



*IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:
Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

Land Use, Development and Redevelopment of Resource and Management Areas

Given development constraints and the potential long-term effects of climate change, future land development and redevelopment in Mathews County must be carefully planned and coordinated with environmental features. This includes not only new buildings and the rehabilitation of existing structures, but also the development of supporting public infrastructure. The next section on Land Use provides a more detailed analysis of existing land use and development patterns and presents recommendations for addressing outstanding issues and amending land development patterns to meet the goals of the future.

Environmental Challenges and Opportunities 2030

The environmental resources of Mathews County provide for the economic and social well-being of residents and businesses. Careful planning and management of the environment, and in particular water quality, must be a priority in order to support the quality of life that is cherished by citizens and visitors. These environmental resources also include complex ecosystems that are sensitive to such things as stormwater and agricultural runoff, inadequate wastewater treatment, soil erosion, and changes in temperature, rainfall and overall climate. All of these challenges are intended to be monitored and managed in conjunction with Chesapeake Bay and Clean Water regulations, among others; however, it takes many partners, extensive public education, and diligent communication to successfully achieve desired environmental goals and outcomes. Ultimately, clean water is essential to community health, safety and welfare. It will be important to pursue and emphasize effective means of monitoring and treating point and non-point source pollutants to achieve the water quality desired for Mathews County and the surrounding region. Traditionally, planning in Mathews County has focused only on land area within the County boundaries; changing the paradigm to expand planning beyond the land and over the water (still within County territorial boundaries) could significantly help to manage future water quality and minimize land use conflicts.

One of the most difficult challenges for Mathews County will be appropriately balancing the increasing conflicts regarding use of and access to the waterfront. Understandably, waterfront residents have personal interests for using and protecting their properties, while waterfront businesses have need for water access and the ability to engage in aquatic trades. In addition, citizens of the County have rights to the waterfront for access and recreation. Yet, underlying all of these interests are the sensitive environmental systems that must be recognized and protected in order to preserve the quality of life desired by all.

The potential rise in sea level should be one of the factors considered in future development patterns. Over time, it is probable that there will be changes in vegetation, the landscape, and flooding patterns. The projected degree of impact is widely discussed and varies among experts and designated study panels. Thus, to be most effective it is best be conservative when selecting sites for public facilities or permitting development in areas that may be susceptible to possible rising sea levels. In addition, because the expansive wetlands of Mathews County are



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important to the physical and ecological attributes of the region, it will be important to ensure that these beneficial communities are not depleted, but rather protected and allowed to transition naturally.

Like many communities, Mathews County residents are interested in maintaining the natural environmental character and reducing unnecessary lighting at night. The adoption of a “dark sky” ordinance can assist the County in reducing spillover lighting and maintaining natural conditions that are enjoyed by residents and important for the environment. New development could be required to provide “shielded” lighting fixtures and appropriate lighting standards could be established to ensure safety, yet control maximum illumination.

Planning/Development Policies, Action Strategies for Environment 2030

The following planning and development policies and action strategies are established to achieve the desired vision for preserving a quality environment in Mathews County:

Development Policies and Strategies for Environment	
EN1	<p>Environmental resources are the natural and the economic foundation of the quality of life in Mathews County. Protection of natural resources and maintenance of excellent water quality and clean air are essential to the safety and prosperity of businesses and residents. For new development and redevelopment, there should be no net increase in environmental loss or pollution.</p>
	<p>1. When considering new development or redevelopment, evaluate potential impacts on environmental features and water quality, particularly with respect to runoff, pollutants and waste management. Require mapping of environmental features for reference and applicant study/response to potential impact. Require use of low impact development techniques (or “light imprint” alternatives¹⁷) in conjunction with site development or redevelopment. These are in addition to use of best management practices and recommended design and development guidelines.</p>

¹⁷ Light imprint techniques for managing runoff are similar to low-impact engineering methods; they result in a blended system of engineering techniques and aesthetic design features that complement the natural and the built environment. For more information, see www.lightimprint.org.



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Development Policies and Strategies for Environment	
	<p>2. Develop and publish a quick reference guide for citizens, contractors, and developers that illustrate use of low impact or light impact development techniques for several development scenarios—single family home, small business, waterfront development, etc. Focus on good site design that minimizes disturbance of land, preserves indigenous vegetation, and minimizes impervious cover.</p>
	<p>2. Amend the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to incorporate the most up to date performance criteria for improving water quality in order to comply with Chesapeake Bay Act Phase III Regulations. <u>Consider implementing the recommendations identified in the CBPA Land Use Ordinance Compliance Review and Analysis Report prepared by the Berkley Group consultants.</u></p>
	<p>3. Amend the County zoning ordinance to include a Floodplain Overlay District to expand the available tools for reducing flood insurance rates and protecting public and private investment. Strengthen development standards and identify types of land uses permitted in the flood hazard and storm induced wave zones (e.g., A/AE, V/VE, and Coastal A or LiMWA zones). Seek funding from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program through FEMA to reduce hazards and losses.</p>
	<p>4. Encourage new development or redevelopment that is designed to meet “green building” standards such as LEED. (This can reduce impervious surfaces, reduce water and energy consumption, minimize site disturbance, and reduce pollutants.) Accept the state-wide challenge and participate as a County partner in the Go Green Virginia Campaign managed by the Virginia Municipal League, www.gogreenva.org.</p>
	<p>5. Promote water conservation for public health, safety and welfare by encouraging (and requiring where possible) the use of low-flow high efficiency water fixtures, showerheads and toilets in all new residential and business development. Encourage appropriate residential and business development that will not have large demands on the potable water supply. Promote water conservation and wise water consumption through public education.</p>
	<p>6. Develop a wellhead protection program that establishes minimum requirements for locations of wells and adjacent development. Amend County regulations to implement development standards and well</p>



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Development Policies and Strategies for Environment	
	protection measures for potable water supplies.
	6. Sponsor, coordinate and promote regular septic tank pump-out programs throughout the County. Designate priority “pump-out zones” and adopt regulations to ensure compliance. Identify existing pit privies and seek better alternative solutions for managing waste. Seek grants and financial programs that can assist the County in these priority efforts.
	7. Promote increased public education regarding water quality impacts of non-point source pollutants. In particular, encourage proper disposal by boaters of bilge water (contains contaminants) and improved management of livestock near surface waters. <u>Implement the recommendations in the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plan to address impairments to shellfish waters as a result of coliform bacteria contamination in selected waters of the County.</u>
	8. Amend the County subdivision ordinance to establish better standards and requirements for development of community water and wastewater systems in order to improve and protect water quality and provide a safe water supply for users. Requirements should exceed the minimum standards required by the health department.
	9. Consider expanding the Chesapeake Bay Resource Management Area in Mathews County to better manage development impacts on the environment.
	9. Develop and adopt a “dark skies” ordinance <u>language</u> that will require shielded lighting for new building development and establish appropriate lighting standards for inland and waterfront properties.
EN2	Mathews County has a strong community heritage in agriculture, aquaculture and forestry. These natural resource trades remain important economic sectors and should be encouraged and supported in order to maintain community character and prosperity.
	1. Protect the environment by continuing to promote and encourage the use of best management practices and riparian buffers prescribed by the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District and the Virginia Department of Forestry for agricultural and forestal activities. Promote environmental stewardship among landowners and operators by actively working with them in educational efforts and incentive or recognition



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Development Policies and Strategies for Environment	
	programs. Encourage landowners to consider conservation easements for their properties.
EN3	The wetlands of Mathews County are critical environmental features that are of substantial benefit to the health of natural systems and to coastal living. Protection and preservation of County wetlands should be a priority in order to retain environmental quality, public health and safety, and the valued character of the community.
	1. Encourage vegetative approaches and “living shoreline” techniques where appropriate for stabilizing coastal property waterfronts. Develop public education materials and programs that will promote use of these techniques.
	2. Offer “living shoreline” training for wetland board members, contractors and others who are involved in coastal property management. Provide continued leadership in this effort by helping to establish a “certification” program for wetland board members and contractors that can be a model for other communities.
	3. Support annual inventories of County wetlands and other natural resources. Encourage regular reporting and sharing of information among agencies, governmental officials, and citizens.
	4. Utilize VIMS' Comprehensive Coastal Resource Management Portal Shoreline Best Management Practices in evaluating existing conditions and proposed plans for development. Consider adopting a policy for the Wetlands Board where “living shorelines” become the preferred adaptation strategy for shoreline erosion control. Integrate into governmental permitting, Wetlands Board decisions, and planning recommendations.
	5. Utilize VIM’s Decision Tree for onsite review and subsequent selection of appropriate erosion control/shoreline BMPs.
	6. Follow development of the integrated shoreline guidance and the statewide General Permit developed through the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. Ensure that local policies are consistent with the provisions of the permit.
	7. Encourage the installation of “living shorelines” through state and local



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	<u>financial incentive programs.</u>
EN4	The waterfront of Mathews County is a valuable ecological, recreational and scenic asset that should be available to all citizens. Use of waterfront lands should be balanced to provide reasonable access points for the public and protection of the environment, while recognizing the rights of private residential and business property owners.
	1. Review and update the County Statewaters Access Plan at least every five years to ensure that public access and recreational needs are met. Update the 2003 Plan with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
	2. Site any new waterfront community facilities or marinas in accordance with the checklist and criteria established by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission for Marinas and Community Facilities for Boat Mooring (1988, www.mrc.state.va.us). Coordinate locations with aquaculture and blue infrastructure resources to minimize land use conflicts and ensure protection of water quality.
	3. Identify desirable waterfront and off-shore locations for pursuing aquaculture. Develop a strategy for improving water quality, managing land use, and reducing development and pollution conflicts.
	4. Consider amending the zoning ordinance to define “floating home/structure” as a use and identify zoning districts in which this use may be permitted or is specifically prohibited.
EN5	Sea level rise, shoreline erosion and coastal subsidence over the next several decades are projected to have effects on coastal areas and natural communities. To adequately prepare for possible changes in rising sea levels and weather patterns, development should be carefully reviewed and managed to take into account the potential impacts. Where possible, conservation measures should be employed to protect natural communities and prevent investment losses in the future.
	1. Promote conservation in the eastern and southern coastal areas of Mathews County that may be most affected by possible rising sea levels and flooding. Amend the County zoning ordinance to address possible sea level changes and develop appropriate use regulations and development standards. Consider amending the zoning ordinance to <u>include language regarding horizontal as well as vertical shoreline setback requirements.</u> <u>Consider preserving additional open spaces adjacent to tidal wetlands</u>



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Development Policies and Strategies for Environment	
	<u>beyond the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Resource Protection Area to allow for inland retreat of marshes potentially affected by rising water levels.</u>
	2. Plan, site and develop new public buildings and facilities so that they take into account possible rising sea levels. Require evaluation of impact as part of the governmental contract for services. Locate facilities in the most appropriate areas.
	3. Protect existing facilities from possible sea level rise through advanced planning and implementation of environmentally acceptable protection methods.
	4. <u>Consider adopting land use policies using appropriate recurrent flooding mitigation tools for Mathews County. Identify financial incentives along with planning and regulatory tools as approaches to address this potential problem.</u>

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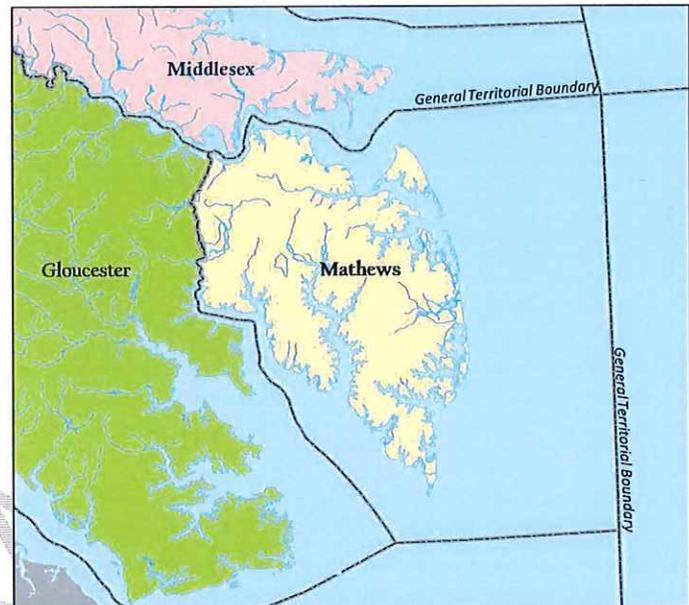
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Environment: Special Action Projects

Preserving the environment of Mathews County will provide the greatest benefits to citizens and businesses for the future. The following paragraphs discuss some initial projects that can assist the County in progressing toward the established goals and strategies for protecting and enhancing the environment.

Planning for Land and Water within County Territorial Boundaries

To effectively plan for continued safety and well-being in the County, there could be expanded controls and management of the territorial waters surrounding the County. This will require developing new tools and working regionally with other local governments and environmental agencies to model specific legislation and methods to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and better manage land/water use conflicts (particularly with respect to aquaculture and “floating homes”). Public education and communication are essential to the success of the efforts and possible adopted programs.



Source: Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission. Aquaculture Steering Committee 2009.



