

WRIGHTSVILLE AVENUE 2030

A Land Use & Transportation Plan
for the Wrightsville Avenue Corridor



City of Wilmington
Development Services
Adopted April 20, 2010

Amended 12/4/12



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Wilmington City Council

Bill Saffo, Mayor
Earl Sheridan, Mayor Pro-Tem
Kevin O'Grady
Laura Padgett
Charlie Rivenbark
Ronald Sparks
Kristi Tomey

Planning Commission

Ken Dull, Chairman
Chris Boney, Vice-chairman
Corey Barbour
Keith Betts
Dan Dawson
Johnnie Henagan
Haskell Rhett

City Management

Sterling Cheatham, City Manager
Tony Caudle, Deputy City Manager

Development Services Department

Brian Chambers, Associate Long Range Planner, Project Manager
Christine Hughes, Senior Long Range Planner
Corey Taylor, Associate Long Range Planner
Anthony Prinz, Associate Transportation Planner
Jeff Walton, Associate Current Planner
Maggie O'Connor, Historic Preservation Planner
Elizabeth Penley, GIS Planner
Don Bennett, Traffic Engineering Manager
Ron Satterfield, Planning Manager
Kaye Graybeal, Development Services Director

Special Thanks

Winter Park Baptist Church
Town of Wrightsville Beach
Eryn Moller, Planner I, Town of Wrightsville Beach

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From its beginnings as a rural road between Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach to the corridor we see today, Wrightsville Avenue continues to be an important part of our local heritage and a source of community pride. Planning for the future is critical to the protection of the unique character of this historic road. In 1990, in an effort to provide direction for future growth along the corridor, the city adopted the *Wrightsville Avenue Land Use Plan* (WALUP). This plan provided guidance for land use, urban design, and transportation management along Wrightsville Avenue.

It has been 20 years since the WALUP was first adopted and many changes have occurred along Wrightsville Avenue. These changes have impacted both the form and function of the corridor. New development, transportation improvements, and the growth of the surrounding area have all influenced the character of the avenue. Two significant annexations in 1995 and 1998 extended the city limits to include the entire length of the avenue and in 2004 the city adopted its first comprehensive Future Land Use Plan (FLUP). Both of these events brought changes to how future growth would occur.

To address these changes, an update to the WALUP was initiated in the summer of 2009. The update was driven by an extensive public input process involving all Wrightsville Avenue stakeholders. Beginning in June 2009, and concluding with the plan roll-out in February 2010, the public input process allowed citizens to actively participate in the development of this plan and help shape the future of the avenue. The *Wrightsville Avenue 2030* plan represents the community's best attempt to protect the unique character of the roadway. The plan includes policies and action items that will guide future growth, foster sustainable development, and assist in the prioritization of capital investment. The plan provides clearer expectations for residents, property owners, and business owners along the avenue.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The *Wrightsville Avenue Land Use Plan (WALUP)* was first adopted in 1990 in an effort to protect the unique character of the Wrightsville Avenue corridor. The plan was intended to guide growth along the corridor by recommending regulations for land use, urban design, and transportation management. A number of changes have occurred along the corridor since the plan was first adopted, including several large development projects and transportation improvements. In order to address these changes, as well as provide guidance for future development along the corridor, an update to the plan was initiated in mid-2009. This update is the result of an intensive community-based planning effort that included residents, property owners and business owners along the Wrightsville Avenue corridor, City of Wilmington and Town of Wrightsville Beach staff, elected and appointed officials, and other community stakeholders. The plan will guide future development, help foster a sustainable pattern of development, and assist in the prioritization of capital investment.

A History

With its origins dating back well over 125 years, Wrightsville Avenue is one of the oldest roads in southeastern North Carolina. Chartered in 1875 as the Wilmington & Coast Turnpike, the privately owned and operated toll road provided a much sought after connection between the City of Wilmington, the limits of which extended to Burnt Mill Creek at the time, and the sounds of New Hanover County. The main stem of the turnpike began at the intersection of Dock and 17th streets and went to the head of Lee's Creek (Bradley Creek), with branches to Masonboro and Wrightsville Sounds.¹ When the construction of the turnpike was completed in 1887, the road was topped with oyster shells, thus earning the nickname "Shell Road."



Old Shell Road, photo courtesy of the New Hanover County Public Library.

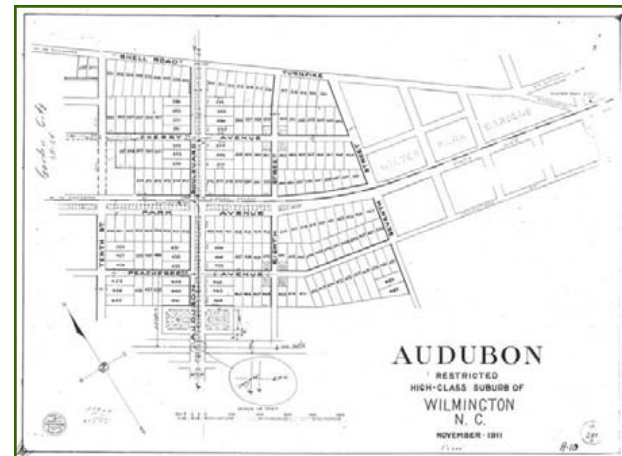
¹The L.T. Moore Collection, New Hanover County Public Library

The Wilmington & Coast Turnpike Company owned and operated the turnpike. Users were charged a toll and three toll houses were erected along its path, the first at 17th and Dock streets, the second at Winter Park, and the third at the head of Lee's Creek (Bradley Creek) in Seagate. The turnpike remained in private hands until 1902, when the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners purchased the road for a sum of \$7,500. The purchase meant a free road for local traffic, farmers carting their produce to market, and cyclists who were, until then, charged 10 cents per wheel to ride on the road. Change in ownership brought a considerable increase in traffic and more visitors to Wrightsville and Masonboro sounds. Wrightsville Avenue was a great factor in the development of Wrightsville Beach as a modern summer resort.²

Shortly after the completion of the Wrightsville Turnpike the Wilmington Seacoast Railroad Company was granted a charter to build a track to extend from Wilmington to the Hammocks on Wrightsville Beach. The new rail line, together with the completion of the turnpike, fueled development along the corridor. The development of communities such as Delgado Mills Village, Forest Hills, Audubon, Winter Park, and Seagate, all of which date back nearly 100 years, are due in large part to these important transportation advancements. The colonial style homes and one- and two-story bungalows and cottages found in these communities gave the turnpike its unique character. This character persists along many parts of Wrightsville Avenue to this day and is one of the reasons why this road remains such a cherished part of the local culture.



Toll house on Shell Road, photo courtesy of the New Hanover County Public Library.



Audubon subdivision plat (1911), courtesy of New Hanover County Register of Deeds.

² Rupert L. Benson and Helen S. Benson, *Historical Narrative of Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina* (Wilmington Printing and Stamp Company, 1972) 5.

Why Plan?

Planning allows a community to help shape its future and the means by which to achieve it. The planning process allows a community to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, develop goals, and formulate a plan to reach those goals. A land use plan is a blueprint that guides growth, redevelopment, and preservation efforts towards a community's identified goals. Land use plans prioritize resources, reduce uncertainty, and allow elected officials to make more informed decisions.

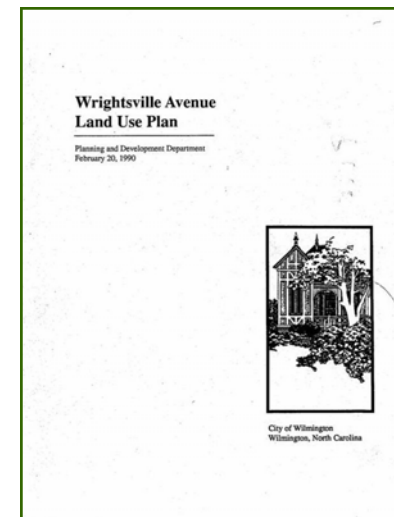
Planning Vs. Zoning

A land use plan is a policy document that provides a set of strategies for achieving a community's identified goals. These goals relate to things such as land use, transportation, historic preservation, and environmental protection. Land use plans are used by elected officials when making decisions about capital improvements or rezoning requests. Because a land use plan is a guide, its adoption does not guarantee that community improvements or zoning changes will occur.

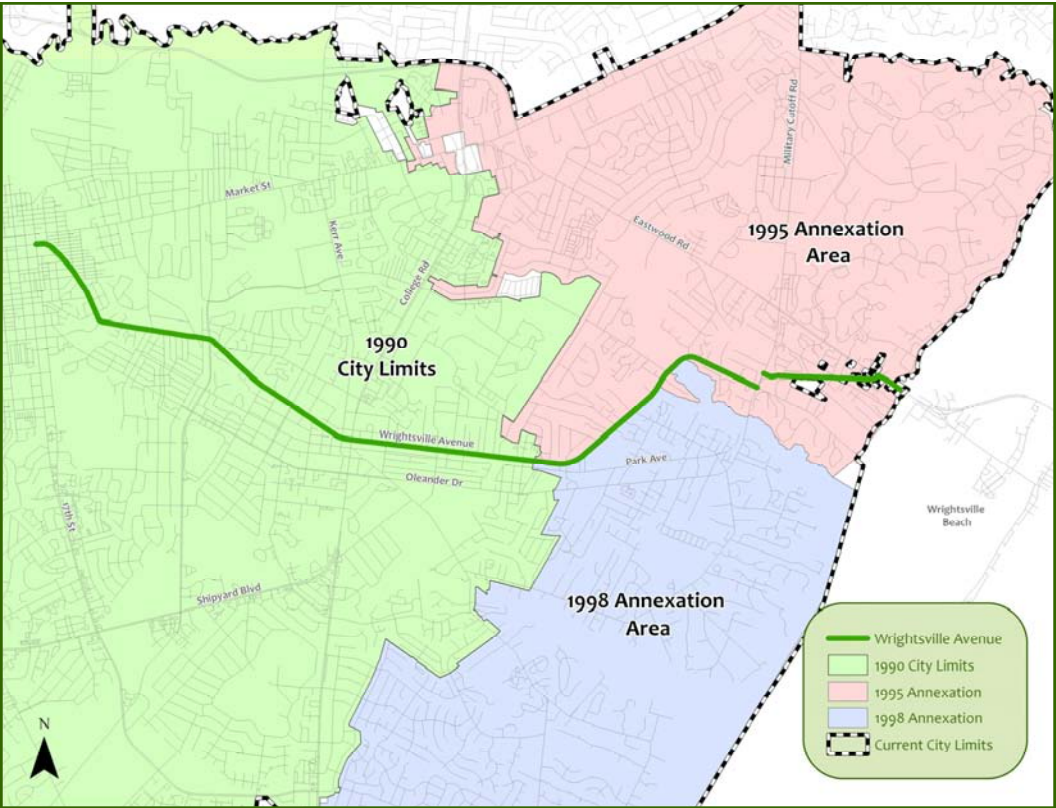
Zoning, on the other hand, is the legal, enforceable part of the city code that regulates the use of land including the type, scale, and intensity of development. Zoning is one tool through which a land use plan may be implemented.

1990 Plan

The 1990 plan covered the entire length of Wrightsville Avenue within the then-current city limits, which at that time terminated just east of the Cape Fear Hospital. The plan included several recommended zoning changes, including the adoption of an overlay district for the corridor which was enacted shortly after the adoption of the plan (Wrightsville Avenue Corridor Overlay). The overlay district required additional building design, access, and permitted use considerations.



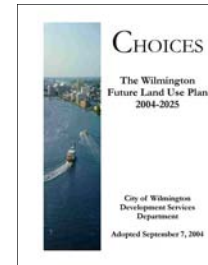
Many important changes have occurred since the 1990 plan was adopted. The entire length of Wrightsville Avenue is now within the city limits. There have also been a number of road improvements and developments completed along the corridor. Road improvements include the one-way street conversion and streetscape enhancements between 17th Street and Gibson Avenue, the road widening and sidewalk installation in front of Cape Fear Hospital, the bridge replacement at Bradley Creek, and the intersection reconfiguration at Oleander Drive, Airlie Road, and Military Cutoff Road, just to name a few. New development projects include Wrightsville Office Park, Trolley Path condominiums, Wrightsville Town Center offices, and Jamesborough Court condominiums. All of these changes have impacted the character and function of Wrightsville Avenue.



Relation To Other Plans

Several of the city’s planning documents were consulted during the development of the *Wrightsville Avenue 2030* plan. These planning documents were reviewed for consistency and recommendations found within these documents were incorporated into this plan where appropriate. This plan builds on these existing planning documents.

The FLUP calls for an update to the 1990 WALUP in order to determine if portions of the corridor are suitable for transition to higher-density residential and/or commercial uses. Some areas along Wrightsville Avenue that are currently zoned single-family may not be as desirable for single-family uses in the future. The FLUP recommends that transitions to commercial or higher density residential uses be discouraged until a land use study and subsequent update to the WALUP can be completed. The *Wrightsville Avenue 2030* plan fulfills this recommendation and serves as a supplement to the FLUP.



Walk Wilmington: A Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan was developed in an effort to create a safe, accessible and comfortable pedestrian system throughout Wilmington. The plan attempts to address challenges that pedestrians face, such as access, connectivity and safety and strives to improve pedestrian conditions on all roads. The plan includes specific recommendations for pedestrian improvements along Wrightsville Avenue as well as within areas adjacent to the corridor.



The *Seagate Neighborhood Plan* was developed in an effort to improve the quality of life in the Seagate area. The plan generally includes the area between Oleander Drive, Wrightsville Avenue and Bradley Creek. The plan provides specific recommendations and strategies that address land use, traffic and infrastructure improvements in the Seagate area. Several properties along Wrightsville Avenue are identified within the *Seagate Neighborhood Plan*. Where these areas exist, the recommendations of the Seagate Plan are retained.



Methodology

Active citizen participation is vital to the success of any plan. When stakeholders in a community are directly involved in the planning process, they are more likely to take ownership of the plan and subsequently play an important part in its implementation. This plan was prepared using a community-based approach with stakeholders providing input and recommendations through a series of public input workshops, surveys, and internet-based review and comment. At the workshops, participants identified the strengths and weaknesses of the corridor, formulated the common objectives of the plan, and identified actions that could be taken to achieve these objectives.



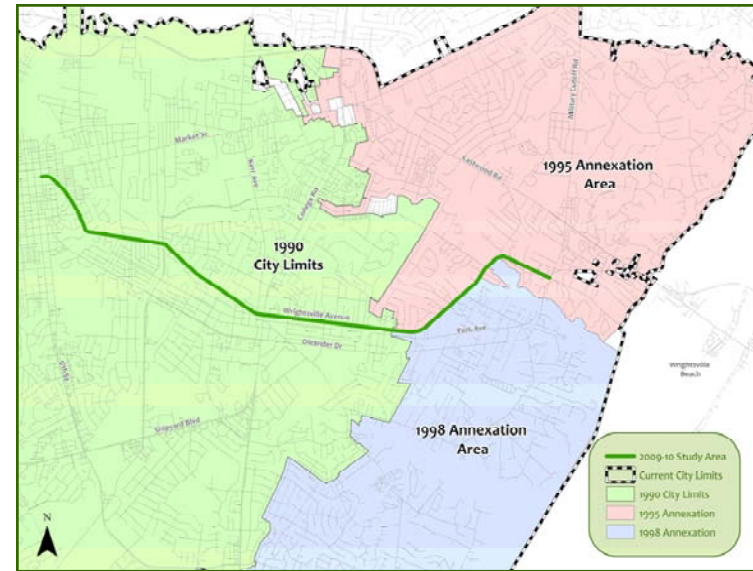
The public input process began with a kick-off meeting held in June 2009 at the Winter Park Baptist Church. At this meeting, staff provided some background on the 1990 plan, explained the factors motivating the update to the plan, and presented an outline of the public input process. The kick-off meeting was followed by a series of workshops at which participants identified and prioritized their concerns, established objectives and planning areas for the plan, and identified actions that address each objective for each area. The public input process concluded with an open house held in February 2010 at which the plan was presented for public review. Overall, the public input process spanned a period of six months and included six public meetings with over 200 citizens in attendance.



2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Study Area

This plan includes all property fronting on, or utilizing for its primary access, Wrightsville Avenue between S. 17th Street and its intersection with Oleander Drive and Military Cutoff Road. The corridor was divided into eight study areas and addresses the same area as the existing Wrightsville Avenue Corridor Overlay (WACO).

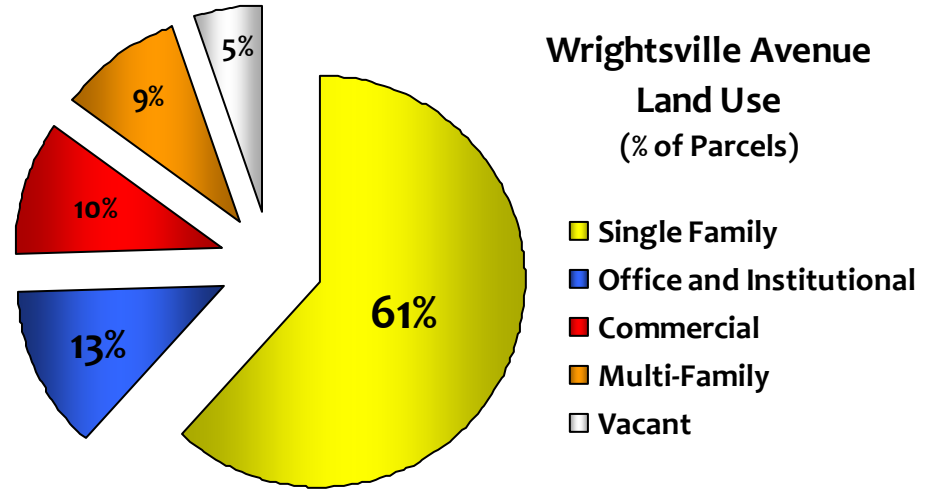


Land Use & Zoning

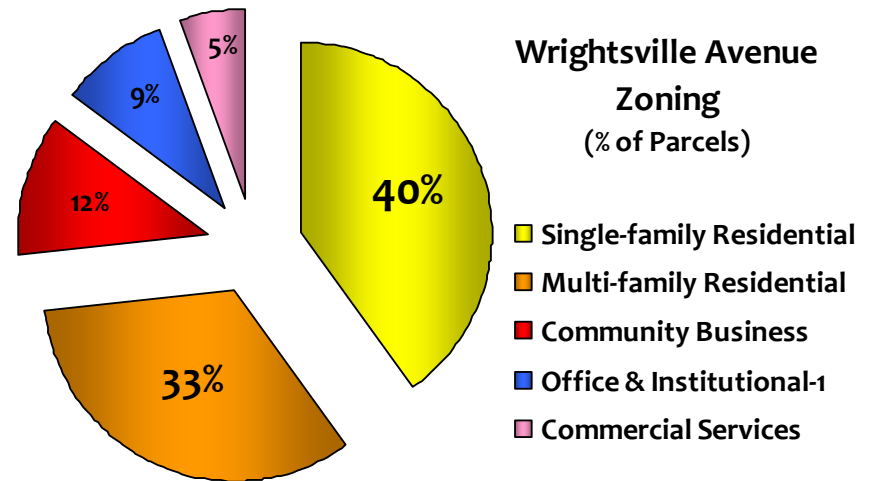
Wrightsville Avenue began as a rural road that linked Wilmington to Wrightsville and Masonboro sounds. Development along the corridor was sparse until the early 1900s when several residential neighborhoods began to develop. Neighborhoods such as Carolina Place, Delgado Mills Village (Mill Hill), Forest Hills, Audubon and Winter Park Gardens transformed the once rural road into a residential corridor. These neighborhoods, which consists of colonial style homes and one- and two-story bungalows and cottages, created the unique character that remains along the corridor to the present day.



