PART I  Existing Conditions

Overview

INTRODUCTION

Corridors are highways or other arterial routes that connect communities and serve as major transportation links. A Corridor Plan can serve as a tool to preserve the pleasing aesthetic qualities in the rural areas while also providing guidelines for attractive and consistent development in the commercial areas. Such a plan can be used to enhance traffic safety and flow by increasing minimum distances between ingress/egress points, calming vehicular traffic and providing effective and safe pedestrian access. In addition, corridor plans can protect visual elements such as open spaces, trees, farmlands and rural vistas. Corridor plans can also place development guidelines on commercial cores that define and shape its growth.

Strip development patterns often occur on main throughfares. This development pattern can effect overall rural character by merging town-like developments together and so eliminating those rural sightlines and vistas. Corridors can become eyesores if proper measures are not taken to ensure a desired appearance is maintained. By regulating what is built along the Route 33 Corridor in and around Deltaville, Middlesex County can begin to provide for strong, attractive, and accessible commercial cores while also protecting the visual resources apparent in the rural areas along the County’s

Fig. 1: Welcome sign located on corridor
PROJECT BACKGROUND

The 2001 Comprehensive Plan for Middlesex County, VA, Charting the Course identifies preserving the rural character of the county as a high priority. In Section V.C.3, rural developmental patterns are addressed: “an essential element of the rural development pattern is the open space containing agricultural fields and the natural and wooded lands that separate its settlements.” It is further stated, “in order to maintain the rural nature of the County undeveloped open areas separating these general centers should be left undeveloped except for sparsely located residential and farmstead-like settlements.” In fact, this study originated from an implementation strategy found in 2001 Comprehensive Plan for Middlesex County, VA, which states “study the creation of corridor protection districts…” (V.C.12).

Middlesex County is currently in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan. Corridor protection was identified in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan as a high priority in preserving overall rural character. The development of corridor plans will be a major part of the County’s updated Comprehensive Plan process. This corridor plan is intended to be a model for the development of other corridor plans throughout the County.

FOCUS

The main corridor of Middlesex County, Virginia is Route 33. Development has already begun to spread between settlements, merging centers together in a strip development pattern along the County’s Route 33 Highway Corridor. Corridor planning is needed to address the County’s desire to maintain its rural, open space character in the face of new development pressures and ensure that towns remain distinct from one another.

Deltaville is located at the most eastern part of Middlesex County and is the last town-like-
development on the Rt. 33 Highway Corridor. Rt. 33 ends at the edge of the County's peninsula in the Deltaville area. Route 33 passes through every major population center in the county, terminating just east of Deltaville.

Historically, Deltaville has been the fastest growing portion of the county due to seasonal resident/tourist interest. In recent years, Deltaville has become the year around home for an increased amount of retirement age individuals. Deltaville's close proximity to the Rappahannock River, the Piankatank River, the Chesapeake Bay, and numerous marinas make it a popular summer home location as well as year around residency. The area's numerous boating and water recreation opportunities appeal to seasonal resident/tourist as well as year around residents.

Deltaville is very significant to the Rt.33 Highway Corridor as it is the last town like development and therefore often the reason travelers even traverse that far on Rt.33. However, Deltaville currently does not have defined commercial growth boundaries. As with many rural areas, commercial growth is occurring on the main thoroughfare in a linear manner. Therefore, planning for the Deltaville area is a necessary action because it is the fastest growing area on the Rt.33 Highway Corridor and needs to be defined in order to contain commercial areas and prevent strip development along its rural corridors.
STUDY AREA

For the purpose of this plan the study area is separated into two categories: the commercial core and the rural outlying areas. The commercial core is defined as the area in which commercial development should be concentrated and contained. The rural outlying areas correspond to those areas just outside of the commercial core, which serve to separate town-like development areas along a corridor.

COMMERCIAL CORE

As there is still more than ample distance between Deltaville and the next town-like development, Hartfield, it was determined that using the outermost linear boundaries of existing commercial development would be ideal to concentrate growth by encouraging infill within those existing boundaries. In this case, those boundaries correspond with the Lord Mott shopping center at Providence Road and the NAPA building at Horseshoe Bend Road. Both of these buildings are anchors in the community and so provide clear visual boundaries for the commercial core. By taking into account these outer boundaries, the commercial core is approximately 12,000 feet in length.