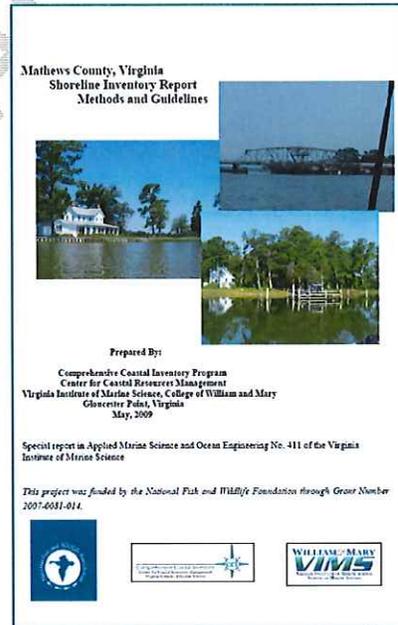
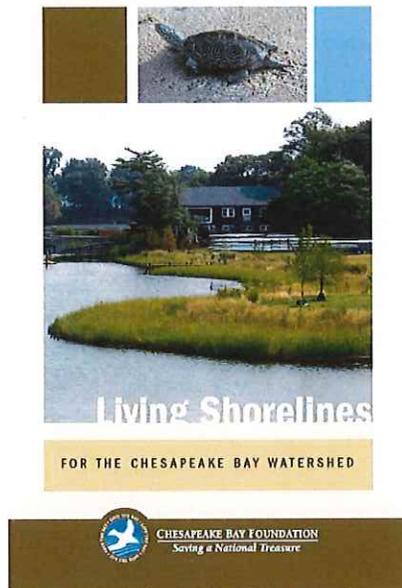
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Model Certification & Training Program - Wetlands Board

Enhanced environmental conditions in Mathews County can significantly assist in addressing many challenges for the future – water quality, economic investment, rising sea levels, and community character and quality of life.

In recent years, considerable research and mapping has been completed for Mathews that provides extensive insight into the physical and environmental conditions. Research reports include the Shoreline Assessment and Inventory for Mathews County (VIMS) and the Living Shoreline (Chesapeake Bay Foundation). Both of these reports provide excellent guidance for property owners, contractors, and reviewing officials in understanding shoreline conditions and in making recommendations for stabilization and ecological and vegetative improvements.

One simple way to encourage use of these documents and methods is to integrate them into the County review process for development permit applications. Initially, this could be done by encouraging training of County staff, wetlands board members and contractors. A “certification” and training program could be developed which then could serve as a model for other communities. The reference documents could be posted as links on the County webpage and copies made available at the library or other public offices.





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Land Use and Development

One of the main functions of a comprehensive plan is to recommend appropriate land use and development patterns that will implement a community’s vision and establish goals for the future. Existing land use and development patterns need to be respected; however, in many instances there needs to be change in future land development patterns to address development constraints and long-term planning issues. For Mathews County, there are many land development challenges that must be considered for the future – environmental constraints, limited availability of potable water, poor absorption capacities for wastewater, and coastal challenges to name a few. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the existing land use and development patterns and recommendations for future land use patterns given the County’s land use development constraints.

Existing Land Use

A map of the existing land use in the County is provided on the next page. Based on the GIS information provided, the land use acreage of the County consists of the following:

Summary of Existing Land Use Mathews County 2009		
	Acreage*	Percentage
Rural Agriculture/Residential	10,500	19%
Residential, Single Family	21,500	39%
Residential, Multi-family	40	<1 %
Commercial	700	1%
Industrial	600	1%
Public/Semi-public	3,100	5%
Conservation/Parks	2,000	3%
Cemeteries	50	<1 %
Other		
Right of Ways	200	<1 %
Commercial Utilities	10	<1 %
Open Land (not developed)	17,000	30%
Total	55,700	100%
*Note: This does not account for large lot sizes; for example, a large lot of five acres will be calculated as a specific land use, even if that land use constitutes only a portion of the parcel.		

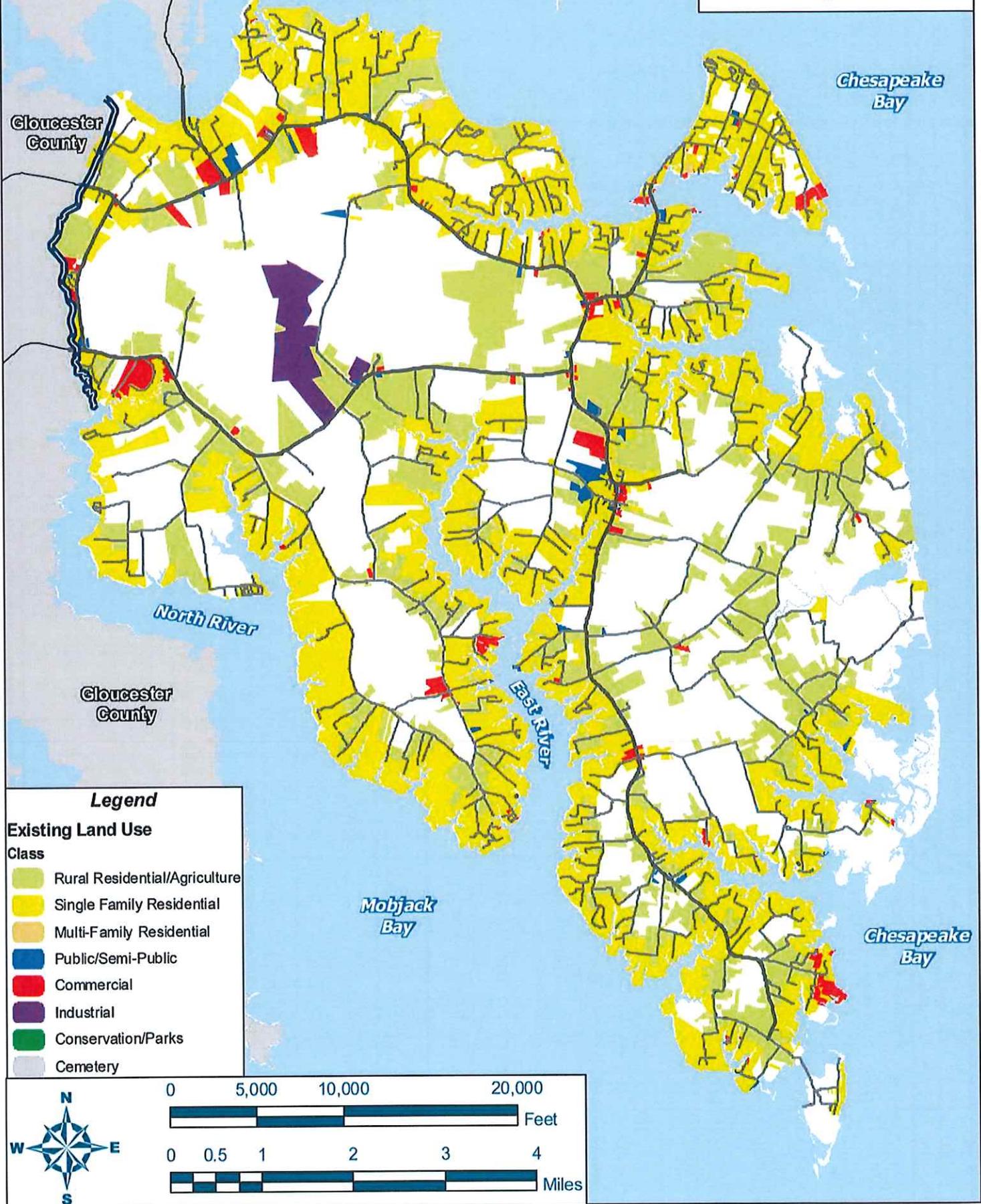


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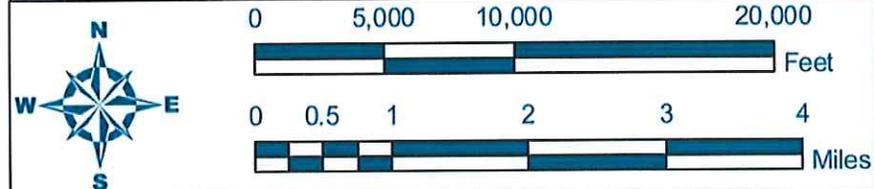


Existing Land Use



Legend

- Existing Land Use Class**
- Rural Residential/Agriculture
 - Single Family Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Public/Semi-Public
 - Commercial
 - Industrial
 - Conservation/Parks
 - Cemetery





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Future Land Use

Given development constraints and environmental factors affecting Mathews County, land development patterns in the future should be more conservative than what exists today. Greater land use guidance and controls are needed in order to achieve the future vision set forth by Mathews' citizens and governmental officials. In addition, changing climate and sensitive environmental conditions present challenges for the future in order to protect properties, public health and overall community safety.

A future land use map is presented on the following page. This map was developed based on various factors including Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas, wetlands, land elevations, proximity to the proposed sanitary sewer transmission force main, and potential coastal changes from rising sea levels. While the future land use map recognizes the need to respect existing land uses and property rights, consideration must be given to shifting development patterns in the future to the best suited areas to address future challenges. More detailed discussion of the future land use categories is on the following pages.

In addition, Mathews County supports preservation of land through conservation or open-space easements. The preservation of open space is viewed as desirable and compatible with the land management recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan, even in areas where the Future Land Use Map may recommend a different or more intensive land use.

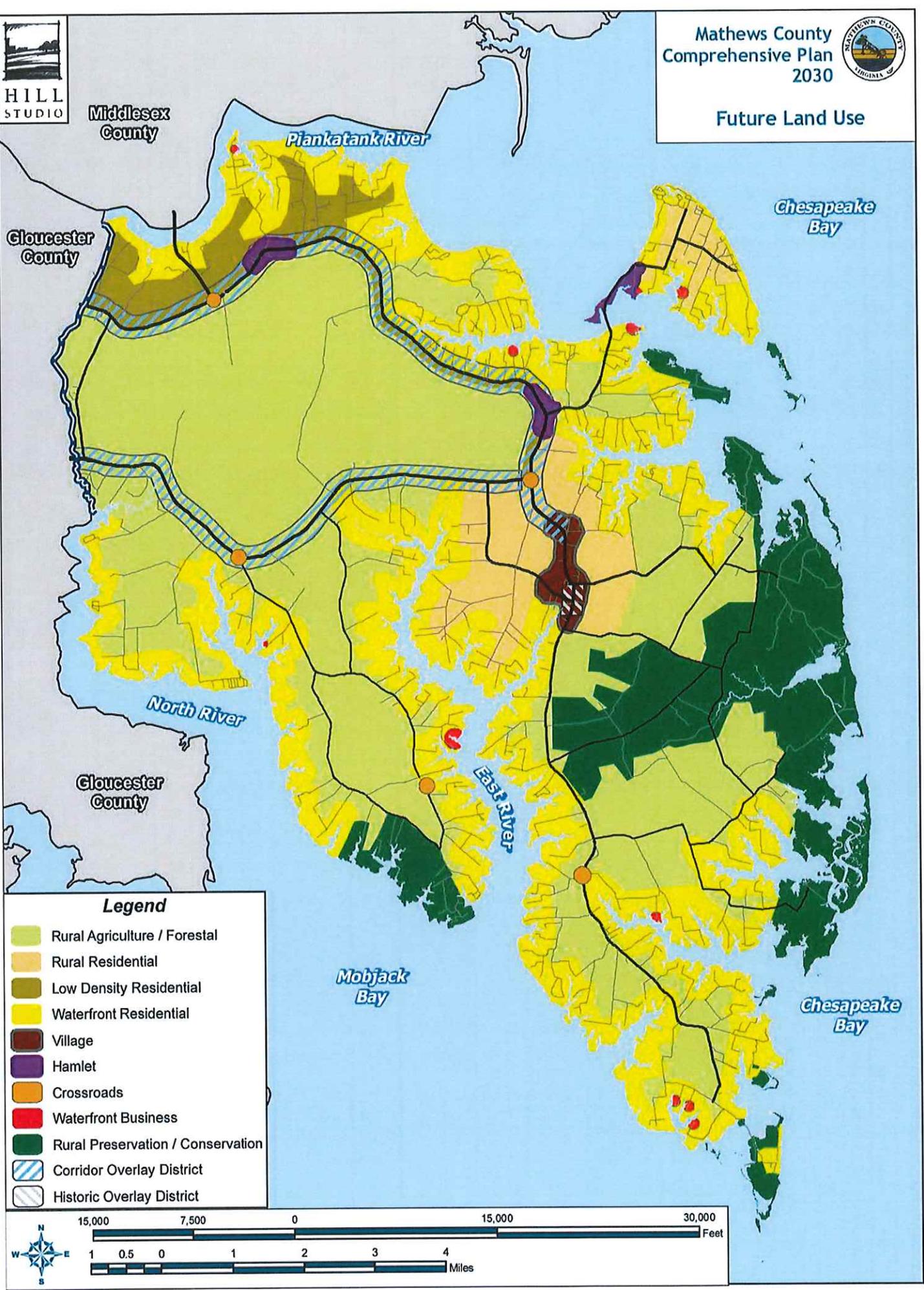
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Future Land Use

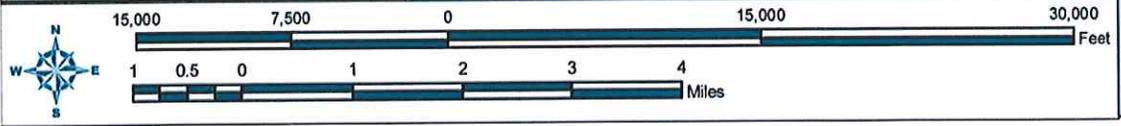


HILL
STUDIO



Legend

- Rural Agriculture / Forestal
- Rural Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Waterfront Residential
- Village
- Hamlet
- Crossroads
- Waterfront Business
- Rural Preservation / Conservation
- Corridor Overlay District
- Historic Overlay District





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The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of the proposed land use categories and development criteria. These descriptions provide guidance for amending land use regulations in the future and for encouraging the type of land development desired for Mathews County in 2030. Of special note is that these land use descriptions are not parcel specific and are not intended to identify specific zoning districts.

