Part 3: Comprehensive Plan Elements

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Chapter 3.1 Land Use Element

3.1.1: OVERVIEW

The Land Use Element tells the history of land development in the County and presents recommendations and strategies to shape the future of the County. This element provides direction for both the intensity and quality of development and specifically addresses aspects of growth management intended to protect the valued rural character of the Lowcountry. Charleston County is a unique coastal county in South Carolina with a vast array of high quality natural resources, a wide range of communities and neighborhoods, and a variety of land uses ranging from untouched natural habitats to highly developed urban centers. In some parts of the County, these divergent land uses are located in close proximity to one another, while in other areas more of a gradual change in the landscape exists as one moves outward from the urban centers of the Cities of Charleston and North Charleston, and the Town of Mount Pleasant.

Updating and reviewing the County's *Comprehensive Plan* provides an opportunity to not only address the intensity of future development, but to truly focus on maintaining the features of the unique Lowcountry landscape that make Charleston County a cherished place to live, work, and play. The land use pattern and the quality of the built and natural environments define the character that makes Charleston County different from other places in South Carolina and the country.

The Land Use Element is designed to tell the story of where the County is and where it desires to be in regard to the utilization of its land resources. This is accomplished through a detailed existing land use inventory and establishment of over arching goals supported by a series of strategies and recommendations to promote implementation and action.

The Land Use Element strives to provide a balance between protection of natural landscapes and logical and sustainable development patterns that support economic development and job growth.

Purpose and Intent

The following land use information, recommendations, and strategies reinforce the Urban Growth Boundary, help manage growth, and strengthen the rural and urban/suburban character of areas of the County. The recommendations and strategies, particularly those contained in the Future Land Use portion of the Plan, are intended to provide guidance for the location and intensity of land uses to support the County in its review and update of the Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance. The Growth Management portion of the Plan provides qualitative strategies to shape the character of preserved and developed land areas in the County and further distinguish the Rural and Urban/Suburban Areas. Combined, the associated aspects of the Land Use Element establish a flexible yet predictable method for determining the appropriateness of proposed development to shape the future of the County.

Land Use Background

The history of land use planning in Charleston County has evolved over the last few decades. Prior to the adoption of the *1999 Comprehensive Plan*, various entities in the County prepared individual land use plans to reflect their visions for their portion of the County. Starting in 1997, the County undertook their first comprehensive planning effort to bring these community level plans together into a consolidated vision for the County. One of the key themes that was relevant then and which carries forward today is the distinction between the characteristics of the rural landscape and the more urban character of the developed portions of the County.

Urban Growth Boundary

In the 1999 Plan, a Suburban/Rural Area Edge was established as a tool to delineate the Rural Area from the Urban/Suburban Area. During the *Five-Year Review* of the Plan in 2003, the Suburban/Rural Area Edge was moved from Brownswood Road to Main Road on Johns Island, placing more of the County in the Urban/Suburban Area. An application to move the Suburban/Rural Area Edge back to its original location was approved in 2004. Over the years, the Suburban/Rural Area Edge came to be thought of as an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), recognized by the public, the municipalities in the County, and other service providers. The *2008 Plan Update* reflected this change in thinking, identifying the delineating line as the Urban Growth Boundary. *Section 3.1.5, Growth Management,* discusses the Urban Growth Boundary in more detail.

The Urban/Suburban Area is located within the Urban Growth Boundary and is characterized by a diverse mix of residential neighborhoods, business/industrial uses, road frontage development, and undeveloped areas. High levels of infrastructure and services and medium to high intensity development exist within the Urban/Suburban Area.

The Rural Area is located outside of the Urban Growth Boundary and is identified by agricultural uses, forests, tidal marshes and freshwater wetlands, which dominate the landscape. It is traversed by scenic rural roads, and dotted with historic buildings and archaeological sites indigenous to the Lowcountry. Low levels of infrastructure and services and low intensity development exist within the Rural Area.

The challenge the County faces with the Urban Growth Boundary is that it requires cooperation from jurisdictions such as the Cities of Charleston and North Charleston and the Town of Mount Pleasant and other service providers for it to be implemented effectively. Some jurisdictions do recognize the boundary; however, there is no inter-jurisdictional agreement regarding the location of the Urban Growth Boundary or the criteria to change its location. The municipalities in the County have the power to establish their own boundary and to adopt amendments to it by approving annexations and development which may be in conflict with the County established Urban Growth Boundary. The only municipalities in the County that have adopted Urban Growth Boundaries are the City of Charleston and the Town of Mount Pleasant.

One of the main focuses of the *Five-Year Review* was to review and revise the location of the County's Urban Growth Boundary (as appropriate) for consistency with the Urban Growth Boundaries adopted by the City of Charleston and Town of Mount Pleasant and to better follow parcel boundaries and geographic features. County staff coordinated with staff from the City of Charleston and Town of Mount Pleasant when reviewing the location of the Urban Growth Boundaries adopted by each jurisdiction. In some instances where differences between the Urban Growth Boundaries existed, the County found it appropriate to revise its Urban Growth Boundary to match those adopted by the other jurisdictions, as described in more detailed below. In other instances, the County found the location of its Urban Growth Boundary to be appropriate even when differences with the Urban Growth Boundaries adopted by other jurisdictions existed. In such cases, the County requested that those jurisdictions examine their Urban Growth Boundaries for consistency with the County's Urban Growth Boundary during the five-year reviews of their respective comprehensive plans.

The County's Urban Growth Boundary was revised to match the City of Charleston's Urban Growth Boundary in several locations in the St. Andrews and Johns Island areas; however, a few differences still remain between the locations of the two Urban Growth Boundaries. The main difference is that the City of Charleston's Urban Growth Boundary places the Sol Legare Community on James Island in the Rural Area while the County's Urban Growth Boundary places that community in the Urban/Suburban Area. This difference has existed since 2003, when the County moved its Urban Growth Boundary in order to place all of James Island in the Urban/Suburban Area. This change was made because high levels of infrastructure and public services that define the Urban/Suburban area existed across the entire island, including within the Sol Legare Community.

Slight differences between the Urban Growth Boundaries adopted by the County and Town of Mount Pleasant exist in the East Cooper Area. The County reviewed these differences and found the location of its Urban Growth Boundary to be appropriate and requested the Town examine their Urban Growth Boundary location for consistency with the County's during the five-year review of their comprehensive plan.

The changes in the Urban Growth Boundary proposed as part of the *Five-Year Review* can be seen on *Map 3.1.2.A*. The Urban Growth Boundary changes resulted in the movement of approximately 1,759 acres from the Urban/Suburban Area to the Rural Area. Of this total, approximately 510 acres were in the City of Charleston and approximately 1,249 acres were unincorporated. The changes also resulted in the movement of approximately 1,212 acres from the Rural Area to the Urban/Suburban Area. Of this total, approximately 1,209 acres were located in the City of Charleston and just under three acres were unincorporated. This data is based on Charleston County Assessor's Office data available on May 29, 2014.

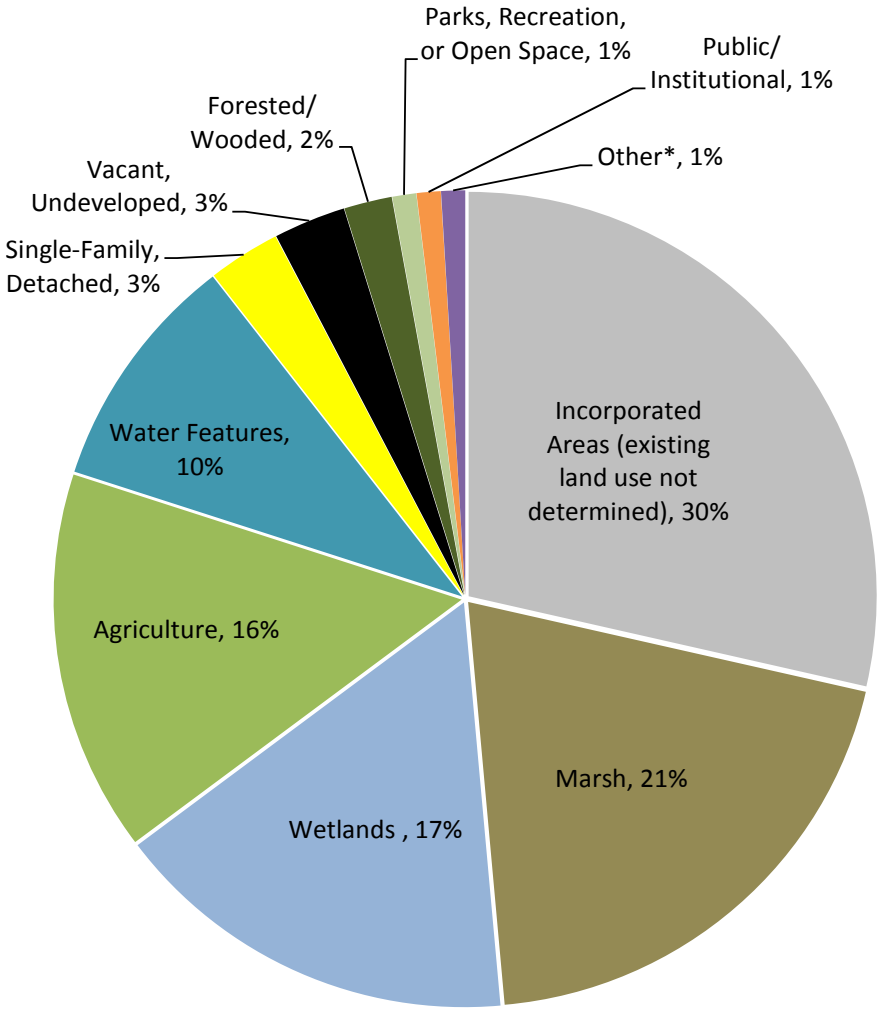
3.1.2: EXISTING LAND USE

Inventory of Existing Conditions

The County completed its first comprehensive inventory of the existing land uses in the unincorporated portions of the County in 2007. A second existing land use inventory was conducted in 2013 utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology, current County records, and 2012 oblique aerial images (Pictometry). The existing land use categories, statistics, and map are illustrated in *Figure 3.1.1: Existing Land Use Pie Chart* and on the following pages.

It is important to note that approximately 30 percent of the land area of the County is incorporated and that the majority of the incorporated area is located in the Urban/Suburban Area. Almost 50 percent of the land area in the unincorporated County contains wetlands, marsh, and other water features, and an additional 18 percent is forestland or in agricultural or silvicultural use.

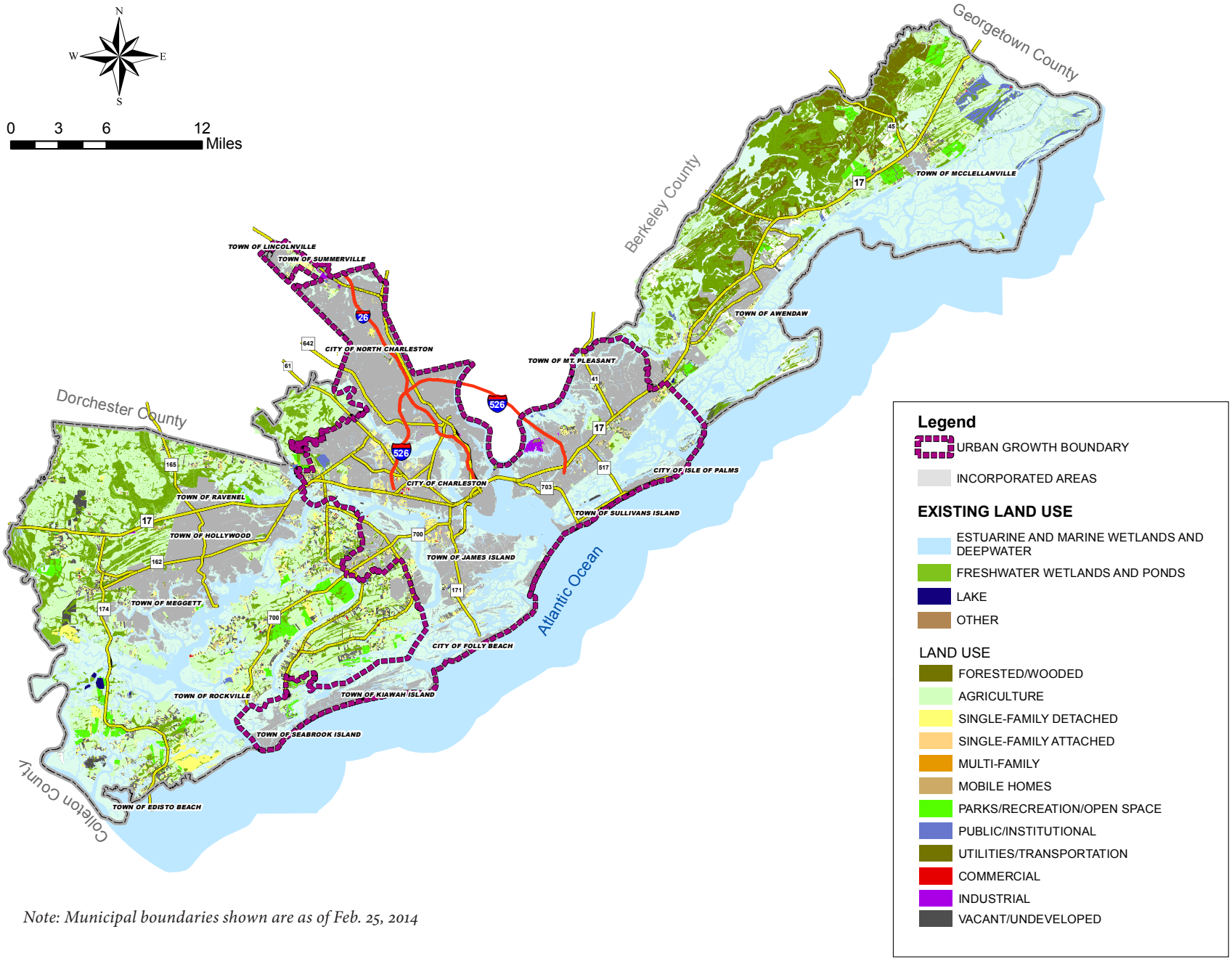
Figure 3.1.1: Existing Land Use Pie Chart



*Other includes single-family attached, mobile homes, commercial, industrial, and utilities/transportation.

