

SUSSEX COUNTY, VIRGINIA
SMALL AREA PLANS

SUSSEX COURTHOUSE



**PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT
AUGUST 2021**



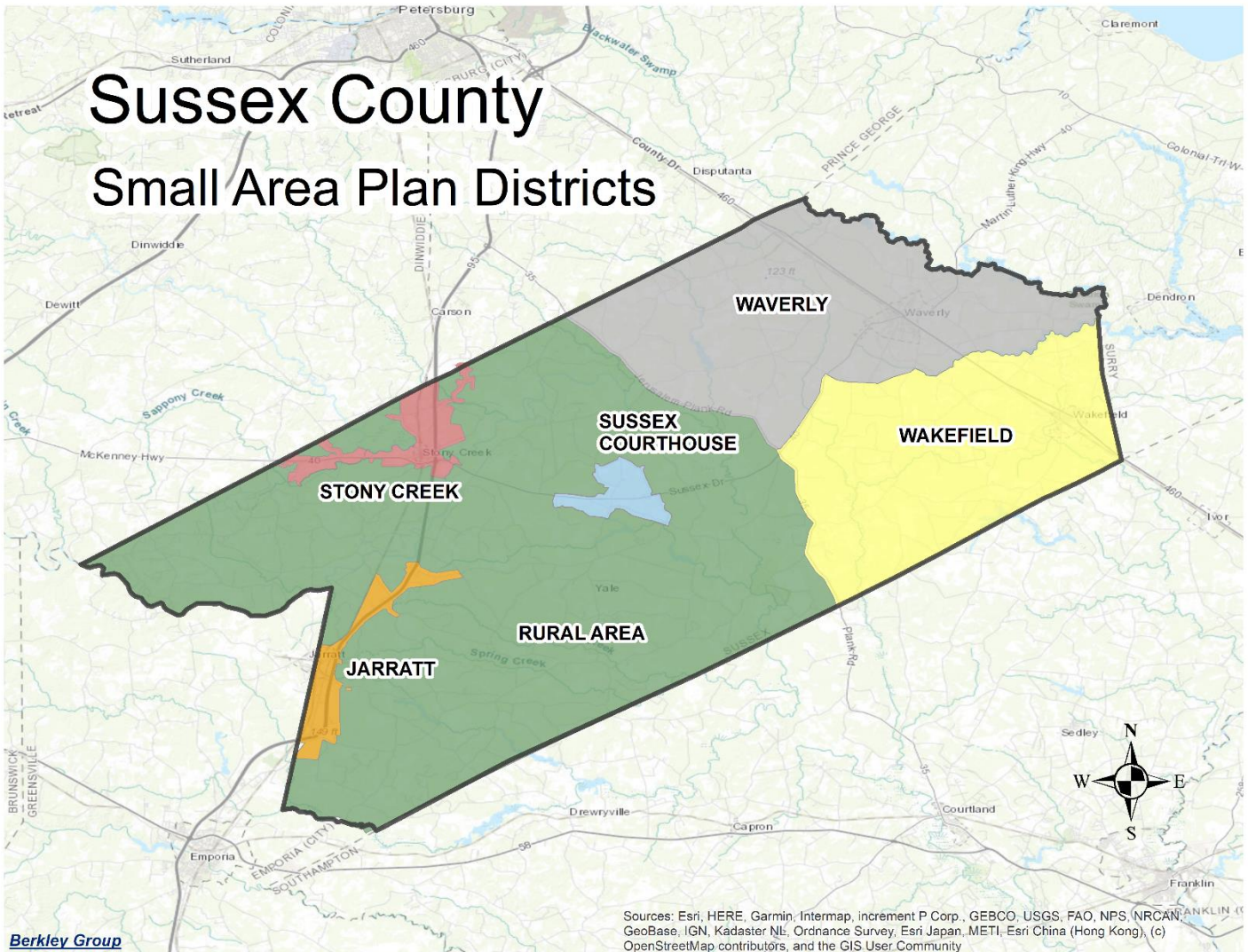
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Preface

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.



Berkley Group

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.

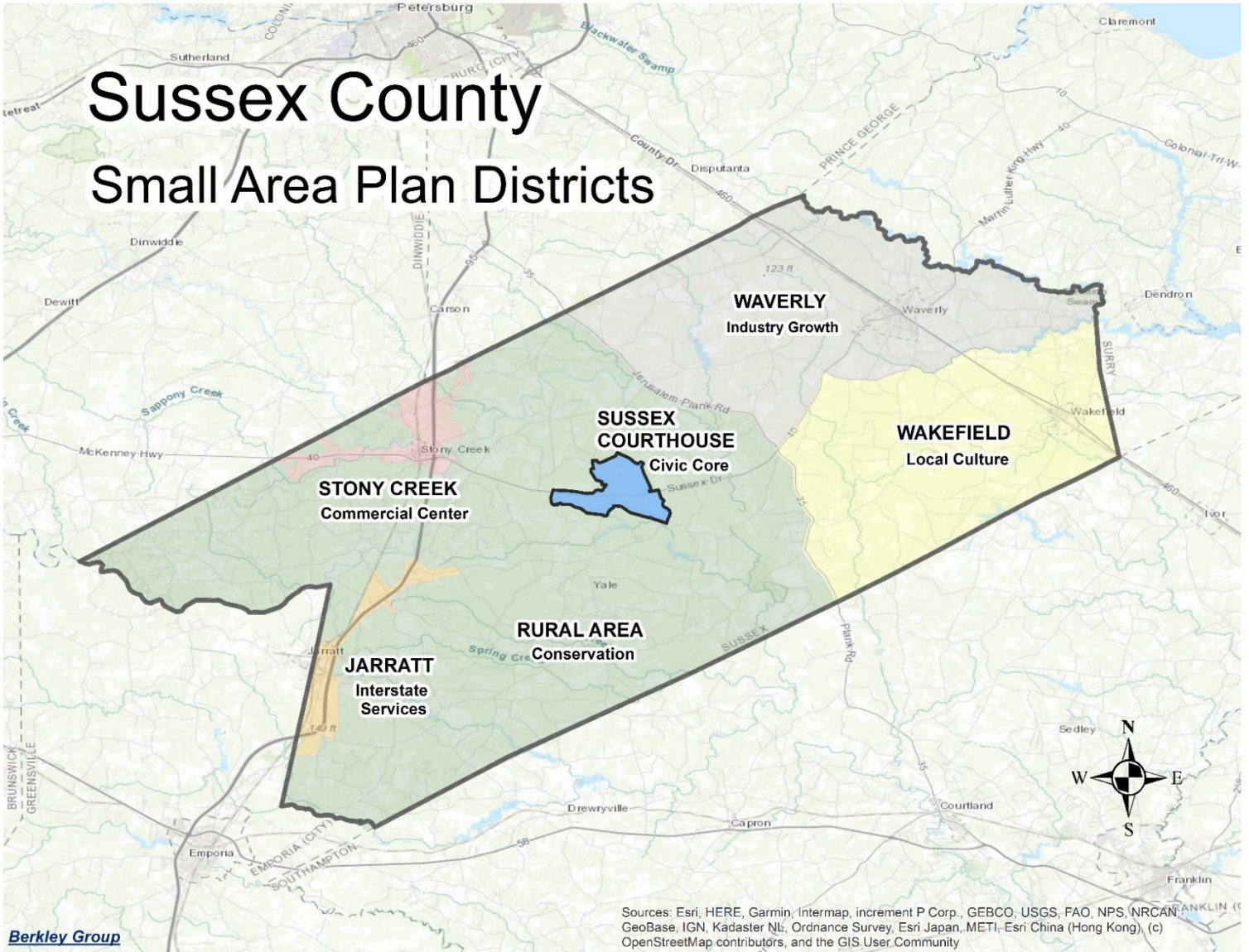
Wakefield / Homeville / U.S. 460 Planning Area – Local Culture

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.

