

SUSSEX COUNTY, VIRGINIA
SMALL AREA PLANS

STONY CREEK



**PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT
AUGUST 2021**



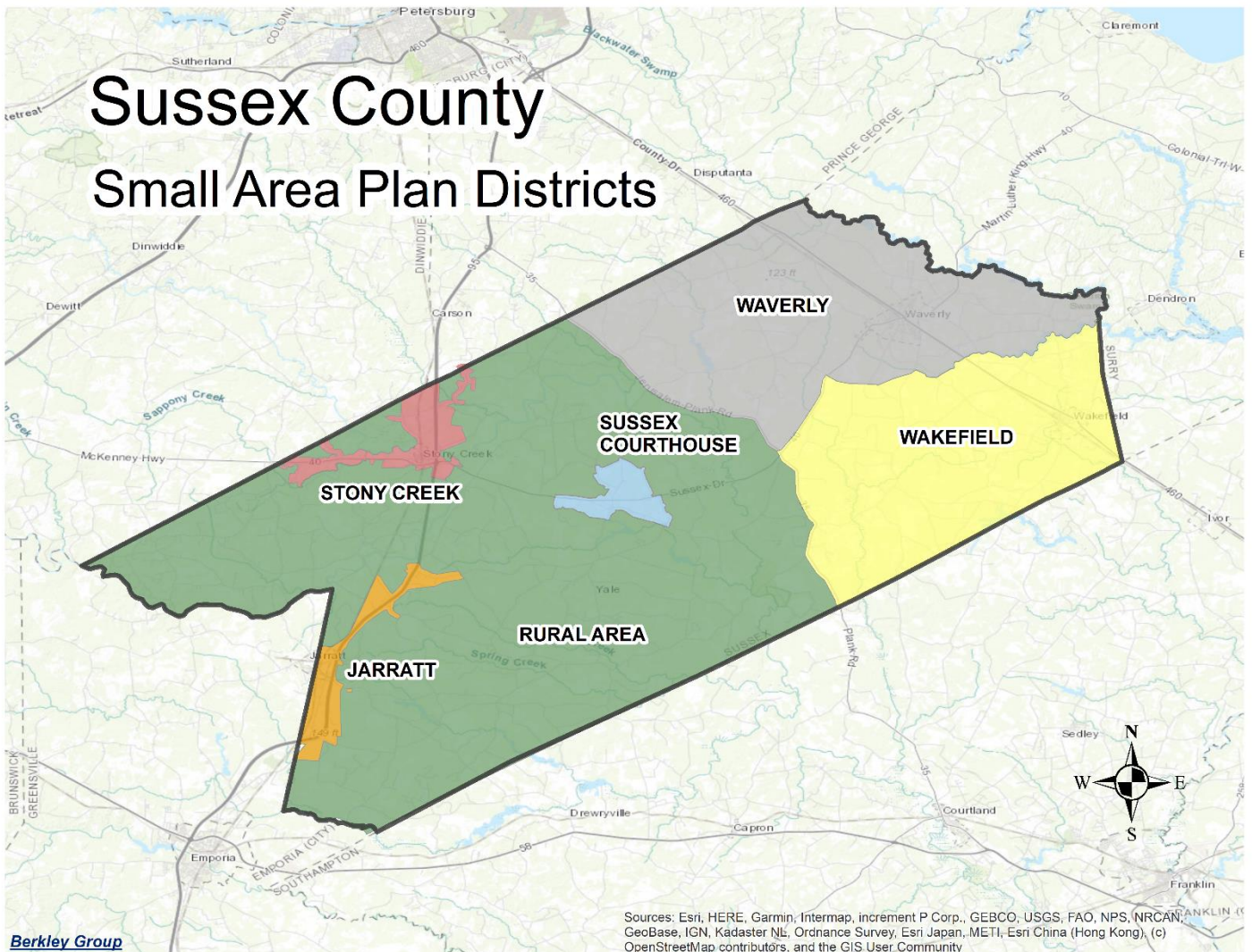
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Preface

Sussex County is a rural yet diverse County that contains individual development areas separated by rural landscape, farms, forests, and a diverse network of waterways. Due to this disparate pattern of development, Sussex County has chosen to utilize a planning strategy that includes individualized area plans for six areas, including the rural area that lies between each of the developed areas.

Each of the geographic regions of Sussex County has a prevalent strength that is specific to the unique conditions of that area. By identifying, focusing on, and nurturing these individual strengths, the County can develop a balance of overall growth and conservation that builds a healthy ecosystem for future development. The goal is to support beneficial growth in each of the focus areas that promotes the success of the County as a whole, while protecting the elements that are important to the people, the economy, and the culture.



Six Planning Areas

The six individual areas that create the backbone of this interdependent County planning strategy are as follows:

Sussex Courthouse / State Route 40 Planning Area – Civic Core

This planning area contains a large government complex and new consolidated school facility. The area is of historical importance and is surrounded by large pristine farms that are important to the local agricultural heritage. It is also served by State Route 40 which is a significant local transportation route within the County.

Jarratt Planning Area – Interstate Services

Located along Interstate 95 (I-95) with relatively little floodplain area and sufficient public services, this planning area can support higher intensity development that is reliant upon easy access to I-95. The area offers a good industrial alternative to the Waverly area due to transportation access.

Rural Planning Area – Conservation

Agriculture is an important economic and cultural driver in Sussex County. Planning in this area should ensure protection of prime farmland, forests, and the hydrological network that supports the farm economy, rural heritage, tourism, and environmental diversity.

Stony Creek Planning Area – Commercial Center

Fed by I-95 and accessible to other areas in the County, the Stony Creek area can accommodate commercial development that is missing in the rural area between Petersburg and Emporia. The large floodplain/wetland areas of this district restrict the amount of development and make it more suitable to commercial than industrial development.

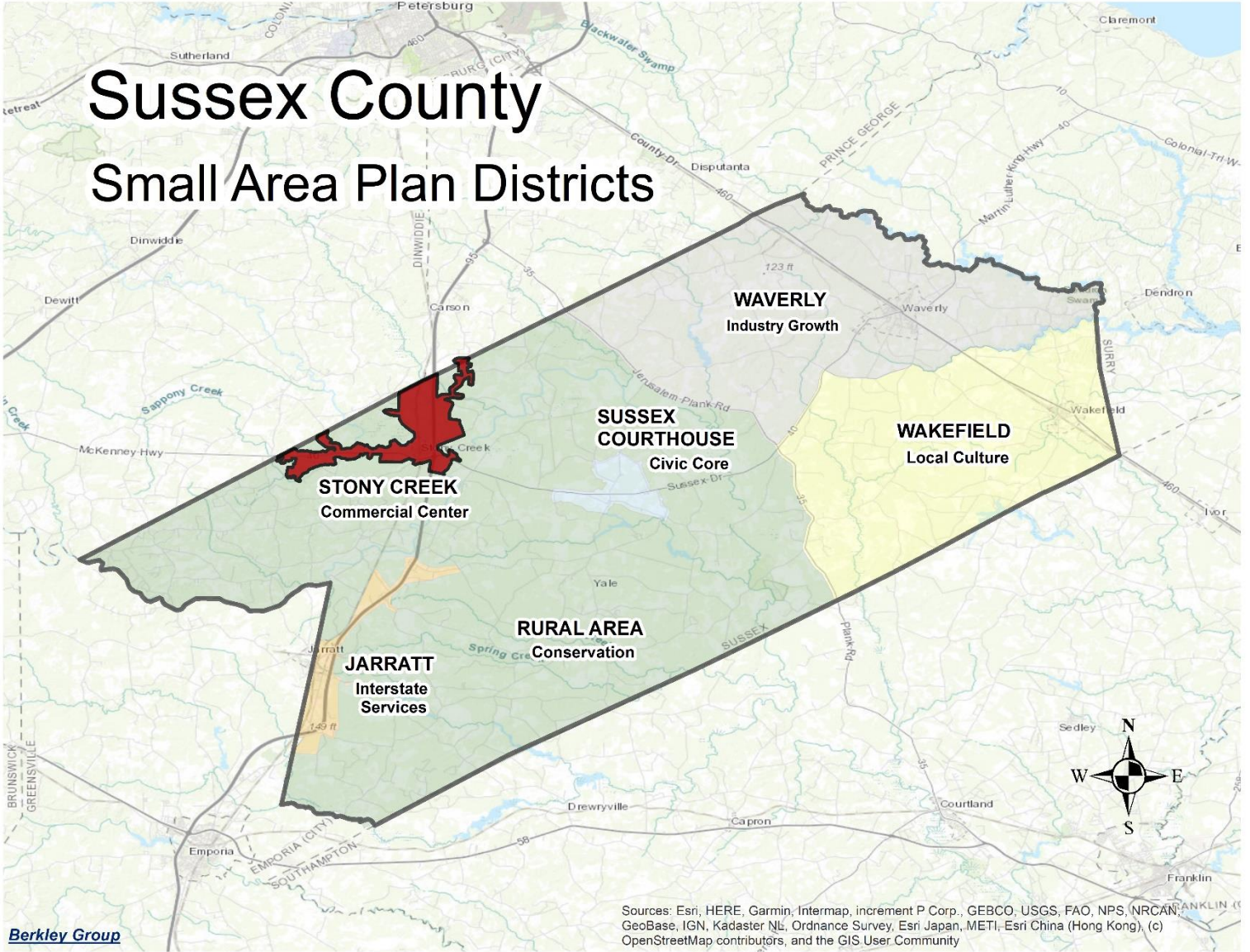
Wakefield / Homeville / U.S. 460 Planning Area – Local Culture

