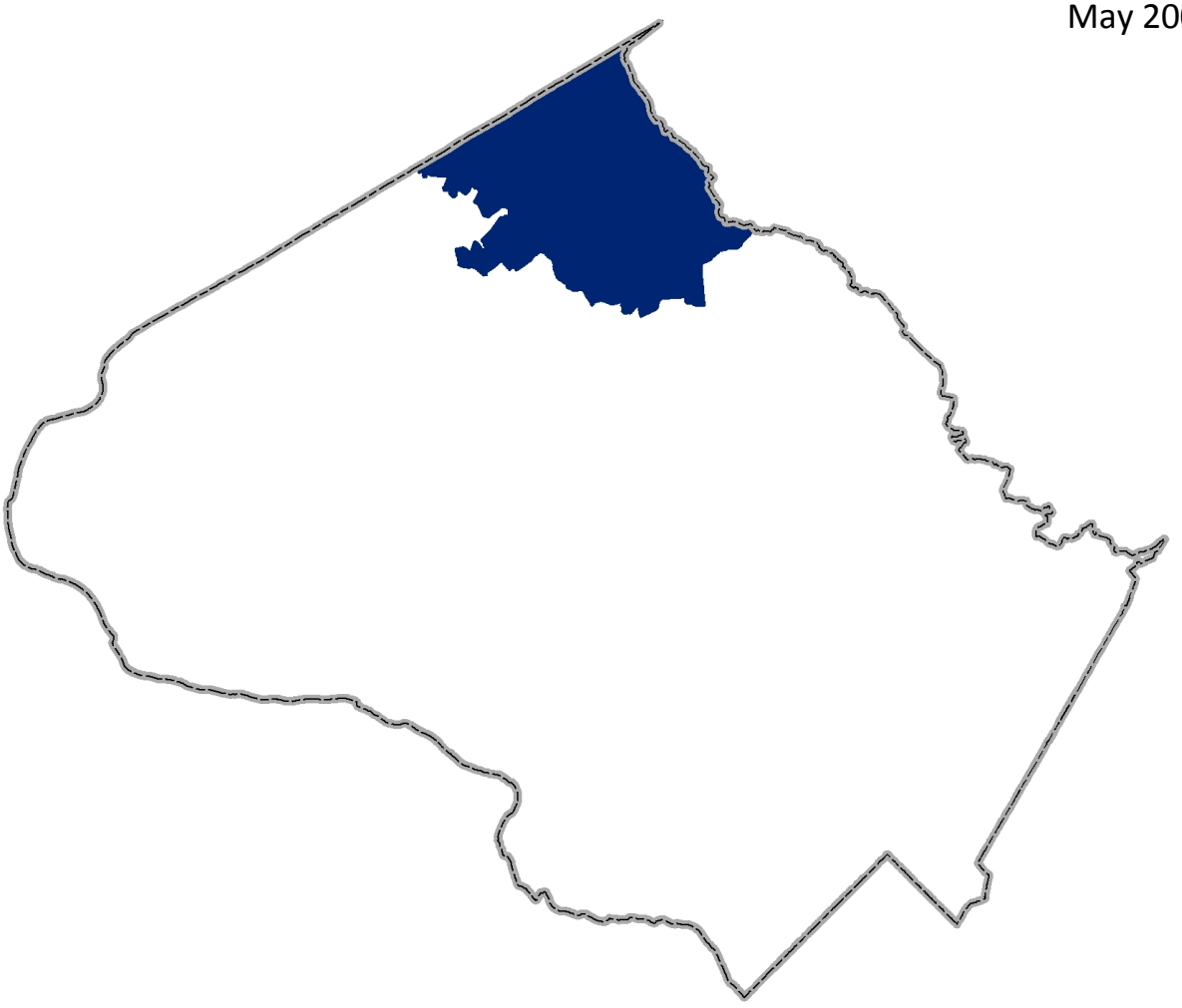
Master Plan Review

DAMASCUS

Approved and Adopted

May 2006



BACKGROUND

In 2007, the Montgomery County Council directed the Planning Department to undertake a comprehensive zoning ordinance rewrite. Last rewritten in 1977, the current 1,200 + page code is viewed as antiquated and hard to use with standards that have failed to keep pace with modern development practices.

With only about four percent of land in the County available for greenfield development, the new zoning code can play a crucial role in guiding redevelopment to areas like surface parking lots and strip shopping centers. An updated zoning code is important for achieving the kind of growth Montgomery County policymakers and residents want.

Initial sections of the new code were drafted by Code Studio, a zoning consultant. These drafts were subsequently analyzed and edited by planners based on feedback from the Zoning Advisory Panel (a citizen panel appointed by the Planning Board to weigh in on the project's direction), county agency representatives, residents and other stakeholders. In September 2012, planning staff began the release of a draft code in sections accompanied by a report highlighting changes from the current code. The staff drafts were reviewed at length by the Planning Board.

The Planning Board held worksessions and public hearings between September of 2012 and May of 2013. On May 2, they transmitted their draft to the County Council. The Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee held worksessions during the summer and sent the draft to the full Council in December 2013. The full Council held worksessions in January 2014 and adopted the text of the new code in March. Work on the proposed map amendment continues.

ZONE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

An important aspect of the Zoning Rewrite process is the potential simplification of 123 existing zones into about 30 proposed zones. While some of the proposed zones are a direct one-to-one translation of existing zones, others are the result of combining existing zones with similar standards. Additionally, existing zones that are not currently mapped or are no longer used in the County have been eliminated from the proposed code. Through the implementation process, Montgomery County aims to simplify the number of zones, eliminate redundancy, and clarify development standards. A full translation table for all zones can be found in the documents section of our website: www.zoningmontgomery.org.

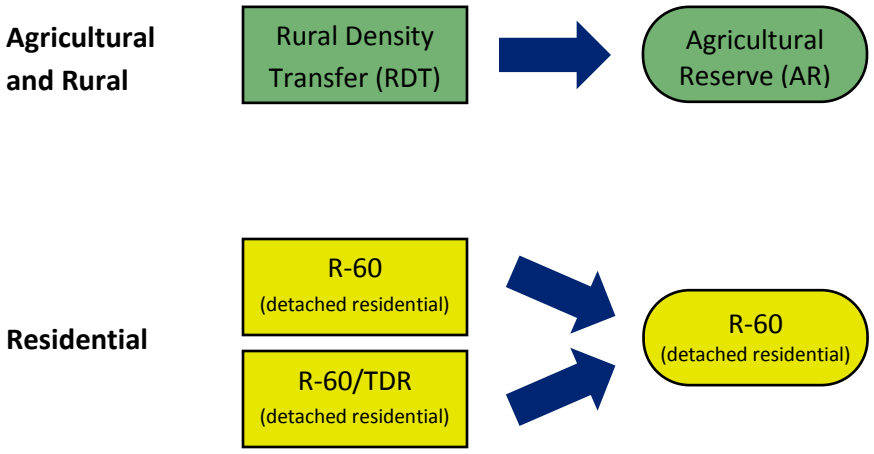
Agricultural, Residential, and Industrial Zone Implementation:

For agricultural and rural zones, the existing zones will be translated to proposed zones on a one-to-one basis, with the exception of the Low Density Rural Cluster zone which is not currently used in the County and will be eliminated.

Many of the existing residential zones will remain the same. Other residential zones will be combined with existing zones that have similar development standards. The R-4Plex zone, which is not currently mapped anywhere in the county, will be removed from the proposed code.

Implementation of Industrial zones will combine similar zones (Rural Service, I-1, and R+D) into the proposed Industrial Moderate (IM) zone. The existing heavy industrial zone (I-2) will be renamed as the Industrial Heavy (IH) zone.