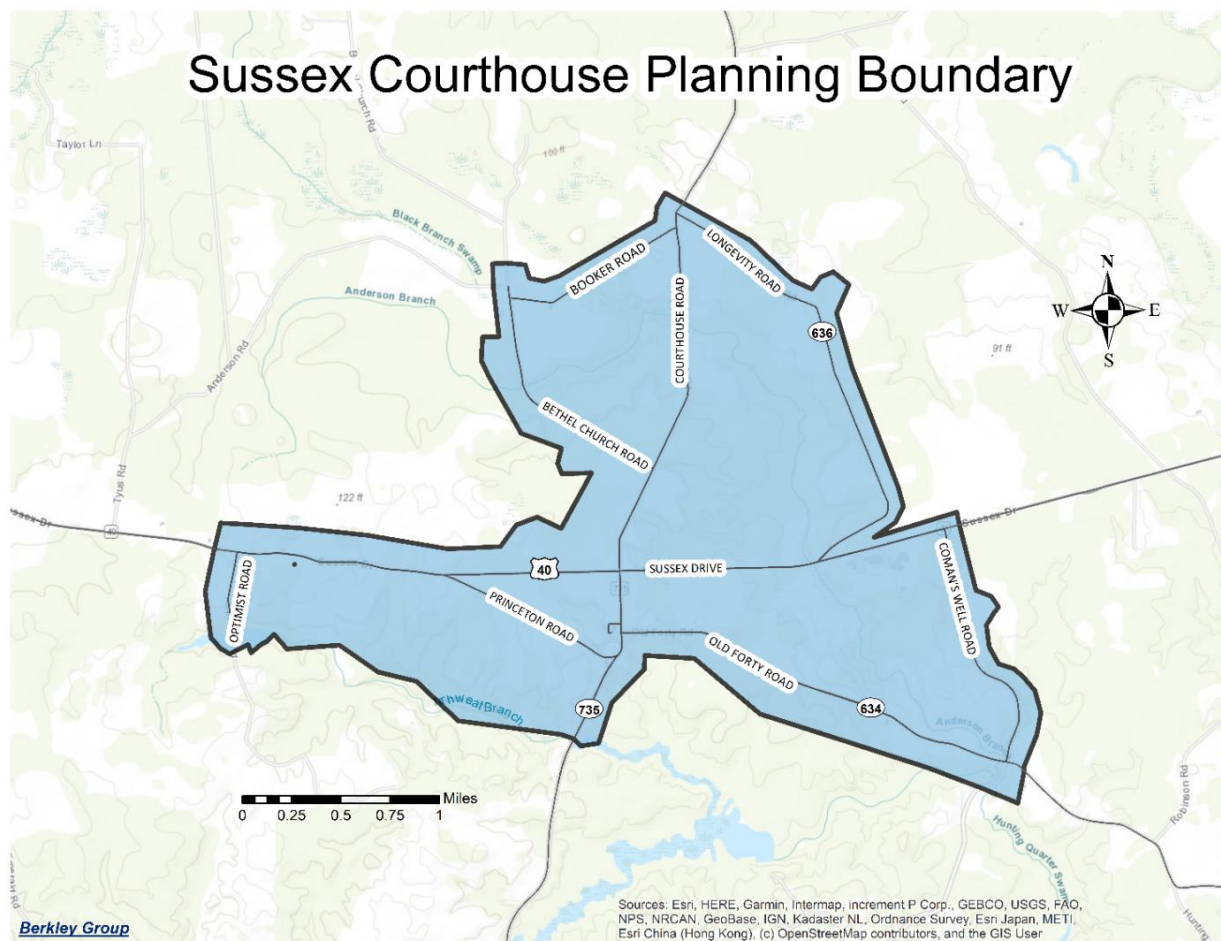
This plan will focus on Sussex Courthouse – The Civic Core for Sussex County. This Small Area Plan is a component of the larger Sussex County Comprehensive Plan examining features, challenges, and opportunities in the constrained zone surrounding Sussex Courthouse while also considering how this area relates to the other areas of the County. The strength of this area is the concentration of government services, including the courthouse and consolidated school complex as well as the strong historic farming community surrounding the Civic Core of Sussex County.



Sussex Courthouse Planning Area

The Sussex Courthouse Planning Area is located in the heart of Sussex County and encompasses an estimated 6.41 square miles. The northern boundary of the Planning Area is formed by Booker Road and Longevity Road (State Route 636). The southern boundary runs along Old Forty Road (State Route 634) and Thweatt Branch. The eastern boundary of the Planning Area is formed by Comans Well Road (State Route 642), Sussex Drive, and Longevity Road (State Route 642), while the western boundary is made up of Bethel Church Road (State Route 637), Courthouse Road (State Route 626), Sussex Drive (State Route 40) and Optimist Road (State Route 733).

The Sussex County Courthouse Planning Area includes 35 Census Blocks and based on 2010 Census Block data, the population for the Planning Area was approximately 250 persons and 85 households.¹ Based on the 2010 Census, the total population for Sussex County was 12,087 people. For context, the 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 Block level is only available every ten years following the Decennial Census.