This planning area contains tourism, agritourism, and recreational opportunities that can be nurtured and developed. With the U.S. Route 460 access and existing tourism, Wakefield can take advantage of the passing traffic and popularity of nostalgic and rural tourism.

Waverly / Blackwater / U.S. 460 Planning Area – Industry Growth

Waverly is the center for current and future industrial development. With U.S. Route 460 access and room for rural/urban expansion, Waverly is a prime location for expanded urban development patterns.

This plan will focus on Stony Creek – The Commercial Center for Sussex County. This Small Area Plan is a component of the larger Sussex County Comprehensive Plan examining features, challenges, and opportunities in the constrained zone surrounding the Town of Stony Creek while also considering how this area relates to the other areas of the County. The strength of this area is the accessibility to I-95, one of the country's busiest interstate highways. Additionally, the existing commercial businesses and infrastructure of the Town of Stony Creek serve as foundation for future growth in the area.

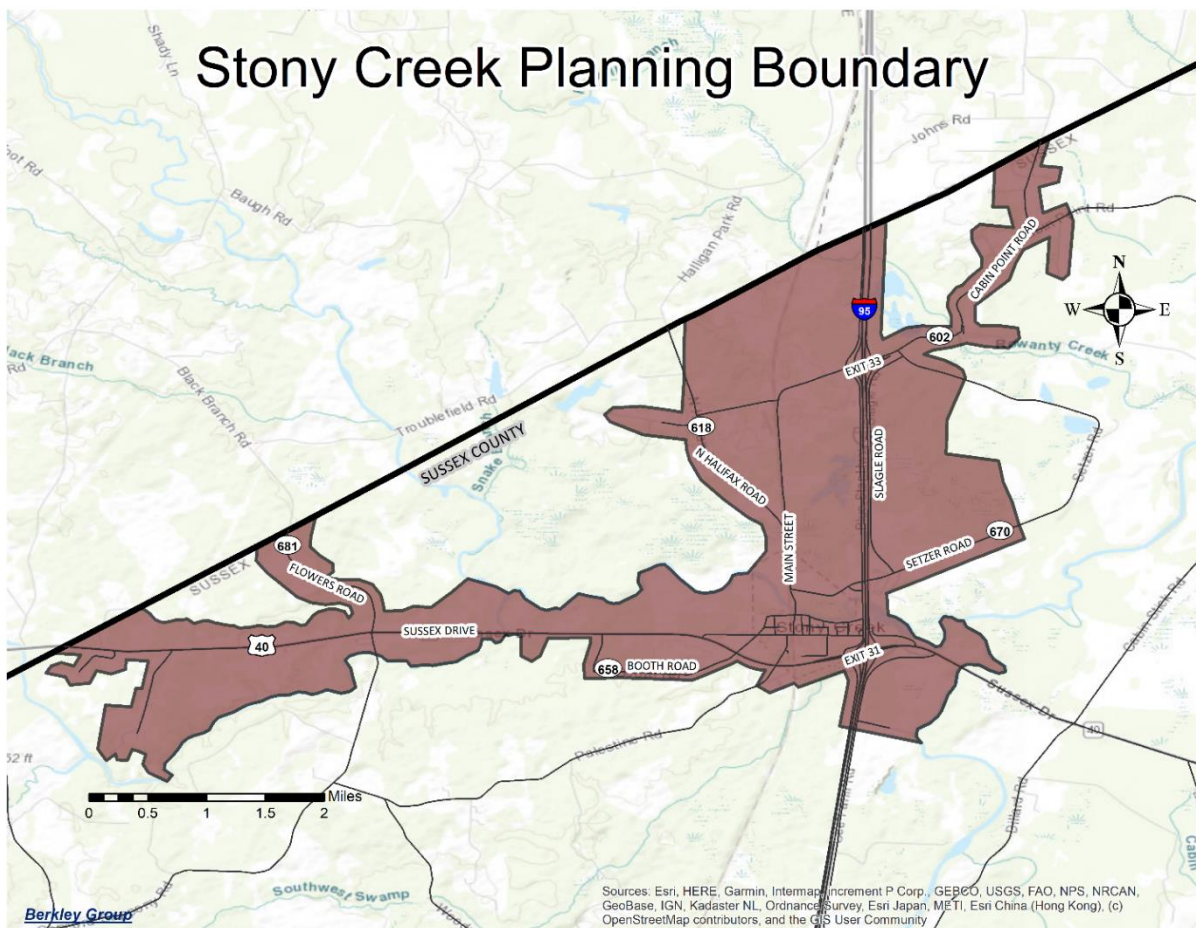


Stony Creek Planning Area

The Stony Creek Planning Area is in the northwestern portion of Sussex County and covers approximately 6.4 square miles, which includes 0.6 square miles in the Town of Stony Creek. The Planning Area contains a 4-mile section of I-95 and the parallel U.S. Route 301 from the Town of Stony Creek north to the Prince George County and Dinwiddie County lines. There are also two exits (31 and 33) off I-95 at Cabin Point Road/St. John Church Road (State Route 602) and Sussex Drive (State Route 40). The Planning Area also extends west of the Town of Stony Creek along Sussex Drive to the Dinwiddie County line. Other smaller corridors that in the Planning Area include Cabin Point Road (State Route 602) east of

I-95 and Flowers Road (State Route 681) north of State Route 40.

Based on the most recent estimates for Census Blocks in the 2010 US Census Data, the population for the Planning Area was approximately 821 persons and 414 households, which includes 198 residents and 75 households in incorporated Stony Creek.¹ By comparison, based on the 2010 Census, the total population for Sussex County was 12,087 people. For reference, American Community Survey estimates for 2019 show the population as having declined to about 11,237 individuals (-6.9%).



¹ Due to the small size of the Planning Area, Census Block data must be used to estimate population. Data on the Census Block level is only available every ten years following the Decennial Census.

Existing Features & Uses

The Stony Creek Planning Area includes a few commercial nodes along with a mixture of rural residential dwellings and farm structures. The area's road features are important assets that serve as the foundation for existing activity and help to guide future growth. Existing utilities in the area include electric power lines as well as water and wastewater, specifically near the Town of Stony Creek and along the Blue Star Highway (U.S. 301).

