

# manassas

## mathis avenue sector plan

Mathis Avenue  
At Night



## City of Manassas, Virginia

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## 1. Introduction and Background

The City of Manassas, Virginia has been experiencing rapid change over the past decade. In response to this issue, a *Comprehensive Plan* was completed in 2002, with a stated priority to:

... “enable the City to preserve its distinctive character by providing the necessary guidance for its growth and change. We envision a City that, through a combination of preservation, in-fill development, and redevelopment, continues to evolve as the most attractive, livable city in the metropolitan Washington, DC area.” (p. 1-1)



Residential uses overlooking vehicle sales area

For planning purposes, the 2002 *Comprehensive Plan* divided the City into six sectors (or study areas), with the recommendation that a community design study, or “sector plan” be undertaken for each area. These sectors vary greatly in size, location, character, and level of pressure for change. Sector 2, the Centreville Road and Mathis Avenue Sector (henceforth to be called the “Mathis Avenue

Sector”), is described in the *Comprehensive Plan* as being a key contributor to the City’s commercial base and an important gateway into Manassas. It appears likely that change might be imminent for several of the larger parcels within Sector 2; hence, the City’s decision to complete its first Sector Plan for this study area.

The 2002 *Comprehensive Plan* calls for the maintenance of a productive commercial district in the Mathis Avenue Sector that continues to provide a steady and increasing tax base for the City. As described in some detail in the existing conditions section of this report, the Mathis Avenue Sector currently supports a full mix of uses ranging from residential to industrial, with a heavy emphasis on retail uses. The sector includes 76 acres of suburban commercial development which comprises a significant part of the Manassas land area. The sector stretches a little over a mile long in the north-east direction and its average width is one-half mile. The Sudley Road portion of the sector extends an additional half mile in a north-west direction.

Ongoing changes in the regional transportation system and the commercial/residential market will affect the ability of the Mathis Avenue Sector to maintain its role as a key commercial district. In light of these potential changes, the City Council asked that the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan create a 20-year comprehensive vision and framework for potential development and redevelopment.

The Manassas Business Council has recommended that this area be redeveloped as a true mixed-use commercial district that “would essentially retain the nearby residential and commercial mix of the area” (2002 *Comprehensive Plan*, p. 5-13). The goals and objectives for the sector plan, as outlined in the *Comprehensive Plan* and as refined by a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) established specifically for this Sector Plan effort, require the plan to strengthen the community’s tax base and protect adjacent residential neighborhoods. The final plan should not only provide a 20 year vision for the future, but should identify near-term opportunities for redevelopment and create an implementation framework that builds on existing patterns of infrastructure and ownership that will allow for flexibility and change over the ensuing decades.

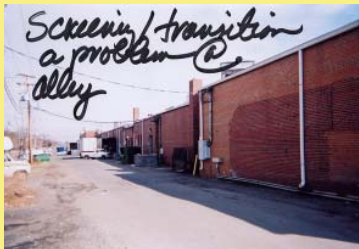


Existing cinema and miniature golf at the Reb Yank shopping center

## 2. The Planning Process



CAC photograph identifying city 'gateway' issue



Additional CAC photographs

The sector planning process included close collaboration between City staff, the community planning consultants, several specialty consultants, and a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) established specifically for this effort. (A list of CAC members is included in the acknowledgements.) The CAC, composed of sector area residents, business owners, property owner's representatives, and members of various City commissions,



worked with the consultants to analyze the sector's existing characteristics, define issues that needed to be addressed, identify a vision for the sector, and develop and evaluate the Sector Plan. The CAC also provided invaluable insight and perspective on the appropriate types of changes for the area, as well as the preservation issues that would need to be addressed, within the Mathis Avenue Sector.

The City staff and consultants worked closely with the CAC at each step of the planning process to ensure that the community's vision for the sector would be developed. The CAC members were asked to photograph the positive and negative characteristics of the sector, an exercise that helped the group "see" and describe the sector in new ways, and helped convey issues and concerns regarding the area. The CAC also participated in a half-day workshop to establish alternative visions for the Mathis Sector. These preliminary ideas were then further developed by the consultants into several alternative concept plans that addressed possible uses, building heights and densities. The consultant team presented other examples of mixed use districts developed elsewhere and analysis of several "model" enabling ordinances, parking requirements used in other communities, as well as visual improvements and transportation opportunities possible within the Mathis Avenue Sector. These were brought back to the CAC for review and refinement.

In addition to working with the CAC, the consultant team conducted a series of interviews with key City staff and important sector stakeholders in order to identify additional issues to be addressed in the Plan. Finally, in order to test the various alternative concepts for the area, the City initiated both transportation and economic analyses of the Sector Plan concepts which were conducted by independent consultants.

The resulting Sector Plan has been presented to the Manassas Planning Commission, the City Council (both in several work sessions and in formal presentation), as well as to local community groups and public agencies. The plan has been revised at each step to respond to various concerns. The final plan, its supporting documents and illustrative graphics are presented in this report.



### 3. Existing Conditions: Site and Context

Figure 1: Civil War Battles  
(study area in red)

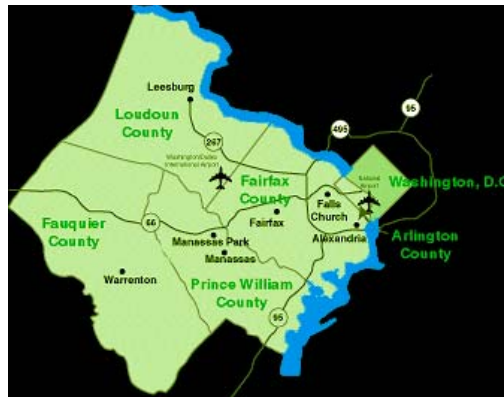
### Regional Context

Manassas was founded at the intersection of transportation systems in the 1850's. The town grew up at the junction of two railroad lines and served as the market town for the region's agricultural products. The Manassas Gap Railroad took goods from the Shenandoah Valley to connect to the Orange and Alexandria Railroad for markets in Richmond and Washington D.C. The 1,600-acre Liberia Plantation utilized the rail lines to move its varied goods to market. The Manassas junction of railroads was coveted by both the Confederacy and the Union during the Civil War. During the war a railroad spur line was constructed by General Beauregard to support his forward winter camp in Centerville. This railroad was the first military railroad in America and it paralleled Mathis Avenue. An enormous complex of fortifications was constructed here by the Confederacy to protect this infrastructure from capture. The desire to control this railroad junction sparked

considerable fighting, including the first major battles of the war – the First and Second Battles for Manassas.

Manassas is located within one of the fastest growing regions in America. The desire to live, work and do business in close proximity to the region's major transportation corridors has sparked the re-assessment of many older commercial areas with regard to their redevelopment potential.

Figure 2: The Northern  
Virginia Region



The Mathis Avenue Sector, located on the northeast side of Manassas, lies in close proximity to Interstate 66, connecting directly into Washington D.C. The north-south Route 28, (Centreville Road) connects to Dulles Airport. The Manassas Train Station, in Old Town, provides direct access to Washington D.C. through the Virginia Railway Express and connects to the east coast and the remainder of the nation through Amtrak.

Many of the existing roads within the sector, including Route 28, are congested. Plans are advancing and land has been purchased for a Tri-County Connector, a proposed limited access highway that

Figure 3: Tri-County Connector, Alternate Routes (study area in red)

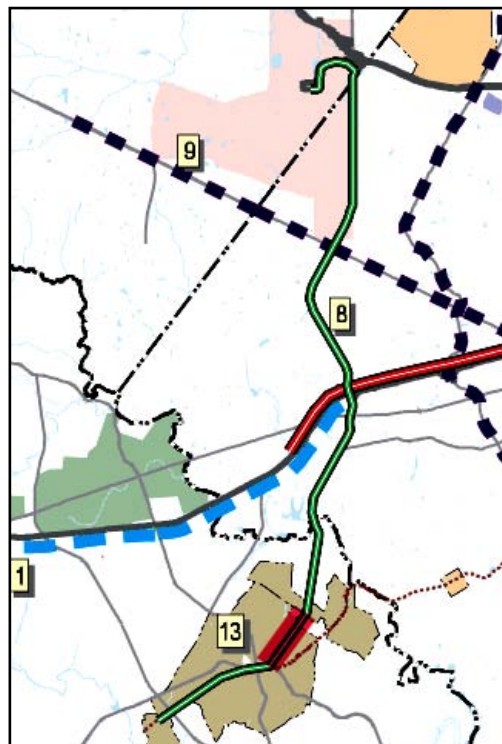
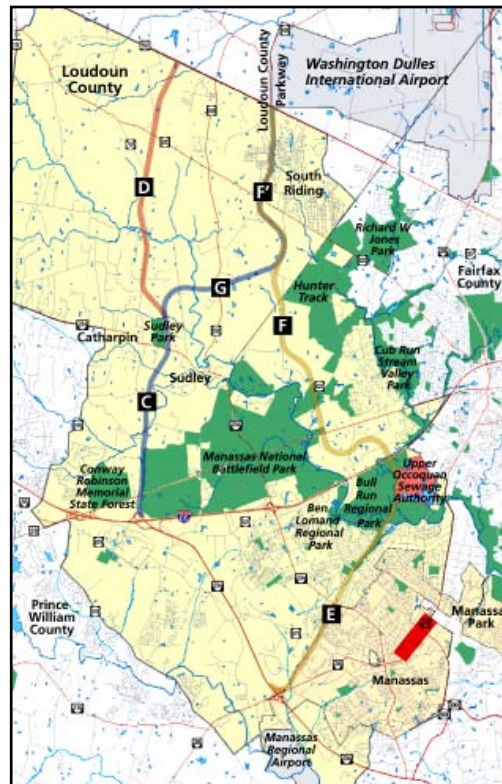


Figure 4: 2020 Virginia Transit Strategies: Light Rail, Following Route 28 (study area in red, light rail as number 8, green indicating alignment)

would essentially parallel Route 28, bypassing Manassas and making connections north to I-66, Route 50, Dulles Airport, and the Hirst Brault Expressway (better known as The Greenway), eventually providing a direct connection to Leesburg and Loudoun County. Whichever of the various alternate routes is selected for the Tri-County Connector, it is

anticipated that a route making these connections will reduce the traffic through Old Town Manassas and much of the sector. This will benefit the historic residential neighborhood adjacent to the sector but will change the commercial market within the area. The city's preference is alignment 'E' which provides the best connection to Route 28 and reduces traffic impacts in the sector.

*Virginia's 2020 Plan* calls for a light rail system to connect Dulles Airport to the Manassas Airport through the City with connections to the Virginia Rail Express (VRE) and Amtrak. This light rail system would follow Route 28 directly through the study area and provide an important link for the sector to regional transportation systems as well as local neighborhoods and Old Town Manassas.



Landscape remnant of the Annaburg Plantation grounds

'Old field' growth on vacant land adjacent to the Liberia House historic site

## Natural Features

The Mathis Avenue Sector sits along a ridge line situated between the Buckhall and Russia Branch tributaries of the Occoquan River. Its strategic high ground and water resources have made this area advantageous for inhabitants from prehistory to the present.

Figure 5 illustrates the natural features that will help influence the redevelopment of the Sector Area. Most of these features comprise large-scale landscape elements that factored into the way in which the Sector Area developed over the centuries, while others are natural remnants left over from a time before the area was changed so dramatically.

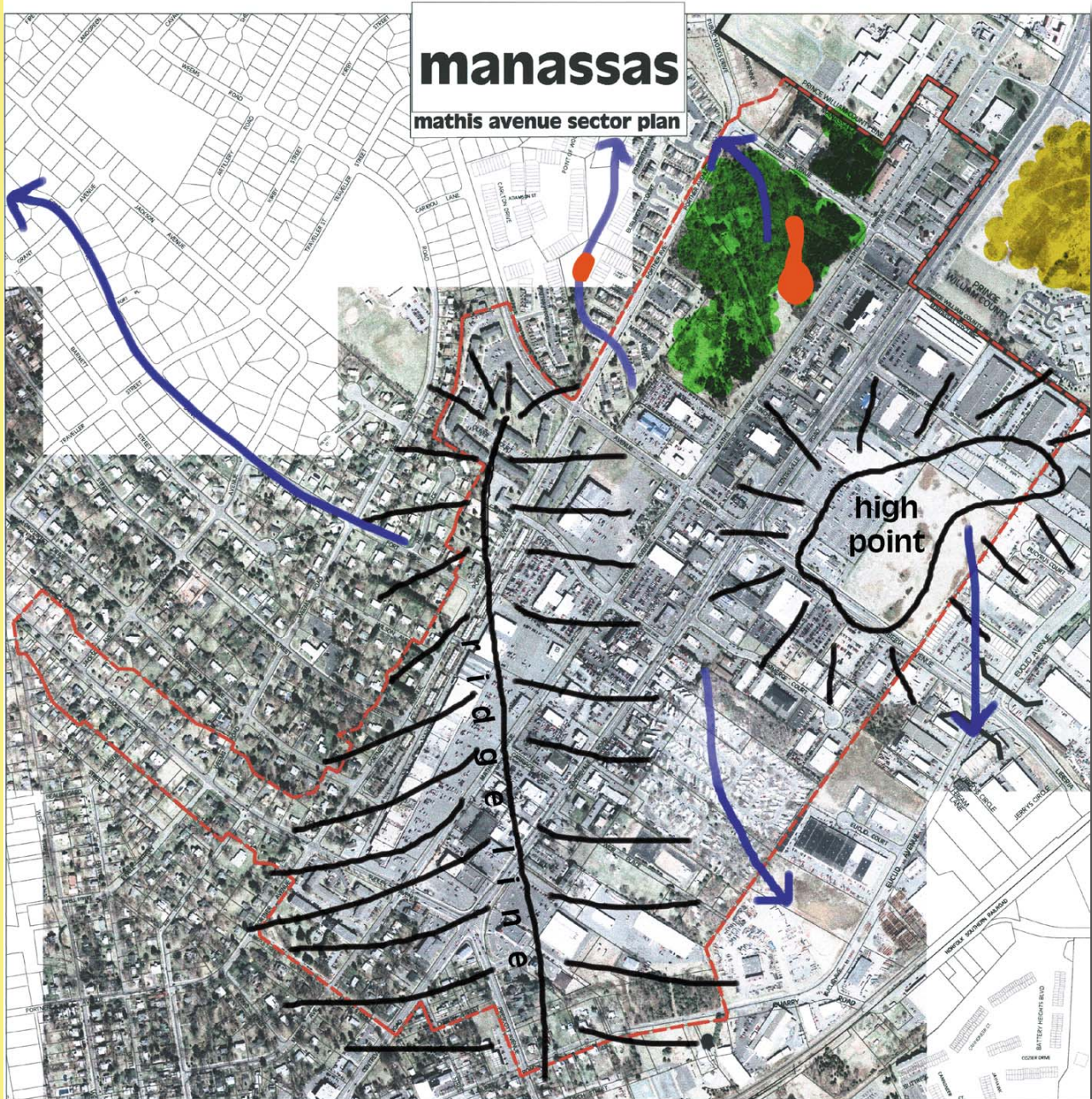
Prominent in Figure 5 is the natural ridge line that runs roughly north to south through the Sector Area. The effect of this ridge line is that Mathis Avenue acts as a natural drainage divide, influencing the way that water drains through the area (drainage patterns are shown in blue arrows on the map). This drainage, in turn, will affect the way that storm water management and other utilities must be planned for in any future redevelopment of the corridor. Also shown is the high point of the study area, which occurs southeast of Route 28/Centreville Road and helps to influence the drainage of water (as well as natural viewsheds) in the Sector Area.







Perhaps most important to the natural fabric of the corridor is the Liberia House property, which consists of fourteen acres of historic open space, natural habitat, and wetlands at the northern extent of the Sector Area. This natural area, owned and managed by the Manassas Museum, has the potential to become a key cornerstone of an open space network for the sector plan.

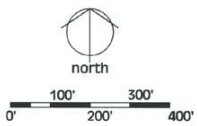


It should be noted that an area of forested wetlands, as identified on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory, occurs on the eastern edge of the Liberia House property. Any future plans for this property should include measures to protect this wetland area, located just west of Mathis Avenue.





-  wetlands
-  forest
-  old field
-  drainage features
-  landforms
-  study area boundary

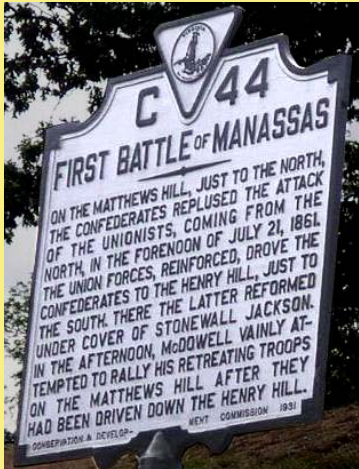


**natural features**

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Figure 5: Natural Features Analysis Map





Historic marker for First Battle of Manassas



Historic view of Liberia House



Annaburg House

## History

A sense of history, and the historical events that have taken place in the Manassas area, are central to the City's identity, self image, and sense of purpose. The historical fragments that remain in the Mathis Avenue/Route 28 sector, and even those historical elements that no longer remain, will play an important role in defining a future direction, for shaping interpreting and understanding the corridor.

The brief history of this area, as provided in the city's 2002 *Comprehensive Plan*, provides insight into the historical context for the Mathis Avenue/Route 28 sector and is, therefore, worth repeating here:

*The construction of Liberia House in 1725, at the northern end of the study area, marks the beginning of documented history in this area. In the late 1800's Robert Portner constructed Annaburg Manor at the southernmost end of the study area. Shortly thereafter, he purchased Liberia as well. The area remained predominantly farmland into the 1950's. I.J. Breeden then bought the Portner property from Annaburg Manor when the Town of Manassas was experiencing growth. An influx of businesses cropped up along Centreville Road (Route 28) in the 1950's, 60's. And 70's. These businesses included a lumberyard, dairy, and packing plant, along with a significant amount of mixed retail. Breeden developed the first shopping center in Manassas. The Manassas Shopping Center was built on Mathis Avenue in 1962. An A&P was the first store located in this shopping center. It was directly across from a small medical center. Many other small businesses and some small strip shopping establishments were added as well. The Manassas Shopping Center continues to be at the core of commercial development in the study area, and offers a focus point for redevelopment efforts in the sector (p. 5-11).*

The most obvious, and important, historical features in the project area include the Liberia House, where a historic home and eighteen acres of land still remain, and the Annaburg Estate, where the historic home has been incorporated into a contemporary assisted living facility. Both of these historic properties should be included as significant southern (Annaburg) and northern (Liberia) interpretive and structural anchors in any redevelopment plans, and should be included as interpretive opportunities in a future system of connected open spaces/trails within the corridor. It should also be noted, as shown in Figure 6, that a designated historic district already exists for the Liberia property, and that the Annaburg house lies just north of the existing Manassas Historic District.

