Winston Rd. and Tappahannock Blvd.	Intersection Safety Improvement
15	Ball St. and Tappahannock Blvd.	Intersection Safety Improvement
16	Desha Rd. (Northbound)	Road Segment Safety Improvement

2040 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan

The following table lists highlights of the 2040 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan update produced in 2020 and included in this 2023 Comprehensive Plan update; previous recommendations not listed here were either addressed or found that additional study was not required. The report may be found at www.mppdc.com.

The RL RTP recommendations also include construction of a roughly three mile “Tappahannock Bypass” from the intersection of US 17 and US 360 south of Tappahannock to US 17 north of Tappahannock. This bypass would allow vehicles using US 17 as a long-distance connecting route to bypass the Town of Tappahannock, thus reducing congestion on the current US 17 segment through Tappahannock. The bypass is proposed to originate at Rt. 360 and 715 south of Town and terminate at Rt. 17 north of the Town Limits. The alignment proposes to utilize the existing bridge channeling through traffic around the central business district and industrial park, providing much needed access between the four corners of the Town. There are several challenges associated with the construction of a bypass, which include the potential impact of hazmat-related incidents from the industrial park on congestion and safety, identifying and mitigating all construction impacts on wetlands, and high costs due to the need to adhere to additional regulations outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act.

Table 7. 2040 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan Update Projects (Identified by Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission)		
Location	Need	Recommended Improvement
US 360 (Church Lane)/ Rt. 103 (Duke Street) (2020 LRTP)	Safety: Stop bar missing on both approaches of Duke Street and vehicle to vehicle conflicts	Install a stop bar on both approaches of SR-1003 (Duke Street). Eliminate left turns from SR-1003 (Duke Street). Construct a median to eliminate crossing and left turn maneuvers along US 360 (Church Street). Close, consolidate, and/or relocate driveways in this intersection.
Rt. 17/US 360 Tappahannock Bypass (2020 LRTP)	Congestion and Safety: Segment experiences the highest AADT of the Town and contains several intersections identified for safety improvements.	Construct Tappahannock Bypass from the intersection of Rt. 17 and US 360 south of Tappahannock to Rt. 17 north of Tappahannock, recommended to be 4 lanes wide with a median and approximately 3 miles long.
Rt. 17 (Church Lane) and Rt. 1036 (Ball Street) (2012 LRTP)	Safety: high potential for rear-end and left turn accidents.	A study of this corridor should be commissioned to explore safety solutions for this intersection.
Rt. 17 (Church Lane) and Rt. 1003 (Duke Street) (2012 LRTP)	The number of crashes at this location exceeds the planning threshold.	Continue to monitor this intersection for potential improvements.
Rt. 17 (Church Lane) and Rt. 657 (Marsh Street) (2012 LRTP)	Safety and Congestion	Install turn lanes as needed to increase safety and capacity.

Six-Year Improvement Plan (SYIP)

Proposed transportation improvements are prioritized and considered for inclusion VDOT's Six Year Improvement Plan (SYIP). The Town currently has no projects listed on the Fiscal Year 2023 SYIP.

US 17/360 Corridor Study Improvements

In May 2022, VDOT completed a study of the Route 17 and Route 360 corridor in the Town of Tappahannock from Airport Road to LaGrange Industrial Drive. This study examined safety issues for motorists, pedestrians, and other travel modes like bicyclists and bus riders, and traffic congestion and access spacing issues. The study recommended the following nine projects to address these issues and provides conceptual designs, planning-level cost estimates, schedule estimates, and potential funding sources for each:

1. Downtown Tappahannock: Short-Term Improvements and Commerce Drive Connection
2. South of Hoskins Creek: White Oak Drive to Teakwood Drive: Sidewalks and Crosswalks
3. South of Hoskins Creek: Teakwood Drive to Richmond Beach Road: Sidewalks and Crosswalks
4. South of Hoskins Creek: White Oak Drive to Teakwood Drive: RCUTs and Access Modifications
5. South of Hoskins Creek: Teakwood Drive to Richmond Beach Road: RCUTs and Access Modifications
6. Brays Fork: Roundabout - Preferred
7. Brays Fork: Continuous Green-T
8. South of Hoskins Creek: White Oak Drive to Teakwood Drive: Multi-use Path
9. South of Hoskins Creek: Teakwood Drive to Richmond Beach Road: Multi-use Path

The study recommends that the Town and Essex County work together to further vet the proposed projects, identify priorities at the local level, and apply for funding. As appropriate, the projects should be incorporated into the Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan and prioritized by resolution of support by the local governing body.

Proposed Transportation Projects

Sidewalk and Bikeway Enhancements

It is recommended that this study be combined with other identified studies in the project list into a comprehensive transportation study of the Town.

The Town should undertake enhancements from the US 17/360 Corridor Study (2022) and the Downtown Revitalization Master Plan (completed and presented to Town Council in May 2023) as the priorities for investments in sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure.

Commerce Drive Connection (Marsh Street & Airport Road Connector)

Connect a road across the former airport facility to allow better access and circulation to areas of Town. This project was recommended in the US 17/360 Corridor Study (2022) and would relieve some of the congestion at US 17 and Marsh Road intersection by allowing motorists an alternative. The discussion focused on a connector across the airport runway that would be open to emergency vehicle access only, rather than general traffic. The extension of Route 700 appears to provide the best opportunity for this connection. If the road is not to be available for travel by the general public, VDOT program funding could not be applied to its improvement.

Implementation Recommendations

The Transportation Plan identifies both needs and planned improvements to create a transportation network that is consistent with the objectives and implementation of the Land Use Plan. The transportation plan cannot succeed without proper support and leadership from Town government. The following implementation strategies establish the policy framework from which the Town will create and maintain a functioning transportation system within the context of planned growth in the Town.

- To improve the current transportation planning process, the State and Town should work closely together to evaluate the transportation system implications of the Town's new comprehensive plan; elected officials should be major participants in this process; and coordinated State and Town transportation management policy should recognize the need to expand upon the current level of commuter ride sharing in order to reduce single-occupant vehicles.
- Integrating housing into overall design of large-scale employment centers will help reduce the need to travel. Encourage land development that integrates housing into the design of large-scale development. Locate residential adjacent to the employment centers to reduce transportation by creating opportunities for workers to walk or bike to work. Encourage land use patterns within the community that provide multimodal access to open space, public facilities, employment, schools, and other recreational and commercial activities while reducing vehicles dependency. Facilities such as bike racks, sidewalks, trails, and bike paths should be encouraged to support alternative modes of transportation.
- Require a traffic impact analysis of all major new projects as part of the Zoning and/or development review process to determine if post-development traffic levels and patterns will be consistent with the Town's Transportation Plan and highway policies. Minimum standards of the analysis should include techniques used to minimize potential safety and congestion problems.
- Coordinate with VDOT to ensure that controlled access management techniques are considered in managing access to principal corridor roadways. An access management plan should be supported by appropriate ordinances to ensure that access is not unnecessarily provided along key road links or near major intersections, particularly along the designated Highway Corridor District.

- Highway Corridor Overlay Zoning - Overlay zoning brings to an area additional requirements and standards above those of the underlying zone. Special transportation related improvements in the Highway Corridor District shown on the Land Use Concept Plan should include access controls and transportation impact analysis for high-volume uses.
- Preserve rights-of-way for road improvements consistent with the Transportation Plan Map and the State capital improvement programming.
- Cooperate and coordinate with transportation agencies and service providers to develop adequate fixed route service to Town residents.
- Encourage innovative mechanisms for addressing transportation issues, including private cooperation, and financial support by developers and the business community. Provide incentives to larger employers that reduce the number of employees who drive to work and/or encourage carpooling and ridesharing.
- Transportation management strategies selected by employers generally provide employees with incentives either to use alternative commute modes or to commute during non-peak hours. These include:
 - instituting flexible or staggered work hours or telework opportunities;
 - facilitating car pool and van pool formation;
 - setting aside preferred parking locations for car pools and van pools by providing Park & Ride in Town Limits;
 - providing company-chartered commuter bus service;
 - charging employees for parking;
 - building on-site bicycle paths and safe storage areas; and
 - providing transit passes or other forms of transit subsidy.

Not all businesses will immediately understand how they can benefit from trip reduction. Educating the private sector is an important part of developing and selling the concept of transportation systems management.

Existing and future land use patterns and activity centers would be used in the determination of trip origins and destinations and future improvement needs to better accommodate bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicle traffic would be identified, with cost estimates and service level analysis provided. The study should identify potential funding sources for the improvements and recommend priority projects for implementation. An active public outreach program should be incorporated into the planning process. It is recommended that the plan include a transit component to determine the role public transportation can be expected to have in meeting total transportation demand.

Chapter 5



Environmental Protection

Goal

Provide protection for the environment including but not limited to protecting wetlands and other natural resources from erosion and ensuring that shoreline structures are maintained and erosion is minimized.

Objectives

- Promote the use of Water Conservation Measures among Town residents and businesses.
- Maintain and protect the extensive wetlands in and around Tappahannock for open space.
- Protect the non-hardened shoreline from erosion through available laws and regulations.
- Minimize adverse impacts of gas or oil drilling and development activities on public health, safety, welfare, the character of the County's communities, the environment, and the Chesapeake Bay.

Analysis

Tappahannock's growth has been managed with consideration to the sensitive natural environment in which it was developed. The Town's environmental resources contribute to its uniqueness in that it provides both a small urban town and a naturally beautiful scene within a small land area. Though the higher density developments of Essex County are concentrated in the Town, environmental protection is an equal goal of the Town and the County. Water quality, erosion and sedimentation are issues addressed at the federal, state, and local levels and will require constant monitoring as growth and development continues.

Soils

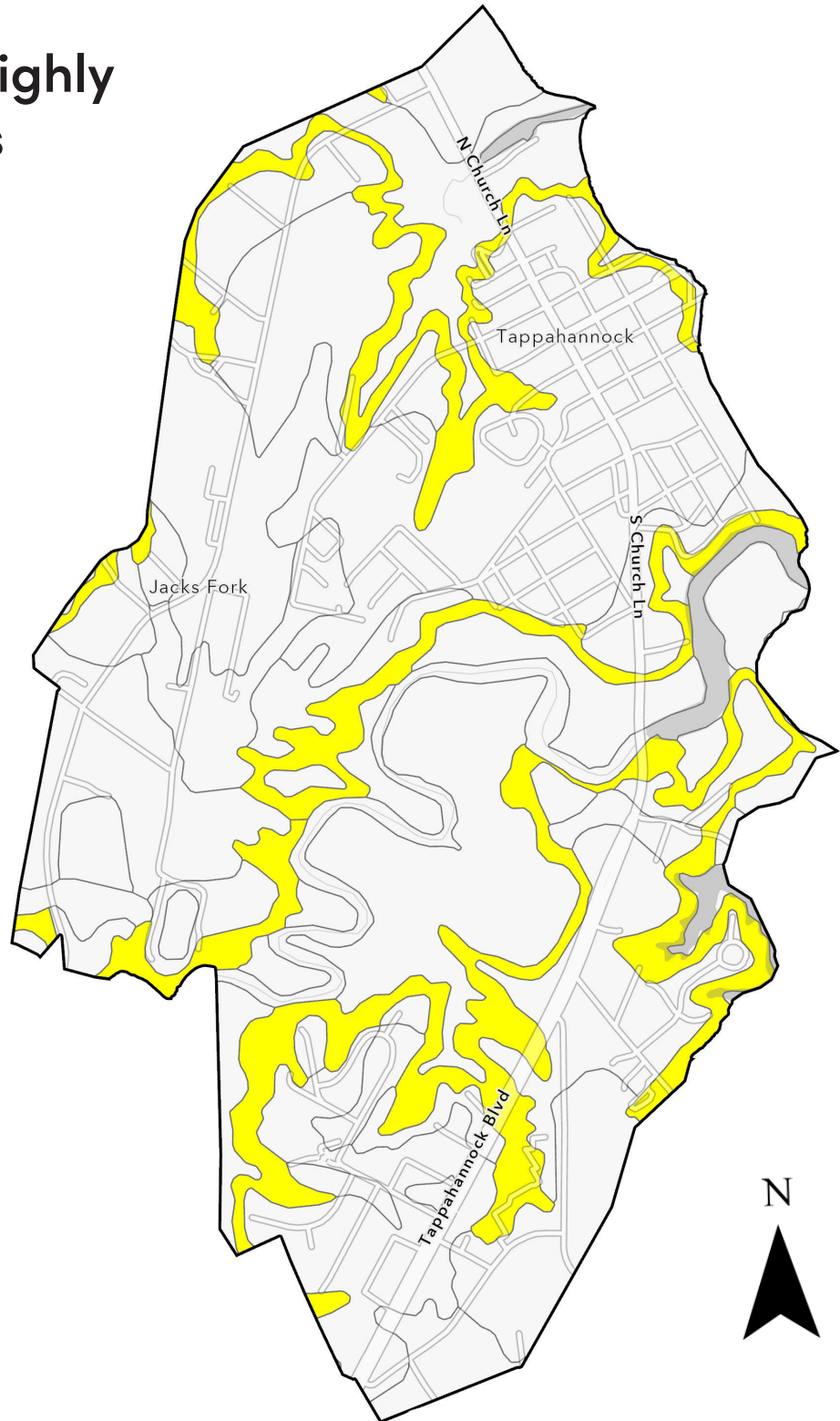
Tappahannock is situated mainly on soils of the Tetotum-Tomotley-State Association. This soil association occurs typically at lower elevations of Essex County, on the river terrace paralleling the Rappahannock River. Soil conditions are a major determinant of future development, as soil characteristics affect excavating, road building, the design and construction of buildings and foundations, and the location of sanitary facilities. A fluctuating high water table, characteristic of the Tetotum-Tomotley-State Association, is the major limiting factor of these soils for development. The availability of central sanitary facilities in the Town allows for development in all but the wettest (Tomotley) soils of this association. Subsurface drainage and proper surface water drainage may eliminate problems associated with the Tomotley soils.

Highly Erodible Soils

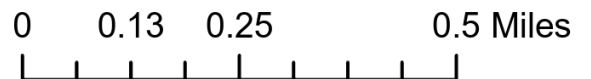
Highly erodible soils are those soils which have a high potential for erosion and sedimentation. This potential is often related to steepness and length of slope. Both of these factors act to increase precipitation runoff velocity which in turn serves to loosen and remove certain soil particles. The extent to which soil particles are moved or the soils “erodibility factor” varies depending on soil texture, infiltration rate, permeability, and other factors. The general locations of soils which are highly erodible in Tappahannock are identified on Map 5. Approximately 15% of the land area within the Town is characterized by the presence of highly erodible soils. Most of these soils are in scattered locations with few areas of concentration in the community. These soils are less frequently present along the Town’s Rappahannock shorefront but are more often located near Hoskins Creek and inland stream systems.

Tappahannock is designated a Resource Management Area (RMA) per the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. Please see page 77 for more information about RMAs. The Town regulates development of sites characterized by the co-occurrence of both highly erodible soils to reduce sedimentation to streams and transport of contaminants which are often attached to soil particles. When development occurs in such locations, plans required for sediment and erosion control should be carefully reviewed and Best Management Practices (BMP’s) are required and reviewed in an effort to minimize soil erosion. Additional BMP’s should also be considered as may be recommended by the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department.

Map 5: Location of Highly Erodible Soils



Source: Natural Resources Conservation
Service Soil Surveys

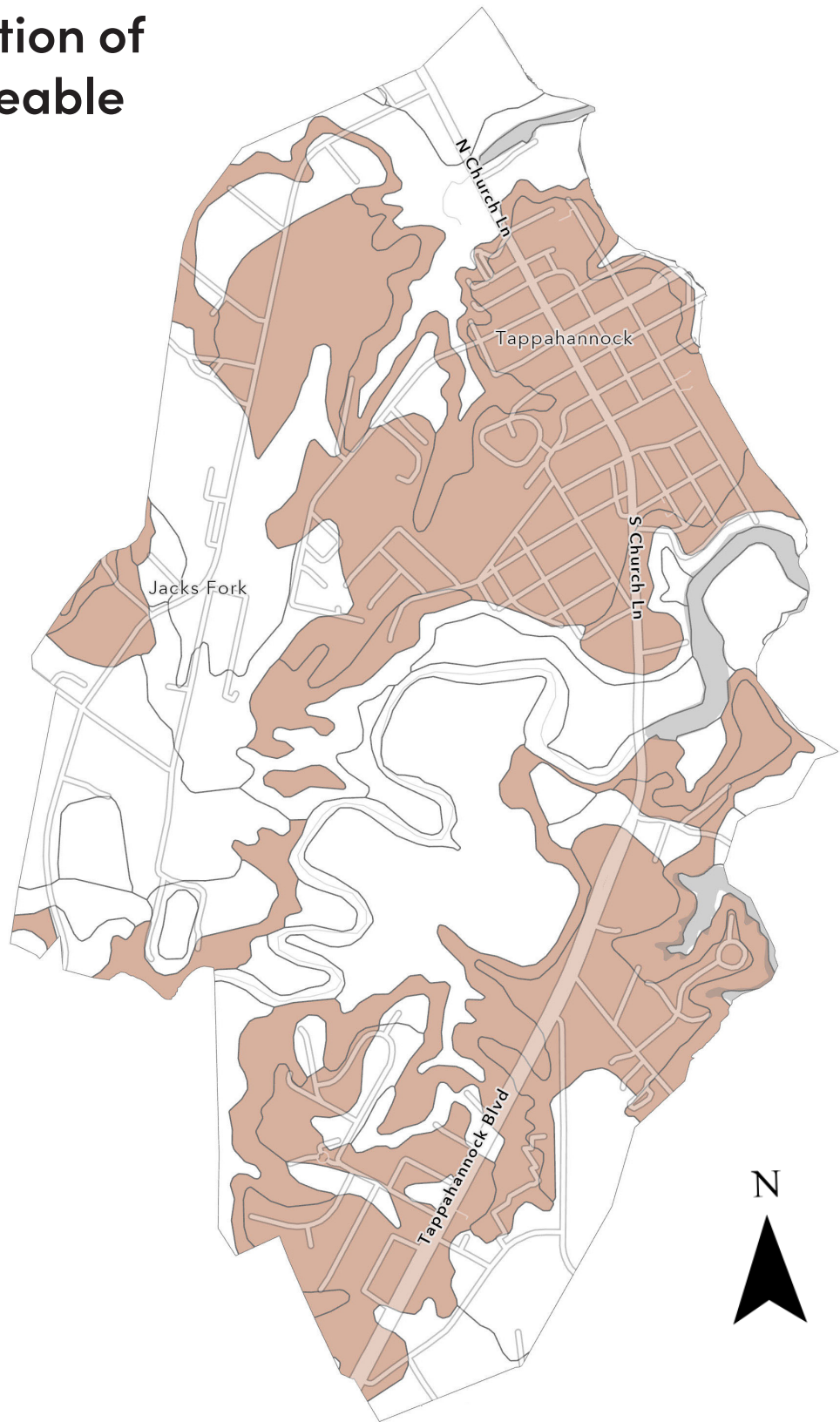


Highly Permeable Soils

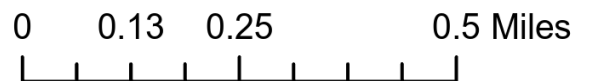
Highly permeable soils transmit water at such a rate that there is a potential for surface pollutants such as nutrient and other chemicals and sewage wastes to infiltrate, undegraded, into nearby surface water and groundwater systems. Highly permeable soils are those which can be characterized as having permeability equal to or greater than six inches of water movement per hour in any part of the soil profile to a depth of 72 inches. Map 6, prepared by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, identifies the general location and extent of highly permeable soils within the Town of Tappahannock. These soils are concentrated in a number of locations which are already developed in the Town, including the Central Business District and adjacent residential neighborhoods, as well as substantial portions of the southern portion of the Town, where a number of highway oriented commercial uses have developed over time. Highly permeable soils occupy an estimated 50% of the Town land area.

Highly permeable soils are highly susceptible to pollutant leaching, and thus have a greater potential for groundwater pollution as well as pollution of surface waters. Soil permeability is particularly important in relation to design of soil drainage systems. Shallow groundwater resources or surface aquifers are also a source of water for streams in the Town which flow into Hoskins Creek, the Rappahannock, and the Chesapeake Bay. The cumulative effects of chemical pollutants leaching into groundwater resources over time can increase the potential for water resource pollution.