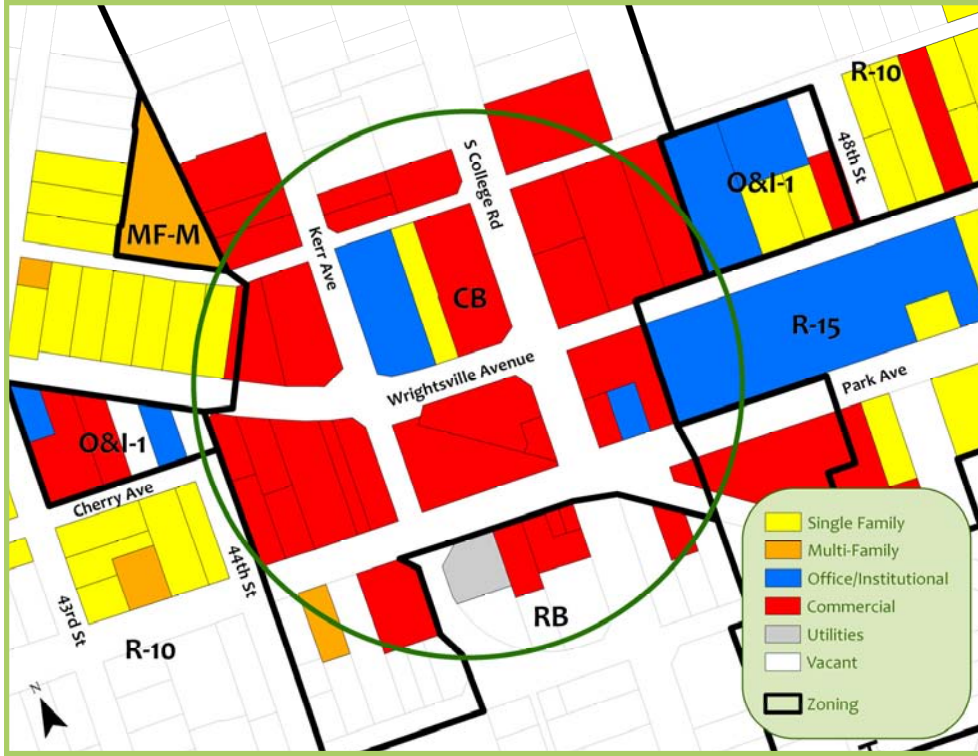
Today, a good deal of the original housing stock remains intact along portions of the corridor. Single-family uses continue to be the predominant use with more than 60% of the parcels and 60% of the linear length of the corridor being devoted to single-family homes. Lot sizes vary along the avenue. Smaller lots exist along the western end, within the 1945 corporate limits. This area is currently zoned R-5, Residential. Throughout the remainder of the corridor, residential lot sizes increase, ranging from 15,000 to 20,000 square feet in size and are zoned R-15 and R-20.



Although much of the corridor remains zoned or used for single-family purposes, there are many areas that have developed with higher density residential and nonresidential uses. Apartment complexes, office buildings, parks, small scale retail establishments, single-family conversions, and a variety of strip commercial developments are located throughout the corridor.

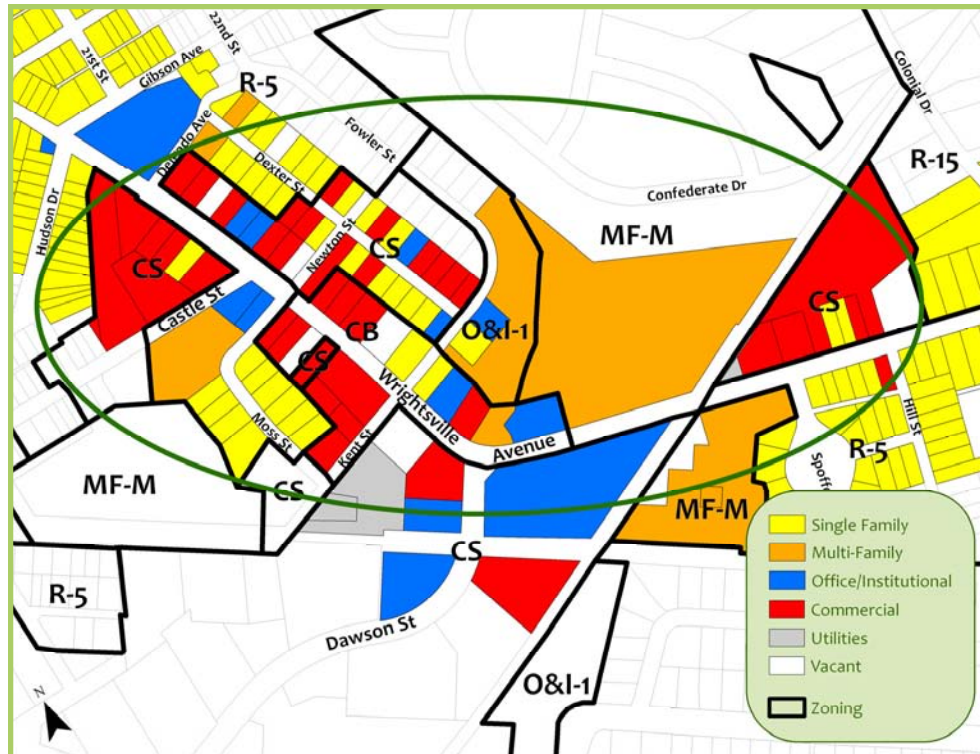


Nonresidential uses along the corridor are generally located at commercial nodes or within commercial strips. Commercial nodes are typically found at the intersections of major thoroughfares. A commercial node exists on Wrightsville Avenue at the intersection of Kerr Avenue and S. College Road. Uses in this area include several strip commercial centers, gas stations, restaurants, and several small retail establishments. This nodal area is currently zoned CB, Community Business.



There are also several commercial strips located along Wrightsville Avenue. Commercial strips are areas between major intersections that are lined with single-story retail and/or office uses. These areas include a number of individual commercial structures on individual lots, each having separate access and signage. Areas that fall within this category include sections of the corridor between Delgado Avenue and Hill Street, between Independence Boulevard and Bryan Avenue, and between Wallace and Rose avenues.

The commercial strip between Delgado Avenue and Hill Street is located on the site of the original Delgado/Spofford Mills site. Although the mill is gone, a number of the original mill village (Mill Hill) homes are still in place. Many of these homes have been converted for nonresidential uses including retail, office, and personal services. The area includes two strip commercial centers and several heavier commercial uses such as auto repair, contractors' supply, heating and air conditioning services, and a tire distribution company. There are two multi-family developments, The Creek apartments and Trolley Path condominiums, as well as the Wrightsville Office Park. Much of this area is zoned Commercial Services (CS), or Community Business (CB) with smaller pockets of Multi-family Medium Density (MF-M) and Office and Institutional-1 (O&I-1).

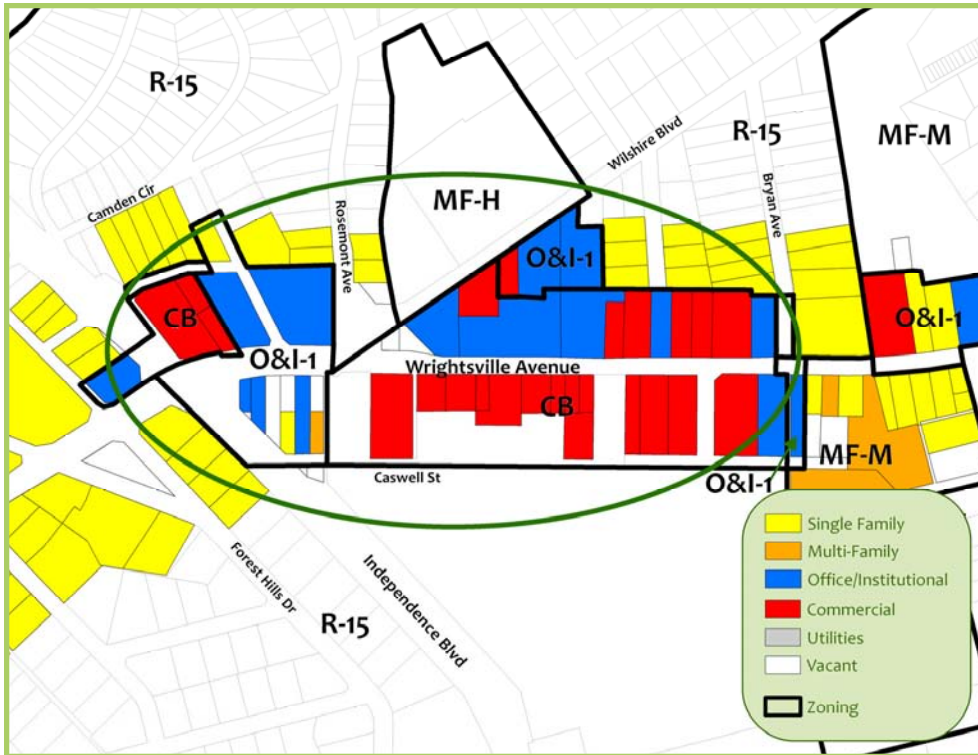


Wrightsville Avenue east of Castle Street.



Wrightsville Avenue east of Dawson Street.

The commercial strip between Independence Boulevard and Bryan Avenue consists of a number of commercial centers, retail establishments, medical and professional offices, and personal service uses. The area, once part the residential neighborhood of Highwood Park, contains several older homes that have been converted for office, retail and personal service uses. The area is zoned Community Business (CB) and Office and Institutional-1 (O&I-1).

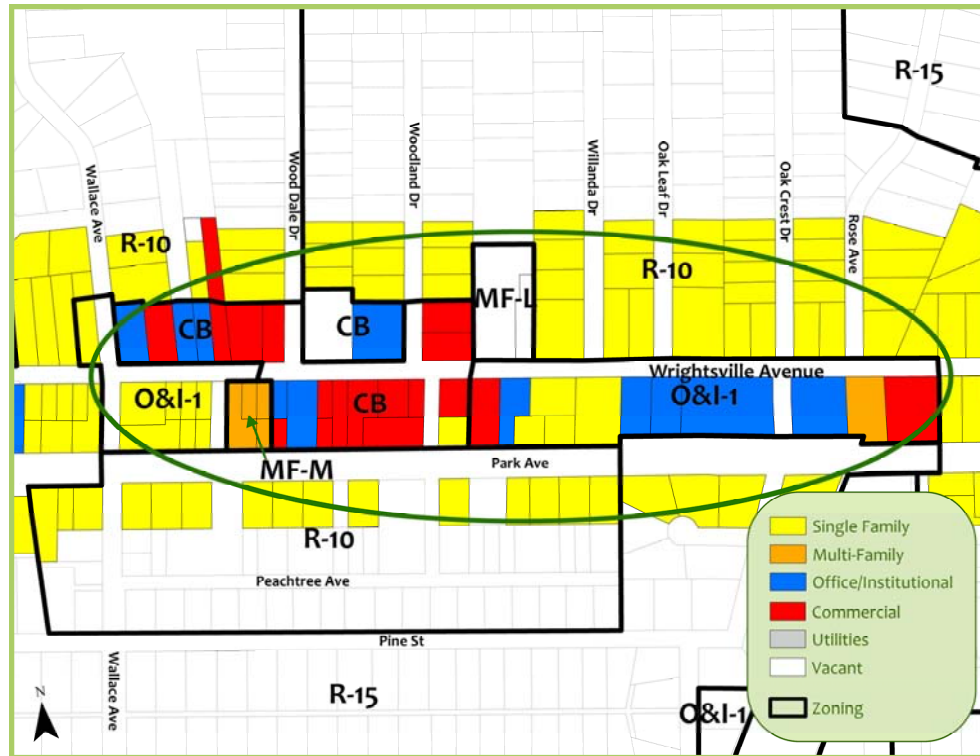


Wrightsville Avenue east of Wilshire Boulevard.



Wrightsville Avenue at the intersection of Independence Boulevard.

The commercial strip between Wallace and Rose avenues includes several strip commercial centers, medical and professional offices, small retail establishments and two gas stations. There are also a large number of older homes in this area that have been converted for retail and office uses. The area is zoned Community Business (CB) and Office and Institutional-1 (O&I-1).



Wrightsville Avenue east of Wallace Avenue.

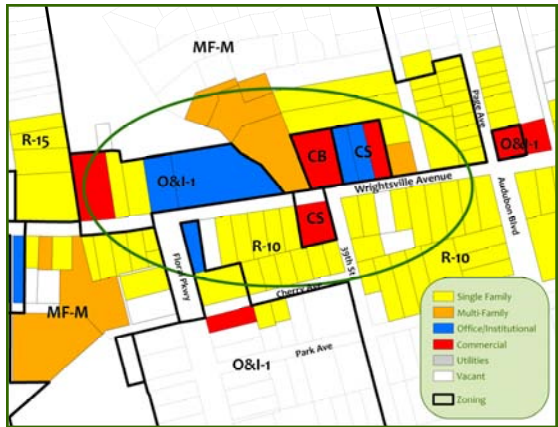


Wrightsville Avenue east of Wilshire Boulevard.

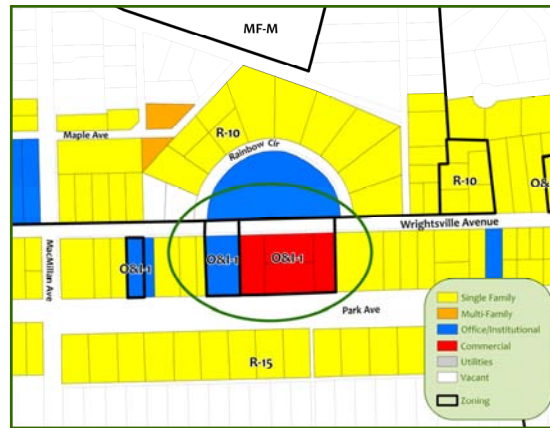
There are a number of smaller commercial pockets outside of these established commercial areas. These pocket areas include several office and retail uses located at or near Floral Parkway, 39th Street, Rainbow Circle, and Greenville Avenue. Individual commercial parcels include a restaurant at Page Avenue, a doctor's office near MacMillan Avenue, and a commercial center at French Road.



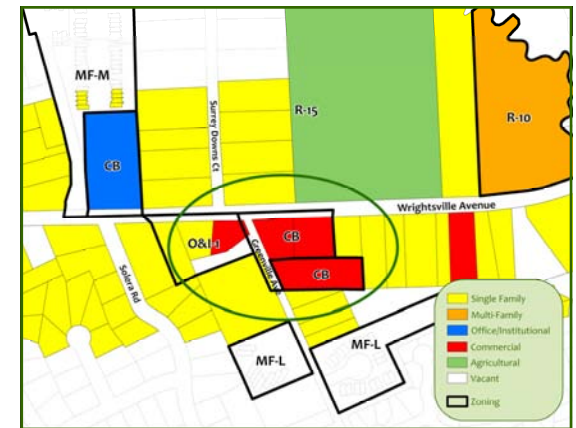
Salt Works II Restaurant on Wrightsville Avenue east of Page Avenue.



Commercial pocket at Floral Parkway and 39th Street.



Commercial pocket at Rainbow Circle.



Commercial pocket at Greenville Avenue.

There are also several nonconforming uses located along Wrightsville Avenue. A nonconforming use is a use that existed prior to the current zoning regulations. These uses are grandfathered, which means they are allowed to remain so long as they continue to operate and do not expand. Nonconforming uses include a medical office at 41st Street, a retail business near 48th Street, an office near MacMillan Avenue, a preschool near Wallace Avenue, and a small retail business east of Greenville Avenue. All of these nonconforming uses are located within residential zoning districts (R-10, R-15).

One of the more prominent uses located on Wrightsville Avenue is Cape Fear Memorial Hospital. The hospital, now part of New Hanover Regional Medical Center, was first constructed in 1957 by a group of local physicians seeking to improve medical care in the region. The hospital has had a profound impact on the surrounding community and to this day remains a significant fixture on the Wrightsville Avenue corridor. Over the years, several properties have been incorporated into the hospital campus. There are also several supporting retail and office uses in the area surrounding the hospital. The hospital and adjacent nonresidential uses are currently zoned O&I-1, Office and Institutional 1.



Cape Fear Memorial Hospital on Wrightsville Avenue east of Hawthorne Drive, courtesy of New Hanover County Public Library.

In addition to the regulations contained in the base zoning districts found along the corridor, properties on Wrightsville Avenue are subject to the requirements of the Wrightsville Avenue Corridor Overlay (WACO). An overlay is an additional layer of regulations that is placed on a geographic area but does not change the underlying zoning. The WACO applies to all properties fronting on or utilizing for its primary access the portion of Wrightsville Avenue between S. 17th Street and Oleander Drive/Military Cutoff Road. The overlay includes additional use regulations and design standards for all nonresidential and multi-family development along the corridor.

Transportation

Wrightsville Avenue is currently classified as an ‘urban collector’ street on the *Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO) Functional Classification Map*. Urban collectors gather traffic from local streets in residential neighborhoods and direct it towards arterial roadways. Wrightsville Avenue, in addition to providing a connection between downtown Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach, also serves as primary access to a number of residential neighborhoods and local commercial districts and connects these areas to the city’s greater public road network.

The majority of Wrightsville Avenue consists of a two-lane undivided road with unimproved shoulders. The right-of-way is currently maintained by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), with the exception of the section between S. 17th and Dawson streets, which is city-maintained. The right-of-way varies between 50 and 100 feet in width and speed limits range between 25 and 45 miles per hour. There are currently 11 signalized intersections and 15 transit stops.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Wrightsville Avenue are limited. Much of the corridor does not include sidewalks, only a few intersections include crosswalks, and there are limited bicycle lanes. The River to Sea Bikeway runs parallel to Wrightsville Avenue along Park Avenue; however, the path is incomplete in some areas and there are few well-identified connections that link it to Wrightsville Avenue. Bicycle lanes have been added in the area near the university (between Wooddale and Woodland drives) but much of the corridor remains without adequate bicycle accommodations.



Wrightsville Avenue east of Dawson Street.



Wrightsville Avenue east of Wallace Avenue.

Wrightsville Avenue operates at various levels of service throughout the corridor. The level of service for a roadway is established by using the estimated capacity and the estimated traffic volume found along the roadway. The capacity of a roadway segment is determined by a variety of factors, including but not limited to the number of travel lanes, medians, and turning lanes. Although the typical cross-section of Wrightsville Avenue is a two-lane undivided road, there are several areas of the corridor that deviate from this form. These areas include the one-way section between S. 17th Street and Gibson Avenue, the four-lane section between Castle Street and Wilshire Boulevard, and the four-lane section between 44th Street and S. College Road. The table below provides a breakdown of Wrightsville Avenue by cross-section type and provides the estimated level of service for each.



Wrightsville Avenue east of S. 17th Street.



Wrightsville Avenue east of S. College Road.

Segment	Cross Section	Estimated Capacity	Average Daily Volume	Date	LOS
S. 17 th Street to Gibson Avenue	One-way, curb and gutter, on-street parking	4,500	1,100	9/3/09	A
Castle Street to Wilshire Boulevard	Four-lane undivided with curb and gutter	28,000	18,000	9/3/09	C
Wilshire Boulevard to 44 th Street	Two-lane undivided with shoulders	15,000	8,000	9/3/09	C
44 th Street to S. College Road	Four-lane, center turn lane	32,000	10,100	9/10/09	A
S. College Road to Hawthorne Drive	Two-lane undivided with shoulders	15000	12,200	9/10/09	E
Hawthorne Drive to Greenville Avenue	Two-lane undivided with shoulders	15000	10,100	2/6/10	D
Greenville Avenue to Oleander Drive	Two-lane undivided with shoulders	15000	10,355	9/10/09	D

There are many cross-streets and intersections located along the corridor that impact or impede the flow of traffic. These connections include local streets that provide entrances to residential neighborhoods, collector streets that link Wrightsville Avenue to nearby commercial areas and corridors, and arterial roadways that move traffic throughout the city and region. Traffic volumes vary at these intersections as their functions range from local streets to major thoroughfares. The table below provides a list of all of the signalized intersections found along the corridor. Traffic simulation models were used to estimate delay and level of service.