Examples:



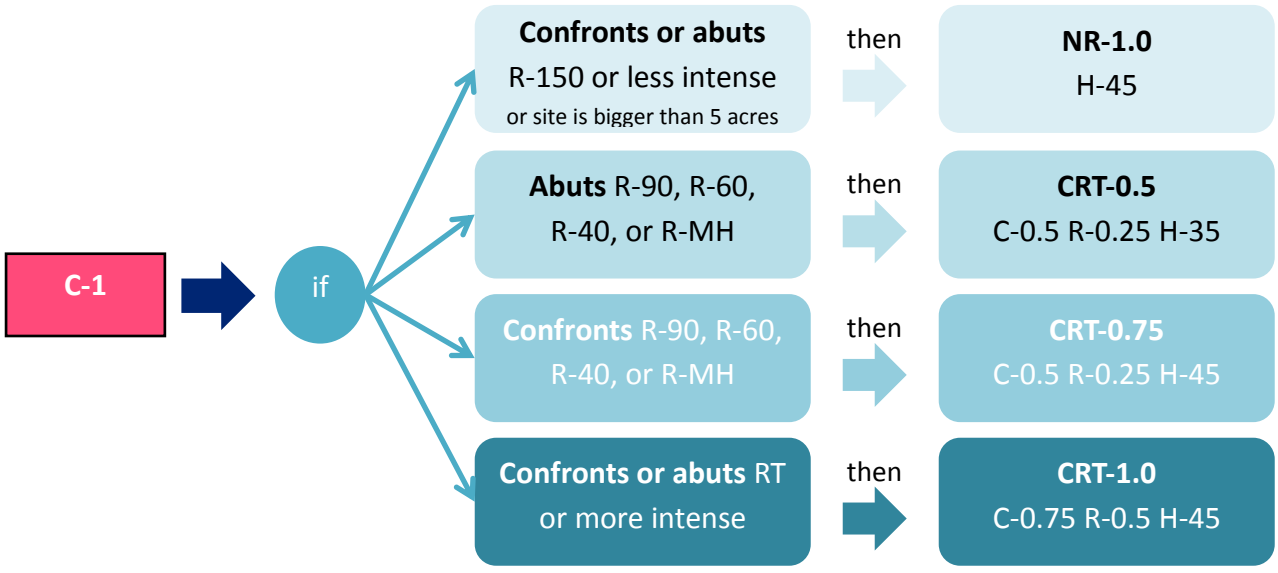
Commercial and Mixed-Use Zone Implementation:

Parcels located in the existing Commercial, Mixed-use, Central Business District (CBD), and Transit Station zones will be translated into one of the proposed Commercial/Residential (CR) or Employment (E) Zones using a two-tiered process.

First, decisions about specific parcels in these zones were based on recommendations within the Master Plan. Planning staff reviewed each Master Plan in the County. When the Master Plan provided specific recommendations about allowed density, height, or mix of uses for individual commercial or mixed-use parcels, those recommendations were used to build the formula of the proposed zone. This ensures consistency with currently allowed density and height, and helps codify Master Plan recommendations in a parcel-specific manner.

Second, if the Master Plan did not make specific recommendations, the current zone changed to a proposed zone on a one-to-one basis or the proposed zone was determined using a specific standardized decision tree *(see example below).* The standardized decision tree translates existing zones by considering each specific parcel's proximity to single-family neighborhoods or other factors. The goal of the implementation decision tree is to retain currently allowed heights and densities and maintain context sensitivity.

Example: C-1 Convenience Commercial



PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

The Damascus Master Plan was approved and adopted in 2006. The Plan aims to enhance the identity of central Damascus as the heart of the community. The Plan includes recommendations for eight key issues:

- **Town Center**: The Plan recommends mixed-use zoning for the Town Center. The zoning will emphasize proportion, design, and an architectural context of structures rather than separation of uses. Commercial uses concentrated along Main Street and at major downtown intersections will create opportunities for residential development that will support retail and service businesses in the core.
- **Transition Areas:** The Plan encourages cluster designs on properties immediately accessible to the Town Center. These properties will establish a strong edge between the town and rural areas beyond.
- **Rural Area:** The Plan supports the existing extent of the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) zone with adjustments for rural village centers.
- **Public Sewer Service:** For community design and environmental protection goals, the Plan recommends community sewer service for designated properties, including all of the RNC/TDR Zone properties if they are developed using the cluster method.
- **Housing:** To support a range of housing options, the Plan recommends providing moderate-density development within the Town Center, including senior housing opportunities.
- **Transportation:** To improve pedestrian and bicycle access, as well as vehicle movement, this Plan recommends establishing a multi-functional transportation network.
- **Environment:** To support goals for protection of environmental resources, the Plan recommends protecting existing forest corridors by encouraging reforestation of stream valleys and protecting high priority forest stands.
- **Parks, Trails, and Open Space:** The Park system in the Planning Area will be augmented by development or improving existing facilities at Seneca Springs Local Park, Woodfield Local Park, Damascus Recreational Park, and completing the Magruder Branch Stream Valley Park Trail to a terminus in the Town Center.

Magruder Branch Stream Valley Park Trail

ZONE IMPLEMENTATION

The Damascus Planning Area currently has 21 zones: 3 Rural, 14 Residential, 1 Commercial, 2 Mixed-Use, and 1 Planned Development.

Existing Rural

RDT: Rural Density Transfer
RC: Rural Cluster
RNC/TDR: Rural Neighborhood Cluster

Existing Residential:

RE-1: Detached Unit, Single-Family
RE-2: Detached Unit, Single-Family
RE-2/TDR: Detached Unit, Single-Family
RE-2C: Detached Unit, Single-Family
RE-2C/TDR: Detached Unit, Single-Family
R-200: Detached Unit, Single-Family
R-200/TDR: Detached Unit, Single-Family
R-150: Detached Unit, Single-Family
R-60: Detached Unit, Single-Family
R-90: Detached Unit, Single-Family
RT-6: Townhouse, Single-Family
RT-8: Townhouse, Single-Family
RT-10: Townhosue, Single-Family
RT-12.5: Townhouse, Single-Family

Existing Commercial

C-1: Convenience Commercial

Existing Mixed-Use:

MXTC: Mixed-Use Town Center
MXTC/TDR: Mixed-Use Town Center

Existing Planned Development

PD-7: Planned Development

Standard Implementation:

The existing RDT will be renamed AR (Agricultural Reserve) zone. The existing RC and RNC will remain. The RNC/TDR zone will become RNC.

The existing RE-1, RE-2, and RE-2C will remain. The RE-2/TDR and RE-2C/TDR zones will become part of RE-2 and RE-2C, respectively. The existing R-150, R-200, and R-200/TDR zones will be combined into R-200. The existing R-60 and R-90 zones will remain. The existing RT-6, RT-8, RT-10 and RT-12.5 will remain RT (Townhouse) respectively.

The existing PD-7 zone will remain.

The existing Commercial and Mixed-Use zones will translate to the specific proposed CRT (Commercial Residential Town), CRN (Commercial Residential Neighborhood), and NR (Neighborhood Retail) zones using both the standard translation criteria and specific Master Plan recommendations. Commercial and Mixed-Use parcels that do not have specific Master Plan recommendations will translate to the proposed zone based on the standard zoning translation table.

All existing TDR zones will have a TDR Overlay zone.

NON-STANDARD CONVERSIONS

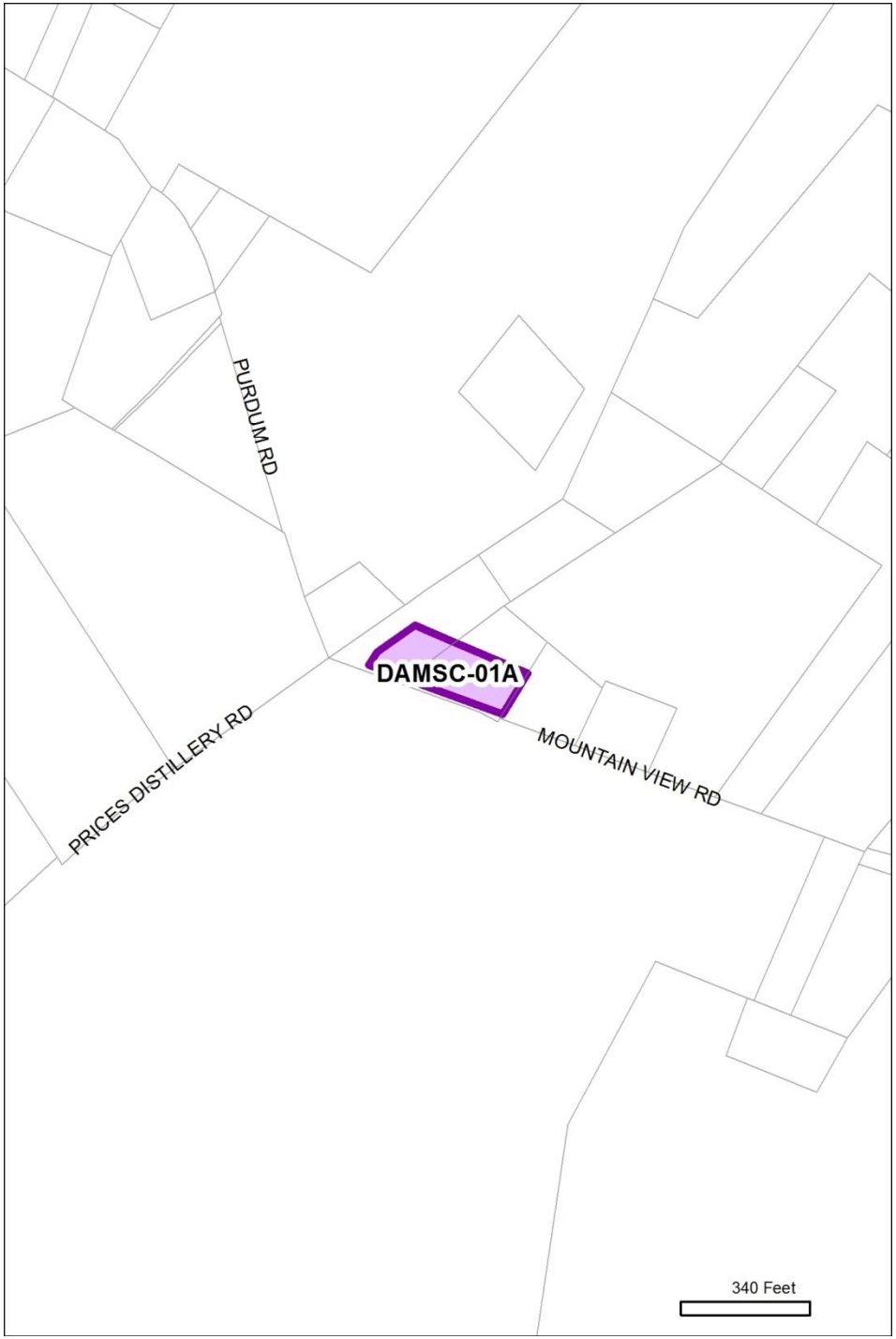
In some cases, properties were not converted using the standard conversions as outlined earlier in the packet.