Map 6: Location of Highly Permeable Soils



Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Surveys

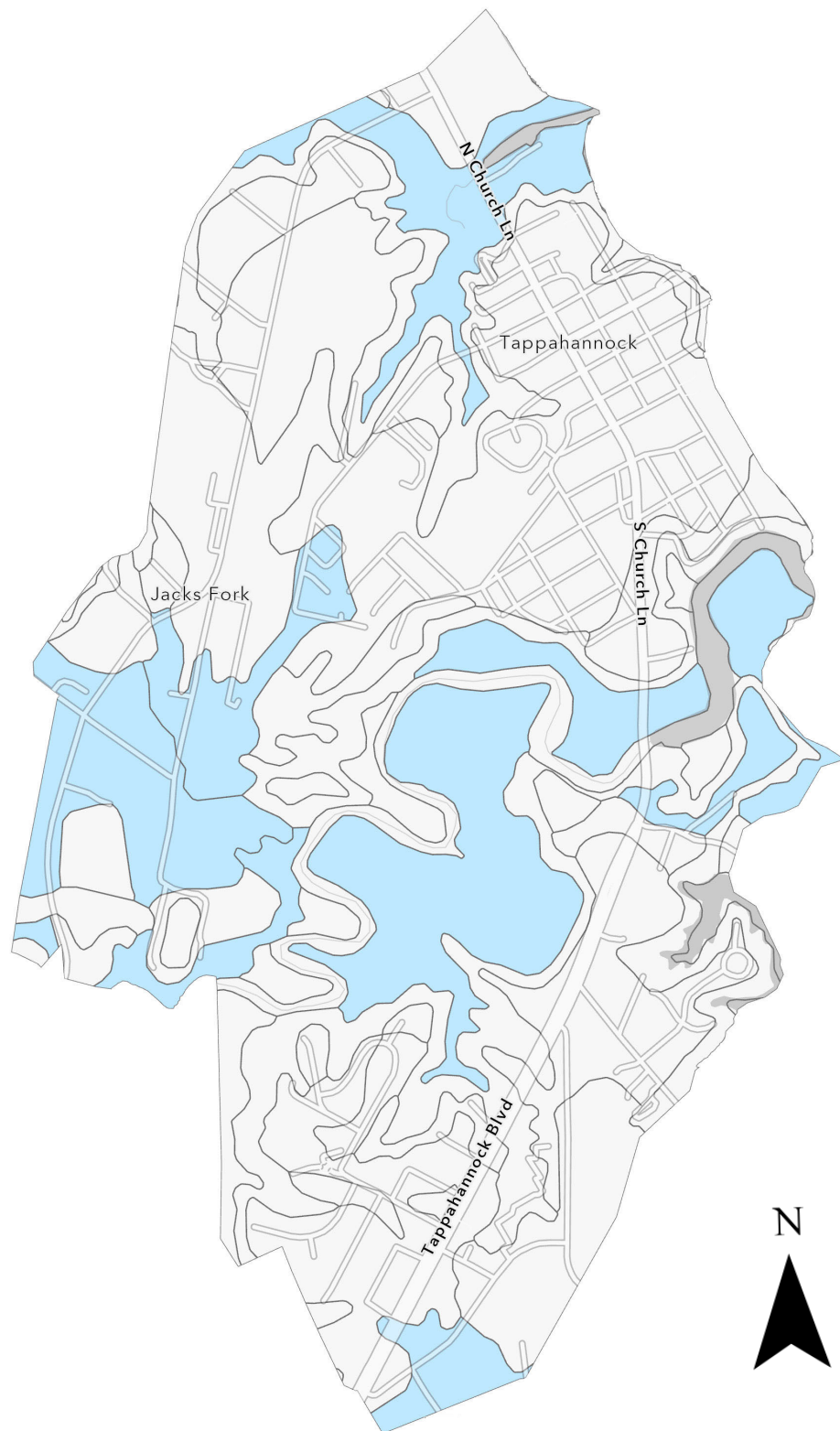


Hydric Soils

Soils are considered hydric if they are saturated, flooded, or ponded long enough to develop anaerobic (no oxygen) conditions in their upper layers. Chemical changes which result from prolonged saturation (at least one week during the growing season) are reflected in the soil color, composition, and in some cases, its smell. Map 7, prepared by the MPPDC with the use of the Essex County Soil Survey, identifies the location of hydric soils in Tappahannock. Hydric soils are located in proximity to stream systems adjacent to Hoskins Creek and Tickner's Creek and along the west central edge of the Town.

Because the identification of hydric soils provided in the soil survey includes soils that are either drained or undrained, not all hydric soils are wetlands although in many cases they provide an indication of the possible presence of non-tidal wetlands. Determination of the presence of wetlands ultimately requires field verification. Any development proposal on lands identified as hydric soils should be required to verify the location of non-tidal wetlands to assure such areas are not impacted by development disturbances.

Map 7: Location of Hydric Soils



Source: Natural Resources Conservation
Service Soil Surveys



Shorelines

Shorelines are a limited resource and, for the most part, are nonrenewable. Shoreline erosion control has been the responsibility of private property owners, the Town provides application review to ensure compliance with State and Federal regulations and/or grant funding opportunities. It is desirable to preserve beaches for their beauty and recreational function and for protection of the marshland. The entire Rappahannock shoreline in Tappahannock has been artificially stabilized, contributing to further erosion downstream. This is a temporary, ineffective means of beach protection. In order to reestablish or maintain existing beaches, the only course of action currently available is a program of beach nourishment and structures specifically designed to trap moving sand at particular sites.

Recreational and Commercial Fisheries

The Rappahannock River, which flows adjacent to the Town of Tappahannock, serves each year as a spawning ground to millions of shad, herring, and yellow perch during the months of April and May. Below the fall line at Fredericksburg, the river broadens into a tidal estuary where fish, oysters, and crabs are abundant. Fish such as shad, rock fish, and catfish support recreational fishing activities in tributaries of the Rappahannock and in particular larger creeks such as the Piscataway near Tappahannock.

Water

Water activities, which serve as major attractions to tourists as well as present and potential residents of the area, are dependent upon high standards of water quality. Runoff from ground areas, sewage treatment discharge, and construction activity along the shoreline all affect water quality. Tappahannock residents take pride in the beautiful Rappahannock and support its preservation.

Adequate groundwater supply for present and future residential, commercial, and industrial uses exists in the upper artesian and principal artesian aquifer systems. The upper artesian aquifer system is 150 to 200 feet below surface, consistently, and is a good source of domestic water supply. Currently, water of good quality is being tapped from this system for individual use around Tappahannock. Tappahannock's central water system is drawn from the principal aquifer at depths greater than 200 feet. Though it is costly to bring to the surface, this aquifer has potential for unlimited use of good quality water.

Given the population served by the Town's municipal water supply facilities and expected growth in the Town, it is the policy of the Town that potential sources and effects of pollution on the Town's water supply be investigated. Sources may include storm water runoff, leaking petroleum storage tanks, abandoned wells, former refuse sites, and on-site sewage deficiencies. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) currently monitors above and below ground petroleum storage tanks in the Town of Tappahannock. The Town has promoted research, education, and action for the management, conservation, and protection of the Middle Peninsula's water resources.

The Local and Regional Water Supply Planning regulation (9VAC25-780) requires all localities in Virginia to submit a water supply plan (Plan), either individually, or as part of a regional planning unit. Plans include key information on what water sources a locality uses and how much water they currently use. The Town of Tappahannock has remained in compliance with this mandate.

Water and sewer service is available town wide. Several on-site systems remain within the Town. At such time when these systems require repair, it is the policy of the Town to investigate the cost of public service hook up. The Town desires to have 100% Town-wide public water and sewer hookup.

The Town is sensitive to the role water conservation plays in the community. As of this 2023 update, the Town has supplied meters for irrigation and has upgraded to new smart water meters that will improve detection of water loss from leaks. Groundwater protection and conservation is an incremental process. Community leadership will be responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing the conservation activities. Following on the recommendation to inform the general public about contamination and threats to water resources, the Town will look towards the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission's Water Resource Program to provide guidance to the Town.

Protection of Potable Water Supplies

The Town of Tappahannock provides the only municipal water supply system in Essex County. Given the large concentration of residents and businesses which are dependent on Municipal water supply facilities and expected growth around the Town of Tappahannock, the potential effect of pollution sources on the Town water supply should be investigated in cooperation with the County. Such sources include abandoned wells, former dump sites, underground storage tanks, urban run-off and any activities that directly or indirectly affect the Town's water supply.

Site planning practices assure that proposed developments are designed to preserve as much of the original site vegetative cover as possible. Vegetative buffers along streams can do much to minimize the impact of development disturbances to wetlands, floodplains, and other sensitive areas. Although there is presently no indication of stream bank erosion along Tickner's Creek and Hoskins Creek, protection of streamside forest cover along both these water bodies and their tributary streams should remain a priority to minimize the erosion and sedimentation impacts of future development disturbances in the Town on both bodies of water. Conserving vegetation, particularly trees along streams and other natural waterways can minimize the impacts of stream bank erosion and stormwater on groundwater supplies and tidal waters.

Measures for streamside buffering include requiring protection of streamside (riparian) forest cover where it exists and encouraging re-establishment of forest cover or forestation where it does not presently exist along streams when development is proposed on sites adjacent to stream corridors.

Development Constraints Analysis

The presence of sensitive environmental features on lands within the Town of Tappahannock clearly influences the development pattern of the community. Certain natural features or environmental resources (notably floodplains, wetlands, hydric soils, and steep slopes) pose limitations for development. The following discussion is provided to establish some understanding of which lands in the Town contain sensitive environmental features which may limit development. A series of maps, prepared by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission identify their general location in the Town.

Air Quality

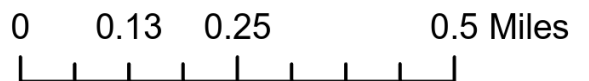
In 1990, Congress passed and the President signed into law amendments to the Federal Clean Air Act. These amendments require cleanup of polluted areas in accordance with a specific schedule, tighten emissions standards and grant federal agencies greater powers to enforce the Act's requirements. Those portions of the Act having the most direct impact on Essex County and the Town are those relating to ozone pollution. Ozone is formed by chemical reactions in the atmosphere when hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides emitted by motor vehicles, industries and power plants combine in sunlight. Ozone at ground level is particularly dangerous to human life. Ozone levels are continually monitored at various locations in the Richmond metropolitan area.

Land uses that increase ozone emissions are relatively low in the County and the Town. Automobiles would contribute more to ozone emissions than industrial uses in and around the town. As of 2022, the Richmond and Northern Virginia regions were at attainment for all applicable air quality standards, including ozone.

Map 8: Location of Steep Slopes



Source: Natural Resources Conservation
Service Soil Surveys



Floodplains

Floodplains are those areas along streams and rivers where flooding is likely to occur in the area. While protection of life and property provide the initial basis for protection of floodplains, there has been a growing recognition in recent years that limiting disturbances within floodplains can serve a variety of additional functions with important public purposes and benefits. Floodplains are critical environmental resources due to their function as a natural and economical storm water management system as well as their value as wildlife habitats and recreational areas.

Floodplains moderate and store floodwaters, absorb wave energies, and reduce erosion and sedimentation. Wetlands found within floodplains help maintain water quality, recharge groundwater supplies, protect fisheries, and provide habitat and natural corridors for wildlife movement. Construction in floodplains is subject to damage by floodwaters however substantial change to existing terrain can also affect the conveyance of storage of the natural channel to the detriment of upstream and downstream landowners. Development in the floodplain is not prohibited by the County or Town and there are no special provisions for development. Most of the town is elevated above the Severe Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).

The minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program do not prohibit development within the 100-year floodplain. However, to adhere to the minimum Federal requirement, the Town requires development and new structures in the floodplain to meet certain flood protection measures including elevating the first floor of structures a minimum of one foot above 100-year flood elevations and utilizing flood-proof construction techniques. Moreover, where alternative building sites on a parcel are available for construction outside the 100-year floodplain, construction outside of the 100-year floodplain is preferred.

Map 9 identifies the general location of floodplains in Tappahannock. These areas are generally located along the Rappahannock shoreline. Portions of the 100-year floodplain are also located along the Town's northwestern and southwestern edges. The most current flood data can be found online at the Federal Emergency Management Agency website (www.fema.gov).




Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is in the process of updating floodplain maps for Essex County. The most recent effective date for Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) for Essex County is 2015. Additional information can be found at the Virginia Flood Risk Information Website at <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dam-safety-and-floodplains/fpvfris>.

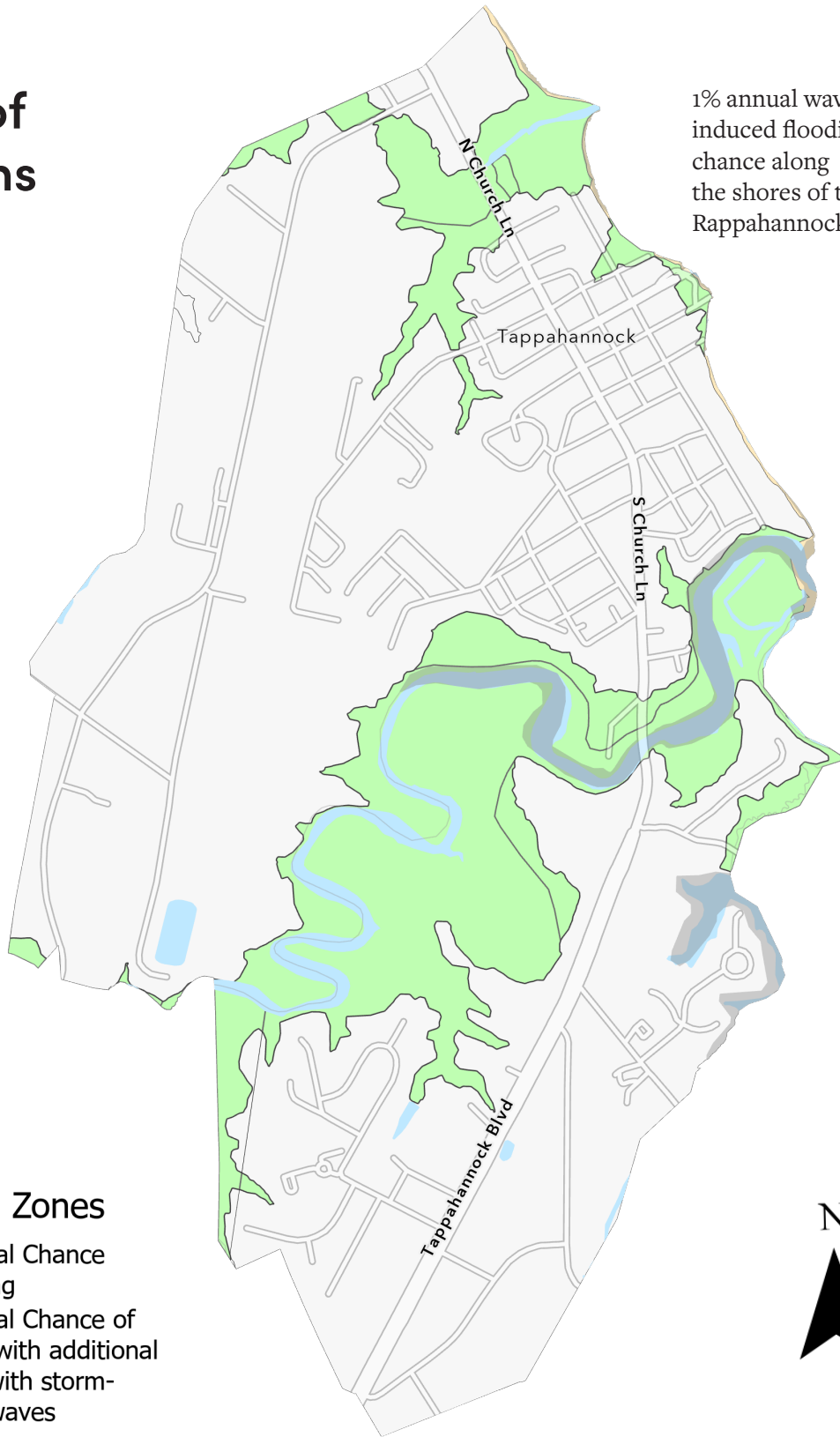
The Town adopted a new floodplain ordinance into the Zoning Ordinance as of August 9th, 2021.

Map 9: Location of Floodplains

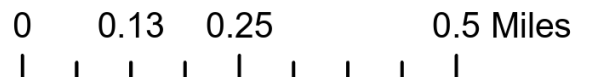
1% annual wave-
induced flooding
chance along
the shores of the
Rappahannock River.

FEMA Flood Zones

-  1% Annual Chance of Flooding
-  1% Annual Chance of Flooding with additional hazards with storm-induced waves
-  Water



Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency



Wetlands

In the 20th century, well-intentioned public and private efforts to provide flood protection, mosquito control, greater agricultural productivity, better highways, and many other benefits to society have often resulted in filling or draining of wetlands for farming, forestry, industry, and development. In more recent years, research has concluded that wetlands play a vital role in the environment. Wetlands are valuable for the many physical, hydrological, biological, and cultural functions which they provide.

In light of the benefits, tidal wetlands in the Commonwealth are protected by the 1972 Wetlands Protection Act, as amended. This law requires a special permit prior to starting construction, dredging, or filling tidal wetlands. The Act also empowers local jurisdictions to establish Wetlands Boards, which may review and decide permit requests. Essex County has a Wetlands Board. The Virginia Marine Resources Commission has the ultimate authority to administer the Wetlands Protection Act and reviews all decisions issued by local boards.

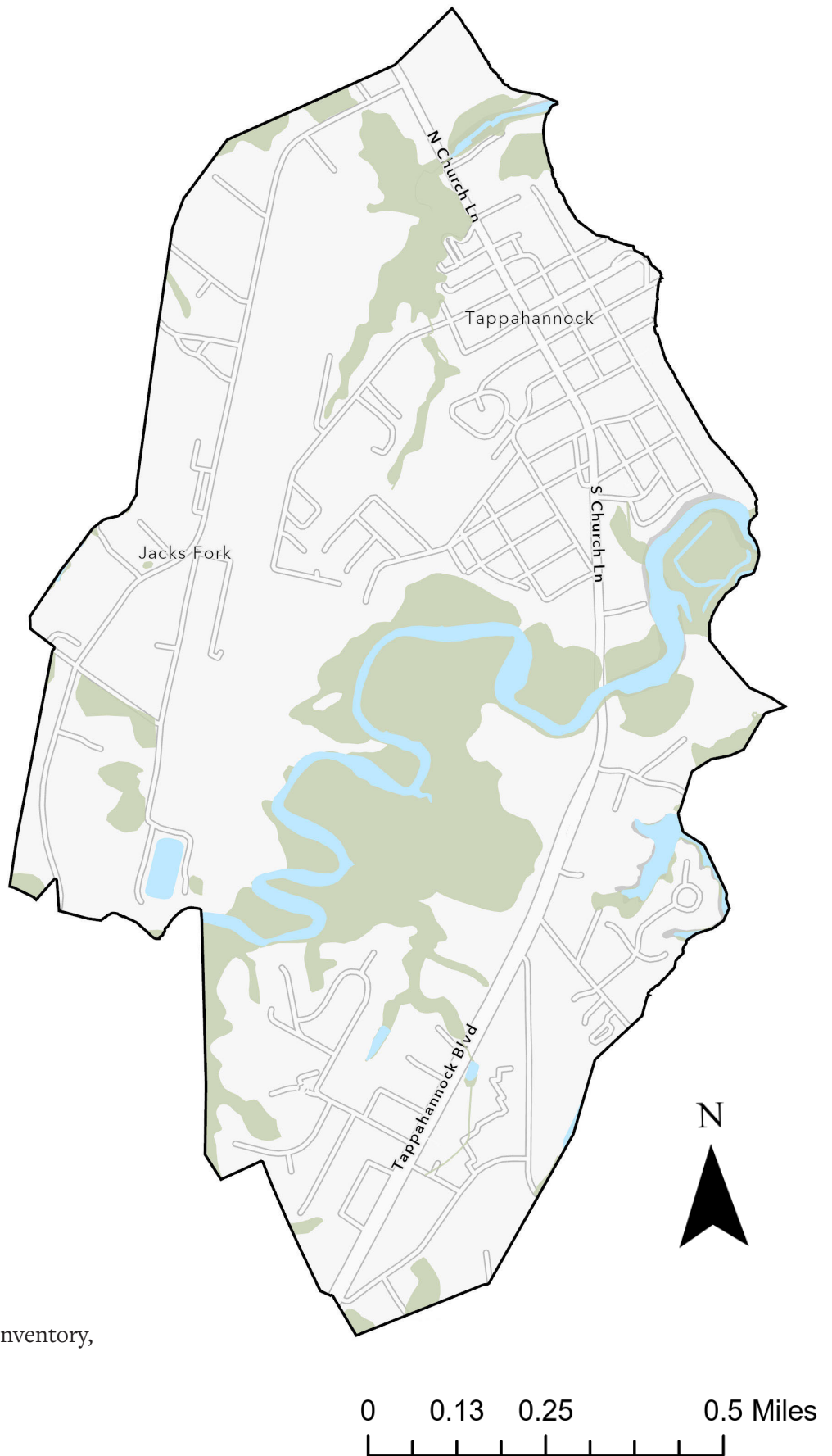
Nontidal wetlands are currently federally regulated by Section 404 of the 1977 Clean Water Act, as amended, which prohibits disposal of dredged or fill material into “waters of the United States” and adjacent wetlands. This has been broadly interpreted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to include virtually all surface waters in the nation, regardless of size.