Also of interest, but no longer remaining, are three Civil War fortifications that were part of a system of defenses that encircled Manassas Junction.





General P. T. Beauregard

The largest of these, Fort Beauregard, was located at the northern end of the present-day Manassas Shopping Center as illustrated in Figure 6. The other two fortifications were located near the present-day intersections of Sudley Road/Ewell Street and Centreville Road/Maple Street. Also existing during the Civil War era, but no longer remaining, were the tracks for the Confederate Military Railroad, which ran northeast from downtown Manassas between what is now Mathis Avenue and Centreville Road.

These fortifications were designed and constructed by General Beauregard, one of eight full generals in the Confederate forces and former superintendent of West Point. General Beauregard opened fire on the Union-held Fort Sumter, regarded as the start of the American Civil War and subsequently led his troops to victory in the First Battle of Manassas, the first battle of the Civil War. In later life, Beauregard initiated a political party in Louisiana that worked to unite blacks and whites in opposition to segregation. His work for black civil and voting rights put him at odds with most other Confederate veterans.

One other early plantation, Birmingham, is no longer remaining but was once located just east of present-day Centreville Road between Liberia Avenue and Phoenix Drive. These no-longer-remaining historic resources offer important interpretive opportunities in the Sector Area. Where possible, these sites might be linked via green pedestrian and bicycle trails.

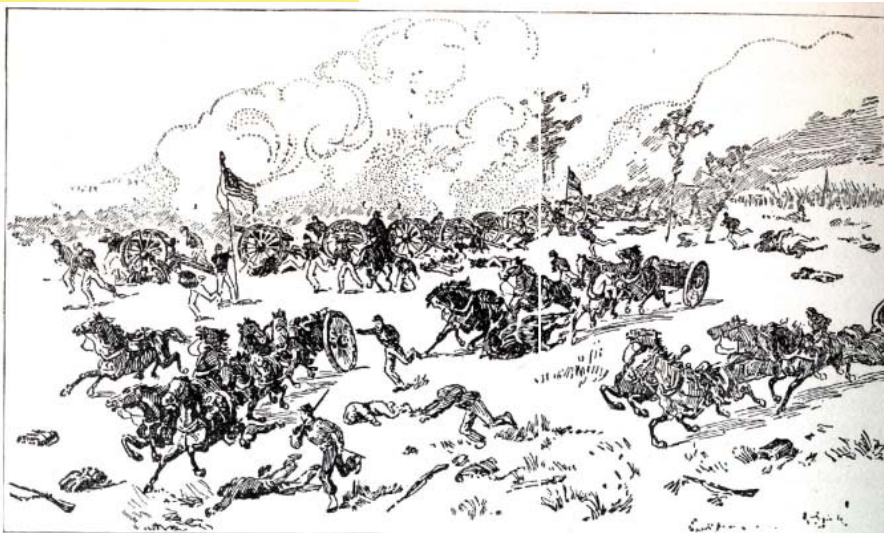
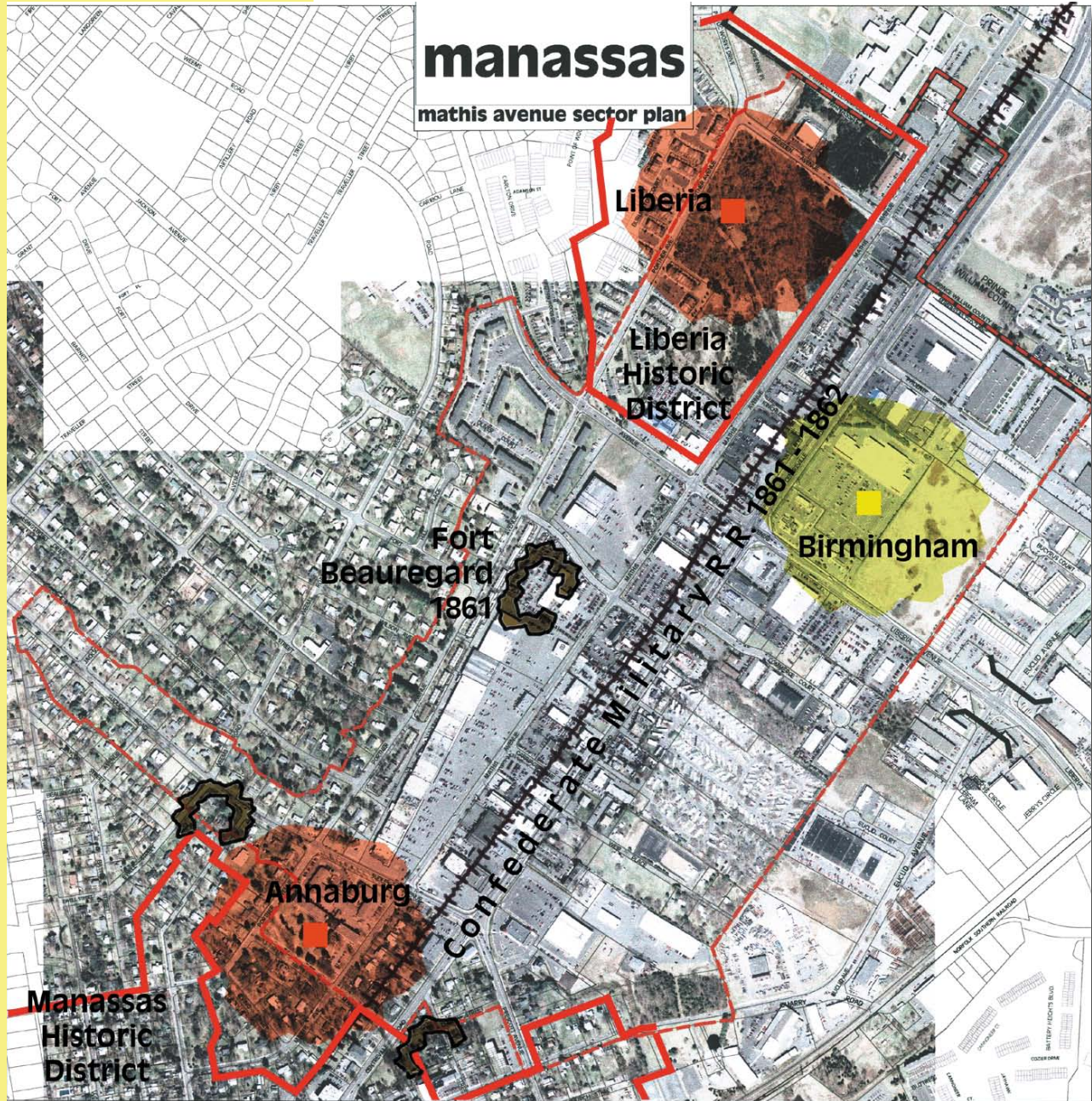
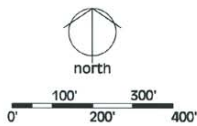


Illustration of Union troops fleeing at the First Battle of Manassas





-  existing plantation homes
-  former plantation homes
-  former fortifications
-  former railroad
-  historic districts
-  study area boundary



## history

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Figure 6: History Analysis Map

## Bike Trails and Open Space

Figure 7 illustrates open spaces and parks that are located within, and adjacent to, the Sector Area. The map also shows planned bike trails and bike lanes, as proposed in the city's *2002 Comprehensive Plan*.

While there are no city parks within the Sector Area, there are two parks located outside this area. These are close enough that connections between the sector corridor and the open spaces should be considered: Byrd Park, on Grant Avenue, and Nelson Park, on Sudley Road (located slightly off the map). In addition, there is a privately-owned park in front of the Annaburg House property. This open space serves as the "front yard" of the assisted living facility and provides a lovely green "square" that frames the surrounding residential uses.

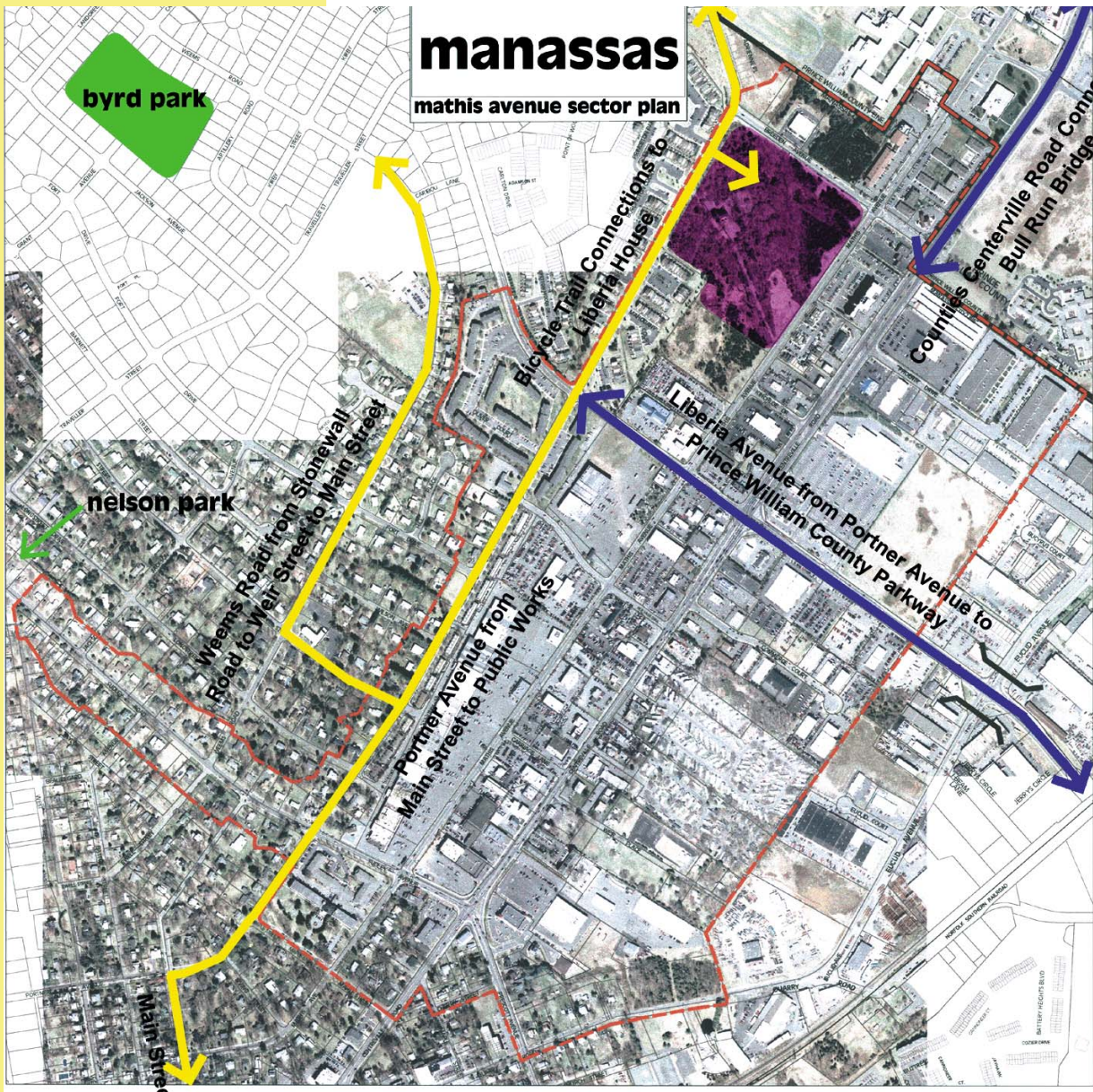
The largest open space in the sector area, Liberia House, is highlighted in purple in Figure 7. This eighteen-acre, Civil War-era property and house is owned and managed by the Manassas Museum. Not only does this property represent an important historic resource for the City, it is also a significant environmental asset, because of the intense urban and suburban development that surrounds the property on all sides, and along the Mathis Avenue corridor.

Visible in yellow on the map are the bike lanes (proposed shared bike lanes) outlined in the *2002 Comprehensive Plan*. As can be seen, one of the proposed bike lanes would tie together downtown Manassas with the Sector Area via Main Street and Portner Avenue. The other proposed bike lane would tie the Sector Area to the neighborhoods to the northwest via Weir Street and Weems Road.

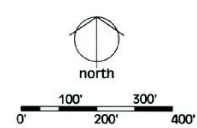
The *Comprehensive Plan* also proposes a separate bike path along Liberia Avenue (shown in blue in Figure 7).

It is clear that the Sector Area presently contains few existing open spaces. Given the primarily commercial focus of the area at present, this absence of open space has likely not been a significant issue. If, however, future redevelopment plans are to include additional residential uses as well as an increase in density, new open space opportunities should be considered for this sector. In addition, green connections (both for non-motorized vehicles and pedestrians) should be considered in any redevelopment plans in order to link the Sector Area to downtown Manassas and to surrounding residential areas. This will reduce traffic impacts in, and will encourage more integrated use of, the area.





- parks
- museums
- bike trail - shared lane proposed
- bike trail - separate path proposed
- study area boundary



## bike trails & open space

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Figure 7: Bike Trails and Open Space Analysis Map



Manassas has ample water supply and the existing potable water infrastructure can serve planned growth

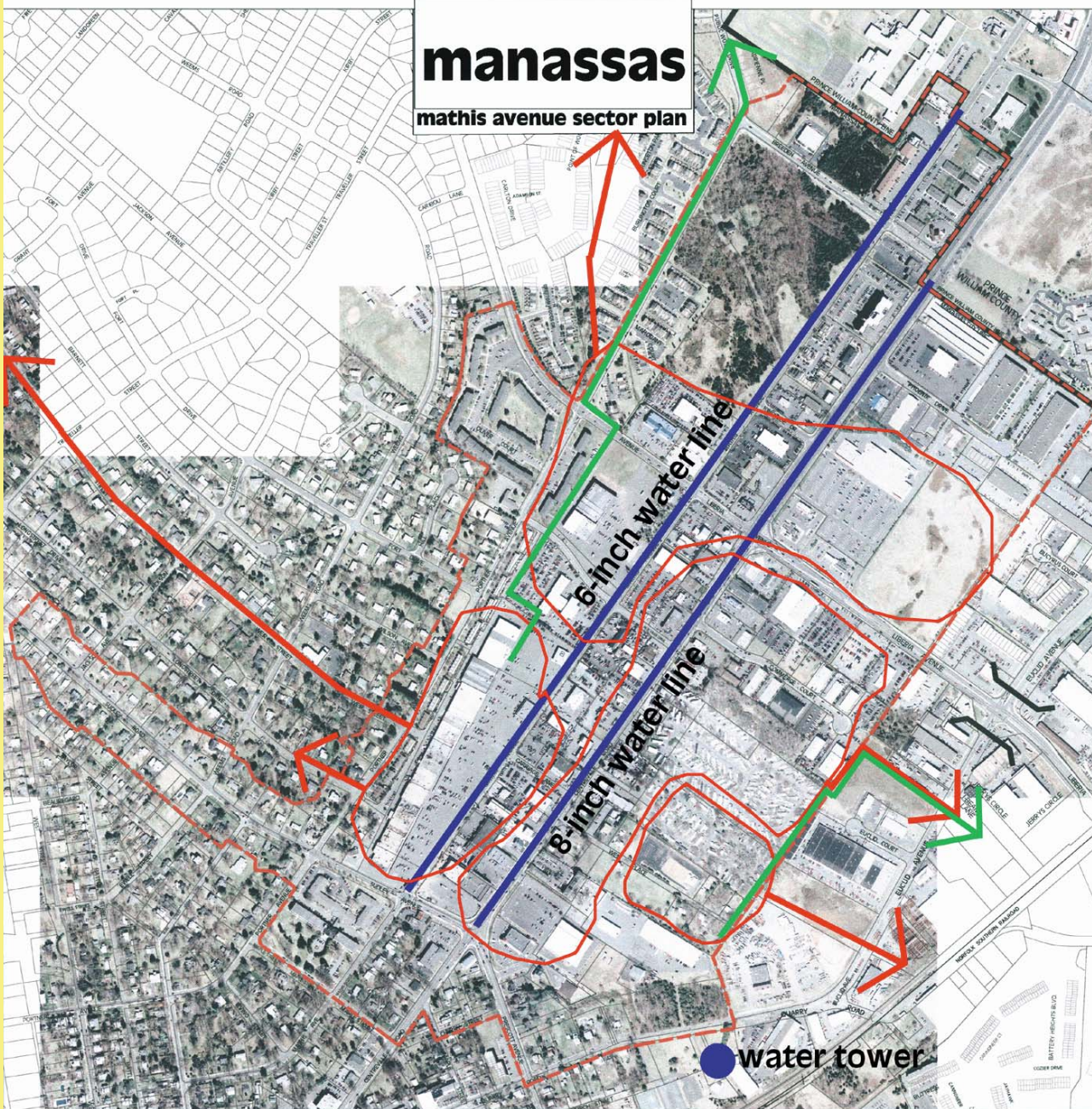
## Utilities

Existing utilities that are essential to the redevelopment of the Mathis Avenue/Route 28 sector are shown in Figure 8. As can be seen from the map, Centreville Road is currently served by an eight-inch water main, while Mathis Avenue is served by a six-inch main. According to engineers at the City's Department of Public Works, both of these lines should be sufficient to handle any new development (and increased density) that is proposed for the sector in the future. According to the city engineers, booster pumps may be required for buildings over four or five stories, but the supply lines should be adequate.

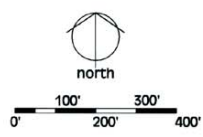
Figure 8 also shows, with circles and arrows, the collection areas and approximate locations of sanitary sewer lines. According to City engineers, sanitary sewer service would likely have to be upgraded in the Sector Area with future redevelopment. This future upgrade of sanitary sewer service could likely be accomplished by running a new line from the Manassas Mall/Reb-Yank Shopping Center, up Portner Avenue, to a main located near the Public Works facility on Public Works Drive. Another possible sanitary sewer line could be installed southeast of Centreville Road, behind the existing trailer parks. This line would then tie into an existing pipe located south of Liberia Avenue.

