

Goochland County Courthouse Village
Square
Assessment of Circulation
And
Associated Activities

April 11, 2000



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Acknowledgement

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Executive Summary

Goochland County is steeped in history and residents want to maintain the county's rural historic character. One of the focal points for rural historic character is the courthouse village square. The square has survived in tact for hundreds of years.

The county has already taken steps to plan for the continued success of the courthouse. In 1978, the county adopted a plan of development for the courthouse village. The plan address how, when and where public facilities should be added to the area. The plan also addresses aesthetic considerations. In 1993, the county undertook a detailed planning exercise for the courthouse village and adopted a Courthouse Village Land Use Plan. The plan addresses growth and development issues for the village relating to land use, public facilities and utilities, and transportation needs. In 1995, the county undertook a transportation study of the area, *Goochland Courthouse Village Circulation Study*, to analyze the movement of traffic through the village area.

It has been five years since the last detailed study of the courthouse village has occurred. Therefore, the county has undertaken this assessment as an update to the findings and recommendations of the previous plans and studies. The assessment also re-examines existing conditions such as increasing traffic, aging infrastructure, and changing growth patterns in and around the square.

The purpose of this report is to assess existing utilities and facilities related to transportation circulation patterns and usage in and around the immediate Goochland Courthouse Historic Village Square by:

- ?? Identifying and assessing the existing conditions of the courthouse square and the environs proximate to the square – the land use, infrastructure and economic development potential; and,
- ?? Making recommendations for needed improvements to the existing conditions based not only on the need for routine maintenance but also on the quality of life issues.

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Assessment of Existing Conditions

Land Use, An Historic Perspective

Goochland County was formed from Henrico Shire by an act of the General Assembly on March 6, 1727. At the time of the formation, Goochland included all of the land from Tuckahoe Creek, on both sides of the James River, west to the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Monacan Indians had occupied this entire area. By the year 1700, French Huguenots had settled in the Manakin area. Today an Episcopal Church occupies the original church site. The French Huguenots were the first white settlers to locate in Goochland. As civilization spread westward, English settlements were established in the area.

The Goochland County Courthouse Square, located centrally within the courthouse village, is an important part of the county’s history. The buildings in the square were among the first permanent structures built in the county. Dabney Cosby and Valentine Parrish built the courthouse building in 1827. The design is the classical design of Thomas Jefferson. Cosby had completed two buildings for the University of Virginia under Mr. Jefferson’s guidance before coming to Goochland. The County Clerk’s office was completed about 1800 and it was once a Masonic Lodge. The courthouse complex is listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings. The square itself is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Existing Land Use

The Goochland County Courthouse Village consists of approximately 2,400 acres. The developed portion of the village is classified among the following land uses: single family residential at eight percent, general residential at 20 percent, mobile home residential at three percent, commercial at eight percent, and public sector (state-owned at 49 percent and county-owned at 12 percent). Refer to Table 1. Although the land is classified by land use, much of the land remains undeveloped.

Table 1

Land Use	Percent of Development
Residential	31
Single Family	8
General	20
Mobile Home	3
Commercial	8
Public	61
State owned	49
County	12
Total	100
Source: Goochland County Comprehensive Plan, March 4, 1997. Richmond Regional Planning District Commission.	

The courthouse village primarily consists of public uses with a majority owned by the state (such as the women’s correctional facility and community college) with a few commercial uses. The largest county-owned properties consists of the centrally located historic government complex and Hidden Rock park located adjacent to state Route 632. Current commercial development

primarily exists along state Route 6 and includes service and retail uses. The county's adopted comprehensive plan proposes for commercial uses to expand, but only in areas adjacent to current commercial development or where future residential growth may necessitate additional commercial uses (refer to Map A).

The Goochland Courthouse Village is one of three major villages shown in the county's adopted comprehensive plan. One element of the plan is to guide growth into the courthouse village area as well as the other designated villages. The Goochland Courthouse Village has long been the center of transportation, political, commercial and social life in the county. The county's comprehensive plan calls for courthouse village to maintain this role into the future.

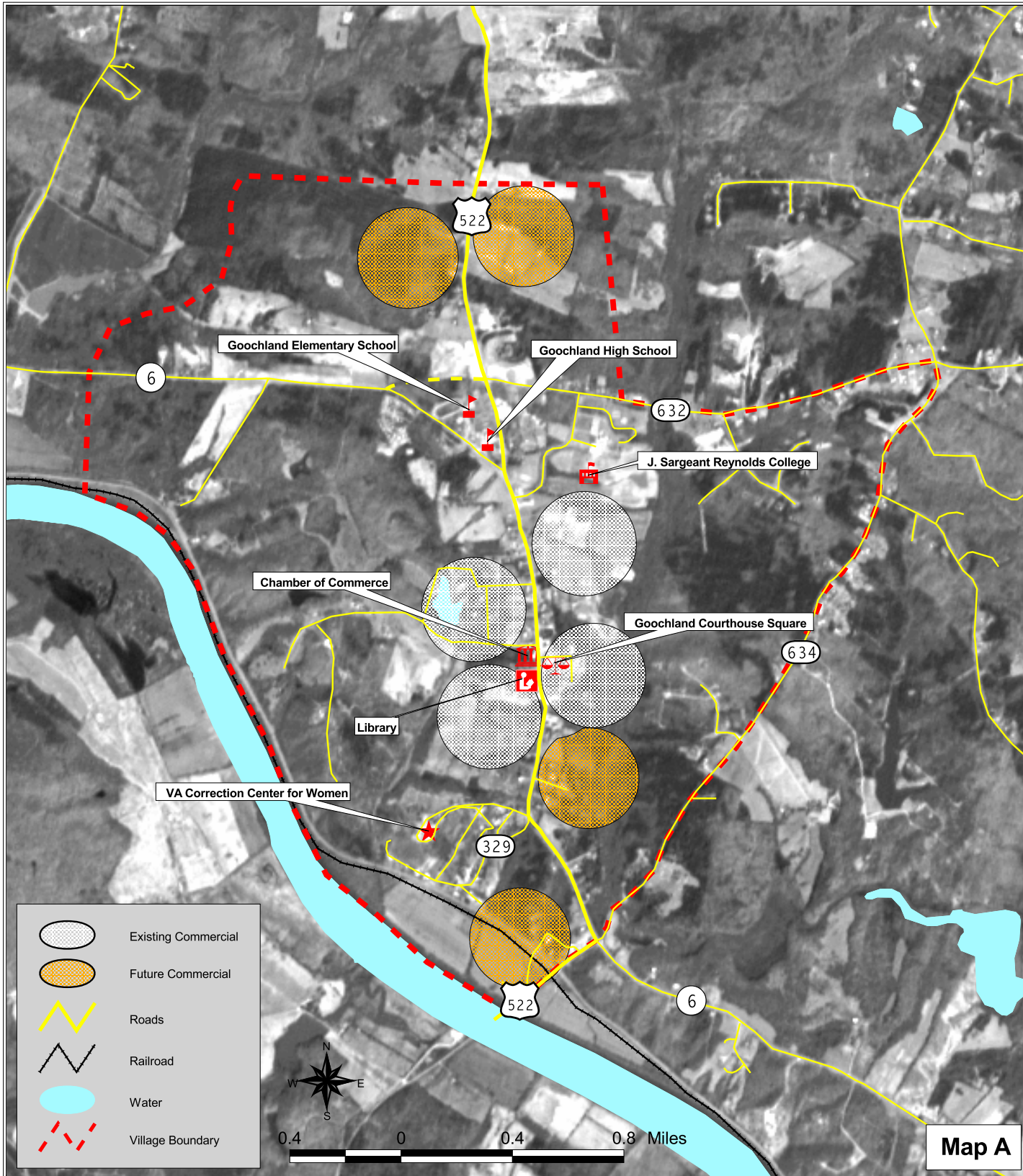
The plan also sets out to maintain a well-defined village character that will ensure preservation of the courthouse village area over time. One important element of the county's village concept is the establishment of a parkway system to provide safe pedestrian access throughout the village. A significant amount of land use in the courthouse village has been devoted to a parkway system. The county established the land uses necessary to provide the necessary capacity that will generate the pedestrian usage to successfully support a parkway system. The plan states that "at least 30 percent of these villages should be devoted to a parkway system consisting of continuous open space linking clusters of a variety of residential types within a community center encompassing a shopping center, schools, churches, a fire and/or police station, library, post office and other necessary support facilities." The courthouse village has these necessary land use elements.