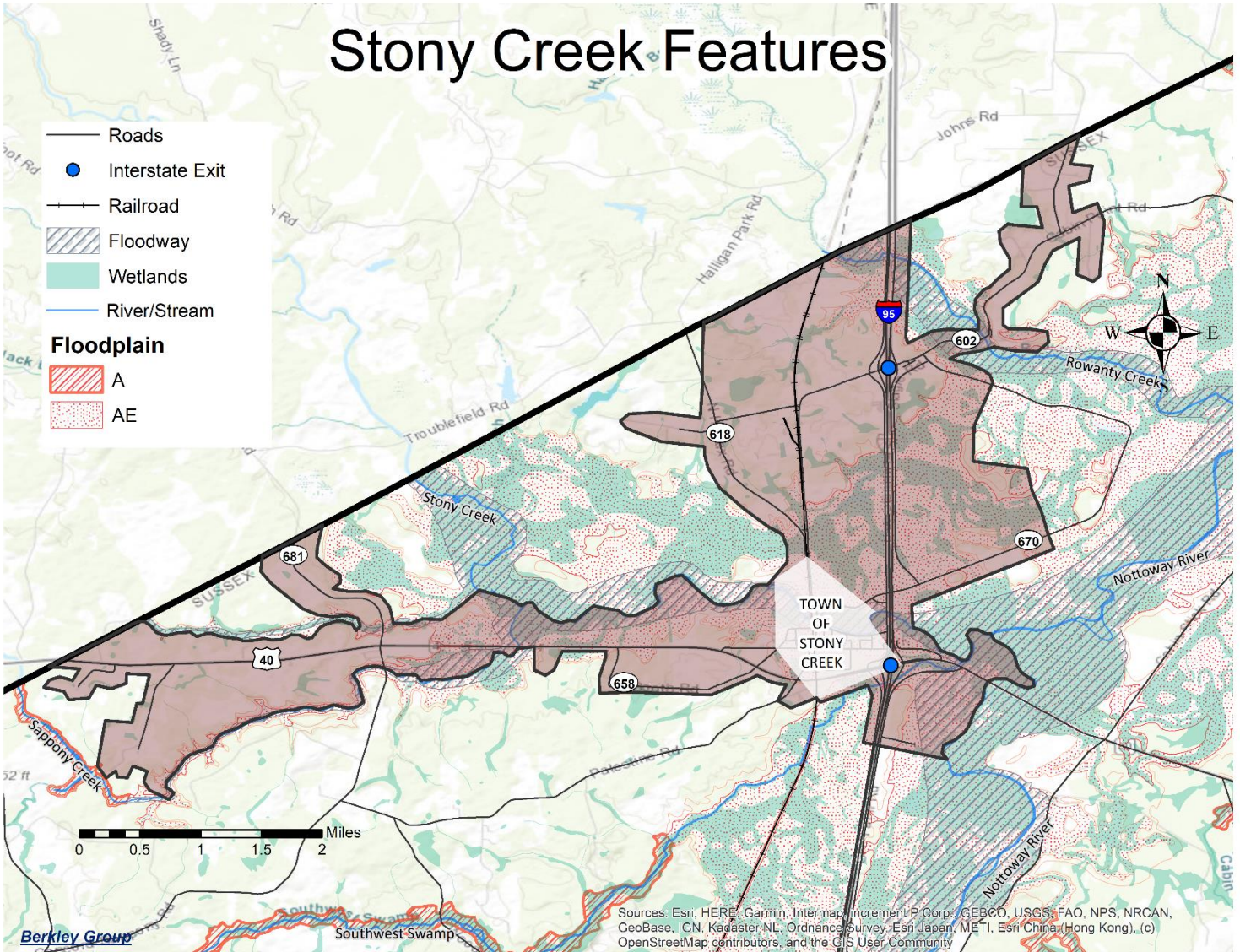
Most of the Planning Area is within the Dominion Electric Service Area. Prince George Electric Co-Op serves some customers along State Route 602 in the northern part of the Planning Area. Broadband internet access is available at some locations along U.S. 301, and Prince George Electric Customers receive internet from RuralBand. RuralBand's Rowanty Zone provides fiber optic internet service to the Rowanty Road and Cabin Point Road area. Many other residents in the Planning Area still remain unserved or underserved by internet service. The current wastewater treatment plant that serves the Town of Stony Creek and some development along U.S. 301 is located east of I-95 on Setzer Road just outside the boundaries of the Planning Area. However, the wastewater treatment plant has limited capacity to accommodate additional growth and development.

The Town of Stony Creek and the area's two interstate interchanges serve as the hubs for development and

activity within the area. The Davis Travel Center and surrounding restaurants and hotels at Exit 33 are the largest structures in the Planning Area. Exit 31 has a dollar store and gas stations to support local and through traffic. The Town of Stony Creek includes a small commercial area with available vacant space for commercial or adaptive reuse. The Planning Area also has some industrial uses including a concrete manufacturer, a mineral processing plant, and a utility-scale solar facility. Each of these features and the roads are discussed further in the Planning Analysis section of this plan.

Notable natural features include Stony Creek and Sappony Creek, which both run west to east before meeting the Nottoway River. Rowanty Creek in the northern portion of the Planning Area runs southeast before also meeting the Nottoway River. Land around both creeks are designated as floodways and much of the larger surrounding area are classified as Zone AE flood zones, meaning that they are subject to inundation by a 100-year flood event. Many small water bodies are scattered throughout the Planning Area, including small ponds, swamps, and streams. Many of the smaller water bodies contribute to the extensive wetlands found throughout the Planning Area.