Generally, this is because the relevant Master or Sector Plan made recommendations regarding the appropriate density, height, or mix of uses on a given site.

In other cases, the text of the zoning ordinance or an overlay zone can affect the development potential of a site, and therefore affect the conversion given as part of the draft proposed DMA.

Additionally, the PHED Committee instructed that, when requested by a property owner, existing site approvals be reflected in the draft proposed DMA. Non-standard conversions sometimes reflect these project approvals.

The following pages will give detail on all of the non-standard conversions in this plan area.



MP Number:		DAMSC-01A
Master Plan:		Damascus
Location:		Mountain View Rd & Prices Distillery Rd
Existing Zone:		C-1 (and Rural Village Overlay)
Standard Conv:		~~NR-1.0 H-45~~
Proposed Conv:		CRN-0.25 C-0.25 R-0.0 H-35
Modifications	**Zone Group:**	Changed to CRN
	Overall FAR:	Reduced to 0.25
	Comm'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.25
	Resid'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.0
	Height:	Reduced to 35'

Reason for non-standard conversion:

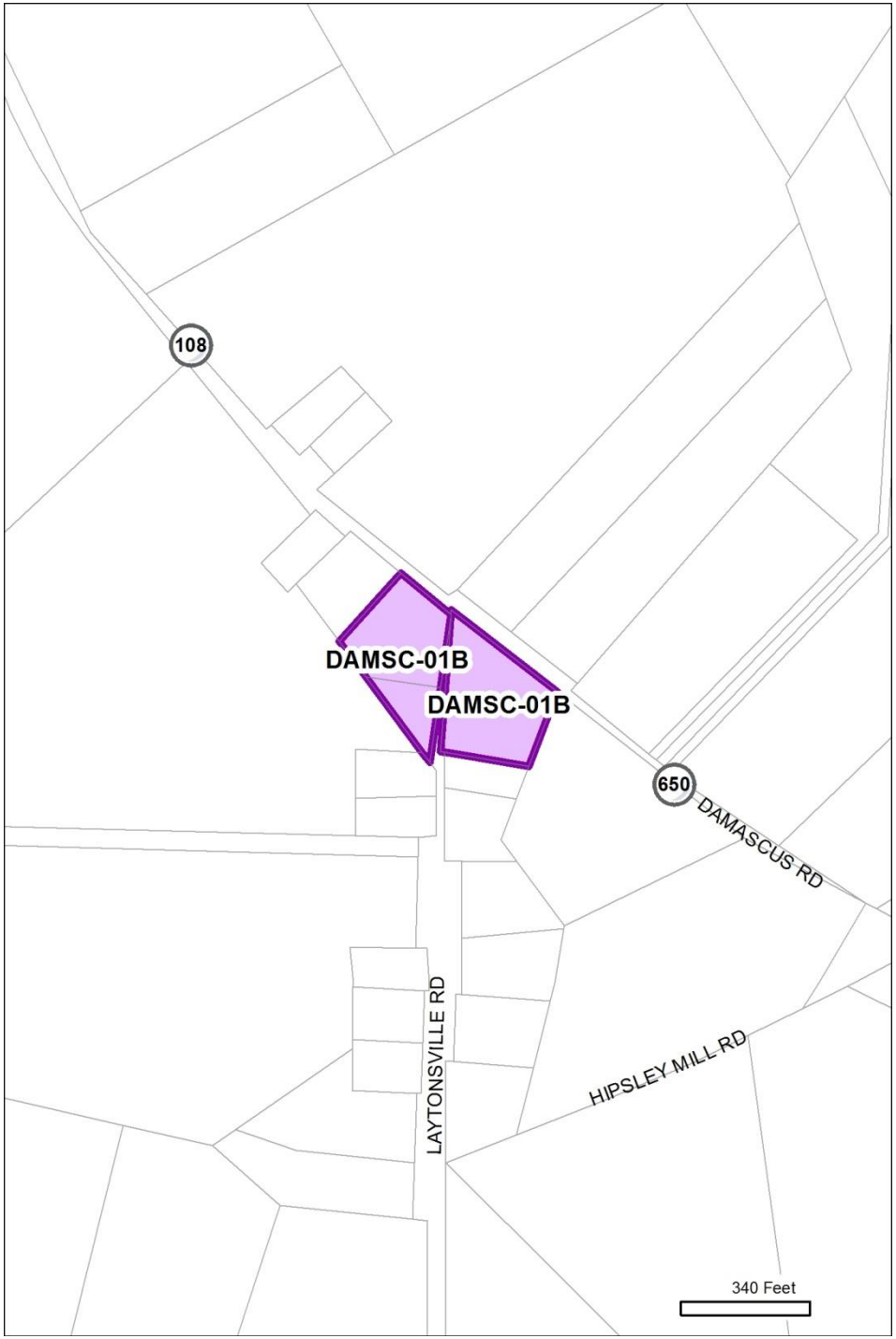
See Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance §59-C-18.232(2)(B)

"Density: Except as noted below, the floor area ratio for commercial uses is limited to FAR 0.2, and is computed only on the area of the underlying commercially zoned portion of the site…"

And

Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance §59-C-18.232(2)(D)

"Building height. No building may exceed a height of 35 feet."



MP Number:		DAMSC-01B
Master Plan:		Damascus
Location:		Laytonsville Rd & Damascus Rd
Existing Zone:		C-1 (and Rural Village Overlay)
Standard Conv:		~~NR-1.0 H-45~~
Proposed Conv:		CRN-0.25 C-0.25 R-0.0 H-35
Modifications	**Zone Group:**	Changed to CRN
	Overall FAR:	Reduced to 0.25
	Comm'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.25
	Resid'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.0
	Height:	Reduced to 35'

Reason for non-standard conversion:

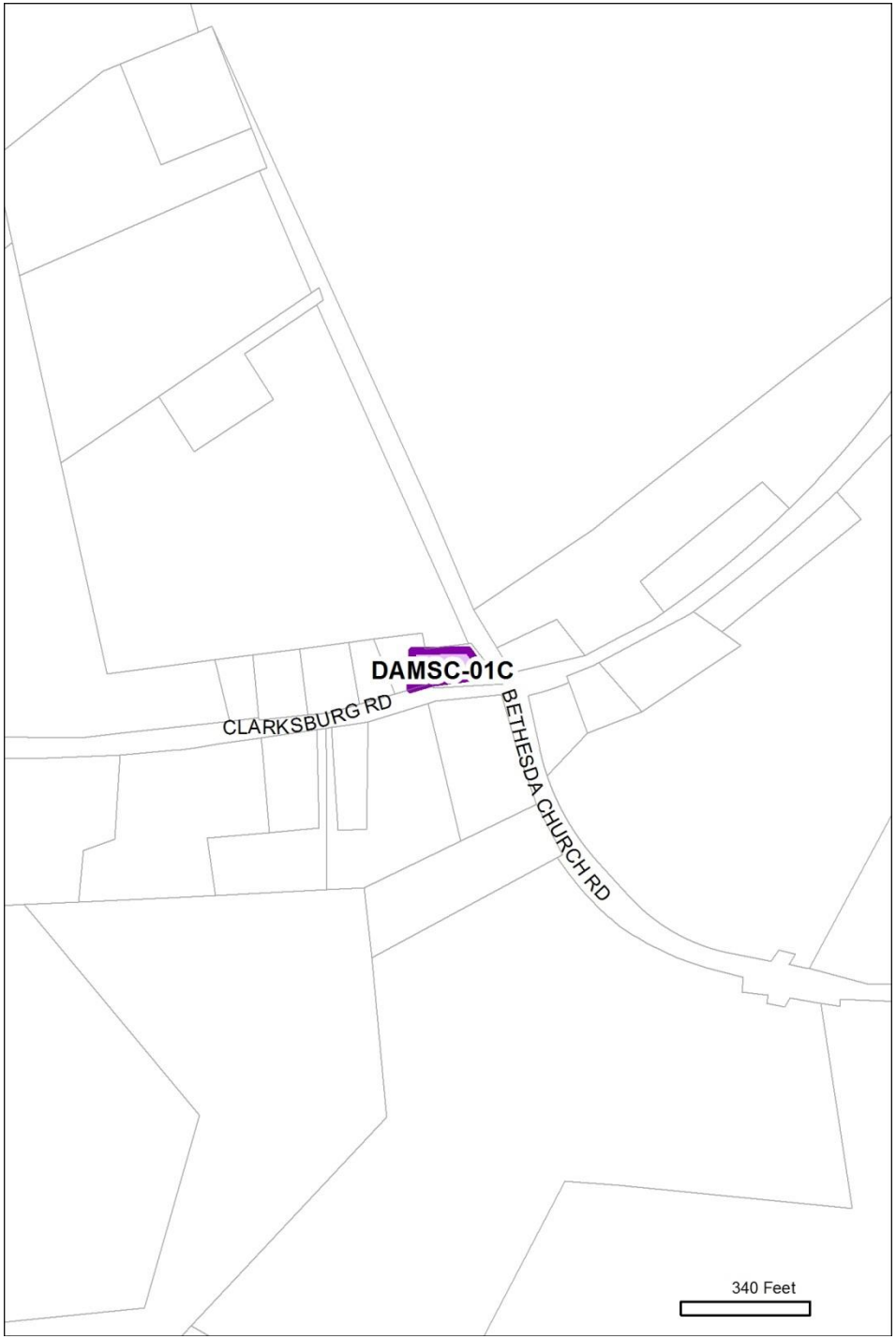
See Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance §59-C-18.232(2)(B)

"Density: Except as noted below, the floor area ratio for commercial uses is limited to FAR 0.2, and is computed only on the area of the underlying commercially zoned portion of the site…"

And

Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance §59-C-18.232(2)(D)

"Building height. No building may exceed a height of 35 feet."



MP Number:		DAMSC-01C
Master Plan:		Damascus
Location:		Clarksburg Rd & Bethesda Church Rd
Existing Zone:		C-1 (and Rural Village Overlay)
Standard Conv:		~~NR-1.0 H-45~~
Proposed Conv:		CRN-0.25 C-0.25 R-0.0 H-35
Modifications	**Zone Group:**	Changed to CRN
	Overall FAR:	Reduced to 0.25
	Comm'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.25
	Resid'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.0
	Height:	Reduced to 35'

Reason for non-standard conversion:

See Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance §59-C-18.232(2)(B)

"Density: Except as noted below, the floor area ratio for commercial uses is limited to FAR 0.2, and is computed only on the area of the underlying commercially zoned portion of the site…"

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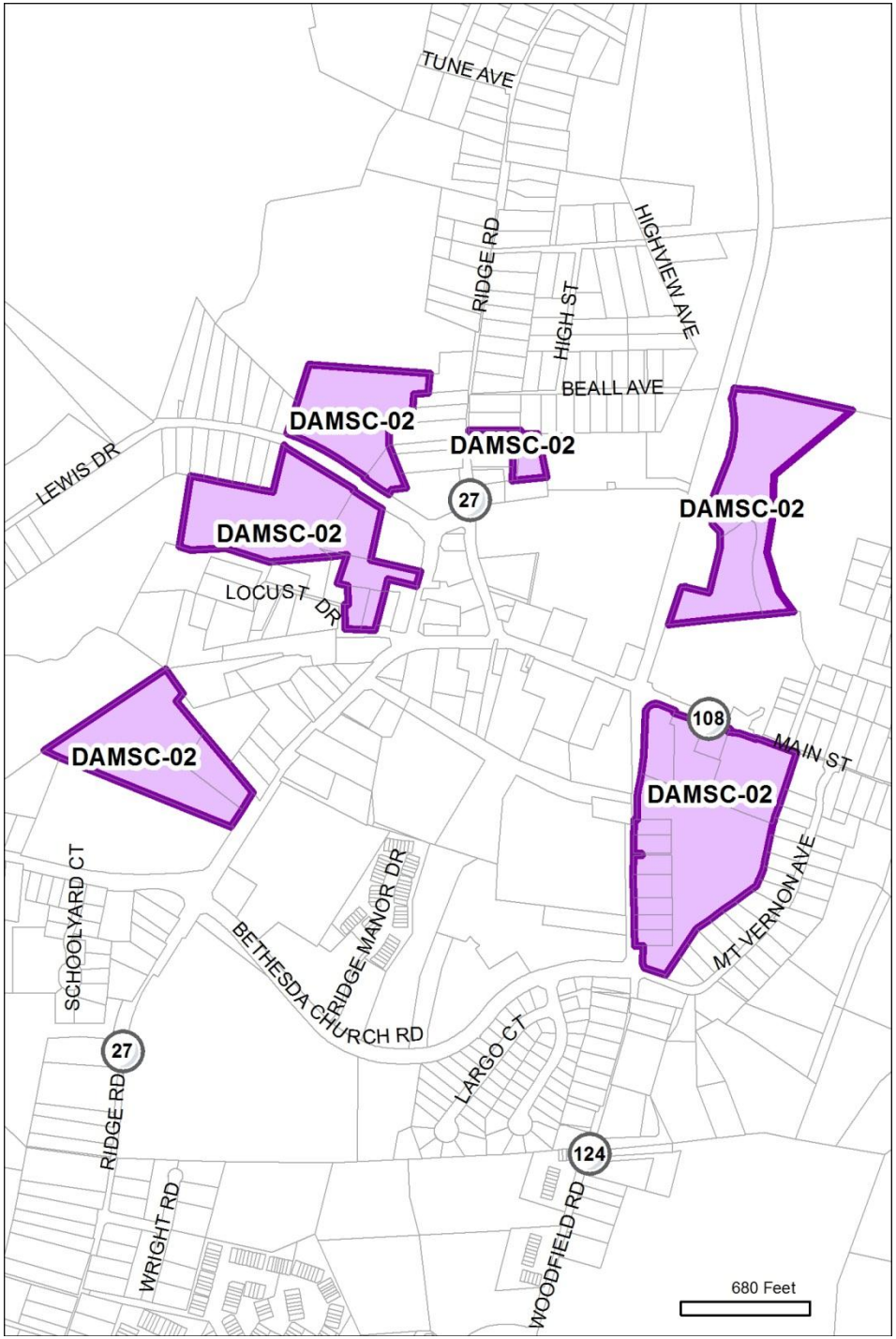
"Building height. No building may exceed a height of 35 feet."