The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Designation and Management Regulations establish mandatory requirements for the Town to obtain evidence from a developer of all wetland permits required by law prior to authorizing any site grading or other on-site land disturbing activities. Wetlands located in the Town of Tappahannock are shown on Map 10. The most extensive area of wetlands co-occurs with the location of Hoskins Creek which bisects the Town. Comparison with Map 7 suggests there are a number of locations where the presence of hydric soils does not necessarily indicate the presence of wetlands.

Analysis of the location of sensitive resources including wetlands, steep slopes, highly erodible and highly permeable soils, and hydric soils indicates that with the exception of hydric soils near the Town’s western border, should pose few limitations for the nature and types of development to be accommodated in the land use plan (see Chapter 3). The presence of hydric soil conditions in on the 70-acre tract along Airport Road, planned for industrial development (see land use plan Map 2), may limit development in these areas. Proposals for development in this area should be required to conduct soils analysis to determine their suitability for development. The presence of hydric soils in this area suggests the possible location of nontidal wetlands. Where their location can be confirmed by field investigation, development proposals should be designed to avoid any disturbances to wetlands and minimize impacts to their hydrology.

Finally, areas designated as Resource Protection Areas under the terms of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act represent areas of severe constraint to development and should remain undisturbed. These areas are identified on Map 11.

Map 10: Location of Wetlands



Source: National Wetlands Inventory,
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Comprehensive Coastal Resource Management

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 accordance with Section §15.2-2223.2 of the Code of Virginia, regarding shoreline management in Tidewater Virginia, all local governments shall include in their comprehensive plan guidance prepared by Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) regarding coastal resource management and the appropriate selection of living shoreline management practices. The legislation establishes the policy that living shorelines are the preferred alternative for stabilizing eroding shorelines. 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 ensure that functions performed by coastal ecosystems will be preserved and the benefits derived by humans from coastal ecosystems will be maintained into the future.

The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act

The primary tool for implementing the resource protection objectives of the Town is the Chesapeake Bay Preservation initiative. The Chesapeake Bay Preservation program, launched by the state in 1988, establishes a baseline for protection of Town resources that disturbance or overutilization can and often have adversely impacted water quality in those Bay system tributaries that border and penetrate the Town.

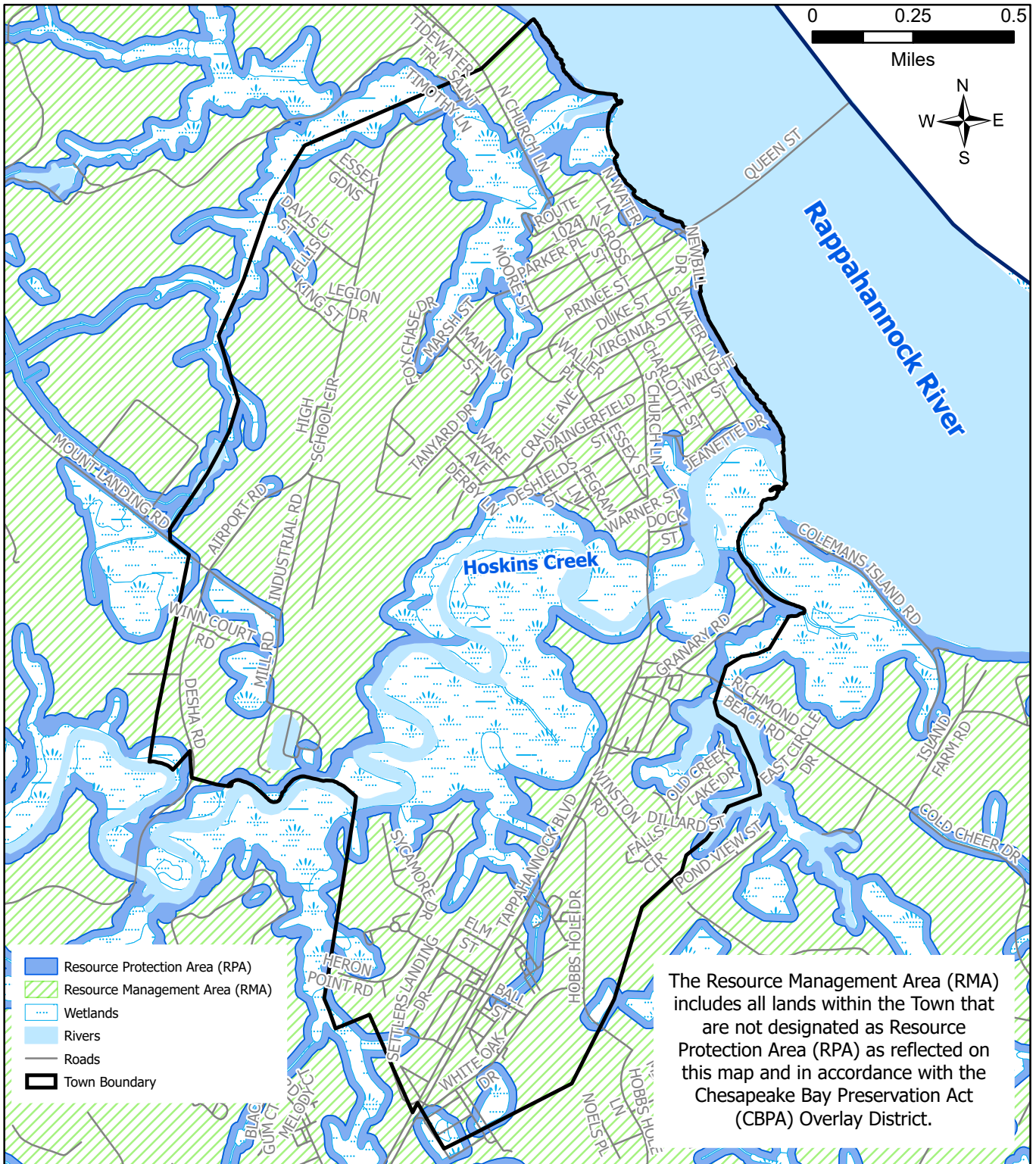
The Commonwealth of Virginia has adopted the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act which mandates all Tidewater Virginia localities to establish program, plans, and ordinances to protect and improve Bay water quality. These ‘local programs’ must be in conformance with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Designation and Management Regulations adopted by the Virginia Legislature in September 1989.

The purpose of the regulations is to protect and improve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, and other state waters by minimizing the effects of human activity upon these waters and implementing the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, which provides for the definition and protection of certain lands called Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas, which if improperly used or developed may result in substantial damage to water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

The regulations establish the criteria that Tappahannock has used to determine the extent of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas within its jurisdiction. The regulations establish criteria for use by the Town in granting, denying, or modifying requests to rezone, subdivide, or to use and develop land in Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas. Regulations identify the requirements for changes which local government like Tappahannock must incorporate into their comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and subdivision regulations to protect the quality of state waters pursuant to the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act.

The purpose of the Tappahannock Chesapeake Bay Preservation Program Comprehensive Plan Element is to collect and analyze data, explore issues and alternatives, and develop policies and implementation strategies, providing a basis to take local action to protect and improve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, and other state waters.

Map 11: Resource Management/Protection Areas



Disclaimer: This map is intended for reference purposes only. The Town of Tappahannock does not provide any guarantee of the accuracy or completeness of map information. Pursuant to 54.1-402, the determination of topography or contours, or any depiction of physical improvements, property lines, or boundaries is for general information only and shall not be used for the design, modification, or construction of improvements to real property or for flood plain determination.

Prepared by the Essex County
GIS Department
December 18, 2023



Data Collection and Analysis

The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Program for Tappahannock relies on the collection and analysis of water and land use data and characteristics. The information sources utilized for the adoption of the program are those which are the best in accuracy and currently available. Recognizing that in some areas data may be incomplete or on a reduced level of accuracy, the county/town, in conjunction with the Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department (CBLAD) and the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (MPPDC), will strive to produce future inventories and studies to best reflect the current and changing characteristics of the lands and waters.

The goal of the inventory of natural and manmade features is to identify the areas within the Town which require and should be considered for preservation under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA) regulations. These areas include tidal wetlands, nontidal wetlands connected by surface flow and contiguous to tidal wetlands or tributary streams, tidal shores, floodplain, highly erodible soils, highly permeable soils, other nontidal wetlands, and other lands whose characteristics may have a significant impact on water quality protection.

Tappahannock contracted with the MPPDC to produce an inventory of the land categories identified above. The MPPDC utilized the following information sources in conjunction with an automated geographic information system to analyze, compile, and map the inventoried features:

- United States Geological Survey - Digital Line Graph: includes tidal wetlands, tributary streams, tidal shores, roadways, and county boundaries.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - National Wetlands Inventory: includes tidal and nontidal wetland and classification of each.
- Virginia Geographic Information System - Digital Information of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service Soil Survey of Essex County, Virginia: includes soil characteristics necessary to determine permeability and erodibility of soils.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency - Flood Insurance Rate Map: includes 100-year event floodplain for Essex County.

The Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission has published the Comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan for the Middle Peninsula which provides water quality and issues data, analysis, and policy review. Specifically, the two elements of the Management Plan provide information relevant to Middle Peninsula localities' on-site wastewater treatment, potable water supply, boating facilities, living resources, waterfront access, existing land use and water quality (including pollution sources), and a general economic analysis of the region.

Other documents referenced directly or through familiarity include the CBLAD's Local Assistance Manual; the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's (VIMS) Shoreline Situation Report for Essex County; and other federal, state, and local studies.

Shoreline Erosion

Previous Comprehensive Plans for the Town of Tappahannock have indicated a need for coordinated collaboration between the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (MPPDC) and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) to develop a comprehensive shoreline management plan. Financial assistance from the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department allowed a survey to be performed for Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock. The County and Town recognize shorelines as a valuable asset and should be managed appropriately. With financial assistance from the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department, Essex County, and the Town of Tappahannock were surveyed for a comprehensive shoreline situation report.

Since the Town of Tappahannock is bordered by the Rappahannock River and contains both Tickner's Creek and Hoskins Creek, shoreline erosion management is of critical concern. Soil erosion along shorelines occurs when water or wind carries off soil particles. The transport of soil particles is generally referred to as runoff. Runoff can wash fertilizer and other pollutants into Hoskins Creek and the Rappahannock River and should be kept to a minimum. The Town uses the Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook for guidance related to overland flow and erosion control. Additionally, the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Shoreline and Erosion Advisory Services (SEAS) provides guidance for tidal and non-tidal erosion. These following characteristics generally identify erosion activity:

- Bare spots on land
- Exposed roots
- Small rills or gullies on slopes
- Sediment collects in low areas

Shoreline and streambank erosion are caused by wave and water energy and can vary from low to moderate or high levels. Permanent structures, such as bulkheads and revetments, have been established along many parts of the Town's shoreline where moderate to high levels of erosion occur. Permanent erosion control structures built in the past have sometimes caused the erosion of downstream wetlands and the disappearance of downstream beaches, as the movement of sand or sediments is impeded by these structures. Unified treatment of whole reaches of shoreline can improve opportunities to assure that solutions to erosion conditions on one site do not create greater rates of erosion on adjacent sites.

Shorefronts subject to low and moderate rates of erosion may often represent candidate sites for non-structural shore protection through the use of wetland plantings and sills (continuous small rock breakwaters used to slow wave energy to establish inter-tidal marshes). Marsh vegetation and plantings in such areas can provide long term stabilization at a fraction of the cost of conventional structures such as bulkheads and stone revetments. Such treatment of shore erosion conditions also improves water quality and increases habitat availability.

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science completed a shoreline and erosion study of Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock in 2001 and 2018. Several classifications of erosion are present along the shoreline of the Town boundary, but there are few areas where high erosion rates are present.

Most of the Town shoreline along the Rappahannock River has minimal erosion activity. According to the 2018 Shoreline Inventory Report for Essex County and Tappahannock, the majority of the river shoreline (129 miles) is classified as having a bank height between 0-5 feet. Areas along the Rappahannock River, Piscataway Creek, and Occupacia Creek in particular have a majority of their bank height at or below 5 feet. Most of the shoreline is hardened. Bulkheads are the most common form of hardening. Grainfields are found along 1,000 feet of shoreline and there are scattered sections of riprap. There are numerous piers and wharfs along the river.

Hoskins Creek has several levels of erosion activity. The majority of shoreline is classified as 0-5 feet bank height/low erosion with marsh conditions. Five miles of the shoreline here are classified as 0-5 feet bank height, while 11 miles are classified as 5-30 feet bank height.

These areas contain bulkheads, one associated with a pier and one with a boathouse. Bulkheads are present on the north shore near the mouth of the creek and there is a small bulkhead on the south shore. There are many piers and boathouses along this section of the creek.

Tickners Creek was not included in the 2018 Shoreline Inventory. Based on the 2001 report, Tickners Creek has two levels of erosion activity. Most of the shoreline is classified as 0-5 feet bank height/low erosion with marsh conditions. There is a 100-foot section of 0-5 feet bank height/high erosion associated with riprap on the north side of the creek. This area is found on the downdrift side of a jetty at the mouth of the creek. There is a marina on the south side of the creek.

Overall, the Town does not view erosion as a problem. However, if at such time erosion activities expand or citizens request assistance in dealing with erosion issues, Town staff will be available to assist citizens with mitigation strategies.

Resource Protection Areas

Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) perform natural pollution control functions. Biological activities and physical characteristics in these areas are especially effective in controlling runoff, trapping sediment, and recycling nutrients and pollutants. Components of RPAs are certain wetlands, tidal shorelines, and buffer areas.

The tidal shoreline interface where water meets the land is the scene of dramatic changes caused by the natural forces of wind and water. Tidal shore stability is generally governed by three main determinants: the amount of beach material, the intensity of natural and human forces, and the stability of sea level. The occurrence of tidal shore erosion is considered a natural process and becomes a serious problem only when human structures and activities unnaturally intrude into this process. Buffer areas are zones of undeveloped vegetated land that are managed to reduce the impact on water quality of land disturbing operations in adjacent areas. Vegetated buffer areas provide a wide variety of environmental benefits, including sediment control, nutrient assimilation, stream bank stabilization, in-stream temperature maintenance, flood control and protection, groundwater recharge area protection, and runoff volume reduction.

The RPA serves the purpose of protecting environmentally sensitive land and water areas from the adverse effects of human activities to thus improve and protect the quality of water both locally and regionally. The components of the RPA are prescribed by Virginia statute, with the local option to include other lands within the RPA designation as necessary to provide a high level of protection to the quality of state waters.

Tappahannock has designated an RPA which consists of all tidal wetlands; nontidal wetlands, including impounded lakes and ponds connected by surface flow and contiguous to tidal wetlands or tributary streams; tidal shores; and an additional buffer area of 100 feet in width, except where reductions are allowed, so located within its jurisdictional boundaries. The extent of the Town's RPA is shown on Map 11.

The intent of RPA designation is to limit land disturbance and development to only those activities classified as "water dependent" or otherwise exempted in the Town Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Overlay District. The integrity of the RPA and associated mechanisms with the CBPA Program will serve the goal of preserving those features most associated with the high standard in quality of life in Tappahannock, namely clean water, and attractive landscapes for the beneficial use by both society and the natural ecosystem.

The implementation of the RPA goals will be through an overlay district contained in the Tappahannock Zoning Ordinance. The zoning ordinance will include a general designation RPA map in addition to the performance criteria to be included on specific site plans. The subdivision, erosion and sedimentation control, and floodplain ordinances will also include provisions to preserving water quality as related to CBPA.

Resource Management Areas

The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and Criteria Regulations establish the Resource Management Area (RMA) as the landward component of Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas. Lands to be considered for designation as RMA include the following: nontidal wetlands, floodplain, highly erodible soils, highly permeable soils, and other lands at local discretion.

RMAs are important in terms of water quality primarily because if improperly used or developed, they could release significant amounts of non-point source pollutants into the surface and ground water systems. The regulations do not limit the types of land use and development that may occur within the RMA. Instead, a variety of performance criteria will be applied to any proposed use or development within RMAs to ensure that those land disturbances that do occur will minimize the adverse impact on water quality. The performance criteria apply to stormwater control, on-site sewage disposal, and land disturbance/stabilization.

The designation of RMAs in Tappahannock has been based on the consideration of the sensitive land types listed above and described below.

Floodplains are areas which are subject to predictably recurring overflows from nearby bodies of water, including streams, rivers, bays, and oceans. A floodplain acts as a natural reservoir for such an overflow by storing water and thus reducing the volume and speed of the flood water's effects downstream. The removal of natural vegetation through land development within a floodplain diminishes the natural flood control capacity of the area. The result can be an increase in non-point source pollution of the water body through severe soil erosion.

Highly erodible soils, if improperly disturbed or exposed, can contribute to water quality degradation through sedimentation and siltation of water bodies. In addition, nutrients and toxicant may be attached to soil particles which can be transported and released to the aquatic environment through erosion.

Highly permeable soils transmit water at such a rate that there is a potential for surface pollutants such as nutrient, sand, other chemicals, and sewage wastes to infiltrate, undegraded, into the nearby surface water and groundwater systems. This possibility of the highly permeable soil becoming a "highway" for pollutants indicates the need for management of development in these areas.

Local designation of other lands to be included in the RMA classification is based on several factors, including the distribution of the other land types listed above, the hydrology of the locality, and the general characteristics of the landform in the locality. The regulations of the CBPA also require the RMA to be contiguous to the RPA.

Tappahannock has chosen to designate the entire Town as a Resource Management Area (RMA). The extent and distribution of the land features considered as RMA components are such that few areas of the Town are lacking one or more of these features. It is also recognized that all lands within the Town are contained within the Chesapeake Bay watershed and activities upon these lands can act to impact the water quality of the Bay. In order to maintain the goal of high water quality within the Town, county and region, the policy of the Town is to include all lands as RMAs when those lands are not designated as RPAs.

The implementation of the RMA goals will be accomplished by specific provision in the Town zoning, subdivision, erosion and sedimentation control, and floodplain ordinances. Implementation will rely on an effort to improve the capacity of staff and the general public through supporting educational opportunities related to managing and enforcing the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Development Suitability

The lands and waters within Tappahannock are varied in characteristics and natural function. Features such as topography, hydrology, soil type, vegetation, and geographic location all serve to influence land development. With advances in construction methods and materials and sewage disposal technology together with the increase in population and property values, land which once may have been considered undevelopable is being engaged for development pursuits.

The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act has highlighted the concern of land disturbing activities which cause water quality degradation through non-point source pollution. In addition, the use of methods of limiting or preventing non-point source pollution, such as Best Management Practices (BMP's), indicate that there are reasonable means to manage the potential impacts of most development. To further explore the compatibility of development to the land site, an additional step of analyzing the suitability and capacity of the site is needed.

Perhaps the most obvious factor to consider when analyzing a site for development suitability is the characteristics of the soils present. Soils play the important role of determining weight loading capacities, on-site sewage treatment assimilation, erosion potential, and vegetation growth.

An additional factor of importance is the location of "poorly" or "marginally" developable soils in relationship to streams, water bodies, and wetlands. Development on such soils, in close proximity to designated RPAS, can produce negative impacts on water quality. A development suitability analysis can provide the necessary detailed information on both the most and least desirable portion of a parcel for development. With this information in hand, the Town and the land developer can arrive at the development design solution which presents the highest compatibility of the use and the environment.

A detailed, site-specific soils survey would provide the information necessary to match the suitability with the uses proposed for the site. The topography and hydrology of the site should be detailed enough to predict overland sheet flows of stormwater. Knowledge of the vegetation and wildlife habitat is important for a site as well as for the surrounding areas. The comprehensive analysis of all these features can lead to development sensitive to the natural resources of Tappahannock.

To preserve the development rights of land owners, options to mitigate impacts and utilize BMPs should be allowed. It is envisioned that the level of detail of the suitability analysis will provide the owner with the information to balance the management options presented by the site.

