

## **VIII. GROWTH MANAGEMENT**

### **A. EXISTING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT**

#### ***1. Introduction***

Existing land use and development patterns in Southampton County continue to reflect the land development process that has been occurring since before any county-wide planning was undertaken. Vast portions of the County have remained devoted to agriculture while more concentrated development has occurred closer to the City of Franklin and the County's towns, villages, and established residential areas.

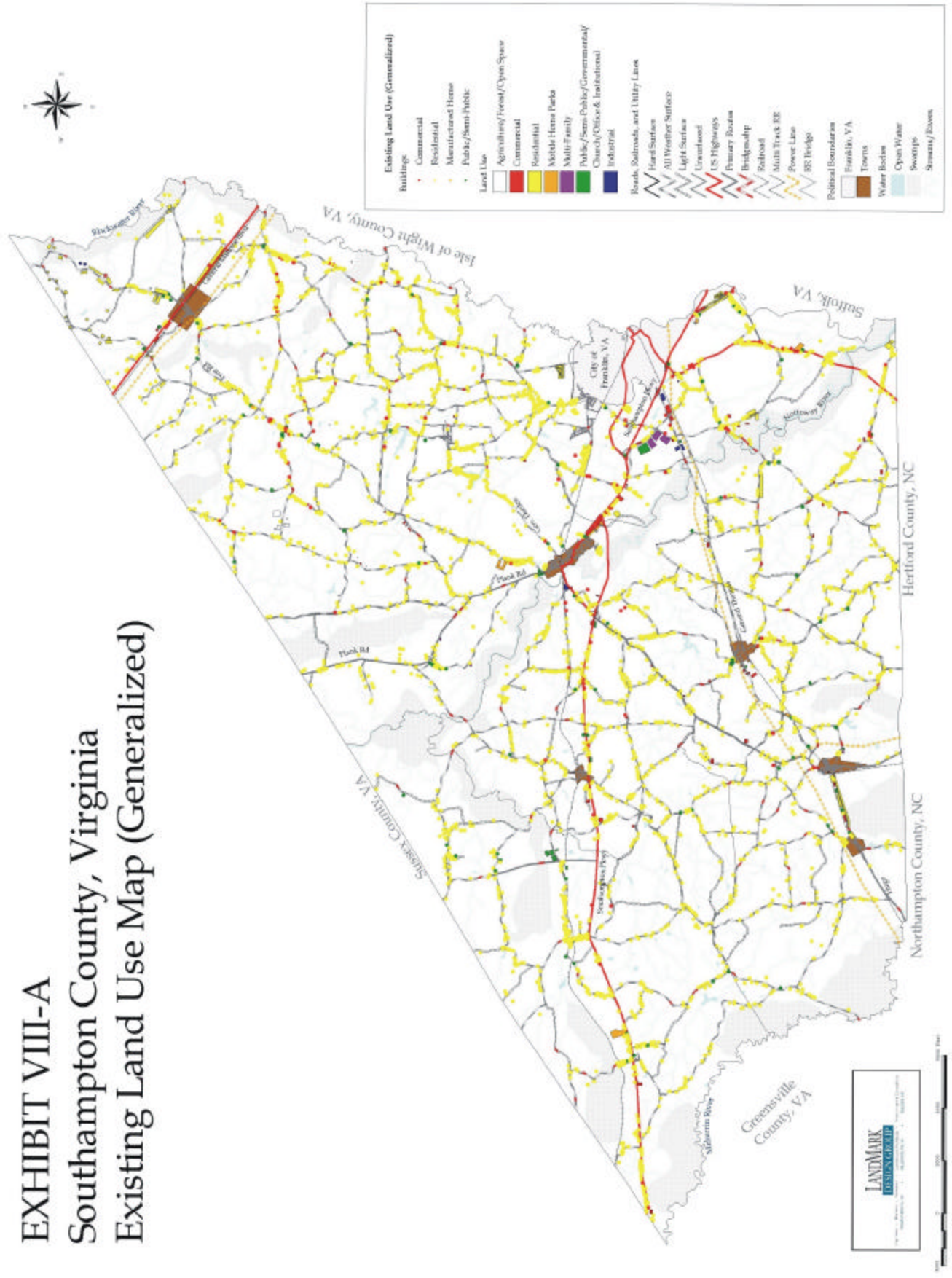
Recent residential development in Southampton County has been consistent with the land use projections found in previous comprehensive plans. Most of the residential development is occurring in the eastern portion of the County. The Route 641 corridor from the City of Franklin to Sedley has experienced the bulk of residential development, while some industrial development has been occurring along Route 671.