Intersecting Roadway	Functional Classification*	Average Peak Hour Delay (sec.)	Peak Hour Level of Service
Dawson Street	Minor Arterial	11.0	B
Country Club Drive	Urban Collector	12.8	B
Independence Boulevard	Minor Arterial	N/A**	N/A**
Wilshire Boulevard	Neighborhood Collector	N/A**	N/A**
Floral Parkway	Neighborhood Collector	10.7	B
Kerr Avenue	Minor Arterial	46.0	D
S. College Road	Principal Arterial	49.4	D
MacMillan Avenue	Neighborhood Collector	15.0	B
Hawthorne Drive	Neighborhood Collector	10.7	B
Oleander Drive	Principal Arterial	50.4	D

* Source: WMPO (Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization) Functional Classification Map

** Information not available due to ongoing roadway improvements

The intersection of Wrightsville Avenue and S. College Road is by far the most congested intersection on the corridor. Traffic volumes on this stretch of S. College Road exceed 50,000 vehicle trips per day. These high volumes create additional delays on Wrightsville Avenue because the majority of the signal time at this intersection must be devoted to moving traffic on S. College Road. The large traffic volume at this intersection also contributes to an increase traffic collisions. The most recent crash report (2007) ranked this intersection 12th among the highest-crash intersections within the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Area (WMPA).



Wrightsville Avenue at the intersection of S. College Road.

University of North Carolina Wilmington

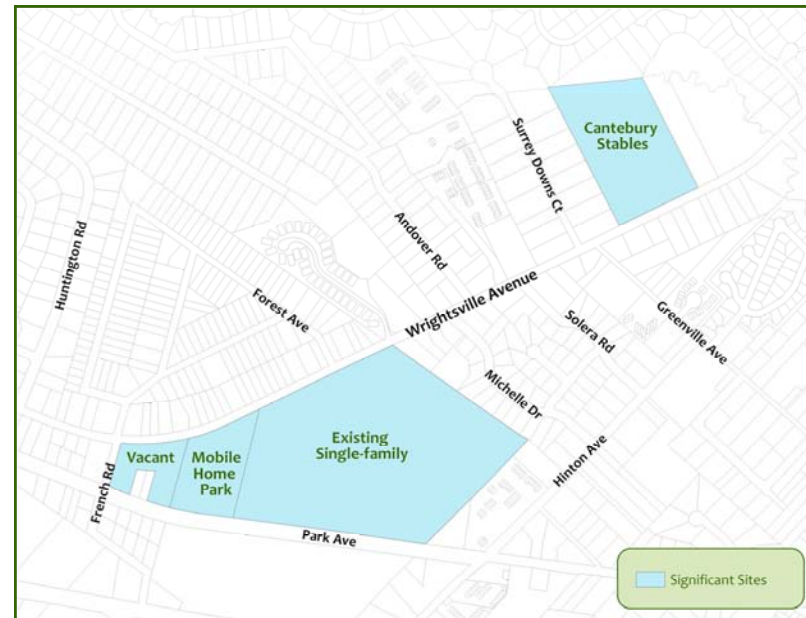
First established as Wilmington College in 1947, the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) continues to be a major influence on the growth of the city and the region. Although the university is not located along Wrightsville Avenue, the proximity of the campus to the corridor makes UNCW an important partner when determining the future of Wrightsville Avenue. The university had a record setting enrollment of nearly 13,000 students in 2009. As the student population continues to expand so do the impacts on the surrounding areas. Increased traffic, off-campus housing, and student safety are important issues that require constant attention.



University of North Carolina Wilmington campus.

Significant Sites

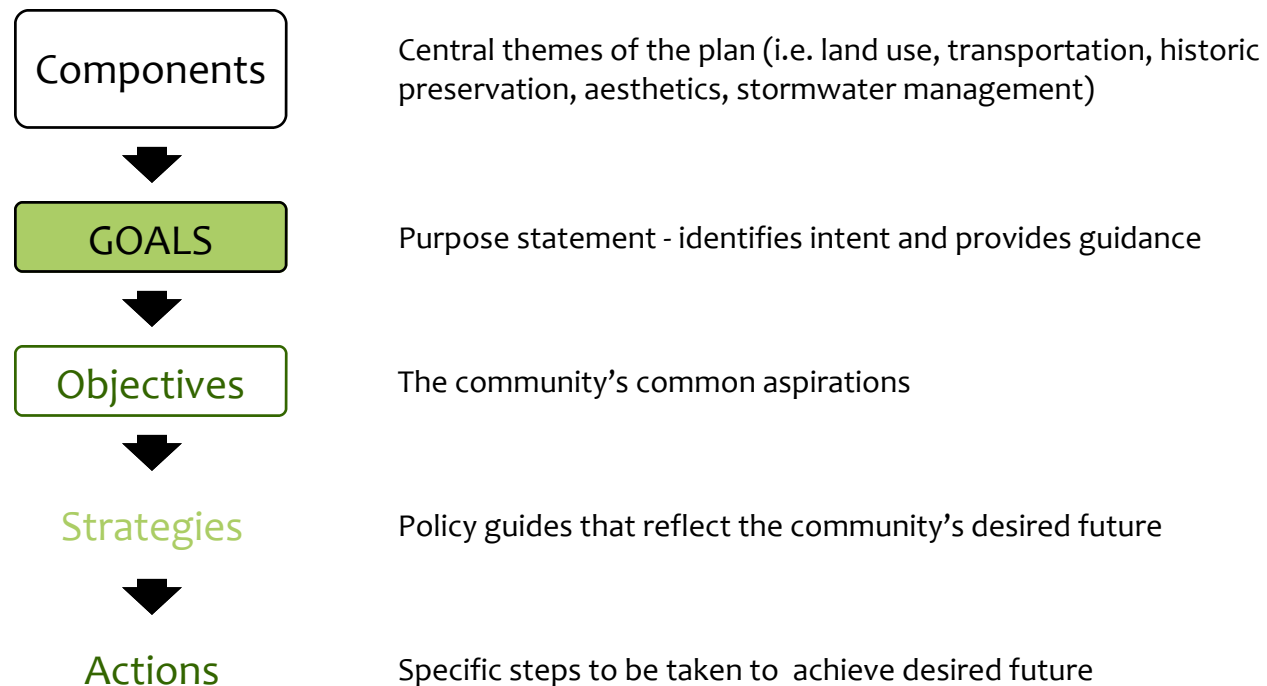
There are several noteworthy properties along the corridor that, due to their size, location, or current use, can potentially have a significant impact on the character of the corridor if they were to be developed or redeveloped. Three of these parcels are located together on the south side of the avenue near French Road and include a 3.1-acre vacant tract, a 5.6-acre mobile home park, and a 37-acre single family parcel. The fourth parcel is the Canterbury Stables property located on the north side of the avenue just east of Greenville Avenue. The stables, established in 1968, represent one of the few remaining agricultural uses in the city and is the only one of its kind on Wrightsville Avenue.



3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the plan were derived from feedback received during an extensive public input process that involved residents, property owners, businesses, and other community stakeholders. Through the public input process, participants identified what was positive about the corridor and should be protected as well as what was negative about the corridor that could be improved. Although complete agreement was not reached on every issue, there was a general consensus on what the future of the corridor should be.

The recommendations for the plan are broken down into five central components: land use, transportation, historic preservation, aesthetics, and stormwater management. Each component includes a goal, or purpose statement, that identifies the intent and provides guidance for the objectives that follow. The objectives reflect the community's desired future for the corridor and the strategies and actions represent the means to achieve them. These components convey the community's preferred development pattern and desired public improvements and should be utilized by prospective investors, property owners, planners, and elected officials.



3.1 Land Use

The compatibility and appropriateness of land uses were identified by stakeholders as important elements of the character of Wrightsville Avenue. The land use component of this plan provides guidance on where different land uses may be appropriate. Due to the length of the avenue, outlining general land use recommendations would not adequately capture the uniqueness of each segment of the corridor or provide area- or property-specific strategies. There are areas of the corridor where the existing land uses are appropriate and should be retained, while in other areas, land uses are not compatible and changes are desired. To properly address future land use decisions for each segment of the corridor, the *Recommended Land Use Map* was created.

The *Recommended Land Use Map* was developed from comments received during the public input process and a comprehensive land use analysis performed by staff. The map is a general depiction of intended land uses for the corridor. The map is not a zoning map. Whereas zoning establishes detailed requirements for setbacks, height, use, parking, etc., the land use categories of the *Recommended Land Use Map* represent a range of potentially appropriate land uses.

GOAL: To provide a balanced mix of land uses that offer options for residents while ensuring new development enhances the corridor and enhances the surrounding neighborhoods.

Objective: Maintain a mix of compatible uses and preserve the residential character of the corridor.

Strategy 3.1.1

Support development/redevelopment in accordance with the *Recommended Land Use Map*.