MP Number:		DAMSC-02
Master Plan:		Damascus
Location:		Damascus town center
Existing Zone:		MXTC/TDR
Standard Conv:		~~CRT-1.5 C-1.0 R-0.5 H-70 T~~
Proposed Conv:		CRT-1.0 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-55 T
Modifications	**Zone Group:**	Standard
	Overall FAR:	Reduced to 1.0
	Comm'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.5
	Resid'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.5
	Height:	Reduced to 55'

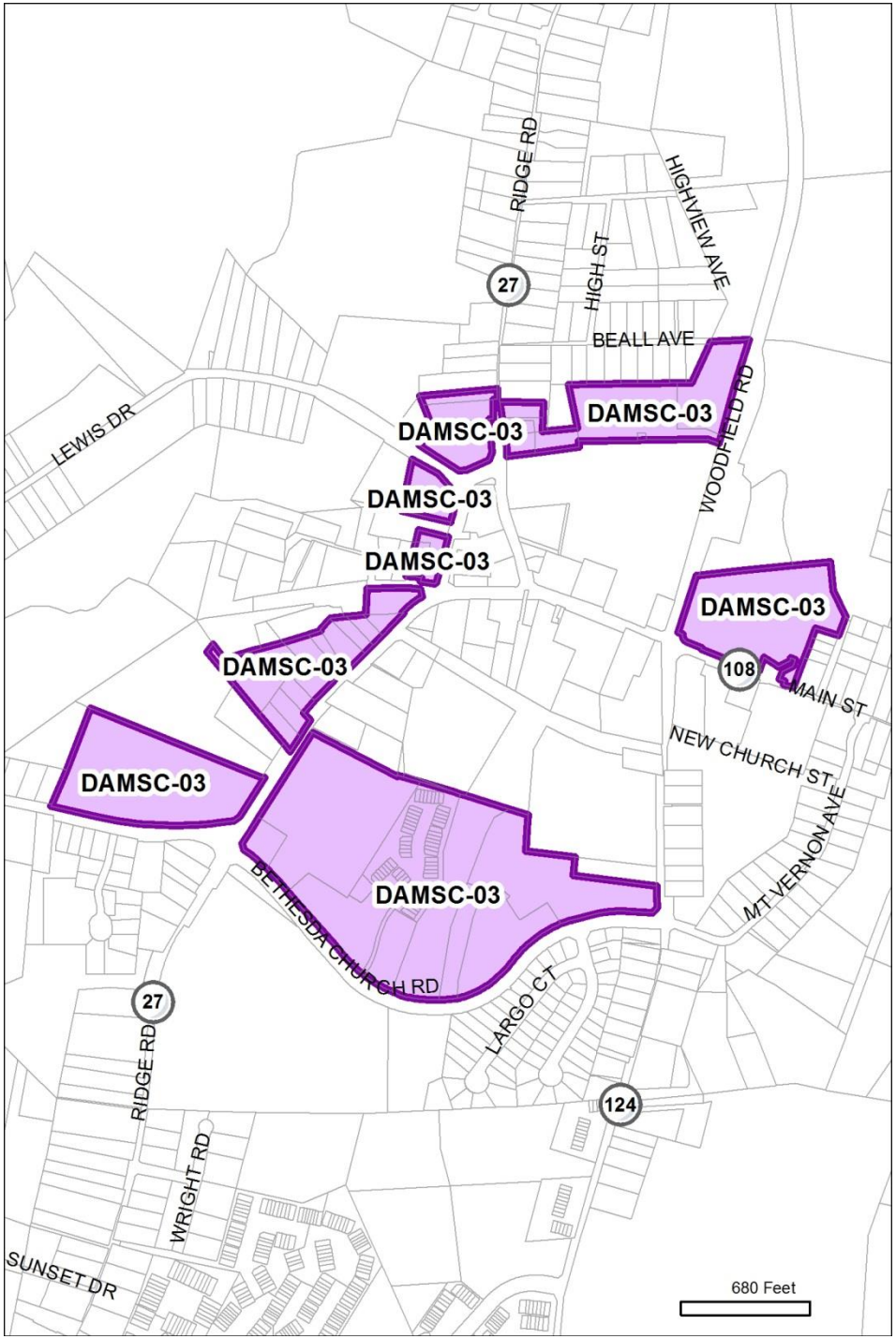
Reason for non-standard conversion:

Damascus Master Plan page 97

Table indicates density for commercial, industrial, or mixed use areas are limited to 0.5 FAR and 20 dwelling units per acre of residential for the "outer area" of the town center.

However, residential development above 8 dwelling units per acre is only possible with the purchase of TDRs.

Table also indicates that heights are limited to 55'.



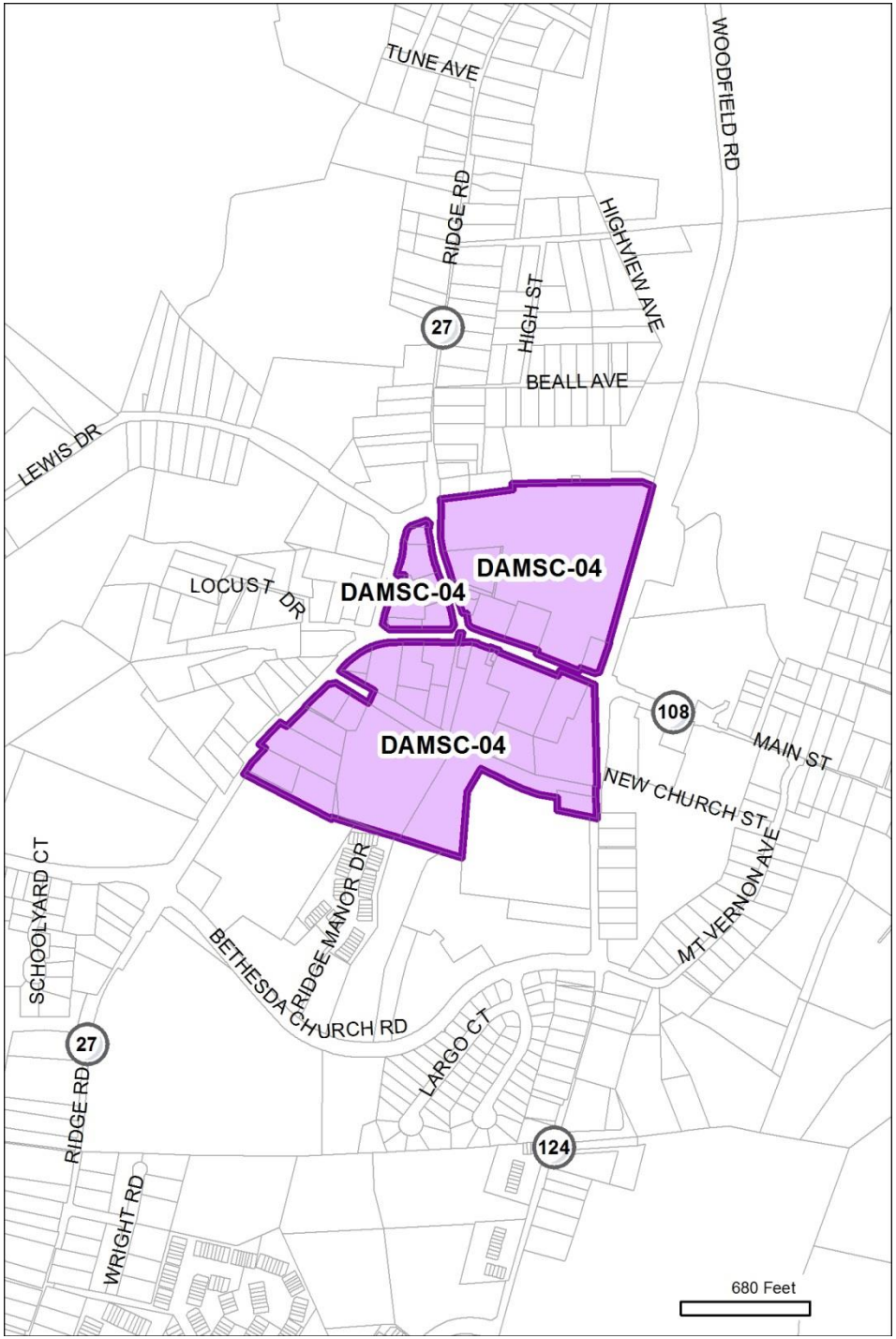
MP Number:		DAMSC-03
Master Plan:		Damascus
Location:		Damascus town center
Existing Zone:		MXTC
Standard Conv:		~~CRT-2.0 C-1.0 R-1.5 H-70 T~~
Proposed Conv:		CRT-1.5 C-0.5 R-1.0 H-55 T
Modifications	**Zone Group:**	Standard
	Overall FAR:	Reduced to 1.5
	Comm'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.5
	Resid'l FAR:	Reduced to 1.0
	Height:	Reduced to 55'

Reason for non-standard conversion:

Damascus Master Plan page 97

Table indicates density for commercial, industrial, or mixed use areas are limited to 0.5 FAR and 20 dwelling units per acre of residential for the "outer area" of the town center.

Table also indicates that heights are limited to 55'.