The commingling of residential uses and agricultural uses continues to occur in the vast rural areas of Southampton County. In most instances, residential and agricultural uses can coexist without many problems or conflicts, although it seems that the few instances of conflict cause a great deal of concern and affect the current and future land use controls of the County. By locating a residence in the rural areas of Southampton County, one must be willing to accept certain factors (dust, noise, odors, machinery, etc.) that come with the agricultural way of life. Many people are willing to accept the normal ways of their agricultural neighbors, but it is the intensive agricultural uses that cause greater concern for persons establishing rural residences. Intensive agricultural uses include such things as large hog farms, chicken houses, and other areas of confinement of large numbers of agricultural animals.

#### ***2. Development Patterns***

General development patterns have not changed significantly in the County in the past 15 to 20 years. Of the 384,000 acres that make up the County, over 90% are used for agriculture and forestry. Residential uses account for less than 5% of the land area, as do commercial and industrial uses. Public and semi-public uses and incorporated areas account for about 1%. EXHIBIT VIII-A EXISTING LAND USE (GENERALIZED) shows that development in the County is concentrated in and

**EXHIBIT VIII-A**  
**Southampton County, Virginia**  
**Existing Land Use Map (Generalized)**



around the City of Franklin and the County's towns and villages. Some concentrations of strip residential development are found along most rural roads.

Governmental services are centered in the towns, with rural areas being afforded limited services. Rural commercial activities are scattered throughout the County. These activities will continue to be needed to serve the agricultural community, tourists, and others passing through the County.

## **B. FUTURE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Introduction**

The purpose for projecting future land use is to delineate the areas in Southampton County best suited for residential, business, industrial, public/semi-public/governmental/church/office and institutional, and agricultural/forestal/vacant/open space/rights of way and easements land uses. The year 2020 has been chosen as the planning period for these projections. The future land use plan is mainly concerned with the general location and amount of land proposed for each of the various land uses. The land use plan can be used either to formulate new County land use policies or to amend current zoning and subdivision regulations.

The development goals and implementation strategies contained in this document provide the framework for managing the future use of the land in the County. The land use patterns envisioned and described below will contribute to maintaining the rural and agricultural character of the County while providing for managed residential, industrial, and commercial growth.

In areas of the County where growth is targeted, services necessary to support such development are or will be provided. Emphasis in these growth areas is on the development of employment and commercial centers and the development of residential uses that may require urban-type services. Through the implementation of the future land use plan, the County is thus able to encourage the separation of major growth areas from rural areas. It is also able to encourage the economical and efficient delivery of public services while exercising a greater sensitivity to environmental constraints to development.

### **2. Land Development Plan**

The future land use plan classifies areas of the County into seven principal land use types. EXHIBIT VIII-B PROJECTED FUTURE LAND USE, depicts the proposed uses of land in the County in a generalized manner. These uses depicted are agriculture/forest/open space/rural residential, commercial, residential, mobile home parks, multi-family, public facilities, and industrial. It is important to note that residential

development is permitted within the agricultural areas. This residential development will either be concentrated in planned communities (subdivisions) or located as strip development (frontage lots) along roads and highways in order to preserve the agricultural and timber economy of the County. Brief discussions of each major land use category follow.

**a. Agriculture/Forest/Open Space/Rural Residential**

This classification includes surface water features, including the Nottoway River, its major tributaries, and lakes/ponds and 100-year floodplain areas as defined and delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Undeveloped land including vacant lots and open space and agricultural and forestal uses are included. This includes publicly maintained roads and rights-of-way comprising the area's transportation system. It also includes operable railroad lines in the County.

Agricultural land is one of the most valuable of all the County's natural resources. Of major importance, and an objective of land use planning in Southampton County, is to identify prime agricultural land and prevent it from being developed for residential or other land uses. Once developed, it cannot easily be restored to its original condition.

As shown on EXHIBIT VIII-B, much of Southampton County is projected to remain in the agricultural land use category for the duration of the planning period. The main purpose of this land use classification is to facilitate existing and future farming operations, reduce the effect of soil erosion, and protect watersheds, in order to promote the continuation of farming as one of the most active sectors of the economy.

Permitted uses are restricted to agriculture and others that are compatible with the existing land use pattern, such as forestry, passive recreation, and other conservation uses, as well as incidental rural residential use. The overall density of these uses should be kept at a relatively low level by maintaining minimum lot areas and allowing for only one dwelling unit (single-family dwelling) per lot. This should effectively limit development in the agricultural areas and encourage development in and on the fringe of the existing towns.

