

Route 5 Corridor Study

The Vision

The distinct character and views along the Route 5 corridor will continue to be preserved to the maximum extent feasible. Commercial development will be concentrated in specific nodal areas and the Virginia Capital Trail will be used as a unifying theme throughout the corridor.

Study Area Goals

In order to achieve the right balance between the quantity and quality of new development and redevelopment, clearly stated goals, objectives and strategies are proposed.

Goal 1: Preserve the rural, historic and agricultural character.

Objectives

Objective 1.1: Minimize adverse visual impacts of development.

Objective 1.2: Protect stands of mature trees along the corridor.

Objective 1.3: Encourage agricultural enterprises along the corridor.

Objective 1.4: Protect significant agricultural or historic land from development.

Objective 1.5: Preserve open space.

Strategies

Strategy 1.1: Create and adopt an overlay district requiring the establishment of buffers and setbacks that protect the character of the corridor.

Strategy 1.2: Create design guidelines to encourage building placement that will respect significant views and vistas on and around a property.

Strategy 1.3: Require low-intensity outdoor lighting to prevent light pollution.

Strategy 1.4: Revise the Zoning Ordinance to support agritourism efforts.

Strategy 1.5: Support conservation easements along the corridor.

Strategy 1.6: Revise the Zoning Ordinance to provide incentives for cluster development on residential property.

Strategy 1.7: Review the 2026 Future Land Use Map to change land use designations.

Strategy 1.8: Partner with local and state efforts such as the Virginia Tech “Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition” Program, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), and Virginia Cooperative Extension to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and skills between experienced farmers and beginners.

Strategy 1.9: Partner with Virginia Tourism Corporation to market agritourism opportunities along the corridor.

Strategy 1.10: Identify appropriate agencies to study the significance of the land along the corridor timed with the county’s next soil survey.

Goal 2: Deter strip development and big box stores.

Objective

Objective 2.1: Encourage small-scale retail development at appropriate locations along the corridor, as identified in the 2026 Comprehensive Plan.

Strategies

Strategy 2.1: Limit non-residential development to appropriate commercial nodes, as identified in the 2026 Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy 2.2: Identify locations through the overlay district where limited expansion of retail/commercial uses could capitalize on the area’s character.

Goal 3: Enhance and increase recreational opportunities.

Objectives

Objective 3.1: Encourage public access to the James River and all significant tributaries.

Objective 3.2: Identify opportunities to link the Virginia Capital Trail to neighborhoods, parks and other points of interest.

Objective 3.3: Support the provision of additional amenities along the Virginia Capital Trail.

Strategies

Strategy 3.1: Require public access to the river through the rezoning or plan of development process.

Strategy 3.2: Identify county rights-of-way that could accommodate shared use trails.

Strategy 3.3: Add more parking opportunities in proximity to the Trail.

Strategy 3.4: Provide rest areas, to include restrooms and bicycle repair stations.

Goal 4: Encourage a transportation network that promotes safety and connectivity for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.

Objectives

Objective 4.1: Minimize the number of entrances along the corridor.

Objective 4.2: Support recommended enhancements to the Virginia Capital Trail.

Objective 4.3: Coordinate with VDOT to enhance pedestrian, bicycle and motorist safety.

Strategies

Strategy 4.1: Encourage shared access for new development.

Strategy 4.2: Prohibit individual access for out-parcels.

Strategy 4.3: Encourage new developments to design roads with narrow cross-sections widths.

Strategy 4.4: Collaborate with VDOT to promote and install safety features to protect trail users and avoid potential conflicts with motorists.

Strategy 4.5: Coordinate with the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation and VDOT on additional landscaping, street furniture and “Adopt A Trail” efforts.

Strategy 4.6: Request updates of VDOT review accident data to determine appropriate improvements at identified intersections.

Strategy 4.7: Request periodic updates to VDOT’s speed studies to determine the appropriate speed limits along the corridor.

Strategy 4.8: Identify bicycle and pedestrian linkages to facilities in the vicinity of the Virginia Capital Trail.