Existing Features & Uses

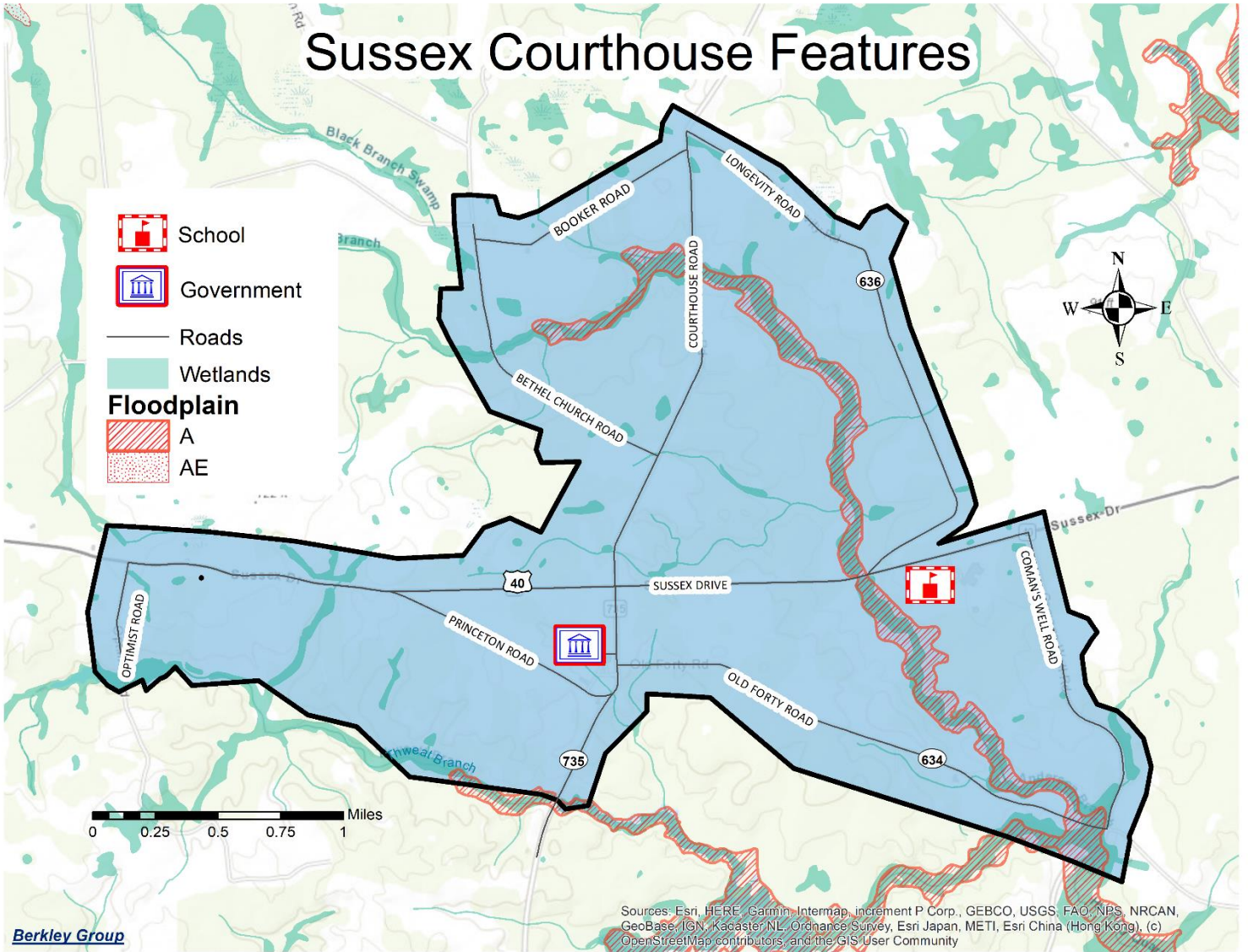
The Sussex Courthouse Planning Area has a number of notable structures as well as a mixture of rural residential dwellings and farm structures. There is also important historical significance here, with the area around the Sussex Courthouse being designated as the Sussex County Courthouse Historical District in the National Register of Historic Places. The County courthouse building was built in 1828 and remains in use today. Other major structures in the area include the Sussex County Government Center, Sussex Elementary, Sussex Central Middle School, and Sussex Central High School, which are all located at the school complex on Sussex Drive. Existing utilities include water, wastewater, and electric power lines. Electricity is provided by either Dominion Energy or the Prince George Electric Cooperative. High-speed fiber internet is available in most of the Planning Area through RuralBand from Prince George Electric Cooperative. RuralBand's Hogwood Zone extends along Old Forty Road, Courthouse Road, and Longevity Road.

The Planning Area is bisected by Sussex Drive (State Route 40), an east/west corridor, which serves as the only major road in the Planning Area. Two other important roads feed into the center of the Sussex

County Government Center: Courthouse Road (State Route 735/626), and Princeton/Old Forty Road (State Route 634). This convergence of corridors is crucial to maintaining the accessibility of the courthouse and other services to outlying portions of the County. These roads are discussed further in the Planning Analysis section of this plan.

The notable natural features in the area are Anderson Branch, which runs north to south beside the school complex on Courthouse Road (State Route 40), and Thweatt Branch that forms the southwest boundary of this Planning Area. Along Anderson Branch and Thweatt Branch, there is a relatively narrow Approximate A Flood Zone, and along both waterways there is a thin band of freshwater wetlands.

Sussex Courthouse Features



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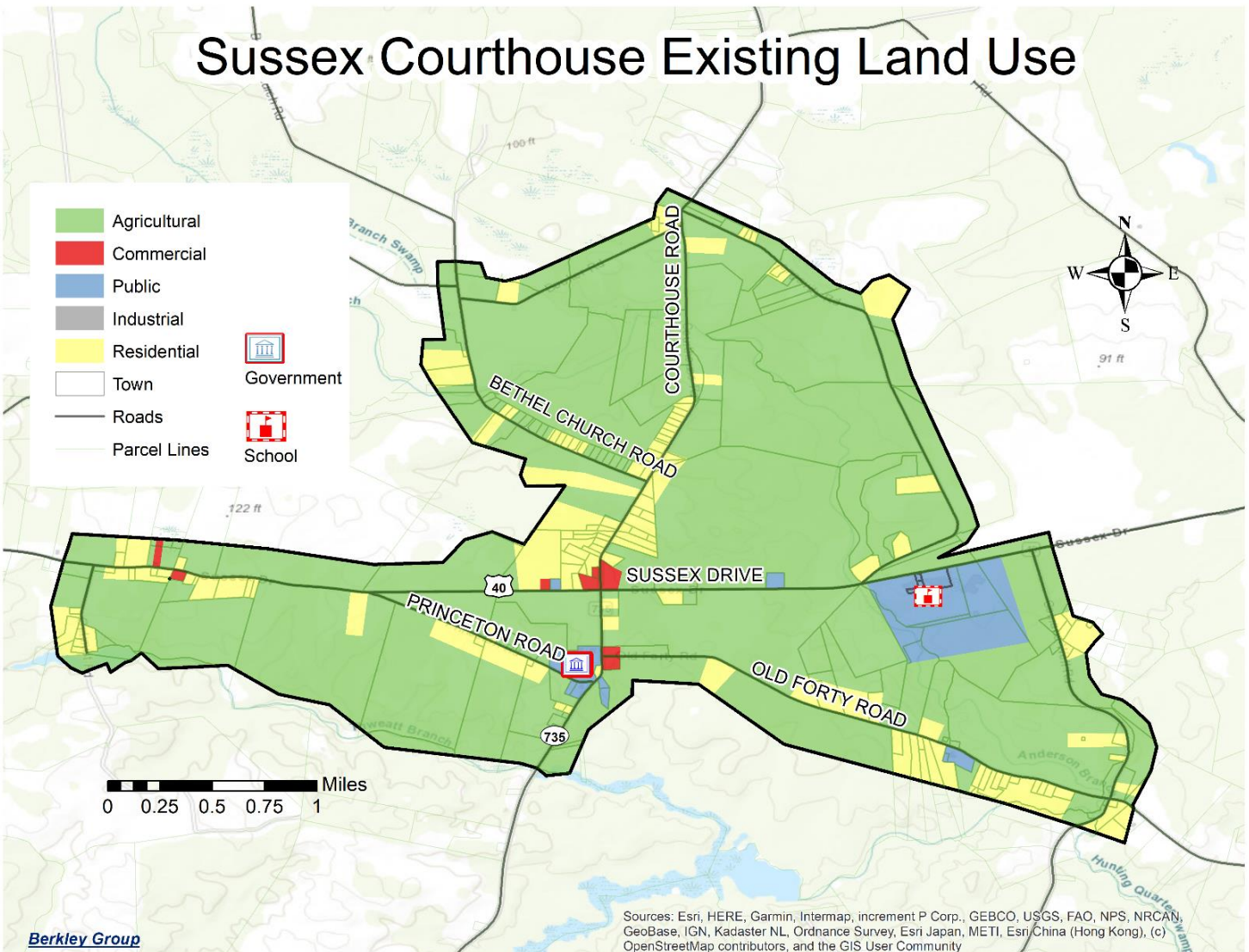
Existing Land Use

