

SUSSEX COUNTY, VIRGINIA
SMALL AREA PLANS

WAKEFIELD



**PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT
AUGUST 2021**



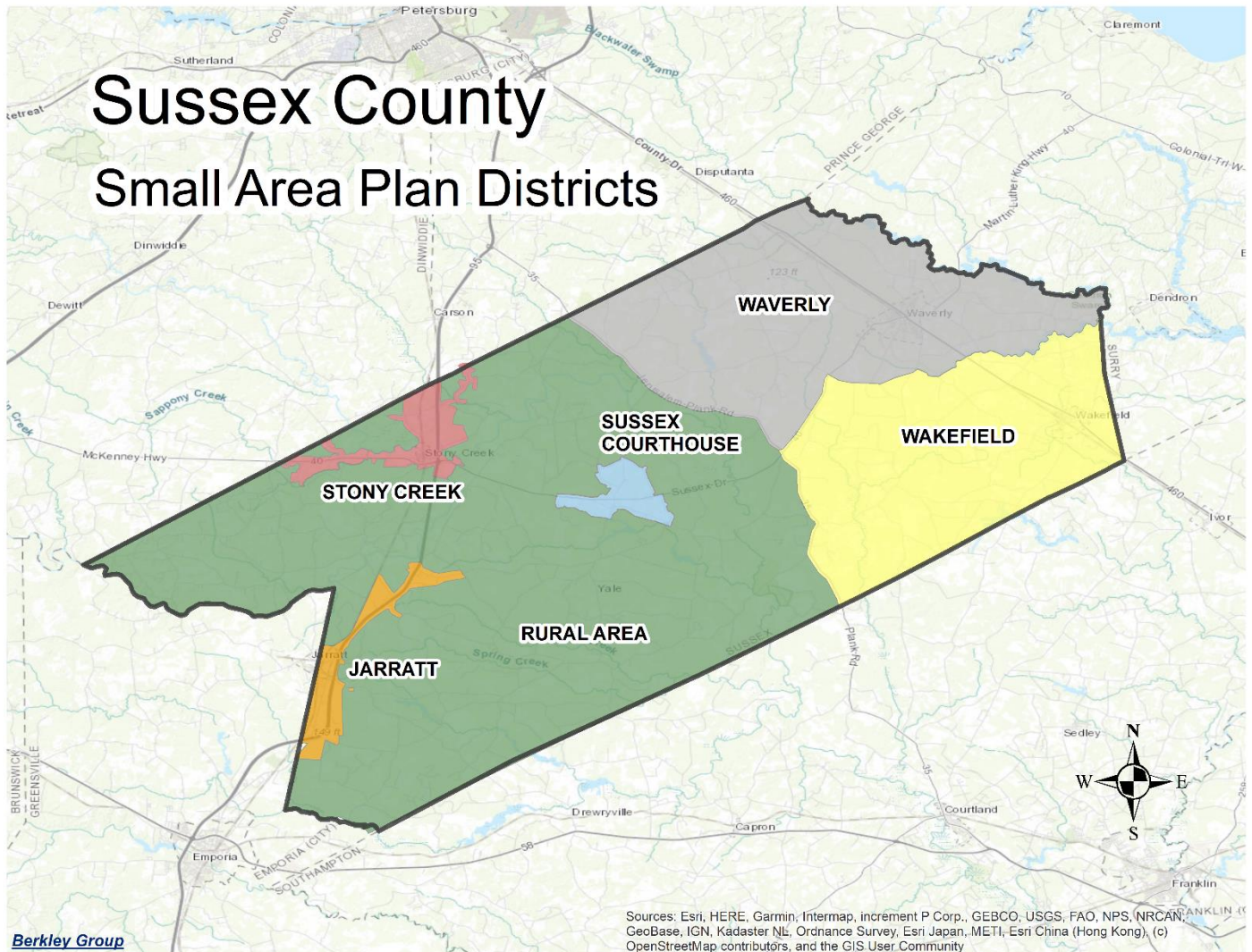
Table of Contents

Preface	3
Six Planning Areas	4
Wakefield Planning Area.....	6
Existing Features & Uses	7
Existing Land Use	9
Public Input	13
SWOT Analysis.....	14
Transportation Analysis	15
U.S. Route 460 Corridor	16
State Route 40 Corridor (Sussex Drive).....	17
State Route 35 Corridor (Jerusalem Plank Road).....	17
Railroad Corridor.....	17
Transportation Improvements.....	18
Future Vision & Planning.....	19
Future Land Use Analysis	20
Implementation Recommendations	23

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.

This plan will focus on Wakefield – The Hub for Local Culture in 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 around the Town of Wakefield and the surrounding areas that include Homeville and the U.S. 460 corridor while also considering how this area relates to the other parts of the County. The strength of this area is the existing amenities and the number of travelers passing through the area on U.S. 460. The existing commercial businesses and infrastructure of the Town of Wakefield as well as existing and planned residential development serve as the foundation for future growth in the area.

Stony Creek Planning Area – Commercial Center

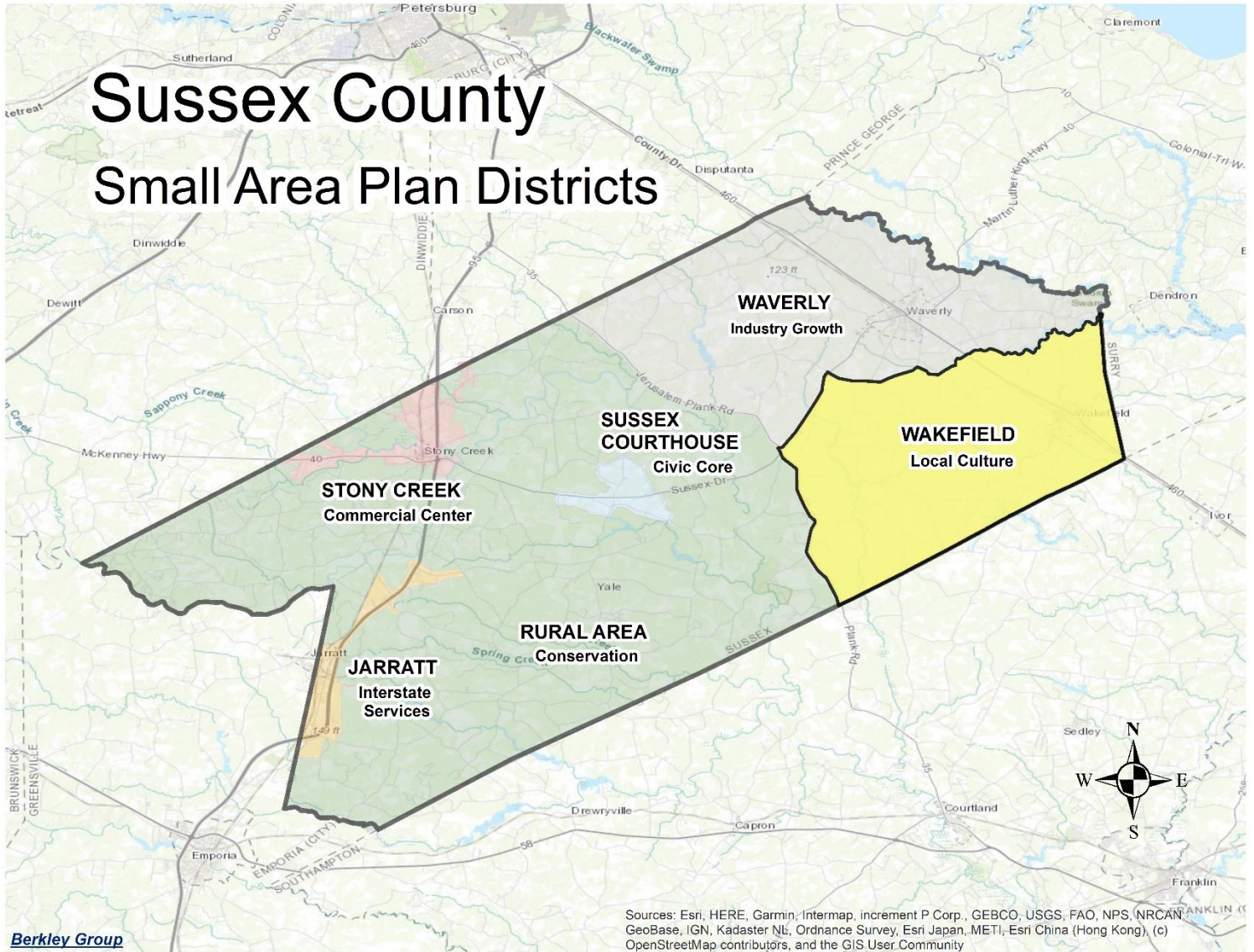
Fed by I-95 and accessible to other areas in the County, the Stony Creek area can accommodate commercial development that is missing in the rural area between Petersburg and Emporia. The large floodplain/wetland areas of this district restrict the amount of development and make it more suitable to commercial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