Stormwater management is a very important issue in Manassas. According to the Comprehensive Plan, all of the watersheds in the City of Manassas drain into the Occoquan River. Because the Occoquan is the major water supply impoundment for Northern Virginia, it is very susceptible to pollution from surface drainage. As a result, the drainage basin for the Occoquan River is subject to the Occoquan Basin Non-point Pollution Management Program, which requires that the City establish a management program to reduce pollutant runoff into the river. The major component of this program is the use of regional stormwater management ponds in various locations in the City. Developers are required to "buy into" these stormwater management ponds - contributing money for new development depending on the size of the lot and the amount of impervious surface to be constructed on the property.





- water service
- existing sanitary service
- possible sanitary service
- study area boundary



**utilities**

Figure 8: Utilities Analysis Map

## Visual Character and Physical Condition

Figure 9 illustrates the visual character of the study area, a significant factor to be considered in developing the sector plan. Realization of the *2002 Comprehensive Plan* vision for this sector as a “vibrant uptown” commercial district with a distinct identity that encourages the redevelopment and revitalization of existing businesses and attracts new businesses” will depend, to a great extent, on being able to attract people and business to this area.

Perhaps most evident in Figure 9 is that a large percentage of the sector is characterized by strip commercial development and large parking lots. Indeed, this “sea of parking,” and the commercial development that it accompanies, dominate the landscape along both Mathis Avenue and Centreville Road, and detract greatly from the overall image of the area.

One of the most positive visual attributes in the area is its residential neighborhoods, which provide a sense of stability, history, and a visual contrast to the vast acreage devoted to commercial interests. For the most part, however, there is no buffer between the commercial areas in the heart of the sector and the residential areas on the fringe.

The area of industrial activity southeast of Centreville Road also dominates the visual landscape, and contributes to a sense of disorganization and clutter in this part of the Sector Area. While such activities are important to the fabric and economy of the City, these areas need to be encouraged to become more aware of their visual image with regard to their surrounding and need to be better shielded from surrounding uses.

Significant views in the area must also be considered prior to the onset of any major redevelopment activity. The strongest existing views are those up and down both Mathis Avenue and Centreville Road, and the cross views between these two roads (across the parking lots and between structures). Other significant views that must be considered in developing the sector plan are those into, and out of, the Liberia House property in order to protect the viewshed for this historic resource.

Figure 9 also shows potential locations for “gateways” into the sector area. These represent important introductions to the area and, in some instances, provide “front door” entrances to the City of Manassas itself for many visitors. While the most important gateways would be those along Mathis Avenue and Centreville Road, it would also be important to establish these special entrances ( via signs, streetscape treatments, etc.) along Liberia Avenue and Sudley Road.

Figure 10 depicts the condition of building sites in the Sector Area. While the assessment is based partially on the condition of the structures



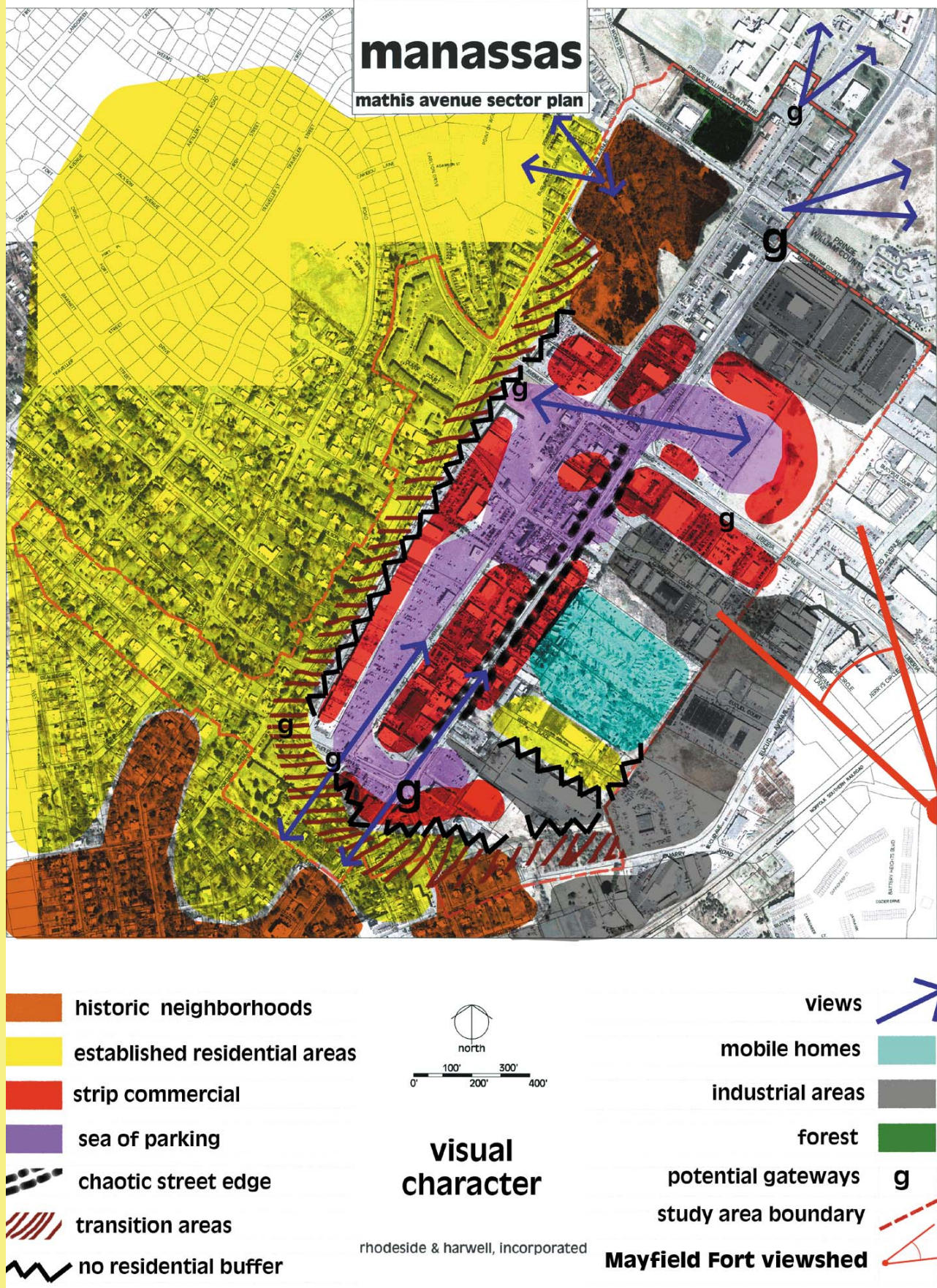


Figure 9: Visual Character Analysis Map



themselves, it is aimed more at the sites that the structures occupy, including the condition of the paving, curbs, drainage, and other infrastructure on the lots. These items are often the most expensive to upgrade in any redevelopment plan, and the intent of the map is to show which sites might be more in need of significant redevelopment in the short or mid-terms.

Shown in green on the map are those developments that are new, and are, therefore, less likely to be redeveloped, or to need upgrading, in the short term. The yellow areas on the map depict those sites that are likely to be older and, while still being maintained, may be viewed as becoming "outdated," particularly as compared to newer commercial sites. These include the Manassas Shopping Center, the Reb-Yank Shopping Center, and the majority of the commercial areas between Mathis Avenue and Centreville Road.

The red areas are those that can be considered to be run-down, poorly maintained and/or "dilapidated." Included in this classification are the trailer courts and several commercial establishments bordering Centreville Road.

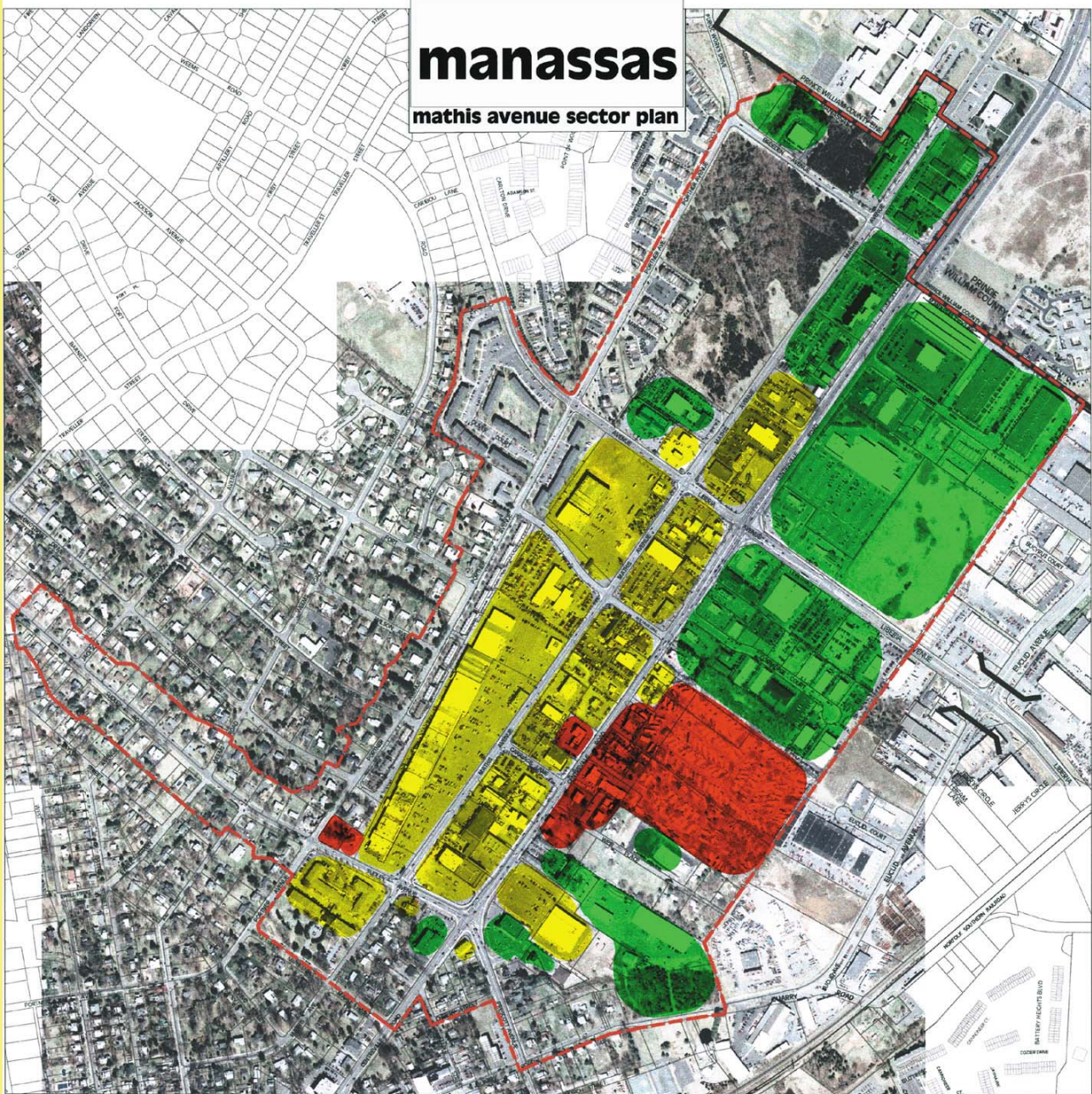






Homeowner installation acts as private art

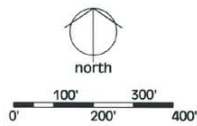


# manassas

## mathis avenue sector plan



-  **new** - meets current code
-  **maintained** - may meet current code
-  **dilapidated** - does not meet code
-  **study area boundary**



### physical condition

Figure 10: Physical Condition Analysis Map

## Circulation

Figure 11 is a general analysis of existing circulation, and circulation problems, in the sector area. The red lines represent, by their varying widths, the relative traffic flows on the main roads in the study area. Evident is the fact that Centreville Road and Liberia Avenue carry the heaviest volumes of traffic, but that Mathis Avenue, Portner Road, and Sudley Road also carry extremely high volumes. Indeed, Sudley Road, Centreville Road, and Liberia Avenue are on a truck route that (at points along the way) carries these large vehicles through residential neighborhoods.

The concentric circles in Figure 11, by their varying sizes, represent the intersections suffering from the greatest congestion. While the worst congestion occurs at the intersection of Centreville Road and Liberia Avenue, congestion occurs at almost every major intersection in the Sector Area. Figure 11 also shows those intersections with the heaviest turn movements, and the worst backups, in their turn lanes. It should be noted that all of the major intersections along Sudley Road suffer from vehicular congestion – a fact that should be taken into account when planning for high-density uses on this end of the project corridor.

Finally, the map shows the general directions of pedestrian flow in the Sector Area, which largely come from the surrounding residential neighborhoods south, southwest, and northwest of the sector. Consequently, the map also shows where pedestrians come into the greatest conflict with vehicular traffic and where people have the greatest trouble crossing the street. These conflicts occur at all the main intersections along Sudley Road (despite the crosswalks and walk signals). In addition, pedestrian access, both along and across Centreville Road, is dangerous and, therefore, rarely seen to occur. At the same time, there are few opportunities to accommodate even vehicular access across the Centreville Road corridor. This fact puts great traffic pressures on both Liberia Avenue and Sudley Road.



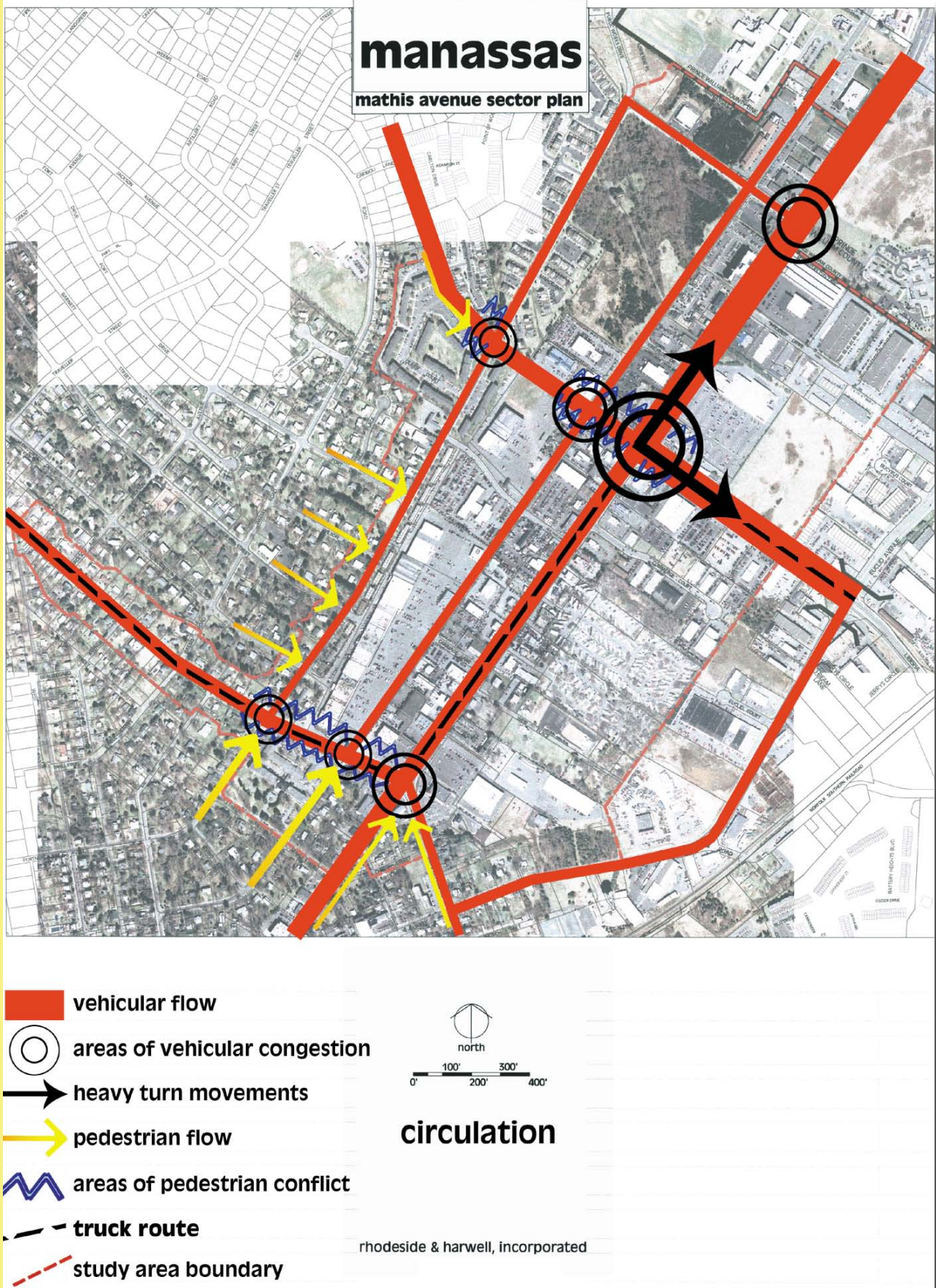


Figure 11: Circulation Analysis Map

## Existing Land Use

Figure 12 illustrates existing land use in the Mathis Avenue/Route 28 sector, which is dominated by a central core of “general commercial” use (the area shown in purple). This commercial area stretches from the northwest side of Mathis Avenue to the southeast side of Centreville Road, all the way from Sudley Road to the northeast edge of the area. Breaking up the commercial strip along Mathis Avenue is the Liberia House property, which is an open area shown in green in Figure 12, at the intersection of Breeden and Mathis Avenues.