Existing development in the Sussex Courthouse Planning Area is centered around government use with a mix of rural residential uses. Agriculture and forested areas extend outward with active farming primarily taking place on large parcels along the roadways and forested areas lying behind the fields along the streams. Commercial development makes up a relatively small portion of the Planning Area.

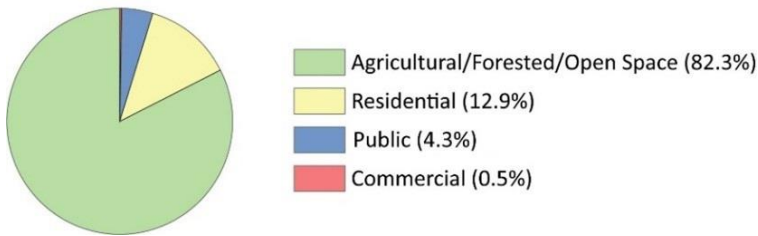
The current pattern of development has supported some residential growth in the area, but very little new

commercial development. Existing development has occurred adjacent to public roads. Undeveloped areas contain an equal distribution of forest and agriculture cropland. A small portion of the Planning Area lies within the 100-year floodplain, and there are limited identified wetlands along the 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.



Sussex Courthouse Existing Land Use



Residential

Existing residential development in the Planning Area consists of single-family dwellings, many of which are prefabricated structures on lots of five acres or less. Approximately 120 residential structures are estimated to exist in the Planning Area, however some of these structures are vacant. Although a few new residential structures have been built, the housing primarily ranges in age from 20 to 200 years old, with the bulk of newer housing being constructed in the 1990s.

Although the condition of each structure is not readily available, the County assessment data can provide some insight on the housing values and amenities. Most residential dwellings are located along Princeton Road/Old Forty Road (State Route 634), Sussex Drive (State Route 40) to the north and west of the Sussex County Government Center, and Courthouse Road (State Route 626) and Bethel Church Road (State Route 637) to the north of the government center. There is a cluster of small (one to three acre) residential lots on the northwest quadrant of the Sussex Drive/Courthouse Road intersection. One residential subdivision exists in the area comprised of 35 one-acre lots running linear to the road extending west on Bethel Church Road and north on Courthouse Road. This subdivision, County Homes Estates, appears to have structures on about half of the available lots. Of those developed, most are manufactured homes constructed in the 1990s. According to the County assessment value, most are valued near the mid-range housing value for the County.

Commercial

Limited commercial development exists near the County Government Center. Existing businesses include locally owned retail operations and gasoline sales. There are less than ten parcels in this Planning Area that are identified in the Commercial/Industrial tax class in the County's assessment database. Other than the few existing commercial sites, residents and employees in the area must travel to other parts of the County to access restaurants, grocery stores, and other services.

Industrial

No industrial land use currently exists in the Planning Area or is anticipated to be developed.

Agricultural /Forested/Open Space

As with much of Sussex County, this Planning Area is mostly composed of agricultural, open space, or forested land use. On the existing land use map, these areas have simply been labeled as Agricultural. The area has a fairly even distribution of forested land and agriculture land. Approximately 3,500 acres are taxed as agricultural land, which also includes forested areas. Almost half of that area is comprised of 10 large agricultural parcels of more than 100 acres each. The entire area within the Sussex Courthouse Planning Area is designated as Prime or Statewide Important Soil, indicating it is suitable for active agriculture. Western portions of the area along Sussex Drive and close to the Sussex Courthouse are mostly used for cultivation, especially adjacent to roads. The densely forested areas are located primarily along Anderson Branch and Thweatt Branch. There is also a narrow band of wetlands and Approximate A Flood Zone along these streams and there is little to no development in these identified hazard areas.

Public Use

Government and public land use make up approximately 4.25% of the Sussex Courthouse land area. These uses are the major contributors to activity and development in the area and act as a central meeting point for all of Sussex County. Additionally, the Sussex Courthouse Planning Area is of particular importance to the County as it is the site of most of the County's government services and administrative facilities including: The Sussex County Government Center, USDA Agricultural Service Center, Sussex Courthouse Volunteer Fire Department, Sussex County Courthouse and Circuit

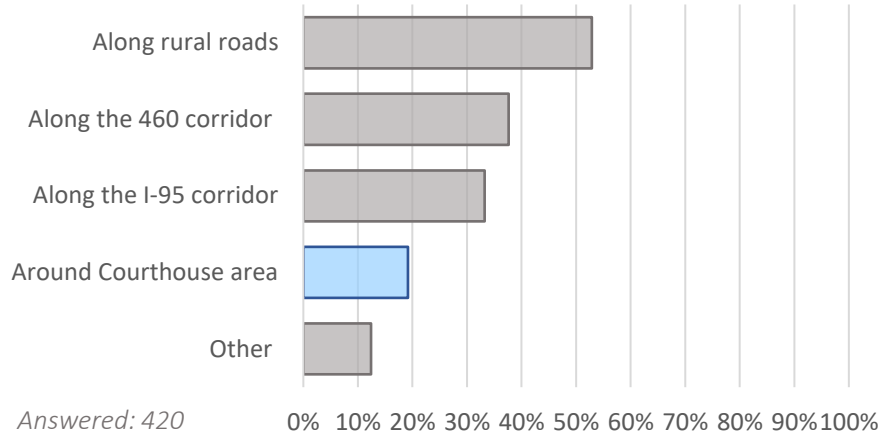
Court, Sussex County Building Inspections, and Sussex County Social Services. The local post office is across from the government complex. The County's consolidated elementary, middle, and high school campus is also located in the Planning Area on Route 40, to the east of the County Government Center. This facility has the capacity to serve as a center for recreational activity and community events for area residents. Several religious assembly uses are also located within this Planning Area.