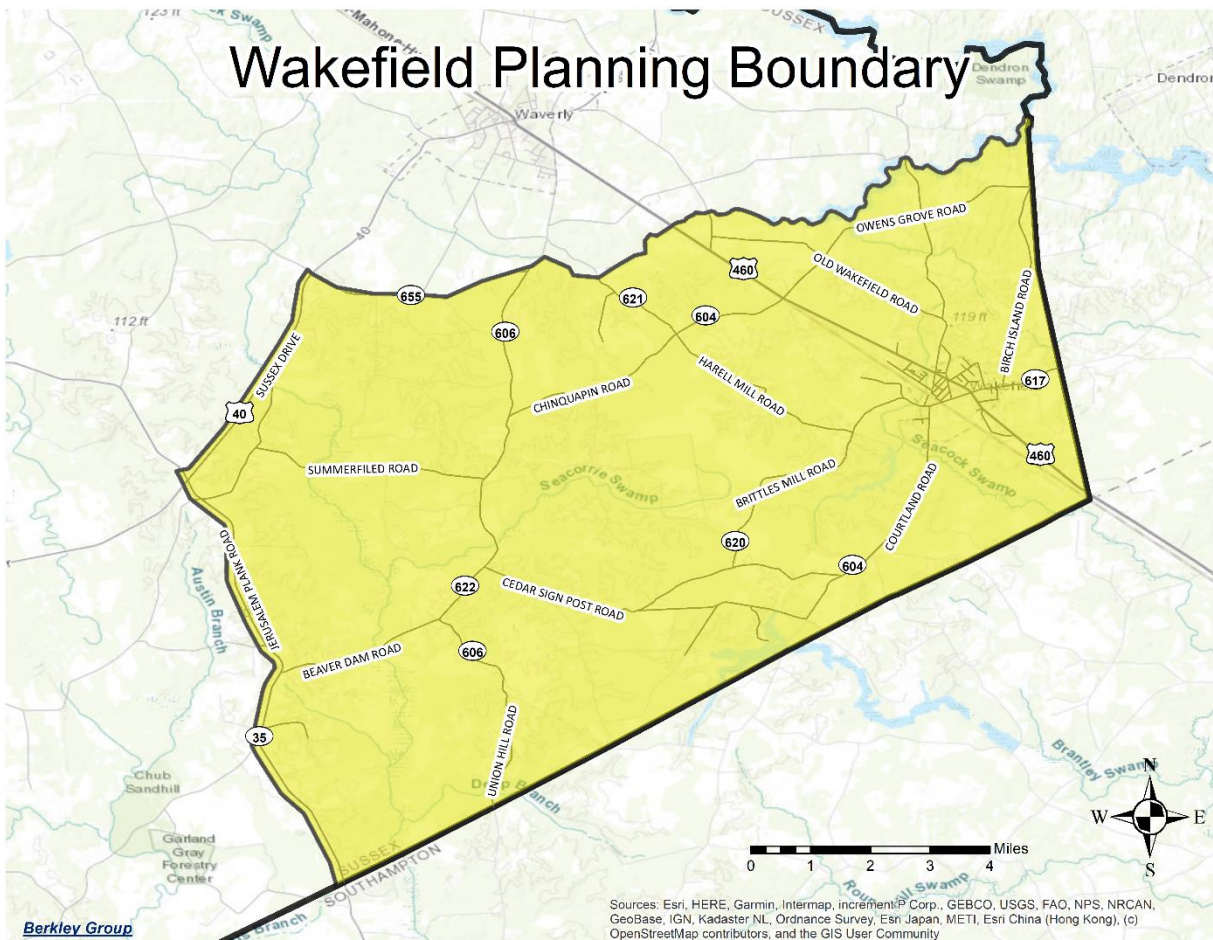


Wakefield Planning Area

The Wakefield Planning Area is located in southeastern Sussex County. The area includes the Town of Wakefield, a nine mile stretch of U.S. 460, and most of rural southeastern Sussex County. The area borders Surry County to the east and Southampton County to the south. The area also extends west to include portions of Sussex Drive (State Route 40) and Jerusalem Plank Road (State Route 35). Other major transportation features are the Wakefield Municipal Airport and a Norfolk Southern/Amtrak rail line. The northern boundary of the Planning Area follows Sussex Drive from its intersection with Jerusalem Plank Road in Homeville to State Route 655. The western boundary of the Planning Area follows Jerusalem Plank Road from Homeville to the

Southampton County line. The southern boundary is formed by the Sussex County and Southampton County border.

The entire Planning Area is approximately 86.6 square miles, which includes the 1.3 square miles of the Town of Wakefield. Using 2010 Census Block data to analyze the general boundaries of the Planning Area, an estimated 1,999 residents inhabit the Planning Area in 834 households.¹ Approximately 927 people lived in the Town of Wakefield in 2010, although estimates from 2019 ACS data suggests the Town's population may have increased to around 1,175 inhabitants (+26%). The area's population density is roughly 23 people per square mile.



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.