Design Guidelines

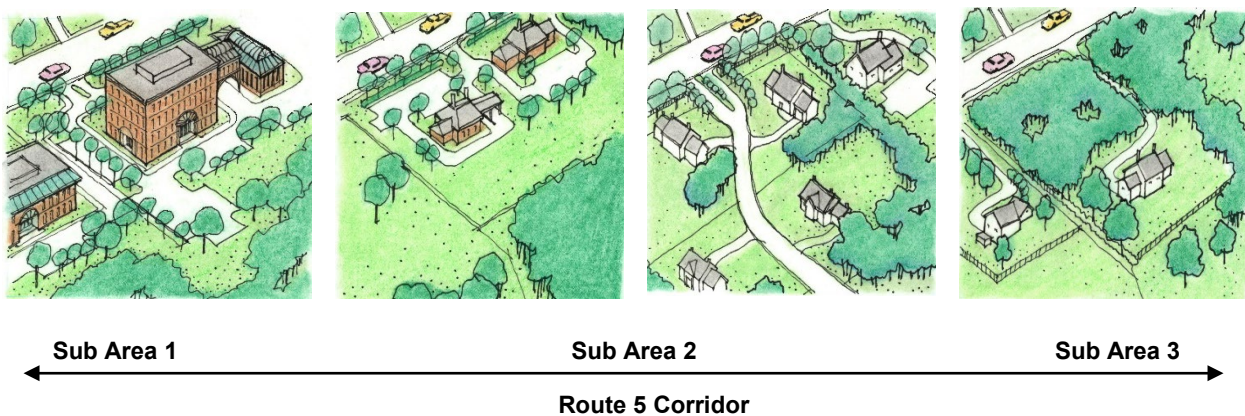
The land adjacent to the Route 5 corridor has various uses and zoning designations, which have been detailed in Chapter 2 of the study. Predominant land uses for much of the corridor are single-family subdivisions and large acreage properties, with either residential or agriculture zoning designations.

Commercial and industrial uses exist at several notable intersections along the corridor, especially at the northwestern boundary with the City of Richmond. Future land use designations recommended in the county's 2026 Comprehensive Plan also vary along the corridor. Most of the land along the corridor is recommended for low-density residential or prime agriculture, recognizing that Route 5 is not envisioned as a commercial corridor. However, as noted in Chapter 6, there is a range of more-intense recommended land uses along the northwestern portion of the corridor, ranging from Commercial Concentration, Urban Mixed-Use, and Light and Heavy Industrial.

The predominant land uses establish the character of Route 5. The study identified three sub-areas based on their distinctive characteristics. The first, adjacent to the City of Richmond, is more urban and industrial. The second more suburban, while the third is more open field and farmland and undeveloped woodlands.

The challenge with the review of future development proposals along the corridor will be to establish design guidelines that both recognize the character of the three sub-areas and effectively address the development concerns inherent in each regarding setbacks, building orientation and height, the protection of views, and preservation of selected natural assets along the corridor.

This study recommends design guidelines applicable to the entire corridor, as well as those tailored to the unique character of each sub-area.



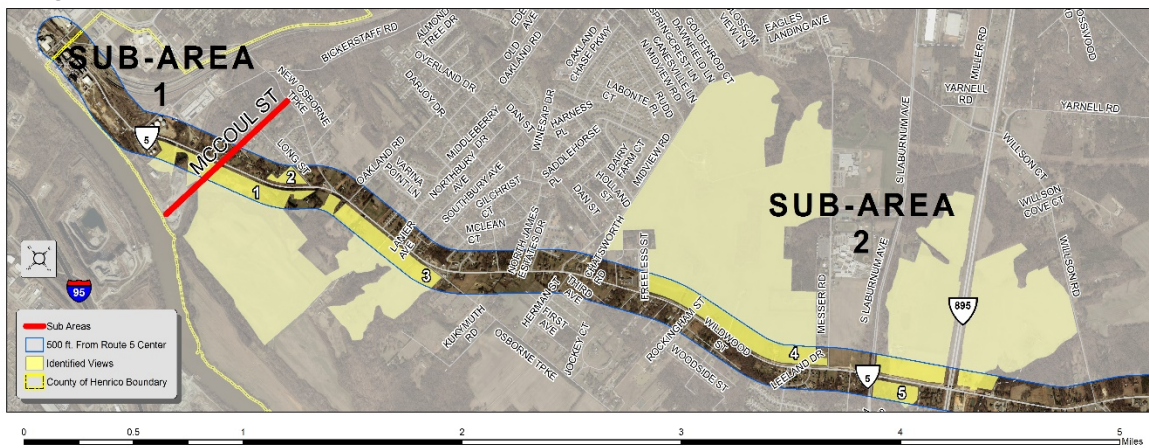
Future development in the three sub areas of the Route 5 corridor would use design guidelines for site layout, building orientation, location of parking, landscaping and lighting.