Rural Agriculture/Forestal

This land use category is proposed to include much of the County that is oriented to large-tract agriculture and forests. The recommended density is one dwelling unit per five acres. These low-density development recommendations are proposed to maintain the rural nature of the county, preserve important agricultural areas and forests, and respect the varied constraints for development. Land uses included within this category would include agriculture, forestry, and accompanying very low-density residential uses.

Rural Residential

This land use category is proposed to include areas of the county that are still rural in character and exhibit very low-density residential uses. The recommended density is one dwelling unit per 2.5 acres. This category would provide for small-tract, low-intensity agriculture and residential uses with larger lots. Also, building heights should be of an appropriate scale to maintain community character.

Waterfront Residential

Much of the residential development that exists today in Mathews is on the waterfront. Although these areas are highly cherished for their waterfront amenities, there are many environmental challenges associated with expanding development in these areas. Consequently, new development along the waterfront in the future should be more conservative in terms of dwelling-unit densities, building types and locations, and shoreline and water access. In addition, new or expanded development on existing lots must recognize constraints relative to providing and maintaining safe wastewater treatment and water supply, as well as protecting water quality. Finally, planning for possible sea level rise can protect property investments and assist in using environmental assets for the purposes of accommodating natural succession of wetlands.

Building heights should be limited to an appropriate scale to ensure an appropriate fit and relationship with existing development patterns. Land uses should be limited to primarily single-family residential development at a density of one dwelling unit per acre, well-managed agriculture or open space. Larger lots or small grouped development should be encouraged where environmental factors will accommodate development; large residential subdivisions should be discouraged.



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Low Density Residential

This land use category is proposed for sections of the County where elevations are highest and where there is potential access to public sewer and safe water supply. The land uses within this category could include single family and duplex residential uses at a density of one dwelling unit per acre depending on environmental constraints and access to public utilities. Building heights should be limited to an appropriate scale to maintain community character. Business uses should be permitted only as accessory to a residence and restricted to home-based businesses that meet specific requirements for residential compatibility.

Village

This land use category includes the historic commercial center of the County, Mathews Court House. This compact development center consists of a core of mixed residential, commercial and community services that may include small businesses, upper-story residential, live/work units, and surrounding groupings of residential uses.

Within the village there are a variety of residential types and densities ranging from single-family homes to small groups of dwelling units (e.g., duplex, or townhouses) at a density of 4-8 dwelling units per acre. The village exhibits an interconnected street network and is pedestrian-oriented so that residential and business uses are within an easy walking distance of one-quarter mile (or five minute walk). The village area is well-landscaped, exhibits pedestrian-scale signage and lighting, and incorporates traffic-calming measures on the streets to ensure an inviting and safe experience. Buildings should be positioned close to the street with parking on the street or in small, shared lots located to the side or rear of buildings. Rehabilitation of existing buildings for alternative purposes should be encouraged; new buildings should respect the existing architectural context and building patterns.

Planned Business

This land use category provides an opportunity for larger scale business and limited industrial development in specially targeted areas to provide enhanced business employment opportunities and economic development for the County. Land uses could include corporate offices, light manufacturing or assembly, medical facilities, and other larger-scale business uses or warehouse/distribution uses. A planned business zone should be a minimum of 5-10 acres. Signage, access and building materials and placement should be carefully planned and coordinated to ensure a well-designed and complementary environment. Potential Planned Business areas may apply to Dixie and Cobbs Creek (existing business park area), or other areas that may be identified in the future as suitable planned business areas.



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Hamlet

This land use category is proposed for businesses serving local residents in several areas of the County. It would be applicable to the existing business areas of Hudgins, Gywnn's Island, and Cobbs Creek. A hamlet consists of a small-scale, compact settlement area that may include several business uses and community services.

Land uses may include a small convenience store, post office, fire station, church, professional office, neighborhood retail store or restaurant. These uses should be oriented to pedestrians, close to the street, and have small-scale signage and limited lighting (because of its proximity to nearby residences). Parking should be minimal and located to the side or at the edge of the street. Housing may be located adjacent to the hamlet or within the hamlet above ground floor commercial uses. Rehabilitation of existing buildings for alternative purposes should be encouraged; new buildings should complement the surrounding residential uses.

Crossroads Community

Several County primary or secondary road intersections have developed as small crossroad business centers. Examples of a crossroads community are: Dixie, Ward's Corner, Port Haywood, North and Bohannon. In addition to the central village and hamlets, these areas also serve local residents and provide small business opportunities or services at intersections of roads that frequently carry neighborhood traffic. Typical land uses could include a small convenience store, gas station, post office, café or small office. New buildings should respect the existing architectural character of nearby buildings. Rehabilitation of existing buildings for alternative purposes should be encouraged. Dixie and Ward's Corner may evolve into hamlets, since they may become more developed with the extension of the sanitary sewer transmission force main line.

Waterfront Business

The working waterfront, fisheries, and aquaculture businesses of Mathews County should be continued to the extent environmentally feasible. Appropriate business locations on the waterfront are important to the long-term economy of the County and should be carefully protected and utilized in a productive manner. In particular, preference should be given to promoting areas and sites for working waterfront operations, fishing, aquaculture, and habitat preservation that will support the economy, enhance the environment, and ensure quality production of fish and shellfish. There should be a careful assessment of new waterfront land uses with respect to their effects on important fishing and aquaculture resources. In addition, there should be careful assessment of existing waterfront land uses to ensure that they use best management practices to protect and enhance the environment. Of note is that it is important to recognize that with the pursuit and promotion of waterfront business development and aquaculture, there may be competing interests among other property owners for use of adjacent land and water. Quality fishing and aquaculture production require wise management of



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shorelines and off-shore waters with promoted understanding of aquaculture operations, processing, and access.

In addition to business uses, there may be appropriate residentially-oriented business uses that are suitable for the waterfront. These could include such uses as a small condominium complex, boutique hotel, bed & breakfast, or community campground. All of these uses must be carefully considered to ensure environmental compatibility and adequate and safe water and wastewater facilities. Like businesses, these types of uses must utilize best management practices to protect and enhance the environment.

Rural Preservation/Conservation

Rural Preservation/Conservation areas include public open space, natural preserves, and areas that should have carefully managed development or be conserved because of special ecosystems or natural conditions. These areas include dedicated conservation areas that are public set-asides for recreation and natural conservation. Other areas noted for preservation/conservation are areas that may be influenced by storm surge or possible rising sea levels over the next twenty years. Generally, further development in these areas should be carefully considered and limited to protect public and private investment and to minimize potential flood damages. Appropriate land uses would include open space, passive recreation, low-density residential development and carefully managed agriculture, forestry or aquaculture.

Corridor Overlay District

A Corridor Overlay District ~~is proposed to~~ could extend from historic Mathews Court House, along Main Street, Buckley Hall Road (Route 198) and John Clayton Memorial Highway (Route 14) corridors to the Gloucester County line. This district would follow the major entrance corridors into the County and include the area served by the sanitary sewer transmission force main. It ~~will~~ could provide development guidance for new development to enhance the entrances to the historic Mathews Court House. ~~The Corridor Overlay District is expected to be approximately 300 feet on either side of the corridors and would address such elements as general building location and design, parking, access points, landscaping, lighting and signage.~~

Historic Overlay District

A Historic Overlay District is proposed for the historic Mathews Court House and surrounding Mathews village area. This district could provide design recommendations for exterior building improvements and new building construction, as well as establish a process for reviewing building demolition. Also, there is the opportunity to designate additional historic overlay districts. ~~after a countywide survey of historic properties is conducted.~~



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Floodplain Overlay District

A Floodplain Overlay District is proposed for the County Zoning Ordinance to emphasize its linkage to land planning, use and development. At present, review of development and evaluation of floodplain regulations are the responsibility of the building official. By adopting an overlay district that is part of the zoning code, there is greater control over land uses in the floodplain and increased ability to manage development patterns within the context of the adopted Comprehensive Plan. At a minimum, the County must comply with regulations established by FEMA for the purposes of the National Flood Insurance Program; however, the County can choose to be more stringent in managing land uses and development in the floodplain. The proposed Floodplain Overlay district should coincide with the areas delineated on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps for the County and the Floodplain Map illustrated in Section V, Environment, of this Comprehensive Plan.

Future Land Use, Mathews County 2030		
Category	Approx. Area (acres)	%
Rural Agriculture/Forestal	32,000	58 %
Rural Residential	3800	7 %
Low Density Residential	2600	5 %
Waterfront Residential	9000	16 %
Village	450	<1 %
Hamlet	380	<1 %
Crossroads	150	<1 %
Planned Business	20	<1 %
Waterfront Business	200	<1 %
Rural Preservation/Conservation	7100	13 %
TOTAL	55,700	100 %



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Planning/Development Policies, Action Strategies for Land Use 2030

The following planning and development policies and action strategies are established to achieve the desired vision for land use in Mathews County:

Development Policies and Strategies for Land Use	
LU1	<p>The desired future land use for Mathews County should represent a land use pattern that enhances environmental quality while promoting high quality development. Improvements or changes in land development patterns and uses should incorporate sensitive environmental design and best management practices.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amend the County zoning ordinance to integrate the land use categories and development standards recommended by this Comprehensive Plan. <u>Revise permitted land uses to coincide with policies promoting preservation and improvement of the environment and water quality.</u>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Amend the County Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Overlay ordinance to expand the limits of the Resource Management Area. Consider additional amendments to improve overall water quality, protect sensitive environmental areas, and promote better management of land and natural resources.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Revise the County zoning map to reflect revised ordinance amendments.
LU2	<p>The future viability of Mathews County requires planning and management of not only land uses, but also the use and treatment of the surface waters surrounding the County. The land and waters are linked; one affects the other. Future land use decisions should consider effects on both the land and the water.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pursue planning and management of uses beyond the shorelines of Mathews County. Coordinate approaches and methods with state agencies and other regional governments. Develop agreed upon procedures for reviewing development and use requests that affect land and water. Adopt applicable regulations to effectively manage uses within County territorial boundaries.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to adequately address aquaculture as a land use and. Amend other relevant regulations to protect water quality and appropriately manage aquaculture businesses/operations and surrounding



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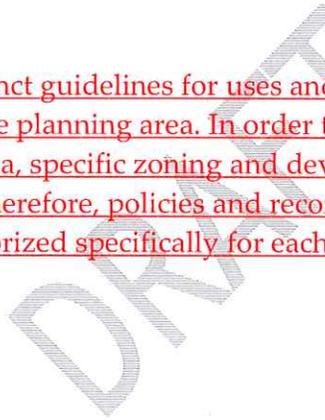
Development Policies and Strategies for Land Use	
	land uses.
	3. <u>Consider adopting various tools identified in the Recurrent Flooding Study prepared by the MPPDC for the County.</u>

Planning Districts

Mathews County consists of five planning areas:

- o Piankatank
- o Gwynn’s Island
- o Central Mathews
- o West Mathews
- o Bayside

Each district should have distinct guidelines for uses and development that are based on the individual characteristics of the planning area. In order to manage growth and the type of uses permitted in each planning area, specific zoning and development regulations must be created for each of the five districts. Therefore, policies and recommendations on land use that are outlined in this plan are categorized specifically for each of the five areas.

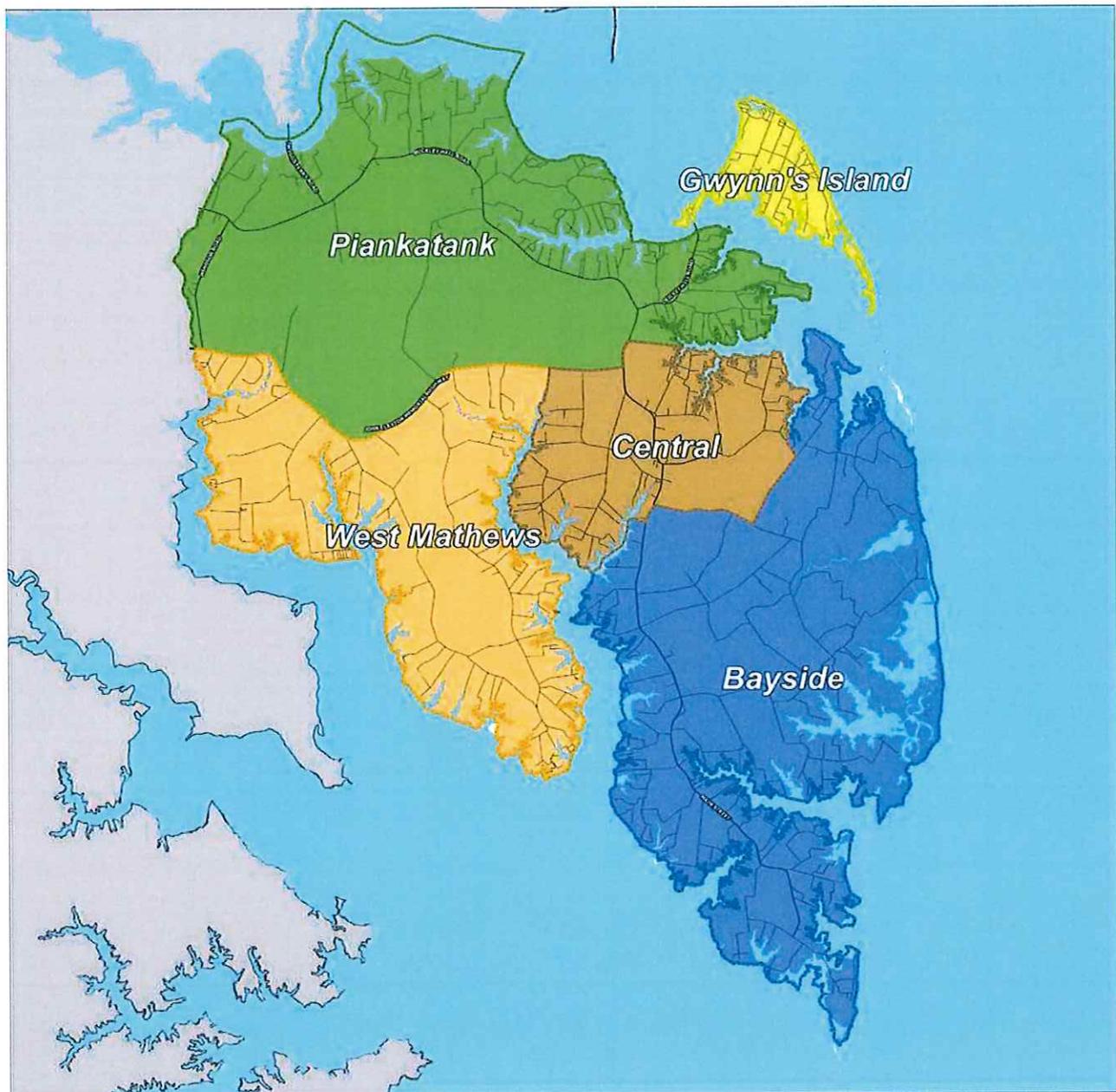




*V. Mathews County Community Plans:
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

Mathews County Community Plans:

Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies





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Piankatank

Community Overview

The Piankatank Planning Area is located in the northern portion of Mathews County and lies adjacent to Gloucester and Middlesex Counties. The Piankatank area extends north of Route 14, John Clayton Memorial Highway, to the Piankatank River and includes the small communities of Dixie, Dutton, Cobbs Creek, Hudgins, Blakes, Hallieford, and Redart. The area hosts the Piankatank River Landing that is frequently used by residents; in addition, Piankatank hosts three other public water access sites.