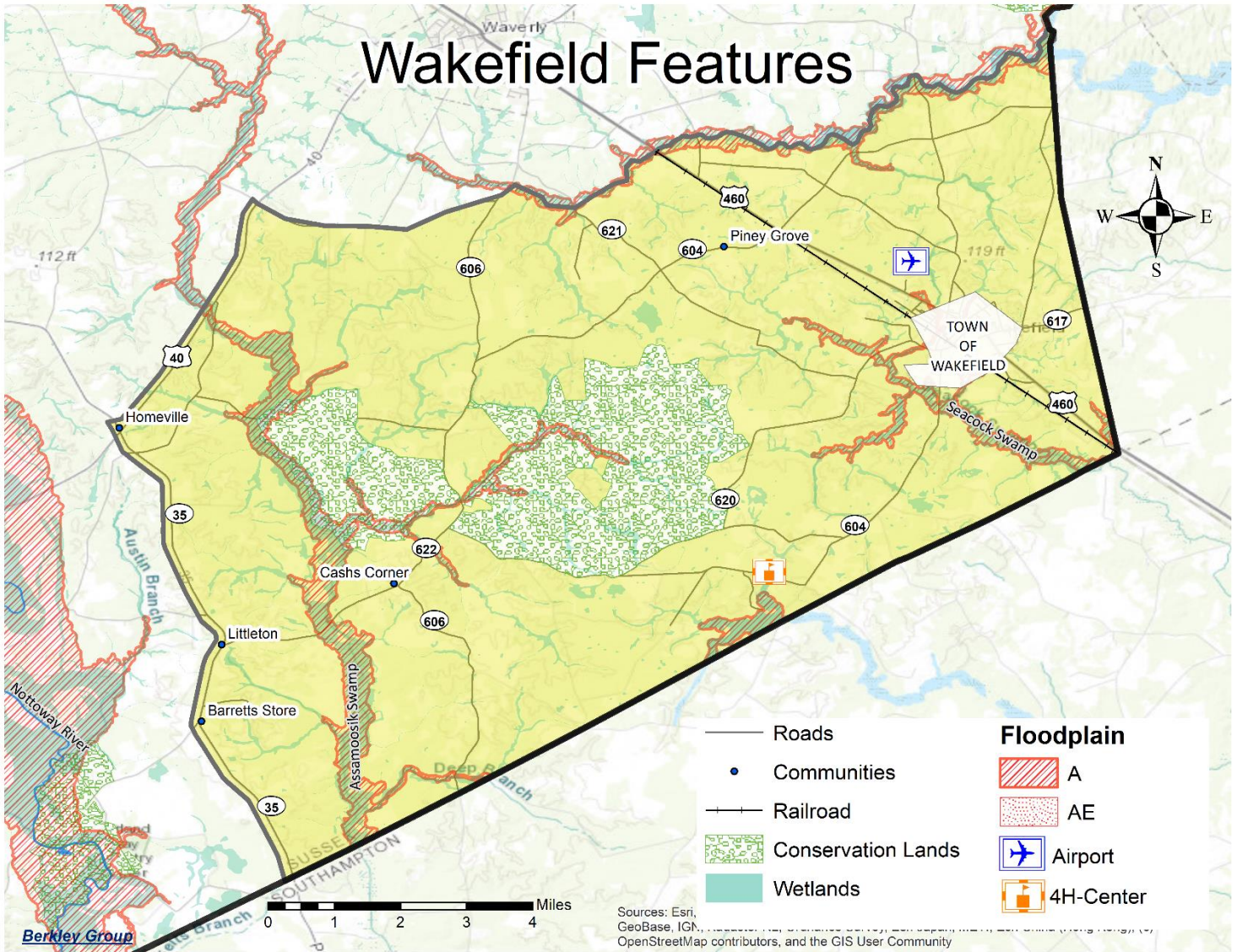
Existing Features & Uses

The Wakefield Planning Area has a concentrated presence of developed structures and activity along U.S. 460 surrounded by a much larger natural area full of rich resources beyond U.S. 460 with a mixture of rural residential dwellings, farm structures and actively managed conservation lands. The Wakefield Planning Area has a unique local culture, physical amenities, and valued environmental resources that make it an attractive destination for County residents, passing travelers, and tourists. Major structures and developments in the Planning Area include the Wakefield Municipal Airport, the National Weather Service Forecast Office, the Airfield Conference Center, the Southeast 4-H Educational Center, and the Wakefield Peanut Company.

The location of existing development and established transportation corridors will guide future development while the presence of valuable natural resources restricts expansive growth beyond established developed areas. Most residential and commercial activity occurs in and around the Town with limited rural development spread elsewhere. Development near U.S. 460 has water and sewer service from the Sussex Service Authority. Most of the Planning Area has electric utilities from either Dominion Power or Prince George Electric Cooperative.

Some addresses on the southern County border receive electricity from the Community Electric Cooperative. Additionally, the Town of Wakefield provides electric utilities in the Town limits, making it one of only six towns in Virginia to provide that service. High-speed fiber internet is available in much of the Planning Area through RuralBand from Prince George Electric Cooperative. RuralBand's Wakefield Zone extends along many of the rural roads near Town. RuralBand plans to continue extension of fiber internet to all Prince George electric customers.

Notable natural features in the area include the Airfield Pond, Drumwright Pond, Chinquapin Swamp, and Brittles Mill Pond. In addition, the area has some FEMA Zone A flood zones along the Assamoosick Swamp and the Seacock Swamp that will constrain future development. The Seacock Swamp flood zone is located directly west of Town and may limit some development opportunities to expand development near the Town of Wakefield to the west. Presently, very little development has occurred in either flood area. In addition, the area has large amounts of rural land managed by the Commonwealth of Virginia and The Nature Conservancy as conservation land. A map of all managed conservation areas is found on the next page.