According to the county's adopted comprehensive plan, the projected population rate of growth for the courthouse village will be significant in the period 1995 to 2015. During this period, the courthouse village is expected to grow from a population of 750 to 2,100, a growth rate of nine percent per year. However, based on the number of building permits issued since the comprehensive plan was adopted, the county believes the actual growth rate may be around three percent. Still this rate is higher than the overall county growth rate of 1.7 percent per year for the period 1970 to 1980, and almost two percent per year for the period 1980 to 1990.

Presently, the largest employer within the courthouse village area is the Commonwealth of Virginia that has approximately 300 employees and 800 inmates at the women's correctional center and approximately 25 employees and an estimated 492 students at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College. The community college is presently undergoing expansion to the existing facility. The new expansion, which will double the size of the existing facility, plans to open in the spring of 2001. This expansion will impact the courthouse square area by increasing traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian. The county's school system in the courthouse village has approximately 135 employees and county government employs approximately 100 people. School students, parents and government facility visitors generate significant concentrations of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic for daily activities of the facilities as well as for special events, such as sporting events. The school system is undergoing expansion too with a new, larger high school under construction near the existing schools. The remainder of the village's workforce is concentrated in small retail and service businesses. In addition to employment within the village, there are several large employers east of the village area in the West Creek

GOOCHLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE VILLAGE ASSESSMENT

Existing and Future Commercial Areas



Office Park that may influence growth and activity in the village. Once such employer is the Virginia Farm Bureau.

Infrastructure

Roadways: The major transportation routes within and through the larger courthouse village area are state Routes 6, 632, 634 and U.S. Highway 522. (Route 6 and U.S. Highway 522 share the same roadway in front of the historic courthouse village square.) These roads provide access to the village, within the village and movement through the village. All are two-lane roads. U.S. Highway 522 runs roughly north-south through the village and links the central part of the county, and several counties to the south, to Interstate 64 and the northwest portion of Virginia.

State Route 6 diverts from Highway 522 at the northern and southern ends of the village. At these points, Route 6 runs east west and is the principle transportation route through the northern and southern portions of the county. Route 6 also provides a route through the county that links the courthouse village and areas to the west with the Richmond metropolitan area. State Route 6 is designated by the state as a Virginia Byway. A Virginia Byway is defined as a road with a relatively high aesthetic or cultural value, leading to or within areas of historical, natural or recreational significance. There have been no significant changes to Route 6 through the courthouse area in recent history. However, as traffic volumes have increased on this segment of road, left turn movements have begun to become more difficult and increasingly unsafe. The county and VDOT have been discussing possible solutions to improve left turn movements in the courthouse area. One option the county has suggested is to re-stripe the roadway to create a center turn lane, especially near the courthouse square where historic buildings and structures are adjacent to the roadway. VDOT has suggested a potential road widening.

State Route 632 (Fairgrounds Road) provides access to the village from areas north and west of the village area. Route 632 provides access to Interstate 64 (via U.S. Route 250) and to the Richmond metropolitan area. Scheduled improvements will soon be made to state Route 632 that should improve circulation in the area. These improvements include installing a left turn lane at state Route 634, and constructing approximately 0.81 linear miles of new roadway to connect existing Route 632 to Route 6 near the existing elementary school. These improvements are scheduled to occur around 2005.

State Route 634 (Maidens Road) provides access to the village from areas south and east. Maidens Road is scheduled for major improvements during 2001. Improvements include road realignment from state Route 6 to 500 feet north of the Courthouse Creek bridge, and replacement and realignment of the bridge.

The minor transportation route(s) serving the historic village area are state Routes 1201 and 1202 (Courthouse Circle). This circular road provides the most immediate access to the historic courthouse square. This road winds tightly around the historic courthouse buildings, and may easily be confused for a private drive. Transportation improvements that include sidewalks and historic-styled lights have been requested for these two roads. The county hopes to receive grant funds during FY 01 for these improvements.

Traffic counts prepared by the Virginia Department of Transportation for the period of 1990 through 1997 indicate an increase in the Average Daily Traffic Counts (ADTs) along the segment of state Route 6/U.S. Highway 522 within the village. The ADTs taken on this 1.74 mile segment of Route 6/U.S. Highway 522 show an increase from 6,115 in 1990 to 6,500 in 1997, an increase of 6 percent. When compared with the projected service volume or capacity of 8,946 for this segment of road, it is apparent that the road is approaching design capacity. It should be noted that these projections did not include the growth and activity impacts expected from the Motorola facility located in the West Creek Office Park, east of the courthouse village. As of 1986 (the most current year recorded), average daily traffic counts for Routes 1201 and 1202 show around 650 vehicles per day.

Sidewalks and Crosswalks: The purpose of sidewalks and crosswalks is to provide a safe passage for pedestrians outside the flow of ordinary vehicular traffic. Typically these areas are flat, smooth surfaces that are wide enough to allow for at least two people to pass each other from a forward facing position when approaching from opposite directions. Present building standards usually require sidewalks to be at least four feet wide to accommodate passage.



Figure 1: Typical sidewalk.

There are many sidewalks provided in the courthouse area. The most obvious sidewalks are those that run along state Route 6 (refer to Figure 1). Sidewalks are also found throughout the historic courthouse square running between buildings and parking areas. A few of the sidewalks in the village are in need of maintenance. Routine maintenance is typically the responsibility of the adjacent property owner. Figure 2 illustrates a sidewalk overgrown with grass.