Much of Piankatank consists of open fields or forests and residential development, particularly along the Piankatank River, which provides waterfront access and vistas. Cobbs Creek and Hudgins exhibit the most business development; Cobbs Creek includes a small business park and Hudgins contains a cluster of village-type businesses.



Cobbs Creek Business Park



Historic Hudgins Business

Piankatank River Residential

Queens Creek Residential



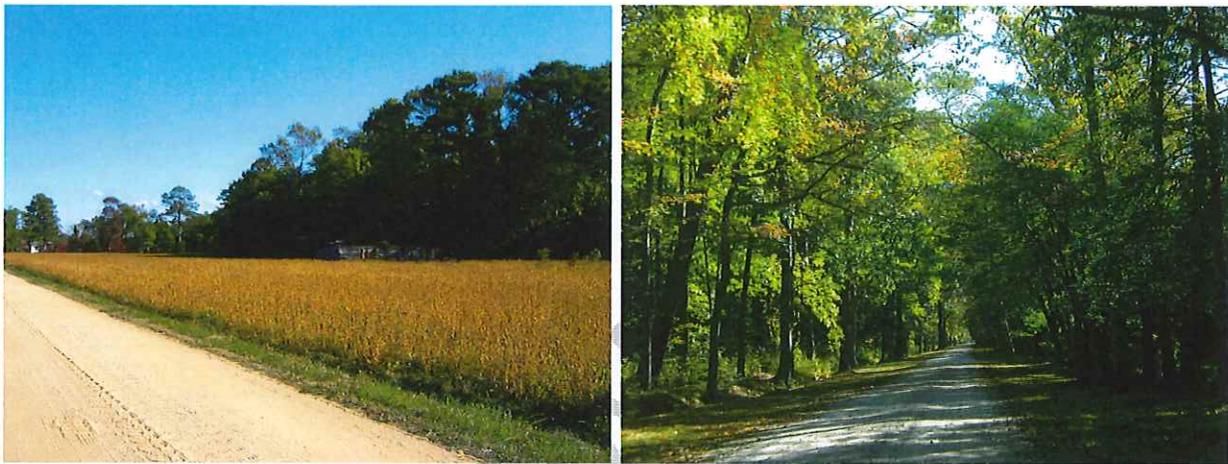
This planning area includes the highest elevations in the County, particularly north of Buckley



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Hall Road. As a result, the soils here are more diverse and permeable, allowing better drainage; however, the elevation makes them more erodible, particularly along the shoreline. The district's unique topographic features are attributable to the meteorite that impacted the region millions of years ago, creating what is known today at the "Chesapeake Impact Crater." The ridgelines of the crater can be seen along Buckley Hall Road and Ridge Road.

The Piankatank Planning Area also contains some of the most productive forests and agricultural lands in the County. Much of the district between Buckley Hall Road and John Clayton Memorial Highway lies undeveloped in large tracts of forests and open fields.



The Piankatank Area hosts facilities of the Piankatank Ruritan Club which are used by many Mathews County citizens. There is a large event facility and several ball fields. A new fire and rescue building ~~is planned~~ has been constructed off Buckley Hall Road for the Cobbs Creek area.

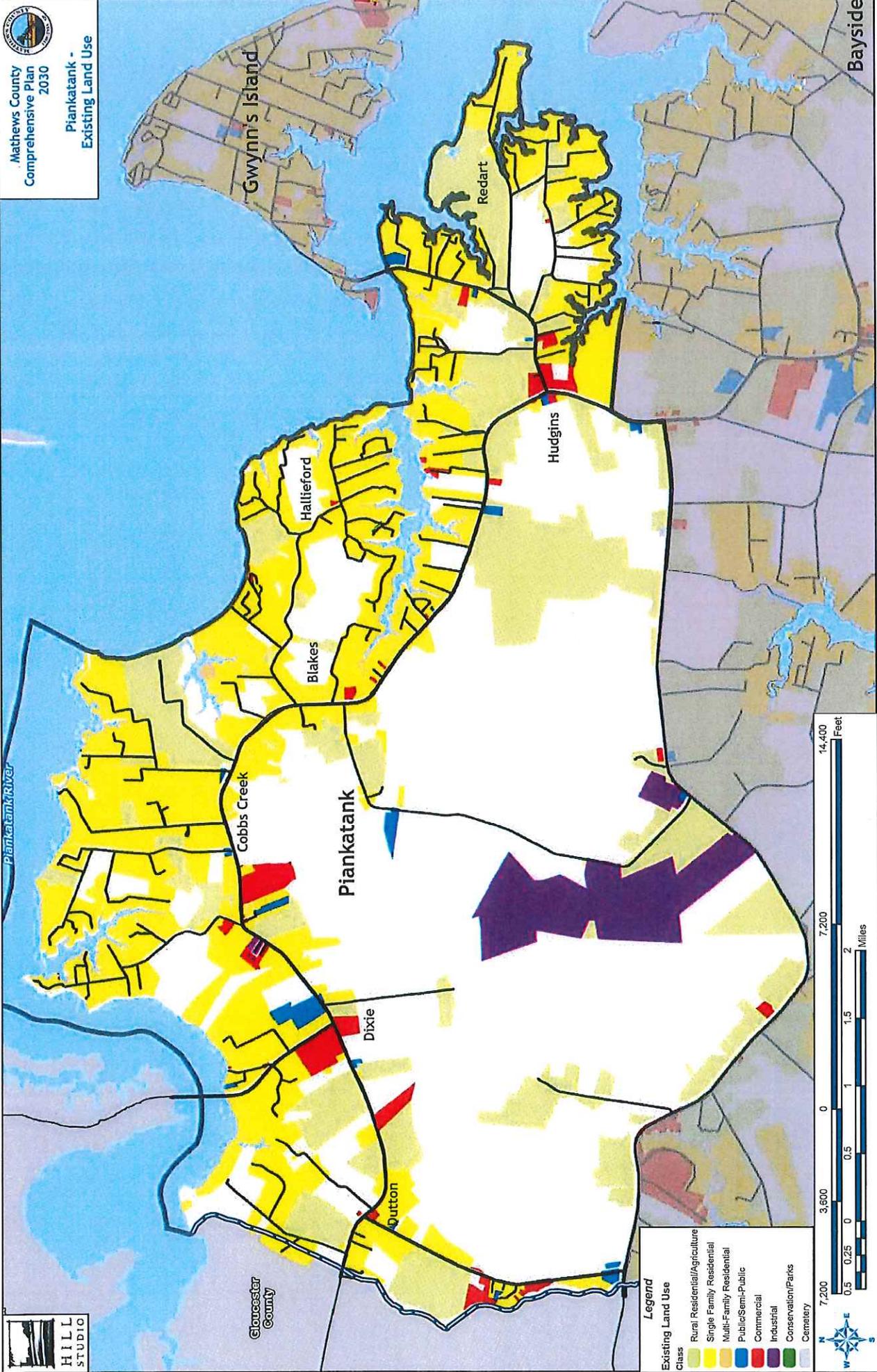
The following maps provide a more detailed overview of the existing conditions and planned public infrastructure improvements in the Piankatank Planning Area:

- Existing Land Use
- Public Facilities
- Development Constraints
- Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas

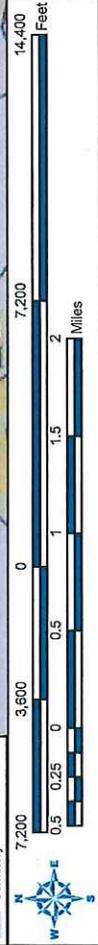


Mathews County
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2030

Piankatank -
Existing Land Use



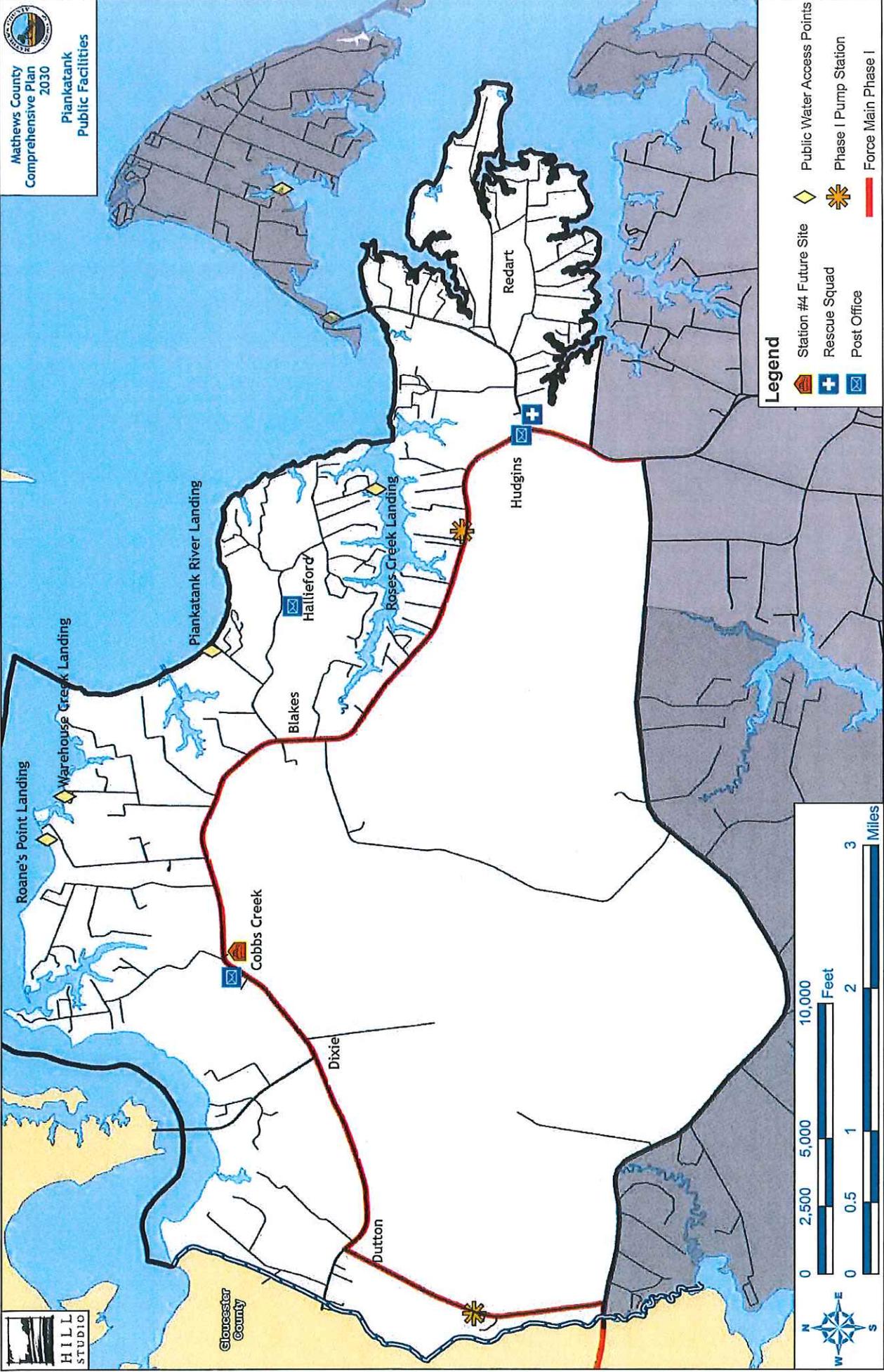
- Legend**
- Existing Land Use Class**
- Rural Residential/Agriculture
 - Single Family Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Public/Semi-Public
 - Commercial
 - Industrial
 - Conservation/Parks
 - Cemetery





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Piankatank
Public Facilities

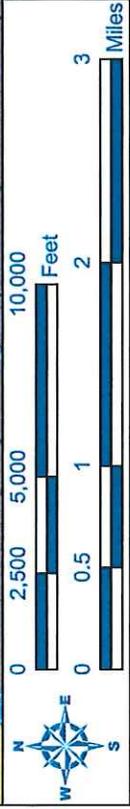


Legend

- Station #4 Future Site
- Rescue Squad
- Post Office
- Public Water Access Points
- Phase I Pump Station
- Force Main Phase I