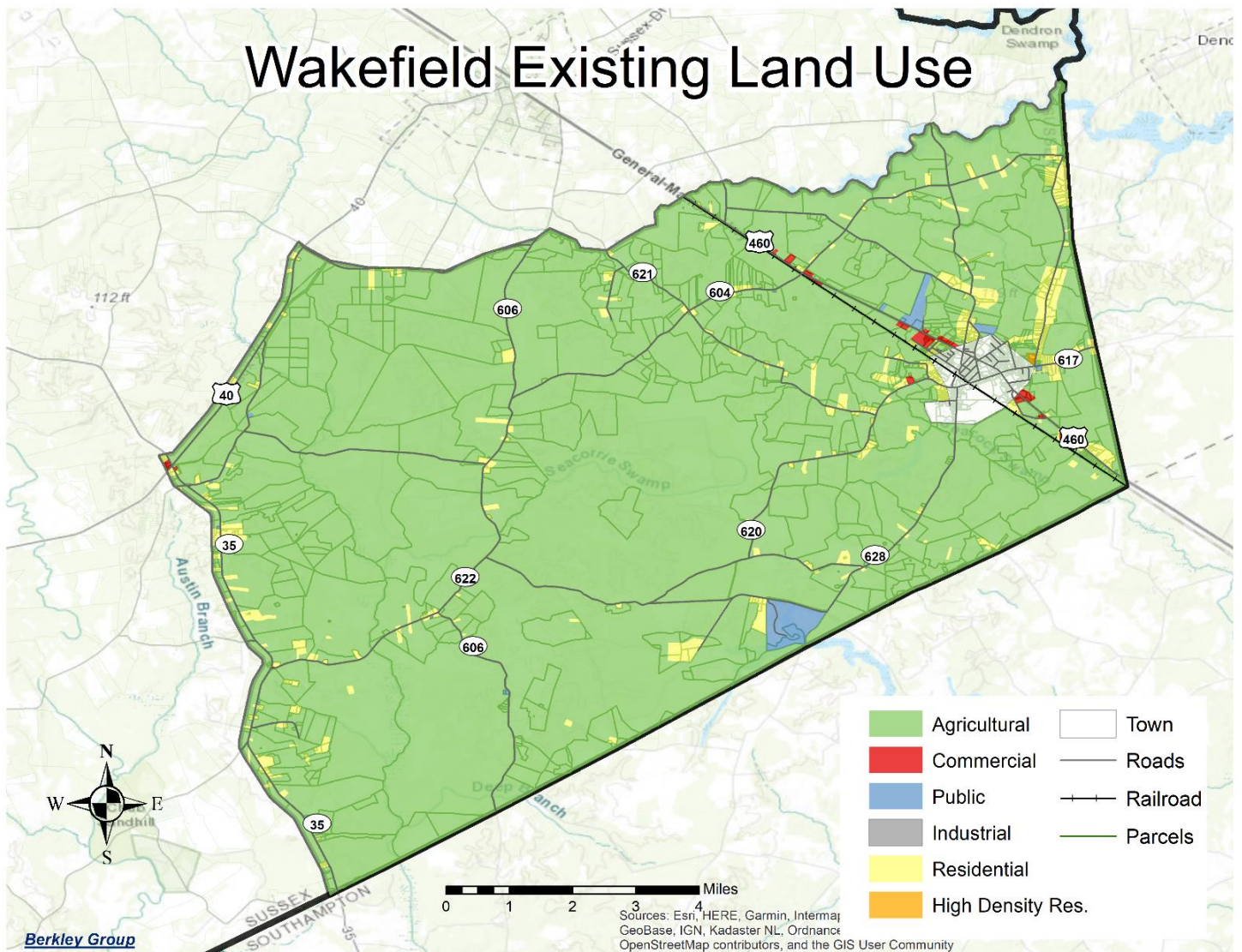


Existing Land Use

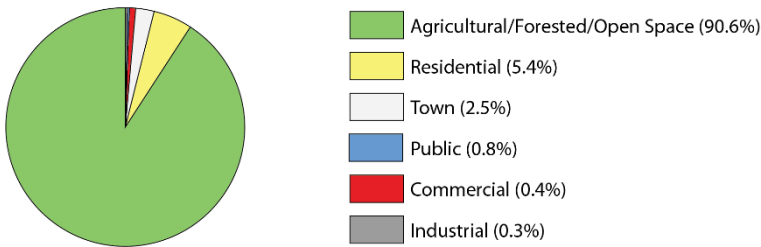
The Wakefield Planning Area can generally be separated into the developed land along the U.S. 460 corridor and the rural areas extending outward from U.S. 460. The Wakefield Planning Area along U.S. 460 is a hub for commercial activity in the County and as a result the area has a diverse distribution of land uses centered around the Town of Wakefield. Most of the land beyond the Town is primarily rural with large amounts of land reserved for conservation, silviculture, and agricultural use. A total of 90.6% of the Planning Area is considered agricultural, forested, or open space. For this plan, the Town of Wakefield contains a diverse set of land uses but

is defined as Town and is separated from other land uses in the area. This plan treats the Town as an independent actor in charge of its own land use decisions.

The map below and 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.



Wakefield Existing Land Use



Residential

Existing residential development in the Planning Area consists primarily of single-family dwellings. There are approximately 993 residential housing structures, which include 485 in the Town of Wakefield. Most residential development outside of the Town limits is located very close to U.S. 460 and the Town. The land in and around the Town has some of the highest density of housing units in all of Sussex County. Rural residential development is scattered elsewhere in the Planning Area, but there are no other significant clusters of residential development.

Near the Town of Wakefield, Main Street (State Routes 628/617), North Street/Pine Street (State Route 679), and Railroad Avenue (State Route 705) contain defined neighborhoods with some of the greatest concentration of residential parcels. Housing structures near Wakefield are diverse with a mix of large single-family structures greater than 150 years old, prefabricated structures, modular homes, and more modern ranch style homes.



The Birch Island Apartments (Phase 1 and 2) are located just east of Town in unincorporated Sussex County on Birch Island Road (State Route 31). This complex is the only multifamily development in the Planning Area. Built with a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) in 1984 and 1988, most of the units are income restricted to low-

and middle-income households. Most of the units (48 total) from Phase 1 were recently renovated in 2019.

Also, the Drumwright Mill Subdivision was a previously proposed 500 lot development near Courtland Road (State Route 628) that was approved as a planned unit development for several years but was never developed. Previous plans called for the construction of a golf course, a medical facility, restaurants, and other commercial establishments. Despite these elaborate plans, the site still remains vacant.

Commercial

This land use category includes areas used for retail, consumer services, and professional activities. Most of this type of development is currently clustered around the Town of Wakefield, especially along U.S. 460 to the east and west of the Town. Wakefield has multiple commercial uses that have been in business for decades and serve as unique cultural attractions bringing visitors to the area.

Many of the commercial businesses are related to the local production of peanuts, which has helped Wakefield become known as one of Virginia’s capitals of peanuts. The Virginia Diner and Hope & Harmony Peanuts in Town and the Wakefield Peanut Co. and Adams’ Peanuts & Country Store outside of Town on U.S. 460 are all iconic commercial businesses in the area. The U.S. 460 corridor also has a few small antique and collectibles stores and a motel that primarily serves passing travelers.

The U.S. 460 corridor also has many commercial uses oriented towards serving local needs, including the only full-service grocery store in the County. The corridor also has multiple gasoline stations, dollar stores, small restaurants, banks, auto repair shops, and other service oriented commercial businesses. Railroad Avenue also has a small downtown district in Wakefield with a bank and small retail stores.

There is very little commercial development beyond the Town of Wakefield or U.S. 460. The intersection of Jerusalem Plank Road (State Route 35) and Sussex Drive (State Route 40) has a few vacant commercial and industrial buildings. Farther to the south, the Airfield Conference Center has a restaurant that primarily serves guests at the retreat center.

Industrial

The Wakefield Planning Area has a few smaller industrial uses primarily located along U.S. 460, but overall, the area has a much smaller industrial presence as compared to other areas of the County. There are no sites actively being marketed for industrial development.

The Isle of Wight Forest Product Lumber Mill on U.S. 460 northwest of Town and the Wakefield Peanut Co. processing plant southeast of Town on U.S. 460 are the two main industrial uses in the area. The Wakefield Farm Services grain mill is located in Town. Additionally, the Virginia Diner was recently approved to expand their peanut processing operations in the area. These industrial uses are an integral part of the local economy and directly tied to the forest and agricultural products grown in the surrounding area.

Presently the sites are all near public roads and have small setbacks with minimal landscape screening or buffers. Each of these sites is very noticeable, and the County should consider additional screening requirements to improve the aesthetic of the surrounding area.

Public

The Wakefield Planning Area has a variety of public and institutional uses that are an important component of the local culture and activity. This land use category includes buildings for governmental functions as well as schools, libraries, fire stations, and other similar public uses.



Particularly unique to the Planning Area is the Airfield Conference Center and the Southeast 4-H Educational Center near Courtland Road (State Route 628), which serve as major attractions in the area drawing visitors from across Virginia and beyond to attend camps,

conferences, retreats, and other events throughout the year. The Wakefield Municipal Airport located northwest of the Town, serves as the only active airport for public use in the County. Finally, the National Weather Service's (NWS) Forecast Office for eastern and central Virginia is located on U.S. 460 near the airport. The site includes an office space and a doppler radar used for weather forecasting. The presence of the NWS office in the Planning Area brings regional recognition to Sussex.



The area also has many institutional uses intended to serve local users. The Town and surrounding area have numerous churches, and the Wakefield Friends Center Camp just outside of Town is a religious retreat center drawing people to the area.

The Wakefield Foundation Inc. is a unique nonprofit that has preserved and restored the former Wakefield High School building to offer public classes, events, and meetings. The Troxler Memorial Library, which is a branch of the Blackwater Regional Library, is also located in the same building in Town (pictured below). The Wakefield Town Ballfield Complex and Playground is located along U.S. 460 near the airport just outside of the Town limits. The Wakefield Swim Club is a private recreational asset in Town. The Wakefield Fire Department is also located in Town and responds to emergencies in the surrounding area. The Ellen W. Chambliss Elementary School building, which closed in 2014, on Higgins Street just outside of the Town has a playground and basketball courts available for public use. The building and school property remain mostly vacant and offer an opportunity for future redevelopment.