Tappahannock has determined a comprehensive development suitability analysis to be necessary to the optimum function, design, and environmental preservation of land development sites. The comprehensive development suitability analysis should include a detailed inventory of soils with the capacities for on-site sewage treatment, weight loading, erosion potential, and vegetation growth documented. Discussion of wildlife habitat and other significant environment should be included. Mitigating factors, such as the use of BMPs should be included. This analysis should be conducted for all proposed development exceeding 10,000 square feet in land disturbance within Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas.

The requirement to conduct a comprehensive development suitability analysis will be implemented through the Town's plan of development procedures, including zoning and subdivision ordinances.

Waterfront Access and Boating Facilities

The Rappahannock River and Hoskin's Creek are resources belonging to the residents of Virginia. The use of these waters for recreation and commerce are traditional and acceptable as the economic base for the area. With the subdivision of large tracts of waterfront property into numerous privately owned smaller lots, comes the competing interest of those owners seeking privacy and the upland residents and tourists seeking use of the waters. The increasing use of our waterways leads to concern of environmental damage due to improper or reckless activities causing pollution or habitat destruction. This concern leads to the need for greater management capability over waterfront access and uses.

The only actual Marina facility in Tappahannock is the June Parker Marina, or Tappahannock Marina, located at the edge of the Town along the Rappahannock shorefront just north of the Bridge. The facility provides slips for some 48 boats. Boat storage facilities are also provided to accommodate up to 96 watercraft. Services provided at this facility include fuel sales, a launching ramp, a hoist, and hull repairs. Containers are provided on the site for solid waste and sanitary facilities are provided. Boat holding tank pump-out facilities consist of a portable pump with holding tank. A dump station is also provided for emptying portable marine toilets. Final disposal of sewage from boats and on-shore sanitary facilities is by connection to the Town wastewater treatment plant.

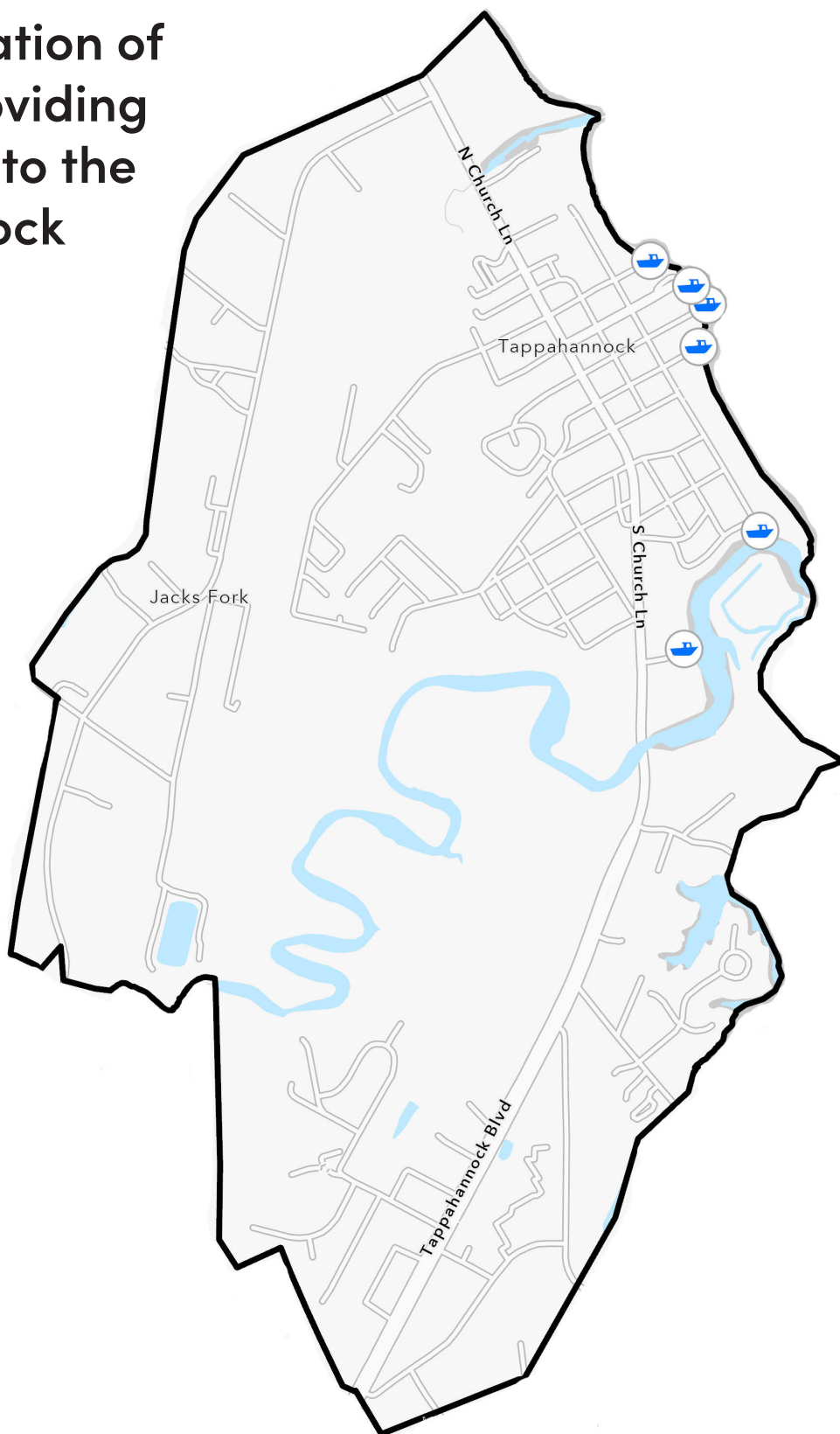
Other privately owned facilities or publicly owned lands in the Town provide only limited boat launching or swimming/fishing beach facilities. These facilities include:

- Riverside Condominiums (maximum of 14 privately owned slips)
- Southside Motel Marina located on Hoskins Creek (maximum capacity of 8 slips)
- Boat Launching facilities at Dock Street in Tappahannock
- Boat Launching area at the foot of Prince Street in Tappahannock (inactive as of 2020)
- Tappahannock-Warsaw Moose Lodge located on Hoskins Creek
- Parker Marina

The location of these facilities which provide boating access to the Rappahannock is shown on Map 12.

There are two broad uses involved in the waterfront issue. First is the use of the waterfront for boating access, whether at a marina, a boat dock, ramp and pier, or car-top boat landing. Second is the utilization of the shoreline and near-shore areas for recreational activities such as swimming, bank fishing, nature studying, and picnicking. Either public or private facilities can provide these activities. Both boating and shore recreation are allowed exemption as "water dependent facilities" under the requirements of the CBPA, provided that non-water dependent components are located outside of the RPA.

Map 12: Location of Facilities Providing Boat Access to the Rappahannock



Source: Essex County GIS

Existing Pollution Sources

The Virginia Water Control Board (VWCB) regulates existing point source pollution dischargers. Essex has little role in the enforcement of existing permit conditions; however, compliance is tied to land use ordinance approvals. The Town Chesapeake Bay Preservation Program, Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance, and participation in the activities of the local Soil and Water Conservation District are means of local management of non-point source pollution. A periodic review of the effectiveness of these local ordinances can determine where changes or amendments may be needed to achieve the goals of reducing non-point source pollution.

Water Quality Issues

Given the population served by the Town's municipal water supply facilities and expected growth in the Town, it is the policy of the Town that potential sources and effects of pollution on the Town's water supply be investigated. Sources may include storm water runoff, leaking petroleum storage tanks, abandoned wells, former refuse sites, and on-site sewage deficiencies. Since the last comprehensive plan update, the Town has taken many proactive steps addressing water quality issues.

The Town Council understands that many types of land uses and practices within the Town can affect the quality of both surface and ground water supplies. Runoff from lands adjacent to surface water reservoirs may contain chemical and biological contaminants. Pollutants can originate from agricultural practices, residential lawn care, pesticides, petroleum spills, and failing septic systems. Groundwater can be contaminated by these sources by infiltration through the soil to the water table.

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) monitors above and below ground petroleum storage tanks in the Town of Tappahannock. Currently there are no active underground storage tanks in the Town limits that are being monitored by DEQ. More information can be obtained from the Department of Environmental Quality web site at www.deq.state.va.us or by calling the Department of Environmental Quality Piedmont Regional Office.

On-site wastewater failures have been practically eliminated within the town. Water and sewer service is available town wide. Few septic systems remain within the Town. At such time when these systems require repair, it is the policy of the Town to investigate the cost of public service hook up or directing the homeowner to the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission's On-site Wastewater Revolving Loan Program which offers financial assistance for the repair or replacement of failing on-site systems. The Town desires to have 100% public water and sewer hookup town wide or when necessary, require engineered on-site waste treatment systems with the Town overseeing operation and maintenance. This strategy will ensure 100% public sewer management by the Town.

The Town is sensitive to the role water conservation plays in the community. Groundwater protection and conservation is an incremental process. There are seldom any fast solutions. Rather, step-by-step changes lead to strong and lasting results. Community leadership will be responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing the conservation activities. Following on the recommendation to inform the general public about contamination and threats to water resources, the Town will look towards the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission's Water Resource Program to provide guidance to the Town. MPPDC's Water Resource Program has received financial assistance from the Department of Health, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program. The PDC will be introducing localities to the Groundwater Guardian Program. This program supports, recognizes, and connects communities protecting groundwater. It is designed to empower local citizens and communities to take voluntary steps toward protecting their groundwater resources. Groundwater Guardian can be a catalyst for groundwater protection programs such as a local wellhead protection or a source water protection program.

Implementation Recommendations

The following is a list of specific recommendations to achieve environmental quality goals and objectives set forth in this Chapter. These recommendations are in addition to the federal, state, and local regulations that are currently in place.

- A review of criteria and requirements of Town ordinance and local regulations for site planning to assure standards and requirements are designed to minimize run-off and its impacts on water quality to both surface waters and groundwater supply.
- Coordinate with state and federal agencies and non-profit conservancy organizations to protect the community. Seek public outreach opportunities to educate citizens and stakeholders on new shoreline management strategies including Living Shorelines.
- Existing marinas and boat repair facilities are encouraged to adopt operational procedures consistent with BMPs. When existing marinas remodel or expand their facilities, structural BMPs should also be constructed. For proposed boating facilities, BMPs should be required as a condition of development approval.
- Study the needs for waterfront public access in conjunction with state, federal, regional, and private agencies. Coordinate with the Middle Peninsula Public Access Authority for assistance with local efforts in planning water access, open space, and park facilities which will benefit education and habitat vital to water quality.
- Revise local regulations to discourage and/or limit development in the floodplain, especially SFHA areas.
- Educate staff and the public on the Community Rating System (CRS) and partnering with the county to possibly obtain CRS designation.
- 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).
- 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 locality-wide permit to expedite shoreline applications that request actions consistent with the VIMS recommendation.
- 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.

- Coordinate with the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission to implement the strategies as recommended in the 2021 Regional All Hazards Mitigation Plan.

- Encourage the use of non-structural shore line protection such as wetland plantings and sills to provide long term protection. Promote unified treatment of shoreline to assure that solutions to erosion conditions on one site do not create greater rates of erosion on adjacent sites;

- Develop community level educational programs to promote conservation of the Town’s natural resources and community assets. Programs should include understanding of high water table issue, proper fertilizer application, safe disposal of hazardous household and toxic industrial waste, and the necessity of inventorying and monitoring underground storage tanks.

- Coordinate and cooperate with local, regional, state, and federal agencies to implement policies to protect Tappahannock’s natural resources. Work with local businesses and residents to assess development impacts and if necessary, create appropriate mitigation strategies on a case-by-case basis.

- Explore and employ stormwater management strategies associated with development of a waterfront park to use as a demonstration project for innovative storm water management techniques.

- Explore the development of a Wellhead protection ordinance and develop a program to provide citizens with assistance for well closures.

- When financial resources are identified, the Town will conduct a “Reach Assessment” study to determine where erosion process and response mutually interact. The reach assessment achieves the following:
 - Determine the reach limits.
 - Determine historic rate and pattern of erosion and accretion for the reach.
 - Determine within the reach which sites supply sand.
 - Determine wave climate and the direction of net littoral sand drift.
 - Identify factors causing erosion, and other than waves.
 - Estimate potential and active sources of nutrient loading (nutrients do not impact erosion but do impact water quality).

- Maintain an infrastructure improvement plan that prioritizes repair or replacement of older sections of municipal water system.

- Develop an amnesty day for the disposal of unwanted chemicals, home hazardous waste, fertilizers etc.



Chapter 6

Housing

Goal

Provide for a balanced community by promoting safe, efficient, quality, and affordable housing options for all Town residents.

Objectives

- Encourage an adequate mix of housing types and sizes to accommodate all Town residents through local code and various programs and incentives.
- Encourage development of infill housing in existing subdivisions to maintain the housing balance.
- Explore options that will help identify and address substandard housing issues.
- Explore alternative means of meeting the housing needs of low, moderate, and fixed income residents.
- Encourage the preservation of historic and/or architecturally significant buildings, homes, and properties.

Analysis

Housing is arguably one of the most important aspects of a community. Housing provides shelter, security, and protection from the surrounding elements and helps to provide a sense place and pride which shapes quality of life. Housing is also important to the local, state, and national economy as it provides for local jobs and revenue through sales and real estate taxes. Housing also impacts the micro economy being that it is generally the largest investment an individual makes. Because of its importance to the stability of our communities, it is necessary to understand the impacts that growth has on housing cost and how the potential lack of affordable housing may impact future socioeconomic growth in the Town. Some of these impacts are indicated in the housing analysis provided in this section.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the Town's housing and occupancy makeup and determine what methods would be necessary and appropriate to ensure adequate housing availability to accommodate both current residents and future growth.

Housing Types

Housing in Tappahannock consists primarily of single family, multifamily, and mobile homes (See Table 6-1). In 2020, approximately 49% of the occupied housing stock consisted of single-family homes. Multifamily homes accounted for 45% of the occupied housing stock while manufactured homes comprised 6.5% of the total occupied housing stock.

Housing growth has been slow since 2000, however, a number of additional housing units have been completed within the Town limits. From 2000 to 2020, 163 new multifamily dwellings and 36 single-family dwellings have been added in various Town locations. The new development has provided a greater variety of single and multi-family housing options. The table below shows a slight increase in housing units, noting a decrease in mobile homes and a 13% increase in multifamily housing from 2000 to 2020. Single-family dwellings still remain the dominant housing type in Town, although the gap is closing relatively quickly.

Type	2000 Number of Units	2010 Number of Units	2020 Number of Units
Single Family Dwellings	541 (58%)	578 (58%)	577 (49%)
Total Multifamily Dwellings*	296 (32%)	413 (32%)	525 (45%)
Manufactured Homes	96 (10%)	157 (10%)	**77 (6.5%)
Total	933	1,138	1,179

*Includes two or more units. **This decrease in manufactured homes may be due to a discrepancy in Tappahannock's border parcels counting the units as part of Essex County.
 Source: 2020 and 2010 Census, American Factfinder and the Town of Tappahannock Water Billing Accounts

New Housing Trends

The Town of Tappahannock has a large rental market. The 2021 American Community Survey data indicates that of the 1,137 housing units in the Town, 18.8% were vacant, up from 12% housing vacancy in 2010. Of the 81.2% or 928 units that were occupied, 66.1% were renter occupied, up from the 57% renter occupancy rate in 2010 and the 42% renter occupancy rate in 2000. This means that more people in the Town rent than own their current residence. It also shows the dramatic decrease in owner occupied residences in the Town since 2000. The high rental percentage in the Town is also an indicator of the inability of residents to afford to purchase homes. Table 9 provides a look at the housing occupancy characteristics in the Town.

Table 9. Housing Tenure		
Overall Type and Number of Housing Units		
Total Housing Units	1,137	100%
Occupied	923	81.2%
Vacant	214	18.8%
Tenure by Race of Householder - Owner Occupied Units		
Occupied Housing Units	923	100%
Owner-Occupied	313	33.9%
White alone householder	529	57.3%
Black or African American householder	350	37.9%
Two or More Races householder	40	4.3%
Hispanic or Latino householder	18	2%
Tenure by Race of Householder - Renter Occupied Units		
Occupied Housing Units	923	100%
Renter-Occupied	610	66.1%
White alone householder	276	45.2%
Black or African American householder	296	48.5%
Two or More Races householder	34	5.6%
Hispanic or Latino householder	18	3%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates

Home ownership is one component of a sustainable community. The housing market in the Town is driven by the large percentage of commuters to higher wage labor markets outside the Town. The inability of those residents who live in the Town to afford housing is impacted by wages earned outside the county and the region.

Characteristics such as median income and demographics are important factors that determine the housing makeup of a community. Low wages and high rental rates generally signify a transient-based population, while a high owner occupancy rate typically indicates a stable base and an affordable community. The parallel in the average income and wages of Tappahannock residents and the housing tenure of residents illustrated above is further explored in Chapter 7 of this Plan.

Housing Conditions

According to the 2020 Census, more than 50% of occupied housing in the Town was built at or before 1999. The Census determined that of all 928 occupied housing units, all came with complete plumbing and kitchen facilities. 85.7% of housing in Town uses electricity as its fuel source, with kerosene being the second highest source at 5.5%. Additionally, 52.4% of residents in Town have access to one vehicle, while 12.3% have no access to a vehicle at all.

Affordable Housing

As evident in the economic and occupancy makeup of the Town's housing population, affordable housing is an important issue that affects the social and economic stability of a community.

Statistics show a significant disparity between household income and housing pricing throughout the County but especially in the Town. This disparity indicates a serious issue of housing affordability to Town residents. While affordable housing is influenced by many factors that are beyond local government control, factors such as local job market, public attitudes, regulatory and policy barriers, and available public infrastructure are all areas that the Town should strongly examine when looking at affordable housing issues.

In 2020, the median gross rent in Essex County was \$887. Affordable housing choices remain a priority for the Town and County to continue to provide. One type of affordable housing that is common throughout the Town is mobile homes. Also referred to as manufactured housing, this type of housing tends to be less expensive than most other types of single-family homes and, consequently, serve as a practical alternative to affordable housing. Mobile homes provide a low to moderate income housing option for Town residents. There is currently one mobile home park located in the Town, the number of mobile home permits that have been issued by the Town has experienced a significant increase over the past several years.

Foxchase Apartments, located in the western area of the Town on Marsh Street, has 60 income-restricted housing units. Tappahannock Greens is located on the southern end of the Town and has 40 income-restricted housing units. Both developments provide other valuable sources of affordable housing for the Town.

Rental Housing Subsidy Programs

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- Section 221 (d)(3) provides mortgage insurance to help finance the construction or substantial rehabilitation of large multi-family (five or more units) rental or cooperative housing projects for low and moderate income families.
- Section 8 Existing Certificates and Moderate Rehabilitation Housing provide assistance on behalf of households occupying physically adequate, moderate-cost rental housing of their own choosing in the private market. Section 8 New Construction and Substantial Rehabilitation subsidizes rent of lower-income households occupying public and privately developed projects. Federal payment per unit equals the difference between the government-established Fair Market Rents and 30% of the tenant's income. The Section 8 program is administered through Bay Aging. The Bay Aging office located in Urbanna, Virginia serves the Town of Tappahannock.
- Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) is a HUD program administered through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and local housing authorities in which tax credits are granted to subsidize the acquisition, renovation, or construction of low-income housing. Foxchase Apartments are an example of a property developed through the LIHTC program.

Farmers Home Administration (FMHA)

Section 515 of the Housing Act of 1949 authorizes FMHA to make or insure loans to finance the purchase, construction, or rehabilitation of rental and cooperative housing in rural areas for occupancy by the elderly, the handicapped, or low and moderate income families. The purchase of a site and the provision of essential housing-related facilities may be included in a loan where appropriate.

The Tappahannock Greens Apartments, a 40-unit rental housing complex for the elderly and disabled, was developed and financed through the FMHA 515 Rural Rental Housing Program and is operated under the program. The complex includes five buildings with eight one-bedroom units each, a community building, walkways, sitting areas, and recreation facilities.

The Homeless Solutions Grant (HSG) is a state-funded program to assist households experiencing homelessness to obtain and maintain housing stability. This program replaces the State Shelter Grant (SSG). HSG is designed to assist households experiencing homelessness to quickly regain stability in permanent housing.

The program goals are to provide effective and efficient assistance to reduce the length of time households experience homelessness and to reduce the number of households returning to homelessness. It is intended to be administered as a community-based resource that maximizes mainstream resources.