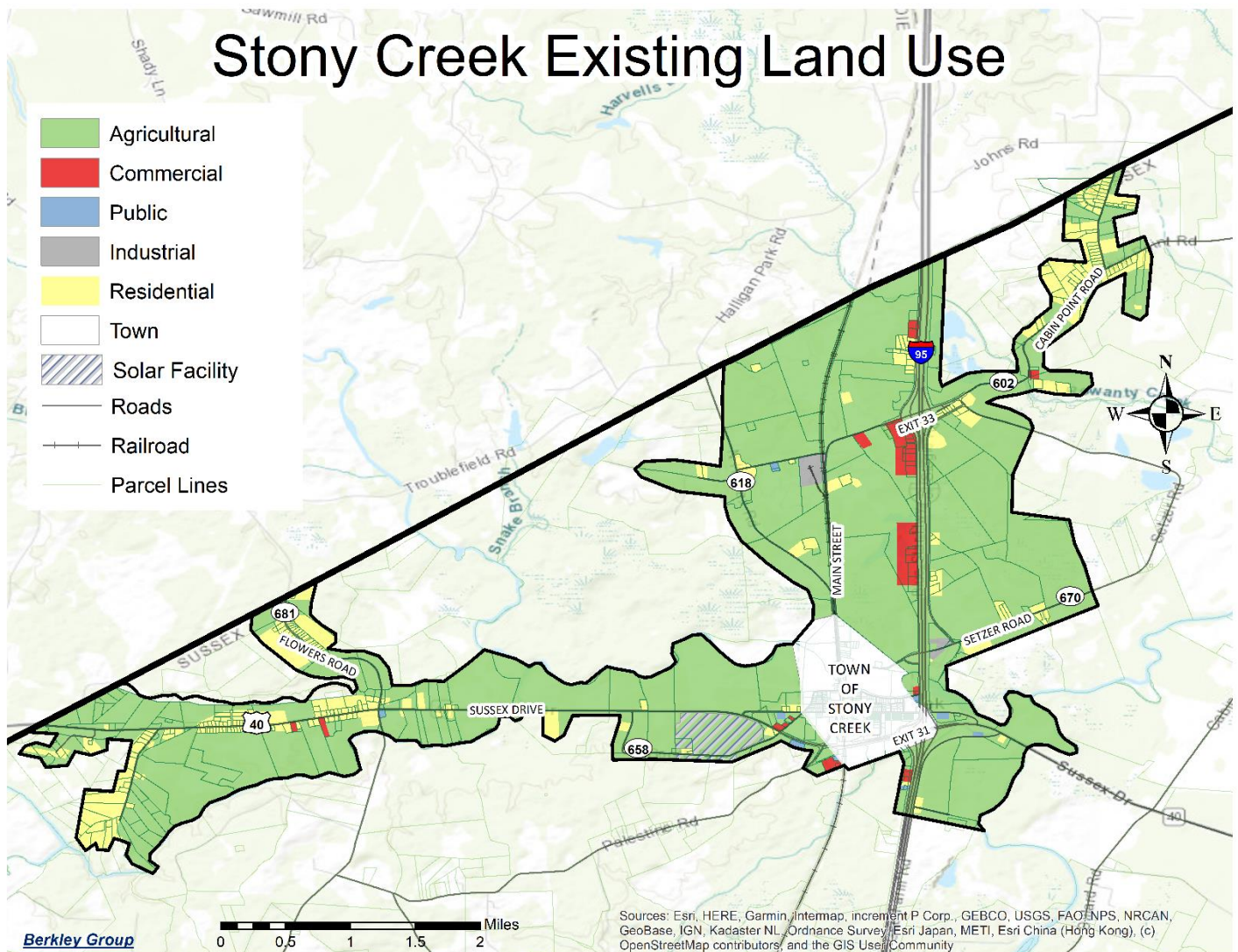


Existing Land Use

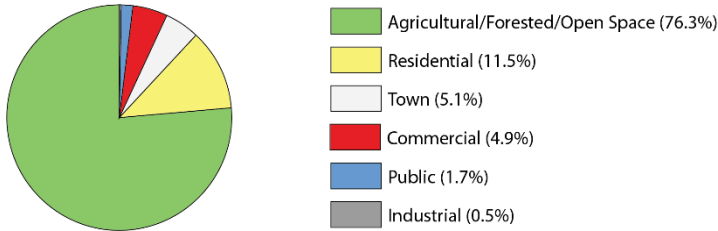
Existing development in the Stony Creek Planning Area is centered around established commercial uses near I-95, U.S. 301, and the Town of Stony Creek with a mix of rural residential, active agriculture, and forested areas extending outwards from the Town. Despite the presence of major transportation corridors, much of the Planning Area remains undeveloped because of the significant presence of floodplains and wetlands. The current pattern of development has supported some residential growth along public roads extending beyond the Town of Stony Creek outside of floodplain areas. The undeveloped areas contain an equal distribution of

forest and agriculture cropland with much of those areas lying in the 100-year floodplain or near identified wetlands and along freshwater streams.

The map below and the pie chart on the next page show the quantity and location of various land use types in the Planning Area. These graphics are also complemented by descriptions of each land use type on the following pages.



Stony Creek Existing Land Use



Residential

Residential uses consist almost entirely of low density single-family detached housing and make up only 11.5% of lands in the Planning Area. An estimated 439 housing units (occupied or vacant) are located within the Planning Area. Generally, homes are scattered throughout the Planning Area, but small concentrations can be found within the Town of Stony Creek, along the State Route 40 corridor between Flowers Road (State Route 681) and Shands Road (State Route 713), and northeast of Exit 33 in the area of Cabin Point (State Route 602) and Rowanty (State Route 623) Roads. This northeast cluster includes both single-family homes on large lots and manufactured homes. Most of the concentrations of residential development in the Planning Area are located outside of designated floodplain areas. Additionally, most existing residential development has occurred along public roads and there are no subdivisions with development on separate private roads.

Commercial

This land use category includes areas used for retail, consumer services, and professional activities, and makes up less than five percent (4.9%) of Planning Area land use. While commercial uses cover a small portion of the area, these uses are some of the defining features of the Stony Creek Planning Area. Retail uses include hotels, restaurants, gas stations, banks, and convenience stores. Several smaller retail commercial uses are found in the Town of Stony Creek. Travel related services are concentrated at Exits 31 and 33 of I-95. Exit 33 at the intersection of U.S. 301 and Cabin Point Road (State Route 602) is a hub for commercial activity serving local and regional traffic. The Davis Travel Center Truck Stop

draws a large amount of interstate traffic into the Planning Area. Additionally, hotels, restaurants, and gas stations located on U.S. 301 are drivers of local commercial activity. The Exit 33 interchange also offers large amounts of accessible vacant land for future commercial development.

The Town of Stony Creek and the area around Exit 31 at Sussex Drive (State Route 40) also has a presence of commercial uses at a lower density. This includes gas stations, small restaurants, and a dollar store. A small assortment of locally-serving commercial uses, such as a pharmacy, auto repair shops, a used truck dealer, and a post office, are located in and around the Town of Stony Creek.

Industrial

The Planning Area currently has two active industrial sites with the land and access to support industrial growth in the future. Existing rail and interstate access may make the Stony Creek area attractive for future industrial development. One of the existing sites is an active precast concrete manufacturer located off of Setzer Road along I-95. The other existing industrial site is the Iluka Resources mineral separation plant and operations office. However, Iluka resources has ceased active mining operations in the surrounding area, so the active use of the site has been recently reduced. Nevertheless, the site remains heavily industrial due to the intensity of existing uses on the site.

Sussex County's only active utility-scale solar facility is on approximately 200 acres of land that is partially in the Stony Creek and Rural Planning Areas. It is a 20-megawatt solar facility that is considered a temporary use with an initial lifespan of around 40 years. The site is an active use of the land but is not defined within the traditional industrial land use classification. The site is specifically highlighted on the existing land use map separate from the industrial and agricultural uses.

Agricultural/Forested/Open Space

Agriculture, forest, or open space makes up the majority of the land in the Planning Area, accounting for over 75% of the total area. On the existing land use map, these areas are labeled simply as agricultural. Many of these areas include actively cultivated agriculture lands with a notable presence of soils designated as prime farmland or a soil of statewide importance. Although some of these areas may experience future development pressure as a result of their proximity to the Town of Stony Creek and Interstate 95 interchanges, the County's Comprehensive Plan vision is for a large portion of Sussex's land to remain undeveloped to preserve the rural and agricultural lands of the area.

This land use category also includes the Stony Creek waterway, scattered wetlands, and floodplains. The areas directly along Stony Creek are unique natural resources that provide important environmental services and are largely unfit for development.

Public

This land use category includes buildings for governmental functions, schools, libraries, fire stations, and similar public uses, as well as institutions like churches. Public use makes up less than two percent (1.7%) of the Planning Area, and include churches, telecommunications facilities, and the Stony Creek Volunteer Fire and Rescue Squad.

Town of Stony Creek

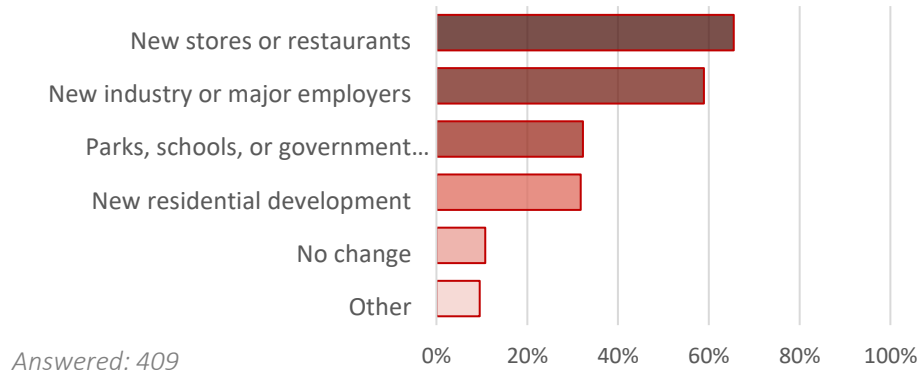
The Town of Stony Creek includes a number of residential and commercial uses that complements development in the overall Planning Area. Small commercial uses and a post office in the small downtown serve as the main center of activity in the Town. The Town also features a public park with a walking trail, fitness stations, and a pavilion that serves as a recreational asset for the area.