Recommended Land Use Map

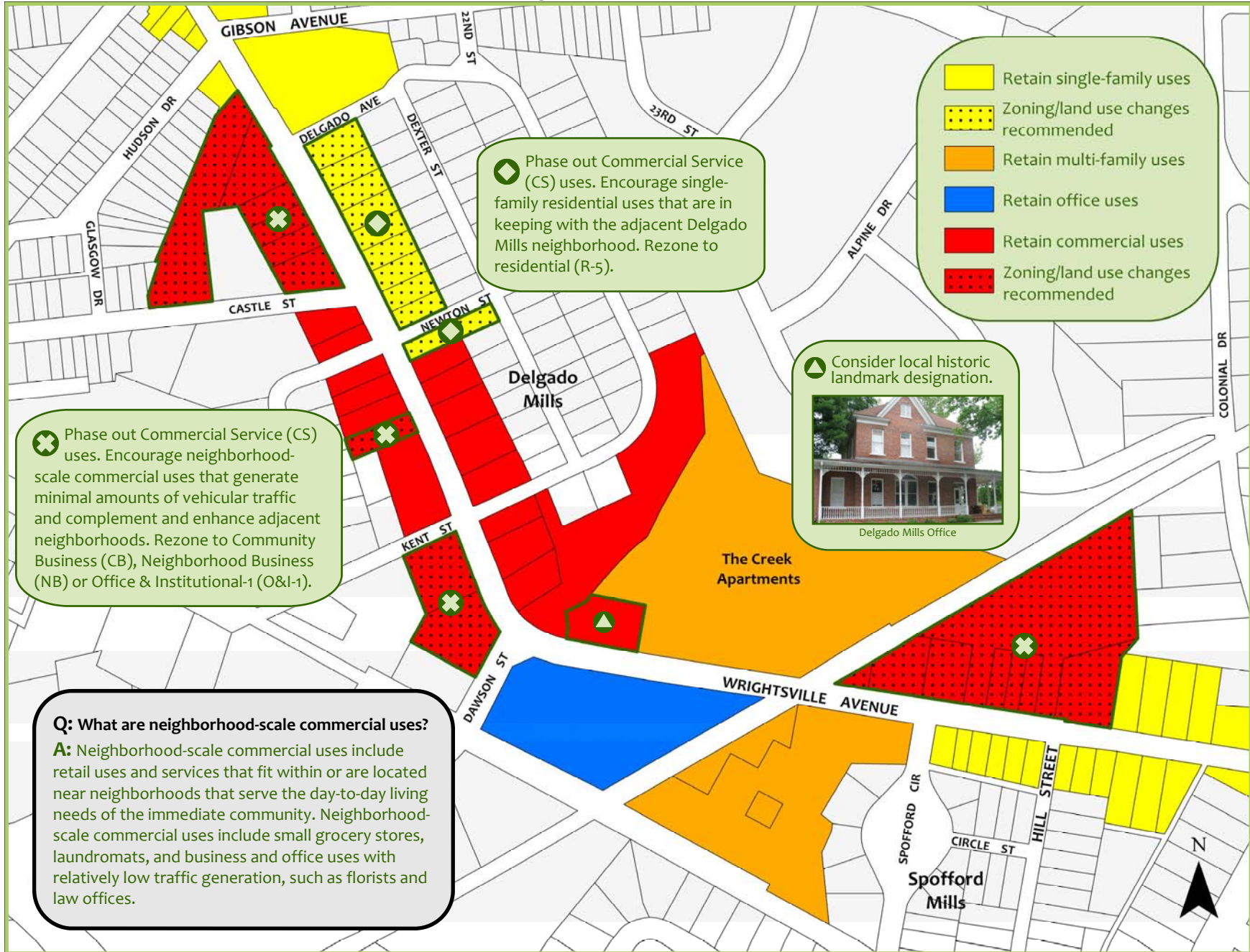
RECOMMENDATIONS



Area 1

S. 17th Street to Gibson Avenue

Recommended Land Use Map



Area 2

Gibson Avenue to Hill Street

Recommended Land Use Map

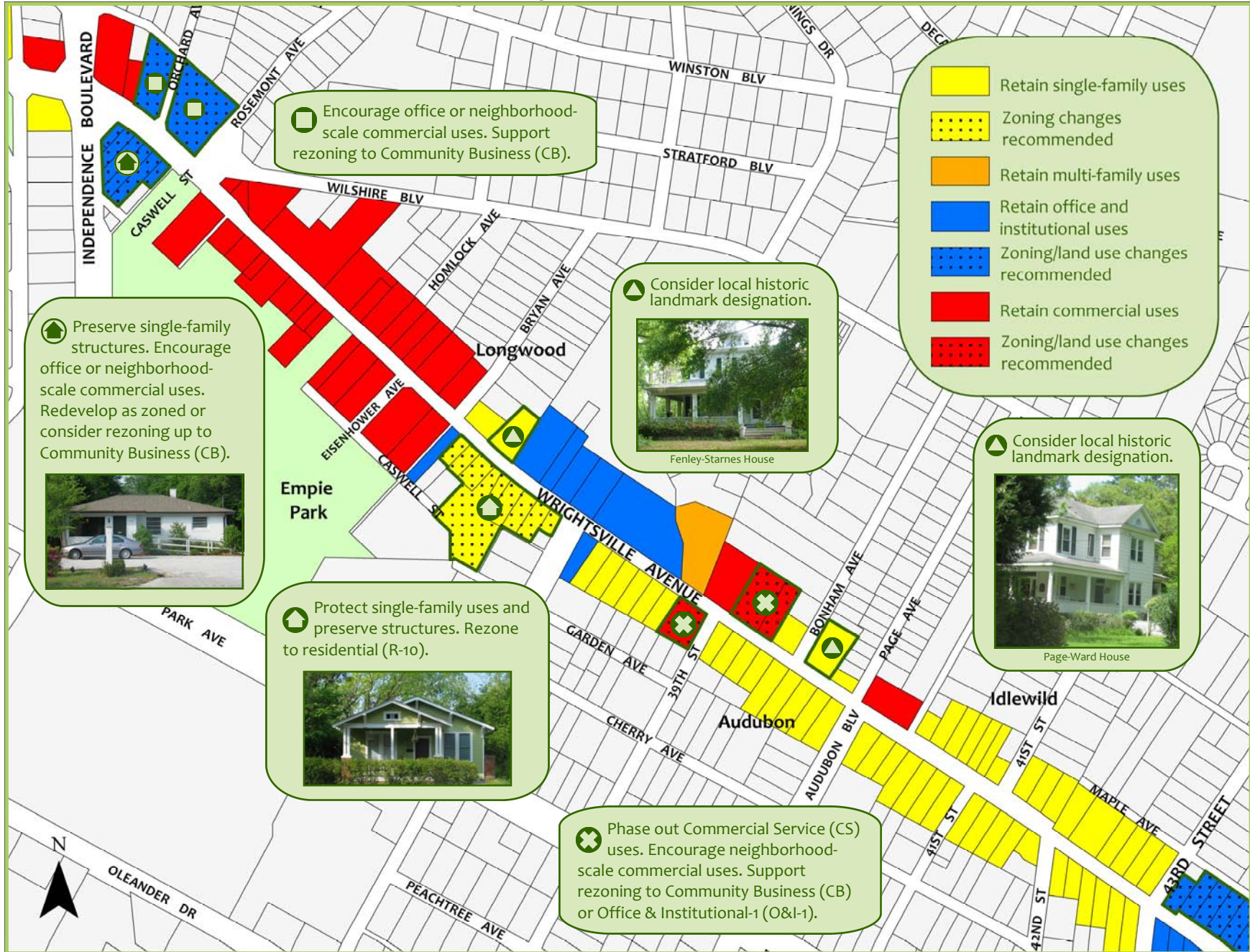
RECOMMENDATIONS



Area 3

Hill Street to Independence Boulevard

Recommended Land Use Map



Area 4

Independence Boulevard to 43rd Street

Recommended Land Use Map

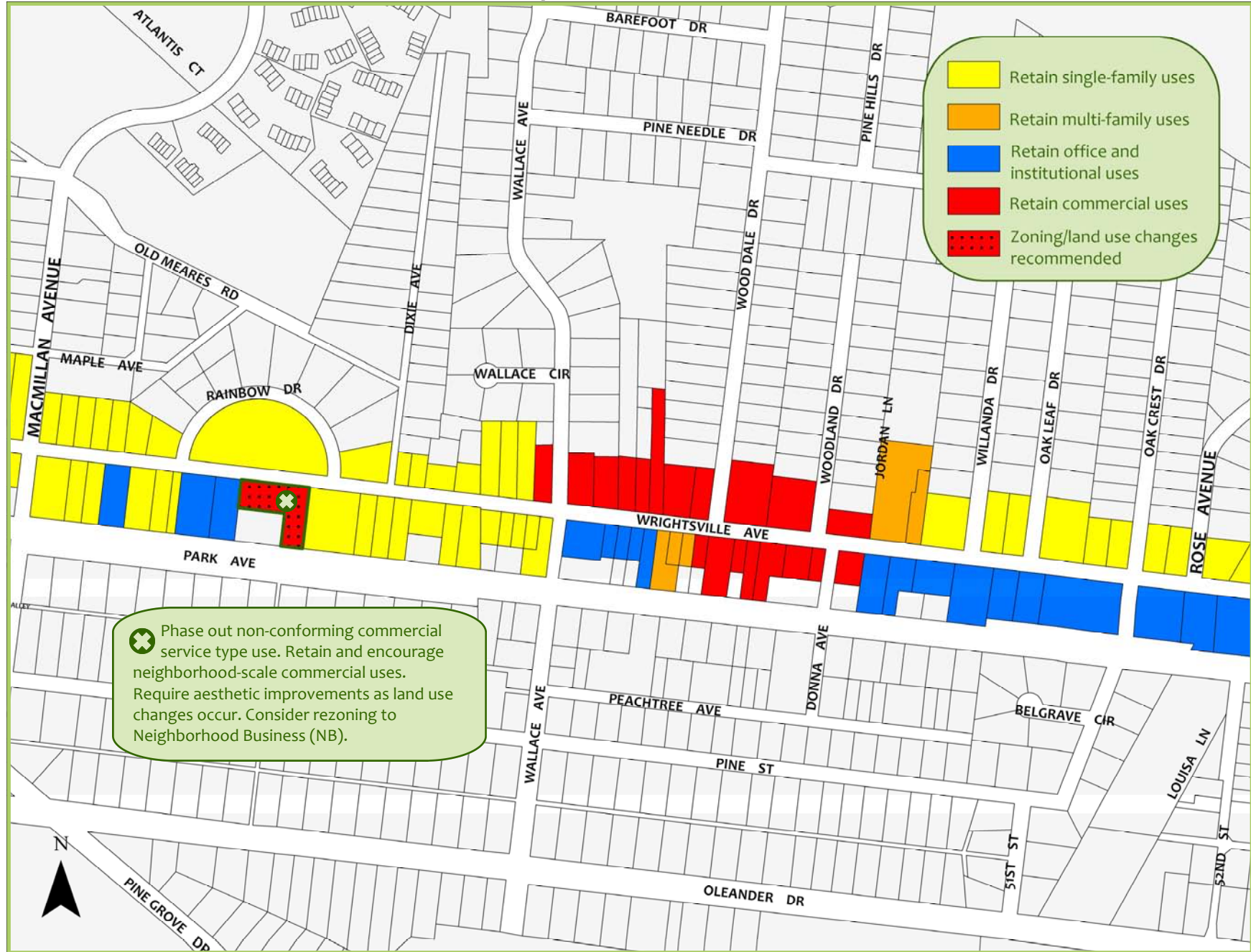
RECOMMENDATIONS



Area 5

43rd Street to MacMillan Avenue

Recommended Land Use Map

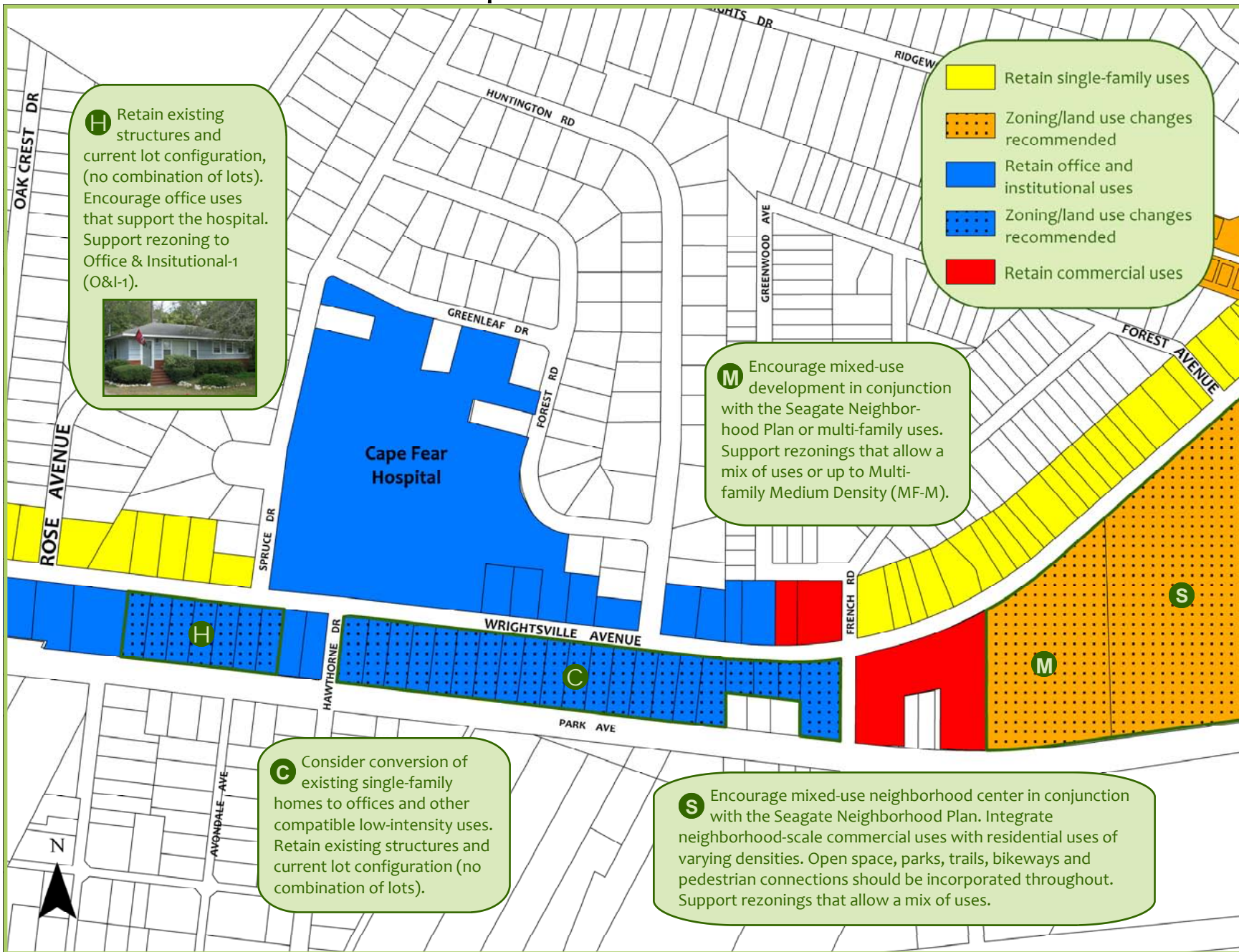


Area 6

MacMillan Avenue to Rose Avenue

Recommended Land Use Map

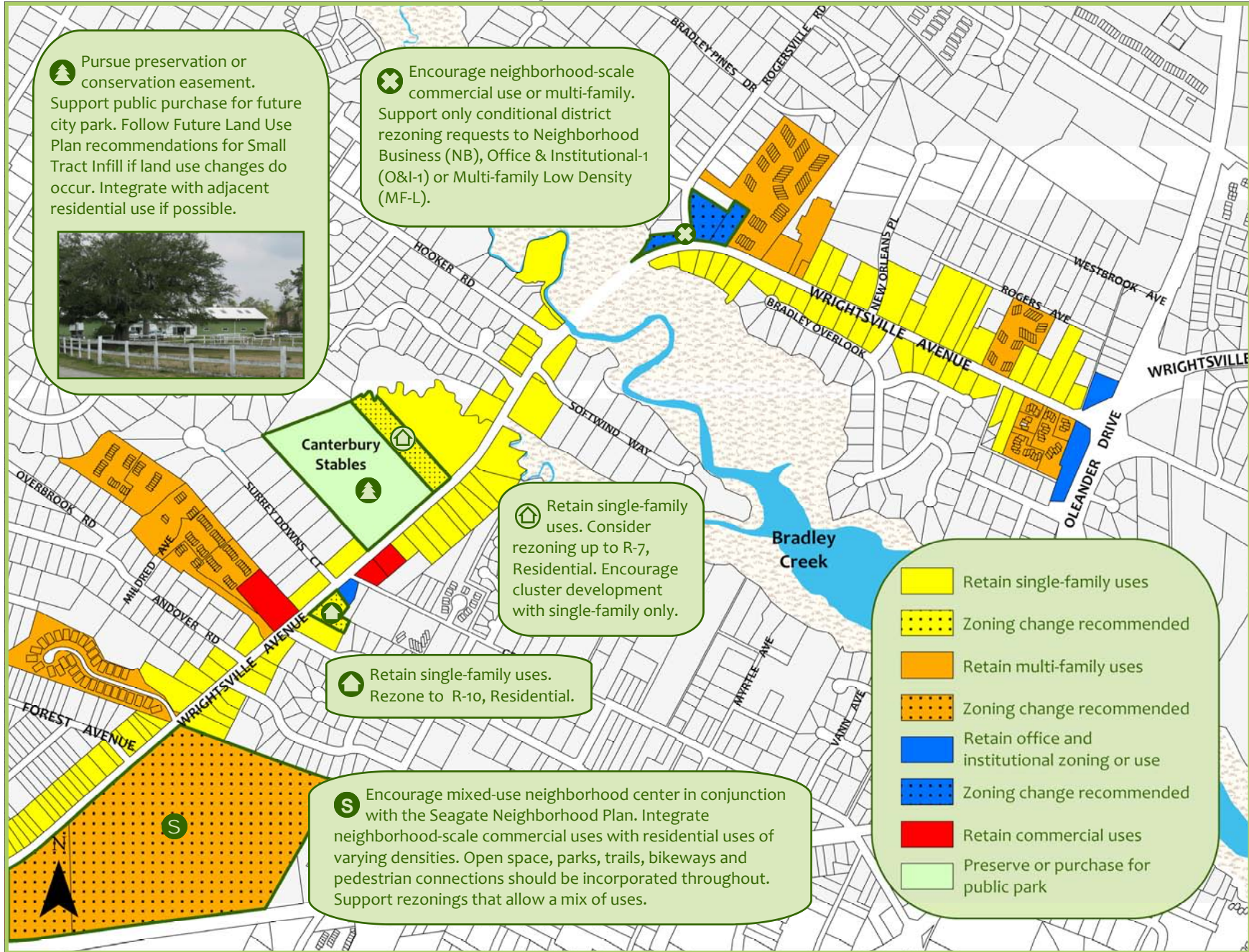
RECOMMENDATIONS



Area 7

Rose Avenue to Forest Avenue

Recommended Land Use Map



Area 8

Forest Avenue to Oleander Drive

3.2 Transportation

Maintaining the safe and efficient operation of Wrightsville Avenue and improving accommodations for alternative modes of transportation were identified by stakeholders as vital to the future of the corridor. Stakeholders desire Wrightsville Avenue to remain a local street that serves local residents and businesses and avoid becoming a regional transportation route with higher traffic volumes and speeds. The transportation component of the plan provides guidance on how traffic flow along the corridor can be maintained and outlines improvements that will expand the use of the corridor for all modes of transportation (auto, bicycle, pedestrian, public transit). The policies contained within the transportation component provide direction for future transportation projects and development activity along the corridor. This component also provides specific recommendations for both traffic improvements and improvements to bicycle, pedestrian and public transit facilities.

The *Recommended Transportation Improvements Map* was created to illustrate the recommended transportation improvements along the corridor. The map depicts specific actions that can address the objectives and strategies of the transportation component.

GOAL: To provide a safe and efficient travel route for all users that accommodates all modes of transportation (auto, bicycle, pedestrian, public transit).

Objective: Maintain road functionality by improving safety and traffic flow along the corridor.



Strategy 3.2.1

Improvements to Wrightsville Avenue should be contained within the existing right-of-way to the greatest extent practical. Road widenings should be limited to safety improvement projects only. Install turn lanes where necessary to mitigate identified crash patterns. Where right-of-way constraints exist, the construction of left-turn lanes should take precedent over right-turn lanes.

Strategy 3.2.2

Minimize conflict points between vehicles and bicycles/pedestrians to improve safety for all modes of travel.

Strategy 3.2.3

Minimize driveways on Wrightsville Avenue when properties have alternate means of ingress and egress.

Strategy 3.2.4

Ensure land uses can be adequately supported by existing or planned transportation infrastructure. Require all new nonresidential development to consider the cumulative impacts on the level of service of Wrightsville Avenue.

Strategy 3.2.5

Implement traffic improvements along the corridor in accordance with the *Recommended Transportation Improvements Map*.

Objective: Improve the effectiveness of alternative modes of transportation including bicycle, pedestrian, and public transit.

Strategy 3.2.6

Include pedestrian and bicycle facilities as a component of all transportation-related capital projects and programs when feasible.

Strategy 3.2.7

Construct sidewalks throughout the corridor in accordance with *Walk Wilmington: A Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan*.

Strategy 3.2.8

Continue to improve the River to the Sea Bikeway and Cross-City Trail bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Strategy 3.2.9

Install wayfinding signage along Wrightsville Avenue to direct bicyclists and pedestrians to the River to the Sea Bikeway and Cross-City Trail.

Strategy 3.2.10

Install benches, shelters and bus pull-outs at high-volume transit stops along the corridor.

Strategy 3.2.11

Provide half-hour bus service along the entire length of the corridor.

Strategy 3.2.12

Implements bicycle and pedestrian improvements along the corridor in accordance with the *Recommended Transportation Improvements Map*.