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) was authorized under the Housing and Economic Recovery Act (HERA) of 2008 to provide emergency assistance to state and local governments in acquiring and redeveloping vacant and foreclosed properties that might otherwise become sources of abandonment and blight within their communities.

Implementation Recommendations

In addition to techniques and policies already established, the following recommendations have been selected to implement the Town's identified objectives.

- Foster land use patterns that reduce unit land costs and encourage flexibility in housing types. This can be achieved through infill development, planned residential development and cluster development provisions in the Town's zoning ordinance.

- Explore the use of Federal and State programs to help meet Tappahannock's housing needs. These Programs include:
 - Congregate Housing Loan Program - Funds from this program are specifically for projects which provide housing for such low or moderate income disabled or elderly persons.
 - Virginia Housing Partnership Program - Tappahannock is eligible to apply for either a block grant or a grant for a specific project under this program. Eligible activities include single and multi-family rehabilitation, energy loans, and funding for emergency home repairs.
 - Small Cities Community Development Block Grant - (CDBG) Funds are passed through the State Department of Housing and Community Development for a variety of housing related projects such as housing rehabilitation programs.
 - HUD Section 202 Housing for Elderly and Handicapped - provides direct loans for the development of rental housing for the elderly and handicapped. Projects also receive Section 8 subsidies.
 - Bonus Densities for Affordable Housing - Grant bonus densities to planned development projects to encourage the provision of more affordable housing.

- Adopt and enforce a process of evaluating housing conditions on a nuisance or health and safety complaint basis that will provide the Town with a mechanism for policing substandard housing.

- Create and implement programs to encourage and assist property owners of substandard housing to bring property up to minimum standards or replaced where renovation is not feasible through available Federal, State, and local programs

- Smart and sustainable growth should be considered when assessing housing and zoning needs for the Town to create a wider range of housing opportunities and choices. Smart and sustainable building utilizes existing structures rather than creating new ones, thereby reducing sprawled development.

Chapter 7



Economic Development

Goal

Provide and maintain a positive environment that fosters economic and employment growth.

Objectives

- Encourage commercial and industrial development while supporting the preservation and expansion of existing industries in order to strengthen and diversify the economic base and provide necessary jobs.
- Promote Tappahannock in conjunction with the County as an attractive and available location for higher wage industries.
- Encourage existing businesses to maintain and improve their appearance so as to preserve the attractiveness of the central business district, and shopping centers.
- Continue efforts to revitalize the Tappahannock Main Street district to attract and retain new businesses while also promoting the area for tourism.

Local Economy

The Town of Tappahannock is the nucleus of Essex County's economy. Business and employment activity in Essex County is mostly confined to the town limits of Tappahannock. Over the past several years, Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock experienced some significant changes in the unemployment rate. Since 2006, the unemployment rate increased to a high of 9.2% in 2010, then subsequently decreased to 4.6% in 2020 according to the 2020 Census. While the Commonwealth's employment rate was at 4.6%, down from 7.1% in 2010, the data reveals absorption of available labor is reflective of the trend during this period.

The Middle Peninsula region has significant pockets of isolated distressed communities with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participation designation rates that are higher than average. According to American Community Survey 2020 5-Year Estimates data, 20% of all households in the Town were receiving SNAP benefits. This is higher than the statewide average of 7.9%.

In 1980, the major industry in Tappahannock was manufacturing. At that time, 41% of all workers in Essex County were employed in the manufacturing industry. However, by 1990 this figure dropped to 31.7%. With the closing of the SouthTech Plant just outside the Town only 11.2% of workers within Essex County were employed in manufacturing in 2003. However, this number increased to 16.4% of all workers in Essex County employed in manufacturing in 2020. Over the same time period, retail trade employment increased to become a prominent employment industry in Essex County. Other major employment sectors in the area include health services and government.

The shift in employment coincides with the general trend which has occurred in the United States over the past twenty years. The United States is shifting from an industrial based economy to a more service-oriented economy. It is evident by the shift in employment from manufacturing to retail trade and services that Tappahannock is also experiencing this trend but at a lower rate than the United States as a whole.

While the area has gained in population, the area has lost jobs. In 2000 employment had reached 5,306 but had dropped to 5,059 in 2003. In 2013, employment among residents had reached 5,389. In 2020 total employment in the Town had further decreased to 4,864. Total employment in the County has increased slightly due to residents commuting outside the county for employment.

Local sales tax revenue has increased steadily since 2000, with an increase of almost 4%. This is a strong indication of the gradual recovery of the County's economy.

Year	Revenue
2000	\$1,234,370
2010	\$1,713,422
2015	\$1,921,077
2020	\$2,357,987

Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, 2020

Economic Composition

It is important to the stability of a community to have a diverse economic base. If a community is dependent upon a few industries, then those industries will largely affect the economy of that community. If an industry is doing poorly, then the economy of that community will do poorly. On the other hand, if the economic base is diverse, then the downturn of one industry will not greatly affect the community's economy.

Tappahannock has a fairly diverse economic base. In 2020, approximately 18% of the County's employment industry was manufacturing, an increase from 2010 where manufacturing made up just 6% of County employment. Healthcare is the second major industry in the County due to the presence of the VCU Health Tappahannock Hospital, just outside of the Town limits in Essex County. Wages in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services are among the highest in the town and county averaging over \$2,988 weekly.

Table 13 shows the major employment industries in the Town of Tappahannock and Table 11 provides the average weekly wage for each as of 2021 for Essex County.

Industry	Weekly Wage
Finance and Insurance	\$750
Agriculture and Forestry	\$700
Healthcare & Social Assistance	\$1,374
Manufacturing	\$1,428
Public Administration	\$1,214
Wholesale Trade	\$733
Educational Services	\$865
Construction	\$1,492
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	\$2,988
Transportation & Warehousing	\$1,554
Retail Trade	\$1,033
Accommodations and Food Service	\$1,684

Industry	# of Employees
Manufacturing	487
Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance	438
Retail Trade	396
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	315
Construction	403

Source: 2021 American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 4th Quarter (October, November, December) 2021

The manufacturing industry in Tappahannock is among the top employers. In 2012, the county's manufacturing industry experienced significant gain in new employees, but also experienced the highest turnover of any other industry, implicating its instability. Manufacturing comprises 17.7% of Essex County's labor. While the farming and forestry industry employs only 0.8% of the county's labor market, these industries are significant contributors to the local and state economy. Another significance of the export industry in the Town is that it manufactures and ships those goods that are in excess of local consumer demand; therefore, goods are exported to larger geographical markets and the costs of producing goods are distributed to consumers outside the County.

With the growth of the retail sector, combined with declines in retail activity in other areas, Tappahannock is a regional center. There has been an increase in the overall number of employees, export employment, and base industries in retail trade as a whole. Table 13 is an illustration of the major employers in Essex County.

Table 13. Major Employers in Essex County Region	
Business	Industry
Walmart	Retail
Essex County School Board	Education
MCV Hospital	Healthcare
County of Essex	Local Government
Lowes' Home Centers, Inc.	Retail
FDP Virginia	Manufacturing
James River Group	Retail/Wholesale
O'Malley Timber Products LLC.	Manufacturing
Food Lion	Retail
Service Master	Construction
Essex Rehabilitation & Care Center	Healthcare
Riverside Regional Medical Center	Healthcare
Tidewater Lumber Corporation	Manufacturing
Town of Tappahannock	Local Government

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 4th Quarter (October, November, December) 2021

Business Corridor

The Town of Tappahannock is an active trade center for the region, which is reinforced by the crossroads of Highways 360/17. The three existing shopping centers of Tappahannock create a regional commerce center for the Town and Essex County. The Tappahannock Town Center, White Oak Village, and Essex Square shopping centers all provide convenient shopping for the neighborhood, community, and regional area. All three shopping centers have an appropriate mix of commercial uses, which help establish a well-developed regional center.

Central Business District

The Central Business District (CBD) will remain the focal point of community life in Tappahannock. The CBD encompasses the Historic Downtown Tappahannock District as described in Chapter 7, and the historic commercial area downtown from the waterfront west to residential sections. The area currently serves as a government, office, and specialty retail center. Commercial activities in downtown Tappahannock are going through a metamorphosis from general retail to smaller, upscale, tourism-oriented specialty retail shops mostly catering to out-of-town tourists. The historic character of this area has made it an attractive location for specialty retail shops whose products are oriented towards the area's tidewater heritage.

The area of the Town south of Hoskins Creek and Route 17 has also emerged in recent years as another commercial center for Tappahannock and Essex County residents, anchored by big-box stores such as Walmart, restaurants, and several hotels.

Historic Downtown Tappahannock Association

Historic Downtown Tappahannock Association (Formerly named Tappahannock Main Street), the Town's Virginia Main Street organization, is located in downtown Tappahannock representing an area spanning from Hoskins Creek to Tickner's Creek. The association consists primarily of retail and service providers for the local community with some retail services directed towards the regional community. However, as mentioned in the previous section, it is important to acknowledge that Tappahannock's historic downtown and commercial activities extend beyond the formally designated Main Street district.

The association is accredited as a Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Commercial District through the Virginia Main Street Program with the purpose of planning for and promoting downtown revitalization. Virginia Main Street Program is a preservation based economic and community development program that follows Main Street America's four-point approach: economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization. The program offers a range of services and assistance to meet the variety of needs of communities interested in revitalization. Aspects of the Main Street approach may be applied successfully in other commercial settings elsewhere in Tappahannock outside of the formally designated Main Street district.

The Historic Downtown Tappahannock Association provides leadership, assistance, and resources for the revitalization of downtown Tappahannock. Their goal is to promote the Town's quality of life and unique downtown shops, while enhancing the visitor's experiences related to historic and cultural resources. Main Street continues to thrive with the success of the Revitalization Plan, the Farmer's market, the Historic District street sign initiative and the Tappahannock concert series.

In 2009, the Revitalization Plan was developed in a joint effort with the town and technical assistance through Virginia Commonwealth University. The plan covered the traditional business district in the Town and analyzed existing building use and spatial layout, vacant buildings and lots, infrastructure and pedestrian facilities and existing and potential business for the local market. The Town is currently undertaking a downtown revitalization master planning process, anticipated for completion in 2023. The new revitalization plan will build upon the 2009 plan and provide new guidance for the future and include considerations of opportunities for properties along Prince Street that were damaged in the fire of July 2022.

The local market is comprised of professional services such as realtors, banks, lawyers, insurance offices, local government offices, and hair salons/barber shops. A small percentage of uses are dedicated to specialty retail uses such as children's clothing, books, antiques, arts and crafts, and bridal accessories.

The range of service providers could become diverse if plans are developed which encourage more tourist interaction in the downtown area. In the future, Tappahannock is looking toward seeking a community design element that will create visual similarities throughout the Town – such as wayfinding signage – to encourage more tourist interaction.

Strengthening the Local Economy

A primary strategy for strengthening the economy is to diversify the tax base. Tappahannock has many characteristics and resources that are available to move its economy to the next level. Its location as a waterfront Town allows for working waterfront businesses and tourism. Route 360/17 intersects the town, connecting travelers and freight carriers to employment hubs and attractions from Northern Virginia to those in Hampton Roads. Water and sewer infrastructure in place throughout the Town provides an attractive incentive for industries to relocate to undeveloped properties. Other incentives include low business tax rates for the area, low real estate taxes and the relatively low cost of labor compared to more urbanized areas.

The focus of future industry should be on attracting new businesses and enhancing work skills. The first phase will capitalize on the existing industrial park. The existence of an already developed industrial park with infrastructure needs provided by the town should serve as an incentive to attract new industries to the area. New industrial development should be limited to the area in and immediately surrounding the designated industrial park area. Remaining parcel sizes in the industrial park will limit new development. The former Tappahannock Airport site, inside of the Town, offers a large amount of land that is available for light industrial use. Grant funds through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership have been awarded for the development of these properties through the “Business Ready Site Program.”

While the current mix of industry is good, the mix can be improved upon with diversification. Diversification will provide some protection for jobs in the event of an economic recession. Firms which do not compete with existing employers for labor should be targeted. Large industrial employers such as manufacturers and lumber suppliers should be encouraged to relocate and expand existing operations within the county. Feeder industries are industries which supply technology, parts, or supplies to an industry which then produces the goods. Industries, along with additional distribution and sales organizations related to health care, should also be encouraged.

Examples of target industries include food and related products, furniture and fixtures, paper and allied products, printing and publishing, fabricated metal products, machinery, electric and electronic equipment, and instruments and related products. One area with great potential is manufacturing industries which combine manufacturing facilities with a showroom to sell goods directly to local and regional consumers and tourists, in addition to exporting goods to regional and national markets.

If the suggested truck route linking the industrial park with Route 17 is built, development in the industrial park area and corridor has the potential to expand. It is essential that growth be controlled and planned so that the existing services will not be overwhelmed.

Job Growth

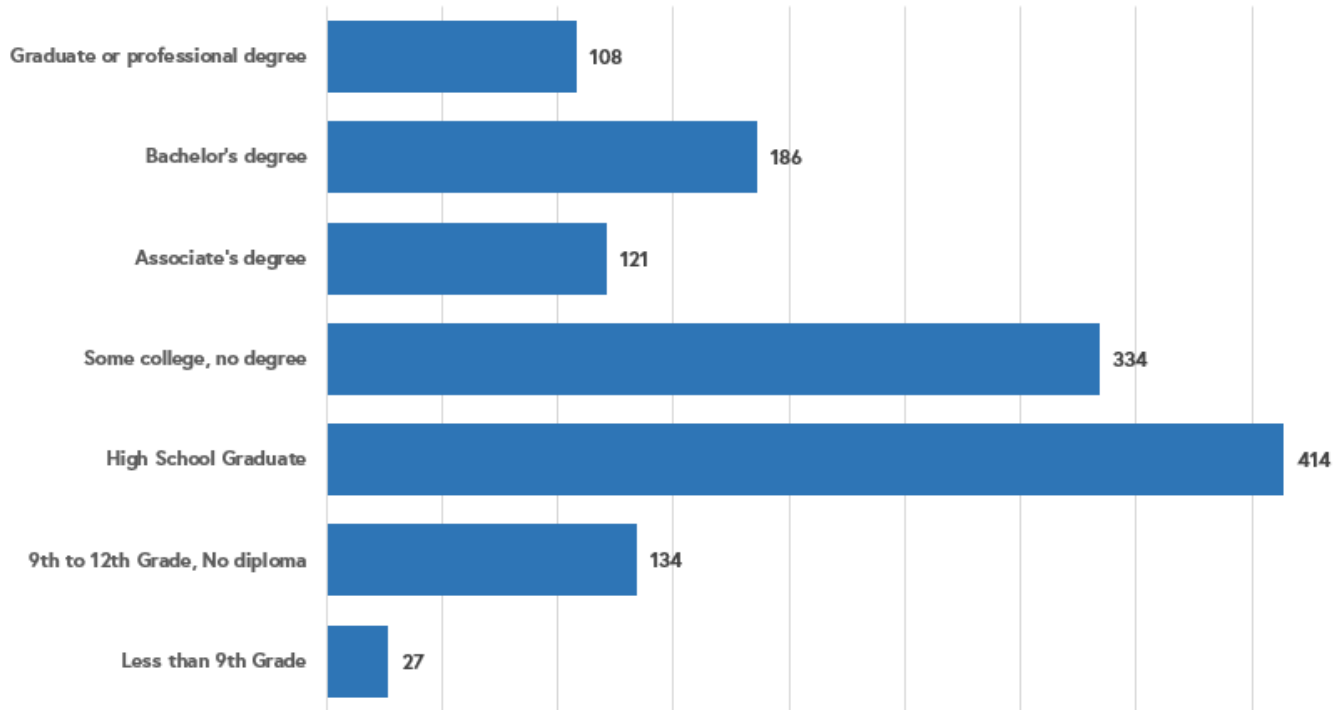
In recognition of the need to provide additional, upgraded and diverse job opportunities for residents of Tappahannock, it is proposed that several areas be reserved for development into industrial clusters. Proposed land areas are sufficient to meet future needs of the community. A variety of sites are necessary to permit the location of industrial uses which provide employment opportunities. Several industrial clusters are necessary to provide for the location of industry according to their specialized needs while protecting the environment of the community.

In the event of an economic recession, Tappahannock would certainly suffer economic hardship. Industries which supply lumber and building materials and automobile parts would see a drastic decline in demand for goods. Therefore, the town should encourage the location of new industries which will not be as affected should a recession occur.

Tappahannock Commerce Center

The Town of Tappahannock has created a Master Plan for the former municipal airport property, often referred to as the Tappahannock Commerce Center. Grant funding has been awarded through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership's Business Ready Sites Program to clear the properties and complete infrastructure improvements necessary to make the sites "shovel ready."

Educational Attainment in Tappahannock



Source: 2021 American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates

Education

A skilled and educated workforce is essential to attracting industries. Studies show that employers are targeting Generation Y due to their advanced knowledge and capabilities in the area of technology. The median age of Essex County is 46.7 years old. Tappahannock's present labor force could prove to be a disincentive in attracting industries which demand workers with a higher skill level.

Institutions of higher education are in relatively close proximity and are accessible to Tappahannock residents. Many of these institutions offer certification and training programs necessary for advancement in industries such as healthcare, business, and technology, communications, and professional and technical fields. With the current job market in Tappahannock, students in these disciplines have limited incentive to stay in the area to seek employment and typically look elsewhere.

Vocational/technical training is offered through Essex County High School at the Northern Neck Vocational Training Center in Warsaw. Rappahannock Community College in Richmond County also offers vocational and training courses in areas such as civil engineering, drafting, computer science, and mechanical engineering. The 2021 update to the Middle Peninsula Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy identifies several major projects in close proximity to the Town of Tappahannock, including the need for a technical training facility at the Rappahannock Community College. The proposed building would provide state of the art training and preparation of students for the current demands of the labor market. The proposed project is vital to the success of economic growth and diversity of the Town of Tappahannock's labor force.

Infrastructure

The provisions of infrastructure and adequate facilities are essential to attracting businesses and promoting job growth which strengthens the local economy. Tappahannock has much to offering in this area; however, some facilities would require improvement to meet the demands of certain industries, particularly those associated with higher wages.

The former Tappahannock-Essex Airport complex offers a large amount of land that is available for light industrial use.

Amenities, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, are necessary to a diverse labor force and promoting economic development. Studies show that the younger generation is less likely to afford automobiles and more likely to use alternative modes of transportation. The younger generation is also an important target market for employers in major industries.

Water and Sewer

Water and sewer infrastructure is available and is adequate to service existing demand with some availability for additional capacity to accommodate future growth. The Town will evaluate the need for maintenance and coordination of improvements as necessary for future growth.

Water supply is currently operating at sufficient levels to meet the needs of current uses. Water reuse and reclamation allows for used water to be treated and safely used for other purposes, decreasing the demand for fresh water. Measures to increase supply and reduce wastewater through water reuse and water reclamation to facilitate future demands need to be addressed. Developments with higher consumption rates will be urged to employ strategies and techniques to increase supply by conserving while reducing wastewater runoff.

Broadband Facilities

Broadband services are available to Town of Tappahannock businesses and residents; however, most of the customers have digital subscriber loop (DSL) service which transmits through phone lines. Broadband is considered the better option because it can help to diversify the economy by allowing for various types of businesses that rely heavily on internet services that cannot be supported by DSL.

According to Commonwealth Connection, while nearly all Census blocks within the Town have at least one address served by broadband, only a few Census blocks within the Town have at least 80% coverage. These Census blocks are concentrated between Prince Street and Warner Street. A small portion of the southern area of Tappahannock also has at least 80% broadband coverage. Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock are active participants on the Middle Peninsula Broadband Authority and are currently looking for options to provide expanded broadband facilities in the Middle Peninsula.

Universal broadband coverage throughout the Town is important for many reasons. Broadband facilities would make the Town of Tappahannock more competitive in attracting jobs in industries such as customer care call centers and information technology. Broadband would also allow for more home based startup businesses such as internet based businesses, and is critical to supporting the remote workforce. The installation of universal broadband within Town limits would therefore provide a significant boost to economic opportunities and future growth. Broadband would also provide higher opportunities for education. Tappahannock's current skilled labor force is lacking. As illustrated earlier in the chapter and in previous chapters, the majority of the labor force possesses education below a two-year degree. Broadband would provide an alternative for those residents who find it difficult or are unable to commute to academic institutions.

Transportation

The transportation system is adequate with provisions being considered to address higher demand. As growth and development occurs, the Town of Tappahannock will coordinate with the Virginia Department of Transportation to ensure that adequate facilities remain available in the town. In addition, the town is continuing to look for ways to improve traffic conditions and decrease transportation demand as growth and development occur and will seek cooperation from the business community with addressing the issue.