Public Input

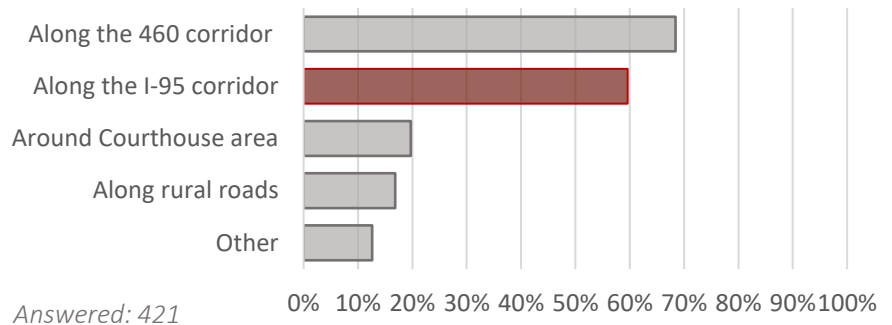
Local stakeholder meetings and county-wide surveys provide a brief understanding of public opinion about the status and future of the Stony Creek Planning Area. Input recognizes the need for the development of public facilities, with public water and sewer systems being particularly relevant to the Stony Creek area. Additionally, there is recognition that the Stony Creek area has potential for new commercial and industrial development. This further substantiates the need to improve local water and sewer service to support more commercial uses of various sizes.

Additionally, the location of the Planning Area along the heavily trafficked I-95 corridor further explains why commercial and industrial uses should be a priority. The types of development desired for the Stony Creek area in the public survey directly complement its location along I-95. Accordingly, the public survey responses appropriately prioritize development along the corridor where through traffic is mostly likely to stop and contribute to the local economy.

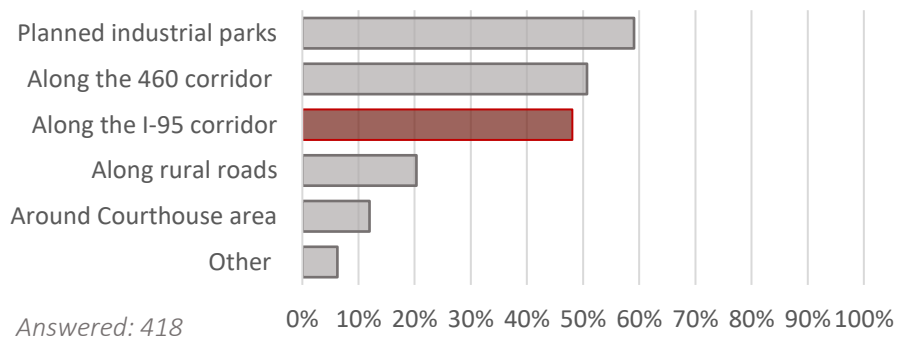
What would you like to see happen in the Stony Creek area?



Where should new, non-farm commercial business and shopping areas generally be located?



Where should new (non-farm) industry be generally located?



SWOT Analysis

The Stony Creek Planning Area has a variety of assets and challenges. The SWOT analysis identifies the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats faced by the Planning Area. These are internal and external factors that can help to inform the best uses for land and best investments for the community.

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
INTERNAL	<p>Strengths (Positive characteristics of the Planning Area that give it an advantage over others.)</p> <p>Availability of developable land for future public and private use, including vacant lots near highway interchanges with established businesses and commercial activity.</p> <p>Relative affordability compared to Virginia’s Richmond and Tidewater hubs, both in land prices and in tax structure.</p> <p>Excellent transportation access via I-95, U.S. Route 301, and State Route 40 provides connectivity to the entire east coast with capacity for additional growth.</p> <p>Available rail access for new industries that may require both rail and highway access.</p> <p>Existing commercial activity at highway interchanges serves as a foundation for further growth.</p>	<p>Weaknesses (Negative characteristics of the Planning Area that could harm its revitalization.)</p> <p>Much of the land in the planning area is within designated flood zones, including most of the Town of Stony Creek, making these areas inappropriate for many types of development and difficult to insure.</p> <p>The limited capacity of the existing sewer treatment plant may prevent the ability to accommodate large developments in the short term.</p> <p>Lack of variety/density and availability in housing may not meet the needs of potential employers.</p> <p>Failing septic systems within floodplains and low-lying areas may compromise local water sources.</p> <p>Safety concerns along State Route 40, particularly at the intersection with US 301 and the I-95 interchange.</p>
EXTERNAL	<p>Opportunities (External influences that can be used to the advantage of the Planning Area.)</p> <p>Visibility and access to a high-volume interstate highway system.</p> <p>Affordable land, tax, and living costs make Stony Creek a marketable location for some businesses compared to more urban areas in the state.</p> <p>Prime soils and active agriculture can qualify owners for farm conservation opportunities that offer monetary benefits as well as land preservation.</p> <p>Distance and commute time to the Richmond metropolitan area makes the area attractive for commuters looking for a more rural lifestyle.</p>	<p>Threats (External factors that could prevent improvement of the Planning Area.)</p> <p>Many localities are in competition for the same kinds of commercial and industrial development desired for Stony Creek.</p> <p>Trends toward increasing environmental regulation may make development in flood-prone areas more complex as time goes on.</p> <p>Easy transportation in the Stony Creek area makes it convenient for the limited local workforce to access jobs in the metro Richmond area rather than work locally.</p>

Transportation Analysis

Future uses in the Stony Creek Planning Area (Commercial Center) must be coordinated with transportation routes and other existing assets in the area (See also: Existing Features & Uses).

The following table shows the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) average daily traffic (ADT) count estimates in 2019 for each major road in the Planning Area. While future development may increase traffic volumes, it is anticipated that these roadways are sufficient to accommodate potential growth. A brief overview of existing and future uses for each major route follows.

Additionally, this analysis incorporates various construction priorities, programmed projects, identified deficiencies, and recommendations from existing VDOT publications and plans such as the VTrans Mid-Term Needs, projects listed in the Six-Year Improvement Program, and traffic deficiencies identified in the Crater Planning District Commission (PDC) Rural Transportation Plan.

VDOT Average Daily Traffic Count Estimates, 2019	
Transportation Corridor	Traffic Count
Interstate 95	
At Sussex Dr.	39,000
North Exit Ramp at Exit 33	1,500
South Exit Ramp at Exit 33	1,700
North Exit Ramp at Exit 31	1,100
South Exit Ramp at Exit 31	940
Blue Star Highway (US 301)	
North of SR 40 Bus.	1,800
Between SR 40 Bus. and SR 40	2,500
South of SR 40	740
Sussex Dr. (State Route 40)	
East of US 301 Blue Star Hwy	3,500
West of US 301 Blue Star Hwy	2,500
Cabin Point Rd./St. Johns Church Rd. (602)	
East of I-95	720
West of I-95	560
Flowers Rd. (681)	
North of Sussex Dr.	300



Interstate 95

I-95 is the most important transportation feature of the Stony Creek area and is considered a Corridor of Statewide Significance (CoSS) by VDOT. Running north and south along the eastern edge of the Planning Area, I-95 serves the entire east coast of the United States, including major metropolitan areas, with high-volume and high-speed transportation. The Planning Area is fortunate to have two interstate interchanges; Exit 33 to the north at the location of the Davis Travel Center, and Exit 31 adjacent to the Town of Stony Creek and State Route 40. This interstate brings nearly 40,000 vehicles per day through the area and will provide the demand for the majority of new commercial, industrial, and eventually residential development in the area.