Recommended Transportation Improvements Map

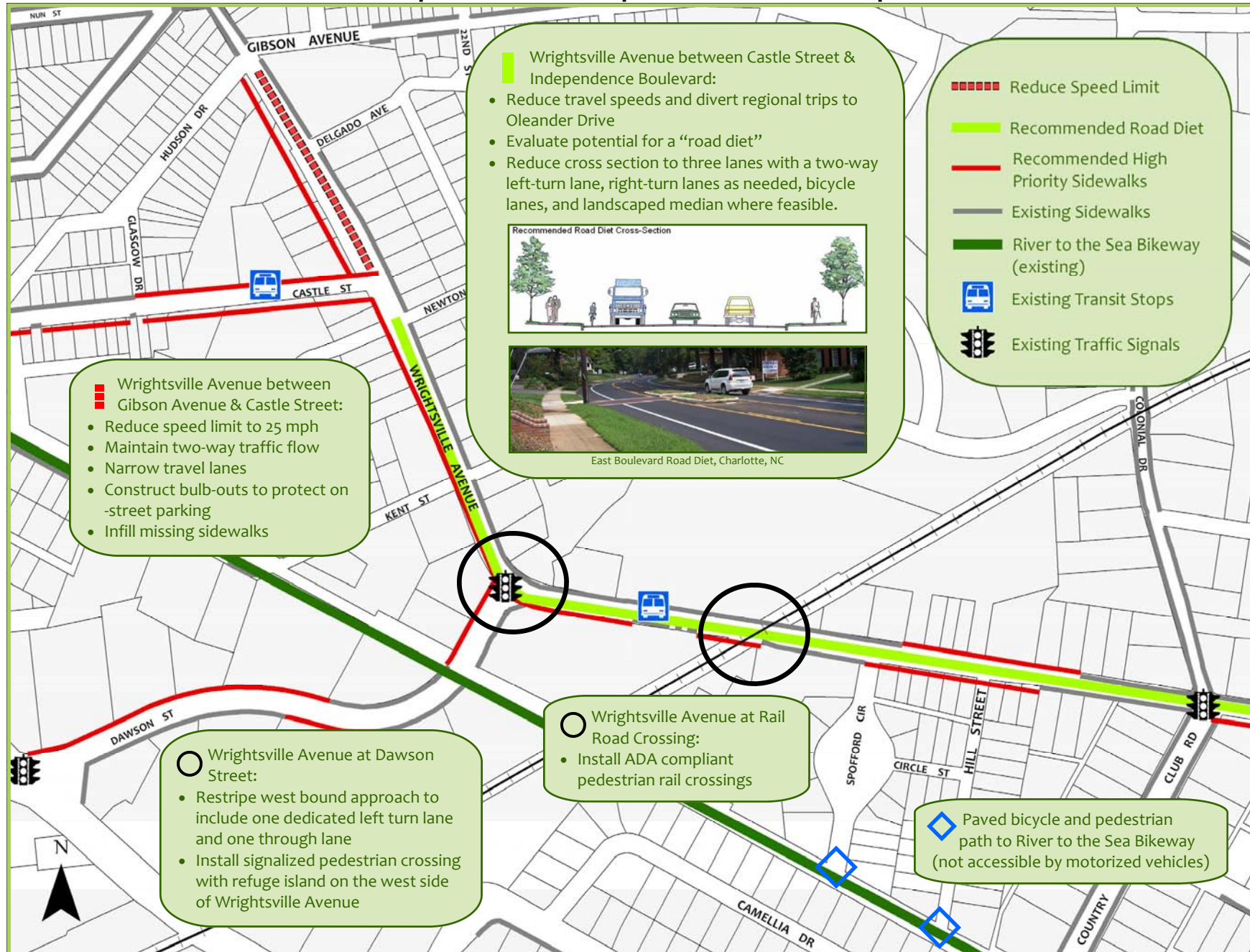
RECOMMENDATIONS



Area 1

S. 17th Street to Gibson Avenue

Recommended Transportation Improvements Map

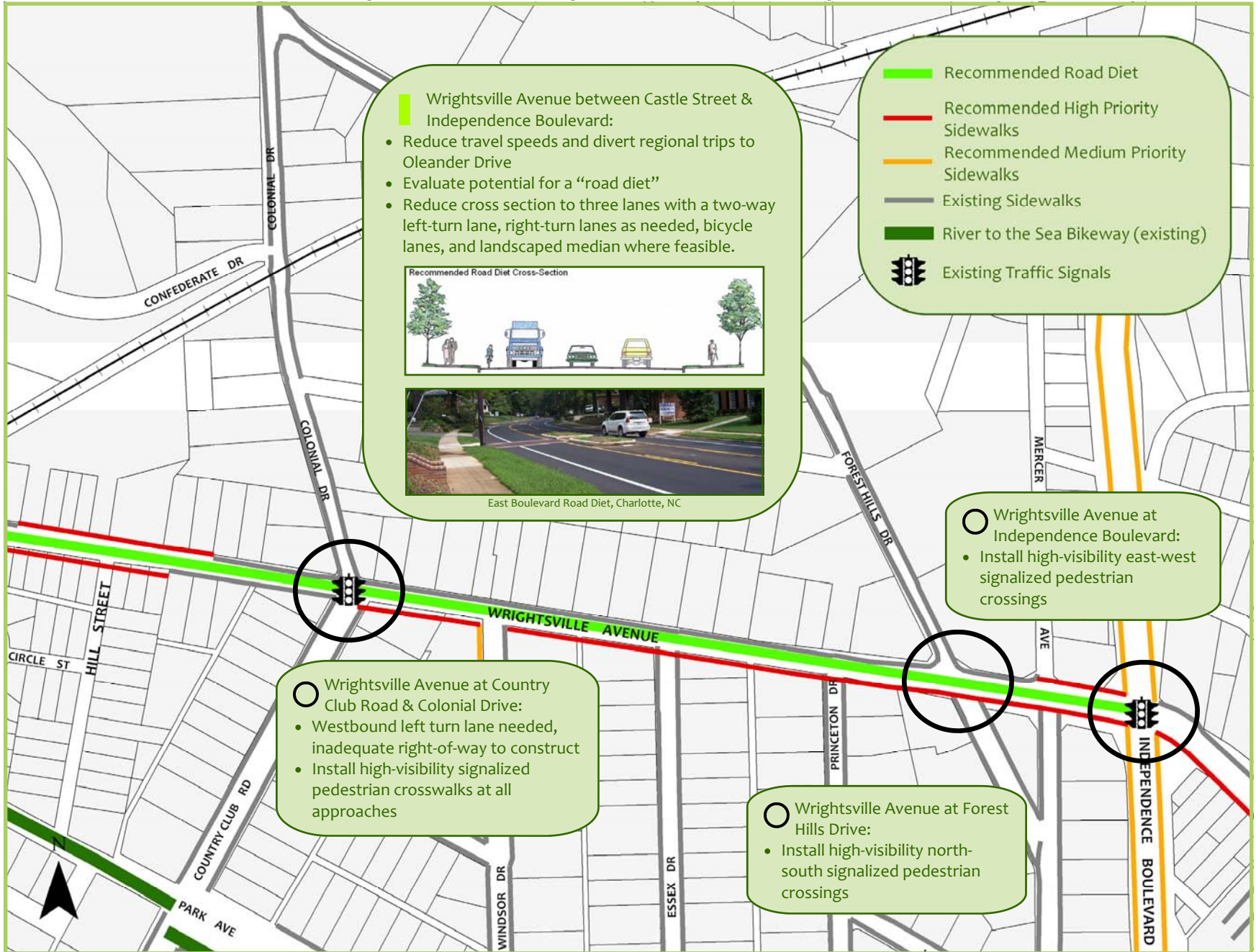


Area 2

Gibson Avenue to Hill Street

Recommended Transportation Improvements Map

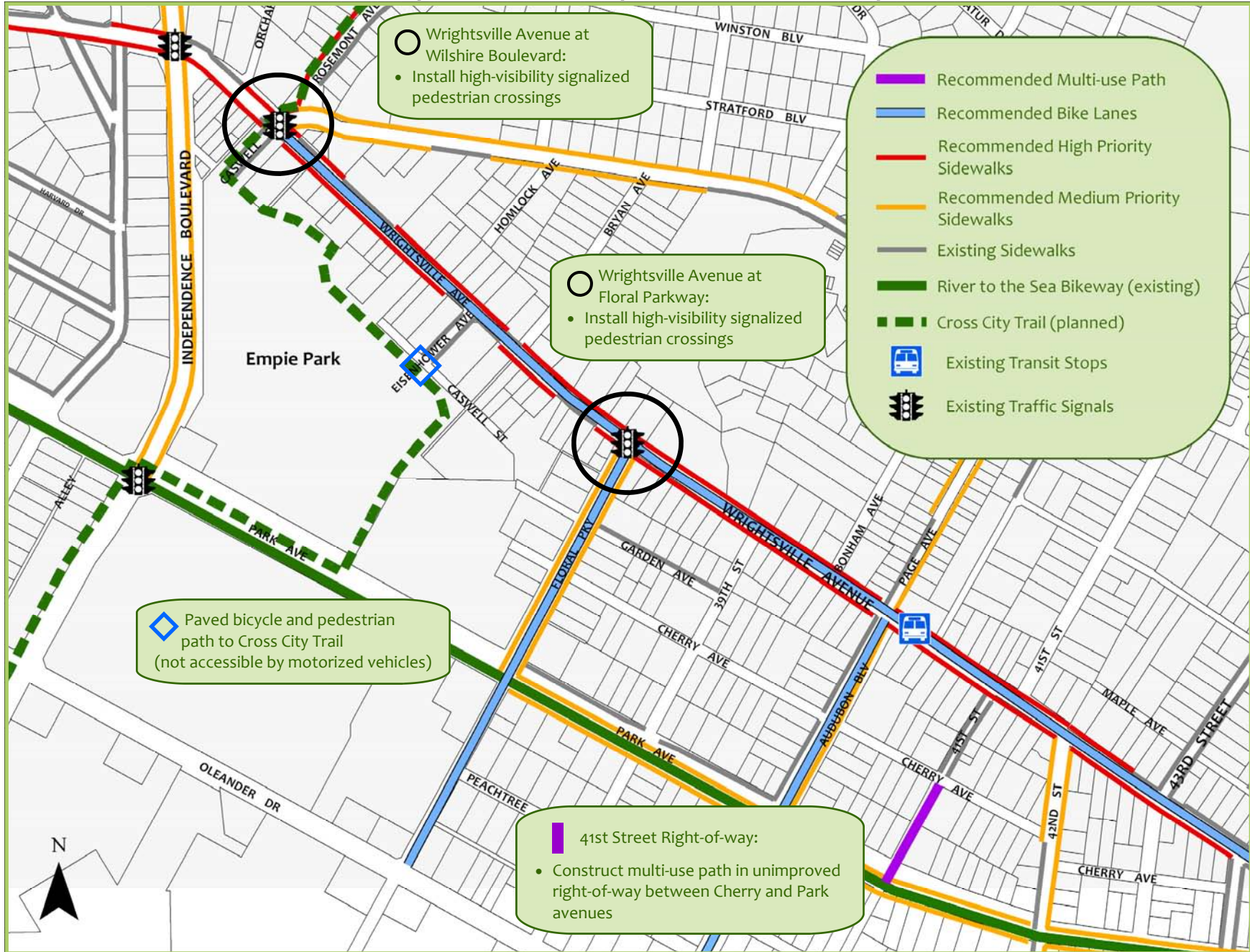
RECOMMENDATIONS



Area 3

Hill Street to Independence Boulevard

Recommended Transportation Improvements Map

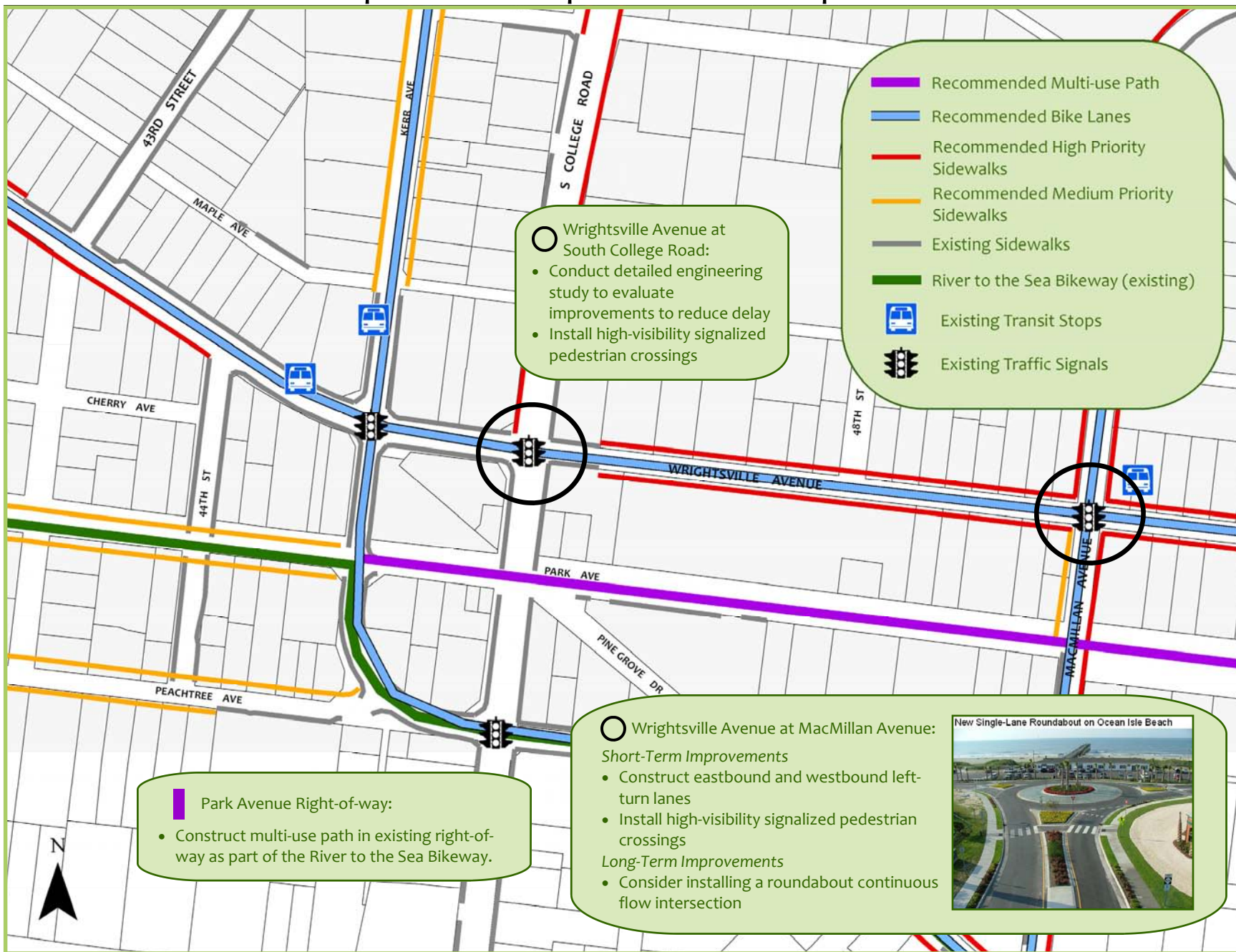


Area 4

Independence Boulevard to 43rd Street

Recommended Transportation Improvements Map

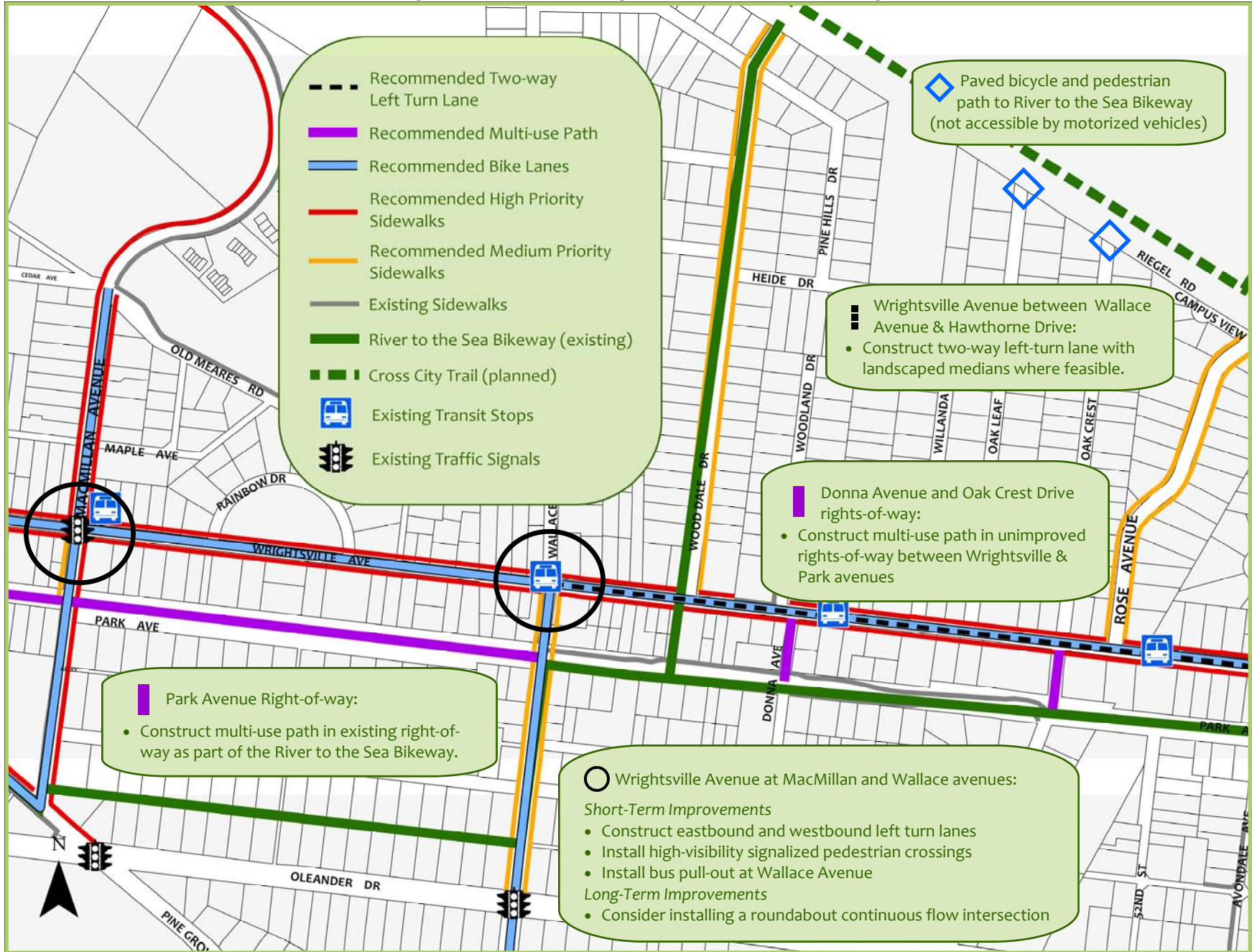
RECOMMENDATIONS



Area 5

43rd Street to MacMillan Avenue

Recommended Transportation Improvements Map



Area 6

MacMillan Avenue to Rose Avenue

Recommended Transportation Improvements Map

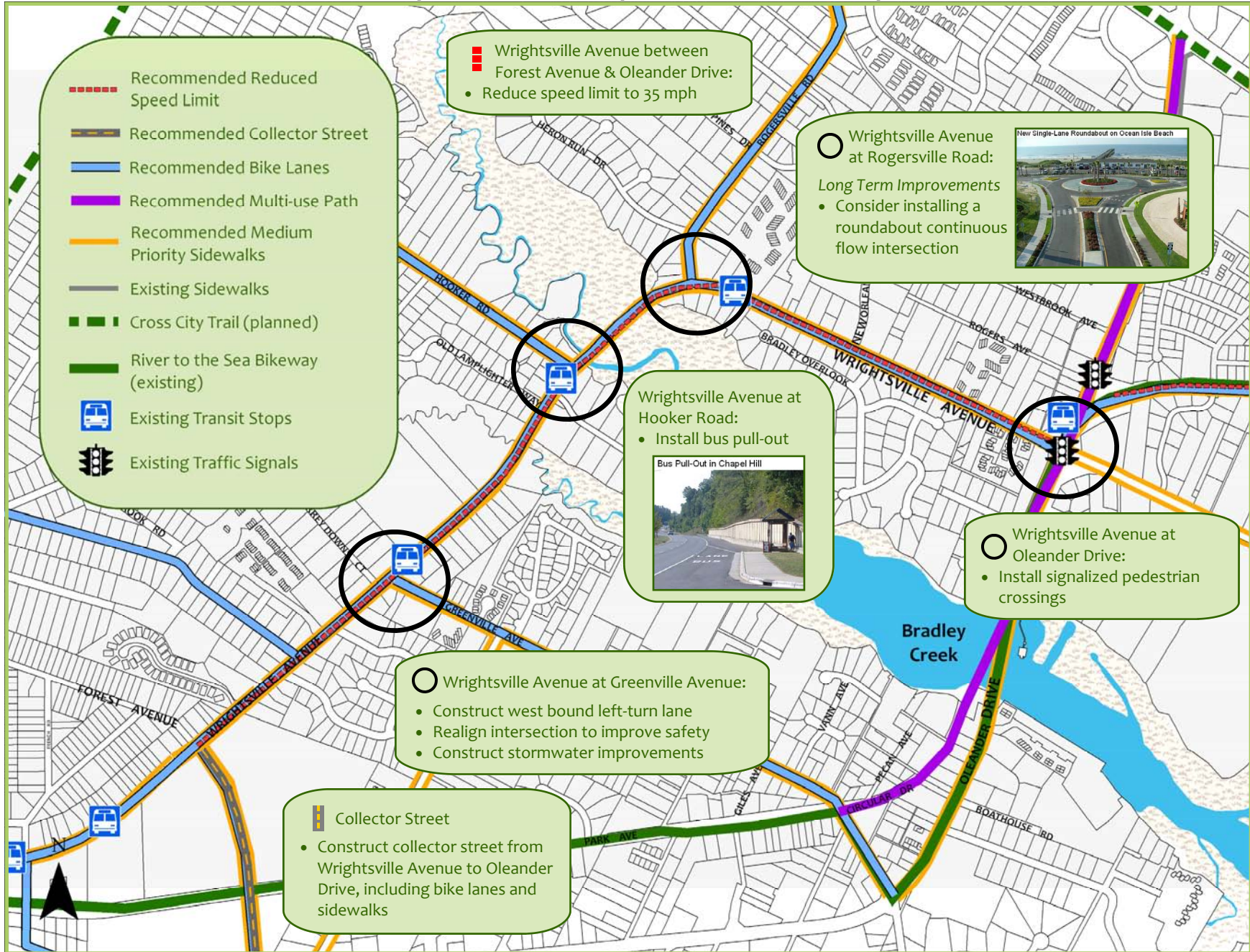
RECOMMENDATIONS



Area 7

Rose Avenue to Forest Avenue

Recommended Transportation Improvements Map



Area 8

Forest Avenue to Oleander Drive

3.3 Historic Preservation

Preserving the historic character of Wrightsville Avenue was identified by stakeholders as critical to the future of the corridor. The historic preservation component of the plan provides guidance on how to protect and enhance the historic resources found along the corridor. The policies provide direction for long-term preservation efforts and the action items provide specific recommendation on preserving historic resources and promoting the historical significance of the corridor.

GOAL: To maintain and enhance the character and historic significance of the Wrightsville Avenue corridor.

Objective: Preserve the historic character and promote the historic significance of properties along the Wrightsville Avenue corridor.

Strategy 3.3.1

Identify and document historic resources that meet the criteria for listing at the national, state and local level for historic preservation. Encourage the preservation and/or rehabilitation of these properties.

Strategy 3.3.2

Encourage neighborhood-based efforts to preserve character-defining resources and support neighborhood conservation districts in areas that do not possess adequate historic integrity or do not have sufficient property-owner support for local historic district designation.

Strategy 3.3.3

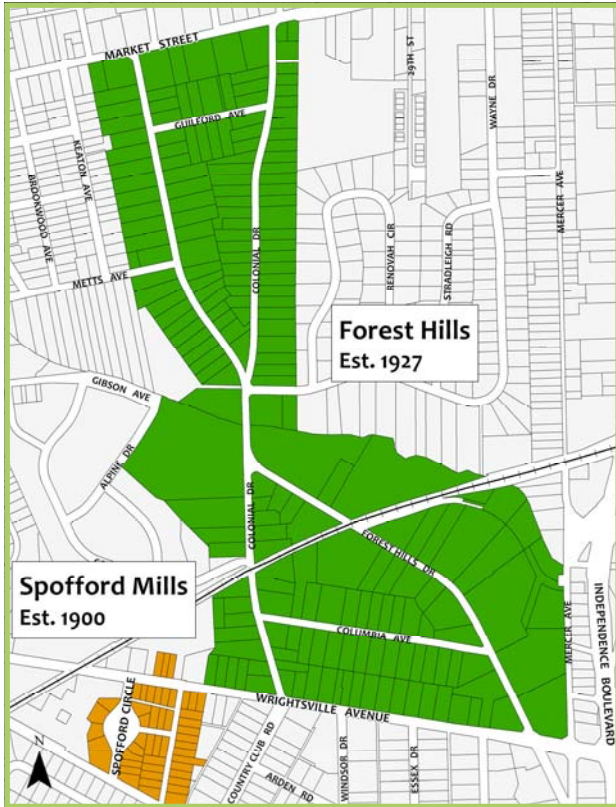
Ensure that new development is compatible with the character of the area. Ensure compatibility of design based on mass, scale, height, materials, and historic context.

Strategy 3.3.4

Ensure that the residential character of Wrightsville Avenue remains intact by confining traffic and roadway improvements to the existing right-of-way.

Q: What is a neighborhood conservation district?

A: A neighborhood conservation district (NCD) is a zoning overlay that can be applied to residential neighborhoods to preserve and protect the character of the neighborhood. NCDs are for neighborhoods that do not necessarily qualify for historic district designation .



Action 3.3.1

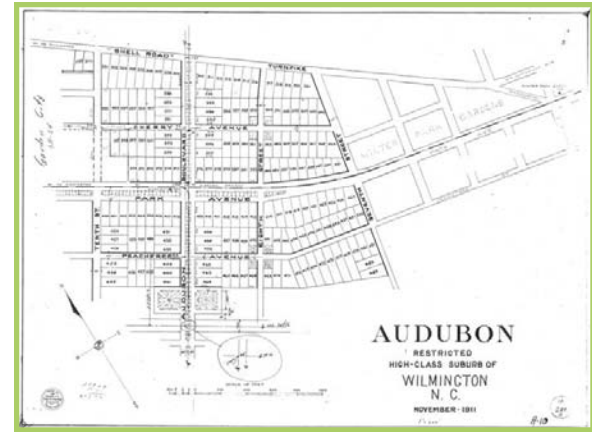
Pursue listing Forest Hills as a National Register Historic District. Support local historic district designation and/or neighborhood conservation district in this area as well.

Action 3.3.2

Pursue the designation of the Spofford Mills and Audubon neighborhoods as local historic districts or neighborhood conservation districts.

Action 3.3.3

Pursue local landmark designation for the Delgado Mills office (2231 Wrightsville Avenue), the Fenley-Starnes House (3617 Wrightsville Avenue) and the Page-Ward House (3917 Wrightsville Avenue).



Recorded plat for Audubon neighborhood (1911)



Delgado Mills Office (2231 Wrightsville Avenue)



Fenley-Starnes House (3617 Wrightsville Avenue)



Page-Ward House (3917 Wrightsville Avenue)

Action 3.3.4

Create a neighborhood conservation district within the Land Development Code (LDC) that can be requested by property owners for areas that do not possess sufficient historic integrity or do not have sufficient property-owner support for local historic district designation.