Resources Available

There are resources available for implementing economic development efforts other than the organizational strategies already described. These include a number of state programs that provide assistance with financing, infrastructure, and training.

1. Community Development Block Grants

CDBGs are available to eligible cities, counties, and towns for industrial or commercial revitalization, site development, access road construction, railroad span construction, and water and sewer projects.

2. Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund

The Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund provides loans to Industrial Development Authorities (IDAs) within communities eligible for Community Development Block Grant non-entitlement funds. The loans may be re-lent to private businesses within the IDA service areas.

3. Tax Increment Financing

The purpose of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program is to remove blighted conditions by improving the real estate tax base and by attracting private investment to the area. A local government may adopt TIF by passing an ordinance designating a blighted area as a development project area. This may be useful in redeveloping the area associated with the existing airport.

4. Virginia Revolving Loan Fund

The Virginia Revolving Loan Fund (VRLF) provides loans to assist eligible Virginia localities in efforts to create or retain permanent jobs. The loans may be used for asset financing for manufacturing and related uses and may include the acquisition of land and buildings, development or redevelopment of real estate, rehabilitation and renovation of buildings, and purchase of equipment and other fixed assets. The loans may be used for on- site and off-site public facilities supporting manufacturing and related uses.

5. Industrial Access Road Program

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) administers a program to assist in constructing industrial access roads to serve new and expanding manufacturing or processing companies. The program may be used to improve existing roads, construct a new road, and to maintain the access road after completion as part of the secondary highway system or road system of the locality. The Town intends to explore this option for development of the Tappahannock Commerce Center.

6. Industrial Training Programs

The Industrial Training Division of the Virginia Department of Economic Development will prepare and coordinate an industrial training program tailored to meet the specific needs of new or expanding companies seeking to increase employment in Virginia. Industrial training will recruit prospective trainees, provide specialists to analyze job training requirements, develop and implement training programs, conduct “Train the Trainer” programs, arrange for adequate training facilities, and prepare instructional audiovisual materials for in-depth training orientation. These services are provided at no cost to the employer and may be helpful in meeting the town’s job retention objectives.

Implementation Recommendations

- Provide adequate quantity of zoned land and improve the physical appearance and attractiveness of the corridor. Encourage proposed redevelopment to come into compliance with appearance and landscaping requirements.
- Promote the existing businesses and actively work to attract new businesses which will complement the existing businesses by marketing and incentives. Coordinate with the County and the EDA to obtain the state Enterprise Zone designation which provides incentives for targeted industries to operate in the Town. Maintain an up-to-date listing of all available store space to facilitate expansion or relocation efforts.
- Develop and implement a Plan that includes the promotion of tourism as a tool for economic growth in Town of Tappahannock. Partner with the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commissions and other agencies to create a regional tourism plan.
- Create and implement design guidelines to promote a unified image of a downtown district as discussed in Chapter 3 Land Use. This includes provisions for a Historic Preservation District and Downtown Development guidelines.
- Actively market and promote local businesses and downtown events such as an arts festivals or outdoor music productions in the summer, and a sidewalk sale.
- Industrial locations should provide large land areas suitable for horizontal expansion, of sufficient size to provide on-site storage, parking, and landscape areas. The character and aesthetics of adjoining residential areas should be preserved by requiring industrial activities to meet strict performance standards.
- Create and adopt an ideal approach to training and developing a skilled labor market with possible collaboration between the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Authority and the local Workforce Development Center partnering with local businesses to provide training to local residents.
- Coordinate with Virginia's River Realm to explore options for obtaining additional access to the water in an effort to promote working waterfront businesses and recreational use associated with tourism.
- Continue efforts to revitalize Tappahannock's downtown district, including the waterfront, to attract and retain business in the old downtown area. Coordinate with the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission to explore funding options to implement the current revitalization plan.
- Continue to work with the Middle Peninsula Broadband Authority and other agencies on local and regional efforts to bring broadband facilities to Essex County.

Chapter 8



Public Facilities & Community Services

Goal

Adequate and efficient public services and facilities should be ensured for all town residents.

Objectives

- Ensure adequate accessibility to its library and recreational facilities via a variety of transportation modes.
- Maintain, expand, and improve Tappahannock's central water and sewer systems to adequately accommodate future demands
- Support shared services and facilities such as the library, rescue and fire services and continue to collaborate with the County on future needs and improvements to these services.
- Provide efficient public safety services for Tappahannock residents.
- Encourage recycling and reuse of refuse through town's recycling program.

Analysis

Ensuring that the provision of community services and facilities is phased with the demand or need is a major component of growth management. Community facilities and public services are those minimum facilities and services the town provides for the common good. Town of Tappahannock facilities include land, buildings, equipment, and whole systems of activity provided by the town on the behalf of the public. The quality of public facilities contributes to the quality of life in the town as well as the Town's ability to grow and thrive economically. Some facilities, such as clean drinking water and adequate sewage disposal are necessities while others, such as theaters and parks, are highly desirable for cultural and educational enrichment.

Tappahannock provides a variety of public services and facilities for its residents which include water and sewer, solid waste disposal, libraries, and public safety. As growth occurs, so does the need for services.

A survey of existing services and facilities, in conjunction with population and economic data on which to base projections of need, provides an indication of what future improvements and additions might be necessary. In order to accurately anticipate needs, all projected figures should be updated constantly as new population and economic data become available. This section will focus on identifying existing facilities and identifying future needs based on growth projections. The following is a discussion of the existing capacities and levels of service for selected community facilities and services as well as projected demands. Planned facilities included in the town's annual financial planning process are noted.

Water Service

A number of laws control the use and quality of water in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Riparian Rights Doctrine allows for landowners to make reasonable use of the water resources adjoining their land. Secondly, the Groundwater Act of 1973 allows the Water Control Board to designate management areas in which water withdrawals are regulated. This allows the Board to assert state ownership and have control of the water beneath a landowner’s parcel of land. Areas outside of those management areas are controlled by common law. Thirdly, the State Water Control Law mandates the protection as well as the restoration of state waters. The standards are continuously reviewed and revised as appropriate. Lastly, the State Health Department regulates the water supply or waterworks permit is to be issued and assists applicants in completing all necessary paperwork pertinent to water supply. These are just some of the laws and agencies that help protect and regulate water. Map 12 shows the locations of all Town-owned pumps, wells, water tanks, and the Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Water Supply Planning

The Town’s waterworks consist of three drilled wells, a 200,000-gallon elevated storage tank, a 100,000-gallon elevated storage tank, a 500,000-gallon ground storage tank, a booster pump station, a chlorine feed system, the distribution system, and related controls, piping, and appurtenances. Based on the town’s water records in 2022, there were approximately 1,438 water users in the town requiring an average daily demand of 273,522 gallons per day (gpd). Well #1 is no longer in use at this time. Well #2 has a limiting capacity of 331,200 gallons per day (gpd). Well #3 has a limiting capacity of 518,400 gpd. Well #4 is the newest well for the town (added February, 2011) and has a limiting capacity of 514,085 gpd. The waterworks is permitted for a capacity of 1,363,680 gpd due to limited source capacity; the DEQ groundwater withdrawal permit is for maximum withdrawals of 137,200,000 gallons per year, 15,800,000 gallons per month, and 780,000 gpd. The Town of Tappahannock has one community water system servicing approximately 1,438 residences. Table 15 illustrates the water use projections for the Town of Tappahannock through the year 2040.

*The table below utilizes the Middle Peninsula Water Supply Plan’s population estimates, created in 2009. Previous population estimates in the Comprehensive Plan are referencing U.S. Census Bureau data.

Year	Population	Estimated Population served by community systems *	Estimated Water Demand (mgd)**	Estimated Water Demand as % of permitted system Capacity +
2020	2,723	2,723	.450	57.7
2030	3,111	3,111	.508	65.1
2040	3,449	3,449	.538	69.0

Source: Middle Peninsula Water Supply Plan, 2009

Map 13: Town-owned Water Service Facilities



Source:
Essex
County GIS

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

This data was updated
May 2, 2023



Storage Requirements

The water supply and storage requirements must meet the recommended fire flow demands, plus normal daily operating storage needs, plus an emergency reserve. The recommended fire flow duration for Tappahannock (based on the “Guide for Determination of Required Fire Flows” from the Insurance Services office) is 2 hours at a flow of 1,500 gpm, a total flow of 180,000 gallons. The recommended operating storage is 15% of the average daily water consumption. For the 2005 average flow of 251 gpm, 15% of the average daily use is 54,216 gallons. The emergency reserve is designated as 25% of the total of these numbers of 90,360 gallons.

Based on these criteria, the required storage under normal conditions is 281,700 gallons. The available effective storage which can be provided with existing facilities includes 675,000 gallons of storage plus 1010 gpm of pumping for two hours (121,200 gallons), less the 54,216 gallons of daily operating storage. The available storage is 741,984 gallons which more than adequately meets the requirements.

Daily water consumption is approximately 300,000 gallons. Present well and storage capacity should be sufficient for the expected demand for some time unless industrial uses are greatly increased.

Sewer

Located south of the industrial park, a new sewage treatment plant was constructed in 2001. The capacity of the plant was upgraded to allow 800,000 gallons per day. Of the total capacity, 200,000 gallons are reserved for usage by Essex County as part of its allocation in exchange for participation in the sewer system expansion.

Solid Waste

Presently, the Town of Tappahannock employs three full-time personnel to operate the curbside and green box collection of solid wastes. Two trucks collect trash throughout Tappahannock on a regular schedule and disposal is done at a Virginia Peninsulas Public Service Authority (VPPSA) facility in King and Queen County, Virginia. In 2021, 564.32 tons of processed solids were hauled from the Town to the VPPSA facility. The annual waste tonnages have slowly declined since 2015, when 673.23 tons of processed solids were hauled to the VPPSA facility. From 2021-2022, the Town hauled 2,407.21 total tons of waste to the VPPSA facility. Residential (937) and commercial (276) collections each take place two times a week for a total of 2,426 weekly collection stops and 126,152 collection stops each year. The town also provides curbside pickup of recyclable materials once per week. Disposal is through the Regional Solid Waste Authority.

Storm Water Management

The Town of Tappahannock's Zoning Ordinance requires adherence to the best practices required of the Code of Virginia in storm water management practices. The program includes development standards and suggests best practices designed to reduce erosion and sediments that negatively impact water quality. The regulations are implemented by the Town officials through a plan review process which also entails onsite inspections by Town officials.

Essex County handles all erosion and sediment control and stormwater management for the Town. The Town does not have an MS4 program to regulate discharge from municipal storm sewer systems.

Safety and Emergency Services

The Town operates its own Police Department, which includes eleven full-time staff and one part-time staff who enforce the law within the Town limits. The Police Department is located at 104 Commerce Road in the Town. Jailing is handled through the county and prisoners are housed at the regional jail in Saluda. Dispatching is provided by the County. The Town operates a fleet of twelve vehicles.

The Tappahannock-Essex County Volunteer Fire Department serves the Town of Tappahannock and Essex County from a main facility located in Tappahannock. There are twelve total vehicles in the Town and County, with the Town and County each having six vehicles. The Town has an engine truck, a rescue engine, a brush truck, a tanker truck, a ladder truck, and a utility vehicle. The County has two engine trucks, two tanker trucks, and two brush trucks. There are three fire stations located throughout Essex County in the North, Central, and South areas.

Essex County formed a combination Emergency Services system consisting of career and volunteer Fire and EMS providers. Essex County's Emergency Services was formed in September 2011 and employs full time personnel to meet the service needs of both Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock. The County-Town Emergency Services is composed of about 20 employees operating seven (7) rescue vehicles. The units are dispatched county-wide from the County Sheriff's Department. Essex County Emergency Services is funded by the County and receives private donations and local contributions.

Parks

Marsh Street Pool and Park, located in Tappahannock, is a public park with pool amenities and is operated by Essex County Parks & Recreation. The facility is less than two acres and provides Town and County residents with on-site activities such as Fun Day, splash parties, swimming lessons other special events. The County also organizes volleyball, little league basketball, aerobics, soccer, kite flying, and tennis.

Additional information about parks, including planned and in-progress investments, can be found in Chapter 9 of this Plan.

Tappahannock's other park facilities include Rappahannock River Park and the new Central Park.

Library

Essex Public Library is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization led by a volunteer Board of Trustees with support from local and state funding sources. This single-branch library serves Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock. The Library is located in a central location on Route 17 north of Marsh Street next to Tappahannock Elementary School. There were 30,000 visits to the building in FY 2023. Essex Public Library serves a critical role in Tappahannock, connecting residents to ideas and information to improve lives and strengthen the community, and is often a first stop for new residents who move to the area.

Services offered include public Wi-Fi and computer access, special programs and events for all ages, printing and scanning services, community meeting room space, reference and research assistance, and access to the library's extensive collection of print and online books and resources. The Library provides literacy outreach through "Little Library Boxes," including two located within Town limits, where books are distributed for free.

The Library Board of Trustees, working with an architectural design firm, completed a building study in 2022 to explore options for expanding and renovating the current building, which has not had any updates since it was built in 2000. Parking and pedestrian access are issues, and there is a demand for more space to accommodate meetings, programs, quiet study, and outdoor activities.

More information about library programs and services can be found on the Essex Public Library website at EPLVA.org.

Education

Public education is provided to Town of Tappahannock residents by Essex County schools, which are located in the Town of Tappahannock. Funding for public schools is provided by the county, state, and federal government. St. Margaret School is the only private school within Tappahannock's boundaries.

School facilities in the county are adequate to accommodate both the Town and County school-age population. Based on population projections, the Town of Tappahannock is experiencing growth at a faster rate than the County. As the Town's growth continues, existing facilities will need to be evaluated for their suitability to accommodate future demands.

Broadband Facilities

Broadband services are critical to the continued growth and economic development of Tappahannock. Known as a regional commercial hub, many businesses and employers rely on broadband service for businesses and strongly consider the service when deciding to expand or relocate. Whether the town attracts much needed job industries relies on the services that are available. In the age of technology, the availability of fast and reliable broadband services can be the deciding factor.

Due to the density and commercial concentration, Town of Tappahannock businesses and residents have the benefit of access to high speed broadband service. Enhancement and expansion of broadband services is necessary to advance the educational and economic goals of the Town of Tappahannock. Additional information about broadband can be found in Chapter 7 of this Plan.

Government Services

Offices of the County government are located in Tappahannock in and around the County courthouse. The Town utilizes the services of the County building inspector for enforcing the Uniform Statewide Building Code within the town.

Town offices on Church Lane house the Tappahannock administrative offices. The Police Department is located at 104 Commerce Road. These offices administer all local ordinances, water and sewer system operations, trash collection and all regular town operations. Additional space within these buildings will be available for expansion, as needed.

Capital Improvement Projects

The Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) will provide the vehicle for the town to set priorities and to make the most efficient use of available funds. Capital programming is the tool which should be used to guide growth toward predetermined areas of the town and county and at predetermined rates. The town should use the capital improvements program to guide developers in proffering conditions for the provision of public facilities. The CIP is also necessary to leverage funds needed to implement development and infrastructure projects.

Implementation Recommendations

There various alternatives available for achieving the objectives relating to the provision of public services and facilities to accommodate growth. This section provides a brief discussion of the general techniques recommended. More specific recommendations are included as needed for individual public services.

- Coordination between the County and the Town to provide adequate sewerage capacity, water, roads, and schools in order for the district to accommodate anticipated county growth. Some of the issues to be considered are:
 - Equitable funding mechanisms
 - Sources of revenue
 - Timetables for the extension of services
 - Safeguards to ensure that existing and future town residents have adequate services and facilities and that they in no way bear additional costs for the extension of services.

- Develop a formula calculating the per unit fiscal impact of residential and commercial development to provide a rational basis on which to accept proffers from developers. The formula can be used to determine impacts on water and sewer facilities, parks, roads, and schools, as well as, for more public welfare needs such as police, fire, and emergency medical facilities.

- Develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan and any agreements for utility extension made with the county. For example, a well-designed capital improvements plan will provide for the orderly extension of sewer and water at a rate needed to accommodate anticipated growth.

- Seek to form partnerships with other stakeholders in the County to advance needs. The Town will communicate and cooperate with local businesses as well as agencies such as the Economic Development Association to understand the needs of industries that the Town seeks to retain and attract to the area. The Town will also work in conjunction with federal and state agencies to explore and obtain various funding sources available such as impact fees, application fees and grant funding to finance projects identified in the capital improvement plan.

- Consider the acceptance of voluntary proffers as a means of obtaining revenue for capital improvements to service new developments. A proffer normally involves the donation of property or improvements by an applicant seeking a rezoning on a property which will offset the capital costs incurred to the locality by allowing the increased development to occur. (Section 15.2 - 2297 Code of Virginia.)

- Adequate facilities standards will help control the development process by showing that sufficient infrastructure and services are present or will be provided. These standards can ensure that land development coincides with the location and timing of capital facilities. Standards for water, waste treatment, transportation, and educational facilities guide the development review process. Consider adequacy of existing facilities such as fire suppression, roads, schools, sewerage, storm drainage, and water and set minimum standards to determine adequacy need to be established for Tappahannock.

- Annexation is a viable way to serve areas adjacent to the town with traditional municipal services. Application can be made to the Virginia Commission on Local Government for the requisite hearings and processing.
- Services are localized within the town limits and are convenient to citizens. As population increases, however, additional employees and departments will be necessary and additional departmentalization may be practical. Coordination with county programs may also provide more effective and efficient delivery of services as they become more complex.
- The Zoning Ordinance should be evaluated in order to ensure the Town is able to accommodate growth under the current capacity of the water and sewage facilities. Specific recommendations include:
 - Require household water saving equipment and technologies in high density residential areas.
 - Undertake an annual review of the Zoning Ordinance with the Planning Commission and Town Council to ensure that regulations remain appropriate for Town priorities and changes.
 - Implement policies that encourage long-term water use reduction practices such as water reuse and reclamation within the review process for public infrastructure connection requests.

Chapter 9



Recreation

Goal

Develop and improve recreation services, facilities, and programs for the citizenry of Tappahannock.

Provide safe public access for the residents of Tappahannock to public lands, government buildings, schools, and open spaces and to a system of parks and facilities for recreation.

Objectives

- Provide recreation programs in association with a system of neighborhood parks, pocket parks, public lands, playgrounds, and open spaces.
- Provide public access and water trails to the waterfront on the Rappahannock River or on Hoskins Creek or both.
- Develop along Hoskins Creek or the Rappahannock River, or both.
- Designate an urban trail system in the Town of Tappahannock utilizing the existing street system.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle access to public lands and open spaces for those areas of town not connected by the existing street system and for future development in the southern part of town via an expanded trail loop system.
- Develop an urban park at the end of Prince Street as part of a downtown revitalization effort.
- Encourage development of other neighborhood parks and playgrounds as a part of development requests.
- Explore possibilities for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of waterfront acreage for public use.

Analysis

Recreation plays an important role in the quality of life of the Town and its economic development growth. Recreational activities lend to the existing traditional character of the natural environment while providing alternative means of transportation, decreasing demand on transportation facilities. The Town has acquired and is working to develop two park sites for recreation and water access. While the Town has a number of recreational enhancement options available, those opportunities are strengthened through the numerous recreational facilities in the County in close proximity to the Town limits. The County-owned sites are comprised of public schools and a public swimming pool, as well as the library and government buildings.

Schools are located primarily in the northern end of the town. The high school is located on Airport Road, the middle school on Marsh Street, and the elementary school adjacent to Route 17. Although these facilities form the majority of Tappahannock's public use facilities, they are not currently open to the public for recreation after school hours, nor are they connected by a non-vehicular transportation facility, such as a bike path or designated walking trail.

Water access is presently provided by two public boat ramps, one of which is available for public use at the time of this update. One ramp is at the end of Prince Street and closed to the public in 2020 due to poor access, inadequate parking, and no pier facilities. The other ramp is located along Hoskins Creek at Dock Street. The Dock Street facility has both ample parking and a docking area; repairs to the dock are needed. The Hoskins Creek ramp is owned by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources with policing and maintenance services provided by the Town. Pilings from an historic wharf provide evidence of previous public access to the Rappahannock riverfront.

There are two public beaches with access to the Rappahannock River in Tappahannock. One beach is located along Newbill Drive; another is located at the end of Duke Street. Publicly owned land exists at the base of the Thomas Downing Bridge between the overpass and Prince Street. The property is owned by VDOT and the Town and is open to the public for recreational uses including picnicking, fishing, and river access.