Figure 2: Sidewalk with overgrown vegetation.



Figure 3: Parking adjacent to state Route 1202.

Parking: There are several types of parking available throughout the courthouse area. Most parking is directly associated with a public or private business and is off-street. This type of

parking is typically organized into a lot that is clearly distinguishable and separate from the roadway. However, parking areas along state Routes 1201 and 1202 are not clearly distinguishable from the roadway. Refer to Figure 3, on the previous page.

Parking along Route 6 is prohibited. There are numerous signs throughout the area to remind drivers that curbside parking is prohibited. Refer to Figure 4. In Figure 4, a series of five no parking signs are within view.

Signage: With the exception of the redundant ‘no parking’ signs in front of the courthouse square and westward towards the high school, there are few signs in the area, which noticeably adds to the area’s charm. Public uses have minimized their use of sign and many blend with the quaint character of the area. In contrast, many of the private business signs are large and are designed with the company logo or custom advertisement. These private signs are an obvious divergence from the historic character of the area. (Refer to Figure 5.)

There are few public signs in the area. These consist of road signs and directional signs. Road signs include instructional signs (such as STOP or speed limit) as well as road names and state Route numbers. These signs are primarily located at road intersections or at midpoints along the roadway whichever is appropriate. Wherever possible, several of these signs have been posted on a single pole to reduce the amount of potential sign clutter. (Figure 6, Photo of several signs together on one pole.) The road signs in the historic courthouse area are all standard VDOT design. Some signs are in need of routine maintenance, such as cleaning, painting or replacement.

There are various directional signs in the courthouse square area such as signs for the library and historic courthouse. The directional



Figure 4: On-street parking is prohibited downtown.



Figure 5: Local business sign.



Figure 6: Several street signs clustered on one pole.

signs are located in strategic places along the roadway and are designed according to basic VDOT standards. One exception to this is the location sign located in the courtyard in front of the old courthouse. This custom-made sign provides a listing and the general location of government buildings within the courthouse square. This sign is not a street sign but rather designed for pedestrians to use.

Overhead Utilities and Lighting: The Goochland historic courthouse square area is equipped with standard utilities: telephone, electrical and cable television wiring. These utilities suspend on overhead cables throughout the area. Overhead street lighting is also provided near the top of a few utility poles along state Route 6. (Refer to Figure 7.) Most of the streetlights are located near the courthouse square.



Figure 7: Typical utility pole with overhead lines and street light.

Overhead lighting is also provided on the lawn within the courthouse square. (Refer to Figure 8.) This pedestrian-oriented lighting is primarily provided at the rear of the government complex between building and in parking areas. There are four different types of lighting fixtures, although three of the four are similarly colonial-styled. The colonial-styled lighting fixtures are reminiscent of historic times and add character to the courthouse square. The county has applied for state and federal funding to acquire more of these colonial-styled lights to help beautify the historic courthouse square area. The county’s aim to enhance the historic village atmosphere by replacing utility lighting as seen in Figure 7 with more appropriately designed and better located lighting.



Figure 8: Historic lighting on the courthouse square.

Water and Sewer Utilities: Goochland County purchases water and wastewater treatment from the Virginia Department of Corrections. Recently the county completed a new distribution system that consists of new water and wastewater lines running through the area, and a water storage tank. These new water and sewer improvements were made to serve the new high school, provide better service capacity to existing residential, and commercial business areas, and create the ability for new growth and development to occur in the courthouse area.

The Department of Corrections provides water to the central courthouse area through a 12-inch line where the water is stored in a 300,000-gallon storage tank. From the tank, the county distributes the water through a ten-inch water line running along state Route 6, west to the new high school. The Department of Corrections has allocated up to 100,000 gallons of water for the county to use. Presently the county uses approximately 50,000 gallons per day.

The county also recently completed installation of a new 12-inch gravity-fed sewer trunk line. The line runs from the Virginia Department of Correction property along Courthouse Creek to the new high school. Wastewater is treated at the Women’s Correctional Center and discharged into the James River. The wastewater treatment capacity is 198,000 gallons per day (GPD). The Women’s Correctional Center uses approximately 100,000 GPD and the county has an agreement for 18,000 GPD. A preliminary engineering study has been completed to increase the size of the wastewater treatment plant or to build a new facility. Either option proposes to increase the capacity up to 400,000 GPD, about double the existing capacity. It is projected that either of these two plans could be executed within five years.

Vegetation: Within the courthouse village, vegetation provides several important roles. In the courthouse square, the vegetation in front of the square generally along Route 6 is characteristic of the historic village setting that many citizens identify as an important symbol of the county’s history.

Extending away from the immediate courthouse square area, little or no formal landscaping is evident on public property. The land fronting state Route 6 is largely privately owned, and the landscape varies according to the type of land use. In general, residential property has well maintained landscaping with combinations of trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses. Commercial property typically has similar, residential-type landscaping styles, but less overall landscaping because of the extra parking areas associated with commercial uses. The public/semi-public areas, outside of the immediate courthouse square, are less landscaped but well maintained.

Pedestrian Enhancements: The county has already made investments to provide enhancements that blend with and support the historic character of the area. Examples include wood plank trashcans, park benches and colonial character lighting. Figures 9 and 10 show how public utility services can be made attractive to blend with the character of an area. Plans are to continue providing these types of utilities as funding allows.



Figure 9: Wood plank trashcan.



Figure 10: Small park area with benches.

The county has also made significant investments to the recreational and leisure needs of its citizens. The 104-acre Hidden Rock Park, located adjacent to the village along state Route 632, has softball/baseball fields, basketball court, a sand volleyball area, children's playground, exercise/fitness trail, concession building and picnic pavilion. The county recently received funding for a tree-planting program and was able to add 63 trees of various types and sizes to address beautification, energy conservation, and educational concerns.

During the spring and summer seasons, approximately 200 to 250 people use the park each day. During the fall and winter there are about 100 to 150 people using the park each day. Soccer/football fields are under construction and should be complete soon. Future plans for Hidden Rock Park include the construction of a 5K-fitness/nature trail, adding lights to each of the ball fields, and the construction of additional picnic pavilions. These improvements are scheduled to occur over the next few years.

Summary of Existing Conditions

This section identifies the many issues that affect vehicular and pedestrian circulation in the courthouse square area. This section also provides some insight to the general character of the area. The following summarizes the courthouse square circulation issues that are identified in this section.

Land Use:

- The majority of the land use is public (government buildings) at 61 percent.
- Commercial land uses surround the centrally located public land use.
- Thirty-one percent of the area is comprised of residential land uses. The residential uses consist of single-family homes and mobile homes – there is little to no housing diversity.