Sources: Charleston County Tax Assessor data, GIS data, and oblique aerial images (Pictometry, 2012).

Map 3.1.1: Existing Land Use Map



Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of Feb. 25, 2014

3.1.3: GENERAL LAND USE POLICIES

Overview

The Land Use Element Goal and Strategies provide direction regarding the overall approach to land use planning in the County. They address the long-term vision for land use and establish strategic actions that County Council can take to carry out the recommendations contained in the Future Land Use and Growth Management sections that follow.

Land Use Element Goal

Accommodate quality growth in a way that respects the unique character of different parts of the County, promotes economic opportunity where appropriate, respects private property rights, is coordinated with the provision of community and public facilities, and protects cultural and natural resources.

Land Use Element Needs

Land Use Element needs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Reinforcing the significance of the Urban Growth Boundary through interjurisdictional coordination;
- Preserving the rural character of the County;
- Encouraging compact growth where infrastructure already exists;
- Providing guidance for the location, character, and intensity of land uses in the County; and
- Authorizing innovative planning strategies that respond to emerging land use policy needs, with focus on the form and mix of land uses in land use plans.

Land Use Element Strategies and Time Frames

The following strategic actions should be undertaken by the County in support of the purpose and intent of the Land Use Element. These implementation strategies will be reviewed a minimum of every five years and updated every ten years from the date of adoption of this Plan.

LU 1. Protect and enhance the environmental quality of: freshwater and saltwater wetlands and recharge areas; creek, marsh and river front lands; beaches; and access to beaches and waterways.

LU 2. Implement design character that enhances the quality of development along commercial corridors and establish scenic corridors and areas of environmental and cultural significance.

LU 3. Foster the rural character of land outside the Urban Growth Boundary, encouraging lower density development.

LU 4. Coordinate land use patterns with transportation, housing, employment and retail development to provide communities and neighborhoods where people can live and work.

LU 5. Reinforce the location of the Urban Growth Boundary and the criteria to change its location through coordination with the Cities of Charleston and North Charleston, the Town of Mount Pleasant, and service providers.

LU 6. Encourage compact growth in already developed areas, redevelopment, and infill of existing vacant sites inside the Urban Growth Boundary over development in low growth areas, giving high priority to areas of greatest employment and residential density.

LU 7. Continue the *Comprehensive Plan* implementation initiatives adopted by County Council.

LU 8. Establish programs and policies which ensure new growth contributes its fair share to the costs associated with growth.

LU 9. Require that any application affecting County resources be reviewed by the County for consistency with the adopted Future Land Use Plan.

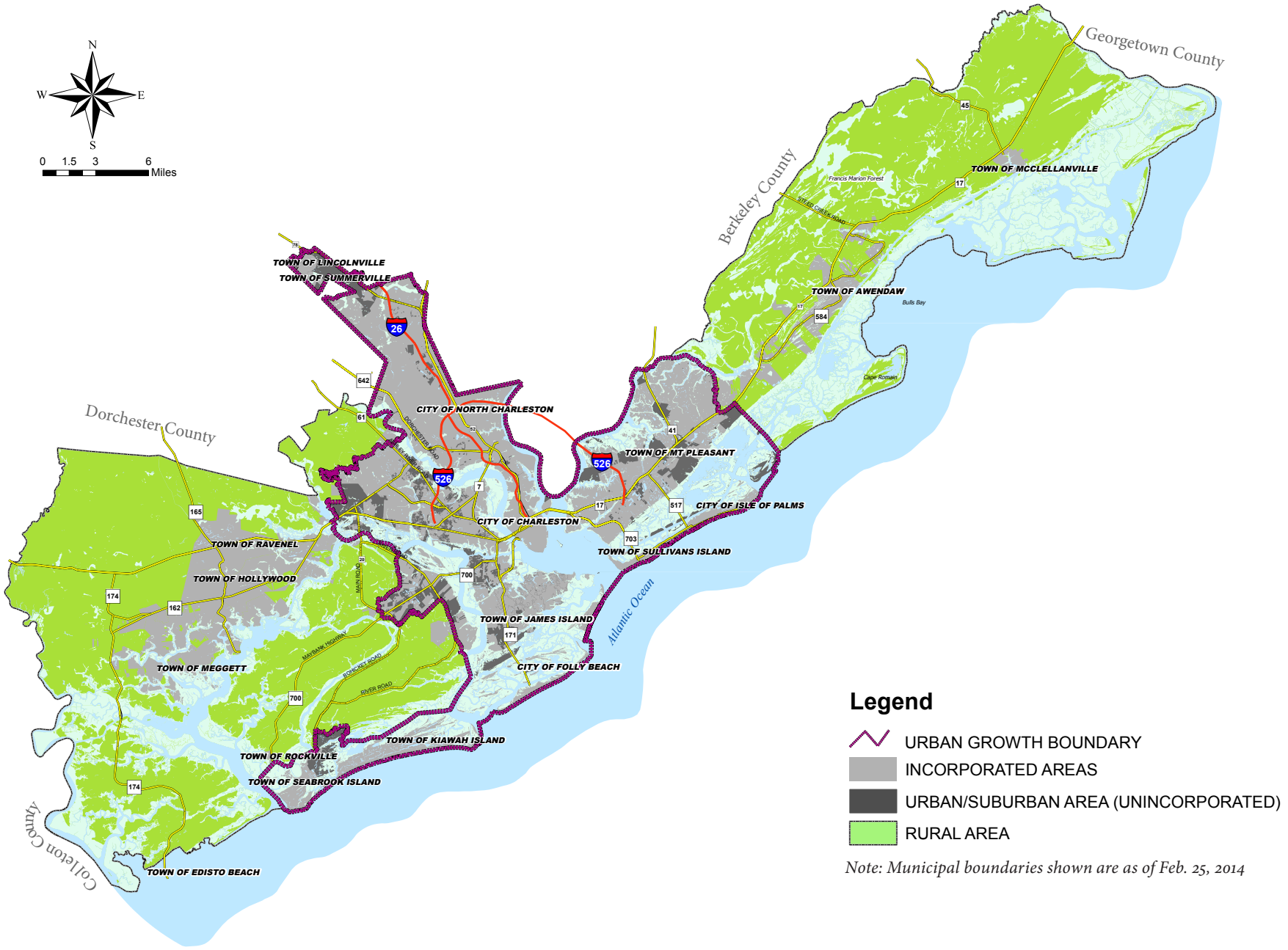
LU 10. Adopt innovative planning and zoning techniques such as: (1) Clustering or Conservation Design and (2) Form-based Zoning District regulations to authorize a combination of land uses within communities, including residential, service, and employment land uses.

LU 11. Density bonuses beyond the maximum density of the recommended future land use designation may be approved when affordable and/or workforce housing units are included in proposed developments in the Urban/Suburban Area, provided there is no negative effect on the existing community.

LU 12. Continue to work with the City of Charleston, residents, and stakeholders in the DuPont | Wappoo Community to execute the DuPont | Wappoo Memorandum of Understanding to implement the DuPont | Wappoo Community Plan, which is adopted as part of this Plan by reference.

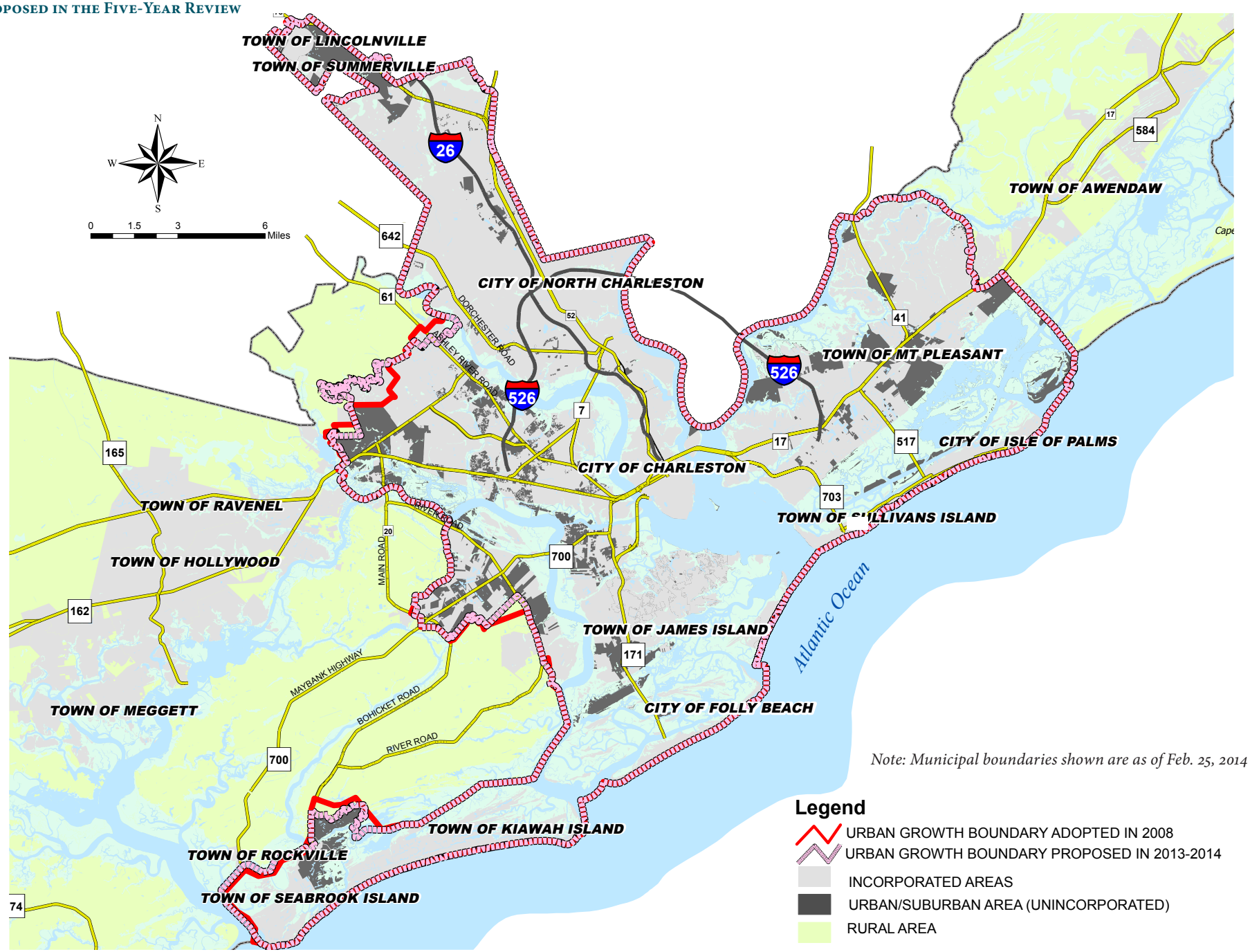
LU 13. Continue to work with the residents and stakeholders in the Parkers Ferry community to implement the Parkers Ferry Community Plan, which is adopted as part of this Plan by reference.

Map 3.1.2: Growth Management Areas



Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of Feb. 25, 2014

Map 3.1.2.a: Urban Growth Boundary Changes Proposed in the Five-Year Review



3.1.4: FUTURE LAND USE PLAN APPROACH

The approach to future land use includes a multi-tiered effort that incorporates recommendations for growth management, treatment of major planning efforts, specific land uses and densities within the Future Land Use Plan, and development quality and character through a series of guidelines for the Rural and Urban/Suburban Areas of the County. Combined, these recommendations and the other elements of the Plan are the criteria against which all development proposals should be evaluated for conformance with the *Comprehensive Plan*.

3.1.5: GROWTH MANAGEMENT

One of the growth management tools implemented in this plan is the Urban Growth Boundary, which clearly defines two distinct Growth Management Areas - the Rural Area and the Urban/Suburban Area. The Urban Growth Boundary implements the desired County policy to promote higher intensity growth in the Urban/Suburban Area where adequate infrastructure and services are in place, at the same time allowing for preservation of the rural character of the majority of the County. *Map 3.1.2: Growth Management Areas* shows the geographic boundaries of these two Growth Management Areas. All future land use and development quality recommendations are tied to these areas. *Map 3.1.2.A* illustrates the changes in the Urban Growth Boundary proposed as part of the *Five-Year Review*, which are described in detail in Section 3.1.1.

The City of Charleston and the Town of Mount Pleasant have both adopted Urban Growth Boundaries, as well; however, the locations of those Urban Growth Boundaries vary slightly from the location of the Urban Growth Boundary adopted by Charleston County. To be implemented effectively, cooperation with jurisdictions such as the Cities of Charleston and North Charleston, the Town of Mount Pleasant, and other service providers is needed. Cooperation regarding the location of the Urban Growth Boundary and criteria to change its location should be pursued. More information regarding institutionalizing the Urban Growth Boundary is described in detail in *Chapter 3.9 Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element*.

3.1.6: SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS

A. Major Planning Efforts

Major Planning Efforts include specialized initiatives in both the Rural and Urban/Suburban Areas of the County where multi-jurisdictional planning is required to ensure that the goals and strategies of this Plan are met. The Major Planning Efforts adopted as part of the *2008 Plan Update*, which included addressing the southern portion of Johns Island and the Highway 17 North corridor, as well as implementing Developments of County Significance, were accomplished in 2009, 2011 and 2012, respectively.

The Major Planning Efforts identified during the *2013/2014 Five-Year Review* of the Plan include reinforcing the Urban Growth Boundary through interjurisdictional coordination and addressing the proposed Spring Grove development, which encompasses approximately 14,500 acres in western Charleston County, as identified on *Map 3.1.3: Special Planning Areas. Chapter 3.9 Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element* describes each Major Planning Effort and the recommended implementation strategies.

B. Urban/Suburban Area Review

Map 3.1.3: Special Planning Areas identifies areas in the Urban/Suburban Area of Charleston County that require further study regarding land use, zoning, and site design consistency with adjacent jurisdictions. These areas are located in Johns Island, James Island, West Ashley, East Cooper, and the North Area. In some instances, the future land use recommendations in these areas are inconsistent with the zoning and/or existing land uses. In other cases, existing land uses and/or future land use recommendations are not consistent and/or are not compatible with land uses and form of development on adjacent parcels located both within the unincorporated County and within other jurisdictions.