Southampton County's natural environment is one of its most valuable assets and at the same time one of its most vulnerable. There are extensive watersheds, areas subject to flooding, wetlands, unsuitable soils, wildlife, and woodland areas located throughout the County. Environmental concerns include deforestation, soil erosion, stormwater runoff from built surfaces, destruction of wildlife habitat, loss of agricultural acreage, and destruction of property and loss of life due to floodwaters.

This classification also includes portions of the County which may exhibit one or more of the environmentally sensitive land conditions discussed above. These areas may not be suitable for intensive development, and this category of land use is intended for the conservation of water and other natural resources (forests and prime agricultural lands) of Southampton County, thereby reducing soil erosion in the floodplain areas, preventing pollution of the major streams and rivers, and preserving the quality of open space for future generations to enjoy. EXHIBIT VIII-B generally shows the extent of the drainage areas in the County.

Single-family residential development should continue to be permitted in these areas under strict minimal lot area requirements. Agriculture, forestry, passive recreation, and other conservation uses may also be permitted. EXHIBIT VIII-B shows agricultural areas (including forested areas and open spaces) as well as areas currently zoned agriculture/residential.

**b. Commercial**

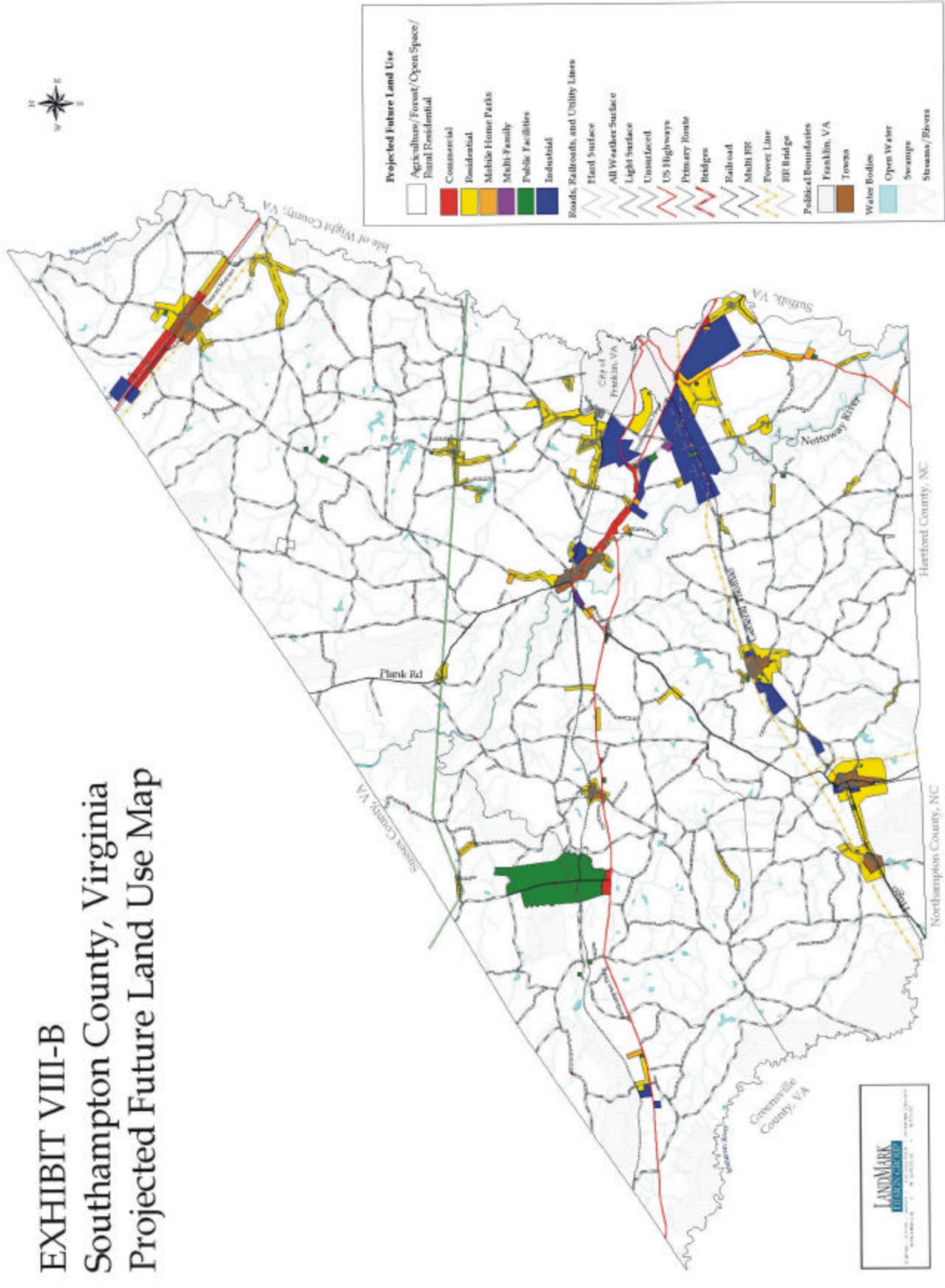
The commercial land use classification represents existing business and commercial districts and those projected, including those areas currently zoned business local, business general, and business highway service.