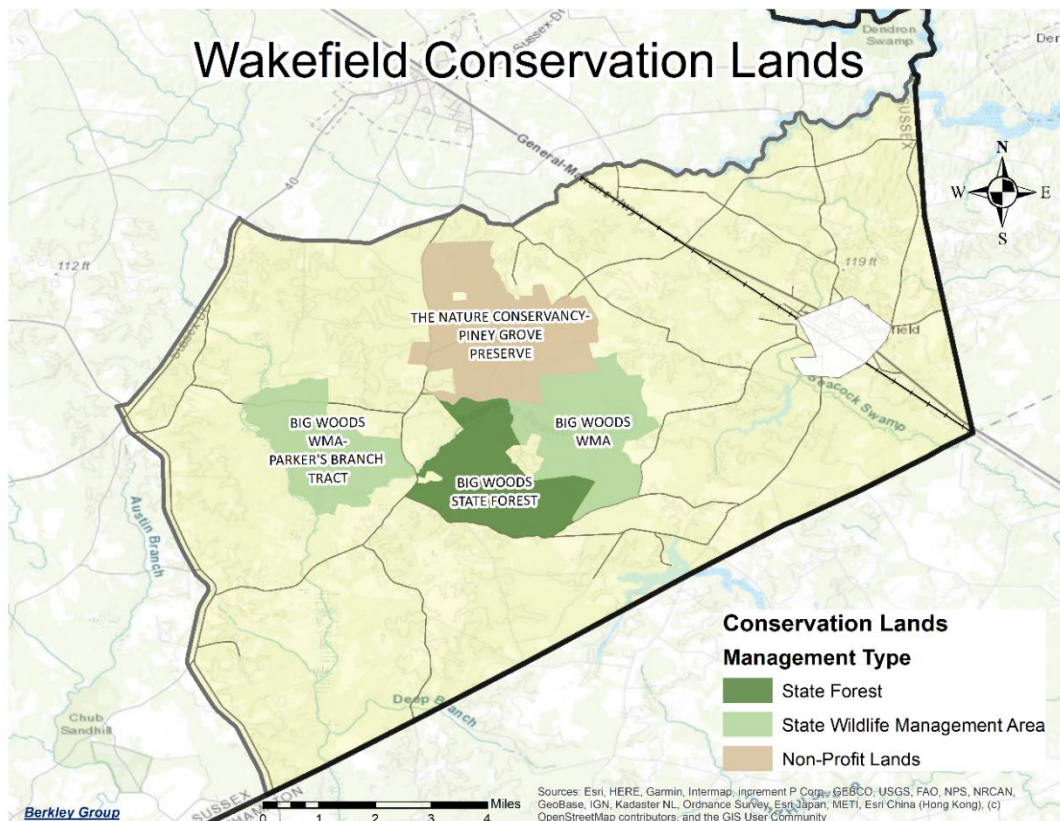
Agricultural/Forested/Open Space

Much of the land within this Planning Area currently consists of agricultural or undeveloped forested/open space. These areas are labeled simply as Agricultural on the existing land use map. Some of these areas near U.S. 460 may experience residential, commercial, or industrial development in the future; however, most of the Planning Area will remain largely undeveloped. West of U.S. 460, the undeveloped land is more heavily forested with some agricultural operations scattered within the large blocks of dense forested land. East of U.S. 460 towards the border with Surry County, the undeveloped land is mostly cultivated agricultural land with smaller sections of conserved forested land. Most of the area is designated as Prime or Statewide Important Soil, indicating it is suitable for cultivating agriculture.

In addition, the Planning Area has a significant amount of contiguous protected forested land. This includes the Big Woods Wildlife Management Area (WMA) (4,173 acres in two tracts of land) operated by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Big Woods State Forest

(2,220 acres) managed by the Department of Forestry, and the Piney Grove Preserve (3,200 acres) owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Together these conserved lands account for close to 25% of the entire Planning Area and is one of the largest blocks of ecologically diverse, protected woodlands in southeast Virginia. Loblolly and longleaf pine forests of various ages predominate with some hardwood and grasslands. They provide critical habitat to one of Virginia’s only breeding populations of the red-cockaded woodpecker, which has been endangered for decades, in addition to numerous other native species like turkey, quail, deer, frogs, and songbirds. Collectively, these lands support a thriving natural habitat within the area.

These lands also offer unique recreational opportunities. The Big Woods WMA and State Forest have trails and small roads that support hiking, hunting, trapping, primitive camping, and birding throughout the lands. The TNC Piney Grove Preserve is mostly closed to the public but does have a small ADA accessible trail for birding and wildlife viewing. All these lands offer excellent opportunities to see and explore wildlife.

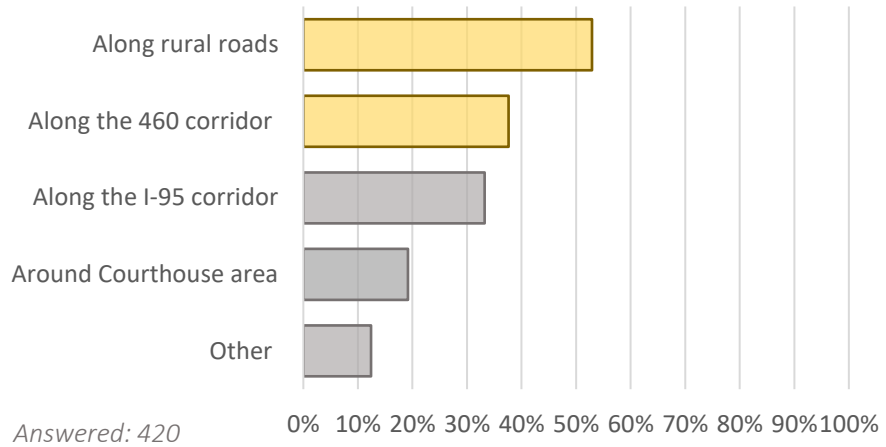


Public Input

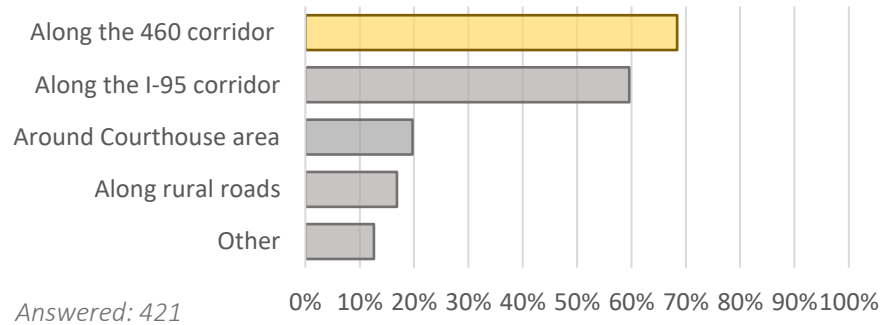
Local stakeholder meetings and county-wide surveys provide a brief understanding of public opinion about the current status and future of the Wakefield Planning Area. Input recognizes the importance of the U.S. 460 corridor for both residential and commercial activity in the County. Additionally, there is recognition that the Wakefield Area has potential for new residential development along some of its rural roads.

While there is some recognition that the U.S. 460 corridor can support industrial uses, this type of development is probably best located near Waverly where multiple planned industrial parks exist alongside existing industrial uses. However, U.S. 460 within the Wakefield Planning Area does offer the appropriate amenities and resources that makes additional commercial and residential development appropriate in the surrounding area. Fully recognizing the potential of the U.S. 460 corridor in Sussex County will require coordination between the interests and needs of the Waverly and Wakefield areas to ensure that new development best supports resident needs and maintains a high level of service for traffic using the U.S. 460 through Sussex County.

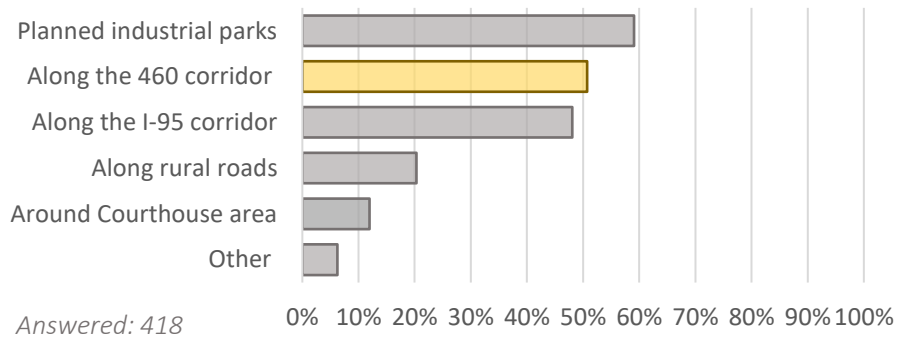
Where in the County should new housing be concentrated?