As Fig. 2 shows, in addition to this linear growth boundary between Horseshoe Bend and Providence roads, a 1,000-foot buffer extends this boundary to parcels on both sides of Rt. 33. The 1,000 foot buffer area was chosen because on average it was the distance needed to encompass the majority of parcels that front onto Route 33. Also the 1,000 buffer treats all parcels owners on Rt.33 equitably by requiring the same amount of land be subject to the additional regulations. Having a set buffer area distance can also avoid complications that might arise when parcels subdivide. Finally, determining which parcels are eligible for the overlay district requirements can be easily determined using a geographic information system.
RURAL OUTLYING AREAS

When considering growth boundaries for a commercial core, it is also essential to consider the land outside of those areas, which serve to separate town-like-developments from one another. Protecting those commercial core boundaries has as much to do with planning for the land outside the boundaries as it does those parcels within the core.

For the purpose of this study, the 1,000-foot buffer applies to those parcels on either side of Rt. 33 between each town-like-development. The 1,000-foot buffer was also chosen for the rural outlying areas because encompassed the majority of parcels fronting on Rt. 33. As with the commercial core, the uniform 1,000 buffer area is equitable, easy to determine, and does not change as parcels subdivide in the future.

As Fig. 2 shows, the rural outlying area begins just to the west of the commercial core boundary at Providence Road and extends to the next town-like development, Hartfield. As Deltaville is the most eastern town-like development on Rt.33, the rural outlying area will extend from the eastern edge of the commercial core boundary at Horseshoe Bend Road eastward to the tip of Middlesex County’s peninsula.
Fig. 2 Study Area Boundaries

Legend
- Roads
- parcels
- Route 33 1000-ft. buffer

Source: Created by Christina Greene using Middlesex County GIS layer

A Route 33 Highway Corridor Plan for Deltaville
Demographics

POPULATION

The following population data received from the United States Census Bureau indicates that the population of Deltaville is increasing at a faster rate than the County as a whole and the population is aging. In 2000, Middlesex County’s total population was 9,932. The Deltaville area represented 23% of the County’s total population with 2,318 people. In 1990, the population of Deltaville was 1,897. The Middlesex County’s total population is expected to increase by 1,568 by the year 2010. Therefore, if 23% of that growth continues to occur in Deltaville, its population will increase by 376 by the year 2010, reaching a total of 2,694 people. As Fig. 3 indicates, Deltaville grew at a faster rate than the County as whole between 1990 and 2000.

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deltaville Population</td>
<td>1,897</td>
<td>2,318</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesex County Population</td>
<td>8,653</td>
<td>9,932</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of County Total Population</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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As Figure 4 shows, the age groups below forty-five years have all fallen in total percentage, while all age groups over forty-five years increased between 1990 and 2000. These
numbers support the fact that Deltaville is increasingly become the home of retirement age individuals. The decrease in age groups below forty-five is due to many factors. The increase of women not of childbearing age will decrease the number of younger cohorts over time. The high value of homes within the area can also have an effect on the age of residents. In addition, the lack of higher education facilities and well paying jobs within the area can discourage college and young adults from remaining in the area.

HOUSING

The following housing statistics were received from the United States Census Bureau. Deltaville had 1,711 housing units in 1990. By 2000, the number of housing units had increased by 18% for a total of 2,020 housing units. In 2000, 45% of the total housing units were vacant. As Fig. 5 shows, this is a five percent decrease in vacant housing from 1990, when 50% of the total housing units were vacant.

![Fig. 5 Status of Housing Units](image)


The vacancy rates do not indicate a poor housing market or a declining community. As Fig. 6 shows, 93% of those vacancies occurred due to seasonal housing usage in 2000. The Deltaville area is a place where individuals have and continue to locate second homes for summer use. In fact, there was a 3% increase in seasonal housing from 1990 to 2000.
As Fig. 6 also indicates, there are not many homes for rent in the area. In addition, there are a low amount of homes for sale in the area with a slight decrease in those for sale from 1990 to 2000. The seasonal housing demand combined with the year around retiree housing needs greatly reduce the amount of available housing for sale.

These factors affect the value of homes in the area, as there is more demand than supply. In 1990, the median value of owner occupied housing was $92,000 compared with $142,500 in 2000, indicating a 55% increase in value. This increase occurred prior to the boom in the housing market experienced throughout United States, which began in this area in roughly 2003. Therefore, after speaking to a local realtor, it was confirmed that housing values in the area are currently two and three times the value stated in 2000.
INCOME

The following income data received from the United States Census Bureau indicates that the community is becoming more affluent. In 1990, the median household income was $25,197. In 2000, the median household income grew by 61% to $40,795. This relatively large increase in median income along with the age group data suggest that the area is becoming more affluent with many retirement age homeowners or those who can afford second homes on the water. There was a 7% increase in households with retirement income from 1990 to 2000.