U.S. 58 and U.S. 460 cross Southampton County. Running east-west through the County, U.S. 58 provides access to the mountains of Virginia to the west and to the Atlantic Ocean to the east and has resulted in the location of several highway commercial establishments. U.S. 460 traverses the northeast tip of the County, bisecting Ivor. Two types of highway commercial activities are most prevalent. These are commercial establishments clustered around highway interchanges and commercial strip development.

The most common interchange uses are traveler and vehicle services. Highway-oriented uses have markets directly related to traffic volume on major routes adjacent to their sites. They require very close proximity to the interchange, good access, and visual exposure to the interchange. Potential highway-oriented uses include gas stations, truck stops, motels, and restaurants. While these interchange areas may prove to be beneficial from both an economic and travel-time viewpoint, no such development should be allowed at the expense of safe and efficient ingress and egress to the highway.

Strip commercial development is a common highway-oriented situation. Such uses are viewed as generally unsuitable because of undue traffic congestion, encroachment into residential areas, and the blight that results from improper development and advertising. However, the congestion of traffic and the spread of commercial and residential blight along such commercial strips are

**EXHIBIT VIII-B**  
**Southampton County, Virginia**  
**Projected Future Land Use Map**



caused primarily by a failure to establish sound land development standards. Future strip commercial development should be allowed if it meets recommended standards such as controlled access, parallel roads, adequate building setbacks, corridor development standards, signage standards, and off-street parking.

**c. Residential**

This classification represents existing developed areas within the County with dense populations and areas that are likely to be developed for residential purposes, primarily those areas on the fringes of incorporated towns and the City of Franklin. Projected residential use areas include those currently zoned by Southampton County as residential low density, residential medium density, and residential manufactured home.

Due to the shortage of vacant land available within the towns, residential growth beyond the limits of the incorporated towns is assured. However, difficulties may arise relative to the provision of an adequate and desirable level of services. Concentrated residential development should be adjacent to Franklin or towns where public water and sewer utilities are either available or can be easily extended from the incorporated towns.

The majority of the residential units in the County today are single-family dwellings. However, given the shortage of affordable housing in the County and recent building trends, a greater percentage of residential development will consist primarily of mobile homes (referred to as “manufactured housing”). In order to assure proper development of the residential areas, strict enforcement of subdivision and building codes is necessary. The zoning ordinance is another important tool for implementing the proposed residential policies. An overall density should not exceed one single-family dwelling per subdivision lot or parcel. While a double-wide mobile home, on a permanent foundation, is assessed the same as a stick-built dwelling and is considered real estate, single-wide mobile homes are not. For this reason, single-wide mobile homes should not be allowed within residentially zoned areas and should be encouraged to locate within existing mobile home parks. Public, social, and community facilities should be allowed to develop in the residential areas.

To help ensure the preservation of its rural character and discourage the establishment of densely developed residential areas in areas designated for agricultural pursuits, the County should encourage large lot/acreage rural residential subdivisions for single-family residential type development.

Referred to as “mini-farms” by some people, this type of low-density residential development appeals to those desiring the controls and restrictions normally associated with subdivision development coupled with larger tracts of land.

**d. Mobile Home Parks**

This classification includes parcels where three or more manufactured or mobile homes are placed on rental or leased spaces.

**e. Multi-family**

This classification includes apartment buildings and complexes housing multiple families.

**f. Public Facilities**

This classification includes public and semi-public community-type facilities, such as County buildings and lands, areas used for utility systems (treatment plants, wells, water storage), schools, churches, and other public/semi-public facilities. It includes lands, facilities, and buildings devoted to parks and recreation areas. Examples include parks, public/private golf courses, solid waste collection sites, and indoor recreation centers. Recreation facilities at school sites are color-coded under public facilities.