Roadways:

- State Route 6 is the major traffic corridor, running west to east through the area. Ongoing discussions with VDOT have focused around re-stripping the roadway near the courthouse square to allow three lanes (a center lane to store turning traffic).
- In the area near the historic government complex, there is inadequate right-of-way to increase the width of travel lanes, shoulders or sidewalks.
- Significant roadway improvements are planned for state Route 632, Fairground Road, and for state Route 634, Maidens Road.
- Along state Routes 1201 and 1202, roadway surfaces are not always clearly distinguishable from adjacent parking areas.

Sidewalks/Crosswalks:

- Some of the sidewalks are in various stages of deterioration, and deterioration in some areas is severe.
- Sidewalks are absent along state Routes 1201 and 1202 that have high pedestrian traffic usage between county buildings.
- There are no clearly defined crosswalks to connect sidewalks through roadway intersections.

Parking:

- Overall, the amount of parking throughout the area is very good.
- Parking areas adjacent to state Routes 1201/1202 are not clearly distinguishable from through roadway surfaces.

Signage:

- The type of signage throughout the area varies greatly.
- There does not appear to be any consistency in the style of signage throughout the area.
- Some signs are in need of routine maintenance such as cleaning, painting or replacement.
- Some of the public ‘no parking’ signage near the government complex appears to be unnecessarily repetitive.

Overhead Utilities and Lighting:

- Overhead utility lines near the courthouse complex significantly detract from the historic character of the area.
- Some of the existing overhead street lighting is not strategically located to provide needed lighting at road intersections.
- Pedestrian-oriented lighting is absent along many sidewalks.
- The existing institutional lighting does not blend with and detracts from the area's historic character.

Water and Sewer Utilities:

- Significant water and sewer improvements have been made to the area that will likely encourage more growth and development.
- Goochland County's source for wastewater treatment, the women's correctional facility, is near capacity.

Vegetation

- There is no overall landscaping theme present throughout the area. The courthouse complex has mature vegetation that was planted when the buildings were constructed.
- Other public and commercial uses throughout the area have a variety of vegetation that was likely planted when the buildings were constructed. Residential uses have a combination of indigenous vegetation mixed with new landscaping.
- The vegetation in the area appears healthy.
- Other than routine maintenance, plans do not exist for replacing and enhancing existing vegetation in the courthouse complex.

Pedestrian Enhancements

- The county has made noticeable aesthetic improvement throughout the area such as park benches and wood plank trash cans.

From this information it is possible to identify the constraints and opportunities for making improvements to the courthouse square area.

Constraints

Overall, the area is constrained physically because of existing structures; especially the historic buildings and structures that remain in the area. The existing buildings and structures have monetary value, and some have historical value, which must be maintained. Some of the vegetation, while perhaps not having the same monetary significance, has significant cultural value to the citizens of Goochland. Any physical improvements recommended for the area should support existing buildings and structures. It is imperative that any improvements be made in such a way that no damage is caused, especially to historic structures, significant vegetation and other cultural amenities.

Of course there are the relative financial constraints associated with making any substantial capital improvement. Through the county's transportation planning process with VDOT, has

allocated about \$1.9 million for improvements to state Routes 632 and 634. VDOT estimates that an additional half million will be needed to complete the scheduled improvements. In addition, the county has requested \$80,000 from VDOT (to be matched with \$20,000 in county funding) for lighting and sidewalk improvements.

The relative cost for making improvements will likely impact when the improvements can be financed, and therefore scheduling will play an important role. However it remains important to also schedule improvements in a logical sequence to minimize the overall cost. For example, it is prudent to schedule street light installation and related utility work prior to scheduling sidewalk repairs that occur over the area in which the utility work will occur.

In addition to the physical and financial constraint, there is the overall human factor. The courthouse square area is significant to both the county and Virginia because it is one of the first early settlements in Virginia. The area is steeped in a rich cultural history that spans several hundred years. Any repairs or improvements proposed to the courthouse area will no doubt be met by vigorous community interest. County citizens were very involved with the county's last comprehensive plan update (discussed in the next section.) During the update, citizens identified many quality of life issues that are important and need to be preserved. This includes directing development into designated villages; providing adequate and attractive infrastructure in villages to support various housing types, and overall healthy economic growth; the importance of historic buildings and settlements; the feeling of personal safety; and rural community pride. It is imperative that improvements to the area embrace these quality of life issues.

Opportunities

Physical: The over-riding image of the courthouse village area is a theme of historic buildings and structures with a safe, rural atmosphere where people gather to conduct local business and socialize. The county and its citizens treasure this aspect and have continued to invest in the area. Recent physical improvements to the area include new water and sewer lines, new high school under construction, and expansion of the community college. Additional capital improvements that have already been budgeted include expansion of the library, extension of state Route 632 (Fairgrounds Road), realignment of state Route 634 (Maidens Road), and new historic character lighting and sidewalk around the government complex. These improvements are scheduled to be completed within the next five years.

Financial: The county has budget funds or secured funding from other sources to finance some of the identified infrastructure improvements to the area. There also may be local sources of funding available such as contributions from civic groups. These groups may be willing to purchase relatively inexpensive items such as a colonial-styled street light or landscaping. These groups may also be able to donate labor and/or goods and materials. The willingness of civic groups to contribute to planned improvements within the courthouse village area will likely be influenced by the relative degree to which the county champions these improvements.

Human: Citizens of the county have acknowledged that the courthouse square area is an important county resource, including the historic buildings and structures and the overall village atmosphere. This resource has many significant features such as its history, rural atmosphere

and village character that has been maintained since the 1700s. Today's businesses located in the area are economically healthy and vibrant. Citizens still are drawn to conduct business and socialize in the area at a time when new and more modern development is occurring elsewhere. There is strong community support for maintaining the area's character and for modeling future development after the courthouse village. Through the county's public participation process to review and revise its comprehensive plan, many citizens spoke about the courthouse village area as "the example" for future village-type development in the county.

Implementing Measures, Adopted Plans

Existing Plans and Studies

In 1978, the county adopted a plan of development for the courthouse village. The plan lays out a phased approach for adding needed public facilities and making related improvements. The plan details how buildings, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping and pedestrian amenities such as park benches should look and where they should be placed. The county continues to follow the recommendations of this plan.

In 1993, the county recognized the need to review issues related to growth and development in the courthouse village area and formed a committee to identify these issues. The issues identified by the committee were integrated into the county's Courthouse Village Land Use Plan as follows:

- (1) The village needs to be a viable governmental service center, retail center and office center for the county.
- (2) The expansion of the water line and the development of a sewer system are crucial to the future growth of the courthouse village.
- (3) Improvements are needed to Route 634 to include replacing the bridge and straightening out the curves in the road and widening the road to safely accommodate the traffic. Also, install turn lanes at the intersection with Route 632 to provide safer measures at that intersection.
- (4) Extend Route 632 behind the high school and elementary school to tie in with Route 6.
- (5) Provide improved pedestrian access between the school complex and the existing commercial development to the north. This will require a tunnel under the extended Route 632 to provide for safe pedestrian movement in the area.
- (6) Provide for commercial growth in the village by designating parcels with depth along Routes 6 and 522. One possible site is at the intersection of Routes 6 and 522 across from the high school. Discourage strip commercial development by increasing setbacks and providing guidelines for quality commercial growth.
- (7) Discourage industrial development in the courthouse village but promote commercial retail and office growth.
- (8) Encourage affordable housing in the village by providing densities for multi-family development.
- (9) Support the development of recreational facilities at the landfill site.
- (10) Provide a road connector between Maidens Road and the courthouse area. This will serve to tie the eastern part of the village with the center of the village.
- (11) Support roads connecting within the village instead of a proliferation of cul-de-sacs that are not tied together in a uniform system.