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



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



SWOT Analysis

The Wakefield 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>Good access for residents to a grocery store, library, recreational opportunities, and other shopping needs.</p> <p>Existing transportation assets (U.S. 460, airport, and railroad) provide a variety of modes to access the area.</p> <p>Relative affordability compared to Virginia’s Richmond and Tidewater hubs, both in land prices and in tax structure.</p> <p>Local restaurants and the 4-H Airfield Education and Conference Center actively attract visitors to the area.</p> <p>Potential to capture traveler spending from through traffic on U.S. 460</p> <p>Large amounts of public and privately conserved forest lands protect environmental resources and offer ecotourism opportunities.</p>	<p>Weaknesses (Negative characteristics of the Planning Area that could harm its revitalization.)</p> <p>The area’s population provides an aging workforce that does not help to attract businesses.</p> <p>Safety and access management is a concern along the U.S. 460 corridor.</p> <p>Distance and travel times to other County communities, facilities, and the I-95 corridor may isolate Wakefield from development elsewhere in the County.</p> <p>The existing Norfolk Southern Railroad presents a barrier to development and accessibility along the corridor.</p>
EXTERNAL	<p>Opportunities (External influences that can be used to the advantage of the Planning Area.)</p> <p>Well established history and culture in and around Wakefield is a draw to visitors and potential developers.</p> <p>Farms located in areas on routes near U.S. 460 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>Affordable land, tax, and living costs make Wakefield a marketable location for some businesses compared to more urban areas in the state.</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 Wakefield more challenging.</p> <p>Land intensive, but not revenue or job intensive, uses such as utility-scale solar generation facilities can take up valuable agricultural zoned land (crops or timber).</p> <p>Uncertainty about the realignment or reconstruction of a U.S. 460 bypass could inhibit growth and development.</p>

Transportation Analysis

Future uses in the Wakefield Planning Area (Local Culture) should be coordinated with transportation routes and other existing assets in the area (See also: Existing Features & Uses). The transportation features of the Planning Area are central to its future growth.

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 most roadways in the area 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
U.S. 460 North of Town of Wakefield South of Town of Wakefield	11,000 11,000
Courtland Road/Main Street/Birch Island Road (State Route 31/628) South of Wakefield In Wakefield, South of U.S. 460 North of U.S. 460/Wakefield	520 1,600 2,800
Jerusalem Plank Road (State Route 35) North of State Route 40 South of State Route 40	1,900 2,300
Sussex Drive (State Route 40) At State Route 35	2,100



U.S. Route 460 Corridor

The U.S. 460 corridor is considered a Corridor of Statewide Significance (CoSS) and is a defining feature of the Planning Area and eastern Sussex County. U.S. 460 is an important regional transportation route connecting the Richmond and Hampton Road metropolitan areas. Within the Planning Area, U.S. 460 is a four-lane undivided highway named General Mahone Highway after the confederate general William Mahone. It runs approximately 7.5 miles through the area and has an average of 11,000 vehicle trips per day both to the north and south of the Town of Wakefield. While some of this traffic serves local needs, a large portion comes from longer trips passing through the area. This includes a notable level of truck traffic which accounts for about 20% of all trips along the corridor. These trucks likely use the route as an easier and more reliable connection to the ports in the Hampton Roads region.

In the past, there have been discussions at the state level about the capacity and safety of the route if regional travel is further prioritized along the corridor. As an undivided highway with high truck traffic and multiple driveways without left turn lanes or deceleration lanes, relevant safety concerns exist along the corridor. For many years, VDOT was working to develop a parallel U.S. 460 limited access bypass through the area, but those plans have not been seriously considered in recent years. Nevertheless, the County must ensure that new development promotes safety and limits further congestion.

Traffic along U.S. 460 is both an asset and challenge. The road brings travelers directly through the Planning Area and helps to support the viability of local businesses along the corridor. However, through traffic also poses some safety risks and may limit where new development can be located with adequate access. The development of new entrances and outlets along the roadway should

be carefully planned, with multiple uses sharing entrances where possible.

U.S. 460 is also a major route within the Town of Wakefield, contributing to the Town's potential as a commercial and residential center. In particular, the Town and County should cooperate on functional and aesthetic improvements within the corridor, including wayfinding, sidewalks, landscaping, and sign regulations that help to tap the economic potential of pass-through traffic, encouraging long distance travelers to stop in Wakefield and Sussex County.



State Route 31 & 628 Corridor (Main Street/Courtland Road/ Birch Island Road)

This two-lane secondary road intersects with U.S. 460 in the Town of Wakefield and continues south into Southampton County and northwest of Town into Surry County going all the way to the James River. In Town, the road is titled Main Street and changes from State Route 628 east of U.S. 460 to State Route 31 west of U.S. 460. Main Street connects U.S. 460 with Wakefield's small commercial downtown at Railroad Avenue. Most of Main Street in the Town of Wakefield is residential and has sidewalks with some limited commercial use.

South of Town, the road goes by the name Courtland Road where it provides access to the 4-H Educational Center and Airfield Conference Center. There is little development along the corridor south of Town and the road has relatively light traffic (520 vehicles per day). Continuing northwest out of Wakefield, the road is called Birch Island Road and has a notable amount of residential development all the way to the County line. This part of the corridor is more heavily trafficked and sees around 2,800 vehicles per day.

As the County looks to expand existing residential development along Birch Island Road (State Route 31), ensuring a safe environment for residents living along or

near the highway will be paramount. Sidewalk extensions out of Town to residential neighborhoods along the corridor should be considered. Traffic calming and other traffic control measures may also be necessary in portions of the corridor near U.S. 460 and leading into the Town of Wakefield.



State Route 40 Corridor (Sussex Drive)

State Route 40 is a major local route running along the northwestern portion of the Planning Area. It provides access to County resources near the Sussex Courthouse and the Town of Waverly to the west. Route 40 is also an important cross-county route connection to the I-95 corridor near Stony Creek. State Route 40 is a key route for residents and businesses in Wakefield relying on access to I-95. Currently, an average of 2,100 vehicles travel along the roadway at its intersection with Jerusalem Plank Road (State Route 35). This intersection of Jerusalem Plank Road (State Route 35) and Sussex Drive (State Route 40) is the rural crossroads community of Homeville which is in the Planning Area. While most commercial and industrial uses will be located along the U.S. 460 corridor, some light development should be supported along State Route 40, particularly near the intersection with State Route 35.



State Route 35 Corridor (Jerusalem Plank Road)

State Route 35 is a rural route that forms the western boundary of the Wakefield Planning Area and continues south into Southampton County. With light residential development and minimal commercial uses, Route 35 is at the center of the County's vision to conserve agriculture, forestry, and open space uses in the interior

of the County. State Route 35 serves an important role as being the primary transportation corridor running north to south through the center of the County. It provides an alternate for residents and passing travelers from I-95 or U.S. 460 along a more scenic route. Accordingly, State Route 35 should be considered as a scenic corridor, with careful protections applied to preserve land use, aesthetics, and views in this area.



Railroad Corridor

Norfolk Southern owns and operates the double-track railway that parallels U.S. Route 460 through Sussex County. The railroad is heavily used and is a critical freight connection to the Hampton Roads ports. The corridor has Amtrak service on the line, but there is no passenger rail access in the County. Within the Planning Area there are no active spurs servicing any commercial or industrial uses. The railway does present a physical barrier within the area, with only three public crossing points along the 7.5-mile section of the railroad in the Planning Area. This includes at-grade crossings at Main Street and Chinquapin Road and a small, limited access underpass at Tunnel Road.