Action 3.3.5

Update Wrightsville Avenue Corridor Overlay (WACO) regulations in order to protect the historic character of the corridor (see Section 3.4).

Action 3.3.6

Explore a historic preservation and/or conservation easement for the Canterbury Stables property.



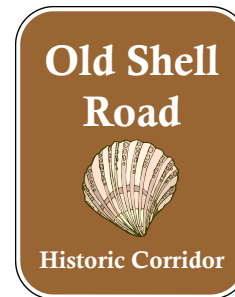
Canterbury Stables Est. 1968 (6021 Wrightsville Avenue)

Action 3.3.7

Provide signage along the corridor recognizing the historic significance of Wrightsville Avenue (“Old Shell Road”) as the first east-west connection in New Hanover County that linked the City of Wilmington to Wrightsville Beach. The city should partner with the Historic Wilmington Foundation, New Hanover County, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), the Town of Wrightsville Beach, the Wrightsville Beach Museum and local property owners in providing signs recognizing historical significance along the corridor.

Action 3.3.8

Develop and implement a signage program to recognize significant buildings, sites and events along Wrightsville Avenue.



Toll house on old Shell Road, photo courtesy of the New Hanover County Public Library

Action 3.3.9

Pursue state scenic byway designation for the Wrightsville Avenue corridor.

3.4 Aesthetics

Throughout the public input process, stakeholders recognized the importance of aesthetics in defining the character of the corridor. The aesthetics component of the plan provides guidance on protecting the unique character of the corridor by ensuring compatible design and improving the natural and built environments. The policies and action items included in this component are derived from input received during the public input process and build on existing design standards in place for properties located along the corridor.

GOAL: To protect and enhance the unique character of the Wrightsville Avenue corridor.

Objective: Enhance the visual appearance of the corridor.

Strategy 3.4.1

Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties to make these properties more viable and improve the appearance of the corridor.

Strategy 3.4.2

Improve commercial signage along the corridor. Freestanding pole signs should be phased out while decorative post or monument style signs should be encouraged. Older, dilapidated signs should be removed.

Strategy 3.4.3

Improve site lighting on commercial properties along the corridor. Site lighting should be in keeping with the scale of the surrounding neighborhood and should not allow light trespass on any adjacent residential property.



5000 block of Wrightsville Avenue

Objective: Maintain and restore residential properties to preserve and enhance the visual appearance and character of the corridor.

Strategy 3.4.4

Ensure that property owners are informed of and have access to information about the historical significance of Wrightsville Avenue and any related city policies, incentives and programs that exist to protect the corridor.



Single family home on Wrightsville Avenue

Objective: Protect the existing character of Wrightsville Avenue by ensuring new nonresidential and multi-family developments are compatible with the surrounding area.

Strategy 3.4.5

Design new nonresidential structures to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and the prevalent architectural style of the area. Base the determination of compatible design on massing, scale, height, materials, and historic context.

Strategy 3.4.6

Enhance the Wrightsville Avenue Corridor Overlay (WACO) regulations to further the preservation and protection of the unique character of Wrightsville Avenue.



Audubon Station (3900 block of Wrightsville Avenue)

Objective: Improve the public realm and enhance the visual qualities of the corridor.

Strategy 3.4.7

Encourage property owners to incorporate native plant communities into landscaping designs.

Strategy 3.4.8

Identify tree species that are inappropriate for the character of Wrightsville Avenue and/or the local climate and prohibit these trees from being used in required streetyards and discourage their use outside of required streetyards.

Strategy 3.4.9

Encourage property owners to consult with the city's urban forester before planting or removing trees.



Residential street in Chapel Hill, NC



Native Live Oak in Wilmington, NC

Action 3.4.1

Create an index of commercial properties located along the corridor that tracks specific site characteristics such as facade condition and materials, type and condition of signage, amount of landscaping, and general site conditions. Use this index to prioritize beautification efforts and/or funding opportunities.

Action 3.4.2

Establish a commercial aesthetic improvement program that identifies funding sources and provides assistance to commercial property owners to improve the appearance of existing commercial properties. The program should focus on facade improvements, signage replacement, site lighting, and landscaping.

Action 3.4.3

Create a business owners' association that brings local businesses together for corridor beautification efforts and creates partnerships to make improvements.

Action 3.4.4

Amend the WACO regulations to reduce minimum parking requirements for redevelopment projects in commercial areas along the Wrightsville Avenue corridor.

Action 3.4.5

Bury all existing utilities along the corridor. Make this a priority in all future streetscape projects on Wrightsville Avenue.



Commercial parking lot on Wrightsville Avenue

Action 3.4.6

Create and distribute educational materials for property owners that provide specific information about Wrightsville Avenue and applicable city ordinances. These materials should highlight the history and intrinsic value of Wrightsville Avenue in an effort to build and sustain community pride and encourage private investment.

Action 3.4.7

Identify business organizations, neighborhood organizations, homeowners associations and other community organizations and utilize these groups to arrange targeted beautification efforts and share information.

Action 3.4.8

Cultivate strong relationships between local neighborhood organizations and city code enforcement staff to educate residents and improve the appearance of the corridor.

Action 3.4.9

Develop a local landlord registry to keep landlords aware of issues affecting property owners as well as tools and resources that can help in maintaining their property.

Action 3.4.10

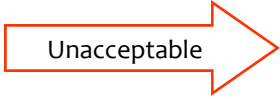
Develop a design manual that includes guidelines for all aesthetic elements along the corridor. Utilize the one-way segment between S. 17th Street and Gibson Avenue as a template for creating designs for other segments of the corridor.



Action 3.4.11

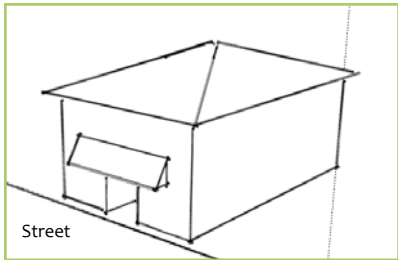
Enhance the WACO regulations to improve the overall aesthetics of the corridor by incorporating the following improvements to existing building design standards:

A: Building materials –In no case should fixed riot bars or shutters, exposed concrete block, or full metal facades be allowed.

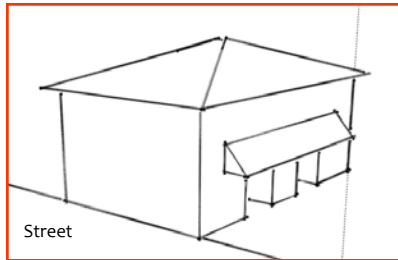
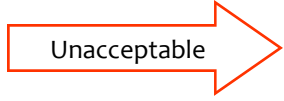


Building with full metal facade.

B: Orientation – Design structures such that the primary entrance, or the appearance of a primary entrance, fronts Wrightsville Avenue.

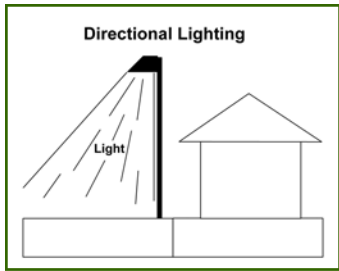


Building oriented toward street



Building oriented toward parking lot

C: Site lighting – Improve outdoor lighting standards to ensure light will not shine or reflect directly onto any adjacent residentially used or zoned property.



D: Signage – Provide landscaping around the base of all free-standing signs. Electronic changeable copy and outdoor advertising signs (billboards) should remain prohibited.



Monument style sign with landscaping.

E: Massing and scale – Design structures so as to not include large expanses of flat, unadorned walls. Facades should incorporate architectural details and periodic transitions on facades facing Wrightsville Avenue.



← Encouraged

→ Discouraged



F: Underground utilities – Place all new utilities underground.



G: Street trees – select all required tree plantings within the public right-of-way from an approved tree list. Select all trees planted outside of the public right-of-way from the approved plantings list codified within the WACO regulations.

Action 3.4.12

Identify and adopt incentives that encourage property owners to preserve trees.

Action 3.4.13

Establish streetscape improvement plans for specific segments of the corridor. Corridor segments should be based on existing right-of-way conditions and recommended transportation improvements. Streetscape improvements should include street trees, landscaping and median plantings.

Action 3.4.14

Utilize native, drought-tolerant species in all landscaping projects within the public right-of-way.

Action 3.4.15

Establish a tree planting program that assists property owners in planting trees. The program should identify areas of the corridor in the greatest need of trees, prioritize these areas for outreach efforts, and identify funding sources.

Action 3.4.16

Develop and distribute educational materials regarding landscaping best practices that can be made available to interested property owners.

Action 3.4.17

Work with the NCDOT to identify and remove vegetative overgrowth in problem areas to improve aesthetics and safety.



Drought tolerant “Sweet Gum”



3.5 Stormwater Management

Improving stormwater drainage and protecting water quality are both significant issues identified by stakeholders during the public input process. The stormwater management component of the plan provides guidance on how to mitigate stormwater impacts to both private property and the environment.

GOAL: To provide effective stormwater management that reduces the potential for stormwater impact to life, property, and the environment.

Objective: Improve stormwater drainage to minimize flooding and protect sensitive environmental areas.

Strategy 3.5.1

Support ongoing efforts to maintain the city's stormwater drainage system.



Stormwater runoff is rainwater that flows over land and directly into creeks and waterways. Stormwater pollution is our biggest source of water pollution.

The city's **Stormwater Services Division** provides comprehensive management of the stormwater drainage system to protect our community and the environment.



Objective: Minimize water quality degradation and protect remaining wetland resources.

Strategy 3.5.2

Support the preservation of existing natural areas and re-establishment of native vegetation to protect natural hydrology and natural ecosystems.

Strategy 3.5.3

Educate residents about the proper disposal of pet waste and yard debris and the proper use of lawn and household chemicals.

Strategy 3.5.4

Encourage property owners to incorporate native plant communities into landscaping designs.

Strategy 3.5.5

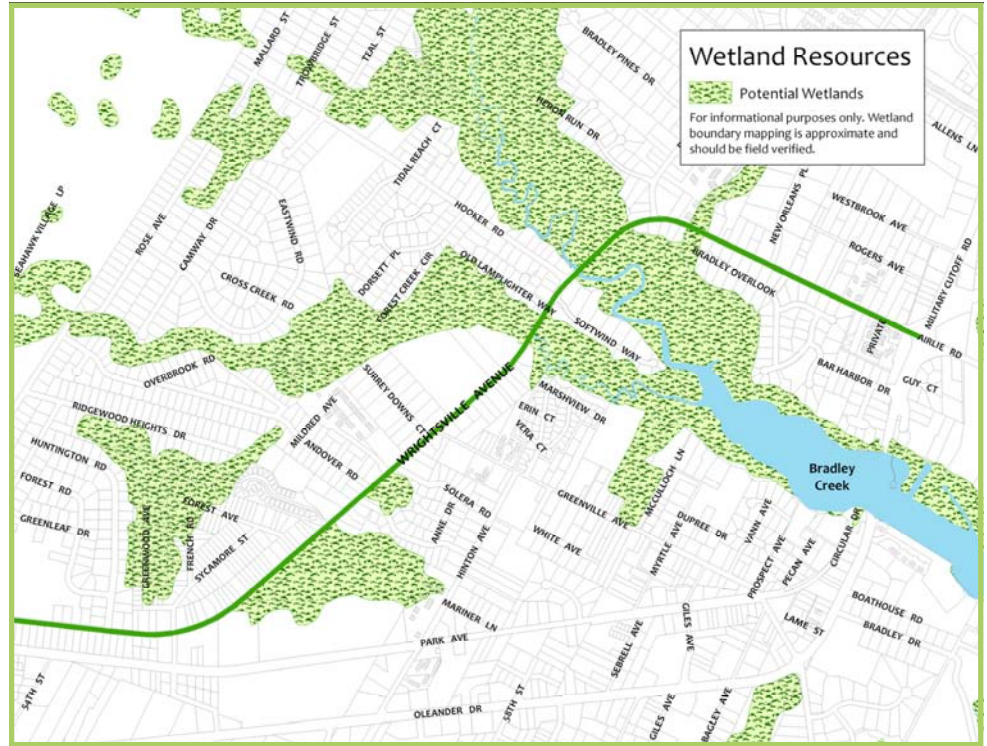
Educate property owners on xeriscaping techniques and proper irrigation techniques that reduce the need for water, fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides.

Strategy 3.5.6

Identify opportunities for voluntary water quality retrofits on residential and commercial properties, including rain gardens, swales, rain barrels, and stream bank restoration, in cooperation with the New Hanover Soil and Water Conservation District (NHSWCD), the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR), and New Hanover County.

Strategy 3.5.7

Support the policies and implementation of the *Wilmington-New Hanover County Joint Coastal Area Management Plan*.



Action 3.5.1

Utilize site-sensitive design principles, including minimizing impervious surface coverage, maximizing the use of riparian buffers, using natural wetlands functions for stormwater management, maximizing tree retention, utilizing green roof construction, increasing stormwater retention, incorporating low-impact design (LID) techniques, and promoting transportation alternatives.

Action 3.5.2

Work with the NCDOT to facilitate improvement of stormwater facilities located within the NCDOT right-of-way.

Action 3.5.3

Maintain land in its natural state whenever possible if not needed for necessary site improvements.

Action 3.5.4

Develop properties at their existing grade whenever possible.

Action 3.5.5

Develop and distribute educational materials regarding landscaping best practices to interested property owners along the corridor.

Action 3.5.6

Continue to monitor the water quality of Bradley Creek and promote and support initiatives for water quality improvements.

Action 3.5.7

Provide vegetative buffers and natural wetland features to improve water quality treatment of stormwater runoff. Restore and/or create new natural vegetative buffers along Bradley Creek where parcels are already developed or as they are developed or redeveloped.



Rain barrel to capture runoff for future use.