General – Entire Route 5 Corridor

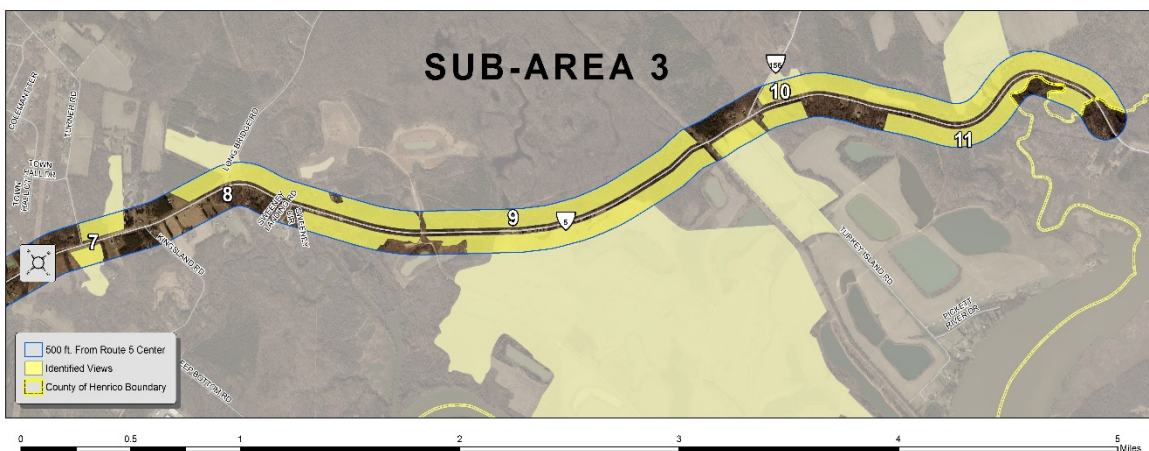
Site Design

1. Development should preserve open space, existing mature trees and significant vegetation where possible. New development should avoid mass grading.
2. Development should respect existing significant views along the corridor to the extent feasible and should not block an existing view if an alternative to the location and orientation of structures is possible.

Significant Views – Sub Area 1 and 2



Significant Views – Sub Area 2 and 3



3. Buildings should be oriented to front (face) the corridor and blank facades should be avoided. Architectural detailing and fenestration, such as windows, dormers,

awnings, doors, louvres, wall panels, skylights, and storefronts are encouraged. Rear facing facades lacking such details visible from the corridor should be prohibited.

4. Any development that is significantly taller than adjacent existing buildings should create a transition with the built forms and maintain a lower building profile along the corridor.
5. Locating new development on top of ridgelines, hilltops, and visually prominent rises within open fields should be avoided. Site plans should show and use topography to help buffer impacts of new development to the extent feasible, or as an alternative, employ high quality architectural design and landscape buffering.
6. Nonresidential development should be located at existing commercial nodes (referenced in Chapter 5) or be limited only to adjacent sites that are a reasonable expansion of existing commercial zoned areas.
7. Commercial development along the corridor should focus on infill properties and be consistent with the scale and style of existing development. New commercial development larger than 10,000 square feet should articulate rooflines and facades and vary heights to reduce mass and enhance pedestrian orientation along the street.
8. Commercial buildings, with minimal setbacks to Route 5, may be appropriate if proper building orientation, parking lot location and landscaping and screening methods are utilized.
9. Commercial development should have a visually continuous streetscape with a uniform alignment of facades, unless the corridor is characterized by a wide variety of setbacks.
10. Nonresidential buildings should have an architectural design and human scale massing compatible and reflective of the character of the corridor. Details such as the proper scale of windows, doors, and other facade articulation to reduce the overall perception of building mass are encouraged.
11. The visibility of off-street parking should be minimized by placing parking areas to the side or rear of buildings with adequate screening and landscaping.

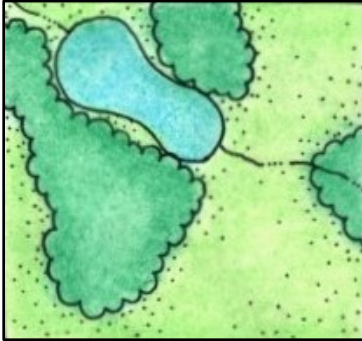
Streets/Access

1. New streets should be configured to maximize and preserve existing scenic views. When new streets are adjacent to open areas such as fields and meadows, the view to or across these areas should be preserved and not obstructed by structures, opaque fencing or other buildings.

2. New streets should be configured to avoid natural resources and open space areas. Single-loaded streets with lots on one side and common open space on the other are strongly encouraged.