Transportation Improvements

A few notable transportation improvements have been recommended for the Wakefield Planning Area. First, VDOT is beginning to implement a Smart Scale project at the intersection of U.S. 460 and Main Street (State Route 628) in the Town of Wakefield (pictured below). This project will include a new right turn lane on eastbound U.S. 460 that increases visibility and turning radius, as well as improving pedestrian accommodations at the intersection to include audible signals. The Six-Year Improvement Program includes paving Glyndon Lane and Carver Lane off of Railroad Avenue near Town.

The VTrans Mid-Term planning priorities largely focus on U.S. 460 as a Corridor of Statewide Significance (CoSS) that may need transportation demand management in the future. In addition to the intersection of U.S. 460 and Main Street, VTrans also identifies the intersection of Jerusalem Plank Road (State Route 35) and Sussex Drive (State Route 40) as in need of safety improvements. It also identifies a section of Owens Grove Road (State Route 604) east of U.S. 460 for safety improvements.

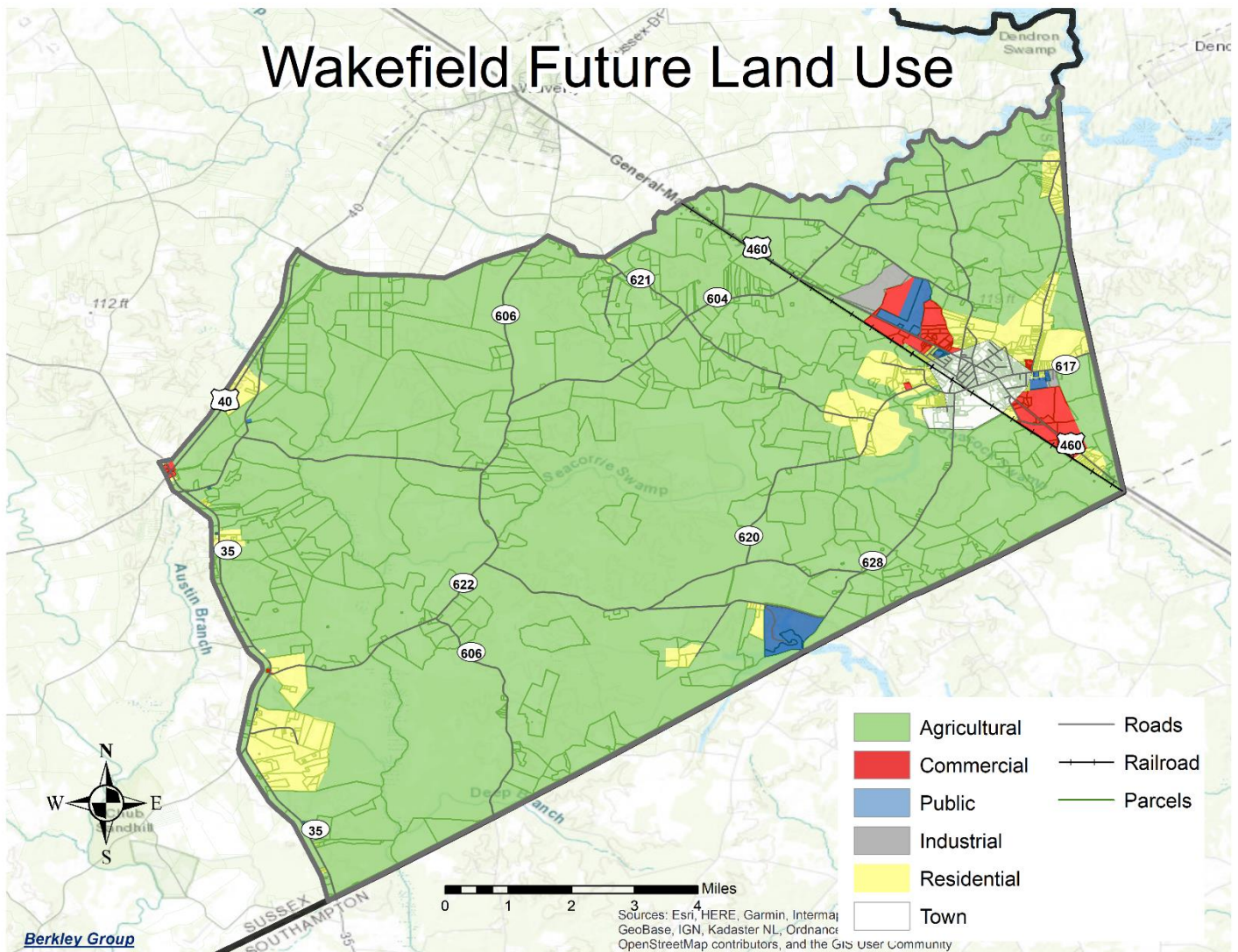
Recommendations in the Crater PDC and VDOT Rural Transportation Plan include a number of safety, signage, accessibility, and road size recommendations. First, the plan recommends speed reduction measures for the sections of U.S. 460 in the Town of Wakefield. It also suggests long-term needs at the U.S. 460 intersections at High Street and Church Street to relocate stop signs, enhance approaches, and study the need for turn lanes. The plan recommends improved signage and alignment along White Marsh Road between Wakefield and Surry County. Finally, it recommends reconstructing Britties Mill Road near Wakefield to widen the lanes and address geometric deficiencies.



Future Vision & Planning

The Wakefield Planning Area is known for its rural character, significant cultural contributions, and abundant natural resources that will require a focused effort to preserve and further develop. Strengthening and diversifying the economy will require creative strategies to maximize the overall potential of the Planning Area. The presence of a high-volume transportation corridor, along with well-established commercial and public uses, available developable land, and large amounts of preserved natural lands makes Wakefield a great place for economic activity and investment.

This vision builds upon a future land use analysis that prioritizes protecting the area’s richest natural and cultural resources while also expanding commercial activity and residential development in appropriate locations. The full potential of the Wakefield Planning Area can be realized by capitalizing on the economic potential of travelers and also expanding job opportunities and improving quality of life for residents. Proper investment will also expand the County’s tax base, leading to improvements in schools, social services, public facilities, and other community amenities.



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 development near the Town of Wakefield as well as targeted growth in commercial and public uses. This includes strategies that promotes entrepreneurship and investment to further complement the established businesses of the Wakefield area. Moreover, the U.S. 460 corridor should support new commercial and light industrial development while the outlying portions of the Planning Area are retained in their current undeveloped state. As a result, future land use in the Wakefield Planning Area will ensure that new and existing development avoids conflict with the existing natural features and transportation corridors that define this portion of Sussex County.

Environmental Conservation

The Wakefield Planning Area contains a wide variety of environmental features, including wetland areas, flood zones, riparian areas, and large forested tracts, that play an important role in plant and animal species diversity as well as natural water system filtering. The Planning Area already has a large amount of land that is actively managed and protected for its unique environmental features. Given the prevalence of natural features throughout the County, environmental conservation is a relevant consideration for all future land use categories discussed in this plan. New development should be guided towards previously disturbed locations and away from the boundaries of these preserved lands. Most of the land between U.S. 460 and Jerusalem Plank Road (State Route 35) is heavily forested and provides important natural habitat and forest resources that should be protected as much as possible through the County's land use tools.

Accordingly, the County must ensure that development is limited near these environmental areas and should encourage low-impact development strategies and stormwater management improvements to protect habitat and water quality. This includes directly to the west of the Town of Wakefield where the Seacock

Swamp has flood zones and riparian zones in an area that could eventually be developed. Additionally, farmers are encouraged to follow best management practices and take advantage of conservation and environmental programs as promoted by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS).

Agricultural, Forested, and Open Space

Protecting agricultural and forestry uses is central to maintaining the rural character that defines much of the Planning Area outside of the U.S. 460 corridor. The primary land use in the Wakefield Planning Area 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. 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 and forestry uses that are among the most important sectors of the economy.

In planning for active agricultural and forestry 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 parcels will remain necessary for sustainable agricultural enterprise in the rural area.