Each of these items has been addressed. Items 3, 4, 10 and 11 were addressed in the spring of 1995, when the county undertook a study to examine the vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns in the courthouse village, *Goochland Courthouse Village Circulation Study* prepared by the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission. The study examined growth pressures and provided alternatives for road widenings and/or extensions that could accommodate anticipated growth. The study also addressed needed improvements for pedestrian access through the construction of new sidewalks.

The expansion of the water and wastewater systems, item 2, has recently been completed (refer to *Existing Conditions* section); item 5 has been under examination by the county and VDOT; items 6 through 8 have been carried out through zoning enforcement actions; and, item 9 was addressed with the phase-I construction of Hidden Rock Park. The county plans to continue making improvements to the park, as resources are available.

In addition to the circulation study, on March 4, 1997, the county adopted a revised comprehensive plan. This plan incorporated the findings of this study as well as addressing broader land use issues for the courthouse village area. The county uses this comprehensive plan to guide future population growth, and to make land use development decision throughout the county and within the courthouse village. An important part of formulation of the plan is the level of citizen participation during its development. It is public participation that shapes and guides governmental policies regarding future growth and development. Because of this, it is important to consider the findings and recommendations found throughout the plan as applicable to the courthouse village.

Of particular interest are the policies and means that will be used to direct future growth and development in the courthouse village area. The selected policies and means listed below are grouped into the following general categories: transportation; historic resources; development in villages; and design quality. The policies and means are identified as those likely to have the most direct impact on the transportation-related utilities and facilities evaluated in this assessment.

With regard to *Transportation*

Policy: Guide development of major transportation facilities between, rather than across, major functional areas ... to provide safe, yet efficient, transportation services to those areas.

Means: Combine considerations of zoning and transportation policies in future land use plans.

Policy: Insure the protection and functionality of major transportation corridors.

Means: Discourage strip development by requiring special setbacks and common access points for all development located along major primary roads such as Route 250 and Route 6.

Means: Discourage spot zoning along these major transportation corridors.

Means: Establish standards for minimum separation of curb cuts and access points along primary roads.

Policy: Recognize in all county plans the relationship between transportation and land use and provide tools for determining whether the relationships resulting from proposed plans are sound ones.

Means: Indicate in the county comprehensive plan transportation facility needs, which will result from recommended land use plans.

Means: Specify in all functional plans the travel demands generated by the facilities proposed.

Policy: Integrate short, medium, and long-range plans for the development of future land use and transportation in the county.

Means: Include staging recommendations for transportation facilities and land use in the county comprehensive plan.

Means: Coordinate the transportation plans and system contained in the county comprehensive plan with the six-year operations and maintenance budget of the Virginia Department of Transportation Residency serving the county.

Policy: Ensure that sound long-range design standards are followed in all construction of highway facilities in the county.

Means: Coordinate the requirements for street design standards and right-of-way width promulgated in the county subdivision ordinance with standards recommended by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Means: Keep current information on the average trip producing and attracting characteristics of various types of land uses so that the Virginia Department of Transportation design standards based on traffic volumes may be used.

Means: Coordinate design standards for transportation aspects of designs of subdivisions not covered in the Virginia Department of Transportation Subdivision Standards with the appropriate officials of that department to ensure sufficient quality.

Policy: Minimize the amount of travel necessary for county citizens.

Means: Utilize grouping of community facilities, which form multi-purpose centers in the county comprehensive plan.

Means: Encourage pedestrian walkway and bicycle trail systems in subdivisions, which will encourage local foot and bicycle travel and provide access to local open space.

Policy: Maximize the effectiveness of all new or reconstructed transportation facilities and systems.

Means: Configure land development patterns in the county's comprehensive plan so that transportation facilities needs for new development are combined with existing deficiencies and the benefits received are maximized.

With regard to *Historic Resources*

Policy: Develop specific controls and incentives for preserving historic places in their natural setting.

Means: Specific measures include placement of historic places on state and national registers. Additional controls should be developed in the county zoning ordinance to protect historical properties and districts.

Policy: Improve accessibility and levels of use of historic places.

Means: Improvement of accessibility/levels of use of historic places will be highly dependent on private sectors efforts.

Means: Encourage imaginative adaptive reuse of abandoned historical structures.

With regard to *Development in Villages*

Policy: Encourage intense residential, commercial and industrial development to occur within or near major villages.

Means: Provide incentives for future development to occur in and around major villages in an effort to preserve valuable agricultural areas.

Means: Provide infrastructure support to include water and sewer in the villages. This will support planned growth in the villages.

Policy: Encourage urban development to take place inside service areas of existing and projected public facilities and utilities in order to minimize the tax burden on local residents and businesses.

Means: Adopt adequate subdivision and zoning regulations designed to prevent leap-frogging, fragmented inharmonious urban and suburban development.

Means: Encourage cluster developments to similar uses to prevent strip development and unwise land use development.

Means: Utilize a capital improvements program to schedule the establishment and expansion of park and recreation areas, schools, libraries, fire stations and other public facilities.

Objective: Expand affordable housing through encouraging the development of a variety of housing types in the county.

Means: Encourage the development and extension of utilities in major villages to support multi-family housing and smaller residential lots.

With regard to *Design Quality*

Policy: Structure the county's development ordinances so as to ensure that all major developments, whether residential, commercial or industrial, are of sufficient design quality; encourage creative design.

Means: Utilize to the greatest extent possible performance standards in all development ordinances so that the question of whether or not any proposed development meets review criteria can be readily answered by comparing proposed or actual performance with clearly defined standards.

Means: Utilize a format in all development ordinances, which clearly delineates allowable review criteria, and specifically encourages creative design.

Means: Ensure that all performance standards are adequately coordinated with the review criteria that they support.

Policy: Switching, pumping, communication substations, and offices shall be designed and laid out so as to minimize detrimental effects on surrounding land uses. Substations shall be defined to include telephone and microwave towers, natural and liquid gas pumping stations, water towers, sewerage and water filtration and purification plants.

Means: Special allowance for such conditional uses shall be granted on the basis of location and design considerations as set forth in the county's ordinances.