The following information received from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership describes statistics related to the County's employment type and labor force characteristics. In 2005, Middlesex County's unemployment rate was 2.77% this is lower than the statewide rate at 4.33%. About 74% of the population has a high school diploma and 19% possess a Bachelor's Degree or higher. However, 40.6% of the total labor force commutes out of the County to find work. Most commute to surrounding Gloucester or Lancaster counties with some commuting to Richmond City and Henrico County. Nearly 60% of the County's total labor force is employed by the service and government sectors.
DEMOGRAPHICS ANALYSIS CONCLUSION

Deltaville is perceived as a quaint, charming town that appeals to people. For many years it has served as a summer retreat, but more retirement age individuals are choosing to become permanent residents of Deltaville. This demand for both seasonal and retiree homes greatly affects the demand for land and infrastructure in the town.

As Deltaville continues to grow and serve as a popular destination, demand for housing will continue to increase, while the housing available to meet that demand will decrease. In 2000, the percentage of occupied housing units increased indicating that more individuals are making Deltaville their permanent home. A large majority of the vacant housing is still for seasonal use. However, in 2000 there were not many vacant housing units other than those for seasonal use. In addition, there were not many homes for sale or rent. New construction will be necessary to meet the demand of individuals who want to make Deltaville their year round or summer home.

The median household income in Deltaville rose by $15,598 between 1990 and 2000 to $40,795. Some of these higher income residents will desire not only new homes, but also some services and businesses that currently require a trip to another location outside of the County. Deltaville has the regional draw for retiree residents, summer home residents/tourist, as well as weekend boaters and international sailboats. With higher incomes, the town can support a wider variety of businesses, which would also be appreciated by the seasonal residents. Therefore, based on these facts, the challenges for land use include providing more businesses and more housing while retaining the charm and character of the town.
LAND ANALYSIS

Existing Land Use

In Fig. 7, the existing land use map, for Deltaville commercial core boundaries, indicates that most parcels along the Rt.33 corridor and the surrounding 1000-foot buffer area are currently used for single-family dwellings. The Middlesex County Commissioner of Revenue's office gives undeveloped land, the same land use code as a single-family land use. Therefore, this map artificially inflates the single-family land use category.

By manually counting vacant parcel it was determined that of the 375 parcels included in the 1000-foot buffer study area, 35% or 131 parcels are currently undeveloped. This indicates that there are numerous infill development opportunities within the study area's commercial core boundaries. Only 12% or 45 parcels currently are used for commercial purposes. This is a low percentage for a commercial core and indicates under utilization of commercial opportunities. The remaining 53% or 199 parcels are for residential or civic uses.
Fig. 7 Existing Land Use Map for Commercial Core

Source: Middlesex County GIS layer
EXISTING ZONING

The existing zoning designations shown in the map below for the Deltaville area is predominately Village Community with some General Business along the Route 33 Highway Corridor with Residential, Waterfront Commercial, Low Density Rural, and Resource Husbandry along the periphery of the town.
VILLAGE COMMUNITY DISTRICT (VC)
The Village Community zoning district seeks to establish a “well-defined area with low to moderate density mixture of residential, low-intensity commercial, and other community service uses.” For the most part, the Village Community zoning is appropriate for a mixed-use town-like development. In the VC zoning district, the following uses are permitted by right: single and two family dwellings, professional offices, retail stores less than 5000 square feet, medical clinics, grocery stores, restaurants, inns, wayside stands, garage and service stations, animal hospitals, as well as civic buildings. There is no minimum lot size within the VC district but lot coverage cannot exceed 60% of the parcel area. Densities are set at the rate of two units per acre for single family and four units per acre for two-family and multi-family dwellings. No structures are to be placed closer than 30 feet from the road and ten feet from side and rear property lines. The maximum height of all structures must not exceed 35 feet.

GENERAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (GB)
The General Business zoning district is intended to provide for “areas in which commercial and compatible uses may concentrate at medium to high density” and “are to be located so as to provide convenient access to shopping facilities by the motoring public.” The GB zoning district allows those uses permitted in VC as well as the following: services, wholesale, banks, mortuaries, studios, theaters, auto sales, hospitals, building supplies, auto repair, warehouses, car wash, mobile and manufactured home sales, food processing and light manufacturing facilities less than 5,000 square feet. The conditions of the General Business zoning district state that the minimum district size is five acres with a location at or near the intersection of two existing public highways. The maximum lot coverage for the GB district is 75% of the parcel. Densities are not defined in this district. The front road setback requirements within the GB district state the minimum setback at 30 feet. There are no minimum setbacks that apply to rear and side property lines. There is also no
maximum height restriction in this district.

**RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT (R)**

The Residential zoning district, in addition to single family and two family dwellings, allows parks, churches, schools, residential home occupations, and bed and breakfast inns. The minimum lot size is based on the presence of either central or on-site water and sewage disposal systems. For those parcels with both central water and sewer, the minimum lot size is 10,000 square feet with minimum lot width of 80 feet. For those parcels with either central water or sewer, the minimum lot size is 20,000 square feet with a minimum lot width of 100 feet. Where on-site water and sewer are utilized, the minimum lot size is 30,000 square feet with a 100-foot minimum width size. In the Residential district, the minimum front road setback is set at 35 feet and structures shall not be closer than ten feet to rear and side property lines. The maximum height of all structures must not exceed 35 feet.

**WATERFRONT COMMERCIAL DISTRICT (WC)**

The Waterfront Commercial zoning district is intended to accommodate the “special requirements for [the] physical design, layout, and [the] supporting facilities and services” of waterfront commercial activities while also “affording adequate protection to the natural environment.” The permitted uses within the Waterfront Commercial District are marinas, boatyards, shellfish and finfish processing, restaurants, boat ramps, docks, retail fuels sales, seafood sales, marine related retail sales, fishing piers, hotels, campgrounds, marine salvage, and single family dwellings. In the WC district there is no minimum lot size restriction. The maximum height restriction is 35 feet. Any structure must remain a minimum of 30 feet from the road and ten feet from rear and side property lines. However, the Zoning Administrator reserves the right to increase minimum setbacks as necessary to avoid conflicts with surrounding uses.
LOW DENSITY RURAL DISTRICT (LDR)

The Low Density Rural zoning district is the predominant zoning designation of most parcels throughout the entire County. The LDR district is intended to protect the rural character “by providing for a low density mixture of the primary uses of agriculture and forestry and secondary [uses of] residential, recreational, and selected non-intensive commercial and public or quasi-public uses.” The following uses are permitted in the LDR district: agriculture, forestry, single family, manufactured homes, horticulture, hunting and fishing clubs, golf courses, inns, wayside stands, nursery, and civic buildings. The minimum lot size is two and one-half (2.5) acres with a minimum lot width of two hundred feet at building setback and minimum road frontage of 60 feet. For an immediate family member, the minimum lot size restrictions are reduced to one acre with a minimum lot width of 150 feet at building setback. All structures must maintain at a minimum, 100 feet from right-of-ways 50 feet or greater in width or 125 feet from right-of-ways less than 50 feet in width. Primary structures shall not be closer than 35 feet from side property lines and no less than 50 feet from the rear property line. Accessory structures cannot locate closer than 20 feet from both rear and side property lines. The maximum height restriction is 35 feet with exception made for farm related buildings and structures.

RESOURCE HUSBANDRY (RH)

The purpose of the Resource Husbandry zoning district is “to conserve and protect from competing or incompatible uses, traditional agricultural and forestry uses of large tracts which are particularly well suited for such uses by virtue of soil, topographic and other natural conditions.” The conditions of the Resource Husbandry district state that the minimum district size shall be no less than 100 acres in area. In addition to the primary permitted uses of agriculture and forestry, single family dwellings, inns, greenhouses, wayside stands, rural home occupations, and manufactured homes are also permitted. As in the Low Density Rural district, the minimum lot size is two and one-half (2.5) acres with a
minimum lot width of 200 feet at building setback and minimum road frontage of 60 feet. Also like the LDR district, in the Resource Husbandry district the minimum lot size restrictions are reduced for immediate family members to one acre with a minimum lot width of 150 feet at building setback. No structures shall be located 60 feet from the road and no closer than 50 feet from side and rear property lines. Additionally, there are limitations on subdivisions within this district. Major subdivisions, which are six lots or more, are not permitted in the RH district. Minor subdivisions and family exempt divisions are allowed but are limited to one per tract of land 50 acres or more in area. Minor subdivisions in this district cannot be conducted administratively and must seek approval before the Board of Supervisors based on the following criteria: the land must be unsuitable for agricultural and forestry uses and the subdivision can not render adjacent land unsuitable for those purposes.

**CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT (CD)**

Cluster Development is an actual zoning district designation. There are only approximately four parcels in the entire County with the CD zoning designation. This is because when the County adopted this new zoning designation, no corresponding parcels were given this zoning classification. The four existing Cluster Development parcels later petitioned the Board for a rezoning of their parcels. The County does not allow cluster development as a by-right option but only as a rezoning. Therefore, there is currently no opportunity for the clustering of development on sites outside of the option to actually request a rezoning of a parcel to the Cluster Development zoning designation.

The permitted uses within the Cluster Development district are single and multi family dwellings, parks, and civic buildings. The density shall not exceed eight (8) units per acre. The front road setback for each dwelling corresponds with the Residential zoning district at thirty-five (35) feet. The minimum distance between buildings is set at thirty (30) feet. The minimum area for a dwelling unit shall be 800 square feet. Every CD zoning district
development must provide central water and sewer. All internal roads and parking areas must be paved. Open space must be no less than thirty (30) percent of the total land area. Also reasonable buffering requirements, such as decorative fencing or dense evergreen growth, may apply as the Planning Commission sees fit during site plan review.
EXISTING ORDINANCES AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the zoning district regulations, there are relevant ordinances that affect the character and occurrence of the development of land such as the Supplementary District Regulations, Subdivision Ordinance, Sign Ordinance, Off-Street Parking, Site Plan Review, Landscaping and Buffering Requirements, and Lighting Requirements.

SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT REGULATIONS

The Supplementary District Regulations are meant to set specific conditions on development in order to circumvent frequently encountered problems. In Article 15, Section 6, it states, “nonresidential uses or buildings shall not be conducted or located closer than fifty (50) feet to any lot used for residential purposes in a Resource Husbandry, Low Density Rural, Village Community, Mobile Home and Cluster Development district.” In Article 15, Section 15, it states, “commercial uses which are located in a VC or GB District and which abut a Residential District shall screen the entire length of each side of the lot which abuts the R district, using a solid decorative wooden fence at least six (6) feet in height.”

SIGN

The sign ordinance mainly addresses area size, number, setbacks, and height. The sign ordinance does not address the size of lettering, font, character/style, and colors. Article 16, Section 3, allows for the placement of illuminated signs. There is a provided incentive to use non-illuminated or externally illuminated signs, which allow a 25% addition to the maximum permitted size allowed in each district.

OFF-STREET PARKING

The off-street parking section of the ordinance clearly identifies minimum dimensions for parking spaces, aisles, access paths, and number of spaces. There are no identified
maximums set upon these dimensions. Also there are no requirements on the placement of parking areas.

**SITE PLAN REVIEW**

In the site plan review regulations, there is a distinction made between major and minor site plan review processes. Major Site plans are subject to preliminary review by the Planning Commission and final review by the Zoning Administrator. Minor site plans are only subject to final review by the Zoning administrator. Additionally, this ordinance addresses the different submission requirements, procedural matters, and review criteria. Finally, this section identifies many projects that would be considered exempt from the site plan review process such as residential, signs, parking redesigns, landscaping redesigns, accessory structures less than 500 square feet, and expansion of nonresidential building or combination of buildings with a total finished floor area of less than 2500 square feet.

**LANDSCAPING AND BUFFERING REQUIREMENTS**

A landscaping and buffering plan must be submitted with any Site Plan review. This section of the ordinance addresses submission requirements, acceptable plant materials’ size and condition, tree preservation standards, planting ratios, and buffering requirements. This section recommends but does not require that along project boundaries a minimum of one large or small deciduous tree every 50 linear feet, one evergreen tree for each 30 linear feet, and one shrub every 15 linear feet. Article 17, Section 7 states that “nonresidential uses or buildings shall not be conducted or located closer than fifty feet to any lot in a residential district or any lot used for residential purposes...this fifty (50) foot buffer shall be landscaped to minimize visual impact...”

**LIGHTING REQUIREMENTS**

The lighting requirements section of the ordinance is extremely brief at one page. This
section only applies to projects requiring Major Site Plan approval. In summary, this section requires that a lighting plan showing all lighting locations must be submitted and that all lighting shall be shielded and not directed onto adjoining properties.

**SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE**

The Subdivision Ordinance is fairly standard covering general regulations, review procedures, and subdivision improvement requirements. Subdivisions of a tract into six lots or less constitutes a minor subdivision and receives administrative review by the County’s agent. Major subdivisions must submit a preliminary plat before the Planning Commission. At this time the Commission may grant, deny, or grant with conditions. After the Commission concerns have been addressed, a final plat can be submitted to the agent for final approval.

In the review procedures’ section, the submittal requirements are listed. The submittal requirements currently require that the existing conditions and certain elements of the tract be delineated. However, the Ordinance does not require delineation of the predevelopment vegetation as well as the vegetation to be removed.

The subdivision improvements’ section addresses guidelines for required improvements. This section covers standards for streets, water and sewer, easements, utilities, lots, blocks, open space, homeowners associations, and monuments. The subdivision improvements’ section does not require sidewalks or vegetative buffer requirements. The open space requirements specify dedication provisions as well as minimum percentages based on average lot size within a subdivision.
Figure 9, shows that the County has chosen to encourage the preservation of rural character, through their Subdivision Ordinance, in two separate ways. First the County is requiring a larger percentage of open space for allowing smaller lots. Secondly, it is encouraging larger lots of five acres or more by waiving the open space requirements altogether. Leveraging either more open space or large lots, the County is hoping to preserve overall rural character. The Ordinance does not address the characteristics and restrictions on land offered to meet the open space requirements.

<table>
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<th>Average Lot size in Subdivision</th>
<th>Percent of Total Land for Open Space</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than 1 Acre</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>1 Acre to Less Than 2.5 Acres</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5 Acres to Less Than 5 Acres</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
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Source: Middlesex County, VA Subdivision Ordinance, 2006.
EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

As shown in the existing community facilities map, Deltaville currently has many elements necessary to a town-like development. There is currently a firehouse, one post office, a library, a nature park, and a rescue squad. The closest school is approximately 15 miles west.

There are no public water and sewer services available in the Deltaville area. Studies are currently being conducted by the County to determine the feasibility of installing public water and sewer in this area. Currently, parcels have individual wells and septic systems. As the Deltaville area is at the tip of a low-lying peninsula, it is very close to the water table. Therefore, the land has difficulty perking and often times require the installation of alternative septic systems.

Fig 10: Existing Community Facilities Map
Source: Charting the Course: County of Middlesex, VA, 2001.
EXISTING FUTURE LAND USE

The future land use plan for Middlesex County designates portions of Deltaville, in purple on Figure 11, as transitional development-commercial centers. Those in blue reference areas designated for transitional development-waterfront. The plan describes this use as “a mixed settlement of low impact commercial activities, services, and residences in a medium to low density situation adjoining higher intensity commercial developments”. However, these areas are not transitional nor adjacent to higher intensity commercial developments rather they are the commercial areas. In addition, large portions of Deltaville are currently not designated for any particular use despite having an existing Village Community and General Business zoning. The purpose of a future land use map is to guide future development and create compatible and ideal future uses. However, this fragmented future land use plan does not place a sufficient emphasis on creating a Deltaville “proper” with a strong commercial core.

Fig. 11: Existing Future Land Use Map
Source: Charting the Course: County of Middlesex, VA, 2001.
LAND ANALYSIS CONCLUSION

The existing land use map indicates that the parcels within the commercial core are predominately a mixture of residential, commercial, and civic uses. Only 12% of the parcels are currently used for commercial purposes. There is significant potential for infill commercial development within the core as 35% of parcels are currently undeveloped land.

The existing zoning designations within the commercial core are predominately Village Community with some General Business. The uses allowed within these zoning districts are overall appropriate for small town development. However, the setbacks and densities do not support the classic “main street” commercial core image. Also the lack of a minimum road frontage width requirement within these zoning districts could prove problematic to access and mobility with excessive road cuts.

Residential, Waterfront Commercial, Low Density Rural, and Resource Husbandry exist in the immediate rural outlying areas adjacent to the commercial core. The Residential district is appropriate for single dwellings in a town-like development area. The R district properly encourages the use of central water and sewer systems by providing density and road width incentives. In both the Low Density Rural and Resource Husbandry zoning districts, the minimum road frontage needs to be increased from 60 feet in order to avoid numerous parcels flagging along corridor. The restrictions on subdivisions within the Resource husbandry district are appropriate for the preservation of farmland and large acreage.