Discouraged

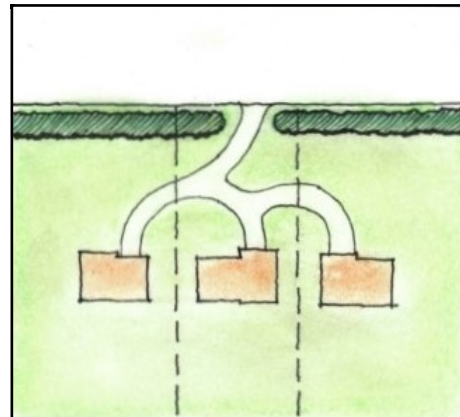
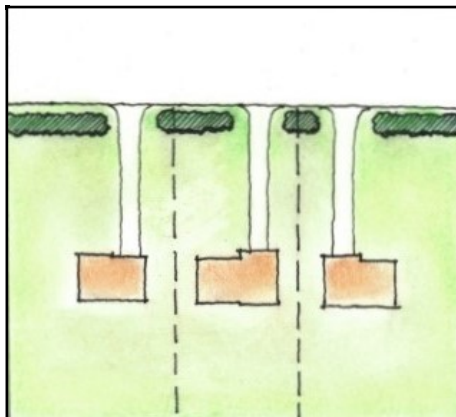
Preferred



3. New two-way streets in residential developments should use a narrow cross section of 24 feet.
4. Nonresidential entrances should be clearly visible with connection to sidewalk and/or pedestrian trails.
5. The Capital Trail is a unifying element of the Route 5 corridor and future development should promote and/or provide sidewalk and bikeway links to the trail and other amenities such as rest areas, bike racks and additional parking for trail users.
6. Driveways and roads should be designed for safe crossings by bicyclists and pedestrians using the Capital Trail.
7. Restrict the occurrence of numerous entrances along the corridor to retain the spacious open rural character. Shared access is encouraged where feasible.

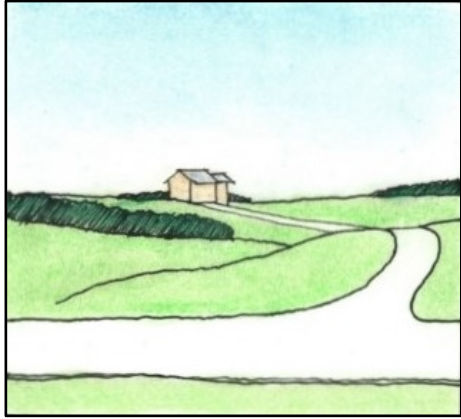
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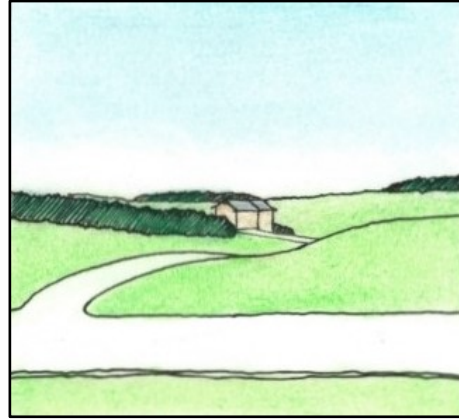


8. The alignment of new residential streets should follow natural contours and avoid placement on prominent hillsides or ridges to ensure development fits well into the rural character.

Discouraged



Preferred



Landscaping

1. When new development requires landscaped buffers and supplemental planting, the use of native species is encouraged, provided they can be reasonably maintained.
2. Use existing vegetation and landform to integrate new development with the rural landscape. On visually prominent landforms where natural topography or existing vegetation, hedgerows and windbreaks cannot be used as a vegetated backdrop then use naturalized plantings to visually anchor the development.

Discouraged

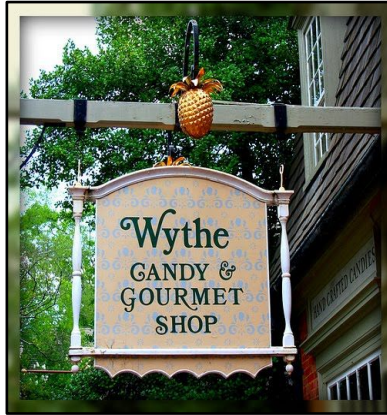


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Signage/Lighting

1. Signage should complement the character of the corridor. Businesses should employ signage that resembles a traditional storefront style rather than suburban monument style signage.

