

POWHATAN COURTHOUSE VILLAGE PLAN

POWHATAN COUNTY, VIRGINIA



POWHATAN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

PREPARED BY

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ARCHITECTURE

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PREPARED FOR THE

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INTRODUCTION

The Village of Powhatan Courthouse was laid out soon after Powhatan County was founded in 1777. Today the village is a lovely small scale town centered around Virginia's finest remaining "Greek Revival" courthouse on a classic courthouse square. The original village has a wonderfully unspoiled authentic small-town feeling which is formed by the historic courthouse, the court-related buildings, an historic jail, a rare tavern, and historic mercantile buildings organized around a traditional street grid. Old Buckingham Road and Scottville Road, which are still characterized by open rural expanses, are the main entrance corridors to the Village from Rt. 60. The Historic Village surrounding the courthouse together with these open rural entry roads have survived to represent several golden ages over the last 230 years. Beyond the historic center and the rural corridors, the Rt. 60 corridor will provide the potential for future growth surrounding the historic district. In the future it will be critical that the development of the areas that surround Powhatan Courthouse Village support and strengthen this historic area by bringing additional residents, complimentary commercial activity and that the Village benefits from the economic growth.

The purpose of the **Powhatan Courthouse Village Plan** is to continue to preserve and enhance the Powhatan Courthouse Village and take advantage of future opportunities for economic growth that have the potential to sustain this historic community with new businesses and residents. The **Powhatan County 2010 Long-Range Comprehensive Plan** recognizes the potential for new residential and commercial growth to support the Courthouse Village through the addition of new residential development and commercial development. The Courthouse Village Plan establishes a framework where the historic Courthouse Village can be integrated into the future growth and development of the surrounding area thereby participating in the economic activity that is needed to sustain and strengthen it. An equally important objective in this approach is to ensure that the character and scale of new development is compatible with the historic Courthouse Village and they work together.