Public Input

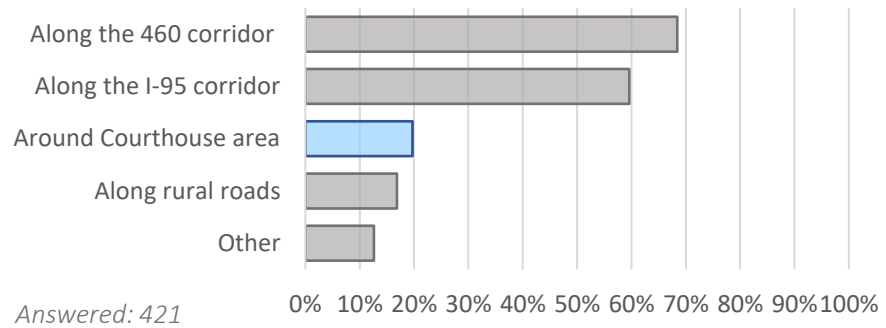
Local stakeholder meetings and county-wide surveys provide a brief understanding of public opinion about the current status and future of the Sussex Courthouse Planning Area. Input recognizes the need for the development of public facilities, which are already concentrated in the area. Additionally, there is recognition that the Sussex Courthouse Area has a relatively low potential for new commercial and industrial development.

Public schools, fire and rescue, and law enforcement are identified as important priorities for the citizens of the County. According to the public input, respondents feel these services need improvement. Each of these public amenities have a significant presence in the Sussex Courthouse Area. The public survey also indicates that the Sussex Courthouse Area will not be a major focus of non-farm industry or commercial development. In addition, while some small commercial development may occur, it will be important to preserve the historic and natural character of the small area by directing major development elsewhere.

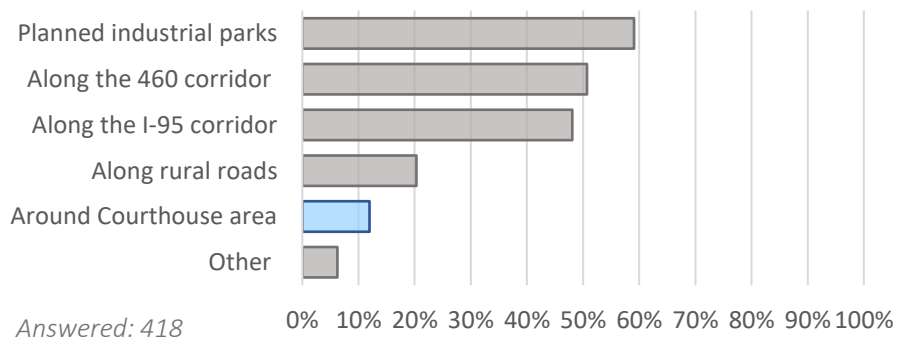
Where in the County should new housing be concentrated?



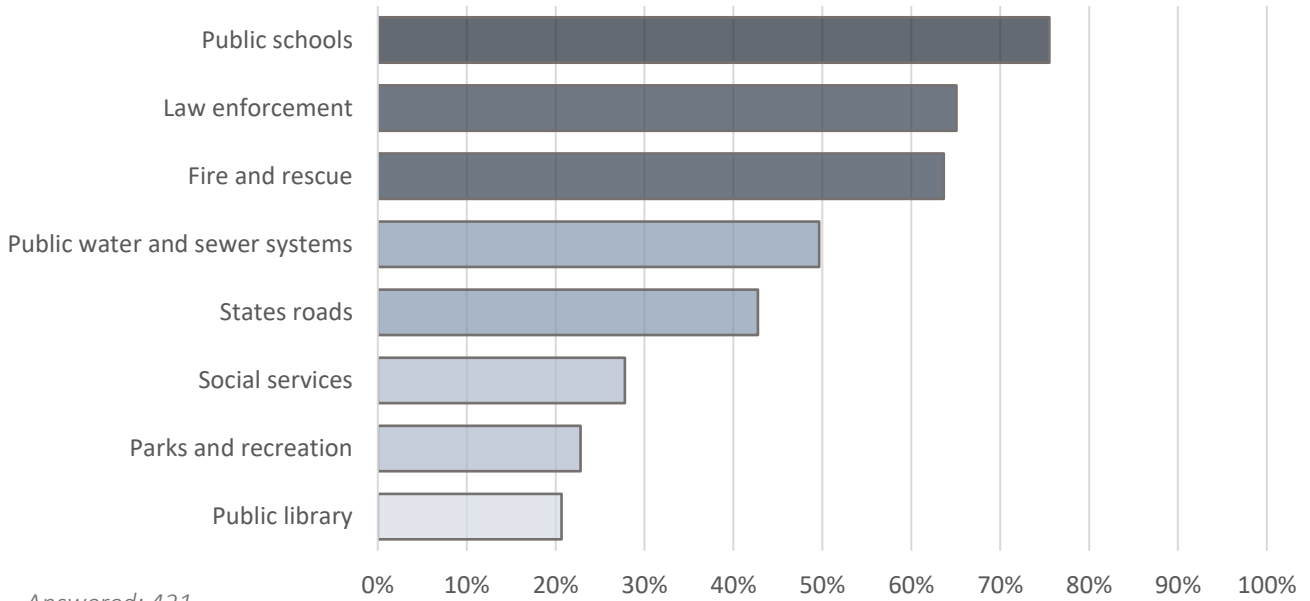
Where should new, non-farm commercial business and shopping areas generally be located?



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



What should Sussex County's highest priorities be for improving public facilities and community services?