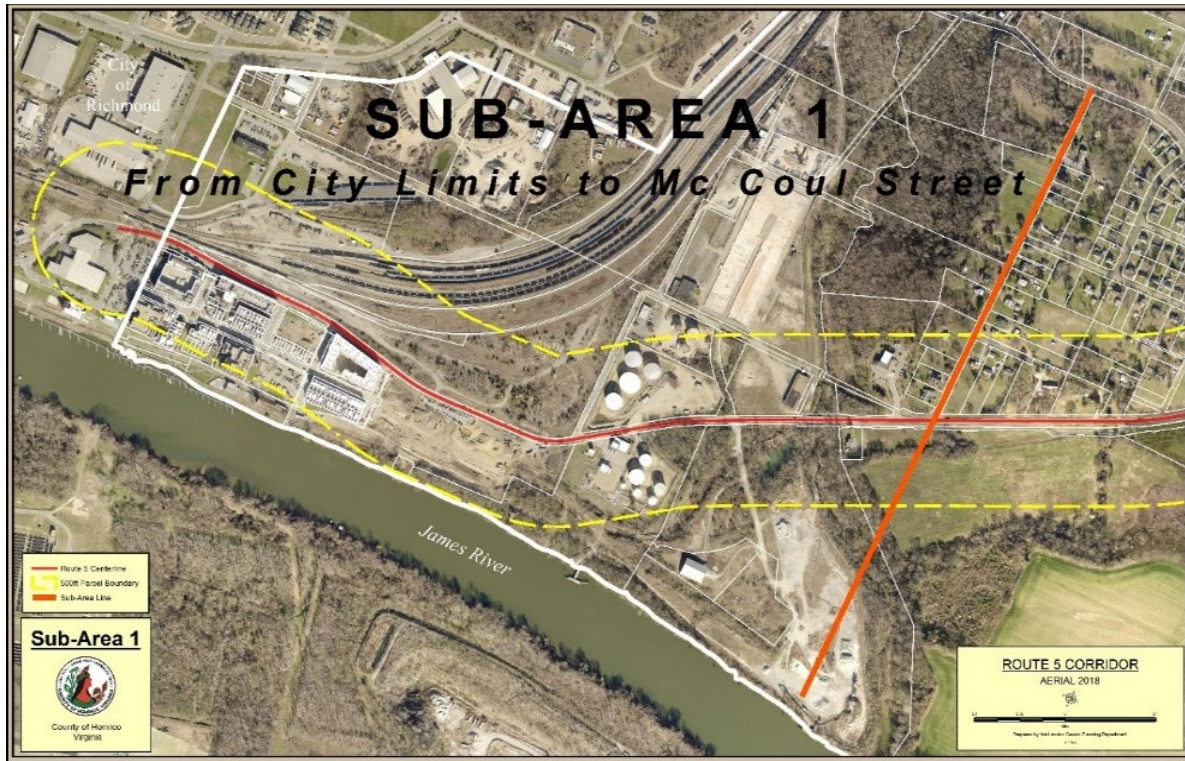


2. Signage throughout the corridor should be of a scale, size, and materials appropriate for the area. Cabinet signs and the use of attention getting devices or excessive illumination of signs should be prohibited. Sign illumination should avoid objectionable glare and light spill-over on adjacent properties.
3. Consistent ornamental and pedestrian-scale lighting is encouraged along the corridor to create a uniform streetscape.



4. Lighting along the corridor should be designed to avoid light trespass and nuisance glare. Light poles and fixtures should avoid unnecessary or excessive height and use concealed source fixtures.

A. Sub Area 1: Richmond/Henrico Line to McCoul Street (Urban)



Sub Area 1 is predominately industrial and urban in character, with the existing Rockets Landing mixed-use development and the future Tree Hill development. There is limited potential for new industrial development. Design guidelines in this sub area focus primarily on future nonresidential development.

Site Design

1. Orientation and heights of buildings and structures should not block the significant views of the city skyline from Route 5.
2. Development within industrially-zoned areas should be located with a setback adequate to allow for the preservation of existing vegetation and the addition of supplemental plantings, fences or walls to effectively screen loading, storage areas and/or other potential visual impacts to Route 5.

3. Development within areas designated Urban Mixed-Use, which may contain a mixture of commercial, office, residential, and civic uses, should emphasize pedestrian-oriented scale of buildings, street furniture, lighting, hardscape and activity centers. Multi-story buildings should contain a vertical mix of uses (see image below).



4. Encourage the location of buildings close to the street to preserve the urban character within the sub-area.
5. Encourage placemaking and public gathering locations.
6. Future development should provide sidewalks along the corridor to enhance the pedestrian-oriented scale of buildings and activity centers.