The Town is a member of the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority. The Authority was formed in 2003 for the purpose of acquiring and managing public water access opportunities in the region that can be used by the public for passive and active activities.

Privately owned recreation areas in the Town that are open to the public consist of ball fields located in the northern end of town. Numerous marinas, a golf course, overnight camping, and a private membership park are within close proximity to Tappahannock. A portion of the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge is located just north of Town and the Essex County Museum is located on Water Lane.

Rappahannock River Park

The Town recognizes the opportunities for public shoreline enjoyment made available due to the proximity of the Rappahannock River. Development of the waterfront park area commonly referred to as the Rappahannock River Park has begun with Phase One already complete, an area owned by VDOT and the Town and located under the bridge on Newbill Drive and Queen Street. There are also additional fishing opportunities available at the park, although there is no pier or boat drop.

Potential Waterfront Park Development actions would include:

- Acquire 2 parcels between bridge and condominiums for development as a passive urban park
- Provide limited parking for park

Additional Activities Envisioned with this Proposed Park Concept

- Farmers market, produce market, seafood emporium
- Festival event for “kick-off” and annual follow-up
- Antiques “Alley” in downtown
- Dock activities: crabbing, fishing, walking, itinerant boat use

While opportunity for waterfront park development exists in this location, the site size is limited and the location of nearby residents suggests use should be limited to passive recreational offerings. This park concept is further discussed in the implementation recommendations of this section.

Assets

- Many historic structures and landscape features of high aesthetic value throughout the town.
- The Rappahannock River bordering town holds significant promise for future access, vistas, active recreation, marine activity, etc.
- Presence of Hoskins Creek meandering through town offers unique potential natural setting for passive recreation and aesthetic enjoyment.
- The upland area west of town at the head of Hoskins Creek offers future potential for a park facility.
- Presence of commercial marina immediately north of town suggests possible downtown/wharf boat link for visitors by water or potential use of part of the Marina site as a small waterfront park facility.
- Town history is strongly linked to the waterfront and creeks. The history suggests possible festival or special event focus to increase tourism into the downtown commercial district.
- Publicly-owned property on the 360/17 Corridor, formerly known as the “Captain Thomas site,” is being developed for public water access such as kayaking, fishing, etc. Additional parks and recreation opportunities are being developed between Earl Street and Virginia Street, near Water Lane.

Problems Identified

1. Lack of parks and recreation facilities for Tappahannock, including a lack of large passive recreation areas and indoor gym/exercise facilities.
2. Lack of publicly-owned land south of Hoskins Creek and in the far western reaches of the town.
3. Lack of pedestrian access between public spaces, particularly evidenced by the Route 360/17 safe-crossing problems and the airport crossing conflict between the middle and high school sites.
4. Lack of neighborhood parks denies the Town an important motivational tool for achieving developer-associated improvements for recreation in the town comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances.

Considerations for Park Development

1. Parks system should be explored that relates to the Rappahannock River Park.
2. Existing schools should be incorporated into park planning for programs and facilities development.
3. Every effort should be made to relate the downtown dock/park component to the historical record of wharves or docks for accuracy in restoration, if possible and practical.
4. Early park support and visibility could be enhanced by building on an established festival event, such as the annual RivahFest, and supported by service organizations. Food sales, proceeds, and commissions would be associated with vendor activity. A parade, contest, or water competition would complete the “Water Day” event.
5. Another boat trip venture, of a local nature and brief in duration, might be introduced and linked to a historical town walk.

Managing Parks and Recreation

A Parks and Recreation Authority can be developed to carry out the task associated with a system of open spaces for public use. Among the structures to consider for implementation are a Parks Authority, a Parks Commission, and a Parks and Recreation Department. A Parks Authority, whether it is a town authority or a joint City/County Authority, is the political structure that sets rules and regulations, establishes development priorities and funding mechanisms, and provides for comprehensive management and overall system maintenance. A Parks and Recreation Department would be responsible for the day-to-day operation and maintenance of facilities and for programming events and activities.

Utilizing Publicly Owned Land and Facilities

Given the history of excellent cooperation between Tappahannock and Essex County, it seems logical to presume that this cooperation will certainly extend to County-owned land located in the town. For Tappahannock, this suggests with a minimum of public expense that the town can anticipate reasonable access to adequate publicly owned land to form the basic “spine” of a system of parks and open spaces for public use.

The County operates the three schools, as well as the library and the downtown government buildings and grounds, all of which are suitable for inclusion in the proposed system.

The airport facility has strong potential for a mixed-use designation, which could in the future make some portion of that land available for use in a system of open spaces and parks. The airport property consists of over 70 acres of land that the Town envisions becoming a mixed-use district within the town. There is the potential there for light industry, office spaces, more parking areas, and open space to be used for recreational purposes such as a recreational trail or a cross country course for the schools.

The considerable wetlands areas that adjoin Hoskins Creek provide an extremely rare and exciting conservation land area, highly suitable for inclusion into the proposed open space system. This large area presents a great opportunity for use as a passive observation area for wildlife and the natural environment, as well as an excellent location for pedestrian use and access via the urban trails system.

Leasing / Acquiring Additional Public Lands

While the inventory of publicly owned land in Tappahannock is substantial, a comprehensive and balanced system of parks and open spaces implies the need for additional lands. This is particularly acute in the case of the need for a waterfront access park facility downtown, and similarly important in the town at or south of Hoskins Creek.

Central Park

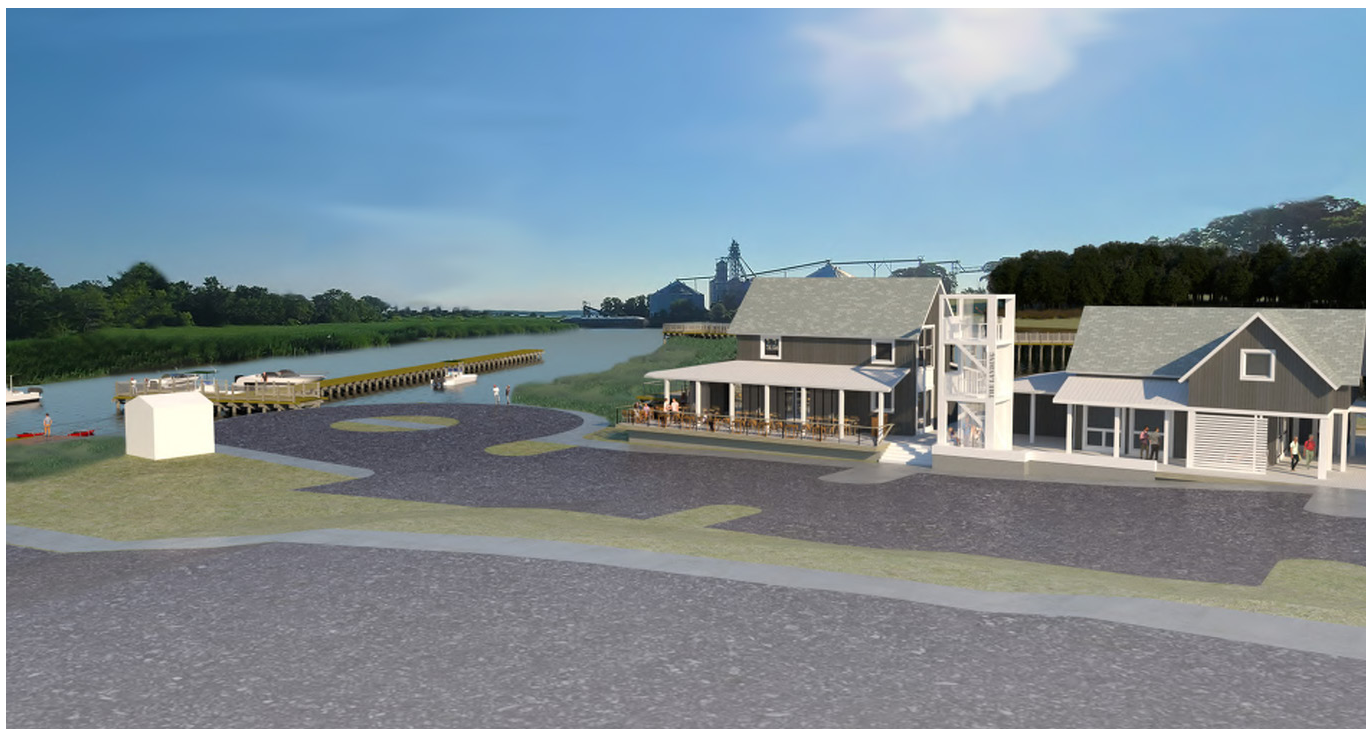
In October 2021, the Town closed on properties located between Virginia Street and Earl Street to develop a new, downtown public park facility. Referred to as Central Park, the new facility will feature tennis courts, pickleball courts, walking trails, and picnic pavilions, as well as other flex field spaces. The proposed Central Park will provide a needed space in the heart of Tappahannock's central business district for active and passive recreation alike.



Tappahannock's new Central Park.

Hoskins Creek Park Facility Development

The Town of Tappahannock has acquired a 2-acre property immediately south of the Downing Bridge at the end of Queen Street (also referred to as the Captain Thomas site) for the development of the Hoskins Creek waterfront park. The development of this open space will provide public access to the waterfront, and potentially serve as a vital interest component for a revitalized downtown commercial district. The adopted master plan for the site includes an ADA-accessible kayak launch, transient boat dock, boardwalk, parking, a bath house, and buildings. Construction is anticipated to begin in Spring of 2023.



The new Hoskins Creek Facility.

Improvements to Land and Facilities for Public Use

While designation of publicly owned lands and the dedication of leased or acquired properties together provide a network of parks and open spaces, the facilities appropriate for a parks system will not necessarily be distributed evenly or satisfactorily given the current status of each parcel. Improvements to the sites and the addition of equipment and facilities are essential to meet the needs of the community in recreation programming.

Depending on the specific site and the programmed use, essential improvements would include:

1. Safety considerations: drainage, improved sod or groundcover, safe sidewalks, curb ramps, parking surfaces, traffic control devices for pedestrians, bicycle racks, and lighting.
2. Use considerations: signage, traffic flow pattern, traffic barriers, benches, tables, trash cans, waste spigots, lights, bathrooms, swing sets, jogging and exercise trail stations, and storage buildings.
3. Aesthetic considerations: trees for shade and definition, shrubs for space control definition, fences, planter boxes, flowers for beauty, hedges, preparation of vistas or views, etc.

The input of the citizenry in Tappahannock via a Parks Department, Commission, Board, or Authority would provide valuable guidance for town leaders in assessing and inventorying existing facilities and developing a capital improvements budget for long term development and improvements.

Implementation Recommendations

- Designate existing publicly owned lands shown on the land use plan as park lands/open space lands. These sites would include the elementary, middle, and high schools, the Dock Street dock, the parcel under lease to VDOT that is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and owned by the Town, the government building sites, as well as the conservation lands associated with Hoskins Creek.
- Continue to plan and develop a waterfront park facility. Seek funding mechanisms required for the downtown waterfront park land acquisitions and development as a cooperative effort between the town and Atkins Petroleum Products.
- Explore a town/county collaboration as one approach to planning and maintenance for future park and recreational facilities.
- Establish a program to upgrade all park sites for appropriate public use as recreation facilities.
- Develop a pedestrian and bicycle plan that includes facilities located in the Town and County. These facilities should be planned and designed to encourage use of existing and proposed recreational facilities and connection to downtown area.

Chapter 10



Downtown Revitalization

Goal

To maintain and support a thriving downtown economy by promoting the environmental, cultural, and historical aspects of Downtown Tappahannock and diversifying business options.

Objectives

- Create a visual gateway in the northern section of the town and strengthen the visual image of the Town's gateways located at Hoskins Creek.
- Develop design standards for the historic district for all new construction and exterior renovations to existing structure.
- Encourage redevelopment of compatible uses and structures adjacent to the downtown historic area that lend to its character.
- Encourage the location of new businesses in the downtown area while retaining and expanding existing businesses.
- Encourage and support the identification and preservation of historic landmarks within the town.

Analysis

One of the key concerns mentioned in the Tappahannock Comprehensive Plan is the enhancement of the visual appearance of the town. This chapter includes a definition of the urban design districts and their attributes. It will also identify the alternative methods available to the town for protecting or enhancing community appearance and the legal basis for doing so. It is the intent of this chapter to focus on the town's appearance by clearly defining the town's urban design districts and evaluating the elements which can influence their appearance, and by offering a framework by which the town's character will be preserved or enhanced.

Through observation and evaluation, four distinct design districts have been identified and were found to be appropriate for assigning different levels of treatment to the commercial corridor area of the town:

1. The Southern Business Corridor
2. The Northern Business Corridor
3. The Central Business District
4. Tappahannock Main Street

The Southern Business Corridor

The Southern Corridor is comprised of two miles of commercial business and service uses along Route 360/17 in the southern section of Tappahannock south of Hoskins Creek. The Southern Business Corridor is easily identified by the mid to large box commercial uses with vast parking areas, and signage designed to attract travelers passing through town. Businesses located in this area, such as Lowes, Walmart, and shopping centers are destination oriented in that local and regional shoppers seek to frequent these businesses specifically. There are numerous convenience stores and services for shoppers in the region and travelers passing through Tappahannock. The convenience stores are oriented closer to Route 360/17 and attract both local and regional customers. The recently constructed buildings in the Southern Business Corridor are one or two stories, large in scale, and built of concrete, metal, brick, and glass.

In analyzing the Southern Business Corridor, it becomes apparent that two major problems exist. Numerous signs at different scales and styles tend to confuse motorists looking for a particular business. The number of curb cuts on Routes 360/17 creates traffic issues due to the high volumes of vehicular traffic. The Virginia Department of Transportation has since developed access management regulations that require future development to restrict the number of entrances and exits along the corridor.

Large shopping centers and big box businesses in the Southern District are designed with sparsely landscaped parking lots. Stringent landscape standards would help commercial development blend more with the character of the area and provide for less impervious surface reducing water runoff.

Addressing these issues is essential to the Town's goal of providing an attractive impression for travelers and potential tourists traveling along Route 360/17. Sidewalks are developed sporadically along the roadway adjacent to commercial development limiting pedestrian friendly access. In addition, this section of town is economically important because it draws people from surrounding areas for shopping.

The visual elements of the Southern Business Corridor should be enhanced in several ways. A variety of low maintenance trees and shrubbery should be planted in the median strip to narrow the field of vision for those traveling on Route 360/17. Narrowing the field of vision will reduce distractions from the intense activities surrounding the traveler. Furthermore, the space in which people are moving is made smaller which identifies more closely with the general character of a small town. Trees also provide a small town feel as opposed to lanes of traffic experienced in more urban areas. Help in enhancing this corridor may be achieved through a highway corridor overlay zone (see Chapter 3) and the Development Appearance Standards set forth on the following pages.

Map 14: Tappahannock Commercial Corridor



The Northern Business Corridor

The Northern Business Corridor is situated along Route 360/17 between Hoskins Creek and the intersection of 360/17 in the northern section of town. This design district is different from the Southern Business Corridor because the road narrows, the buildings are smaller in scale and are closer to the road. Businesses along the Northern Business Corridor consist of more small-scale retail, restaurant, and services.

Entering into the area from the south across Hoskin's Creek Bridge provides the first view of water and associated activities. Hoskins Creek bridge acts as a gateway into the Northern Business Corridor from the south, while a second gateway is formed at the intersection of Route 360 and Route 17.

The signage is comprised of different sizes and styles; the lighting is oriented to automobile traffic. Sidewalks are provided beginning at Hoskins Creek Bridge then narrow and deteriorate as you travel north towards the downtown area.

The Central Business District

The Central Business District (CBD) encompasses the Tappahannock Main Street district as described in Chapter 7 of this Plan, as well as the historic commercial area downtown from the waterfront back to adjacent residential areas that compose the older residential neighborhoods of Tappahannock. The CBD, 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. Any effort to improve the visual quality of this area must deal with economic realities, i.e., the competitive nature of the large commercial centers located in the town and the impact they have had on the economic viability of the older commercial district. The CBD designation provides for the significant role that commercial land uses continue to provide in blending a compatible mixture of commercial, cultural, institutional, governmental, and residential uses in a compact, pedestrian oriented, traditional town center that serves regional business needs.

The CBD contributes to the Town's urban feel in the midst of the rural character of the county. In order to provide the intensity and diversity of choices that make urban centers attractive to visitors, high densities are essential. Revitalizing this area will require a concerted effort to attract shoppers and visitors to the downtown to purchase goods and services that cannot be obtained in the commercial centers, i.e., specialty items. Making the downtown an especially attractive area for visitors can best be achieved by capitalizing on the positive qualities of this area, e.g., the waterfront, the historic charm, and the contrast it presents to urban centers along U.S. 17.

A vibrant and thriving downtown is indicative of a growing local economy. As of 2021, the Town was no longer designated as an Enterprise Zone. One option for the Town to continue to offer additional local incentives is through exploring the creation of a local tourism zone to offer additional local incentives. Designation as an Enterprise Zone could also be reobtained in future years.

In order to serve its purpose, the CBD must be highly accessible to shoppers and tourists with adequate public access and amenities. Sidewalks, trails, and bicycle facilities should be provided to promote alternative means of access and reduce the demand for automobiles and parking. Street and intersections that provide local access must be managed so as to permit convenient access to the shops and other attractions of the downtown.

The Town is currently undertaking a master planning process for downtown revitalization, slated for completion in 2023. Among other things, the plan should include a detailed development evaluation and plan for increasing public access to the waterfront.

Historic Downtown Tappahannock Association

Reflecting its commitment to downtown revitalization, Historic Downtown Tappahannock Association, formerly called Tappahannock Main Street, has adopted and adapted Main Street America's Four-Point Approach to maximize efforts in the community. The Town was formally designated as an accredited Advancing Main Street community in 2020 and has developed specific transformation action strategies to maximize revitalization efforts in the community. Virginia Main Street has partnered with the town to install gateway signage and undertake a Community Development Block Grant for downtown revitalization. Building on this progress will require continued commitment on the part of the town and private sector, i.e., landowners, residents, and merchants, to fully accomplish the town's revitalization goals. The associations covered area consists of properties from June Parker Marina and Tickners Creek south to Hoskins Creek including the historic downtown. The association has an organized citizen group working towards building and promoting a more vibrant Main Street.

The Main Street Four-Point Approach consists of Organization, Design, Economic Restructuring, and Promotion:

- Organization requires the creation of a coalition of merchants, residents, property owners, officials, and other interested stakeholders to pursue revitalization activities in the district. The activities should increase the capacity of the association to achieve the revitalization goals. These goals include enhancing the Town and County's ability to strengthen and retain existing businesses by offering resources and support to apply for national and state recognized designations that will open the area up to more funding resources, such as pursuing Main Street Status with the Department of Housing and Community Development.
- The design aspect includes making the area attractive physically with cohesive and unifying design elements and amenities between Prince Street, Queen Street and Church Lane while preserving the historic assets present. It also includes necessary renovation of downtown buildings that is consistent with the architectural theme and character of the area and providing pedestrian friendly amenities that are essential to pedestrian oriented commercial centers.
- Economic restructuring is crucial in transforming downtown into a more active business district. The efforts will require recruitment of new businesses and businesses looking to expand that are in keeping with the land uses desired downtown, as well as developing cultural and entertainment attractions in the traditional business district. The Town in partnership with the County and the Essex Economic Development Authority seeks to facilitate restructuring downtown through the Enterprise Zone program. The program will be used to target and attract niche commercial businesses and leverage services that will help strengthen and diversify business options that are available downtown.
- Promotion consists of increasing local business activity through the identification and adoption of new business marketing ideas and activities, as well as increasing the number of special events held downtown. Rivahfest, an annual event showcasing the Town, attracts more than 12,000 visitors providing a first-hand look at the community and is offered free of charge. Installation of new signage is also another tool proposed as a part revitalization plan that will assist in marketing the downtown area.