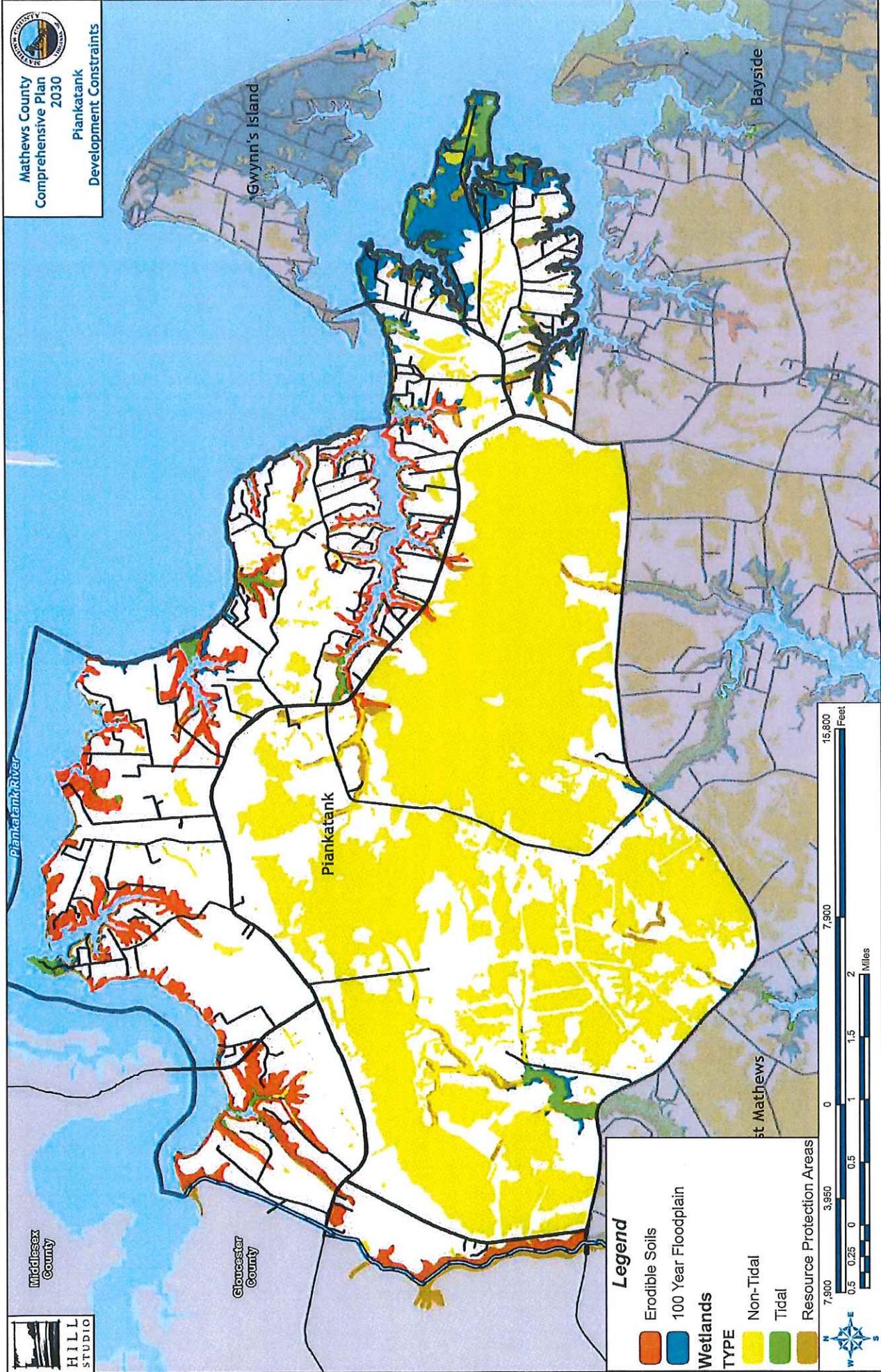
Gloucester
County





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Piankatank
Development Constraints



Middlesex
County

Gloucester
County

Piankatank

St Mathews

Bayside

Piankatank River

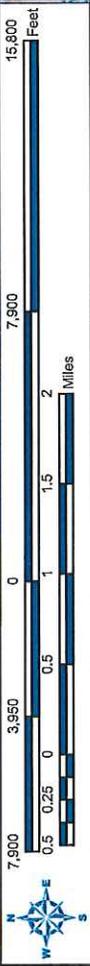
Gwynn's Island

Legend

- Erodible Soils
- 100 Year Floodplain

Wetlands

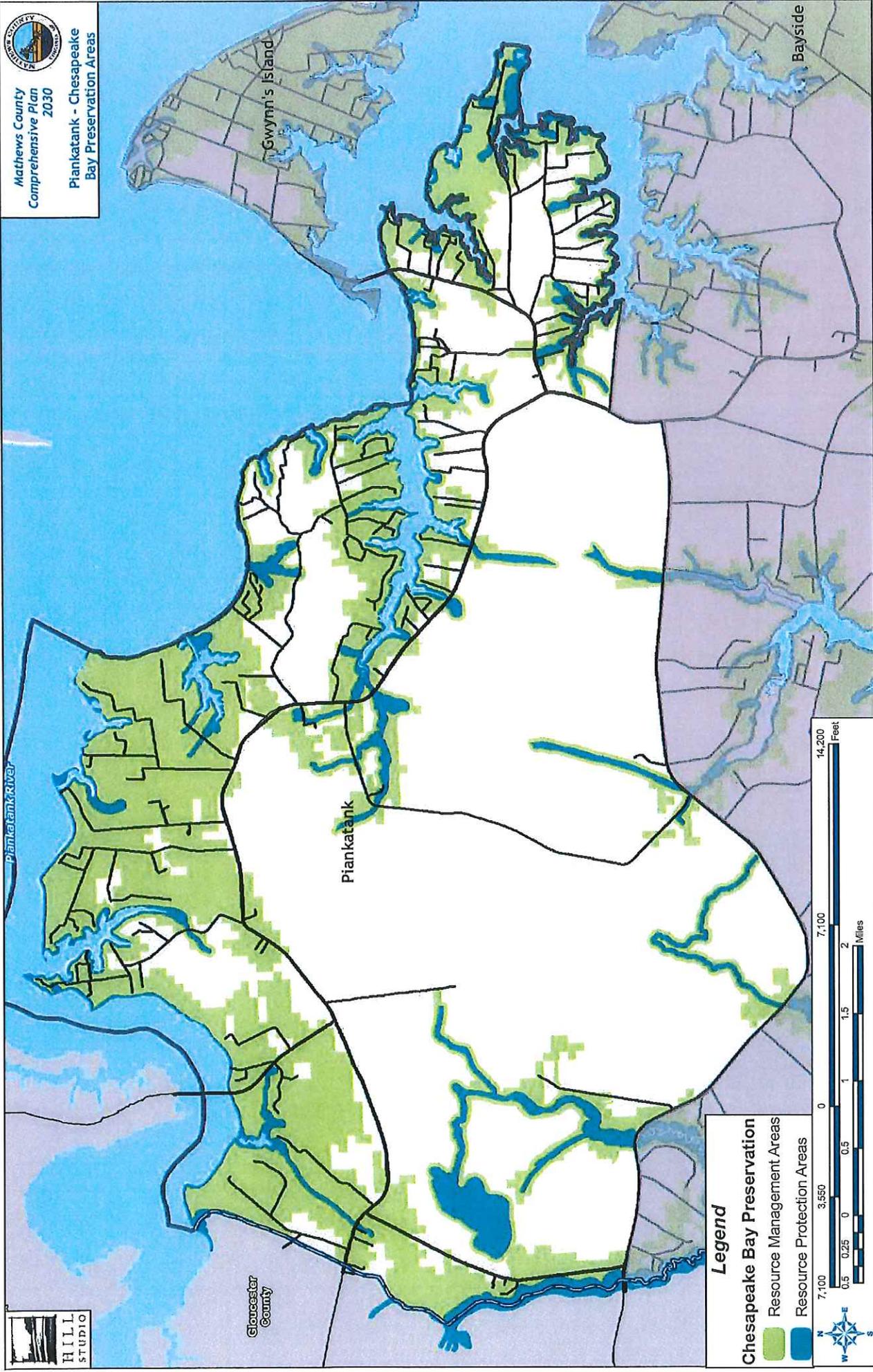
- TYPE**
- Non-Tidal
 - Tidal
 - Resource Protection Areas



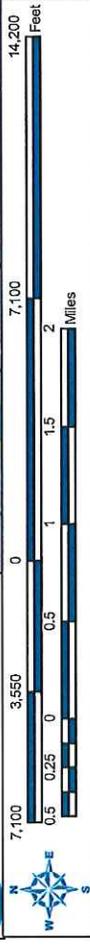


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Planktank - Chesapeake
Bay Preservation Areas



Legend
Chesapeake Bay Preservation
■ Resource Management Areas
■ Resource Protection Areas





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Community Opportunities and Challenges

Over the next 10-20 years, some of the opportunities and challenges for Piankatank include:

- The Sanitary Sewer Transmission Force Main ~~scheduled for implementation~~ constructed in this portion of the County will provide an opportunity to accommodate new development at defined concentrated areas along the corridor. This is beneficial to the County in that it provides opportunities for managed growth that is not dependent on septic systems; also, it encourages growth in the northern section of the County where there are fewer development constraints and better access. The challenge for the new sanitary sewer areas will be to manage the land uses along the corridor to ensure that the land uses and patterns of development complement the gateway corridors and the visual character of the County. The Board of Supervisors will need to work with HRSD, taxpayers, and businesses to establish recommendations and guiding policies for future connections that will balance costs and benefits.
- The Piankatank River is considered “qualifying” as a scenic river from Route 17 in Middlesex, Gloucester and Mathews Counties to the Chesapeake Bay. In Mathews County, the public access areas on the Piankatank are some of the most frequently used. A scenic river designation could be beneficial in helping maintain the natural integrity of the area and encourage tourism.
- Much of the undeveloped land in the Piankatank Planning Area is non-tidal wetlands and large tract forests and agricultural lands. These are important natural features that need to be carefully managed in order to maintain the overall environmental quality and visual character of Mathews County. Leadership and special land management and conservation efforts are needed to ensure their continued contribution to the community’s quality of life. Increased minimum lot sizes are recommended, as well as best management practices for agriculture and forestry operations. ~~Expansion of the Chesapeake Bay Management Area designation can assist in better oversight of these important areas.~~
- Cobbs Creek and Hudgins offer opportunities for additional business development, ~~particularly once now that~~ the sanitary sewer transmission force main is completed and further direction is provided by the Board of Supervisors regarding any future connection policies. They are recommended as “hamlets” for the purposes of future land use, which are areas where there would be a mixture of supporting commercial and residential uses in a concentrated area. Cobbs Creek can provide increased sites for economic development in a planned business environment and other commercial development along the corridor; residential uses also could be considered in denser development patterns along the corridor or located above first floor commercial uses. Hudgins could provide a very interesting opportunity for mixed residential and commercial uses because of the unique architecture and pedestrian scale of the community. Improvements to the street frontage, landscaping, sidewalks, and existing buildings could create a very welcoming small hamlet environment for the community.



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- Much of the demand for residential development will likely continue to be oriented to the waterfront. Because of environmental factors, there must be careful management of land uses and development patterns along the Piankatank River. New residential buildings and subdivisions should incorporate conservation and low-impact/light imprint environmental principles into the design of parcels and supporting systems. Public education about waterfront environments and risks will play an important part in managing land development and achieving community goals for improved water quality and environmental sustainability.

Piankatank Future Land Use

The future land use map for Piankatank is shown in greater detail on the following page. The recommended future land use categories are discussed in the preceding land use section of this plan; for the purposes of this section they are summarized below:

- **Rural Agriculture/Forestal** - This land use category is intended for large-tract agriculture and forests. Land uses may include agriculture, forests and accompanying very low density residential.
- **Waterfront Residential** - There are many environmental challenges associated with expanding development in these areas. New development should be conservative in terms of lot sizes, building types and locations, and shoreline and water access. New or expanded development on existing lots must recognize constraints relative to providing and maintaining safe wastewater treatment and water supply, as well as protecting water quality. Land uses may include single-family residential development and well-managed agriculture or open space. Building heights should be limited to an appropriate scale to maintain community character.
- **Low Density Residential** - Land uses within this category may include single family and duplex residential uses at a density of 1-2 dwelling units per acre depending on environmental constraints and access to public utilities.
- **Planned Business** - This land use category is for targeted business areas to enhance employment opportunities and economic development for the County. Land uses may include corporate offices, light manufacturing or assembly, medical facilities, and other larger-scale business uses or warehouse/distribution uses. Signage, access and building materials and placement should be carefully planned and coordinated to ensure a well-designed and complementary environment. Dixie and the existing business park in Cobbs Creek apply to this future land use category.
- **Hamlet** - This land use category is applicable to Hudgins and Cobbs Creek. A hamlet consists of a small-scale, compact settlement area that may include several business uses and community services. Housing may be located adjacent to the hamlet or within the hamlet above ground floor commercial uses. Rehabilitation of existing buildings is encouraged; new development should complement the corridor and surrounding uses.