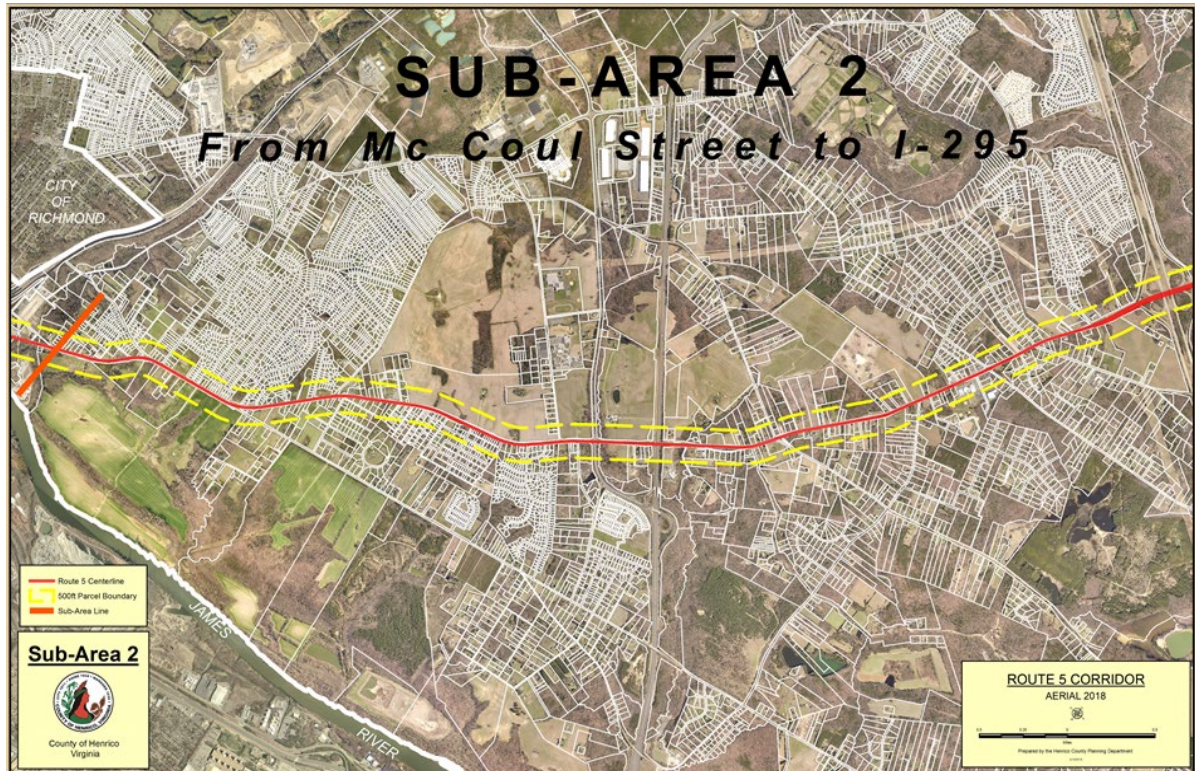
Landscaping

1. The landscaping along this area of Route 5, especially the existing stand of trees along the western side of the corridor between Bickerstaff Road and McCoul Street, should be preserved to the greatest extent possible and use supplemental planting where necessary.

Signage/Lighting

1. Lighting along this area of the corridor should be of a consistent style and pedestrian scale to create a uniform streetscape.

B. Sub Area 2: McCoul Street to I-295 (Suburban)



Sub Area 2 is predominately suburban with the open farmlands of the Reynolds Tract and Nelson Farm, and the important commercial node at Strath Road. The design guidelines address the potential for residential with some commercial development following the Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) future land use designation on the Reynolds tract and additional commercial development at Strath Road area.

Site Design

1. Orientation and heights of buildings and structures should not block the significant views of the city skyline from Route 5.
2. During subdivision or site plan review, portions of new developments should be reserved as common open space to preserve distinct views or features.

3. New residential uses should be set back from Route 5 to allow for adequate landscaped buffers. Proper building orientation should be used to avoid having the rears of houses facing Route 5.

Discouraged



Preferred



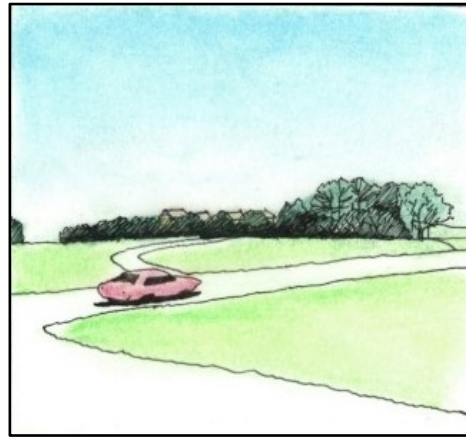
4. Development should provide a natural buffer of 25 feet along the corridor where possible. Any reduction in the width of the buffer, or areas that are open fields should require an alternate buffer/screening plan demonstrating how supplemental landscaping will provide adequate screening of new development.
5. Future development should evaluate areas of significant natural features such as streams, ponds, significant stands of trees and hedgerows and use design techniques to preserve them as part of an open space plan.
6. Commercial uses may be located closer to Route 5 if appropriate building setbacks, off-street parking and landscape screening measures are used. A minimum setback of 35 feet is recommended.