New retail should be concentrated in areas that are proximate to Interstate 95 access points. Exit 33 is already the most heavily trafficked exit in the County with an estimated 3,200 trips exiting at the interchange in either direction. There are already two hotels and a third under construction along the corridor with the possibility for more development. While I-95 does serve larger metropolitan areas, the traffic and high land costs in other areas along the corridor can be a detriment to business, especially industrial applications with large land needs. Stony Creek therefore can be an ideal location for such businesses relying on access to I-95. With two local interchanges and low existing traffic counts based on road capacity, there is little concern for future congestion.



State Route 40 Corridor (Sussex Drive)

State Route 40 runs from east to west across the Planning Area, providing access for local travel. State Route 40 is also an important cross-county connection to the I-95 corridor and to the U.S. 460 Corridor near Waverly. State Route 40 is, therefore, a key route for residents that are accessing I-95 from more rural parts of the County. State Route 40 bypasses the Town of Stony Creek, while State Route 40 Business serves the Town. The two roads merge and continue west into Dinwiddie County where some residential development is present. East of Stony Creek, State Route 40 serves a small concentration of residential development and has the width and capacity to serve more residential growth in this area if development is appropriately clustered. Signage and landscaping along Route 40 should create a visually cohesive experience for locals and visitors alike.



US Highway 301 Corridor (Blue Star Highway)

The Blue Star Highway (U.S. 301) offers a parallel route to I-95 and has local connections between the Planning Area's two I-95 interchanges. This route is ideally located to provide local circulation and access to potential development sites without obstructing the interstate interchanges themselves. Various sites along the U.S. 301 frontage offer opportunities for commercial and industrial development needing easy access to I-95. The corridor also provides local connection between the Planning Area's two main hubs of activity at Exit 33 and Exit 31 around the Town of Stony Creek.



Railroad Corridor

CSX rail line runs north and south through the Planning Area, providing opportunities for industry, commercial distribution, and other applications. A spur from the main line connects to the Iluka Resources mineral processing plant. While the appeal of rail access has declined in certain industries as modern commerce has shifted to highway shipping, the flexibility offered by the railroad is another asset to the community. Combined with access to I-95, this asset may allow potential industrial users to import raw materials by rail and export finished products by highway from a single site.

The rail line also creates a physical barrier through the Town that limits development in some parts of the Planning Area. While Route 40 has an elevated crossing over the railroad, at-grade crossings exist on Route 40 Business within the Town and at Route 602 (St John Church Road) north of the Town of Stony Creek. At-grade crossings may cause congestion and safety issues if further development that attracts truck traffic takes place near these crossings.

Transportation Improvements

A few notable transportation improvements are recommended for the Stony Creek Planning Area. The VTrans Mid-Term planning priorities include intersection improvements at the intersection of U.S. 301 (Blue Star Hwy) and State Route 40 (Sussex Drive) as well as the intersection of U.S. 301 and State Route 40 Business (Lee Ave.). Additionally, the priorities include speed reduction improvements on the southbound exit ramp of I-95 at Exit 31 onto State Route 40. As of the most recent VTrans report, all of these projects are designated as Priority 4, which is the lowest priority classification. Finally, the VTrans recommendations includes the proposed industrial site at Exit 31 as an Industrial and Economic Development Area (IEDA) based on input from Sussex County. Accordingly, VTrans has listed potential capacity improvements to the surrounding roads to complement site development.

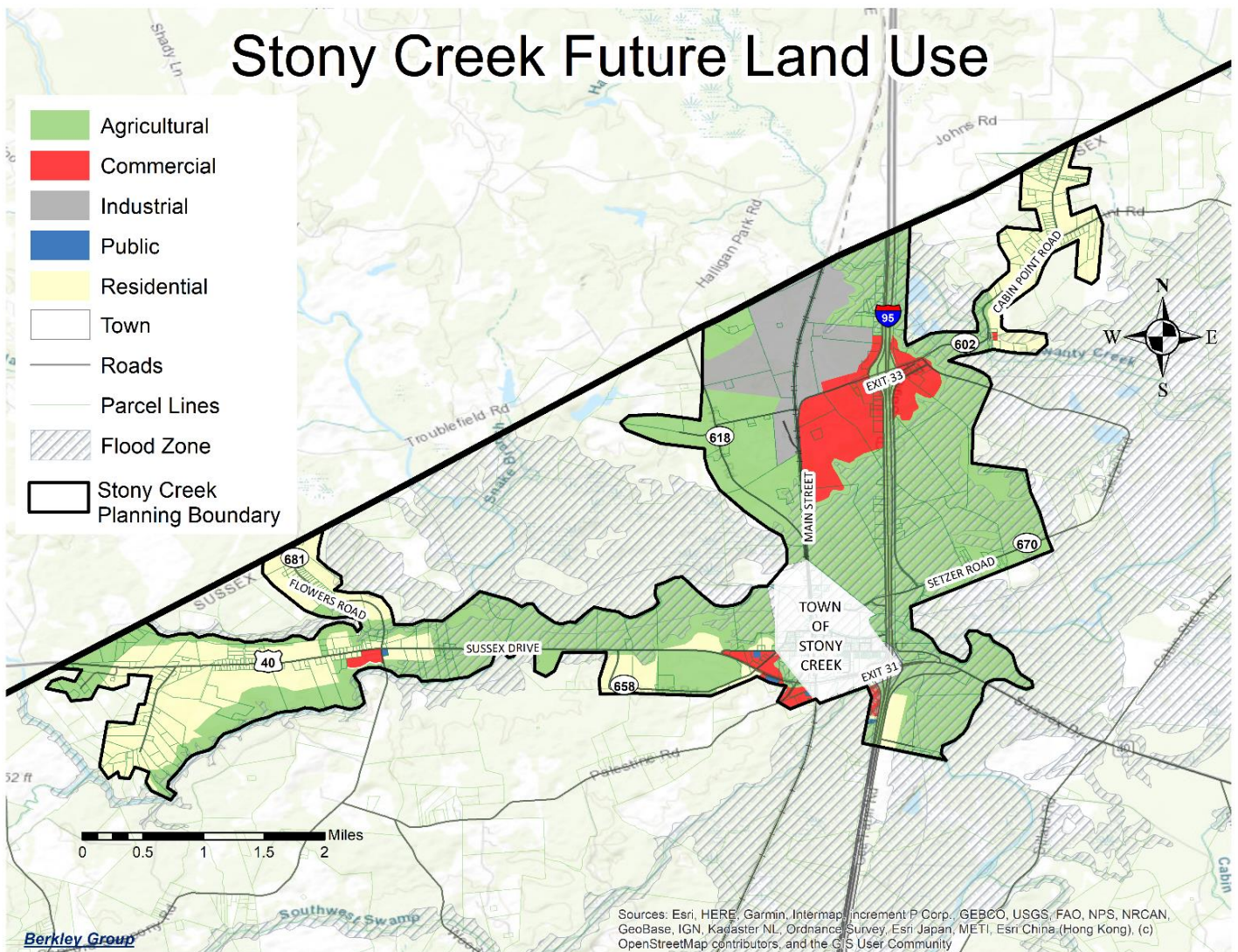
Recommendations in the Crater PDC and VDOT Rural Transportation Plan include the short-term need to install speed reduction measures at the intersections along State Route 40 as well as to add deer warning signs along State Route 40. Over the long term, the plan recommends potentially widening State Route 40 to four lanes and also reconstructing Rowanty Road in the northeastern portion of the Planning Area to widen lanes and address geometric deficiencies.