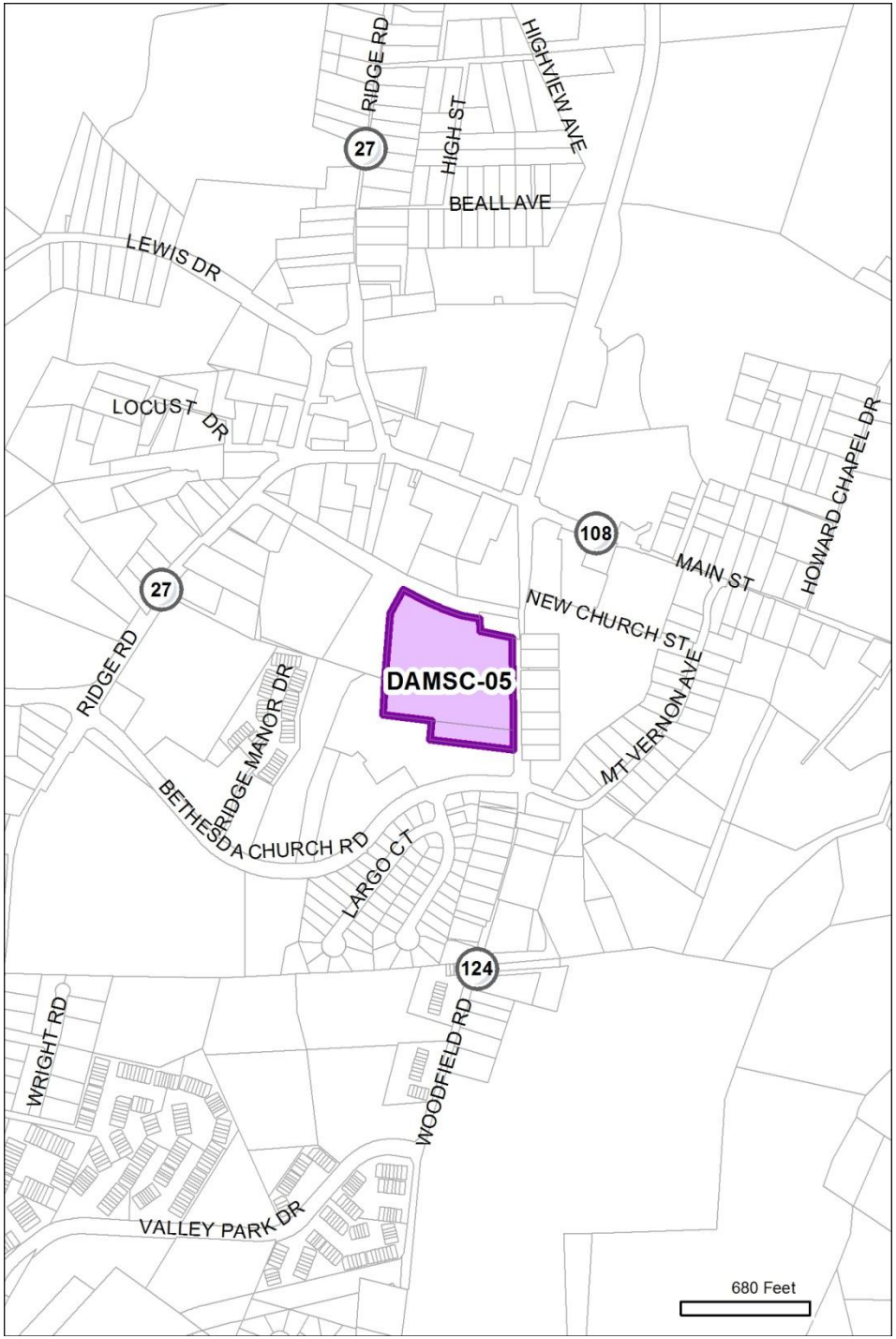
MP Number:		DAMSC-04
Master Plan:		Damascus
Location:		Damascus town center
Existing Zone:		MXTC
Standard Conv:		~~CRT-2.0 C-1.0 R-1.5 H-70 T~~
Proposed Conv:		CRT-1.75 C-1.0 R-0.75 H-55 T
Modifications	**Zone Group:**	Standard
	Overall FAR:	Reduced to 1.75
	Comm'l FAR:	Standard
	Resid'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.75
	Height:	Reduced to 55'

Reason for non-standard conversion:

Damascus Master Plan page 97

Table indicates density for commercial, industrial, or mixed use areas are limited to 1.0 FAR and 15 dwelling units per acre of residential for the "inner core" of the town center.

Table also indicates that heights are limited to 55'.



MP Number:		DAMSC-05
Master Plan:		Damascus
Location:		Damascus town center
Existing Zone:		MXTC/TDR
Standard Conv:		~~CRT-1.5 C-1.0 R-0.5 H-70 T~~
Proposed Conv:		CRT-1.0 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-55 T
Modifications	**Zone Group:**	Standard
	Overall FAR:	Reduced to 1.0
	Comm'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.5
	Resid'l FAR:	Reduced to 0.5
	Height:	Reduced to 55'

Reason for non-standard conversion:

Damascus Master Plan page 97

Table indicates density for commercial, industrial, or mixed use areas are limited to 0.5 FAR and 20 dwelling units per acre of residential for the "outer area" of the town center.

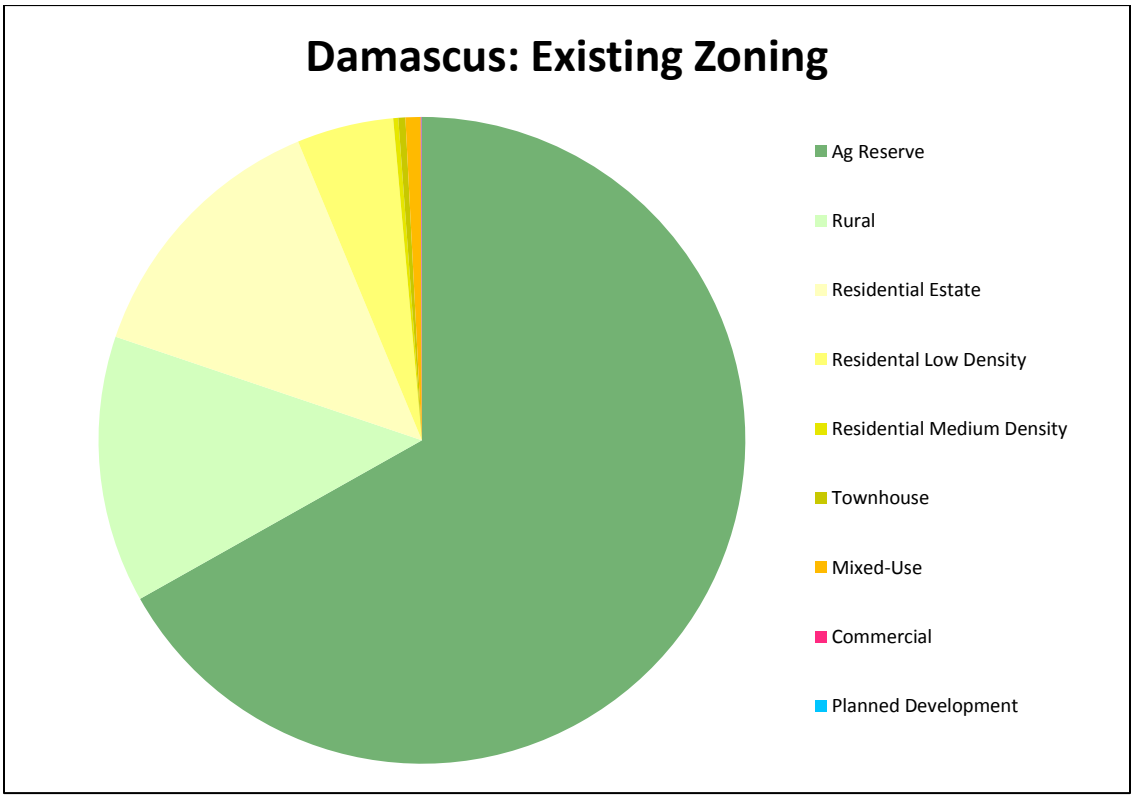
However, residential development above 8 dwelling units per acre is only possible with the purchase of TDRs.