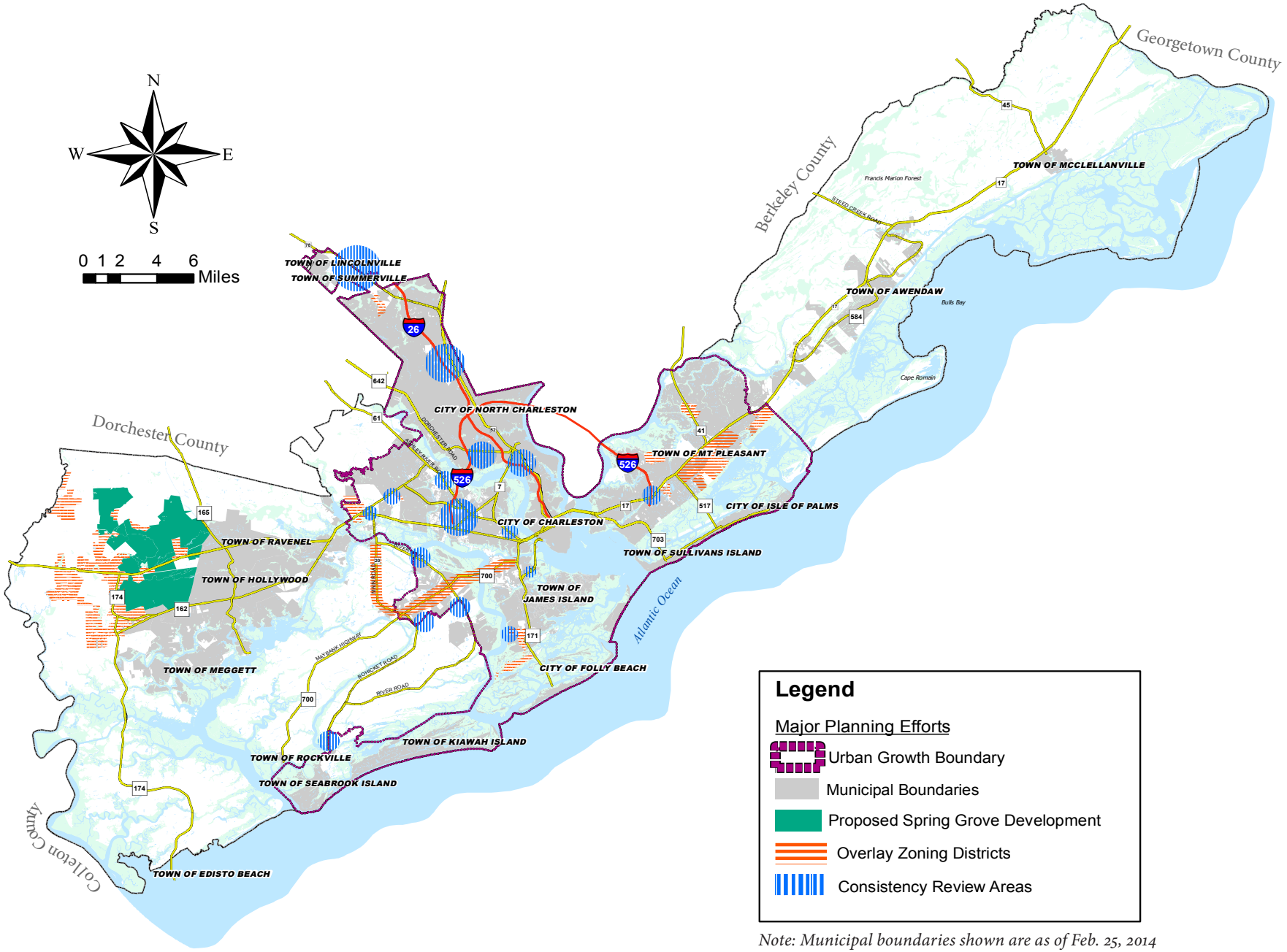
Chapter 3.9 Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element describes the recommended implementation strategies to address these issues.

Chapter 3.9 Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element also describes the process for reviewing the Urban/Suburban Area zoning districts for consistency with Comprehensive Plan policies regarding uses, densities, intensities, dimensional standards, and provision of housing types that are desired and can be afforded by new and future County residents.

C. Rural Area Review

Map 3.1.3: Special Planning Areas identifies areas in the Rural Area of Charleston County where there are inconsistencies between the future land use designations, zoning, and/or existing land uses. *Chapter 3.9 Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element* describes the recommended implementation strategies to address these issues and also describes the process for reviewing the Rural Residential (RR-3) zoning district to allow development to occur at a maximum density of one dwelling per acre, consistent with the density recommendation of this Plan.

Map 3.1.3: Special Planning Areas



Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of Feb. 25, 2014

D. Overlay Zoning Districts

Map 3.1.3: Special Planning Areas identifies both currently adopted overlay zoning districts that need to be reviewed and areas of the County where new overlay zoning districts should be created including:

- Maybank Highway Corridor including James Island;
- Main Road Corridor;
- Sweetgrass Basket Stand Special Consideration Area;
- Customized overlay zoning districts for the areas in the Urban/Suburban Cultural Community Protection future land use category;
- Customized overlay zoning districts for the areas in the Rural Cultural Community Protection future land use category; and
- Aircraft Accident Potential Zones and high noise zones surrounding Joint Base Charleston.

The purpose of these overlay zoning districts is to ensure that land use and design standards implement the desires of the community and are coordinated among relevant jurisdictions. Descriptions of each overlay zoning district, along with the recommended strategies and processes, can be found in *Chapter 3.9 Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element.*

3.1.7: FUTURE LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the descriptions and density recommendations for the future land use categories identified on the *Future Land Use Map (Map 3.1.4). Map 3.1.5* provides a detail of the Urban/Suburban Area, followed by a series of maps showing the existing overlay zoning districts with their respective land use recommendations.

A. Rural Area Future Land Use Categories

The following future land use categories apply in the Rural Area of the County.

Conservation Management

These are areas consisting of various natural resources located in the County. They typically include highland areas surrounded by marsh or water, small islands, fragile natural land, or other areas as determined by their changing nature. Residential development in these areas should be very low intensity and may be in the form of Planned Development Zoning Districts. Densities will be based upon criteria such as FEMA designations, historical erosion patterns, nature of plants and wildlife, soils, ability to provide services, and other pertinent information.

Resource Management

Resource Management areas generally encompass undeveloped lands within the Rural Area that are used principally for timber production, wildlife habitat, recreational and commercial fishing, and limited agriculture. These areas encompass significant acreage of fresh, brackish, and saltwater tidal marshes, as well as important habitat for non-game and endangered species.

Designation of Resource Management areas recognizes the importance of a coordinated effort to protect and conserve natural resources while allowing for the continued economic use of private property and public lands. The type and intensity of development in Resource Management areas should support the needs of timber production, wildlife habitat management, recreation, agriculture, and areas of environmental sensitivity.

Developed uses should not constitute a threat to the resource base through either physical encroachment or indirect impacts. Development should also be compatible with the land management requirements essential to maintenance of the resource base. Accordingly, residential development should be limited to very low density, with a maximum density of one dwelling unit per 25 acres. Clustering and other techniques may be used to ensure compatibility with Best Management Practices.

Wadmalaw Agricultural Preservation

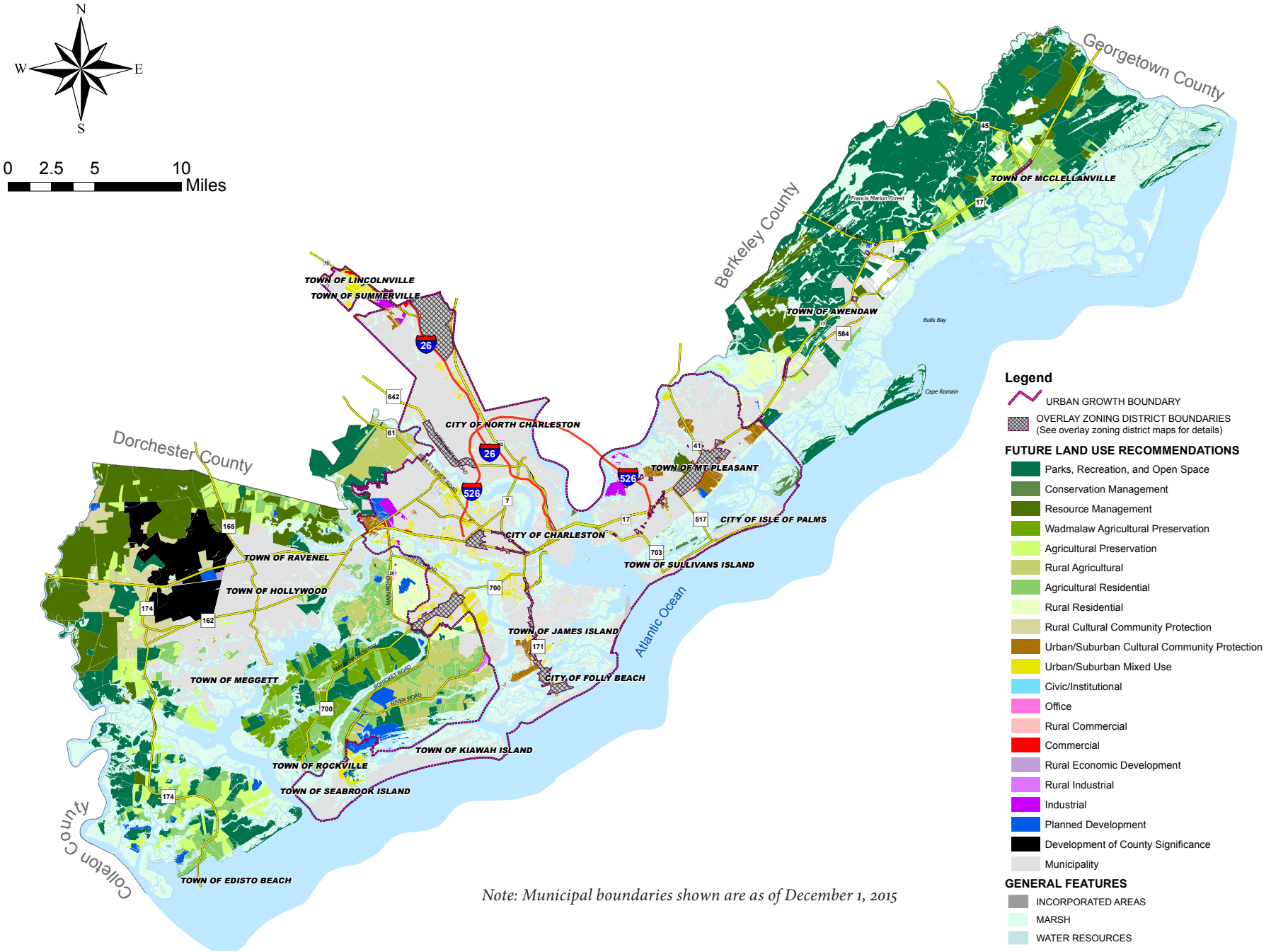
The uses recommended for this future land use category are similar to those recommended for the Agricultural Preservation use category; however, the recommended density is lower and this designation applies specifically to Wadmalaw Island. The incorporation of this designation is also consistent with the *Wadmalaw Island Planned Development Guidelines* adopted by the County in 1988.

Agricultural Preservation

The majority of land within the Rural Area contains soil types recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the best farmland for agricultural production. These include areas characterized by soils classified as prime farmland, unique soils, and soils of statewide importance. Designation of farmland preservation areas recognizes the importance of preserving Charleston County's farming resources, including individual farms and areas of productive soils, as well as a way of life valued by the community. Changes brought on by higher energy costs should result in more demand for agricultural products that are locally grown and harvested for local markets.

The types and intensities of development in the Agricultural Preservation Area should primarily support the needs of the farming industry, secondarily allowing for compatible residential development. Residential density of one dwelling per five acres to one dwelling per ten acres applies, except on Edisto Island which has a residential density of one dwelling per ten

Map 3.1.4: Future Land Use



Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of December 1, 2015

acres. The residential density is coupled with development guidelines and incentives to retain significant acreage available for farming. Specific regulatory techniques may include flexible site planning guidelines, minimum lot sizes, or conservation or clustered design with retention of open space. Such provisions will maintain the agricultural land base, while enhancing development values particularly along waterfront properties.

Agricultural Residential

This land use category consists of rural residential Settlement Areas that have been subdivided into small properties. Proposed densities generally range from one dwelling per acre to one dwelling per five acres. "By-right" uses include residential development, agriculture, and other uses necessary to support the viability of agriculture.

Agricultural Residential includes Settlement Areas, which are small older crossroads communities, family lands, typical suburban-style subdivisions, frontage lots along local roads, waterfront developments, and vacant land that has been subdivided for residential use that may or may not yet be built upon. The criteria for additional parcels to qualify for inclusion into a "Settlement Area" are as follows:

1. Parcel size of 30 acres or less (including highland areas and freshwater wetlands) on parcels existing prior to April 21, 1999; and

2. Parcel must be located in an AG-8, AG-10, or RM Zoning District or adjacent to lands currently zoned AGR; and

3. Parcel must be either within 1,000 feet of an existing AGR Zoning District or show the same obvious spatial characteristics of other existing AGR Zoning Districts in the agricultural area; and

4. Parcels are not located on Wadmalaw Island or Edisto Island.

Rural Agriculture

The intent for this area is to retain the viability of agriculture while accommodating low levels of population growth. Densities range from one dwelling per four acres to one dwelling per eight acres. Incentive provisions should be made to encourage conservation design to retain acreage suitable for maintaining agriculture, protection of natural, historic, and cultural resources, and provision of open space. Specific regulatory techniques may include flexible site planning guidelines, minimum lot sizes, or conservation or clustered design with retention of open space. Such provisions will maintain the agricultural land base, while enhancing development values particularly along waterfront properties.