Recommended Improvements

Current Plans for Improvements

Already Goochland County is actively seeking to make major infrastructure improvements to the circulation in the courthouse square area. The county is seeking \$1.9 million in funding from the Virginia Department of Transportation. The funds would provide for the extension of and improvements to state Route 632 around the new high school, the realignment of state Route 634, and new lighting and sidewalks in the courthouse square area. The county is also seeking state funding for a 5k jogging/fitness trail as part of planned improvements to Hidden Rock Park. Other improvements included landscaping and ball field lighting.

Several other major capital improvement projects are underway in the courthouse village: construction of a new high school; and expansion of the library. These major improvements should stimulate private interest and perhaps leverage private investment in the courthouse village. Recently completed and planned major improvements are shown on Map B.

The improvements currently being sought by the county for the courthouse village will provide multiple advantages:

- ☞ Promoting the friendly neighborhood atmosphere that has been identified by citizens as important to preserving the rural, historic character of the village.
- ☞ Providing an essential part to the reinvestment efforts to keep the courthouse square a viable economic base for the community.
- ☞ Improving safety for citizens whether conducting business or touring the area.

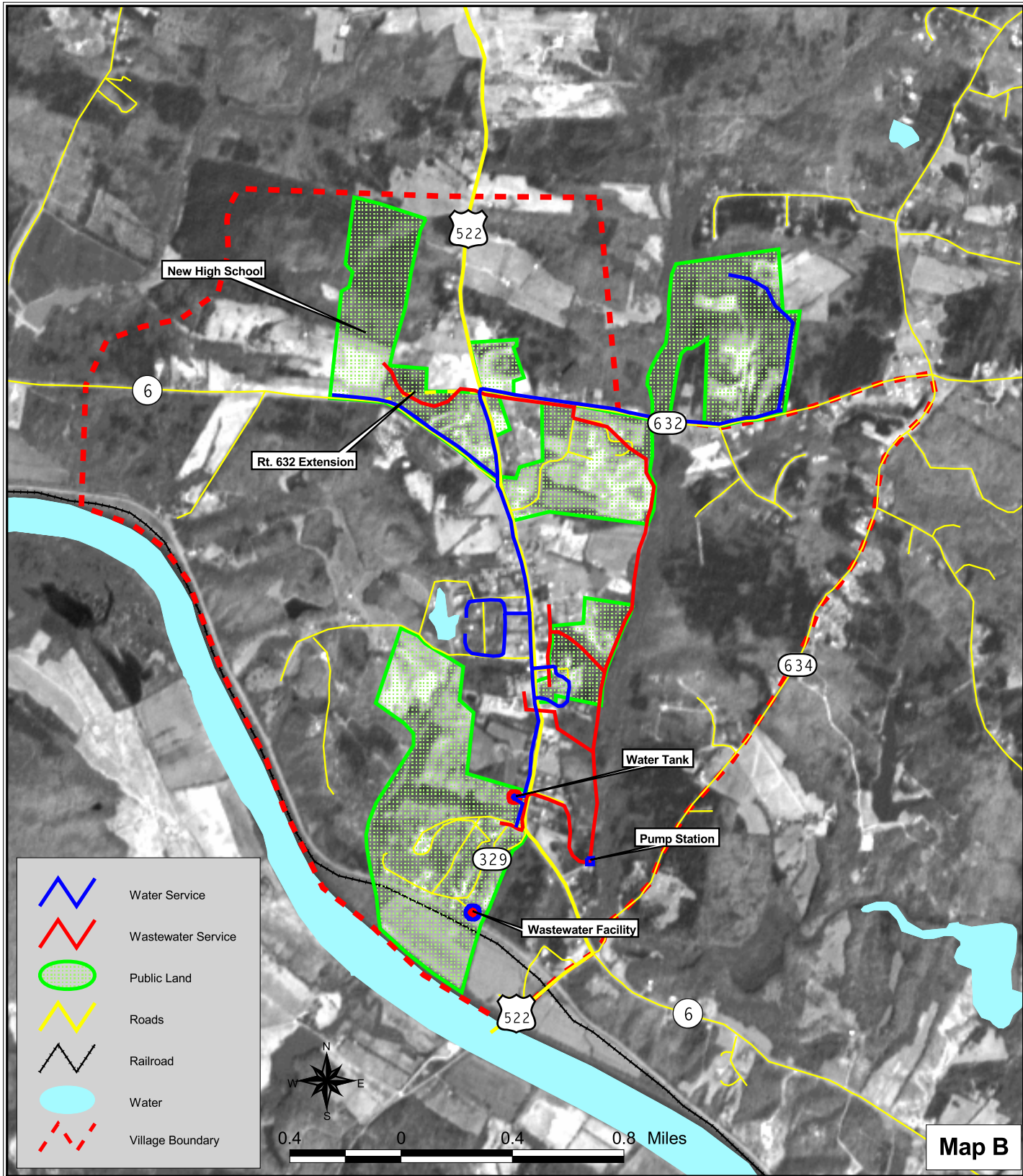
Recommended Improvements

Roadways: Existing roadways in and around the courthouse village are designed, constructed and maintained by VDOT. Although the county may make suggestions to VDOT about the need for additional roads or other roadway improvements, VDOT makes all of the necessary arrangements to make improvements as part of a statewide program. As previously mentioned, funding requests are being made to improve the lighting and provide sidewalks along state Routes 6, 1201 and 1202. Turn lanes and minor improvements to Route 634 and Route 632 are also planned and partially funded.

Although not directly related to improved circulation, the county may wish to consider beautification improvements along the roadway entrances to the courthouse village. Figure 11 (next page) shows the road sign on state Route 6 eastbound that announces the entrance to historic Goochland County. Other than this sign there is nothing else to attract one's attention to one of the county's most important assets. The sign itself appears to adequately perform its intended function and additional signage is not recommended. However, a different type of signage, such as a custom-made sign, may be more appropriate and perhaps could be incorporated as part of a gateway.

GOOCHLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE VILLAGE ASSESSMENT

Recently Completed and Planned Major Improvements



The county may wish to draw attention to the historic area by considering roadway improvements in the form of a gateway entrance. State Route 6 is the only major road running centrally through the historic courthouse area. For this reason, the importance of Route 6 should not be overlooked. This road provides the first impression of the area, provides the perfect setting for a grand entrance to the historic courthouse square. Because state Route 6 is relatively short through the courthouse village, its entire length should be evaluated for possible beautification improvements.



Figure 11: “Help Keep Our County Clean Welcome to Goochland County”.

There are numerous alternatives to beautifying the roadway including but not limited to constructing structural gateway(s) made of stone, brick or wrought iron, adding historic light fixtures and landscaping. Improvements made should be consistent with the existing historic character of the area. These types of improvements can be made along the entire length, at the road’s intersections with Fairgrounds and Maiden’s roads, or at other strategic points. VDOT has a process for reviewing and permitting these types of improvements within the road right-of-way. There are several issues that will need to be addressed as part of the process to proposing enhancements to state Route 6. These include but are not limited to: the amount of right-of-way available, the need to acquire donations of private land should there not be adequate right-of-way available, future plans to widen or otherwise improve the paved surface of the roadway and possible design conflicts with existing drainage ditches or other existing infrastructure. Should the county decide to pursue roadway enhancements, it is important that VDOT be consulted early in the planning process to address these and other related issues.