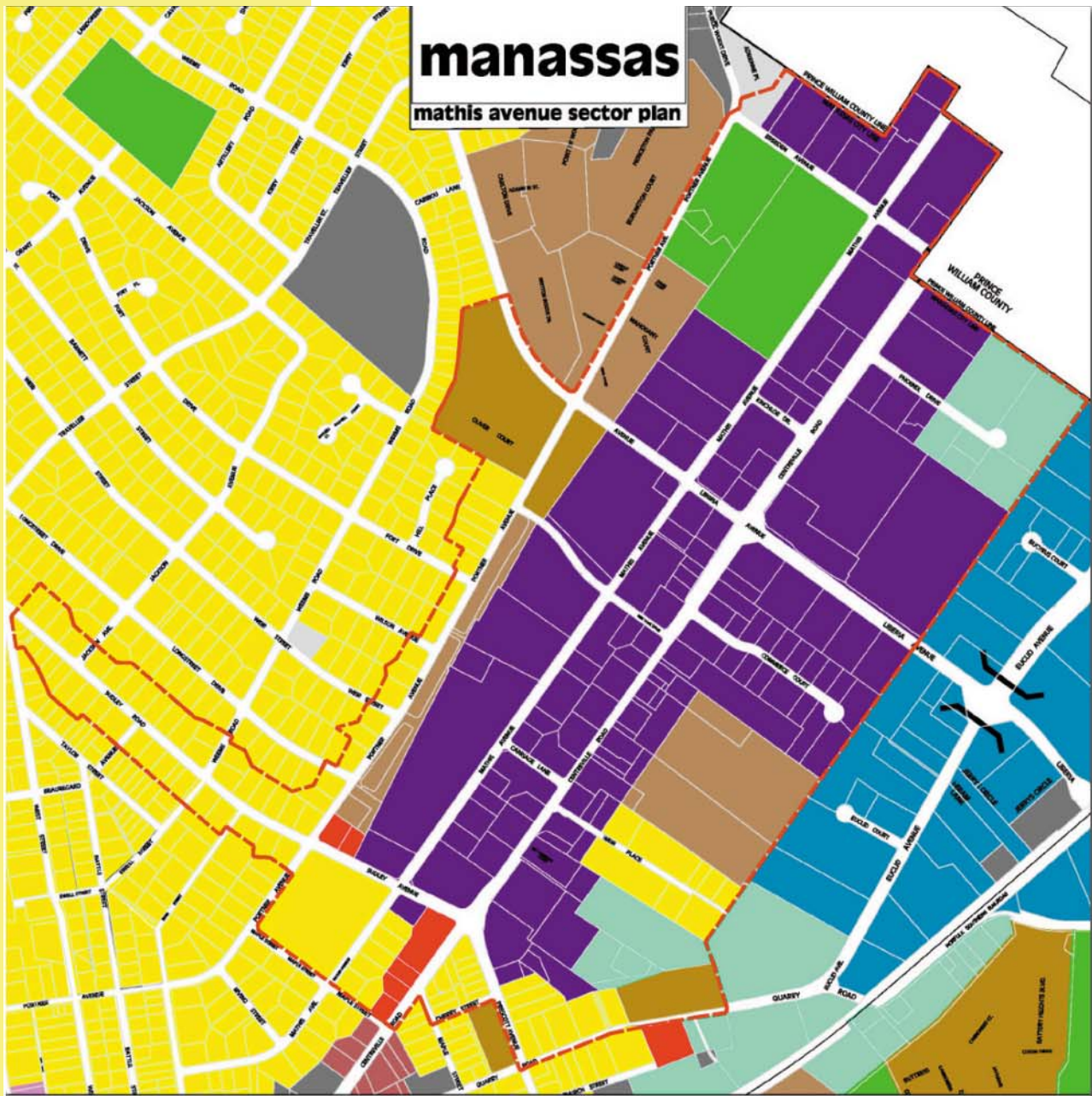
Surrounding the commercial core on the south and west sides are residential uses, the majority of which are single family homes (shown in yellow), but with a strip of medium-density townhomes (shown in light brown) between Portner Avenue and the commercial area, and a pocket of high-density residential at the corner of Liberia and Portner Avenues. A large area of medium-density residential (townhomes) also exists on the west side of Portner Road, across from the Liberia House property.

Southwest of Sudley Road, between downtown Manassas and the Sector Area, is an area of “transitional use,” as well as city-center commercial along Centreville Road which is bordered on both sides by single family residential.

The eastern edge of the Sector Area marks a transition between the area of general commercial along Mathis Avenue/Centreville Road and an area of general industrial use and “campus employment” that runs along both sides of Euclid Avenue (shown in blue and turquoise). Also located on the eastern edge of the study area are several trailer parks, characterized on Figure 12 as an area of low and medium-density residential (yellow and light brown).

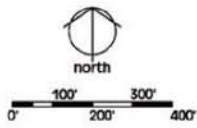
In the *2002 Comprehensive Plan*, the Business Council recommended the redevelopment of the Mathis Avenue/Route 28 sector into an uptown “mixed-use commercial district that would essentially retain the nearby residential and commercial mix of the area” (p. 5-13). It was hoped that, by allowing a mix of uses to occur in this area, the city would be able to provide incentives for redevelopment of the sector as a diversified, economically strong corridor.





**manassas**  
mathis avenue sector plan

- PP - public
- SPP - semi public
- POS - parks and open space
- LR - low density res.
- MR - medium density res.
- HR - high density res.
- TU - transitional use



**current land use**

rhodeside & harwell, incorporated

- CC - city center commercial
- CE - campus employment
- GC - general commercial
- GI - general industrial
- study area boundary

Figure 12: Current Land Use Map

## Existing Zoning

The sector area is largely zoned *B-4/General Commercial* (see Figure 13). There are, however, smaller portions of the area that are zoned *R-4/Multi-family*; *R-5/Mobile Home*; *R-1/Single Family*; and *I-1/Light Industrial*. None of these zones allows for mixed-use development. Although the B-4 zone does allow a mix of commercial uses, it does not provide for residential development as well. The following analysis of current zoning requirements assumes an underlying desire on the part of the City to create a greater mix of uses within the Sector Area, and discusses the compatibility of current zoning with this goal in mind.

### Section 130-381 R-5/Multi-family

The R-5 zoning requirements are compatible with the goal of creating mixed use areas, particularly when the R-5 areas are located at the edges of a mixed use neighborhood. The current R-5 zone allows a maximum density of 5/du per acre which is not compatible with proposed mixed use development.

### Section 130-481 B-4/General Commercial

The land use intent for much of the Sector Area should be to create a mix of retail, office and residential uses that integrates with, and complements, adjacent land uses. With this in mind, current B-4 zoning presents the following potential constraints to achieving this goal:

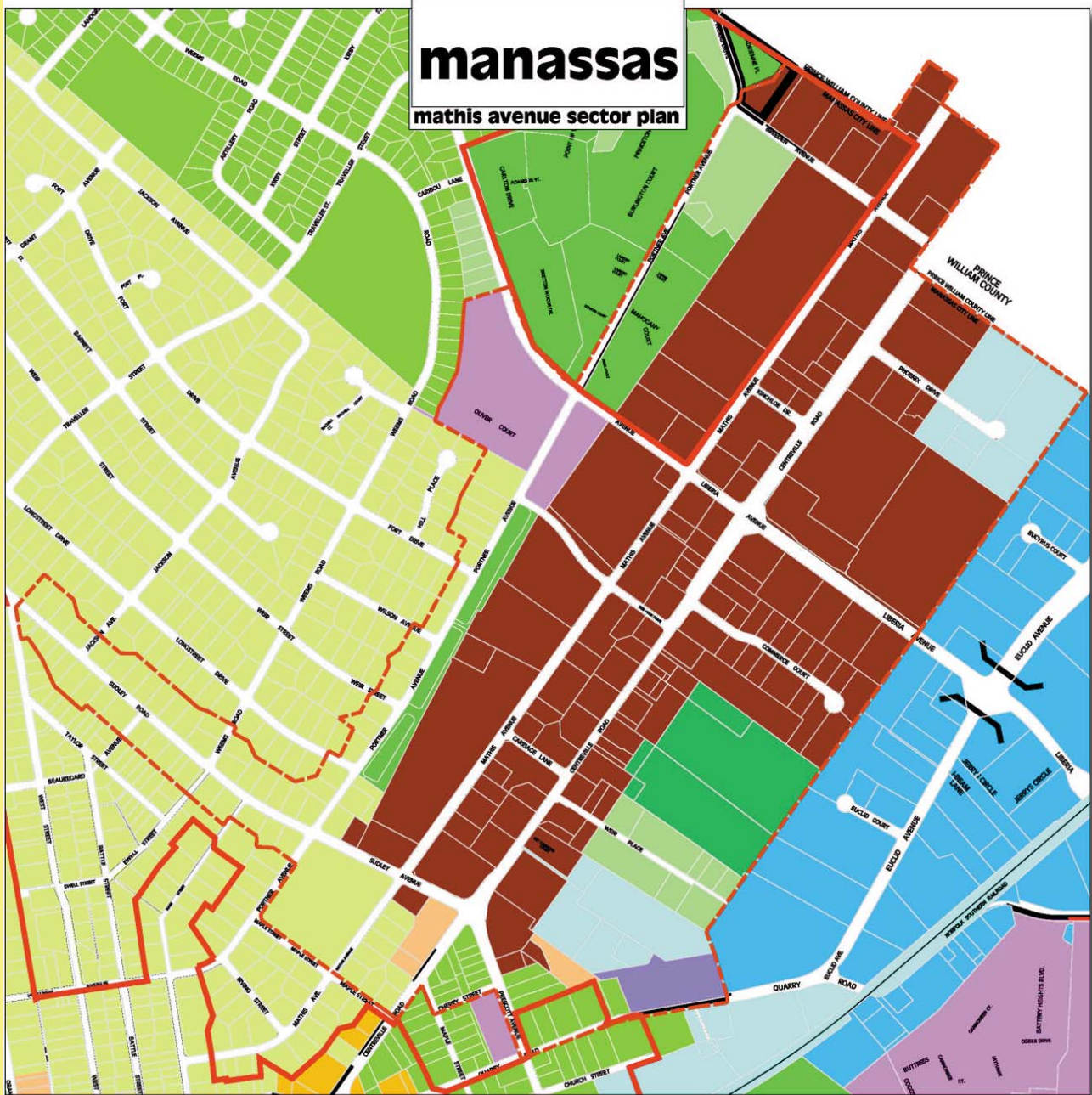
- Many of the uses permitted by right in this category (e.g., car wash facilities, farm equipment sales, outdoor display of vehicles) are not compatible with the mix of uses that is likely desirable in this area.
- Current zoning excludes single and multi-family residential development which should be allowed in mixed-use areas.
- Many of the uses allowed through special use permits in this zone (e.g., kennels, motor vehicle and engine repair, exterior display of vehicles for sale, etc.) are also likely to be incompatible with the mix of uses wanted in this area.
- Current screening requirements between this zone and adjacent residential uses should be reconsidered; it seems likely that landscaping to screen surface parking will be needed as a minimum.
- Structure heights in this zone need to be reconsidered in order to coordinate these with the types of thoroughfares they face, and to allow for changes in potential building uses.

- Minimum front, side and rear yard dimensions in this zone should be replaced with build-to lines that are coordinated with the thoroughfare design on which they face (as discussed later in this report, under the plan).
- Existing off-street parking requirements in this zone appear to be far too high to achieve the goal of creating an urban mixed use environment. Future design should encourage on-street parking that is coordinated with its adjacent thoroughfare design. On-street parking should be counted toward meeting the required parking amount when directly adjacent to that property. In addition, the City should consider greatly lowering parking requirements for lots that are 20,000 SF and lower, in order to allow, a well designed small infill development to occur (This parking structure issue is addressed more specifically in The Plan section of this report).
- Open space requirements should include mandating useful public open spaces for larger mixed-use developments. However, the current tree canopy requirement of 10% seems appropriate for a mixed-use neighborhood.

### Section 130-502 I-1/Light Industrial

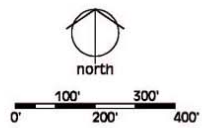
The inclusion of I-1 in this area should be reconsidered, since most of the light industrial zones currently existing would likely not be compatible, in the long term, with the creation of a mixed-use community. A better definition of the types of light industrial uses that would be compatible in this mix-use area is needed in order to guide future land use and zoning decisions.





**manassas**  
mathis avenue sector plan

- R1 - single family
- R2 - single family
- R2s - single family
- R3 - townhouse
- R4 - mobile home
- R5 - multi-family
- R6 - multi-family age restricted



**existing zoning**

rhodeside & harwell, incorporated

- B1 - professional office
- B3 - city center commercial
- B4 - general commercial
- I1 - light industrial
- I2 - heavy industrial
- historic district
- study area boundary

Figure 13: Existing Zoning Map

## Constraints and Opportunities

Figure 14 provides a summary of the major urban design issues within the Sector Area. One of the most important future opportunities, represented on the map by the blue arrows, is to bring the character of



Opportunity for streetscape gateway improvements for Manassas along Route 28, Centreville Road

the surrounding neighborhoods (including the Downtown and Liberia Historic Districts) into the Sector Area. One of the keys to the successful redevelopment of the Mathis Avenue/Centreville Road area will be the appropriate integration of new, higher density, mixed-use development with the stable single-family neighborhoods, and downtown commercial areas, that surround it. One way that this integration can be achieved is through the use of open space and streetscape connections (depicted with white arrows) to link new

sector development, both physically and visually, to these surrounding areas. Open space and streetscape improvements can also be used to create better east-west links across Mathis Avenue and Centreville Road, and to create connections between the Liberia House and new development in the corridor.

Opportunities also exist to create “gateways” at the northern and southern ends of the sector that would provide a more distinct sense of character for, and arrival into, the Sector Area. These gateways could take the form of special signs, open spaces, monuments/structures, plantings or a combination of these features.

In addition to its potential as a gateway, Liberia Avenue represents a future opportunity to accommodate a higher volume of traffic than it currently carries, which might help alleviate heavy volumes along Sudley Road. However, more traffic along Liberia Road could also be considered a negative impact, a cost that will have to be weighed in the conceptual design phase.

The probability for change of individual properties, indicated in red, yellow, and green in Figure 14, must also be taken into account when planning for future redevelopment. Shown in red are those properties which, because of land use or ownership status, are perhaps less likely



to be redeveloped in the short term. An example of this is the single-family residential neighborhood located west of Portner Road. As an established, suburban neighborhood, this area presents a less significant opportunity for redevelopment in the Mathis Avenue/Route 28 Sector Plan. On the other hand, the properties shown in green, including the Manassas Shopping Center, are considered the best target sites for nearer-term redevelopment as part of this sector plan.

A final existing condition that must be dealt with is the level of traffic, and particularly truck traffic, that runs through the center of the study area, from Liberia Avenue down Centreville Road and up Sudley Road. Because this truck route currently carries a large volume of tractor trailers and other trucks, future redevelopment plans must either account for this necessary volume, or shift it to other roads in the area in order to reduce/minimize impact on residential and commercial uses. In addition, because of the city's sensitivity to overall traffic volume issues within the sector, additional analysis of the possible transportation impacts of the sector plan was carried out. The results of this analysis are presented in an appendix to this report, with the findings shaping the plan recommendations regarding density, land use, and circulation issues.



Opportunity for streetscape gateway improvements for the Historic District along Centreville Road.



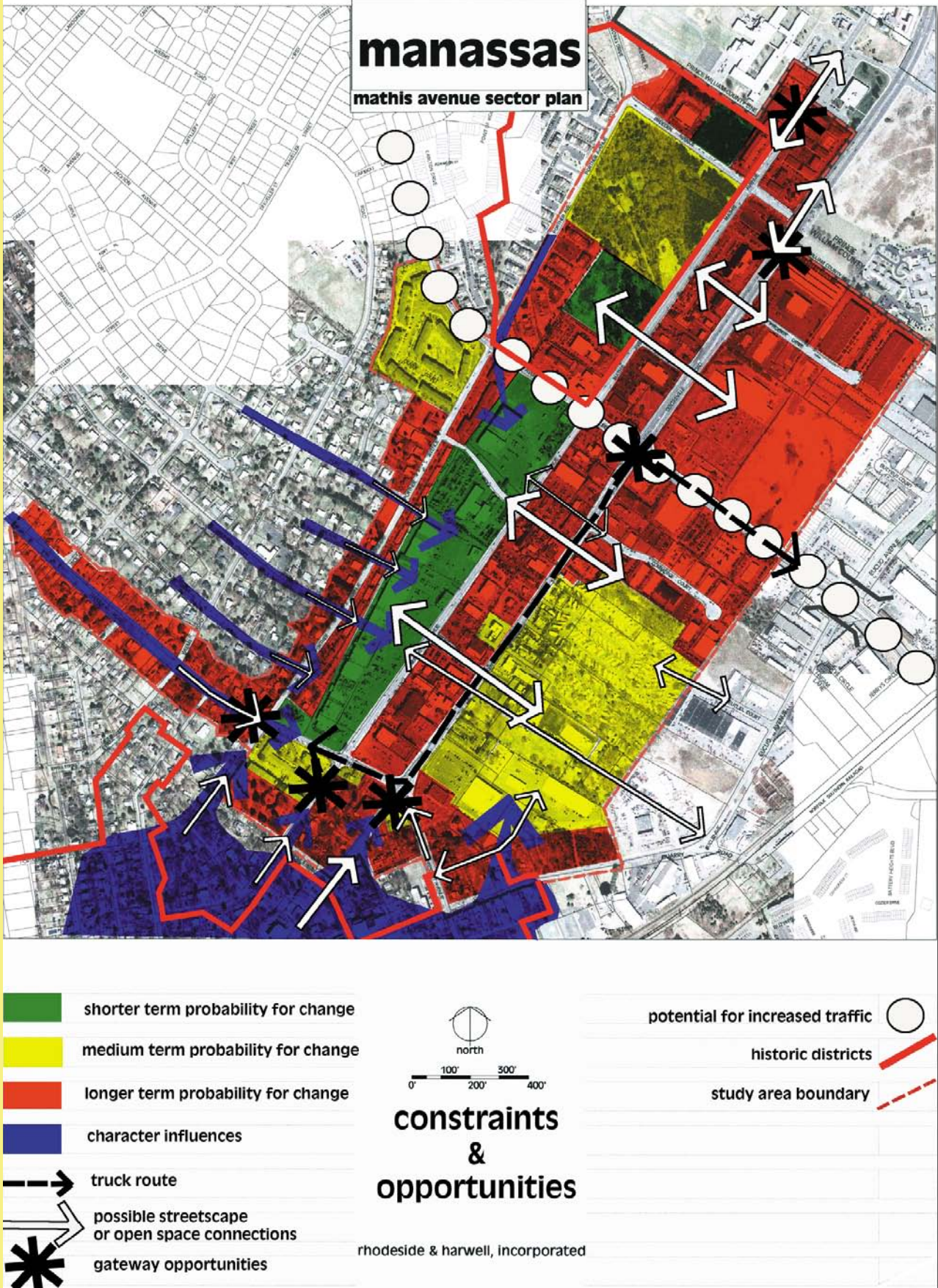


Figure 14: Constraints and Opportunities Analysis Map

## 4. Community Design Vision

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The vision guiding the development and redevelopment concepts for the Mathis Avenue Sector grew out of an understanding of the existing conditions, the regional context and history, as well as the existing and potential uses for the area. The vision to guide community design plans primarily came from the carefully considered goals of its citizens.