There are currently no opportunities for the clustering of development outside of a rezoning to the Cluster Development District. The rezoning process can be very time consuming and restrictive on the development community. This can create a limitation on clustering, increase land consumption, and so hinder the preservation of rural character.
The supplementary district regulations seem to discourage mixed-use town-like developments by prohibiting nonresidential uses from conducting or locating closer than 50 feet to residential. This would discourage shop owners, for example, from renting out their second floor for residential uses. Additionally, these regulations unnecessarily isolate uses by requiring commercial uses to construct a fence at a minimum six feet height, if it abuts a residential district. This discourages pedestrian access from adjoining neighborhoods and so encourages vehicular dependence.

The Sign, Landscaping and Buffering Requirements, and Lighting Requirements sections of the County’s ordinance are minimal at best and require more stringent standards in order to generate the desired cohesive developmental pattern. All of these ordinances require significant revisions in order to create defined and appealing commercial core areas.

The Off-Street Parking section also needs reworking as it clearly identifies minimum dimensions and amounts but does not state maximums. This can lead to excessive parking lot expanses that create eyesores, waste valuable land as well as cause drainage and runoff problems. The location of parking areas are not specified and should be encouraged on side and rear areas with buildings located adjacent to the road.

The Site Plan Review regulations allow for certain exemptions to the site plan review process that should not be exempt such as signs, parking redesigns, landscaping redesigns, accessory structures less than 500 square feet, and expansion of a nonresidential building or combination of buildings with a total finished floor area of less than 2500 square feet. These are all important elements of a commercial area, especially on a major corridor, and should receive the same scrutiny given to other development activities.

The Subdivision Ordinance does not require applicants to delineate predevelopment vegetation or the vegetation to be removed. As rural character can relate so closely to the natural environment, this should be a necessary submittal requirement. In addition,
subdivision improvements’ section of the ordinance does not require nor encourage sidewalks within subdivisions. Sidewalks, especially when adjacent to commercial areas, can foster pedestrian mobility and decrease vehicular traffic. Open space requirements are addressed but the issue of land characteristics and restrictions need to be defined. No land that would otherwise be unusable either by state, federal or county regulations should be used to qualify as open space. For example, the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act’s Resource Protection Area buffers should not be used to meet open space requirements. In addition, the open space percentages need to be increased for parcels along the corridor in order to ensure adequate protection for those rural sightlines and vistas.

The existing Future Land Use map is insufficient with large portion of Deltaville receiving no land use designations. This sends an unclear message to the citizens and development community. A new future land use map for the commercial core area needs to be created with individual parcel attention in order to effectively guide and shape cohesive development patterns within Deltaville.
Development character

BUILDING CHARACTER

There are no architectural standards or guidelines that apply to the Deltaville area. However, while there is no common architectural style or building material, there is an apparent character or theme within the commercial core along Rt. 33. The character is of a nautical nature with bright beach colors, boat related signage, marine decorations, and beach landscape elements.

The buildings’ styles, materials and colors vary throughout the corridor but appear connected and coordinated with the utilization of what we may call a “nautical theme”. There is a fun, bright, and playful feeling to the area that definitely creates a unique sense of place. Contributing to this design theme is completely voluntary and has not been required or promoted by the County. The local business owners seem to have fun with the beach theme and find their own unique way to express how it is manifested it.
LANDSCAPING

While there is no consistent landscaping theme throughout the corridor, there are some common elements. These landscape elements reference the beach theme of the area with pampas grass at entranceways and oyster shells used in flowerbeds.

In addition to the organic landscape elements common to the corridor, there are decorative landscape elements as well, which foster the nautical theme. Pilings, marine rope, anchors, and life preserver tubes at entranceways also serve to further the overall maritime theme.