Figure 1 -View of Powhatan Courthouse

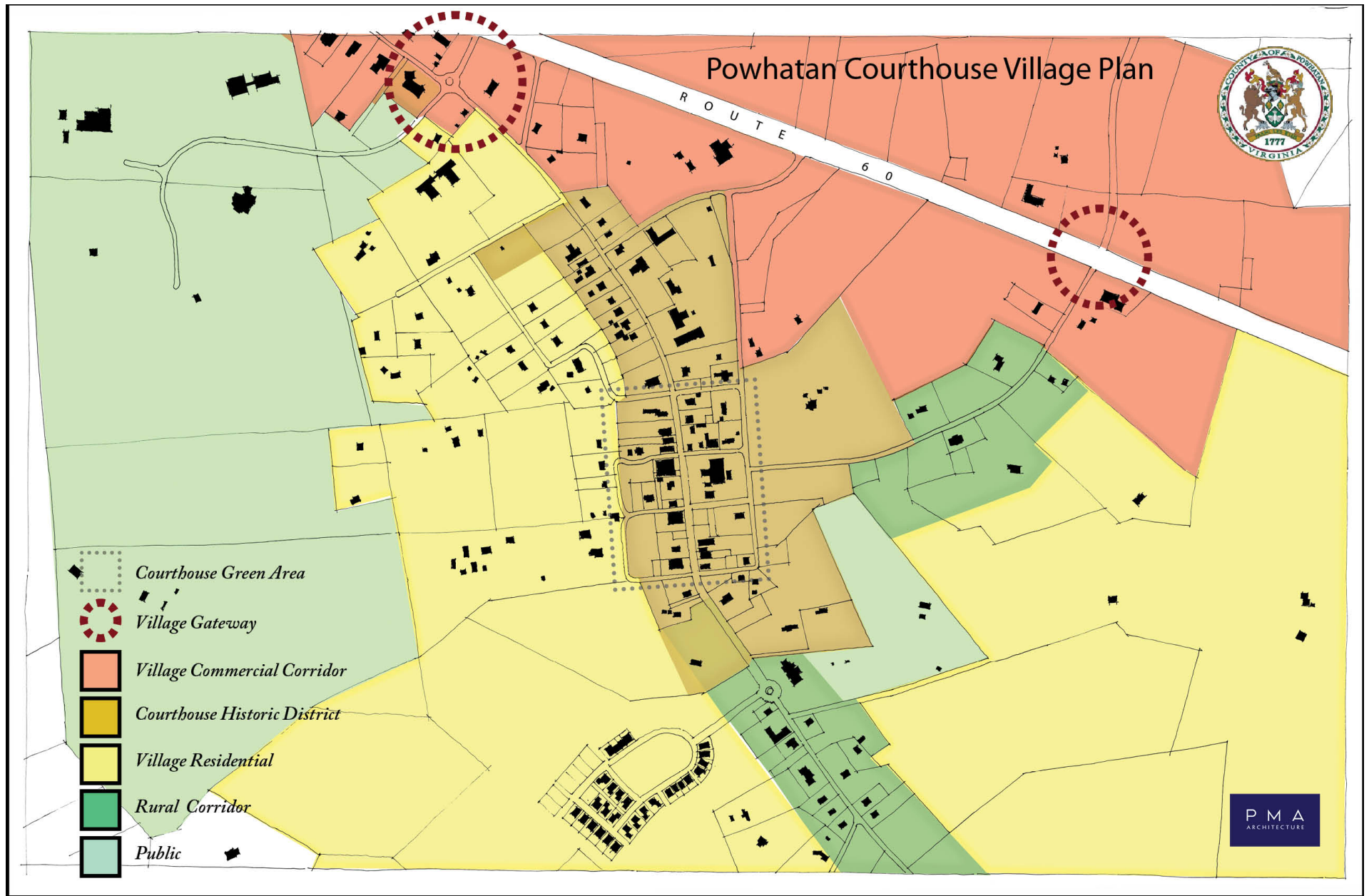


Figure 2 - Powhatan Courthouse Village Plan - Powhatan County, Virginia

FOCUS AREAS WITHIN THE VILLAGE

Courthouse Green Area - The center of the Powhatan Courthouse Village is the Courthouse Green Area which consists of the original grid of streets which formed a “town” setting around the county seat of government. The Courthouse Green Area today continues as the judicial center of the county and is well served by several restaurants, businesses and mercantile uses. This area holds much potential to serve as a specialty retail and services district if improvements are made to provide additional parking and better utilize the area for small and high quality specialty shops. Availability of water and sewer in this area is a critical infrastructure requirement to stimulate growth in this area first.

Rural Corridors - The entry corridors into the Courthouse Green Area consist of Old Buckingham Road (Rt. 13) to the north and south and Scottville Road to the east. These entry roads are characterized by buildings and houses separated from each other by large green spaces and resemble the more rural rolling pastoral landscape of Powhatan County. The open pastoral green space of these corridors should be preserved in order to retain the rural quality of these approaches to the historic courthouse.

Gateways - The gateways to the Powhatan Courthouse Village occur at significant intersections between Route 60 at Scottville Road and Mann Road. These intersections have potential to provide future commercial uses that can serve to draw traffic off of Route 60 and bring it into the Courthouse Green Area. They should be marked by historically thematic signage identifying the entire area as the “Powhatan Courthouse Village” which is designed to reinforce the special character of the historic courthouse area. Consistent with the Powhatan County 2010 Long-Range Comprehensive Plan, the areas around these gateways should be developed with moderately scaled commercial uses referred to as Village Commercial. Care in use of construction materials and signage is encouraged in order to reinforce the historic identity of this area through the design and detailing of new development.

Village Commercial Corridor - The Route 60 corridor provides great future commercial development potential to build a destination around the Powhatan Courthouse Village. Land fronting the highway should be developed under the Village Center designation in the Powhatan County 2010 Long-Range Comprehensive Plan under special design guidelines which emphasize a smaller scale of development and the historic themes, materials and character of the Courthouse Green Area. It is recommended that this overlay area be designated as the Village Commercial Corridor. Signalized interstections should be developed at Mann Road and Scottville Road where the ingress and egress can be channeled into these developments to align with the entry corridors to the historic area.

Village Residential - Large parcels of undeveloped land exist in the proximity of the Courthouse Village, which if properly developed in the correct housing types can bring new residents to the village area. New residents will help to build the customer base for needed growth in service and retail uses in the Courthouse Green Area and outlying commercial uses around the gateways. Village residential should occur with sufficient setback from the Rural Corridors to preserve the open rural greenspace of these corridors.