The Town of Tappahannock has acquired the land between the end of Prince Street and Downing Bridge for use as a waterfront park. The Town is also in the process of acquiring the end of Prince Street with the intent to install infrastructure such as a pier to access the Rappahannock River waterfront for recreational use. Plans for the Prince Street road ending were designed and outlined in the Tappahannock Main Street Program developed in December 2012. These plans not only provide for more tourist and recreational activities but also help to protect water quality by minimizing water runoff from development of the waterfront. The plan also discusses and provides recommendations for downtown area including three phases of program improvements:

Phase 1: Rappahannock River Waterfront Pier Access:

- o Pier access to deep water channel
- o Pierhead boat and cruise landing facility
- o Intermediate pier shell building for services
- o Tidal floating docks for transient boat visitors
- o Dedicated fishing pier upstream of Downing Bridge
- o Handicap accessible from land and water
- o Configure utilities and services to pier
- o Establish a long-term plan for waterfront park

Phase 2: Prince Street Improvement Project:

- o Develop comprehensive downtown landscaping plan
- o Placing all utilities underground
- o Repaving sidewalks and associated hardscapes
- o Reduction in curb cuts
- o Streetlights and banner support
- o Street trees and related landscaping
- o Crosswalks with decorative hardscapes
- o Alternative parking solutions
- o Wider pedestrian sidewalks
- o Public art
- o New street furniture
- o Divided street median landscaping

Phase 3: Church Lane and Queen Street Additional Improvements:

- o Placing utilities underground
- o Provide streetlights and banner support
- o Street trees and related landscaping
- o Divided street median landscaping

The Town wishes to improve the walkability of the downtown community, which will require improvements to existing sidewalks. Improved pedestrian facilities will also help to relieve traffic demand on inadequately designed roads in the Northern Business Corridor and downtown area. Presently, it is an activity center for both local citizens and regional visitors and as such, can boost tourism in Tappahannock, strengthening the local economic base.

A plan is needed to study the feasibility and impacts of widening sidewalks throughout the improvement area and a comprehensive landscaping plan to unify the project areas. These needs are expected to be addressed through the on-going Downtown Revitalization Master Plan (2022). Funding for the planning and improvement of the downtown area may come from various funding sources, including but not limited to:

- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): The TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways. This project is administered by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 established a federal reimbursement program for the acquisition and/or development of public outdoor recreation areas. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is administered in Virginia by the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) for the National Park Service. The program represents a federal, state, and local partnership. A key feature of the program is that all LWCF assisted areas must be maintained and opened, in perpetuity, as public outdoor recreation areas. This requirement ensures their use for future generations.
- Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Boating Access Grants to Localities Program: The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources has funds to assist localities in providing public opportunities for boating access facilities. The funds are derived from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, and from boat sales tax and registration fees and federal funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The grants are available for new development or the renovation or improvements to boating access facilities. This grant program's first year was 2013.

The Historic District

The historic district extends from Duke Street north to Queen Street and Route 360/17 east to the Rappahannock River and is included within the designated Historic Downtown Tappahannock Association's district. The historic district consists of a cluster of structures which have been identified as historically significant, the majority of which are located in the old town section around the Courthouse green. The Old Debtor's Prison on the Courthouse green was built before 1769 and now serves as the Essex Treasurer's Office.

County-owned Beale Memorial Church on the Courthouse Square contains the original walls of the 1729 Courthouse. Anderson House on the St. Margaret's campus is located on one of the oldest occupied tracts in Tappahannock, the Robert Coleman property.

In general, the buildings and structures located within the historic district reflect a colonial design. The main street within the historic district is the portion of Prince Street east of Route 360/17. One of the concerns identified within the district is that many of the structures along Prince Street have either been altered or constructed in a way that the colonial character has been lost. Also detracting from the historic character is the inconsistent size and style of the signs used by the commercial establishments. Finally, there exist no strong or consistent visual linkages from one side of Prince Street to the other.

The built environment plays a significant role in the quality of life a community enjoys. The purpose of the design element of the plan for Tappahannock is to provide a vision for the future and a framework for improving the town's man-made environment. Such a vision includes well-trimmed and landscaped public areas which enhance the style, color, and texture for the surrounding buildings. The buildings themselves should complement one another and reflect the mark of history on the town in their design. For example, the historic district represents Tappahannock's colonial past; the Northern Commercial Corridor, through its eclectic architectural style, reflects the town's gradual economic growth and expansion. The Southern Commercial Corridor reflects Tappahannock's current regional economic importance through its newer and more modern architectural style.

Tourists entering Tappahannock should be able to recognize the boundaries of the town by gateways that visually welcome them into town. Gateways help to identify district boundaries, each district having its own identity and importance.

In addition to the general appearance standards presented above, the scale of design within the historic district is geared towards the pedestrian. As such, special emphasis on details will be placed on the urban and architectural design plans for this area. The street furniture should reflect a colonial character with street lighting designed to replicate traditional soft lighting. The benches and trash containers should also reflect the style used in colonial periods. The sidewalk planters should consist of a uniform style and should be rigorously maintained.

The character of the storefronts should be enhanced. Mullions and shutters should be used in windows which will enhance the traditional colonial style and appearance of downtown and reinforce the pedestrian scale of the area. Awnings of a uniform style can be utilized by the stores located in the historic district.

Although the style of several buildings within the historic district may not be the same, all structures blend well in terms of texture and color. Brick is the predominant material used to face the buildings. In addition to brick, wood siding may also be found. The colors of the paint used are also complementary, consisting mainly of warm earth tones such as tan, soft grey and white.

The historic district also contains many positive yet subtle features that are not readily identified but add to the picturesque atmosphere of the district. The chiming of the bells in the courthouse complex along with the historic markers on the buildings serve to create a sense of time and place for residents and visitors the area.

This rich history is only one of several assets that attract people to Tappahannock that cannot be replaced once destroyed. Historic areas should not be viewed only as attractions for tourists, but as elements that enrich the experience of living in a community and make it more attractive for others. The preservation of an area's historical heritage is an important economic development strategy that contributes to the enrichment of the quality life of residents and the local economy. The town is committed to enhancing its historic district, as evidenced by its recent designation as a Main Street community and creation of a façade improvement grant program to enhance the appearance of businesses. The Essex County Museum and Historical Society has created a courtyard on Prince Street to provide open space for the community.

Historic Preservation Programs

Historic preservation programs are designed to assist with preservation efforts by providing funding as well as guidance on proper procedures for altering, improving, and maintaining historic structures and amenities. Historic preservation efforts on behalf of a community display character and show a sense of pride and self-awareness. There are several methods available by which communities can make historic preservation a reality. While much has been done to preserve local architecture and history, many opportunities still exist to further preservation effort programs.

A number of existing programs provide assistance in protection or preservation, through tax benefits, professional historical/architectural consulting and so forth. More detailed information on programs including the National Historic Landmark, National Register of Historic Places, Conservation and Preservation Easements, and Historic Overlay Districts can be found from various historic preservation organizations and such publications as Virginia's Heritage: A Property Owner's Guide to Resource Protection, published by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Historic Resources.

National Historic Trademark - A historical resource is generally a site over fifty years old. The criteria for determining these sites have been established by guidelines set forth by the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. A district, site, building, structure, or object can be considered a historic resource. The criterion is that the resource must be noted to be significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture.

This program, run by the National Park Service, is the primary federal means of recognizing the exceptional national significance of historic properties. The program is also one of the major tools used to scrutinize proposals for additions to the National Park System and to select nominations to the World Heritage List.

In recognition of the historic significance of a property, the owner receives a certificate of designation and a plaque bearing the name of the property and attesting to its national significance. Ownership and use of the property is not changed by being listed as a National Historic Landmark. Instead, an honor is granted.

National Register of Historic Places - In 1966, Congress established the National Register of Historic Places as the Federal Government's official list of properties, including districts, significant in American history and culture. In Virginia, the Register is administered by the Virginia Landmarks Register. Some benefits resulting from a listing in the National Register include the following:

1. National recognition of the value of historic properties individually and collectively to the public.
2. Eligibility for Federal tax incentives and other preservation assistance.
3. Eligibility for a Virginia income tax benefit for the approved rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential buildings.
4. Consideration in the planning for federally and state assisted projects.
5. Listing does not interfere with a private property owner's right to alter, manage, or dispose of property.

Virginia Landmarks Register - The Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks (VDHL) surveys historic buildings, structures, and archeological sites to determine eligibility of being listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register. As with being on the National Register of Historic Places, listing does not limit or regulate the property owner in what can or cannot be done with the property. In order to be considered for listing on the National Register or having an easement on the property to be accepted by the VDHL, the site usually must first be listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register.

Virginia Historic Preservation Easement - A state-held historic preservation easement monitored by the Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks (VDHL) is an excellent means of perpetually preserving a historical structure and property for future generations. The benefits for a property owner to donate his land to the VDHL include income, estate, inheritance, and gift and property tax benefits. In exchange, the owner gives the VDHL the final word regarding proposed alterations.

Local Historic Overlay Zone - A third, but separate designation is the local historic district which is generally an overlay over a specified area created by the governing locality. This district, allowed by the Code of Virginia, Title 15.2-2306, is designed to maintain the architectural character of a historic community. It may allow an appointed commission or board to review alteration and demolition requests of architectural or historic significance. The main purpose of historic overlay regulations is to safeguard the heritage and character of the town by preserving the District therein which reflect elements of its cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history.

There are well-publicized design guidelines that the committee should employ when assisting the applicant in obtaining a certificate of approval for alteration or new construction. The government supports these owners' efforts through tax benefits and other programs. By creating such districts, a community can look forward to being able to maintain its identity in the face of advancing new developments.

The Town of Tappahannock has adopted a Historic Overlay Zone as part of its Zoning Ordinance. The following criteria are included within the Historic Overlay Zone ordinance, and should continue to be included and considered when determining whether to apply a Historic Overlay Zone to a parcel or parcels:

A. Historic and Cultural Significance

The historic resource:

1. Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the town, county, state, or nation;
2. Is the site of a historic event;
3. Is a site that has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history;
4. Is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society; or,
5. Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of the town and its neighborhoods.

B. Architectural and Design Significance

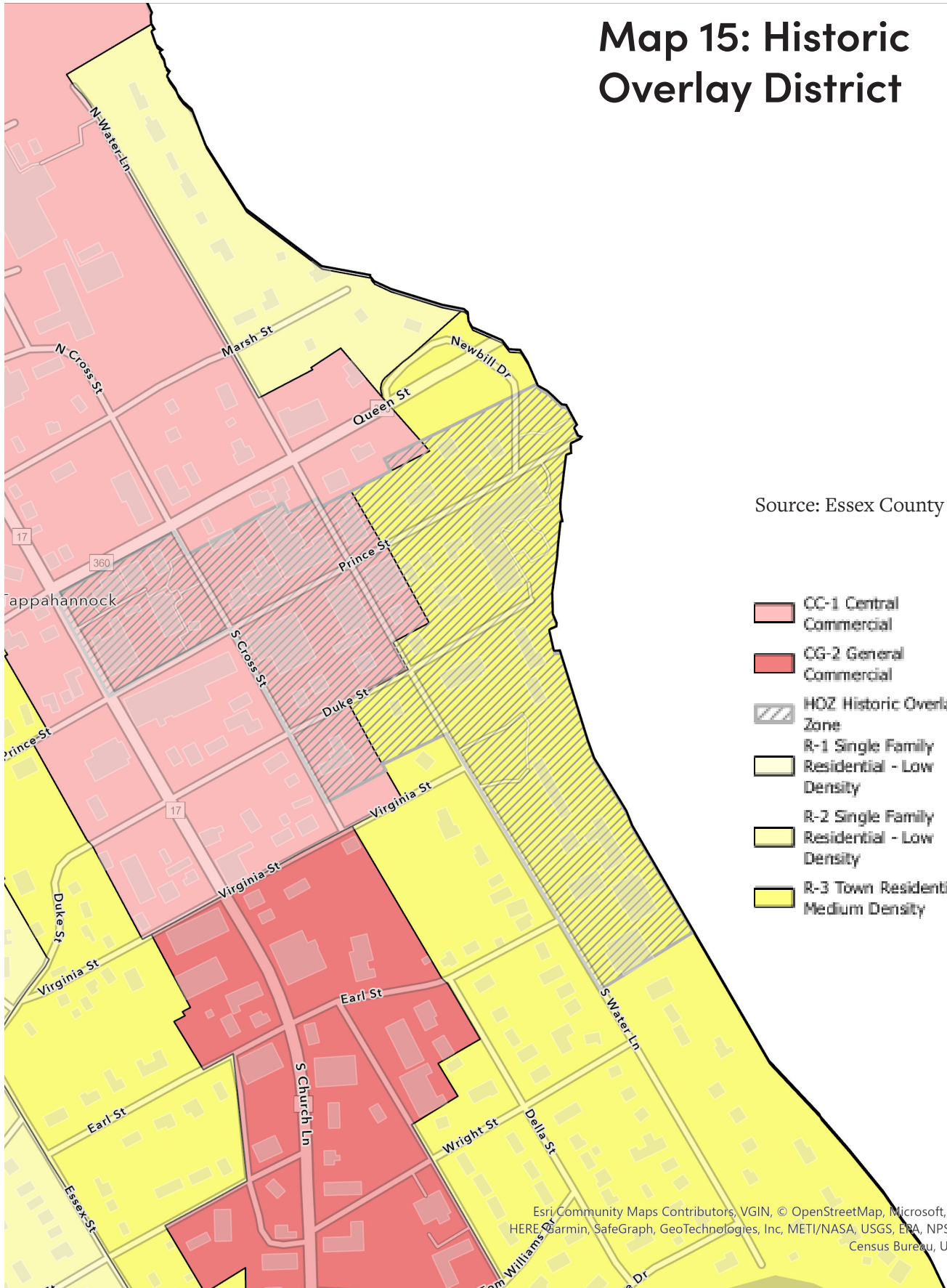
The historic resource:

1. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style, or method of construction;
2. Represents the work of a master craftsman, architect, or builder;
3. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or,
4. Represents an established and familiar visual feature of the town, due to its singular physical characteristics or landscape.

Non-Profit Preservation and Conservation Organizations - A number of organizations exist throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia whose objective is to preserve and conserve archeological and historical resources. These include, but are not limited to, the Archeological Society of Virginia, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, and the Council of Virginia Archaeologists. Individuals can contact the Virginia Department of Historic Resources in Richmond, Virginia for a more complete listing of existing organizations.

Map 15: Historic Overlay District

Source: Essex County GIS



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Architectural Design Standards

Architectural design standards promote an aesthetically sound development. Aesthetics help to protect and enhance real estate values, foster civic pride, and improve the overall appearance of a community. All future development within the identified urban design districts should be subject to design review for compliance with minimum architectural design and development standards. The minimum standards that should be achieved are performance standards rather than inflexible and stringent criteria. The intent of these performance standards is to promote quality development that will complement the community character of Tappahannock.

These standards are not intended to restrict imagination or development creativity, but rather, to assist in focusing on development design principals which should result in enhancing the visual appearance of the built environment in Tappahannock. The development appearance standards relate to such factors as: relationship of buildings to the site; relationship of existing buildings and site to adjoining areas; landscape and site treatment; building design; signs; and maintenance. These standards should not be considered cost prohibitive or overly restrictive since they embody common sense design principles which were traditionally employed throughout the country prior to the advent of post-war suburbanization.

The following are recommended development appearance standards for future multi-family, commercial and industrial development in identified urban design districts of Tappahannock:

Relationship of Buildings to Site

- The site should be planned to accomplish a desirable transition with the streetscape and to provide for adequate planting, safe pedestrian movement, and screened parking areas.
- Site planning in which setbacks and yards are in excess of zoning restrictions is encouraged to provide an interesting relationship between buildings. Buildings in the downtown and community centers are encouraged to minimize front setbacks to enhance the traditional street/building relationships typically found in rural villages. Parking areas should be treated with decorative elements, building wall extensions, plantings, berms, or other innovative means so as to screen parking areas from public ways.
- Without restricting the permissible limits of the applicable zoning district, the height and scale of each building should be compatible with its site and existing (or anticipated) adjoining buildings.
- Newly installed utility services and service revisions necessitated by exterior alterations should be placed underground wherever possible.

Relationship of Buildings and Site to Adjoining Area

- Adjacent buildings of different architectural styles should be made compatible by such means as screens, site breaks, and materials.
- Harmony in color, texture, lines, and masses should be required. Monotony of design should be avoided.
- Adjacent incompatible land uses should be screened from one another by landscaping, berms, walls, and fences.

Landscape and Site Treatment

- Where natural or existing topographic patterns contribute to beauty and utility of a development they should be preserved and developed. Modifications to topography should be permitted where it contributes to good appearance, or where it is necessary.
- Grades of walks, parking spaces, terraces, and other paved areas should provide an inviting and stable appearance for the pedestrian. Emphasis should be placed on facilitating pedestrian traffic in the historic/downtown area of the Town, especially traffic moving to and from parking lots to walkways.
- Landscape treatment should be provided to enhance architectural features, strengthen vistas and important axis, and provide shade.
- Plant material should be selected for interests in its structure, texture, and color, and for its ultimate growth and maintenance expectancy. Plants that are indigenous to the area and others that will be hearty, harmonious to design, and of good appearance should be used.
- Parking areas and traffic ways should be enhanced with landscaped spaces containing trees, tree groupings or shrubbery.
- Where building sites limit planting, the placement of trees in parking or paved areas should be required.
- Screening of service yards and other places that tend to be unsightly should be accomplished by use of walls, fencing, enclosures, plantings, or combinations of these. Screening should be effective in winter and summer.
- In areas where general planting will not prosper, other materials such as fences, walls, and pavings of wood, brick, stone gravel, and cobbles should be used. Carefully selected plants should be combined with such materials where possible.
- Exterior lighting, when used, should enhance the adjoining landscape. Lighting standards and building fixtures should be of a design and size compatible with the building and adjacent areas. Lighting should be designed to avoid excessive brightness.

Building Design

- Architectural style should not be restricted. Evaluation of the appearance of a project should be based on the quality of its design and relationship to surroundings.
- Buildings should have good scale and be in harmonious conformance with permanent neighboring development.
- Materials should have good architectural character and should be selected for harmony of the building with adjoining buildings. Materials should be of durable quality. Materials should be selected for suitability to the type of buildings and the design in which they are used. Buildings should have the same material, or those that are architecturally harmonious, used for all building walls and other exterior building components wholly or partly visible from public ways. In any design in which the structural frame is exposed to view, the structural materials should be compatible within themselves and harmonious with their surroundings.
- Building components, such as windows, eaves, doors, and parapets should have good proportions and relationships to one another.
- Mechanical equipment or other utility hardware on roof, ground, or buildings should be screened from public view with materials harmonious with the building, or they should be so located as not to be visible from public ways.
- Exterior lighting should be part of the architectural concept. Fixtures, standards, and all exposed accessories should be harmonious with building design.
- Refuse and waste removal areas, service yards, storage yards, and exterior work areas should be screened from view of public ways.
- Monotony of design in single or multiple building projects should be avoided. Variation of detail, form, and siting should be used to provide visual interest. In multiple building projects, variable siting of individual projects should be used to prevent a monotonous appearance.

Signs

- Every sign should have “good” scale and proportion in its design and in its visual relationship to buildings and surroundings.
- Every sign should be designed as an integral architectural element of the building and site to which it principally relates.
- The number of graphic elements on a sign should be held to the minimum needed to convey the sign’s major message and should be composed in proportion to the area of the sign face.
- The colors, materials, and lighting of every sign should be restrained and harmonious with the building and site to which it principally relates.
- Each sign should be compatible with signs on adjoining premises and should not compete for attention.

Maintenance - Planning and Design Factors

- Materials and finishes should be selected for their durability and wear as well as for their beauty. Proper measures and devices should be incorporated for protection against the elements, neglect, damage, and abuse.
- Provisions for washing and cleaning of buildings and structures, and control of dirt and refuse should be incorporated in the design. Configurations that tend to catch and accumulate debris, leaves, trash, dirt, and rubbish should be avoided.
- Provisions for landscape maintenance and replacement should be added.

Implementation Recommendations

In order to achieve the goals and objectives outlined for downtown revitalization, the town should implement the following recommendations into its planning efforts:

- Continue to use the Historic Overlay Zone district to designate buildings and parcels in the Town deserving of additional preservation and protection.
- Create and implement design and architectural standards for those developments adjacent to the Historic District. The design standards should encourage colors, mass, scale, and architectural styles that compliment that of adjacent structures and uses.
- Establish a Historic Preservation or Architectural Review board to review requests in the Historic District.
- Implement design standards for signage for all business establishments within the town. Sign guidelines for the Historic District should be separate from those development for other commercial districts. Signage in the Historic district should vary from hanging to V frames to all for consistency with its small-town character.
- Implement programs for the improvement of window and awning treatments to all structures, as well as improve landscaping in all public places within the historic district and the Northern Business Corridor.
- Pursue national and state recognized designations which will allow access to resources that will help to promote the cultural, economic, and historical aspects of downtown Tappahannock as a tourist location.
- Coordinate with other local agencies and organizations to promote tourism, business growth and diversity in the downtown area. Promotion efforts should include enhancements of the existing buildings and streetscape, marketing of downtown events and revision of land use regulations to include a broader use of downtown buildings and structures.

Appendix