Answered: 421



SWOT Analysis

The Sussex Courthouse Planning Area has a host 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 help plan 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 subdivided for residential use.</p> <p>Relative affordability compared to Virginia’s Richmond and Tidewater hubs, both in land prices and in tax structure.</p> <p>Transportation access via State Route 40 – a two-lane divided roadway with available capacity and relatively low traffic volume.</p> <p>Available utilities to support modest residential and commercial development.</p> <p>Prime Agricultural soils, limited floodplain, and good transportation access can offer farmers flexibility in their agricultural commodity production and delivery.</p>	<p>Weaknesses (Negative characteristics of the Planning Area that could harm its revitalization.)</p> <p>The area’s low population provides a very small and aging workforce.</p> <p>Accessibility to grocery stores and other major retail is a challenge for residents.</p> <p>Lack of variety, diversity, and availability in housing.</p> <p>No access to public transportation and distance from major regional roadways.</p> <p>Safety along State Route 40, particularly in the school zone close to the Sussex County school complex.</p>
EXTERNAL	<p>Opportunities (External influences that can be used to the advantage of the Planning Area.)</p> <p>Central location and presence of public offices and facilities can offer traffic for businesses offering goods and services that support government, such as law offices, surveyors, engineers, and lunch cafés.</p> <p>Farms located in areas on routes near the government and school complexes can take advantage of high visibility for on-site farm markets or local agritourism.</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>New school complex offers opportunity for community events and gatherings that can also support commercial businesses.</p>	<p>Threats (External factors that could prevent improvement of the Planning Area.)</p> <p>National retail trends make future development in rural areas like Sussex Courthouse more challenging.</p> <p>Isolation and distance from major roadways limits potential to attract businesses.</p> <p>Lack of available or usable vacant structures in the Planning Area would make new construction necessary for small business.</p>

Transportation Analysis

Future uses in the Sussex Courthouse Planning Area (Civic Core) 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
Sussex Dr. (State Route 40) East of Courthouse Rd. West of Courthouse Rd.	2,400 1,800
Courthouse Rd. (State Route 735/626) North of Sussex Dr. South of Sussex Dr.	430 950
Princeton Rd. (State Route 634)	570
Old Forty Rd. (State Route 634).	220



State Route 40 (Sussex Drive)

Sussex Drive (State Route 40) is a primary transit corridor in Sussex County that runs east to west through the Planning Area, connecting Sussex Courthouse with Stony Creek, I-95, and U.S. 301 to the east, and the Town of Waverly and U.S. 460 to the west. This is the central local roadway for residents in the Planning Area. It provides access to the Sussex County Government Center, as well as the County's consolidated school complex. Sussex Drive (State Route 40) is expected to be the center for any residential and commercial development that takes place in the Planning Area and is the site of a recent residential subdivision development near Sussex Courthouse. The area north of this corridor is expected to support the need for increased housing in the area. The main intersection of the area at Sussex Drive (State Route 40) and Courthouse Road (State Route 735/626) should also support new commercial and public use. While significant growth and development are not anticipated for the Sussex Courthouse Planning Area, County officials should consider the benefits of establishing a highway corridor overlay zoning district along Sussex Drive (State Route 40) to ensure quality development along this major roadway.



State Route 735/626 Corridor (Courthouse Road)

The Courthouse Road Corridor (State Route 735/626) runs north to south through the Planning Area, intersecting with Sussex Drive (State Route 40), and provides direct access to the Sussex County Government Center. Modest commercial development exists at the intersection of Courthouse Road (State Route 735) and Old Forty Road (State Route 634). Limited, commercial development is expected to continue and may be expanded at the intersection of Courthouse Road (State Route 735) and Old Forty Road (State Route 634).

The north side of the intersection of Sussex Drive (State Route 40) and Courthouse Road (State Route 626) may also accommodate potential commercial development. Modest residential development is also anticipated along Courthouse Road (State Route 626) and Bethel Church Road (State Route 637) to the north of the Sussex County Courthouse where several dwellings and utility connections already exist.



State Route 634 Corridor (Princeton Road/Old Forty Road)

The Princeton Road Corridor (State Route 634) runs from northwest to southeast through the Planning Area, branching from Sussex Drive (State Route 40) and intersecting with Courthouse Road directly adjacent to the Sussex County Government Center. State Route 634 then continues eastward as Old Forty Road. Government and commercial development is expected to continue at the intersection of these roads due to their close proximity to the Courthouse.

Transportation Improvements

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.

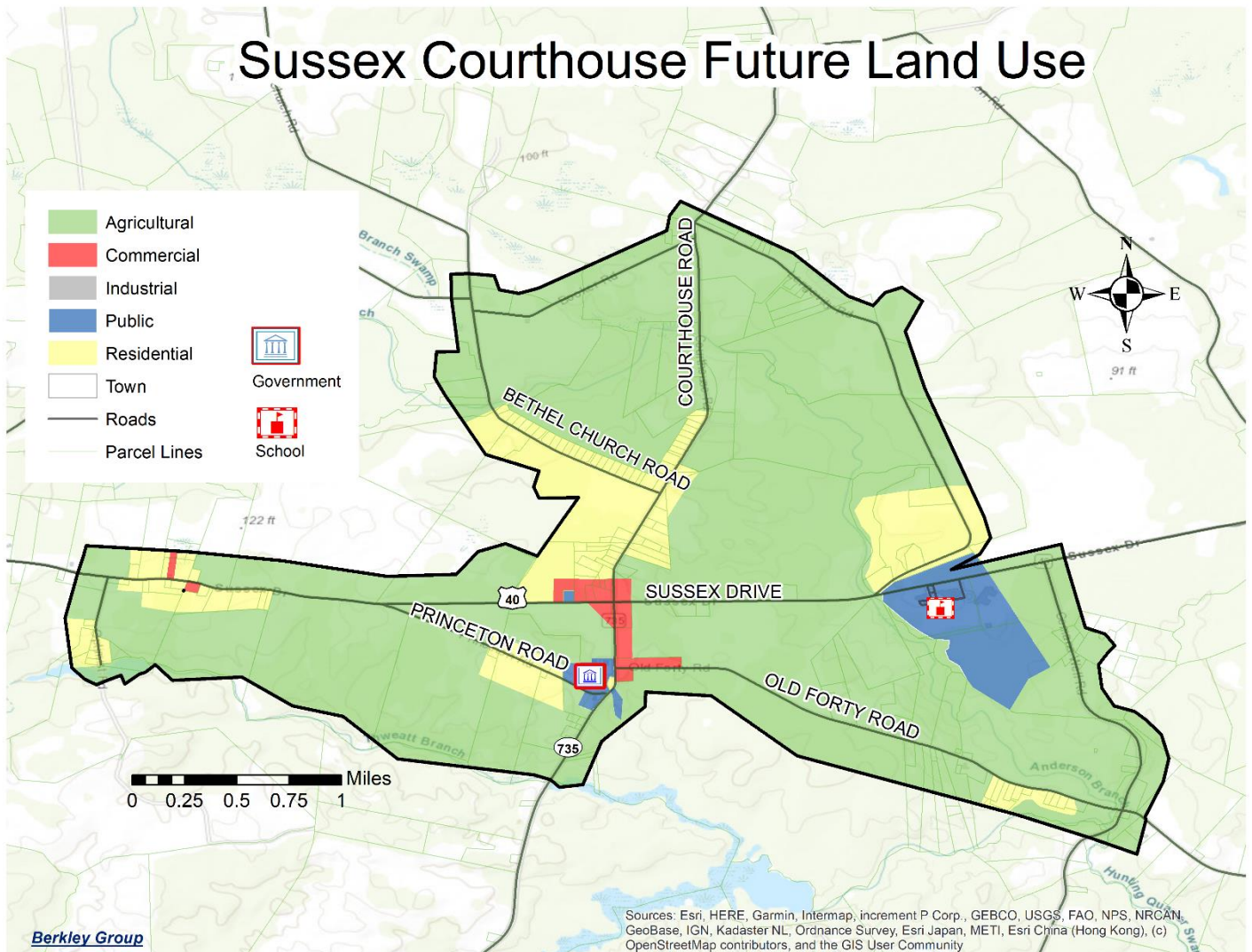
VDOT has previously paved Longevity Road (State Route 636) starting at Courthouse Road as identified in the VDOT Six-Year Improvement Program. The VTrans Mid-term Needs does not recommend any transportation recommendations for the area. Recommendations in the Crater PDC and VDOT Rural Transportation Plan include improvements to Courthouse Road (State Route 626) north of Sussex Drive (State Route 40) to widen the lanes and address geometric deficiencies. The existing road has less than 10-foot-wide lanes that creates a safety hazard for travelers along the route, particularly at corners and bends. This is the only recommendation that the plan provides for the area.