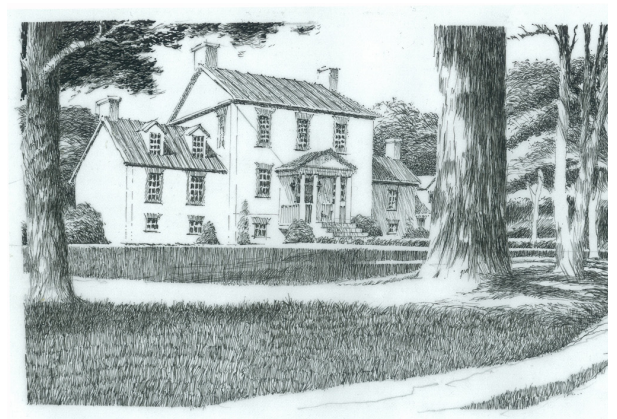


Figure 3 - Historic Erin Hill

- 1 - COMMERICAL/RETAIL USE
- 2 - PROPOSED TRAFFIC CIRCLE
- 3 - COMMERCIAL/RETAIL USE
- 4 - HISTORIC COURTHOUSE
- 5 - COMMERCIAL/RETAIL USE

- 6 - OFFICE/MIXED INFILL
- 7 - RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
- 8 - FIGHTING CREEK PARK
- 9 - ARTS CENTER AT OLD SCHOOL
- 10 - OPEN SPACE/FESTIVAL GROUNDS

- 11 - RESIDENTIAL/COMMERICAL USE
- 12 - PARKING/RETAIL USES
- 13 - RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
- 14 - PRESERVE HISTORIC HOUSES
- 15 - SCOTTVILLE EXPANDS