Early on in the planning process, the CAC developed a set of goals to guide the community design vision. These goals are listed below.

### Plan Goals

- Define the character differences between Route 28 and Mathis Avenue
- Maximize sector potential – create areas of greater density
- Improve linkages within the sector, and between the sector and Old Town:
  - Pedestrian
  - Bicycle
  - Vehicular (car/tram)
- Encourage mixed-use development
- Provide compatible transitions to residential uses
- Create more active and community-oriented places:
  - Round-the-clock activity
  - Community spaces
  - Child-oriented places
  - Active public space/civic art
- Create a regional market attraction: retail, office, entertainment
- Maximize open space and green connections
  - Create an interconnected street/sidewalk network
  - Make the public street the focus of site design
  - Create pedestrian-friendly retail districts
- Define traffic impacts
  - Protect residential areas from thru-truck traffic
- Create attractive gateways: enhance Manassas' image
- Develop sign controls/guidelines
- Address overall visual quality/appearance of area:
  - Eliminate the "sea of parking"
  - Establish streetscape design standards
  - Ensure that redevelopment "fits" its context
  - Upgrade visual quality of commercial and industrial structures
- Identify appropriate ways to address affordable housing
- Encourage sustainable/"green" design concepts in new development and redevelopment
- Preserve and enhance historic resources



## Aesthetic Vision

The visual character for the sector should build on the unique resources within and adjacent to the Sector Area. The site is bounded on the southern edges by historic residential districts composed of late 19<sup>th</sup>



Century Victorian homes and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century bungalows. These historic structures are characterized by wood clapboards, as well as brick and stone walls. Two historic plantation homes, located at the northern and southern boundaries of the Mathis Avenue sector, are additional sources to inform the visual character of the area. These include the Liberia House, a Federal period brick structure, and the Annaburg Mansion, an Italianate plantation house from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. The grounds of the plantation homes preserve remnants of the once-extensive gardens and follies that extended along Mathis Avenue, although little is left of this green infrastructure save some significant trees in close proximity to the remaining buildings. These historic pieces of ground, with their remaining vegetation, should be protected and incorporated into an open space system for the area.



Citizens Advisory Committee developing sector plan goals

both the initial creation and current layout of the sector should be evident in the final plan. The existing connected street grid owes its configuration to the alignment of the Manassas Gap Rail spur to Centreville and the need to move parallel along, or safely cross, the tracks. The configuration of a possible future light rail system could pay homage to the area's rich railroad history.

During the Civil War, an extensive system of fortifications was constructed within the Sector Area. All but the Mayfield Earthworks Fortification (south-east of, and overlooking, the sector) have been removed, yet this history should be documented and incorporated into the place-making that occurs as part of these redevelopment plans.

While the historical styles, materials, remnants and memories are a good starting point for a conceptual vision, outright mimicking of a historic

district should be avoided given the high quality of the City's existing historic Old Town area. A sense of materials and a pattern of building mass and fenestration can be developed from these historical antecedents that are appropriate to apply in the scale of buildings and the modern mix of uses proposed for the sector.

The creation of both thoroughfares and open spaces should respond to these historical antecedents as well. Memories of the Sector Area's past can be used to create an image-able future. Sculptures, architectural elements and gardens can evoke memories of the people and events that make Manassas and the Mathis Avenue Sector unique.



Citizens Advisory Committee  
developing sector plan goals

## 5. The Plan Introduction

The Mathis Avenue Sector begins with a description of recommended land use for the entire sector and transitions to a detailed description of the various proposed neighborhoods and continues by describing the plan's overall recommendations, including the sector-wide linkages of transportation, open space, plan structure, etc.



Figure 15: Section through the proposed Beauregard 'Avenue' thoroughfare

An underlying feature of the plan, and key to its success in functioning as a coherent entity, is the creation of distinct thoroughfares that provide structure, focus and definition for future development and redevelopment in the sector. A thoroughfare is a public way that accommodates pedestrian, vehicular, and transit so as to combine all activities and uses in a manner that is safe, attractive and comfortable. A thoroughfare is also a civic place with a distinct visual character that is functionally and visually linked with the community's open space system. Adjacent structures and uses are sited along thoroughfares in ways that create active and distinct places, and reinforce these as the "public face" of the community. Different types of thoroughfares can be used to create different types of places, varying by use, character and scale. Often the official name of the street might not, in fact, accurately represent the type of thoroughfare it represents (i.e., Centreville Road more accurately functions as a "boulevard" rather than a "road."). Therefore, for the sake of clarity, a list of thoroughfare types has been included in Appendix 'A' to aid in understanding the implications of the recommendations contained in the sector plan.





Figure 16: Proposed monument location at intersection of Mathis and Beauregard Avenue.

Each of the “neighborhood” components of the plan is described in terms of its land use. However, it is important to note that, in mixed use districts, the land use assigned to the plan designates only the ground floor uses facing the thoroughfares. Upper floor uses may not, in all instances, be identical to those uses on the ground floor of the same structure. In fact, only lower density residential land uses, as shown on the Land Use Plan (Figure 18), will not allow or encourage other-than residential upper floor uses. In other land use categories, the upper floor uses can vary over time as the neighborhood and the market develops and changes. This adaptability provides significant flexibility for redevelopment opportunities within a constant framework of thoroughfare oriented place making.

## Land Use

A rich mix of land uses has been proposed for the Mathis Avenue Sector, as discussed above as part of the neighborhood descriptions. In general, the proposed uses gradually transition from existing residential edges, where adjacent compatible new residential uses are proposed, to a higher density mix of office/commercial areas. Existing residential uses on Sudley Road, Portner Avenue and Prescott Avenue all currently abut commercial or industrial uses. These residential areas will greatly benefit from the creation of more compatible adjacent uses as have been proposed in this plan.

As illustrated in the Land Use Map, many blocks have been designated for mixed use. Additional work will be needed to define the recommended mix of uses relative to each neighborhood (see Section 6: Implementation).

Neighborhood 3, Fort Beauregard Avenue, is centrally located within the sector and will contain the tallest buildings in the area, particularly on lower ground elevations south and west of Centreville Road. Recommended residential uses also shift in height and density from single family attached in the Prescott Avenue neighborhood to medium and high density residential uses in the proposed Fort Beauregard Avenue Neighborhood.

As outlined in the Liberia Retail/Business Neighborhood, the plan calls for office and retail uses in the northeast corner of the Mathis Avenue Sector. Over the very long term, this area might be an appropriate location for more intense corporate office development as the office market in Manassas increases. This long term office development plan would take advantage of its location along the heavily traveled Liberia and Centreville Roads, with anticipated future connections to the Tri-County Parkway and the Route 28 light rail system (if these projects move forward).



Figure 17: Civic uses, such as libraries, post offices, etc. incorporated into mixed use structures at civic focal places

## Land Use Categories

The purpose of land use categories is to recognize distinct areas of the City based on existing as well as projected growth and development. These land use designations help guide the City Council, Planning Commission, planning staff, and other members of the local government in making the most appropriate decisions to ensure that the development of Manassas is in accordance with the Sector Plans. In the event of a conflict in between the general definitions of the Comprehensive Plan and the more specific definitions of the individual Sector Plans, the Sector Plans shall govern.

**Low Density Residential** – The LDR designation is intended to provide for the utilization of land for single family detached homes on lots 10,000 square feet or greater with an average maximum density of 4 units per acre.

**Medium Density Residential** – The MDR designation is intended to provide for a greater utilization of land for single family detached and/or attached homes on lots less than 10,000 square feet with an average maximum density of 8 units per acre.

**High Density Residential** – The HDR designation is intended to provide for the greatest utilization of land for residential development. Areas with this designation are to be developed with multi-family development with no average maximum density. Density shall be determined by the development's ability to achieve the City's goals under the Community Design chapter of the Comprehensive Plan as well as other related goals, objectives and sound planning practices.

**Residential Medical Campus** – The RMC designation is intended to provide for the utilization of land for a continuum of care residential/medical community that may involve, but is not limited to, uses such as retirement living facilities, independent living facilities, acute care nursing facilities and ancillary uses such as medical offices and diagnostic services. Development in any Campus designation should provide an attractive setting to include appropriate open space, tree preservation and landscaping and structures consistent with the Community Design chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Mixed Use** – The MU designation is intended to implement the City's goals for providing a vibrant, 24-hour live/work environment that enhances the City's non-residential tax base and provides opportunities for City residents to reduce their dependency on automobile travel. Mixed use developments shall include both residential and non-residential uses at a ratio to be determined by the zoning category, market conditions and sound planning practices. Emphasis in site design should

be placed on pedestrian and non-motorized travel and incorporate public gathering areas consistent with the Community Design chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

**General Commercial** – The GC designation is intended to provide for development that is characterized by retail and wholesale trade activities, services including financial services, restaurants, auto oriented uses and others that enhance the City’s tax base.

**Campus Employment** – The CE designation is intended to provide for the development of general manufacturing activities, technology oriented services, research and development areas, offices, some transport or storage related activities, and a limited number of general commercial uses arranged in a park-like setting with appropriate open space, tree preservation and landscaping and structures consistent with the Community Design chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Open Space** –Locations with this classification are intended to identify areas of passive or active recreation facilities and may be areas with scenic, historic, or sensitive environmental characteristics. Open space areas may be used in conjunction with landscaping to provide buffers between incompatible land uses. Open space may be both public or private and may also include greenways, trails and/or more urban “green” spaces (smaller areas of public or private open space) and gardens.

**Semi-Public** – This category includes assembly and institutional type uses which are generally, but not limited to private schools, hospitals, nursing homes, churches, and civic uses.

**Public** – This category includes existing and planned public facilities, institutions, or other government installations such as, but not limited to detention/correctional facilities, government centers, judicial centers, and related facilities i.e. water, sewer, transportation, fire/rescue, and schools.

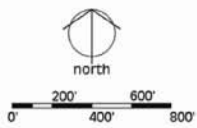


# manassas

## mathis avenue sector plan



- open space
- semi public
- Single family
- medium density residential
- residential medical campus
- high density residential
- mixed use

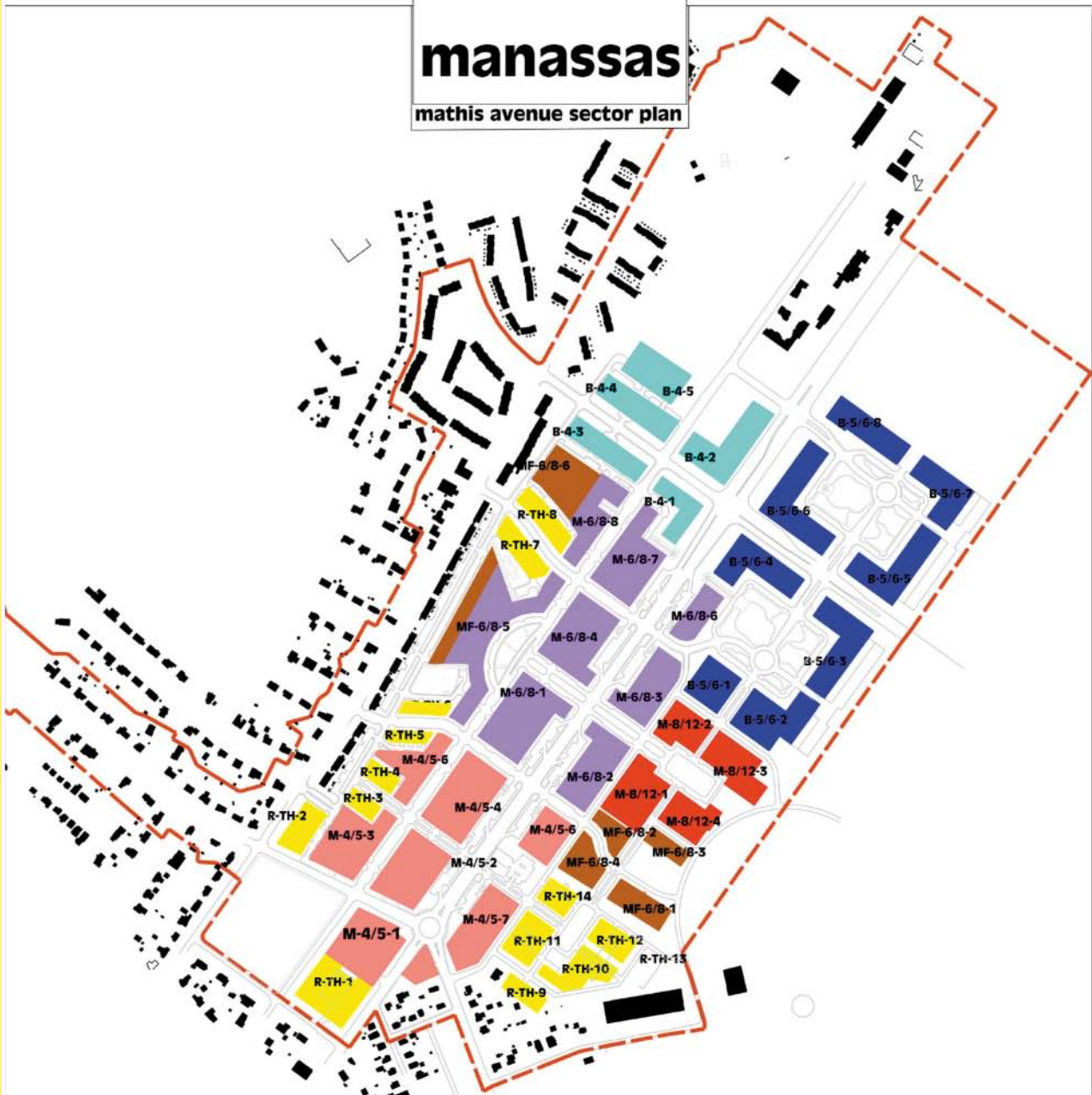


- campus employment
- general commercial
- neighborhoods

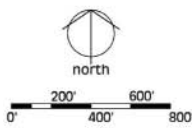
Figure 18: Proposed Land Use and Neighborhoods

# manassas

## mathis avenue sector plan



- R-TH townhomes
- MF- 4 story multi family
- MF- 6/8 story multi family
- M- 4/5 story mixed use
- M- 6/8 story mixed use
- M- 8/12 story mixed use
- B- 4 story office



### proposed building height & use

B- 5-6 office & retail

study area boundary

Figure 19: Proposed Building Heights & Use Plan



## Illustrative Plan Overview

In keeping with the City's goals for this sector as described in the 2002 *Comprehensive Plan*, the Mathis Area Sector Plan (see Figure 22) envisions the creation of a vibrant mixed-use district built on the existing road and parcel network and composed of six distinct neighborhoods.



The multi-story mixed use district replaces the existing single story, single use pattern of suburban commercial areas along Centreville and Mathis Roads. Mathis Avenue is proposed to become a "Main Street" for the mixed use district and Centreville Road is proposed to be a "Local Boulevard". The Mathis Main Street will feature broad, walkable sidewalks faced with retail uses as well as entrances for upper floor office and residential uses. The Centreville Boulevard will feature service roads and sidewalks faced with larger floor plate retail uses on the ground floor of proposed mixed use buildings and parking structures.

This 30-year vision is linked through the creation of three new "Avenues" that cross both Mathis Avenue and Centreville Roads to connect these corridors and to tie together the new mixed use districts to both adjacent existing neighborhoods and proposed new neighborhoods.

These three "Avenues" form the focal pedestrian core for each of the proposed neighborhoods, and link to both the proposed open space system for the sector, and to the larger Manassas community.

Building footprints and heights vary in size across the sector, with the smallest and shortest located at the edges of the existing residential and historic districts, and the largest footprints and tallest buildings midway within the district, and west of Centreville Road. This new centrally-located neighborhood, the Beauregard Avenue Neighborhood, features the most diverse mix of uses found within the sector.

The Mathis Avenue Sector Plan provides a flexible framework for both redevelopment and development to occur in response to varying market conditions, while still guiding the creation of a safe, comfortable and attractive community.

Figure 20: Illustrative plan detail of potential traffic circle recommended to smooth traffic flow and create a gateway for the historic district and Old Town Manassas. Section line refers to Figure 21



Figure 21: Section of Sudley Road directly adjacent to the proposed traffic circle.





Figure 22: Illustrative Plan





Figure 23: Residential thoroughfares to face street with porches or stoops.

## Community Character: "Neighborhoods"

The Sector Plan encourages the development of six distinct, but interrelated, "neighborhoods" within the Mathis/Route 28 area. While the proposed major thoroughfares (Mathis Avenue and Centreville Road) run in a continuous northeast/southwest direction, different neighborhoods have been proposed to link across these thoroughfares in a perpendicular north-west to south-east direction. This neighborhood orientation most directly responds to the existing residential neighborhoods and historic districts. Aligning the primary neighborhoods along thoroughfares that run perpendicular to Mathis Avenue and Centreville Road will create a core thoroughfare in each neighborhood that is pedestrian in scale and use. In addition, each neighborhood will be linked to the others by means of an open space system that is located at the core of each neighborhood and pulls together the neighborhoods into a cohesive and coherent sector.

- **Neighborhood 1 - The Sudley Road Neighborhood**



Figure 24: Sudley Road Residential Neighborhood Plan

The Sudley Road neighborhood reinforces Sudley Road as a residential thoroughfare of single family detached homes located northeast of the Portner Avenue and Sudley Road intersection. The plan for this neighborhood includes single family attached dwelling units facing Portner Avenue and Sudley Road between Portner and Mathis Avenue, as well as mixed use development with upper floor residential along Sudley Road to the Centreville Road intersection.