Future Vision & Planning

The Sussex Courthouse Planning Area is the geographic and civic center of Sussex County. This is the primary point of delivery for government services, which is the current and future driver of development in this area. For purposes of this plan, this district has been deemed the Civic Core. These government and educational facilities along with the convergence of several primary rural routes creates some potential for growth and development. Future planning efforts must also recognize the importance of the agricultural economy and local desire to maintain rural character.

Part of the future vision builds upon a future land use analysis that projects ideal land uses for major zones of the Planning Area shown below in the Future Land Use Map, with associated recommendations to follow.

It should be noted that residential use secondary to agricultural operations or scattered rural residential or commercial parcels are not reflected in recommended future uses. This does not mean those existing individual uses should be discontinued, but rather that the recommended land use model reflects the primary future uses.



FUTURE VISION

Future Land Use Analysis

The recommended future uses are based on a variety of factors, such as subdivisions on record, 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 Sussex Courthouse Planning Area as well as some limited growth in commercial and government uses and the proposal of strategies to ensure that agriculture continues to be profitable and thus the rural culture preserved. Future development in the area should be clustered as much as possible and be located outside of FEMA flood zones located along Anderson Branch and Thweat Branch.

Environmental Conservation

The Sussex Courthouse Planning Area contains a wide variety of environmental features, including wetland areas, flood zones, and riparian areas that play an important role in plant and animal species diversity as well as natural water system filtering. Given the prevalence of natural features throughout the County, environmental conservation is a relevant consideration for all future land use categories. There are a number of forest, wetland, and recreational conservation easements on properties throughout the County, but few in this area. Conservation easement programs could be enhanced in this area and expanded to specifically include the protection of active farmland.

Low-impact development strategies and stormwater drainage infrastructure improvements should be considered to protect water quality in areas slated for commercial and public facility growth. Moreover, cluster development strategies that emphasize greater density and concentration of dwellings should be utilized when planning for new residential development near the Sussex County Government Center.

Farmers are encouraged to follow best management practices and take advantage of conservation and environmental programs promoted by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and USDA. And, as mentioned

in the Agricultural, Forested, and Open Space section of this document, natural floodplains should be maintained and used as natural buffers along waterways.

Agricultural, Forested, and Open Space

The primary land use within Sussex Courthouse will continue to be rural in nature and include large tracts of agricultural, forest, and open land uses. These areas are labeled as Agricultural on the future land use map. Development should be focused in designated areas and discouraged throughout most of the Planning Area. 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 to promote the continuation of farming as one of the most important sectors of the economy. As such, minimizing land subdivision, 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. Additionally, areas within the FEMA-designated flood zones should not see any future development and should be used as a natural flood reserve area that act as a buffer between agricultural uses and waterways.

In planning for active agricultural use of parcels in the rural area, 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 the rural areas of Sussex County for tourism as well as providing additional income to farming operations. Large, contiguous parcels will remain necessary for sustainable agricultural enterprise in the rural area.

Outside of sensitive environmental areas, it is the vision of Sussex County that rural areas remain rural, and that active agriculture maintains its importance in the community. A central objective of land use planning in Sussex County is to preserve this valuable land from

being developed for residential or other land uses. Once developed, it cannot easily be restored to its original condition (nature). Areas reserved for agriculture on the land use map should be used for active agricultural and forestry enterprises, and best management practices should be observed relative to the land disturbance, support structures, and other facilities that such agricultural/rural operations require.

Areas that are in forest preservation programs should be maintained to support the ecological balance between agriculture and forest. The County should consider the formation of a farmland conservation board to promote and manage conservation easements specific to the protection of active agricultural land.

Residential

Design

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. Public sewer service should be secured to ensure sustainable water quality necessary for active agricultural.

It is understood that 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/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.

Location

Modest residential development is anticipated along Courthouse Road (State Route 626) and Bethel Church Road (State Route 637) where several dwellings and utility connections already exist to the north of the Sussex County Courthouse. In addition, Old Forty Road (State Route 634) and Sussex Drive (State Route 40) have also been identified as possible areas for future residential development. It is a central priority for the Sussex Courthouse Planning Area, and Sussex County as a whole, to guide residential development in a direction that it does not diminish the County’s rural character. Accordingly, utilizing development strategies, such as planned communities or cluster developments as described above, will confine residential development to specific areas rather than allowing it to sprawl along roadways.

Housing Type

In the past, residential development in Sussex County has comprised almost exclusively of low density, single-family dwellings. While this approach has been employed to protect the rural aesthetic of the County and preserve vital environmental and agricultural areas, a consideration of the potential benefits of allowing for more residential options may better achieve many of the County’s long-term goals. For example, duplex/triplex style residential dwellings or accessory dwelling units

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(ADU's) could be permitted on individual lots of at least one acre rather than single-family dwellings alone. This approach would enable County officials to ensure the preservation of the area's rural character and economy while also creating more affordable housing opportunities in Sussex County. This could be potentially useful near the school complex. Affordable, well designed residential areas could provide desirable housing opportunities for young teachers and other school staff.

Public Services

Access to public services is also an important component of residential growth. While grant assistance could be used to expand water and sewer services into more rural parts of the Planning Area where residential growth is desirable, the existing treatment capacity is insufficient to support anticipated growth. It is especially important to ensure that areas provided with public water access are also provided with public sewer access. Public water services can increase development pressures, but without public sewer, an increase in the number of septic systems can threaten the groundwater quality, especially in low lying areas where soils may not be suitable for effective septic development. This could endanger the agricultural viability as well as public health.

Commercial

Commercial development should be focused near the intersection of Route 40 (Sussex Drive) and State Route 626 (Courthouse Road), which is the busiest intersection in the Planning Area. Additionally, the area across from the Sussex Courthouse and Government Complex at the intersection of State Route 735 (Courthouse Road) and State Route 634 (Old Forty Road) has potential for commercial growth.