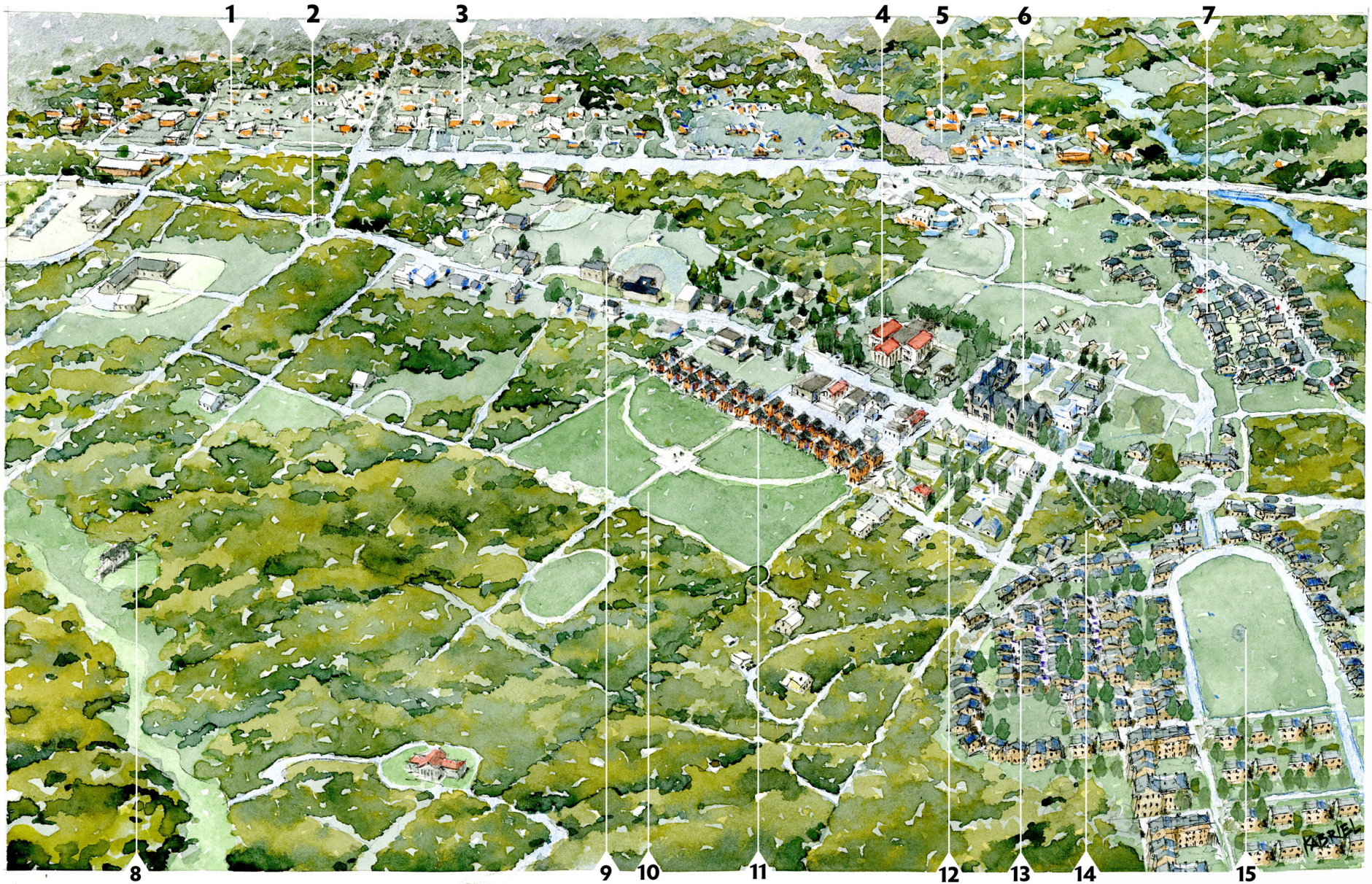


Figure 4 - Conceptual Impementation of the Powhatan Courthouse Village Plan - Powhatan County, Virginia

VISUALIZING THE POWHATAN COURTHOUSE VILLAGE PLAN

The **Powhatan Courthouse Village Plan** envisions building a destination community around the historic courthouse and integrating it into the Route 60 corridor so that both of these areas can grow together and achieve their potential. The Powhatan Courthouse Village will build on the historic character of the Courthouse Green Area to strengthen this “Main Street” style community with additional specialty retail, restaurants and service businesses. Within the Courthouse Green Area, preservation of the historic homes and buildings will be emphasized along with enhancements to the pedestrian environment, parking, circulation and compatible infill development to create additional space for residents and businesses. Outside of the Courthouse Green Area, new residential and commercial development will be possible to attract new residents and businesses at a scale that will help improve the local economic performance of the Courthouse Village.

Village Commercial Corridor - New commercial development with a moderate scale is recommended for the Route 60 corridor in the vicinity of the Courthouse Village, around the intersections of Mann Road and Scottville Road. As described under Village Centers in the Comprehensive Plan the future development of these areas should reinforce these intersections as gateways to the historic courthouse area (Pointers 1 & 5, Figure 4). These gateways should be developed as high-quality moderately-scaled commercial uses that are appropriately designed to reinforce the image and theme of the historic courthouse Village. Design guidelines should be

established to illustrate the building types, materials and colors that should be encouraged to reinforce the identity and character of the Courthouse Village. Gateway signage should be placed at the major intersections identifying Powhatan Courthouse Village and marking its primary entrances.

Village Residential - Also in accord with the comprehensive plan, new residential development is encouraged on vacant land surrounding the village in order to draw more residents who can live, work and shop in the Powhatan Courthouse Village (Pointers 7 & 13; Figure 4). The recent development of Scottville (Pointer 15; Figure 4) illustrates one example of how new residential development can coexist adjacent to the historic village and bring new vitality and residents. New residential development, as described in the comprehensive plan as *Village Residential*, can include single family, attached housing, townhouses and other multi-family types of housing which will attract high quality residents.

Courthouse Green Area - Strengthening the Courthouse Green Area with the capacity for additional parking, enhanced pedestrian amenities, improvements to circulation are possible within the historic Courthouse Green Area (Pointers 4, 6 & 12; Figure 4). A moderate amount of infill development in this area can increase its vitality and create more opportunities for a mixed-use environment typical of “Main Street” communities. Adoption of a local historic district and creation of design guidelines will allow sufficient oversight of these improvements to achieve an appropriate compatibility with the historic character of the Courthouse Green Area.



Figure 5 - Courthouse Green Area Plan - Powhatan County, Virginia

THE COURTHOUSE GREEN AREA

The Courthouse Green Area is the historical focal point of the Courthouse Village, featuring many historic structures that establish and reflect the identity of the County. This area is defined by the traditional street grid resulting from its original plat following the establishment of Powhatan County in 1777. A primary objective of the Powhatan Courthouse Village Plan is to preserve the historic character and charm of the Courthouse Green Area, while at the same time enabling it to become more economically sustainable, becoming stronger over time rather than weaker. In order to strengthen the historic area, several things need to be accomplished.