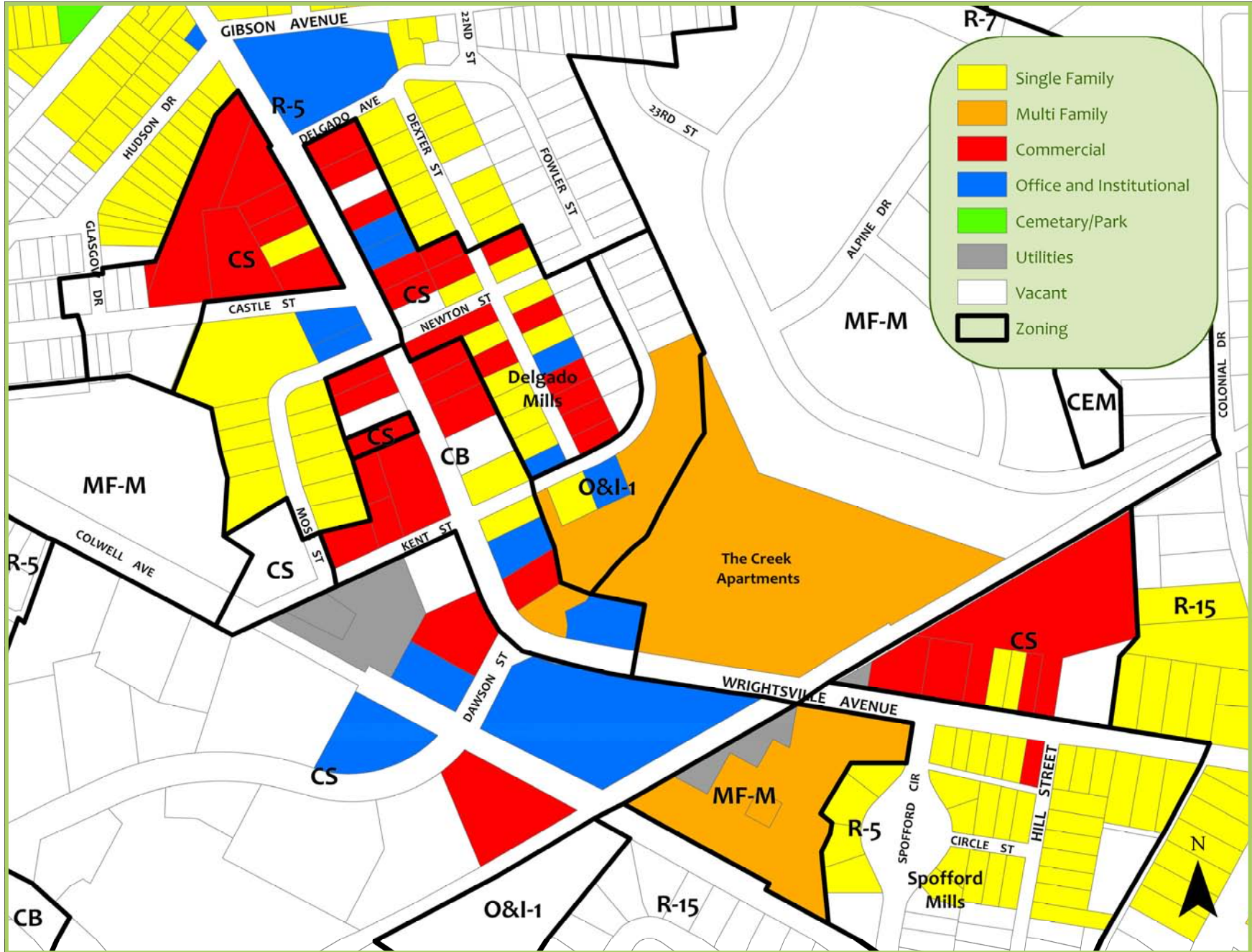


Northwest branch of Bradley Creek at Wrightsville Avenue



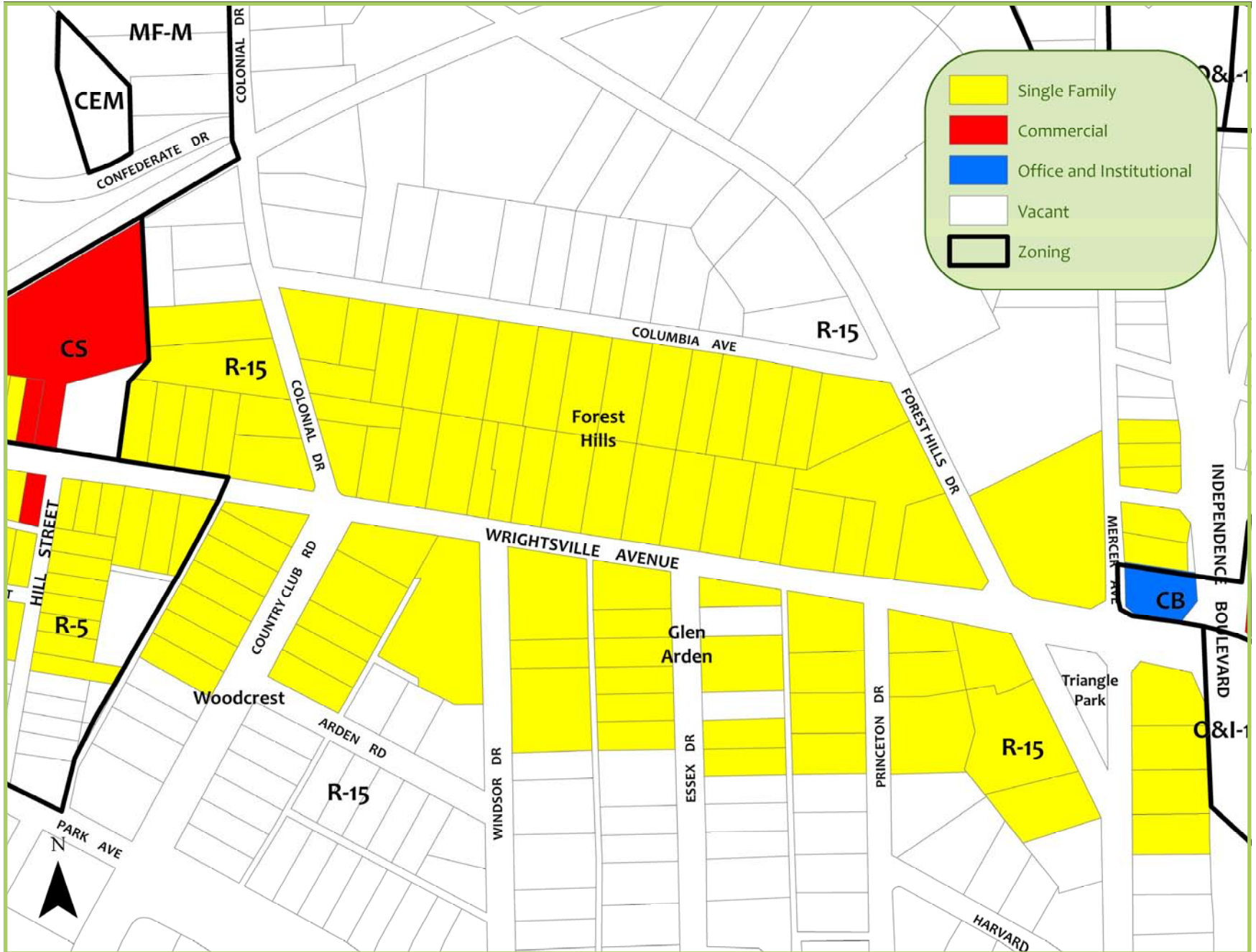
Area 1

S. 17th Street to Gibson Avenue



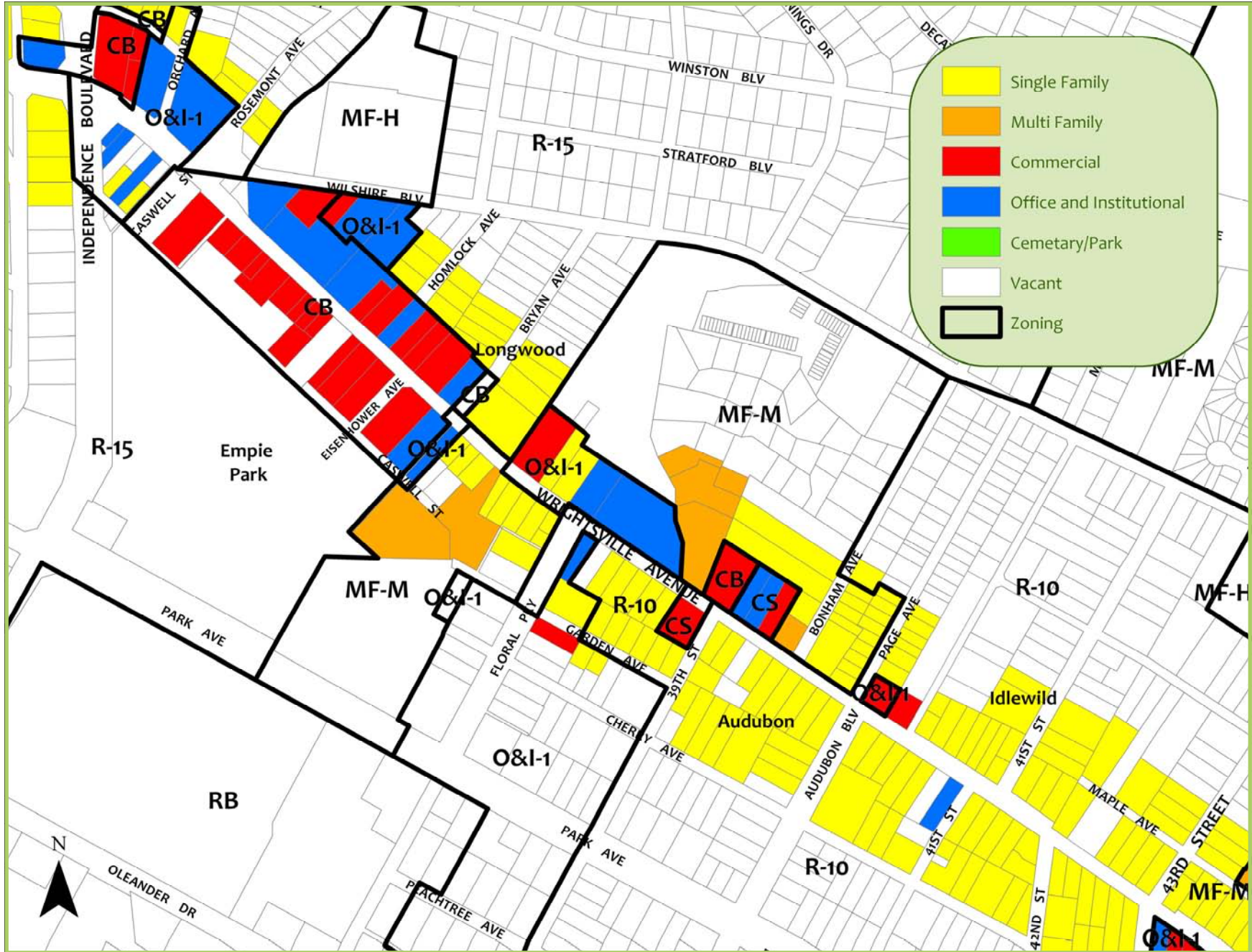
Area 2

Gibson Avenue to Hill Street



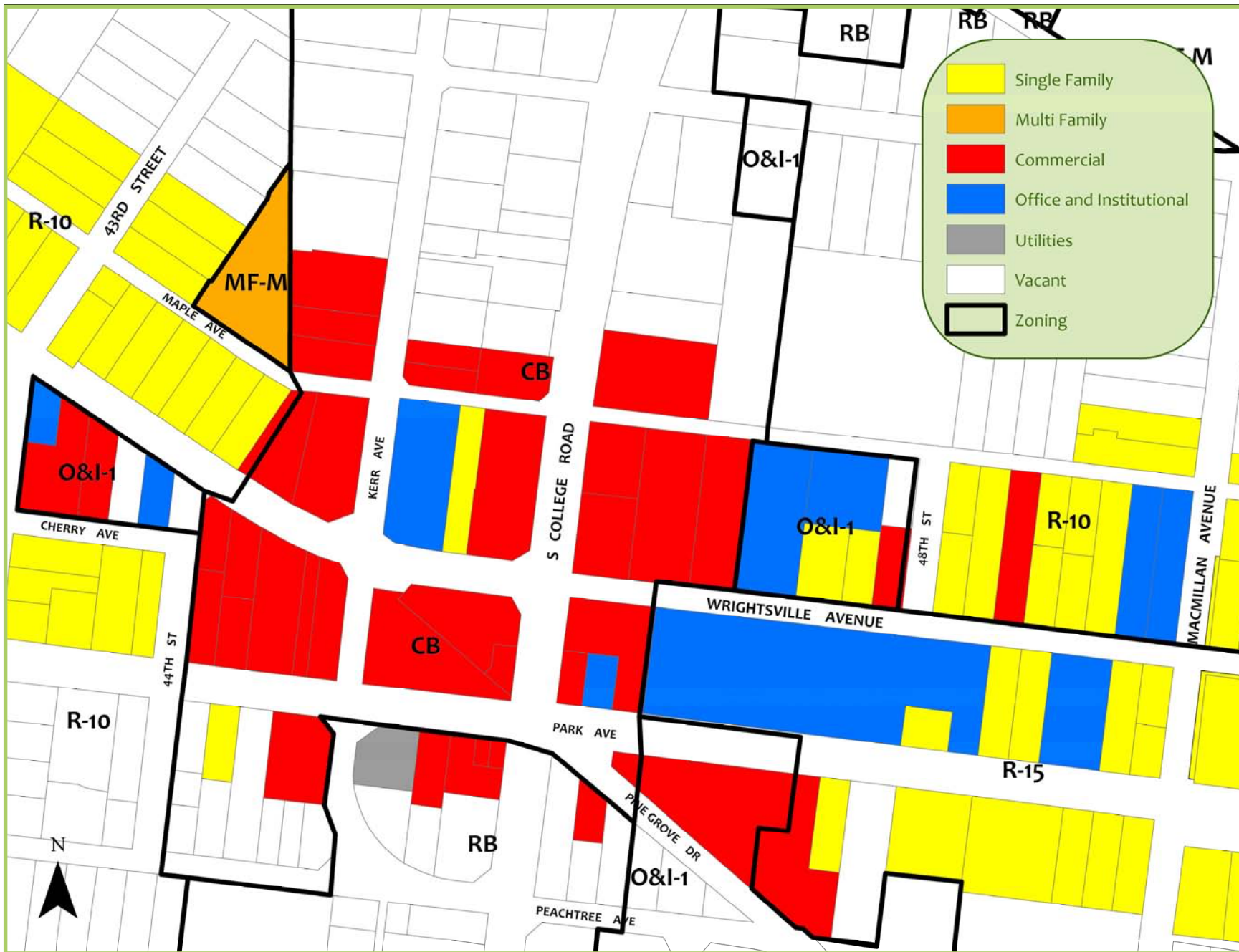
Area 3

Hill Street to Independence Boulevard



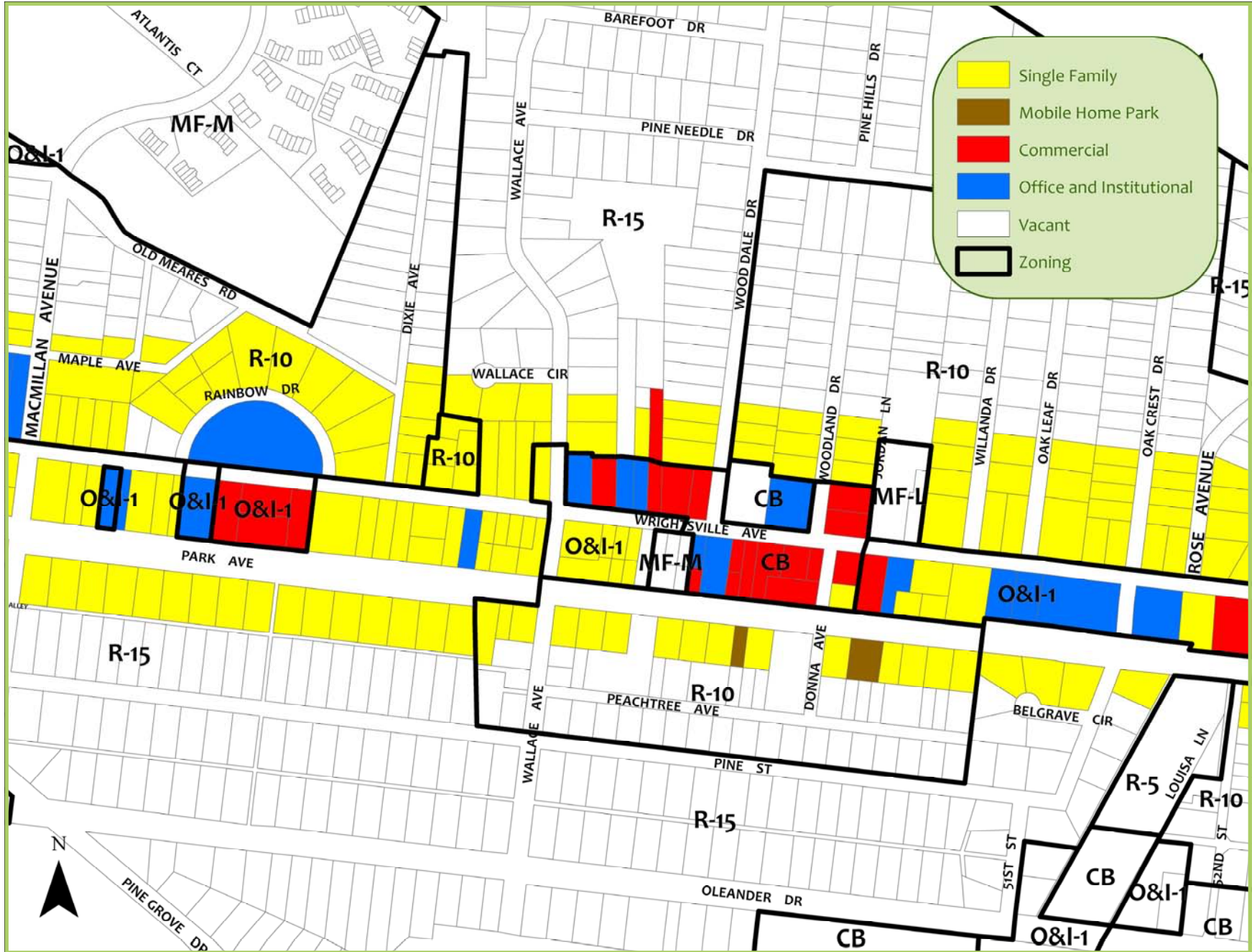
Area 4

Independence Boulevard to 43rd Street



Area 5

43rd Street to MacMillan Avenue

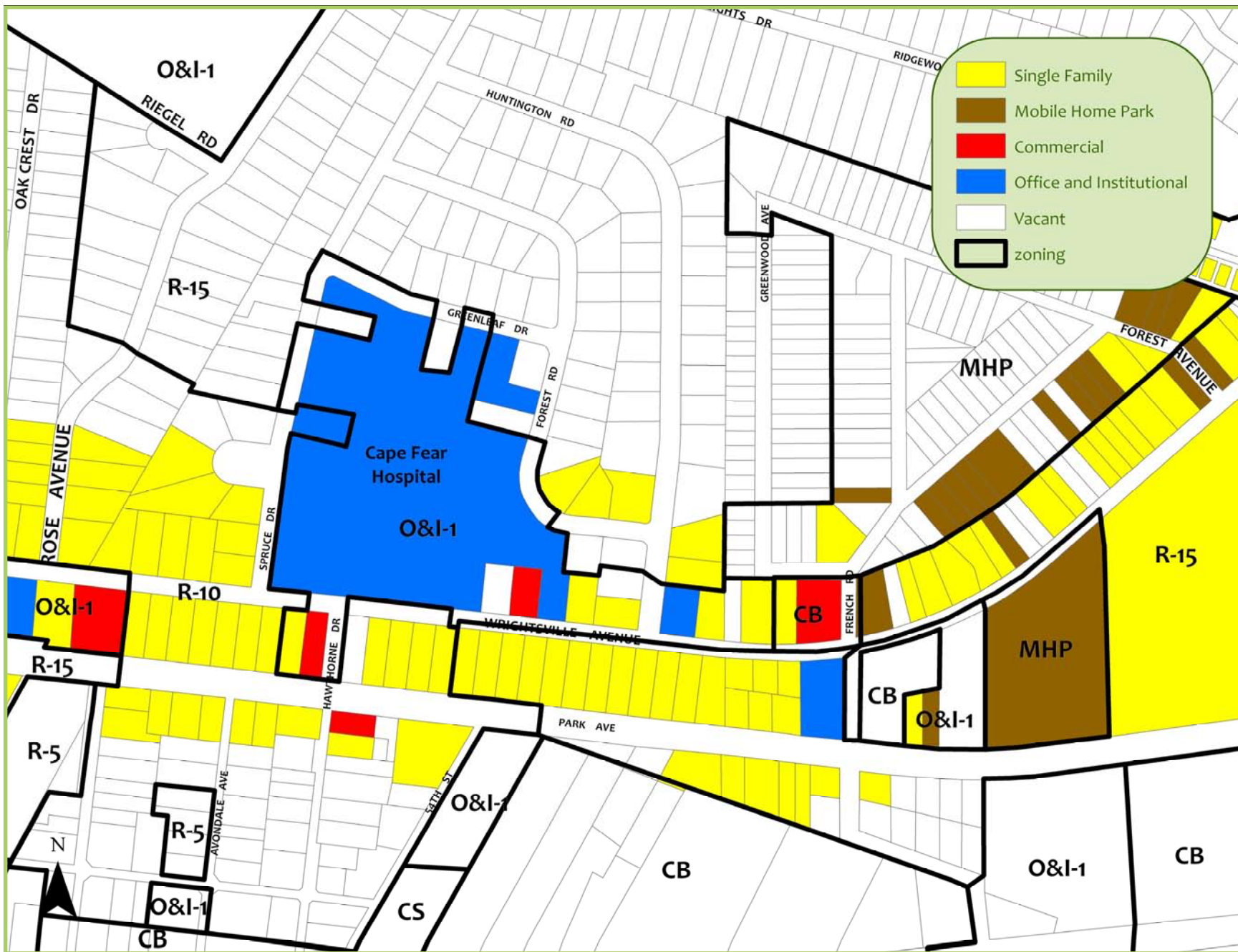


Area 6

MacMillan Avenue to Rose Avenue

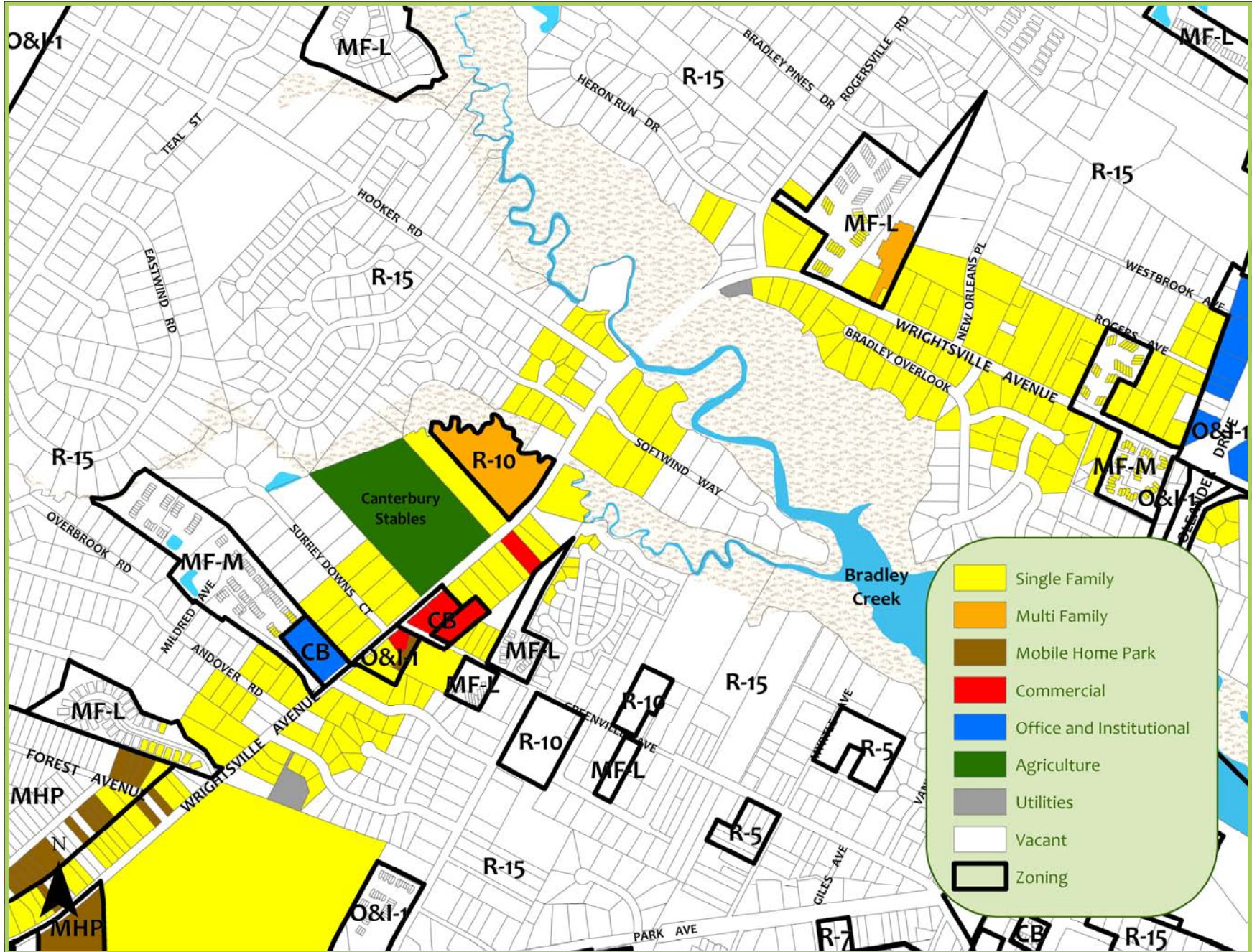