All front residential entrances, whether for single family detached, attached or multi-story units, will face Sudley Road and parking lots and/or garages will be located in the rear or will face away from the public thoroughfare.

- **Neighborhood 2 – The Prescott Avenue Neighborhood**

The Prescott Avenue Neighborhood plan is designed to protect and strengthen the adjacent residential historic district. It allows for a transition in scale and character from the existing historic homes to the proposed mixed-use areas along Centreville Road. The neighborhood plan encourages upper floor residential at the Centreville Road and Prescott



Figure 25: Residential Parking and Garages (at rear of dwellings)

Figure 26: Key Court Commons Neighborhood Plan (below)

Avenue intersection. A traffic circle has been recommended at this intersection to create the Old Town Manassas Historic District gateway, and to smooth traffic congestion at this critical location. The pie-shaped southern corner of this intersection has been incorporated into the proposed traffic circle design as a civic/open space amenity area.

- **Neighborhood 3 – The Key Commons Neighborhood**

The Key Commons Neighborhood is centered on the extension of the existing Key Commons Court to the north-west across Centreville Road and Mathis Avenue, and to the south-east terminating in a civic green or “commons”.



The plan proposes the transformation of Key Commons Court into an “avenue”-type of thoroughfare that will serve as the pedestrian core for this mixed-use/residential neighborhood. The southern end of the “avenue,” with its proposed green, is surrounded by a neighborhood of two and three story attached dwelling units, featuring porches facing the street. Neighborhood parking and garages are accessed from rear alleys or easements. Where Key Commons crosses Centreville Road and Mathis Avenue, the four-to-five-story buildings will face the “avenue” with retail ground floor uses and residential upper floor uses. The south-west edge of the key commons neighborhood is defined by Quarry Road and the historic



Figure 27: Section through Residential Part of Key Court Commons

district. A cul-de-sac arrangement for Quarry Road and Euclid Avenue is recommended for further study. In this scenario Quarry Road would be connected through the proposed ‘drive’ to an extension of Key Commons Court, Wier Road, internal streets in the Fort Beauregard neighborhood and back to Euclid Avenue, and the direct connection between Quarry and Euclid would be accessible only for emergency vehicles. This adjustment in the vehicular traffic pattern would slow through traffic and allow for a safer multi use trail connection between the mixed use district and Old Town.



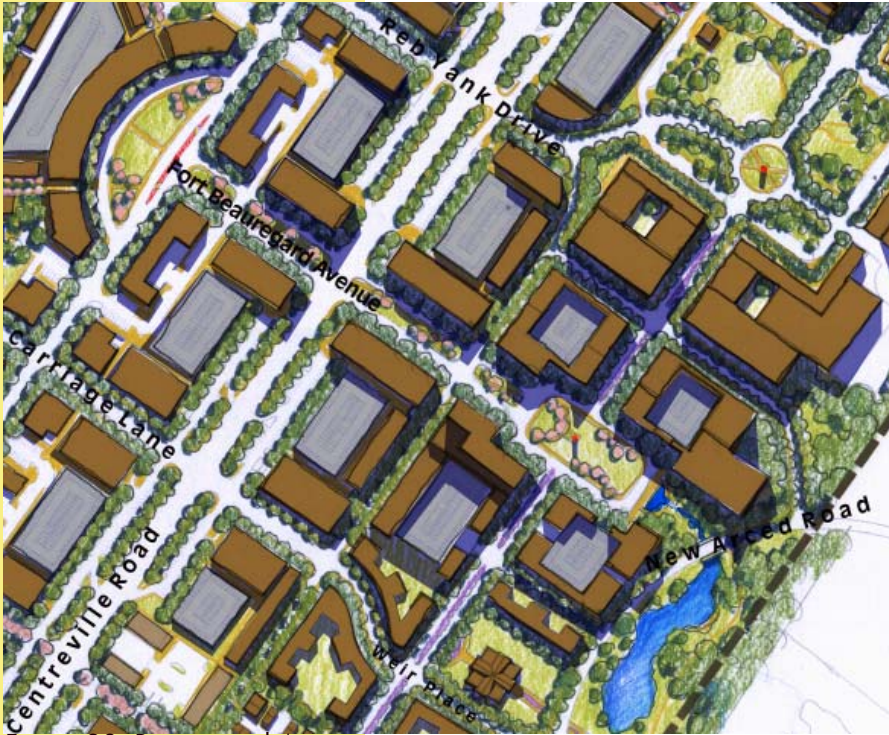


Figure 28: Beauregard Avenue Neighborhood Plan

• **Neighborhood 4**  
 – The Fort Beauregard Avenue Neighborhood

The Fort Beauregard Neighborhood as been designed as a mixed-use district with the highest density of uses within the sector. However, given the sloping topography of this area, the visual impact of the proposed increased density will be minimized since the taller structures have been concentrated in the lowest portion of the area. A new “avenue”, Fort Beauregard Avenue, has been proposed to connect Mathis Avenue across Centreville Road into the area currently occupied by mobile home parks. Fort Beauregard, a Civil War fortification, was once located in the northwest end of this neighborhood and was named

after the Confederate General who built extensive earthwork fortifications to protect the Manassas railroad junction during the Civil War. At the northwest terminus of Fort Beauregard Avenue, at Mathis Avenue, a crescent green has been proposed to serve as the focal civic place for the Mathis Avenue Sector. Fort Beauregard Avenue has been designed with wide sidewalks and a broad central median. The median will accommodate a park-like landscape with room for play areas, civic monuments, lawns and other civic amenities. Fort Beauregard Avenue is seen as a thoroughfare bounded by 5- to 12-story buildings characterized by ground floor retail and residential/office uses on the upper floors. The southeast terminus of Fort Beauregard Avenue will feature a small green with pedestrian connections to a parkland and buffer area. This downhill part of the sector can also accommodate additional areas for stormwater management facilities.

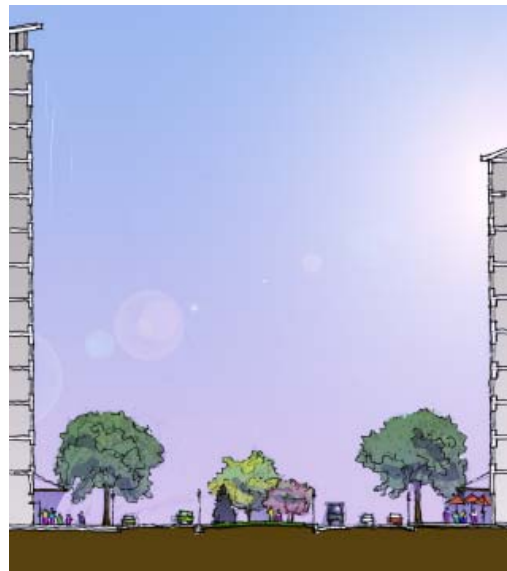


Figure 29: Section through Beauregard Avenue East of Centreville Road

Fort Beauregard Avenue is seen as a thoroughfare bounded by 5- to 12-story buildings characterized by ground floor retail and residential/office uses on the upper floors. The southeast terminus of Fort Beauregard Avenue will feature a small green with pedestrian connections to a parkland and buffer area. This downhill part of the sector can also accommodate additional areas for stormwater management facilities.



Figure 30: Liberia Avenue neighborhood West of Centreville Road

- **Neighborhood 5 – Liberia Retail/Business District**

The Liberia Retail/Business Neighborhood has been proposed as a mixed-use office/retail district. Median to high density residential areas abut the existing high density residential areas along Portner Avenue. The proposed uses would transition along Liberia Road into office/retail areas to the east. Liberia Road and Centreville Road (north of Liberia) will continue to be very heavy vehicular traffic routes. These thoroughfares will not be amenable to active pedestrian edges and any buildings planned

along these corridors should turn their pedestrian faces toward attractive interior courtyard areas. At the same time, requirements should be put in place for heavy planting along the Liberia and Centreville Road frontages. The south-east portion of the Liberia Retail/Business Neighborhood lies within the Mayfield Earthworks Fort viewshed and any redevelopment within this area will be required to ameliorate any adverse viewshed impacts as part of obtaining permission to build structures in this neighborhood.

- **Neighborhood 6 – Liberia House and Manassas Gateway Neighborhood**

This neighborhood contains the oldest and the newest development within the Mathis Avenue Sector. The plan does not call for extensive changes for this area. Residential uses are not recommended for the Liberia House and Manassas Gateway Neighborhood. All future community design changes should reinforce the designated historic district and the community entry gateways on Mathis Avenue and Centreville Road. Additional retail or office development within this neighborhood should blend with the existing low-scale development existing across from Liberia House. Streetscape development should be unique to the neighborhood, emphasizing heavy plantings, significant shade trees, central planted road medians (where feasible) and “period” lighting and signage. This neighborhood should read as one place that focuses attention on the remaining historic resources. On entering Manassas, the visitor will move through a uniquely planted, lighted and signed neighborhood that, itself, will serve as a distinctive gateway for the City.



## Sector-Wide Framework

### 1. Transportation

The Sector Plan builds on the existing pattern of connected streets and expands that network into a series of neighborhoods composed of a well-defined system of thoroughfares.

Utilizing and extending the existing rights-of-way will be the most cost effective and least disruptive way to create the connected circulation grid proposed for the sector. The Mathis Avenue Sector's existing street framework provides an excellent initial structure upon which to plan a fully connected network of thoroughfares.

Connected networks improve traffic capacity and flow by lessening bottlenecks and providing many alternate travel routes. The connected network also creates a safe and understandable pedestrian environment. The opportunities for users to find convenient walking distances between parking opportunities and destinations increase greatly within a connected grid.

To develop a plan that will allow for adequate parking, the team evaluated the existing Manassas Zoning Code requirements in comparison with the parking requirements of other local jurisdictions. The parking

requirements were also tested against the existing as-built parking on the Manassas Shopping Center site. The planning team developed a parking strategy that is closest to the parking requirements that the City of Alexandria, Virginia requires for its development. While these requirements are below the quantities currently required in Manassas, they are significantly above the parking requirements recently adopted for the Columbia Pike mixed use redevelopment area in Arlington, Virginia. The Columbia Pike parking requirements were not used to develop the design for Mathis Avenue because of differences in access to mass



Figure 31: Ideas were generated for creation of a historic landscape for Liberia House .

transit and adjacent residential density, both of which are greater along Columbia Pike. The parking strategy does recommend that developers build 50% shared-parking spaces as part of their required total in order to increase flexible access to the area. These parking requirements were used to assess the height of buildings and structured parking for the mix of uses recommended within each block of the proposed plan. Each block provides space for the recommended mix of uses, required parking, service and internal access within the building heights proposed in this plan.



Figure 32: Section through proposed service road and parking along Centreville Road

The existing surface parking at the Manassas Shopping Center does not meet the current City code for parking. The quantity provided is very close to the quantity currently required for the same uses in Alexandria, Virginia. Members of the CAC attested to the fact that the existing shopping center parking lot is rarely filled. The planning team developed the Sector Plan based on the selected parking strategy as a conservative approach to planning for redevelopment in the area. (see Table 1) The plan tested the redevelopment capability for the Manassas Shopping Center site without structured parking and found it to be developable in a manner that met the goals and objectives of the CAC.

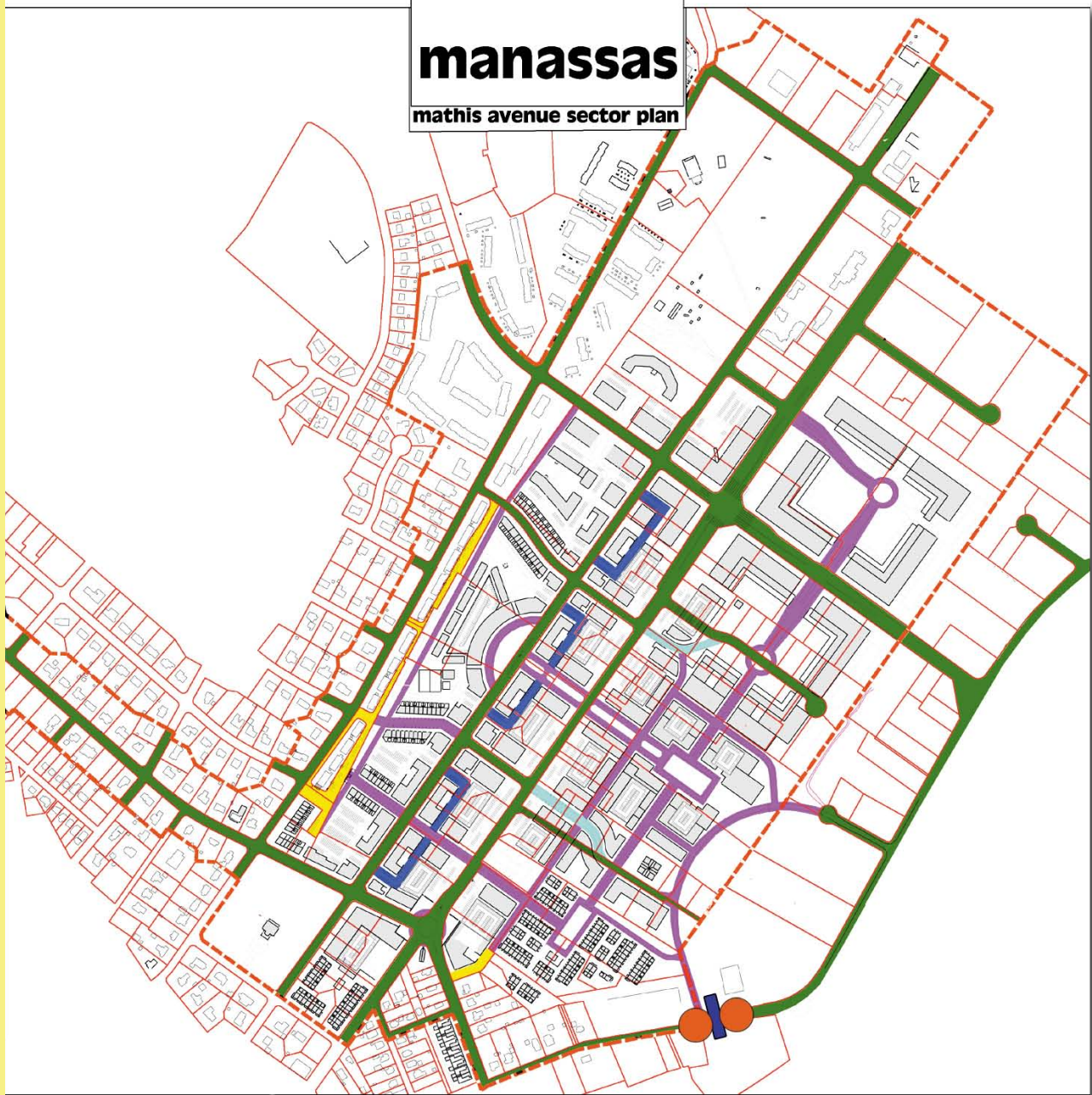
The blocks between Mathis Avenue and Centreville Road will require structured parking to meet the goals and vision of the plan. Structured parking for all areas of the plan was designed to be contained in free-standing structures, except in the Liberia Road Retail/Business Neighborhood where below-grade structured parking has been proposed for if and when a higher density of office structures are developed in this area. Where parking structures face thoroughfares in the plan, such as along Centreville Road, the plan proposes ground floor retail uses with three or four floors of structured parking above. This will allow these thoroughfares to be activated by a continuous retail edge and will provide the space for large floor-plate retail or enclosed automobile sales.

The proposed community design plan for the Mathis Avenue Sector will be ideal for public transit, given its resulting increase in density and in the level of pedestrian amenities provided. The development of a tram or light rail system will be very feasible considering the proposed population of residents and workers, as well as the overall characteristics of the plan itself. The Route 28 Light Rail system, as currently proposed by the State of Virginia in their *2020 Vision*, may not be realized; however, it appears feasible that, even without this light rail possibility, the Mathis Sector Plan could support a transit system on its own (perhaps a rapid bus shuttle) with connections to Old Town Manassas and the VRE/Amtrak station.