First, it is recommended that a local historic district be established for the area, creating a review board and design guidelines in order to provide guidance to developers and property owners to ensure that changes and new development is historically appropriate and compatible with the image of the area.

Second, the block between Yates Lane and Marion Harland Lane offers a unique redevelopment opportunity to provide additional retail and office space along the street frontage of Old Buckingham Road and Marion Harland Lane. New buildings in this area will strengthen the Courthouse Green Area by adding new businesses and merchants. Parking can be relocated behind these new buildings and provide up to 150 new parking spaces which can be utilized by the Courts and new business users.

Third, parking improvements should be studied and examined to create better parking resources that will allow business growth in the area without further congesting the vehicular traffic on Old Buckingham Road. Public parking should be developed behind existing buildings (like has been built at the County Seat Restaurant) in order to create enough parking to meet the needs of a more active economy in the Courthouse Green Area.

Fourth, additional streetscape enhancements are recommended along Old Buckingham Road and to improve pedestrian access and improve the appearance of the historic “Main Street”. The unusually wide paved area along Old Buckingham Road in front of the Courthouse should be modified to denote the parking spaces in a more visually appealing manner. The “head-in” parking spaces and parallel parking spaces could be repaved in exposed aggregate concrete or other attractive paving material to distinguish it from the asphalt street paving and improve the appearance along the sidewalks. Additional street trees with a tall upward branching canopy can be added along Old Buckingham Road to provide shade and color to the streetscape (Zelkova Serratta Green Vase, pruned for urban street use is a recommended tree variety).

Fifth, a new use for the Old High School building campus is needed which can stimulate the historic area and bring new activity and commerce. New uses could include a multi-purpose center for community arts that could draw visitors and citizens. The building could also be used to meet County office needs.

- 1 - NEW OFFICES/RETAIL
- 2 - ADD STREET TREES
- 3 - POURIOUS PAVING AT PARKING

- 4 - EXPAND SIDEWALKS
- 5 - ADD STREET TREES



Figure 6 - Conceptual Improvements around the Historic Courthouse - Powhatan County, Virginia

THE COURTHOUSE GREEN AREA

Reinforcing the Historic Character - Recommendations for the Courthouse Green Area are intended to reinforce the historic character and buildings of this special area and to make the area more appealing for specialty retail users, more accommodating for pedestrians and more successful economically. Figure 6 illustrates several improvements which are intended to strengthen the visual appearance of the Courthouse Green area. New buildings at the corner of Old Buckingham Road and Marion Harland Lane are recommended to provide new businesses and office space (refer to pointer 1, Figure 6). Proper redevelopment of this block can relocate parking to behind the new buildings, thereby creating more activity and vitality in the center of the Courthouse Green Area.

Pedestrian Improvements - The width of the asphalt paving along the courthouse green on Old Buckingham Road is excessively wide and intimidating to pedestrians. As the Courthouse Green Area increases in new business activity so will the traffic and pedestrian traffic. As this activity increases it will become evident that these paved areas are too wide and that the vehicular areas dominate the streetscape. It is recommended that the “head-in” parking spaces and “parallel” parking spaces be repaved in a more appealing exposed-aggregate or colored porous concrete to distinguish it from the main highway (refer to pointer 3, Figure 6). This will have a traffic calming effect as well as improve the historic appearance of the

area. Further, it is recommended that the sidewalks be widened and connected better to the parking resources. Accessible parking for disabled users needs to be integrated into the on-street parking at key locations.

Landscape Improvements - Street trees and landscape plantings are needed to augment the existing greenery of the courthouse green along Old Buckingham Road in order to provide shade for pedestrians and a richer more colorful environment. These improvements will attract more activity from businesses, visitors and shoppers.



Figure 7 - Example of Public Square with Mixed-Uses



Figure 8 - Creating a Public Green Space in the Village of Powhatan - Powhatan County, Virginia

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CREATING A PUBLIC GREEN SPACE

A Civic Multi-purpose Outdoor Space - One of the needs of the Powhatan Courthouse Green Area is to have a public green space which can provide a multi-function civic outdoor space for public gatherings, recreation, festivals and fairs right in the heart of the historic area. Fortunately, there are several areas where open space exists adjacent to the historic area where a public green space can be developed. Figure 8 illustrates one way of creating a public green space as an extension of Courthouse Tavern Lane and Marion Harland Lane to the south side of Old Buckingham Road. A large public green space could be created in this location within walking distance of existing and proposed parking areas. If housing and mixed-use development is arranged correctly around this open space then it can become a high quality public square as illustrated in Figure 7.