Rural Residential

In this designation, densities range from one dwelling per acre to one dwelling per three acres. Where appropriate, provisions should be made for clustered development to retain open space and preserve natural features. The intent of this area is to accommodate modest population growth to reduce demand for public services and facilities while retaining rural community character.

Rural Cultural Community Protection

This future land use designation is intended to protect and promote the culture and unique development patterns of existing communities and sustain their strong sense of community. The communities in this category are located in the Rural Area and are typically less developed than other areas due to the lack of off-site water and sewer utilities. Much of the development is single-

family residential with many churches. Historically, many small neighborhood businesses existed in these communities; however, there are very few neighborhood businesses existing today. The communities have a strong tie to the natural resources in the area and have many earthen roads that connect to state roads.

Future development should be compatible with the existing community and the residential density should not exceed one dwelling per acre. Residences, agriculture, forestry, churches, cemeteries, cultural and historic buildings, schools, post offices, etc. should be allowed. Compatible businesses and offices should be allowed to offer services and employment opportunities for local residents, provided the building scale and coverage fits with existing structures. This designation should not be located on Wadmalaw Island or Edisto Island, or within Planned Development or Form-Based Zoning Districts. Zoning and land development regulations in these areas should be customized to meet the needs of the individual communities.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

This category provides for lands intended to remain in a predominantly natural state; lands that have been protected through permanent conservation easements or are publicly owned that significantly restrict development; and open spaces, green spaces, and parks and recreation, as defined in this Plan.

Civic/Institutional

Civic and institutional uses such as churches, schools, and community centers make up a large portion of the "sense of community" that is Charleston County. Appropriate locations for these uses include prominent locations within communities, such as key intersections, within Settlement Areas, or within nodes that have safe access and visibility from major roads.

Rural Commercial

Commercial development in the Rural Area is limited to retail and service uses that serve the residential population and agricultural activities, provide employment opportunities, and do not negatively impact the surrounding community.

Rural Industrial

The Rural Industrial areas are designated to accommodate low impact industrial uses. Activities that are noxious are prohibited. High-tech industrial uses are encouraged over traditional smokestack or manufacturing industries. Industries that support the rural economy and provide employment opportunities for rural residents, such as warehousing, agricultural processing, agricultural manufacturing, farm equipment sales, repair and rental services, welding services and other services to support the rural population, are encouraged.

Rural Economic Development Area

Rural Economic Development areas are designated to accommodate regional business parks that contain professional office, wholesale, warehousing and high technology industrial uses that support the local rural economy and provide employment opportunities for residents in the Rural Area.

B. Urban/Suburban Area Future Land Use Categories

The following future land use categories apply in the Urban/Suburban Area of the County.

Urban/Suburban Cultural Community Protection

This future land use designation is intended to protect

and promote the culture and unique development patterns of existing communities and sustain their strong sense of community. The communities in this designation are located in the Urban/Suburban Area and are characterized by low density single-family residential development, limited commercial activity, and some agricultural uses. Many of the roads are paved with connections to county or state maintained roads; however, earthen roads still exist.

Future development should be compatible with the existing land uses and development patterns and the residential density should be a maximum of four dwellings per acre. Compatible institutional, office, and low intensity commercial uses should be allowed to offer services and employment opportunities for local residents, provided the building scale and coverage fits with existing structures. Sweetgrass Basket making, including sales, should be recognized and promoted. Zoning and land development regulations in these areas should be customized to meet the needs of the individual communities.

Urban/Suburban Mixed Use

This designation encourages compatible mixed use development and a general land use pattern that includes a variety of housing types, retail, service, employment, civic and compatible industrial uses, as well as public and open spaces and linkages to public transit in a walkable environment. This category is intended to allow for growth to occur within the Urban Growth Boundary by allowing urban mixed uses and affordable housing in the Urban/Suburban Area while preserving and protecting the Rural Area for future generations. Densities of four or more dwellings per acre should be allowed. Urban agriculture should also be permitted.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

This category provides for lands intended to remain in a predominantly natural state; lands that have been protected through permanent conservation easements or are publicly owned that significantly restrict development; and open spaces, green spaces, and parks and recreation, as defined in this Plan.

Civic/Institutional

Civic and institutional uses such as churches, schools, and community centers make up a large portion of the "sense of community" that is Charleston County. Appropriate locations for these uses include prominent locations in communities, such as key intersections or within neighborhoods that have safe access and visibility from major roads.

Office

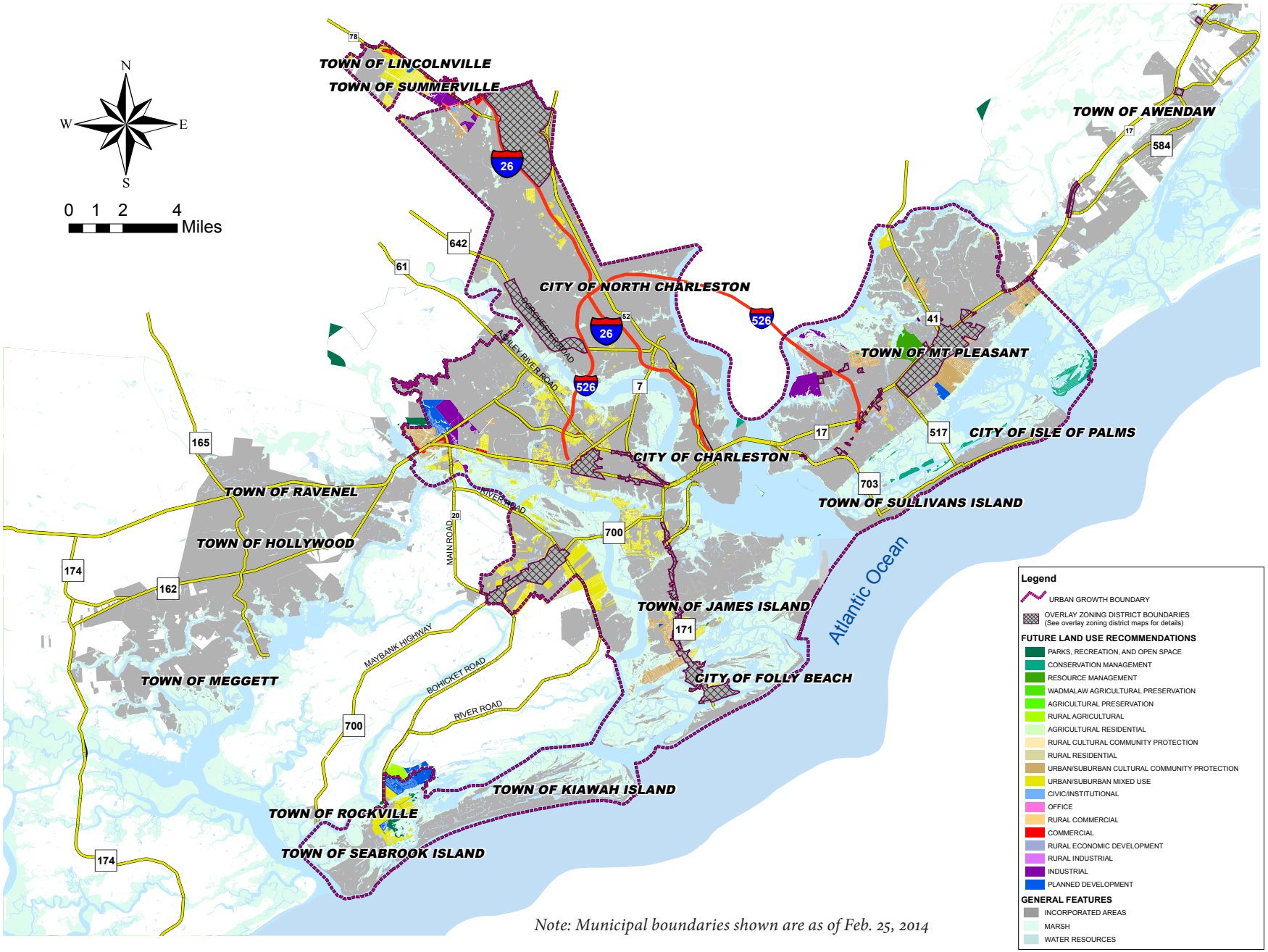
This land use category provides for a range of professional and other office uses including: administrative, professional, business, government, and medical. The scale and intensity of office development should complement the surrounding area and provide employment opportunities for the residents of Charleston County. This designation encourages compatible mixed use development and a general land use pattern that includes a variety of housing types, retail, service, employment, and civic uses, as well as public and open spaces and linkages to public transit in a walkable environment. Residential densities of four or more dwellings per acre should be allowed. Urban agriculture should also be permitted.

Table 3.1.1: Future Land Use Residential Densities

	Future Land Use Categories	Residential Density Guidelines
The Rural Area	Conservation Management	Consistent with the Natural Resource Management (NRM) District contained in the *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance*
	Resource Management	1 dwelling per 25 acres
	Wadmalaw Island Agricultural Preservation	1 dwelling per 15 acres to 1 dwelling per 7 acres*
	Agricultural Preservation	1 dwelling per 10 acres to 1 dwelling per 5 acres 1 dwelling per 10 acres on Edisto Island
	Rural Agriculture	1 dwelling per 8 acres to 1 dwelling per 4 acres
	Rural Residential	1 dwelling per 3 acres to 1 dwelling per acre
	Agricultural Residential	1 dwelling per 5 acres to 1 dwelling per acre
	Rural Cultural Community Protection	1 dwelling per 25 acres to 1 dwelling per acre Not permitted on Wadmalaw or Edisto Islands
Planned Development Zoning Districts	All Future Land Use Categories	See Chapter 3.1.7.C, Planned Developments, of this Plan
Form-Based Zoning Districts	All Future Land Use Categories	See Chapter 3.1.7.D, Form-Based Zoning District
Urban/Suburban Area	Urban/Suburban Cultural Community Protection	1 to 4 dwellings per acre
	Urban/Suburban Mixed Use	4 or more dwellings per acre

** The area of a parcel in the Wadmalaw Agricultural Preservation designation within 1,000 feet of the OCRM Critical Line has a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 3 acres.*

Map 3.1.5: Urban/Suburban Future Land Use Detail



Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of Feb. 25, 2014

Commercial
This designation encourages compatible mixed use development and a general land use pattern that includes a variety of housing types, retail, service, employment, civic and compatible industrial uses, as well as public and open spaces and linkages to public transit in a walkable environment. Residential densities of four or more dwellings per acre should be allowed. Urban agriculture should also be permitted.

Industrial
Major industrial uses and industrial parks are included within this land use designation. High-tech industrial uses are encouraged. Industries that support economic development goals and strategies should be given priority. Appropriate uses include manufacturing, distribution facilities, flex space, industrial support activities, ports and transportation related facilities. This designation also encourages compatible mixed use development and a general land use pattern that includes a variety of housing types, retail, service, employment, civic and compatible industrial uses, as well as public and open spaces and linkages to public transit in a walkable environment. Residential densities of four or more dwellings per acre should be allowed. Urban agriculture should also be permitted.

C. Planned Developments Zoning Districts
Planned Development Zoning Districts (Planned Developments) are a type of zoning district and planning tool intended to promote innovative site planning, mixing of uses, conservation of natural and cultural resources, and efficient use and provision of public facilities and services in order to accomplish the Purpose and Intent of the *Comprehensive Plan.* Planned Developments ensure the orderly development of projects that do not fit the typical future land use or zoning prototypes by allowing flexibility in future land use recommendations and zoning restrictions as trade-offs for improved design amenities, infrastructure provision, and mixed use.

While Planned Developments may permit flexibility in future land use recommendations and zoning restrictions, they still must comply with the overall Purpose and Intent of this Plan. Additionally, Conservation Design may be used in Planned Developments to offset the provision of significant amounts of permanently protected open spaces or agricultural land. (See *Conservation Design Toolbox* in *Appendix A*).

This Plan places a strong emphasis on balancing social, economic, and environmental considerations and recognizes the need for incentives to promote mixed -use development, conservation of open space and agricultural lands, and the provision of affordable housing. Some of the incentives include, but are not limited to:

- Density bonuses, as described in sub-sections "a" and "b" below, may be allowed for Planned Developments that include at least fifty percent (50%) permanently protected Common Open Space and comply with all other requirements of this Plan and the *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance.* These density bonuses shall not be applicable to areas in (1) the Conservation Management and Resource Management Future Land Use designations, as identified in this Plan; and (2) the Agricultural Preservation Future Land Use designation on Edisto Island, as identified in this Plan.
    a. An increase of up to 20 percent more than the number of dwelling units permitted under the maximum density identified in this Plan for the Rural Residential and Agricultural Residential Future Land Use designations (example calculation: number of dwelling units permitted under the maximum density multiplied by 1.2).

Table 3.1.2: Example of an Increase of Up To 20% Density Bonus

Parcel Size	10 acres
Future Land Use Designation	Agricultural Residential
Maximum Density of the Future Land Use Designation	1 dwelling unit per acre
Number of Dwelling Units Permitted (Maximum Density)	10 dwelling units
Number of Dwelling Units Permitted with 50% Permanently Protected Common Open Space: [# of Dwelling Units Permitted Under Maximum Density X 120%]	[10 dwelling units X 1.2] = 12 dwelling units

Table 3.1.3: Example of an Increase of Up To 120% Density Bonus

Parcel Size	80 acres
Future Land Use Designation	Rural Agriculture
Base Density of Future Land Use Designation	1 dwelling unit per 8 acres
Number of Dwelling Units Permitted (Base Density)	[80 acres / 8] = 10 dwelling units
Number of Dwelling Units Permitted (PD Maximum Density)	[80 acres / 4] = 20 dwelling units
Number of Dwelling Units Permitted with 50% Permanently Protected Common Open Space: [# of Dwelling Units Permitted Under Base Density X 220%]	[10 dwelling units X 2.2] = 22 dwelling units

Table 3.1.2 illustrates a detailed example of this calculation.

b. An increase of up to 120 percent more than the number of dwelling units permitted under the base density of the Future Land Use designation identified in this Plan for all other applicable Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use designations in the Rural Area (excludes (1) "a" above; (2) the Conservation Management and Resource Management Future Land Use designations; ~~and~~ (3) the Agricultural Preservation Future Land Use designation on Edisto Island) (example calculation: number of dwelling units permitted under the base density multiplied by 2.2). *Table 3.1.3* illustrates a detailed example of this calculation.