Future commercial development in the Planning Area is expected to be limited relative to other Planning Areas in Sussex County. Given the County's central priorities of preserving environmentally sensitive conservation areas and the area's agrarian economy, any commercial development should be concentrated around the center

of the Planning Area near the Sussex County Government Center, where some commercial development already exists. Commercial development should take advantage of vacant commercial spaces that exist in the Planning Area and limit the disturbance of the rural character of the area. Officials might also consider efforts to bring small market-style retail space to the area to serve its residents and improve food security in the area.

Industry

Unlike other Planning Areas in Sussex County, no industrial development of any kind is anticipated or recommended for the Sussex Courthouse Planning Area.

Public Use

The Sussex Courthouse Planning Area is the center of both the County's courts and administrative services, as well as its consolidated elementary, middle, and high school campus. As such, the modern and spacious school grounds will provide area residents with recreational facilities for many years to come. One of the primary objectives for the Planning Area will be to accommodate any expansion of public facilities and utilities necessary for maintenance and development of the Sussex County Government Center and the school complex.

Implementation Recommendations

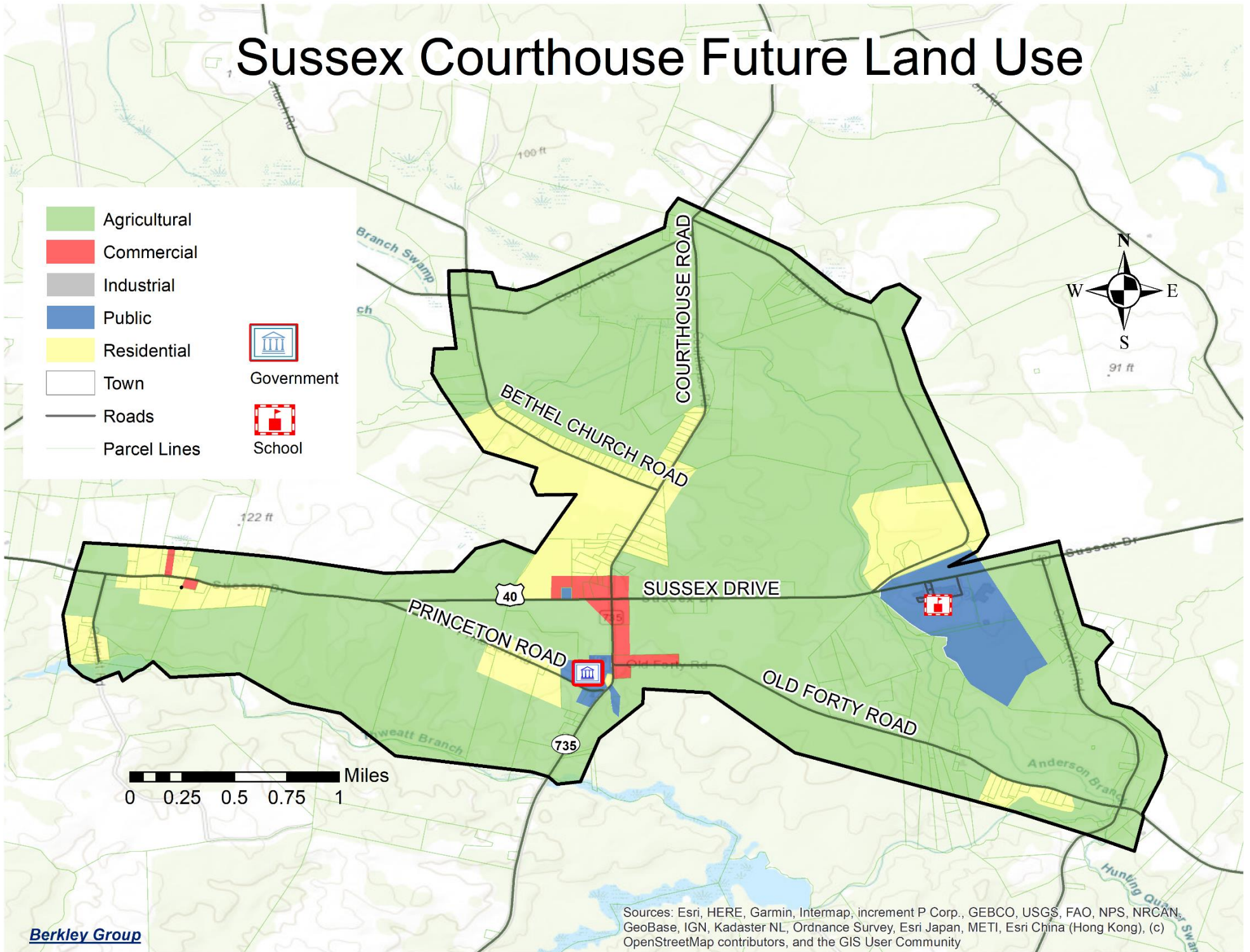
Recommendations for the Sussex Courthouse Planning Area build on the strengths of the area as Sussex County’s center of community and government. The recommendations focus on identifying opportunities for appropriate development and preserving agriculture and open space.

Implementation Task	Cost Scale	Time Scale ²	Responsible Party
Promote County policies and farmer participation in conservation and environmental programs, such as those available through the VA Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and promote additional forms of income for farmers like Agri-tourism.	\$	Short-term	Cooperative Extension
Promote the use of the Sussex County school complex as a place for recreation and community use in the Planning Area.	\$	Short-term	County Administrator/ School Superintendent
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
Review and update the zoning ordinance to increase housing diversity, such as allowing cluster development on small lots, duplex, triplex structures and accessory dwelling units in appropriate areas to improve the quality of housing structures and 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

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

Implementation Task	Cost Scale	Time Scale ²	Responsible Party
Modify or update the zoning ordinance to ensure that commercial development is concentrated near the Sussex County Government Center and easily allows for retail, restaurants, offices, and local medical facilities to be developed.	\$\$	Short-term	Planning and Zoning Department
Update zoning ordinance to reflect portions of the Planning Area in the vicinity of the Sussex County Government Center for limited but concentrated commercial development, and direct future commercial development into designated growth areas.	\$\$	Short-term	Planning and Zoning Department
Consider establishing a highway corridor overlay district to preserve the appearance along State Route 40.	\$	Medium-term	Planning and Zoning Department
Consider utilizing farmland protection tools available in the VA State Code to promote long term agricultural conservation.	\$	Medium-term	Cooperative Extension/ Planning and Zoning Department
Adopt low-impact (best management practice) development strategies and guidelines for constructing stormwater drainage infrastructure to mitigate environmental impacts of development and remediate flood prone areas where poor drainage exists.	\$	Medium-term	Planning and Zoning Department
Implement necessary utility improvements/expansions along State Routes where residential and commercial growth is projected in the Planning Area.	\$\$\$\$	Long-term	County Administrator

Sussex Courthouse Future Land Use



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