Future Vision & Planning

The Stony Creek Planning Area has the potential to become the gateway of Sussex County and a hub of commercial activity. With a long frontage on Interstate 95, the Stony Creek Planning Area offers high visibility and access for development. New commercial and industrial uses at the Planning Area's two interstate exits can contribute to the County's tax base and increased exposure for the Town and its surroundings. While existing gas station, hotel, and restaurant uses aimed at passing travelers provide tax revenue and some job opportunities, the long-term success of the Stony Creek area will rely on the expansion of commercial and industrial uses that provide high quality jobs, attract new

residents, and support the growth of retail and services in the area.

Part of the future vision builds upon a future land use analysis that projects ideal land uses for targeted locations in the Planning Area shown below in the Future Land Use Map, with associated recommendations to follow. It should be noted that a significant portion of land in the Stony Creek area is within designated flood zones, including most of the Town of Stony Creek itself. Any future developments within flood zones should be informed by the relevant environmental constraints and the risks of flooding.



Future Land Use Analysis

The recommended future uses are based on a variety of factors, such as existing development, actively marketed sites for economic development, best land use practices, environmental conditions, zoning, and access to public utilities. Future land use recommendations include the addition of some residential land uses to the Stony Creek Planning Area as well as targeted growth of commercial and industrial uses in appropriate and accessible locations. Many of the recommendations are contingent on the ability of the County to expand wastewater capacity in the area. Moreover, it also includes the proposal of strategies to ensure that agriculture continues to be profitable and that the general rural culture is preserved. Finally, future development in the area should be clustered as much as possible and be located outside of the extensive FEMA flood zones.

Environmental Areas

The Stony Creek Planning Area contains many environmental features, including waterways, wetland areas, flood zones, and riparian areas that play an important role in plant and animal species diversity and natural water system filtering. As well as being important environmental features, the area's waterways, primarily Stony Creek itself, can be scenic and recreational assets. Given the prevalence of natural features throughout the Planning Area, environmental conservation is a relevant consideration for all future land use categories discussed in this plan.

The local waterways and low-lying topography of the area bring risks of flooding, as well as the potential for contamination from future development. These natural features must be respected in the process of pursuing future development for Stony Creek. Approximately 41% of lands in the Planning Area are within defined flood zones, presenting a challenge for future development. Preferred uses within flood zones include agriculture, recreation, and open space. Moreover, with so much designated flood zone, the County should consider programs available to localities to help mitigate flood risk. The Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program is a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) program that can assist with a variety of disaster

preparation steps for communities, including physical improvements that protect against flooding. Grants are also available through Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), including the Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) program for acquisition and relocation of flood prone structures or elevation of flood prone structures. Finally, both the County and Town of Stony Creek can participate in the Community Rating System (CRS), which is a flood insurance program that can drastically lower flood insurance costs if the County is willing to help further inventory flood prone areas.

Also, the County must ensure that development is limited near these environmental areas and encourage low-impact development strategies and stormwater management improvements to protect habitat and water quality. This includes along Stony Creek where flood zones and riparian zones could eventually be developed.

Agricultural, Forested, and Open Space

Like much of the County, the outer portions of the Planning Area will remain rural in nature and include tracts of agricultural, forest, and open land uses. These areas are labeled as Agricultural on the future land use map. Development should be focused along transportation routes and in designated locations. The main purpose of this land use classification is to facilitate existing and future farming operations, allow for expansion of farm related activity, reduce the effects of soil erosion, and protect watersheds in order to promote the continuation of farming and forestry as one of the most important sectors of the local economy.

As such, preserving environmentally sensitive areas and ensuring appropriate buffers around streams and intensive livestock operations will help preserve the overall rural character of the Planning Area. Many of the most flood prone areas should remain as unused forested or open space.

In planning for active agricultural use, the County should consider the full scope of modern farming activities, including agritourism, on-site sales, food preparation, and events and modify local regulations to more easily permit all activities that can help farmers maintain a profitable enterprise. Such activities have the added

benefit of drawing visitors to Sussex County for tourism as well as providing additional income to farming operations. While the rural and agricultural landscape of the County extends well beyond the Stony Creek area, this type of expanded farm enterprise, including farm stands, activities, pick your-own, and other elements can be especially successful with proximity to, and visibility from, I-95.

Outside of sensitive environmental areas, it is the vision of Sussex County to remain rural and that active agriculture is preserved. A central objective of land use planning in Sussex County is to protect this valuable land from being developed for residential or other land uses. Once developed, it cannot easily be restored to its original condition. Since the Stony Creek Planning Area is near a major transportation corridor, finding a balance between commercial activity and rural character will be an important consideration as development interests in the area increase.

Residential

Currently, three nodes of residential development exist in the Planning Area: at the western end of the Planning Area along State Route 40; within the Town of Stony Creek; and along State Route 602 east of I-95. Each of these areas has room for additional residential growth, and infill should be welcomed to this area of the County where it can be served with adequate transportation access and utilities. The Stony Creek area is situated to serve two kinds of residential demand – people that work in the Stony Creek area and people who live in Stony Creek and commute elsewhere. While there is very little employment base currently in Stony Creek, the designation of areas for commercial and industrial development could lead to future residential demand to support local employment needs.

Future residential development should be located in and around Town and at the northern and western ends of the Planning Area. The County should also encourage a wide variety of housing unit types, including single family homes, townhomes, and apartments close to the Town and U.S. 301. If new commercial or industrial development occurs, it will likely create additional residential demand for higher density housing.

Based on the current number of subdivided but vacant parcels in the area, there is some immediate potential for residential growth. Residential development in the area has historically been as a secondary use on farms or of a linear pattern along roadways. It is recommended that the continuation of the current trend toward linear housing development be limited. Where linear development is inevitable, shared driveways can be designed to reduce safety issues that can arise with multiple single driveway access points.

The option to subdivide small lots with road frontage for residential development provides farmers an opportunity for supplemental income with minimal development effort/loss. However, there are other options for design. Cluster development offers an alternative to linear sprawl with the same or less cropland/forest impact and a safer, higher quality environment for the residents. This design also limits the area of exposure of agricultural commodities and forest land to the risks associated with multiple residential access points. Cluster development can also offer a more desirable “neighborhood” layout and more design flexibility. Advantages include:

- Safer access for residents to subdivision streets as opposed to highways.
- Reduced front setback to increase the surrounding buffer between agricultural and residential activity.
- Walkable neighborhood with safe walking and bicycling for children and adults.
- Shared use areas such as parks, can be easily accessible to all residents providing for a better quality of life and a greater sense of community.

Finally access to reliable water and sewer services will be critical to expanded residential development in the area. The existing wastewater system is already close to capacity and is insufficient to support anticipated growth.

Commercial

The Stony Creek Planning Area is well situated to take advantage of I-95 for commercial uses focused on traveler services. As a result, the Stony Creek Planning Area is considered the commercial center of Sussex County. Although the local population is relatively small, new commercial development can rely on the consistent interstate traffic in the area, and therefore, should be clustered around the two existing interchanges. With two existing hotels and a new one almost complete, as well as dining options and gasoline stations, the foundation for future commercial growth already exists. The Davis Travel Center serves as the cornerstone for any new development at Exit 33, while growth in and around the Town of Stony Creek can help to expand commercial activity at Exit 31.

The County should also encourage more expansive commercial developments that are not intended simply for servicing travelers that are passing through. The Planning Area has the land and accessibility to support a large retailer or a group of smaller retailers. However, wastewater improvements will be necessary to support the full potential of commercial development in the Planning Area. With sufficient demand and wastewater capacity, additional new hotels could serve the area, along with restaurants, fueling stations, and other interstate services. Sussex County is already considered part of the Richmond MSA, and as the Richmond region continues to expand outward, the Stony Creek area may be a viable location for more intensive commercial development close to I-95 similar to developments farther north in Prince George and Dinwiddie Counties.

Industry

The Stony Creek Planning Area is currently over seventy percent agricultural land, and this plan recommends transitioning some agricultural land for industry. This plan remains ambitious and flexible about the area that could be used for industrial uses.