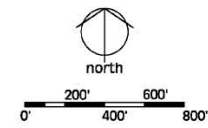


# manassas

## mathis avenue sector plan



	study area boundary
	parcel boundaries
	existing public access
	existing access easements
	possible access re-alignment
	proposed public or private access
	possible access easements



### existing & proposed vehicular access

	Cul-de-sac
	emergency vehicle crossing

Figure 33: Existing and Proposed Vehicular Access

**Manassas**      **Columbia Pike**      **Alexandria**      **Mathis Avenue**

bank	1 space per 200 gsf, + 1 space per 2 employees	1 space per 1,000 gsf min, required as shared parking, 1 space per 1,000 gsf max, reserved parking (can purchase additional reserved parking)	1 space per 450 gsf + 5% carpool set-aside	2 spaces per 500 gsf reserved 2 spaces per 500 gsf shared
medical office	3 spaces per examination room	(same as bank)	1 space per 200 gsf	(same as bank)
professional office	6 spaces per 1st 500 gsf, + 1 space per each additional 300 gsf	(same as bank)	1 space per 500 gsf + 5% carpool set-aside	1 space per 500 gsf reserved 1 space per 500 gsf shared
retail store	4 spaces per 1st 500 gsf, + 5 spaces per each additional 1,000 gsf	(same as bank)	1 space per 230 gsf ground floor	(same as bank)
restaurant (formal)	1 space per 4 seats + 1 per employee	(same as bank)	1 space per 4 seats	(same as bank)
retail shopping center w/ one 40,000 anchor tenant & 4 or more additional tenants.	5 spaces per 1,000 gsf (1st 60,000 gsf); 3 spaces per 1,000 gsf (2nd 60,000 gsf); 2 spaces per 1,000 gsf (over 120,000 gsf)	(same as bank)	1 space per 230 gsf ground floor	(same as bank)
theater	1 space per 4 seats, + 1 space per 2 employees	(same as bank)	1 space per 4 seats	(same as bank)
single family attached	2.5 spaces per du + 1 space per 3 units	1 space per du reserved + 1/8 space per units shared, (no max, shared) for sites over 20,000 sf	2 spaces per du	2 spaces per du
multifamily	2.5 spaces per du + 1 space per 3 du's + 200sf parking per 6 du's	(same as single family)	1.75 spaces per du (average)	1.8 spaces per du
age restricted housing	1.25 spaces per du + 1 space per employee	(same as single family)	1 space per 2 du's + 1 space per 2 guest rooms	1.8 spaces per du

**comparative examples**

20,000 sf retail	101	40	86	80	40 shared spaces 40 reserved spaces
60,000 sf retail	300	120	260	240	120 shared spaces 120 reserved spaces
60,000 sf professional office	192	120	126	120	60 shared spaces 60 reserved spaces
5,000 sf restaurant	55	one table & 4 seats per 100 gsf; 1 sp, per 4 seats + 5 employees max. shift	10	40	one table & 4 seats per 100 gsf; 1sp per 4 seats
12 single family attached	34	14	24	24	2 shared spaces 12 reserved spaces
25 unit multifamily unit	77	estimates 200 sf parking per 6 du's as 2 spaces per 6 du's	43	45	3 shared spaces 25 reserved spaces
		<b>332 total spaces</b> <small>* on shared parking adjacent to site can be counted as shared parking</small>		<b>549 total spaces (217 difference)</b> <small>* on shared parking adjacent to site can be counted as shared parking</small>	

Table 1: Parking Quantity Requirements Analysis



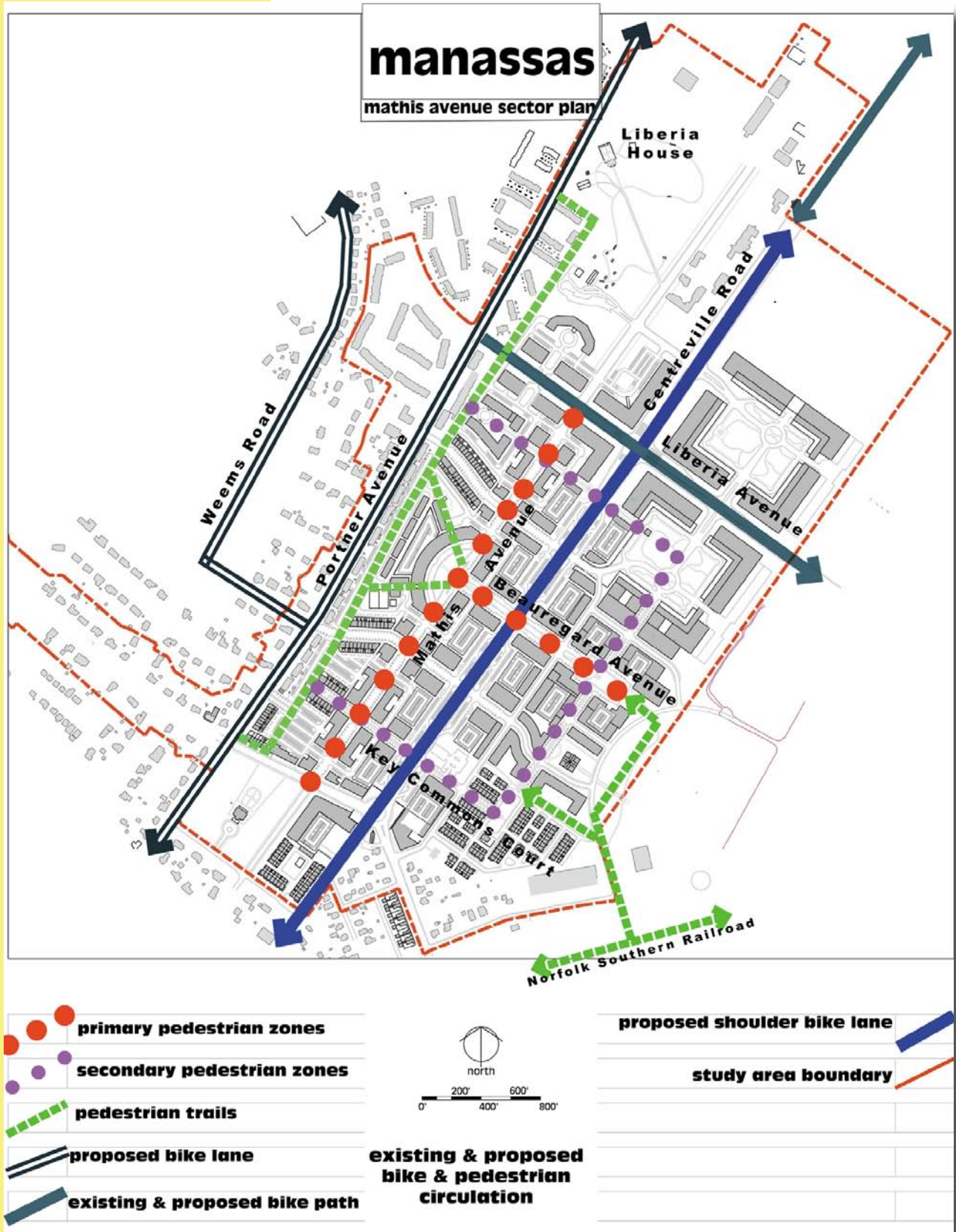


Figure 34: Existing & Proposed Bike & Pedestrian Circulation Plan



Figure 35: Crescent Open Space Elevation (above)

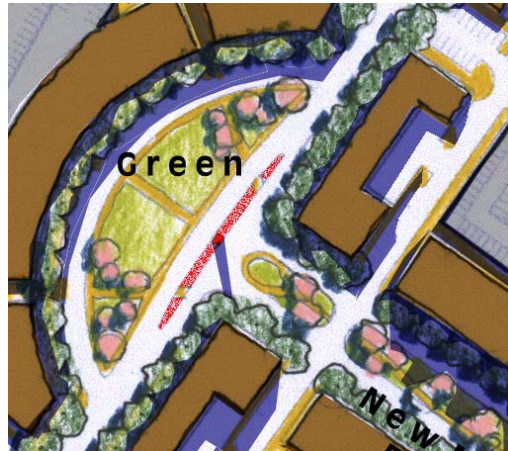


Figure 36: Crescent Open Space Plan (right) - Located at intersection of Mathis and Beauregard Avenue)

The proposed circulation plan has been designed to complement the Manassas Bike Trails Plan. The sector plan recommends that a bike trail be developed on the east side of the Centerville Road to connect to the counties planned trail.

## 2. Open Space

One of the goals established by the CAC was the creation of a community design for the Mathis Avenue Sector that would allow for and encourage both pedestrian access and community gathering space. The Plan proposes to accomplish both of these objectives through the development of a clear, well organized and easily accessible open space system for the area. This open space system provides multiple green and attractive linkages through the center of the sector, running east-west in order to bridge the Route 28 "divide", within each of the proposed neighborhood areas, at the northern anchor point established by the historic Liberia House site, and along the major thoroughfares of Route 28 and Mathis Avenue running north-south. For each neighborhood, the plan recommends the creation of a central open space system that is unique to it.



Figure 37: A key part of the open space proposal is a park and auto drive to buffer residential neighborhoods from existing industrial and to provide connections to the historic district and Old Town.

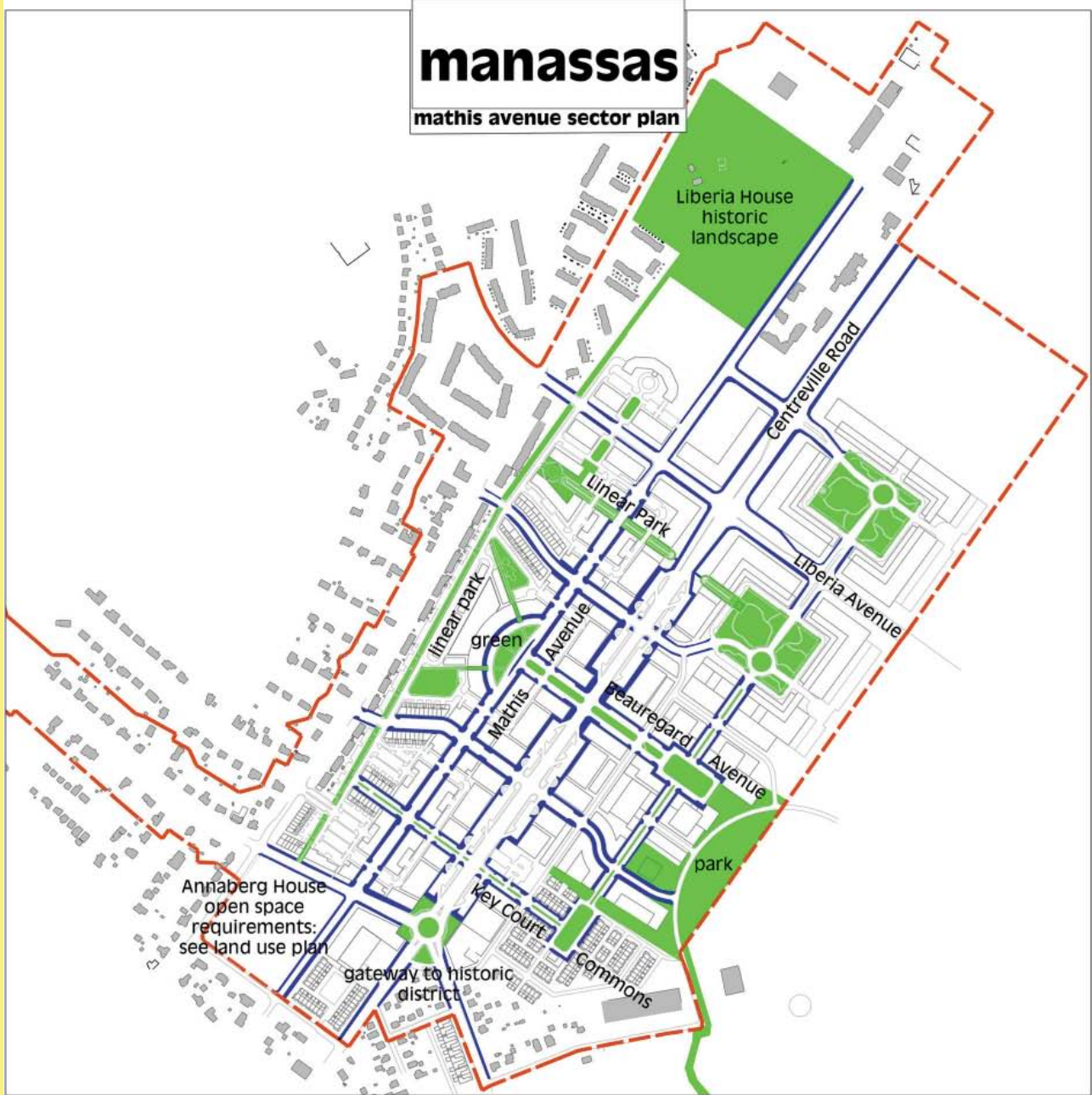
Several linear parks are included in the Sector Plan. The first of these engages the newly-created "drive" that connects the various neighborhoods at the rear lot line of the existing attached townhomes that face Portner Road. This green link buffers the residential area from the adjacent mixed use development and connects the residential area to the central community gathering space proposed for the heart of the mixed use development area fronting along Mathis Avenue. In addition, this linear park links to the two east-west linear parks and physically connects the Portner Road neighborhood to the eastern portions of the Sector Area.

On the southeastern edge of the sector, a key element in the open space system is a proposed park and newly-created vehicular drive that would buffer adjacent residential neighborhoods from existing industrial uses, and would provide a green connection to the Historic District and Old Town.

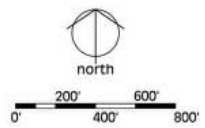


# manassas

## mathis avenue sector plan



-  open space, public & private
-  pedestrian streetscapes
-  study area boundary



### potential parks, plazas and streetscapes (public & private)

Figure 38: Proposed Open Space Plan

Thus, the open space system proposed in the plan provides the organizing element that ties together all of the neighborhoods within the sector, provides the “human-scale” amenities that are much needed in this area, and allows for a higher level of non-motorized activity within the sector.

### 3. Plan Structure

Currently, thoroughfares play a critical role in defining the Sector Area, with the sector itself taking its identity from its major thoroughfares – Mathis Avenue and Route 28.

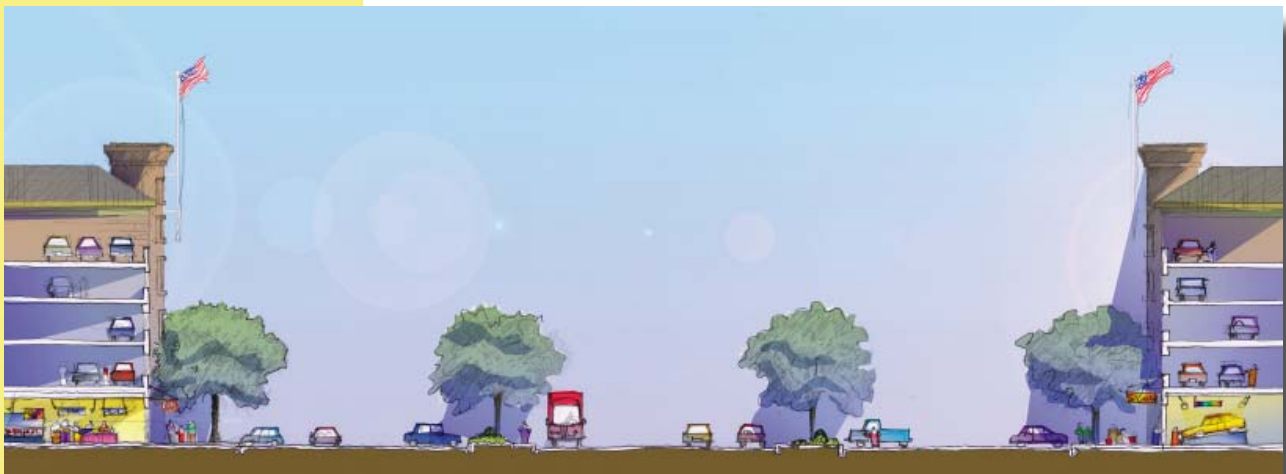


Figure 39: Centreville Road (as ‘local boulevard’)

The Sector Plan recognizes the importance of this structure and builds upon it through a series of proposed improvements to, and clarifications for, the major roads within the Sector Area. In fact, the roads themselves become the organizing elements for the plan, guiding both the location and design of adjacent building walls and uses along their lengths (see “Proposed Thoroughfare Types,” Figure 41, and Appendix A for a definition of the various thoroughfare types used within the sector).

The two key thoroughfares providing structure for the plan are Centreville Road (Route 28) and Mathis Avenue. Both of these thoroughfares intersect the various neighborhoods within the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan. The plan recommends a clear form for establishing these thoroughfares as important “places” that subtly vary as they traverse the various neighborhoods.

- Centreville Road Thoroughfare

Centreville Road has been designed as a local “boulevard” (Centreville Boulevard). This boulevard is planned as an attractive, primary vehicular way through the sector. The plan calls for retention of the existing vehicular travel way at its current



(or close to current) dimensions, with the addition of curb and gutter, and with the incorporation of the currently planned VDOT improvements. The most significant changes to Centreville Road as proposed in the Sector Plan involve: (a) the way in which the proposed buildings along this thoroughfare relate to it, and (b) building/site access along this route.

One way access parking/service lane facilities (with parking) have been recommended for both sides of the Centreville Boulevard.



Figure 40: Mathis Avenue Section (indicating proposed 'main street' and courtyards at building rear)

The sidewalk directly adjacent to the travel-ways is minimized, with heavy plantings proposed between the sidewalk and the service lane. On the building side of the access/parking/service lanes, wider sidewalks face the ground floor retail edge. This arrangement will provide access to the proposed parking structures in the area, as well as offering building drop-off and quick-park amenities for shorter term shopping visits to the floor-plate retail planned for this corridor.

- **Mathis Avenue Thoroughfare**

Mathis Avenue is seen as the pedestrian "main street" for the sector. An almost completely continuous retail edge is planned for Mathis Avenue, with wide sidewalks and central medians where feasible. A civic focal point, sculpture or memorial is planned for a central median at the intersection of Fort Beauregard Avenue adjacent to the proposed crescent green. A memorial to the Civil War fortifications and/or their builders may be appropriate here.

The character of the Mathis Avenue "main street" will vary by building height, wall fenestration and materials, and use as the thoroughfare moves through the different neighborhoods, as described above.

## Thoroughfare Types

The following provides a brief description of thoroughfares based on the definitions established by the firm Duany Plater-Zybert & Company in their *Lexicon of New Urbanism* (1999). The *Lexicon* defines basically two thoroughfare patterns: connected (variations of a grid) and dendritic (branching like a tree). Connected streets comprise all variations of a road network pattern with multiple crossings and ways to move continuously through areas. In contrast, dendritic streets end in cul-de-sac and are typically found in single family, single lot areas. The *Lexicon* recommends use of only connected patterns of thoroughfares to support urban areas since these disperse traffic and provide multiple, short pedestrian routes through the urban areas. On the other hand, dendritic streets tend to concentrate traffic, creating bottlenecks and long walking distances. Thoroughfares are defined not only as transportation routes but as civic places, with well defined building edges and pedestrian facilities with clear connections to a community's open space system.

### Thoroughfare types include:

**Highways:** High-speed, vehicular-oriented corridors with no intersections and highly controlled pedestrian access. Included in this category are expressways and parkways.

**Boulevards:** Major thru-city thoroughfares often connected to regional highways. Boulevards are defined on its edges by both buildings and parking. Plantings should buffer the higher traffic volumes on boulevards, with generous space provided for pedestrian facilities. Boulevards connect the core of a community with its adjacent highways.

**Drives:** Thoroughfares bounded on one side by buildings and on the opposite side by open space, parks or linear greenways. Drives give a continuous public edge to open space areas and often define the outer edge of a neighborhood or community, where it faces open space areas.

**Roads:** Thoroughfares serving primarily residential areas that tend to be more suburban in nature, with deep building setbacks and sidewalks.

**Avenues:** Thoroughfares that connect different neighborhoods within a city. An avenue typically has a finite length and, often, terminates in a civic feature, or landmark. Avenues often combine heavy pedestrian edges with several lanes of vehicular traffic.