- Density bonuses beyond the maximum density of the recommended future land use designation may be approved when affordable housing units are included.
- Planned Developments that include a parcel or parcels of land that have varying future land use designations and/or varying zoning classifications may be deemed consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan* if the total density proposed does not exceed the maximum combined density permitted in the future land use designations and/or zoning districts.

D. Form-Based Zoning Districts

A Form-Based Zoning District is a zoning district category and a planning tool that guides the form and character of the built environment to create development patterns that coordinate the location of a variety of land uses with a connected transportation network in a manner that accommodates pedestrian mobility and controls sprawl.

These development patterns further the Land Use, Economic Development, Population, Housing, Transportation, Community Facilities, Natural Resources, Cultural Resources, Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination, and Energy Element strategies contained in this Plan by addressing the County's emerging land use policy concerns with innovative planning concepts. Increased residential and commercial sprawl and automobile-dominated transportation networks have created demand for innovative planning and zoning techniques such as Form-Based Zoning District regulations that enable the combination of land uses at densities that are sufficient to support walkability and land use diversity, and that facilitate coordinated and integrated infrastructure planning strategies.

Form-Based Zoning District regulations create predictability in the community planning process by directing the intended form and character of the specific Form-Based Zoning District, while allowing such District to naturally grow over time in response to market conditions. The *Comprehensive Plan* recognizes that the projected build-out time frame of any specific Form-Based Zoning District may far exceed the time frame of the current Comprehensive Plan update, and that the goal of predictability in the long-term community planning process may require the consideration of land use planning strategies not envisioned in the current Plan. Therefore, the Form-Based Zoning District provisions of the *Comprehensive Plan* are intended to complement the future land use recommendations incorporated in Sections 3.1.4 and 3.1.7, the growth management provisions of Section 3.1.5, and the guidelines set forth in Section 3.1.8.

E. Developments of County Significance

Developments of County Significance are defined as proposed developments that (1) have a gross acreage equal to or exceeding 1,000 acres, (2) are located in the Rural Area of the County, and (3) may be considered consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan if they comply with the criteria and requirements of the Developments of County Significance provisions contained in the *Comprehensive Plan* and *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance*. The Plan recognizes that there are Rural Areas throughout the County which may at some time meet this definition and that they should be addressed through appropriate procedural requirements. The *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance* should be amended to establish protocol for submission requirements and review of Developments of County Significance. The following outlines an application, process, and criteria which shall be addressed in the *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance*.

Application

All applications for Developments of County Significance shall include a Comprehensive Plan amendment request(s) and Development Agreement request(s). Additionally, a Rezoning application may be submitted as part of the application for Developments of County Significance. An application to amend the *Comprehensive Plan* pursuant to the Developments of County Significance process may be approved by the County Council if it determines that the proposed amendment is consistent with the overall purpose and intent of the *Comprehensive Plan* and the requirements of the Developments of County Significance provisions contained in the *Comprehensive Plan* and *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance*.

Process

The process shall follow the procedure required by the Charleston County *Zoning and Land Development*

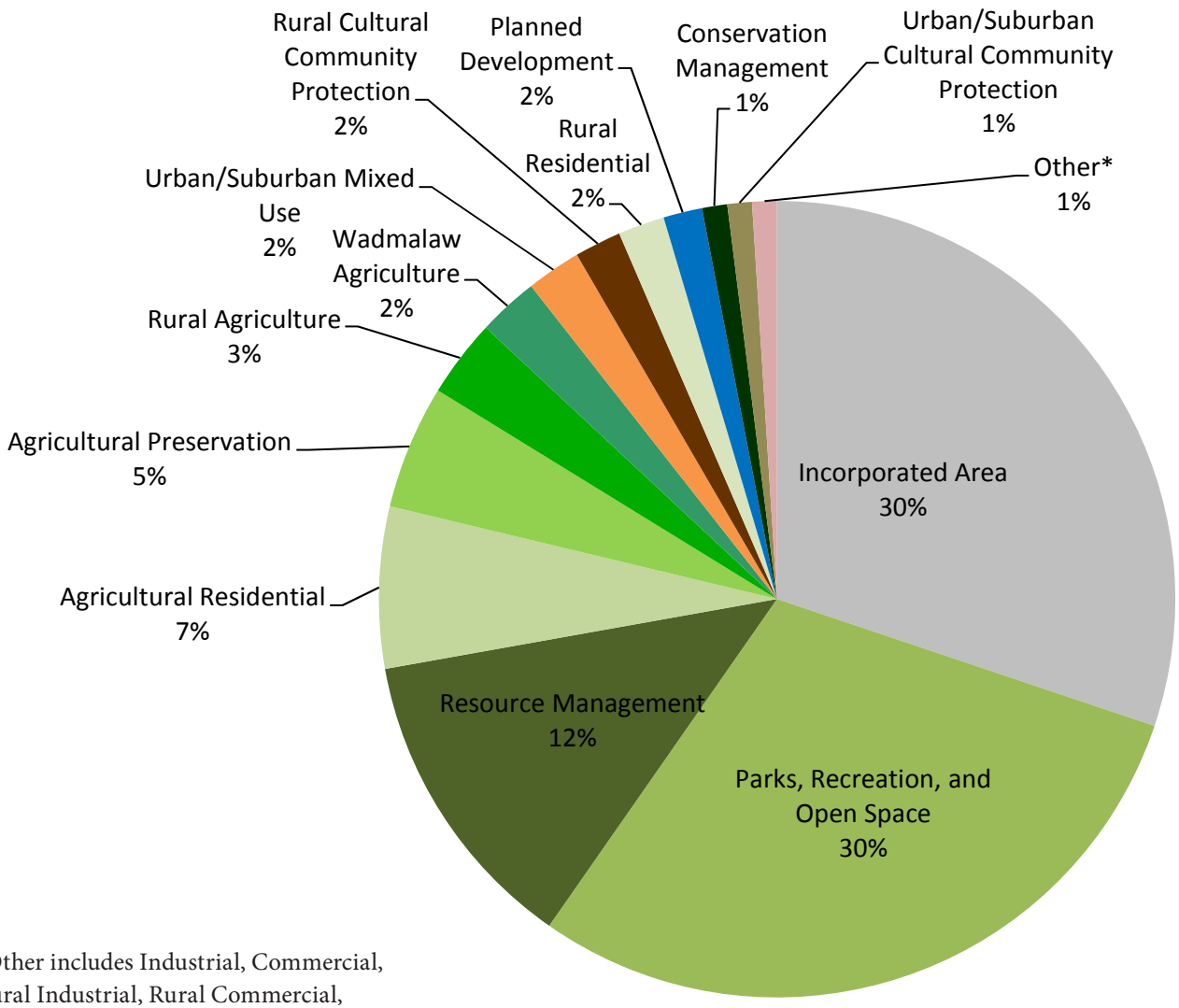
Regulations Ordinance and South Carolina State Law in terms of public hearings, notifications, time-limits, and final determinations for *Comprehensive Plan* amendment requests, Development Agreement requests, Rezoning requests, and for any change on the Zoning Map. Extensive public outreach should be required prior to the submission of an application for a Development of County Significance.

Criteria

All applications shall include documentation addressing each element of the Charleston County *Comprehensive Plan* and shall at a minimum include the following:

- Seventy-five percent (75%) of the land included in the application shall be either private land permanently restricted by deed restriction or conservation easement to clustered or unclustered rural densities, or other areas proposed for private and/or public ownership (e.g., parks, lakes, greenways, parkways, buffer zones, agricultural and silvicultural areas, recreational areas, preserved historic and/or cultural areas, preserved areas of biological significance), or areas to be purchased by the County's Green Belt Bank or other open space preservation organizations. The application shall identify the amount of acreage available for clustered rural density; said acreage shall be excluded from the seventy-five percent (75%) calculation.
- A historic and archaeological resource study;
- Preservation, mitigation and/or management of significant cultural, historic and archaeological sites, resources and landscapes;
- Information regarding the location, density and intensity of proposed land uses for the first five years of the proposed project and projections for each subsequent five year time period until buildout;

FIGURE 3.1.2: FUTURE LAND USE PIE CHART



*Other includes Industrial, Commercial, Rural Industrial, Rural Commercial, Rural Economic Development, Civic, and Office. These Future Land Use categories equate to less than 1% of the total unincorporated acreage.

- An analysis of how the proposed form and character of development is compatible with the intent of the Rural Area guidelines;
- An analysis of how proposed residential land use patterns are coordinated with employment and service opportunities in the area of the proposed development and adjacent areas of the County or other jurisdictions;
- Inclusion of a variety of housing ownership types and affordability;
- Economic development information such as economic feasibility analysis (e.g., estimates of average annual ad valorem tax yields, economic development analysis) of the impact on the local economy and employment market;
- Fiscal impact analysis of the public infrastructure needs;
- List needed and/or required public improvements including but not limited to transportation improvements, educational facilities, public safety services, and government facilities;
- Traffic impact study;
- Interconnected and complete transportation network;
- Analysis of public transit alternatives;
- Provision of transportation alternatives; and
- Emergency evacuation plans.

3.1.8: DEVELOPMENT QUALITY

The following guidelines for the Rural and Urban/Suburban Areas are included to help manage growth in a manner that is consistent with the desired character and quality unique to the communities within Charleston County. The guidelines provide a set of expectations that should be used to evaluate the conformance of applicable development applications with this *Comprehensive Plan*.

A. Rural Area

Purpose and Intent

The Rural Area is located outside of the Urban Growth Boundary and is identified by forests, tidal marshes and freshwater wetlands, which dominate the landscape. They are traversed by scenic rural roads, and dotted with historic buildings and archaeological sites indigenous to the Lowcountry.

Agricultural and forestry activities and geographically dispersed Settlement Areas with homes are secondary to the natural and historic landscapes in the Rural Area. A small number of service and agriculturally oriented businesses are sited along major highways.

The Rural Area is not targeted for public wastewater treatment except when approved by County Council for the general health, safety, and welfare of the community. A significant amount of land is in public ownership, open space easements, agricultural use, timber management, and wildlife habitat uses, contributing to the rural character of Charleston County.

The purpose of establishing the following guidelines for preservation and development in the Rural Area of the County is to:

1. Protect and maintain the natural environment;
2. Promote agri-business and agri-tourism;
3. Designate prominent locations with good access and visibility from major roads for civic or community oriented uses such as churches or schools;
4. Establish and maintain a rural network of roads that

enhances the rural character and does not encourage rural growth;

5. Promote infill of undeveloped portions of existing Settlement Areas to continue to define the edge between the Settlement Areas and the surrounding rural landscape; and
6. Maintain the rural low-density qualities of large portions of the County to preserve the character and culture of the Lowcountry.

Rural Guidelines

The following Rural Guidelines describe the features of preservation or development that are important to maintain the rural qualities of the County. These statements provide guidance for the location, quality and character of future development which are appropriate in the Rural Area and should be considered in the composition of development applications in the Rural Area.

Rural Guideline 1.

Prioritize the protection of agricultural activities, natural landscapes, and cultural resources balanced with low-intensity residential, agricultural, and supportive commercial uses.

Rural Guideline 2.

Develop very low density residential uses to maintain the rural character.

Rural Guideline 3.

Develop gross densities at the higher range of the recommended future land use when Clustering or Conservation Design is used, as exhibited in *Figure 3.1.3*, to offset the provision of significant amounts of preserved land, especially in the Rural Residential and Rural Agriculture Future Land Use categories. (See *Conservation Design Toolbox* in *Appendix A*).

Rural Guideline 4.

Develop gross densities at or above the maximum densities recommended in the future land use categories when Planned Development Zoning Districts, Form-Based Zoning Districts, and/or Developments of County Significance are found to be consistent with the Elements contained in this Plan and the requirements of the *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance*.

Rural Guideline 5.

Establish a pattern of roads and buildings which portrays a traditional rural quality of life with large areas dedicated to agriculture or silviculture, or protected in a natural state to provide habitat for native species.

Rural Guideline 6.

Preserve cultural and historic sites.

Rural Guideline 7.

Designate prominent locations with good access and visibility from major roads for civic or community oriented uses such as churches or schools.

Rural Guideline 8.

Maintain or enhance the visual identity of existing scenic roads.

Rural Guideline 9.

Provide vegetated buffers of fifty feet or more between roads and structures where development occurs along or near designated scenic roads.

Rural Guideline 10.

Maintain rural and agriculturally oriented commercial uses in a dispersed pattern or in low concentrations in nodes at major intersections to support and contribute to the rural quality of life.

Rural Guideline 11.

Locate new rural and agriculturally oriented commercial uses at nodes with access to major roads and buffer from any adjacent residential or agricultural uses.

Rural Guideline 12.

Maintain the overall pattern of very low levels of human influence.

Rural Guideline 13.

Preserve and protect natural areas such as marshes, forests, and vegetative or wildlife habitats.

Rural Guideline 14.

Preserve areas with soils recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the best land for agricultural production or agricultural activities.

Rural Guideline 15.

Preserve and protect agriculture and timber land.

Rural Guideline 16.

Comply with the Settlement Area criteria in the *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance* for the establishment of all new Settlement Areas. No new Settlement Areas shall be established on Wadmalaw Island or Edisto Island.

Rural Guideline 17.

Respect the scale, configuration, building orientation, density, pattern, materials, building relationship to street, and general character of existing settlements and the surrounding Rural Area.

Rural Guideline 18.

Provide pedestrian and bicycle trail linkages as well as access to public transportation routes in Settlement Area developments.

Rural Guideline 19.
Protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and scenic vistas by meeting or exceeding the minimum lot widths, buffers and setbacks required for developments along the OCRM Critical Line, as contained in the *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance*.