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Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

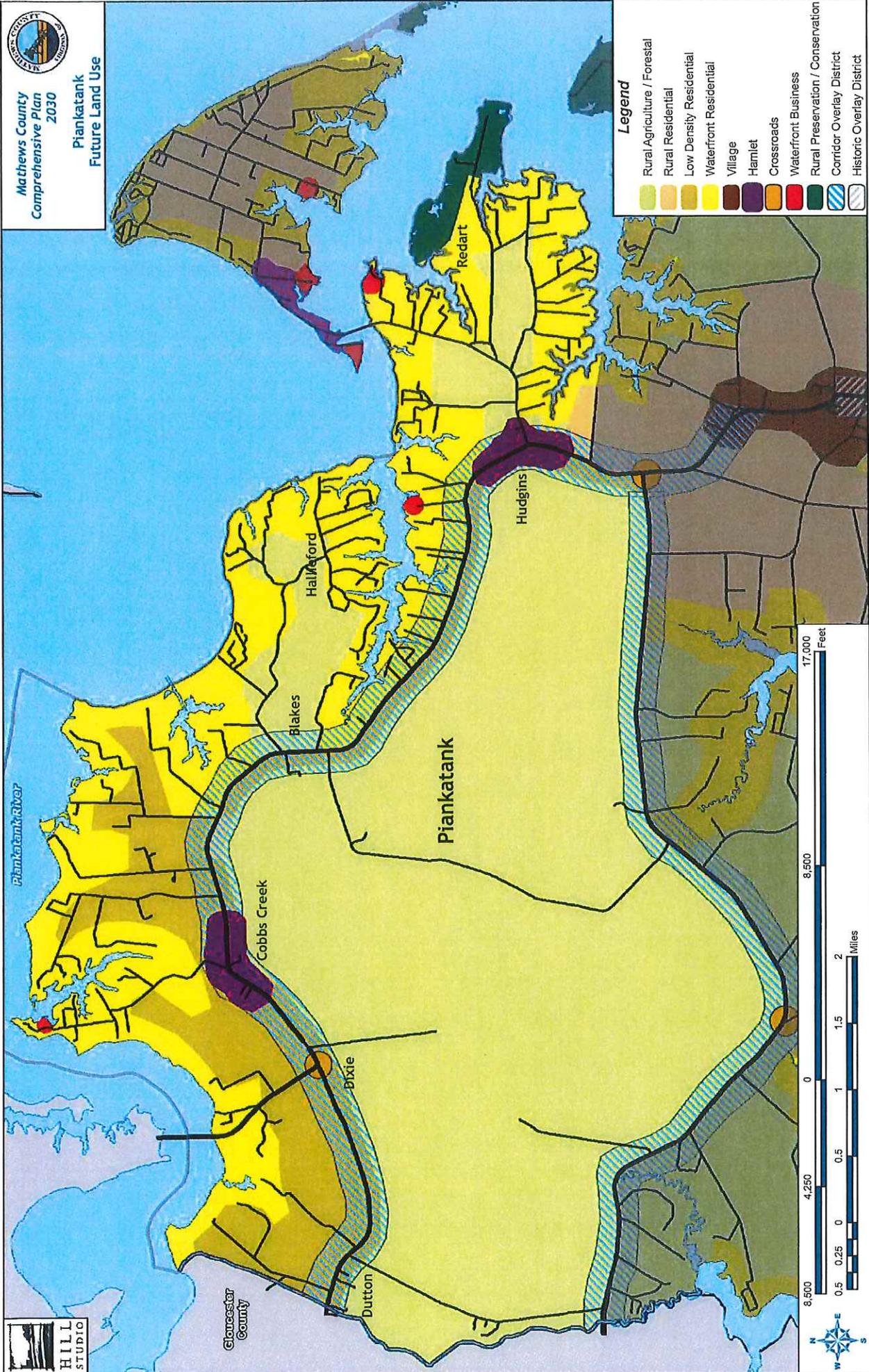
- **Crossroads Community** – These are small crossroad business centers that serve local residents on roads that frequently carry neighborhood traffic. Typical land uses may include a small convenience store, gas station, post office, café or small office.
- **Waterfront Business** – This category is for important working waterfront businesses of Mathews County that are important to the long-term economy. Quality aquaculture requires wise management of shorelines and off-shore waters with promoted understanding of aquaculture operations, processing, and access.
- **Corridor Overlay District** - This district would follow the major entrance corridors into the County and include the Phase I area to be served by the sanitary sewer transmission force main. It could provide development guidance for new development to enhance the entrances to the historic Mathews Court House.
- ~~**Floodplain Overlay District**— This district includes the floodway and 100-year floodplain. This will enable zoning regulation over land uses in the floodplain and increased ability to manage development patterns within the context of the adopted Comprehensive Plan.~~

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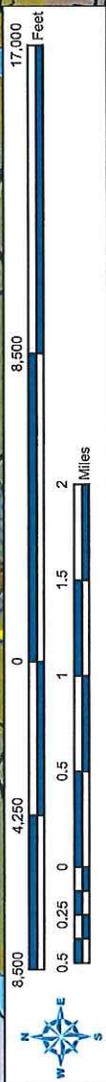


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2030

Piankatank
Future Land Use



- Legend**
- Rural Agriculture / Forestal
 - Rural Residential
 - Low Density Residential
 - Waterfront Residential
 - Village
 - Hamlet
 - Crossroads
 - Waterfront Business
 - Rural Preservation / Conservation
 - Corridor Overlay District
 - Historic Overlay District





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

Piankatank Community Development Policies and Strategies

Development Policies and Strategies for Piankatank	
PIANK 1	<p>The Piankatank Planning Area exhibits the highest elevations in Mathews County and some of the best opportunities for suitable housing and business development given the sanitary sewer infrastructure improvements. New development should complement the gateway entrance corridors and maintain the environmental resources of the County.</p>
	1. Encourage new business development in the designated hamlet areas. Develop and adopt corridor design standards that will provide guidance for new development and redevelopment.
	2. Encourage new residential development that is designed to maintain the natural and environmental qualities of the area. In designated hamlets, promote housing above commercial uses and in compact groupings.
	3. Consider adopting a corridor overlay district to include Routes 198, 14 and 3 and work with private and public partners to adopt design guidelines and implement them. Install County gateway entrance signs at these routes.
	4. Encourage the rehabilitation of existing buildings, particularly where they contribute to the architectural character of the community or have historic value. Promote the use of historic tax credits where applicable. Develop incentive programs to encourage appropriate rehabilitation in the corridor overlay district that is consistent with adopted design standards.
	5. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to limit business uses in residential zones. (This is particularly important along the corridor in order to orient business to the hamlets rather than sprawled along the corridor.)
PIANK 2	<p>The Piankatank District includes some of the largest tracts of agricultural lands and forests in the County. These are important natural assets that should be managed carefully and protected.</p>
	1. Identify major land ownership patterns and work with the owners to conserve lands and manage using best management practices.
	2. Amend the County zoning ordinance to increase lot sizes for rural agriculture and forested lands.

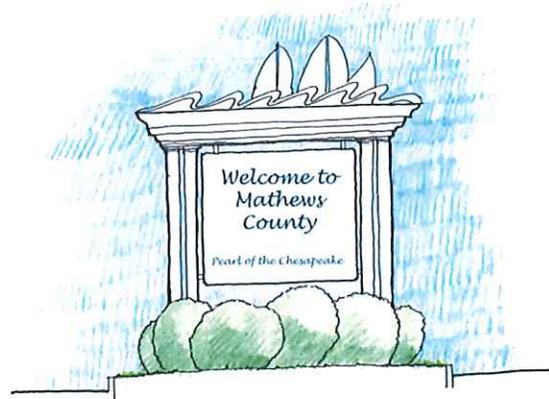


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Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

Piankatank: Special Action Projects

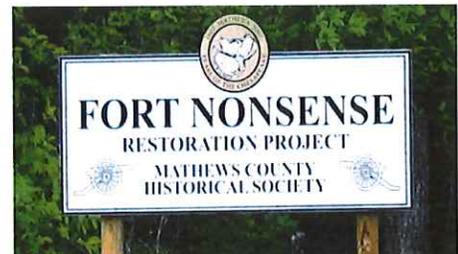
Gateway Entrance Signs

Gateway entrance signs are excellent ways to introduce a community to visitors. Initially, signs could be erected at the entrances to the County. These gateway signs could include entrances to the County along waterways as well as along roads. Additional signs could be added to each of the smaller communities in a district to promote identity and sense of place. Special attention must be given to the design and placement of the overall signs. There should be consistency with an overall County theme, yet promote individuality with respect to specific communities or districts.



Fort Nonsense

In addition to its early settlement heritage, Mathews County played a role in the Civil War. Earthen fortification elements are intact at Fort Nonsense located northeast of the intersection of John Clayton Memorial Highway (Route 14) and Windsor Rd. (Route 3). The County and the Mathews County Historical Society are working to develop an educational and visitors' center that will celebrate the Civil War experience in Mathews.



Entrance Corridor Building Rehabilitation

There are many early buildings along entrance corridors that offer interesting architectural features that can complement the character of the corridor if rehabilitated appropriately. Building improvements should respect architectural features and site improvements must provide an attractive relationship to the street.





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Gwynn’s Island

Community Overview

Gwynn’s Island has an extensive heritage, including an early visit by the explorer Captain John Smith. The island contains a mixture of commercial, residential and working waterfront facilities. It is accessible by boat or across an iron truss bridge that connects to the County mainland. Unfortunately, the bridge, which rotates for navigational purposes and is a special architectural asset, is being considered for replacement.

Gwynn’s Island exhibits some of the oldest settlement patterns and includes some of the densest development patterns in the County. Many of the houses are small cottages or two-story structures on small lots; many have been expanded over the years. The island contains two small post offices (Grimstead and Gwynn) as well as several small commercial and tourist attractions on the island including the Gwynn’s Island Museum, public boat ramp, and an old, vacant motel which was once an active destination for both visitors and residents. Gwynn offers a community center, waterfront condominiums, and a small campground.



Island Campground



Gwynn's Island Community Center

Spirit Branch Cemetery

Truss Bridge

Gwynn's Island Museum

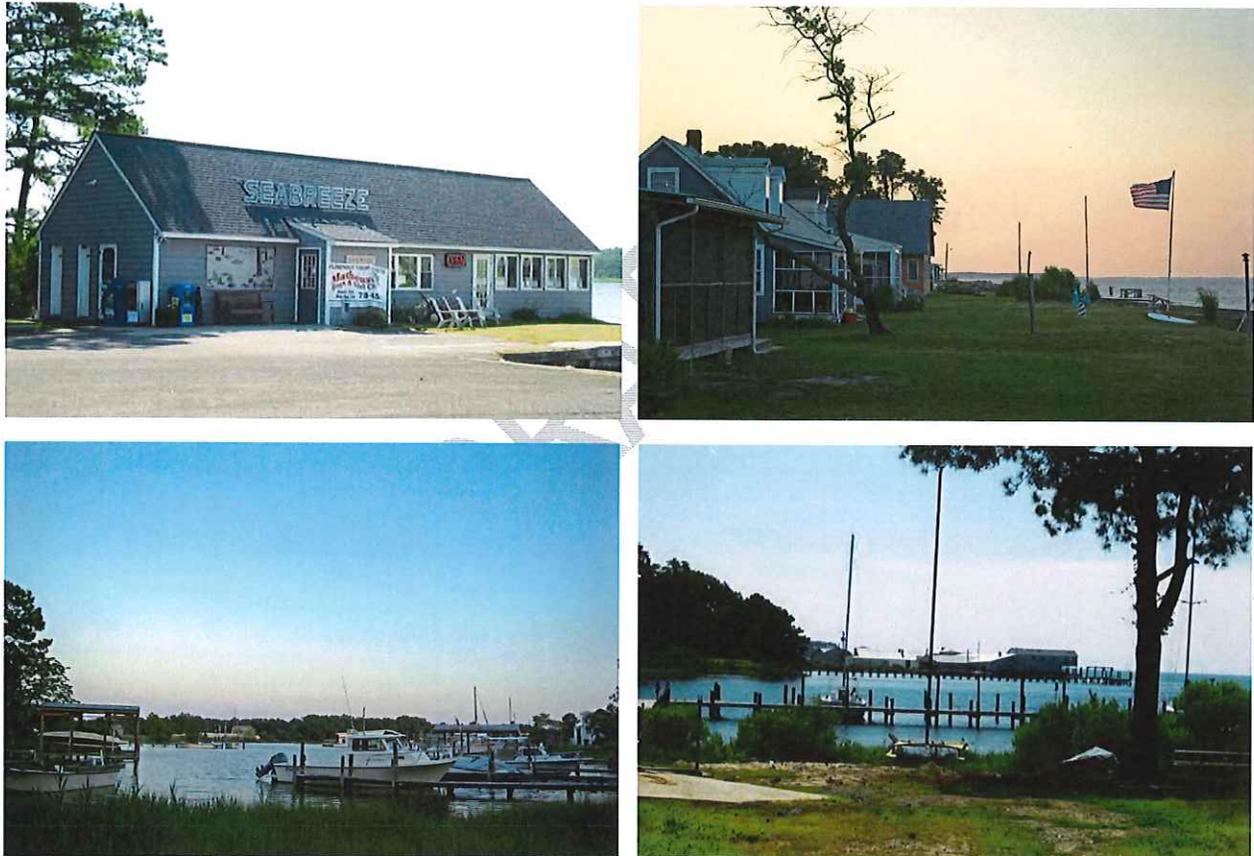




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Gwynn's Island condominiums, retail businesses, housing and working waterfront.