Building upon the Street Grid - Several additional development blocks can also be created to the west of Old Buckingham Road by building a more substantial street in alignment with Sigourney Street and the southern leg of Marion Harland Lane as indicated by the dotted line in Figure 8. Extending the street grid in combination with the establishment of a public green space can create a whole new focal element in the heart of the Courthouse Village around which a new community identity can emerge. This street grid can also be extended to connect to Yates Lane and Scottville to create additional circulation routes which can take traffic pressure off of Old Buckingham Road.



SIGNAGE

Creative and distinctive signage can be one of the most effective ways to announce the character of an historic area and communicate in advance the quality of experience that awaits at your destination. Signage for the Powhatan Courthouse Village must fulfil the following objectives.

Branding of the Village - Signage design must establish a visual branding image that conveys the unique historical character of the Powhatan Courthouse Village. Figure 9 and Figure 11 illustrate a logo design which references the courthouse facade under the umbrella of tree canopies on the square. The green base symbolizes the courthouse green and the stone base is a reference to the piedmont region. The design is intended to evoke the character of the courthouse green as an idyllic place where history is still alive.

Gateway Signage - Figure 9 illustrates a ground-mounted gateway sign which is recommended for installation in the median of Route 60 at Mann Road and at Scottville Road. These signs would announce arrival to the Powhatan Courthouse Village and mark the intersections which lead to the historic area as well as the future village commercial areas. These signs would be illuminated by ground mounted lighting.



Figure 9 - Prototype for Gateway Signage - Powhatan County, Virginia

Post Signs - Figure 10 illustrates a free-standing post sign incorporating the recommended logo for the Powhatan Courthouse Village. This sign type is intended for arrival points at the outer perimeter of the Courthouse Green Area. Post signs could be installed at the following locations: Scottville Road and Tilman Road; traffic circle at the entrance to Scottville, Intersection of Mann Road and Old Buckingham Road and possibly on the Corner of Old Buckingham Road and Courthouse Tavern Lane.

Regulatory signage - Another effective way to distinguish the Courthouse Village area is to adopt special signage standards for regulatory signage within the district. What is recommended is a simple system consisting of a square powder coated post with finial and a simple sign blade in matching color. Charleston Green is recommended for the base color, with reflective white letter in a traditional font.



Figure 10 - Regulatory Street Signage



Figure 11- Post mounted sign

IMPLEMENTATION

In order to strengthen the historic Powhatan Courthouse Village and tap the economic development potential of the greater village area designated in the 2010 Powhatan County Comprehensive Plan, it will be critical for the County to implement a series of strategies as described in this plan and in the comprehensive plan. Implementation of these measures needs to be done as soon as possible, before development pressures return to the Route 60 Corridor.

Prioritize water and sewer infrastructure in the Courthouse Green Area in order to encourage business, commercial, restaurant and retail growth around the historic center.

Adopt a Courthouse Village overlay zone specifically crafted to address the goals and needs of the Powhatan Courthouse Village. This overlay zone should refine the housing densities permissible to allow for densities up to 8 units per acre in the Village Residential Area.

Design guidelines should be established for the Village Residential and Village Commercial Corridor to establish direction for architectural design, materials, colors and signage which will be compatible with the historic Courthouse Green Area.

Adopt a Local Historic District under the zoning ordinance to establish an Architectural Review Board in order to guide property owners and developers toward historically appropriate designs for site design, building design, material selections, colors and signage.

Establish an Architectural Review Board with the authority to review and approve proposed changes within the entire plan area.

Pursue grant funding through Federal Transportation Enhancement Grant programs (SAFETEA) to fund further streetscape enhancements and parking lot construction in critical areas of the historic Courthouse Green Area.



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Develop a public green space adjacent to the Courthouse Green Area to serve as a public gathering place and staging area for the Wine Festival, Art Shows, concerts and other activities designed to draw visitors to the Village.

Courts and other County Offices should remain near the Courthouse Green Area in order to support a higher density of uses at the historic area. This will continue to support the existing businesses and maintain vitality in the area.