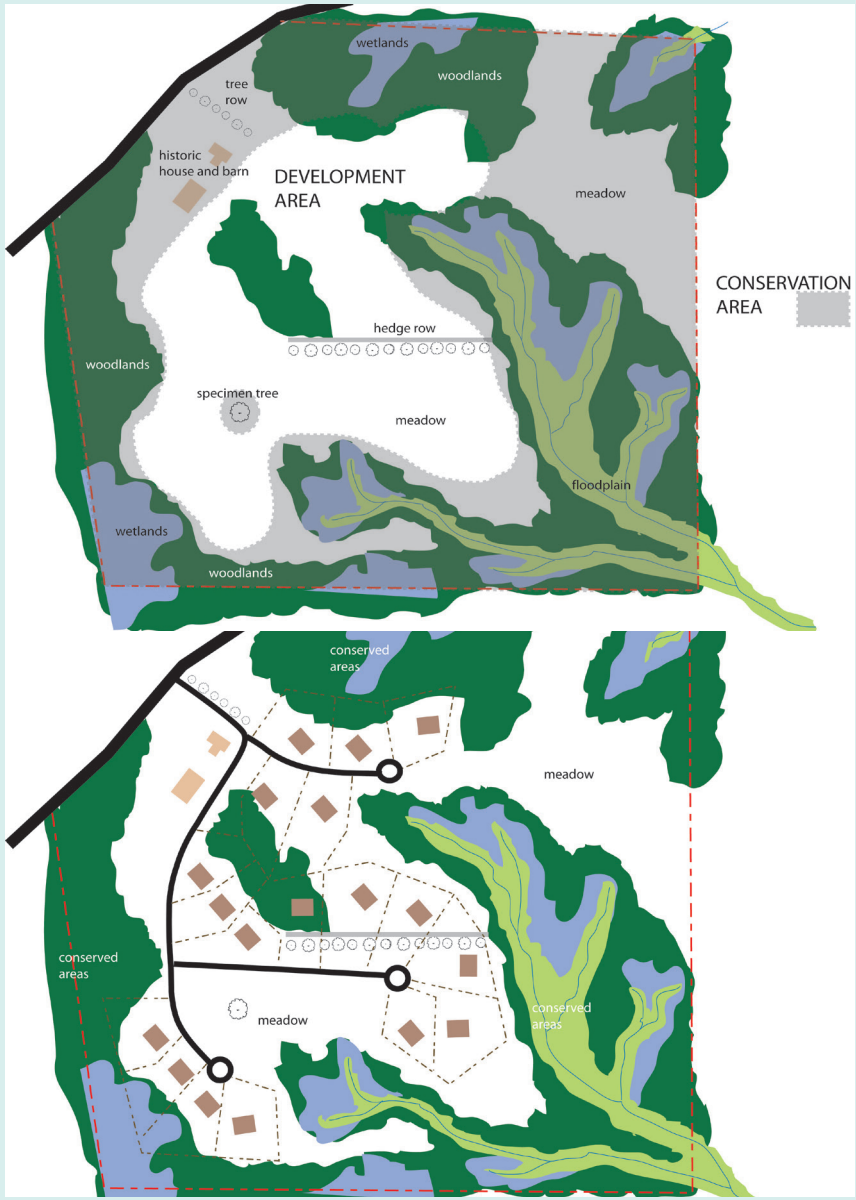
Rural Guideline 20.
Ensure adequate soil conditions and land area is present to support on-site wastewater disposal systems and potable water/well systems.

Rural Guideline 21.
Obtain approval of a *Comprehensive Plan* amendment for the purposes of amending the Community Facilities Element and the County's 208 Wastewater Service Areas Map and a *208 Water Quality Management Plan* amendment to allow any wastewater treatment systems other than individual on-site systems prior to submitting applications for development approval. Wastewater treatment systems that are approved as part of Planned Development Zoning Districts, Form-Based Zoning Districts, and/or Development Agreements do not require amendments to the *Comprehensive Plan*; however, they may require amendments to the Charleston County and *BCDCOG 208 Water Quality Management Plans* (Charleston County became a Designated Management Agency in 2010).

Rural Guideline 22.
Design new publicly owned and maintained roadways to be in character with the Rural Area and ensure that they will not promote additional growth out of character with the rural landscape.

Rural Guideline 23.
Where appropriate, meet the requirements for Developments of County Significance, as contained in *Chapter 3.9 Priority Investment, Implementation, and Coordination Element*.

Figure 3.1.3: Clustering or Conservation Design



The illustrations show how a rural site can be creatively developed with the by-right number of units while permanently protecting cultural and natural resources. By building homes on smaller lots clustered in the buildable or highland areas, the wooded areas, wetlands, marshes and historic structures can be preserved for generations to come.

This concept is an innovative way to develop land in the Rural Area that applies many of the Rural Guidelines in this Element.

B. Urban/Suburban Area

Purpose and Intent

The Urban/Suburban Area is located within the Urban Growth Boundary and is characterized by a diverse mix of residential neighborhoods, business/industrial uses, road frontage development, and undeveloped areas. High levels of infrastructure and services and medium to high intensity development exist within the Urban/Suburban Area.

The land development pattern in the Urban/Suburban Area ranges from older traditional neighborhood patterns with a grid street systems to suburban style subdivisions which draw on the natural landscape of marshes and waterways to help delineate neighborhoods, but which only allow for limited pedestrian ways and street connectivity. The purpose of the Urban/Suburban Guidelines is to:

1. Provide locations for concentrated mixed use growth patterns on land environmentally suitable for development where services can be provided in an efficient and cost effective manner;
2. Focus development activities on infill, redevelopment, and intensification of existing and surrounding uses;
3. Promote mixed use developments and a general land use pattern that includes a variety of housing types, retail, service, employment, civic, and compatible industrial uses, as well as open space and includes linkages to public transit in a walkable environment;
4. Promote alternative forms of transportation;
5. Establish a transitional area between the Rural Area and the Urban/Suburban Area consisting of lower intensity uses at the outer edge of the Urban Growth Boundary;
6. Designate prominent locations with safe access and visibility from major roads for civic or community oriented uses such as churches or schools; and
7. Protect natural resources.

Urban/Suburban Guidelines

The following Urban/Suburban Guidelines describe the features of preservation or development that are important to maintain the character within the Urban/Suburban Area. These statements provide guidance for the appropriate location, quality and character of future development in the Urban/Suburban Area and should be considered in the composition of development applications for the Urban/Suburban Area.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 1.

Provide compatible mixed use development and a general land use pattern that includes a variety of housing types, retail, service, employment, civic and compatible industrial uses, as well as public and open spaces and linkages to public transit in a walkable environment. Urban agriculture should also be permitted.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 2.

Provide an interconnected network of sidewalks, pedestrian ways, bike ways, and streetscaping in all new residential and nonresidential developments to establish linkages to parks, open space, schools, and public transportation as well as retail and service uses.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 3.

Respect the scale and site placement of adjacent existing development to maintain established community characteristics where appropriate.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 4.

Provide a variety of type, size, affordability and creativity in housing design.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 5.

Minimize the visual impact of garages and parking structures, as shown in *Figure 3.1.4: Minimizing the Visual Impact of Garages*.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 6.

Utilize locations in close proximity to existing neighborhoods for mixed use infill development.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 7.

Minimize the effect of industrial/commercial uses on local street systems and land use patterns through quality site design, provision of public transit access, and the design of local road connections.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 8.

Provide transitional areas from residential uses to non-residential uses through similar scale of building, architectural styles, and orientation of buildings and parking lots.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 9.

Provide a transitional area in developments near the outer edge of the Urban Growth Boundary consisting of lower intensity uses to step down to the adjacent rural intensities.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 10.

Preserve cultural and historic sites.

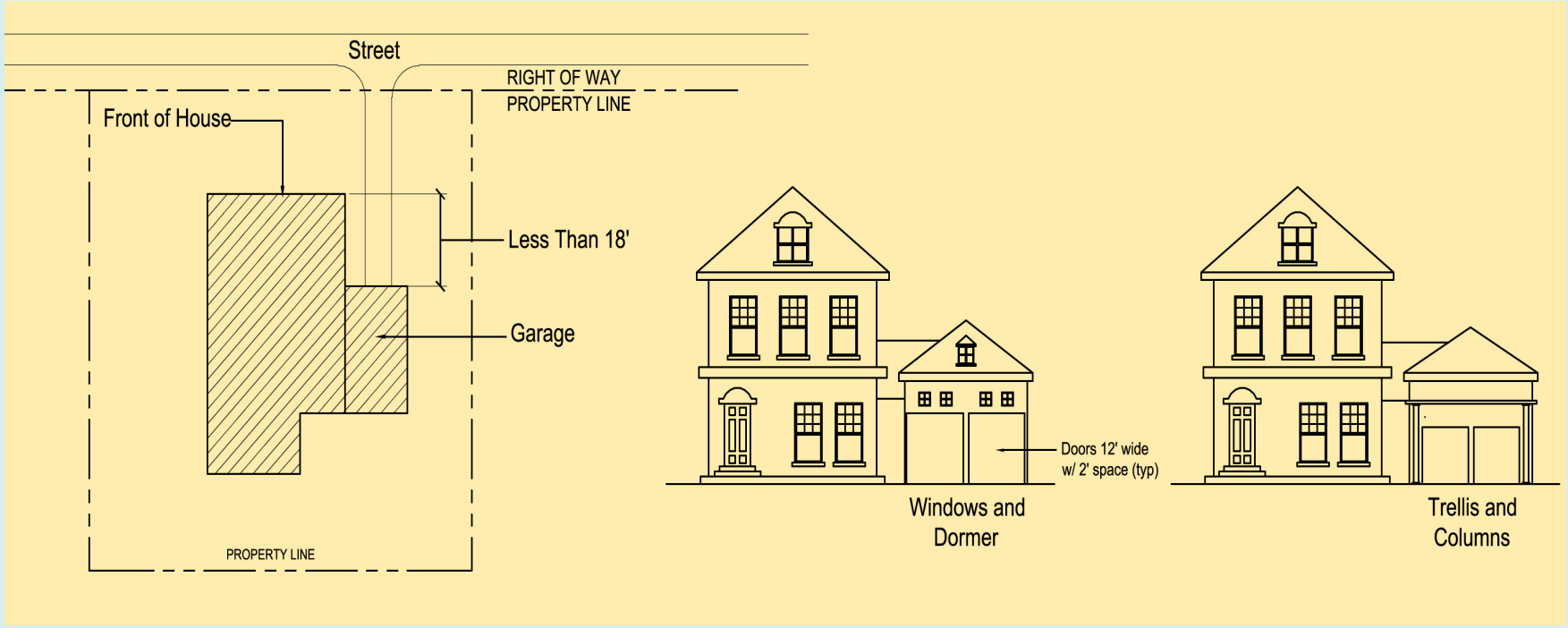
Urban/Suburban Guideline 11.

Include parks, recreational uses, greenspace, and water access in urban/suburban neighborhood design.

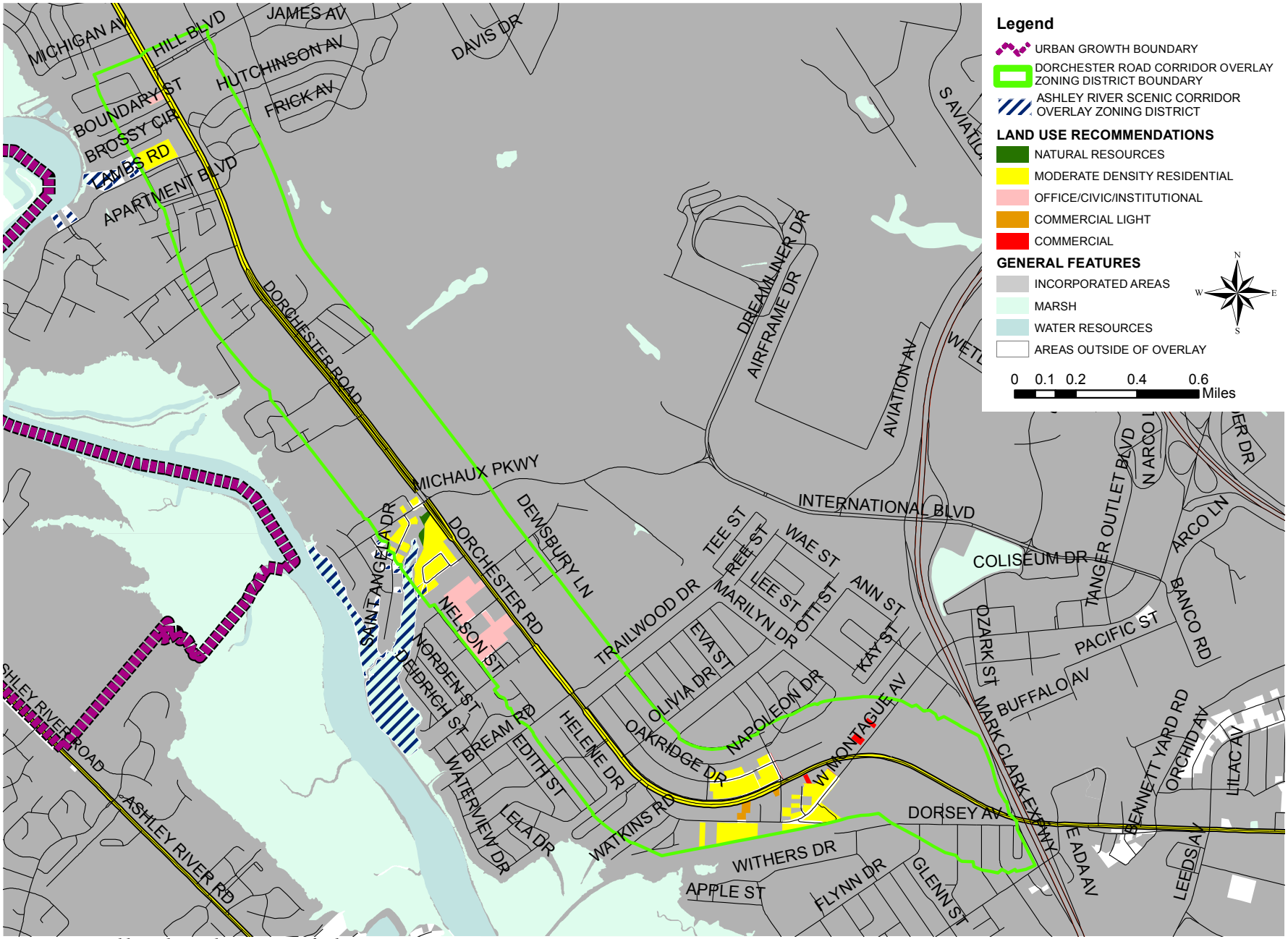
Urban/Suburban Guideline 12.
Maintain areas occupied by marshes and unique vegetative and wildlife habitats.