Areas that are in forest preservation programs should be maintained to support the ecological balance between agriculture and forest. Private landowners, the Department of Forestry, the Department of Wildlife Resources, and The Nature Conservancy all have different management priorities. Where public access is permitted, the County should promote these important resources to be enjoyed for recreational and eco-tourism opportunities in addition to supporting the economic and natural benefits that these lands provide.

Residential

The Town of Wakefield and the immediate surrounding properties are the only locations with clustered residential land use in the Wakefield Planning Area. As a result, the proposed residential growth areas are concentrated around the existing clusters of dwellings outside of the Town and along routes that lead into the Town.

As the possibility of new employment sites in nearby Waverly arise along with increased business investment in Wakefield, the County should be supportive of additional housing development. Wakefield has the resources and assets that make it an attractive area for new residential development. The County should encourage a wide variety of housing unit types, including single-family homes, townhomes, and apartments close to the Town and U.S. 460. The County should also work to expand water and sewer services around the Town. The Town of Wakefield also has an existing sidewalk network that should be improved and expanded outside of Town to locations with existing clusters of dwelling units, like the Birch Island Apartments. Neighborhoods with safe walking and bicycling routes that connect to shared use areas, such as parks or retail, can improve quality of life, public health, and overall sense of community.

It is recommended that the continuation of the current trend toward linear housing development on routes leading into Town be limited. Where linear development is inevitable, shared driveways can be designed to reduce safety issues that arise with multiple single driveway access points.

Additionally, the County should work to develop parts of the proposed Drumwright Mill Subdivision property. While the full scale of that approved development may not still be feasible, the County should work with the current landowner of the property to promote the residential development of portions of the site that is coordinated with County utilities and services.

Commercial

The U.S. 460 corridor around Wakefield contains multiple commercial businesses that are an important

component of the local culture and identity. Additionally, many existing commercial businesses serve a critical role in supporting the needs of County residents. Specifically, the businesses related to the local peanut industry and the grocery store are critical for the area. The County should ensure that the needs of these businesses are fully supported. Partnering with the Town of Wakefield to improve local wayfinding, signage, and streetscaping would not only increase the attractiveness of the area for new business owners, but also improve the ability of existing businesses to draw customers from U.S. 460. These commercial businesses are central to the identity and culture of the area, and it is appropriate for the County to market their importance.

Future commercial development should continue along U.S. 460 south of Town towards the Southampton County line and north towards the Coppahaunk Swamp. Given existing traffic safety concerns on U.S. 460, new commercial development should incorporate safety and access management improvements. New businesses should take advantage of vacant and underutilized commercial properties along U.S. 460 and on Railroad Avenue. Establishing an enterprise zone or other local incentives for economic development could help to revitalize some of these underutilized properties.

Most future development should be encouraged outside of the Town limits along U.S. 460 where there is greater flexibility in site requirements and transportation access. New commercial development along U.S. 460 should be clustered as much as possible to maintain a high service level for travelers on U.S. 460 with easy access in and out of commercial sites.

A smaller cluster of commercial development should also be encouraged at the intersection of Jerusalem Plank Road (State Route 35) and Sussex Drive (State Route 40) in the western part of the Planning Area where a few vacant commercial buildings already exist. This is one of the major intersections of local roads in the County and should have commercial uses that are convenient to residents in the County's rural areas. Future development in this area may necessitate intersection improvements. However, it is important that major commercial development is not widely permitted outside of these locations.

Industry

Industrial uses in the Planning Area should continue to support the traditional economic activities in the surrounding area focused on harvesting timber and peanuts. The existing light industrial uses in the area contribute to the unique rural culture and do not have heavy industrial impacts. Nevertheless, these existing industrial uses are in close proximity to major roads, other commercial businesses, and residential neighborhoods and should be properly buffered and screened.

Compared to Waverly, less intensive industrial development is anticipated in the Wakefield area. New industrial development may be allowed along U.S. 460 or the Norfolk Southern Railroad northwest of Town. This may require extensive cooperation with the Sussex Service Authority to expand water and sewer services beyond the Town. The site near the Airport is the only specific location on the future land use map that has been proposed for industrial use. Ultimately, industrial uses should be more heavily prioritized farther north along U.S. 460 near Waverly where more industrial uses already exist.

Public Use

Public land and structures are an important part of the local culture and activities that draw many people to the area. The County should continue to engage with all relevant government and non-profit stakeholders to ensure that these uses are maintained and preserved. The Airfield Conference Center and the adjacent Southeast 4-H Educational Center are major attractions in the area and bring many visitors to the County each year. Improving signage to and from the Center would allow local businesses to better attract customers traveling to the Centers.

The County should also coordinate with the Town of Wakefield to support unique public assets like the Wakefield Municipal Airport, the Troxler Memorial Library, and the Wakefield Town Ballfield Complex and Playground. These are important assets for all Sussex County residents and should be properly marketed and supported.

Finally, the Ellen W. Chambliss Elementary School building and property located just outside of Town on Higgins Street has the potential to be a resource to the local community. The County and Town should coordinate to find a partner to revitalize or redevelop the site for community or other appropriate use.

Town of Wakefield

While Wakefield itself is an incorporated town, and therefore conducts its own land use planning and development regulatory programs, its vitality is critically important for the County. Sussex County should support new commercial and residential development in the Town as a positive contribution to the County's tax base. Due to available lot sizes within the Town, most large-scale development is likely to occur outside of Town boundaries. Sussex County should collaborate with the Town to welcome some new commercial development along U.S. 460 with proper turn lanes and combined and clearly marked entrances to minimize negative effects on traffic within the corridor. The Town also has a number of small undeveloped sites and vacant commercial buildings that may be attractive to new commercial or mixed-use investment. Accordingly, the County should work with the Town to pursue economic revitalization efforts under the Main Street program through the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Implementation Recommendations

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

Implementation Task	Cost Scale	Time Scale ²	Responsible Party
Actively promote and market the cultural, recreational, and eco-tourism attractions that define the Planning Area as important County resources.	\$\$	Short-term	County Administration
Consider wayfinding, signage, and streetscaping that improve the aesthetic and direct traffic to local attractions.	\$\$	Short-term	County Administration
Gather community input to consider renaming U.S. Route 460 (General Mahone Highway) to better present the local culture and identity of the area.	\$	Short-term	Planning and Zoning Department
Amend the zoning ordinance to permit facilities for farm tours, agritourism facilities, and other similar uses in the agricultural zoning districts.	\$\$	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
Review the potential participation in the Enterprise Zone program and other local incentives and seek ways to encourage participation by existing and new businesses.	\$	Short-term	County Administration

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

Implementation Task	Cost Scale	Time Scale ²	Responsible Party
Update the 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
Establish a highway corridor overlay district to preserve and improve the appearance along U.S Route 460.	\$\$	Medium-term	Planning and Zoning Department
Partner with the Town of Wakefield and private/non-profit organizations to promote the use of the Ellen W. Chambliss school complex as a place for recreation and community use in the Planning Area.	\$\$\$	Medium-term	County Administration/Town of Wakefield
Partner with the Town of Wakefield to seek economic revitalization through participation in the Main Street program through the Department of Housing and Community Development.	SS	Medium-term	County Administration
Work with agencies, such as the Department of Wildlife Resources and the Department of Conservation and Recreation, to enable the development of outdoor public recreational facilities. Ensure appropriate marking of access to such facilities.	\$\$	Medium-term	County Administration
Work with VDOT and the Town of Wakefield to expand the existing sidewalk infrastructure to established neighborhoods and proposed developments near Town.	\$\$\$	Long-term	County Administration
Implement necessary utility improvements/expansions along State Routes where residential and commercial growth is projected in the Planning Area.	\$\$\$\$	Long-term	County Administration

Wakefield Future Land Use