7. Existing hedgerows and windbreaks should be preserved to minimize the visual impact of new development.

Discouraged

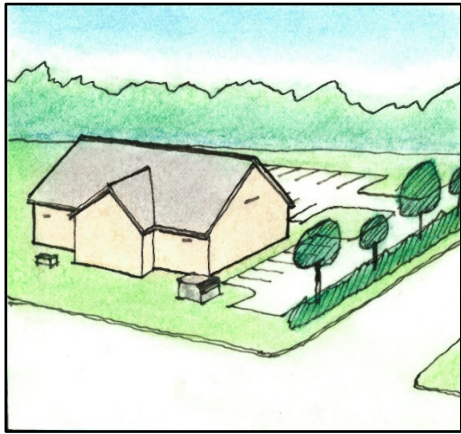


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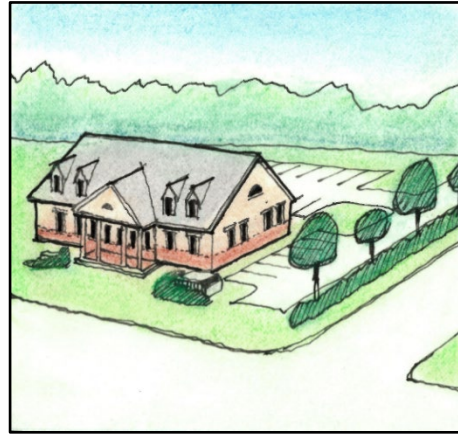


8. Parking for commercial uses should be located to the side or rear of buildings. The rear of a building should not face Route 5 unless appropriate architectural treatment is used to enhance the appearance. Large areas of blank walls should be avoided and loading areas and mechanical equipment should be screened from public view.

Discouraged

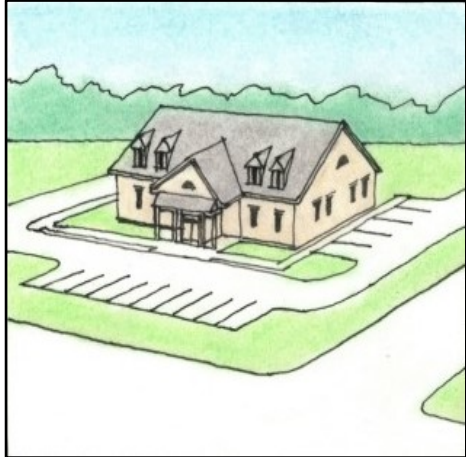


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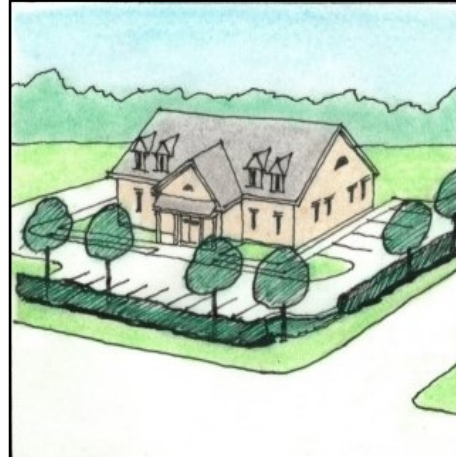


9. Parking may be placed in front of a building only if architectural treatment and the main entrance faces Route 5, and landscape screening measures for the parking are used.