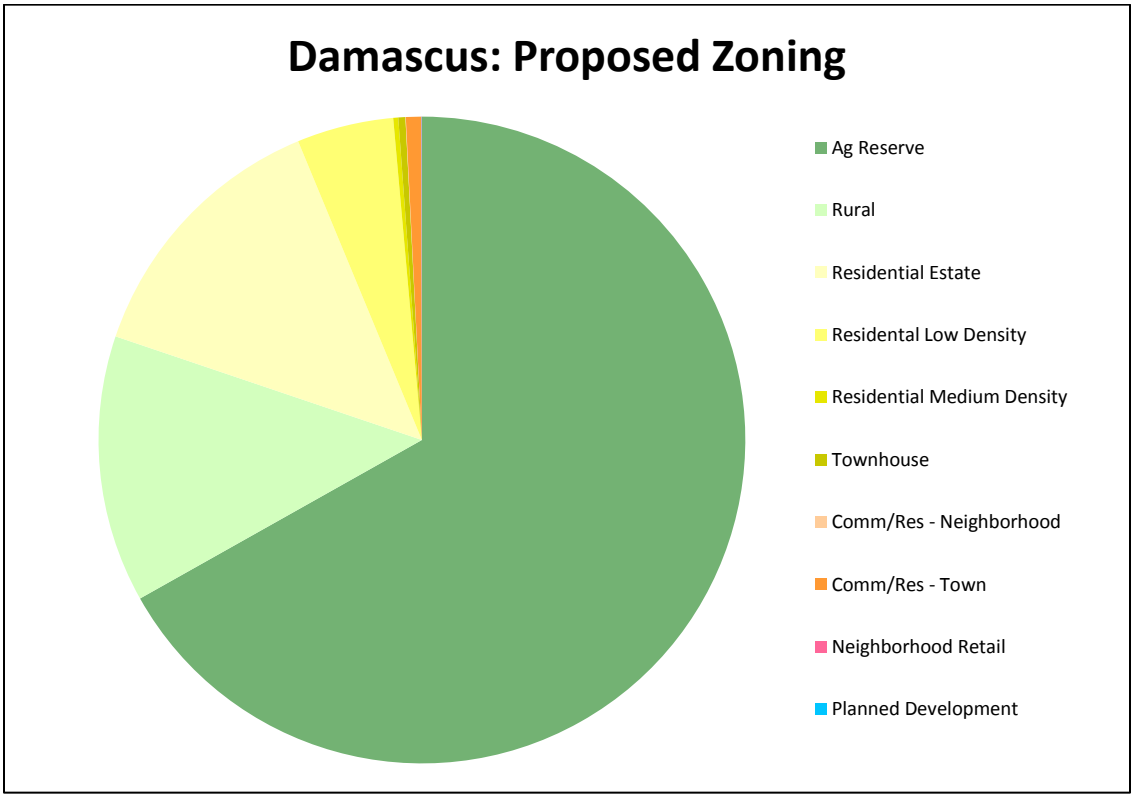
Table also indicates that heights are limited to 55'.

ZONE IMPLEMENTATION

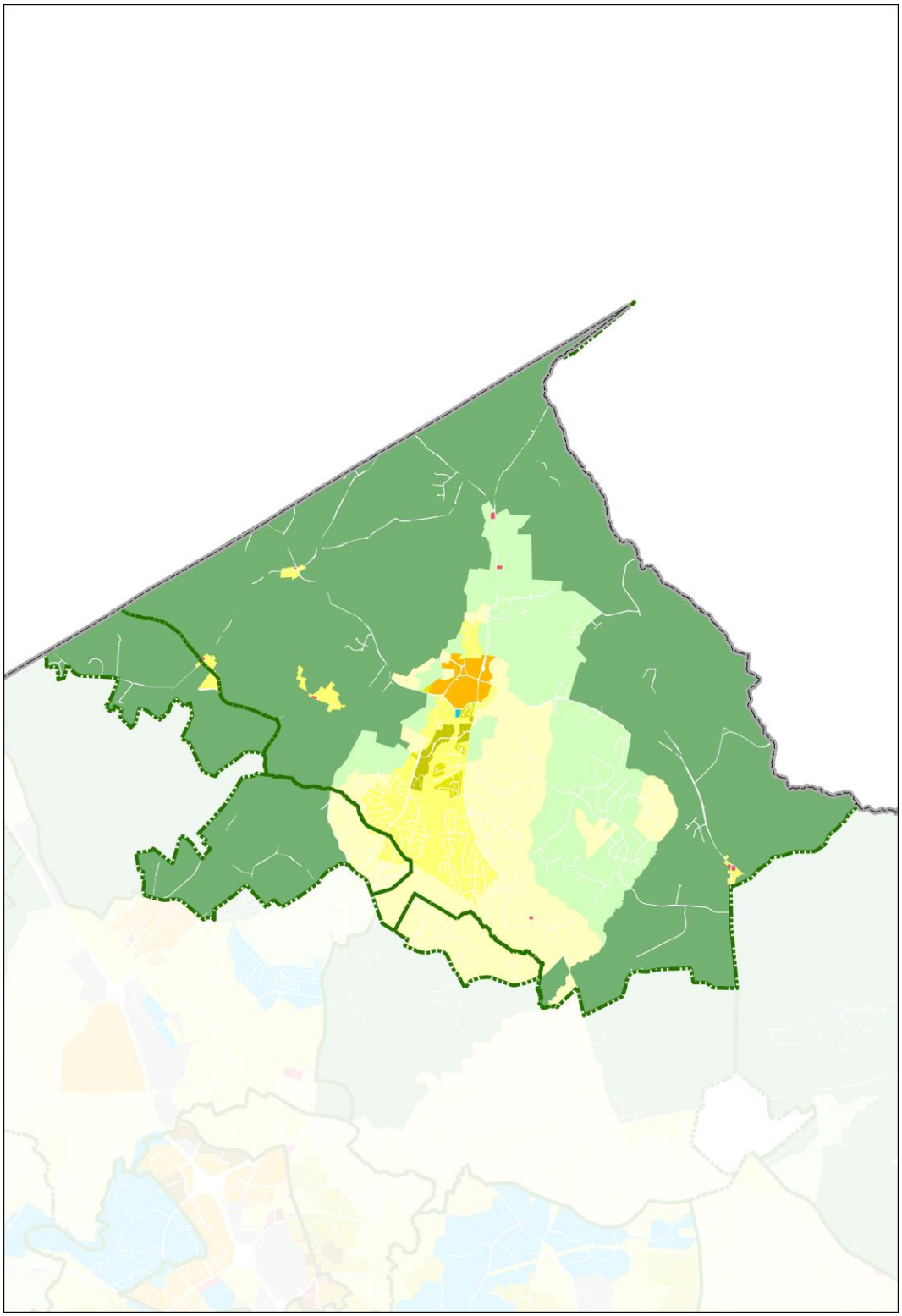
Damascus					
Existing			Proposed		
Zone	Acres	Percent	Zone	Acres	Percent
RDT	17,117.31	66.85	AR	17,117.31	66.85
RC	3,007.23	11.74	RC	3,007.23	11.74
RNC/TDR	409.83	1.60	RNC	409.83	1.60
RE-1	68.27	0.27	RE-1	68.27	0.27
RE-2	1,191.25	4.65	RE-2	1,384.29	5.40
RE-2/TDR	193.04	0.75			
RE-2C	1,817.66	7.10	RE-2C	2,019.00	7.89
RE-2C/TDR	201.34	0.79			
R-150	235.78	0.92	R-200	1,238.63	4.84
R-200	1,002.66	3.92			
R-200/TDR	0.19	0.00			
R-60	11.81	0.05	R-60	11.81	0.05
R-90	52.44	0.20	R-90	52.44	0.20
RT-6	46.43	0.18	RT-6	46.43	0.18
RT-8	12.10	0.05	RT-8	12.10	0.05
RT-10	8.97	0.04	RT-10	8.97	0.04
RT-12.5	22.62	0.09	RT-12.5	22.62	0.09
MXTC	126.53	0.49	CRT-1.5 C-0.5 R-1.0 H-55 T	74.16	0.29
			CRT-1.75 C-1.0 R-0.75 H-55 T	52.37	0.20
MXTC/TDR	67.04	0.26	CRT-1.0 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-55 T	67.04	0.26
C-1	11.39	0.04	CRN-0.25 C-0.25 R-0.0 H-35	4.98	0.02
			NR-1.0 H-45	6.40	0.03
PD-7	3.16	0.01	PD-7	3.16	0.01
Grand Total	**25,607.05**		**Grand Total**	**25,607.05**	