Sidewalks and Crosswalks: Goochland County has already made plans and has requested funding to make sidewalk and crosswalk improvement in and around the courthouse square area. Improvements made in this area may require special consideration for construction and placements because of the extent of existing historic structures in the areas. In the area at the rear of the courthouse where funding requests are currently pending, existing vegetation and structures are not present. However, special consideration and planning would likely be required for the previous funding request (requested in 1999 and not funded) to construct a pathway along Courthouse Creek. This request would have constructed a path from the rear of the courthouse square along the creek to connect with the sidewalk system at J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College. The new path would have linked existing sidewalks in the courthouse area to create a large loop to encourage pedestrian movement. The county’s plans for the construction of sidewalks and paths throughout the courthouse village will continue to support the county’s policy to promote highly accessible, safe pedestrian access.

Future plans for sidewalks may place sidewalks very close to existing historic buildings or structures. For this reason, it is important that the sidewalk improvements not damage the integrity of the existing structures and to the extent possible, complement existing structures. The county may wish to consider the use of bricks or cobblestones to better suite areas near historic structures. Figure 9 provides an example of how sidewalks can be constructed to complement adjacent historic structures. The sidewalk shown in Figure 12 is about four feet wide. This distance from the nearest edge of the sidewalk to the historic brick structure is also about four feet.



Figure 12: Sidewalks adjacent to historic structures are reminders of quaint times.

However, the edge of the sidewalks to the wooden porch is only about 10-inches.

Another important pedestrian feature that is completely missing from the Goochland courthouse square area is painted or brick-paved crosswalks. Painted or brick-paved crosswalks are an important safety symbol to both drivers and pedestrians. When approaching an intersection, painted or paved crosswalks make drivers more acutely aware that pedestrian activity is encouraged and that pedestrians are likely to walk in front of them. For the pedestrian, painted or paved crosswalks help provide the security that they have the right-of-way and that approaching vehicles should be more aware of pedestrian activity. Figure 13 illustrates how sidewalks and crosswalks work together to help provide safe pedestrian passage along an otherwise busy roadway. Notice that the crosswalks are wide enough to connect the outer edge of the sidewalk to the outer edge of the curb and roadway. This area provides enough room for opposing pedestrians to pass each other without walking into a driving lane.



Figure 13: Crosswalks and sidewalks were designed and constructed to tie the area together as well as provide a subtle message that pedestrian activity is encouraged here.

Parking: The parking issues associated with the courthouse village are summarized below:

With regard to *Parking Behavior*

- Generally, drivers like to park as close to their destination as possible.

Trying to initiate drastic changes to the parking behavior does not seem justified in the courthouse village. VDOT statistics indicate that few traffic accidents occur in the area.

With regard to the *Amount of Parking*

- The amount of parking available throughout the courthouse village appears adequate. However, occasional overflow parking from lots adjacent to state Routes 1201 and 1202 will result in on-street parking that is prohibited.
- Parking is off-street along Route 6. On-street parking is prohibited on Route 6.

Historically, the amount of parking available has not been viewed as an overwhelming problem in the courthouse area with the exception that more is always better. Overflow parking may occasionally occur when special functions are scheduled. However, as stated above, VDOT statistics indicate that few traffic accidents occur in the area.

With regard to *Parking Aesthetics*

- Most parking is lot-oriented, usually head-in. Standards do not exist that require parking areas be screened from the view of the roadway or adjacent properties.
- A proliferation of no-parking signs appears along Route 6 in front of the courthouse square extending westward. (Signage is discussed below under the heading of ‘Signage.’)

To improve aesthetics of the park areas, the county may wish to consider adopting screening standards. Figure 14 illustrates how a parking lot can be screened from view and made attractive to blend with the character of an historic area. The white picket fence, lower-scaled historic lighting, park bench and evergreen medium height shrubs, make this parking facility very attractive. The county may wish to consider adding these types of aesthetic enhancements to its existing lots and requiring future parking lots to install screening.



Figure 14: Screened parking with historic lighting and evergreen landscaping adjacent to commercial buildings.

Signage: For the most part, the use of signs has been kept to a minimum in and around the courthouse square. The exception is the

proliferation of institutional no-parking signs in front of the square. Minimizing the use of signs reduces visual clutter that can make the area unattractive. The county may wish to consider painting the curb yellow and removing the no-parking signs, and/or replacing the numerous signs with a single custom designed sign. The custom sign could be part of an overall theme for public signs in the area. Figure 15 shows a custom parking sign that was designed and developed to complement the historic character of Colonial Williamsburg. This sign, as well as all other public signs in the area, conforms to a uniform theme. Typical no-parking signs are made of rectangular shaped aluminum and painted with reflective paint – with white background and black lettering. While both types of signs provide the same function, a custom made sign that is part of an overall sign theme helps to convey the message of community pride. Customized signs indicate extra effort and thought has been invested in the area. Types of signs that can be included in an overall theme are roadway and directional signs and signs for public buildings and spaces.



Figure 15: Parking sign that conforms to an adopted theme to complement and blend with the surroundings.

As was noted earlier in this report, some of the public signs are in need of general maintenance, such as painting or cleaning. These types of improvements can be incorporated into an overall sign maintenance program.

There are also numerous types of private business signs throughout the area. As previously mentioned, most of the designs follow a company logo or business theme. The location and size of the signs also vary greatly. The county may wish to consider adopting a sign ordinance to better regulate the size, location and design of private signs be blend more with the area's historic character.

Overhead Utilities and Lighting: The majority of the overhead utility lines (telephone, cable and electric) and utility poles run along the roadways and down side yards throughout the courthouse village. Only in the area closest to the courthouse square do the utility poles, lines and utilitarian lighting fixtures noticeably detract from the historic character of the area. To the rear of and centrally within the courthouse square, historic-styled lights have already been installed. However, the aesthetic benefits of these light fixtures are not readily noticeable from the roadway or from the front of the square. The county has submitted a proposal to VDOT to purchase additional historic lighting to surround and run along the front of the village square. The new, lower pedestrian oriented lights would replace several of the tall security lights on utility poles. Figure 16 shows a historic-styled light that has integrated customized street name signs. This type of light is considerably more attractive than its utilitarian counterpart.

The county plans to continue gradually installing historic-styled lighting fixtures to replace the utilitarian street lighting around the courthouse square and along Route 6 in front of the square. This phased approach will allow for expenditures to be made gradually, over time so that large capital outlays will not be needed all at once. In addition, the replacement process can be accelerated if the county receives the enhancement grant funds requested from VDOT.