Urban/Suburban Guideline 13.
Protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and scenic vistas by meeting or exceeding the minimum lot widths, buffers, and setbacks required for developments along the OCRM Critical Line, as contained in the *Zoning and Land Development Regulations Ordinance.*

Figure 3.1.4: Minimizing the Visual Impact of Garages
Setting garages back from the front facade of a home de-emphasizes the elements of the home related to the car and increases the focus on the human-scale elements of the house.

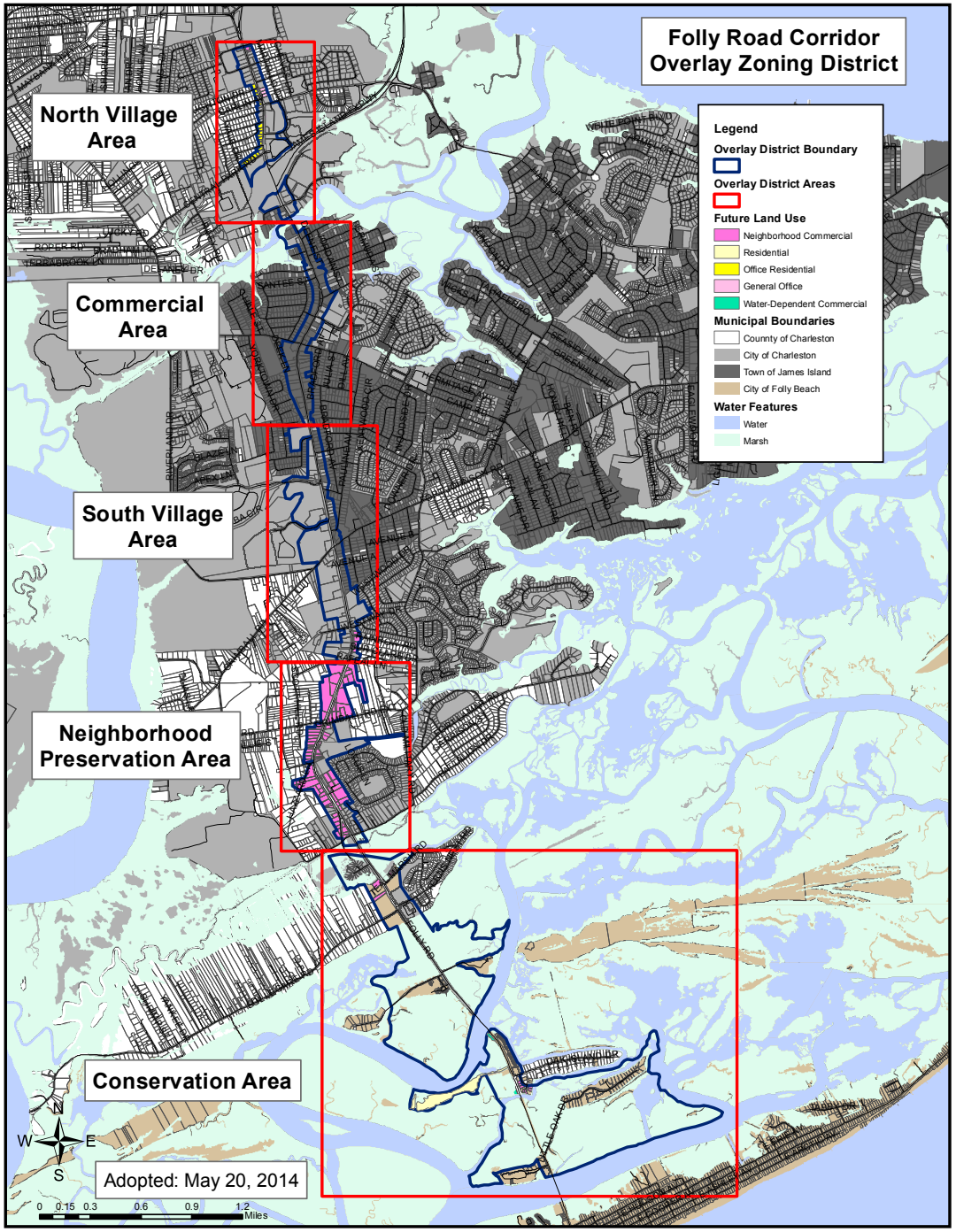


Map 3.1.6: Dorchester Road Corridor and Ashley River Scenic Corridor Overlay Zoning District



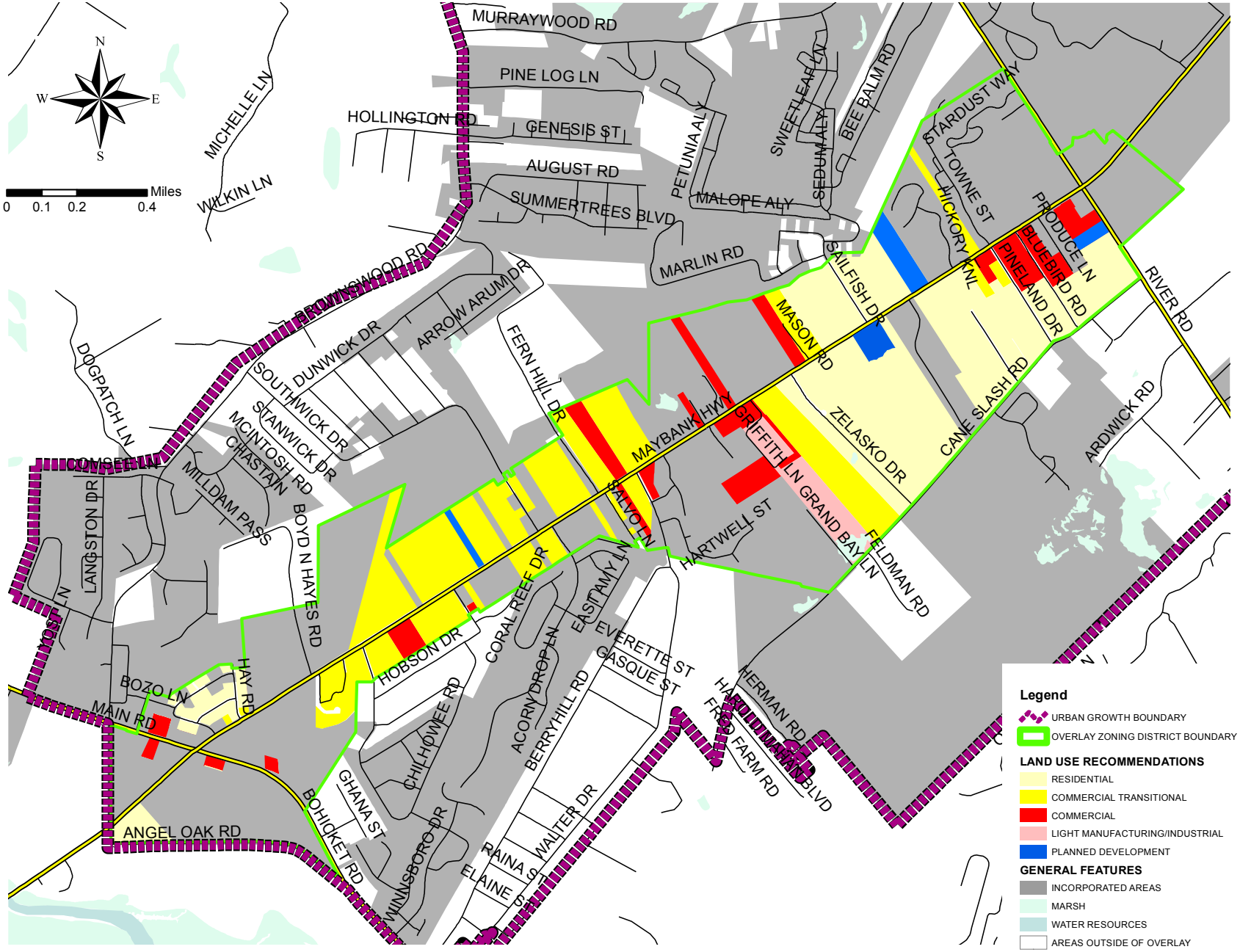
Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of Feb. 25, 2014

Map: 3.1.7: Folly Road Corridor Overlay Zoning District



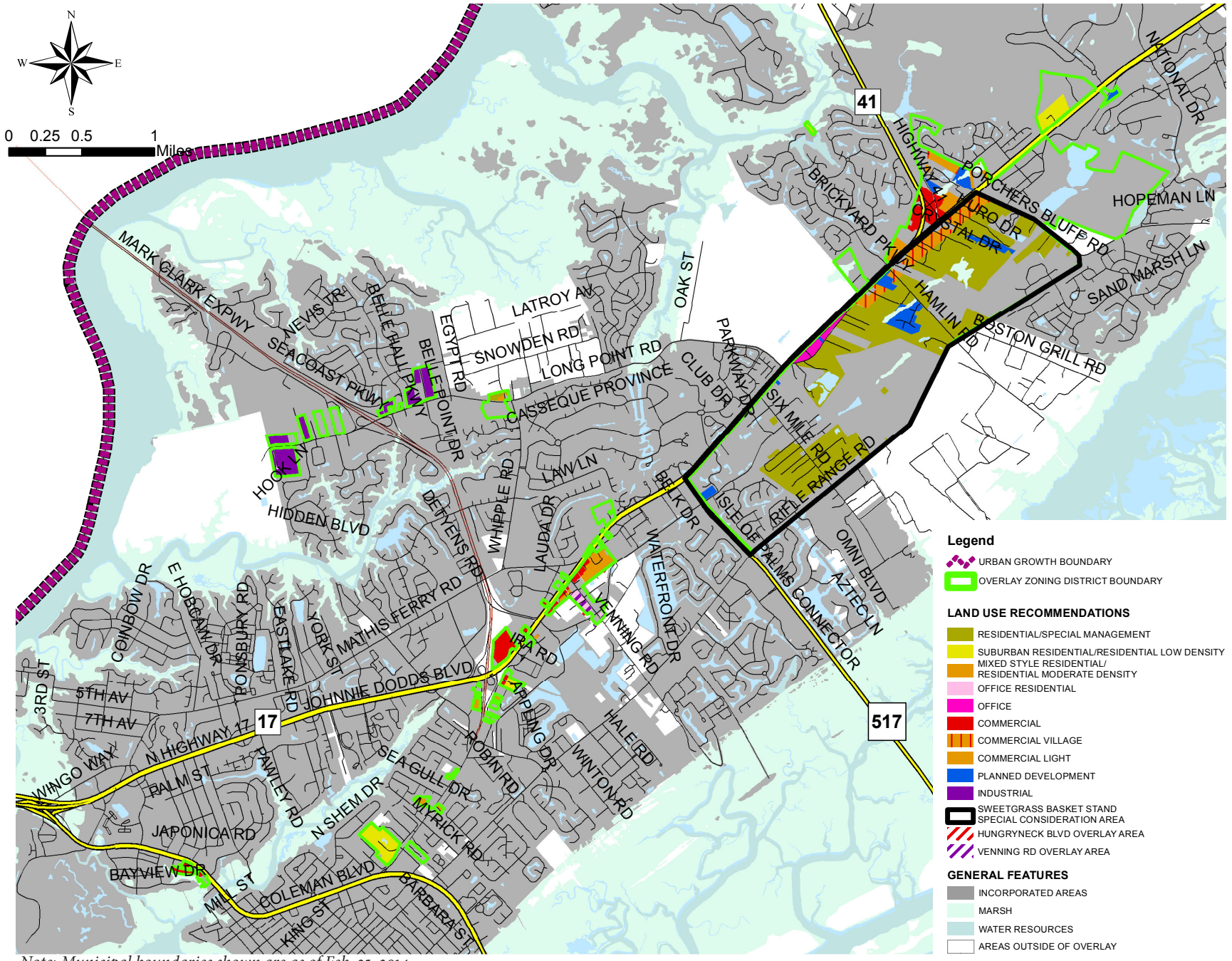
Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of Feb. 25, 2014