APPENDIX 1

CURRENT LAND USE & ZONING



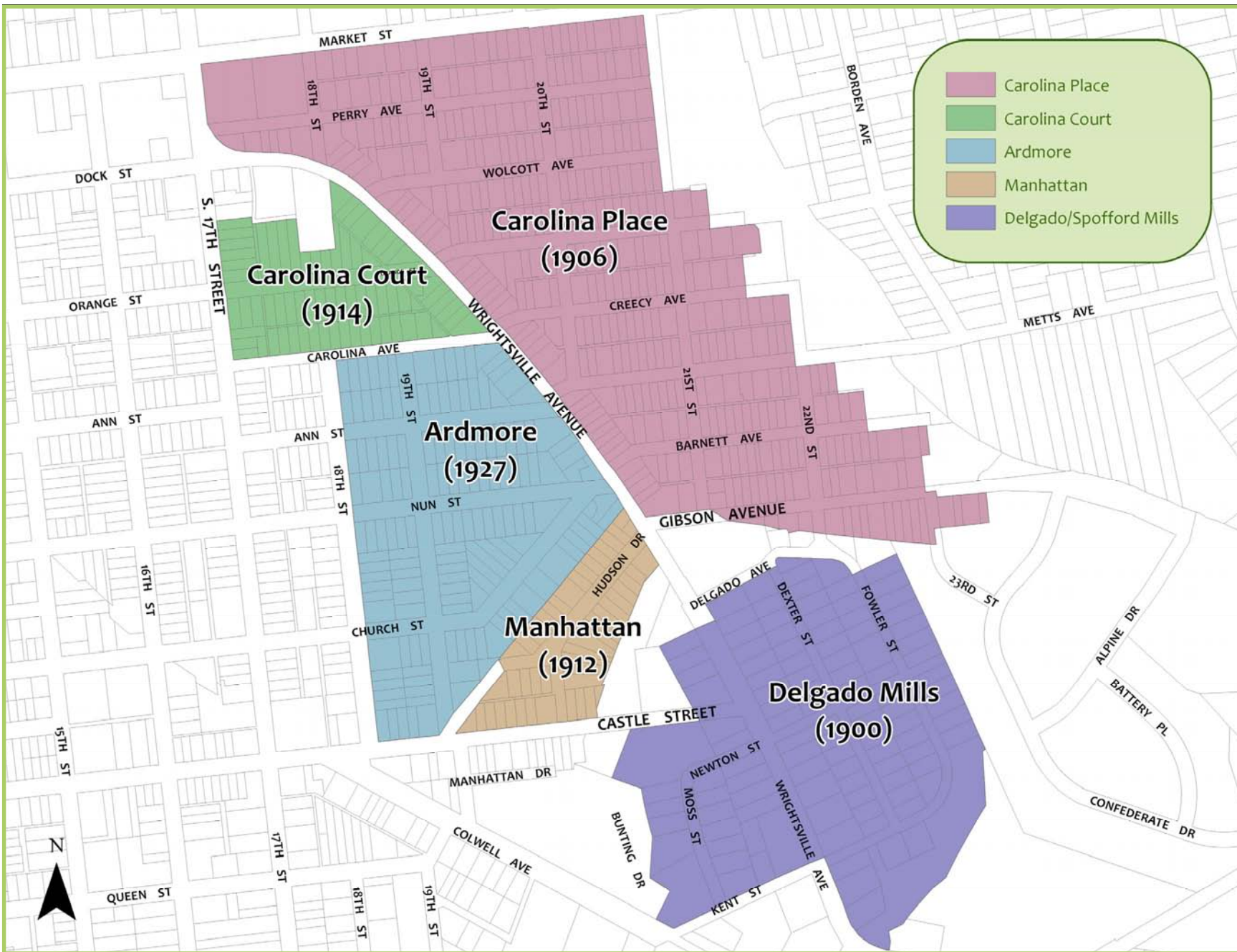
Area 7

Rose Avenue to Forest Avenue

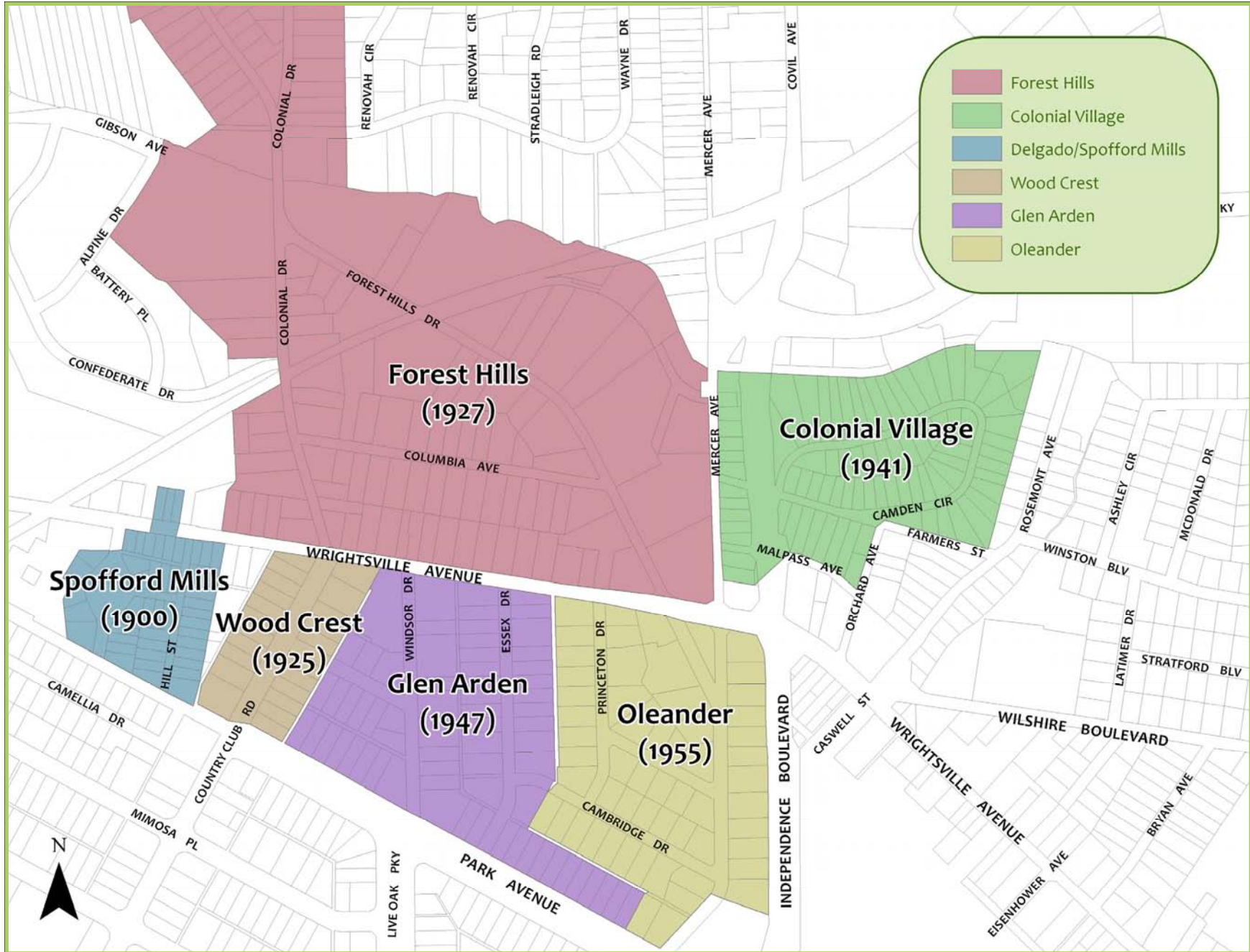


Area 8

Forest Avenue to Oleander Drive



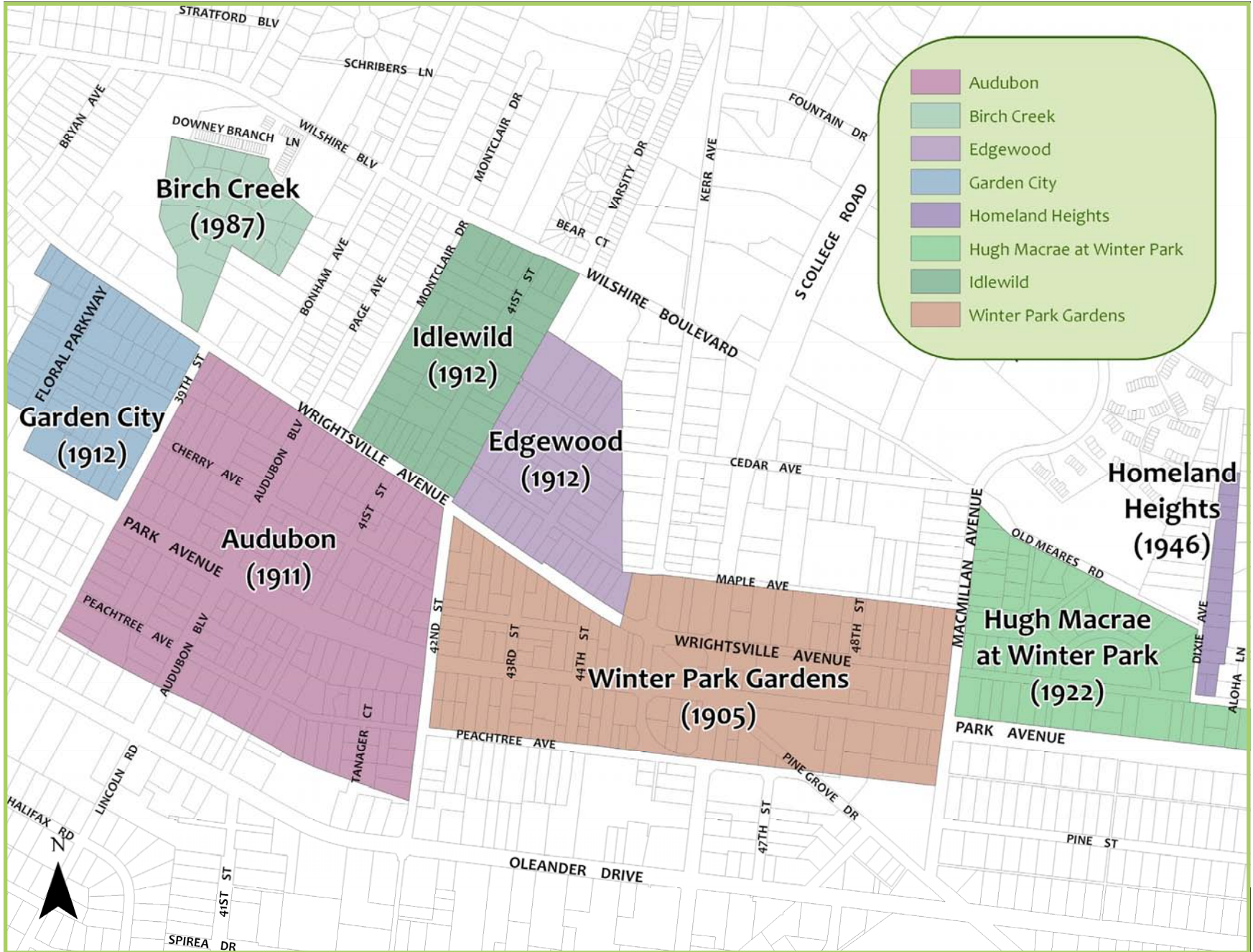
S. 17th Street to Castle Street



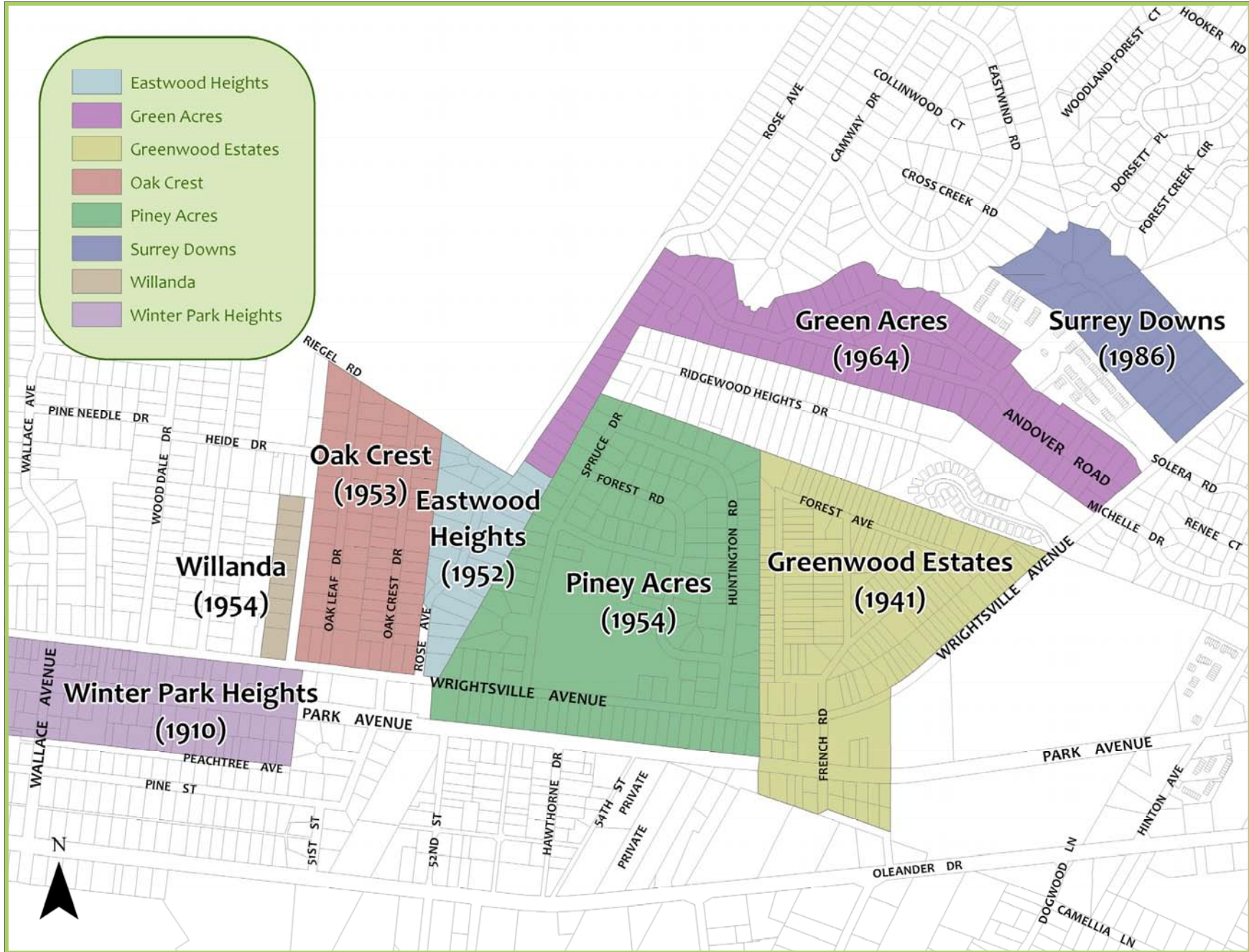
Spofford Circle to Independence Boulevard

APPENDIX 2

WRIGHTSVILLE AVENUE NEIGHBORHOODS



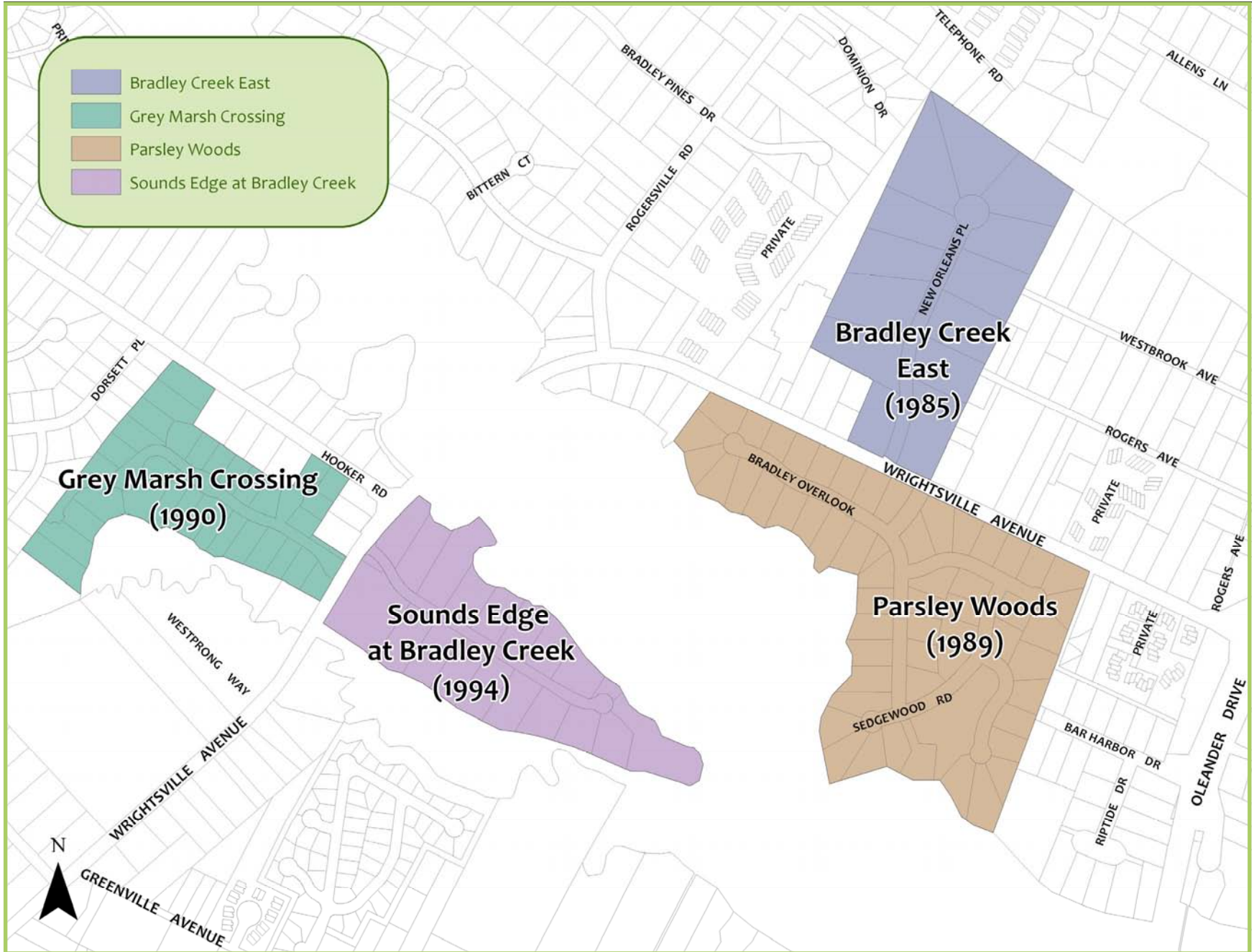
Floral Parkway to MacMillan Avenue



Wallace Avenue to Andover Road

APPENDIX 2

WRIGHTSVILLE AVENUE NEIGHBORHOODS



Greenville Avenue to Oleander Drive