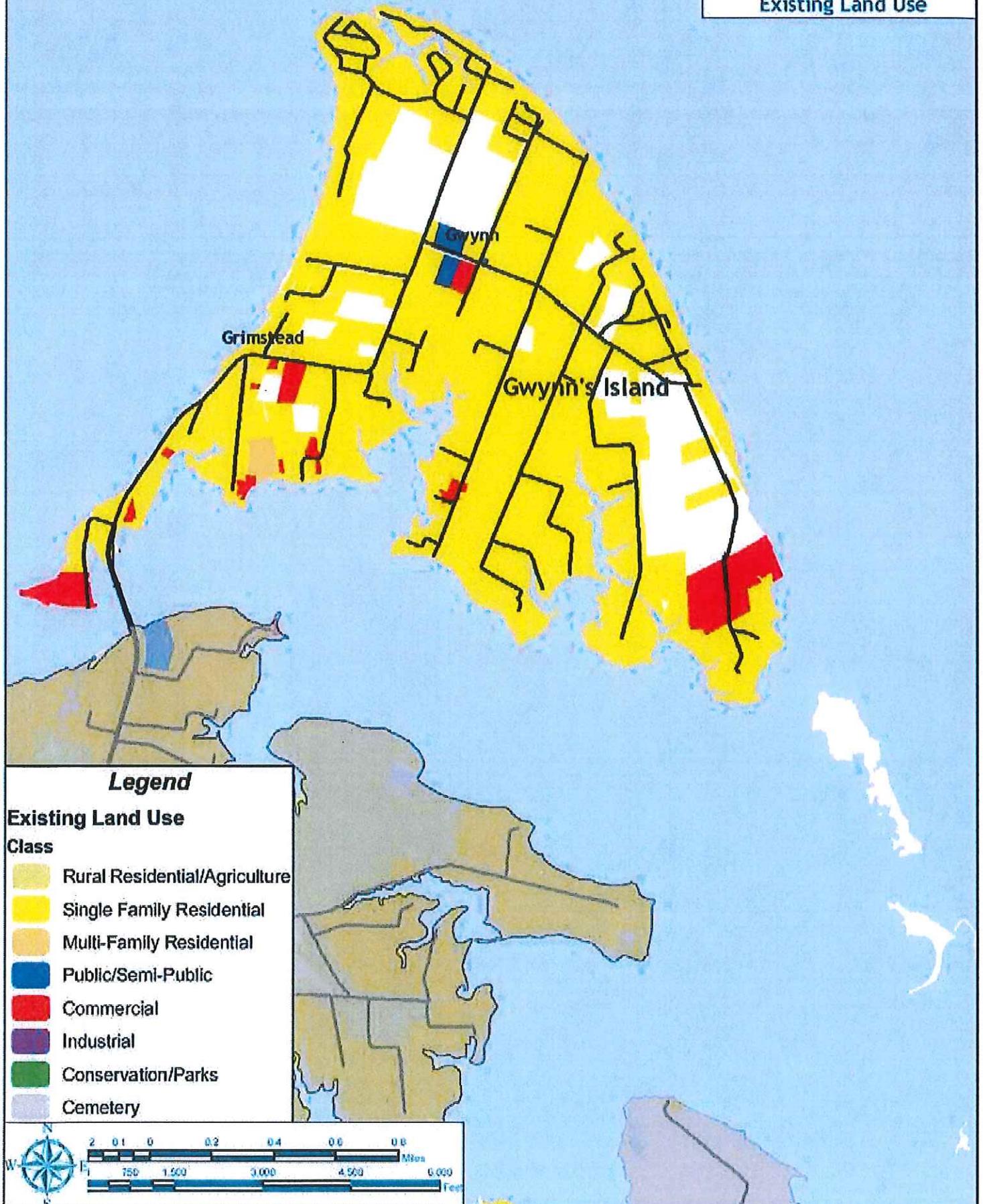


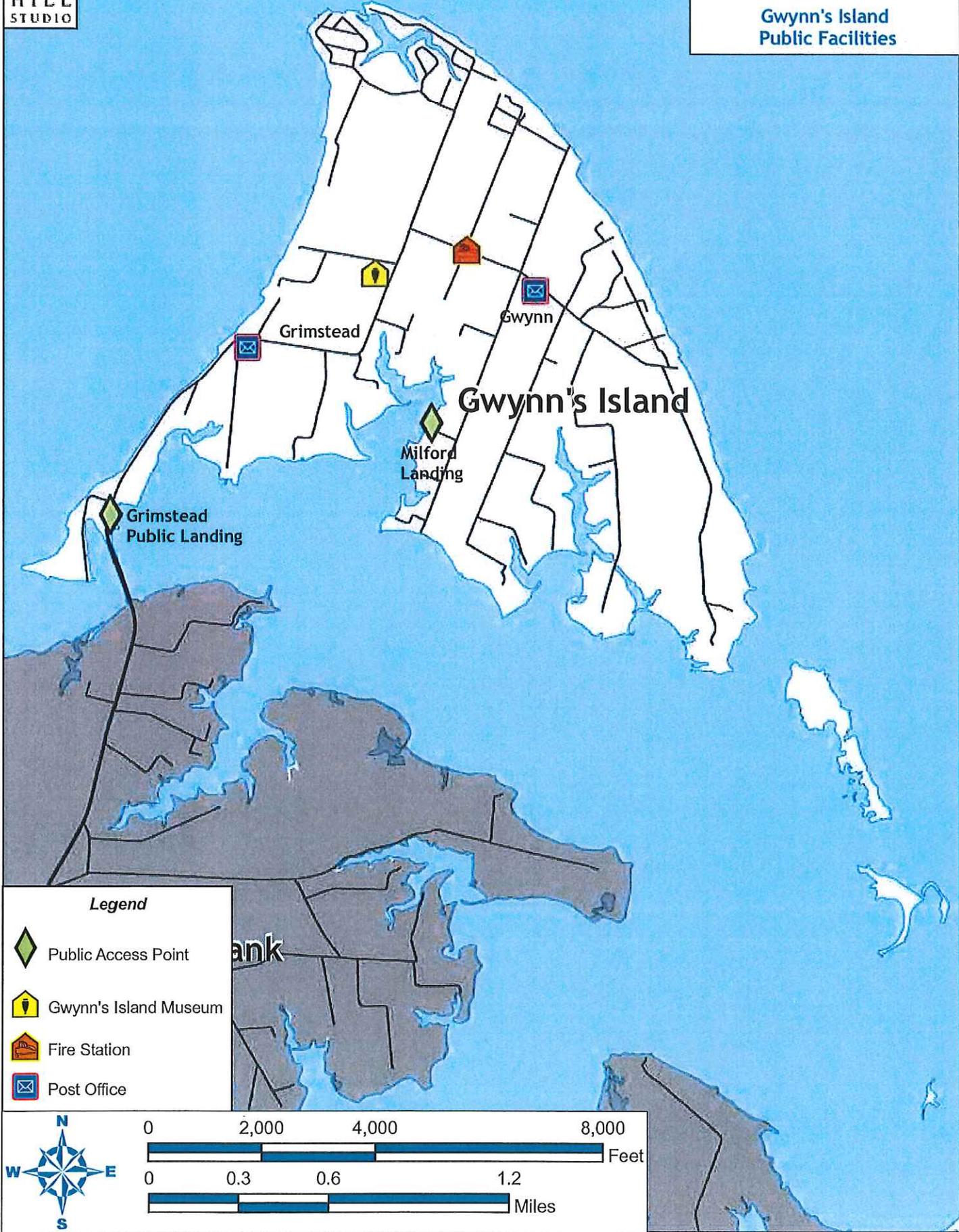
The following maps provide a more detailed overview of the existing conditions and planned public infrastructure on Gwynn's Island:

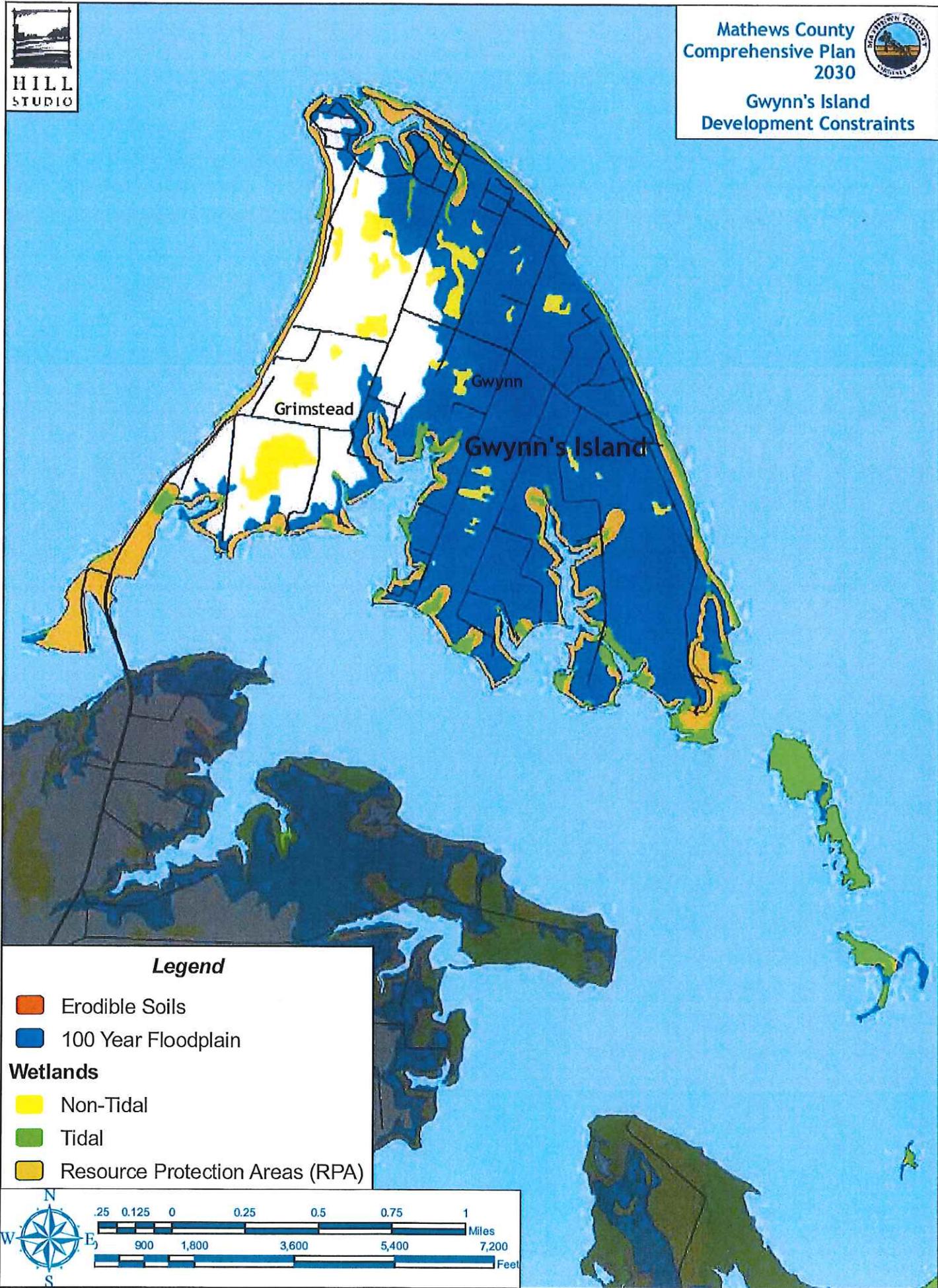
- Existing Land Use
- Public Facilities
- Development Constraints
- Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas



Gwynn's Island
Existing Land Use





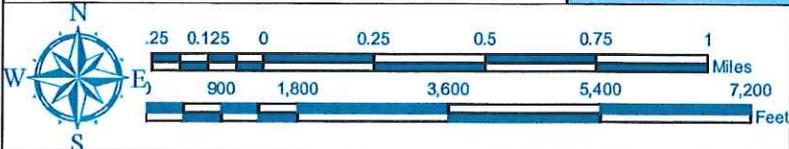


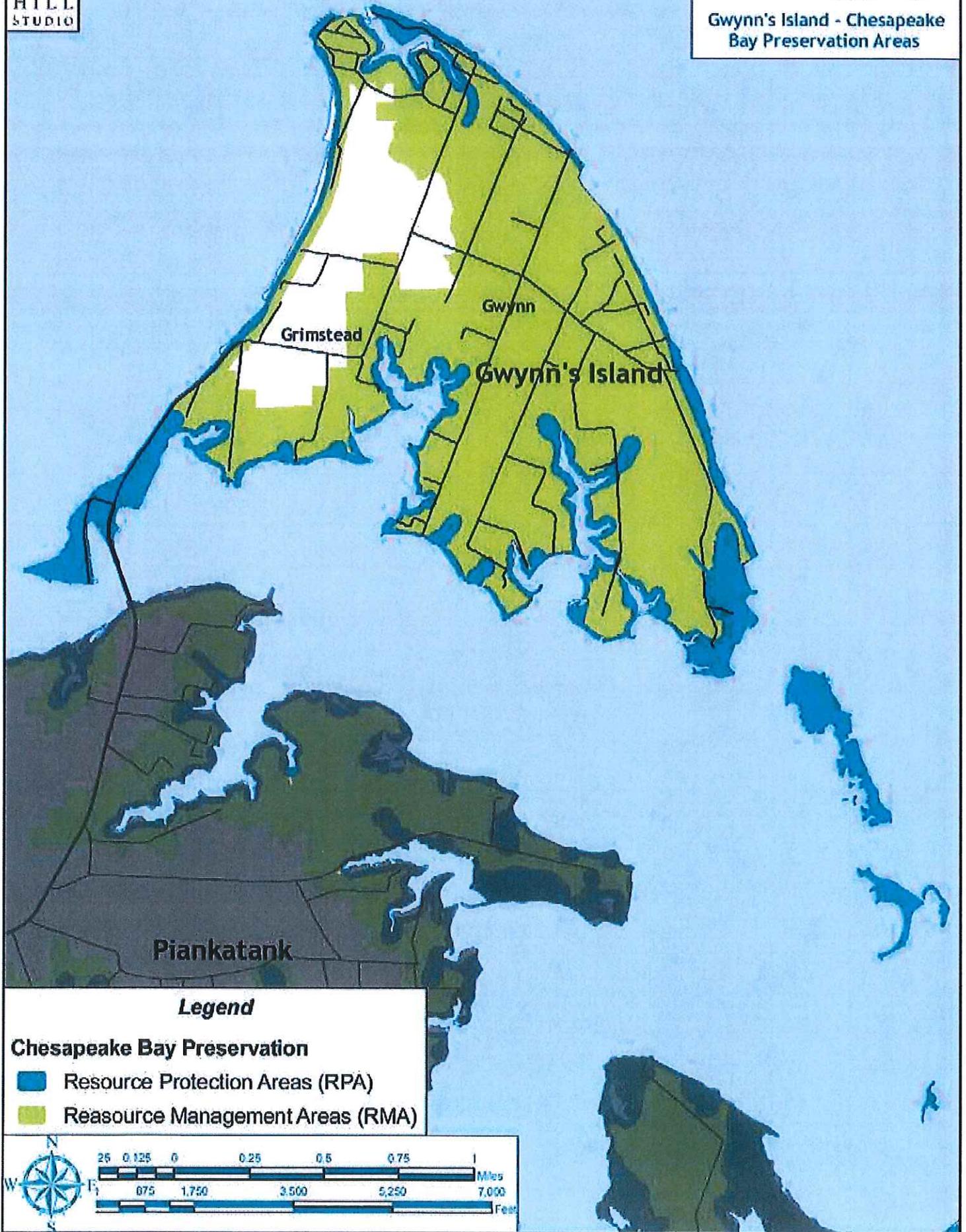
Legend

- Erodible Soils
- 100 Year Floodplain

Wetlands

- Non-Tidal
- Tidal
- Resource Protection Areas (RPA)