Map: 3.1.8: Maybank Highway Corridor Overlay Zoning District



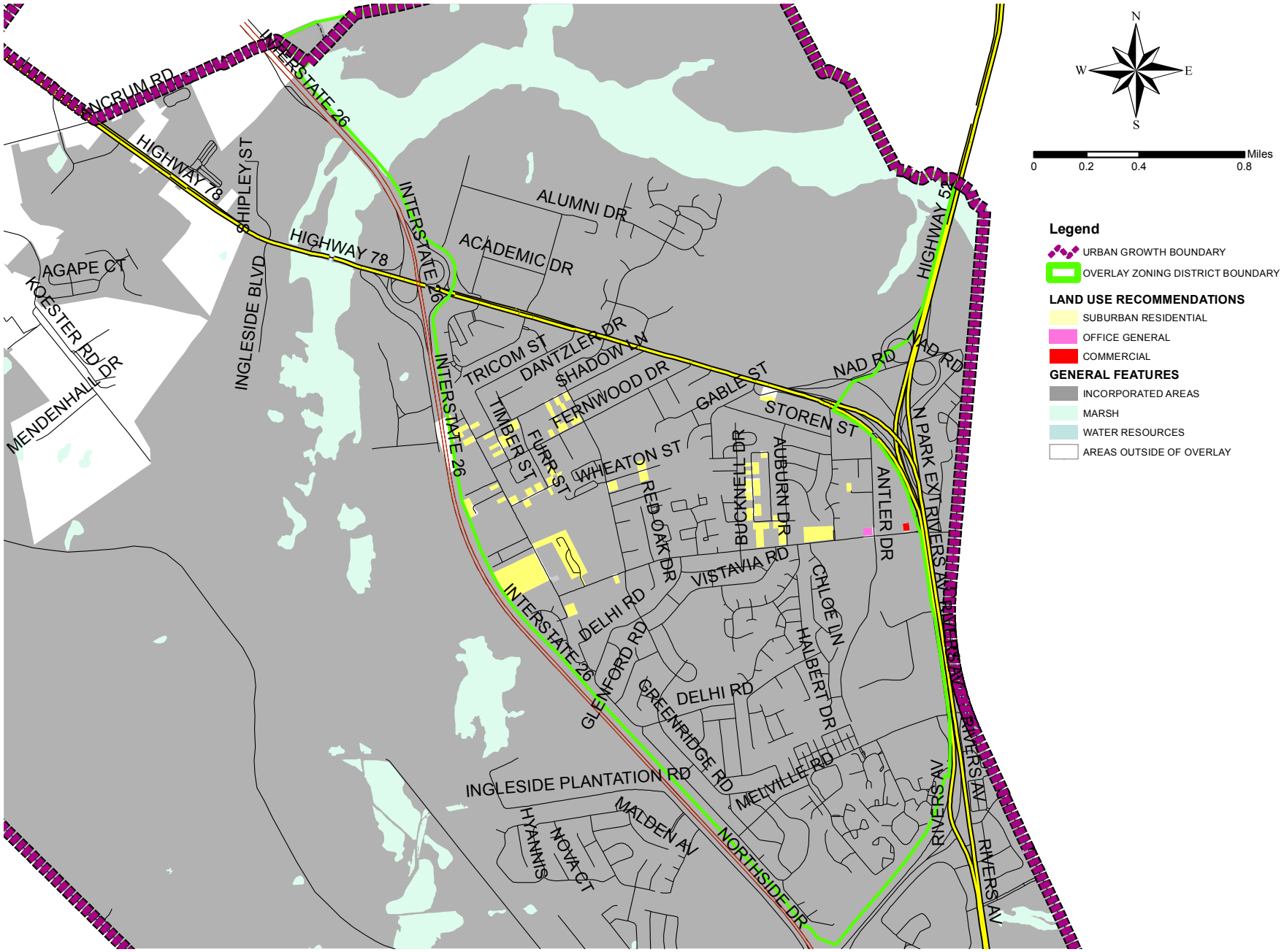
Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of April 29, 2016.

Map: 3.1.9: Mount Pleasant Overlay Zoning District



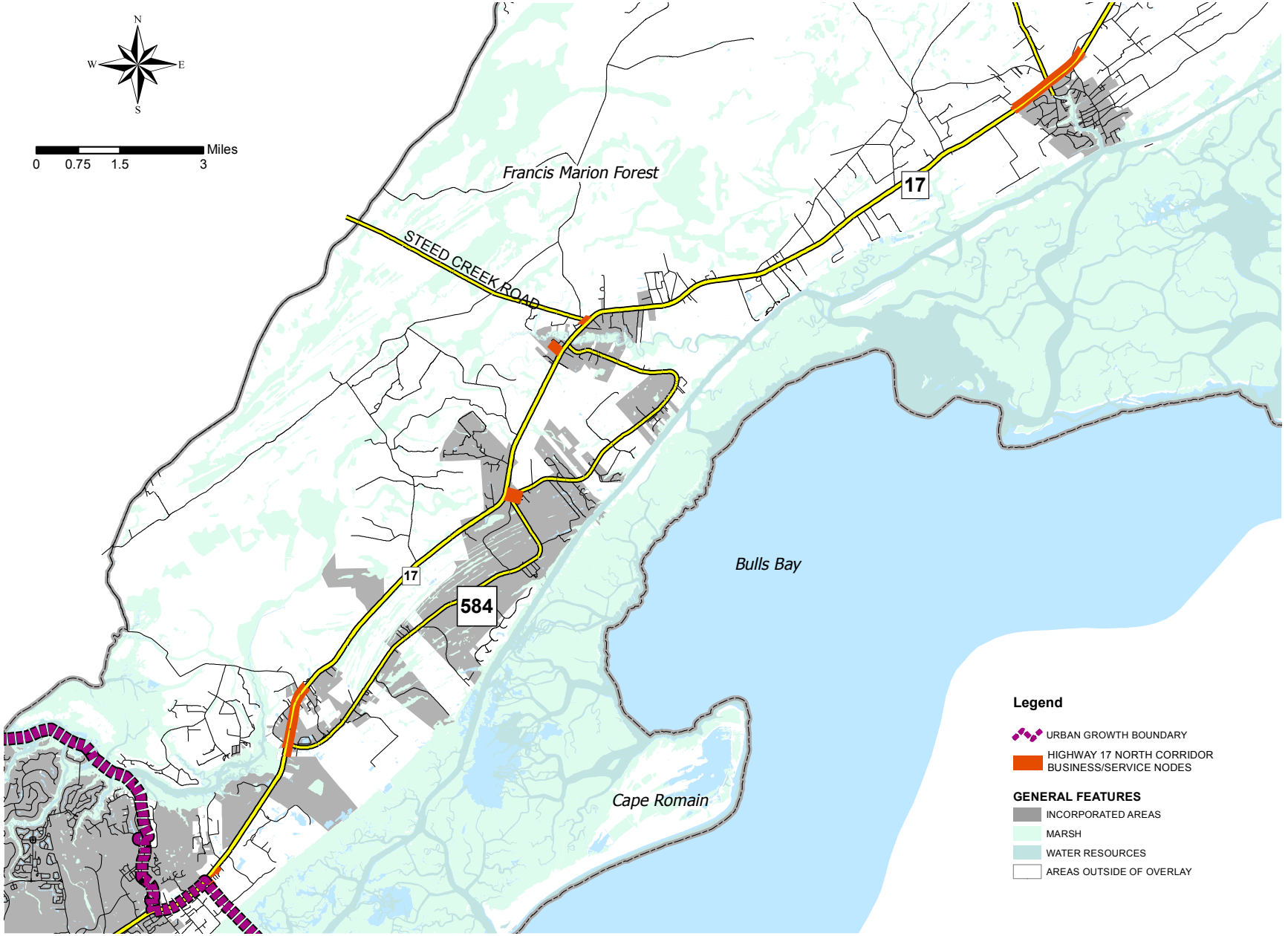
Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of Feb. 25, 2014

Map: 3.1.10: University Boulevard Overlay Zoning District



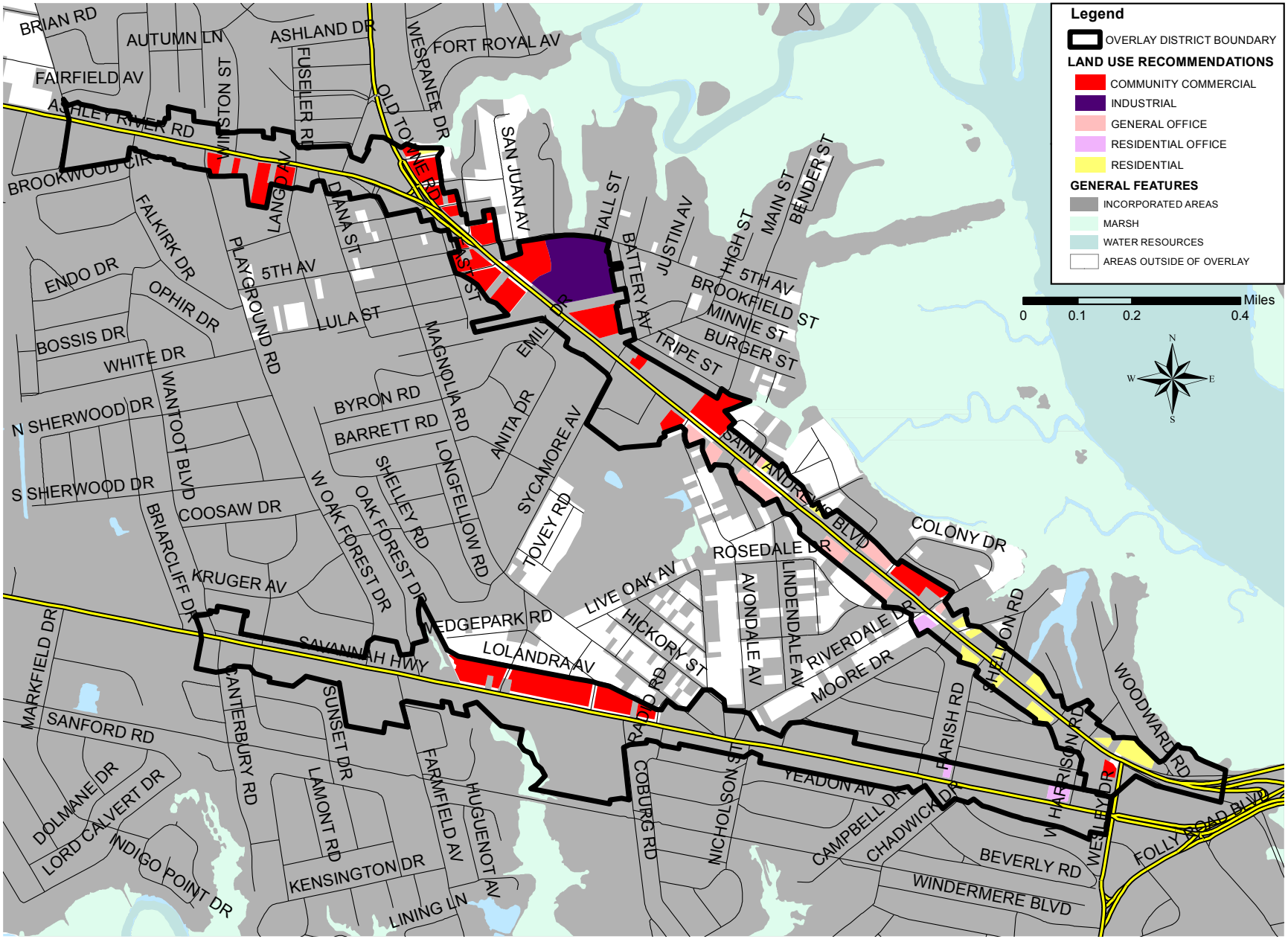
Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of Feb. 25, 2014

Map: 3.1.11: Highway 17 North Corridor Overlay Zoning District



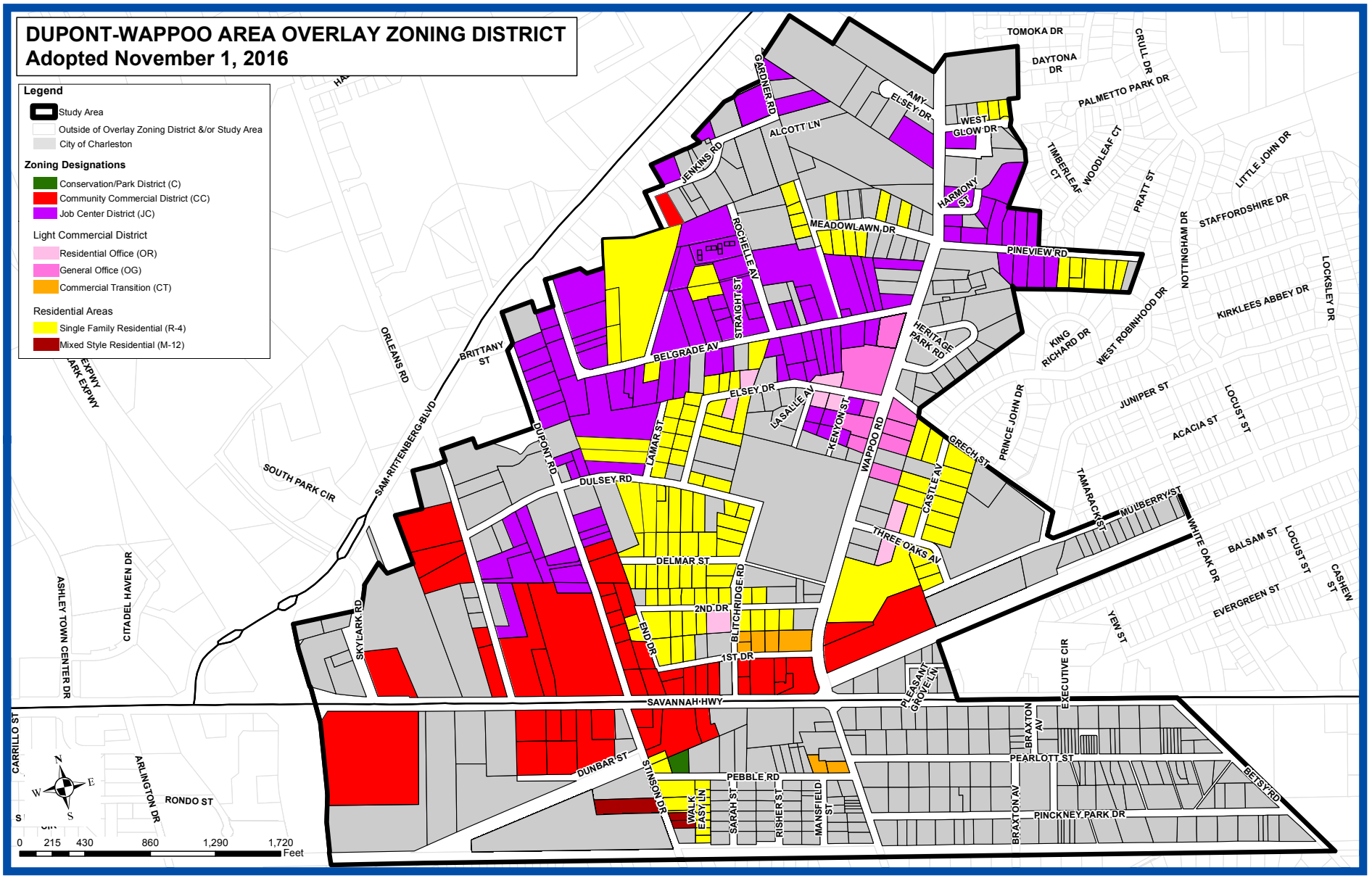
Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of Feb. 25, 2014

Map: 3.1.12: St. Andrews Area Overlay Zoning District



Note: Municipal boundaries shown are as of Feb. 25, 2014

Map: 3.1.13: DuPont-Wappoo Area Overlay Zoning District



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