The proposed industrial area at the northern portion of the Planning Area close to the Exit 33 interchange is significant in size, with access to both rail and highway transportation. The County has begun to market this site and should consider a variety of businesses including

major manufacturing, shipping and fulfillment, data centers, and other uses that can take advantage of low land costs, proximity to I-95, and access to major markets in the Richmond and Hampton Roads metro areas. The County should also make efforts to prepare these sites by improving transportation and utilities, clearing land, and making other improvements to create shovel-ready investment areas for potential tenants. As the selected site may be visible from I-95 once developed, building and site design should be of high quality to promote a strong County image. Depending upon the use, traffic and housing considerations may also require county attention.

Another notable use that currently exists in the Planning Area is the Sappony Solar Facility. The County should continue to monitor the ongoing use, impacts, and future benefits of the site. Ultimately, the County should decide if the solar facility should remain beyond the initial lease as an industrial scale use. If so, the County should recommend adaptive methods that better integrate the solar farm with the agricultural surroundings as opposed to simply being reserved as an industrial use.

Town of Stony Creek

Sussex County should welcome new commercial and residential development in the Town of Stony Creek as a positive contribution to the County's tax base. However, since the majority of Town lands are within designated flood zones new commercial or residential investment will need to comply with additional environmental requirements. This means that the County should coordinate to ensure that development in the Town utilizes existing buildings and take advantage of adaptive reuse methods.

The Town also has some parcels that are outside of significant flood risk. These parcels are located in the southeast quadrant of the Town, south of Route 40 Business, with immediate proximity to the Exit 31 interchange. These parcels appear to have development potential and should be the focus of immediate investment within the Town.

Implementation Recommendations

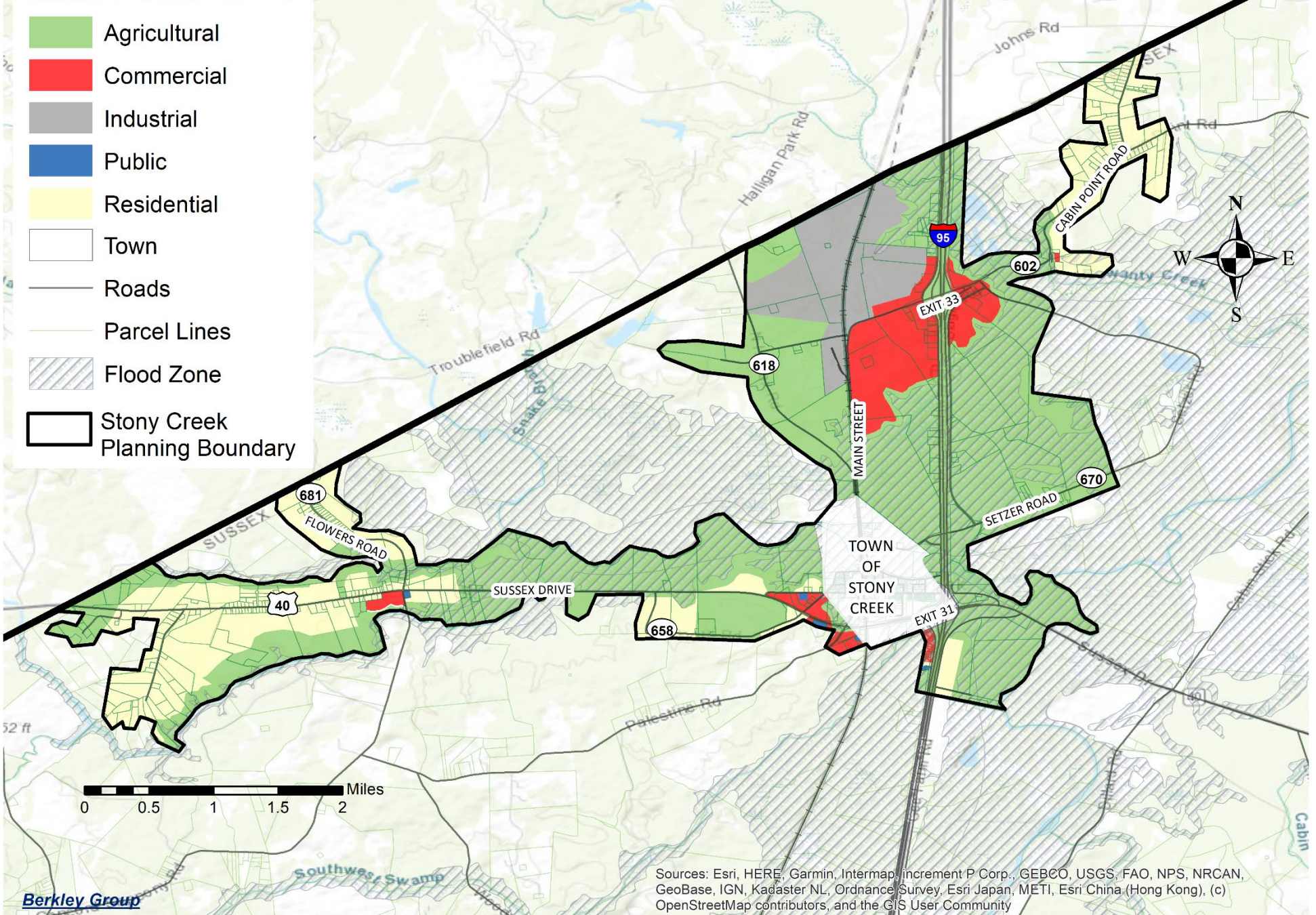
Recommendations for the Stony Creek Planning Area build on the strengths of the area as Sussex County’s center of commercial activity. The recommendations focus on identifying opportunities for appropriate development while also preserving agriculture and open space.

Implementation Task	Cost Scale	Time Scale ²	Responsible Party
Update County zoning ordinance to encourage cluster development, deter the development of prime farmland and woodlands, and preserve the rural character of the County.	\$\$	Short-term	Planning and Zoning Department
Modify the County’s zoning districts to permit creative agricultural uses, including on-site sales and other features that can make agricultural properties attractive to passing highway traffic and other visitors.	\$	Short-term	Planning and Zoning Department
Review and update the zoning ordinance to allow for some variation in density and appropriate accessory dwellings to increase affordable housing options in the area.	\$\$	Short-term	Planning and Zoning Department
Continue to work with utility providers, local businesses, and County residents to extend broadband internet service to all unserved and underserved homes and businesses.	\$\$	Short-term	County Administrator
Plan for and construct landscape and signage improvements that represent Stony Creek as a gateway to the County and draw passing I-95 travelers into the Planning Area for short-term and convenience spending to boost the local tax base.	\$\$	Medium-term	Planning and Zoning Department

² Short-term (1-5 years); Medium-term (5-10 years); Long-term (10+ years)

Implementation Task	Cost Scale	Time Scale ²	Responsible Party
Prioritize water and sewer expansion and distribution to targeted areas and consider incentives to encourage the location and form of development that fits with planned County capacity.	\$\$\$\$	Medium-term	County Administration
Adopt low-impact (best management practice) development strategies and guidelines for constructing stormwater drainage infrastructure to mitigate environmental impacts of development.	\$	Medium-term	Planning and Zoning Department
Market the Stony Creek Planning Area as a location for commercial and industrial development that capitalizes on interstate access and other local assets.	\$	Medium-term	County Administration
Implement necessary utility improvements/expansions along State Routes and near interstate exits where residential and commercial growth is projected in the Planning Area.	\$\$\$\$	Medium-Long-term	County Administration
Consider utilizing farmland protection tools available in the VA State Code to promote long term agricultural conservation.	\$	Long-term	Cooperative Extension/ Planning and Zoning Department

Stony Creek Future Land Use



- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public
- Residential
- Town
- Roads
- Parcel Lines
- Flood Zone
- Stony Creek Planning Boundary

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community