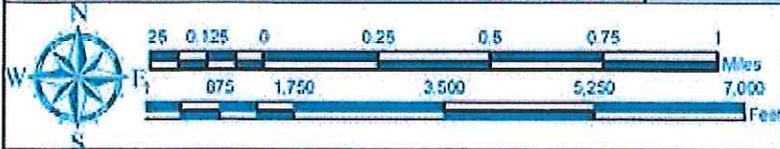




Legend

Chesapeake Bay Preservation

- Resource Protection Areas (RPA)
- Resource Management Areas (RMA)





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

Community Opportunities and Challenges

Over the next 10-20 years, some of the opportunities and challenges for Gwynn's Island include:

- Gwynn's Island exhibits a more dense development pattern than other parts of the County and is surrounded by water, making it susceptible to storm winds and rising waters. Land elevations are less than ten feet above sea level. ~~and approximately two-thirds of the island is within the 100-year floodplain.~~ Possible sea level rise over the next few decades could affect half of the island. New and existing development must consider these factors and appropriately plan for these potential impacts in an environmentally responsible manner.
- The development on the island is served primarily by septic systems. This presents water quality issues for both surface and ground water. Many of the systems are failing and there is a need for active measures to protect public health and safety. Phase II of the Sanitary Sewer Transmission Force Main is planned to extend to Gwynn's Island at a to-be-determined future time. Phase I construction is expected to be completed in early 2011.
- Many of the older structures on Gwynn's Island have been rehabilitated or expanded, reducing the amount of open space available on lots. The County's Zoning Ordinance does not regulate the maximum percent of a lot that may be covered with structures or impervious surfaces. Extensive development on small lots may exacerbate drainage issues. To help minimize development conflicts in the future, the County should consider amending the zoning ordinance to establish maximum lot coverage for driveways, parking and structures.
- Because of its proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, the Piankatank River and several inner waterways, the Island has historically had many waterfront businesses ranging from marinas to shipyards and seafood processing. There are two public landings. These amenities and historical operations may offer beneficial opportunities for aquaculture development and working waterfront preservation for the future.
- The Islander Motel once provided bay-front accommodations for tourists and was a gathering spot for residents for special events. It represented the only motel facility in the County, offering spaces for large hospitality events. This property could be rehabilitated or redeveloped for a similar use; however, access and environmental issues are challenges.
- Gwynn's Island is a tourist destination and home to residents (permanent and seasonal), as well as a place of business for waterfront operations. Most recognize the special small community charm and the waterfront opportunities, but may not realize the delicate balance that must be achieved to maintain the community's qualities, environmental amenities and overall contributions to the County. Careful land management and planning will be needed to preserve waterfront businesses and enhance the quality of life for residents.

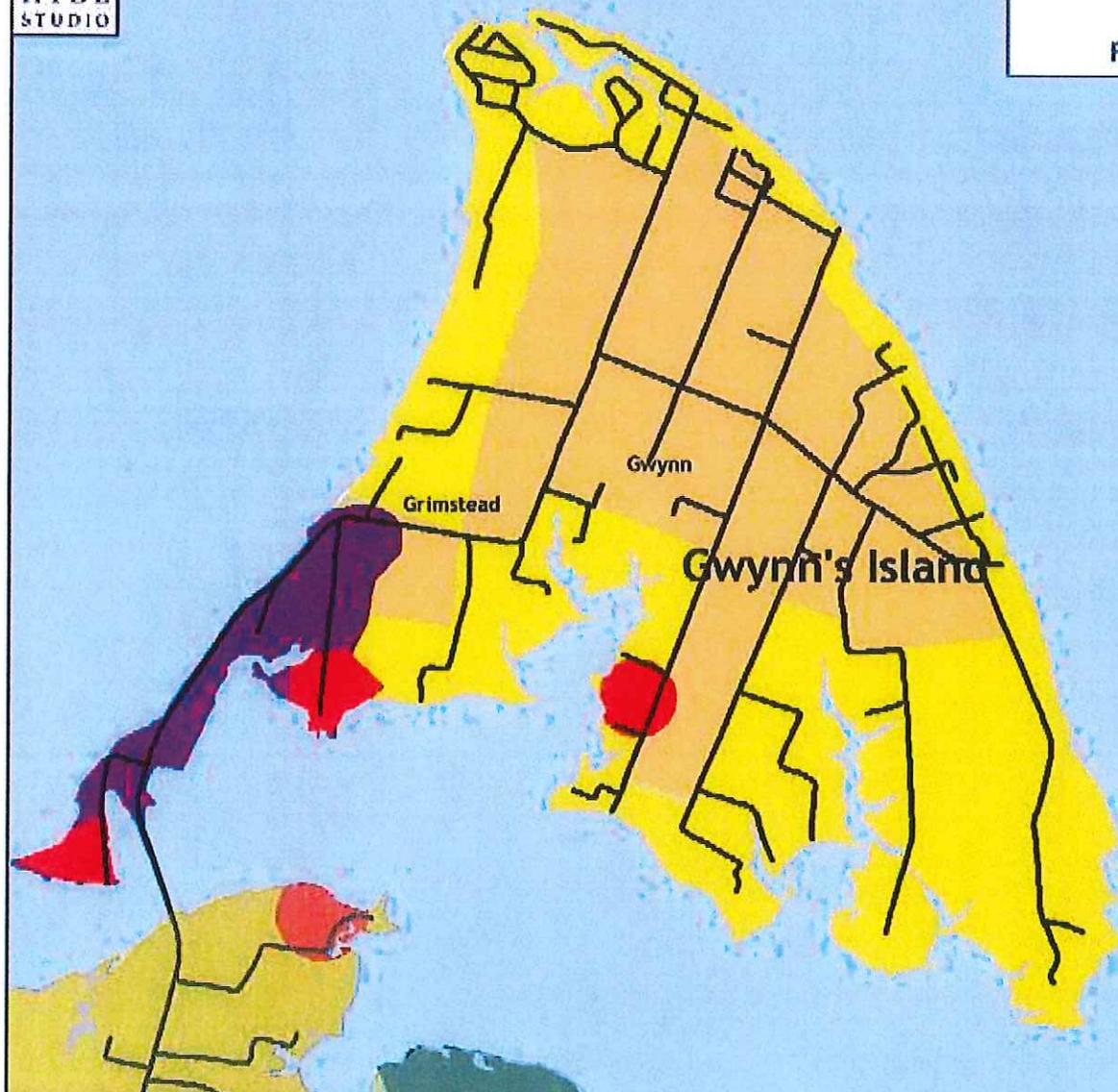


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Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

Gwynn's Island Future Land Use

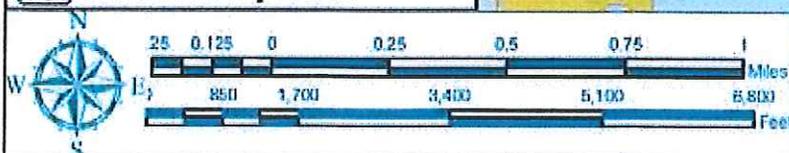
The future land use map for Gwynn's Island is shown in greater detail on the following page. The recommended future land use categories are discussed in the preceding land use section of this plan; for the purposes of this section they are summarized below:

- **Waterfront Residential** - There are many environmental challenges associated with expanding development in these areas. New development should be conservative in terms of lot sizes, building types and locations, and shoreline and water access. New or expanded development on existing lots must recognize constraints relative to providing and maintaining safe wastewater treatment and water supply, as well as protecting water quality. Land uses may include single-family residential or clustered-open space development as well as limited agriculture. Building heights should be at an appropriate scale to maintain community character.
- **Rural Residential** – This category applies to areas that are appropriate for very low-density residential development. Development should maintain community character.
- **Hamlet** – This land use category is applicable near the Gwynn's Island Bridge, Grimstead Public Landing, and other adjacent areas where mixed-uses have developed on Gwynn's Island. A hamlet consists of a small-scale, compact settlement area that may include several business uses and community services. Housing may be located adjacent to the hamlet or within the hamlet above ground floor commercial uses. Rehabilitation of existing buildings is encouraged; new development should complement the corridor and surrounding uses.
- **Waterfront Business** – This category is for working waterfront businesses that are important to the long-term economy of Mathews County. Quality aquaculture requires wise management of shorelines and off-shore waters with promoted understanding of aquaculture operations, processing, and access.
- **Rural Preservation/Conservation** - Rural Preservation/Conservation areas include public open space, natural preserves, and areas that should be carefully managed and conserved because of special ecosystems, natural conditions, or possible rise in sea level. Appropriate land uses include open space, passive recreation, low-density residential, and managed agriculture, forestry or aquaculture.
- ~~**Floodplain Overlay District**—This district includes the floodway and 100-year floodplain. This will enable zoning regulation over land uses in the floodplain and increased ability to manage development patterns.~~



Legend

- Rural Agriculture / Forestal
- Rural Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Waterfront Residential
- Village
- Hamlet
- Crossroads
- Waterfront Business
- Rural Preservation / Conservation
- Corridor Overlay District
- Historic Overlay District





V. Mathews County Community Plans:
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Community Development Policies and Strategies

Development Policies and Strategies for Gwynn’s Island	
GWYNN 1	<p>Gwynn’s Island is an important heritage resource for Mathews County because of its early settlement and its waterfront business history. New or expanded development on the Island should complement existing land uses, minimize use conflicts, and respect environmental features.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that new or expanded development addresses environmental constraints and protects water quality. Encourage design solutions that will enhance the environment and protect resources and physical investment for the long-term.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Protect working waterfront operations that are important to the economy of Mathews County. Work with multiple partners to enhance water quality of the Bay and its tributaries. Work with and educate residents and businesses on aquaculture needs and waterfront operations.
GWYNN 2	<p>Gwynn’s Island is important to County tourism and economic development efforts. Underutilized properties within the “hamlet” should be carefully considered for rehabilitation or redevelopment. Commercial waterfront development outside of the hamlet should be limited to appropriate sites for aquaculture.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider redevelopment of the former motel site on Gwynn’s Island as a small resort facility. Ensure that development is low-impact, environmentally-friendly and a good neighbor.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Pursue the redevelopment of underutilized waterfront sites as recommended for aquaculture development.
GWYNN 3	<p>Gwynn’s Island is susceptible to storm surges and potential rising sea levels. Public education of risks and mitigation solutions is essential in order to raise awareness, reduce adverse effects and limit property damages. Expanded or new development on Gwynn’s Island should carefully consider these factors. Conservation and appropriate environmental solutions are preferred.</p>



V. Mathews County Community Plans:
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

Development Policies and Strategies for Gwynn’s Island	
	1. Increase public awareness regarding the risks to property and life during storm surges and long-term risks related to possible sea level rise. When possible, discourage development in high-risk areas or encourage appropriate environmental solutions to reduce impacts. Develop and publish appropriate materials for public distribution.
	2. Expand the Chesapeake Bay Resource Management Area.
	3. Revise land use and development regulations to direct growth and development out of high risk areas outside of the floodplain. Consider enhancing existing regulations to increase setbacks and buffers in the floodplain.
	4. Identify alternative means for evacuating residents from Gwynn’s Island in the event of a hurricane. Work with the U. S. Coast Guard and other agencies to provide boat and air rescue. Encourage residents to register with the County’s Code Red Emergency Alert service.
GWYNN 4	Gwynn’s Island has a low elevation and near-surface water table that poses risks for proper functioning of septic systems. These systems should be monitored frequently to reduce impacts on water quality.
	1. Pursue and support local and regional pump-out programs for septic systems in the County.
	2. Amend the County zoning ordinance to address development by creating maximum lot coverage standards that minimize impacts in water quality.

Gwynn’s Island: Special Action Projects

Maritime History of Gwynn’s Island

The maritime heritage of Gwynn’s Island could be shared by writing a history of important activities and events. By integrating current aquaculture operations, the publication could serve as an educational aid, as well as provide a bridge between collections in the Gwynn’s Island Museum and the Maritime Museum. Suggestions for walking, driving and boating tours of important maritime sites could enhance the value of the publication.