ZONE IMPLEMENTATION





EXISTING ZONING MAP



Existing Zones

Agriculutral Reserve
RDT

Rural
RC
RNC/TDR

Residential Estate
RE-1
RE-2
RE-2/TDR
RE-2C
RE-2C/TDR

Residential Low Density
R-150
R-200
R-200/TDR

Residential Medium Density
R-60
R-90

Townhouse
RT-6
RT-8
RT-10
RT-12.5

Commercial
C-1

Mixed-Use
MXTC
MXTC/TDR

Planned Development
PD-7

PROPOSED ZONING MAP

Proposed Zones

Agriculutral Reserve
AR

Rural
RC
RNC

Residential Estate
RE-1
RE-2
RE-2C

Residential Low Density
R-200

Residential Medium Density
R-60
R-90

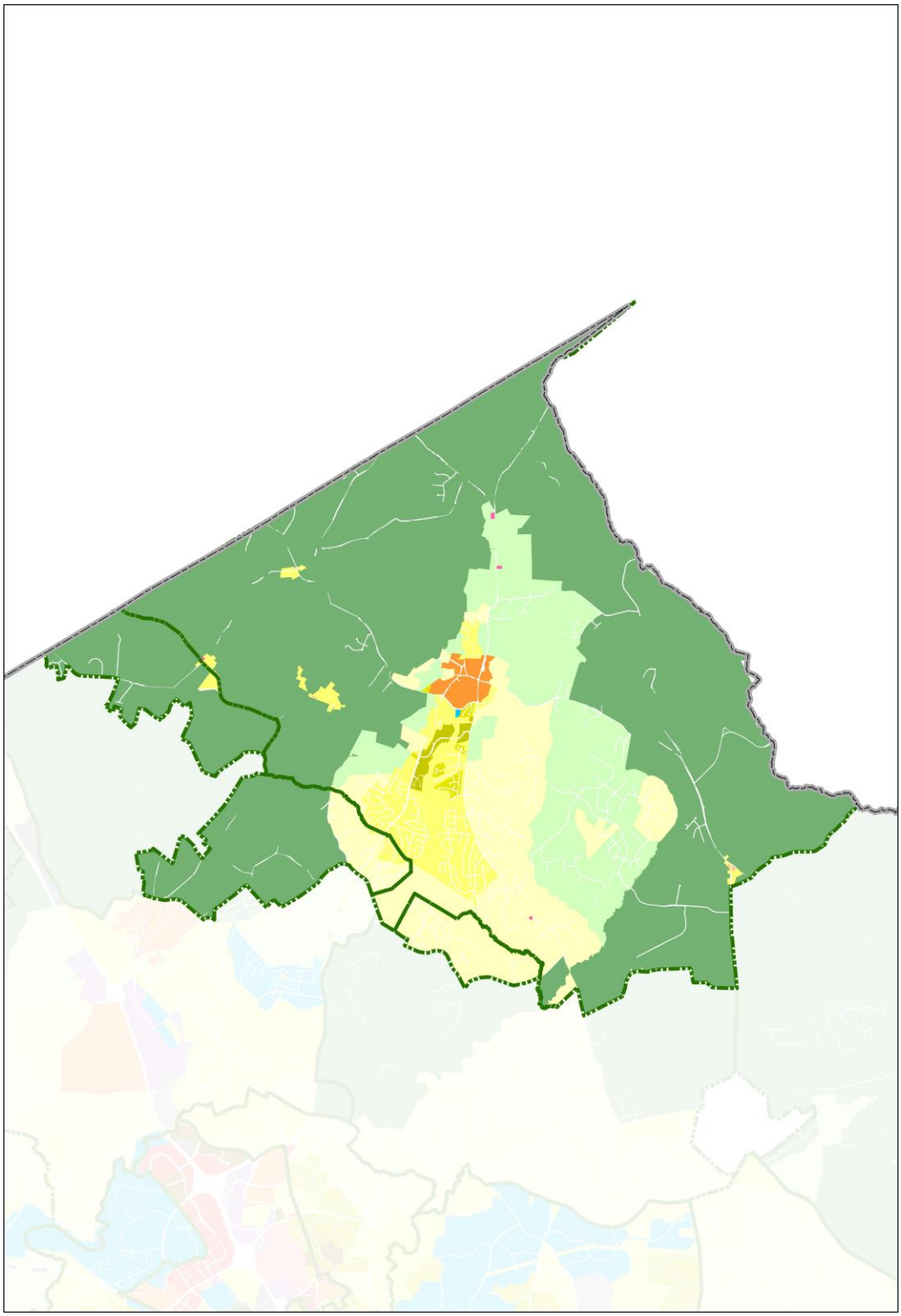
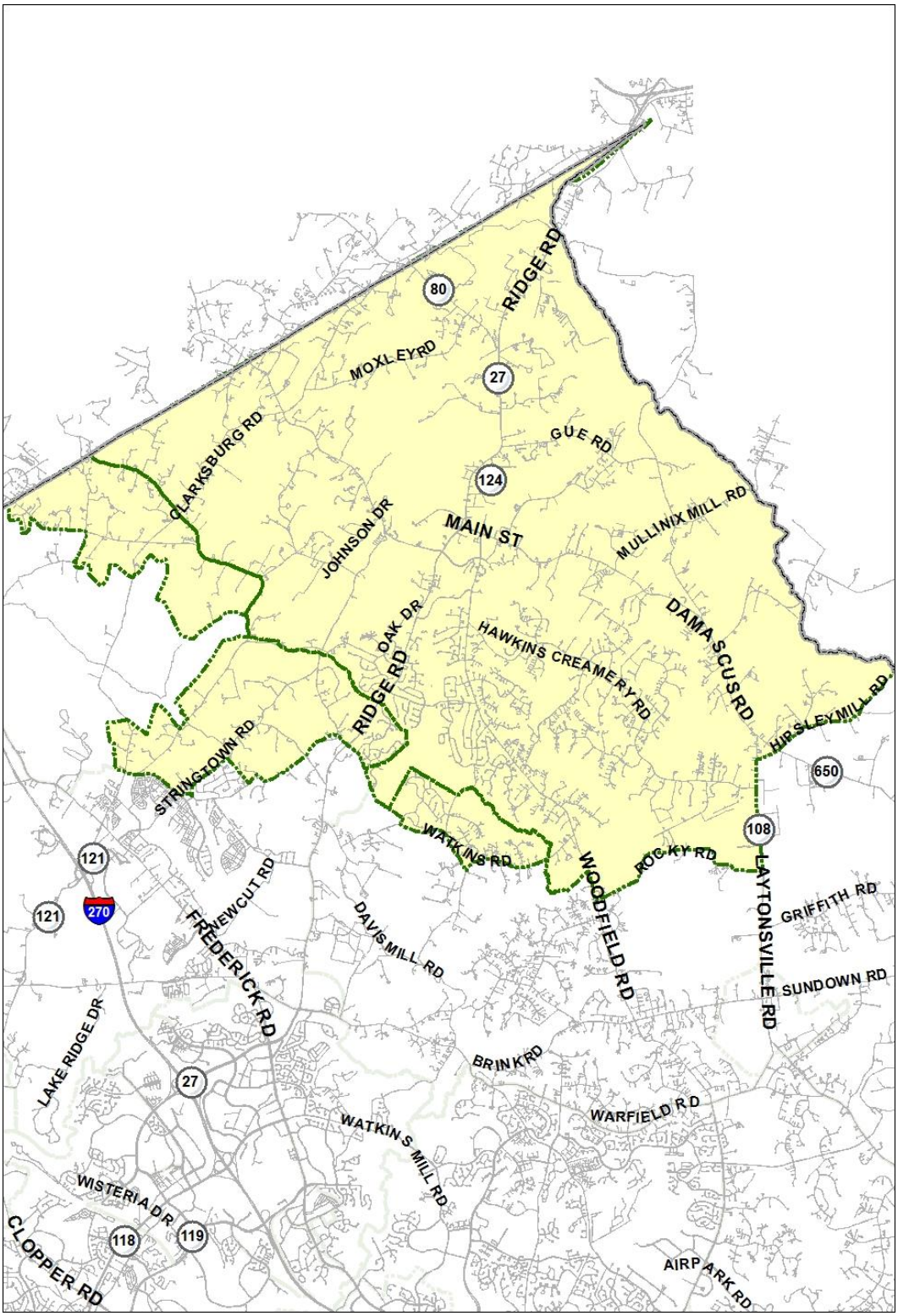
Townhouse
RT-6
RT-8
RT-10
RT-12.5

Comm/Res-Neighborhood
CRN

Neighborhood Retail
NR

Comm/Res-Town
CRT

Planned Development
PD-7



PLANNING AREA CONTEXT