In addition to the current plans, as overhead utility upgrades are made to the area, the county may wish to work more closely with Virginia Power and other service providers to consider a gradual phase-out of utility poles and overhead lines, especially those located in clear view of the roadway. Installing underground utilities as an option to overhead utilities is an expensive proposition. However, there are several factors that can be used to help justify the conversion to underground utilities. Underground utilities can help promote the economic development value and historic character of the area. Figure 17 illustrates a tree-lined historic district where the absence of overhead utilities and utility poles are an obvious attribute.



Figure 16: Historic-styled light with custom street name designs.

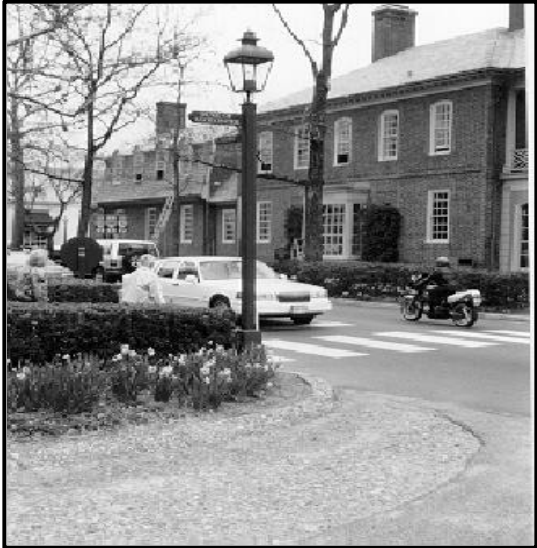


Figure 17: Downtown historic district. Notice the absence of overhead utility poles.

Water and Sewer Utilities: Although water and sewer utilities do not directly impact transportation facility circulation, certainly the growth and development generated by these utilities impact transportation facilities. Recently the county has made major investments in improving water and sewer utilities throughout the courthouse village by installing a water tank, major water trunk and sewer line. These new utilities were primarily designed to serve the new high school at the far western boundary of the village. However, the utilities were designed with excess capacity that could accommodate new growth and development.

The county’s comprehensive plan addresses where and when new water and sewer utilities should be installed. The plan also addresses aesthetic considerations intended to encourage new aboveground utilities to be built in character with the built surroundings. Future expansion of

water and sewer utilities and facilities in the village should be built to complement the historic character of the courthouse village.

Vegetation: Vegetation is one of three main elements that are commonly used to define the character of an area; the other two are structures and topography. Vegetation is oftentimes used to identify an area. For example, the large evergreen trees that are found within the perimeter of the courthouse square are frequently associated with and are used to define the historic character courthouse area. Vegetation also has two important roles: from a distance, vegetation establishes continuity or transition between areas; from the immediate perspective, the details of individual plants or groups of vegetation can be explored for their individual characteristics.

Main entrances set apart as ‘doorways’ into important areas are often referred to as gateways. The courthouse square area has three entrances but no gateway. The western entrances are from Fairgrounds Road and Route 6 near the new high school (where a ‘y’ is formed at the convergence of Fairgrounds Road and Route 6.) The eastern entrance begins at the intersection of Maidens Road (522 from Powhatan County) and Route 6. The feeling of connection for the area however, begins near the car dealership along Route 6 and ends near the bank located on the eastern side of the community college. At either end of this smaller area, the spacing between the buildings is greater and the area begins to feel more spread-out and less compact.

An opportunity exists for the courthouse square to be better advertised through the use of formal landscaping. In many ways, the historic courthouse area seems to be undersold. Other than the VDOT sign along state Route 6, there are no other visible features to entice travelers to the area. From an economic development standpoint, the need to attract visitors who will spend money in local shops is a primary reason to enhance the area with vegetation. From an historic perspective, reinstating vegetation that is reminiscent of the area’s historic past and that helps to integrate new development will assist in maintaining the character of the area.

Maintaining and preserving existing vegetation should be a priority for the courthouse square, extending throughout the entire village. Presently, existing vegetation in the immediate courthouse square area is well maintained. However, thought needs to be given to replacing vegetation that is nearing the end of its expected life cycle. Replacing mature vegetation with new vegetation can cause a dramatic change in the character of the area. New plantings should be integrated slowly over time to avoid drastic transitions.

The best way to accomplish replacement planting is through the development of a master-landscaping plan for the area. A plan can also help provide a phased approach for landscaping to help defray the costs associated with a landscaping project of this size. The plan can help create attractive gateway entrances along Route 6. It can also establish a schedule for replacement, maintenance and enhancement of maturing vegetation while considering such factors as restoring the original character of the area with lower growth plants and re-establishing a new tree canopy.

Pedestrian Enhancements: The county should continue to make pedestrian enhancements throughout the area as resources allow. The park benches and wood plank trashcans are examples of existing pedestrian enhancements. The county may wish to consider making enhancements in a style as similar to the existing style in order to avoid a clash of styles such as with the modern versus historic-styled lighting near the rear of the government complex. The county may also wish to consider developing a style guide to use in combination with a landscaping plan, sign ordinance, and lighting plan. If the county chooses to change the style of pedestrian enhancements, it may want to consider replacing existing enhancements to match the style of new enhancements.

Conclusions

Conclusions

The roads and pedestrian pathways have long been established in the courthouse square area. The original design for this transportation network was developed in a time when pedestrian traffic and movement through the area was at a maximum, and horses carrying single passengers or drawing carriages and wagons were guided to heed pedestrians. Today, vehicular traffic is the predominate mode of transportation and pedestrians typically must yield the right-of-way to vehicles or be careful to cross at road intersections.

The courthouse square remains the example and basis for the county's transportation goals. Any improvements or changes made to the transportation system in the courthouse square area should therefore be made in a manner that continues to embody the transportation goals. It is also important that the courthouse square area be maintained in a manner that preserves this area as the county's pinnacle example of the attractive, safe relationship between today's vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

This report has assessed circulation and the many related activities in the courthouse square and its village area. The county has already taken steps to plan for the continued success of the courthouse area by conducting and implementing several plans and studies over the years. This assessment is a continuation of the county's efforts to ensure the viability of the area. Below is a list that summarizes areas for continued improvement. Each of the areas is directly tied to at least one of the policies for future growth adopted as part of the county's comprehensive plan.

Findings and Recommendation:

- State Route 6 provides the only direct access to the historic courthouse square. For this reason, its importance as a gateway should not be overlooked.
- An overall landscape plan that would replace and replenish maturing vegetation as well as enhance areas lacking formal landscaping should be considered.
- Crosswalks are needed to help make drivers more aware that pedestrian activity is important and encouraged throughout the courthouse village.
- It is important that the addition of new utilities and facilities near the courthouse square complement existing historic structures.
- Much of the signage and lighting throughout the village is utilitarian. Considerations should be made to transitioning these utilities into historic-styled fixtures that are more characteristics of the historic village. The county may wish to consider developing a signage and lighting plan.
- Overhead utility lines and poles detract from the historic character of the courthouse square. The county may wish to work closely with Virginia Power and other associated service companies to establish a plan to gradually phase out utility poles and overhead lines over time.