Discouraged



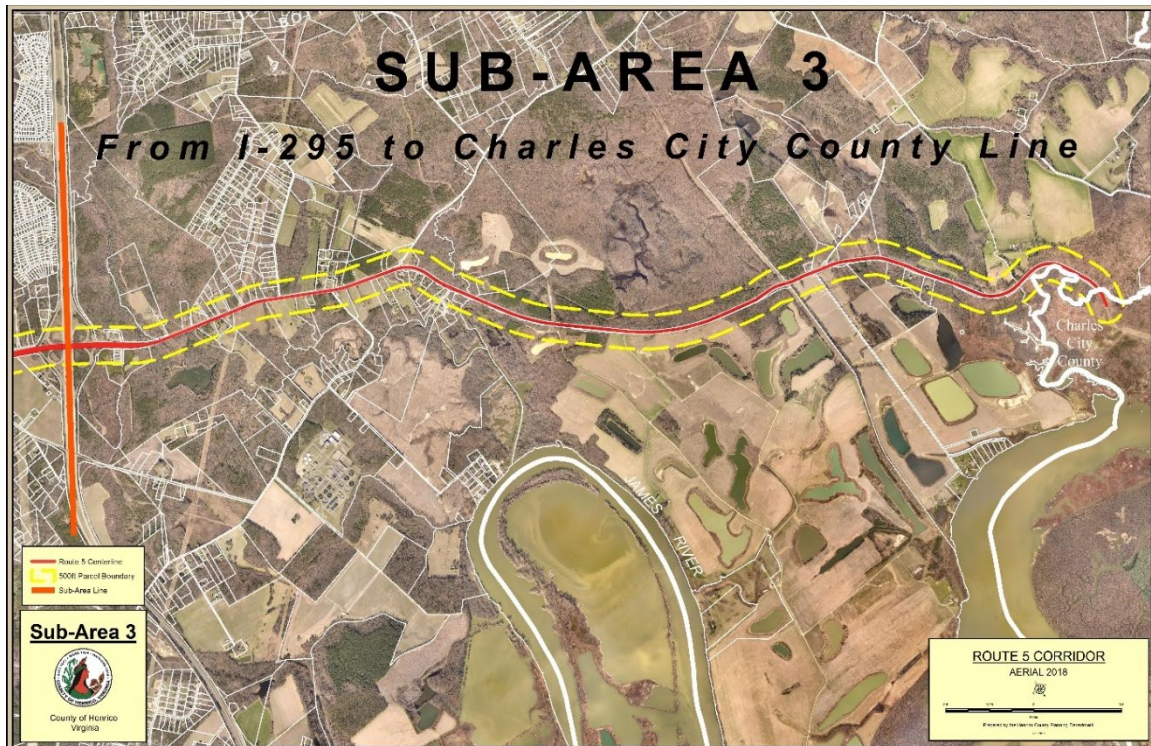
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Landscaping

1. The landscaping along this area of Route 5, especially the existing stand of trees along the western side of the corridor from McCoul Street to Oakland Road should be preserved to the greatest extent possible. Supplemental planting should be used where necessary.

C. Sub Area 3: I-295 to County of Henrico /Charles City County boundary (Rural)



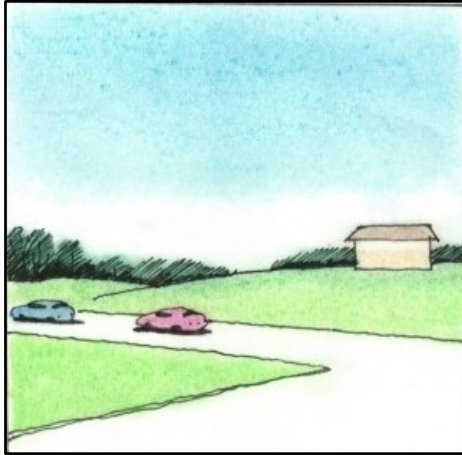
Sub Area 3 is predominately wooded on the north side of the corridor with large tracts of open farmland on the south side, including Curles Neck. Given the recommended land use of Prime Agriculture and the current lack of public water and sewer, future development will likely consist of larger lots on a minimum of one acre or more. Design guidelines should focus on preservation of the wooded edge of the corridor and sensitive siting and orientation of homes. There are a few small commercial nodes in this sub area and future commercial development should use building orientation guidelines as mentioned in the overall corridor design guidelines.

Site Design

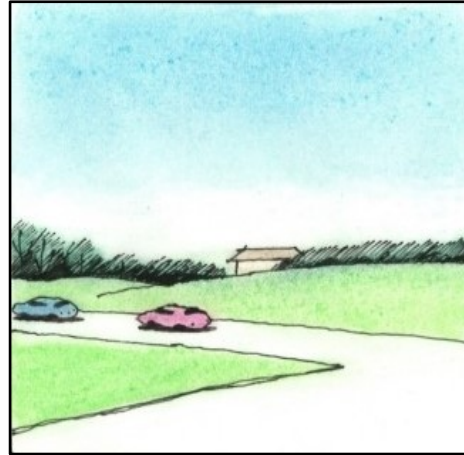
1. Residential development should use conservation subdivision or cluster development principles as part of the site design to preserve open space, existing vegetation and other significant natural features.
2. Future residential development should not dominate the view along the corridor nor compromise views or vistas.

3. Residential development should use existing topography and vegetation to buffer the impact of new structures to the extent possible.

Discouraged



Preferred



4. Residential development in this part of the corridor should provide a natural buffer of no less than 75 feet. Any reduction in the width of the buffer will require an alternate buffer/screening plan demonstrating how supplemental landscaping will provide adequate screening of new development.
5. During subdivision or site plan review, a portion of development sites should be reserved as private common open space to preserve rural character.

Streets/Access

1. New streets should maintain the rural character of this part of the corridor and be configured to avoid natural resources and open space areas. Single-loaded streets with lots on one side and common open space area on the other are strongly encouraged.