SIGNAGE

There are many signs along the corridor that emphasize the beach theme through the use of pilings, marine rope, anchors, boats, and rafts. They bring consistency to the area’s appearance and create a unique sense of place. A variety of colors and building materials are used for signs and entranceways, but they maintain the beach theme and create an eclectic, fun, and playful atmosphere that both help to attract tourist and maintain residents.
BUILDING AND LAND CONDITIONS

Middlesex County’s Commissioner of Revenue’s database indicates that on average the conditions along the corridor are satisfactory with most buildings having fresh paint and showing no obvious signs of deterioration. Of the developed parcels, 75% are in average condition and only 4% in poor condition. The average parcel size is 2.49 acres. The median assessed value of land without improvements is $16,900. The median value of improvements on the land is $71,100.
PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

SIDEWALKS

The entire length of the Rt.33 corridor in the designated commercial core area is approximately 11,957 feet. A continuous sidewalk exists for 4,777 of those feet, making the commercial core at least 40% walkable. All sidewalks exist only on the actual corridor. There are no sidewalks feeding into the surrounding Residential and Waterfront Commercial areas. This is disadvantageous because many potential consumers live in the surrounding area and also during the summer many arrive via boat with no means of transportation.

CROSSWALKS

Crosswalks are not present along the Rt.33 corridor. This makes it extremely difficult for pedestrians seeking to traverse and shop along both sides of the corridor. This can discourage pedestrian access while encouraging vehicular dependence. The opportunities for pedestrian crossing are also limited by the fact that there are no traffic calming devices to allow pedestrians to cross corridor safely.

SPEED LIMITS

There are three posted speed limits within the commercial core boundaries. The first appears just before Providence Road, the western most boundary of the commercial core, slowing traffic from 55 to 45 miles per hour. The second occurs about midway through the commercial core at Fishing Bay Road, slowing the traffic from 45 to 35 miles per hour. The last posted speed limit is located approximately 300 feet before Horseshoe Bend Road, the eastern most boundary of the commercial core, bringing the speed back up from 35 to 45 miles per hour.
SETBACKS

Most of the buildings within the commercial core area are between 15 and 30 feet from the edge of Rt.33, giving a “Main Street” feel to the area. The existing zoning designations within the commercial core do not allow for setbacks of less than 30 feet. Therefore, much of the recent development does not conform to the pre-zoning town-like image, having huge setbacks with parking between the building and road. At approximately 30 feet, the average building height in the area is appropriate for a small town development, with the exceptions of churches and recreational centers.

Fig. 16: Two examples of newer developments that do not support “Main Street” feel with large setbacks from road.
ACCESS AND MOBILITY

The majority of the parcels within the commercial core have multiple access points per parcel. There are almost no examples of shared access between parcels. Many of the parcels have minimal road frontage and so the corridor is plagued with excessive points of entry. Furthermore, there is no road running parallel running to Rt.33 that could create additional options for accessing parcels.

Fig. 17: Three separate access points within 75 feet

Throughout the commercial core, there are numerous examples of parcels with unrestricted access points. These parcels allow drivers to enter and exit the corridor from various points. Without delineated points of access, drivers may have trouble deciding the best course of action to take and also difficulty in assuming other drivers’ intended course.

Fig. 18: Unrestricted access points
DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER CONCLUSION

Deltaville’s greatest strength is its development character. The area is so unique and charming with a long-standing regional tourist appeal. While the buildings vary greatly in color, style, and material, the area gains uniformity in a common nautical theme. Bright beach colors, marine decorations, coastal landscape elements, and boat inspired signage are all used to create a playful beach-inspired environment. Even in the absence of design principles, landscape guidelines, and sign standards, the area has created its own nautical inspired theme. However, without requiring these standards, the County stands the chance of newer developments not being consistent with the areas’ established theme.

Overall the corridor is not pedestrian friendly and fosters vehicular dependency. While about 40% of the corridor within the commercial core has sidewalks, there are no sidewalks feeding into the surrounding neighborhoods or to the numerous marinas within close proximity. Also there are no crosswalks or stoplights that allow pedestrians to safely cross the street and shop along both sides of the corridor. Therefore, the existing sidewalks are rarely used as the corridor discourages pedestrian activity.

Prior to the adoption of zoning regulations in 1985, the development within the commercial core followed the traditional main street image with close road setbacks. However, existing zoning regulations require between 30 to 35 feet minimum road setbacks. Newer developments have tended to place parking lots in the front pushing buildings even farther from the road.

The majority of the parcels within the commercial core have the Village Community zoning designation. The VC zoning district has no minimum lot size or width, which can lead to the creation of narrow lots with minimal road frontage. This fact combined with no minimum distance between curb cuts and little to no shared access among parcels can greatly impede access and mobility if the corridor becomes flagged with numerous access points.
Unrestricted access points are apparent throughout the corridor and pose additional safety issues. They create more options for drivers when exiting and entering the highway, which makes it harder for other drivers to effectively anticipate and react accordingly.