**Streets:** Streets are the most local and neighborhood-oriented thoroughfares. Streets are lined with mixed uses, with primary entrances and window walls directly facing the street. Streets have an urban character that changes according to density and the types of uses that front them. A "Main Street" is a type of thoroughfare with continuous retail uses at the ground floor and mixed uses above. Main Street can often be some of the most pedestrian-oriented places in a community.

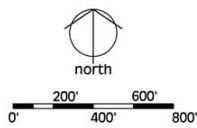


# manassas

## mathis avenue sector plan



- main street
- local boulevard
- regional boulevard
- residential road
- historic road
- mixed use boulevard
- mixed use avenue



### proposed thoroughfare types

- residential street
- rowhouse street
- mixed use street
- access street
- historic/residential street
- open space, public & private
- study area boundary

Figure 41: Proposed Thoroughfare Types



Figure 42: Mathis Avenue Existing Conditions (view from street edge at Manassas Shopping Center looking across Mathis)



Figure 43: Mathis Avenue Short Term Visualization (of plan proposals)



Figure 44: Mathis Avenue Long Term Visualization (with potential light rail )



## 6. Implementation

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The Mathis Avenue Sector Plan follows a shift in focus from revitalizing the historic downtown of Manassas to reinventing the City's later concentrations of commercial growth – the suburban strip. The shift of focus builds on the success of downtown revitalization efforts and recognizes that current patterns of growth and development along the City's suburban strips are un-sustainable. Increasingly, residents are calling for a greater sense of community and convenience in their lives and opportunities to decrease the amount of time spent commuting to inner beltway employment centers. Today's Manassas residents want jobs and services convenient to housing. In addition, the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan represents one of the best opportunities for Manassas to continue to enhance the tax base while recognizing that the City's ability to expand its boundaries is non-existent. The most important and critical part of any land use plan is its implementation. The following provides an overview of different strategies for implementing the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan.

### **Strategy 1 – Review existing land use regulations and amend as necessary to implement the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan.**

The Comprehensive Plan defines the long-range vision for a community in maps and text formats, and addresses such topics as land use, transportation, utilities, open space, etc. Separate neighborhoods or sectors are often delineated within the comprehensive plan to address problems and issues unique to those areas. The plan is a guide for both decision makers and the community in arriving at development or preservation decisions. Plan recommendations are not requirements.

The Code of Virginia requires that all local governments adopt and maintain a comprehensive plan with the purpose of controlling the general location, character and extent of each feature shown on the plan. Further, no street, public park, school, etc., shall be constructed or established until its location has been approved by the local planning commission as being substantially in accord with the plan. In Virginia, the comprehensive plan is a fundamental planning tool that is used as a guide to shape the future development of a locality's physical features, both public and private. The City's first step in implementing this vision is the adoption of the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan's land use map, thoroughfares and circulation map, and overall goals as part of its Comprehensive Plan.

Zoning controls the classification of any locality into districts of such number, shape and size as may be best suited for promoting health, safety or the general welfare of the public. It is a tool that can be used both as an incentive to new development that is desired by a locality, or as a disincentive to uses that may not be as welcome for a variety of reasons including no perceived benefit to the public health, safety and welfare of the city. To implement the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan, the CAC and Staff recommend the following 3 options for consideration:

Option 1 – Performance Based Zoning – This type of land use regulation includes zoning districts that are based on the application of specific performance standards and assume a rezoning application with a proffered general development plan. In return for a high quality design and public improvements, property owners are provided with an added economic benefit due to either additional uses or greater density under the new zoning. The City currently has several of these types of districts in place, including B-3.5, PMD, R-7 and R-6 any of which may be applicable to the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan area. Performance zoning provides for greater flexibility by avoiding the detailed specification of acceptable uses for specific parcels. It provides for the exercise of greater discretion by the jurisdiction at the time developments are proposed while, at the same time, establishing specific standards for the exercise of this discretion. So, for example, rather than defining requirements for a parcel according to specific allowable uses, the jurisdiction defines performance criteria that must be met by development on this parcel. Typical performance issues dealt with in this way are: parking requirements, traffic impacts, noise impacts, density requirements, open space requirements, etc.

Option 2 – Form Based Code - This type of land use regulation includes zoning overlay districts that also provide the property owner with an added economic benefit due to either additional uses or greater density than the underlying zoning but are based upon the willingness of the property owner to build to clearly specified design guidelines. Applicants do not have to go through a rezoning process because the performance standards are already established through the design guidelines. Form-based codes are a new technique in zoning that guides “place making” and involves the community at every step of the ordinance development process. Form-based zoning is an outgrowth of the New Urbanist planning movement and focuses on making public streets and public open spaces (i.e., the public realm) the well-defined core elements of each neighborhood. It should be noted that this is the established structure for the Mathis Avenue Sector



Plan. While traditional zoning focuses on what is undesirable, form-based codes focus on a community design vision – a more productive and positive incentive for achieving community-based development.

In both of these two options, existing property regulations would not be impacted unless the owner sought to either change the zoning or build under a different set of rules through the overlay district. The disadvantage to the City in not pushing for redevelopment in the form of a rezoning opportunity is the inability of the City to collect proffers for needed public improvements such as roads, public safety and schools. However, under the Form Based Code option, there may be the opportunity for the City to participate as a partner in the redevelopment of certain key properties.

Option 3 – Utilize Existing Zoning – The City always has the opportunity to amend existing zoning districts such as the B-4, General Commercial district to allow the types of mixed use development contemplated by this plan. This option is not recommended since the City loses all leverage to push for better design and more compatible uses in the sector plan area under this approach. However, limited changes to allow for properties not identified as short term opportunities to upgrade their image may be appropriate and are discussed later in this chapter. This approach may also assist non-conforming uses.

**Strategy 2 – Identify key opportunity sites for redevelopment and work with property owners to achieve projects that meet the City’s goals outlined in this plan and provide the property owners with an economic benefit.**

Figure 45 identifies key opportunity sites that should be the focus of any redevelopment efforts in the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan study area. These opportunity sites include:

- Manassas Shopping Center – Buildings are deteriorating and the parking area is not a good use of scarce land. However, local businesses within the shopping center need to be supported if any redevelopment does occur on the site.
- Reb-Yank Shopping Center – Same as the Manassas Shopping Center, buildings are deteriorating and the large expanse of parking is not a good use of scarce land. Retention of entertainment uses is desired.

- Mobile Home Parks – Housing stock that is varied in physical condition, some below standard. Affordable housing options need to be addressed.
- Undeveloped Parcels – Key site adjacent to the Manassas Museum’s Liberia House needs to be developed with sensitivity to adjacent historic resources, or acquired for public interests.
- Annaburg Manor - The City should encourage expansion of the existing Annaburg Manor so that the goals of the Prince William Hospital System are met while preserving the campus appearance such as the specimen trees, historic manor house and lawn area.

**Strategy 3 – Identify public facilities that will be impacted by redevelopment and plan accordingly for their expansion if necessary.**

- Schools – Development in the form proposed under this plan would generate approximately 960 to 1,000 new students with the heaviest impact to the Weems and Dean Facilities under the existing school district lines. Elementary school capacity is approximately 500. Therefore, mixed use development in the corridor that introduces additional housing may create a demand for a new elementary school though the majority of the suggested development is multi-family development, which has the lowest generation for school children, and the redevelopment of the mobile home park which currently has children in the system.
- Utilities – The majority of utilities are adequately sized or can be easily expanded with the exception of the sanitary sewer system which will require substantial upgrading in the area of Portner Avenue behind the existing shopping centers on the west side of the sector. See Figure 46.



**Strategy 4 – Address the City’s need to replace affordable housing units in the area as existing stock (i.e. trailer parks) is lost to redevelopment opportunities.**

- The Mathis Avenue Sector Plan Area currently contains a significant number of affordable housing units, primarily within the two trailer park communities located east of Centreville Road. Over time, and spurred on by the gradual implementation of the recommendations in the Sector Plan, the land values in this area will likely increase to a point that the trailer parks will no longer be economically viable to retain. A key element of this plan is the eventual redevelopment of the two mobile housing parks that are in the sector plan study area. While the plan provides a strategy for the creation of over 3,000 new residential units within the Sector Area, no decision has been made about whether or not a portion of these should be set aside as units for affordable housing. As housing costs within Manassas and its vicinity continue to rise, this issue becomes a critical one for the City to address. Within the context of an overall citywide policy regarding affordable housing, the City must decide how much affordable housing it wishes to retain in the Mathis Avenue Sector, what a workable definition of “affordable housing” should be within this sector, and what incentives the City wishes to offer developers in order to encourage them to provide the number of affordable housing units determined to be needed for the Sector Area.

In 2003, the City’s Housing Task Force met and discussed a set of goals and issues that should govern affordable housing decisions in future development plans for the City. These include the following:

1. Providing housing for a variety of incomes and ages within mixed use developments that provide opportunities for live/work environments and the use of transportation alternatives such as bus transit.
2. Consider an Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) as part of the change in land use regulations.

**Strategy 5 - Conduct a market analysis and retail study to determine the best mix of non-residential uses for the sector plan area that would compliment the development in Old Town Manassas and Liberia Avenue, with emphasis on the opportunity sites identified in Figure 45.**

**Strategy 6 - Amend the existing B-4, General Commercial to allow some flexibility in a designated redevelopment overlay area that would allow for expansion and upgrade of facilities without encouraging a great deal of capital investment in properties that the City would like to see redevelop in the future.**

- The designated redevelopment overlay district would be those areas that have NOT been identified as opportunity sites in Figure 45. The redevelopment overlay district would encourage the upkeep and upgrade of existing businesses in areas where the market is not there for full redevelopment. The areas in which to consider a greater degree of flexibility would be the following:

Existing Development Standards in the B-4

- 15-ft front yard set back from a street
- No side or rear when adjacent to non-residential; 25 feet next to residential
- 10% Tree Canopy
- 55 feet Height

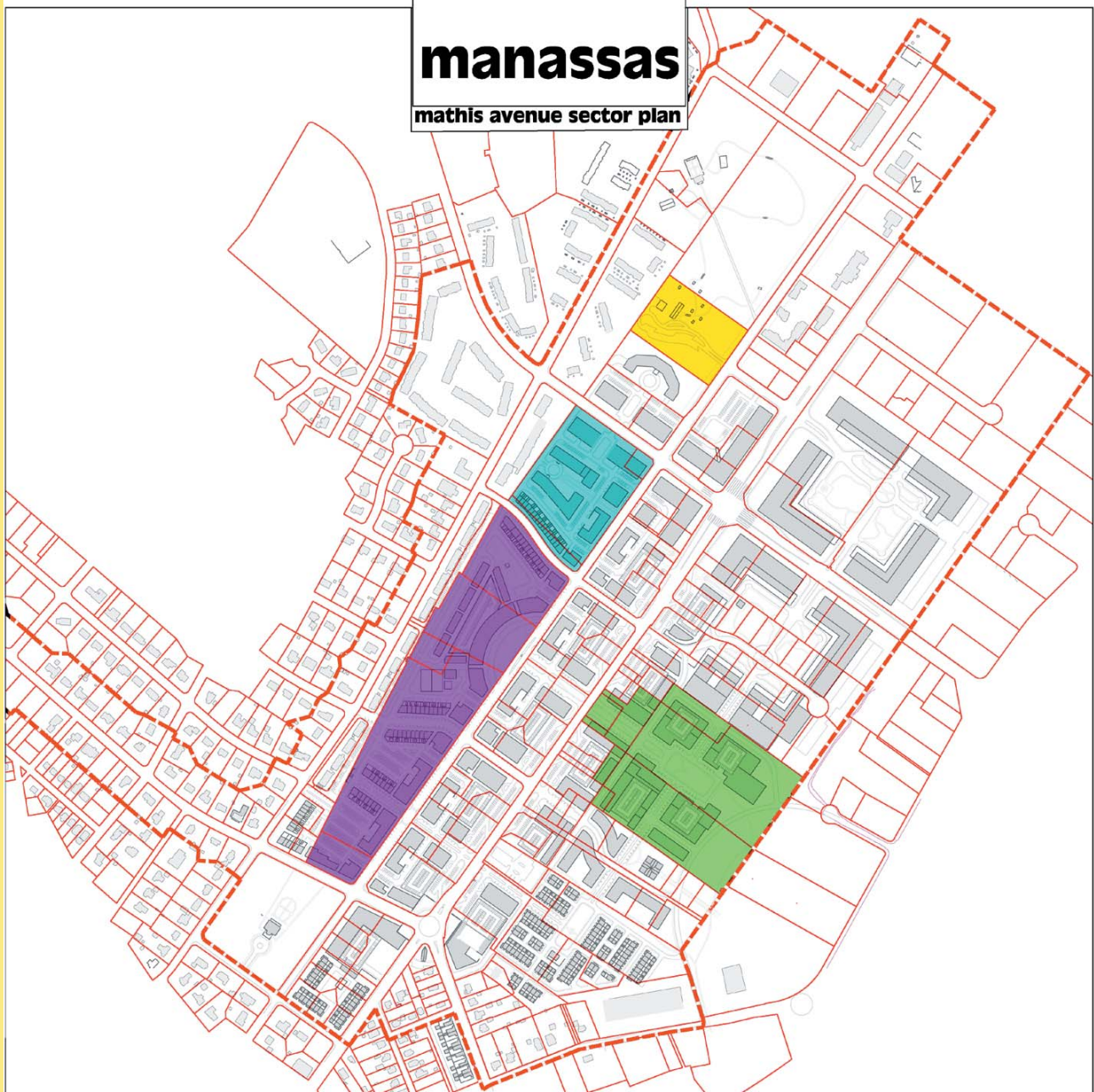
**Strategy 7 - Explore the creation of a Housing and Redevelopment Authority for the City to use as a mechanism for acquiring and developing land in partnership with private developers and existing property owners.**







**Strategy 8 - Develop a Business Assistance Fund to provide funds for businesses that may be displaced when property owners or developers acquire properties for redevelopment to assist those businesses in relocating to the new buildings.**

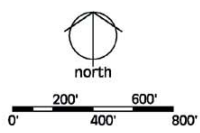


# manassas

## mathis avenue sector plan

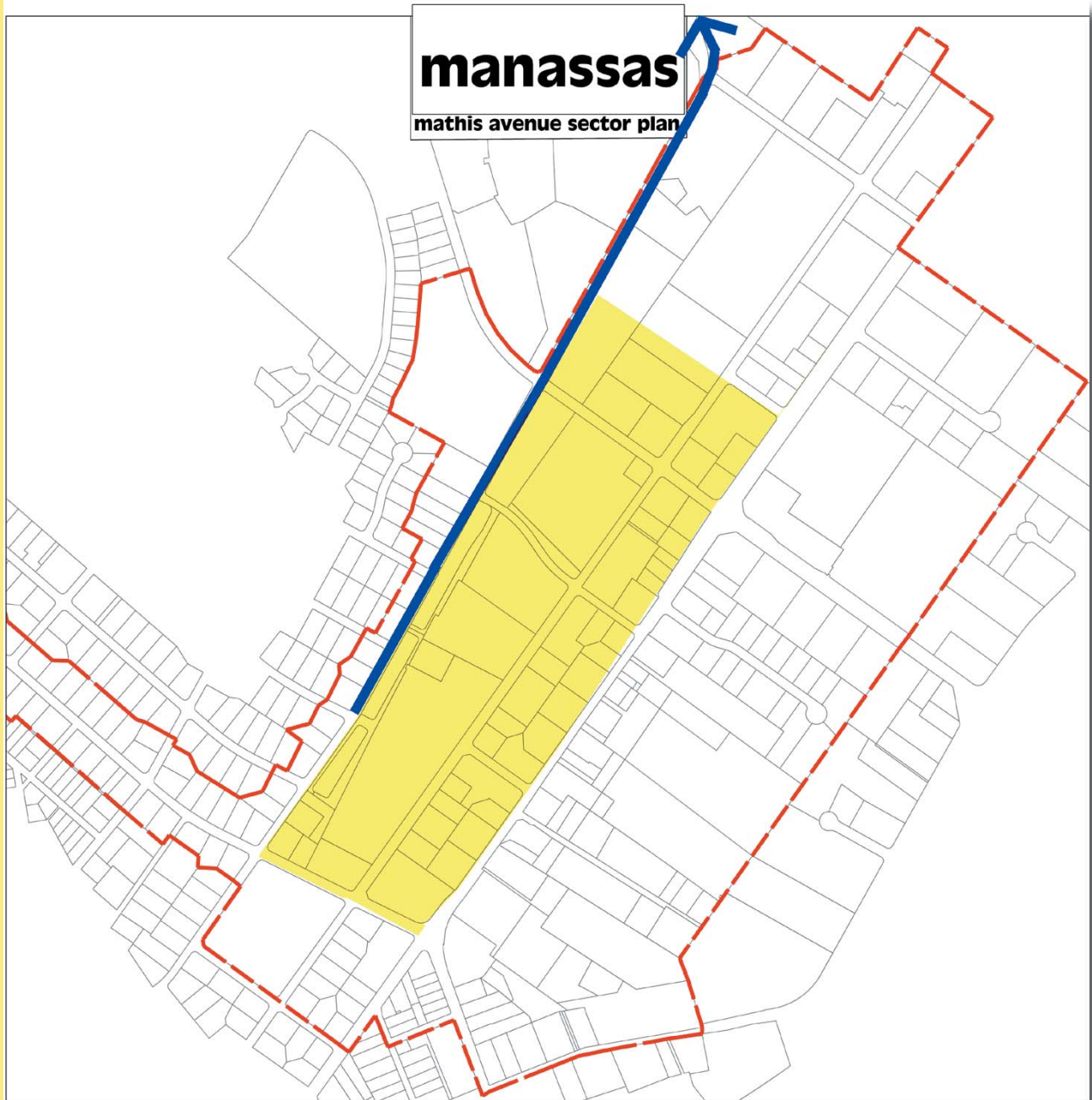


	sector boundary
	parcels
	manassas shopping center
	reb yank shopping center
	mobile home areas
	undeveloped parcel






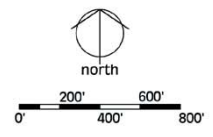
### opportunity sites


Figure 45: Opportunity Sites



**manassas**  
mathis avenue sector plan

-  study area boundary
-  proposed sewer line
-  service area



sanitary  
sewer

Figure 46: Proposed Land Use and Neighborhoods