**g. Industrial**

Industry, which will provide basic employment for some segments of the County's citizens, has more critical location requirements than other major land uses. Prime industrial sites should be located where they can be served by major transportation facilities, including major highways, railroads, and airports. Industries dependent upon the transportation of heavy materials and products require locations served by railroad facilities. Other types of industry may prefer locations near major highways to facilitate truck service and access by employees, and still others may seek location near the airports. In addition to transportation facilities, industries should be in locations where adequate public utilities and services can be provided. Other requirements include suitability of sites with respect to slope, drainage, and soil bearing capacity, and suitable buffering from residential or other incompatible uses.

As shown on EXHIBIT VIII-B, projected industrial uses are likely located on the fringe of existing towns and along the corridors of major highways. In addition, other land areas are allocated for industrial development near major existing plants to provide for future expansions. EXHIBIT VIII-B displays areas of the County now zoned and/or used for major industrial purposes. Projected industrial



use areas include those currently zoned “industrial, limited” and “industrial, general.”

### **C. CONCLUSIONS**

Land use involves the concept of growth management, which should be a coordinated effort by County government. The County should seek to achieve an efficient pattern for future development, in accordance with the premises discussed herein. Areas should be designated for residential, business, and industrial uses, and growth can be better managed. New residential development should be guided to locations where adequate public infrastructure such as roads, water, sewer, schools, and related facilities are available or can be provided most efficiently. Identification of commercial and industrial areas to serve the residential areas should be designated, as well as open space, agricultural areas, and other areas requiring conservation and/or protection. Managed growth will help maintain an important and desired distinction between rural and developing areas of the County.

Farming and forestry remain the mainstays of the Southampton County economy. The rural areas of the County are the areas deemed most appropriate for these uses. Other uses should be carefully thought out before being established in the rural areas where existing farms are being tended and where there is a great possibility of expansion of an existing farm or creation of a new farming operation. The County should investigate strategies and methods to accommodate but manage development of rural land – when proposed -- into areas for residential purposes. When it occurs, such development should not result in the sacrifice of large portions of prime agricultural lands or create conflict between the “country homeowner” and the farmer. Additional setbacks and buffering should be studied for areas and instances where agricultural and residential uses abut or overlap.

Urban development should be concentrated in the towns, unincorporated villages, and other areas where services can be reasonably provided. The Boykins-Branchville-Newsoms Regional Water and Sewer System will prompt some development in the areas served. The remainder of the County should remain rural. Scattered housing in the countryside will continue, so this housing should be at low density appropriate to a rural area. Large-scale subdivisions should not be permitted except in areas planned for them. The best agricultural land should be protected from uses adverse to agriculture, and non-farm development should be protected from the adverse effects of agriculture.

The stripping of rural roads with houses should be prohibited, and commercial uses should be grouped, preferably at intersections. Industry should be located according to the requirements of the particular industry but generally in the corridors where transportation is best and where utilities can be made available.

Access to business and service uses from roads should be a major factor in deciding where the appropriate location for such uses may be. Several uses bunched together

provides for a more desirable effect than the same uses strung along a roadway. A strong effort should be made to provide for the locating of commercial and service uses with consideration to their effect on the surrounding area, especially their impact on the residential areas.

Increasing development along highways, particularly close to the towns and Franklin, can create problems. Congested highways can cause safety hazards. Highway-oriented development, therefore, should be properly planned and laid out, providing for efficient ingress and egress, on-site parking and loading/unloading facilities. Furthermore, it is important to realize that strip development along highways not only cuts off back land from development but increases the cost of government services.

Land use decisions in Southampton County should seek to enhance and improve the quality of life for the majority of the citizens who live in the County. Land use should be taken very seriously and long-range effects on surrounding property should be evaluated when considering placement of mixed uses.

The land development plan for land use discussed herein is conceptual and serves as a guide. Ordinances, particularly zoning, serve as tools to implement land use regulations and bring structure to the plan.

The growth management goals and implementation strategies indicate a guideline to orderly development of residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial uses. With this comes the complications of all of the uses coexisting and still maintaining the natural beauty of the County.

The County should develop design standards or criteria for residential, business, and industrial subdivisions and developments. Tools such as clustering, density and open space trade-off provision guidelines, and ingress and egress standards can be implemented as advisory/guidance mechanisms initially. As needs dictate, design standards can be made a part of the County's growth management regulatory arsenal.